



Province of Alberta

The 26th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

March 1, 2005 to December 1, 2005
and Index

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 1, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 2005/03/01
 [The Mace was on a cushion below the table]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated February 7, 2005, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

head: **Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor**

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.
 His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, his party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

His Honour: Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.

Mr. Stevens (Provincial Secretary): Hon. members, I am commanded by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to inform you that he does not see fit to declare the causes of the summoning of the present Legislature of this province until a Speaker of this Assembly shall have been chosen according to law. He therefore is pleased to retire from this Assembly, to return at a subsequent hour tomorrow to declare the causes of the calling of this Legislature.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor, his party, and the Premier left the Chamber]

head: **Election of a Speaker**

The Clerk: Hon. members, pursuant to the Lieutenant Governor's direction and section 16(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act nominations are invited for the Office of Speaker of this Assembly for the 26th Legislature. Ms Haley.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. It's a real honour for me to be able to participate in the Speaker's election for the 26th Legislature of Alberta. With this being our 100th anniversary year as a province, I have been looking into the historical context of various building blocks of our province. Part of that, of course, is the actual election of the Speaker.

The first known Speaker's election was held in 1377 in England. Even the name of the position, Speaker, evolved out of those early days as one designated to speak for the House and represent the House to the Crown. The role became pivotal in times of struggle between the Crown and the House, the essence of which was captured in 1642, when Charles I entered the House to arrest five members for treason. The Speaker refused to give the members'

whereabouts, saying, "I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me."

It is, in fact, a common myth that Speakers have been executed in the course of carrying out their duties, and while it is true that between 1399 and 1535 nine people who had once held the Office of Speaker were executed or suffered violent deaths, those demises cannot be attributed to the actual act of being the Speaker. They were in fact attributed to other functions in their lives. However, the responsibility still weighed heavily in uncertain times when free speech could not be taken for granted. Our parliamentary system of democracy has evolved over the past 800 years, and the role of Speaker may be slightly less dangerous now but still equally important.

There is a role for government which is represented by the Premier and Executive Council, and there is a role for the Assembly, comprised of all members, most of whom are not part of Executive Council. It is imperative to keep the separation between the two. That is why there is a separate budget for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. It is also why we have our own Standing Orders, that we ratify in this Chamber, to govern our own behaviour.

There are many books defining how to do things, and one person is vested with the role of interpreting and ruling on issues important to all members. It is in this context that I am very proud to nominate a man who lives and breathes those dusty old books and brings them to life for us here, to the benefit of us all. It is the third time he has willingly put his name forward for this position and the third time I've had the privilege to nominate him. He has brought respect, honour, and dignity to our home away from home here in this Assembly, allowing all of us to function freely and with integrity on behalf of our constituents. He has proven over the past eight years that he is not only good at the job but that he, in fact, loves doing it. I am very proud to nominate my friend and colleague Ken Kowalski, the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, to the position of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: Mr. Kowalski, do you wish to accept the nomination?

Mr. Kowalski: Mr. Clerk, I'd be both honoured and humbled to accept the nomination.

The Clerk: Are there further nominations for the Office of Speaker? I declare, then, the nominations closed, and I further declare that Mr. Ken Kowalski, the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, is elected Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for the 26th Legislature. [applause]

[The Speaker, with apparent reluctance, was escorted to the chair by Mr. Klein and Dr. Taft]

The Speaker: Hon. members, it is with the deepest of humility that I thank you all, all members of Alberta's 26th Legislature, for the great honour bestowed upon me today.

As we close the first 100 years of Alberta as a province and embark upon our second centennial, we should all be cognizant of the tremendous responsibility placed upon all of us as Members of this Legislative Assembly. As the future unfolds, I have no doubt that the 26th Legislature will experience momentous events that will define the new Alberta. Your integrity, your honesty, and your transparency will define you as a member of Alberta's Legislative Assembly. You will make a difference.

Thank you again for electing me as your Speaker. To the Member

for Airdrie-Chestermere, thank you for believing in me and thank you for your humbling nomination.

The best to all. Thank you.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms placed the Mace on the table]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: I would now invite everyone to stand for the prayer.

Let us pray. To the Almighty, on this day of a new beginning we ask for Your guidance in the responsibility we have undertaken and Your help in fulfilling our duties. As Members of this Legislative Assembly may we faithfully serve all Albertans and, in serving them, serve You. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Election of a Deputy Speaker
and Chair of Committees**

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and Standing Order 55(1)(a) nominations are invited for the office of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of this Assembly for the 26th Legislature. The hon. Mr. Amery.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me be the first one to formally congratulate you on your re-election to the Speaker's chair. I look forward to serving under your inspired guidance for this 26th Legislature.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to put forward the name of the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall for the position of Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has for many years served you and all members of this House as Deputy Chair of Committees as well as serving on several House committees dedicated to the rights and privileges of all members. All members who have sat before him in this Chamber and Committee of Supply know that he is always a balanced and thoughtful purveyor of the rules and Standing Orders to all members of this House whatever their political stripe.

Mr. Speaker, as we go to place our ballots for Deputy Speaker, it is important that we know more about the candidates who we are electing and the accomplishments and activities that they have undertaken before and while they have been elected to this House.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has been a lifelong advocate of child welfare and community support for children. He has also taught numerous courses at Mount Royal College in Calgary. The hon. member ran and was elected in a by-election in 1995, strongly committed to making a greater contribution to the people of Calgary-McCall and the people of this province. In his first term the hon. member served voluntarily and diligently as the Deputy Chair of Committees whenever he was called upon.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member has served in many nonpartisan capacities: as a member of this House, as a vice-chair of the Public Accounts Committee, as a member of the Legislative Review Committee, and on any other committees that he was assigned to. I have the pleasure of sitting with him on the Standing Policy Committee on Health and Community Living and have found his level of commitment and dedication to be second to none.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I know that by electing the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall to the position of Deputy Speaker, this Assembly will be well served. He will do so in the manner in which he has served us in the past, with a shrewd understanding of the duties and parliamentary responsibilities required in conducting the business of

the House. He will do so in a manner that brings credit to this House and all hon. members, who serve the people of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, through you I urge all hon. members to support our friend and colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall for Deputy Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, Mr. Shariff, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Shariff: With humility and a great sense of pride I accept the nomination.

Mr. Speaker, I also congratulate you on your victory.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, Mr. McFarland.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, and may I be the second, Mr. Speaker, to extend sincere appreciation for your eloquence and your dedication and also for the words of advice that you gave my electorate during my by-election in 1992. Only you and I would remember what those words were.

I am pleased to present to the Legislative Assembly an individual that I know would be a worthy and capable Deputy Speaker. This MLA has a well-rounded background that suits him to assist you, Mr. Speaker. A former scoutmaster, a minor hockey coach, a small-business owner/operator, he and his wife, Jan, have farmed in central Alberta since 1964. During that time they raised their daughter and son, and their expanded family has now blessed this marriage with three grandchildren, a wonderful gift for a couple who this November will celebrate their 40th year of marriage.

A responsible community person, my colleague served 17 years as a municipal councillor, as many of us in this Assembly have. He also served with the municipal district of Kneehill, as it was known then, as deputy reeve, as reeve, as chair of the central zone of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and as chair of the reeves' council for the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties.

Richard Marz was elected to this Assembly in 1997, and I have been fortunate to know and work with him in various capacities since that time. A devoted MLA, in my mind, Richard has chaired a number of committees including the farm assessment review and the labour review committee and served on all other SPC and legislative committees that he's been asked to, and he's done so with vigorous attention. I am confident that his abilities to now assume the role of Deputy Speaker will be made with dignity and with strength.

It's my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to nominate without reservation Richard Marz, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, for Deputy Speaker, and I encourage all members of our Assembly to support him.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Mr. Marz, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Marz: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for Little Bow for his very kind words, and I would accept the nomination with honour and pride.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, would there be additional nominations? I declare the nominations closed.

The nominees for the position of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees are Mr. Shariff and Mr. Marz.

Voting will commence after the list of nominees is posted in each voting booth and will be conducted by the office of the Clerk.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

The Speaker: Hon. the Premier, perhaps you might begin, followed by the hon. Minister of Environment. Then we'll just go up this row.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, if you would commence on this side, and then we'll follow with the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill and just go down the row.

[Members voted from 1:55 p.m. to 2:02 p.m.]

The Speaker: Hon. members, have all those who wish to vote voted? Then proceed, Mr. Clerk.

[Ballots were counted from 2:03 p.m. to 2:12 p.m.]

The Speaker: Hon. members, it'll be a couple of minutes before the results come in.

There was one thing we were going to do at the conclusion of the program this afternoon, but I think we'll proceed with it now. I'm going to call on the hon. the Premier, the hon. Mr. Klein.

Centennial Medallions

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] Thank you very much. Well, Mr. Speaker and colleagues, thank you for that very warm round of applause, and it is nice to be back.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate you on your acclamation as Speaker. I know you had a hard run.

I would like to congratulate in advance, although we don't know who the victor might be, the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees. As well, in advance I would like to congratulate whoever wins the Deputy Chair of Committees. I'm confident that each of them and you, Mr. Speaker, will serve Albertans well in your respective roles.

As Alberta celebrates its 100th anniversary, there will be a number of celebrations and activities throughout the province. There will be celebrations in communities, and service clubs will have celebrations. I know that a number of corporations are planning celebrations. So virtually whole segments of society are developing programs to celebrate Alberta's 100th birthday. These are all people and entities that make this province such a fantastic place in which to live.

As a government we are recognizing centenarians, we are recognizing students, and we are recognizing community leaders and volunteers, just to name a few. I would personally like to add another group to that list, and that is Members of the Legislative Assembly because notwithstanding what we hear on the radios and read in the newspapers and watch on television from time to time, we actually do work. We do very significant work, and we serve the people of this province with a tremendous amount of commitment, pride, and dignity. So I want to add to that list Members of this Legislative Assembly because as legislators the members of this Assembly continue to make important contributions to the lives of all Albertans.

As I announced last September, the government is producing a centennial medallion in honour of Alberta's 100th birthday. Each student from kindergarten to grade 12 will be receiving a commemo-

orative brass medallion. Every Albertan who reaches or has reached the age of 100 in 2005 – and I can't believe how many there are; there are many – will receive a 14-karat gold medallion.

A silver medallion has also been produced to bestow as a commemorative gift to distinguished Albertans and guests visiting Alberta in 2005. Members will receive a supply of these medallions for their distribution. Today, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a silver medallion to each member as a memento for his or her work on behalf of all Albertans during this centennial year.

I would like to note with pride that these medallions were designed by an Alberta artist, as a matter of fact right here in Edmonton, as I understand, and produced, of course, right here in Alberta.

Alberta's centennial should be a great year, and I look forward to working with you, Mr. Speaker, and all Members of this Legislative Assembly to make sure it is.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Leader of the Official Opposition, this is a deviation from what we are doing today, but I suspect that we might interpret the Premier's comments as a ministerial statement, and under our normal rules if the Leader of the Official Opposition wants to make a comment further with respect to the medallion presentation, please proceed.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a completely unexpected gesture on the part of the Premier and the government and the Legislative Assembly. I haven't seen the medallion yet, but I'm sure we'll be very interested in them. I appreciate the gesture, and I'm even more excited for the Albertans who will receive the medallion who aren't MLAs, the people who have reached their 100th birthday and the schoolchildren of Alberta, who represent the future of this province. So on behalf of the opposition I thank the government and the Legislative Assembly for this generous gesture.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would also draw to your attention this pamphlet that we've produced: Page Biographies. These very remarkable young people will be with us for the remainder of this session, and I certainly hope that you will have an opportunity in the ensuing days to basically identify their backgrounds, their names, and some really remarkable things. Do you know the Speaker's page, Matthew? Where is he? There he is, right there. In his biography he's president of a junior achievement company, executive member of the Northern Alberta BMW Club, an owner of an automotive accessories business. He's in high school with honours all the time, and once he leaves us after his successful stay in the Legislative Assembly, he plans on getting into business administration. Remarkable people, all of them.

The Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees, 82; the number of spoiled ballots, zero; the number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 42; the member having received the majority of the votes cast, Mr. Richard Marz. Mr. Richard Marz is declared Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 26th Legislature.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has a new Deputy Speaker for its 26th Legislature. We all congratulate the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Mr. Marz, would you like to say a few words?

Mr. Marz: Well, thank you very much. I'd like to thank all the members of the Assembly for entrusting this very important position to me. I'd also like to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your third term, and it will be indeed an honour and a privilege for me to work side by side with you in serving this Assembly in the 26th Legislature.

Again I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Little Bow for his kind words, and I would also like to thank my friend and colleague from Calgary-McCall for giving us the opportunity to exercise the democratic process in this Assembly.

I guess that about sums it up, Mr. Speaker. Thanks again.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would ask you to join with me as I say thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall for very distinguished service in the 25th Legislature of the province of Alberta as Deputy Chair of Committees. Thank you.

head: **Election of a Deputy Chair of Committees**

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and Standing Order 55(1)(b) nominations are invited for the office of Deputy Chair of Committees for the 26th Legislature. The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to congratulate you on your election to the Office of Speaker. We have benefited immensely from your expertise in the past, and I look forward to another Legislature with you in the Speaker's chair.

I'd also like to congratulate my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on his election as Deputy Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today to nominate the Member for Calgary-Fort as the Deputy Chair of Committees for the 26th Legislature. I've come to know this member very well since he was first elected in 1997. We were both elected in the same year. Since that time I have witnessed his dedication to his constituency and to the province of Alberta. He has shown himself to be an ethical, hard-working, effective member of this Legislature. I have no doubt that he would be an impartial adjudicator of House debates, and his enthusiasm for parliamentary democracy would be a benefit to all members of the House. The Chamber would be well served by the Member for Calgary-Fort, and it is an honour to nominate him.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, Mr. Cao, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, for the nomination. With my personal pledge of hard work, humility, and great honour I'll accept the nomination and seek your support.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to be one of many who are going to congratulate you on your acclamation as Mr. Speaker. Your commitment, knowledge, and leadership are admired and appreciated by all.

I would also like to congratulate the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on his appointment as Deputy Speaker. I know that the experience and the challenge will be humbling and trying at times.

It is my honour to stand before you today, Mr. Speaker, and this Assembly to nominate the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Drayton Valley-Calmar. This member was elected to his first term

as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Drayton Valley-Calmar on March 12, 2001. In addition to his role as MLA he has served as a member of the standing committees on Law and Regulations; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; as well as the Standing Policy Committee on Learning and Employment.

I believe this member will be fair and courteous and will keep good decorum in the House. His knowledge of process and parliamentary procedure will be an asset to this Assembly. He will be an excellent support for our newly elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Therefore, I nominate the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar for election for the Deputy Chair of Committees.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, Reverend Abbott, do you accept the nomination?

Rev. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, let me also congratulate you publicly on your position as well as my seatmate, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, on his election as Deputy Speaker.

Let me thank the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul for his gracious nomination, and yes, Mr. Speaker, I do accept.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there further nominations?

Ms Haley: Mr. Speaker, with great pride I would nominate my friend and colleague Mr. Shiraz Shariff, Member for Calgary-McCall, for this position.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, Mr. Shariff, do you accept the nomination? [some applause]

Mr. Shariff: Thank you very much, colleagues. I hadn't contemplated running for this position. I will put my name forward. I accept.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there additional nominations? Then I declare the nominations closed.

The nominees for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees are Mr. Cao, Reverend Abbott, and Mr. Shariff.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

The Speaker: Hon. the Premier, would you lead the members on this side and, hon. Dr. Taft, would you lead the members on that side, please?

[Members voted from 2:22 p.m. to 2:29 p.m.]

The Speaker: Have all hon. members who wish to vote voted?

[Ballots were counted from 2:29 p.m. to 2:38 p.m.]

The Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees, 82; the number of spoiled ballots, zero; the number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 42. No candidate has received a majority of the votes cast. Reverend Abbott has received the least number of total votes cast, and Reverend Abbott's name will therefore be excluded from subsequent ballots.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a second ballot will be cast. It'll be just a matter of a minute or so, and then we'll proceed in the same manner as the last.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, Mr. Leader of the Official Opposition, please proceed.

[Members voted from 2:41 p.m. to 2:47 p.m.]

The Speaker: Hon. members, have all who wish to do so voted? Then I think, Mr. Clerk, you can proceed.

[Ballots were counted from 2:47 p.m. to 2:54 p.m.]

The Speaker: Hon. members, just a few quick reminders before the proceedings continue. First of all, tomorrow at 3 o'clock. But on Thursday, when we come in at 1:30, we are going to try and do one of those historical pictures of all Members of the Legislative Assembly. There's a window of opportunity for the picture to be taken of about 20 seconds, so would you please be in your chair. If not, we will have to electronically insert you after the fact.

An Hon. Member: And it hurts.

The Speaker: And it hurts, yeah.

Hon. members, I'd just like to draw your attention to the legislative officers who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. For returning members, you'll be familiar with them and know who they are, for new members perhaps not, so I'll just take a moment here to introduce them: first of all, Mr. Don Hamilton, the Ethics Commissioner; Mr. Fred Dunn, the Auditor General; Mr. Brian Fjeldheim, the Chief Electoral Officer; Mr. Gordon Button, the Ombudsman; Mr. Frank Work, the Privacy Commissioner.

The Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees on the second ballot, 82; the number

of spoiled ballots, one; the number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 42; the member having received the majority of votes cast, Mr. Shiraz Shariff. Mr. Shiraz Shariff is the Deputy Chair of Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 26th Legislature.

The Speaker: Congratulations are extended to the Deputy Chair of Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Mr. Shariff, would you like to say a few words?

Mr. Shariff: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm stuck for words, and you can understand that, but I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your confidence in me. I will serve you diligently, fairly, and I'll apply the Standing Orders as I've always done in the past.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues the hon. Member for Calgary-East and the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere for nominating me.

I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your acclamation and congratulate my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on being elected as the Deputy Speaker. I also want to recognize my two other colleagues, Calgary-Fort and Drayton Valley-Calmar, for letting their names stand for this position.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. members, might we have consent to destroy all ballots and documents related to the election of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees, and the Deputy Chair of Committees?

[Unanimous consent granted]

[At 2:58 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 3 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 2, 2005** 3:00 p.m.
Date: 05/03/02
The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly, entered the Chamber and took the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Almighty God, author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask Your blessings on all here present. We ask Your guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments for the benefit of all Albertans. Amen.

Ladies and gentlemen and hon. members, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join us in the language of your choice. At the conclusion of the anthem I would ask that you remain standing.

Hon. Members and Guests:

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

Hon. Dr. Lois E. Hole, CM, AOE

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, on January 6, 2005, the late the Hon. Dr. Lois E. Hole, CM, AOE, the 15th Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, passed away following a courageous battle with cancer. Her Honour served with grace and dignity as Alberta's Lieutenant Governor from 2000 to 2005.

Her Honour was well known in various local, provincial, and national organizations and was recognized for her contribution to libraries, education, and the arts.

To Mrs. Hole's family and those who knew her I extend the condolences of the Assembly. Members of Her Honour's family are with us today in the Speaker's gallery.

In memory of Her Honour I ask you to join me in a moment of silent prayer and remembrance.

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

Please be seated.

head: **Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor**

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, prior to the arrival of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor the Royal Canadian Artillery Band will play a brief musical interlude.

The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was formed in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and Halifax. It has seen service in both world wars and in Korea,

and it has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders. Reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997, the band is today under the direction of Captain Brian Greenwood, CD, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

The band will now play a piece written by baroque composer George Frederick Handel, the details of which are in your program.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, his party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

His Honour: Pray be seated.

The Speaker: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has elected me as their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfill the important duties thus assigned to me. If in the performance of those duties I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not the Assembly, whose servant I am and who through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duties to the Queen and province, humbly claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person at all reasonable times, and that their proceedings may receive from you the most favourable construction.

Mr. Stevens (Provincial Secretary): Mr. Speaker, I am commanded by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that he freely confides in the duty and attachment of this Assembly to Her Majesty's person and government, and not doubting that the proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temperance, and prudence, he grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow the Assembly's constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to His Honour upon all reasonable occasions and that all proceedings as well as your words and actions will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

head: **Speech from the Throne**

His Honour: Fellow Albertans, it is my privilege to welcome you to the First Session of the 26th Alberta Legislature.

The Next Alberta

It is my great honour to deliver the Speech from the Throne as it is my great honour to serve as this province's Lieutenant Governor. [applause] In this role I have big shoes to fill, or perhaps I should say big rubber boots. My predecessor, the late the Honourable Lois Hole, was much beloved by Albertans. She brought warmth, grace, kindness, and compassion to this office. She personified the very best qualities of this province.

I had the honour and privilege of meeting Bill and Valerie and Jim and Marcia this afternoon and know that their mother's qualities are carried on in the family.

All of us here can do no less than endeavour to follow Mrs. Hole's example. We must strive to fulfill the duties of our offices with diligence and dignity. We must respect each other even when we disagree. Above all, we must always remember the people we serve and act in ways that will bring honour to them and this province, as she did.

This year the government will establish lasting tributes to Lois Hole. Later on I will announce two initiatives in recognition of Mrs. Hole's dedication to libraries and learning. The government will also celebrate the late Lieutenant Governor's first love, gardening, with the creation of a memorial garden on the grounds of the Alberta Legislature. There will be a seating area where visitors can enjoy the beauty of the garden and the grounds. The garden will be named after Lois Hole and will include a cairn with a plaque featuring her portrait and biographical highlights of her life and legacy.

During this centennial year we will also remember the legacies of the many other great Albertans who came before us, and we will celebrate the wonderful province they helped to build.

The Centennial: A Century of Achievement

It's amazing to think of how far Alberta has come from its roots 100 years ago. Back in 1905 Alberta's population was only 185,000, much smaller than that of either Saskatchewan or Manitoba, and the people were outnumbered by the livestock. There were nearly a quarter million horses and a million cattle in Alberta at that time.

A look back at this province's first Speech from the Throne, delivered by Lieutenant Governor George Bulyea in the First Legislature at McKay Avenue school, shows some surprising similarities with the business that concerns us today. Mr. Bulyea noted, as I also will, the importance of agriculture to the province. He spoke about the pressures a rapidly growing population puts on infrastructure, pressures we continue to face today. Back in 1905 Alberta was developing a telephone system, while 2005 will see the completion of the SuperNet.

The people who heard Lieutenant Governor Bulyea's words couldn't have known all the struggles they would face. They didn't know how difficult it would be to build the roads, bridges, and railroad tracks that would connect this province to the rest of the country. They didn't know that fires, floods, and droughts were on their way. They didn't know that many of their sons and daughters would give their lives building this province and this country and defending it overseas.

What they did know was that theirs was a land blessed with beauty and natural resources. They knew they would have to work hard to turn the land's promise into prosperity. They knew that with provincehood came great responsibility. It was a responsibility they willingly accepted, and together they built a strong, vibrant province.

Today all Albertans owe a debt of gratitude to those who came before us: to the aboriginal people, whose deep connection to this land spans generations and centuries; to our seniors, who laid the foundations for the communities that took root all across this province and made it home; to the settlers, who came from all over the world to make a fresh start here, often bringing nothing more with them than dreams and determination; to those who fought for this nation in armed conflicts; and to everyone who had faith in this province and what it could become. The fruits of their labours are all around us.

Alberta now enters its second century with a strong economy, no debt, nation-leading rates of growth and employment, a high standard of living, and an enviable quality of life. The credit for all these achievements rests with Albertans themselves, and they are

indeed achievements worth celebrating in this centennial year.

Albertans will mark the centennial in ways that are as grand and unique as Alberta itself. Among the highlights of the province's centennial celebrations will be a visit from Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh this spring.

In honour of the centennial a new graduate scholarship and fellowship program will be established. Beginning in the next school year 200 students enrolled in full-time masters programs in Alberta will each receive a \$9,300 scholarship, and 100 students enrolled in full-time PhD programs will each receive a \$10,500 fellowship. A total of 300 students will receive nearly \$3 million through this program, a number that will grow with the number of graduate students in Alberta.

Another way Alberta will mark its centennial is by presenting centennial medallions to all schoolchildren and to Albertans who are 100 years or older.

As Albertans celebrate the province's past, they will also look ahead with enthusiasm to the next Alberta, the Alberta our children and grandchildren will inherit. My government's goal is to make sure that the next Alberta is even better than the Alberta of today.

The Next Alberta Will Be a Leader in Learning

That's why the next Alberta will continue to be a leader in learning. The children of Alberta already benefit from one of the best education systems in the world. Its success is due to dedicated students, outstanding teachers, and a high-quality curriculum. Alberta will continue to invest in its children's futures by supporting initiatives that build on the strong foundation of the kindergarten through grade 12 system and enhance learning opportunities for students across the province.

Previous efforts to strengthen the education system are already showing results: class sizes are coming down and will meet the Learning Commission guidelines two years ahead of schedule, and our students continue to outperform their peers on national and international tests.

Now it's time to make sure that the province's postsecondary education system is able to meet the needs of the next Alberta. A strong postsecondary education system is crucial for continued economic diversification, growth, and prosperity as well as personal fulfillment. Strengthening the postsecondary learning system is the government's top priority during this centennial year.

The government is taking immediate action to improve access to advanced education. Over the next three years 15,000 new spaces will be added to the postsecondary system. In six years that will double to 30,000 new spaces. By 2020 a total of 60,000 new spaces will be created. Our goal with this bold expansion plan is to move Albertans to the highest rate of postsecondary education in the country.

Particular attention will be paid to increasing training opportunities in areas experiencing skills shortages. Government will invest in new apprenticeship certification programs. Investment will also be directed to new apprenticeship training initiatives, particularly for aboriginal people. It will bring opportunities closer to the learner by exploring increased use of alternate delivery training mechanisms such as distance learning and mobile delivery to rural communities.

This government will also make advanced education more affordable. The government will pay the full cost of tuition increases at Alberta's public postsecondary learning institutions for the 2005-06 academic year. It will also create a new policy, the most innovative, entrepreneurial, and affordable in the country, to ensure that tuition and schooling costs aren't a barrier to learning in Alberta.

The first legislation introduced during this session will call for a

significant new investment in the postsecondary learning system. Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, aligns government's fiscal strategy with its 20-year strategic plan. It will lay the groundwork for investments that will allow Alberta to continue to prosper in the increasingly globalized, knowledge-based economy.

The signature piece of this act will allow for the creation of a \$3 billion endowment fund to sustain Alberta's postsecondary education system into the future. The access to the future fund will support innovation and excellence in postsecondary education. For example, it will provide matching contributions to help create a new centre for Chinese studies at the University of Alberta. This landmark institute will promote greater understanding of the culture, language, and history of one of the world's largest economies and a country with which this province has long enjoyed a special relationship.

The new fund will also support the development of an Alberta-wide digital library that will allow all students and faculty, wherever they are located in the province, to access the resources and knowledge currently held in the individual libraries of our postsecondary institutions. To be named the Lois Hole digital library, this leading-edge initiative is centred on the work already under way at the University of Calgary. The government will also create the Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship. Beginning in the next academic year four students will each receive a \$5,000 scholarship toward his or her postsecondary studies.

This government is committed to removing obstacles from the path of any Albertan who wants to get an education, whether it's from a university, college, or technical institution, and it will show its commitment through its actions.

The Next Alberta Will Have a Diverse and Growing Economy

Having an educated workforce is key to ensuring continued prosperity in the next Alberta. We know that a strong economy is not an end unto itself; rather, it is the means to achieve the things we want as a society such as strong health and education systems and supports for those who are vulnerable. This government remains committed to the fiscal principles that have served the province so well: balanced budgets, no debt, and low taxes. These principles have made Alberta the economic leader of the nation. We're at the head of the pack, and we're staying there.

Growth brings its own challenges, and among them are tremendous pressures on infrastructure. This government will maintain one of the most aggressive infrastructure programs in Canada to make sure Albertans have the roads, schools, hospitals, and facilities they need.

Work will begin this year on the southeast portion of the Edmonton ring road thanks to a public/private partnership that will see the road's completion in just two and a half years. Government will explore continued use of this innovative form of financing for large capital projects as it aims to complete the ring roads around Edmonton and Calgary within the next decade.

Secondary highways are also critical to the province's continued economic growth. These roads are vital links to and between rural communities, and many are long overdue for improvements. This year the government will increase its investment in this area to rehabilitate and upgrade more provincial highways throughout the province.

Our government will work with municipal partners by allocating the \$3 billion that has been committed to address municipal infrastructure needs beginning in Budget 2005.

Now that the province's debt has been paid off, the government

will begin inflation-proofing the Alberta heritage savings trust fund to ensure that it is sustained as a legacy for future generations.

We will take steps to protect consumers by strengthening legislation on collection practices, credit reporting, public auctions, and loan brokering. We will also introduce standardized, plain language contracts for residential natural gas and electricity consumers.

Alberta will continue to implement its water for life strategy this year, including developing a provincial plan for water conservation in partnership with the Alberta Water Council.

We will increase consultation with aboriginal people on resource development and land access issues to help them participate fully in the growing economy.

This government will continue to stand by agricultural producers, who face the future with renewed optimism. The economic hardships of recent years have prompted improvements to the agriculture sector, including increased domestic processing capacity and the expansion of value-added products, which will make the industry more competitive than ever.

We will work to strengthen this vital sector by continuing to advocate for marketing choice for wheat and barley. The global marketplace is demanding that we move to a more competitive marketing system. Alberta will push for a new business model for the Canadian Wheat Board, one with market choice, so that Alberta farmers can be more competitive in the value-added market.

Vibrant rural communities are vital to this province. That's why this government will act on the recommendations of the rural development strategy to sustain and strengthen the rural economy.

Much as the land sustains the agriculture industry, it also sustains other economic mainstays such as energy, forestry, and tourism. Wise land management is crucial to ensure the sustainability of these sectors and continued prosperity for Albertans. That's why this government will develop a land-use management framework supported by effective resource and environmental policies and shared, integrated information systems. It will also continue to leverage energy resources to their full value.

The government will explore ways for the economy to be more knowledge based by adding value to primary resource industries and expanding manufacturing and business services.

Taking a co-ordinated approach will help protect the province's environment and ensure that all the province's resources are wisely managed with their benefits maximized for future generations.

The Next Alberta Will Be the Healthiest Province in Canada

Having a strong economy gives Alberta the ability to invest in areas like health care, but Albertans and indeed all Canadians know that if simply adding money to the system were enough, the challenges in health care would have been resolved long ago. The days of endlessly studying and debating health care reform are over, and the time for action is here. That's why Albertans will pioneer a new way of health care.

Alberta's third way for health care is about making sure Albertans get the best health care services, what they need and when they need it, at a price taxpayers can afford. We're going to get on with the things that need to be done such as developing systems to improve wait-list management and allowing electronic referrals between family physicians and specialists. We'll make whatever legislative changes are needed to allow innovation to occur throughout the health system.

We'll keep looking at new ideas. In May Alberta will host an international symposium to examine best practices in health care

delivery. The symposium will give Albertans an opportunity to examine a range of solutions that could benefit our province.

And we'll take steps to make Albertans the healthiest people in the world because even the best medical treatments aren't as good as staying healthy in the first place. The government will work with community partners to find new ways of encouraging Albertans to make health and wellness part of their daily lives. We will examine a range of wellness strategies promoting healthy outcomes for all Albertans.

The government will introduce daily physical activity in schools for grades 1 through 9 beginning this fall. It will also introduce a wellness initiative starting at the kindergarten level beginning in 2006 to help foster a lifelong commitment to healthy and active living in students.

We will take steps to manage future health risks. The government will develop a plan to reduce the unacceptably high number of deaths and injuries on Alberta's streets and highways. We will invest in water infrastructure to provide a safe, clean water supply, and we will complete an emergency response plan for communicable disease emergencies.

All Albertans Will Share in the Alberta Advantage

Albertans are caring, compassionate people who want every member of this province to have the opportunity to share in the Alberta advantage both today and in the next Alberta. This means making sure that Albertans are protected in their workplaces and that they feel safe and secure in their communities.

This year the government will review employment standards to make sure that the laws dealing with overtime, vacation, hours of work, and other workplace standards are current and relevant. It will raise the minimum wage to \$7 per hour, a rate that reflects the strength of Alberta's economy. Albertans are being consulted about whether this increase should be phased in or introduced all at once. We will work closely with affected employers to see that the impact on business is minimized.

Following the review of the assured income for the severely handicapped program, government will increase financial benefits for program recipients. Details of these changes will be announced during this legislative session.

This spring we will implement programs to provide dental and optical assistance to seniors and help cover annual increases in the education portion of their property taxes.

We will also review the Dependent Adults Act and revise accommodation standards for long-term care and seniors' housing.

Government will update the Police Act to enhance civilian oversight of police services. The province will continue to be the leading voice in pushing the federal government for conditional sentencing reform. Our position on this issue is very clear: in order to maintain the public's confidence in the justice system, those convicted of serious offences must face real jail time.

We will fight to protect our children from crimes such as sexual exploitation. The government will introduce an education campaign to help prevent sexual exploitation of young people through Internet luring, child pornography, and child prostitution.

Government will strive to reduce family violence through effective interventions, including treatment, through the province's specialized domestic violence courts. Increased emphasis will be placed on training police and Crown prosecutors to investigate and prosecute family violence cases more effectively.

The system of parent link centres will be expanded, and Alberta

will become the first province in Canada to introduce a child care worker accreditation program.

We will also continue to fulfill our commitment to children through Alberta's Promise and encourage all sectors of our communities to contribute their time, volunteer efforts, and finances to benefit young people.

These initiatives and others will help Albertans who are vulnerable receive the supports they need to participate fully in the social, economic, and cultural life of the province.

The Next Alberta Will Be a Leader in Canada and the World

In these past hundred years Alberta has grown from humble roots. It's gone from being a long shot on the Canadian prairie to becoming a magnet for modern-day pioneers from all around the world. It's gone from being a rough-edged frontier to offering among the best qualities of life of any province in Canada, with world-class museums and libraries, breathtaking parks and recreational opportunities, and a vibrant arts and cultural scene. It's gone from being the new kid at the Canadian family's table to playing a major role on the national stage, and Albertans are ready to play an even bigger role in Canada because, as this province's 100-year history illustrates so unmistakably, Albertans have what it takes to be leaders.

Like those who were faced with the task of building this province back in 1905, Albertans today cannot know what challenges lie ahead. We know only that we will meet them, as Albertans have always done, with courage, innovation, and determination. We live in a land rich in blessings, and like those who came before us, we are willing to work hard to make it even better for those who will follow us.

This centennial year people across Alberta will celebrate the amazing province we call home, and from this firm foundation we will look ahead to the prospect of building something even greater: the next Alberta.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and may God bless you all.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

The Speaker: Thank you, Your Honour.

Please remain standing, ladies and gentlemen. I'd now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of *God Save The Queen*. Please remain standing at the conclusion.

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,

long live our noble Queen,

God save The Queen!

Send her victorious,

happy and glorious,

long to reign over us:

God save The Queen!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour, his party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

**Bill 1
Access to the Future Act**

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As His Honour the Lieutenant Governor so aptly pointed out, this year Alberta celebrates the accomplishments of its past with the 100th anniversary of this province. It is most appropriate in this Alberta centennial year that the signature bill for the first legislative session of Alberta's second century focuses on postsecondary education. In the very first sitting of the Alberta Legislature 100 years ago, the government of the day passed a bill called the University bill. That bill helped set the stage for the rich heritage of higher learning in Alberta today.

In that same spirit today I request leave to introduce Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, a hundred years ago Albertans knew that there is no better way to secure the future than by investing in higher learning. The Albertans of 2005 know the same to be true today.

Bill 1 lays out a solid and comprehensive plan for taking Alberta's advanced education system to a new level of excellence. It confirms this government's commitment to an affordable, accessible, and high-quality postsecondary education. I've said on many occasions in recent months that this government doesn't want Albertans' young people to have to go elsewhere for a postsecondary education. We don't want any students turned away because they can't afford the cost of tuition. We want to ensure that Alberta has the best advanced education system in the country. Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what Bill 1 will help us achieve. It's about investing in this province's future, it's about ensuring that all Albertans have access to educational opportunities, and it's about securing a bright and promising future for Alberta's children and grandchildren.

Therefore, it is my honour and my privilege today to introduce Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

head: **Tablings**

The Speaker: I have the honour to table a copy of the speech graciously given by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

Certificates of Election

The Clerk: Mr. Speaker, I've received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta pursuant to the Election Act two reports containing results of the general election conducted on the 22nd day of November 2004. The first report states that an election was conducted in the following electoral divisions, and the said report further shows that the following members were duly elected.

[The Clerk read the election returns]

The Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the second report received from the Chief Electoral Officer pursuant to section 149 of the Election Act contains the results of the general election conducted on the 22nd day of November 2004 for the electoral division of Edmonton-Castle Downs, and the said report declares the member duly elected as of January 24, 2005, in Edmonton-Castle Downs: Thomas Lukaszuk.

head:

Motions

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I move that the speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration Thursday, March 3.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that pursuant to Standing Order 49(1) and 49(2) the standing committees and the special standing committee for the present session of the Legislative Assembly be appointed for the following purposes:

- (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund,
- (2) Legislative Offices,
- (3) Members' Services,
- (4) Private Bills,
- (5) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, and
- (6) Public Accounts.

[Motion carried]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I would move that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's five standing committees and the special standing committee:

- (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Mr. Liepert, chair; Mr. Rogers, deputy chair; Mr. Cao; Mr. Goudreau; Mr. MacDonald; Mrs. Mather; Mr. McFarland; Mr. Pham; and Mr. Snelgrove.
- (2) Legislative Offices: Mrs. Tarchuk, chair; Mr. Ducharme, deputy chair; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Flaherty; Mr. Griffiths; Mr. Loughheed; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Marz; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Rodney; and Mr. Strang.
- (3) Members' Services: Mr. Kowalski, chair; Mr. Ducharme, deputy chair; Mrs. Ady; Mr. Backs; Mr. Horner; Mrs. Jablonski; Mr. Knight; Mr. Martin; Mr. McFarland; Mr. Shariff; and Mr. Taylor.
- (4) Private Bills: Dr. Brown, chair; Mr. Liepert, deputy chair; Mr. Agnihotri; Ms DeLong; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Elsalhy; Mr. Groeneveld; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Johnston; Mr. Lindsay; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. Mitzel; Dr. Morton; Mr. Oberle; Mr. Pham; Mr. Prins; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Shariff; Dr. Swann; Mr. Tougas; and Mr. VanderBurg.
- (5) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Ms Haley, chair; Mr. Cao, deputy chair; Rev. Abbott; Mr. Amery; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Danyluk; Ms DeLong; Mr. Flaherty; Mr. Groeneveld; Mr. Herard; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Knight; Mr. Liepert; Mr. Loughheed; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Marz; Mr. Mitzel; Dr. Pannu; Ms Pastoor; and Mr. Zwozdesky.
- (6) Public Accounts: Mr. MacDonald, chair; Mr. VanderBurg, deputy chair; Rev. Abbott; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Bonko; Mr. Chase; Mr. Danyluk; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Griffiths; Mr. Johnston; Mr. Lindsay; Dr. Morton; Mr. Oberle; Mr. Prins; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Rogers; and Mr. Webber.

[Motion carried]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 3:57 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 3, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 20050303
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

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

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

Mr. Roderick MacLeod
August 3, 1908, to June 8, 2004

The Speaker: Hon. members, Mr. Roderick MacLeod passed away on June 8, 2004, at the age of 95 years. Mr. MacLeod was first elected in the by-election held February 9, 1959, and served until June 17, 1963. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Olds for the Social Credit Party. Mr. MacLeod served on the following select standing committees during his term of office: Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; Municipal Law; Public Accounts; and Railways, Telephones and Irrigation.

Mr. Percy Wickman
June 10, 1941, to July 3, 2004

The Speaker: Mr. Percy Wickman passed away on July 3, 2004, at the age of 63 years. Mr. Wickman was first elected to represent the Liberal Party for the 22nd Legislature, March 20, 1989, representing the Edmonton-Whitemud constituency. He was re-elected June 15, 1993, for the 23rd Legislature and March 11, 1997, for the 24th Legislature to represent the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency. Mr. Wickman served on the select standing committees on Law and Regulations; Private Bills; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; and on the Public Affairs Committee. He also served on the special select standing committees on Members' Services and Parliamentary Reform.

Mr. Euell Montgomery
November 9, 1915, to October 9, 2004

The Speaker: Mr. Euell Montgomery passed away on Saturday, October 9, 2004, at the age of 88 years. Mr. Montgomery was first elected in a by-election on October 26, 1961, and served until May 23, 1967. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Peace River for the Social Credit governing party. During his years in the Legislature Mr. Montgomery served on the select standing committees on Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; Municipal Law; Municipal Law and Law Amendments; Railways, Telephones and Irrigation; Public Accounts; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; and on Public Affairs.

Mr. Stanley N. Ruzycski
December 31, 1915, to October 15, 2004

The Speaker: Mr. Stanley N. Ruzycski passed away on Friday, October 15, 2004, at the age of 88 years. Mr. Ruzycski was first elected on June 29, 1955, and served until June 18, 1959. During his

years of service he represented the constituency of Vegreville for the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, also known as the CCF. During his years in the Legislature Mr. Ruzycski served on the select standing committees on Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; Railways, Telephones and Irrigation; and Private Bills.

Our prayers are with them. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of their families, who shared the burdens of public office. Members of Roderick MacLeod's, Percy Wickman's, Euell Montgomery's, and Stanley Ruzycski's families are with us today in the Speaker's gallery.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember hon. members Roderick MacLeod, Percy Wickman, Euell Montgomery, and Stanley Ruzycski as you may have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members, beginning today, as we go through 2005 and the early parts of 2006, I'm going to provide hon. members with an historical vignette from the history of the province of Alberta. On this day in 1930 the first prairie mail service by air began in the city of Edmonton.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's an honour for me to rise today to introduce you to guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. These guests are family members of our former colleagues.

The family of Mr. Roderick MacLeod, former MLA for the constituency of Olds, is represented by his sons Mr. Colin MacLeod and Dr. Rod MacLeod. If they would rise, please.

Mrs. Silvia Wickman, widow of Mr. Percy Wickman, former MLA for the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, is here with family friend Mr. Ed Wrynn.

Former MLA Mr. Euell Montgomery, of the Peace River constituency, is represented by his nephew Doug and his wife, Alberta Montgomery, niece Mrs. Myrtle Hueppelsheuser, great-niece Dawn Sigurdson, and friends Vern and Gail Machon.

Mrs. Anne Ruzycski, wife of Stanley Ruzycski, former MLA for the constituency of Vegreville, is here with daughter Marilyn Ruzycski and family friend Marvin Bloski.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a number of guests from Alberta Finance, who are here as part of a public service orientation tour. I would ask them to stand as I read out their names: Balkar Dusanj, Bashar Dari, Boris Dudas, Bronwen Thompson, Christine Loiselle, Jasmine L'Heureux, Joffre Hotz, John Yu, Jon Hill, Kevin Pengelly, Laura Zavicsa, Lori White, Louise Devaney, Melissa Strong, Nicola Sargeant, Robert Hoy, Sam Wong, Tracey Rittinger, Tyler Foote, Waldemar Kuras. I would ask that all members welcome our guests to the House.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a constituent of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, a long-time employee of Alberta Transportation, marking more than 35 years, Mr. Barry Campbell, seated in the members' gallery. I would ask Mr. Barry Campbell to rise and receive the traditional applause of the Assembly.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature someone who has travelled all the way from Calgary to be with us this afternoon. This is someone who took action where she saw a need to do so. She did so out of caring and compassion and a belief in the need to stick up for the rights of those who cannot adequately fend for themselves. I would like to recognize and thank Carol Weatherdon for her effort. She gathered over 4,000 names of Albertans who support an increase in the AISH benefit and a commitment from this government to renew that benefit annually. I would ask that our honoured guest please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly today 14 constituents from my constituency accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Dean Hughes. There are 14 students with him today from grade 10, and they attend the Airdrie Koinoina Christian school. I'd just like to commend them on once again being one of the top schools in Alberta for marks, according to our achievement tests. They deserve incredible congratulations for that. They have a very small, humble school, and they work really hard. It's just an awesome place. I'd ask if they could please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly nine very bright students from the J.F. Dion school from the Fishing Lake Métis settlement in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. They are accompanied today by teachers Miss Kathryn Walmsley and Miss Rhonda LaBoucane and helper Mr. Shaun Anderson. They have been here all this week, and they have been participants at all the festivities that have taken place this week. They've also been very active in the program that you offer, School at the Legislature. I'd ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce a man who wears a lot of hats. Today the hat he's wearing is as co-chair of Edmonton Salutes, a body that liaises our civilians with military and shows them the due respect that they indeed deserve. I would ask Mr. Bart West to rise and accept the warm, customary welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly two distinguished constituents, Dr. Olga Kempo and Dr. Hélène Narayana. Dr. Olga Kempo was born in Nordegg, Alberta. She has a PhD in French literature from the University of British Columbia. She lives in my constituency, Edmonton-Strathcona, and her family home, known as Margaret Martin House, which was built in 1907 and where her mother lived for 50 years, is being considered for historical designation by both the city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta.

The second guest, Mr. Speaker, is Dr. Hélène Narayana, who is a

physicist by background and education. She's a long-time social and environmental activist and a former broadcaster with the CBC French network. These distinguished guests are seated in the public gallery, and I would now ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of honour this afternoon to introduce to you a number of very powerful Liberal supporters seated in the public gallery. Through you I would like to have the Assembly give them the warmest possible welcome: Ms Kieran Leblanc, who is with the Alberta Liberal Party; Mr. David Cournoyer, who works with us in the Liberal Party; Mr. Bruce Dean; and several others that are up there as well. Please have all members give them the warmest possible welcome.

Thank you.

head:

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Border Closure to Canadian Beef

Mr. Klein: Thank you. If you'll allow, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all members of this Assembly on their elections or re-elections, including you, Mr. Speaker. As this spring session begins, I know that all members feel honoured to serve their province as legislators and will take their responsibilities seriously.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about yesterday's development in the ongoing struggle to restore the full strength and prosperity of the Canadian beef industry. Yesterday, as we all know, a Montana court brought down a temporary injunction to prevent the expected reopening of the U.S. border to Canadian beef next Monday. The injunction was granted at the request of a lobby group in the U.S., to be specific R-CALF, I believe. The decision undoubtedly was a blow to the hopes that ranchers and producers have carefully held for the last two years, it was a blow to the excitement that was growing around the expected border opening next week, and it was a blow to every Albertan whose livelihood depends on an open border.

But this is not the time for us to give up. Over the last two years Alberta's beef producers have shown the world what they are made of. They are strong, they are resilient, they are innovative, and they are resourceful, and they have made Albertans proud. These men and women don't give up fighting for what they believe is right, and there is no question that getting that border reopened is the right thing. It's right for beef producers and consumers on both sides of the border, and, Mr. Speaker, it will happen.

Today I want to assure Albertans that this government is pledged to doing whatever it can, whatever it needs to do in order to speed the process along. Our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is meeting with federal and provincial counterparts to develop a national response. He's in Ottawa as I speak. As well, the minister has instructed his department experts to continue working with Alberta producers on further steps to be taken to get the industry fully back on its feet.

Under the recovery plan announced by this government last year, expanded slaughter capacity is being developed right here in Alberta. We're working with industry on market and project development, work that has already led to over a dozen new Alberta-made beef products hitting the markets. Improved income support programs for producers are in place, programs designed to keep the

overall cattle market running. Just this week the government announced that almost \$40 million is being allocated to a prion research project. That project, of course, is to help better understand how BSE is spread and how to control the disease in livestock.

But we're not going to stop there. Given yesterday's court injunction, I will meet with the minister and others involved, my colleagues in cabinet, to discuss any further action necessary on the government's part. We will also work with our fellow provinces and the federal government to ensure that all necessary and possible steps are taken to restore open trade as quickly as possible. My government will press the USDA to appeal this injunction and quickly, and my government will meet with whomever necessary wherever necessary to discuss the harm to both countries caused by the decision.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that no member of this Assembly believe that yesterday's injunction has anything to do whatsoever with food safety or disease prevention as it relates to humans. Canadian beef has met or exceeded every international safety standard known to man and woman. Canadian testing systems have been reviewed repeatedly by national and international bodies and have been deemed to be more than adequate. It is clear that what has happened is the result of politics and protectionism not safety. It is not science. Therefore, I do not expect yesterday's decision to withstand the clear-eyed scrutiny of science or a rational approach to trade policy.

Mr. Speaker, as rightfully angry as Albertans are about the decision, I urge everyone to keep in mind who's at fault here. Our disagreement is with a small group – and I emphasize a small group – of protectionist cattle producers in the U.S. It is not with the U.S. administration nor the American President. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture is on record that he supports an immediate reopening of the border, and I believe that he, not R-CALF, speaks for the President and his administration.

Alberta, I would remind all members, has a good, positive relationship and friendship with the U.S., and while we expect the U.S. to be good neighbours just as they expect us to be good neighbours, we must not jeopardize that friendship by seeking revenge. We must work with the U.S. administration if we are to be successful in having this injunction overturned. Mr. Speaker, our work on this vital matter begins immediately. That work will not end until cattle are moving freely in both directions between our two countries. That is the goal of this government. It is the goal of every member of this caucus and, I'm sure, the opposition caucuses, and it is a goal that we will not be swayed from until we have succeeded.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sure, like all the rest of us, I'm saddened that we have to rise again and face the need today to speak once more to the unnecessary suffering that is going on in rural Alberta as a result of the ongoing BSE crisis. Yesterday's Montana court decision to bring down a temporary injunction to prevent the reopening of the U.S. border to live Canadian cattle is just the latest blow to Alberta's farming communities. For almost two years this disease and the political reactions of governments at home and abroad have had a devastating impact on rural Alberta, not just farmers and ranchers and their families but implement dealers, truckers, and many of the other people whose livelihoods depend on the agricultural sector. Entire communities are struggling.

The decline of rural Alberta hit home once again for me while in Calgary last fall after I watched oil close at over \$50 a barrel and then visited Olds the next day and discovered that times were so tough in that area that a food bank has been set up. It's a shame to see that for all the prosperity in Alberta people are still suffering.

The Alberta Liberal opposition has always supported farmers in rural communities. We want independently owned packing plants to be built in Alberta and slaughter capacities to be increased. The BSE crisis has proven that we cannot have all of our focus on the U.S. We need to seek out new markets for the high amount of product we have to export.

The Alberta Liberals believe that there's an alternative to the devastation of rural Alberta by supporting rural Alberta entrepreneurs. The Alberta government should provide infrastructure for water, roads, and land to help get small packing plants off the ground, set a 10 per cent cap on the monthly slaughter capacity of the big three packers coming from their self-owned herds, restrict market share and control of the market packers until healthy market conditions return. This may require capping process capacity of these companies and placing a moratorium on the purchase of Alberta-based processing companies.

The cattle industry was a vital part of Alberta well before this province came into existence. Beef producers and people working in related areas remain among Alberta's most important industries and serve as the backbone of rural Alberta. There are so many families relying on Alberta's cattle industry for their living that no Albertan can afford to ignore the BSE crisis and the devastation it has caused. We will do whatever we can and work with this government in any way possible to help bring this terrible situation to a positive conclusion.

I would urge the leaders of all parties of this Assembly to draft a resolution to be given unanimous consent by the Assembly urging the resumption of live cattle exports to the U.S.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent of the House to allow the leader of the NDP to reply to the Premier's statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has once again proclaimed his dedication to the farmers and family farms of Alberta. Unfortunately, farmers can't eat words. From the beginning the government has put all its eggs into the basket of getting the American border reopened. They have consistently told Alberta farmers to be patient, that relief was on the horizon.

However, certain political realities have been obvious. It was obvious to most observers that opening the border would be determined by politics rather than by science. As we pointed out over a year ago, the reopening of the border would be delayed until after last year's presidential election. It was also clear that R-CALF was not giving up its lobbying efforts.

Despite obvious obstacles to border reopening, the government continued to sell farmers a troughful of false optimism, and the results on farmers have been disastrous. This government's practice or failure to protect farmers from a distorted marketplace, a concern raised in this Assembly by the NDP opposition, has forced families from their farms and forced farmers to take work to replace the income they should have been getting from raising cattle.

We know that the packers have continued to make hundreds of millions of dollars of excess profits at the expense of Alberta producers. With the recent announcement that the border will remain closed, the packers are poised to once again make profits from a dysfunctional marketplace.

Statistics Canada reported last year that Alberta's farm incomes had plummeted by almost 70 per cent. Reports of farm bankruptcies and rural decline are the clearest evidence of this devastation.

It's time to stop waiting for the border to reopen. It's time to protect beef producers against a monopolistic packing industry. It is time to address issues around testing and time to develop real protection for family farms and rural communities. In this sitting of the Legislature the NDP opposition will be proposing real solutions to the real problems faced by real farmers. They deserve no less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request unanimous consent of the House to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Hon. members, normally that matter would be dealt with according to the major caucuses in the House and the leaders of such caucuses. In the case of the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner he is one member of one caucus and not the leader of the caucus, as I recall. However, a request has been made by the member, and unanimous consent is required.

[Unanimous consent denied]

2:00

The Speaker: Hon. Solicitor General, did you give notice to me as well that you would like to make a ministerial statement?

Mr. Cenaiko: I did.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

RCMP Drug Raid near Mayerthorpe

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a new minister I report to you and members of this Assembly a tragic situation. I understand that RCMP were conducting a raid near Mayerthorpe this morning, and they were met with gunfire. The latest information available to me indicates that this incident may be still ongoing as we speak, and details are still very unclear. My thoughts are with any officers or anyone else who may have been hurt during the raid this morning. In my previous experience as a police officer I know of the dangers involved in these kinds of incidents and the pressures and challenges faced by those who respond.

As Solicitor General I am gravely concerned with the level of illegal drug activities in Alberta. Albertans are thankful for the service provided by all officers in this province, and I along with my colleagues are praying for all individuals affected by this incident.

As well, together with the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, we have been briefed and will monitor the events as they unfold.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to participate.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have only the highest respect for members of the police forces of Alberta because they daily put their lives at great risk in order to protect Albertans and create communities in Alberta that are safe and secure. So we're

quite obviously shocked and worried about the events that are unfolding near Mayerthorpe, and our prayers are with them.

It's fitting, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly begins each day with prayer, acknowledging our dependence on a power not our own, so we pray for the officers involved, that they would have courage and that they would have healing. Now is not the time to talk about issues that we must face in the future, like the underfunding of our police service in Alberta and dealing with gangs. Now is the time to pray for these officers and their families, and our thoughts are with them.

head:

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we begin Oral Question Period today, I would like to provide a statement to hon. members with respect to the conduct of question period today and Monday and Tuesday.

All hon. members should have on their desk a copy of a memo that I forwarded to the various House leaders yesterday, but I would like on the record to share these comments as we proceed to the first Oral Question Period of the 26th Legislature.

First, for the information of new members the chair wants to quote from page 415 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by Marleau and Montpetit about the nature and importance of Oral Question Period, where it is stated:

The right to seek information from the Ministry of the day and the right to hold that Ministry accountable are recognized as two of the fundamental principles of parliamentary government. Members exercise these rights principally by asking questions in the House. The importance of questions within the parliamentary system cannot be overemphasized, and the search for or clarification of information through questioning is a vital aspect of the duties undertaken by individuals Member.

The chair notes that there is no House leaders' agreement about the conduct of Oral Question Period. Accordingly, it falls to the chair to determine the rotation of questions.

In the interest of certainty for today, for Monday, March 7, and for Tuesday, March 8, the chair will follow the practice in place for the 25th Legislature. At the end of the daily Routine on Monday next the chair will invite members, any member, to make submissions concerning the rotation of questions. These are oral submissions; they need not be in writing. After hearing these submissions, the chair will rule on the operation of question period for the Legislature by 5:15 on Tuesday, March 8, 2005.

That means that for today, for Monday next, and for Tuesday next the Leader of the Official Opposition or his designate will be entitled to the first three questions. The leader of the New Democratic opposition or his designate will be entitled to the fourth question. A member from the government caucus will be entitled to the fifth question. The Official Opposition will be recognized for the sixth, eighth, and 10th questions and members of the government caucus for the seventh and ninth questions. The New Democratic opposition will be entitled to the 11th question. A member of the government caucus may ask the 12th question, the Official Opposition the 13th question, and a government member the 14th question. Following the chair's ruling of April 11, 2001, which governed the operation of the last Legislature, government members would be entitled to ask subsequent questions should there be any.

In terms of proportion of seats the Alliance member would be entitled to the 58th question each week, although we will not hit that number by the end of question period on Tuesday. The practice that has developed in Alberta is for each member asking a question to be

entitled to a main question, which may include a preamble of a few comments, a couple of sentences maximum, and up to two supplementary questions with no preambles. The chair sees no reason to depart from this practice.

It has long been a concern of members that some questions and answers take up too much time. Members may be aware that the Canadian House of Commons has a 35-second time limit on questions and answers. The chair would like to see a similar system put in place in Alberta and would appreciate the contributions of members next Monday. For today, Monday, and Tuesday I will attempt to apply a 45-second rule. "Attempt to apply" are the operative words.

Another practice that will continue is that of caucuses submitting lists to the Speaker's office by 1 o'clock each day the Assembly sits of those members who wish to ask questions, and in accordance – always in accordance – with the practices and traditions of this Assembly the chair will retain discretion when it comes to recognizing members during question period.

The chair also understands that there may be some agreement amongst House leaders concerning members' statements and recognitions. While the chair recognizes the need to operate according to the will of the members, it must be done in accordance with the rules that govern the proceedings. In this case the chair is reluctant to depart from the requirements in Standing Orders until the appropriate amendments to those Standing Orders are passed or there is unanimous consent to waive those requirements.

Accordingly, unless the House decides to do otherwise, the chair will apply the rules from the last Legislature concerning members' statements. So as to provide for Standing Order 7(4), there'll be four members' statements today and next Tuesday, March 8. Today two will be by government members and two from the Official Opposition. Next Tuesday government members will be entitled to three members' statements and the Official Opposition to one.

On Monday, March 7, under Recognitions up to seven members other than members of Executive Council may make one-minute statements of congratulation or recognition. The chair will recognize five members of the government caucus and two members of the Official Opposition.

The chair will revisit the rotation of these items of business at the same time as the decision on the rotation of questions for Oral Question Period.

I hope that's as clear as it can possibly be. On Monday, before we call Orders of the Day, I am prepared to hear comments from any member in the House with respect to these three matters.

So we will now proceed.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: I'll recognize the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ambulance Services

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Beginning with the provincial review in 2001, this government has been reviewing and studying ground ambulance services for almost four years, and now, just one month before they were to transfer responsibility, they cancelled the transfer, leaving municipalities scrambling and Albertans wondering whether they can rely on ambulance services. The government's mismanagement is not only irresponsible; it is quite possibly dangerous. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee here and now that this government will cover all municipal costs of delivering ambulance service in the next fiscal year so there is no interruption in the delivery of that service?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I will have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness respond in further detail.

We won't be writing blank cheques, but we will treat each municipality fairly. Our priority is to ensure that Albertans have access to a solid and dependable ambulance system this year wherever they live.

With that, I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the continuity of patient care and public safety is uppermost in the minds of both the government and the regional health authorities and the municipalities. I have spoken with the Urban Municipalities Association, with the mayors of the two larger cities, and with a number of other municipal leaders and have assured them that we will consider their costs, that we will look very carefully at how we reimburse them, and that we will give a very definitive answer on the manner in which that reimbursement will come by next Tuesday.

2:10

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How can the Premier assure Albertans uninterrupted ambulance service when emergency workers in some areas of the province have already been given notice and are looking for other work?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that to be true. Perhaps the Minister of Health and Wellness can shed some more light on it.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in fact, anecdotally I have been told that there are a number of employees that are either contract or are employed by the municipality that have already faced other job opportunities or have been relieved of their duties, and we will be working with those municipalities. Again, uppermost in our minds is the best interest of the patient, a continuity of patient care. Where there have been people that have incurred expense or disruption as a result of this change, then I would assure this Assembly that we will be addressing those matters.

Number one, Mr. Speaker, the most . . .

The Speaker: I think we're going to move on to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Evans: All right. Thank you.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a mess.

Again to the Premier: given that this government has been working on reviewing and studying this issue for almost four years, why were there suddenly one month before the transfer unexpected costs of such great magnitude?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we're trying to get to the bottom of why those costs escalated from \$55 million to \$128 million. That answer will be provided as soon as we have it.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I'm somewhat frustrated and a little bit perplexed as to why these costs have gone up because the ambulance review conducted by the hon. members for Calgary-Buffalo and Innisfail-Sylvan Lake took place I believe two and a half years ago. After a very careful and considered review of the multitude of ambulance services throughout the province they arrived at an average, as I understand it, that came out to \$55 million. Adjusted for inflation to 2005, it would be slightly more but certainly not \$128 million.

The reason I'm perplexed, Mr. Speaker, is that the intention was simply to leave ambulance service much the same way as it now is but have the regional health authorities co-ordinate the activities of ambulance services, recognizing – and I'm sure the hon. member agrees – that ambulance services are an integral part of the health system as opposed to fire departments and volunteer systems and so on.

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

Market Surveillance Administrator Review of Enron

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Electricity deregulation has cost Albertans \$8 billion – \$8 billion – and now there's growing evidence that deregulation opened the door for market manipulation, costing Alberta energy consumers who knows how much more. This morning the market surveillance administrator announced that they are asking the federal Competition Bureau to reopen its investigation into Enron's Project Stanley scheme. My questions are to the Premier. Given that the market surveillance administrator and the federal Competition Bureau see the need for an inquiry, will this government now follow suit and launch a full independent public inquiry of its own?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite clear relative to the question. Is the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition asking us to launch an investigation into Enron or into the whole issue of electricity deregulation?

I'm not quite sure of the question, but maybe the hon. Minister of Energy is, and I'll have him respond.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that even in the deregulation this is also an example of how it worked in this sense. We have a market surveillance administrator, that monitors 24/7 all the irregularities. Through that period of time there were legislative hedges put in place while we were also giving experience so that the generators and everybody participating in deregulation could understand the new rules, new methodologies so that in case any odd variations happened in the marketplace, they would have a chance to legislatively by hedges protect the consumers. In this case Albertans have not been impacted in any significant financial way.

Dr. Taft: How do we know that?

Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: given that a former Tory Premier launched a public inquiry into the Principal affair, when the investments of hundreds of Albertans were lost, will this Premier follow the example of his predecessor and call a public inquiry into Alberta's entire electricity deregulation experience when so much more is at stake?

Ms Blakeman: Exactly. Do the right thing.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we are doing the right thing, in response to a gratuitous comment from across the way. Electricity deregulation has worked. There have been some problems, admittedly, relative to billing by retail operators, but that has nothing to do with deregulation, which alludes only to the generation side of power. But I'll have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will the government make public the latest evidence that has sparked this new investigation?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that it's prudent to speculate or attempt to interpret the information contained in the documents relative to the 1999 Enron fiasco, which occurred – as a matter of fact, I was in Houston at the time that all of this broke.

I would remind the hon. member that there is an industry watchdog. He alluded to the . . .

An Hon. Member: Lapdog.

Mr. Klein: "Watchdog," I said. Watchdog. That is the market surveillance administrator. He has the expertise to review the materials, and he and members of his agency have been diligent in requesting all the relevant documents relating to this particular incident, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that we let him get on with his work.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Government Aircraft

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this same time last year the Liberal opposition exposed and questioned the government on their blatant misuse of government aircraft. It seems that the government hasn't changed their ways at all, and in fact the abuse of the government aircraft has indeed increased. My questions are to the Premier. Since the government was questioned last year, have they implemented any measures to ensure more efficient and accountable use of government planes so that taxpayers are not burdened with the costs of empty or single occupancy flights?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the use of government aircraft is quite clearly to allow government members and members of the opposition who are on government committees to access all regions of the province in a timely manner.

Relative to the policy with respect to use of government aircraft I'll defer to the hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly attempt to fill up the plane as many times as we can. This morning at 7 o'clock there were 24 people that were flown to Calgary on the Dash 8. There will be 37 returning on the Dash 8 this afternoon. These people are flying down for an incredibly important land sale, which actually brings money into this government and into this province. It is absolutely critical for those of us who live in rural Alberta to have access to rural Alberta. If I were the Liberal opposition, I wouldn't want us as the government in rural Alberta either because we help rural Alberta.

2:20

Mr. Chase: Again to the Premier: how can Albertans be assured that their tax dollars are not being wasted on flights for nongovernment reasons?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the policy is quite clear that the planes are to be used for government business. But, again, if there is any doubt in the mind of the hon. member of the Official Opposition, the Member for Calgary-Varsity, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is absolutely right. The planes must be used for government business.

We do not delineate exactly what government business is. However, the ministers are held responsible for the booking of the airplanes to ensure that it is truly going for government business, and I trust the people on this side.

Mr. Chase: Again to the Premier: will this government commit to tabling the flight logs in this Legislature so that all Albertans can see for themselves what their tax dollars are being used for?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the question is an interesting one. You know, I don't know if one wants to be subjected to boxes and boxes and boxes full of information. As the hon. minister alluded to today, there is – I don't know – a whole Dash 8 planeload of people heading down to Calgary, as they do every week, for land sales. Certainly, if members of the Official Opposition want to know about flights, they can access that information through the regular freedom of information program and access the manifests that way. If the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity has specific questions relative to the use of aircraft by myself or any other minister or member of government, I would invite him to direct those questions to me.

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

Ambulance Services (continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Less than one month before ground ambulance services were supposed to be transferred to regional health authorities, this Conservative government has brought the process to a screeching halt, thereby creating a province-wide emergency. The complete lack of an action plan along with a lowballing of the costs involved has been obvious for months. In fact, I drew attention to this looming emergency in November, but the government kept claiming that the transfer was on track. My question is to the Premier. How can the Premier assure Albertans that their safety has not been jeopardized by this completely botched transfer of ground ambulance services?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, it has not been brought to a screeching halt. As a matter of fact, ambulances are running in Edmonton and Calgary and, indeed, throughout the province, and people are being transported to hospital. Just before coming in, I heard an ambulance siren, looked out the window, and there was an ambulance on the road, so obviously it hasn't come to a screeching halt.

Mr. Speaker, the review was done with all good intentions, and that was to find a way to bring ambulances into the health service, understanding that ambulances have evolved considerably over the last 20 or 25 or 30 years from being much more than a service to simply transport the sick and injured to being the first line of medical treatment, and we simply wanted to find a way to better coordinate under regional health authorities those services. It was determined that the cost initially would be \$55 million. Somehow that ballooned to \$128 million, and we need to examine why.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that two jurisdictions will go through a discovery relative to whether the system under the regional health authority works.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What action will the government take to make sure that the safety of citizens in communities like Wainwright is not put at risk since the paramedics and EMS personnel of the Wainwright ambulance society have

already received their layoff notices effective at the end of this month?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the situation specific to Wainwright, but I'll have the hon. minister respond.

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

Ms Evans: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful to provide information to this Assembly. Our deputy is contacting the mayor in Wainwright to make sure that today we can make absolute arrangements, something that will ensure the continuity of service.

Mr. Speaker, the innovation and creativity of Albertans is never at question here. Although there has been, as the member described, a screeching halt of the transfer as it was originally intended, I can only anticipate what kind of criticism this government would have received had we proceeded where costs had apparently escalated three times the original estimates. We're trying to do the job properly, and our discovery over this next year will assure Albertans that it's not only a good service but that it's responsibly funded and provided for.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why is the Premier expressing surprise and frustration over the situation relative to ambulances when I raised this looming mess three and a half months ago, including specifically the woefully inadequate \$55 million allocation? At the time his government denied any problem whatsoever.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, there were audited statements at the time that the survey was done, and I said that adjusted for inflation, \$55 million appeared to be reasonable, understanding the simplicity, in my mind, of what we wanted to achieve, and that is that ambulance services would ostensibly remain the same but would be governed and controlled by the regional health authorities. How it ballooned from \$55 million to \$128 million is what is perplexing to me.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Border Closure to Canadian Beef

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Montana court ruling that will leave the border closed to Canadian cattle dealt a devastating blow to our industry and our economy. My questions are to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, who is also responsible for trade policy. Can he update this House on the status of the proposed rule on live cattle trade given the current situation in Montana and the other actions taken today in the U.S. Senate?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said earlier today, all Albertans were obviously very disappointed with the ruling of the lone Montana judge. However, we firmly believe that the U.S. government will stand by their word, not only Secretary of Agriculture Johanns but also the President, to ensure that the border does open. These are court proceedings that'll take a bit of time, but we firmly believe that the American government is on our side.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary is again to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What action is the Alberta government taking at this time to address this issue?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we do have legal counsel in Washington. We do have our envoy in Washington as well as our minister of agriculture working with the federal minister in Ottawa to ensure that we expedite the opening of the border. About February 2 and 3 the minister of agriculture, my colleague, and I personally met with a number of key officials from the American government. We talked about basing the decision on science and not emotion, and we were supported at every meeting, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Advanced Education Tuition Costs

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Speech from the Throne yesterday confirms the government's intention to overhaul its postsecondary tuition policy for the fourth time in 14 years, a clear and ongoing admission of failure to address the issue of affordable advanced education in the province of Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. How can the minister assure Albertans and their sons and daughters that this review will produce a policy that's any better than last year's new and improved policy?
2:30

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, access to postsecondary education is very important for all Albertans, particularly as we move to implement the strategic plan and make sure that opportunities that Albertans have can be achieved because they have access to the education they need. So we'd need to review the policy for both access and affordability.

It goes beyond tuition, Mr. Speaker, because in many circumstances the costs of going to school, whether you have to move from a rural area or whether you have to even move from one urban area to another, are perhaps even higher than the cost of tuition. So it's not just review of the tuition policy. It's review of affordability and review of how you finance that education. It's an understanding that there's a contribution made by society, an important benefit to society, Albertans being educated but also the need for students and their families to participate in the cost of education. So it's a review of the tuition policy, but it's broader than that. It's a review of affordability and how it's financed.

Mr. Taylor: To the same minister: what role, if any, will the proposed \$3 billion access to the future fund play in holding the line on tuitions beyond the academic year 2005-2006 freeze on tuitions?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the access to the future fund is not designed to hold the line on tuition freeze or to be part of the ongoing operating budgets of the institutions. It's designed to ensure that there are better opportunities for access, better opportunities for affordability. That might be by way of, for example, people who want to contribute to setting up an endowment for scholarships or bursaries or rural access funds or those sorts of things. So it can play a role in financing, but it wouldn't play a role in holding the line on tuition fees or in the operating budgets of institutions.

Mr. Taylor: One final supplementary to the same minister, then, Mr. Speaker. Does this freeze mean that the minister thinks tuition fees in Alberta are too high?

The Speaker: Well, opinions are really not relevant in the question period, but if the minister wants to proceed, he can.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what's important is that many students across this province believe that tuition costs are getting out of hand. It's very clear that students and their families are concerned about the cost of education, and when students and their families are concerned about the cost of education, their government is concerned about the cost of education.

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

Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Can the minister provide the House with an update on the softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the United States?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, since the House last adjourned, there have been a number of court and trade challenges. The latest one is the extraordinary challenge under NAFTA, and we are awaiting the decision. In the meantime, remember that when the House adjourned, the tariff duties were about 28 per cent, and there was some hope that the Americans would reduce those tariffs substantially. Unfortunately, they reduced them to about 21 per cent. Presently they're sitting on more than \$3 billion of tariffs on the other side of the border.

We are awaiting the results of the first track, which is the litigation, and we will work on the second track, which is under the responsibility of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, in terms of looking at some policy renewal. But at the end of the day we want our money back.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Can he tell the House when this softwood lumber dispute will be resolved?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we are now completing the fourth challenge. I suspect and it's the feeling of the industry and of governments on both sides that we may, as soon as this litigation is complete, enter into the fifth challenge. That is the reason why we're working with our federal counterpart and the industry and our minister responsible to try and find some sort of consultation process to maybe bring this to an end before another legal challenge.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. How is this ongoing dispute affecting our Alberta forest industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The softwood lumber trade dispute is challenging, certainly, to our province's

forestry industry but, more importantly, to the people that work in that industry and the close to 50 communities in this province that produce dimensional lumber. Fifty per cent of the dimensional lumber that is produced in this province goes into the international marketplace, the majority of that into the United States, and we're very concerned about how this trade dispute will have an effect on these communities as well as on our industry.

I can assure the Member for West Yellowhead that we will continue to work with the industry, particularly the Softwood Lumber Trade Council, and our colleagues at intergovernmental affairs as well as with the federal government to make sure that we can come up with some long-term solutions to this dispute for the betterment of all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Grizzly Bear Hunt

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the deadline for applications to be included in the random draw for the spring grizzly bear hunt to commence this April. This hunt is being continued despite the warnings of the government's own grizzly bear recovery team as well as the warnings of conservation groups which call for the spring bear hunt to be postponed due to the low numbers of grizzly bears in Alberta. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: why is this government refusing to listen to the findings of their own experts and allowing the grizzly bear hunt to continue?

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

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The endangered species committee that was set up by the former Minister of Sustainable Resource Development asked us to look into a number of things, and this was three years ago. They asked us to look at including designation of the species as it's threatened. They also indicated that there was no indication of declining numbers at this point in time and that the hunt really and truly has no significant factor in the population itself. As a result, we took a very cautious and a very conservative approach to the management of grizzly bears in this particular province. [interjection] Absolutely right. The job that we have in Sustainable Resource Development is to monitor and make sure that we put conservation methods in place for the future of the grizzly bear in this province.

Mr. Bonko: A supplemental question again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that new evidence indicates that the death of one female grizzly bear can have serious repercussions, won't the minister suspend the hunt?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the hon. member is speaking about a study that came out of the University of Calgary for which members of Sustainable Resource Development provided information. The threat to grizzly bears in and around the park of Banff and south to Montana was based on the reproduction of the grizzly bears, and we have taken those kinds of studies into account when we took a look at the number of grizzly bears. Along with our DNA consensus, that is the best way of finding out how many grizzly bears there are in the province, we have made the proper decision that from highway 1 south to Montana and over to the British Columbia border as well as in the Willmore area there will be no

hunt. We will do hunting in areas where we know that the populations can sustain themselves.

Mr. Bonko: Third question, Mr. Speaker. When will this government take action to save an endangered species from extinction?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, what we need to do is continue with bear management on the ground. We want to see bears remain on the landscape, and the best way for us to do that is to conserve and to monitor and make sure that grizzly bear species are here for many, many years to come. Some of the things we put in place as a result of the recovery team are appropriate, things like DNA consensus so that we know the actual numbers and we can actually tell what the numbers were, but more importantly poaching fines: \$100,000 if someone is caught poaching. That is a huge policy that was put in place to make sure that we have this resource for the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

2:40

Climate Change Technology

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. In his budget the federal government seemed to follow the lead of the Alberta government in emphasizing the role of technology in addressing climate change. What is Alberta doing to develop technology to contribute to the fight against climate change?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans, like all Canadians, want a healthy and sustainable environment, and technology is a key in terms of a solution in terms of helping the environment that we all live in. Investment in technology in Alberta universities, in research institutions is so critical in terms of today and into the future but at the same time maintaining a vibrant economy. I just want to say that the best way, I believe, to address climate change – and we've shown the Alberta leadership – is rather than buying a piece of paper and having money leave Canada, we believe it's best used in investing right here in Alberta at our own universities, that are true excellence across the province.

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

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary question to the Environment minister: is this technology in the future, or is it something which is happening right now?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, one thing about the Alberta attitude is that it's somewhat like one of the sporting associations' commercial that says: let's just do it. That's exactly what Alberta is doing. If I could use an example for you, in Joffre we are showcasing the technology to capture and store carbon dioxide. This is so important. We're investing in such areas as clean coal, the use of CO₂ for enhanced oil recovery, and hydrogen fuels in partnership with many stakeholders across this province and this country. From a pan-Canadian approach clearly Alberta is playing an important role in this technology initiative we're taking.

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

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. When will we see commitment and action on reducing greenhouse gasses?

Mr. Boutilier: Well, that's a very good question by the hon. member. Mr. Speaker, we are the first province in Canada to pass in this Legislative Assembly legislation called the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. It was done right here, so I congratulate every member of this House who participated in that important law.

I also want to say that in terms of Alberta government buildings that are fuelled, are you aware that 90 per cent of the energy is through renewable energy sources. How much? Ninety per cent of the energy is through renewable energy sources, and that's because of technology, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About 31,500 Albertans with severe disabilities rely on the AISH program to survive. Right now that assistance includes a maximum cash benefit of \$850 a month. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: when can AISH recipients expect that long-overdue increase in their monthly cheques?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite raises a very important issue. It is about the assured income program for the severely handicapped.

As you know, there was a review that commenced in September of 2004, and I'd like to begin, actually, by thanking the chair of the review committee, the hon. Member for Strathcona, as well as members that were on the committee from Calgary-Bow and from Calgary-Nose Hill. That report has been submitted to me, I can tell the Member for Lethbridge-East, just within the past two weeks. I am reviewing the recommendations of the report. They are important, and a part of that is the financial benefit that you have referred to in your question. I can tell you this: I will be getting back to the Assembly and releasing the report to the public in the near future.

Ms Pastoor: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will this government tie the AISH rate increase to the Alberta consumer index, the market-basket measure, or some other calculation of living costs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the living allowance that the hon. member is referring to in the report is very important and on the minds of people who are currently receiving the AISH benefit, but I can tell you this: there were many suggestions from Albertans. There were over 18,000 submissions that the committee reviewed, and those suggestions were excellent in that they asked for a renewal of the AISH program. In that renewal package, which I'm currently reviewing, are a number of recommendations, and this very well could be one of those recommendations. Thank you.

Ms Pastoor: Again to the same minister: when will the Renewing AISH report be actually made public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned to the hon. member when we met – I think a couple of weeks ago we had the opportunity to meet – I am fast-tracking the report. As I indicated

to you, hon. member, I am currently reviewing the recommendations, and the report will be released to the public in the near future. It will be during this session. I am trying to tie it in with the budget and the fiscal year, so you will see it soon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Beef Recovery Strategy

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's cruelly ironic that in the throne speech reference to renewed optimism in rural Alberta came the same day as the news that the U.S. border will remain closed to Alberta cattle. The Conservatives seem to have a one-point plan of action for dealing with the BSE crisis: hope and pray for a quick reopening of the U.S. border. Meanwhile, for two years nothing has been done to prevent the two big American-owned meat packers from profiting at the expense of cattle producers. My question is to whoever is second in command. Does the government have a plan B to deal with the continued closure of the U.S. border to Alberta cattle, and if so, what is it?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I could certainly understand, as the member wasn't in the Assembly over the last period of years and is new to the Assembly, that he would not be as familiar with the six-point plan that in fact was introduced last fall, late summer. That six-point plan was built on the basis of the border not opening. It was not dependent on a border opening.

For the member's information, because I think he's truly interested in rural Alberta, I would reiterate very quickly some of the comments that the Premier made. We have increased our slaughter capacity in Canada over 20 per cent. In fact, last year were the highest slaughter numbers that we have had in the history of the industry. We have over a dozen – the last count I had was before Christmas – 16 new beef products on the shelf by Alberta companies and entrepreneurs, advanced work in marketing into new markets.

Mr. Speaker, cattle prices are as high or higher on the calf and yearling market than they've ever been. Fat prices are being held because of the program that was put in place in Alberta for feed and basis. If the hon. member would like to discuss that further, I'd be happy to talk to him about it.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that we don't know when that border is going to open, the six-point plan doesn't mean anything right now. My question to the minister is simply this. What are the plans, other than the six-point plan, if this doesn't open and stays that way indefinitely?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member misses the point. The six-point plan does not hinge on the border opening. In fact, what it plans on by this fall is Canada being totally self-sufficient in slaughter and not dependent on the U.S. market. [some applause]

2:50

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, we can pound all we want, but the reality is – then if we're talking about slaughter capacity, my final question is: why has the Alberta government continued to block efforts by groups like the Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op to expand value-added meat packing in Alberta? They'll be setting up in Dawson Creek in B.C. How do they justify that?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to respond to that, and I in fact would be pleased to ask the hon. minister of agriculture to

table the work that was done with Peace Country because, in fact, we did work with them. Their decision to move was their decision, and I would remind him that Dawson Creek is not very far across the Alberta border. We're talking about Canadian slaughter capacity.

I would remind him that at Sunterra 800 head a day will be up and running this fall and of recent announcements about a cow plant in southern Alberta. We hope there'll be more in the north. I remind the hon. member again that our slaughter capacity has increased over 20 per cent, the highest it's ever been in this country in the history of the industry, in these recent months, and it's being done because of the initiatives that we put in place well over a year ago to ensure that slaughter capacity increased. He might want to write to another government in this country and ask why the delay in their portion of it.

Youth Residential Drug Treatment

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, there is a battle raging in our province and in our country for the hearts and minds of our children. Children addicted to drugs or alcohol are torn away from their families and all that is good into a life of crime, sickness, and death. The government of Alberta has received a growing number of requests to address the increasing demand for youth detoxification and residential treatment services. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will the Ministry of Health and Wellness provide funding for youth residential treatment facilities?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. Member for Red Deer-North about the scourge of drugs and increasing addictions that are facing our young people. The exact amounts for funding have not been determined yet for the 2005-06 year, but I've consulted with the chair of AADAC, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, about expanding addiction services. Currently there are several outpatient services.

I think what the hon. member is looking at are some more intensive, secure types of treatments. Mr. Speaker, with the professionals from AADAC and in conjunction with other ministries, we're looking at the opportunities we have to actually expand in communities in Alberta and take a giant step forward to healing young people.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Children's Services: since this is a cross-ministry concern, will Children's Services provide support for youth residential treatment facilities in Alberta?

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

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the hon. member that if a child is in the care of Children's Services, we do provide alcohol treatment. For example, we are partnered with AADAC on the Chimo Healing Home, which provides addiction treatment. For example, if it's the protection of children involved in child prostitution and they enter one of our safe houses, we treat their addiction in that way.

The hon. member brings up some good points, and we'll continue to work with the partners that we need to on this very serious issue.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, since this is a cross-ministry concern, my third question was to the Solicitor General to ask for support for our youth treatment centres. However, he has been called out of the Assembly to deal with a very serious situation related to drugs.

The Speaker: I take it there was no question there then.

Mrs. Jablonski: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Market Surveillance Administrator Review of Enron

(continued)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently revealed evidence from a court case in Washington state indicates that Enron may have conspired with other companies to manipulate electricity prices here in Alberta, a scheme Enron dubbed Project Stanley. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. How long has this government been aware of Project Stanley?

Mr. Melchin: Project Stanley was an acronym that came to light. There have been a number of acronyms used, I guess, but the latest information was just recently, back in February, when the market surveillance administrator talked about Project Stanley. We didn't know really what that meant per se. So it's new information.

On the latest, that came out today, I've got to congratulate the market surveillance administrator. They have been proactive in getting the information from this court case that's going on in Washington at the present stage and were asked if they would give complete disclosure as to any relevant information. Some of the facts that came out – I don't know if they're facts. It's just transcripts of phone conversations, so that doesn't necessarily mean what facts you have. You just have a discussion and a dialogue that's going on. Out of that, there was some thought that we ought to continue. We will be proactive. If there's any abuse in the system, the market surveillance system will act on behalf of Albertans to ensure that all Albertans are protected in electricity.

Thank you.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: is it the market surveillance administrator's role to manufacture confidence in electricity deregulation or protect electricity consumers from price gougers and market manipulators like Enron?

Mr. Melchin: The good news about the market surveillance administrator is that even as far back as when this story first hit, in 1999, they acted on it. Watching as the watchdog on behalf of Albertans, they actually did investigate this back in 1999. This is just old information that is coming to the forefront because of a court case in Washington today. They did act, but Albertans were always protected because of legislative hedges that were in place during that time such that no one would really benefit if in the design and transition to new rules Albertans would be impacted. They have acted appropriately.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how can this government and this minister claim that the Enron investigation in 1999 by the market surveillance administrator is adequate, that it's enough, when new evidence has been uncovered and this new evidence is for the years 2000 and 2001 in regard to Project Stanley? How can you tell this Assembly that the market surveillance administrator and that system is working?

Mr. Melchin: It's important to note that Albertans have been protected back then, now, and in the future with respect to the role of the market surveillance administrator. They have acted very proactively in that regard. The information that's coming forward is in fact relating still to the 1999 issue. It does relate to that, and it is they themselves that have asked the Competition Bureau to further investigate. It is part of their role to ask for further investigation if there was an impropriety. But even with that new information, it's too soon to assess if there was any wrongdoing. It is only some information that's come forward. We do not yet, even at this stage, have all the facts.

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

Mount Royal College

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Now that he has received the request from Mount Royal College to change its status to a university, I'd like to know what steps the minister will be taking to grant that request.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to review a considerable amount of information with respect to the proposal by Mount Royal College to achieve university status. I must say that it's an interesting and unique proposal and has a lot of facets which are important to the whole postsecondary system in this province. I've met with the president of Mount Royal College and the chairman of its board as recently as yesterday. I've assured them that we will take a very thorough review of their proposal, and we will review that proposal in the context of the overall postsecondary system in the province. The college, of course, has to look out for its own strategic plan and its aspirations and goals. Our role is to make sure it fits into the continuum of education opportunities for students in southern Alberta and particularly in Calgary.

So we will be reviewing it in the context of the system. We'll be discussing the concerns of other members of the system, looking to see whether it's in the best interests of students in Calgary and southern Alberta, looking to see whether by making that change it creates any holes, creates any problems for students in other program opportunities, and whether it adds value.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the minister. I'd ask him if it's his intention to hold public consultations in the city of Calgary with groups such as the students' union and the faculty before granting this request.

3:00

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've indicated to all players in the postsecondary system that I intend to work collaboratively with them, to have open, frank, and honest discussions with them about any changes, any moves that we make. We've started that process by virtue of a meeting that I held at Government House on January 19 with a broad cross-section of the system and followed it up with meetings with board chairs. I intend to continue that type of a collaborative process. At the January 19 meeting we had representatives of faculty associations and of student associations at the meeting, and we'll continue that process.

I wouldn't at this time intend to hold a public type of meeting but certainly intend to collaborate and discuss with each of the players in the postsecondary system in Calgary and, quite frankly, across the

province because the interest and questions come not just from the Calgary area but also from rural colleges, from other institutions across the province as to what impact, if any, the change in status might have on them.

Mr. Liepert: My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is to the minister. Since Calgary is the largest city in Canada represented by only one university, what is his timetable for granting this request?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's of course an important question to be determined and important to be determined on a timely basis. This discussion and the request have been in the works, I think, for a period of at least a year and a half, possibly two years, so it's important that they get a determination quickly. I have indicated to them that I will try and make sure that that happens as quickly as possible. We need to have the full and complete discussion. They need to have an answer by early May. We'll try and accomplish both the full and complete discussion and their timeline if at all possible.

The Speaker: That'll conclude the question period today.

I want to thank all hon. members for their co-operation. Today we had 14 hon. members who could participate, which is very good, very large. In essence, if you just took 14 members times three questions, that's 42, but two members only asked two, so in essence there were 40 exchanges. That's pretty good in a 50-minute question period. That would be really wonderful if we could continue this on a daily basis and all members would really be able to participate.

Hon. members, 30 seconds from now I'm going to call on four members to participate. I'll call first of all on the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Before calling on the hon. Member for Strathcona, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that I've managed to collect my heart and put it back in my chest where it belongs, I'm grateful to have the opportunity to do this again. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a longtime Liberal Party volunteer and most recently the chair of the very successful Edmonton leader's dinner, Mr. Keith Meagher, who is seated in the public gallery. I would ask that he receive the warm welcome of all members of the House.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Sorry. Strathcona, period. I've got to get used to that.

World's Longest Hockey Game

Mr. Louheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After 10 days, 4,457 goals, and one mangled finger, Dr. Brent Saik and his 39 fellow hockey players skated to a Guinness world record, completing the world's longest hockey game on February 21, 2005. Played in Strathcona county on an outdoor rink at Dr. Saik's acreage, known as Saiker's Acres, the players fought injury, exhaustion, and the

weather to battle it out for 240 straight hours of play, beating the old record of 203 hours. Referees ensured that the world's longest hockey game was played according to official NHL rules. Dr. Saik and his teammates tripled their own previous record of 80 hours set in 2003.

More impressive than their endurance was their dedication to raising funds for pediatric cancer research at the Cross cancer research centre. In 2003 Dr. Saik and his teammates raised \$140,000 and have already raised over \$100,000 this year, with donations still coming in.

Dr. Saik's hockey dream was almost finished before it started when he sliced off the tip of his middle finger while working on the Zamboni prior to the start of the game. Luckily, he was able to have it bandaged up just in time to make it back for the game-starting faceoff at 12:13 p.m. on February 11.

I and thousands of Albertans had the opportunity to go and watch parts of the game, which was open to the public all day every day. It was good to see the dedication and perseverance with which these players played the equivalent of an entire season. Without a doubt the funds raised for cancer research meant as much to the players as the record they helped to set. Pictures of family members who had battled with cancer were placed under the ice surface to help remind players of their commitment.

I'd like to thank Dr. Brent Saik and his teammates for their commitment to hockey but more so for their firm belief that we will one day, hopefully soon, find a cure for a disease that has prematurely taken so many loved ones from us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: My apologies. It is the Member for Strathcona.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Rotary International

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One week ago yesterday marked the 100th anniversary of the meeting of the very first service club. Rotary International was founded in Chicago on February 23, 1905, by Paul Harris and three business associates. In the 100 years that have followed, Rotary International has grown to include 1.2 million Rotarians world-wide belonging to 31,000 clubs in 166 countries.

From the very first project, which was a public comfort house in downtown Chicago, to the unprecedented response to the tsunami in southeast Asia last December the Rotary has truly been there when nature called. Whether responding to natural calamity, disease, famine, poverty, or local community needs, Rotarians have a 100-year history of putting service above self.

Over 200,000 young people have been the beneficiaries of the Rotary youth exchange program, while tens of thousands have participated in the ambassadorial scholarship program. Since 1985 when the PolioPlus program was initiated, more than \$500 million have been raised to immunize more than 2 billion children world-wide, resulting in the near eradication of this dreadful disease.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the generous gift of \$56,000 from this government and the people of Alberta, which will help to pay for the making of a compact disc which profiles last week's gala celebration held at the Winspear Centre. I know that all Rotarians and past Rotarians in the Assembly today would invite all Albertans to join us in congratulating the family of Rotary International for their wonderful achievements and in wishing them well as they begin their second century of service to humanity.

Mr. Speaker, if I may quote Sir Winston Churchill, a Rotarian from the Rotary Club of London, England, and if I might mention

that he was a parliamentarian of some note himself, he said: what is the use of living if it be not to make this world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?

Happy 100th birthday, Rotary.

The Speaker: Just out of interest, would the Rotarians in the Assembly kindly identify themselves? One, two, three, four, five. There are more than that. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, I believe, is one as well. Impressive.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Proliferation of Drug Abuse

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are facing a problem in this province that does not discriminate according to race, colour, religion, sex, or socioeconomic status. It is a problem that has existed in one form or another for a long time but has now grown to a size where more measures are needed to control it. This problem is the proliferation of dangerous drugs and the effects they are having on our children.

We see drug busts in the news, each one seemingly larger. Just today the Solicitor General gave a very grim report about a gunfight near Mayerthorpe, with a number of police officers no longer responding to their radios. We hear of grow operations worth millions of dollars and meth labs big enough to blow up entire city blocks if not handled carefully.

3:10

We need to take a tough stance against those responsible for these illegal enterprises. Criminals are taking bigger risks because of the bigger rewards. They do not fear our justice system. They rob us of our children and take away their innocence. We need to target organized crime since they are the fuel that is feeding our kids' addiction fires. We need to target the federal government and convince them that federal drug laws are weak and in desperate need of change. We need to come together as a community because it does take a whole community to raise a child.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's parents deeply and unconditionally love their children, and it is hurting them intensely to watch them fall victim to addiction. These parents have the courage they need to help their children overcome their addictions. They have the will and determination to see the process through. What they lack are legal tools, and when Alberta's parents are given the legal tools to help their children, added to their courage and determination, we will all reap the benefits.

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

Freedom to Read Week

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak in recognition today of Freedom to Read Week, which is sponsored by the Freedom of Expression Committee in Canada and was celebrated the final week in February. Freedom to Read Week is primarily an educational opportunity to have people understand that even in Canada, even in Alberta we do not always enjoy intellectual freedom. The Freedom of Expression Committee organizes Freedom to Read Week and encourages Canadians to think about and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom, which is guaranteed them under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Freedom of Expression Committee produces an information kit and website every year, and the Calgary Freedom of Expression Committee presents an annual award honouring freedom of expression. This year it was presented to my colleague the new MLA for

Calgary-Mountain View. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View was particularly honoured for his work with the antiwar protest movement, including his co-founding of the Canadian Network to End Sanctions in Iraq, now known as Canadian Democracy and International Law, and for his work in promoting the Kyoto protocol and linking it to health issues.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View understands better than most that intellectual freedom can carry dire consequences. As medical officer for the Palliser health authority he was released from his job for speaking out in favour of the Kyoto protocol. His journey from that day two years ago to his taking his seat in this Legislature today on this first sitting day of the 26th Legislature is a story of personal integrity, hope, and advocacy.

We Members of the Legislative Assembly have a special privilege in this Assembly guaranteeing our freedom of speech. I ask all of you to help those outside this Assembly to achieve, enjoy, and protect that same right. And my personal thanks to the Freedom of Expression Committee in Alberta.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a petition signed by 401 Albertans from Fox Creek, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Red Deer, Valleyview, Vermilion, Stettler, Sunset House, and many other areas urging the government to

institute a fair and equitable minimum floor price for cattle that would be flexible to meet the changing needs of the cattle industry, including cow-calf producers, and curb the excessive profits of the major meat packers in the current dysfunctional market.

Thank you.

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

Ms Pastoor: I'm sorry; I'm new.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because the person that our leader had introduced earlier was actually not in the gallery, may I have your indulgence to introduce to you and through you Carol Weatherdon, the lady behind the petition I am about to present to you.

The Speaker: Do all hon. members agree that we can proceed to this introduction?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: Proceed.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. I would like to introduce to you and through you Carol Weatherdon, who is in the gallery and is the lady behind this petition.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**
head: (*continued*)

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed by 4,175 Albertans petitioning the Legislative

Assembly to urge the government to

1. significantly increase the amount of the AISH monthly benefit; and
2. adjust AISH benefits on an annual basis to reflect changes in the rate of inflation.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on a Standing Order 40 application.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give notice that I plan to raise a matter of urgent and pressing necessity under Standing Order 40 at the appropriate time in the proceedings. I am sending the appropriate number of copies of the motion to the table for distribution.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper also do stand and retain their places.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to table the requisite copies of a review entitled Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta from the Alberta Risk Management Fund. Also, members will see under Notices of Motions on Monday's Order Paper a motion for this report to be referred to the Members' Services Committee.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to table three different documents. This first is in fact a letter addressed to you, written by me, and delivered earlier today seeking clarification on the authority of the Chief Justice in her role as Administrator of this Legislature as well as in respect to her participation in the legal decision which determined who would serve as MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Speaker's Ruling
Tabling Correspondence to the Speaker

The Speaker: Hon. member, just a second. It's really, really strange. The chair will deal with hon. members in a very private and confidential manner, and members should be aware that if they convey anything to the chair, it will be dealt with that way. Never once would the chair ever consider making public correspondence or verbal statements made to the chair from any hon. member. If the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition wants to make public correspondence to the chair, he can do so. The chair will not deal with this matter outside of this Assembly. The member should know that. The chair also is in no position to provide legal opinions to anyone. That's clearly prohibited by all of the rules.

Proceed.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

head: (continued)

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second tabling is a letter to the Premier, delivered to him on February 28, urging him to review the Election Act of Alberta through an all-party committee.

My third tabling is documents from a constituent of mine operating a business called the Bon Ton Bakery outlining a new line of products he provides, encouraging healthy choices to address diabetes for all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, did you want to come back?

Mr. Martin: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of an article printed in the *Calgary Sun* on March 2 of this year. The article quotes Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier objecting to accusations that municipalities were inflating the cost of ambulance services.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a document from Frontier Economics of Cambridge, Massachusetts, labelled Privileged and Confidential Communication with Counsel, regarding Project Stanley.

3:20

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

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter to the Hon. Anne McLellan, Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, expressing my concerns about the closing of the RCMP forensics lab in Edmonton.

Also, I would like to table a letter from my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning expressing his objections and problems with the lack of wisdom in closing this very important RCMP forensics laboratory "as a cost-saving measure."

The Speaker: Hon. members, there is a series of tablings I have to make today. Pursuant to section 28(1) of the Ombudsman Act I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the 37th annual report of the office of the Ombudsman for the period April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004.

Pursuant to section 46(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act, chapter C-23 of the *2000 Revised Statutes of Alberta* I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner for the period April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004.

Pursuant to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer for the calendar year 2003.

I table with the Assembly the report by the Ethics Commissioner into allegations involving the hon. former Member for Edmonton-Norwood, Mr. Gary Masyk, dated July 20, 2004.

Pursuant to section 63(1) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, *Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000*, chapter F-25 and section 95(1) of the Health Information Act and section 44(1) of the Personal Information Protection Act I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The report covers the activities of the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner covering the period April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004.

I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the 17th annual report of the Legislative Assembly Office of Alberta for the calendar year ended December 31, 2003, and financial statements for the fiscal

year ended March 31, 2003. This report represents the audited financial statements for the 2002-2003 fiscal year and the seventh annual report of the Alberta branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Under Standing Order 7(5) I'd like to ask the Government House Leader if he would be so kind as to share the projected government business for the week beginning the 7th of March.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are no bills on the Order Paper at the moment, I will take some licence and indicate which bills might be introduced as well as the government business.

On Monday, March 7, in the afternoon under Introduction of Bills it would be our intention to introduce Bill 2, the Alberta Centennial Medal Act; Bill 3, the City of Lloydminster Act; Bill 4, the Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 5, the Family Law Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 6, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005; and Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. It's my understanding that Bill 201 and Bill 202 might well be introduced at that time as well. Because of the fact that those bills have not been introduced as yet, there may not be business available for the House under private members' business on Monday afternoon, and if that's the situation, then it would be our intention to ask for consent to use that time to speak to government business, being the reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Monday evening at 9 under Government Bills and Orders government motions that are on notice now with respect to supply, Committee of the Whole, adjournment, and spring recess might well be addressed, as well as address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

On Tuesday afternoon under Government Bills and Orders it's anticipated that there may be messages delivered from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor with respect to supplementary supply. Also, under Government Motions, then, supplementary supply motions with respect to referral to Committee of Supply, and the number of days in Committee of Supply would be proposed. The remainder of the day would be spent in address in reply to the Speech from the Throne and possibly in the introduction for second reading of Bill 1 as introduced by the hon. the Premier yesterday. Tuesday evening at 8 under Government Bills and Orders address in reply to the Speech from the Throne and potentially second reading of Bill 1 and as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, March 9, under Government Bills and Orders again address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Wednesday, March 9, at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, potentially Committee of Supply, and potentially day 1 of two proposed days for supplementary supply.

Thursday, March 10, under Government Bills and Orders, Committee of Supply, supplementary supply, day 2 of two days.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm going to soon recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to proceed with a Standing Order 40 application. I would direct all hon. members to Standing Order 40 in your Standing Orders. Hon. members will be requested to vote.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

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

Ambulance Services Funding

Ms Blakeman:

Be it resolved that this Assembly urge the government to provide all necessary funding to municipalities to cover the operation of ambulance services for the 2005-2006 fiscal year so as to maintain uninterrupted ambulance services and ensure that no municipality is put into a position of hardship as a result of this government's decision to cancel the transfer of ground ambulance services from municipalities to regional health authorities.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present arguments under Standing Order 40. I believe we have the situation in place to address the urgency required by this motion. Standing Order 40 indicates that "in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover," the House will give unanimous consent without notice having been served under Standing Order 38, which would allow us to proceed with the motion. I have had the motion distributed to everyone, and I'm assuming that they all have it now.

I think there is no matter more pressing than addressing the services that Albertans rely on when they are sick and in desperate need of medical attention. The urgencies in this case, Mr. Speaker, are several, and I will proceed to outline them.

The new fiscal year and the original deadline of April 1 for the transfer of ambulance services is fast approaching. We are now less than one month away. This creates a fiscal urgency for those municipalities. The Legislature has not sat for over nine months. This is the first day, the first opportunity, we have had to raise the issue in the Assembly since the problems with the government's plan to transfer responsibility became apparent.

There are no government bills or motions on the Order Paper that deal specifically with this issue. There has been nothing raised through the projected government business that would lead us to believe that it might be addressed quickly. The provincial budget has yet to be given a date and at this point, I believe, is too far off to bring any certainty or financial relief to the municipalities in the short term or, indeed, before the April 1 deadline at all.

Some municipalities such as Edmonton have already budgeted on the direction from the provincial government that the government would be picking up the tab for the transfer and operation of ambulance services so that these municipalities should redeploy funding. They will be left in a fiscal hole, a fiscal deficit, if no solution is found in time.

We did ask questions in the number one position in question period today, but the question period format is not sufficient to explore this issue at length, and indeed that runs against the purpose of question period.

Mr. Speaker, the House does not sit tomorrow, and by the next sitting day, we would gather, four more days will have gone by without a resolution to this crisis. There is an urgency of public health and confidence in the public health system and delivery of ambulance services. Thousands of people rely on ambulance services each and every year in Alberta. There is a risk to the health and safety of these individuals if we cannot come to a successful consensus on the delivery of ambulance services.

3:30

The case for urgency couldn't be summed up any better than in the words of Garry Zinga, the administrator for the ambulance

society in Wainwright, who is quoted as saying: it's unconscionable to think that there wouldn't be an ambulance service in this region; I don't know what we're going to do and who's going to provide it.

I ask for the Assembly's agreement to this Standing Order 40 request to allow us to debate and accept the motion that I have proposed. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Unanimous consent denied]

head: **Orders of the Day**

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I move that this Assembly consider the debate on the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, yesterday we heard the new Lieutenant Governor, His Honour Norman Kwong, deliver his first ever Speech from the Throne. Before replying to that speech, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say how fortunate we are to have someone of Mr. Kwong's legendary character represent this Assembly and the people of Alberta. There is no forgetting the outpouring of sorrow and sympathy at the loss of Mr. Kwong's predecessor, the Hon. Lois Hole. Her good humour, easy grace, and undeniable compassion endeared her to all Albertans. Lois Hole set new standards for anyone elected or appointed to a public office. I think Dr. Hole would be pleased to know that the duty she has left behind, the people she had yet to met, and the responsibility she worked so diligently to fulfill will be so ably and respectfully attended to by His Honour Normie Kwong.

I am extremely pleased to address this Assembly this afternoon. I say "extremely" because for a member of the Legislature there is no greater motivation nor realization of just how privileged we are and no acceptance of humility like that which accompanies the rather unique experience of losing and winning the same election. I am here today, Mr. Speaker, because of the wisdom of our institutions and the right of every Albertan to a fair and equal voice in a true democracy. If that's what it takes to validate a three-vote victory, then it's neat to be known far and wide as Landslide Lukaszuk.

Mr. Speaker, if nothing else, my recent experience has taught me that no matter who we are or where we come from, my colleagues and I serve at the pleasure and whim of two very important people. We know them as Martha and Henry, average everyday Albertans, Albertans who work hard to pay their taxes, to plan their futures, and to make a meaningful contribution to their communities.

My government colleagues and I pay close attention to the things that Martha and Henry have been telling us. We've discovered that average everyday Albertans are developing new ideas and progressive new outlooks on who they are and where they are going. I am

happy to report that Martha and Henry have been taking advantage of the Alberta advantage. They've become more cosmopolitan, better educated, better travelled, and more productive than ever before. Look around, Mr. Speaker. Martha and Henry have become leaders in business, made great discoveries in medicine, toured the world as talented performers, shared their knowledge as accomplished academics, tilled the soil as tireless providers, and helped shape the future generations of proud and prosperous Albertans.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Martha and Henry have grown up right along with the cities and towns and the economy of our great province. They value the prudent management of their finances, and they've earned the right to enjoy a high standard of living. They also believe that no government should attempt to micromanage their personal affairs or their morality. Martha and Henry are rational, intelligent citizens of a modern world, and they're quite capable of determining their own family values.

I believe it's incumbent upon this government and every member of this Assembly to ensure that we keep pace with the people who put us here. To provide the methods, means, and materials to sustain our momentum as we move into a new century of continued growth and prosperity, we must remain focused on the things that really matter, things like quality of health care, a good education, a clean environment, safe and secure communities, vibrant arts and culture, and a robust and competitive business environment.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta stands poised on the threshold of another 100 years of challenge and change. In 1905 our forefathers were busy building the foundation of what has now become the wealthiest, most productive province in the country. Today our job is to ensure that future generations are equipped to realize the same degree of success but in an even more competitive global market. There is no question that Albertans benefit greatly by virtue of our close association with our friends to the south. However, as markets evolve and new opportunities arise, we must actively pursue new commercial, cultural, and academic relationships with the world's most influential trading nations, especially those of the Pacific Rim and the European Union.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to acknowledge that according to the recent figures released by the hon. Minister of Economic Development, our province's total merchandise exports increased by over 16 per cent during the first nine months of the last year. That includes 88 per cent growth in manufactured goods exported to China and 28 per cent to Japan. Strong growth in the value-added exports means new jobs for Albertans and increased trade opportunities for Alberta-based business and industry. I encourage our government to build on these successes with a program to expand the number of foreign offices and our ability to liaise effectively with key decision-makers and trading partners throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, with an estimated \$100 billion in new and proposed capital projects in the works our province boasts the most vigorous economy in the country, but that kind of success places great strains on our human resources and underlines the need for a skilled workforce. Our priorities must include facilities and programs to provide the vital educational and training opportunities Albertans need and deserve. In fact, it's difficult to overstate the benefits of a well-educated and highly skilled population. That's why the first piece of new legislation introduced this session is indeed cause for a celebration. Bill 1 will establish unprecedented new investment totalling \$4.5 billion in postsecondary education. Alberta's colleges and universities will see the creation of 15,000 additional student spaces as early as next year.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we'll see new initiatives to make postsecondary education more affordable for everyone. Bill 1 will also create a \$3 billion endowment fund supporting a variety of

innovative, new education-related projects, such things as a new centre for Chinese studies at the University of Alberta and the development of a province-wide digital library. It's apparent our government remains committed to any Albertan determined to achieve a quality education.

A few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the caring, compassionate nature of Her Honour Lois Hole. I believe Martha and Henry share her belief that good government promotes personal independence but is also prepared to assist those in need. Even though some disabilities may not be apparent, AISH recipients are among those most deserving of our support. Government is to be commended for its promise to increase financial benefits for the severely handicapped but also for its commitment to programs such as Alberta Works, helping an estimated 20,000 unemployed workers find new jobs and new independence.

3:40

This year we can also look forward to new dental and optical assistance for seniors, improved accommodations for those in long-term care, a new initiative to prevent exploitation of young people, and an increase in Alberta's minimum wage. In addition, our government will soon become the first in Canada to introduce an official accreditation program for child care workers. Mr. Speaker, these kinds of supports for families, for workers, and for the disadvantaged clearly demonstrate that government has the willingness to assist those in need, the ability to encourage those who can help themselves, and the wisdom to know the difference.

In recent years, Mr. Speaker, no issue has received more attention or created greater debate than health care. Edmonton is extremely fortunate to realize the benefits of such world-class institutions as the Capital health authority or the Stollery children's hospital, for example, or even the newly constructed Alberta Heart Institute. We have become a centre of excellence in organ transplants, medical training, and research. Yet despite the fact that our health care system is the envy of jurisdictions across the continent, we continue to experience unacceptable delays and limited access to front-line acute care personnel. There is a shortage of qualified general practitioners and nursing staff. It is the responsibility of my colleagues and I to ensure that Martha and Henry have reasonable and convenient access to the front-line medical attention they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see a range of new initiatives designed to make Albertans the healthiest people in the world, new systems to improve waiting list management, and electronic referrals between family physicians and specialists. This year we will also see a new focus on health and fitness, plans to reduce the high number of injuries and fatalities on our streets and highways, and new infrastructure to provide a safe, clean water supply. Albertans deserve no less than the best possible health care services and facilities in the world. This government is to be applauded for its determination to establish innovative, efficient, and affordable health and wellness solutions that are truly second to none.

Mr. Speaker, creative innovation and fresh new approaches to the problems of growing population are the hallmark of this government. Recently we've seen a truly innovative private/public partnership, or P3, in response to Edmonton's pressing need for a new ring road. I submit that our minister of infrastructure should be encouraged to employ similarly creative programs to bring vital new schools to Alberta's children facing urban sprawl and new neighbourhoods with no schools at all.

Last year our Premier announced an unprecedented \$3 billion fund to help build and repair much-needed new infrastructure across the province. This was truly a landmark decision, a decision that only

a province with robust financial resources would even consider. Even so, we must ensure that the funds are distributed in such a way as to recognize the diverse needs of nonamalgamated municipalities with their aging infrastructure and unique circumstances. Mr. Speaker, people who live in various municipalities surrounding the city of Edmonton make good use of our streets, roads, and recreational facilities every day, yet those who live in St. Albert, Spruce Grove, Sherwood Park, for example, pay virtually no property taxes to the city of Edmonton. In order to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of infrastructure funds, these kinds of issues must be taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has established an enviable track record when it comes to economic development and attraction of new companies and businesses from all over the world. In a report released by TD Canada Trust two years ago the Edmonton-Calgary corridor was described as the only Canadian urban area to combine American-styled wealth with Canadian-styled quality of life. In fact, Alberta is renowned for its affordable tax structure, stable government, skilled workforce, and overall business-friendly environment.

But we're also famous for the amenities we enjoy as individuals, families, and communities. This year, in concert with our centennial, Albertans will celebrate the recent renovation of the Jubilee auditoria in Edmonton and Calgary. We have constructed new museums, recreation facilities, and entertainment complexes. We're proud of our low crime and low poverty rates, our high-quality education and health care system, and our clean environment. We enjoy short commutes, safe streets, a vibrant arts community, cultural diversity, and breathtaking Rocky Mountain resorts. There is little wonder why people from around the world can't wait to get here.

We have every right to take pride in the accomplishments of the past hundred years. But I think, Mr. Speaker, it's time to kick it up a notch, to use the fruits of our nonrenewable resources to move more aggressively beyond them. I see the character of my colleagues and the vision, energy, and depth to lead our province into a new century, a new century of connecting to the world, of developing new technologies and medical miracles, and of the never-ending pursuit of excellence. Call it the Alberta advantage or the next Alberta, it's all Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to second the motion of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and to see him in the House and to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for the Speech from the Throne.

I'd like to begin by congratulating His Honour on his new role as Alberta's 16th Lieutenant Governor. I know that if the former Lieutenant Governor were looking down, she'd give him a big hug and say that she also approves of the new choice.

I'd also like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, for being re-elected as the Speaker of the 26th Legislature. If my experience in the House has taught me anything, it is that the Assembly is assured of another productive and disciplined session with you in chair.

There are a number of new faces in the seats that were occupied by past colleagues. Although this will take some getting used to, I am confident that these new faces will bring forth energized debate and that it will only further contribute to the success of the province and this government. Albertans have once again agreed in an overwhelming majority that the vision this government has for Alberta over the next 20 years is something that they want to be part of and contribute to.

I am as always humbled to have the opportunity to once again represent the extraordinary, wonderful constituency of Calgary-Shaw. It seems like yesterday, but only four years ago I addressed this Assembly for the first time. During my maiden speech I mentioned that the first member from Calgary-Shaw once described Calgary-Shaw as being three subdivisions in a series of cow pastures. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pause for just a moment and remind the House once again that in the last sitting I represented the largest constituency in the history of the province of Alberta. At that time I had some 82,000 constituents. That constituency continued to increase to the number of 100,000 constituents until recent boundary changes when I was joined by the hon. members for Calgary-Hays and Calgary-Lougheed, and I'm thrilled to have them join me in the south. I'm confident that this number – I now have 36,000 constituents – will not remain for long as I have the privilege of representing one of the fastest growing constituencies in the province.

I believe that the message in this year's Speech from the Throne is extremely positive and one that the constituents of Calgary-Shaw and all Albertans can be proud of. There is much to celebrate during 2005, but at the same time there is work that needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like, though, to pause for just a moment and reflect. We're busy in this Legislature looking at new problems and issues, and we forget sometimes to look back at blessings. I feel very blessed to live in the province of Alberta. I heard recently in the news that being born in Alberta or living in Alberta is like winning the lottery. Truly, you don't have to go an inch out of this province to the right, left, north, or south to hear others say that they wish they had our problems and that we're so fortunate in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I look back to the tremendous growth issues that I had over the last four years. I saw this province step up and bring some 11 schools into Calgary-Shaw. We opened the south health centre so that constituents could go that didn't have family doctors. We also saw the Deerfoot Trail extension completed, and we broke ground on a new hospital in the south end of the city of Calgary. So we do have much to be thankful for.

It was almost 99 years ago, March 15, 1906, that the opening of the first Legislature and Alberta's inaugural Speech from the Throne took place at the Thistle rink before 5,000 Albertans. I can only imagine the excitement and the energy that was in the air that day: a province on the verge of charting its own destiny and a population waiting in anticipation to hear what the future had in store. And here we are a hundred years later with the luxury of hindsight to see where we strayed and how to take that lesson and use it to ensure that we stay the course over the next hundred years. There might not be 5,000 Albertans packed into the Legislature, but I can assure you that thanks to advances in technology there are millions of Albertans hearing our provincial centennial Speech from the Throne, and they too are waiting in anticipation to hear what the future has in store. The next hundred years are still ours to decide, and much of the population is counting on this government to make the right choices and the right decisions to ensure that Alberta's future is successful.

3:50

I'm happy to hear that the memory of Lois Hole will be honoured with the creation of a memorial garden. It's a fitting tribute to a fine lady. Through the positive effect she had on numerous Albertans, along with the Queen's graduate scholarship and fellowship program and the Lois Hole digital library, our beloved Lieutenant Governor will be in the hearts and minds of Albertans for generations to come.

Education has always been a top priority for me and my constituents. My constituency is full of young families with children in

elementary school, high school, and college/university. I'm happy to report that the government's class size initiative is working. I recently visited one of the elementary schools in my riding and saw first-hand that our schools have been able to lower class sizes to reflect the recommendations of the Alberta Commission on Learning. The government has injected some \$98 million into the system and provided 1,250 new teachers across this province to meet class size guidelines. School boards have chosen to direct these resources to early elementary grades.

I know it's working, Mr. Speaker. I recently received an e-mail from a constituent, a teacher who has called me many times over the last four years, and she writes: I'm having a much better year with only 21 in my grade 3 class; for the past 10 years I've had 30, and this year means a different style of teaching and much more individualized attention for my students; the class size initiative has been a real bonus for us; thank you. This is positive proof that the work we're doing is working and effecting positive change throughout the province. I know that this is an extremely important issue as it was the number one reason I was contacted over education in the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to bring attention to another accomplishment for my constituency. I was extremely proud, as all of us, I'm sure, as I watched the Premier's centennial address in February. You may have noticed that some of the segments were taped at the Centennial high school. I couldn't have picked a better location myself. It was fitting that the Premier chose that school as the setting to announce new investments in postsecondary education for Alberta. Once the school has a full student complement and all programs are up and running, Centennial high school will stand out as an example of the best that we can offer young people.

Centennial high school is the first high school to be built by the Calgary board of education in more than a decade, and it was built in Calgary-Shaw. The school opened to 550 grade 10 students and 34 staff for the year 2004-2005. The school is one of a kind, with many defining factors, including mentors to assist students in developing an individualized learning pathway and portfolio. The portfolio reflects student career pathways and high school learning experiences. This gives students the essential opportunity to explore career options and experience career pathways in health, human resources, arts and communications, science, technology, business information and management systems.

Mr. Speaker, this is another example of the commitment of Alberta to continually improve its education system and ensure that Alberta's youth have the skills and knowledge to carry on their successes. It's apparent through the commitment made in the Speech from the Throne that the actions taken in the past show that this government acknowledges and is committed to building the resources of our youth.

The work has begun to strengthen elementary and high school education, but I still have concerns regarding the future of postsecondary education in Alberta. We know that the bubble of kids moving through elementary and high school is now hitting our postsecondary system, and we don't want that bubble to burst as young people seek to further their education. I was so pleased to hear that over the next three years we'll be adding 15,000 spaces to the current 140,000 full time and 40,000 apprenticeship positions. I'm also pleased to hear that government has made long-term commitments to improve access by doubling additional spaces to 30,000 in six years and by 2020 increasing the number of new spaces for Alberta postsecondary students to 60,000. It's an important step in the right direction, and I've received many calls from constituents who are concerned about their kids being able to attend postsecondary. Increasing the number of available spaces is definitely a good place to start.

I'm also happy to hear that tuition fees will be frozen for the upcoming postsecondary year and that a new tuition policy is in the works. As I mentioned earlier, the future of this province is currently in Alberta's education system. It's up to us to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to play a role in the next hundred years of our province.

Mr. Speaker, it's more than evident that this government's focus for the 26th Legislature in Alberta's centennial year is on education and ensuring that Alberta's future is in good hands. I commend these commitments and look forward to the discussion and debates that will take place in the months to come on these topics.

There is, however, a topic on my mind that I would also like to bring forward, another major concern of my constituents, and that is the concern of health care and its costs. We must make certain that Alberta's health care system is sustainable and that we are doing our job to ensure that Albertans are the healthiest people in Canada. Alberta now spends more on health care each year than all the money we collect in personal income tax, federal transfers, and health care premiums combined. Health care spending could rise to almost a billion dollars in a single year. Health care and education are the biggest government expenditures, and they remain Albertans' highest priorities.

I am confident that very few individuals will disagree that making Albertans the healthiest people in Canada is one way to curb health care costs. I think that can be achieved by better tobacco reduction strategies and by reviewing other ideas that have been proven effective in other jurisdictions as well as many other innovative ideas that have been discussed in the past. I look forward again to the debate and discussion that will take place concerning Alberta's health care system, and I know that it's an important issue to my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, despite the work that needs to be done, Alberta continues to be the best place to live and work, and I am proud to call this province home. It is a privilege to stand here today amongst my colleagues, representing the constituents of Calgary-Shaw for a second term. The 26th Legislature will see the celebration of Alberta's centennial, a visit from the Queen, and the first full session of a debt-free Alberta. There is a lot to celebrate and a lot to be proud of.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on the past hundred years and celebrate Alberta's success and learn from its failures and mourn its losses, we can be certain that there are few other jurisdictions in North America or the world that have the ability and the resources to be a leader in innovation, a leader in health, a leader in education, and a leader for the next hundred years.

I'd like to close, Mr. Speaker, by referring to the Speech from the Throne, where it said that Alberta has

gone from being a long shot on the Canadian prairie to becoming a magnet for modern-day pioneers from all around the world . . . This centennial year people across Alberta will celebrate the amazing province we call home, and from this firm foundation we will look ahead to the prospect of building something even greater: the next Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Speaking Time

The Speaker: Hon. members, in your Standing Orders the standing order that applied to the participation here today by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs was Standing Order 29(1)(b), which provided up to 20 minutes to speak. For the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw the standing order that applied was Standing Order 29(1)(c), which provided for up to 20 minutes to speak. Now I'm

going to recognize the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Official Opposition can participate according to Standing Order 29(1)(a)(ii), which provides up to 90 minutes of participation. Following the participation Standing Order 29(2)(a) provides for a five-minute question and comment period.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and my duty today on behalf of all Albertans as Leader of the Official Opposition to respond to the Speech from the Throne delivered in this Assembly yesterday.

First, Mr. Speaker, while we continue to mourn our truly beloved friend Her Honour the Honourable Lois Hole, we also celebrate our newly appointed Lieutenant Governor. The distinguished person who now holds this high constitutional office is one whose accomplishments stand as a model for our province's next 100 years. We welcome His Honour the Honourable Norman Kwong to public life in Alberta. We thank him for agreeing to give so much of himself in service to Alberta and Albertans, and I caution him now that I will be asking for his autograph when circumstances permit.

Mr. Speaker, we joined the Legislature to build. In responding today to the Speech from the Throne, I am conscious that my job, our job as Alberta Liberals, is to begin building a better future for Alberta. Every time we rise in this Assembly, our cause will be to better Alberta's future, and there is so much room to make Alberta's future better.

There is so much this Assembly can do to make it better. We can manage what we have so much better. We can reach so much higher. Alberta's future will be driven by the values of Albertans, by their energy, their thoughtfulness and imagination, their individualism, their grasp of opportunity, their respect for the land, their humanity, their commitment to community, their thrift, their sense of fairness, right, and wrong. The government of Alberta must serve those values to serve the future. Our government must serve our values.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, a hundred years ago the men and women of the North-West Territories worked with Canada's leaders to create the province they called Alberta. They breathed life into this Legislative Assembly. They built a working democracy, a system that could truly represent its citizens although the errors of those times excluded many: aboriginal peoples, many immigrants, and all women. But the system they built on values was and is strong and flexible enough to look at itself, to work towards correcting errors.

The people who laid Alberta's foundation are our ancestors in spirit if not in blood. They are the forebears of legislative democracy who planted their feet and spread their arms and stood tall to hold up a sheltering roof for democracy, and like the foundations and stone pillars and the great dome of this building they created a space for dreams and ideas, for possibilities and opportunities. Those builders of a new province understood they weren't just building roads and schools, towns and businesses, communities and a government; they were building a society.

The urgency, the creativity and energy of the first years of this Legislature were remarkable. The Liberal government of Alberta, the first government of this province, established the University of Alberta, the first step in creating Alberta's postsecondary education system. It empowered school districts and municipal governments, creating a comprehensive system of local government. It laid the foundations for telephone and electricity systems.

It led the way in recognizing the rights of women. In 1916 in response to the undeniable voices of Alberta women, this Legislature

recognized women's right to vote. This was an important start by a courageous government, but as I look around at the small number of women who are members of this Assembly today, I remind us all that a government guided by the values of Albertans will improve the representation of women in this Assembly. It will recover the creative spirit of democracy through democratic reform.

The Liberal government of this province placed the cornerstone of natural resource research and development in 1920 by forming the Scientific and Industrial Research Council of Alberta, which eventually became the Alberta Research Council. More than 80 years ago, an entire lifetime, that agency did the basic research on extracting oil from the oil sands that led to the industry that is driving Alberta's economy today. Far-sighted government.

As the decades passed, governments changed, but Albertans continued to bring their core values to the business of this Legislature. Mr. Speaker, the 1940 throne speech, delivered in this room on behalf of a Social Credit government, neither minced words nor counted pennies when it pledged social and economic justice for all Albertans. I quote from that throne speech.

We are determined to provide food, clothing and shelter for the people to the limit of our financial ability, and we will continue our unrelenting fight for monetary reform and social security with the determination to relieve unemployment and banish poverty from Alberta. No person should be allowed to lose his farm or home.

Those were the words from that throne speech.

In the 1970s the government changed again. Thirty-three years ago yesterday, in this very room, the Progressive Conservative government of Peter Lougheed delivered its first throne speech. The speech was sharply focused and specific, presenting a series of ideas aimed at improving government accountability and advancing Alberta society. Human rights led its five priority areas, followed by seniors' benefits, the family farm, handicapped children, and mental health, priorities that squared with the values of Albertans: values, passion, detail. The important throne speeches of Alberta's past respect Albertans' individualism, their thrift, but they set and reset our course with energy, thoughtfulness, imagination, humanity, commitment to community, respect and responsibility for the environment, a sense of right and wrong, and an understanding, a grasp of great opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we can look back on Alberta's century with pride. We've built a remarkable society with elements of great success because we meant to, because we planned to, because we did our best to make the most of what we were given by good fortune or the grace of God. But in contrast to the passion and detail of great throne speeches, great plans for the future, we heard yesterday a laundry list, housekeeping, a disjointed, reactive response to the holes in this old government's moth-eaten program.

The Tory House leader gave us a sneak preview of this throne speech last week. The government's agenda is, he said, and I quote: mostly amendment acts improving, updating, and adding on to existing legislation. This Premier's often-repeated dream has come true. This really is a government on autopilot – or maybe four very expensive autopilots.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at recent history. The Tory governments of Alberta spent their first decade building toward a clear-eyed vision of an amazing future. They spent the next decade floundering, then the most recent decade reversing their course, cutting, hacking, slashing, following the motto sometimes attributed to a former Tory treasurer, "If it ain't broke, break it."

That brings us to now. No more of 1993's blind determination to pull the rug out from under education by chopping kindergarten. Instead, a present for every baby, a present for postsecondary education; an old government but not a wise government fumbling

for its second youth, marching ahead under a 12-year-old Alberta Liberal slogan but still without a plan.

The people of Alberta expect and deserve better from their government. The great governments of this province have known what they stood for and where they were going. They have known these things because they have known their values, and the values of the people of Alberta have been steady throughout the past century: individual rights, thrift, energy and initiative, imagination, humanity and generosity, respect and responsibility for the environment, commitment to community, a sense of fairness, right and wrong, common sense. Mr. Speaker, these values will guide Alberta's future. They will because they are resilient, enduring, and substantial in contrast to the insubstantial patchwork of a throne speech that parliamentary tradition invites me to pick over today.

We in the Alberta Liberals prefer to talk about tomorrow rather than yesterday. We have said it before. No place on Earth offers the wealth of opportunities we have here now in Alberta. Nowhere. We are unique. We are so, so fortunate. We are blessed. We have forests, agriculture, some of the world's most stunning natural landscapes. We live in peace and security. Albertans are energetic, hardworking, well educated. They bring talents, knowledge, and experience from all over the world. We live next to the richest market on the planet, on top of petroleum reserves that rival Saudi Arabia's. No place on Earth offers these opportunities except Alberta. What we make of these opportunities defines us.

What is it that we will make of these opportunities? That's what I want to hear in a throne speech. That's what Albertans' values demand. What will we make of our opportunities? What will we make of what is given to us, our luck, our blessings? That's what I want to hear in a throne speech.

4:10

Squandered opportunities offend our values, the very nature of Albertans: the flowering of individual talents and energies stymied, squashed; thrift discarded for unplanned spending and unaccountable excess; humanity and generosity sacrificed to arbitrary goals and then insulted by enormous surpluses sent straight to the banks. In the future Albertans will have a government that manages better and reaches higher. Our values demand it.

Mr. Speaker, there's an old joke that says that the best way to make a small fortune in the futures market is to start with a large fortune. As the Tory government congratulates itself and settles back for another spell on autopilot, that's the joke ringing in our ears in this Alberta Liberal caucus, and we're not laughing.

Since the Tories were first elected in 1971, they have had more than 135 billion windfall dollars to work with or to play with; \$135 billion in energy revenues have flowed through this government's fingers. No other jurisdiction on this continent comes close. And that's in addition to taxes, health care premiums, user fees, and everything else. That's a mix of 1971 dollars, 1981 dollars, 1991 dollars, and 2001 dollars. Adjusted for inflation today, that would be hundreds of billions, \$65 billion in this Premier's tenure alone. This government paid off a \$23 billion debt that it created with \$65 billion in revenues from nonrenewable resource revenues. That's bad management, bad government, the Tory-preached cutbacks cloaked as sustainability when they could've been building for an unparalleled future.

Mr. Speaker, that offends what Albertans believe in. It offends our thrift, our imagination, our grasp of opportunity. This is not the moment in our history for another patchwork plan. After all that cash we may not have dollar debt, but we still have social debt: two Albertans living side by side; unacceptable child poverty mocked by a one-time-only baby bonus; attention to the minimum wage and disability benefits, both arriving a day late and a dollar short.

We have infrastructure debts, a billion here and a billion there to make up for years of short-changing cities, hospitals, schools. Environmental debt: the fruits of an attitude towards fresh water, resource extraction, and climate change that too often says, "Use it like there's no tomorrow." Human debt: debt of the spirit, leaving some communities pitted against each other and arts and cultural expressions stuck way in the back seat while the engine of the economy roars ahead. Family debt: rural families stressed as never before, taxes masquerading as premiums and user fees, seniors served or abandoned on the whim of a moment despite the means to plan.

We don't owe a penny, but Edmonton and Calgary have the most overcrowded hospitals in Canada. We jerk our universities and colleges around like dogs on a leash. We have the highest high school dropout rate in Canada. We still have billions of dollars in unfunded pension liabilities, our liabilities. Farms and ranchers are facing foreclosure all over the province while the Tory government points fingers at Ottawa, Washington, and a court in Montana.

As Albertans what can we say about all this? That we'll wait for next year's Speech from the Throne? That we'll forgive and forget and hope that we all get a second chance? That the windfall will always be there? That our string of luck will never run out?

Don't our values demand that now is the time to make a plan? Even better, yesterday was the time to do it, yesterday when this government shredded a handful of Alberta Liberal policies and served the tatters up in a throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at this another way. Let's compare Alberta to other lucky energy producers. Norway since 1990 has built up a fund of about a hundred billion U.S. dollars. Alaska has an enormous permanent fund and sends money back to taxpayers. Kuwait earns more from its investments made with oil money than from its oil itself.

Meanwhile, Alberta's heritage fund is worth less in real terms than it was in the 1980s, and the best we can do is now to inflation-proof it. A hundred and thirty-five billion extra dollars in energy revenues since the Tories were elected, and it is virtually all gone.

What have we learned? That's what Albertans deserve to hear in a throne speech. What will we do if our luck continues? That's what Albertans deserve to hear.

Mr. Speaker, the praise this government gets for management is a triumph of image over substance. This throne speech should have told us that this Premier will no longer be the minister responsible for the Public Affairs Bureau, that he'll spend more time on substance than on spin.

Yesterday's throne speech watered down Liberal policies and called them Tory inspirations. The echoes begin with the evocative recurring phrase "the next Alberta." I quote from yesterday's throne speech. "The Next Alberta Will Be a Leader in Learning." "The Next Alberta Will Have a Diverse and Growing Economy." "The Next Alberta Will Be the Healthiest Province in Canada." "The Next Alberta Will Be a Leader in Canada and the World." Well, Mr. Speaker, The Next Alberta was the campaign slogan of the late Laurence Decore's Alberta Liberals in the 1993 election. Almost 12 years later the Tories' failure to remember that fact recalls their failure of imagination ever since that year.

Yesterday's throne speech went on to incorporate a damaged Tory version of the Alberta Liberals' plan for a postsecondary endowment fund, now through some epiphany the Tories' highest priority, and the sadly overdue increases in the minimum wage and assured income for the severely handicapped.

With all of those piecemeal borrowings we believe the throne speech missed the opportunity to borrow some other key planks in the Alberta Liberal platform, our plan for the future. Our surplus

policy, the Alberta legacy act, would create permanent wealth out of fleeting resource revenues by investing future surpluses in postsecondary education, in the heritage savings trust fund, in the restoration of our crumbling infrastructure, and in the arts, culture, and humanities.

Our bill would commit 35 per cent of future budget surpluses to an endowment fund for advanced education, uncapped and without strings attached. There is a plan to set innovation free as opposed to tying postsecondary education even more firmly to the apron strings of the government of the day. Thirty-five per cent of future surpluses would be streamed in the heritage savings trust fund, to grow it rather than be satisfied with simply preventing it from eroding away; 25 per cent would be put in a capital account to address the multibillion dollar backlog of infrastructure projects in this province; and the final 5 per cent would be invested in an endowment fund to support the contribution the arts and humanities make to Alberta society.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta Liberals have long stood for universal public health care, and we will continue to do so. We will continue to support the idea of a wellness fund created from tobacco taxes to support public health initiatives and research. We will continue to support health impact assessments for major policy decisions and a health auditor to ensure that Albertans are getting the best value for their health care dollars.

4:20

Alberta Liberals will also push to improve the democratic process for all Albertans. Yesterday's throne speech should have mentioned democratic renewal. Democratic renewal will come because Albertans' values demand it.

Alberta Liberals believe that open, accountable government follows naturally from a belief in fairness, that freedom of information should not be a euphemism for manipulating access to information when government has something to hide.

We believe we should call things by their right names. Wasted money is wasted money whether or not most of us feel prosperous for the moment. It's not good management. It should be fixed. The throne speech should promise to fix it. Call things by their right names. This government should not call its record in all areas of education, kindergarten to postsecondary, "previous efforts to strengthen the education system" in a throne speech. The throne speech shouldn't call privatizing health care a "third way." The Tories plan to violate the Canada Health Act, but they don't say it. They say that they will "make whatever legislative changes are needed to allow innovation to occur throughout the health system."

Open, accountable governments make plans, and then they review their performance against those plans. They budget, and then they review their performance against those budgets. They spend steadily less on special warrants, not steadily more. They listen to their Auditor General, and they commit to making necessary changes. I didn't see any of that in yesterday's throne speech. The Auditor General notes that in the area of health care, ostensibly a high priority throughout this government's tenure and again in this throne speech, there is no provincial health plan. Let me respond very directly to that section of the throne speech. It should be amended with 21 simple words: we will develop a provincial health plan, and we will disclose it to Albertans openly and accountably in their Legislative Assembly.

Let me also respond very directly to the section claiming that all Albertans will share in the Alberta advantage. The Auditor General examined the books of two agencies out of about 120 funded by the Department of Community Development to provide services for persons with developmental disabilities and found almost \$3.6

million improperly skimmed off by the operators in clear violation of their contracts instead of going to people with developmental disabilities. This section should say: we will plan and implement measures correcting all concerns raised by the Auditor General.

Tradition suggests that I should respond to what's in the throne speech, but I find myself responding to what is not in the throne speech. I quote: "The government will explore ways for the economy to be more knowledge based by adding value to primary resource industries and expanding manufacturing and business services." Or again: "Alberta's third way for health care is about making sure Albertans get the best health care services, what they need and when they need it, at a price taxpayers can afford." What's not there is content. The throne speech is missing information. The throne speech is missing information because of yet another deficit, a democratic deficit.

We in the Alberta Liberals believe we must rebuild democracy. When I listened to the throne speech, I heard the cynical manipulation of information by this government, the substitution of spin for substance, the contempt for this Legislature they have shown again and again while making billion-dollar decisions in backrooms. Add to that the sloppiness, incompetence, and corruption detailed in the Auditor General's report.

The Alberta Liberal vision for the future of Alberta is one of revitalizing our system and its institutions through democratic reform and renewal, ensuring that our government is responsible and accountable to the people of this province. In practical terms: fixed election dates every four years, a lobbyist registry, whistle-blower protection legislation, cooling-off periods for cabinet ministers and senior officials leaving government.

The first step should be to establish an independent citizens' assembly on electoral reform, with all recommendations put to a referendum. The citizens' assembly should have a mandate including reviewing the number of MLAs, reviewing electoral options such as proportional representation, considering preferential ballots, and examining term limits for Premiers.

Democratic reform should include a citizens' empowerment act to give Albertans the power to petition government either to introduce legislation they would like to see or to remove legislation. It should amend election financing laws to restrict individual, corporate, or union donations to a maximum of \$5,000 per political party per year.

Democratic renewal would include a Legislature that establishes an external, independent, nonpartisan committee to select the Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner. It would strengthen the Public Accounts Committee so that even Premiers accept their accountability, supported by an open-book policy on government expenses including travel and credit card expense accounts. It would allow examination of the mandate, management, and operation of every government department every year.

Democratic renewal means amending the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Albertans deserve prompt, affordable access to information even when it may embarrass the government. It means all parties with elected MLAs will be represented on legislative committees and that an independent external body will set MLA remuneration and benefits. Democratic renewal means replacing the current government-only accounting principles with generally accepted accounting principles.

That's what I wanted to see in this throne speech: some hint, some sign that we will not be subjected to government by unplanned, unprincipled, undisclosed whim and whimsy for another session.

First things first. Let's reinvigorate this institution, our government; let's use its capacity for self-correction to repair errors of the past; and then let's get down to the business of government with the

energy, attention, and capacity to tackle the spectacular opportunities that lie ahead.

Albertans demand a government that reflects their enduring values, one that joins them in putting their values into practice in building a better future for Alberta: individual rights, thrift, energy and initiative, imagination, humanity and generosity, respect and responsibility for the environment, commitment to community, a sense of fairness, right and wrong, discipline, common sense.

Albertans demand a government that has not exhausted its capacity to imagine that things might be done differently, that they might be done better, that they might be done according to a plan that informs and inspires where this throne speech does not. They deserve a government more focused on discharging its awesome and its historic responsibilities than on preserving its hold on power.

Albertans demand that we can and will again strive towards an Alberta that works for every Albertan, one that pays attention to equity as well as to debt, one that turns off the autopilot and seizes control of the future, building the best Alberta we can be.

Mr. Speaker, that's our response to this throne speech and our response to the opportunities ahead. That's the vision of the Alberta Liberals. Thank you very much.

4:30

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) now is available. Five minutes. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I for one cannot sit quietly in this Assembly without challenging the drivel, the falsehoods, and the negativity that I have just heard from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. He talks of building Alberta, but in his first speech in this Legislature he stoops to federal Liberal smear campaigns used by his corrupt Liberal cousins in Ottawa. My question to the hon. member: does he really think that he is building Alberta by delivering a message of despair and doom? Is that the kind of leadership we're going to see over the next four years from the opposition?

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

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thank you. The member reveals much about himself in that comment. I would say this. There is a huge lesson to be learned from the federal government in Ottawa about disclosing flight logs and flight manifests. When will this government live up to that responsibility to be open and accountable and honest to the people of this province?

Rev. Abbott: I'd like to know what part of the current hundred million dollar ad scam he sees as open and honest from his Liberal friends there in Ottawa.

Dr. Taft: It's irrelevant.

The Speaker: Others?

Then we will call on and recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, the leader of the ND opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin in my remarks today by commending His Honour Lieutenant Governor Norman Kwong, who delivered yesterday's throne speech on behalf of the government. I wish to congratulate Mr. Kwong on his appointment as this province's Lieutenant Governor. Mr. Kwong is an Albertan who has accomplished much in the areas of sports, business, and multiculturalism, and I'm certain he will fulfill his

responsibilities as the province's Lieutenant Governor with honour and distinction.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour knows better than anyone else what huge shoes he has to fill in succeeding Mrs. Lois Hole, perhaps the most popular and most beloved Lieutenant Governor in the 100 years since Alberta became a province. For the past four years the former Lieutenant Governor fulfilled the duties of her office with grace, generosity, and with the hugs for which she was famous. I just want to say once more how much she will be missed by those of us with the NDP opposition and by everyone in this Assembly.

I would also like to take this occasion to thank the residents of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for the trust they placed in me last November 26 by electing me for a third time to represent them in this Legislature. It is indeed an honour to serve a provincial constituency as diverse and hard-working as Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, a constituency I am proud to call home.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's throne speech was a disappointing document. Far from laying out an ambitious agenda for Alberta's next century, the government's commitments on the throne speech are a series of half measures designed more to put a happy face on the problems of the past than they are to chart a course for the province's future. The government seems so bereft of ideas that it's taken to stealing them from other jurisdictions and from other political parties, but if you're going to steal ideas, at least steal sensible ones. The Conservative government can't seem to do that.

For example, for its health care agenda the Conservative government has ripped off the slogan The Third Way from the United Kingdom in order to import a health care system from the United States. If you like the way the government is handling the ambulance transfer, you're going to love the way the government implements The Third Way in health care. Not much, Mr. Speaker.

For its grandiosely named access to the future fund the government is ripping off a flawed idea from the Alberta Liberals. I'm disappointed that the Conservatives had decided to use unplanned budget surpluses to set up the postsecondary endowment and to expand student scholarships. Relying on unplanned and unpredictable budget surpluses to fund endowments is bad budgeting and bad public policy. A March 2 government release that accompanied the throne speech says, "If there are any unbudgeted surpluses in future years, a portion of that surplus will go into this new endowment until it grows to a maximum of \$3 billion." Planned investments from future unbudgeted surpluses is in itself an oxymoron, Mr. Speaker. How can you have a planned investment from an unbudgeted surplus? Well, I'm sure that our former Provincial Treasurer could have told us that.

In other words, if there's a downturn in the price of oil and natural gas and future budget surpluses evaporate, Alberta's postsecondary students will either have no endowment at all or a significantly smaller endowment than first advertised. This is gambling with their future, Mr. Speaker. If endowments such as the one proposed for postsecondary education are set up, the cost of doing so should be built into the budgets up front and not depend on unbudgeted surpluses, as common as they are with this government.

The Conservative government has faced criticism, including from the province's own Auditor General, for systematically lowballing budgetary revenues, thereby leading to unbudgeted and unplanned spending partway through the fiscal year. Sometimes this unplanned spending starts before the ink on the provincial budget is dry. This government needs to be challenged to do accurate revenue forecasting for provincial budgets, not given the licence to dole out unbudgeted monies outside of the established budgetary process for its own ends. Banking on unplanned budget surpluses to fund endowments will make the government less accountable for the expenditure of public funds in the future.

My NDP colleagues and I are also concerned about the political motivations behind the postsecondary endowment fund. Yesterday's backgrounder that accompanied the throne speech certainly leads me to question that motivation. "The Minister of Advanced Education will then make decisions about how to allocate grants from the Access to the Future Fund." In other words, Mr. Speaker, instead of providing predictable, stable funding to our universities, public colleges, and technical institutes and letting them establish their own priorities, the Minister of Advanced Education gets to dole out the grants from the endowment fund at his whim. This leads me to question whether or not this is an endowment fund or just another political slush fund. In my view, this undermines the autonomy of postsecondary institutions and is not a step forward for advanced education in the province.

The tuition freeze in the throne speech is a bait-and-switch ploy, Mr. Speaker. It's only for one year. In fact, the government isn't even agreeing to freeze tuition at all, only to pay the costs of tuition increases for a single year, making it likely that students will be hit with a double tuition increase the following year.

The Alberta NDP caucus will continue to push for real solutions for Alberta's advanced education institutions, not band-aids. We will continue to push for an independent review of postsecondary education to fund long-term solutions to both affordability as well as to improving teaching and learning conditions at our universities, public colleges, and technical institutes.

I can move on to health care, Mr. Speaker. The throne speech says that "the days of endlessly studying and debating health care reform are over, and the time for action is now here." Yet, true to form, there is little or no detail about what those actions will be other than to study the problem some more by holding an international symposium of health care experts. To this day the Conservative government refuses to consult with Albertans about its so-called health care reforms, preferring instead to huddle with hand-picked experts. During the election the Premier repeatedly refused to discuss his health care plans with Albertans.

Unlike the Premier, my NDP colleagues and I have just returned from a province-wide tour where we asked Albertans, including seniors, patients, health professionals, disabled Albertans, and many others, to share their views with us on how to strengthen and sustain the health care system. From these Albertans we heard many excellent and exciting ideas which we are currently preparing in a report that we will table in this Assembly in the coming days. We heard about the need to expand public coverage of prescription medications while getting a better handle on the escalating costs of drugs. We heard about innovative suggestions about how to reduce wait times for specialists, diagnostic tests, and surgeries. We heard about the need to improve standards for long-term care of the frail elderly and the chronically ill, something that was also mentioned in yesterday's throne speech but on which very little action has yet been taken.

4:40

If there was a common theme to the presentations we heard from Albertans, Mr. Speaker, it is this: the best way to sustain health care is to strengthen public health care. We need to stop throwing money at more costly private approaches, yet I fear that this is exactly what this government has in mind with its so-called third way in health care.

The NDP invented public medicare, Mr. Speaker, and we can be counted on to defend it. Albertans can count on us to make the case for a strengthened and sustainable public health system, and the recently completed public hearings give us a good foundation for doing so.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government with an extremely poor track record when it comes to looking after lower income and working Albertans. After years of unapologetically having the lowest minimum wage of any Canadian province, an increase of that minimum wage sometime in the next year to \$7 will still only place us in the middle of the pack. While I welcome the review of employment standards announced in the throne speech, previous reviews have generally not yielded positive changes for working Albertans, and working Albertans and union members across this province are not looking forward to the potential that may arise from that.

The Conservative government has done several reviews of the assured income for the severely handicapped program. However, there's only been one single-digit increase in monthly benefit levels in the past 12 years despite the fact that our salaries as elected members are automatically adjusted every year. Disabled Albertans can only hope that the promised increase in financial benefits is a substantial one as there is a lot of catching up to do and that thereafter there is a mechanism put in place to link future adjustments to increases in living costs.

The throne speech says that Alberta agriculture producers are facing the future with renewed optimism. How ironic, Mr. Speaker, coming on the same day that a Montana judge threw a monkey wrench into the planned reopening of the American border for Alberta cattle exports. Not only that, but I have just learned that the United States Senate voted down the bill that would have opened the border to Canadian cattle by about 52 to 48. Again, the government's plans to deal with this crisis have been shown to be wanting.

Mr. Martin: Hope and pray.

Mr. Mason: Hope and pray is the answer that they keep coming back to.

It also exposes the government's continuing short-sightedness in placing all of its hopes in the reopening of the U.S. border instead of adopting an action plan to find long-term solutions for our farmers and ranchers. For over a year the government has rejected calls for a temporary floor price to curb excessive packer profits, to undertake universal testing of all cattle over 30 months, or to support increased packing capacity within the province to diversify export markets. They talk about it, Mr. Speaker, but we haven't seen any results yet.

Instead of adopting such positive solutions, the government instead continues to pursue its vendetta against the democratically elected Canadian Wheat Board. This attack continues despite the fact that Alberta grain farmers keep electing directors who want to maintain the Wheat Board's single desk marketing powers.

Mr. Speaker, environmental protection warrants only a single sentence in this throne speech. There's nothing said about addressing climate change or about the dangers posed by approving sour gas development near large urban centres. The water for life strategy is only mentioned in the vaguest of terms with no firm commitment to phasing out the use of fresh water by the oil and gas industry for well injection. These are important issues that my colleagues and I will be raising in this Assembly in coming days.

It is also disappointing that there is little in this year's throne speech about K to 12 education, this despite the fact that there is so much unfinished business in terms of implementing the recommendations of the Learning Commission. This unfinished business includes providing school boards with funding to implement kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs for disadvantaged children.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's throne speech alternates between the rudderless drift of a government that has spent far too much time in

office and whose leader is packing his bags to depart and, on the other hand, doing damage control to try and fix past mistakes, mistakes that are very, very serious and very difficult to overcome.

It's certainly not a plan that Albertans can fly with, Mr. Speaker, and not one that the Alberta New Democrats are prepared to support. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Red Deer-North, did you want to participate in Standing Order 29(2)(a)? We have five minutes.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election to the chair. It's obvious that we will need your experience and your knowledge throughout the session.

I rise today to enjoy the privilege of being the third government member of this House to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Congratulations are in order to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his appointment to this very important position and for his most gracious presentation of the throne speech.

I'm honoured to have the opportunity and responsibility to once again represent the constituency of Red Deer-North, and I look forward to working diligently with all my colleagues in this Chamber to ensure that Albertans have the best economic health and physical environment in order to continue to be successful.

Mr. Speaker, this term is one of legacies: the legacy of Lois Hole, who has served Albertans with such dedication and integrity; the legacy of our hon. Premier, proclaimed nationally to be one of the best leaders that Canada has ever seen; and the legacy of Alberta's centennial, an event that will remain in the hearts and minds of Albertans for many years to come, especially the school-age children, who will always remember the very special day that they received their centennial medallion.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I'd like to acknowledge a great Albertan, the former Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole, as my colleagues have done previously. She has left her hugs on thousands of people in this province, and her kind words and her legacy will continue to affect thousands more. Her list of accomplishments is impressive, and her commitment to honesty and goodwill is immeasurable. Lois Hole will remain in my memory as a true Alberta hero.

With the passing of Mrs. Hole comes the passing of the torch. I have no doubt that the new Lieutenant Governor will serve Albertans with the same passion and devotion as his predecessor. His Honour has demonstrated his love for all of Alberta by helping both the Edmonton Eskimos and the Calgary Stampeders to win that great Canadian Grey Cup. He is a football legend in the province, and with his new appointment as the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta a new legacy begins.

The next legacy, the one that will be left by the hon. Premier, is one of achievement, of sacrifice, and of commitment. What makes our Premier a great leader is his ability to sense the needs of Albertans and to turn their dreams into opportunity. Mr. Premier, we thank you for creating economic opportunities for Albertans to be able to realize their dreams.

Mr. Speaker, my young family moved to this great province 24 years ago from my hometown of St. Catharines, Ontario. My career choices in Ontario were limited to the usual and typical part-time jobs in banking and retail, and my husband's choices were limited to assembly line work for General Motors or the Ford Motor Company or as a communications technician for Marconi Canada or Bell Canada. Alberta opened up our suitcase of hopes and dreams and allowed us to fulfill our greatest potential.

Twenty-four years ago, when we drove our old car loaded down

with two children, one dog, one cargo trailer, one boat, and one very pregnant mama into the province of Alberta, we were welcomed by the great spirit of freedom, the great spirit of love for family, and the great spirit of entrepreneurship. The mountains confronted us with awesome wonder, the lakes greeted us with the colours of the wind, and the wheat fields waved to us as we passed by. We knew then that Alberta was a paradise where we could raise our family and have the opportunity to make our dreams come true, and more and more families keep coming every day because they know that this is the best place to live.

4:50

I thank our Premier and our government for not blinking in the face of adversity and criticism. I thank you for having the same courage and persistence as our pioneers, and I thank you for creating the economic environment that helped our family business to grow and to become very successful. Now that Alberta is the only debt-free province in Canada and our fiscal position is strong, we owe many thanks to you for leading us in this direction. I also thank you for introducing the Fiscal Responsibility Act as this legislation will remind future generations about the sacrifices made at the end of Alberta's first century by all Albertans to make life as an Albertan better in the second century. Your legacy will be timeless.

A very special legacy will remain from this term in Alberta's 2005 centennial celebration. This once in a hundred years event will allow us to look back and be proud of what Albertans have accomplished. We will unite in September and celebrate together the passing of this monumental time in our history, and we will leave legacies for future Albertans by way of centennial grants, the rebuilding of parks, historic buildings, and other important sites across the province.

Mr. Speaker, although it's a great time to be an Albertan, it's an exceptional time to be a member of this House. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to serve my province as the MLA for Red Deer-North and as the chair for the Standing Policy Committee on Justice and Government Services, and I thank the constituents of Red Deer-North for voting for me for the third time and for once again allowing me to represent them.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of the volunteers who helped me go door to door to listen to the concerns of constituents, who phoned people for hours on end, and who dedicated their time to ensure that I had the opportunity to stand here and represent them today.

I speak for all members in this House when I say that without volunteers Alberta would not be where it is today. The level of volunteerism in Red Deer and the rest of Alberta is very impressive. Alberta is recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in the voluntary sector. This is due to the strong values that make us Albertans. Among these values are three concepts – personal responsibility, caring about others, and family life – which are the ingredients for a healthy society. These concepts make up the values of the people of this province. Collectively there is no end to what we can accomplish.

I also thank Red Deer seniors who have worked with me and whose experience and wisdom have guided me through several decisions. Last session I submitted a motion to urge the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to review benefits for seniors and to raise the qualifying income levels for seniors' subsidies. The throne speech mentions that dental and optical benefits for seniors will begin on April 1, an announcement that makes me very happy. This session I have submitted a motion to urge the Legislative Assembly to review and implement regulations and standards for private, for-profit and private, not-for-profit long-term care facilities to ensure

that all seniors in any long-term care facility in Alberta are treated with the same respect and regulations everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is strong because its base is the family. I would like to thank my family as their support and love is the wind beneath my wings. I would especially like to thank my loving husband, Bob, who continues to give me confidence and who inspires me to achieve everything that I thought possible.

Finally, my extended family, which consists of all the people of Red Deer-North. This constituency of about 32,000 people is a great source of pride, and I continue to cheer their every accomplishment. We have hundreds of small businesses that serve the oil field, construction companies, manufacturing companies, and farmers which are flourishing and growing. Red Deer is part of the economic corridor along highway 2 that drives our economic engine. Companies like Olymel, E-One emergency, Traveleaire, Terroco, Halliburton, Safety Boss, and Nossack's are such important ingredients in the Red Deer-North recipe for a successful and diversified economy.

Infrastructure projects I have worked hard for in the Red Deer region, along with my hon. colleague from Red Deer-South, are the expansion of the Red Deer College library, the modernization and expansion of the Lindsay Thurber, Camille J. Larouge, and Notre Dame high schools, the hundred million dollar expansion of our Red Deer regional hospital, Red Deer's new \$7 million stand-alone cancer centre, expansion of the Red Deer health unit, and five affordable housing projects that will provide 244 homes in Red Deer to combat homelessness.

In addition to these infrastructure projects I've also worked and supported the hospital's Healing and Hope campaign, the St. John Ambulance Training Centre, the Children's Services Centre, the upgrading of Red Deer-North playgrounds for safety, increased funding for the Schizophrenia Society, funding for a detox centre in Red Deer, and a youth rehabilitation centre in central Alberta that I hope will be announced sometime in the future.

Finally, I presented Bill 202, the environmental cleanup act, that was unanimously supported in the Legislature, and I supported the north Red Deer water project. I presented Bill 23, Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act, which helps families by giving them two levels of service: family support services and child-focused services.

In this upcoming Legislature I will proudly push through legislation, Bill 202, to protect children abusing drugs, as a response to the growing drug addiction problem that is affecting so many families across this province. We need to keep the family strong as it is the core of a strong society, and with that core strong people are able to concentrate on living, working, and playing.

Mr. Speaker, we must remember that it is not governments that create wealth but people, provided that we have the policies which encourage them to do it. As a government we should not try to legislate everything as this will destroy the driving force of human nature, its inventiveness and ingenuity. We must leave the planning, the money making, and creativity up to the businesses that build up our economy.

We can, however, ensure that our children are healthy, educated, and productive members of society so that they can one day become

the brains and the sweat behind our economic engine. The fuel for this economic engine is a highly educated and productive labour force, and the education policies our government has introduced and will continue to introduce are the grease that the engine needs to work in the long run. I commend this government for recognizing the need for this grease, grease like the new postsecondary tuition policy that will make higher education more attainable for Albertans, the increased capacity for schools so that we have graduates to fill jobs, and our dedication to a knowledge-based economy. This is the wave of the future and another legacy that will be left by this government during this term.

This term will be one of legendary proportions. We will celebrate the life of the great Lois Hole. We will welcome His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. We will be led in this session for the last time by our hon. Premier, and we will celebrate Alberta's centennial. These people and all Alberta are associated with the pure pursuit of clear goals and desires of an honest and straight path to a great end. Mr. Speaker, I suggest that my colleagues remember why we are here and that we work together to keep the fires burning.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, would you like me to recognize you?

Ms Blakeman: No.

Prayer for Fallen RCMP Officers

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've been advised and it's confirmed that four RCMP officers were killed today and one was wounded. This will without any doubt go down, I am sure, as one of the darkest and blackest days in the history of Alberta.

I think we shouldn't be here. I have no right to say that, but I want you to join with me, please, in a moment of silent prayer. We extend to those four officers the hope that they will experience eternal peace, and to their loved ones, I would ask that all hon. members please provide them with all the strength that you have in your hearts so that it can be conveyed to them. This has to be one of our blackest days. Let's have that moment of silence and prayer.

Thank you. May they rest eternally in peace. Please be seated.

Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, I would ask you to move an adjournment motion, if you would.

5:00

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a sad and tragic day, and I commend you for the act that you've just taken to draw all members' attention to that. For the Deputy Premier and myself, who grew up in that area, it's doubly tragic to hear such sad news coming from there.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful to all the members for their understanding, and I would move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn until Monday at 1:30.

[Motion carried; at 5:01 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 7, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/03/07

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Please join me in the prayer. We give thanks for the lives of Your faithful servants who defend the freedoms and values that are a true expression of Your divine intent. We humbly ask Your blessings and grace upon the members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who were killed in the service of our country and our communities: Constable Anthony Fitzgerald Orion Gordon, Constable Lionide Nicholas Johnston, Constable Peter Christopher Schiemann, Constable Brock Warren Myrol. We pray for the families, friends, and fellow officers of those who have died as they mourn their loss. On Thursday last we prayed in this Assembly. Let us do it again as we stop for a moment of silence in honour of the four RCMP officers. May God bless them all and extend eternal salvation in a heaven of peace. Amen.

Hon. members, on your desk is a blue and black ribbon with a pin. It was provided this morning by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and it may be worn in memory of the four members of K Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, killed on Thursday last while carrying out their duties in the service of others.

Those citizens of Alberta wishing to express their sympathies for the officers can visit the Legislature rotunda, where books of condolences will be available from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. today, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of this week. These books of condolences were opened on Saturday last.

I would like to advise all as well that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police also have an online website, www.rcmp.ca, that citizens can access and convey their messages of condolence.

We will now participate in the language of your choice in the singing of our national anthem, and we'll be led today by Mr. Paul Lorieau.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of my colleague the Hon. Gene Zwozdesky, the Minister of Education . . . Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mrs. Fritz: . . . to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Ms Barbara Pederson and Ms Mary Sertic, who I

understand are from the Department of Education's information and strategic services division. I would ask that both Barbara and Mary rise and receive the traditional warm applause of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Again we'll call on the Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ambassador of France to Canada is in our province on his first official visit to the province of Alberta. It is my great privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly His Excellency Daniel Jouanneau, ambassador of France. With His Excellency are Mme Jouanneau and Jean-Yves Defay, consul general of France for Alberta, and Mme Defay. The honorary consul to Edmonton, Dr. Jean-Michel Turc, and Mrs. Turc are also here.

This is His Excellency the ambassador's first official visit to Alberta. Alberta has always had a special and warm relationship with the people of French heritage be they francophone Albertans, the vibrant Québécois, or our trading partners, visitors from, or generous hosts in France itself. I ask His Excellency Jouanneau and his party to stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly of Alberta.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 30 grade 6 students and their teachers, Ms Natalie Gago-Esteves and Mr. Matt Thiessen, from the Brander Gardens elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They're here today to observe and learn with keen interest about our government. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 19 department workers that are visiting the Legislature here today to see how we work first-hand. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

1:40

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly this afternoon seven students from the Cedarbrae community school in Calgary-Glenmore together with teacher Ms Chari Smith and parents Mrs. Jan Coates and Mrs. Judy Arnall. In the three terms now that I have been in the Assembly, while I have had an opportunity to introduce people, I have never had an opportunity to introduce a school group. This is the first one in that time that has visited Edmonton while we've been in session. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm response.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and other members of the Assembly a fine young lady who provided valuable service to the constituents of

Grande Prairie-Wapiti last summer, worked in the office. Lots of very positive comments from constituents who called in with concerns that they wanted addressed to the government. I'd like all members to recognize Hannah Zacharias, who is with us this afternoon and is currently a student at the University of Alberta.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a school group from one of my favourite schools in McClung, called Callingwood school. The students, staff, and parents of this school are truly amazing, and I have a particularly soft spot for this school because that's where my five-and-a-half-year-old boy attended his two years of playschool. Today I welcome 17 students and their teacher, Mr. Lonnie Wilcox, and one of the parents, Mr. Peter Conrad. I ask permission to invite them to stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to introduce to you and through you a group of 24 very energetic and enthusiastic seniors who reside in the Lifestyle complex in the fine constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They are joined today by group leaders Phyllis Lindsay and Mr. Bill Jones. I met with them a little bit earlier. They had lunch here, and they tell me that they've just had a wonderful day and were so pleased to have had the opportunity to meet His Honour Lieutenant Governor Norman Kwong. I'd ask your permission to have them stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mrs. Hubbard and her grade 6 class from Keenooshayo school from St. Albert and also Mr. Dennis Arnesan and Mrs. Sandi Mecir, who are volunteers. I believe they are in the public gallery. With your permission I will ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three international students who are currently pursuing their programs of study at the University of Alberta. Besides pursuing their graduate studies, these students are the founding members of the international student relief organization that raises funds not only for international students in need on campus but also for causes overseas. They and their organization have raised funds for the tsunami victims in Indonesia and Thailand. They are planning to hold an international cultural night on March 14, 2005, at 6:30 p.m. in Myer Horowitz Theatre on the U of A campus to raise funds, this time for tsunami victims in India.

These guests are Dr. Yokanath Sekar, Mr. Ouan Keosysano, and Sarabpreet Singh. They are already standing in the public gallery, so I would request all members of the House to give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to introduce to you and through

you to members of this Assembly two very important people from Red Deer, Darin Doel and Tracy Rosentreter. Darin is my constituency assistant, who does a tremendous job for me, and Tracy is a really good friend of mine. The two of them are here today in support of the introduction of Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs, as concerned parents. I would ask Tracy and Darin to rise in the members' gallery to receive the warm welcome from the House. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Deaths of RCMP Officers

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Much has been said about the RCMP shooting in Mayerthorpe. There has been much speculation about what happened and how it might have been prevented. It is natural for the public and the media to ask these questions and to look for answers, but I would encourage the members of this House to refrain from speculation.

In the coming days as funeral and memorial services are held, we need to stop and really think about the sacrifices these four men made for us. We need to honour their lives, we need to grieve for their families and their friends, and we need to pause for a moment and reflect on the remarkable service our police provide to us each and every day.

Later in today's session I will give notice of a motion. As you know, a national public memorial service will be held this Thursday afternoon at the University of Alberta. Because it will take place at the same time as our session, Mr. Speaker, my motion will seek to reschedule our session so that members can attend the memorial.

I would also like to report to this House, Mr. Speaker, that all members will be receiving a blue ribbon that honours these four RCMP members and all those who died in the line of duty before them.

Thank you.

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

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sent a note to the Solicitor General expressing my feelings that he has been under a great deal of pressure and he has spoken so well to the media to encourage all Albertans to enter into a period of grieving. It's just a terrible tragedy that has taken place. We talked this morning about the national public memorial service, and our caucus is in favour of suspending the usual business. It seems inappropriate to continue business as usual considering these tragic events.

This week as we continue to grieve the tragic loss of the four young men, we must deal with a variety of emotions: deep sorrow for the families of these men – nothing can diminish the pain which the families feel – and also anger, anger towards such an incredible, evil deed that in an instant took away their precious lives. At a time like this we realize how vulnerable our lives are and that life is such a precious gift, and we reel back from the horror of such violence which destroys life. May God give us courage, strength, and hope.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request the unanimous consent of the House to allow my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona the opportunity to speak on the statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the House for this opportunity. It's with deep sadness and pain in my heart that I rise today on behalf of my caucus colleagues and the NDP opposition to express our deep sorrow and regret of the tragic events of last Thursday. In the few days since the deaths of the four valiant constables from the RCMP, we have slowly begun to get a clearer picture about the crime that led to this terrible tragedy. To date the only thing we know for sure is the devastating impact this loss has had on the families, friends, and fellow members of the RCMP.

On behalf of the New Democrats I rise today to extend our deepest condolences to all those who have been affected by this loss. Our hearts are especially with the families and friends of the fallen officers and with the residents of the Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt area, whose lives have been so rudely jolted by this devastating event.

Every day we ask police officers to uphold the laws of our society. We ask these officers to put their lives on the line to safeguard our lives and our communities. Thankfully events leading to deaths of police officers are not commonplace, and that is what makes last week's events such a profound tragedy. We must do everything we can to learn from this tragic event. There has already been a great deal of speculation surrounding these events. It's my hope that collectively we can wait until all the facts are known before coming to conclusions, and I'm certain that as the grieving process takes its course and the investigation into last week's tragedy continues, we will be able to focus our attention on ensuring that such a tragedy never happens again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: 1:50 **Oral Question Period**

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

Inquiry into Deaths of RCMP Officers

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tragic events of last week leading to the deaths of four dedicated young members of the RCMP have devastated all Albertans. In the aftermath of this tragedy our attention turns to what can be done in the future to prevent incidents like this from occurring again. Our men and women who wear a uniform every day and put their lives on the line for our safety deserve no less. My questions are to the Solicitor General. What role is the Solicitor General's office going to play in the investigation of the events last Thursday outside Mayerthorpe?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Solicitor General's office won't play any role with regard to the investigation but that of the employer of the provincial police service. The RCMP's responsibility is to conduct the investigation, and if there is any assistance that the Solicitor General's office can provide, we'd be more than happy to assist them.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Solicitor General: does he know if there will be any actions taken or recommendations put forth while this investigation is proceeding to protect our police officers from being exposed to similar dangerous conditions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I spoke to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Anne McLellan. I conveyed to her the Alberta government's opposition to the decriminalization of marijuana, that in the wake of this tragedy now is not the time for the federal government to weaken illegal drug legislation.

As Alberta's Solicitor General I am more committed than ever toward the dismantling of organized crime in every region of this province. My department has been working on a strategy, and will continue to do so, to dismantle organized crime that I will present to my government colleagues in the immediate future.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, to the same minister: is the government considering any sort of provincial inquiry, public or otherwise, into the tragic events that led to the deaths of these four young officers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to supplement the answer on this, please.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I'd like to point out that the members of the Justice department work very, very closely with the police services of Alberta, and on their behalf I wish to pass on condolences to the family and friends. This is a most tragic event.

We will be having a fatality inquiry with respect to this matter. The RCMP are currently conducting their investigation, and it is necessary for that to conclude before a date with respect to the inquiry is set. It's important that all of the facts be available, and we believe that as a result of having a fatality inquiry, those facts will be made public and the best opportunity to determine what can be done to avoid a tragedy like this occurring again can be had.

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

Government Aircraft

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal opposition expects this government to know the value of a dollar, but this government's use of its fleet of aircraft indicates that it does not. To the minister of infrastructure: will the minister do the right thing and recommend to cabinet that the government fleet immediately be cut in half? Thank you.

Dr. Oberg: No.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the former Minister of Economic Development, a known leadership contender for the government party, took over 100 flights on government aircraft last year alone, how can the minister assure Albertans that the government planes are not being used for the Tory leadership campaign?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Each time a government minister books a plane, they do have to put down a purpose. As I mentioned in the Legislature on Thursday, that purpose can be government business, or they can be more specific. The ministers on this side have to get out to rural Alberta. I fully understand why the Liberal opposition does not want us in rural Alberta, but the rural Albertans are Albertans too.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that most of the flights are between Edmonton and Calgary, when will the minister of infrastructure table the government flight logs that have been so often promised and that are supposed to state the reasons for the use of the fleet of government aircraft?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Liberal opposition was allowed to see our flight logs.

Ms Blakeman: Point of order.

Dr. Oberg: They had asked that parts of these flight logs and the manifest be photocopied. We gave them full compliance on this.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that's very important here is something that the Liberals have championed for a long time, certainly this side of the House has championed for a long time as well, and that's freedom of information and privacy. Anything that potentially could damage the privacy of individuals will be severed before it is given to anyone. That's part of the law of this land, and it's something that we will adhere to.

An Hon. Member: You're hiding.

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, we are hiding nothing. We want to get it out. We have nothing to hide on this side.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader, there was a point of order?

Ms Blakeman: Yes, there was.

The Speaker: Okay.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora with the third question from the Official Opposition.

Market Surveillance Administration Review of Enron

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government can no longer ignore the mounting evidence that Enron colluded with Powerex to drive up electricity prices in Alberta. To the Minister of Justice: what investigations has Alberta Justice made on electricity price manipulation in Alberta?

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

Mr. Stevens: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. None.

Dr. B. Miller: Will Alberta Justice now investigate the allegations that Alberta's laws were broken by unscrupulous market traders?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that my colleague the Minister of Energy is following, and last week he answered questions in this House with respect to it. I'm sure that if the minister wishes me and my department to get involved, he will contact me. At this point in time there is no intention to proceed with anything.

Dr. B. Miller: Well, given that new evidence has revealed that Enron officials want to destroy all electricity trading tapes regarding Project Stanley, what is the minister doing to ensure that all evidence on this scandal is gathered?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the market surveillance administrator has received some new information about the case. I understand that he's reviewed the new information and has asked the federal Competition Bureau to reopen the investigation.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Border Closure to Canadian Cattle

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the past couple of months in anticipation of the American border opening to live cattle exports, Alberta cattle producers finally started making a bit of money after enduring almost two years of losses while meat packer margins soared. However, returns for farmers literally evaporated overnight due to last week's Montana court injunction that is keeping the border slammed shut, and cattle producers are once again back in the red. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Given the overnight collapse in prices since last week's Montana court injunction, will the government reconsider its stubborn opposition to a temporary floor price for cattle as a way to curb packer profiteering in a dysfunctional market?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week's announcement was indeed a very, very frustrating development in our long and bumpy road to normalized trade between our two countries. I think it's important to note that our argument today is not with the government of the United States. They are firmly onside with the rule that they've prepared. The President of the United States has publicly announced his intention to veto any opposition to that in both Houses. The Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary Johanns, has been very, very supportive in his comments to it.

As to the pricing mechanism that is in place in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, we are extending the calf set-aside program that was in place up to this point. We're going to extend it out farther. We've made some adjustments to it to be more market reactive. The industry is telling us that that's the way to go, and that's the way we will go.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the U.S. Senate voted 52 to 48 against legislation that would have opened the border, can the minister tell us what our envoy to Washington, Mr. Smith, has been doing in terms of lobbying the Senate of the United States?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent question. I

must say that my understanding of the American system would tell me that the Senate needs a two-thirds majority in order to override the presidential veto. The Senators knew that; they knew it when they voted. They also knew that the President had announced his intention to veto that vote prior to the vote taking place. So I view the vote as somewhat symbolic. All politics is local.

The office in Washington has been instrumental, Mr. Speaker, in creating the context for us to meet with those Senators and Congressmen as well as members of the USDA as well as members of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. The Premier instructed the office in Washington to stay in very close touch with all of the key members and key decision-makers there so that we can act as a team and work with our partners across the border.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If the minister and the government are again wrong in their predictions about American political behaviour, what does the minister then have to say to Alberta farmers who are losing their farms?

The Speaker: Well, that's kind of a speculative question, but if the minister wants to briefly say something, go ahead.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, our plan that was developed last year, the six-point restructuring plan, was based on the fact that the border would be a long time in reopening. In fact, these developments this past month are far ahead of the schedule that we had anticipated previously. The six-point recovery plan, that we are working on right now and working on through and with industry, is working. We have had an increase in slaughter capacity in our province over 20 per cent since the first case of mad cow was announced. The industry is solidly behind what we are doing. In fact, I met with them this morning in Calgary, and we are working with them to make sure that what we do doesn't hurt the industry and, in fact, makes it a stronger one when this crisis is over.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Inquiry into Deaths of RCMP Officers

(continued)

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most Albertans are still shocked by the tragic shooting of four RCMP officers on Thursday in my constituency of Whitecourt-St. Anne. The family members, the police force, and our communities are in deep mourning as we face a week of funerals and memorial services throughout the province. During this time we must respect the families involved and not politicize this horrific disaster. My first and only question is to the Minister of Justice. Given that the minister has ordered a fatality inquiry, what will the minister do to ensure that the families' wishes for a week of mourning are respected?

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

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly agree with the hon. member that this particular week is a week of grieving, of mourning, and that that is what all Albertans should focus on. In an answer to a previous question this afternoon I indicated that a fatality inquiry has been ordered. However, there is no intention whatsoever to proceed in any meaningful way at this time because the RCMP

investigation is ongoing. It was important to tell Albertans who were asking questions about what happened that there in fact will be a process, the usual process, if you will, to answer those questions. In the fullness of time it will be held, but it certainly won't be proceeding in any fashion this week, hon. member.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Métis Hunting Rights

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Did the minister consult with any groups, such as the 14,000-member-strong Alberta Fish and Game Association, before entering into the interim Métis hunting agreement signed in September of 2004?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, we did not do that. We went into negotiations with the Métis settlements as recognized by the Powley decision, where the Métis community is the group that we would recognize. So that's basically what we did.

Mr. Tougas: Again to the same minister: given that no other province has entered into such an agreement, why did the government hastily sign this document without consulting all concerned stakeholders?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, we did not do this hastily. The Supreme Court of Canada made a decision on the Powley decision actually in September of 2003. It took us a year to go into negotiations, and those negotiations are what sent us to make sure that we address the very concerns.

The one thing that I would like to say about the decision is that the decision came out with some areas where we were not quite certain as to what needed to be done. What we wanted to do was ensure that we were dealing with the Métis community to address a number of issues, and of course those ones were the conservation issues for the benefit of all Albertans, and I think that's really important when we're looking at these issues, when we're dealing with the rights of aboriginal communities.

Mr. Tougas: To the same minister: given that the agreement was created out of session and with no opportunity for public debate, will the minister commit to consulting with concerned groups before signing the final document?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, when we're dealing with minority rights, it's a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada to be able to address the issues, and each province then has to be able to address the concerns, as has been decided. What we have done is we made sure that we addressed the concerns with the very community that has been impacted and the ones who have the rights, and that's what we've been doing. It was a negotiated position with those communities. The rights were recognized and affirmed by the Powley decision.

Basically, what we did then was we made sure that we would work with that community to be able to address the very issues that the decision left, where we wanted to ensure that we took care of the conservation issue. What we did then was we made sure that we

would work with those communities. There is an opportunity for any other group to be able to identify should the interim agreement not do what we had intended to do.

I'm sure the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development may want to address that very concern about the implementation of the agreement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Highway Safety

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Economic activity is at an all-time high in northern Alberta, and this puts tremendous pressure on our highway safety and has been especially noticed in northern corridors like highways 43 and 63. Again this winter we are experiencing a high number of serious and fatal accidents. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: what are your department's near-term plans to continue the upgrading of highways 43 and 63?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Highways 43 and 63 are incredibly important to Alberta, especially as the increased economic activity in these areas just continues to blossom. On highway 43 we have already twinned a little over 300 kilometres of that particular highway, and there are about another hundred to go. We have been held up to a small degree because of some land acquisition issues. We certainly hope and would foresee that those will be done very shortly, within the next couple of weeks. So we will be proceeding with the twinning of highway 43, and hopefully we'll get it done as quickly as we can.

Highways 63 and 881 – and I would add in highway 881 because I do believe that that does add some potential outages for us on this – will be looked at very, very quickly. We are looking at a concise and comprehensive plan for the whole corridor up to Fort McMurray. Again, when you take a look at the economic activity up there, the number of people that are going to be travelling on that road, it's absolutely imperative that we do this.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what message is your department co-ordinating with the enforcement agencies on these routes?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, over the past winter we've seen a lot of accidents occur right across the province of Alberta. Many of these have had to do with enforcement issues: driving too fast, making left turns when they shouldn't, all of the above. We are putting together a concerted effort to ensure that there is improved enforcement, that the enforcement is out there. We are co-ordinating it very closely to the McDermid report, which was a very comprehensive, good report on the safety of roads in Alberta, and we'll be doing that very shortly.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: has highway maintenance or lack thereof contributed to the high collision rates, again, on these routes?

Dr. Oberg: I would love to stand here and say no, but I have been in communication with a lot of the municipalities in northern Alberta, and there certainly have been a lot of maintenance issues that have been raised with me over the past couple of weeks. Mr. Speaker, through to the hon. member, we are looking very closely at our maintenance contracts and ensuring that that standard of our highways is maintained. Quite frankly, I've heard some rather nasty stories about our maintenance contracts, so we will be taking a look at these, especially in northern Alberta, to ensure that they are to a high standard. Again, the transportation routes in northern Alberta are absolutely critical.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Climate Change

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For several years the government of Alberta has committed itself to face the stark reality of climate change and to greenhouse gas reductions. However, the Alberta government has not created any absolute targets and only voluntary compliance. Alberta's greenhouse gases continue to increase in spite of this commitment. To the Minister of Environment: how can the minister tell Albertans that we are leaders in reducing greenhouse gases in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to say that the province of Alberta is the only government in Canada that has legislation dealing with true action on the issue of climate change. That speaks for itself in terms of why Albertans have been leaders in the past, will be leaders today and certainly into the future on this important issue in protecting our environment.

Dr. Swann: A second question, Mr. Speaker: given that some municipalities and companies in Alberta are already on track to achieve Kyoto targets in 2012, when will this government require all industry to meet their commitment?

Mr. Boutilier: This is so important, Mr. Speaker, the issue of a carrot or a stick. In changing behaviour, I think all of us as Albertans have a responsibility that we have our behaviour so that we do the right thing, rather than using a stick. In my meeting with the federal minister, Dion, when he visited on my invitation the province of Alberta just two weeks ago – I might also say that the province of Alberta is the only government in Canada that has Climate Change Central, an agency unmatched anywhere in the country because of the leadership we took seven years ago. We are on the right track. We want to do the right thing, but we're going to be doing it because our behaviour says that it's the right thing to do in protecting our environment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the Alberta government help industry by showing real leadership and work with other jurisdictions to establish consistent regulations?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes a very important point relative to working with our stakeholders. It's not only industry though; it's every single Albertan. As you know, we got in our cars today to come to work, or we took public transit. If

I were to ask everyone in here, “Who took public transit? Who drove? Who walked? Who took a bicycle?” – the reality of it is that industry has a responsibility, and my comment to them has been this, that they can do better, just like all Albertans can do better, and that’s this government’s commitment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Métis Hunting Rights (continued)

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As was mentioned earlier, this government has entered into agreements with Alberta’s Métis people to permit hunting, fishing, and trapping year-round. Many of my constituents in Drayton Valley-Calmar are feeling that this is very unfair and that it will deplete the harvest for sport hunting and fishing. My questions today are for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Given that Alberta has resisted other Supreme Court decisions, with regard to same-sex marriage and the gun registry, why did we sign these agreements?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, as I indicated earlier, the Supreme Court of Canada in the Powley case of 2003 recognized and affirmed that the Métis had an aboriginal right to hunt and fish as their ancestors had for generations. What it did was that it left some issues unresolved.

In terms of the question that was asked, under section 35 of the Constitution these are rights that cannot be questioned or in any way, shape, or form used with the notwithstanding clause. What they did, then, in the Powley case was they certainly affirmed those rights.

Basically, when we went into the negotiations, we wanted to make sure we did a number of things, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we wanted to have certainty . . .

The Speaker: Perhaps, hon. minister, we’ll get to that a little later. The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is for the same minister. Who, then, can claim these rights?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Métis of Alberta. As the Supreme Court of Canada indicated, there was a test for making sure that the Métis had a way to be able to identify themselves. One is self-identification, one is ancestry, and one is community acceptance. What we did was we decided that the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Settlements General Council were the community that we use, so basically we had to ensure that that membership was going to be able to meet the test of what was happening under the Powley case.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary question is for the same minister. Given that the original agreements were struck at a time when the common weapon was the willow bow and arrow, will we require the modern-day Métis to use such ancient weapons, or will we allow them to use the modern guns?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, nowadays it seems that those who have money can use the bow and arrow. Years ago we used to use the bow and arrow, it’s true, and we didn’t have the guns, but nowadays it’s those who have dollars that can use the bow and arrow, and we use the guns.

So I guess what we’re trying to make sure is that we have the

conservation issue in place. I’d like the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development to talk about the issue of conservation, which all Albertans are concerned about.

The Speaker: Perhaps another day, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Workplace Drug Testing

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recently leaked 2003 industry report to government said that Alberta should change its human rights law to allow random workplace drug testing. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: will the minister commit to tabling that report in the Assembly during this sitting?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Once I do a thorough review of the report, no doubt it’ll be filed.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: is this government committed to bringing in mandatory random workplace drug testing to determine drug use risk rather than just impairment?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I did have an opportunity to meet with a number of groups that are interested in that particular area. It is a very important area and challenging and not easy because you may introduce something that industry cannot afford or support. So we will be working very closely with industry, continue monitoring the situation, and make the necessary changes that are required.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: as a show of good faith and in order to better be acquainted with this process, will the minister volunteer that Executive Council, cabinet ministers, submit to random drug tests to better understand this process?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, no, but the Liberals may want to do it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Government Air Travel

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The main purpose of the Alberta government’s aircraft fleet seems to be the operation of some sort of private limousine service for the Premier and the Tory caucus. Despite the fact that the government planes fly empty a good percentage of the time, the government has admitted that it also charters planes on occasion. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. How often does the government charter aircraft in addition to flying people around on the government-owned fleet?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are occasions when we do charter planes. By far the most common occurrence of this is when one of the planes is out for maintenance. We’ve had several times when the Dash 8, some of the King Airliners have gone for routine maintenance, and therefore we have chartered them.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that we will be having some episodes where we will have to charter planes in the near future; for example, when

the Queen comes. All of these things are occurrences. We attempt not to do it unless there are outstanding circumstances.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:20

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the government, then, ever charter private jet planes, and if so, will the minister agree to make public information detailing the cost and the frequency of doing so?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I believe there have been four, five, or six different times when there has been a private jet chartered to go across Canada. Again, consistent with the freedom of information and privacy rules we would certainly make these public.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask: does the \$3.5 million cost to the Infrastructure and Transportation ministry of the government-owned fleet represent the entire cost to the government, or are there additional costs for the aircraft allocated to the budgets of other departments or even to the Premier's office?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, each and every time the members of Executive Council utilize the government aircraft, it is billed to my department, which takes into account the \$3.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, one point I would really like to make and that I think deserves being said is that the province just to the left of us, British Columbia, recently went and sold their planes, and as of today my understanding is that their costs have been roughly triple what their costs were when they owned their fleet. So this fleet, although it's probably a break-even kind of point, does enable us – and I really have to say this again and again and again – to do our business in rural Alberta, which is critically important to the people on this side.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Beef Recovery Strategy

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today was supposed to be an encouraging and progressive day for cattle producers. Instead, thanks to the actions of a group of protectionist ranchers in the United States our cattle industry faces uncertainty. Many ranchers and farmers who have had their livelihood and dreams again diminished are feeling the anguish of the challenge ahead. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development mentioned the progress on the set-aside program. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. What else is the government doing to help our industry deal with the uncertainty they are currently facing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a very good question. One of the things we are doing immediately with industry is going over our six-point plan as well as the set-aside program to ensure that we're on the right track. In addition to that, we all recognize that slaughter capacity is a key component of that, but slaughter capacity alone won't do it. We have to have international markets and marketplaces where we can diversify our markets. To that end, this morning I was with the Premier at an industry meeting

where the Premier announced a \$37 million new program for BSE initiatives, which is to increase our market access as well as deal with the question of SRM removal and to try to create more value on farm.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the same minister. The Premier and the minister mentioned in their announcement about the progress tied to the six-point plan. Could the minister please enlighten us on the progress that's being made in other elements besides the plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the six-point plan is what the whole industry is basing our recovery strategy on and a significantly increased slaughter capacity. I mentioned earlier in answer to another question that in Alberta our slaughter capacity since the first case of mad cow disease has gone up over 22 per cent. We are currently at a capacity that will increase to 67,500 head per week by the fall of this year. That's an increase of close to 800,000 head each year. In addition to that, current slaughter capacity for cattle older than 30 months, which is a real concern with our producers, sits at about 600,000 head per year. The proposed projects that we're aware of right now will increase that national slaughter capacity for older cattle to over 1.4 million head per year.

Our inventory management programs are coming along very well, Mr. Speaker. We are looking at other income support. We are reviewing the case program in conjunction with other provincial ministries in meetings we attended last week. In addition to that, the Premier invited me to sit in on a conference call where the Prime Minister and other provincial ministers spoke about the current situation and whether we needed to change plans or to re-evaluate our plans. The general consensus is we're on the right track. Industry is behind us, industry supports what we're doing, and they're very much involved in those plans.

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

Trade Mission to Southeast Asia

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From January 11 to the 21st of January 2004 the Premier led a delegation on a trade mission to India and Hong Kong. This trip cost Alberta taxpayers about \$64,500. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. What incentive has this government provided to the Indian film industry to encourage the production of movies in Alberta as a result of this trip?

Mr. Mar: None that I'm aware of, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Agnihotri: Again, to the same minister: can this government prove that this trip provided a benefit to the Alberta film industry?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I think this might be a question that may more properly be directed to the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Agnihotri: Another one to the same minister: can this government provide proof that all gifts over \$200 received by the government members on this trip were reported to the Ethics Commissioner?

The Speaker: Hold on. Hon. member, questions of that nature should be directed to the Ethics Commissioner.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Prevention of Wildfires

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the last five years we've seen wildfire devastation through several communities in western Canada and the United States. Following the Kelowna fires of 2003 the B.C. government released the Firestorm report, highlighting the urgent need for protective measures to be taken in and around forest communities to help protect them from wildfire. My questions today are to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is the provincial government doing to reduce the risk of wildfires around these forest communities?

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

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The province has started implementing FireSmart communities based on the principle of Alberta's at-risk communities that are in the forest. Certainly, you can see that it's no small task. Over the past five years we've come what I believe is a long way with the department and with the help of communities in assessing communities in the forest protection area, prioritizing them based on a degree of risk, and we're starting to develop an implementation plan for those who we deem to be a top priority. Right now the department is focusing on about 32 communities across the province, and every one of these communities is currently in the planning or the implementation stage of the FireSmart process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Why has it taken so long to see the results on the ground?

Mr. Coutts: The planning process, Mr. Speaker, is a very lengthy one. FireSmart is only a small part of a broader landscape picture. It's important to know that there are a number of other important priorities that have to be taken into account in making a FireSmart community, and those are fish and wildlife habitat, timber resources, public lands, and, of course, the all-important watershed. Work is proceeding in many of these communities. Particularly in West Yellowhead the town of Hinton is proceeding with their plans, and open houses will be held in Grande Cache and Robb in the coming weeks to gather public input on the FireSmart proposals that are before that community.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the same minister. How long will Albertans who live in communities deemed as a lower priority have to wait to get this critical protection?

2:30

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, individuals can begin today, companies that are in the forest protection area can begin today, and communities can begin today. That is, we need the help of every resident, of every municipality, and of every stakeholder to make a FireSmart plan work in that community. Albertans can begin by fire smarting

their own particular properties, and municipalities can start by introducing FireSmart principles within their boundaries. We have a wealth of public information that is available to individuals, to stakeholders, and to communities through the process with step-by-step instructions on how they might reduce the risk in their communities, and they can find that information on Sustainable Resource Development's website.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Centennial Education Savings Plan

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education participated in the launch of the centennial education savings plan. Now, most of my constituents are pleased that this government is actively encouraging parents to start saving early for their children's postsecondary education, but they wish that the program applied to children born before 2005. To the Minister of Advanced Education: why are children born before 2005 not eligible for the initial \$500 grant of the centennial education savings plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That has been a concern raised by a number of parents calling my office and calling colleagues. I know that many parents, particularly those whose children were born in the previous months just before January 1 of this year, are concerned and raising that question, quite appropriately. But as with any program there has to be a start date.

Since January 1 of this year there have been approximately 4,500 births registered in this province. It's estimated that there will be 40,000 children born in our province in 2005. We've budgeted about \$20 million to provide these children with a head start on their postsecondary savings. We encourage parents to get to their banks or financial institutions and open those RESPs so that the money for those children that are eligible can be deposited in the RESPs.

Again, Mr. Speaker, programs have to start at some point in time. It's difficult to go back and change retroactively everything for everybody. So, unfortunately, we can't go back and start it retroactively. However, one of the things that I want to assure people is that one of the most important parts of the CESP program is not just the putting of money in the account but the recognition at birth that children will go on to get an advanced education.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: would the minister consider looking at the possibility down the road of making the three subsequent \$100 grants available to all holders of registered education savings plans in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a good idea. We have had some initial discussions about it and are trying to cost out to see what effect there would be if every child could have the \$100 supplement at age 8 and age 14. We'll certainly be looking at that to see whether we can manage to change the program in that way.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the program is about more than just the \$500 and the supplements of \$100 at those two ages. The program is about encouraging people to think about education when their

children are young and make sure that their children have an RESP in place. Statistics show that 80 per cent of children with RESPs in their names go on to postsecondary studies, but only 44 per cent of parents have actually opened an RESP for their children. There's lots of work to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: given that children born in 2005 and beyond who participate in the centennial education savings plan will be better able to afford postsecondary training, what is the government doing with respect to affordability for students of today?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, that's a very important question. The Premier mentioned in his speech to the province in early February that we're very concerned about affordability in postsecondary. We're also very concerned about access. We're intending to create 15,000 new spaces in the next three years, 30,000 over six years, and 60,000 over the years of the 20-year strategic plan. But it has to be affordable.

Affordable is more than just tuition fees. Although we've indicated to the public postsecondary institutions that we will pay the costs of increase in tuition this year, we also have indicated that we're going to spend the course of this next year looking at affordability, looking at the costs of going to school, whether you're coming from Manyberries or whether you're coming from Fort Vermilion, whether you're moving from one urban centre to another. It's more than just tuition; it's also the cost of living and the cost of transportation.

So we're going to do that review. We're going to make sure that finances are not a barrier to a student getting an education.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Tourism in Rural Alberta

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the government released the report *A Place to Grow*, Alberta's rural development strategy. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. What is the minister planning to do in order to meet the recommendation that new tourism destinations be developed in rural Alberta?

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, the four pillars of tourism in this province have traditionally been, of course, Calgary and Edmonton and Banff and Jasper. Certainly, the mandate that we have taken on is to move the tourism activity further into rural Alberta, and I want to just reaffirm to everyone here in the House today that there's lots to see in rural Alberta. As a way to try to solidify my argument about lots to see, I would want to indicate that if I lived just east of Lethbridge and if I had a dog and that dog wanted to run away, I could watch him for three days. You can see lots in rural Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what plan for the next year does the minister have to establish, expand, and market tourism opportunities in rural Alberta?

Mr. Dunford: I notice I have the attention of the House now. Thank you very much.

The product development and marketing arms of our ministry are

taking a look at some projects as we speak, and one of the ones that I am particularly excited about is around the Canadian badlands. Now, this is a project, of course, that would be primarily located east of highway 2. I think this is very important because we do get caught up, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the corridor and in terms of the mountains as we look at tourism here in the province. So when we start looking at east of highway 2, we look at the Canadian badlands. I might throw in at that particular point the Dinosaur Trail and other product that is likely to come on stream as we move forward.

We're very, very excited, then, about the opportunities for rural Alberta as it relates to tourism.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Beef Slaughter Facilities

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my question to the hon. minister of agriculture on the crisis of BSE. The question I have at this time is that no one understands the importance of value-added here in the province, yet many of the small packing plants that are trying to get up and going cannot receive the financial aid they need and backing. Would the government contemplate or consider making a dollar-to-dollar match for the small packing plants and have a first mortgage on those packing plants, that would enable them to get the funding up and running and, therefore, increase and have value-added here in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the hon. member. Today I don't think it's fair to say that they cannot get the funding that they require. Those plants that have proper business plans, those plants that have the experience and the expertise to move forward and the markets are getting the financing that they need, and we're going to see those plants come to fruition very, very shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I said in public and many other times that anyone can build a slaughter facility. That's not the hard part. It's what you do with it afterwards that counts. This government is not going to pick winners or losers. We're going to stand behind our producers, and we're going to stand behind this industry.

Mr. Hinman: Last week the Premier made comments that it's not about science; it's about politics. Our beef is supposedly safe here, which I know it is. I eat it here in the province. Why has this government shut down farm gate sales and acts like there is a problem? In the past we've always had farm gate sales. We no longer allow it here in the province of Alberta, whereas B.C. still does.

2:40

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest things that has come out of this is that the world and consumers demand food safety. This government has always worked with the industry to develop the rules and regulations that will enable these plants to survive and thrive. I think the member is a little bit mistaken in some of the comments that he's making with regard to our shutting down this marketplace.

I'll say one other thing, Mr. Speaker. Part of our six-point plan, a major component of it, is the slaughter capacity. One of the things that the industry has told me at round-tables that I had with the industry in January is that we need to have a consensus amongst our producers as to food safety, food inspection, and that is what we

have. They like the rules that we have in place. We would like to harmonize with the other provinces, and that's another issue that we'll be addressing federally and provincially.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. A final supplemental question regarding the banking system here. There are many farmers that are in a crisis situation now because of BSE. Would you urge the banks to postpone their foreclosure on those farming operations that have not been able to zero-base their operating loans because of BSE?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to see the specifics of any of those situations that might be urgent in nature. I can tell you that under our CAIS program the advanced payments and the final payments under the 2003 program are about 70 per cent complete. In many instances where the banks have decided that they for whatever reason do not want to wait for that program, we've been able to expedite the 2003 CAIS payments and, in fact, the advances under CAIS. The banks have been very, very receptive to that, and I intend to continue to dialogue with them and to work on making the CAIS program the risk management program for all producers in the province.

The Speaker: Hon. members, today we were able to recognize 17 hon. members, which is very, very significant. So I want to congratulate all of you who have participated for your sharp questions and your sharp answers. A couple might get a note from me later in the day, but all in all pretty good.

Just so the Minister of Economic Development knows, while you may be able to see a dog running for three days outside of Lethbridge – I said the other day that I would start with a comment of the day – in March of 1906 the first Edmonton-to-Calgary automobile journey was undertaken in a 29-horsepower Ford. Twenty gallons of gasoline and a gallon of lubrication oil were used to complete the journey. Sounds like my Buick.

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

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the Albert Lacombe school from St. Albert. They have some special teachers here, Bruce Brown and Tina Warbis, and volunteers, which are key, Mrs. Labas and Mr. Lauckner.

Also, I understand that the hon. Doug Griffiths, Battle River-Wainwright, is getting married. He says a special hello to Brodie Ackerblade, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member will have observed earlier that I did like that to the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports for mentioning the name of an hon. member. I have to do the same thing to the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Okay. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the Assembly I am very honoured to introduce a rancher from northeastern Alberta. Shelley Dyck farms with her husband Bob and her family just northwest of St. Lina. Shelley is a previous school board trustee for many years, and she is now presently offering her contributions and efforts and knowledge by sitting on the zone 7 children's services board. So if I could ask this Assembly to honour Shelley Dyck if she would rise, please.

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very proud to rise in the House to introduce a number of guests who are here in support of Bill 202, PCAD, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs. Some of them braved the winter road conditions to be here, but they've been through much more difficult circumstances as they watched their loved ones sink lower into the depths of depression with drug abuse.

There is one that could not be here today, and his name is Tyler Bjornstad. Tyler wanted to be here today to support this bill, but he was not able to be here due to ongoing treatment. He also supports this legislation.

So here in our members' gallery today I would like to introduce Morgan Kingdom, Dallas Oeger, Alisha Pollar, Nick Smith, Ryan Stanley, and Miranda Zapisocki. If I pronounce your names wrong, I apologize. Those are youth that here today to support this bill.

From Parents Empowering Parents – if you'd like to stand when I call your name, then we'll be able to recognize you later on, parents – we have Audrey Bjornstad, Patrick Galenza, Kelly Parson, Barb White, Maralyn Benay, Tina Dow, and Gord Daniher. Other parents and family members from Parents Empowering Parents are Marguerite MacPherson, Lori Read, Pat LaSalle, Bill Baker, Aline Lafleur, Lisen Limon Falcon, Asia Castor, Samantha Castor, Karin Daniher, Denise Scorgie, Moyra Holliday, and Chris Uttley.

One more recovering youth who is present is Gillian Galenza, and I'd ask Gillian to stand as well. Anyone else here supporting Bill 202, if I do not have your name . . .

The Speaker: It's okay, hon. member. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Jablonski: Could you please welcome our members? Thank you.

The Speaker: I'm going to be leery of these introductions here. That went on seven minutes.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs on Recognitions.

head: **Recognitions**
North Saskatchewan River Rescue

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 24 two nine-year-old boys fell through the thin ice of the North Saskatchewan River and into the frigid waters. Brandon was able to pull himself out to safety, but Steven Hillman was not able to do the same. Luckily for him Jack King, Lawrence Yuskow, Patricia Bartolozzi, and Patrizio Bartolozzi were nearby to come to his rescue.

King immediately went to help, running into Yuskow, who then called 911, and the Bartolozzis happened upon King and Yuskow and immediately sprang into action. Patrizio risked his own life by crawling out onto the thin ice to drag Steven to safety. Without Patrizio's quick thinking and selfless drive to help a person in need, Steven might have suffered a different fate.

For their actions I would like to recognize Jack King, Lawrence

Yuskow, and Patricia Bartolozzi, and for risking his own life to rescue Steven Hillman, I would ask the Assembly to pay special tribute to Patrizio Bartolozzi. He truly is a role model and a hero.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

U of A Pandas Hockey Team

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and recognize some very outstanding athletes from the University of Alberta. These fine young women have been doing a single masterful job since October 13, 2001, and that is win. They have not lost a single game during this time frame and have just recently captured their fourth straight Canada West women's hockey title, beating the Manitoba Bisons 2 to 1 and 5 to 3 in a best of three final.

Their current unbeaten streak currently sits at 105 straight games. You very rarely see such dominance in sport at any level. This is just an outstanding feat considering the level of competition in women's university hockey.

The amount of dedication these women put forward towards both their athletic and academic commitments is to be admired and commended. They have had many close games, but these athletes just refuse to give up and have come together as a team and persevered.

I congratulate all the athletes, the head coach, coaches assistants, and parents of the present team and of all the teams since 2001 on a job well done.

Thank you very much.

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

2:50

Kyle Shewfelt

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak about a once-hidden secret in the Dover community of the Calgary-Fort constituency. Indeed, it's a secret no more that a quiet young Albertan has brought top honour to Canada at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, the birthplace of the Olympic Games.

This young man is Kyle Shewfelt. He is the family product of Nola and Wes Shewfelt, together with his brother Scott. He is also the athletic product of the Altadore Gymnastic Club and personal coach Tony Smith and career coach Kelly Manjak. As you know, he has brought great pride and encouragement to Canadian athletes, and he is an great inspirational model for the young people in Alberta.

Just think about it. Olympics 2004: we have two gold medals won by Albertans.

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

U of A Golden Bears Volleyball Team

Mr. Johnson: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the University of Alberta men's volleyball team. The Alberta Golden Bears captured their fourth national men's volleyball championship on Sunday in Quebec City, with an exciting 3 to 2 win over second seeded Trinity Western Spartans in one of the more closely contested national finals in history.

This accomplishment was made all the more exceptional by the fact that the national title caps off a brilliant season for the Bears in which they had an overall record of 33 wins and only two losses, and fourth year player Brock Davidiak of Edmonton earned MVP honours following his performance in the gold match final.

It takes a great deal of skill and dedication to win a championship

banner, and the Bears volleyball team is to be congratulated. This latest achievement builds on the university's outstanding reputation for good sportsmanship and excellence in athletics.

I know all members of this Assembly join me in extending their best wishes and congratulations to head coach Terry Danyluk and all members of the University of Alberta men's volleyball team.

Spitz Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise today and recognize the outstanding efforts of the Foothills Speed Skating Marathon Association in hosting the third annual Spitz Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon, an international event in Sylvan Lake on February 26.

Through the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Evert van Benthem, Mr. and Mrs. Dirk Appel, and Mr. and Mrs. Peter Yss, this year's event was a huge success, with local volunteers hosting over 125 skaters from Europe and 50 from outside our province, with a total of 500 skaters participating in all the races. In fact, Mr. van Benthem is to the Netherlands in speed skating what hockey and Wayne Gretzky is to Canada.

It's hoped that this event, which honours the sport of speed skating and the Dutch heritage of these three men, will grow and become one leg of the Grand Prix 200-kilometre circuit. This would be a huge accomplishment for Sylvan Lake. The other three legs of this international event are in Sweden, Austria, and Finland.

This is truly a remarkable event, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask all honourable members to join with me in recognizing the volunteers and organizers who did such an outstanding job.

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

Flooding in Guyana

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In late December of 2004 and into the end of January this year the nation of Guyana endured four weeks of torrential rains which have resulted in widespread flooding. Many people lost their lives, and 50 per cent of the total population in Guyana have lost everything they had, their livestock and cash crops, and the rest have with limited water supply and inadequate medical assistance, all contributing to a high risk of disease.

As many as 75,000 people, almost 10 per cent of the total population there, still have standing water in and around their homes, raising fear of epidemics such as malaria and cholera. It's a huge challenge for the government as well as the people of Guyana to get the water out and the health resources in.

The flood disaster in Guyana brought powerful relief that was felt here in our homes and everywhere around the world. The lives lost cannot be replaced, but we certainly can reduce the suffering of victims of this disaster by helping them . . .

The Speaker: That's one minute, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Pharmacist Awareness Week

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise again today, this time in recognition of national Pharmacist Awareness Week. The theme of this year's event is A Healthy Partnership: You and Your Pharmacist.

Pharmacists work in local drugstores, hospitals, nursing homes, and outpatient clinics. They receive a minimum of five years of university training in all aspects of human health and medication

management. The traditional role of a pharmacist as dispenser of medication has been replaced by a multifaceted, comprehensive role of primary care where patients and health professionals rely on a pharmacist as a drug expert, a health educator, and as a provider of disease management. Surveys have shown that pharmacists are the most trusted health professional and the most accessible health care providers in the community.

I have taken great pride, Mr. Speaker, in being a member of this profession that's essential to the health and well-being of Canadians for 10 years, and I would like to encourage Albertans to take a moment this week to reflect on the impact their local pharmacist has had on their lives in the last year whether he or she promptly filled a prescription, gave pertinent warning about a drug interaction, gave helpful advice, or was simply available when needed.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Eggen: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a petition signed by 400 Albertans from Clairmont, Fox Creek, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Little Smoky, Red Deer, Stettler, Sunset House, Valleyview, Vermilion, Whitecourt, and many other areas urging the government to "institute a fair and equitable minimum floor price for cattle that would be flexible to meet the changing needs of the cattle industry, including cow-calf producers, and curb the excessive profits of the major meat packers." This petition adds another 401 names to the one presented earlier, the total now being 802.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give oral notice of the following motion, which I understand will be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns at the regular hour on Wednesday, March 9, 2005, it shall stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, March 14, 2005, to permit members' attendance at Thursday's memorial service for the deaths last Thursday of the four Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers in Mayerthorpe.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Bill 2 Alberta Centennial Medal Act

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to rise to table Bill 2, being the Alberta Centennial Medal Act, for first reading.

This legislation creates a one-time recognition program this centennial year to honour the many exceptional Albertans who are the heart and strength of our province.

Thank you, sir.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Bill 3 City of Lloydminster Act

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request

leave to introduce Bill 3, the City of Lloydminster Act, for first reading.

This legislated update framework under the City of Lloydminster Act clarifies the process for approval of a new charter for the city of Lloydminster. Mr. Speaker, it mirrors an act passed by the Saskatchewan government last year.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 3 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Bill 4 Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 4, the Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005.

This amendment follows up on a commitment made in the 2004 Speech from the Throne and allows for the establishment of an information and communication technology institute and a life sciences institute. These two industries are cornerstones of the Alberta innovation agenda and critical to our future economic prosperity and quality of life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

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

3:00 Bill 5 Family Law Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce for first reading Bill 5, the Family Law Amendment Act, 2005.

Amendments to the act change the joint guardianship provisions of the Family Law Act so that fathers and mothers are given a more equal opportunity to be guardians of their children. The act also clarifies the powers and responsibilities of persons who are guardians of children and introduces some housekeeping amendments to better define the Family Law Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

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

Bill 6 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

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

[Motion carried]

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

**Bill 7
Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005**

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

Several health statutes are amended within the content of this act. Clarification of certain definitions and recognitions of name changes of colleges are among the amendments that are enclosed.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

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

**Bill 201
Smoke-free Places Act**

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act.

The purpose of Bill 201 is to create smoke-free environments in enclosed public and work places. I care very deeply about the health of all Albertans and am particularly concerned with the exposure of youth to second-hand smoke. The regulations set forth in this legislation will help the province embrace and promote healthy workplaces and safe public social areas for Albertans as well as provide a province-wide set of standards concerning smoke-free areas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

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

**Bill 202
Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act**

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act.

Bill 202 would give provincial authorities and parents the power to place children under the age of 18 into mandatory drug treatment programs. This bill would recognize that children who abuse drugs are victims and need help and protection and recognizes that families should be actively involved in ensuring the safety of their children, especially when involved in drug abuse. The outcome of 202 would be that children are safe and free from abuse and neglect, practise healthy behaviours, and are successful in their transition to adulthood.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

[Applause in the gallery]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order in the gallery!

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of the NDP opposition's proposal for the rotation of questions in the Oral Question Period.

I would also like to table an article from the Peace River Block Daily News dated September 7, 2004, in which the Tender Beef Co-op indicates that their plans to build a slaughterhouse in Alberta were stymied by a "negative attitude" from the Alberta government.

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

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table an Alberta Fish and Game Association position paper on Métis hunting and fishing rights in Alberta.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from the Academy of Learning where they are marketing 18,000 workers from Venezuela, and they attest that these workers are Alberta job ready. They're engineers, rig workers, and tradesmen.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter dated February 16, 2005, from my office to the hon. House leaders in this Legislative Assembly. This is in regard to improving and reforming the Public Accounts Committee.

My second tabling is on behalf of Joanne Dykstra, who is writing from the Fulton Child Care Association in regard to the school closures in the neighbourhood of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

My third tabling is five copies of a petition. This is also from the Fulton Place community, and it is in regard to the public school closures which hopefully will not occur in Edmonton-Gold Bar. This petition is signed by 74 citizens.

Thank you.

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

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an e-mail from senior Enron officials regarding the destruction of electricity-trading tapes. This e-mail is dated March 2001.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mr. Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs: pursuant to the Government Organization Act the Alberta Boilers Safety Association annual report 2003; the Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association annual report, April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004; the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta annual report 2003. Pursuant to the Safety Codes Act the Safety Codes Council 2003 annual report and the authorized accredited agencies activity summary for April 1, 2002, to March 31, 2003.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on a point of order.

**Point of Order
Provoking Debate**

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in question period in an exchange between the Leader of the Official

Opposition and the minister of infrastructure, the minister of infrastructure claimed that the Liberal opposition had access to the government flight logs. Now, citing *Beauchesne* 417, in which questions and answers in question period should not be raising or provoking debate, I would argue that he very much opened that up to provoked debate.

The minister himself was the one who allowed the Official Opposition to examine the manifests but not the flight logs. He was very aware of the difference between the two. I would argue that in misleading the House, he did provoke debate in that given the sequence of events, he was very clear on giving us access to passenger manifests but not to the flight logs.

In fact, in a memo dated February 14, 2005, the minister of infrastructure states that the passenger manifests are available for viewing by appointment at the government hangar and then goes on to give contact information. We in fact followed those instructions, but we did not see flight logs. We saw manifests. Further in that memo of the 14th: if we wish to view additional documentation such as flight logs, one must file a formal request in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Again, that's written by the very member who is claiming that the Official Opposition had access to flight logs when very clearly we did not. I would ask that the member correct himself at this point in time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

3:10

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, obviously in the answer that I gave, I did misspeak and said "logs" instead of "manifest." I believe that when you take a look at the Blues, I actually clarified it in the answer to the question. So if there's any harm done, I do apologize to the hon. member for bringing it up. Yes, indeed, they were given full access to the manifest logs because by virtue of the private information they are required to be under the auspices of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The Speaker: I would think that we've now had clarification for this. This matter has now ended.

Submissions on the Rotation of Oral Questions

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Thursday last I rose in the House and indicated that failing, I guess, an agreement or advice provided to me by the various House leaders with respect to the rotation of question period, I would provide certainty for three days of the question period: Thursday last, today, and tomorrow. I indicated that at the conclusion of this part of our agenda for today I would invite comments from various individuals, particularly House leaders but not to say that other members cannot participate, on this whole question of the question period. What is certain is that our Standing Orders say that we have to have a 50-minute question period. That's it. I also invited comment with respect to Recognitions and the other item that we have another two days each week.

So I'm going to invite members who wish to participate. I'm seeking advice, and I'll take that advice and would come back with a ruling no later than 5:15 tomorrow afternoon that would provide us for the duration of the Legislature. This is not a debate. There is no need for cross-debate. Nobody has to get angry with one another. Just provide your thoughts, and we'll see where we go with it. You have to have some certainty. If there can't be any certainty in the House, well, the chair has no difficulty providing that certainty to the

members. If no one wants to make participation, that's fine with me too.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you making this presentation of arguments public by asking that it be done in the Legislative Assembly, obviously recorded by *Hansard* and available for those in the gallery to witness the arguments that are put forward. I appreciate that.

We in the Official Opposition would like to present issues surrounding the number of questions and the order and rotation of question period for the 26th Legislature. In addition, with the Speaker's permission I would like to speak briefly on the format and the use of precedents in considering how the Speaker will determine how question period rotation shall proceed through the 26th Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition believes that there should be a stronger role for Official Opposition private members during question period. I note that in *Marleau and Montpetit* they hold out that the primary function of question period is to hold the government accountable and the right to ask questions of the government is fundamental. Okay. That's *Marleau and Montpetit*, 415. Oral Question Period is the primary forum where the opposition may ask questions and seek accountability and information from the government. *Marleau and Montpetit*, 416, notes that question period is almost exclusively for opposition. The accountability function must be done primarily by opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you are very aware, as most members of the House are, that Alberta is unusual in the degree to which private members who support the government are able to participate in question period both in terms of the number of questions and also in the order or rotation or positioning of the members' questions. In fact, the high participation of members supporting the government is acknowledged by the 2001 Speaker's ruling in which he notes that for private members supporting the government, their role is reflecting the contribution of individual members but also the number of government private members.

Now, in comparison to other jurisdictions – for example, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia – the primacy of opposition and the Official Opposition in question period is stronger, and government members are not in the regular rotation at all. But there are also examples where members supporting the government are in the rotation – for example, in Ontario and even in the federal House of Commons – in which one question is allowed from a government private member each day.

Mr. Speaker, private members supporting the government have important contributions to make, but given that the primary function of question period is to hold government accountable, I would argue that these members are not well positioned to fulfill this function. In fact, *Marleau and Montpetit* notes that their primary function – that is, the primary function of members supporting the government – is in fact to facilitate the government's agenda.

I note in *Beauchesne* 195 that "the chief function of the government party is to support the administration of the day in achieving its policy objectives." *Marleau and Montpetit*, 30, notes that the parties define political fault lines for debate and legislative activity, and again *Marleau and Montpetit*, 32: the tripartite functional division of the House is government, private members who support the government, and private members who oppose the government. I would argue that accountability, therefore, in question period must be done primarily by opposition. In other words, if question period is for accountability, then the Official Opposition should have the pre-eminent role in doing that.

It's been raised many times inside and outside of this Assembly that members supporting the government have special access to government that is not enjoyed by members of the Official Opposition or other opposition parties. There are a number of examples that have been raised inside and outside of the House; for example, the standing policy committees, which are funded by the regular budget. But no one other than members of government caucus are allowed to participate. These also rarely have open or public meetings, and no *Hansard* or minutes are kept.

Members of the government caucus have access to decision-making and information not shared with other private members. There is special access by members supporting the government to ministers by simple right of proximity and by being members of that caucus. Interestingly, just recently, according to the previous Speaker Schumacher, even bills from members supporting the government are now being treated more like government business. He says, and I quote: the government is trying to co-opt this process by requiring caucus scrutiny and consent for certain private members' bills, much the same as government bills. The point being made is that members supporting the government are treated differently and have more access to government and Executive Council than other private members not supporting the government.

Other changes in the last 12 years have affected the ability of the Official Opposition to function fully in other processes of the Assembly. The opportunities to comment in substantive ways have been reduced. For example, we've had speaking times which have gone from unlimited to 30 minutes to 20 minutes to 15 minutes. We increasingly have government bills which empower ministers to carry on virtually all business in the specified area through regulations and orders in council without returning to the public forum of the Legislature for additional scrutiny and comment. We have the time guillotine that is now available for use by the government to limit the amount of time that will be spent on debating government bills, and we sit relatively few days in comparison to other jurisdictions.

In other words, members supporting the government have other opportunities to question Executive Council or to have their views heard. The Official Opposition does not have this access and therefore must take the primary role in both position and number of questions in question period.

There is also a categorical distinction between the Official Opposition and other opposition that ought to provide us with a relative role beyond what simple numbers should provide. Position is of great importance. The role of the Official Opposition being pre-eminent among opposition members appears in *Marleau and Montpetit*, 33, and *Beauchesne* 196-97. This is evident in distribution of debate time, again *Marleau and Montpetit*, 33, and the Official Opposition being given particular rights in *Beauchesne* 196. The Official Opposition is equal to the opposition versus the recognition for other parties.

3:20

The Liberal opposition has laid out the argument for pre-eminence of the Official Opposition, but we believe strongly in supporting opportunity in question period for all opposition members, including single-member party representatives. Privileging the Official Opposition in terms of numbers of questions is not necessarily to disadvantage government. *Marleau and Montpetit*, 416, indicates that question period dominance by the Official Opposition serves both sides well. Government gets the last word even if the Official Opposition sets the agenda of questions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make clear that I am not arguing the abolition of questions being asked by private members who support

the government, but I am arguing that their position be lower in the rotation. If constituency-based questions need to be raised by members from the government side, their position in the rotation should follow all reasonable opportunities being exhausted by members of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to consider granting the Official Opposition significant number and positioning of questions. We ask the pre-eminence of the Official Opposition with five leader questions. In the last Speaker ruling the Speaker was wise by apportioning seven questions: three for the leader and four for other members of the Official Opposition. We ask that our now larger caucus be taken into consideration and ask for an additional four questions in positions high enough in the rotation to be likely to be heard each day. Thus, four questions plus the five leader questions we've asked for, for a total of nine questions daily. Given the 24 government ministries from which accountability and information need be sought, this would give us a ratio of three questions for every eight ministries.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to comment briefly on the Speaker's memo of the 2nd of March indicating retention of the prohibition of preambles before supplementary questions. The lack of a preamble in supplementals is an advantage to the government side because opposition parties are unable to react to earlier answers and reframe subsequent questions to hold ministers accountable for the statements they've just made. In other words, there's no ability through use of a preamble to respond to the answer just given. There's no ability to put a response on the table to note that it was off topic or didn't answer the question that was asked. So there's no ability for the Official Opposition to contextualize the supplementary question as a further question in response to the answer given. We're not allowed to refer to the answer the minister just gave us at all. I would ask that if the 45-second rule is going to be put in place, the Speaker please consider removing the prohibition against the use of a preamble on supplementary questions.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, precedent, which I know is a very important part of what you consider. I know that in other contexts there has been some reference to the 1986 rotation of questions and positioning. If I may ask that we avoid the search for selective precedents. The rule of precedents must take in all relevant precedents including the most recent, and all other things being equal, the most recent precedents trump older precedents. The more recent precedents will be more attuned to the changes that have happened. Precedents should favour orderly change according to established principles of stability, certainty, and evolutionary progress of parliamentary traditions and practices. All circumstances should be considered.

This Assembly has had many changes since 1986. Although the Official Opposition had 32 members in 1993, they had only three leader questions. I argue that much has changed since then, and I've already mentioned some of those differences: the creation and institutionalization of the standing policy committees, the shorter speaking times, increasing government bills passed which take parliamentary scrutiny outside of the Legislature and subsuming action into orders in council or regulations, and Speaker Schumacher's point about government giving their private members special attention and resources not available to other members.

I argue that in the context of the last election, in which Albertans are looking for a stronger opposition voice, it would be counter to that expressed democratic will to reduce the number of Official Opposition questions. I'm not arguing that any grouping of private members should lose questions, but I am arguing that the Official Opposition should be pre-eminent, followed by third party and other party representatives. Government members should be able to raise their constituency-based questions at the end of the rotation.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to argue this.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the NDs.

Mr. Mason: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking on behalf of our House leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who unfortunately fractured his ankle yesterday and is unable to be with us for a few days. So I beg the indulgence of the House to speak on his behalf.

Mr. Speaker, last week you noted the importance of question period, citing *Marleau and Montpetit*. Your citation noted in the western parliamentary tradition the importance of question period for holding members of Executive Council accountable. By tradition this method of accountability is particularly important for members of the opposition parties. In fact, question period as a means to hold members of Executive Council is at the very core of what it means to belong to a loyal opposition party.

It is not our position that the government private members should be excluded from question period. Our position is, however, that the opposition parties ought to be given the first opportunity to set the tone and the direction of question period. I would like to emphasize that the question period belongs not only to the Official Opposition but also to other recognized opposition parties. As a result of last November's election the Alberta NDP elected four members to this Assembly, thereby becoming a recognized opposition party. As such, it is the submission of the NDP opposition that the achievement of recognized party status warrants a change in the question period rotation in the 26th Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it is my submission that the most important criteria upon which the question period rotation should be based are the precedents in this Legislative Assembly. A second criteria is the practices of the federal Parliament and the practices in other provincial Legislatures where there are recognized third parties.

In fact, in the history of this Assembly there is an exact parallel to the situation we find ourselves in in this 26th Legislature. Between 1986 and 1989, in the 21st Assembly of the Legislature of Alberta, the proportion and number of seats between the two recognized opposition parties was exactly as it is now. Only the distribution of the seats was reversed in 1984. The NDP was the Official Opposition, with 16 seats, while the Liberals were the third party, with four seats. Between 1986 and 1989 the Liberal party opposition, with four seats, was given the third and sixth main questions in question period. Given the exact parallel with today's 26th Legislature, we submit that the NDP opposition is entitled to ask the third and sixth main questions.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, in every jurisdiction across Canada today where there is a recognized third party, that party has no lower than the third main question in question period. Currently in the federal Parliament the Official Opposition Conservatives have the first two main questions; the third party, the Bloc Québécois, has the third main question; and the fourth party, the NDP, has the fourth main question. In the Ontario Legislature the third party, the NDP, receives the third and fourth main questions each day. Again, these precedents require that the NDP opposition in this Legislature should receive at least the third question each day.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a couple of points relative to issues raised in the submission of the Liberal caucus, which asked for great scope for the Official Opposition as opposed to the opposition in general. Actually, under *Beauchesne*, section 196, there are limited additional roles specified for the Official Opposition.

The Speaker: Hon. leader, just a second, please. It may be more prudent here this afternoon to make submissions on behalf of what the hon. member and his party believes. I don't want this to turn into a debate. If the hon. member then questions what the hon.

Official Opposition House Leader says, there may be then a desire to counteract. So let's just stick to what it is we want to have delivered here today.

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then I'll carry on.

Based on the precedents that I have cited in our submission, the NDP opposition proposes the following rotation for question period for main questions: first question to the Liberal caucus, second question to the Liberal caucus, third question to the NDP opposition, fourth question to a government member, fifth question to the Liberal caucus, sixth question to the NDP opposition, seventh question to a government member, eighth question to the Liberal caucus, ninth question to the NDP opposition, and all subsequent questions should rotate between government members and the Official Opposition.

At least once a week the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner should be given the seventh question, which would bump all subsequent questions one down.

3:30

This rotation would provide government members with an opportunity to ask four questions in the top 12 and five questions in the top 15. The Liberals would have seven questions in the top 15, which is the same as what they had from 2001 to 2004. I would like to note, Mr. Speaker, that in 2001 the size of the Liberal caucus was cut in half. At that time, however, the number of Liberal questions was not similarly cut in half. It follows, then, that simply because the Liberal numbers have now increased, their questions should not automatically increase as well. In fact, the most significant change between this Legislature and the 2001 Legislature is that today there are two recognized opposition parties whereas there was only one in the previous Legislature.

To conclude, therefore, the most exact precedent for today's Legislature is the question period rotation that was in place when the composition of the opposition made up of recognized parties was identical to what it is today. Such an identical composition can be found in 1986, in the 21st Legislature, when the Liberal opposition, with four members, had the third and sixth questions. We ask you to reply on this precedent, Mr. Speaker, and in your ruling provide the third and sixth main questions to the NDP opposition each day.

I just want to make a short comment with respect to time limitations, which have been informally enforced. This has produced, I think, a tremendous improvement already in our question period. Today I think we set, at least in my limited experience, a record in the number of questions that were asked, and it didn't detract at all from the thoroughness of the answers which are sometimes given in this House. So, Mr. Speaker, I would wholeheartedly endorse that change and thank you for making it.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not wanting to be repetitive on the arguments that have been brought up, I'd just like to bring up a few points. I feel that Albertans and this Assembly would best be served by the more voices that come forward, the better off we will be. It is important that the government is asked questions from those that aren't part of the government. I do feel it's critical. I am the only MLA elected in the rural – I feel that that's an important and significant role that I need to play for rural Albertans. We received close to 9 per cent of the vote, and I think that in those consider-

ations it would be appropriate to allow more than one question a week. It's also worth noting that 53 per cent of Albertans did not vote for the current government and would add to the weight of why it is important that those who are not part of the government get to ask them questions.

I think it would be fitting to be able to receive one question a day, when we look at the precedent set in the past, and if that were to be in the ninth spot, I think that would be appropriate. To look on the long side, with 21 opposition members being elected, the ninth question every other day to me would be extending it the longest. We should be allowed to ask questions at least once every other day.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this discussion as well. First of all, let me congratulate you on your election as Speaker to this 26th Legislature. This is your third election as Speaker and clearly sets you out as one of the pre-eminent guardians of the legislative process and the parliamentary tradition in our world of parliamentary democracies.

Mr. Speaker, the role of the Legislature has at least three very important functions in a parliamentary democracy. We of course debate and pass bills brought before the House, primarily brought by government but also brought by private members. We have been leaders in the parliamentary world in promoting the role of private members with a system for debate and voting which ensures that private members' bills have the opportunity to be debated and the opportunity to become law, a system, I might note, which was promoted by yourself when you had the role of Government House Leader, attaining a far-reaching agreement between all House leaders on that point.

As a Legislature one of our other very important functions is to pass supply. The Legislature has the ultimate authority over the public purse. Indeed, a good portion of each session is dedicated to budget, Committee of Supply, and appropriation bills to ensure that interim supply, supply, and supplementary supply are all voted by this House.

A third very important role, Mr. Speaker, is accountability. The government promotes business to the House, requests supply from the House, and is accountable to the House. Part of that accountability is the daily question period, an opportunity for members of the Legislature to seek information from the government and to hold the government accountable for its actions by questioning ministers of the Crown in the areas of their responsibility.

While often the Legislature is viewed as government and opposition, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that it's actually made up of government accountable to the Legislature, all members of the Legislature, some of whom have a particular role as members of the Official Opposition, some of whom choose to sit with others as recognized parties, some of whom sit alone as independents, and, yes, some who choose to sit with the governing party.

But all of those members who are not part of Executive Council, not just those who sit in opposition, have the responsibility of the Legislature to hold the government accountable and to represent their constituencies by raising issues, seeking information, and questioning action. The participation of all private members in question period is a critical role of a private member, and every private member deserves equitable access to that particular portion of our daily travail.

The opposition's function in parliament is well known. It's a role which has been recognized in part by affording the Official Opposition and other recognized opposition parties the pre-eminent position

each day in question period. But that role, Mr. Speaker, is not so overarching that it can be allowed to push out or overwhelm the very legitimate right of all private members. Question period is not in our tradition the exclusive domain of the opposition.

It should be noted that with 50 minutes allotted for question period, our Legislature is among the forefront in the country in meeting the opportunity for accountability. Some are as short as 15 minutes. You have, Mr. Speaker, indicated both in your ruling in 2001 and in your comments on Thursday a preference for brevity in questions and answers, which would allow for the maximum utilization of the full 50 minutes that this House devotes to question period each day. While specific application of time rules may inhibit important or appropriate questions or answers, for the most part, assuming the framing of the question is not excessively inflammatory or inaccurate, requiring significant context for an answer – and, really, that should not be necessary – I certainly would accept that a judicious application of time parameters will ensure that we maximize the number of opportunities for private members each day.

So how should the question period for the 26th Legislature be structured? Well, Mr. Speaker, on the basis outlined above, there should be two principles observed. All private members should have a fair opportunity to participate, and the opposition, due to their particular role, should have the priority position daily. That, in fact, is our tradition.

Mr. Speaker, the last two Legislatures dealt fairly and appropriately with this, and we would propose that the rotation utilized for each of those Houses, one of which, in 1997, was very similar in makeup to this one, was appropriate and ought to continue; that is, the first three questions to the Official Opposition, the fourth to the third party, with a subsequent rotation between the government and Official Opposition until the third party receives an additional question as the 11th question, and the private members on the government side receive all questions after 13.

We would submit that the independent member should be eligible for every 58th question, as has been accorded to other members who have attended as independent members in earlier Legislatures, and presumably would fall into the rotation on the appropriate day after the first four questions or within the first nine questions.

With the fact that the New Democratic Party now has official party status, we would not object to a rotation which would see them participate earlier in the rotation, somewhat as they propose. We would suggest, however, that it should be the first two questions to the Official Opposition, the third question to the third party, the fourth question to private members on the government side, the fifth question to the Official Opposition, the sixth to the third party, the seventh to members on the government side, and then a rotation between private members on the government side and Official Opposition members to 14, with any subsequent after 14 being allocated to government members, the 58th to the independent member after the primary rotation on the day that his entitlement comes up.

Either proposal, Mr. Speaker, assuming 14 questions a day, would result in PC private members, with 63.7 per cent of the 58 private members in this House, having 20 questions per week while their numbers would warrant 36 and would have them participating only after four or five opposition questions being raised, which would answer the principle of fairness and a pre-eminence of the opposition role.

3:40

The Official Opposition, with 27 per cent of the private members in this House, would have 28 questions per week, including the first

two or three per day and three of the first five. Their numbers would only warrant 15. So the allocations are almost double what they would be entitled to normally on a simple percentage basis. The third party, with 6.9 per cent of the seats in the House, would have eight questions, whereas their entitlement on that percentage would be four, with either one or two in the first, depending on which of the two suggested rotations you selected. The independent member would get one question per week, almost right in line with his .95 per cent of private member status.

These proposals are fair to the opposition members in that they get almost twice as many questions as numbers warrant and the front end of the question period rotation each day. It's fair to the private members on the government side in that while a smaller number of questions go to them than warranted, it continues to provide the opportunity for them to do their job, equally important to that of opposition members, in getting information important to their constituents, highlighting issues important to their constituents, and holding the government accountable on behalf of their constituents.

Some would suggest that private members who are members of the governing party have better access already. With respect, such arguments fail to distinguish the important difference in role and function that this House stands for. Every member of this House has an equal role and an equal responsibility to represent their constituents. Some may be asked to take responsibility as a member of Executive Council. By doing so, they may feel that they can take on that role and better represent their constituents and all Albertans, but it comes at some loss of their individual role as a member in the House.

Members decide, and it's their decision alone, to join a caucus perhaps in order to be more effective as a group than as an individual. They may agree to meet as a caucus and make decisions as to how they will handle themselves as a group. They may do any number of things outside this House which they believe will make them a more effective member and a better representative. None of that, Mr. Speaker, detracts from the individual responsibility of a member for his or her own voice and for his or her own vote and for his or her own actions and for his or her own right to participate to the fullest in this House regardless of whether they've chosen to align themselves with the governing caucus or an opposition party caucus or to remain independent.

It's for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that it would not be appropriate or desirable to move away from the rotations you previously determined in 1997 and again in 2001, which have served this House and its members well, when the opposition had similar numbers to that reflected in the House today and when the numbers were lower. In other words, the fact that a smaller opposition in the last Legislature was afforded significantly more questions than their numbers warranted to acknowledge that particular role of the opposition is not a reason to grow that number of questions because they have now risen back up to the numbers they previously had in 1997.

Mr. Speaker, question period is important for all members of the House. There is a pre-eminent role for the opposition. That's why they get the first three or four questions in the front end of the rotation. The proposal to maintain the status quo or modify it gently to acknowledge the official party status of the NDP by bringing their second question earlier in the rotation would recognize that pre-eminent role of the opposition. Having the rotation as we've suggested would clearly recognize that each and every private member of this House has a valuable and important role and responsibility to their constituents and to Albertans to seek information and to hold the government accountable regardless of the side of the House on which they sit.

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, in order to increase democratic participation in this House and to involve the electorate to a greater degree, which I think is what we would all believe in, we have to involve them through the question period. Voters traditionally in Alberta and, I guess, in other provinces as well have less than a 50 per cent turnout, or a very small turnout. In order to involve people and give them the kinds of transparency and accountability that I believe is necessary, the opposition must have more questions.

It's been noted previously that oppositions together received more votes than the government itself. The first past the post system works against members of the opposition. What we require is the opportunity to ask the questions that the people have elected us to ask. The government has all the resources. It also has what I consider to be a large cloak, a cloak of secrecy, and that is FOIP. So often we request of the government to detail a position such as the flight logs, and we're unable to do that, so we have to go through the long and involved FOIP process. Question period is our one shot at democracy, and I believe the opposition needs a larger share in that position.

Thank you.

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

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to get up and make a few brief comments. I appreciate very much the comments that I've heard from all hon. members today. I guess I would like to speak just on behalf of some of the private members on the government side. We, too, have constituents and issues that occur and are raised by our constituents to us. It is just as important for us as a private member, whether we sit on the government side or not, to be able to in fact ask those questions. The truth is that we get very few opportunities to ask those questions in a question period format to show our constituents that we, too, are working.

Believe it or not, we all work very hard. I recognize that you work hard as well, but I need to be able to assure my constituents that I'm not just sitting here day after day not doing anything. They ask me a question, and question period is my opportunity as well. It's very competitive in my caucus to try and get an opportunity to ask a question because, generally speaking, the opposition, both parties, have that opportunity well before us. So you have the opportunity to raise the bigger issues. We tend to raise issues that are more relevant to our own constituencies but equally important to us and to our constituents. We do have a majority of members, but we also have a minority of questions. So when you talk about democracy, it's just as important for us to be a part of that democratic process that question period affords us.

I remember in 1993 when question period was extended to its current length. Probably at that point, at least, it was the longest in Canada. That was done in recognition of a larger, more substantive opposition that we wanted to show that we had respect for, and we still have respect for the opposition parties although they are not at 32 members, which they were at that time.

I think that the current system, Mr. Speaker, whether it were to change the order of questions to two and one or stay with three and one for the opposition parties matters not to me from my perspective. But as a private member of this caucus and as somebody who served as the government caucus whip for over five years, my job was in fact to make sure that my private members, when I was doing my job as whip, had an equal opportunity to try and have their voices heard in here. I believe that the quality of their questions was just as good or better than anything that the opposition raised. We challenge our ministers just as much as they do. I would sincerely hope that when you make your ruling, our members are treated the

same even though it's a lesser number than I think we're entitled to, that at least we end up with no less for our caucus.

Opposition members indicate that we have all of these advantages. Yes, we have standing policy committees. They are advisory bodies to ministers. It gives us an opportunity to review policy. That's our job. Government's job is to bring forward policy, and as a private member I wish to have the opportunity to participate in that policy direction. So, yes, SPCs are in fact for government members.

Under FOIP, as I recall, there were numerous members on the original FOIP committee from the opposition party, including a distinguished lawyer, Mr. Gary Dickson, that helped to write the rules of FOIP that we all have to live with, whether we like them or not. I think there are many of us that wish it had never been invented, but it's there. It's not just about freedom of information. It is, in fact, about protection of privacy, and that must be respected.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know that if there's one thing I can count on, it's that you will in fact be fair when you make your final ruling on this decision, and I appreciate your consideration of my colleagues that are private members on the government side as well.

Thank you.

3:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I'll be brief. I'd like to make a few comments here. My colleague the leader of the NDP opposition in the House, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, has made the argument based on precedent: first and foremost, the precedent of this House, and, secondly, precedents in other sister Legislatures across this country.

I've tried to search for a precedent in the history of this Legislature where when there is more than one recognized opposition party present in the House, the Official Opposition would have as many as the first five questions. There's no precedent that I can find in the 100-year history of this particular Legislature which gives the Official Opposition in the context of three or more parties being present in the House the first five questions. So that's one point that I want to reiterate.

Associated with that, of course, is the arrangement that this House had in 1986. That, I think, needs to be re-emphasized. The number of seats held between the two recognized opposition parties, the NDP and the Liberal at the time, were 16 plus four, or 20. We have the same, exact situation now except that the parties have reversed their positions. Liberals have 16 seats, and NDP have four seats. So I think the arrangement that was fair and appropriate and worked well in the Legislature of the 1980s is the arrangement that we are proposing, at the minimum, should be the guide.

Going outside of the precedents and history of this Legislature, my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has drawn our attention to the way the House of Commons as currently constituted uses the question period. I'm not going to repeat that; he is on record saying that. I just want to add one minor additional precedent to it. In the current Ontario Legislature, where there are three recognized parties – the ruling party and the Conservative Party and the NDP as a third party but a recognized party – the arrangement for the question period is as follows. The Official Opposition in the Ontario Legislature receives the first two questions; the third and fourth questions are then available to the NDP as the third recognized party in this Legislature. So that's another precedent, Mr. Speaker, that we should draw upon from a sister Legislature in our country.

With these points made, I think I would simply say that we should pay attention to the principle of precedents and that we should pay attention to the principle of fairness, both of which, I think, are incorporated in the proposal that the NDP opposition has submitted, with respect, to you and to the House, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Opposition House Leader has argued in favour of a diminished role for private members and, in particular, those private members who happen to be affiliated with the governing party. Private government members are not constrained by solidarity with the government policy, as are members of the Executive Council. In fact, by custom and tradition members of the backbench are free to criticize government policy. I would respectfully submit that the private members, including private government members, have equal rights to represent their constituents and their electors in this House and to raise their concerns before the House and to be their voice in this House. I would therefore argue in favour of the status quo in terms of rotation of the questions.

The Speaker: Are there additional comments from members? Anyone else want to participate? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a short comment with respect to the issue. There have been some statements made with respect to the low number of voters at provincial elections. The number is somewhere less than 50 per cent. Given that that might be a fact and given that the boundary review commission divided the 83 seats equitably, the government represents 62 of 83 ridings, or 75 per cent of the 50 per cent plus of Albertans who never took the opportunity to go to the polls.

Therefore, it follows that the private members in the House are with their questions representing 75 per cent of the people that didn't take an opportunity to vote. The opposition members are representing 25 per cent of that same group of citizens. I think that it speaks for itself, that perhaps we're being, I would suggest, more than liberal with our suggestion that the questions remain as our leader has suggested.

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members. I shall take this input. The table officers and I will do some huddling.

Statistically it's very easy to find out the calculation of exactly how things have gone in the past in the province of Alberta. A number of members talked about 1986. No member mentioned in the discussion of 1986 that other parties had a right to ask a supplemental question to the original question being asked, and I gather that while there was some discussion about 1986, no one has suggested that we might go back to that. I was here in 1986. It meant that the Official Opposition had the right to ask a question, they could have two supplementals, and any other party could ask a question as well, so it was quite a free-for-all in the Assembly on any given day. It sure did make some excitement for the chair, but that's probably not what anybody is anticipating today.

We've got variances, going from the Official Opposition saying that they want the first five questions to the government and the third party basically saying that it should be two and two to a variety of other things with it. We will use the best wisdom that we possibly can to try and come up with a conclusion. There will not be any heart attacks or anything else when this decision is made. It will be made for certainty, and it will be made in the best traditions that we can hopefully come up with.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, March 3, it's my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, March 3, it's my pleasure to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are no bills available for discussion given that bills 201 and 202 were only introduced today, and it would require unanimous consent of the House to move to discussion of Bill 201 at second reading. Now, it may not be appropriate for the House to have that unanimous consent given that most members, I presume all members other than the one introducing it, have just seen the bill for the first time today.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask, if it's the pleasure of the House, to have unanimous consent to proceed to second reading on the same day as first reading of Bill 201.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if you look at your Standing Orders, 73(1) says, "Every Bill shall receive three separate readings on different days before being passed." What is being asked today is to waive this particular ruling, if I understand the hon. Government House Leader correctly.

[Unanimous consent denied]

4:00

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we do not have private members' bills to proceed with this afternoon, then I would ask that the House waive the standing rules and allow us to proceed to government business for this afternoon to address the motion in reply to the Speech from the Throne because that is properly on the table with the unanimous consent of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if you look at your Standing Orders, Standing Order 8(1) gives the Routine, and the Routine on Monday provides for certain things. What's being asked now by the Government House Leader is that the Assembly give unanimous consent to waive that so we might now proceed to Consideration of the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Then we shall now proceed with the reply to the Lieutenant Governor's throne speech.

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

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

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

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

[Debate adjourned March 3]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, you were last up, if you wanted to continue.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to take this opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to start out by welcoming all members of the Assembly, particularly the new members of the Assembly, to the absolutely fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, in which you are now sitting. So welcome to you, one and all. I'm very proud of my constituency of Edmonton-Centre, as many of you know, and I take every possible opportunity to promote it and welcome you to it. It's pretty special to have the Legislative Assembly in your constituency, so I like to tout that when I get the chance.

I'd also like to thank the electors living in Edmonton-Centre. They were very supportive and generous to me during this last election and gave me a whopping majority, and I really appreciate that vote of confidence. Very nice to have. I've really enjoyed serving two terms, and I'm very much looking forward to the third term, that I'm now in.

The last group that I would like to thank is those on my campaign team that worked so hard to elect me. I think it's appropriate that I also recognize and thank them very much and of course, my family, who are fairly long-suffering in this, but I sure appreciate their support.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, we've had quite a bit of reflecting, this being the 100th year of Alberta, and I take a perverse pleasure in acknowledging that in all of this casting back 100 years, in fact we're casting back to a Liberal government. It was the innovation and vision for the 100 years that was set in place by, in fact, the Liberal government. So I know the members opposite don't like to acknowledge that when they talk about what was going on 100 years ago, but it was a Liberal government, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that they did things like start the University of Alberta. It shows that Liberal commitment to higher education and to moving forward and trying to get as much access for as many people as possible to a postsecondary education. I'm proud of them that they put in place a number of public utilities and regulations for public utilities. I'm proud of the then Liberal government for having put some human rights, particularly women's rights, in place. Very appropriate.

We are also starting this 26th Legislature having come out of an election, obviously, so we've all had lots of opportunity – or at least I hope we did – as we were door-knocking to listen very carefully to what our constituents were telling us. What I looked for in the Speech from the Throne, what I was hoping to hear was that energy,

that vitality that comes from saying: "Alberta is a good place to be. No, Alberta is a great place to be. But Alberta could be extraordinary. It could be mind-boggling. It could blow you away." I was looking for that kind of vision, that kind of excitement, that kind of planning, that kind of management, and I got autopilot. I got announcements that we've heard in two or three press releases over the last four months. I got something that was in an infomercial on TV. I was so disappointed, Mr. Speaker, because really that's what my constituents told me.

We have a unique opportunity right now to capitalize on our luck and on our good fortune. We're very lucky to be born and walking around on a chunk of geography that spews oil out of it. Some of us were lucky enough to be born here, and others were smart enough to move here. Nonetheless, that's where a good deal of our money comes from, and we need to recognize that. It has given us a surplus, and the Liberals want to see that not frittered away.

Some of you will remember a bumper sticker that was around, I think, in the '70s. Mr. Speaker, you'll have to bear with me while I paraphrase a bit because the original of the bumper sticker is not printable in *Hansard* to be read. But it went something along the lines of: dear Lord, please send me another oil boom, and this time I promise not to fritter it all away. That's the position that we're in. We are in an extraordinary position right now. We are so lucky to have this, and we need to be making sure that that money is not frittered away. Very, very important, and I heard that repeatedly from my constituents.

So what did they want done with this money? Well, they wanted to see prudent management of those assets. They really liked the Liberal idea of a surplus policy in which we had 35 per cent of future surpluses going into a postsecondary endowment fund, and don't you know it: Bill 1. Gosh, sounds like they heard it. I don't mind. I don't mind sharing good Liberal ideas with the government caucus. If it's a good idea, they should take it from us. Credit where credit's due. I'm happy to share that with you. It's a gift.

People also really like the idea of putting an additional 35 per cent of any future surpluses into the heritage fund to strengthen the heritage fund. That's become a keystone for us in our belief of who we are as Albertans and how we handle our resource revenue.

We had an additional 25 per cent going into infrastructure, which is badly needed, and we recognize that – so that was a catch-up fund – and a final 5 per cent going into a special endowment fund for universities, specifically going into the humanities and the arts. It's recognizing that there's opportunity that's being capitalized on, rightly so, by the sciences and technology sectors of the universities. They're attracting a lot of outside money and research grants. Good; go for it. But the arts and the humanities don't attract that same kind of outside assistance, and the Liberals felt that they're important. We need archaeologists and philosophers and artists and writers and speakers of other languages as much as we need scientists, and we wanted to make sure that there was some redress of the imbalance there. So that was the final 5 per cent.

You know, one interesting thing I will note is that people were pretty clear with me that they did not approve of having public lands sold off. That's been a bit of a move that we've been seeing from the government side, and I just want to state that very clearly: my constituents were not in favour of public land being sold off. I just want to get that on the record there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've got about six groups that live in my constituency with very particular interests in the throne speech. The first group is people on AISH. I represent a downtown riding. I tend to have a fairly high portion of people who receive AISH benefits and live downtown. They're closer to the support services that they need. Also, we have an older housing stock, so it tends to be a cheaper housing stock, and given the low rates of AISH, they need

that cheaper housing stock to be able to afford their rent. So my people on AISH were looking at that throne speech saying: when do we get the money? It's as simple as that.

4:10

I think February 28 was the 100th day that this government has been in power since its election on November 22. What's the delay? Where's the money? They said that they were going to increase the AISH rates. Where is it? How long are they going to make these people wait? Another month? Another two months? Another six months? How long do they have to wait? We've recognized that the rates are insufficient, so why are we delaying in finding that money and getting it in a cheque and getting it into their hands? It's really, in my opinion, quite unforgivable. So that's one thing we were looking for.

I also have a number of people that have mental health issues, and again they tend to cluster downtown for the same reasons: they're closer to services and the housing stock. A number of them are homeless; there's no question. They just don't have the coping capacity that others do, and they're looking for more community support. A long time ago we deinstitutionalized. We threw them all out there and said: the community is the better place for them to be; we'll put the supports in the community. We have never come to the point where there is sufficient community support for those individuals, and I continue to look to this government to make sure that happens.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a lot of seniors that live in my constituency, and they have a number of concerns. One would be funding of seniors' centres, which is going to give them access to programming, wellness, initiatives, exercise programs, mental health programming, and that they can get out and socialize with people; they don't just sit at home all day. I continue to press the government to make sure that they develop a new funding model which would include seniors' centres.

The seniors are also really concerned, as are their families, with the state of long-term care. I'm aware that the Auditor General is doing an audit, but I understand he's doing an attest audit, not a value-for-money audit, which I'm disappointed to hear because I don't think it's going to give us very much information about the state of things. In particular, we would like to see standards of long-term care that go right across the board and affect not only the smaller group homes with two or three seniors being looked after but also the various kinds of institutions that we now have. I think that's very important. We've got to put some attention to that.

Mr. Speaker, no surprise to anyone that's sat in here, but I also have a large gay and lesbian community that lives in Edmonton-Centre, of whom I am very proud. They look to having human rights in Alberta upheld. They are protected in the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. They look to having the government uphold those rights for them. In particular, in that community they are very concerned about a very high level of suicides among their young people. They say to me: you've gotta understand, Laurie, that when politicians and leaders in the community get up and say things about people who are gay and lesbian in a way that is not positive, that really affects particularly young people who could be really struggling with their identity. I think we need to be very careful about that. I don't want to see those suicide rates get any higher. I'd like to see them get lower, and I'm just asking for respect.

Human rights are not a finite bucket of rights. In extending a human right to one group or individual, you don't take away rights from others. That's not how it works. It's not a finite bucket of rights. If you extend human rights to others, you simply have them

join a loving family of individuals that are in this province. You don't take something away from someone else, and I wish we'd quit talking about it that way.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a large constituency of artists, who are the hardest working, proudest Albertans, who struggle away without the benefit programs that are available to many other groups. They don't qualify for unemployment insurance. Unless they're truly strapped, they don't get onto social assistance or Alberta Works or whatever it's called now. They tend to subsidize the arts very heavily in Alberta. Yes, they get occasional jobs working in the arts, and they spend the rest of their time working at a myriad of other jobs, which helps them stay alive and pay their rent so that they can go out and continue to make art in whatever form that is.

I would really like to see this government step up to the plate, understand and acknowledge the contribution that artists have made in this province and what an economic driver in fact they are in this province. It's money that stays in this province, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't go away. It doesn't go to shareholders in a multinational corporation. That money stays right here in Alberta and circulates here. I would really like to see the government increase the Alberta Foundation for the Arts grant pot of money to \$40 million immediately. That fund has been starved for a very long time, and I'd like to see that corrected.

The sixth group of people in my constituency that had particular interest in what was in the throne speech were students because they were really looking for help. You've all heard my argument on the transfer of intergenerational debt, which I argue has happened instantly. You know, paying off that debt basically was shifted to the shoulders, in many cases, of students and seniors and people on programs like AISH.

Anything the government can do to improve access – and that's real access with real desks in real classrooms with real instructors. Yes, I hear what the government is saying about virtual space, but it's also about staffing, and it's about infrastructure in the postsecondary institutions. So I encourage them to continue on that path.

I'd also like to note that my constituents hold a keen interest in the environment and particularly in conservation, so I'm going to be holding the government to account on that.

We would like to see a complete workplace smoking ban. I think we're also very interested in seeing better labour laws, particularly around replacement worker legislation and first-contract legislation.

What's interesting is the government seems to keep planning for things to get worse, Mr. Speaker, and we in Edmonton-Centre believe that things are going to get better. We want to see things put in place that are going to make Alberta extraordinary, not just okay, not just good, not just great but extraordinary. We are on the lip, the cusp of something, great potential, so let's do it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29 allows for a five-minute question and comment period. Past practice has been that we try to restrict that to one minute for questions, comments, and responses. So the floor recognizes anyone that wishes to speak under Standing Order 29.

Seeing none, I recognize the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm truly grateful to be able to speak at this the first session of the 26th Legislature.

I would like to offer my condolences to the family of Her Honour Lois Hole. She was a truly remarkable and inspiring woman.

I would also like to offer my congratulations to our new Lieutenant Governor and wish him and his family all the very best as he

begins to serve our province in his new role. We have been truly blessed with the men and women chosen to be our Lieutenant Governors, and I know that His Honour Mr. Kwong will also exceed our expectations.

Congratulations to all members, both new and returning. This is a great year for our province and its citizens. I feel so privileged to be here again as an MLA in this our 100th anniversary as a province.

I would like to thank the residents of Airdrie-Chestermere for their support. In four elections now, Mr. Speaker, I have only lost four polls out of close to 300, all of them in my first election in 1993, all of them in your area. I am very gratified by the strength of my win, and I repeat the one promise that I have made in four elections. I promise I will continue to try to do my best to represent the needs of my constituents, not always the wants but the needs, and we have many.

We have a very high-growth constituency, with growth rates consistently over the years coming in at around 8 per cent for Airdrie and 18 per cent for Chestermere and Langdon. We opened new schools with a dozen portables attached and instantly high occupancy rates. I know both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation are fully aware of our issues, and I am grateful to both of them for taking the time to meet with both of my school boards.

In addition to school facilities, we are in desperate need of overpass work, both at the north and south ends of Airdrie, as well as traffic control lights in Chestermere, an overpass on 797 to cross highway 1, and Langdon needs control of its main street, as well as the Prince of Peace Village, just east of the Calgary city limits, needing assistance with traffic control at the entrance and exit to its village off highway 1, issues that I have been raising and will continue to raise until we finally get our problems solved.

I'm also very pleased that Jack Davis, the CEO of the Calgary regional health authority, has taken a personal interest now in making sure that the medical needs of Airdrie are finally going to be taken seriously. It has been a long battle, but as they say, good things come to those who wait, and I know that we've waited. We've been very patient, but I'm afraid the patience is wearing pretty thin. Our new mayor in Airdrie, Linda Bruce, has also worked very hard on the medical clinic initiative, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to take the time to thank her for her effort and diligence on this.

4:20

I would also like to mention my municipal councils, Mr. Speaker, as I feel particularly lucky in the truly awesome people that I get to work with. In addition to superb councillors, I also get to work with mayors Bruce, Fuselli, Rowe, and Mikkelsen, with Reeve Schule, and with Mrs. Metzger of the Rocky View school board as well as school trustee Linda Wellman of the Calgary Catholic board. I know that the residents of our area can from time to time get frustrated with the growth pressures that we deal with. I also know that the men and women in my area that serve our constituents all work very hard and with integrity and honour to try and solve those problems, and I'm grateful to all of them for their efforts.

One hundred years ago in our province, Mr. Speaker, I could not have been elected an MLA. Even 50 years ago it would have been very difficult, but today we have 13 women here, not because they are women but because they are all strong Albertans with a dream and a vision for our province. Now, if you lined all 13 of us up and asked us what that vision was, you would have 13 totally different responses, but that is the beauty of politics: good people with different points of view get elected, come here, and try their best. I know that that is true for all 83 MLAs, but in this our centennial year

I would like to thank the women that came before us and made it possible for the 13 of us to be here.

I hope it is not inappropriate to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think Alberta is a better place because there are women involved in every aspect of people's lives from construction to research and from business owners to politicians. I admire Albertans for their willingness to see women in many roles. And truth be told, if all the women in Alberta decided to withdraw from the workforce in our province, our economy would collapse.

Mr. Speaker, I lived in Europe for a year in the late '80s, and one of the realizations I had when I was there was how young we are as a province and how we take for granted that we can compete with established and mature civilizations that have gone through their growth in the building of their infrastructure over hundreds if not thousands of years. I stood in a cathedral in Lausanne, Switzerland. At the time it was 1,293 years old and Alberta was celebrating its 82nd birthday. I stood and looked at this enormous building and realized that they had taken longer to build this one cathedral than we have to build an entire province. They did it without cranes. The bricks and arches were made by hand, put in place by people using pulleys and ropes and huge numbers of people working on one project. The family business was truly a family business. Generations of a family would work on one project.

Our world today is so unlike that. Our challenge is to try and keep up with the speed of change that the Industrial Revolution, the technology revolution, and now the knowledge-based revolution are sweeping over us. When I was first elected in 1993, MLAs were not even allocated computers. Apparently we didn't need them, and now, just over a decade later, every MLA has been given a laptop. We can and do use them right here in this Assembly, and I can't imagine trying to do my job without one anymore.

My sons could not imagine a world without colour TVs or cell phones, McDonald's Restaurants or paved highways. Yet when I was a child, TVs were black and white, if you were lucky enough to have one at all. Phones weighed about 10 pounds and may have had a crank on the side that you wound up to try and get an operator. [interjection] I'm not telling you how old I am. My first phone number when I was 10 years old was 212. It was up in Lesser Slave Lake, and it was on a party line. I grew up with gravel roads, and that was gravel if you were lucky. Most of the time it was just a trail backlit by a D9 Cat because we also lived in the oil patch, and that's just the way the world was. We had power when the rig was running because we could use the power plant, but when the rigs were shut down, we used coal-oil lamps.

My brother and I had the world's best imaginations because we had to. We had to invent things to play. I lived through books, and of course I grew up in the oil patch, so my life, I admit, was a bit different than many of my colleagues here. But it was what it was. I didn't question it. The junior high school I went to in Lesser Slave Lake was heated by coal. We considered ourselves lucky when the public health nurse would come to town. There was no doctor or hospital there, but I don't remember anybody complaining about it. We were all just happy that our dads had jobs. Life was maybe a little simpler then.

My dad had a love for golf, so he and several of his friends decided to build a golf course there. There were no provincial grants. There were just a group of guys out there month after month over the course of several years building a golf course. They finally got it open and hosted the oilmen's golf tournament. It was a huge day for my dad. He had been injured in an oil field accident years before. His leg was crushed, and they told him that he would be lucky to walk and that he would never golf again. Well, they were wrong. He did golf and as often as he could right up until he died.

I realize that I sound like I must be close to 100 years old. Well, I'm not quite there yet. The truth is that massive changes have occurred just in our lifetimes. In this our centennial year I truly hope that we pause to reflect on those changes and not just on our physical environment, Mr. Speaker, but also on our level of expectation as a society on what we want from government. How deep do we want government in people's lives?

I listened with great attention to the Speech from the Throne, and there were many wonderful initiatives in that speech. We need more spaces in postsecondary education, but noting the rapid expansion of high-speed Internet, I wonder if we know how many students will take their courses online 15 years from now when 10 years ago it was almost unheard of.

I worry a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about the sustainability of some of our programs. I don't question the value of the programs, just the sustainability of them. The Health Council of Canada estimates that with our aging demographics the health system will grow by at least 80 per cent over the next 10 years. I think they're way off. I think it is more than capable of growing by 80 per cent in the next five or six years. If I'm right, or even if they are, the provincial budget will be consumed by health care unless changes are made in how it is paid for and how it is delivered. Our expectations of what the system can and should do may have to be adjusted a bit as time goes on because it is just possible that it will not be capable of doing all things for all people all of the time.

We have incredible research going on right here in our province thanks in large part to a foundation set up 25 years ago, and, as announced, it will be enhanced. The researchers are amazing, and they think they may have found a way to help a group of people with a genetic disorder. From what I've heard, there is no doubt that this new discovery can and will help people. The downside right now is that the estimated cost is \$300,000 per patient per year. I would like the researchers to spend some time on how we can make our system sustainable and not just expensive, but that's just me.

Right now we have many bright and thoughtful people working hard on developing great programs that will solve the problems for many families, whether it be in Children's Services, Human Resources and Employment, health care, Education, Advanced Education, to name but a few. We have other bright and thoughtful people trying to figure out ways to pay for it all.

So in this our 100th year I ask all my legislative colleagues to look back a little bit before they look forward. Don't forget that independent and freethinking spirit that has brought us this far. Let us as MLAs help where necessary but respect Albertans' right to succeed and their right to fail.

I have travelled extensively, Mr. Speaker, across Canada, the United States, and to countries in Europe. There is no place I would rather be. I thank God that I was born an Albertan and that, as the words on our crest so eloquently put it, I was born strong and free.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

If not, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne. Before I start with the response, I want to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker and on your very first opportunity to preside over the proceedings of this House this afternoon.

I also want to not overlook congratulating the Lieutenant Governor, Hon. Norman Kwong, for his appointment into this position. My congratulations to him and his wife, and we look forward to his contribution to the Alberta we want to build in the future.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in this House. I see lots of familiar faces but also lots of new faces. I want to congratulate all the members of this House for their election or re-election. I look forward to working with each and every one of them in this session and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, we are entering the new century of this province. This is the centennial year, so Albertans are hoping that their government and their Legislature will come up with a vision of a new Alberta, the Alberta of the next century, the new Alberta, that will excite their imaginations, that will strengthen their sense of hope in their own future and the future of all of us as a provincial community and the hope that the Alberta of the 21st century will be charting a course in which democratic values will take a central place in developing our communities, developing our institutions, developing our educational institutions, political institutions, and all.

So looking at this throne speech, I search for the vision, the dream that at the turn of the new century for this province this government is presenting for Albertans to consider and to feel excited about.

4:30

Albertans are hard-working, optimistic, compassionate. They've demonstrated this over and over again. The very last expression of those core values and commitment of Albertans to those values was to be seen in the response that Albertans made to the victims of this huge international disaster, the tsunami disaster that hit two continents, nine or 10 different countries far away from us here. Albertans were generous beyond the expectations of anyone in responding to this huge natural disaster leading to human tragedy. So those values are alive and well in this province.

Albertans are expecting their leaders, their government, to renew their commitment to those values and incorporate them, inscribe those values in everything that we do, in every action that we take, in every policy that we develop, a vision of our future that we forge working together. Looking at this throne speech, I keep looking for the cues, for some signs that would assure me, assure my constituents, assure Albertans that, in fact, the government is quite alive and receptive to their hopes, their dreams, their values.

I find the throne speech lacking in its ability to inspire Albertans to higher goals, to building a more compassionate, a more humane future for all of us, where we are freed from the prison of poverty. In this very wealthy province with an economy that's growing at a rapid pace, expanding in many directions, driven by our natural resources wealth, we continue to find lots of fellow Albertans who live in conditions of poverty. More heartbreaking is to see our children, a substantial percentage of children in Alberta, 15 to 20 per cent, who live under conditions of poverty.

Poverty disables. Poverty is disabling. Poverty is prison-like, and I would have hoped that the throne speech would commit the Alberta of the 21st century in its own beginnings of the second century to eradicating poverty. Signs of that poverty are to be seen everywhere. Go to food banks. Look at the homeless on our streets in big urban cities and in smaller towns; they're everywhere. This speech doesn't ask the question and doesn't challenge Albertans by saying that there's no room for us to live with the realization that it's okay to have homeless among us. There's absolutely no reason why this province should find its own citizens, Albertans, living under conditions of homelessness. It takes away human dignity to be homeless. It hurts our sense of wellness and humanity to be thrown onto the streets.

I don't see any commitment, a pledge, an undertaking in the form of a vision that over the next five years this province, this government, is determined to provide leadership to Albertans to achieve a

social condition in which there will be absolutely no need for anyone to have to go to food banks. Yet we find that as the provincial economy has grown, it hasn't translated into prosperity for all. In fact, whether you are in Medicine Hat, a city that I visited last year on one of my tours of southern Alberta – and I was invited to go and visit the food bank, which is used by increasing numbers of people who live in that beautiful city.

Why is it that in the richest province in this great country, in Alberta, we have an expanding need for the food banks? More and more Albertans go to food banks in order to get the food their families need. We have created a whole new class of the working poor in this province. There's no attention paid here, firstly, to say that, yes, it's a problem, and secondly that we are up to addressing this problem, solving this problem, and then setting timelines that we are going to do it together, that we have the resolve and the commitment and the resources that we're going to put there so that this problem can be addressed.

Alberta in the new century must provide special opportunities to young children, preschool children. There is an opportunity now for us to make serious investments in our own future by investing in the care of our children, child care, child care that includes a robust vision of child development and early childhood education.

Our child care centres must become centres of learning and development and growth for every child in this province, yet there's no commitment that I see in this throne speech to embracing that challenge, to embracing that opportunity to make sure that children who are two, three years old today, the ones who are going to build this new century, who are going to build the new Alberta, will not be deprived of the very fundamental experiences that all children need at that age. It is those experiences that become the building blocks for their later success. If children miss out when they're one year old, two years old, three years old, on those very fundamental, important learning experiences, opportunities to develop and grow in certain ways, they cannot become successful, first, in school and later on, when they leave school, in the wide, open world outside. So we have in this speech an absence, a stunning silence of this government on what its plans are to address this very critical question that we have before us with respect to providing facilities for our preschool children.

4:40

If anything, this government is about to squander the opportunity that's provided by a commitment made by the federal government. After 13 years of waiting, at least the federal government now says: we are willing to put funds in there for the development of these early childhood development and education facilities in every province. Our province is dragging its heels. It's mired in its own concerns about keeping control. Control is more important than providing those facilities. Its concerns with for-profit/nonprofit mix trump the interests of children in this province.

I think it's a shame that we as a province are not playing a leading role in insisting on the establishment of national standards. We can be leaders in that. We need to provide that leadership. We have the capacity to provide that leadership to establish national standards, which every child care facility dedicated to providing development experiences, learning experiences, early childhood education experiences will have to meet. That should be the primary concern, not who runs these child care facilities. That's absent in this speech, and I'm disappointed. My constituents and Albertans, I'm sure, are disappointed that this government is silent on this very critical issue.

Mr. Speaker, I seek your guidance. How many more minutes do I have?

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. Your time has elapsed.

Is there anyone who wishes to be recognized under 29(2)(a)? Are you rising on 29(2)(a), hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I was listening with interest to his response to the Speech from the Throne, and I certainly would agree with him on his points, certainly on issues related to poverty and children, the fact that too many children in this province think Kraft dinner is a luxury meal.

The hon. member has in the past been a passionate defender of public health care, and I was curious. I didn't hear him talk at length about public health care and his view on where we're going in this province with public health care. I'm now asking him to share with this hon. member and the entire House his concerns about the direction we are going in this province with public health care.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, hon. colleague. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to address the question. I have, I guess, a minute to do it.

There's widespread concern across Alberta among Albertans with respect to the direction that this government proposes to take with respect to refashioning Alberta's health care system one more time yet. What I've been hearing from Albertans is that they want this government to give a commitment to them that their health care system will be publicly funded, publicly delivering services, and will not be taken away from them, that it will not be stolen by using a term like the third way. This third way is the Mazankowski report way. They have told me that it's the Graydon report way, and they are not going to be fooled by a new label that the government is now proposing to use. They don't want this government to be paying the consultants and advisers of the Fraser Institute, west and east, to again be put on a new expert committee to give us advice on what to do about the system. They have heard enough.

Albertans know enough about where to take their health care system. They want this government's commitment that it will not steal the system away from them. Mr. Speaker, at four different places in Alberta, from Medicine Hat to Grande Prairie to Calgary to Edmonton, we heard the same message from concerned Albertans about the future of health care. They are not at all willing to trust the designs of this government with respect to yet further changes that it proposes to make come May or June or whenever it starts to do it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Back to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I commence my maiden speech, I would like to express my sincere appreciation of the leadership the Speaker showed and the solemnity when he first shared the news last Thursday of the tragic deaths of the four young RCMP constables. Our hearts and gratitude go out to their families for the gift of their sons, husbands, and fathers.

I would also like to take a moment to express my condolences on behalf of the residents of Calgary-Varsity to the family and many friends who recently observed the untimely passing of our Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Lois Hole. We welcome, however, a distinguished gentleman and proud Albertan, the Hon. Norman Kwong, to continue the great work that his highly revered predecessor began.

On a personal note, I was thrilled to be able to meet such a famous celebrity as the Hon. Mr. Kwong as he had a distinct role to play in one of my most precious childhood memories. The first football game my father ever took me to starred none other than the living legend himself, Normie Kwong. I congratulate the Hon. Mr. Kwong as he assumes the position of Lieutenant Governor of the 26th Alberta Legislature and to the Speaker for his continued service to the House and to you, the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a willingness to change and grow is a powerful motivator, as evidenced in the Calgary-Varsity constituency in the recent provincial election. It is my pleasure as the newly elected MLA for Calgary-Varsity to respond to the throne speech and provide this House with some insight into the many facets of the diverse, dynamic constituency I'm proud to call home.

I have the privilege of standing here today as a representative of Calgary-Varsity because of the dedicated support and efforts of hundreds of financial supporters and incredibly effective, skilled, caring, and highly motivated campaign workers. To each of you, thank you for the opportunity to represent you in this Legislative Assembly. Individuals from diverse backgrounds, including dedicated seniors, friends, teachers, and former students and parents, worked collaboratively because they believed in a new, inclusive version of what could be, given Alberta's bountiful resource and Albertans' potential. To my campaign supporters and all constituents of Calgary-Varsity I declare that I will strive to respectfully uphold the powerful democratic process by listening to and addressing constituents' concerns, holding the government accountable, and striving to bring about positive change which will benefit Calgary-Varsity constituents and all Calgarians and Albertans.

This constituency is typical of many which 30 years ago were considered outlying suburbs, however, due to the rapid urban growth of the city of Calgary, find themselves now reclassified as inner city. Calgary-Varsity encompasses the vibrant communities of Dalhousie, Brentwood, Charleswood, Varsity, University Heights, portions of Silver Springs, Banff Trail, Capitol Hill, and Triwood. Calgary-Varsity hosts a healthy array of bustling schools, libraries, community halls, recreational facilities, thriving small businesses, and enviable parks and pathways. The people, however, are naturally this constituency's greatest asset. The residents of Calgary-Varsity represent a rich cross-section of society and stem from various walks of life and economic and cultural backgrounds.

4:50

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the hon. Murray Smith for his valued service to this remarkable constituency from 1993 to 2004 and wish him all the best in his new position in Washington.

I have had the privilege of living in the constituency, more specifically Dalhousie, for the past 25 years. My daughter has fond memories of growing up in the area, playing in the community soccer league, riding her bike down the pathways to the constituency's many parks and playgrounds, and attending the local public schools from elementary right up to the University of Calgary, where my wife and I are also alumni.

Schools are an essential cornerstone of any community. I have a particularly strong interest in the delivery of public education within the riding as my background for the past 34 years is teaching, 21 years of which took place within the constituency at Jerry Potts elementary and F.E. Osborne junior high. I retired from full-time teaching two years ago. However, I spent a great deal of time substitute teaching in various Calgary-Varsity schools at the elementary, junior, and senior high level. My wife taught in and around the area, and my daughter, also a teacher, began her career at a well-respected elementary school within the constituency. My

first-hand experience coupled with the extensive discussions with students, parents, teachers, and school staff during and following the election has made me intimately aware of the numerous concerns constituents are saddled with regarding the government's lack of support for education in this province.

The blatant inadequacy of government funding has hurt the schools in the Calgary-Varsity constituency and throughout this province. Alberta suffers from Canada's highest dropout rate, a pronounced lack of support for special needs and ESL students, overcrowded classrooms, outdated and often unsafe and environmentally unsound infrastructure, a shortage of classroom resources, a dismal supply of library books and staff, cuts to arts and language programs, and increasingly expensive school fees, which are becoming a heavy burden on parents like any other user fee or tax.

On behalf of the residents of Calgary-Varsity, I hope to impress upon the government that parents cannot continue to subsidize schools indefinitely. Small class sizes are not a luxury but are essential for quality teaching and learning. Curriculum support must outweigh spending on overemphasized areas such as controversial achievement testing, of very questionable value.

The cause of the majority of problems that ail the school system is that the government has chronically overlooked and under-researched the true cost of education. You get what you pay for. Government funding has no relation to schools' actual costs. It's not necessarily about spending more but spending smarter.

Calgary-Varsity, as denoted by the name, is a university community. The University of Calgary lies at the heart of the Calgary-Varsity constituency. I am proud to have obtained my degree at this well-respected institution back in 1971. The University of Calgary exemplifies the power of education to help people of varied ages to reach personal and professional goals. The students, support staff, and faculty of the University of Calgary are a valuable Alberta resource. They deserve our respect.

I have heard from postsecondary students, many of whom are forced to work two minimum wage jobs to pay for their inflated tuition, rent, and/or food and are looking forward to the funding specifics of how the Alberta government will improve the quality, affordability, and guarantee the sustainability and diversity of postsecondary education as an investment in both their and Alberta's future.

I have also spoken with many of the valuable people who support the students in a variety of roles, from faculty to food service to maintenance and security, who are watching nervously as their budgets, buildings, and jobs crumble around them. As my hon. colleague from Calgary-Currie likes to say, we must get postsecondary institutions off their starvation diet.

The contributions of leading-edge philanthropists to the University of Calgary, that have resulted in the creation of the recently established Institute for Quantum Information Science and the Markin health institute should serve as the icing on a well-government-funded cake rather than as the dough that holds the cake together.

The success and prosperity of our province in the next century depends upon a highly skilled and educated, richly talented and diverse workforce. The University of Calgary, in addition to other academic and trade-based institutions throughout Alberta, can only achieve this through stable, predictable, long-term financial support from our provincial government. My opposition colleagues and I will diligently promote adequate public and postsecondary funding in order that education be accessible to all and so no student in Alberta is denied the opportunity to excel.

In the run-up to the fall election seniors, especially those on fixed incomes, who represent a large portion of the Calgary-Varsity

constituency population, received a welcomed, long-overdue relief when the province no longer collected their health care premium taxes. Hopefully, during this session of the Legislature the government will also come through with a promised return of their vision, dental, and pharmaceutical benefits now that the province is supposedly debt free, which is due in a large part to the contributions seniors made throughout their lives.

Another announcement that seniors in long-term care facilities would look forward to is an improvement in the services they receive which is directly proportional to the crippling rent increases that the government forced them and their families to endure. For those fortunate enough to still be able to drive, a decrease in their insurance rates would be appreciated given the province's underwriting of private insurance profits by reducing yet-to-be-defined soft tissue injury settlements, capped at \$4,000.

Seniors deserve the best possible quality of life and must be given the means to live with dignity, a notion that stands in stark contrast to the cuts the government has imposed in previous budgets. Seniors, their family members, and support group advocates are anxiously awaiting the Auditor General's review and recommendations for long-term care, which we hope the government will quickly accept and implement once they are discussed and debated in this spring sitting of the Legislature.

In addition to seniors, I have heard from a large number of AISH recipients of varied ages in the Calgary-Varsity constituency who are hoping to be recognized and valued by the province through not only an increase in their minuscule living allowance but through a decrease in the portion of the province's clawback. I recently met with representatives of the VRRRI, the Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute, located within the Calgary-Varsity boundaries, to discuss the AISH advocates' coalition recommendations report, which has been compiled with government representation and input. With the anticipated approval of this House I hope it will be quickly funded and implemented.

One of the ways in which the Calgary-Varsity constituency is dramatically different from the majority of other Calgary or Alberta constituencies is the fact that it not only has a soon-to-be-completed hospital, the new Children's hospital, within its boundaries, but it is in close proximity to the Foothills hospital, which, although possessing wings older than the imploded General, escaped the latter's fate. While the Children's hospital will not house all the children's services under one roof, as it was originally proposed to do, and although it will only provide a few more beds than the existing Children's, their layout and accompanying child-and family-friendly support rooms will serve as a much-needed addition to the million-plus combined population of the communities served by the Calgary health region.

With luck and a renewed government commitment to public health care delivery the second replacement hospital in southeast Calgary, which has been set back to 2010, will finally be in service and, hopefully, paid for rather than P3 leased, together with the much-needed additions to the Foothills, Rockyview, and Lougheed hospitals, which must be completed as quickly as possible to relieve the pressure of growing waiting lists. In royalty-rich Alberta good health care should not be merely a perk.

Calgary-Varsity is a remarkable, concerned, caring community where people have settled to live, learn, work, and play. This vibrant constituency contributes not only to the quality and character of the city of Calgary but to the province of Alberta as a whole. Calgary-Varsity voters supported me on November 22 because they want a strong and effective opposition voice in the Legislature. Calgary-Varsity residents want their concerns and values reflected in the questions, statements, and motions I bring forward on their

behalf. They have asked me to stand up for what they believe in: affordable and accessible health care; quality education for all; inclusive and equitable community support systems; bold innovation and strong, steady management; fiscal responsibility; and open, accountable government.

It is my privilege to stand here today as the representative for Calgary-Varsity on the cusp of Alberta's new century exhilarated by the opportunity to help shape a just and inclusive vision of this province.

Thank you.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a singular honour to rise in the Assembly this afternoon. Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to the residents of Calgary-Nose Hill who've entrusted me with the privilege of public service and granted me the opportunity to be their voice in this House. I want to say to all of the residents of Calgary-Nose Hill that I will do my utmost to listen to all of you and to be your voice in government.

Over the past 12 years this government has achieved remarkable things. To the hon. Premier and to my colleagues who are returning to this House I say this: it was your leadership and your record that led us to another resounding victory in this recent election, and for this you have all our gratitudes. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the House that our work is not finished. Indeed, it never will be finished for as legislators it is our opportunity and our job to improve the conditions which we have found, as those who have preceded us in this Chamber have also done.

Mr. Speaker, this year marks the centenary of Alberta's incorporation as a province in Canada. This is a time to pay tribute to those who have with courage, vision, and hard work built this province from our aboriginal peoples to our pioneers and our builders and who have left us proud legacies. I'm proud to say that my own ancestors have played a part in writing this great story. My maternal ancestors William and Helen Shaw and their children came to what is now Calgary in 1883. They journeyed by covered wagon from near present-day Swift Current, Saskatchewan, across a wild and desolate land to take out a homestead on the banks of Fish Creek. There they built Alberta's first manufacturing industry, the Shaw Woolen Mills of Midnapore.

A number of my family have also served the military forces of our country. My paternal grandfather, John Thomas Brown, volunteered to serve his country in World War I. He went overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, where he was gravely wounded in the Battle of the Somme. My parents, Allan and Irene Brown, both volunteered for military service in the Second World War. Mr. Speaker, it is our task to build on the courage and the vision of our ancestors. The challenges that we face are myriad, but none are insurmountable. We can improve education and training for our young people, we can preserve and improve the quality of our public health care, we can dedicate ourselves to the needs of our senior citizens and those less fortunate, and we can sustain and protect the environment and our wildlife resources.

Let me turn to education. Our education system from kindergarten through high school is among the finest in the world. Yet, sadly, many of our young people drop out as early as the age of 16 years to take unskilled jobs to their own long-term detriment and to the detriment of our society at large. Let us set a goal to reduce the high school dropout rate by one-half. Let us achieve this goal by making school attendance mandatory until the age of 17 years, by ensuring

that programs are developed and supported for those young people who are at risk of failing, and by providing enhanced learning and career choices appropriate to individual aptitudes.

We must also ensure that Alberta continues to train and keep the best teachers, who make all the difference in determining the success of our young people. I know that teachers like Roberta Scott and Mabel Dow of Midnapore school made a great difference to me.

Mr. Speaker, let me now address some of the issues of higher education and training. This government has provided us with a strategic plan which includes the goals of leading and learning, unleashing innovation, competing in a global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. As our province makes its transition to a knowledge-based economy, the key to all of these goals is to invest in education. Let us heed the wisdom of the philosopher Diogenes, who said: the foundation of every state is the education of its youth. Why not aspire as a province to reach the pinnacle of accomplishment in teaching, learning, discovery, and creativity in the sciences and in the arts? Why not have our universities and other postsecondary institutions be among the best in the world? If we do so, the future success of our province will be assured.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne provides a positive plan to provide increased access and more affordability for postsecondary education. It is our obligation to ensure that the riches accruing to our generation from nonrenewable resources are of benefit not only to our generation but that they also benefit future generations. Let us build on the access to the future endowment and continue to invest a portion of surplus funds into that fund. Let us build on the quality of our major research institutions by enabling them to grow and attract the best researchers and provide the best facilities by putting in place a long-term capital funding plan necessary to fulfill the government's goals for increased access.

In pursuing our goals of educational excellence, we should not focus narrowly on fields of endeavour which may be perceived to have immediate economic benefits, for such an approach lacks foresight. Often the fruits of knowledge are little known at the outset but at some future date may produce great benefits.

Dr. John Polanyi, the Canadian Nobel laureate, put it this way. We should not try to turn centres of excellence into centres of relevance because such a policy will fail to deliver value for money for two reasons: first, because excellence is rare, and we simply cannot select the excellence we prefer; and, secondly, because the discovery that one wishes to see made and its application lie well in the future, and the future is hard to predict.

Let us recognize that pure sciences, the arts, and the humanities also have important places in our postsecondary education system and that they make important contributions to the richness of learning.

Let me turn now to health care. Our health care practitioners are of the highest standards, as are our programs and facilities. While public expectations of what health care can and should do are increasing, so are the costs of providing those services. Changes are both necessary and inevitable, and we should innovate and modify the methods of delivering health care so as to optimize the health and wellness of all Albertans. Nonetheless, we must ensure that whatever changes are made, universal public health care continues to be just that: publicly funded, universally accessible, affordable to all Albertans, and of the highest standard. We must continue to ensure that timely access to quality health care is never dependent upon financial means.

Mr. Speaker, there is no better way to acknowledge the contributions of those who have built this province than to accord recognition to our seniors. They, too, should benefit from the Alberta

advantage. Some priorities in this area include the necessity of ensuring that there is adequate and affordable housing for seniors and that our health care and support systems allow seniors to be as independent as possible. Where necessary, we must provide support to those who choose to remain living in their own homes and especially to those who selflessly provide such great service to our society by providing home care for spouses and other family members who are unable to care for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the application of market value property assessment across the province and the upward trend in house prices have resulted in an increasing tax burden falling on those who live in long-established neighbourhoods in our cities. We must ensure that seniors who are faced with rising property taxes are not forced into hardship by such increases.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak briefly about Alberta's environment. There is no higher duty to which we are bound nor no greater legacy that we can bequeath to future generations than that of ensuring that our natural environment is preserved and enhanced. Alberta has always been a leader in those endeavours. We were the first province in Canada to create a ministry of the environment.

5:10

I wish to mention three priorities for the future. First, we must ensure that there is continued protection of public lands for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. We must keep our inventory of public lands intact. Resource exploitation from those public lands must be done in a way that never compromises the ecological integrity of those lands.

Secondly, we should ensure that our water resources are conserved. We must have a comprehensive, integrated policy for watershed management, and this policy should be multidisciplinary and multidepartmental. It must build on the ideals of the water for life program. It must include policy in the fields of agriculture, forestry, industry, and hydrology and must establish guidelines for the development and land use in the eastern slopes and the riparian areas of our major watersheds, from which we draw our drinking and irrigation water.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that our wildlife resources are conserved and protected for the enjoyment of all Albertans now and in the future. We need to allocate the resources required to protect and preserve our wildlife resources and to enforce our laws, and we must find ways to deal with the findings of our courts on special hunting privileges for aboriginal and Métis people for if we do not, wildlife and game conservation will be in jeopardy for all of our peoples.

Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians many challenges lie before us as we play our part in writing the next chapter in the history of this province. We are entrusted with power not to advance our personal agendas nor to embellish our own names but for the noble purpose of serving people. Times of prosperity, like times of scarcity, provide great challenges to peoples and to governments. We must accept these challenges. We must seize the moment and ensure that these great opportunities which lie before us are not lost.

The motto of our fair province, *Fortis et Liber*, strong and free, is drawn from the anthem of our great nation of Canada. From Wood Buffalo to Waterton, from Zama City to Etzikom, from the Rocky Mountains to the prairie grasslands under endless skies of blue may Alberta always remain part of the "True North strong and free" and a place where freedom and individuality may flourish.

Mr. Speaker, may all of us in this House be granted the strength to fulfill our purpose here, which is to benefit the people of this fair province and this great nation now and in the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under Standing Order 29?

Seeing none, we'll move to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the time remaining, I rise with a great feeling of honour and privilege as the member of the Legislature for Edmonton-Glenora. After a high-profile campaign between very able candidates 55 per cent of Edmonton-Glenora voters went to the polls, and I feel quite elated to be elected by them. I know this is not the time for introductions, but I would like to acknowledge that the most important supporter of my campaign is here in the gallery, my wife, Rhea Jansen. She is an outstanding watercolour painter, and she put aside her paints for the campaign. She became just a tireless worker, going door to door on my behalf, so thank you.

Edmonton-Glenora residents are highly educated and very well informed about politics and public issues, and they have high expectations for their MLAs. Their confidence in me is I believe an endorsement of the social justice agenda which I have been advocating for many years: equal justice for the poor and the marginalized and greater participation in the wealth of Alberta by all Albertans. Edmonton-Glenora voters expect their MLA to be a strong voice in the Legislature for the values which they believe in.

What is it that the residents of Edmonton-Glenora want? This became quite clear to me recently in a town meeting in Inglewood, where I live. The town meeting, which had standing room only, was held to discuss the new proposal to develop the Camsell hospital site. All agreed that something must be done to develop that site – the hospital building has been sitting there empty for eight years – but there were many different opinions on the new proposal. As I listened to the people state their opinions – and some statements were quite emotional – it was obvious to me that the residents of Inglewood really care about their community and that they are all united in their desire to improve the quality of life of their community.

They're not against development, but they're asking important questions. Will 2,000 more people only exacerbate the already very busy traffic through the community? Will a huge urban development create a more secure, safe, and healthy neighbourhood? What will happen to the Inglewood School? Will there be some open space for parks? How will this development affect the value of their properties and homes? Speaker after speaker shared why they had moved to Inglewood, a quiet single-family neighbourhood with fine shopping at Westmount Shopping Centre. They expressed their concern, above all, for the quality of life of their community, and more and more quality of life is becoming the key measurement of growth and the criterion for evaluating change.

Quality of life is more than just income and the value of our property, but that is a good place to start. Edmonton-Glenora has a wide spectrum of income levels: 12.9 per cent of the population earns over \$100,000 a year, but 13.1 per cent earns less than \$20,000. So the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing, especially in cities like Edmonton. What is there in the throne speech which addresses this reality? There is one statement which I affirm with all my heart: "Albertans are caring, compassionate people who want every member of this province to have the opportunity to share in the Alberta advantage both today and in the next Alberta." Yes, Albertans are caring and compassionate; would that were true of governments.

Raising the minimum wage to \$7 and promising yet to determine increases to AISH and reintroducing optical and dental benefits for seniors does not address the real problem, which is a paternalistic,

punitive, uncaring, welfare system. Arbitrary handouts every 10 years solve nothing. We need a total reform of the system, the restoration of social workers on the front lines who will deal in a caring way with the real needs of people, and an invitation to people living in poverty to participate in building a system in which people will have a living wage so that they can lift their heads with dignity and pride.

People often ask me if entering the public realm of politics is a radical break from my career as a minister in the United Church of Canada. Well, one of the differences is that at least in the congregation that I served, when I got up to speak, the congregation didn't all disappear; they stayed. But there's lots of continuity, not just differences. It's a radical change, but the continuity is that I'm still able to deal with the same social justice issues. After 27 years of serving as a pastor and preacher for churches in Lethbridge and St. Paul and for the last 15 years at Robertson-Wesley United Church in Edmonton, I can now come here to address the same social justice agenda.

It's not unusual for preachers to enter politics. In the last 100 years there have been 21 preachers in this House: 19 ordained ministers, including well-known former Speaker Dr. David Carter, and two unordained preachers who are perhaps the most famous preachers, two former Premiers, William Aberhart and Ernest C. Manning. But the tradition that has shaped me as a preacher is not that which shaped Ernest C. Manning and William Aberhart. It's called the Social Gospel tradition, which was prominent on the prairies in the first few decades of the 20th century and which produced such remarkable politicians here in Alberta as William Irvine and Nellie McClung. In fact, Nellie McClung taught Sunday school at Wesley Methodist Church right here in Edmonton, which later became Robertson Wesley United Church, which I served, and she served in this Legislature for five years.

So as I begin my work as a legislator, I am particularly aware of this rich heritage. Some preachers focus all their attention on heaven and life after death; you just have to turn on the TV to see that. Not the Social Gospel preachers. For them God was active in history and in politics. For them personal sin was secondary to the sin of social structures which left people poor and marginalized. Preachers of the Social Gospel demanded justice, not charity. They hated the soup kitchen philanthropy which enabled the rich to provide condescending handouts to the poor without questioning the injustices of the system. As the noted Saskatoon theologian Ben Smiley put it, quote: they were confident that the realm of God would come in the political events of daily life and that God's new Jerusalem would be built on Earth.

5:20

Now, in our time some have referred to the right-wing revival which has been going on for some years and, hopefully, is now waning. It's easy in the midst of a right-wing revival to forget the Social Gospel tradition and all of the values that it represented, values such as equal rights, which led to the inclusion of women in political life. Nellie McClung was a great leader to bring about the inclusion of women and the establishment of a social welfare system which served the needs of the poor, which is being gradually dismantled by the social policies of governments today.

The Social Gospel Movement produced a song which I'm going to the end with, a song that goes to the tune of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, which I'm not going to sing, but I'll repeat the words because the words focus on the real concern for me, which continues to be equal justice: equal justice for women, equal justice for gays and lesbians. Here are the words. The song goes like this.

The farmers of the prairie lands are massing in their might,
Exalting in a principle, a cause for which they fight,
The sacred cause of justice, the establishment of right,
And equal rights for all.
Oh, 'tis time to get together,
You will help us get together,
Pledge we all to stand together,
For the day of peace and right.

Mr. Speaker, that is my pledge: to fight for the sacred causes of justice, equal rights, and peace as I represent the people of Edmonton-Glenora. And all the congregation said amen.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I was going to say to the hon. member that had you chosen to sing the song, it wouldn't be the first time it was done in this Assembly.

Does anyone wish to rise on the Speech from the Throne?
The hon. minister of seniors.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 8 o'clock this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:23 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 7, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/03/07

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Wellness Initiatives

501. Ms Blakeman moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider using taxes from tobacco sales to create a wellness fund to support wellness programs, public health initiatives, and research.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reason I have brought forward this particular motion and ask for the support of the House for it is two parts. One, I think that we are a healthier society, a better society if we have more well people in it. I like the idea of a wellness fund that supports initiatives to get more people with a wellness attitude rather than always looking at a sickness model.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I'm very interested in the idea of cost containment in our health care system, and I think one of the easiest and most obvious ways to contain costs is to have more people well and less people in need of acute and primary care.

The Alberta Liberals really believe in this. In fact, this was our number 2 policy in our Creating a Healthy Future policy position, and this motion is a paraphrasing, essentially, of that particular motion, but it contains all the important ingredients of it.

The background to this is that in March of 2002 – so we're talking three years ago – a number of stakeholder organizations came together under the banner of Wellness Alberta to advocate for the establishment of a wellness fund. There were a number of organizations that were involved in that: Action on Smoking and Health, Alberta Centre For Active Living, Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, Alberta heart health project – I'm just jumping around here, Mr. Speaker – Alberta Public Health Association, Alberta Recreation & Parks Association, Dietitians of Canada, Grande Prairie & Area Safe Communities, the Health Promotion Research Group at the University of Calgary, et cetera. It was a very lengthy list. They were calling for a provincial wellness fund of approximately \$200 million annually that would be funded out of tobacco tax revenue.

We think that's an excellent idea, and essentially that's what we've incorporated into the motion that I have before you here tonight. The Alberta Liberals listened to those experts and those members of the health promotion community. We heeded their good advice and their suggestions, and thus we are in favour of creating this province-wide wellness fund.

Now, how does the fund work? Well, it would be phased in. The idea is to eventually collect \$200 million a year from taxes on tobacco and tobacco products, and that \$200 million a year would then be fed back out to support projects aimed at improving health and wellness.

The amount of this fund could be adjusted for future years based on the tax revenue and Alberta's increasing population. It anticipates that hopefully we have fewer people smoking and that tobacco tax allocation of money does in fact drop. Currently it's at \$660

million a year, and we are proposing using \$200 million of that for this wellness fund. But let's say that we do have a tobacco tax revenue drop and it becomes inadequate to sustain this. Then we can look at other sources of revenue to sustain it; for example, perhaps liquor taxes. We should note that the \$200 million is not a one-time cost, but it is in fact an annual cost of \$200 million each year, and the funds are expended annually.

Mr. Speaker, I want to underline that the wellness fund would under no circumstances take revenue away from other programs. This is not meant to cause any kind of a clawback in any other area. This is intended to be separate and a new fund beyond what we have, so it shouldn't take money away from acute care or chronic care or anything like that.

Now, we propose that the money be distributed and get into the community and create wellness initiatives through a couple of different ways, but the primary venue that we would like to support is using the family and community support services. We would hope to foster healthier communities and by extension healthier families and healthier individuals by funnelling most of this money through the FCSS set-up.

FCSS currently supports approximately 192 programs across the province, and they vary widely. They range from things like parent-child development activities, support services for young school-aged children, parenting and family life education, youth development, home support services for the elderly, outreach and co-ordination for the elderly, newcomer services, education services. It's quite an extensive list.

You can start to see what becomes possible there; for example, the issue that the Member for Red Deer-North raised earlier today around drug-use problems with youth. We could be looking at initiatives on wellness that dealt specifically with youth and the drug culture. So lots of possibilities there.

Right now 286 municipalities and Métis settlements are participating in FCSS programs. In other words, almost 98 per cent of Alberta's population has access to an FCSS service.

FCSS is particularly a good venue for us because it's driven by the communities that it serves. In other words, it's localized decision-making for the allocation of dollars. Neither the province nor any provincial agency directly creates or runs FCSS services. They rely on municipal initiatives and community support in order to achieve their objectives. The process works from the bottom up. What does the community need? They identify that need, and then we can look at the programming that feeds into it.

Currently there is an 80-20 split. The municipalities put in 20 per cent, and the province puts in 80 per cent. With the wellness fund in place, this formula could be re-examined, for example.

I think that in FCSS we have a proven, successful mechanism for building partnerships between Alberta's provincial and municipal governments and the communities that they serve. We think it deserves more credit for the work that it does and more money to do that work. We think the wellness fund would allow FCSS to create new programs and services in addition to those currently offered. We'd also like to explore ways to encourage stronger partnerships between FCSS and the public health organizations.

8:10

Now, the second initiative we're looking at underneath this motion, aside from funding through FCSS, is to support specific public health initiatives. Investments in health promotion require that we invest not only in programs that would benefit targeted high-risk populations, for example people with diabetes, but we also look at ways to fundamentally change the way we operate our schools, our hospitals, our local community organizations. So we're talking about institutional change and incorporation there.

Lastly, we would like to look at furthering research into wellness initiatives and pilot projects, and part of that is looking at and better integrating social determinants into the way we look at our health system and wellness initiatives. Furthering health promotion research is also a key component of the wellness fund, and I don't think we can make informed decisions on how and where to invest our money unless we understand what works and what doesn't work.

I think that there's a variety of groups that can gain funding through this. Public health and health promotion are not solely the responsibility of any one government department. We think that through these three ways – the FCSS, the public health initiatives, and the research initiatives – this is an excellent way to disseminate that money.

I know I have other colleagues who want to speak tonight on different aspects of a wellness fund, social determinants, wellness overall in society. I will ask for the support of the Assembly in supporting this motion, and I will take my seat and allow some of my colleagues to be able to speak to this. Thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Motion 501. Sadly, I can't support it, but I would like to try and explain why.

There is already a fund dedicated to healthy living initiatives in Alberta. It is called the Department of Health and Wellness, and currently it is funded at about \$8 billion per year, and it is moving up at the rate of about 10 per cent a year. There is another fund. It's an endowment fund, Mr. Speaker, called the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. A commitment has been made to move it from the original \$300 million in grant money to \$800 million by adding an additional \$500 million this year.

While I agree that more needs to be done on the wellness side of our coin, reality has a habit of getting in our way. Health care funding has been growing at a rate exceeding 10 per cent a year. It becomes difficult to do the extra things in health care or in any other department even when necessary when growth in health care spending is so high. It not only precludes our ability to deal with new initiatives; it makes it difficult for other departments of government that are continually being denied additional funds as health care and education come first, as they should. They're the priority, but the growth in those two program lines is starting to hurt other programs.

All is not lost however. The current minister of health continues to work on a wellness strategy, and I am confident that even small things like more phys ed in schools can have a huge impact on the well-being of our children's lives. Impacts from the tobacco reduction strategy are being felt. As the minister of health indicated, over a hundred thousand people have quit smoking in the last two or three years.

Mr. Magnus: And one.

Ms Haley: And one.

The International Symposium on Health will provide a forum to explore a variety of ideas regarding health care in Alberta and hopefully will also look at the potential on the wellness side.

The actual idea of a wellness fund is not new, Mr. Speaker. It was in fact mentioned in the original Rainbow Report, and it is something that I think makes a lot of sense. But at the same time we need to constantly be reviewing the things that we are doing, such as the

CFEP grants of \$25 million a year. It's an awesome program that allows communities, in my area at least, to work on their recreational facilities. We were lucky enough to get a million dollar grant towards a swimming pool. Well, it's a \$12 million swimming pool in Airdrie, but we were able to get a centennial grant, which really helped. Those are the types of initiatives that my communities are working on, and I'm glad to try and support them in any way that I can.

As well, as a parent when my sons were younger, one of the most important things, I think, that I could do for them was to encourage them to be in as many sports as was possible, and we tried them pretty much all, from swimming to football and basketball and volleyball and everything in between. We started out with just soccer, which was a very inexpensive sport for children to participate in. It was also something as a parent that I could get involved in with them.

So I think that not everything is about trying to spend \$200 million. Perhaps it's more about getting people to reconnect with our beautiful province. If I actually had \$200 million to spend, Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would do would be to try and invest it in our parks because I happen to think that that's an area that needs that kind of investment, but it would be a one-time investment, not an ongoing annual expenditure.

I would like to point out that if you combined our personal income tax, our health care premiums, the tobacco tax, the alcohol tax, you still wouldn't have enough money to pay for what one year of health care is costing us right now. So, clearly, wellness is an incredibly important issue, but never yet in all my years here have I seen anything that we've done in health care to help reduce costs actually reduce costs because the second that you find a way to do one surgical procedure for less, you end up doing two more of another one later. So there's never a reduction, and we have an aging demographic, so we also have to be cognizant of the growth potential in the health care sector.

I guess to conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to caution all of us on setting up funds like this for a dedicated revenue stream. I think that there's a risk that we set priorities today that 10 years from now may not be the priority for the government of that day, and we tie their hands by precluding their ability to change things like this. We make it very difficult with endowment funds and foundations in order to be able to deal with the current realities. Right now life is pretty good because we have a very nice surplus. Oil and gas prices are high. I remember a day when they were very high in the early 1980s, and everybody believed that they would stay high. Then I remember about 10 years where things were not so great in Alberta, and we ended up with major deficits and debt that we've just now finally concluded paying off. So I really think it's important that we not dream with taxpayers' dollars but, rather, try to find the best way to deal with the program needs that Albertans are actually asking us to deal with.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the motion, but I appreciate very much the opportunity to get up and address the issue. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we'd all agree that wellness is the preferred concept to date for us to talk about our physical and emotional well-being. In fact, a paradigm shift has taken place in which the emphasis has shifted from a biomedical model to a focus on social conditions. A recent report commis-

sioned by the Alberta government, the 2004 report on comparable health indicators, affirmed that

health is much more than just the absence of disease or disability. It is a state of physical, emotional and social well-being. Our education, employment, income and physical environment influence our health as much or more than the quality and availability of health service.

If we're really serious about our overall health and wellness, we must shift our focus. Roy Romanow wrote recently: we need to move from an illness model to a wellness paradigm that connects the dots of all of the factors that contribute to health for individuals and society at large.

This is not just an academic exercise. It's really a life and death matter. Over 80 per cent of cases of coronary heart disease, diabetes, and lung cancer could be prevented. We ignore the social determinates of health and wellness at our own peril. Tommy Douglas said: the ultimate goal of medicare must be the task of keeping people well rather than just patching them up when they're sick. The social determinants of health are the economic and social conditions that influence the health of individuals, communities, and societies as a whole, conditions such as early childhood, income, availability of food, employment, working conditions, and social services.

Of course, there have been studies on this for a long time. Beginning in the middle of the 19th century there was a famous classic analysis of the social determinants of health written by Friedrich Engels, 1845. It was entitled *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. He discovered that in Manchester death rates were directly affected by the quality of material conditions, housing for example. Rudolf Virchow, a German physician and the father of modern pathology, in his investigation of a typhus epidemic in Upper Silesia discovered that poor living conditions, inadequate diet, and poor hygiene fuelled the epidemic. So finding a direct relationship between social conditions and health is not new, and recent studies in Canada continue to confirm, and it's really a common-sense conclusion.

8:20

The 2002 York University conference on the social determinants of health identified 11 key determinants: aboriginal status, early life, education, employment and working conditions, food security, health care services, housing, income and its distribution, a social safety net, social exclusion, unemployment, and employment security. Mr. Speaker, the FCSS-supported agencies – and they do such a great job in Alberta – address all of these social determinants. A wellness fund directed to the social conditions just mentioned will lead to creating a healthier society and saving the health care system millions of dollars.

One of the most important social determinants of health, of course, is adequate income, the fact that people need a living wage. Study after study demonstrates that poverty is the biggest contributor to poor health. Low income is a determinant of the quality of early childhood, education, housing, employment, working conditions, and, of course, food security. Canadian children living in low-income families are more likely to experience greater varieties of illness, mental health problems, lower school achievement, early school drop out, family violence, and child abuse. Material deprivation often leads to greater consumption of tobacco, alcohol, and a lifestyle of poor diets and lack of exercise. I do not blame people living in poverty. There is too much of that kind of blaming the victim in our society.

Welfare is not enough. There must be support for full citizenship and participation in the wealth of our society. People on welfare are not just clients and recipients of welfare or the beneficiaries of the

government's largesse; they are citizens and ought to be treated with dignity and respect. Without the self-esteem and self-worth of being treated with dignity, their wellness will be undermined and ground down, ensuring their dependence on the health care system.

So, Mr. Speaker, the most important question, I believe, for us in this Assembly is to ask ourselves: has government policy contributed to our wellness or undermined it by weakening the quality of so many social determinants of health? Rudolf Virchow, whom I quoted earlier, wrote in 1848: medicine is a social science, and politics is nothing but medicine writ large. One of the most important aspects of the Hippocratic oath of physicians is their commitment to not do any harm. So we must ask if government policy, especially since 1993, has contributed to our wellness or undermined our wellness. Has government policy done more harm than good? So it's not a question of blaming the poor; it's looking at ourselves and our own social policies.

I affirm the wellness fund. That's going in the right direction: to put money and resources where it counts, to enable Alberta to be a more healthy province. Roy Romanow put it best, and this is my conclusion:

Historians and health experts tell us that we have had two great revolutions in the course of public health. The first was the control on infectious diseases . . . The second was the battle against non-communicable diseases.

The third great revolution is about moving from an illness model to all of those things that both prevent illness and promote a holistic sense of wellbeing .

Motion 501 recommends putting our money and resources into dealing with the social determinants of wellness. If we do that, then the promise will come to pass. Albertans will be the healthiest people in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate on Motion 501, which would have the government consider dedicating tobacco tax revenue to a wellness fund. There is no doubt that health care continues to be one of the greatest concerns in our province. Motion 501 would appear to be one way to address certain issues in the health care system; however, I do have several concerns with this motion.

While I am sure that the intent of the Member for Edmonton-Centre is to in some way further meet the health needs of Albertans, I feel that this approach will not be beneficial for several reasons. Mr. Speaker, in March of 2002 tobacco taxes were raised in our province in an effort to reduce the number of Albertans who use tobacco. This is part of the provincial government's overarching strategy to combat tobacco use in our province.

Prior to 2002 tobacco taxes generated roughly \$350 million each year. In 2005 this will go up to \$720 million, so a doubling plus. Currently these revenues flow into the general revenue fund, or GRF, of the provincial government. From here the government allocates revenues towards spending priorities, including health care, primary and postsecondary education, infrastructure, and other provincially delivered programs. By funding programs from the GRF, the government is better able to respond to changes in priorities and circumstances.

According to the wording of the motion, if the government were to accept Motion 501, this would mean that over \$700 million per year would be dedicated to the proposed wellness fund. This is no small amount of money, and the effective removal of close to three-quarters of a billion dollars from the provincial budget would have a large impact on the budget process.

As an aside I must say that exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Centre is suggesting is a little unclear. The wording of the motion seems to indicate that all revenues from the taxation of tobacco would be dedicated to this fund. However, the press release regarding this issue states that only \$200 million would be directed towards this fund, so I may need clarification there. I appreciate the opportunity to debate the issues in this Chamber, but in the future it would be helpful if exactly what is being debated could be a little clearer, but I digress. The dedication of funds solely to one purpose could result in the limiting of spending choices by the government and hampering of the ability to deal with emergencies if they arise.

My second exception to this motion surrounds the issue of efficient program development. What is proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Centre would appear, in my humble opinion, to be a backward approach to program development. In order to have an effective, efficient program, it is best to design what would work best to accomplish a specific goal, then set out funding it. This way there are definite targets and strategies in place so that the program can achieve the original aims that it's created to fill. What is proposed in Motion 501 would appear to put the cart before the horse. In this case it would appear that the Member for Edmonton-Centre is saying: start out with a pile of money, and then we'll see what we can do with it.

Mr. Speaker, to be honest, this method of program development makes me nervous because of the very large chance that funds would be used inefficiently. In one scenario the level of funding would be inadequate to fully develop a program that would be effective, and the program will fail because of this. This will result in the waste of all the funds poured into the program. The other possibility is that there will be a surplus of funds to develop a program, and this will result in wasteful spending. Funds that could have been used to develop other programs in other areas will be locked into a dedicated revenue stream and could not be accessed. Either way, there exists a very large possibility of waste due to a lack of freedom and ability to adapt to changing needs within government funding.

Mr. Speaker, while I do not agree with the mode of funding that is suggested by Motion 501, I very much agree with the measures that are proposed in it. The proposed fund in Motion 501 would support wellness programs, public health initiatives, and research. As I have said, I agree with these initiatives entirely, which is why I am so glad that the government of Alberta has already had these programs in place. The provincial government currently has in place the measures which this motion would achieve. These programs have been in place for some time now.

I would like to briefly discuss the research program that is funded by the provincial government because there is some astounding work benefiting from this. The Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, or AHFMR, was created specifically to fund medical research. Each year this foundation awards over \$40 million in grants and awards to medical research. The funding for these grants comes from the endowment fund created by the provincial government for this purpose. The proceeds that are generated from the investment of the principal of this fund are used for the grants and endowments awarded by the AHFMR. Since its creation in 1983 the AHFMR has been recognized internationally as an outstanding institution, and the provincial government was applauded for its vision in creating it.

Mr. Speaker, as I have stated previously, I agree with what this motion seeks to accomplish, but I do not feel that I can support it because these measures are already being undertaken. To create a seemingly directionless fund with a vague purpose of wellness would be a disservice to Albertans. These are serious questions that surround the issues of health care, and the questions deserve serious answers, not vague promises of some form of spending.

I will not support Motion 501, and I would urge my colleagues in this Chamber to do the same. Thank you.

8:30

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in support of this bill. As a physician in practice for the past 30 years in the province I've come to a real revolution in my own thinking about the way we're spending our health dollars. In fact, approximately 95 per cent of our health budgets are being spent on treatments and prescriptions, and it's not working.

The wellness fund is really about getting at root causes, not dealing with symptoms, not dealing with the results of lifestyles and social conditions that have created the problems in the first place. It's really about getting at root cause, not about prescriptions. That's hard even for medical people to understand. So it's a challenge to shift our thinking around from what we have been used to in the so-called health system, which is actually a sickness treatment system, to one in which we are creating conditions for people to live more healthy lives. The health system is consuming increasing portions of our budgets. It's clear that the returns are diminishing, and it's because we are focusing so much on the supply of services, not on the root causes of the conditions that are coming into the health care system.

In research done in the last 10 years it's increasingly clear that the health system can resolve between 25 and 30 per cent of the conditions presenting to it. This is because in our modern society many of the conditions that are presenting to us are having to do with environment, genetic issues, and social relationships. Many issues today are stress-related: self-esteem, loneliness, violence, addiction, anxiety, depression. We need to begin to address the broader determinants of health, and this fund is designed to try to do that.

Income supports are an example that was referred to earlier. The Quebec health system has investigated the proportion of users of the health care system and found that over 50 per cent of the users of the health care system are on the poverty side of the economic spectrum. Wellness is about how people feel as well as what their medical measurements may tell. It's beyond diagnosis and treatment. It's beyond pills and even beyond lifestyles, which are the symptoms of conditions from which people are struggling to be liberated.

People make choices on the basis of the opportunities and the barriers that they experience in their lives, especially their early childhood experiences. It's appropriate to recognize that this government is spending in some areas of early childhood enrichment. That is going to pay back bountifully in adult lives and health. Early childhood is a vital priority to improve health and to reduce health system use.

Real health promotion – and this is what the wellness fund is about as opposed to sickness management – begins with finding ways to increase people's sense of control, Mr. Speaker. That comes through improving living conditions. Health is about power and money in our culture. In this democracy there are many opportunities, and we need to find across the sectors – the health sector, social services, education, the justice systems – a common commitment to engaging with people and their communities in their responsibility for their health and their future. We can assist them in finding that joint responsibility for health.

This is the crux of wellness. This is the crux of a new paradigm we call health promotion – it's political; it's not medical – stimulating, liberating, caring, healthy communities. It's a challenge to all of us to think about who is responsible for health. The medical

model says: we will take care of you. The wellness model says: together we can create healthy, caring communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking in favour of the motion. The notion of using a sin tax to promote wellness – in other words, turning a negative into a positive – has a sweet irony to it. Another example of irony or paradox is that this government has had no difficulty at all in terms of assessing Albertans and collecting over \$900 million in the form of health care premiums, taxes by any other words, but seems reluctant or reticent to have what I see as almost found money, \$200 million out of a fund of \$660 million, set aside to promote wellness. The notion of promoting wellness is so much cheaper than the after-effects of disease.

The ideal would be through a comprehensive program of education combined with a total ban in public places including bingo halls, casinos, bars, and so on, to promote such a healthy lifestyle that there would no longer be any taxes to collect. And until that wonderful day arrives, we should be setting aside portions of this sin tax to fund healthy investments.

Investment in health is like an investment in education: it just continues to pay and pay and pay. It's not a matter of either/or, robbing Peter to pay Paul. Setting aside \$200 million of a \$650 million windfall from the unfortunate nature of smoking provides us with a kind of funding that can set aside community health support in the form of schools. Compare this kind of an initiative to simply mandating daily phys. ed. without providing either the infrastructure, the equipment, or the support for such a program. You can't mandate; you can only promote.

To get back to the notion of not robbing Peter to pay Paul, we have in this province in one sense the good fortune of our revenues from oil and gas, which this year are accounting for somewhere between \$6 billion to \$10 billion. So the idea that we can't set aside \$200 million just, I'm afraid, is not a wise argument.

We must invest in health if we are going to move into this next hundred years with a healthier lifestyle than we currently have. We have a whole series of problems with regard to obesity, with regard to drug addiction. The latest with the crystal meth is causing a great deal of difficulty. If we can avoid these pitfalls through a wellness fund, which has an education component in it which states that this is the lifestyle we should be seeking, then we can convince youth to avoid the pitfalls of crystal meth and other forms of drugs. This \$200 million could be used in part for programs like AADAC. We're having a bill come up later along that same line, where we're talking about the best treatment for crystal meth, but I'm not sure that we have sufficient funding for that program to be realistically implemented.

The government has said over and over again that health care costs are spiralling out of control. I take exception to this statement because since the 1980s as a portion of GDP our expenditure on health has not risen. It has stayed under that 10 per cent level, yet here we have a fund which by itself would provide an extra \$200 million.

One of my former Calgary colleagues was concerned that the principles weren't laid out. Where was this money going to go? Well, I would point to the fact that it should be noted that this \$200 million is not a one-time cost but an annual cost of \$200 million each year. Funds would be expended on an annual basis, or as I indicated earlier, hopefully by having healthier lifestyles, we could do away with this fund, and health would be seen as an investment, not something that we had to provide a fund for. As to how the fund

should be used and the notion that it wasn't delineated, that's what a committee of all representatives of this House could determine: how best should we be investing in health care funding and wellness?

8:40

In February I was fortunate enough to go to the University of Calgary and there attend a public health care international symposium. Doctor after doctor from around the world indicated that wellness was certainly a better option to what we currently have. Rather than a health care system, what we have is a sick care system. We deal with people who have succumbed quite often through no fault of their own, through a matter of family genealogy, and find themselves in need of health care. The opposite of that is to promote wellness. Save that money; invest in the future.

For 34 years I taught in the public school system. My most enjoyable early experiences were teaching elementary school when, before laws were too tight and curriculum was so designated, we had the opportunity to go for runs on a regular basis. And talking to my students 32, 34 years later, the times that they remember the most were when we were out there doing these healthy pursuits.

I would recommend to this government the notion of turning basically a sin activity into a heavenly pursuit: \$200 million available, used over and over again, to promote wellness to the point where we eliminate the cancer-associated problems with first-hand and second-hand smoke.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first observation I have is that the hon. Opposition House Leader's motion is quite vague when she speaks about wellness programs, public health initiatives, and research. While I would agree that reforms of the health care system are certainly in order, the Ministry of Health and Wellness already does all of the things which this motion speaks to.

Tobacco taxes bring in approximately \$700 million, while approximately \$9 billion are already spent on health and wellness. So we can assume that every penny of the tobacco tax is already spent on health care. We already have a medical research endowment fund in the province of Alberta, and we already spend approximately \$233 million on wellness programs. So if the hon. member is suggesting that \$467 million more be spent on wellness programs, we would have to take away necessarily from some other health care programs. I'm not sure what those would be.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the motion is simplistic, and it is vague, and I would urge all members to vote against it.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak from a geriatric nurse perspective. There are so many things that we can do to help keep our elderly out of nursing homes, which in the long run is or should be really what our aim is with our health/wellness dollars.

There was something I heard from the other side of the House that I had to really think about, the fact that if we took \$200 million annually, that would tie up something that would happen or decisions that would be made 10 years down the road. I really can't help but think that 10 years down the road the thinking would be different, and the changes would be made according to how the future would call for it at that point in time. So saying that your hands are tied because you decide something today to me is a little bit frightening.

There was an analogy that I thought I could use about the \$200 million out of \$720 million, and as I was listening, it went from \$350 million to \$720 million. Who knows what it's going to be five years from now? I would like to sincerely believe that it would be lower because we don't have people smoking as much; however, we'll see how that works out.

But there is an analogy that I'd like to use in my own budgeting procedures. Many, many years ago I was taught how to budget with an envelope. I have little envelopes, and if I want a new car, I take that money, and it is specifically put aside for my new car. Now I have my new car, but guess what? In five years I'm going to need another new car, so my little envelope doesn't move. Those dollars are specifically taken, and I can figure out the rest of my budget based on that one thing.

I truly believe that by taking this \$200 million out of the \$720 million, it would be money exceedingly well spent. As a municipal councillor I have seen the benefits and the operation of FCSS first-hand. They address local issues, and they address them at the local level. So, Mr. Speaker, I would of course support this Motion 501, and I would ask that the hon. members in this House perhaps reconsider some of the things that we have discussed.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, stand in support of this motion tonight. Considering my background as a health care professional, I understand and recognize the benefits to be realized if this motion is accepted and if the plan is adopted. I remind everyone in this Assembly about the old saying about the ounce of prevention. Mr. Speaker, what we are suggesting here is using a few ounces of prevention to save a whole lot more of pounds of treatment.

I disagree with the hon. members who went before me who suggested that this plan duplicates already existing government programs. This motion seeks to empower local communities and groups to promote health and wellness. It is not meant to replace what the government already has in place. The money collected through tobacco taxes just goes into general revenue. It is not spent on health promotion and disease prevention. Mr. Speaker, so do the health care premiums that we pay and the user fees that we pay. It all goes into general revenue.

There is no harm in setting aside some of that money to promote healthier communities and healthier individuals. Billboards and banners and TV ads telling people how to lose weight, how to drink responsibly, how to not smoke are simply not enough. We need to offer them a new tool, a new mechanism by which to operate, and I think this idea is wonderful, and I urge everybody here to vote yes.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, shall I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to conclude the debate?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I've enjoyed the debate tonight, and I thank my colleagues for participating in that and bringing a number of different perspectives to support the motion.

To those who spoke against the motion, I certainly respect your point of view, but I'd like to take the opportunity to address a few of the misconceptions that I heard there. The Member for Calgary-Hays talked about funds being used inefficiently, and I urge the Member for Calgary-Hays to investigate the excellent record that

FCSS funding has held in this province for many, many decades. It's a primary funding source used by the provincial government over a very long period of time. So if the member feels that there might be inefficiencies, I think he's going to have to look at his own government involvement in this very long-running program. As I said, the provincial government funds 80 per cent, compared to 20 per cent municipal support for the programming.

I think what's important here is that we don't want to spend more money. We are spending more money on health care. We're spending more money on health care all the time. We're seeing more money spent on acute care, and we're now spending a 10 per cent top-up to get a private health care provider to do knee and hip surgeries in Calgary. Talk about spending more money, there's a way to do it: let's give more money to private health care providers.

I think what we need here is less sickness management. What we want to have is less use of health care services by having healthier people overall. The idea behind a wellness fund and dedicating tobacco tax revenue specifically to a wellness fund is to have those initiatives that will help our Alberta population achieve a better level of wellness and therefore use health care services less. So I'd be very surprised to see government members on the side opposite voting against an initiative that was to promote healthier Albertans and reduce the costs on the health care system.

I once again urge all members to vote in support of this motion and thank you very much for the opportunity to bring it before the Assembly tonight. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:49 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Orders 31 and 32 basically, effectively, deal with what we're doing now. This is called a division, and one of the interesting parts about the division is 32(4). "Every member remaining in the Chamber must vote on the question being put." There is no choice.

For the motion:

Backs	Eggen	Miller, B.
Blakeman	Elsalhy	Pastoor
Bonko	Flaherty	Swann
Chase	Hinman	

9:00

Against the motion:

Ady	Goudreau	Mitzel
Brown	Groeneveld	Oberg
Calahasen	Haley	Pham
Cao	Hancock	Prins
Cardinal	Johnston	Renner
Cenaiko	Knight	Rogers
Coutts	Liepert	Stevens
Danyluk	Lindsay	Strang
DeLong	Magnus	Tarchuk
Doerksen	Marz	Webber
Fritz		

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 31
---------	----------	--------------

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

head: **Government Motions**

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

[Government Motion 4 carried]

5. Mr. Hancock moved on behalf of Mrs. McClellan:
Be it resolved that the Assembly do resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

Spring Recess

6. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns on Thursday, March 24, 2005, at the regular hour of 5:30 p.m., it shall stand adjourned until Monday, April 4, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that's the Easter break motion and basically proposes that we have an Easter break. This year the stars are aligned. Normally we have to tussle over whether we take a spring break with the Edmonton school break or with the Calgary school break or with the rural break, which is normally aligned with the week following Easter. This particular year all three weeks happen to be the same week, and therefore it's very easy to suggest that the last week of March be a break from the session.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

Adjournment of Session

7. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess the spring sitting of the First Session of the 26th Legislature, it shall stand adjourned until a time and date as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, this, again, is the routine adjournment motion. I always get razzed for raising it so early in the session. People say that we're already talking about going home, but in fact it's just prudent to get these routine measures on the table so that they are available for us when the appropriate time comes.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 7: Mrs. Fritz]

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to say a few words about my reasons for being here, who I am, and what I hope for the future for Alberta.

I'm a husband, father, and recent grandfather and, like many of you, revelling in life at this stage. The opportunities and gifts of life seem greater than ever, perhaps also because at our age some of us have lost as much as we've gained, and we're getting ready for later-life experiences. So I come from a place of gratitude and especially in Alberta, Canada, a place of great abundance. After 30 years in medical practice, including work in developing countries, I'm also counting my blessings. E.E. Cummings probably expressed as well as anyone my feelings today: "I thank you God for this most amazing day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything which is natural which is infinite which is yes."

I experienced the reality of our democracy deficit personally in this last year in my firing for speaking out in support of the Kyoto accord, and more broadly I experienced it as I witnessed the lack of public involvement in many of the key issues of our day, from justice and peace issues to taxation to social programs to environmental protection and preservation. Healthy debate is essential at all levels to minimize the impact of vested interests in our policies. This deficit is clearly connected to people's sense of control and their health. This has been identified in a large body of research from medical sociology and epidemiology.

I want to speak briefly to these issues: what we mean by health and democracy, what we can do to ensure the appropriate balance of economic, social, and environmental health into the foreseeable future.

9:10

Proud as we all are of our hundred years as a province, we as custodians of our future must articulate a meaningful vision and a plan for the next hundred years that inspires Albertans to be all we can be, working together with citizens, elected officials, and nongovernment organizations, a huge and growing sector across this country, to create the rules and conditions for sustainable, healthy communities.

I want to be part of a new politics of trust, integrity, transparency, accountability, and honesty. Our reputation as politicians begs improvement. As a physician in clinical medicine for 10 years and public health for 15 years, having worked on five different continents, I bring all of this perspective to the Legislature. I'm fundamentally concerned with health, which I have found fundamentally to be about relationships. Relationships are largely about mutual trust and caring. I've come to believe that a vision of health on the planet is essential in our work for a better world to avoid the twin deceptions of self-interest and fear.

Health for me means maximizing participation in decisions, maximizing people's sense of control and freedom, balancing the interests of the short term with the long term. I'm reminded from time to time that these are dangerous times. There's an urgent need to find a new way of living and relating to each other. The mentality of us and them, winners and losers, good and bad is not serving us or the environment.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Huge challenges have developed: economic interdependence, burgeoning populations, water sustainability concerns, habitat disruption, resource depletion, an increasing divide between rich and poor, and increased religious fundamentalism. These challenges are connected to our Alberta concerns, and if we do not learn from the

exploitation of other times and places, we will find ourselves in the same circumstances as many countries in the world in history and at the present.

I would like to talk a bit about the future. I dare say that all of us entered political life in order to make a difference to some of these pervasive and persistent problems, and I want to use this opportunity to call us all again to our common agenda or vision, both globally and locally, to democracy, to community, and to a sustainable economy. Too often I hear the economy pitted against the environment and quoted in this dichotomy: do you want jobs or environment? It's abundantly clear to all that the economy depends fundamentally on a sustained, healthy environment. To believe it can support uncontrolled growth in anything, including the economy, is to court disaster. Uncontrolled growth is the definition of cancer in the medical field. Nothing in the natural world supports the notion of uncontrolled growth.

There must be checks that protect the natural environment, or we will leave, as other parts of the world attest, a wasteland to our children. This necessarily means intervening in the free market, where demand and supply govern everything. My constituents are telling me to confront the truth. Business must no longer determine the rate and conditions of resource extraction in Alberta, either renewable or nonrenewable resources. This is not a partisan issue. It's a matter of decency, humanity, and sustainability, and it will require of us in this new dispensation the courage to think freely about our deepest values, to speak out on our convictions, and to be the change that we and our constituents want to see. In short, it means renewing our commitment to the long term of the province and to the people of Alberta above all else, even our own parties.

Besides my personal experience in the Palliser health region there were two key reasons for entering politics: number one, the recognition that the average citizen feels disconnected from each other and from the political process and, secondly, that many citizens, including myself, believe that the public interest has not been adequately served in Alberta over the long term. Essentially, then, I entered political life because of the weakening of democracy and its connection to balancing financial self-interest with protection and preservation of the environment.

I want to say just a few words about those. As a physician I've always been keenly interested in what makes people healthy and what undermines people's health. A definition of health I've come to appreciate has a spiritual dimension to it. It was coined 3,000 years ago by St. Irenaeus when he described health as to be fully human, fully alive. I found it helpful to apply this to my own condition from time to time and to assess the needs that I need to make for change in my own life.

Work in a number of countries in Africa and southeast Asia as well as northern Canada has also opened my eyes to how other cultures view and experience the limits of modern medicine. When people do not feel significant, listened to, in some control of their lives, including what they say and how they live, their health is eroded. Support of family, friends, and workplaces is vital in keeping people well. We are in this environment of winners and losers, I quote, rapidly losing a sense of that security that comes from these social supports. At a larger macro level the policies and system supports similarly can either strengthen or weaken people's sense of control, and so we are increasingly seeing stress-related disorders, anxieties, and addictions that relate to people's loss of a sense of control. So from South Africa to Medicine Hat I've noticed the importance of strengthening civil society and of inclusive politics to assist people's sense of control and thereby their health.

Since my firing two years ago many people in the health professions, teaching, and social service systems have expressed their

concerns also about feeling unable to talk about certain controversial issues in their own sphere of influence. I have increasingly realized that democracy is only a word. Living democracy requires every one of us to think our own thoughts, speak our own truth, and take action on what we believe most deeply.

Someone said that weakness corrupts: absolute weakness corrupts absolutely. I take this to mean that when the electorate relinquishes its responsibility to be fully human even to elected officials and does not make them accountable for key decisions, the elected people predictably respond to dominant pressures – wealthy lobby groups, party interests – and not necessarily the public interest.

My political campaign opened many doors in my constituency, literally and figuratively. The constituency of Calgary-Mountain View, the second largest in the province, about 42,000 people: one-sixth are immigrants; two-thirds have a postsecondary education; the average income is \$60,000 per year. I developed a new appreciation for how people are living and what is important to them. Voter apathy is widely discussed in the media. I began to hear beyond the words of people to actually a feeling of being discounted, hopeless, and weary of a process that doesn't seem to include them. Feeling disconnected and powerless, many had little capacity to get involved in another election exercise.

I had the door slammed in my face as soon as I identified myself as a politician in some cases and as soon as I identified myself as a Liberal in other cases. I take that to mean that people are not interested in politics anymore, and that's a real scary thought to me. Yes, there are people who have stopped caring. But I have to ask: what experiences have they had in life to leave them so wounded that they no longer care enough to participate?

In our world of winners and losers, us and them, good and bad, we are often polarized and alienated from one another. I have begun to experience that here in this Legislature. Though not unexpected, it does lead me to ask the question: is this the best that we can do? We must be careful not to demean anyone if we are to model the kind of living we want to see around us. Actions, ideas, and plans can be challenged, but the person must not be undermined or we damage our own health as well as that of our democracy. That contributes to the distrust and hopelessness that we talked about earlier.

If we are not contributing to trust and hope in the Legislature, can we really be believed when we say that this is what we want for our province? It's like health professionals prescribing healthy lifestyles and not practising them. There's a major disconnect here, and I don't believe it's inevitable. I here make a public commitment: I will not heckle nor put down any person in the Legislature for any reason. I have three reasons for saying this and making this commitment to all of you. First, it doesn't accomplish my goal, which is to get the truth and to make the decisions; secondly, it undermines my own credibility when I put someone else down; and three, health is too important to me to sacrifice for expediency.

9:20

The bigger question is: how do we prepare people to take their roles as citizens in our democracy on behalf of our communities and on behalf of our environment? I'm discovering how fragile our democracy is and how much I need a large, caring base to help me reach those who for whatever reason find it difficult to talk to me. Democracy, like the doctor/patient relationship, lives in honest conversations. Who is responsible for the democracy deficit? All of us, of course, including those of us privileged to be elected. We need to make it clear that we're open to discuss all perspectives on issues.

I'm also here because I believe that the long-term interests of people, of Alberta, and indeed the planet have become secondary to

narrow economic and vested interests. What has moved me most powerfully are two things: the experience of largely preventable disease in our society and the evidence of huge decline in the natural environment. In both cases, individuals and the environment, I recognize difficulty in being heard and addressed in a holistic and a lasting way. I'm therefore doubly aware of my responsibility to tell the truth, to care about the healing needed, both my own and that of others, and to persist in searching out the root causes rather than the quick fix. It is a truism that if I fail to be concerned about the security of my neighbour, including you, I threaten my own security.

Mr. Speaker, we are living beyond the means of the planet, and no one wants to call a limit on production and resource extraction. If we're committed to people's health and the environment, we must create limits to growth. In addition, we need to have the courage to speak and to be the change we want to see. In our use of resources like water, electricity, and automobiles we need to model change as representatives of our people. We must use our dollars to stimulate responsible business practices, building renewable products, and minimizing waste.

Our greatest responsibility as citizens and elected representatives is to show our children the way. This means each of us deciding to take less, a radical notion in today's society. We must search our hearts and minds for ways to express our integrity as fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, citizens of Alberta, and citizens, increasingly, of the world. For our sake and for the sake of the planet we must place limits on our growth.

I began with a creative expression of gratitude and hope, and I end with a stark expression, but one that's still of hope, by Leonard Cohen.

Don't really have the courage
To stand where I must stand
Don't really have the temperament
To lend a helping hand

Don't really know who sent me
To raise my voice and say
May the lights in The Land of Plenty
Shine on the truth some day.

I'll close with the rallying cry of The Hunger Project on transformation: If not this, what? If not now, when? And if not me and you, who is going to make the change?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to remind all hon. members that under Standing Order 29(2)(a) five minutes is available for questions, comments, and responses. Anyone wish to rise on that?

Seeing none, I would recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate each and every member of this House for their success in the recent election. It is always a great honour to have the trust of the constituents and to serve them to the best of our ability. I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on another successful bid to be the Speaker of this House, and also my congratulations go to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on his elected role as our Deputy Speaker.

I would like to congratulate the Lieutenant Governor for his appointment to this important position. I believe he was correct in asserting that he has big boots to fill, but I feel confident that the footprint he leaves will be impressive. Mr. Speaker, the late Lois Hole was a great Albertan. I thank the government for recognizing her contribution to this province and for establishing the lasting tributes to Her Honour. As a member of this House I had many

opportunities to attend various events with Mrs. Hole, and I can attest to the magic of her presence and the lasting impression she has left on the people of this province. She will be missed but never forgotten.

I want to draw your attention to the recent election. It is a great honour to be re-elected, and with great help from my campaign team and my volunteers and the trust of my constituents, I have the privilege of serving again. I would like to thank all the people who have participated in the democratic process, their dedication with time and resources. It takes a lot of effort and commitment to run a campaign, and there is far too much work for one person to do it successfully. I could not have done it alone. I sincerely thank all of those who have helped me. My campaign team, headed by Mr. Bob Gray, who designed and orchestrated a strategy that was open, honest, and ethical, allowed me to return to this Assembly serving Alberta with you.

Mr. Speaker, the voice of democracy has spoken again in the last election, and I thank all those candidates who ran an honest and ethical campaign. This type of integrity is absolutely necessary for us as legislators to be able to properly represent our constituents. Being ethical and accountable is of utmost importance as we cannot function properly unless we have the confidence of our electorate. I thank the candidates of Calgary-Fort for running honest campaigns. This is the least our voters can expect from us.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to call on all candidates in the Calgary-Fort constituency to work with me to serve our constituents. Yes, if you have ideas to improve the quality of life for our constituents, I would certainly welcome them. To my constituents I can pledge with certainty that I will serve them and Albertans at large to the best of my ability based on four principles: being ethical, patient, effective, and economical in life, at work, and in politics.

Mr. Speaker, the boundaries of my constituency have changed. The new community of Forest Lawn has been added, and I would like to welcome all the residents of this historic area to the constituency of Calgary-Fort. In the beginning of the last century Forest Lawn was a flat prairie inhabited by no more than half a dozen families. The area had no transportation and was slow to develop. As a way to spawn interest and growth in the area, two land promoters bought hundreds of railway ties and laid them out to the centre of Forest Lawn from the Calgary boundary. Then the promoters started a rumor that the streetcar was coming, and lots started to sell soon thereafter.

The area grew and developed into three separate, distinct hamlets: Albert Park, Forest Lawn, and Hubalta. The name was thought to be attractive to the real estate speculator, so it was named to encourage purchases. In 1934 the three districts of Hubalta, Albert Park, and Forest Lawn were incorporated into three villages. However, no one would run for an elected position, so the provincial government combined the three villages into one, and the village of Forest Lawn was formed. On November 29, 1952, the proclamation was official, and the three districts became the town of Forest Lawn. Then the people of that community voted in favour of annexation in October, and Forest Lawn became a part of the city of Calgary on December 31, 1961. The town's population was 13,000.

9:30

Mr. Speaker, today Forest Lawn is a beautiful and vibrant community. Its high school consistently produces outstanding graduates that move on to become leading doctors, lawyers, engineers, various other professionals, even politicians. These individuals bring a great deal of pride to the eastern side of Calgary.

My vision for Calgary-Fort and indeed for all of the eastern part

of Calgary is to work with community to raise their profile. I want to see more of the provincial government's services in this area: more schools, more transportation, and more housing for seniors. The hard-working people that live here deserve more, and it will be my most important commitment to ensure that they will get it.

One way eastern Calgary will get recognition is through the further development of 17th Avenue southeast. This road is now known as International Avenue in Calgary. I will support improvements in this area as I believe that Albertans and Canadians can capitalize on our international diversity. We are unique in that we are made up of such a large variety of cultures, yet we unite under one flag. International Avenue allows us to display our diversity and learn from each other's experiences.

I also proudly support events such as the international fireworks festival, that takes place every year now at Elliston park. Events like this will give us more opportunity to come together and to celebrate our culture.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Fort's land is as diverse as its people. We have major roads, parks, schools as well as residential areas, commercial areas, and even a fish hatchery. This hatchery is located in a wetland park, and it is very good for education about the environment.

Calgary-Fort is the home of an outstanding Canadian Olympic gold medalist, Kyle Shewfelt, who won the first-ever gold medal for Canada in gymnastics in Athens in 2004. I had the pleasure of speaking to this resident of the community of Dover, and his winning spirit was an inspiration to me. My great feeling was to see Kyle on TV performing his routine and standing on the podium receiving the gold medal, and my great thrill was to rush to his home right after he came back and hold the shiny gold medal in my hand.

Mr. Speaker, it's amazing that Alberta has only 10 per cent of Canada's population, but we won 2 out of 3 gold medals for Canada. I wonder if our government's policies have anything to do with it, but I believe so. By giving citizens the self-reliance and choices, they will propel themselves to the highest levels.

Mr. Speaker, I'm inspired by the vision of this government for recognizing that the key to the prosperous future of this province lies in the education of our children. I welcome announcements such as the scholarships and fellowships program, that will help a total of 300 masters and PhD students through their studies. I look forward to seeing opportunities present themselves to students with the addition of new spaces in the province's postsecondary institutions.

Alberta's kindergarten is very important. From kindergarten to grade 12 students currently lead their peers across the country and should therefore be able to move on and become top students in our postsecondary system. They should not be prevented from achieving all their talents, not allowing them to achieve because of money constraints. Alberta has too much prosperity and its students have too much potential to allow this to happen. For this reason I applaud the government for commitment to creating a new tuition policy ensuring that tuition and schooling costs aren't a barrier to learning in this province.

I also commend the government for its announcement on the development of an Alberta-wide digital library. This is an example of how this government uses today's technology to overcome the problems of yesterday. With the Internet comes endless opportunity and innovative efficiency. Alberta will reap the benefits of such initiatives, and I thank the government for naming this library the Lois Hole digital library as a tribute to her dedication to libraries, literacy, and books. This highly symbolic gesture will connect the dedication of a great Albertan from the past with a generation in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this year we will celebrate our centennial. This occasion will allow all generations to come together to commemo-

rate all the achievements we as a province have accomplished. Our position in the federation has changed from that of a western province with more livestock than people to Canada's leader. This accomplishment is due to our strong values, that include hard work, relentless dedication, respect for family, fiscal responsibility. We have a lot to be proud of this year.

I also thank the many seniors in Calgary-Fort, who have provided me with their insight and experiences into the many matters that affect the community. I will work hard for you, I could say to my seniors, to ensure that your opinions are heard in this government and that your ideas are represented in this House. This year's centennial will give us the unique opportunity to learn about how the sacrifices of your generation are affecting this generation's present and great future.

Mr. Speaker, the future of this province looks bright, and I thank my constituents for allowing me the opportunity to once again have a role in making it even brighter. I look forward to working with the people of Calgary-Fort, Albertans at large, and the members of this Assembly to make it good for all Albertans. By working together, we shall build Alberta's greater future.

Mr. Speaker, a personal point of pride, I may say, will come from listening to the Alberta song, which will be played time and time again throughout this year. I thank my colleagues for supporting me in this initiative. May I end this with a refrain.

Alberta is calling me.

Home sweet home, it's where I'm proud to be.

Alberta is calling me.

Livin' right I'm feelin' free.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise under Standing Order 29?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you. It's an honour to rise as a newly elected member in this Assembly. I want to thank my family first of all for their encouragement and support. They constantly point out that I must have the dreamer's disease. It isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's a good thing, in fact, when you think about the combined possibilities of the ideology and the personality. These are the things that make a person. My family encouraged me to run, and they saw that with the community as well.

I would also like to thank the many volunteers who helped with the campaign for their time, money, and other donations. They were very generous. There were friendships created as a result of the election which will last a long time. This is more than I could have imagined, and for that I am truly grateful. I owe the volunteers, friends I call them, more than I can say, and I will do my best to represent all of the constituents within the newly named riding of Edmonton-Decore.

I would like to thank Bill Bonner, the Liberal MLA for Edmonton-Glengarry, for the past eight years of service to the people of this community. I think it's very fitting that a Liberal be the first elected to the newly named constituency of Edmonton-Decore, honouring the late Laurence Decore, who served Edmonton as an alderman, a mayor, an MLA, and, finally, a Leader of the Opposition whose vision of a debt-free Alberta is almost realized except for the fact that Alberta still has debt in areas of infrastructure, causing municipalities to go further into debt, borrowing money for things that should be funded by this province; education, not having enough money to pay for arbitrated settlements negotiated by third parties, causing boards to lay off teachers only to rehire them later; health care backlogs and waiting lists and roadway construc-

tion in which we have to form partnerships in order to fund projects. All this when we boast a debt-free Alberta.

Alberta will celebrate 100 years, and I wonder if this is what the first members, while sitting in the Thistle curling centre rink, the first Legislature, had envisioned for Alberta 100 years ago.

Edmonton-Decore is truly a unique constituency, some neighbourhoods older than 50 years and some not yet established. I know these areas well from having served a great many of these constituents as a school board trustee for the area. I spent most of my life growing up in the Killarney area, attending the local schools from Glengarry, Mee-Yah-Noh, Killarney junior high, and finally finishing at Queen Elizabeth high school, but not all residents were as fortunate as I was to have neighbourhood schools in newly developing areas. They continue to bus children out of the area, so after 20 years of bussing we leave the environment with more pollution and nothing more to show for it. In some areas of the city the school boards are actually considering closing schools, further hurting communities' dreams of growth.

9:40

Edmonton-Decore is rich with diversity, and rich with groups able to call it home in the newly established boundaries, allowing for a mix of newly developing along with well-established neighbourhoods. Not all of these people that I met during the campaign share the Alberta advantage. In fact, many people question why we still have the high cost of gas and electrical prices in our rich province. Many of the people not on fixed incomes still feel the burden of these payments while raising families. In some cases they seem like mortgage payments, they indicated to me.

The lack of affordable housing, seniors' complexes as well as assisted living, is very concerning in the area. There are long lists to get into these facilities and when successful, if successful, it's very expensive to be able to stay in these places as well. For those who are not able to wait for the need and the housing, they're often shipped off to other neighbourhoods, having been long-term residents, expected to move to unfamiliar locations.

Other questions that surfaced during the campaign range from: why the delay in surgeries? We have such a rich province. Why does a waiting list continue to grow for these people, except for the fact that we're paying for quicker services and they refuse to do that when they're on fixed incomes? Other questions during the campaign: why does this government still fund abortions while we still have expanding health care concerns? Our health care is the envy of other countries, although not perfect, yet it needs solutions to ensure that it's sustainable for the next wave of the needed use, when the baby boomers will put the system to its greatest test.

Postsecondary was also raised as well as costs of access as well as debt repayment. Youth who are considering enrolling and those who are enrolled certainly face the reality of debt and the repayment. There is outrage, at least, from the approach of the funding of universities during election time, when Albertans are expecting long-term, predictable, sustainable funding that they can count on.

These needs need to be met with more public debate to ensure Albertans' voices are heard and considered. At the end of the day, I think we all seek the same for our communities; it's the Alberta advantage. As an elected member and a member of the Official Opposition, it is my job to ensure that the government is held accountable through questions raised by myself through conversations with day-to-day constituents.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will state that I am honoured and humble to be here to represent all the viewpoints of the constituents of Edmonton-Decore. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I would be recognizing the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a tremendous honour and privilege that I rise on this, my first occasion to address the Assembly, in response to the Speech from the Throne delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Honour on his appointment.

It is with a heavy heart that I say a fond farewell to my dear friend Her Honour Lois Hole and thank her family for sharing with us the queen of hugs. She will forever remain the queen of our hearts. May she rest in peace.

I would also like to congratulate my colleagues and wish them the best during this 26th Legislature, with a special acknowledgement to the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for his acclamation once again as Speaker of the House and to you, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, for your election as Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the new Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Leduc-Beaumont-Devon constituency I am humbled and honoured to extend thanks to my constituents and assure them that their interests locally, provincially, and nationally will be represented to the best of my abilities and with these interests as my guide. I'm able to stand here because of the encouragement and support from my wife, Brenda, my children, many other family members, and an exceptional team of friends and supporters who believed in me and worked hard on my behalf. I would like to thank them all very much.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon is located just south of Edmonton and reaches from Devon in the west to an area east of Round Hill, which is northeast of Camrose, some approximately 60 miles. The other communities I represent include Armena, New Sarepta, Hay Lakes, Kingman, Beaumont, the city of Leduc, and portions of Leduc and Camrose counties. The constituency may have a new name, but the boundaries are essentially the same as the old Leduc riding with the addition of two unpopulated quarter sections west of the town of Devon. With a population of approximately 34,000 people the communities contained within the constituency are situated just far enough outside of Edmonton to enjoy the amenities of a large urban centre with the serenity and friendliness of small-town, rural Alberta.

Manufacturing and retail are the largest employers in this riding, which also has a strong agricultural base and is home to Nisku, western Canada's largest business park, contributing to average household incomes of approximately \$73,900, which, Mr. Speaker, is above the Alberta average. With all of these wonderful blessings, it is the warm, friendly, and resourceful people that make me proud to call this area my home.

Mr. Speaker, the population of this constituency is very stable, reflecting that two-thirds were born in Alberta while some 7 per cent are immigrants to Canada. I'm very proud to be a part of that 7 per cent. As a native Jamaican I'm extremely proud of my heritage and my roots. I am equally proud to call Alberta my home since I arrived in Leduc in 1975.

Mr. Speaker, my 17 years in Jamaica provided me with a foundation that allows me to fully appreciate all the wonderful opportunities that our province has to offer. These years along with reminders from my dad, Hal Rogers, who was, by the way, a much-loved grade 5/6 teacher who passed away at the young age of 53 in Leduc, taught me that "if you wan' good, you nose hafi run," a Jamaican term which in everyday language means nothing comes without sacrifice or hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a proud graduate of NAIT with a diploma in business. This foundation provided me with the ability to work successfully in the oil industry and in municipal administration between 1980 and 1991. More recently I was a successful realtor from 1992 to 2004.

In 1992 the citizens of Leduc placed an enormous trust in me when I was elected by a record number of votes as an alderman. That trust was further extended with the municipal election of 1995. In 1998 I was elected as mayor, and that privilege was further extended with the 2001 election. During my tenure on council I was elected over 10 years by Alberta municipal colleagues to the board of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. I served four years as vice-president and two years as president. This role allowed me to promote and champion the needs and challenges of Alberta's communities to the provincial and federal governments as well as other stakeholders.

9:50

Mr. Speaker, these are a few of the tools that I bring with me that I believe will help me to make a positive contribution to this House and to the constituents that I represent.

I would now like to discuss a few of the many positive contributions the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon has and continues to make to the province of Alberta and how the commitments made by government through the Speech from the Throne will help to contribute to the success of these extraordinary communities.

When the majority of Albertans hear the word Leduc mentioned, they think of the famous discovery at Leduc No. 1 in 1947, and rightly so. It was a major turning point for our province. In a local history book Harvey Maloney describes the discovery that transformed Alberta as turning much of the province into something resembling a geological pincushion. With the discovery of oil at Leduc No. 1 the grainfields northwest of Leduc were soon dotted with drilling rigs, and by the early '50s it seemed that all of Alberta was bathing in oil and perfumed with gas.

Albertans have much to be proud of and to be grateful for as we enter our centennial year and prepare for the celebrations that will be taking place and the visit from Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. The discovery in Leduc has played more than a substantial role in making Alberta's first century a great success. Our natural resources will continue to play a crucial role in Alberta's future. It was, however, reassuring to hear that the Alberta government will continue its very strong commitment to a healthy and sustainable environment.

Mr. Speaker, although the discovery of oil has played a large role in defining the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, we are also very proud of the diversity of the region. This diversity ranges from agriculture to industry and has provided the region with stability and confidence in good and bad economic times. The economy of the area originally revolved around agriculture, and still today we are at the centre of one of Alberta's richest and most diversified farming regions. Dairies, livestock operations, and grainfields are plentiful and flourish.

An example of the success of the region during the current challenges faced by the agriculture industry is the agrifood business incubation facility announced last fall by the minister of agriculture, the Alberta Agriculture Value Added Corporation, and its partners. This facility will help take Alberta's value-added food processing industry to new levels of success, helping entrepreneurs make the transition from product development to the marketplace. The facility will house a food processing business incubator, which will help start-up companies move from product and process develop-

ment to the establishment of their own facilities. The incubator is currently under construction next to the food processing research centre in Leduc and will be managed by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Speaker, it is innovative developments such as the incubator that propelled the Leduc region to the head of the agricultural sector in Alberta. It makes me extremely happy to hear through the throne speech that Alberta will continue to stand by agricultural producers and increase the expansion of value-added products.

I was also impressed to hear that the government will work to strengthen the agricultural sector by advocating market choice for wheat and barley. Many of my constituents, Mr. Speaker, will agree that the Canadian Wheat Board has for far too long dictated the market value for Alberta wheat and barley in what should be a free global marketplace. It is reassuring that the government continues to recognize and support rural communities through these commitments as well as through the recommendations of the rural development strategy, which will sustain and strengthen rural Alberta.

With my history in municipal politics I was encouraged by the commitment to work with municipal partners by the government's commitment to allocate \$3 billion to address municipal infrastructure needs. A new spelling, Mr. Speaker, for the word "relief." Mr. Speaker, the Alberta advantage is the product of activity in individual communities across our province. It is vital that local communities have the sustainable fiscal capacity to provide and adequately maintain infrastructure, both hard and soft, which is critical to the advancement of the Alberta advantage.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the government on its commitment to education during Alberta's centennial year both through Bill 1 and enhancements to K to 12 already in progress. I have been blessed with three wonderful children, all of whom are currently thriving in Alberta's education system from grades 9 through to university. I therefore have a very personal stake in this area. I know the trials and tribulations that students can face when attempting to follow their dreams. If those dreams are achievable anywhere, they must be achievable in Alberta. Our children are our future. As leaders we must lay a sound foundation for them to prosper. Bill 1 goes a long way to laying this foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate surrounding these topics as well as the many other discussions that will take place in this House. It is a privilege and an honour to be here as the humble servant for the constituents of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. I thank you and my colleagues for this opportunity to speak tonight.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29?

Seeing none, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'd move that the House stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[Motion carried; at 9:55 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 8, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/03/08
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Guide us all in our deliberations and debate that we may determine courses of action which will be to the enduring benefit of our province of Alberta. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I have a set of introductions today. The first is to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three very special guests seated in the public gallery today. Richard Crier, Anne Locke, and Craig Auger work diligently to raise awareness of aboriginal issues in our province. Richard is from the Samson band in Hobbema. He grew up in an environment of drugs and alcohol, but he has turned his life around and is studying at CDI College to become a computer technician. Anne Locke grew up in foster care. She works hard to spread awareness about specific issues affecting young aboriginals and now works for the Edmonton public school board. Craig Auger uses the power of drumming to increase awareness of aboriginal issues. In fact, last Thursday some of you here may have seen him outside the Legislature Building demonstrating traditional native drumming. That's when I first met him. I'd ask that our honoured guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

My other introduction is of a visiting school group, one of the very best and brightest classes not only in Edmonton-Riverview but possibly the entire world. Now, they're from St. Martin Catholic school, and they are students registered in the Ukrainian bilingual program. They're seated in the public gallery, and they're accompanied by their teacher, Natalie Harasymiw. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of all MLAs.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this House two distinguished gentlemen sitting in the members' gallery. The first gentleman requires very little introduction to Albertans, and that is Mr. Harley Johnson, who is the Métis settlements ombudsman. Seated next to him is, of course, the Métis settlements adviser to the ombudsman and an investigator, Mr. Chuck McBurney, who is also a constituent of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I would ask that they both rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege today to rise and introduce the Bethal Recycled Teens, a very important group individually and collectively that is represented here today. There are 27 in the audience. I believe they are sitting in the members' gallery, and they are here with their leader, Phylliss Stein. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to introduce to you and through you guests from Edmonton-Mill Woods. We have two grade 6 classes with 45 students from Mary Hanley school along with teachers Steven Bain, Melanie Mazurek, Kim Schellenberg, and parent volunteer Mrs. Colleen Sommerfeld. I'd like to ask these guests to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the introduction sheet, but I understand that a group from NorQuest is joining us today, so through you and to all members of the Assembly I'd like to introduce a class joining us from NorQuest College. Their instructor, Allan Carlson, has been very good about bringing groups down here, and I'm going to visit this particular group later in April, I think. I'd ask them, if they're in the Assembly, to please rise. There they are, a very inquisitive group and committed to citizenship. I'd ask you all to please welcome them to the Assembly.

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

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly two people sitting in the gallery. They are Mr. Bill Irons and Mrs. Eileen Irons. They are my best friends. I request them to please rise and receive the welcome from the Assembly.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. First, I am more than happy to stand and introduce to you and through you on the occasion of International Women's Day four women who are very important to me: my wife of 13 years, Somboon Eggen, whose love and support means everything to me; as well, I would literally not be here if not for my next guest, my mother, Marion Eggen, who has always gone above and beyond the call of duty to assist me in all of my endeavours.

An Hon. Member: She had to.

Mr. Eggen: She had to, yeah.

And, finally, Louise Barr, a tireless volunteer and supporter and my auntie; also, a woman who keeps me all together in my constituency office, my constituency manager, Arlene Chapman. If those ladies could please rise.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, as you know, every member in this Chamber is here because of a very hard-working and dedicated team of volunteers and supporters, who have worked tirelessly to get us to where we are today. My case is no different, and I am very honoured that a group of people I would like to call my secret of success is able to join me here this afternoon. Without the work of these people I wouldn't have the privilege of sitting in this Assembly here today. I would like to call each of their names, and they can rise together and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Mr. Ron and Mary Deeprise; Lance Burns; Gilbert Charest; Sylvia Krogh; Denise Alston; Brent Bartlett with his wife, Paula, his sons Nicholas and Lucas, and his daughter Abigail; Tom Bremner; and Christine Bremner. Please give them the traditional greeting.

Thank you.

1:40

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a good friend and colleague from the Alberta Alliance Party. Marilyn Burns is a communications vice-president on the provincial council of the Alberta Alliance Party, where her work and dedication has been a great asset. She is indeed a pillar in the party. I'd like to ask our honoured guest, Marilyn Burns, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Calder mentioned that today is International Women's Day, and I have the pleasure of introducing a very powerful and influential woman seated in the public gallery. She is a friend and a neighbour and also happens to be the driving force behind our Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Her name is Rita Agnihotri. I'd like the Assembly to give her the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we call Orders of the Day this afternoon, I will provide a ruling to the House with respect to the question period and the rotation.

First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Government Aircraft

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The use of taxpayer-funded aircraft by this government is scandalous. My questions are to the Premier. Can the Premier explain why a paid lobbyist for a new rail link to Fort McMurray, Rod Love, was given exclusive use of a government aircraft to fly from Edmonton to Calgary last year just a week before the Premier floated the idea of that rail link publicly?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea. But I'm sure that the Auditor General will be reviewing all aspects of the use of government aircraft by all people, including those from outside government, so I'll await the findings of the Auditor General.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Could the Premier explain why Mr. Love was on a government aircraft to Fort McMurray March 29, 2004, the same day a press conference was held to announce that the province was granting over a million dollars to Mr. Love's client to study the feasibility of a rail link to Fort McMurray?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, no, I can't. I have no knowledge of that particular incident.

An Hon. Member: You should.

Mr. Klein: Across the way someone shouted, "You should." Well, Mr. Speaker, I have responsibility for virtually all of these portfolios and all of the duties of the MLAs, and this is – I don't know – a \$23 billion or \$24 billion or \$25 billion operation. I can't devote my

attention to who might be or might not be on an airplane on a particular day.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier undertake to inform the Assembly how much of that taxpayer grant was paid by the railway lobby group to Mr. Love for his lobbying work?

Mr. Klein: I have no idea, Mr. Speaker, nor is it any of my business. How much a private-sector operation pays a consultant is entirely up to them.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Investments in Tobacco Companies

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the same time the government has been talking wellness and tobacco reduction, it has been taking millions of taxpayer dollars and investing in tobacco companies. According to the most recent listing available for the heritage fund, the Alberta government has invested over \$10 million in some of the world's largest tobacco companies, including Imperial Tobacco, R.J. Reynolds, and Philip Morris. Once again this government says one thing but does something else. My questions are to the Premier. Why has the government been investing millions into getting Albertans hooked on smoking?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the inappropriate preamble, it is the duty and the function of the heritage savings trust fund and all officials associated with that fund to maximize the investments.

I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance respond.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is exactly that. There is a separate investment division. I think it's their responsibility – and I think everyone in this House would agree – to invest those dollars in the heritage fund in manners that bring the greatest return to this province. The minister doesn't generally interfere in that, and in fact I don't think you would approve if we did. As I say, we have a qualified group of investors. I think their track record shows that they do an excellent job of investing that fund, and the returns to the people of this province have been enormous.

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Again to the Premier: given that the Liberal members on the heritage savings trust fund asked and were told by the then minister that ethical investing was not possible because it would increase the risk, which risk is this government more concerned with, the risk to investment or the risk to Albertans' health?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we're cognizant of the need for some kind of antismoking legislation, and indeed that will be introduced. But to relate that somehow to use of the heritage savings trust fund is somewhat confounding.

Mr. Speaker, now I forgot what – she said something.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: will the govern-

ment now do the right thing and pull all taxpayer dollars out of investing in tobacco companies?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, heritage savings trust fund dollars are accumulated mostly from oil and gas revenues.

But I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we've entrusted a group of very knowledgeable and very talented people to manage the investments of the heritage fund. I'm not sure that this House or the people of this province would want us to be micromanaging each and every one of those investments. I'm not sure that that would be the best way to ensure that we get the maximum benefit from those dollars in the fund that are invested.

There is a committee of this Legislature that certainly talks to people around this province on their various trips, talking about the heritage fund. To the best of my knowledge – and I review most of the information that comes back from that – this particular incident has never been raised by the public. I think, Mr. Speaker, there's some scrambling there.

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

Market Surveillance Administrator Review of Enron

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government can no longer ignore the mounting evidence that Enron colluded with Powerex to drive up electricity prices in Alberta. Enron traders joke on tape of going to jail for price-fixing and making Alberta's power market, quote, a gong show. Well, electricity deregulation has certainly been a gong show, and this government is fully responsible. My first question is to the Premier. Why did the government allow Enron to start and then continue to price gouge Alberta electricity consumers?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this is the subject of an ongoing investigation. The market surveillance administrator has uncovered new information relative to Enron that was not previously available and has asked the federal Competition Bureau to reopen the Enron investigation. I would suggest that all members of this Assembly await the outcome of that investigation.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. The investigation is not sufficient. How many times did the government meet Enron officials regarding the planning of electricity deregulation? How many times did you meet with Enron?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has made a very argumentative statement. I would suggest that he direct that statement to the market surveillance administrator or to the federal Competition Bureau and tell them that their investigation into this matter is not sufficient.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that Enron officials stated in the year 2000, quote, to date the government has been amending documents and rules fairly freely, end of quote, how many documents and how many rules did this government amend on Enron's behalf so they could rip off Albertans?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as Albertans we are all concerned about this new information that has come to light, and if the hon. member has any further information, I would invite him to provide it to the market surveillance administrator or the Competition Bureau. The Minister of Energy assures me that the market surveillance administrator has been diligent in his job as a watchdog on behalf of all Alberta consumers, and as I said he has uncovered new information. That information has been passed on to the federal Competition Bureau with a request to reopen the investigation, and I would ask that he await the outcome of that investigation.

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

Ambulance Services

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On May 28, 2004, the provincial government made the following promise to Alberta municipalities: "On April 1, 2005, municipalities will no longer fund ground ambulance services and will be able to allocate funds currently dedicated to this service to other municipal priorities." The Conservatives even put this promise in writing. My question is to the Premier. Will this promise, made to Alberta municipalities in May of 2004 on ground ambulance service funding, be just another broken promise of this government?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, it's not a broken promise. Basically, the scope of the program changed dramatically, went from \$55 million to \$128 million. We will be proceeding with two discovery projects, one in Palliser and the other in the Peace country. But I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, today we have provided for the municipalities of Alberta funding in the amount of \$55 million to assure, had any of them perceived that they would be vastly inconvenienced by this continued review of the transfer, that they would not be caught short by that. Over and above that we will be providing the two pilots, or discovery projects, as a separate funding chapter. So in total in this coming year the support for ground ambulance in Alberta will be at least \$65 million from this provincial government.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that all evidence is that \$65 million will be significantly inadequate, when will the government be able to tell this House the full cost of transferring ambulance services to the provincial government?

Mr. Klein: That is an interesting question. Mr. Speaker, it was determined through extensive study by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer that \$55 million would be adequate. That figure was audited, as I understand it, and it was deemed to be sufficient. So how that ballooned to \$128 million is somewhat of a mystery, understanding the simplicity of the program and how it was to be undertaken in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister has pointed out, she is doing all she can to remedy the situation as it affects those municipalities that took some steps on the assumption that ambulance services were to be transferred to the regional health authorities.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is not a trained administrator and not responsible for developing programs, why did the Premier take his word for it instead of asking for a proper administrative analysis of this situation?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, both members had sufficient support from very talented and very educated and very skilled members of the public service, and it was those people who really compiled much of the information and made detailed examinations of the information to make sure that it was correct.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Lynnview Ridge

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that environmental protection is very important and the fact that the pollution cleanup in Lynnview Ridge residential area in the Calgary-Fort constituency has been disputed and delayed for over three years, my question is to the Minister of Environment. Could the minister explain what caused this delay and how it happened?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A few years ago environment protection issued environmental orders. In actual fact, at that time there were many stakeholders that had been party to this important initiative because the protection of our environment and the residents is first and foremost from an environmental ministry's perspective. I can assure the hon. member, though, that as we go forward, there is a mediation process that is taking place as we speak with the multitude of stakeholders in order to arrive at the desired resolution to this important initiative.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is also to the same minister. What measures are taken to ensure that a government environmental cleanup order is carried out when it is issued?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, through our environmental enforcement orders I can assure all members of this House that the mediation is carrying on. Having said that, I want to assure all Albertans that the protection of the environment and the residents pertaining to this issue with all the stakeholders will clearly be covered on this initiative through mediation.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you. My second supplemental question is to the same minister. To me it's a matter of wealth and health of my constituents, so when can my constituents in the affected area expect to see some cleanup action?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, if the mediation goes as we anticipate, it is my hope and, shall I say, direction that by the end of this summer the mediation will be carried out and, furthermore, that, again, the environment protection and the residents' safety will be first and foremost towards this important initiative.

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

School Utilization

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School closures threaten the viability and survival of communities as small as Bruderheim to the established communities within Edmonton and Calgary. Meanwhile, the public education stakeholders have for years pointed to serious flaws in the school utilization formulas there. My question is to the minister of infrastructure. Will the minister finally commit to changing the utilization formula to protect such public schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, when the utilization formula was put in, it was put in for a distinct reason. We had a lot of schools that were at the 15 to 20 to 40 per cent utilization. I do believe it is time to evolve this formula, and we are currently looking at different and varied ways that we can evolve it. Hopefully these announcements will be made soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister commit to adopting a community-based utilization formula for urban schools, as has been recommended for rural schools in the government's rural development strategy?

Dr. Oberg: No, Mr. Speaker, because I feel we can get a better formula than that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why has the minister not followed the recommendation of the Learning Commission and moved capital funding for schools back under the education ministry, where it belongs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because that was one recommendation that was turned down by the government.

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a very related topic, the Edmonton public school board right now is conducting what they refer to as a cluster study, which I am led to believe might result in the closure of some schools. Can the minister explain to us why it is that school boards undertake such studies?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I understand is happening in northeast Edmonton is that the Edmonton public school board is looking at three schools that are relatively close to each other that have occupancies anywhere from one-third to two-thirds full.

What they are looking at doing is taking the whole class, the teacher and everything, and moving them to one of the three schools and potentially two of the three schools. They've anticipated that by doing this, there would be a cost saving of about \$200,000 per year.

So they're taking a look at it. My understanding is that it's going to the Edmonton public school board meeting tonight, and that they will either make decisions on it or they will table it for further discussion, Mr. Speaker.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the anticipated changes in the utilization formula and the results of such cluster studies result in an enhanced ability of school boards to build schools in city sprawl areas such as Castle Downs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there is an excess of space right around Alberta. If we were to take a complete picture of the amount of school space, there are roughly 100 extra schools. Combine this with a school population that is actually decreasing as opposed to increasing, and we're in a very difficult situation. Compounding this is the fact that the schools are simply not in the right place.

So I do feel that by changes to the formula it will enhance the schools to be put in the right place. It will allow local decision-making by the public school boards, and I think that it will be something that is greeted very positively. Mr. Speaker, I really must stress, though, that we still are working on this formula. I think it's going to be a good formula, but we're currently in the consultative phases with the school boards.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Daycare System

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The national daycare program being established by the federal government is meant to help all children. This government first refused to sign any deal and then was not able to work with other provinces to establish an agreement. To the Minister of Children's Services: why is the minister continuing to hold up an arrangement that will give money to parents that require care for their children?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really do appreciate the question. I think it's important for the hon. member to understand that when we were at the negotiating tables, at the federal/provincial table, it was important for me as the minister responsible to do what's right for Alberta and to do what's right for Alberta parents, and that is to give the Alberta parents choice.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister supports development in the for-profit sector, what plan does the ministry have to avoid abuses of government grants by private companies, like in Australia, where a company can make a profit of \$100,000 per year per daycare?

The Speaker: Well, this is not Australia, hon. minister, but . . .

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member should understand that what Alberta supports is parents' choice. Whether it's for-profit, whether it's nonprofit, whether it's kin care, or whether it's day home, that's what we believe in. We do not have any big Australian daycare or what Minister Dryden refers to as Wal-Mart for-profit daycares. What we do have here are small mom-and-pop daycares. Again, I think it's important for the hon. member to understand that it's about choice, and it's about what's in the best interest of the child.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has not increased daycare subsidies since 2001, what is the plan to aid parents in affording quality daycare if this government cannot come to an agreement with the federal government?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact we did get other provinces onside at the federal/provincial/territorial meeting because they listened to what Alberta had to say. They listened to what was important to Albertans, that it was in the best interest of the child.

I will let the hon. member know that we're cautiously optimistic about closing the deal with the federal minister – again, it's about choice – and then, when we get the money from the federal government, we can make those decisions about raising the subsidy, giving stay-home parents tax incentives. All of those are important. We will continue negotiating the best interests of the parents who live in this province and the best interest of their children.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Foreign Workers

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been a lot of attention recently on the hiring of foreign workers in some of our large industries and in some construction. In Red Deer we have one very successful food processing plant that is hiring a number of temporary employees from central America, and some of my constituents are concerned about hiring people from other countries. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Are there not enough people here in Alberta and Canada to fill these jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a good question. Thanks to a good government we are blessed here in Alberta with thousands of jobs, and no doubt most jurisdictions in North America would love to have the challenges that we have.

Of course, when it comes to jobs, priority will always be given to qualified Albertans and Canadians first, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, groups underrepresented in our labour force – aboriginal people, people with developmental disabilities – and other low-income Albertans will also be given the opportunities.

In relation to the foreign worker, Mr. Speaker, employers first of all have to exhaust all avenues in relation to getting local employees in place, and if they can't do that, then they have to apply to the federal government's temporary foreign workers' program. It's a challenging and complicated process and can be costly to the employer, so I'm sure and I have confidence in the employers in

Alberta that every opportunity will be given first to Albertans and Canadians, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is your department doing to develop a skill base of Albertans in order to meet the demand for skilled labour?

Mr. Cardinal: Of course, Mr. Speaker, Alberta shines in this area because I believe Alberta trains 25 per cent of all the apprentices in Canada, and that's commendable. The apprenticeship and training industry is vital to Alberta's future economic success in relation to resolving the labour skills shortage. My department alone processes and funds over 4,600 apprentices to go through the program annually. We also spent another \$280 million in that program, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Jablonski: My last question is to the Minister of Economic Development. How many foreign workers have come to Alberta under the provincial nominee program? Do they need English language skills? Does this program displace Alberta workers?

Mr. Dunford: The last part of her question talked about displacing Alberta workers. This can't happen under the program because, as the Minister of Human Resources and Employment had already indicated, any of these kinds of programs are only after the skills that are required are exhausted amongst Albertans and, in fact, Canadians. I would remind the House and you, Mr. Speaker, that Economic Development, Human Resources and Employment, and Advanced Education some time ago released the report called Prepared for Growth, and we talked about the fact that it would be Alberta first, then Canada, then offshore.

But we are going to have to go offshore. People that were listening to the answer previously of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation heard about the decline in numbers of school children, and so when we look ahead and we look at the demographics of what's happening in Alberta, we simply are not going to be able to fill the demand that we are going to be faced with in the future. So we have to work with the federal government. We have to work on the issue of English. Perhaps the standards are too high. We need people. Like the 1920s, Mr. Speaker, we need a full-front initiative in this province at some time to bring these people here.

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

Automobile Insurance Rates

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are paying the highest auto insurance premiums in this province's history while insurance companies rake in record profits. Meanwhile, the Minister of Finance has been sitting on the Automobile Insurance Rate Board report. To the minister: why won't the minister disclose the Automobile Insurance Rate Board report immediately?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly will bring a recommendation forward very soon, but I think if the hon. member is following this – and I'm sure he is – he would understand that the last of the filings of the companies is just in the process of occurring. What we had was preliminary information, what I had from the Automobile Insurance Rate Board after I wrote to them and said: in

view of anticipated high returns, would you please look at this and provide me with a recommendation? The hon. member probably knows that they would do that review in October. What I had asked them to do was to bring that review forward. I have met with the insurance company group. I have asked them their intentions and asked them to come back with what their intentions are in the very short term.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister, then: given that the minister will not release the report today, will the minister provide instant relief to Alberta drivers by at the very least eliminating the 3 per cent hidden sales tax on auto insurance?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, it's not hidden, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there's a 3 per cent tax. It's been there for years and years, and if we did eliminate it, there's no assurance that that savings would go, in fact, to the people who insure their vehicles. There is no tie there. I think what we should concentrate on is exactly what this government has concentrated on, and that is to ensure that people who have to insure their vehicles under PL and PD, which is compulsory insurance in this province, have a reasonable way to do that. This government has done that.

Albertans enjoy some of the lowest insurance rates in the country. I've heard a lot of call for public insurance by the people across the way, and I'm not sure if they want British Columbia insurance here or whether they want some other public insurance. My understanding is that B.C. insurance – public insurance – is in fact much higher. Saskatchewan is lower.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister won't release the report. She won't eliminate the hidden tax. Why doesn't she just do the right thing and institute a lower premium public auto insurance system?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, as I said, Mr. Speaker, really the only people in this province that I've heard calling for public insurance are the Liberal Party and the NDs. The private sector is alive and well in this province. There are 72 companies that insure vehicles. Their agents are in every one of our communities. We want to make sure that people who must insure their vehicles to operate a vehicle in this province have opportunity for insurance that is reasonable and right. We approached it the right way: you drive, you have a good driving record, you have a lower insurance premium. You are a bad driver, you will have a higher insurance premium. We have removed the age and gender from it.

We've had less than a year, in fact about six months, to see these reforms work and, Mr. Speaker, they are working. One thing is that I have not refused to release what the auto rate board sent me. I have said that you must consider it in the fullness of all of the information. In this government we have a responsibility to act on full information, not partial, which is what this hon. member is asking me to do today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Government Air Travel

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reply to my questions yesterday, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation ac-

knowledge that in addition to the government air fleets the government also does on occasion charter aircraft, including private jets. The minister then committed to making public information about the chartering of these aircraft, including flights on private jets. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Exactly who popped on these private jets that were chartered to travel across Canada, and how much did it cost the government of Alberta?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, first of all, under FOIP a lot of that information is private, but I certainly will undertake to get as much of the public information as possible to the hon. member. These records are public, and we will get them to him.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. If chartering aircraft only takes place occasionally, will the minister then order his officials to compile the necessary information, including cost, frequency, who went where and when, and table it in this Assembly? The FOIP process is very expensive, and it's difficult too.

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, consistent with the FOIP Act I'd be more than happy to do that.

Mr. Eggen: Given the minister's admission yesterday that the government has chartered private planes to fly across Canada on up to six different occasions, why didn't the Premier or government ministers use commercial instead of chartered jets?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, each and every time an airplane is chartered or an airplane is utilized, it's for different circumstances. I don't believe that you would want me to stand here and talk about each particular time on the six or seven occasions that were there, but I would certainly undertake to provide the information to the Legislative Assembly that I promised.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Affordable Housing in Fort McMurray

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The unprecedented growth in our provincial economy and the steady stream of new individuals and families coming to our province, not to mention the individuals living in other communities that commute, have led to a significant increase in the need for affordable housing and housing development in high-growth communities. This is especially true in Fort McMurray, where the population has grown almost 20 per cent since 2002 and the growth rate is forecast to be at approximately a hundred thousand in the next 10 to 15 years, the third largest city in Alberta, if I can mention. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. What has this minister done to assist those people who cannot afford the market rate rents in high-growth communities such as Fort McMurray?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member indicated, Fort McMurray is a vibrant community, and it is very fast growing. Along with that growth, of course, comes the need for housing, especially in the area of affordable housing.

In Fort McMurray the way that we have assisted is through the

Canada/Alberta affordable housing program, which was established in 2002. It's an excellent program, where we as a provincial government match funding along with the federal government, and I'm pleased to let you know that \$6.7 million has been allocated over the past two years to provide 310 units in Fort McMurray. But more importantly, along with that, Mr. Speaker, through the rent supplement and community housing program we've also provided assistance for another 365 houses.

So, yes, there is a problem in this area, Mr. Speaker, but we are working hard to address it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Given that the availability of serviced lots or land for development is in short supply, can the minister advise what her department has done to address this challenge?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, in keeping with Fort McMurray, not only is it affordable housing that is necessary but also housing in general. What we are working toward, hon. member, is providing land as quickly as possible on the market. Last year we transferred 470 acres from the Social Housing Corporation, and we made that a direct sale to fast-track the development, which worked very, very well. Just two weeks ago we closed a tender on approximately another 400 acres in the area.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the goal – well, it's a philosophy that we've been discussing over the past three months while I've been in the ministry – is to make the land that is available in the Social Housing Corporation available very quickly in total, as a total package, to the community of Fort McMurray. I'm hoping that this will address the situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Danyluk: With the challenge of the availability in affordable housing at this time my next question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Can the minister advise how he plans to address the influx and the increase of traffic on adjacent transportation routes from communities such as Edmonton, Lac La Biche, St. Paul, Athabasca, specifically highways 63 and 28?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly 63, 28 – you add in 881 – are all parts of our plan in order to help Fort McMurray. I'm currently in the process of sitting down with the oil industry, with the four or five major plants that are in the Fort McMurray region, to come up with a collaborative solution on how we can move forward not just on people transport but also on the transportation of goods and services as that's going to be critical considering that we have some \$80 billion or \$90 billion worth of projects that are in that particular area. We are going to be sitting down, and hopefully a solution will come forward on these.

In the meantime we are proceeding with paving 881, and we are proceeding with improvements on 63, but realistically, Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member, I would really like to see these improvements come along quicker than they are at the moment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

2:20

SuperNet

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have been told for the third time that the completion of the SuperNet is imminent. The latest deadline is now for October 2005, more than a year after the initial deadline. My question is to the hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. If public/private partnerships genuinely transfer risks to the private sector, why has the government refused to use the provisions in the contract that would hold the private-sector partners accountable?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. As the hon. member mentioned, the SuperNet project completion is indeed overdue. I'm pleased to pass along, though, particularly to my rural colleagues, that more than 400 rural communities will be connected to SuperNet by the end of April. A vast majority of these facilities that we're talking about – government buildings, health care buildings, libraries, schools – will be connected to the SuperNet by the end of June, with the total network being completed by the end of September, giving us just one more reason to celebrate our centennial in style with the Alberta SuperNet advantage.

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister: given that public agencies have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars installing their own networks because they couldn't wait for the SuperNet, will the minister commit to reimbursing these groups for the cost of the upgrade?

Mr. Ouellette: No, Mr. Speaker, we won't.

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister then: can you assure municipalities, school boards, and other public agencies that they will have the funding necessary to maintain access to the SuperNet?

Mr. Ouellette: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think that they will have the funding available, and we're working on all of that right now.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Canadian Forest Products Ltd. Mill Closure

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Canfor in the MD of Clear Hills near Hines Creek has served notice that they will close their mill this summer and consolidate their operations in Grande Prairie. This will result in the loss of over a hundred jobs in some of my communities, increase log truck traffic on our highways and the Dunvegan bridge, loss of municipal tax revenue, and again the movement of our raw resources to the south. Furthermore, this decision will no doubt affect other mills in the area that have had joint agreements with the Hines Creek Canadian Forest Products Ltd. mill. My first question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is the minister doing to minimize the impact of this pending closure on all those affected, including the possibility of probably retaining some of this timber in our local community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Coming

from a small community myself, this is a very grave concern and something that I had empathy for when we visited that community. It is important to note that this was not a government decision but a company decision, and it was strictly based on business. To remain competitive in the global marketplace, companies today are finding that they have to make decisions to consolidate their mills and to find efficiencies.

When I first learned about this closure, at the request of the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace we made the attempt to go up and meet with the four affected communities. I have to say that I appreciated their concerns, and we listened to them express their concern about transportation and safety, questions about jobs and the viability of their community, schools, and residents, and concerns about their future in terms of economic development.

I've spoken with my colleagues from Economic Development and Infrastructure and, as well, Human Resources and Employment about the future of these communities, and I know Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development have talked to them as well. We'll continue to work with the company to look for employment opportunities as they have promised. As well, timber allocations for the future are being reviewed by our department for the future of that community.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Given that a potential of 10,000 truckloads will travel on highway 2 and over the Dunvegan bridge crossing the Peace, what is being done to assure the safety of all drivers using this road and bridge?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Dunvegan bridge poses a considerable problem when it comes to logging trucks coming down the hill. What is occurring right now is there is a significant turn just prior to the bridge, and the logging trucks are going to have a difficult time manoeuvring that turn. When you add into the facts some of the road maintenance issues that we have experienced on the Dunvegan bridge, we really have to take a very serious look at how we can alter the route onto that bridge. Through you to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, we are currently looking at and studying that, and we will very soon be coming up with a solution to how we can help these logging trucks on the Dunvegan bridge.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Economic Development. What is his ministry doing to minimize the negative economic impact this decision has in my constituency, including the impact on many small businesses that benefit from the spinoff economy?

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, we have one of our regional economic development alliances in place in the Peace region, and we also have an office in Grande Prairie. With the staff and the people that are involved in the alliance, we've been trying to deal with this matter in the same way which we do in other communities, and that's to start looking at then: what other economic development opportunities will there be? We look into things like tourism. We look into value-adding in terms of the industries that might be up there. But again, hon. member, within the context of economic

development where we're catalysts and not bankers, we'll continue to do our work, providing the kind of information, working with the people in the area to try to get the stimulation that they're going to need moving on into the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that discussions have resumed regarding a potential negotiated solution to the current Canada/United States lumber dispute. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Can he kindly update this House on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Canada has been developing an outline of a potential agreement in consultation with provincial governments and industry in hope of presenting to the United States some form of a beginning of a consultation and try and deal with this ongoing softwood lumber issue for years. In developing the proposal from the province of Alberta, it is the responsibility of the minister of sustainable resources to contact industry and build that recommendation, which then we will forward to other provincial governments and to the federal government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first and only supplementary question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, who is responsible for forest management in this province. Can the minister advise the House what the current status of discussions with other provinces and the industry is now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in this House last week, we will work effectively and diligently with the provinces of Canada and the federal government and consult regularly to discuss how we can move forward with this very sensitive softwood lumber issue. Through these discussions we are committed with the federal government to a pan-Canadian approach, and we're working to develop the agreement for that pan-Canadian approach. We think that there's some good common ground so that we can restart these negotiations.

As I also committed to last week, we will continue to work with our industry, with our Softwood Lumber Trade Council, and our close colleagues at International and Intergovernmental Relations to make sure that we come through to a successful conclusion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

2:30

Métis Hunting Rights

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. There's been much talk and much concern over the potential impacts of the interim Métis harvesting agreement on the sustainability of our wildlife resources. Can the minister inform this House as to the instruments we have available to ensure hunting sustainability in the province of Alberta while respecting aboriginal rights?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, our role, as with all hunting, all trapping, and all fishing, is to ensure that there's proper monitoring, proper enforcement, and proper management of the resources. We already have in place in Alberta a process to register species that are of management concern and of management concern to all Albertans. These registries enable us to monitor the harvest that is occurring and make decisions about that harvest and how it affects the resource that is being hunted. Where necessary we can and we do establish closures for conservation purposes, and it's important that we recognize that we do this now in our key wildlife corridors.

The agreement that the hon. member is talking about respects closures. It also imposes limits for conservation purposes, and that's the key of the entire agreement. As with all hunting and fishing laws and regulations, Mr. Speaker, if there is a violation, we are committed to the enforcement practices that have been put together in this province to protect all resources.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Further to the same minister: could he specifically address the issue of fisheries and what the province can do to ensure the sustainability of sport fishing in Alberta?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, we have many management methods to ensure that sport fishing is sustainable, again, for all Albertans. We know that sport fishing is affected by domestic fishing, and where there are conservation concerns, we have to close lakes when appropriate. The agreement respects these closures. We require all domestic fishing activity, including Métis fishing, to be licensed so that we know where this is taking place and we can manage the lakes effectively. This is part of our monitoring responsibility, and we will continue to do that under this agreement.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. A supplemental to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: can the minister inform the House as to whether or not the Métis community is supportive of conservation measures, and will such measures guide future negotiations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me say at the outset that the agreements balance the need to respect Métis rights but also ensure that we protect Alberta's precious wildlife resource. On the issue of the Métis, Alberta's Métis community has been very supportive and continues to be very supportive of any measures regarding conservation and safety. On that note, as a matter of fact, the Métis waited a full year before they began to harvest anything, and we wanted to make sure that we had the structures in place in order for us to address those very concerns that they had. They wanted to ensure that they knew who could hunt, where they could hunt, and when they could hunt, and it was with that in mind that we brought it forward.

In terms of the interim agreement, Mr. Speaker, what we want to do is monitor what goes on to be able to take into consideration all the issues that will come forward, and then we can go towards the finalization of the final agreement.

The Speaker: Hon. members, thank you very much for your co-operation today. All 16 members who advised the chair that they

wanted to raise a question were able to raise a question. So in the last three days it's been 14, 17, 16, which is very good.

head:

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Statements

The Speaker: I indicated several days ago that before the end of today I would provide the ruling with respect to the operation of question period for the 26th Legislature, and I'm prepared to do that now.

The chair wants to thank all honourable members who participated in the discussion Monday afternoon about what should be the proper rotation of questions for Oral Question Period. As most members noted in their submissions, question period is of fundamental importance to our parliamentary system of government. The chair recognizes the gravity of this matter and has carefully weighed the various submissions against the history and traditions of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

In those submissions some members encouraged the chair to apply the rules that existed for the 21st Legislature, which commenced in 1986. As the chair noted yesterday at page 58 of *Hansard*, there were many differences in 1986 with respect to the operation of question period. At that time a person asking a question was entitled to three supplementaries, and then anyone could ask another supplementary. So there were four supplementaries to every question, and one of those rotated among the parties. That practice ended in 1989, and the chair has no intention of reviving it.

There were arguments advanced about moving the New Democrats up in the order of questions. The chair would note that while the New Democrats have doubled the size of their caucus, they are still one-quarter the size of the Official Opposition. After the 2001 election they had two members to the Official Opposition's seven members, which was a little more than a quarter, but retained the fourth position in the question period.

The Official Opposition has had the first three questions since the 1993 election, when they had 32 seats. Of course, there was no other opposition party until 1997, when the New Democrats elected two members. They had the fourth question then, as they did in 2001.

In their presentations members referred to practices in other jurisdictions across Canada. While this chair has always welcomed advice on procedures in other jurisdictions, it is fair to say that after 99 years of being a province, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has developed its own practices and traditions, which we can draw upon. As the chair has noted, the practice across Canada with respect to question periods varies widely, with the length running from 15 minutes to one hour.

In the final analysis, the chair sees little reason to depart substantially from the rotation that applied for the previous Legislature and the Legislature before that. For this Legislature, like in the 25th Legislature, the Official Opposition will be entitled to ask the first three main questions. The New Democrat opposition will be entitled to the fourth question each day. On three out of four days a member of the government caucus will be entitled to the fifth question. On those days the Official Opposition will be entitled to the sixth, eighth, and 10th questions, and private members of the government caucus will be recognized for the seventh and the ninth questions. The New Democrat opposition will be entitled to the 11th question every day. A member from the government caucus will have the 12th and the 14th questions. The Official Opposition will have the 13th question.

The chair was gratified that those participating in yesterday's discussion generally endorsed the 45-second rule for questions and answers that the chair put forward on Thursday, March 3. The chair

believes that this time limit will result in more questions in the question period. Members reviewing the chair's ruling of April 11, 2001, will note that in the last Legislature government members were entitled to the 14th and subsequent questions every day. In light of the 45-second guideline it is entirely conceivable that there may be more questions asked each day than in the previous Legislature.

In recognition of the greater number of seats held by the Official Opposition, they will be entitled to the 15th and 17th questions on three out of four days. The government will be entitled to the 16th question. In recognition of the increase in seats by the New Democrats, a member of that caucus will be entitled to the 18th question.

The chair indicated that this is the rotation that would apply on three out of four days. The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, who is the sole representative of the Alliance Party in this Assembly, must be entitled to ask questions in this Assembly. While he is one of 58 private members, allotting the 58th question to him would seem to invite logistics problems. For instance, should the member displace the Leader of the Official Opposition if his turn corresponded with the first question on a given day? While the chair takes very seriously the role of protecting the interests of the minority, he also wants to ensure the orderly progression of the business of the Assembly. Accordingly, the chair finds that the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner will be entitled to the fifth question of the day every four days.

On those days the sixth, eighth, and 10th questions will go to government members, the Official Opposition will be entitled to the seventh and the ninth questions, the New Democrat opposition will have the 11th question, the Official Opposition will have the 12th, 14th, and 16th questions, government members will have the 13th, 15th, and 17th questions, and the New Democrat opposition will have the 18th question.

Hon. members, this rotation means that on most days, assuming 17 questions, the Official Opposition would have nine questions, government members six, and the New Democrats two. Every fourth day the Official Opposition would have eight questions, government members six, New Democrats two, and the Alliance member one. If there were 15 questions asked a day, on most days the Official Opposition would have eight, government members five, and New Democrats two. On the fourth day the Official Opposition would have seven questions, government members five, the New Democrats two, and the Alliance member one. If there were only 13 questions asked a day, then most days the Official Opposition would have seven, government members four, and the New Democrats two. On the fourth day Official Opposition members would have one fewer question, and the Alliance member one.

2:40

In approximate percentage terms, whether there were 13, 15, or 17 questions asked a day for a week, the Official Opposition would have just over 50 per cent of the questions, government members between 30 and 35 per cent, New Democrats between 12 and 15 per cent, and the Alliance member between 1.5 and 2 per cent.

The chair has, as members know, made sure that copious statistics were kept on the time allocated to the different parties within the Assembly. Based on the time spent on questions and answers in the four sessions of the 25th Legislature, with a similar rotation, the Official Opposition's questions and responses accounted for between 48.4 and 53.7 per cent of the time spent. Government members' questions accounted for between 28 and 34 per cent, and the New Democrats, between approximately 17 and 18 per cent.

The chair has been advised that there may be an agreement between the House leaders about replacing the items of business

Members' Statements and Recognitions with an item called statements. However, until the appropriate changes are made to the Standing Orders, the chair will apply the rules that exist for Members' Statements and Recognitions. Based on the standings in the Assembly, for Recognitions over a four-week period government members would be entitled to 35, the Official Opposition 16, the New Democrats four, and the Alliance member one. To remind members, seven members may make a one-minute statement of recognition or congratulation every Monday and Wednesday.

With respect to Members' Statements, over a seven-week period government members will have 35, the Official Opposition 16, the New Democrats four, and the Alliance member one. Members' statements are two minutes in length, and there are four such statements every Tuesday and Thursday.

So starting tomorrow, Wednesday, March 9, 2005, the members of the government caucus will be entitled to four recognitions, the Official Opposition two, and the New Democrats one. Rather than take any more time, the chair will ask the Clerk's office to contact the caucuses with respect to who will be entitled to how many members' statements and recognitions on any given day in the future.

In conclusion, the chair wishes to emphasize that the general rules for question period noted last Thursday will continue; namely, a short preamble to main questions and no preamble to supplementary questions. The practice of providing a list to the Speaker's office of members who wish to ask questions will continue. Of course, should circumstances change, the chair will revisit this allocation of questions. This ruling will take effect Wednesday, March 9, 2005. March 9 will be day 1 for the implementation of this ruling.

Thank you very much.

Hon. members, 30 seconds from now I'll call upon the first of four members to participate, but in the interim might we revert to Introduction of Visitors?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure today to introduce a proud Albertan who is here today to watch his father in action, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. This young man is seated in the members' gallery. I'd like to ask Wayne Prins to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a great group of students from Trinity Christian school. They have with them their teacher Mr. George Graffunder and parent helpers Mrs. Linda Neal, Mrs. Judy Kolk, Mrs. Brenda Graham, Mrs. Shelley Biggs, Ms Sylvia Lopez, and Ms Colleen Reimer. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

head: **Members' Statements**
World Schools Debating Championship

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

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to talk about the World Schools Debating Championship that was held in Calgary from February 9 to the 18th. The brightest of high school students from 31 countries around the world debated for the world championship. Calgary's students acted as ambassadors, timekeepers, and hosts. In addition to debating, the international teams travelled to Banff, skied and snowboarded at the Canada Olympic Park, attended a Calgary Hitmen hockey game, and spent a day debating at the Siksika and Tsuu T'ina nations. The grand finale was held at the Hyatt Hotel, downtown Calgary.

I want to recognize the organizing committee members: Ron Lee, David Tupper, Norman Leach, Ken Goosen, and Brad Copas. They did a fantastic job four years ago to successfully bid for the prestigious world event, bringing it to Calgary as part of Alberta's centennial celebration.

I was very pleased to support this event since the beginning and to join the members for Calgary-Lougheed and Calgary-North Hill at the closing ceremony. I also want to thank the Minister of Education and the Minister of Gaming for some matching funds for the event.

The first World Schools Debating Championship was held in Australia in 1988. At that first-ever event Canada's team won the championship and was named the best in the world. The Canadian team was made up entirely of Albertan students. Since that premiere year the competition has grown to over 50 participant countries. Canada has been frequently represented in the top eight finalists, and, notably, Albertan students have been in the national team ever since 1988.

Thank you.

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

Deaths of RCMP Officers

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The national tragedy which took the lives of four young RCMP constables last week has left Albertans and, indeed, the entire country shocked and appalled. This incident brings the number of police officers slain in our province to 88.

These men were members of families who loved them and communities who respected them. They were members of a brotherhood of firefighters, paramedics, and police officers who depend on each other and trust each other with their lives every day. The families of these officers, the communities who knew them, and the brotherhood to which they belonged are now in a period of deep mourning. I would ask that all Albertans and all Canadians respect the grieving process that is necessary for those left behind.

Mr. Speaker, there are some who are attempting to make this a political issue, and to them I ask this: please honour the memory of these four constables by giving those who knew and loved them the time needed to heal. There's been a fatality inquiry called, and this process will bring out the details surrounding this senseless loss of life. There's no need to aggravate the situation during this initial period of mourning.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Solicitor General for the kindness, the understanding, and the compassion he has shown to the communities in which I live. His thoughtfulness and words of strength have helped us through this difficult time. In closing, I remind all members that the government has set up books of condolence in the rotunda. I invite all of my colleagues to show their support for the families at this time.

Thank you.

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

International Women's Day

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is International Women's Day, a day to celebrate women's achievements and, for those of us that are activist, to continue to advocate for needed change.

The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women recently issued a resolution to declare the next decade, 2005 to 2015, a decade of difference for aboriginal women in Canada. Mr. Speaker, aboriginal women were the last group to receive the franchise to vote, and they continue to struggle mightily to be safe, healthy, and to have their voices heard. These women face intolerable levels of violence, and addictions, chronic health problems like diabetes, and bone-crushing poverty also impair their ability to share equally in the life of this province. The institute's resolution asks for a coordinated, dedicated community approach to bringing about positive change.

The issue of violence against women continues to hold many other women back from full participation. We need to provide full, predictable, long-term funding for women's shelters. Please fund enough for shelter staff to be paid at fair market value and to have their salaries indexed as MLA salaries are. More concrete support for traditional housing is also a must.

2:50

Finally, I continue to press the government to find a way to fully fund the operations of sexual assault centres in Alberta. Not the piecemeal, project-by-project, narrowly focused method used to date but actually fund the operations of these centres, please.

On this International Women's Day who will step up to the plate in defence of women? Political will and a champion are needed on the government side. Please step forward.

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

International Women's Day

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise today to recognize International Women's Day as we celebrate and recognize the many achievements of women in Alberta and around the world.

This year's Canadian theme is You are Here: Women, Canada and the World. It encourages Canadians to recognize women's accomplishments and to consider the road ahead. International Women's Day is a celebration of Alberta and Canada's women. Combined with our centennial, these two events give Albertans a special opportunity to recognize the women in their lives and the contributions they make to our province and to Canada.

Women in Alberta have made great strides towards different things. They can be proud of their accomplishments in the past hundred years. Women's educational levels have vastly increased, and they've found many successes in nontraditional careers.

Mr. Speaker, for just a moment I'd like to speak about a special woman in my life that had what I'll call a traditional career: my mother. She didn't have national standards or rules to help teach her how to teach her children or any formal training. But she loved us, and she taught us to be honest, to work hard, and to help those around us, and I value the input that she had in my life.

Since 1977, when the United Nations established March 8 as International Women's Day, we have dedicated this day to address the advancement of women's issues and to assess the challenges facing women and to consider future steps to enhance the status of women and to celebrate gains made.

I ask all Albertans to join the Minister of Community Develop-

ment and myself in acknowledging the achievement of women in Alberta and around the globe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Calendar of Special Events

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed, just to advise hon members that there are other days in March or weeks in March that may be of significance for all hon. members. March 4 to March 25 is the Easter Seal paper egg campaign. March 4 to March 20 is Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. March 6 to March 12 is International Women's Week. March 6 to March 12 is National Dental Assistants Recognition Week. March 7 to March 13 is Pharmacists Awareness Week. March 8, of course, is International Women's Day. March 8 is also the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. March 9 to March 16 is Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. March 13 is Great Kids awards day. March 14 is Commonwealth Day. March 14 to March 20 is National Farm Safety Week. March 14 to March 20 is Brain Awareness Week. March 15 to March 19 is daffodil days week on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society. March 17 is St. Patrick's Day. March 19 is St. Joseph's Day. March 20 is Journée internationale de la Francophonie. March 20 is Palm Sunday. March 21 to 28 is the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination. March 21 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. March 21 is also World Poetry Day. March 22 is World Day for Water. March 23 is World Meteorological Day. March 24 is World Tuberculosis Day. March 25 is Good Friday. March 27 is Easter Day. March 27 is World Theatre Day. March 28 is Easter Monday.

head:

Introduction of Bills

Bill 8

Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Groeneveld: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

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

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Bill 9

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005, for first reading.

Last year the government passed the Post-secondary Learning Act to help provide a legislative framework for Alberta's vision for an adult learning system that's accessible, flexible, and responsive regardless of where a student chooses to live. Bill 9 proposes minor amendments and housekeeping to fine-tune the legislation and further strengthen it. Some of those changes are for clarity, some are housekeeping, and some delete unnecessary sections.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Bill 10

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 10 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Bill 12

Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill updates principles that apply to the treatment of victims. These principles have been agreed to by all provinces, territories, and the federal government.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 12 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Bill 13

Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005.

These are a couple of very minor amendments that set a time limit for appeals to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board and ensure that there is consistency in dispute resolution mechanisms for existing road/rail crossings.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a statement I have released today on behalf of the NDP opposition to recognize and celebrate International Women's Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a tabling pursuant to the question asked today by the leader of the NDP opposition. The

document is one that's been released by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, documenting the province's commitment to taking over ground ambulance services.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is an e-mail from Enron officials in regard to their activities in Alberta, and in it is a quote I took for question period today. I would encourage all members of this Assembly to read it.

The second tabling I have is again in regard to this matter of Enron and their activities in Alberta. This is entitled Project Stanley: Summary of Transactions. Again I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly to have a squint through this in their spare time.

Thank you.

3:00

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a copy of the resolution I referred in my member's statement from the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women.

The second tabling is a detailed list of investments from the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, and they're detailing the investment in tobacco companies. Mr. Speaker, there are eight tobacco companies involved in 10 separate investments totalling almost 10 and a half million dollars.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from my office to the hon. Minister of Finance requesting a copy of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board review, which she had asked for.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm pleased to table in the House five copies of the Speaker's ruling on the operation of question period for the 26th Legislature.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. Pursuant to the Government Accountability Act, Government of Alberta 2003-2004 annual report.

Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Government Accountability Act: the 2003-2004 annual report of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development annual report 2003-2004; Alberta Children's Services annual report 2003-2004; Community Development annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2004; Alberta Economic Development 2003-2004 annual report; Alberta Ministry of Energy 2003-2004 annual report; Ministry of Environment 2003-2004 annual report; Executive Council annual report 2003-2004; Alberta Finance 2003-2004 annual report; Alberta Gaming 2003-2004 annual report; Alberta Government Services annual report 2003-2004; Alberta Ministry of Health and Wellness annual report 2003-2004, sections I and II; Human Resources and Employment ministry

annual report 2003-2004; Alberta Infrastructure annual report 2003-2004; Alberta Transportation annual report 2003-2004; Ministry of Innovation and Science annual report 2003-2004, which includes the Alberta Science and Research Authority, Alberta Informatics Circle of Research Excellence, Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research; Government of Alberta Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations 31st Annual Report for the fiscal year April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004; Alberta Justice annual report 2003-2004; Alberta Learning annual report 2003-2004; Alberta Municipal Affairs 2003-2004 annual report; Alberta Revenue annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2004; Alberta Seniors 2003-2004 annual report; Alberta Solicitor General annual report 2003-2004; Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development annual report 2003-2004.

Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Conflicts of Interest Act: report of selected payments to Members and former Members of the Legislative Assembly and persons directly associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2004; report entitled General Revenue Fund, details of grants, supplies and services, capital assets and other, by payee for the year ended March 31, 2004.

Pursuant to the Agriculture Financial Services Act, the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation annual report 2003-2004.

Pursuant to the Alberta Capital Finance Authority Act, the Alberta Capital Finance Authority 2004 annual report.

Pursuant to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, the 2004 Alberta heritage savings trust fund annual report for the year ended March 31, 2004.

Pursuant to the Insurance Act, the Alberta Automobile Insurance Board annual report for the year ended December 31, 2003.

Pursuant to the Government Accountability Act: Budget 2004, 2004-2005 quarterly budget report, quarter 1 fiscal update; Budget 2004, 2004-2005 activity report, quarter 1 activity report; Budget 2004, 2004-2005 quarterly budget report, quarter 2 fiscal update; Budget 2004, 2004-2005 activity report, quarter 2 activity report.

Pursuant to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Act: Members of the Legislative Assembly pension plan annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001; report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2002; report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003; and report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2004; Minister of Finance, Alberta Treasury Branches financial annual report 2004; Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation 2003 annual report; provincial judges and masters in chambers pension plan annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001; the same report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2002; the same report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003; the first quarter update, 2004-2005, the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, for the three months ended June 30, 2005; the 2004-2005 second quarter update of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund for the six months ended September 30, 2004.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Transmittal of Estimates**

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

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of

the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: **Government Motions**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, prior to moving a number of motions relevant to the supplementary estimates, I wish to advise that I provided the government's 2004-05 quarterly budget report for the third quarter to all MLAs on February 28. On this same day I also made this report public, as required by section 9 of the Government Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the 2004-05 supplementary estimates. These supplementary estimates will provide additional spending authority to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer and 20 departments of government. When an election is called, a special warrant can provide interim funding authority. The Assembly will be asked to approve the supplementary estimates and thus ratify this special warrant. When passed, these estimates will authorize increases of \$1,944,494,000 in voted operating expense and equipment inventory purchases, \$102,351,000 in voted capital investment, and \$40 million in lottery fund payments.

Mr. Speaker, I am now tabling the quarterly budget report for the third quarter pursuant to section 9 of the Government Accountability Act. This amended fiscal plan is also required by section 8 of the Government Accountability Act when a second set of estimates is tabled.

I am also tabling the third-quarter activity report describing the major achievements of our government during that period.

Likewise, I am tabling the third-quarter update for the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, would you like to move Motion 8?

8. Mrs. McClellan moved:
Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2004-05 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

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

The hon. Minister of Finance to conclude debate, or should we just call the question?

Mrs. McClellan: Question.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

9. Mrs. McClellan moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(9) the number of days that Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 2004-05 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund shall be two days.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

head: 3:10 **Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

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

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

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative

Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank you, Your Honour, for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 7: Mr. Stevens]

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be given this opportunity to address this Assembly as the representative of the Edmonton-Calder constituency. Calder is a place where I have worked very hard during these past years, and I am both humbled and honoured to serve the people of Edmonton-Calder as a member of this Assembly.

Edmonton-Calder is a large urban constituency that straddles the northwest side of the city from 97th Street on the east all the way over to 232nd Street on the west. Calder is an important and historic constituency, with its communities forming part of the heartland of Edmonton north of the river. People in Edmonton-Calder work hard for their money and take a great deal of pride in their communities, people like Kevan and Una Warner, who have lead the charge to save their neighbourhood schools in Wellington and Athlone – and that motion is before the board of Edmonton public tonight – or Karen and Olga at the community drop-in centre, who devote hundreds of volunteer hours to make Calder one of the most vibrant and successful community centres in the province. I think of Bryan Stokes in Prince Rupert, who worked hard to keep the grounds of his apartment building looking good and his condo association firing on all cylinders.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Edmonton-Calder have sent me to this Chamber to look after their interests, to get the political machinery of this province back to working for them rather than the other way around. They have asked me to take action on their energy bills, their car insurance, their schools, and their medical care. They have asked me to make sure that those less fortunate are given the means to live in a dignified and healthy manner. The people of Edmonton-Calder and Alberta speak loud and clear that they do not want their physical environments to be compromised and that there must be reassurances that the lands, the air, the water, and the natural bounties of this province will be there for their children and for generations to come.

The critical portfolio areas for which I am responsible are grouped together for a very specific reason: to build new energy for this province on the strength of a balanced relationship with our environment. Energy is the economic and physical lifeblood of this province, and it will lead the way to change the way that we do things here in this province. This change can be a great economic stimulus for diversification and to build a more equitable society for all Albertans to enjoy.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

I've heard someone say that to be born in Alberta was like winning the lottery. Well, maybe that's true for a fortunate few, but for many Albertans there are plenty of disturbing and difficult issues to resolve. The insistent, grinding poverty that thousands of Albertans must live under is no sweepstakes winner. The dark pit of indignation and hopelessness into which so many of our injured workers fall is no scratch-and-win prize. In this brave new Alberta we have created this past 30 years, children born into poverty are likely to stay right where they are: in poverty. More seniors than ever are likely to descend below the poverty line after they retire, and Alberta workers must work longer hours and with less purchasing power than they did back in the 1970s.

For certain, money that flows from oil and gas revenues and booming construction drives a remarkable economy in our province, but just where does all of that money flow to? How we look after the people who are most in need in our society is a measure of our strength as a people. Most Albertans are only one accident or a health problem, a series of unfortunate events, or a few missed paycheques away from themselves living, too, in poverty. We have the ways and means to eliminate poverty in Alberta, and there is no economic, logical, or moral excuse that should keep us from accomplishing this task.

In this new Alberta century people are looking for ways to get our natural advantages working for us, for all of us. We have a strong economy, the wealth of natural resources, the people, the money, and the space to build something remarkable, something to be proud of. What we are lacking, I believe, is a firm commitment to a set of guiding principles that can make these natural endowments work for us to make the best possible life for every single Albertan in this province now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest a list of guiding principles something like this. Number one, "higher education shall be equally accessible to all" on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means and, in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education. I took that quote from the UN charter of rights and freedoms. Postsecondary education is the way that people can get a leg up and improve themselves economically, intellectually, and spiritually. A good education makes everything better. Let's look past endowment plans and elitist models and make sure that everyone has a real chance to improve themselves through education.

Number two, the right to work at a job with humane conditions, with sufficient hours, pay, and benefits to earn a living; the right to enjoy some rest, leisure, and reasonable and periodic holidays with pay. We might pride ourselves here as the hardest working province in Confederation, but for many people that means that they are being worked to death. Now is the time that we can put into place labour laws that lay out reasonable parameters for work, pay, and benefits.

Number three, let's bring democracy back to the people of Alberta. People in this province used to vote a lot more than they do now because they believed that the system was working for them then. Now, as I have said before, it's more like the opposite is true. The disconnect between what people want and what people get out of government is wider and deeper than the deepest stretch of the Peace River Valley these days.

Proportional representation would help. Rules to limit campaign spending would be a good idea. Giving back the power to school boards and the right to elect health board authority trustees would be useful too. But more than this, people in Alberta will come back to vote and care about politics when the system starts to work for them again, when the provincial government starts charging decent oil and gas royalty rates and puts the money back into the hands of the people that it belongs to, when the government begins to fund public education and health care the way it should, when government starts to protect our health and the health of the natural environment on which we most vitally depend.

Everyone knows that we are on an unsustainable path in regard to our natural worlds. It's becoming patently obvious that we cannot continue to exploit the land, the water, and the air as we have been accustomed. So why don't we turn a corner when we still have that option? We won't lose money by employing measures to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We will gain diversity and strength in our economy, we will lessen our dependence on increasingly expensive traditional fuels, and we will gain a measure of peace of mind knowing that we are finally doing something about a problem that we all know is not getting any better as time goes by.

There are innumerable other benefits to taking action on our dependence on carbon-based fuels. Our health will improve as pollution from gasoline, diesel, and coal is reduced. Cities will grow to accommodate more rapid transit and pedestrian streetscapes. New economies based on conservation and alternative energy production will help to strengthen and diversify our economy.

The oil and gas industry will be with us for a long time to come. It is our ace in the hole, an insurance policy we all hold together that will help to underwrite this new Alberta century. But let's start looking at it for what it truly is: an industry in transition with an uncertain and, ultimately, unsustainable future. What it can do, however, is help to underwrite the transition to the future, a future where every Albertan can count on a decent living and be proud of the choices we make together as a democracy for now and for the future of this fine province that we live in.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, environmentalism is not just about blue boxes and fluorescent light bulbs. It's about how we value the physical world in which we live as an extension of ourselves. Drilling sour gas wells in urban areas is not just a human tragedy waiting to happen; it is also an assault on the sensibilities that we have as human beings, on how we value the places where we live, and on how we value ourselves and each other. Big box store clusters and the blights of billboards on our main drags, Macleod Trail and Gateway Boulevard and Gaetz Avenue, don't just kill pedestrian-friendly main streets and cause traffic problems; they are an attack on how citizens interact with each other and their city. We can do better, and we will.

In this new Alberta century let us remind ourselves about something important. The oil and the gas and the coal and everything beneath our feet is ours. We own it, the people of Alberta, not the energy companies, who seem so bent to extract every last drop as fast as they possibly can. The cities and the countryside are ours, too, as are the schools, the roads, the hospitals, the water that flows around us, the air that we breathe. It's time we stand up and say how we want to use these assets in the best possible way for everyone in this province. It's time, in this new Alberta century, that we choose a more equitable path for our future.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak, and I look forward to working with this Legislature to effect positive change for the people of Alberta. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29 if anyone wishes to ask a question, they may do so now.

There being none, the chair recognizes the Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this Chamber in my maiden speech. I would like to begin by recognizing my predecessor, Don Tannas. His contributions to the communities in the Highwood constituency and his representation of his constituents earned him the trust and respect of the area for 16 years as an MLA. It was only upon his announced retirement that I considered running, and he has left some pretty big shoes to fill. His hard work, determination, and tenacity at representing Highwood will be missed both here and in the constituency. I wish him the best in his future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Highwood is one that has been greatly changed since this Assembly last sat. The amazing population growth that our province has witnessed did not bypass any constituency, and this resulted in the borders of Highwood being greatly altered. Some parts of the new area now constitute Foothills-Rocky View, some are now part of Livingstone-Macleod, and others

now call the offices of Banff-Cochrane to speak with their MLA. I know that Albertans in these areas will be well represented by the MLAs in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, I have called this constituency home for all of my life. In fact, my parents emigrated to this province and to the Highwood area in the early part of the century. My father's brothers had come to Alberta from Holland in 1926. After a time in this province they had written home of their successes and invited others from their family to come over as well. My parents decided to emigrate in 1929 and started the long journey to Alberta, first by boat and then by train across this huge country. Travelling with three small children was no picnic, but the trip, so I am told, went surprisingly well, uneventful all the way to Calgary.

However, upon arriving in Calgary, their good luck seemingly ran out as there was no one there at the train station to meet them. So my parents were there with three children, no way to contact my uncles, and unable to speak English. Well, through the good graces of some strangers they were able to arrange a taxi to take them to my uncle's farm. The only problem was that neither my father nor the driver who had agreed to take them knew exactly where my uncle's farm lay. Not to be deterred by small details such as this, they set off in the general direction. Four hours and \$22 later they finally pulled into what seemed to be the correct yard. The only problem was that everybody was out in the fields working, so no one was at home.

When they got to the house, my father immediately thanked the driver because he knew that he had found my uncle's house. Bewildered, the driver looked around for a sign or a nameplate or some indication that would explain my father's sureness. Finally, this man asked my father how he knew. There was no name, no person in sight, and the farmhouse looked no different than a hundred other ones across the prairie.

By way of explanation my father pointed to the front step of the house, where the driver saw shoes lined up neatly next to the door. He was about to ask my father what he meant, when he realized that there was something different about these shoes. Upon a closer inspection he realized that they were all wooden. My father had known that he found his brother's house because of all the wooden shoes lined up at the door. The telegram my parents had sent from Winnipeg helpfully arrived four days later.

My family has lived in this area ever since, and this story of my parents setting out across the world looking for a new life, and apparently some wooden shoes, has embodied the free nature of Albertans.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the Chamber to the new constituency of Highwood. This riding contains a diverse group of Albertans that make their living in as many ways as can be imagined. The northern part of the riding contains communities that have grown exponentially in the past few years. Many of the people in this area make their living in Calgary but have chosen to live in a more rural setting.

The west of the riding is dominated by the foothills of the Rockies, and in the east there is the broad expanse of the prairies. The constituency is bordered by the Bow River on the north and stretches a good portion of the way to Nanton in the south. The riding is bisected by No. 2 highway, and as you travel along this road from Calgary, you can see the population density start to thin and an increasing amount of agricultural land come into view. The land in this area is rich, and the farmers and ranchers are able to raise a variety of crops and livestock, from canola to cattle and cereal grains to poultry.

I have the privilege of representing the Stoney Nakoda people, who make the Eden Valley reserve their home. Theirs is a proud

history of the plains people, who made the vast prairies and the foothills their home throughout western Canada and the United States.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Highwood are as varied as the geography and are a great cross-section of those who call Alberta home. For all their uniqueness my constituents share common concerns with each other and other Albertans. Postsecondary education, health, infrastructure, and the maintenance of the environment for future generations are all priorities of Albertans. The Speech from the Throne demonstrated that they are the priorities of their provincial government. The Speech from the Throne, given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, charted a course that will build on the four pillars of the 20-year plan first discussed in this Chamber last February.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear of the government's commitment to moving ahead with the water for life strategy. Highwood is a part of the Bow River watershed, with both the Sheep River and the Highwood River flowing into the Bow. Over the years that I have lived on the banks of the Bow River, I have seen the changes that development has initiated on our rivers and streams. I am proud to live in a province that is committed to such an aggressive environmental protection program and continues to show this commitment in actions and not just words.

As I mentioned earlier, a good number of my constituents have chosen farming and ranching as their lifestyle. The Speech from the Throne outlined the government's continued commitment to stand by this province's agricultural producers. Alberta has long been known for our primary agricultural products, and now it's time to build on that reputation and shift the focus to more value-added products. The continued closure of the American border to our live cattle highlights the continued need for us to develop a larger homegrown slaughter and meat-packing industry. By increasing domestic slaughter capacity and focusing on the development of more processing plants, Albertans will be able to realize more benefits from the livestock that we raise. Moving in this direction will create more jobs in our province and create a more stable structure for marketing Alberta's beef both nationally and internationally.

This move is not limited to the beef industry but also the grain industry. In the Speech from the Throne His Honour outlined the government's continued commitment to advocating for a marketing choice for wheat and barley. The development of market choice for wheat and barley will open the doors to benefits for individual producers. The power to choose who you sell your product to is afforded to every other industry in this country. Only wheat and barley producers are forced to sell to a monopoly. The promotion of choice among producers does not call for the elimination of the Wheat Board, only the opportunity to market wheat and barley elsewhere. It will also help in the development of value-added industries focused on grains in Alberta.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, the shifting focus to value-added industries in agricultural sectors is merely the tip of the iceberg. I feel that our province needs to advance a whole value-added strategy in all sectors of our economy. Our natural resource wealth is such that we are able to make decisions and investments that are not available to other districts. In order to move away from being a primary-product economy, we need to look not only to value-added industries but to all knowledge-based industries.

As was discussed in the Speech from the Throne, the government is committed to increasing the capacity of Alberta's postsecondary education system a total of 60,000 spaces by the year 2020, and this

is exactly the type of forward thinking that is necessary to help Alberta make the transition into a leader in knowledge-based industries such as computers, medical technology, and nanotechnology.

Mr. Speaker, the final point I'd like to touch on is the added investment in Alberta's infrastructure, that was discussed when His Honour delivered the Speech from the Throne. In my constituency there is a need for overpasses at busier intersections. I feel that spending on infrastructure in this way will have a positive effect on safety on Alberta's highway system. Casualty and fatality traffic accidents are a tragedy that no jurisdiction is immune to.

The Speech from the Throne discussed the pressing need to increase safety on Alberta's roads. I believe that one way to do this is to reduce the number of level crossings on busy highways such as the number 2. On the northern edge of my constituency, on the immediate outskirts of Calgary, there are three secondary highways which cross the number 2 within a 30-kilometre stretch. The ever-increasing volume of traffic on highway 2 combined with the ever-increasing volume of traffic on the secondary roads in my constituency means that the issue of traffic safety is becoming more and more prominent. The province's investment in infrastructure is a way to deal with this.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a land of endless opportunity, and we are in a position to seize it. By working with our constituents, we'll be able to provide the government that Albertans chose and give the services that Albertans need. I look forward to working with the people of Highwood and my colleagues here in the Legislature to make the Alberta advantage an even better one.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29 if anybody wishes to ask a question, you may do so now.

Okay. There being none, any other speakers? The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a pleasure for me to rise today to deliver my maiden speech as the representative of the people of the constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat. It's with a great deal of pride that I'm able to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you and your two colleagues on being elected to your honourable positions. I'm sure your experience and guidance will help myself and the many new members adapt to our roles as MLAs.

I'd also like to formally congratulate all the members of the House on their recent election, especially those who are here for the first time. When the constituents of the areas we represent went to the polls last November, they gave us the trust to do what is best for them and what is best for Alberta. I must admit that I find this a very daunting task. The decisions we make inside this Chamber touch every aspect of the lives of Albertans, and I'm extremely honoured that the constituents of Cypress-Medicine Hat put their faith and trust in myself and the entire Conservative Party team to make the right decisions. While I realize that as a government we won't be able to please every single Albertan, I'll be very diligent in my role to ensure that whatever is done is done in the best interests of Alberta.

As I was preparing what I was going to say for this response to the Speech from the Throne, I was looking back at many speeches and articles from the years past, some as far back as 1971. I initially thought that these speeches, being given by a variety of those community leaders and previous MLAs, would be out of date and out of touch with the needs of Albertans at the dawn of this new

century, but after reading a few things by a vast number of orators, I quickly discovered that I was wrong. Mr. Speaker, Albertans' attitudes and entrepreneurship haven't really changed.

As each decade passes, there hasn't been a great variance in the issues, just a change in technologies. The need for gravel roads has changed into needs for highway interchanges. X-ray machine demand in the health sector has moved towards MRI and CT scanners. In education the expansion of the consolidated one-room schools has moved towards having our rural schools hooked up to the SuperNet. Several schools in my constituency are hooked up to live video conferencing to allow students to interact with a variety of scholars and experts that they wouldn't have been previously able to without this new technology.

Even with the great leap of technological advances in all areas of our lives, the one common theme that keeps occurring over and over is opportunity. Albertans, I feel, are interested in having the opportunity to succeed. They believe that the best social safety net is a job. They aren't looking for handouts. They just want a chance to work hard and be successful through their own blood and sweat.

What has been very eloquently presented to us by the hon. Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, is the direction in which Albertans have always wanted their government to go. In years past the dark cloud of debt has loomed above, but thanks to my colleagues here in this House and many who are no longer here, including my predecessor Dr. Lorne Taylor, our future plans do not include budgeting for the debts of years past.

Now the focus is solely on the people of Alberta, which most definitely includes the constituents of Cypress-Medicine Hat. What do the people of southeast Alberta want from this province? Well, the southeast portion of this province was where the settlement of southern Alberta began. The prairies of southeast Alberta are filled with the remnants of those who, as our Lieutenant Governor mentioned, settled this land with all the hopes and dreams that we can only wonder about as we travel the back roads of Alberta and see the remnants of these hopes and dreams in the abandoned farmsteads. One can only imagine what drove these people to leave their homes and families to come overseas to settle here.

From working here, living here, and knocking on doors in Cypress-Medicine Hat, I've heard a great deal of stories of how they came to this beautiful corner of Alberta and what they expect for the future. The one thing I hear resonating through each and every discussion is the feeling of pride they have for their family, their career, and their province. This feeling of pride encompasses all aspects of their lives, whether it's pride in putting every ounce of their being into growing the best crops their fields can yield, using their skills in their respective professions, or working hard to pass that final exam at Medicine Hat College.

I know that the people associated with the large agricultural sector will be pleased with the direction you've put forward today. Agriculture is no longer just a way of life; it's also a proud business. When we provide increased domestic processing capabilities, press hard to expand our value-added sector, and push hard for market choice, we provide opportunity.

The agricultural industry through past droughts and especially the cattle and grain industries for what they've been going through in the past several years aren't sitting back and waiting for the government to give them a cheque. Instead, they want the opportunity to do what they do best, which is working hard and taking pride in what they do. But there are times when the weather or a prolonged border closure threatens the very core of the industry. Government needs to provide assistance. Industry is very appreciative of the assistance this government has provided in the past. Our past programs and future plans outlined in the Speech from the Throne are providing a hand up to industry, not a handout.

3:40

I'm quite proud to say that we are continuing to provide opportunity to our agricultural sector. Opportunity for increased domestic processing and value-added products can sometimes require more than hard work. With the continued growth of the global marketplace, farming isn't just planting seeds or taking feed out to cattle. It's big business, and we need information technologies to succeed. Our youth are coming back to the farm with a firm grasp about how new technologies can improve yields and have a more efficient operation.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that our rural communities remain vital components of Alberta. A healthy and strong rural Alberta strengthens the entire provincial economy, and it enhances the quality of life for all Albertans. I'm very excited to be a part of the Rural Development Strategy Task Force, led by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. We have such a wealth of creative and innovative individuals on this committee. It's amazing the sorts of ideas regarding sustained growth of our rural communities that are already coming forth in the preliminary meetings of this task force. Rural communities have been the backbone of this province, and I look forward to helping to build upon the four pillars that have been initially developed through the rural development strategy.

Mr. Speaker, people kid us southeastern Albertans about being rednecks. It's true; we are rednecks. But that's just because we enjoy being out in the sun, enjoying areas of the province that haven't been discovered by most Albertans, like the Sweetgrass hills and the Milk River badlands.

I just want to clarify something: there really is no milk in the Milk River. My four-year-old grandson had just recently asked as we were driving through this region: Grandpa, are we really going to see a river full of milk? Like any responsible grandfather, I told him that wasn't the case and that it was named that way because of the muddy and murky appearance of the water.

Imaginative and inquisitive thinking isn't something us rednecks are lacking. We have the same dreams and interests in technology and innovation as every other Albertan. Southeastern Albertans are on the forefront of some technological research, particularly unmanned vehicle research. Mr. Speaker, representatives from countries around the world came to southeast Alberta last year to watch live demonstrations of unmanned vehicles at the Defence Research and Development Canada range at Suffield, just outside of Medicine Hat. This experience cannot be achieved anywhere else in Canada and in very few places in the world. Companies in Medicine Hat built the drones, the unmanned aircraft that are being used for surveillance in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Swedish navy came to the desert of southeast Alberta to demonstrate and purchase Barracudas, unmanned sea vehicles. Cutting-edge technologies have been developed and are continuing to be developed in southern Alberta.

To continue the economic development of the region, the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat need the education and information to compete globally. This is why I'm very excited to hear about Alberta's promise to make strengthening our postsecondary system a top priority, which includes the creating of 60,000 new postsecondary spaces by the year 2020 and the Lois Hole digital library. It can be costly to have well-stocked libraries in every single community in Alberta, and it's so exciting to hear that our constituents will have instant access to such a wealth of information. I find it very fitting and appropriate that this digital library was named after one of the biggest advocates for learning this province has been fortunate enough to be graced with. A remarkable woman who dedicated her life to learning will now forever be a part of all Albertans' lifelong learning.

Education will create the backbone of Alberta's economy as we

move forward into the future, and I know that I along with the constituents of Cypress-Medicine Hat look forward to witnessing the direct impact this commitment to education will have on our communities. The commitment to education that has been put forward through the Speech from the Throne will be looked back upon as the proverbial starting blocks that launched Alberta's economy into a new era. While our natural resources will still play a prominent role in Alberta's future, with the access to the future we will be experiencing from the direction put forward in the Speech from the Throne, our economy will be diversifying with an extremely well-trained and educated workforce.

There's great opportunity in store for the future of Alberta. From the very beginning of this province 100 years ago whenever opportunity was present, the hard-working people of southeast Alberta have taken advantage of the situation and excelled. The Premier has set forth an agenda which will allow for each and every Albertan to share in the Alberta advantage. I thank him for that, and so do the people of Etzikom and the people of Manyberries, the people of Hilda and the people of Schuler. I feel quite fortunate in being given the opportunity to represent the great people of Cypress-Medicine Hat during these exciting times. The future of our province looks very bright.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in. Any questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: It's a great honour to rise in this House with much pride and excitement to deliver my maiden speech, pride because I represent the great riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie, excitement because I am looking forward to working for the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie, who have placed their trust in me.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your election as the Deputy Chair of this House. Your reputation as a parliamentarian ensures that you will carry out your duties with confidence, nonpartisanship, and expertise.

I would like to thank my constituents from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity to represent them here in this Assembly. I extend my warm greetings to my colleagues on all sides of this House, I congratulate them on their election or re-election to this Assembly, and I am looking forward to working with each one of them to serve the best interests of all Albertans. We are here to best serve the public's interest, and I am confident that each member is as committed as I am to perform that commitment.

The throne speech is obviously an expression of this government's desire to pursue a certain level of action over the next four years. Mr. Speaker, what I find in this speech was clearly a reaction to the pressure the Alberta Liberals put on this government for years and years. What I heard was a collection of strong Liberal ideas watered down and repackaged as Tory policies. Alberta Liberals have long argued for increasing the minimum wage, restoring seniors' benefits, inflation-proofing the heritage savings trust fund, and an endowment fund for postsecondary education. These were the issues Albertans and the Alberta Liberal opposition have demanded action on for years and years.

It's great to see the government finally responding to overdue issues such as increasing AISH rates. There is still confusion in the area of health care in Alberta, and the throne speech did very little to clear things up. Albertans are anxious to see some more concrete plans. They want government to spend taxpayers' money wisely and build permanent wealth for this province.

I'm glad to hear that the government wants to honour a great

Albertan, the late Lois Hole. If the government is really, really serious about it, then they should adopt the Liberals' Motion 502 to eliminate library card fees from public libraries throughout Alberta and double the funds for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts as she was a strong supporter of more funding to public libraries and the arts community. I think a tribute for Lois Hole is something that would benefit all Albertans.

3:50

It seems that too often we find ourselves out to score political points. We are not here for the benefit of the media but for the benefit of the people of this province. Scoring cheap political points does nothing to help the people of this province. [some applause] Thank you. Only constructive criticism, original ideas will truly help the people each of us represents. Members must question government initiatives and oppose them when it is necessary and only support the government when support is warranted. Like all Albertans, my constituents have great expectations of all of us. The people are looking for their government to be guided by professionalism, to be true to the government's promise of an open and a responsible government, a government that is frugal when dealing with Albertans' purse strings. We promised Albertans that. That is what we will do for them.

Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the cultural diversity within the riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie. I intend to pursue the interests of my great riding, and I will do my level best to voice their concerns in this Legislative Assembly. I am proud to be an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for Edmonton-Ellerslie, and I am proud to be an Albertan. I am committed to serving both Edmonton-Ellerslie and all Alberta.

Let me tell you and through you tell all the members of this House the real concerns that I heard as I went door to door seeking support for my election. The people of my riding want us to protect their public health care system from being a privatized, two-tiered system. The people feel that our health care system can be reformed by reducing the waiting times for medical treatment and surgery; by aggressively recruiting and training more sufficient numbers of doctors, nurses, and other professionals in the health care system; by actively encouraging the development of specialized surgical centres within the public health care system; and by increasing the number of beds in Edmonton as well as in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents also want us to improve their education system. They believe that the place to start is within the classroom, from prekindergarten through to postsecondary. Their belief is that our aim must be for excellence in our education system. My constituents want us to focus on strengthening the postsecondary system and increasing accessibility to education. They want every Albertan to have the opportunity to reach their personal potential by recognizing and supporting the classrooms.

The people of my riding want us to restore key seniors' benefits and to put measures in place which ensure that all seniors can live safe and comfortable lives.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie want to see improved law and order in this province. They are concerned, and rightly so, with the level of crime involving our youth. They want us to take a firmer stand in the elimination of youth crime in this province.

Thanks to the windfall of energy revenues over years and years, Alberta's economy is flourishing. History shows that this cannot last forever. The people of my riding want us to start translating our current energy boom into permanent long-term prosperity. They want the opportunity to build a truly remarkable future. Long-term, sustainable policies are required to preserve what we have today.

My constituents look to the government to focus on spending smarter, living more within our own means, and continuing to support the Alberta heritage trust fund.

Deregulation of the power industry has created many challenges for Albertans. They pay a high price for gas and electricity. If we restored affordable, stable electricity rates for homeowners and businesses, the people of this province would be able to reinvest more within Alberta.

There is so much room to make Alberta's future better. There is so much this Assembly can do to make it better. We can manage what we have so much better. We can reach so much higher. Let's all start building a better future for Alberta.

I pledge to all of you my respect and gratitude for helping make Alberta the best and the most prosperous province in Canada. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in. Any questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, this is the time when MLAs rise to react to the Speech from the Throne and then give their maiden speech. I'd just like to thank the government for making my job a whole lot easier today. The Speech from the Throne was such an uninspiring document that to comment on it would be like trying to write a review of an instruction manual. As a former newspaper editor I look forward to the cut and thrust of debate as we discuss changing colons to semicolons.

In a more serious vein, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today as a member of the Alberta Legislature, particularly so on this 100th anniversary year of Alberta's founding as a province. I am especially proud to say that the Tougas family has been part of Alberta since almost the beginning. My father, Richard, who is in the gallery today, turns 86 two days after Alberta's 100th birthday, and he is a born and bred Edmontonian. [some applause] I wasn't expecting that.

I'm genuinely humbled that the people of Edmonton-Meadowlark chose me to be their representative, and I would like to express my thanks to the small but very dedicated corps of volunteers who helped out an election campaign that began for me just the day before the election was called. I would especially like to thank Fay Stankov and Bonnie Rawlyn for their efforts on my behalf.

As exciting as it was to win the election, I harbour no illusions. Like all who assume elected office, it is important to remember that no matter how big or small your victory, only a minority of your constituents actually chose you. We as legislators should always be cognizant of the fact that we are here to serve not just those who voted for us or those who support our party but all of those who live in our constituency and our province.

Edmonton-Meadowlark represents a fairly typical cross-section of Alberta. There are slightly more women than men, a fact that is at odds with the makeup in this Legislature. There is a large and diverse ethnic community, with nearly 6 per cent of the population speaking neither official language at home. I found that out several days door-knocking. The largest ethnic group is Chinese, with the largest group of immigrants coming from the Philippines. Nearly 5 per cent of the population is aboriginal, a reflection of Edmonton's status as having the fastest growing aboriginal population of any city in the country. There's a strong seniors presence in Meadowlark, and shortly the Westend Seniors Activity Centre will be moving into a bright new location in the Terra Losa community. I would like to acknowledge the work done by the previous Edmonton-Meadowlark MLA, Bob Maskell, in securing the grants for the expansion.

4:00

Edmonton-Meadowlark is lucky to have the Misericordia hospital in its midst. The hospital survived a brush with death of its own a few years ago when reckless government downsizing left it a shell of its former self. Happily, the Misericordia is returning to form, and a major expansion and reorganization is in the works. The hospital's most outstanding contribution is the craniofacial reconstruction unit, called COMPRU, a world-class facility dedicated to the reconstruction of the face, head, and neck. It also offers the only publicly funded hyperbaric oxygen program in Alberta.

In most communities a hospital would be the most important structure, but in Edmonton-Meadowlark one structure dominates, West Edmonton Mall, virtually a city within a city. To those of us who live near the mall or drive by it every day, it has become part of the landscape that we take for granted. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that West Edmonton Mall is the largest shopping and entertainment complex on the planet and one of Alberta's top tourist attractions. The fact that the world's largest shopping centre would be located in a remote western Canadian city and built by a family of immigrants speaks volumes about the Alberta spirit and the Edmonton attitude.

Among the many attractions of West Edmonton Mall is something called the Palace Casino. Now, a generation ago the idea that a casino would be operating in the heart of a residential area of Alberta would have seemed preposterous, but today casinos are as much a part of the landscape as grain elevators once were. There is even going to be one in Camrose in the near future.

When I was asked by the Leader of the Opposition what portfolio I would like to oversee, I asked for Gaming. Over the years I have watched with fascination and growing concern as what was for most of Alberta's history considered a vice is now a major contributor to the Alberta economy. The progression of gambling from being a crime to a cash cow for government has been insidious, so gradual that it came upon us with hardly anyone noticing.

I remember well, when I was a kid growing up in west Edmonton, how my normally law-abiding father would occasionally purchase something called an Irish sweepstakes ticket. [interjections] Yeah, a few of you remember Irish sweepstakes tickets. Now, sweepstakes were illegal in Canada at the time, but for whatever reason the authorities looked the other way when it came to the Irish sweepstakes. My dad won a hundred pounds, by the way. Eventually Canada got into the sweepstakes game with the Olympic lottery, a \$10 ticket whose million dollar prize draw was a major televised event. Now, just like income tax, the lottery was intended to be temporary, and we all know how that turned out.

As late as 1967 sanctioned gambling in Alberta consisted of dart throws, crown and anchor wheels, and hoop-toss games of chance, of skill at agricultural fairs. These quaint days would end in July of that year when the Edmonton Exposition was allowed to open its first temporary casino during Klondike Days. Two years later Calgary had its first casino during the Stampede, and by 1970 Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer all had casinos running during their agricultural fairs. Pandora's box had opened, and there was no closing it now.

Alberta's first permanent casino, the appropriately named Cash Casino in Calgary, opened 25 years ago this year, but it wasn't until VLTs and slot machines were introduced into Alberta casinos and bars that gambling in Alberta made the quantum leap from games that required skill and knowledge to something that anyone with a quarter and the ability to push a button could do. Alberta today has the highest per capita gambling expenditure on all forms of licensed gambling as well as the highest per capita VLT expenditures. While

charities and casino operators have benefited mightily, it is the province that has cashed in on casinos in a big way. On average, Canadian provinces receive 3 per cent of their provincial revenue from gaming. In Alberta it's 4.8 per cent.

The big money streams in in the form of quarters, nickels, dimes, and now even pennies. There are more than 6,500 slot machines in Alberta casinos, and in 2002-2003 Albertans pumped approximately \$9.3 billion into these one-armed bandits, most of which don't even have arms anymore because that makes them too slow to play. Now, it is true that most of it, \$8.6 billion, was paid out in prize money, but that still left a \$683 million profit. Compare that to the mere \$122 million in profit from table games, and you see where the real money comes from in a casino.

So how did this happen? How did Alberta go from being closed on Sunday to having seven-day-a-week casino gaming until 3 a.m.? Well, the answer can be summed up in a line from my favourite TV series, *The Simpsons*. That's for you, boys. When Springfield was considering opening a casino to cure its economic woes, straight-arrow Ned Flanders asked Reverend Lovejoy to rule on the morality of government-run gaming. Reverend Lovejoy's answer perfectly describes how gaming came to become such an integral part of the Alberta community. In the words of the Reverend, once something has been approved by the government, it is no longer immoral.

The government's enthusiastic introduction of VLTs and casino gaming into Alberta has created a pyramid of addiction. The government is addicted to the easy revenue of gaming. As casino owner Montgomery Burns said in the same *Simpsons* episode, "I've discovered the perfect business. People swarm in, empty their pockets, and scuttle off." Charities and registered societies are addicted to casinos. Charities are walking away with \$50,000, \$60,000, or \$70,000 for a few hours' work, the kind of money it would take years of hard work to raise by more conventional means.

At the bottom of the pyramid of addictions is the lowly gambler, the very people the government likes to call Martha and Henry. It's not the high rollers who are greasing the casino wheels in Alberta. The real money comes from Martha and Henry, who are whiling away the hours joyously pumping coin after coin into slot machines.

I went to Palace Casino last Sunday minutes after it opened at 10 a.m. Already slot jockeys, as they call them, were taking up their places behind their favourite machines based on comfortable TV shows like *Wheel of Fortune*, *Jeopardy*, or even the *Munsters*. I chatted with a charming older woman who enjoyed playing a slot machine based on the game show *The Price is Right*. She happily explained how the machine worked and, while doing so, promptly hit a decent payday. About \$35 in nickels spewed out of the machine. "If I'm smart," she said, "I'd quit right now." I saw her again about a half hour later, still playing the same game, her stash of nickels dwindling down to nothing. Such is the power of the slot machine. Its mindless simplicity has turned thousands of people into addicts and destroyed innumerable lives.

AADAC estimates that 5.2 per cent of Albertans experience moderate to severe problems as a result of their gambling. We've all heard of friends, acquaintances, or loved ones, the Marthas and Henrys of Conservative mythology, whose lives have been destroyed by slot machine addiction. With three new casinos approved and a number of others on the way, the number of VLTs and slot machines will continue to rise. Yes, VLTs and slots have fattened the government coffers and made life easier for charities, but I ask a question that should have been asked a long time ago: at what cost?

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I must mention that the first of four funerals for the slain RCMP officers was held in Stony Plain this afternoon. The deaths of the four Mounties was a diabolical crime that shocked the nation and shook our belief in peace, order, and

good government, that Canada was founded upon. On behalf of my constituents in Edmonton-Meadowlark I would like to express our collective condolences to the families of the four brave Mounties who died in the line of duty.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29. Any questions?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne, delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor a few days ago. I guess that in one sense that was His Honour's maiden speech, and I want to congratulate him on that as well as all hon. members who have risen in this House and delivered their first speech. I actually wish this was my first speech because things were very different in 1993, and the opportunities today are so great for this province that I wish I was starting again.

Mr. Speaker, one of my passions in life is education, whether it may be at the primary, secondary, or postsecondary level, for all Albertans. An educated mind opens many, many doors for those who are willing to make the effort and the sacrifice to obtain an education. Having said that, there are some skills that are definitely more in demand than others, and this is nowhere more apparent than in this province. As the Lieutenant Governor stated, Alberta has an enviable quality of life, low unemployment, and a very high employment growth. It is this issue of employment that I want to spend a little bit of time on today.

4:10

The economic successes in our province have proven to be a benefit to most Albertans. Historically and currently natural resources have been the source of our wealth, fuelling our economy and driving our growth rates. The growth of the oil and gas sectors has been exponential, and with high natural resource prices it appears that this growth will be sustained for at least some time in the foreseeable future.

While natural resources are currently fuelling our growth, it takes many well-oiled parts to keep our economy functioning properly. The Alberta economy is currently looking at the possibility of shortages in one of its key parts, skilled labour. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that Alberta as well as all of western Canada is experiencing a mounting problem with skill shortages. The Canada West Foundation authored a series of well-researched reports to examine the issue in western Canada, as has the TD Bank Financial Group, and also other reports put out by the Economic Development Authority.

The Canada West Foundation highlights an interesting trend. In specific areas Alberta and other western provinces are currently experiencing labour shortages, and the industries themselves feel that these shortages are going to get worse before they get better. Most notably, current shortages exist in health care and most of the trades, transportation, and equipment operation. In the future industry associations expect the shortages here to worsen but also to begin to have a greater effect on primary industries, sales and service industries, processing, manufacturing, and utility industries.

The shortage of skilled labour in certain industries in Alberta has been attributed to the rapid growth of the economy. In a sense we're looking at the possibility of becoming victims of our own success. This labour shortage is currently being felt most acutely in the skilled trades, and this is for several reasons. The demand for jobs in this area has grown, there are fewer Albertan students choosing to pursue a trade in these areas, and the demographic makeup of this

sector of the workforce is one that is fast approaching retirement age.

The Speech from the Throne highlighted the government's commitment to postsecondary education in our province. This includes not only colleges and universities but also trade schools and technical institutes. There exists a large demand for skilled labour in specific industries in our province. In fact, this demand is so great that industry is beginning to look at international sources to fill this labour requirement. The creation of 60,000 postsecondary seats by 2020 will work to relieve the pressure being felt in these areas and ensure that the provincial economy does not falter due to a lack of skilled labour. Additionally, these seats will help Alberta make the transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. Mr. Speaker, by making Alberta a leader in learning, we can ensure that the prosperity we currently enjoy is passed on to our children and our grandchildren.

I'm most pleased to inform the House about a project that I'm proud to be a small part of, and that is the WorldSkills Competition, to be held in Calgary in September 2009. Mr. Speaker, over 40 countries will come to Calgary to compete in 38 or so skills and trades in what will be the largest international event to be held in Calgary since the 1988 Winter Olympics. In preparation for these competitions the government is working with the organizing committee to make a major difference in the skills and the attraction of the skills that we have in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's well known that there currently exists a bias or a culture within our society that favours university training. This exists all over the world. When I was in Switzerland in 2003 to look at the WorldSkills Competition to see if we should bring it to Alberta, there were people there from 40 countries, and they all had the same problem: how do we deal with the bias that we find in our schools with respect to skills versus university, how do we change the mindset of parents who want all their kids to be brain surgeons, and how do we excite our kids to the phenomenal opportunities that exist throughout this province? We're working to minimize this bias by better informing our teachers and our parents that one can have a great life in the trades while seeing every day the fruits of one's labour.

Mr. Speaker, we're taking steps to excite teachers and parents but most of all Alberta students to the fantastic opportunities that exist here in Alberta in any walk of life. We want to excite our young people earlier in life and perhaps provide virtual mentors via SuperNet. A turned-on student does so much better than one that is not.

Fifty years ago, Mr. Speaker, a great teacher of mine said some very simple things to me about career selection. He said: Denis, the term "vocation" comes from the Latin word "vocare," which is a voice from within. He said: you need to listen to your voice from within, find out what makes you energetic, what makes you lazy, what makes you happy, what makes you sad, and once you know yourself, you will know what to be in life. I never forgot that, and I really think that we need to in fact help our children find their voice from within, and we need to fan the flame, whatever it may be. As parents the best thing we can do for our children is to fan the flame of their passion in whatever direction they wish to go.

Another important element, Mr. Speaker, is ethics. The number one reason that our kids lose their first job in many, many cases is that they have a lack of work ethic. That's reported by most employers that you talk to as the reason why kids lose their first job. In other words, they don't care if they turn up on time, or they don't care what kind of job they do. So it's important to have a good work ethic.

One of the other elements that's being included in this

WorldSkills Competition preparation is the inclusion of values and attitudes. It's the inclusion of all of those things that we want all of our kids to have with respect to work ethics.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about the potential referred to in the throne speech and the vision of both of our ministers of education, in both K to 12 and advanced ed, and the new investment that is being promised for education in this province.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in. Any questions?

Anybody else wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Liepert: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to be in this Assembly. It was some 30 years ago that I first walked into this building and walked up above you there in the press gallery and spent five years there. I spent another five years looking down on this Legislative Assembly floor, so it gives me a great deal of pleasure to come back and actually sit on the floor of the Assembly some 20 years later.

I'm also extremely honoured to be representing a constituency that has some incredible tradition and has been represented by some very special people. Karen Kryczka represented this constituency eloquently for two terms. Prior to Karen's representation, we were very fortunate to have Elaine McCoy as the representative for two terms. Prior to that, Peter Lougheed represented this constituency for almost two decades, and I think his legacy lives on. In Calgary-West we did experiment for one term with a Liberal, but we quickly decided that that wasn't the way to go, and we're back to electing Conservatives.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-West is a constituency that I'm proud to say is the home of our new Lieutenant Governor. He will serve this Legislature extremely well, and he has, as by his own admission, big boots to fill. I did not have the pleasure of sitting in this Assembly when Lois Hole was the Lieutenant Governor, but I did have the honour of meeting her on several occasions, and like so many people have said so well, we will miss her a great deal.

Mr. Speaker, the boundaries of Calgary-West have changed so dramatically in those 20 years, and that is typical of the growth of that particular city that we call home. When the constituency was represented by Peter Lougheed some 20 to 25 years ago, for the most part the western boundary was Sarcee Trail. Today with the exception of the community of Glenbrook my eastern boundary is Sarcee Trail. So we have some 40,000 constituents now living in Calgary-West in an area that at one point in time was farms, acreages, CFCN, and the Hart house.

It is a constituency that has a high standard of living. People have good jobs. I always believed that we had the highest household per capita income. I'm now told that my good friend from Calgary-Hays has the constituency with the highest per capita income, but second isn't bad.

As I said, it's a constituency where people are well educated. They are proud to be taking part in the Alberta advantage. But one of the things that I noticed that came up consistently in the election on November 22 was that people were concerned that their children were not going to have the same opportunities that they have because they were unable to get, in many cases, the ability to attend postsecondary education. So it was with a great deal of pride when the Premier announced about a month ago that we would be increasing the number of postsecondary education spaces by 15,000 over the next three years. Mr. Speaker, that is an example of this

government listening, caring, and acting on what Albertans want.

While my constituency has a high per capita income, the other thing that I heard at the doors was that we also have to take care of those people who are less fortunate. I heard on several occasions that we needed to review the payments to our AISH recipients. Again, our throne speech laid out what we are going to do for people who are on AISH, and I'm proud to say that I'm part of a government that is going to look after the people who are less fortunate.

The other thing that I heard consistently at the doors was: "Do not go on a spending spree. Yes, we are in a fortunate position with a surplus, but do not become a Liberal once you get to Edmonton and spend all of our dollars." Mr. Speaker, what I heard was: we have a heritage fund, we are proud of our heritage fund, we need to start to put the revenue from our heritage fund back into the heritage fund, and we need to start to commit a percentage of our nonrenewable resource revenue on an annual basis to the heritage fund. That is one thing that I am proud to say that I intend on pursuing in the next four years.

I'm also concerned, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I found that troubled me when I was going door to door was that more often than I wanted to hear it, people said: "Well, it doesn't really matter. I don't vote anyway." I would like to try to convince people in this Assembly that that is an area that we must take a serious look at and

figure out how we can convince people that they do have a democratic right to vote. I recall a month or so ago when people were driving a thousand kilometres from Vancouver to Calgary to vote in the Iraqi election, and we have people in this country, 1 out of 2 people in the municipal election and the provincial election, who simply didn't take the time to vote.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to speak long. I want to conclude my remarks tonight by saying that I'm incredibly grateful to my family, to my campaign team, and to the 6,964 residents of Calgary-West who gave me the pleasure of sitting in this Legislature. For the 6,440 who did not vote for me and voted for another candidate, I intend to work very hard to get their support in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn the Assembly until 8 o'clock this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:26 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 8, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/03/08

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Government Motions

Adjournment of the Legislature for RCMP Memorial Service

12. Mr. Stevens moved on behalf of Mr. Cenaiko:

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns at the regular hour on Wednesday, March 9, 2005, it shall stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday, March 14, 2005, to permit members' attendance at Thursday's memorial service for the deaths last Thursday of the four RCMP, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, officers in Mayerthorpe.

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

[Government Motion 12 carried]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

Introduction of Guests

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you tonight some dear friends who are here. All of these individuals worked on my campaign for election and continue to support me in my role as an MLA. It's an honour to have these friends here tonight: Mr. David Watts, Mr. Neil Evans, Ms Judy Axelson, Ms Delia McCrae, Mary-Michael Kennedy, and Sue Stephens. I ask you to rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Government Motions

(continued)

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

11. Mr. Stevens moved:

Be it resolved that

- (1) A Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be appointed to review the Conflicts of Interest Act as provided in section 48 of that act consisting of the following members, namely Dr. Brown, chair; Mr. Shariff, deputy chair; Ms DeLong; Mr. Groeneveld; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. Martin; Dr. Miller; Dr. Morton; Mr. Oberle; Ms Pastoor; and Mr. Rogers.
- (2) The chair and members of the committee shall be paid in accordance with the schedule of category A committees provided in the most recent Members' Services Committee allowances order.
- (3) Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel,

and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair.

- (4) In carrying out its duties, the committee may travel throughout Alberta and undertake a process of consultation with all interested Albertans.
- (5) In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of the public service employed in that department or the staff employed by the Assembly or the office of the Ethics Commissioner.
- (6) The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned.
- (7) The committee must submit its report, including any proposed amendments to the act, within one year after commencing its review.
- (8) When its work has been completed, the committee must report to the Assembly if it is sitting. During a period when the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

Mr. Stevens: This is a relatively routine matter, Mr. Speaker. The act in question provides that this legislation be reviewed every five years in this fashion.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and talk briefly about Government Motion 11. Certainly I for one and members on this side of the House do not consider this motion a routine matter. We need stronger conflict of interest guidelines and rules in this province. That is quite evident to everyone on this side of the House and to the majority of Albertans and hopefully to the government.

This committee is going to be dominated by government members. From this side of the House I'm pleased to see that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East is going to serve on that committee as well as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora as well as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who oddly enough – I was reviewing the history of the Assembly – is the first New Democrat member from the city of Edmonton to be elected to this Assembly. He has had a distinguished career as a parliamentarian, and I believe that these three members along with the government members will make a positive contribution to ensuring that not only are the conflict of interest laws in this province strengthened, but certainly they will be rigorously enforced as well.

I will look forward at the appropriate time to reading this report, and certainly I hope it's not like the Coverage of the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, which was prepared for the government in December of 2001 but unfortunately was not made public by a tabling until last Thursday. So I'm sure the hon. member across the way is going to ensure that there are no lengthy delays in the final report becoming public.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just very, very similar to the argument yesterday with regard to question period, I believe there's strength in diversity, and having a greater representational role from other opposition parties I think can only serve to increase the

transparency and accountability of this particular committee. I would encourage the committee to extend its membership to include a member of the New Democratic Party, and I would like to see the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner be involved in at least two committees to get a sense of where the future of this province is headed.

Thank you.

8:10

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of this motion to strike this all-party committee to do an important job for this House and for citizens of this province. I served on one other committee which was made up of all parties representing the House several years ago and that was struck on the initiative of the then Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Mr. Havelock. That committee's work and proceedings as it travelled around the province was most warmly received by Albertans. Albertans appreciate all-party committees holding public hearings inviting public input on public forums, and many of my colleagues who are now on the front benches on that side were also on that committee. So I strongly support the striking of this committee and wish well for the work of this committee over the next year.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else? The hon. Minister for Justice and Attorney General to close debate.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just simply wish to thank the hon. members for Edmonton-Strathcona and Edmonton-Gold Bar for the very strong support of this motion.

[Government Motion 11 carried]

Report on Risk Management Fund Coverage of MLAs

10. Mr. Stevens moved on behalf of Mr. Hancock:
Be it resolved that the report entitled Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Risk Management Fund, Cambridge Strategies Inc., 2001, tabled in the Assembly on Thursday, March 3, 2005, be referred to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services.

Mr. Stevens: The nature of this report, Mr. Speaker, is that it deals with coverage afforded to members of this Assembly under the risk management fund. That particular fund has its derivation as a result of a request from this Assembly that came out of the all-members Special Standing Committee on Members' Services some time ago.

There are a number of recommendations, and it makes sense from my perspective, Mr. Speaker, that this report be referred to that committee for review and consideration and perhaps for some decision on behalf of the members. Of course, the members have this matter in their hands. Should they wish not to have it dealt with but simply have the matter tabled and leave it there, that is up to them, but it seems to me that it is a matter of concern to all members. We're asking that it be sent to an all-members committee, and therefore all members from the recognized parties in this Assembly will be able to comment and debate this particular report with *Hansard* capability.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased

on behalf of the Official Opposition to join in the debate this evening on Government Motion 10. As I said earlier, I was astonished to see how much time had passed between the time this report was finished and the time it was released to the public.

The authors of the report from Cambridge Strategies Inc. talk at length about freedom of speech and freedom of expression and the role of an MLA. Sometimes the role of an MLA can be difficult, and they are required to make public comment on sensitive issues. Certainly, I think the authors of this report have made some good suggestions. There is certainly no doubt about that.

When one walks through this Assembly these days, Mr. Speaker, it's early spring, there are beautiful flowers in the rotunda – the staff has done a marvellous job with the circular arrangement there – and one realizes just how lucky one is to be able to participate in parliamentary debates in this place. You travel another five feet from that circle, and you see the photographs of the gentlemen who unfortunately lost their lives last week in defending this community, this province, and this country. Hopefully, the smell of a funeral parlour will disappear, but we will be reminded always by those flowers in the Assembly of those who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect us. But at the same time we must ensure that we ourselves do not through the course of our duties libel others.

The risk management fund is always a difficult issue. There certainly are recent difficulties with the administration of this fund. I spoke earlier about the interval of three years and three months from the time this report was prepared until it was tabled here in the Assembly last Thursday. During that interval of over three years, Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition and a national daily newspaper tried to pry from the reluctant hands of this government all the information regarding the use of the risk management fund in the matter between the former Treasurer of the province, Mr. Stockwell Day, and a gentleman in Red Deer.

Now, certainly, the risk management fund coverage extended to Mr. Day at that time was well in excess of \$700,000. I think this report cost in excess of \$70,000. I could stand corrected, Mr. Speaker. I can only imagine the internal costs to this government and eventually to the taxpayer that were accumulated or incurred to prevent both myself and the national newspaper, in this case the *Globe and Mail*, from receiving the information regarding the use of this Alberta risk management fund.

I had a good look at this report, and it talks about other cases with other members, but it fails to mention why there was a refusal by the Alberta risk management fund to cover the legal costs of the former Member for Edmonton-Glenora, Mr. Howard Sapers. Why he was denied coverage is not addressed in this report, and that is really important because we can't have selective coverage. It has to be for everyone, regardless of which political party they're involved in. It just can't be for some. And the rules on this coverage have to be made available when people want to know. People have a right. It's public information.

8:20

Now, I have one other observation in regard to this report at this time. It will be interesting to see just exactly what this select special committee does with this, whether they table it or whether they use this as some form of final guideline. If this report were to become part of the risk management fund administration, who would compile this list of lawyers that one could receive advice from? I'm going to quote, Mr. Speaker. This is on page 10.

Just as MLAs are able to approach the Ethics Commissioner should they have a question about an intended course of conduct, so should they be able to access a select pool of lawyers, at public expense, should they have a question about something they intend to say or otherwise publish.

Now, I would be interested in hearing how other members of this Assembly feel about this. A select pool of lawyers? Who would compile this list, and how does one become eligible to be on this list? Certainly, I hope that we wouldn't be creating a political football here. I don't think that is the intention of the authors of this report, but that is my major concern. Are we going to make this process political by having a poor selection process for these lawyers?

With that, Mr. Speaker, that concludes my comments in regard to this report. Certainly, it is interesting to see that there was this long delay while we fought valiantly, and lost, to try to unveil the secrecy that surrounds the risk management fund, but hopefully something will come of this. It's springtime, and I, too, am optimistic.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, before I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce someone who I came to know very well during the election campaign as one of my most valued and trustworthy volunteers. This gentleman continues to serve me in the role as a co-manager in my constituency office. He's in the public gallery. I'd ask Daniel Langdon to please stand and have him receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. It's my pleasure to welcome a dear friend who worked very hard on my campaign and continues to support me and is here tonight, Mr. Abdi Karim Bakal. Please stand, Abdi, so that we can give you the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Any other guests for introduction?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the debate.

head: **Government Motions**
(*continued*)

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Motion 10, I believe it is. The motion, of course, is about referring this report by Cambridge Strategies Inc. This report is dated December 2001. It was over three years ago that this report was received by the government, and it deals with the coverage of the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta from the Alberta risk management fund.

It's the delay in this report's arrival on the floor of this August Chamber that has been a matter of concern for many of us, including myself. After having waited and made inquiries behind the scenes for several years in various ways, I finally put a private member's motion for return on the Order Paper last week, seeking the release of this report.

I am pleased that the Minister of Justice and Attorney General took action on his own in the opening days of this Legislature last week to table this report. I want to thank him for his quick action on

this although I do want to express regret about the three-year delay in the process of this report reaching all members of the Assembly. Seventy thousand plus dollars of taxpayers' money was paid to get the report ready, and I think Albertans and members of this Legislature had the right and due expectation to receive a copy of it as soon as the report was submitted by this consulting company.

There's a second point I want to make. The report was not made based on public hearings, public hearings that were held by an all-party committee going around the province, nor was it a report prepared by a commission appointed by the Legislature or by this government. It's a private consulting company's report, and that should be kept in mind.

Having said that, I think the recommendations contained in this report do merit consideration. They don't necessarily answer all the questions to the satisfaction, perhaps, of all of us. Nevertheless, they do go some way, it appears, in addressing some of the key concerns that many of us had expressed on the floor of the House, outside to the media, and in our interviews with the authors of this report. I as the then leader of the New Democrat opposition was interviewed at length by the authors of this report, so I speak from personal knowledge of the concerns that I conveyed on behalf of our caucus to this committee. I'm sure the same was the case with the Liberal opposition. Its leader, I think, was interviewed, and many others might have been interviewed. I'm not sure who the others were who were interviewed.

But based on my conversation with the authors of the report, I notice that the recommendations reflect some of the steps that we were proposing and thought needed to be taken in order to make changes in the existing arrangements, existing arrangements which, our experience has shown, were very seriously flawed.

My colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has drawn attention to two cases. In one case coverage was denied and no reasons were given, and we had no recourse as elected members to appeal that decision. The decision was final, made outside of this Legislature, beyond any influence or access that we could exercise over that decision. That was regrettable, the case of Howard Sapers, who at that time represented Edmonton-Glenora. Then, of course, the case of the former Treasurer, Mr. Day, brought into focus even more serious flaws with the current arrangement. So it was those two events, I think, that triggered the commissioning of this report done by consultants.

Now, with respect to the referral of this report now to the Members' Services Committee, I want to make a few comments on that. I think this committee report should be seen as a report prepared by a consulting group. It should be received as information, and the Members' Services Committee should obviously debate the recommendations and see if there are gaps that need to be filled, if there are recommendations that need to be amended and modified in order to strengthen them and make them more appropriate for the purposes that we want it to serve.

Thirdly, I think there's a great deal of merit for an issue like this to be debated more broadly, publicly, and one way of taking it out for dialogue and debate with Albertans would be perhaps for the Members' Services Committee to hold some public hearings or at least invite public input, and I want to underline this.

8:30

I think there's a great deal of concern on the part of Albertans that resulted from the failure of the current risk-management arrangement, that casts doubt on our own integrity as members of this House. I think that that doubt needs to be dispelled for good. In order for that to happen, I think that public input, to be invited by the Members' Services Committee, would be a very effective way of

approaching that problem. We need the trust in us restored on this issue by all Albertans, and that will happen if you go out to them, seek their advice, and seek public input. So that's my request and advice to the Members' Services Committee.

Finally, once the Members' Services Committee has had the benefit of deliberations within its own ranks, members, and then, hopefully, beyond it go out to get the advice of Albertans, then the recommendations of the Members' Services Committee should come back to the Legislature for approval because this is a very important matter on which all of us need to have the opportunity to have a final say.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking in support of this motion. I hope that the Members' Services Committee will do this important task in a way that will be satisfactory not only to us as individual members who are directly affected by whatever decision is made, but also it will serve to satisfy Albertans who have had serious concerns about the way this current arrangement has operated in the past. They want us to do a better job now.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Once again I just simply wish to thank the members for Edmonton-Strathcona and Edmonton-Gold Bar for supporting the motion. I also wish to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for the kind words with respect to the voluntary release of the report, but I think he should on behalf of his party take full credit, given the opportunities are few in this House, because after all Motion for a Return I asked for it. It was probably under the pressure of that motion that I was persuaded to do what I did.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 7: Mr. Liepert]

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Assembly this evening with much humility and an overwhelming sense of responsibility as the newly elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for Edmonton-Rutherford. The tradition, as you know, is to share a little bit about myself, the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford, and some of the cares and concerns expressed to me during the most recent provincial election.

Before doing so, however, I would like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Norman Kwong, for his delivery of the Speech from the Throne last Wednesday and congratulate him on his appointment as Alberta's Lieutenant Governor in this our centennial year. I would also like to applaud our Prime Minister, the

Rt. Hon. Paul Martin, for showing the wisdom and leadership he did when selecting His Honour after the passing of the beloved Lois Hole.

Congratulations are also in order for our colleagues from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for having been selected to perform the roles of Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively and, of course, to you, Mr. Speaker, for your selection last week as the Deputy Chair of Committees. I have complete trust that all of you fine gentlemen will hold true to the commitments that you made when appearing in front of the Official Opposition caucus prior to having been elected to these positions. Quite clearly, we should also be congratulating all 83 members of this Assembly on their election wins on November 22, 2004.

It is especially gratifying for me as a rookie MLA to have 15 Liberal colleagues in the House with me, something that many in the media and probably many in this House didn't think would be possible. I'm indeed pleased for the people of Edmonton-Rutherford to see a much larger combined opposition in this Assembly, and I truly believe that all Albertans will be better served by having such a talented and diverse group of individuals to hold this government accountable.

I'd also like to extend a special welcome to the newly elected Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, Mr. Speaker. I know he's already received a bit of a rough ride from some of the members opposite, and I suspect that that's merely a foreshadowing of what might be to come.

On November 22, 2004, Mr. Speaker, the very wise citizens of Edmonton-Rutherford voted overwhelmingly for change. They were not alone. Across this province 53 per cent of those who voted voted for change. We as legislators and especially my hon. colleagues across the floor must always be mindful of that fact as we debate bills and motions that will shape the future of this province.

Now for a little history lesson. In the early spring of 1966 Arthur and Barbara Miller moved their growing family of three young boys – Richard, Lesley, and Donald – into a two-storey home on 52nd Avenue in the south Edmonton community of Pleasantview. They were soon to be joined by a daughter, Denise, in May of that year, and the family would grow and flourish with the neighbourhood.

Mr. Speaker, as the eldest child in that family I have many vivid memories of those early years on what was at that time the outskirts of the city. I particularly remember watching movies on a drive-in theatre screen from a second-floor bedroom window in our home. The drive-in theatre sat where the Southgate Shopping Centre is now located. Behind the drive-in theatre, Mr. Speaker, lay wide open farm fields for as far as my eyes could see. That vast expanse of farmland was the future constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, which would later be renamed Edmonton-Rutherford following the redistribution that took place in 1993.

Almost as soon as we had moved into this neighbourhood, construction began on the communities of Duggan and Petrolia. I literally watched the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency grow as I myself was growing up. Over the years as young families grew, so did the community around them. Schools were built, shopping centres were added, freeways were constructed, parks and playgrounds were bustling with children. I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that this part of Edmonton was reflective of the general growth and prosperity that was sweeping across the province in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. The Miller family continued to grow and in 1972 was completed with the addition of my youngest brother, Howie.

In the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-Rutherford continued to expand southward. But the recession of 1983 created many challenges for all Albertans, and the residents of this constituency were certainly no exception to that.

By 1989 the people in Edmonton-Whitemud had become so restless and disenfranchised with the government of the day that they did what many had considered unthinkable. They elected my friend and mentor, Mr. Percy Wickman. In doing so, they unseated a sitting Premier even though his government did manage to maintain a majority. Throughout the 1990s Edmonton-Rutherford continued to grow southward past 23rd Avenue to the current boundary of Blackmud Creek and beyond.

Now, this little history lesson of mine is not without a purpose. As you know, Mr. Speaker, newly elected MLAs are provided with copies of the maiden speeches given by their recent predecessors. I would like to take a minute or two to share with you some of the quotes from the late Percy Wickman's maiden speech, which he delivered in this Assembly on June 5, 1989. Percy said: "The thing I find most remarkable is that people are asking, requesting, or demanding honest, open government." Does that sound familiar to anybody in this Assembly? I've certainly heard it before. He went on to say:

It is particularly disturbing when you go to high schools, like Harry Ainlay, and you hear . . . from students who say: "Why should I become involved in politics? Why should I be concerned, when I can't look up to my political leaders and have the respect I should?"

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to digress for just a second here. I want to thank the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for establishing the School at the Legislature program. I've often been known to lament the lack of participation in politics by today's youth, and I think that this program in particular is an excellent initiative to try to reverse that trend.

8:40

Mr. Speaker, Percy Wickman went on to raise some serious concerns in 1989 about transportation, municipal affairs. In particular, he was concerned about the funding formula of the day. He had questions about health care as it related to Edmonton-Rutherford, education, the environment, the plight of the disabled, labour strife in the province, the lack of any real economic diversification, the waste of time and money on a senatorial election that nobody wanted, and the decline of the family farm. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, that the more things change, the more they really do stay the same.

Percy sums up by saying of the June 1 throne speech that year: I don't see a vision, a blueprint; it should be a master plan. Now, I imagine you know where I'm going with this. The concerns that Percy had heard from the electorate in 1989 are pretty much exactly the same concerns that I heard time and again from the people of Edmonton-Rutherford in 2004. Quite frankly, my response to last Wednesday's Speech from the Throne is pretty much identical as well. The people of Edmonton-Rutherford want and deserve a plan for the future that is truly visionary. I believe that in large part the Alberta Liberal Party's election campaign outlined what that vision should be, and I believe that the results show that the people of Edmonton-Rutherford share that vision.

Our leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, spoke of it in this Chamber on Thursday. The Alberta legacy act would see a concrete action plan instituted to ensure that all Albertans today and tomorrow would benefit from the truly unbelievable natural resource revenue that we are now experiencing. Our leader spoke about democratic reform and renewal, about allowing the people of this province to choose for themselves what changes they might want to see in our electoral and parliamentary systems.

Mr. Speaker, he spoke of the need to preserve a publicly funded health care system. I can assure the Premier and this government that the people of Edmonton-Rutherford are not interested in a third way or even a second way and certainly not a fourth way. They just

want to know that the health care system will be there when they need it. They want to know that they can get an ambulance in an emergency and that there will be a hospital bed, not a hallway gurney, awaiting every patient. They want to see the elimination of the health care premium tax, and they certainly do not want to pay \$500 or \$600 a month for health insurance. Establishing a wellness fund, creating a public drug plan, and improving long-term and seniors' care centres: these are visionary ideas that are attractive not only to the constituents of Edmonton-Rutherford but to all Albertans.

Funding the recommendations of the Learning Commission might not be visionary, but it is very clearly what people want, and we should be doing it now, not later. The Liberal plan for community schools is visionary, Mr. Speaker, and would prevent several school closures that we are likely to be seeing take place in this coming year. I, myself, am very pleased to see that the government is moving towards an endowment fund for postsecondary education. If we could only convince them now to adopt the Official Opposition's plan for reinvesting in the heritage savings trust fund, then we would be doing something that would benefit all Albertans for generations to come.

Speaking of vision, only the Official Opposition talked about creating an endowment fund for the arts and the humanities. With the wealth that we have in this province, we should be forward thinking and doing everything we can to ensure that our children will grow up and live in a well-rounded society and have as much exposure to the arts and culture community as possible.

Public auto insurance and a return to the regulation of the electrical and natural gas industries. Again, Mr. Speaker, this might not be seen as visionary, but it certainly is a recognition that there are some things that the government must be involved in. There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that the constituents of Edmonton-Rutherford would agree.

Mr. Speaker, there was no mention in the throne speech of the proposed high-speed rail link between Edmonton and Calgary. If this Premier is truly looking for a legacy project, I want my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren to marvel at the fact that their forefathers did not wait until it was needed before we began planning and building something that we all know is a service that will be required eventually.

Mr. Speaker, last fall I personally visited nearly 10,000 homes in Edmonton-Rutherford. I spoke to literally thousands of residents, and those were some of the concerns that were expressed to me, some of the plans that they had hoped to see their government introduce. While the constituents of Edmonton-Rutherford may not have been successful in achieving the scope of change that they had hoped for, I have committed to represent them and their desire for that change to the very best of my ability in this Assembly.

In closing, I would like to take a moment to thank some of the people that have helped me over the years and some of the people that have helped the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. I would be remiss if I did not thank Mr. Ian McClelland for his three and a half years of service in this Assembly, so on behalf of all of the people in Edmonton-Rutherford I say thank you to Ian.

Mr. Speaker, I have an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my incredible team of campaign volunteers, who contributed in so many different ways to the very successful campaign last November. Of course, you will know that behind every candidate, win or lose, there is a supportive family entrusted with holding the home front together while we are out on the campaign trail. I would not be here today were it not for the support of my wife, Lois, our children Christopher and Kimberly, along with the watchful eye of our guardian angel, Nicole.

Lastly and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a

very gracious thank you to the voters of Edmonton-Rutherford for they have entrusted me with the responsibility of representing them during this our 100th year as a province and beyond. I believe that I am up to that task, and I have no intention of disappointing them.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in, if anyone has any questions.

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your recent nomination.

It is an honour and privilege to stand and give my maiden speech in this Chamber. In November I was humbled by the trust that the constituents of Calgary-Hays placed in me to represent them in the Legislature. I look forward to representing their interests and addressing their concerns both here in the Chamber as well as in the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to formally introduce myself to my colleagues in this room. When I was elected to represent the people of Calgary-Hays, it signified the start of my third career in public service. In 1970 I joined the Canadian armed forces and served 10 years and retired with the rank of sergeant. During this time I had various postings, which included the Middle East, Cyprus, and Germany. I joined the Calgary Police Service in 1980 and served there for approximately 24 years before retiring in 2002-2003. During my previous two careers I served the public interest of all Canadians and then the citizens of Calgary. I look forward to continuing to represent the public interest of the constituents of Calgary-Hays and of all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, in the past few months I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with many members of the communities I now represent, first as a candidate during the election and afterwards as their elected representative in this Legislature. These conversations allowed me to hear and respond to the issues that weigh most heavily on Albertans who call Calgary-Hays home.

Education, health care, and infrastructure were identified as the top three concerns. My constituents want to know that the government they elected will ensure that schooling, both primary and postsecondary, will be available and affordable for their children now and for years in the future. They want to know that their health care system will be able to handle the demands that are placed on it and that their grandchildren will be able to access the same if not a better level of care than we do today. Finally, they want to ensure that our road systems and other infrastructure will be up to the task of handling the volumes of traffic and usage that these systems will see as Alberta continues to grow.

The Speech from the Throne, delivered by the Lieutenant Governor, built on the pillars of the 20-year plan that were raised a year ago. Financially our province is in a very enviable position. We will soon be able to completely retire our debt. This will free up extra funds in the budget to address issues across the province.

As some of you may know, Calgary-Hays is a newly created constituency. Prior to last fall's election this constituency was the eastern part of Calgary-Shaw, but due to the explosive growth of this area two-thirds of Calgary-Shaw was split off to form Calgary-Hays. This riding is bordered by the city limits on the east, the Bow River on the west and south, and, it says, Glenmore Trail on the north, but that's not correct. It's the Bow River also on the north.

8:50

While this is a new constituency, we have had the great fortune to have one of the most innovative and forward-thinking projects being

undertaken within its borders. The construction of the newest hospital in my constituency is a fantastic example of the provincial investment into health infrastructure. The planned facility will give Calgarians and people in the surrounding area another point of service to access health care. The planned opening of the first phase in 2009 will add 350 beds to the health care system.

This health campus, as it is being called, will not only be a hospital; it will be an innovative facility. It will allow for multiple postsecondary educational institutions to train health care professionals in an entirely new way. This health campus represents the best in cross-ministry initiatives, where the goals of improving provincial infrastructure, increasing Albertans' access to health care, and ensuring that Alberta continues to be the leading edge in advanced education can be met through the completion of a single project.

Mr. Speaker, on the eve of our provincial centennial celebration Alberta is well positioned to continue being a world leader in many areas. With investments into projects such as the south Calgary health campus, Alberta is breaking new ground and discovering new solutions to old problems. I look forward to working with my constituents and colleagues here in the Legislature to ensure that the quality of life we enjoy today exists for future generations.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29. Any questions?

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege to have the opportunity to rise tonight and respond to the Speech from the Throne. As I begin, I would like to congratulate our Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Norman Kwong, on his appointment as our Queen's representative in Alberta, and I wish him all the best in his new position.

As this is my first speech in this House as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to take a moment to thank also the people of Lacombe-Ponoka for electing me as their representative.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, I would like to take this time to introduce my wife, Pauline, who is sitting up in the nosebleeds here on the other side. This afternoon you met my son Wayne. He was down from Fort McMurray. We also have three other children: Julia, who is studying for her master's degree in divinity in Vancouver; a son Mark, who is studying for his medical doctorate degree in Calgary; and Lorne, who is studying business at NAIT.

An Hon. Member: Your retirement fund.

Mr. Prins: That's my retirement fund. Correct.

Lacombe-Ponoka is a new constituency that was formed after the realignment of boundaries in 2004. Our constituency lies on the golden corridor in central Alberta. We enjoy both the benefits and challenges of an extremely active and growing economy. The Lacombe-Ponoka constituency is home to the largest ethylene plant in the world and about 20 additional related petrochemical plants which produce all kinds of products from ethylene: anhydrous ammonia, CO₂, nitrogen, oxygen, and many other products associated with these plants.

At Alix we have the largest single-cell malt plant in the world, processing more than 500 tonnes of barley per day and making it into malt. This is enough malt to make about 3 million litres of beer per day. Most of this malt is exported to the U.S. and Asia. [interjections] I think we do keep some at home.

Lacombe is home to a federal government agriculture research

station, which includes a meat research lab, and a provincial government agriculture research and plant breeding station. Plant breeding is important to both the feeding industry and the malt industry. The Lacombe provincial ag research station just released two new varieties of barley that outyield previous varieties and will soon be available to our farmers.

Lacombe-Ponoka is also home to a highly intensive agricultural industry. We have among the highest densities of livestock, both dairy and beef, hogs, chickens, vegetable greenhouses, seed potato farms in the province. This is in addition, of course, to all the traditional forms of crop production, which would include wheat, barley, oats, canola, corn, hay, and silage crops.

It is really an honour to represent my constituents, and I look forward to working with all my colleagues in tackling the issues that face our province. There are many areas addressed in the throne speech, but I'll restrict my comments to a few that are especially important to me and my constituency.

I was born in Lacombe to an immigrant family. We were not rich; we were not poor. We never lacked anything we needed. We always counted our blessings. My father came to Canada from Holland in 1939 at the age of 19. Soon after he arrived, the war started, and he enlisted in the Dutch army, which had actually started a unit in Stratford, Ontario. He served for five years in the Caribbean. At the end of the war he found himself in Holland again. This time when he came back to Canada, he brought with him a Dutch war bride. My mother came in 1947. They're both 84 years old now. They've been married almost 58 years. My father was here last week for the Speech from the Throne, which he enjoyed very much.

I have been a farmer for more than 30 years, and in representing a rural constituency, I believe the continuous support and expansion of our agrifood sector is one of the keys to achieving further diversification and prosperity for people throughout rural Alberta and all Albertans wherever they may work or live. While much work has been done toward growing the ag industry, there are many opportunities that remain untapped, particularly on the value-added front. With this in mind I encourage our government and the private sector to collaborate on diversification strategies, such as the rural development initiative, and encourage funding in ag research, especially plant breeding and crop sciences.

While I'm on the subject of agriculture, I know I'm not alone in expressing my disappointment with the recent court ruling in Montana which has delayed the opening of the U.S. border to Canadian cattle and beef products. This is extremely frustrating for our producers and everyone employed within this sector. However, I am confident that the provincial and federal governments will work with our neighbours to the south to resolve this impasse and have the border open to normal trade again.

In the interim our cattle producers have shown incredible resourcefulness and determination in adapting to the challenging economic realities. We've had some farms that have not survived this disaster. This is regrettable, and it caused some terrible hardships. We will continue to work with the cattle sector to help them through this difficult time.

As a member of the Standing Policy Committee on Agriculture and Municipal Affairs I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues and cattle producers toward the goal of normalizing trade relations with the United States and other international markets. We must ensure that our beef exports, be it cattle or packaged products, are safe and of the highest quality. However, this incident just reinforces the need to develop our own packing and processing industry within the province so that we are not as reliant on export of live animals, especially those over 30 months. Without a doubt,

Mr. Speaker, freedom of market access is extremely important to all our livestock farmers, not only those producing cattle and ruminants but also those producing hogs, which are affected by trade issues at this very time.

Listening to the Speech from the Throne, I was encouraged to hear that our government will continue to advocate for marketing choice for wheat and barley farmers. Providing Alberta wheat and barley producers with a marketing choice is a matter of fairness and marketing freedom. The combination of the global marketplace and marketing on the Internet is opening up new opportunities for producers to grow, process, add value, and market their products independently of the Canadian Wheat Board and generate greater revenues for farmers and producers. Technology has enabled producers to access niche markets, negotiate prices with buyers, organize transport arrangements independently of the CWB, and allowing these producers the freedom to choose how to market their products will enable them to take advantage of these opportunities and will finally place them on a par with their counterparts in eastern Canada and other countries, who have enjoyed this free market access for decades.

As I have previously mentioned, Mr. Speaker, development of rural Alberta is essential to our economic diversification and to the future prosperity of our province. One of the major prerequisites to having viable and sustainable rural communities is ensuring that they have access to all of the necessary resources and services, including water. It is too bad, but surface water is not a resource that is evenly distributed across this province. As a result, there are numerous communities which depend on groundwater or aquifer water in order to satisfy their domestic or municipal needs. This places great pressures upon existing groundwater resources.

9:00

From my personal experiences I have become increasingly aware of the challenges associated with freshwater distribution. Over the past years I have travelled several times to Africa, in fact six times to Sierra Leone in west Africa, to help build safe and reliable water systems that can be used both for human consumption and for commerce. These were very simple systems, but they produced immediate results in social and economic spinoffs.

Here within our province I've also been active in this particular area. As reeve of Lacombe county I was a founding member of the North Red Deer River Regional Water Services Commission, which collaborated with various levels of government to gain approval and, hopefully, funding for the construction of the North Red Deer River regional water project. And I say "hopefully" because at this very moment in time they tendered out the project. It was about \$4 million more than what they had hoped for, and the communities will probably be back to the government to see if we can help them out again.

Once completed, this system will distribute much-needed water from the Red Deer River, treated by the city of Red Deer, to the towns of Blackfalds, Lacombe, Ponoka, the counties of Lacombe and Ponoka, and the First Nation reserve at Hobbema. Aside from providing water services to these communities, the north Red Deer River regional water system is considered an environmentally sound solution, as it helps conserve groundwater resources, which, instead of being used to satisfy municipal demands, can be used for farm and agricultural purposes. We hope such an arrangement will enable our farmers to enjoy a reliable source of water for domestic use and livestock watering needs while also helping preserve the groundwater aquifers.

The town of Lacombe, currently with a population of around 10,000, uses about 220 million gallons of water a year; it's about a billion litres. This amount of water is approximately equal to what

about a hundred average size livestock farms may consume annually. So you can see that as the town of Lacombe was using water, 220 million gallons a year, it was starting to affect the availability of water on the nearby farms.

I would like to point out that interbasin transfer systems are consistent with the Water for Life strategy, which calls for better management of our water resources and supplies. I'm fully convinced of the merits of this system, and I look forward to working with the ministries involved in this project and expanding it throughout the province and helping ensure that our water resources are preserved for generations to come. I also look forward to working with my colleagues to determine an affordable and sustainable solution for funding municipal water systems.

Speaking of future generations, Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend two of my colleagues, the Minister of Advanced Education and the Minister of Education, on their commitment to ensuring that our education system remains sufficiently funded and that our students receive the best instruction possible in the greatest schools in the world. Our schools have excellent teachers, programs, and curriculum. Our students have a good choice of schools to attend and have shown their excellence by posting world-class results in achievement tests.

During the Speech from the Throne I was pleased to hear that the government has a plan in place to improve access to advanced education. As the hon. Lieutenant Governor announced, the province plans to add 60,000 new spaces to our postsecondary system by the year 2020, 15,000 of which will come in the next three years. I commend the government on this commitment, and I hope that the province fully supports all postsecondary institutions, public and independent alike, in their efforts to create more student spaces.

The Canadian University College, located in the Lacombe-Ponoka constituency, is one of several independent, not-for-profit postsecondary institutions accredited to grant specific degrees at the university level. Many of these independent institutions are expanding their capacity and contributing to the goal of creating new spaces for Alberta's postsecondary students. Although independent universities are assisting the province in its long-term goals, efforts to expand their capacity are not being funded by the province.

Once such example, Mr. Speaker, is Edmonton's King's University College. This year King's is investing \$6 million to create about 400 new spaces to meet the growing demands and help keep many of our students here in Alberta. Also, Concordia University College in Edmonton is currently spending \$10 million on an expansion program at no cost to the government. While these projects are not huge in comparison to the U of A or the U of C, it is important to note that these institutions are not coming to the government looking for capital funding. They are paying for their own expansion projects using donations from supporters.

Being from a constituency that boasts about 1,500 to 2,000 students attending the independent schools, one of the highest concentrations in the province, I am aware of numerous independent schools that are providing cutting-edge education to our students. I believe these schools are a huge asset, as they not only provide choice and quality education to their students, but they also help alleviate some of the pressure on our public school system. As any other institution they teach the mandatory curriculum that is prescribed by the province, and for this portion of their instruction I feel they should receive full and equitable funding from the government.

Ensuring that these schools are financially healthy means that they can continue to complement our public and separate school systems and help keep class sizes down. If any of them had to be shut down due to inadequate funding, the public system would have to absorb,

in some cases, large numbers of new students. This could increase class sizes and place additional financial pressure on the public system. With this in mind I believe that fully funding the independent schools, both K to 12 and postsecondary, for the mandatory portion of their curriculum is not only in the best interests of our students but the province as well.

The last topic I would like to briefly touch upon, Mr. Speaker, is seniors. As chair of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta I'm pleased the province is continuing to respond to the needs of our seniors. Throughout their working lives our seniors have been dedicated to seeing Alberta grow into a prosperous province and a vibrant society. They were instrumental in creating the Alberta advantage, so I believe that as they reach their golden years, we should be compassionate and responsive to their needs to make sure that they are able to enjoy the fruits of their labour. With this in mind I'm committed to working with the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports and all my colleagues in this House in finding ways of reducing burdens upon our seniors.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to speak today and to voice my optimism for the future of our great province. I look forward to working with my constituents.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in. Anyone have any questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first time speaking to this Assembly is not my first time speaking from this floor. Thanks to an invitation from the Model Legislature in November my first time speaking here was with youth of the province, part of a provincial community with whom I've spent the last 30 years of my life.

My life journey began in the Crowsnest Pass and led to the capital region. It's a journey I shared in part with my husband of 32 years, Dick Mather, who served on the Edmonton public school board and on city council. My being here today marks the end of one vocation and the beginning of another. It marks a return to the classroom to experience life again as a student. It is the beginning of a new set of associates, colleagues, and new friends. Yet with these new beginnings, Mr. Speaker, there are some things that I'm not leaving behind. Chief of these is my constituency, in which I've served as an educator and which I now represent.

For three decades I've worked in one of Edmonton's most diverse and dynamic communities. Thirty-five years ago Mill Woods did not exist. The town that makes up Edmonton's southeast quadrant has grown from nothing to become a community of close ties and co-operation. For the past 10 years I've sat on the Mill Woods President's Council, where I've seen a growth in strength, achievement, and self-respect.

Edmonton is Alberta's most diverse city. It is a representative Canadian city, multicultural before the word became fashionable. Mill Woods is built on and has extended that tradition. The people of Mill Woods with whom I work hold passionately to Canadian values and believe in the Alberta opportunity. They care for each other and take their citizenship seriously. To serve this community is a privilege and a responsibility, and I sincerely thank them for giving me the opportunity to serve as their member. I thank them for their encouragement as I went door to door, and I thank those who volunteered on the campaign trail and my family for its support. I acknowledge my predecessor, Dr. Don Massey, whose 11 years as an MLA were a model of service and representation that I intend to follow.

9:10

A majority of my constituents are new Canadians, Mr. Speaker, yet many of them have a clearer sense of the Canadian identity than some of my generation who have lived here for a lifetime. Catering to our diversity has not weakened our social fabric; it has made us stronger. My constituents' range of religious beliefs and practices is not something we have to tiptoe around. It is a source of strength, an opportunity for exploration when we get together. One of them said to me recently: you know, it doesn't matter what we call God. I have been blessed and enriched to be part of talks where we have shared our deepest values. Our values, what really matters to us and not just what we say we believe, are an expression of what binds us together.

Another part of my past life that I've not left behind in coming here is my commitment to education. Alberta led the country in the adoption of progressive education in the 1930s under the hon. William Aberhart. Mr. Aberhart was an educator himself who served as Minister of Education as well as Premier. While he held conservative religious views, he defended the teaching of evolution as part of a liberal arts education, a heritage he prized. In the past decade Edmonton has led the continent in the offering of educational choices.

Education is a lifelong experience. We are learning from our time in the womb until we draw our last breath. We are aware of seniors who have gone in search of new adventures, of physical challenge, travel, and university degrees, and we hear regularly of new findings of incredible learning feats by the very young. It is in this connection that I raise the shadow portfolio I have been assigned, that of Children's Services.

The children's services undertaken by this government began with a safety net for those who, as a result of poverty, family breakup, and other factors, found themselves without the supports once provided by the extended family. In the current debate on national child care I sometimes come up against the belief that it's not the job of the state to be providing a universal care system that many people prefer to undertake for themselves. Yet no one I've talked to who may feel this way doubts that there is a place for the state in education.

Mr. Speaker, we have made an arbitrary division between child care and education. No one who has worked with children and youth in the public education system as I have would doubt that a large part of effective education consists of providing a supportive environment of caring relationships where learning can take place. Likewise, no one can spend time with young children in their own homes, nurseries, daycare centres, and play groups and doubt that education is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to expand our focus on children from the basic mandate of a single department. In the 1970s the Lougheed government established early childhood services, an amalgam of health, social work, education, and psychology that became the basis of this province's public kindergarten program. Its focus extended beyond preschool to an integrated and organic approach to life and learning. Its benchmark was not standardized testing but an ongoing assessment of social, physical, intellectual, cultural, and emotional growth of each child. In the past decade we have lost this wider focus on children, and we need to regain it. It is not enough for us to repeat that children are our future and then look at them as an endless supply for our workforce and as consumers for a well-oiled economy. We need to start with children now and be aware of how choices we make in all areas of life and public policy impact on them.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the government's launch of Alberta's Promise initiative for children, and I thank my worthy opponent the

hon. Minister of Children's Services for sending me a little red wagon so that I can show my support of this initiative. I urge the government to expand the leadership and participation of this program beyond party and sector so that all who are involved in work with children can relate to it in some way.

I also invite the government to assess the impact of all areas of public policy on children. Such an assessment would include Alberta Health, Education, Justice, Environment, and small business. In fact, it would be incumbent for an agency to show how its work does not affect children. The mark of an advanced society is seen in how it treats its smallest and youngest members. Let us show that Alberta in its second century belongs in that league.

A third part of my life I expect to continue to practice in my new vocation is the role of communicator. That's a role I learned and partnered with my husband, Dick, who worked in media before entering politics. It's a role I fostered in my leadership at J. Percy Page high school in the planning and building of the TeleLearning Centre. It's an inherent part of my role as a representative in the Legislature, for to be a representative is to 're-present' views and experiences until they become part of another's reality.

To be a communicator is more than to be a speaker. It's more than to be a spokesperson for the people I represent. It's to be a builder of consensus. Communicate and communion share the same roots. To commune is to spend time together. It means to listen and observe as well as to show and tell. It means to encourage others to find their own way to say something rather than to get them on side with me.

It is in this conviction that I have taken the step into the world of politics. I believe there is far more that we hold in common than the issues that we say divide us. The most pressing issues of our time, as the Asian tsunami brought into focus, are not the divisions of Liberals or Conservatives or Alliance or New Democrats or even Canadians or Albertans; they are human issues, and our response to them will depend on our human values.

I've received welcomes from members in all quarters of this building. To you, Mr. Speaker, and to the security staff and Clerk's office I give my thanks for easing my transition here. This has been a reminder of another new beginning, when I had to learn to get around in a new way after a car accident. My work in this Assembly will be in the same spirit.

To my counterpart in the government, the hon. Minister of Children's Services, I have promised to do my utmost to raise the profile of her portfolio with her cabinet and caucus colleagues. To my neighbour the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner I extend my concerns for the rural constituencies of this province at a challenging time. With him and others on this side of the House I share a belief in our need for a more grassroots democracy.

To conservatives who want to live by the principle of conserving what is best in our society as well as in our environment, I add my support against a cynicism that feels that we must roll over before the strong and powerful in order to be on the winning side. To democrats who are willing to explore new ideas for renewing our democracy, I offer a sympathetic ear and an open mind. Last, to my colleagues to whom the word liberal is more than a label but a description of a wise and tolerant generosity, I pledge my part to articulate a new vision for Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I see an Alberta where urban and rural communities recognize each other's value and can support each other's concerns. I see an Alberta where youth and seniors see each other's strengths and hear their stories. I see an Alberta where resources contribute to the quality of life and where people are not human resources but our focus. I see an Alberta where workers are cobuilders of the dream and management takes initiative to facilitate leisure and

family life. I see an Alberta where our outdoor spaces stretch our inner spaciousness and the environment is not the concern of lobby groups but the treasure of all. I see an Alberta where faith is not competing creeds but a shared valued and hope is not wishful thinking but energizing confidence in the gifts we share.

9:20

Mr. Speaker, the members of my party, in common with some members of every party in this Assembly, believe there is a better way to do the business of government. Parties may differ in their social and spending priorities, but many of us truly believe in a democracy that is open to the best input from our fellow citizens, with decision-making closer to the people who live with the impact of these decisions.

Alberta Liberals are not positioning ourselves to become the next dynasty to rule the province for 40 years. In fact, if we are successful in the democratic reforms we are proposing, we will close the possibility for any party to develop that kind of headlock on government. No party has a monopoly on truth.

If the government brings in proposals that are good for this province and its peoples, I and my colleagues will not be opposed. If the government changes proposals that we criticized earlier and its changes are positive, we will not blame it for changing its mind. When we criticize, we will be constructive. We may propose alternative legislation even if it never comes to a vote. Mr. Speaker, there may be times when, faced with a measure we believe to be harmful, all we can do is to oppose. When we do this, we are still the loyal opposition. The ultimate loyalty of all members of this Assembly is not to a party or leader but to values that unite Albertans.

What are these values, above party and politics? Let's look at our provincial motto. Alberta's motto, strong and free, is also a line in our national anthem. What are these qualities we've chosen to highlight, to stand on guard for?

It takes strength to admit mistakes or to change our minds. To be rigid or self-righteous isn't strong; it's brittle. It takes strength to be vulnerable and compassionate. To be hard, unfeeling, to keep all comers at bay isn't strong; it's defensive. It takes strength, courage, character to be in a tough situation without complaining, blaming, or throwing one's weight around. To be pushy or loud isn't strength; it's aggression. We show our strength and influence in the quality of our presence.

We show our freedom in our willingness to think outside the box. To say that we don't need anyone and can go it alone doesn't prove that we're free; it shows that we're afraid of dialogue and discussion. To be free is to be able to listen to and consider many points of view. To say that nobody's going to tell me what to do isn't freedom; it's stubbornness, slavery to habit. To be free is to be able to enter relationships, to be connected to others, to admit our interdependence. To refuse to be tied down isn't freedom; it's fear of commitment.

To be strong and free isn't to strut or swagger; it's to move and speak with dignity. It takes presence, it takes empathy, it takes conviction, and it takes class. That's the kind of member, the kind of model, the kind of citizen, and the kind of human being I seek to be.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29? Any questions?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for a very eloquent maiden speech. I do, however, want to ask her one question, to ask her if

she knows that children are a primary focus of this government and that we have numerous programs for our children because we know that they're the number one concern that we have.

We have initiated programs like Amber Alert; parental leave; parent link centres; supports for families of children with disabilities, a new program in Canada that's there primarily to give family support so that they don't fall apart because of the extra needs of special needs children; the accredited child care programs that are among the first in Canada; the Great Kids awards, that recognize kids that aren't necessarily the brightest or the smartest but have contributed to their communities; a Youth Secretariat that recognizes our youth and has them participate in our programs; the youth at risk and youth in care bursaries that we provide for kids that aren't the smartest and don't have parents and we're their guardians and we want them to go on further in education; a new approach to adoption, which gets more kids into loving homes; a new child welfare program, called Alberta Response Model, that makes sure that we don't tear them out of their homes but try to teach parents to be better parents first because we know that tearing them away from their family is as traumatic as whatever is going on in that home; the bicycle helmet law; the child prostitution laws; the FASD initiatives that are among the best in Canada, that we have here in Alberta; our crystal meth workshops that had the youth participate. I just wanted to ask if you were aware of those programs.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, this segment was supposed to be brief questions, brief responses. I'll accept that for now.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, if you so choose, you may respond; you're not forced to.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will respond briefly.

I am aware of all of those wonderful things in Alberta. I believe that we need to stretch even further and go beyond that. We live in the richest place on earth. There should be no child in poverty. There should be no child living without security or safety.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: There being no other questions, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured and, in fact, amazed that I am standing in this room, the Legislature of the province of Alberta, and about to deliver what is known as my maiden speech. It's been a very long time since the term "maiden" has been applied to me, but I'll take it.

The swearing-in ceremony was for me a very moving moment. I am awestruck when I remember your words that only 763 people over the 100-year history of this Legislature have actually been sworn in with the responsibility to govern their fellow citizens, an awesome responsibility when you really think of it, and I do take these responsibilities that I swore to uphold seriously. I want to govern with fairness, openness, and accountability.

I would like to congratulate the Lieutenant Governor, His Honour Norman Kwong, on his investiture. I have great confidence in his ability to carry out his duties with humility and wit. He will leave his mark on the history of this province. I had the privilege of signing the memorial book for our wonderful former Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole. I wrote that her example of courage, compassion, and caring, and her strength of character to stand up for what she believed in set an example for all of us and one that I would fashion my public life after. Only time will tell.

Mr. Speaker, how appropriate that today is International Women's Day because I am going to honour the women in my life: those that

gave me life, those whom I gave life to, and those who sustain and influence my life. I do not stand here alone. I did not get here alone. Behind me are my three daughters – Florence, Shelagh, and Bridget junior – my granddaughters Kerstin and Skye, and my son-in-law Kirk, who, although he is badly outnumbered, has learned to hold his own, also a large family of siblings and their families, who are spread all across Canada, and, in particular, my only sister, Florence, a Manitoba Liberal.

Mr. Speaker, I returned to school at 45 years of age and became a nurse, which awakened in me the latent belief in social justice taught to me so many years ago. I come from a long line of strong women who understood the paramount importance of fairness. The first immigrant ancestor five generations ago was *une fille du roi*, a girl of the king. They were the young women from France who came alone to the new world to create life and build life to a viable society. The hardships were many. My mother, Florence, was from that line. She owned and ran a manufacturing agency in 1935 which sold taps, dies, drills, and wooden axe handles to Ashdowns. I can guarantee that she was the only woman in that game. My three aunts, who had successful professional careers, remained maiden as a result of all the men who did not return from World War II.

I was educated by nuns. Believe me; they don't come any tougher. By that I mean that they set high standards for social justice. Caring for the poor amongst us and being good stewards of the blessings given to us were at the top of their lists. I come by my Liberal leanings honestly.

But I did not get here by myself. There were many people who believed in me and what I stood for. They believed in the importance of all voices, opinions, and diverse views being heard. They believed, as I, that open discussion is paramount to good governing practices. They believed in the clear, well-thought-out policies and the vision of the Liberal Party for this province. Many of those policies were developed in no small way by Dr. Ken Nicol and successfully articulated by our present Alberta leader, the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

9:30

I did not get here by myself. Adelle Downs and Kirk Mearns and their small but very effective election team worked extremely hard to get me elected. Sixteen-hour days, seven days a week were the norm, and there were thousands who showed their confidence in me by voting for me, and they do expect me to ask the tough questions and debate the issues.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor said he had big shoes to fill. I, too, have big shoes to fill as I am representing the constituency of Lethbridge-East, formerly held by Dr. Ken Nicol, the former leader of the Alberta Liberal Party, a man who set the bar high in terms of the respect he garnered in this House, in the province, and in the constituency. Mr. Speaker, between Lois Hole and Ken Nicol I sure have my work cut out for me.

My constituency is one-half of the city of Lethbridge, and I believe that because of that division the city is uniquely represented to this body in a balanced way. I share the representation with my Assembly colleague on the other side of the House, the hon. Minister for Economic Development. The representation is male and female, Liberal and Conservative, business and humanities, experienced and inexperienced, all of which in my mind equals the many diverse views that are held in our city. It represents balance. Mr. Speaker, balance is good.

Lethbridge has a population of 72,712, continues to grow, and with new census figures to be released this fall, I'm sure it'll be the third-largest city in Alberta.

We have the University of Lethbridge, whose business school and education faculty are renowned across Canada, a university that

recognizes the importance of wellness and is building a wellness complex that will serve not only the university but also the southern Alberta community. However, Mr. Speaker, this infrastructure does not come cheap, which is why it's important for this government to step up to the plate and fund projects that affect our future in a very significant way. We have the Lethbridge Community College, that has worked with industry to try and encourage apprenticeship programs. We have two research stations, and Lethbridge has the greatest number of PhDs on a per capita basis in Canada.

Lethbridge has the lowest cost of doing business and the lowest personal cost of living. Lethbridge has a 25-member, community-based economic development office which has been successful in attracting five new, large businesses to our community within the last two years. However, Mr. Speaker, despite this good news I can't say enough about BSE and the devastating effect it has had on my constituency and the extended community.

We have the Prairie Baseball Academy, where the young men of summer come to dream in the winter. Our academy, under the dedicated leadership of coach Blair Kubicek, trains young men not only to play baseball but to grow into mature and responsible citizens. Coach has sent many a young man to play in the majors or earn scholarships to American universities. The boys go to university or college and must maintain at the very least a 2.5 grade point average.

But, Mr. Speaker, it isn't all la-la land. There are great concerns. As a former municipal alderman I was very disappointed to see a P3 relationship for the ring roads for Calgary and Edmonton and only \$3 billion. I can't believe I just said "only \$3 billion." That's a lot of money. But I did, and I know that after years of downloading infrastructure responsibilities by this government onto municipal governments, there are huge infrastructure needs that \$3 billion will only begin to address.

In southern Alberta it's imperative that highway 3 be twinned from the Saskatchewan border to the B.C. border. The Canamex highway will bring goods from the north, but not all are destined for the far south. They will branch off and go east and west as well as the goods that come from the B.C. interior that will use highway 3 and then go south.

Mr. Speaker, as a resident of Lethbridge I am horrified that this government would allow blatant discrimination in this province on a geographic basis. I speak of cutting off southern flights, for instance south of Calgary to the municipal airport but continuing to allow flights from the north to land. After all, Edmonton is everyone's capital. The famous flights of our Premier to that very airport would surely point out the authenticity of this argument.

The North American trend in the airline industry is for charter aircraft to provide more direct routes to small city airports. For instance, Denver has many airports allowing choices of where to land depending on what part of the city you're going to do business in. More importantly, it saves many hours off a trip by not having to go through large and overly busy international hub airports when the objective is not to make a connection. Most North American cities, given this new paradigm of travelling for business, would kill to have the opportunity to have a city airport for fixed-wing aircraft. Helicopters' costs are prohibitive to most business travelers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, my last kick at the cat, at least for tonight: the need for provincial standardized care for our vulnerable elderly or those in long-term care. We would not let babies cry. Why are we letting our vulnerable seniors cry? Seniors don't cry out loud. They sit and they inwardly pray: please answer my bell; please come; I only want to go to the bathroom; I just want to be turned because my arm has gone to sleep, and I can't; I just need to be fed; I just want to feel human. They wait because of staff shortages or,

in the case of assisted living or designated living, having to pay extra costs for these services because what they're entitled to is so minimal. I pray that none of us here in this House, or more so our parents, will experience that indignity, the indignity of only being a commodity on a bottom line.

We can as a collective Assembly do better, and we must. We owe it to ourselves and to the people who expect us to govern fairly, openly, honestly, and to be accountable. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in.

Nobody wishing to ask a question, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour for me to rise today in response to the Speech from the Throne and to address this Assembly for the first time. I'm truly humbled to be counted amongst the hon. members on both sides of this August body, and I will try very hard to further the work of inspiring members present and past.

May I begin by offering my congratulations to the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock on his return to the Speaker's chair. I also offer my congratulations to the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and indeed to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to briefly introduce to you and through you to this Assembly the Peace River constituency that I am so proud to represent. Lying in the extreme northwest corner of this province, settlement in the Peace River constituency began when the North-West Company established a trading post on the Peace River between Fort Chipewyan and Fort Dunvegan. This post, known as Fort Vermilion, was established in 1788 and is the oldest agricultural settlement in the province.

The original post was moved five miles to its current location in 1831 as settlement in the area expanded, and it exists as a thriving community today. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the old Bay House still stands after many years of service as the family home for Hudson's Bay Company representatives. During its service it even housed the family of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and indeed fostered his early career. The house is an empty shell today, but it remains an important historical feature in the community, and I commend the hard-working group of volunteers there who have fought to preserve it.

Other settlements grew in the area, also established as trading posts to facilitate the growing fur trade. Most notable of these is the area of the present-day town of Peace River, which began life as St. Mary's House in the early 1800s.

9:40

As the province of Alberta was established, the constituency of Peace River came into existence in 1905. It has changed shape and undoubtedly character since then, but it has always retained the name. The first elections were held, and the constituency sent its first representative to the Legislature in 1905. That didn't work out too well, Mr. Speaker, so we sent another one in 1906. Peace River has been ably represented ever since, most recently by the hon. Gary Friedel, whose hard work and dedication I would like to recognize here.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency has always been characterized by a pioneer spirit, and this continues even today. Where once we were at the edge of the expansion of the fur trade, we later found ourselves at the edge of agricultural expansion in the province. Still later the forest and energy industries pushed their way northward and today play a vital role in the area economy.

Mr. Speaker, as the economy grew and diversified, the region grew, and today the constituency is home to over 30,000 people. These people are diverse in heritage and culture and language and religion, but they are united in a belief in and a love for the north. We believe that the north is the new economic engine of the province and is poised to assume its role in supplying the benefits that all Albertans enjoy.

Because of these beliefs, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to hear the agenda of this government as set forth in the throne speech. I am pleased that the government has outlined such strong support for rural communities across the province and for their agricultural base. We in the north are concerned for our rural future, and I am pleased with the commitments made. I am also pleased by a strong commitment to innovation in health care, for I believe that continued spending expansion will harm not help our health care system. I am very pleased to see such a strong commitment to postsecondary education access and delivery. This is the vital engine that will indeed provide our access to the future, and I agree that now is the time to act.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm perhaps most pleased with the strong commitment to infrastructure. I believe that Alberta can fuel its continuing economic miracle by supporting regions of expansion in this province. These regions need help to build healthy, safe, and attractive communities that are able to draw and support people and services. I agree that we should make Alberta the best province in which to live, work, and play. Our continued economic prosperity is vital to this goal.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the government has recognized that there is work to do to ensure that all Albertans benefit from the prosperity we enjoy, and I support the initiatives outlined.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would again offer my congratulations and my thanks to you for your support. I would also like to thank the people of the Peace River constituency, who have chosen to place their trust in me. I wish to convey to them that I deeply understand the responsibilities this includes, and I would like to provide now my solemn promise to be a tireless advocate for the Peace River constituency during my time here.

With your permission I would now move that we adjourn debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 9:42 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 9, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/03/09

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Grant us daily awareness of the precious gift of life which has been given to us. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and of our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly His Excellency Mr. Sadaaki Numata, ambassador of Japan to Canada, and his wife. Also joining us today is Mr. Takeuchi, Japan's consul general to Alberta, and his wife.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today I was pleased to host our honoured guests at an official luncheon, and I was very pleased to learn that one of His Excellency's hobbies is folksinging. He quoted in his speech today Alberta's songwriter laureate Ian Tyson with a verse from *Four Strong Winds*. He commented on the weather and how the winds had brought him here to the province of Alberta. I had suggested to him that there might actually be another song that Ian Tyson wrote that would be most appropriate. It's called *Springtime in Alberta*, and it goes something like this:

Just like springtime in Alberta
Warm sunny days and the skies of blue
Then without a warning
Another winter storm comes raging through
And the mercury is falling
I am left all alone
Springtime in Alberta
Chills me to the bone

Mr. Speaker, Japan is Alberta's largest overseas trading partner. Annual two-way trade between this province and Japan totals nearly \$2.5 billion. But of course our relationship goes far beyond commerce. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Alberta's sister province ties with the prefecture of Hokkaido.

I would ask that our honoured guests please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: I sit in apprehension of St. Patrick's Day, March 17.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't sing, so we're not going to be hearing me sing in this Legislature.

I have two introductions this afternoon. First, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a very accomplished young man, Mr. Robert Dixon, who is with us today in the members' gallery. Robert is the 2004 4-H Premier's award recipient, the highest honour the Alberta 4-H program bestows on a member. This award recognizes young Albertans that demonstrate strong project management, leadership, and communi-

cation skills plus dedication to their community. Winners are selected based on their 4-H and community involvement and performance at the Alberta 4-H selections program. Like many 4-H members Robert is now pursuing a future in agriculture. As a past 4-H member it's a pleasure to introduce Robert, his mother Barb, Mark Muchka, and Corinne Skulmoski from our 4-H branch. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and be recognized in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure also to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Miss Krista Wurz, a grade 5 student from the Morinville Colony school. Her poster on farm safety was selected as the winning entry in a recent farm safety poster contest organized by the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre. Miss Wurz is accompanied today by her family members. Also in the gallery I'd like to introduce two women who organized the farm safety poster contest, Mrs. Jeanette Smith and Mrs. Judy Kesanko of the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre. They are all seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 45 students, parents, and teachers from the Boyle school in my constituency. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly here today a 17-member advisory group of principals and vice-principals who are serving as volunteers on a committee that was appointed by the former minister of learning to conduct a review and to make a recommendation regarding Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 78, which asks the government to consider establishing a new council of education executives.

I will ask each guest, as I call their names, to please rise and to remain standing until I have introduced all 17: from Lethbridge, Carol Steen; Joe Lepage, Strathmore; Mark Francis, Athabasca; Carol Grant-Watt, Airdrie; Ross Tyson, Edmonton; Rob Cowie, Vulcan; Larry Albrecht, Okotoks; Dave Elwood, Rocky Mountain House; Karen Bartsch, Brooks; Ray Battochio, Stettler; Marc Frey, Fairview; Gord Walters, Red Deer; Bob Tredger, Edson; Dianne Yee, Calgary; Dave Brecht and Irene Washylk from Edmonton; and the group leader from Rocky Mountain House, Mr. Jimmy Clark. Please welcome our guests.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly guests from Edmonton-Mill Woods. We have 75 students from Meyonohk elementary school along with their teachers, Mr. Victor Wang and Mrs. Trudy Warkentin. I ask our guests to please rise and receive the traditional and warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you

and through you to the members of this Assembly two influential members of the Alberta Women's Liberal Commission, Mary Amerasinghe and Trudy LaRose, who are seated in the public gallery. I'd like them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today and it is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Rob Burton, an extraordinary young man from my constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner. This young man is studying in a home-based self-education program and this June will be going to Europe on a study tour of 13 countries. He has raised his own money for this educational trip by starting his own business. He is both a talented basketball player and a skilled pianist. He has a keen interest in constitutional law and a strong desire to make a difference for the good. This fall he'll be attending George Wythe college on an early entrance Andel character prize scholarship, which is awarded to one youth leader per year. For the last two weeks Rob Burton has been a volunteer here for me at the Legislature and has been a great asset. I would ask Rob Burton to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition. The first Official Opposition question.

Electricity Deregulation

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day, another scandal. An Enron commissioned report on Project Stanley in Alberta states that "strategies by many players to influence prices appear to have been fairly common." Engage Energy Canada was active in Alberta's electricity market during the time Enron was ripping off consumers. To the Premier: knowing that market manipulation was common in Alberta, why did the government employ a former executive of a company that cashed in on electricity deregulation, Engage Energy, to be the market surveillance administrator?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the answer to that, and I'll defer to the hon. Minister of Energy.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first and foremost say that during the transition period when this was happening, all Albertans were protected by legislative mechanisms, that despite any price volatility or even if there were alleged manipulation, hedges were in place that Albertans would not be paying the price of any price volatility during that time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister of Energy then saying that there was no price manipulation during that time in the development of Alberta's deregulated electricity market?

Mr. Melchin: What we are saying is that during a transition it was anticipated that as you're adjusting to new rules, everybody has to get used to what the rules are in a new marketplace versus the

regulated marketplace. To allow that, Albertans would be protected for a number of years, and that went through to August of 2000 before the power purchase arrangements were sold. Through that time of transition Albertans would pay a legislated hedge protected on what they were paying in the past for the old generation since Albertans had paid for that generation in the past. In that sense it is possible that some— they are alleged at this stage; investigations are going on. That is why Enron has been referred by the market surveillance administrator to the Competition Bureau. They are taking this seriously, and the matter is now before the Competition Bureau.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, that should be a simple yes or no question. Is the minister saying there was no market manipulation during that period of the development of Alberta's deregulated electricity market? Yes or no?

Mr. Melchin: Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is being investigated, has been investigated in the past with respect to Enron, and we are and will take it very seriously if any evidence is found rather than just allegations. We are seeking to find and support that there is evidence to support abuse, and the market surveillance administrator along with the Competition Bureau take that seriously on behalf of protecting all Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Market Surveillance Administrator Review of Enron

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the background of the market surveillance administrator, will the Minister of Energy replace him with someone willing to investigate Enron's scandalous price gouging on behalf of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This still is about protecting all Albertans. The market surveillance administrator has acted and continues to act on behalf of Albertans. In this sense it's important to see that we do look for the facts and the evidence as presented. At this stage that's being reviewed.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interest of looking for the facts and the evidence, why isn't this government and this Minister of Energy directing the market surveillance administrator to investigate Enron's price-fixing?

Mr. Melchin: The market surveillance administrator has been in front of this. They have been asking and requesting information from the Snohomish utility with respect to allegations made against Enron.

You've got to remember that the Snohomish utility in Washington is being sued by the bankruptcy trustee for Enron in that they owe a substantial amount of money to Enron's bankruptcy trustee. They are going to continue, I suspect for some time, to look for all evidence, allegations, or otherwise to support their case. In that light, we are also interested in any evidence that they bring forward, and we're staying on top of it.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why do the people of Alberta have to depend on the county of Snohomish, Washington, to defend their rights and dig up the information into Enron's price gouging of the people of Alberta? Why aren't we doing this under this province?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't get involved in the mechanics of an investigation. Relative to why this particular county is involved, I'll defer to the hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: The market surveillance administrator is acting as a watchdog to protect all Albertans. They are acting in their role just in doing that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Nonsmoking Legislation

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has entered the debate surrounding a private member's bill on a workplace smoking ban, but instead of protecting the workers, the Premier has announced the government's intention to put workers' health at risk by introducing amendments that will create exceptions to a workplace smoking ban for bars, casinos, and bingo halls. My questions are to the Premier. What justification does the Premier have in protecting the health of workers in some workplaces but not protecting the health of workers in bars, casinos, and bingo halls?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of procedure this issue is now before the Legislature, and the hon. member along with all members of this Legislature will have the opportunity to debate the bill and whatever amendments might be introduced.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is the government prepared to create a policy for an unlevel playing field, especially for small business, by allowing some establishments an exemption from the smoking ban?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again, the bill is before the Legislature and will be duly debated in due course.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is government policy or government proposed policy focused on smokers' rights rather than on workers' rights to good health?

Mr. Klein: Again, Mr. Speaker, the bill is before the Legislature, and this member will have an opportunity to debate it at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No question today.

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

Agricultural Income Stabilization Program

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development talked about Alberta's six-point recovery strategy. One of the elements of the strategy is inventory management; that is, compensating producers who are willing to set market-ready cattle or calves aside in exchange for compensation for their feed costs. While this program has admirable goals, could the minister please explain why some producers have yet to receive a program payment even months later?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question, and we are getting calls on this issue. The uptake that we had on the calf set-aside program and the fed cattle set-aside program has been very, very high. It's been tremendous. So far there are 502 registered bidders for the national fed cattle set-aside program. The auctions are held almost every week of the program. In addition, more than 13,000 producers applied to set aside 2004 calves. That represents 675,000 animals.

So far we've paid more than 7,000 of the 13,000 applications, and we're sending out more payments twice weekly. However, there may be some producers who have not yet received their payments, and if this is the case, I would urge all hon. members to let them know to contact the rural services division of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is for the same minister. Another key element of the six-point recovery strategy remains the CAIS program. What is the minister doing to ensure that this program is reacting appropriately to the needs of Alberta producers?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta continues to work with our federal and provincial counterparts on the CAIS program, and all of the provincial ministers as well as the federal minister want to ensure that it's responsive to producers' needs. In that light, today we announced that we have extended the election deadline for the 2005 program year from March 31 to May 31, 2005. That will give our producers more time to consider the benefits of the program and allow them to make the right decision for their farming operations.

We also addressed an inequity that exists for CAIS participants who made their deposits before the requirement was reduced to one-third for the 2003 and 2004 program years. Now producers who contributed over the one-third level can access those deposit funds almost immediately, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental is for the same minister. Are there any additional changes to the CAIS program in the works?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are, as I said, working with our industry and federal counterparts to develop alternatives to the current deposit requirement. All federal and provincial ag ministers will review these alternatives later this year. Alberta is hosting the federal/provincial meetings in July of this year, and we have asked our departments to work with us on alternatives. Alberta wants to be a leader in setting this program's direction, and we're going to

continue to strive for that by working with our federal/provincial counterparts as this is a fed/prov agreement.

I might add that all of the provincial ministers regardless of party stripe, Mr. Speaker, believe that this is the program for the farmers of the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Government Investments

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Conservative government has a history of allowing the heritage savings trust fund to be invested in companies that are deemed to be dangerous to human health and even human rights, such as Talisman Energy, numerous tobacco companies, and now even Lockheed Martin corporation, a leading weapons manufacturer. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Is there any company that this government would not invest in?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, we have very competent investment managers that are investing billions of dollars on behalf of Albertans. Our first priority, obviously, is to gain the greatest return on those dollars for current and future generations, and we look for investments to do that.

Investing billions of dollars is very complex. We entrust that to our investment group. It's not simply a matter of buying a few shares of this and a few shares of that. We have a very, very small amount of the heritage fund that's invested in tobacco companies.

I would remind the hon. member and this House that the heritage fund in particular has its books reviewed by an all-party committee of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister then: would the minister please explain to Albertans why this government believes that the bottom line is more important than moral or ethical standards?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't agree that that's the case at all. What I do agree with is putting the investment into the hands of very competent investors to ensure that Albertans get the greatest return.

I will remind the hon. member one more time that the heritage fund books are reviewed by an all-party committee of this Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then to the same minister: will this minister please commit to establishing a firm strategy to deal with ethical investment of public funds?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I will commit to ensuring that we invest wisely and that we invest well, and I will also commit to any recommendations that I receive from the standing committee on the heritage fund.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution-related Offences

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that prostitu-

tion activities are harmful to the safety and security of residential neighbourhoods. Nearly two years ago a bill was introduced by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and this Assembly passed it. It gives police the power and authority to seize the vehicles of johns soliciting prostitutes. Reflecting the wishes of my constituents, my question is to the Solicitor General. It's been two years. Why haven't there been any seizures yet?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. In the year 2003 I did introduce a bill in the Assembly, which you're very aware of, and at that point in time the bill did pass unanimously in this House. I have seen the devastation that the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort has just described in his community as well as in my own of Calgary-Buffalo. These are tremendous issues that not only deal with the causes of devastation to a community and neighbourhoods but as well to young women that are addicted to drugs and alcohol abuse.

I understand that Alberta Infrastructure and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation have set up a review of the seizure of vehicles with regard to this bill as well as all seizures of vehicles, and I'd ask the minister to supplement this answer, please.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you. In fact, my next question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. When can we expect the enforcement of this piece of legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the advent I would say that the legislation that was brought forward was very good legislation and continues to be good legislation. It's legislation that I as Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation strongly support.

One of the issues that we're having, Mr. Speaker, is quite simply the constitutionality of how this is going to work. We're also looking at the logistics, exactly, as to how this is going to work. The seizure of vehicles is under my department – it is under infrastructure – and we are currently looking at this. I sincerely hope, through to the hon. member, that we will have closure on this issue consistent with the hon. Solicitor General's initial bill that will be put forward very, very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: No more questions.

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

School Utilization Formula

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the Edmonton public school board voted to begin the process of closing four schools, yet yesterday in this Assembly the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation indicated that he's busy evolving the formula. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: why are you allowing these school closures to proceed when you've stated publicly that a new utilization formula for urban schools is in the works?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton public school board has taken a very difficult step for a school board, which is that they are looking at potentially closing some schools. I believe that the Edmonton public school board has done it for the right reasons. They're looking at programmatic changes, and I believe that even last night – and I apologize for saying this in the Assembly, but I actually watched the news – one of the principals said that it would be very, very difficult to provide the programming needs when the number of students in the school is getting down so low. I believe that they are doing it for programmatic reasons. There also is the potential to save \$700,000, which is taxpayers' money, after all, from the operation and maintenance for the Edmonton public school board.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: will the development of this new formula delay further approval of new schools such as the Lois Hole elementary school, proposed for St. Albert's underserved northeast quadrant?

Dr. Oberg: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about two separate issues here: operation and maintenance versus the building of new schools and new capital construction.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the minister enlighten the public as to what this new formula for urban schools will look like and how it will better the community school proposal for rural areas?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm a firm believer in elected officials, and I'm a firm believer in school boards. I think it is their prerogative, being closer to the grassroots than anyone else. They're ultimately the ones that should be making these decisions on opening or closing of schools. The formula that we're designing will give much more flexibility to the school boards as to what they need to do and what they should do.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will commend the Edmonton public school board for their decisions because they are looking at how they can provide a better learning environment for their children, and ultimately that's what a school board's responsibility is.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

2:00 Foreign and Non-union Workers

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. In December 2004 the government gave Canadian Natural Resources Limited major project status for the Horizon oil sands project. Building trade unions say that the company may be attempting to reduce project costs at the expense of union members and fear that their members will be displaced by foreign workers. To the minister: what does the division 8 designation granted to Canadian Natural Resources Limited mean?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are blessed here in Alberta with a good, diversified economy that's booming and a good government to run the province also.

A division 8 designation allows the parties to negotiate terms and conditions of employment that will be specific to the project only. If an agreement is reached, no strike or lockout could take place until the agreement expires. Mr. Speaker, this designation, of course, is only allowed on projects that have a major economic impact to the province. As you are no doubt aware, the oil sands project is a \$10 billion project. There are going to be about 6,000 jobs during construction, and once the operation starts, it will be about 2,000 jobs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Union members are upset because they feel that their jobs are at risk as a result of the special project status granted to the Horizon oil sands project. Therefore, is it true that the designation granted to the Horizon oil sands project is a union-busting exercise?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker, of course not. You know, like I said earlier and the same yesterday in question period, I mentioned that our economy is well diversified in Alberta. It's very strong. There are jobs for everybody. In fact, the designation assumes that there is a unionized environment. It has no application to non-unionized workers, of course. Again, the purpose of this designation is simply to facilitate a special bargaining process, and the negotiations are voluntary. The Alberta government does not get involved in the process.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that in 2004 about 5,500 temporary foreign workers came to Alberta through the federal government's temporary foreign worker program, will the Horizon oil sands project open the door to cheaper foreign labour in Alberta?

Mr. Cardinal: No. That's a very good question, Mr. Speaker. Definitely not cheaper because all the workers that come to Alberta have to meet the Alberta standards we have in place. Of course, I mentioned yesterday during question period also that the employers that are looking at workers and foreign workers first of all have to exhaust their attempts to hire Albertans, Canadians, aboriginal people, people with developmental disabilities. That is the number one priority. If they cannot find the employees they want, then they are allowed to make an application. It is a complicated process and costly, but the application actually goes through the federal government.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to hear the questions from the previous member.

In looking at how the provincial cabinet granted this quick and quiet, rare labour code exemption to CNRL for that huge Horizon oil sands project in early December, Horizon was given this power to impose these terms for union and non-union workers under the same long-term contract. My questions today are to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Will this minister release the documents that led to the decision to grant this controversial division 8 exemption?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't class this as a controversial decision. The process took a long time to arrive at the decision. It doesn't happen overnight. I will review the submissions and what was reviewed and advise you further.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: why didn't the minister consult with major stakeholders such as the Alberta building trades, for example, on a matter so important to Alberta's economy and the development of our precious oil sands resource?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I know the previous minister consulted with all parties that were interested. Since my appointment to the ministry I've met with a number of these groups: the unions, non-union members, company officials. I've had meetings constantly with these people, and I don't see any conflict in this issue. Only the Liberals would see it as a conflict and negative, like they always see everything negatively. Any jurisdiction in North America would love to have the challenges that we have here in Alberta: a strong economy and a good government.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: are there any other division 8 applications pending?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, only the opposition, thinking negatively, would assume that there are things happening that we don't know of.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Dr. Pannu: With respect, Mr. Speaker, no question today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. McFarland: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was taken aback – to the back of the row.

To say that agricultural producers in Alberta are facing challenging times is quite an understatement. I know that the Canadian agricultural income program and the Alberta hail and crop program are designed to alleviate income issues, but a lot of the producers in our area are expressing frustration with the CAIS program in particular. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. If the CAIS program is supposed to alleviate and moderate some of the income coming into a farm, why are some of the producers still waiting for the finalization and the processing of their applications for this program, particularly those who applied back in September of 2003?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again a very, very good question. I know there are a number of producers out there with concerns on the CAIS program, and as with all programs that are national and have various agreements in them, we've had some growing pains in the CAIS program. It's no exception. It has had overwhelming interest from producers, and for the 2003 claim year alone more than 24,000 Alberta producers submitted applications and almost half of those in the last two-month period after the original deadline was extended. So getting CAIS payments and advances out to producers took longer than we'd hoped.

AFSC has spent a great deal of effort trying to improve their system. We recognized the acute cash flow problems and went with the advance payments, which some other provinces don't do, Mr. Speaker. We're about 80 per cent complete on the 2003s as I stand today. I know that on Monday I mentioned we were at 70 per cent. We're moving closer to the 100 per cent. So far \$186 million in payments for the 2003 year. We're anticipating about \$256 million to complete final payments for 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, some of the frustrations that particularly grain producers are passing on are their concerns with eroding margins, where PROs for barley have fallen 20 per cent and yellow mustard is down maybe 33 per cent. Could the minister tell us if changes to the CAIS program could be implemented to more accurately reflect the gradual, steadily diminishing margin that we experience?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings up a very, very important point, and that is that Alberta's agricultural industry has been hit hard in the BSE sector, but that's not the only sector that's being hit hard. Certainly, we should remember to focus on our grain and other sectors of agriculture. They are being hit hard.

When we were in Ottawa last week with the federal/provincial ministers' meetings, the issue of margins and the reference margin was brought up. As I mentioned, we are reviewing the CAIS program this summer with federal and provincial counterparts. Our intent is to address those issues and try to come up with some alternatives that will not, Mr. Speaker, cause us undo stress under the World Trade Organization because agriculture support has to be based either on a producer's most recent three years or on what we call the Olympic average, which is where we are.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

2:10

Government Aircraft

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister of infrastructure has repeatedly refused to table the government flight logs, citing privacy and security reasons. Would the minister please explain through this House to all Albertans what concerns contained in month-old, year-old flight logs are more important than transparency and accountability?

Dr. Oberg: Oh, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I'm not in any way meaning to lecture the hon. member, but there was a freedom of information and privacy act that was passed in this particular Legislature that is paramount to what has happened here. So the answer to the question is the FOIP legislation. I believe strongly in transparency, and for that reason we gave the Liberal opposition access to the flight manifests, and indeed they were even able, I believe – they may not have taken that ability – to photocopy them.

When asked by the New Democrat opposition about whether or not we would make the flight manifests public, I said quite simply: certainly, anything that we can. We are limited though, Mr. Speaker, as you yourself would know very well, by the FOIP legislation.

Mr. Chase: Will the minister quickly table the flight logs, not the manifests, from May through December 2004?

Dr. Oberg: Again, Mr. Speaker – and I do apologize for having to say this again – we will table anything that has been through the FOIP process.

Mr. Chase: Will the minister follow the transparent example of the federal government in publishing its flight logs?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, transparency and federal Liberals: I'm just having a really difficult time in dealing with that right now.

But we certainly will make our effort. If I do remember correctly, Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is absolutely minimal information that is put on from the federal government about their logs. Indeed, our manifests, I believe, have more information than the flight logs that were actually put on the Internet by the federal Liberals.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

High School Completion Rate

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Higher education is increasingly necessary to enable our young people to compete in a global economy. However, many of our students are failing to complete their high school studies, to the detriment of their own success and that of our province. In fact, our high school completion rates are amongst the lowest in Canada. To the minister: can the minister advise the House what steps are being made to address the question of high school completion rates in view of the recommendations of the Learning Commission that 90 per cent of our high school students complete within four years?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to clarify that it's the three-year high school completion rate that rates amongst some of the lowest in Canada. I'm not proud of that, but I just wanted to confirm the fact. In fact, however, our five-year high school completion rate is on the increase. It's up around the 75 per cent mark. I recognize that there's work to do, but that at least shows that some of the initiatives we are undertaking are working.

I will conclude by simply saying that the completion rate isn't just up to the school system. It's also up to the individual and to the individual's family and the community. Some people, Mr. Speaker, do leave the education system in around the grade 10 or 11 level perhaps for one year to earn some money or whatever it is that they wish to do, or they're facing other socioeconomic or related community factors. So it's not just the education system that is a stakeholder in that outcome.

Dr. Brown: Can the minister advise the House when Alberta will achieve the performance goals recommended in the Learning Commission report of 90 per cent completion within four years?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, our target is to increase our high school completion rates every year, and that's why I'm happy that we're on the right trend so far.

But I also want to just say quickly that we have a number of initiatives that we've either taken on that are ongoing or some that are new. For example, I instituted an internal task force just a while ago to review this issue completely and thoroughly with our stakeholders to see what new strategies we can add to enhance our high school completion rates. At the moment, however, we have a number of things that are impacting that question in a very positive way such as our Alberta initiative for school improvement, such as

our First Nations/Métis/Inuit strategy, such as the class size reduction initiative, which is increasing our students' abilities to learn, and a number of other things.

I expect, Mr. Speaker, that the short answer will be that it'll happen sooner than later.

Dr. Brown: For the same minister: why are Alberta's high school completion rates lagging behind those of the other provinces?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's the three-year rate that I'm not pleased with. I think that if you read the rest of the StatsCan report, you would probably find there where something in the order of 89 per cent of Albertans in the age bracket of 25 to 34 have completed high school. So there's a period of time that sometimes evolves during which people do return to finish their high school, and that's a very good thing.

The specific answer of why is a very complex one, and it's one that we're studying now to try and, in fact, answer in some detail. I don't think that any single jurisdiction out of the 62 school boards that I've met with would give you an exact answer to that, and I say that having surveyed almost all 62 of them. But the fact is that it has been brought to their attention, it has been brought to mine, and there will be more information within a few weeks on how we're going to address improving our high school completion rates, and we will do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Canadian Forest Products Ltd. Mill Closure

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 3 Canadian Forest Products Ltd. announced that it was ending operations at its Hines Creek sawmill. The closure of this mill will mean a loss of over 100 jobs and \$6 million in yearly salaries that will have a devastating economic impact on Hines Creek and surrounding communities. My first question is to the Minister of Economic Development. In the throne speech the government stated, "Vibrant rural communities are vital to this province." Then why is the government not ensuring that Hines Creek remains vibrant?

Mr. Dunford: Well, Mr. Speaker, we did make that comment in the throne speech, and I want the member to know that the rural development strategy is part of the top three initiatives that we have under way within Economic Development. Certainly, the Hines Creek situation is at the forefront as we speak, and thank you for raising that particular issue. I mentioned yesterday on a question from another hon. member that the Peace region economic alliance was involved currently with that situation as well as our Grande Prairie office.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. This minister stated yesterday: "What other economic . . . opportunities will there be? We look into things like tourism." Can this government tell us what tourism opportunities can replace the lost jobs at Hines Creek? [interjection]

Mr. Dunford: I didn't hear that, so I don't know what took place.

In terms of the comments that the hon. member has neatly picked up out of *Hansard*, certainly we're looking at tourism as one, of course, of the obvious economic development activities that we look

at throughout Alberta and particularly want to look at beyond just Calgary, Edmonton, Banff, and Jasper. You know, there are value-added areas in terms of secondary manufacturing. The value-added strategy that we have in terms of our number one strategy inside Economic Development is really to look at developing secondary manufacturing as it relates to wood products. So we think we have opportunities there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will this government commit to taking action to protect Hines Creek from becoming a ghost town?

Mr. Dunford: Well, I wish the hon. member wouldn't be so pessimistic. I mean, there are good people in Hines Creek, as you know if you've taken the time to be there as our Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has. These are good people, they're Albertans, they're ambitious, they are inventive, and we think that in working with them, we'll be able to reorganize the Hines Creek area so that they'll continue to be a viable part of Alberta. I'm actually disappointed and disturbed that a rookie MLA would walk into this place and start talking in such a disparaging way about a fellow citizen.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

2:20 Capital Grants for Major Fairs

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of my constituents have expressed interest in and I might say support for the capital grants for major fairs that were announced in the 2004-2005 third-quarter fiscal update, released on February 28. Some are curious to know which fairs will be funded and what this means for them. My first question is to the Minister of Gaming. As the minister responsible for the Alberta lottery fund which fairs are going to receive grants, and what will the grants be used for?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that my first question in the House allows me to stand and talk about the wonderful things that flow from the Alberta lottery fund. It was announced in the third-quarter fiscal update that \$40 million is being provided to seven regional fair and agricultural societies. They're located in Camrose, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Olds, and Red Deer. These funds will be used to upgrade buildings and facilities at these regional facilities. They're extremely excited about it, and I know that they're all looking forward to putting this money to good use.

Mr. Johnson: To the same minister then: why did the government identify major fairs as a priority for this \$40 million in funding?

Mr. Graydon: These seven boards are very regional in nature. You know, I can remember as a young lad – I can remember back that far – living in Lacombe, Alberta. The highlight of the summer was to go to the Red Deer fair, and it's still going on to this day. This weekend I am returning home to my constituency and attending the 20th annual Agri-bition at the Evergreen Park in Grande Prairie. It's a huge regional agricultural fair and provides tremendous economic benefit to the region, allows the rural community to come in and show their stuff.

Mr. Johnson: To the same minister then: why are only these seven fairs getting this money?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, these seven are just the tip of the iceberg, if you will. For the past several years this government has provided the 283 additional ag societies – they're in smaller communities. There's not a small community in Alberta, I think, that doesn't have an ag society or fair board or something. There are 283 of them, and each year Alberta Lotteries provides funds to Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, an unconditional base grant of \$17,500 for operating. That's unconditional, but on top of that, they submit the list of activities that they've hosted the previous year and are allotted extra money based on how busy they were in the previous year. As well, Edmonton Northlands and the Calgary Stampede receive more than \$7 million each for their activities over the year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

School Utilization Formula (continued)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the Edmonton public school board, to the bitter disappointment of parents that attended the public school board meeting, voted to begin the process of closing four public schools. This government must return authority for public school structures to the Minister of Education, where it properly belongs. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Why doesn't the government provide block funding for public school buildings and get out of the job of counting spaces?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Edmonton public school board does a very good job against some very unique circumstances, and I've followed with interest and I've met with them and discussed with interest some of their initiatives. Unfortunately, these things, like declining enrolments, do happen from time to time, and in this case they're faced with some very, very difficult decisions, which I think the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation answered a bit earlier.

But I think the key part in the question is with respect to the utilization rate in that formula, and that's one reason why we are reviewing that rate formula right now. Perhaps some relief will be forthcoming that will address this problem from that point of view.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. To the same minister: how can this government support a policy that tears the heart out of the communities by closing their community schools?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't exactly consider the high regard in which North America holds the Edmonton public school board as tearing the heart out of anything. They're the number one school board, and that's why they frequently receive visitors from around the world to come and have a look. So they are doing a very, very good job. But the fact is that we do need to review some of these difficulties where we see student enrolment going down and costs skyrocketing upwards, and the school utilization formula is the key part of that, regardless if it's done in this ministry or if it's done in the ministry of infrastructure.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: has this

government considered moving some of its offices in the capital city to share space with underutilized public schools? Save some money.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Save some money. Well, there are a number of initiatives that the school boards are looking at that might bring that very thing about. In fact, that's part of our renewed funding framework, which I'm sure the member knows about; that is, to allow maximum flexibility. Under the renewed funding framework school boards have asked for and they have received that particular flexibility formula to work with. Now, I am reviewing those budgets as we speak to see where some additional support might or might not be possible and see what kind of utilization we can have for these schools.

I would tell you, though, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that the new schools that are coming on stream do have a fundamentally different approach to their design that will make them quite useful in later years for either continued school purposes or for some other community use purpose, and that in the long run will save all taxpayers money.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, while this may be the only time that we do get to question 18, unfortunately I have no questions today. Thanks.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, and I have six additional members beyond that. No shortage of members.

Edmonton City Centre Airport

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton City Centre Airport is a vital facility to my constituents and indeed, I believe, to all Albertans. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Can the minister inform this House as to the government's position on the importance of the Edmonton City Centre Airport?

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, some time ago there was a committee that was put together to look at the City Centre Airport and some of the issues that were surrounding passenger flights in and out of that airport, and that committee presented a report then to the board of directors of the Edmonton Airports Authority. Unfortunately, not all of the recommendations were accepted. So it's put the government now into a position, in terms of economic development, of now taking those recommendations and looking at it in the juxtaposition of what the authority actually did and trying to determine what is in the best interest now of all Albertans.

I've charged my deputy minister with that responsibility as recently as this morning, as a matter of fact, and we'll have to develop, then, a strategy from an economic development perspective and then, of course, take that through the internal process to try to develop a government position as to the City Centre Airport.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. To the same minister: can the minister offer Albertans any assurances that we'll be able to access our capital city through the City Centre Airport in the future?

Mr. Dunford: Well, yes we can. Again, as far as the recommendations made that were accepted, I've been assured by the airport

authority through its chair and its president that the business model that the City Centre Airport will be working from indicates that those airlines that are currently bringing passengers in and out of that City Centre Airport will be allowed to continue to do so off into the future as long as the individual airline's business model makes sense for it to do that.

So they have assured me that they're not in a position and will not take the position of removing any further airlines from that airport. The difficulty, of course, is that they've already removed a couple, and that's where the tension continues to circulate between members of this House, including myself as the representative of Lethbridge-West, and the airport authority.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. To the same minister: can the minister inform us as to the current status of the City Centre Airport and what changes, if any, we can expect with respect to this vital facility in the near future?

Mr. Dunford: As we speak, there's a meeting that's taking place at a hotel here in Edmonton. It's been organized by a group now called CAANA, and I believe that stands for Commuter Air Access Network of Alberta. Many of the people here on the floor of this House will remember a previous member that we had with us, Gary Friedel. We have a situation where Gary has organized this group. There are players from all across the province, including Edmonton's city council, the representatives of the airport authority, and mayors of various communities including my own community of Lethbridge. I was part of a panel there this morning.

We're trying to get the issues dealt with, and the call that I made, hon. member: it's time for us to be candid. There's been too much of this talk, parallel talk where, yeah, maybe people are happy; maybe they're not happy. Let's get all of the cards on the table over this issue, and let's get it dealt with.

The Speaker: Hon. members, something very historic happened today. This is the first time in the history of Alberta that the chair was able to call on 19 members to participate in the question period. My apologies do go to the eight additional members who sent me notes wanting to get in the question period. Perhaps Monday we'll be able to do just a bit better.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: I indicated before that I would provide a historic comment of the day. I want all hon. members to know that in March of 1941 the Legislative Assembly under the leadership of Premier William Aberhart amended on this day in 1941 the provincial School Act, making it illegal not to salute the Union Jack.

In 30 seconds I'll call upon the first of several members to participate. Hon. members, prior to introducing the first of several members to participate in Recognitions, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you

and through you to this Assembly my lovely sister Susan Backs and my dear dad, John Backs. Susan has acted on many stages including London, New York, Toronto, Calgary, and of course in Spruce Grove. My dad recently received an award from the Crown Prince of the Netherlands for his work as a member of the Stootroepen regiment in the Second World War. That, of course, was the crucial regiment that was formed from armed underground resistance fighters that fought with the Canadian army to help liberate the Netherlands in many crucial battles that ended the Second World War. I'd like you to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Recognitions

The Speaker: Hon. members, as per the ruling yesterday, today we'll be proceeding with four recognitions from government members, two from the Official Opposition, and one from the third party. I guess that I have to ask for clarification. Is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona proceeding this afternoon with a recognition, or should we fill it with someone else?

Dr. Pannu: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You are going to proceed?

Dr. Pannu: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Youth Science Month

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year thousands of young Albertans take part in local and regional science fairs. Each of these young scientists works diligently to develop projects that demonstrate innovation, initiative, and imagination. This year the very best of our province's science fair participants will represent Alberta at the Canada-wide science fair to be held in Vancouver in May.

Mr. Speaker, one only has to attend one of the many regional science fairs held throughout the province to meet the many exceptional young science students of Alberta. They are truly the innovators and leaders of tomorrow. It is vitally important to nurture a generation of scientifically literate young people who will push forward the boundaries of our knowledge and improve the culture of innovation in our province. This is why I'm happy to join the Youth Science Foundation Canada and the Alberta Science Fair Foundation in recognizing March 2005 as Youth Science Month in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Western Canadian Blind Curling Championship

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the Calmar Lions Club for once again successfully hosting the Western Canadian Blind Curling Championship. This championship was originally born in 1971, when a rink of blind curlers came down to Calmar from Edmonton to challenge the Calmar Lions Club in the first blind curling bonspiel. This quickly turned into an annual event, which expanded a couple of years later to include teams from both Edmonton and Calgary. A few years later it expanded once again to include two blind curling teams from each of the western provinces, thereby creating the Western Canadian Blind Curling Championship.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the curling you may be watching at the Brier

this week, blind curling allows five-member rinks, with one sighted skip and one sighted sweeper. At least one member must be completely blind; two others may at the very most have partial vision.

This year's western Canadian championship was won by a B.C. rink, with an Alberta rink placing fourth.

I would like to commend the Calmar Lions Clubs and surrounding clubs for their decades of commitment to the sport of blind curling. Mr. Speaker, for what the participants might lack in sight, the Lions Club more than makes up for in vision.

Thank you.

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

Ken Flesher

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again in this the week of the Brier in Edmonton it gives me great pleasure to recognize a very exceptional senior from the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. Mr. Ken Flesher of Devon was recently successful as the Alberta champion in the provincial Masters Curling Championship, and Ken will be representing Alberta in Brandon, Manitoba, the weekend of April 8 to 10 as the skip for the Alberta rink. I would like to recognize Ken on behalf of this House.

Thank you.

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

British Commonwealth Air Crew Memorial

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 3, 2004, a six-metre high statue of a uniformed airman was unveiled by the Premier at McDougall Centre in Calgary. This memorial pays tribute to the more than 1,600 Albertans in the air service who lost their lives during the Second World War. This unique group of individuals were all graduates of the British Commonwealth air training program, with 18 of the 360 training schools located right here in Alberta.

I am honoured and humbled, Mr. Speaker, to remember their service to this province and to their country. I find it appropriate during our centennial year to recognize the sacrifice these Albertans and their family have made. They contributed to making this the prosperous province it is today and made these centennial year celebrations possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those involved with the establishment of the memorial, notably former Member of Parliament Mr. Arthur Smith, who was a strong voice for the air crews and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:40

Youth Emergency Shelter

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pride that I ask this Assembly to recognize youth shelters in this province for the invaluable service they contribute to our society. I especially want to recognize the Youth Emergency Shelter Society in Edmonton.

This program helps youth between the ages of 15 and 18 who are homeless. Over 68 per cent have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, an increasing number with serious mental health problems. Most attempt to numb their inner pain by using drugs and/or alcohol. The youth come from every neighbourhood in Edmonton and surrounding communities. They all have different

economic backgrounds and are of every race and religion. Some are high school dropouts while some are honour students.

The Youth Emergency Shelter provides basic necessities along with opportunities to become strong, independent, and learn life and decision-making skills, giving youth at risk a chance to become productive and successful individuals.

Thank you.

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

Democratic Process in the Ukraine

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the people of Ukraine. This past fall when Ukrainians felt that the presidential election had been tainted, they stood up despite the threats of violence from the government, and they refused to accept the results. Ukrainians showed the world that peaceful change is possible. We do not have to accept corruption, and when our political process fails us, it's up to each and every one of us to stand up and correct the wrong.

I want to recognize Ukrainians who supported either candidate in the presidential election. I heard from Canadian election observers of the amazing commitment to the democratic process from the supporters of the candidates on both sides. I've heard of friendships being forged between political adversaries and the desire to make democracy work regardless of the outcome.

Ukrainians showed that it is possible to right a wrong, to stand up to injustice, and to work together as one for the good of all. Ukrainians have taught us how to make democracy work, and their lessons should never be forgotten.

Thank you.

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

International Women's Day

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to take this opportunity, the earliest one available to me, to recognize International Women's Day. International Women's Day is a time to recognize and celebrate women's struggle for equality and women's ongoing work to build a more just and compassionate world.

On behalf of the NDP opposition I would like to reaffirm our commitment to women's equality. We will continue to work with child care advocates for low-cost, high-quality child care centred on early childhood learning and development, for laws and policies that prevent harassment and discrimination, for adequate funding for women's shelters, for community policing and safer communities. The NDP opposition will also continue to work with women's groups and others for public health care that includes a full range of women's health needs including midwifery and reproductive choice and will stand up for women regardless of their sexual orientation, country of origin, or economic status.

This International Women's Day, Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposition reaffirms its commitment to bread and roses for all Alberta women. Thank you.

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions

for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places as well.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Bill 14

Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 14, the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005.

Just so that there is no confusion, Mr. Speaker, this does not embody the new and improved formula for student finance or student affordability but really is just housekeeping with respect to items that have been left over in the past. We can look forward to more and better new, exciting legislation later on the other topics.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

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

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to move first reading of Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill clarifies wording around immunity for the board of directors of the Workers' Compensation Board, the WCB. It confirms that the WCB can regulate the fees charged by private lawyers working on third-party civil actions, and it permits WCB to pay cost of living increases to workers who are on extended temporary partial disability benefits.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 15 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Bill 16

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request the leave of the House to introduce a bill being the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005.

The bill proposes amendments to the Alberta Business Corporations Act which will modernize the act and bring it into conformity with the Canada business corporations act. It will also for the first time allow the incorporation of unlimited liability corporations.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 16 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Bill 17
Agrology Profession Act

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to request leave to introduce Bill 17, the Agrology Profession Act.

Mr. Speaker, this act will help to clarify and strengthen the agrology profession by ensuring that its governing legislation is consistent with the current government policy on professional legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 17 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 18
Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and request leave of the House to introduce Bill 18, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow the movement from five members to the order per year to 10.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 18 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 20
Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a bill being the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Personal Income Tax Act to parallel recent federal amendments including easing the eligibility requirements to qualify for the disability tax credit, to improve fairness with respect to the treatment of part-year residents, and to ensure that the act is consistent with the current administration.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 20 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: 2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two groups of tablings today. For the first I would like to table the annual reports for the year 2003-2004 for the following health authorities: Chinook regional, Palliser regional, Calgary health region, David Thompson regional health authority, and East Central health. That's the first tabling.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the requisite number of copies of the annual reports of the following colleges and associations: the Alberta College of Optometrists' annual report 2003, the Alberta College of Pharmacists' annual report 2003, the Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists' annual report 2003, the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists' annual report 2003, and, finally, the Alberta Opticians Association annual report 2003.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the liberty today to table four copies of a document entitled Projected Government Business for the week of March 14, 2005. Given that we will not be sitting on Thursday of this week, I thought it appropriate to table the document and would ask, if it pleases you and the Legislature, that perhaps on this occasion only it could be printed in the Order Paper in the same manner as it's normally printed when it's asked for and read out on Thursdays.

The Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, no difficulty with that, is there? It's a unique situation: we're not sitting tomorrow.

Ms Blakeman: It is indeed unique, and I appreciate the efforts of the Government House Leader and would appreciate having it printed and shared orally, if possible, at the end of the Routine.

The Speaker: No disagreements with any members? So be it.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter dated March 8, 2005, from the constituency office of Edmonton-Gold Bar to the chairperson of the Edmonton public school board, and it's CCed to all school board members. This is requesting that there be a stop put to the closure process until the provincial government introduces its new utilization formula.

The second tabling is a letter that I received as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts dated June 9, 2004, from the Auditor General of Alberta. The Auditor General is explaining to me why he cannot release to me information in regard to management letters that reference both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter from a Mr. Don Lind – he's an outfitter in High Prairie – regarding his concerns over the Métis harvesting agreement.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a news release issued by the University of Alberta Students' Union on March 2 of this year which expresses serious concerns about whether the government's proposed measures

for postsecondary education will satisfactorily address issues of affordability and accessibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Projected Government Business

The Speaker: Hon. members, a minute or two ago under Tabling Returns and Reports the hon. Government House Leader rose and did something. The reason he did it: if you look at Standing Order 7(1), it says that it is only on Thursday that we can deal with Projected Government Business. There's no provision to deal with it without unanimous consent on Wednesday because it is a Wednesday. So the hon. Government House Leader used the opportunity to deal with the tabling. The hon. Opposition House Leader agreed to that, and you all agreed to it, so it's been done. We worked the rules, I guess, so to speak, as to how you can be efficient with respect to this matter.

head: **Orders of the Day**

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 8: Mr. Oberle]

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure and a great honour to stand and deliver my maiden speech in the Assembly today on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Currie. I want to start by expressing a deep debt of gratitude to my wife, Martha, for her love, her support, her encouragement, and her patience – some of those who know us both are so impressed that she's put up with me for 22 years that they've nicknamed her Martha Theresa – to my nearly adult children Scott and Jenny for being everything a father could hope for, and to one of the most awesome teams of campaign workers in Calgary history: 146 dedicated volunteers, many of whom joined in without even being asked and few of whom needed to be asked more than once, who stepped forward to help me in spite of myself.

I spent a lifetime being politically aware and interested but as an outsider, a journalist and a talk show host. Although I've always considered myself a small "I" liberal, because of how I earn my living, I was never a member of any political party until I decided in September to run for the big "L" Liberals. Look, since I was old enough to vote, I voted provincially and federally for just about every political party there is at one time or another.

My dear old late Nova Scotia grandfather, Charlie Walker, was as dyed-in-the-wool Liberal as you could get. If the Liberals down there were running Elmer's dog against Nova Scotia Tory Robert Stanfield himself, Charlie Walker would have voted for the dog. When I won election, my Aunt Shirley, his daughter, said to me: if your grandfather were still alive, he'd be so proud of you.

Me, I've always preferred to take a different approach to elections and vote for the candidate or the party or the leader whose views and policies aligned most closely with what I as a voter thought the

country or the province or the city I was living in needed at the time. So my campaign team didn't exactly rally around me because I'd been a good big "L" Liberal. I hadn't. In fact, I counted among my friends hardly anyone who was politically active in any party. In my past life I spent a lot of time talking about politics at work, so over the years Martha and I have formed most of our friendships with decidedly apolitical people precisely to make a clean break from work.

So why did they rally around me? Well, because they picked up on the same appetite for change, the same desire to see things done differently in this province that I picked up on from the callers to my talk show in the months leading up to the election. It was a buzz that many of the pundits and many in the media missed. My own boss laughed at me when I said that I was going to run for the Liberals. But there was and is among the people of Alberta and the constituents of Calgary-Currie impatience with the status quo and a feeling that we can do better.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you and the hon. members gathered here today a little bit about the constituency of Calgary-Currie, the people who live there, and what they value and believe.

Calgary-Currie is an inner-city riding close in to the downtown core of what we modestly like to call the greatest city in Canada. It is an eclectic, diverse, vibrant, and interesting mix of communities from the old downtown neighbourhoods of Mission and Cliff Bungalow through the mansions of Mount Royal, the condos and apartment buildings of Lower Mount Royal along the Red Mile. Across 14th Street is Bankview, an established, funky collection of houses and apartment buildings, each different from the next, very much like the people who live there, built on a series of hills that exudes almost a bohemian atmosphere in the sense that you might be someplace in San Francisco.

To the south are the neighbourhoods of South Calgary and Richmond-Knob Hill, in the midst of rejuvenating and reinventing themselves, a mix of houses from the very old to the very new; the Marda Loop business district, like 4th Street and 17th Avenue a destination area with its storefronts, coffee houses, ice cream shops, and restaurants. Each one of those three areas is unique, but what they all have in common is that they attract people from the adjacent neighbourhoods and from the far-flung suburbs, people who park their cars, get out on foot, and explore, enjoy, and engage themselves with their surroundings at street level. These are not mall crawlers, at least not while they're in Calgary-Currie.

Further south, Garrison Woods, a new community built on part of the old Canadian Forces Base Currie barracks, which gives my constituency its name, has attracted families from other parts of Calgary as well as from big cities across North America who were drawn there because they wanted that close in to downtown, big city feel.

South of that is the mature residential community of Altadore, which itself is starting to see some new infill development and houses undergoing substantial renovation, and to the west the neighbourhoods of Killarney, Glengarry, Glenbrook, and Glendale, good neighbourhoods filled with good people.

Mr. Speaker, you can look at the demographics of Calgary-Currie and, depending on your point of view, take away different impressions of the makeup of the constituency. Some have noted that Calgary-Currie has a disproportionate percentage of young single residents. It also has a significant population of seniors. It's also home to a substantial number of married, two-career couples with children. There is some real poverty in my constituency and some unbelievable wealth and everything in between. It is in many ways a microcosm of Canada.

3:00

There is, however, one demographic that stands out no matter how you read the other numbers, and that is the incredible level of education in Calgary-Currie. The single biggest percentage of the adult population, 31 and a half per cent, has a bachelor's degree or higher. Another 17 per cent have a college certificate or diploma, and a further 10 and a half per cent have a trade certificate or diploma. In all, 77 per cent of the adult population of Calgary-Currie has at least some postsecondary education.

As I went door to door during the campaign, Mr. Speaker, I encountered deep concerns and great annoyance among my constituents with the declining state of postsecondary education in this province. That's not surprising. The people of Calgary-Currie understand that accessible, affordable, excellence in advanced education is crucial to the future success of today's students and tomorrow's Alberta. They and I will be watching closely to see whether the platitudes and promises about postsecondary education contained in the Speech from the Throne are actually acted upon, and we will be watching with the understanding that even if they are, the systemic problem in Alberta's advanced education system will not be addressed unless and until the government substantially increases base operating grants to the institutions and adopts a new, more equitable, and realistic way of calculating just how much a postsecondary student in Alberta is worth. There was no mention of this in the throne speech.

My constituents, many of whom learn, teach, and work in support roles at Mount Royal College or are friends or neighbours of those who do, are also watching and waiting for this government to do the right thing and make Mount Royal into a university. Calgary is the biggest city in North America without a second university. Mount Royal is ready, willing, and able to fill that role as soon as this government grants its approval. The proposal has been in the hands of the government for two years now. One wonders what possible reasonable excuse there could be for delaying this decision any longer.

Mr. Speaker, I said at the outset that I wanted to talk about what my constituents value and believe. Those values and beliefs are informed by an urban, inner-city, downtown attitude. These are people, by and large, who live close to the downtown core by choice, because they prefer it to the suburbs. They like being able to walk out their front door and down the street for a couple of blocks to shop or dine or go for a drink. They prefer being a short public transit ride away from work to spending an hour or more every day stuck in traffic. They like the proximity to arts and culture, to theatres, museums, the opera, ballet, the philharmonic, the folk festival. They understand that vibrant arts, entertainment, and cultural sectors add to the quality of life in a city and to that city's potential for greatness. Frankly, many of the constituents I met during the campaign think that this government has let us down badly in that department.

They value and embrace diversity for the way in which it enriches their lives. They have a tolerance for ways of doing things that are different from their own, and they have a hard time understanding what all the fuss is about over same-sex marriage. They care about fairness and equity, and to them politicians who are more concerned about blocking a loving couple from declaring their commitment to each other in front of friends, family, and the wider community than they are about improving the lives of the elderly, the sick, and the disabled by raising AISH payments and restoring seniors' benefits are politicians who have their priorities mixed up. The people of Calgary-Currie don't always embrace change – I mean, who among us does, other than the consultants? – nor do they always resist it. They do however understand that real progress is measured by more than just profit.

The people of Calgary-Currie value community. By definition community is a group of people with a common interest living together within a larger society, individuals bound together by common cause, if you will, for the common good. Community is about more than shared values, for if the only value people share is this self-interested pursuit of personal wealth and happiness, well, then that's not really a community. What you have there is a collection of strangers who agree to respect each other's property lines and stay out of each other's way.

Community is about caring about what happens to others and knowing there are people who care about you. It's about feeling safe when you go out for a walk, and feeling secure in letting your children out to play because you know the entire community is looking out for its own. It's about knowing the neighbours, understanding that we're in this together, and getting it that society works best when everyone has the opportunity to participate. Community allows us to leave this world a better place than we found it by combining our efforts through strength in numbers. The people of Calgary-Currie want a government that understands that common cause and common good sustain the human spirit and quality of life in a way that self-interest does not, a government that appreciates that its job amounts to more than merely creating conditions for the rich to get richer.

The people of Calgary-Currie care about the land. Why wouldn't they? They live on the edge of what is quite possibly the most beautiful place on earth, a land so beautiful that it pierces clean through to the soul. I've yet to meet a constituent, whether by birth or by choice, who doesn't feel a deep connection to the awesome natural beauty that surrounds us. It sustains us and can sustain our children and their children but only if we sustain it through conservation, responsible development, and caring stewardship. The notion of undeveloped, unexploited, undisturbed wilderness as sterile land must end.

My constituents were proud to send me to this Legislature. I'm proud to be here and to serve them. Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time today.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should any member wish to take advantage of it.

If not, then might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

Introduction of Guests (*reversion*)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly this afternoon several individuals who are here to hear my maiden speech later this afternoon. I'd first like to recognize Mr. Stan Schumacher, a former Member of Parliament, a former member and Speaker of this Assembly. Thank you for joining us this afternoon, Stan. I'd also like to recognize that we've been joined by one of Alberta's newest Senators-in-waiting, hopefully soon to be appointed, Mrs. Betty Unger.

Like everybody else in this Chamber on both sides, I'm here partly by my own efforts but more because of the efforts of all the volunteers and friends. There are a lot of volunteers and friends here that I'd like to ask to stand in a moment, but, of course, like everybody else the person I owe the most thanks to and apologies, probably, for getting into this business, is my wife, Bambi. I'd like

to ask the rest of my family, friends, and supporters who are here today seated in the public gallery to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on an introduction, as well.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly my brother Stan Backs, who's in the public gallery. Stan, could you please rise to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

**Consideration of His Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**
(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to add my comments to those already offered by my colleagues in consideration of the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to congratulate you and offer you my best wishes on your re-election, and I truly hope that the fate that befell several Speakers of the British Parliament in the 17th century will not afflict you this session.

Mr. Speaker, Foothills-Rocky View is a new constituency. It is comprised of the territory from the former constituencies of Airdrie-Rocky View, Banff-Cochrane, and Highwood. Our territory lies to the west of highway 2 and the city of Calgary. It stretches from Crossfield and Madden in the north to Black Diamond and Turner Valley in the south. It includes the acreage communities that surround Calgary on the west: Bearspaw, Springbank, Elbow Valley, Priddis, and De Winton, and the beautiful hamlets of Bragg Creek and Millarville. It also includes the Tsuu T'ina Nation, one of the most dynamic and well-governed reserves in Canada. Our greatest asset, however, is the people of Foothills-Rocky View, some of the most successful, well-educated, and community-minded citizens of this province and whom I'm honoured to represent.

Mr. Speaker, Foothills-Rocky View is truly the crown jewel of southern Alberta. We're the gateway to the Rockies. The sweeping Canadian prairies end at our eastern doorstep. Our rolling foothills are nature's staircase to the craggy peaks that fence us on the west. We share this special place with the deer, elk, and moose, cougars and lynx, black bears and grizzlies, and hundreds of God's lesser but no less important creatures.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, living in Foothills-Rocky View is a privilege, and we're determined to protect and preserve the natural beauty and environmental integrity. So we're especially pleased with the throne speech's commitment to help in this effort. In Alberta our quality of life and life itself depends on having a healthy and sustainable water supply. Foothills-Rocky View straddles the central section of the eastern slopes watershed. A river flows through it; not one, not two, but three of the most important rivers in the South Saskatchewan River basin: the Bow, the Elbow, and the Sheep. Managing the waters of these rivers in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way is among the very highest priorities of my constituents, so we're pleased that Alberta will continue to implement the Water for Life strategy.

Foothills-Rocky View is also home to some of Alberta's earliest cattle ranching. The beef industry remains an important pillar of our local economy and has been hurt by the U.S. border closure. We

applaud the throne speech's commitment to increased domestic slaughter capacity, and we are proud that one of the most important new plants, Rancher's Beef, is being built in the MD of Rocky View.

Mr. Speaker, Foothills-Rocky View is uniquely tied to Calgary. The water that flows through the taps of Calgary flows first through the rivers and streams of Foothills-Rocky View. We have serious waste-water issues in Bragg Creek and Springbank. Our problems are also Calgary's problems, so we applaud the government's commitment to invest in water infrastructure to provide a safe, clean water supply.

The residents of Foothills-Rocky View value being close to Calgary but only close to, not part of Calgary. We do not want to be swallowed up by mindless urban sprawl. We value our working rural landscapes and open spaces, and we want to keep them that way. So again we applaud the government's commitment to a new land use management framework, and we encourage the government to embrace the concepts of natural capital and smart growth.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne informs us that "strengthening the postsecondary learning system is the government's top priority during this centennial year." As a professor who has taught at the University of Calgary for the past 24 years, nothing could please me more. Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, commits 4 and a half billion dollars to our universities, colleges, and technical institutes. These funds "will lay the groundwork for investments that will allow Alberta to continue to prosper in the increasingly globalized, knowledge-based economy." Much of this learning will be technical and scientific, but it will also include the humanities and social sciences, which include history and, specifically, Alberta's history.

As the throne speech declares, "As this province's 100-year history illustrates so unmistakably, Albertans have what it takes to be leaders." So I would like to take this opportunity to revisit the role of political leadership in Alberta's history.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the great occasion of our centennial, we should recall that provincehood did not come easily to Alberta. Sir Frederick Haultain, the Premier of the North-West Territories began in the late 1890s to push the idea of extending provincial status and responsible government for the western territories.

Initially, the Laurier Liberals were receptive, but for the first time but not the last politics in Quebec dictated Ottawa's treatment of the west, and Laurier rejected the call for provincehood as premature. Happily for us, Premier Haultain refused to take no for an answer. He abandoned his embrace of nonpartisanship and plunged into the 1904 federal election as a candidate for the Conservative Party. In that campaign he declared to his supporters:

Let us fight for our rights with all the energy we can command. The only way to show the Liberal government that we are in earnest is to turn them down at the polls. Give them a crushing defeat and we will get the rights we demand.

I'm sure my Liberal friends are quick to point out that Haultain lost that election. But he won the war. The Laurier Liberals carried the west, but conceded on the issue of provincehood the very next year.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to Frederick Haultain's spirited defence of democracy, Alberta achieved provincial status in 1905 but not on the terms demanded by Haultain and the other western autonomists. Ownership of natural resources was not granted to the two new provinces. This was a radical departure from the practice in the rest of Canada, under which all existing provinces did control their own natural resources. Thus right from our birth equality of the provinces has been the battle cry of Alberta. The transfer of natural resource ownership to Alberta was pursued in virtually every session of this Legislature for our first 25 years. Not once but twice this Assembly enacted mineral taxation legislation to try to recoup the

revenues that were supposed to be coming to this province but were being denied, and not once but twice these laws were disallowed by Ottawa. Did Albertans become discouraged? Did Albertans give up? No. We persisted, and in 1930, under the persistent leadership of Premier John Brownlee and the United Farmers of Alberta, ownership of natural resources was transferred back to Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the prosperity that Albertans enjoy today did not happen by accident. It happened on purpose. It happened because of the bold leadership of men like Frederick Haultain and John Brownlee.

No decade was as harsh and cruel for Alberta as the Dirty Thirties. The Great Depression forced thousands of Alberta families off their farms and into bankruptcy. The government was forced to default on its bond payments, and into this breach strode William Aberhart and the new Social Credit Party.

Premier Aberhart enacted a suite of Social Credit policies designed to stimulate consumer spending and revive our prostrate economy. These acts, however, were quickly disallowed by the Liberal government in Ottawa. Undeterred, the following month Premier Aberhart reconvened this Legislature and passed the same three acts again, only slightly amended. Within weeks these new acts were struck down again, this time by Alberta's own Lieutenant Governor. Aberhart immediately challenged in court this striking down as an unconstitutional attack on responsible government and provincial rights, and to make sure the Lieutenant Governor and Ottawa got the message, in the next budget, in the spring of '37, the Aberhart government cancelled all provincial funding for the Lieutenant Governor, including his residence, his car, his driver, and his secretary. They got the message.

Writing in 1954, 20 years after this, J.R. Mallory, one of English Canada's leading constitutional scholars, observed: "One of the most significant facts which emerges from a study of the disallowance power is that the power has been used primarily against the West . . . The disallowance power [was] an imperial device for holding other provinces under the sway of the predominant economic interest of the central provinces." These words were written in 1954 not by an Alberta separatist but by a revered McGill University professor, but the message they conveyed was understood 20 years earlier by a strong-willed Alberta preacher. To his credit and to our benefit William Aberhart refused to accept the antiwestern bias of the political status quo.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps William Aberhart's greatest gift to Alberta was his second-in-command and Alberta's longest serving Premier, the Hon. Ernest C. Manning. Ernest C. Manning was the Moses of Alberta. His steady hand guided Albertans from the economic desert of the '30s to the promised land of economic self-sufficiency and prosperity in the '60s.

Today I want to draw attention to only one of Premier Manning's many important legacies, provincial control of natural gas transmission. Premier Manning saw that the economic value of Alberta's emerging natural gas industry depended on export markets. He also understood that every time a gas pipeline crosses a provincial or international border, it falls under federal jurisdiction. Thus, in 1954 Premier Manning created the Alberta Gas Trunk Line, the AGTL. The AGTL was designed to transport Alberta gas to provincial borders and the U.S. border, thus keeping gas shipment under provincial jurisdiction. In later years Premier Manning explained this strategy. "Theoretically . . . if we'd ever had a constitutional hassle over the export of gas under that arrangement, you could just simply turn the tap off at the border."

Contemporary Alberta's prosperity and control of its resources did not happen by accident. It was made possible by far-sighted decisions of leaders like Ernest C. Manning. Ernest Manning mused

about the possibility of conflict with Ottawa over Alberta's oil and gas revenues. For his successor, Peter Lougheed, this was not mere speculation. During his 15 years as Premier Alberta was constantly under attack by a rapacious federal bureaucracy. Thankfully for us, Peter Lougheed rose to the occasion. He had hardly been in office two years when in September of 1973 Mr. Trudeau surprised him with the announcement of the federal oil export tax. Lougheed's response was direct and unequivocal.

This appears to be the most discriminatory action taken by a federal government against a particular province in the entire history of Confederation. . . . The natural resources of the provinces are owned by the provinces under the terms of Confederation. The action taken by Ottawa strikes at the very roots of Confederation. And why just an export tax on oil? Why not on lumber from British Columbia, potash from Saskatchewan, nickel from Manitoba, pulp and paper, asbestos, and gold from Ontario and Quebec? Why only Alberta oil?

3:20

But Premier Lougheed was not anti-Ottawa; he was pro-Alberta. This explains why over the protest of the oil and gas industry he raised provincial royalty payments in March of 1974. Peter Lougheed wanted all Albertans to share in the province's resource wealth, but this was too much for Ottawa. Less than two months later, in May of '74, the Liberals brought in a new federal budget declaring that provincial royalties would no longer be deductible from federal corporate income tax. This punitive measure provoked a sharp rebuke from Peter Lougheed and also sent a lot of drilling rigs out of the province immediately. Lougheed denounced the Liberal budget on nondeductibility of royalties as "the biggest rip-off of any province that's ever occurred in Confederation's history."

Premier Lougheed's unflinching defence of Alberta resources brought several years of peace, but the energy wars erupted again in October of 1980, when the Liberals announced the national energy program. Lougheed lost no time in responding. In a televised speech that same afternoon the Premier told Albertans, "We have made it abundantly clear to the federal government that we would not, as a matter of principle, accept a . . . royalty upon Alberta's oil."

Lougheed did not just talk though; he took action. He announced the shut-in of 60,000 barrels of oil daily. He also launched a constitutional challenge to the natural gas export tax, a challenge, I might add, that Alberta won in the courts. This strategy worked and forced Trudeau back to the bargaining table. Lougheed subsequently cemented this victory over natural resources into the Constitution. Trudeau gave in to Lougheed's demand for a new and strengthened recognition of provincial responsibility for nonrenewable resources. Lougheed also shaped the new constitutional amending formula in a way that protected Alberta. From 1970 Lougheed had fought for the principle of provincial equality of all provinces with respect to a made-in-Canada amending formula.

Premier Lougheed took the lead in opposing Mr. Trudeau's attempt at unilateral patriation in 1980, and his persistence was rewarded in the final amending formula adopted in the 1982 Constitution in which no province received special treatment, thus ending the de facto constitutional veto enjoyed by Quebec. No Alberta Premier has achieved more for our province in the constitutional field than Peter Lougheed.

Last in time but first in responsibility for our province's current financial strength is our own Premier, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. When he assumed the reins of leadership in 1992, our province was drowning in debts and deficits, but the Premier led this province out of the annual operating deficits in just three years. The Alberta model, first scorned by political and media elites, soon was being copied by other provinces and eventually even by Ottawa.

This is the ultimate kind of leadership, leadership by example.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) applies. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Standing Order 29(2) does allow for up to five minutes of further comment and debate, I'm just wondering how the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View would conclude his speech had he been given another four and a half minutes.

Dr. Morton: I'll abuse the privilege. I'll go back to a section of the speech that I left out.

The Rutherford scholarships recognize the role that Premier Alexander C. Rutherford played in the establishment of higher education in Alberta. Today in the spirit of nonpartisanship I want our Liberal friends to know that I am wearing an original campaign pin from the 1905 campaign with the likeness of Alexander C. Rutherford on it. I'll be happy to let you see this afterwards. It will remind you of the distant days a century ago when the Liberals governed this province.

Returning to my conclusion, which will take 75 seconds, Premier Klein's prudent fiscal management soon produced a second and even greater legacy. He paid off our \$24 billion net debt. The result, as the throne speech notes, is that Alberta enters its second century with a strong economy, no debt, nation-leading rates of growth and employment. What a way to turn 100. When the history books are written, they will show again that Alberta's enviable status was not by accident but on purpose, and it was the legacy of the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Foothills-Rocky View are happy with the government's throne speech. We are excited about Alberta's second century because we agree with the throne speech that this province's 100-year history illustrates so unmistakably that Albertans have what it takes to be leaders. A society that forgets its past has no future. The path to our present can serve as our guide to the future.

Our Alberta strong and free did not happen by accident; it happened on purpose. It happened because of the wise and deliberate choices made by the statesman who has served as Premier of this province. I congratulate the government for a throne speech that proposes a plan of action that will continue this proud legacy. As Peter Lougheed liked to challenge his adversaries in Ottawa, how do you make Canada stronger by making a province or region weaker? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is: you don't. An Alberta strong and free is the best way to ensure a Canada strong and free.

Thank you.

The Speaker: My congratulations, hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar. That's the second time today that innovative use and knowledge of the Standing Orders allowed certain things to happen. This is good.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with tremendous pride and with a sense of great honour that I rise today to present this my maiden speech to this Legislature.

First, of course, I thank the voters of Edmonton-Manning. Edmonton-Manning is a diverse riding. It's one of the largest urban ridings in the province. Even though being in the city of Edmonton, it has a very large rural component, with many families whose

homesteading history goes back to the late 1800s and with farm families on those places for generations. There are also many diverse communities of very different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, there are many languages heard, and it is an extremely vibrant community. It is their support, those voters of Edmonton-Manning, that made me their voice in our Alberta Legislature.

I also thank the many volunteers that helped put me here, and I hope and pray that I can live up to their expectations. It is incredible the amount of work that goes into an election. The tens of thousands of pamphlets dropped, the tens of thousands of phone calls, the thousands of signs erected, the money donated and raised, and the many other volunteer activities all attest to the huge amount of work that was done to put me here. I cannot give enough thanks to those that helped.

It was a hard and difficult campaign in some ways. I extend again my sympathies to Premier Klein for the loss of his mother in the early stages of this campaign. It is extremely difficult to have such a difficult event in the middle of the emotional extremes of an election battle. I also give condolences to the family of our dear departed Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole. Also, my own dear and much beloved mother, Helen Backs, passed on to her heavenly reward on November 7, 2004, just 15 days prior to election day. I don't know if I've quite personally accepted that yet. I thank my extended family and friends, who provided great support for me in that difficult time, and I'll dedicate these humble words to my mom. I offer prayers to our Lord to all those who have lost a loved one in recent times.

I am a proud Albertan. I was born in Calgary and grew up on the city's west side. My dad immigrated to Canada from Holland in 1948. My mother's side of the family came to western Canada in 1871. Dad learned a trade, attended night school at SAIT, and developed a successful construction business and a lumberyard, which he later sold to go ranching in the Peace country near High Prairie. But he got design awards, a 12-page spread in *Better Homes and Gardens* for his houses, and he did well.

3:30

I went to the University of Alberta in Edmonton but always helped him in his businesses both in the south and the north of this province. We broke 140 acres of bush for a couple of years, and I've worked countless acres of land and worked on equipment, tended cattle, and ridden herd for many days. I even had five quarters myself for a while. Like most young guys on the farm I went off to work in construction except in the peak seasons. I got into industrial construction and pipeline. In Alberta I worked at many sites including Suncor, Syncrude, Sundance, Kepphills, Genesee, Joffre, Dow at Fort Saskatchewan, Hardisty, many other sites, and I pipelined from Brooks to Rainbow Lake. It's an experience that many Albertans have worked in and enjoyed.

Like most farm families and with an offer that really couldn't be refused, we eventually sold the farm. There's maybe one family living and farming on the old road, where there were probably 10 a quarter of a century ago. That's what's happened to farming in Alberta. I ran crews and later moved on to a lot of work in labour relations representation and labour market analysis. I've been an operating engineer for nearly 30 years. For many of those years I also had a place in Edmonton.

I've also travelled and worked in 45 countries in Europe, Africa, and South America. I've done a lot of wildlife photography. I've been to every province in Canada as well as the territories as well many of the states in the U.S. and Mexico. A year and a half ago I even made it north of Ellesmere Island and Greenland on an icebreaker expedition.

I've been involved in many election campaigns and have done some political work. I first door-knocked in what is now Edmonton-Manning nearly 20 years ago. I have great respect for the memory of Bettie Hewes, Laurence Decore, and Percy Wickman, all of whom I helped extensively and draw inspiration from. I hope that those varied experiences and knowledge of those people will help me in my work as an MLA.

We are in a tremendous process of change. Technological advances, environmental challenges, globalization, international terrorism, and the demographics of the baby boom all pose tremendous challenges which cry out for leadership. Albertans in the last election told me that they do not want a smug, self-satisfied, and complacent government. They want a government with a sense of purpose and a mission for our future.

In going door to door, I was told that even with our well-earned prosperity, people are afraid for their future and the future of their children. It is good to see this government finally wake up and begin to recognize the value of education and the real justice of investing in the future of our people. Such investments will pay dividends a hundredfold if only this government could fully and completely understand the idea and provide the full-meal deal called for by Alberta Liberals for education and postsecondary education in the last election.

Many seniors supported me in the last election, and I am indebted to them. Indeed, the huge increase in long-term care rates foisted on fixed-income elders led me to decide to join the race in Edmonton-Manning. My aunt was hit like a sledgehammer with that particular money grab. I couldn't believe how any government with one bit of a sense of respect for its pioneers could pull such an act. It's all about dignity; it's all about respect. We must show and our government must demonstrate that respect to those people that have built our province.

We must also be compassionate to those that are less fortunate. AISH and other supports are embarrassing. I heard that loud and clear.

There are some things that government has done well over the years. Our apprenticeship system still holds up against any in the land, even though there are some unscrupulous and exploitive types, I think, that would have it degraded. We must maintain and improve the apprenticeship system and decrease the cost of access to trades apprenticeship. We must also have a multifaceted approach to ensure that those who take up a trade stay in it. Many trades – and I've talked to many of them – lost a majority of their new apprentices in the last few years because of mass layoffs in industry after projects were finished and intermittent work, and the people just couldn't keep their young families provided for by that apprenticeship. There has to be change in the way that is done.

There is also too much hype and misinformation on the demographic time bomb of the baby boom. Do the arithmetic. World War II ended in 1945. It took a while for the boys to get back, get families started, and there's this common thing of a nine-month delay. Boomers started coming on in about 1947-48, and the baby boom lasted until the mid-60s. The first boomers will be 65 in 2012, the middle boomers in 2022, and the late boomers are still having kids. I really wonder how many will actually want to retire at 65.

There has certainly been far too much one-sided hype on shortages in the trades, yet there are shortages in health care occupations. So many health care professionals were let go in the government-led purges of the last decade that it's no wonder that it's hard to find nurses and doctors who want to work in our system. There are shortages in residential construction because this government downgraded the trade of carpenter. Yes, there are shortages from time to time in some trades, but Alberta can handle it, together with

a proper and paced development, without recourse to temporary foreign workers to take their jobs.

There has been a working trades labour mobility system in place in Canada for generations. Immigration has also been an important part of that process. Oft reported studies speak to demand, like Todd Hirsch's excellent survey of employers/organizations for the Canada West Foundation. These do that, though they only speak to demand. To only survey demand from employers for workers down the road is like surveying a grade 3 class on the supply of candy in two months: there will never be enough. There have been precious few public reports on the supply side. Some pending studies have been kept private or delayed, but I personally asked many of the trades organizations just last week if they could supply now and in the future. They said that they have no problem in supplying the major oil sands projects, and they said that there was availability from the traditional areas in the United States as well.

The temporary foreign worker program can only be one huge mistake. It will drive away apprentices. It will grab the best jobs and take the wages away. It will not work. You cannot treat labour like a commodity. I have heard some foreign companies come in and say that they should be able to come up to the tar sands and build their plants, like they do in the Persian Gulf or in Indonesia, and just grab 10,000 workers away from some country, just come up here and do that. Well, I don't think that that's right for Alberta.

Over 20 years ago, after the failure of the Alsands project – and there were great difficulties at that time in Alberta – I lobbied to grant royalty holidays for oil sands developers. Eventually this took hold, and I believe it has been a great success for Alberta and the development of our oil sands. For many Albertans and certainly for tradesmen there has always been a trade-off, a quid pro quo, so to speak. That quid pro quo for many Albertans is that in exchange for support for deferred royalty holidays for oil sands development there must be opportunity for Alberta businesses, opportunity for those top wages and benefits for Alberta workers, and development of our own economy for the benefit of Alberta. These opportunities provide taxes, develop our economy, and pay for the many advantages that we hold dear in our Alberta.

There's also the environment. Albertans want clean, clear water. Don't give us a water disease disaster like Walkerton in Ontario. Albertans want clean air. Clean up the pollution hanging increasingly over our cities. Why is it that the air quality in the pristine eastern slopes near Rocky Mountain House is worse than in downtown Vancouver? What about sour gas? What about agriculture? Do something for Albertans, not just the big American outfits. We must have fiscal responsibility. Enough said. But I wonder about the supplementary estimates released just yesterday.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are looking for a government of decision. The throne speech did not reflect that. Albertans are looking for change. I suspect that that will only happen in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

3:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should there be questions.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to a Member by Name

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair did not intervene when the last two speakers gave their remarks when they mentioned the name of a member in the Assembly, and he did that in deference to the fact that these were their maiden speeches. But it is against the rules to mention the name of an existing person in the Assembly, and there's

a reason for it. There's a reason for it. Every once in a while there arrives a name that perhaps can be pronounced in a number of different ways and if slurred improperly gives the wrong impression, at which point in time the phones in my office would light up incredibly. So the tradition is set to protect everyone. We mention only the name of the constituency.

Now the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure and pride that I rise today to give my maiden speech in this the 26th Legislature of Alberta before you, whom I congratulate on your re-election, sir, and before our hon. colleagues on both sides of the House, whom I also congratulate on their recent election.

I would like to begin by saluting the pioneers of our fine province, who have taught us all that we can turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones, obstacles into opportunities, and, yes, even bust into boom if we choose to. Our forebears were dealt many raw hands in the past 100 years, and because they played their cards right, we have all benefited. To their credit they applied the advice of Winston Churchill, "If you are going through hell, keep going." In many ways those who have come and gone before us have turned our small corner of the globe into a little piece of heaven, perhaps because they truly understood Charles Darwin's notion that it is not the strongest that survive; nor is it the most intelligent. It is those who are most adaptable to change. I believe, as our grandmothers and grandfathers must have, that the sky is the limit as long as we develop and implement the right attitudes, actions, resources, personnel, luck, and dreams.

Mr. Speaker, we've had dreams in the past, we have dreams in the present, and we will have dreams in the future. As such, I would like to thank all the residents of Calgary-Lougheed who have made a dream come true for me by electing me to this Legislature. I applaud all of my constituents in the extreme southwest corner of our city, which includes the communities of Woodbine, Woodlands, Shawnee Slopes, Millrise, Evergreen, Bridlewood, and the western half of Canyon Meadows, those who exercised their democratic right to vote during the last election. Whether they cast a ballot for me or for one of my political opponents, they participated in one of the most fundamental aspects of a free society, and I appreciate that they took their precious time to do so.

In my travels over the years I've met people around the world who struggle daily for the kinds of opportunities that many of us take for granted in this great province and country. We take it for granted all too often. As an example of this, we recently watched on television as the people of Iraq turned out in record numbers to risk their lives to line up at polling stations, even as they were being bombed, just to cast their single ballot. Such images of great human perseverance to participate in our electoral process should remind us of the great responsibility that we have been bestowed with by those who have elected us to represent them here today with honesty and with integrity.

I appreciate that the people of Calgary-Lougheed have put their faith in me, and I'm honoured with the great task of representing these wonderful people. It's a rather daunting proposition, but it is not in my nature to back away from a challenge. As some of you may know, it was certainly an uphill climb to earn three university degrees, work with the federal government for three terms, serve as an educator and administrator at all grade levels in three countries, and run my own business internationally, as well as climb Mount Everest twice. [some applause] Thank you.

I'm certainly grateful for these opportunities as they've led me to

this place right here right now. I'm very excited to utilize the insights I've gained for the benefit of those in Calgary-Lougheed and the rest of the province, and I cherish this monumental mandate as I pledge to do everything possible to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of people. I will do so by drawing upon the many lessons I have learned quite humbly over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I've often been asked what I have gained during some of my so-called Everest experiences. I can tell you that I've learned how tiny and insignificant yet how powerful each of us is. I've learned a little bit about how to relate to and encourage and empower others facing huge obstacles in life, whether they be mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural, or financial mountains in life. I know first-hand that no one can climb a mountain for anyone else, and at the same time we never climb a mountain all by ourselves.

When I compare mountaineering expeditions to political endeavours, I note that both require calculated individual application as well as well-planned teamwork. They're both very time-consuming projects and are difficult missions that some would never, ever care to even attempt. I'd also like to point out that, interestingly enough, it is the descent, not the ascent, that is the most dangerous part of an expedition.

Similarly, in Alberta, although we have scaled to the summit of our mountain of debt, I really believe that we have to watch our steps very carefully right now. We need to continue to power the engines of small and big business that got us here, and we need to reinvest in education, health, infrastructure, and transportation. That's exactly what I heard my constituents in Calgary-Lougheed say, and thankfully that's exactly what our legendary new Lieutenant Governor, Normie Kwong, shared in his inaugural Speech from the Throne.

This brings to mind one of my favourite quotations from our dearly beloved and recently departed Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole, who once said: "Money is like manure. If you spread it around it does a lot of good. But if you pile it up in one place it stinks like hell." Why would we do well to spread it around? Well, as the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises stated: "Those fighting for free enterprise and free competition do not defend the interests of those rich today. They want a free hand left to unknown men who will be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow."

Mr. Speaker, our future is at least partially influenced by our past, and I will share a short personal reflection along these lines. In my youth I was both attracted and repelled by politics. I can relate to social activist and rock star Bono, who said: in my teenage years I just despised politicians, but now I have more faith in them than I ever could have imagined.

I was first attracted to politics as a teenager as a delegate to Youth Parliament and the model United Nations. I suppose that in certain ways I may have been looking forward to this day ever since my high school social studies teacher imparted the idea that politics, when done well, is perhaps the greatest agent of positive social change that is available to us on this earth. Perhaps for this reason I have long believed that being a public servant is a mission, a vocation, an honour, and an obligation, something that gives meaning and purpose to life.

As politicians I believe that we're in a perfect position to help facilitate the incredible conditions under which we can create a new and improved province together. In my vision of Alberta's next century we will create and maintain a sustainable balance between industry, environment, and recreation. Alberta will be the best place in the world to live, learn, do business, and raise a family.

In the 21st century we will cultivate a diverse economy, with much more than just oil revenues to keep us from running a deficit.

We will never allow the next Alberta to go into debt. We will tax reasonably with huge return on investment for ourselves and the future of our children and our children's children. The Alberta of tomorrow will quite simply see us provide those children with the best education system in the world. We will plan the development of our communities together much earlier than we have in the past, and we will not spend hours sitting in traffic on our way to and from work.

I see a province in which we will all have equal access to excellent health care, and we will also have options to choose from in this regard. No one, especially seniors, will ever have to wait 18 months for an operation. I see an Alberta in which we treat the less advantaged with dignity and grace. We not only allow but we encourage and empower them to be the best that they can possibly be. In the microcosm we will live by good old-fashioned family values – we'll take care of ourselves, and we'll take care of each other – and in the macrocosm we will enjoy an even stronger Alberta within Confederation.

I believe that my Progressive Conservative colleagues have a similar vision, and I know that they have many more wonderful ideas to share, as well. As such, I would like to thank my PC brothers and sisters for sharing their incredible gifts and talents with our caucus and with our province.

3:50

I would also like to thank the members of our team who have represented Calgary-Lougheed before me, Judge Marlene Graham and the hon. Jim Dinning. These two have left very large shoes to fill, but it is affirming to follow in such great footsteps, and I wish them nothing but the best in their future endeavours. These predecessors have helped to lead us into these interesting times that we now enjoy, and I believe that it's only going to get even more exciting.

To address this future reality, our forward-thinking agenda, as laid out so well in the throne speech, is a testament to the tireless work of all former MLAs, current colleagues, and of course our esteemed Premier. As was outlined in the speech, I know that the people of Calgary-Lougheed are very excited about working towards an Alberta with the best educational, economic, health, and social systems in the world.

While my team and I knocked on 8,000 doors in our riding during the nomination and election, thousands of my constituents shared their thoughts with regard to how they think this government should tackle the issues of our time. But it was also what my constituents did not say that I think is worthy of note. I did not hear my constituents say that they wanted to be average citizens, and I did not hear them say that they wanted an average government. My colleagues heard this message as well, and as such they have planned a very ambitious agenda: to be national leaders on the issues that matter most to Albertans. While this is a tall task and while there is a predominance of doom and gloom in the news and in the beliefs of certain interest groups, I believe that we have a world-class system here in Alberta and that it will only improve with time. But from what people tell me, we need to do more now, and we will.

As this government pledges to open up 60,000 new spaces in our universities and increase training in nonacademic career paths, we will have the most-educated and well-trained workforce in all of Canada. Thankfully, this spending will not only benefit those who wish to attend postsecondary education in the next few years, since Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, will create an endowment fund to ensure that the youth of this province continue to benefit for decades to come. This is a reminder of one of the most endearing legacies to come from the Speech from the Throne, that being the Lois Hole

digital library, based at the University of Calgary but providing vast knowledge to all Albertans, that will help them overcome their educational obstacles.

However, there is one thing that the library cannot completely help us overcome, and that is our individual health status, which doesn't necessarily improve with a strong economy or great returns on the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Instead, it is dependent on people making informed choices on how to live their lives in a positive manner and being able to quickly access quality health care when they really need it.

As the newly-appointed chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission I look forward to the challenges and rewards of acting as the liaison between the health minister, AADAC, the Premier, cabinet, and my fellow colleagues in the Legislature. Substance abuse leads to a great number of health problems, as we all know, not just for the individual but for the family and friends of those who are addicted. We can spend a huge amount of funding in health facilities to treat the secondary symptoms that result from substance addiction, but unless we focus on the causes of these types of addictions and abuse, we'll never see the light at the end of the tunnel with respect to the elimination of substance abuse. I know that that is exactly what AADAC and its fine personnel strive to do every day.

So I believe that there are many reasons for hope. I anticipate that great strides will be made for those involved with substance abuse partially because of the commitment that the minister of health has made toward Alberta being the healthiest province in Canada, and I look forward to working with the minister, our Premier, and my colleagues on this.

Together we are faced with very innovative opportunities with regard to health care delivery. Many Albertans have told me that they want a health care system that provides them with the services that they need, with very careful attention as to how their health dollars are spent. As someone who has used our health system in the past, I honestly believe that we have very good people in the health sector, who provide Albertans with the best possible care that they can. Is our system perfect? Of course not, but we'll continue to make it the best it can be.

As we plan for the future of our health care system, I know that the constituents of Calgary-Lougheed want a system that works best for Alberta, one that includes aspects of a wide variety of models. The proposal to amend legislation that will allow for innovation in the health care field will create a very healthy debate and will explore all of the health care delivery options so that we won't miss out on any of the excellent approaches that are being utilized in systems across the world. The people of this province will be watching very closely as we make very important decisions on this matter, and I will be watching very closely, as well, to ensure that whatever systems we choose, every single Albertan will continue to receive quick and high-quality health care, regardless of their ability to pay.

In addition to these issues, I know that the people in Calgary-Lougheed are concerned about a clean and protected environment. Like many constituents and colleagues I also put a great amount of value on environmental conservation.

Sorry. Am I out of time? I'll sit down.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to hear what the concluding statement of this maiden speech would be, please.

The Speaker: Hon. member, proceed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, hon. member, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. One minute to go.

As I've mentioned, in addition to health care and education, I know that people in Calgary-Lougheed are concerned about a clean and protected environment. Like my colleagues and constituents I put a great amount of value on environmental conservation. Perhaps this is at least due to the close proximity of our fine riding to the beautiful Fish Creek provincial park.

When I draw attention to this, please note that I'm not speaking out against all industrial development. I believe that we sometimes pit environment and industry against each other, sometimes very unfairly. While future generations of Albertans deserve to have a healthy environment passed down to them, I believe that this does not need to be at the expense of this province's great economy. I am very proud to say that I believe this government has performed a great balancing act with regard to environmental protectionism and industry growth. Through strong government policy I'm confident that this relationship will grow even stronger in the future.

The last concerns of Calgary-Lougheed residents that I will mention today are those of transportation and infrastructure. I certainly share this concern, as well, but after speaking recently with the hon. minister in charge, I have never been more optimistic in this regard. Additionally, with the city of Calgary receiving \$1 billion recently and considering the arrangements for the southwest portion of the ring road being closer to reality than ever before, as evidenced in today's paper, I'm confident that we will continue to move in the right direction at an even faster pace than before.

Mr. Speaker, I maintain that the future is bright for all of us, and I look forward to the challenges ahead as we move onward and upward, building the legacy of Calgary-Lougheed and the future of Alberta together.

In closing, I would like to thank my personal hero, my wife, Jennifer, who is also the co-founder of our organization entitled the Mountain of Heroes. I'd like to thank my assistants, my campaign teams, my campaign manager, who is a 22-year-old former student of mine named Keith Marlowe, and of course my family and friends for their support and inspiration.

I would like to once again express my appreciation to the constituents of Calgary-Lougheed for the opportunity to be their representative, and I very much look forward to their continued feedback over the years. I want to assure them that I will do everything possible to keep their issues at the front of the Alberta agenda.

Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me an extended period to share my thoughts on the past, present, and future of our fair province.

The Speaker: Before I call on the next speaker, hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, you have a special introduction? Proceed.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It makes me extremely proud and pleased to rise today and acknowledge the one person I love the most in this world, more than anybody else except for our two children: my wife, Marwa, who is sitting in the public gallery. I would like her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Wow, you earned points.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the hon. Member for

Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

4:00

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I get the chance to congratulate you on your re-election as the Speaker of this esteemed Assembly, and I would like to also convey congratulations to the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair of Committees.

I'm extremely pleased to have the privilege of responding to the Speech from the Throne and delivering my initial or inaugural address, and I thank you for this opportunity today. It is with great pride that I stand before you today representing my constituency and the constituents of Edmonton-McClung.

My constituency is named after Nellie McClung, of course, one of the Famous Five, a visionary, a brave person, a person who fought for equality and fairness. She was an individual who had the courage and resolve necessary to challenge the status quo. She had the courage and vision to change people's lives for the better. I am honoured to be representing a constituency named after her.

I am also proud to be living in a neighbourhood by the name of Lymburn, which represents a sizable portion of my constituency and is named after the hon. J.F. Lymburn, this province's Attorney General between 1926 and 1935.

Edmonton-McClung has a population of about 38,000, and about one-sixth of them, Mr. Speaker, are school-aged children and youth. The people of Edmonton-McClung live in both rural and urban settings, and they are predominantly middle- to upper middle-class citizens, where the average household income exceeds \$80,000 per year.

I plan to work hard to ensure that the residents in my riding, in my constituency, continue to have prosperity and enjoy a good quality of life. Whether they're still working or retired, they are or were hard-working individuals and families, and for that they deserve recognition and support. Their achievements have to be highlighted and their contributions to society rewarded.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Having said that, we also have an incidence of low income in our riding of about 12 and a half per cent. This is 1 in 8 families, Mr. Speaker, so obviously this is an area which requires our immediate attention, and I plan to work on finding a solution.

The population in Edmonton-McClung is generally on the younger side. However, we highly value and recognize our seniors. It is a growing group, and more and more households in Edmonton-McClung now have at least one elderly person living with them. Mr. Speaker, I have always had a soft spot in my heart for both children and youth and for senior citizens, and that's probably going back to my years of community pharmacy practice, where most of my patients and clients were either young people or elderly. The seniors of this province have worked very hard to get us where we are today, and they deserve our recognition and care. We should be asking them for advice and input, and we ought to build on their wisdom and expertise. The young people, on the other hand, represent our future, and looking after them today is a sound investment for a better tomorrow.

Next I would like to congratulate all members of this 26th Legislature, new and returning, and wish them well in carrying out their duties. I remind them and myself that we chose to be servants of the public. We answered the call for a life of selflessness and dedication. May you all have the courage and insight needed to help the people of this great province, and may you gain satisfaction and pride in the work that you do for all Albertans.

I need to take a moment now to recognize my dear wife, Marwa, my two children, Zeyad and Jana, my parents, my brother, my sister, and my sister-in-law. I would not have made it this far without their love and support. To my family, thank you sincerely for being with me, by my side, and behind me.

It's important that I thank the many volunteers who believed in me and worked tirelessly day and night on my campaign. The youngest person on my campaign team was 12 years old, and the oldest person was in his 80s. Without my committed team of volunteers, without the community support I would not be standing here today.

To my volunteers, my friends, and my neighbours in Edmonton-McClung, I want to tell you all: thank you very much. I love you all, and I appreciate all you have done. We ran a spirited and structured campaign. We had a message to deliver, and my team and I delivered it effectively and efficiently. We kept to the high road, and we stayed above board throughout the writ period. It was undeniably difficult, and the task seemed enormous at times, but we had fun, and we made many friends. Our hard work and dedication resonated very well throughout the riding – and it's not a small riding – and the people of Edmonton-McClung reacted very favourably.

It is those people, Mr. Speaker, who I would definitely and ultimately like to thank and appreciate, the voters of Edmonton-McClung. They have put their trust in me to be their MLA. I have lived in this constituency for the past 15 years and have come to know many of its people, young and old. I am blessed to have also worked in the constituency for 11 years, and I am proud of the many wonderful people who have frequented my pharmacy and entrusted me with their health. Now they've hired me to represent them here and defend their interests.

I quote H.L. Mencken's remark when he said: "It is inaccurate to say that I hate everything. I am strongly in favour of common sense, common honesty, and common decency. This makes me forever ineligible for public office." Mr. Speaker, this is where we differ. Many people, including myself, who are in favour of common sense, honesty, and decency are recognized by people around them and are voted in. The people of Edmonton-McClung wanted a hard-working MLA to represent their points of view and deliver their ideas to the higher circles of government, so today I am going to repeat and renew my promise to them. I will always tell you the truth and share all the facts with you, I will honestly work for you and wholeheartedly defend your interests, I will constantly seek your input and direction, I will always be visible in the community, and my team and I will remain accessible to all of you. Again, to the voters of Edmonton-McClung, thank you and God bless you and your families.

Further, I would like to thank and congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, who led our campaign with class and style. We are a party with a vision, and our platform is full of ideas for a brighter future. I am honoured and humbled to be a part of this wonderful team. As the Official Opposition we promise the people of this province that we will leave no stone unturned. We will ask the hard questions, and we will advocate for their causes. As the youngest caucus member I promise to be a quick study. I'm looking forward to working alongside my esteemed colleagues to restore accountability and transparency, bring back faith in politics and politicians, and revive the democratic process in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the following quotation by George Jean Nathan with the people of Alberta. "Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote." Voting is a right and a privilege people in other parts of the world, as my hon. colleague there alluded to, fight for and die for. So it cannot be stressed

enough that all of us as electors and as voters exercise this right and use the tool that's available to us to decide our own destiny and future.

When I moved to Canada 15 years ago, I knew this was a great land. When I chose Alberta, I felt this was the one part of Canada with the most potential. When I embraced Edmonton, I knew its people would become my big family, and when I picked Edmonton-McClung, I was sure it would be my neighbourhood and the people in Edmonton-McClung would be my friends. Mr. Speaker, I was right. I'm proud to be a Canadian, an Albertan, and an Edmontonian.

Four months ago I was a successful health care professional and a businessman. Today, Mr. Speaker, I am an MLA, a legislator, and a critic. I assure you that I will work to serve all members of this Assembly, the constituents of Edmonton-McClung, and all Albertans to the best of my ability regardless of their political affiliation or ideology. I will do my best as an MLA and as the Official Opposition critic for Government Services and Innovation and Science.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this privilege of speaking today. I look forward to working with you and learning from you.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a new member it is a pleasure and an honour to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Foothills and address the Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne. This is my first opportunity to formally address the Assembly, and in doing so, I would like to provide some background information on both the constituency of Calgary-Foothills and myself.

4:10

First, I would like to begin by congratulating all of my colleagues in the Assembly on achieving the opportunity to represent their constituents and to represent Alberta.

I would also like to congratulate the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for his election as Deputy Speaker of the House for the 26th Legislature. I'm well aware of the distinction you bring to the chair and the House, and I look forward to participating in what will be a constructive and meaningful session under your watch as well as the watch of the Speaker, the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. Speaker, as a new Member for Calgary-Foothills I have some extremely large shoes to fill. Calgary-Foothills has been held by Conservatives for the past three decades. The late hon. Len Werry was the first member to serve our constituency, from 1971 until his untimely death in 1973. His thriving political career was cut prematurely short by a tragic automobile accident. The hon. Stewart McCrae then served the constituency from 1973 to '82; the late hon. Janet Koper from '82-89; and of course the former Finance minister, the hon. Pat Nelson, who served with remarkable diligence and distinction from 1989 to 2004.

I'm honoured, Mr. Speaker, that the constituents of Calgary-Foothills have provided me with the opportunity to represent them here in the Legislature, and I look forward to carrying on the tradition of virtue and integrity established by those past members, that helped establish Calgary-Foothills as the best constituency in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, today is an especially proud occasion for myself and my family. It was almost 30 years ago, on May 21, 1975, that my father, Dr. Neil Webber, rose in the House to deliver his maiden

speech as the Member for Calgary-Bow. He served 14 years in the Legislature under the Lougheed and Getty governments and served with honesty and integrity. There are two hon. colleagues in this House, the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw and the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, who, I am sure, feel as I do today, and that is feeling tremendously proud of our fathers and tremendously proud to carry on the family tradition of public service.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading through my father's maiden speech recently, and I came across a portion that I would like to share. In the education segment of his speech my father made a reference to Bertrand Russell, a noted English author, mathematician, and philosopher. Lord Russell felt that education is, as a whole, "the strongest force on the side of what exists and against fundamental change."

My father went on to explain that although many tend to agree with Russell's philosophy and that educators have never come to grips with what education should be, he believed Alberta's education system needed to be geared towards helping people progress toward their own goals of self-fulfillment. This meant support for research in our universities and colleges for the improvement of the quality of learning, support for well-planned programs for early childhood education, support for continuing educational opportunities for adults, and support for specialized programs for the handicapped and the gifted. He concluded his remarks on education by stating that "we cannot overlook the challenge to provide for future generations the best educational opportunities possible."

Mr. Speaker, while I read that, I could not help but think about how far we've come in 30 years but at the same time how far we have yet to go. During the Speech from the Throne my father's remarks kept coming to mind. Through Bill 1, the commitments to keep tuition fees affordable and increase spaces for students in Alberta's postsecondary institutions, the government is ensuring that future generations of Albertans are provided the best educational opportunities possible.

Mr. Speaker, before I address some other specifics of the throne speech, I feel it is important to bring some attention to some unique qualities of Calgary-Foothills. As a born-and-raised Calgarian I have watched the constituency change from rolling hills of native grassland and grazing cattle to the thriving residential communities of Edgemont, Citadel, Hamptons, Hidden Valley, and Sherwood. With the recent boundary changes citizens in the far south were shifted to the Calgary-Varsity constituency while the riding was expanded west to take in an area formerly of Calgary-North West. From a bird's-eye view the riding is located at the top northwest corner of the city limits.

Calgary-Foothills has a population of just over 40,000, the majority of which are families which have achieved a college or university education, own their own house, and have an average annual family income of close to \$100,000. It is interesting to note that more than 70 per cent of individuals residing in Calgary-Foothills are postsecondary graduates. That's the second-highest percentage of postsecondary graduates in Alberta. I know what most members are thinking: the June and Ward Cleaver family, including Wally and Beaver, live in Calgary-Foothills. But I can assure you that these are mere statistics. Calgary-Foothills is very much an economically diverse constituency with many hard-working families of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. We have representation from almost every profession. Professional and retail services are the most common jobs in Calgary-Foothills. Six point eight per cent of the residents are low income, with 4 per cent of the riding's income coming from government transfer payments, the third lowest rate in Alberta.

My background in construction and in the trades has brought me especially close to the many tradesmen and women living in the constituency. These individuals are the backbone of our vibrant economy, and I feel privileged to represent them here in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier how far we have come in 30 years but that we have a ways yet to go. That sentiment rings true throughout remarks made by past Calgary-Foothills members. In 1983 the member for Calgary-Foothills mentioned that it was not uncommon for students at the University of Calgary to line up even in the middle of the night for time on computer terminals. Many classes were filled to overflowing, and some were even conducted by closed-circuit television. That was over 20 years ago. Today the majority of Albertans and students have computers in their home and do the majority of their class work through the Internet. Obtaining class notes, contacting classmates and professors, submitting assignments, and even obtaining graduate and master's degrees can all be accomplished on line.

The technical advances that are being introduced daily only strengthen the enormous possibilities for what the future has in store for education in Alberta, and the Supernet is a large part of that. Alberta is one of the most wired jurisdictions in North America, and that is instrumental in ensuring that Albertans have access to the information and possibilities they deserve.

Yet there are still not enough spaces in Alberta's postsecondary institutions, and the limits placed on registration have increased the competition to a level beyond anything most Albertans can conceive. The effects of these limits are closing the door to advanced education for a number of Albertans. Tuition fees are rising at a rate that is making it extremely difficult even with funding assistance for some Albertans to attend postsecondary institutions. I was pleased to hear that the Alberta government is taking action on tuition fees across the province, freezing them this year and working towards a tuition policy that will strengthen the Alberta advantage.

As was the case 20 years ago and the concern of my father 30 years ago, individuals that want to advance their education are not always provided that opportunity due to a lack of open spaces at Alberta's universities, colleges, and technical institutions. The government's commitment to increasing the number of available spaces by 15,000 in the next three years, 30,000 after six years, and 60,000 by the year 2020 is something that Albertans can be proud and excited about. These commitments, along with the promises made in Bill 1, a long-term plan to keep Alberta's education strong and successful, an endowment fund, the creation of a centre for Chinese studies, and the Lois Hole digital library are an incredible centennial gift for a debt-free Alberta and all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Calgary-Foothills are also extremely excited about the \$3 billion committed to municipal infrastructure. I'm sure that my colleagues will agree along with our constituents that it will go to good use and is a very welcome addition to the future of the great city of Calgary.

In conclusion, I would like to also quote Lord Bertrand Russell.

Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth – more than ruin – more even than death . . . Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible, thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habit. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man.

I thank the hon. members for their attention, and I encourage a debate deep in thought culminating in an Alberta that will ensure another hundred years of greatness. I look forward to a fruitful session.

Thank you.

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar in regard to the Speech from the Throne which was delivered by His Honour Norman Kwong, Lieutenant Governor, in this First Session of the 26th Legislature.

Certainly, this is a wonderful year for the province as we celebrate our 100th anniversary. I certainly hope that there are not many dark days this year like we had last Thursday. I have a great deal of confidence, as the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar do as well, in the future prosperity of this province. We still have a lot of work to do to make this province better for each and every citizen.

I'm pleased to see at this time that the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House is reading, but I would remind that hon. member that newspapers, as I understand the rules of the House and the decorum in this House, are not to be opened and read in that matter in this Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this province and we look at all the constituents that are represented by the 83 of us, we have to stop and pause, and we have to reflect on exactly what is good for everyone. We have to look at all the issues, not just some of the issues some of the time but all of the issues all of the time. We can start on the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar, which now is made up of communities on both sides of the North Saskatchewan River. We're looking at the communities of Cloverdale, Strathearn, Holyrood. We're also looking at Ottewell, Capilano, Gold Bar of course, Terrace Heights, Forest Heights, Hardisty, Fulton Place, Riverdale, Boyle, McCauley, Commonwealth areas. Edmonton-Gold Bar is a diverse constituency. I am proud to now represent the neighbourhood around Commonwealth Stadium. I'm proud to represent the neighbourhood that's affectionately called Little Italy in the city of Edmonton and parts of the Chinese community east of 97th street. In fact, all hon. members of this Assembly, if you're looking for any good restaurants with extensive menus and varied prices, I would urge you to visit some of the finer establishments in Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mrs. McClellan: I've never seen you in any of them.

Mr. MacDonald: Even the Minister of Finance. Certainly I know that the hon. minister is very busy, but she, too, would be welcome in the eateries in Edmonton-Gold Bar.

An Hon. Member: Are you buying, Hugh?

Mr. MacDonald: No, I'm not buying, but certainly hosting budgets don't seem to be limited with this government, and I'm sure arrangements could be made.

Now, I would like to formally thank the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar for re-electing me as their representative. I was joined by many people who worked very hard on our campaign, and during the campaign the citizens told me that they would give me another opportunity to represent them in the Legislative Assembly if I would hold this government to task, hold this government accountable, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to do my utmost to keep in mind exactly what they told me. In a democracy there has to be government and there has to be opposition, and the opposition has a duty and an obligation to hold the government accountable. I was given instructions to hold this government accountable.

On behalf of all the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar, I would like to congratulate each and every member of this Legislative Assembly on their election victory. I would also like to congratulate the Speaker and all others that were successful in the internal elections that were recently conducted in this Legislative Assembly. It is very important that we always remember during this term the citizens, the taxpayers.

Now, Edmonton-Gold Bar would be no different than a lot of other constituencies in this province. People are doing very well economically, yet there are some people who are not. There are issues around poverty. There are many people in the constituency who during the last election certainly wanted AISH rates increased. They did not want to wait and have this studied any further. They wanted an immediate increase in AISH rates. People in this province can no longer afford to get by on as little as \$855 a month, and I don't think it is the right thing to do to expect people on fixed incomes in this day and age to try to get by on as little as that. Certainly the minimum wage needs to be increased.

There has to be, also, more work done on the whole issue of homelessness. People have remarked to me that in the last 10 years the number of homeless people not only in Edmonton but also when I visit Calgary has increased. We can do more, and we can do it better. Regardless of whether it's in the middle of the winter or in the summer, if any Albertan wants to go somewhere to seek shelter and perhaps have a shower and get a meal, those facilities should be available for them.

I had an interesting opportunity to visit one of the faith-based charities in Edmonton-Gold Bar that provides breakfast for citizens, a hot breakfast, three mornings a week. I was astonished in the time that I was there to observe the number of elementary-aged school-children who came in, and that was their first meal of the day. I certainly hope, Mr. Speaker, that it wasn't their only meal of the day, but it was their first meal of the day before they went off to school. I don't think that that is part of what we all talk about in this province as being the Alberta advantage. I just don't think it is.

Now, the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, doesn't address, in my view, this whole idea of importing temporary replacement workers in Alberta. Certainly I was as astonished as many others were to hear last June that this was going to be a way that we're going to deal with these perceived labour shortages in this province. I would ask respectfully of this government to have another look at that policy.

Youth unemployment in this province is double the provincial average. Close to 10 per cent – 9 and a half per cent – of Alberta youth between the ages of 16 and 24 are unemployed. Why are these people not getting apprenticeships? Why are they not going up to Fort McMurray and participating in the economic boom? That's one group. Alberta First Nations citizens have a chronic rate of unemployment. They are not included in this. There are other Canadians. There are many different groups that should be contacted and should be encouraged to take out apprenticeships, if we have this perceived trade shortage, before we resort to importing temporary replacement workers into this economy.

4:30

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have here from the Legislature Library the Employed Labour Force in the agricultural sector of Alberta. There has been a significant decline, a 23 per cent drop between 2002 and 2003, in the number of employed people in mixed farming. Where did those people go? Who knows? But I think that before we have seminars at NAIT and SAIT and dream up ways to get temporary workers into this province, we have to have a sound policy to encourage farmers to get certification in some of the compulsory

trades so that if they want during these difficult economic times to work out off the farm, then they can get the maximum amount of money for their labour. I would encourage the government at this time, in light of the BSE issue and the fact that farm incomes in this province are declining significantly, that that would be an initiative that we could implement before we allow these guest workers from who knows where to be imported at what wage rates.

Also with the agricultural sector, and I certainly hope that we will address this sometime. I don't see directly mentioned in the throne speech the money that we're investing in BSE scientific research. I would urge the government at this time to take, whether it's part of the \$30 million package – I would hope that part of that money is going to be used for scientific research into a live blood test to detect BSE, a live test that could be conducted for a modest amount per head, maybe \$5, maybe \$7, maybe \$10 a head, an accurate, live blood test for BSE. Maybe that's what some of this money is going to be used for, and this hon. member is not aware of it.

Now, in the time that I have left, there are a number of issues but certainly education. Many hon. members in this Assembly have talked about public education, postsecondary education, and I'm glad to see that the government has at least taken some plays out of the Alberta provincial Liberal Party's playbook and are now finally recognizing the seriousness of the underfunding of postsecondary education in this province. Don't declare it a victory that after allowing tuition fees to skyrocket for the best part of 10 years, to freeze them and think that that is enough. It's not. I know that this government did that with health care premiums, allowed them in the last term to go from roughly \$600 million to well over \$900 million and then used that tax increase – and it was a tax increase – to allow a modest reduction for some citizens. Seniors certainly welcomed that tax reduction, but don't forget about the rest of the citizens.

Now, the community of Edmonton-Gold Bar is a settled community. It is well established, and it's going through transition. Because it's going through a transition, it is not necessary to be forcing the public school board because of this government's utilization policy to close neighbourhood schools. An hon. member earlier in his speech talked about Peter Lougheed and some of Peter Lougheed's views and Peter Lougheed's visions. Well, Peter Lougheed's vision was also a community school, the idea that a community school was a part of the community, a big part of the community and was not necessarily just open from 8:30 in the morning until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and once the children and the staff left, that was it. A school was part of the community, and it could be used for many things other than the routine school day. This has been forgotten by this part of the Progressive Conservative dynasty.

I'm disappointed that my time is up, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As seems to have become the tradition in the House this afternoon, I too very much would like to hear the conclusion of the remarks from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: I had many issues I was hoping to discuss this afternoon on behalf of the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar. Certainly, education and the closure of our schools is an important one, but also during the campaign whether I was at the Capilano Mall or I was at the Italian Centre, people would come up to me and say: we realize the government is spending money. I would say: they certainly are. In my time in the Legislative Assembly the provincial

budget has increased by over 50 per cent, and constituents and voters would look at me and they would say: "Where's the money going? We still have problems. We still have long lists for health care access. We still have potholes bigger than hubcaps in our streets. We still have bridges that need repair. We still have major roads that need to be built. We need hospitals in Calgary. We need schools on the outskirts of Edmonton." All this money is being spent, but the citizens don't know where it's going. They demand accountability from their government, and they feel at this time that they're not getting it now.

For instance, how fast this government spends money, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is a valid example. We've expanded the size of government.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, you're rising on a point of order?

Point of Order

Question and Comment Period

Mr. Hancock: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 29 with respect to time limits on debates, 29(2) provides for the five-minute question-and-answer period. I think both the strict wording of the rule and the intention of the rule was that there be an opportunity for members to ask questions and get brief answers.

Now, I can appreciate that one might read into the comment by Edmonton-Rutherford, "I would like to hear the conclusion of the debate," a question as to, "What was the conclusion of your debate?" It certainly didn't invite a lengthy continuation of the debate. It asked for the conclusion, and a brief answer to the request for a conclusion would have been appropriate, but a lengthy conclusion is certainly not under that rule.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you want to respond to that?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker, briefly. I'll be brief because I would certainly like to conclude my speech whether the hon. member wants to hear it or not. Certainly, a precedent was set this afternoon, not by members on this side of the House but by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor and by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North. The Government House Leader perhaps should discuss that with them privately, not on the floor of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Did you have anything more to add, hon. Government House Leader?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, if nobody objected earlier, that's not my problem. The fact of the matter is that there is a rule, and it ought to be interpreted appropriately. Just the fact that the practice was let go, perhaps, earlier this afternoon is not an answer to the question of whether the rule is being appropriately used.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, thank you for the opportunity to make my first ruling as Deputy Speaker. I would believe that the Speaker has ruled on this earlier today by allowing this, and I would allow the hon. member to take up the rest of the five minutes. That may be very short by this time.

Debate Continued

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, an example of government spending and the growth of government is the creation of the new ministry, affectionately on this side of the

House referred to as RAGE, Restructuring and Government Efficiency. This department has only been in existence, by the time this quarterly report came out, for a little better than six weeks, yet we have a \$38 million line item associated with it. Thirty-eight million dollars. That is just one example of government spending that in my view is out of control and not accountable. We don't have \$200,000 to keep a school open in the community of Edmonton-Gold Bar, but we can spend money like this.

4:40

Also, electricity deregulation is an ongoing concern for the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and it's not addressed in this speech, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker. We need, really, to get to the bottom of electricity deregulation, and we're not, unfortunately. I would urge this government to unplug electricity deregulation and take another idea from this side of the House and adopt our low-cost electricity plan. Consumers demand it.

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has elapsed, hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: It's up?

The Deputy Speaker: I apologize, hon. member. Apparently, it's not. You have two minutes. I was in error. Please carry on.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Electricity deregulation is a very complex issue, and I appreciate the extra time.

Now, when we talk about electricity deregulation, we have to talk about what has happened in the last seven years in this province. We have seen time after time after time citizens expressing their outrage at the cost of electricity. What caused these prices to go up? We had one of the stablest, one of the most affordable electricity generation and distribution systems in North America, and it just went crazy starting in 1999, year 2000, year 2001. It was just before the 2001 election that this government capped electricity prices and then returned money to the citizens. However, it was the citizens' own money.

This system that was developed by this government, this government is totally responsible for. It had big loopholes in it. Outfits from across the border, Enron in particular, looked at the rules that were set up by this government and, as far as my research indicates, came up with this whole notion of Project Stanley, which was . . . [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired] I'll get to that later.

Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Deputy Speaker: I would just like to, before I recognize the next speaker, also point out to the hon. members that Standing Order 13(4)(b) says, "When a member is speaking, no person shall . . . interrupt that member, except to raise a point of order." There were a number of interruptions there that could have been called as well.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Debate Continued

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to respond to the Speech from the Throne, given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. In his address the Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, reiterated the government's commitment to a superior education system in this province. This year the focus is on making adjustments to the postsecondary system so that it is more tailored to respond to the changing environment.

There have been many exciting events in the Wetaskiwin-

Camrose constituency since we last sat in this Chamber. On July 1, 2004, Augustana University College became the Augustana Faculty, the newest campus and faculty of the University of Alberta. This partnering with the University of Alberta creates a centre of education that will provide greater opportunity for students to study in rural settings as well as increasing the number of university seats in Alberta. As a result of this change, my constituency is fast becoming a hub of learning, with the University of Alberta campus in Camrose, the NorQuest College campus in Wetaskiwin, and Maskwachees Cultural College in Hobbema. The Wetaskiwin NorQuest campus is their largest outside of Edmonton and provides students with the opportunity to study high school credit courses as well as computing, financial, and other job preparation programs.

Leading in learning is one of the four pillars upon which Alberta's 20-year plan is built. The plan to expand Alberta's postsecondary spaces by 15,000 in the next three years, with more to follow, and the announcement of Bill 1 of this Legislature will mark the start of Alberta's reinvestment in the postsecondary education system. By continuing to invest in the education of Albertans, we will be strengthening our workforce by providing the opportunities for them to increase their skills. We will also be providing the human capital necessary to build on the next pillar of the 20-year plan, namely unleashing innovation.

Mr. Speaker, the research and development industry is growing at a fantastic rate in this province. We have world-class universities where leading-edge research is taking place in a variety of fields from medical technology to agricultural research to nanotechnology. However, research in this province is not conducted solely in our universities. Industry partners with government agencies to conduct research and develop innovative ideas in the province.

In particular, I would like to speak today about the Alberta Research Council, or ARC, an organization of which I am pleased to be the chair. ARC was created in 1921 to help Albertans harness its resources for greater economic impact. Over its more than 80-year history the organization has leveraged public investment to create economic opportunities designed to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of Alberta industries. It was this principle that led ARC to understand how to use aspen poplar to create an oriented strandboard, OSB, industry in the 1980s, a \$2 billion industry today, and now has ARC looking at doing the same with straw and other agricultural fibres to help establish a strong bioproducts industry in Alberta.

Today ARC continues to work hand in hand with industry and in collaboration with governments and universities to make Alberta a leading centre for technology development and commercialization. The organization supports the growth of innovative companies by providing research and development services and helping companies apply and commercialize technology. Its close to 500 highly skilled scientists and engineers work in key sectors that drive Alberta's economy: manufacturing, energy, life sciences, forestry, agriculture, and environment.

Energy and life sciences are key strategic economic thrusts for Alberta, and the Alberta Research Council is contributing with the technical underpinnings and applied research and development to move these industries forward. In energy ARC's activities are driven by the need to build government/industry/academic collaboration across the research continuum to acquire, develop, adopt, and adapt transformational energy technologies.

ARC has aligned its energy, integrated resource management, and enabling technology activities to deliver on the six core programs of Alberta Energy's innovation network, known as the EnergyINet strategy. These include clean coal, resource recovery, carbon dioxide management, water management, and alternate energy.

ARC has also identified a number of crosscutting themes to enhance the impact of the EnergyINet process. These are advanced materials, flow sensors and controls, economics, risk assessment, process integration, system engineering and modelling, and technology commercialization.

In the area of life sciences ARC's focus is on helping local companies get their new products and processes to market more effectively and on creating value-added opportunities for future business built on life sciences. ARC's nutraceutical and pharmaceutical services business has adopted a new model to support local biotechnology companies realize their product development goals. The organization also acts as a catalyst in helping to create a strong regional bioproducts cluster in the greater Edmonton region.

4:50

In this regard the organization is providing a gateway for bioproducts development in Alberta, which is one aspect that enhances value-added industry in Alberta. For instance, ARC is a founding member of the new institute for agricultural sciences Alberta, sometimes known as IFASA, along with the University of Alberta and Alberta Agriculture. Bioproducts are one of six priority research areas for this institute.

ARC has also recently initiated construction of an agricultural fibre pilot processing facility, expanding its existing physical infrastructure to support the growth and development of an agricultural bioproducts industry in Alberta. This new bioproducts processing and scale-up facility is expected to be on stream and operating early in 2006. It will include laboratories and pilot scale processing capabilities that will support collaborative bioproduct based research and product development between the three founding partners of IFASA, industry, and others.

While the initial focus will be on agrifibre-based products such as paper, fibreboard, and plastic composite materials, the facility will also provide a critical building block to the infrastructure and capability required to add value to Alberta's agricultural crops. This facility will also serve to support existing and emerging industries as well as the training of new graduate students from universities and other educational institutions.

Mr. Speaker, this is but a glimpse of the work that ARC is currently involved in, and ARC is but one of several institutions within the province that are designed to drive research and development in key areas in Alberta. By supporting our postsecondary institutions and nurturing research centres such as the universities of Alberta and of Calgary and of Lethbridge as well as ARC, we can help Alberta continue to move towards a knowledge-based economy. The advanced education agenda discussed in the throne speech is vitally important to my constituency and to the research initiatives and programs in our educational institutions of higher learning and research centres such as the ARC. Surely, this will ensure success and prosperity in Alberta for our next century.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure today to rise and address the hon. Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne, given on March 2. First, I would like to congratulate His Honour on this appointment to the Lieutenant Governor's position. The speech His Honour gave was done very well, and I would like to commend His Honour on the fine job that he did. I look forward to working with the Lieutenant Governor in the coming years.

As well, I will take this time to pay tribute to his predecessor, Lois

Hole. She was a remarkable lady who brought so much dignity and warmth to the Lieutenant Governor's office. Her Honour was such a beloved Albertan, and she loved this province greatly. It was a delight to work with her, and she is surely going to be missed.

I would like to begin by thanking the people of West Yellowhead for returning me to serve here in this Legislature. I appreciate the support, and I'd like to thank you all for your confidence in me. I will represent you to the best of my ability and will always assure that the interests of West Yellowhead are heard at the government table.

I would also like to thank those who helped me with my campaign this year. I especially wish to send special thanks to Darlene Beckstrand, who took time off to assist me with the challenge of seeking re-election. I greatly appreciate her help, and she has decided to return as my assistant here at the Legislature, which shows me that she is extremely strong to be able to keep me in line. I look forward to working with her over the next four years. As well, I wish to thank all the volunteers who helped me. Without them I would not be here today.

Mr. Speaker, the West Yellowhead constituency has been through its ups and downs over the last six years. I think that the region is a great representation of the entire province and a fine example how diversification is so important for economic sustainability.

In the Speech from the Throne His Honour mentioned that the next Alberta will have a diverse and growing economy, and I could not agree more. Diversity is the most important economic strategy that this province must take hold of. Dependency on one industry to continually maintain an economy is just too risky for any economy. I was very proud to hear that this government is pushing for more diversification, and I think this government realizes the importance of this strategy.

Diversification is something that West Yellowhead is greatly involved with right now. Grande Cache, an extremely beautiful community in the West Yellowhead constituency, shows the importance of diversity. The town of approximately 3,800 people is moving forward and developing other industries outside the mining industry to ensure that there will be long-term sustainability. Long-term growth is at the forefront of their minds, and they are developing industries such as tourism to keep themselves moving forward in this province's new century.

West Yellowhead constituents also encourage diversification through the development of the Grande Alberta Economic Region. The Grande Alberta Economic Region is an alliance of 13 rural municipalities, towns, villages, and one associated member, Jasper national park. This is a nonprofit corporation. It's made up of businesses, government, and industry stakeholders as an agency on behalf of its member municipalities. It began in 2001 and has been strengthening every year since.

The goal of this partnership is to ensure that the region can take what industry it has and make it better and diversify. The alliance realizes the greatest opportunity to diversify the five major industries: agriculture, oil and gas, mining, forestry, and tourism. For instance, the oil and gas industry is extremely hot in the constituency. The industry is providing so many jobs not only in the oil and gas industry, but the spinoffs for small business have been remarkable. Alberta as a province depends on the oil and gas industry, as do many in West Yellowhead. It is an important economic driver but not the only one. Many communities are looking to develop other opportunities to supplement the industry.

I mentioned tourism a few minutes ago, and with the development of the tourism levy West Yellowhead is in great shape to market itself to the world. The levy is a great example of how the Alberta government is committed to diversification. The entire constituency

will take advantage of new funding, encouraged that they have another industry to draw on. There are so many opportunities for the communities in West Yellowhead, and I am excited to see how they take the challenge of them over the coming years. The levy will also strengthen the municipality of Jasper, which relies on tourism as their main industry because of being in the national park. Hopefully, more tourists will head to the Jasper region because the more that go, the more business it will bring.

The Speech from the Throne also mentions how important postsecondary education is to the diversification process. I agree because a highly educated society means that there are more advancements made in research, and research is very important to West Yellowhead and to this province. The oil and gas industry has allowed the economy of West Yellowhead to grow at a rate that it has not seen for many years. Because of solid research in the forest industry the Edson, Hinton, and Grande Cache economies are growing, and the towns are booming. It is because of this that West Yellowhead is more and more excited about what the next Alberta has to offer.

5:00

Even though the constituency is diversifying, it is also expanding traditional resources. Coal mines around the constituency are rebuilding and providing many jobs for the people of West Yellowhead. This is a welcomed development for everybody that depends on that industry. I know that the research that is being done includes research into clean coal technology, and it is beneficial to Alberta as a whole. It is important that the government of Alberta continues to push research. New technologies are allowing small communities across Alberta to become stronger and better able to serve their people. Those small communities around Alberta, all similar to those in West Yellowhead, are rural Alberta, and this government is showing its resolve in this speech to ensure that rural Alberta is strong.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne was met with optimism by the people of West Yellowhead. We are all looking forward to the new century of this province and what it's going to bring to us. We love this province, and we're not afraid to move outside of what we know to ensure that we are sustainable. We look forward to seeing how this government is going to continually build this province, and the people of West Yellowhead are very excited at the prospect of helping. We are looking forward together, and we'll strengthen ourselves and this province.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today, and I look forward to the years to come. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on 29(2)(a)?
May we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and through the members of this Assembly I would like to extend a welcome to Mme Lillianne Maisonneuve, a leading member of the communauté Franco-Albertaine here in our great province. I would like to have the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly extended to her, the centennial ambassador for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Lindsay: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today in response to the Speech from the Throne. I'm privileged to be delivering to the House my maiden speech in this Assembly. I'm honoured to have been elected to represent the people of the Stony Plain constituency.

I'd like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for delivering his Speech from the Throne, which outlined how the government will deal with the many issues that are facing the province. I commend His Honour in doing an excellent job in delivering his maiden speech to this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker. I would also like to congratulate the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock on his acclamation as Speaker of this House. I would also like to congratulate the Premier on his re-election to his fourth term in office and in leading our party to another majority election victory. I would also like to congratulate all other members of this House on their election or re-election. I look forward to working with all of my new colleagues to ensure that Alberta remains the best place in Canada to live.

Mr. Speaker, the last election has shown us that Albertans still have confidence in their government. The current government has a strong record of responding to the desires of everyday Albertans. Alberta leads the country in economic development, education, and health care. In Alberta we are enjoying all of these benefits while paying the lowest taxes in the country. This is a record that any government would be proud to have. However, as outlined in the throne speech, I am pleased to see that the government is not content to rest on its laurels and is proceeding with a bold vision for the future.

I would like to begin by thanking the previous Member for Stony Plain, which was Stan Woloshyn, for his many years of service. The people of Stony Plain have seen a true example of what representation is and what effective representation can do. I look forward to following in his proud tradition and will represent the people of the constituency of Stony Plain to the best of my ability. Mr. Woloshyn leaves big shoes to fill.

I am honoured to be the 730th person to be sworn in as a member of this House and one of only 753 Albertans to have had the privilege of serving the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I would not be here today addressing this House without the support and encouragement of my family, and I would like to thank them all for what they have done for me. I would especially like to acknowledge my father, George Lindsay. My father immigrated to Canada in 1905 from Scotland and contributed in his own way to the development of this province. My father was also proud to serve our country in the First World War. My father was a great role model, and I hope to be able to emulate his success as a contributor to the community.

I would also like to thank everyone who came out to help with my election campaign. I appreciate the effort and dedication that all of my volunteers displayed. Their countless volunteer hours are the main reason that I am standing in this House today.

Mr. Speaker, the Stony Plain constituency covers a significant part of the area between our capital city and Jasper national park. My riding runs for 85 kilometres west from Edmonton to the Pembina River, with the Yellowhead highway shadowing its northern boundary and the Saskatchewan River as the southern boundary. This region of our province is home to both a very diverse landscape and people, just like Alberta.

My constituency mirrors Alberta. All of the industries that make up Alberta's economy are present in the Stony Plain constituency. Agriculture, power production, mining, tourism, retail, construction, small business, and oil and gas are all present and contribute to the local economy. Because of the diverse local economy often what is happening in Stony Plain is happening all across Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, having a diverse economy is important for all rural areas of the province. In order to maintain the economic successes of rural Alberta, proper transportation infrastructure needs to be in place. With proper roadways we are able to ensure that inputs are able to reach rural areas and that finished goods are able to reach the market. The key to sustainable rural development is the ability of the province to provide infrastructure. That is why I am pleased to see that the government has made such a strong commitment to infrastructure in the throne speech that His Honour read on March 2.

The government's new rural development strategy contains a plan for action to provide real assistance to rural communities like Entwistle, Tomahawk, Seba Beach, Fallis, and Wabamun. These communities are struggling to remain economically viable and watch as young members of these communities leave for larger urban centres. The rural development strategy will help to provide young people with a reason to remain in their communities by helping to develop the infrastructure and services that currently draw youth toward the larger urban areas.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Stony Plain are hard-working, but despite the relative prosperity of their region, there are still those who are in need of some assistance. There is a real need in our communities for affordable housing and assisted-living accommodation. By providing affordable housing to people, we're helping to provide them with a hand up and not a handout. Assisted-living accommodation will address the needs of an aging population in my constituency.

I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work that the government has done in limiting class sizes. The government's goal of leading and learning is certainly something that I support wholeheartedly. In order for Alberta to remain as strong as we are today, it is important that our education system be strong. However, Mr. Speaker, there is more to providing a quality education than ensuring that our students are in small classes and instructed by world-class teachers. School facilities are important to students' overall educational performance. The composite high school in my riding is showing its age. Built in the 1950s, the school is in need of replacement. Replacing aging schools such as Memorial composite high school will help us to be a leader in learning.

Just as the Alberta economy is becoming more knowledge-based, so must our education system. The opportunities available to young Albertans are endless, and our education system must reflect this. Facilities are important to the learning process. Without a proper computer lab students cannot learn a skill that all employers are looking for. In order for our system to continue to produce the best graduates in the world, schools like Memorial composite must be updated to keep pace with their excellent teachers and curriculum. Having quality education facilities in rural areas also makes it easier to recruit and retain quality professionals that are needed in our community.

5:10

Mr. Speaker, nearly 1 in 10 people in my riding are aboriginals. As the first inhabitants of Alberta our aboriginal people have made great contributions to the Alberta mosaic. Their culture has enriched Alberta. I'm pleased to see in the throne speech that government is developing measures to increase the supply of skilled labourers and that these measures will contain an aboriginal component. We need to continually work with our aboriginal communities like the Paul

band and Enoch to improve their socioeconomic conditions. Increasing training facilities will help to increase their socioeconomic standing.

Mr. Speaker, energy is another concern to the people of my constituency, which is currently home to three coal-burning power plants. Together the plants in my constituency contribute approximately 40 per cent of installed generation in this province. These plants have provided many years of reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly electricity to Albertans.

We are now at a time when we need to begin examining ways of moving electrical production forward. A major focus of the government should be placed on joining with industry to develop new technologies that will allow us to burn coal more efficiently and cleanly. Concern needs to be given to both the environment and the cost of producing electricity. Coal is an important economic source of energy for the province of Alberta. Through research and development of clean burning technologies Alberta can be a leader throughout the world in environmentally safe electrical production.

Emerging clean coal technologies will allow for coal to be used to produce electricity in a manner that is as environmentally friendly as using natural gas. If we are able to invest in clean burning technologies and expand their use, then we can reserve the use of natural gas for higher value uses without suffering a negative environmental impact. Using cleaner production methods will allow Alberta to maintain its energy advantage, that has benefited all Albertans. The government's energy innovation strategy and innovative technologies program is an important step in the right direction. There is an economic opportunity for the use of clean technologies. Further research will help us to develop newer and cleaner energy-generating technologies.

Mr. Speaker, the ranchers of the Stony Plain constituency, as I am sure all Alberta ranchers, are anxiously awaiting the opening of the U.S. border. The recent court decision was certainly a setback. However, I'm glad to hear of the commitment that the Premier has made to continue to help our ranchers and farmers. In the history of farming in Alberta there has not been a single more devastating event to the agriculture industry. As a result of BSE our economy has lost hundreds of millions, and countless lives and dreams have been shattered. I'm extremely pleased to hear His Honour mention in the throne speech that the government is fully behind our cattle industry and is committed to continuing to help ranchers to improve their economic viability.

As Alberta begins her journey into her second century, it is important that we lay a foundation that will allow future generations to prosper. Being debt free is an important component of that. The 20-year strategic plan that the government has laid out provides us with a long-term vision for the province. Unlike the path taken by many governments, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that the throne speech has focused on building the future.

Both the people of Stony Plain and I are looking forward to celebrating the province's centennial, knowing that we have not had to mortgage the future of Albertans. The strategic plan provides our province with a framework for growth that will ensure that Alberta continues to be a leader in education and health, is a province with strong and viable communities both large and small, and is a great place to live, work, and play.

Mr. Speaker, the agenda laid out in the government's strategic plan and this throne speech captures the spirit of Alberta. Like the people of this province the government is committed to ensuring that all Albertans share in the Alberta advantage and the quality of life we maintain today is not only maintained but enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I take my place as a member of this Assembly. Although I have had the opportunity to hold public office before, being a member of this House supercedes

those honours and responsibilities. I would like to thank again the people of the Stony Plain constituency for entrusting me with the privilege of representing their interests.

I would like to close, Mr. Speaker, by saying to the people of Stony Plain that I'll represent their interests with the honesty and integrity that is expected of an elected official.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

If not, the hon. Deputy Premier and Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this first opportunity to congratulate the Speaker, to congratulate yourself as Deputy Speaker and, of course, our Chairman of Committees, and to congratulate His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor on his presentation of our throne speech. Of course, congratulations on his appointment, and appreciation for his ability to take what might have been an awkward situation with our sound system during the speech and make the whole atmosphere more comfortable for all of us. I'm sure that we will enjoy more opportunities to get to know our new Lieutenant Governor, and he will serve us well.

I certainly appreciated in our throne speech the tribute to Her Honour the late Lieutenant Governor, Dr. Lois Hole, who was not only our Lieutenant Governor but a friend to many of us, a personal friend known to all of us through her works for libraries, for education, and of course for her love of the land, the love of agriculture, and the great contribution that she has made to this country nationally and, I'm sure, internationally with her expertise in nurseries. Much of our province is much more beautiful today because of the efforts of the late Mrs. Hole and her family.

I want to add my congratulations to all members that were elected in the recent election, and this is, of course, our first opportunity to come together in this House as elected members. I want to make just a few comments. I have not heard all of the speeches in the Legislature on the throne speech, but I've been impressed with many. I want to add my most sincere congratulations to the new members who have made their first speech in the Legislature, which we affectionately call your maiden speech. You've done a fantastic job. Some of the best speeches I have heard in this Legislature in 18 years have come from you new members, and I wanted to comment on that.

I'm not going to take a long time to talk about the speech. Many have been very eloquent. But what really impressed me was that this was a speech that reminded us of how humble beginnings with people of talent, determination, and grit have made this province in a short 100 years a place to be proud of, a place to be proud to do business, to raise your families. It spoke of the people who came here who didn't really have an understanding of how difficult it would be to tame this wild, wild west, if you wish, how difficult it would be to build bridges.

I'm reminded of the Rochfort bridge just out of this city, the longest wooden trestle bridge, I think, in the country and maybe in others, and I'm reminded of the bridge at Lethbridge that takes the railroad across. I'm sure that people who came here to start this process had no idea how difficult this would be. I'm reminded of the aqueduct, which is now an interpretive part of our history. But the importance of that work that developed southern Alberta and the irrigation systems and the water management systems that we have in this province – and, you know, all of us can go around this province and see those things in every corner of the province.

We owe an incredible debt of gratitude to those who came here

with their hopes, their dreams, their talents, their commitment to make this a place to live, work, and raise their families. I think the province of Alberta today is what it is because those people had that determination, had that pride, and were convinced that this was a land that could contribute to future generations and families. We are seeing those results.

What a wonderful year to be in Alberta and to not just celebrate the year but to celebrate the past and look with great optimism to the future. The people who left this province to fight in wars because they believed in freedom – and we have, of course, on our grounds and in our building a commemoration of members who joined in that – is indicative of the commitment that the people in this province have to the province.

5:20

But we move on to the next Alberta, the new Alberta, the continued Alberta, the wonderful future of this province, and we look to continuing to be, I believe, leaders in learning. I'm proud that our students in this province today score the highest in almost every subject not only nationally but internationally. That's due to the dedicated men and women who teach in our schools. I admit to a little bias there; I do have somebody who was educated at the University of Lethbridge that I think contributes to that on a daily basis. We look to continue that excellence in learning and to ensure that our students have a place for postsecondary education. We know that a great deal of what has brought us success is an educated workforce and an educated people, and we have to continue that to reach our potential in the future. So I applaud and support the commitment to advanced education, to the people who work in that field, to the researchers that come to our province.

I should mention that we attract a great number of researchers. In fact, at the University of Alberta – the minister might correct me – I believe there might have been 26 new research chairs that came here in the last year. That's phenomenal, it's fantastic, and it's indicative of the commitment that we have to learning. I just mention this university – we are in this city – but we have similar opportunities in all of our fine institutions.

The work in wellness is incredibly important. We know that the best way to make our health system sustainable is to concentrate a great deal on wellness, prevention, a healthier family. I believe you start with the very young. You start in the very early years in school. I can tell you of some experience with my children and now grandchildren. When they come home from school after they've had a lesson, we get very politely, usually, told that maybe some of the things we're doing are not quite appropriate. It came home to me in a farm safety session, when we had a farm safety person at our little school, and we quickly understood that there were some hazards around our farm that we just hadn't really been paying attention to. Children are the same with healthy eating and healthy living if they learn it at an early age. I support that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see wonderful opportunities ahead for our province. The first steps of the new century, the new mandate are in this throne speech. It's really up to every one of us in this Legislature to see them fulfilled.

I thank you for your time, and, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 8 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 9, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 05/03/09
 [The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. You may be seated.
 Hon. members, might we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly visitors from Preceptor Gamma, Edmonton, who are lead by their president, Val Lavarato. They are a chapter of Beta Sigma Phi International, a world-wide organization of women whose motto is Life, Learning, and Friendship. This tour is part of their cultural program. They would like to congratulate the province and its legislators on the occasion of the centennial of our province, and I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 9: Mrs. McClellan]

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am deeply honoured to rise in the House today on behalf of the constituency of St. Albert. This is my first opportunity to speak within this magnificent building, and I thank you for the privilege.

Mr. Speaker, every Member of the Legislative Assembly is sharing a special moment in time. We are members of the House during Alberta's centennial year. I represent the community of St. Albert, one of the original 25 constituencies that made up our first Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals played a lead role in forming this province. Alberta's first Premier, Alexander Rutherford, was a Liberal as were our federal MPs who lobbied for within the Liberal government led by Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier to create this province and the province of Saskatchewan.

My community has a long history of sending strong advocates with a passion for St. Albert to this House. Previous hon. members include people such as Dick Fowler, Len Bracko, and Mary O'Neill. They have each added to the expectations set out by our first MLA, also a Liberal, W.H. McKenney. I hope to live up to the excellent standard that these people have set.

St. Albert's history is rich and unique. St. Albert was the first community founded outside a fort. Our community was founded by

Father Albert Lacombe. It was founded by Catholic francophones, and their legacy is still evident today with an abundance of French immersion and francophone schools. Our public school system, St. Albert school division No. 29, established 140 years ago, is still a Catholic school system. Over the years a Protestant school system was added, further enhancing the quality and choice for an excellent education.

Mr. Speaker, our community, like virtually all communities in Alberta, has grown incredibly over the years. St. Albert's population in 1905 was about 500 people. Today we are almost 55,000 strong and reflect an incredible cultural mosaic. This diversity and our commitment to education and enhancing our quality of life will keep us strong as we move into Alberta's second century.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder what the founders of our province would think if they could visit us today. My father came to Alberta when he was 18 years old. He helped build the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad and met my mother here. They were married in 1918, and he spent 42 years working as a CN railroad conductor. He was fortunate enough to be the conductor on two royal visits. My mother worked as a buyer for the ladies clothing department of Thompson & Dynes. She worked to support her parents who eventually joined our family in Alberta from Valleyfield, Quebec. Two of my brothers served in the air force during World War II.

As a young man I spent many nights sitting on the back porch of Dr. Greiger's home with Eddie Keen waiting for Lois and Ted Hole to close up shop at their fledgling garden market so we could sip tea and watch the setting sun.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many great memories that have been enhanced by the beauty of this magnificent province and the people who have made it their home. Just as it is important to reflect on the past when we reach a milestone, so is it important to take stock of the present and look forward to the future.

Present-day St. Albert is a community rich in heritage, culture, and performing arts. We take pride in our schools and our parks, our trail systems, our recreation facilities, our renowned International Children's Festival, all things we have worked hard to build and maintain. Our children are exposed to a multitude of opportunity, and our community supports people of all walks of life, all cultures, all levels of financial background.

Mr. Speaker, St. Albert is working toward building a multicultural leisure centre to enhance the quality of life. St. Albert is also working toward building a western bypass road to enhance the safety of our streets and ease traffic congestion. Our community hopes to have this bypass designated as highway 2.

We are working to make improvements to our library and to many other public facilities and public spaces that will serve the current and future needs of our community. The provincial government has a strong record of supporting these types of projects throughout Alberta, and I hope to assist St. Albert city council in maintaining and building on that support for our community's current endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, we also guard against the parochialism of the present. We must guard against losing our way, against the temptation to spend without thought, against the ease of glossing over real problems and challenges because they may not fit the theme of the celebration. This is the time to establish a long-term vision. When I say "long-term," I mean much more than the four-year election cycle. We need to create a vision that looks well into the century. We need to be imaginative, creative, and bold. We have a unique opportunity to invest our incredible good fortune and current wealth into Alberta's future. Our natural resources will eventually run out. We must invest now so that our children and their children will be able to look back with appreciation of our efforts and planning.

It is too easy to spend our wealth away and have nothing to show for it. We have all heard of the stories of the lottery winner who filed for bankruptcy within years of winning. Alberta has won the biggest lottery in history. We need to turn that winning into a generation of wealth and opportunity for all Albertans. This government's current practice will not take us there.

It is very important that all Albertans share in our prosperity. Too many of our children go to school hungry. Too many Albertans cannot afford to save money to buy homes, to send their children to postsecondary education, to keep up with ever-rising costs of living. This is especially true for our young families and for our seniors. Too many young Albertans are dropping out of schools, too many are being hooked on drugs like crystal meth, and too many lose hope believing that there is no place for them in today's Alberta. Further to this, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the Member for Red Deer-North talk of Bill 202 recognizing the problem of drug addiction facing young Albertans and the importance of the family.

Our current system of achievement testing must be reviewed. There is absolutely no excuse for this 25 to 30 per cent high school dropout rate. We need to stop thinking of children as failing the education system. We need to view the huge dropout rate as our education system failing our children, and we need to fix it now. We must start diagnostic testing early to identify challenges that individual children have with language arts, math, and all subjects. We need to empower teachers and ensure that they have the classroom and school-wide supports to ensure all children experience success in learning.

Our children are under pressure to perform and are constantly measured against the students in the next class, the next school, the next community. Where is the sense in judging grade 3 students on a province-wide bell curve? Elementary education is crucial. We need to ensure that they enjoy going to school and enjoy learning. We need to create a system that teaches our children they are valued, able, and when they apply themselves, will be successful.

8:10

This is an urgent and significant problem. When children are convinced that they can't learn, when they are convinced they aren't smart enough, when they are convinced they have no hope of achieving success, at what point does this government finally wake up and say, "The way we are doing this isn't helping children"? If the system is creating such massive problems that 25 to 30 per cent of the children are dropping out, it's time to do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education told me his department is all about kids, and I trust that he is sincere and that he has starting building a solid plan to make some required changes. We all agree that our children are our future. Surely we can do more to support them and encourage success. Surely this is a legacy worthy of the centennial.

It is appropriate for Alberta schools to have common indicators across systems. Provincial achievement exams do serve as an indicator and provide independent verification that students are learning what they should be learning. Only about 30 per cent of achievement grade is really predictable on the basis of instructional skill. Other factors that account for lack of success in provincial achievement exams are the following: student personality, temperament, and task persistence on the part of the student. Support that students receive from their homes in terms of encouraging completion of homework and studying is very important. These and socioeconomic factors are real achievement variables. These along with intelligence levels amount to achievement scores.

Let us not forget that the amount of support a school provides for academic versus sports, fine arts, and other activities may also be a

factor. We need to value education of the whole child – body, mind, and soul. However, we have students that fall through the cracks. For example, students who have learning challenges generally are having difficulties keeping up with demands of the curriculum. Over time, given the stress and anxiety of schooling, they end up falling further and further behind and specialized programs are required.

Also keep in mind that inner-city schools are special needs. Comparisons of achievement testing results relative to other schools is not relevant as they have far greater percentages of special needs populations, minority groups, English as a second language groups, and so on. It is my contention that K to 3 should be a place where students develop a solid foundation in the core subjects for successful schooling. Students requiring special help need to get the help they need. Diagnostic testing identifying students requiring modified curriculum in reading, language arts, and mathematics is a must. Education in the province, specifically K to 3, must become more student centred.

My grandson in Okotoks was screened prior to entering into an early childhood program. This screening was done by a student services team, and it discovered that he lacked fine motor skills. This is being addressed, and hopefully he will acquire good handwriting and drawing skills much better than his grandpa's.

Mr. Speaker, the Klein government some five or six years ago gave extra money to health and education jurisdictions in various regions of this province to acquire family and school liaison counsellors, school counsellors, social workers, and nurses. They provided funding for psychological, medical, and psychiatric assessment for students that have very specialized needs. All of this is very good and should be continued, but the level of support, in my view, is often not adequate and doesn't meet the needs of the kids. I believe that this must be addressed to prevent the high school dropout rate that we are currently experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, a well-known professor at the faculty of education who has visited schools once or twice a week for the last 35 years is holding up a red flag. He has stated in a letter of February 26, 2005, that he has seen and is seeing a dramatic rise in behavioural, psychological, and emotional problems in students, including drug use. Further, he states that the government has made an effort to provide extra funding to assist these students at the school level, but it is not sufficient, and too many students, therefore, fall out of the system or quit altogether.

Somehow we have developed two very different points of view in Alberta. It is today that we should create a legacy for the future. We cannot continue to focus on testing results rather than completion results. We cannot continue to focus on the quality of roads while ignoring the quality of a low-income child's life. We cannot continue to focus on the centennial legacies while losing sight of seniors forced to sell their homes in St. Albert or drug grow ops springing up in rural parts of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we must work together to build the legacies that this government is contemplating. They will enhance our province and help take us into the future. However, we must also ensure that we don't get so caught up in building these capital projects that we overlook real problems facing our educational systems and our Alberta citizens. We have the ability and the responsibility to make our legacy too.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

I recognize the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd like to congratulate the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on their elections. I'd also like to congratulate all those who were elected during this last campaign. I am both honoured and humbled for being elected to represent the people of Cardston-Taber-Warner. I consider it my duty to represent all the people of my riding. I would like to thank all those who helped me before, during, and since the election.

My constituency starts in the southwest corner of this province, in the beautiful park of Waterton national park with beautiful mountains, beautiful lakes, and beautiful rivers. It heads out east up over the Milk River ridge, another beautiful area, and down into the valley and into the hoodoos of the Writing-on-Stone provincial park. Then it heads north and goes through numerous irrigation districts that are the breadbasket of our province.

I'd also like to go on to thank the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, who earlier today helped me reduce my speech by 15 minutes. It would have been a dilemma to include all that wonderful history in the allotted time that I have.

It's exciting to me to be here at the turn of the century, and I would like to thank Premier Klein for allowing us to start it debt free. In 1905 we were faced with similar challenges of infrastructure, schools, and now health care. History has shown Alberta as a leader, and this being the international day to recognize women, it's only fitting to realize and remember that in 1929 the first woman was elected to the Legislature, which was the first in the British Empire. In the 1980s Alberta led the way once again, and Premier Lougheed introduced the notwithstanding clause in our constitution, which enabled Albertans to keep a check on government and to keep those things that are true and important to us.

Now Alberta must take the lead once again. It's going to go beyond being just simply good government; we need to be a better government. This is a hard road but certainly an achievable one and one well worth travelling. We need a new way of thinking. As the Premier pointed out earlier this week, it is about science not politics. We have been injured because of the protectionism of our neighbours to the south, and protectionism does not serve the interests of the people.

The proper role of government is to protect the rights and the freedoms of the people and then to leave them free to exercise their rights so long as they do not infringe upon the rights of others. Alberta has prospered in the past because we have had the freedom for our entrepreneurial, innovative, and industrious people to choose for themselves and create the province that we live in today.

8:20

All of us in this great Assembly derive our powers from the people of Alberta. I know that the best administration is the one that is the closest to the people. The smallest government is the best government. We have to ask ourselves: what type of government do we want in the future? If we were to compare our government to a tree, we can ask: do we want a fruit tree or a shade tree? Government can create no wealth, but proper laws protecting our rights and freedoms allow the people and the country to prosper. However, if the branches of the fruit tree are not kept trimmed, the tree will not bear the fruit to its fullest capabilities. We have trimmed our health care, our schools, and our municipal funding. All the while the branches of our government have grown. Now is the time to trim the growth of our government. It is not only necessary; it is the right thing to do.

Government needs to be open, transparent, and accountable. Since we derive our power from the people, it must therefore be accountable to the people. We must continue to reduce taxes, user

fees, licences, and eliminate our health care premiums. With these we can allow the people the freedom from the overburden of taxation and protect the people from the government. With lower taxes that rival even the biggest economies, we can fight on a global stage and drive into a new century of leadership. Thomas Hobbes stated, "Unnecessary laws are not good laws but traps for money." It is critical that we protect the autonomy of Alberta and stop the inequitable redistribution of wealth.

In 1907 Edward VII gave us our motto: Strong and Free. To maintain that freedom and strength, Alberta must be a leader in our dealings with the federal government. Canada is founded upon the principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law and guarantee the rights and freedoms that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. Thus, it is within Alberta's constitutional rights to protect Albertans under the law. We must recognize this defence of the individual rights, not protecting individual benefits but rather protecting freedoms. The proper role of government is to maintain these ideals.

It is critical at this time, as we go forward, that we balance the government. We can compare it to a bird. If on the left wing we have compassion and security, we cannot fly, but if on the right wing we have freedom, we can continue to soar and the sky is our limit. It is my hope and prayer that we in this Legislature will work together on common grounds and put our best ideas forward so that we can serve the people of Alberta.

I'd like to close with a little story of a miner that was lost in the desert. As he was travelling along – it had been two days since he had any water – he was struggling and figured that he was finished and done. Then he came across an old shack, and by that shack there was an old pump. He pumped vigorously on that pump but was unable to get any water, and he collapsed. Upon collapsing to the base, he found a glass jar with water in it. On the instructions on the outside it said: "This pump has been fixed and repaired. If you prime it with the water, the leather will soften and you can pump and get all the water that you need. All I ask is that you fill the water in the bottle before you leave." Weeks later the owner came back, only to find a dead man beside there and an empty bottle of water.

We've been blessed with a second chance here, and it's our opportunity to take the economic security and the benefits from our resources and prime the pump for future Albertans. I'm very pleased that we've started the educational foundation for our future. Our greatest assets are our kids, and we need to make the effort that every individual family does to protect and educate them. This is a huge opportunity that we have. We also need to look after our elderly and the sick and the afflicted, that we do have the ability to be compassionate and to reach out and to serve those people. By doing those things, our society will be better.

Society has the right to choose to be better or to choose to become decadent. It's my desire that we will be leaders here in this House and show by example and through sacrifice that we choose to be better, that we'll make laws that will protect freedoms and innovation and the desire for people to succeed as they have ideas to go into the future. In that we will be blessed, and it's a great joy to see that next generation as we look to them and see how they have succeeded. It's been encouraging to listen to the different members and the success that they have with their children that have gone on to education. I hope that we use our resources wisely for the benefit of all Albertans and that we can stand proud a hundred years from now on the things that we've accomplished at the turn of this century.

Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn the debate now.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 1
Access to the Future Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd rise to move Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, for second reading.

Mr. Speaker, this is a flagship piece of legislation. I think it's the first of its kind in Canada, perhaps in North America. It sets a course for Alberta's second century with bold new initiatives that will create and enable Alberta's advanced education system to reach even higher levels of excellence.

Mr. Speaker, this province has come a long way in the past decade. Albertans have worked hard to ensure that the government's finances are in order and the debt has been paid off. Now, with a strong fiscal foundation Albertans are looking ahead to the future, as is their government.

Albertans have told us, both in the process that led up to creating this 20-year strategic plan and through the It's Your Future survey, that a portion of future budget surpluses should be invested in higher learning. We ought, Mr. Speaker, to endow the future with our nonrenewable resource revenue, and that's exactly what this legislation does. It puts in place the mechanisms by which the government can set aside in a wise and prudent manner unbudgeted surplus funds, when they occur, for use in driving postsecondary education.

Bill 1 proposes that this be done in three ways. First, Mr. Speaker, a separate \$3 billion postsecondary endowment will be created within the heritage savings trust fund by contributing an additional \$3 billion to the fund, to be allocated to a separate account within that fund which will grow with the fund as the fund grows for inflation to retain its value. From that endowment 4 and a half per cent of the contributed and growing amount will be paid into the new access to the future fund annually, providing a stable, regular source of additional funding for postsecondary education. At full funding of the \$3 billion, \$135 million per year would go to the access to the future fund for that purpose.

The funding, Mr. Speaker, will not be for the standard operating costs. It's not intended to replace the operational costs that are budgeted on an annual basis to keep our postsecondary education system operating. In fact, it adds nitro to the fuel to fund new and innovative projects and initiatives within the system; in other words, it'll help to make a great system even better.

Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech we heard about two projects that were identified to give examples of how this fund might operate. The first is the centre for Chinese studies at the University of Alberta. That would be a matching gift program, where a substantial gift is to be made to the University of Alberta in the area of Chinese cultural material. The value of that gift could be matched, and with the gift and the matching funds together with other funds raised, the University of Alberta will be able to establish a pre-eminent centre of knowledge and understanding about Chinese culture, economy, and knowledge in the western world. Right here in Alberta, right here at the University of Alberta we will have the pre-eminent centre of knowledge about Chinese culture and the economy.

Now, what a benefit for Alberta, Mr. Speaker, because as we all know, the Chinese economy is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. As we move towards competing in the global economy, improving our ability to find markets out in the world, at the root of that is relationship building. Where better to build relation-

ships than to have a knowledge and understanding of one of the largest economies, if not the largest economy, in the world, that of the country of China and the Asia Pacific area?

So you can see from that example and that project that the access to the future fund will have a significant impact not only in expanding the opportunity for study and the opportunity for knowledge and transfer of knowledge but to do it in an area which will create a pre-eminent centre of excellence and knowledge and understanding about another area of the world that's going to be absolutely key to Alberta's continued future growth.

8:30

The other project that was announced in the throne speech was the Lois Hole Campus Alberta digital library, and it was a honour and a privilege to be able with the permission of her family to name the new digital library after Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. With the lifetime commitment that she had to knowledge – to the advancement of knowledge, the transfer of knowledge – and to libraries, Mr. Speaker, there couldn't be a more fitting memorial to her.

The Lois Hole library is a project which demonstrates the other aspect of the access to the future fund which does not require matching funds but which will allow a project, which I call an ingenuity project, a new example of a way to deliver knowledge or transfer knowledge, extend the reach of knowledge within our province, which could be funded from the access to the future fund. So the digital library concept will see us digitizing library resources whether they're books or periodicals, expanding the number of digitized resources that are available through the digital library, and perhaps digitizing any other three-dimensional collections that our universities and postsecondary institutions have.

That could even extend to art collections and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts – many ways through the SuperNet to take knowledge that's collected and resident in our postsecondary institutions, make it available to postsecondary students across the province and perhaps, Mr. Speaker, eventually to all Albertans. It's a dream which has huge possibilities for the transfer of knowledge in this province. It's a great project that's been under way for some time in different initiatives, in different institutions but headed up by the University of Calgary, a project which they have proposed for Campus Calgary. Now we've taken it the one step further to Campus Alberta and perhaps in the future to be able to extend it to all Albertans.

So two projects which demonstrate the length and breadth of the access to the future fund, being able to encourage the contribution of funds from private capital, from private donors, from corporate donors in areas that would expand access, quality, or affordability or projects which expand the way in which we make knowledge available across Alberta into rural Alberta to help build the rural development strategy, to help make sure that people in rural Alberta have access to the same knowledge resources that people in urban centres have, and to make sure that students right across this province have access to all of the three-dimensional resources and print resources that are available.

Mr. Speaker, it's a phenomenal opportunity, and it's an opportunity which will now be made possible in part by the access to the future fund. Those are just two examples, but we had those examples from the throne speech to show the absolute value and the power that will be in the hands of the access to the future fund.

Of course, there's a great thirst. Most of the postsecondary institutions in this province are raising funds for various projects which will expand access and expand quality. This is not a new concept by any means. In the 1970s there was a tri-university fund

which matched private donations and endowed chairs, some of which are still operating today at universities in the province. But it's expanded in a couple of very important ways. One, it's endowed, which means it will always be there; we'll only spend the interest. Very important. The other funds that were established in the 1970s were spent down, were concluded. They did good work, but they're not available any longer. This will be endowed. It will be there forever, and it will create an income stream which will continue to grow and help make these new projects, these exciting projects possible.

Mr. Speaker, this is a responsive project in that it was raised, as I said, through the 20-year strategic planning process. It was raised by an individual who talked to many of us I'm sure, both in government and opposition, promoting the idea of an endowment fund, a somewhat more modest amount but an endowment fund to do exactly this. I've talked to him, and he's indicated it would be all right for me to indicate that Mr. Harold Bannister had some small part to play in promoting this concept and setting it up. I think the first time he called me or wrote me on this one was about two years ago. So it's a credit to him to have the foresight to push this as, in his concept, a centennial project.

Then, of course, the Edmonton-Riverview Constituency Association of the PC Association of Alberta I have to give a nod because they brought forward a resolution to our annual general meeting last year, and it was passed, I believe unanimously, asking for government to endow the future in this manner.

So this is very responsive to requests from Albertans, both individual Albertans, groups of Albertans, people who know that our renewable resources are not ours alone today. They're not there just to fund the current Albertans, but they need to be also used to endow our future, to build and grow our future. What better way to do that, to underpin our 20-year strategic plan, than by expanding knowledge? So it's an exciting fund, and I'm absolutely delighted that we're able to set it up and get it running.

The second feature in Bill 1 is that the current Alberta heritage scholarship fund, which again was set up in the 1970s, would grow by \$1 billion, again from surplus funds, again a very important acknowledgement of the need to build knowledge and innovation in Alberta, to expand our knowledge base, and to expand our education in Alberta so that Albertans will be able to take advantage of the opportunities that will be here in the future.

Mr. Speaker, as we move from a carbon-based and a commodity-based economy to a knowledge-based economy – and by no means does that mean that we're giving up on oil and gas or that we don't think oil and gas will be around – we have to add knowledge and technology to our traditional economy in order to be prepared for the future as well as to look to the new knowledge-based economy. That's the innovation section of the 20-year strategic plan.

Scholarship funds will help to finance students so that they can get that education, so that finances will not be a barrier to getting an education. This project, under Bill 1, will make the scholarship fund five times larger than it is now, and the income will allow government to ensure that postsecondary education is affordable through scholarships, bursaries, awards, and other initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, the third thing that Bill 1 proposes is doubling the Alberta ingenuity fund, currently endowed at \$500 million, with an additional \$500 million from unbudgeted surpluses. Again, the ingenuity fund has been in place since the year 2000, funding research and innovation across the province, and this expansion will allow and encourage even greater levels of innovation and ingenuity in Alberta.

I've already spoken, Mr. Speaker, about the need for that ingenuity, but you need to look no further than the oil sands, that we know

is adding huge amounts of economic development to our province and producing a great deal of oil and gas. The current technology in the oil sands is SAGD technology, steam-assisted gravity drainage. You get steam from water, which is a scarce resource, and you have to use gas to create the heat to create it. Gas is also a scarce resource. So it's self-evident just by looking at the technology that's extant there that new technology is going to be needed in the very near future if we're going to be able to capitalize on that resource and continue.

Innovation is essential whether we're looking at a traditional economy, adding value to wood fibre, adding value to agriculture products, or whether you're looking at the new economy of nanotechnologies, biosciences, and life sciences. Absolutely essential. So increasing the ingenuity fund for research adds to our knowledge base, adds to our ability to create knowledge in this province, adds to our ability to have the best and the brightest attracted here to educate other Albertans and to continue to improve our knowledge and technology base.

All told, Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 commits to \$4.5 billion in investments in higher learning opportunities for Albertans, \$4.5 billion in endowing the future. If I may add to the point, the \$500 million that was announced in January to be added to the Alberta heritage medical research fund makes it \$5 billion worth of endowment for the future, which is to me very, very exciting. There could not be a better way to enter into our centennial year in our new century. No province in Canada has made this kind of investment. We're blessed with the ability to do it, but we're also blessed with the obligation to make sure that we use those nonrenewable resource revenues in some small way to endow the future and to make sure that Albertans are ready to reach those opportunities of the future.

Albertans can be very proud, Mr. Speaker, of their hard work and their sacrifice, which has made this level of investment possible, and the clear direction that they've given to this government is enabling it to happen.

Mr. Speaker, those are the huge items in Bill 1. Those are really exciting, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the other very important aspects that are included in Bill 1.

Bill 1 also lays the groundwork for the introduction of a common postsecondary application process. Mr. Speaker, we hear often of students who are applying to two or three different institutions in order to make sure that they get in to one, and sometimes more than two or three, sometimes five or 10 and perhaps sending a deposit along with each application. When we have a common application process, a student will be able to apply online through one portal, pay one deposit if a deposit is necessary, and be able to indicate which institutions they would like their application considered by. We'll be able to track the success of each applying student to make sure that there is a space for every student who wants a space, for every Albertan who's qualified to go. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, every Albertan is qualified to advance their education.

8:40

So the common application process is a very significant step forward, but we also suggest in Bill 1, Mr. Speaker, that a framework be put together for a common application process for scholarships. Again, I don't know if other members of this Assembly have had the privilege of helping a child or perhaps for themselves going to postsecondary education and looking to see what scholarships might apply to them. There are a myriad of scholarships and bursaries and financial assistance available out there, but you have to be somewhat of a detective to find all of the opportunities, and you have to be very persistent to find the ones which apply to you. So if we can design and build a common application process so that

a student can log on and find those scholarships, bursaries, and financial assistance processes which apply to them and apply through one common portal, that will be a huge assistance to students who want to get an education and have to deal with financial aspects of doing so.

It will also, Mr. Speaker, allow for improved transferability and recognition of prior learning experiences. We have in this province – and I'd like to say it in this Legislature and acknowledge it – the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, and it is a model for the country. People come from other jurisdictions to take a look at our Council on Admissions and Transfer, the transferability, the seamlessness to a great extent by which people can move from one type of postsecondary education into another and be able to transfer their course credits across. But it's not perfect, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of work that can be done. Even though we have the best in Canada, it's not good enough.

We need to work with the postsecondary institutions and with the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer to make sure that there is no dead end to an education in Alberta, that from wherever you are now, you can go to somewhere else if you wish to advance your education. If you're taking an apprenticeship program and you become a journeyman, that experience, that education, and that work experience should be able to be applied to the next level should you decide you want to take it there. So through Bill 1 we'll be working to expand those opportunities, but prior learning assessments are also important. There are many people who haven't had the opportunity to take advanced education or even, perhaps, finish their high school, but they have got a great deal of learning in a practical way in their work. We need to find a better way to recognize at what level they ought to be able to enter a postsecondary education process should they desire to do so.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, people coming from other parts of the world who might be bringing credentials from that part of the world which may or may not be consistent with our credentials here: we have a great program through IQAS to recognize foreign credentials, but in the event that they need to bridge those foreign credentials to Canadian or Alberta credentials, there need to be better ways to do that, better ways to maximize the human potential that we have. Bill 1 will assist us in moving significantly in that direction.

The legislation will also represent that we need to develop better ways to involve those people who are underrepresented in our postsecondary system and in our advanced learning processes, to represent them and bring them into the system. Mr. Speaker, it would come as no surprise if it was suggested that for aboriginal and First Nations people we need to encourage and promote and inspire the passions and make the systems available so that more and more people, First Nations people and any others that are not now able to or do not now have access to postsecondary education or an opportunity to advance their learning, have that opportunity.

The legislation, Mr. Speaker, has a strong focus on quality, recognizing that while access and affordability are important, having an advanced education system with the highest quality is equally important. If we're going to be competing in a global economy, it's not going to be on commodities alone. In fact, it's not going to be on commodities really at all; it's going to be on knowledge. What we're going to be selling in the future out to the world is a knowledge base. Whether we use that knowledge to advance the value of our agricultural products or to advance the quality of our environmental technologies, which we do now sell out into the world, that's where our advantage is going to be. So access and affordability are absolutely important. Quality: we have to be among the best in the world if we're going to compete in that knowledge-based economy.

The legislation allows for and requires, in fact, that we develop a

comprehensive examination of postsecondary standards and outcomes with the aims of ensuring that the system meets or exceeds national and international standards. Mr. Speaker, it's not good enough for people to read *Maclean's* magazine to decide where their postsecondary institutions rank with others. That's just not the appropriate level of assessment. So in its entirety Bill 1 will ensure that Alberta has a world-class advanced education system, poised and equipped for the challenges of the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, it's an exciting time to be involved in Alberta. It's an exciting time to be involved in postsecondary education. It's a grand vision for advancing education in Alberta, whether you're moving to literacy or moving to a PhD. I would encourage all members to vote for Bill 1.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to start out my part of the debate this way, but I think I will by referring to what is not the central theme or the central point of Bill 1 at all, of course, but which is worthy of consideration, the common application process for entrance to public postsecondary institutions. I'm going to start there because the minister mentioned, quite rightly, about having experience with people who are applying to a number of different institutions because they're trying to get into postsecondary education, and they're applying to different institutions with different deposits that they have to hand in and all the rest of that at the time because there isn't this common application process.

I'm starting there because it struck home with me. My son turns 18 in about a month and graduates from grade 12 at the end of June and is going through the application process as we speak. He has applied to three different institutions. Unfortunately, two of them are out of province, and he's done that because of the sense that he has and that his fellow students have that postsecondary education in the province of Alberta isn't quite up to snuff, and that's where we need to start this debate.

I'll give you another sort of real-life example, that goes back to probably the college and university campus days of a whole bunch of us here in the Chamber today. You think back to your days in university, and you probably knew somebody, a fellow student, who had an old car. I remember a guy who had I think it was an old Datsun B-210, and it was basically rusted out. It barely moved, but, gosh, it had a good stereo system. It had a stereo system that was worth more than the whole car, and there's an analogy to be drawn with Bill 1. You know, there are many good things about Bill 1. It is a bold new initiative lifted from the pages of the Alberta Liberal election platform and then watered down.

Ms Blakeman: Whose Liberal platform?

Mr. Taylor: The Alberta Liberal platform.

It doesn't solve the problem to put great big honking speakers and a subwoofer in the trunk of a car that is barely roadworthy. Now, maybe I overstate the case. Our postsecondary education system is certainly more than barely roadworthy, but it has been starved. The minister himself said some weeks ago that it's time to take postsecondary education off its starvation diet. It has been starved by 12 years of underfunding, funding that has not kept up, has not kept pace with inflation and increased enrolment. Since 1993 government funding to postsecondary education in the province of Alberta in real terms has decreased 28 per cent per full-time student while tuition, adjusted again for inflation, in real terms has increased 183 per cent per student.

8:50

The fundamental problem, the systemic problem is that the system is hurting from underfunding. What Bill 1 does not address and what I hope this government will address later on in the budget is a fundamental need to increase substantially base operating grants to postsecondary institutions in this province and take a look at the formula by which they determine base operating grants and come to a real understanding of the basic worth of a postsecondary student in the province of Alberta.

I'm pleased that the government has seemingly taken a renewed interest in advanced education with Bill 1. It's about time after 12 years of underfunding. Investing in quality educational opportunities for students and in the creative contributions of our postsecondary faculties is almost certainly the best investment that we can make as a society. Creating world-class educational environments that are affordable for every Albertan with the drive to succeed is a duty of this government. It also represents a unique opportunity to combine the dual goals of economic competitiveness and social equity. I heard what the minister said. The minister gets much of this – much of it – and I'm glad he does. It's one of I think the most positive signs we have seen in postsecondary education in many, many years in this province, Mr. Speaker.

High-quality, affordable education from early childhood education right through to graduate degrees is the foundation for creating a society with equal opportunity for all. It's also vital to remember that such investments pay off not only in terms of economic competitiveness in a new knowledge economy but also by creating and sustaining the conditions for a vibrant, diverse culture and an informed, engaged democratic society. Higher education is critical to meeting our demand for skilled labour and ensuring that our students are equipped to compete in the job market.

But, Mr. Speaker, that is not the sum total of what higher education is all about. I'm hopeful that Bill 1 represents the end of an era when spending on higher education was considered a cost to be minimized and an understanding now that it is, in fact, an investment in the future of today's students and tomorrow's Alberta. The goal seems to have been for the last 12 years to simply produce as many degree and diploma and certificate holders as possible for the lowest cost possible, to churn them through. You know, it's a suitable approach for producing widgets, but it's not so good for facilitating the growth of citizens.

We must recognize that higher education is a great public investment, and we must be ready to invest in a way that supports the multiple roles that higher education plays in our society. This is certainly something Albertans have been demanding for a long time, something the Liberal opposition has been pressing for for years, so I'm gratified that this government seems to be responding in some measure to Bill 1.

But in what measure, Mr. Speaker? The minister says that this government is committing to put \$4.5 billion into higher education, into postsecondary education, through Bill 1, but it's not really a commitment, unfortunately. It's not a firm, unshakeable commitment to put that money in. On the Liberal side our commitment was to take 35 per cent of every annual budget surplus no matter how big, no matter how small every year and put it directly into a postsecondary education endowment fund with no cap. You know, I'll grant you that this government's proposal may actually get more money into the access to the future fund more quickly than the Liberal plan would have, but once it hits \$3 billion, if it hits \$3 billion, that's all she wrote. That are it. No more. Uh-uh. Finis. We're full.

The Liberal plan conceivably could have seen a billion dollars a

year go into that postsecondary education endowment fund so that at the end of 20 years there would be \$20 billion. I didn't just pick that number. I didn't just pick that number out of a hat because \$3 billion for a system with 140,000 full-time learning equivalents is not sufficient. It permits some interesting tinkering at the margins, but it won't really provide the financial foundation for a world-class system.

Let me give you some comparative figures. Harvard University's total endowment is \$20 billion, not \$3 billion for an entire province, an entire system, but \$20 billion for one institution. Princeton's endowment is approximately \$1.3 million per student. Alberta's \$3 billion, even at current enrolment levels, represents less than \$17,000 per student. It's not enough. And that, Mr. Speaker, is contingent on this government really putting in the money that it says it will, that it might, that is scheduled to go into this account within the heritage savings trust fund, to be allocated as considered appropriate by the Minister of Finance after April 1, 2005.

So the Minister of Finance is the final arbiter of how much money goes into the fund, and the Minister of Finance has the opportunity to say, "You know, I don't think we can afford to put any money into the fund this year," or "I don't think we can afford to put in more than – I don't know – \$100 million, \$50 million." Pick a figure. Maybe the Minister of Finance will say: "Boys, we've got \$3 billion sitting here. I'm putting it into the fund right away." Of course, then it's capped. Then it's capped. It doesn't get any bigger than that.

Maybe the Minister of Finance will say: "We have a BSE crisis on our farms. We have yet another summer where the forest fire fighting budget has gone through the roof because it's been a much worse fire year than we thought it was going to be." Maybe there's another crisis that comes down the pike. "I need the money. I need the money that should go into the access to the future fund to pay the farmers and pay the firefighters and do that sort of thing." You see, the thing is that there's not a guarantee in here. There's a commitment in principle, I guess, but there's not a firm commitment to put the money into the fund.

The same thing goes for increasing by a billion dollars the Alberta heritage scholarship fund, and the same thing goes for increasing the Alberta heritage science and engineering research endowment fund, in each case by \$500 million. In each case it's in amounts considered appropriate by the Finance minister. I'm not suggesting that the Finance minister doesn't want to do the right thing. I'm suggesting that other issues may come up. We need more certainty than Bill 1 offers. Bill 1 is a start down the right road, but it's not certain enough.

The other problem that I have with the money and where it goes is that it tends to go, as is very often the case with this government, into areas that deal with applied knowledge and applied research. The Alberta ingenuity fund, for instance, funds especially applied research in science and engineering. Arguably, this contributes to harnessing public education to industry interests. You know, there's a role for that within the broad scope of advanced education, Mr. Speaker. There's definitely a role for that. But the whole system should not be geared up to the needs of industry. There needs to be a place within the context of the broad scope of advanced education for the pursuit of learning for its own sake, for the pursuit of creative thinking and pure inquiry, for the pursuit of arts and humanities.

There just isn't the commitment to arts and humanities that the Alberta Liberals would like to see. We, of course, had a plan. Again. This part wasn't adopted by the government. We had a plan to put 5 per cent of every annual budget surplus into a fund to complement the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. We think that the government should do the same thing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's a delicate balance that needs to be struck in our public institutions between ministerial control and institutional autonomy. I'm wondering if there aren't some clauses in this bill – and I don't mean to go through it clause by clause – that threaten to tip that balance. Institutions are public, but they can never become partisan or be made simply to perform pet partisan projects. Institutions, including board members, presidents, and all faculty, need to be assured that they can speak out on important matters of public policy without fear of reprisal. It's also vital that qualified academics are empowered to set academic policy and standards at their institutions.

9:00

In some respects the degree of ministerial or governmental control that this bill provides is somewhat troubling. The fund, if and when fully funded, will provide the minister with, we think, an excessive degree of discretion to pick winners and losers among the institutions or to reward and punish according to how accommodating the institutions are. The conditions of making those grants will not be subject to legislative debate approval since they will be made through regulations passed by orders in council, which this government is wont to do.

The minister also appears to want to establish, albeit "in consultation" with institutions, enrolment targets and entrance requirements. Now, institutions currently and appropriately are empowered by the Post-secondary Learning Act to establish admission standards. There seems to be a conflict between Bill 1 and the PSLA.

The minister is also empowered to appoint all the members of the council, his advisory council. Institutional stakeholders, we feel, including administrators, faculty council, students should be empowered to formally nominate representatives to the council. A good advisory council is made up of good advisors from the areas that you want advice from. You don't just hand-pick people you like; you allow these organizations to put forward the names of people they know can contribute to your council.

The purpose of the fund is "to promote the . . . attraction and retention of the faculty, staff and graduate students." We hope that that is not going to undermine current collective agreements and the ability of faculty and staff associations to freely bargain. I don't think the province of Alberta right now needs temporary Venezuelan professors, Mr. Speaker.

The other point that I wanted to make is on reporting and accountability. This minister is to be commended for trying to make the system more accessible, more affordable, and more excellent. He is to be commended for wanting to "develop and implement mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on the quality of advanced education in Alberta." He's to be commended for wanting us to have the best system in the world. But postsecondary institutions, already underfunded, are burdened by numerous accountability and reporting requirements. Entire institutional bureaucracies have been created to handle the reporting demands of the ministry, and, you know, there's never been any extra money for that. If institutions are expected to participate in substantive ways in establishing or administering common application processes, financial aid inventories, prior learning recognition and transfer arrangements, participation or affordability plans, or quality assessments, then they must be provided with the resources required to fulfill these duties. This has not been the case in the past.

You know, I've heard from so many stakeholders in the advanced education field that this government repeatedly demands from the institutions four-year business plans, yet they cannot get back from this government the commitment to more than one year of funding. Sometimes they're very, very perilously close to the end of their

fiscal year before they can get the commitment for the next year. Fair is fair, Mr. Speaker. If you're going to demand a four-year business plan, then present certainty of funding with a four-year funding policy.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to debate Bill 1 through second reading, through Committee of the Whole, through third reading. My colleagues are going to have much more to say about it. I think that gives you an overview of the Alberta Liberal opposition point of view on Bill 1. It's a good start, but it needs a lot of work. It's kind of like that Datsun I referred to. It needs some real body work, hopefully better than Bondo. It needs some real body work and perhaps a mechanical tune-up as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to commend in sort of a backhanded way the effort and sort of the idea of creating the best postsecondary system in the world here in this province. Certainly all members of this province and students going into postsecondary deserve such a thing. We can afford such a thing. But I think that perhaps we have to look at a larger picture here besides just the endowment fund to make it a reality.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my comments this evening by outlining some of the structural difficulties that our postsecondary system is currently experiencing. Alberta has had the fastest rate of tuition increases across Confederation in the last 13 years. The average student debt is over \$20,000 per student. That's only public debt. The student loan system is so inadequate that many students are going into private debt and credit cards to get by, not to mention the good graces of their parents and relatives. Imagine if you had to live on \$700 a month. That's what the student loan system currently gives Alberta students.

Base operating grants to universities and colleges do not keep pace with inflation in this province. While government posts multibillion dollar surpluses, postsecondary institutions are cutting programs, laying off staff, and eliminating student services. At the University of Calgary they're looking at 20 per cent cuts over the next four years under this current fiscal situation. Teaching and learning conditions have suffered as a result. Four hundred people crammed into a lecture hall is not an educational experience, Mr. Speaker; it's a mere shadow of what a meaningful educational experience should be.

The arts and humanities have suffered the most. Students are paying more and getting less. Departments are cutting resource materials and support staff and not replacing retiring faculty at replacement levels. Class sizes are going through the roof, and quality suffers as a result. Even with the tuition freeze institutions are charging more fees this next year because their budgets are still too tight. At Red Deer College students are looking at a \$40 new fee just for their athletic teams. This sort of thing should be coming out of the base budget, not out of students' pockets, but institutions are just trying to get by, and these other extra billing fees are coming in.

The Premier said that they're rewriting the tuition fee policy for 2006. He says that it will be, quote, an entrepreneurial tuition fee policy. What exactly does that mean? Parents taking on a second mortgage? Students having to run bake sales outside universities? It sounds to me like another misguided market solution, which has been proven disastrous in every other jurisdiction that has tried it, such as Australia and New Zealand.

The tuition fee policy in 1991, '96, 2004, and now again – students will get nothing out of this new policy other than what they

have gotten in the past 14 years: more student debt, higher tuition, lower quality education. Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 is not inclusive enough to address these concerns.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to remind the hon. member that we're not in Committee of the Whole. You have to be in your seats.

Carry on.

Mr. Eggen: I, too, have difficulty with that rule. Mind you, I'm a new guy, so perhaps I had an excuse.

Anyway, Bill 1 is not inclusive enough to address these concerns that I've just outlined. We need a long-term, independent look at the future of postsecondary education here in Alberta. We need a postsecondary learning commission similar to the Learning Commission that we had for the K to 12 sector.

Specifically, our criticisms of Bill 1 are as follows. Now, the government is saying that they are reinvesting; but how exactly? They are relying on unbudgeted surpluses in order to fund what should be long-term investments. This is questionable funding as well as being confusing public policy. If there's a downturn in the price of oil and natural gas and future budget surpluses evaporate, Alberta's postsecondary students will either have no endowment at all or a significantly smaller endowment than was first advertised. If endowments such as the one proposed for postsecondary education are set up as outlined in Bill 1, the cost of doing so should be built into the budgets up front.

9:10

I am also concerned about the increased involvement in the private sector, which will be in this new endowment fund. No one stipulates that the endowment fund money will be given out to institutions that find matching funds from private donors or the private sector. This doesn't allow institutions to plan ahead for the future. Postsecondary institutions will have to take some focus off teaching and learning and now on to raising money and on increasing the role and influence of the private sector. Also, smaller institutions will have more difficulty raising this matching fund because the money will naturally gravitate to the larger universities in Edmonton and Calgary.

This has very disturbing implications for academic freedom as well. Academic freedom is seriously compromised when developing new programs, faculties, and areas of inquiry is dependent on structuring funds from the private sector. Postsecondary institutions must be able to ask difficult questions, must be free to pursue knowledge for the sake of seeking knowledge, and must be able to operate freely from the constraints of vested interests.

Mr. Speaker, seeking matching funds from the private sector or from large private donations also fails to build a new century for the arts, humanities, and social services in our universities and postsecondary institutions. Private donations to the social sciences and humanities are usually far lower than they are to the so-called hard sciences. Under the Tory scheme, as we see from Bill 1, the arts and social sciences will continue on the decline in this province because Bill 1 does not allow for increased base operating funding, which is what arts and social sciences programs need to be sustainable.

Alberta's new century must be built on a solid foundation of informed, well-rounded citizens. It is no surprise that today's CEOs and business executives often look to graduates from the social sciences and humanities for their new workers. This is an increasing trend because arts graduates have an ability to write, to think critically, to solve problems quickly, and to look at the world in a broad context. The Conservative government continues to under-

fund and underappreciate the arts and social sciences, but they will do so at their own peril. They do so at the peril of starving the very lifeblood of democracy: a well-informed, active, and engaged citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude my comments, and I now beg leave to adjourn the debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

head: *(continued)*

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, you have seven minutes left. Do you wish to continue?

Mr. Hinman: I'm finished.

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the opportunity, and congratulations on your job, something that not many of us care to fulfill. It's not a challenge to a lot of us. I do want to congratulate you, the Speaker, and the Deputy Chair on your elections. I also, like many others here, want to congratulate His Honour for his speech. Mine is a rather informal bunch of comments and reflections at this time.

When I was a young kid, my dad used to go down to Lethbridge to a function called the Lethbridge sportsmen's dinner, and I still have a baseball that dad brought home to me signed by – now I guess I have to call him His Honour. He was then a pretty fabulous star with the Edmonton Eskimos, and I can also remember his nickname, and it was a term of endearment. I would imagine that in this day and age of political correctness, they'll have to rewrite the history book to eliminate that reference to him as well. I won't even mention what it is here because I'll get myself in hot water.

I would also like to pay respect to Her Honour. You know, not too many of us didn't have an opportunity to get a hug, not too many of us didn't have an opportunity to see her. I can remember the kids in a little small community in our constituency called Little Bow. The community was Lomond. It's about 208 people, and they had the grand sum of six kids graduating from grade 12. Her Honour had been invited down there and managed to escape all the protocol, give all the kids a hug, and helped a little handicapped graduate not onto the stage, but instead of making him feel a little different, she brought all the kids down onto the main floor so everyone was part of the graduation ceremony.

I wanted to reflect a little bit and tie this into the throne speech in this our centennial year, where we've come from and where we're going to. I know that it was 13 years and five days ago that I made my maiden speech after a by-election, and I can imagine that those of you who have given speeches today were pretty darn nervous like I was. I know that the thing that appealed to me the very most was your references to your family, your background, and an appreciation for the people that got you here.

I don't think I'm any different, but in this our centennial year I have to think back to my great-grandpa who came here in 1898 to an area south of Pincher Creek. If the family still had the land today, they would have received the farm century award, but unfortunately with progress the old homestead is under the Waterton dam. He raised horses for the North West Mounted Police, and I reflect today of the sadness that everyone will think about and attend tomorrow.

I'm also reflecting on the fact that looking in the newspaper

accounts at a picture of a young officer out at the Mayerthorpe detachment, I recognized the name and did a phone call and found out, lo and behold, that it's a cousin to my very best friend that I grew up with in the little town of Carmangay. It is miraculous that she wasn't one of the unfortunate few that had to attend the scene.

When I think of our riding I'm really quite amazed that in the 13 years I've been here, it's grown about 40 per cent geographically. We've got a wonderful riding, really. Another reason that I wanted to give you a thumbnail sketch was for those of you who haven't been in southern Alberta to our riding called Little Bow. It's actually a very large riding, one of the ten largest, and it starts about 70 kilometres north of the American border at the south end of the county of Lethbridge. It goes all the way north to within 22 kilometres of the southeast part of Calgary, one of the newer communities, Copperfield. If you swam across the river, you'd be literally 15 minutes from one corner of our riding over to Calgary, and down in the southeast we're only within 60 kilometres of the city of Medicine Hat. A huge area, over 20 municipalities, and every one of them has something to be very proud of.

The county of Lethbridge, for instance, is probably best known for the fact that it has the largest total number of intensive livestock operations, not to take away from the county of Lacombe. I know that they have the largest number of confined feeding hog operations, but the county of Lethbridge has the largest number of cattle, swine, dairy – you name it, they seem to have it – over 680 confined feeding operations.

And, you know, neighbours get along. Yes, they're concerned about water, but you know the irrigation systems in the area have a far higher quality of water than many of the treatment plants that we have in our towns and villages.

They also are the home to the Lethbridge regional airport, something that quite a few of us in the Assembly want to see maintained, not only the viability of the airport but the airline that services our capital here in Edmonton. It's one of the only airlines that has a direct flight, 75 minutes, second-longest in the province other than one of the flights coming in from northern Alberta, all without a washroom, mind you, but it is a critical service to go 75 minutes nonstop and not to have to go through an international airport and security.

9:20

The county of Lethbridge is also the home to probably one of the world-class agricultural research stations, and it's a marvel in itself because it's a joint federal/provincial venture that's been in place for years. That sits outside the city in our riding, as does a provincial jail.

We have the entire county of Vulcan, and that's primarily an agricultural community, again. The largest centre, the town of Vulcan itself, has a history of being one of the few flight training centres in Alberta during the Second World War, training over 1,200 RCAF pilots. Today when you think back to those guys who trained in Harvards, now their theme, their tourism draw, is the Star Trek theme. It's my understanding that this year they'll host a grand national assembly of Klingons attending in Vulcan from all across North America. It's the second week of June if anyone wants to go.

You know, it doesn't really relate to the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, but it does when we think of where we were a hundred years ago. The technology and the education and the things that we kind of take for granted today, a lot of it speaks in my mind to disposable income. You know, the fuller our stomach is, the more we want to whine and the more we expect and the more we want to keep up with our neighbours.

I was one of the very fortunate few, I think, of my generation. I

was the oldest in the family, and it was a dream that I should go to postsecondary. But none of my other brothers or sisters were able to, you know. We just didn't have the money. I'm very fortunate. My wife and I have four children, and all four have been able to attend some form of postsecondary. When the kids today talk about how much it costs to go to school, it's true: it costs a lot of money. But I remember when I went to the U of C for a brief time before I went to SAIT. You got by on a hundred dollars a month, and that was big living. Mom and Dad had to scrape like crazy just to make that available.

I'll even go back to our oldest son, Mr. Speaker. In 1996 at the U of L they were paying \$1,200 per semester, and we were looking at a 3 per cent increase in tuition fees, and the kids were going wild. Well, I happened to speak to a parent from Massachusetts that same year, and he had his son attending what they call a land grant college in the state of Massachusetts. I said, being a nosy farm kid from southern Alberta, "How much is it costing you to send your child to go to school?" He looked at me, and he said, "Eleven thousand." I said, "What? For one year?" "Yup. For my own state college. Eleven thousand dollars."

I knew at the time, as many of us in this Assembly have spent time on municipal and city councils, roughly what our tax rates were, and it was suddenly arousing my curiosity. I said, "Up at home for about a 1,500 or a 1,200 square foot home, we pay about \$1, \$1.10, \$1.15 a square foot for property taxes. What do you pay?" His answer was: "Seventy-five hundred dollars." Have any of us ever thought of what a wonderful province we actually live in?

You know, I've got quite a few other communities, and the problem with speaking of one, then you forget the other one, or somebody says that you didn't mention our town. Well, we've got a couple other really neat ones. Coaldale. It's the largest community in our riding: 6,500 people. It's the home of the oldest Mennonite settlement in the riding, maybe even in Alberta, a gem of the west. It's an old church that a group of volunteers have restored by taking advantage of the CFEP program, and it hopes to be a tourism, educational recollection of old antiques and what things used to be. Bring kids in and show them how their great forefathers farmed the land.

It is also the home of the Alberta Birds of Prey Centre, and it's state of the art. It's probably one of only four in North America that takes birds that have been injured in the wild, treats them, and then releases them out. I encourage you to come down and see it.

It also is the home of a centenarian this year. Mr. John Gettman is going to be 102 years old, and he still sets up the tables when the seniors have a meeting in the lodge, and he's got almost as much dark hair as I do. He's an amazing guy.

We have Vauxhall. It's the potato capital of the world. Again, not a big town, 800 people, but you know when I went to the high school graduation last year, over 80 per cent of the kids were on the honour roll. Not too shabby, is it? We've got a poor education system, don't we?

When I went to Vulcan, you know, the same thing. A couple of years ago they were ranked third in all of Alberta for the high school ratings. People can't stay at number three all the time because there's always another school that wants to compete and beat them and be better.

Picture Butte. It's the feedlot capital of Alberta. Some call it Feedlot Alley.

You know, there are all kinds of communities. Champion, if anyone is ever down there, has Little Bow provincial park. For 25 years the people in the county hoped and prayed and planned through droughts to develop a water management thing, a thing called a dam, that was, yes, going to displace a few people, but you

know the community came together and realized they wanted municipal water that was safe and secure to fight fires with, that they wanted a recreation area, that they wanted to be able to develop private irrigation, and that will allow 10,000 acres of private irrigation to come on stream. No government money to do that, they do it on their own. They invest over \$500 an acre just in the capital to put a pivot system on their own land.

Speaking of irrigation, we've got three irrigation districts. St. Mary's is shared with Cardston-Taber-Warner and Little Bow. We've got the Bow River irrigation district on the east side, Lethbridge Northern irrigation in the middle. This is a positive thing, I believe, for all of Alberta. It's not a grab. It's not an empty trough of wasted money. It's 4 per cent of the agricultural land generating 22 per cent of the agricultural revenue.

The neatest thing is that a little community called Barons teamed up with the Lethbridge Northern irrigation district, and this spring they unveiled a 10,000-acre expansion to the district in the Barons area totally enclosed in pipe. Not one drop of evaporation. All the guys now are irrigating with pivot systems with low-drop, low-pressure systems. You know, talk about being innovators and talk about being responsible.

I think I've almost wasted my 10 minutes, and I probably had 10 minutes more, but I did want to . . . [interjections] Pardon me? Keep on going? Okay. Well, I'll try to speed it up just somewhat.

You know, that Little Bow dam – it's called Twin Valley dam and reservoir right now – will provide a recreation area not just for people in our constituency. We're about a hundred miles from the Little Bow provincial park and Twin Valley from the city of Calgary, and it's booked by Wednesday night on any long weekend. It provides an escape for the people from urban centres who want to come out and get some fresh air and do some waterskiing, get some nice sun, lean into the 80-kilometre an hour winds. You know, those kinds of things are what Alberta is made of. The only thing is that all of these facilities that we have south of Calgary that are called bodies of water are manmade. Only two are natural resources.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to our tour.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader.

9:30

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't planning to speak tonight to the Speech from the Throne, but as I have to move to adjourn debate, I don't want to miss my opportunity to make a few short remarks before I do that. [interjection] Is that an invitation to treat?

Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely enthused by the Speech from the Throne delivered by our new Lieutenant Governor, and I, too, want to add my congratulations to the Honourable Norman Kwong as our new Lieutenant Governor. He has big rubber boots to fill indeed, as he noted as he delivered his remarks to our House, the remarks about the next Alberta and even the titles throughout it: "The Centennial: A Century of Achievement," "The Next Alberta Will Be a Leader in Learning," "The Next Alberta Will Have a Diverse and Growing Economy," "The Next Alberta Will Be the Healthiest Province in Canada," "All Albertans Will Share in the Alberta Advantage," "The Next Alberta Will Be a Leader in Canada and the World."

Mr. Speaker, last year this government published a 20-year strategic plan, a strategic plan that talked about Albertans being self-reliant and entrepreneurial, that talked about building on four basic pillars: unleashing innovation, leading and learning, competing in a global economy, and making Alberta the best place to live, work,

and visit. Mr. Speaker, those pillars, that direction, that vision for the future of this province is reflected in the Speech from the Throne and the action that this government is going to be taking over the next year and the next period of time with the three-year business plans and, indeed, over the next 20 years to make that vision a reality.

Mr. Speaker, the focus on education is absolutely key. It's not just one of the pillars of the four pillars of the strategic plan, but it's the underpinning of the whole strategic plan. You cannot unleash innovation without education, and it's necessary to unleash innovation because in our economy if we do not advance knowledge, if we do not apply knowledge to our economy and make Alberta a leader in knowledge, we will not be competing in a global economy.

All you have to do is to look at our traditional economy, oil and gas. The investment that was made in research and development by our predecessors had tremendous foresight, and it's resulted in us being leaders both in the traditional oil and gas development and also in synthetic crudes in the oil sands. It was investment in technology that's made that happen. It's investment in technology which will take us to the next level, to the new technologies which will continue to allow us to extract values from those resources, to move into clean-burning coal, to move into coal-bed methane, both in an environmentally sustainable manner.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at other areas of our economy as well. Our fibre economy. It doesn't make sense over the long term to be shipping wood fibre relatively unprocessed to other places in the world. We need to add technology to add value to keep those jobs here, and that happens through the pursuit of knowledge and innovation. In the agricultural economy it makes no sense for us to ship our agriculture products relatively unprocessed to the United States or to other parts of the world. We must be adding knowledge, adding value, using technology to increase the value here and keep the jobs at home.

Moving to the new economies of biosciences, life sciences, and nanotechnology requires innovation. It requires knowledge. So the first pillar of our 20-year strategic plan, unleashing innovation, is absolutely underpinned by the expansion of knowledge, the expansion of education, the advancing in education that's referenced in His Honour's Speech from the Throne.

Leading in learning is self-evident. We need to have basic education. We need to inspire our students to complete their high school education because we know that in the future – I think one of the statistics that's often thrown out is that 67 per cent of all future jobs created are going to require a postsecondary education. We need to inspire our students to finish their high school and to move into an advanced education.

We need to recognize that advancing education is not just about completing high school. It's the full, broad continuum of education. It's those people who need, moving to literacy as well as those people who want, moving to a PhD or beyond. So advancing education and being leaders in learning are pivotal to the new economy and to the next Alberta.

Competing in a global marketplace. Absolutely essential for Albertans. With 3 million people, even if we grow to 4 million or 4 and a half million people, Mr. Speaker, we need to trade out into the world, and we're not going to be trading out into the world effectively with our current commodity bases. We have to trade out into the world with new commodities, with advanced commodities, with high-value commodities, and with knowledge, particularly with knowledge, competing in a global economy.

What's going to make it possible for us to compete in that global economy, Mr. Speaker? It's, again, our human capital, the people who we have here in Alberta with a good education, with a strong,

innovative and entrepreneurial ability. One thing that we seldom reference about Alberta but which is particularly true is that we are a complex, cosmopolitan community with friends and relatives from all over the world, and in the new economy those friends and relatives, the fact that Albertans come from everywhere, are related everywhere, is going to be so critical to us not only in the basic makeup of our modern economy and our modern society in this province. It's what makes our society an interesting and diverse place.

We live together here in harmony better than virtually any place in the world. Compare Alberta, compare Edmonton to any place in the world, and you won't find the kind of diversity we have and the ability to live together with that diversity, to value that diversity, and the ability that that gives us to trade out to friends and relatives all over the world. Just one high school in this city, Harry Ainlay high school, at one time had 88 different language groups represented in that school. It's phenomenal. It's a very, very valuable resource that we have in human capital of this province, and it's something that we need to value. So competing in the global economy, absolutely important. We're well positioned to do it. We need a knowledge base to be able to do that.

Making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit, the fourth pillar of our 20-year strategic plan. It's not about beating our chests and saying that we're number one, Mr. Speaker. It's about having the quality of life which makes people want to live here and makes living here worthwhile, valuable, and a place where our children and our grandchildren can be.

What makes it worthwhile? Well, it's being stewards of our environment: the clean air, the clean water, the great mountains, the wonderful place that we have to live. That's what's important. That's where we provide stewardship. We must leave as small a footprint as possible so that future generations can enjoy the same Alberta that we enjoy.

It's about having a good education system so that our children can grow up having the advantages of an education system which will enable them to take advantage of the opportunities which present themselves in the future.

It's about having a health care system that takes care of our children and our parents when we need it. It's about having safe

communities. That's the type of thing which makes our community a livable place.

It's about the arts. It's about the quality of life which makes life enjoyable and celebrating the arts. That's a very important part of our community. I had the opportunity to go to an IRDC conference in San Antonio, Texas, a number of years ago, when I had the portfolio of intergovernmental affairs. IRDC is an organization of senior executives that looks for the next place for their corporation to invest. When you ask what the criteria are that they're looking for, sure they're looking for low taxes; that's important. They're looking for low input costs; that's important. They're looking for a well-educated workforce and a well-education population; that's important.

But what they really want are the creative costs. What they really want is a place where their employees, their senior executives, and the senior executives' spouses and their employees will enjoy living because when they have an enjoyment of life and when they know that their children have a place where they can be educated, be healthy, have a quality environment, and have the arts, they will be productive, happy employees, and they will make the economy sing. So it's a tautological thing, Mr. Speaker. It all comes together. It's what the strategic plan is all about and is so ably reflected in the issues that are set out in the Speech from the Throne.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted with the Speech from the Throne this year and the avenues we are taking to make the strategic plan for this province sing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, with tomorrow's sombre observances in mind, specifically the national memorial service for the four Alberta RCMP officers murdered last week in the line of duty, I move that the Assembly stand adjourned pursuant to Government Motion 12 agreed to by this Assembly yesterday until 1:30 Monday afternoon, March 14.

[Motion carried; at 9:38 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 14, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/03/14

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, and welcome. At the conclusion of the prayer would you please remain standing for the singing of our national anthem.

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

Hon. members, we'll be led today with the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Would you please participate in the language of your choice?

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Before calling on the Premier for Introduction Of Guests, let me just provide to members a little information with respect to our history. On March 14, 1979, a general election was held in Alberta; that's 26 years ago today. Of the 79 MLAs elected, 74 were PC, four were Alberta Social Credit, and one was NDP. Included in that election were the fathers of the current members for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert and Calgary-Foothills. Their fathers then represented the constituencies of Barrhead and Calgary-Bow respectively.

The hon. Premier.

head:

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature four visitors. Every year Grant MacEwan College hosts a Mad Hatters Ball. This is a very successful dinner and silent auction fundraiser. My guests today were the successful bidders on a lunch with the Premier.

An Hon. Member: Was there any orange juice?

Mr. Klein: There was a little orange juice and sandwiches, very expensive sandwiches.

It was my great pleasure to host Mr. Pat Buffalo, Mr. Trevor Swampy, Mr. John Szumlas, and Ms Diane Strashok, all members of Peace Hills Insurance's board of directors. I'd like to thank them for both their company and their generous support of the college, and I'd ask that two of them, Diane and Trevor, stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's a pleasure for me to introduce eight individuals visiting from Ontario. They're participating in the Ontario Legislature internship program, and they'll be attending meetings in the Legislature with government and opposition members both today and tomorrow. It's a pleasure to introduce Nicola Hepburn, Audrey Lemieux, Adam McDonald, Kaila Mintz, Ben Rossiter, Rebecca Sciarra, and Beki Scott. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that everyone give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a number of people that are here to watch the introduction of Bill 21, the tourism levy act. We have with us Mac Makenny, who is the chair of the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council. Mac has been our chair now for about a year. With him is Bob Scott, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Economic Development. And either here or on their way are Ken Fiske of Edmonton Tourism and David Kaiser of the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association. I'd like the Assembly to give them a warm, traditional welcome.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I introduce to you and through you Mr. Herb Robinson and Mrs. Angie Lemire, who are teachers from the Jasper junior/senior high school. Along with them they have 30 bright young individuals. Some of them have been here when they were in grade 6, but now they've graduated to grade 10. They're all from the municipality of Jasper and wonderful by nature. That's what it is. So I'd ask them to all rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Loughheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce today to you and through you to members of the Assembly 21 students from St. Luke school in South Cooking Lake. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Mhairi Miskew, and parents Mrs. Lesley Serediak and Mrs. Brenda Olsen. I'd ask them to please rise in both the members' and the public galleries and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 23 very experienced teenagers. They are, in fact, a group of seniors from the community of Beaumont, which is in my constituency. They're 23 seniors along with their leader, Mrs. Raymonde Boyachuk, and their bus driver, Mr. Ouellette. I'd also like to mention that they include the mother of the Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace. It is my pleasure to ask this group to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my

pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two folks that work very hard for Catholic education in this province. Marilyn Welsch is from Pincher Creek, and joining her today is Stef Michniewski. Stef is the executive director of that particular organization. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests who I think will give me cause to expect a particularly spirited and inspired debate today in the Legislature. They are three seminarians from St. Joseph Seminary in Edmonton. They're in the public gallery. I'll ask them to rise as I read their names. Lee Leslie, seminarian for the archdiocese of Edmonton, formerly worked at the Legislature on maintenance staff. He's a first-year theologian. Marc Cramer is a seminarian for the archdiocese of Edmonton. He's a third-year theologian and may be ordained as a deacon this year. Our third guest is Aaron Roth, who once worked in our caucus staff and is a seminarian for the archdiocese of Edmonton and a first-year theologian. They're touring the Legislature today and observing us and perhaps even praying for us in question period. I'd like everybody to give them a warm welcome.

Thank you.

1:40

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the Keenooshayo grade 6 class and their teacher, Mrs. Hubbard, and parent helpers Mrs. Deb Caney, Mr. Jason Biggs, and Ms Michelle Riches. Would they please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly?

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Dr. Donna Chovanec. Dr. Chovanec is my constituent, a former student, and presently an assistant professor in the department of educational policy studies at the University of Alberta. Her focus of research for the past several years has been related to women's challenges and strengths. Her most recent research has been in two distinct areas: women's movements in Chili and women's dependence on substance use. Dr. Chovanec is sitting in the public gallery, and I would now ask her to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, also in the gallery today and here to observe the introduction of Bill 21 is Don Boynton. Don is the director of communications for Travel Alberta, and I'll ask Don to rise as we provide him with a warm welcome from the Assembly.

Thank you very much.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Budget Process

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being on time, on task, and on

budget is a basic responsibility this government has lost. Regional health authorities, municipalities, school boards, and government departments have complained that they cannot plan and manage properly when their budgets are not finalized until the fiscal year is already months under way. Every single Albertan is affected by budget delays, from AISH recipients to students and farmers to taxpayers, who expect better from their government. My question is to the Premier. Why is this government is such disarray that it can't deliver a budget on time?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we're not in disarray, and I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance speak to the budget.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we will be introducing a budget roughly in the same time frame as we do in most sessions. The hon. member would know that the session began two weeks later than we maybe normally would. But I think the important thing and what I hear from school boards and health authorities and all of the affected municipalities is that they want the budget in as quickly as we can but that more important than the day the budget comes in is the content of the budget.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: what steps is the Premier taking to improve budget discipline so that this year the budget will actually be followed?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the point is well taken, and the hon. Minister of Finance is taking her time with the budget to make sure that there are no in-year adjustments.

Dr. Taft: My last question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Given the widespread breakdown of the budget process, what recommendations will this minister be making to improve the government's efficiency in budgeting?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that our Treasurer is doing a very good job with budget, and I don't think I have to look at that at this point in time.

Thank you.

Chartered Air Travel

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, last summer Premier Klein refused to do his health care . . .

The Speaker: Please, please, please. That's a no-no. Go ahead.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Last summer the Premier refused to do his health care homework by meeting with the other Premiers at the Niagara-on-the-Lake conference. Then in September of 2004 the Premier, having spent less than one day at the three-day Ottawa health conference, headed over to the casino in Hull, Quebec. This rambling, gambling, private-chartered jet junket flight cost the Alberta taxpayer almost \$42,000. To the Premier: how can the Premier justify such extravagance to Martha and Henry?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, many officials attended that conference and stood in for me, not at the casino but stood in for me at the

conference. So when we charter aircraft, we weigh the costs of flying commercial against the costs of chartering.

Mr. Chase: Again to the Premier: given that the health care summit date was set months in advance, why didn't the Premier either fly commercially or on one of the government's four private planes?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again, we weigh the costs of flying commercially, not on government aircraft because I can tell you that I've taken government aircraft to Toronto and Ottawa. It's two stops on the way back, about 11 hours and about seven hours down. So it's a matter of expediency.

Mr. Chase: Finally, to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: given that eight of the Premier's chartered flights of fancy cost Albertans in total a quarter of a million dollars, isn't it time that this government clipped its wings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that these people realize how important a job our Premier has, and we have to get him places as fast as we possibly can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Market Surveillance Administrator

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In December 2002 the EUB ruled that Engage Energy Canada charged the transmission administrator \$126 million for demand power to balance the electricity system when the value of the deal should have been only \$66 million. The EUB ruling forced Engage Energy to refund \$63 million within 28 days. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Why did the government appoint in 2003 as market surveillance administrator a former executive of the company that overcharged the transmission administrator \$63 million in the year 2002?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of questions in there. First, with respect to the facts I don't have the information in front of me, so I can't really judge as to what the merits of that specific instance were. I'd be happy to look at it if he'd send us the information.

With respect to the individual that was hired on as the head of the market surveillance administration, he comes with a tremendous amount of industry experience, the kind of people you want to look for that can head up these agencies.

Mr. MacDonald: Industry experience but no experience protecting consumers.

Why is the market surveillance administrator now refusing to investigate electricity market manipulation and price gouging that occurred between 1999 and the year 2002?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I want to again say that the individual in particular, the head of the market surveillance administration, does come with a high level of competency, expertise, and the ability to assess these things to ensure that the public is protected. He has acted on this case. They have done their investigations, and they've also forwarded some of that to the Competition Bureau.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: when will this minister remove the market surveillance administrator because of this conflict of interest and replace him with someone who is independent and will represent the interests of overcharged, frustrated consumers?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that one could probably try and say that anybody with experience might have some conflicts of interest. It's precisely the kind of people that you wish to have. You wish to have someone that understands, has the experience and background in these topics, very technical, and this individual comes very highly qualified.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

1:50

Electricity Billing

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The problem of billing errors on power bills lives on. Recently the Capital health authority was overbilled \$125,000, and the error was only spotted because Capital health hired an outside expert to help read its power bills. Because of deregulation the average residential or farm customer faces a dizzying array of new line items and charges on their power bill, making it harder to spot overcharging and billing errors. My question is to the Premier. What does it say about the sorry state of deregulation in Alberta when health authorities, which should be focusing on patient care, are forced to hire outside experts to comb through their power bills to spot errors?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the specifics relative to the case with the Capital regional health authority, but I can tell you that deregulation applies only to the generation side, and problems related to billing have to be sorted out with the retailer and the customer. We have an advocate and a person who will assist not only the Capital regional health authority but any individual with these problems.

Mr. Mason: Assist the power companies.

While hiring outside experts may be a solution for large electricity users such as Capital health, where does it leave Martha and Henry of this province who can't afford to hire professional energy watchdogs to spot errors on their power bills?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again, I pointed out that there is help available to individuals, the Marthas and the Henrys of this province, to help them sort through their utility bills. I'll ask the appropriate minister to supplement if he wishes.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has clearly stated, there is help available to anyone that has a problem with reading their bills. Within Government Services we have the Utilities Consumer Advocate, which has done a remarkable job of sorting out a lot of these problems as it relates between the retailer and the consumer.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier defend a situation where only big electricity consumers get credits for errors on their power bills while small residential and farm customers are stuck paying higher power bills because of overcharging and billing errors that go undetected and uncorrected?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that statement to be true, and I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, where there are errors that have been found, through the advocate's office there have been refunds. There have been errors corrected on occasions. I've got to tell you, though, that because of the activity of the consumer advocate, we are seeing a reduction in the number of errors. In a lot of cases when we find that some people think there is an error, there are some corrections as it relates to the distribution and transmission time frame and the energy consumption time frame. So you get those variances, and they can be sorted out through the advocate.

Shell Chemical Plant Vapour Release

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, I understand that this morning there was an incident in the northern part of Strathcona county involving a chemical plant. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Can the minister please provide an update to this Assembly?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes, Mr. Speaker. At 9:45 this morning Alberta Environment did receive a report that I have in front of me pertaining to a vapour pressure release from a tank at the Shell chemical plant near Fort Saskatchewan.

The compound is believed to be a mixture of ethyl benzene and styrene, which are used to make plastics and Styrofoam. In fact, it's somewhat like a paint stripper, and it smells like gasoline. I'm really pleased to say that the company has reported that there have been no casualties. We have sent our investigators in, but this is a collaborative effort with Emergency Management Alberta as well as the EUB through Alberta Energy and also with Strathcona county.

I want to say that in terms of acceptable levels essentially 300 parts per million is what is considered an acceptable guideline. What we've discovered at this point is about 80 parts per million.

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, my only supplemental is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Can the minister please tell us what role Emergency Management Alberta has in this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the government takes incidents such as this very seriously, and I'm pleased to report that my latest information indicates that this particular incident has been contained.

Nevertheless, it's important that all members know, Mr. Speaker, that each municipality is responsible for maintaining an emergency plan. Those plans are tested on a frequent basis, and the role of Emergency Management Alberta is to co-ordinate with both the private sector and the first responders to ensure that these plans are adequate. As of this point in time my officials within Emergency Management Alberta are on standby and will respond if requested.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Policing Review

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2002 this government released the results of the MLA policing review committee, a comprehensive review of the Alberta Police Act, which is 17 years old. Society has obviously changed, and there is a pressing need to change the Police Act. My questions are to the Solicitor General. Given that the government has had over three years to consider these recommendations, can the minister explain why there has been a delay in implementing the core themes identified in the report?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are 34 recommendations within that report. It did take about two years or two and a half years to actually complete the whole review and take it through the government process. There are some tremendous challenges within that review. Some of those challenges we're going to be addressing within this next fiscal year, but as well with regard to the Police Act those legislative changes will be before this Assembly I'm hoping later this month.

Dr. B. Miller: Again to the same minister: will this government commit to amending the Police Act to ensure that the police are governed by a transparent, objective, public oversight?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, we do have amendments that will be coming before this House with regard to civilian oversight, with regard to establishing and ensuring that public oversight is entrenched in legislation and is part of the process with regard to investigations regarding police conduct and/or the opportunity for a complainant from the public or a police officer to have the ability to appeal their complaint to the LERB, the Law Enforcement Review Board.

Dr. B. Miller: Again to the same minister: given that the current Police Act prohibits the Solicitor General from calling for a public inquiry, will this government listen to Albertans and show true leadership by amending this provision and giving the Solicitor General the authority for full public inquiries?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, there is legislation in place right now regarding the Fatality Inquiries Act. There is legislation in the Police Act regarding a commission inquiry as well as a law enforcement review inquiry, so there are avenues that are available there. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora will have to wait till legislation comes before the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Pheasant Hunting

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first of two questions is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development regarding pheasant hunting in Alberta. Recently a constituent asked about an Alberta government program where pheasants which are raised in hatcheries are released into certain areas of the province each year for hunting. I understand that pheasants are released primarily only in southern Alberta with the exception of one location north of Red Deer. My question for the minister is: why are pheasants not also released in north-central Alberta to provide the same opportunity for hunters there?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, it is a good question. Pheasants in this province are a limited resource and most are released in southern Alberta for several reasons. Some of it, of course, is to be cost-effective and to be practical. It is necessary to release pheasants into areas where they will have the greatest chance of survival and have the opportunity to augment the wild populations. Because of varying factors, including weather, agricultural practices, and the actual pheasant habitat itself, pheasants have a better chance of thriving in southern Alberta than they do in the wild.

2:00

It must be kept in mind, Mr. Speaker, that some other species are

being hunted, for example bighorn sheep, in only certain parts of Alberta, and sometimes if people wish to hunt pheasants, they must be aware that opportunities largely make themselves available in southern Alberta, where most of the habitat is.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My other question is to the same minister. Can something be done in future, then, to better support pheasant hunting in central Alberta?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, my department works very diligently to make sure that we balance conservation and allocation amongst all its stakeholders, and we take into account various parts of the province where possible. Department staff will continue to examine all the factors in determining whether an area of Alberta, whether it's south or central, is suitable for pheasant release sites, and we will continue to release some pheasants in the Buffalo Lake area. I can reassure the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose that we will continue to release pheasants in those particular sites so that he and his constituents and the person that he's representing can go out and hunt pheasants.

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

Wellness Initiatives

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 11 the Premier said: "Talking about the future leads me to the fourth component of the Third Way for health renewal. And that's to get serious about wellness." My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. If wellness is the fourth plank of this government's third way, why is the government putting regional health authorities like Capital health in a position of cutting early intervention treatments like physiotherapy?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, there is not a cut in the physiotherapy budget or service being provided by Capital health. What they have chosen to do is look at the acuity of some of those people who need to receive treatments, particularly for low income and seniors and so on, and they will get those services without interruption as required.

Mr. Speaker, these are again services that are not listed that are provided in Alberta. More physiotherapy services are sponsored in Alberta than in any other province, and the services that are being provided through the dollars that are being allocated, and not cut or reduced dollars, will go to help those that have the greatest need.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: if wellness is the fourth plank of this government's third way, why does this government oppose the Alberta Liberal idea of creating a wellness fund?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, there are many ideas that we will consider in the discussion about the third way. On the conference dates of May 3 to 5 we'll have an opportunity to hear from people worldwide with best practices. Currently the wellness fund has been well expended to the extent that we have communities with the Wellpower challenge. Healthy U has been very effective, and there are numerous other budgets, in fact, throughout this government, through other ministries that address wellness in Alberta.

The consolidation of a wellness fund is an idea that could be

looked at, but it would be one of several that we will explore over this next year as we look at innovation and best practices worldwide.

Ms Blakeman: You voted it down last week.

Again to the same minister: if wellness is the fourth plank of this government's third way, why isn't a comprehensive workplace smoking ban already government policy?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the bill is on the Order Paper today.

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

Seniors' Benefit Programs

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my senior constituents are indicating that they're looking forward to a more enhanced optical and dental plan. Can the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports advise us whether she is looking forward to enhancing optical and dental plans for our seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do recognize the important contribution that seniors make to our province, and we provide programs that enhance the quality of life for our seniors. As you know, an important part of healthy aging is in the area of dental care and optical care, which is why, hon. member, we are introducing in a couple of weeks – I guess it would be after budget – a dental program that's enhanced as well as an optical program. That program is important because it's going to be easy for seniors to access. As well, it will provide maximum assistance to seniors that are lower income, who we know need our help the most, and some assistance to seniors that have a moderate income, and that will be in the area of coverage for basic dental health procedures as well as for prescription eyeglasses. I will announce more details about the program as it becomes finalized in a few weeks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seniors are also concerned with the high cost of hearing aids. Is the minister also looking at that particular benefit?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, recently the responsibility for the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program was transferred from the Ministry of Health and Wellness over to this ministry, and that means that now we have two programs that will assist seniors with hearing aids. First, the Aids to Daily Living program will provide up to \$945 for low-income seniors and up to \$756 for other seniors toward the purchase of a hearing aid. In addition, there is an opportunity for the special-needs assistance program to top up the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program, up to \$1,200 for a first hearing aid and up to \$1,200 for a second hearing aid if it's required. We are working very hard, as I indicated earlier, to ensure that our seniors have the resources that are needed for their care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you. My last supplemental: what kind of income and asset testing is the minister considering for these programs?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know and as I mentioned earlier as well, the dental/optical program is income tested. It's focused on those who need our help and need our help the most. The programs will provide some assistance to seniors with moderate incomes.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important that you know that our seniors' programs are not asset tested. That's a well-known fact. While some of the programs are focused on seniors with lower incomes, we also provide programs that are for all seniors regardless of income. For example, last year we eliminated health care premiums for all Albertans over the age of 65, and also all our seniors receive premium-free Blue Cross prescription drug coverage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, at a news conference with the Premier in February the Minister of Human Resources and Employment promised a minimum wage increase within 30 days. He then backed off and announced that the 30-day consultation would only happen after a three-month waiting period, when this Legislature will no longer be sitting. A question to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: will the minister guarantee that when this curious three-month wait is over, there will be no further delay and that he will quickly increase the minimum wage to his promised \$7 per hour?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That's a good question because I'd like to clarify the situation. When we did announce the process, we said that within three months a decision will be made after consulting one month with the industry, and that's exactly what will happen. We will definitely announce the program.

Mr. Backs: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will the minister guarantee that there will be no two-tier minimum wage with lesser rates for servers in restaurants and bars?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, at this time we are proposing \$7 an hour.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that the government is now in a long consultation process on how to implement an increase, why was there not a plan in place before there was the announcement of this increase?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, yes, we do ongoing monitoring of the wages. Issues like this are always discussed within caucus, within cabinet, and within ministries. We do work closely with our own ministries to ensure that if changes need to be made in any area in government, we can do it. Yes, we have been working on this.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

2:10

Diploma Exam Grades

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Education made serious mistakes with this year's math 30 diploma exams, and as a result some 4,000 students may have had their marks rolled back by 3 per cent. For many grade 12 students considering postsecondary education, a 3 per cent mark reduction will deny them honours standing and thousands of dollars in scholarships and awards. To

cover up and compensate for their own bungling, the department officials are asking teachers to tinker with school-awarded marks. My question is to the Minister of Education. Will the minister guarantee that Alberta Education's bungling will not result in any student being denied a Rutherford scholarship, other student awards, or entry into a postsecondary program?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, there was no bungling of any sort. In fact, the issue that I think the hon. member is referring to is called the equating process, which was actually brought to our attention as a necessary step by the Auditor General some five or six years ago. The department responded by bringing forward what we felt was a reasonable and fair way to provide consistent standards over time.

This is extremely important, Mr. Speaker, because what it does is it provides basically in the first year, the only year we do this in, a baseline exam to be arrived at against which future exams can be compared, and that, in fact, is extremely important to universities and colleges and other postsecondary institutes right across all of North America. So we've done our best to address that. It's been done in physics, chemistry, and math this year. It was done in social studies last year. Now we have those baseline exams, and we're in better shape for it.

Dr. Pannu: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: why is the government asking teachers to tinker with school-awarded marks when it is the Alberta government's policy and practices that need correction?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, diploma exams typically count for about 50 per cent of the student's grade, so there is an entire semester of study during which students are expected to perform as well. This particular situation, however, doesn't always result in final scores being adjusted downwards by 1, 2, or 3 per cent. In some cases, in fact, those students' scores went up.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, my final question to the minister, although he hasn't answered my second question: will the minister make public how many students lost credit or honours standing due to the Department of Education's botched departmental exams?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member would not berate the school system or the students or the outstanding teachers who are associated with them. I frankly think that it's quite an insult to pursue this line of questioning.

What I can tell the hon. member is that we had approximately 3,800 students write one form of the exam and the other several thousand write the other form. There was a set of common questions on each, and then there was a set of differing questions. The issue of equating has brought about now a standard which, as the Auditor General brought to our attention, was very necessary, as also was brought to our attention by several of the universities that our students are competing for entrance toward. Now, if there's a statistical figure available in that respect, I'll certainly try to find it for the hon. member.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that we spend the most money of any province in Canada per capita per student in this province, and our students are number one in the world in many, many respects and certainly number one throughout Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Contracted Employment Training

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are several not-for-

profit, nongovernment organizations that have been doing great work in providing skilled training for Albertans who need a hand up so that they can participate in Alberta's labour workforce and enjoy a higher quality of life, and one of them is the MCC Employment Development program in Calgary. I have met several of their successful graduates and their happy employers. My question today is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. What is the government policy to help those organizations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I mentioned last week in this House the challenges we have with a good diversified economy and some of the processes we are using to try and provide the training that's necessary.

First of all, I'd like to commend the organizations like MCC in Calgary and many other organizations who assist us in this transitional process for doing such a fine job. We've spent \$7 million in the last two years in training, and in the next two years we're going to spend another \$7 million, Mr. Speaker. Over a thousand Calgarians will benefit from the whole process. The whole department is around \$280 million in training for the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the same minister. How is the government assistance delivered to those organizations?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, we do tender out contracts, and they are retendered every two years, so it gives us an opportunity to assess the success and the value of the programs. In 2004-05 13 organizations did get different contracts and continue to operate them in Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you. My last supplemental question is to the same minister. To be specific, Minister, what is the government assistance to help the effective program of MCC Employment Development in Calgary?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, we had a number of telephone conversations with the people from MCC, and I am planning to meet them in the very near future here in Edmonton. In fact, we are funding two programs with them right now and working very successfully.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary Egmont.

Métis Hunting Rights

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the Powley decision of the Supreme Court this government negotiated the Métis harvesting agreement, which allowed all Métis to hunt and fish year-round. In response to the same Supreme Court decision the Ontario government negotiated an agreement with the Métis Nation that restricted the number of hunting licences issued and limited hunting to traditional Métis territory. My questions are to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Why didn't your ministry adopt this reasonable and environmentally responsible agreement as a model for the government's Métis hunting accord?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta certainly entered into these agreements to fulfill its obligations relating to the said Powley Supreme Court decision. We were at the table with Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development regarding the decision, and our reason for being there was based on conservation of the resources. With all of our involvement in the resources across this province our role with all hunting and with all fishing is to make sure that proper conservation happens with the resource, and that's our role in this particular agreement.

Mr. Tougas: To the same minister: given that the Ontario agreement puts a cap on the number of hunters and the Alberta government's agreement does not, are there any plans in place to monitor the unknown number of hunters in Alberta as a result of this agreement?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, we knew that as soon as we put conservation on the table as one of main benefits of the decision, we would have to do a lot of monitoring. Certainly, because our job is to manage the resource and monitoring is part of that, we will also be involved in the enforcement if necessary. All parties that agreed to the interim agreement agreed that the Powley decision does not necessarily mean that it's open season for hunting in this province. The Métis associations agreed with that, and they also agreed to respect closures and limits that are imposed for those very things, the conservation reasons that we were involved with.

Mr. Tougas: To the same minister: will the minister commit to including specific and enforceable conservation measures in the final Métis harvesting agreement?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, this is ongoing monitoring from within our department. We will make sure that the information that we provide as this goes forward, whether or not it goes into an actual full-time agreement, will be based on a lot of the information from our department, working with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development as well as the Métis councils, and comes forward in a constructive way.

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

2:20

School Board Consultations

Mr. Herard: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of Education recently visited all 62 school boards in this province. To the minister: what was the main purpose of your visits to all 62 school jurisdictions?

Mr. Zwodzdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, in a nutshell the main purpose was of course to get acquainted with these elected trustees and at the same time to also discuss with them some of their successes and some of their celebrations and at the same time again to do a little bit of surveying on some of the remaining recommendations from the Alberta Commission on Learning report and ultimately to listen to what some of their issues, challenges, and concerns might have been. It was very successful. I'm deeply grateful to all of them for having come out in such large numbers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: would

you please summarize the key issues that boards brought to your attention?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that one of the key issues was declining enrollments for K to 12 education throughout a large part of the province, with increasing costs everywhere in the province. Certainly, there were some issues that surfaced with regard to sparsity and distance and travel, busing in particular. I think there were some issues that arose with respect to operating and maintenance funding, issues that are primarily in the area of infrastructure but certainly an area where we have concerns. Issues pertaining to funding were prevalent with respect to English as a Second Language – we have a large influx of individuals who need that particular attention – as well as special needs, libraries. There was a real gamut of issues that were brought forward, that's for sure.

Mr. Herard: My final question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker, is: what do you plan to do with respect to dealing with these issues?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest challenges that our province faces in the K to 12 system is to take an already excellent and outstanding school system and try and maintain it and, where possible, make it better. So we're doing that as we go through these discussions with the school boards, trustees, and their senior officials. We're doing it also by providing additional monies for the class size reduction initiative, which has been extremely successful. We're doing it with the continuation of Alberta initiative for school improvement funding, for the First Nations/Métis/Inuit funding, with a renewed funding framework, and a lot of other exciting things with respect to the curriculum to ensure that our students get the greatest opportunities possible so they can continue their education to the largest and best extent available.

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

Reclamation of Oil Well Sites

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil and gas sector is now requesting that their liability for old sites end with the issuance of a reclamation certificate. Approximately 90 per cent of these sites are not inspected directly after reclamation, leaving the likelihood that government and therefore the taxpayers will be forced to assume any further responsibility for cleanup. My question to the Minister of Energy: is this government prepared to give the oil companies release of responsibility and to transfer this massive, unfunded liability to present and future Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The industry actually operates in a very environmentally responsible manner. I'm going to have the Minister of Environment respond as well.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, we in the Ministry of Environment are examining that exact point that the hon. member raises. First and foremost we want to ensure that we protect the interest of all Albertans relative to liability that is out there. To put it in context, laws were not in place 30 or 40 years ago. Based on very good work by industry, they are of course remediating a lot of the sites that are taking place based on what they view as their corporate responsibility. But at this point in time it remains on the balance sheet and will continue to until we come to a successful resolution in protecting the interest of all Albertans.

Dr. Swann: Again to the Minister of Energy: with approximately 40,000 inactive wells, how can this government assure Albertans that they will not bear the burden of any costs associated with reclamation of these sites?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the industry takes this very responsibly too. No one wants to be left with reclamation such that the environment is not put back into order, and the Energy and Utilities Board and all of the standards are set such that we will see that after the activity has occurred, there can be reclamation of all of the industry activity.

Thanks.

Dr. Swann: To the Minister of Environment: given no increase substantially in inspectors, how can this government assure Albertans that all of these are remediated adequately and Albertans will not be on the hook in the future?

Mr. Boutilier: Number one, I can assure this Assembly and the hon. member that Albertans will not be on the hook. If I could use the example: we don't inherit this land from our ancestors; in actual fact, we borrow it from our children. That context will continue to be a priority of this government relative to reclamation of these sites that the hon. member has mentioned.

Calgary Area Road Construction

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, on Friday last the province and the Tsuu T'ina Nation signed a framework agreement to at last construct a portion of the southwest ring road in Calgary. My question to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is: what checks and balances are included in this agreement that will ensure all parties meet their time commitment and get this road constructed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 1947 these negotiations were started, and here we are. Close to 60 years later they have finally taken a significant step forward. Included in the framework agreement that was signed on Friday after a great deal of negotiations by myself and my department are timelines that basically say that if there is not something done by a specific date, then an arbitration process will kick in. All this is done with the view of having a draft final agreement by November 1 of 2005.

Mr. Speaker, some people will say: well, what do you mean by draft final agreement? The issue comes down to that unless the federal government agrees to this whole process, it will not go ahead, because ultimately these are federal government lands that the reserve is on. Both the chief and myself feel that the federal government will come onside and that we will hopefully have these negotiations completely done and the road under way and going by September 1 of 2006. I think it's absolutely critical that there were timelines put in this agreement.

Mr. Liepert: As a supplementary, Mr. Speaker, now that the portion of the road across First Nations land is being planned, when will work begin on dividing highway 8, which has become one of the most dangerous stretches of road in the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Typically we look at twinning a road when there's anywhere between 10,000 and 12,000 vehicles per

day. Highway 8 is currently sitting at around 8,000 vehicles per day. I do believe that before it is twinned – and it certainly is in the future to be twinned – there are some improvements that need to be made specifically to highway 8. One of them, in direct reference to the hon. member, is that that intersection of highway 8 and highway 22 will be worked on. There will be work on that to ensure that it is a much safer intersection than it is now.

Just for the Assembly's interest, though, I must say to the hon. member that 43 per cent of the accidents that are on that road at the moment are actually caused by wildlife and animals running across the road.

Mr. Liepert: As a final supplementary: is the minister considering any form of redirection of truck traffic off highway 8 pending the upgrading?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, personally, I think that is a very good idea. My department has not looked at that, but we'll certainly take that under advisement. I think the whole idea of having highway 22 in the south and highway 1 to the north will certainly expedite truck traffic. I think we have to ask ourselves the question of whether or not there needs to be a lot of truck traffic on that. The whole goal of our highway 8 strategy is to make the road safer for those people that travel on it, and that's what we will be doing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, and the ND opposition has the 18th question, but they have not advised if they choose to use it. If not, we'll recognize, then, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Parks and Protected Areas

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only 12 per cent of Alberta's land has been set aside or protected as parks. Eight per cent of the parks and protected areas are national. The remaining 4 per cent remain as provincial parks. My question to the Minister of Community Development: given that Albertans have expressed their desire to preserve Alberta's heritage in the form of new parks and protected areas, will this government halt the future sale of public lands to private developers?

2:30

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I would want to say that Albertans recognize the value of parks throughout the province of Alberta. They're very proud of them. We have almost 500 parks and protected areas and recreational areas throughout the province. I can tell the hon. member that every Albertan, regardless of where they live in this province, is within 100 kilometres of a park. We do have plans to move forward on improving our parks and restoring them. We know that there are issues related to the infrastructure of some of our parks that requires some fix up. It's our plan to move forward on that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the federal government has begun to invest millions of dollars in repairing decaying infrastructure in Alberta's national parks, will this government commit to following this example and reinvest in our provincial parks?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I think that if the hon. member would refer to the Blues of my most recent answer to his first question, he'd find that I said exactly that.

Mr. Bonko: To the same minister: will this government commit to reopening and fully staffing the many conservation offices that have been closed throughout this province?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, our commitment is to the parks. We recognize that they are an important part of the economic development of rural Alberta. It is part of our rural strategy. We will be moving forward on making sure that we are able to enforce the rules within the parks that we have. So my only comment to the hon. member in answering his question is that he should wait for budget day.

Policing Services

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, according to Statistics Canada, Alberta has the lowest number of police officers per capita of any province west of Prince Edward Island. Despite the partial restoration of public municipal police grants last year police services in this province continue to be stretched too thin, risking both public safety and the safety of the police themselves. The NDP opposition is calling for an additional 500 front-line police officers to improve policing services throughout the province. My question is to the Solicitor General. Why has the government been dragging its heels on providing the necessary resources to get more police onto the beat, serving our communities large and small?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government isn't dragging its feet. Last year the government added \$50 million to the budget. At this present time we're reviewing the budget. As you are well aware, the budget presentation will be in early April, and we are looking at a number of strategies with regard to providing policing services throughout Alberta.

Mr. Eggen: My second question is to the same minister. Does the government, then, have a plan for getting more police onto the streets in our rural communities, and if so, what is that plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we do. We are working on strategies right now, as was released in a news release this morning. We're working with the Alberta chiefs of police tomorrow – and the Minister of Gaming will be in attendance as well and officials from the department of corrections – to look at strategies with regard to the deployment of resources, with regard to sharing information and sharing resources, integrated opportunities in the future, and looking at deployment models throughout the province. So, yes, these are some of the things we're looking at.

Mr. Eggen: To the same minister: what actions will the government take to ensure that municipalities with populations above 5,000 residents are provided with additional provincial government dollars to allow them to hire more officers, thereby improving policing in their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member will have to wait until the budget is released. He'll notice that then.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Minister of Education would like to supplement an answer now. Our rule is that we allow that to happen. The hon. member who raised the question during the question period can raise an additional question.

The hon. minister.

Diploma Exam Grades (continued)

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to add to the question and the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that those students, those parents who feel that they have a case that they wish appealed may do so regarding the equating process. I think that's important to note, Mr. Speaker and all hon. members, because the Special Cases Committee, which must receive such an appeal in writing, will be meeting on March 17. So if there is interest in this particular area, they're welcome to call: 422-4848 I believe is the number in Edmonton; toll free, 310-0000.

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

Dr. Pannu: That's fine, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, and I thank the minister for the information.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. members. Today, what a good pace again. Eighteen members participated, and I very much appreciate that. My apologies to only one member. Unfortunately, we couldn't get you in. We'll try better tomorrow.

Before we proceed to the next item, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of this Assembly – with us today in the members' gallery is the previous MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, Dr. Lorne Taylor. Though retired from this government, it's obvious that his heart is still with this government. I would ask Dr. Lorne Taylor to rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Dr. Taylor should note that he's always welcome to sit in the Speaker's gallery should he return. Actually, I always enjoyed keeping him under my thumb, but it was never successful.

In thirty seconds from now we'll move to Recognitions, but in the meantime let's all recognize happy, happy 5-0 for the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

head: **Recognitions**

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

Team Ferbey

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and recognize Team Alberta for their exciting win at the Brier yesterday. With their 5-4 victory over Nova Scotia, skip Randy Ferbey, third Dave Nedohin, Scott Pfeifer, and lead Marcel, otherwise known as Shot Rocque, became the first team with the same lineup to win four Briers.

The back-and-forth match came down to the final shot as Nedohin made an open draw to the four-foot to score the final, winning point. Earlier today the Premier sent a personal letter of congratulations to the Forbey foursome. That letter will be tabled in the Legislature today at the appropriate time.

An Hon. Member: It's Ferbey.

Mr. Lukaszuk: It's the Polish way of pronouncing Ferbey.

Mr. Speaker, this Brier win is all the more exceptional because it happened in front of a hometown crowd right here in Edmonton. Let's congratulate them on behalf of all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Great Kids Awards

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today and recognize Alberta's Great Kids. I had the honour of attending the sixth annual Great Kids award ceremony yesterday afternoon. Premier and Mrs. Klein and the hon. Minister of Children's Services presented awards to 19 outstanding Alberta children and youth for making a difference at home and in their communities. Mr. Speaker, I was so impressed by the broad spectrum of talented recipients that were represented, each one an inspiration to everyone around them.

These Great Kids were selected from among 181 nominations. As the chair of the Youth Secretariat I was privileged to sit on the selection committee this year, and I can tell you that the quality of applications was beyond imagination. We are blessed to have so many excellent young people contributing in so many important ways in our province.

This year's awards make a total of 100 Great Kids honoured across Alberta just in time for Alberta's centennial year. As the Premier said yesterday: it's a great time to imagine what amazing things all of these kids will do in the next 100 years.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:40 **Alaina Smith**

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise to recognize an outstanding Albertan from Bonnyville. Alaina Smith is one of the recipients of this year's Great Kids awards.

Beginning in her grade 10 year, Alaina worked diligently to host a conference for young women in the Northern Lights school division. This conference, which brought in speakers from across the country, encouraged young women to pursue nontraditional careers, engage in positive risk taking, build support networks, and take an active role in their schools and communities. Alaina spent over 300 volunteer hours in making her vision a reality. The conference was an outstanding success.

Mr. Speaker, I believe one of her teachers, Heather Bartling, explained why Alaina is so deserving of this award when she said, "Alaina Smith is the type of kid that exemplifies what this award is all about by truly being a great kid." I could not agree more.

Congratulations, Alaina.

National RCMP Memorial Service

Dr. B. Miller: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the historical

importance of the national memorial service at the Butterdome, which we all attended last Thursday, March 10. It was an historic occasion. The tragic deaths of four young RCMP constables elicited an unprecedented outpouring of grief and sympathy by the people of Alberta and the people of Canada. The attendance of so many thousands of police officers and emergency services personnel was evidence of a tremendous loyalty and solidarity with their fellow officers.

We commend all of the organizers of this memorial service. We commend the city of Edmonton for its handling of all the logistics of such a large event. We commend the Premier for his remarks, his sensitivity, and understanding. We applaud the families for sharing with us their memories and hopes.

Above all, we commend the RCMP. Repeating the words of Commissioner Zaccardelli, we say to all of the men and women of the RCMP, "Our community, our country grieves with you and commits that we will never forget."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Alyse Geiger

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year Children's Services honours outstanding children and youth who make positive contributions to their families, schools, and communities. Today on behalf of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud I wish to recognize Alyse Geiger, a recipient of the Great Kids award. She's a 13-year-old student attending Vernon Barford junior high school, which is located in his constituency.

As a student Alyse has exemplified amazing citizenship skills and is an outstanding youth role model and mentor in building her community and at school. Her qualities in leadership, her passion, her selflessness, and her strong spirit of service are an inspiration to her schoolmates, friends, and community. As well, Alyse is an outstanding youth ambassador for Parkinson's disease.

In the two years Alyse has been involved with the annual Superwalk for Parkinson's, an annual national event, she has raised thousands of dollars for support services and research and has helped to increase awareness of the challenges of living with this disease. She is fully aware of the devastating effects of Parkinson's disease as her grandfather has had this disease over the past 20 years.

In her first year of fundraising she raised a remarkable \$1,400. In the second year she raised \$8,741. Out of the 74 national Superwalk for Parkinson's events held across Canada Alyse was recognized as the top under-18 fundraising student in Canada. I'm pleased to report that Alyse's fundraising for 2005 is well under way.

This young lady is a true example of someone who takes great pride in giving back to her community. She's a credit to her parents, her family, her school, and her community. It's an honour to recognize Alyse Geiger, a truly Great Kid truly deserving of this award.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tim Hortons Brier

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to congratulate all the people involved in putting together the Tim Hortons Brier in Edmonton. A special recognition must go to the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers who made this event successful. This is a testament to Edmonton's as well as the province's love of curling. People came from all across the country to watch this

week's set of draws, and the city of Edmonton put on a real showcase of hospitality for everyone.

I also would like to congratulate Alberta's rink, skipped by Randy Ferbey – I think this time it's right – who has accomplished an amazing feat, winning four Briers in the past five years. This is truly an Alberta dynasty. Congratulations to the Brier champions and to all of those who made this event successful and memorable.

Thank you.

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

U of A Pandas Hockey Team

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to recognize the University of Alberta women's hockey team. Following their fourth straight Canada West women's hockey conference title, the seventh in team history, the Pandas captured the silver medal at the Canadian interscholastic women's hockey championship in Montreal yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, their loss in the gold medal game was their first after an astonishing 110 straight victories. They are to be congratulated for their dedication, commitment, and athletic achievement. They are an exceptional group of highly skilled individuals, who serve as role models for young aspiring players, and we look forward to more exciting games in the future.

On behalf of the Minister of Community Development and all members of this House we extend our congratulations to coach Howie Draper and the entire Pandas hockey team for continuing a rich tradition of athletic excellence at the University of Alberta.

Speaker's Ruling

Recognitions

Referring to a Member by Name

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we move to the next order, just a couple of comments because of the notes that I've just recently received. First of all, recognitions are one minute. The chair did not intervene today out of respect for the quality of the presentations, at least the subject of the presentations. There will be occasions where members will go beyond one minute, and members will really totally dislike what one hon. member is saying. So the reason for intervention and the reason for one minute is to basically give you total freedom for whatever you want to say but only within one minute. But, please, there's a risk associated with this.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity and hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, the chair interjected during the question period when the hon. member stood up and used the name of a member of this Assembly, and that was correct for the chair to do that. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul used the name of the wife. Our rules do not prohibit that. So that should avoid those kinds of messages coming forth with respect to that kind of a question as well.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Bill 19

Securities Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 19, the Securities Amendment Act, 2005.

This legislation follows an historic co-operative effort among Canada's provinces and territories to harmonize security regulations

in the country. Mr. Speaker, as well, this legislation will help fulfill a commitment we made when the government of Alberta signed a memorandum of understanding with our provincial and territorial partners on September 30, 2004, to implement a passport system for securities regulation.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Yes, sir. I move that we move this bill onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 21
Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy)
Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. I request leave to introduce Bill 21, the Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill is part of the government's plan to use the proceeds from the hotel tax tourism levy to determine the level of funding provided for tourism marketing and development in Alberta. Significant components include changing the name of the hotel room tax to a tourism levy and reducing the tax rate from 5 per cent to 4 per cent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I move that we move Bill 21 onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

2:50 **Bill 22**
Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005, for first reading.

This bill will update and strengthen the legislation to apply to anyone causing distress to an animal, help prevent animals from becoming distressed, and provide protection for those who report an animal in distress. The bill also outlines the duties of a person responsible for an animal and protects those that follow reasonable and generally accepted practices of care.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 22 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 23
Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to request leave to introduce Bill 23, the Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005.

This new legislation will clarify the jurisdiction of all boards and tribunals relating to questions of constitutional law and will greatly reduce court challenges on this basis. The act provides that no board has the jurisdiction to determine questions of constitutional law unless jurisdiction is conferred by regulation. The act also provides a mechanism for boards to refer questions of constitutional law to the court where the court is a better forum to decide the question. The act is expected to streamline the regulatory process and help boards get on with business.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

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

Bill 24
Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 24, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill makes several amendments to the Fatality Inquiries Act arising from a review and stakeholder consultation completed in 2003. Stakeholders told us where the system could be enhanced, and we are taking this opportunity to benefit from their experience. New provisions in this bill will clarify and improve the fatality inquiries process from the time a death occurs to the release of the judge's final report. The inquiry judge's recommendations after a public fatality inquiry can provide important information for preventing future fatalities in this province. Amendments will ensure that a judge's report will be publicly available.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a first time]

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

Bill 25
Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 25, the Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005.

This amendment will allow judges to retire and then be appointed to sit full-time for six months of the year. A major benefit will be that highly experienced and competent judges will be attracted to continue serving in our justice system after retirement. To be eligible for part-time service a judge must be at least 60 years of age with a minimum of 10 years' service or age 70 or older. Appointments for judges over the age of 70 would be for one-year terms, which would be renewable for additional one-year terms to the age of 75. The amendment is the result of our work with the Provincial Court to develop new ways to improve the justice system.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

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

Bill 203
Report on Alberta's Legacy Act

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 203, the Report on Alberta's Legacy Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Bill 204
Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting)
Amendment Act, 2005**

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 204, being the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005.

The purpose of Bill 204 is to make it more difficult to obtain amphetamine and methamphetamine by classifying these drugs as schedule 2 under the Pharmacy and Drug Act.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table one copy of one complete set of audited financial statements of school jurisdictions for the year ended August 31, 2003. One set weighs about five pounds, so the additional copies, as required, have already been filed and provided to the Clerk's office.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take this opportunity to table in the Assembly today five copies of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research 2005 calendar with the 2003-04 financial highlights and the consolidated audited financial statements for 2003-04. A copy of this document has been sent directly to all members of the Legislature from the foundation.

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

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise before the House today and table five copies of the 2005 Alberta guide to fishing regulations. Awareness and understanding of the rules of sport fishing are essential to the wise use of Alberta's fisheries resources. These guides are also available upon request from licence issuers and fish and wildlife officers throughout the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is five copies of the report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the Fourth Session of the 25th Legislature, covering the committee's activities in 2004.

The second tabling I have is for the benefit of all members of the House. These are taped conversations of Enron employees in regard to Project Stanley and other matters, and these are dated through 1999. It would be of great interest to all members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is bringing forward concerns around prompt and thorough investigation of complaints against physicians

by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, including concerns about monitoring, discipline, disclosure, public access, and public warning of high-risk physicians. That's from Gloria Campbell, of Edmonton, and I'll table the appropriate number of copies.

My second tabling is from Ruth Hanna-Fath of Vulcan, who notes that the Vulcan hospital has gone from 37 beds to 25 beds to 15 long-term care and 8 active-care beds. She is proposing that they look at adding wings for long-term care patients and switching the 15 long-term care to active acute-care use in Vulcan.

Thank you.

3:00

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the required number of copies of letters addressed by the Premier to Randy Ferbey, congratulating him and his teammates on their fabulous win yesterday.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five letters here, each with five copies, from a stack of letters I have, all handwritten. They are from Albertans that have a great deal of concern about the issue of foreign replacement workers. Interestingly enough, just looking at them, they're all from the ridings of government members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table the appropriate number of copies of correspondence from a gentleman by the name of Ted Frederickson, who lives in Strathmore, Alberta. He is writing to express his grave concerns about the issue of Métis hunting rights.

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

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the program from the national memorial service.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is a study entitled "Reduced incidence of admissions for myocardial infarction associated with . . . smoking ban," and it shows a significant association between workplace smoking bans and a reduction in heart attacks.

The second is called The Economic Impact of a Smoke-free Bylaw on Restaurant and Bar Sales in Ottawa, Canada. It shows that there is no evidence of any adverse effect on bar and restaurant sales associated with the smoke-free workplaces bylaw in Ottawa.

Finally, I would like to table a press release from the New York city department of health and mental hygiene citing an increase of 1,500 jobs in the first four months after the introduction of smoke-free workplace legislation in that city.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, proper notice having been given last Wednesday, March 9, I will now move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, proper notice having been given last Wednesday, March 9, I will now move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

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

**Bill 201
Smoke-free Places Act**

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. members. Good afternoon, everyone. It is a pleasure to rise today as I move second reading of Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. As chair of AADAC and as one of the many new faces in this House it's an honour to bring forward Bill 201 as my first piece of legislation and as the first private member's bill of the First Session of the 26th Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we are in Alberta's centennial year and are in the midst of a rejuvenation of Alberta's call for a prosperous and healthy future for all Albertans. Bill 201 reflects this intent, specifically with respect to the commitment that this government has made to an effective and successful tobacco reduction strategy. This strategy was introduced in 2002 and provided AADAC with the mandate to lead and co-ordinate tobacco reduction efforts on behalf of the government of Alberta. AADAC co-ordinates the strategy through partnerships with various government ministries, agents, and community organizations.

Mr. Speaker, studies indicate that tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Canada. Smoking causes cancer, lung disease, heart disease, and many health problems.

On March 3 Statistics Canada released the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, results on smoking rates in Alberta and Canada for the first half of 2004. The good news is that the results indicated that the Alberta tobacco reduction strategy is working. The overall smoking rate in the province declined from 25 per cent in 2001 to 20 per cent in 2003. That said, we now have the opportunity to complement the tobacco reduction strategy and address the significant issue of second-hand smoke.

Second-hand smoke is a serious health concern for a number of Albertans. AADAC reports that two-thirds of the smoke from a burning cigarette is not inhaled by the smoker but goes directly into the surrounding environment. Studies indicate that second-hand smoke has twice as much nicotine and tar as the smoke that smokers inhale. It also has five times the carbon monoxide, and 50 of its 4,000 chemicals are known to cause cancer. These chemicals are inhaled and absorbed by nonsmokers when they are exposed to second-hand smoke and can lead to respiratory disease, heart disease, and lung cancer.

Children are particularly vulnerable to second-hand smoke

because their lungs are still growing and developing. Children who are exposed to second-hand smoke can develop respiratory diseases such as bronchitis and pneumonia as well as middle-ear disease and asthma. Infants who are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke before birth are at increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

Mr. Speaker, I have received over 1,200 letters and e-mails in the past few weeks from Albertans, and over 90 per cent are in support of a province-wide smoking ban in work and public places. Eighty-four of 353 Alberta municipalities have some form of nonsmoking law, but 78 per cent of Albertans are currently exposed to second-hand smoke in public places such as restaurants, bars, shopping malls, arenas, bingo halls, and bowling alleys. Importantly, 80 per cent of Albertans do not smoke.

Bill 201 isn't just about protecting the health of individuals who work in the hospitality industry and may be exposed to substantial amounts of second-hand smoke; it also protects the health of every Albertan who is involuntarily exposed to second-hand smoke in an enclosed public or workplace, independent of the amount of exposure. According to AADAC approximately 350 nonsmokers die each year from second-hand smoke-related cancer, and approximately 3,500 people die from second-hand smoke-related heart disease. Mr. Speaker, these numbers are alarming, but what I find even more alarming is that these numbers are simply not new. The harmful effects of second-hand smoke have been known for almost 20 years, but the majority of jurisdictions are acting only now.

The majority of economic impact studies indicate that legislation prohibiting second-hand smoke in hospitality venues does not negatively impact sales and employment over the long term. For example, when the city of Ottawa, the state of California, and the country of Ireland introduced smoke-free legislation, business dropped off slightly for about three months in the hospitality industry, but it was quickly back to normal, and in Boston business actually increased.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other dangers in society that individuals are involuntarily exposed to both now and in the past. Some examples include lead in paint and asbestos in construction. These substances were and remain serious hazards to the health of children and adults, but once they were recognized as a danger to the well-being of individuals, they were designated as hazardous substances, their usage was discontinued, or it was carefully regulated.

Second-hand smoke is a hazard to the health of Albertans, and while the minority of the population who smoke are free to put their own health at risk, they should not have the right to put the health of others at risk. Thankfully, we're in a position to set the standards for the next hundred years of this great province, and I believe that recognizing second-hand smoke as a preventable health hazard and limiting its involuntary exposure are small steps towards protecting the health and future of all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude my introductory remarks, I'll address just some of the terms used in Bill 201. When discussing this legislation, the terms "public space" and "workplace" will often be used, and I am sure that the exact definitions of these terms will be examined thoroughly in the Committee of the Whole debate. However, I'd like to provide a few examples of what those terms mean as defined in 201.

As expected, Bill 201 would make any enclosed public space or enclosed workplace a hundred per cent smoke free, and this includes outdoor eating and drinking areas, such as restaurant and bar patios. Bill 201 would also allow municipalities the right to implement more stringent anti-smoking bylaws should they see fit. This legislation would set a minimum standard throughout the province and provide a reasonable level playing field or equal economic footing for all businesses and municipalities.

As I mentioned, the definitions and specifics of Bill 201 will be more thoroughly discussed during the Committee of the Whole debate. I just wanted to highlight a few points that I felt were important.

In conclusion, the ill effects of second-hand smoke were first documented almost 20 years ago, and we can no longer ignore the health risks and costs it presents. The time to act is now, and I encourage all members to carefully contemplate Bill 201. I hope they will agree that this legislation is trying to accomplish the best for our people, and I trust that they will lend their support. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do look forward to this upcoming debate.

3:10

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

If additional members want to participate, would you let me know?

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the Official Opposition critic for Health and Wellness I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak as the second speaker in second reading for Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. I'm very pleased that we have got to the place where we are today because I'll tell you that for a while there I was really worried we weren't going to get here, so I'm delighted that we've made it all this way. Originally this came up in the public's eye with the Premier speaking in context of his new third way and the Minister of Health and Wellness taking a leap of faith and saying: well, then, let's look at a smoking ban. I commend her for doing that. Then it became a very public debate with the Premier saying, no, he wasn't in favour of that.

If we look in context of the information that's available to us on smoking and exposing workers to second-hand smoke in the workplace, we can see that Alberta has not been coming up to the mark in protecting its workers and protecting Albertans. In fact, I think we got a failing report card on health that was put out by the coalition of—no, I'm not going to get that title right. It's a coalition of groups that worked for smoke-free workplaces, and we failed in having smoke-free workplaces, we failed in having smoke-free public places, and I think we didn't do very well on the retail display marketing and didn't do very well with having pharmacies not selling. So we really scored pretty badly there.

Around the issue of display, which I think is not addressed in this bill—and maybe there's a way to work it in in an amendment because it would certainly strengthen the bill if we could address the displaying and advertising, but particularly the displaying, at locations where cigarettes are sold, their ability to display cigarettes and cigarette advertising prominently. In fact, in Saskatchewan they had their bill struck down. They were trying to argue that it was freedom of speech to be able to advertise and display smoking products, and that, in fact, was struck down, Mr. Speaker. So if I can do any encouraging here to the sponsoring member, perhaps we can look at an amendment in Committee of the Whole to strengthen the bill even further.

I think the bill is strong, and I am glad to see that thus far it has not been watered down. I'm glad to see that it's a complete ban on smoking in the workplace and a complete ban on smoking in public places. So really the only place where the government does not come into it—and they shouldn't—is in private residences and private vehicles.

Staying on the idea of the studies that we've had and somewhat in refuting the Premier's comments when he first stepped into this debate, certainly every credible scientific study that has ever been done says that smoking is harmful to your health and so is second-hand smoke. What I came into this debate with was that, you know,

you have to protect all workers, paid and unpaid. Why do I say unpaid? Because when we look at casinos and bingos, we have a lot of volunteers there, a lot of moms and dads out there earning money for amateur hockey. We've got arts and cultural groups. We've got health groups, for heaven's sake, and support organizations and friends-of-groups where their volunteers are subjected to second-hand smoke in casinos and bingos, and they should be treated with no less protection than a paid worker in my opinion.

When I heard that, oh, well, maybe there were going to be all kinds of variations of this and we might protect workers in some places but not protect workers in others, I thought to myself: how can that be? How can you justify protecting workers from a known problem, a known health hazard, in one area but not protect them in another area? Just to put this in context, insert the word "asbestos." Well, yeah, we're going to protect workers from asbestos, which we know to be a known health hazard in this occupation, but not if they happen to work in a bar or in a casino or in a bingo hall. Excuse me? No, no. You have to protect all workers equally. You cannot differentially protect workers based on their workplace. You have to protect them all, and this bill has come through to do that.

The other issue touched on briefly by the sponsor of the bill—and I think it's a very important one—is that we have an unlevel playing field right now. The municipalities stepped in where the province was not and gave themselves some restrictions, and those are different restrictions. We can even have some circumstances like Lloydminster, where the Saskatchewan half is nonsmoking and the Alberta half across the street is smoking, and that very much creates an unlevel playing field, particularly for small businesses. The Alberta Liberals have been known for a long time for being supporters of small business, and I just do not want to see anybody put in that position.

There was an example in the standing policy committee, in which I was only allowed to be an observer of course, that was raised where they said, "Oh, well, you know, it has impacted differentially on the casinos in Ottawa," and the question was raised: "Was there an equal smoking ban in Hull? Well, no." Well, that creates the unlevel playing field then. All they had to do was walk across the bridge, and they could gamble and smoke all they wanted. So, of course, it impacted negatively. You've got to have a level playing field there, and that means a complete smoking ban. That's what makes it fair.

I know that there was some talk at one point of having designated ventilated smoking rooms in some areas, but what you've got to think of there is that that door opens and closes. I worked with one woman that worked in a hospital wing where smoking was allowed. She was at the nursing station, and the ventilated smoking area was right across from her. Well, of course, every time somebody came in or out, whoosh, a great big puff of second-hand smoke came at her. She wasn't being protected from that second-hand smoke even though it was a special designated room. She got a gust of it every time that door opened. So that's the problem with the designated smoking rooms. Those doors open and close, and the air still gets out.

I am personally very supportive of what I see being brought forward in Bill 201. This is a private member's bill, and the Alberta Liberals insist on free votes for their members on private members' motions and bills. There's no whip on in our caucus. I as the critic have made a recommendation to my colleagues that they should support this bill as it is, and a number of them have already signed up to speak to it. I encouraged them strongly to support the bill, but as I said, it is a free vote on our side.

I think that the member has done a good job here, and I certainly hope that we're not going to see anything like a reasoned amend-

ment or a hoist, which would take the bill off into the ozone never to be seen again. I think it's important especially for the 80 per cent of Albertans that don't smoke and, further beyond that, for those that are interested in having smoke-free workplaces to see how their MLAs are going to represent them here. I hope that we will be able to actually reach a vote in second reading, which is commenting on the principle of the bill, and, furthermore, be able to take this bill through Committee of the Whole and, indeed, into third reading.

A couple of things that again I'm hoping to see, just a few small issues to be raised. Perhaps the member could think about it. You know, in section 11 it's not clear, if in fact the municipal bylaws are stronger than what is anticipated in the bill or, heaven forbid, if this bill got watered down a bit and then we had a number of municipal bylaws that were stronger, whether this bill would trump the municipal bylaws. I think we have to be very careful there. If there's stronger stuff in place, that should be able to stand. Perhaps we'd want to look at some fine-tuning of the language there.

The second thing is around section 14, the commencement, the act coming into force on proclamation. I'm a little uneasy about that because this section is standard in government bills, but in a private member's bill it allows the government to stall on proclaiming it, and I will give you a reference on that. In fact, the Prevention of Youth Tobacco Use Act was passed in 1999 but not proclaimed by the government until 2003, Mr. Speaker. So I'd like to see that given a specific date for proclamation, and then we would all know that it would happen. The government has been very involved in this private member's bill, and I'm a little uneasy that they would continue to stay involved and would somehow be playing around with the proclamation date. I think that if this passes second, Committee of the Whole, and third and it's passed by members in this House, it should in fact get a definitive proclamation date.

So I'm very pleased to have the time that I did. I speak in favour of second reading on Bill 201. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

3:20

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, and then the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill 201, and I'd like to bring perhaps a slightly different perspective to the discussion.

Going back several years now, the government of Alberta had made a decision to encourage municipalities to deal with this issue. The belief then and now, from my perspective, was that local authorities had a better ability to reflect the values, needs, and wants of their residents as it pertains to this issue. Mr. Speaker, municipalities have done an amazing job, whether by smoking bans, smoking bylaws, or ordinances on specific buildings. From the figures provided to me, between 2.4 million and 2.7 million Albertans are currently covered by some sort of smoking restriction.

That reaps the question, Mr. Speaker: who would we be passing this law for? I'd like everybody to think about that. Would we be passing it for our First Nations? I have a real and significant doubt that a provincial law would apply to a First Nations reservation. Perhaps we would be passing it for the 52,000 farmers and their families in this province. Maybe it's for the thousands of acreage holders in the province, or perhaps it's for some of the smaller summer villages with 20 or 30 homes in them.

I have great respect for this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. It is our role

to pass laws, but I would sincerely hope that when we are passing them, we would make them meaningful. I think this is a bandwagon bill; let's all get on the bandwagon and do something that is already pretty much being done by our colleagues in the municipalities. Someone does a poll that says that 70 per cent of the people think there should be a province-wide smoking ban, and I ask you: on what is it based? Was the poll done on the basis that people knew that the vast majority of residents, such as in Edmonton and Calgary, were already covered by a smoking ban? Or was it, in fact, another example of statistics being used to come to a conclusion that we want them to?

I remember similar polls being done on the gun registry. Sixty-eight per cent of Albertans believed that we needed a gun registry. It was a great big headline, Mr. Speaker, and I'm equally confident that the majority of people polled didn't know that there were already gun laws in place and that the gun laws pertained to controlling the purchasing and transporting of most guns, nor did they know that it would cost a billion dollars and that it wouldn't work.

Sixty-nine per cent of Albertans were in favour of the Kyoto protocol, which is an amazing consistency in numbers about polling data, Mr. Speaker. Having said that, there was a campaign of fear generated by environmental groups indicating that without the Kyoto protocol we would probably cease to exist, no recognition of a growing economy, our standard of living, or in fact that Alberta had been leading Canada in the control of emissions for years. Now the feds are telling us that Kyoto will likely cost \$10 billion to implement, and no one knows if it will work.

So here we are again with similar polling data, and now all we want to do is pass yet another law. The bill would in fact be a major shift in government policy, which was to let municipalities make this call after due consideration. I remind all members of the House that this is a private member's bill, not a government bill. The minister of health is working on a wellness strategy, which I would hope smoking cessation would be part of.

In the October municipal election the residents of Airdrie voted for a smoking ban. They had two options on the ballot, and they voted in favour of the stricter law. At the same time, in Peace River the community there defeated an outright ban. Different communities, different results, both totally democratic. Now we come along and say to the residents of Airdrie: "Well, well done. Would you mind terribly if we passed yet another law over top of the one you already have? It won't mean anything. It won't change anything for you, but we'll do it anyway." Better yet, we say to Peace River: "Well, democracy is all well and fine, but you guys must have been wrong. We gave you a chance to decide. You blew it. You chose poorly, so here's our law. Enjoy it."

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, if we all stopped trying to make every decision for every Albertan every day and instead focused on what we really want to do, which is to encourage Albertans to stop smoking – I also think it's even more important to prevent our youth from ever starting. If this bill were more focused on that side of the coin rather than on this all-encompassing legislation, maybe I could support it. Perhaps we need to be responsible as a government and do our best to ensure that Albertans are aware of the dangers of smoking, working with the Lung Association and the SmartCare organization on cardio-obstructive pulmonary disease to help with the cessation programs, to help our youth understand that the downside does not apply to somebody else; it applies to them. Perhaps we could actually accomplish something here today other than frustrating the 25 per cent of Albertans who can still legally purchase this product, the vast majority of whom are already covered by a smoking ban.

We need to continue to educate Albertans on the dangers of smoking, particularly those in rural Alberta that are also exposed to other pollutants, such as grain dust, coal dust, emissions from the forestry, oil, and gas industries. I believe the COPD group would agree that in recognition of the problem in rural Alberta, we need to be more proactive in educating all of our residents.

From time to time, Mr. Speaker, I wish we would spend more time, well, even a moment's more time, talking about illegal drugs and what they are costing our society along with this issue and not just this issue in isolation. I worry when we as a society become so fixated on something that is already being controlled in so much of our province. The belief being, of course, that if we can just ban it, it will go away. Reality says that it won't, but education, from my perspective, is the key to this issue.

Section 7 of the Municipal Government Act gives councils the authority to pass bylaws for municipal purposes respecting protection of people and property as well as activities in or near public places or a place that is open to the public. If you want to pass a law protecting children, I will support your bill. If you want to regulate what an oil field worker does in Zama Lakes, Red Earth, or High Level, I won't. If you want to help people quit smoking and prevent young people from starting, I will support your bill. If you want to regulate what workers do in a feedlot, I won't support it. What works well in Edmonton and Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, or Airdrie does not always work as well in our rural or remote areas. Our approach should focus on helping Albertans quit smoking and on preventing young people from ever starting.

I will support this bill as it goes into Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker, and if amendments are forthcoming, I will look carefully at them at that time. If the changes are sufficient, I will in fact support it as it goes forward. As it stands right now, I could not support this bill in its current form going to third reading, but as I mentioned earlier, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this discussion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After 30 years of working in medical practice, I'm keenly interested in and supportive of this initiative. Let me say that having worked both in the Calgary scene and in Brooks and Medicine Hat, where we managed to get municipal bills relating to smoke-free spaces, it was a tremendous lot of work, a tremendous duplication in many instances, and in many cases a frustrating initiative for many participants with a lot of lost time and income. Indeed, many councillors in those jurisdictions indicated that they would have supported a provincial legislative bill in order to save them from the harangues and difficulties that went along with this.

Some of the issues that were raised by the previous speaker are legitimate. Yes, indeed, air quality, air pollution anywhere should be addressed in any work site, and the occupational health and safety standards are lacking in the area of second-hand smoke. They may be present in terms of other chemicals, and they must be addressed stringently in these and other areas.

With respect to polls in the province, people were asked, in fact, whether they supported a new bit of legislation that related to smoking in the workplace where it did not exist. Indeed, over 70 per cent of Albertans said that they wanted and supported legislation that would protect workers, workers of all ages, and indeed many are younger workers, Mr. Speaker, young adolescents and others who have no choice about where to work. So we are talking about protecting all age groups, including, may I say, the pregnant women

who are working in these conditions and place their own and their unborn offspring at risk.

I would compare this legislation in the workplace to guaranteeing clean water and compare it to where people in airplanes simply are not allowed to smoke over the course of seven to eight hours at times and manage to do that without a great deal of suffering.

Indeed, the workers in the air industry are keenly supportive of this particular measure. A research report out of the *British Medical Journal* recently studied the effects over the course of one year of hospitalizations and deaths associated with the factor of environmental tobacco smoke. That report shows a very stark reminder that death is contributed to by environmental tobacco smoke.

3:30

Over 350 municipalities in Alberta are struggling with piecemeal legislation that creates, as we've heard, an unlevel playing field. That means others are struggling with benefits and risks to their businesses. It's clear that we've been asked by the people of Alberta to take some leadership here and along with five other provinces and territories in Canada follow the trend across the world to reduce risk to our workers. I stand very much in support of this bill and commend the hon. member for this introduction.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I rise to speak to Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. This is a very timely and important debate that we're going to have today and that will carry on I'm sure beyond today or the discussion even of this bill.

This issue, Mr. Speaker, is being discussed in every coffee shop in this province. This issue was a referendum in many municipal elections around the province in the last municipal election. One in particular in my constituency was where the town council was acclaimed. There was no need for anyone to vote, yet they had one of the highest turnout of voters in the history of the municipal elections in that community just to defeat a municipal bylaw similar to this. Regardless of how people feel, whether they're in support of this bill or opposed to this bill, whether they're advocating for choice and freedom, or whether they're advocating for the health of Albertans in general, everyone is passionate about this issue and takes a stand somewhere.

Before I move on to explain why I am opposing this bill, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that I find it very interesting and ironic in today's society, just in this country in general, that sometimes we seem to have funny priorities. We're discussing all over not just this province but this country about whether or not to ban smoking while at the same time we discuss whether or not we should legalize marijuana. We debate whether or not we should give needles to heroin addicts, but we don't have enough debate about whether or not we should give them to people who have diabetes.

Mr. Speaker, I was a teacher before I ever became a politician, and I had many discussions with parents, with colleagues about parenting. I would like to use that as an analogy for why I think this is the wrong approach to this bill. Many of my colleagues agreed with me when we discussed it that there are generally two types of parents. There are parents who make decisions for their children all the time because they really don't want them to get hurt. They don't allow them to make simple decisions, so they never evolve to making complex decisions. Those children very rarely ever graduate to taking on responsibility and understanding the consequences of the choices that they make. The other types of parents typically give

decisions to children that are small, and they graduate to larger and more complex decisions. Those decisions that are made lead the child to acquire more of a sense of responsibility and a sense of the consequences for the decisions that they make.

With rights and freedoms and choice come responsibilities. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's why I oppose this bill. The entire premise of this bill is that the government knows what's good for everybody. We should try and deter people from smoking; we should tell them what they can and cannot do. But when you do that, you take away people's freedoms, their rights, and their responsibilities. And, of course, that is an issue, but that's not the sole issue.

Some people in this Assembly are going to argue that this is about freedom of choice. That's part of it, but it's not the complete picture. Freedom of choice is important to give people because then they learn consequences and responsibility. If we're going to make everyone's decision for them, perhaps we should discuss some other issues. Of course smoking is unhealthy, and so we want no one to smoke because it costs the health care system a lot. It's expensive for public health. But, Mr. Speaker, hanging out around in back alleys at 3 o'clock in the morning is also unhealthy, golfing in the rain is unhealthy, not getting enough sleep is very unhealthy, not eating properly is very unhealthy, and not exercising is unhealthy. How much should we make illegal?

Now, I'm not just talking about the back alley instance, but eating is unhealthy. Perhaps in the interest of public health and safety, we should legislate the amount and type of food that we can eat according to the Canada food guide. I know many people who are overweight who eat extremely unhealthily, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps they should be told when, where, and how much they can eat. Obesity is reaching epidemic proportions. It costs the health care system more money than smoking, and it costs more lives in this country than smoking does. It causes heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and countless other ailments that cost the health care system incredible amounts of money. If we're going to tell people what they can and can't do and what is good for them, why don't we address the issue of obesity?

Mr. Speaker, the intent of this legislation is to deter people from smoking, to make it more difficult. The conservative approach to this would be not to tell people what they can't do but rather ensure that the consequences for their choices are very evident.

If we're worried about WCB premiums and the liability that they might face from smoking in the workplace, we have to remember that WCB is insurance and that insurance premiums are supposed to reflect risk. If the risk is increased from allowing smoking in the workplace, the people who own that business should pay higher WCB insurance premiums for allowing that to happen.

Health care premiums. I mentioned obesity. I mentioned a lot of different issues, Mr. Speaker. When you get life insurance – and I think most people in this Assembly have life insurance – you know that they swab your mouth, and they can tell if you have smoked within the last year. They did it to me. I had to do it. Why can't health care premiums reflect whether or not you are a high risk because you smoke? Why can't health care premiums reflect a higher risk if you're overweight? There is a body mass index ratio that some insurance companies use to determine whether or not you're in shape, whether you eat too much, whether you don't get enough exercise. Perhaps we could charge premiums based on whether or not you smoke, based on body mass index, based on a health report from a doctor, based on a lot of different issues that would encourage people to make their own decisions.

Some suggestions for real reform I've just made, and I hope those are dealt with in the future. I could support this bill if it dealt with a couple of the primary issues which would be government's

responsibility, Mr. Speaker. That's places where children can go. I could support this if that was the intent of the bill instead of dealing with everybody and telling them what they could and could not do.

Mr. Speaker, when the amendments come forward, if there's some discussion, I could also support something that still allows adults to determine when and where they'll smoke. I hope that all of these things are considered and, until they are, I'm afraid I cannot support this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill, and I think that it's one that should not have arguments that trivialize its importance, you know, that show that this Legislature is willing to take leadership on this issue and to get away from the hodgepodge of regulations, all of which deal with smoking and are different and make it difficult for businesses that are looking to invest in certain industries in our province.

It is a workplace issue, and as the critic for Human Resources and Employment I'm pleased to speak for this. People must work. The government is quick to say that a job is the best social program, but there are people with asthma; there are people with other respiratory problems; there are people who just can't stand smoke. Many people are kept away from their ability to advance in our society because there is no way to stop smoking in places where they would like to work.

There are those who would say: just don't work where there is smoking. Mr. Speaker, many people just don't have a choice of the place where they can work. Many don't have the power to say that there shouldn't be smoking around them, and, yes, there are those who will not respect those who ask that they do not smoke while they are in fact working. That is why we must have a law that has some teeth and that it must be respected.

3:40

The point that should be emphasized here is the need for a smoke-free workplace. Society is moving quickly on smoking. Knowledge of the harm to individuals from smoking is clear. Knowledge of the cost to the health care system is widespread. Knowledge of the harm to families from smoking-related early deaths is saddening. But it is the workplace where the challenges are growing. If the government doesn't move soon on the issue, I expect that we will begin to see huge insurance liability issues, a greater WCB liability, or a call from business to move on this issue to ensure a safe and productive working environment. Many businesses already have strict anti-smoking provisions in their workplace.

Some questions must be posed. One is: do workplace bans really work in protecting employees? According to a joint study by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, and the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, workplace smoking bans really do work in improving the air quality and protecting employees. In July 2003 New York state introduced a ban on smoking in indoor workplaces and public places. According to the study, the ban greatly improved the quality of reduced exposure to second-hand smoke. Other findings from the study:

Partial measures such as cordoning off smoking areas from nonsmoking areas or installing a more powerful ventilation system are not the answer, Roswell's Hyland said.

That's Andrew Hyland, PhD, a researcher at the Buffalo-based Roswell Park Cancer Institute in the State University of New York and one of the authors of the study findings.

“[Employers are] fooling themselves if they think that’s going to be an effective solution. It doesn’t provide protection from a known human carcinogen in the workplace. If they endorse a policy that allows smoking in the workplace, potentially I could see they’re opening themselves up to litigation,” he said.

Workplace smoking bans have an indirect benefit, he said.

“Smokers who work in an environment that’s smoke-free are more likely to quit [smoking]. There are other studies that show smokers have decreased productivity – extra time taken on smoke breaks, increased sick days, increased health care costs,” he said.

Another question is: do smoking bans hurt business? In the long run the only business that smoke-free regulations hurt is the tobacco business. According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:

In 1998, all of California’s restaurants and bars went smoke-free. According to the California Board of Equalization, sales at places selling beer, wine, and liquor increased every quarter in 1998, 1999 and into 2000 (the last period for which data are available). What’s more, sales increases at these establishments outpaced – by nearly 8% – increases at all other types of retail outlets.

Experience shows that support for a ban grows among bar patrons once a ban is in place. The experience in other jurisdictions is that once a workplace smoking ban is in place, support for it grows among the patrons. Again according to the New York Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:

Smoke-free workplace legislation has become increasingly popular. While 65% of bar patrons in California “strongly” or “somewhat” approved of the law in 1998, almost three-quarters (73%) felt that way by 2000. Also by 2000, 87% of bar patrons in California reported they were “as likely” or “more likely” to visit bars since they had become smoke-free.

A province-wide workplace smoking ban could be even beneficial to business. Businesses with smoke-free policies experience less absenteeism when nonsmoking employees are no longer exposed to second-hand smoke, Mr. Speaker, which can trigger asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses. Employers also see lower house-keeping and maintenance costs because they longer need to clean ashtrays, they no longer need to sweep up cigarette butts, and they have a much cleaner workplace. We don’t allow smoking here in the Legislature where we work, Mr. Speaker, in the Assembly. They don’t have to replace burnt carpeting or clean fabrics and other materials nearly as often. In addition to the cost benefits, studies show that smoke-free policies reduce costs for cleaning and fire insurance and there is less damage to equipment and furniture.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

It is often argued that service industry businesses such as restaurants, bars, and hotels will suffer if smoke-free policies are introduced. However, studies in Canada, the United States, and Australia all show that smoking bans do not result in lost business.

What about designated smoking rooms? The problem with designated smoking rooms is that they still do in fact give workers who are working in those places the need to work in those designated smoking rooms.

It’s clear that it’s time to move on a cost-effective, full workplace ban, and the time is now. It’s time for a cleaner and healthy workplace in all areas of our great province. It’s time to end the cop-out, the hiding from this issue, that has constantly been the position that’s been taken by the government of Alberta. It’s time to end the patchwork of municipal bylaws and come out with a strong law that deals with the problem, that makes it simpler for people to deal with investing in the different areas of Alberta and not have somebody just working on smoking regulations.

I urge the government to act quickly and decisively, and I urge the

members of this Assembly to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak on Bill 201. I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing this piece of legislation forward. Health promotion bills like this will always encourage Albertans to become the healthiest people in the country.

For a long time smoking was considered an acceptable, even desirable act. We can still watch reruns of old movies on TV and see the favourite Hollywood stars inhaling cigarettes with passion and drama. Without a doubt such scenes led to people lighting up cigarettes and imitating the stars.

As science progressed, however, we began to learn that smoking is actually very dangerous. In addition to this, we discovered that second-hand smoke is also bad for our health. The research into this harmful effect has produced a slow but steady change in attitude toward smoking and second-hand smoke and has caused legislators to respond to this attitude by creating laws that limit the effect of second-hand smoke. Mr. Speaker, Bill 201 is late but necessary to respond to the harmful effect of second-hand smoke.

I would like to spend a few minutes talking about how science has changed the attitudes of people in the United States of America and how it relates to Alberta. About 50 years ago evidence started surfacing about cigarette smoking causing harm to people’s health. Then in 1964 the first Surgeon General’s Report on Smoking and Health was released. This report stated that “cigarette smoking causes cancer and other serious diseases.” This major announcement began the transition in people’s attitudes toward smoking, but it did not lead to any legislative changes.

In 1986 the U.S. Surgeon General published another report, and this report was about the association between second-hand smoke exposure and the adverse effect of it on nonsmokers. Next, the Expert Committee on Passive Smoking concluded that second-hand smoke could cause lung cancer in otherwise healthy adult nonsmokers. In 1992 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a study which confirmed the Surgeon General’s report which was released in 1986. This report released by the Environmental Protection Agency led to the classification of second-hand smoke as a group A carcinogen, which is the category reserved for only the most dangerous cancer-causing agents in humans.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, after so many studies and announcements there are no longer any doubts about the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. The science behind it is over 50 years old. We all know that cigarette smoke contains over 4,700 chemicals, over 200 poisons, and another 50 human carcinogens. As far back as 1993 an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that “waiters and waitresses have almost twice the risk of [contracting] lung cancer due to involuntary exposure” to second-hand smoke. Also in 1993 it was determined that second-hand smoke kills approximately 53,000 Americans per year. This is about the same number of Americans that were killed during the Vietnam War.

Mr. Speaker, during the timeline I discussed, not a single government in North America acted on these announcements and studies. The point I make is that although the science is proven and time tested, legislators have been reluctant to protect their constituents from these harmful effects. In fact, California was the first jurisdiction in North America to legislate a smoking ban. I used to live there, and my family members are still there. In 1994 the state of

California passed a smoking law that prohibited smoking in all enclosed places of employment. This legislation was fully enacted in 1998 to include bars, clubs, and halls.

Mr. Speaker, California was the first jurisdiction in North America to take a stand against a killer. The legislation was fully implemented 34 years after a major announcement that smoking is dangerous and 12 years after it was announced that second-hand smoke is also dangerous. Here in Alberta legislation was not introduced to limit the harmful effects of second-hand smoke until 1997, 11 years after the announcement in the United States that second-hand smoke is dangerous. This legislation, however, was very limited in that it only protected workers who worked in public buildings that were owned and operated by the Crown.

The time to act in the interests of all Albertans is now. It's been 18 years since the very important health authority in the United States warned about the dangers of the effects of second-hand smoke. Long-term exposure to second-hand smoke leads to increased risks of lung cancer and coronary artery heart disease in nonsmokers as well as a number of other serious health conditions. According to statistics, people who live with smokers have an increased risk of heart disease by about 25 per cent. Imagine being a bartender or waiter who is exposed to 50 or 100 smokers for eight hours a day.

Mr. Speaker, about 347 nonsmokers die a year in Canada from second-hand smoke-related lung cancer and 3,470 from second-hand smoke-related heart disease. These numbers are too high. We are not talking about death from old age; we are not talking about death from accidents. We are talking about the worst kind of death, preventable death.

In Alberta about 27 per cent of people smoke. Unfortunately, we cannot force these people to stop smoking as we violate their rights. I can understand and support the protection of minorities and minority rights. I can understand the rights of smokers, but I can draw the line when those rights infringe upon the health of non-smoker constituents, when going to work means enduring cancerous poisons, when, while making a living, somebody else's habit may be contributing to your early death.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 201 is a simple bill. By passing it, we will be contributing to the health of Albertans who do not smoke, and we will save the health care system from many unnecessary costs. With some luck, by reducing the places where people can smoke, we may even reduce the number of smokers. This is the root of the problem. Although Bill 201 is good because it will reduce the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, the real need is to reduce the number of people smoking.

To this end there exists a need for public investment in programs that help people to kick this dangerous habit. Besides education to prevent people from getting into smoking, I call for more public and private investment in programs helping smokers to kick this nicotine addiction habit and to replace it with something more healthy, perhaps healthy pleasures, I'll call it.

Another idea that works well is to increase the so-called sin tax on tobacco products. This way people still have the choice to smoke but may think twice when they realize how much smoking costs them. Furthermore, such a tax can help to pay for a program that helps to reduce smoking levels across the province. Such a program could be targeted at youth as a means of educating them about the harmful effects of smoking and the difficulty associated with addiction. Or money from the so-called sin tax could be used for the creation of smoking areas with proper ventilation or to set up environmental standards for smoke emissions in workplaces or giving Alberta a balance between the right of nonsmokers and smokers. After all, isn't it all about choices?

Mr. Speaker, we have 50 years of science telling us that smoking and second-hand smoke is deadly. Bill 201 proposes to do something about this fact. In principle I cannot oppose any legislation that deals with this effect, so I urge the members to support this bill in principle.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for taking the same heroic stand in political life as he did in his former private life. Being a fellow Calgary rookie, I appreciate his personal bravery in advocating such a strong, inclusive smoking ban despite the fact that he was chastened somewhat by his caucus for his eagerness and singular pursuit in the face of Everest-like obstacles.

This bill will not only save lives but millions of dollars in health care due to its proactive, preventative stance. This bill recognizes what the opposition proposed in our wellness motion 501, which advocated using \$200 million annually from the \$650 million of tobacco tax revenues. With this bill we would get rid of smoking in all public and workplaces, saving Albertans' lives. No one has the right to bring a concealed weapon into a public place, never mind discharge it, yet government members opposed to this bill are willing to put nonsmokers' lives at risk. If an individual wants to risk their own health, their suicidal choices shouldn't be allowed to put others' lives in danger. Cancer doesn't pick favourites; it's an equal opportunity killer both for first-hand smokers and second-hand smoke victims.

We have mandated the use of seat belts, which save lives and health care dollars. We have mandated helmets for children riding bicycles and for motorcyclists. This is a bill designed to protect Albertans' well-being. I look forward to the day that I can enjoy the music jams in bars and public places throughout the province without compromising my personal health.

I hope that government members will be permitted a free vote, which will parallel the 80 per cent demonstrated support of their constituents for an uncompromised, total smoking ban. Vote with your conscience. Vote for your constituents. Vote in favour of this proposed complete province-wide smoking ban.

Thank you, Member for Calgary-Lougheed, for your leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

4:00

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and address my concerns with regard to this Smoke-free Places Act, Bill 201, tabled by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I certainly understand the health effects of smoking and the health effects of second-hand smoke. I don't dispute them. I support smoking restrictions, but I don't support Bill 201 as presented.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere alluded to a situation in Peace River. I'd like to use that situation to explain my viewpoint a little better. In October of 2004 the town of Peace River faced a plebiscite about a smoking bylaw. The proposed bylaw was a full ban on smoking in all workplaces, bars, restaurants, gaming establishments. It also extended to private residences where employees were in a home business. In fact, it extended outside of businesses, six metres outside the doorway of a business. The plebiscite was defeated not by a landslide but certainly by a healthy margin in large part, I believe, because it was viewed as a draconian measure even by a number of nonsmokers that I talked to.

The application to private residences was strongly resisted. The idea of banning smoking outside the doorway of a business was seen as almost ridiculous by many people. Certainly, the fact that businesses were liable for the actions of their customers was viewed as unreasonable. There was some fear in the community about the business impact to bars and gaming facilities and, therefore, to the nonprofit societies operating within the community.

It was a divisive and acrimonious battle, no doubt, but something positive, I believe, emerged once the dust settled. There actually was clear support for a bylaw that invoked smoking restrictions in the town of Peace River, just not one as draconian as the one proposed. First of all, the protection of children and the application to all businesses that admit children was actually strongly supported. There was, I believe, quite a bit of support for exempting bars and gaming facilities from that bylaw and certainly for exempting private residences from that bylaw.

I believe there's a lesson here. Certainly, there was one for the town of Peace River, but I think there's one for the province as well. I believe this tells us that choices are important and choices are different in different communities. In Peace River there was support for reasonable restrictions but little support for it to apply to bars and gaming facilities. I think that that stems from a recognition that some facilities are entered by choice, not by necessity. As I said, there was little support for the bylaw applying to private residences, and there was very strong concern expressed in the community about the impact on businesses.

Now, I recognize that there are studies, some tabled today, that show that there is little to no economic impact. I would suggest that there are other studies indicating otherwise. This is one of the fears I have. I echo the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere. This is a bit of a bandwagon issue, and I resent the fact that studies that are tabled that show that there is an economic impact are virtually automatically labelled as noncredible, just as arguments against the smoking ban are labelled as trivial, as the Member for Edmonton-Manning just did. I resent that. I think that there's some reasonable middle ground here and that we should seek to find it. I believe that it's incumbent on us to seek to find it.

The other concern that arose in Peace River: there was little support for measures that would place an undue enforcement burden on the community. I think that we have enough burden on our communities as it is. As I said, there was strong support where access to children is involved. Overall, I believe there actually is strong support for a reasonable, tempered approach to a smoking bylaw in the town of Peace River, one that recognizes and respects choice, recognizes that private residences should not be involved, recognizes that the protection of children is of paramount importance, and recognizes that there is a financial burden or could be a financial burden on some businesses, especially rural ones. I believe that wherever possible we should allow businesses to decide what's good or bad for business, not the government.

I will support Bill 201 if amended to include these considerations, and I support it moving to Committee of the Whole for further consideration and discussion. In short, I will support a bill that lays down the basis to protect children in public places from exposure to second-hand smoke but allows local decision-making beyond that point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my thanks and respect to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for having and demonstrating the courage of his convictions.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my

pleasure to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. There is no question in my mind and certainly not any in those of the people that I've spoken to that this is primarily a health concern, and that's really the way we should be treating it. If this government is so hot on wellness, then I would ask the members opposite who are speaking against this bill today to please take that into careful consideration. There is simply no disputing the medical facts as they relate to the damage that smoking and second-hand smoke cause to those that are exposed to cigarette smoke.

By and large what I'm hearing from people across this province as I discuss this issue is also a question of fairness and consistency. I know it's been mentioned by a number of the other speakers this afternoon that when there's an imbalance in terms of the local municipal rules, you open up all sorts of problems and all sorts of unfairness to local businesses. We've had that example many, many times already today. I'm involved in several charities that work bingos and casinos, and they have serious concerns about the Edmonton smoking ban coming into force on July 1 and how that will impact them when people can drive to a community just outside Edmonton and practise their gaming in a facility that allows smoking.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity mentioned seat belt use, and I would just like to touch on that for a second. Many of the same arguments, Mr. Speaker, that we're hearing today about rural Alberta and farmers and oil field workers, and so forth, not necessarily being willing to comply with a smoking ban – those same arguments we heard very strongly several years ago when mandatory seat belt legislation was first introduced. I'm proud to say that today Alberta is shown to have some of the highest seat belt compliance rates anywhere in Canada. That includes rural Alberta. It includes the farmers and the oil field workers, and so forth. So peer pressure, as we know, can be surprisingly powerful. That's not only true of the teenagers that start smoking, but it's also true of the adults when we're trying to get them to stop smoking.

Mr. Speaker, I would certainly hope that this government is not as addicted to the revenues that it realizes from investing in tobacco companies as it sometimes appears to me that it is. Again, I certainly hope that the opposition members that are speaking out against this bill today are not taking that into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Fort alluded to the fact that there are literally thousands of deaths a year that are attributed either directly to the use of tobacco or the exposure to second-hand smoke. I would just like all members to ponder carefully that if the same sort of fatality rates were being seen, let's just say as an example, as a result of amusement rides, you can only imagine the outcry that there would be. I would use the argument that the Member for – I'm not sure.

An Hon. Member: Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. R. Miller: Battle River-Wainwright, thank you. It used to be called Wainwright, I think.

... that the Member for Battle River-Wainwright alluded to, and that is that people are doing this of their own free will. Well, most people will get on an amusement ride of their own free will, Mr. Speaker, yet if there were thousands of deaths a year on amusement rides, even though people got on those rides of their own volition and recognizing the risk, the outcry would be tremendous, I'm sure.

I would like to just reminisce for a second about my years at Strathcona composite high school. At that time there was a designated smoking stairwell, actually, Mr. Speaker. I was smart enough – perhaps I was one of those that the Member for Battle River-Wainwright was referring to – to avoid that stairwell like the plague

because I recognized, as did many of the other students, that that stairwell was perhaps the most dangerous place in the whole school. We definitely made a point of using another way to get upstairs or downstairs.

Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago I stepped outside to chat with a fellow who was a visitor in the public gallery today, and we were standing in the hallway by one of the ministers' offices. He was astounded at the smell of cigarette smoke emanating from that minister's office. He did not know and, I suspect, most Albertans do not know that smoking is allowed in this building, this Alberta Legislature, which is arguably one of the most public workplaces in all of Alberta. He was astounded at that, and as I said, I wouldn't be surprised if most Albertans don't find themselves fully aware of that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to applaud the initiative of the Member for Calgary-Lougheed in bringing this bill forward. I certainly support it at this stage and will continue to do so barring any major amendments that would water it down.

Thank you very much.

4:10

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. Before us is a bill which is quite a contentious issue for the members of this Legislature and for the constituents that we represent.

The one area of this issue that we can all be in agreement on is that tobacco smoke, whether it be directly inhaled through smoking or through second-hand smoke, is a contributing cause of lung cancer, heart disease, and a large number of other health ailments and diseases. This is not up for debate. It has been proven time and time again that smoking is as dangerous for those who smoke as for those who are around people who smoke.

Is it right to move Bill 201 forward and enact a broad prohibition on smoking in all enclosed workplaces across this province? I think it is. As a government we have an obligation to provide safe workplaces for all Albertans, not just for those who work in office buildings where smoking is not usually allowed. We have laws and regulations in place that keep Alberta's workers safe in regard to safety devices for construction workers working on tall buildings, for oil patch workers working on the hundreds of rigs across the province, but we don't have protection for the thousands upon thousands of individuals who are subjected to second-hand smoke each and every day in their workplaces.

The argument may be put forward that these individuals don't have to work in the types of jobs that require them to be around second-hand smoke. Usually this involves some type of hospitality industry. I just don't think that this type of argument is strong enough for me not to support this bill. Mr. Speaker, science has come far enough, and too many people have become sick or have died because of second-hand smoke for us not to put forward legislation that protects individuals from second-hand smoke in their chosen profession.

When this government is dealing with the issue of safety guards and restraints for construction workers who work on high buildings, we don't accept the rationale that falling from a high building is just a risk of construction and if these workers don't want to plummet to their death, they should just find another profession that isn't as dangerous. Instead, we put forward legislation that will help make those construction workers' work sites as safe as possible. Bill 201 is the safety restraint that hospitality workers across this province have never had.

Mr. Speaker, jurisdictions across Alberta, Canada, and all corners

of the world, regardless of their political leanings, are moving forward with laws which are very similar to the bill proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. The general acceptance of the prohibition of smoking in public places is here. I emphasize enclosed public places because in no way does this bill restrict what Albertans can do in their own homes or vehicles.

By not supporting this bill, we are just temporarily putting off the inevitable, and in the process we might be opening ourselves up to possible litigation due to the fact that government was aware of the dangers of allowing workers to be subjected to second-hand smoke. The Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board initially ruled in favour of a woman who was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer after working as a waitress for most of her life to receive worker's compensation. Mr. Speaker, while these types of rulings are not common, it does show that precedent is beginning to be set, and by not taking action, we potentially open ourselves to WCB claims. We are aware of the danger of second-hand smoke in the workplace, and the government could therefore be held in neglect of the health of Albertans by not taking action on this issue.

I will be supporting Bill 201, and I urge all members of this House to do the same. I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing this bill forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I too want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing Bill 201 forward. I support this bill because I believe it is the right thing to do.

I do not want to repeat what has already been said in support of this action. I would like to respond to the suggestion that we should allow children to make their own decisions to help them grow and develop into mature adults. My background is also education, and I can think of countless times when students did not or would not make wise decisions because they did not have the facts, the critical thinking skills, or the experience that would be required to make good, informed decisions. Our responsibility as adults is to guide them or override them when necessary to ensure their safety and security. Sometimes we must intervene in the best interests of people. Although I am speaking of youth, there is no magical age when individuals become responsible.

On the basis of discussion with parents and students in my constituency I must support this bill. Some of these constituents are smokers who actually believe that a smoking ban would have helped them overcome their addiction and who want to do whatever they can to prevent others from becoming addicted to tobacco.

I also want to mention that we have lots of evidence behind a total workplace smoking ban and the health that it creates and the assets that that would bring. This is about protecting the worker, not about the smoker. Smoking cessation programs in the workplace may also achieve substantial cost savings as well as productivity benefits. Workers who have stopped smoking for at least one year lose significantly fewer days of work and have fewer admissions to hospital than those who continue to smoke. Smokers take time from their jobs to go and smoke and have their breaks. If that's not happening any longer, that can contribute to better productivity.

I support Bill 201 as I see it as a health concern that must be addressed in our wellness mandate. Our mandate is provincial. This Bill 201 offers an opportunity for province-wide consistency and better health. Once again I applaud this initiative.

Thank you.

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

Ms Evans: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I begin my remarks, I'm mindful of my own home and my children years ago who, enthusiastic with what they were hearing at school, rushed home to talk very seriously with their father about the evils of smoking. Children during the period of the '70s and '80s grew up with that delightful program Participation, that made them all little health and wellness teachers when they came to their homes. I think that for me the memory of my oldest son most seriously illuminating what he believed was a travesty in behaviour relative to smoking will be one of my most poignant memories as a parent.

As health minister one of the things that I'm most conscious of is that children tend to start smoking when the adults around them smoke, and no matter what the adults say, they usually can't dissuade the child from doing something different. That is an important reason in support of Bill 201, to look at a broader outreach on the tobacco reduction strategy and, in fact, look at a provincial ban.

Thankfully, my children today, adult men of 36, 38, and 40, still do not smoke. It was the teaching about the misuse of tobacco that taught them that this was definitely something they wanted to make a choice about.

So, Mr. Speaker, today as we discuss Bill 201, I want to talk a little bit about the strategy that's already a part of the tobacco reduction strategy in Alberta. In fact, it was launched in 2002. The purpose, of course, is to increase the wellness of Albertans and to decrease health care costs through the denormalization of tobacco use. The strategy addresses prevention and education, cessation and reduction, research and evaluation, leadership, co-ordination, taxation, and legislation.

4:20

We have taken strong antitobacco action on many fronts, including tobacco taxes, making it illegal for youth under the age of 18 to smoke in public places, and comprehensive advertising campaigns showing the adverse health effects of smoking.

The smoking rate in the province for people 15 years and older declined from 25 per cent in 2001 to 20 per cent in 2003, which represents approximately a hundred thousand fewer smokers in Alberta. This reduction represents an annual cost savings to the economy of approximately \$465 million. This amount is a 40 to 1 return on the Alberta government's investment in the Alberta tobacco reduction strategy. For the first time ever the smoking rate in Alberta is lower than the smoking rate for Canada, which is 21 per cent. Our goal is to reduce this number to 17 and a half per cent by 2011. Mr. Speaker, I hope to wake up one morning and realize that Alberta, in fact, has no smokers.

We cannot be complacent. While we're having success already with the tobacco reduction strategy, we face numerous challenges on the tobacco front, including discount brands, the low cost of loose tobacco, and the number of young people who are still smoking. While smoking rates overall have declined, the smoking rate in Alberta remains high among young adults aged 20 to 24 at 31 per cent. In the 15 to 19 age category 18 per cent of young people smoke. We want to lower the number of smokers in the 15 to 19 age category to 12 per cent in the next six years.

Mr. Speaker, recently I noted a commercial in a theatre that talked about the image of beauty and young women, and it's sponsored by the Dove Foundation. What I liked about it is that it challenges young girls particularly but also young women to consider that they are beautiful no matter what they look like as long as that inner beauty shines. I fear from my discussions with young girls in

particular that many who are still smoking are smoking because they really want to become slim. The image of Virginia Slims lingers in my mind as one of the cleverest albeit the least ethical types of advertising that would encourage one to feel like they will be slimmer if they smoke, in fact, a slim brand of cigarettes.

Cigarette sales in Alberta are up 7.5 per cent for the nine months ended December 2004 compared to the same nine months in the year prior. Discount brands now make up a substantial part of Alberta's tobacco marketplace. These brands sell at \$2 less per pack than premium brands, thus negating our tax increase of two and a quarter.

Mr. Speaker, tobacco use remains a critical health concern in our province. Tobacco use is the leading avoidable cause of illness, disability, and premature death in Alberta; 3,400 Albertans die annually from tobacco-related illnesses. Just recently we attended a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease session with SmartCare and a number of Albertans, and they advised us that this particular disease is a disease which kills one Canadian every hour. SmartCare is chaired by a wonderful gentleman – I'll call him Jim – who identifies that this irreversible lung condition attacked him because he was a heavy smoker.

We must protect the health and development of our children. Their lungs are still so much in a growth phase that second-hand smoke is particularly dangerous for them. Eighty-eight per cent of Albertans agreed two years ago that smoking should be banned in places where children are allowed.

We must be vigilant because Alberta has fallen behind other Canadian jurisdictions regarding tobacco legislation. With the exception of Alberta every province has adopted or is developing some form of comprehensive tobacco control legislation. While the reduction strategy is working, we know that it can be further reduced. One of the targets for the strategy includes reducing the consumption of tobacco products in Alberta by 50 per cent over the next 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that smoking and its effects are major barriers to wellness in our province. I am concerned that Alberta does not have sufficient legislation limiting tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke. Numerous studies indicate that neither workplace nor public place smoke-free policies have long-term negative economic impacts. In order to create the healthiest citizens in the entire country, we must address the issues that inhibit wellness.

Mr. Speaker, today I am challenged as health minister with the fact that we are spending 2 per cent more than our gross domestic product in Canada, in France, and in many other countries of the world. The only way that we can really successfully attack health reform, in my opinion, is when we attack those things that mitigate against wellness: when we attack things like obesity, that has been mentioned, like tobacco, like pollution, like all of those things that, in fact, subtract from our capacity as Albertans to feel well, when we get every Albertan to have a healthy and positive outlook on life, to sleep well, to exercise properly, to eat the required and proper foods every day, to do things that protect their health, like not smoke, like not overindulge in alcohol, like not overindulge in any unhealthy or high-risk behaviour, and when we encourage Albertans to wash their hands.

We know, in fact, that there is a pandemic that has been discussed and is on the horizon, and, Mr. Speaker, it will be the healthiest people in Canada that will survive. For those that are vulnerable, for those that threaten the vulnerability of others, I say this. This bill may be ambitious. There are many sides to the debate and many that we have heard this afternoon. However, I ask our colleagues for very careful consideration of Bill 201, and I compliment the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for his courage and commitment in bringing forward this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 201, and I would like to commend the hon. member opposite for introducing this bill. I think that it's very timely, and I was pleased and I would like to believe at least that the motion that's been tabled by the New Democrat opposition calling for a full smoking ban had some role in precipitating this bill. That's exactly what we hoped to see.

This is first and foremost a workplace health and safety issue. For thousands of Albertans who work in the hospitality industry, in bars, restaurants, casinos, bingo halls, and other establishments, cigarette smoke is a clear danger to their health. The Premier of this province has repeatedly said that his opposition to a province-wide smoking ban is based on the fact that an 85-year-old man in a Youngstown bar parlour has the right to light up a cigarette. The Premier seems to have no explanation for why the 85-year-old man's right to smoke a cigarette in a place of work trumps the right of his 20-year-old waiter or waitress to work in a healthy and safe environment.

Second-hand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals including 69 known carcinogens such as formaldehyde, lead, arsenic, benzene, and radioactive polonium-210. It is a scientifically proven cause of serious health problems including lung cancer, heart disease, and chronic lung ailments such as lung cancer and asthma. Studies have shown that employees who work in smoke-free indoor workplaces are at least 25 per cent more likely to make quitting attempts and are more likely to achieve cessation than those who work at work sites that permit smoking. Smoking bans help people quit smoking, Mr. Speaker.

Nonsmokers are exposed to the same carcinogens as active smokers. Even the typical levels of passive exposure have been known to cause lung cancer among people who have never smoked. Second-hand tobacco smoke is carcinogenic to humans. There's evidence that smoking bans are linked to decreasing incidents of heart attacks. When Helena, Montana, imposed a ban from June 5, 2002, until it was struck down in court on December 3, 2002, the incidence of hospitalization for myocardial infarctions dropped significantly, by about 40 per cent, compared to before and after the law was enforced and compared to neighbouring regions.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the dinosaur on this issue. It reminds me of the Far Side cartoon about the real reason for the extinction of dinosaurs. If anyone's ever seen it, it's got various dinosaurs smoking cigarettes.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding what the Premier said about an urban-rural split on this issue, the vast majority of Albertans do support a smoking ban. Many other countries have smoking bans or intend to implement them very soon. The Canadian Medical Association reports that Ireland, Zimbabwe, Thailand, Pakistan, Iran, Uganda, and Sweden have smoking bans in place. Most other provinces, including our neighbours to the west in British Columbia and to the east in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, also have province-wide smoking bans.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's intransigence is hurting our border towns. In Lloydminster, for example, the mayor is concerned that Saskatchewan businesses are suffering unnecessarily because there's no level playing field between Saskatchewan and Alberta law. Alberta's policy is also hurting businesses in other places. In Clareview, for example, many businesses are losing out to restaurants and bars in neighbouring Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park. The patchwork of smoking bylaws is the reason why the Alberta Urban

Municipalities Association is supportive of a province-wide smoking ban in the workplace.

There is some very real resistance to a province-wide smoking ban within the Tory caucus, including, I might add, the Premier. The rationale is that we cannot infringe on the private sector's right to allow smoking in their establishments. There is a further rationale that restaurants, bars, and casinos will lose money if a province-wide smoking ban is implemented.

Mr. Speaker, let me start with the first assertion that the province has no right to infringe on private business. Now, we know how harmful second-hand smoke is, we know that smoking bans are effective in terms of encouraging current smokers to quit, and we know how costly smoking is. We also know that there are provincial regulations for all kinds of health and safety requirements in the workplace. Workplaces are required to have ventilation systems. They are required to have a certain air and water quality. They are required to have sanitary food preparation and waste disposal. We have all of these rules to protect human health. All the facts show that a smoking ban would serve the same purpose.

Now, the second assertion that restaurants, bars, casinos, and so on would become ghost towns is just patently false. There are so many jurisdictions that are ahead of Alberta that we have a treasure trove of evidence and proof to the contrary. For example, the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit examined the effect of Ottawa's smoke-free bylaw on that city's hospitality industry. Far from having a negative impact as detractors had warned, the smoke-free bylaw appears to have had substantial economic benefit. Some further quotes from the Ottawa study:

- Using two statistical approaches, and allowing three possibilities for the timing and pattern of the impact, we found no evidence that the Ottawa smoke-free bylaw adversely affected restaurant and bar sales.
- Our results and those of [other] previous studies indicate that communities considering implementing smoke-free bylaws need not be concerned that bars and restaurants will be adversely affected.
- Studies of the health and social costs of smoking and of the impact of bylaws on smoking behaviour suggest substantial economic benefit to the public from 100% smoke-free bylaws.

A report commissioned by the city of Ottawa to examine the impact of its ban on smoking in bars and restaurants found that the smoke-free bylaw has had little or no negative impact on the industry as a whole.

In California a comprehensive poll was undertaken by Field Research of bar owners, employees, and patrons. The poll found that five years after California implemented a smoke-free bylaw, a majority of stakeholders approved of the law. Seventy-nine per cent of bar patrons surveyed said that it's important to have a smoke-free environment inside clubs, bars, lounges, and restaurants with bars. This represented a 20 per cent increase from that reported in 1998. Seventy-seven per cent of bar managers and their employees said that complying with the law has been very or fairly easy, and 87 per cent of patrons, including smokers, said that they are more likely to visit bars or have not changed their bar-going behaviour as a result of the law.

The New York City department of health and mental hygiene released information in July 2003 showing that employment in city bars and restaurants since implementation of the Smoke Free Air Act "increased by about 1,500 seasonally-adjusted jobs", for an "absolute gain of nearly 10,000 jobs" since the implementation of that act.

It is true that there is an adjustment period for businesses in the aftermath of a province-wide ban, but this adjustment period, if it is applied to everyone, is far less damaging than the halfway solutions

and patchwork bylaws that we now have. It is temporary pain for long-term gain.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there are health care costs to consider. In May 2004 the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, represented here by the minister over there, reported this.

- Over one third of all deaths [that is, 36 per cent] are due to cardiovascular disease . . .
- More women (37%) than men (35%) die of heart disease and stroke.
- Heart disease and stroke cost the Canadian economy \$18.5 billion.

Even the infamous Mazankowski report recommended action on smoking in the workplace as a good way to reduce health care costs.

Mr. Speaker, the government seems to want to take the Mazankowski report's advice on privatizing the health care system, charging more user fees, and allowing more for-profit medicine, but it is not enthusiastic about doing something that would really lower health care costs, and that is to implement a province-wide smoking ban.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to follow the advice of our health minister and support this bill. I believe that it is an excellent piece of legislation, a progressive piece of legislation, and it should be passed unamended by this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Marz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I'd also like to thank the hon. member for bringing forward such an important bill as this as it proposes to ban smoking in all enclosed public spaces and workplaces. Given that nearly every day we are bombarded with new studies outlining the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, Bill 201 clearly is a good idea in principle.

Second-hand smoke is of particular concern because of the fact that it is a health risk that is imposed on a person by the actions of another. There is a role for government to play in situations such as these. Whenever the rights of one citizen have the potential to harm another if exercised, then the government has a legal and moral obligation to step in and curtail the exercise of that right in order to ensure the greatest benefits for society. Government also has a special obligation to protect children from harm. However, Albertans should have a reasonable expectation that they are free to go to public places without having to worry about being exposed to second-hand smoke, and Albertans over the age of 18 should also have a reasonable expectation that they are free to choose how they live their lives.

Mr. Speaker, what Bill 201 proposes to do is extend to the provincial level a process that has already begun in municipalities in this province and across Canada. I can remember that back in the 1980s championing a cause such as this, which I did, was a very lonely, lonely exercise. As the minister of health is smiling across the way, she can remember when we shared going to municipal conventions. The only smoke-free table at the lunch was the one I sat at because I reached in my pocket and brought out a sign and set it on the table, and it soon attracted other nonsmokers to that table, and that's how I started.

Now, I always believed in leading by example, and as a municipal councillor I also set out to eliminate the cloud of smoke from my own municipal buildings, starting with the Kneehill municipality, and it became the first municipal administration building in the

province to go smoke free. I then got on the hospital board of the Three Hills hospital, and to my knowledge it was the first hospital in the province to have any smoking restrictions at all. And, yes, believe it or not, back in the 1980s you couldn't go into a hospital without smelling smoke in any room in any part of the building. Even this building. My research tells me that in the early 1980s in this very Assembly smoking was prevalent and quite common.

As an encouragement to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed we've made a lot of progress, or to paraphrase the advertisement of the cigarette company that the minister of health mentioned, Virginia Slims: we've come a long way, baby.

4:40

Numerous American states have passed similar legislation to this, and Cuba, a country where smoking is culturally ingrained, has also moved to limit smoking in public places. It's important to note that if Alberta adopts legislation to create a baseline for smoking restrictions across the province, it must protect children and respect municipalities' and organizations' rights to meet local needs. By creating a provincial standard, we can ensure that all Albertans are assured of a basic level of protection against exposure to second-hand smoke and that children are protected. Should municipalities want to further restrict smoking in public places, I believe it's their right to do so. There was a recent plebiscite in one of my larger municipalities during the last municipal elections, and it was defeated. So, Mr. Speaker, I think I've got at least a little bit of a feeling of what my constituents feel about being too restrictive on this issue.

Bill 201 in its current form will protect all Albertans from exposure to second-hand smoke in enclosed public places but does not allow for municipalities to respond to the needs of its local citizens. It does not allow for them to have a less stringent ban, nor does it allow for private organizations to set their own rules. Restrictions should only apply to enclosed public spaces and workplaces where minors are permitted. A public space is a place where members of the public are free to enter and interact with each other. A private club such as the Legion is not open to the public and has restrictions on who can enter. Because of this definition, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 201 should not apply to exclusively private organizations.

As legislation across Canada similar in cause and effect to Bill 201 has been introduced, the Royal Canadian Legion has voiced its concerns. The Legion is concerned that proposed blanket smoking bans will harm the organization as they depend on smokers for their bottom line. Bill 201 if applied to private clubs would be especially penalizing. Public facilities like restaurants and bars are worried about their bottom line as well; however, being a public establishment, they are more able to replace customers as everyone is free to enter their facilities. [Mr. Marz coughed] That's not a smoking cough, Mr. Speaker.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Private clubs, on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, apply directly to a specific segment of the population and are only open to members and their guests. With each passing year it becomes harder and harder for Legions to survive. According to the Brandon, Manitoba, branch president, his Legion lost 30 per cent of its business immediately after the smoking ban was put into place. Legions play an important role in the lives of veterans and in communities. In 2003 the Alberta Northwest Territories Command donated \$9 million to charity and countless hours in community service to help other veterans run youth programs and sponsor senior housing programs.

When members leave the Legion, their dues and talents leave with them. A loss of the local Legion can be devastating to local communities.

Mr. Speaker, private clubs should be considered exempt as they are clearly not public spaces. Other jurisdictions have made exceptions for bona fide private clubs. In its bylaw the city of Toronto allowed for Legions and service clubs to be excluded and stated that the bylaw did not apply to banquet halls or restaurants when they are hosting private functions. The reason for the exception to smoking bans lies in the definition of a public space. A private club is open only to members and their guests, all of whom still choose to belong to that organization despite its smoking policy. A private club, if it chooses to allow smoking, does not have to allow minors on its premises. Private clubs like the Royal Canadian Legion are not competitors to other public entities. They cater to a certain clientele, and they do not try to attract business from a broad cross-section of society. Therefore, by ensuring that bona fide private clubs are exempt from this legislation, we're still allowing for a level playing field. The argument that allowing private service clubs an exemption would create a market distortion is simply inaccurate as private clubs occupy a separate niche in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the Legion also caters to a segment of the population who grew up with smoking being acceptable. While the view of mainstream society has changed, the opinion of many Legion members has not. By ensuring that the private clubs are left out of the legislation, we're able to satisfy a generation of individuals whose sacrifices created our free society while at the same time acknowledging the hazards of second-hand smoke, bringing our policy in line with the views of the average Albertan.

Bill 201 is an important piece of legislation, and there can be no denying the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. This House has the responsibility to protect Albertans from harmful substances. That's why it's so important to prevent smoking in enclosed public spaces and workplaces where minors are permitted. Private clubs, however, are not public entities and should therefore under the definition of the proposed legislation be allowed to have smoking areas accessible for their members.

Bill 201, with the proper definition of public spaces, strikes a correct balance between freedom of choice, protecting public health, the rights of smokers, and the rights of nonsmokers. I will support this bill in second reading and look forward with great interest to what amendments may be forthcoming in the committee stage, and I will make my final decision then.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to speak to Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act. I admire the stand of my colleague across the floor for his tenacious challenge with this bill, and good luck with it. I believe adults are models here. Smoking sets a very poor example, and by example we teach.

During the municipal election in St. Albert three candidates ran on the basis of coming back and having the smoking ban removed. These three candidates were removed and were not elected, so that may have some message to our political hearts.

In visiting schools, which I have done since becoming the Education critic, I note a fairly large number of kids still smoking, and it seems to me just on a limited observation that a number of them are women, young ladies. This really has an impact on the future in terms of health costs.

There are simple reasons why I support this bill. I believe it

brings us better health, I believe it will cut costs, I believe it will make a better and healthier business environment, and I believe it will promote the well-being of people that are employed and also people that visit establishments that they must go into to do economic exchange, business. Therefore, I do believe that we should support Bill 201. It will set a province-wide standard.

There's one other thing, Mr. Speaker, that I think is very, very important. It would also tell people across Alberta that this Assembly can work together to make Alberta smoke-free and make Alberta a healthier place to live. I think that's really worth fighting and standing up for.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to be able to rise and speak to Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act. I listened to the comments from my colleagues here in the Legislature regarding Bill 201 with interest. I am sure every member here is receiving arguments and positioning both for and against this legislation while being approached by their constituents and in reading all the letters, faxes, and e-mails their constituency offices receive.

This is a very tough bill that's being brought forward. The health benefits to quitting smoking are obvious, and I don't think I need to go into any detail here as a few members of the House have already done an exceptional job outlining the dangers of smoking and second-hand smoke to nonsmokers. I am a reformed smoker and, I would suppose, one of the harshest critics.

4:50

As a government I do believe that we shouldn't be responsible for making sure every Albertan makes the healthiest choice at every corner. If this was the situation, as mentioned previously this afternoon, we would be legislating what foods Albertans eat, how much exercise they must perform each day, and we would be monitoring how much mindless and idle activity we participate in every day. Obviously, this isn't the case, and Albertans are free to make the choices that they feel are best for themselves.

AADAC does a great job in providing resources for individuals who choose to stop smoking but are having a difficult time doing it. As a former smoker I know it can be a difficult habit to beat, and I would be supportive of a bill that would in some way help discourage everyone, especially our youth, from ever starting smoking. Even with the dangers of smoking fully known by our youth, we still have young children starting to take up smoking. Although there are fewer youths starting to smoke than in the previous decades, we still need to protect children from taking up the habit.

Resources need to be there for those who choose to stop smoking. When people make the decision to stop smoking, we should be focusing on providing the services and support they need to kick this tough addiction. Wouldn't it be better to encourage adults and children to quit smoking instead of telling businesses how to operate? By focusing our efforts on eliminating where people can smoke, all we're doing is changing the locations where parents will be subjecting their children to second-hand smoke. It doesn't matter whether we create incentive programs or some type of tax credit. We need to start addressing how to encourage people to stop smoking, not just limit where they can smoke.

When I look at Bill 201, the biggest impact I see coming from it is that smoking will no longer be allowed in bars, restaurants, casinos, and other hospitality-related businesses. Will we be

creating other hazards to people's health by having groups of people smoking in front of restaurants? People will have to pass through the group of smokers to get to the smoke-free restaurant. I am not alone in Alberta with the discomfort around smoke. Many Albertans feel the same way I do when around smoke. We choose to go to businesses or restaurants that don't allow smoking. This is what my main contention with Bill 201 is as it currently sits. This bill in its current form will legislate hospitality businesses and dictate how they cater to a specific segment of the population.

I fully support prohibiting smoking in health facilities and most public buildings, but I have a hard time supporting legislation that tells a businessperson how they should run their private business. Perhaps we should look into developing better signs to warn people that certain businesses allow smoking. I want to emphasize: working with business, not dictating to businesses should be how we deal with the smoking issue.

Alberta has become a great province not because we're best at making laws but because of the entrepreneurial spirit that flows through our blood. I don't know if we really make a difference for the health of the public if we make it illegal for welders or any other shop owners to smoke in their own facility. Our farmers don't want Ottawa telling them where they have to sell their wheat and at what price. They want the option to be able to market their own products. They're smart enough to grow their farms into successful businesses, so it's insulting for them to be told that they're not smart enough to market their own wheat themselves if they choose to do so. I think that this directly applies to how we could be treating small business owners in relation to how they must run their own private businesses.

Is there such a high demand for nonsmoking establishments? The keen and smart businessmen that we have in our province will make sure that there is a smoke-free environment for these people who spend their money. The businesses that do allow for smoking are making a conscious decision to cater to a continually decreasing segment of our population. I really think that there will be a point when businesses that choose to allow smoking will eventually have to switch to nonsmoking because the actual numbers of smokers will be so little as not to be able to keep their business profitable. But until that time comes where either private businesses cannot be profitable with allowing smoking or until smoking itself becomes illegal, dictating how a business should be run is not the government's business.

As to this bill helping to protect the health of Albertans who work in public places where smoking is currently allowed, I don't think the debate for this is much different than if it was the province's business owners choosing to have their establishments free or not. To use serving as an example, people may choose where they work. There are so many options with smoking and nonsmoking establishments that the serving profession is not being subjected to second-hand smoke unless they choose to, just like the customers choose to frequent an establishment where smoking is allowed.

It simply comes down to personal choice, and this bill as it sits hasn't addressed a variety of other options that still need to be explored. Are the small nonsmoking signs that municipalities require businesses to post significant enough? How much authority do we extend to municipalities in regard to allowing smoking in public places? Why are we trying to interfere with local economies and the autonomy of the local municipalities? People should be able to decide how they will operate their businesses. We have seen a great number of municipalities move towards nonsmoking in almost all public places, but we have also seen many communities that will continue to allow businesses to choose what is best for their business.

I do feel that this bill is moving in the right direction, but I think further consultation and amendments are necessary before I would completely support this bill. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing Bill 201 forward and evoking such great debate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this Bill 201 today, and I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing this important bill to the House.

At this time, I have a few questions that I'd like each of us to ask ourselves. We as legislators are empowered to bring forth good bills to protect those who cannot protect themselves, and though we've taken a good step so far with this bill, I still have questions. Are we really looking after the children of our province here? At this time a parent cannot take a child to town without strapping them in a seat belt. Children have a 1-800 number if they're physically or emotionally abused. Yet I ask the question: who's protecting the children in their home if their parents have chosen to smoke?

While this bill moves forward in the right direction, I still question that we don't protect those who cannot protect themselves. I would hope that as we continue to address and debate this bill, we will consider those in it and have the desire to strengthen this bill after this one passes to a stronger one that will protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to be able to rise today and join the debate on Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. I'd like to compliment the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for having the courage to bring forward this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by just talking about three different instances in my own life. The first one was when I was 10 years old. At that time, my grandfather moved in to live with us, and he was in the final year of emphysema. He was in the next bedroom to me, and I would often hear him coughing. His lungs had gotten to a point where he could no longer cleanse them. They no longer worked for him adequately, so they would fill with phlegm, and he would cough. He had lunch bags, wax-lined lunch bags. He would cough so much that he would fill those lunch sacks with phlegm, and it was my job to take the lunch sacks out of his bedroom and dispose of them. For a 10-year-old girl that was a gross thing to do.

But worse than gross, Mr. Speaker, was actually that year living in the next bedroom, listening to him slowly choke to death. That made an impression on me that I've never forgotten. Emphysema is a terrible disease. It's not a disease that you'd want anyone to experience.

I'd like to fast-forward for just a moment to probably 10 years after that. I was just a newlywed. My husband and I were both in university. I was expecting our first child. We returned to Calgary right after things had been very tough, you know, after the crash, and we desperately needed both of us to work in order to be able to go on that next year in university.

5:00

I finally found a job after a few weeks of really searching. Unfortunately for me, I ended up in a very small office with another worker who was a chain smoker. Now, back then I could say

nothing. The reality was that I needed the job worse, in some ways, than other conditions. So I put up with it. I couldn't complain. I couldn't ask him not to. In fact, there was a window in that small office, and I tried to open the window so that I could air out the environment a little bit because I was concerned about being pregnant and being in such a smoke-filled environment. Unfortunately, my co-worker had a terrible case of asthma, so he couldn't tolerate the window being open because it so adversely affected his asthma, but I could tolerate the second-hand smoke.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was some 25 years ago. I'd like to think that today we have progressed from that point. I'd like to think that we have better knowledge today. For many years the tobacco industry left us in a position where they didn't want us to create a causal link between smoking and lung cancer. Sometimes I feel like we're doing the same thing.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, I hate to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(5)(I) we've now reached the point in time where I must call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to close the debate.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have nothing but respect for each of the people who has risen in this Chamber before me to address this issue. I express my appreciation for the time and talent that they've put into their remarks. No matter what they might happen to have been, they've been very well thought of. Obviously, people have been speaking with their constituents. We all want to do the best thing for the people of this province.

I will not add to what has already been said here earlier today. Instead, I will ask for your guidance as we take this forward. We will now have the vote, I presume. Is that correct?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:03 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abbott	Graydon	Oberle
Ady	Groeneveld	Pannu
Agnihotri	Haley	Pastoor
Backs	Hancock	Pham
Blakeman	Hinman	Prins
Bonko	Jablonski	Renner
Boutilier	Johnson	Rodney
Brown	Knight	Rogers
Cao	Liepert	Shariff
Cardinal	Lindsay	Stevens
Cenaiko	Lougheed	Strang
Chase	MacDonald	Swann
DeLong	Mar	Taft
Doerksen	Marz	Tarchuk
Ducharme	Mason	Taylor
Elsalhy	Mather	Tougas
Evans	Miller, B.	Webber
Flaherty	Miller, R.	Zwozdesky
Goudreau	Mitzel	

Against the motion:

Danyluk	Griffiths	Ouellette
---------	-----------	-----------

Totals:	For – 56	Against – 3
---------	----------	-------------

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a second time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very progressive day and a healthy debate on an interesting bill today. Therefore, in view of the hour I would move that we call it 5:30 and reconvene at 8 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:17 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 14, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/03/15

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

You have an introduction of guests?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. I would like to seek unanimous consent to briefly revert to introductions, please.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm most pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a group of young New Democrats who have joined us this evening to view the proceedings. They are members of the New Democrat club from the University of Alberta and the newly formed New Democrat club at Grant MacEwan College. First of all, from the University of Alberta I have Roland Schmidt, Scott McAnish, Andrea Ennis, and Tahnis Cunningham. From the Grant MacEwan New Democrat club I have Barry DeFord, Chris Harwood, Geneva Harwood, Katie Van Tighem, Patrick Lau, and from our own caucus tonight Anand Sharma. Could I please have them rise and get the warm traditional welcome from the House.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of guests tonight. They do volunteer work at the Cross Cancer Institute, which is in my constituency but serves people across the province and, indeed, from beyond. Among their work is work in the cafeteria, the gift shop; they help in the rooms. They also operate the Edmonton Mennonite Guest Home, right across the street from the Cross Cancer Institute. They're here this evening on a tour of the Legislature and to watch us in our discussions for as long as they are welcome. They're welcome to until the bitter end if they want, but I can't imagine they'll stay that long. Anyway, I'll ask them to rise as I read their names: Elmer Esau, Joann Esau, Melinda Wiebe, Adriana Unruh, Verna Hershberger, Hildy Fehr, Sherri Koehn, Bethany Ensz, Lenora Penner, and Jerry Penner. I would ask all of you to give them a warm welcome, please.

Thank you.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Elimination of Library Card Fees in Tribute to Dr. Lois E. Hole

502. Mr. Agnihotri moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to eliminate fees for library cards in all public libraries in tribute to the late the Hon. Dr. Lois E. Hole to honour her belief in the importance of literacy and in the principle that access to libraries should be free for all Albertans.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The libraries are the basic services to all walks of life. It's an investment in building intellectual resources and also a cornerstone of a democratic society.

Lois Hole was a strong supporter of public libraries. Because of this, this government has proposed the development of an Alberta-wide digital library in the name of Lois Hole. The government has also created the Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship for postsecondary students. However, on a number of occasions she expressed her view that public libraries' membership should be free.

Most recently at a library event in Banff in July 2004 she said, "Giving free library memberships to all members of the community is a wonderful idea, and like you, I believe it should become standard practice throughout Alberta." In this centennial year let us reaffirm in legislation the principle that was embodied in Alberta's very first Public Libraries Act in 1907. That act stated clearly: "All libraries and reading rooms established under this Act shall be open to the public free of all charges."

Public libraries started out in the early years of this province's existence as open-door institutions, free to all Albertans, but in recent years, starting in the late '80s, public library after public library across this province has introduced annual membership fees in order to generate funds. As a consequence, today in Alberta every major public library, with only two exceptions, charges an annual membership fee that Albertans must pay if they want to borrow books. In this practice of charging residents a fee to belong to their local public library, Alberta is alone in North America with the sole exception of Quebec. Everywhere else in North America public libraries are free to the local residents, whose taxes support the libraries' existence.

Public libraries are a municipally based service. Municipalities contribute 80 per cent of the funds, provinces about 10 to 11 per cent, and the rest through user fees and other sources. Ninety-two per cent of the head librarians in Alberta agreed with the principle of free public libraries but said that they would need some form of revenue replacement before they could eliminate the fees. To replace this funding, it appears the easiest way to do this would be to increase the provincial funding portion for public libraries from the existing level of 10 to 11 per cent to an adjusted level in order to replace the lost revenue.

Over the last two decades provincial funding for public libraries has been far from generous. From 1986 to 2002 the library operating grant funding formula was \$4.04 per capita, and today it's \$4.29 per capita to determine their grants. This province should increase its share of the funding formula to increase the funding available to public libraries and compensate municipalities for the lost revenue from charging a fee for library cards.

Mr. Speaker, if the access to a well-funded public library is vital to all Albertans – and surely all of us believe it is – then we in this room must take our share of the responsibility. For less than \$4 million a year the province could increase library operating grants so as to compensate most libraries for the loss of membership fee revenues. This is a very, very small investment with huge returns on its effect upon the lives of Albertans.

When the Edmonton public library introduced \$10 fees in 1994, enrolment immediately dropped significantly. Even now, 11 years later, despite new libraries and population growth library enrolment has not recovered.

Our late Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole, was a passionate supporter of democracy, literacy, community, and lifelong learning. She correctly saw public libraries as both a manifestation of and source for these values and believed strongly that public libraries should be free for all Albertans as they are elsewhere. It would be

ironic indeed if, when the new Lois Hole library opens its door later this year, patrons have to pay to obtain a borrower's card.

8:10

The death of Lois Hole was a great loss to this province. She was an excellent Lieutenant Governor, an outstanding Albertan, and an exceptionally warm and caring person. We have lost her, but we can take this opportunity to pay tribute to her and to enshrine the values for which she stood in the legislation of this province. Our province has the resources that enable us to provide excellent funding to our public libraries to assure both their viability and their accessibility.

I propose that a very appropriate lasting tribute to this remarkable human being, Lois Hole, would be an endowment in her name to provide ongoing funding to support the annual provision of a free library card to every Albertan. This motion promotes fundamental values that were dear to Lois Hole and which, I am sure, all members of this House support. The values that underlie the existence of public libraries are the very values that public libraries support; namely democracy, literacy, community, lifelong learning. This is our opportunity to honour a great Albertan. Let us adopt this motion and eliminate library cards throughout Alberta as a tribute to Lois Hole.

Thank you very much.

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

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do applaud the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for the worthy objectives of his motion, which are particularly the recognition of the late Lieutenant Governor and also the encouragement of public library usage.

However, I do not believe that the motion achieves the objectives for several reasons. First of all, by seeking to impose a blanket prohibition across the province, we would be making a significant intrusion into the authority of the local decision-making bodies whether they be municipalities or the library boards. My own view has always been that the authority is best vested in the local government and the local governing bodies, where they're closer to the people that they are affecting.

Secondly, while the fees charged are relatively modest, they do provide some resources for the library system, and in so doing, by depriving the libraries of those specific resources, we are in effect depriving them of the resources they need to fulfill the very objective which my learned friend has sought to achieve.

Thirdly, there may be valid reasons beyond the actual monetary payment for charging a fee for the issuance of that card. Particularly, I'm thinking of the ability of the library system to keep up a current list of the users of the system and to keep the addresses current and to make sure that those people that are actually on their lists are the current users of the library system.

Fourthly, by paying a modest fee, the library users may actually be empowered to have a sense of ownership of that library system. They may value the privilege of library membership more, and in fact they may be encouraged to use the library system even more than they would have otherwise.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to oppose the motion, and I ask my learned colleagues to do likewise.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak in support of the motion of my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie.

You know, the amount of money we're talking about for library fees is not a lot. In Edmonton it's \$12, I believe, and an additional

\$8 for other family members. So to anyone in this building right now it's not a lot of money, but unfortunately there are a lot of Albertans, a lot of Edmontonians to whom that is reason enough not to buy a library card.

If you start to lose people because of the fee attached, you're losing the people who most desperately need a library. These would be the people who can't afford books or who count on libraries' magazine and newspaper collections to keep up with the world. Libraries provide CDs and even DVDs these days. Now, it's a shame in a province with the riches of Alberta that we would be underfunding libraries to the point where libraries feel compelled to raise additional revenues from memberships.

Of course, it is optional for libraries to charge fees. Now, this is kind of a sneaky way around the underfunding of libraries. You don't give them enough money, and then you give them the option of charging user fees. Of course, most libraries will take the opportunity to charge for memberships because they need the money. So it's hardly fair to say, "Gee, it's your choice, so don't blame us" if the libraries charge fees. That's like putting a cookie jar in front of a hungry child and telling them that they have the option of having a cookie.

It's discouraging to see that Alberta is one of only two provinces and states in all of North America that allow library fees. It's maybe understandable for a have-not province or some of the poorer U.S. states to do this, but it's just not right for a province that is awash in cash and one that is about to pour billions more into postsecondary education to nickel and dime Alberta library users.

Mr. Speaker, this motion does not break the bank. It does not set a precedent that will result in other organizations coming cap in hand to the government for money. It's a relatively inexpensive gesture of support to encourage reading and education. I support it fully, and I hope that my colleagues in the House will support it as well.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29. Any questions?

The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to share with the members of this Assembly my first experience as an elected official at the municipal level, which actually goes back to when I'd just graduated from university in Boston, Harvard. I came back to become mayor of Fort McMurray. I was the youngest mayor, I think, in the entire country at the time.

The issue was the library. I want to share with you the experience where at the time the municipality was looking at how we could deal with things. When we were looking at libraries, we found out that everyone had to pay a \$5 fee. At that point the library board, which I sat on as mayor, discovered that in actual fact the public policy that was in place was trying to accommodate not the minority but the majority. What we observed was that 99 per cent of the people that were coming into our library were wearing be it a Sun Ice jacket or they were doing very well, yet our policy said that no matter what your income level was, you still had to pay \$5 for the membership.

The position of the council of the day was that we didn't even think that they should have to pay the \$5. Yet for those who could well afford it, what responsibility did they have in caring for those less fortunate who could not afford it? At the time the headline the next day was: only the rich would be able to pay. But that wasn't the case at all. It was about what our responsibility was, those who could well afford a library fee. By the way, I might add, what great value you got for \$5. If it's free, I don't know if people appreciate it.

The actual library board in Fort McMurray raised the fee from \$5 to, in actual fact, \$20. You know what? For that person who couldn't afford it under the policy before, now they didn't have to pay a cent because for those who could well afford the fee, the public policy was in place to care for those who were less fortunate. I only impart to you today that, as much as the headline in the newspaper was, "Only the rich can read," from a public policy perspective we have to make sure that we make public policy that can serve the majority so that we can even do a better job serving the minority who cannot afford the actual fee.

As mayor it was really frustrating, to say the least, because it truly is a municipal responsibility, but we formulated a policy where those who were paying the \$5 had no objection to paying more to care for those who did not have the opportunity to pay for it. I want to say today that our public policy remains in place. It is strong. People are caring for those who can't afford it, and at the same time we have a public policy that can accommodate so many people. Not only that. We've been able to strengthen the interest in the library for those who are able to pay that \$5 and the additional fee that went into it, and I can say without fear of contradiction today, Mr. Speaker, that our library is even stronger for it in terms of embracing those who were willing to pay for good value.

So I only say today that we moved forward, and we were able to develop a public policy that even served all of our citizens, those who could afford it but also those who could not. It really, truly says that something that is free is not valued. Ultimately, we were able to develop a policy that says that by paying, we're showing that we care for those less fortunate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8:20

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak in favour of the motion and perhaps just a couple of comments in regard to the hon. Minister of Environment's arguments. With all due respect, you know, on this idea that if something is free, it's not going to be respected or valued somehow, I think it's difficult to put a value on that.

I think we can see some very obvious numbers, though, say from the Edmonton public library. When they had to impose this \$10 fee in 1994, they were expecting approximately \$1.5 million in revenue from that thing that they had to do. You know, they were very reluctant to impose this. It was only as a result of severe provincial and municipal cutbacks that this had to take place. They were expecting \$1.5 million in revenue. They only received half of that, which is \$750,000.

Now, to say that it's free – of course, we're all paying through our taxation system. Perhaps, you know, the hon. minister making this comment about \$5 or \$20 is a good argument for a larger argument, Mr. Speaker, about progressive taxation, which is: what should we be paying for libraries in this province in the first place? Right? A properly funded provincial library system paid by taxpayers is indeed what we did have for most of the history of this province as well as what we're asking for here today.

As this Assembly well knows, the late Lois Hole was a very ardent supporter of literacy and learning, and supporting libraries was certainly one of her most cherished goals. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie mentioned, I think this would be a very appropriate legacy for her name as well as to restore a basic need that we have in our society to fulfill barrier-free knowledge and to promote literacy as well.

Removing library fees would allow everyone access to libraries. Libraries are based on the democratic right, Mr. Speaker, of all

citizens to have access to knowledge, barrier-free access, as the Edmonton public library states in their constitution.

As the members of this Assembly are no doubt aware as well, the public library in Banff is a good example of how removing the fee structure allows for a great deal more public access to libraries. They removed their \$10 fee, I believe, a couple of years ago, and within a month they had a 40 per cent increase in usage as well as a 60 per cent increase in their circulation rate. Mr. Speaker, this is what libraries are made for: for the books to be used and for people to be reading them.

Although a \$10 or \$12 library fee may seem like a small price to pay to most Albertans – right? – in fact, it does act as a deterrent. This is very similar to other fee structures introduced by this government, Mr. Speaker. Although it may seem like a small amount of money, really it's a question of embarrassment for feeling that you have to ask for something that otherwise, you know, you're entitled to as a citizen of the city or of the province. The Edmonton library policy is that if somebody asks, then they will waive the fee, but you can imagine what it's like to be in the lineup in a public place and saying that you can't afford \$12. You know, it's hardly a way to make yourself feel valued in this society. Why should people be doing this in the first place? These libraries are set up for education. This government has put in place this valuing of education for the new Alberta century. Well, this would be a most appropriate way to show that commitment to that value.

According to an organization here in this province, one out of every three adults in this province has reading skills that limit their ability to deal with written material they encounter every day. One in seven adults in Alberta are at the very lowest literacy level and have serious difficulty reading printed materials. One of the consequences of Alberta's poor literacy rate is low levels of participation in postsecondary education. I would venture to say as well, Mr. Speaker, that it's part of our problem with our participation rate in voting in the provincial and federal elections.

The key to a successful library bill, I believe, is to make it impossible, in fact, for libraries across this province to charge a service fee and to make sure that libraries receive adequate funding. There are two things that must happen here, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we must get rid of the library fee that's put into each place around this province and, number two, put the funding back that was taken away more than 10 years ago in this province.

The late Hon. Lois Hole once said that librarians are the secret masters of the world, in a sense; at the very least, [they] wield great power. But unlike many of those who wield political power, librarians are not afraid to share their power, to freely give away the knowledge that makes them powerful.

Indeed, powerful words.

Only Alberta and parts of Quebec charge to use public libraries. As part of this new Alberta century let's make knowledge and technology available to all here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

An Hon. Member: A question under 29(2).

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. It doesn't apply in these motions. My mistake the first time.

Go ahead.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and join second reading debate on Motion 502, which proposes to eliminate library card fees across the province. Access to the wealth

of resources a library has to offer is very important to having a well-educated and forward-thinking society. As the late Lois E. Hole said,

books are the gateway to a better tomorrow, for books challenge us to use our minds, to find better ways of conducting ourselves and managing the great problems of human existence . . . Libraries are the cornerstones of civil society, of the liberal democracy that we've come to cherish.

Now, Mr. Speaker, she was an amazing woman, and she will be missed by all of us, and I can't think of a better person to honour in any way, shape, or form, but I'm concerned about whether or not this is the proper way to do it. Accessing books in a library shouldn't be dependent on an individual's income. Correct. This system also rings very true for our health care system, where any Albertan receives the best health care delivery regardless of their annual income.

Services, whether they be library, educational, or health related, are not free, however. They are paid for by the hard-working taxpayers of Alberta. We must get past the myth of free services anywhere. Unless you don't pay taxes, you are paying for the services, just not directly. It is not such a scary idea for individuals who can afford it to help directly fund the services they utilize through a very small yearly fee.

Library boards use card fees to generate approximately \$3 million each year to help recover costs associated with individuals borrowing materials, obtaining items through interlibrary loans, and basic information services. The people who are using these services are being asked to pay a very nominal fee to help with some of the costs that are incurred by using the services. I know that some members of this House try to demonize the term "user fee," Mr. Speaker, but I think the average Albertan doesn't mind paying a very minimal fee for accessing and using the great resources our libraries have to offer.

When I say a minimal fee, it really is minimal. The fees in both Edmonton and Calgary are a very reasonable \$12 for adults to help support the services they are utilizing, and the costs are comparable in rural Alberta. I understand that for some individuals and families a fee of any amount is a financial deterrent to using the library, but it's clearly stated by both the Edmonton and Calgary public boards that the card fee will be waived for those individuals who are unable to afford the fees, and I know that most rural library associations do the exact same thing. Those who can pay pay, and those who cannot afford to pay don't usually have to.

I think that any member in this House would agree that it's reasonable to have individual Albertans purchase their own books when they go to a local bookstore, so it's not a stretch to have an individual pay just a single dollar a month if they can afford it to access thousands upon thousands of books in addition to the great services our libraries provide on top of that. Those Albertans who utilize the great resources and services our libraries offer acknowledge that their use of the library materials puts additional wear and tear on the materials, that need to eventually be replaced. It is very reasonable to assume that those individuals who use libraries chip in a little extra to help replace and maintain the resources.

8:30

The members opposite seem to think individual Albertans don't want to take responsibility and help fund the services that they particularly use. I, however, along with my colleagues, believe that Albertans appreciate having the lowest personal income taxes in Canada and they don't really mind taking personal responsibility for the services they use.

Library boards have been permitted to charge fees for library cards since the 1930s, and I can't even seem to recall the fees for

library cards ever being a barrier for an individual from utilizing our great libraries across the province. I've never received a single call from anyone in my constituency on that issue especially since Alberta's library boards are so willing to accommodate low-income individuals by waiving the library card fees for those people who are unable to pay. The only barrier I see with this motion is one that will prevent libraries from being able to have the choice on how to best serve their communities, to charge people who can afford to pay to add extra resources into the library system.

Mr. Speaker, I have a difficult time supporting this motion because it removes personal responsibility from individuals who use library services and will just hide the actual costs of using libraries in individuals' personal income taxes. We already have the mechanisms in place to ensure that low-income individuals in this province will continue to not have to concern themselves with paying a library card fee.

I do applaud the member on his motion and his desire to honour the Honourable late Lois Hole for her contributions to this province, but I do have to say that I believe this is the wrong way to do it, and I don't support this motion.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to express my support for this bill and quote again the Honourable Lois Hole in her comments about literacy. She said:

Without true literacy, democracy itself becomes impossible; the real battle of the 21st century, I believe, will be between those who would use ignorance to serve their own greed, and those who selflessly open the doors of knowledge to anyone who cares to listen.

By building a culture that venerates the principles of literacy, we may yet save ourselves from a grim future of literary haves and have-nots.

Mr. Speaker, I think access to knowledge in this knowledge age is a human right, it's an access also to health, and it's an issue of equity. Many of us here don't use libraries because we have access to the Internet, where we have, indeed, access through that vehicle to most of the books in the world. I for one have taken this for granted, and I recognize that many people find a barrier to go to an institution where they feel they will be charged even if they have that option. This access to free library services will provide people an opportunity to inform themselves, to acknowledge their human rights, to find their own sense of power in a culture that is so dominated by knowledge and expertise. There should be no barriers for people in this knowledge culture, and it should not be based on any ability to pay or a perceived barrier to pay. Those most in need clearly are those who are most excluded here.

From a health perspective knowledge accessible through libraries allows people to understand themselves, their world, their community resources for health more fully. It helps support through the contributions of those who can pay – and taxation has provided that facility – to make available to all dignity, opportunities for health, and for democracy.

Lois Hole would be proud to be honoured by this renewal of access beyond people's ability to pay, and I hope all members of this Legislature will support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by commending the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for bringing forward this motion in a relatively clever way. It's a very noble and

very proper idea. I don't think anyone here would argue either side of that because he's very skillfully combined two elements of greatness in this one motion. One, of course, is the great success of our public libraries throughout this province, and the second, of course, is the greatness of the late Lois Hole. It's very cleverly done how one element is crafted and couched with the other, but I think we need to separate those two streams for purposes of not getting too emotionally attached to the central issue here.

The late and very Honourable Lois Hole was a friend to many in this Assembly and to many outside the Assembly as well. I shared a tremendous friendship with her for some 30 years. I think that in the last three years alone I probably spoke with her or met with her something in the order of 200 times – that is no exaggeration; that is a fact – because I had the pleasure of being responsible for public libraries, and I know that libraries were her number one topic along with the arts and gardening and education and a number of other issues. When we got speaking about libraries, we talked about some of the important things that libraries stand for in our communities.

I think it's important to point out, Mr. Speaker, that our publicly run libraries have something in the order of 36,000 community-based programs throughout Alberta, which includes reading clubs and story time clubs and courses on various subjects from photography to resumé writing to what have you. In fact, almost half of our libraries serve communities of under 1,200 in population, where they are important information centres. So we are all, on all sides of the House, very supportive of our public libraries.

In fact, it would interest members here to know that in a typical year 30 million items can be borrowed or exchanged amongst the various libraries or borrowed and used or whatever. That's a phenomenal amount of usage amongst our libraries, and it's not just restricted to library borrowings but usership in general. As our population grows, so does the pressure grow on our libraries. I see libraries as being very innovative, very creative in how they're meeting the increased demand to share the treasures that they have. So Albertans are provided with first-class access to information in many different forms.

It's also important to note that in some provinces libraries cannot charge for cards, but they do charge for other services that sometimes we don't focus in on; for example, fees for interlibrary loans, video, online databases, audio materials, and so on. However, since 1930 libraries, according to the Libraries Act, have had the right to charge a fee. Not all libraries do that, obviously, but we need to allow those libraries at the local level the ability to make whatever decisions they want. So there's no argument about the importance of libraries. Now, the second great element, of course, is Her Honour the late Lois Hole, who came from a very strong rural background. She was a trustee, she was a chancellor of our University of Alberta, an award winning author of at least six gardening books that I'm aware of, a director of the Farm Credit Corporation, honorary chair for the 27th congress on criminal justice and for the children's millennium fund, and the list would go on for another half hour if I were to read it all. In 2003 she founded the Lois Hole library legacy program, so we see these two elements now coming together.

In fact, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta arts award program was also established during her tenure, and I was very pleased through Community Development when I was in charge to have provided a \$1 million grant in support of that awards program as part of our Alberta 2005 centennial partnership, so our centennial is woven inextricably into all of this as well.

I should point out to the members, particularly the new ones, that we have had many centennial legacy grant projects given around and to library causes. For example, the Claresholm library received a

significant grant under the centennial program. The Beaverlodge public library also did. The Edmonton Strathcona branch library did. The Hinton municipal library received \$580,000. Taber and district public library received \$500,000. Vegreville public library received another \$500,000. We also funded the Lieutenant Governor's walkway at Erin Ridge Park in St. Albert. That was a quarter of a million dollars. When Her Honour passed away, she knew about these projects that were out there and she knew what we had done. Not to forget, of course, the Lois Hole pavilion, the hospital pavilion at the Royal Alex, which we were there to unveil a few months ago.

We have also established other forms of recognition. For example, the province just recently added three more programs to honour Her Honour: the Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship, the Lois Hole digital library, and the Lois Hole garden at the Legislature. I know that those are important projects to focus in on because they talk about the other great element.

8:40

Let me just conclude, then, by saying that while I support the thrust and the gist of where this member is coming from, I think rather than supporting the motion as it's worded, I would rather see some significant increases be made as soon as possible to the per capita rate for public libraries and also some increases to our library system boards. These are initiatives that I have worked on for the past couple of years, and budgets pending and dollars pending, maybe one day we'll be able to see those significant increases because those are the kind of increases that would maximize those boards' abilities to provide the kind of programming that they're after.

This motion in and of itself won't quite do that. In fact, according to a 2004 survey carried out by the Department of Community Development, 75 per cent – 75 per cent, Mr. Speaker – of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that libraries should be able to charge. In fact, they said that they should charge library card fees, and those fees range anywhere from \$2 a year up to about \$30 in the maximum case per year.

So if we sort of harness the debate and focus around what's important in this matter, we would agree that the recognition it offers to Her Honour is a noble gesture. We would agree that we should do whatever we can to attract more resources for the libraries, but waiving fees for library user cards won't do it, Mr. Speaker.

I've spent a number of years in this area, and I'm a passionate library user, as my record will indicate, and I'm so sorry that I'm not able to support this motion as it is currently worded. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate on Motion 502 tonight, the elimination of charging fees for library cards as a tribute to the late Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole. Certainly, there have been a lot of discussions as we have debated this motion. I, too, would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for bringing this forward. I think it's an excellent idea, it has merit, and it's time we certainly support it.

There is no doubt that at this time we can afford this. If we look at the last time the Alberta Liberals were in power, Alberta's first Public Libraries Act in 1907 decreed that all libraries "shall be open to the public free of all charges." I'm sure that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is going to continue with those ideas and make sure that everyone, regardless of income, does not have to check their pockets before they go into a public library, Mr. Speaker.

That's what this is all about. The late Lieutenant Governor would be supportive, just as she was supportive not only of public libraries but public education.

It is true that the late Lieutenant Governor was passionate about public libraries but also was passionate about public schools. She stood up occasion after occasion and spoke out for public schools, unlike this government and the current Minister of Education and the current Minister of Infrastructure, who are content to see good public schools closed against the wishes of the citizens in the surrounding communities. That's wrong. That is totally wrong.

Now, other hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly talk, quote, if it is free, it is not valued, end of quote. Well, does that also apply to airplane rides on the government's fleet? Certainly, that has been abused in the past. Let's stick a user fee on that, see how much the government members like it. I can't believe that they would advocate – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder was talking about this earlier in his remarks, Mr. Speaker: if it's free, it is not valued. Well, that certainly applies to a lot of things other than library cards. Perhaps, if there was a user fee of maybe \$50 or \$100 or \$200 on these airplanes, then they would be in the hangar a lot more often and people would be taking commercial aircraft and maybe saving money in another manner and we could afford with little effort to finance Motion 502 by the hon. member.

An Hon. Member: A lot of them don't work when they get on an airplane.

Mr. MacDonald: Now, many people, hon. member, in the business community, whether they travel economy class or first class, get their work done from an airline seat just as well as we get our work done from this seat. So you don't have to travel on a government plane to get work done. That's just not correct, hon. member.

Now, the elimination of library fees. Full access to public libraries and promoting universal literacy, as I said, were passions of the late Lieutenant Governor. I would urge all members of this Assembly at this time to support this motion. We have the money. The amount of money that will be spent to support this motion is money well spent. If we have to cut back in other areas, I'm certain we can do it – we've done this before – but libraries should be accessible to everyone.

Hon. members of this Assembly, there's no access fee for us to go downstairs and utilize that wonderful library, so why should not the citizens of this province enjoy the same privileges that we do?

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak to Motion 502 this evening. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for bringing forward this motion.

Mr. Speaker, this motion proposes that the government prevent libraries from charging a fee to individuals obtaining a library card. I believe that this motion has the potential to deprive libraries of a much relied upon source of revenue.

I share the hon. member's desire to recognize in a special way the unique and lasting contribution that Dr. Lois Hole made to our province. Dr. Hole had a passion for reading and learning, Mr. Speaker. She felt that libraries were an important source for communities and wanted to instill in all of us a love of reading. I acknowledge that libraries are important to lifelong learning. I am committed to encouraging her sentiment within Alberta and am

pleased to hear the government outline its plans to create a new digital library at the University of Calgary in her memory. The creation of a new digital library is an appropriate way to honour the memory of our late Lieutenant Governor.

This new library will help bring Alberta's libraries into our province's second century. As we move forward, Mr. Speaker, digital resources are becoming more and more important to our way of life. Data can now be stored on CDs and DVDs as opposed to microfilm and microfiche. Data in digital form enjoys a greater longevity and can be stored in a much more compact and accessible format.

Building a new library provides a constant reminder of all that Dr. Hole held dear. This new Alberta-wide library provides students and faculty with access, regardless of their location, to all the resources held in our postsecondary institutions' libraries. This new library will remind the people of the legacy Dr. Hole left to Alberta in ways a library card cannot.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps in bringing forward this motion, the hon. member is concerned that library card fees limit the ability of people to access libraries. Libraries are considered by most to be a public good, the result of which has been the extensive subsidization of libraries in all jurisdictions across the country. It is important that all Albertans have access to libraries, as libraries benefit society in ways that cannot be underestimated. The cost of library cards is minimal. However, this cost helps the libraries raise small amounts of own-source revenue that assists the library in offering some of its important functions.

As the sponsoring member for this motion is from Edmonton, he may be aware of the Edmonton public library. Any Edmonton resident can go to a local library and get a library card for only \$12, and those under the age of 18 are given library cards without charge. In addition to being able to access the library's collection at all 16 locations, an individual is automatically granted an Alberta library card, which gives the user access to interlibrary loan material from most Alberta libraries.

8:50

In addition, Mr. Speaker, a program is available for people with low incomes. Library card fees are waived by the Edmonton public library for those individuals who cannot afford it. Given that the fee for a library card is minimal, I cannot see how the fee could be conceived of as being unaffordable. Twelve dollars, if my math is correct, works out to \$1 a month. That cost is only paid by those who can afford to pay it.

Mr. Speaker, \$12 is equivalent to renting two videos, purchasing three gourmet coffees, or borrowing one softcover novel and is less than the admission to most movie theatres. Going to the library is one of the cheapest forms of entertainment available in this city. I can think of nowhere else where you can go and borrow as many videos, CDs, DVDs, or books as you want for only \$12. Furthermore, the cost of an individual's library membership card is not based on his or her usage of the library. Most other entertainment services are priced on a per-use basis. However, libraries, being a public good, benefit from having a flat fee. Charging a flat user fee means that use is not discouraged as it does not cost to borrow more, the more they use the library.

This cost is not exuberant nor is it prohibitive, Mr. Speaker. It is important that children are exposed to libraries so that they can develop a love of reading at a young age. This love of reading will help them blossom into intelligent young adults with a desire to be lifelong readers and learners. Currently, children are exempt from paying library fees in Edmonton.

Her Honour was particularly concerned with helping Albertans. Therefore, when this House gives consideration to honouring Dr.

Lois Hole, we must attempt to understand which action will have the largest impact. Given that the fees charged for library cards are not prohibitive to users, I would believe that the creation of a new and modern library will be of greater benefit to Albertans in the long run than free library cards would be. The creation of a digital library will leave a lasting footprint on Alberta's library system. This is the type of project that will have the impact of literacy that Her Honour desired to see in Alberta. This library will ensure that Albertans have access to the most advanced resources and that these important resources from our first century can be enjoyed and accessed throughout our second century.

While I applaud the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for his understanding of the importance of libraries, I would suggest that if he truly wanted to honour the legacy of Dr. Lois Hole, he support the government in its endeavours to create a digital library. This House should not agree to this motion, Mr. Speaker, as it will not enhance Albertans' ability to access libraries, and it will reduce an important source of funding to Alberta's libraries. I believe the member has honourable intentions in bringing forward this motion but has failed to think of the unintended consequences that such an action may have. Given the importance of libraries to our society, I do not feel that we can run the risk of reducing their funding without the realization of a corresponding benefit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a privilege for me to rise and speak about this topic, and I think people are having selective memory about Her Honour Lois Hole and what she stood for. Speech after speech she connected the two themes of education and poverty. I've heard many of the speeches, and in one speech that she recently gave at a banquet of the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation for World Peace, at which she received an award in the name of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., she talked about poverty. She said:

I cannot help but mourn all the progress the human race has lost to poverty. How many brilliant young minds are withering this very moment because of malnutrition or lack of access to education . . .

The truth is, the poor people of this earth need our help. And since it is our children who have the potential to build a better tomorrow, part of our help must come in the form of investment in education.

Then she quoted from one of her personal heroes, Nelson Mandela, who once said:

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

Lois went on and just said this, and I end with this quote.

This quote [of Nelson Mandela] is a great inspiration for me, and reinforces my determination to support public education and public libraries here in Canada and in all the corners of the globe.

Mr. Speaker, I knew Lois Hole quite well also, and I invited her to participate in an organization we formed in the city of Edmonton called the Quality of Life Commission. For a number of years we gathered stories from people living in poverty, and one story I remember quite distinctly was about a young, single father with two children. He was on social assistance, and he had to walk miles to attend a job training course here in the inner city because he couldn't afford to buy a bus pass. He couldn't afford to feed his own

children. He couldn't afford the \$12 for a library card. He said to us that all he could do with his children was simply walk by museums and other public institutions where there were user fees because he couldn't afford them. So the issues of affordability and accessibility to libraries are issues that Lois Hole would have been concerned about. I think that this proposal, this motion is truly a motion that honours the memory of Lois Hole.

Why should a person experience the indignity of having to go into a library and beg for a library card? Of course, in Edmonton the public libraries, if you do not have adequate income, waive the cost of the library card, but why should a person have to go through the indignity of having to beg for a library card? We should enable all Albertans to participate fully as citizens in this province and be able to go to a public library and read the books and participate.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to join in the debate on Motion 502 this evening. It is an interesting motion, and I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my thoughts. I think that we would be hard-pressed to find any member in the Legislature who would not at some point in their life have used a public library to find information or for entertainment or for research of some kind.

I want to say that when the discussion comes to the Hon. Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole, I had the privilege of serving with Lois on the school board for many years and have known her for a lot of my political life. We became very close friends, and at no time did she ever mention to me that she felt it was unnecessary to have fees. We talked extensively about her passion for education, her passion for reading, her passion for learning, and her passion especially for libraries. Mr. Speaker, I don't know of any individual that dedicated her life to libraries more than Lois Hole. I again repeat to you that I at no time heard her say that she believed that for individuals that used libraries it was important that they had free access.

I can speak of rural Alberta, and presently we are in a situation where the government does support municipalities for library operations. We are very fortunate in rural Alberta to have a network of library systems that operate very effectively and efficiently and allow access to those libraries with minimal or no cost to the patrons that use them.

We also have . . .

9:00

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

Hon. members, before we proceed with the next item of business, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two representatives from the Alberta Institute of Agrologists. Agrologists are scientists who provide scientific services in environmental protection and agriculture production. Representing the Alberta Institute of Agrologists, which boasts over 1,500 members, are incoming president Mr. Dave Lloyd, and Mr. Ken

Davies, the executive director and registrar. Also, from the Department of Human Resources and Employment Mr. Adrian Pritchard, the manager of professions and occupations. As you see, they have risen, and maybe I could ask everybody together to give them the warm applause of this Assembly.

Thank you very much.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 17
Agrology Profession Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 17, the Agrology Profession Act.

I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists, which has worked closely with the staff of Human Resources and Employment to develop this new legislation. The membership of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists strongly supports the provisions contained in this bill. In addition, stakeholders from government, private industry, other professional associations, academic institutions also support this proposed legislation.

The Agrology Profession Act will repeal and replace the current Agrologists Act with new legislation that provides for greater public accountability, transparency, and equity in the governance of Alberta's agrology profession. The act follows other professional statutes, notably the Regulated Forestry Profession Act, in making the agrology profession's governing legislation consistent with Alberta government policy regarding the self-regulation of professional associations.

As I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, there are over 1,500 professional agrologists in Alberta who provide professional services in agriculture and in the environmental sector, which are vital to our Alberta's economy. This act was developed to enhance the quality of agrology services in the province by improving the regulation and professional standards of Alberta's agrologists. Ensuring the highest standards of agrology practice contributes to the protection of Alberta's environment as well as the protection of agricultural land, crops, and livestock.

The Agrology Profession Act is modelled on administrative registration, continuing competence, professional conduct, business arrangement, title protection, regulatory and by-law provisions of the Regulated Forestry Profession Act.

I would like to go over some of the key highlights in this legislation, Mr. Speaker. An important part of this legislation is that it strengthens the role of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists. This professional organization ensures that its members are qualified and competent to provide knowledge and advice on agriculture, food, and associated natural resources. The act specifies the requirements of an annual report and increased public membership as well as the composition role, responsibilities, and delegating powers of the institute's governing council, registrar, committees, and tribunals. The act also specifies the institute's application and registration requirements, including the mandatory registration of those persons who meet the institute's academic, professional, and experience requirements.

The act strengthens the professional conduct of the institution members by specifying the requirements for complaint investigation, hearings, and appeals, the use of alternate resolution processes, and the procedures relating to decision and disposition of records. The act also requires that the institution comply with record retention

requirements of the Personal Information Protection Act to ensure personal privacy. It also follows other professional legislation in allowing complaints to be referred to the office of the Ombudsman.

The act also specifies the protected titles, words, and abbreviations which may only be used by the institution members. There are also penalties and injunctions associated with the illegal use of such titles, words, and abbreviations. When you see the letters in quotations "PAG" behind a name, you know that you are hiring or working with an agrologist who meets the highest standards of professionalism.

Another positive aspect of the legislation is that it allows for the establishment of subcategories of institution memberships such as the agrology technologist. This is important because it enables these individuals to become institute members and make a positive contribution to its activities.

In conclusion, the Agrology Profession Act establishes clear accountability requirements and provides authority for the Alberta agrology profession. It responds to the public expectations for more transparent and consistent professional legislation, and it strengthens a profession that provides important services to Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to move adjournment of this debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 4
Alberta Science and Research Authority
Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 4, the Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005.

This amendment act follows up on the commitment in the 2004 Speech from the Throne allowing for the establishment of an information and communication technology institute as well as a life sciences institute. ICT and the life sciences are important components of the province's innovation agenda and are critical to our future prosperity and quality of life.

We already have three successful research institutes operating in the province. These are the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute, the Alberta Energy Research Institute, and the Alberta Forestry Research Institute. The proposed institutes will mirror the operating structure of these organizations and facilitate increased collaboration on shared research agendas. We have seen excellent results come out of the existing research institutes; for example, the strategic focus for investments in each of the institutes, the Agricultural Funding Consortium, the initiation of joint initiatives like bioenergy and blended fibre research and development as well as EnergyINet.

It is important that we maintain specific expertise in key areas like agriculture, energy, and forestry, but it is also important that we look to expand our capacity by establishing research institutes that focus on research and development that cuts across sectors and require multiple-disciplinary teams to find solutions. By establishing research institutes in ICT and life sciences, we can expect to bring more collaboration to our common innovation agenda and to find more cross-sector opportunities.

9:10

A life sciences institute will show a further commitment to fulfilling the life sciences strategy that was approved by government in March 2003. We will focus on such areas as bioproducts, which includes bioenergy, biochemicals, and biomaterials. It also focuses

on health innovations, including BSE and prion science. It'll focus on sustainable resource management in water, climate change, biodiversities, and sustainable production on the land. As well, it will focus on the platform technologies including genomics, nanotechnology, and bioinformatics.

It will provide direction for the province as we look to build our capacity and our capability in this important sector. An ICT institute will provide necessary leadership and co-ordination to further our ICT strategy, and it will drive the implementation of that strategy. It will also build on previous government investments in iCORE, which of course is the Informatics Circle of Research Excellence, and the Alberta SuperNet as well as postsecondary education opportunities in ICT. It will focus on areas such as leading the development of a focused strategic plan for ICT, it will develop and implement R and D and commercialization programs consistent with that plan, and it will work with other provincial research institutions to ensure that that plan fits within a provincial, national, and international context. Lastly, it will focus on attracting world-class ICT researchers to Alberta.

Significant opportunities exist for the province in ICT and the life sciences, and establishing research institutes to provide strategic advice and direction is a logical and necessary step. This is important legislation to ensure our future economic prosperity and quality of life, and I encourage the Assembly to provide their support for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 4.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To begin, while we as the Official Opposition do not disagree with the proposed amendments to the Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, I want to briefly comment on the following issues. First, I would like to highlight the fact that both the Alberta information and communications technology institute and the Alberta life sciences institute have significant public policy implications and can have a profound effect on people's lives in areas like modes of service delivery as in government, education, and health and privacy and security issues, commercialization potential, applicability, and so on. Therefore, I strongly urge this government to remember that what drives us all here is what makes life easier, healthier, and more enjoyable for all Albertans, and that research has to be geared to and directed towards this outcome.

If this amendment is meant to streamline the operation and expand the scope of the Alberta Science and Research Authority to benefit the people of this province, then we're for it, and we will support this initiative. However, it is still necessary to emphasize that this government insists on excluding arts, humanities, and social sciences, and that's possibly because it perceives them not to have immediate market value. By contrast, the Alberta Liberal platform in 2004 advocated funding for these areas through the surplus revenues.

Also, the fact that the three existing research institutes – namely, the Agricultural Research Institute, the Energy Research Institute, and the Forestry Research Institute – have failed to consistently provide publicly accessible annual reports is disturbing. Such reports may be provided to the minister as per the legislation, but that's not adequate in this day and age, Mr. Speaker. The public should be able to access this information freely, timely, and efficiently. It shouldn't cost the ministry much to post these reports on its website, for example.

Lastly, there is also a concern that all board members of these institutes are appointed by the minister. Appointing officials seems

to be the preference of this government today. At least one of these board members must be an MLA, and the chair of each of these institutes must also be an MLA. These are clearly patronage appointments, Mr. Speaker. What are the chances that an opposition MLA would be invited to join one of these boards? Highly unlikely. These appointments are political in nature, and these individuals may not be the best candidates for that job.

So, to conclude, the Official Opposition agrees in principle with adding the two institutes under ASRA, but we want to ensure more transparency and accountability. The Official Opposition is not here to complain and whine. We're willing to work with the minister if he can assure us that these amendments are useful to Martha and Henry and that they are beneficial to the average Albertan, not to a select group of stakeholders or certain industries which stand to gain from cheap, government subsidized, market-targeted research initiatives.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science to close debate.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just starting to look at the website for the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute, and it provides a wealth of information that the hon. member was just requesting. The same information would be there for the other institutes as well, but I will take the opportunity and read his comments and at committee provide some further comments of clarification.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

Bill 5

Family Law Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Stevens: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening to move Bill 5, the Family Law Amendment Act, 2005, for second reading.

The Family Law Amendment Act makes several changes to strengthen the Family Law Act before it is proclaimed on October 1, 2005. Overall, the amendments fall into three categories. First, amendments have been made to joint guardianship provisions of the Family Law Act so that mothers and fathers are given a more equal opportunity to be guardians of their children; second, the amendments clarify the powers and responsibilities of persons who are guardians of their children; and third, there are a number of minor housekeeping amendments to correct small errors and oversights. I will speak to each of these in turn.

Section 5 of the amendment act amends section 20 of the Family Law Act. Once proclaimed, the Family Law Act will repeal and replace the Domestic Relations Act. The joint guardianship provisions of the Family Law Act are modelled after the joint guardianship provisions of the Domestic Relations Act. Every child needs to have a guardian until the child reaches the age of majority. The current provisions provide that the mother is always the guardian of a child. The father is a guardian only if he is married to the mother or if he lives with the mother for 12 consecutive months during which time the child was born. In other words, the current provisions say that the mother and father are joint guardians of their children if there's a sufficient relationship between the parents. If there is not a sufficient relationship, there is a default to the mother

as the sole guardian of the child. If the father is not automatically a guardian, he can apply to the court to be appointed as a guardian.

The Domestic Relations Act provisions have been criticized by the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta for failing to treat fathers and mothers equally in their ability to be the guardians of their children automatically and so are contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The amendment to section 20 of the Family Law Act will treat fathers and mothers more equally in terms of who is automatically a guardian of the children.

The current relationship provisions for acquiring guardianship are contained in subsection (2). Subsection (2) says that the mother and the father are both the guardians of the child where the parents are married, cohabited with each other for 12 months during which time the child was born, or are adult interdependent partners at the time of the child's birth. The major change to the relationship provisions is the addition of adult interdependent partnerships to the list of relationships. Where any of these relationships exist, both the mother and father will automatically be guardians of their children. Most parents will fall into one of these categories. However, subsection (3) changes the default provisions where there is not a relationship between the mother and father. Instead of defaulting to the mother as sole guardian, the law will default to both parents until the child acquires a usual residence with one or both parents. At that point, the parent or parents with whom the child usually resides will become the guardian or guardians.

9:20

Subsection (1) allows the court to make an order or the parents to enter into an agreement which would be different than the legislation would otherwise provide.

Subsection (4) provides that if a child has resided with a parent for a year, that parent continues to be a guardian even if the child no longer resides with that parent. By defaulting to both parents until usual residence is established, either parent is able to make important medical decisions.

I'd like to reiterate that most parents will automatically be guardians by virtue of the relationship provisions of the legislation. What the amendment does is create a level playing field for parents where both the mother and father have an interest in being involved in their child's life and are willing to assume that responsibility.

For fathers in short-term relationships who may not want to be a guardian, the usual residency provisions will allow the mother to become the child's sole guardian without difficulty. If the father does wish to be a guardian, the parents can enter into an agreement regarding guardianship powers.

The amendments to section 20 are consistent with the principle that both parents should be encouraged to take an interest in and responsibility for their children and that collaboration between parents in raising their children is usually in the best interests of the children, and they address the Charter equality concerns in the clearest possible fashion.

Section 6 of the amendment act amends section 21 of the Family Law Act. Currently the Family Law Act lists the responsibilities and powers of guardians together in subsection 21(5). The intention of the legislation is that guardians have certain responsibilities that are mandatory and that they have a number of powers that may be exercised in order to fulfill their responsibilities. To ensure that the difference between powers and responsibilities is sufficiently clear in the legislation, the proposed amendment separates the two.

Responsibilities will now be found in subsection (5). Powers will now be found in subsection (6). Currently the exercise of powers is to be done in a manner consistent with the evolving capacity of the child. That remains unchanged, although this is now placed in its

own subsection (7). Simply put, this means that a guardian is expected to treat an infant differently than a five year old, a five year old differently than a 12 year old, and so on.

Also, as is currently the case, subsections 21(2) and (4) do not apply to decisions of child welfare directors. The right to be consulted about decisions, for example, is inconsistent with the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, rather than the Family Law Act, governs the rights of parents and guardians whose children are in care, and that remains unchanged.

The remaining amendments are housekeeping amendments that correct small errors and oversights in the original wording of the Family Law Act. I'll go through each of those briefly.

Section 2 amends section 1(o). A respondent will now mean a person against whom proceedings are brought under this act rather than a person who answers a response to an application under this part. Under the current definition a person would have to respond to an application to be a respondent, and that needed to be clarified.

Section 3 amends section 3(2)(a). This adds section 10 to the list of sections over which the provincial court does not have jurisdiction. The provincial court does not currently have jurisdiction for constitutional reasons over section 9, which is the ability to make the declaration of parentage for all purposes. Section 10 allows the court to confirm, set aside, or make a new declaration where there is new evidence. If the provincial court does not have jurisdiction over section 9, it should not have jurisdiction over section 10.

Section 3 amends section 3(2)(b) by repealing clause (b). This subsection currently prevents the provincial court from making trusteeship orders under the Family Law Act for constitutional reasons. Since all of the trusteeship provisions of the Family Law Act were repealed by proclamation of the new *Minors' Property Act*, this subsection is no longer required.

Section 4 amends section 8(1)(d). Section 8 establishes the circumstances in which a male is presumed to be the father of a child. The language of section 8 is being changed to reflect a similar change to the language that is going to be used in section 20(2)(d), which is the relationship subsection establishing automatic guardianship. Section 7 amends section 23(7) by striking out "section 24" and substituting "section 25." This speaks for itself. The wrong section number was inadvertently used.

Section 8 repeals section 51(6). Section 51(6) repeats section 51(5) and is, therefore, redundant and is being repealed.

Section 9 amends section 66(3)(a) by adding "or" after "sum." Currently the section allows a court to make an order for a lump-sum payment periodically which does not make sense as these are intended to be alternative orders. The amendment will allow the court to order a lump-sum payment or periodic payments.

Section 10 amends section 77(4)(a) by striking out "as" and substituting "including those." The current language would require the child support guidelines which are being developed by regulation to identify all the possible changes of circumstance that could justify a variation order. We just want to be able to specify some circumstances that would justify variation. We do not want the regulations to be the exclusive source of circumstances that would justify variation.

Section 11 amends section 87(c) by adding "judgment, finding or declaration" after "order." The intent of this section is to allow one court to admit into evidence findings made by another court, and we felt that just using the word "order" was not broad enough.

Section 12 amends section 107 by adding a regulatory power to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to define "party" for the purposes of the act. Section 1 provides that "party" will be defined in the regulations but that power was accidentally left off the list of regulatory powers in section 107.

Section 13(a) amends section 108(5) by striking out “terminated” and substituting “set aside.” This subsection allows the Parentage and Maintenance Act order to be dealt with under the Family Law Act. Terminating an order is not available under the Family Law Act. The correct remedy is setting aside an order. This amendment corrects the language used.

Section 13(b) amends section 108(7) by striking out reference to “access enforcement order under this Act” and substituting “enforcement order made under Division 4 of Part 2.” This amendment corrects the language used since enforcement orders under the Family Law Act are not called access enforcement orders.

Mr. Speaker, this gives an overview of Bill 5. As I’ve indicated, it amends several points in the Family Law Act so that when we proclaim it, it will be clear and easier to implement. It’s a huge undertaking to revise family law in Alberta, and we want to ensure that we do it right.

I would encourage all members of this Assembly to support the bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 5, Family Law Amendment Act, 2005, presented by the hon. Minister of Justice. We would agree with almost everything he has said. There are lots of housekeeping changes put forward in the rewriting of this act, which is very helpful in clarifying language. I’m not going to follow and mirror the journey that our hon. minister has . . .

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

Dr. B. Miller: You’re welcome.

Most of it’s quite acceptable. But I just wanted to speak for a few minutes about the central core of the bill. The purpose of the amendment is to correct the inequality between the mother and the father in respect to guardianship. Of course, the rationale for such equalization is that differential treatment between mothers and fathers is contrary to the equality provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, so this is something that we ought to do.

The most important change is to section 20, which in its present form assumes that the mother is always the guardian of the child, and the father is recognized as the guardian only under certain circumstances. So this is, of course, a serious question. When is a father or a mother recognized as the guardian of a child? I think that all would agree that really the test for guardianship is the best interests of the child. The law should enable the recognition of guardianship in the best interests of the child. I have no doubt that that is the motivation behind this bill: to recognize the best interests of the child and to recognize the quality of a mother and a father.

9:30

So in the proposed rewriting of section 20, “the mother and the father of a child are both the guardians of the child where,” then there follows a list of categories defining the grounds for the recognition of guardianship and the principle of equality is honoured. In general, the mother and father of the child are both guardians where the parents are married or living together, cohabiting. If they are not married or cohabiting, if they’ve separated, then the parent with whom the child resides is the sole guardian, or both parents are guardians where the child resides with each of them for “equivalent periods of time.”

I assume that when we go into Committee of the Whole, we’ll get to debate some of these points. This particular point about “equivalent periods of time” I’m not sure about. If one of the parents is

working in the far north and is only home a quarter of the time, does the parent lose his or her eligibility as a guardian? It seems that there might be a problem there. I realize that the development of these definitions and rules is driven by actual court cases, so it’s important to make these changes. The bottom line is the nurture and care and love for the child – that’s what’s important – and our courts, I think, should have the flexibility to assess a variety of possible arrangements in respect to guardianship in order to ensure that the child is really cared for. That’s what’s important.

Let me add that there is one interesting element here that I’m sure the government members haven’t thought about, or maybe they’ve thought about it but don’t want to think about it, and that is: what will be the implication of the legislation before the House of Commons on same-sex marriage when that becomes law?

Now, Ontario anticipated this and went ahead and changed the language of 85 statutes, removing all gender-specific language. It seems to me that Alberta will have to do the same thing eventually, so maybe we should anticipate that and begin to work on that now because among the many family arrangements that are recognized and should be recognized in our society, same-sex relationships should be recognized too. They are relationships that involve guardianship and the nurture of children. So apart from adoption issues it seems to me that two women living together should be recognized as guardians as much as two men living together raising children.

Well, the amendment of section 21 – this is the last thing I’ll say – separating out the responsibilities of parents in respect of the child from the powers that a guardian may exercise is quite fine. It looks good, but I’m not sure what difference it makes to fix it up this way. But I really like the content there, the content that all parents in Alberta should become aware that there are responsibilities and, indeed, there are powers in the exercise of being parents.

There is an addition of subsection (7). I agree with the intention of this, that guardians should exercise their parental powers of daily decision-making “in a manner consistent with the evolving capacity of the child.” I’m not sure exactly what this means. The minister talked a little bit about that. Secondly, I don’t know how it would ever be enforced, unless there’s going to be a proposal that we should all have parenting courses, which is probably a good idea. Certainly parents have a lot to learn about raising a child, and we have to make decisions in relationship to the evolving capacity of children.

I guess my final comment is just that it’s difficult to interpret a bill like this when it all is coming out of court experience, and it’s difficult to understand the rationale behind specific clauses here. In general, it’s a good amendment, so we support it, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General to close debate.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I’d like to thank the hon. member for his general support of the amendment. A brief comment regarding guardianship in situations where only one of the two parties who would be parents is either the mother or the father. Under the Family Law Act we’re talking about mothers and fathers. It makes little difference whether you’re talking about an opposite-sex or same-sex situation as it relates to parents who wish to be guardians. If there is a situation where only one of the parties is a mother or a father of the child in question, then it is necessary for either would-be parent to adopt. In that particular case the guardianship provisions flow from the adoption, and that particular situation and the rights and obligations, if you will, are found under the adoption legislation here in Alberta. They’re not found under the

Family Law Act. So that is where one looks to find the answer to that particular question.

I would now call the question, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

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

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members for a very enlightening evening of good and thorough debate. That being the case, I would move that the House now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 9:37 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 15, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/03/15
 [The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Deputy Speaker: Welcome.

Let us pray. Lord, guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. Give us the strength to labour diligently, the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Please be seated.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, today marks the 99th anniversary of the opening of the First Session of the First Legislature in Alberta in 1906. Also on this day in 1972 the first radio and television coverage of regular sittings of the Alberta Legislature began.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning the Speaker graciously hosted a special ceremony in the rotunda of our Legislature to mark the beginning of 15 days of celebration called Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie to highlight the contributions of the francophone community across Canada and to mark International Francophone Day on March 20.

The president of l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta was present in the rotunda to celebrate with us. He is in your gallery this afternoon with members of his executive and members of two francophone provincial associations. It is my pleasure to introduce them to the Assembly. I ask them to stand and remain standing as I call their names: M. Jean Johnson, president, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta; three of his four vice-presidents, Ms Dolorès Nolette, Ms Adèle Poratto, M. Patrice Gauthier; the executive director of the association, M. Joël Lavoie. Also accompanying the group are M. Zacharie Tardif, the president of the francophone youth organization, and Mme Agathe St-Pierre, the president of the seniors' francophone group. Also accompanying them is the director of the Francophone Secrétariat, M. Denis Tardif. Please join me in giving them the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Brigadier Kuldip Singh Randhawa and his wife, Mrs. Amarjit Randhawa. They're seated in your gallery. Brigadier Randhawa is a professional engineer, recently retired from the Indian army after 30 years of distinguished service. He's a recipient of the distinguished service award of the government of India. The Randhawas are visiting here, and of course they also stopped over in Ireland on their way to Canada. They're spending the next two weeks with their family and friends in Alberta to discover and enjoy the beauty of this province and the hospitality of their friends. As I said, they're seated in your gallery, and I would now request them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Jean-Michel Halfon. Mr. Halfon is country manager for Canada of Pfizer Global Pharmaceuticals and the president and chief executive officer of Pfizer Canada Inc., the Canadian operations of Pfizer Inc., one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical companies. I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Halfon today to discuss research and development innovation and Alberta's 20-year strategic plan and how we meet the innovation agenda in Alberta and the role that Pfizer might be able to play in assisting us to do that. Mr. Halfon is joined today by Laura Fitzgerald, the senior manager of patient access and health policy in Alberta and a resident of Edmonton. I'd like them to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have family in the gallery today, and I would like to introduce them to you and through you to the other Members of the Legislative Assembly. My cousin Mae Lake and her husband, Jim, are here with us today as well as my wife, Gwen Green. Now, Mae and I grew up in Portreeve, Saskatchewan, but Mae now lives with Jim in Swift Current. We're glad to have her here as a tourist in Alberta and, as a matter of fact, on the day that we actually debate a tourism bill. How about that? I wonder if we could give them the warm, traditional welcome as we normally do for guests of the Assembly.

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

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests from the Alberta College of Social Workers. They are Mr. Rod Adachi, executive director of the college, and council person Ms Linda Golding. I'm so pleased that they could join us today, which is during Social Work Week. My ministry knows well the important work of social workers, as do many other government ministries, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. I'd like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Prins: Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to introduce to you and all members of this Assembly a group of 24 bright grade 6 students from the Clive school. They are accompanied by Mr. Robert MacKinnon, their teacher. He is here on his 17th trip to the Legislature – this is my first group coming here – accompanied by Mrs. Shauna Philip, a student teacher at Clive, and parent helpers Mr. Scott Clark, Susanne Schweer, Mona Woods, Alice Green, Margaret Reynolds, and Denne Rowley, their bus driver. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House four young people who've been pushing hard for tuition relief in Alberta, part of an organization that has been doing so for years, student union executives from the University of Alberta: Jordan Blatz, president; Alex Abboud, vice-president external; Graham Lettner, president-elect; and Samantha Power, vice-president external elect. I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a fine young woman who's been an active philanthropist on the local, provincial, national, and international scales. I will give more detail on the Mountain of Heroes Foundation, which she cofounded, during my member's statement on Thursday. This committed Albertan has also managed a small business on a global scale, organizing speaking engagements for children, charities, and corporations and guiding trekkers on adventures from the Rockies to the Himalayas. She's been invaluable to the constituency of Calgary-Lougheed, and she's been invaluable to me personally, professionally, and politically as well as to a little puppy named MacGyver. I'm speaking, of course, of my wonderful wife, Jennifer, who is in the members' gallery, and I will ask her to stand now to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Leila Houle of Goodfish, who was recently crowned Miss Edmonton. Ms Houle is flying to Toronto this evening to compete in the national Miss Canada competition later this week. Leila also works with Treaty 6 chiefs and is a tremendous role model and an ambassador for Alberta's youth. She's accompanied by her very proud father, Ernest Houle, a private consultant from Goodfish. They are joined by Donna Potts-Johnson, the director of social development for the Samson Cree nation, and Susan Houle, a student at the U of A, also from Goodfish. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

1:40

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you a young group of 59 students from St. John Bosco elementary school, the future of Alberta. They are accompanied by Mr. Zydek, Mrs. Adolf, Miss Yetman, Mrs. Frey, Ms Glover, Mr. Richard Johnston, Mr. J.R. Hebrada, Mrs. Syskakis, Mr. Tabachniuk, and Mrs. Padovan. They are seated in both galleries. If they could receive the warm traditional welcome.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise today and introduce to you and through you members of the Yellowhead Tribal College in Edmonton-Calder. There is a group of 16 students along with their teachers, Linda Anderson, and M.K. Jardine. I would ask them to now please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly a long-standing Conservative and the elected president of the Alberta Alliance Party, Mr. Gary Horan. He is seated in the members' gallery today, and he is a concerned and dedicated citizen of

Alberta who has put in many hours of service to help build the Alberta party to make it what it is today. I would ask Gary Horan to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

Impacts of Oil Sands Expansion

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, Fort McMurray serves as the litmus test for the lack of infrastructure support for municipalities shown by this government. Fort McMurray has insufficient schools, hospitals, roads, sewage treatment, and affordable housing. Like other rapidly growing municipalities, it is struggling to cope while the provincial government swims in oil revenues. To the minister of infrastructure: will the government commit to improving the dangerous, indeed often deadly, highway heading to Fort McMurray before approving further oil sands expansion?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, we want to be in the position where we work with the oil companies to ensure that these expansions can take place. In the past two to three years there probably have been four to five different examples of plant expansions in the Fort McMurray region, and certainly that has put a tremendous amount of pressure on the infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we are currently looking at what to do exactly with highway 63. We're over halfway finished paving highway 881, which provides an excellent route for trucks to come up to Fort McMurray. We're in the process of putting in staging areas that allow these huge loads that are being transported up to Fort McMurray to have a place where they can pull over and wait until the early hours of the morning, when it is their time to go through Fort McMurray.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd love to be able to stand here and say that we had all the answers to what is going on in Fort McMurray, but the best things that I can say are: we're working with the oil companies, we're working with the municipality of Fort McMurray, and we will find solutions to this very good issue to have.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: will the government commit to providing the hospitals, schools, roads, and sewage treatment facilities that are so badly needed in Fort McMurray prior to further expansion of the oil sands plants?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate my answer. We are working with the oil companies. Certainly, we recognize that Fort McMurray has seen unprecedented growth, and we will continue to work with them to build schools, to build hospitals, to build the necessary infrastructure. As a matter of fact, as you well know and the hon. Premier announced a while ago, there'll be \$3 billion that will go to the municipal infrastructure program. Fort McMurray will receive around \$50 million to \$60 million to \$70 million, depending on how fast they grow. So there's a lot of infrastructure that can be built for that, but the key to this is working together, finding solutions for just an absolutely great problem to have for Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The minister refers to the \$3 billion they've committed, but there's an \$8 billion infrastructure deficit. Given that, when are we going to see the remaining funding put forward to address the issues faced by municipalities?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the estimate for the municipal infrastructure deficit was around \$3 billion. The \$8 billion that the hon. member refers to is actually included in this three-year business plan, where we're looking at spending \$9 billion in the next three years.

The Deputy Speaker: Second main question of the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has bragged that it is committed to sustainable development: the balancing of social, environmental, health, and economic values that will preserve the quality of life and natural capital for future generations. Fort McMurray is our test case on who is calling the shots on resource extraction and its impacts on the people and the environment in this province. My question to the Premier: how is the government accounting to citizens for the total impact – social, environmental, and economic – of this development?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation pointed out, we are dealing with this matter. This was not unanticipated. Certainly, it's been known for some time that some \$97 billion Canadian worth of new construction will take place in the Fort McMurray area relative to the oil sands by the year – what? I think it's 2010. This is a phenomenal amount of construction.

There will be a meeting in short order, as I understand it – I believe it's April 8 – involving a number of government ministers including the MLA for the area, the hon. Minister of Environment, the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, the minister of human resources, industry players, as I mentioned, and other people from the private sector to address the infrastructure issue.

We have identified some priority areas. Certainly, one of the priority areas is the area of housing. The hon. minister has made available some public lands to accommodate more housing. Another area is the area of health and education. Both ministers are working to make sure there are adequate schools.

The other area of interest is the area of transportation, ostensibly highway 63 and highway 881. I can tell you with respect to highway 881 that the paving of that highway and the upgrading of that highway is proceeding at a very rapid rate as well as the upgrading of highway 63, plus infrastructure north of Fort McMurray to accommodate additional oil sands development.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will this government show leadership by shifting from its focus on GDP and begin to measure genuine progress indicators, GPI, or the triple bottom line, to assess the true cost accounting of these activities?

Mr. Klein: It's a good question, and it's a very subjective one, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if this hon. member is willing to go to Calgary right now and tell Mr. George of Suncor, "Stop your expansion," or if he's willing to go to Calgary and talk to Mr. Markin of Canadian Natural Resources and say: "You cannot expand. It's against the law. It's against my law." It's against the doctor's law to expand. As I say, the question is very subjective. Now, if this hon. member will stand up and go to Calgary and tell these people that if the Liberals are elected, you will not have expansion until all the infrastructure needs have been addressed, then I invite him to do that.

1:50

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the commitment of this government to share the responsibility for climate change and to reduce greenhouse gases, when will the government put the brakes on emissions?

Mr. Klein: I think we're doing very well. The hon. Minister of Environment may wish to supplement, Mr. Speaker, but certainly in conjunction with industry we have brought in legislation which addresses greenhouse gases and global warming but does it in a much more reasonable way than the internationally contrived Kyoto protocols.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To supplement what the Premier has said, of course, in actual fact in oil sands development emission intensity has gone down by 50 per cent because of new technology that was made right here in Alberta. So technology is a key principle as we continue in terms of protecting the environment with new technology, and that's exactly what we delivered with the federal government at COP 10 in Argentina recently.

The Deputy Speaker: Third main Official Opposition question. The Member for Calgary-Currie.

Apprenticeship Training

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Still on the topic of Fort McMurray, as has been noted in this House before, because of the oil sands Alberta's energy reserves rival Saudi Arabia. Such potential. And it's great to see the potential continuing to be realized, but Alberta citizens are being shut out of the work this bonanza is creating. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what plans does the minister have to revamp the apprenticeship program to ensure an ongoing supply of trained Albertans to fill the jobs in the oil sands?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member would know or should know that Alberta's apprenticeship program is the model of this nation. In fact, the apprenticeship program in this province produces 20 to 25 per cent of the new apprentices and new journeymen in this country at a red seal level, which is a very high qualification level.

Do we need more people? Absolutely, we do. There's no shortage of place in our advanced education institutions for apprenticeships. The shortage is in placement. So we're working with industry to encourage industry to hire more people so that we can enrol them in apprenticeship programs, and we'll continue to work with them to make sure that those places are available so that Albertans can have access to the advanced education they want and to the jobs they need.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: since the number of people going into the apprenticeship program has doubled in the last 10 years, how come there's only been a 22 per cent increase in the number of certified apprentices coming out the other end?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are all sorts of reasons why people go into programs and perhaps choose to change programs. In fact, in our advanced education system you'll find that no matter what program people enter, a very large percentage of them change programs before they exit. That is not a bad thing. That's called choice. That's called finding your passion. That's called finding the place where you want to advance your career and advance your education. Is the hon. member opposite suggesting that once a person enters a program, that's it for them? That's what they should do for the rest of their lives?

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, as I continue to ask the questions, can the Minister of Advanced Education explain why the government calculates its apprenticeship completion rate using second-year apprentices as the baseline when to use first year would make the numbers look so much worse?

Mr. Hancock: No, Mr. Speaker, I can't answer that, and I'd be very interested in reading *Hansard* to find out what the hon. member just said and in finding the answer to that.

The Deputy Speaker: First main question for the leader of the New Democrat opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fallout of the province's complete bungling of the ambulance transfer agreement continues. Today the city of Red Deer launched a major public appeal urging the citizens to get involved to hold the government accountable. The city of Red Deer says that the so-called government fix announced last week leaves them facing a \$1.6 million shortfall in 2005 and a \$4.1 million shortfall in 2006. My questions are to the Premier. How can the Premier justify saddling the citizens of Red Deer with a likely tax hike to pay for ambulance services when it was the Conservative bungling of the transfer that led to this unacceptable deficit in the first place?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, just as a preamble before I turn it over to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, there are claims, undoubtedly, from some communities, including Red Deer, that they were over- or undercompensated. The fact is that these claims are based on cost estimates that are now being verified, and that's why we suspended the transfer. We need to know what the actual costs are before going further, and that's why we embarked on the two pilot projects in the Peace region and the Palliser region, where they are ready and set to go. But I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we wanted to get dollars out as quickly as possible to the some 300 municipalities that weren't covered in the two pilot projects. When you use a per capita methodology, there may be some that gain more and some that gain less. In the circumstance with Red Deer, Red Deer had worked and had verified their figures with the regional health authority. However, over this next year with the governance advocacy and advisory group we'll review not only the discovery projects in Palliser and Peace, but we will review actually why ambulance services and costs in some areas were widely different from some of the other areas.

Certainly, in the case of the city of Red Deer they have an excellent ambulance system. No doubt that will continue, and no

doubt the advisory council will be very interested in working with the city of Red Deer and all other municipalities across Alberta to confirm just exactly what the costs are, what the methodology should be. If, in fact, we assume responsibility through regional health authorities for delivering ambulance services, we will know full well what the costs are and be fully accountable for them, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why is the Premier defending the \$55 million figure when the government's own draft ambulance services report from 2001 identified the cost to be closer to \$106 million, and we now know that the estimates are closer to \$128 million? Why is he surprised?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right when he says that the costs have been identified as \$128 million. It's my best information, based on the report, that the original estimate was \$55 million, but I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think one of the grave difficulties that we have encountered is that when the regional health authorities looked at assuming governance and operations, costing for particularly integrated ambulance service delivery may not have been accounted for in exactly the appropriate way. It might have been, for example, a municipal authority's opportunity to account for ambulance in the fire service delivery. So in extrapolating those costs for ambulance, they were quite different.

Yes, there were costs identified in the report on ambulance service delivery that included the figure of \$106 million, but there were also dollars that were accounted for that were on the revenue side of the equation that may have not been fully looked at at the time that the amount of \$55 million was put in as the true cost – the true cost – of governance and operations of ambulance in the submission that was put in the budget the year previous while we were looking at transfer.

So we can play a lot with numbers here, but the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that what we're doing now is trying to find the best way of assuring that the continuity of safe patient transport continues in Alberta, that proud tradition is maintained, and that whether or not in the future ambulance services are delivered by municipalities or health authorities or a combination of both, Albertans will feel secure that they have the best ambulance service delivery system possible.

2:00

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, let me put this directly to the minister. Why was the government using the \$55 million figure as late as a month ago when on May 23, 2002, your own MLAs' report on ambulance services used a figure of \$106 million?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, at the time the budget was approved for 2004-05, the identifiable figure for true costs was estimated for the budget year '05-06 at \$55 million. The exponential increase to what was described to me as a soft number of \$128 million was considerably higher, and what was even of greater concern to this minister was that I was told by several parties in Alberta that it could be as high as \$180 million. I thought it was responsible to do a thorough review of that. That's what we're doing.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Oil Sands Development

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Following in the flavour of the development of oil sands, another new multimillion dollar project has been announced north of Fort McMurray. Yesterday Suncor announced a \$10 billion project that will mean, as mentioned earlier, even more strain on the existing infrastructure of the city of Fort McMurray. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. With Suncor's announcement of the \$10 billion Voyageur project can the minister tell us what other projects are anticipated for the area?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's announcement clearly was another one of the very major announcements. These are very large megaprojects that continue up in the oil sands. It's because of the work, really, that the government's done over the years to set the right climate, to attract the investment to see that we could realize the opportunity that's before us today. With that comes huge challenges, and those are the things that we'll be talking about.

I thought I'd mention a little bit of the scope of the activity, too, that's happening. It's not just that \$10 billion project. You can look at CNRL, that recently announced their willingness to go with another 10 billion plus dollar project. You've got Shell, that's also looking at an expansion of their projects. You can look at UTS, who's partnered recently with Petro-Canada. So you've got quite a bit of expansion. In all, you could see up to a hundred billion dollars of investment in this area alone in the province over the next 10 years.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what type of support will the government of Alberta provide to this part of the province, and will some unique approach be necessary to cope with these added pressures?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As he rightly said, this area of the oil sands actually expands beyond just even the oil sands. If we looked into the heavy oils just to the south of that area – the member himself is involved with it and the members from the Vermilion-Lloydminster and Bonnyville-Cold Lake areas. Very large deposits of heavy oil. So the combined region has some extraordinary issues that are going to have to be looked at.

It does have a special and unique case in the size of investment, in the quantity of infrastructure demand that this government will have to facilitate and accommodate. We've heard some responses already from the minister of infrastructure.

There is also a regional working group of the senior vice-presidents of the companies that are involved in the oil sands and the heavy oils, and we'll be meeting with them, actually, and the mayor of Fort McMurray later this week. That's been an ongoing working relationship, and we continue to see how we can facilitate and ensure that we realize the benefit of this great deposit in that area.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much. That's my last supplemental. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Just a reminder. We're striving for a 45-second time limit on questions and answers.

The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Labour Negotiations with Teachers

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many parents and educators and school boards are concerned about the on- and off-again funding for education in this province. Albertans clearly can't afford to repeat the teacher layoff disaster of 2003-04, from which most schools are just recovering. My question to the Minister of Education: can the Minister of Education assure Albertans that the money will be there to support fairly bargained or arbitrated settlements with teachers?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, every local school board has the right, the authority, and the responsibility to negotiate in good faith at the local level with their local ATAs. We provide the money in unenvolving fashion for them to do that, and as part of that unenvolving we brought forward the renewed funding framework, which has even given them more flexibility with respect to costs related to all education matters, and that includes the negotiated settlements. There are varying degrees and lengths of time involved in some of these agreements, and I feel quite comfortable that our local school boards are doing their very best to address ever-increasing costs with ever-decreasing enrolments.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the envelope is large.

To the same minister: what specific measures is this minister considering to support school boards and educators in places like Fort McMurray, where even in the aftermath of a new agreement teachers can't afford to live?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, teachers can afford to live there, but the fact is that I think the costs of living there are somewhere between 10 to 30 per cent higher than elsewhere in the province, so the local school board does have an allowance for that built into their negotiations. I think they just came to a conclusion to that effect a couple of weeks ago, at least the public system did. We'll wait and see what the Catholic system does shortly.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, there will be a group coming to Edmonton for a special visit, as our Premier alluded to earlier, and I will be part of that meeting. In fact, I will be advancing some of those very issues. I did meet with several hundred teachers during my rounds, and I did meet with a group in Fort McMurray as well. I am acutely aware of the difficulties they are having in attracting and retaining teachers in that area, and we will do our best to address it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister abandon his effort to impose a one-size-fits-all province-wide bargaining model and concede that teachers and school boards should be allowed to negotiate local matters locally?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely important question, and I'm actually grateful to the member for having raised it. The fact is that the Alberta Commission on Learning report did make a recommendation in this respect. It's found under ACOL recommendation 81, I believe.

Now, in response to that, the government has asked for additional work to be done as we try and steer our way through to a conclusive answer, and I will be striving for that very shortly. In the meantime, we do have groups like the Alberta School Boards Association, which at a meeting on November 22 voted two-thirds to find some sort of a model and bring it back to their general membership and thereafter provide it to me for further consideration. After I've received that input and after I've heard more from the local school boards themselves and from the ATA, ASBA, and a number of other players, I will bring forward a decision for this House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Jetsgo Bankruptcy

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With Jetsgo grounded, many of my constituents are concerned about the dollars they spent on air travel. My questions are to the Minister of Government Services. What can my constituents who have bought and paid for tickets from Jetsgo do now that the company has folded?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, it's terribly unfortunate when any airline goes under and, in fact, people are stranded and don't get the services that they paid for. We would recommend that any individual that has bought a ticket and was unable to use it get in contact with their insurance agent. Many people have bought travel insurance, and they may be eligible for a refund on the ticket.

Secondly, if a person has paid for the travel by credit card, it could very well be that the credit card company will be in a position to – as a matter of fact, a number of the credit card companies have stepped up to the plate and offered to refund. Also, if a person has purchased the ticket on the Internet in Alberta, they're rather fortunate because under the Internet sales contract regulation you're guaranteed to get the service. The credit card companies have up to two months to credit the person. [interjections] It's very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, all the chirping over across the way, that those folks aren't interested in hearing how a consumer can get their money back on this type of an issue.

2:10

Ms DeLong: Mr. Speaker, what can Albertans who travel do to protect themselves in advance if an airline goes out of business?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things, and we've been recommending for some time that if you feel that you need to pay by cash, then you look at purchasing travel insurance so that you are covered. We do also recommend that you use a credit card because the purchase of a travel ticket is pretty well covered through that mechanism.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, what are we doing to help protect Albertans in the event of future airline failures?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, the airline industry is

under federal jurisdiction. One of the things that we are going to be doing this summer is actually going with our other provincial counterparts and talking to the federal government about setting up some kind of an insurance plan, some kind of a protection program so that when these kinds of events do occur, then the persons that have purchased tickets would have some kind of coverage.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Electricity Deregulation

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day and the Enron scandal in Alberta continues to grow. Yesterday at an energy conference a senior executive stated that unnamed companies are unethically bending the rules six years after Enron exploited loopholes in electricity deregulation in this province, yet this Progressive Conservative government continues to keep consumers in the dark regarding this growing scandal. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that industry insiders now admit that power companies are still bending the rules, what will it take for this government to finally call for a full, independent public inquiry into this \$8 billion electricity deregulation disaster?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first say that the market surveillance administrator does take very seriously their role. They act on behalf of Albertans to ensure that they are protected. They have acted on this. The investigation of Enron is six years old. They acted on it then. They're repeating investigations again today. They've also involved the federal Competition Bureau. So they continue to do the role for which they are there, and that is to ensure that Albertans are protected.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that it has also been stated that various companies have behaved in a way that has been not particularly ethical, which companies are unethically bending the electricity market in Alberta, and why are you so reluctant to name them?

Mr. Melchin: When we say "various companies," everyone here seems to be reluctant to actually bring forth any evidence. It's easy to bring forth allegations. That's what the market surveillance administrator is there for. If you have evidence, I'd suggest that we do bring evidence before the appropriate authorities. They can act on it if there is evidence.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that Enron and other companies have used the Alberta-B.C. tie-line to manipulate Alberta's domestic electricity market, why isn't the market surveillance administrator investigating electricity imports?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there are many things in regulation to ensure that our marketplaces do work. They have worked effectively, and in this respect the market surveillance administrator continues to watch as a watchdog on behalf of Albertans. We are all interested, just as the market surveillance administrator is interested. We want to ensure that things continue to operate as they are designed to do. If there is evidence, please bring it forward.

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

First Aid and CPR Training in Schools

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, when a bystander uses cardiopulmon-

ary resuscitation, otherwise known as CPR, on someone who has collapsed from a cardiac arrest, the victim's chance of survival dramatically improves. In Edmonton the survival rate has increased some 10 per cent because of frequent early bystander action, including CPR. The message is simple, Mr. Speaker. CPR by family members or bystanders could save the lives of hundreds of people in Alberta. My one and only question to the Minister of Education: would the minister consider implementing mandatory CPR and first aid courses in Alberta's high schools, which could be instructed by St. John Ambulance?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we already do provide some courses with respect to both first aid and CPR training. To my knowledge none of them are mandatory yet, not at this stage anyway. I know that at the grade 9 level we also provide some additional components through first aid and emergency care.

We have been talking now about something that we could do through the mandatory physical education 10 program, beginning in the fall of 2006 perhaps, where we could provide some type of additional training for our teachers so that they could pass on those skills to the students. In that respect, I'd be happy to chat further with the St. John Ambulance folks to see what role they might be able to play in guiding us along. I think it's an excellent idea, and I commend the member for raising it. We will be looking at this very closely.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Health Care Reform

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been three years since the release of the Mazankowski report, over two years since the Graydon report was completed, and over a year and a half since the release of the Westbury report. Despite all these reports, Albertans are still in the dark about the government's latest attempts at reform, termed the third way. In fact, it seems that the third way is really no way at all. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How much longer will Albertans have to wait before finding out the details of this government plan?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, early in January our Premier spoke to the Canadian Club, and he announced several things including the work that will be done this year, commencing in a more accelerated fashion so that we can achieve a target of an electronic record by January 1, 2008, which will be one step to making sure that we are linking the system and working more cohesively together. He talked about an innovative mental health fund. He talked about the supports for the kinds of things that could be done to make sure that our children were well looked after, particularly in the area of mental health.

Mr. Speaker, we've been talking now for a few weeks and even invited the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition to be a part of the international symposium which will gather a number of ideas of best practices from people world-wide to see whether or not those would be appropriate opportunities for us to link with some of the other initiatives that are going on in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the third way is not about any single, one idea but about a series of very good ideas that can be implemented in a very focused way across Alberta. We can assure Albertans that we are working towards one goal, and that is quality health care as quickly as possible for all Albertans.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. No details.

Back to the same minister: can the minister tell us whether the third way would mean more contracts with private providers like the Health Resource Centre in Calgary, which the Premier termed in January a health care success story?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Premier was very clear. He said that we were not going to try and challenge the Canada Health Act, we were going to unleash innovation and invite our health care providers, the regional health authorities, to bring forward methodologies for improving health care. The bottom line is that we are working on the assumption that we will complete the recommendations in the Mazankowski plan.

We will look over the next few weeks and months at the things that we can do to build on the primary health care reform. I say: stay tuned. I think that there are wonderful things happening in Alberta. The bottom line is that Albertans should remember this: no matter where they go, the best health care system in the world exists in Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that yesterday the minister said that "a wellness fund is an idea that could be looked at," why did government members vote down the Alberta Liberal motion for a wellness fund just last week?

2:20

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I said that it could be looked at in the context of other ideas. We are not going to simply react to every idea that comes along at the time it is presented. We have to look at a package of how we are presenting the very best possible strategies. In fact, today with the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation we talked about the great success of the rural seat belt strategy, which has seen an improvement in the use of seat belts. Twelve ministries are involved in strategies to improve the health and wellness of Albertans, particularly as it relates to seat belts. So to have any one fund or any one consolidation is something that we'd have to examine very carefully so that we were assured that we were getting all the pieces of it. It's not as simple as agreeing to a motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Policing Services

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years the Conservative government has failed to adequately support policing services, which has resulted in Alberta having the lowest number of police officers per capita west of PEI. Adding 140 offices a year, as the government proposes, fails to put policing services on par with those in other Canadian provinces. My questions are to the Solicitor General. Why are Albertans being forced by this government to put up with a lower level of policing service than residents of every other province west of Prince Edward Island?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The 5,000 officers that we have in the province of Alberta are well respected by the communities that they work in throughout this province. The issue that we're looking at in the future is the resources we have in

rural Alberta as well as in the urban centres, but we want to look as well at the deployment models that we have and build on the integration that we have right now as well as building on other models that we want to look at across Canada, which includes regionalization.

Dr. Pannu: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Why won't the Solicitor General commit to increasing provincial police numbers, whether RCMP or municipal, by 500 additional front-line officers as proposed by the NDP opposition so that Albertans receive the same level of policing service as other Canadians do?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The 500 officers that the hon. member speaks about are a tremendous amount of officers to obtain. The officers that we want to see employed in the next year, two years have to be trained. They're not in place now. We can't hire them April 1. Some of them we can, but we're going to have to do this over a period of time to ensure that the training process takes place. Again, it's not just putting officers on the street. It's looking at the ability to deploy these officers properly in the areas where they need to be deployed, and that includes integrating our policing services so that the seven municipal police services and the RCMP are working together as one.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: while better approaches to fighting gang violence are needed and the minister is exploring them, will he ensure that most of the additional provincial money will be earmarked to strengthening community policing and thereby better prevent gang violence from taking root in the first place?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about integrated models and we're looking at joint force operations between either the Calgary Police Service and the RCMP or the Edmonton Police Service and the RCMP, we're also talking about intelligence-led investigations. In order to fight organized crime or in order to fight gang violence, the intelligence base that's required is tremendous. That's where we have to stress our services in the future: to develop the intelligence we need to go out and arrest these guys.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Exploitation of Children

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Modern technology is a double-edged sword that has put many people at risk including our children, who are very vulnerable. Some nasty elements of our society use technology such as cellphones, e-mails, and Internet chat rooms to prey on children, and through digital photography and the Internet they share pornography of all kinds easily and freely. My question is also to the Solicitor General. Why are we lagging behind? Why haven't we followed Manitoba's lead and created some kind of agency to protect our children?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government takes the protection of children very seriously, and several ministries are working together right now. The Ministry of Children's Services as well as the Ministry of Health and Wellness have programs in place that are working with those children that are in need. We also consider child pornography and Internet-luring as child exploitation, and we are building on the protection of these children. In fact, Alberta has the only specified Crown prosecutor that deals with these issues in Canada.

Mrs. Jablonski: To the same minister: when are we going to create an integrated child exploitation team?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, at this present time we don't have a provincial integrated child exploitation team, or an ICE team, but I can tell you that the Edmonton Police Service, the Calgary Police Service, and the RCMP each have a member that is working in those areas. They do collaborate together. They do work with each other and are ensuring that the information collaboration is flowing between them.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: what are we doing to protect our children?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, in the budget that the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier will be presenting in early April we'll be looking at, as well, resources for the integrated child exploitation team, and I'd ask that member to wait until the budget process is complete.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Funding for Youth Programs

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Children's Services has failed to properly fund shelters for Alberta's youth. The government annual grant system does not give the shelters across Alberta any security. To the Minister of Children's Services: why does the ministry refuse to guarantee funding to youth shelters past one year?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we do. We provide Edmonton about \$13.2 million through FCSS, and it's up to them to determine how best to spend their dollars. We've also done some very innovative things with some programs through the ministry. If there's a particular youth shelter that the member is concerned about, I'd ask her to bring it forward, and I'll look at it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that shelters like the one in Grande Prairie and day programs like the Kids in the Hall Bistro have to be at risk of closing before receiving funding from the province, when will this government provide stable funding so they don't have to be in dire need before they get help?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, we did do that. It was brought to my attention, I believe it was in December, for the Kids in the Hall program, and if I remember correctly, we provided them with \$150,000. That funding is going to continue.

As I explained, if the member is aware of someone who is in a difficult situation, I'd be more than pleased to meet with her, sit down and talk to her or even the agency. None of these agencies, Mr. Speaker, have brought this matter to my attention. Please bring it forward.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister of Children's Services commit to a new funding regimen that would provide sustained, stable, and sufficient funding with annual reviews instead of contract renewals every year that leave agencies begging for money?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, if the member has a particular organization or shelter that she is deeply concerned about, I'd ask her to bring it forward to me. We'll look at it. We provide money, like I indicated, to Edmonton FCSS. They receive \$13.2 million. That's another one of the stakeholders that have to be contacted because they get the money out to them too.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Emergency Preparedness

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday there was a vapour release at the Shell chemical plant in northern Strathcona county. This incident raises some important questions about emergency preparedness. This is similar to questions that were voiced after the BP ethane well fire in the area in 2001. My first question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What's the government doing to help keep Alberta communities safe during incidents such as these?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I did yesterday, I want to assure the hon. member as well as all members of the House that this province's municipalities are very well prepared to respond to disasters and emergencies. Municipal Affairs through Emergency Management Alberta, or EMA, works closely with municipalities to ensure that they are prepared for and can respond to and recover from incidents such as the one that occurred yesterday. All Alberta municipalities have emergency plans in place, and these plans are validated annually and tested at least once every four years. In addition, Mr. Speaker, EMA has expanded and maintains the Alberta emergency public warning system, which allows local officials to transmit information and warnings to affected municipalities via television or radio.

2:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental to the same minister: since the BP well fire what has changed in terms of municipal emergency response?

Mr. Renner: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the actions of officials and first responders from Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona county as well as those of Shell. From the moment that they learned of the vapour release, they responded in a timely and effective manner, and they continue to do so today. Thanks to our

experiences during the BP well fire we gained an opportunity to tighten up and improve the communication and information aspects of municipal emergency response.

I'd like to highlight two of the important improvements. First, communities and industry worked in the Heartland Industrial Area in partnership to design and implement a community notification system for the entire region. The system, Mr. Speaker, is unlike any other, and it enables officials to send telephone emergency warnings directly to affected residents. The system complements the radio and television warnings available through the emergency public warning system.

Secondly, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board in co-operation with EMA updated the emergency response plan for upstream petroleum industry incidents to have a far more stringent call down the system, which is regularly validated through exercises and very real events.

Thank you.

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

Medication for Seniors

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A University of Lethbridge study of 1,500 residents in 24 Alberta nursing homes found that there is a high use of sedative and antipsychotic drugs, almost double the use in Europe and the U.S. These drugs are potentially dangerous given their side effects and, in particular, the fear of falling. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. What will the minister do regarding these reports that Alberta seniors are being drugged to make up for staff shortages in nursing homes?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that we are working diligently to try and accomplish the objective of having quality health care for long-term patients in our institutions. The regional health authorities along with the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports and myself have met on a number of occasions to talk about ways that we can improve the quality care in these various facilities. I'm very satisfied that there are great strides being made by many. For example, we are looking at the continuum of care from the time that home care is delivered right through to the seniors. Long-term care facilities vary throughout the province. Nursing home services, including levels and types of staffing, should be based on individual need.

As to the particular question about the use of drugs for seniors in these facilities, we're working with health authorities and with the attending physicians to make sure that they are used in an appropriate fashion. Mr. Speaker, for the largest part I'm satisfied that they are. I realize that questions have been raised publicly by a couple of the facilities in Alberta, and we are exploring what the alternatives are. But Dr. Jerry Predy's work with a long-term care facility to introduce Cold fX as a measure of prevention for flu and other anomalies associated with the frail elderly I think is a positive example of use of drugs of a preventive nature in long-term care facilities.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Following that commercial, the question is to the same minister. What is this government doing to ensure that continuing care facilities have enough funding to provide adequate staffing so that sedation is not necessary?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the funding question will be very appropriate once the introduction of the budget comes forward. I think one of the great challenges for regional health authorities dealing with long-term care facilities is the mix of patients with various levels of acuity in the facilities, which formula basis staffing is arranged to look after them. It's difficult, Mr. Speaker, to measure just exactly what's needed in every facility, but that work is being done. As to further funding that might be provided for long-term care facilities, I would say to the hon. member opposite: stay tuned; the budget will be out in a few weeks, and we'll have that discussion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Again to the minister of health: despite waiting for the budget, what guarantee could you give the families of nursing home residents that this won't be happening over a period of time, that their loved ones are not being unnecessarily sedated?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, you know, with great regret it sounds to me like there is some sense of allegation here that doctors are overprescribing for their patients in long-term care facilities. Clearly, families, if they have that concern, can approach the physician that's attending that particular person, can speak to the matron about it, and explore whether or not the appropriate level of drugs is being provided for that patient. But I think that unless there's a specific case in point that the hon. member wants to raise privately with me, it's my view that the physicians are doing the prescribing, and any other concerns could be addressed on a private individual basis.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we go into Members' Statements, I'd just like to say that we've done 15 questions today, a tad shy of our previous high standard that was set. So I would encourage us all in the future to focus more on brevity.

Could we have unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute privilege and honour to be able to introduce to you and through you 43 people from Rolling Hills, Alberta, who have journeyed here to see us in the Legislature. There are 33 students with teachers Gail Sapergia, Christopher Zottl; parents Gerjan Stikker, Kelly Shackleton, Michele Hemsing, Jackie Sereda, Irene Nannt, Kimberley Fletcher, Carmen Thomsen; and, of course, Jay deJong, who has brought up many people as a bus driver. I would ask them all to stand and receive the very warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly several of Alberta's chiefs of police and their representatives. We are meeting this afternoon to develop strategies in our fight on organized crime. They are each

on their own tremendous leaders in our Alberta communities. I'd like to ask these individuals to please rise and remain standing as I introduce each of you: Acting Chief Darryl daCosta and Acting Deputy Chief Dave Korol from the Edmonton Police Service, Inspector Tom McKenzie from the Lethbridge Police Service on behalf of Chief John Middleton-Hope, Chief Marshall Chalmers from the Camrose Police Service, Deputy Chief Rick Hansen on behalf of Chief Jack Beaton of the Calgary Police Service, Chief Norm Boucher of the Medicine Hat Police Service, Chief Bill Zens of the Lacombe Police Service, Chief Terry Dreddy from the Taber Police Service, and Chief Superintendent Knecht from the RCMP. I'd ask that these individuals receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Deputy Speaker: We will call on the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for Members' Statements.

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie

Mr. Ducharme: Merci, M. le Président. Aujourd'hui c'est un plaisir pour moi de présenter à la Chambre une explication d'un événement canadien qu'on appelle Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie.

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie se déroulent à la grandeur du Canada sur une base annuelle. Cette année Les Rendez-vous ont lieu du 4 au 20 mars. Durant cette période de temps on célèbre les communautés francophones afin de promouvoir la langue et la culture françaises tant par ses activités sociales et ses célébrations que par sa dimension humaine et communautaire.

Les Rendez-vous contribuent à renforcer les liens entre les anglophones et les francophones du Canada et favorisent un plus grand respect entre ces deux communautés.

2:40

De plus en plus nos municipalités albertaines se joignent aux Rendez-vous en tenant des cérémonies pour reconnaître leur communauté francophone; parmi ces municipalités cette année on compte Red Deer, Lethbridge, Calgary. Félicitations à ces municipalités.

Comme je le mentionnais lors de la présentation des mes invités spéciaux, ce matin à la rotonde de la Législature le Président de la Chambre était hôte d'une belle célébration dédiée à la reconnaissance de la contribution des francophones à notre province. C'est un geste que la communauté apprécie beaucoup, si on en juge par la participation importante de la communauté.

Je tiens aussi à remercier mes collègues de l'Assemblée qui se sont dérangés pour assister à la célébration.

Cette septième édition des Rendez-vous revêt une signification spéciale parce que le thème de cette année porte sur les centenaires de l'Alberta et de la Saskatchewan avec un accent sur les communautés francophones de ces provinces.

Pierre Sabourin, un jeune artiste franco-albertain, est présentement en tournée canadienne avec un groupe d'artistes francophones de l'ouest pour promouvoir Les Rendez-vous et le centenaire de notre province.

Merci, M. le Président.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my pleasure to provide the Assembly with information on a wonderful Canadian event called Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie are held throughout Canada on a yearly basis, and this year they run from March 4 to 20. During that period of time attention is focused on francophone communities with the idea

of promoting French language and culture as much through community and human relations as through social activities and celebrations.

Les Rendez-vous contribute to the reinforcement of links between francophones and anglophones in Canada by fostering greater respect between the two communities. More and more of our municipalities are joining in Les Rendez-vous by holding ceremonies to recognize their francophone communities. Red Deer, Lethbridge, Calgary are some of the municipalities that held flag-raising ceremonies to mark the launch of these celebrations. Congratulations to all of them.

As I alluded to earlier while introducing my special guests, this morning the Speaker of the House hosted a wonderful ceremony in the rotunda to recognize the contributions of the francophone community to our province. It was very much appreciated by the francophone community, judging by the large attendance. I also want to thank my colleague MLAs who took time off their busy schedules to stop by.

The seventh edition of these Rendez-vous takes on a special meaning because the theme of this year's event is centred on the centennial of Alberta and Saskatchewan with a focus on the francophone communities in these provinces. Pierre Sabourin, a young Franco-Albertan singer from Edmonton, is part of a group of western francophone artists presently touring Canada to promote Les Rendez-vous as well as our centennial.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [As submitted]

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie

Mr. Chase: Aujourd'hui je voudrais reconnaître la fête de la Francophonie, une célébration qui a eu son début en 1998. Cette fête célèbre les accomplissements et les contributions de millions de Canadiennes et de Canadiens français. Pendant leur/notre histoire les francophones de l'Alberta et à travers le Canada ont dû se battre pour les droits de langue dans leurs églises, leurs écoles, et même pour le droit de parler français au sein de l'Assemblée Législative de l'Alberta. Les organisations comme Les Bons Amis et la Société St-Jean-Baptiste et l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta continuent toujours la lutte.

J'ai commencé mes études de la langue française au quatrième niveau d'une école élémentaire sur la base militaire de Namao à Edmonton. J'ai continué ces études à un lycée à Ottawa avant de suivre des cours de français, mon premier choix, à l'Université de Calgary. J'ai enseigné le français aux enfants et aux adolescents pour plusieurs années à Calgary.

Je voudrais remercier les francophones de l'Alberta pour leurs cadeaux d'arts et de culture, et surtout merci à ceux qui ont contribué au succès de cette province. Merci, et bonne fête.

[Translation] Today I would like to recognize the annual get-together of French-speaking Canadians, a celebration that began in 1998. This festival celebrates the accomplishments and contributions of millions of French Canadians. During their/our history French-speaking Albertans and those across Canada have had to fight for language rights in their churches, schools, and even for the right to speak French in the Alberta Legislative Assembly. Organizations like the Good Friends, the St. John the Baptist Society, and the French-Canadian Association of Alberta constantly continue this struggle.

I began studying the French language as a grade 4 student on Edmonton's Namao air force base. I continued these studies in high school in Ottawa before majoring in French at the University of Calgary. I taught French at the elementary and junior high levels for several years in Calgary.

I would like to thank French-speaking Albertans for their gifts of arts and culture and especially for their contribution to the success of this province. Thank you, and happy birthday/holiday. [As submitted]

National Social Work Week

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and recognize that March 13 to 19 is National Social Work Week. As a former social worker I understand that their work can be a difficult yet extremely gratifying profession. Social workers in our province make a difference in the lives of so many Albertans, from the youngest to the old. As Albertans we should all be proud of them.

This year's theme is Social Work: Fairness and Well-being, which is a very fitting theme for a profession that seeks to achieve equality and wellness for each person they serve.

Social workers perform a variety of roles as they work with people in need. They could be part of a family counselling agency providing services such as parenting and marriage counselling. Many work as part of health care teams, working with patients and family members to overcome emotional, behavioural, social, and financial difficulties. Others work with youth and adult offenders in correctional services.

Social workers are part of our educational system, providing services for students, parents, and teachers. Government departments also benefit from the help of social workers to deliver social programs, including income-support programs, child protection programs, child care programs, and foster care and adoption programs. Community agencies also employ social workers to meet community needs and address problems such as homelessness, family violence, addiction, or racism. There is a great diversity in the work they do, just as there is diversity in the many kinds of people they serve. Social work is a demanding profession requiring patience, sensitivity, and an understanding of others' beliefs and values.

Earlier the Minister of Children's Services introduced Mr. Rod Adachi and Ms Linda Golding from the Alberta College of Social Workers. I, too, am pleased that they could join us today. I commend the men and women who take on this rewarding line of work. Their efforts too often go unappreciated. I hope that this week we all take time to celebrate the vital contribution social workers make in the lives of Albertans.

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

Construction Labour Trades

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 40,000 highly skilled tradespeople represented by the affiliated unions of the Alberta Building Trades Council were recently dealt an unnecessary and unfair blow by this Conservative government. On December 6, 2004, the provincial cabinet issued an order in council unilaterally changing the rules under which the Horizon oil sands project, a major oil sands project north of Fort McMurray, will be constructed. The order in council was granted under the little used division 8 of the Labour Relations Code after a request from Canadian Natural Resources Ltd., owner of the Horizon project. There was no prior consultation with the affected building trades unions.

This division 8 provision allows CNRL to unilaterally negotiate terms and conditions of work outside existing collective agreements. Instead of having to negotiate with the building trades unions, the company can instead use company-friendly unions such as CLAC or the non-unionized Merit Contractors. CNRL will be allowed to

bring in lower paid foreign temporary workers without first having to demonstrate that there are no qualified Canadian tradespeople available to do the work.

This unilateral change of normal collective bargaining rules is fundamentally undemocratic and completely unjustified. There have been two decades of labour peace in the construction trades in this province with no major strikes or job disruptions. This labour peace has been one of the foundations of Alberta's sustained economic growth. Alberta's building trades are playing a crucial role in building all of the major multibillion dollar oil sands projects. These skilled tradesmen and -women do hard, dangerous work often far from home. Alberta's building trade unions are warning this government that the imposition of the division 8 provision will lead to job site conflict, less qualified, inexperienced tradespeople being hired, and as a result, lower quality work and more accidents.

Mr. Speaker, answers have been hard to come by as to why the Conservative government made this provocative move against unionized construction trades. I urge the government to abandon its policy of confrontation and move quickly to re-establish a co-operative labour climate in the oil sands so Alberta's continued economic prosperity can be ensured.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition signed by 1,088 people in Calgary and Edmonton urging the government of Alberta to "introduce legislation that will provide immediate tuition relief to students attending post-secondary education institutions across the province [of Alberta]."

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am presenting a petition signed by 87 parents and constituents from Edmonton and Sherwood Park who are in support of Bill 202 and are urging the government of Alberta to introduce legislation that will allow parents the authority to place their children who are abusing drugs into mandatory drug treatment and fund urgently required youth treatment centres.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 26

Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 26, the Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 26 amends the Alberta Corporate Tax Act to parallel federal provisions, including measures to ensure that tax cannot be avoided by transferring property out of a corporation at less than fair market value and does make some other technical changes. It also amends the ABC Benefits Corporation Act to facilitate payment in lieu of tax programs for Alberta Blue Cross.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a first time]

head: 2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to table in the Assembly the requisite number of five copies of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta annual report for the previous year, 2003 to 2004.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a Statistics Canada table that shows Alberta to have the lowest number of police officers per capita of any jurisdiction in Canada west of P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a press release issued by the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, dated March 11. The release describes Capital health's cut to physiotherapy as "robbing Peter to pay Paul" and "another example of Albertans being forced to assume an increasing cost for health care."

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two tablings today. The first is from a constituent, a student at the University of Alberta who writes to the Premier in response to the Premier's comment that the \$180,000 severance was not a lot and notes that as a student with a lot of debt, enrolled in four classes this semester and working an average of 20 hours a week at a part-time job, it matters to him and it is a lot of money.

My second tabling today, Mr. Speaker, is an announcement from the city of Red Deer commenting on their "dismay over the delay of the province-wide transfer of ambulance services from municipalities to Regional Health Authorities" and noting that it will cause a deficit for the city of Red Deer and a possible almost 3 and a half per cent increase in their tax rate as a result of this.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings from James Carss, the president of the University Heights Community Association, located in the southwest corner of Calgary Varsity. In a letter to the Premier and in a second letter to the residents Mr. Carss expresses the community's grave concerns about the marked lack of stakeholder input regarding the widening of 16th Avenue N. What used to be a vista view of the Bow River to the south and the Rockies to the west, an idyllic parkland setting, is about to be turned into a sound wall penitentiary bisected by lengths from the Foothills hospital to the new Children's hospital, which was pigeonholed into their community without their permission or meaningful consultation. Two hundred and forty-eight trees are about to be bulldozed to make way for road expansion . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I'd like to remind the hon. member that it's just for tabling, not for making a speech.

Anyone else with tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings

today. The first one is the EUB decision numbered 2002-103, dated December 19, 2002, and for the information of the Department of Energy and the minister this is the document that indicates that there was an overcharging by Engage Energy to the transmission administrator of \$63 million.

The second tabling I have this afternoon is further information in regard to the Enron scandal in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. This is an e-mail from Richard Sanders, a legal adviser for Enron, dated December 2000, and it indicates in this e-mail that Enron's "intelligence indicates that the government's investigation is not moving forward in any organized manner."

Thank you.

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have very voluminous reports to table under Tabling of Returns and Reports: the annual report for Capital health for 2003-2004, the Aspen regional health authority annual report 2003-2004, and finally the Peace Country health annual report for 2003-2004. The required numbers are here.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few tablings here today, and I have the number of copies available here. One is a unanimous resolution from the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta – that's all the reserves in northern Alberta – and it's condemning the government as "irresponsible and short-sighted and offensive" to their people and to their treaty regarding their employment immigration policies.

The second is a letter from the Treaty 8 First Nations grand chief speaking to the same issue and stating that it is creating an "extremely irresponsible and potentially explosive" situation.

And another group of letters from a number of concerned Albertans – I understand, again, all from government members' ridings – deriding the government on their temporary foreign replacement worker policy.

Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see that you were able to get that straight because earlier today I received some mail from your office for the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who has the same last name as I do.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity to rise today and table the appropriate number of copies of an electronic mail that I received from a constituent and her family. Actually, there are five of them altogether: Sharon Hawrelak, Kris and Jason Kropiniski, and Nick and Nancy Hawrelak. They are writing today to their MLA to express a great deal of support for a total smoking ban in Alberta.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I have the appropriate number of letters, again an electronic mail, that comes from a lady by the name of Wealtha McKenzie in Red Deer. She is the president of the Alberta Bed & Breakfast Association, and she writes to raise some minor concerns that she has with the Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, that we're going to be debating later today.

Thank you.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mr.

Boutillier, Minister of Environment, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act: the Ministry of Environment, environmental protection security fund annual report, April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Transmittal of Estimates**

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

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Deputy Speaker: The Lieutenant Governor transmits interim supply estimates for certain sums required for the service of the province and of certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: **Government Motions**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the 2005-06 interim supply estimates. These interim supply estimates will provide spending authority to the Legislative Assembly and the government until June 1, 2005. By that date, it is anticipated that spending authorization will have been provided for the entire fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$5.1 billion for expense and equipment and inventory purchases, \$136 million for capital investment, \$32 million for nonbudgetary disbursements, and \$316 million for lottery fund payments.

3:00

Interim supply amounts are based on departments' needs to fund government programs and services until June 1. While many payments are monthly, other payments are due at the beginning of each quarter and at the beginning of the fiscal year, and some payments, Mr. Speaker, are seasonal.

13. Mrs. McClellan moved:

Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2005-06 interim supply estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 13 carried]

14. Mrs. McClellan moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(9) the number of days that Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 2005-06 interim supply estimates shall be one day.

[Government Motion 14 carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 21
Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy)
Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. members. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 21, the Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005.

This legislation has not been amended since it was introduced in 1987, so there are technical improvements, clarifications, and administrative issues that need to be addressed through this process. There are also changes that will benefit administration of the hotel room tax, tourism levy, and bring it into line with other tax programs that we administer. That said, there are some very key components of this bill that will indirectly but undoubtedly contribute to the strength of our province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I love this province and its many wonders and natural attractions. We have great beauty here that is beyond compare, and we truly have a lot to offer in Alberta. This bill will provide another way for more people to take advantage of what we have to offer and, in turn, benefit our economy. This is an important bill, particularly to Alberta's tourism industry as it continues to work diligently to strengthen Alberta's position as a great destination for visitors and effectively compete with other regions for guests.

One of the key elements of this bill is that it will be a factor in increasing funding by an estimated 75 per cent for tourism and development in Alberta. Basically, the way it will work is that on April 1, 2005, the bill will change the name of the tax from the hotel room tax to a tourism levy and reduce the rate from 5 per cent to 4 per cent. The revenue that's generated from this levy will be put into the province's general revenue fund, and the proceeds collected from the levy will be used to determine the funding levels for tourism, marketing, and development.

Mr. Speaker, there are some that may feel that the 1 per cent reduction alone may not seem significant to the guests staying one night at a hotel, but if you look at the collective savings based on this year's numbers, it is more than \$11 million. As with most tax reductions, people will choose to spend, or invest, that reduction back into the economy.

Mr. Speaker, there will also be a smooth transition for operators. There will be no substantial change in the process for operators in the province as they will continue to collect the levy from their guests and remit it to the province. One of the key reasons there will be a smooth transition for industry is because of the valuable input from the industry itself. Government has been working with the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association, with Travel Alberta, and with others in the industry over the past few years for an improved way to benefit both the consumer and operators and for ways to help Alberta compete for tourists with provinces like B.C., Ontario, and Quebec.

In our province's centennial year this bill will help stimulate further travel to our province by lowering the cost of accommodations, and it will provide another avenue for improved funding to promote Alberta in the years to come. I urge all members to give their support to Bill 21, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate today to all of the members in the Assembly that the only way taxes go in Alberta is down. What we have today, again, is an example of the fiscal responsibility of this government. This has been the keynote of this administration since we were elected in 1993, and I'm pleased to state to all that are represented here today that this remains, then, the keystone as we move forward into the future.

There are a few people that I want to thank and congratulate for bringing forward the bill today. First of all, we've just heard the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, and I want to thank him both from the standpoint of the government caucus and also individually for his support of this bill. Now, we don't want to forget, of course, the Minister of Finance. That is the department that is bringing forward this bill. Again, with her guidance and encouragement we've been able to proceed through the processes, then, that are necessary in order to be able to bring a bill to this House. I would urge all members, of course, to support the bill, and we'll get into some reasons why we might wish to do that.

First of all, let's talk about a bit of the history. My colleague that sits to the right of me, the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, back in 1994 was chair of a committee that first started looking at what we might do with the tourism industry here in the province. While the tourism industry for a long time has been very strong in Alberta, we felt that perhaps there were ways in which we could strengthen it. I'm reminded continually of a frame of reference that my colleague from Calgary-Nose Hill uses, and that is that just because we're doing good doesn't mean we can't do better. I think this is a great example of that.

Now, where the discussion first started was: what were we going to do in terms of the pillow tax? It was certainly not called that by any act of legislation here in this House, Mr. Speaker, but on the street that's how the situation was referred to: the pillow tax. Of course, there's been lengthy discussion throughout the province as to what might be done and what could be done over time. It was actually quite controversial at various points because there was reason for support for it because, of course, this was a way in which, then, to provide revenue into general revenue.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Of course, the main objective that we have had since 1993 and, certainly, I had in even getting involved in politics was not only to eliminate deficit but was to reduce debt to zero. So it wasn't an easy thing to be able to give up existing revenue patterns. But, again, my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod and others persisted, and through the years I think we saw a gaining of momentum in this project.

3:10

It wasn't until my predecessor Minister of Economic Development put together an MLA team, a strategy team, that really went to work on this particular initiative and actually was successful, then, in bringing it forward and having the government agree that this would be approved. We're now here today talking in terms of a government piece of legislation.

I haven't had time to look at the tabling that was made earlier today and purported to be, perhaps, an objection to the bill. I'll have to spend time later today to look at that and will certainly do that prior to this bill going to committee, but I'd be very surprised to learn of any serious objection, really, to this piece of legislation.

What we have of course is not only the reduction of a tax, but by moving from a hotel tax to the tourism levy, what we do have are funds that are going into and will continue to go into general revenue. In fact, then an equal amount will come out of general revenue and go into, actually, the budget of Economic Development and into our tourism file. So as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed had indicated, about a 75 per cent increase in that particular budget line item.

Now, how will we use it? Well, Mr. Speaker and fellow members, what we will be doing with it is dedicating it to the develop-

ment of marketing plans for tourism in Alberta and also in terms of the development of tourism facilities. Now, all of us are aware of the four pillars of tourism in this province – i.e., the city of Calgary with its Stampede, the city of Edmonton not only with the West Edmonton Mall but its becoming a festival city, and we want to encourage that, and then, of course, the majestic mountains and the resort areas of Banff and Jasper – but, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, and as we've heard in the maiden speeches on the Speech from the Throne as this session has unfolded, there's a lot more to Alberta than just these four pillars.

I want to indicate to you that as many of us travel around the province, we see the sights that strike our imagination. My personal indicator as to whether something is impressive is whether or not I get the goosebumps. I want to indicate to my fellow colleague that would represent the High River area but also Cayley that if you have had the opportunity like I have – and I'm sure that you have. Every week I get to drive south on the number 2 highway south of High River. When you get to a little place called Cayley and you come up over the rise, there is Alberta.

If you ever want to see Alberta, there's where you want to go. Mr. Speaker, it will give you goosebumps, I tell you. Over to the east you have territory that is as flat as the floor of this House. You can see for miles. You could watch your dog run away for three days. Over to the southeast is the town of Nanton, an historic town, a town that is involved in the rural development strategy and has become, perhaps, a centre for antique shopping. If you see the signs on the side of the highway, they're not only offering an opportunity to get involved in antiques, but they have walks where you see murals, then, that are on the sides of the buildings.

Straight ahead of you, Mr. Speaker, are the Porcupine Hills, a beautiful, beautiful sight, and you can see immediately why they are called the porcupines. Then over to the southwest and to the west of you – mind you, I'm keeping my eyes on the highway as I'm doing all of this, and I'm well within the speed limit – you will see, of course, foothills and again those majestic mountains. It is a wonderful, wonderful sight.

Recently in Germany I got talking about tourism, and of course the German people love Alberta. They love the aboriginal situation. They love the cowboy heritage that we have. But I got talking about the hoodoos, and I got quite excited about the hoodoos, Mr. Speaker. I want to say to the people that are around – my mind has gone blank on the name of the park.

An Hon. Member: Writing-on-Stone.

Mr. Dunford: Writing-on-Stone. That's it. Again, if you were to visit this site, nobody – nobody – could come away without being impressed by the wonderful sights that you see.

Now, in the coulees in Lethbridge we don't quite have the hoodoos, but we've got the next best thing in terms of the coulees and especially on full moon nights. I invite every member in this Assembly with your spouse or your significant other, whatever the case is, to come with my wife, Gwen, and myself on a full moon night. Midnight is about the best time because you have the angle then of the moon on these coulees. It's magnificent, it's breathtaking, and it's exciting. I can't tell you the word I used in Germany to describe this, but there are staffers that you might know in my office that will surely tell you. If I knew the German translation, I might be able to get away with it in the House. In any event, I want to tell you that this is a spectacular situation.

I have no idea how much time I have left, but I'm trying to instill in everyone that there is a lot of product in Alberta that can be developed. What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is go, then, beyond

the corridor, go beyond these four pillars and move into the rural areas of Alberta and develop that tourism product.

Ms Calahasen: Yes, and northern Alberta too.

Mr. Dunford: Yes, absolutely. Northern Alberta: beautiful, beautiful, beautiful sites and arrangements of trees. Actually, being from southern Alberta, I want you to know that I'm becoming a bit of a timber expert because I saw a tree.

These are situations, again, in this province, Mr. Speaker, that we want to congratulate.

Now, on the more serious side with the time that is left, despite a bit of the fun that I'm having – perhaps I'm showboating for my family that's here; you know, say it isn't so – I want you to know that within Economic Development, within the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council, within our administration we have the kind of minds, the kind of dedication, the kind of energy that we believe will stand you in good stead in approving this bill, in allowing the tax levy dollars to be given to us and taken into our possession. We promise that we will use them to the benefit of all Albertans from a marketing standpoint and from a tourism development standpoint. This is so important that we get this work done because we want to take the tourism industry, right now about a \$4 billion industry, and we want to move that up. We want to make it stronger in Alberta.

3:20

We want to do this for a number of reasons, not only the obvious economic development reasons, but I remind all of us who are becoming more in tune with the ecology, becoming more environmentally oriented that this is clean industry. This is clean, sustainable economic development. We want it, of course, not only to grow but also to prosper, then, as we move on through the years.

I would be again surprised, maybe even disappointed, to hear objections to this bill. I hope that people can see the wisdom of what the government is doing with this bill and can support it.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to everyone for their kind attention, and I look forward to them supporting the Member for Calgary-Lougheed on this particular bill.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, earlier today the hon. Deputy Speaker provided an historical vignette for the Assembly. I would now like to provide a geographic vignette. Edmonton is in southern Alberta. The geographic centre of Alberta is located 110 miles to the north and west of this city.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the government is in a bit of a rush to have this bill proceed, and I can appreciate that. It was, as the hon. member mentioned, first introduced in 1987. It's been some 18 years now that the industry has been waiting for some changes to be made. Here we are two weeks away from the date on which they were hoping to have it implemented, and it's first being discussed in the Legislature today. So I recognize the need for some hurry up.

However, having said that, I had hoped to be the first member opposite to speak to this bill, and I was a little perturbed, quite frankly, that the Speaker in the chair at the time, for whatever reason, did not see me prepare to speak. I was certainly prepared to speak. Anyhow, that's an issue to be discussed later.

The Speaker: Hon. member, we can always ask for unanimous consent of the House to let you go on. But proceed now. Let's see what we've got for the first 15.

Mr. R. Miller: We'll see if I can fill that time up, Mr. Speaker. I may have to call my family in and reminisce about some drives down the highway in order to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I am in fact pleased to have the opportunity to commence the debate on behalf of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition on Bill 21, the Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005. We live in a province with almost unspeakable natural beauty, from the grasslands of the southeast – here I go now; I'm starting to wax eloquent here – to the vast, wide open prairies all the way up to the beginning of the great Canadian Shield, the incredible sight of the Alberta Rockies, the rolling foothills which lead into the eastern slopes, the Lakeland district in the northeast, the hidden treasures of the Peace country. I'm not sure that I can even name them all.

I have been fortunate enough in my 44 years to have travelled to every corner of this great province, and I consider myself even more fortunate to have met many tourists from all over the world, many of whom have become really good friends. We have a plethora of tourism facilities and attractions in this province, Mr. Speaker, and endless opportunities for ecotourism, shopping, cultural events, and urban nightlife.

According to the Economic Development ministry, approximately 120,000 Albertans are employed in the tourism industry, and they rate tourism as one of Alberta's fastest growing industries. In fact, it is estimated that tourism generates somewhere between \$4 billion and \$5 billion in business each year in this province. So it is clear to me and, I think, clear to most Albertans that this industry is one that requires our attention, and dealing with the hotel tax is an appropriate thing for this Legislature to be doing.

As you well know, the current hotel tax, as I mentioned earlier, was implemented in 1987. At that time it was an effort to deal with the ever-increasing yearly deficits that our province was experiencing under a Conservative government, I might mention, and it was to have been a temporary measure, somewhat like most taxes. When they come in, it always seems as if they're designed to be temporary measures.

Somehow, 18 years later, Mr. Speaker, this tax is still alive and kicking. The deficits are long gone, thanks in large part to much higher than expected energy revenues that we've experienced over the last many years but also thanks in part to the many sacrifices that Albertans have made as a result of government cutbacks. The debt is also gone. At least, that is to say, we have enough money to pay off the debt, and that's a good thing although, in reality, most of us know that we're going to be paying off the debt for another three years or so. Yet the hotel tax remains.

Mr. Speaker, this tax has been an unpopular thing with the industry ever since it was first implemented, and it's been the focus of discussion and possible changes for many years now. Five years ago, in fact, the Treasurer of the day was considering eliminating the tax altogether at the urging of the industry. At exactly the same time the mayors of Alberta's two biggest cities were lobbying the government to allow the municipalities to collect the tax and use it to promote local tourism initiatives.

Now, more recently the hotel and accommodation industry has been working with the government to have the tax changed into a levy, and the hon. Minister of Economic Development alluded to the fact that there has been very close co-operation. That's obviously a good thing, and hopefully it will allow this legislation to move forward with a relatively smooth ride. The new levy, Mr. Speaker, would generate monies or, at least, is designed to generate monies that would be earmarked for the promotion of tourism and travel to and within Alberta. Hence, we have this legislation before us today. As I indicated, the government has been working closely with the industry on this legislation for some time. There is a great deal of support from industry for the bill, and I'm glad to see that.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this bill in principle during second reading. Legislation which will result in a lower rate of taxation and at the same time provide some assurance to the industry that the levy imposed will be used to promote the industry certainly sounds like a good thing on the surface.

I do have a number of small concerns and one major concern, Mr. Speaker. The major concern that I have as it relates to this bill is as follows: the government has made a lot out of the fact that this bill will change the hotel tax into a tourism levy, the intent of which is to provide stable and predictable funding to the industry in order to promote itself and the wonderful opportunities that exist for visitors to Alberta and, indeed, to Albertans themselves. I was spending some time on the website this morning, Mr. Speaker, and it very much trumpets the fact that this will channel money specifically into promoting the industry, yet there is not one word – not one word – in this legislation that commits the government to ensuring that the levy collected will actually be earmarked for the promotion of the tourism industry.

The bill talks about reducing the tax from 5 per cent to 4 per cent. This is good. Taxes are going down. I think we all like that. Certainly, the people renting hotel rooms, staying at bed and breakfasts will appreciate the fact that the taxes are going down. But nowhere does it talk about ensuring that this money will actually go to promote the industry, and that is supposedly the main reason why we're discussing this bill today. In fact, a phone call to the Finance ministry this morning indicated, and the Minister of Economic Development confirmed it here a few minutes ago, that the revenue generated will flow into general revenue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm kind of new to this game. I don't mind admitting that. But if the intention of the bill is to commit more money to the promotion of tourism in Alberta, then why doesn't the bill make any mention of this at all? I would have presumed that the legislation would have some mention of where the funds collected would be held, how it would be proposed that those funds would be managed, how they would be spent.

It's very much, Mr. Speaker, like the tire recycling fund. Right now we collect I think it's \$4 on every new tire that's sold in Alberta, and there's a process outlined that determines exactly what that money will be used for, how it's going to be collected, how it will be used, what's going to happen to it. I would have thought in this legislation there would be something similar. If this is the grand vision of this bill, to promote industry and to make sure that the money collected goes to industry, it should be in there.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, there's been, what I've perceived to be, at least, and I think others would agree, a growing trend by this government to do more and more business by regulation as opposed to legislation, and I'm afraid that this may be just one more example of that. It leaves us and, in fact, the industry with no choice but to take the government's word that the levy that is collected will be used in the promotion of the industry.

There's another concern. The Minister for Economic Development alluded to the letter that I tabled earlier this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's not necessarily opposition to the bill, but it is a concern which I will be raising when we get to Committee of the Whole. There was up until now and presumably until March 31 a \$25 commission per reporting period that is allowed to be claimed back by the operator when they file their hotel tax submission.

Now, Mr. Speaker, \$25 may not seem like an awful lot of money to larger hotels and motels, the larger operators, but for the small operator of a bed and breakfast operation that \$25 allowance is, I think, some recognition of the amount of time and paperwork that's

required on their part to fill in this remittance. In most cases it would be for a very few number of rooms, a very few nights of stay. Nevertheless, it requires a certain amount of paperwork and time input on their behalf. It would appear on first blush – and I know the Minister of Economic Development indicated not, but until we get into the details, we won't know for sure – that there will be perhaps even more bookkeeping required than there was before, and as I say, that \$25 commission is gone for those small operators.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that I'm new. I don't mind admitting that. I'm on a rather steep learning curve right now, but one thing I have learned rather quickly is that there are often cross-jurisdictional contradictions between ministries. This is another one of the concerns that is raised in this letter from the president of the Bed & Breakfast Association. It would appear that both Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Human Resources and Employment have legislation on the books which treats establishments that accommodate more than eight guests as a motel or a hotel, yet this legislation as it's currently written, and indeed the proposed new legislation as well, contemplates four or more bedrooms in defining which would be a lodging that would be required to collect and remit the tourism levy or, as it is now, the hotel tax.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this raises a little bit of a question in terms of contradiction. On the one hand, you could have fewer than eight people staying in your facility and you wouldn't have to comply with certain regulations that apply to hotels and motels, and on the other hand, four bedrooms is the number. I would just like to see some consistency across the ministries.

Now, I also mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that there have been concerns raised in the past about the way the money would be used to promote tourism in Alberta. Last year in this Assembly there was a motion, Motion 506, debated and ultimately passed. It was presented by the Member for West Yellowhead. It called on the government to establish just such a levy as we are discussing today and to dedicate that money to the province's tourism marketing framework. There was considerable debate at the time as to how to best promote the province and the various tourism possibilities that exist here.

I have to admit that my first thought when I was reading through last year's debate was that I would be worried as a citizen that we would be concentrating on what I call the big three; namely, the Calgary Stampede, the Banff corridor, and the West Edmonton Mall. Mr. Speaker, of course we all recognize that these are world-class attractions, and in fact they're world-famous attractions, but at the same time Alberta has so much more to offer. I certainly would hope that we don't lose sight of that fact in any future promotional campaigns that we undertake. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there's probably 83 members in this Assembly, quite frankly, who would have some very strong ideas on how to best promote tourism in their province and particularly as it might affect their individual constituencies.

When I look at the numbers that have been bounced around a little bit both on the government website and by the Minister of Economic Development, I wonder if perhaps we shouldn't be allocating even more money to this endeavour. The proposed legislation, Mr. Speaker, according to the Finance minister's own press release would boost funding for tourism by approximately 75 per cent to somewhere in the area of \$42 million in the coming fiscal year.

According to published newspaper reports from last August, Ontario was spending \$144 million on tourism promotion, Quebec was spending \$125 million, and even British Columbia was spending \$50 million promoting the industry in their province. Given that tourism is bringing in such tremendous revenue, as we said, somewhere between 4 and a half billion dollars, \$5 billion, and we

recognize that it is a major employer in this province – certainly, it's seen as a growth industry – I think it could be reasonably argued that perhaps \$42 million is not enough.

In summary, I think I'd like to just tell all members that I believe that anything that we can do to help revive an industry that has been ravaged somewhat in recent years by the events of 9/11, the SARS outbreak, and more recently the onslaught of BSE, anything we can do to ensure that our tourism industry continues its recovery and goes on to thrive and prosper, Mr. Speaker, would be a good and noble thing for us to be doing.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is now in effect. Five minutes for comments and questions if there are.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are you taking advantage of Standing Order 29, or are you participating?

Mr. Taylor: No. I'd like to speak to the bill if I might, Mr. Speaker, and I won't take a long time. I just have a couple of points that I wanted to bring to it from the perspective of somebody who is an Albertan by choice. A very large part of the reason that I made that choice is because I fell in love with this province as a tourist some three months before I moved here.

I remember, as you drive through Strathmore headed towards the mountains on highway 1, on the Trans-Canada highway, there's just a little rise as the highway comes up out of the town. At that point, with my wife driving and me sitting in the passenger seat, I got my first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains, only at the time I didn't know that that's what they were.

I saw this shimmering white on the horizon, and I thought, oh, there's a bank of clouds coming in to ruin what had been till that point about three beautiful cloudless days in a row. I made a comment like that to my wife, and she sort of smiled because she'd been out here before and I never had. She didn't say anything, and we drove on maybe for another five minutes, and I said: "Those aren't clouds. Those are mountains." From that moment, Mr. Speaker, I was hooked on the awesome natural beauty of the province of Alberta. Three months later, as I said, we were living here.

So I understand the draw that this place has and the hold that it can develop over you once you've seen it. The issue, I guess, is to get more people to see it and stay here and take advantage of it and, in so doing, spend their money on Alberta.

I'm reminded of something else that happened before I first laid eyes on this province and on these mountains, when I was living back in Toronto and I was doing a radio show there. This probably would have been in the late '70s, maybe early '80s; I don't remember exactly. Two representatives from Travel Alberta stopped into the radio station and paid us a visit. They were there to promote tourism in Toronto. I remember asking them, "Why did you come all this way?" I mean, seeing that Alberta was so far away. Of course, you have to understand, Mr. Speaker, that when you live in Toronto, you think that you're in the centre of the universe, and you think that, you know, Hamilton is a day's journey away because you see no reason to go there. But I digress. They said: "Well, you know, there are a lot more people living in Ontario than there are in Alberta or Saskatchewan or British Columbia or Montana or Idaho. We need to draw business. We need to draw tourists from further afield."

At that time there was money in the budget, obviously, for Travel

Alberta to send representatives far afield to promote the natural beauty, the natural wonder, and all the attractions of this great province in which we live. I remember most specifically them promoting – now, I'm not sure which ranch it was. It might have been Bar U; it might have been one of the other guest ranches. But going: wow, there really are ranches and real cowboys still left in the world. I wanted to see that although it took a couple of years to get around to getting out here.

3:40

Why I bring this up is because it seems to me that we could do more in this bill to fund tourism marketing and promotion than we are. If we put all the money that the tourism levy will generate as proposed in this bill into tourism marketing and promotion, it will generate about \$42.5 million in around that figure. As my colleague pointed out, Ontario spends roughly three times that amount. Of course, when you're as devoid of mountains as Ontario, you might need to spend more money to make people think that there's any reason to go there.

But we could spend more. We could do more to promote tourism. It is our fourth biggest industry in this province. This is arguably the most beautiful piece of geography on the North American continent. We could, we should do more, and I would urge that when this bill gets on to committee, that we take a look at that.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Additional speakers?

Then the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to close the debate.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Economic Development for giving us all goosebumps during his poetic address. I would also like to thank the hon. members for Edmonton-Rutherford and Calgary-Currie for their comments. But I see no need for further comment from me at this time, so I would like to ask to call the question.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a second time]

Bill 6

Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 6, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005.

The Fair Trading Act came into force in 1999, when it combined seven statutes into one. Amendments are now needed to fine-tune and update the act. Government services received overall support from stakeholders on these amendments. Over 8,000 stakeholders were consulted, ranging from cheque cashing agencies, electricity marketers, moving companies, natural gas marketers, payday lenders, and time-share operators.

These amendments, Mr. Speaker, will clarify the interpretation of certain definitions and principles in the act; ensure that certain business practices such as negative option practices are prohibited; provide that consumers give express consent for continuous agreements; expand the list of individual representatives of a business who can be sued when the business deals with consumers unfairly; increase the amount of access and control that individuals have over their personal credit information stored by credit reporting agencies; require individuals to provide their express consent to

credit reporting agencies before these agencies can provide credit reports about them unless the report is provided to collect a debt; specify when loan brokers can charge a fee for their services; strengthen the director's authority in the areas of licencing, investigation, and enforcement provisions; improve the act's provision for investigations, prosecutions, and remedies including removing the \$100,000 cap on restitution payable by offenders to consumers; add regulation-making authority to deal with issues such as identity theft, reverse mortgages, and loan brokering; and expand regulation-making authority in the areas of credit reports, licencing, debt collection practices, and public options.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will tighten the legislation, increase administrative efficiencies, and add flexibility to address existing and future marketplace and consumer problems. I look forward to hearing the comments during second reading. Should there be any questions or concerns raised, I undertake to respond to them at the next stage of the bill process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. The hon. member serves as the caucus critic in this area. Please proceed.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this time to commend both the hon. Minister of Government Services and the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for sponsoring Bill 6, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005. We as Official Opposition realize the value of good legislation. We will support any and all government initiatives if they're meant to facilitate good market and business practices and if the paramount goal is to always look after the consumers and taxpayers of this province. This act appears to be geared towards doing just that, and for that, we will throw our weight behind it and support the minister and the hon. member.

The Official Opposition is more interested in constructive dialogue and co-operation with the ruling party for the good of the people than in idle debate and wasteful bickering. This is a common goal that ought to be shared by all parties and ideologies represented in this Assembly, and as the Official Opposition critic for Government Services I must say that I was pleased with the co-operation and information that I received from the hon. minister and his staff and from the hon. member when we briefly met, I think yesterday.

Having said that, it's noteworthy to mention that from our side we're trying to set a tone in this Assembly today which fosters trust and co-operation and avoids animosity and friction. When we as opposition members – and I hope I am speaking for all 21 of us – raise certain concerns or ask a question with regard to a particular bill or a motion, we're not adversarial or confrontational. We simply want an answer to a question. Nothing more, nothing less.

I like this bill because it seems to address certain issues and areas which are very important to most Albertans if not all. One point in the bill that caught my eye was the item about protecting consumers from contracts that may include unknown renewal clauses or other attributes which were not previously agreed to. The hon. member alluded to negative billing, for example, and probably on numerous occasions many of us have experienced that in one way or another. Things like the book of the month or the tape of the month or the video of the month: once your initial period has expired, you are faced with a new bill, and usually it's for an amount that's more than what you agreed to initially.

There's also another area which makes all credit reports that banks use when loaning money more open to all Albertans so they are better informed on the process of loan approval. Many people in the public would go to a bank, apply for a mortgage or apply for a loan, and be denied when, in fact, they actually went ahead and did their

own research and say, "My credit report is okay; I should be entitled to that loan or that mortgage," not knowing that the banks and the collection agencies have different pieces of information that are available only to them but not to the applicant.

It changes the rules on sales contracts for time-shares so that consumers have more time to look over the contract. I think it extends it from seven days to 10 days now. Again, maybe relating to a personal experience, many of us would attend a presentation or a dinner or take a cruise not knowing that we're expected to attend a sales meeting. Usually it's between 90 minutes and two hours in length, and basically what the company is trying to do is sell you a time-share. You know, many of us would actually feel pressured, and there is no way out. You're on that cruise. What can you say? Let me off? You cannot say that. So it extends the period during which you could actually review the contract you have been entered into by 10 days, which is good.

It also protects Albertans from all lending institutions using wage assignments. I think this is particularly important because more and more Albertans are subjected to a heavy debt load which is not proportional, or representative, of the income that they're earning. To prevent wage assignments is actually a good thing.

I also like the particular point about providing that a reporting agency cannot furnish a report unless the consumer has given express consent. I think this fits quite nicely and snugly with the requirements to protect personal information and privacy, so I commend the hon. member for bringing that forward.

The point about requiring a principal, director, manager, employee, or agent of a corporation or a partner in a partnership to be held accountable or guilty of an offence if they aided or abetted in perpetrating a crime makes a lot of sense. It was only previously extended to corporations, but now it also offers the same definition to partnerships, and I think that this is a commendable addition.

3:50

Also, it ensures that criminal record checks can be performed before providing a licence, and I think this is timely. It was overlooked in the first main act, but I think it's timely to bring it in today.

It makes sure that investigations into companies that may be performing fraudulent activities are run more smoothly and that investigators have better access to the information. There were some minor loopholes in the previous act, you know, through which certain areas could not be investigated, so this streamlines it.

It also stops companies from running ads with misleading information. Many of us have seen false ads in the media promising quick and sizable incomes stuffing envelopes or working at home reselling some stupid report on a CD or, you know, just schemes that were meant to extract money from the unsuspecting public where no product or service is furnished. You fall prey to scam artists, basically. Multilevel marketing in some malicious way could also be added to that definition.

Media outlets have to be held accountable and stop running such ads if they're alerted to the falsehood that it promotes. An ad in a paper or on radio or on television may be construed or perceived as being trustworthy just because it's run in a media outlet, and the public actually thinks it has that weight behind it and all that merit because it's in a paper or on TV or on the radio. So I think the government is taking a progressive step forward to ask media outlets to stop running ads propagating falsehood, and I think the natural thing to do for the media outlets is to basically show some leadership and follow the government initiative and stop airing or running those ads in their outlets.

Having said that, we still have minor concerns that I would

tremendously appreciate some clarification on from the hon. member. We're concerned that there appears to be a trend developing where this government removes the core components of bills and laws and loosely puts them into the regulations. I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford also mentioned the same point. While we realize that sometimes the ministry or the department needs to make a timely decision in response to emerging practices or new situations, it's still a little alarming because regulations are set and changed without full consultation or input from a cross-section of the affected public. The minister at the time and some board members would decide which regulations to add, which ones to omit, and which ones to amend.

I fully understand the rationale that certain decisions have to be made when this House is not sitting, but perhaps this might take us to the argument that this House is one of the shortest sitting in the western hemisphere. I, for one, and all my caucus colleagues don't mind sitting twice as many days so we can collaborate and work with the government. We feel that this preferred government approach gives the minister too much power and discretion and effectively eliminates any need for consultation or opinion seeking.

Who decides who ends up joining these boards? Who sits on those boards? Who qualifies to sit on those boards and draft those regulations? Also, which companies or stakeholders were or will be represented on these regulations boards? Will the meetings planned for changing the regulations be open to the public? Can Joe Average or, to quote the Premier, can Martha and Henry attend those meetings or at least even submit written recommendations or suggestions?

Lastly, I urge the hon. minister and the hon. member to ensure that the sections which are going to be repealed do end up in the regulation sections. They have to be clearly stated to ensure that the continuation of consumer protection is implemented, and I'm mainly referring to sections 46 and 48 pertaining to credit reporting. It's an area, actually, that is receiving a lot of attention in the media recently. Many people have written to me as the opposition critic regarding credit reporting and the practices, you know, with respect to student loans, previous finances, mortgages, and so on. I am a little concerned that they're being repealed from the existing act, and I would like to see them highlighted and emphasized in the regulations after.

Citizens who felt that the initial Fair Trading Act was brought forward to protect them and offer them tools to evaluate and possibly repair their credit ratings are now concerned that repealing this section might just leave them with a bad credit report forever. I would hate for them actually to think that this government is letting go of its commitment, so I urge the government, I urge the minister and the hon. member to promptly and properly draft those regulations to alleviate this concern.

To end today, I repeat our agreement as the Official Opposition with the proposed amendments, and we look forward to working alongside our government colleagues. Thank you.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this bill, and together with my colleague for Edmonton-McClung I will commend the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and the minister responsible for bringing this legislation forward.

Speaking to some of the areas that it touches, such as identity theft, I think is really important considering the real problems we saw last year with the theft of identity information of many senior government people that got into the hands of alleged organized criminal elements. The ability to restrict the use of any information

of their identity and to deal with that somewhat more effectively I think is very important.

Also, to deal with utility marketing schemes as different ways to make money seem to be arising through means of the way we govern ourselves and problems with time-shares and payday loan dealers and such. You know, these are things that must be regulated.

Of course, and to concur with my colleague for Edmonton-McClung, we must be wary of the inclination of this government to deal with things by regulation and orders in council. I think the division 8 debacle that we saw in December with the Alberta labour code has, you know, underlined that fact, and we have to be very careful in this province that we don't go too far with that type of thing.

I'm very pleased to see movement on the practice of negative options. That's where a consumer is not liable to pay for any goods or services received under a negative option practice. This bill strikes out "unless the consumer agrees in writing to pay for the goods or services." That's very good. You know, the negative option is something that just kind of really pulls consumers in without their knowledge, and to have something that effectively deals with this I think is a responsible move on the part of the government.

Some questions arise. It takes out the list of information an agency can and can't include in its reports and puts that in regulations. Again, it's a regulation problem. Most of the members duly elected by Albertans to look after their rights as individuals and consumers will not then have a say as to how this will be developed, and it will be approved behind closed doors. I think that's a concern of some importance.

It takes out of the act provisions demanding that a reporting agency must disclose a person's file to that person on request. I guess it begs the question: is there anywhere else that requires a reporting agency to disclose to an individual or their representative what's on their file once this is repealed?

It removes the whole section allowing a person to dispute the accuracy or completeness of information in their file. Once this section is repealed, is there anywhere else in legislation that gives an individual the right to dispute the information in their file in the sense of this type of important consumer legislation? It vastly expands the aspects of the act which, again, the minister can control through regulations. It's our major and biggest concern in this particular legislation.

The updates on the reverse mortgages are timely. We've all seen the ads there. I mean, it's something that must be looked at.

The receipt situation. It repeals the section requiring that every collection agency must acknowledge the receipt of any money collected from a debtor. Does that mean that they don't have to issue receipts now for payments made? It repeals the reporting requirements of a collection agency in the section prohibiting certain activities by a collection agency or collector.

4:00

Removing these sections, Mr. Speaker, makes the public more vulnerable to rougher treatment and possibly even harassment by collection agencies, even more so than happens at the moment. The removal of some of these prohibitions of certain activities opens the door for infringement on the debtor's privacy. There's also some vagueness. It adds failing to comply with other applicable legislation as a reason to refuse to issue or remove or suspend or cancel a licence. Well, what determines what's applicable? Sometimes legislation can be too broad, and you know, in the application of certain provisions and laws we have to be very careful in that area.

One other area that's related to that is the ability for the director

to have the authority to do anything to enforce an order against real property. I think that is far too wide reaching. It speaks to the rights of property that many of us hold dear, and it is, I think, too much of a wide berth as it's termed in this.

I think the rights of consumers are very important in our legislation. I think that to uphold in this particular act respect for the law increases respect for the rule of law. I again commend the movers of this bill. We'll be in favour of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Ducharme: Question.

The Speaker: The question has been called. Are there additional speakers?

Then the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close the debate.

Mr. Ducharme: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

Bill 1 Access to the Future Act

[Adjourned debate March 9: Mr. Eggen]

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of Bill 1 and want to say how much I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of many Albertans with respect to advanced education and investments.

I graduated in 1973 and was fortunate enough after six years of school, including four years of medical school, to complete that education without any significant debt. That seems to be a thing of the past, and increasingly, as a part-time teacher now in university, over the last decade I've heard from a lot of students about the longing they have to be less stressed in their pursuit of higher education.

The citizens of Calgary-Mountain View, where I am representative, have a fairly significant rate of postsecondary education. Approximately two-thirds have postsecondary training. Many of them expressed concerns during the last six months and during the election period about postsecondary education and about the future for their children and opportunities that they wanted to see and that they experienced but that have been less accessible as a result of some of the changes over the past decade in this province.

Most of my constituents are pleased that Alberta has paid off its debt, but the decade of cuts has indeed left people, including teachers and students, in a deficit position, stretched and stressed over the lack of resources for learning, the lack of support for learning, for infrastructure, and for building and maintenance. That was quite evident to me as I worked both on the main campus and in the medical school over this past decade. Many of them in the constituency are calling on government for sustained, reliable, predictable funding through an endowment, not depending on the ups and downs of our oil industry, that would allow consistent planning into the foreseeable future and the funding that would allow for quality education and supports.

My constituency happens to have the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, the Alberta College of Art, the University of Calgary

medical school, and all have indicated tremendous support for this bill. Truly, our future does depend on attracting and retaining capable people in Alberta.

I'll talk just about two major concerns that I was party to, and those are student concerns and faculty concerns. In relation to tuition there has been a 250 per cent increase over the decade, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier, I found it hard to justify the fact that I graduated after six years of university without significant debt, to turn to students and justify the fact that their tuition left them between \$20,000 and \$21,000 in debt on average. That is an average. That doesn't account nearly for the amount that many students incur because they're not supported by their parents, and up to \$40,000 and \$60,000 debts I encountered with some of my students.

Class sizes. I myself experienced where students had to sit on the floor because of the lack of space. Certainly, the lack of access has been well publicized over the past year particularly, when we had to turn away 14,000 students who were otherwise qualified in the Calgary area.

These were serious and recurring expressions from students, some of whom we had in the Legislature today.

I've heard from many young people about concerns in the apprenticeship area, the lack of access to apprenticeships. My own son is one of those who's trying to get into an apprenticeship program and struggling to know where to begin and how to ensure that there will be access and a job afterwards. So I would ask in terms of this bill that we try to address an approach to facilitate apprenticeships in various trades so that apprentices are not discouraged from trades of their choice and therefore not dropping out, as we heard earlier today.

They also expressed concerns particularly, obviously, from the Alberta College of Art, concerns about the lack of commitment to arts, humanities, and the social sciences. Truly, Mr. Speaker, these are integral to healthy human and community development. If we're talking about a sustainable future in Alberta, we have to invest not only in the hard business faculties and the professions but surely in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, which are integral to quality of life and, indeed, to reducing mental stress in our culture. I think we're paying a significant price in the health care sector, in which the health of people has been limited to looking at whether they have a job and whether they have a significant income, as opposed to what the arts and humanities bring to the total picture of our humanity.

Other issues related to disadvantaged people and immigrants and how to make more accessible loans and subsidies for their further education.

I alluded to some of the stresses that I experienced as a teacher at the University of Calgary, and I would say that our health system is dealing with a lot of these issues. We're experiencing another deficit, then, that has not been measured over the last decade, and that's a mental health deficit, especially among college students but also among faculty who have been forced to leave or downsize their expectations. The literature is showing an increasing number of mental health problems in our health care system, most particularly college students with increased rates of depression and anxiety and, indeed, suicide threats over this past decade.

These are all part of postsecondary education demands that teachers and other faculty on campus have to address and part of a deficit that is much more difficult to measure, one that is borne increasingly by the health care system. We need to find the roots of these. I'm not saying that they all lie at the base of the education system, but I am saying that we have an increasingly stressed and health-challenged population, and we need to look at roots and solutions into the future.

4:10

In terms of the faculty this decade of cuts has had significant impacts. There has been increasing concern about the targeted investments in postsecondary education, and I can speak for the medical school, where a number of very dramatic and influential special projects have been developed: bone and joint issues for example, the new Markin chair in health and wellness. These have been important contributions, but as another member has indicated, this should be icing on the cake of a continued, sustained operating grant system where people can count on a budget, can make plans for two to three years into the future, and can count on the classroom supports that they need to do what is a reasonable quality of teaching.

The lack of operating support extends also to the clerical and the secretarial and the communications side of the faculty, and many have expressed the frustration that unless the operating grants, the ongoing grants apart from capital and new budget expenditures, are addressed, many of our best teachers will leave and have left this province for other fields.

There is, then, Mr. Speaker, a need to rebuild trust in the whole process of postsecondary funding and a commitment to professors and infrastructure and students. This has been lost during this decade of severe austerity in postsecondary education. The public has repeatedly said that education is the best investment we can make for our future. All of us here agree. The question now is how and in what manner to sustain that so that people have confidence and not only come here but stay here as a result of the investment we're making.

I simply want to leave with a message of urgency to the government to move ahead as quickly as possible, to aid the population who holds the future, our future, in their hands. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to participate in the debate.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I applaud the initiative by this government towards a change. For most of the last decade students and teachers have been trying to cope with increased demands and inadequate and declining resources. While some of the erosion has been halted, much remains to be done. Albertans consistently rank education as one of their top priorities. Polls have indicated that Albertans want to see improvements in teaching and learning conditions.

Michael Fullen, renowned author, states that although change is unpredictable, you can set up conditions that help to guide the process. You must establish a sense of urgency, create a guiding coalition, develop a vision and strategy of what we want, communicate the vision, empower broad-based action, generate short-term wins, and anchor new approaches in the community.

We have a sense of urgency, and the government must now move to ensure that all Alberta families have access to the education they need, from kindergarten to postsecondary. We need the high school graduates for postsecondary, and our high school completion rates are determined by factors beginning with kindergarten.

Too many Alberta students are still trying to learn in overcrowded classrooms, where opportunities for individual assistance and support are limited. Education is investing in our future, opening opportunities for inner-city children to break the cycle of poverty by gaining access to a properly funded education. It is the right thing to do. Even our schoolchildren responded to the tsunami disaster, a

way for young people to take their little money and invest in someone else because it is the right thing to do.

There is a huge variety of different careers young people must prepare themselves for in the future. Postsecondary education provides the backdrop for preparation. We need more resources for counselling students to help them make wise choices for their postsecondary training and careers because Alberta has the lowest average rate in Canada for students to move on to postsecondary education, and demand for postsecondary education is expected to grow. Seventy-nine per cent of all new jobs created in Canada and Alberta are expected to require postsecondary essentials and credentials.

Yet despite having paid down its fiscal debt, Alberta has allowed the infrastructure debt to balloon to between \$7 billion and \$8 billion. In the education sector spending on infrastructure has not been sufficient to provide high-quality learning environments for all Alberta's students. Key recommendations of Alberta's Commission on Learning have yet to be acted upon.

Alberta's Commission on Learning made many recommendations that if implemented would improve classroom conditions. These include ensuring that all students have access to adequate counselling, diagnostic, and other specialized services necessary for them to succeed; ensuring adequate support is in place when children with special needs are integrated into regular classrooms; providing classroom teachers with adequate support to develop and implement individual program plans for children with special needs; setting province-wide standards for the types of technology that should be available in every classroom; providing adequate funding not only for the purchase of hardware and software but also for necessary technical support, training, and continuous upgrading of equipment; providing significantly improved support for aboriginal students and their families; establishing parenting centres in communities across the province with close links to elementary schools.

The government has yet to provide targeted financial assistance to school boards to enable these recommendations to be implemented. Alberta's students are still waiting for improved classroom conditions. We need to address needs for education at all levels. We can create a guiding coalition. This government can do this.

Bill 1 is the beginning, but it falls short. We must develop a vision and strategy of what we want for Alberta education. We know the value of postsecondary education, without a doubt. At the very time when postsecondary is becoming more basic to individual success and more essential to the future of Alberta, this government has treated it as a high-priced option. We must support all postsecondary schools as the investment they are, beginning with kindergarten.

Finally, my focus, Mr. Speaker, is on the legislation's intent. In the preamble I find four 'whereas' statements that I take as goals. First is a belief in advanced education as a means of economic growth. Second is an intent to provide education for skill development and quality of life. Third is a commitment to ensure educational access to the qualified and motivated. Fourth is a support for innovation to facilitate access and eliminate barriers. I suggest these goals in aggregate because I support them in aggregate. I have difficulties with the order in which they appear, however. At present this implies that economic values are paramount and education is a servant of the economy.

An earlier Alberta government championed education in very different circumstances in the Depression. It supported education as a goal in its own right regardless of financial return. It may be that this government shares that belief and has simply not given attention to the order these objectives appear or the priority. I suggest a reordering of the goals in the preamble to Bill 1 to emphasize the

individual and that the economy exists to serve the citizen and not the reverse. This vision can begin to provide an anchor for education in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to make a few brief comments on Bill 1. First, I'm happy to see that the government has finally begun to address the postsecondary funding issue in this province. Alberta has the money and the expertise to become a postsecondary beacon in North America, and I challenge the government to aim high and not settle for anything but being the best.

But as I look at this surprisingly thin bill, some questions come to mind. Without sounding too mercenary about it, I have to ask: what's in it for my sons? Now, two of my sons are college-age, certainly qualified for postsecondary education. The third is a junior high student who is intent on becoming an entomologist, of all things. You won't believe what we have as pets in our house.

I wish I could say that my two older sons are enjoying college life and all it has to offer, but I can't. They're at an age when they could be taking arts courses or perhaps exploring business or science, but they're not. Why is that? Well, simply put, postsecondary learning in Alberta has become so expensive that it has become a barrier to education, the one overarching concern of thousands of Albertans in the great, overlooked middle class. My son, for instance, wanted to take a commercial art course at Grant MacEwan this past year, but it would have cost him \$6,500 for one term. That made him change his plans in a hurry.

4:20

You know, Mr. Speaker, just a little over 10 years ago the arts tuition fee at the University of Alberta was just \$1,229. Today it's \$4,537, and that's just for one year. To obtain a bachelor of arts degree at the University of Alberta will set a typical student back about \$20,000. Once that student has the BA framed on the wall, what do they then do? Usually they go back to school. As wonderful as it is to have a BA, we all know that it doesn't set you out on a career path to riches. The sky-high cost of tuition in Alberta has made the admirable goal of education for the pure joy of expanding your mind into an out-of-reach goal for the great middle class. As far as I can see, there's nothing in this bill that addresses this problem.

Mr. Speaker, the bill promises "plans for ensuring that financial need is not a barrier to pursuing advanced education opportunities." There are also "plans to increase the participation in advanced education of individuals who are disadvantaged due to social, economic, geographic or cultural factors," which if implemented would be good news for Alberta's chronically overlooked and undereducated aboriginal community. But, again, I have to ask: what's in this bill for the middle class, the middle-class Albertan, the type of person who makes too little money to qualify for grants but not enough to be able to fund postsecondary education without going into serious debt?

This bill does not address the single greatest problem postsecondary institutions face: the lack of predictable, long-term operating grants. This has resulted in the University of Alberta, which is legislated not to run a deficit, doing exactly that. It has resulted in the anomaly of cranes dotting the skyline at the U of A as high-profile big-ticket buildings go up while the buildings around them decay. In Bill 1 we see promises of seed money for innovations,

which is code, basically, for new stuff that we can show off to the world. We see more scholarships for Alberta students but not an overall decrease in tuition that would benefit every single student.

Now, maybe I'm missing something, Mr. Speaker, but as far as I can tell, in all these promises there's not one commitment to increasing the base operating funds for institutions. So while there may be money for high-profile new initiatives that make headlines for the U of A or the U of C, these new initiatives have to be sustained by operating budgets that can't keep up. It is the equivalent of building a new hospital but not supplying the money to staff it, clean it, or heat it. I can't speak on behalf of postsecondary institutions, but I would suspect that if you asked each college and university to compile a wish list, at the top would be: give us predictable, long-term funding, and let us do our job.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, as the debate over Bill 1 progresses, that we can expect some help for the middle-class students, the middle-class parents, and the low-profile but important faculties struggling to keep up. Thank you.

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

I'm prepared to recognize additional speakers. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I support putting more money into advanced education. Who doesn't support that? The question is how, and is this the right model, the right way to go?

I want to first make a comment about the title, Access to the Future Act. The key word in that title is not "future." Of course, universities prepare our young people for the future. The key word is "access." The key word in this name in terms of practical outcomes is the word "access." This is an important word, and in my experience it is usually associated with the capability of students with lesser financial resources being able to access higher education.

This is a huge issue in this province given the fact that Alberta has the lowest average rate in Canada of students who move on from high school to postsecondary education – it's at 43 per cent – and given that Alberta has the third lowest number of postsecondary degrees granted per capita in Canada compared to other provinces. So it's important to ask ourselves whether our students are getting access to advanced education and what are the roadblocks, the obstacles in the way of getting access.

Maybe on the list of definitions in this bill there should be a definition of the word "access" because most would think that access is about the opportunities and possibilities open to our students to get into university. Can they get access to the programs that they need? Can our students, no matter what their financial status is, get access to colleges and universities?

The one clause that I really quite agree with, 2(c), is the emphasis on "plans to increase the participation in advanced education of individuals who are disadvantaged due to social, economic, geographic or cultural factors." Many years ago I was involved in a program at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a program which was set up to admit disadvantaged people from the black community and also aboriginal students into St. Mary's, a program that enabled them to reach the required literacy levels so that they could compete in a university environment. That led to a number of students being able to get into university who wouldn't have otherwise qualified. So that kind of special emphasis on a special program to enable the disadvantaged to get access to advanced education is very, very important.

I think, considering that our universities and colleges are mainly in urban environments, it's very important in Alberta to look at rural education. Much innovation has gone into distance education. I for

a whole year drove from Edmonton to Slave Lake to teach a course one day a week, and it was a great experience for me. Those students had an opportunity to take a university course without having to come to Edmonton, and I think that's very, very important. These kinds of programs are absolutely essential.

The rhetoric of equality of opportunity is not enough; there must be also equality of results. We have to put funding into programs that really do enable students who are disadvantaged to get ahead and to get the kind of education they need to participate in this great province. We need equality of results.

Mr. Speaker, the word "access" in this bill is not primarily focused on guaranteeing the kind of accessibility that I've been talking about. In this bill access seems to mean the ability of educational institutions to access funding, so an access to the future fund is proposed. The emphasis of this fund is on innovation and excellence, but that places the onus on the institution rather than the individual's potential. So we're no longer talking about a student's access to higher education; we're talking about a university's ability to prove that it's innovative enough to attract money.

Why should the ordinary student growing up in Alberta bear that kind of burden? Instead of access being determined by the real needs and abilities of students applying to go to university, access is determined by the decision of some kind of elite access advisory committee overseeing the universities and colleges and meting out or agreeing with this program or that program.

Mr. Speaker, in my education in Canada one of my favourite philosophers is the Canadian political philosopher George Grant, who taught us many years ago in all the books that he wrote that we in Canada are moving gradually toward the universal homogenous technological state, and it seems to me that this bill is encouraging that process to take place. What it's moving us toward is a kind of 'multiversity' in Alberta in which we would all have the same common application process. No matter where you want to go to school, there's the same common application process, which seems to me to overlook the tremendous variety of programs, the high-quality programs that are everywhere in Alberta. Students applying to an agricultural or forestry or nanotechnology program or whatever are applying to highly specialized programs, demanding that the student fit the program and so is able to choose the program of his choice. I don't understand this idea of a common application process. I don't know what that would mean. I don't really understand it, and I hope that that can be explained as we move through this bill.

4:30

Also, I want to raise a question. In terms of moving, it seems like we're moving in a formation of a kind of highly technologized multiversity for Alberta. We're moving in the direction of having a kind of super institution in which the ministry really hovers over advanced education institutions in this province in a way, as the bill says, "to monitor, evaluate and report on the quality." Well, I have a lot of problems with that. Mr. Speaker, I don't understand how this can be suggested given the tremendous traditions of academic freedom that universities have established.

Now, if Alberta wants to have world-class universities, then there has to be a respect for curriculum development, respect for university professors, their academic freedom. I've taught many courses at the University of Alberta, courses on the history of the occult, courses in spirituality, comparative religions, and I never felt that I was accountable to some superministry, some government out there, which would be evaluating the standards of excellence that I was following for my course. I, of course, was accountable to my peers and accountable to rich traditions of academic excellence that are

well rooted in Canadian culture and life, but I really object to a kind of ministry hovering over advanced education.

Of course, that means that money that goes to universities and colleges in Alberta has strings attached to it. I find this ironical because this government is always criticizing Ottawa for transferring money to the provinces with strings attached, yet in this bill they're suggesting: "Okay. We'll give money to advanced education, the universities and colleges, but there are going to be all kinds of strings attached. You have to meet these various criteria in terms of proving quality."

I just submit to you as evidence of this a recent document that was presented to the House of Commons by the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations, which points out that in Alberta the government has imposed performance measures to ensure accountability in the postsecondary sector for 10 years, and it hasn't worked. It hasn't worked. There's been too much ministerial micromanagement, which doesn't work because there are not enough staff to ensure that it does work. So the conclusion of university professors is that restricted funds are not the way to go in terms of ensuring the tremendous excellence of our universities.

I point out that the University of Alberta, in their strategic business plan, specifies that the solution to the university's budgetary problems lies in securing "unrestricted revenue," not revenue with strings attached where they have to be accountable to some superministry that hovers over them but unrestricted revenue, "while continuing to manage expenditures effectively." When too much of an institution's revenue comes with restrictions on how it can be spent, the institution's ability to respond to change is greatly impeded.

So over and over again the connection between performance measurement and the restriction of funds just leads to tremendous problems in the advancing of education in this province. It takes a long time to build up resources in various programs. They have to have secured funding in order to develop those programs, in order to move in the direction of becoming world-class universities.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I think it's great that so many billions of dollars are being earmarked for higher education, but there has to be the insurance of the autonomy of higher education and the protection of academic freedom. The basic problem, as I said already and as has been mentioned again and again by the university professors that I have talked to, is the lack of secured, unrestricted funding. When you also couple that with the fact that Alberta only invests 5.2 per cent of its total expenditures on postsecondary education, making Alberta's rank second lowest in Canada, no wonder we have problems in the area of advanced education.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

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

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I just would like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora where he reads in the bill that the provision of providing for some measurements and some understanding as to whether or not we're getting close to our goal of being a world-class educational system comes with strings attached, and if he doesn't read that in the bill or doesn't see a connection in the bill that says that money for universities and for colleges in advancing education in this province is not connected to those parameters but that the parameters in the bill clearly set out that we're trying to monitor whether we're achieving our goal, why he would make that up and then negative it.

Dr. B. Miller: It's the section under Quality. What does it say?

"The Minister shall develop and implement mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on the quality of advanced education." Well, isn't that some strings attached? How do you measure the quality of a course that I teach on the history of the occult? I mean, does the government have any idea how that could be done? Or a course on nanotechnology. Surely, how do you do that? How do you measure the quality?

Universities set their own standards of quality in conjunction with the professional societies of academics to which they are responsible. They have all kinds of ways of assessing the quality of their own classroom work and education. They're continually producing articles that receive feedback and criticism from their peers. They're part of organizations that involve faculty around the world. That's how you maintain the quality, through peer oversight and the responsibility to your peers. It has nothing to do with governments setting any kind of standards, so really I don't understand this section 3, quality. It sets up a kind of draconian emphasis in terms of this special fund.

The Speaker: The intention of this is short answers, short questions. Another question?

Mr. Hancock: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora would prefer that Albertans be reduced to reading *Maclean's* magazine in order to determine whether or not their universities and colleges and technical institutes are appropriately ranked or have some understanding of the quality. Understanding the hon. member's point about how you do determine quality and the need for independence of the institutions and not detracting at all from those commentaries about how institutions actually maintain their quality, is there a better way to have Albertans understand where their institutions rank other than reading *Maclean's* magazine?

The Speaker: The hon. member?

Okay. Additional questions? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Would it be fair to say that the hon. member's position is that the taxpayers of Alberta should give him or someone like him, really, an unmonitored amount of money so that he can teach the occult?

Dr. B. Miller: I think I don't have to justify the teaching of courses like the history of the occult because, I mean, in the history of the development of religious studies in various universities – my own degree is from the University of Chicago – this is the kind of curriculum that we develop to cover all the religions of the world in every different kind of culture. So there are good reasons for developing a fine program in comparative religions. We don't take our instructions from anybody beyond us, and we report, of course, through the proper channels. The president of the university has the responsibility of reporting to the public what happens in a university and so on.

Sure, you should be concerned that your tax dollars are being properly used, and there should be some kind of accountability, but what I'm dealing with is the issue of quality and standards. The quality of advanced education – it sounds very draconian to have some sort of superministry hovering over, determining, monitoring, evaluating. Just the reading of it sounds quite draconian.

4:40

An Hon. Member: They're unqualified.

Dr. B. Miller: That's right. They're unqualified to do that kind of work.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development on this question portion?

Mr. Horner: A question, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted . . .

The Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. We've now expended the time.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose to continue the debate.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin my remarks with a quote from a famous educator from my constituency, Dr. Chester Ronning: "Live until you're old, learn until you're old, and there's still so much [more] to learn."

As many of my colleagues know, my background lies in education. I had the pleasure of teaching and working at Augustana University College for many years, and prior to that I attended the institution as a student. My experiences have shown me that the value of an education cannot be overestimated. It is crucial that postsecondary education remains accessible for Albertans who have the ability and the drive to pursue one. Whether an individual is working towards the acquisition of a master's designation in the trades or a university degree, our future success as a province is tied to the accessibility of learning.

Bill 1 recognizes this fact and lays out a comprehensive strategy to ensure that Albertans are able to gain the training they choose. This will be accomplished through a variety of ways, such as developing new ways to share information. The Lois Hole digital library will increase accessibility to learning materials in our province. Using the infrastructure provided by the SuperNet, this library will allow Albertans throughout the province to access digital information and print materials that are contained in our postsecondary institutions. In such a large province as ours proximity to a large academic library can be an issue, and this initiative will facilitate lifelong learning in this province. The ultimate goal of this library is that whether you are in Peace River or Calgary, you will be able to access the same information.

Another concept that Bill 1 devotes energy toward is the issue of transferability. Bill 1 works toward improved transferability of postsecondary credits between institutions and from other learning arenas. This will recognize the skills gained through different learning experiences and make it easier for students to achieve their educational goals.

As well as addressing transferability between institutions, this act will also make it simpler for students to receive financial assistance, whether this takes the form of bursaries, scholarships, or loans. This bill calls for the investigation of the implementation of a one-window system where students will be able to browse and apply for financial assistance. In addition to this, Bill 1 calls for the addition of \$1 billion to the Alberta heritage scholarship fund. This will increase the amount of funding that is available for scholarships, grants, and bursaries in this province. Having a greater number of bursaries available will benefit all students, ensuring that financial status will be no barrier to continuing education.

However, Bill 1 does not only work to increase accessibility to learning; it also introduces new avenues for learning in our province. The proposed centre for Chinese studies at the University of Alberta will provide our province with an amazing opportunity to learn more about this rich culture. As a province we already have a great number of ties with China, and the opportunity to learn more about one of the most populous nations in the world is one that I am sure

many Alberta students will appreciate. I find it almost providential that this centre has been announced within a year of Augustana University College in Camrose becoming a campus of the University of Alberta. This stems from the passion that one of Augustana's former presidents had for China.

Mr. Speaker, I began my remarks today with a quote. These words, as I mentioned before, were spoken by the late Dr. Chester Ronning. This man was an academic, a teacher, an MLA, a foreign diplomat, and a personal friend of mine. Dr. Ronning was the principal at Camrose Lutheran College, which is now Augustana, from 1927 to 1942, after which he went to a career in the foreign service.

His special interest was China, where he grew up, and Augustana University College had put forth a concept to create a chair of Chinese studies at the college, which would be named after Chester Ronning. Unfortunately, this plan did not come to fruition as hoped, but with Augustana becoming a campus of the University of Alberta and the announcement of this new centre focusing on Chinese studies, Augustana has the opportunity to be involved and be a part of this.

Mr. Speaker, continued investment in postsecondary education through increased funding for scholarships and innovative ideas such as the centre for Chinese studies is but one part of the Access to the Future Act. Bill 1 also concerns itself with another issue which will greatly affect the province's future, and that is research. This is only fitting as postsecondary learning and research are inextricably linked, and increasing funding is one area that affects the other.

In Bill 1 the government commits to expanding the value of the ingenuity fund. While this will be beneficial for research in a variety of areas, there is one that I would like to highlight in particular, and this is the area of water research. Through the ingenuity fund the Alberta Ingenuity Centre for Water Research was born. This centre focuses on the broad picture when it comes to this precious resource, and it will be instrumental in the further development and application of the province's water for life strategy.

Water quality, water use, and water conservation are issues that are important to Albertans and to the constituents of Wetaskiwin-Camrose. Of particular interest to myself and my constituents is the Battle River basin. Mr. Speaker, the Battle River flows through my constituency, and there is continuing research on this river because of the diverse flora and fauna it supports as well as its unique water source. The Battle River relies solely on surface water runoff and groundwater to feed it. It does not benefit from the snowpack runoff from the mountains and the foothills or the glacial melting that feeds many other basins in Alberta. As a result, this river has naturally low volumes, and this presents challenges because of municipal and agricultural pressures that increased development brings. Additional capital for the ingenuity fund could result in increased funding for water research into issues such as those that I have already mentioned as well as a wide range of energy, environmental, and life science projects.

Mr. Speaker, the Access to the Future Act addresses many challenges that are facing our province as we head into our second century. Through supporting our postsecondary institutions and research that is performed throughout our province, we will be well equipped to deal with any challenges that we may face in the future.

I support Bill 1, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the floor to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Then I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although the government's

proposed Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, may seem like a step forward, may seem like a long overdue look at the obstacles and hurdles faced by our postsecondary students, it still fails to address the core issues.

This government's philosophy resembles very much the band-aid approach. When we're playing sports and someone gets hurt, someone gets an abrasion or a cut, their coach tells them to bandage it and keep playing. Later, when time permits, when we have more free time, we may take a thorough look at it, and we may try to tackle the real issues. Sometimes the pharmacist in me resurfaces, and I make a reference to a pharmacy term. This bandage, Mr. Speaker, will not work. This approach will never work when we're talking about chronic issues, chronic problems which besiege our postsecondary institutions and hold our university and college students hostage. Our postsecondary education system is beleaguered by lack of space, lack of funding, and lack of empathy for the students.

4:50

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that although Bill 1 may appear to be forward thinking—that's relative to the typical Conservative position—it still in my opinion is a little short-sighted. The Conservative government plagiarized our Alberta Liberal postsecondary plan right out of our campaign policy book, changed the wording a little, tweaked it a little bit, and laid claim to the idea. I am not terribly mad at the Conservatives because the end result would be one that would help alleviate difficulties which our students face in finding spots and in affording spots in our colleges and universities.

I could also go as far as saying that I understand the Conservatives' motives in scrambling to hastily put together what appears to be a plan to address voter anger at the Tories, to react to voter receptiveness to the Alberta Liberal platform, and to pretend to be listening to what Albertans told them in their very own It's Your Future survey.

I think I can find it in my heart to co-operate with the ruling Conservatives on this one if they accept the following guiding principles. One, removing the cap that they put at \$3 billion on the endowment fund. Uncapping the endowment fund is the right thing to do, especially in our allegedly debt-free stage and with our huge surpluses. If we take the \$3 billion and split it up amongst all students and apprentices in the province, they would each get something like \$16,000. A place like Princeton, on the other hand, has an endowment fund of up to \$1.3 million U.S. per student. So if we're talking excellence and talking setting the stage for Alberta students and Alberta universities and colleges and institutions to excel and be world renowned and world respected, we have to look at other places like Princeton and Harvard, for example, and see where we stand in comparison to them. This government, unfortunately, sees education as a liability. It looks at education as merely a budget line entry on the debit side. In fact, it's a sound investment in a stronger tomorrow.

Two, committing to at least 10 years of funding the endowment out of future provincial budget surpluses. This act talks about one year, and there is no assurance and no guarantee after April 1. Our postsecondary institutions are faced with uncertainty and vagueness when dealing with this government. If we treat them as businesses, or if we expect them to make decisions and long-term plans, the least we can do is to offer them some clarity and some certainty so they can forecast and plan. Leaving it to the whim of the minister at the time and his or her personal agenda or his or her personal preference or whichever lobbying group happens to have his or her ear at the time is totally unacceptable.

Three, we as the Official Opposition demand that an independent

postsecondary education commission perform a full review of the entire system. We're talking funding, tuition, accessibility, quality, et cetera, not a cosmetic ministry public relations exercise or a make-work project for Tory MLAs. The planned affordability review, which will be performed by Tory backbenchers, will surely not be there to criticize the ministry so much.

Four, this government puts too much emphasis on the applied or marketable research, and it totally underestimates the value and merit of pure research. Again, this is a government looking under its feet, only realizing short- or medium-term gain. Investing in pure scientific research and fields like the arts, the humanities, or social sciences would provide a wider scope, and it's probably more useful to society at large, not only to select private interest groups. This bias has to end.

Five, the government has to investigate all options and try its hardest to ensure that students get actual physical placements in postsecondary institutions. Physical enrolment should not be replaced with virtual e-learning except in very select cases, very few cases, not the norm, and when offered as an option. So that student has to actually have that choice and decide whether they want to have distance e-learning from their home or whether they want and deserve to be bum in a seat in an institution, attending class.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I don't mind working with the government and accepting their Access to the Future Act if they in turn listen to our suggestions and take our proposed improvements into consideration. This is not a tit-for-tat position. Presumably we all want what's best for our province's students and what's best for our institutions.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member is not somewhat ashamed of accusing the government of plagiarism when their own party platform actually borrowed from a resolution that the Edmonton-Riverview Progressive Conservative Constituency Association brought forward to an annual general meeting which was adopted unanimously, which actually has more bearing on the policy that's being reflected in Bill 1 than the Liberal platform, which came many, many months subsequent.

Mr. Elsalhy: No, I am not ashamed to say this. We listened to a report that was put forward, and we put it in as part of our campaign platform. We're proud to be listening to the people of this province. The Tories, on the other hand, accepted the policy that we brought forward and implemented it and laid claim to it after the election. They ran on empty during the election, Mr. Speaker. We had an idea that we adapted from a report, and we accepted it. We improved on it. So, no, I'm not ashamed.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, let me get this right. So when the Liberal Party borrows an idea from a PC constituency, it's called listening to Albertans and accepting good ideas. But when a Conservative government borrows an idea from a Liberal platform, it's called plagiarism and stealing. Am I correct in understanding that?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. member could just clarify. He started off by calling the bill short-sighted, then claimed ownership of it as a Liberal policy, and then criticized

it for being hastily put together. I wonder if he could just clarify whether he likes it or not. Is he for it or against it?

Mr. Elsalhy: Yes. To clarify to the hon. member, it was short-sighted because it was hastily put together without ensuring that it's to be continued after April 1. After April 1 we have no assurance in this amendment act to ensure that the endowment fund would continue to be funded from the surplus or from any other revenue.

We laid claim to it during the election. We ran with a strong campaign platform. The Tories, on the other hand, had nothing, and I think that what they're doing now is sort of damage control to try to please some of the voters who punished them. Two hundred and some thousand voters did not vote Tory this time because the Tories did not have anything to say.

An Hon. Member: But they didn't go over to you.

Mr. Elsalhy: Well, some did. [interjections]

The Speaker: All right. Through the chair, please.

Hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, do you have a question?

Ms Calahasen: No.

The Speaker: Additional? We have time.

Additional speakers, then.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak on this bill. There are a number of items here I think the government is good to move on. You know, it's good to finally have something so that we can say to Albertans that the government is looking to try and improve access to education and trying to improve the ability of our educational system to deal with and for the future.

I very much like the \$500 million in the heritage science and engineering fund. I have many relatives that are in engineering and in construction and in trades, and they look forward to doing this sort of thing. I have some that have been in research. I think that it's timely and can hold great benefit to Alberta just as such funds have done in medical research.

Mr. Speaker, placing a greater emphasis on postsecondary education is crucial to the future livelihood of all Alberta families. Even if the government is not going far enough to provide stable, long-term funding for our postsecondary institutions, at least the endowment portion of this bill is a start. At least the other aspects of this bill are beginning to look to the future.

5:00

Postsecondary education is not just the education which happens at our bricks-and-mortar institutions such as universities, colleges, and technical institutions. Postsecondary education is also the on the job training provided in our formal apprenticeship training and in other training. Access to apprenticeship has become increasingly difficult for young Albertans for a number of reasons. Work is often intermittent, even though at times it can be frantically busy. A good trades job can be no good to a young family if it only lasts for four months of the year and then they get a layoff. Heavy overtime and huge demand for apprentices' services often slack off into sudden layoffs, unemployment, and forced hanging around if there's not a new job to go to.

With dramatic development slated to take place over the next 10 to 15 years and even longer in the Alberta oil sands, it is key that the apprenticeship system be administered in a responsible manner.

This responsible approach must reflect the true needs and opportunities for individuals in our marketplace. Training must be responsible and at a sustainable and ongoing level.

We've seen such wide variations in apprenticeship training over the years, Mr. Speaker. There are gaps, almost a generational sort of appearance that we see. The generational age representations you see on many of our construction projects is because in some periods of our history we've trained very, very few apprentices, and you can see that right now on job sites.

It must be at a responsible level. Most responsible employers I've spoken to are adamant that there be proper apprenticeship ratios that give rise to good training. Many place that at about 3 to 1 in construction, for example. They know that this is the optimum level for the proper training of an individual in his or her chosen trade. Young apprentices get the opportunity to interact with different tradesmen to get the proper attention they deserve and require to know their trade. Too many apprentices make for a group grope, a what-will-we-do-now approach. Even there there may be more lower wage individuals on a job site. In fact, this can decrease productivity and raise costs because people really don't know what they're doing.

We've seen a number of projects where costs have ballooned and gone out of control. It's not really the labour aspect, but I think it's important that the best qualified crews and the best makeup of these crews be made available for our ever important oil sands projects. It's obvious on construction sites where apprenticeship ratios have been abused and the ever present problem of rework becomes a common and costly problem.

Better access must provide for more flexibility and indentureship. This is the system where an apprentice is sponsored over the years of his apprenticeship and works with his or her mentors. As apprentices often work multiple short-term jobs, it makes sense that the hiring halls and trades organizations which they work through be empowered to indenture. Then they can be assured that they at least can have some sense of steady employment.

When there are slow and excessively busy periods, we must recognize the interprovincial trades mobility agreements already in place in Canada. There's long been this safety valve system in place in our country. What happens in this process is that, for example, a contractor calls for a number of tradespeople that he or she may need, and those skilled tradesmen are then sent, or dispatched, to a job site. They will often call first for the ones they know and have experience with, and then the hiring hall will send others with the proper qualifications that are available.

If there are not enough people in northern Alberta, then these hiring halls will call their counterparts in southern Alberta. If there's no one available in southern Alberta, these hiring halls will then call their hiring halls in other provinces of Canada. On the rare occasion that this demand cannot be filled from Canadian sources, there are sources of trade supply in this system, in this interprovincial, intercountry system. In our continental system they can get people from the United States, and they have done so in the past, and Canada has sent people to the United States in the same way. This system has historically successfully supplied trades labour for all the megaprojects that have been completed in Alberta.

The government must recognize that this ability of skilled labour is a true availability of skilled labour for projects that are upcoming. It must recognize the ability of the system to trim the peaks and fill the valleys in labour demand, and it must develop some system which better targets labour market needs, surveys both supply and demand – I underline that: both supply and demand – and can give planning for Albertans, give the ability to Albertans to look and plan for their future to ensure that their families have some security and a real sense of involvement in the wealth of Alberta.

There are many groups that must be accessed in training. There are many unemployed farmers as people are increasingly leaving the family farm, with the steady and regular stories of more people in financial difficulty because of the situation there with BSE. We have unemployed youth, which are at the highest level in the country. We have underemployed landed immigrants. Many, many stories have been in the media about their inability to use their skills and to be utilized for the development of our province.

Of course, you know, we have our very important and underutilized aboriginal people. I'll quote from a letter that was tabled earlier today from the Treaty 8 First Nations, paragraph 3.

There are significant numbers of our people and other Albertans that, with some appropriate support and training beyond current practices that could fill the employment needs that industry and your government are concerned about. The forecast of shortages of people for employment in certain skills areas should be taken as a first challenge on the "home front" rather than a "quick fix" using foreigners that will backfire in the long run.

And in the sixth paragraph:

Should these actions take place it would be extremely irresponsible and potentially explosive. You and your government talk about an "Alberta Advantage" that to us means your words talk of the well being, caring and development of First Nations peoples, other Aboriginal peoples and in general all Alberta citizens. Importing foreigners without taking more serious steps amongst our members and within the Alberta population pool at large to qualify unemployed people should be unthinkable.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that statement speaks well to some of the feelings of the Treaty 8 First Nations, which are the reserves that occupy much of northern Alberta.

Just one more point. I think that our system must look not only to postsecondary education like the universities and the bricks-and-mortar institutions that look to academic skills, but they must also recognize those skills of the hands, the different types of intelligence that different individuals may have: you know, the tradesmen, the farmers, the artists of our great province.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, investment in Albertans, investment in our people, and investment in those special people for whom we all work, Alberta's children, I think is what is most important here. I look forward to further discussion on this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, please.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. MacDonald: I have a question for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, and it is this. I was listening with interest to his remarks. What further steps would he like this government to take other than facilitating the recruitment of temporary replacement workers for jobs in the construction of the oil sands plants in the north? What steps would he like to see the government take instead of recruiting temporary foreign replacement workers, particularly with First Nations people, who have a very chronic rate of unemployment?

The Speaker: A fine question, hon. member, but I think we should adhere to the rules of relevancy. The bill that we have before us is the Access to the Future Act. If somehow this could be tied in together, proceed, but tie it together, please.

5:10

Mr. Backs: I think that the training of many individuals that are capable for this is certainly part of this act, and access to postsecondary education is certainly most important. The way that we look at postsecondary is not something, I think, that should be only looked at in terms of universities and technical institutions and colleges. We've got to look at it in terms of the many other sometimes innovative ways.

You know, I've seen aboriginal companies work very closely with some of our major employers like Syncrude and Suncor, and I've worked with some of these companies in the past to try and encourage aboriginal employment in a way that brings them into the mainstream of our economy and helps them to develop as citizens that are taking part in this Alberta advantage, as mentioned by the Treaty 8 First Nations.

I think there are many areas where we can look at this, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the questioner for the question.

The Speaker: Additional questions, hon. members? Additional participants?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar then.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the debate this afternoon on Bill 1, Access to the Future Act. Perhaps the title of this bill could be the affordable access to postsecondary education in Alberta's future act because, unfortunately, access to postsecondary education for many in this province has become unaffordable. Many speakers this afternoon have discussed that.

Certainly, when we look at access, affordability, and quality of postsecondary education, we all know that they were important issues in the provincial election which occurred last fall. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is to be commended for bringing these issues forward and leading the charge, so to speak. I'm not saying that the government is copying many of our ideas that were presented during the election, but certainly I think this is a political reaction to what Albertans have known for quite some time, and that is, again, that postsecondary education has become unaffordable for more than a few young Albertans.

When we look at unemployment rates, if we want to talk about apprenticeships and industry training and how they're going to be affected by this bill, we have to ensure that young Albertans have access to postsecondary education so their unemployment rate goes down and it is the same as the provincial average of roughly about 4 per cent. It is more than double the provincial average at this time for the group between the ages of 16 and 24. I would certainly endorse this legislation if it would reduce that unemployment rate.

Certainly, I would like to see access for First Nations to postsecondary education so they, too, can see a significant drop in their unemployment rates. Surely, there will be partnerships developed with industry to ensure that First Nations young people are trained before we go about recruiting these temporary foreign workers.

I would hope that the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert at the next caucus meeting would take some of his hon. colleagues aside and say, "Look, before we continue with the recruitment through our technical colleges of replacement workers to work in construction in the north, perhaps we should develop a special program for some of the farmers who are facing financial difficulty right now and may want to work out and pick up a few dollars on the busy construction sites of this province." So perhaps we should have a targeted initiative to ensure, not only for the compulsory but the optional trades that are available in this province,

that farmers come first. I think this would help a lot of farmers make ends meet in these difficult times if they could work out. If they could go to a place like Fort McMurray and have a trade ticket, a valid trade ticket, in their pocket, they too could participate in that construction boom. I would like to see this, and I certainly hope that access will become an issue, and we will look at training those individuals before we go searching far and wide around the world for people who may not have the standards of training of this province.

Now, under this current government, Mr. Speaker, funding for postsecondary education certainly has not kept pace with inflation or enrolment increases. This Progressive Conservative government cut funding to postsecondary education by 21 per cent in the three years between 1994 and 1997. More recent increases have not enabled institutions to recover or deal with rising enrolments or inflation. In fact, four Alberta universities alone project that they need \$160 million in new operating dollars just to catch up with their peers. Now, other hon. members this afternoon have talked about this infrastructure deficit. We certainly have been successful in paying down the debt, the enormous public debt that was incurred by this same Progressive Conservative government, but now we must look at a lot of the infrastructure debts in the province, and we have to go no further than our postsecondary institutions.

It is unfortunate, as we debate this bill, Bill 1, that again most postsecondary education institutions are projecting budget deficits in one or more of the next few years. This has been brought forward by a group called Public Interest Alberta. I'm sure that the fact sheets that are put out by Public Interest Alberta are read with keen interest by government members. Certainly, I find some of the research that is presented by Public Interest Alberta informative and very worthwhile, and I thank them for making us a much better province.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, funding for postsecondary education in the past was often dependent on fluctuating government revenues. Funding, as a result of this, has become unstable and contingent on bureaucratic measures of performance. Financial uncertainty makes planning impossible. It doesn't matter whether it's the Department of Health or the Department of Environment or Human Resources and Employment. In order to plan, there has to be a standard. There has to be a commitment. Hopefully, with Bill 1 there will be a renewed commitment, a renewed interest by this government, and this won't be just fallout from the provincial election, but this will be a renewed commitment to postsecondary education.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at some of the numbers surrounding postsecondary institutions in Alberta, we have to look at the amount of money. When we look at the amount of money adjusted for inflation and on a per student basis, transfers to postsecondary institutions in Alberta fell from \$14,274 in 1992-93 to under \$11,000 in the 2003-04 fiscal year. Now, if we look at funding for postsecondary education during this current Progressive Conservative reign – and for new members of the Assembly there are, you could almost call them dynasties; there are three. There was one from 1971 through to '86, then there was a second dynasty from '86 through to '92-93, and then the current dynasty. One has to wonder how long this current dynasty will last. In this last dynasty funding for postsecondary education fell as a percentage of provincial expenditure from 6.2 per cent to 5.1 per cent. This is a measure, one could say, of this government's commitment to postsecondary education, and I'm disappointed that Alberta ranks ninth out of 10 provinces on this measure.

There's a lot of work to do, and if my support for Bill 1 would help, I would certainly provide it and endorse this bill because while it may not be perfect, I think it is a step in the right direction, Mr. Speaker.

5:20

Now, lack of funding has created a backlog of deferred maintenance not only in roads, bridges, schools, hospitals but also at universities. The two largest universities alone have deferred maintenance of approximately \$1 billion. Again, this is information that's been provided by Public Interest Alberta, and I'm grateful to them for that. The government gets a real dollar return on its investment in postsecondary education. There's no doubt about that. And we need to see some commitment to repairing the infrastructure at our larger facilities.

We know that the business community would like to see a commitment to postsecondary education. The business community points out that for the long-term economic competitiveness and diversification of this province it's a number one public policy.

Mr. Speaker, we were talking earlier about affordable access to postsecondary education. Now tuition costs. It doesn't matter whether it's this government or other right-wing governments around the world, there seems to be this drive to limit access to education. I disagree with that. I think we should look at the Irish model and follow that. That model has been discussed over the course of time in this Assembly by many hon. members on both sides of the House, but let's not forget about it. If access is virtually free, many companies will want to set up shop because they know that the prospective employees will be able to read the manual, they will be educated, and they will be able to follow directions and be productive and, hopefully, very well-paid workers as well.

Now, institutions have been forced to increase tuition. For university tuition, Alberta saw the largest percentage increase in the country – in the entire country – between 1990-91 and 2004-05: 270 per cent. The average tuition for colleges and technical institutions has also increased, a little less but really a significant amount: 250 per cent.

Tuition increases have not consistently been accompanied by an increased level of access to student financial aid. Yearly tuition as a percentage of the Alberta student loan program: the maximum, in 1992-93, used to be about 20 per cent. It is now almost 40 per cent. Students make up the difference by working part-time and even full-time jobs. Almost 65 per cent of Alberta university students now work while in school an average of about 20 hours per week, or three shifts. The overwhelming majority of these students say that this negatively impacts their academic experiences.

Student debt, Mr. Speaker, has also risen substantially in Alberta. University students graduate with an average debt of over \$21,000 and college students with \$19,000. Seventy per cent of Albertans believe that university and college tuition is too high. Is Bill 1 going to be able to reduce tuition fees? This remains to be seen. We'll have to wait and see.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Then I'll call on the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak to Bill 1 for a minute. I'm very excited about the future and that we're increasing the opportunities for Albertans by opening up the universities and vocational education. I'd like to see the government perhaps look at an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. In Europe we see vocational schools opening up in grade 9. There are many kids in our junior and high schools that don't have the interest in academics and are falling through the cracks. Especially in the rural areas, there's lots of room in the schools. Some are only at 50 per cent capacity. If we were to spend some extra money at that level and open up vocational education for the students, I feel that we could benefit greatly.

There are too many kids in grade 12 that are graduating and have no skills because they didn't work hard while they were in school. They saw no need to, and then when they go out, they have nothing. But if we were to start having more educational opportunities and work employment in the early years, that would greatly improve their ability.

I just want to give my own personal example. In grade 11 I did not like all the options – band, art, and some of the other ones – and I went and talked to our school administrator. He set up a program where I was able to go down to the butcher shop and work for half a day. Consequently, when I graduated from grade 12, I had the opportunity to go and work in a butcher shop at an increased pay, as opposed to some of those kids who had no work experience and were unable to do that.

In many of our small towns, Raymond for example, there's a small business owner there who has a muffler shop and a wheel balancing place, and he's ready to retire. There should have been 40 or 50 students that could have gone through and learned that and bought that business when it shut down. Instead, the rural areas are dying because there are no tradesmen and craftspeople that are able

to pick up on some of what's happening in the rural towns. We have cabinetmakers, all kinds of good opportunities. So I would urge this government to look at increasing their spending in the high schools and start that vocational program much earlier so that the students can exercise that right.

Also, we see with the sports programs and band and other ones that we have a lot of teachers that come and spend countless hours helping those students develop those talents, and I think that there would be a lot of students that would be excited to have teachers that would help them with carpentry, with mechanics, with electrical, all types of trades if in fact we were to allow them to have that opportunity. But the funding isn't there for vocational education, and it would be appreciated.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for about 12 seconds.

Hon. members, the Assembly stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 15, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/03/15

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the committee to order. This is the first time this Assembly, the 26th Legislature, has gone into committee, so I would like to note for some of the newer members that it's a more casual level of debate. Jackets for the gentlemen are optional. Also, members are allowed to occupy a seat other than their own. Sometimes this leads to some side conversations. I would ask that we still respect the member that has the floor. If your conversations need to get louder, perhaps they could take place out in the committee room.

Bill 21

Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak in Committee of the Whole to Bill 21, the Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005. Our critic for Finance had laid out our Official Opposition response to the bill earlier this afternoon, but there were a couple of issues that I wanted to raise and, hopefully, get some response back from the sponsoring member or the minister. Hoping to, anyway.

As the critic laid out, the Official Opposition is supportive of the moves that are being contemplated here. I think it's something that the industry has been asking for for an extended period of time. I think the first time I heard about it would have been in about '96, but my notes indicate that the hotel room tax was introduced in '87. Well, I know that in '96 they were trying to get it turned into a levy and have that money redirected into tourism and marketing, so they've been trying to make that happen for at least nine years. Once again, we see that the wheels of the Legislature grind exceedingly slow. But we are happy to support this bill.

Just a couple of things that I want to note, and I believe the member raised them this afternoon, but I'll just underline them again. I think there is expected to be an increase in the amount of money that is available, but I note that it's still substantially below the money that's available for tourism marketing in most other provinces. I don't watch television very much, and I usually tape it, but I have noticed some commercials recently for Newfoundland and Labrador, really nice, well-produced television commercials, so they're socking a wad of money into promoting their province for tourism possibilities. I know that we always get a lot of advertising out of B.C. and Ontario. We're quite far behind in investing in that. I think we do have to look at this money as an investment in an economic driver because tourism is an economic driver for us, and we need to look at marketing dollars as an investment in that, in increasing our share of the marketplace, and I'm very supportive of that.

I think it's also important that the act not become unduly onerous with paperwork and reporting on behalf of the operators. You often hear from small business operators that talk about how many reports they've got to fill out and file and how onerous that is, especially if they're a fairly small business. I think that wherever we can simplify that, make e-filing commonplace, is very helpful.

We have heard from some very small bed and breakfast owners that they have concern with the present legislation. It's around definitions, I think, because something happens at a certain accommodation level, and below that they're treated differently than above that. Also, we get Health and Wellness defining a B and B by the number of people, eight or less, and the hotel act defining accommodation by the number of rooms. So there's a slight jurisdictional battle there that maybe can be addressed as part of this or worked out as part of this.

Now, the substantive part of what I wanted to discuss tonight is around two things. The first is: where's the money going? I could have missed something here – and I'm happy to be corrected by the sponsor of the bill – but as far as I can see in the act, the money is designated to be collected, but it doesn't say that it's going to go into a special designated fund, which tells me that it's going into general revenue. Since we're in Committee of the Whole, we can have a back and forth discussion here. I'll get the sponsoring member to get up and tell me on the record whether in fact this money is going to go into a special set-aside designated fund or if it just flows into general revenue.

My concern about this is that it's not secure funding. If we have a change in minister, a change in government – anything is possible – a change in government direction, none of this is nailed down. That 4 per cent levy . . . [interjection] We'll talk about ducks later. That 4 per cent levy/tax could not be directed into tourism marketing anymore unless it's going into a specific fund that is set aside for that purpose, and my reading of this bill indicates no such thing. There's no mention of a separate fund. There's no mention of designated, set-aside, tagged, enveloped money here, none of those things that we would usually look for when we're talking about money collected for a specific purpose that's tied to something.

So I'd like to get the government on the record with that one because what I'm seeing is that this is a tax that's being collected and flowing into general revenue, and then there's this sort of general discussion about: it will probably go back out to marketing. But that's not a very secure place for those hotel tourism operators to be hearing about. I think they're looking for some certainty here.

Let's face it. It's not as though this government doesn't operate with a number of tagged levies or royalties that are collected off particular sectors that are then set aside for specific use. Certainly, we see that with oil and gas royalties. Certainly, we see that with stumpage fees: collected, set aside. They're not going into general revenue. So it's okay to designate on the front-end load, but on this one, which perhaps you could say was a back-end load, there's great reluctance to tag it or to put it into a special fund. I'd like to hear some discussion around the choices the government has made with that one.

Ducks. I'm interested that the government says: well, we've gotten rid of this 5 per cent tax, and now we're going to have a 4 per cent levy. Oh, come on. If it walks like a duck and it quacks like a duck, you know what? It's a duck. I appreciate the attempt at levity that's brought forward around calling this a levy rather than a tax, but you know what? It's a duck, and it's a tax. Okay? Thank you for bringing me a bit of amusement while I talk about this, but it's a duck.

The second issue I have is: who controls the dollars? Who will distribute the dollars that are collected? Assuming that they are

going to go into a special fund, who is going to designate where they go, and how will this be done? What's the criteria that it's going to be based on? It's all pretty loosey-goosey. Oh, my, we have a f-o-w-l theme happening tonight: ducks, geese. But it is very loosey-goosey. This money is going to get collected. We don't know where it's going to go or how it's going to be held aside, and we're not getting any indication of who's in control here. Where does the buck stop, in other words?

8:10

Now, I'm aware that the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council, which was an advisory body to the minister, maybe was supposed to distribute it, or maybe it has distributed the first wave of it that's already been happening, but I don't think so. I think Economic Development stepped in and said: we're going to tag where the first amounts of money go. There was an expectation there, certainly on my part, that the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council was going to be designating where these funds go, but first time out we've got Economic Development involved here. So what's happening? Why is that happening?

Now, a third layer of this. One, is the money going into a special fund? Two, who's going to designate it, and what's the criteria for designating and doling out the money on the marketing tourism end? Three, what kind of monitoring audit function is there going to be on this, performance measurements, et cetera, et cetera, the way that we will be able to look at this particular initiative and judge it a year, two years, five years, 10 years down the road and go, "Boy, this was successful," or "No, it wasn't, and we need to fix it a bit?" I'm not seeing anything that is laying out for us how we the Members of the Legislative Assembly, we Albertans, we the public, we the Public Accounts Committee are going to be able to look at this money and say, "Yes, we got value for our dollar there; yes, it was wisely used" and all the other monitoring transparency and accounting functions that go along with that.

Now, a couple of other sort of small, niggly factors that come up. I know that there was a PricewaterhouseCoopers poll that was done around this idea, and there's very strong support for it, which is in large part why, in fact, we are supporting it. But there were some that were less supportive, and it seems to be that sort of 10 per cent level, and that same 10 per cent – and I can't tell you whether it's exactly the same people, but there's more or less a consistent 10 per cent – feels that the increased marketing money won't help. They appear to have given up. It correlates to the rural small-business owners in the hotel industry. See, in response to the question, "Would the government fulfill the promise?" there was still around 10 per cent – it's actually 8 to 15 per cent in that particular one – that weren't exactly believing that the government would fulfill the promise that's being put forward with this bill.

You know, to other questions like, "Do you expect a levy to be beneficial?", a number of people did, a very high percentage there, almost 65 per cent, for a couple of reasons. One, because it showed government commitment to the sector, and they feel very strongly that they haven't had government – well, sorry; I can't speak for them. I would argue that the government has not been supportive of the tourism and marketing sector for many, many years. They are saying, according to this study, that they believe it is showing government commitment to the sector and also that it's a good marketing opportunity.

When I look at that kind of feedback coming from the sector, I go back to my initial questions about: where's the money going, and how's it being kept separate? Is it designated or set aside or kept safe? That is what we really want to know, that it's not just going

to be snatched away by some other department. Already, as I pointed out, the very first allocation of the money seems to have already been decided by Economic Development, which wasn't quite what we were expecting there, so there's already a bit of inconsistency in what we're expecting.

I'm also interested in the criteria to allocate the funding. Assuming that it is going to go to tourism and marketing, what criteria is going to be used? Is it going to be on the basis of strengths so that those that are already doing really well get more money, get to be stronger, a sort of Darwinian theory of tourism? You know, if you have a going concern in the Rocky Mountains between Jasper and Banff, you're going to continue to get good money, but if you're somewhere out there in rural central Alberta, you're not? Will the money be allocated on that base, working from a basis of strength so those that are strong get more marketing money, or would it be based on some other kind of strategic plan? You know, is it going to be allocated equally across all of the tourism marketing – oh, they have all those marketing groups across Alberta. Is it going to be divided equally amongst them, or are we going to say that only new ventures or new products are going to get attention? What's the concept behind this?

We're being asked to invest in something, approve of something, and I agree with approving of it, but I'm not getting a lot of details about what's coming after that. It's hard, as always, for me to sort of buy into something that isn't very well articulated. So I'm looking for the sponsor of the bill or the minister to get up and fill in some of those blanks.

I'm wondering if there is any kind of a plan for money to go into the physical development support for marketing or not. I note that with that Strategic Tourism Marketing Council there are a number of vacancies on that council right now. That's supposed to be coming from the sector, from the industry, so I'm wondering why there are vacancies there. If the sector is really involved and really interested, usually people would be lining up to put their name forward to sit on the council. Has it run its time? Is the industry withdrawing from it or hesitating for some reason? That was the advisory council to the minister, so has the minister got the recommendations on his desk and he just hasn't gotten around to giving the rubber stamp to everybody? What's the deal there?

The last thing that I want to talk about is that the minister, when he spoke this afternoon, got me thinking in this direction with his flight of poetic fancy about southern Alberta, which I admit is God's country. It's where my father comes from. It's also prime film land, and we have had a setback in Alberta around our film industry. It's rebuilding. The government listened to sense, listened to the film industry and did start to reinvest in it. We're coming back certainly, but we could come a lot further. For example, right now there's the Jesse James film that is casting about looking for where they're going to film, and it could be in southern Alberta.

Now, could that marketing tourism dollar, some of the criteria, be allocated towards enticing a film like that to come to southern Alberta and shoot their scenes there? Would that be part of the consideration? I think that depends on who's making the decision and who's setting the criteria because I'll bet you some people that are involved in this like Tourism Alberta wouldn't consider that money going to entice a film group to come and shoot in southern Alberta. But maybe they should be considering it, and if somebody else is in control like the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council, maybe that is something that could be considered by them.

I'm interested to hear, because we have no criteria, what the expectation is. Where is this money expected to go? Would it be a wide enough mandate? Would the criteria include targeting film

development? I mean, we've got a film commissioner that's operating out of Alberta. Can they be given additional resources to sell the province? It sure brings a lot of money in. It brings local money in. We at one point had a lot of trained technical and artistic people to work in the film and television industry.

Now, because we withdrew support for that when Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation shut down and in that period before the employment credit was put into place, we lost a lot of business. Those technicians packed up their very, very expensive specialty trucks and went off to Saskatchewan, who was offering a lot of incentives, and Manitoba and B.C. So we don't have them living here anymore just down the block, where they can fire up that truck and be on set in a couple of hours. We've got to bring them back from those other provinces, and frankly those other provinces are offering some darn good incentives. So is there a possibility that this fund could be used to augment those incentives or to bring us up to an equal bargaining position with some of the other provinces that we're competing against or competing with locations in the States, for example?

8:20

That's really what I'm looking for, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking for answers about: where is the money going to go where it is definitively protected and it can't just disappear into the general revenue fund? Who's making the decisions on how the money would be distributed and some details about that? What's the criteria that's going to be used for the allocation of that money, including, you know, how widely would they consider or what things would they consider as part of that? That's what I'm looking to have nailed down. If I can get somebody opposite to stand up and answer some of these questions, I may well be willing to support this at this point in time and vote it through Committee of the Whole. So I look forward to hearing from the members opposite.

Thank you.

The Chair: Does any other member of the Assembly wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I noticed that there's no one on the government side of the House ready to speak, so I thought I'd take advantage and make a few observations.

Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to speak on Bill 21, the hotel room tax – that will be called a tourism levy, I guess, from now on – amendment act, 2005. I was listening to the Minister of Economic Development this afternoon when he spoke to this bill. There was a bit of bragging going on, as I noticed in the minister's comments, that this administration always likes to reduce taxes, and this is just another instance of how it goes about doing it.

Well, I just want to underline that it was this Tory government that brought in this hotel room tax in 1987 at 5 per cent or whatever, and the current government has continued with it until today. It took over from the previous Premier and cabinet in December 1992, and it's taken us 13 years for this new administration, as the Minister of Economic Development referred to the government that he represents, to reduce this tax come the year 2005.

Having said that, I think a reduction in this tax from 5 per cent to 4 per cent is something that will be welcomed by Albertans. Albertans are also among the people who use tourism facilities in this province. This government, as part of its last year's budget, brought in some – we counted I think about 70 different indirect service fees and indirect taxes which weren't there before. So in talking about this government's own record about reducing taxes, I think one needs to be a little more modest if one is on the govern-

ment side speaking to that issue. That's not always the case. That's not been the case. But in this case a reduction from 5 per cent to 4 per cent I think would be welcomed by Albertans. The question, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre has raised, is: how is this money going to be used? Who is going to receive it? Who is going to account for the way the money is used and given out?

The other question, of course, is also one that needs to be addressed. When some of the funds from this tourism levy, which this tax will be now called, will be used for promotion of tourism, what kind of promotion will take place? On the TV? Certainly, we see other provinces doing intensive advertising through all kinds of media, including TV, to expand tourism, to direct tourists from outside to their provincial jurisdictions. I see from south of the border various states, North Carolina and others, doing that exact same thing. So the question then is: why is it that in this province, where the minister this afternoon was talking about how important tourism is and how he would like to see it expanded, there hasn't been that much of an emphasis on advertising and marketing the tourist attractions? Plenty of it exists in this province, but it certainly needs to be marketed rather aggressively and vigorously in places where we think we can attract tourists.

The last point, Mr. Chairman, that I very quickly want to make at this stage of the debate on this bill is that as we aspire to further increase tourism in this province and hope that tourist facilities will expand as a result – as demand grows, supply will increase – I think we also need, although there's no space on this bill for it. I guess that from the funds that will be generated from the tourism levy, some of them perhaps could be spent also to address the question of the working conditions of lots of people, Albertans, young Albertans mostly, who work to provide hospitality facilities in tourism locations and facilities. So the whole issue of health and safety of workers, most of them if not all of them being Albertans, who work in the tourist industry is an issue that needs to be addressed.

I hope that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's Bill 201 will proceed without too much tampering with it so that at least it does address some of those conditions under which hospitality workers are working or will be working and providing the users of tourist facilities in this province the services that they need.

The government has moved and I hope that it implements this undertaking to increase the minimum wage because many of the people who work in the tourist industry unfortunately also work close to the minimum wage level. So after a long wait of many years the government has finally undertaken to increase that wage to \$7. I hope that that will be implemented and brought into force forthwith in order to strengthen the tourism industry, the hospitality industry. The benefits of that expansion should go to tourists, to this government by way of revenues generated through the tourism levy, and also to people who provide those services, most of whom are Albertans and are young Albertans.

That said, Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that in general the NDP opposition is supportive of what this bill is proposing to do, but I did want to put on record some of the concerns that we hear from Albertans with respect to the conditions under which they work and what they would like to see done to the tourism sector and the economy in general.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Are there other members wishing to speak on this bill?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just waiting to see if we had other speakers as well. I'll make some concluding remarks

if I may. I do want to express my appreciation for the support of those who have spoken both this afternoon and this evening, and I appreciate all of the comments.

To reiterate, this act does include technical improvements, clarifications, administrative issues that needed to be addressed since it was implemented back in 1987. It will benefit administration of the hotel room tax, tourism levy, and bring it into line with other tax programs that we currently administer. Yes, you've heard the projection. It will be an increase in funding by an estimated 75 per cent for tourism and development in Alberta. Yes, there's a change of name from tax to levy, and it is a reduction from 5 to 4 per cent.

8:30

It was stated earlier today that the revenue that is generated from this levy will be put into the province's general revenue fund, and the proceeds collected from the levy will be used to determine the funding levels for tourism, marketing, and development. There is no substantial change in the process for operators in the province, and the government has been working for many years with the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association, Travel Alberta, and a number of others in the industry, so there is a lot of agreement there, and that is very affirming.

I know that further travel will be stimulated in the province during this our centennial year. It will lower the cost of accommodations and improve another avenue – and I say another avenue – for improved funding to promote Alberta in the years to come.

With respect to other concerns raised today, it had been suggested that more money should be spent in this regard. It may be argued that there is never enough, but the stakeholders involved have told us that they believe this is a very good start.

There was a question of whether it's four rooms or eight people, and I guess if we base it on double occupancy, four bedrooms times two persons per bedroom is eight people. The very simple answer to that, ladies and gentlemen of the House, is that the line had to be drawn somewhere, and that's a very workable number for that industry.

There was a point made also, Mr. Chairman, that \$25 as a claim back for filing indicates that there is a lot of work involved in this. Yes, indeed, there is a certain amount of time and paperwork that is required. I know that the stakeholders involved know that that's just the time and cost involved in running a business.

Finally, a couple of the hon. members have brought up the fact that in the act it does not state directly that the tourism levy will be directed to marketing or whatever the case may be. I will say that the government did look at all the options of how to handle this, and in their wisdom decided to leave it as a tax that flows into general revenue. But I know that you can be assured that the agreement is outlined in a number of documents, and I'll refer specifically to the Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan 2003-2006: Navigating Winds of Change. Based on a lot of research, all the stakeholders involved, it will approach provincial, national, and international audiences. So this is consistent with other government policy, handling it this way, and I know that with the amount of agreement we have with all the stakeholders involved, we're in good hands.

Those are my comments, and I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

[The clauses of Bill 21 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report Bill 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 1
Access to the Future Act

[Debate adjourned March 15]

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, that's before the House in its second reading. I am pleased to rise and speak to it.

Mr. Speaker, there's no denying the fact that postsecondary education does need some decisive change in direction in this province, and the question is: does this bill signal that direction or not? I say: if at all, only partly. The postsecondary education system in the province is large. There are four universities, 16 or 17 colleges and technical institutes. There are private colleges, for-profit colleges and universities setting up shop and expanding their operations in this provinces. So the system is becoming larger by the year, more diverse, and perhaps expanding in directions which Albertans would consider undesirable if they were consulted and asked for their advice on this.

The bill itself does move toward setting up an endowment fund, Mr. Speaker. Once it's fully financed, it will be \$3 billion, and only 4.5 per cent of this amount, a maximum of \$135 million, will be available for postsecondary institutions to draw on. Then the drawing rights, if you wish to use that term, or the ability to draw on this will depend on various conditions, including the ability of each institution to match the amount of funding they can withdraw from the endowment fund, and those matching funds will come in most cases, perhaps, from the attempt of these institutions to get private donors, including corporate interests, to donate.

When these private donors, particularly big businesses, corporations do give funds to postsecondary institutions, they have strings attached to them. They have special projects. They want special

kinds of developments to take place which may or may not suit the overall plan for operation and expansion and development by the academic communities that each of these institutions represents.

8:40

The whole question of the autonomy of institutions, their ability to set their own research and teaching agendas, is put into question by the conditions attached to the manner in which this fund will be accessible to these 20, 21, 22 institutions. I'm assuming here that this fund will be available, Mr. Speaker, only to nonprofit public institutions and that if there are some private institutions that will qualify to access this fund, these will be nonprofit institutions. I would like the minister of postsecondary education to perhaps speak to that issue.

I notice that in section 2 of the bill – I was looking at it – there's a section there on the access to the future fund. The section previous to that is on accessibility and affordability, and every statement does refer to public postsecondary institutions. But when it comes to this section 4(1), which deals with the access to the future fund, the explicit reference to public postsecondary institutions there is missing, and that causes concern for me. I would like the minister responsible to clarify that.

In my meeting with the minister I did ask him these questions, and he was kind enough to invite me to a meeting where he explained what is likely to go into this bill. It did raise the question of whether or not private, for-profit institutions will have access to this fund in any shape and form. He said to wait for the bill to appear. The bill is before us now, and I'm asking some of these questions that need to be asked on the floor of this House with respect to the ability of private, for-profit colleges or technical institutions or universities to access this fund. If that were the case, then I would have to vote against this one and strongly oppose that provision. So there is some, I think, lack of clarity if not equivocation on that point in this bill. I would like the minister to address it, and I hope he will certainly allay my fears with respect to this particular issue.

A couple of other points, Mr. Speaker, that I want to make. The endowment fund, while it's good in itself, is long overdue. It's not good enough. It's not a substitute for enhanced core funding of Alberta's public universities, colleges, and technical institutes. Even when fully funded at \$3 million, as I said, the amount is small. It's only 10 per cent, \$135 million.

When that amount becomes available – and we don't even know when this endowment fund will reach the \$3 billion mark, but even when it does reach that point – the maximum amount that we can draw on would be \$135 million, and that will form only about 10 per cent of the overall amount that we spend. Good. Good start, but this money is not available, I think, for meeting the pressing needs of universities and colleges and institutes when it comes to either student services, student tuition fees, and other operating deficits that have resulted because of the chronic underfunding over many years in the past.

As I said, the other pressing needs of postsecondary institutions are being ignored. The need to freeze tuitions beyond the one year announced by the government could have been addressed in this bill, but it's not. I'm disappointed, and students are disappointed. They're expressing concern already. In fact, the government is not even amending the tuition fee policy at all, only giving students a one-year stay of execution, as it were, by paying for tuition increases that would otherwise be charged to students. While the government is providing a one-year stay of execution in terms of tuition increases, nothing is being done to address the problems of skyrocketing student debt.

Bill 1 should have addressed the situation of inadequate living allowances on the student loan system, where they're not keeping up

with inflationary increases in rent, food, transportation, and utility costs. There also needs to be a firm legislative commitment to not raising the ceiling above which student loans are remitted.

Another point. An Access to the Future Act that truly met the multifaceted needs of the public postsecondary sector would have dealt with many other pressing priorities. Such an act would have addressed teaching and learning conditions at our postsecondary institutions. Class sizes of many first- and second-year postsecondary courses, for example, are in the hundreds of students. Imagine a young student coming from a high school with an average class size of 30 students going into a first-year university class of 300 or 400 students. The so-called Access to the Future Act does not address this pressing issue and others like it.

Until now provincial funding support has not kept up with the inflation in enrolment growth. For the past 12 years postsecondary institutions have had to cut programs and restrict enrolments to make ends meet. A true Access to the Future Act would establish an equitable formula for core funding to at least match inflation in enrolment growth.

One of the consequences of provincial underfunding is an increase in the amount of deferred maintenance at universities, colleges, and technical institutes, something the Auditor General has repeatedly pointed out in his reports. Buildings on university and college campuses are aging, and we need to make sure that the dollars are there on a consistent basis to do repairs and keep them in good shape. While there have been significant dollars put into the construction of new buildings at public postsecondary campuses, many of these buildings are for research purposes and do not relieve the crowded lecture halls and labs that students are facing.

For all of the above reasons, perhaps the greatest failing of Bill 1 is its failure to establish a postsecondary learning commission to examine the many challenges facing Alberta's postsecondary system as called for by the Learning Commission itself, a recommendation rejected by this government. My hope was that with the change of the minister who now looks after the portfolio for postsecondary education, that decision of the government to reject the recommendation to establish a postsecondary commission would be reversed. Unfortunately, that has not happened.

There are many major issues, Mr. Speaker, that need to be addressed which bear on the future of the postsecondary system in this province, and I'll just list a few. The question of tuition fees, for example, is one. I think it requires public input before the government comes up with its next steps as to how it's going to deal with ever-increasing tuition fee costs for students. But tuition fee costs are only a part of the overall costs of the students. I think such a commission as I'm proposing would be asked to look at the whole question of costs that go into postsecondary education, including the costs that are attributable to tuition fees.

The question of the role of private, for-profit postsecondary institutions in this system is another big issue, and the minister seems not to be concerned about the growing presence of this for-profit sector. Some of the players, at least, who are coming in have questionable past records, Mr. Speaker, including some convictions for breaking the contracts that they had not been able to deliver on and perhaps more serious infractions of law. Given that, I think that it's important that we look at the whole question of whether or not this province's accessibility goals are served and served well by allowing for-profit institutions to come in and set up shop here. That question is not being addressed and will not be addressed.

The question of governance of institutions is another one. The current postsecondary act in the province centralizes the powers in the hands of the minister. The autonomy of the postsecondary system is very important. Particularly university institutions and

some very promising colleges I think need to be able to enjoy full academic autonomy. What I see in this bill is an effort, in fact, to further concentrate and centralize those powers into the hands of the minister.

I give an example here, Mr. Speaker. In section 2(1), accessibility and affordability, the act reads that “the Minister, in consultation with public post-secondary institutions, shall identify and establish enrolment targets and minimum entrance requirements.” This is something new. Minimum entrance requirements, I think, are the responsibility of each of the institutions to establish. What the minister now is attempting to do by way of this legislation is bring that power under his own direct control. I don’t think that’s a healthy direction in which to move forward.

8:50

Similarly, the minister will be establishing, related to the access fund, a council. All of the members of this council will be appointed by the minister, and the final decisions on how these funds will be distributed will be strictly controlled by and will be in the hands of the minister. Again, I think we need some arm’s-length institutions which make these decisions rather than the minister taking all these powers onto himself. The commission itself, when it is established, if it’s ever established, would have to be an independent commission which holds public hearings and seeks public input and comes forward, then, with the recommendations for the consideration of this government and of this House. That’s unfortunately not the case, so I have very serious concerns about the bill.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I take my seat. Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but there is a five-minute period of question and comments available for anyone who wishes to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a). Were you wishing to rise on that?

Ms Blakeman: No. I’m wishing to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else?

Seeing none, I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in second reading to Bill 1, the flagship bill of the government’s agenda for 2005, the Access to the Future Act. Seeing as this is the first bill the government has brought forward, flowing out of, I’m assuming, the election – and certainly I can say that in my constituency of Edmonton-Centre, postsecondary education, tuition, funding of universities and colleges, the debt load carried by students were all very, very hot topics at the doors. People were really committed to this, not just students – and I have a lot of students that live in the riding that attend the University of Alberta, NAIT, Alberta College, Grant MacEwan, NorQuest – but their families as well and in a lot of cases grandparents, in fact, whose grandchildren were students somewhere else. It was a general topic of real interest and concern.

I think the title of this act is a good one: Access to the Future. I think a lot of people view postsecondary education as access to the future. It’s so important to the Alberta Liberals that it was a major part of our platform, and I know that my colleagues have spoken at length about it. It’s very important to me, and I’m a great supporter of our policy that we would recognize that from any future surplus

we would set aside 35 per cent to a postsecondary education endowment fund. One of the issues that kept being raised for me is: you need that money to keep going. We didn’t put a cap on it. We didn’t say, as this bill does: \$3 billion and that’s good; you can stop there. We felt it was important to continue to endow.

In fact, when we looked for examples across the world, those higher educational institutions that people talk of with awe, you know, the pinnacles, the paragons, have astonishing endowment funds. I mean, Yale and Harvard are up in the billions and billions of dollars of endowment. So we’re looking at pretty small potatoes here. I mean, I’m glad to see that we’re doing it, but we would have a long way to go to set ourselves up in competition with some of those institutions.

Mr. Speaker, that disappointed me a bit because when I did my Speech from the Throne I talked about how Alberta was good, that it was even great in some areas but that it could be extraordinary. We had such an opportunity to just blow people’s minds with how exceptional we could be, how much leadership we could provide. This is one of the areas that I was really hoping we could come out of the gate on and just blow people away. We would be so impressive with it. And that’s not quite happening with this bill. It’s nice, and it’s a good idea, and it’s got some money in it, but it wasn’t quite moving us into the extraordinary place that I felt Alberta could be.

I’m happy to have the government take some of our good Liberal ideas and turn them into this fund. Happy to share that. I think it’s going to move everything forward in the province. I just wish they would have taken a few more things, like not capping it at \$3 billion but allowing it to get larger and also actually having some guaranteed money flowing in there. This one is a little loose on whether the money will actually get there depending on what the year is looking like. For Edmonton-Centre this is an important bill, and I’m certainly considering supporting it in second for the principle of the bill because it is important to my riding.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I tabled a letter from a university student that lives in my riding. He was reacting specifically to the Premier’s comments that the \$180,000 severance package offered to the previous chief of staff was “not a lot.” I think is the direct quote. And this student was saying that, well, it was an awful lot of money to him. Considering how much of his life he’d invested in going to university and how much in debt he was and how many extra jobs he was working, \$180,000 seemed like a lot of money to him. But that’s true for many students not only in my riding but in other places. So they are looking to the government to make access easier, to better fund the infrastructure, and to better fund postsecondary education, including apprenticeship programs. And I think it’s always important to remember that they’re part of the scope that we’re talking about here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had talked about general funding, and I think it’s important to realize here that we’re coming from behind the starting post on this one. Essentially, funding for postsecondary education under this government with this particular Premier – we had cuts there of 21 per cent between 1994 and 1997. So we have had money put into this area since then, but I don’t even know if we’re back to where we were in ’94. So we can’t get too cocky about how great we’re doing here because, as I say, I don’t even know if we’ve caught up to where we were in ’94, and it’s now 2005. So given inflation and value of money and all of that, I suspect that we’re still behind where we needed to be.

One of the other issues that is an ongoing concern for me – and I’m not seeing it specifically addressed in this bill, Mr. Speaker, but I’m wondering if I’m not seeing it happen by stealth. You know, sometimes people talk about by design or by default, and I guess I’m

looking for clarification about whether this is design or default. I'm finding that funding for postsecondary education is increasingly targeted. Whether it's going to so-called high-priority programs or certain kinds of research initiatives, they do tend to be streamed into commercial potential. I think this is not the point of higher education, and I think we need to be really careful that we don't have government controlling the activities of postsecondary education institutions. I think we're on the verge of that if we actually haven't started to move down the road.

9:00

You know, anybody receiving funding from the government always looks to the government for signals about where it's going and how to please the government to make sure that funding, if it's coming, keeps coming. I think what they're seeing are signals that commercial initiatives get the nod of approval but others not so much.

Postsecondary institutions aren't stupid. They will figure out how they're going to secure more funding or even secure, stable, predictable funding by playing into those expressed or indicated preferences of the government. I see government's control reorienting the activities of what these institutions are doing and tying them to short- and medium-term private sector economic endeavours. I think Bill 1 is continuing this trend, but I would love to be proved wrong on that one, so please prove me wrong.

The second issue I've touched on briefly, and I'm going to expand a bit on that now, is the amount of deferred maintenance that the postsecondary institutions are dealing with. Now, we've often heard members on this side talk about the infrastructure deficit that was created. So, yes, the government paid off the cash debt and deficit that we had, but in doing so, they stole from Peter to pay Paul and created an infrastructure deficit, and some would also argue – and I'm one of them – that there was a human, social deficit that was also created as part of that.

Specific to the infrastructure deficit, the fact sheets that I've looked at indicate that the U of A and the U of C alone, not counting all the rest of the postsecondary education institutions in Alberta, have a deferred maintenance of a billion dollars. Now, I'm just going to refer back here to my earlier comments about capping this fund at \$3 billion. That's only going to give us a hundred and thirty five mil to play with extra every year, and we have no idea when we're going to attain that full level of \$3 billion. Here we are with a billion dollars today in deferred infrastructure maintenance. So I think that's an issue that we need to be looking at outside and inside of what's being talked about and contemplated in this bill.

Tuition is another area, and I know others have talked about the increase in tuition. Yearly tuition as a percentage of the Alberta student loan program maximum in '92-93 used to be about 20 per cent, and now it's almost 40 per cent. That difference is being made up by the students working part-time and full-time.

I always find it interesting that when we went to university, that was not the norm so much, yet when we all safely have degrees and are well on in our working lives, we're more than happy to turn around and make it much more difficult for the next generation. I argue, in fact, that this government transferred that intergenerational debt in less than a generation because they moved it onto the shoulders of the students in particular. I think that we've now got the numbers to show that, that the students ended up picking up a huge debt load that came to them as a result of choices made by the government.

If we look at, for example, information from ACTISEC, they note that student debt has risen substantially, and university students

graduate with an average debt – there are some lower, but there's also some substantially higher – of \$21,000. Twenty-one thousand dollars. If you could manage to put a thousand dollars into your loan payment, it would still take you almost two years to pay that off and more if you've got interest payments as part of that. College students with \$19,000. I mean, they're not going to be able to pay off a thousand bucks a month. Let's face it; it's much less than that. They're looking at years and years and years of this. Well, we didn't have to do that. How come we're willing to do it to somebody else? It doesn't redress overall the level of tuition that students are paying.

I'm interested very much in what the criteria are that the minister contemplates using as performance measurements to judge the success of this program, and I'd like to see these laid out now. I don't want to see opinion polls used as performance measurements. I want to see what the criteria are now. They should be part of this bill. I mean, if we're to judge this – the Public Accounts Committee, the public at large, the members of the Assembly – we need to know what we're judging against. What's the benchmark? What are the criteria we're supposed to be using to decide whether or not this program is successful? And that stuff needs to come out at the beginning. You can't invent it as you go along, or you're not playing the game fairly. So that is a question that I have of what the criteria and performance measurements would be.

I continue to be concerned by bills I see coming forward from the government which are essentially shell bills. They outline a bunch of stuff with no details in it, and the details are to come later. Well, they come through regulations and orders in council, Mr. Speaker, and that's much more difficult for people to track. I mean, even in this day of electronic scrutiny – e-government, if you will, and that's a good thing – it's very difficult for people to find out things like orders in council and how things got changed.

There's no public discussion around that. It doesn't come back through this Assembly and get debated openly. We don't get to consult with our constituents and bring forward issues they're concerned about. It's just quietly done as a regulation change. An order in council comes out in the *Gazette*, if you know where that is or how to find it, and that's it, and people don't know what's happened. They don't know how it's changed. It's a bit of a surprise to them. May not even be a press release that they changed something.

So I continue to push the government to lay out their plan and the specifics of it in the legislation and not hide behind this, "We'll do everything behind closed doors later and get back to you." What are they fond of saying? "Stay tuned." Well, that radio station is a bit staticky, Mr. Speaker. It's not giving us very much information.

There are a number of other issues that I would like to bring up around this, but I know my time is running out. I'm glad that I got a chance to raise some of these issues during second reading. I am supportive of the bill overall, but I think it could be better, and I'm always going to be pushing the government to be better. I look forward to continued debate on this and some additional suggestions in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, could we have permission for the Assembly to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lonesome soul in the members' gallery. You must be wondering why she's there. Well, definitely not to listen to the debate. One option could be seeking shelter from the snowfall outside, but there's actually a better reason. I would ask to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ms Nejjolla Korris, who is a proud mother looking down on her son, our page Mr. Taddes Korris, working with us tonight. Would she please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 1
Access to the Future Act
(continued)

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to comment on Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, and tell you that in St. Albert there's a lot of interest in this bill. I'd like to also talk about it in terms of my past background as a person that started school late at the university level, when I was 21, and also from the perspective of needing information in offices.

I think it's important that when we talk of a bill, we should look at the students' focus. Therefore, I'd like to just briefly talk about the need for a solid student services outlet in postsecondary institutions because they play, in my mind, three major functions. The student services' role is outreach activities to the community – and I think especially of a number of seniors in St. Albert who take advantage of this service and get updated – and access to programs and services and financial assistance available to students while they're on campus. I think it's also crucial in terms of student services that we look at the whole business of support services. Now, student services, as I understand it to be – and I think, again, it's so important – is what is going on in terms of counselling, guidance, careers, courses, housing, health, outreach, and also key information on scholarships and loans.

9:10

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that there's so much information, and I know that this government spends a lot of time on the whole issue of communication. I think that when we have a bill of this importance and this amount of endeavour, we want to make sure that it's well communicated to the constituents and to the citizens of Alberta as to what is available in the institutions and continuing education and so on. Also, I think it's very important that we have good high school information getting out and to interface with high schools across the province.

I think also, Mr. Speaker, it's important that when we have postsecondary institutions, it is crucial that we keep government departments updated. I'm thinking particularly of social services, workmen's compensation, these kinds of services where we need to work on and improve the interface so that we have people in these services advising people that may go on to postsecondary education. They must be well informed.

Also, in the student services function at a university or college level you'll see that many, many student services are directed to

serious problems of students. This is all fine and good, but I think there must be much more evidence of service to careers, career planning, alternate programs available, housing needs, financial, and academic upgrading in terms of what's going on.

The other aspect that I think is important in postsecondary institutions is that we see now many of our larger institutions such as Grant MacEwan, Mount Royal, have been moving away from the kinds of programs they've had and will be moving away from diploma students and into more university-oriented programs. It's very, very important to have a plan when we do this for counselling these students that may be left who have to go into other institutions such as NorQuest, Bow Valley, Portage, and those kinds of institutions across the province.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think there's a good endeavour through this bill. There are some issues here that I hope are looked at. I hope, and truly mean this, that there is a focus on student services to get the right information out and help students with better decision-making when they move on from high school education.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the University of Calgary located in the heart of my Calgary-Varsity constituency, I have great concerns about the government's abandonment of postsecondary institutions. Whether you refer to external evaluations such as *Maclean's* magazine or internal student evaluations, satisfaction has declined considerably. Each year the *Maclean's* survey lists the U of C near the bottom based on a variety of categories. U of C student dissatisfaction rated the university at 47 out of 48, with 1 being a top grade.

Bill 1 does not address a number of issues, the first issue being infrastructure. Bill 1 ignores the decade of disrepair into which the physical structure has fallen. One of the worst buildings, as one might expect, is one of the first built. This is the administration building in which President Dr. Harvey Weingarten's office is located.

On a recent tour of the university I could not help but note the slope of the floor which leaned to the east. What also stood out in a rather ironic fashion were the institutional hospital-green hallways and doors reminiscent of one of B.F. Skinner's rat mazes, which housed a number of behavioural psychology labs. I almost expected to see large rats wearing lab coats scurrying about the decaying dungeon in the building's basement. While this building is one of the extreme examples, other more modern buildings have their facades propped up by external scaffolding to keep them from crumbling on the students trying to enter the building.

In other academic offices buckets have been placed to catch the errant drops from aging plumbing, reminiscent of a *Ma & Pa Kettle* or *Beverly Hillsbillies* movie prior to the "up from the ground came a bubbling crude." This analogy was chosen to show how ludicrous it is, given our oil and gas revenues, that students and professors are forced to work under Third World infrastructure conditions. Students have to sit in the aisles or stand in the back of lecture halls, which sport very few left-handed desks, hoping that a fire marshal doesn't show up to shut down the class.

Another key factor of the infrastructure problem is that only a skeletal crew exists to repair whatever problems appear. For example, the number of electricians required to maintain a campus of the size of the U of C is 43. Over the years with cutbacks, its staff alone has been reduced to 8. Other such support staff deficiencies are notable in the number of custodians. Instead of doing the research, meeting with students, marking papers, or planning

lectures, professors are emptying their leak-catching buckets or vacuuming their offices. Secretarial staff as well are stretched well past the stress point trying to cover the requirements of several professors within their departments.

Issue number two: campus cannibalizing. In an effort to keep the cuts as far away from the students as possible, all support staff have been cut back. The most dramatic cutback has come in the form of the soon-to-occur layoff of 250 food support worker members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Many of these workers have been employees of the U of C for many years. Over 100 of the part-time workers are students themselves trying to cover their constantly rising tuition with the one notable exception of the proposed fall of 2005 saving of approximately \$55 thanks to the one-time magnanimous covering by this year's 5 per cent increase. Thank you, government, for your generosity.

Another form of campus cannibalizing which directly affects the quality of academic instruction and which this bill doesn't address is the growing class sizes. What was once considered acceptable only for first-year introductory classes in large theatres capable of . . .

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Herard: Yes, point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Point of Order
Relevance**

Mr. Herard: You know, it's understandable . . .

Ms Blakeman: Citation?

Mr. Herard: Relevance, 23.

I appreciate the fact that the hon. member is here, he's new, but there has to be some relevance to the bill at second reading. We can't just be listening to a speech that has absolutely no relevance with the bill that we're trying to discuss.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to please enforce the relevancy rules.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on the point of order.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, indeed. Thank you very much. Well, relevance is always an interesting point to be raised as a point of order because I think you have to listen to everything in context. Seeing as the member is a newly elected member from an area that, in fact, has a university in it, and he's obviously done a great deal of consultation, and he is bringing forward the issues that were raised by the university around funding and future support by the government, I would argue that his comments have been very relevant and key to what is in fact being brought forward by this bill. He has talked about infrastructure, and the bill certainly talks about infrastructure. He's talked about funding. It talks about funding in the bill. He's talked about tuition. It talks about tuition in the bill. He's talked about access. It talks about access in the bill.

So I think, in fact, Mr. Speaker, he has been very relevant.

Mr. Herard: I give up. I give up.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you so much for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: I would allow the hon. member to continue. I would not rule that there is a point of order.

There have been numerous interruptions from all sides of the House, and I would remind everyone that it is the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity that has the floor. Perhaps if we give him the opportunity to state his case, we would be able to tie all his comments in, and it would sound more relevant.

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, if I can just confirm that the clock was stopped and it restarts when the member starts to speak again. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: That's right.

9:20

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to the hon. government members, while I was a language arts teacher and some of my analogies may seem to be somewhat literary, I have been up to the university a number of times. I have spoken with groups from the students' union. I have spoken with faculty representatives. I have spoken three times with Dr. Harvey Weingarten. I've done the research.

What was once considered acceptable only for first-year introductory classes in large theatres capable of holding up to 600 students has now expanded into second- and third-year classes. There aren't enough grad students to fill in the instructional gaps. Students, therefore, feel abandoned. It is therefore not surprising that Alberta on a per capita basis has the lowest percentage of postsecondary graduates. Contributing, of course, to the lack of graduates is the lack of available seats for those students who have reached the constantly rising grade point entrance requirements.

This past fall over 25 per cent of eligible students who could afford what has become the latest tuition rates were turned away due to lack of space. As is the case with public education, portables and ATCO-style trailers rather than permanent structures have become the norm. The government with their Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, has committed to providing 15,000 new seats within the next two years. Given how long it has taken to build the new children's hospital, which is also located in Calgary-Varsity, this leads me to believe that the U of C will start to look like a carnival or trailer park. Possibly we could convert some of the old school buses into mobile classrooms linked together in trainlike fashion, pulled by retired Fort McMurray gigantic dump trucks.

Bill 1 doesn't address the fact that the U of C has been forced to cut back all their departments by 5 per cent over each of the next four years. While the government has covered the debt of health care regions, it hasn't shown the same generosity or foresight when it comes to covering either school board or postsecondary debt. Possibly it is this government's intention to create virtual university spaces for virtual students with virtual dollars like some kind of Xbox virtual reality game in which once you've passed through the various levels and obstacles, you'll be granted a virtual degree.

When you look, then, at the other future seat increase targets, especially the 60,000 new seats by 2020, which is only 15 years away, you have to wonder when the necessary construction will begin. The promised southeast hospital completion date keeps getting pushed farther and farther back with still no clue as to how or when half of the \$500 million will come from. The most recent suggested date is now set back from 2008 to 2010.

The difference between the government plan and the opposition plan is that the government plan is limited to a one-time \$3.5 billion infusion whereas the opposition plan, the Alberta legacy fund, carries on annually with a guaranteed 35 per cent funding from each year's surplus. In addition, it offers a guaranteed potential of

infrastructure, 25 per cent. Obviously, all of that money wouldn't go into postsecondary students.

I would like now, Mr. Speaker, if possible, to adjourn debate on Bill 1.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Clerk of Journals: Government Bills and Orders for Second Reading. Bill 2, Alberta Centennial Medal Act, hon. Mr. Mar.

Mr. Hancock: Might we move to Bill 3 for the moment?

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreeable to the House that we move to Bill 3? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed, say no. Okay.

Bill 3 City of Lloydminster Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to bring into debate the second reading of Bill 3, the City of Lloydminster Act.

The goal of Bill 3 is to update and enhance the legislative framework for the governance of the City of Lloydminster. The City of Lloydminster Act will clarify the process by which both the government of Alberta and the government of Saskatchewan can amend regulations and approve new regulations, including the approval of a new Lloydminster charter. The City of Lloydminster Act will replace and rescind the Lloydminster Municipal Amalgamation Act, which was originally approved in 1930 and is out of date relative to the current requirements for the city of Lloydminster.

The City of Lloydminster Act will contain modernized language, and the act will recognize the current city status of Lloydminster. The City of Lloydminster Act removes the legal requirement in the Lloydminster Municipal Amalgamation Act requiring the establishment of a commission in order to redraft any regulations, including a new Lloydminster charter. As the province of Saskatchewan has already passed its version of the City of Lloydminster Act, approval of the City of Lloydminster Act in Alberta will ensure that the city council and administration are not subject to two separate acts.

Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 3.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 2 Alberta Centennial Medal Act

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 2, the Alberta Centennial Medal Act.

This legislation will create the Alberta centennial medal. This award will commemorate our province's centennial by honouring some of our most talented and dedicated residents. Just about any Albertan that's made a significant contribution to the province would be considered eligible for this medal. The criteria as outlined in Bill 2 have been kept deliberately broad to allow us to recognize a wide spectrum of achievements. Albertans are contributing to their province in many different ways, but, Mr. Speaker, Bill 2 recognizes exactly that fact.

This bill also recognizes the importance of involving Albertans in honouring one another and in their own communities. The Alberta centennial medal will be awarded to nominees submitted by representatives from provincial organizations and various levels of government. The exact list will be contained in the regulations for the act.

The groups that nominate will be able to also award the medals to recipients that they select, and I anticipate, Mr. Speaker, that we will see some unique award ceremonies taking place in communities across the province throughout the centennial year. The Department of Alberta Community Development will co-ordinate the program to ensure that the same person is not nominated more than once and to see that the nominees in fact meet the program's minimal criteria.

Besides having made a significant contribution to the province, recipients must also be Canadian citizens that reside in or have resided in Alberta and are living at the time of awarding. This medal is for Albertans who are making a difference right now in helping our province start its next century strong. It's important that we pay tribute to these individuals and give their stories a chance to inspire others. The Alberta centennial medal would be a fittingly prestigious award.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, not to confuse this program with the Alberta centennial medallion. The Alberta centennial medallion is a keepsake that will be presented to all Alberta schoolchildren, centenarians, officials, and visiting dignitaries in the year 2005. Bill 2, the Alberta Centennial Medal Act, will designate the medal as an official honour of the Crown in the right of Alberta. Once the bill is passed, the government of Alberta will pursue national status for this award. A medal with national status is included in Canada's order of precedence.

Bill 2, the Alberta Centennial Medal Act, creates a recognition program that is inclusive, that involves communities in honouring their own, and pays a fitting tribute to Albertans that have given so much of themselves to others and to their province. It is a meaningful thing to do for our centennial. After all, the province is only as great as its people.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure again to move second reading of Bill 2, the Alberta Centennial Medal Act.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the Legislature to speak to Bill 2. I think it's entirely appropriate that this bill, Bill 2, is being introduced today in the Legislature. This bill provides tribute to Albertans who have made significant contributions to make our province a better place to live in, to raise our families in, and to work in. In this our centennial year, honouring current and former Albertans who have made our province so prosperous, so culturally diverse, and so special is a fantastic way to celebrate our 100-year birthday.

9:30

Mr. Speaker, Albertan people are known for their spirit, their innovation, and their generosity. In the past 100 years there have been so many special Albertans who have contributed to our society in such a profound way that honouring them with this special award of merit is entirely appropriate in our centennial. The awarding of the Alberta centennial medal will recognize and honour the important role individuals have played in the development of Alberta as the most prosperous province in Canada.

We need to honour these special people in our centennial year. Alberta is full of special individuals who have made contributions that have had a profound impact on the development of our society,

from community leaders to volunteers to those who have dedicated themselves to public service and achieved outstanding results. These are the people we are honouring with these medals, and I stand in support of the principle of this bill that guides this bill as well. It is entirely appropriate in our centennial year.

There is one area of this bill, section 4, that needs further clarification. It is the part that speaks to individuals and organizations designated in the regulations who may nominate individuals to be recipients of the centennial medal. I think further clarification is needed as to what criteria will be used in determining who these individuals and organizations will be. How will the government determine who can make nominations? My concern is that certain organizations may be excluded from being able to nominate an individual to be a recipient of this award. So can the hon. minister provide some clarification as to what process will be used to designate individuals or organizations who can nominate recipients? Also, what steps will be taken to ensure that worthy individuals are not excluded from being able to be nominated because the process for nomination was flawed?

My second concern with Bill 2 is clarification of the clause “the Minister shall approve.” Could this allow for political considerations to enter into decisions?

My final concern is surely about revocation, section 6. On what grounds?

Mr. Speaker, other than these concerns about potentially omitting worthy recipients of this medal, I fully support the spirit behind this bill, and I commend the hon. minister for sponsoring it. This prestigious award provides us with the opportunity to celebrate the contributions made to Alberta by exceptional individuals who have played a role in making our province prosperous. The special men, women, and youth who will receive this award will no doubt be worthy of this special tribute. I am pleased to support this bill, sir.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Flaherty: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I looked at this bill on the basis of two principles: transparency and responsibility. I believe there should be a panel of distinguished Albertans set up to develop the exact criteria in determining what worthy individuals or organizations may be eligible to receive an Alberta centennial medal, and by doing this, the government will be transparent and responsible and not be accused of playing politics with what I consider a wonderful idea.

To move from the above recommendations places the government in a bit of a pickle if they don't look at my recommendations. Organizations and associations and municipalities across the province will see right through this nominating process. I think it is flawed, and I think it should be changed in light of the panel concept.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone that wishes a question or comment.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill is a one-time commemorative medal that will recognize and honour the extraordinary accomplishments of nominated Albertans during the province's centennial year. The medal would be awarded to any Canadian citizen who has resided in Alberta and has made a significant contribution to this province. Criteria to be considered in the

awarding of this model are a broad range of contributions to the community and to the province through leadership, volunteerism, community involvement, and outstanding personal achievement.

Bill 2 is specifically awarded for exemplary personal contribution by nomination. The Alberta government has announced that plans are under way to have representatives from provincial associations, governments, and other organizations make the nominations with the awarding of the medals to be done at presentations throughout the centennial year. It is expected that 8,000 Alberta men, women, and youth will receive this award during the centennial year. It seeks to award deserving Albertans who have contributed to our province in areas such as community involvement, leadership, volunteerism, and outstanding personal achievements.

I support this bill. I think it's a wonderful opportunity for us to recognize the strength of this province, and that is its people. The only question that I believe should be raised here is surrounding section 4 of the bill. This section states that “individuals and organizations designated in the regulations may nominate individuals to be awarded the Alberta Centennial Medal.” What exactly are the criteria in determining who these individuals and organizations are? Specifically, how will the government determine which associations and other organizations will be designated as having the ability to nominate recipients, and then how will the government determine which individuals can nominate potential recipients, and what is the process for this?

Other than further clarification around those issues, I believe that this is a commendable bill. Albertan people are known for their spirit, their innovation, and their generosity. This medal provides us with an opportunity to celebrate these qualities and the people who exemplify them. I support the Alberta Centennial Medal Act. I believe it is the mark of a civil society to honour its people. In this first year of a new century I see opportunity for this government to emphasize our people and that we are here to serve our citizens. The centennial medal will recognize and acknowledge outstanding achievements of Albertans of all ages because we understand that each individual's achievement and success contributes to the health, wealth, and spirit of this great province.

Regulations for designating individuals and organizations for the purpose of nominations are not specified. It is my hope that regulations will support wide-sweeping consideration across the province, including all ethnic and religious groups. This will be another way of recognizing that our diversity is a strength and our strength is our people.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I rise to speak to Bill 2, the Alberta Centennial Medal Act. I want to thank the minister for his remarks introducing the bill and for clarifying the distinction between the medal and the medallion. I think it's an important distinction to keep in mind.

That said, I am speaking in support of the bill. I think it's a laudable decision on the part of the minister to recognize the individuals who have made significant contributions. It's obviously a very, very broad sort of criterion that the minister suggests here, but I suppose that if some mechanism could be found to make the judgments with respect to the selection of individuals who will be recipients of this award, that will certainly help. Particularly, section 4(2), which says that “the Minister shall approve the individuals nominated under subsection (1) to be awarded the Alberta Centennial Medal.”

nial Medal,” has raised some questions already in the minds of some hon. members who have spoken.

9:40

This may not be the time to propose any concrete changes to the act, but if there were some sort of all-party committee that the minister would seek advice from in making his final approvals, I think that would allay some of the concerns that have been expressed around that issue.

The revocation of awards did get my attention. I wonder what conditions, what circumstances would lead the government to revoke the awarding of this medal. If appropriate scrutiny is done to start with, if the minister seeks advice from an all-party committee, as I said, and the organization and individuals who have nominated people for receiving this award have done their work, then it seems to me the revocation section in the bill would seem to be redundant. It's not needed. It really casts some sort of shadow over what's otherwise a very nice and optimistic gesture on the part of the government.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my remarks. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else wish to speak on the bill?

Does the hon. Minister of Community Development wish to close?

Mr. Mar: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I wish to do so. I'd like to thank hon. members for the comments that they made this evening.

In answer to a specific question referred to by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona with respect to why there's a revocation provision in the bill, this is a requirement by Rideau Hall in order to allow this medal to be recognized by the Order of Precedence. That's the reason why the revocation provision is contained within here.

With respect to the other concerns raised by many other hon. members, I can assure you that the regulations are being drafted now, and those regulations are being drafted pursuant to section 7 of the act and will include the issues raised by section 4, which a number of you referenced. My undertaking to you is that I will provide transcripts of the Blues or *Hansard* to the drafters of the regulations so that they might take your comments into consideration while preparing the regulations.

With that, I wish to call the question on Bill 2, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

Bill 7

Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to request leave tonight to bring forward second reading of Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

Bill 7 proposes to make technical amendments to the Public Health Act, the Government Organization Act, and the Health Professions Act. The minor amendments address issues related to health professionals. These issues have been brought forward by the respective professional associations and colleges in Alberta. Currently the Public Health Act provides authority for nurse practitioners to practise. These sections will be repealed by Bill 7 when nurse practitioners become regulated under the registered nurses schedule of the Health Professions Act. This change is targeted to come into effect in the fall of this year.

Bill 7 also proposes amendments to the Health Professions Act. These amendments are required to protect the term “specialist” and limit the use of the term. Colleges would make regulations about how their members can use the specialist designation.

Amendments are also proposed to several schedules in the Health Professions Act. These include revising the names of certain colleges and amending the protected titles for regulated health professionals. For instance, the “College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Province of Alberta” will become the “College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta.” Another example is the title “emergency medical technologist-paramedic (critical care paramedic),” a new protected title which will be added by the amendments. A schedule amendment is also necessary in order to allow the Alberta Podiatry Association to continue as a nonregulated body with the same name once podiatrists become regulated under the Health Professions Act with physicians, surgeons, and osteopaths.

Bill 7 proposes amendment also, Mr. Speaker, to the Government Organization Act. The Government Organization Act restricts certain medical activities to health professionals who are authorized to perform these activities by legislation or by the minister. The proposed amendments are intended to more clearly define certain restricted activities. For example, there is a definition for dispensing a drug which specifically excludes the administration of a drug. However, there is no current definition of administration of a drug.

Proposed amendments to Bill 7 add a definition of administration of a drug and also clarify the definition for “compound” and “dispense.” “Administration of a drug” will mean “the supplying of a dose of a drug to a person for the purpose of immediate ingestion, application, inhalation, insertion, installation or injection.” The definition of compounding clarifies that reconstituting a drug with water does not fall within the definition of compounding, which would make it a restricted activity. The definition of “dispense” will be amended to clarify that when a drug is dispensed, it is provided to a person through a prescription and clearly does not mean to administer the drug. Associated redundancies and wording in the Government Organization Act will also be addressed through Bill 7.

I ask support of the House for the second reading of Bill 7.

Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 9

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I rise to move Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005, for second reading.

A little bit of time has passed, not much but a little, since the Post-secondary Learning Act was passed, and in practice it's been determined that it would be appropriate to make a few small changes for the purposes of clarification and housekeeping and deleting some unnecessary sections. Bill 9 will help to clarify board membership regulations for technical institutes and colleges, correct some things that were unintentionally done when the legislation was drafted which could lead to unintended restrictions.

It also proposes to delete the section of the act that lists not-for-profit institutions eligible for funding from the government since funding for these institutions is provided through a regulation. Now, the purpose of removing them from the act. Basically, there are, I think, four specific not-for-profit institutions listed in the act. There are an additional four not-for-profit institutions which are not listed

in the act which have the same criteria and qualifications as those that are listed in the act, and one of the institutions listed in the act has now been merged with a public institution. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, having the specificity in the act listing these institutions is not an appropriate way to go, so we're proposing to delete the section. It's not required. The same matter can be dealt with under the regulations.

Now, I know that we've heard in the House tonight different views about framework legislation and the work being done under regulation, but I would suggest that surely that criticism, if it was ever valid, isn't valid with respect to this point. There needs to be the flexibility to add a not-for-profit postsecondary institution to the list when it's appropriate to do so. So that's the intention there.

9:50

Bill 9 also clarifies terminology relating to tuition, as requested by the Auditor General.

There's a housekeeping amendment for sections that relate to student associations. The Campus Alberta Quality Council has assumed, as well, a role of reviewing degree proposals, work that was previously done by the Private Colleges Accreditation Board. Thus the work of the Private Colleges Accreditation Board is now done, and that section can be deleted.

There is a change being made to the section relating to the collection of information. Right now the minister can only access information regarding current students. However, in order to ensure that good policies are being developed for advanced education in Alberta, we need to be able to access information for those who apply but do not enrol in an institution as well as alumni information for various surveys. It's something that we will be obviously

consulting and working with the Privacy Commissioner about to make sure that the information collected is used appropriately. Revising the section does allow us to collect information that may include personal information about an identifiable student, applicant, or alumni of a postsecondary institution providing that the information relates directly to and is necessary for the operation of the program or activity.

The minister also needs authority to be able to conduct surveys relating to postsecondary education with applicants and with graduates of institutions to ensure that policy directions are supporting the needs of Albertans. We have consulted with the Alberta privacy branch and the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to ensure that the wording provided is appropriate.

Finally, there are some housekeeping changes to ensure consistency in the use of the terms "private college" and "private institution" throughout the act.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the House would see the benefits of these amendments and would approve Bill 9.

With that, I would move that we adjourn Bill 9.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn the Assembly until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 9:53 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 16, 2005** 1:30 p.m.
Date: 05/03/16
[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibility laid upon us. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to introduce to you and through you 17 grade 6 students from Neerlandia public Christian school, which is located in the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency. They are accompanied this afternoon by teacher Mr. Jim Bosma, parents Mr. Eugene De Groot, Mrs. Carol Elgersma, Mr. Kevin Gelderman, Mrs. Karin Siegle, Mr. Ken Wood, and Mrs. Anita Veldhuisen. They are seated in the gallery this afternoon. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 46 students from New Sarepta elementary school accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Lynne Chalmers and Miss Tessa Hornbeck, assistant Mrs. Horvey, and parents Mrs. Linda Harke, Sherry Metrunec, Mrs. Koziol, Mrs. Dykstra, Mrs. De Pew, Mrs. Sloan, Mrs. McKinney, and Mrs. Ogonoski. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of this Assembly a gentleman seated in the members' gallery who has been a friend of mine for many years. He's been a councillor for the MD of Taber for the last 10 years. For seven years he's been on the Alberta board of FCSS, and he's recently been elected as president of the AAMD and C. This man has been a good friend of mine and worked many years in municipal politics with me. I'd like you to please ask Don Johnson to rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 16 students from NorQuest College, located in the Edmonton-Glenora constituency. They are in an English as a second language program. Their teacher is Debbie Stephen. Just to give you an idea of their backgrounds, they are from Afghanistan, Iran, China, Taiwan, Rwanda, Palestine, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Israel, Russia, and Pakistan. I invite them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the new chief of staff for the NDP opposition, Debbie Clark. Some of you may know Debbie through her work as executive administrator and registrar of the Alberta Assessors' Association. Joining Debbie today are her parents, Mike and Lorette Spilchen, long-time New Democrat supporters and formerly of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, where they owned a business. They now reside in Canora, Saskatchewan. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others at this time? A little later there will be some additional ones.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Our historic vignette of the day, hon. members. On March 16, 1967, the portrait of Roberta Catherine MacAdams Price was presented to the Alberta Legislature to honour her achievements. She was one of the two first women elected to the Alberta Legislative Assembly on June 7, 1917, and she was the first woman to introduce a piece of legislation in what was then known as the British Empire. She was elected as Roberta MacAdams as a nonpartisan MLA to represent the province at large in the 1917 election.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Ambulance Services

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Albertans expect good management from their government, but they are struggling to find it. Not only did this government mismanage the transfer of ambulance services, now they've made a mess of their makeshift \$55 million solution. Seventy-seven of 149 Alberta municipalities will be facing a budget shortfall because of the failed ambulance transfer. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is this government going to do to help these 77 municipalities climb out of the financial hole this government's ambulance transfer has dug for them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government takes very seriously the role and responsibilities associated with municipalities and see ourselves clearly as partners with municipalities. With respect to the issue of ambulances Municipal Affairs and myself as the minister of that department are working very closely with the minister of health to ensure that issues related to municipalities are dealt with as fairly and equitably as they possibly can be.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Well, then, to the Minister of Health and Wellness: given that ambulance services cost more to deliver in rural areas, why did the government put rural Alberta at a disadvantage by providing assistance on a per capita basis?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we spent a very intense several days examining options, looking at per capita funding, looking at actual costs submitted to regional health authorities from the municipali-

ties, evaluating the way to manage it most effectively. Some of the municipalities, rural and medium- and small-sized municipalities, in fact did not deliver ambulance services. They contracted it from somebody else. To give carte blanche funding without carefully having an opportunity to examine the impacts may have been unfair, but the best way to do it was on a per capita basis and to look at the opportunity this year with the technical committee, to examine each and every case and see whether we could improve upon it for the next year.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. So, then, to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: given that the transfer of ambulance services is such a glaring example of failed restructuring and government inefficiency, what role will this minister's department play in improving the efficiency and structure of ambulance services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the health minister had a very tough decision to make and did a very good job on the decision she did make.

I want to understand from some questions that were asked yesterday. At the time when the ambulance review was done in 2002, total ambulance cost in the province of Alberta was around \$115 million. Of that, the municipal portion was roughly \$40 million. Forty million from the province, \$22 million from patients that took rides in ambulances, and about another \$9 million to \$10 million that came from the federal government, which was mostly aboriginal. That's the \$115 million, and that was the total cost at the time. But remember that \$40 million of that was all that municipalities paid. They've never been paid any different for that, and now we're giving them \$55 million.

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

1:40 Restructuring and Government Efficiency

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to its website the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency is focused on "how government and its reporting entities can better provide services to Albertans." This minister so far has refused to look into the mess surrounding the budget process, refused to look into taxpayer dollars wasted on flights, and now apparently is refusing to look into the transfer of ambulance services. So to that same minister: other than SuperNet what files is his department working on, and what is their cost?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want you to know that SuperNet is going to be a huge advantage to Albertans. It is especially going to be an advantage to rural Alberta, and it goes along with the rural initiatives that this government has. At this point in time it's so important to get the SuperNet done that I am focusing most of my energies and time on the SuperNet.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. To the same minister: what was the cost of establishing the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, that, I think, is a budget item, but I will say this. I don't know if the members across the floor understand that this ministry wasn't a brand spanking new ministry. It's new in name and it's new in form, but there was some restructuring done before the ministry started. We have a large portion, Alberta Corporate Service Centre, that's in this ministry, that we're working on diligently to find efficiencies in. The corporate chief information officer was also moved over, and that was about 1,350 employees.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why won't the Premier himself take responsibility for government structure and efficiency, cut the taxpayers' losses by transferring SuperNet back to Innovation and Science, and simply eliminate the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency? Why won't he do that?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the department of restructuring is moving along very well indeed. I'm pleased with the progress and anxiously await the minister's report. Perhaps he can update us, bring us up to date on what the department is all about.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Health Resource Centre

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October the Calgary health region contracted with the Health Resource Centre to do hip and knee surgeries. Despite the fact these procedures would cost more than they would in the public system, the Premier called this contracting out "a health care success story." But it's now been revealed that not only do these procedures cost more, but the wait-lists are longer at the Health Resource Centre. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that wait times for hip surgery are longer at the Health Resource Centre than in any other facility in Calgary, does the minister consider this contract a health care success story?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Calgary health region for making every attempt to reduce the length of time people were waiting for surgery. While there are still issues with the wait list, those are issues that the health region is working to address. We haven't done a complete evaluation of the effectiveness of that contract. To be critical of a region who is attempting to move patients forward into the system to get the service they require is really not the way to approach improving the health care system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: are the wait lists longer at the Health Resource Centre because its private clients like the WCB, who pays a premium, are being served before patients from the public system?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, that has always been the case.

Ms Blakeman: Again to the same minister: given that procedures

that are done at the Health Resource Centre cost more and waiting lists are longer, will the minister do the logical thing and increase capacity in the public system and cancel this private surgical contract?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's jumping to conclusions, and this minister isn't prepared to jump to conclusions. We have to take a look at all of the issues surrounding the health care system. Number one, this is a very good health care system. Number two, the region in Calgary is planning to add beds. The exponential growth in Alberta is probably unprecedented anywhere else in Canada. Number three, the issue of leveraging some of these surgeries in an attempt to reduce waiting lists was something – if the hon. member opposite really had a case, wouldn't we have heard about it when it happened during the election?

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Ambulance Services (continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, they certainly heard about it from us.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I informed the House that the city of Red Deer is short millions in provincial ambulance funding. Today the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association is saying that the Conservatives' so-called \$55 million fix announced last week still leaves Calgary \$4.3 million short and Lethbridge \$2.7 million short. In fact, more than half of AUMA's member municipalities are facing shortfalls because of Tory ambulance bungling. To the Premier: can the Premier explain why this government has so badly botched the ambulance transfer that municipal taxpayers will end up being saddled with at least \$12 million in extra ambulance costs come the 1st of April?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the hon. member, a botch of the ambulance service changeover to make it part of health as opposed to a transportation service, which I don't know if that's what the opposition wants, would have been to go to the \$128 million program. Had we proceeded with the program at the costs that had escalated so dramatically, I suspect there would have been yelling and screaming and stamping and fuming and storming on the part of the opposition.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that during the election we brought it to the government's and the public's attention that they were lowballing the ambulance costs, why is the Premier now perplexed that the costs are in fact so high?

Mr. Klein: Perplexed? Because it was to be really quite simple. The original context – and I'm sure the Official Opposition agrees – is that ambulance services are now an integral part of health services, the front line, the first responders, and ambulances for the most part are travelling hospitals. The paramedics and the EMTs are highly trained individuals able to administer certain kinds of medicine and certainly more than primary first aid. So it was decided that ambulance services should be part of the health system as opposed to an array of services offered throughout the province. Some were municipal services, some were in conjunction with fire departments, some were volunteer services, some were private operators, and what we wanted to do was to achieve a co-ordination of services under the regional health authorities. That's all we

wanted to do. That was the first step. I don't know where it would have taken us from there. To me, that didn't require a tremendous amount of rocket science.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When will this government admit that its own shoddy research led to the lowballing of ambulance transfer costs, and when can municipalities expect to see a funding plan that doesn't leave their citizens facing property tax increases to pay for the government's mistakes?

Mr. Klein: If that question is to me, Mr. Speaker, we're doing our best to compensate municipalities. The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness has this file on her table, and I'll ask her to respond.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, over this next year while we look at the discovery projects, I think more of the information will come to light. We hope to keep progressing. But I think that what we are doing today and a very rational assessment of it will illuminate why many of the earlier reports that were filed with Municipal Affairs from municipalities did not account for all of the costs that were made available to the regional health authorities at the time that the transfer was intended to be complete, and that is part of the crux of the problem. So we will elucidate that over these next few months, and we're working very diligently to get that in place.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, may I remind this Assembly that last year \$65 million, \$55 million that we gave to municipalities and \$10 million that we gave to the discovery projects, was in fact not paid to them, so there is extra compensation for ground ambulance to municipalities this year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Definition of Marriage

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in June 2003 our Premier spoke out for Albertans, and he said:

The law in Alberta is very clear, notwithstanding how some people might feel about it, it's very clear. It's as clear as crystal. If there is any move to sanctify and legalize same-sex marriages, we will use the notwithstanding clause. Period. End of story.

On March 23, 2005, this government's Marriage Amendment Act will expire. My question is to the Premier. Regardless of what the courts and the federal Parliament are doing, will this government show leadership by re-enacting the Alberta Marriage Amendment Act, renewing the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman and using the notwithstanding clause before it expires?

Mr. Klein: Relative to the hon. member's stand on the traditional definition of marriage, we agree with him entirely.

I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General respond relative to the legalities of this case, but the hon. member knows full well that whether the notwithstanding clause stays or whether it goes, it can't be defended, and that's what I'll have the hon. minister talk to.

I would like to just take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to talk about what we have done. Perhaps I can do that during the second supplementary.

Mr. Hinman: Is this government prepared to clearly state that

notwithstanding any federal court or parliamentary decision it will not solemnize any marriage within Alberta other than those which are between one man and one woman?

Mr. Klein: A very interesting question. I agree with the tone and the intent of the hon. member's question, but relative to the legalities I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Speaker, last December the Supreme Court ruled in a Marriage Act reference that was brought by the federal government. In essence, that case says this: the federal government, not the provincial government, has the jurisdiction with respect to the definition of marriage. That is why at this point in time the federal government has before its Parliament an act relative to the definition of marriage. It is also very clear that a province cannot use the notwithstanding clause relative to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms with respect to matters that are not within its jurisdiction. Therefore, the province does not have the power to use the notwithstanding clause in the Charter relative to the definition of marriage.

Mr. Hinman: Will this government stand up to Ottawa for the traditions and customs of Albertans by just saying no to changes in the definition of marriage, just as Quebec has said no to Ottawa in defence of its traditions and customs?

Mr. Klein: Quebec has said no to Ottawa relative to a number of issues over which it has constitutional authority.

Mr. Speaker, again, we agree with the tone and the intent of the hon. member's questions. Relative to the legalities he's quite clear on the legal matters, and the Attorney General and Justice minister has explained them quite well.

Mr. Speaker, we have continually defended the traditional definition of marriage. We believe that it's deeply rooted in history, culture, and religion. We have continually fought changes to the traditional definition of marriage, now a bill before the House of Commons. I have personally written to every MP – every MP; all 300-and-some-odd MPs – I've written to the Prime Minister asking him to allow a free vote, and I've urged all members of the House of Commons to vote no or to at least amend the legislation to include a notwithstanding clause. We are also encouraging all Alberta people to contact their MPs, and I would encourage this member to talk to the Liberal caucus and have the Liberal caucus talk to the federal government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Métis Hunting Rights

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The spring grizzly bear hunt in Alberta is based on the scientific management of our bear population, and the number of permits issued each year is strictly limited to achieve a sustainable grizzly population. My concern is the effect that the new interim Métis harvesting agreement may have on Alberta's grizzly conservation programs, specifically next month, when the male bears come out of their winter hibernation. So my question is to the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Under the new interim harvesting agreement what restrictions are imposed on the Métis' ability to hunt grizzly bears in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sustainable Resource Development's role in implementing this agreement is again to make sure that the ongoing theme of conservation and monitoring and enforcement, if necessary, prevails. That is something that was discussed with the Métis during the time of the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things to note is that Alberta's careful and cautious approach to the grizzly bear hunt this year already includes a modest aboriginal harvest. Like the aboriginal harvest, SRD will closely monitor any grizzly bear hunt or any grizzly bear hunting that might occur under the Métis agreement, and we will share those results with the public as we always do.

Dr. Morton: To the same minister again: given the absence of any or at least very minimal restrictions on Métis hunting of grizzly, would the minister consider cancelling the spring grizzly hunt for legally registered hunters in order to prevent Métis or anybody else from hunting or killing grizzlies this spring?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, under the federal government's Powley decision, the Supreme Court decision, and with the interim Métis harvesting agreement that's in place, if the hunt were closed to anyone, the Métis would still be permitted to hunt for subsistence reasons. As a result of that and to ensure the conservation measures that we abide by and that were put into the interim agreement, those measures and education, we will continue to work with the Métis associations and under the leadership of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Dr. Morton: Again to the same minister. I don't know how many people hunt grizzly bears for subsistence, but last year there were six grizzly bears killed by licensed hunters in this province. Does the government have a plan to monitor the number of bears killed by unlicensed Métis hunters this spring to ensure that our grizzly population does remain sustainable?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, we do want grizzly bear on the land, and definitely the grizzly bear hunt is closely monitored and checked and researched every single solitary year. That's why we do that: to make sure that the bears are kept on the land.

By regulation, the hon. member is wanting to know that every single hunter, including Métis, must register their grizzly bear harvest with our officials. We have these measures in place so that we can keep those conservation concerns that we talked about earlier in check and we can take action on our licensing and our ultimate rollout of a grizzly bear strategy each year. So we do monitor. We do it on our best research available.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Access to Information on Enron

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that this Progressive Conservative government and Enron talked and talked and talked often. Enron Canada was a generous financial donor to the Progressive Conservative Party, and even one of their Houston officials was quoted in a government of Alberta news release that was bragging about the power purchase arrangement auction in the year 2000. My first question is to the Premier. Given that over 5,600 pages of records of communication between Enron Canada and Alberta Energy were denied the Official Opposition's

access to information request in 2002, will this government now release these documents to the public immediately?

2:00

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the market surveillance administrator has asked the federal Competition Bureau to investigate this matter. I'm sure any files that they require will be turned over to them, and once they make their findings, perhaps – I don't know for sure – those papers will become public. I don't know. Nor do I know the reason – but I'll attempt to find out – why the Liberals were denied access to the files. I can only surmise that they didn't fit within the context of the FOIP rules and guidelines.

Relative to the hon. member's preamble, I'll address that in the second supplementary.

Mr. MacDonald: I'll be pleased to hear it.

To the Premier: given all the damning information the American authorities have uncovered on Enron's activities in Alberta through Project Stanley, why is this government refusing to release these records now?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I have no idea, but perhaps what the hon. member is requesting doesn't fit within the guidelines of the FOIP rules and regulations.

Relative to his first preamble, Mr. Speaker, where he alleges that Enron has talked and talked and talked to the government and had these secret, behind-closed-door discussions, I don't recall any discussions whatsoever with Enron. None.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: how many of these records relate to Enron's unethical activities and price manipulation at the Power Pool of Alberta? There are 5,600 records. How many of those relate to these activities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, if in fact the allegations being made by the hon. member are true, then that information undoubtedly has been obtained by the market surveillance administrator, and he has passed that information on to the federal Competition Bureau in order that they may conduct their investigation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mountain Pine Beetle Control

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mountain pine beetle has had a devastating impact on the forest industry in British Columbia, already resulting in the loss of more than \$9 billion in forestry revenues and threatening 80 per cent of their pine forests. Recent reports indicate that the number of mountain pine beetles in Alberta has increased this year over last and that the forest pest has been found in areas where it hasn't been found before. Can the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development tell us what he's doing about this alarming trend in the increase of mountain pine beetles and their locations in Alberta?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question because as far as our forestry industry and Sustainable Resource Development are concerned, the greatest threat that we have to our pine forests is the pine beetle that is coming in from British Columbia. That's why we've continued over the past three years – it's a three-year project at this point in time – to look at surveys to see if there's

any significant increase. We do know that there are some areas in the province that are starting to experience some pine beetle infestation, but let me be clear: there is no epidemic of mountain pine beetle at this particular point in time.

We do continue to do aerial surveys as well as on the ground surveys. What we do when we find a patch of pine beetle destroying our pine forests is: we go in there, we identify the trees, we take and log the trees, and we burn them to make sure that the pine beetle does not infest other trees. This is a strategy . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Can the same minister tell us, in light of the fact that there are more beetles found in more places than ever before, if his department is co-ordinating with British Columbia to help keep beetles out of Alberta and, if so, how?

Mr. Coutts: We have 2 million acres of pine forest in Alberta, and our priority definitely is to work with the British Columbia government to learn from their dire situation over there. We constantly share information. As a matter of fact, I plan on talking to my British Columbia counterpart within the next two days when we're in Cranbrook, British Columbia, at a joint cabinet meeting between Alberta and B.C. We know that these beetles come in, as I said, from B.C., and we're monitoring those areas on a very, very close basis. We will continue to work together with the British Columbia government to eradicate this pesky little beetle.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister tell us what, if any, role he's taken in consulting and co-ordinating efforts with the forest industry?

Mr. Coutts: The industry is definitely involved because it's their future that's at stake here. As well, we have different government departments and the federal government being involved with this as well. We also involve municipal governments in this because it's part of their communities that are devastated by annual allowable cuts that are affected by pine beetles.

For example, Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation conducts random checks for barked wood coming in from British Columbia at their weigh stations. Community Development doesn't allow B.C. wood to be burned in their parks, and their conservation officers continually check on that. So I'm quite proud of the fact that these and other efforts have earned the Alberta team a Premier's award of excellence in the past year, and we will continue to work on it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Apprenticeship Training

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this Assembly the Minister of Advanced Education said: "There's no shortage of place in our advanced education institutions for apprenticeships. The shortage is in placement." Yet the apprenticeship and training board's own figures show that for 2003 of the nearly 40,000 apprentices registered in Alberta, barely half were attending technical training institutions. Can the minister explain why?

Mr. Hancock: Most of those who weren't attending institutions at the time were probably building their workplace hours. Part and parcel of the apprenticeship training program is that you work and you go to school. When you've built up the work hours, you're eligible to go to school. We don't have a compulsory aspect in the program that says that once you've acquired the work hours that are necessary, you have to go to school. That depends on the students determining when they're available to go to school and their employers determining when they can release them to go to school. It's very much a co-operative effort with students, their employers, and the system. I can assure the hon. member that we have contracts with the postsecondary institutions that are in place, the technical institutes, to provide apprenticeship programs for everybody that registers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it is as the minister says, then I wonder if there's any protection for the apprentice if an employer continues to say to the apprentice: "I can't release you to go to school. I can't afford to. I need you here now."

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a very strong apprenticeship system in this province, and we have fieldworkers in the department who work with the employers and the apprentices in order to co-ordinate this. I can assure you that that has not been brought to our attention as a problem in any way, shape, or form.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why is the government of Alberta pushing to allow temporary foreign workers in to work in the oil sands when we actually trained 1,700 fewer apprentices in 2003 than we did in 1982?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, whether or not the hon. member is correct in his assertion, the two have no relationship to each other. The reason why we have the opportunity for foreign workers to come into this province is that there is a skill shortage. There are lots of jobs. This province is operating at full steam. Not just in the apprenticeship area but in skills right across the province there is a need for well-qualified people. There is a place for every qualified Albertan, and there's an opportunity for Albertans who want to be qualified, but that's still not going to be enough to fuel the opportunities that are available in this province. So we welcome others to come to this province to help build this province and to create a home here.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

2:10 Health Regulations for Rural Community Halls

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week I met with several rural community associations that due to a boundary adjustment find themselves now in the Calgary health region, and they all expressed the same concerns. The way they're being classified by the health inspectors, also known in rural Alberta as the pie and perogy police, they fear that they're going to have to shut down their community halls. The number of specific concerns raised were far too numerous to mention within the guidelines of a

brief preamble, so I'll go directly to my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Why are small rural community halls that put on one annual turkey supper or serve annual rodeo lunches classified the same as full-service restaurants by health inspectors?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, for public health reasons, obviously, facilities that serve food are classified under very different categories. The category a facility is placed in depends upon the frequency and the kind of food that's served and whether or not the venue is open to the public. Wherever food is served, public health regulations apply equally regardless of any other factors, including size and frequency of use, and this is to ensure that Albertans can be confident that public health is protected.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that these functions are little more than a community picnic held indoors, should there not be a separate designation for these small rural community halls?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, in light of the hon. member's concern I contacted the Calgary health region today, and the Calgary health region is looking into the matter of how frequently regions and municipalities may feel that there are some impediments to how well they can serve. A number of people have suggested that there are clear guidelines in place. If a region is planning an event, if they're planning some kind of community activity, they can contact the health region, and the health region will come and work with them to ensure that public safety is maintained, that the proper rules and regulations are in place, and they work with the groups to ensure that guidelines are followed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that these complaints were not nearly as prevalent in the health authority that they found themselves in before, is there a standard level of inspection between one health region and another?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in most regional health authorities the level of inspection varies with the amount of confidence the health authority has relative to the type of food and the type of facilities, the frequency, and so on. While I recognize that under the new regional authorities there may be variances, I encourage community groups to work with the health authority, to work with the public health inspector to make sure that there is in fact a safe event possible under the guidelines.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Health Reform

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has huffed and puffed for months about the so-called third way in health care, yet he refused to talk about it during the election, and four months after the election he's still refusing to level with Albertans. Meanwhile, the NDP opposition has just finished province-wide public hearings on health care reform, and believe me, grassroots Albertans have lots of ideas on how to fix problems that in many cases were created by this government. My questions are to the Premier. Why is the Premier still refusing to consult with the Marthas and Henrys of this

province to get their input on how to strengthen and sustain the public health care system in this province?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that will be done. This is a three-pronged approach to achieving sustainability in health care, which has now reached proportions of – what? – \$9.1 billion a year. If the hon. member feels that is acceptable, then he can stand up and tell Albertans that he thinks that that and an 8 per cent increase each and every year is acceptable. I'll let him do that. I'm not about to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is: the first step was actually to put more money into the health care system to eliminate all the deficits of the regional health authorities and to alleviate waiting lists for certain common procedures, primarily bone and joint procedures, some heart procedures, some cancer procedures, and to accommodate some capital.

The second phase of the program is to hold an international symposium to find out what works in other jurisdictions, including socialist republics where there is a mix of public and private.

The third component, of course, is a public consultation with the people of this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier again: why is the Premier and his government huddling with hand-picked international health care experts at an invitation-only symposium in Calgary in May while freezing out severely normal Albertans who have many worthwhile ideas for improving the health system?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I understand that 500 severely normal Albertans have been invited. We can't invite the world to this symposium. We're inviting representatives from around the world to share their experiences, from jurisdictions around the globe representing countries that espouse to the free-enterprise system and representing countries that espouse to the system that they espouse to.

Dr. Pannu: My second supplementary to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: with his so-called third way why is the government ripping off a slogan from the United Kingdom in order to import a health care system from the United States?

Mr. Klein: Well, first of all, I don't know to what slogan the hon. member alludes, Mr. Speaker. If he's talking about the third way, I didn't know that. I just thought it was a good slogan, and if they're using it in Britain, great. Britain happens to be governed by the Labour Party, which is the equivalent to the NDs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate received a \$1.7 million increase in funding overtop of its last year's \$2.6 million budget. This expensive office supposedly has the charge of defending Alberta's consumers against price gouging, market manipulation, and price-fixing by utility companies. Unfortunately, it has been silent. To the Minister of Government Services: has the Utilities Consumer Advocate looked into the current case against Enron and its affiliates price gouging in Alberta?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, as has been answered in this House many times, there is an investigation going on by the Competition Bureau of the federal government, and that will get into all of the angles. The Minister of Energy has on many occasions clearly demonstrated what the provincial government's role has been, and certainly the Competition Bureau will be coming out with their report, and we'll have a complete answer when that is done.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why is it, then, that the Utilities Consumer Advocate's own website posts consumer updates about Enron's activities in Alberta, Project Stanley? Is it just functioning as a propaganda machine when it's not really investigating anything?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen where Enron is on the website at this time. Enron is now not an identity.

Mr. Elsalhy: To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: given that the Utilities Consumer Advocate is refusing to look into something that affects all taxpayers, which is really his main reason for existence, what's your ministry doing to ensure that the Department of Government Services is investigating the consumer rip-off?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that the utilities advocate has been travelling all of Alberta doing investigations, and to my understanding he's saying that he's posting them on the website.

Thank you.

Mr. Melchin: I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is an investigation going on, and I think it's not fair to characterize it that the appropriate authorities aren't doing their work. That's why you do put in bodies like the market surveillance administrator. That's why there is a Competition Bureau. They have been given the jurisdiction, they are taking the authority, and they're doing their work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

2:20 Wabamun Provincial Park Closure

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wabamun Lake provincial park is closed now for the remainder of 2005 to upgrade the water and sewer systems. My question is to the Minister of Community Development, responsible for parks. Is it necessary to shut the park down for the entire summer? Could the work not have been done incrementally over the winter and spring or later this winter and fall?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is an enormous amount of work that is being done, and to be clear, some work has been conducted over the winter and the spring. That work, which is now completed, has been the installation of new showers and new washroom facilities. The next step is to install and connect the sewer and waterlines. There is a significant amount of work to do

in this, and the reason why the park was closed was for public safety reasons. So the park will be closed and then remain closed for the balance of the year 2005. The total cost of this project is about \$1.5 million.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: knowing how popular this camping and fishing getaway just west of Edmonton is, what are some alternatives for campers this summer?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, only the park itself is closed. People should know that the village of Wabamun and the marina that are there will remain open, so people will still be able to use some of the amenities in the area. I should say also that once these renovations are done, I think people are going to be very, very pleased with the work that's been done.

With respect to other places to go, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other campgrounds within a 100-kilometre radius of this area. Two of them would be Miquelon Lake and the Pembina River provincial parks, and Albertans can visit the department's website to see other park sites and camping venues that may be available to them, perhaps an opportunity to see a part of the province that they wouldn't ordinarily see. That website can be accessed relatively easily, and you can check for campsites both geographically and alphabetically.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: are there plans to upgrade or develop a more serviced campsite at this park in the near future?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, any further improvements to this park or any others will be considered in the next fiscal year, but again this is a major investment of money into the park at Wabamun Lake. In addition to what I indicated in my previous answer, I have a list of things that are being done. We're refurbishing the water tower, replacing the water main valves, establishing a new potable well, constructing four new septic fields, and relocating the recreational vehicle sewage disposal station. But even if we move forward on other improvements for this park, I don't anticipate it will ever need to be closed again.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Game Farming

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning our Member for Calgary-Mountain View along with the Alberta Wilderness Association were calling upon this government to ban game farming in Alberta. This is because of the ongoing threat and contamination of wildlife from chronic wasting disease. My question to the minister of agriculture. For 12 years this Premier has been promising a public inquiry into this industry. When will this happen?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there has never been a case of CJD that has been linked back to CWD, or chronic wasting disease, and I think that to suggest that there's a

health risk when there's no science to support such a suggestion is somewhat irresponsible. It's irresponsible to the industry. It's irresponsible to those producers who have taken the entrepreneurial attitude to get into this business. It's irresponsible to suggest that there's a health risk associated with these producers' animals.

We're currently testing about 10,000 a year, and only three cases of CWD have ever been confirmed, and none of that has ever hit the human food chain or, for that matter, the feed chain. As with BSE, Mr. Speaker, effective surveillance is the key. As with BSE, more science is required, which is why this government has already announced \$38 million for a new prion research centre, which will study the folding proteins that cause this disease. I might also add that there is no CWD in our wild herd as well.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that such a small area on the border is being culled, how will this government prevent cross-migration between Alberta and Saskatchewan?

Mr. Horner: Again, Mr. Speaker, the department of agriculture as well as the Department of SRD are monitoring that situation very, very closely. The cull is a preventative measure to ensure that we don't have a spread of disease in our wild or domestic herd. Again, we are testing the wild animals, and chronic wasting disease has not been found in wild deer or elk in Alberta despite testing over 5,400 animals during the last seven hunting seasons.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that this industry cannot survive without government supports, will this government shut down the industry by providing compensation to all the game farmers?

Mr. Horner: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Our intent is to encourage this industry and build this industry. Our intent is to continue to support those producers, which we have done through per head payments – we are still waiting for the federal government to come forward with their portion of that per head payment – which we have done through dollars to market enhancement programs, much the same as we have done with the beef industry.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, this industry has been hit hard by the border closure in the United States as well as some border closures in Korea. Our department as well as the Minister of Economic Development and his department are working to reopen those borders and to reopen those markets. This is a very valued industry in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now I'll call upon the first of seven members to participate. In the interim might we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure

to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my first school group to visit here since the House has been sitting. I have 28 enthusiastic students here from Taber and their teachers and a few parents. I'd like to introduce to this gallery their teachers, Mr. Pyne and Mrs. Siemens, and their parent drivers are James Heal, Lori Cudrak, Bonnie Elliott, Miss Jordan, and Tony Machacek. I'd ask that they rise and we give them the regular warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Recognitions

The Speaker: We'll start with the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Red Deer College Kings Volleyball Team

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me stand in the Legislature of Alberta today to recognize the Red Deer College Kings men's volleyball team dynasty.

Mr. Speaker, what do you get when you win 38 straight matches in provincial and national volleyball championships? You get six consecutive national volleyball championships and a claim to a national dynasty.

Thanks to the exceptional direction of head coach Keith Hansen, the College Kings volleyball team has won another national championship. The national tournament was played in Fredericton, New Brunswick, where the College Kings set a national record for the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association men's volleyball with six straight championships, the eighth in 11 years.

Congratulations to all the coaches and players of the Red Deer College Kings and a special congratulation to tournament MVP and the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association player of the year, Joey Martins.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the Legislature join me in congratulating the Red Deer College Kings men's volleyball team on their six straight national titles.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Tom Baldwin

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great regret that I rise today to recognize the late Tom Baldwin, the executive director of the Northern Alberta Development Council. Tom suddenly and unexpectedly passed away on Sunday, March 13. He was 48 years old.

Tom was well known throughout the north and respected for working miraculously in his quiet articulate fashion. His knowledge, leadership, and accomplishments can only be marvelled at, and his expertise can only really be appreciated by those who had just a fragment of his understanding.

As a chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council I was fortunate enough to be able to work closely with Tom, and I was always amazed at how hard he worked to improve communities. He was on countless committees and associations and never missed an opportunity to use his great charisma and tireless energy to promote northern Alberta. Tom's commitment to excellence was apparent in all aspects of his life and his work. He will be dearly missed by his family, friends, and colleagues.

Thank you very much.

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

2:30

Jared Potts Jennifer Ross

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year the Great Kids awards honour outstanding youth for their contributions to their schools, communities, and families. This past Sunday two of my constituents received the Great Kids award.

The first constituent is Jared Potts, a 14 year old attending Griffiths-Scott school in Millet. Jared is known for kindness and thoughtfulness. Jared's parents passed away when he was young. Despite that, he has shown perseverance and tenacity through his actions in the community. He's recognized for his kindness and bases his success on what he gives to others as opposed to what he receives.

The other recipient is Jennifer Ross. Jennifer is a 17 year old from Camrose. It's been said that Jennifer has displayed some extraordinary feats throughout her life. When Jen was four, she suffered from a virus which severely damaged her liver, which required a liver transplant. From that point on, Jen became a passionate spokesperson for organ donations and served as the Stollery children's hospital child champion in 2003-2004. Jen displays great strength and generosity and will continue to be a leader in the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Stony Plain Atom Hockey Double-A Team

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an outstanding group of young athletes aged nine to 11 from my constituency of Stony Plain. The Stony Plain atom double-A hockey team participated in the provincial championship tournament in Barrhead over the past weekend. By exhibiting a high level of skill, teamwork, and sportsmanship, this team, coached by Mr. Malcolm Berndt, won the gold medal and are the new provincial champions. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the players, coaches, and manager on this outstanding accomplishment.

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

School Lunch Program

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to talk about the Edmonton school lunch program. This program provides a well-balanced lunch to children so that they can concentrate on their schoolwork and not on their hunger. The program, which feeds nearly 2,300 children in 12 participating schools, provides one-third of a child's daily nutritional requirements. Lunches are prepared by the Misericordia and Edmonton General hospitals.

In addition, the Edmonton school lunch program also offers young chefs groups, collective kitchens, snack in the shack, and the nutritional snack program where funding is given to participating schools to provide a mid-morning nutritious snack to 6,300 children in 33 high-needs schools. And the breakfast club: a junior high school provides a healthy breakfast each morning.

Teachers recognize the benefits of the lunch program, indicating that there is a positive influence on student behaviour, attendance, morale, concentration, and learning ability. The Edmonton school lunch program is a cost-efficient investment in our children and our communities. Its continued growth depends upon generous donations from all sectors of the community.

Thank you.

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

Safeway Support for ArtStart Program

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During February Safeway grocers across Alberta and western Canada kick-started the Show Your Heart campaign, which raises upwards of \$15 million a year for local charities. Here in Edmonton-Centre the Oliver Safeway is supporting ArtStart throughout the year of 2005, thereby making an incredible difference in our community. I'm very pleased to acknowledge the remarkable efforts of the Safeway staff and volunteers in Edmonton and across the province. The particular enthusiasm of those Oliver Safeway staff like Adrienne Brown and store manager Dan Kolba and their work for ArtStart should be applauded.

ArtStart, headed by Jacqueline Biollo, is a program that gives inner-city children the opportunity to produce art portfolios, learn a variety of mediums, participate in choir and musical theatre. They're introduced to creative movement through dance and are invited to learn the violin or viola. The value and importance of this program is priceless. On Saturday, February 12, the Oliver Safeway raised \$2,000 for its cause. Please join me in congratulating the hard-working volunteers of Oliver Safeway and ArtStart and commending them on their efforts for this wonderful charity.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition from approximately 670 constituents of Whitecourt-St. Anne urging the Legislative Assembly to increase the funding for long-term care facilities so that our seniors can remain in their communities when they no longer can look after themselves.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions to table today. The first is a petition with 324 signatures urging the government to "institute a fair and equitable . . . floor price for cattle."

The second is a petition with 648 signatures calling for increased funding for improvements to Highway 63.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

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

Bill 11

Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 11, the Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act, 2005, which would ensure a safe, secure water supply for approximately 6,000 Albertans living in the communities of Donalda, Big Valley, Rochon Sands, White Sands, Byemoor, Endiang, Erskine, Nevis, and Red Willow.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 11 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 28

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005.

The bill introduces two new tools for municipal revenue generation. The first is a property tax increment financing tool which will help municipalities address infrastructure and other costs associated with redevelopment in designated areas. The second will provide the authority for municipalities to pass a bylaw to collect a levy from sand and gravel operators to address some of the impacts of the extraction activity.

The bill also clarifies taxation status for certain Crown lease properties to ensure consistent taxation rules and equitable property tax treatment. In particular, this affects certain Crown lease assessments associated with parks and recreation areas.

Finally, the bill will allow for clarification of the administration of the linear assessment process.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite number of copies of the Northern Lights health region annual report 2003-04, the Alberta Cancer Board annual report 2003-04, and the Alberta Mental Health Board annual report 2003-04.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to table with the Assembly the appropriate number of copies of three annual reports. The first is the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission 2003-2004 annual report. The second document is the Charitable Gaming in Alberta review 2003-2004. Finally, pursuant to the Horse Racing Alberta Act I would like to table today the Horse Racing Alberta 2003 annual report.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of a document from the Epp family in Red Deer in support of Bill 202, PCAD. This document states that all five members of this family "have suffered unspeakable pain and grief and trauma" as a result of the drug and alcohol addictions of their daughter and sister that began when she was 13 years old, when she was a bright and gifted straight-A student.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. Both of these documents have been uncovered by

American authorities, and they're in regard to Enron's activities in Alberta through Project Stanley. The first is a backgrounder that was prepared on behalf of the company after the Competition Bureau had initiated an investigation of certain transactions involving Enron and Powerex during the period from June to October of 1999.

The second tabling is again from Enron's legal advisors to some of their operators in regard to Project Stanley, and they're asking the question: were the Project Stanley tapes destroyed?

Thank you.

2:40

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four documents that were e-mailed to my constituency office today. The first is from Frances Plaunt, the second from Bettie Yanota, the third from E. Seidle, and the fourth from Tom Yanota. They're all expressing concerns about the lack of consultation between the province and their community with regard to the 16th Avenue road expansion.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to be tabling the appropriate number of copies of the front and second pages of that website that I referred to in question period. It's utilitiesconsumeradvocate.gov.ab.ca on the index page, and it refers to the consumer advocate's investigation into Project Stanley.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today. The first is from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association entitled AUMA Frustrated with Provincial Funding Formula for Ambulance Transitioning. The release details AUMA's frustration with the funding formula proposed by the government after the confusion relative to the transfer of responsibilities for ambulance services.

The second I would like to table is the appropriate number of copies of the Far Side cartoon by Gary Larson entitled The Real Reason Dinosaurs Went Extinct. It shows, of course, dinosaurs smoking. Government members may wish to take note.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mr. Stevens, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General pursuant to the Legal Profession Act: the Alberta Law Foundation 31st annual report, 2004, for the fiscal year ended March 31; the Alberta Law Foundation audited financial statements and other financial information for the year ended March 31, 2004.

head: **Statement by the Speaker**
Committees of the Whole House

The Speaker: Hon. members, in just a few seconds I'm going to say, "Orders of the Day," and then something really neat is going to happen for the new members. The Clerk will then say, "Commit-

tee"; the Speaker will depart. A lot of members ask, "Why is it the Speaker has to leave?" other than the Speaker really likes the fact that he has to leave. So I've done some research just to give you some of these historical vignettes.

In 1641 in Great Britain during a Parliament that was called a Long Parliament, a particular individual was appointed Chairman of Committees so as to get him out of the way so that he might not obstruct the ordinary business of the House by too much speaking. So that was a pretty neat thing. In those days the Speaker was too often the spy of the King, so it was considered that if you wanted to get rid of him at certain times, this could be best done by turning the House into a committee and putting some other member into the chair.

From another book, *The House Was My Home*:

Then the committee system came into being and work was sent out to committees of Members to be dealt with and reported back. The Members still felt a sense of restriction imposed by the formal rules of procedure in the House until some parliamentary genius suggested that if the Speaker were to leave the Chair and the Mace be removed from the Table the whole House would then become a committee and could proceed under the more informal rules which the Members found so useful in the committees established to act outside the House . . .

[As a matter of fact] committees of the whole House, to consider important subjects such as money bills [in Great Britain], were first recorded in 1607, when it was affirmed for the first time that if Mr Speaker were absent the whole House might be a committee, to consider the details of a Bill.

But at that time the Speaker did not necessarily have to leave the Chamber. That really didn't evolve until about 200 years ago, but it was a great evolution.

So you've now become a little more informed.

In a minute or two you can get up and walk about, and you can visit somebody on the other side of the House, and you can doff jackets and things like that.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order. As the Speaker indicated to you, this is an informal session. However, for any member who wishes to speak, you have to be at your own chair to be recognized to speak, but you can move around in the Assembly at this stage.

head: **Interim Supply Estimates 2005-06**
Offices of the Legislative Assembly,
Government, and Lottery Fund

The Deputy Chair: Would anyone like to begin debate on the interim supply? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Only insofar, Mr. Chairman, as to put forward that, as is the normal practice of the House, of course, the estimates which were voted last year, supply which was voted last year through the appropriation bill, cease as of the end of March of this year. So interim supply is necessary in order to allow government to pay its staff and to provide the grants funding that we provide to government-supported organizations such as schools and health authorities and others around the province. It's a normal and routine manner with which to ensure that the life of the province goes on insofar as it's supported by the citizens through their government.

Interim supply that's being requested at this point in time is

basically a rough estimate of the first part of the year and in some cases slightly more than that for a department where grant funding is paid out early in the year. Of course, the fullness of the discussion around supply and the fullness of support of supply will come as the budget is tabled and we move into Committee of Supply with respect to the regular estimates.

So I'd encourage the House to support interim supply estimates so that as we get into the fullness of debate at Committee of Supply for each department, as this House well knows we will, the ongoing operations of government through schools, hospitals, the maintenance of roads, and all the other things which are necessary to provide the infrastructure and capital and human support for Albertans continue.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and get the opportunity to participate in the discussion, in the debate in regard to interim supply estimates for 2005-2006. Certainly, everyone recognizes that the government has to receive interim funding. We can describe this as normal and routine, but many citizens in this province do not consider this government's spending normal nor routine, and we cannot be cavalier with government spending.

Since I have become a member of this House, government spending on the total budget has increased from roughly \$14 billion to \$22 billion. As I've said many times before, we still have the same problems in regard to access to health care, closure of public schools, roads, bridges, sewers, the maintenance and the construction of our infrastructure. So we have to be careful whenever we describe things as normal and routine.

2:50

Perhaps this interim supply, the amounts to be voted here, Mr. Chairman, would not nearly be so large if this government would plan their annual budget so that the budget would be tabled or presented to the Legislative Assembly before the end of the fiscal year. Now, I don't know if that is too much to ask, but I know that in some fiscal years that has been accomplished. Now, this year, for reasons that are not known to this member, that's not going to happen. Certainly, this is a rough estimate, and when we use the words "rough estimate" to describe a budget process, it makes one want to have a closer look at this list of interim supply estimates. Mr. Chairman, whenever we use rough estimating for budgets, there can be problems.

I don't want to go back to a time in recent history when this Progressive Conservative government used to use special warrants to fund their habits, but that use of special warrants was, in my view, because maybe our estimates were rough. Maybe our budget estimates need to be refined. But we have to be cognizant of the fact and all hon. members of this Assembly recognize that we do only have one taxpayer, and we have to show a great deal of respect and restraint. As this budget process, which the hon. Minister of Advanced Education earlier explained to the House, is going to unfold, and we're going to get to the main estimates of each department eventually, we have to have a look at what we're doing here with interim supply amounts to be voted.

If we look at the schedule, we're looking at support for the Legislative Assembly of \$12 million; the office of the Auditor General, 4 and a half million dollars. The Ombudsman is to get \$700,000. The Chief Electoral Officer is to get \$700,000. Meanwhile, in supplementary estimates we have an amount that was to be voted because of the Senate elections that was greater than what was

previously estimated. That Senate election must have been one of those rough estimates that we were talking about earlier. We have \$100,000 for the Ethics Commissioner, and we have the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to receive \$1.1 million. That would be a total in the LAO budget of a little bit over \$19 million.

Now, for the government here it's all neatly listed alphabetically, A through S. The Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development department is to get \$10.6 million. Advanced Education is to get two amounts. The first is for expense and equipment/inventory purchases of \$255 million and nonbudgetary disbursements of \$20 million, so that's a total of \$275 million. Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is to receive \$160 million. Children's Services is to receive close to \$350 million.

Community Development. I'm sure that as time progresses, we're going to see the Community Development budget scrutinized with a great deal of interest by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. The hon. member has been in his office, I noticed, poring diligently over not only the previous annual report from that department, Mr. Chairman, but he's gone back four or possibly five fiscal years by now. It'll be interesting to see what is uncovered in that department. But at the moment that department is to receive through interim supply an amount exceeding \$100 million.

Economic Development. Now, that's not the department that has the aircraft fleet. No; I'm mistaken. That's Infrastructure. Economic Development uses the airplane on occasion. Economic Development is to get \$14 million.

Education, a very important and sometimes unappreciated department, is to receive over \$660 million. Energy is to receive in interim supply \$59 million. Environment is to receive a little bit over \$22 million. I don't know what the total budget will be for the Department of Environment, but I would think, Mr. Chairman, that it would be significant. Executive Council is to receive at this time over \$5 million. Finance in two budgetary items is to receive over \$31 million.

Gaming is a player, certainly, in interim supply. For expenses there is going to be an amount allocated of \$38 million and lottery fund payments of \$316 million. I would love an update on just exactly where these lottery fund payments will be going in the first quarter of the fiscal year. That's a lot of money. I'm sure some of it is going to the department of health, some would be going to Children's Services. When and where in those departments would that money be going?

Government Services is to receive over \$17 million. Now, Government Services is a very interesting department. Certainly, in question period earlier today there was a discussion about the role of Government Services and the role of the consumer advocate. There was also a discussion in question period today about grizzly bears in hibernation, and there would be those that would say that the consumer advocate is in hibernation, and there are those that would say that they hope the consumer advocate comes out of hibernation. The consumer advocate: I don't know whether it's a shared office. I don't know exactly how this works. Some view this as a conflict. "Some" would include this hon. member. The Government Services assistant deputy minister or deputy minister, I forget which, is one and the same as the consumer advocate. I think that if it's an important job, which some people think it is, there should be a dedicated individual hired to do one job.

3:00

Now, I'm certain that the consumer advocate is not going to be paid out of this amount of \$17 million because, of course, the budget for the consumer advocate is coming from the ratepayers, from the

natural gas customers in this province and the customers of electricity. There is a little bit of a levy, a tax, you name it, on consumers. They're paying for this office, and this is getting to be, as was mentioned in question period, a very expensive office.

Now, Health and Wellness is to receive in the next short period of time over \$2 billion. Certainly, we want to ensure that our hospitals and our regional health authorities are receiving adequate funding. At this time perhaps we could get an update from the government members as to exactly how that budget process works. Do the health authorities present their budgets in advance? If so, how far in advance before the provincial budget is set? I think it would be interesting to find out how many of the health authorities are setting their budgets well in advance before the province sets the global budget.

Human Resources and Employment is to receive \$136 million, again for expense and equipment/inventory purchases.

Infrastructure and Transportation is to receive – oh, here we go – expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$485 million. I hope that they're not going to buy a new airplane with that, maybe a jet. I hope not. Why not? Because there's no need of any more aircraft.

If I could make a suggestion to the government, perhaps you should reduce the size of that fleet and maybe hire or buy an air ambulance that could take sick Albertans from rural Alberta into Edmonton and Calgary to receive medical treatment in a timely fashion. We could reduce the size of the government fleet and increase the number of air ambulances, maybe a helicopter, perhaps, or maybe a fixed-wing aircraft that would be suitable for that purpose.

Infrastructure and Transportation is receiving a lot of money, and one of the areas I certainly hope that they don't spend any money is on new airplanes. But I certainly hope that they do maintain the ones we've got, for obvious reasons. I wouldn't want any of them to be crashing or have to stay at an airport in another province or another country and have to charter back because that, as we all know, can get really expensive.

Now, Innovation and Science is to receive \$35 million. I don't believe the SuperNet is involved with Innovation and Science. That has been moved over to the RAGE department.

International and Intergovernmental Relations is below Innovation and Science, and they are to receive \$3 million.

The Justice department is to receive \$67 million. Now, the Justice Department is certainly not involved in the construction of the courthouse in Calgary. That would be Infrastructure and Transportation. Justice is most certainly involved in the planning of it, but they're not paying for it. Okay. There are in supplementary estimates amounts for the courthouse in Calgary, but perhaps we'll get to that later on this afternoon. So Justice is going to get \$67 million.

Municipal Affairs is to receive \$31,600,000.

Restructuring and Government Efficiency is to receive, to my astonishment, \$66 million. I think I need glasses. I saw in the quarterly report that was released where the RAGE department had received I believe it was \$37 million. In a very short period of time that department has been very efficient at spending tax dollars, and now we see that it is to receive an interim supply amount of over \$66 million. What are we going to use that money for? Certainly, in question period this afternoon the only file that seemed to be open on the hon. minister's desk, as I understood it, was the SuperNet. There was no talk of studying any restructuring or government efficiency. It was just, "I'm going to deal with one file," and that was it. So I don't know what all this money would be for, and I would really appreciate an explanation at this time.

After the last election when the government caucus grew, the size

of cabinet grew. This is not a government that is concerned about reducing the size of government, as some would be led to believe, because certainly the number of government members increased in 2001 and the size of the cabinet increased dramatically. Well, the government shrank in the election last fall. Even the odd cabinet minister lost their seat, yet we see that, again, the size of government continues to expand, this time not by seven or eight ministries but by one, this RAGE, Restructuring and Government Efficiency. I think that when taxpayers get a look at this amount, they may be enraged with the RAGE ministry for spending far too much money without any adequate explanation as to why.

Now, Seniors and Community Supports is to receive \$347 million. Certainly, there have been some initiatives recently by this government to finally admit that some of the past government policies have reduced significantly the disposable income of many of Alberta's seniors. If a person or a couple has been retired for 10 years, 15 years their disposable income, unfortunately, has not kept up – the cost of utilities, the cost of insurance – and that has really affected a lot of seniors. We want to encourage seniors to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

The government has sort of admitted that, yes, they have been maybe a little bit stingy. I think we can afford to give our seniors an adequate disposable income through the Alberta seniors' benefits without breaking this province. When these individuals retired, they didn't know that this government was going to, for instance, proceed with electricity deregulation, and a power bill now is a big expense at the end of the month for many retired seniors. They come into the constituency office, I see them in the coffee shop, and they tell me that, Mr. Chairman. If we can use some of this money to increase the Alberta seniors' benefits, I think it would be wisely spent and would be respectful of the citizens who helped build this province.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

3:10

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's my honour to have the opportunity as well to speak to the interim supply estimates. In my mind, we shouldn't even be here having this discussion today. We should be discussing a budget today, not interim supply.

I understand from previous Legislatures that we normally sit starting somewhere around the second week of February. Nobody has yet made clear to any of those of us on this side of the House why we were not here the second week of February. As you know, there are many, many new MLAs in the Legislature this time around. Elected November 22, we were anxious and ready and willing and able to go to work. We've been chomping at the bit literally for months now.

Obviously, one of the first tasks that we look forward to is debating the budget, planning the fiscal priorities for this province for the coming year. Here we are two weeks away from the end of the fiscal year, and we don't even have a preliminary budget in front of us to begin debating.

Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud indicated that this is a normal process. My point would be, Mr. Chairman, that this does not have to be a normal process, and in fact it's not necessarily a normal process in other jurisdictions. It certainly has become a normal process here in Alberta.

We've got a one-week break coming up at the end of next week. We're going to take a break for spring break, and I understand that many members are looking forward to that, but I question whether or not that's appropriate given the fact that we don't have a budget.

I think we should be here, debating the budget as opposed to going skiing or whatever it is that some of the other members might be planning on doing. I know that I'll be working on budget preparations.

Mr. Chairman, after three and a half weeks of work we're going to take a one-week holiday. Now, I don't know, but in my mind that seems an awful lot like the severance package that Mr. West received for working only six months as the chief of staff and ended up with a huge severance.

An Hon. Member: Relevance.

Mr. R. Miller: It's very relevant, I'm afraid. Three and a half weeks of work, and here we are getting a one-week holiday. I honestly don't believe we should be taking a break at all.

Now, it's amazing to me, Mr. Chairman, that we're asked to look at interim supply estimates with one or two lines only per department. There's absolutely no information there that tells us what this money might be used for, and in fact as we rise to speak in this debate in committee today, we're left to guess at what the various ministries and their ministers might be wanting the money for. I don't know what you would expect us to tell our constituents when we go back to the constituency on Thursday afternoon or Friday and meet them in the office, and they're going to ask us: "Where is the budget? We're almost at the end of the fiscal year, and we're wondering what the government is going to spend the money on this coming year."

An Hon. Member: They're not going to ask you that question. You're not in government.

Mr. R. Miller: They do ask us because it's their money. You know, the hon. members across the way, Mr. Chairman, perhaps should remember that this is not money that belongs to the government. This is money that belongs to the taxpayer, and I can assure the one hon. member that every single time I meet with a constituent, they express concerns to me about their tax dollars and the way that their tax dollars are being used. So for somebody from across the floor to suggest that it's not my money because I'm in opposition, he's missing the boat entirely. This is money that belongs to every single taxpayer, and they have a right to know how the government plans to use it over the coming fiscal year.

As I say, here we are two weeks away from the end of this year, and they're asking us for 5 billion and some dollars without any more than a single line in terms of telling us what they might be using this for.

Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure that I'm going to do what my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar did and go through line by line, although I might. Certainly, as the Finance critic I wonder about finance in particular, and I see in here – I always find it interesting that I get up to mention finance, and the minister gets up to leave – that there's \$32.3 million.

Mr. Dunford: Point of order.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of Members

Mr. Dunford: You know what? I don't know what the item is, but we're not to comment on people's attendance or nonattendance in this House.

Mr. MacDonald: Citation?

Mr. Dunford: You know the answer.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the chair did not hear those comments, but if they were made, they are not appropriate. As a convention we do not comment on a fellow member's presence or absence in the Assembly. Okay?

Mr. R. Miller: My apologies to the hon. member, Mr. Chairman.

Debate Continued

Mr. R. Miller: As I was saying, \$32.3 million estimated for the Finance ministry: a simple two-line explanation. There's nothing to tell us what it's for. Now, I'm wondering, and I had hoped to be able to ask the Finance minister – perhaps I will later – if 1.4 million of those dollars . . .

Mr. Dunford: He just did it again.

Mr. R. Miller: I did not. I said that I may ask the minister. Mr. Chairman, I hope you were listening this time.

Chair's Ruling

Decorum

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, please. Please speak through the chair. You have to have some decorum in this Assembly. Although we are at committee stage, I think there has to be decorum. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has the floor.

Debate Continued

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure if yourself or anybody else would like to check *Hansard*, I indicated that I may later ask the minister this question.

I'm hoping that \$1.4 million is included in this \$32.3 million so that we can explain to Albertans through some sort of an advertising program why they should feel good about being asked to roll over and take their medicine by this government and the auto insurance industry as we continue to pay record high auto insurance premiums and the insurance industry continues to collect record high profits. Last year, as you well know – and it's in the supplementary estimates, which we will be debating later today – this same ministry spent \$1.4 million trying to explain to Albertans, with a very slick advertising campaign I might add . . .

Mr. MacDonald: How much did it cost?

Mr. R. Miller: One point four million dollars, Hughie.

. . . to try to convince Albertans that the insurance reforms were a good idea. Maybe it's just me being cynical, but it also happened to be just before a provincial election. So I'm really hoping that there's \$1.4 million included in this \$32.3 million that might go now towards Albertans to help them feel good about the fact that the insurance industry is making record profits at their expense.

Now, someone will have to explain to me – I've said it several times, and I don't mind saying it again. I am relatively new to this process. I do not understand what nonbudgetary disbursements mean in the Ministry of Finance. I know there's a two-line explanation in the estimates that talks about "non-budgetary disbursements consist of the exchange of cash for another form of asset, or for the reduction of a liability." I note here that out of the \$32.3 million about one-third is for nonbudgetary disbursements. I'm sorry. I just don't understand what that means, and I'm hoping that at some point somebody will have the opportunity to explain that to me.

There are a couple of other ministries that I flagged because they create some interest for me. The ministry of health as an example: a little more than \$2 billion for expense and equipment and \$5.6 million on capital investment. Now, I'm curious. We had some discussion earlier today about the health symposium that's going on in May. Certainly, there was discussion of the fact that this is an invitation-only event, and I believe the Premier said that there were some 500 invited guests, hand-picked by the government. I'd like to know just how much of this money is going to put on that event.

Albertans have expressed an incredible amount of interest in health care and are very, very concerned about whatever the plans might be by this government for the future of health care, whether it be a third way or a second way or no way at all. I'd be very curious to know just how much money that particular event is going to cost. Again, Mr. Chairman, we're not going to find out now until probably sometime in the middle of April, which is shortly before that symposium takes place, how much it's going to cost. I think it's unfair to my constituents and to the rest of Albertans to be left in the dark on that particular expense. They'd like to know what it's costing.

3:20

I'm going to echo the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on this one, but I had exactly the same thought: Restructuring and Government Efficiency, \$66.2 million, and this afternoon the minister stood in the House and told us that the only file that he's concentrating on right now at all is the SuperNet. Given that this is an estimate that's supposed to run only to the beginning of June, \$66.2 million seems like an awful lot of money for one file, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar suggested. I'm wondering if we shouldn't perhaps call it the supersize Internet as opposed to the SuperNet because somebody is certainly supersizing the budget there, Mr. Chairman.

There were a couple of others here that certainly caught my eye. Advanced Education, \$255 million for expense and equipment/inventory purchases. I have no idea what that might be. Certainly advanced education is a concern. I heard it time and time again at the door. People are very concerned about the future of their children, especially if they have school-age children or children that might be approaching university age, as I do myself, Mr. Chairman.

I have two children that are approaching university age, and certainly postsecondary education is something that I'm very, very concerned about, and many of my constituents are as well. You know, actually, Friday afternoon I have a meeting with a constituent who has a concern about a high school student, a child of theirs, and this is going to most likely be a concern of theirs as well. It's just really, really hard for me to sit down and try to explain to somebody why we're being asked to approve \$5 billion, and there's nothing more than a single line to address that.

Now, a couple of other comments. I mentioned earlier that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud talked about this being a normal practice and a usual practice of this Assembly to approve interim estimates, and I couldn't help but notice a report from *Canadian Business and Current Affairs*, the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, that last year in Saskatchewan, which is the lovely province next door to ours, a sister province of ours, in their spring session for the very, very first time in that province's history they approved some interim funding because they had yet to pass the budget. Interestingly enough, in that particular case they actually had a budget before them which they were deliberating. They had the information in front of them but did not have time to pass the budget before the end of the fiscal year, so they had to move to interim funding. But this was the first time in that province's history.

We've talked about the centennial a lot, Mr. Chairman. You will

know, as will other members, that Saskatchewan is as old as Alberta. Now, I wish I had had time this afternoon to check and see how many times in Alberta's history we've had interim supplies, but obviously it's certainly more than once. I was able to look back through several of the most recent years, and it seems year after year after year, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud suggested, interim supply is a normal practice for this government. It certainly is not and has not been a normal practice in Saskatchewan, so that would cause me a great deal of concern as well. Now, I would like to submit that maybe Saskatchewan has some practices that this Finance minister and this province should be looking at very carefully.

Well, I'm at about the stage, Mr. Chairman, where I'm going to start doing as my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar did and go through line by line. The first thing that appears on here is \$12 million for support to the Legislative Assembly. Like most working stiffs in this province I need a paycheque, so I'm not going to question too seriously the \$12 million that's being asked for there, because my wife would probably give me a hard time when I came home tonight if I didn't have a paycheque coming.

Office of the Auditor General, \$4.5 million. Office of the Ombudsman: it looks like this gentleman is actually quite frugal. It's only \$700,000 between now and the 1st of June. Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$700,000. I'm not sure what they're doing right now over at that office, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps they're still counting ballots or something. I'm really not sure what that might be. Office of the Ethics Commissioner: I'm surprised, quite frankly, that that budget isn't a little bigger than \$100,000.

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner: well, \$1.1 million to operate that office for the next two months. I can understand that because it certainly appears that they have a very big job on their plate in terms of FOIP legislation and the work that they do limiting access to information by Albertans, it seems, at every turn. That's been quite evident, most recently especially with attempts to get information on the flight logs with the government aircraft.

Now, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, \$10.6 million. I would like to think that some of that money might be contemplated to go towards holding some public hearings on the Métis harvesting rights, although it doesn't appear as if that's the case. I do understand that there is a meeting coming up in Bonnyville soon, and I applaud the minister for holding that meeting. I wish there had been many more across the province. Perhaps, contemplated in this \$10.6 million, Mr. Chairman, that's what the minister is planning.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, \$160.6 million. It's an awful big number. I'm not sure what's in there. I'm hoping that there may be some BSE relief in there for our farmers. Certainly, the federal government came through this week with some more relief for farmers, and I'm hoping that the Alberta government might do so as well.

Community Development, \$90 million between now and the 1st of June. Again, a pretty big number, although I understand that we have some celebrations coming up somewhere around the May long weekend, Mr. Chairman, and perhaps some of that \$90 million is earmarked for the royal visit that is contemplated.

Economic Development, \$14 million between now and the 1st of June. I'm not sure, again, what that might be for. We had a motion that moved through the House yesterday, through second reading and into committee. I think it passed committee, actually, and is now at third reading. It's the motion on the hotel tax. That money is being raised through the private sector, so I'm not sure what the \$14 million might be for there. It would be good to know.

Just going through here. Five point three million dollars for Executive Council. Again, being new to the game, I'm not sure. I expect that means those in the front row across from us, and again it's a pretty big number. Gaming, \$316 million for lottery fund payments. I'm not sure what that is for, if that's winnings that are being paid back to people after the money has been collected or what. Again, an awful big number.

Health and Wellness. Well, Mr. Chairman, \$2.044 billion for Health and Wellness. I have to be honest with you. I'm a small businessman, and I've told people that when I look at numbers as Finance critic, I often have to add three or four or even five zeros to the numbers that I'm used to dealing with, and \$2.044 billion is a very, very big number. It's bigger than anything I've ever dealt with before.

I think it is a recognition by this government of the concerns that the citizens have for health care, but then we heard some very good questions this afternoon on health care and the private delivery of some services. In fact, the minister indicated that she was quite comfortable with farming out surgeries to private companies that charge more to the government than we're able to deliver those same services for through a public system. As much as I'm in favour of giving Albertans the very best health care possible, I'm wondering if that number has to be as big as it is there. Maybe if we were delivering services through the publicly funded system, which many studies have shown to be more efficient, perhaps that number could be a little smaller than it is in this case.

3:30

Infrastructure and Transportation. Well, I have a particular concern with that, Mr. Chairman, because my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford happens to encompass the interchange at 23rd Avenue and Calgary Trail. As you well know, that particular interchange is in the news a lot, especially as it regards the \$1 billion that was supposed to flow through to Edmonton in infrastructure payments. Now that \$1 billion appears to have morphed into \$750 million, and there is some concern that perhaps the construction of that interchange may be delayed as a result of that lesser amount of funding that's coming through to the city of Edmonton.

Innovation and Science: \$35.4 million.

Mr. Chairman, I believe my time is up, and I'll be happy to complete running through the book at a later point. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was listening intently to the hon. member's dissertation there, and I wanted to correct him on a couple of things as it related to the agriculture portfolio.

He mentioned that the federal government has come through recently with more aid for our producers, and if that is indeed true, I would love to see the announcement that was made for that because the only announcement that I am aware of that was made was a repeat announcement of the \$50 million that the federal government had committed to the beef marketing initiative. The only reason, I would like to point out to the hon. member, they did that was on the heels of our \$30 million contribution to that same fund in order to diversify our markets. I would like to point that out to the hon. member because he may be able to help me with lobbying his federal cousins for some additional funding that was promised to us in some way, shape, or form on the other ruminants in our province.

We had a question this afternoon in the House on the other cervid

industry in this province. It should be noted that this government has stepped up to the plate and offered a per head payment as well as marketing dollars for the other ruminant industry based on some indications from the federal government that they were going to actually step up to the plate and help that industry out as well. To date – to date – Mr. Chairman, we've not seen any dollars in that respect.

Another item that I would like to point out, Mr. Chairman, is the \$38 million announcement which we have made to tackle the research component of this crisis that we are involved in, in better understanding BSE. My understanding is that to date the federal government has not come forward with any matching funding in that, and I would love to have them come to the table with us on that one.

In addition, Mr. Chairman – and these are only a few of the things that come to mind as I sit listening in the House – we've already announced \$7 million in research and development funding for the SRMs that are going to cause a serious problem for us in the province and are currently an issue. We would appreciate very much if the federal government would see fit to use some of their surplus to help out the producers in this province who are struggling. Quite frankly, Alberta is probably the best place to be in the cattle industry today given the crisis that's going on across the country and the supports that this government has provided to our industry.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to the motion to approve the interim supply estimates for 2005-2006. I look at the document before us and am impressed with the numbers, first of all, the overall aggregate numbers just for the government departments. For one-sixth of the year, because these estimates are for two months, the months of April and May, into the next fiscal year, the total amount for 24 government departments that's being asked for approval for here is close to \$5.52 billion. Multiply it by six because this is only for two months and if you were to use this as the average bimonthly expenditures, the total budget for these 24 departments would likely come close to \$33 billion.

Now, it would seem to me, although I don't have the numbers before me – and that's why it would have been helpful if the Minister of Finance had provided last year's interim supply estimate numbers so that we could have a general idea about the relative increase or decrease of the money being asked for by each of the 24 departments and get some idea about, then, why that is the case. But that information is not there. Notwithstanding, it is the case that this budget if calculated on the basis of the average expenditure of \$5.52 billion for every two months will come to about \$33 billion or more.

I understand that for last year, the fiscal year that's just ending, 2004-05, the total amount would be close to perhaps \$28 billion. So that's a huge increase if I'm correct in that. Then the increase is close to \$5 billion or \$5.5 billion over the previous year of \$28 billion, and that amounts to about a 16 to 18 per cent increase. I'm just making these calculations in my head as I go along. It doesn't seem to make much sense when you have huge increases proposed by way of this interim supply. I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance if she would like to comment on this increase, and maybe she will have some justification for the very, very radically different numbers for this year than last year.

As I said, I can't help but simply make some estimates here. It would have been nice if we had last year's numbers mentioned there as part of the interim supply so that I wouldn't be accused later on of making wild guesses. That's all I'm left to do at this moment.

That is certainly something that's I think a concern since it's a huge amount of money as part of the next year's budget, which is not before us yet and won't be for, perhaps, another three to four weeks. Who knows? Maybe the Minister of Finance will tell us the exact date on which that budget will be coming down so that finally Albertans and we here in this Assembly will have an opportunity to take a close look at next year's budget and the government's plans to spend taxpayers' dollars in different ways.

Regardless of when we get the budget and when we finally have a vote on it so that the government has the legitimate right to then go ahead and start spending that money, close to 5 and a half billion dollars are being asked for our approval right now without any details available to us with respect to how this money is going to be spent as part of the next fiscal year. I don't think that's an appropriate way to seek this Assembly's approval to spend such huge sums of money without accounting in any detail as to where this money is going.

When you look at the different departments, the one that strikes me as the one that deserves, you know, the closest of scrutinies is the new Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Other members have spoken on the supply estimates requested by different departments, so I won't go into details on any of those, but this one is a department that seemed to be from the very, very beginning, from the get-go, terribly redundant.

This government has been busy restructuring this government since 1993, yet come 2005-06 it is asking for \$66.2 million just for the first two months of the next fiscal year for this department's expenditures. Multiply that by six and the restructuring ministry, which I said is to me redundant, useless, not needed, will be spending between \$375 million and \$400 million on something that this government has been busy doing for the last 13 years without the help of such a ministry. It looks like a make-work arrangement, one that will cost Albertans dearly, to the tune of \$400 million. It could be that much, although it's difficult to be exact on this.

3:40

So I think there's a need for this Legislature and certainly for us to raise questions on this. I'm sure the minister responsible or the Minister of Finance will have some comments to make in response to the questions that are being raised here, some of these by me as I look through the different estimates.

I have questions about the Seniors and Community Supports, which I suppose is responsible now for AISH recipients. I stand to be corrected if that's not the case. In the throne speech the government made some promises with respect to making adjustments to the AISH payments and to restoring seniors' benefits related to dental care and eye care. I'm wondering: if those benefits are the responsibility of the Department of Seniors and Community Supports, then what amount of this \$347 million that are being requested for approval for the first two months of the fiscal would go towards increasing the AISH payments and the payments for restoration of seniors' benefits with respect to dental care and eye care?

Similarly, let me take one more case here, Advanced Education. Since the Minister of Advanced Education will be happy to answer some questions on this, let me pose some. There are \$20.3 million under the nonbudgetary disbursements being asked for for the first two months of the next fiscal year, fiscal 2005-2006. Pro-rated annually that comes to about \$121 million or more under nonbudgetary disbursements. Nonbudgetary disbursements are defined in this document, and the definition is very sparse, I must say: "consist of the exchange of cash for another form of asset" – that's one category – "or for the reduction of a liability."

Now, talking specifically about the interim supply, I wonder:

under these two categories of the nonbudgetary disbursements what's the proportion of the \$20.3 million that's going to each? It's these kinds of questions that need to be addressed.

Also to the Minister of Advanced Education, as part of his Bill 1, I have a fear that the bureaucracy will grow in order to implement some of the proposals related to centralization of province-wide admission arrangements and for setting some common standards, the minister calls them, which is part of the language of the bill. What kind of new expenditures are being planned to pay for that necessary bureaucracy that will inevitably be spawning thanks to the proposal that he's making as part of his Bill 1?

So those are some specific questions here related to Advanced Education. I don't think there is room here to ask the minister because the departmental requisition here, this supply request, relates only to April and May while the academic year at the universities and colleges this year will not start until – the classes won't start until September 1. The academic year started, I suppose, on January 1. Are there any hints in this request that some of the money is being now asked for continuing, with the tuition freeze, into the 2005-2006 academic year? If so, it would be nice to know what's roughly the amount that's being requested in order to continue to implement the tuition freeze, or is it not on the table at all?

I think the minister should be contrite on this. Over 80,000 Albertans will be enrolling next year, again, into our postsecondary technical institutes, colleges, and universities, and they're expecting and they're hoping that this government will continue with a tuition freeze, but they want to be assured about this. I would like the minister, perhaps, to give some signals here in response to the monies that he's asking for as part of his department's expenditures, whether that includes that consideration of continuing the freeze for those students.

I'd much rather be asking these questions in relation to the debate on the budget, but the budget has been delayed so far into the future that these questions must be asked even though the budget is not before us. The fact that the budget is not before us is not the fault of the members of the Assembly. It falls squarely on the shoulders of this government, which is finding it very hard this year to come up with a budget, which normally is one of the major tasks of the Assembly before the spring session. We're dealing with tens of billions of dollars of taxpayers' money, and we still don't know when the government plans to spend that money are going to be available to the public and to this Assembly.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would take my seat, and I will give other hon. members the opportunity.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister for Health and Wellness, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a privilege to get up today and defend the supplementary estimates of the Department of Health and Wellness. At the outset I want to remind the hon. member opposite from Edmonton-Rutherford, who spoke about the expenses, that in the introduction of the bill yesterday, the Minister of Finance clearly illuminated why the interim supply estimates were as high as they were. Although the hon. member opposite made much comment about the \$2,044,200,000 for expense and equipment and inventory purchases, by definition this expense includes "salaries, supplies, grants, amortization of capital assets and debt servicing costs." In short, Health employs just less than a hundred thousand employees, and for two months this amount helps run the health system, for April and May. So an extraordinary wild cost? No, of course not. It is the responsible governance and payment

through the regional health authorities for the salaries of people that serve the patients of this province.

3:50

Now, Mr. Chairman, in terms of the supplementary estimates that are being debated, I will comment later, but that I think was a reference point and a suggestion as well that we should be discussing how much would be spent on this year's international symposium. I'd like to remind the hon. member opposite that although it was not a budgeted amount for this year's budget, we are doing our best within the resources available in the administration of the Department of Health and Wellness to provide supports for the symposium, to make sure that we have provided monies for those 500-some-odd people that will attend. They will represent every stakeholder group in the health-related field, from opticians to ophthalmologists, physicians, nurses, licensed practical nurses, regional health authorities. The members of the opposition have been invited to attend as well.

Mr. Chairman, although I'm aware that this attendance might run into conflict with activities in this House, clearly it is being arranged to be primarily convenient for those members of the public, including physicians, who will evaluate the effectiveness of those treatments. So, quite honestly, the best practices that will be displayed have been very carefully selected, and we are managing that symposium as parsimoniously as possible. It will be located in Calgary at the Westin. The costs that I've seen that have been advanced thus far are frugal indeed. I'm not able now to report what the totals will be, but I will report at some time later.

Mr. Chairman, another reference point from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was that the minister, if I refer to the Blues, was quite comfortable with expenditures that were made by a private provider for health care service. Those were not words that I stated. I said that evaluation of that had not come forward.

What I am comfortable about and what I can assure this Assembly my comfort relative to is that 500 people who had pain and suffering, who had endured long waiting lists – we were able to alleviate their discomfort by giving them an opportunity to advance their surgery in a fashion that made sure that they were attended to. From many of those people I have had either verbal comment or comments from people within the city of Calgary who are family members associated with those particular patients who have said that that was the best thing that happened because it gave them an opportunity to go back to work.

Mr. Chairman, I don't think there's more to be said on this interim supply amount to be voted, but this particular reference point is for management of the health care system. At some point later when you want to speak about additional operating and capital funding for the years 2004-05, I will identify how we expended the additional funding of \$350 million provided to the health authorities to defer or defray their accumulated deficits and provide additional operating funding to enable them to advance the cause on waiting lists.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise in the Legislature today to speak to interim supply. The focus of interim supply is to make sure the government has operating grants when they have not yet completed the budgeting process. Even when this government has a budget, they end up overspending. How foolish can that be for a government that cannot organize its time? Once again they want us to write a blank cheque without any detail. It tells us that there is progress in place to start planning, and that's what's critical if we are

going to be fiscally responsible and fiscally prudent in this province. We have got to signal them so that the proper budget planning can be undertaken so that we can have a reflection of the needs of the agencies that are going to be doing the expenditure planning on our behalf.

Mr. Chairman, last year Dr. Nicol said this.

I guess one of the things that's really difficult as we go about talking with Albertans about interim supply is focusing on the kind of debate around: what expenditures are there? I know that the normal answer to that is: well, wait till the budget.

And it's still the same thing today.

But if we are supposed to work on this judiciously and in the spirit of appropriate government recognition of expenditures, we need to have the detail that's associated with being able to say that these are the types of expenditures.

Mr. Chairman, a little further he said:

The question that comes up in my community most of all, you know, is: what is going to happen to the expenditures for seniors? The seniors lost both their dental and optical benefits . . .

And it's still the same.

. . . or some of them, in recent budgets. Will they be restored through this program?

This is the question.

Is that going to be part of the focus that will be there for seniors?

The focus also that comes up in a number of other discussions would be: will there be dollars in the budget and are they included in this interim supply to initiate and expand the investigation of complaints of all Albertans about abuse of elders? You know, the elder abuse situation is really getting to be critical when we look at it from the point of view of the number of concerns that come to our offices and get raised about: are seniors getting proper care? Are seniors being looked after appropriately in their homes and in care facilities?

These are the questions.

These are the kinds of things that individuals want to know and want answers to.

When we see just major lines with departmental expenditures, we don't know where these are going, so how can we comment on them appropriately when individuals ask us?

If my constituents ask me about this interim supply, I think they will laugh at the government. Here I have the list of interim supply for the fiscal year ending this year, March 31, 2006. It's a huge, huge amount. My friend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar explained all the departments right from the beginning. It's really a huge amount and without any details.

I want to ask the Minister of Community Development, because I'm the critic for Community Development, to see the breakdown of the \$90 million which the government mentioned in this supply list, \$90 million they are spending on expenses and equipment/inventory purchases, whatever they call it. How much money will be spent on the programs or the services? Is it possible to receive a detailed breakdown of how the money found under each line item is going to be spent?

These are just a few questions I raise, but there are definitely many, many more questions to ask. Maybe I will ask in detail when the question period comes. Thank you very much.

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

4:00

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, well, well, where to start. I remember one time coming home from a first day at a new job where there was a lot of work ahead, and I said to my wife: I don't know where to start. And she said: Start anywhere. So I shall.

I'll start, Mr. Chairman, with paper. I'll start with the incredible amount of duplicate paper that we get in this job. I'll start with the

fact that every morning we start our caucus meeting with *Hansard* from last night and the Order Paper and the Votes and Proceedings and a full copy of the bills, and then we get it all again later on the same day. Actually, I guess, we get the bills for the first time here in the House, and then we get those again the next day. You know, we must in this Legislature, in this House, be responsible for the clear-cutting of a significant part of the British Columbia forest with all the paper we go through, and I was wondering how to bring this up.

Then, I noticed that with all this paper that we duplicate, all this paper that we produce, for this we get a seven-page document proposing to have us approve the spending of \$5.5 billion with no supporting evidence whatsoever. Line items, that's all.

I know I'm starting to go over some of the same areas that some of my colleagues have already touched on here today, but I just don't understand a process that would ask the members of this House to approve an interim budget for a government that has yet to produce a budget for this fiscal year when they've had so much time. There's no justification in here whatsoever, some half-baked explanation of what expense and equipment/inventory purchases are and what nonbudgetary disbursements are and what capital investment is.

Then we get a line like in Advanced Education: \$255 million for two months' worth of expense and equipment/inventory purchases and \$20,300,000 for nonbudgetary disbursements for two months. I have no idea what those are. I mean, I know this. I know that our universities collectively have about a billion dollar infrastructure deficit, but I have no idea whether any of this money is going to solve that problem.

I know that one of the reasons why our universities and most of our colleges are forecasting running deficits or are having problems meeting their budgets is because they're paying astronomically high utility bills compared to what they used to have to pay. But I don't know whether any of the money in here for Advanced Education is going to help that. I know that the minister has talked about wanting to improve accessibility and wanting to improve affordability and wanting to improve the quality of postsecondary education. I cannot read from this whether any of this goes to support any of that.

Although this adds up to \$275 million of, I guess, routine expenses in the Department of Advanced Education for two months' worth of work, multiply that by six, I can see that it does not total up to \$3 billion for the postsecondary education endowment fund or a billion dollars for an increase in the Alberta heritage scholarship fund or half a billion dollars for the ingenuity fund. I mean, there has been much talk by this government over the last several weeks about how much they're reinvesting in postsecondary education, but I can't see if any of the reinvestment is in here. In fact, it would seem to suggest that it's not.

The reason why I bring this up, Mr. Chairman, is because when we ask for details, when we press for details, whether it's in question period, whether it's in news conferences outside this House, wherever it is, the answer that comes back from the government benches is: stay tuned; wait for the budget. Well, okay. When are we going to see the budget?

We started this session of the Legislature, depending, I guess, on who's doing the calculating – my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford said that the Legislature usually starts to sit the second week of February. My understanding is that it's usually right after the long weekend in February, the Family Day long weekend in February. Whichever it is, they've had at least an extra week if not an extra two weeks before the House went into session this time to do the grunt work on the budget.

Thank goodness we have spring break. Thank goodness we have

Easter break. It gives them another week to do the grunt work on the budget so that maybe in my lifetime we'll see the budget. I'm getting tired of waiting. Five billion dollars in here. They're asking us on trust, on faith, on blind faith, to approve their spending of \$5.5 billion, which, times six, is \$33 billion.

I know that the Minister of Finance scoffed at my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona, I believe it was, when he did that math in his head.

Mrs. McClellan: I did not. I never scoffed at him.

Mr. Taylor: I know that the Minister of Finance says that she would never scoff. [interjections]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has the floor. The chair will be happy to recognize anybody else who wishes to participate in this debate. Please identify yourself to me. I will recognize you at the appropriate time.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope we can continue a lively and spirited debate about this.

I would love to find out more about what this \$5.5 billion is supposed to be spent on over the next two months. On behalf of the 33,000 constituents of Calgary-Currie I don't feel good approving on faith a government document that asks me to commit to spending 5.5 billion tax dollars over a two-month period. Projected across the entire year, that's \$33 billion. That's a huge number. Now, maybe it's the right number. I'm not even going to suggest right now that it's out of line, provided the government will furnish for us some fundamental details as to how they intend to spend the money. They're not doing that.

It doesn't matter what department I speak of. I used Advanced Education as an example because I am the critic for that portfolio for the Official Opposition, and I think I'm a little better briefed in the activities of that department and that area, that issue, than I am on the other areas. That's why we have other members who are critics for other areas. But I submit to you that I could have picked any ministry here: RAGE, Sustainable Resource Development, Infrastructure and Transportation.

Infrastructure and Transportation: their budget for two months is well over \$600 million, and only a fraction of that is for capital investment. Capital investment is described as "regardless of value: assets such as land; buildings; highways; roads; bridges; transportation and storage facilities; permanent accommodation," et cetera, et cetera, things that the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation ought to be concerned about, roads and schools and hospitals and public works and public buildings. That's one of the definitions of capital investment.

There's so much capital investment lacking in this province. An \$8 billion infrastructure deficit, yet they're only putting \$116,800,000 towards that in the next two months. You know, maybe that's the right number. Maybe that's a great start on a whole bunch of environmental impact assessments and other engineering studies that will lead us, you know, to a grand and golden future of infrastructure deficit making up. But I can't tell. I don't know. I just don't know.

I don't know if they're going to spend the money on the roads and the schools and the hospitals that this province and cities like Calgary and Edmonton and rural areas so desperately need or what they're going to do. I'd love to know why they spend so much more on expense and equipment/inventory purchases than they do on building roads and schools and hospitals and doing what that

department is supposed to do. Again, no information, Mr. Chairman. No details. No explanation.

4:10

You know, during the election campaign the voters of Alberta were told in so many words by the Premier that election campaigns are really no place to talk about health care reform. Now my assessment is that with a seven-page document that purports to have us approve 5 and a half billion dollars in spending for two short months, we are being told by this government that the Assembly is no place to go into detail about how our tax dollars are spent.

This was a government, Mr. Chairman, that prided itself, that got elected in the first place, this particular incarnation of the government, on getting us out of debt, eliminating the deficit, balancing the budget, and responsible, frugal spending. Well, that was then; this is now. I would suggest that the next time they say anything about our federal Liberal cousins in Ottawa, they take a good, hard look in the mirror because the members opposite are the ones who like to spend like they do in Ottawa. They may not be tax-and-spend Conservatives, but that's only because they've got oil in the ground to make up for the fact that they don't have to take it out of your pocket in order to waste it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Hinman: I can barely hear you, Mr. Chairman. I wasn't sure whether it was me or someone else that had the floor.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand and to participate in I guess it's called a debate on interim funding. The first thing that I'd like to address is the support to the Legislative Assembly. I received a lesson this morning on what they call good politics. I'd prefer to receive lessons on good government though. I have no desire to learn the shenanigans that can go on.

I'd like to see the details, and every member, I'm sure, is going to ask for this. Why do we vote on something that we receive no details on? Are we just fish? Are we just sheep that are supposed to walk over? Or maybe we're down at the buffalo jump, and we're supposed to land and have our heads smashed in. I'm not sure. Because that's what it would take to vote on a paper like this and say: oh yes, I'm in favour of it. I requested \$93,000 this morning from Members' Services, and I guess I'd like to see where the \$12 million – I was told that we have a very tight budget, and they couldn't afford to allow the Alliance caucus to have \$93,000 for research and secretarial services.

I've been told many times by different members across the floor that they have no business being in business. This looks like pretty big business to me: \$160 million going to agriculture. There's no question that we've had a major disaster in the province. It's gone on for two years, and we haven't taken a stance yet to realize that value-added is not only necessary if we desire to go on. We need to have our own packing plants.

I'm afraid that if we continue to follow and wait for our neighbours to the south to tell us that we are now okay and that they'll accept our beef – they're in a state of denial there in the south. They've had chronic wasting syndrome in their wildlife and in their game farms, and because they've shot, shoveled, and shut up with their beef, it doesn't mean that they don't have BSE in their cattle. If we wait to be connected to them rather than developing our own markets to raise our standards to the high quality that we have instead of staying at the low quality that goes on in their country, we're going to be devastated again when finally the world wakes up

and says, "We know that you have BSE in the U.S.," and once again we're linked to them.

If we were to put just a small percentage of this budget to be loaned out and have a mortgage on that, that Albertans would be able to call back if in fact those facilities were to go under and to resell them – we need the facilities here. They've played a great deal of games with the different ones, and they say: oh, if they have a good business plan, we'll accept it. That's hogwash. The fact is that business plans have gone forward. Because they're different, because they're not in the box, they say they're not credible. I have three that I'd love to sit down with the minister of agriculture and discuss with him, but I haven't had an invitation. If he'd send one, I'd make the time. He's had the time to fly down to my riding and talk there. I'd appreciate being able to speak to him because we have some ideas. There are some very good, innovative ideas that have come forward. There have been packing plants that have brought people from . . .

Mr. Horner: Point of order.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Horner: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Standing Order 23(h) and (I), imputing motives to another member. This hon. member has not requested a meeting with this minister. This hon. member has not presented three business plans to me. This hon. member has not requested my itinerary as to where I was going and what I was doing, not that I would give it to him in the first place. I believe he has imputed to me the motive that I am not taking care of the producers in his area, and that is simply not true. I would like him to retract those statements and to apologize.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, do you understand this?

Mr. Hinman: I guess I'll retract. I'm not sure where I breached, but I'll apologize to the hon. member. I've been to his office several times, and I guess I'd need a paper trail. I'm a farmer, rancher, handshake type of guy, and I realize that in this world it's paper trails, and I will abide by that. I apologize for the misunderstanding. May I continue then?

The Deputy Chair: We will recognize that as a retraction and apology. Thank you. You may proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hinman: There are some very innovative ideas. They've brought people and talked to people in the Mideast, Japan, Korea, and Europe and packing plants that have the ability to bring the sales from those other countries, but when they have made application to I believe it's CVAT, they've been turned down. They don't have the innovation to see that this is a new business plan; therefore, they've ruled and said: well, it can't be successful because it's new.

This government has continued to aid the big slaughterhouses and those with connections in order to expand but still keep a monopoly here on the industry in the province. So I would plead on behalf of . . .

Mr. Horner: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is rising again on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Horner: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is again under Standing Order 23(h) and (I) imputing motives to this government by saying that we are not helping individual entrepreneurs or packing plants and only helping the big business ones.

Mr. Chairman, there have been 29 proposals come to my office that I have personally reviewed. Probably three of them are the three that this hon. member is referring to, although they may not have told him that. I don't know whether he's been that intimate with their plan development.

Secondly, we are indeed helping a number of packing plants that are not owned by multinational corporations. In due course the hon. member will understand what it takes to get a value-added business going in this province, as I do and as many of the entrepreneurs do.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that he should retract that last statement as well.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, before you speak I just want to draw to your attention the standing order under which the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development rose. It states:

23. A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member . . .

(h) makes allegations against another member.

You may respond to this point of order that is being raised.

Mr. Hinman: First of all, I can't hear the best, and there's been so much chatter going on, I don't know if I heard everything. But I'll apologize, and I'll continue on with a few ideas and some things that some of the constituents have asked me to address concerning this supplemental supply.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River on the point of order.

Mr. Oberle: Point of order, Mr. Chairman, also on 23(h). I apologize for the delay. I had to look up the citation. I'm new.

In his initial retraction the member said that he had been to the minister's office several times, and he said, "I guess I need a paper trail," insinuating that the hon. minister was not telling the truth when he suggested that the member had not asked for an invitation.

4:20

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Anybody else wishing to participate on the point of order? Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, did you want to rise on the point of order?

Mr. Chase: Yes. Again, I'm new, and I apologize for requiring explanations, but I interpreted what the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was trying to point out was that he had physically gone to the office of the minister of agriculture, who is an extremely busy man. What he meant, I'm assuming, by the paper trail was that he's used to doing things first-hand – knock on the door, "Is it convenient?" kind of thing – rather than simply writing notes. I think you probably realize now that given this dependency upon paper, that's probably another approach: when at first you don't succeed, try the note. I don't think there's a deliberate attempt here. We're learning, and hopefully that will be accepted.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, you've already spoken. Do you want to add on?

Mr. Horner: I just wanted to make a point of clarification, Mr. Chairman. As many members in this House well know, my door is always open if I'm there. Any MLA that comes to my door is more than welcome without an appointment if I'm there and able to spend the time. In fact, this hon. member has been in my office, and we have had a chat on a couple of occasions, I believe. The offer is always there to all members of this House to come into my office, and if I am there and I have the time to chat for whatever brief moment or issue it is, they're more than welcome to do that.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I hope that for the new members this is a learning experience. What we say here has a reaction or there can be a reaction to what we say, and a point of order can be raised if somebody is making allegations against another member. The chair will consider this as a learning experience. I once again caution the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner that the choice of words can lead to such points of order and disruption in the debate, so guide yourself accordingly.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: I appreciate that, Mr. Chair, and I make a full retraction. I was not insinuating at any time denial or anything like that, just frustration on the three packing plants that I'm working with that haven't received the answers that they're looking for. We definitely need to open up and have a better line of communication, and that's the avenue that I'm trying to pursue. I appreciate the offer from the hon. minister of agriculture, and we'll try and schedule something together because I do understand and know that it's a huge task and a very busy schedule that he has.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hinman: To go on, in agriculture, though, there are many people and ranchers in my area that are still struggling with the CAIS program. They haven't received them yet. Earlier in this House they talked about 70 per cent of 2003 payments being out. I guess, in view of that, those payments haven't all gone out, yet we're willing to spend and look forward to the future. I just want to bring it to attention that if necessary we need to put more facilities and people there so that this can get out quicker because there are a lot of people in dire straits waiting for that money, and a year behind does seem quite a tragedy for those people.

I'd like to discuss a little bit more, also, about education. The shutting down of the rural schools and the rightsizing is a huge concern. It's very difficult for some of the specific schools. For example, I'll use the one in Milk River. It's an old school, but it's still fairly sound. The minister has told them: we won't look at readdressing this because there is less than 80 per cent being used. They don't understand. They'd like to be able to increase their curriculum and offer more things for those students, yet they're told that they're going to have to tear down their gym and tear down the library to bring other things in.

The point that I'm trying to bring up is that it would be very nice to have the priorities and where this money is being spent so we really could have a decent discussion on where we think it should go. But what are we to discuss with just a one-line entry? I mean, if we were to take this to the bank and say that we wanted to borrow money – and that's what we're doing: we're asking taxpayers to collect money so that we can spend this \$5 billion but no details. I find that very difficult to address. How are you supposed to proceed and say that I'm representing those people from Cardston-Taber-Warner, yet I'm not privy to know where the \$5 billion is going to be spent other than just in lump sums? Of course, this government has done its due diligence.

I mean, I think that maybe just 24 people and we could've saved

a lot of money there and let this cabinet minister continue to run the executive of the province and not worry about the rest of us to spend the time to look at these things. We're struggling here on the other side of the House wanting to make Alberta better, wanting to work with them, yet we're given no information. My biggest request at this time would be to please give a detailed breakdown of where this money is wanted and will be spent so that we could look at it and prioritize it to the best advantage to Albertans.

With the huge surplus that we continue to come in with, I also struggle with the fact that why do we not see tax cuts coming in a massive amount when we have an \$8 billion surplus? That money should be going back to the Alberta taxpayers who have put that in there. The purpose of government isn't to collect extra taxes so we have a lot and can make all of a sudden these contingency plans. It's to collect the taxes. The municipal level is not allowed to do this. Why are we allowed to do it on the provincial level?

With that, I'll sit down and appreciate being able to address this. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Deputy Premier, rising on a point of order or wanting to respond?

Mrs. McClellan: No, no. Just thought I'd wait till three or four had made comments and then offer some clarification.

I think that when this bill was introduced, the explanation was given, perhaps not well enough, and I think it was given today again by our Government House Leader, perhaps again didn't expound long enough or well enough. I certainly appreciate that there are a number of new members in this House that are not entirely familiar at this point with the process that we go through with the budget.

I do want to make it clear that I don't scoff at anybody. Sometimes I like to engage in repartee as much as anyone else. I was a new member in this House 18 years ago, and I appreciated the courtesy and respect that others gave me that had been here longer, and I hope that I accord the same to the new members here as well as the ones that have been here for some time.

I want to just point out again that this is for two months' operation of government. It is to carry us to June 1 of '05. For new members' information in particular, each year when the budget is presented, there is a three-year business plan of government and by department. That three-year plan lays out the expenditures that are anticipated in the current year of budget time frame and the next budget time frame, so the three years. In 2004-05 there was an overall three-year business plan for government and by department. If you wanted to look at that, you would get an indication of what the anticipation was for the second year, which is the year we're in now – I'm trying to be clear, not confusing – which would give you some indication as to what those dollars might have been anticipated for.

However, the more important part that I hear from members is the question on the amounts. I don't think anybody is doubting that it will take that much money to operate the government for the period of time. One of the reasons that you have it larger than you would if you simply multiplied by the remaining months is that, as I think I indicated when I introduced the bill, in many cases grants are given at the beginning of the fiscal year. In some cases payments are made monthly. In some cases payments are made maybe quarterly or in a half year. But in many instances we pay grants to entities on the 1st of the year, so there will be a higher amount paid in the first month that may not carry on throughout.

So I wanted to make sure that members understood that. It was an interesting calculation, hon. member, a bit scary but an interesting calculation that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona made in his addition and subtraction, but I hope that knowing that you have

grants paid up front at the first of the year, that can be substantial, gives you some comfort level in your multiplication.

4:30

So, Mr. Chairman, I simply wanted to offer those clarifications. As the practice has been, and for new members, whenever we deal with matters in the House, if there are questions that I don't deal with at the time – we want to allow as much time here for members to raise their questions – I will respond to each individual member in writing. Now, the normal practice in the budget process is that I would respond to those questions before the end of budget. Will I have the opportunity to get written response to you before we deal with this bill? Maybe not, but you will get the response.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the exception of what adjusters refer to as acts of God, which in this province include floods, blizzards, prairie and lightning-strike forest fires, hail, drought, tornados, pine beetles, and grasshoppers, to name a few, minus of course Moses' amphibious plague, the government should be able to plan an accurate budget projection. This government has had 34 years and counting of budget planning experience, but for the past decade it has alternated between flying by the seat of its pants and flying on autopilot. It appears more and more that this government, while very good at subtracting, as evidenced by ongoing cuts or freezes to health care, public education, social programs, AISH, minimum wage, infrastructure, roads, parks, and protected areas, seems to have trouble adding and balancing budgets or publicly accounting for expenditures within a fixed budgeting process.

I would be interested in hearing from government ministers how they arrived at their budgets for the first quarter and what types of projects they are planning to kick off the centennial year. As a new member myself and for the new members who represent almost a third of this House, this type of overview would provide a form of whirlwind busman's in-service initiation tour. I would like to at this moment thank the Minister of Finance. I do appreciate her explanation, and as a teacher every bit of learning I can receive is appreciated.

I would especially be interested in how the departments for which I share the critic portfolio operate. These departments include Infrastructure and Transportation as well as parks and protected areas. These are two departments that I would not begrudge major budget increases if I could be assured that the money went to targeted areas. For example, I would like to see upgrades begun on highway 2, especially between Carstairs and Crossfield, which seem to have two levels of roads on the south side. It really appears to be a matter of you take the high road, and I'll take the low road, and I'll be in Calgary afore ye. The trouble occurs, however, when you try to change lanes, dropping suddenly off the upper lip into the lower trough.

Another local highway that I would like to see repaired is highway 8, that unfortunately has killed a number of Calgary commuters and injured many more. Other dangerous highways include 43 and 63, which lead to Fort McMurray. Both these highways have become killer strips, which should have been fixed long ago. There is a secondary road problem where rural residents have to do the daily joust with logging trucks and heavy well-servicing equipment. The municipality roads are equally atrocious. Each year radio stations and local papers run contests to name and provide locations of their most infamous pothole. The contests receive hundreds of different entries.

Besides the road problems the biggest deficit Albertans have faced for the past 12 years has been in the area of infrastructure. The Calgary Conservative caucus seems to think that the best way to cut costs is to close schools and hospitals rather than open them. The problem with this short-sighted logic is that premature closing costs more money in the long term for the replacement. While we wait and wait for these replacements to finally occur, such as at the southeast hospital, which has been set back now to 2010, service deteriorates.

When the government formulates or calculates its interim budgets, I would be interested to hear at some point whether the Finance minister could explain to what extent inflation and population growth are taken into account. I would also like to hear from either the minister of learning or perhaps the minister of infrastructure whether the cost of busing thousands of children out of the suburbs of cities like Edmonton and Calgary is actually cheaper than building community schools in their areas.

I also wonder whether the time spent on school buses would not be much better spent at home or at school, for example in libraries either reading for pleasure, doing homework, or working on research projects. As a teacher of 34 years, I realize the need to provide for a variety of activities to keep students actively involved both mentally and physically. Long bus rides rather than short walks or jogs fail to provide this necessary stimulation.

I would also like to ask the ministers of learning and advanced learning whether they consider education to be an investment in the future or a financial liability. Given the resource bounty in this province, which is the envy of all the other provinces and states, I can't help but wonder why a larger portion of our annual GPP isn't allotted to a pursuit of education.

The majority of school boards in this province, which are running provincially-forced deficits, are searching for alternate ways to generate revenue. One of these ways is to actively recruit students from foreign countries, in particular Korea, China, and Japan. However, when these students pay the equivalent of an education head tax for the privilege of studying in Alberta's schools, the reality, due to lack of funding for English as a Second Language, is that they find themselves frequently isolated, immersed in English-speaking classes. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that there is a dropout rate of close to 75 per cent of high school ESL students. Again, I would be very much in favour of addressing this problem either through hiring more ESL teachers to reduce class sizes or extending the number of years for which an ESL student is funded.

Another factor that could decrease the dropout rate would be to exempt students whose language skills aren't sufficiently advanced from being forced to take departmental or provincial exams, which create a great deal of stress for Alberta-born students, never mind immigrant children.

One of the ways the department of learning could have a greater bang for their buck would be to recognize the value of the variety of daily in-class evaluations and school-based testing and put the money spent on creating and marking end-of-the-year, out-the-door, one-shot, nonremedial government exams into curriculum development where it would do some good. Torturing grades 3, 6, 9, and 12 students with these one-shot, one-to-two-hour tests, which especially at the grade 12 level account for half of the student's mark, seems sufficiently unusual and cruel punishment. But like putting salt into a festering wound, the government follows its Fraser Institute advisors' advice and publishes the school results.

How many times will these tests be administered and published before the government realizes that there is a direct relationship between marks and socioeconomic status? If you want to improve grades, address the underlying issues of poverty, health, and housing, rather than beating up kids . . .

Dr. Brown: Point of order.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill is rising on a point of order. Are you rising on a point of order?

Point of Order
Reading from Documents

Dr. Brown: Mr. Chairman, I rise under Standing Order 23(d). The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity appears to be reading extensively from a document, contrary to 23(d) and also *Beauchesne* 473, that members are not to be reading extensively. They can consult extensive notes, but he appears to be reading from a document which is not before the House.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Once the students have navigated their way through the grade 12 process – they've gone through 12 years of crowded classrooms, of underbudgeted programming – they finally arrive at the gates of postsecondary institutions. One that the hon. member is very familiar with as he was formerly involved at the University of Calgary. He and I have had numerous discussions about the importance of postsecondary funding. The problem is that when they arrived at these school doors, 25 per cent of them were turned away this fall because there were no seats available.

4:40

The Deputy Chair: Are you speaking on the point of order? I just recognized you if you wanted to respond to it.

Mr. Chase: Oh, sorry. Was I reading from a document? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill caught me. I admit that I had been reading from my personal notes that I had written. Could I have a qualification from a more learned member as to whether I'm allowed to read my notes or not.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill rose on a point of order citing Standing Order 23(d), which says:

A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member . . .

(d) refers at length to debates of the current session or reads unnecessarily from *Hansard* or from any other document, but a member may quote relevant passages for the purposes of a complaint about something said or of a reply to an alleged misrepresentation.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity was reading from his personal notes, and there is nothing wrong with that. So there is no point of order.

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

Mr. Chase: Well, thank you for that clarification.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: I have been an English teacher, and I've written a lot of essays, letters to the editor. That's part of the reason I'm here today. Anyway, I realize that I'm not giving you the full benefit of my rhetoric, so I'll put my notes away.

What I was getting to is that in the postsecondary area, as I pointed out, 25 per cent of students were not admitted into Alberta institutes of postsecondary learning. They had the marks, the marks which have increased tremendously over the years. They met the 80

per cent plus averages. They qualified. Somehow, whether it was their own personal debt or their family's debt, they were able to raise the money for the inflated tuition costs in Alberta. They came up to the university institutions, they applied, and they were turned away.

So Alberta lost twice. They lost because these kids were held back in their academic process. They lost a second time because they had to find other alternates. They had to go outside of the province to get their education. That is very unfortunate in this province. We have the wealth, but how we invest it – and that's what we're talking about today in terms of interim budgets – seems to be questionable.

The other area that the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner – and I keep thinking: boy, what a title having all those three; mine's simple, Calgary-Varsity – mentioned was the need to invest in not only our own marketing, our infrastructure for slaughterhouse capacity, but also I would add to his concerns the need for 100 per cent testing.

If we want to develop new markets to counteract the border closures and our dependency on our American neighbours, we cannot be always at their mercy. What we do by 100 per cent testing is we open up the markets in countries like Japan, who have already instituted 100 per cent testing. We cannot afford the opportunity to miss markets like the growing market in China, which is rapidly outstripping all other economies. The only way we can get into those countries and their economies and derive the benefits is through 100 per cent testing. My understanding is that that testing is available. The best time to test before it hits the food chain is obviously prior to the slaughter. We need to invest money into preventative feeding practices that allow ruminant waste to turn up again in terms of food. We've got to close that door as well.

I do very much appreciate your patience. When I talked about long bus rides, I'm sure you were thinking: I feel I'm on a long bus ride now. With that, I will sit down.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for clarification, and thank you, hon. member for Calgary, for qualifying that creative writing is acceptable, but *Hansard* dependability isn't. Thanks very much.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Assembly. I will speak to the interim supply budget regarding, first, education. At least I've got the minister of postsecondary listening to me, hopefully, for a minute. Anyway, I do appreciate the Deputy Premier spending some time with us to educate us. That was very much appreciated.

I'm not able to tell exactly where the Education budget is going, but I do hope that one of the key items in the interim budget is the matter of diagnostic testing. Again, I would like to address this in terms of the House. I do believe that the whole matter of diagnostic testing at the elementary level, K to 3, is very, very important for helping children adjust to elementary education.

I also hope that there's some vision in the interim supply budget of Education for a look at the whole business of dropouts. I think it's time that we looked at that to see if we can get a handle on the 20 to 30 per cent, if there's some indication or some good information that we can draw on to help make us do some extra work in curriculum development.

I hope that there's some new direction in terms of curriculum development for teachers, where teachers are asked to introduce a new curriculum into the schools of Alberta, that there are some dollars there for teacher in-service. I think it's also a real key, it seems to me, to look at the whole matter of achievement testing – this would be very interesting – and ascertain if it's doing the job.

As an old evaluator of schools throughout Alberta we used to look at the whole instructional process, how instruction was going, and the administrative process and had a fairly good handle on what was taking place in schools. I wonder if achievement testing does that. Sometimes I think the whole business of achievement testing is a bit of a trophy hanger.

New dollars I think should be indicated in the Education budget for gifted children, and I hope that's something that the new minister will look at as well.

I hope there are some new ideas in terms of curriculum development on drug education.

I think there's some need to look at the whole matter of community schools not only in the rural areas of the province and revisit it from an urban sense and broaden out the whole business of adult education and utilizing schools for helping seniors in the evening and that kind of thing.

The whole matter of school fees hopefully will be looked at by the new minister through this interim budget that we're looking at. OPM – operations, plants, and maintenance – is another matter.

These are the items that I hope the Minister of Education will look at in terms of his new budget or in the interim budget that we're looking at.

Mr. Chairman, there's another matter that I would like to speak to today, and that's the matter of health. It's not clear to me in looking at the interim statement if there is some money there for the whole question of crystal meth and what's happening there. Last night at our caucus we met a parent group and an RCMP officer who were telling us the very, very tragic cases that are facing children and adults with drug problems.

There are two or three things that I hope are identified in the health budget. One is the matter of facilities. I'm not talking necessarily here of new facilities. I think there are facilities in the province already up, some of them that I'm aware of that are empty that could be utilized for this. I think it's very important to look at facilities for the treatment of these types of people. Also, the matter of treatment. I think that treatment has to be looked at in terms of introducing the medical people more in the treatment. AADAC, as I understand it – and I stand to be corrected – does not have any services for children under 18 in terms of the crystal meth problem.

The other interesting issue that's very, very important in this whole issue is the matter of co-ordination or interministry co-operation, and we're talking there of the matters of Justice, Children's Services, Solicitor General, those types of things. So I'm hoping that in the health budget there is some money for crystal meth, and I hope that we can do something about it.

4:50

One of the other areas that I'd like to comment on for more of a landowner outside the province – and I was very encouraged to hear the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development talking about the pine beetle problem. I'm sorry to say that in British Columbia, where I'm aware of this, I think the government of the day did not do a good job of handling this issue. I'm pleased to hear that the minister is going to take a positive attack and move on this very quickly. It's a very serious problem, and unless it's cut in the bud, I think we could find ourselves with a very serious problem in our forests.

I see the Minister of Gaming is sitting over there wide awake this afternoon listening to me, and I'm so pleased about that. Sir, besides talking about your budget, I would like to ask you if you could help us new people in St. Albert and give us a new handle on your services. My good constituency office manager was told, when we had a group of about 10 citizens that wanted to hear about the

gaming matter, that I was making a political matter out of this. You look like a very wise and prudent man. I wonder if you could help us. I'm seeing you there, so I'm making a plea. I'd like to just get information for some people who want to start some things out there in a nonprofit way, and we'd really appreciate it.

Now, I see that the minister of health has come back. I'd just like to make a pitch one more time if I can. [interjections]

Chair's Ruling

Referring to the Absence of Members

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, we had this discussion earlier on today, that by convention we do not make reference to a member's presence or absence in the Assembly. So I'd caution you because a number of people were wanting to rise on a point of order on this matter.

Mr. Flaherty: So should I sit down, sir?

The Deputy Chair: No, no, no. All I'm saying is I'm cautioning you. We do not make reference to a member's presence or absence in this Assembly.

Mr. Flaherty: Pardon me, sir. Thank you for that.

Debate Continued

Mr. Flaherty: I'd like to just comment on the remark that someone made over here to me as well that bothered me, but I'll just leave that for your good judgment, sir. It did bother me a lot. I'll leave it.

I was just going to suggest my train of thought. Oh, I was going back to the question of treatment and residential care for crystal meth people. In St. Albert we did a survey under a former area manager of mine and we found out that of the 12 agencies present there now, we do not have any agency that does intervention and treatment for crystal meth. I can't say that it's scientifically done, but it did concern me. I did speak to a lady in your constituency last night who spoke very highly of you, and she said that it was something that you would probably be interested in.

So I'll just raise that through you, Mr. Chairman. I do apologize again for making that statement, and I hope that anyone else that wants to see me about some issues will do it face to face.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chair's Ruling

Insulting Language

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the Minister of Health and Wellness, I just want to raise a very important point in this Assembly. Each and every member here in this Assembly is an honourable member, and when we make catcalls that are insulting, it is an insult to the entire Assembly.

Now, I as the chair did not hear the catcall that ended up frustrating the hon. Member for St. Albert, but whoever it is, please, we have to be respectful of our colleagues in this Assembly. So whoever it is, I caution you: do not do it again.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Debate Continued

Ms Evans: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak just to the last point that the hon. Member for St. Albert addressed, which was the capacity of either AADAC or Alberta Health and Wellness to provide intervention and treatment for persons affected by crystal meth. It is a grave concern. It is one of the reasons why I have been in support of the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, who

has been campaigning on initiatives to assure Albertans of better treatment and intervention for youth that are so afflicted.

I'm going to take under advisement the concerns that the hon. member has mentioned about his own local community. I know that if there's a perception that there isn't anybody to provide either intervention or treatment, I'm sure we can try to rectify that. I think the one area that the hon. member and I would probably both find a common ground of understanding on is that today in Alberta, other than the AARC facility in Calgary, there are not places to secure treatment for people that ultimately protect the child on a 24-hour basis. For the families who have been facing the attempted suicides, the often very traumatic side effects of the indulgence and addiction to crystal meth, this poses a real problem. What AADAC has been looking at is a program to intervene and treat but not necessarily secure or protect, so we will have a great deal to do before we are fully able to work with the youth the way that we wish.

If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the initiative to follow up on what treatments are available in St. Albert so that we can make sure that as much as possible information is provided to the hon. member and, most importantly, that if there is some gap in service there that is provided elsewhere in the region currently, we can try to fulfill that. It's our youth that are imperiled.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been watching the proceedings this afternoon and the points of order and some catcalls, and it reminds me of my first year in the Assembly in '97. I have a great deal of sympathy for new members of the House. There is a sharp learning curve, and we all survive it. We learn. I ask for patience and courtesy on the part of all members of the House towards each other. I was quite shocked to hear an utterance a while ago that was, I guess, directed at one of the new members of this House when he had the floor and was speaking. I am saddened by such actions and this kind of behaviour in the Legislature.

Without naming names and without rising on a point of order, I just want to request and hope that all members in the Assembly will show the courtesy and respect due to all of us. We are here because we have been elected to be here, and our rights and privileges and our dignity must not come under attack from any of us. There's a need for self-discipline here, and I hope that we'll all exercise that.

5:00

Having said that, I want to return to the debate on the interim supply estimates for the budget. I heard the minister of health address a question raised by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I think, with respect to this consultation that the Premier and the minister of health are planning to have in early May. The numbers are mentioned here; 500 people will be invited to this assembly. Participants will be picked, of course, by the minister or by the Premier's office or perhaps in consultation with each other. We certainly won't be privy to who gets invited or who doesn't.

I just want to mention that I have attended over the last eight years as a member of the Assembly two forums of this kind. The first one followed public hearings held by an all-party committee on justice, which went around the province and provided a forum for Albertans to come to this committee to speak their mind with respect to the concern that they had. That exercise in public consultation – it was free and open and transparent – which was held by this committee, which every party represented in the House was on, was the prelude to the second-stage consultation. It was held in Calgary, and 400 or 500 people were invited to this forum on justice. So I can see that there was some effort made to get ready for the two-, three-day event in Calgary by an all-party committee of this Legislature going out to Albertans to listen to them, to take them seriously, and then bring in

a set of recommendations which we made. That report became in a sense the basis on which the next stage of the consultation was undertaken.

Now, the second forum that I attended had to do with the environment, and again as a critic for environment for the NDP opposition I attended that forum. The flavour was very different. The whole thing seemed to be orchestrated in a way that there was no possibility for people who were attending it to raise questions which didn't fit the format. The format in a sense fettered us in a way that there was really no debate that took place there. There was very sophisticated electronic gadgetry that was used to sort of consult people: press this button if you're for this or for that one. I felt rather manipulated, you know, attending that one.

My fear is that the health forum that is being planned here follows the consultation model of the environmental sort of exercise that was done. It's going to be an expensive one. It's going to be one that I'm afraid is going to be more of an exercise in shaping the outcomes of the forum even before it takes place. It will be based on money. It will be dealing with an issue of such central importance to Albertans, has been over the last eight years since I've been in this Assembly, and to now have the Premier and our Minister of Health and Wellness organize this opportunity to consult Albertans by hand-picking those who can come to this forum I think would be a waste of effort. I'm afraid to say that it sounds more like a cynical exercise in manipulating public opinion than in really engaging people in asking: what exactly is it that you propose needs to be done to fix the system and to prepare it for becoming stronger and more responsive to the needs of the next year and ten years hence?

The budget associated with this exercise. As the minister has said, she doesn't quite have a handle on it yet, but she will bring the information back to us. If the budget for this May exercise is going to come from this department, then I think that the minister at least should have been prepared well enough to tell the House what the budget is for this exercise. Dollars for it will be drawn from the interim supply estimate that the department is presenting here.

Unfortunately, alas, that information is not there. Is it going to be \$500 per head, \$600, \$700? I don't think it should be difficult to at least bring in some sort of estimate as to the costs of that exercise. What is it going to cost the so-called experts that are going to fly in from all over the world, I presume? How many of them are going to be there? We are only two months away from this event, yet the minister doesn't know who's coming, what they're going to be paid for coming, what the costs are going to be.

I don't think it's that. I think it's another indication to me of a government that runs on autopilot. It's a government that likes to run on remote control rather than using the resources that it has in terms of technical resources, professional resources, human skills and abilities that it has in its own civil service to be able to do its homework and come to this Legislature prepared, and say: "Here are the costs. Here is what we are hoping it'll be like. It may be 5 per cent this way or that way, but we're asking you as part of these interim supply estimates to approve this particular budget item or this particular estimate as part of this because it's a special event. We've been working on it for many years. We attach to it a great deal of importance. This is the Premier's pet project, and here are the estimates."

The fact that the government has not done its homework on it, the fact that the Minister of Health and Wellness is unable to give us any estimated dollar figures on it I think speaks volumes of the way this government has been running the affairs of this province.

Another reminder, going back in time. Eight years ago when I first got elected and came to the House, we were dealing with 18 ministries, 18 departments. Looking at the budgets or at the interim supply estimates, the emphasis was on a small government: we can

do it with less; 18 ministers are more than enough. Immediately after the 2001 election, that number was increased by six. The size of the cabinet grew by 33 per cent in one fell swoop.

So it's a big government. It's a massively large cabinet, yet its ministers are unable to bring any information before the House that we can at least use to base our determination of whether we're going to vote for it or against it. It's a highly undesirable situation in which the members of the Assembly are put by the failure of the ministers and their departments to give us at least bare minimum information that would be considered necessary in order for us to vote in \$5.5 billion over the next two months, come the end of this month. So it's not what we expected.

I have some questions, for example, about the Executive Council; \$5.3 million is being asked for that. It would be important for the House to know how much of this money is going to be needed for the operations for the two-month period from the 1st of April to the end of May on the Public Affairs Bureau. Is that bureau being expanded? How much money is needed for the operations of that propaganda machine that's controlled from the Premier's office? No information on it, yet we are asked to vote for \$5.3 million just for the Executive Council.

It's not good enough, Mr. Chairman, for the government to come before this House without some information that's necessary for the members of this House to make up their mind whether to vote for the request that's before us in the form of interim supply estimates for 2005-2006.

I could go on, but I will stop here and let some other hon. members take a turn. Thank you.

5:10

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East. [some applause]

Ms Pastoor: Don't be doing that. I haven't read this yet.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Being new and being exposed to what is called interim supply made me have to go back and think about budgeting. My only experience with large budgeting is with the city of Lethbridge. But more importantly, a lot of my budgeting experience is with my own budget. If I was overdrawn \$5 billion – however, let's back it up into my reality. If I was overdrawn by \$500, at 6 per cent I'm now \$530 in the hole, and if I kept going on and on and on like that, I would soon be homeless. So where would I get that money? That's why I envy this government and their ability to have these interim supply estimates. I don't have the ability to go to someone else, but they can go to the taxpayers and bail themselves out. Because I was unable to live within the budget that I had or perhaps properly project my costs, better yet, I would have had special dollars in an envelope labelled "contingencies," and these would be taken from that present year's budget.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the Gaming department. Because these are just one-line items, some of my questions would be: I would like to know if these dollars are being used for the horse-racing track at Balzac. In my mind that track should be able to stand on its own and be a separate project. They should not have to have interim money to carry them over. That is a separate project, and truly they should have been able to project the funding for that project.

For Health and Wellness I'm hoping that these dollars go toward – the definition is "salaries and supplies." I would really like to hope that these were for the extra salaries of extra personal care aides that would be hired in our long-term care facilities. And supplies: one of the words is "consumable inventories" for the Department of Health and Wellness. To me a consumable inventory would be disposable pads that we use on our seniors when they live in nursing homes or long-term care or, in fact, in assisted or

designated living situations. I'm not sure – and I don't care how absorbent it is – that one a night is sufficient. So I would love to think that that consumable inventory would be proper numbers of disposables and that this isn't considered part of a bottom line and that this is why they only get one a night.

I'd like to think, too, that some of these wellness dollars would go toward the U of L project. They have a huge wellness centre coming onside, and they're valiantly going ahead with it. It isn't just for Lethbridge; it's for the surrounding area as well, and it's certainly necessary, by the government's own desires, to move more toward prevention than treatment.

The International and Intergovernmental Relations line asks for \$3 million. My question would be: what is that \$3 million for at this point? I know that we have just opened up a new office in Washington. I also understand that Washington is very expensive, and that we also have the U.S. exchange rate that we have to factor into that. But even considering those, I really believe that \$3 million is a pile of a chunk of change for someone that didn't project the project properly.

head: **Vote on Interim Supply Estimates 2005-06
Offices of the Legislative Assembly,
Government, and Lottery Fund**

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, but pursuant to Standing Order 59(2) and Government Motion 14, agreed to March 15, 2005, I must now put the following question. Those members in favour of each of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the 2005-2006 interim estimates for the offices of the Legislative Assembly, government and lottery fund, please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed, please say no.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Chair: The motion is carried.
Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the interim supply estimates.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows.

All resolutions relating to the 2005-2006 interim estimates for the offices of the Legislative Assembly, government and lottery fund have been approved.

For support to the Legislative Assembly, expense of \$12,000,000; the office of the Auditor General for expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$4,500,000; office of the Ombudsman, expense of \$700,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, expense of \$700,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, expense of \$100,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, expense of \$1,100,000.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$10,600,000.

Advanced Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$255,000,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$20,300,000.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$160,600,000.

Children's Services: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$348,100,000.

Community Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$90,000,000; capital investment, \$11,000,000.

Economic Development: expense, \$14,000,000.

Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$665,600,000.

Energy: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$59,000,000.

Environment: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$22,700,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$5,300,000.

Finance: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$20,600,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$11,700,000.

Gaming: expense, \$38,200,000; lottery fund payments, \$316,000,000.

Government Services: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$17,600,000.

Health and Wellness: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$2,044,200,000; capital investment, \$5,600,000.

Human Resources and Employment: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$136,500,000.

5:20

Infrastructure and Transportation: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$485,300,000; capital investment, \$116,800,000.

Innovation and Science: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$35,400,000.

International and Intergovernmental Relations: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$3,000,000.

Justice: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$67,300,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$31,600,000.

Restructuring and Government Efficiency: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$66,200,000.

Seniors and Community Supports: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$347,100,000.

Solicitor General: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$74,100,000.

Sustainable Resource Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$41,900,000; capital investment, \$3,500,000.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we return in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 16, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**

Date: 05/03/16

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: We'll call the committee to order.

Before we proceed with the item before us, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very honoured tonight to introduce a group of 40 people from my community from Our Lady of Perpetual Help church. It is called the Encore group, and June McNamee, who is the social director, brought them here this evening. They've had a tour of the Legislative Assembly. I've explained to them that when we're in committee, it's much less formal, but I'm sure that they're impressed that there are so many members sitting here this evening. I wonder if they could rise, and we'll give them the warm welcome they so richly deserve for coming out.

The Deputy Chair: Just for the information of our visitors up in the gallery, we are currently in the committee stage, which is a little informal compared to how we meet in the Assembly. So if you notice people moving around or taking their jackets off, it's allowed only in this phase of proceedings.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 2004-05
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

The Deputy Chair: I will now recognize the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Health and Wellness

Ms Evans: Thank you very much. Well, it is a pleasure tonight to rise and speak to the 2004-2005 supplementary estimates. Mr. Chairman, the additional funding that is in the budget is for the following: \$350 million to support health renewal and \$12.4 million for Alberta's share of the public health and immunization trust fund, that was announced by the federal government in March 2004.

In the case of the trust fund, the federal government tabled its 2004 budget on March 23, 2004, and included in the budget was funding to the provinces for a national immunization program and support for provincial public health systems. This announcement came after Alberta's provincial budget was tabled. The share of Alberta's amount in this funding is \$40.2 million over three years. The \$12.2 million is the first year's share.

A list of the projects and initiatives that are funded are as follows: number one, consumption of vaccines; number two, the RHA vaccine administrative grants for the regional health authorities; the third, chronic disease management pilots for the Institute of Health Economics. The chronic obstructive pulmonary disease initiative has received funding. The Provincial Laboratory of Public Health has received funding. AADAC has received funding for the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder initiative, and prevention of type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases has received funding. The

acquisition of vaccines has also received funding. The total is \$12,350,000.

So that is how we have spent the funds that are essentially received by our government and forwarded through as I've just identified. It's really something that is not in any part distributed as funding for the administration of Health and Wellness.

Now, on the subject of health renewal for \$350 million. In June 2004 the government announced an investment of \$700 million for health renewal. Three hundred and fifty million dollars was provided to the health authorities for, one, eliminating the accumulated deficits, a sum of 92 and a half million dollars; secondly, additional operating costs totalling 87 and a half million dollars; third, increased orthopedic surgeries for \$20 million; and, finally, acquisition of equipment totalling \$150 million. The remaining \$350 million was provided to Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation for health capital projects. On one hand, the \$350 million for Infrastructure and Transportation went to health capital projects that were identified in the capital plan. The other dollars offset deficits and provided additional support for surgery equipment and to support operating costs.

Now, the various health authorities in receipt of this money had provided their budgets and were granted the monies in the following amounts. The total additional funding – and I think it's important for the record, Mr. Chairman – was \$17.4 million for Chinook; \$2.7 million for Palliser; \$113.4 million for Calgary; David Thompson, \$28.7 million; East Central regional health authority, \$17.8 million; \$119.8 million for Capital health; Aspen received \$6.7 million; Peace Country received \$19.4 million; and Northern Lights \$3.9 million, for a total of \$330,307,000. Over and above this amount, the Alberta Cancer Board received \$17.6 million primarily due to the high costs of drugs that are part of the therapies for the cancer treatments, and the Alberta mental health program received \$2 million. Then the total of that amount was for the \$350 million.

Mr. Chairman, I think that at the time we looked at the dollars that were in-year spending as enabling us to improve access and quality, to look to the future. The minister of the day spoke about the really significant need to reduce waiting lists for joint replacements. Certainly, under the new access standards for cardiac surgery some patients scheduled for coronary artery bypass grafting received because of this grant intensive home care, and there was certainly an importance in helping patients wait at home for their procedures, and freeing up hospital beds for more surgery was also part of it.

Health regions were expected to use part of their additional funding for elective outpatient MRI scans, and then new health promotion projects in different communities were initiated to reduce and manage preventable illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, research suggests that up to 1 in 3 cancers can be prevented through diet and exercise. A good part of what was done with pilot projects and the monies that were provided were initiating some of those types of projects.

Finally, one of the most exciting things was that 11 of 26 proposals to form local primary health care initiatives, which is really a most successful team approach maximizing the benefits of staff in health care delivery, were approved to develop business plans. The implementation of those projects, those initiatives, should occur this year. Eleven projects involved 294 physicians who are working together with other health care professionals.

Mr. Chairman, just this evening we met with the Association of Registered Nurses. They truly believe that the third way will be much more successful as we work to collaborate, work to put our teams together in health care delivery, work to fulfill the ambitions of the Health Professions Act, which will get them functioning as a cohesive unit.

In total, the expenditures from the supplementary estimates, I am satisfied, were well spent on behalf of Albertans to improve their health care.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the attendance of the minister of health and her agreeing to get up first and lay out some information for me. I have quite a few questions about what's happening here, but I think that the single largest injection of money goes into this department, if I'm correct, or at least that's the one I was most concerned about.

Now, I think what is most significant to me – and I actually did have a little notepaper here. We started the budget I think on March 24 last year, and in fact the last day of budget debates was May 6. The appropriation bill passed third reading on May 13, and six weeks later we have \$362,350,000 plopped into this department. I think to myself: wow, that was a magic six weeks.

8:10

So I really have questions to the minister about why within six weeks of passing a budget you add another \$362 million into this account. Six weeks this budget was good for. That's a pretty short shelf life before you add in a lot of money. I was listening carefully as the minister ran through where this money went, and I thought: well, if this was part of all of the business plans, then why wasn't it in the budget that was passed six weeks earlier?

Now, some of it is connected to the government's share of the public health and immunization funding coming from the government of Canada, but that is – if the lion's share is the largest share, what animal represents the smallest share? – the mouse's share of what we're talking about out of this \$362 million.

I'm really struggling on behalf of Albertans to understand what is going on in the management of this government that their budget is only good for six weeks and then they have this decision. I mean, it was a press release. It's not as though this money sort of filtered out. It was a whole humdinger, you know, with 18-point font title on it. This was a big rollout of money. June 30, 2004: "Health renewal strategy improves access and quality now, looks to the future." And on and on it goes. I'm thinking: why didn't we get this in the budget? This just doesn't make sense to me.

The whole purpose of the budget process is to say: "Okay. Here's our plan. Here are our goals. Here's how we're going to measure it." The departments know how much money they've got at the beginning of the year, and they can work through the rest of the year as appropriate. Then we get this kind of thing happening. So did they know that that money was coming when they started the fiscal year at the beginning of April, or did they find out at the end of June and now they're supposed to deal with the next nine months of the fiscal year?

I'm really concerned about what I see as a skewing of the whole budget process. If I'm going to say, "Why didn't you include this money in the budget planning in the first place?" I guess the other way to say it is, "What were the factors that led the government to delay announcing this increase until six weeks after the budget was passed?" Either it should have been in the budget planning process to begin with, or explain to us why you delayed telling all Alberta why that choice was made. Obviously, a choice happened there and please share it with us.

What I'd like to know is on the disbursement of these monies. How has it been going? Have there been any glitches or problems that have come up with the distribution of this 362 million dollars and change since the 30th of June, and have the funds been appropriately expended? We're now two weeks away from the end of the

fiscal year. That money should have been mostly spent. Has it been spent? You should have been forecasting to the end of the year to know whether that indeed happened, and I'd like to know whether it did.

Now, the orthopaedic surgeries, the minister mentioned, were supposed to increase by 1,200 this year. I'd like to know whether that objective was met inside of this year or will be within the next two weeks. How many surgeries were planned to happen before the money was announced, and then how many got added? Was that 1,200 entirely new? Was that being added onto the orthopaedic surgeries that had been planned when the budget was actually brought down? Can you give us a breakdown, please, of where the orthopaedic surgeries have increased? In other words, if you want to go through the regional health authorities or you could provide in writing later as well how much each health authority got or how much in Edmonton, how much in Calgary, and how much in rural.

In the press release there was also a commitment to reduce the wait times for certain heart surgeries from nine weeks to two weeks. I don't have a medical background, so can you explain to me what "certain" means as in certain heart surgeries? What does that mean exactly? You obviously have a designation there in mind. Can you detail what that means? It's an interesting phrase to be using, and that's lifted right out of the press release. How close are we to achieving reducing the wait times for these certain heart surgeries from nine to two weeks? Again, if you don't have that with you, Madam Minister, could you table it, please?

Also according to the press release, the money was supposed to fast-track 600 hospital beds in Calgary and the capital region. So do Edmonton and Calgary as of today or as of two weeks from today, at the end of the fiscal year, have 600 more beds, and how did that break down? We've raised the issue in the past that Edmonton and Calgary have two of the lowest bed-to-population ratios in the country. Can the minister tell us what those ratios are today? What difference does this funding of these extra beds make?

Also according to the press release, the money was supposed to accelerate the planning and design of the south Calgary hospital. So could the minister update us on where we are with the south Calgary hospital? I think there's been at least one spade turning, sod turning, but no hospital. So I'm just wondering if that project is going to be completed on time and if the minister could also let us know whether it's going to be a P3 or not. We've heard that it's a P3, then it's not, and then it is. Perhaps you could share with us what it's going to be. Can the minister also give us some kind of projected new costs for that? Again, I wouldn't normally be going into this at this point, but it is in the press release; that is, around that \$362 million that we're looking at in this budget.

Now, this press release from June 30 also noted that there's \$50 million toward capital projects for rural Alberta including supportive living options for seniors in rural areas. I'm wondering if any of the \$50 million went towards acute care beds in rural areas, particularly targeted toward seniors, and can you give me a more detailed breakdown of where the money went and which specific rural communities benefited?

Now, the vaccines that the minister was talking about. I was writing as fast as I could, but maybe she could just table the list that she was reading from. The \$2,896,000 for the purchase of vaccines: now, she'd listed a number of them including, if I heard that right, that diabetes was part of that vaccine list. I'm just wondering if she can share that with us. I didn't know that diabetes needed a vaccine. I think what I heard the minister do is actually account for that money in a couple of different ways, but it is a little confusing because she added up how much each regional health authority got

for the total of \$350,302,000 but then also, if I'm getting you right, broke it down by the surgeries and capital grants. You seemed to give us the money in a number of different ways, so if you can just clarify that for me, please.

The other thing I'm interested in is exactly how much went to each health authority to eliminate deficits. I'd like to hear from the minister about government policy on eliminating deficits that have either been accumulated or are a one-year debt because it seems to me that we have a real checkerboard or patchwork across the province. Some health authorities don't run deficits, but then those that do get them wiped out for them. So, heck, why should you stick to the rules? You might as well just run up the deficit. I think that that gives different kinds of signals and the wrong message all the way across the board. So, once again, that question is: how much did each health authority get specifically for debt elimination or deficit elimination, and if there's an accumulated deficit, how much is it for each one of those? And a little bit of discussion from the minister about eliminating those deficits because I think it does send a very bad message.

8:20

Sorry. Just let me leap backwards here. I'm wondering if any of the vaccine money, the purchase of vaccines, included the avian flu vaccine. I know that there has been an attempt to do some fairly forward-thinking work on that, and that's why I'm wondering if it's including the avian flu vaccine.

Exactly how much went to local primary care? I heard the minister talk about it. I don't know that I heard an amount of money that went for it.

Now, the \$9.4 million "for various public health initiatives." I haven't had a chance to read the Blues. If the minister has already detailed that, don't do it again. I'll get it from *Hansard*. But if you didn't give us the breakdown of the \$9.4 million for various public health initiatives, could you give us the breakdown for that, please?

You did talk about the coronary artery bypass grafting and the intensive home care there and the expected reduction in wait times. Could you clarify whether that expected reduction in fact happened? There was an expectation that it would reduce the wait time to 14 days. Can you tell us if that in fact happened? All right. There are the funding allocations that went with the press release and the breakdowns in that funding. Okay.

Out of the equipment cost, the "capital grants for asset acquisitions, such as diagnostic and medical equipment," again, what's the breakdown for each regional health authority, and what exactly did they get? You know, how many heart-lung machines or MRIs are there out there? What exactly did we get with that asset acquisition? It's a lot of money, \$150 million, so what exactly did we get for it? Again, if the minister is not standing there with a list she wants to rattle off, I'm happy to have her table it or send it over.

One other question that I had. On page 60 under Health Services there's a Credit or Recovery column, and it's listing \$938,621,000. Can you tell me what that is, that credit or recovery? I'm sure that there's something incredibly logical, but I'm just wondering what it is because it's almost a billion dollars, I think. So what is it exactly?

I will take my seat and see if the minister is able to give me any kind of feedback on the questions that I've asked. I appreciate her willingness to do a back-and-forth on this one.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much, and thank you very much for the hon. member's interest and excellent questions. In the first instance,

I'm having the page print for all members of the House the list of how the vaccine dollars were distributed. Although I had read them out, I realize I didn't relate each particular one, for example, with the amount, so this would perhaps make it easier to look at.

Also, I have asked for copies of the distribution of dollars to every single health authority. You can see that some, for example Palliser, did not have dollars to offset deficits because, in fact, Palliser had not incurred deficits. Although the formula for distribution of dollars is, I think, somewhat complicated – and it's understandable – it's also one that there's always significant discussion about. When I talked to the chairs of all of the health authorities within the first week of assuming this particular portfolio, I discovered that, for the most part, the dollars are working well. However, where Palliser did not incur any deficit in terms of the management of the health services within their authority, they were very clear that they felt that it would have been appropriate for us to have considered their good behaviour in not incurring any deficit and giving them some acknowledgement because the other health authorities that had incurred deficits appeared to have benefited from behaviour, in terms of managing their health care costs, that would have been assumed to be in contradiction to best budgeting practices.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot adequately judge whether or not the disbursement of funds and giving Palliser fewer dollars than the others that received them who had incurred deficits – I cannot make a judgment that that was either right or wrong without looking at the program delivery with every one of those authorities. Clearly, the government, in determining that we should not have deficits in place and that the deficits, in effect, were a compromise to the continuation of properly delivering health care in the most cost-effective way possible, I think was responsible to provide those dollars. But I certainly have an empathy for the board of Palliser, that made it abundantly clear that their fiscal policies, their financial management, their accumulation of dollars in a surplus account were, I think, in their view responsibly used and that by abiding by the rules, they were concerned that they had missed out.

So let me address the first point that had been raised by the hon. member, and that is why we would so quickly after a budget had been introduced and passed consider providing additional dollars. I think that in order to be fair, I should provide an iteration of the calendar of events. A good part of it dealt with negotiations with our federal government between the ministers of health, talking about the dollars, for example, for diagnostic and medical equipment. Those dollars, which became part of the health transfer to the various provinces, have been dollars that were looked forward to by various health authorities throughout the province. I know quite clearly that in Capital health they were waiting for dollars, and we are still waiting for dollars that have been due as a transfer this year. To the best of my understanding, although it's supposed to arrive by the end of March, I'm not convinced that it will.

But in the negotiations of health care supports from the federal government I believe that at the point that the decision was made to add dollars to health care to take advantage of an opportunity to offset the deficits as well as pass through the dollars for diagnostic equipment, it was perceived that this would be a responsible way to expend money and extend supports for the health authorities. So if I may wrap up on that, to the hon. member opposite, I would be very pleased to illuminate this further for you by identifying exactly why the amounts came later or why that particular sum in total was being added at that time and why the diagnostic equipment account at \$150 million was separately extended from the original health budget. I'm almost a hundred per cent sure, Mr. Chair, that that related to the federal dollar transfers, but let me get that really quite definitively.

The wait times on heart surgeries and the question about certain heart surgeries. I don't want to be guilty of not giving the accurate medical definition, but the wait times, in fact, were reduced by the fall from nine to two weeks, so for some particular heart surgeries the access standards were considerably improved.

8:30

For each and every area where access standards were identified in the initial release, dated June 30, 2004, for each of those particular procedures I will, in fact, provide the hon. member regional health authority information about the success or the capacity to complete those particular procedures in that hoped-for or anticipated period of time and will also identify how the fast-tracking of beds, for example in Calgary, or other capital expenditures were achieved, if at all, and I suspect that not all of them have been achieved.

As you know, the south Calgary hospital was announced. Planning dollars are in place. I believe the planning dollars that were levered out at the outset were several million dollars, but as yet there are still discussions about whether or not the Cancer Board would locate a facility in conjunction with the south Calgary hospital or whether, in fact, the university site at the University of Calgary might become a possibility. Discussions are currently under way between the Calgary regional health authority and the Alberta Cancer Board on the placement of that. So I can provide and I'm very willing to table more about the scope of the planning on the south Calgary hospital, but when we get into this year's budget, when that budget is tabled, I think some of the other questions may be addressed.

In terms of the vaccine that's identified, the avian vaccine, I can't answer that. I don't know. The list that I have doesn't specifically address whether or not the avian vaccine is one of those properties that were purchased in the 12 some odd million dollars. Once again, I will provide you with that information.

Overall, the advancement of many of the care initiatives – when I met with regional health authorities, they were satisfied that the dollars were put to good use. The hon. member makes a good point in asking about the accomplishment of some of these targets. Mr. Chairman, those targets, their completions have not been available to me although we have talked about that. Many of the advancements on access are evident, but to be quite precise, I would rather table those as soon as it's reasonably possible to do so, and I will commit to doing that. Even if it comes in bits and pieces, I'll make sure that you get that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. Just one final question, then, that I'm still trying to nail down. The minister seemed to be saying that the reason that this came so late was that it was money from the federal government or as a result of that. So can I just get the minister to nail down exactly how much of this \$362,350,000 came from the federal government? How much of it?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister for Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: The federal government did come through with the \$12.4 million; that's when you were looking at the \$62 million. On the \$350 million I believe \$150 million was part of the agreement on diagnostic equipment, but I will get very precisely why those dollars came, how they came, and how they were advanced. I'll table that information directed to the hon. member opposite and, further, so that the balance of the House can have it.

Mr. Chair, the copies of the total iteration on vaccines and health authorities should be distributed here momentarily. I've given them, as I say, to the page.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to ask the minister questions in respect to any items in this budget that may relate to recent changes to physiotherapy.

Ms Evans: I believe the hon. member was questioning whether or not the dollars for physiotherapy or the changes on physiotherapy in any way related to the dollars that were a part of this budget. No. Those policy changes were made within the scope and are within the scope of the health authority. Initially, the Calgary regional health authority made a change determining that they would focus the dollars that were expended on low-income or higher risk patients, ones with more acuity of care, requiring more therapies and assuring that they were there. Most recently, Edmonton announced that as of April 1 it would follow suit with that. So if you are, for example, a senior who fit in the low-income bracket, then, obviously, you will not have to pay for your treatments. However, if you have a greater income, if you are not deemed to be acutely in need of the physiotherapy, then you would be required to pay.

Mr. Chairman, in defence of the regional health authorities' move in this direction, I recognize the significant importance of physiotherapy; however, I also recognize that in those areas where we have been providing services, we are almost in all categories more generous in our service delivery than other provinces with the amount of dollars we do have. But, again, if the hon. member wishes, I will provide very accurate briefing notes for him about the specifics of that because there are a few things with the schedule that might be useful.

Mr. Mason: On that, in recent hearings that the New Democrat opposition held on the future of health care, physiotherapy was one theme that came up again and again. We heard from physiotherapists as well as families of people and patients of physiotherapy. I wonder if the minister would just comment on one brief argument that was put to us several times and that is: well, Alberta may spend more on physiotherapy than some other provinces; it is, in fact, a very wise investment because by the provision of physiotherapy services you prevent people from having to reaccess the primary health care system in many cases. You actually help people recover and be well again. I just wonder if the minister agrees with that point of view and whether or not she believes that, perhaps, if we treat physiotherapy as an investment and spend more money on it, we might actually reduce overall health care costs in the long run.

Ms Evans: Well, you know, it's as if the hon. member opposite reads my mind because, quite frankly, I do support the premise that physiotherapy can reduce health care costs. However, I have also recognized that what we have done with the authorities delegated to regional health authorities is provided them the latitude to make decisions in certain areas. As it was in my previous portfolio, sometimes one wonders, then, about the equitableness of service delivery across the province. On one hand, I can accept that not everybody is going to be able to do heart/lung transplants, but on the other hand, with issues such as the delivery of physiotherapy services and other things that can mitigate against long-term hospitalization or at least enhance the capacity of the patient to get

back to work, I think that there's a practicality to that that makes it eminently sensible.

This policy, no doubt, as we review the third way, will be one of the ways we review it because, quite honestly, my own view is that if we make quality care delivered as quickly as possible available to Albertans, that will be one of the very best ways of improving and transforming the system so that we skate to where the puck is going and get ourselves to the future in a way that is going to make sure that Albertans get the health care delivery they need. I also have a great deal of empathy for that.

I feel some constraint by the policy of delegation to authorities, but through this next year as I become increasingly familiar with those kinds of issues, especially as it relates to delisted service elements, I hope that my discussions with the health authorities will help us understand and mutually reconcile where we spend the dollars. I mean, at the end of the day they're going to tell me: "Well, of course we could pay more. But where are the dollars coming from?" So they are making choices, and that has been their prerogative to do so. Physiotherapy is one that I have a very strong predisposition towards, and I will be looking at that.

8:40

The Deputy Chair: Anybody else? Are you ready for a vote on this estimate?

An Hon. Member: Were we going to vote them all at the end of the night?

The Deputy Chair: Do you want to vote at the end of the evening? If there's an understanding to vote at the end of 10 o'clock, we'll do it at that stage.

The next minister we'll go to is the Minister of Justice.

Justice

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the supplementary estimates for Alberta Justice for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. I'd ask that you refer to the section beginning on page 73 of the estimates.

The estimates for Alberta Justice total approximately \$9 million, and our request is to provide funding for four areas. First, there's \$6.9 million required to pay Provincial Court judges in accordance with the recommendations of the 2003 Judicial Compensation Commission. Second, there is \$1.5 million needed to cover costs related to the implementation of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. Another \$331,000 is required for the cost of opening two additional courtrooms in Calgary Provincial Court, criminal division, and \$190,000 is required for the office of the Public Trustee to initiate the replacement of the office's information technology systems.

The bulk of the supplemental funding requested for the Justice ministry is to accommodate the increased compensation for Provincial Court judges as recommended by the Judicial Compensation Commission. The provincial judges and masters were paid retroactively to November 30, 2004, and then at the new rate to December 21, 2004. Those payments together with payment to March 31, 2005, again at the new rate, will cost approximately \$6.9 million. This is a decision that is out of our hands, and we are obligated to pay the new compensation rate to judges and masters.

The second largest portion of the funding is \$1.5 million to implement the Alberta Justice portion of the Child, Youth and

Family Enhancement Act. This act is under the jurisdiction of Children's Services and came into force November 1, 2004. It requires the justice system to significantly shorten trial preparation, dispute resolution, and lead times and increase mediation and dispute resolution services. This act is certainly good news for Albertans in that wait times will ultimately be reduced from the current average of 22 weeks to 10 weeks. When fully implemented, a total of 30 new staff members will be added in court services and legal services. Albertans accessing the courts will notice a big change for the better, but it does cost something to implement these changes. The \$1.5 million I'm requesting is start-up funding to begin to implement these changes during the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

In August 2004 a minister's report identified a significant increase in trial lead times in Calgary. In fact, the trial lead times were well above the provincial average and almost double the target lead time of 16 weeks. Obviously something had to be done, and it was. We moved to open courtrooms 105 and 106 in Calgary. Two new judges were appointed; four additional court clerks, two Crown counsel, and support staff for a justice were all hired. The total cost of that was \$331,000. This, once again, is money extremely well spent and is already making a difference to make courts more responsive to Albertans' needs.

The last of the supplemental estimates is a self-funded item. It will have no impact on government of Alberta surplus. I'm requesting \$190,000 as an incremental increase to the Public Trustee's office. This increase will be fully funded by a small increase in the management fee the Public Trustee can charge against the common fund administered for their fines. Over a period of several years the increase will allow the Public Trustee to replace the existing computer system, increase efficiency, and address ongoing staffing requirements. This, as I said at the outset, will be neutral to the government.

I would ask members to approve these expenditures as part of the Alberta Justice supplementary estimates. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise to respond to this supplementary estimate for the Department of Justice. I thank the hon. minister for his explanations. It helps to clarify some of the points because there's not much in this book to indicate any explanation. I was thinking that maybe the additional courtroom expense in Calgary had something to do with the building of a new courthouse there, but it doesn't have anything to do with that at all. Thank you for your explanation.

I just want to focus on the first point, the biggest amount of money, which is the \$6,949,000 to pay Provincial Court judges in accordance with the 2003 Alberta Judicial Compensation Commission. The recommendations were effective for a period April 2003 to March 31, 2006. That means that you had to give them retroactive back pay to April 2003, so that would account for some of that money.

It's very interesting that the commission had to consider many new circumstances, I think. I think they did good work. They expanded the scope of the work of provincial judges in recent years, the increasing responsibility attached to the office of a judge, and the relationship of Provincial Court judges to the judges of Queen's Bench. I take it that the commission was trying to bring up the Provincial Court judges to the same kind of level given the fact that, virtually, they do the same kind of work. In fact, that's what the Provincial Judges' Association concluded, that Provincial Court judges and Queen's Bench judges are both trial judges and generally perform equivalent functions.

But it's noteworthy that the commission's final recommendations are much higher in respect to the salary levels than the government of Alberta recommended. The commission saw fit not to agree with the ministry's submission, asserting its own independence and attempting to depoliticize the process. Now, I wonder if the minister could tell me how much was spent on the court challenge, on the challenge to the commission by the government. Does that money appear anywhere here? Also, the budget schedule, I'm not sure about the timing here. When this report got into the ministry's hands, did it come in time to get into the 2004 budget as the commission is the 2003 commission?

The commission made its recommendations taking into consideration many important points: the constitutional law of Canada; the need to maintain the independence of the court and the judges; the unique nature of the judge's role; the need to maintain a strong court by attracting highly qualified applicants to the Provincial Court; the compensation of other judges in Canada, that we want Alberta judges to get the same kind of pay as judges in other provinces; the need to provide fair and reasonable compensation for judges in light of prevailing economic conditions in Alberta and so on; the cost of living index; the nature of the jurisdiction of the court.

I learned so much in reading their report. All criminal prosecutions begin in Provincial Court – that's interesting – and 97 per cent conclude in Provincial Court. I'm on the way to supporting this additional money, so hear me out. So that means that what Provincial Court is doing is on a par with Queen's Bench. Queen's Bench handles murders and some very, very select other kinds of matters, but most matters are handled by Provincial Court. And then there are things that have to be considered like the new Youth Justice Act, which adds a lot to the workload of judges, and, of course, the whole area of domestic violence.

8:50

In conclusion, I'm not questioning the additional money although I'd like to know how much money was spent on challenging the commission and why this couldn't have come into the 2004 budget since the commission report was a 2003 commission. But I respect the commission's conclusions. I respect the independence of the Judicial Compensation Commission and the requirement of the government of Alberta to follow its recommendations, which are binding. The commission's role is to weigh the evidence and the submissions and to recommend the proper compensation and benefits for Provincial Court judges. Hopefully, in the years to come this kind of thing will be a part of the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stevens: Briefly, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the hon. member for his comments. My experience is that often there is a price to pay for support. I am quite prepared to listen to the hon. member in order to gain his support with respect to these estimates, and I do appreciate that.

I can tell you that there is no amount relative to the legal dispute relative to compensation built into this particular estimate. It is solely for the purpose of paying an amount that effectively was directed by the court while the issue is ongoing. So this is exclusively for compensation for the judges and for nothing else.

I believe that that's the only comment I have with respect to this matter. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will have fun with your estimates, then, hon. minister.

I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General if within the supplementary estimates are contained any expenditures for external legal counsel and if so, where are they, how much, and what for?

Thank you.

Mr. Stevens: Certainly not to my knowledge. As I indicated in my opening remarks, we have judges' pay; we have start-up costs with respect to the implementation of justice matters regarding the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act; we have money that is associated with a new computer system regarding the Public Trustee's office that is very much required. Then there was the cost associated with opening two courtrooms in Calgary and the associated judge, Crown prosecutor, and support staff within the court itself. There are no dollars associated with this for external counsel.

The Deputy Chair: Anybody else?

I will recognize the Minister of Advanced Education now.

Advanced Education

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Supplementary estimates for Advanced Education are found on page 13 of the material which was circulated, with the explanations shown on 13, 14, 15, and 16. I'd be more than happy to respond in more detail to any questions that might be raised.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I note that this ministry's supplementary estimates indicate that they only went 1.4 per cent over budget. Looking at some of the other departments' supplementary estimates, that's rather good, so congratulations.

I do have a couple of questions for the minister, not a whole bunch, I don't think. I'm curious about the \$1.3 million in grants to postsecondary institutions to support curriculum development and recruitment activities for the new Alberta school of veterinary medicine at the University of Calgary. I'm wondering if the minister can tell the House why that is not being approved through the normal budget process. Same question, essentially, for the \$2.8 million for the access fund: why is it not being approved through the normal budget process?

The \$11,674,000 for the performance envelope to reward institutions for the achievement of performance goals. The amount, as I understand it, that institutions can earn through achieving performance targets is limited, has maximums, and thus should be almost entirely predictable. So I'm wondering why this \$11.674 million is being approved for performance funding at the end of the fiscal year. The \$5.4 million for assistance for learners I would think should be similarly predictable, particularly the \$4.1 million requested there for student loan relief benefit payments.

In terms of equipment/inventory purchases we have a budget line item of \$162,000 for continued development of the apprenticeship, trades, and occupations management system. If that's part of the continuing development process, again, why is that not being approved through the regular budget?

I'm curious as to what specific enhancements to the student financial assistance system are being funded with the additional \$500,000. Why was this enhancement not envisioned and budgeted for in the '03-04 budget?

I think that's the extent of my questions at this time, Mr. Chairman, unless the minister says something that really perks my ears up.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A real challenge there to provide full and complete answers without perking the hon. member's interest. How to do it.

With respect to the \$1.3 million dollars for curriculum development for the veterinary program at the University of Calgary, apparently that program was approved. I believe the timing of the approval of that was in September, and then there was a decision taken that we ought to try and have that moved ahead more quickly. So the minister of the day gave the University of Calgary approval to move ahead with a \$1.3 million allotment in this fiscal year in order to allow them to move ahead with curriculum development and get-ready money, if you will. Rather than waiting for the budget process in a new fiscal year and saying, "Wait, and don't do anything until we get there," that funding money was approved to get started. So that's why the \$1.3 million is in the supplementary estimates rather than in the original budget forecast.

I should say at the outset that virtually none of this money that we're talking about voting in the supplementary estimates for Advanced Education is new money. It's just money that's being reprofiled, and because it was voted in other statutory categories, we need to seek the approval of the Legislature to move it from where it had been voted to where we want to spend it. So the questions that are raised are really questions surrounding what I would call matters of opportunity.

In other words, because we were able to reprofile the \$15 million from student loan funds because of some changes that had been made in there which resulted in the money being budgeted in that area and not being utilized and we were able to predict that early enough on in the process, we were able to take those funds and reallocate them to the access fund and the performance envelope where we wouldn't have been able to provide those additional funds, which I'm sure the hon. member and others of his colleagues will agree were very much needed in the system, and we didn't have them in the budget to provide them to the system. Because we were able to free up those resources from other parts of the budget, we were able to provide them to the system, and the best way of doing that was through the access fund and through the performance envelope.

In the same way, some of those funds could be channelled to much-needed projects; for example, the enhancement of the student finance system redevelopment. There's been an ongoing redevelopment of the student finance data system, the computerized system which handles the whole student finance process. That's been ongoing, and changes in the student finance program resulted in the need for some changes in redeveloping the existing legacy system. The \$500,000 made that possible, to move that project ahead.

In the same way, what we call the ATOMS project in apprenticeship and industry training, where we're moving to an automated system so that apprentices and employers can register online 24/7, basically automate a system which should have been automated, perhaps, many years ago, but now with the resources available we can move it into that project and move that project ahead so that we can have a much more effective and efficient system so that people can get the information they need 24/7, can register for a program, register for courses, can get the information about what their standing is. All that sort of information will be available through the electronic data system, and \$2.9 million of that redeployed money will be able to move that project ahead and make that much more effective.

9:00

Essentially, with all of the items under our supplementary estimates we're not talking about new money. We're talking about

some changes that were made which resulted in some savings on one side of the agenda, and we are asking for permission to use those monies to do more effective and more efficient work on the other side of the agenda. The three big areas that have been addressed: one is doing the curriculum development for the veterinary school; the second, improving our technologies so that people can have faster access to registration information; and three, providing additional resources to postsecondary institutions that have gone above and beyond in providing access to students.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for those answers. I guess really the only additional piece of information I'd be looking for, then, since we're talking about this not being new money but old money, reallocated money – and this may just be a dumb rookie question; I don't know. Can the minister show me or demonstrate for me where the money came out of the budget in order to move into his estimates?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. member, the \$15 million came from student loans. We incur and cover the costs associated with the remission of student loans. We provide student loan relief to students. Even though these show up in future years, we provide for losses in the current year. The amount for that provision is set each year, but it's adjusted during the course of the year depending on the remission rates and the level of loan relief benefits. There's been a decrease in the remission rates and a lower than anticipated request for student loans, which resulted in an excess of \$15 million in this fiscal year for that particular budget item. So \$15 million of the \$19 million comes from that pot.

Four million dollars comes from the Alberta centennial education savings plan budget. There will be \$20 million budgeted in a normal year. There was an amount budgeted for the balance of this year, from January 1 to March 31. The reality is that very few of those children will be registered prior to the end of this year. So this is not really new money; it's basically moving forward. It's freed up the \$4 million this year. We anticipate that to be a three-month adjustment every year.

So we don't need the \$4 million in these three months. Those children will be registered in April, May, June, and the children at the end of the year will be registered the following fiscal year. So it's just a \$4 million shift forward, but it frees up \$4 million now that was budgeted and not needed for that particular program. But because that's a statutory vote, I can't spend that money without coming back to the Legislature and asking for permission to reprofile it into the program spending. That's what we're asking for.

Basically that's the money. It's \$15 million on overprediction of the remissions on student loans and the amounts available in the issuance of student loans and \$4 million that we budgeted, perhaps overzealously, for the start-up of the centennial education savings plan, which won't be actually needed just yet, so we can utilize that money for current urgent priorities.

Mr. Taylor: So if I understand the minister correctly, Mr. Chairman, the minister is borrowing, essentially, \$19 million from next year's budget to add to this year's budget. Is that correct?

Mr. Hancock: No, not at all, Mr. Chairman. In the first instance, that was an overprediction of need. We anticipated a higher demand

for student loans and a higher rate of remission than actually is going to come true, and because we now know what is going to come true, that frees up the money. So we'll be predicting in next year's budget what next year's use will be, but that's not connected to this year. This is money that was budgeted for but is not being utilized, so we'd like to get it out to the institutions so that they can fund the access to the students that the universities and colleges have provided. So that's not borrowing from next year at all.

On the educational savings plan again one could say borrowing from next year, but that's not really a reality. We will budget the full amount for next year. It's just that although the program had started on January 1, the expenses aren't, it appears, going to start really until April 1. There will be some money needed in there, but there's not a lot of money needed. So it's really that we anticipated spending some money too early and we're not going to need to spend it in that time frame. So because that money is in the budget and because there is a need, we'd like to reallocate it and get it out to the postsecondaries, who need it for the things that they're doing.

I should mention that there's another \$5.8 million that we are reprofiling as well, but that money can be reprofiled within the budget, so that doesn't form part of the supplementary estimates. So we're actually taking about \$23 million which can be freed up from other things to get it into the areas where we really need it to maximize the opportunities, most of that going through the performance envelopes and the access funds to get it out into the hands of the postsecondary institutions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. Minister of Advanced Education: I wonder if he could elaborate, but not too much, about the \$11,600,000 "for the Performance Envelope to reward institutions for the achievement of performance goals." I'd like to know a little bit more about how that actually works.

I also have a question with respect to the \$15 million in overallocation for student loans and why the minister feels that that has occurred, why less people are applying for remission. Does it have any relationship to enrolment in our postsecondary institutions? Is there any indication that it may just indicate a problem with debt load of students, leading to their choosing to not access the student loan program?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the second one, that would be pure speculation as to why. I don't think that there's been any change – and I can check that, and I will and get back to the member on it – in take-up rates or that sort of thing. It's difficult to predict what the total remissions will be in any given year. It's difficult to predict what the take-up of loans will be.

There are a number of factors which go into the budget. One is how much we're putting out in terms of loans. We budget every year for a cost factor related to both the failure to repay as well as the remissions, so there are a number of factors that go into that. I can get some more detail if the hon. member would like.

With respect to the performance envelope of \$11.6 million, that goes to postsecondary institutions through performance envelope awards, which is one of the recommendations that was made by the MLA Post-secondary Funding Review Committee back in the fall of 2000. The one-time performance funding envelope is available to recognize achievement of excellence and improvements in perfor-

mance. They're awarded based on key performance indicators, which they apply through, those being responsiveness, accessibility, and affordability. So there are a number of factors that institutions put into the mix to apply for performance funding, and we were able to add approximately \$12 million to that performance funding envelope.

Human Resources and Employment

Mr. Cardinal: I'm pleased to be here, of course, to request supplementary estimates of \$34,925,000 for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. The department requires a net increase of \$14.9 million. The reason for that is, of course, our caseload. Costs per case were higher than we had budgeted for in the income support program or that portion of the program. Although we have been successful in moving more people off the income supports to employment and training opportunities, these decreases have been more than offset by caseload increases and the not-expected-to-work category, which is about 11,000 cases these days.

9:10

In addition, we have experienced some unanticipated cost pressures related to increased medical costs, primarily the escalating cost of drugs, and covering the cost of utility arrears and reconnection fees. This demonstrates that this government is committed to stepping up and providing more dollars for the needy that are still out there in Alberta.

You will also note that \$3 million is required in addition to the funding. It's required for the Alberta adult health care benefit program. This is, of course, a positive development that means that more people who were receiving assistance are now employed and are eligible to access the medical benefits available under this particular program. Again, another department program in place to help Albertans help themselves.

Due to the lower than anticipated enrolment in training programs funded by the department, some dollars were available to partially offset the income support pressures, actually about \$12 million. However, my department remains committed to funding opportunities for low-income Albertans to access the training they need to help them get jobs.

In addition, \$20 million is requested for the salary contingency fund, which will be allocated to departments on an as-needed basis. It's prudent planning to ensure that departments have sufficient funds available to them for fiscal obligations, in other words settlements. Without contingency the departments may have been required to fund these costs out of their next year's budget.

Support for the supplemental estimates for Human Resources is recommended and would be appreciated if you'd give it. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the minister for his report. There are a number of I think interesting areas in the supplementary estimates that I'd like to have some questions asked on.

You know, skills investment seems to be something that is a very topical and important area right now and something that we seem to have a lot of attention focused on because of the needs and our economy. The ability to bring all Albertans forward as productive members of our economy I think is crucial in this area, but we've had \$14,925,000 – and the minister had mentioned that – for extra income supports and health benefits and for an extra high caseload for people not expected to work. Basically, there are more people

on welfare. I just have to ask that question. At the same time, we've had monies transferred from skills investment to the tune of \$12,943,000 that is not being used in the skills investment area to deal with that.

Obviously, the \$20 million for salary contingencies is something that may be necessary. You know, I've seen also some of the operations in some of the line departments, some of the line operations, and either they're doing a very good job of selling me on what they're doing – but I think many have been improving their things, and I could commend the department for some of their work in this area.

The skills investment area – that's career information, obviously, and some of the other areas, some of the basic skills and academic upgrading. I've heard the criticism from some of these people in these centres that, basically, sometimes they're transferring into these upgrading programs instead of actually being on welfare, and then as soon as they're off the supports for these programs, they then become a statistic on welfare again rather than in this so-called upgrading or skills investment area.

Crucially, I think in the skills investment we have to understand the need in this area for actually using that funding for providing those skills. I mean, more people on welfare, less money being spent on skills, money being transferred from skills investment to welfare: somehow that equation doesn't work for me in the Alberta where we need so many new people. There are people in many groups and areas that I've talked to that want to get into our economy and be a part of it.

Some areas, I don't think, have at all been adequately addressed, Mr. Minister. It surprises me, these areas such as the labour market partnerships, which are designed to identify, develop, and implement projects with organizations, industry sectors, and communities with common labour market needs. I see that the ministry has worked in certain areas like the hospitality industry to try and develop certain areas of expertise and develop personnel in that area, and I think they should be commended for that, but in reality some of our great demands are getting people to Fort McMurray, developing our aboriginal workforce.

I've heard great criticism that the aboriginal skills development outlined here has really just been a lot of paper and committee work. We haven't seen, really, any real action done other than that on the part of the government, and the results do show. I mean, again, monies transferred out of skills investment and away from developing our workforce while at the same time the department gets into the temporary foreign worker program, which seems to be a total cop-out in terms of, you know, developing our workforce. I think that's kind of a key area to look at.

The desired results in the 2003-2004 report state that "Alberta employers [should] have the skilled workforce they need." That's an objective of the department: to "identify, and advise stakeholders of significant labour market trends and issues." Again, there's a significant problem here in some of the labour market information that I've seen. It's very incomplete and very global, and some of the areas that we see do not really speak to the exact availabilities in certain areas. Indeed, we have certain areas targeted sometimes even though the government in its annual report said that in some certain key performance measures the "number of occupations that are in a skill shortage situation as defined by an unemployment rate below 3%" has actually dropped. That's on page 76 of the annual report.

It's interesting to look at these things, you know, when we see all the hype about a shortage in certain areas when I'm being told by many stakeholders that, in fact, there is not the shortage, and they

have an availability, and they can provide this. In fact, the problem is getting people to work in the oil sands area because of other problems.

9:20

The implementation of the strategy on Prepared for Growth: Building Alberta's Labour Supply I think has got to come into some sort of real work in terms of how we actually strategize the key areas, how we cut off the peaks and fill the valleys in terms of the needs for apprentices in many of the key skills areas, how we look at the demographic trends that will develop in five to seven years to begin to create some true pressures on our labour supply as people retire in the beginning phases of the baby boom retirement. Workplace effectiveness is actually one of the key areas that's looked at as a strategy here as well, and I really see very little, again, understanding that there's been money transferred out of skills investments even though there's a strategy from the department.

The "work-life balance, lifelong learning, workplace values": some of these things would look to having, you know, a working life that balances family life, family pressures, some of the cultural sort of values, multicultural values that some of us hold dear in this society, some of the traditional beliefs and ways of living that many groups in our society hold dear. There again, skills investments is going to just basically income supports and being transferred out of the things that could be doing something very positive for the economy of Alberta.

"Develop alliances at the local, provincial, national and international level that will contribute to human resource development." I think there are some areas of real alliances at the local level, you know, dealing with the colleges but also dealing with the various traditional groups like the trades, the aboriginal groups, and looking clearly at our deficit in youth unemployment, one of the highest rates in the land. Obviously, in the report there's the short-term training that was provided for farmers affected by BSE. That's a good short-term thing, but the best thing is long-term employment. A job is a very fulfilling thing for many people in our economy.

The interprovincial mobility initiatives that have been brought forward I think have been very effective. Some of these have been ongoing for the last decade: the red seal program, of course, and some of the other areas about bringing people from other parts of Canada. Actually, I think there's some opportunity to do so with parts of the United States. I've spoken with some of these areas where there are skills shortages. People could have access to labour pools in the United States, and they might be a quicker, easier mix for us than actually trying to retrain new people from a lot of other areas.

Immigration is important. It's absolutely a part of our history, our ability to develop our economy. But we have to be careful that we do not flood certain occupations. We have to develop certain occupations so that there are people here afterwards. To bring in some people from outside can bring about great difficulty and create holes or gaps in certain trades and occupations that we will see five and 10 years down the road or longer. You know, we've seen that happen in a period in the 1980s, when there was actually a construction depression in Alberta.

Some of the areas that I'd like to understand. There's been transfers in from skills development and some of the areas in safety such as the partners in health and safety program. It's had some successes. I've talked to a number of employers across the province, and you know they have done some great things in bringing down some of the safety figures.

Another area, actually, is the children and youth initiative and how well that is happening for people that are on income supports or not

going back to work: the crucial area of providing recreation to children and getting kids off of, you know, the ongoing generational sort of cycle of being in a kind of welfare or support situation and also decreasing gang violence by keeping these kids active.

Those are my general questions, Mr. Minister, and I thank you for your time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much. Those are, of course, very good comments and very good questions and very good recommendations also. This is a very sensitive area, and it needs more careful attention.

I know that as we move forward, this year we may be moving some dollars from the skills development area. You can be assured that this fiscal year you won't see that happen, because right now, the way it looks with the spaces that may be coming open for training and various training opportunities for individuals out there, we'll be lucky if we can find enough dollars to fulfill what is required. So definitely we will be expanding the number of seats that are offered for training to ensure that whatever is allocated for skills investment, that money is fully utilized. In fact, we'll be lucky if we have enough to do the job that's required to be done.

As you're aware, the welfare caseload in Alberta is very low. At one time, going back to '92-93, it was about 97,000 cases, or 180,000 individuals, and 80 per cent of those on that system at that time were single people or couples without children. The move government made at the time was to make sure those people that were able to work and able to train were off the system and into the workforce, either through training or direct placement. That's been very successful because our caseload today is under 28,000, and about 11,000 of those 28,000 are people not expected to work for various reasons: larger families at home or lower education levels or situated in a geographic area where there are no job opportunities or a lot of underemployment and unemployment. That will no doubt continue, but I think we can still reduce that to a lower level yet.

The other competition we have, of course, when it comes to skills development and skills training and the reason why we would have some surplus to transfer this year is that we are having some stiff competition from the jobs that are available out there. Rather than people going into training programs to do academic upgrading and technical trades and even university, people are taking jobs out there and going into the workforce. That is also some competition, some challenge that we're faced with. I don't know if it's negative or positive. I guess in the long term it's probably positive, but in the short term it's probably negative.

So when you look at our offices in Alberta, we do not have a welfare office. I think it's the only jurisdiction, probably, in North America that does not have a welfare office. The reason for that is that no one out there wants to be on welfare. We know that. You people know that. We've put in a process here in this province that has looked after that generally. Very few people are on assistance that are employable and trainable, and that's not easy to arrive at.

We have about 26 offices, service centres we call them, which are in some cases co-located with the federal government and in some cases not. But what we provide in those offices is that basically you walk in, and the first thing you'll get is probably an application to get a job or a process for further education, further career counselling, or direct placement in a job opportunity, either in that community or in other communities. Actually, about 80 per cent of people that walk into our offices never end up with a file. I think that's a good move because I think that's what Albertans want, that's what taxpayers want: to ensure that wherever we can we move people

back into training, into the workforce, and to of course become self-sufficient and independent.

9:30

I know that in aboriginal communities – you mentioned that, and that's a good point; I commend you for that – we do have challenges in that particular area. The aboriginal communities we look after are people off the reserve, along with other Albertans, to provide the services that are required.

On the reserves we have absolutely no jurisdiction, and the present socioeconomic policies that are in place for the First Nations on-reserve programs do not really encourage people to get back into the workforce. It's a real challenge because that's not what the people want. That's not what the First Nations chiefs want. They'd like to see their people go back into the workforce. Until the federal socioeconomic policies change for on-reserve programs – and we can keep working with them to try to achieve that because it would be best for everybody – we will continue to have those challenges that employers have. They'd like to hire First Nations. When there's stiff competition from social support programs, then it's really, really tough for industries to hire First Nations people.

In relation to foreign workers, of course, that continues to be a real challenge for everybody. The first priority for Alberta, our government, and no doubt your support is to hire Albertans first wherever possible, Canadians second, and that includes aboriginal people; it includes persons with developmental disabilities, first opportunity. When an employer has exhausted that, then they have an opportunity to apply through the federal government to bring in foreign workers, and that's a complicated and a costly process. It's definitely not a top priority for industries, definitely not a top priority for our government, and no doubt not a top priority for you people, who like to see our own local people working first.

In some instances, of course, when you look at northern Alberta, some of the challenges that we have is a road network that's in there, for an example. We have a community north of Athabasca which used to be in my riding. The community of Wabasca has about 5,000 in population. There's about 80 per cent unemployment and underemployment in that community. The reason for that is there are jobs around, but they're not within commuting distance on the roads. We need a road developed between Wabasca and Fort McMurray, and if we did that, at least 2,000 or 3,000 people would get to work almost immediately either through training or direct placement on the job. So we need to improve the road network in northern Alberta also to accommodate the First Nations people that are out there. Industry would like to hire them, but the access is not there.

So with a few policy changes, a few changes in the infrastructure to provide access roads and proper services to support people to get back into the workforce, we'd have a lot more people working in the workforce. We do have a lot of work, and as an opposition we need your support to achieve that. I know that together in the next number of years we can achieve some of those goals we have.

In relation to the apprenticeship program, of course, we need to continue improving that although, from what I understand, Alberta presently trains close to 20 per cent of all the apprentices trained in Canada. On the other hand, the average age of a journeyman in Canada is about 51 years old. The average age of a person completing the four-year program in Alberta is about 26 years old. When you go back to the schools, say, in the north half of the province, 65 per cent of the students want to take technical trades, and they know that by the time they hit grade 10. Why is it taking from grade 10 until you're 26 years old to complete your four-year program? So

we need to make some changes to improve that and have more people join the apprenticeship program and end up with a journeyman certificate. Again, we'll need your help in ensuring that those changes take place.

The welfare cycle. Again, I stress that on the reserves we have reformed the welfare system. Off the reserve it has worked well. We need to encourage the federal government to make some of the policy changes that will ensure that the First Nations people on reserves move off the reserves and into the workforce and once again become independent and self-sufficient.

When you look at northern Alberta, before 1950 there was no welfare system. People lived off the land the traditional way, completely, 100 per cent self-sufficient. We didn't have health care problems. We didn't have the social problems, the cultural breakdown, didn't have alcoholism. In fact, in my community I remember days when I don't think one person even smoked in that community. That's how we lived before 1950. Industrial development came, and we didn't provide the necessary transitional supports to move people through the process to the industrial type of lifestyle. It's the same, you know. You live off the land the traditional way. It's no different today. We do live off the land, but we do it by harvesting the resources that are out there in the industrial setting. We didn't provide that link. We tried to provide it by providing welfare.

So you're exactly right: we need to break that welfare cycle because it is a disaster. With your help and the support of our government no doubt we can achieve that. I am sure that we have thousands of First Nations people that can get in the workforce if we work together with industry before we start talking about bringing foreign people in. That should be our top priority.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Minister, for some very wise words. I have been up to many of those areas a number of times and lived in the area, actually, for a number of years. The need for some of the infrastructure actually is a real part of all of this. It is crucial to the development of our oil sands and of our greatest resource, which is our people.

Some of the problems with this infrastructure really have to be linked. You know, many of these things are interdepartmental in the way they do work, such as the need for a road. There are sometimes a number of winter roads from Wabasca through, you know, Pelican Lake and up through Fort McMurray, and some of those go up to Chip and some of those places and off to some of the areas in Saskatchewan as well which could use some great development. But I'm kind of diverging here, I guess.

I'll just say that some of the needs that you mention there are huge in developing skills and that if some of these skills investment monies can be programmed into some of the successful, actually, industry examples that we've had – for example, Neegan Development has had some successes. Some of the other aboriginal companies where there have been informal relationships between labour providers like building trade unions, Syncrude, some of the other people to try and ensure that there is in fact labour supply can be very successful. I'll just end with that comment, Mr. Minister.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Anybody else?

Okay. We'll move on to the Minister of Economic Development.

Economic Development

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Chairman, as you know, there are times when I can be mischievous and playful and other times when I can just be relatively simple and direct, and that'll be one of these times.

The \$506,000 that we are seeking is based on two areas. The first area: the federal government and the provincial government agreed with the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce to get involved in a World Trade Centre. The federal government put in their money, \$3 million were put in by Gaming from Alberta, and Economic Development was responsible for \$500,000, so that is our ask tonight, and \$6,000 just for new computer hardware for Travel Alberta.

9:40

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Just a few questions for the minister. Thank you for clarifying that the \$500,000 is Alberta's pony up to what the feds were putting in. I'm wondering just about timing here. Since we're so close to the next budget, why didn't the money just come out of the next budget year? Is it because you had enough surplus you could put it in and do your matching now? Or was there a requirement, some kind of guillotine timeline with the feds, that if you don't put it in by the end of March, you've lost it? The minister is nodding at me, so I'm taking it that the feds had set the timelines on this and we had to match it.

Can you give me any kind of a breakdown on how the money is spent? Or do we just hand the money over to Economic Development Edmonton, I think it is, and let them spend it? Or is there some definitive allocation or breakdown on what it's supposed to be spent on? Did we get any kind of indication from the World Trade Centre of what their goals or objectives were in the expenditure of this money? Is there any kind of performance measurement that we can put against it, where we can say: "Well, out of that \$500,000 of Alberta taxpayer money we expected to get the following six things, and looking back, we got them"? You know, what's the measurement that we can use for accountability of money spent there?

The computer hardware for the Travel Alberta Secretariat – oh, things are running together in my mind; when was I talking about this recently? Again, what's the timing issue here? Why wasn't this appearing in the budget that was voted on on the 13th of May 2004? Did the Travel Alberta Secretariat not know it was going to need computer hardware at that time? Or did their computers crash or fall out of a window that they had to come to you now and have this money allocated backwards? Or did they just overspend and come and ask for the money to make sure that they didn't go over budget?

So just a few quick questions on that, and thanks for the opportunity.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you. We'll check the *Hansard* tomorrow and just make sure that I'm providing the proper information, but my understanding is that both the federal government and the Alberta government had agreed to provide the funding before March 31, 2005. It was a capital project rather than operating costs, so there was a proposal made in terms of how the capital would be used. Of course, the normal auditing procedures will be in place.

On the computer hardware, I believe the reason for that was the events that took place after the vote on the budget, and that was the movement, then, in anticipation of the legislation to go to a tourism levy from the old pillow tax.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

We move to the next portfolio. The next one is Environment. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Environment

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my honour and pleasure to respond to the supplementary estimates for this year. Let me say that it appears a modest supplement, with about 6 per cent of the average budget for this department of about \$122 million. How to assess whether it's appropriate, whether it's too much, too little? They've requested \$2 million in upgrades for information technology, 4 and a half million for Alberta waste management assistance, and 1 and a half million for water management and erosion control. I guess around those areas individually there isn't enough detail for me to say what it was about these areas – that is, information technology, waste management, and water management – that wasn't budgetable.

Having recognized that there is such a common need for supplementary estimates, I guess my question as a newcomer is: is there a problem with the budgeting process, and is there some way that we could reduce the amount of supplementary estimates over time? I don't know the answer, and I welcome feedback on that.

In relation to the details of those, I would anticipate further explanation about the allocations in each of those and how it was that these were required. Some explanation, in other words, around each of them would be appreciated.

In summary, then, with the lateness of the hour, who overspent, and why? If the budget is inadequate for this department – and I would argue that for most Albertans the idea of only 5 per cent of the budget of the government of Alberta going to protection of the environment may represent an inadequate support for a very vital department – if that's the case, then I would welcome this department putting forward a stronger case for increasing their budget annually. I would certainly support that, given the appropriate documentation. When will this department receive the appropriate amount, and when will the department apply for that appropriate budget?

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Anybody else?

We'll move on to the department and minister for seniors.

Seniors and Community Supports

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the supplementary estimates tonight as well for Alberta Seniors and Community Supports and for the 2004-05 fiscal year. These estimates total 34 and a half million dollars. That includes \$30 million for the Alberta seniors' benefit program and 4 and a half million dollars toward support of housing initiatives.

In August 2004 we announced changes to the Alberta seniors' benefit, which is a program that provides lower income seniors with a monthly cash benefit, and \$30 million in funding for the Alberta seniors' benefit also allowed an increase in the eligibility thresholds. We added 17,000 more seniors to the program, and in addition seniors who are already receiving the monthly benefit saw annual increases of up to \$275 per year. Approximately 142,000 seniors, which is 42 per cent of Alberta seniors, receive a monthly cash benefit under the Alberta seniors' benefit, and the Alberta seniors' benefit now offers the highest monthly payment and the highest income threshold in the country. Mr. Chairman, we are committed to ensuring that the Alberta seniors' benefit continues to focus on lower income seniors who need our help the most.

In addition to this funding for the Alberta seniors' benefit, an additional 4 and a half million dollars was made available for affordable community supportive living, and this funding was transferred from Alberta Infrastructure to Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, with the responsibility for supportive living, to fund the development of new supportive living spaces in the East Central health region. This breaks down to \$2.4 million allocated to a new 40-unit seniors' supportive housing project in Vegreville, and \$2.1 million was allocated to a new 40-unit seniors' supportive housing project in Wainwright. The funding provides 50 per cent of total project cost and significantly reduces the amount that the management body has to borrow in order to build the project.

These projects help respond to the need for additional affordable supportive living, and they are currently in the design phases, Mr. Chairman. Supportive housing, as we know, is less expensive to build and operate than long-term care. It's estimated that 40 to 50 per cent of people in long-term care could have their needs met through supportive housing. Building affordable supportive housing in rural Alberta helps seniors with high health and personal care needs to remain in their community.

I'd ask that members approve these expenditures, and I have tried to be very quick so that we may have some questions in case there are any questions.

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

9:50

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This afternoon I queried the process of the interim supply, how I thought it appeared to me that budgeting and the dollar projections were lacking in, perhaps, proper planning, and the lack of dollars earmarked for contingencies so that there really shouldn't have been the need for the interim financing. But now, this evening, upon some further study of the supplemental estimates, I feel that my remarks bear some repeating. How on earth would a department be so far off in their budget that they would need \$30 million to find enhancements four months after the budget was passed? I'm hoping that it was just a coincidence that the election was just six weeks later.

Although the line items give some description – and I certainly thank the minister for the descriptions that she has given so far – I would ask that she could perhaps elaborate a little bit more, and I ask for some clarification on some further breakdown on how the dollars were spent. I actually had some specific questions regarding the definitions.

The dental and optical coverage that is going to take effect in April of 2005. I do know that the minister and I have actually consulted with the same people that we've spoken with, and I'm sure that this minister is aware of this, as I am, but I'm not sure that everyone else is aware of this: people who do not have proper dentures or their own teeth actually live 10 years shorter, and that's due to the lack of proper nutrition. I'm not sure that you're ready for this at this time of the night, but however. The chewing process that goes on actually doesn't break down the food properly. Then it hits the stomach, and the stomach has to work harder, which is all part of the process of why your lifespan is shorter.

So the dental part of this, I think, is exceedingly important. Just from my own personal experience, sometimes seniors will have small chips on their dentures, and they end up with huge cankers in their mouths that can't be cured, and it's because they haven't had the opportunity to go and have them fixed.

The other thing I wanted to discuss was actually supportive. I'd like a definition on that. You said that, in fact, it is better than long-term care, and I agree to a certain degree. I'm wondering how this

has been broken down. Is it assisted living or designated living? With those two designations, do these people pay extra over and above the very minimal amount of home care that they are allowed? Also, was this a P3 project to build these three institutions? Is it a private provider that is actually directing the management? If it was a private developer and it was a P3 sort of set-up, I'm wondering how long the building has been leased for and who would own it at the end of its natural lifespan.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I just need to seek direction. We are about six minutes away to 10 o'clock, and the committee has to at that stage rise and report. Do you want me to proceed with the votes on individual items for the 12 portfolios that we have before us?

An Hon. Member: The vote call is tomorrow.

The Deputy Chair: Tomorrow? Okay.

Hon. Minister for Seniors and Community Service, did you want to respond?

Mrs. Fritz: If it may be helpful to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, I can take your questions under advisement. I can respond back to you directly, and then that may assist with moving the vote forward because we should, as you said, Mr. Chairman, vote here by 10 o'clock.

Ms Pastoor: In light of our time constraint I certainly would appreciate that. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Next we have on my list the Executive Council. It's my understanding that there are no questions for the Executive Council.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. We will move to the next item, which is Finance.

Finance

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, the \$1.4 million request from Finance was to deal with reforms in the insurance area. Automobile insurance in Alberta is mandatory. I don't have to remind anyone about that. It's against the law for any driver to get behind a wheel without having insurance for PL and PD on that vehicle.

The changes were made to those laws. It was our responsibility to inform Alberta drivers and other stakeholders, including the industry and medical professionals, about the new system, and that is primarily what that was for. Part of the money was used to develop products designed to educate Albertans and stakeholders. This involved a comprehensive brochure, it involved radio and newspaper advertising. That is really what the \$1.4 million was for.

I should just note that reform saved Alberta drivers about \$200 million at that point.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My opening comments would be to congratulate this minister and her ministry for being one of the more prudent ministries in terms of their

spending and only the one item in particular that is overbudget, which I'm pleased to see.

I do, however – and I recognize that I only have a minute or two – have a couple of questions. My first would be: I'm curious; she did not really explain why this money was not allocated in the 2004 budget, so I would like to know why that expenditure wasn't identified back in May of last year.

Also, Mr. Chairman, I'm wondering if there have been any steps taken to ensure that it won't happen again. I alluded earlier this afternoon to the fact that we're anxiously awaiting a report from the automobile insurance review board that the minister has requested, and I'm wondering if there may be some thought to doing another advertising campaign such as that one.

Lastly, I guess, I was just wondering if there's any performance measure to identify how effective that particular advertising campaign was in terms of informing Albertans of the new legislation.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of being able to move on to another department, I will give you a complete answer in writing. However, I would just say that the reforms started in October of 2004. It was very difficult, if not impossible, to predict what the final reforms were going to be and to plan what type of information you might be required to present to Albertans. Finance simply just did not have that number of resources planned for that.

But I will give you more information on the performance, how we base it. Part of it is the savings.

But it would be nice if we could get one more department before you tonight.

Mr. Mason: Hon. minister, if I may, \$1,400,000 for advertising of a very controversial reform, and I use the term "reform" advisedly. Could you please provide us with, you know, what that was actually spent on and what the key messages were? How much went into advertising on television and so on? All of the components of that.

Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: I will, but as I just explained, there was a brochure that was developed that went to households. Insurance is a very complex business, and the insurance reform was a very lengthy discussion with consumers and with the industry.

I would say to date we've had considerable success in our province. I gauge that by the number of people I hear from that are pleased, those that seem to have a problem that we are able to straighten out for them very quickly, and the fact that we have 72 companies in this province that are offering mandatory insurance that Alberta drivers must carry. Alberta drivers have saved about \$200 million, in our latest estimation, because of those reforms. That's not a bad benchmark.

10:00

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration of estimates, I would invite the Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report progress.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report progress and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2004-2005 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund, reports progress, and requests leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:02 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 17, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/03/17

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue our work with the people in the constituencies we represent. Amen.

Please be seated.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, our historic comment of the day. On March 17, 1937, the Hon. Philip C.H. Primrose died in Edmonton, having served as Alberta's Lieutenant Governor for six months. The Hon. Colonel Primrose was known for his long and distinguished career with the North West Mounted Police, now known as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He was the first Lieutenant Governor of Alberta to die in office, and his was the first state funeral in the history of the province of Alberta.

As I sit, may I wish all the best to all those of Irish descent.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 83 grade 6 students who are accompanied by their teachers and parent helpers. They are from the Gibbons school in my constituency. They are seated in the public gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students and their chaperones sitting in the members' gallery who are from the Canadian University College, which is an independent school of advanced education in Lacombe. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly the hard-working members of the Northern Alberta Development Council, who are meeting in Edmonton today. Joining us are Carmen Ewing from Girouxville, Helen Henderson from High Prairie, Gary Pollock from Swan Hills, Maurice Rivard from Bonnyville, Harvey Yoder from Lac La Biche, and Michael Ouellette from Grande Prairie. They're also accompanied by three staff members from Peace River: Allen Geary, Audrey DeWit, and Jennifer Bisley.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals are to be commended for their dedication and advancement of northern Alberta development through regional initiatives in partnership with the private sector and

community-based organizations. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask them to rise, if they would, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of individuals in the public gallery that I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. I'd ask them to please rise as I call their names. Ed Koning is a Fabry patient and chair of the Fabry Society of Canada. Frank Koning is the father of two Fabry patients and the grandfather of one Fabry patient. Audrey Koning is a Fabry patient and the mother of two Fabry patients and the grandmother of one Fabry patient. Ross Perri is also a Fabry patient, and Helen Tsenekos is president of the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders, a national group encouraging the development of an orphan drug policy in Canada. I ask all members to join me in welcoming these individuals to our Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important services my constituency office provides is to assist constituents in gaining access to important government services. I'm truly fortunate to have Wes Carter, a social work student and a part-time employee in my office, to help with this work. I would like to introduce him to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. I would ask Mr. Carter to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a member of my constituency. Joni Wilde, a teacher from the Magrath high school and the special needs co-ordinator, is here in Edmonton attending the Asperger's and autism conference at the U of A. I would like her to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm most pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of 34 students from the La Crete public school accompanied by Mr. Morgan Coates, Mr. Richard Coburn, Mr. Steve Cole, Mrs. Mary Driedger, Mrs. Mary Wiebe, Mrs. Agnes Wiebe, Mr. Peter Neufeld, and Mr. Henry Harder as adult chaperones. They've travelled nearly a thousand kilometres to be with us today, and they're so in tune with the political process that they included on my notes that they want highway 88 paved. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Enron Activities in Alberta

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans expect nothing less than the truth from their government. Yesterday in response to a question on government meetings with the disgraced Enron corpora-

tion the Premier stated: "I don't recall any discussions whatsoever with Enron. None." And he even went "none" – like that – for emphasis. However, an e-mail between senior Enron officials dated September 2000 has as its subject heading "Project Stanley - Recent Meetings with Alberta Government and TransAlta." Project Stanley was the code name Enron used for its market manipulation scheme in Alberta. To the Premier: is he now prepared to admit that Enron officials did in fact meet with officials from his government while Enron was ripping off Alberta consumers?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea if Enron officials met with officials. I don't recall – and that is the truth – personally meeting with any officials from Enron. If Enron officials had meetings with our officials, I know nothing of that, but I will have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the specifics as to any meetings with officials. I can say this: Enron clearly was here as a participant in the marketplace. In fact, the investigation and the incidents with allegations to Enron go back to 1999, predating even that question. Investigations were and did occur. There wasn't sufficient evidence at that stage to proceed further. New information has come to light. The MSA continues to act on behalf of protecting Albertans by investigating this issue.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the Premier: then since the Premier doesn't know now who met, will he investigate who in his government did meet with the Enron officials and what they discussed?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister has heard the request, and I will assume that he will take appropriate measures.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that at least 5,600 pages of records of communications between this government and Enron are known to exist, will this government turn those records over to the Competition Bureau for investigation?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I assume that the market surveillance administrator will do whatever he deems appropriate in terms of turning documents over to the federal Competition Bureau, but I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it is the market surveillance administrator that initiated the investigation in the first place. It is they that worked in conjunction with the federal Competition Bureau. At any time when new information comes forward, you want to assess and get to whether it's valid or not. At this stage it still is just information. There's been no evidence to substantiate it, but they take it very seriously. They are examining all the documents they specifically requested. They've taken the proactive question, and they are working to protect Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Electricity Pricing

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Enron was not the only company profiting because of this Progressive Conservative government's weak and indifferent attitude. This government allowed TransAlta and Powerex to set electricity prices at the Power Pool of Alberta in the spring and summer of 2000, causing consumers' power bills to skyrocket. The megabucks for megawatts scandal grows. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that during April of the year 2000 76 per cent of the time that electricity prices were more than \$498 per megawatt – Powerex was the reason – why did this Progressive Conservative government sit idly by while Alberta's electricity market was being dominated by Powerex and prices were skyrocketing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's put some things into perspective. Powerex would only be through a tie-line to B.C. It's a very minor part of the power. It would only be a maximum of 600 megawatts. You still had at that stage about 7,000 to 8,000 megawatts of power that were available to consumers in Alberta. The market surveillance administrator has been a watchdog. They continue to watch prices as they happen throughout the days. If there are any abnormalities, they do investigate and they do follow through on these things.

1:40

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that this Progressive Conservative government gave the hydro power purchase arrangements to TransAlta for next to nothing, hydro being the cheapest source of electricity in Alberta, how could this government allow TransAlta to set the power prices for so long and for so high without any investigation?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, one of the great accomplishments of having a market prevail is that those that trade are allowed to trade their goods and services in a marketplace. It's not a matter of setting prices. Any time you trade a commodity, you bid. There's an ask and a bid price, and you trade the commodity. It's no different on the stock markets. It's no different in the electricity market. Those things are very regular and anticipated by the marketplace.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: if this Progressive Conservative government is too weak and too indifferent to investigate the Enron scandal in Alberta, how will it now not investigate the price-setting strategies of both Powerex and TransAlta? Do the right thing: protect consumers.

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we've answered these questions numerous times. The intent is to just try to slander. We still are looking for evidence. We'd invite any evidence. We always ask for the evidence so that we can make the appropriate judicial issues in this. The market surveillance administrator is and does act to protect Albertans every day.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Software Licences for Schools

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Late last year in a deal described as unprecedented, the ministry of learning cut a cheque to Microsoft for \$6.3 million for software licences for Alberta's

educational institutions, yet just months earlier Ontario signed a remarkably similar deal with Sun Microsystems for little more than shipping costs. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Why was this government so eager to write Bill Gates a big fat cheque when Ontario scarcely had to write one at all?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a question with specifics relative to two sets of contracts which he has neither had the courtesy nor the foresight to provide any information about ahead of time so that he could get an answer to the question. So the public watching and the members of the Legislature hearing that question are supposed to take at face value his assumption that the two contracts are similar in any way, shape, or form, that they deal with the same types of items, that they have any relevance to each other. I'm not prepared to do that, and I don't think anybody else should be.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: can the minister advise this Assembly and all Alberta taxpayers as to whether this contract was appropriately tendered, allowing all interested companies to compete fairly?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to get the details with respect to the contract and provide the hon. member details as are appropriate.

Mr. Taylor: My final question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Given these misspent millions, what is the minister's department doing and going to tell communities such as Bruderheim and Strathearn whose schools are threatened with closure in the name of system efficiency?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I'm under the understanding that Bruderheim is staying open. Our department is looking at all the contracts right now to make sure that we are adhering to all of our government policy and rules.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Southeast Edmonton Ring Road

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On January 25 the Conservative government left the public and the news media with the distinct impression that there would be a small \$4 million savings if the southeast Edmonton ring road was built as a P3. However, this is contradicted by an internal document provided exclusively to government MLAs which said that it could cost up to \$41 million more to build the ring road as a P3. I will table this document at an appropriate time. My question is to the Premier. How does the Premier explain the discrepancy between the facts given to government MLAs and the spin given to the rest of us about the comparative costs of building the ring road as a P3 or building it conventionally?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, this question was asked of me by the media, fed obviously by the ND opposition. My answer to the media was that we're seeking as many innovative ways of up fronting the costs of infrastructure projects as we possibly can. I also indicated to the media that this is a 30-year project, and outside of one of the ND opposition none of us will really live long enough to see the completion of the project.

Mr. Mason: Well, that's reassuring, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the Premier: why did the government leave the false impression with the news media and the public that there would be a \$4 million savings by building the ring road as a P3 when the government knew that it could just as easily have cost \$41 million more to do it?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, to set the record straight, this hon. member would have us take \$43 million out of the bank. As I said to the media: \$43 million for the Anthony Henday, \$43 million for something else, \$43 million for something else, \$43 million for something else. Pretty soon you're up to \$430 million, and then double that and you're close to a billion dollars. You know, they talk about \$43 million as if it's peanuts.

Relative to the actual costs of the project, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: Well, I think we'll get back to the next one, perhaps. The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why does the government keep pretending to be transparent about P3s when they fail to disclose information relative to the actual costs if the government had built it through conventional means? Will he table the documents?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'll defer to the hon. minister.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The number that the hon. leader of the third party is referring to is \$451 million, which was a public-sector comparator, which was a public-sector estimate on that particular project. On any public-sector comparator there is a 10 per cent on either side, which brought it up to \$497 million. The actual amount came up to \$493 million. [interjections] The Auditor General has been involved in every step of the process. If they want to laugh, laugh at the Auditor General.

Senate Reform

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, a majority of Canadians in every province support reform of the federal Senate to make it an effective and elected body. A triple-E Senate has been the priority of Alberta governments for the past 25 years. Thanks to our Premier, Albertans were given the opportunity to elect four new Senators-elect last November. Unfortunately, the Liberal Prime Minister of Canada has now indicated that he will not appoint the four Alberta Senators-in-waiting as part of his new round of Senatorial appointments. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What is the Alberta government doing to push ahead the issue of Senate reform and get our elected Senators appointed?

The Speaker: The Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Alberta has taken the most significant step compared to any jurisdiction in Canada, and that is to offer Albertans a choice of electing a list of Senators to be appointed by the Prime Minister. What has happened is that even though the Prime Minister talked about some democratic reforms, he stepped away from taking, I think, a leadership role and appointing at least one of the four to the three vacant positions we have

currently in Alberta. Since the election, the Premier and I have written to our counterparts. The Premier wrote to the Prime Minister asking him to select from the list. I have met with our counterpart in Quebec, our counterpart in Ottawa. We have met with all of the Senators-elect to talk about the next steps, and we are proceeding quite vigorously with other jurisdictions on this particular file.

Dr. Morton: To the same minister: do you have other plans to push the appointment of Senators to the second Chamber? Going forward from now, please.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we are committed to Senate reform. This year our Premier will be chairing the Council of the Federation. The Council of the Federation, to Albertans, is the meeting of all of the Premiers and territorial leaders, and that will be held in Alberta this year with our Premier chairing. At this time we're working with the four Senate nominees to see how we can move this onto the agenda. One of them, of course, is to work with department officials in setting up a schedule for the four nominees to talk to other provincial counterparts and also to the federal government in promoting Senate reform in this country.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Dr. Morton: No further questions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

1:50

Game Farming

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister of agriculture yesterday clearly demonstrated his lack of understanding of the science of chronic wasting disease and other TSEs and the threat they pose. To the Premier: does the Premier recognize the danger of chronic wasting disease, and will he ensure that we eliminate the possibility of risk materials entering both the human food chain and the animal food chain?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development respond. But in answer to the preamble, certainly I'm aware and concerned about the risks relative to CWD and BSE or any other disease that affects animals that might have an impact on the public as well.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I have a fairly good knowledge of the risks associated with CWD, BSE, and CJD, or Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, that's associated with BSE. As I said yesterday, there has never been a case of CJD that's been linked back to chronic wasting disease, and to suggest that there's a health risk in Canada when there is no science to support that association is irresponsible to the industry in this province. I would suggest that perhaps the hon. member doesn't understand the industry as well as the science.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: if the science does indicate a human health risk, will he commit to a ban on all game farming activities, including the movement of animals and their products?

The Speaker: Hon. Premier, that's speculation.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally fulfill his written commitment of December 1992? And I quote: I am fully committed to putting the privatization/commercialization of wildlife issue through a thorough and public assessment.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that's a legitimate question. That has indeed been done. As a matter of fact, there was a great debate in caucus – I don't know if it took place in the Legislature – relative to not game farming so much as game shooting of wildlife that is domesticated on game farms. That was rejected quite soundly. But we are diligent in making sure that any material that poses a risk to animals or humans is kept out of the animal food chain and, more importantly, the human food chain.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

North American Trade

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. There's no doubt that Alberta's trading relationship with the U.S. is a vital part of our economy. In 2003 U.S. imports made up almost 90 per cent of Alberta's exports, by far our most important export market. Albertans are concerned about the ongoing trade irritants such as softwood lumber and BSE. U.S. trade laws are extremely complex, therefore making it difficult to resolve trade issues that affect Alberta's industry. Can the minister tell the House what Alberta is doing to push for freer open trade?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. There are a number of very serious trade issues, most importantly BSE and, of course, softwood lumber. The department has been working very closely with our federal counterparts in trying to find some solutions to these outstanding issues. Clearly, Alberta has pushed forward some new ideas with respect to North American trade. For example, we're looking at a customs union, a NAFTA-plus solution to deal with these very complex trade issues, that are costing our economy virtually billions of dollars.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a follow-up question to the same minister. A tri-national report on March 14 calls for harmonized trade tariffs for nations outside North America as well as a North American energy strategy. Has the government of Alberta been consulted, and will the government of Alberta be a full partner in the development of Canada's position?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the study in question is an important step in the direction of dealing with some of these trade issues. Really, among the proposals is one of common low tariffs, and another one is looking at the whole regulatory regime, not only Canada/U.S. but Canada, U.S., and Mexico. We will be working very closely with the federal government, of course, because they'll be at the table dealing with these issues, to see how we can best position Alberta's interests.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplement is for

the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. What effect will the Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade's NAFTA challenge have on the USDA's next actions in overturning the Montana judge's decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We believe that it's in the best interests of the USDA and the government of the United States to appeal the decision as soon as possible, and we wait moment by moment for that decision to happen. In order for the appeal to be successful, we believe that the USDA should be concentrating as many resources as they possibly can towards that effort.

It's important to remember that under chapter 11 the challenges are about financial damages, so even if the border were to open – and we hope it opens very, very soon – the Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade would still be available to go forward with their challenge for damages, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Rural Development Strategies

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has entered into another rural development strategic plan. These plans seem high on ideals but small on delivery, for example the transfer of ambulances, leaving rural municipalities underfunded. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: what other areas are being ignored, such as attracting doctors to rural communities?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I have been meeting with the family physicians and the rural physicians on this very subject. I think we're well planned, and there's a good strategy that helps not only the rural doctors but their families accommodate to life in rural Alberta. There's extensive work going on with the communities, with the health authorities to make sure that there's work done to network and make rural physicians feel comfortable in communities. With our ARP, our alternative compensations for doctors involved in academic institutions – it gives them an opportunity to earn money as sessional lecturers – we are doing a lot to both place those physicians in rural communities and to network them with local academic institutions.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the minister of infrastructure: when will this ministry implement the recommendation of the rural development strategy to keep rural schools open?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely great to be able to talk on that question. Rural Alberta has some very interesting demographics these days. One of the things that is occurring is that the number of students in rural Alberta actually seems to be decreasing. One of the challenges that we have is keeping the rural schools open so that those kids that are in rural Alberta will have exactly the same learning opportunities that the kids do in urban Alberta. One of the ways – and we could go on and on with all the ministries here, such as the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency to deal with the SuperNet. Mr. Speaker,

quite simply, we are very much in favour of keeping rural schools open and keeping good education for the rural students.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: what help other than building the twice-delayed SuperNet can this ministry offer the other ministries to properly implement the rural development strategy?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was one of the authors of the rural development initiative, and I'm going to grow my rubber arm here and pat myself on the back because I thought it was a very good strategy.

SuperNet was a part of that strategy, and it will help with schools that are going down in population a little bit. In fact, in the last two weeks we've just lit up 26 more communities, I think I have here. We've opened up Acme, Barnwell, Bearspaw, Beiseker, Bezanson, Bow Island, Burdett, Caroline, Coaldale, Cremona, Crooked Creek, Falun.

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

Alberta Office in Washington

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Premier will be travelling to Washington, D.C., next week to officially open the Alberta office in Washington. My questions are to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What is the role of the Alberta office in Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, since 90 per cent of Alberta's exports go to the United States of America, it makes very good sense to have a full-time presence in Washington. We found out very clearly during the BSE announcement in 2003 that we didn't have a go-to person. Essentially, the role of the office there is to build relationships with our American counterparts. You know, it's a full body contact sport. You have to see the people across the table, meet them on a regular basis, and get Alberta's point of view across to every decision-maker in Washington.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first and only supplemental question is also to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What has the Alberta office done so far to get the attention of decision-makers in Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, clearly, since the office has been fully staffed, our envoy there has had two very important articles in the *New York Times*, explaining Alberta's position on energy. It has also set up many meetings with state representatives, met with many of the policy decision-makers. I might add that when we talk about body contact sport, we've got a person that's a good weight to carry on the duty for us in Washington.

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

Fabry Disease

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fabry disease is a rare, life-threatening genetic disorder that causes patients to suffer excruciating pain and often leads to kidney and heart failure as well as strokes and premature death. A treatment is available for Fabry patients, but because of the high cost for that treatment, Fabry sufferers cannot afford it on their own. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. When will the government give Albertans suffering from Fabry disease assurance of the ongoing access to enzyme replacement therapy they so desperately need?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say two things. First of all, I want to thank the hon. member opposite for alerting our office to the fact that this disease was going to be mentioned in the House today because it's clearly very important for those that are enduring pain and suffering, usually in the fifth decade of their life, to know what is happening with this.

Because of a concern because both Fabryzyme and Replagal were not going to be available, according to the information we had from the drug providers, I raised with the federal government the question about this type of therapy being provided for patients in Alberta or across Canada, where we have some, I believe, 250 people suffering, about 15 in Alberta. What has been initiated is a review at the national level of how we can conduct clinical trials of this type of therapy when, in actual fact, there are only about 3,000 people worldwide with this disease, and the normal number of people to have such therapeutic assessment is much higher. What the national government has initiated in co-operation with British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia is a review of whether or not we can place a different trial methodology in place to make sure that we can more fast-track these kinds of approvals for patients.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. What we need to know is if the minister is going to help these people. Will you provide bridge or interim funding for the enzyme replacement therapy today until an orphan drug policy or the results of your review come into effect in Canada? How do they get from today to then?

Ms Evans: In fact, a bridging program will be in place, and next week our officials will be talking again federally about a national program that can assist with this. I believe it's fair to say that the federal minister is also engaged. This is a national regulatory problem as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Finally, will the minister be willing to meet with Fabry sufferers before the end of the month to explain this to them personally?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I cannot promise or commit to meet with Fabry sufferers individually or collectively before the end of the month; I am rather cramped for time. But I can assure Fabry sufferers and will do so, both with this type of communication and others, that we are working to do our due diligence so that the most important thing that can happen will be some support for Fabry sufferers with this very costly therapy, which runs at about \$300,000 per patient per year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Border Closure to Canadian Cattle

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government strategy for opening the U.S. border to Canadian cattle is twofold: one is hope and pray, and the real trump card is to cozy up to George Bush. Now, no wonder the government is failing to support grassroots Alberta cattle producers, who are launching a legal challenge under NAFTA on their own time and at their own expense. My question is, of course, to the hon. Premier. How can the government justify turning its back on grassroots Alberta producers, who unlike this government understand that you sometimes have to play hardball with Americans to get their attention?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the whole issue of retaliatory action has been discussed, and we decided not to do it because we do value our relationship with the USDA and the United States administration. I value, personally, my relationship with Vice-President Dick Cheney. I value my relationship and the government's relationship with President Bush. We value our relationship with the Secretary of Agriculture in the U.S. administration. That is the administration of the U.S.

There's a different tone, of course, within the political arm, particularly the Senate, and there's a different tone within the judiciary. The group of cattle people the hon. member alludes to are seeking redress on the judicial side, but we will seek to maintain a very strong and meaningful relationship with the administration.

Mr. Martin: It's nice that you're a buddy with Dick and George, but I guess the question that Alberta producers want to know is: how's it working for you so far in getting the Alberta border opened?

Mr. Klein: I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's better to be buddies with those people than some of the ND leaders who have come across unsuccessfully in this country from time to time. I'll tell you that for sure. But I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take a little bit of offence to the comments that we are leaving our producers high and dry on this issue. We are not. In fact, if the hon. member would care to contact the industry and ask them what their opinion is, he would find that we are working hand in hand with their strategies, including the Alberta Beef Producers, including the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, including the American Meat Institute, including the National Cattlemen's Beef Association in the United States, including the National Meat Association in the United States, including the USDA.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that R-CALF, being the left-leaning protectionist group that they are, is closer to the hon. member's thinking than ours is, and it's probably unfortunate that he's not getting that.

2:10

Mr. Martin: Well, there's a third strategy, Mr. Speaker: meetings.

I guess my question, then, is to either the Premier or the minister of agriculture. What exactly is the downside in supporting grassroots Alberta cattle producers on their challenge? What is the downside to this?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. minister supplement, but I can tell you that the six-point program that has been put in place by this department of agriculture, the Alberta department of agriculture, has gone a long way to sustain the beef industry in this province. I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate the hon. member hasn't talked to some of his NDP colleagues across Canada as well because I can tell you that the federal/provincial ministers are working hand in hand in this on a team. They agree with the approach that we've taken. The Alberta beef industry agrees with our approach, and those are the grassroots people who are involved in this industry.

We are also taking initiative through our Washington office and legal counsel and legal advice there as well as working, as I said, hand in hand with the legal counsel of the Alberta Beef Producers, with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, and with the other farm organizations that are most definitely affected by this issue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Electricity Costs

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, a study on electricity prices by the internationally recognized London Economics group referenced this week at a conference in Banff has concluded that, in fact, purported lower rates in Ontario and Manitoba aren't such a bargain after all with hidden costs such as taxpayer-funded development of power plants, therefore making Alberta's rates very competitive. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Has he seen the report, and if so, is he prepared to table it in this Assembly so all members, including the opposition, have all the facts when it comes to questions on electricity rates in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of the report. I have not yet seen the report. It's being finalized later this week. We're hoping it will be available next week. When it is available, I'll be more than happy to table that report so all members of this Assembly can see that Albertans truly are getting good value for their electricity and that there is an Alberta electricity advantage.

The one thing I would like to say is that there are two key factors that came out of that report. One, it does talk about how electricity is generated being a very key part of cost of electricity. Those that have substantial amounts of hydroelectricity have the cheapest power. One of the topography issues of Alberta is that we don't have a lot of hydroelectricity.

Secondly and probably more important to see is that in most of the other jurisdictions the provinces accumulated debt, be it through Crown corporations or directly onto their own provincial books, to build and/or pay for this. If you just took Ontario as an example, if the debt that they've accumulated was added to the bill of every Ontario resident, it would add \$100 per month for five years to pay for the debt that they've not put through the electricity bill.

Mr. Liepert: Again to the same minister: is he aware of any similar studies being undertaken which show the true cost of power generation to the taxpayer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of studies to date looking at and comparing electricity costs across this country and in North America. Not many of them, if any, have really gone into the true costs of electricity, as the hon. member had suggested. But we do know that if the provinces had shown the true costs, if they had allocated all the costs to the electricity bill, their

bills would likely have been in the range of 25 to 30 per cent higher. Those are being added through the taxpayer rates. Those costs, at least in Alberta, are clear, are transparent, and are known.

I could cite that even without that, by comparing some bills across the country – Quebec Hydro, for example, did a survey. They said that Edmonton had the cheapest power rates out of 21 jurisdictions in North America. The only four that beat Edmonton's rate happened to have been hydrogenerated areas and none of them with the substantial growth that Alberta has had.

Mr. Liepert: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. As a result of studies and facts and data, what benefits do Albertans receive because we have a competitive marketplace in power versus Crown-owned utilities?

The Speaker: Well, hon. minister, we're getting into a lot of opinions here with respect to government policy, so I think we're just going to move on.

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have an answer that's brief?

Mr. Melchin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important. Given all the talk that goes out trying to put innuendos that electricity deregulation hasn't worked, it's important that we also talk about the many successes that have been accomplished. Over 3,300 megawatts of power . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I could not agree with you more. This is not a debate. I ask you and the hon. member to read *Beauchesne* 407, 408, 409, 410, and a whole bunch of others.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Public Service Pension Appeals

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every day I'm hearing concerns from retired public-sector employees from all across this province regarding the serious concerns that they have with the funding of their pensions and expressing concerns with the inadequate appeals process. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Why does this minister allow a pension appeal process that leaves thousands of Albertans feeling frustrated?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have not been made aware by any of the groups in the pension plans that they are dissatisfied with the appeal process. I'd be more than happy to receive that information from the hon. member with some documentation.

We take the management of pensions very seriously, and the pension board takes the management of pensions very seriously. Certainly, if the hon. member has some information that he would like to share with me on the appeal process, I'd be very pleased to sit down and talk with him about it and look at it.

Mr. R. Miller: It's on its way.

To the same minister, then. Why doesn't this government follow the example of British Columbia and publish very clear guidelines for pension appeals on the government's websites just like B.C. does?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again a very good suggestion. I'll take that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then to the same minister: can the minister explain to average Albertans why Steve West gets \$180,000 severance for eight months' work, while Martha and Henry can't get any satisfaction on their pension appeals?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that's a bit of a stretch tying those two issues together. One is strictly a contractual arrangement. Pensions, of course, are a contractual arrangement also but of a very, very different kind because you're looking at retirement dollars in those cases.

As I indicated in my first answer, if indeed thousands of Albertans are concerned because they haven't an appeal process that's satisfactory to them, if thousands of Albertans are concerned that they're not getting the information they require, if you would share that information with me. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I am not getting, indeed, even tens of letters on the issue, let alone thousands. But I take the hon. member at his word. If he's getting that kind of information, share it. We'll discuss it, and we'll look at ways that we can rectify it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Energy Innovation Network

Mr. Knight: On Wednesday, March 16, a simultaneous launch of the Energy Innovation Network took place in Calgary and Ottawa. The announcement indicated that Alberta in association with other provincial jurisdictions and the federal government will partner with industry and postsecondary institutions to explore innovation programs to enhance Canada's energy future. To the Minister of Innovation and Science: what assurances can the minister give Albertans that public money supporting this initiative will be productive?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Energy Innovation Network, otherwise known as EnergyINet, has been work that's been under way for a couple of years, initiated by the Alberta Energy Research Institute, which really looks to solve and address two long-term problems, and that is having a secure long-term energy supply for all Canadians as well as making it environmentally responsible. So innovation is at the convergence of energy and the environment, and I'm convinced that this is going to be successful because we do have the support of a number of different provinces, the industry, and the federal government. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that affects all Canadians, and we have to address this on a long-term, strategic, priority basis.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Energy: to what extent has the energy industry in Canada come on board to support this initiative?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Industry is a major significant partner of this initiative. They see it to their benefit that

we continue to view and pursue technologies to improve our extractions and integration of extraction of the hydrocarbon resources that are here. Just as an example, we leave about 40 per cent of the gas and 72 per cent of the oil in the ground in the conventional oils. Just a minor improvement in technology, and we'll find a whole new Alberta underground.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment: what does this initiative do to ensure environmentally responsible development of energy projects?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the pieces of this puzzle are: on one point we have environmental principles; on the other side we have economic principles. How we link these two principles together is through what I refer to as the technology that the ministers have talked about, and that technology is the link in terms of how we act responsibly to demonstrate to future generations that we are and continue to be good stewards of our environment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Physiotherapy Services

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Strains and sprains are among the most common workplace injuries. Lost time and productivity from these injuries are a huge cost to employers, workers, and the WCB system. With public treatment like physiotherapy scarce because of health region restriction and delisting because these regions aren't funded properly, Albertans now look to workplace health plans and the WCB for relief. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Why is this government shifting the cost in provision of these health services to private health plans and the WCB?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. To start with, it is an issue that's been around a long time, but as you're aware, the WCB is an independent operation funded fully – funded fully – by the private industry, and it's managed by the private industry. We have as a government, of course, legislation to ensure that proper coverage is provided to employees and employers out there.

In relation to selecting the processes they use in order to look after the medical issues they may run into, it is a decision that they make that we're not involved in.

Mr. Backs: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Is the emphasis on government restructuring dedicated to cutting services and creating additional and expensive payroll costs for Albertans and Alberta employers?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, that's a great question because the answer is: absolutely not.

Mr. Backs: Another question to the same minister: is the restriction on physiotherapy services an attempt to create lower wage, private, profit centres for friends of this government?

Mr. Ouellette: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Pork Exports

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Happy St. Patrick's Day to you as well. As I was eating my bacon and eggs this morning, I was thinking about some of my constituents who are hog producers. They're concerned by a recent U.S. government decision on pork tariffs. Although they were pleased at the ruling that they are not receiving unfair government subsidies, the antidumping duty was upheld. My questions are all for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. What is the government doing to ensure fair trading relations with the U.S.?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a topic that's been covered quite substantially in the House today in question period, but I can agree with the hon. member that we're quite concerned about groups in the United States that resort to trade actions rather than sitting down and negotiating good trade agreements. The protectionist trade actions impose wide-ranging costs on all of our industry, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. member mentioned, we were pleased the U.S. government dismissed the claim that Canadian hog producers are unfairly subsidized, but on the other side of the coin, we were clearly disappointed with the antidumping ruling. It is an investigation that is ongoing right now and will continue. The antidumping investigation is not finished. The U.S. International Trade Commission has to make its final injury determination. Right now the U.S. is experiencing record pork exports and a period of strong prices, which we believe will make it difficult to argue that the U.S. producers are being harmed by any imports from Canada, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental is to the same minister. What does this ruling really mean for Alberta's pork producers?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, a little clarity is probably required. At this stage, no antidumping duties will be imposed on swine exports. However, the U.S. will require bonds or cash deposits on swine imports to be posted by the importers of record. The U.S. investigation into the matter is not over, as I said, but we do expect a final determination to be made on April 18. We remain confident, as I said, that the investigation will show that this is not harming American producers.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before calling on the first of four to participate today, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly eight students from the Rosedale Christian school in my riding accompanied by Miss Diane Klassen, Mrs. Janet Wohlgemuth, Mr. Lee Wohlgemuth, Mrs. Brenda Schartner, and Mr. Delmar

Schartner. They're visiting today and having a tour of the Legislature and have an opportunity here to see question period in action. I would ask them to rise, please, and to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Peace River, you introduced your charges a little earlier, but they weren't here. Do you want to say something again?

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The guests that I introduced to the record moments ago have now arrived in the gallery, and I would like to take this opportunity to formally introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a group of 34 students from the La Crete public school accompanied by eight adults. They've travelled about as far as you can travel in Alberta to visit our capital, and I ask these great champions of highway 88 to please stand and accept the welcome of this House.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Mountain of Heroes Foundation

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to share an Albertan good-news story. The Calgary-based Mountain of Heroes Foundation recently held their inaugural awards gala dinner. Five local citizens were honoured.

Christianna Wood-Roddick, who initiated "Christianna's cause" at the tender age of 10. After the tragic death of her mother a year ago Christianna has raised \$35,000 for the Aventa program, which her mother founded. Aventa is an AADAC funded group that attends to the addiction treatment of women.

Eva Davis, a concentration camps survivor, has raised two successful sons, run a small business, and taught tolerance to a whole new generation, partially through the gift of song.

Kevin Mark was on his way to the NHL in 1982 before he was paralyzed from the neck down during a hockey game. He's now an accomplished engineer and a distinguished speaker who has personally raised over \$300,000 for the Calgary Handi-Bus Association.

As a youth Pat Nixon was aimless and living on the street. He's gone on to become the executive director for the Mustard Seed Street Ministry, which not only provides food and lodging for the homeless but also supplies employment training to get its clients off the street.

Finally, Dr. Harvey Rabin founded the southern cystic fibrosis adult clinic at the Foothills Hospital in 1979, and he continues to run it today although he is not paid for his time spent as clinic director.

Mr. Speaker, my wife, Jennifer, and I founded the foundation a few years ago, and we thank our board members: Nicki Perkins, a CF survivor who chaired the awards event; her husband, Dean Perkins; Colleen and Dave Zeller; and Wayne Logan.

We shared a wonderful evening with our heroes, our sponsors, the public, and the media. Proceeds from the event were dedicated to fund the research of Dr. Mody, a Calgary scientist who is doing world-class work on cystic fibrosis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to share this good news story.

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

2:30 **Canadian Agricultural Safety Week**

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize and

bring attention to the Canadian Agricultural Safety Week campaign, which ran March 9 through to the 16. This year's theme was Safety is in the Details, with a focus on seniors on the farm. Farmers over the age of 60 represent only 13 per cent of the farming population, but they accounted for almost 40 per cent of the total farm-related deaths in the past five years. One death is too many. This number is unacceptable. We must do better. In 2004 there were more than 1,500 farm-related injuries and 15 farm-related fatalities in Alberta. Sadly, five were children.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development plays an active role in providing farmers with information that promotes farm safety year-round. This year Alberta Agriculture is involved with a number of contests to increase farm safety awareness among people of all ages. The highlight of this year's safety week was Farm Safety Idol, which encouraged people to nominate someone they believe is a role model for farm safety. A farm safety newsletter and a kids' club were also launched.

With more than 50,000 farms in Alberta many Albertans are already aware of the importance of safe farming practices. Canadian Agricultural Safety Week aims to increase awareness for people working at and visiting farm operations because we want Alberta farms to continue to be a safe place to grow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 3 the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development signed an historic agreement, the aboriginal workforce participation initiative, in the city of Grande Prairie. I say historic because this partnership is the first such agreement between Canada, a province, and a municipality.

Mr. Speaker, we are becoming increasingly aware of the skill shortages faced by employers across Canada, especially in the resource-rich areas of our province. We know, too, that aboriginal people, the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population, constitute an increasingly educated, readily available local workforce eager to take their place in our economy.

Therefore, aboriginal workforce participation initiative agreements like the one signed in Grande Prairie represent a win-win solution for all of us. This partnership brings together provincial ministries including Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and Alberta Human Resources and Employment, the federal government, forward-thinking municipalities such as Grande Prairie, and our world-class education system. Most importantly, the AWPI bridges relations between employers and Alberta's First Nations and Métis people.

Under the aboriginal workforce participation initiative employers undertake to identify both systemic and attitudinal barriers within their workplaces and to work with aboriginal people to reduce or eliminate those barriers. This is another milestone on the road to successful employment strategies for Grande Prairie and region and the full participation of local aboriginal people in Alberta's economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ethical Investments

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in this Assembly I asked some serious questions of the Minister of Finance

regarding ethical investing or lack thereof of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Albertans are particularly concerned about the investment of \$10 million in various tobacco companies, but I expanded the questioning to include companies that have questionable human rights records. They might be involved in child labour or even perhaps the manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction. The Minister of Finance clearly stated that the overriding consideration of the Investment Operations Committee was the return on investment or, in other words, how much money we can make regardless of morals or ethics.

She went on to correctly point out that the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund is an all-party committee. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this committee did meet this past Monday, and I'm very pleased to inform the Assembly that the two opposition members who sit on the committee did raise the issue of ethical investing. It was at that time reinforced by government members on the committee that return on investment is the primary factor in deciding whether or not to make an investment in any given company.

This raises serious questions, again, as to where we would draw the line. There are now several pornography websites which are publicly traded, and they return a very handsome profit to their shareholders. The same is true of a number of offshore brotels, again known to be quite a profitable industry in jurisdictions where prostitution is legalized. What if marijuana were ever to be legalized? Are we going to be the proud shareholders in legalized grow ops just because we can make a quick buck?

Mr. Speaker, Talisman Energy is an example of a company which recognized and responded to legitimate public concerns. It is our sincere hope that the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee will listen to the advice of our members and do the same.

head:

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition with 310 signatures on it. The petition urges the government to institute a fair and equitable floor price for cattle.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present the first 102 petitioners on a petition asking the government to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines." Many of them, I just note, are from the fine Alberta communities of Mirror, Vermilion, Sexsmith, Coleman, Bashaw, Pincher Creek, Leduc . . .

The Speaker: It's not really required, hon. member.

head:

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns appearing on that Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

**Bill 30
Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005**

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 30, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I would like to table the following documents: the report of the Auditor General on the Alberta government's BSE-related assistance programs, dated July 27, 2004, and distributed to hon. members on August 3, 2004, and the 2003-2004 annual report of the Auditor General of Alberta, distributed on October 4, 2004.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to table an information kit describing the Energy Innovation Network, known as EnergyINet, which was launched yesterday in Ottawa and Calgary. Through this unique collaboration of industry organizations, federal and provincial governments, and the research community, EnergyINet will initiate and support the development and application of new technologies to ensure a long-term supply of environmentally responsible energy for generations to come. I will ensure that each member of the Legislature also gets a copy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Loughheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities I'm pleased to table the 2004 annual report.

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, I would table five copies of a petition presented to me requesting "government funding to establish the building of a long term care facility in the Village of Onoway."

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of a document entitled Life and Death Sentence of The Addicted Child, written by Maralyn Benay. The document reviews the life-and-death sentence of addicted youth and strongly supports Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, or PCAD.

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

2:40

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three

tablings this afternoon, a follow-up from today's question period. This first is an e-mail from employees of Enron, and it is dated September 2000. It's in regard to Project Stanley and recent meetings with the Alberta government and TransAlta.

The second tabling is also in regard to question period, in regard to the prices set by Powerex and TransAlta, and this is the Market Surveillance Administrator Report on Power Pool of Alberta Prices, Summer 2000.

The third is a memorandum between legal advisers for Enron, in regard to the report that I just tabled. This is dated November 3, 2000, and regards Project Stanley.

Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to a comment made by the Finance minister this afternoon and in an effort to aid the process, I'm pleased to table the appropriate number of copies from the British Columbia public service pension plan website outlining in very plain English the appeals process and how it can be accessed.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a few tablings here, and one is from the president of Humpty's Restaurants International Inc. It's to the Premier regarding a province-wide smoking ban, and it calls on the Premier to be a true leader and to let his caucus vote freely with their own hearts and minds on that particular issue.

I also have five copies each of five individual handwritten letters all from government members' ridings regarding requests to deal with the foreign worker issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to table two documents today on behalf of the leader of the NDP opposition. The first is a background document issued by the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation on January 25 of this year.

The second document, which the leader of the NDP opposition referred to during question period today, is titled MLA Questions and Answers, Anthony Henday Drive South East – Public-Private Partnership.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to Standing Order 7(5) I would ask the Government House Leader to share the projected government business for the following week. That would be the week commencing on March 21 to the 24th.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, March 21, 2005, at 9 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for second reading and in anticipation of completion of Committee of Supply this afternoon, Bill 27, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply)

Act, 2005; Bill 30, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005; Bill 18, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 13, the Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 17, the Agriology Profession Act; and in Committee of the Whole Bill 2, the Alberta Centennial Medal Act.

On Tuesday, March 22, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 1, Access to the Future Act; Bill 3, the City of Lloydminster Act; Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 8, the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 9, Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 10, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 12, Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 14, Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 15, Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 16, Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005. On Tuesday, March 22, at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for third reading Bill 21, Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005; for second reading Bill 10, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005, and bills 12, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, and 25; and under Committee of the Whole Bill 27, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005; Bill 30, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005; bills 1 and 6.

On Wednesday, March 23, 2005, in the afternoon for second reading bills 18, 19, 20, and 22. On Wednesday, March 23, at 8 p.m. Government Motion 15, to engross the Speech from the Throne; second readings as per unfinished second readings from Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons; Committee of the Whole on bills 1, 5, 4, 3, and 6; and third reading of the appropriation bills 27 and 30, and as per the Order Paper.

Thursday, March 24, 2005, under Government Bills and Orders we are anticipating the attendance of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for royal assent to bills 21, 27, and 30, should they be completed by then, and second and third reading as per the Order Paper.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd call the committee to order. We'd remind all hon. members that although this is the more informal part of the session and you can leave your seats, to be recognized by the chair, you must occupy your space. Of course, the rules of decorum are the same as in the normal session.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 2004-05
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

The Chair: I would now recognize the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps before I begin, if I may, I would like to recognize a couple of individuals in the gallery who are with the department. One is the deputy minister, Mr. Barry Mehr, and the other is the chief bean counter for us at agriculture, Miss Faye Rault. They're up in the gallery to throw things at me if I do something wrong.

Mr. Chairman, the majority of the dollars in the supplementary estimates that we're requesting are to handle the ongoing impacts of BSE on our industry. As well, what's extremely important to point out is that the disaster assistance is offset by increases in federal

transfers relating to these programs. Approximately half of the assistance, \$317.7 million, is allocated to support producers in setting aside calves and market-ready cattle in order to manage the oversupply resulting from border closure.

The remainder of the request is allocated primarily to support the development of new markets and products that will help the industry deal with transitioning into new market realities. More specifically, Mr. Chairman, \$30 million is allocated to support the establishment of a market retention and development fund that, as you are aware, is also now being supported by \$50 million worth of federal dollars in contributions. So I'd say that that was leveraged quite well. Also, \$7.1 million is allocated to support projects that are developing both beef products and markets; \$35 million is allocated to support ongoing research into the development, production, and marketing of value-added food products.

We have also enhanced our surveillance capabilities, Mr. Chairman. Twelve million dollars is allocated to help us ensure that we continue to meet our international testing targets. This is critical to maintaining our stature and branding around the world as a producer of a safe, high-quality beef.

Other ruminants have been impacted by BSE as well. Therefore, \$1 million is allocated to focus on market and product development in this area. As you are aware, the impacts of BSE have spread beyond the beef sector and have impacted the whole farm and farm results. Consequently, the costs of the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, or CAIS as we call it, are higher than anticipated, so an additional \$86 million is allocated to cover the increased costs of this program, also resulting from the impacts of BSE.

2:50

As you are aware, our industry is also recovering from the most severe droughts experienced in over 130 years. As a result, the farm income disaster program costs were higher than was anticipated, and final payouts in 2004-05 were \$11.2 million higher than what had been accrued and projected.

Similarly, our wildlife damage and compensation programs were also higher due to that drought, \$7.9 million higher than anticipated.

Last, Mr. Chairman, but certainly not least is an additional \$10 million to provide support to ongoing operations for value-added initiatives. These initiatives cover all areas of the industry and are seeing positive results with repayments starting to flow from some of the key initiatives that they are involved in.

Mr. Chairman, that does conclude my explanation of our requests. It's very brief because there are only a few items there. I would prefer to take some questions rather than take up the time of our discussion. If I am unable to give anyone in the House an answer this afternoon, I will certainly seek the assistance of my very capable staff and respond in writing before the end of this session.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to participate in the discussion on the supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund this afternoon. Certainly, in the last fiscal year there was significant money spent by the government in the BSE recovery program, close to \$500 million. That's the province's share. Unfortunately, this is a crisis that doesn't appear to be going away any time soon.

We can point as many fingers in different directions as we would like, but the reality is that many of our small producers of beef and beef products in this province are facing significant economic

difficulties. There is no one, regardless of whether they reside in urban or rural neighbourhoods, that does not recognize that this is an extraordinary, unfortunate event, and the farmers and the farming community certainly need our support. The only question would be, certainly, how we provide this support.

Small producers seem to be the ones that are phoning our constituency office, and they are expressing a great deal of frustration. There are claims that the money, some of the BSE assistance programs, are just simply not getting down to them fast enough. We are looking at our supplementary estimates here. It was only three years ago that a former minister of agriculture closed some of the rural ag offices, and I'm wondering if at any time the department has considered reopening some of those.

Certainly from what I'm hearing, there are significant delays in the processing of some of the assistance packages. Farmers, producers themselves are telling me this. Now, with the central office, I guess we could say, in central Alberta perhaps it's time to reconsider reopening some of these offices that we closed. Would it help? I don't know. How much would it cost? I don't know. Perhaps the minister can clarify that not only for this member but for the entire House.

Now, when we're looking at the BSE recovery program, we see that there's \$320 million to be spent. There was a great deal of anxiety expressed last year over the \$400 million that was spent — where did it go? — and the fact that 10 per cent of it went to the largest packers. How are we to ensure that how this \$320 million is going to be disbursed is going to be different?

Certainly, with the margins on cattle — and the hon. minister knows full well the different margins for the American-owned packers in this country and south of the border. They have bigger margins in Canada, particularly in Alberta, and I don't think we need to be providing them with any BSE money. I think we have to ensure that we look after the small producers, the cow-calf operators, through this crisis. I would be grateful and interested to hear the hon. minister's comments on this.

Ag food investment processing. We're indicating here that we're going to spend \$17 million. How much of that money will go to some of the smaller initiatives? I've heard the amount. There has been an increase in processing capacity in this country by 20 per cent in the last two years. Because it would make a big difference to a lot of smaller operators that are banding together and contemplating building their own processing plants, how much, if any, of that \$17 million is going to enterprises such as the one I just mentioned, Mr. Chairman?

Further down we're looking at agriculture insurance and lending assistance. The CAIS program is going to get an additional \$86 million. Certainly, as I said earlier, I would like an update on how long the applications are taking before they're processed and cheques are sent out for CAIS. What are the administrative costs of the CAIS program? For instance, to the hon. minister, if we're going to spend \$86 million here in Canadian agricultural income stabilization, how much of that is going to be used in the administration of the program?

Certainly, I would encourage the minister to pursue scientific investigation, whether it's on a partnership basis with private industry or whether it's a stand-alone project over at the University of Alberta. And I want to see this at the University of Alberta, not at the University of Calgary, at the vet school down there. I still don't understand how that vet school wound up in Calgary, but it did. How much of this money, if any, if going to be used on research into live blood tests to identify a BSE-infected animal? We discussed this earlier in the Assembly in this session, and I would like that clarified at this time. That would be a big step if we could have an affordable live test for BSE.

Meanwhile, now that R-CALF has been successful in their campaign, their lobbying efforts to keep the American border closed to live cattle under 30 months, what consideration is this government taking now to allow, particularly for our export markets to Asia, the demand that some of the Asian markets have that all beef products from all carcasses be tested for BSE? If the American border is not going to open, then we have to look at other markets. We have to give the consumers what they want, and if the consumers want full testing, then I think it is time that we reconsider and provide that.

Particularly, there were two, that I'm aware of, enterprises in the Peace district, one of which unfortunately moved to the B.C. side of the fine Peace Country, but there was interest expressed in having 100 per cent testing. If the Americans are going to deny us access to their markets, then we're going to have to look after ourselves and our producers. Has the hon. minister reconsidered previous government policy in light of the fact that on March 7 our border had not opened?

3:00

At this time I believe I will cede the floor to anyone else, or perhaps the hon. minister has some answers for some of my questions at the moment. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we have to be very prudent about how we spend this money. One only has to look at the Auditor General's report from 2003-04. Certainly, it is interesting reading for all members of this Assembly, and there are some very good suggestions here as to how we can administer our BSE assistance packages better.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to make a few comments with regard to the questions raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. First of all, I would like to thank him for his support in the endeavours that we've had with the producers and the ongoing crisis that we have. I know he understands that it does affect every point and part of agriculture in Alberta, so I appreciate that. His comments with regard to urban and rural Alberta are taken very much to heart. All Albertans have been involved in this issue for far too long.

In terms of the dollars not getting down fast enough to the producers, I'm going to take a stab in the dark here and assume that that's probably a question with regard to our CAIS payments and how fast they're getting out. Mr. Chairman, as you're aware, 2003 was the first year for the CAIS program, and introducing a program like this during the middle of a crisis like BSE was trial by fire in its best form. The government didn't anticipate the kind of response or the kind of complexity that was going to be required, so putting the new program through its paces during one of the most devastating events to hit Canada's ag industry certainly provided an opportunity to evaluate its overall effectiveness.

As well, as with all new programs we started the CAIS program design process knowing that the specific need we were trying to address was to stabilize producers' income during difficult times. Then we designed that program that we felt would meet that need. Trying to assess producer interest in a program that is not up and running is kind of like the movie *Field of Dreams*. If you build it, they will come, you're hoping. Going into the first year of the program, we made our very best estimate of producer participation and expected payment levels based on our experience with the FIDP program, or the farm income disaster program, and the NISA accounts, or the net income stabilization accounts.

But then, of course, BSE hit and the commodity prices hit, and the magnitude of the BSE crisis and resulting income shortfalls really made it necessary for the governments to go back and amend the CAIS program. It did increase the program expenditures. We've now introduced coverage for up to 60 per cent negative margins by claim year.

So all of those changes, then, had a kind of a ripple effect. In order to give producers more time to consider the CAIS program, especially those producers whose eligibility for the CAIS program had changed as a result of the amendments, we had to then extend that deadline. The end result was that for the 2003 program year we had over 32,000 Alberta farmers elect to participate in the CAIS program, and of those more than 24,000 submitted claim applications. But, more importantly, Mr. Chairman, almost half of those claim applications were received in the two-month period after the original deadline was extended, so we had this massive rush of claims at the very end of the program deadline.

I can tell the hon. member that we've had an update very, very recently: 87 per cent of those claims are processed, resulting in \$176 million that has been paid to producers. I think the hon. member and all members will be glad to hear this. We are on track to have all the 2003 claims processed by March 31 of this year. That is with the exception of those that are missing information. One of the things that I can't stress enough is that when – and this is true of any financial program – you're asked for information, if there's any holding back of the information, if there are any errors in the information, if there are certain parts of it that aren't filled out, it's naturally going to delay the process and the program, and that's been a cause of concern.

It is based on income tax information, so there can be up to a one-year lag between when the disaster strikes and when the producer actually receives a payment under the CAIS program. We recognized that very early on, so to address the more immediate cash-flow difficulties, Alberta introduced the equity loss advances to get money into producers' hands more quickly. We were the only province at that point to do that, and we are now one of few provinces to do that. Ontario doesn't do that. Mr. Chairman, the hon. members will be interested to note this: that alone paid \$250 million into producers' hands. Again, this was kind of an unanticipated side effect of the BSE crisis and low commodity prices.

Going forward, the proposed changes to the CAIS deposit requirement are not expected to have a major impact on our budget expenditures. It'll have a direct consequence if the changes would be to increase participation levels, and our budget already reflects the cost associated with close to 100 per cent participation level. Of course, should farm incomes in the future be low relative to historical incomes, we would see an increase in producer payments and an overall increase in CAIS program expenditures.

Nonetheless, the CAIS program has been presented to producers as providing a permanent income stabilization and disaster program that they can rely on instead of ad hoc payments. It's important that we follow through on this promise and continue to support our ag industry in these challenging times. I can add, Mr. Chairman, that the federal minister and all of the provincial ministers, regardless of political stripe, I believe, feel very strongly the CAIS program is the program of the future for our producers. We do need to make some adjustments to it to make it more responsive, but we are working very, very hard to make sure that we get these applications out.

I can also say with regard to the 2004 payments, because that's another area of concern that we're hearing as well, that over 9,300 applications for the 2004 interim advance have been received and processed for a value of \$254 million. The Agriculture Financial Services Corporation has now received 1,280 final claims for the

2004 claim year and have paid out a value of close to \$5.6 million on that.

The hon. member also raised the issue of rural offices and thought that perhaps that might be a way to speed this process along. I agree that Agriculture needs to be in rural Alberta, and I agree that our offices need to have a better integration to the rural community. I'm not sure that reopening the offices is the way to go. I'm sure it would not have helped in the CAIS issue, as the member pointed out. But we are definitely reviewing how we get our message out and how we get information in, and we'll be coming forward with some things in the future on that.

CAIS. The program is operated under the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, the same group that does crop insurance and as well is involved in some of the slaughterhouse lending that they are currently involved in.

The member also mentioned that he was curious about the \$17 million with regard to new product initiatives and the SRM initiatives, I believe. Those programs are going to be worked with the scientific community, all of it, not just the U of A or the U of C. I noted his concern about the U of A getting it over the U of C. I view Alberta as Campus Alberta and would hope that we would be able to do this as a team approach across the province, utilizing not only the U of A but perhaps the U of L, perhaps Olds College, perhaps a number of the other fine institutions in agriculture in this province that are involved in it.

So we'll be looking at any good initiatives that come forward that will help us deal with the SRM removal as well as deal with new product commercialization and research into new ways of doing business. That's part and parcel of what we're trying to accomplish with our slaughter capacity.

3:10

He also asked a question about the dollars of administration on each claim. I don't in front of me, Mr. Chairman, have the exact number, although I know from memory, and if memory serves correctly, there are only three provinces in the country that actually administer the CAIS program on their own. The rest of the provinces are all managed by the federal government. My information is that our management or our processing costs are considerably less than what the processing costs are for the federal government, but that may be hard to figure out because we'd have to ask them to find that out. We will certainly see what kinds of numbers we can arrive at and bring forward a written response on that.

The member also talked about the importance of other marketplaces, and he may not have been aware that we have already committed \$30 million to the beef industry market fund or the Canada Beef Export Federation legacy project. It's a 10-year program, Mr. Chairman, that will indeed do much of what the hon. member was concerned about, about reducing our dependency on the U.S. marketplace.

In addition, he was talking about maybe there are some other things that we can do to help enter those other markets and mentioned the hundred per cent testing. It has yet to be proven to me, and certainly in the world theatre no one is telling me that testing an animal under 24 months makes any hoot of a difference as to whether or not they're going to get into the marketplace. In fact, what a number of these other markets are doing is saying: "You know what? It doesn't make sense to test that young because you're not going to find anything. So why would you have a hundred per cent testing?"

I think that what is of more importance and something that we're looking very seriously at, Mr. Chairman, is the traceability. Traceability of the animal and verification of the age of that animal

is probably more important to this industry and to the world markets than hundred per cent testing, and we're going to work in cooperation with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Alberta Beef Producers on strategies that may do just that.

He mentioned a couple of other things with regard to some plants that may have moved to other provinces because we did not do one or another thing. I would encourage him to find out what the status of those projects in other provinces is just to be sure that he has all the information that he needs to make a valid case for hundred per cent testing.

I think I've covered most of his comments, Mr. Chairman. The only other comment I would cover is with regard to the Auditor General. We take the role of audit very, very seriously and certainly the role of audit with the programs that we're putting out with taxpayer dollars. As I understand it, we accepted all of the Auditor General's recommendations that were put forward and are working to fulfill those recommendations.

In fact, on the BSE program audit process field audits are an ongoing process for our BSE programs. To date 58 per cent of the BSE program dollars have been audited through the field audit process, and from an auditing perspective, from going back to my old audit days and my old banking days and business days, that's a pretty high percentage, and it gives you a pretty good comfort level as to where things are going.

Where instances of noncompliance are noted, producers are required to return payments either directly or through clawbacks through the programs that we have out there. So we have a pretty good methodology of bringing those dollars back, and I'm very, very happy to tell the House, Mr. Chairman, that very, very few concerns have been identified. Less than 1 per cent of audited payments have required any follow-up action. That's a very good track record, one that my department should be very, very proud of.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to participate in the debate on 2004-2005 supplementary estimates and specifically to make a few comments and ask some questions with respect to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. I want to start by congratulating the minister for his appointment to the cabinet. This is the first occasion when from the floor of this House I have this opportunity. So congratulations, Minister. I also want to observe, Mr. Chairman, that the minister seems, certainly, to pay attention to detail and takes his work seriously, has lots to say in response to questions and explanations that are requested, and I'm pleased to notice that.

Mr. Chairman, the department, of course, deals with agriculture and then food – I think food industry value-adding is an important part of that responsibility of the department – and then rural development. I notice that in the supplementary estimates, at least, there is no supplementary request being made for rural development. I just want to ask the minister. Perhaps he would like to comment on the kind of programs and policies that are specific to rural development and what part of the budget of the department in general goes toward providing services related directly to rural development as distinct from either food or agriculture. I'm curious about this, and I think perhaps some other members of the House will also benefit from the information that I'm seeking on this point.

Mr. Chairman, the minister is asking for \$528,267,000 extra, and the explanation is provided on page 18. I notice that most of this money, close to \$500 million of it, \$499,082,000, was specifically used for the assistance related to the BSE crisis in the province.

Under that expenditure category there are several areas in which this BSE-related assistance has gone, including \$100,000 for the stranded beef export container initiative. I just am wondering exactly what that was or is.

Then \$30 million to support the establishment of a market retention and development fund. Since these terms are fairly general, from my reading of them, I wonder if this amount includes the \$37 million recently announced in the form of BSE assistance. I think it was announced on March 7. Does the \$37 million announced on March 7 form part of the total amount, the \$499 million something?

Another question that I have here is the unfortunate fact that the BSE crisis is prolonged now given the court decision across the border, and cow-calf producers are going to be coming under enhanced and new, unexpected financial pressures. That's one side of the story. On the other side we know that certainly the packers have been enjoying huge profits while this crisis has been around. The question has been asked, I guess, before in this House. I'm going to ask the minister perhaps to comment on it again. What problem does he and the government have with introducing a minimum floor price while this crisis prolongs and continues to afflict the producers in the industry and inflicts huge damage and anxiety and concern and stress on farm families engaged in the production of calves and cows?

3:20

Watching on the news, you know, when people are interviewed, they express extreme anxiety about their own future and how what has taken perhaps a generation to build is likely to be lost now that this crisis is going on and on and on without any clear sign that it's going to end soon. In that context what serious reservations and objections do the minister and this government have in seriously considering setting a minimum floor price to ensure that cattle that do go to the packers end up guaranteeing some minimum price to the farming families and ranching families in this province? I'm asking this question here because it's a lot easier here to dispassionately deal with this issue rather than in question period, where time is short and usually time is spent on avoiding answering questions rather than engaging each other in debate.

The next question. In light of the Montana court decision and the resulting continuing closure of the border for Alberta cow-calf producers, what is the government anticipating in terms of additional assistance required in the next year? We are less than two weeks away from the next fiscal year, and while all of us would hope, we know that the aid crisis is not going to come to an end all of a sudden, you know, by the end of this fiscal year. What plans are in place that anticipate expenditures in the form of ongoing assistance in this respect? What kind of allowances are being made in the budget so that the minister won't have to come back for another supplementary request sometime next year?

Some other questions. I notice that the wildlife damage and compensation budget has quadrupled in the supplementary estimates here. Initially it was \$1.94 million, less than \$2 million, and now it has jumped to close to \$8 million. I would appreciate it very much if the minister would explain the reasons for this quadrupling, fourfold increase. Is the damage and compensation related to wildlife limited to damage caused to farm crops or fences or what? Does the compensation go either exclusively or primarily simply to farm families, or are there some other recipients of this compensation? This category needs to be unpacked for my benefit if not for anyone else, so I hope that the minister will explain that.

My last question, I guess, at the moment has to do with – two questions, actually – the NAFTA-related challenge that some

Canadian producers are going to take. I think the minister was asked this question earlier, perhaps in the question period as well. You know, the court challenge that . . .

An Hon. Member: Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade.

Dr. Pannu: Right. Yeah.

Now, the minister during question period said that we don't like to take the road of confrontation and want to negotiate given that we have good relations with the current administration. You know, NAFTA is a treaty, and it is presumably about fair trade and free trade. I wonder why the minister thinks that providing assistance to these groups that intend to challenge under NAFTA the border closure for calves and cows will particularly be seen as an offensive and provocative act by the American administration? After all, this is a treaty, and as a treaty it's available to us to seek redress to the problems that we might see, and there's no greater issue on which we are seeking redress than the situation in which our cow-calf producers find themselves in this province.

Why is the minister, in fact, not enthusiastic about providing help to this group, which is using a legitimate tool to seek redress to a very serious problem? We all call it a crisis. It has cost taxpayers, you know, more than half a billion dollars already and may cost more. So why on earth are we reluctant to provide support for this group, which is using an instrument which is legal, which is jointly negotiated between us and them on the other side? Why not?

A couple of other questions here quickly, Mr. Chairman, with your permission. As part of this supplementary request are there any monies being asked for here for providing financial assistance to beef co-ops, you know, slaughterhouses, their proposals? There's one, I think the Tender Beef Co-op, in the Peace River area. Is there any money available in this supplementary request for such initiatives? I think that these initiatives are important. They will reduce our dependence on the two monopoly slaughterhouse operations in the province controlled by two massively powerful multinationals. Is there any money there, and if not, why not?

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for this opportunity. I'll sit down and listen with attention to what the minister has to say to my questions.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the hon. member as well for the kind words of congratulations when he started. I appreciate that very much.

Mr. Chairman, I'll try to be brief. I know we have a lot of other supplementary estimates to go through. It's tough to be brief when you talk about this department because we have such a wide diversity of things going on in it. We are kind of centred on the BSE issue in supplementary estimates, so I'm probably not going to give you a real good answer on rural development strategy because that will be coming forward in our upcoming budget.

You know, of course, that we just announced the task force in early February and have that essentially up and running right now, and I'm very, very excited, hon. member, about where we're headed with that. I think there are a lot of very good initiatives in there. It won't just come from our budget, from agriculture's budget. It's going to come from all of the other budgets because it's a cross-ministry initiative in a lot of cases when you start talking about rural schools, rural economic development, rural health care, the ability of youth to have something to go to in rural Alberta. There are a lot of different things involved in there. So rather than get into that in the supplementary estimates, I'm going to go to some of your questions, if that's all right, and we'll talk a little bit about that.

The \$37 million is included in this supplementary estimate. One of the issues that we have coming before us is the specified risk materials: what do we do with them? In my mind, how are we going to take those SRMs, as we call them, and turn them into something that has value again? Previously they had some value; now they have no value. What we want to do is do the research, do the precommercialization work. I know that the hon. member understands this type of a process. We want to do that work, so we've put these dollars out there with our academia and the research network that's out there in agriculture to try to find ways to turn what is now essentially a disposable cost centre into value. So the \$37 million is in there.

3:30

The \$30 million is to support the establishment of the market retention and the development. That's to turn our dependency away from the United States marketplace. Currently we are dependent on the United States marketplace for about 76 per cent of our export business. We would like – and I think it's a target of the industry; this is all coming from the industry – to reduce that dependency to about 50 per cent. That means that we have to find markets for 26 per cent of what we used to do.

That's a fairly daunting challenge. That's why they've come forward with a 10-year plan to do just that. Having been in the international sales business, I know – and I know that you have travelled too, hon. member – it's difficult to enter new marketplaces; it's difficult to displace current suppliers in those marketplaces. So those dollars are there, and they have been leveraged with federal dollars now as well as industry dollars. In fact, the industry will be putting up the lion's share of those dollars.

I had a note here: BSE testing. I'm not exactly sure why I had that note down. I think you had a question on the live testing. Yes. It's not in this supplementary estimate, but one of the things that we've done is through co-operation and collaboration with the Ministry of Innovation and Science we've created the \$38 million BSE or prion research centre. Of course, BSE and the folding proteins and the science of all of that is something that we need to understand better so that we can better deal with the products and the by-products that we have.

It's also something that we need to do in the study of zoonosis, diseases from animals to humans. Coupled with that, there are a couple of proposals that I have seen that have come forward that believe that they have that Holy Grail of a live test, or what I call the live test. We are following up on them because that would be something the world is looking for. But we also have to understand that it's a little bit like the cure for the common cold: everybody thinks they've got it, and everybody in the world is looking for it. So we have to be careful about where we put those resources.

In terms of a floor price – and I know that this has been a question that has been on the minds of the NDP and some producers in the province. I can tell the hon. member that the industry, the Alberta Beef Producers, the cattle ranchers, the Feeder Associations, all of those groups that are part of that network – there are people out there who think that a floor price might be the right way to go, but the vast majority of the industry says: no, don't go there.

It'll be a higher cost for packers, that's true. So what will happen? They may buy their cattle out of Saskatchewan or British Columbia as opposed to buying them in Alberta. They may close down the number of days that they slaughter. I can tell the hon. member that if we get less numbers of days of slaughter, that will only compound our problems here. We need to make sure that we have as many days of slaughter going through these packing houses as possible.

The other problem with even a temporary floor price is that it

won't work. It's still going to cause a lot of major hardship, it wouldn't be easy to put in place, and if we just had it in Alberta, that would cause us the difficulties of: what do you do with the cattle that may be crossing back and forth?

It's also the wrong message to send to those entrepreneurs who are in the co-operatives trying to get into a packing house or those investors that are looking at building that slaughter capacity and that value-added. It's the wrong message to send them, that we're going to regulate what their cost is going to be and we're going to regulate what their margin is going to be. A lot of these business plans that are coming forward are predicated on the market price. You would have a massive number of meetings going on with their bankers and the institutions that they're trying to get their financing from and their shareholders, many of whom are producers, trying to figure out: can we make this work based on a floor price, and where is the government going to go with the floor price? It causes a lot of grief.

I would suggest to you and submit to you that the set-aside program that we have in place right now is a much better market-responsive type of a price system. It works much better than a floor price because you still have the market forces involved. It did take a little bit of a hit after this announcement prior to March 7 when the R-CALF injunction went into play, but the interesting thing is that it did not drop anywhere close to what the prices had dropped to with the announcement of the other positive tests. That tells me that it's working, and nationally it's starting to work.

So I think what we have today, hon. member, is a program that is endorsed nationally by the producers and the members of the industry. It's also one where, yes, we have some control in regard to the basis levels and some of those other things and the weights of the animals, which allows us some movement in the marketplace, but it isn't a set control. It's a much more responsive and much more well-received program than a floor price.

Plans in place and ongoing assistance: what allowances in the budget to come up? That almost sounds like: what have you got in your budget coming forward? Can't tell you, so I won't.

Wildlife damage and compensation. You noted that the \$7.9 million is much higher than the previous year. It is much higher due to the drought conditions that we had and a lot of the damage to fences. It's an all-encompassing type fund for damage from that wildlife, but I will get more explanation for you on that one, maybe a little more detail on paper on that one.

The other question you had was with regard to the Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade and their NAFTA challenge. Our fight is not with the American government. The American government has put forward a proposal to allow trade in our beef through the USDA and to have the border open. On March 7 had that happened, we would be in a much better position. Having said that, our fight is with a court and a protectionist group in the United States. That's where our fight is. What we need to do is prove to that court that their government is right. So our suing their own government only adds to the R-CALF argument. I'm not in a position at this point in time to recommend to any of our colleagues in the Legislature that we should be doing something against the U.S. government, who at this point in time is one of our biggest allies in getting the border open.

So I think that's an important differential because what the Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade are doing – and they have every right to do this, and I do not want to hinder their approach. They have a right under NAFTA and under chapter 11 to go for redress on damages caused, and even if the border were to open, hon. member, within 60 days, they can continue on with that challenge. Perhaps at some point in the future – and we've all seen these NAFTA things drag out for a long, long time – they may actually see some benefit

out of that. You know, I hope they do. It's something that they probably have a good argument on.

Our point is: get the border open. Our challenge is: get the border open. So I want to utilize all the resources that we have to enable the USDA to prove to their own court that they are right. I don't want to challenge what the USDA is doing. I would rather challenge what that judge is doing, and we are working in that direction.

I think that covers most of the points, Mr. Chairman, and if there are other questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

The Chair: Anyone else wishing to speak? If not, I'll recognize the hon. Minister for Children's Services.

Children's Services

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to be brief, and if the opposition critic has any questions after I've explained where we are, I'd be more than pleased to provide her with some answers in writing. I know we've got six others after me.

In total an extra \$18 million will be used for child intervention services. Child and family services authorities will receive \$14.4 million to cover additional costs for the child welfare service programs. This includes a 4 per cent, \$4 million increase in the foster parents maintenance rate. The remaining \$3.6 million will be used to implement the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. This one-time cost will fund the transition to provide child welfare services under the new act.

3:40

An additional \$7.5 million will be used to implement a network of parent link centres across the province. This additional funding will be fully offset by additional federal transfers.

Supplementary funding of \$5.3 million will be used to fulfill our commitment to the prevention of family violence. We are using an extra \$2.5 million to fund community incentive grants and help communities take action against family violence and bullying, we will continue to develop and implement Alberta strategies for the prevention of family violence and bullying with an additional \$1.76 million, and we will use \$500,000 for a cross-ministry public awareness and education campaign to help put an end to bullying.

We also require \$1.1 million to cover increases in insurance and corporate administrative costs. We'll pay Alberta Finance an additional \$400,000 for insurance, and \$700,000 will go to ACSC for related costs.

We also are able to use savings from other areas to partially offset increased costs in some of our critical programs.

So that really explains the reasoning behind the supplementary estimates, and we'll intently listen to the opposition.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I think about the provincial budget, I want to give my thanks for the message from Her Majesty the Queen for Commonwealth Day three days ago.

Her Majesty's reference to children, youth, and education in the human family are important to us in Alberta. I believe that Commonwealth is a good context in which to look at some of the issues we face here. I'm speaking of Commonwealth not simply as an international organization but as a spirit of sharing and co-operation, whether on the world stage, within the Canadian federation, or in our own province.

Let's take the word Commonwealth. I believe that the shift in thinking from empire to Commonwealth was one of the truly

positive signs of how people and governments can evolve peaceably. It was a shift from a relationship based on the domination by one party or group of interests to a point where it is recognized that wealth, resources, and responsibility are shared among the members and that the challenges and opportunities faced by one confront us all.

I'm especially grateful that this experiment in Commonwealth began in Canada in our development of a growing measure of autonomy in the context of connectedness. Since the first ongoing contact between Europeans and our First Nations, Canada has been in the orbit of three great world powers: France, Britain, and the United States. The issues of dependence, domination, consultation, and connection are not new but an ongoing part of our story.

It was Canada's emergence without revolution or civil war from a dependency on the world's greatest empire ever, territorially speaking, that paved the way for Australia, New Zealand, and scores of other countries that make up the present Commonwealth. It was Canada's internal politics of 80 years ago that led to a re-examination of the relationships between the parts and led to the statement of a new relationship in the 1926 declaration: "They are autonomous Communities . . . equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown." What better model for a society in Alberta: coequal, responsible communities of citizens united by common transcendent values.

Mr. Chairman, it is a model of our society and its values that faces us as we deal with the Alberta budget. In each specific spending bill we vote on as well as the budget as a whole, there is a reflection of what truly matters to us as a government and as Albertans, as individuals and families in relationship.

Many of us feel that our relationships are too private and too precious to be quantified in dollars or regulated by the state. I note that a former Newfoundland and Canadian cabinet minister has brought up the proposal of legalizing a certain relationship in order to regulate its practice and protect its practitioners. He's speaking of relationship at the level of a commodity, the exchange of what I get for my dollar. Our most valued relations are more than dollar exchanges, yet what we spend in billions is an indication of what our values and relationships are. As the values that we are professing affect what it is we do, so what we do reflects what our values really are.

I am sure that most of us would not want to see the intimate aspects of our lives assessed in dollars and cents. Yet, Mr. Chairman, a provincial budget, the billions we spend collectively, is a good mirror of what the priorities in our relationships are. C. Northcote Parkinson, who gave my generation Parkinson's law and other insights on how we administer and mishandle our wealth, pointed out that corporate boards of directors often approve contracts worth millions on a simple recommendation without discussion then spend half an hour haggling over the price the staff pay for coffee in the lunchroom. He believes this happens because the million- and billion-dollar contracts are too big for us to get our minds around, so we opt out, step back from these to focus on something we can make sense of. Mr. Chairman, the budget being a statement of the big picture, it is important that we stop and step back to get it right, to get the picture clear and to be clear ourselves on our part of the picture. What does it mean to spend dollars, a measure of energy and value on some things and not on others?

In our parliamentary system it is the government's side of the House that brings forward the bills that spend public money. Someday, in a more consensual spirit, in a recognition of the principle of common wealth that may change, but for the moment that is the reality with which we must deal. So, Mr. Chairman, as a

member of the second party in this Legislature I propose some alternative measures for our investment that reflect another set of values from those we have before us.

In Bill 1 the government focuses on postsecondary education. This costs billions in faculty and facilities, research and infrastructure. It leads to a flow of expertise and investment to the focus of communities and capital. Yet, Mr. Chairman, the greatest learning takes place in the earliest years of life. Here a child not only learns how to orient himself or herself in the world but faces the basic question of value. Whether she or he is loved and nurtured for what she or he is or for what she or he does to satisfy others, whether she is central in others' attention and affection or somewhere on the periphery, on the basis of this early education curriculums are structured, and systems are put in place.

Is it better spending to provide the initial supports in having a parent on-site at home or quality and qualified support, if required, which costs at most tens of thousands per year, or to train and pay psychologists, psychiatrists, and other therapists at hundreds of thousands and who charge a hundred dollars per hour at least for intervention once damage in early miseducation has been done? Is it better stewardship to have both parents competing in the competitive economy, leaving a child to decide that he must prove his worth by taking jobs that impress, dropping out of relationships and postsecondary programs that she or he should never have entered? One of the greatest educators of all time stated that the goal of education is to know thyself. This is what happens or does not happen in the early years. If we structure society, the market, and family relationships on a basis of unknowing, we cannot be surprised if the results are flawed.

With our provincial budget I understand that decisions are made through managers to either cut or allow certain expenses. Each region makes decisions about how their funding is to be spent. Child and family services is a difficult area in terms of budget because as other areas are cut back and if the cutbacks involve families, child and family services picks up the slack – example: justice, health, income support, education – because in the end child and family services are responsible for the safety and security of our children. As well, as the needs and risks become more complex, the services required in upcoming years may become more costly and complex as well. This may be one area where unexpected expenses would apply. Because of demographics some regions are more costly – for example, fetal alcohol syndrome, addictions, violence – depending on the socioeconomic conditions.

I do have some questions about costs and possible improvements. I wonder if some contracted agencies in our province are duplicating services; for example, when more than one agency has a permanent emergency bed set aside for kids while there is an emergency shelter available which always has room. I'm wondering if these funds for unused emergency beds could be put to better use.

Another thing is training. I'm wondering why some agency staff cannot participate in the training offered to government workers. Those agencies don't usually have the budget, and the government workers, I believe, are getting great training. I think that, surely, including agencies would be wise. I believe there may be innovative ways of working together that are not entertained because of camps and territories within our service provision.

Could we also do a better job of creating a better working relationship with youth justice and agencies in providing transitional services to youth leaving the justice system? These steps may be cost-saving through avoiding some unnecessary duplication and supporting each other in common goals.

3:50

As I look at the supplementary estimates, I notice that the request

at this time is for \$14,426,000 for financial support to child and family services authorities for additional child welfare services program costs, including the 4.5 per cent increase in the foster parents maintenance rate. I appreciate the minister's attempt to give me a little bit more detail because the line items are not very detailed; for example, \$425,000 more for corporate administration.

We have a large increase in programs such as the prevention of family violence, and I really salute your efforts with the bullying initiative and the parenting resources initiative. I also notice that the Edmonton area and region is requiring the largest input, with \$6,550,000.

I wonder how we could have avoided the need for supplemental income? One of the things that is really difficult as we talk with Albertans about budgets is that we have little information on the expenditures. If we are supposed to vote on this judiciously in the spirit of appropriate government recognition of expenditures, we need to have the detail that allows us to know the types of expenditures.

Another point is that if we are going to have prudent fiscal management in this province, we've got to have timeliness associated with that. We have to make sure that as the budgeting process is put in place, the signals are sent out to the agents that use the dollars that are allocated by these budgets so that they have time to plan, subject to their fiscal year. I believe we must work together toward giving all departments clear priorities and sustainable, predictable funding so that they can better plan for expenditures. This will allow appropriate planning capacity so that we can make sure that our dollars are used prudently.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to be really brief, actually because the hon. member talked a lot about the budget process. I really have to say off the bat that I know her heart is in the right place. We had a meeting; she very deeply, deeply cares about the children and youth in this province and showed it at our meeting. We've decided that we're going to work together for the betterment of the children and youth in this province.

She talked about the duplication of services in regard to some of the things that are happening in this province, and I don't disagree with her. We are going to be looking at how we can better improve the services and, if there's duplication, get rid of that. We're going to do a review of the FCSS and find out if there is any duplication, what they're providing and what government is providing, and make sure that we get the best bang for our buck and do the right thing.

I like the idea that she mentioned, the fact about training, about why the agencies can't participate with government. I don't know why they can't. I wasn't aware of that, so I appreciate your bringing that up to me, and I've got staff that are listening and taking notes.

She talked about youth justice and youth in transition. We're really very, very excited about what's happening in that area. We've got youth receiving services through the new enhancement act that requires a plan to help them work toward independence and adulthood. Previously, when they turned 18, of course, I know the member is well aware of what happened. Under the new act we've got it going until they're 22, and we've developed a mentor program.

Our youth in transition programs that we have currently in the department are, without question, leading this country in how we're dealing with our youth. We'd be more than happy to have her at one of our youth forums sometime, and we'll extend an invitation to let her have the ability to meet the youth that I've met in the past. I mean, it's just an incredible high to be around them.

Her interest in FASD: we talked about that when we've met in the past because it's one of her passions. I can tell her that we are leading in FASD in North America. We have just hired a director because of our involvement with the Canada Northwest Partnership, of which I take over the chair on April 1. He's from Washington, and he's very excited about being here, very excited about what he's doing, told us when he was offered the job as the executive director for that particular position, that he took it in a heartbeat and told the university he was working with how much Alberta is leading. So we're quite excited about that. We're also involved with research, and they're doing a lot of work on FASD. So we should be very, very proud.

The family violence initiative. You indicated that you applaud what Alberta is doing: again, working toward trying to be family violence free. I think probably that would be pushing it, but certainly we're going to continue to work very, very hard on that initiative and the bullying issue.

Mr. Chairman, those really are the few notes I had. Like I indicated to the hon. member, we have staff that will be taking notes. If there's any question, we'd be pleased. Looking forward to continuing working with the opposition member.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to spend a few minutes, make some observations on the request for supplementary estimates for the Department of Children's Services. We'll have a few questions for the minister. I hope she will either be able to answer them here or perhaps later, which would be fine as well.

Mr. Chairman, the additional funds being asked for by the department are close to \$27 million, which is a fair bit of change. So the question that I have is: why this fairly large request for extra dollars in the budget in the supplementaries? I thought budgets are prepared by this government doing its due diligence to forecast expenditures and obligations. Then the money is asked of this Legislature by way of the annual budget. Close to \$27 million extra dollars being asked I think requires some broad explanation. The information that's provided here in two pages is not enough for me to understand why the expenditures have overshot by this amount over the budgeted ones.

So the minister, I think, took over this portfolio recently, and I appreciate that. I think she is relatively new to this portfolio, but I hope she will have some answers to these questions.

A couple of questions here. On page 23 I think I'm dealing here with line 2.2.6, prevention of family violence. There is quite a substantial increase in that line item from \$18 million to close to \$23.5 million, so the increase is anywhere between 28 and 30 per cent, quite a large jump over the period under consideration. While I would applaud any effort that is made and bears fruit with respect to the prevention of family violence, I'm curious. Why this jump?

Are there some special measures that have been brought into play to reduce family violence, to prevent it? Has the incidence of family violence gone up so much over the last year that it required additional resources, or has the salary part of the bill gone up because we are paying so much more to people who do this work for us? I mean, all kinds of questions come to mind. Why is it that such a large increase has occurred? As I said before, I would applaud any concrete program and additional effort that will contribute to the prevention of family violence rather than having to deal with the results of it once it's taken place. So it's in that spirit that I'm asking this question, and the minister I'm sure will try to address that.

4:00

The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act implementation

support is 2.1.2. There again the increase is quite substantial, almost 75 per cent more than the \$4.3 million overbudgeted as part of the budget. Three point six million dollars extra is being asked for as part of this supplementary request, close to a 75 per cent increase. When increases are so large relative to the budgeted amount, I think it's important to ask some tough questions: why so?

Similarly, Mr. Chairman, the line item 2.2.9, parenting resources initiative. Again, the amount being asked for, in fact, is close to four times what was budgeted. What kind of oversight at the time of budgeting last year led to this one is the question that comes to mind. There's no explanation anywhere here that I can find which would give me the answer so that I don't waste the time of the House and pester the minister with these questions.

One other concern has to do with the only place where I see reference to child care programs, and it's page 22, the very last two lines there: "These costs are being partly offset by anticipated lapses of \$4,657,000 from the Child Care Program." What in heaven is this? "Lapses." Is this money unspent? Is this money that's not invested for the care of our children in this province? How does one explain this? I'm just wondering about it.

The minister has been on the national stage with respect to the future of health care in the province. She was in Vancouver, of course, attending meetings with, I suppose, the federal Minister of Social Development. She made some interesting statements and took positions, which we will have opportunity another time, perhaps, to engage the minister in debate on. I'm very concerned about the position the minister has taken.

The child care subsidies that are available now go to families, and only some families qualify based on their income. There are 75 per cent of mothers who are working now, in the labour force. What percentage of that 75 per cent get the subsidies based on this income criterion that the government uses? There's a very large number of middle-class parents who find it both necessary to work and want to work.

It's no longer that women want to accept the old traditional sort of definition of their roles. They want to work. Many of them have gone to university, to college to acquire qualifications. They want to work yet find it very, very tough to pay for the quality of child care that they want to provide for their children. They cannot from their incomes, so they are cutting into their budgets for other family expenditures. I'm hearing from my constituents and from across the province that this is causing a huge hardship.

Now, I don't know the details of the federal program that's under discussion that the minister has been participating in, but I do know that there are some general parameters that are well known, that it's conceived as a universal program, that it'll be available to those who want to make use of it. The minister, during her, I think, statements related to that discussion that she participated in, talks about parent choice. There are lots of parents who want to choose to send their children to good, quality, publicly funded child care programs. Child care provision is not just about babysitting. It's about, in fact, child development and child learning and education in very early years, which are so critical for these very children to do well later on, both in school and beyond.

So the whole notion of child care needs to be revisited in its expanded form in the 21st century. If we really want to succeed, our children must succeed. If our children must succeed, they must receive the services that they need very early. The science of child development that we have available to us, knowledge that's available to us, tells us that any dollars that we invest in very early childhood learning experiences and developmental experiences are paid back wholesomely many, many times over later on in terms of these children doing the right thing that they need to do so that our

Solicitor General doesn't have to deal with the problems that arise when we neglect or ignore our children. The children succeed in school. They become more productive. They become higher income earners. They become more contributing citizens of society.

So I don't need to convince the minister or this House about how important it is for us to provide what current knowledge about child development tells us should be provided to our children regardless of who they are or where they are. Yet the minister's statements I find disheartening and discouraging when she talks about not wanting to participate in the federal program, perhaps because it's universal, perhaps because she thinks that it doesn't provide choice.

I'm saying that choice is not the issue. It's not a program that would be compulsory. It's not a program that parents would be forced to participate in. It's a program that will be available to the 75 per cent of women who now take part in the labour force. We need to stand by them. We need to be there to say: well, we are with you as you pursue your hopes and dreams and the incomes that you need as you take part in the place of work, in the labour force. I don't see any indication here that the minister has devoted any resources to exploring that possibility and cutting a new path in that direction as we approach the next year and the year beyond.

So general comments on the minister's position on, you know, providing universal child care to the children of this province. When parents want to go and work and want to choose to send their children to these facilities, we want to make sure that those facilities are of good quality, of the best quality possible. Risks of not guaranteeing quality are so high that they must not be taken.

Anyway, with these comments, I'll sit down, and maybe the minister would want to make observations. I'll be certainly happy to take her answers later on.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really am going to make my comments brief, keeping in mind the other ministries that have still got to report. The hon. member from the NDP opposition started off with the comment about it being a fair bit of change. Yes, it is a fair bit of change, but it's good change. It's good change that we're doing here. Yes, you've had some tough questions, but you've also had some very, very good questions.

I want to start on the last thing first, if I can, and that's on your national child care and the questions you had. Maybe you should join us at the federal/provincial table because what you're talking about is exactly what we were fighting with the federal government about, and that's about choice. What you discussed in regard to child development and the importance of those children getting good quality daycare is exactly what we were fighting about. The federal government was talking about spaces versus output, and we were talking about it being important not to count the spaces but how the children are coming out of the system.

We were also speaking about the fact that we wanted our parents to have choice, whether it was for-profit or nonprofit, whether it was a day home or whether it was kin care or even talking about the fact that we thought about tax incentives for stay-home parents. I have to tell you that one of the questions that you asked – we spent \$4.6 million less on child care because there was a decrease in the number of families that chose to participate in the child care subsidy program. That is a very interesting stat. One of the things that we're talking about with the federal government and looking at when we're making our way through this discussion on the national child care is not only a parent's choice; we want to be able to provide the best quality for the parents in this province who choose to put their children in care, whether it's for-profit, nonprofit, day home, or kin care. We think that's very important.

4:10

The family violence initiative increase that you asked about is a commitment that we've committed ourselves to from the round-table. We're going to continue to put a lot of emphasis on family violence.

You also asked some other questions. I have to tell you that we've put an extra \$18 million in use for child intervention services, which we think is key, and talked about a \$4 million increase for foster parent maintenance.

We are very, very pleased and proud of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which we think is groundbreaking in this country and has been accepted throughout the whole province after many, many, many, many months of consultation with the stakeholders. They're all very, very excited about the new act. With that new act come costs, but again it's important for us to have the best, best for the children and youth in this province.

The parenting resource that you asked about was for us to get up and running parent link centres, that we're very, very excited about, and we'll continue to work on those.

The hon. member asked many, many more questions. We've got staff that have been listening, and I'll be pleased to send you answers by written response. I thank you for your, again, tough but good questions.

The Chair: Is there anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my great pleasure to rise again, to be able to have another opportunity to address the debate. This time it's supplementary supply, not interim supply.

Mr. Chairman, I'm critic for Community Development. This year Alberta is celebrating its centennial, and pursuant to that, this government has allocated funds for a variety of centennial projects. The goal of these projects has been stated by the government to be to construct and upgrade community, historic, and cultural facilities. However, it appears that some of the projects that have been described as centennial projects to celebrate the vibrancy of Alberta's arts community are, in fact, infrastructure maintenance.

The Chair: A point of order. The hon. minister.

Point of Order Relevance

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Chairman, maybe you could help me out here. We're talking about Children's Services. The hon. member seems to be talking about centennial projects and maybe Community Development. My understanding is that we're still on Children's Services unless you've gone to Community Development.

The Chair: The minister would have to speak first on that topic before you're allowed to speak on it. We're still on Children's Services. So did you want to speak on the estimates of Children's Services?

Mr. Agnihotri: No.

Debate Continued

The Chair: Okay. Does anyone else wish to speak on Children's Services? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Good. I'm glad that you decided that we weren't

quite finished. I'd like to ask if I could have answers to the same questions that you're going to send to the other hon. member, minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Absolutely.

The Chair: Anyone else?

Community Development

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Gaming for the hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you. Good afternoon. On behalf of the Minister of Community Development I'm pleased to speak to his request for a supplemental amount of \$2.801 million for capital investment.

The facilities at the Canmore Nordic Centre were built for the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary. They need serious upgrading to bring them back up to international sporting standards and to train Canada's internationally rated athletes. Of the \$3.5 million approved this fiscal year, Community Development managed to accommodate \$699,000 needed for equipment purchases such as snowcat vehicles used to groom the trails. This supplementary estimate today covers the balance of \$2.801 million. The upgrades are paying off already. The facility will host the 2005 World Cup in cross-country skiing this December. We also expect to see the benefits in our athletes' performances at the next Winter Olympics in Torino and again in Vancouver in 2010.

On behalf of the Minister of Community Development I ask that you vote to approve his request for this supplemental estimate. If there are questions to be raised on this \$2.8 million, I'm sure the minister will be referring to *Hansard* when he returns and will answer those questions in written form to the people asking the questions on the supplemental estimate.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Once again it's my great pleasure to rise, to be able to have another opportunity to address the debate, but this time it's supplementary supply, not interim supply.

Mr. Chairman, I'm the Community Development critic. This year Alberta is celebrating its centennial, and pursuant to that this government has allocated funds for a variety of centennial projects. The goal of these projects has been stated by the government to be to construct and upgrade community, historical, and cultural facilities. However, it appears that some of the projects that have been described as centennial projects to celebrate the vibrancy of Alberta's arts community are in fact needed infrastructure maintenance. This government is calling the needed renovation to the two Jubilee auditoriums in Edmonton and Calgary as well as the Provincial Archives centennial projects when they are in fact required infrastructure upgrades. This is not fair.

The Alberta government is not providing sufficient funding for the 600 Alberta artists who are going to participate in the upcoming celebrations in Ottawa and some other cities, to perform their art, for their accomplishments. The Alberta government is providing only half a million dollars for 600 artists. I don't think it's a sufficient amount for all 600 Alberta artists. The Alberta art community is growing. They are generating approximately \$153 million in our economy and also about 3,500 jobs every year. They are growing, and we should help them more to grow.

I have just been going through this list of questions on the

supplementary estimates that I've kept for the Community Development section. I would like to address this issue to the Minister of Community Development. I don't think he's here, but somebody should see them.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of Members

Mr. Oberle: A point of order, referring to the absence or presence of another member in the House.

The Chair: On the point of order?

Mr. Mason: I don't think the hon. member mentioned any particular member of the Assembly.

Mr. MacDonald: Also, Mr. Chairman, on that point of order there was no citation from the hon. member.

The Chair: Do you have a citation?

Mr. Oberle: I don't know the citation, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: I would just caution the hon. member that that's not acceptable.

Would you carry on.

4:20

Debate Continued

Mr. Agnihotri: Okay. My first concern is: why did this government allocate \$2,801,000 to upgrade the Canmore Nordic Centre facility? Why wasn't this money allocated in Budget 2004, and why couldn't it wait for Budget 2005? What upgrades specifically was this money spent on for this project? I want clarification on this particular project because once again the government has not provided the full detail. Why is it happening year after year? Is it the normal kind of practice? Don't you think it's poor budgeting practice? If the government were a corporation, its CEO would be fired.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. minister, any comments or answers?

Mr. Graydon: The questions are in *Hansard*, and I'm sure that the responsible minister will be happy to answer them next week. I congratulate the member on getting to the point at the end about the supplementary estimate. We're not here to talk about Jubilee auditoriums, et cetera. The supplemental estimate is very specific to the Canmore Nordic Centre, and that's what his questions were about.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Specific to the supplementary estimates for the Department of Community Development I think it's great that Canmore has been awarded the World Cup race for the winter of 2005. That's fantastic. The information that I have on what the government has already committed to for upgrading the centre is as follows.

In June 2004 the then Minister of Community Development announced \$16.5 million to upgrade the Canmore Nordic Centre in support of this bid, which has now been concluded, and of course the World Cup cross-country venue will be Canmore. Now, between June 2004 and March 17, today, we have seen that particular cost skyrocketing by another \$2,801,000.

I wonder: what's the explanation for it? Why is it that within a period of less than a year, in fact within a period of eight months, we are seeing a request which adds another \$2.8 million to the \$16.5 million which was precisely allocated last year for the purpose of upgrading this facility? I think the House would like to have a clear answer to this question. Is it cost overruns? Was it sloppy budgeting eight months ago? Why is it that such a large increase in the cost is being funded without getting answers to the question of what happened over the last eight months that's resulting in this request for an additional \$2.8 million for this purpose?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Anyone else wishing to speak?

Education

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today of course to discuss the supplementary estimates for the Department of Education, over which I have responsibility. As all members can see, the supplementary estimate that is requested is in the amount of \$64.8 million in order that we can continue to support a number of very important initiatives that are of tremendous benefit to our students and toward the enhancement of their learning and, particularly so, to help add more teachers to our classrooms. In fact, of the \$64.8 million \$52 million for fiscal '04-05 will go specifically toward reducing average class sizes in our school jurisdictions, which, I might add, was an important if not critical recommendation of the Alberta Commission on Learning.

Mr. Chair, I'm sure that the members are well aware of the need for these funds because there's been a lot of talk about reducing class sizes in Alberta. This particular class size reduction initiative, which started last year, has been phenomenally successful. Having concluded my meetings with all 62 school boards, I can tell you that they are absolutely delighted with these new monies. They just want to make sure that we continue them, and we intend to do that.

In any event, the \$52 million was first identified and allocated for school jurisdictions I think back in July and August of 2004, and then it was incorporated as a special warrant on January 26 of '05, and what we're asking for now is ratification by the Legislative Assembly within this process called supplementary estimates.

I should also just add for clarity purposes that there is an additional \$37 million, which if you add to the \$52 million comes to \$89 million, and that, in fact, was part of the announcement. But because of the way the government year and the school calendar year sort of overlap by a five-twelfths/seven-twelfths basis, the \$37 million will actually come forward in the '05-06 budget, that has yet to be presented in this House. So I just wanted to clear up that point.

This particular supplementary estimate is for the \$64.8 million, and of that amount \$52 million is specifically for the class size reduction initiative. The second item, which will be the balance, represents \$12.8 million, and that's specifically for the purchase of textbooks and other classroom resources that are in support of the new and updated curricula in Alberta's classrooms.

The new funding that we're asking for here will support the implementation of a new social studies curriculum, in particular, which will start in September of '05. The work has all been done. The professional development side has been looked after. The inservicing side, for the most part, has also been looked after, and it's a timely recognition for our centennial year. Obviously, Mr. Chair, everybody in the Assembly would know that textbooks are a critical learning tool for our students, which help them with their literacy,

research, study skills, the KSAs as they're called: knowledge, skills, and abilities of our students.

A final couple of comments. The \$12.8 million requested here as part of the \$64.8 million will help our teachers with classroom learning objectives, and it will give school administrators the flexibility they need in preparation for the introduction and implementation of the new school curriculum. I would like to advise everyone that the revised social studies program will include a greater emphasis, a greater focus on Canadian and Alberta history and will focus on the core concepts of citizenship and identity, for example. This is a good thing, and it's one reason why we updated the curriculum. That, of course, ties in with our centennial initiative that I referred to earlier.

I'll conclude by just saying that the \$12.8 million for this aspect will be distributed on a per student basis, and all school jurisdictions, that being 62 school boards plus Alberta students enrolled in the Lloydminster public and separate boards plus 13 charter schools and 112 accredited and funded private schools, will receive their portion of funds with the March '05 grant payments. Providing funds in this fashion, Mr. Chair, is very much in keeping with our flexibility formula, our flexibility principle of our new funding framework, and it will allow school jurisdictions to do the best planning possible for the allocation of these additional resources, whether it's for textbooks or for other important student resources as referenced in the estimates book.

4:30

I'll finally just say this concluding statement. These supplementary estimates are very necessary to us, Mr. Chair, because they are ministry-specific and they will give my Ministry of Education the legislative authority to increase spending above amounts previously approved by this Legislature in 2004. In that respect, I certainly look forward to support for these two important initiatives that will be addressed through this supplementary estimate amount.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak to the supplementary estimates for 2005. Just before we get into this in terms of specificity in questions, I think there are about three principles of management that concern me here, and I hope that the new minister is going to be addressing these in his new ministry.

Good fiscal planning seems to be one of the things that we really need to look at here. I think it's also significant and important to look at the whole business of input from the school districts. We looked at that this afternoon in terms of the computer. But what kind of input into this information? For example, looking at daily physical education, I think that that was planned somewhat in a hairy-scary kind of situation, and I think we need to try and look at that. I'd like the minister to elaborate, if he would, and tell us the mechanisms he uses in the department to hear from people advising him on curriculum matters. I'd be interested in getting an update on that.

I think the other significant issue here, Mr. Chairman, is the matter of co-ordination between ministries. We have here the \$52 million I believe the minister talked about in terms of class size. But as good as that is – and I'm certainly pleased to see that he did that – I think the aspect of planning comes in there. What does it do to the infrastructure of schools in terms of dealing with this? I think we're talking there, as a principle, the interchange of co-ordination between the Education department making a change. What implications does it have in terms of schools accommodating this

kind of thing, and what happens to kids in terms of having to deal with the initiatives that are brought forth and the kind of space they use to learn? Is it safe? Is it properly lighted? Does it have the proper blackboards and so forth and so on, audiovisual and so forth?

The other question I'd like to ask the minister is: if this class size initiative was brought by the Learning Commission, I think it was in 2003, for example, how come it wasn't put – I think there was ample time – in the 2004-2005 budget? I'm wondering about that. Then, I look down the line and we look at the whole question of curriculum changes. Again, we look at the question of the Learning Commission report including second language instruction and daily physical education activity. They were accepted shortly after the commission reported in the fall of 2003. Well, is this money being used to support the curriculum changes which the government needed in 2003? Why wasn't it allocated in the regular budget? That's a question I'd like you to answer, sir.

The other question that comes to mind is the question on the business of learning resources. I wonder if he'd be able to tell us: what kind of books? How is this money allocated in terms of school districts across the province? How is it going to be used as a room resource? Is it going to be used for gifted children? Is it going to be for learning disabled children? What kind of use are we getting out of that? Some of the areas I've talked to in the province are even having to supply their own books.

Then the other question I'd like to make. The current allocation for the increased pressures on infrastructure and teachers needed as a result of both class size initiative and new curriculum demands: are these going to be addressed in the new vision in '05-06? He may not want to share that with us. In the need for class size, that he's already talked about, are we going to see some changes to deal with the structural changes that class sizes caused or brought about? I think this is very important, going back to the business of planning and interfacing with the ministry of infrastructure.

I'll just pass on, if I can, Mr. Chairman, to my colleague to my right.

The Chair: Did the minister want to respond first?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Let me just answer a few because it might help out there.

An Hon. Member: Don't ever admit that he's to your right. [interjections]

Mr. Zwodzesky: A bit of mirth in the House. Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the questions. I'll just address a couple of the issues, and the rest we'll pick off in *Hansard* and provide you with the answers that you're looking for.

However, I want to clarify one very important misspeak from the hon. member, and I know it wasn't intentional. We were never talking about daily physical education; we were talking about daily physical activity. As you would know, there's a huge, huge difference. In fact, it was so huge that I had to send out a letter of clarification because some members of the media got it wrong. They thought we were talking about implementing a mandatory daily physical education program, which, as you know, is a whole different thing.

We're talking about simply daily physical activity, 30 minutes per day starting in September for I believe it's grades 1 to 9. It can be as simple as bending, stretching, walking, jogging, taking a field trip down to wherever. The difference is that we are asking teachers to explain that before they do it. Recess, for example, in the lower grades has a huge amount of physical activity out on the play-

grounds. That will be eligible, as will stuff at lunchtime, some of it after school, and so on. As long as the activity is connected directly to the school – it doesn't necessarily have to happen on school grounds – then it will be eligible for counting.

The other point that the hon. member made, which is a very good one, is on the relationship between the class size reduction initiative and physical space in the schools. I'm sure that it will come as no surprise that when you hire more teachers to accommodate the first initiative, which is the class size reduction initiative, you have to provide them with classroom space in which to do it.

The member is correct that it has put some additional pressure on the system, and that's why we work very closely with Alberta Infrastructure – now it's called Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation – to ensure that we have a very smooth or as smooth as possible a transition as we're able to arrive at. I would never say that the system is perfect at this stage, but it's being worked on right now very aggressively to make sure that we smooth out some of those difficulties that have arisen and I heard about from my meetings with the school boards.

The other part about the Commission on Learning recommendation. I should probably remind the member that when the Alberta Commission on Learning report came out – I believe it was October of '03, somewhere in that neighbourhood, in any event – there was an undertaking at that time that the government would respond as quickly as possible to whichever initiatives it could. In fact, we then prioritized with additional consultation which of the initiatives, which of the recommendations we were prepared to accept at that time, which were in the priority category. As members here would know, class size seemed to be one of the top priorities.

But with the lateness of the arrival of the Commission on Learning report – which was no one's fault; it was just late in arriving, postponed, as I recall, by about six or seven months – we responded as quickly as we could over the Christmas period and into the January/February period. However, the unfortunate thing is that we couldn't get it all into the budget in time for printing and presentation. So it came out as soon as possible thereafter, which I believe was June or July. It was still done in time, however, for school boards to hire about 1,250 new teachers for the September '04 calendar start-up year, so that was a good thing. We'll be adding more this fall and again next year.

With respect to curriculum changes I'll just have to read what the member said there because I was writing these other notes, and I didn't quite catch it all. We do spend a considerable amount of money on developing curriculum. In fact, we invested about \$11.4 million during this past year, hon. member, in curriculum development and in the implementation of it and all the accoutrements surrounding it.

With that having been said, we certainly have involved a lot of teachers and others in that process. In fact, we provide about a million dollars to support teacher professional development through the six regional consortia, which you would be familiar with, hon. member, for in-servicing and in-service training for teachers, and so on. So there's quite a bit that goes into all of this, and we do the best that we can with all the experts we have to maintain an excellent curriculum development process.

4:40

The question about how the money is allocated I addressed in my opening comments. Perhaps if you just reference back, you'll see that it's going out on a per student basis, and that will impact everybody equally. It doesn't matter what their particular circumstance is, if they're a special-needs child or whatever. We're addressing primarily grade 3 right now because that's the one that

starts in September, and we must have the textbooks for those children, but we're not restricting it just to that level. There might be other priorities there as well.

Let me take my seat so that other members can get their comments on record.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister has addressed a couple of the questions that I had. Let me start by saying that the fact that the Learning Commission report came somewhat late in October shouldn't have prevented the government from prioritizing the recommendations. In particular, the school classroom size issue was one of the key issues even before the commission started its investigations. It made certain recommendations with respect to what should be average class sizes, but the class size problem was known prior to the commission starting its work. That was one of the key concerns of parents. That was a key concern of teachers.

For the government to then take five, six months before it could come back with its decision on what is the highest priority and then find money, \$52 million, within less than a month or a month after this Legislature, this House, had just finished giving approval to the budget that the government had proposed – I think we worked hard. I think we worked some sweat on our brows, that hadn't dried up yet, and the ink on the budget was still kind of not quite dry. The government started changing its budget numbers in June. A \$52 million addition, welcome as it was because the issue of the crisis in the classroom was a huge one, did provide some relief, but it wasn't adequate. It didn't provide the relief to the whole system, you know, most school boards.

As a matter of fact, the Edmonton public school board came up with numbers at the end of September or October or November, whenever they did the counting, and drew attention to the very large number of classrooms which are still above the recommended average class sizes. So the minister might want to refer to that.

The adequacy of the allocation is one issue; the timing is another. The timing, as I said, was welcomed. I welcomed it even though it came, I think, with some political motivation attached to it. The government was considering and thinking about the upcoming election, and that's why it held back making any announcements at the right time. School boards need to know these things quite a bit ahead of time in order for them to plan to use those funds. So inadequacy and the political timing are two issues, I think, that I wanted to put on record here.

I want to ask the minister if he agrees with me that the \$52 million that the government allocated for class size reduction was an inadequate amount. If he agrees, then what is he about to do, and do soon, to make sure that the class size matter is addressed in the interest of our children who are in those classrooms and in order to assist our teachers, who provide the most valuable help and assistance and guidance and learning opportunity to our children, so that they can do the job that we expect them to do in the classroom? So that would be my question.

The second question that I have is for the minister to perhaps tell the House what amount of this \$52 million went to which school boards. Certainly, I'm interested in finding out, using the formula that the minister used to allocate this money or the department at that time used – this minister wasn't the Minister of Education at the time, so I can't attribute the allocation to him as the formula was developed under the guidance of another minister – whether or not that formula is seen by school boards as a fair one or whether it needs some change. Again, I hope that the minister is able to share his reflections on those questions with us: what amounts have gone

to which school boards and the fairness of the formula that they use to allocate those amounts.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Very briefly. Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, for some good questions, although there are a few there that I thought were politically charged, but we'll deal with them.

The fact about the recommendation from the Alberta Commission on Learning report concerning this issue is that we saw it as a priority and we got on to it as quickly as we could. In fact, we are accelerating the small class size strategy by two full years. In other words, instead of doing it over the five-year window which was initially contemplated, we're doing it over three years. But I want to say that you can't rush out there all that quickly with an initiative like this because, as spoken to earlier, you have to look at the physical infrastructure side as well. They have to be sort of done in tandem, so you can't flood the system too, too quickly with this.

Now, we arrived at the numbers that we did for very calculated reasons, and in that three-year window, Mr. Chair, we will see about 2,200-plus brand new teachers added into the system over the three-year period I'm talking about. So I hope that helps that point a little bit.

With respect to the class size problem being known earlier, certainly some of us knew about it earlier. I did in my area, and I would agree that it would have been a wonderful thing if we could have made the announcement sooner than later because if you want to look at it from a planning perspective, it obviously would have helped school boards and it would have helped parents. It would have relieved the anxiety. To get to your political point, I would love for it to have been announced much earlier so that perhaps some people could have used it if they so chose. But it came out when it came out, and teachers were hired, and by the time the good news got out there, I think the election was over. So it certainly didn't really help from a political timing point whatsoever.

The other point was in respect to the class size averages, and that is an extremely important point, Mr. Chair. The fact is that these are jurisdictional averages, and I do have an issue with that. I know, for example, that if you take a look at let's just say Edmonton Catholic, for example, they received about \$4 million under this initiative, thereabouts I think. In any event, whatever the exact amount was, it allowed them to hire about 74 brand new teachers, so it helped across the jurisdiction.

But I find that in some particular schools there still might be numbers that are slightly higher than what we would like them to be. A case in point is in my own riding, in my own constituency. I have a lot of joy over the new money and over the new teachers and new teacher assistants and so on that have been engaged because of the class size reduction initiative, but it's hard to explain that to those parents who still see higher than average class size numbers in their particular class. I won't name the school, but there's one school in particular that I get calls from frequently because they are still above the average. So I know the school board, the public school board in this case, is working hard to address and alleviate that.

4:50

By the way, the public school board was able to hire 180 or 182 brand new teachers with the additional \$13 million that they received. I hope that's the right amount.

My final point is on the member's question about: do I think it's adequate, that is to say, the \$52 million? Well, in fact, the first

announcement was \$52 million plus \$37 million. But because our government year ends on March 31 and the school year continues through to the end of August, you know, we're caught in that five-twelfth, seven-twelfth thing, so it's actually \$89 million. It's an appropriate amount for what we felt we had available.

I'm working right now on my budget, as members here would know, to continue that first level of funding and if possible add the next level so that we can address the next level of schooling, which would be grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and on through up to grades 10, 11, and 12. We addressed K to 3 because that was where we felt that the greatest pressure was, and that's where there is a greater benefit for one-on-one instruction. That is not to say that one-on-one isn't beneficial later. It certainly is, but the priority is in the K to 3 area, so it was an adequate amount for them. We need more, and I'm working on that now.

The final thing that he asked about was providing him with a list, and I'd be happy to do that. I will undertake to get you that list of who got exactly what. I've got it all. I just don't have it all on one sheet because when I met with every one of the school boards, we talked about it, and they were very happy with this new money. They just felt that they needed a little bit more in the next budget, so I'm working on that. So I'll undertake to provide those answers out of *Hansard*.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Listening to some of the debate, I'm very pleased that there is some new monies. Again, it was expressed that it could have come a little bit earlier than later. I mean, we've only got 90 days left until the end of the school year, so they were going to be able to hire in some cases 189 teachers.

The minister had mentioned 2,200 new teachers coming into the system. Is that taking into account the retirement, or is that going to be new teachers?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Brand new.

Mr. Bonko: Brand new teachers. So retirement is altogether different then.

Mr. Zwozdesky: That's what we call new.

Mr. Bonko: The fact that we're going to be giving some money with regard to being able to buy new books certainly is a big question and concern to school boards because of the ongoing costs of maintaining the books as well as having to charge students the textbook rental fees. Does this money come in the form of a credit to be spent at the LRDC, or will it be actual cash given over to the individual school boards allocated per class? That's another question with regard to that.

We did mention the new social studies curriculum, which I'm pleased about. I would hope that it would have a little bit more impact with Canadian history and content, as you did mention, with perhaps the struggle of Upper and Lower Canada, that I read about as well years ago.

Part of the infrastructure money or the monies going to the schools here in Edmonton – we realize that there is almost just within two school boards a billion dollars just within Edmonton itself. So the breakdown of \$64 million in a province really doesn't amount to a whole lot, although they're not going to squeal about the money they're given. The Catholic system, I think the minister said, was going to receive about \$4 million, which maybe would allocate about \$7 million to the public system then. If you break that down

to 206 schools, it doesn't amount to a whole lot. So I just would echo some cautionaries there as well.

Thank you then, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Chair, just to clarify. The 2,200-plus new teachers that will be hired over the three years from '04-05 through '06-07 will be 2,200 brand new FTEs. So you can add that on to the base that you have now.

With respect to the question on textbooks there will be a combination of how these monies roll out. I don't know the member's familiarity with the school system well enough to know, but in any event, in case he's not familiar with it, we will be placing some of it as a credit, a buy-down credit, with the LRC, the Learning Resources Centre, and then other materials will perhaps be acquired through other means. But the central way of handling new curriculum textbooks is to provide that as a buy-down credit through the LRC.

The other question was with respect to the public school. In fact, according to the numbers I have here, hon. member, the public school actually received about \$13.2 million, not \$7 million, under the class-size reduction initiative for the '04-05 year. That allowed them to hire 180 or 182 – I forgot the number – brand new FTEs. By comparison, the Catholic schools received \$4.1 million, and they were able to hire 75 new FTEs. All of these FTEs started in September.

Was there another question there that I missed? I'm sorry; which one was it?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've recognized the cost of upgrading textbooks, but school boards are certainly finding it a burden with the ongoing costs for computers because as more and more computer technology comes on stream, the cost of ownership is very hard on the school boards.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Yeah. That's why this is mentioned as it is in the estimates book, which I'm sure you have a copy of. It talks about "for the purchase of textbooks and other classroom resources in support of the . . . curricula" because we understand that some of this is online, some of it'll be available through LearnAlberta.ca, and so on. So it's not just for textbooks.

The second part of your question is a little outside the supplementary estimate, but I hope what I've just provided by way of an answer at least gives you some level of comfort that there's more to it than just textbooks.

The Chair: The hon. leader of the ND opposition and Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask something which the minister may also feel is a little bit outside the question of the supplementary estimates, but I nevertheless want to raise the question of school closures in a number of locations.

We have seen very quickly since the last municipal election the Edmonton public school board move towards consideration of the closure of a number of schools in inner-city communities in Edmonton. This is, of course, a great concern. I know the minister is not directly responsible for the school utilization formula – that falls under the minister of infrastructure – nevertheless, I think he must have some concern for the school issue.

I just want to indicate to the minister that, you know, inner-city schools often struggle with a greater range of problems than you

might find in suburban schools. The classroom complexity is an issue. You have students with special needs; you have students who have issues related to poverty, who have issues related to not being fed or not being properly cared for at home. In some cases it's often the child who is one of the more responsible members of the household and gets him- or herself to school. They may not get there until 10 o'clock in the morning, but they get themselves to school. So a one-size-fits-all formula is not going to work.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, the whole question of schools as a focus for revitalization of inner-city neighbourhoods is very important. Many neighbourhoods are struggling to revitalize themselves and attract new young families. When the school is closed, it is almost impossible to attract new young families, so the whole process gets cut short. I think there's a need for the municipalities to be involved in this too. Municipalities have some responsibility to have revitalization strategies for their inner-city communities and to put some kind of controls on urban sprawl.

I know that in the city of Edmonton a few years ago there were actually 34 separate communities under construction. Of course, that means that the build-out of these communities is very slow and they often wait many years. They often wait many years for their schools because the new housing is spread through so many communities that they just grow slowly and they have to wait. In some communities that I used to represent on city council, the kids were moving into junior high and high school by the time they got the elementary school built, and by the time they got the junior high built, all the original families' kids were moved on to high schools.

It's a complex problem, but the needs of children in communities I think are not necessarily being met, and I just want the minister to be aware. We know that there are a number of so-called clusters in Edmonton public that are going to be considering closures. They call it a closure process, but in fact it's nothing more than a move towards closing schools, and it causes a lot of concern for parents and for communities and certainly for me. So, Mr. Chairman, I'd ask the minister if he can offer us any hope with respect to resolving this issue.

5:00

Now, closing an inner-city school is essentially closing the community, and they are central to community life and to hopes for the future. I would ask the minister to maybe make some comment on that and what kinds of things he thinks the government could do or the community or the city could do in order to keep some of these schools closed and if, in fact, there can be any accommodation in the new utilization formula to take into account special needs to allow community functions like a daycare, for example, to go into a school and have that space be eliminated from the calculation of the formula. I know that it's not his direct responsibility, but I know that he's interested in it, that it affects his work and the work of his department and will want to have some input and some comments on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, hon. member, for those questions and observations. I'd be happy to address just about every one of those things, but they're not really relative, Mr. Chair, to the estimates before us today. I do care deeply about them, and I hope the member won't take offence at that. But the fact is is that we're talking about the class size initiative monies and the new textbook monies primarily here today.

Before I go on to that, I just wanted to visit back to the previous speaker from Edmonton-Decore when I made the comment about the familiarity with the system. I'm well aware of his background as a

trustee, but I was talking specifically about how schoolteachers go about ordering these books, so I hope he didn't take any offence to what I had said.

Nonetheless, the issue of utilization rates does have some relevance to the class size initiative, Mr. Chair, so I will comment on it. We are working together as two departments right now, Alberta Education with Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation, on a new utilization rate formula. It's a point that was referenced in almost all 62 school board meetings that I had. It's been referenced to me over the past three months by teachers, by the Council of Alberta School Superintendents, CASS, by the Alberta Home and School Association, by the ATA, and by a number of other groups that I can't recall all the acronyms, and it was referenced in a very positive way, simply saying that the utilization formula that we've had worked for a while, that there are some pressure points developed around it and it's time to revisit it and fix it. And that's in fact what we're trying to do. I'm acutely aware of some of the difficulties with how space allocations have been made under the utilization formula where we're looking at teachable space versus, perhaps, hallway space or other space that clearly is not used for teaching, and that's why we're revisiting it.

That, Mr. Chair, does tie in with our class size initiative because as I indicated earlier, hiring new teachers simply doesn't happen by itself. You need to provide them with physical space in which to carry on their teaching practice, which they do so very, very well.

That raises the point about the difference between rural and urban and suburban and 'rurban' Alberta, and one of the strategies that we're looking at more and more here is the video conferencing to help out with some of those disparities of sparsity and distance. It's not central to this particular topic today, so I'll leave it, but I just wanted to give the member comfort that we are looking at some of those differences as they apply to learning and teaching and also as they apply to the differences in our utilization in rural versus urban settings.

With the special-needs area, the ESL area, the poverty area I think I'll just remind members that we spend about \$108 million per year in the kindergarten program. That's not mandatory, as you know; it's optional. But that's a significant commitment on our part that catches a lot of those areas, and I know it's not just kindergarten. I understand that.

We spend about \$215 million per year for extraordinary costs related to severe special needs. In fact, I met with the AACL representatives this morning, and we talked about inclusive education. There's a gentleman in town from McGill, Dr. Roger Slee, and he'll be talking about this issue at the convention this weekend. There's \$36 million a year for ESL, and all of these amounts have gone up. The ESL amount, in fact, has gone up by about 71 per cent in the last while. So we're acutely aware of those things. Again, all of these things can't happen overnight, but I'll give them my commitment to do my very best to address all of those in the upcoming budget; that's for sure.

The last thing is with respect to daycares. I'll just comment, Mr. Chair, that we spend about I think \$14 million or \$15 million per year working with ECS operators for mild and moderate special-needs children in particular, and we're reviewing that as well. I'm not sure where the dust will settle yet, but anything we can do to help those children get the proper start we're going to try and do. With that, I'll cede the floor so that others can ask more questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a

few questions for the hon. minister. Certainly, I would also request a copy of the list that the minister agreed to provide to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in regard to the boards and their respective allotments in regard to the \$52 million in class size reduction initiatives.

Also, I was listening with interest to the hon. minister discuss the per-student basis. This money will be delivered on a per-student basis, and the first cheques must be out now, in the March 5 grant payment that went out.

Now, the school year, as other hon. members have said, is obviously over in June. For the teachers that are to be hired, this is good news, but what happens to schools such as Strathearn public, Terrace Heights, and the other schools on the north side of the city, in Wellington for instance, that are tentatively scheduled for closure? Where would this per-student money go? For other small schools, schools with populations of 100 students and schools with populations of 200 students, what difference on a per-student basis will this money make?

Certainly, this is welcome, but am I also to understand from the minister that we're just hiring teachers here or are other support staff going to be hired as well? What about librarians? What about language specialists? What about counsellors? Are they going to be hired as well, or is this exclusively for teachers? This is a welcome expenditure, but if we're going to implement the Learning Commission, we have to recognize that it is going to mean a reduction in class spaces. The current utilization rate will no longer be applicable because, of course, we're going to need more and more class spaces because we're finally recognizing that smaller class sizes make a difference.

I appreciate the minister's time, and if we cannot get the answers today in the time allotted, by writing in due time would be appreciated. I look forward to the hon. minister's answers.

Thank you.

5:10

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. I'd be happy to provide the list that I offered to provide to the previous speaker before Edmonton-Gold Bar spoke regarding the \$52 million rollout, how it went, and where it went and so on.

The question about what happens to schools that are tentatively scheduled for possible closure with the Edmonton public school board is a very good question. My staff worked with all of these school boards in their planning because each school board is required to submit a plan with respect to how they intend to use the money in the coming year. I think the former trustee would agree with that. I don't have their plan just in front of me, but we'll get you an answer for that specific question in relation to their plan and how it's built in.

With respect to the smaller schools that are facing enrolments of, say, less than 100, I think it's the same answer, and I'll get you more elaboration on that.

In the minute remaining here, Mr. Chair, let me just say that the initiative for class size reduction is very much targeted at exactly what its title suggests. We're looking to reduce the number of students that each teacher has to teach in a single classroom at any one time. So it's not as immediately applicable to librarians or language specialists or counsellors or the other areas that the hon. member referenced, although there might be cases where it could be. For example, you might have a teacher-librarian who has a class. In that case, obviously, it could possibly be applied. But in a general sense it's, I guess, the broader, the bigger picture. These other items

are extremely important, and they're ones that I'm very sensitive to, but that's not the central purpose of this particular class size reduction initiative at this time.

School boards have referenced those points and asked for some ability to address those pressure points. I think we would all agree that more librarians are needed, more specialists, language specialists, language therapists are needed, and if they were available to be hired, we would likely be hiring them, but there is a world-wide shortage of audiologists and speech and language therapists at the moment. World-wide. I was surprised to hear that, but that's the truth. It's the same with counsellors. It depends on whether we're talking about career counsellors or guidance counsellors or whatever have you.

So I'll close there, Mr. Chair, and we'll do our best to look through *Hansard* and see what other answers need to be provided. Unless, of course, there are just a couple of seconds here. I'll just finish then.

With this point about the counsellors that I rushed a little bit, if I could just clarify that briefly, we have two types of counsellors in a generic sense that are employed in many of our schools, and I pursued this issue as one of the points . . .

head: **Vote on Supplementary Estimates
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Education, but pursuant to Standing Order 59(2) and Government Motion 9, agreed to March 8, 2005, I must now put the following question. Those members in favour of each of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the 2004-2005 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye

The Chair: Opposed, please say no.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Chair: That's carried.
Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the supplementary estimates as voted.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows.

All resolutions relating to the 2004-2005 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund have been approved.

For the office of the Chief Electoral Officer: operating expense of \$1,018,000.

Advanced Education: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$19,000,000.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$528,267,000.

Children's Services: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$26,755,000.

Community Development: for capital investment, \$2,801,000.

Economic Development: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$506,000.

Education: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$64,800,000.

Environment: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$8,000,000.

Executive Council: for operating expense, \$75,000.

Finance: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$1,400,000.

Gaming: for operating expense, \$40,000,000; lottery fund payments, \$40,000,000.

Government Services: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$180,000.

Health and Wellness: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$362,350,000.

Human Resources and Employment: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$34,925,000.

Infrastructure and Transportation: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$614,348,000; for capital investment, \$99,550,000.

Innovation and Science: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$38,000,000.

Justice: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$8,993,000.

Municipal Affairs: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$26,600,000.

Seniors and Community Supports: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$34,500,000.

Solicitor General: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$9,777,000.

Sustainable Resource Development: for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$125,000,000.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with the usual practices of the House, I would request the unanimous consent of the House to revert to Introduction of Bills.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Bills
(reversion)**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader for the hon. Minister of Finance.

**Bill 27
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005**

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 27, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005. This

being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

5:20

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

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very, very great Alberta day as we discussed a lot of important issues. I just

wanted to thank my two staff members Jeff Olson and Brad Smith, who were in the galleries. They left before I had a chance to thank them during my estimates debate. To them and Mat Hanrahan and everyone else who helped me out in this regard, thank you.

With that having been said, I would move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn until 1:30 on Monday, March 21.

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 21, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/03/21

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Guide us all in our deliberations and debate that we may determine courses of action which will be to the enduring benefit of our province of Alberta. Amen.

Hon. members and all those in the galleries, I'm now going to invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, two historical vignettes for today. On March 21, 1930, the Floral Emblem Act was passed in Alberta, making the wild rose the official floral emblem of Alberta.

On March 21, 1940, a general election was held in Alberta. Of 57 MLAs elected, 36 were Social Credit, 19 were Independents, one was Liberal, and one was Labour. There were 309,000 votes cast provincially.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House three guests who are seated in your gallery. They're representatives of Pacific Northwest Economic Region, PNWER as it's better known. They're in Alberta meeting with members of government and Members of the Legislative Assembly. In fact, we were honoured that they hosted a lunch, and all members of the Assembly were invited. We had a good turnout and discussed a number of very important issues to Albertans over the lunch hour.

Mr. Speaker, if I could introduce to you representative Glenn Anderson, who is from Washington state, and he is a PNWER vice-president; representative George Eskridge, who is from Idaho, also a PNWER vice-president; and also from the state of Idaho representative Max Black, who is a PNWER past president. I see that they are standing. I'd ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of all.

head:

Introduction of Guests

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly five very distinguished guests. Three of them are from the Lushoto district, Tanzania, Africa, and they're here visiting

the town of Drayton Valley on an international partnership exchange. I will ask them to stand and remain standing as I call out their names: first of all, the district commissioner, Elias G.B. Goroi; the chairman, which is our mayor counterpart, Richard A. Mbughuni; also the district director, which is the counterpart to our town manager, Obed K. Mwasha. Accompanying them today from Drayton Valley are our mayor, Her Worship Diana McQueen, and our town manager, Manny Deol. I'd ask that the Assembly please recognize them.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Council of Alberta University Students, an advisory group of presidents and vice-presidents of students' unions from universities around the province with whom I had the pleasure of meeting earlier today. The council represents over 80,000 university undergraduate students from the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, and Athabasca University.

I'd ask each of our guests to stand as I call their names and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Duncan Wojtaszek, executive director of the Council of Alberta University Students; Lisa Priebe, president of the Athabasca University Students' Union; Jordan Blatz, president of the University of Alberta Students' Union; Alex Abboud, vice-president external of the University of Alberta Students' Union; Bryan West, who was recently elected to his second term as president of the University of Calgary Students' Union, and being elected twice as president of the students' union is a relatively unique opportunity; Michael Bosch, vice-president external of the University of Calgary Students' Union; and Jason Rumer, vice-president academic of the University of Lethbridge Students' Union.

These representatives of students from across the province serve their constituents well, and they're here today to talk to members of government and to watch as we serve our constituents well, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a guest visiting from the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. Watching the proceedings today is Kim Heyman, the chief administrative officer of a great staff from the county of St. Paul. She's accompanied by her mother, Pamela Napier, from Victoria. Mrs. Napier is retired and has taken up travelling in her retirement and is originally from England, where she hopes to return as a tourist this year. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. You've often heard me talk about the incredible community of artists that we have in Alberta, and I'm thrilled today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very special visual artist, Peter Field. Some of you Edmontonians will remember Peter's work as artistic director for the First Night Festival, designing the huge puppets and the parade icons and

characters like the Big Mamas or the big chairs that sat atop the transit information centre for a number of years or any of the downtown murals that he's done. Peter currently has an exhibit running at the Works Gallery in Commerce Place until April 1. The exhibit is called Chickens, and for anyone with a drop of prairie blood in them, you've got to see these portraits of chickens. You absolutely must. I would ask Peter to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second introduction today is the two people that work in my constituency office. They do all of the work to make me look good, and I'm very appreciative of that. [interjections] And I need a lot of help, yes. All right. The first person is Jane Wisener. Jane is from New Brunswick, and we managed to get her all the way out here as a good Liberal. She graduated with a poli-sci degree from Mount Allison, and she ran a very successful campaign that gave me my colleague in Edmonton-Rutherford. Jane is already standing. Could I ask Jim Draginda to join her? Jim comes from a career at the *Edmonton Journal* for 14 years, United Way for three years, and then went into arts administration. I have managed to scoop him from arts administration to work in my office as the caseworker. Thank you both very much for joining us, and please accept the welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today as well, actually. The first is a group of seniors from Luther Place, connected to Hosanna Lutheran church. I met with them earlier in the rotunda. There are 22 of them, and they are led by Mr. Walter Adolph. I think they are in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of all members.

I would also like to introduce some of our staff, who are seated in the public gallery, four altogether. The first one is my special assistant, Susie Sykes. Susie has been working with me since last summer and has a degree in communications from Ryerson, went to high school in Edmonton, and is I think happy to be back here in Edmonton. The second is our senior administrator, Leigh Anne McCrowe. She joined our caucus after working at the University of Alberta and, before that, several years in the private sector. She grew up in Newfoundland, so we're representing all provinces here, just about. Third, I'd like Yolande Cole to stand. She works in our media liaison group. She's a recent grad of journalism from Mount Royal College in Calgary. And last, Vivienne Kostiuik, if she could rise. She's also an assistant to me. She grew up in Lloydminster and, after living and working overseas for 13 years, has returned to join our team.

Mr. Speaker, if I'm not organized after the help of these four women, I am helpless. I ask all members to give them a warm welcome, and I hope they enjoy their stay with us. Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this Assembly residents of Ottewell Place seniors' lodge, which is very well run by the Greater Edmonton Foundation – it is located in the south end of the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar – and also two residents of Virginia Park seniors' lodge, who are together today on a tour of the Alberta Legislature. They are accompanied by Kristi Getz, their recreational co-ordinator; volunteer Wilma Nerenberg; and their bus driver, Mrs. Vicki Noël.

I would ask them now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 35 grade 6 students and three supervisors from the Polish bilingual arts program at St. Basil school in Edmonton. They are attending the School at the Leg. this week. They are led by Vice-Principal Teresa Kiryluk, Mr. Luke Wasik, Mr. Roman Kalinowski. Could you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you 24 members of our outstanding public service, who are here for the public service orientation tour of the Legislature. We have one from Advanced Education, six from Education, one from Finance, one from Government Services, two from Health and Wellness, one from HR and E, eight from my Department of Infrastructure and Transportation, one from IIR, one from PAO, one from Restructuring and Government Efficiency, and one from Sustainable Resource Development. We couldn't be here today if it wasn't for these people, and I'd ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've got two sets of introductions today. Just to remind the House that today is World Poetry Day, and on this very important day we have three poets visiting with us. The first one is Christina Grant. She's the interim executive director of the Writers' Guild of Alberta. The Writers' Guild of Alberta was formed in 1980 to provide a meeting ground and collective for the writers of this province. The guild acts as a strong representative voice with the public and with every level of government. Ms Grant strongly believes that the province of Alberta will benefit greatly by having a provincial poet laureate. I ask Ms Grant to rise and wait for me to introduce the other two members of her group.

Andrew Thompson is a poet and the president of the Stroll of Poets Society, which operates in my constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. The Stroll of Poets Society was founded in 1991 to address the need to promote poetry as a popular art form. Stroll stages two annual poetry festivals, publishes an annual anthology, and offers other programs such as a reading series and workshops. Mr. Thompson has been involved in Edmonton's local poetry scene since 1980 and was a founding member of the Stroll of Poets Society.

My third guest, Mr. Thomas Trofimuk, is a member of the Raving Poets, a group who read and perform Tuesday nights at a pub in my constituency. Mr. Trofimuk is the author of a book called *The 52nd Poem* and will be launching his newest novel, *Doubting Yourself to the Bone*, in September. Now I would ask these three guests if they are not standing already to stand and please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second set of guests, Mr. Speaker, represents the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, called NAARR. Ms Charlene Hay is the program manager and head researcher of this organiza-

tion. She is a former teacher who has taught in Africa and with aboriginal children in Alberta. Charlene received her MEd in educational foundations in 1989, and I had the pleasure of being her supervisor. She also happens to be my constituent, and during the past several years she has managed the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations. With her today is NAARR's youth organizer, Mr. Oliver Kamau. Mr. Kamau conducts outreach to youth on behalf of NAARR and leads such efforts within the organization as the peace ambassadors' initiative, which uses everything from games to drama to help youth to recognize and help eliminate racism. I'd ask both of these guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly three gentlemen who are seated in the public gallery. They are Mr. Paul Moist, the president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. CUPE represents 535,000 public-sector workers across Canada, including hospital workers, school workers, child care workers, and municipal workers. Mr. Moist became a CUPE member at age 19 in 1975 and was elected president of CUPE Manitoba in 1997 and elected president of CUPE national in October of 2003.

Mr. D'Arcy Lanovaz, president of CUPE Alberta, has been active in the labour movement for over a decade now, first with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and now with CUPE.

Finally, Mr. Alex Grimaldi, who is currently the president of CUPE local 30, representing city of Edmonton outside workers. He is also the former president of the Edmonton & District Labour Council. I joined these three gentlemen today at the multicultural luncheon sponsored by CUPE local 1158 in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I'm very pleased that they were able to take time out of their very busy schedules to be with us today, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Definition of Marriage

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The line between the PC Party and the government gets blurred more every day. After announcing last Wednesday that a fight against federal civil marriage legislation is completely unwinnable, this government has now decided to waste taxpayer money to appease the right wing of the PC Party and fight a costly legal battle it is guaranteed to lose. Once again the interests of the taxpayer come after the interests of the Tory party. To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: how does this minister justify wasting taxpayers' dollars on a legal battle that the Premier and the Justice minister have admitted they cannot win?

1:50

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, that's a good question, and I think I will have the hon. Deputy Premier answer that question.

Mrs. McClellan: And that was a good answer, too, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the government caucus and the people that we represent in our constituencies feel very strongly about the traditional definition of marriage. However, having said

that, I will let the Leader of the Official Opposition know that we are considering all of our options at this time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, back to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, who presumably is interested in cost-benefit analyses: can that minister explain the cost-benefit analysis of fighting civil marriage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing I want to explain is we try to do everything we possibly can for our constituents and all Albertans. I believe that the hon. Deputy Premier did a very good job answering that question with her first answer.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, perhaps then to the Deputy Premier: will she elucidate the House on what the other options are that are being considered?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, at this point that's a bit hypothetical. But what I will tell the hon. leader is that when we have reviewed our options and have made a determination as to which options we will choose, I will be happy to elucidate the House.

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

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not getting much elucidation so far, so let's try the Minister of Community Development. What will be the role of the Alberta Human Rights Commission in the government's strategy to fight same-sex marriage?

Mr. Mar: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Community Development responsible for the Human Rights Commission, obviously I'm at the table as these things are discussed. I would certainly bring forward any perspective that the Human Rights Commission feels is appropriate.

Dr. Taft: Well, then, to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: given that the Premier and the Justice minister have both admitted that they cannot win the legal battle over same-sex marriage, will the minister be investigating why the government is throwing away taxpayer dollars on this issue?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that this government has spent any money or thrown any money away on anything at this point in time. The hon. Deputy Premier has said that we are looking at all different avenues on anything we can do to protect marriage between one man and one woman.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, again to the same Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: given that the government is wasting taxpayer money on this issue to shore up support for the PC Party, will this minister ask that the legal fees for this action be paid out of the PC Party bank account?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I think we've answered the question once already, that we're not wasting any taxpayers' money. Absolutely not will I be going to the party for anything.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no shortage of skilled industrial trades labour in Alberta; there's just a shortage of cheap labour. Government has just approved an application for the first 680 temporary foreign construction workers to work in the oil sands. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: why has this government not done its duty to ensure employment for Albertans and Canadians first or offered training for these positions to unemployed aboriginals, unemployed youth, underemployed landed immigrants, or displaced farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To start with, I want to clarify that there is no cheap labour. These workers that come in will have to follow all the standards and policies laid out in Alberta. Again, I'd like to stress the fact that the issue of a labour shortage or the issue of a strong economy should not be looked at as a negative thing for Alberta. It's a challenge that most jurisdictions in North America would love to have: a strong, diversified economy and lots of jobs for everybody.

Now, when an industry wants to hire people, the first thing they have to do, number one, is hire local people, hire Albertans, hire aboriginal people, hire Canadians first. Yes, Mr. Speaker, if that is exhausted, the next step is the employer then applies to the federal Liberals for approval of the process to bring in workers.

Mr. Backs: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: understanding that this minister in this Legislature has said that there would be no temporary foreign workers approved for the oil sands until Albertan and Canadian labour sources were exhausted, why has this government teamed up with the federal government to approve this first group of 680 temporary foreign workers?

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I stress the fact that our priority is to hire local people first. Our priority is to hire Albertans, aboriginal people, persons with development disabilities, and Canadians. Until that is exhausted, then nothing else happens.

Mr. Backs: A third supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: why is this government providing huge royalty breaks to large oil sands firms while Albertans are denied access to the good jobs there?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are not denied access. We have more job openings than we have people right now, and the challenges we have are to ensure that the proper training and programs are in place. I'll give you some examples of some of the communities we're dealing with in northern Alberta. Wabasca, which used to be in my constituency, 5,000 population, still underemployed and unemployed in some cases. They are interested in these jobs. It's a matter of putting in the infrastructure, the training, the road network in that region so these local people can

work in these jobs, and they're not given that opportunity. That is our priority.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Southeast Edmonton Ring Road

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government misled Albertans in claiming that building the southeast Edmonton ring road by conventional means would cost \$4 million more than if a P3 public/private partnership was used. Last Thursday the infrastructure minister admitted that the cost of conventional financing had been deliberately inflated by 10 per cent to make the P3 look better in comparison. In other words, the P3 model preferred by this government will cost Albertans \$41 million more than it should. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Will the minister commit here and now to table immediately all documents relating to the financing of the southeast Edmonton ring road by conventional means?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First off, I would like to say, through the Speaker to the hon. member, that the facts that he has basically stated are completely, 100 per cent false. What we did is we put out what is called a public-sector comparator, which is a potential estimate of what that road would cost. Included in the P3 process is the agreement that it could cost 10 per cent either way. It could be 10 per cent higher or 10 per cent lower. There was a private-sector panel who looked at this every step of the way. The Auditor General looked at this every step of the way.

I would ask the hon. member to be honourable and withdraw that question.

2:00

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that the government issued the number, the 10 per cent, rounded up when they told the public about the full price of this project by conventional means?

Dr. Oberg: Absolutely not.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that this answer completely contradicts the answer that the minister gave on Thursday, will the government now admit that this southeast Edmonton ring road project, like the Calgary courthouse and the southeast Calgary hospital, will cost more as a P3, and will this government also consign this project to the P3 graveyard and get on with building a proper road?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the P3 project on the Anthony Henday has several huge advantages. I recognize that the hon. member is from Edmonton, but, for example, it will be built two years sooner doing it this way. The private-sector component, the P3 component, of this particular road will assume all responsibility for cost overages. There is a warranty for 30 years – 3-0 years – on this particular road. While that is extremely, extremely valuable to us, if I was a MLA for Edmonton, I would be extremely happy that we get the road early and get it on time. It's wonderful for the city of Edmonton.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

B.C. Ports Strategy

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The importance of transportation links for our products moving to the Pacific Rim cannot be understated or overstated or stated at all. The recent announcement of the opening of a rail link from Alberta to Prince Rupert gives rise to a question. It is my understanding that the Alberta government has endorsed the British Columbia ports strategy at the B.C./Alberta joint cabinet meeting held March 18 and 19. What does this endorsement mean for the province of Alberta?

The Speaker: I gather it's directed to a particular minister?

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: You know what happens now, Mr. Speaker. I'm now under some suspicion that I might have actually written the question. It ain't so.

Mr. Speaker, I was there. I was in Cranbrook on Thursday and Friday, when we had a joint cabinet meeting with colleagues from the British Columbia government. Yes, in fact, on the agenda was the B.C. ports strategy. We recognize in Alberta from an economic development standpoint just the urgency and the strategic advantage, of course, that as Albertans we would have not only in the further development of the port of Vancouver but, probably even more importantly, in the importance and the strategic opportunity of developing the port of Prince Rupert.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For clarification, the minister didn't write the question. However, I will make it clear that the supplemental question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Does Alberta's endorsement of the B.C. ports strategy commit our province to funding or partnering in any funding of any project or program?

Mr. Dunford: No, it won't, but we will still play a critical role. I think it's important that British Columbia and Alberta on the B.C. ports strategy try to speak with one voice wherever we can. I believe that we will go to Ottawa with British Columbia in some type of format, then, to not only present the economic business case for this particular strategy but, I think, to once again point out to the rest of Canadians that there are a lot of things that are happening on the west coast and in the western part of this country. That, of course, is an important message that we have to get out to all Canadians.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Game Farming

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Health Canada's risk assessment for transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, including chronic wasting disease, Report 2000, concluded, and I quote: the highest risk ranking of Canadian domestic products were pharmaceuticals containing high-risk tissues and elk antler food supplements. The report further states, quote: the possibility of BSE risk to humans must now be acknowledged. To the Minister of Health: given the profound impact of BSE and its impact on human health and the economy, will the minister acknowledge the potential risk to humans of this prion disease?

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member did me the service of advising me by note this afternoon that he had forwarded the information that he is referencing to our medical health officer. We'll be pleased to review that information. As of a few minutes ago it had not yet arrived.

I would like to comment that in conjunction with the Minister of Agriculture we have been part of a study – Health has supported a study – that is going to do Alberta-based research into issues surrounding BSE, and I look forward to that. Presently, I have no further comment other than to say that I appreciate the notice, and I look forward to reading the information.

Dr. Swann: Again to the Minister of Health: will the government work with Health Canada to immediately ban the use of elk antler velvet?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say no. At this point I have no further information to base my comments on other than the hon. member's question, which I have committed to undertake a review of.

Dr. Swann: That was reported five years ago, the high risk of elk antler velvet.

Given the Premier's promise since 1992 to hold a public inquiry, will this government now hold a public review of the game ranching industry in Alberta?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to invite the hon. minister of agriculture to respond to the hon. member, please.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to respond to the question. We are constantly reviewing all of the industries in the province and, as such, have been reviewing game farming and hunt ranching, as the Premier answered last week in answer to the question. We are working diligently with the elk industry and with the other ruminant industries in the province to ensure that not only are they safe but that they are going to be viable into the future.

I think, Mr. Speaker, to compare the CWD risk to human health risk when science is telling us – and I've not had the pleasure of reviewing anything that the hon. member has brought forward – that to link it to health risk and to compare it to BSE health risk is akin to what a group of ranchers in Montana right now are trying to do by suggesting Canadian beef is unsafe because of BSE. I believe that to be irresponsible fearmongering, and I just think it's a direct shot at those producers who are working very hard.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton McClung.

Student Loans

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a most shameful manner the Prime Minister snubbed postsecondary students along with the media and most Albertans during his visit to Alberta last week. I know many students who would have liked to ask him about the recently announced increase of the federal student loan limit by his government as they're very concerned about how this impacts their student loan debt limits. My first question is to the Minister of

Advanced Education. Is there anything that the Alberta government can do to assist students in dealing with this increase in federal loan limits?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has indicated that it will increase the combined provincial/federal student loan limit by \$540 for the 2005-06 academic year, bringing it up to \$12,140. On one hand, this is good news because it will assist the students getting the financial resources they need to complete their education. On the other hand, it will allow students to graduate with more federal debt.

Alberta has no power over the federal government's approach to their student loan limits. What I can indicate to the hon. member is that we do have a remission policy in this province, which allows us to remit provincial debt that students incur over the course of the debt load. That remission policy actually works very well to forgive almost all, in many cases, of the provincial debt load that's there. So we'll have to work with the federal government to encourage them to follow suit with their student loan program to allow student loan remissions on the federally granted loans side.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the minister. Is Alberta's approach to increasing the student loan limit different from the federal government's?

Mr. Hancock: Well, our process is considerably different. In the first case, this is the first time, I think, in 10 years that the federal government has increased their student loan limit, and so it's done sort of on a one-off basis, with a massive period in time. We increase ours on a regular basis to keep pace with inflation. Our student loan limits increase with respect to the cost of living, with respect to mandatory fees and other learning costs to recognize the increases, yes, in tuition fees, those other things. So we've urged the federal government to take a similar approach, to do it on a continual basis rather than to do it periodically and sporadically.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: what is the Alberta government doing overall to increase the affordability of postsecondary education?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier announced in his conversation with the province at the beginning of February of this year, first of all, that the province would pay the increase in tuition fee for students this year. So that gives us an opportunity to hold the line for a year on the increases while we look at our tuition fee policy but, more broadly than that, look at affordability because finances cannot be a barrier to a student getting an education.

We need all Albertans to have the opportunity to access education so that we can deal with some of the skills-shortage issues. We can maximize the human potential in this province. So we will be taking a very careful look over the course of this year involving the institutions, involving students, involving the community in talking about how we make sure that getting a postsecondary education is

affordable, that there's a proper balance between the amount that the student and their family pays and the amount that society pays for the benefit that society gets, and making sure that everyone knows that they can get that postsecondary education. We will make sure that their finances are affordable.

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

SuperNet

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, RAGE, agreed last week that the SuperNet project was long overdue. My question is to the hon. minister. Why did this government not accept the bid from Telus when, in fact, Telus had 75 per cent of the infrastructure already in place?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't here at the time when Telus was around or when that bid actually went, but I do know that I'm sure whoever was in charge at the time did what was responsible and looked at all the bids and made sure they picked the very best bid that came in. I would like to let the — ah, that's enough information for him for today.

Mr. Elsalhy: Again to the same minister: please share with us why the penalties and provisions stipulated in the contract with Bell were not enforced to hold this private-sector company accountable. That's probably another fine example of a successful P3.

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I want the hon. member across to know that the SuperNet has been moving along very, very well lately. I explained to him last week how many new ISP readies were coming on stream, and I just got another note passed to me this morning before I came to the House that we had 29 more come on this week. We had Barons, Bassano, Blue Ridge, Cardston, Carmangay, Champion, Duffield, Elnora, Entwistle, Evansburg . . .

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister: given that the ministry will not reimburse communities and public agencies for the upgrades and interoperability costs, how do you propose that these public agencies make their networks compatible with Bell SuperNet without your government's support?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, the \$193 million that this government committed to the SuperNet program includes all the hookups of all the municipalities, the schools, the libraries.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Electronic Health Record

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January our Premier announced that this government would be fast-tracking the provincial electronic health record. My question is to the Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness. Would the minister please tell us where this province is today with the rollout of the electronic health record?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since October 2003 we have trained 9,000 health care providers in the use of the electronic record. We are currently looking at the three strategies that have

been in place with Calgary, with Capital, and with the rural providers, developing a plan to embrace in a formal fashion the co-ordination of all of the strategies for the electronic health record to ensure better patient care and a number of other obvious benefits to the health care system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. How will the electronic health record address some of our real issues we're facing in our health system like improving access and patient safety?

Ms Evans: The opportunity to co-ordinate the system to better schedule when we have patient transfers, the opportunity to avoid adverse events by understanding the legibility of the record.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I want to just ask the hon. member and others present to imagine a bank where you're told you can get your money at only one branch because it's where your records are. You can use your bank card only in bank machines at your own bank, if at all, your balance is incorrect because the teller's handwriting is illegible, you're told to wait for two hours while your money is being sent by taxi from head office, and you do not have Internet access to your accounts. What the electronic record will do is put us even further ahead. We're already number one in Canada, and we lead many places in the nation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Big Lake Natural Area

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight in St. Albert a proposal is being presented by the city of St. Albert, the city of Edmonton, Parkland county, and Sturgeon county to initiate application to the government of Alberta to have the Big Lake area designated as a provincial park. Big Lake is an important area for the sustainability of wetlands that support many plant and animal species. My question to the Minister of Community Development: will this government commit to changing the status of Big Lake from a natural area to the more protected designation of a provincial park?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, Big Lake's natural area is an internationally renowned area for nesting and migrating of waterfowl and shorebirds. We are willing to work with the four municipalities as partners. The area in question already is under provincial Crown lands, so the proposal, at least in its current iteration, is that the current boundaries remain the same and that, as the hon. member said, the level of protection would be higher. I don't anticipate any great challenges in this at this point, but that's the reason why we're waiting for the municipalities to come back to us with a plan for proposal that we can consider. If there are challenges that are presented by moving it to a provincial park designation, I can assure the hon. member that we'll make whatever efforts we can in order to try and resolve those difficulties.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment: will this government commit to developing a more integrated approach to managing water resources which will guarantee the sustainability of the water from the Big Lake basin?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, and a very good point raised by the hon. member. I want to assure all Albertans that our government, through the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Energy, is working on what we refer to as an IRM, integrated resource management, approach for the exact points that the hon. member has raised.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Community Development: will this government commit to honouring the memory of the late the Honourable Dr. Lois E. Hole by designating Big Lake as the Lois Hole/Big Lake provincial park?

Mr. Mar: We cannot make a commitment to that at this time, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Temporary Foreign Workers (continued)

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A follow-up on the Ledcor Industries Limited approval to bring in 684 temporary tradespeople over the next year to work in oil sands projects under the banner of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, and of course they're the favourite big oil union. The decision to bring in these foreign workers is being made despite a 6 per cent unemployment rate in the construction industry, according to this government's own figures. My question to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: why is the government prepared to allow temporary foreign workers to build oil sands projects at the expense of skilled Canadian tradespeople when there is already a 6 per cent unemployment rate in the construction industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:20

Mr. Cardinal: Yeah, Mr. Speaker. I just want to mention again that that's very similar to the question I answered already, but I just want to mention that this member is talking about what may happen a year from now. That's part of his question. He's projecting that this will happen a year from now. At the same time, again, I want to stress the fact to these members – and I'm going to file this document that shows exactly what an employer has to do – that the employer here in Alberta has to exhaust all avenues available before any foreign workers are brought in. You've got to hire local people. You've got to hire Albertans first. You've got to hire aboriginal people, persons with development disabilities. Then you go beyond that, go outside anywhere in Canada to try and bring in the labour force that's required.

It's not an easy job, but again it's a good problem to have. Most jurisdictions in North America would love to have that problem and that challenge, Mr. Speaker. We are in a good position to be able to meet those challenges. My department alone spends \$280 million a year in training for 4,000 apprentices, and we're trying our best to fill those jobs.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, this is not hypothetical. This has been approved by the federal government.

My question is: why is this government going along with bringing these people in – and I'll repeat it again – when there's already a 6

per cent unemployment rate in the construction industry? Why are they doing it?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, there are lots of jobs for all Albertans. In fact, the question wouldn't come up if there weren't any jobs. There are lots of jobs for all Albertans. You can be assured that when everything is exhausted here to hire local people in Alberta, then the federal government does the approval process. I will file this document because step-by-step it shows you exactly what the employer has to do. It shows you exactly what Human Resources and Skills Development of Canada has to do in order to bring the foreign workers into Alberta.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, this is already occurring.

At least would this government be honest in that the real reason that they're encouraging foreign workers to come into Alberta is to give their big oil company friends cheaper labour costs? This is what it's all about.

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, the opposition member again is not right by saying that we're bringing in cheap labour. Any employee that gets hired – Albertans, Canadians, aboriginal people, and employees from across Canada – has to meet the labour standards in Alberta. I'll give you an example. CNRL projected that during the construction the average salary will be \$95,000 a year. I don't class that as cheap labour. I don't call that starvation wages.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Film Development Program

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta film development program was established in 1998 to try and encourage Alberta-based film production. Since then, other provinces have increased and expanded their tax credit based programs to entice more foreign production to their jurisdictions. Most recently, in response to similar moves south of the border, both B.C. and Ontario have increased their tax credits to 20 per cent of all eligible labour cost in their provinces to try and retain their current level of production. Could the Minister of Community Development please tell the House what impact these increased credits are having on our Alberta-based production?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to identify it this early in the year. I can give some background information, sir, on the total expenditures for Alberta-based productions and coproductions that were supported under the film program under the Department of Community Development. This year the total for that is about \$133 million, and of that, \$64 million was spent directly here in the province of Alberta. The result is that there were 3,000 people involved in this industry, including 450 directly involved in acting and performing.

We do know, Mr. Speaker, from the industry that our system of grants is much less complicated and cumbersome than the system of tax credits that's used in many other jurisdictions in Canada. We do know also that increasing the tax credits in places like British Columbia and Ontario does reduce production costs of film, so we know that this may have some impact on our film industry. To what extent it's too early to tell, and I can tell you that the department is currently involved in discussions with the industry on possible improvements to our film production grant program.

Ms Haley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that our program is oversubscribed every year and that we are still losing production to our neighbouring provinces, could the Minister of Community Development tell me what steps he is taking to try and expand film production in Alberta?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, our department's film development program currently has a budget of monies in the amount of \$13.5 million. It has resulted in a very strong resident industry in the province of Alberta. This is one of the great advantages of having the grant program as opposed to film credits, which do not require that the work actually be done in the province. So, for example, there may be a \$50 million project done in the province of Ontario that takes advantage of film credits but does not in fact result in \$50 million worth of economic activity in the province of Ontario.

So we are working at trying to improve our program. We're in ongoing discussions with the industry to determine how best we can improve our program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is for the Minister of Economic Development. I would ask if it's possible for him to tell us what steps he and the film commissioner are recommending that we make in Alberta to make it an attractive location not only for Alberta-based production but also for foreign or guest production?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have the Film Commission Advisory Council, and they have made representations to the minister colleague and myself. There seem to be two areas that we need to focus on. The first one has a bit of a tourism bent. We can employ, I think, Travel Alberta with their marketing expertise as we go out into the world, not only to the United States but also into Asia and Europe, and talk about Alberta not only from a tourist-type perspective but also from film location, and we of course plan to do that. The other one would be in the area of human capital in the sense that we also can attract film to the province by making sure that we have the artists, the technicians, the administrative-type people that are available so that we can have an effective and an efficient film industry here in the province. Of course, we'll work with the Minister of Advanced Education on that as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Software Licences for Schools

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Conservative government continues to claim that it runs a tight ship and provides the best services possible with the taxpayers' dollar. Opposition members are duty bound to hold government accountable, to ask questions and to seek information about the government's activities. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Is the minister prepared today to provide details of the tendering process regarding the government's \$6.3 million deal with Microsoft for software licences for the educational system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, in actual fact the Microsoft licensing project was one that benefited both advanced ed

and our K to 12 system, but primarily it was a K to 12 initiative. My understanding is that that was an open competition, there was a list of accredited companies that were invited to bid on that, and in the end the successful bidder was reviewed against the usual criteria and that contract was awarded in that fashion.

Mr. Taylor: Okay, Mr. Speaker. I'll direct my first supplemental question, then, to the Minister of Education. Will the minister commit to ascertaining whether after the government of Ontario signed a similar software deal with Sun Microsystems for next to nothing, Microsoft responded by offering its software to Ontario educators for nothing more than a nominal administrative fee?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a part of our ongoing improvements in technology opportunities for our students. I'm not aware of what the jurisdiction in Ontario may have done. What I am comfortable with is what Alberta did. We did what was right at the time: to enter into an agreement that went through a standard open-competition tendering process. The net result of it is an incredible array of new information and new software for our students to work with. For example, we're very proud that Alberta is the only jurisdiction that has exclusive licensing rights to use all of National Geographic's material, the only jurisdiction to do that. It's through these kinds of initiatives that we're able to move that particular technological advancement forward.

2:30

Mr. Taylor: Well, I'll try my last question, then, to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. When can this Assembly expect a report on this contract to be tabled?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, in many cases the responsibility of securing contracts remains with the individual ministries. We would be involved in software version upgrades or modifications for licences over \$50,000, and I'm not sure that what he's speaking about is in that range.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Municipal Tax Exemptions

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I've recently learned that some Legions in my constituency are completely tax exempt while others pay property tax only on the lounge portion of their facilities. Can the minister explain what the Municipal Government Act says about Alberta Legions paying property tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Municipal Government Act does exempt certain properties from taxation, and that would include hostels, not-for-profit organizations, and student dormitories. Section 363 specifically exempts property that's "used in connection with a branch or local unit of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada or other organization of [any of the] former members of any allied forces." The act also provides for the option for municipalities to exclude themselves from that exemption, and there could be a number of reasons for that. Usually it's the canteen version that the municipality feels is in direct competition with other businesses within the community. They therefore, then, use their ability to opt out.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental to the same minister: given that Legions do such good and charitable work as community halls and churches, who are tax exempt currently, will the minister change section 363 of the MGA to make all Legions in Alberta 100 per cent tax exempt?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, just as the MGA recognizes that not all communities are alike, I would suggest to the hon. member that perhaps not all Legions are alike. This is the kind of decision that really needs to be taken on a case-by-case basis and is best left up to the expertise and the community knowledge of local councils, and I would urge the member to advise his constituent to contact his or her local council with respect to this issue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Métis Hunting Rights

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The uncertainty over the Métis hunting agreement continues to cause a great deal of concern within Alberta's hunting, fishing, and conservation community. With the agreement itself making very little reference to conservation and the Sustainable Resource Development minister admitting that the Métis can hunt protected animals for subsistence, there are still more questions than answers regarding this agreement. To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: can this minister define subsistence as it is used for the purposes of the Métis harvesting agreement?

Ms Calahasen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I certainly can. Subsistence means that it's for noncommercial purposes.

Mr. Tougas: To the same minister: given that the Supreme Court decision was in regard to Métis hunting on their traditional lands and keeping in mind that Alberta already provides thousands of acres to Métis settlements, why did this agreement expand beyond Métis settlements?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Powley case certainly didn't talk about Métis settlements. The Powley case came from, actually, Ontario, where there are no settlements, as a matter of fact. What it talked about was being able to deal with the Métis settlements aboriginal rights to hunt, fish, and trap on unoccupied Crown lands.

Mr. Tougas: To the same minister: can the minister provide a date when a draft version of the Métis harvesting agreement will be available for public scrutiny?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Powley case of 2003 was actually a case that recognized the aboriginal harvesting rights for the Métis, and that agreement we did with two of the Métis settlements: the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Settlements General Council. Those agreements are between the government and the Métis settlements.

However, having said that, I have indicated to anyone who would like to talk about these agreements to sit down with me in a format where we would be able to address the concerns that have been brought forward by all the different groups. I have had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to go out and meet with the various groups to be

able to address the concerns, and I have attended a number of public meetings to address those very issues. I think it's really wonderful to have people who are interested in conservation because when we're dealing with the conservation of the natural resources we have, we want to ensure that we continue to do that, and that's what these agreements have done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Southeast Edmonton Ring Road

(continued)

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Could he please advise the Assembly about the time frame for the southeast portion of the Anthony Henday?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent question. Because of the P3 arrangement I'm able to stand here today and say that the 120 lane kilometres and 24 bridges will be open for the citizens of Edmonton in the fall of 2007.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lougheed: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the minister as well: what will be the impact on highways 21 and 14?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, access to highway 14 will be extremely increased. It will be much easier to get onto highway 14, and indeed heading out east of Edmonton will be made a whole lot easier. But probably more important is there will be a lot of traffic that will be redirected off a very busy highway 21 that will be able to be taken in by the new ring road. Mr. Speaker, through to the hon. member, I've had the opportunity of travelling with the hon. member on highway 21, and it is going to alleviate traffic in that heavily congested area to a large, large degree.

Mr. Lougheed: A follow-up question, Mr. Speaker: what would be the estimate of the time saving for members of my constituency to get down to the Calgary Trail or to the International Airport, for example?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, my residence tends to be in Sherwood Park, and this morning it took me about an hour to get down to the airport, so I do believe that a ring road is going to make the trip to either highway 2 or to the International Airport much easier for not just your constituents, hon. member, but for everyone in east Edmonton and everyone in northeastern Alberta. This is going to be a huge, huge economic benefit to the people of north-eastern Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Centennial Projects

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has allocated funds for a variety of centennial events. However, it appears that most of the projects described as legacy projects are in

fact required infrastructure maintenance. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. Can this government explain how renovating old buildings can be described as a celebration of Alberta's centennial?

Mr. Mar: Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been a wide variety of projects that have been given centennial legacy funding. Some of them are brand new facilities; for example, the brand new Millennium Place in Sherwood Park was partly funded by centennial legacy funds. In Spruce Grove and other jurisdictions, in Calgary and throughout the province some facilities have been new. It's true, as the hon. member says, that some of the facilities were renovations of existing facilities, facilities that are important parts of the communities they serve. For example, I don't think anybody would suggest that significant amounts of monies that we spent on the two Jubilee auditoria were somehow not an important part of the legacy of the province of Alberta. Those facilities were a gift to the people of the province of Alberta in 1955. Now 50 years later in the year 2005 they will be reopened in the fall to provide again another hundred years of terrific service to the people of the province of Alberta.

2:40

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: can this government explain how all Alberta artists can travel to Ottawa and Atlantic Canada to participate in the Alberta Scene celebrations when they have to pay most of their own costs?

Mr. Mar: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Scene in Ottawa is a tremendous opportunity for Albertans to demonstrate the gift of their culture and their arts to the rest of the nation. For 10 days, commencing on the 28th of April, some 600 Alberta artists will be at venues including the National Arts Centre and dozens of other venues around the city of Ottawa demonstrating everything from visual arts to performing arts to culinary arts.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government has put a significant contribution into this project. It is true that artists will be making, no doubt, some out-of-pocket expenditures themselves, but in combination with the federal government and the provincial government this is a tremendous opportunity for Albertans to share the great richness and diversity of their culture with other Canadians.

Mr. Agnihotri: Again to the same minister: can this government provide all Albertans with a breakdown of what percentage of the centennial budget is for bricks and mortar projects?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, that's obvious to anybody that reads Public Accounts. This is what we do.

head:

Recognitions

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now I'll call upon the first of seven.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations first recognized this day in 1966, designated in memory of anti-apartheid demonstrators killed or injured in Sharpeville, South Africa, in 1960.

Mr. Speaker, this special day reminds us that we all have a responsibility to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms are

safeguarded for us as human beings and citizens of this world. Let us use this opportunity to remind ourselves to foster greater equality and fairness for all our citizens, who represent a rich mosaic of cultures woven into the strong fabric of our province and our nation. Let us celebrate the uniqueness of each individual and each culture. Let us embrace a vision and shared belief of Alberta that values the dignity and worth of every citizen. We can by working together create an Alberta free of racial discrimination.

As chair of the Advisory Committee on the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund I encourage all Albertans to join their community and the members of this House in working towards this goal.

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

Brendan Thomas Bellingham

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday, March 13, the aptly named Great Kids of Alberta were recognized during the Premier's excellence awards in Edmonton, and the youngest recipient was from the constituency of Calgary-Lougheed.

Brendan Thomas Bellingham was born two months premature, was resuscitated at birth, and was transferred to a third-level facility to receive intensive treatment. Brendan was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, and he has had numerous surgeries and intense therapies for much of his short life. Brendan is now six years old, and I'm pleased to report that Brendan enjoys grade 1, downhill skiing, swimming, martial arts, and helping other children. He's taken part in community launches and many other charity events, including the Miracle Treat Day for the Children's Miracle Network. Recently Brendan sang live during a radiothon, and his recording was rebroadcast many times in an effort that raised \$880,000 for the Alberta Children's hospital. I can tell you from firsthand experience that Brendan sings like a little angel.

Brendan Bellingham is an intrepid young Albertan who is an inspiration to us all, and I'm proud to have him in my riding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Parents Empowering Parents

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure that I ask this Assembly to recognize the group Parents Empowering Parents, or PEP. PEP is a support group for parents whose teenage and young children are abusing alcohol and drugs. These are parents who are feeling helpless as they see their children with addictions. This organization gives somebody to call when in crisis.

PEP also educates and supports parents. It also provides counseling activities and support for teens trying to stay clean and sober. This group meets every second Tuesday in Sherwood Park and is determined to provide support to parents and youth as well as look at what is needed for intervention and do whatever is necessary to have those needs met.

Please join me in congratulating these parents for their initiative.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Fairview College/NAIT Consolidation

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this moment to recognize a significant event in Alberta's postsecondary education system. Saturday, March 12, 2005, commemorated the inaugural graduation ceremony for the self-consolidated Fairview College and Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. First

announced in April 2003, the historic agreement saw NAIT grow to serve over 65,000 full-time, part-time, and apprenticeship students via nine campuses stretching from Edmonton to High Level with a budget of over \$200 million. The consolidation of NAIT and Fairview College along with its six campuses was made official on July 1, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, this successful alliance is a testament to Alberta's commitment to ensuring that all Albertans have access to first-rate, cutting-edge educational opportunities. Not only has this alliance brought NAIT to the true north, but it has brought northern Alberta closer to the province's urban centres, which have customarily offered the educational opportunities we are now seeing in rural Alberta.

I want to congratulate the NAIT Fairview campus graduating class of 2005.

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

Lord Beaverbrook Lords Basketball Team

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so very proud to recognize the Lord Beaverbrook Lords basketball team for winning the Alberta 4A high school basketball championship Saturday night in Calgary. Now, the last time that a Calgary team won that title was in the last century, when Bishop Grandin won it back in 1997.

The Lords defeated Edmonton's Ross Sheppard T-Birds 71-62 in a seesaw battle that saw Jeff Price lead the Lord Beaverbrook offence with 15 points, Beau Lawlor with 14 points, and Greg Jobagy with 13 points. Congratulations to head coach Ray Raymond and everyone involved in bringing this championship back to the best high school in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This special day is observed annually on March 21 because on this day in 1960 police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid pass laws in Sharpeville, South Africa. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was first proclaimed in 1966 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. At that time, the UN called on the international community to step up efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. Sadly, however, 39 years later discrimination still exists.

Mr. Speaker, as we observe this day, we must each resolve to better ourselves every day of the year so that we neither perpetuate nor tolerate racism no matter what the form, no matter what the venue. People are essentially the same all over the world. We may have different traditions, experiences, languages, cultures, or religions, but that's what makes us worth getting to know. Each individual must be judged based on their own merits, not on the colour of their skin, their place of birth, their culture, or their religion. Imagine all that would be lost if each culture kept to itself. That is reason enough for all of us to promote inclusion instead of discrimination.

Thank you.

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

2:50 **International Day for the Elimination
of Racial Discrimination**

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise today to join my colleagues from Stony Plain and Edmonton-McClung to recognize International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this day, of course, over 40 years ago police opened fire on peaceful demonstrators and massacred close to 70 of them. The demonstration was to protest the apartheid pass laws. Proclaiming the day in 1966, the General Assembly of the United Nations called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

This year's theme, Mr. Speaker, is Empowering Youth to Fight Racism. This theme is particularly dear to my heart both as an educator and one who represents a constituency which has a very large number of young Albertans living in it. Too often politicians give lip service to the importance of youth for our collective future. We tend to forget that we must go beyond rhetoric to actually providing young people with the tools, skills, and resources they need to fight racism.

I would call on all hon. members of the House to join me in renewing our collective commitment to work with groups such as the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations in their efforts to eliminate racial discrimination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I beg leave to present the following petitions that have been received for private bills under Standing Order 93(2):

- (1) the petition of Albert Holthuis, Marvin Phillips, Edward Latvala, Werner Scheidler, Brenda Caston, Richard Hester, and John Davis for The Bow Valley Community Foundation Act;
- (2) the petition of Camrose Lutheran College Corporation for the Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act;
- (3) the petition of Rodney Wutch, Kathy Mandeville, Walter Sauve, Fred Weinheimer, and Michael Christie for the Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005; and
- (4) the petition of Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega, an infant, by her legal guardian and father, Douglas George Rewega, for the Brooklynn Hannah George Regewa Right of Civil Action Act.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition with a hundred-plus signatures on it. The petition urges the government to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers."

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to present a petition from a number of largely Calgarians but also from a number of southern Alberta communities such as Claresholm, Airdrie, Coaldale, Picture Butte, Lethbridge, and a number of other communities calling on this government to prohibit the use and "importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines."

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition with 259 signatures on it. The petition urges the government to

"institute a fair and equitable floor price for cattle," which brings us to 1,217 signatures for this session.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

**Bill 31
Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005**

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a bill being the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will ensure that the real estate assurance fund is for consumers. These amendments will prohibit financial institutions and those people that commit fraud in real estate from having access to the fund.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Bill 34
Insurance Amendment Act, 2005**

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005.

With this act the government is following through on its commitment to open an automobile insurance competition to other provinces' Crown insurance corporations. The other amendments in this act will continue the Insurance Act as progressive and contemporary consumer protection legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table with the House five copies of the annual report of the Alberta Teachers' Association for the year 2003, which highlights some of the excellent work the ATA has done for their members with respect to issues relative to government, members' services, professional development, teacher welfare, and administration.

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission it is with pleasure that I table today the requisite number of copies of AADAC's 2003-2004 annual report. This document summarizes AADAC's leadership in services with respect to the education, prevention, and treatment programs for Albertans with alcohol, drug and/or gambling problems.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with three tablings. The first is a copy of a letter, tabled with permission, written by a constituent named Peter Verchomin, who raises the idea of a rebate of half the royalties on natural gas for nitrogen fertilizer production.

The second tabling in the appropriate number of copies, written by Ami Brodribb, tabled with permission, a constituent who is writing to express her concern about lack of financial support for midwives in Alberta.

The third is from a Calgarian, Gracie Seto, whom I met last fall and who has asked me here: "Please bring this letter to the legislative assembly to speak on behalf of . . . people with disabilities who desperately need" an increase in AISH funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from a very concerned parent. The writer very much wants Strathearn school to stay open for the sake of her community and the children in that community.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. The first is from a constituent who is a filmmaker, William Becze, who is noting that it's very difficult to get distribution in Alberta and in Canada and asking us to do whatever we can to help with that issue.

The second tabling is a very good letter on seniors' care written by Judy Brown, and she notes that staffing levels in particular are a problem and that "it's time for people in nursing homes to be considered a priority."

The third tabling is a point of view from St. Albert noting that local kids can fall prey to crystal meth addiction and that a primary goal of a safe injection site is harm reduction.

The last tabling, Mr. Speaker, is in support of Bill 202. This is from Mary Talbot, and noting that if this bill had been in effect sooner, it may have given her the tools to help her child.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today, three of which are from University Heights residents expressing outrage at the lack of provincial consultation. Mary Abel is concerned about the widening of 16th Avenue. Sheila Donaldson is concerned about the effect that roadway connections and the Children's hospital are having on community reserve lands. Doug Bonnyman shares the same community reserve concerns. Finally, Don Smith in his letter urges the provincial government to "consult with the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation" prior to naming or renaming provincial parks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings for the house today. The first, in relation to Bill 202, is an article from the *St. Albert Gazette* talking about the training course that a number of St. Albert firefighters have gone through on how to deal with a fire on a property in which a suspected crystal meth lab is discovered.

The other is a report from the University of Alberta called A Case for Investment, which points out the degree to which funding for

postsecondary institutions in this province has fallen behind other jurisdictions and our funding for K to 12 education in this province as well.

3:00

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. The first one is a document indicating just how big the bonuses were before bankruptcy to some of the senior officials at Enron, including one John Lavorato, who was active in Project Stanley.

The second tabling I have this afternoon is a letter dated March 21, 2005, from myself to the FOIP co-ordinator at Alberta Energy. It indicates that I accept the estimate and am enclosing a deposit of over \$880, which is 50 per cent of the amount, in regard to a freedom of information request I made about Enron.

The third tabling I have is the correct number of copies of a six-page transcript. It is a conversation between a Murray from TransAlta and a Sean from Enron. These are energy traders, and they're discussing the fact of a marriage of convenience between the two companies. This can also be listened to at enrontapes.com, and I would urge all hon. members to have a squint at this.

The last tabling I have is a Markets & Strategic Initiatives report from the Alberta Electric System Operator dated September 2003, and this is further evidence that unfortunately our prices were higher than they should be for electricity in 2001.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table with permission the appropriate number of copies of a letter from a constituent by the name of Shannon Critchley, who has written to me expressing her concern regarding the closing of the RCMP crime lab in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a report with the appropriate number of copies. This report is indicating the process of an addiction from the words of a parent and her addicted child.

I have a second tabling which comes from the October 16 *St. Albert Gazette*. It's entitled Treatment Centres Needed to Help Kids Get Off Meth.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from a constituent named Christine Rogers, who is expressing support for the high school fine arts requirements but also with a reservation about the implementation and the effectiveness in actually achieving the desired results.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table Battling Drugs relative to Bill 202. The author of this position paper is Jac MacDonald of the *Edmonton Journal*. So I table this, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a very good article from the *St. Albert Gazette* on March 5, 2005, about the addiction bill that we are going to be discussing today, that it's finding a great deal of support throughout the province.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tabling with the appropriate copies is to acknowledge the Alberta Grandparents Association, who wanted to identify and recognize the struggle that grandparents have in access to grandchildren and the "extremely onerous and burdensome" requirement for grandparents to gain access to their grandchildren.

Mr. Tougas: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the appropriate number of documents of copies of a letter from Mr. Ron Watt, the president of the Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association, a 168-member group, outlining his concerns about the Métis harvesting agreement.

The Speaker: Now, have I missed anyone?

Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents

The Speaker: Perhaps it's as good a time as any to make a brief comment about tablings. Brevity is very important in our House. It's very different from virtually every other jurisdiction that follows this form of government in the world. There are few parliaments in Canada – the House of Commons does not permit it – that you are allowed to table anything other than statutory requirement tablings.

Now, we've gone into e-mails, cartoons, letters, letters from ourselves to other people, and what have you, and I suspect that – hon. members, this is why I caution you. The only day during the week which is an opportunity for private members to participate in legislation or other activities on their behalf is today. You could conceivably see three hours of tablings, which would be the most devious form of filibuster possible if a private member's bill was coming up, and private members had better understand this very, very carefully. There's a risk in what's going on here.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, March 17, it's my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice also having been given on Thursday, March 17, it's my pleasure to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

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

Bill 202

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great honour that I begin the debate in second reading for Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, 2005, or PCHAD.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 is an extremely important bill for Alberta's children because it gives them a chance to overcome their dangerous drug addictions with the help of their parents and government. It gives them the chance to enter adulthood without criminal records and with renewed opportunities for success. Bill 202, PCHAD, is important to Alberta's parents and families because it gives them a tool for helping their children fight the disease of addiction that has become far too common in our society.

Bill 202 would give provincial authorities and parents the power to place children under the age of 18 into mandatory drug-treatment programs. Instead of considering children who use drugs as a menace, Bill 202 would recognize that children who abuse drugs are victims who are in need of help and protection. An important aspect of this bill is that it allows for parents to be actively involved in their children's recovery by allowing them to initiate the process of addiction treatment.

In fact, the idea for this bill came to me while listening to parents and youth while I was the Youth Secretariat chair for Alberta but especially listening to parents at a methamphetamine conference which took place in Red Deer in 2004. At this conference parents told delegates stories about their children's drug problems. They complained about being helpless while they watched their children destroy their lives.

I would like to take a few minutes to share one of these stories. It's a story about a woman named Audrey Bjornstad, who helped organize the meth conference in Red Deer. She has created an organization called Parents Empowering Parents, and she works tirelessly trying to educate other parents on the crisis facing many of Alberta's children.

Audrey's story begins about two years ago with a normal middle-class family in Sherwood Park. This family consisted of two loving parents and their son, who played hockey, lacrosse, and volleyball. By all standards Audrey's son seemed like a typical child who was well on his way to becoming a productive member of society. One night, however, when Audrey's son was in grade 11, he did not come home. Being a concerned parent, Audrey filed a missing person's report, which prompted a search by the RCMP. That night authorities found Audrey's son at a known meth house. This is how Audrey and her husband found out their son was addicted to crystal meth, even though he denied it vehemently afterwards.

Audrey and her husband tried time and time again to convince their son to go for rehabilitation. He denied having a problem and refused to go. He was so sick that he was not able to help himself, and his parents could do nothing but watch his condition deteriorate. He fell victim to the disease of addiction and was in need of protection and help. Ironically, Audrey's son was too young to buy tobacco and liquor, yet he wasn't too young to refuse treatment for his severe drug addiction. Audrey and her husband were left with nowhere to turn. Their son spent more nights away from home on drugs while they spent more sleepless nights worrying and wondering how they could intervene.

Then they got some good news. Their son had been arrested and was in a youth detention centre. Under normal circumstances

finding out that your child has been arrested is terrible news, but these were not normal circumstances. Their little boy had fallen victim to a deadly drug addiction, and as long as he was in prison, they knew he was not on the streets and not taking drugs.

3:10

Audrey remembers celebrating when her son was selected to play on a hockey team or when her son's school volleyball team got into the playoffs. Today she celebrates the fact that her son is alive. Her son's life had been lost. He is suffering from short- and long-term memory loss and attention deficit disorder. Luckily, he had been chosen to participate in a test treatment program for youth who are addicted to drugs and who have been convicted of a crime. Hopefully, once this program is complete, Audrey's son will be drug free even though his life will never be the same.

Mr. Speaker, Audrey's story is all too common these days. Every community in this province is affected by drugs. This problem is not limited to underprivileged children or children who have only one parent. Having a child who is addicted to drugs does not mean that a parent did a bad job raising that child. The reality is that drugs are very prevalent in our schools and in our communities. Sometimes good children make bad choices. Drugs are not forgiving, and crystal meth and other drugs are extremely addictive and dangerous.

We, as adults, as parents, and as legislators, have a responsibility to help these kids get back on the right path.

Mr. Speaker, there are three complementary ideals that when combined create a healthy society. It is a society in which the vast majority of citizens are encouraged to and helped to accept responsibility for themselves and their families. It is a society where everyone feels that they are responsible members of the community in which they live and work. It is a society where people are inspired to play a part ensuring the well-being of that community. It is a society whose foundation is the family.

Mr. Speaker, parents across this province are asking for our help. They are forming groups, organizing conferences, and taking action. Parents are pulling together and taking responsibility for their families. They are playing their part, ensuring that the well-being of their communities is looked after. Unfortunately, when it comes to making the right decisions for their children, their power is limited.

Bill 202, PCHAD, will give this power back to the parents by allowing parents to make decisions in the best interest of their children, whose judgment is often clouded by the disease of substance addiction. Bill 202 ensures that this process includes the family, which is the foundation of our society.

PCHAD is based on the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act, or PCHIP, which considers children who are involved with prostitution as victims who are in need of help and protection. The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act enables police and child protection workers to apprehend with or without a court order children engaging in or attempting to engage in prostitution. Very often children who are involved with prostitution are also involved with drugs. My great hope is that with Bill 202 we will be able to help our drug-addicted children before they become involved with prostitution, crime, and other dangerous activities.

This is one of the most important aspects of Bill 202. It not only proposes to help children who are addicted to drugs overcome their addictions, but it proposes to do so before they become involved in crime. Currently the only way to force a person into drug rehabilitation is by sentencing them to it as a part of their punishment for being convicted for committing a crime. The premise of Bill 202 is that if a child is forced into rehabilitation because they have committed a crime, it's too late.

The idea of having involuntary addiction treatment is not new. In fact, there are several states in America that have similar legislation.

Washington state is one of these jurisdictions. In that state a person may be involuntarily committed if they either present a likelihood of serious harm to themselves or are gravely disabled by alcohol or drug addiction or the person has threatened or inflicted physical harm on another and is likely to inflict physical harm to another unless they're committed.

Mr. Speaker, children who are abusing drugs are causing serious harm to themselves, and this should be reason enough to intervene. Some people will not like Bill 202 because they believe that it will violate the rights of the child. These people see this bill as an infringement on personal rights and believe that we should be fighting at all costs to protect these rights. I wonder what gives us the right to step back and watch our children fall victim to drug addiction. Children who are addicted to drugs are suffering from a disease, and we have not only a right but an obligation and a duty to help them. This obligation is supported by provincial courts of Alberta, which stated that children, especially young children, are not able to assert their right to life and health. These rights are to be balanced in the child protection context with parental liberty.

Mr. Speaker, we want to be able to help our children. We do not want to be helpless while we watch our children destroy their lives. If we can force our drug-addicted children into rehabilitation programs before they destroy themselves, we can provide them with a variety of life-saving services. First and foremost, we can give them detoxification and drug counselling. In addition to this, however, we can also provide them with mental supports, counselling and psychological services, educational and life supports.

We must remember, Mr. Speaker, that these children are still developing and that we need to do everything in our power to ensure that they develop into healthy and productive members of society. Our children are vulnerable. We as parents raise our children hoping and praying that they become successful. We dream for them, we nurture them, and we teach them. We have the life experience to tell them which choices they should make, but as they grow older, we must allow them to make their own choices. We should, however, be able to help them overcome their bad decisions.

Mr. Speaker, for the sake of our children, our communities, and our futures I strongly urge all members to support Bill 202, PCAD, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a private member's bill, so it will be back and forth with this debate for the remainder of the afternoon.

I'll recognize someone from the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As critic for Children's Services I urge all members of this Assembly to give this bill careful attention and consideration. I believe that its intent is honourable and that action is needed. This bill, when passed, will set up the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act. Its intent is more focused than this suggests. It is intended as a tool for use against addiction in general, and it is a response to a relatively new and specific type of addiction. While it does not mention crystal meth by name, that is the focus that brought this bill forward.

Why a special act for addiction and especially one agent of addiction? The effects of crystal meth are so potent that they call for special attention. They pose dangers that require rapid assessment and response. Most other addictions do not create the same type of unmistakable blips on the radar screen that this act sets as a minimum standard to intervene. It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, a high threshold for intervention and a chemical that uniquely meets it, that I believe I can assure my fellow members that this proposal, this act,

will not be used as a catch-all for dealing with other more widespread types of addiction.

The critical factor about crystal meth is that as many as 50 per cent of users can be addicted with the first dose. They can become paranoid and experience chronic hallucinations and mood disorders. This first-time factor is like the warning on bottles that say: if taken internally, seek immediate medical attention. A person who has taken crystal meth does not have the luxury to wait in line or experiment with remedies. They have crossed a line that is critical. They may not be able to go back on that crossing to regain themselves without expert assistance. The effects are too fast and far-reaching for the usual procedures.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Under current legislation an addicted minor can be committed for treatment only through the criminal justice system or the Mental Health Act. One requires that the individual commit a crime and the other that they be found a danger to themselves or to others. Families of crystal meth-addicted minors should not have to wait to reach this point before they access the needed assessment and treatment.

3:20

The medical community is concerned with the implications of a wave of addictions. It is limited in its response by the current intervention models of delinquency and mental breakdown. A model that is more integrated with the medical one provides a broader basis for diagnosis.

Addiction is an illness as well as a behaviour pattern, a biological problem as well as a psychological and social one. It needs to be recognized and treated as such. It does not meet criminal or mental health standards unless we leave it to fester. On a basis of discussion with both parents and medical personnel, I feel I need to say this again: addiction is an illness. Crystal meth addiction is an illness. It is the result of a foreign agent in the body, an agent with its own agenda that can be eliminated only by rapid response measures. The body has been breached, the individual invaded.

What is needed, Mr. Speaker, is the means to enter a critical situation before the damage becomes widespread and the ravages irreversible. Therefore, I support this bill permitting a parent to admit an addicted child for treatment. I support it as a parent myself and as a liberal democrat who recognizes that our society is imperfect.

This is a measure which some may be reluctant to take, and I want to admit that at the outset. Any approach to health that entails holding against one's will is offensive to many in a democratic society for the freedom to come and go without hindrance is one of our most cherished values. We cannot escape this dilemma by claiming that this bill applies only to persons who are underage, as if there was some magical point at which a youth becomes a responsible adult and the problem might disappear. Responsibility is something that must be learned gradually, and the need to substitute external discipline for self-discipline is one that can only be taken with deep reservations and regret.

This is not an ideal route or recourse to an addiction problem. It is not a solution but an admission of failure, a last resort when other measures have failed. To pretend that it is a remedy would be dishonest, yet in the relatively recent experience of crystal meth addiction we can say that other measures have failed. In an imperfect world often the best we can manage is an imperfect measure, and this is one to be used in case of breakdown.

There is a parallel in another type of breakdown where the state intervenes. Divorce legislation is an attempt to limit the damage in

a breakdown between two people. It imposes waiting periods, requires an attempt at mediation or counselling, and tries to act in the best interest of children of the failed relationship.

The situation that this bill addresses is also one of breakdown, a breakdown within oneself. It, too, provides for counselling, a space in which a young person can be shielded from further damage and given an opportunity in which he or she may decide to come home to herself. There is no guarantee that she or he will, but this offers a chance. This offers hope. This is a case where liberal democratic values allow for reluctant intervention in people's and families' lives in the hope of giving them time and opportunity to regroup and make their own wise choices. In a broader perspective of human values, this measure is intended to ultimately further a person's choice rather than to take it away.

I answer the concern about violating a young person's autonomy in this way. Addiction is an abdication of one's autonomy. By being addicted, one has already surrendered control over his or her own life to someone or something else, in this case a chemical substance and the people who provide it or urge the use of it. The intervention proposed by this bill is not a further act of overriding or violating but a countermeasure to a violation of self by drugs that has already taken place. It is not a case of two wrongs making a right but of attempting to limit a wrong that should not be left unchecked.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks in support of this bill with two points of secondary importance. One is to note what I see as an omission in its content, and the other is to observe and commend the process by which we are dealing with this issue in this Assembly. The bill mandates assessment that may lead to treatment, but it deliberately does not specify the type of treatment.

I agree that as legislators it is not our competence to prescribe medical matters, yet I am concerned that any treatment prescribed pursuant to this act be the best for the condition this bill is seeking to deal with. Specifically, I wish to commend what is described as the wraparound approach where clients are assessed and monitored regularly to determine their level of risk, medical impairment, and progress. Individualized treatment plans, intervisitation, and treatment strategies must be comprehensive. Given the social context in which addiction occurs, an appropriate response to the medical condition needs to include all areas of the youth's life. Activating hope and strengths in youth is essential.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I see as significant that this issue involving children and youth is one that we are dealing with on a nonpartisan basis. I hope that this will become a precedent. Young people's lives are affected by what we decide here in many ways. Many of these do not fall under the rubric of Children's Services. They are implicit in our approaches to health, education, ethics, environment, and law enforcement. It is right that we look at the issue in this bill and these other issues from a perspective of our common humanity, unblurred by artificial lines of demarcation.

This bill is important not only for what it contains but in the way we are dealing with it. We do not have to change our institutions to begin to change the way politics is done. The private member's bill is a measure that is available to us. All we have to do is use it. I commend the sponsor of this bill, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, for choosing to proceed in this manner of inviting the participation from all sides of this House. I thank all members for their contributions and the government for permitting discussion to run unfettered.

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that I'm not alone when I say that I share the public's concerns and my colleagues' concerns about the harm associated with drug use amongst youth. Serving the needs of our youth in our province is certainly amongst the most important of our callings as government members.

To place my comments about Bill 202 into context, I must first report that my remarks are made as chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. AADAC provides a range of addictions information, prevention and treatment services for youth and families, and they're available widely across Alberta in 49 communities as well as through mobile outreach services, satellite sites, and two specialized youth centres.

In 2003-2004 the number of young people and their families who turned to AADAC for help was approximately 6,500, a 75 per cent increase in the last five years. Of these, 358 required intensive treatment. I find this troubling both because 6,500 is a large number and because addictions problems have very serious implications. But I think it may also be a hopeful sign because it shows that youth and families are accessing our treatment services in considerable numbers.

What are the characteristics of these youth who attend AADAC's treatment programs? Well, first of all, they tend to be multidrug users, often dependent on more than one substance. They're typically under the age of 12 when they first start using drugs, and many have a history of criminal involvement, abuse, suicidal ideation, school failure, and/or mental diagnosis.

AADAC treatment clients are comprised of voluntary – I'll repeat that: voluntary – admissions and also those who are ordered by the courts to attend treatment. The commission is unable to hold clients for treatment under its mandate. AADAC is, however, currently piloting Bridges, a residential addiction and mental health treatment program in Edmonton designed for adolescent male offenders transitioning from closed custody to open custody.

3:30

Now, while AADAC services for youth are extensive in scope and reach, there remains a significant gap. AADAC does not currently provide separate youth detoxification or residential treatment as part of its continuum of services. This is something that AADAC and other ministries involved with children or youth are working on right now to address. Generally, AADAC supports legislation and regulations that promote health and well-being and discourages illicit substance use. These legislative and regulatory measures should be sensitive to changing community needs and values and should not result in more harm to the individual or to society than would occur from the actual use of the illicit substances.

Bill 202 provides us with an opportunity to consider an additional avenue open to us to help youth. However, youth addiction is complex and difficult, and it often has no easy solutions. The fundamental principle of Bill 202 is that it would give provincial authorities and parents the power to place children under 18 into mandatory drug treatment programs. There are definitely compelling arguments – I've heard them first-hand myself – that are in favour of compulsory treatment. I should mention that research I've seen regarding effectiveness is somewhat inconclusive. There's little evidence it works for intensive drug and alcohol addiction treatments since the most effective treatments are based on individual commitment to stopping drug use. Positive effects appear to last only as long as the clients are supervised and to the extent required by the courts.

In my consideration of Bill 202 I'm pleased to give it support in principle because it's intent to act in the best interests of young Albertans is clearly evident, and the hon. member presenting it has wonderful, wonderful motivations in doing so.

At the same time, there are certain concerns in the bill that I will just draw your attention to. Number one, any legislation that permits involuntary detention of persons in treatment without that person's consent raises Charter concerns, and this is an important issue that will be reviewed by the Minister of Justice. Number two, the act does not provide mechanisms for appeal or review of the involuntary treatment order. Number three, without community-based supports children leaving an involuntary treatment program will be at very high risk of not maintaining the gains made in compulsory treatment programs. Number four, significant increases in resources will be required if large numbers of children are confined in safe protection houses and require compulsory treatment. It's worthy of note that these houses would have to be provided by someone other than AADAC at this time. While I have made these four concerns known, I do expect that the hon. member bringing forth this bill will be able to answer to each of these in turn.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, effectively addressing substance use by youth requires comprehensive, effective action, including the availability of a range of information, prevention, and treatment services. Legislation such as Bill 202 should be entered into after due consideration of evidence regarding the efficacy of such an approach and consideration of the rights of the individual. Please note that should government choose to implement legislation that compels youth into treatment, AADAC will definitely continue to work with key stakeholders such as the Minister of Children's Services, the Solicitor General, and others in meeting the needs of youth. AADAC's role would be to provide addictions treatment consistent with its mandate while working with other key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Children's Services, who would provide the protective safe houses.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this issue.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity over the next 10 minutes to speak on Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, in its second reading.

As I understand it, Bill 202 would allow a parent or a legal guardian to go to a court to order mandatory treatment for their child if the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission has determined that the child is abusing alcohol and/or drugs. The problem of minors abusing drugs or alcohol is a serious one. The intentions of Bill 202 as expressed in the preamble are certainly admirable and sound. Children who abuse alcohol or drugs are a danger to themselves and sometimes to others. As legislators we have a responsibility to take whatever action we can to help.

As legislators, Mr. Speaker, we also have a responsibility to consider what the most effective way is to address the problem of substance abuse among children and youth. In considering whether Bill 202 is an effective way to address this problem, the first question I ask is: how widespread is the problem among Alberta youth?

The most recent study I've been able to find was an AADAC survey of adolescent substance and gambling abuse done in the fall of 2002 among high school and junior high school students. That survey found that the most widely used substances were alcohol and marijuana. In fact, the survey found that a larger percentage of high school students had used marijuana, about 41 per cent, than had used tobacco, which was about 25 per cent. Of harder, more highly addictive drugs 7.6 per cent had tried club drugs like Ecstasy and crystal meth, 6.1 per cent had tried hallucinogenics like LSD, 5 per cent cocaine, and 4.5 per cent crack. These are the percentages of young people who tried the above drugs at least once in the last year. Now, the percentage addicted to these drugs is likely much lower.

The AADAC survey also noted that most youth drug users did so at relatively low frequencies, particularly in the case of softer drugs like cannabis or alcohol. While in no way diminishing the seriousness of the problem of drug addiction among youth, the fact is that most youth, like most adults, are not abusing drugs and do not have a substance abuse problem.

Has the drug abuse problem gotten worse among youth since the fall 2002 AADAC survey? As the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed indicated, it perhaps has. I know that this is no comfort to parents with children struggling with serious addictions. For those parents and for society as a whole this is a very tragic situation.

Communicating or trying to get through to adolescents is a challenge at the best of times. Adolescents are trying to find their own way in the world outside of the boundaries of even the most loving homes, and often the influence of peers can be more powerful than that of parents or legal guardians. Children and youth with addictions, especially to highly addictive drugs such as crystal meth or cocaine, are very vulnerable, and we must do everything we can to assist them. It can be extremely difficult for parents and guardians to reach out and convince their child to seek treatment especially if peer influences are keeping them trapped in an unhealthy lifestyle.

To support their addictions, these children are also vulnerable to other negative influences such as prostitution or committing crimes to feed their habits. These are tragic situations. Solutions are not easy to come by. The situation is complex. It is important to ask the question as to whether we are doing everything that can be done to provide the services and supports to youth facing addictions.

In talking to parents, educators, and social work professionals, I find that this province is a very long way from providing the required specialized services and supports to young people struggling with addictions. In most of the province drug treatment programs specifically targeted at children and youth struggling with addictions are either nonexistent or woefully inadequate. Shouldn't we be putting necessary treatment options into place before we adopt the approach proposed either in this bill or in other legislative actions?

I remain to be convinced that Bill 202, compelling young people into drug treatment, is the correct approach especially when we have not done everything we can to provide the necessary supports to youth who are ready to confront their addictions and seek treatment. It is our duty as legislators to carefully examine the consequences that flow from the legislation passed in this Assembly. For example, Bill 202 could be used to force into treatment not only youth addicted to hard drugs but also softer drugs such as marijuana and alcohol. I'm not entirely sure if tobacco addiction, for example, would also fall into the very broad application of the proposed legislation.

Bill 202 would also significantly change the mandate of AADAC. Instead of being strictly a helping agency, AADAC would take on certain enforcement powers that could lead to the involuntary detention of minors. This could well taint the perception that youth have of AADAC and its services, possibly compromising its ability to reach out and educate youth about the dangers of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. In researching this bill, I asked our staff to contact AADAC and ask them for their views on mandatory youth drug treatment. Our efforts to contact AADAC as to their views have not been successful, and I believe it is very important to hear from them.

3:40

Bill 202 also has significant implications for police officers, for the courts, as well as for those involved in child protection. While

I appreciate the fact that the motivation behind Bill 202 is protection, not punishment, I'm concerned that this may not be a perception shared by some of those that this bill is trying to help.

Bill 202 also sets up a process of apprehending youth that parallels existing provisions of division 4 of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, Mr. Speaker. Under division 4 if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child or youth poses a danger to themselves or others, that child or youth can be confined in a secure services facility. Why is separate legislation needed when it seems that legislation exists that could be used to accomplish what the Member for Red Deer-North is trying to do through Bill 202?

Moreover, I'm not convinced that commingling youth who are voluntarily in treatment programs with youth who are in compulsory treatment is a good idea. Similarly, it may not be advisable to mix young offenders in protective safe houses or later on in treatment programs with other youth not currently involved with the criminal justice system.

My NDP opposition colleagues and I strongly support the need for more and better drug treatment services, including residential treatment programs for youth caught up in addiction. Bill 202 does not add a single bed for a highly addicted youth needing treatment in a residential facility. Bill 202 provides no needed counselling services for the youth or for their families. We need to make sure that these services are in place. Why do we need legislation compelling treatment when the appropriate services for those wanting treatment are not in place? That's putting the cart before the horse, Mr. Speaker.

So for all these reasons and despite the most admirable motivations of the Member for Red Deer-North, who is sponsoring Bill 202, at this stage I find myself harbouring serious concerns and reservations about whether or not to support this bill. With this, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks, and thank you very much for this opportunity.

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

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 202. While I think that the bill will likely pass and eventually become law in our province, I want to put on the record that I have serious concerns, many of them just said by my colleague across the way.

I want to start my comments by citing three different parts from the Charter of rights, Mr. Speaker. They're called "legal rights." They have three specific provisions.

8. Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure.
9. Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.
10. Everyone has the right on arrest or detention
 - (a) to be informed promptly of the reasons therefor;
 - (b) to retain and instruct counsel without delay and to be informed of that right; and
 - (c) to have the validity of the detention determined by way of habeas corpus and to be released if the detention is not lawful.

This bill would confine a child for up to 90 days against their will. This is not a voluntary treatment bill, Mr. Speaker, and that's what concerns me. This bill could be triggered by a wide variety of people, from guardians, physicians, relatives, teachers, or spiritual advisors.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, to talk about adults, when I was on the board for the Calgary General hospital, we had a psychiatric ward on-site in that facility. From time to time the court would mandate someone into our custody for up to 28 days for assessment.

A person could voluntarily commit themselves for short periods of time, and when deemed necessary, a person could be committed for up to seven days. There was a mental health advocate on-site that could and did review each individual case, and if he deemed that a person should not be held against their will, they were in fact released.

I had a friend, Mr. Speaker, who was having serious mental health issues. Her family wanted her to get help, and she declined. They tried to have her institutionalized and failed. My point is simply to point out the difficulties when trying to detain an adult. We need to be very careful here. We're talking about mandatory treatment for children and holding them for 90 days, which brings me to my second point, which is that if government members and opposition members were to pass a law like this, people would anticipate that we must in fact have facilities and staff to deal with this problem.

I worked very hard just to get a drug counsellor in Airdrie for our youth. I have been fighting for years to get a 24-hour medical clinic for Airdrie. There's not enough money to do everything that everybody asks us to do, yet with no dollars attached we talk about passing this bill. It would indicate to many people, parents and guardians alike, that not only do we have facilities, but we in fact have staff to treat young people who may not want to be treated. I'm trying to tread a really fine line, Mr. Speaker, between my desire to never have a child hurt by drugs or alcohol and my desire not to have them incarcerated or put into a treatment program against their will.

Twelve years ago, Mr. Speaker, I knew that we had a drug problem in Alberta. Today it is crystal meth, and it's a very serious drug. It is and was then cocaine, LSD, pot, Ecstasy, ice, and dozens of other designer drugs. It is sold on playgrounds, in schools, and a thousand other places in both rural and urban Alberta. There are grow ops and drug dens throughout our province and, sadly, even in my riding. One estimate just on marijuana grow ops between British Columbia and Alberta is that it is an over \$7 billion business. I have no idea what it really is for all of the illegal drugs that are sold in our province or in British Columbia or in Canada, but just from that one estimate, it's a huge problem.

I as a legislator want to make a difference, Mr. Speaker. I want Albertans and especially our children to be safe. I am concerned about how this law will work and what it really means to lock children up in mandatory treatment programs. It has been my experience that unless an addict actually wants to enter a program, it won't work. Even if they want to quit, there's still a high recidivism rate, and I'm not sure how this bill addresses that kind of issue.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the sponsor of this bill will help me to understand how the Charter impacts this bill. Also, I would like assurance that, if passed, it would not mean that the taxpayers have to provide facilities and programs that we currently don't have but, rather, that it is enabling legislation that would in fact allow parents to choose a location for their child and pay those costs, that as well the children's advocate and the courts would have the ability to overturn an order remanding a child into custody.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we have a very complex situation, and it's going to require a great deal of thought as to how the whole issue of drug and drug abuse is dealt with, from children to adults. I don't think that we can be precipitous by passing a law like this without having carefully understood all of the ramifications of it, and I for one would feel a great deal better if we took the time, had our minister of health and representatives from AADAC do a little bit more work for us, tell us what it is we really need, what we have, what is available in a comprehensive way, what parents can do now

versus this. While this bill is done with the best of intentions, I am a little concerned that it's maybe a little sweeping and perhaps a lot further ahead of where we truly are when dealing with this issue.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate, and I look forward to hearing other speakers.

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I attended a support group meeting in St. Albert on crystal meth, and I'd just like to start off today by sharing with the members of the Assembly some of the characteristics of this drug.

It is a colourless, odourless, powerful, and highly addictive synthetic stimulant. It is as toxic to the environment as it is to users, producing five gallons of toxic water per ounce. This is often dumped into the water table. Crystal meth is abused because of the long-lasting euphoric effects it produces. Crystal meth, however, typically has a higher purity level and may produce even longer lasting and more intense physiological effects than the powdered form of the drug. Crystal meth typically is smoked using a glass pipe similar to pipes used to smoke crack cocaine, and crystal meth also may be injected. A user who smokes or injects the drug immediately experiences an intense sensation followed by a high that may last more than 12 hours. Quite devastating to the individual, Mr. Speaker.

3:50

Now, a number of parents in St. Albert – and I share some of the concerns of the member who just spoke – who have children with crystal meth feel that they are supportive of the mandated treatment that is necessary. They support a clause in all mental health confidentiality agreements that states that in order for confidentiality and privacy to be assured, the person cannot be present with symptoms of either suicidal or homicidal problems. In plain terminology, a person who poses a risk to himself or herself or to others is no longer protected by their individual rights to privacy and confidentiality.

While civil liberties dictate that a person who refuses treatment should be respected, they also provide for the instance when that very treatment will promote the person's safety as well as the safety of other innocent people in the community. It is well known that a minor who uses crystal meth is putting himself or herself in deadly peril. Crystal meth use is associated with numerous serious physical problems. One of the things that parents in the St. Albert constituency who have had children involved in crystal meth feel very strongly about is that this incarceration mandate, or taking into care, is very, very important.

Risk to self. Let me just look at some of these for a moment, Mr. Speaker. The drug can cause a rapid heart rate, increased blood pressure, damage the small blood vessels. Chronic use of the drug may result in the inflammation of the heart lining, long-term damage to the brain cells similar to that caused by strokes or Alzheimer disease. Overdoses can cause hypothermia, elevated body temperature, convulsions, and death.

The other thing I'd like to look at, Mr. Speaker: what are the risks to others relative to crystal meth? It can augment episodes of violent behaviour, paranoia, anxiety, confusion, insomnia on the part of the person taking the drug, and psychotic symptoms. Crystal meth users who inject the drug expose themselves to additional risks including contracting HIV, hepatitis B and C, and other bloodborne viruses. So we see the impact in terms of other people, in terms of our

citizenry. Chronic users who inject crystal meth also risk scarred or collapsed veins, infections of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and liver or kidney disease.

Crystal meth is a man-made stimulant. The vast bulk currently on the streets has been illegally manufactured. There is an increasing number of small-scale labs being set up in rural areas of the mid-eastern states such as Missouri and Kansas and Iowa and also, I think, in parts of rural Alberta if not in the cities. The chemicals used in manufacturing processes can be corrosive, explosive, flammable, toxic, and possibly radioactive. For every pound of finished product five or six pounds of chemical waste are left at the illicit lab site. Possible ingredients include brick and driveway cleaner, drain cleaner, starting fluid, and Vicks nasal inhalers. I think my colleague will talk about some of this later on. Crystal meth is typically used on a regular daily basis, and users tend to integrate their drug use into many other daily activities.

Now, the one thing that's really concerning me as the Member for St. Albert is in terms of the mandatory taking of the person into care. I think it's very important that we look at treatment, and that is the one major consideration that I have. Crystal meth treatment consists mainly of addressing damaging emotional and behavioural patterns. No pharmaceutical treatment is particularly effective for crystal meth, although in some cases antidepressants are administered if necessary. The most effective crystal meth treatments are therapeutic, cognitive, behavioural interventions. A support community is essential after the first detox and second treatment stages are completed.

One of the things that I am not sure about in this bill is what is out there in terms of treatment, and this is of grave concern to me. Also in terms of treatment is the follow-up after the treatment. If we're able to get it, do we have the staffing in order to do this? I think it's very crucial that we have a look at this. It seems to me that if you're just incarcerating and you don't have the right treatment and facilities in order to provide the program, we have a major problem. So those are some of the reservations that I have.

Just taking a look for a moment in terms of St. Albert, we did a survey of 13 agencies in St. Albert. Most of them – this is under the FCSS banner – are doing preventative work with young people. The one area that we don't have in St. Albert is the intervention services or treatment services and, for that matter, lodging, which again focuses on some of the reservations that I have regarding the bill. I'm not clear in terms of: do we have the power with a private member's bill to make amendments to the bill? I would sleep a lot easier, for example, if it was a lot clearer to me how treatment was going to be done.

I do believe that it's very important to have the medical profession involved. Right now, if I understand the mandate of AADAC, we do not have – and I stand to be corrected on this, Mr. Speaker – services delivered to youth that are under 18. Maybe somebody can clarify that for me. So I think this is very crucial, and in terms of St. Albert it is very crucial that we look at the whole business of treatment and have a look at, again, the facilities where this service will be provided.

Let me, then, just come to this and conclude. A person under the influence of crystal meth meets the criteria in the mental health clause of being a danger to themselves and to others. Under these criteria it is essential that minors who are addicted be assisted in obtaining safety and self-control. If a person cannot present clear judgment and self-direction and poses a risk to self and others, this person becomes incapable of making appropriate choices for themselves and is then a risk to other members of the community.

The treatment of crystal meth is slow and costly and requires the assistance of well-trained mental health professionals, a support

community, and the availability of long-term resources such as halfway houses or appropriate facilities. Still, as a community – and I'm talking about St. Albert here – our best bet is to educate our children and prevent them from starting to abuse this lethal drug in the first place. Going back to St. Albert, we have approximately 13 agencies that are doing prevention. We're not coping with this particular problem as well as we should. An aggressive education campaign that involves more than road signs must be added to the school curriculum. These classes must be mandatory and be made available to every student as early as grade 5. Only empowered with this knowledge, future generations might avoid this and other drug perils.

For the hundreds of minors in the community who are addicted and for their desperate families, the solution for speed is paradoxically very slow. Mandatory treatment should not be seen as an infringement on civil rights and, I would say, in terms of the need of a particular parent. But, again, the whole question of treatment and facilities is important, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for letting me talk to this.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to make a few comments with respect to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act. At the outset what I would like to do is congratulate the hon. Member for Red Deer-North on this initiative. I think it's a very important issue in today's society. I think it's one that all members of this Assembly will recognize as addressing from a topic perspective a plague that is running through all of our communities, and that is this pervasiveness of illegal addictive drug use.

I do however rise this afternoon as Minister of Justice and Attorney General to make a few comments regarding the bill. Because it is a private member's bill, it is introduced in this House and really sees the light of day, if you will, when it is introduced. It is not something that I as a minister have an opportunity to see beforehand, so the comments that I can make are based on a review since its introduction. The comments I make this afternoon are in no fashion comprehensive but simply to underscore some of the preliminary issues that we have been able to identify.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that the intent behind the bill is a good one, and that is to establish a process whereby children who are abusing drugs or alcohol can be placed in treatment programs, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. The bill appears to be similar in nature to the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act. It gives parents and provincial authorities the ability to place children under 18 years of age into mandatory drug treatment programs. The basis of this appears to be that children are victims in need of help and protection. The bill also recognizes that families should be actively involved in ensuring the safety of their children, especially when it relates to drug abuse. It apparently will cover a wide variety of drugs and include alcohol in that definition.

4:00

This, however, is not the same situation as children involved in prostitution in some material ways. It's intended in this bill to give not only provincial authorities, such as police, the power to act but also parents. There are far more children who are involved in substance abuse situations than children involved in prostitution, and this gives rise to the issue: if a very large number of children were taken into custody, what facilities would be available to deal with the caseload?

It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act was challenged on a variety of constitutional grounds, and significant evidence was introduced through Children's Services about the background and purpose of the legislation to support it as child protection legislation.

What's notable about private members' bills is, of course, that these are initiatives taken on by the private member, and the resources of government in terms of developing the policy, the evidence, the drafting are not available to the private member. So some of these very, very important causes simply do not have the resources available to them when they become before the Legislature in this fashion.

Therefore, it ought not to be a surprise that evidence may well be lacking in this instance because government departments that should be involved—namely, Children's Services, Justice, and the Attorney General, Health and Wellness, and so on and so forth—have not, just simply because of the way we do business around here, had an opportunity to participate in the matter.

It should be anticipated, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that if the bill is passed, it will be challenged on several constitutional grounds. It's unknown whether Justice will be able to successfully defend against these challenges because we haven't had participation to date, and that is a fundamental problem of many of these types of bills that come before the House. But the fact is that they raise important issues. We can have that discussion, and if in fact we do see that there are fundamental problems, then it can be, with the will of government, with the will of the members of this House, addressed at a later time, recognizing it is something that we want to do. I think that there is absolutely no doubt that this is something that we want to do; namely, giving assistance to our children who have drug dependency.

I thought that with the time available what I would do is just give a little bit of more detailed flavour as to some of the problems that may be anticipated with respect to this bill. For example, on legislative intent: under the PCHIP legislation it provides for the apprehension and confinement of a child for the purpose of removing the child from the abusive environment and ensuring the child's safety. Bill 202 provides for the apprehension and confinement of a child for the purpose of imposing involuntary treatment. This involuntary treatment component of Bill 202 makes the legislation fundamentally different from PCHIP and raises a number of jurisdictional, Charter, and procedural issues.

On the issue of jurisdictional authority PCHIP establishes child prostitution as a child protection issue within the jurisdiction of the province. Under Bill 202 it provides a definition of drug and alcohol abuse, but it does not clearly establish the activity as a child protection issue. As a result of that, Bill 202 deals with illegal drug use and utilizes confinement as a consequence, meaning the legislation could be interpreted as criminal legislation and challenged as being beyond the jurisdiction of the province.

Just a couple more, Mr. Speaker. When an order is granted, what provisions are applicable for review of the order? Under PCHIP a child may apply to the court for review of the confinement order. The court may confirm, vary, or terminate that order. Under Bill 202 while the child may apply to the court for review of the period of confinement, there is no ability for the child to apply for review of the compulsory care order, and therefore the lack of review process for the child or the child's guardian raises Charter concerns.

One last point, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of notice to guardian. Under PCHIP if a child has been apprehended and confined, the director is required to notify the child's guardian. Under Bill 202 there is no such requirement, and that lack of notification to the guardian raises Charter issues.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, my comments are not intended to be comprehensive. I applaud the hon. member for this initiative, but I advise you and through you to other Members of the Legislative Assembly that as this bill is currently structured, there are significant constitutional and Charter and other legal issues that in my view ought to be addressed if it is to become law. Thank you.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a physician in the system for a number of years I'm familiar with the challenge of addictions and particularly concerned about the early onset addictions and addictions with young people. Let me say at the outset that we know a lot about some of the precursors of addiction now, and there should be a resurgence, I should say, of investment in getting at root causes and preventing some of the addiction that is increasing in our society.

Some of the precursors I allude to relate to social conditions, families in poverty, family violence, mental problems that can be identified within family constellations and in individual children themselves, learning disorders, emotional and behavioural problems. Part of our challenge in the health system and definitely in the educational system is to identify early some of the signs and symptoms of young people and older people who are starting to move toward abnormal and serious problems such as these addictions.

This points to the vital importance of social and economic supports for people, particularly those at a disadvantage. It points to the need for a cadre of individuals who have the skills to identify early some of the signs and symptoms and for appropriate early intervention programs, both in the school system and in the health care system. I'm pleased to hear in the discussions so far the allusion here to the need for strengthening our prevention and early intervention programs. This indeed is a last resort where we're intervening to the point where we take away an individual's rights. It has a mixed blessing for the individual and the family system and can indeed go awry, as the hon. Minister of Justice has alluded to.

We need to also have a strong research component. I don't think we understand as well as we should some of the precursors, some of the issues relating to early identification of symptoms. What are the results of intervening in certain areas in the family with individuals and in the schools? I don't think we know as much as we need to about this addiction and, indeed, addictions in general.

Crystal methamphetamine addiction is a very serious condition, and rightly it's been identified as not only a risk to the individual but to those around the individual. I think we do have to take it very seriously. I'm pleased that the hon. member has raised this as it is an emerging problem that is unique and different among the addictions, both its serious rapid addiction and its impact on the individuals and the society that is emerging.

What we are recognizing in modern medicine is that diseases have to be identified as diseases if we're going to get the appropriate holistic approach to these problems and recognize that these are not simply social or psychological aberrations. They have a biochemical basis in some instances, a biochemical tendency, a genetic tendency, and they are therefore much more resistant than a lot of diseases that modern medicine has treated. But at the same time if we treat them only as social or psychological quirks, they will not be addressed in a comprehensive and effective manner.

It's obviously an increasing concern across this province and across the country. With the increasing signs of youth violence and the conjunction of drug use, alcohol use, sexual problems, and

violence we need to address this in a very serious way. This is one step that has to be seen in a context of a broader approach to early identification, indeed prevention, and a comprehensive treatment that includes not only medical but social, family dynamics, and spiritual supports.

I think that's been identified also in the AADAC mandate, and they have been doing very worthwhile work in terms of education and early intervention, but they clearly don't have the resources that they need to be as effective as we want them to be, particularly in this new realm for which we still need a lot of research, Mr. Speaker.

4:10

I want to say of the recognition by AADAC through the hon. member that they simply don't have the resources and that this would require a new cadre of workers and new centres, indeed a significant involvement of the court system, and raises questions about the cost. I think we would need in this House to hear a little more about what some of the expected costs might look like so that we can make a responsible decision and sustain the important interventions that we identify here.

Secure residential treatment I think is an appropriate way to deal with some of those who particularly are in the extremes and are significant threats to themselves and to others around them, and I certainly would support that in unique cases. Again, it raises the question that the Justice Minister made about: how far can we intervene in taking away the rights of individuals, and is there an appeal process for young people in that instance? There's a lot that needs to be reviewed, then, in the human rights and Charter issues as indicated.

I have several questions that I don't know the answers to and perhaps will emerge in the further discussions. What defences are in place to make sure that children that don't require treatment will not be forced into treatment? In other words, will there be an objective panel that reviews the allegations and the evidence of family members that particularly are forcing this issue? Secondly, what role does the child's advocate play on this bill? Thirdly, what facilities are presently available such that we will not have to build new ones? Is there going to be an added police service cost that we have not considered so far?

That, Mr. Speaker, deals with most of my concerns. I support the bill and its intention. I have questions, as I've indicated, that I would like to learn more about. I wanted to recognize particularly that this is the extreme end of a growing problem in our culture, and we need to look at root causes and more research on early intervention.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to contribute to the debate surrounding Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act. I'd like to commend the Member for Red Deer-North, first of all, for sponsoring this piece of legislation designed to alleviate a very serious drug problem that we have in our society. I also want to thank the previous speakers who have all acknowledged and stressed the seriousness of this problem that we have and the problem that Bill 202 addresses.

My time spent as chair of AADAC from 1999 to 2003 gave me insight into the breadth and scope of addictions in our province. Substance abuse is a problem in all jurisdictions across North America, and Alberta is no different. Abuse of alcohol, prescription drugs, illegal narcotics, and other substances presents a problem throughout this province as previous speakers have indicated. This

disease does not discriminate based on age, gender, geographic location, or income bracket. People from all walks of life are affected by this problem. The introduction of new superdrugs compound the problems that we are facing because the rate of addiction is high. Drugs such as methamphetamine have such potency that I'm told it is possible for a person to become hooked even after one use. Drugs such as this can turn a momentary lapse in judgment into a lifelong battle with addiction.

The cost of substance abuse in both human and financial terms is very high. Those caught in the spiral of addictions are often unable to break free, and their dependence affects every aspect of their lives. There is a negative impact on careers, on schooling, and on family life. In extreme cases a substance abuse problem can lead to a total loss of financial stability and the initiation of criminal acts in order to feed the addiction.

Mr. Speaker, the devastation that addiction can cause in a life becomes especially pointed when the person affected is a minor. Young Albertans are some of the most vulnerable in our society, and I believe that we have a duty to offer protection and support in any way that we can. One of the great strengths of Bill 202 is that it recognizes the fact that minors who have a substance abuse problem need help. These kids are not likely criminals, though that may change if the addiction is not broken. They have merely made some wrong choices in life, and with support and encouragement it is possible that these minors can beat their addiction and take control of their lives again. However, making the decision to quit using drugs, especially while in the grip of that drug, can be very, very difficult.

Bill 202 would give parents the opportunity to help their children by placing them in a mandatory drug treatment program. This would give the minor in question a chance to break their addiction and begin making healthier lifestyle choices once again. While the cost of such a program is high, the cost of an addiction over the long term is even higher. The course of action laid out in Bill 202 would have a beneficial effect not only on the person struggling with an addiction and their family but also on the province of Alberta as a whole in both financial and economic terms.

In light of these factors I fully support this idea, the motivation behind it, and the bill itself. However, as legislators we have a responsibility to ensure that the laws of Alberta will benefit the citizens of this province and that this law is necessary. At times we find that there is existing legislation that will allow the minister responsible to create the desired outcome through a change in regulations or through a new interpretation of an existing act. If this is the case, the creation of another law becomes redundant and, therefore, unnecessary.

In the case of enforced drug treatment there are currently only two avenues: either by getting in trouble with the law or through the use of the Mental Health Act. In the first scenario the child must be involved in criminal action before it is possible for the justice system to order them into a drug treatment program. In this case the addicted individual has already come to the point in their addiction where crime becomes a factor. This could be early, this could be late, but the fact is that if that child does not commit a crime or is not caught committing a crime, it is next to impossible for the parent of the child or the proper authorities to help them.

Additionally, the need to brand the person as a criminal is not congruent with the philosophy of Bill 202. The present pathway to drug treatment does not recognize the fact that minors addicted to drugs are in need of our help and protection. In fact, it does somewhat the opposite: labelling the minor as a criminal. This can have a detrimental effect on the child, possibly making the treatment even less effective.

This brings us to the possibility of adapting the Mental Health Act or its regulations to deal with the placement of minors in mandatory drug treatment programs. Under the current Mental Health Act it is conceivable that this legislation could be used to place an addicted individual into a mandatory drug rehabilitation program. A physician has the power to issue an admission certificate if they have examined a person and feel that the person, among other requirements, is in a condition that is likely to present a danger to themselves or to other people. It can be argued that an individual using drugs presents a danger to themselves, and therefore they could qualify under this section of the act.

However, just because one is able to use a tool for a purpose doesn't mean that they should. To illustrate, it is not wise to use a knife where a screwdriver is required to adjust a screw. I can see the use of the Mental Health Act to deal with mandatory drug treatment in the same way. It may work, but it is the wrong tool for the task at hand, and eventually this is going to cause difficulties. The Mental Health Act was not originally designed to deal with this type of situation, nor are the facilities which fall under its jurisdiction necessarily equipped to deal with this type of program.

4:20

It would be possible to attempt to retailor the Mental Health Act, its regulations, and the associated facilities to accommodate this new program, but that could prove to be detrimental not only to the program which we are discussing but also the programs which currently fall under the jurisdiction of the Mental Health Act.

The best course of action to take is the one set out in Bill 202, I believe. This piece of legislation will give parents a possible way to help their children, where previously there was none. I believe that this program, acting as a possible solution of last resort, will be beneficial to Alberta's youth who are struggling with an addiction.

I fully support Bill 202, and I urge other members to support it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to talk about this Bill 202.

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps before you get started, I'd like to remind all members that we have to have our own spots occupied; we're not in committee.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with most of the speakers that the intent of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, is laudable, but there are lots of questions to raise about it.

I want to start with the big picture because the big picture is not very encouraging. Illegal drugs are the world's largest illicit market, and though its products are quite simple – agricultural products and chemical compounds – because of the huge jump from import price to retail price when the products come to North America, there's a huge, huge cost in the production and consumption of drugs. So the estimates recently are that the illicit drug trade is an industry between \$200 billion and \$400 billion, which certainly surpasses the tobacco industry and alcohol.

Of course, there is moral outrage about illicit drugs. There's no question about that. No matter who you talk to, whether you know somebody that's a part of your family who is involved with drugs or not, there's a tremendous moral outrage in our society, but as many commentators point out, moral outrage does not necessarily lead to

good social policy. A good example of that is the United States. The United States' war on drugs has been going on for quite some time, and it seems to be a repetition of the 1920s prohibition against alcohol. But the war on drugs in the United States has simply created a huge black market for drugs and the involvement of organized crime, yet the level of drug usage amongst people in the United States has not diminished.

That is quite challenging for us in Canada, and we have to ask the question whether Canada just follows the United States as an example. In the United States prisons are overflowing with convicted drug offenders, over 2 million in prison because of drug offences. The United States has a quarter of the world's prison population but less than 5 per cent of the world's population, and it's partly because of the emphasis on punishment of those who possess drugs.

So in Canada what is the direction that we should follow? We have been following that same direction. Historically, beginning with MacKenzie King's 1908 Opium Act, Canada has been emphasizing that drug prohibition is the way to go, so for decades we followed that emphasis, but the usage of drugs has not diminished.

I think the moral question – and I'm taking this from not exactly a leftist magazine, the *Economist* magazine, which had an excellent article on July 16, 2001, on the big picture in terms of drug usage. The heart of the issue for the *Economist* magazine was that it's a moral question: what duty does the state have to protect individual citizens from harming themselves? Now, that gets to the tradition of libertarianism, which has been the basis of much of our politics in the modern world.

In fact, John Stuart Mill in the 19th century wrote a famous, famous essay called *On Liberty*, in which he stated, "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." Here we're talking about intervening and preventing harm to oneself. When is that warranted? When a person is about to harm themselves, you can try to persuade them to act otherwise, you can argue with them, you can try to prevail upon them through your own moral discourse, whatever, but you can't bring force to bear upon their action. John Stuart Mill says, "Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with children, so this is where the issue becomes difficult. I would be a champion of individual human rights. I would champion a person's ability to make choices, whether they harmed themselves or not, but here we're dealing with children. Even John Stuart Mill acknowledged that children might indeed need our special protection. Of course, it can be argued – and I know this from experience – that children who are hooked on drugs not only harm themselves but harm others because it destroys the family, it destroys friendships, and it has a tremendous effect on society, especially when drugs seem to always lead to crime. It's not always the case but in many examples. I can speak from personal experience about this. Because children who are on drugs don't think rationally, they don't make the right choices. They don't hang around with the right kind of crowd, and they get into trouble and end up committing crimes.

Still, I'm nervous about this bill because of its tendency to see children involved with drugs as a criminal activity. I'd say that it may lead to criminal actions. But the actual use of drugs itself: is that a criminal activity? The government of Canada's 1982 statement of principles, called *The Criminal Law in Canadian Society*, argued that "the criminal law should be employed to deal only with that conduct for which other means of social control are inadequate or inappropriate." Those are nice words, but we don't follow that very often because we so quickly turn to a Criminal Code

solution, some legal solution, some solution of imposing force before really dealing with the issue in other ways.

Mr. Speaker, I think this should give us pause because surely we must first think of all that we can do in the name of compassion and justice before we turn to the criminal law. We need an honest, open debate about the harm that drugs bring to young people and to adults in our society. We need that debate in our schools, in our churches, in our community halls. We need to be openly debating and talking about this issue before we become draconian and start passing laws that take away human freedoms. Of course, I've heard the expression already that this bill is a bill of last resort, but I'm nervous about going ahead with a bill of last resort when we don't do the other. We don't have the kind of educational supports everywhere throughout our province to properly educate our children.

You know, a week ago I spoke with a group of ex-cons and addicts. I asked them about this bill, and of course, predictably, they said: "This won't work because this bill suggests that you force a person into a treatment centre. It never works because if they don't volunteer, if they don't decide and make the choice themselves that they need help, then there's not much hope for success in their treatment." So they volunteered themselves to go into schools and go to a young offenders' centre and talk to young people about the harm that drugs can have on people, and they would give their own testimony about how drugs often lead to crime. They would do that. Of course, Mr. Speaker, they probably wouldn't pass a police check and be able to do that. But I find that quite interesting. I think that's an important question. To what extent is there success if a person is not led to actually voluntarily enter a treatment program?

4:30

I agree with all of the other speakers about the need for more treatment centres. I can speak from personal experience that in my own family there was a problem with a drug addiction, and my son was not able to find a treatment centre in Alberta. He had to go to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and it was very difficult for us as a family to travel right across the prairies to visit him. Thankfully, my son has been clean for many years, and he's a great success story, but there were not at that time any residential treatment centres in Alberta. So, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the others that we can't pass a bill like this and not have the proper treatment centres here in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to address the Assembly today regarding Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for bringing forward this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a very blessed man. I have an amazing wife and three wonderful children. I live in what I consider to be Alberta's single best constituency, Drayton Valley-Calmar. [interjections] Thank you. We attend church on Sundays. We spend a lot of quality time together as a family. I would consider us to be a fairly average middle-class Alberta family.

Now, while I consider myself to be blessed, I'm also a little scared, Mr. Speaker. I'm scared when I think about the dangers that are out there that my children are going to have to face, dangers that I never had to face. When I was growing up in rural Alberta, drug abuse was something that you heard was happening in big cities like New York or Los Angeles: drug addicts living on the streets, robbing people to pay for their habit, terrorizing neighbourhoods. It wasn't something that people in rural Alberta could even fathom. However,

today nearly every community in Alberta is dealing with drugs. Some communities that I'd never even heard of until a few years ago are seeing their youth become drug addicts sometimes even before they reach junior high school.

In fact, drug use across Canada by all ages is increasing. Last year Health Canada released their Canadian Addiction Survey. It showed that across Canada drug use has greatly increased during the last decade. In 1994 28.5 per cent of all people surveyed indicated that they had used drugs at some time in their life. In 2004, just 10 years later, that number was now 45 per cent of Canadians. In 1994 3.8 per cent of Canadians indicated that they had used cocaine or crack, and in 2004 that number had increased to 10.6 per cent of Canadians.

Drug use in Canada is getting even more prevalent, and the drugs are getting harder and more addictive. In 2002 AADAC did a survey of youth in Alberta on their drug use: 41.9 per cent of students in grades 10 through 12 indicated that they had used cannabis in the last 12 months; 7.6 per cent of grade 10 to 12 students indicated that they used club drugs like crystal meth or Ecstasy in the past 12 months.

Mr. Speaker, these are absolutely staggering numbers, and these aren't just troubled teens living in inner-city Edmonton or Calgary. These are kids living in Drayton Valley, Fort Saskatchewan, Camrose, and many other rural communities. This isn't an Edmonton or Calgary problem. It's an Alberta problem, and it's all of our problem.

In my constituency crystal meth is particularly rampant. Sadly, Drayton Valley has become a hotbed for crystal meth producers and pushers. In fact, our town has hired three more police officers to deal with enforcement as well as a community officer to conduct prevention programs in schools. Now, these are good initiatives, but they're not enough. Part of the problem is that crystal meth is so easy to make. Meth can be cooked up in bathrooms and kitchen sinks with precursors obtained from the local drug mart or even found beneath some of these same kitchen sinks. It's being pushed in our schools and in all of our communities.

Children coming from good, loving families are becoming addicted to crystal meth at exponential rates. I've had countless parents come into my constituency office pleading for help. Often they've been battling with their child's meth addiction for months, and they don't know what else they can do. Their child isn't eating or going to school. They're either up all night or asleep for days on end. In most cases when they confront their child about their problem, the child runs away. Mr. Speaker, I can't even imagine what these parents are going through, not knowing where their child is when they go to bed at night, thinking that they might be strung out on meth, and wondering what they're doing to afford these drugs.

As their MLA and as a parent I often feel helpless. I don't know what I would do if I was in their situation, and I pray that I never have to make these hard decisions. But my children are getting to that age where the pressure to try drugs is mounting. My eldest son, Taylor, is 13 years old. What really scares me is that I've talked to parents whose children his age and sometimes even younger are already addicted to drugs. That's one reason why I attend the Drayton Valley parent-to-parent support group, in my constituency. I wanted to educate myself as a parent and as an MLA as to what other parents are going through so that I can help my child manoeuvre through the pitfalls that await his every step. I also wanted to provide what support I can to those parents as they struggle with this problem.

For many of these parents who are dealing with drug-addicted children, there are currently only two options, Mr. Speaker. They can try to convince their child to come in voluntarily and voluntarily

ask for treatment, or they can try to have their child arrested and put into a young offender facility. Now, even if the parents can track down their children, very few of them can convince their addicted child to accept voluntary treatment. Sometimes even for those who can convince their child to go into treatment, it's only voluntary treatment, and many of them leave after a few weeks and return to a life of drug use.

I know for a fact that many of us here have had to suggest to constituents that their only option might be to try to have their own child arrested. Now, if that alone isn't enough to convince us that Bill 202 is needed, I don't know what is. But arrest is, unfortunately, one of the only options available to parents right now. Having arrest as an only option is not satisfactory for Albertans. Arresting a child puts an unnecessary strain on our police and on our court system. It also puts a child in a young offender facility where they may or may not get the addiction treatment they need. Furthermore, their child ends up being branded a criminal when all they really needed was help for their addiction.

I can understand why a parent may take this option. Their child gets taken off the streets, put into a safe, secure environment. They get a bed to sleep in and three meals a day. I imagine for these parents simply knowing that their child is safe and not on the streets is a huge relief.

Mr. Speaker, parents shouldn't need to have their child arrested to be able to get them into a safe place. That is why I support Bill 202, brought forward by my hon. colleague from Red Deer-North. Bill 202 will give parents another option. It will take drug-addicted children off the streets and put them into a safe, secure facility where they can dry out and start to receive proper treatment for their addictions. Bill 202 will empower parents again. I can tell you right now that many of them feel helpless. Bill 202 will allow parents to help their children when for so long they have been helpless.

As many of you here know, I strongly believe that governments must not dictate how each of us should live. Most Albertans don't need the government telling them how to live their lives, but I also strongly believe that as a society and as a government we need to help those who cannot help themselves. I'm not talking only about those people that are homeless or that are living in poverty. I'm also talking about those who have a mental illness and those who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. If we don't act now and give parents with drug-addicted children another avenue for help, we will have failed. We will have missed a chance to try to stem the tide.

4:40

Now, I'm very optimistic that we're going to see a great number of children taken out of harm's way as a result of this bill. I also believe that if it is successful as I think it will be, it will lay the groundwork for us to look at expansion to other types of interventions. This bill will allow parents to force an intervention upon their own child, but it does not allow for a community to enact an intervention upon an adult. There are many drug addicts out there today who would probably benefit if their family or friends or even their community were able to take their case in front of a judge and force them into treatment such as the community treatment orders like we see in other provinces. The community would also benefit, especially if it's suffering due to a person's drug addiction.

In most cases it is simple economics. A drug addict needs money to feed their addiction. To get this money, members of a community tend to suffer from increased thefts, break-ins, prostitution, or a proliferation of drug dealing. A community should be able to protect itself from harm as well as have the ability to help one of their members who so greatly needs help. In fact, the state of Washington has had legislation in place since the '70s where a person, not just a child, can be involuntarily committed to a

treatment facility if they are, "gravely disabled by alcohol or drug addiction."

As I have mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is about more than protecting the individual. We also must protect the community from some of these individuals. I also believe we should consider extending this to people who have a severe mental illness. In Saskatchewan they have the community treatment order program, as I mentioned earlier. An order for mandatory treatment can be obtained for those people deemed by a psychiatrist as likely to cause harm to themselves or others.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 202 is a great start. It's a good first step. In fact, it's a necessary start. If we don't act now, parents of drug-addicted children will continue to struggle. We must give them help. We must give them options. We must give them hope. So I urge all members to join me in supporting Bill 202.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to give my response to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, and I rise not only as an elected official but also as a parent and as a health care practitioner.

Bill 202 proposes that the way we apprehend these children who are under the influence or who are addicted is the same as stipulated in the protection for children in prostitution legislation, and I think this is a positive step. The one thing we all have to remember is that children are vulnerable. These young guys don't know what they're getting themselves into. They're surrounded by temptation, and we've heard on numerous occasions how boys would resort to stealing or get on the wrong side of the law to feed their addictions and then how girls would also resort to prostitution to feed their addictions.

I can't imagine what I would do as a parent, myself, if one of my two children were addicted to a substance or to an illicit drug. I would probably be devastated. I could probably lose my mind. My hon. colleague for Edmonton-Glenora indicated that the illicit drug industry runs into the billions of dollars, and I can probably add to that that it's probably the second worst and dirtiest industry to arms dealing.

The threshold for the decision whether a child or a youth is incarcerated would probably be made by AADAC. AADAC is qualified. They have the medical staff, and they have the knowledge and the expertise to render a scientifically based decision that would help the court in making that judgment. So I think AADAC is a suitable agency to ask for expert advice. However, I don't think AADAC itself is qualified or empowered enough to handle the treatment of these children. If they do and if they're asked to play that role, we'd probably have to empower them and fund them more so they can actually have more beds open for treatment. They can probably offer all the different angles of treatment, which is not only chemical.

I have a little concern with this proposed bill. The government and the courts will have to exercise extreme caution in the use of this new law to ensure that the rights of children are not violated. Many of my colleagues indicated that it's a multifaceted problem. The situation has two sides. You have the parents, on the one hand, who are helpless. They're at the end of the road. They don't know where to turn or who to go to. You also have the children who might not voluntarily agree to being placed in a secured facility for treatment. There's also the third side with society, and, yes, we do have to protect society from the crime that is perpetrated and the ill effects of a spiralling drug trade.

There is also the other concern that treatment facilities are not adequate and that they're few in Alberta. Government cannot just simply legislate a solution and say: yup, once this is on paper and it's available, we hope that everything works and that everything will miraculously fall in place. If they legislate a solution, they probably have to look at ways to implement the solution and empower the individual agencies to fulfill that role.

Children's rights are paramount. We have to respect a child's rights. However, under the influence or when these guys are addicted or hooked on a substance, they're impaired. They cannot make these decisions for themselves. So a parent in their right capacity as a guardian or as the caregiver to that child probably is in the best position to make that request of the court.

There's also the concern with regard to the safe house, the proposed treatment facility. Safe houses are not meant to be holding cells or jails. I think they're meant to provide a safe and healthy environment for a person to cope and to recover. The chemical treatment is the main thing. It's the main angle of treatment. However, we have to conduct more research and look for ways to help these kids recover from their addictions. As it stands now, the treatments that we have are not successful and they're inferior. They're not useful enough.

Also the angle of behaviour and psychological counselling. These kids have to know that, yes, we're fighting the physical dependence, but you have to want to quit. You have to want to recover.

Also their education or schooling component. When they're incarcerated or held in those treatment facilities, they're not attending class, they're not studying, they're not doing their homework. So we have to minimize the impact on these children's development and allow them to receive some sort of schooling or some sort of education while they're in the treatment facility.

We also have to encourage the development of support groups. Peer support is probably the most useful because it's kids advising other kids about the detriments and the potential side effects of the addiction, telling them how to identify the temptation and how to fight it, how to resist it, and maybe looking at empowering those children to become ambassadors in their communities once they're released from those facilities. They can go back and talk to their same age group and tell them, you know, what's involved, what got them hooked, how they fought it, and now how they're planning to continue to stay clean. So I think we should empower them to become ambassadors in their own communities and their own schools to distribute and spread the word that you can fight it and that you can probably resist it at the beginning too.

Two days ago I met with 250 high school kids with my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Decore, and we spent 90 minutes surveying these children with regard to Bill 202. We wanted to go to both the source and the target of the issue. Ninety per cent of those 250-plus students indicated that they're in favour of Bill 202. They had questions about their rights as individuals, most of whom are almost 18. They said: okay; what happens if I'm 18 or if I turn 18? They identified with the risk to society, and they identified with the escalating danger, and they recognized that some of their peers are either drug traders themselves – they're trafficking in the drug to feed their own addictions – or they're profiting from it, and they didn't like either of the two situations. They said: this has to stop.

Ten years ago they hadn't heard of crystal meth. Now we have it. Who knows what we will have 10 years from now. It gets more potent, it gets easier to make, and it gets deadlier. So they said that, yes, intervention is necessary.

4:50

They also indicated that education was not adequate. They commented on the DARE program, and they said that it wasn't

enough. They say that even parents don't identify the signs of addiction. With crystal meth, for example, early on the kid actually excels. They do better, they're more energetic, and they look brighter. A month after that, they start the downhill dive. They lose weight, they lose sleep, they cannot study, they cannot function, they resort to crime, and then they leave the house. So we probably have to educate the kids, but we also have to educate the parents what to look for, what signs to watch for.

Interestingly, the children and the youths that I actually spoke to had a parallel concern where maybe one or both of the parents are drug addicts themselves. The children said: what recourse do we have if we identify one of the parents as a potential threat? They're faced with a temptation in the house. "What can we do to alleviate that temptation, that risk? What can we do as children if the parents have all this power now? What do we do if we realize the threat and we want to do something about it?"

So, to close, Mr. Speaker, I support this bill and so do many of my constituents who came into the office and indicated their support, some of whom were actually young adults. They weren't just parents who came and said: yes, we agree. Some young adults themselves came in and said: yes, we agree. I applaud the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for sponsoring this bill, and I would hope that she listens to my concerns and those made by the other colleagues because really the intention here is to make this bill foolproof, basically. We want something that works, and we want something that is useful, that is empathetic, and that is courtproof. So I applaud you and God bless you and thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and join the debate on Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North. Bill 202 has provided the opportunity for the House to debate an issue that affects all Albertans. Some Albertans may choose to believe that drug abuse doesn't affect them. They would be mistaken. Every Albertan pays for drug abuse, whether it's through policing and court costs, adding stress to the emergency medical system, or the loss of a friend or a loved one. Those are just a few broad examples.

The truth is that drug abuse is like a pebble that is dropped in a pool of water. The initial result is confined, but in time the ripple effect spreads, the result of one small pebble, across the entire pool of water. I would like to commend the Member for Red Deer-North for introducing Bill 202. It is revolutionary and it is necessary. I see this as a ripple effect that can ultimately destroy families, cripple communities, and weaken a province.

In discussing this issue with families and constituents, you can often hear the word "assume" used to describe people's thoughts on drug abuse. They assume that their community and schools are drug free. They assume that their child's friends have positive intentions. They assume that their children assume the pressures involved with using drugs. Mostly importantly – I alluded to this before – they assume that consequences of drug abuse in our province don't affect them.

Drug abuse is a serious problem in Alberta. Statistics from 2001 show that Alberta has the lowest number of drug offences in Canada at 7,211. That includes possession, trafficking, and importation offences. Cannabis possessions account for half of all drug offences in Alberta. That was in 2001, Mr. Speaker, and that was just those who were caught and charged. As we all know, we are facing a new problem in our province and across the country: methamphetamines, a word we are going to hear a lot of during our debates in the House. As all MLAs, especially rural ones, we'll be working hard to lessen the effects of drug abuse on Albertans.

There is a reason for real concern on these issues when in one year's time span over 1.5 million needles were exchanged at needle exchange programs in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, and Lethbridge. This statistic only highlights the drug abusers that are exchanging their needles. It does not take into account the drug abusers who do not use the needle exchange program. There are real problems with real consequences, some of which I alluded to earlier, such as health risks and death.

In 2002 39 per cent of all positive HIV serological tests in Alberta listed injection drug use as a reported risk factor. In 2000 the chief medical officer in Alberta investigated 205 deaths that were drug related and 49 that were drug and alcohol related. These included suicides resulting from overdoses or poisoning, accidental deaths involving the use of drugs and/or alcohol, deaths directly caused by substance abuse, and deaths where drugs and/or alcohol were contributing factors.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a province where the only way we can get help with drug abuse is to voluntarily seek help or by being charged with a criminal offence and being sentenced to a mandatory drug treatment program. There need to be other options available, especially for children and teenagers of this province.

The statistics I have been using have been generic ones that take into account all Alberta, but ultimately Bill 202 is for Alberta's children. However, as I alluded to earlier in my remarks, I see Bill 202 as a permissive stake to circumvent the inevitable should we allow drug abuse to spiral out of control against Alberta's children, resulting in criminal charges, court appearances, health issues, and death.

Just so we can get a grasp on exactly what we are dealing with when it comes to children and drug abuse, I would like to share some specific statistics dealing with the youth in Alberta. The number of children under the age of 18 charged with possession of drugs in 2002-03 was 204, while the number charged with trafficking was 132. In 2002 persons between the ages of 12 and 17 years of age had the second-highest rate of drug-related violations, only to be outdone by individuals between the ages of 18 and 24. I think the most pertinent stat to this legislation was in 2002: 27 per cent of junior and senior high school students in Alberta had used cannabis, and 14 per cent reported using one or more drugs such as magic mushrooms, club drugs, or cocaine in previous years. They are real statistics that highlight a real problem.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Alberta families have to be our first line of defence against teen-aged drug abuse. Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 recognizes that children who abuse drugs are in fact victims that need help and protection. Their families should be involved in ensuring the safety of their children, and Bill 202 would allow them the right to do so.

Going through some documents on the legislation, I found an interesting quote from a Supreme Court of Canada justice that was made during a ruling concerning a children's charter of rights that I'd like to share with the House.

Children, especially young children . . . are unable to assert their rights to life and health. These rights are to be balanced in the child protection context, with parental liberty . . .

Where parents, for what ever reasons, do not exercise their rights vis-à-vis their children, or do not exercise them in the best interests of their children, the state has assumed the duty and role to intervene to protect children's welfare.

5:00

The government of Alberta introduced Alberta's Promise, which promises all of Alberta's children that the government will champion their future. I see Bill 202 as yet another positive step in this

direction. I am sure you are all familiar with the little red wagon that symbolizes America's Promise. This symbol is derived from a speech given by Colin Powell when he launched America's Promise in 1997.

Every child should have a Little Red Wagon . . . A Little Red Wagon to pull around the heavy load of life . . . A Little Red Wagon to pull around his or her dreams. The Little Red Wagon also has a very long handle so that an adult can come along and help when the road is particularly difficult or rocky.

Through this legislation we have an opportunity to further strengthen our resolve in providing Alberta's children a safe place to grow, learn, and develop positive life skills. Those children that abuse drugs need the help and protection of their families and friends.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 has been in the media for some time now. If any of us were to walk into a coffee shop in rural or urban Alberta and sit down next to a family or an individual and ask them about it, they would likely know what we were talking about. Most surprisingly, the majority of individuals you talk to would have a story to share with you involving a family member or a friend. The story would likely be one about the overwhelming feeling of helplessness as they watch their son, daughter, sister, brother, best friend, neighbour, cousin, niece, or nephew fall to the devastating effects of drug abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased if everybody would support Bill 202. Thank you.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That certainly cuts it down to one page, doesn't it?

I just will say the one thing that I wanted to perhaps give as an idea to the Solicitor General. We have treatment centres up and running now, but I'm not sure that AADAC is the only answer. They could be utilized under a contract basis. This government contracts out to private-care-delivery firms for the elderly. Bricks and mortar, big buildings are great, but a secure room with a trained and compassionate worker will do the trick just as well. For instance, in Lethbridge as in other parts of this province the government has shut down the youth remand centres. These buildings sit there with all the security fences, the locks, and the cameras, ready for these victim children to move into. All of society will say thank you for the dollars saved in the long run because these victims would not end up on social assistance.

I distinctly recall back in the early '80s a family that had to remortgage their home and use their savings. The mother lost her job just to pay for the rescue of their son from a cult. The consequential time and effort to help him rejoin society as a productive, balanced, and more importantly a happy and content human being – did that son say thank you that he was helped in spite of himself? Yes, he did, and they were lucky that their son made it.

There is a parallel with that story with crystal meth. Parents can't wait and must help their victim children in spite of themselves, especially when the problem is developed before the parents know what's going on. I recall comments made by Rod Stewart and Jamie Foxx when they received their Academy awards, that they were very thankful, Rod Stewart to his mother for making him practise his piano and Jamie Foxx for his grandmother.

I would just like to thank the minister for bringing this forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Actually, it's a member. This is a private member's bill.

Hon. members, under Standing Order 8(5)(a)(i) five minutes is now provided for the sponsor of the private member's public bill to

close the debate. I invite the hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate on Bill 202.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is a very important bill. I see that we will need some strengthening of the bill, and I look forward to answering all the questions that I heard today in the debate in Committee of the Whole. In the meantime I would ask that everyone support Bill 202 in second reading, and I would call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a second time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that in view of the hour now we call it 5:30 and adjourn until 8 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:06 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, March 21, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/03/21

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Elimination of Library Card Fees in Tribute to Dr. Lois E. Hole

502. Mr. Agnihotri moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to eliminate fees for library cards in all public libraries in tribute to the late the Hon. Dr. Lois E. Hole to honour her belief in the importance of literacy and in the principle that access to libraries should be free for all Albertans.

[Debate adjourned March 14: Mr. Danyluk speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand again and speak to Motion 502. I'm familiar with rural Alberta more than I am urban Alberta. I would like to say that I'm very proud of the extensive library system that we have in Alberta. I'm very proud of the library services network that we do have.

In my constituency, which really affects, I believe, nine constituencies, we have a library system that an individual can walk into a library and have access to 3 million books, Mr. Speaker. So when I look at a system that offers that sort of service, that comes to all of our individual libraries – and we have libraries in some very small communities that do not charge for any sort of service. The library opportunities are free and are very, let's say, accessible to anybody there. So what happens is that there are some library systems that charge a very nominal fee for their services, and that really provides them with the opportunity to purchase some extra books, some extra things that aren't funded. As I said before, I think we're very fortunate with the library system, the support that does come from the government to the municipalities. And the municipalities pass that on to the individual library systems.

When we had the discussion of Lois Hole, we talked about: wouldn't it be a tribute to Lois Hole to have no library fees? I believe that it is a tribute to Lois Hole for us to make libraries accessible to people through a digital system, through enhanced systems. I think that is a lot more important to make sure that children and people have an opportunity to read, that individuals have an opportunity to access the books that we do have in our area. I think that is a tremendous tribute. Lois Hole sponsored books in each one of our local libraries, and that was such an inspiration to the small libraries, her dedication and devotion to learning and to reading.

So, Mr. Speaker, if I can, I would like just to close and say that I believe that it wouldn't be the right decision to try to put a curtailment on a library system, to not be able to charge a fee. Presently, most people have the access and the ability. I don't think it's necessary to put that forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 8(4), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a govern-

ment motion to close debate, I'd invite the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close debate.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been very interesting to listen to this debate and to hear how every single speaker has talked about the vital contribution made by the libraries. Well, it's time to put our money where our mouth is.

Several hon. members remarked that library card fees are nominal, not significant. Well, \$12, \$15, or \$30 a year does not mean the same thing to a lawyer, a doctor, or a parliamentarian as it does to a minimum wage worker. The less affluent one is, the less privileged one is, the more significant that so-called small fee is. Public libraries are there to serve all of us, especially the less privileged, and that is why we should pay for them through our taxes and not through private membership fees.

Some hon. members speculate that fees do not deter users, but the facts prove them wrong. When Edmonton introduced a fee, enrolment dropped, and no doubt the same thing happened in other libraries. On the other side of the coin, when Banff eliminated their \$10 annual fee, memberships soared.

Some hon. members believe that we don't value what we don't pay for. Well, I value our police department. I value our fire department. I value my right to cast a vote. I value my family. I don't need to pay user fees to know that these things are valuable. Let us not confuse price with value. I think the hon. members have it backwards. It's not that we don't value what we don't pay for; rather, we don't pay for what we don't value. In this wealthy province over the last two decades the province has not paid its fair share of funding towards public libraries, that we in this House all profess to value.

The hon. Minister of Education says that he would like to see a significant increase made to the per capita rate for public libraries. It is unfortunate that when he was Minister of Community Development, the increase that he brought in after 15 years of stagnant funding was only 26 cents per capita. But he's right: public libraries do deserve and require a significant increase in the provincial per capita funding, and that is exactly what we propose.

There's no doubt that the late Lois Hole was a passionate believer in public libraries and in social justice. She said on many public occasions – and I'm sorry if some of the members didn't seem to hear what she said – that she wanted to see library membership fees eliminated in Alberta. Today we have a chance to honour her name and her values in the lasting legacy of open library doors for the benefit of all Albertans. Let us not squander that opportunity. Everywhere else in North America except for parts of Quebec public libraries are supported by taxes, not by private membership fees. Our province can afford to support public libraries too. Let us pay for what we profess to value: well-funded, accessible libraries.

Thank you very much.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 502 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:09 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Agnihotri
Bucks

Eggen
Elsalhy

Miller, B.
Miller, R.

Bonko	MacDonald	Pastoor
Chase	Mather	Swann
8:20		
Against the motion:		
Boutilier	Groeneveld	Mitzel
Brown	Haley	Oberg
Calahasen	Jablonski	Ouellette
Cao	Johnson	Prins
Cardinal	Knight	Rogers
Danyluk	Lindsay	Snelgrove
DeLong	Magnus	Stevens
Doerksen	Mar	Strang
Goudreau	Melchin	Webber
Griffiths		
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 28

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 lost]

Alberta Ingenuity Fund

503. Mr. Knight moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider the advisability of increasing the value of the Alberta ingenuity fund to \$1 billion over the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I decided to sponsor Motion 503 is because in many ways the future of our province and our economy is dependent on our commitment to research and innovation. I see the Alberta ingenuity fund, or the AIF, as a very appropriate way for us to invest some of our growing resource revenue. With the debt paid down and oil prices higher than expected, the next several years may be an opportune time for us to invest our revenue into areas that will help sustain and grow our economy for years to come.

The Alberta ingenuity fund was established by our government in 2000 to provide funding for grants and award programs for both basic and applied research initiatives. Over the past four years the fund has provided valuable dollars in support of research projects in the areas of agriculture, natural sciences, engineering, telecommunications, applied mathematics, ecology, soil science, and artificial intelligence. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a very diverse list, one that mirrors our own diversification efforts.

In order to fund these efforts, the AIF was originally endowed with \$500 million, and the government set a goal of growing the fund to \$1 billion when finances permit. It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that unlike other one-time research and innovation investments the AIF is an endowment fund which funds R and D projects through investment income. The added advantage of funding research through endowment funds is the fact that the principal is never lost, and the government retains the option of modifying the fund if times deem necessary. Therefore, I don't consider topping up the AIF by a further \$500 million over the '06-07 and '07-08 fiscal years as revenue spent but rather as revenue redirected. The \$1 billion principal should double investment income, thus providing additional funding for research and innovation initiatives.

Another advantage of Motion 503 is that it does not make it mandatory for the government to top up the AIF to \$1 billion dollars over the specified fiscal years; rather, it urges the government to do

so without having to pass laws mandating this proposal. Through Motion 503 I want to encourage the government to consider increasing the fund by a further \$500 million in '06-07 and '07-08. However, I don't wish to restrict our budget flexibility if we're not able to do so over the proposed fiscal years.

With this in mind, I am pleased that this government is moving in this direction through Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act. Section 8 of the act complements Motion 503 by proposing to top up the ingenuity fund up to \$1 billion. The difference between what I'm proposing and Bill 1 is that Bill 1 does not offer a timetable outlining when the investment should be made. Rather, section 8 of the act stipulates that the \$500 million would be invested "in amounts considered appropriate by the Minister of Finance." Having said this, I'm encouraged that the government is looking to top up the AIF. However, I urge the Minister of Finance to allocate the necessary funds over the years I have suggested because depending on what happens to oil prices, our revenues may not be as high as they have been and may, in turn, limit our ability to follow through with this commitment.

While I'm on the subject of our revenues, particularly those generated through oil royalties, I would like to briefly look back at our previous research and innovation investments and their contributions to the creation of the Alberta advantage. Our province has been blessed with large quantities of natural resources, especially oil and gas deposits. However, many of these deposits would still remain untapped if Albertans did not recognize the importance of investing in R and D initiatives, which produce the necessary technology enabling us to discover and develop more resources.

Thanks to our current and past governments, who invested large amounts of public funds in the development of our energy sector, the province finds itself in a situation where we are considered the leaders in the country not only in terms of economic growth and potential but in innovation and ingenuity as well. By focusing on research and development projects and initiatives, we have been able to take advantage of our natural resources in a manner that is both environmentally prudent and economically viable.

One of the best examples of combining research and innovation with industry development has been the expansion of Alberta's oil sands. The story of the Athabasca oil sands is directly related to Motion 503 because it not only reflects the linkage between innovation and industry development, but it also demonstrates just what can be accomplished through continued commitment to research.

It's fascinating, Mr. Speaker, that in only a few short decades – these oil deposits were considered unworkable and unviable as the technology of the time could not allow us to tap into these potentially rich sources of revenue. However, the government of the former Premier Peter Lougheed recognized the enormous economic potential of developing these deposits and formed AOSTRA, the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, in 1974. The goal behind establishing the new authority was to develop oil sands technology that could allow us to exploit our oil resources at relatively low cost and minimize the impact of potential declines in conventional production.

In order to bridge the technology gap, the government provided AOSTRA with approximately \$100 million in funding to help research and development in an entirely new method of extracting bitumen, which was previously considered uneconomic. This was a relatively large investment of taxpayers' funds for its time, Mr. Speaker, but it pales in comparison to the return it helped generate over the years to come. Thanks to the initial investment AOSTRA led the way in developing steam-assisted gravity drainage, or SAGD, and the OSLO cold water extraction system, both of which were

vital in transforming the oil sands into an economically viable source of oil revenue.

In the last five years alone, Mr. Speaker, the industry sector has allocated \$24.7 billion toward oil sands development, which is amazing.

An Hon. Member: How many?

Mr. Knight: \$24.7 billion, which is amazing when one considers that it took only \$100 million to get the ball rolling.

The benefits of the project, Mr. Speaker, have been truly staggering. In 2003 the oil sands contributed about 52.7 per cent to Alberta's total crude oil and equivalent production, and we're responsible for about 34.8 per cent of all crude oil and equivalent produced in Canada. Between 2001-2002 and '03-04 the oil sands development provided \$565 million worth of revenue to Albertans in the form of royalties paid to the provincial government, outweighing the initial investment more than fivefold. In addition, annual oil sands production is projected to grow at a steady pace, promising to generate valuable resource revenue for years to come.

In addition, the oil sands development project opens new job opportunities for Albertans and Canadians seeking employment in the oil patch. Just to illustrate this point, Mr. Speaker, it is predicted that the oil sands will create a total of 102,000 new jobs across Canada by 2012, which is important as this not only adds to our economy but also helps to create added spinoff industries and employment opportunities across our province and across the country.

8:30

Now, the reason I spent so much of my time referring to the Athabasca oil sands project, Mr. Speaker, is because I want to illustrate just what can be accomplished through recognizing potential economic opportunities and finding research that would allow us to capitalize on these opportunities. Without a doubt, there are many other potential oil sands type of discoveries waiting to be made. These are not limited only to the oil sector but other sectors of our economy, some of which are currently in their infancy. However, I believe that only through funding the Alberta ingenuity fund and other research and development funds and initiatives will we be able to take full advantage of all the opportunities that await us in the future.

With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favour of Motion 503 and look forward to the debate. Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Motion 503, which calls on this government to increase the value of the Alberta ingenuity fund, which is otherwise known as the Alberta heritage fund for scientific and engineering research. I will briefly say that although we as the Official Opposition are not against this motion, I for one was greatly astonished that the Conservative deputy whip, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, would sponsor a private member's motion that exactly duplicates one entire clause stipulated in the proposed flagship government bill, Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, which was sponsored by our hon. Premier and marketed as new-found Tory pride.

The Alberta ingenuity fund was established in the year 2000 with an endowment of \$500 million. This Motion 503 wants it to increase to \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker, whereas Bill 1 wants to increase it by \$500 million. So correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that these

two calculations are the same: \$500 million plus \$500 million is \$1 billion, or \$1 billion minus \$500 million is \$500 million. Motion 503 is identical to section 8 of Bill 1.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, that here is proof that the government caucus is in some form of disarray. The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. The leadership race within the Tory ranks is clearly interfering with their legislative duties to the extent that they're jamming the Order Paper with motions excerpted and extracted from their own bills just to look like they're working and thinking wonderful ideas. This is of course contrary to what the hon. Premier instructed his MLAs to do in that no leadership campaigning or organizing should interfere with government business.

We obviously find ourselves tonight wasting some time on a done deal whereas, in fact, we could have used this time more productively. I for one would have much rather stood here tonight debating one of our Official Opposition motions, which are really worth looking at. We are now faced with a situation where our motions were pushed down the line to make room for this supposedly unique government motion. Maybe the hon. member himself is not seeking the Tory leadership, and maybe I shouldn't be as critical of him personally, but perhaps he or maybe some of his research staff are busy supporting one of the many leadership hopefuls which are dotting our landscape and they're not paying attention to their own legislative agenda or what the people of Alberta are actually after.

Having said that, I appreciate the explanation that the hon. member offered, and I mean no disrespect. But I still think it wasn't necessary as it was exactly stated in Bill 1, a government bill which is expected to pass and to receive royal assent anyway.

So, in short, we support this motion, but I think we should move on. Thank you.

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

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and join the debate surrounding Motion 503. I'd like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, first of all, for bringing it forward and also for the excellent information provided on the ingenuity fund in his introductory speech on Motion 503.

The intent of Motion 503 closely shadows one that has been put forward by the government in Bill 1. The distinguishing feature is that Motion 503 asks that the principal of the Alberta ingenuity fund be brought to \$1 billion in a set time period, more specifically during the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years. Increasing the capital investment of the endowment fund will increase the amount of money that the Alberta ingenuity fund, or AIF, as it is being called, is able to distribute to researchers who are working in Alberta. This fund supports a variety of research initiatives including student scholarships, fellowships, and industrial associateships which assist researchers to become involved in applied research in the private sector.

These various funding programs all have one goal: working to attract and retain leading researchers in a wide array of disciplines. This type of program increases the amount of human capital that we are able to access in our province. In fact, the foundation has supported over 200 graduate students in full-time research training in Alberta with a commitment of \$5 million per year. By supporting initiatives such as the AIF, Alberta is able to increase the amount of research performed in our province, and this will assist us in shifting from a resource-based economy to a value-added economy.

As we begin our second century as a province, we are in an enviable position, and it is important that we keep working to ensure that we retain the advantages that we have built up over the past 100 years. The high prices of oil and gas have been a boon to Albertans

both in terms of natural resource revenues and the creation of jobs for Albertans. However, the problem with nonrenewable resources is that there is a limited reserve. Alberta now has the opportunity to begin working with industry to begin creating economic alternatives here at home. Using the benefits that our oil and gas wealth has given us, we can create other industries alongside our traditional ones. By building a more diverse economy, we will be bolstering our current industrial strengths while planning for the future. Supporting research and development is one way that we can achieve this.

Being a former educator, the current chair of the Alberta Research Council, and the current vice-chair of the Alberta Science and Research Authority, I have a great interest in education and research. Education and research go hand in hand as it is necessary for Albertans to obtain the training and skill sets that come with an education before embarking upon research initiatives. Alberta's universities are among the finest in the world, and with the government's announcement of continued commitment to our postsecondary institutions I am certain that our campuses will remain at the top of their fields, and that means research excellence as well.

Since becoming the chair of the Alberta Research Council, I have had the opportunity to learn about the research and development initiatives that are taking place in our province, and there's a great deal of excitement in the research that is presently taking place. This includes new research in biosciences, agriculture, energy, engineering, forestry, information and communications technology, and the environment, including the water initiatives of the Alberta ingenuity fund.

While the AIF provides funding for research in our province, the ARC provides facilities and staff that work with industry to assist them in developing technology. The ARC, the Alberta Research Council, provides access to world-class resources and facilities in Alberta and a team drawn from 600 experienced scientists, researchers, and business experts. Alberta currently lends a great deal of support to research in our province through our universities and through organizations such as ARC, ASRA, AHFMR, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, and of course the Alberta ingenuity fund. Increasing the value of the Alberta ingenuity fund will give additional support to research, including water research, and development in our province.

So, Mr. Chairman, the AIF, the Alberta ingenuity fund, provides valuable funding and a valuable service to research in this province. Therefore, I support Motion 503 because it will serve to further stimulate research in our province.

Thank you.

8:40

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Motion 503 because I do think it is an important addition to what should be happening for our Alberta. This is the kind of investment in Alberta's research and innovation capacity that Liberals have been calling for. You know, failing the type of surplus strategy that the Alberta Liberal Party called for in the last election, which I think would have really worked in an even much better way to develop our future Alberta economy, I think this is a good second choice. I mean, if we look at the past, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, you know, I believe had its 25th anniversary this year, and it's had a huge number of successes. It's been a great addition to the research capacity of our province. It's created many businesses. It's created economic development. It's created wealth.

I believe the Conservatives here now need to broaden their gaze

and understand that over the long term it's pure scientific research that provides the foundation for the applied research that the government is willing to fund. We welcome this investment and understand that it will provide resources for both applied and pure research but caution that they need to do more to support pure research, that is driven not by immediately foreseeable commercial applications but by the imagination of our best researchers.

It seems to be something about bragging about catching up. Alberta lags behind most other provinces in research and development. This R and D spending as a percentage of provincial GDP is much behind most provinces. There must be public support for this type of research. I'll give a quote from a much quoted study from TD Economics: Special Report. It talks about research and development spending.

Research and development spending is another area of vulnerability [for the Alberta economy]. As mentioned earlier, the Corridor [from Edmonton to Calgary] is home to several excellent centres of research, most notably the Universities of Alberta and Calgary. Since 1994, University of Alberta Research Services reported that the university conducted \$194 million in industry-sponsored research, \$22 million in licensing royalties, and currently has 47 active spin-off companies. At University of Calgary, there have been 398 licenses negotiated, resulting in a number of highly prominent companies such as Cell-Loc Inc. and Living World Education. As well, there are a number of other groups that support and fund research, including [the already mentioned] Alberta Research Council, Edmonton Capital Region Innovation Centre, and Calgary Innovation Centre.

Still, overall spending on research and development . . . as a share of GDP in Alberta stands at roughly half the level recorded in Canada. Only 10 Alberta companies made the list of Canada's Top Corporate R&D Spenders in 2002, with nobody placing in the top 30. And, while there have been a number of successes in commercializing new research in the Corridor, a large share has been licensed abroad, leaving the lion's share of the benefits to accrue to other countries. But, levels of funding are not the only ingredient to achieving success on this front – without a high quality of management, efforts of taking new products to market will probably fall dead in their tracks.

There are many areas of R and D. You know, there's a number of sort of ways to look at how this can develop in terms of the synergies in certain areas, and the corridor is one of those areas. To quote again:

Over the past decade, a number of city-regions in North America have established research alliances to bring together R&D activities in their universities, colleges, teaching hospitals, labs and research-based companies. One notable example is Georgia Research Alliance (GRA), which was formed in Atlanta in 1990. Through the collaboration efforts, the GRA was able to reduce the labour and capital costs of research, spawn high-tech firms and lured world-leading scientists to its research institutions. Such an alliance provides a number of advantages, including lowering costs for R&D costs, and raising venture capital.

You know, these can be a huge benefit for the developing Alberta that we're seeing, but I'll just say it again: we have not had a lot of top R and D spenders in Alberta even though we have had a lot of income generators.

The ranking in 2002 of the top hundred: the highest from Alberta was NOVA Chemicals at the time and Syncrude at 39, and those were of the top 40. You know, this is something that I think the government has to look at, encouraging the private sector as well somehow to move up on its R and D investment, and that can only pay a lot of dividends for the future.

I believe that I have to speak in favour of this bill. I think it's a good and a sound idea. I think these things work, and I think this endowment can only help the future of our citizens and the children to come. That's all I have to say, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few comments with respect to the motion, but before I get into the substance of the motion, I'd like to remind the Member for Edmonton-McClung that every private member has the right to bring forward a motion of their choosing. Whether it looks like it's duplicating a government bill is immaterial because that private member has the right to do anything of their own volition and their own initiative to maybe underscore a point or underscore a direction. So in that respect, the motion the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky has brought forward is one he feels very strongly about, and one that I frankly support.

So what is the distinction? There is a distinction between Bill 1, which does talk about the Alberta heritage science and engineering research fund, which we effectively know as the Alberta ingenuity fund, being increased by \$500 million. The motion, while it reflects that particular commitment, talks about a timeline, which makes it a little bit more distinct from Bill 1. So I think that the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky is trying to put some urgency in his motion around the decision to top up the ingenuity fund and to let all members of the Assembly know that commitment.

We've heard some very good remarks from both sides of the House about the importance of research, the importance of innovation, and the fact that this direction is supported. It was talked about, the legacy that the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research has had in this province. Again, that was started as an endowment fund many years ago. Many of us now know and have seen the impact that that has had for our province, the amount of credibility that brings our research community, the level of expertise we have in this province, the reputation of our universities. Mr. Speaker, the Alberta ingenuity fund, if we look 20 years ahead, I am convinced will have that same kind of reputation and will continue to put Alberta brains and ability on the map.

I'd also like to point out to the members of the House that if they would look under the website www.albertaingenuity.ca, there are some very interesting things that probably aren't well known to most of us in terms of what the ingenuity fund has done and the areas that they invest in. I'm just going to pick a couple because they've got four ingenuity centres, one on carbohydrate science. Now, that one's based, actually, over here at the University of Alberta, and the lead person in that particular group is a Dr. Bundle. One of the breakthroughs that they're working on is a carbohydrate molecule which has been dubbed "starfish." Well, what does that mean? Well, it's dubbed that because of its shape. It's tailor made to neutralize the kinds of toxins that made diseases like hamburger disease and cholera so deadly. The five arms of the starfish attach to the toxins and thus render them unable to stick to healthy human cells. So that's one example of a research project that is being funded out of the Alberta ingenuity fund and that has potential commercial applicability into the future.

8:50

Another one that I would point out that is very timely in its development is the ingenuity centre on water, and this follows the water for life strategy that we introduced a number of years back that is under way. This particular centre is a partnership of the three universities – the University of Lethbridge, the University of Calgary, and University of Alberta – just to look at some of the issues surrounding the water resources we have in our province: being able to catalogue the resources we have available, what's happening to them, determining water quality and the quantity, and establishing a research base from which we can make good policy decisions.

Mr. Speaker, those are just a couple of the initiatives that the

ingenuity fund has undertaken. One of the problems we had with the fund when it was initially established at the \$500 million level is that it was also the time when, most of us remember, the market tanked. As a result, the ingenuity fund got off to a slow start because the amount of earnings coming from the endowment fund were not sufficient to actually establish some of these programs. But, Mr. Speaker, now that the market has recovered and now that we're starting to see some returns in the market, you're going to begin to see more and more important initiatives come out of this particular fund.

The additional \$500 million that is proposed by this motion and, in fact, also proposed in Bill 1 will give this organization, this fund the opportunity to do even more long-term planning that will benefit all Albertans.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do urge all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this motion. It underscores the commitment that we have under Bill 1. I do thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise this evening to speak in favour of Motion 503. I think that the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky is bringing out some very, very good points in regard to the urgency and the necessity of us investing in research development at this juncture in our history. I think that we have tremendous opportunity and a tremendous sort of physical human power to produce a long sort of storied history of research and development in this province, and the Alberta ingenuity fund has contributed to that immensely.

I, too, like the Member for Edmonton-McClung, was somewhat confused about just how similar this particular motion was to parts of Bill 1, but you know at the same time I think that the important issue here – and I'm glad that he's bringing it up – is the idea that the government should commit this money regardless of the vagaries of the markets and put the money in there with the utmost urgency. I think that a lot of projects in this province do not prosper because of a lack of sustained funding over a long period of time. So this particular endowment fund, I think, has some merit in that regard. I think it's in a way better than some parts of Bill 1, which according to the discretion of the Finance minister can be perhaps not funded properly depending on what the budget is for any particular year.

A few points that I would like to bring out in regard to research and development, particularly in science and technology and engineering in this province. You know, we've had a long history of producing R and D in this province, and one of the problems that we've seen is that we've invested quite a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, in specific projects, but when the termination of that funding happens, or when the company or the people that are producing that thing are no longer required to stay, then we lose that. Right? People leave, or the technology is sold off, or the funding dries up, and that particular project ends up leaving the province.

One of the things that I would like to see, and I think many scientists and research firms around this province would like to see as well, is that R and D money is tied to those projects and those people staying in the province of Alberta for a specified amount of time so that we are gaining the full benefit of the research and the innovation that they produce.

As well, you know, part of a prosperous scientific community is to have an infrastructure that supports science in the broadest possible sense across the province. So, Mr. Speaker, I think we must not always focus our attention on individual projects that are just standing on their own but, rather, the broader sort of support that

creates a good scientific community across the province. So funding for pure science in the universities and colleges and in our schools as well, our secondary schools, is absolutely important to create a culture of science and technology that will serve us well in this next century.

So, yes, I do stand to support this motion, and I hope that it helps to strengthen some of the weaknesses that we see in Bill 1. We see the urgency and commitment of quite a significant amount of money for the next few years and the years into the future for both our children and grandchildren.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak to Motion 503 this evening. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for bringing forward this motion.

The province of Alberta has seen its fair share of good times, and we are certainly in a period of extreme prosperity. Alberta has been so successful because Albertans are not afraid to innovate. New ideas foster new technologies and new treatments, which sustain our economy and improve our quality of life.

Alberta is beginning to realize the full economic potential of the oil sands. The oil sands, one of the largest oil reserves in the world, originally were thought to be uneconomical. However, through dedication and ingenuity Alberta has been able to develop methods to make bitumen recovery economical. Alberta is known around the world as a leader in both medical and energy research, Mr. Speaker. The foresight of this government has already created a substantial research infrastructure to support innovation in the province.

The Alberta ingenuity fund, which is the subject of this motion, is currently valued at \$500 million. The interest that this fund earns is enough to provide many grants. The endowment is used to support a balanced, long-term approach to science and engineering research in the province of Alberta. Increasing the amount of the endowment can only help to increase the number of grants available.

Mr. Speaker, this fund operates at arm's length from the government. This fact is extremely important as it insulates this granting body from political influence. The granting procedure is a peer review process, which ensures that only scientifically sound projects are funded. This fund is not a storehouse for government slush funds but, rather, a commitment from the government to the people of Alberta.

At its current level the fund has supported many important projects through its flagship ingenuity centres. These centres are able to provide a competitive edge to Alberta's universities as they attempt to retain top homegrown researchers and international stars. These centres create ideal training environments for allowing Alberta students to achieve excellence and reach their potential. At these centres students are exposed to world-class instructors and have access to cutting-edge technology. By creating ingenuity centres, we are creating virtual circles. The centres attract top professors, which in turn attracts top students, who because of their experiences in the presence of the centres are more likely to remain in Alberta and instruct the next generation of researchers. In short, our ingenuity centres are ensuring that research in Alberta has a healthy future, Mr. Speaker.

Four ingenuity centres have been created in the province: a centre for water, in situ energy, machine learning, and carbohydrate science. Each of these centres has made an important contribution to the lives of Albertans.

At the centre for water multidisciplinary research has been conducted, and this research has been instrumental in the formation of the government's water for life strategy, water management that's paramount to the survival of Alberta. Water is needed to keep industry working, for recreation, to grow crops, and most importantly for human consumption. Without a safe and reliable source of drinking water Alberta will not be able to grow or prosper.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

head: 9:00 **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 30
Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education for the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance to move Bill 30, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005, for second reading.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I checked *Hansard* this afternoon, and it would appear as if I managed to speak for about 20 minutes on this during the committee stage, so I don't intend to bore the members with an awful lot of my rambling this evening. [interjections] I figured you might appreciate that. I do however wish to share an anecdote, as it were, and then make one comment. Then I will cede the floor to at least one other member on my side who wishes to comment.

I come from a small-business background, Mr. Speaker. I think I mentioned the other day that the fact we're not even looking at a budget yet really calls into question the entire budgeting process by this government. We're only days away from the end of the fiscal year, and we've not had one yet.

It was indicated in the House last week by the Finance minister that this is normal procedure. I know that in my business with my partners if I were to come to them at the end of our business year and tell them that I need 25 per cent of my next year's budget with no details as to why and with no explanation as to why I didn't have a budget prepared for the upcoming year, quite frankly they would probably have laughed me out of the boardroom. I don't doubt that in most instances most private corporations would not allow their company to operate in this fashion. It really concerns me, quite frankly, when it's suggested that this is normal operating practice.

I mentioned last week that the government of Saskatchewan last year for the very first time in its history went to interim supply, so I don't see that it should have to be, and I would hope that next year we'll be back in the House in early February debating the budget so that by the time we come to the end of March, we'll have completed the process, and we won't have to do this again.

The other concern that I have, Mr. Speaker, is in the preface to the document which we received last week from the Finance minister, the 2005-06 interim supply estimates. In that preface it says:

... departments of the Government of Alberta to support their operations from April 1, 2005 to June 1, 2005. Before that date, it is anticipated that spending authorization will have been provided for the full fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

In other words, it's anticipated that by the end of May we'll have passed a budget for this coming 2005-2006 year.

My concern is that we have yet to hear from the Finance minister

exactly when there will be a budget brought forward. The most recent rumour I heard the other day – and I don't know what it's worth, but I'll throw the date out anyway: I heard April 18. Now, if it comes April 18 and with my understanding of the number of days required to debate each department, we probably would get it done by the end of May, but if for some reason it's another few days delayed, we may well not have a budget passed by the end of May. My fear is that I'll be looking at another one of these documents some time in the near future, and I hope that that's not the case. I really hope that that's not the case. So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I will allow somebody else to speak to this particular motion.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise today to contribute to the discussion on interim supply not only as a Member of this Legislative Assembly or as the Official Opposition critic for two departments but as a concerned citizen. I agree with the remarks that were made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. Although I do not object to the interim supply for either of these two ministries – I recognize, of course, that they need these funds to operate and to carry out their duties – I'm just concerned that more than two weeks into March the government is making us make funding decisions in excess of \$5 billion over a period of very few days, and then based on this rushed agenda, interim supply is to be implemented or slated to come into force on April 1.

I think this is because the government was distracted. They cannot add or subtract properly when other things are occupying their minds. I would have loved to see this interim supply document much sooner than the two weeks before the huge cheques for interim supply are issued. As a businessman myself, as my hon. colleague indicated, I never prepare my budget and I never prepare my forecasting sheets this late. In fact, I do up my budget early in the fall of the year prior. If my accountant and every level of government expect me to be accurate and ready way in advance, why is it not a fair expectation to have of this government? If I as a citizen with a budget that is a lot smaller than what we're discussing here have to do it way in advance, why can't this government?

I urge this Assembly to revisit this practice and urge the government to present their interim supply estimates a little earlier, and maybe, hopefully, in the future we might actually do away with interim supply altogether and discuss the budget and have it done with.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Minister of Education on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance wish to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a second time]

Bill 27

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's my pleasure on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance to move Bill 27, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005, at second reading.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope I don't sound too much like a broken record, but I'm going to give another little anecdote and then actually a compliment to at least one minister.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I'm a small businessman, and in fact for 20 years I manufactured and distributed rubber stamps. Not a terribly exciting business, although when people ask me how I could make a living making rubber stamps, I always said: as long as there's a government, there will be a rubber stamp. So far I've never been proven wrong.

Mr. Speaker, if at the beginning of the year I do my planning and I budget to sell a stamp for \$35, at the end of the year, when I look back, I will have sold those stamps for \$35. Never in 25 years – and I went back and checked it – did I budget to sell stamps for \$35 and come back at the end of the year and find, lo and behold, that people were paying me \$55 for that same stamp that I had budgeted to sell for \$35. It just never happened.

Now, we're very fortunate in this province – and I'm using oil as an example, obviously – to find ourselves in a situation where energy prices are volatile. There have been years when the budgeting process was such that the price of oil was much less than had been planned, and of course nobody wants to see that. All of us would much rather be in a situation where we have more money left over at the end of the year as opposed to not having enough.

However, when I look at this document – again, I spoke to it at length last week – 20 out of 24 departments were over budget, and it's only by the grace of God and good fortune, i.e. oil and natural gas, that we're not in a very, very serious situation here with all of the overexpenditures. If it were not for those tremendous revenues and the fact that the price of oil and natural gas have skyrocketed in the last few years, we would be \$2 billion, if I remember right, over budget and probably be the laughingstock of the country as opposed to the envy of the country. So we're very, very fortunate, and I just want to remind everybody of the fact that this is not a good-news story in any way, shape, or form.

9:10

Having said that, I did mention that I wanted to give kudos to at least one department – and I actually ran out of time the other day when I was speaking to this in Committee of the Whole – the Department of Municipal Affairs. Now, this is what, in my mind, a supplementary supply document should be all about.

I'm just going to run through here quickly: \$22,900,000 for the 2004 greater Edmonton area disaster recovery program, \$500,000 for the 2004 Kneehill county disaster recovery program, and \$700,000 for the 2004 greater Calgary area disaster recovery program, all related to the unprecedented storms and flooding that took place in those areas in July of last year, Mr. Speaker. In my mind, as I said, this is really what supplementary supply should be about: acts of God would have been totally unforeseen, no real way that anybody could have predicted that this might happen, and totally understandable. When I go out to my constituents to say, in this particular case, that there was nearly \$23 million spent for flood recovery in Edmonton – and I have to say that Edmonton-Rutherford, my constituency, was one of the harder hit constituencies in Edmonton – certainly my constituents appreciate that.

That's really the end of my comments. When I look at this, that's what I would like to see a supplementary supply document refer to, things that were not planned, could not have been foreseen, and money that is spent to address those sorts of situations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. This is, of course, the first time I speak to supplementary estimates, and I think that the first thing I would like to comment on is how, again, I'm surprised that the government wants us to matter of factly approve an almost \$2 billion supplement to their 2004-2005 budget.

Mr. Speaker, as a layman, and if I may explain this to other laymen out there, in my humble opinion this means that our government was \$2 billion overdraft. If we didn't have the fat and sizable surplus this year to hide this overdraft – and again I emphasize, like my hon. colleague indicated, that this was almost an act of God. It's not because of financial wizardry or good management skills that this government hid the \$2 billion overdraft. They would have actually posted a deficit, and we would have been brought back to a provincial debt situation. So I think this is a sign of irresponsible management. Two billion dollars is a huge, huge sum of money, much higher than the GDP of some sovereign nations.

We have a government which spends taxpayers' money like it's pocket change. I would not stand here today and discuss a couple of million. We're talking \$2 billion, which is a \$2,000 million overdraft. Of course, I'm not talking about emergency response to wildfires or BSE research to help the farmers or the one-time election cost for the fall provincial election. These are unbudgeted amounts, and yes we can spend more than was initially allocated. These would be legitimately classified as emergencies. However, the government expects us to go through the document – and it's really a very thick document with some 98 pages – and say, "Yup, this money is needed," with little difficulty, sign off, and say: "It's all right. Go for it." I would do it if it's for a rainy day, not because we brought on the rain. Overspending by \$2 billion or missing the dot by \$2,000 million is not a healthy sign at all.

If I may remind people who listened to my maiden speech, I represent a constituency which is relatively well off, an average household income of more than \$80,000 per year per household. So my neighbours and constituents are not counting nickels and dimes, but they're not known for throwing away money. If we as citizens are expected to be careful with our own money, why can't this government? What can I tell my constituents when they ask me about this rich and extravagant bailout? What does this government have to say to justify to the taxpayer that \$2,000 million more were needed for government programs? What can I tell people on AISH or welfare in my constituency who might be suffering or are barely making ends meet and the government tells them that their relief is on the way but that they shouldn't really have their hopes up and it shouldn't be terribly much? This government claims to not want to break the bank, but again, as a layman, I think the bank is already broken.

I was not a member of this Assembly before this past November, but I'm guessing that this is not the first time huge supplementary injections like this one were retroactively introduced and approved. In the preface to the document, the 2004-2005 supplementary estimates, it says:

On November 24, 2004, a restructuring of government ministries was announced. This changed the responsibilities of some ministries, created new ministries and eliminated others. The Estimates information has been restated to reflect this new government structure.

So I read this, and the way I understand it is that this restructuring for efficiency translated into a \$2 billion deficiency.

Of the two ministries that I'm Official Opposition critic for, the first one is Innovation and Science. They asked for a supplementary estimate of \$38 million, and it says here:

... is requested to support participation in a co-ordinated network for prion and protein misfolding research to develop solutions related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), associated diseases, and the management of specific risk material. Pursuant to

section 4 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, this response to the BSE emergency will be funded from the Sustainability Fund.

Now, having read that, of course no one would dare criticize any research initiative or government project trying to find an answer to our BSE crisis. But, really, we knew about BSE in May of 2003. So why wasn't this co-ordinated network research budgeted for a year in advance? Was that a last-minute decision?

Also, the point is whether or not this research proved beneficial. Did anything positive or useful come out of it? Thirty-eight million dollars can sure go a long way in microbiology and veterinary pathology research, and I can see the merit and potential. But, really, what do we have to show our ranchers and farmers? Tangible results for this amount? Couldn't this amount be better spent on maybe testing all animals and not just opening the U.S. border but probably opening many other markets all over the world for our beef? So I don't disagree with the research to find a cure for BSE or to alleviate that problem, but I think that this is \$38 million that could have been spent elsewhere.

My second ministry, which is Government Services, spent \$180,000 on registries renewal. It says here: "previously classified as Operating Expense, [and it] has been restated as Equipment/Inventory Purchases due to an audit recommendation." Again, to the layman, I find this very vague.

While any amount over budget, big or small, irritates me or causes me discomfort, it sounds like, "Yeah, maybe they needed it. It wasn't forecast, and it wasn't budgeted for, and it's not a terribly big amount." Again, all things relative. So this department is slightly better than some of the others.

I would urge the minister, though, to exercise better management practices next year so that this doesn't develop into a trend: \$180,000 this year, next year it'll be \$300,000, the year after it'll be \$1 million, and so on, and it will just continue to escalate. Again, this is not a bad ministry relative to the other ones, but I'm looking forward to the day that maybe we will have all 24 ministries on the dot and not overdrawn.

So with that I would close my remarks and invite other people to participate in the debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, under Standing Order 29(2)(a) there is a five-minute period for questions and comments, if you wish.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

9:20

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a number of issues that I would just like to bring up in regard to these supplementary budget figures. This is my first time looking at something like this as well.

You know, what I find working backwards is a sense of surprise again in just how much extra money has to be put in. Now I realize that there are so many different contingencies that can take place in any one of these 24 ministries, but you know I would suggest that the almost \$2 billion that we're over budget currently is a sign of a larger problem that we have here in our budgeting process, and this is the tendency to underestimate the revenues that are brought into this province every year as well and sometimes to a very, very large extent. So everyone in the various ministries lowballs their budgets as well, and then it's almost as if everything shifts up once we realize, in fact, that we do bring in these windfall profits from the oil and gas industry, let's say, or other sources of revenue.

My feeling, as a person who has looked at budgets for a long time, is that you're being unrealistic and sort of somewhat deceptive in the amount of money that's coming in to the province on a quarterly basis. I mean, we've seen this for so many years in this province of Alberta that people are wising up to this, of course. And they say:

oh yes, well, you know, we're not going to have so much money with oil and gas revenues. And then – boom – six months later there's this unbelievable windfall. So people are wising up to that here in this province, and I think that we saw a reflection of that in the last election where we have a much stronger opposition.

As well, I take exception to running a budget quite significantly over. You know, we take pride in our own personal budgets with our homes or with institutions or businesses to maintain a balanced budget or run something like a surplus, but it's so difficult with the numbers in this province, Mr. Speaker. There are just so many things hidden that make it difficult to know what the reality is of our financial situation here in Alberta. Certainly the situation is very good; there's no two ways about that. It comes not from clever planning but rather just the bonus windfall that we always manage to get from our energy revenues. There's certainly a better way to do this, Mr. Speaker, and I think that it would be easier for each minister, as well, to build a proper budget if he or she had an honest idea of where the money is going to be.

So just going through my own anecdotal places where I found some points of interest, I think that I can just comment on various ministries as I see fit. I was looking with some interest, for example, at Human Resources and Employment. There's a \$14 million, almost \$15 million, additional funding line here for "People Not Expected to Work," Mr. Speaker, which I found in itself interesting, besides the numbers, and then an extra almost \$9.5 million that was already reallocated to this program, which I believe then represents a total of a \$24 million increase in this area.

Mr. Speaker, this ties into something that we've been discussing in the last few days in regard to employment and employability here in this province. You know, it's interesting to see what the definition is of someone who is "Not Expected to Work." According to the ministry itself, this is a client who shows evidence through a proper and detailed assessment of their potential by a career and employment consultant that they will probably never be able to work full-time continuously in the competitive labour force, and they're assigned this not expected to work designation.

It is interesting, though, that this does not include people who receive our AISH benefits, but rather it's people who, among other things, have a lack of education and are thus considered not able to work. So I think that, again, this is perhaps a budgeting issue because a \$24 million increase in expenses not accounted for is significant, but it points to a structural problem as well.

Moving over to the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation, again we've been discussing a lot about this in the last few days. The Calgary Courts Centre really stands out in the budget because of an \$85.5 million change in the budget voted to capital investment. I would like to know what the nature of this change is exactly. What all does it entail? It's very vague, and I would appreciate clarification on that. I'm sure I'll get it.

There's a whole range of things that I find curious. Another one is in the Sustainable Resource Development area. The minister has allocated a million dollar fund for the mountain pine beetle infestation. Now, certainly I recognize, and most people do in the province, the imminent threat from the mountain pine beetle infestation, but my question is: where did such a beautiful round number come from? This million dollars – right? – with all the zeroes, you know, it seems rather vague and points, to me, to a lack of a specific plan to deal with it but rather just a chunk of change that might look like there is in fact a plan.

My second question is with the mountain pine beetle infestation. I would suggest, perhaps, that we not use more money for this problem and, in fact, long-term funding. This is like a sort of a slow tidal wave of devastation, as some people describe it, that occurs

over a 15-year period that could literally change the face of our forestry industry and the tourism industry as well, as the mountain pine beetle destroys vast swaths of our forests here in the province.

This is sort of a skip-about view of things. Again, my main categorical criticism of this supplementary document is that (a) there is just such a vast discrepancy between budgeting from one quarter to the next and (b) why is it that we have to underestimate our supply side so much so that these budgets don't balance at an earlier date?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to assess the supplementary supply for the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development. The ministry is requesting \$125 million broken into two components: \$124 million for forest fires and \$1 million with regard to the pine beetle.

Why can't realistic budgets be prepared? The reason I say that with the interim supply is because of poor budgeting practices. I'm going to read from some examples with regard to that as to why I do say this.

The core businesses listed under this ministry – forest, land and resource management, fish and wildlife management, rangeland management, land use disposition management, surface rights and land composition boards, Natural Resources Conservation Board, and environment statutory programs – have all had realistic budgets for the last two years with regard to being almost exact or pretty close to it. The one where we could have problems is with forest protection.

When we look at actuals with regard to budgets, we're way out to lunch on these ones. We've had budgets that have been very close with the exception, as I said, of forest protection. The budget 2002-2003 was budgeted at \$302 million. The following year the budget for that ministry was lowballed at \$75.6 million. We knew we were going to have a problem, but we again still budgeted low. Now we go to the next budget with regard to 2003-2004, and again it's gone up almost double the other one, \$204 million. I'm not sure why it had the yo-yo effect with regard to budgeting.

Here we are tonight discussing the budget of \$124 million additional dollars to fight forest fires. This is in request to almost a full budget amount for this government's \$14.5 million. We're asking for an additional \$124 million, going to bring that up to \$138 million with regard to forest fires. I'm wondering why the urgency to have this additional requisition of \$124 million now before the regular budget is to be addressed. If this government was a corporation, it's CEO should be fired for the fact that we're underestimating this on an ongoing basis.

9:30

With regard to the pine beetle, that in itself is another discussion, but I'd still like to talk about the forest fires. We're talking about April 1 we're going to be charging men and women who fight these forest fires room and board. Some of this money, \$124 million, would that be used to offset? Or are we going to still go through with regard to charging the men and women the \$450 room and board? These Albertans risk their lives to control the wildfires that threaten not only thousands of hectares of public forest land but, more importantly, human lives and communities, and we're going to charge these men and women room and board. I find that atrocious.

We're talking about the pine beetle. We're allocating only \$1 million to fight an industry which generates \$4 billion. That's less than 1 per cent of the allocated budget to fight protectionary measures for this ministry. I find that shocking. This ministry and the budget generated by it, \$4 billion in research as well as spinoff industries, employs about 69,000 people here within the province of Alberta. This problem has been around for over 10 years, and it's been recognized, but we've not jumped on it. I'd say that's being reactive instead of proactive.

The federal government announced a program to commit \$40 million over six years. My question would be: has this ministry in fact looked into how much money is available for this province? B.C. is faced with a similar program and similar problems, but I'm sure they're able to access that money down from the federal government. How much of this money did this ministry receive? That would be one of the other questions. What exactly is this money going to be spent on for fighting the forest fires? Is it going to be on equipment, supplies, services? I'm not sure. How long will the money contribute to enhance the abilities of the forest fire fighters as well? Why wasn't this money allocated in the previous budget?

Those are just a few questions, specifically, that I had with regard to this ministry and its lack of proper budgeting then, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone have any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sat and listened to the new members of the House, and occasionally there was a good point to be made. I know that some of them were speaking from a layman's perspective, and some of them were speaking from a businessman's perspective to Bill 27, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005.

I wonder if I could just answer at least one question, Mr. Speaker, which I think the second speaker on the opposition side asked. He wanted to know what to tell his constituents. Well, you can tell your constituents that the government continues to invest in their best interests and the expenditures that are listed here are all going out for central government programs that benefit not only education but seniors and children's services and health and wellness.

In the education area it will help us to provide payment to cover about 1,250 brand new teachers, which I know that they would support. We'd be spending about \$12.8 million to buy brand new textbooks for children, which I'm sure they would support. We'll be reducing waiting lists and providing additional medical procedures. There's elimination of health care premiums for seniors. There's so much that's going on in this budget, Mr. Speaker. I hope that they will vote for these items because, as I recall, many of them campaigned on having some of these increases made.

So that having been said, I would hope that they will find it in their hearts to support our efforts to assist Albertans through these many valuable programs by providing these extra dollars through the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a second time]

Bill 18 Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 18, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005.

This amendment changes section 7(2) of the act, increasing the maximum number of persons that can be named in a given year from five to 10. To put the proposed amendment in context, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer members of the Assembly a very brief overview of the order.

The act was created in 1979 to recognize Albertans who have rendered service of the greatest distinction and of singular excellence for or on behalf of the residents of Alberta. The Alberta Order of Excellence, or AOE, is the highest honour the province can bestow upon a citizen. There are currently 58 members of the order, Mr. Speaker. They come from all walks of life and represent many fields of endeavour, including agriculture, education, science and research, the arts, health care, business, law, politics, engineering, the military, and community service. Each year names are put forward through public nomination, and currently up to five of these nominations are chosen by the Alberta Order of Excellence Council for induction.

Mr. Speaker, these people who are chosen for AOE induction are selected because of their extraordinary contributions to this province. While many members have achieved the highest level of expertise and success in their chosen fields, their professional accomplishments are not the main reason for their induction in the order. AOE members are all people who place a high premium on service to others whether through their professional work, through philanthropic contributions, or through volunteer activities.

Mr. Speaker, these are people who have made a difference in the lives of their fellow Albertans. They are people who have made real and lasting contributions to the quality of life of our communities and the quality of life we all enjoy as Albertans. The contributions of AOE members can also be seen in many cases at the national and even the international levels. In short, AOE members are people whose contributions will truly stand the test of time.

As I mentioned earlier, the act currently allows up to five Albertans to be inducted each year. As successful as Alberta was when the act was created some 25 years ago, the Legislature may not have fully imagined the level of innovation and distinction Albertans would attain by the province's centennial year. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, limiting the annual inductions to a maximum of five is just not enough. It doesn't reflect the level of community service taking place across our province today or the level of commitment and dedication that characterizes so many Albertans' stories.

Moreover, work by the AOE Council to increase public awareness of the order has been successful over the past few years, and a greater number of deserving nominations are finding their way to the council every year. By raising the maximum number of inductees per year to 10, this amendment will allow the council to recognize more of those deserving nominations.

Induction into the order is more than an honour for the inductee; it's also a way for Albertans to thank outstanding citizens for their service and to ensure that their stories are passed down to future generations. This amendment will help to accomplish that goal.

I would encourage all members of the Assembly to lend their support to this bill. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 18.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 18, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005. I'm pleased to rise and speak to it.

The Alberta Order of Excellence is the highest honour the province can bestow on a citizen. It's about recognizing Albertans

who have made a difference and who have served Albertans with excellence and distinction. It's presented by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. The chancellor of the Order of Excellence presents the new member with a medallion and personalized illuminated scroll.

9:40

At present, Mr. Speaker, five people with excellence and distinction get this award. This Alberta Order of Excellence is a great honour to any Albertan that receives it. I'm glad to support this Bill 18, that will allow 10 Albertans instead of five to be honoured, more members of the Alberta Order of Excellence from different walks of life such as science, medicine, education, agriculture, politics, law, business, engineering, and arts. There are many, many great people in this province that deserve to be honoured by this type of award. Many more members will make an impact on our economy and our society.

I think it's great that the government is increasing the amount of people that can receive this award. I commend the hon. minister for proposing this amendment act. I am pleased to support this bill.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Eggen: Oh, yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to rise to speak very briefly on this bill. I think that with some reservations I would consider supporting it as well.

Just looking through the history of recipients of the Alberta Order of Excellence award, it's just a remarkable list of individuals who have contributed so much to our province. The only reason I might suggest some reservation is that, you know, with the very highest awards that any state or government might bestow on its citizens, it's important to keep the very highest standards of criteria to receive one of these awards.

I can think back to any number of awards through military service; say, for example, the Victoria Cross. It's something that was only given out to a very, very select group of people who did something truly exceptional, in this case in a military context. So, you know, the reason that these standards are left so high for the very top awards that the state can bestow on its citizens is because you want to give them that special feeling amongst the population, and people want to recognize just the very best.

You look back through the years, and sometimes there were only one or two recipients in any given year over the last 20-some years that were given this. You know, I think that you in no way want to dishonour, say, for example, some of these individuals, like Joseph Shocter and the Pooles, Peter Lougheed, among the people who were the only recipients or perhaps one or two recipients in any given year when they won it.

So that would be my only reservation. Otherwise, I believe that it's a bill that I would consider supporting.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone have any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the object of this particular bill is to increase the amount of people that can receive the Alberta Order of Excellence.

The Deputy Speaker: I beg your pardon. Is your question or comment directed to the previous speaker under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mrs. Mather: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mrs. Mather: I'm understanding that there are no suggestions of changing the criteria or the high calibre. Is that correct?

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member wish to respond?

Mr. Eggen: Well, that's true although, you know, when you are increasing the number of people, then inherently the two things work together. Right? You have a relationship between the criteria that you put onto paper and then how many people you choose, so the overall value of each word or each descriptor that you might use to choose an individual of exceptional standing or deeds in our province inherently does change if you choose more people to fit into that category. The two have a relationship with each other.

The Deputy Speaker: Did you wish to comment further, hon. member?

Mrs. Mather: Well, I just believe that it's a great honour for Albertans to receive this award and that there are many great Albertans. I don't imagine that we will have to lower the criteria in order to extend it to more people.

Thank you.

Mr. Eggen: I am in no way, shape, or form suggesting that either. I'm just saying a qualification. I mean, we're moving 100 per cent increase. Right? So 100 per cent increase can indeed change the nature of the words and the criteria that you are using. We have to recognize that that is something that does happen.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Any other member wanting to speak on the bill?

Does the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon wish to close?

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I close the debate on this motion. I thank the previous hon. members for their support, but I would note that in the 25 years of this award we've given out 58, a little more than two per year. It would suggest that the criteria and the people that have been going through the nominees have been very cautious. This is a very coveted award, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that in our centennial year we would give the opportunity to go to 10 instead of five, I would suggest, will in no way diminish the wonderful opportunity to receive this order.

So I would again like to encourage my colleagues and all the members of this House to support second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a second time]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I would call the committee to order and remind everyone that this is the informal part of the process. Members can have their jackets off or occupy a seat other than their own. However, you do have to be in your seat to be recognized by the chair.

Bill 2
Alberta Centennial Medal Act

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At second reading of this bill I indicated to hon. members on both sides of the House that I would take the transcripts from *Hansard* and conveying them on to the drafters of the regulations so that the comments and questions that were brought forward at that stage of the reading of this bill could be addressed by the drafters of the regulations, and I've fulfilled that commitment. With that, I don't have any further words to add except to say thank you to the members who have spoken very passionately about this particular bill.

Thank you, sir.

9:50

Mr. R. Miller: Mr. Chairman, I just have one quick question to the minister. Under section 6, revocation of the award, it says that "the Minister may revoke any award given pursuant to this Act." I'm just wondering if he could share with us under what circumstances the minister might wish to revoke an award.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Chairman, this question was asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona at the second reading stage. The reason why the revocation clause is put in there is because it is a requirement by Rideau Hall's direction so that this medal may be recognized by the order of precedence as established by the Governor General. So it is a requirement. Obviously, one can think of many examples where an individual, perhaps by reason of criminal activity, is somebody that you may wish to revoke their medal. There are numerous circumstances – I think most members could probably imagine – when such a situation could arise.

Mr. R. Miller: I'd like to thank the minister for that clarification. I obviously didn't read *Hansard*, or else I would have seen that and perhaps your answer.

That may well be the case here as well. Under article 3, eligibility, it refers to "former long-term residents," and again I'm just wondering if you could share with us what the definition might be for "long-term" when we're talking about former residents of the province.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Chairman, I think what we're trying to contemplate is if somebody had long been a resident of the province of Alberta but was retired in the province of British Columbia, but they were well-recognized as an Albertan who contributed greatly to this province, then that's such a person that we would not want to restrict from being eligible for this medal.

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

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions in regard to the medallions. I guess my first question is perhaps a bit naive, but I would like to ask it anyway. I'm just wondering why we require legislation in the first place to hand out these medallions. You know, it seems as though it's a bit of a formal process for the medallions. Right?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Chairman, at the outset of my comments at second reading I did make a very clear distinction between the medallions and the centennial medal. Medallions being struck do not require legislation. Those medallions are being struck for commemorative souvenirs for all school students, for example, in the province of

Alberta. That is not the subject matter of the legislation that we're looking at today.

The subject matter of the legislation that we are considering today is the Centennial Medal Act, which is restricted. A total, I believe, of 8,000 of these will be struck. The requirement for legislation is the requirement that is established so that it is recognized by Rideau Hall so that individuals may wear the medals at appropriate occasions.

[The clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that we rise and report Bill 2.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 2.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
(continued)

Bill 23
Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this evening to move second reading of Bill 23, the Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill is in response to two Supreme Court rulings that have made it necessary for provincial governments across Canada to specify the authority of tribunals in their jurisdiction. In October 2003 the Supreme Court released two decisions that set out a new test for determining the jurisdiction of administrative tribunals. Those two cases were Paul and Martin, one relating to aboriginal rights and the other to labour rights.

In the Paul case, which originated in British Columbia, Mr. Paul, an aboriginal person, cut down two red cedar trees to construct a deck for his home. The province of B.C. charged him with offences under their Forest Act for cutting down the trees without authorization. Mr. Paul appealed his regulatory convictions to the Forest Appeals Commission, the B.C. tribunal set up to regulate the use of forest products. At his hearing Mr. Paul argued that he had an aboriginal right under section 35 of the Constitution of Canada to cut

down those trees. The question in that case was whether the tribunal had any jurisdiction to consider the constitutional matters.

Mr. Speaker, regulatory tribunals such as the Forest Appeals Commission in B.C. were set up by the province to streamline regulatory dispositions and hear matters quickly so that resource development can proceed in a timely fashion. An inquiry into whether Mr. Paul had an aboriginal right to cut down trees was a significant threat to the entire purpose for which tribunals are created. Aboriginal claims are complex and very involved, often requiring reams of historical evidence and experts and elders to testify.

It was not clear that the Forest Appeals Commission had any capacity to handle such an important but complex and lengthy inquiry. Without jurisdiction the issue would be litigated and resolved in the courts. The Supreme Court concluded that the Forest Appeals Commission had the necessary jurisdiction to determine aboriginal rights because of the way the enabling statute was drafted.

Mr. Speaker, the second case, the Martin case, was decided the very same day as the Paul case. While the Paul case considered aboriginal constitutional law matters, Martin concerned the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and whether the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal had the jurisdiction to decide whether the Workers' Compensation Act offended the Charter.

The case concerned an argument before the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal of Nova Scotia that provisions excluding certain injuries from the workers' compensation system violated section 15 of the Charter. Based on the wording of that legislation, the Supreme Court concluded that the tribunal had the jurisdiction to determine the constitutional law issue.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the Supreme Court's decisions in these cases the law was that when deciding whether a tribunal had jurisdiction over complex questions of constitutional law, it had to be determined whether the Legislature or Parliament intended to confer jurisdiction on the particular tribunal. In most cases the statute creating the tribunal was silent and did not expressly give the jurisdiction to the board. The statutory scheme as a whole in the capacity of the particular tribunal had to be looked at to discover whether or not the Legislature or Parliament intended to confer such jurisdiction. The exercise was not a very clear one.

The Supreme Court turned the test on its head by saying that if a Legislature gave the tribunal the right to determine questions of law, there was an automatic presumption that the tribunal had jurisdiction over all constitutional matters; that is, without an express withdrawal or constitutional jurisdiction by the Legislature.

10:00

Mr. Speaker, Bill 23 is designed to clarify which Alberta tribunals and boards have the jurisdiction to determine which constitutional questions. Constitutional questions generally fall into three broad categories: Charter of Rights and Freedoms, existing aboriginal and treaty rights, and federal and provincial division of powers. There are many other constitutional questions, but these three are the most common.

In the fall of last year, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Justice put a team together to go out and discuss the contents of Bill 23 with most of the major boards and tribunals in Alberta. Input from the various boards was solicited and obtained as the bill was drafted. The boards who met with our officials were very supportive of this legislation and were happy to have the question of constitutional jurisdiction clarified by the Legislature.

Our officials had discussions and meetings with officials from the Labour Relations Board, the Securities Commission, the Energy and Utilities Board, the Natural Resources Conservation Board, the

Workers' Compensation Board and appeals tribunal, the Human Rights Commission, the Environmental Appeal Board, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, the Law Society of Alberta, the Citizens Appeal Panel under the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Council, and the law enforcement board. Mr. Speaker, all of the boards contacted by our team supported the legislation, especially the provisions to allow boards that have jurisdiction an opportunity to refer constitutional questions to the court and the provisions that provide a role for the Attorney General in the determination of constitutional issues for tribunals.

In addition to the boards I mentioned, there were a great number of other statutory offices and tribunals that were identified by Alberta's team, including the agricultural services boards, the Irrigation Council, the livestock diseases panel, and the Seniors Advisory Council, to name but a few. Our team did not meet with every board because it was very clear upon discussing the matter with the department overseeing them that these boards simply did not have the capacity or need to determine issues of constitutional law. These types of issues arise very infrequently, and the courts are simply better equipped to resolve them. However, the new test by the Supreme Court could mean that many of these boards that lack the capacity or need to determine questions of constitutional law now have that jurisdiction.

Something has to be done to clarify the will of the Legislature, and Bill 23, Mr. Speaker, provides that. The amendment specifies that as a general rule no board has the jurisdiction to determine questions of constitutional law unless jurisdiction is given by regulation. A regulation will be finalized in the coming months listing the various boards that need constitutional jurisdiction and what type of constitutional jurisdiction is required.

Mr. Speaker, during the fall, the major boards were also asked by our team to indicate and itemize the type and kind of jurisdiction required by them to discharge their statutory functions. Our team used the following criteria to determine whether a board required this type of jurisdiction. Do constitutional issues arise with some frequency before the tribunal? Does the tribunal need to decide these questions in order to discharge its statutory functions? Does the tribunal have the necessary expertise to decide these questions? Are there other avenues of redress, such as court, and are these avenues a preferable means for a litigant to obtain constitutional relief?

While work is still proceeding to determine what boards will get what type of jurisdiction, many boards have demonstrated the clear need and capacity to determine constitutional issues; for example, the Energy and Utilities Board and the Labour Relations Board routinely are asked to consider constitutional issues and have a demonstrated capacity in handling them. The Workers' Compensation Board and appeal tribunal did not wish to have jurisdiction over Charter and aboriginal law issues, as these issues simply did not arise very often, and they felt they would be better handled by the courts. However, they demonstrated a need to have jurisdiction over constitutional division of powers, as they have to determine when their legislation applies as opposed to federal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation also provides a mechanism for boards to refer questions of constitutional law to court. This will allow tribunals that have jurisdiction over routine constitutional law matters to refer complicated matters to the courts for decision.

One other provision of the bill requires a person who wishes to raise a question of constitutional law before a board to give the Attorney General 14 days' notice so that the Attorney General has the right to participate in the determination of any matter of constitutional rights. This provision was significant to many of the

boards our officials met with because, clearly, Alberta boards want the assistance of the Attorney General and its council in determining issues of constitutional law. The requirement to give 14 days' notice means that the determination of these important issues will not be made hastily and will ensure that they are determined with full knowledge and participation, in appropriate cases, by the Attorney General and council.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the new legislation is expected to streamline the regulatory process and help boards get on with the business the Legislature entrusted to them. It will clarify the intention of the Legislature, thereby reducing the number of court challenges brought by applications over whether certain boards do or do not have jurisdiction to determine constitutional law matters. It will allow boards, such as the Energy and Utilities Board, to decide constitutional questions when appropriate, but it will allow the very same board to refer issues that it believes may be beyond its capacity to the court for determination. This will provide flexibility so that the board can conclude its statutory business subject to what the court has to say on the constitutional issue.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of the Legislature to support Bill 23 in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of our boards and tribunals, and at this time I wish to adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 25

Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to move second reading of Bill 25, the Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005, and to bring to the attention of the House some aspects of this bill.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the bill amends the Provincial Court Act to allow provincial court judges to retire and sit on a part-time basis. Just to clarify this matter, these amendments allow retired provincial court judges to be appointed to sit full-time for six months, or half of the year. This can be either six consecutive months or two terms of three months each.

Mr. Speaker, we've worked with the provincial court to develop a made-in-Alberta solution that improves our justice system by meeting the needs of Albertans and the judiciary. Judges who want to provide a guaranteed amount of judicial service after retirement will be attracted to this option. As a result, highly experienced and competent judges will continue serving Albertans on a part-time basis after retirement. Further, the government will obtain a financial benefit in that it no longer has to contribute to the part-time judge's pension plan. As of April 1, 2005, the government contributions to a provincial court judge's pension will be approximately \$63,000. These kinds of innovative solutions in delivering court services demonstrate how Alberta Justice and the provincial court are working together to make our justice system more cost-effective.

Mr. Speaker, to be eligible for part-time service, a judge must be at least 60 years of age with a minimum of 10 years of service or age 70 or older. Alberta currently has 112 full-time provincial court judges. In 2005 there will be 40 judges who will be eligible for part-time service; 32 of these judges will be under the age of 70. Judges wishing to sit part-time will be required to notify the Chief Judge of their intention prior to their retirement. The legislation ensures that

all part-time appointments will be subject to the Chief Judge's approval. The Chief Judge must be satisfied that the appointment will enhance the efficient and effective administration of the provincial court.

Mr. Speaker, judges 70 years of age or older must meet an additional criteria established by the Chief Judge and approved by the Judicial Council. This additional criteria involves providing a medical certificate establishing that the judge's health will not be an issue in his or her ability to provide continued judicial service. This additional criteria is also currently applied to judges 70 years of age or older who wish to continue sitting on a full-time basis.

10:10

Mr. Speaker, the bill also lays out the process for part-time appointments. When the Chief Judge is satisfied that allowing a judge to sit on a part-time basis will enhance the efficient and effective administration of the court, he will request the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint the judge a part-time judge. The Lieutenant Governor in Council will then formally appoint the judge as a part-time judge by order in council. The term of a part-time appointment will commence on the judge's birthday. The term of a judge under the age of 70 will expire on his or her 70th birthday. The term of a judge 70 years of age or older will be for one year with possible renewals for further one-year terms. No judge can sit on a part-time basis after age 75.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to compensation part-time judges will receive their pension and a salary of up to 50 per cent of a full-time judge's annual salary. A part-time judge's total annual remuneration is capped at 100 per cent of a full-time judge's annual salary. By virtue of the Provincial Court Act part-time judges will also be restricted from engaging in any other business, profession, trade, or occupation.

Mr. Speaker, we have an understanding with the provincial court as to how part-time judicial service will operate. Some of these operational matters will be dealt with in the regulations; for instance, part-time judges will not be permitted to hold administrative offices such as the office of Chief Judge or Assistant Chief Judge. Judges who currently hold an administrative office and who meet the part-time eligibility criteria will have the option to sit part-time available to them; however, they cannot keep their status as an administrative judge once they begin sitting on a part-time basis.

If a part-time judge's pension is worth more than 50 per cent of a full-time judge's salary, the part-time judge's salary will be reduced, but he or she will still be required to sit full-time for six months of the year.

Part-time judges under 70 years of age will be entitled to participate in the same group benefit plans available to full-time judges under 70 years of age. Part-time judges 70 years of age or older will be entitled to participate in the same group benefit plans offered to full-time judges 70 years of age or older.

Part-time judges will be entitled to one-half the annual professional allowance and one-half the annual vacation benefit of full-time judges. Part-time judges will not be given a personal office, nor their own parking space. They will not have their own judicial assistant or any other staff.

Mr. Speaker, the remuneration of part-time judges will be subject to the review of the next Judicial Compensation Commission, expected to convene in 2006.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will also make a consequential amendment to the Judicature Act. The amendment will allow a judge to appeal to the Judicial Council if he or she disagrees with a decision made by the Chief Judge regarding their request to be appointed a part-

time judge. The Judicial Council is composed of the chiefs of the Court of Appeal, the Court of Queen's Bench, and the provincial court or their designates, the president of the Law Society of Alberta or his designate, and two other persons appointed by the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, other provinces such as Ontario and Nova Scotia allow retired provincial court judges to sit on a per diem basis. British Columbia has legislation allowing retired provincial court judges to sit full-time for up to six months of the year.

As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, we have worked with the provincial court to develop this made-in-Alberta solution to improve our justice system by meeting the needs of Albertans and the judiciary. By these amendments we are ensuring the retention of highly experienced and competent judges for our justice system while at the same time providing a cost-effective solution for government in meeting the needs of our courts. I look forward to the support from other members in the Legislature on this amendment.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 17
Agrology Profession Act

[Adjourned debate March 14: Mr. Danyluk]

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, we introduced the bill last day, and if there is no other debate, I'd like to move the reading, please.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

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

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been another very exciting and thrilling day in our province, with much progress having been made on significant legislation to benefit the entire province, and on that note, I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:17 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 22, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/03/22

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, our comment or historical vignette of the day. On this day in 1909 a general election was held in Alberta. Of 41 MLAs elected, 36 were Liberal, two were Conservative, one was a Socialist, one was an Independent, and one was an Independent Liberal. Fifty thousand and four votes were cast provincially.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members today three visitors from the North Red Deer River Water Services Commission. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. First of all, a lady that needs no introduction here, I think, is Mrs. Judy Gordon, chairman of the water commission, mayor of the town of Lacombe, and former MLA, of course, for the Lacombe-Stettler constituency. Next to her is Mr. Larry Henkelman, mayor of the town of Ponoka and also a member of the water commission, and Mr. John VanDoesburg, the chief administrator of the water commission. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests from Alberta Finance who are here as part of a public service orientation tour. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to stand as I call their names and remain standing, please. Corinne Carlson, Shibu Chandry, Carla Dowsell, Jason Lammers, and Iryna Kryvoruchko. I'm missing one. Anyway, I'll ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure today of introducing to you and through you to other members of the Assembly Señor Horacio Luna and his wife, Laura Herrera, from Mexico. Señor Luna is the director of communications at the Legislature in the state of Mexico. Joining him in the members' gallery today are his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Fernando Cienfuegos and Ana Herrera. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly two classrooms from St. Gabriel school in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. There are in total 39 visitors from the school, and they are led today by Mrs. Svetlana Sech and Mrs. Friedt, who are the teachers, and they also are assisted this afternoon by parent helpers Miss Lamontagne and Ms Carroll. They are in the public gallery, and I would now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House four representatives from the Council of Alberta University Students, a couple of whom were here and introduced yesterday. They're back in the House again today, demonstrating, I think, with a couple of others their ongoing commitment to and interest in an issue that both sides of this House have identified as a top priority for us, postsecondary education. If you would please stand as I call your names: Mike Bosch, vice-president external of the University of Calgary Students' Union; Bryan West, president of the University of Calgary Students' Union; Jason Rumer, vice-president academic of the University of Lethbridge Students' Union; and Duncan Wojtaszek, executive director of the Council of Alberta University Students. Please, if you would all give them the warm welcome of the House.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an adult ESL class, LINC 4, from Metro Continuing Education. I believe that they're sitting in the public gallery. These students are very high-level ESL, and they have been studying the research on cabinet ministers' responsibilities, so I'm sure they'll be looking forward to question period with great anticipation. They are accompanied today by their instructor, Mr. Fred Sherbourne, and I would ask if they are in the public gallery to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Jim Graves. Mr. Graves is a professional engineer with 26 years of experience in rural gas and water pipeline design and construction. He is director of Graves Engineering Corporation and was the New Democrat candidate in the last election in Lacombe-Ponoka. He's a community-minded individual serving on various boards, including the L'Arche board, which is an international federation of communities creating homes and day programs with people who have developmental disabilities. I'm very pleased to ask him today to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Larry Hansen. Mr. Hansen is a fifth generation cattle rancher from the Bluffton area

near Rimbey. At one point, Mr. Hansen and his brother Jim ran 5,000 head of cattle, employed over 20 workers, owned 16 quarters of land and rented out 50 more, and owned \$1.5 million in farm equipment. At present they stand at zero on all the above accounts. I would also like to introduce Dave King, who is also a farmer from the Rimbey area. I would ask Mr. King and Mr. Hansen to stand and be acknowledged by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Joe Anglin. Mr. Anglin is a resident of Rimbey, and he has travelled here today to watch the Legislature in action. He is an investment manager and a registered arbitrator, and I am very pleased to have him as a guest here today. I would ask him now to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly this afternoon a lady who is not only the vice-president for the Edmonton local of the Alberta Teachers' Association but also an educator at Strathcona high school, and in fact she taught my son. As well, I'd just like to throw in there that Strathcona high school is my high school, so we had an awful lot in common when we shared lunch together today. I would ask Ms Sherry Robbins to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Again I would like to introduce the guest I missed. There's a lesson in this for us. When you're in doubt, go with visitors' services. They're never wrong on names. Would Linda Bart please stand and receive the very warm welcome of this House. Sorry, Linda.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Creek to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 25 visitors from the Aurora Learning Foundation accompanied by teachers and group leaders Mrs. Monica Dhamrait, Mrs. Elizabeth Befus, Mrs. Heather Burrowes, and Mrs. Margaret Haughton. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Enron Activities in Alberta

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to be weak and ineffective in reaction to the Enron scandal in Alberta. Court evidence from Washington state, where they take these things seriously, reveals a conversation between Enron and TransAlta power traders from January 2001 about setting up a, quote, marriage of convenience, end quote, to take advantage of the Alberta market. The conversation actually details how such manipulation between

two companies could work. My question is to the Minister of Energy. What did the government do to prevent such marriages of convenience, in other words collusion, between Enron and TransAlta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first state that we do take these issues very seriously, and the market surveillance administrator is working very aggressively and actively on behalf of Albertans to see that they are protected. So, first off, the system is working and designed to do exactly that. Investigations did happen back in 1999 of some of these instances specifically mentioned. As to the other transcripts that have come forward, it was the market surveillance administrator that specifically requested those transcripts, has looked into them, and has also forwarded them to the federal Competition Bureau.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that in September 2003 the Alberta Electric System Operator raised concerns that a plan like that detailed in the Enron/TransAlta conversation had actually been implemented, why did this government ignore evidence that companies were colluding to set power prices in Alberta? Why didn't they do something?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to note that fortunately in this country we do work under the presumption of innocence until we have evidence with the appropriate bodies to judge the merits of that information, and that's exactly what is happening today.

Thank you.

Dr. Taft: There are thousands of pages of evidence, and he will not act.

Has this government or any of its agencies ever investigated the role of TransAlta in potential manipulation of Alberta's electricity market, and if so will it make that information public?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the market surveillance administrator acts on behalf of Albertans, watches all of the transactions every day. It certainly manages those issues. They have also done their preliminary review of these transcripts. From their information that's why they have sent it forward to the Competition Bureau. That's with respect of Enron. But with respect to TransAlta they have also investigated and looked at transcripts that refer to all of these things.

One thing in particular that should be said: it is important that people with the right expertise knowing how to judge these transcripts and in what context they are made do their appropriate assessment of that information, and that's what they have been doing.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday a secret communications strategy from Suncor was leaked. This document states that this oil sands firm knows Albertan and Canadian tradespeople are available and will be in the future. Its stated reason for temporary foreign workers is to stock an employer-dominated convenience union to get workers for a particular contractor. To the Minister of

Human Resources and Employment: given this latest proof that temporary foreign workers for the Alberta oil sands are indeed replacement workers, why is this government allowing this to continue?

Mr. Cardinal: The process is not to replace Alberta workers here in Alberta. To start with, you know, we shouldn't look at the whole process of the Alberta economy in a negative way. We have one of the best diversified economies in North America, in the oil and gas industry, agriculture, forestry, tourism, science and technology. Now we're moving into value adding. Last year alone, 2004, Mr. Speaker, 40,000 jobs were created by Albertans. That's 31,700 new jobs, and it does create some challenges.

The Speaker: The hon. member can now proceed.

Mr. Backs: Second question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that the leaked communication plan from Suncor states that foreign workers, quote, are expected to cost more than Canadian workers in the long run, end quote, exactly how much more will passing over qualified Albertans for foreign workers cost this province?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I think the member basically answered his own question, but I may want to add some more. If there is a leaked document, I wouldn't mind if the member would pass a copy on to me because I haven't seen any leaked document.

Again, I'd just like to stress the fact that our policy here in Alberta is to hire local Albertans first, then Albertans, then aboriginal people, then persons with development disabilities, then Canadians. When that is exhausted by the employers out there, they go through this process, which is very, very complicated and costly. So this definitely – it's not a priority for industries here in Alberta to go find workers elsewhere.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, another question to the same minister. That process was not done in this case. Given that the temporary foreign worker agreement with the feds says that the Alberta building trades must be consulted before permits are issued, I ask the minister simply: why were the proper procedures ignored, and why was this permit issued without them?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, of course, it's a federal issue, but the agreement the member is talking about I believe is under Advanced Education, so the Minister of Advanced Education may want to answer.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Postsecondary Education Costs

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, this government is legendary for its poorly conceived privatization schemes, from electricity to the ever-mysterious health care reforms. The ideological urge doesn't stop there, though, because there has also been a conscious decision over and against the expressed interests of Albertans to privatize part of the province's debt right onto the backs of students and their parents. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Will he commit to providing real tuition relief to students by ensuring that institutions don't impose two years' worth of fee increases after the token one-year tuition rebate is over?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what we've committed to and what we've committed to all students and to all Albertans is that we'll do an affordability review, which means that we will look closely at all the costs of attending postsecondary education affordable to the students, looking at all of the costs to students attending postsecondary education, determine what balance of those costs ought to be appropriately shared by the student and their family as opposed to society, and then how we make sure that every student can afford the cost of education. That's the affordability review we're engaged in. When we're completed that review, we will have a new tuition policy proposed and, broader than that, a way forward for every student in Alberta to make sure that they can afford a postsecondary education.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: now that this government is free of its debt, will the minister commit to lowering the current debt thresholds for the Alberta student loan relief program?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would know, I believe, that very few students in Alberta actually carry a debt load from Alberta; they carry a student debt load from their federal student loans. In Alberta most student loans are totally remitted to those students, so the money that this province puts in is very much taken up in remission to students. Most of the debt that students carry is a federal student loan debt. The other thing that the hon. member would know is that Alberta students have the lowest debt load in the country.

1:50

Mr. Taylor: I'll take that as a no.

To the same minister: why hasn't this government increased student loan living allowances from its current sub-AISH level of \$730 a month, when the cheapest residence at the U of A costs \$622 a month? Could the minister get by on 27 bucks a week?

Mr. Hancock: When I was a student, I probably did exactly that because I was going to school as many students do, living in a student environment and working in a student environment. But times have changed, so we must every year take a look at the living allowances, the cost-of-living allowances, the costs of going to school and adjust appropriately for that. We committed to doing that review and making sure that going to university, going to college, taking a postsecondary education at any level is affordable to students.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Temporary Foreign Workers

(continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, earlier today the NDP opposition released information showing an average of 6.1 per cent unemployment in Alberta's construction trades. According to StatsCan labour force data, since January 2004 monthly unemployment in the construction area has never dropped below 4 per cent and has been as high as 9.4 per cent. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Given the thousands of qualified Alberta tradespeople ready and available to work on oil

sands projects, why is the government facilitating the entry of 680 temporary foreign workers to take away jobs that should be going to Albertans first, including aboriginal people and immigrants?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, again I'd like just to clarify that the policy that we have here in Alberta, of course, is to hire Albertans first, then aboriginal people, local people, persons with developmental disabilities, Canadians. In relation specifically to that question, if there are thousands of tradespeople out there and there are thousands of jobs, surely between the organizations out there they can match the people.

We try very hard in our own department, Mr. Speaker, and there are other departments that are also involved in that. Under Human Resources and Employment we spent \$280 million to start with in assisting in training people. We have 26 offices, some colocated with the federal government, that provide all forms of employment services, including matching people with employers, providing the supports that are required, resumé writing, posting jobs. I mean, we do almost everything in those offices.

Mr. Mason: Given the smoke, Mr. Speaker, all I can do is repeat the question. Given the fact that in Alberta's construction trades there is 6 per cent unemployment, why is the government bringing in 680 temporary foreign workers?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, there must be something wrong with our system. If there are thousands of jobs available for Albertans and there are thousands of tradespeople that are looking for the jobs, why are they not connected? Like I say, we spent close to \$300 million to do some of the work at the provincial level, but surely there are private employers and the unions and other people that are looking for work that should be able to find the jobs that are out there.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the minister is just explaining why he's not doing his own job.

In facilitating the entry of these temporary foreign workers, why is the government putting the interests of big oil and the preferred labour organization CLAC ahead of the best interests of hard-working Alberta trades union people facing continued unemployment?

Mr. Cardinal: Of course, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't do that here in Alberta. Again, when you talk about the strong economy here in Alberta, all of us should be proud that we have a diversified, strong economy and jobs for everyone.

Now, if for some reason we cannot match the jobs that are available and the tradespeople that are looking for work, then we'd better look at our process to see if there is a gap because the actual approval of the foreign workers is complicated and costly. Employers would not prefer to use that process because it is very, very costly and complicated, and the federal government approves that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Airport Rental Costs

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As part of the transfer of airports the federal government leases 26 national airport system facilities to nonprofit airport authorities, which consists of two major airports in Alberta. The federal Liberal government requires the authority to pay a substantial rent which is also going to be increased dramatically, and this is despite no longer being

responsible for the running, maintaining, or funding of these facilities. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What is the minister doing to address the concerns of airports regarding these significant rent payments?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is an incredibly important question. When the federal government passed on the airports to the airport authorities, the amount of infrastructure that was passed on was roughly \$1.6 billion. Since that time the airport authorities have paid over \$2 billion in rent, and the federal government is indeed increasing the rent to make these not-for-profit airport authorities pay even more money. Ultimately this system goes right through to the air traveller, and these costs are absorbed by the air traveller. We have spent a lot of time in sending letters to the federal Minister of Transport, and I will continue to lobby on behalf of the airports.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Has his department worked with other jurisdictions to confront the federal Liberal government on the airport rent issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have. The council of ministers of transportation, Canada, have lobbied the federal government. This is not just an Alberta issue. This is an issue right across Canada. To put it in perspective, the Edmonton airport will go from \$4.3 million a year in rent to \$20 million a year this year. The Calgary Airport Authority will go from \$25 million a year to \$50 million a year. You and I as airport travellers are going to be the ones that bear the cost of this increase in rent.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That brings forward my second supplemental. My question again to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: in addition to the freezing and reducing of rent levels, what else is the minister going to try to do to ensure affordable air travel for Albertans?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I think we have to get to the fundamentals of this. The fundamentals are quite simply that the not-for-profit airport authorities were turned over with a value of \$1.6 billion, as I already stated. They have now paid over \$2 billion back to the federal government. I believe that their share of taxation is now done, complete, kaput. Turn over the airports to the airport authorities without rent so that they can run them so that they can pass on the savings to the travelling public. That's the only way that this is going to get better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Automobile Insurance Rates

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta auto insurance rates are still high, and they're still frozen. To the Minister of Finance: where are the auto insurance rollbacks?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the House previously, we have had a discussion with the insurers. There are some 72 companies that insure in this province. I expect to hear in the next day or two as to the final decision on insurance rates in the province, so perhaps tomorrow. If not tomorrow, certainly the next day.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the last rollbacks averaged less than \$5, how much are they going to be this time?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have an Automobile Insurance Rate Board, and that rate board is certainly charged with ensuring that insurance rates for the compulsory insurance that we have to carry on our automobiles in this province are reasonable.

I find it interesting that a reduction of \$5 is somewhat scoffed at whereas if it were an increase of that, it would be of gigantic proportions. However, Mr. Speaker, a reduction did occur, and all of the people that I talked to that received a reduction, either by a \$5 cheque or by a reduction in their renewal or off their policy, were actually quite appreciative of the fact that the insurance reforms in this province worked.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why doesn't this government just do the right thing and protect consumers by significantly reducing premiums immediately?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, as I indicated to the hon. member, I expect that in the next day or two at the latest you will know what the insurance industry in this province is going to do. We do have a rate board, and it is a compulsory review, actually, by October 1. However, as I indicated earlier, because of the profits that were shown in the industry, I wrote immediately to the rate board and asked them for a recommendation. They responded. We reviewed it. I discussed this with the insurance industry, and we will have a response this week.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Financial Assistance for Youths

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of my constituents have expressed concern about a group of young Albertans who appear to be falling through the cracks. These are young people aged 16 to 19 years who require financial assistance so that they can complete their high school education. I'm told that these teenagers are required to leave school in order to be eligible for funding so that they can go to school. My question is for the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Can you clarify if 16 to 19 year olds are required to drop out of school for one year so that they can receive financial assistance to attend school?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to mention that financial assistance is available to eligible youth while they are attending the regular school system. It was discovered under our regulations that some 16 to 19 year olds who had previ-

ously been supported to attend school were no longer eligible, but very quickly we addressed that issue. Now youth are considered for support if they are attending the regular school system and if there is a family breakdown that results in the youth having to live independently or they are a single parent or they are living independently with a partner over 18.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister. As you mentioned, your department helps youth live independently. Is the government using taxpayers' dollars to help kids move out of their family homes?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker. That is not so. The government has never funded youth, in fact, to move out of their family homes. Families, as you know, have the primary responsibility for the caring of their children. We are committed to supporting families by providing a number of services, actually, that assist Albertans here, some through Children's Services of course.

Mrs. Jablonski: Then to the same minister: is this funding available to youth who wish to take skills training?

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker, students are eligible for skills training. Persons have to be 18 or older of course.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Hydropower Purchase Arrangements

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here in Alberta the EUB concluded on April 16, 2002, that TransAlta's hydro offer pricing strategy caused undue increases in the Power Pool price in certain hours of 2000 to the ultimate detriment of customers. The board ordered TransAlta to make a compensation payment of \$3.7 million within two weeks. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Why were hydrogenerating units such as Bighorn and Brazeau, which are owned by TransAlta, excluded from the original power purchase arrangement auctions?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I don't have all the specifics that are related to that. I'll be happy to look into that and advise him accordingly.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: why are actual water rental and associated charges paid by TransAlta regarding the matter also determined by TransAlta?

Mr. Melchin: Once again we're going back to specific incidents that happened a couple years ago. I'd be happy to look into it and advise him.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: why are so many terms of the hydropower purchase arrangements confidential and, therefore, withheld from the public, who are the owners of the water, the resource that's used to generate the electricity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many documents are held confidentially in respect of protecting businesses and their confidential interests.

With respect to that specific one, we previously answered the question. These are very specific, isolated incidents that we'd be happy to follow up and advise on.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Workplace Safety

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Calgary-Fort has many small businesses and shops that employ many of my constituents. Safety at work is their concern. Recently two Calgary gas stations were robbed at knifepoint, and an employee who was working alone was stabbed. Given that the working alone regulation was passed some years ago in response to the tragic murder of Tara Ann MacDonald, a young woman working at a fast-food restaurant, and in light of this recent incident, my question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Is the minister considering any changes to the regulation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a very good question. Incidents like these are terrible incidents to have happen, but they are the result of a crime, and there's no evidence to show that if you had more than one person working, they'd be different. However, I am prepared to review the regulations, and if I feel that changes need to be made, of course I will be taking them through the process. Just for interest, no province prohibits working alone here in Canada.

Mr. Cao: My next question is to the same minister. What steps has the minister taken to ensure that employers are aware of the regulation that protects hard-working constituents?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, we do try very hard. Of course, through some of our offices we've distributed over 140,000 copies of a best practices guide called Working Alone Safely.

Mr. Cao: My last question is to the same minister. What is being done to make sure that employers are meeting their obligations for the safety of the employees?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Again that's a very good question. It's not self-regulated. We do have occupational health and safety officers that can go out and inspect any work site without advanced announcement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Construction Projects in University Heights

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. University Heights residents received very little consultation when the Children's hospital, the bone and joint institute, and the research centre were shoehorned into their community. With the planned widening of 16th Avenue both their patience and their community's development have reached the saturation point. My question is to the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Will the minister briefly outline the

process his department employs to hear, evaluate, and incorporate affected stakeholders' concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Any time there is a project, whether it be in the city of Calgary or whether it be elsewhere in the province, there is a strict procedure that is followed in order to ensure that the projects have as little community impact as possible. This one was followed with respect to the project that the hon. member is talking about, and indeed there were some residents of the community that were not entirely happy. However, it is an extremely, extremely important project, and we're doing everything that we can to ensure that the issues with the community are minimal.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. To the same minister: if after this initial consultation citizens still have objections, what recourse do they have from this government?

Dr. Oberg: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, what we attempt to do is to hear the concerns of all the affected people, and we tend to act on them. I'll give an example. In one particular project with the Children's hospital there are approximately 400 trees that have to be uprooted and moved. One hundred and sixty-three of those trees are being moved, and we're actually in the process of planting more trees than the 400 that were originally there. That particular roadway is extremely important because it provides a direct access between the Foothills medical centre and the new Alberta Children's hospital over 16th Avenue, so the access for doctors, the access for medical personnel is extremely important. What we've attempted to do is deal with the issues that face the communities and attempt to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question to the same minister: will University Heights residents receive compensation from this government for their devalued property and lost community reserve land?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I would be very, very surprised if University Heights people see their property values go down. There's a lot of development that is going on in there, and obviously the development in Calgary is at an extremely high rate right now. Again, it is a necessary part of development in Calgary and in every community where roads are put in. With roads there are people that are going to be inconvenienced. There are people that are not necessarily going to like what is happening. However, my department and certainly the city in this case, as well, go to whatever extent needed to ensure that those complaints are kept to a minimum, and we will continue to do that.

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

Climate Change

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Trying to figure out where this government stands these days is somewhat like herding cats. Not a week goes by that we don't see MLAs going off in one direction

policywise and the Premier in another. The latest instance is on the climate change file. Last week I met with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and with Suncor, who said to me that above all they want certainty, and that's precisely not what they're getting from either Ottawa nor the Alberta government. My question is to the Minister of Environment. When is this government going to set firm targets for large industrial emitters to stabilize and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, let me correct the hon. member. In terms of what Alberta is doing, it is exactly that. We're the only province in Canada that has legislation in place approved by the Members of this Legislative Assembly. That does provide certainty in achieving the objectives that the hon. member is talking about.

Mr. Eggen: Given that this government's Kyoto plan is based on the discredited concept of reducing emission intensity, why won't the minister admit that this so-called climate change plan he describes will in fact cause a 40 per cent increase in emissions here in this province?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta is the only province in Canada that has an agency referred to as Climate Change Central. Tomorrow myself and the Minister of Energy will be in Ottawa meeting with my counterpart, the Minister of the Environment, Stéphane Dion, as well as Minister Efford in terms of trying to mitigate the uncertainty that he is making reference to in protecting the environment that we all cherish in this province.

Mr. Eggen: If this government really wants to fight climate change, why won't it implement the NDP plan to help Alberta families retrofit their homes through interest-free loans that are repaid from energy savings on utility bills?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta is again the only province in Canada that has Municipal Energy First through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs on exactly the point of energy efficiency. In fact, if you want to get your furnace retrofitted to be more energy efficient, the province of Alberta through Climate Change Central offers a rebate up to \$300 per furnace.

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

Payday Loans

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The payday loans industry has seen rapid growth in the last few years. From my constituents and from my involvement in the AISH review I have been hearing about serious problems with some of these companies regarding their interest rates and collection practices. My question is for the Minister of Government Services. What is Alberta doing to protect Alberta consumers?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, currently in Alberta we don't have any specific regulations that apply just to the payday loan industry. However, they are subject to the Fair Trading Act, and of course under that act they must reveal what their costs of credit are, how much they're charging for it, and also their service charges. As you know, there are amendments before the House in Bill 6 dealing with

the Fair Trading Act. Under that act it will be against the law for a payday loan company to actually seize a paycheque in order to secure a loan.

We are currently working with the federal/provincial governments to come up with an across-the-country standard and probably some legislation because, quite frankly, this industry is important, and we know, having met with many of them, that they would like to see regulations that would govern the industry across Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. I understand that consumer advocates are requesting that this government limit the interest rates these payday loan companies can charge. Are you planning to do that?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the interest rate that anyone can charge is a federal regulation, so we cannot unilaterally control those prices. However, we are working, as I said earlier, across the country to try to establish something with the federal government that will deal with all of these issues.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. When can we expect to hear back from that committee?

Mr. Lund: Well, we're hoping that by midsummer we will have reached some kind of understanding and agreement. We will be meeting face to face in June.

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

CT Scans

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, almost three years ago when two private clinics began offering preventative CT scans, the Alberta Liberal opposition raised serious concerns regarding the effectiveness and safety of those scans. Since that time, the issue of safety has continued to be raised about these CT scans, including a recent article in the peer-reviewed journal *Radiology*, which found that full-body CT scans can lead to increased cancer mortality risks. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. What restrictions has the Department of Health and Wellness placed on these private clinics offering private CT scans?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the article that has been cited by the hon. member opposite. I should assure you, however, that when there is work done with private clinics – for example, the work that was done on the bone and joint allocation last year with the Calgary health authority – there is a very detailed and thorough review of the capacity of any clinic to engage in any kind of performed duties. I'm very satisfied that proper protocols are in place when such an agreement is made. In fact, I just reviewed patient safety and progress with those types of agreements yesterday, and I'd be pleased to address any concerns that are reported by the hon. member opposite.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Well, thank you. To the same minister and specific to these preventative CT scans: what evaluations has your depart-

ment done of these private clinics in Calgary offering customers private CT scans?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, since the formation of regional health authorities much of the work relative to patient safety has been delegated to the health authorities. They have engaged in proper processes for assessing the types of care that is offered. I am sure that if I am given a day to look specifically into the CT scans, anything that has been done there, I will find out that there is significant work, mitigating measures, and that patient safety is protected.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Final question. Again to the same minister: can the minister explain, if a doctor's referral is needed and if additional symptoms are present, why these scans are not being paid for by the public system? If they're medically necessary, why aren't they being paid for?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to answer that question tomorrow.

Veterans' Licence Plates

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government recently introduced a special licence plate to honour our veterans. However, my neighbour tells me that he's unable to have one of these special veterans' plates for his farm pickup, which is his only vehicle. Could the Minister of Government Services confirm that he's considering a change in this policy?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, when we were working with the Alberta-Northwest Territories Command of the Legion on this whole program, there was an oversight when the decision was made that commercial vehicles would not be allowed to have one of these plates. The oversight was that farm vehicles – pickups have been mentioned – are registered under our registry as commercial vehicles. So when we came about to start registering these vehicles, we discovered that the system would not accommodate them. So we have made the changes. Probably in another month or so the folks that do qualify through the Legion will also be able to get these stickers.

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: does this mean that other commercial vehicles will also be eligible for these plates?

Mr. Lund: No, Mr. Speaker. It will be only those that are registered as farm vehicles.

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, since several people have already been told that they will not be able to have these plates for their farm vehicles, does the minister have a way of communicating this information to them so they can reapply?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, we have already sent out notices to the Legions across the province, so they will be able to contact folks that have been approved but unable to get the licence plates. We're sending it out also to all of the registries so that they will also know. Also, we'll let the individuals that have applied but were rejected know as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Homeless Shelters

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The system of grant funding for homeless shelters in Alberta is not working. It leaves homeless shelters begging at the end of the fiscal year when their grants run out. To the minister of seniors: will the minister be reviewing the current application process to establish a more sustainable funding formula so that homeless shelters are not on the brink of closing before they receive this funding?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by thanking the municipalities and community partners, the agencies that do provide emergency shelter services for homeless Albertans. As the hon. member knows, the situation for the homeless is very complex, but so are the solutions, and it isn't just necessarily solutions regarding housing. It's other issues such as mental breakdown, substance abuse, and whatnot.

We do, though, provide funding, Mr. Speaker, that is fairly substantial for homeless emergency shelters. For example, we provide \$14 million in operational funding to 22 shelters, which provides about 2,100 spaces. Also, over the past five years we've provided \$15 million to provide 2,500 new spaces in Alberta for the homeless. The member has mentioned the operational grant. That, as I indicated, is fairly substantial at \$14 million.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the same minister: given that homelessness and the use of food banks is on the rise in this province, will the minister commit to long-term funding increases to match the increases in Alberta's homeless?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, that's a very interesting question, actually, Mr. Speaker, and I think fairly significant too because I have met with a number of people that operate the homeless shelters. Part of that has been discussions regarding the food bank, and I can tell you, hon. member, that I will be looking at that following the budget.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. My hon. colleague must have been reading my mind because my next question is to the Minister of Finance. Given that shelters are four days away from the end of the fiscal year and their budgets hinge on these grants, when will this ministry develop a budget so that the homeless will be protected?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is aware that each department is responsible for developing their budget, and each department minister takes that very, very, very seriously. All of the departments' business plans are put together with great care and with great time, looking at all of those areas, and I know that the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports is dealing very diligently with this. At the appropriate time that department's budget will come forward, and you will have the opportunity to debate those numbers and the accommodation that's in it.

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

Agricultural Income Stabilization Program

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month the hon. Member for Little Bow stood up and asked about the long waits our cash-strapped producers are enduring before they receive their CAIS payments. Well, it's near the end of the month, and so are my producers in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne. With input costs like fuel, fertilizer, and seed going up every year, rural producers are having some tough decisions to make. My questions are all for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. How can our ag producers make business decisions about their operations if they don't have the cash on hand?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in the House earlier, all programs have growing pains, and the Canadian income stabilization program is no exception, or CAIS as we call it. The CAIS program has had an overwhelming interest from producers in the province. In fact, for the 2003 claim year alone more than 25,000 Alberta producers submitted their applications, and over half of those were done in the last two months after extending the deadline.

Getting the CAIS payments and advances out to producers is a priority. It's taking longer than we had hoped. AFSC has spent a great deal of effort trying to get those payments out by putting on extra shifts, by introducing a call line, by extending the hours of operation. Additionally, to help producers face acute cash flow problems, we did introduce advance payments for the 2003-2004 year, which are not available in all provinces. So as soon as an application is received, we are committed to getting those advances out. It's important to understand that the producers have to have completed applications, or it does delay those things, but so far \$190 million in payments for the 2003 year has been paid out.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you for that partial answer. But if the program is not working to get the cash in the hands of my producers who qualify for it, Mr. Speaker, obviously some changes need to be made to this program. What program changes need to occur?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A good question and I was trying to say that we believe that we're going to have all of the 2003s done very, very soon, prior to the end of this month. We believe that a further \$260 million in advances and final payments has already been approved for the 2004 year.

As far as the CAIS program is concerned – and producers will be interested to know this – the CAIS program is a whole farm income program. It's designed to stabilize income over the period of the five-year term, the Olympic average. We know that Alberta producers are suffering right now. We have kind of a perfect storm going here in the sense of low grain prices, BSE, high input costs, high fertilizer costs, high fuel costs. CAIS is a national program. We want to maintain that.

Mr. VanderBurg: This is a very serious issue, and my producers are asking me on the weekends when I get home: is CAIS the most

appropriate vehicle to deal with high input costs, or are ad hoc programs the way?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, we're getting into opinion here now. Let's get policy.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the policy of Alberta Agriculture is that we're going to continue with the CAIS program because we believe it is the program for the future of agriculture, but we are making it a priority to talk to the federal/provincial ministers this July. We're going to ensure that that's the priority to talk about: how we can make the CAIS program more responsive, how we can make the reference margins more realistic to what the farm operation is. We are also talking about some options and working with my federal counterpart to look at some of those options to help the seeding for this year and for this new crop year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

2:30

Library Funding

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the government voted against Liberal Motion 502, which asked the government to eliminate fees for library cards in tribute to the late the Honourable Dr. Lois E. Hole. The Liberal opposition is extremely disappointed by this result as free access to libraries was one of Lois Hole's core beliefs. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. Last Monday in this Assembly the hon. Minister of Education stated that the per capita funding for public libraries should be increased. Will this government listen to the hon. minister and commit to increasing the per capita funding formula for public libraries?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will have to wait for the budget.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: given that this government can find \$133 million in the budget for horse racing in four years, why can't they find \$4 million to support learning in Alberta? What's more important?

The Speaker: We're into opinion here now again.

Mr. Mar: The issues are unrelated, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Agnihotri: Again to the same minister: given that the Ministry of Education encourages literacy, why is this government opposed to providing Albertans with a tool to encourage lifelong learning?

Mr. Mar: That is patently untrue, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you categorically that Albertans love their libraries. They are among the highest per capita users of libraries anywhere in this country. Some 30 million materials are circulated each year. This province has some 300 libraries, many of them, over half of them, serve communities of fewer than 1,200 people. They run over 36,000 different community-based programs.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out this incorrect notion that the hon. member has left this House, and that is that people cannot access libraries without a library card. That is patently untrue. Anybody can enter a public library at any time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are library fees, not for the use of the library but for library cards, which will allow you to take materials

out. Now, in other provinces they may not charge library card fees, but they do charge for the borrowing of materials. They might be audiovisual materials. They might be interlibrary loans. They might be used for databases or other materials of the like.

So, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the overwhelming number of Albertans recognize the value of their libraries, this government recognizes the value of its libraries, and it's demonstrating itself in the utilization rates of libraries in this province.

Speaker's Ruling Items Previously Decided

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair allowed the hon. Minister of Community Development to go beyond the 45-second guideline simply because Standing Order 23(f) may have been called into question with respect to this last series of questions. I'd ask the member to study and read Standing Order 23(f).

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: In 30 seconds, hon. members, we shall proceed.
The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Rural Tourism Conference

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to talk about the 2005 Rural Tourism Conference called What's the Big Idea?, that just took place in Camrose from March 7 to 9 at the Camrose Regional Exhibition.

The conference has been known for its positive impact on the rural tourism industry in Alberta. This year 225 delegates along with 20 speakers and guests attended the conference, where they had the opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss experiences with stakeholders in rural tourism from across Alberta. Delegates and guests were also treated to a Showcasing Alberta evening by celebrating Alberta's 100th birthday on a train ride on Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions in central Alberta.

In its fifth year the concept of a rural tourism conference was brought forward by the Camrose Regional Exhibition. This is one way that the CRE demonstrates its commitment to agriculture and rural development, two integral components to the future of a strong rural Alberta, that is being championed through the rural development strategy advanced by the Member for Battle River-Wainwright. By enabling communities and tourism operators to offer strong and more relevant tourism experiences, the conference allows communities to develop new revenue streams and employment to their communities. Through its support the government of Alberta can proudly say that it is taking steps to meet the goals of the rural development strategy.

The conference was a great success due to the partnership between the CRE, Travel Alberta, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and Alberta Economic Development and the support from sponsors like the Calgary Stampede, Northlands Park, the city of Camrose, and Western Economic Diversification Canada among many others. The conference went ahead without a hitch thanks to the great crew from MIH Consulting in Camrose, who managed the conference.

The response from conference participants was very positive and shows the potential and excitement that exists in rural Alberta to develop a strong and vibrant future. Due to the continuous positive response the organizers are preparing for a bigger and better conference in 2006.

Thank you.

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

Great Kids Awards

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak about an event I attended to honour a young constituent of my Calgary-Fort constituency.

The annual Albertan Great Kids awards was initiated by our Premier and Dr. Colleen Klein together with the Minister of Children's Services over five years ago. This excellent idea encourages and recognizes young Albertans for their outstanding contribution to society.

At the sixth annual Great Kids awards on March 13, 19 outstanding Alberta children were honoured for making a difference at home and in their communities. In honour of Alberta's centennial this year's awards make a total of 100 Great Kids honoured across Alberta since its inception. Each contributed in their own way to the betterment of our society, perhaps not even knowing about their impact. These children have integrity, personal optimism, and drive that adults have to admire. They generally have overcome challenges with a compassion that inspires us all.

The 19 award recipients this year were selected from among 181 nominations, and these outstanding children are: Brendan Bellingham, 6 years old; Kathleen Griffin, 7; Joseph Kemper-Vela, 8; Morgan Mombourquette, 8; Dakota Beaver, 10; Serina Nooitgedagt, 11; Summer Satre, 11; David Smith, 11; Christianna Wood Roddick, 10; Gabriel Diggs, 14; Alyse Geiger, 13; Cassandra Just, 14; Angela Enokson, 14; Jared Potts, 14; Fiona English, 16; Deryck Scott Reade, 17; Jennifer Ross, 17; Alaina Smith, 16; and Justin Yaassoub, 17.

Each recipient received prizes from IBM, TransCanada, Fantasyland Hotel, and West Edmonton Mall. I want to congratulate them.

Thank you.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Walter Paszkowski Agricultural Legacy Endowment

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday last an enthusiastic crowd of over 300 supporters gathered in a hotel ballroom in Grande Prairie to honour a former member of this Assembly. The occasion was the announcement of NAIT's Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment co-ordinating agricultural research and training in the Peace region of Alberta, British Columbia, and beyond.

The fund has been established to nurture the continued growth of agricultural leadership in the Peace region. Commitment from the Alberta government, the corporate sector, agricultural producer groups, and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology will enable this endowment to become self-sustaining. Revenues from investment of the fund will be utilized to provide a wide range of services in the agricultural community throughout the region.

Agriculture innovator, Alberta government cabinet minister, community leader, scholar, active volunteer: all of these words, Mr. Speaker, describe Walter Paszkowski, whose commitment to the people and prosperity of our region is second to none. In 1953 Walter was part of the inaugural graduating class of the Fairview School of Agriculture. Graduating with honours, his academic success started him on the path to an impressive record of international, national, and provincial achievement.

His work as a grower, researcher, and developer of canola varieties has proven vital. Walter founded the Grow with Canola

committee, recognized as the most successful program of its kind in the world.

Walter's political life encompassed stints as a school trustee, hospital board director, town councillor, and mayor before he was elected MLA for Grande Prairie-Smoky, a position he held for 12 years. His provincial political tenure included posts as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister of transportation and utilities, and numerous other positions where Walter's expertise was invaluable.

The naming of this endowment to honour a true Albertan whose heart is in the agricultural sector is truly outstanding. Congratulations, Walter Paszkowski.

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

Community Schools

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's school utilization policy wreaks havoc on both rural and urban school boards. Here in Edmonton the public school board has been forced by the provincial government to close schools in central areas of the city with low enrolments. This is bad public policy, resulting in less public infrastructure for residents of central neighbourhoods.

What is missing from this government's flawed utilization policy is a community school concept. Previous Progressive Conservative governments supported this concept. To date this government does not.

Public schools can be used for far more than just classroom instruction. Public schools play host to daycares, playschools, counselling services, sports events, community outreach, and many other services. If the utilization formula took into account the numerous ways that a school serves the community, many communities would not be facing the closure of their schools.

To remove hundreds of classroom spaces from four neighbourhood communities in central Edmonton is wrong. These communities are showing changing demographics. As population densities increase, the need for these school spaces will increase. These schools are the lifeblood of their respective communities. Their closure would result in a utilization rate of 109 per cent in the junior high schools that the public board wants our displaced children to attend. What happened to the government's promise in response to the Learning Commission to reduce crowded classrooms?

The Official Opposition has long advocated for a community schools policy to help schools form partnerships with community groups offering child care, after school care, social services, and public health care. These schools should be designated as community schools by the school boards and be exempt from closure.

Public school parents were pleased to learn on March 8 that the provincial government is considering a more effective utilization formula. We need to stop this closure process until the government introduces a new utilization formula. All our remaining public schools are a legacy paid for by taxpayers. All communities deserve and need their public schools.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 94 the Standing Committee on Private Bills has reviewed the petitions that were presented yesterday, Monday, March 21, 2005, and can advise the House that the petitions comply with Standing Orders 85 to 89.

Mr. Speaker, this is my report.

The Speaker: Hon. member, will you be moving that the report be concurred in?

Dr. Brown: Yes.

The Speaker: On the motion put forward by the hon. member, would all hon. members of the Assembly agreeing to the motion please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

Hon. members, this is a bit unusual to do this under this segment of the Routine, but I'm going to table five copies of the report of the Select Special Health Information Act Review Committee. This committee was established during the last Legislature. This is unusual to do it at this point as the committee no longer existed with the dissolution of the Legislature and the calling of the election, and the chair is tabling this report at this time to ensure that the records of the Legislative Assembly are comprehensive and complete.

head:

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to be presenting a petition to the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the oil sands when other groups have unemployment, as in aboriginals, unemployed youth, unemployed landed immigrants, and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition bearing a hundred names of people primarily in Edmonton, Spruce Grove, and Sherwood Park again urging the government of Alberta to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines" until unemployed Albertans, Canadians, aboriginals, youth under 25, landed immigrants, and displaced farmers have been given said jobs.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition with 548 signatures. The petition calls for increased funding for improvements to highway 63.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly signed by 105 Albertans. This petition reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

**Bill 32
Animal Keepers Act**

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act, for first reading.

This bill will update and replace the current Livery Stable Keepers Act. It provides animal keepers with a mechanism to better recover costs associated with stabling, boarding, feeding, and caring for an animal.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 32 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

**Bill 33
Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005**

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005, for first reading. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The Act provides a mechanism to recover costs associated with capturing, confining, impounding, identifying, maintaining, transporting, and selling livestock and trespass, Mr. Speaker. The proposed changes will clarify the use of the act and make minor changes to promote public safety.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of a letter from myself to the Leader of the Official Opposition regarding issues regarding Chief Justice Fraser in a letter from the leader to yourself dated March 3, 2005, and tabled in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on March 3, 2005.

2:50

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a document prepared by Statistics Canada. The document shows high levels of unemployment in the construction trades.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a document entitled A Clean and Sustainable Tomorrow. The document details the NDP opposition's proposals for meeting the targets set out in the Kyoto protocol.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've two tablings today. The first is from Jane Ballantine, the president of the Alberta Medical Association, in support of Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act.

The second tabling is a package of correspondence from constituent Brad Molnar, who makes an excellent case against section 8. Mr. Molnar is with local union 424 and wonders why the government can put big oil companies' profits above the workers' rights, which took 75 years of hard work to achieve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to table the appropriate number of copies of the report A Plan for Alberta's Universities, prepared by the Council of Alberta University Students. In it, among other things, they make the point that it is vital to guarantee access to Alberta's postsecondary education system by addressing deficiencies in the student loans program.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling this afternoon, and that's a fact sheet on Strathearn school, a community school that offers excellent educational opportunities to its students with neighbourhood access.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a tabling of five copies of five letters, handwritten letters nonetheless, from concerned Albertans looking to have temporary foreign workers abolished for work in the tar sands in Alberta.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness, pursuant to the Health Facilities Review Committee Act, the Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee annual report 2003-2004.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness, pursuant to the Health Professions Act, the College of Physical Therapists of Alberta 2003-2004 annual report, the Alberta Dental Association and College annual report 2004, the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta 2003 annual report, the Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association 2003 annual report, the College of Alberta Denturists' annual report 2003, the College of Dietitians of Alberta annual report 2003-2004, the Alberta College of Social Workers' annual report 2003.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, a document dated February 3, 2005, entitled Process to Apply for Temporary Foreign Workers.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 7
Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005**

[Adjourned debate March 15: Mr. Mitzel]

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I concluded my remarks when I adjourned debate last Tuesday, but I look forward to hearing any comments or questions which the hon. members may have, and I'll attempt to address these at the conclusion of this debate.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise today and speak in second reading to Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act. I'll just note briefly, as we start, a historical change.

This is an omnibus bill in that it's changing a number of statutes: the Health Care Insurance Act, Government Organization Act, Health Care Protection Act, Health Professions Act, Fatality Inquiries Act, and I think the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Act and some others. We used to, through previous Standing Orders, be allowed a longer period of time to speak to omnibus bills because there was obviously more than one being altered, and it recognized the complexity of having more than one bill being discussed at one time. Those Standing Orders are no longer available to us, so just a little historical note there when I see a bill like this.

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly straightforward act giving us some minor administrative changes. I almost think parts of it could in fact have been done under miscellaneous statutes; nonetheless, I'm always glad to see an act that gets to come out and breathe in the clear light of day in this Assembly and be open for all members to comment upon it.

There are a number of sections in the bill where we're looking at clarifying certain definitions and also recognizing name changes that have happened, colleges and some amending health statutes. So most of what we see in here is actually around names changes from things like "The Alberta Dental Association and College" to a lower case "the Alberta Dental Association and College." In a number of other cases it's around "College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Province of Alberta" to "College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta." So it's a minor change; nonetheless, because it's in legislation, it comes before the Assembly to be altered.

There are a few other areas that are a bit more substantive. The act is dealing with or repealing provisions that are related to what a nurse practitioner may do under the Public Health Act. My understanding is that this is being changed because regulations are coming forward under the Health Professions Act that will govern more specifically and more generally, I suppose, nurse practitioners. I think there is a larger issue around that in that one of the things the Alberta Liberal opposition has been looking at is that in order to assist the health care profession and the system we support to move forward, part of what we need to do is identify what only doctors can do and make sure that's in fact what they're doing.

If there are other aspects of the job that can be covered, obviously, legally, safely, and all of those other considerations that are important to public health, if they can be done by other specialists or trained health care professionals, then we should be making accommodation for that to be happening and leaving the docs to do what only the docs can do. I think that working around the nurse practitioners and clearly defining and even expanding the role that they have is part of what we're looking at.

The act is also looking at amendments to protect the term "specialist." I'll come back to that a little later, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, there are also clarifications around the definition and restrictions around prescribing, administering, and compounding a drug or vaccine.

In the Liberal opposition it's my recommendation as the Health and Wellness critic that we would be supporting this bill. There is very little that I would argue, nothing controversial in here, but there are a few questions that I would like to put on the record, and the sponsoring member has already offered to answer them, and I appreciate that.

I am a little curious about why the name change and the case adjustments from a capital T "The" to a small t "the" and why the choice was made to put it in an omnibus bill along with everything else as compared to bringing it forward as miscellaneous statutes. That may simply be a matter of timing, that all of these were sort of gathered together, but I'd be interested in knowing why the choice.

There is also a section that is striking out of the Government Organization Act the prescribe, dispense, and compound section, and this section was under a list of restricted activities of delivering a health service. I'm wondering if by removing the prescribe, dispense, and compound section from here, we seem to be removing it as a restricted activity. I'm just looking for clarification around the choice there. I believe what it is is that it's being moved into a larger section that, in fact, gives a much more detailed definition of what's involved in prescribing, but I'll look to the sponsoring member for the answer to that and why. What was the impetus or the reasoning behind it?

3:00

Now back to the observation about protecting the term "specialist." Can the minister or the sponsoring member tell us whether any other consultations beyond the Alberta College of Pharmacists have been done on this particular change around the term "specialist" as a protected title? I'm wondering if there was any consultation or chats or offers to speak with the colleges or regulatory bodies or any of the other health professional organizations. Can the member tell me which professions would be affected by including this term "specialist" as a protected item?

I'm wondering where this came from, so my final question is whether the member or the minister is aware of whether the term "specialist" was being used inappropriately somewhere by some health professionals and that was what prompted the need to legislate this term as a protected title. If, in fact, they felt it was being used inappropriately, could we have the examples before us, please?

Now, the section of the bill that repeals several sections dealing with nurse practitioners under the Public Health Act. Evidently this is around new regulations that are forthcoming under the Health Professions Act. Can the member tell us when the nurse practitioner regulation and registered nurses profession regulation will be forthcoming? I'm a little worried about the gap time here. We're removing this now, yet I don't see on the Order Paper nor have I had any information from the minister's office that we are expecting imminently to have before us changes in those regulations.

I'm concerned that there's a gap where basically we're looking at removing with the passage of this bill the sections dealing with nurse practitioners under the Public Health Act, but where they're supposed to appear newly scrubbed and freshly minted under the new regulations, I don't see any sign of them. I'm worried that we put them into thin air, and we don't rescue them back again and give them the home that they're looking for. So if I can get some explanation, please, from the sponsoring member about when we can expect the nurse practitioner regulation and the registered nurses profession regulation.

I'm also very interested in what those regulations would be. What is the content of them? It would actually be very nice if the member could table those in the House so that they become a more accessible

public document than regulations usually are. If we could find out who the minister consulted with, please, as the department moved forward with these changes.

I spent some time, Mr. Speaker, visiting with a number of the health care professions around Health and Wellness when I was offered the critic portfolio from our leader. One of the issues that came up consistently was workforce planning, and that's interesting because that, in fact, was something that we had identified in our document produced by the Alberta Liberal opposition on our health care policy entitled *Creating a Healthy Future*. That, of course, is always available through our website at www.liberalopposition.com. But we had raised this as a significant issue, and as I say, it has been raised with me by I think everyone that I met with, and there were some 20 different organizations, colleges, associations, member service organizations, et cetera, in the health professional field.

The whole idea of succession. We've got that baby boomer generation moving through and moving toward retirement age, living longer, much healthier, less likely to be in need of acute care medical services, but they are getting older and retiring at exactly the same time as the health professionals are getting older and retiring. They're all a part of the same generation, so there is a critical need, and I would argue an increasingly critical need, for very careful workforce planning and succession planning.

I think there's an argument that we're not giving nurses and pharmacists and technicians and therapists and technologists the opportunity to put all of their knowledge and abilities to work, and we could reduce the burden on our doctors. This is back to my earlier argument, Mr. Speaker. We could reduce the burden on our doctors in our system by giving these people more direct access to other professionals.

The Alberta government has not been adequately tracking health care workforce participants, so we don't really know how many doctors, nurses, and other workers are being used in the system. I would argue that it's very difficult, then, to plan for them. We have this common concern over the shortage of physicians, but I would argue that we're also looking at a shortage of every other health care professional, and we don't have the data to be able to organize that or to be able to plan adequately for it.

So we're talking somewhat about opening up new spaces for students, and this ties very much into the number of questions that were raised today in question period, Mr. Speaker, around whether we are making the best use of Albertans and Canadians first in training for the workers in the oil sands sector and whether we're giving every possible opportunity to those people before we bring in replacement workers from other countries. I think that's something of what we are anticipating here.

I wanted to make sure that I put it on the record that those very health professions are very aware of the need for succession planning and want to actively participate in this. This whole area, looking at the nurse practitioners, is one access point or entry point into discussing that. So can the minister give us an update of where we are at with workplace planning? Does she have any better data than we did a couple of years ago, when that healthy future report was written? Can she give us anything definitive on how the ministry is planning to better utilize nurse practitioners in the province, and is there any plan to address the fact that the average age of nurses is continuing to climb and we will likely be facing a severe shortage?

Now, as I said, we're not expecting the baby boomers to all hit 65 and be in need of front-line primary care. They're not. We're going to live longer and be much healthier. But we know that there's also a certain age when dying is very expensive because you die from things that are very expensive to treat, like cancer treatment, for example. I would prefer to see us working as much as possible on

a wellness model, but I'd like to hear what work the minister has done around that.

That's my first glance at it and reaction to what's being proposed in Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. As I say, it's mostly clarification of definitions, a few sort of miscellaneous housekeeping changes, case changes, and some questions about reserving the term of "specialist" and about the health practitioners.

3:10

So I've put some questions on the record for the sponsoring member to contemplate and to get back the information. Maybe if I could either get that in writing, or perhaps the member could answer back when we get into Committee of the Whole with this, I'm happy to support it in second reading.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to it.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make some brief comments on Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, in its second reading. The bill really deals with changing parts of the names of health professional organizations, as I see it. These changes in the titles of the names of these professional organizations or colleges are mentioned in existing pieces of legislation and statutes. So several of those current statutes will be amended as a result of the changes being proposed here.

I just want to tell the House that we haven't received any concerns from the groups of practitioners in the health care field who either individually or severally or as members of organizations might be affected by these changes, so I take it that most of the changes, as I see them, are uncontroversial. There are no objections that have reached the office of the NDP caucus. So there is not much here for substantive debate.

Certainly, I was intrigued by the substitution, I guess, of the word "compound" to administer drugs. When I was a young child, we used to take a prescription to a dispensary, and a compounder would make some sort of mixtures that would be then used by patients. We've moved a long way from that now. So I think it's about time to make the change as well in our legislation and statutes.

Similarly, I noticed that the college of podiatrists – these are, I suppose, physicians who deal with the problems of the feet in particular – name is also being changed here from the Council of Management of the Alberta Podiatry Association to the Board of Directors of the Alberta Podiatry Association. So many of these changes are merely changes in name, as it were.

The same is the case, I think, with the Alberta College of Optometrists. The only change there is the "T" in the word "The" is changed to "t" in the lower case. That's, I think, an interesting change. Why we needed to take the trouble of doing this may have something to do with drama rather than with substance, but here it is, and I'm not about to say that it shouldn't have been done.

So the changes are minor. The groups to be potentially affected would be health care practitioners and workers, and there's no indication that there is any major concern from any of the groups that are likely to be affected or that potentially will be affected by changes in this bill. So we are in support of the minor technical unsubstantive changes, which seem to be the only ones that this bill contains.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and let other members speak to the bill if they wish. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close the debate.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were so many questions, and I would be prepared to answer those questions when we go into committee.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

**Bill 8
Personal Information Protection
Amendment Act, 2005**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 8, the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

The Personal Information Protection Act is Alberta's private-sector privacy legislation. The act came into force on January 1, 2004. The Personal Information Protection Act establishes clear, concise, and common-sense rules for private-sector organizations when collecting, using, and disclosing personal information. The Information and Privacy Commissioner and Alberta Justice have requested three minor amendments to this act to clarify certain issues that have arisen since it came into force.

Number one is exemption for political bodies. Mr. Speaker, amendments are being made to clarify that the act does not apply to the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information by or for a candidate for public office or an office or position in a registered political party or constituency association. This amendment is proposed to clarify the wording in the act.

Number two, co-ordination with commissioners in other jurisdictions. The commissioner's office has requested an amendment that will allow the commissioner to talk to and co-ordinate with other Canadian commissioners when resolving multijurisdictional complaints. Under this proposed amendment the commissioner will be allowed to collect and use and disclose information for the purpose of co-ordinating activities among commissioners and will be able to accept a delegation from another commissioner to investigate a matter if it has a closer connection with Alberta.

Number three, consent for deceased individuals. This amendment will clarify who can consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of a deceased's personal information for the purpose of funeral arrangements and disposal of remains. This amendment is needed because PIPA protects an individual's personal information for 20 years after their death, and there has been some recent confusion in the funeral industry as to who can consent on behalf of the deceased. The Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board supports this amendment, by the way.

In addition, stakeholders have requested that the review of PIPA by the select committee of the Legislative Assembly be delayed by one year as there has not been sufficient time since the act came into force to conduct a meaningful review.

Lastly, Alberta Health and Wellness has also requested that the Health Information Act be made paramount over PIPA.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this time to briefly comment on Bill 8, the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

Privacy and the protection of personal information are subjects which are increasingly on people's minds these days. How many times have we heard of incidents where personal information got into the wrong hands? We've heard and still hear of identity theft as

a growing problem, we hear of credit card fraud, back in the fall we were made aware of the credit reports on top government bureaucrats which ended up being made available to potential crooks, et cetera, et cetera. Many cases.

3:20

This is the age of information and technology, but this is also the age when we should worry about protecting personal information and ensuring privacy. This is what the old act was drafted to do – and it's not really that old because it only came into effect in November – but I believe that this is really what this amendment was created to strengthen. I agree with the amendments proposed in this little housekeeping act, and I only want to raise some issues and would appreciate any clarification from the hon. member.

First, there is the issue with political candidates and campaigns. This amendment provides some clarity in that PIPA, the Personal Information Protection Act, does not apply to the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information by or for a candidate running for public office or for a position on a board of a registered constituency association or a political party. Clarification was needed here to alleviate concerns. A candidate – and I was one, and 82 other members of this esteemed Assembly were back in November – needs certain basic information on the electors or the potential voters so we can market ourselves: we can tell them about ourselves, our platforms, our ideas, our concerns, where we stand on things. I think this amendment is timely because it explains and clarifies the legality of that.

Next, this amendment also facilitates the co-ordination of activities between the Alberta Privacy Commissioner and his or her counterparts in other jurisdictions. I was pleased to find out that this change was actually brought forward by the Privacy Commissioner himself, and this is a positive sign that the government is listening. The Privacy Commissioner is crucial, and he's doing an important role in ensuring that the privacy and the personal information of all citizens, not only government bureaucrats, is protected.

This would also prove beneficial when the matter discussed or the subject that's being studied should more properly be referred to a different jurisdiction. Maybe that jurisdiction is of closer proximity, or maybe it has a stronger mandate over the issue. So maybe we can refer situations from Alberta to the outside, or reversely if Alberta has a stronger connection or a stronger mandate over the issue, maybe the discussion has to be brought here. I think it's useful and beneficial to allow our Privacy Commissioner to exercise his or her discretion in delegating or accepting issues of concern.

Furthermore, I agree with the hon. member that clarification was needed in that the Health Information Act, HIA, has precedence over PIPA. Again, that was timely, and I'm referring back to my years of health care practise. There was a lot of confusion in that area. The Health Information Act controls which information is shared in the medical or health fields and which information is transferable between health care professionals, the patient, the patient's family, and the legal system. We as health care professionals or workers, including pharmacists, physicians, nurses, et cetera, are entrusted as custodians of information, but many of us had doubts and concerns with regard to the PIPA because we weren't sure where the overlap is and which one has precedence over the other.

Offering health care workers the clarity and offering them the assurance that the HIA has precedence is timely and very important. That would free them up from their worries, provides them with direction, and allows them to just focus on the job at hand. Many of us health care professionals had the concern that maybe we were doing something that is not entirely correct, or maybe we were not consistent. So, again, I commend the hon. member on this change.

Lastly, with respect to funeral arrangements or the disposition of remains, again I appreciate the clarification. I am sure many people in the funeral industry and families, even, had that concern. Twenty years seemed like a very long period. You know, it was just vague.

I have to emphasize, however, that all information shared or provided must only be for the purpose of the funeral preparation, disposition of remains, or even publishing the obituaries, and nothing more. The person, he or she, may have died, may be deceased, but the relatives and the estate are still entitled to some degree of privacy, so we have to assure them that what's being made available is only for the purpose of the funeral arrangement, for printing or publishing the obituary, and that's it. When a person dies, there remain pieces of information about him or her which should be guarded and not shared.

In conclusion, I think this amendment act is useful and it's timely, and I appreciate the fact that it was presented shortly after the November implementation date. That's a good sign.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to speak briefly during second reading of Bill 8, the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005. My colleague from Edmonton-McClung has already sort of walked through what's in the bill.

I have no problem at all and am very supportive of the amendments around the disclosure of information around deceased persons so that for folks that need to use that information for arranging a funeral and related matters – you know, put people's names in the newspaper and that sort of thing – and administration of the estate, that's fine. That's perfectly reasonable.

I sat on the Health Information Act Review Committee, the one that you, Mr. Speaker, tabled a report for this very afternoon. The issue of the powers of the commissioner came up in that context as well, if I'm remembering that correctly. So I think this was an omission that happened across the board wherever we were looking at the powers of the commissioner, personal information, and protection of privacy.

My issue when you're talking about the protection of personal information is always around the safeguards that we have in place partly around computer security access. As we all know, when you've got information on a computer and you can attach it and send it to other people by pressing one button on your keyboard and off it goes, you have no control or power over the people that get it, and they can send it on from there. That is a huge issue as we try and deal with that around levels of security access. Yes, that's one way of doing it, but it's not completely successful.

The second area where this really goes off the rails for us and is an area that we have yet to address although I'm sure there are people attempting to do so, is around – how do I put this? – human decisions to interfere in that process and to pervert the process to their own ends. That is always a concern, and that's where the illegal activity takes place. There's nothing that's being proposed here that is specifically dealing with that.

We basically have the three sections, which are that PIPA doesn't apply to use in the political realm or in the elections, the section that's around allowing the Privacy Commissioner to consult and enter into discussions and information sharing with other privacy commissioners but also their ability to delegate certain of their powers, and finally the funeral arrangements and the issues around the deceased persons.

I'm aware that we're in second reading, Mr. Speaker, so I'm not going to get into the nitty-gritty of the word by word dissection of

this. Whenever I look at any amendment that is allowing more information to go out without scrutiny, my antenna is always going to go up, and I'm always going to be looking at that with a bit more scrutiny. That is what's being contemplated here with having the commissioner collect, use, and disclose personal information without the individual's consent for the purpose of exercising or performing any power, duty, or function in this particular section. I think we always have to be vigilant on this, Mr. Speaker. We will not have the co-operation of the public in giving us their information if we cannot vigorously police and protect their information.

3:30

There are always new entities pulling at us, trying to get access to more information, whether it's for marketing purposes or research purposes. It just seems to be never-ending. Everybody can think of a great way to use that information, and it's so tantalizing to have it all in one place, particularly when it's kept electronically. Then it's really tantalizing because to be able to get it and transfer it is, as I said, the press of a button. So we have to scrutinize things really carefully to make sure that we are not allowing anything to slip under the radar in coming out with this.

As I say, I haven't discovered anything nefarious in here. I'm just always cautious about it. That's why I've read it and I'm up talking about it. The one question I did have about this is: why is it changing the review of the act? That was originally slated to be, I think, July 1, 2005, and that's being changed to a year later, 2006. I'm wondering why that's happening. Why the extra extension? I think it was originally supposed to be 18 months after the act came into effect and then once every three years. So why do we have the one-year extension here?

I didn't hear an explanation for that, but my attention may have wandered. I admit it; occasionally, not often but occasionally it wanders. If it did while the sponsoring member was explaining that, my apologies. I will endeavour to go back and read *Hansard* and see if I missed something. But I'm very curious about that because I think it's important that we stick to this. I mean, we have to honour the work of those that went before us and, frankly, those of us that are still sitting in this House.

If we said that we felt that the review should be every three years, we contemplated that carefully, or at least I hope we did. If I was sitting here, I did. So why now would we not honour that and follow through on that action that was laid out for us? The postponement of one year: I'm wondering if it's because this is the end of March and the minister feels that we just can't get it together to have this meeting over the summer or because it's the birthday summer and all kinds of celebrations are happening and people don't want to get together and do the review. Why? What's the reasoning? I remain ever hopeful that the government has a good reason for this, and I know that they're going to get up and share that good reason with me.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

So that's the primary question that I would like answered. I would like to hear some additional discussion about reassurance that the changes would not result in any additional information being made available and that all possible security precautions are being kept in place, particularly around electronic records, to make sure that these are not either deliberately or inadvertently sent on to others because, boy, electronically, once they leave the first person's hands, we cannot track that stuff.

We have to be really careful about it because in many cases we really haven't quite caught on to how dangerous this can be, Mr. Speaker. I'm reminded of what I learned in having my insurance

company send me a fairly innocuous renewal statement, on the back of which was sort of: check off these boxes if you don't want us to have this information or you don't want us to give out this information about you. I glanced at it, and I was ready to send it back as it was. Then I started to think: "Just a second here. Why does my insurance company need to know and have access to all of my financial records and bank accounts? I've got a good record of paying, you know, my fee every month. It comes as a direct withdrawal out of one account, so they already know what's happening there. They don't need to know anything more about my financial records. Why would they? So, okay, no, they're not going to get that information."

Then they wanted to know about mortgages and land owned and all of that kind of thing, and I thought: "This is car insurance. Why do they need to know about mortgages and the land that I own? They don't need to know that for car insurance. No, they don't get that information either." I kept going down the list, and in the end I only left them with a very little bit of information.

You know, when I first got into this, it never occurred to me. I would have happily given them all that information, and I think too many of us do that, not understanding that it just gets passed on and passed on and gets out into that system, and you don't have control over it any more. So we're inadvertently giving too much permission for agencies and commercial ventures even for research purposes to use our personal information, and we have to become much more careful with whom we give permission to use personal information about us.

So those are always my cautions around that. I appreciate the opportunity to get up and put those concerns on the record. I know that the sponsoring member is going to take every single word I said with absolute seriousness and get back to me on the question that I've raised.

Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29 kicks in if anyone has questions for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Anybody else who wishes to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to give some qualified support to Bill 8. I think that the hon. Member for Highwood has managed to clarify and synchronize a number of issues that were inconsistent between, say, the health privacy act as well as the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. So, hopefully, harmonizing these various elements concerning people's personal information will assist all Albertans in having the security to know that their personal information is being looked after in a reasonable way.

I think the important part of this bill as well is to harmonize our provincial privacy laws in keeping with the federal laws, laws across the rest of the country, and again that's a beneficial thing for personal information here in Alberta.

As well, I think that providing some clarity in regard to the use of information for election purposes is reassuring to all of the members here in the Legislature as well as other levels of government, people running for municipal and federal governments. We like to hold that information as a very important element of our campaigns always, plus we hold a great deal of trust, I think, and understanding that we use that information in a very specific way but not extended to sort of giving that information to anyone else.

The whole issue of privacy, particularly in this electronic age, I believe is something that we need to be continually revisiting. As a number of members have pointed out already, this information is quite literally gold for marketing purposes and for, I guess, analysis

purposes. You know, being able to know where people are and what they're doing, what their buying habits are as well as any personal information about their bank accounts and whatnot is of course extremely valuable to both legitimate and less-than-legitimate business interests. So we can only hope to protect that over time. It's very much a moving target though. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we have to always be on the lookout for ways by which both marketers and less-than-scrupulous people might try to use this information.

3:40

Now, one particular area that I think that we need to watch for is when we're harmonizing the relationship between the Personal Information Protection Act and the Health Information Act. I think that we have to be very careful because, of course, health information is a whole other ball of wax, if I may say so, in regard to personal information. There is just a tremendous amount of potential for abuse there in regard to analyzing people's health in terms of job qualification or perhaps qualifying for insurance purposes or any number of things. You know, this information is something we need to guard even more, if that's possible.

Another concern that I would like to raise at this point is the threats from extraterritorial claims against personal information, and I think we need to address that here at some point, not with this legislation. You know, there is the American PATRIOT Act, say, for example, which is requiring a whole range of bits of personal information. The Americans are pushing very hard at this juncture to get hold of information from their own citizens that they perhaps were not able to before but also information on Canadian citizens and Mexican citizens, it seems. So, you know, I think that we have to be very careful about protecting those interests in an extraterritorial sort of way and visit that at some point in time.

My last comment and concern in regard to private information is with the issue of contracting out the administration and protection of personal information. We've seen at the federal level the government using private firms and, in fact, in one case an American firm to administer personal information. You know, I think at the end of the day the sovereignty of this body here and of our own country federally in no small way depends on how well we protect the personal information and, by extension, the citizens that reside in this province and in our country. So I think this is another issue we must look at.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29. Any questions?

Anybody else wishing to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Highwood to close debate.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the comments that were made by the hon. opposition members over here. Certainly, the intent of the act, of course, was not changed, and they quite agreed with that. I could see that.

The one question that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre brought up was about why we were extending it. I think we did question that early on, and I think it was that in consultation with the commissioner he hadn't had enough material or issues come up that he really had any issues at the time, so he wasn't too concerned that we would do it at this time. In fact, he was the one that probably recommended that we extend it the extra year.

So with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope we can move this bill on.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

Bill 9

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate March 15: Mr. Hancock]

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to continue second reading debate on Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005. As the minister himself stated when he opened debate on this bill, it is a bill to clarify and do some housekeeping of certain sections, certain areas in the Post-secondary Learning Act, which in itself I believe was a rather major piece of legislation in the last session of this Legislature. It passed with, I think, some speed, some rapidity, and now there are some things that need to be gone back over and cleaned up a little bit, and much of it is housekeeping.

Ms Blakeman: Haste makes waste?

Mr. Taylor: Haste does make waste sometimes, yes. And haste sometimes makes for the need to go back and make some changes that perhaps you didn't contemplate making in the first place, changes that are basically of a housekeeping nature. Also, I think, Mr. Speaker, it gives you at a time like that the opportunity to go back sort of within the context of doing some cleanup, some housekeeping, and make some other changes that maybe you didn't contemplate at the beginning that allow you to do some things you weren't allowed to do in the first place.

This is, I guess, where I have a problem with this bill, Mr. Speaker. I will put it to you this way. There are a couple of changes being proposed under the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act that I've been looking at for some time now and trying to figure out. Are these innocent, innocuous housekeeping changes, or is there something more nefarious going on here?

Now, there are many things about this bill that I don't think I have a problem with and I don't think anybody else has a problem with. I will comment briefly on the changes that are being proposed here around tuition fees, to modify tuition fee policy to provide an additional academic year before which the newly calculated annual limit applies. This is being done, as I understand, Mr. Speaker, largely at the behest of the Auditor General, who had indicated that further clarity is needed to ensure that institutions understand how to calculate annual tuition increases.

It is a bit ironic, I think, that we are going back into the Post-secondary Learning Act and making changes to tuition fee policy that will soon in and of itself be replaced, we are told, by the affordability review that the minister has agreed to undertake during this one-year, some people call it, freeze on tuition fees. Some people refer to it more as a rebate since, after all, the institutions, the colleges and universities and technical institutes, in this province are being allowed to raise tuition fees this year. It's just that instead of the students of Alberta paying that increase in tuition, it is the government of Alberta paying it for this one year and one year only. The purpose of that is to buy some time for an affordability review to produce a tuition policy for the 21st century, as the Premier described it in his state of the province speech a few weeks ago.

This will be, I think, the fourth time in 14 years that this government has reviewed tuition policy, and here we go going in and cleaning up a tuition fee policy that – well, you know, I wasn't in this House when Bill 43, as it was called before it was passed, was being debated. Certainly, from outside the House it looked as though this tuition policy was supposed to be the policy to end all policies, and here we are mere months, really, after it was proclaimed going back in and modifying it slightly, amending it slightly

to address the concerns of the Auditor General when a few months hence we're going to replace the whole thing anyway. It seems like a bit of a waste of time and effort, but the Auditor General says that further clarity is needed, so this bill seeks to provide further clarity for however many weeks or months it's needed to do.

It's interesting, though, that because the calculation of the annual actual allowable increase per student is done about 18 months after the institution has approved their fees, the calculation isn't timely enough for prompt action. It's, I think, a little bit a case of putting the cart before the horse.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has indicated that this work needs to be done. This bill seeks to do this work, and I don't have a problem with that. I don't have a problem, as well, with the changes that this bill proposes to make around deleting the entire section about nonprofit private colleges. Circumstances have changed, and I think we can all be fairly agreeable to that. The minister has made the very good point that the Private Colleges Accreditation Board has completed its work. The Campus Alberta Quality Council assumes the role of reviewing degree proposals there. I don't have any problem with that.

3:50

There are two sections that I have a problem with. Section one, Mr. Speaker – at least section one in terms of the two that I have a problem with – really refers back to the last bill that we were debating in a funny sort of way because it has to do with the collection of personal information. The amendments or the changes proposed in the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005, will allow the minister and the ministry to collect personal information on individuals who are not students to support system assessments and reporting. The minister has the authority now to require a board under the existing Post-secondary Learning Act to collect information and submit to the minister any information and reports that the minister considers necessary, and that can include personal information about an identifiable student.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, it would be pretty hard to run our advanced education system if the minister and the Ministry of Advanced Education were denied access to personal information about students in the system. But the change that is proposed goes beyond the students in the system to those who used to be students in the system, alumni, and to those who, interestingly enough, did not make it into the system. The minister has said – and I'm quoting here from *Hansard* – that “we need to be able to access information for those who apply but do not enrol in an institution as well as alumni information for various surveys.”

Well, okay. What kind of surveys? I think the basic question is: why? Why do we need to collect information, to access information including personal information about identifiable people for those who have applied but who did not enrol? The minister has not been specific, and I would invite clarification from the minister on this point. He has not yet been specific to the best of my knowledge, nor do I think Bill 9 is specific on this as to whether that includes applicants who were accepted by institutions and simply chose to go to a different institution, maybe out of province, maybe within the province, or whether it also extends to applicants who applied for admission to college or university or a technical institute in this province and were denied application.

The minister says that he needs the ability, the authority to be able to conduct these surveys relating to postsecondary education I guess to make sure that policy directions are supporting the needs of Albertans, but I don't exactly know how he finds that out by needing to collect personal information on people who are not in the system. So I have a concern about that. It's probably not the deal breaker though.

The deal breaker for me is again a rather innocuous-looking section which seeks to lift the ceiling on the number of board members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council for colleges and technical institutes only, just for colleges and technical institutes and not for universities. No plans to change the appointment model for universities, which in and of itself I think, Mr. Speaker, introduces unneeded complexity. But more fundamentally, additional government appointees water down the representation on those college and technical institute boards by institutional stakeholders such as students and faculty and, therefore, tends to undermine institutional autonomy.

Now, I did some checking around on this. We made some calls around the various colleges and technical institutes in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and we couldn't find any evidence, any indication that any of these colleges or technical institutes had asked for this change to the boards. I'll grant you that most of the feedback I got was that the colleges and technical institutes weren't overly troubled by this proposed change, but they were perplexed and intrigued by it and kind of wondering why it would be proposed since they certainly hadn't asked for it.

Now, we had an earlier indication that at least one of the reasons for doing this was that membership on these boards needed to be clarified to ensure that any member can have a maximum term of six consecutive years on the board and that there is sufficient flexibility in the number of members to address any unique or emerging needs within the community or the institution. Currently it's possible, for instance, for a chair of the board to be restricted from being able to complete a full six-year term if they were appointed partway through a term as a public member. It was indicated to us, you know, that this was unintentional when the act was drafted.

Well, okay. That's fine except that the section of the Post-secondary Learning Act that is being amended is section 44, and this is where the bill seeks to institute a lower limit, if you will, and lift the upper limit on the number of board members for colleges and technical institutes that can be appointed by the minister. The section that deals with the length of time that you can serve on a board, a maximum term of service on a board, is actually section 56, I believe, and there is no amendment proposed to section 56.

I'm not really sure, if section 56 deals with the concerns that had been indicated to us, why section 44 is the one that's being amended unless, of course, increasing the total number of board members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the concurrent reduction, therefore, in the proportion of board seats held by institutional stakeholder groups such as students, faculty, support staff results in the influence of the government or the ministry over the board of that college or technical institute growing correspondingly. LGC appointees are already a majority under the current legislation, so I guess this change does not by itself represent a new balance of power between public and institutional members, but it – what? – institutionalizes, I guess, solidifies that balance of power.

Mr. Speaker, it concerns me because I happen to think that in a democracy the citizenship is best served by an independent, autonomous postsecondary education system where independent critical thinking is not only fostered; it is encouraged. It is coerced when necessary at 8 o'clock on a Monday morning when half the class shows up for that lecture and they're practically falling asleep in the back rows in between bites on their double chocolate Tim Hortons doughnut. You know, critical thinking is vital in a democracy. Critical thinking is what moves us ahead for better or for worse, and I tend to think mostly for better.

Institutional autonomy is important; institutional autonomy is vital. And this government seems to have a reputation, a track record, for wanting to get right in there and get its hands dirty right

up to the elbows, you know, and change the oil and do the lube job on every college and university itself. It's micromanaging them, and I have to ask why. I have to ask why. Is it a trust issue? Is it a philosophical issue? I don't know, but it causes me problems, Mr. Speaker. It causes me a great deal of consternation, makes me wonder what it is that this government really wants with this bill.

So I'm going to defer to others older and wiser than me who have said that, you know, in this business of being a legislator, when in doubt vote no. Mr. Speaker, I am going to oppose Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act.

Thank you.

4:00

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make some comments and raise some issues in second reading of Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005. There are a couple of issues that I am really concerned about here, and essentially they come up in two places. One is the gathering of personal identifying information, and the second is around the repealing of the, let me get the titles right, Private Colleges Accreditation Board and what appears to be a sort of transfer of those responsibilities or an assumption of them by the Campus Alberta Quality Council.

My issue there is that it's not assuming what the Private Colleges Accreditation Board actually used to do, particularly around issues of transparency and accountability. When we go back and look at the Post-secondary Learning Act, the Campus Alberta Quality Council is a very small section that was, I think, new in here. On the pages I'm looking at, it's like less than half a page setting out the powers and duties of it. Essentially, it is to provide advice and recommendations: appointment of members, terms of office, rules to govern itself. It is charged to inquire into matters relating to proposals to offer a program of study, then to look at the identified and demonstrated need for a program, the capacity of the institution to deliver the program, the impact of the program on the postsecondary institution's ability to fulfill its stated mandate and integration of programs. That's pretty much it. So it is meant to be more of a sort of global policy checker on behalf of the minister.

The Private Colleges Accreditation Board is much more lengthy in how it sets out everything it's required to do, and we are looking at repealing this. In particular, what I'm noticing is that there is a whole section under the Private Colleges Accreditation Board describing its powers. Again, Mr. Speaker, I mean, to be fair, it also goes through setting up, you know, that there'll be a chairperson and who will be on the committee, how they're appointed – members from the academic staff, members from the nonacademic staff, members from the public – terms of office and remuneration.

Then, Mr. Speaker, budget, records, and reports. Specifically, the accreditation board was to "prepare a budget and submit it to the Minister" and "keep full and accurate records" and submit and transmit "annual and other reports and returns as required." That does not appear correspondingly under the Campus Alberta Quality Council. In repealing what we're looking at for the accreditation board, we are losing some reporting and record keeping functions that are not being transferred to the Campus Alberta Quality Council, so I have concerns about the disparities that are appearing between what was in place before and what will be in place now.

As my colleague from Calgary-Currie laid out, we wouldn't like to believe that any of this was any deliberate sleight of hand, but I've been here long enough that I know to question things now, and I've been proved right more times than I would have ever liked, Mr.

Speaker. I would prefer in these cases that I am proved definitively wrong, and unfortunately that does not happen as often as I would like.

Just for anybody following along in *Hansard* or on the live audio, under the Post-secondary Learning Act those two sections that I was looking at for the Campus Alberta Quality Council are sections 108 and 109 and for the Private Colleges Accreditation Board are 110 to 115.

I think there's an issue there that needs to be explored. I have real issues about accountability and transparency and record keeping, especially when we're playing around with two really important things: taxpayer dollars and the education of our citizens and how we fund that and how we promote it and protect it. So I'm not impressed by what I'm seeing there.

The second issue that I am really unhappy about – and how interesting that I was just discussing this very thing, which is around collection of personally identifying information.

Oh, there's one other thing that I'm going to want to come back to, Mr. Minister, and that's around the repealing of the listings of those colleges receiving funding from the government. I'm wondering if that isn't starting to just open the door just the tiniest little crack to funding for-profit institutions. I would be most unhappy to see that. I'll come back to that one.

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm searching for the actual information on the collecting of information from people other than students. I think specifically it was talking about two categories; one was the alumni, and the second was people who apply but do not in fact for whatever reason carry through and enrol in the institution.

[Dr. Brown in the chair]

One of the things I learned on the Health Information Act review – and I've discussed this before – is that we collect too much information, and we don't strip it. Yes, that's an onerous task, and it can be expensive, and all the usual qualifiers and excuses that I hear, but the fact of the matter is that we have a responsibility as stewards of that information. More globally, back to the trust issue, if we can't get the public to believe that we are foremost and most vigorous in protecting that information, they'll stop giving it to us, and then we've got research on nothing. So we really have to be careful about this.

I am questioning why you need personally identifying information on the alumni and on those enrolled. You should not need tombstone information on these people, tombstone information being the date of birth, date of death, first, middle, last names, and sometimes there's a version of that called business card information. You should not need that. What you need to know is, perhaps, gender. You should not be able to identify who you're talking about or who those statistics are about. You should not be able to. You get up and explain to me why you would need to know that John Brown, male, 18 years of age, lives on 112th Street and 100th Avenue. Why do you need to know that amount of information on someone when you're looking at enrolment factors? You do not need to have that personally identifying information, and if you do, you get up and tell us all why you need it, because I don't think that's necessary here.

I'm not shaking my finger at you in particular, Mr. Speaker. It's just for emphasis.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker: What's your point of order?

Mr. Boutilier: I'll withdraw my point of order.

Ms Blakeman: Why am I not surprised? Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

To continue then. The information about collecting the personally identifying information of people in these circumstances I think is fraught with problems for all of us and particularly for the colleges. It's just so tantalizing, so inviting to see all that good information collected in one place and to be able to say: "Oh, look at what we could do with that. We could offer these people grants, and we could give their information to banks so that they could get more money and go more into debt as a student. It's just so good. Let's have the access to the information and share it with everybody." We cannot do that. We can only use the information for the purpose for which it was collected.

Now, why did you collect that information from those students enrolling? So they could enrol in the program. If they didn't enrol in the program, you should not be able to use that information for anything further.

For the alumni why do you have that information? If they're donors to a particular program or they are supporting through a financial contribution, great. Then you need that particular kind of information for them. But what else are you using it for? If you're using it for any reason other than why you originally collected it from them, you have to go back to them and say: we'd like your permission to use it for a different reason.

4:10

That is not contemplated in what's in front of us in this act in any way, shape, or form, and I would challenge the government that if that's what they really need it for, then fess up, step up to the plate, and explain that. Let me see it in the act that you've got it in place to go back to those people and get their permission to use their personally identifying information in a different way than the reason that you collected it for or that the government collected it for. Otherwise, it's a no go; you don't get to do that. I'm most unhappy when I see something like this in here.

Now, I was going to go back to the private colleges and the funding of them. What my issue there is that there's an interesting little sort of change in language, and what we've got is a repeal of a section that listed four private but nonprofit colleges, which are traditionally religious-based colleges, or at least that's how they started out. No, I think they all still are. They receive funding from the government, and the funding is determined by the regulations. So what we see here, evidently, is the ministry seeking additional – and I'm putting little quotes around it – "flexibility" as more institutions have been granted authority to offer degree programs, and they would be receiving funding as per the regulations, one assumes, for offering degree programs.

Historically, the ministry has given assurances that for-profit institutions will not receive funding. Well, if we end up with more for-profit agencies that are allowed to grant degrees – and when I look at the list here, interestingly, two of them that turn up, in fact, are for-profit institutions that I think are now approved to grant specific degrees. So most of them, as I say, are religious-based organizations, but we've got the DeVry Institute of Technology in Calgary and the University of Phoenix, which are both showing up. They're both clearly profit corporations, which is fine. There's nothing wrong with that.

What's wrong with it is that when you end up with that hybrid, that mix where a business that is supposed to be competing freely and openly in a free-market enterprise system, yada-yada-yada. We've all heard that rhetoric. But, no, what they really want to do is take their garden hose and hook up to that fountain of public funding.

I say that if you're going to be free-market private enterprise, great. More power to you. Go do it. But don't pretend and try and cloak yourself as being a public institution. That's what I'm picking out here, that we're ending up with a very interesting kind of cross sleight of hand on the definitions. Previously, we had only private colleges that were not for profit. They were receiving funding for their programs. Now we're shifting over to defining this as degree granting, and I'm just trying to make sure up front so everybody knows – and let's get it on the record, Mr. Speaker – that we will not have these for-profit educational companies able to get operational funding for granting degrees. I would like to get confirmation on that.

I appreciate the opportunity to raise those points. I'll see what the rest of the speakers have to say, but I'm very reluctant at this point to support this bill in second reading in principle. Thank you for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there hon. members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

There being none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Caldor.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to make some comments on Bill 9 here in its second reading stage this afternoon. I have some serious reservations about Bill 9, you know, and they specifically are around these issues of the composition of boards and specifically with the technical institutes and colleges.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Now, while under previous legislation the government still had the ability to appoint the majority of board members in technical institutions and in colleges, this change in Bill 9 would allow almost a doubling or more of the government's appointments on any given board in a given institution or college. So, you know, for a number of reasons I think that this is unnecessary and potentially destructive to the democratic composition of these boards. Also, I think it sends a rather negative message towards both these types of institutions, that their ability to be independent and to develop their own strategy and course of action, so to speak, is going to be much more seriously curtailed by the provincial government.

While of course this body is responsible for the funding of these institutions, I think that at this juncture, where we're trying to diversify the economy of this province and we are developing, you know, sort of a booming and vibrant population here in the province, the diversity and the proliferation of different types of colleges providing different types of information in perspective would really enhance our province, Mr. Speaker. This move, quite a heavy-handed move, I would say, to increase the amount of government-appointed board members of institutions to a minimum of 12 as opposed to previously a maximum of 12 at best would be coldly received by these institutions that would be affected.

Now, we've been phoning and speaking to a number of different colleges and institutions around the province, and you know most expressed a sense of surprise at this particular point in this legislation. Certainly it wasn't asked for, and at the same time the people who did manage to get a heads up on it were quite concerned. Remember that the composition of these boards includes teaching staff and support staff and students, the student body as well, and each of those stakeholders has a strong bearing on the maintenance and the future of a school. So, you know, if we're somehow watering or diluting that or changing the way that these different groups can interact with each other in a democratic way, then I think it would be at the peril of the functioning of these boards.

I think that the consultation wasn't there, and perhaps an amendment to this aspect of Bill 9 would be appropriate. We will hopefully pursue that here in this Chamber.

Just briefly, the other thing that I would like to comment on in regard to Bill 9 is this concept of retaining and using information that is used for registration in postsecondary boards. You know, although it's difficult to know what it's pointing at, my suspicion points specifically at the necessity, I think, of these postsecondary institutions to have to fund raise on an extended basis. I know that already the University of Alberta has put a tremendous amount of focus on fundraising in its last seven to 10 years. While that's an honourable thing, I suppose, it undermines the independence once again of a postsecondary institution, and it takes so much energy for a postsecondary institution to have to focus on fundraising to such a great degree.

Remember as well that when you're talking about fundraising – and that's a competitive environment – smaller institutions are less able to engage in that in an effective way. So, you know, the trail leads back, Mr. Speaker, to this whole idea that's in Bill 1, to move more towards an endowment system, towards more of an American-style system of funding our postsecondary institutions, and, you know, really leaning heavily on the alumni of postsecondary institutions to fund their colleges.

4:20

This is a road that, I guess, leads to some institutions not getting the funding that they need, and quite frankly it leads to a widening in the gap between the wealthy and the poor because you have certain institutions that will be very well represented and very well endowed and supported by their alumni and other places that will be less able to do so. That gap that is created between the wealthy and the less so as a result of that I think is less than acceptable for a democratic and a very, you know, egalitarian province that we've managed to maintain over these past hundred years.

Privacy of information. We were just talking about this a few short minutes ago, and once again it creeps into the whole debate. I think it's something that we have to remember as Members of this Legislative Assembly, just how important it is for us to protect the privacy and the integrity of one's personal information because, you know, at the end of the day that is the sovereignty that we have as individuals and together the collective sovereignty that we have as a community and as a political entity. So I would like to place my word of warning on that issue as well.

Bill 9. At the end of the day I think it's great that we have a process here by which we can perhaps make some amendments. While I do see some advantage to it, we would have difficulty supporting it as it is presently worded.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in.

Any other speaker?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be happy to review the comments that have been made by members speaking to this bill and respond to the concerns raised when the bill gets to Committee of the Whole, if in fact the Legislature agrees to the bill in principle. So I would ask that we now do that.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

The Clerk: For second reading, Bill 3, City of Lloydminster Act. Adjourned debate: Mr. Snelgrove.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of procedure we had agreed – and I'm sorry I didn't inform the chair – to call Bill 10 first in order to have Bill 3 done at a later time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. If that's an understanding.

The Clerk: Bill 10, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005, for second reading. Mr. Strang.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this time to . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, it's my understanding that this bill has not been moved for second reading, so is the hon. Government House Leader going to move on behalf of the Member for West Yellowhead?

Mr. Hancock: Perhaps we could call Bill 24. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to allude to the presence or absence of any member, but we had agreed that Bill 3 would be called at an appropriate time. So perhaps we could move to Bill 24.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. We'll go to Bill 24.

Bill 24 Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister for Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to move second reading of Bill 24, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005.

The proposed amendments are the culmination of a project that began almost three years ago. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, the province's Chief Medical Examiner, and counsel from Alberta Justice formed the committee charged with reviewing the fatality inquiry process. The current fatality inquiry process was developed in the mid-70s. The objective of the project was to determine whether there might be a more effective and efficient method to meet the needs of Albertans in this new century.

Their work included an initial review of the existing fatality inquiry process in Alberta; consultation with other government departments, policing agencies, health professionals, legal professionals, and other parties with an interest in the fatality inquiry process; and the preparation of a final report to the minister. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that among those interested in this and who were consulted were the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, numerous police forces, hospitals, the Fatality Review Board, the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association, the Alberta Criminal Trial Lawyers Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Alberta Medical Association, the Canadian Medical Protective Association, Corrections Canada, the Alberta Mental Health Board, and the national Transportation Safety Board, together with appropriate ministries in government. The committee reviewed specific issues to ensure that responsibilities and roles are clearly defined in legislation and resources are used efficiently so inquiries are conducted in a timely, meaningful, and cost-efficient manner.

A public fatality inquiry examines the circumstances around a fatality to increase awareness of factors that put lives at risk. With this knowledge authorities are able to take measures to prevent

similar deaths in the future, so the process must be as effective as it can be. Consultation took place over the summer of 2003, and the committee's final report was completed last year. Some of the proposed amendments are procedural in nature, but many of them will have a significant impact on the fatality inquiry process.

The procedural amendments include giving the Minister of Justice a formal authorization to release the judge's report to the public and eliminating the jury provisions in the act. Currently there is no provision for the release of the report, and a jury has never been called in Alberta.

There are also more substantive amendments that will impact how inquiries operate in the future. One of the substantive amendments will give the Minister of Justice the discretion to order the Chief Medical Examiner's office to conduct a limited investigation into the death when the death of an Albertan occurs outside Alberta. The medical examiner's investigation would be limited to gathering records that had been generated through the other jurisdictions' own death investigation process. The records shall be then given to the Fatality Review Board, who will make a recommendation to the minister as to whether or not a public fatality inquiry is necessary to examine issues specific to Alberta. The subsequent fatality inquiry, if called, would focus only on issues specific to Alberta. Witnesses would not be called from other jurisdictions to testify to the identification of the decedent, cause of death, and so on, as normally occurs at a public fatality inquiry.

As you may recall, in the year 2000 a group of schoolchildren were on a field trip to California. Three people died on that particular trip. After the tragedy there were calls for a fatality inquiry, but under the act at that time the minister did not have the authority to call an inquiry into a death that occurred outside the province. Presently if a death occurs outside Alberta but the body is brought to Alberta, a medical examiner or an investigator authorized by a medical examiner may conduct an investigation to establish or confirm the cause of death or establish the identity of the deceased person. The act does not authorize any further investigation into a death that occurred outside the province.

The review committee also found that there were situations where a person died while they were in the custody, care, or guardianship of government, but the fact that they were in care was unrelated to their death. Sometimes people die while they are in the custody, care, or guardianship of government. Examples of such circumstances are deaths that occur while the deceased person was in the custody of a peace officer or as a result of the use of force by a peace officer while on duty. Also, there may be a death of a child under the guardianship of a director under the Child Welfare Act or in the director's custody.

4:30

Under the present wording of the act the Fatality Review Board is required in these circumstances to recommend that a fatality inquiry be held unless it is satisfied that the death was due entirely to natural causes, was not preventable, and that the public interest would not be served by a fatality inquiry. The amendments would allow the Fatality Review Board to decline to recommend what would previously have been a mandatory fatality inquiry in cases where there is no meaningful connection between the death and the fact of the deceased's custody, care, or guardianship by the government.

For example, Mr. Speaker, consider the situation of a 16 year old under government care driving a car and unfortunately dying in a motor vehicle accident. At present, because that 16 year old is under government care, there would be a mandatory fatality inquiry. But, obviously, in that particular situation the death while not natural is also not connected to government care, and under the proposed change a fatality inquiry would not be required.

One of the primary goals of a fatality inquiry is to inspire confidence that the public authorities are taking appropriate measures to protect human life. If a death occurs for reasons that are entirely unrelated to the issue of government care, the Fatality Review Board should not be required to recommend an inquiry. The minister retains the right to call an inquiry in the event that the board does not make such a recommendation.

Other amendments to the act address the collection and disclosure of information by inquiry counsel as well as the disclosure of such material to participants at the fatality inquiry and final disposition of records and exhibits. Having all relevant information helps focus a fatality inquiry on the important issues and allows inquiry counsel to review circumstances surrounding the death, to identify potential issues and witnesses, and generally to prepare for the fatality inquiry.

Under the existing legislation inquiry counsel's authority to compel production of documents in the possession or control of others is not clearly spelled out. The amendments give inquiry counsel the authority to collect any record or information that is considered to be or could be relevant to the fatality inquiry. Relative to this, the custodian of records will be able to object to disclosure of records or information to inquiry counsel by going before the inquiry judge. Situations may arise where a person feels that they should not release records to inquiry counsel, often because the records are subject to some form of legal or statutory privilege. To resolve such questions, an inquiry judge can hear arguments and make a decision regarding disclosure.

The proposed amendment also clarifies access to exhibits. Many different kinds of records may be entered as exhibits to a fatality inquiry. While all parties with status at a fatality inquiry have the ability to examine the exhibits, whether or not the public can examine the exhibits was not clear. Allowing unfettered access to all exhibits to an inquiry could result in an inappropriate disclosure of the sensitive personal information they contain. In order to provide the proper protection to this personal information, an application should be made to the presiding judge to clarify the public's ability to examine the records. The judge can weigh the sensitive nature of the documents against the benefit to the public by their release on a case-by-case basis.

Under the present act the counsel appointed by the minister is the one who will present the evidence to the inquiry, but in some circumstances in the past the fatality inquiry judge also appointed his or her own legal counsel to act concurrently with the minister's counsel. As the counsel appointed by the minister carries out his or her duties in an impartial manner, it was felt that involving additional counsel can only complicate and perhaps inappropriately expand the scope of the inquiry.

The proposed amendment will accomplish two things. First, it will clarify that the person who is appointed by the minister is counsel to the inquiry itself and does not represent the interests of the Minister of Justice or the government of Alberta. This should eliminate the perception that a judge may need to appoint his or her own counsel to act in tandem with counsel that is appointed by the minister. Also, in cases of real or perceived conflict of interest the amendment will allow the minister to appoint outside counsel to take on the role of counsel for the inquiry. The amendment will also clarify that it is the responsibility of inquiry counsel to determine who will be called as a witness, with the assistance of the inquiry judge. This provision will further clarify the powers and duties of inquiry counsel.

A pilot project has recently been implemented in Edmonton for the holding of preinquiry conferences before the fatality inquiry begins. This bill reflects the goals of that procedure by including an

amendment that allows an inquiry judge to hear from the parties and then determine the scope of the inquiry, address procedural questions, consider applications for status, and so on. Further conferences may be held before the inquiry or as the inquiry proceeds if the scope of the inquiry changes or expands as a result of newly unearthed evidence.

Under the present act there is no provision for preinquiry conferences. Matters such as the scope of the inquiry, issues, witnesses, production of documents, and so on, are dealt with in the course of the inquiry, often causing unexpected adjournments that interrupt the inquiry process. Preinquiry conferences will also serve to prevent such adjournments and delays. As noted, a number of preinquiry conferences have been conducted in Edmonton over the last number of months under a pilot project, and what we have seen clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach.

As an example, a fatality inquiry was completed in early March into the death of a young boy who died after a collision with an unmarked police car on the Yellowhead Trail in Edmonton. The driver of the police car had been acquitted of charges of criminal negligence. The circumstances surrounding the accident were exhaustively examined during that trial.

A preinquiry conference was held, and the judge determined the main issues the inquiry should address. These were the nature of the activity the police were engaged in at the time of the crash, whether there was a policy in place that covered that activity, if there was, whether the policy was appropriate, and if not, whether there should be a policy.

Most importantly, for the purpose of illustration it was also decided that transcripts from the criminal trial would be entered at the fatality inquiry in place of oral testimony from approximately 50 witnesses. As a result, the inquiry was completed in only two and one-half days, and testimony that was previously given was used appropriately.

All persons who may appear in an inquiry should attend the conference, and applications for status in the inquiry should be made at the first preinquiry conference. Presently the act provides that an inquiry judge may grant status to any person who applies to the judge before or during the inquiry and is declared by the judge to be an interested person. There is a danger in granting interested person status inappropriately for it is a broad and undefined term.

The act allows interested persons to cross-examine witnesses and present arguments and submissions. For example, whether or not a person has sincere motivations, he or she may pursue issues that are not sufficiently relevant to the subject of the inquiry, resulting in undue delay, confusion, and inefficiency. Under the proposed amendments interested person status would be granted only to those parties who can demonstrate that they have a direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest in the death, investigation, and inquiry.

One group intended to be affected generally by this proposal is the media. The role of the media is to report the news and not to make it. This rule change does not affect the media's role as reporter on the process.

So, Mr. Speaker, Bill 24 is an important piece of legislation that will ensure that fatality inquiries in this province are as efficient and as effective as possible. Albertans need to be confident in the outcome of the inquiry process and know that we are working to prevent further deaths wherever possible. I urge all members of the Assembly to give support to Bill 24.

At this time I would move that debate on Bill 24 be adjourned.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 3
City of Lloydminster Act

[Adjourned debate March 15: Mr. Snelgrove]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to all the comments and questions from all hon. members.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's nice to see you in the chair. I'm delighted to rise to speak to this bill. It's addressing a very interesting and unusual problem in a city that actually is a very interesting city and one that has a special place in my heart. I remember as a child driving up and down highway 16 between Edmonton and Saskatoon to visit relatives in Saskatoon and always thinking, "Well, when we get to Lloydminster, we're halfway through the journey," and stopping for a milkshake or a hamburger or something like that before carrying on to our destination.

4:40

Of course, over the years so many changes have overtaken Lloydminster. It's gone from a small, isolated, frankly, prairie town almost entirely agriculturally based, and I think, in fact, if I'm correct in my history – and I'm going purely from memory here – it was originally settled by the Barr colonists. So it's a city with a long and very interesting history. It has grown from its agricultural roots into a significant industrial city because of the heavy oil deposits in that area.

I also used to visit Lloydminster quite often in my work looking at health facilities and reviewing health facilities, and I remember going through the long-term care centre and the seniors' centre there, the seniors' lodge, and even the hospital, which at the time I think was on the Saskatchewan side. So I'm delighted to speak on this act.

The strength of Lloydminster's economy is often overlooked by the rest of Alberta because we're so focused on Fort McMurray or Calgary or the corridor, but actually Lloydminster is a very prosperous and growing community. I think someday it will take a place on the global level.

We talked today about west Texas intermediate and Brent crude as benchmark prices for the oil industry. Well, there will be a time when the Lloyd blend – and I don't mean a drink mixed at the house of the MLA representing that constituency, although that might be a good plan too, and maybe I'll sample it sometime, but I mean the blend of oil sands and heavy oil that come out of Lloyd and serve as a benchmark price for heavy oil in Alberta generally. This is a great city.

I also notice that the name of the city shares something in common with the name of the MLA who represents it. Lloydminster and – I don't know if I'm allowed to say his name here, but he's well known. I don't want to get a point of order here.

Ms Blakeman: Given names.

Dr. Taft: I can't use given names, but when I talk about how Lloyd has a soft spot in my heart, I generally mean the city of Lloydminster. Just so everybody's clear on that, Mr. Speaker.

This bill serves what is a unique function for a unique city and provides, as I understand it, in close co-operation with the Saskatch-

ewan government effectively a legislative charter for the city of Lloydminster. Of course, this is necessary because the boundary between Alberta and Saskatchewan runs more or less up the middle of the city of Lloydminster. So the city is faced with the prospect of living in two provinces with two entirely different sets of legislation, and that, of course, can cause all kinds of problems. Imagine the complications in urban planning when half the city is governed under the legislation of Saskatchewan and the other half is governed under the legislation of Alberta or even simple things like bicycle helmets. There's a different bicycle helmet law in Alberta than in Saskatchewan. Suddenly, people crossing Main Street, Lloydminster – on one side of the street they have to wear their helmet and on the other side, maybe at a particular age, they don't have to. And it goes on and on and on. All those complications. So this legislation frankly continues a tradition of special treatment for the city of Lloydminster recognizing that it's divided between two provinces. Actually, I think it's kind of remarkable.

I see our New Democrat colleague is here, and of course many Conservative colleagues are here. This particular bill is kind of a bridge between the Conservative government of Alberta and the New Democrat government of Saskatchewan, and there aren't many things that could bring those two governments together, I don't suppose, but this bill is one of them.

This bill will resolve those issues. It will give a clear mandate to the citizens of Lloydminster and to the city administrators of Lloydminster and the city council there to keep their affairs in order.

In fact, I think work has been going on on this particular bill for some three or four years. A project team has been working to address the special issues faced by the people of Lloydminster. I believe I'm right in saying that a virtually identical or maybe exactly identical version has been passed already in the Legislature of Saskatchewan. With that, once the same legislation is passed here in this Assembly, then both provinces will have given a clear foundation to Lloydminster for all its activities.

I think we will be unequivocally supporting this legislation, Mr. Speaker. We don't want to complicate the lives of the people of Lloydminster. The people of Saskatchewan have already endorsed the identical bill, and it seems only sensible that this Legislature should do the same thing. We will then have matching legislation for the people of Lloydminster, and they can get on with the business of living and developing and growing in a prosperous and flourishing community. That's the intent of this bill. To my knowledge this bill will fulfill that intent, and so I will be recommending to our caucus that we support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am rising this afternoon to speak in favour of this bill. I think that Lloydminster's unique place on the very border of Saskatchewan and Alberta warrants some sort of special legislation, and as my previous colleague mentioned, the government of Saskatchewan had passed very similar legislation in 2004. So for the sake of convenience and for the good relations that we can enjoy for all citizens of Lloydminster, both on the Saskatchewan and the Alberta sides, I think that it's important to harmonize the laws between the two provinces.

It's interesting how Lloydminster is an example, I think, of what's happening in terms of growth across western Canada at this point. With the heavy oil deposits that we find on both the Alberta and Saskatchewan sides, Lloydminster is enjoying really unprecedented

growth over these past 15 or 20 years. I think it's important to allow that growth to carry on and to take place in an unfettered sort of way, I suppose, that the municipal laws somehow are able to encompass the best that both provinces' municipal laws and provincial laws are able to give.

You know, over the years we've seen the good people of Lloydminster taking advantage of Saskatchewan car insurance, say, for example, because of course they have a much better deal in Saskatchewan with public auto insurance. On the other side, I think there are some advantages with the provincial sales tax that Saskatchewan residents can and do enjoy as well.

4:50

I know that there was confusion around the smoking bylaw which was in place on the Saskatchewan side. Now, of course, the good people on the Alberta side will be able to enjoy the smoke-free health benefits and the peace-of-mind benefits that come with the smoking bylaw being extended across into the Alberta side. Of course, we would like to see that extend right the way across the province, but I think that will be another issue for another day.

So, yeah, I'm certainly speaking in favour of this bill. I think that border towns are always a unique place, and sometimes they will create unique solutions to problems. We can see it around the world. I think that Lloydminster has been a positive contribution to our province thus far, and it's creating some new, positive contributions here with a unique law that straddles the border between Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29? Any other speakers?

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster to close debate.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview for his kind comments. I think more members should have taken the opportunity to wax eloquently about my favourite city, and it's much the same as all Alberta cities that are enjoying tremendous growth. They just don't have quite the opportunity for such a fond name.

It is truly unique. It is developing a culture all of its own, and it does have the problems of straddling two provinces. In many cases it has used that to great success to become a service point for much of northern Saskatchewan and, of course, into Alberta.

So I appreciate the comments, and I would like to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

Bill 28

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and move second reading of Bill 28.

The Municipal Government Act authorizes the operations of municipal authorities and therefore affects the vast majority of Albertans. To improve the act, the government is proposing that some amendments be presented for discussion and approval by the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, will amend the act a number of ways, and I'll take a little bit of time to just explain to the members present what the amendments actually are intended to do. First of all, adding provisions that would

allow municipalities to set and collect a community aggregate sand and gravel payment levy, clarifying issues regarding the flow of linear assessment process and jurisdiction, clarifying the intent of the assessment of Crown-owned property held under lease, licence, or permit in provincial parks and recreation areas, adding enabling provisions for a municipality to pass a community revitalization levy bylaw subject to provincial approval, and finally, providing regulation-making authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish any area as a community revitalization levy area and to set out the specific conditions that will be required.

I'll just go through each of the various sections individually and go into it in just a little bit more detail. The community aggregate payment levy is a levy that is proposed to be implemented through amendments to the MGA and would give municipalities the option of passing bylaws to set and collect a levy from sand and gravel operators. It would ensure that municipalities realize a financial benefit from the extraction of a natural resource located in their communities. Municipalities and industry support this levy, and they agree that sand and gravel operations should provide more funding for mitigation or other initiatives to demonstrate more clearly that communities benefit from these operations.

The proposal gives the minister regulatory authority to set the maximum rate of the levy and establish administrative details, and the levy would be based on the amount of actual material that is shipped. The levy would not replace road-use agreements between individual sand and gravel companies and individual municipalities. I think that's important to note, Mr. Speaker, because there has been some confusion that perhaps this was intended to replace one when in fact it is not.

Finally, municipalities that have already established fees or other charges related to sand and gravel will be encouraged to move to the standardized process of aggregate payment levies established with this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, the proposal was developed with the collaboration and support of the following groups: the Aggregate Resource Development Task Force, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, the Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association, the Alberta Sand and Gravel Association, and Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation.

The next area I'd like to discuss is the proposed amendments to the linear assessment process. The amendments regarding a linear assessment will improve the clarity of existing process, lead to internal administrative efficiencies, and result in improved linear assessments. Accordingly, the proposed amendment includes the preparation of a linear assessment roll. This would be similar to a municipal property assessment except that it's prepared by the assessor designated by the minister. It will also align the provincial assessment process with the municipal property assessment process.

One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that is an issue from time to time is the lack of requirement for notification when a pipeline or a pipeline company is sold, to advise the minister of that change, and then municipalities will send tax notices out and be advised that the company was sold. So this process will create a roll similar to real property. One of the provisions is that just as it's necessary to advise the municipality when you sell your house, you'll also be required to advise when you sell your pipeline. Only in this case it's the province that would be receiving that advice.

The next area has to do with Crown leases. The amendment clarifying the assessment of Crown leases will ensure consistency in property taxation rules among municipalities for similar property regardless of location. The recommendation is supported by my colleague the hon. Minister of Community Development in his capacity as minister responsible for Kananaskis Country.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of unintended interpretations of section 298(1)(k) by the Municipal Government Board and the courts, some private operators using Crown properties for business purposes have recently been exempted from paying property taxes on them. A number of other recent assessment appeals to the Municipal Government Board and to the courts have resulted in decisions to exempt certain businesses on property under lease, licence, or permit to the Crown. The appealed assessment value for these properties is significant to the local assessment and tax base. This has had a significant impact on the local assessment and tax base for Cypress county, Kananaskis Country, and improvement district No. 9.

A 2004 Municipal Government Board decision regarding a ski resort in Banff national park will affect other property in ID No. 9 and could result in additional revenue losses for that ID of up to \$300,000, or approximately 30 per cent of their general municipal budget.

The proposed amendment will clarify the rules regarding when and where property is to be assessed if a person other than the Crown holds or uses property in a national park, provincial park, or recreation area. The amendment will continue to exempt any provincial park or recreation area, including any campground, day use area, or administration and maintenance facility held by the Crown in right of Alberta or operated under a facility operation contract or service contract.

However, Mr. Speaker, properties like downhill ski facilities, golf courses, food concessions, stores, and restaurants held under lease, licence, or permit will once again continue to be subject to property tax as was the original intent of the act. This will ensure fair and equitable property tax treatment regardless of the property's location and will result in a tax stability for municipalities and improvement districts impacted.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that when the Municipal Government Act underwent substantial amendments back in 1994, there was a move to plain language in the legislation. In this particular area there was no intent to have any change in policy. The intent was to bring forward exactly the same taxing policies that had been in place since 1968.

Since that time various taxpayers have appealed to the courts and then ultimately to the MGB, claiming that the change in wording in the act in effect bestowed a change in policy and an exemption from taxation. That simply was not the case then. It was not the intent then, and it is not the intent now. The intent is to continue to assess all properties that have historically been assessed within provincial parks with the exception of Crown-owned and -operated facilities and facilities that are operated under a specific Crown lease.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little bit of time discussing the community revitalization levy. Municipalities have been asking the province for access to innovative financial tools to help infrastructure needs. The proposed policy change will allow any municipality to pass a bylaw and designate a specific district for redevelopment and to set the duration of tax increment financing generally up to about 20 years.

In a tax increment financing scheme, a community revitalization levy tool is that a municipality would take out debentures to cover the cost of infrastructure servicing and other costs of redevelopment. As development occurs, the value of the property increases. Taxes collected on the increased assessment are captured in a separate fund to repay the debenture. This innovative financing scheme would see current property tax values held for project purposes at the current level for, again, up to 20 years or until the original investment has been recouped.

Mr. Speaker, just for simplistic explanation, basically what you would do is take an area that is undesirable for development, that requires significant public investment by the municipality. They would go out, they would borrow money, make that investment. The assessment that is in place in that designated zone would be frozen. Any new development that comes into that area would have the taxes diverted into a special fund that would first go to repay the debentures rather than into the general revenue of the city. Once that original investment has been recouped, then the zone ceases to exist, and everything returns to normal.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to emphasize that the proposals have been developed in consultation with Alberta's local governments in collaboration with targeted stakeholders. The overall result is that municipal authorities will be better able to continue providing the high quality of service Albertans have come to expect. The bill is part of the government's responsiveness to the needs of Alberta municipalities and their residents by providing two new innovative tools for revenue generation and clarifying certain property assessments and tax provisions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the consideration of the House to give approval to Bill 28. Thank you.

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

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciated the comments of the minister, and I appreciate his efforts at working to keep us well informed on this issue. It's a significant piece of legislation. It's a bit unusual in that it has four very unrelated kinds of aspects to it. Obviously, they're all tied into the Municipal Government Act, but they range from issues around managing sand and gravel right through to potentially very significant inner urban redevelopment projects and other issues as well. So it's a kind of disjointed piece of legislation in that way, but if it's the most efficient way to steer it through the Legislature, so be it.

I would like to begin by reflecting to the Assembly that I consistently hear concerns from municipal councillors that the Municipal Government Act is amended virtually every year, and while they ask for different amendments from time to time, there is a sense that their legislative base is always up for modification, and from one year to the next they're never quite sure what the rules are or what they're going to be.

We've argued recently that the Legislature should consider, actually, an amendment to the Alberta Act, which would amount in some ways to a constitutional amendment, establishing for municipalities a much more solid basis in the Alberta Act, what is in their control and what is not in their control, giving them the predictability and the security in the long term over their legal existence, because they do worry and fret about how secure their legal existence is.

I know that in this Legislature we've debated changes that have reduced the power of municipalities over things like intensive livestock operations when, in fact, some municipalities are very keen to have those controls and regret losing them. But that's a different issue for another time. All I'm really raising there, Mr. Speaker, is the concern that this act is amended so often that municipalities do worry about their legal security.

The intent of part of the bill is to help municipal governments manage and respond to sand and gravel operations, essentially, that may be within their boundaries. These operations, I know, can be very big, very noisy, environmentally quite disruptive. They can also be very economically important. The value of a large sand and gravel deposit to the owners can be easily into the many millions of dollars.

We can all easily imagine the wear and tear on roads that occurs as a result of a busy gravel pit or sand operation and the heavy truck traffic that that generates. We can also easily imagine the environmental disruption and the impact on surrounding property values that could result from this. So trying to help municipalities respond in an appropriate fashion through a levy like this seems, at first blush at least, to be quite a reasonable tool to give to municipalities and one more thing they can use to manage their complicated lives.

The aspect of the bill that deals with linear assessments is quite different, and it raises a few questions for me. Linear assessments presumably don't just apply to pipelines, as the minister suggested, but also to any rights-of-way; for example, for power transmission or that kind of utility corridor. Of course, these are very important for municipalities, for all of us. They're the corridors that run in some cases right through neighbourhoods, certainly right through cities, that allow us to get the electricity that we value and allow Alberta's very, very extensive pipeline network to function. People also see on their monthly power bills, I think, some of the effects of – I don't know if they call them taxes – city rights-of-way fees for power companies that get passed on to power consumers and are an important source of revenue to municipalities.

5:10

I can't help wondering what implications this bill might have to the bigger debates around major pipeline development in the province, pipelines coming from the north or pipelines extending to the west coast. I don't know if there's any bearing at all of this legislation on those projects or, for that matter, on the possibility of exporting electrical power to the United States, the need for very significant extensions of rights-of-way for transmission lines either directly into Montana or east into Saskatchewan, which is probably unlikely, or west into B.C. So I don't know if there are some implications of this bill on those possible projects, and I'd be interested to hear from the minister at some point if there are.

The Crown lease assessments I will need to study more carefully to really understand what the implications of those are and will be taking some time, I hope, over the next 10 days or so to look at those. Crown leaseholds are sometimes the subject of real debate and controversy in how they should be managed and how much revenue should be charged or what responsibility should be placed on the leaseholder, what privileges people should have, what access issues there might be. I'll be perfectly honest; we haven't had time to look into all of those issues. If this bill will affect those, I don't know.

I think that what we've heard the most about is the question of the revitalization levy that this bill proposes and will present as a tool to municipalities. I've heard about this for some weeks or months now in talks with city councillors certainly in Calgary and elsewhere, and I know there are divisions on whether these are good ideas or not.

I'm all in favour of giving municipalities more tools to manage their affairs and to be creative and in Calgary, for example, to redevelop the so-called East Village. I can see why some members of city council are so keen to get that project going, and I could easily imagine that one might work in Edmonton as well in certain areas of east downtown Edmonton.

A project like that can stimulate new development, it can take a decrepit or old or underdeveloped part of a city and bring it new life. It can generate in the long term new tax revenues. It could even help combat urban sprawl by allowing the intensification of an urban centre and more and more people living close to the city centre where they don't have to place demands on transportation, on roads, on LRT, or on schools or sewers or all of those other costs that come along with urban sprawl. There's even potentially an environmental benefit to reducing urban sprawl.

So those are all good things and I think need to be seriously considered and could provide real opportunities.

There are, of course, as with everything two sides to the debate. To us in here, all of us generally privileged, well-educated, coming from reasonably prosperous households, the rundown areas of central cities look like a blight, but to people who live there, people who are very different from most of us, people who are maybe homeless or struggling to get along in life, those are actually their neighbourhoods. That's where they live. In both Calgary and Edmonton there are thousands of these people, and unfortunately they are frequently the victims of these redevelopment projects. They end up being displaced. They get pushed out to other parts of the city, maybe into neighbourhoods where they weren't welcome before and aren't welcome now.

The very extensive services that develop in these blighted areas to help those people, services like homeless shelters, like detox centres, social justice agencies, health agencies, all of those services that develop in these rundown, inner urban areas also get displaced, and they lose track of the population they're intended to serve. So that's one of the downsides of this legislation that would need to be considered, and hopefully any business case brought to the cabinet by a municipality asking for one of these revitalization levies would need to address that and address that very seriously.

Another question that comes out of this is that basically what this does is allow a municipality to go into debt. I have to ask myself why we're encouraging or facilitating municipalities to go into debt. We're all supposed to be thrilled that this government is so-called out of debt although there are many ways to measure debt, and there are cases to be made that we're not out of debt at all as a provincial government. But that's been an objective of this government. Why is it that we're now making it easier for municipalities in Alberta to go further into debt? I think we need to consider that. What's good for the goose should be good for the gander.

Certainly, the provincial government right now has the resources to take a different approach to this problem. Rather than forcing municipalities into debt, it may want to consider establishing a revitalization fund to serve the same purpose and prevent cities from having to go into debt. After all, as is often said, there's only one taxpayer. The citizens of Calgary are also citizens of Alberta and of Canada. If we're trying to get those people out of debt, then it's really a bit of a slight of hand to say that, well, they're out of debt as provincial taxpayers, but they're deeper in debt as municipal taxpayers. So I think there are some serious questions there and long-term risks to the municipalities if we allow them or indeed encourage them to go deeper into debt.

It also makes me wonder if there isn't some opportunity here for creative funding or creative financing. Maybe there is a role for the provincial government to establish let's call it an urban redevelopment fund. If we want cities to go into debt, they'd borrow from this fund at a set rate. Rather than going to the open market, they'd borrow from the provincial government's fund and then repay at a long-term, predictable, low interest rate. The risks to the municipalities from that sort of opportunity might be really diminished. I think historically senior levels of government have actually been quite prepared to establish those kinds of funds to allow municipalities to borrow and redevelop housing and other services. So perhaps there's some opportunity here for creative thinking.

I will be asking the minister if he's given some thought – and I'm sure he has – to where the financing for these levies ultimately will be coming from. Will cities be going to the bond market or to international lending organizations, or would they have the opportunity to go to a municipal government finance corporation owned and operated by the people of Alberta to help their own cities get stronger? I don't know. I'd be interested in the response to that.

I also note that there are divisions on Calgary city council on this issue. That's healthy democracy, but we'll be trying to reflect those divisions and work them through in the debate on this piece of legislation as it works its way through this Assembly.

So an interesting piece of legislation, an interesting bill that has four rather disjointed components to it. I'm sure the intent of the bill is to help our municipalities be better, stronger, more vital communities and more vital governments. If that's the intent, we support it. But I'm also going to watch carefully as this goes through the Legislature and listen to the debate and listen to the stakeholders and see if there aren't ways that we can actually make this a better piece of legislation.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll turn the floor over to some other member of the Assembly and listen carefully. Thank you.

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

5:20

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I speak to this bill from two points of view. One is as the MLA for Calgary-Varsity – and this bill very much affects my city – and also as the opposition critic for infrastructure. This bill is an attempt by municipalities to generate revenue locally. Municipalities have lost this ability due to government centralization of services. For example, the Calgary board of education used to be able to collect 50 per cent of their operating budget through property taxes, which they then used to target specific urban issues like ESL and special needs.

When the government took over this form of taxation, the municipalities lost out. They fought the province hard and successfully not to have their revenue further eroded by a reduction in the portion of the pump tax that they receive. If the province properly shared the revenue which it extracts from municipalities in the form of taxes for education, health care, et cetera, this bill would not be necessary. The reality is that there is only one taxpayer, and whether the money is taken by the province or by the city, the money is gone.

I have no trouble taxing gravel trucks and operators. I'm glad that provincial parks are exempt because that would leave the province to be taxing itself.

I do have trouble with this somewhat desperate act on the part of municipalities to try and generate or replace revenue which should be forthcoming from the province's general revenue, especially given our series of billion dollar surpluses.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in. Any questions?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. I'm really glad to get a chance to make some comments on Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005. There's a lot of discussion in my household around the MGA, and although it's not my particular interest, I'm hearing a lot about it whether I want to or not. So I'm glad to be in the Assembly while it's being debated and to hear the different points of view that are being brought forward.

We actually have a number of people in the Assembly that have a lot of direct, hands-on experience in municipal government. I hope that we're going to get some of them up and speaking to this bill because I'd be delighted to hear what their point of view is on this. There's a lot of accumulative municipal experience here, so I'm looking forward to that, Mr. Speaker.

Where I want to start on this one is, really, we're looking here at the relationship between the province and the municipalities. Relationships often flounder on the rocky shores of money.

Dr. Taft: They founder too.

Ms Blakeman: Sorry. Exactly. I've been corrected already, and I'm not even three minutes into this.

I note that it's always interesting that we've had a lot of download from the provincial government onto the municipalities to take responsibility for delivery of services and of programs and/or the provincial government has withdrawn from a share of the funding formula and has drawn back in how much they're actually contributing. When we look at, for example, some of the programs around FCSS, which is meant to be an 80/20 split between the province and the municipalities, when the province sort of stayed their contribution to the formula, eventually it flipped right over. We ended up with the municipalities putting in 80 per cent and the province 20 per cent.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has the floor. Any member wishing to converse, we have a beautiful facility just outside this Chamber. Please excuse yourself and continue your conversation there.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a relationship between the province and the municipalities around the distribution of responsibility for programs and for funding those programs, but we also have a disparity between the two on ability to fund those programs, essentially. Something interesting happens. The only tool that the municipalities really have is property taxes.

Both the provincial and the federal governments have income tax, and they get a bonus because when people earn more or when you have more people paying income tax, without doing anything, the province and the feds make more money. The more people earning money that gets taxed or people earning additional money and it's taxed as a percentage of their income, without doing anything, without ever appearing to raise any percentage or level of taxes, the province and the federal government benefit. They don't have to do anything.

The municipal governments, because it's based on a specific percentage of the property tax – and that does not rise just because you have more people working, for example – and even taking the market value assessment that we've moved to, it still doesn't automatically increase in the same sort of way, so the municipalities really get the raw deal. It simply does not increase for them. They have to be very visible and, frankly, accountable as well when they are trying to get more money. So they're kind of stuck whereas the other two levels of government get a bit of a free ride when they're looking for a source of income from income taxes.

The Alberta Liberal opposition has argued for some time that we need a new relationship between the province and the municipalities, and one that is, frankly, less paternal. It needs to recognize that our cities are our major economic drivers. You know, in some cases our cities are now larger than some other provinces in the country. We've got to take seriously their status in what we're doing, and I think that if we don't, we will end up with some of our cities – who knows? – maybe Edmonton, maybe Calgary, seriously investigating some of the other options that are being looked at in other parts of the world, like becoming a charter city where they essentially set themselves up on their own, and that takes them away from the control of the province.

I'm not saying that as a threat. I'm just making it as an observation that if you allow a situation to develop that is so inequitable, eventually people will find a way around it, and I'm always amazed at how ingenious people can be about that kind of thing.

So we need to relook at that relationship between the province and the municipalities. I mean, our Constitution sets out that there are really two levels of government in the country, the federal government and the provincial government. Therefore, the municipalities don't, sort of, figure unless they're thought of as entities of the provincial government. I think we've got to find a new relationship there and, frankly, put it into a recognizable form, and that may well have to do with amending the Alberta Act.

We have to be allowing the municipalities more tax tools, and I would argue some tax tools that are more akin to the income tax regime that the provincial and federal governments are able to enjoy. In particular, I think we need to recognize that municipalities along with a number of other groups in the province and in different sectors need to know that there is predictable funding, that there is stable funding, and that there is sustainable funding. Now, whether that's grant funding that's coming from the province to the munic-

palities or their own ability to collect money to provide the services that their citizens need, both of those need the predictability, stability, and sustainability that I'm talking about.

Now, one of the issues that I've addressed in the House before that links to this issue around flexibility of municipalities to work with the taxation tools that are available is around some wellness initiatives. You've heard me talk before about the ability of the municipalities to work with the education property tax and to be flexible about it, which has not happened. In particular, I'm talking about adult recreational groups here.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 22, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 20050322
 [The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
Bill 1
Access to the Future Act

[Adjourned debate March 15: Mr. Chase]

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you there. It's my first shift in which you've been in the chair.

It's a privilege to rise tonight to speak to Bill 1, which is called Access to the Future Act. This is a bill that I made a particular point of coming in to speak to because of a number of reasons. One, of course, is personal experience. Postsecondary education is of real importance to me. I spent many years of my life in postsecondary education institutions, the great majority of the time as a student, but I did some research and a small bit of teaching as well, some publishing. Actually, my father taught in university for many, many years and ended up as a vice-president of a major university as well. He was part of a generation of academics post-World War II who played a key role in building the modern university system in Canada, and he would sometimes talk about the role of the university in society. So that's one of the reasons this piece of legislation is important to me.

Another one, of course, is that the largest postsecondary education institution in the province, the University of Alberta, is in my constituency. It's coming up soon to celebrating its own centennial, and it has established itself as one of the top universities in Canada. I think its ambition should be to be one of the top universities in the world, and they have tried that. They're working in that direction, but it's going to take time and will and resources from this government.

The U of A is a very large university. There are about 25,000 undergraduate students full-time. There are another 5,000 or more full-time and part-time graduate students. They grant between undergraduate and graduate degrees well over 6,000 degrees a year. Of course, they're a huge contributor to Alberta's cultural life, its intellectual life, and its economy. So I pay close attention to the University of Alberta. Hence, one more reason that I'm speaking to this bill.

There's another postsecondary education institution in my constituency of Edmonton-Riverview. It's the Centre for the Arts campus of Grant MacEwan College. Actually, it used to be called the Jasper Place campus, and it's on the far northwest corner of my constituency. I've toured that facility. It's got some wonderful programs, a good theatre program . . .

Ms Blakeman: It's moving downtown.

Dr. Taft: I'm told that's actually moving from my constituency to Edmonton-Centre, but so be it.

. . . and a great communications program there and other facilities and programs.

So personal experience, political commitment: those are two

reasons that I'm speaking to this bill. I also happen to be a big proponent and supporter of the role of postsecondary education in society generally.

First and foremost, I see it as a major contributor to citizenship. Education isn't, in my view, first and foremost about getting a job. It's first and foremost about taking an active role and fulfilling your life as a member of a broader society, and I think that's a crucial role for all education, including lifelong education. Producing committed, informed, engaged citizens who build a better society is absolutely key to postsecondary education. Postsecondary education also contributes to our cultural life, the academic or intellectual mix of a society, and of course makes an ongoing contribution to our economic prosperity.

If we are to be competitive in the world, we need a well-educated populace. We need research. We need people thinking at the leading edge, people innovating, whether it's in medicine or engineering or in the humanities or the arts or film or music, whatever. All of those are important mainstays of our economy, and we sometimes think too narrowly about the role of education in economics, thinking strictly in terms of job training, education for teachers or doctors or engineers or for apprentices, for journeymen, for those kinds of jobs. But we should remember that the arts also play a crucial role in our economy, and one reason that Edmonton, for example, has such a strong arts community, which contributes so much to our economy and culture, is the strength of the postsecondary institutions producing those artists.

Maybe it's for those reasons that we as a caucus have made postsecondary education such a high priority and that the Alberta Liberals made it such a high priority in the election campaign last fall. One of the brightest lights in our platform was a commitment to stronger postsecondary education, and we got a tremendous public response. People everywhere we went were encouraged and excited and sometimes actually were spontaneously cheering for our policy. Through the election campaign I stopped at Peter's Drive-In on 16th Avenue in Calgary. Is that in Calgary-Mountain View?

An Hon. Member: Yes it is.

Dr. Taft: It is in Calgary-Mountain View. As I had ordered my food and was walking away from the wicket with a couple of other people who were with me, we got about 50 feet away and suddenly we heard this cheering and people calling out for us. We turned around and a group of students had recognized me from the campaign trail and were actually spontaneously cheering us on because of our postsecondary education policy. So we know it resonated. We even got a photo of the students, and they might be on our website, Mr. Speaker, should you ever be interested in looking at it.

Our policy included an endowment fund. It also included a commitment to greater core funding for postsecondary education, a freeze on tuition costs, and an increase in the number of places for students to attend. SAIT, I understand from meetings, as recently as last September turned away over 5,000 fully qualified applicants because there weren't enough spaces, and that's a shame. That's not only a betrayal of those students; it's a betrayal of ourselves and our future.

So I would like to see in legislation addressing postsecondary education something comprehensive, something that addressed the heavy costs that students and their families face in attending postsecondary training, whether it's NAIT or SAIT or other colleges or universities, something that opened up the number of spaces so that we didn't have a labour shortage, so that we didn't have to import foreign workers, so that we trained aboriginal members of

Alberta and Canada and we trained our young people and we trained people who wanted to return to the workforce – why aren't we channelling more money to our technical schools instead of importing workers from, say, Venezuela? – something that addressed the issue of debt, something that addressed the issue of core funding, something that addressed the infrastructure decline in our postsecondary institutions, which is really quite dramatic and quite severe. I would have liked to have seen all of that, but until there's a Liberal government in Alberta, we won't. Instead, we will see somewhat more limited vision, and hence we end up with Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act.

8:10

Now, the Access to the Future Act has at its core a pretty good idea in fact, which is establishing an endowment fund, a very substantial endowment fund, to help offset the costs of postsecondary education either through supporting students or through supporting the institutions themselves, doing things like, I believe, endowing chairs, for example, and perhaps providing other services and supports to universities or colleges or technical schools.

This fund would be managed under the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, and while I can understand, on one hand, the reason for that strategy – I guess there's a claim that it will be somehow more efficient, save on administration – I do have a concern that we should in fact be establishing a separate endowment fund dedicated specifically to postsecondary education and without any cap on it. Why should we limit how much we're prepared to invest in postsecondary education, Mr. Speaker?

We could be building and we should be building the future of this province for decades and generations to come. In fact, we should be debating tonight what the people in Alberta will be looking at a century from now and judging us by because we do stand here from time to time and look back a hundred years and acknowledge the importance of acts such as that of the First Legislature, which established the University of Alberta. We say to ourselves: how farsighted. We should be asking ourselves: what can we do today that will be judged similarly a hundred years from now?

I think one of the things that would qualify for a good judgment a hundred years from now would be to establish an endowment fund without a cap. So instead of a \$3 billion endowment fund let's establish an endowment fund that could grow to \$3 billion and \$5 billion and \$8 billion and \$10 billion and \$20 billion and who knows how many billion dollars?

We know that investing in postsecondary education is key to building our future, and we should know that our oil and gas revenues, which bring so much prosperity to us today and will for the next few years, won't be there forever, or they won't be valuable forever. We might well find that new technology overtakes them, so we need to save what we have now and invest it in permanent prosperity through a much larger endowment fund than is proposed here.

I'm also concerned that one of the effects of Bill 1 is going to be to tighten – tighten – centralization and government control over our postsecondary education. That was actually a concern I had with a big piece of legislation that was brought forward I think it was last spring, the Post-secondary Learning Act. My concern is that instead of encouraging many voices and instead of encouraging a diversity of opinion as we centralize control in the hands of government and ultimately in the hands of a cabinet minister over our postsecondary system, we lose the vitality of our postsecondary education. We end up with a system that marches to the directions of a cabinet minister instead of marching to the directions of a thousand or 10,000 bright minds occupying the desks and classrooms of the province.

So centralization is a worry, and I'm not sure if that's an intent of this bill, but I think it could be an effect. We see it played out, for example, very early in the act: section 2, where the bill talks about establishing enrolment targets, and carries on through section 3 and section 4. You can almost feel the hand of the cabinet ministers tightening over the throat of the postsecondary education in this province.

I'm also concerned about the potential rise in the influence of corporations over our postsecondary education system. I happen to be a strong believer in education for the sake of education and of an independent and free academic voice in this province.

Those are some of my comments on Bill 1. We will be continuing this debate at some length, and I've really barely begun to scratch the surface. A lot of this bill leaves crucial things undefined, and that always makes me nervous. The measures to enhance interinstitutional transferability and the recognition of prior learning are undefined; relieve the measures to increase participation of disadvantaged groups, undefined. The mechanisms to establish institutional enrolment targets and admission requirements are undefined. Over and over and over we are turning the fate of our postsecondary education institutions of all sorts to regulation and, ultimately, to a cabinet minister, and that's a concentration of control and power that makes me nervous. Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, I'm a skeptic of big government, and what I see coming out of this government more and more is exactly that, big government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate. I'll listen to my colleagues. I'll read *Hansard*. I will study the many notes we have on Bill 1. Its intention may be good, but I think its execution is flawed.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Does anyone wish to speak on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me start by saying something really positive about this government, positive as well as a misconception they are providing to the people of Alberta. The government promised the next Alberta will be a leader in learning. [interjections] Good. Good. The government promised the next Alberta will have a diverse and growing economy. [interjections] Good. The government promised the next Alberta will be a leader in Canada and the world. Finally, the government also promised that the next Alberta will be the best place to live, work, and visit and that all Albertans will share in the Alberta advantage. [interjections] Good. Good. This is the government's 20-year so-called strategic plan. [interjections] Shall I carry on?

However, through these plans the government is providing . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has the floor. We should let him speak.

Mr. Agnihotri: However, through these plans the government is providing false impressions to the people of Alberta. It's great to show the people an attractive word, but the words of the government have for the most part not had any credibility. [interjection] Listen, listen. Okay?

8:20

I'm pleased to say a few words with respect to Bill 1. First of all, I want to commend the government for a bold new initiative lifted from the pages of the Alberta Liberal platform that's then watered

down. Albertans have been starved for the last 12 years of underfunded postsecondary education. The minister himself said that it is time to take postsecondary education off its starvation, maybe late but good to start.

An Hon. Member: Who was starving it?

Mr. Agnihotri: A PC, of course.

Taking initiative on the issue which is the top priority of Albertans, I'm glad the government has seemingly taken a renewed interest in postsecondary education with Bill 1. The government seems committed in principle but not firmly committed enough to put the money into the fund without capping the value of the fund. What is the future of this endowment fund if there is a downturn in the price of oil and natural gas and future budget surpluses evaporate? Students will either have no endowment fund at all or a smaller endowment than initially promised. Leaving contributions to the fund to annual budget battles is short-sighted and falls short of the commitment of the Alberta Liberals.

I would like to commence by outlining some of the concerns from my riding's point of view. My riding is culturally diverse. A large population of immigrants, different nationalities are settled in this part of Edmonton. Many of the immigrants have blue-collar jobs, and they want their children to get a higher education. This bill does not provide any opportunity for them. Some of my constituents have taken a second mortgage to keep their children in postsecondary education. Students are frustrated with the student loan system, which is inadequate, the burden of their debt, large classroom sizes, and high tuition fees.

We have shortages of skilled labour – engineers, doctors, nurses, scientists, and so on – but why? Not because our children do not want to learn or not because parents do not like their children to get educated. The answer is very simple. They were unable to get the space, and therefore they were unable to get the opportunity they deserve. Where is the Alberta advantage? Higher education is critical for meeting our demands for skilled labour and ensuring that our students are able to compete in the job market. If we had a long-term, independent postsecondary learning commission to do a full review of the whole system, we would be more likely to find a real solution to these problems.

We do not have a long-term concrete plan to provide resources to the areas that need it most. The Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Science have the highest numbers of students. Therefore, these are the programs that need to be sustainable. However, evidently funding these programs is not what the government cares about. They continue to ignore the arts and social sciences and are not committed to the arts and humanities that the Alberta Liberals would like to see. We, of course, had a plan. Again, this part was not adopted by the government. We had a plan to put 5 per cent of every annual budget surplus into a fund to complement the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. We think the government should do the same thing, Mr. Speaker.

If the government really wants Albertans to dream about high-quality postsecondary education, they should start high-quality affordable education from early childhood education right through to graduate degrees. This would be the foundation for creating a society with equal opportunity for all. It's also vital to remember that such investments pay off not only in terms of economics but by creating a sustaining condition for a vibrant, diverse culture and democratic society.

I want to see some amendments in this Bill 1. The first amendment we will be moving will be to remove the \$3 billion cap on the access to the future fund.

Number two. The second will put guidelines on the size and composition of the access advisory council and place some restrictions on the minister's ability to appoint whomever he wants. For the most part the advisory council members would be appointed by the minister from candidates nominated by others; for example, representatives from each of Alberta's public universities nominated by the boards of governors. There would also be council members chosen to represent public colleges and technical institutes, private not-for-profit colleges, faculties, sports staff, undergraduate students, grad students, members of the public including but not limited to the form of this amendment. It is still being fine-tuned, so I don't have exact numbers to share with you, but the information I have given should be enough to get you talking about this. I think that you should start working on this.

A third amendment will be required: the minister to bring accountability and transparency to the process by reporting on each new and ongoing grant made from the fund in the ministry's annual report.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie would acknowledge, in the context of the comment he made about this proposal being lifted from the pages of the Alberta Liberal platform, that his own leader and party lifted the proposal they had in their platform from a resolution put forward by the PC Association of Edmonton-Riverview at the last annual general meeting of the PC Association of Alberta and, if not, whether he'll go back and do his research.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to respond?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on 29(2)(a)?

Mr. R. Miller: No, I'd like to speak to Bill 1.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on the bill, seeing no other people wishing to talk on 29(2)(a).

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate very much having this first opportunity to speak to Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act. I think we can all recognize a good piece of legislation, and I will say up front that this is probably a pretty good piece of legislation. I think we can all recognize a good piece of legislation when all parties in the Assembly spend an awful lot of time trying to lay claim to it.

I am going to be speaking in favour of Bill 1 this evening, Mr. Speaker, with some qualifications. Since it was our idea, I would expect that I would be generally in favour of it. As others before me have said, I would like to remind all members that this was, in fact, Alberta Liberal policy during the past election when most people at the doors were telling us that the government had no policy at all. Now, our policy platform called for a full 35 per cent – and I think that was articulated very well – of any annual surplus to go into a postsecondary endowment fund.

8:30

According to a survey of Calgarians by the faculty association published last November, 45.5 per cent of those surveyed rated investment in university education as a high priority, and it followed only investment in health care and investment in K to 12 education, Mr. Speaker, in ranking.

Now, in the government's It's Your Future survey, that rather weighted survey, a full 50 per cent of respondents indicated that long-term investment in priority areas was something that they would like to see supported. So, quite clearly, accessibility, affordability, and quality of postsecondary education were indeed important issues in the election of last November. In fact, I would suggest that a number of Conservative members of this government lost their seats, Mr. Speaker, in constituencies which are home to a postsecondary institution. I'm very pleased to be able to stand here today and say that Edmonton-Rutherford is home to the Taylor University College and Seminary, which is among those postsecondary institutions on the list that I just referred to.

Since the current incarnation of this Conservative government has been in place, going back to 1993, funding for postsecondary education has not kept pace with inflation or enrolment increases. During the years 1994 to 1997, in fact, the government cut funding to postsecondary education by a full 21 per cent. Most postsecondary institutions continue to struggle to make up for that lost ground, and that struggle goes on today. Many of those same institutions in fact are predicting budget deficits in either one or more of the next few years. So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly applaud the government, as I said earlier, for taking a step in the right direction – and I do believe that this a step in the right direction – in an effort to address the concerns that I heard time and time again as I visited more than 10,000 homes last fall.

Now, it would be my preference, quite frankly – and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie alluded to it – that there be no cap included in the legislation. I'm disappointed to see that. I think my colleague indicated that there will most likely be an amendment coming forward from the Official Opposition.

Ms Blakeman: That's a good idea.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you to my colleague from Edmonton-Centre for indicating that she, too, thinks that it's a good idea that that cap be removed.

Now, we continue to hear from stakeholders almost every day hoping and praying for long-term, predictable, and stable funding, and I'm sure that members opposite have heard that too. Three billion dollars is certainly a beginning. It's been said in here many times already. But just imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you would, if the world price of oil continued to soar as it is doing almost daily: \$55 today; it could be \$60 in a week or a month. Maybe \$80 is the benchmark that some industry analysts are predicting.

An Hon. Member: It could be \$10.

Mr. R. Miller: It's not likely to be \$10 any time in the near future, although there are certainly those that might like to see that. I wouldn't expect, Mr. Speaker, that anybody on the government side would like to see oil at \$10 a barrel because I have a feeling that their political fortunes might suffer if that were to be the case.

Nevertheless, industry analysts are predicting that it could go as high as \$80 a barrel. Just imagine how this fund could grow if it were not capped but, rather, if it were allowed to do so. At \$80 a barrel, you know, the sky is truly the limit in terms of where that cap could go and what it might do for us.

During the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, who spoke to this bill a few minutes ago, dared to dream out loud about the possibility of Alberta being home to a world-class and world-renowned university such as Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Cambridge, or Oxford. Now, a \$3 billion cap on this fund would never allow us to reach that benchmark, unfortu-

nately. Again, if we were to allow the fund to grow and, in fact, encourage it to grow by removing the cap – \$10 billion, \$20 billion, \$50 billion – in a number of years who's to say where it would be, and who's to say just what standard of postsecondary institution we might be able to achieve. So I certainly look forward to the committee stage when we'll have a chance to deal with that amendment coming forward from the Official Opposition, and I would certainly hope that all members will be supportive of it when we get there.

I would also like to address the fact that Bill 1 seemingly targets and by targeting seems to favour applied research initiatives and other high-priority programs which seem to be related to commercial potential. Specifically, section 4(2)(d) says that the fund is generally "to encourage the creation or expansion of industry funded and privately funded scholarship and bursary programs." Now, of course, the Alberta heritage science and engineering research endowment fund, otherwise known as the ingenuity fund – the idea of encouraging growth in those sectors and, in fact, legislating growth in that fund, those are both lofty goals. The program itself is a lofty program. Nobody on our side is going to suggest that science and research should not be a priority, Mr. Speaker, but nowhere in the bill – again, I think my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie mentioned this – does it talk about the arts and humanities, and I'm afraid that we're shortchanging our society if we don't address that particular issue.

Later in this spring session I understand that we're going to be debating a private member's motion. I believe it's Motion 505, Mr. Speaker. It's being brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont. This particular motion will call on the government to consider the merits of "requiring five credits in fine arts as a condition for high school graduation" in Alberta. Now, I think that would be a recognition, if it were to move forward, that our society is strengthened and, in fact, healthier and wealthier when we recognize and encourage the need for the advancement of the arts and the humanities rather than simply concentrating on science and economics and so forth.

Also, Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon myself and several of my colleagues had the opportunity to meet with a group of students from CAUS, the Council of Alberta University Students. In fact, I believe they were introduced in the Assembly this afternoon and some of them yesterday as well. They're on a tour, meeting with legislators across the province to bring forward the concerns that Alberta university students have.

For me one of the most interesting revelations to come out of the meeting yesterday was that approximately 50 per cent of student loan application denials come as a result of issues surrounding parental participation or lack thereof. That caused me a great deal of concern, Mr. Speaker. It's almost as if there's some sort of reverse discrimination taking place there. I'd like to explore the issues around that a little further, and I hope that perhaps the government will when they're developing their new tuition policy. Hopefully, we can have a serious look at just exactly what's happening and why so many loan applications are being denied on that basis.

Now, again, average tuition for colleges and technical institutes: the information I have shows that those tuitions have increased approximately 250 per cent since 1993. For some reason it seems like we're making it more difficult to access student loans rather than the other way around.

Moving on a little bit, in the bill section 5(2) allows for the minister to name the members of the access advisory council, and again I believe that both the Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie referred to this council,

specifically the makeup of it and what the parameters would be surrounding how that council would work. We talk a lot about democratic renewal in the Official Opposition, and one of the things that I would hope for is that if there are going to be any members of this Assembly on that council, which often happens, the minister would ensure that there's representation from all parties on that council. [interjection] I don't believe the Alliance would qualify as a party in terms of recognition by this Assembly, so the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood probably doesn't have much of a concern in that regard.

8:40

Mr. Speaker, last night in this Assembly we began some debate on private members' business specifically related to private member's Motion 503, which, it was discussed last night, is remarkably similar, almost an exact duplicate in fact, to section 8 of this Bill 1 that we're discussing this evening. The only real difference is that Motion 503 clearly outlines a timeline for topping up the ingenuity fund to \$1 billion from the current amount of \$500 million, and in Bill 1, that we're debating tonight, that's left entirely up to the purview of the minister.

So although I'm not sure that we have an amendment coming forward from this side, I would certainly hope and I'll be encouraging the appropriate critic to make sure that that amendment does come forth because again I think that it would probably be better dealt with, quite frankly, as an amendment, that way ensuring that we have some solid guidelines in the bill for when that fund would be topped up as opposed to leaving it up to the whim, if I can say, of the minister.

In fact, I would like to see similar guidelines brought forward for the postsecondary endowment fund in general, to see some concrete legislation included in the bill that would outline when the money is going to be put in there. If we have to live with a \$3 billion cap, which I'm hoping will be removed, we can outline for the minister what the timeline is to get to that \$3 billion and get there just as soon as possible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many of the members will know that I am the parent of two teenage children, one of whom is only months away from his graduation from high school. As a parent of two teenagers I certainly do share many of the concerns that I heard from the residents of Edmonton-Rutherford over the last six months or so specifically again regarding access and quality of postsecondary education but, most particularly, probably affordability. I don't imagine that I'm much different from most parents, especially if you have more than one child that you're trying to plan postsecondary education for, where affordability tends to be the number one concern for parents. I mean, getting in is one thing, but even if you can qualify for postsecondary given the high entrance requirements these days, there's always a question of how you're going to pay for it. As I said, I don't believe I'm much different from most other parents when it comes to that.

Now, having said all of that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo some comments that were made to me by Taylor University College and Seminary. As I indicated, this is a postsecondary institution that's in my constituency, and I thought it prudent to consult with them to get their input on this bill. They've indicated that from their point of view providing long-term secure resources to support higher education is a good way to use the wealth that Alberta enjoys as a result of the present exploitation of nonrenewable resources.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) there's a five-minute period for questions and comments if anyone has any. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Thank you. I'm wondering if the member could just expand on the comments he was making on resources. I'd be very interested in hearing that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to expand a little bit upon what I was saying there regarding resources. In fact, they were not my words but the words of the administration at Taylor University College when they were indicating that providing long-term, secure resources to support higher education is a good way to use the wealth that Alberta enjoys as a result of the present exploitation of nonrenewable resources. Accordingly, creating endowments for future generations of Albertans from the current resource revenue is in fact sound policy, and that was the point that Taylor University was happy to have me convey to you. I'm almost finished here. I'm happy to have had the opportunity to address the question about resources.

As I said at the outset, I will be supporting Bill 1 in second reading and look forward to the point when it's at committee so that we can deal with some of those questions that I've raised. I certainly would hope that other members in the Assembly would support some of those very worthwhile and well-thought-out amendments that will be coming forward from the Official Opposition.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: On Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act. It's a pleasure because it's a rare occurrence, at least in my tenure in this Assembly, to actually be able to debate a bill that talks about putting money into something like postsecondary education.

This is a real departure, I think, for the government, and I think that in that very broad sense this is an extremely positive bill and a tremendous sea change, I guess, in the government attitude. It's interesting that the Liberals and the Conservatives are fighting over the paternity of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

But there are a number of things here that need to have some scrutiny. You know, the fact that funding will be provided to postsecondary education needs to be carefully considered relative to some of the problems with this bill. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, this bill is based upon unbudgeted surpluses, and we have had a concern in the NDP for years about the government's use of unbudgeted surpluses because we don't think that it represents very good stewardship of the province's resources.

The government has for years now lowballed – deliberately lowballed, Mr. Speaker – the energy prices in their budgeting and, as a result, produced multibillion dollar surpluses every year, which if they had accurate forecasts or reasonable forecasts for the price of oil and natural gas would not exist because those revenues would be captured within the budget. And they should be captured within the budget.

The first problem with this particular approach is it assumes that the government is entitled to continue to use inaccurate and far too low figures for the price of oil and gas as a way of budgeting for the province. It would be far preferable, Mr. Speaker, in our view, if you actually tried to accurately predict or as close as possible the real price of oil and natural gas and the royalties that flowed from that, and you put it into the budget, and you allocated that in the

budget for postsecondary education rather than perpetuating the kind of shell game that the Conservatives have played for a number of years relative to royalty revenues. That's the first thing, that it perpetuates that kind of deceptive budgeting on the part of the government and, in fact, institutionalizes it. So that's a serious concern.

We understand based on conversations with the minister that expenditures made with this fund – and maybe the minister can respond to this – will have to be matched by private sources. This brings up a second serious concern we have with the way the postsecondary system in this province has been unfolding in the last number of years, which is the increasing role of fundraising and in particular private funding for our public institutions, which helps to establish the priorities both in teaching and research for those institutions and in our view distorts what the universities ought to be dealing with. So the growth of private-sector funding for our public institutions of higher learning is a serious concern for the NDP opposition.

8:50

Now, if I can get to the basic problem with our system here, Mr. Speaker, it's that there's not really an overall framework that's been established. We haven't looked at the entire postsecondary system as a whole and what we want it to do, where we want it to be in 10 years, where we want it to be in 20 or 30 years. We haven't in this bill really addressed the overall situation facing our postsecondary system, nor have we sought on a very broad and systematic basis public input and stakeholder input in terms of defining the goals of our postsecondary system into the future.

The Alberta New Democrats have put forward a proposal that there should be a postsecondary learning commission, similar in structure and process to the Learning Commission that I think was fairly successfully implemented as a result of pressure from the Alberta Teachers' Association on this government, and the results that flowed from that I think were really excellent. The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment says that they listen and they care, and they certainly do, Mr. Speaker, when their backs are to the wall.

This is where we think we should begin. We should start at square one with our postsecondary institutions. I think that it's important to recognize and I think the province did recognize in the election that postsecondary education is the cornerstone to the province's future. I think that the government is attempting to recognize this through this bill, but without a fundamental analysis by all concerned I don't think we're going to come up with the kind of postsecondary system that we want and need for our future. So, Mr. Speaker, I would say that we should be starting with a postsecondary learning commission as a way to map the future of our postsecondary system.

The second major concern I have, Mr. Speaker, is that the base funding of our institutions is inadequate and is not dealt with by this legislation. We need to be establishing and we ought to be establishing a base level of funding. There's no reason in this province that we couldn't do that, and in my view until the institutions clearly know what funding they're going to get over a long period of time, at least three years, they will be unable to plan, and we will be unable to build adequately our postsecondary system. So establishing base funding over a period of years, budgeting over three years at least, would be, I think, the direction that we ought to take before we get to the ideas contained in Bill 1.

The third point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, relative to this is that while there is lip service paid to accessibility in this bill, there are no clear guarantees, and there's no clear understanding of

accessibility as a fundamental problem of our postsecondary institution.

Student debt average is about \$20,000 per student upon graduation. The tuition fees in this province have soared dramatically over the last decade, and university and even college and technical institutions are very, very expensive. This needs to be addressed more substantially than establishing an accessibility council. I guess, Mr. Speaker, that I've been here long enough to realize that little councils to talk about accessibility or to talk about some problem aren't really a way of tackling it, not really a way of solving it. It's a way, I guess, of putting some window dressing out there and saying that, yes, this is a big problem, and we're concerned about it.

I would like to see clear legislation that indicates that a freeze in tuitions, in fact a rollback in tuitions, should be the starting point of tackling the accessibility issue in this province. The government has the financial resources and will have the financial resources for a significant period of time, at least for the foreseeable future, and they could do that. We could put this in the legislation, and we could actually tackle it.

I'm really concerned, Mr. Speaker, about this so-called tuition freeze that we've heard from the government because it doesn't really freeze the tuition. It just says that the increase this year will be paid by the government. That means that when they stop paying at the end of this year, that increase will still be there, and there may in fact be another annual increase to the tuition fees, so the students will be faced probably with a double whammy, a double increase one year from now. This whole approach is not a serious approach to the question of accessibility to our postsecondary institutions. It is, in fact, just a political ploy to try and convince people that the government is actually caring and listening, and it doesn't seem that it is.

So that would be something I would like to see in Bill 1. I would like to see a real concrete and specific commitment to accessibility, starting with a rollback and freeze in tuition fees, followed by consultations with the public including students and student organizations to establish a reasonable, accessible tuition policy.

The Premier's address, so-called, on television, his infomercial that we saw just before the session . . .

Mr. R. Miller: Who paid for it?

Mr. Mason: The infomercial, that was paid for by the taxpayers, had the Premier talking about a new tuition policy for the province. One of the descriptors that he used, Mr. Speaker, to talk about this new tuition policy is that it would be entrepreneurial. When the Tories combine the word entrepreneurial with social services, I get the shivers because it makes me really, really nervous. We still don't know what that means, but we do know that this bill will not deal in any meaningful or concrete way with accessibility.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say some nice things about the bill. I think that as far as it goes, establishing an endowment fund – which when topped up will provide about \$135 million annually based on 4.5 per cent of the \$3 billion – will increase funding to postsecondary education. The heritage scholarship fund will result in about \$45 million in scholarships being available, and the heritage science and engineering research endowment will double existing funds for that. So I think those are positive things. I think that the creation of a single point of entry to institutions and a database for bursaries and scholarships is an excellent idea. It's a small point relative to the claims that are made for this bill, Mr. Speaker, but it is in fact a positive thing.

Just in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think that while this bill falls far

short of what could be accomplished if this government had real vision and a real commitment to postsecondary education, it represents a giant leap forward for the Conservative government of this province because for the first time that I've been here, we're actually debating putting substantially more money into our educational system, and I think that that is a positive step.

So in principle, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to support the bill at second reading. I think it's going to be interesting to see what amendments come from the various parties in the committee stage, but quite frankly I'm disappointed because the government has failed to grasp the real extent of the opportunity that it has, given the financial resources of this province at this time, to really, really embrace postsecondary education and accessibility. In my riding there are lots of working people who pay taxes for postsecondary institutions, yet their own children cannot afford to attend, Mr. Speaker, and that needs to be corrected, in my view. First and foremost, before we start talking about new Harvards and new elite institutions, we need to make sure that every person in this province who has the ability and the desire can get the postsecondary education of his or her choosing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:00

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

If not, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 1, Access to the Future Act. There's been a great deal said, and I may well repeat it. If I do, I think that it's worth repeating. Lifelong learning is important to all of us. There is no choice in today's world. We are constantly upgrading, and how hard or how easy that is is that's it's often impossible for single parents. It isn't just mothers that are single parents; men are increasing in numbers as the custodial parent.

I went back to school at 45, knowing that I was not an academic in high school. I wasn't there for the smart time. I was there for the good time. Then while I was raising my family, there was no need to punctuate the grocery lists. Therefore, I went with great trepidation. I got a loan, organized my daughters, and chose nursing because I knew that if I didn't get a job in my home province because of the cuts and the restructuring of the health care, I could go to the U.S., be welcomed with open arms, and be that foreign-trained worker willing to work for less because I had a job. So Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, is a very important document which includes the opportunity for our graduates to be global citizens.

Education is not just university, and I'm glad to see the word "apprenticeship" in this bill. The apprenticeship programs are in our schools, and I speak of the Lethbridge Community College, who have recognized trades programs and are capable of turning out highly trained, skilled workers, so badly needed in our economy, or at least we're led to believe that because of the request for thousands of foreign workers. I trust that these Albertan skilled workers will not have to leave their country to get a job. Mr. Speaker, this bill does not tell me that this government recognizes the need for leadership in working with industry to create apprenticeship spaces to allow graduates to actually be certified.

I would like to have seen at least some mention of police training colleges. In fact, at the Lethbridge Community College there has been work done to develop an accredited curriculum towards the Centre for Advancement in Community Justice. The police of today are dealing with very sophisticated crime syndicates with every available gadget to help them in their nefarious deeds. Crime is certainly global, and many of the crime rings are from different

cultures. Surely the least we can do is to have highly trained and educated police for their sake and their safety as well as our safety.

We have aboriginal youth and those trying to do upgrading or to go forward into their careers or to have a career change or, like me, having to go back to school to return to the workforce.

I see that virtual classroom space is contemplated with this bill. In fact, my three-year-old granddaughter will probably get her undergraduate degree in her PJs and not have to leave her bedroom. On the surface it sounds great, but with the possibility of corporate donations for research and scholarships I fear for the autonomy of the university presidents and boards, whose culture and vision shape each university differently and therefore give students a choice of how they want to be educated.

Universities should establish minimum standards for entrance, which doesn't say a whole lot to me because of my experience. I found out that I was quite intelligent; I just wasn't educated. There are studies that show that high school marks don't always equate to university performance or, in fact, that first-year and fourth-year level marks often have no correlation to one another. Marks usually go up as the students become more proficient in writing papers, performing the necessary tasks to learn, and prove their expertise of their faculty.

University professors and researchers must be free to think and think and think some more without worrying that if they don't come to the right conclusion, they may be asked to consider early retirement. Free thinking and open discussion is imperative if we are to move forward in our growth as a society.

Going forward in the economy is not the only way to benchmark success. The reasoning behind the idea of central admission is easy to understand. However, there are ways in which it could be abused. Students may be excluded from a university of their choice because the seats were filled or they were the last to apply to the computer, and to the computer someone has to be last. Marks are not all to be considered.

How much does an adult return to higher learning? How much do they bring? I would say a great deal. But will those attributes get lost? Perhaps a computer has a way of degrading persons to square boxes. Now, perhaps a new department will just have to be formed to handle the appeals, and heaven knows how fast they would be heard or, in fact, that they would not be evaluated by another computer with different criteria. How would a certain university or college find the people, not just the scholars, that they would like to have at their institution? Will we create cookie-cutter institutions and cookie-cutter students?

The subtle pressures that are apparent when the golden rule is applied – he who has the gold makes the rules – is flawed when it is applied to social policies and especially to public education. It is imperative that universities and colleges retain their uniqueness and their autonomy. The University of Lethbridge enrolment has increased over the past five years by 30 per cent and is currently carrying about 1,200 unfunded enrolments. Deferred maintenance on facilities is estimated at \$62 million. To balance budgets, it's often necessary to rob Peter to pay Paul.

Mr. Speaker, the endowment fund was a great Liberal idea, but how will this government use it? There is a lot of power being created by this bill for the Minister of Advanced Education. Having said that, this Advanced Education minister is knowledgeable and capable; however, it may not always be so. Where is the open, transparent, and accountable method to appoint the access advisory council? More backroom shenanigans, and heaven help us if academia is allowed to be overshadowed by who knows what or whom.

I would hope that this will never be a reward position and would

be peopled by those with nothing to gain except the knowledge that their decisions were the best for all Albertans. How about a retired professor, a retired principal, and the current student body president? How about an open competition, not appointed, for the positions with an arm's-length body to determine the recommendations? These endowment funds, totally controlled by the minister through appointments, also give rise to second, third, and fourth thoughts.

Mr. Speaker, there is lots of good stuff here, but there is sure a lot of detail missing, and the devil is usually hidden in the details.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, is anyone wishing to speak on Bill 1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 1, Access to the Future Act. Before I get to this discussion about the bill, I want to say how great the Alberta postsecondary education system is. Indeed, only a greatly successful business can attract more customers than it can handle. Our postsecondary education system, with many of its outstanding institutions, attracts more learners than it can handle.

Mr. Speaker, I had occasion to attend many high school graduations where the students received outstanding awards and scholarships, and I think that is the source of students attending postsecondary education. They are so happy, happy that they have great institutions in Alberta that they can join.

I also want to talk about an opportunity that I attended, a graduation at the University of Calgary. This is talking about affordability. I was invited to speak at the engineering faculty graduation, and because three of our children graduated from university, I just wanted to use the story of my family. I told the people that the average estimate to raise a child in Alberta from diapers to grade 12 – that's 18 years of raising children – if you take all the costs together, people say that it's probably around a hundred thousand dollars. Now, add another four years after that. I did an estimate myself. His earnings during summer holidays and my contribution, with all the expenses – car insurance, car repairs, expenses here and there – I just grossed it up another hundred thousand. So let's just assume that \$200,000 is spent on a student from diapers to graduation from university.

9:10

With that cost, I also estimate that when the student graduates, they make on average – this is a gross estimate here – \$50,000 a year for 40 years of their working life, so the estimate would be \$2 million. So when you spend \$200,000 and then the return is \$2 million, that is a fantastic return just on the financial side. So the student, the parent, society invest \$200,000, and then you have a \$2 million return on it.

Let me not just talk about the finances but also the quality of life. When you have knowledge, when you have skills, then your quality of life is much better. So on this occasion I just want to use this as an example.

It's a great education system in Alberta, publicly funded. The students invest in it, the parents invest in it, and there's a great return. So this bill provides for the future investment, and I just want to emphasize that point, and I want to conclude with that. This bill, Access to the Future, is a great bill. With all of this detail coming up, I support it one hundred per cent.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: On 29(2)(a), anyone?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am very pleased with the preamble of Bill 1 and the excitement that it gives to young people wanting to further their education. I just want to reiterate a few questions that I have, that have been brought up several times already.

Under accessibility and affordability: "shall identify and establish enrolment targets and minimum entrance requirements." It's been brought up, and I just want to also reiterate that it seems to me that that should be something that the university should be doing, not the minister. I have concerns in that area and think that the micromanagement will cause problems rather than enhance it.

The other area that I guess is my major concern is the access advisory council. As it goes through the points there,

the Minister may, with respect to the members of the Council,

(a) appoint or provide for the manner of their appointment,

(b) prescribe their terms of office, and

(c) authorize or provide for the payment of remuneration and expenses . . .

The Minister shall designate one of the members as the chair of the Council.

Once again, I'm concerned that we've got micromanagement here, that basically looks like it has complete control of this huge fund.

It's a concern to me, and I would like to see more involvement from the university level and perhaps each of them appointing someone on that advisory board and having the option of deciding how and where, which classes they want to expand, as we've seen with the University of Calgary bringing the veterinary school there. I think it's far more important that the universities decide where they want to go than to have us as elected members appointing them and telling them: oh, we think the future is here, or the future is there.

I do have quite a lot of concerns in those two areas. I hope that the minister will look at those areas and look at maybe how we can do better, have that fund more accessible to the university, and have the board of directors, then, rather than here, to this House, be accountable to the people through those who want to access the universities.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Mr. Mason: Yes. I'd like to ask the hon. member his view on the accessibility of our students to our postsecondary institutions and his view on tuition fees.

Mr. Hinman: I think the most critical thing is that they have the opportunity to get there. The bill is so open ended that I would like to see that when someone decides to go into university, they know for the next four years what their costs are going to be. I mean, many members have brought it up already. This year their tuition is paid for. Is it going to be tripled next year? Is it going to be quadrupled? What happens if the price of oil goes down?

So I think that, as with any good management, when someone decides to go to school and they look at what their summer jobs can be, they have to be motivated and have that desire. But I do believe that it's critical that we have a better budget plan in there where students can look and realize that it's going to cost \$12,000 a year and not be worried about what inflation is going to do by year 3. I think that it's sad to see people start to pursue an education only to find out two and a half years later that they've got to back out for a year or two because costs have gone up. I would like to see some sort of long-term planning in there, where someone knows that this is what it's going to cost and can do some planning.

Accessibility. Like I say, I'd like to see that sitting at the

university level, where they decide, you know, that they want so many engineers in electronics or whether they want more in pharmacy or in a veterinarian school, realizing that they want more in small animals. I just believe that you hire and have responsible people to make those decisions and not from the top down. It should be from the grassroots up.

I hope that I've answered the hon. member's question.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, anyone else wish to speak to Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act?

The hon. deputy House leader on behalf of the hon. Premier to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

head: 9:20 **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 21
Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy)
Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 21 demonstrates that from now on the hotel tax will be referred to as the tourism levy. The rate is going down from 5 per cent to 4 per cent, and guests of Alberta accommodations will save approximately \$11 million annually.

When we discussed this bill in second reading and Committee of the Whole, it was made clear that the charge that is collected as a result of these changes will determine the funding that will be allocated to tourism marketing and development for our province within Alberta, within Canada, and beyond to the international community. Based on estimates of hotel tax the government anticipates it will collect in 2004-2005, it is forecast that funding for tourism will increase by approximately 75 per cent. Mr. Speaker, I think we all recognize that this is a significant increase, and it will be well used to promote our great province.

I believe that all the hon. members who have spoken to this bill have commented on the beauty of Alberta, have drawn reference to the notion that we truly have a great deal to enjoy here, and are aware that we have a bounty to share with others who come to visit. It is easy to see how fortunate we are to live in a province with so many diverse and beautiful natural wonders as well as so many man-made attractions.

At this point I would like to note that consultation with key industry stakeholders over the past number of years has been pivotal to the development of the changes inherent to this act. Travel Alberta and the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association have been particularly helpful. Numerous industry groups have worked with government on this bill to make sure it will benefit the needs of industry and government, and they worked with government to make sure that individuals who own accommodations in the province will be able to implement all changes as simply, quickly, and easily as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a good bill. The changes that come from it will help bring us into Alberta's next century and will keep tourism a strong, continued source of pride and economic growth for all Albertans.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 21. Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By and large I'm going to echo the comments of my colleague from Calgary-Lougheed. I believe, and I have indicated to my caucus that I believe, that this is generally a good bill. Certainly, I applaud the government and the minister responsible for the consultation that has taken place over the many years with the industry and the various stakeholders, and perhaps it lays out a plan and a format that should be used more often in terms of consultation with the various stakeholders and making sure that people are onside before the legislation ever comes to this House, although it does somewhat limit the comments that the opposition members might have to make when there's already so much buy-in from the public. But, certainly, I believe that in general that's a good thing.

Earlier this afternoon one of my colleagues – I believe it was my colleague from Calgary-Currie – referenced a long-time member of this Assembly who had advised him that when in doubt, he should vote no. Well, I can assure you that I will not be voting no, but I do have a number of guidelines given to me by another long-time member of this Assembly, who indicated that we should ask ourselves if there is a problem when we're looking at a piece of legislation, identify exactly what the problem is, and then address whether or not the legislation will actually go some way toward solving the problem.

In that vein, I'm going to just identify the fact that certainly there was a problem, and I think I spoke to it when I addressed the bill in second reading. The problem, basically, is that there was a tax that was a very unpopular tax. It's been there since 1987. The member that I referred to a minute ago indicated in her comments that she's been hearing complaints about the tax since 1996, some nine years now.

Actually, the references to tax prompt me to refer to the *Oxford Dictionary*, which one of the pages so kindly brought to me. Mr. Speaker, I thought I should look this up and just check because there's been a lot of talk about the levy being directed specifically to the industry and promotion of the industry. So I looked up the word "levy" and, not surprisingly, what it says is: the imposition of a tax. I guess, as my colleague from Edmonton-Centre indicated the other night, if it walks like a duck and it talks like a duck and everything else, it's probably a tax. Despite the fact that we're sort of dressing up the hotel tax by calling it a levy, I would unfortunately have to conclude that it is nevertheless still a tax. That I'm not so sure necessarily addresses the concerns of the industry, but nevertheless they have indicated that they're by and large happy with this, and so I will be too. That's the problem.

Now, the question is: will the legislation address the problem? Again, I think we've all pretty much agreed that by and large this legislation will go some way toward addressing that problem provided that – and, unfortunately, I wasn't here, Mr. Speaker, when the bill was addressed in committee – there's some sort of assurance written into the regulations that the money actually goes to where it's been widely rumored and widely published that it will go. There's nothing in this legislation, as I indicated when I spoke to it in second reading, that guarantees in any way that the money will go to promoting tourism. If it does in fact go to promoting tourism, I'm all for it.

We debated Bill 1 a few minutes ago, where there's a segregated fund being established within the heritage savings trust fund that will manage the monies that are being put toward the postsecondary endowment fund, and I wish that there was some sort of a similar fund established within or outside of the heritage savings trust fund that would manage the money that's going to be raised by this new tourism levy. Unfortunately, that's not the case. We're past the point where amendments can be made, so I guess it's not going to

happen in legislation, but I certainly would hope that it does happen in regulations.

The questions around that, of course, are: who's going to determine what happens to that money if, in fact, it does go to promoting tourism? How is it going to be spent, and so forth? We talked a lot the other day in second reading about the fact that not only myself and members of my caucus but, in fact, members of the government caucus previously had indicated concerns that it not be spent on just promoting the so-called big three, i.e., the Banff-Jasper corridor, the Calgary Stampede, and West Edmonton Mall. Certainly, that would be a hope that we have as an opposition, that that money will be widely spread across all Alberta in terms of promoting tourism in this province and the province as a destination.

A question was raised in committee regarding the performance measurements of the promotions. Again, Mr. Speaker, nothing indicated in the legislation as to how we're going to determine whether or not we're getting a good bang for our 50 million bucks. Certainly, that would be a concern, and I hope that the regulations are written such that there are some very strong performance measurements in there to determine whether or not, in fact, the funds that are allocated to promoting tourism will be doing their job.

I'm just going to flip through a number of comments that I had highlighted earlier and didn't get a chance to reference when I spoke to the bill in second. Information here from Alberta tourism shows that in the year 2004 tourism jumped 10.9 per cent from the year earlier to somewhat over 1 million visitors to the province, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a wonderful number, and it shows a good rebound from the rather drastic levels that we saw following September 11. I'm sure that all Albertans are pleased to see that taking place because certainly this is a growth industry in our province, and it's vital that we support it. I think I made that comment the other day as well.

I did mention in my comments that I wasn't sure, necessarily, that \$50 million was enough, given that some other jurisdictions are spending two times or even three times as much on promoting their industry.

Ms Blakeman: Who would that be?

Mr. R. Miller: That would be Ontario and B.C. amongst others.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, yeah.

Mr. R. Miller: Certainly, while I suggested that I wasn't sure that \$50 million was enough, at the same time I questioned whether or not there should be a tax at all. In that vein, as I was looking through some press clippings, I noticed that the previous Minister of Economic Development had indicated that his hope when he brought this forward, had he had the opportunity to do so, would have been to reduce the tax to somewhere in the neighbourhood of the 2 and a half per cent range. Obviously, that didn't happen. We're still at 4 per cent, and I guess a reduction to 4 per cent from 5 per cent is better than nothing; nevertheless, it's only a fraction of what the minister who was driving the bill at the time had hoped to see.

9:30

The other issue that, unfortunately, was not addressed in committee, Mr. Speaker – and I had certainly wished it would have been just from a purely procedural point of view – was the issue that was raised by the president of the Bed and Breakfast Association in Alberta regarding the apparent contradiction between this department and the health and human resources departments as to what constitutes a bed and breakfast versus a hotel or a motel, and

specifically that was the issue of eight people versus four beds. I hope that at some point that doesn't cause some problems for the department.

Ms Blakeman: They did answer that.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, actually, the Member for Edmonton-Centre says that they answered it, but the only answer I saw to it was an indication from the mover of the bill that four rooms contemplates double occupancy, meaning eight people, but that's not in the legislation, so I'm not sure if that, in fact, answers it or not.

There was concern, Mr. Speaker, as well regarding the \$25 commission that was paid to people that were filing, and the mover indicated that, unfortunately, that's just the cost of doing business. I can certainly say, as a small businessman who dealt with such filings over the years, although not specifically the hotel tax filing but certainly any number of others, that that so-called cost of doing business adds up awful quickly when you're a small businessman trying to comply with all of the government regulations.

Interestingly enough, one of my colleagues this afternoon, in talking about the interim supply bill, referred to the fact that in small business if you're late filing with your government filings, there is usually a rather stiff penalty, yet this government comes late to us with budget preparations, and there is no penalty at all. That's interesting from the point of view of a small businessperson.

That \$25 commission: I think that there are going to be a number of small businesspeople who are going to miss it and rue the fact that they now have to prepare this tax return, or levy return, without receiving the commission. Nevertheless, I suppose their numbers weren't big enough to sway the committee that was looking at drafting the legislation to leave it in there.

I think that will conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker. As I said, certainly there is a recognition on my part and that of my caucus that Alberta has incredible bounty, as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed indicated, to offer both as a destination for foreign tourists but also, certainly, for Alberta tourists. My hope is that perhaps with this added funding that's going to be coming to promote the industry, we can maybe carry on in the vein of what was one of my favourite promotions when I was a youngster growing up, and that was the Stamp Around Alberta promotion, which I actually fondly remember. I think I still have a passport at home, probably filled out with every zone stamped. If we can, you know, carry on in that vein and encourage not only people from outside of our province and outside of our country but those within Alberta to visit every corner of this province, then I'm hopeful that the money will have been well spent.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my comments and gladly support the bill with the qualifications that I indicated, hoping that there will be some very strong regulations written in to ensure that the money is wisely spent.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure we'll get it by the end of the session.

Mr. Hancock: I don't know if you'll ever get it.

Mr. Mason: Well, I enjoy the Minister of Advanced Education when he's witty, Mr. Speaker, but not when he's halfwitty.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak to third reading of Bill 21, the Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005. I

want to say that my comments will be very brief. I will be supporting the bill, and we will be supporting this bill. Generally we're of the view that tourism is a good thing, and if, in fact, this money is put towards promoting tourism, that is also a good thing. The fact that it's a tax on the people who benefit directly from tourism and tourism promotions, particularly the hotel industry, is in our view also a good thing. So the principles of the bill are certainly congruent with the views of the NDP opposition relative to this.

I just want to say a few things about the bill. Certainly, the reduction from 5 to 4 per cent – that's a 20 per cent reduction, a significant reduction – is acceptable. The bill shows that the government is now becoming serious about systematically collecting this revenue and making sure that hotels and motels actually pay it. There is a strengthened ability to deal with potential fraud, penalties for late or nonpayment, and so on.

I just want to make one comment, Mr. Speaker, on something that I've heard in this House from some of the members opposite, that this is good because it will reduce the rates that people pay for their hotel and motel rooms. In fact, the government press release talks about this too. The government news release said that this tax cut – they called a tax cut, thereby admitting that it's a tax – will save guests \$11 million. I don't know what kind of a fantasy world the government lives in when it comes to its understanding of how the private economy works, but the hotels and motels charge what the market will bear, and this doesn't change what the market will bear.

I will boldly predict, Mr. Speaker, that hotel and motel room rates will not come down, because that's based, really, on the relative supply versus demand and the available income that the tourists have to spend on hotels. But what it is is, essentially, increased revenue of \$11 million for the hotel and restaurant industry. The idea that you cut taxes for private industry and they automatically pass the full savings on to the public is nothing but a Conservative fantasy, and it has no bearing on economic reality.

So with that particular point made, I will indicate that we'll support the bill, and I will take my seat.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. [interjections] Thank you. I just wanted to get a few comments out, and coincidentally who I would like to make them to is, of course, the Minister of Economic Development. As you all know, he's not only my colleague in the House, but we also share the representation in the same city.

I do feel very strongly about the fact that the dollars that are being taken from this levy should be put into a separate fund that we know for sure is going into tourism. As a municipal councillor I know that the Chinook Country Tourist Association would approach our council for the extra dollars for the amazing work that they were doing in southern Alberta. I think that if they along with all of the other smaller tourist associations in this province, regardless of how big or small, knew that those dollars, if they had dollars that were coming in on a regular basis, were being taken out of their work through the levy, they would be most appreciative.

The other point that I'd like to make and my hon. colleague has already spoken about is the commission for doing the paperwork. Although it doesn't sound like a lot, I can use my own personal example of going into nursing 16 years ago and actually nursing. At the end of the 16 years I swear I was spending an hour and a half a day on paperwork, so paperwork is worth dollars, and I'm not sure that it's given its proper appreciation. The \$25 I think is important.

Just with those two comments, I thank you.

9:40

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, anyone else wish to speak on Bill 21? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gosh, it seems everybody is so good. Is a person supposed to try and speak for 15 minutes? [interjections] I'll pass on it.

An Hon. Member: See if you can do it.

Mr. Hinman: No, I'll pass.

Two or three points that I want to bring up. The first and most important, I guess, is that it seems so often the government likes to govern from the top down. Out in the rural area that I am from, it's very frustrating for the towns, the municipalities, the library, whatever it is that's asking for funds from the government. It always comes in an envelope that says: yes, you may have this, but it must go towards this specific project. So I, like the others that have mentioned it tonight, would very much like to see a separate fund – what's good for the goose is good for the gander – so perhaps if the money is coming in, it is there, and we are totally accountable to the tourist industry and would have them participate in how they want that money being spent in order to promote tourism here in Alberta. They probably understand it and know what's best because they want the tourists to come here.

The other part. I guess that as I grew up, my dad always told me to use the KISS principle: keep it simple somehow.

An Hon. Member: That's not the way I heard it.

Mr. Hinman: Well, it changes as we get older.

The other thing, I guess, is that it seems like we have smoke and mirrors here and that we've changed. It was brought up again tonight that it was simple when we just called it what it is, a tax. To put in tourism levy I think was unnecessary.

The thing that I really want to address is how far this bill continues to go on. Obviously, there must be real problems in collecting the tax because it goes on for pages and pages. You know, even if someone owes something or expects money a year from now, they're still liable and responsible to make sure this money gets turned in to the government.

I would just really urge the government, when we continue bringing these bills forward, that we want it for the betterment of Alberta and to stimulate industry and to bring prosperity to our area and that we really try and reduce these bills and put it in there. To me, if you say that there's a 4 per cent tax on it that must be submitted quarterly or whatever we decide to do with it, then you go forward. It just seems a waste of a lot of paper and time and energy and reading to have so many different areas on how and where and if and when and why and who, that it should be collected and how they're going to do it.

So I'm in favour of it. I would love to see it in a specific fund and to let the tourism people be part of that fund and decide where to spend it: once again, to see it being driven from the tourism industry up and their having access and accountability on where the money is being spent.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Anyone else wishing to speak on the bill?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to close debate.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to our hon. members for Edmonton-Rutherford, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Lethbridge-East, and of course Cardston-Taber-Warner for their comments and support of the bill. I will review *Hansard*, and I'm very happy to respond to these questions in writing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I close debate on third reading of Bill 21.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 30
Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005**

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm really pleased to get a chance to speak in Committee of the Whole to Bill 30, which is representing the interim supply budget allocation, because I was not able to participate in the debate during Committee of Supply.

A couple of issues I'd like to put on the table and get some response back from the government side, and really what this is about is accountability. What I'm going to do is reference the Auditor General's report because I am very reluctant to allocate a significant amount of money without there being some detail given to us about what the money is going to be spent on. I think a number of my colleagues, if I know them, have probably spoken at length around this process, as they should have, because this is a flawed process.

The government is in complete control of the timelines on this. The government could have called us back into this spring session in December or January or February, but instead the government chose to call us in in early March. Generally, we get a budget speech two weeks after a throne speech. Well, that went out the window. That went out the window a couple of years ago. We stopped having that connection made. So now we're looking at having not only the budget speech months after the throne speech but well into the fiscal year for which we're trying to pass a budget.

It's become commonplace in my eight years here – commonplace, a regular part of our routine – to have an interim supply. I really feel strongly that this is very shabby management, but the government seems intent on that particular style of management. I believe that in the long run this will hurt them, but I will let the taxpayers of Alberta hold them to account on that one. Where I'm going to hold them to account is whether they have been successful in adhering to the recommendations made by the Auditor General in a number of departments.

Now, Mr. Chairman, you would say: well, that's what the Standing Committee on Public Accounts does. Very true. In the departments of Human Resources and Employment, Health and Wellness, Energy, Children's Services, Infrastructure and Transportation, Environment, Sustainable Resource Development, and Government Services, I indeed as a member of that committee will have an opportunity to question those ministers on their departments' spending, on their annual reports, whether they've been successful in implementing the recommendations from the Auditor

General. I will do that in the allocated meetings, following the schedule that has been put before us of when those ministers will be appearing before the Public Accounts Committee.

But for the rest of the ministries, Mr. Chairman, I will not have an opportunity to question them at all for the fiscal year that is before us in Public Accounts, and that's the year immediately preceding what we are looking at for interim supply. So I would like to go through, and for those departments where I will not get an opportunity to question them in Public Accounts, I'd like to put the questions on the record here and have them respond to those to have some measure of accountability as to whether or not they have been able to follow through and satisfy the requirements of the Auditor General for better accountability and transparency and overall management of the resources belonging to the people of Alberta.

I will start with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, on page 80 of the Auditor General's report. Now, we have recommendation 3, recommending that the department

complete a risk assessment that analyzes the probability and impact of major risks to the agriculture and agri-food industry in Alberta.

Based on the results of the risk assessment, the Department should also develop risk mitigation and response strategies.

Of course, I'm wondering whether the department has been successful in implementing this and addressing the risk mitigation and response strategies.

9:50

I'd also like to know if the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has established "measurable targets for its emergency financial assistance programs," also appearing in the Auditor General's report for this fiscal year. Has that happened? We are looking at a request from Agriculture, Food and Rural Development for \$160,600,000. When that kind of money is being asked for, do we have measurable targets for emergency financial assistance programs?

Here's another one. Has the department improved "its external accountability reporting"? Or a key recommendation from the Auditor General – and these are so important they get highlighted with little symbols beside them. Has the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, working with other governments and industry, developed and implemented "a contingency planning process"? Very important.

Has it, working with the federal Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the beef and related industries, ensured that "Alberta meets its contribution to Canada's BSE testing quota"? Well, are we using any of that \$160,600,000 to do any of that? Is that what that money is being used for?

Do we have any answers to the recommendation that "the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation strengthen its internal controls and program evaluation for the Alberta Disaster Assistance Loan Program"? Has that happened? Is that what this money is being used for?

So if I can get answers to that either in this process of Committee of the Whole or through written response. But, you know, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to get written responses before I'm asked to vote on something. It's not very helpful when the government cheerfully tells me they'll give me a written response and it turns up four months later. If I'm supposed to be voting on this based on whether I feel that the government has met the tests, I'm putting it all out. They've had the Auditor General's report since September. They well know what they're supposed to be doing. So have they done it?

I am not in favour of this kind of sloppy management that has us approving – what is it? – 25 per cent of the budget for the whole year for two months, for one-sixth of the year. That's far too much money to be allocating here with absolutely no explanation of why.

Let's look at page 107 and on, which is the Department of Community Development, and the 107, of course, is referring to the Auditor General's report. Now, Community Development is asking for \$90 million in expense and equipment/inventory purchases and \$11 million in capital investment. So what's that money being used for? Have we satisfied the questions and reservations of opinion brought forward by the Auditor General?

Now, there was an unqualified report on the ministry and the historical resources fund. Some of the operations were "not recorded in Ministry financial statements." Some operations were "not recorded in the Fund financial statements." There's an information paragraph for the persons with development disabilities community boards, and these disabilities "did not meet the definition of a developmental disability, as defined in the legislation." So a couple of issues identified there. Have those been addressed before we go on to allocate more money to you?

Still with Community Development, recommendation 8, appearing on page 107. The Auditor General recommends

that the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board, in conjunction with the six Community Boards, reduce the risk of service providers breaching contracts by:

- performing a risk assessment to identify service providers with a high risk of breaching contracts; and
- auditing high-risk service providers to ensure that they spend funding according to their contracts and that they meet the other terms of their contracts.

Well, this is very serious, Mr. Chairman. There's money, taxpayer money, that's going out into the community. We keep hearing about accountability and transparency, yet here's something clearly pointed out by the Auditor General as needing immediate attention. Has it received immediate attention? It looks like they're asking for \$101 million from us. Is that money to be met with the same laissez-faire attitude that this money was? Well, let's get the answer to the question.

There's also a recommendation that the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board, working with the six community boards, "update and improve their contracting policies and procedures." I'm wondering if that has happened.

Key recommendation 9, appearing on page 111, recommends that the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board, working again with their six community boards, "strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of service providers" by – and then there's quite a long list, Mr. Chair.

- requiring individual funding service providers to provide adequate financial reporting;
- obtaining annual financial statements to evaluate the financial sustainability of critical service providers;
- implementing a sustainable, risk-based internal audit plan;
- developing and implementing standard procedures to be followed when Community Board staff are in contact with service providers; and
- implementing a method to evaluate service provider performance.

We're not going to be able to examine this before Public Accounts. What can the minister or any member of the government tell me as to whether these issues raised by the Auditor General have been addressed, especially since they're asking taxpayers to fork over \$101 million?

Let me go on and have a look at some of the others. Let's look at the Department of Environment, and I know my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View will be very interested in this. This is appearing on page 138 of the Auditor General's report, and indeed there are recommendations from the Auditor General.

I should note – I'm sorry – in passing that there were not any recommendations made for Economic Development, which is why

I have not raised that particular issue, so congratulations to Economic Development. They don't seem to have had any new recommendations. I think they have some that are flowing over from previous years.

All right. On page 138 for Environment there's a recommendation that

the Ministry further improve its business plan by:

- clarifying its contributions to achieving the government business plan goals.
- enhancing the description of the significant environmental factors and risks, and their relationship to the strategic priorities in the plan.
- showing the corporate services areas as supporting all of the Ministry's core businesses.

Has this been achieved, Mr. Chair? Is the government able to give me any indication of whether that, in fact, has happened before we fork over \$22,700,000 to the Department of Environment?

Okay. Let's see if they have managed to fulfill recommendation 13 from the Auditor General, which recommends that "the Ministry improve the process for developing new performance measures and ensure the measures in its business plan assess the results each goal aims to achieve." Mr. Chair, that is my kind of recommendation from the Auditor General because he's addressing everything we're concerned about here. Do we have the performance measurements that will ensure that the measures in the business plan "assess the results each goal aims to achieve"? That's exactly what we're looking for. That's exactly the kind of accountability that I want.

Great recommendation. Was it implemented, before we give them \$22,700,000 for two months' worth of operation? Gee, that's like \$11 million and change for each month, and we don't have a process for developing performance measurements and ensuring that the ones they have assess the results of the goal they're aiming to achieve. I would think that was a major problem that would need to be clarified, wouldn't you, Mr. Chair?

How about the recommendation that asks that "the Ministry clarify the goals, performance measures and targets in its human resource plan, and improve the quality of employee performance assessments and the method of feedback"? That appears on page 141 of the Auditor General's report for Environment.

So there are a couple of very good recommendations from the Auditor General, and I would be very interested in hearing whether those have been achieved before I vote to approve any additional money to this particular department.

10:00

Now, the Executive Council. Ah, yes. Travel and hosting expenses. Well, I'd be interested in knowing how much of the \$5.3 million is going to be used for out-of-province travel. I would like a listing, preferably posted on the website, preferably in advance, that gives us the details of who is travelling, the purpose that they're travelling for, the position of the person that's travelling. I don't particularly need to know their individual name, but I certainly want to know their position. Why are they travelling out of province on the taxpayer dollar? What are they there to achieve? I'd like to know what their agenda is. Are they going to meetings? Are they private meetings? Who are they meeting with? What's the purpose of all of it?

If we're going to be okaying out-of-province travel – and sometimes that's a very necessary part of doing the business of government – I think that the taxpayers' patience for chartering private jets to whip people around the continent is increasingly short. I would like to know if any of this \$5.3 million is going to pay for any charter jets, and as I say, I'd like to know the details in advance of every trip that's planned to take.

This is \$5.3 million for two months, Mr. Chairman. Where the heck are they going to go, and how many people are going to go there, in two months for \$5.3 million? That's a lot of bananas, and I want to know where they're spending them and on what. What's the benefit back to the taxpayer of Alberta? So if I could get that information.

How many years have I been trying to get that information, Mr. Chairman? But I live in hope. I am an optimistic person. I get up here every year, and I ask these questions because some day I'm going to be on the other side, and someone else is going to be asking me, and I will have the answers for them. There we go. All righty.

Now we're into the Department of Finance, appearing on page 152. I'm sure there will be very good questions. Oh, yes, there we go. A key recommendation, Mr. Chairman, indeed. This is for the Department of Finance, who is asking for \$20,600,000 for expense and equipment/inventory purchases and \$11,700,000 for nonbudgetary disbursements. Nonbudgetary disbursements. Okay. Help me with that one. What exactly is a nonbudgetary disbursement? It's not budgeted, but we're going to disburse it? It's one of those interesting little kind of finance terms. So if somebody would like to get up and elucidate that one, I'd appreciate it.

More to the point, let's have a look in here from the members of the government's side as to whether they have been able to achieve recommendation 14, on page 152, from the Auditor General, that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions ensure that compliance staff:

- promptly review and follow-up on compliance information obtained from private sector pension plans

Oh, this would be a hot topic, Mr. Chairman.

- receive appropriate training to effectively discharge their responsibilities.

Yes. I know this one is a hot topic.

All right. Still, I think, on the same area recommendation 15, that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions improve its processes for monitoring private sector pension plans by:

- preparing a risk-based annual plan for its compliance monitoring program that identifies resources required to effectively carry out the plan
- reporting the results of regulatory activities by compliance staff to senior management
- updating its policies and procedures manual.

So that's another question that I'm looking to have answered for the Department of Finance before we give it looks like about \$33 million and change.

Those are two strong recommendations that have been made in that department. Oh, my goodness, here comes another one. Oh, another couple of them.

Recommend that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions obtain audited plan financial statements from all employer pension plans.

Yeah, I told you this was a hot one. I know that this is really top of mind for a number of people, so before we allocate that additional \$33 million and change, I'd sure like to know whether this has been addressed.

Additionally:

for high-risk employer pension plans, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions obtain:

- assurance from pension plans' auditors on the plans' compliance with the Employment Pension Plans Act, Regulation and plan document
- information on pension plans' governance structure and practices.

I know that I'm going to run out of time shortly here, Mr. Chairman, and I have not been able to ask the questions for Gaming, Innovation and Science, Justice, Municipal Affairs, and Seniors and

Community Supports. I will note, to be fair, that both the Solicitor General and International and Intergovernmental Relations did not have any new recommendations from the Auditor General. But all the rest of the departments do, and I'm looking forward to an opportunity to ask the questions on those before I approve their interim supply.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that. I just want to raise one simple question, and I hope that we will get an answer either verbally or in writing, and that is to do with the increasing pattern of delays in bringing down the budget. The government has used the excuse in this case that the election timing meant that the Legislature convened late; therefore, the budget will be delayed. That's what they're saying this time, but the last two budgets have come down late. I believe that it causes significant problems in terms of the organization of the administration of the province among other things.

I would like to know from the government if they see this as a problem, if they're going to correct it, and whether or not they have a plan to make sure that the next budget of this province is brought forward in a timely way so that we don't have to deal with these interim supply issues. I hope that the government will respond either now or the Treasurer may wish to respond in writing, but I would like to know the government's plans for the next budget and whether or not they're going to bring it forward in a timely fashion or whether we're going to continue to see slippage. I agree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. It's just sloppy administration, in my view.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't presume to answer on behalf of the Minister of Finance for the timing of budgets in that respect but would like to just address the issue that's been raised a couple of times in the House now, at least the allegation that's been raised a couple of times, that this is sloppy practice.

There is nothing in parliamentary process which suggests a particular timing for budgets. If you look at parliaments across the nation and, indeed, in the Commonwealth, budgets are not necessarily brought in at any particular time. There are processes in place under our rules, one of which we're engaged in now, to deal with interim supply so that funds are supplied to government to run from fiscal year to fiscal year. But budgets are fiscal documents that come in at various times throughout the year depending on which parliament you might be in and what happens.

The hon. members opposite would seem to think that there's some magic to having a budget in February. There is no magic to having a budget in February. The magic to a budget is in fact in the business planning process that one engages in. In this government the business planning process that's engaged in is a very thorough and comprehensive one, normally starting about this time of the year for the next year in that the departments might start through their process of developing their business plan right about now for next year. Then in about mid-July there would be discussions around fiscal strategies that might happen.

I'm not sure that the members opposite have ever really appreciated the business planning calendar of a government because they've never had the opportunity to participate in one. But the concept of doing the fiscal strategies is in and about July. The annual reports, as they will know, come out in late August, and that helps to inform the business planning process for the following year.

Departments start working around the fiscal strategies to align their business plans with the fiscal strategies in the September-October time frame, and then Treasury Board begins to work with that in the November-December time frame so that you get the budget timing together in January and start finalizing the decisions process in January so that you can start the budget documentation process in February. It can take a month to a month and a half after you've made all the decisions just to compile the documentation and make sure that it's appropriate for entry into the House. So producing a budget is not something that you do cavalierly or that you do overnight. It's a long-term process.

10:10

Now, this jurisdiction, Alberta, is one of the only jurisdictions that has a three-year business plan process, so nobody has to wait for the budget to take a look at what is projected in spending. Now, granted, that spending profile can change, but the concept is that people have a three-year framework. Often we hear in this House that people need to know, people need some longer term certainty in terms of what their budget will be. Well, there is some long-term certainty in the business planning process that gives a three-year cycle. The problem is that most people don't like to live with that three-year cycle. They want those out-year projections, and quite appropriately so from time to time, adjusted on an annual basis when there's some certainty with respect to the income stream, when we know with a greater degree of certainty.

In addressing one of the comments about being out on the forecasts, when you're talking about oil and gas revenue and nonrenewable resource revenue, which is one of the most volatile revenue streams that a government can have, you can never know with certainty what that revenue stream is going to be. Therefore, you do have to, in all good prudence, project that conservatively.

Part of the business planning process, then, is to have that three-year plan that people can rely on but be able to adjust it annually and in the context of what the current realities might be. So I'd go back to where I started with this. It's not sloppy business planning at all. In fact, this government is probably one of the finest in the parliamentary system in terms of its business planning process, the length of the business planning process, the amount of time and effort that goes into the business planning process, and, quite frankly, the results of the business planning process.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, I appreciate the hon. Government House Leader's response, but it really sounds like he's saying that he doesn't think there's a problem. There was lots of bureaucratic gobbledeygook to try and explain how somehow three-year business cycles mean that they can't get the budget done on time. I would think that if you've got three years to plan – and that's not a bad thing – you'd be able to get your budget in on time.

I do believe that there's a significant impact on operations. You know, the government can't keep operating as if they're on a 13-month calendar, Mr. Chairman, because all the rest of us have to work on a 12-month calendar. I think the government needs to pull up its socks on this.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to echo the comments of my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and at the same time thank my neighbour from Edmonton-Whitemud

for the lesson in parliamentary budgeting. However, I'd like to point out that certainly the criteria he outlined do not apply to various health authorities, as an example, when they're expected to have their budgets on time and in place for the government to deal with. Likewise, school boards would be expected to have a budget plan in place and on time.

Mr. Mason: Municipalities.

Mr. R. Miller: Municipalities I'm going to get to in just a minute. Thank you to the hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Nongovernment agencies and volunteer groups, Mr. Chairman. I've been involved with many of these over the years. Especially when it came to our dealings with government, we were always not only recommended to have our budget plans in place and on time, but often it was a demand on which our funding depended. If we were late, there was no funding, and that was just how important the budget process was to us.

My colleague mentioned municipal governments. Certainly, I have a number of friends that serve currently on the city of Edmonton council, and they were astounded, quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, when they were first elected to find that the first week – the very first week – of their service on Edmonton city council they were handed budget documents to deliberate.

Frankly, I'm astounded, knowing that, that we've been here now almost a month and we have not seen a budget document to deliberate. Instead, Mr. Chairman, what I was handed the other day was a request – and bear in mind that this is coming from a small businessman – to approve \$5.5 billion in spending with nothing more than one or two lines in the way of explanation. I am astounded at that, that this government, which brags about three-year plans in place – I will echo again the comments of my colleague in congratulating the government for having the foresight to move to a three-year budgeting plan. But if in fact that three-year budgeting plan is as effective as the hon. Minister of Advanced Education indicates it is, then it should make the preparation of a budget for this Assembly to deal with all the more simple and would, in my mind, negate the impact of things such as an election cycle. So I'm not sure that explanation that has been offered up many times would really be relevant in this case.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to cede the floor again to any other colleagues who might wish to speak to it. I will just echo the fact that as a small businessperson who is used to having to deal with regular budget cycles and having them in place and on time, to come into this Assembly and be told that it's perfectly normal to be expected to approve 5 and a half billion dollars of spending without any more than a one-line explanation – I have trouble accepting that.

I'm not sure if the Minister of Advanced Education has had a chance to check *Hansard*, but I've referred a couple of times now to the fact that our sister province, Saskatchewan, right next door, which happens to be exactly the same age as this province, for the very first time ever in its history last year dealt with an interim supply request. That was the first time in nearly a hundred years that Saskatchewan had had to do that.

Mr. Mason: Those irresponsible socialists.

Mr. R. Miller: Those irresponsible socialists.

Here it is in Alberta. These supposedly fiscally responsible Conservative governments year after year continually overspend and continually come to us late with a budget which requires an interim supply estimate. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I think I indicated earlier

this afternoon that one of my very serious concerns is that this particular document is dealing with only up to the end of May, and if we don't see a budget soon and have an opportunity to debate it soon, we might well be dealing with another one of these interim supply estimates very soon, and that would be a travesty, in my mind.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I will cede the floor to anybody else, but certainly I think this draws into serious question the practices of this government when it comes to budgeting.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Well, I've just been drawn back into this debate by the remarks from the Minister of Advanced Education. Where to begin. I cannot believe that he would get up and defend a practice and say that it doesn't really matter when budgets come down. If that's the case, then why do we have a fiscal year that begins on the 1st of April? Why doesn't it just start whenever we get around to it?

We've got a fiscal year that starts on the 1st of April and runs to the end of March, so it makes sense then – let's say that we want to go by logic, never mind by reality – that we would have a budget passed that allocates the ability to pass the budget before we get to the beginning of the fiscal year. So I have to disagree, with all due respect to the Minister of Advanced Education.

When he talks about business plans that are done in advance, up to three years in advance, again I have to disagree. I've seen those business plans. Sure, they're for three years. Then when I say, "How come the performance measurements are changing every year so that I cannot track this from point A to point B over a five-year time span because every year the performance measurements have changed?" well, I'm told that it's a rolling three-year plan, so that's why everything can change. Oh, really? Well, then that's not sticking to what the minister has brought up here: these three-year plans in advance, and we'll stick to that. No. It doesn't happen that way at all.

10:20

Finally, I want to raise the issues that have been raised repeatedly by the Auditor General around the budgeting process for the health authorities and the school boards. The health authorities are supposed to have their business plans and budgets approved in advance of that April 1 fiscal year, and that's impossible to do because we're not even close to having a provincial budget passed in that time. So the ministers responsible for those various areas can't turn around and then approve the health authorities' or the school boards' plans well into the fiscal year, and this is just poor management. I don't care how you cut it; that's what it is. It's putting a number of other agencies that we all expect to operate with integrity in the province – it jeopardizes them as well.

I appreciate that the minister is trying to defend the practices of his government, but frankly this is not unique to the government under the current Premier. When I was working with the Advisory Council on Women's Issues in the late '80s and early '90s, we were on exactly the same budgeting cycle that the minister just described, so there's nothing new there. That is not an invention of this particular government under the Progressive Conservatives and the various incarnations they have had. They have gone through this same budgeting process for some time, but it's only recently that we've made a habit of not coming anywhere close to getting a budget passed by the time we need to. Again, the government is in total control of the timelines here, absolute total control. They can call us in any time they want. They can move those timelines

around for when deadlines happen any time they want, and they choose not to. I have to assume that they're choosing not to. They are certainly in control of all of that, and they are choosing not to.

Mr. R. Miller: Laurie, I was ready to go to work on the 1st of January.

Ms Blakeman: That's right. I think most of the new people who were elected were ready to go to work on the 1st of January, as soon as session was called in.

Okay. If I may, in the time that I have remaining – I had indicated that I'd like to go back and pick up, Mr. Chairman, on some of the unanswered questions from the departments that will not be examined by the Public Accounts Committee and, therefore, will not receive scrutiny or any kind of report back on, in fact, what's been done here.

On page 168 we're looking at the Department of Gaming and any of the Auditor General's recommendations that have been made there, and in fact there is a recommendation "that the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) improve the worker registration process, including controls to confirm the identity of gaming worker applicants." This is a fairly critical recommendation because it is around maintaining confidence in the gaming workers and the registration process for gaming workers. I'm wondering if it's possible to have any feedback or reporting back on whether that has been accomplished. I think that's all that's being raised under Gaming.

What's being asked for here as an interim supply is \$38,200,000 for expenses, and the lottery fund payments are \$316 million for two months. There has got to be front-end loading in that because that is a third or better than a third of the budget for that department for one-sixth of the year. So could we get some information on: what is the front-end loading? There must be anticipation that in these first two months there are going to be a lot of expenditures. Are there any programs that have particular deadlines or activities that are happening in April and May that would account for the fact that we've got a much larger percentage of money coming out of that lottery fund than one-sixth of the year would indicate? So if we could get the information on that, please.

For the Department of Innovation and Science, on page 227. Ah, yes, the SuperNet.

An Hon. Member: Which ministry is that?

Ms Blakeman: It's Innovation and Science.

What we had there was a plan. There was a recommendation for a plan for testing the SuperNet that was recommended. There's an indication from the Auditor General that the recommendation was implemented, and the ministry did extend the SuperNet completion date for one full year, which we're aware of in this House.

There has been a team to resolve – I'm sorry; this is with Imagis. They did follow those recommendations.

We're wondering about recommendation 25, appearing on page 231, recommending "that the Corporate Chief Information Officer implement a security awareness program for government employees." Was that implemented? If we could get some feedback on that, please.

In the Department of Justice, on page 242: "Ministry is following up on certain files and developing a monthly reconciliation process" on the maintenance enforcement program. But there is a note that "the Ministry needs to complete monthly reconciliations and complete its follow up of the 268 matched files." If we could get a progress report on that, please.

Only two departments left, Mr. Chairman. On page 266 of the

Auditor General's report for Municipal Affairs – this is around the computer control environment – there were weaknesses identified in security. The IT policies were “drafted, but compliance procedures not yet implemented.” There were “identified threats and impacts against IT assets,” but not identified was how to manage those risks. There was also “no assurance on its and service providers computer control environment,” and therefore we “cannot guarantee integrity and confidentiality of its data and systems.” Could we get an update on that, please? What's being requested here from Municipal Affairs is \$31,600,000 for equipment and expenses and inventory purchases, so I'm assuming that this is going to have a lot to do with the IT purchases that are being recommended here.

I'm sorry. I missed the actual recommendation that the department

approve its draft security policies and implement procedures so that only authorized users can access the ministry's systems and data. We also recommend that the Ministry strengthen controls over its information technology by:

- implementing a risk assessment framework to manage IT risks [and]
- obtaining assurance on technical aspects of the general computer control environment.

That's pretty important stuff, so I'm wondering if it has been implemented so that we can feel secure in allocating an additional \$31,600,000 for new equipment purchases.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, under Seniors and Community Supports, which actually would have been just under Seniors, appearing on page 284, we had a recommendation

that the Alberta Social Housing Corporation ensure its program objectives are supported by the appropriate business arrangements.

We further recommend that these arrangements be accounted for in accordance with Canadian Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

What's being requested here for Seniors and Community Supports? That's a huge amount of money: \$347,100,000. Why? That's a lot of money. Do we have any kind of an explanation on why that's so much money? There's got to be a front-end load on that, and why? There is no explanation for that, and I would sure be interested in it because that is, I think, more money than was allocated to come out of the lottery fund for two months. So \$347 million for two months' worth is a rather staggering amount of money. Now, I'm sure that the seniors' benefit program, AISH, and PDD will all be coming out, but there has to be something that's front-end loaded on that. If I could get the information on what that is.

I think that we're still going to get an opportunity to debate in Committee of the Whole on supplementary supply, so I look forward to that. If I could just get the answers to my questions, I'll be able to make an informed vote on interim supply.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

10:30

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few points, I guess, that I want to make. I struggle in the fact that we, as has been brought up many times, have an interim supply estimate of \$5.5 billion.

We have in here support to the Legislative Assembly of \$12 million. Since the last time we spoke to it, I went to Members' Services because we couldn't come to an agreement with the House leaders, asking for a very small amount in order to . . .

Mr. Lukaszuk: How much?

Mr. Hinman: Ninety-seven thousand dollars.

Mr. Lukaszuk: That's a small amount of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Hinman: I hope that can get on the *Hansard*. I appreciate the instructions from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

But we have \$12 million – we have \$5.5 billion here. I guess I always look at putting on the other person's shoe and having to walk down there. To me, if I was bringing this to the people that elected me and said that I was going to spend \$5.5 billion and handed that to them, I'd be embarrassed to go there.

As a businessman when I'd go to the bank and we'd figure out the budget for the year, you'd want your budget good enough because your operating loan would be maxed out if you didn't adjust for fertilizer going up 20 per cent or something else happening. So to look forward and do that budgeting is a good business practice.

Many times we hear here that we have no business being in business. This is a huge business, a \$23 billion a year business, and we should be looking at it and running it that way. The comments in the Members' Services Committee were that \$97,000 to a new and starting party would be a waste of taxpayers' money, yet we have \$5.5 billion that are unaccountable for and \$12 million going to this House. I struggle with the fact that they're saying they're being good operators, that we're going to run this efficiently, that we've got a whole new portfolio to help run more efficiently: you know, we're going to restructure, we're going to be more efficient, and we're only going to spend \$66 million waiting to get some better results.

So it's very frustrating to me as a new member here to look at something like this and be asked to vote on it. I just don't understand how someone can bring this forward and say: “Don't worry. This is a blank cheque. It's just a small amount, not \$97,000 but \$5.5 billion, and it's all being spent wisely, prudently, and there's no waste in it.” I would sure like to have a breakdown of the estimates in all of these areas and have something sensible to read and to look through and to be able to say: yes, I understand that these estimates are needed, that we do have to continue on with business, and there is no waste.

I would urge the government to bring forth documents that are meaningful and something that the people of Alberta can know that we are representing them, that we are scrutinizing where the tax dollars are being spent and have a handle on it and know what's happening because I certainly don't know what's happening with this document and would like to be given a document that means something. What is Restructuring and Government Efficiency going to do for \$62 million? Where is Municipal Affairs going with \$32 million? What are Seniors and Community Supports going to get for \$347 million? Is that, you know, going to get them glasses? Is it going to get them dentures? What are we going to get for that? It needs to be itemized. It needs to be there and make sense to the members in this Assembly as well as to the citizens of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 30, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005?

[The clauses of Bill 30 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 27

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to the supplementary for Alberta Environment and acknowledge the many good initiatives that I see in the Alberta Environment department and recognize that the listed supplementary of roughly \$8 million is identified under three headings, which include information technology, increased waste management, and water management. I guess I'm needing more information about where that extra need came from, and I raised this before and haven't seen any information on it yet.

More to the focus of my comments, though, is a recognition that this is the number three priority for Albertans, and it's receiving roughly 5 per cent of the budget of the government of Alberta. This, I guess, by many perspectives would constitute a starvation diet for what many people in Alberta feel is one of the primary ministries of this government.

They've developed a new water strategy, a very impressive document, two years ago, and I don't see progress on it. I wonder about the lack of resources to move that important planning document forward. They talk, indeed, about new treatment and monitoring standards, very important from a public health point of view. Again, where is the funding to support this and the staffing to monitor and enforce these important new standards?

There's been a five-fold increase in the last decade in oil and gas activity in the province. Where is the new capacity in the department to evaluate approvals, to monitor implementation, and to do testing and enforcement of agreements under this very low budget?

There's obviously a boom in Alberta, more construction both in terms of domestic and industrial activity. How can the Alberta Environment department possibly carry out to the satisfaction of Albertans the important role that it has in monitoring, assessment, and enforcement?

There's also an increased concern about intensive livestock operations. What impact are they having, and how are they being monitored, and what are air quality, water quality, and other concerns that we rely on Alberta Environment to monitor?

People in my constituency, which is an urban constituency, have raised the issue about recycling. Why are we still not recycling oil in this province on a consistent basis? Why are we not recycling, indeed, more than 20 per cent of all of the recyclables in our homes and in our industries and in our construction? Why is it that we're not hardly recycling or composting almost any of the organics when this is contributing hugely to landfill and to greenhouse gas problems?

10:40

Oil sands development has been raised a number of times in the House. How can Alberta Environment satisfy Albertans that cumulative impact and sustainable planning and monitoring are going on in this very important and very active part of the oil sector? I guess my main message today, Mr. Chairman, is that if Alberta Environment is overspent, who's surprised? They have basically a starvation diet to work with in terms of the importance of the ministry. So my main message today is that if the government is serious about addressing the issue of supplementary expenditures, particularly in this department, they need to seriously look at staffing and investment in this ministry for the protection of all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the supplementary estimates under Solicitor General there are two items which I would like to ask questions about. I don't think the Solicitor General has spoken about these items to the House.

One is \$2,900,000 for the province's share of the costs of the RCMP task force investigating high-risk missing persons in the Edmonton region. Well, this is a very important undertaking, and my understanding is that it's an integrated homicide investigation, but it's not clear to me who the RCMP is working with. I assume that it's the Edmonton Police Service, but I'm not sure about the cost sharing involved.

So it's not clear to me when Project Kare began. And is it continuing? How many officers are involved in working on this project? One report that I read suggests that only three RCMP members are involved, but that surely doesn't add up to \$2,900,000. So it must involve a lot of other kinds of activities, offices, and so on. I'm not sure where that project is at. I hope that Project Kare is more than just a public relations exercise to satisfy a concerned public. What progress has been made through the action of Project Kare, and how many arrests have been made through the activities of Project Kare?

The other item in the supplementary estimates is \$6,877,000 for a "ministry-wide manpower and other pressures including security costs to operate additional court rooms in the Calgary Provincial Court – Criminal Division." Mr. Chairman, it's so vague. So my question to the Solicitor General is: what does he mean by "ministry-wide manpower and other pressures"? I don't know what those other pressures are.

When you look at the budget side, it looks like most of the costs are for correctional centres throughout Alberta. I don't know what that involves, whether there's a problem of prison overcrowding, whether there's a problem of having to increase staff. Are there issues of violence within the prisons that need increased staff? Those are specifics that need to be explained. So \$5 million for adult remand and correctional centres in Alberta. It's my intention in the future as the critic for Solicitor General to visit these correctional institutes and to find out what pressures they face in Alberta.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, but under Standing Order 61(4) I must put the question proposing the approval of the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for consideration by the Committee of the Whole. Does the committee approve the following appropriation bill: Bill 27, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005?

[Motion carried]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that we rise and report bills 27 and 30.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under careful consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 30, Bill 27.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:47 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 23, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/03/23
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Renew us with Your strength. Focus us in our deliberations. Challenge us in our service to the people of this great province. Amen.

Please be seated.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a historic vignette for today. On this day in 1937 the late Hon. Colonel John Campbell Bowen was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. He was the sixth Lieutenant Governor of Alberta and served from March 23, 1937, to February 1, 1950.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly His Excellency Mr. Aly Diane, ambassador to the Republic of Guinea. With His Excellency today is the honorary consul of Guinea in Alberta, Mr. Giovanni De Maria, who is based in Calgary. The members for Calgary-McCall, Calgary-East, Calgary-Fort, and myself were pleased to host our honoured guests at an official luncheon earlier today. This is the ambassador's first visit to Alberta, and like Alberta, Guinea is rich in natural resources; in particular, bauxite, gold, and diamonds. I would ask that our honoured guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce 13 visitors from the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency and Tokoro, Japan. The town and county of Barrhead formally twinned with the town of Tokoro in 1991, and each year Tokoro sends a group of high school students to spend a week in Barrhead. They're seated in your gallery this afternoon, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two members from my constituency. They are part of a group of 58 people from the Lacombe upper elementary school that was supposed to be here today, but because of the weather the trip was cancelled and they could not be here. Present today and seated in the public gallery are Mrs. Sandra Scott and her daughter Talia Scott, who's in grade 6. They came in advance of the bad weather to watch Sandra's father and Talia's grandfather, the hon. Member for Highwood, at work today. They are accompanied by Mrs. Judy Groeneveld, wife of the hon. member. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two young men seated in the members' gallery today. The first happens to be a young man who is 27 years old today. It's his birthday. He works for our Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance. He's worked for government for four years now. He is currently working on writing his GMAT at the end of March, and on top of that, because that's not quite enough, he decided that he would get married on April 9 in the middle of our convention this year. Seated with him is a young man who is going to very soon be a major part of his life as his stepson. His name is Austin Mulligan. He's seven years old. He's in grade 2 here in Edmonton, and he got an excellent report card last week. In addition to that, he's a hockey player, got his first hat trick about two weeks ago, and he loves reading. I'm very proud to introduce two very special men in my life, Mr. Jeff Haley and Mr. Austin Mulligan. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: I take it that the hon. member has announced today that she will soon become a grandmother.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour and pleasure to introduce visitors from the international community of Initiatives of Change, a group working voluntarily for peace and reconciliation around the world and bringing spirituality to politics. I would ask them to stand as I mention their names: Catherine Linton from the United States via New Zealand, Chris Evans from England, and Niketu Iralu from Nagaland in northeast India. I'd ask the members to give them the traditional welcome.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly some very special guests. Linda Trimble is a well-respected political science professor at the University of Alberta. In fact, she's so well respected that I believe this morning she learned that she's going to receive the Rutherford award for excellence in teaching, which, indeed, is a real honour. With her are a group of her students from the University of Alberta, 12 political science students as well as I think four graduate students. So I'd ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of all members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly several former students and a colleague of mine from my days as a teacher at W.P. Wagner high school. They are joining us today to see democracy in action, so I hope we might serve them well in that regard, and I am delighted to have them as my guests. I would ask each of them to stand as I read their name: Naveed Chaudhry, Brendon Bruno, Chris Eddy, Brandon Fletcher, Cody Hooper, Chris Jenson, Alycia Knorr, Kyle Polacsek, and Chris Sager. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a member of the

executive board of the International Union of Operating Engineers and a very well-respected person in the construction community in Alberta, Lionel Laverdiere. Please stand and get the warm welcome of this House.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. There are now reported allegations that executive managers of the Alberta Securities Commission obstructed the work of enforcement staff by directly influencing whether the regulators would pursue cases against certain companies and individuals. One staff member was even quoted as saying: it was made clear that certain people and companies were not to be troubled and were being protected from regulatory activity. End quote. This would be corruption in its purist form. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Can the minister identify which people and which companies were being protected by Securities Commission executives and why? We would like names.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that he himself in his opening statement said that there were allegations. Allegations are exactly that. They are allegations, and I don't think the hon. leader expects me to provide information that could have very serious repercussions to people, based on allegation.

1:40

In fact, Mr. Speaker, what I have done I think is entirely appropriate to what I should do. When I was made aware in early January that there were some concerns raised – that was brought to me through my deputy – I wrote to the commissioners. I'll be happy to table that letter with the Assembly at the appropriate time. In that letter to the members of the commission, I said that I had been advised that a member of the commission had brought forward some information regarding concerns. I suggested that this would bear some further investigation and asked them to do that and report to me through my deputy on what actions they were prepared to take.

The Speaker: The hon. minister will table the letter later, I gather.

Mrs. McClellan: I will.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: did members of this government or any of its staff in any way influence the executive managers to protect certain people and companies?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, certainly I did not. To the best of my knowledge none of my staff would have done that. I would remind the hon. member that the commission operates as a commission, certainly at arm's length from government. I am responsible for them in my department, but I have absolutely – absolutely – no knowledge, none, of my staff being involved in any of that. In fact, the first information that I have come through my deputy. I think he very appropriately raised this with me when he first had an indication of some possible irregularities.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this alarming information would not have come to the attention of the minister or to the public light without six brave whistle-blowers, when will this government finally institute whistle-blower protection legislation?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no information nor do I have any reason to believe that any of the persons who had concerns had any reservations about bringing them forward. None. And the staff and the members involved in this, I believe, will through my very swift action in responding to their concern continue to have confidence that if they have a concern in this area or any other area of this government, it will be responded to appropriately and quickly.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The securities industry works hour to hour, minute to minute, day by day. The timelines are tight; things happen now. The troubling report that this minister has referred to was presented six weeks ago. Who knows how many millions or billions of dollars have been traded since then? Why was the Finance minister sitting on this report for that length of time? Who is she trying to protect?

Thank you.

Mr. Hancock: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I guess the allegations have no boundary. I've made it very clear to the Leader of the Opposition that immediately upon receiving this complaint, I responded. I am prepared to table the letter. I read only portions of it to the Assembly, but it is the gist of the letter. I am quite prepared to share that with the hon. member. The Securities Commission continues to operate and operate, I believe, well.

When he talks about sitting on a report, there is a press release . . .

The Speaker: We have a point of order on that particular matter. The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. The letter is one thing, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister table this report in the House immediately? Will she table the report?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I think he's looking for reports that I don't have, but I will table the press release – I think I have every right to do this – that states that there are two reports that have been provided to the part-time commissioners, one on February 16 and one on March 21. It states very clearly that the February 16 report addresses the complaints, the March 21 report addresses the responses to the complaints – that is common practice – and that the part-time commissioners will be reviewing both of those reports and making their report to the minister shortly. I am sitting on nothing or hiding nothing.

Dr. Taft: Well, once again, then, if she's sitting on nothing or hiding nothing, to use her words, why won't she table the two reports she's just referred to?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently the hon. Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand. I don't have the reports. The reports are in the hands of the commissioners, who requested those reports. The latest one, March 21: "The Part-Time Commissioners" – I'll read this – "will be reviewing the two Mack Reports and will be making their report to the Minister shortly." When I receive that report, I will respond.

The Speaker: The third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unemployed Alberta tradesmen and apprentices, aboriginals, youth, underemployed immigrants, and displaced farmers are all out of luck. They have all been incredibly shortchanged by this government's push to bring in you're-deported-if-you're-late three-year temporary foreign workers. The first 680 are already on their way. The instrument being used is the employer-dominated convenience association CLAC, which this government recognizes as a union. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: given that the Canada/Alberta agreement spreads the okay to all companies in the region if only one gets approval to hire temporary foreign workers, will this government rescind any approvals to date until all unemployed Albertans and Canadians are put to work?

Mr. Cardinal: Of course, Mr. Speaker, that's a very similar question that I got, I believe, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday now. It is an important question. Employment of Albertans is important because that is our top priority. Employment of Canadians is important; that is still our top priority. Employment of the other people mentioned is our top priority. But I want to address one issue, and that is in relation to who does the approvals in relation to foreign workers coming into Canada or Alberta: the federal Liberals. It's the federal government. The federal government controls the temporary foreign workers program, and if you have concerns about the administration of that program, you should contact the federal government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the same minister: given that the Treaty 8 chiefs of northern Alberta after a unanimous resolution called this government's temporary foreign worker policy, quote, explosive, unquote, will this government withdraw its support for this policy and put real resources behind training aboriginal Albertans?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, of course, when you're dealing with the First Nations, for example, they are, I know for a fact – I used to be the MLA for that particular part of the province at one time – tired of living in poverty. They want to participate in the economy in Alberta and other areas of Canada. The only way to eliminate poverty is by creating jobs, and that's not easy sometimes. But the jobs are there in that particular region. That is why our provincial policy is to ensure that if an industry is looking for employees, Albertans be given the first opportunity, which includes the aboriginal people and Canadians.

Mr. Backs: A second supplementary to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will this government stop foreign labour recruiters from

promoting to Alberta contractors the 18,500 recently fired employees of the Venezuelan national oil company and, instead, push to get qualified Albertans and Canadians actually working?

1:50

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I think only the Liberals would micromanage private companies when it comes to hiring.

The concern you mention, of course, again relates to the federal government's approval process. I think I filed in the House the other day the process these private industries have to go through in order to get foreign workers into Canada and into Alberta, and you can be assured it's a complicated and costly process, and it is not a top priority for the companies. It's not the top priority for the employees. It's definitely not a top priority for our government either.

The Speaker: The leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Police Service Investigation

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton Police Service is now conducting a criminal investigation into Edmonton's two daily newspapers resulting from the publication of police radio transcripts of a stakeout at the Overtime bar. This criminal investigation was launched in response to three complaints, at least two of which originated from within the police service itself. The EPS decision to pursue the Edmonton media for exposing police wrongdoing raises important questions. My question is to the Solicitor General. What policy does this minister propose to prevent police services from conducting investigations in pursuit of their own political interests?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The issue that the hon. member brings forward is the fact that there is an investigation, the allegation is that of a criminal nature, and the criminal investigation is being handled by the Edmonton Police Service. Whether it was in regard to the information leaked or utilized through the *Journal* or through the *Sun* or whether it was information that was leaked regarding any other investigation, it's the breach of the laws that is being investigated, and it would be improper to really discuss the investigation itself.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Why does the Solicitor General refuse to recognize that in publishing the police radio transcripts, the news media performed a valuable public service and should not in turn be targeted by police?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member in the fact that the media have a tremendous role to play in providing information to all Albertans and all Canadians, for that matter. One of the issues in this case is the fact that there is respect of the freedom of information and protection of privacy over the police radio system. That's one of the areas at issue.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If this is indeed a legitimate investigation and given that the Solicitor General

himself read and commented on the Overtime police radio transcripts, does this not now make the Solicitor General an accessory after the fact?

Mr. Cenaiko: Hundreds of thousands of Albertans out there read that same newspaper article, Mr. Speaker, so I really can't answer that question. I can tell you, though, that as the Edmonton Police Service receives any allegation of criminal investigation, they have to conduct an investigation to determine if in fact the allegation has any merit to it before they proceed with meeting with the Crown's office.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Taxation Policy

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been leading the way in tax relief for big business and the corporate world because it understands the burden and drain on the economy of taxes. I believe Alberta is also leading the way with its fair flat tax and higher personal exemption of \$14,500; however, on the 29th of January, 2001, Premier Klein promised Albertans that the only way taxes are going in this province is down. In the 2002 budget provincial taxes were raised by \$541 million. Most of those tax increases are still in place today. Will this government fully reverse these tax increases in this our centennial budget? To the hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there will be a budget in this Legislature in the very near future. In fact, I would be pleased to share with the House now that our intended budget day is April 13. At that time I would anticipate that all of those questions that the hon. member has raised will be deliberated.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Will this minister take another major step forward to boost the economy here in Alberta by removing the burden and drain on the income of all hard-working Albertans by eliminating the health care premium tax and raising the basic person exemption to \$20,000?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would ask the hon. member to just take some time prior to our budget deliberations to review what personal exemptions are in all 10 provinces and territories in this country. I think he would quickly find that not only are Alberta's personal exemptions the highest; we treat the spousal exemption much better, much differently than other provinces.

As far as a commitment, as I indicated, we will have a budget speech in this House on the 13th. We will have the required and appropriate days to deliberate that, and I look forward to the hon. member getting into that debate.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will ask the minister one other question. Will this government put the people of Alberta first, ahead of government and big business, in their centennial budget and resume its proper role as we go forward into this next century to serve and protect the freedoms of Alberta rather than tax and grow the branches of government by adopting a plan to increase . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, there are about four questions now.

Mr. Hinman: . . . per capita funding to local government, thereby allowing them to reduce the mill rate, stimulating the strengthening and growing . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I really look forward to the hon. member participating in the budget debate because I think he's got a good part of his speech on that particular section written. It will be very good, I think, to have that debate and that dialogue. But, again, before we enter into that, I invite the hon. member to become very well informed about the considerable tax advantage that people who work, live, and raise their families in this province enjoy today. It is envied across the country. There's no question about it.

Mr. Speaker, we have as a government and under the leadership of our Premier long stated that a good fiscal environment, that a competitive tax environment would indeed speed up economic growth. This province is sure evidence that good tax policies, good fiscal policies work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Automobile Insurance Rates

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 18, '05, the Minister of Finance asked the Alberta Automobile Insurance Rate Board to review premiums for compulsory auto insurance. I understand that today a response has been issued by the board supporting voluntary reductions that insurers are filing. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. What improvements will drivers see to their auto insurance premiums with the changes now being requested by industry?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, in fact I do have a news release which I will be pleased to table at the appropriate time for tablings in the House from the Automobile Insurance Rate Board. As I indicated to the hon. member opposite yesterday, I expected to have a response to this in the next day or two. Well, today we do have that response.

What the Automobile Insurance Rate Board informs all of us is that a number of companies, representing at least 50 per cent of the business in the Alberta market, have filed for premium reductions. They range from 4 to 7 per cent, and they will take effect between April 1 and July 1. Other insurers have also indicated that they intend to file as well. So for our insured public this means, I think, very good news and certainly rate reductions.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: does this action go far enough? I mean, is this what was recommended by the Automobile Insurance Rate Board?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the rate board does comment in its news release on that specifically, and with your permission I would just read a very brief sentence. This is from the board chair.

With major insurers voluntarily reducing premiums on average in line with the board recommendation, it's not necessary to mandate

reductions . . . At this time the board is recommending the minister accept reductions that are voluntary and reflect the individual positions of insurers, rather than mandate reductions.

So for this present time I will accept that advice.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:00

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the same minister: will all drivers, including commercial drivers, see these reductions?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, these reductions apply to private passenger vehicle policies below the grid, which is about 80 per cent of the market. I think that is certainly what we expected to see.

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

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Private member's Bill 202 has raised the hopes of parents across the province because it would provide them with a tool to parent their children who are experiencing a breakdown and abdication of their lives to a chemical. The government has recently stated that it will not support this bill with the legal backing it requires. My question is to the Minister of Children's Services. Given that this bill is not receiving the support that it needs, what are this ministry's plans to help parents aid their drug-addicted children?

The Speaker: Hon. members, this bill is still before the House. It's still in the process of being dealt with. We don't know what the resolution of the House will be with respect to this. The question is very premature.

Hon. member, go to your supplementary.

Mrs. Mather: To the Minister of Justice: given that the problem of crystal meth and other drugs has existed for years in urban and rural areas, why is this ministry claiming this bill has come too quickly?

The Speaker: Once again, this bill is still the property of the House. It's before the House. It hasn't been dealt with in the House yet. I think it's premature again.

Go to your third question, hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: To the Minister of Children's Services: given that this ministry is charged with the protection of children in Alberta, is there an intention to work towards receiving government support for the intention?

The Speaker: The hon. minister if you wish.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can let the hon. member know that the government of Alberta and the Ministry of Children's Services support all children who are in need. I think that reflects back on the PCHIP legislation when it hit this House as a private member's bill many years ago and then became a government bill. I can tell the hon. member that this minister supports the intent of the bill as do many members who are sitting around, and we'll look forward to the debate.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Protection of Personal Information

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While not frequent, we do hear about public information entrusted in the hands of government making its way to the public. My first question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Given recent vulnerabilities identified federally and ongoing concerns about the security of private information, what are we doing to ensure that the Alberta government computer systems are safe from attack?

Mr. Ouellette: First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta places a high priority on protecting the privacy rights of Albertans. There are a number of measures in place to reduce risk. These include policies and standards, building a training and awareness program, designing a security architecture, and monitoring security attacks against our systems.

Over the last year there have been marked security improvements; however, it would be foolish to ever think any computer is invincible. The key is to stay one step ahead by continually changing and improving our computer systems and educating our workforce. We accomplish this in part by being one of the only jurisdictions in Canada to have information technology staff devoted exclusively to privacy protection.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is again to the same minister. What steps are we taking to protect personal information?

Mr. Ouellette: The government of Alberta is a leader in the development of information technology standards for personal information protection. In fact, its privacy design standards won an international award in 2003. We've just introduced a new privacy planning tool which gives ICT project teams for all ministries recommendations and advice on how to protect personal information at the earliest stages of project planning. This new tool, which includes an online questionnaire, is intended to be used by every ministry for all ICT projects. The new privacy planning tool has been almost two years in the works, and I'm confident that it will prove to be yet another successful project contributing to an effective, efficient government of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is again to the same minister. Recently, March 15 of 2005, the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner issued a news release warning that newer digital photocopiers and fax machines pose a security risk when returned at the end of their lease. How is the government responding to this latest risk?

Mr. Ouellette: This is a relatively recent discovery within the last year, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to say that the Alberta government is out in front of it. In fact, it was my ministry that first contacted the Privacy Commissioner to advise that this might be a problem. Since the discovery my ministry has now made it standard practice to ensure that all hard drives and memories are removed from the digital photocopiers and fax machines prior to returning these machines to the vendors. I'm pleased to report that in its news release the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner singled out the Alberta government's actions against this potential security threat as a good example for other organizations to follow.

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

Fatality Inquiries

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good governments have a reputation for being open and transparent. Unfortunately, this government does not. Now they are proposing government policy intended to seriously limit the role of the public in supposedly public fatality inquiries. My question is to the Minister of Justice. Can the minister justify the rationale behind prohibiting members of the media and others such as advocacy groups from being invited to participate in supposedly public fatality inquiries?

Mr. Stevens: Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was second reading with respect to amendments on the fatality inquiries legislation, and part of those amendments dealt with a provision which would define interested parties for those that have a direct and substantial interest. The role of the media in this public inquiry process is to attend and to report; in other words, to report the news with respect to this event. Parties who are interested parties or persons under the legislation have an opportunity to participate by having counsel asking questions, assisting in defining the scope of the inquiry. In my estimation, that is not the role of the media in a typical situation.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm not sure if this bill is before the House today or tomorrow, but if it is before the House, the purpose of question period is not to debate bills.

Proceed, hon. member.

Dr. B. Miller: To the same minister: was the role of the media in previous public inquiries what prompted the change in direction of government policy?

The Speaker: Once again, now, we've got a bill before the House, and the purpose of question period is not to debate the bill. That's why we have an agenda for that.

So, hon. member, proceed with your third one.

Dr. B. Miller: Well, it's not up today.

The Speaker: Well, I'm sorry. It's before the House.

Hon. member, proceed with your third question.

Dr. B. Miller: Okay. The third question: can the minister explain to this House and explain to the members of the media who are asking the question – so it has some urgency – why this government is closing another door? Why is this government closing another door to open and transparent government?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, this question relates to something that is a public inquiry. It is open to the public. The public have the opportunity to attend. They can sit in and witness what is going on. They can report what is going on. There is absolutely nothing in the suggestions that we have put forward by way of amendment that in any fashion is going to impact upon the ability of the media or members of the public to sit in that courtroom and observe what is going on.

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

2:10

BSE Testing

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The BSE crisis has taken its toll on Alberta's producers. Producers are certainly feeling it in my constituency, in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne. This past weekend I met with some very confused and frustrated farmers. They explained to me that the gold standard BSE testing in Canada is more sensitive, even as sensitive as 15 times that of what's used in the United States. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. If our beef industries are so linked, why are we not using the same standard of testing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question because it is somewhat of a confusion point amongst a number of our producers. I'd like to point out that the gold standard test that the member mentioned is a confirmatory test. In other words, we have preliminary tests that we do, and in both countries those preliminary tests are using the same methodology. So on the preliminary test we are the same, but on the gold standard test both countries are using testing standards that have been developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health, the OIE. On that basis, the guidelines allow for some variations on the gold test standards in the lab, but it would appear that both testing procedures will give you the same result.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, then, given that Alberta exports 75 per cent of Canada's beef, why is there not an Alberta solution to this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous response, the guidelines are set out by the World Organisation for Animal Health, or the OIE. Because we are trying to make sure that all of our science is transparent and be recognized in the world as following transparent science in relation to testing, that's the test that we follow. In addition to that, in Canada it's the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that directs BSE testing and ensures that all of the labs are conducting BSE testing at the same high standard.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, given that Alberta and most provinces import beef, then, from the U.S., will the minister press the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for a review of testing standards with the intent to harmonize the standard that's used in both Canada and the U.S.?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I said earlier, we are following OIE testing guidelines as is the United States, but as the member rightly points out, we are an integrated marketplace in North America. It would be beneficial if we were working from the same playbook, as it were, using similar protocols. I know that the CFIA is aware of these differences in the testing protocols between our two countries, and they are, as part of our ongoing negotiations with the U.S., working on harmonizing those protocols as well as other issues as it relates to trade.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Opening of Alberta Office in Washington

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government's hypocrisy is as blinding as the American Fourth of July fireworks display. If Ottawa gets within a country mile of provincial jurisdiction, the Tory caucus howls, yet this government feels free to track mud all over Canada's jurisdiction. Yesterday the Premier made a series of comments about Canadian foreign policy on issues ranging from missile defence and weaponization of space to oil drilling in the Alaskan wildlife refuge. My questions are to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Given the Premier's comment on missile defence yesterday, is it this government's position for Alberta to have an independent foreign policy?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the Premier yesterday attended the opening of our Washington office, which is collocated in the Canadian embassy, and had commented on various questions that arose with respect to federal policy. He made it very clear that although these are his own personal feelings, much of this rested either within the federal government jurisdiction or the American government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I ask the minister: is the Premier's attack on Canadian foreign policy on foreign soil a prelude to this government planning to announce a unilateral declaration of sovereignty?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, someone has to speak up for Alberta's interests, and the best person to do that is the Premier of this great province of Alberta.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that yesterday's trade office opening, dismally planned by the man earning \$450,000 a year, was held during the Easter break, when much of the Washington press corps was in Texas, will the minister share with this House exactly what the Premier's ghost town junket is accomplishing for the taxpayers?

Mr. Stelmach: With glee. Mr. Speaker, let me clarify the opening preamble, another mistake on behalf of the hon. member. About two months ago we actually issued a press release with all of the costs of opening the office in Washington. The salary of our envoy is that of a senior official within government, and it's within the \$250,000 range with all of the expenses, not the \$450,000 that the hon. member mentioned. The cost of the office – the start-up costs, staffing, two other people – is roughly \$1 million, and that's what's been budgeted. Any other payments made to any other official, including our envoy, will be duly recorded and presented in this House in our annual reports. So I suggest that they read at least the press report, that we were very open with the total costs of opening the office, and they're nowhere near what the hon. gentleman has talked about.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Medication for Seniors

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A report released today by the University of Lethbridge found that approximately one-third of residents in 24 long-term care facilities in Alberta had received

psychotropic drugs in the last two years. Last week when I raised the issue of medication for seniors, according to *Hansard* the minister passed the buck to the physicians and directed me to take it up with them. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given the findings of this report and given that this minister is responsible for the health care system, what is the minister doing to ensure that these drugs are being used appropriately and only when necessary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The intent of comments made previously was to note that if guardians or families of persons in care are concerned about the prescriptions, they should check with the physicians. The physicians are responsible for prescribing the drugs.

But let me further expand on some of the issues surrounding accountability. The health region has mechanisms to monitor the appropriate use of medications. The Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee, comprised of physicians, psychiatrists, pharmacists, and other health care professionals, develops clinical guidelines to ensure the appropriate use of all medications. These research findings that have been illuminated by the hon. member opposite will be reviewed by the committee. I'd say, further, that the region is implementing a number of additional practice guidelines to ensure appropriate use of medications.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. My supplemental question to the same minister: how does the minister explain the findings of the report that less than half of some psychotropic drug prescriptions had the accompanying documentation on why the drug was being used?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in the review I think that some of the detailed answers, such as the question that the member opposite is asking, will come to light, and I'd be prepared to comment at the time that we hear further from the committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Given that last reply, I would like one more thing for you to think about. Given that the report recommends further research, is the minister prepared to invest department resources into finding out exactly why seniors are being prescribed so many psychotropic drugs?

2:20

Ms Evans: I think the hon. member has made a very valuable suggestion. We can certainly look at that in terms of the increased and improved quality of care in long-term care facilities. With the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports we are working together to try and improve not only the continuum of care for those fragile elderly that need our support but to examine all aspects of drug use. Perhaps it's premature to say, but we are embarking on a further detailed examination of how drugs are used generally by seniors with a view to expand their learning about the appropriate use of drugs, not only those prescription drugs but those off-the-shelf drugs that frequently are prescribed as alternative therapies to seniors.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Protection of Personal Information

(continued)

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A constituent has informed me of a situation where a municipality is considering a bylaw that would require pawnshops to provide client information to the RCMP as part of an effort to reduce crime involving stolen goods. My first question is to the Minister of Government Services. Does the minister have any concerns about this as it pertains to Alberta's privacy legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All businesses within the province have to operate under the protection of personal information and privacy. As such, the operations have to only collect information that is necessary for them to continue operating their businesses, and if they collect that information, they have to be very, very careful how they store it and who they give it to.

I would be very concerned if a municipality was passing a bylaw that would require all of the customers to give the information that seems to be implied by the proposed bylaw because if they're collecting from all customers, then in fact they may be collecting information that is unnecessary and may be violating a person's privacy.

Mr. Johnson: My supplemental question is to the same minister. What should pawnshop owners or other businesses do if they are being asked by the police to disclose information about their customers?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, under the legislation there is the ability for businesses to give information to law enforcement agencies. However, once again, it is very specific. The police force or whatever law enforcement agency it might be could be operating under the provincial legislation, or they could be operating under the federal legislation. They would have to determine that. In any case, it would have to be very specific for the investigation of an incident. So I would really caution any municipality that's considering doing this that they be very familiar with the personal information protection legislation.

Mr. Johnson: My second supplemental question is to the Solicitor General. Even if there were no specific municipal bylaws, can the owners of pawnshops be required to provide police with personal information about their customers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing in the province's privacy legislation specific to pawnshops, but as my colleague pointed out, Alberta's personal information legislation does provide the fact that they must disclose information to the police with regard to an investigation. So if it was required during the course of a criminal investigation, the information would have to be disclosed to them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Physical Activities in Schools

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rising tide of childhood obesity is a threat not only to children's health and the future

of the health system but also to their ability to engage fully in the learning opportunities at school. Many schools are struggling to accommodate the new requirements for 30 minutes of daily physical activity due to the lack of facilities, the lack of qualified teachers, and scheduling difficulties. To the Minister of Education: when will the government provide a solid action plan backed by adequate resources to implement the mandated 30 minutes of daily physical activity recommended by the Learning Commission and subsequently accepted by this government?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, obesity amongst children and, for that matter, amongst anyone in the population is a very important issue and one that we're taking very seriously. That is one reason why we have looked at one way of reversing that trend.

In response to the hon. member's question, I did send out a clarification on this issue a week or two ago to all the school boards and school trustees so that it could be communicated to the particular jurisdictions as to how we intend to proceed with the implementation of the required 30 minutes of daily physical activity as part of the school programming, starting in grades 1 through 9 this fall. In response to that, the public so far and the teachers and the parents and so on involved have indicated that it's a good idea to do that. I've also indicated that we would not be asking the day to be stretched or elongated to accommodate it. This will be done within the school day and at this point does not require additional facilities to be built or additional equipment to be bought or anything to that nature.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The message hasn't got out in St. Albert.

To the same minister: given the commission's clear intention that this activity be integrated into a larger wellness initiative and supervised by appropriately trained educators, why is the minister claiming in this Assembly that everything from recess and field trips to lunchtime roughhousing will fulfill the requirement?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member first of all to check with his local school board or school boards for the area that he represents. I'm sure that they've got the communiqué by now. It went out, as I say, a week or two ago.

Specific to his question, I think it's important to realize that in September '06 we will be bringing forward a new health and wellness framework, a new curriculum, as it were, that will take the best of what we are already doing in the school system and adding to it some new initiatives to help improve overall student health and wellness and their overall outcomes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplemental to the same minister: how can you assure schools and parents that the activities will remain planned, supervised, and safe if indeed recess and lunchtime activities are going to fulfill this requirement of yours, sir?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I indicated in the communication – let's make it clear to everyone – to the school superintendents and to the school boards, who in turn will communicate the message to the teachers, that we're talking about daily physical activity, which in the simplest form can be as simple as bending and stretching and running and jumping and hiking and walking and so on or as complicated, on the other hand, as a full phys ed component, which is in the system now as well.

Now, should a field trip require walking to get to the location, that is a physical activity. Should recess involve some outdoor activity of running around the schoolyard, such as children are apt to do particularly in the younger ages, that too will qualify as will noon hour activities as will after school activities.

The important difference, however, is that we're asking teachers to simply make the explanation, to make the connection with students that what they are doing is a physical activity and alert them to the benefits of that activity.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Border Closure to U.S. Cattle

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the minister of agriculture. As all members of the Assembly know, the United States border is closed to Canadian cattle. What members may not be as aware of is the fact that the Canadian border is also closed to U.S. cattle coming up here. For the most part that wouldn't matter except in specific cases such as a bull stud, for an example that I have in my riding. He is no longer able to import the Holstein bulls that he requires for his genetic bull stud. My question to the minister is: being that the CFIA said at the end of February that perhaps we could re-examine that, is this being done, and if not, are you as the minister lobbying them to open that border?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is just one of the many issues that is surrounding the BSE issue. I can certainly understand and sympathize with the producers who are suffering from a limited supply of genetics or breeding stock, but, you know, we have to be careful what we ask for. The reason is that the rest of the world is watching what we're doing in Alberta and Canada and across our border.

Throughout the entire process we have been working closely with the U.S. to harmonize our animal disease surveillance regulations. We've been ensuring our regulations are synchronized to make it much easier for other international markets to reopen their borders to North American beef. If we moved ahead without the U.S., I think there could be some very potentially negative ramifications to our other international trading partners, so we have to be careful about that. That could actually delay the border opening further for both countries, and that is a serious concern of ours.

2:30

Ms Haley: Well, my last question, Mr. Speaker, is this: we're asking the Americans to open their border. Is it not time or would it not be appropriate to start showing some good faith here and perhaps start to ease the restrictions of our own border closure?

Mr. Horner: Again, Mr. Speaker, we are working on pushing to reopen the border to our cattle because the science supports it. Likewise, we're working very hard to help the USDA with its legal challenges in that regard. If they're successful, it is going to allow them to implement their proposed rule permitting live young cattle crossing the border. At the same time we are working with the CFIA and the Canadian federal minister to work on harmonizing our regulations on both sides of the border.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, and in answer to the member's question, we are working on making sure that we're doing everything we can to ensure normalized trade relations as soon as we possibly can, but

we don't want to do anything that's going to jeopardize either one of those two things happening.

head:

Recognitions

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds I'll call upon the first of seven members to participate.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Jennifer Heil

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievements of a very special Albertan from the community of Spruce Grove. Jennifer Heil did Alberta proud last weekend when she won a gold medal in dual moguls while competing at the world freestyle skiing championships in Finland.

Mr. Speaker, Jennifer is a shining example of a world-class athlete and a fierce competitor, a true Albertan. She is leading the pack in her sport, and even though she has only been on the world circuit for four years, she has won nine World Cups and is the number one ranked female mogul skier in the world. She is absolutely outstanding, and we will all certainly have our eyes on her next year as she races for gold in the 2006 Olympics in Torino, Italy.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Jennifer on her outstanding accomplishment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mohamed El Mais

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise this afternoon and recognize the achievement of an extraordinary 6th grader from Calgary. Hailed as Calgary's CanSpell king, Mohamed El Mais won the 2005 *Calgary Herald* CanWest CanSpell regional championship last Saturday.

The final showdown came between Mohamed and runner-up Matthew Fergel, with Mohamed braving the pressure and edging out his opponent in an exciting finale. The win, Mr. Speaker, has earned Mohamed the opportunity to represent the Calgary area at the Scripps Howard national bee in Washington, DC, in May of this year. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the achievement has earned both Mohamed and Matthew the opportunity to compete at the CanWest CanSpell national spelling bee final in Ottawa in April.

We wish both boys the best of luck in the upcoming competitions. Thank you.

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

Medicine Hat Boston Pizza Royals Hockey Team Foremost High School Falcons Basketball Team

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize two teams from southeast Alberta.

The Medicine Hat Boston Pizza Royals pee wee AA hockey team won the provincial championship this past weekend in Fort Saskatchewan. The Royals, coached by Chad Stadnicki, Kelley Dean, Warren King, and Darcy Haaf, went two and one, losing their only game to St. Paul. In the final game against Fort Saskatchewan and going up 3-0, they fought off a late drive to win the final 3-2. I'd like to congratulate the Royals for their successful season and for winning the championship.

Mr. Speaker, the other team I'd like to recognize is the Foremost high school Falcons basketball team, who won the 1A provincial championship this weekend in Ridge Valley just east of Grande Prairie. The Falcons, coached by Garth Van Gaalen and Cole Dixon, went three for three, beating Hay Lakes in the first game,

Ridge Valley in a close game in the second, and blowing away the team from Lundbreck in the final with good defence and pressure, winning 79-50. I'd like to congratulate the Foremost Falcons for their successful season and for winning the provincial championship.

Thank you.

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

Team Martin

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize some exceptional Albertans.

Last weekend two Edmonton-based rinks, skipped by Randy Ferbey and Kevin Martin, squared off in the final of the Canada Cup. Kevin Martin was successful, and not only did he win the Canada Cup but he secured for himself and his team a berth in the upcoming Olympic trials.

On behalf of this House and all Albertans I'd like to congratulate these fine Albertans. Thank you.

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

Meals on Wheels

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pride that I ask this Assembly to recognize an outstanding service, Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels is a not-for-profit organization that relies on volunteers to provide nutritional meals which promote health, well-being, and independence for their clients.

Volunteers who deliver meals include students gaining work experience, parents with their preschool children, retirees, corporate teams promoting community involvement, ESL students and new Canadians, and shift workers. Meals are heart healthy and diabetic friendly, tasty with generous portions and lots of choice, and are modified to meet individual needs.

This program offers more than just a meal. It offers friendship and connection with the community as well as independence for many housebound clients. Thank you.

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

Justin Yaassoub

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the achievements of Justin Yaassoub. Justin attends Queen Elizabeth high school and I'm proud to say is a member of my constituency of Edmonton-Decore.

Justin was recently recognized as one of this province's Great Kids award recipients. Justin's involvement ranged from the Bright Nights festival, Food Bank volunteer, DARE program mentor with the Northmount elementary school, raising money for his renaissance program for the school, tsunami fundraising for the Red Cross, as well as involvement with the political process in the last provincial election and with the campaign as well.

I'd like Justin to receive one of the centennial medallions that we're able to hand out to distinguished Albertans. I'd like Justin to rise with his father, Ali, to receive the traditional warm welcome as well and be recognized.

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

Promotion of Peace

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize several groups in Alberta whose goals and demands are echoed across the globe.

On Saturday, March 19, peace activists around the world took part in rallies, marches, and other public protests to wage peace against the illegal and aggressive policies of the Bush administration around the world and particularly in Iraq. I took part in the rally and the march that was organized by activists here in Edmonton as part of a global day of action. Similar activities have been organized by groups such as CANDIL, Canada Democracy and International Law in Calgary, and the Wetaskiwin Citizens for Peace.

Right here in Edmonton there are a number of groups who deserve recognition for their efforts to promote peace. These groups include the Edmonton Coalition against War and Racism, Project Ploughshares, and the U of A Coalition against War and Racism.

This week saw the sad occasion of the second anniversary of the American invasion of Iraq. The war in Iraq, which was wholeheartedly supported by the Conservative government, has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians. Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here from some good Albertans from Drayton Valley, Newbrook, Vegreville, Alder Flats, Chestermere, Redwater, Morinville, Spruce Grove, and Stony Plain calling on the government to

prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: [underemployed] Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have also a petition, signed by 104 Albertans. This petition reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

2:40

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, as well, rise today to present a petition containing 103 names, and the petition reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Mr. Speaker, these 103 names are comprised of mostly citizens of Calgary but also many from Lethbridge and other areas in southern Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to submit this petition with regard to the undersigned, approximately 106 signatures here of people who would “prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of the oil sands facilities.”

head:

Introduction of Bills

Bill 35

Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 35, the Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill will allow private-sector pension plan members better access to information and more transparency. In addition, it gives the superintendent of insurance more effective ways of ensuring that their funds are secured and that the plans are properly funded and liquid.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 35 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have actually four tablings. I'll be quick. The first is the Automobile Insurance Rate Board news release that I spoke to earlier today.

The second is the report on premium redundancy, which I received from the Automobile Insurance Rate Board and which I have referred to in answering a number of questions.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a copy of a press release from Alan D. Hunter, QC, who is counsel for part-time commissioners, regarding the Securities Commission discussion.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would table the required number of copies of the letter that I referred to earlier that I wrote to the members of the Alberta Securities Commission, requesting their investigation and advice.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the requisite number of copies of responses to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre relative to questions in question period yesterday, essentially identifying that private CT and MRI clinics are not part of Alberta's public health care system. Questions about safety and value are medical issues, and we rely on the College of Physicians and Surgeons to determine the appropriate use of this technology. So I have those.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the annual report of the Livestock Identification Services Ltd., which incorporates the Brand Act, the Livestock Identification and Brand Inspection Act, the Livestock and Livestock Products Act, and the Stray Animals Act, and their associated audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the required copies and wish to file the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy annual report 2003-2004.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour today of tabling the requisite number of copies of a unanimous House leaders' agreement relative to two items for the Standing Orders.

The first is relative to an agreement with respect to the Members' Statements and Recognitions which would give effect to an agreement whereby the current Members' Statements and Recognitions would be replaced by a new agreement for six members' statements per day, two minutes each, apportioned in accordance with the schedule attached to the agreement.

The second relates to Motions Other than Government Motions to be heard on Monday evening, such that one motion would be heard each Monday evening, debated for up to 60 minutes with five minutes for close, and then moving to government business thereafter. If a motion was dealt with earlier than the 60 minutes, it would automatically move to the government business thereafter. So the House leaders' agreement provides for those two changes and purports to come into effect immediately. In fact, it says it comes into effect on March 21.

So in tabling this document, there are two things I would like to point out to the House. First, I would want to request unanimous consent to putting into effect the changes proposed by the House leaders' agreement, copies of which the House leader of each party has and the independent member has, and secondly to address the issue of having it come into effect on April 4 rather than on March 21 as stated in the agreement. I think all members would agree to that. I would point out one error in week six and seven of the table, where numbers have been transposed, and I've corrected the numbers on the filed copy. It doesn't change the overall allocation other than to correctly give the third party an allocation where one hadn't been given, but it doesn't change the overall numbers.

So I'd ask, Mr. Speaker, if we could have unanimous consent for the House leaders' agreement to be put into effect effective April 4.

The Speaker: Hon. members, all of the documentation with respect to parliaments' historical citations and notations can be given by the chair with respect to this matter, but the chair is going to make comment before we proceed on this matter today.

The chair has indicated on several occasions that it is a positive step when House leaders can agree on how the business of the Assembly is to be conducted. I'm not sure if all members of the House have seen this agreement, and it's very difficult to deal with something that members haven't seen, so I'm going to sit down now at this point and see that the document be circulated to all members. Pending that, we'll recognize the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table the requisite number of copies of the memorandum of understanding for the entry of temporary foreign workers for projects in the Alberta oil sands, specifically referencing the fact of details of comprehensive plans to ensure that available and qualified Canadians are made aware of the employment opportunities in the project and have an opportunity to apply. I would really ask the members

in the Legislative Assembly before they ask questions on matters such as this that they actually read the agreement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder: tabling returns and reports.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several documents to table today, each of which is in protest of the recent dismissal of one Don Hill, who formerly hosted the *Wild Rose Forum* on CBC Radio. I'm tabling the appropriate number of copies, number one, of a news article by Penney Kome, dated Monday, March 7, 2005; number two, an open letter from Bev Muendel-Atherstone; and, number three, a second open letter, this one from Bob Ware and Diana Hobson, who are key organizers for The Friends of Don Hill campaign.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today before you and this esteemed Assembly to table, with permission, the appropriate number of copies of letters I received electronically from five concerned citizens of this province all expressing their support for a total smoking ban in public places. The first is from a Mr. Rob Virgil, and it's a copy of a letter that he wrote to the Premier urging him to show some leadership in this area and support a total ban; the second one is from Garry Dewar, and it's a copy of a message that he sent to the hon. Minister of Health, again supporting a total ban on smoking in public places; the third is from a Dr. Kate Reed, who is a physician, emphasizing the risk of second-hand smoke; the fourth is from a Ms Lois Kelly, who disagrees with allowing bars, casinos, and bingos to have smoking; and the fifth is a similar one, from a Ms Linda McGeachy, voicing similar concerns with bars, bingo halls, and casinos and supporting a full smoking ban in public places.

Thank you.

2:50

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of correspondence to my office from a constituent by the name of Gloria Spooner, who is a teacher assistant at Ellerslie Campus North, and she's raising some serious concerns she has regarding what she perceives to be the lack of a coordinated distribution system of information and equipment resources for special needs students in the province.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in this House and present five copies of a letter from the Minister of Human Resources and Employment to one of his constituents outlining the policy with the Alberta/Canadian agreement on temporary foreign workers and indicating that relevant construction unions must be consulted before a permit is issued.

Also, I'd like to present five copies each of five letters protesting the temporary foreign worker policy of the government.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today, which is a document from Enron Wholesale Services' legal department. It's a monthly report, November 2000, and it is a synopsis of significant transactions and matters.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in question period today there was a question raised by the hon. the Leader of the Opposition to the Minister of Finance, and I'm rising under Standing Orders 23(h), 23(I), and 23(j).

Citation 23(h), Mr. Speaker, indicates that a member will be called to order "if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member makes allegations against another member." Under 23(I) it requires that the "member be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member imputes false or unavowed motives to another member" and (j) "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm of a mind in raising this point of order, which I raised during question period, to also advise the Minister of Finance that she might consider raising this matter as a question of personal privilege. Under *Beauchesne's* 64, "the House has occasionally taken notice of attacks on individual Members," and if you look at other sections of *Beauchesne's* on pages 19, 20, and 21, it reflects on the integrity of a member, and it's clear from *Beauchesne's* in that context that castigations of the character of a member do impugn a member's ability to carry out their duty. I think the aspersion that was cast this afternoon is of such a significant nature that I will in fact be having a discussion with the Minister of Finance with respect to whether she should raise a question of privilege.

But I thought it was appropriate to at the earliest possible opportunity raise the point of order under 23(h), (I), and (j) because in the questions – and I even hesitate to repeat the allegation – centring around allegations that had been made with respect to the chair, I believe, and executive director of the Securities Commission – I believe that was the context – and allegations made with respect to their conduct, which the Minister of Finance had indicated she had referred appropriately for investigation, the hon. member asked: what is she trying to hide or who is she trying to protect? The words I wrote down were: "Who is she trying to protect?"

Now, in that context, Mr. Speaker, in the context of allegations – and I don't know what the allegations were, but they're obviously of a serious nature with respect to a body which is an independent commission to oversee the effect of our securities market in this province. Allegations of that nature are so serious as to go to the integrity of the person being addressed, and this question was posed in a manner in which it was very clear: "Who is she trying to protect?"

That is an allegation which if it was made outside the House might well be the substance of a lawsuit. It ought not to be made inside the House. I think it is so serious, Mr. Speaker, that I think the hon. member should be admonished now, and I would encourage or at least I would talk to the Minister of Finance about whether she should bring a question of privilege.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on this point of order.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I rise and on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview withdraw that remark and apologize to the entire Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, one of the traditions here is that if comments are withdrawn and sincere apologies are offered, the matter is generally dealt with. The Government House Leader is quite clear that the statement that was attached – and this is not paraphrasing; this comes from the Blues – “Why was the Finance Minister sitting on this report for that length of time? Who is she trying to protect?” clearly would have violated all of our rules, all of our traditions, all of the historical precedents, and there would have been no alternative but to find the appropriate ruling that it was a question of order. Whether or not anything else transpires is subject to the future.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 13

Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to move second reading of Bill 13, the Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this fairly short bill does three very important things. In the past there have been significant disagreements between railways and road authorities over the maintenance of rail crossings. The act currently provides a mechanism for resolving these disputes over the cost of construction of the actual road crossing; however, there is no mechanism that deals with the ongoing maintenance of the particular crossing. Bill 13 corrects this oversight and basically states that either party, either the railway or the municipality, can now apply to the Land Compensation Board for a ruling.

Under this bill disputes over construction costs will also be heard by the Land Compensation Board. They're currently being heard by the Surface Rights Board, and in reality the Land Compensation Board is a better board to deal with it as they're the ones that typically deal with costs. The Land Compensation Board has indicated that it will do this.

Bill 13 also sets out a 30-day time limit to appeal decisions made by the provincial railway administrator. What has been in place up to this point is that there has been no time limit on the appeal, so an appeal could occur six months to six years afterwards. This now sets it up for a 30-day time limit, again, which seems to be very consistent.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are only relatively few things that are done with this bill. It is a very important bill. I'll just put a plug in for short-line railways. They're very important to the future of this province, and I see a huge future for short-line railways in this province.

With that, I would like to move second reading of Bill 13, the Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of concerns about this Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005.

I've given it two potential other names: the Alberta Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz or Government Planes, Trains, and Automobiles.

On the surface Bill 13 appears rather innocuous, much like the barely exposed tip of an iceberg in Canada's arctic waters. Bill 13's changes appear to be of the grammatical variety, changing or to and as well as spelling out the powers of the operator of the railway, the road authority, and the Land Compensation Board to resolve disputes arising from land acquisition rights where railways cross roads, this resolution to take place, as the hon. member, indicated within 30 days.

3:00

My concerns lie primarily with section 30, number 6 on the second page, which outlines the minister of transportation's role in making regulations affecting the Surface Rights Board and the Expropriation Act. Viewed in isolation, this act appears to facilitate land disputes. The other side of this Janus coin has to do with the government-sanctioned potential land grab. Whether given the season of Easter or in my role as opposition infrastructure watchdog, I'm going to play the role of a doubting Thomas and enter into speculation of the land variety. If my speculations come even close to the truth, then the value of Alberta muskeg is about to go through the roof.

While I do not normally engage in conspiracy theorizing, when you start to connect the dots, a pattern emerges which becomes a railroad-to-riches map leading to Fort McMurray. A number of questions have to be asked, the answers to which are currently cloaked under FOIP declarations. For example, what was Rod Love, who was a private consultant for a company promoting a rail link to Fort McMurray, doing on a government plane which flew to Fort McMurray the same week in which the Premier later floated the plan of a proposed railway to Fort McMurray? Was this chance circumstance, star alignment, or is the government back in the business of being in business, that it claims to have abandoned?

Unanswered question 2 has to do with another floated trial balloon. Is this an extension of the roads for royalties or a type of railroads for royalties spinoff? This wouldn't be the first time that a government regulation enriched government members and their connected Conservative supporters at the taxpayers' expense. In 1992 when Rick Orman reduced royalty levels by two-thirds, a number of government-seated MLAs, who were later referred to as Tory oil, benefited directly by the reduced royalties they had to pay on their gas and oil leases.

Is the royalty rail or road link to Fort McMurray already a done deal? Will it follow in the tracks of an already existing northern railway, or has an alternate route already been surveyed and staked? Has the land necessary already been purchased by a government-friendly P3 company in anticipation of being awarded a nonbid government contract?

Is the purpose of this act to give the minister the power of expropriation of the remaining parcels of land, which reluctant muskeg managers have refused to part with? How arm's length is the Land Compensation Board from the Alberta government? Is its arm's length longer or shorter than the supposedly independent Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, which receives 60 per cent of its operating budget from the private industry over which it sits in judgment? With other funding coming from the government, is it any wonder that in over 97 per cent of the cases the EUB rules in favour of private oil and gas drilling interests against the wish of affected public intervenors? Will this independent Land Compensation Board simply rubber-stamp government land expropriation grabs and decide on the level of compensation based on government connections and dictates?

Will this next in the long line of private ripoffs at public taxpayers' expense P3 projects be announced this summer during the beer and barbeque days, outside of this House's sitting, like so many other decisions made by this government, behind closed caucus doors?

Is this the Alberta government's muskeg equivalent of the Trans-Siberian railroad, or could it possibly be that on the issue of the Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act I'm simply off track? [interjections] Mr. Minister, if I could specifically have your attention because this is the most important of the questions.

If either or both of these road or rail projects proceed, will this minister commit to an open and accountable bidding and financing process?

I look forward to the minister of infrastructure's direct responses to my multitude of questions.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'm going to be somewhat shorter in my concerns. I know that gets some people on the benches opposite rather excited, that I should say I'm going to be short, but anyway.

Amendment 7 states that appealed presentations must be made within 30 days. I heard what the minister said and certainly appreciate his comments that the appeal period as it sits now is quite lengthy, and that's probably not fair, but I wonder whether 30 days is fair either. It's not a very long time, I don't think, for a person to put together adequate representation if they did wish to file an appeal on this. So my recommendation, should this come up for an amendment in committee study, would be that the appeal period be at least 60 days.

That's the sum total of my concerns on this bill, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we remember our history, what an accomplishment the railway is. It connected our country from coast to coast. In bringing forward Bill 13, the question that comes to mind is: who's going to benefit from this bill? What provisions within this bill allow for the landowner to appeal after the 30-day decision with respect to the railway?

As farmland becomes more and more important in this country, it becomes a very real concern. Railways do carry goods of many values and for a variety of purposes and industries. Dangerous goods might be a concern, especially with travelling past towns, municipalities, and rich farmland. Is this where the bill could provide dispute resolutions for the landowner? If not, who is he or she to go to if they're not happy with the cleanup and the costs incurred with the cleanup?

Is this where it begins and ends: access and compensation? When does access for the purpose of advancement outweigh the rights of the landowner, in many cases generational landowners whose land remained clean and undisturbed? Creosote is a means of preserving timbers. It's the first concern of contamination. As a kid it never came out of my clothes. I can imagine the problem with soil contamination. Is this the part of the bill that would help the landowners and farmers reach resolve?

What about fires? When dry conditions occur in this province, which they do on a regular basis – you need only check the *Farmers' Almanac*; it's a reference that's been around for a hundred years, and it was a regular publication in my grandparents' house. If sparks occur when travelling past or going through towns or rich farmland and a fire is caused, who pays? How does one prove this?

These may be a stretch, but they are very real concerns, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to speak some qualified support for Bill 13. I believe that it is an indication that there is in fact some movement toward building railways in Alberta, and I think that this is something that's long overdue. We had a much more extensive railway network in the past in this province, and by forces that were not entirely looking, I think, at the best interests of Albertans, a lot of that railway has in fact been torn up over the last 20 years.

As we move into this next century, it's important for us to look for alternate transportation systems and systems that are giving us the most efficient use of energy and land as well. So a railway does qualify in both of those categories, and I think we would be well suited to make those sorts of choices in favour of railways in the future.

I do have some reservation, though, as I said before. You know, it just seems that there's a bit of a speediness built into this Bill 13 whereby, as the previous members have mentioned, there is a 30-day limit on being able to appeal railway crossings. Now, I know from my own personal experience that railway crossings in rural areas can be problematic and certainly potentially dangerous. As well, the question of maintenance, be it through erosion or snow removal or other forces, over time does in fact become an issue. Perhaps that might not become readily apparent to the residents in the area until a period longer than 30 days might arise. So, you know, it does put pressure on people living adjacent to railway crossings to actually make that appeal on a faster basis. Then, of course, when a new railway line is coming through, again this is going to be potentially problematic.

3:10

I think one of the things we are looking for in the future here is to have less level crossings across railways. Indeed, that's part of a viable and useful railway line in the future. But we do have to look for all of the ensuing problems that are associated with that. Railway lines for extended lengths without level crossings do have the problem of cutting communities and dividing communities with long stretches of track. You know, I just hope that we can be assured that Bill 13 is not rushing in the favour of some future railway project that will come across our path very quickly but, rather, that it's just a useful and practical tool, I suppose, for building railways in Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I call on the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, that will close debate at this point of reading. Any hon. member wishing to participate?

Then the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To everyone who commented, thank you very much. All the creative alliterations, the mixed metaphors, and the scintillating similes will certainly be sent to the presidents of the four major short line railways in Alberta – I will make sure of that – so that they can respond directly to the hon. members who made those statements.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will move the motion on Bill 13, second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

Bill 16**Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005**

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

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005.

The Business Corporations Act of Alberta came into effect in 1982, and it's not been substantially amended since 1987. The proposed amendments to the Business Corporations Act will allow Alberta's legislation to keep pace with those in other jurisdictions, and in particular it will help to harmonize the Business Corporations Act of Alberta with the federal counterpart, the Canada Business Corporations Act.

Some of the proposed changes in the bill would allow greater use of electronic technology to facilitate shareholder and director participation in the governance of the corporations. For example, shareholders will be able to participate electronically in shareholder meetings, and directors will also be able to indicate their approval by electronic means.

In addition, the major thrust of this legislation is the enhancement of shareholder protection. One example of this: adding the power for the court to require directors to disclose any profit or gain from corporate contracts. Secondly, directors would be required to comply with the new expressed due diligence provision, and that requirement would require directors to exercise their powers with the care, diligence, and skill that a reasonable, prudent person would have exercised in comparable circumstances.

The legislation also provides various strengthening of the accounting procedures and the accounting accountability for corporations. For example, if an accountant is disqualified by virtue of having shares in that corporation, they would no longer be able to act as the auditor of the corporation. Secondly, a corporation would be required to state, if they do replace their auditor, the reasons for replacing their auditor. In addition, the auditor would be allowed to comment on the reasons for the corporation's dismissal of the auditor.

There are also expanded disclosure requirements for directors and officers, and that would include any interest in material transactions as well as the material contracts.

The amendments would also enhance Alberta's act in a number of ways which would encourage corporations to incorporate here in Alberta. Some examples of these changes would be that proxy forms would only need to be sent in with a notice of meeting when the corporation has more than 50 shareholders. Financial statements of a corporation need not be tabled at the inception of a corporation until they have finished their first financial year.

Thirdly, only 25 per cent of the directors would need to be resident Albertans compared to 50 per cent at the present time, and that would bring us into conformity with the federal legislation, the Canada Business Corporations Act, which also only requires 25 per cent of their directors to be residents.

It would also cure certain inconsistencies and inefficiencies in rules regarding takeovers.

These amendments, Mr. Speaker, would allow for the first time the incorporation of unlimited liability corporations in Alberta. Currently Nova Scotia is the only jurisdiction which allows the incorporation of unlimited liability corporations, and these unlimited liability corporations are of special interest presently in Canada because of the preferential tax treatment in the United States. In the United States unlimited liability corporations are accorded a special tax treatment, and in effect they are treated as partnerships. Here in Canada they would be treated the same as any other corporation however. So there will be no net loss of revenue to the Alberta

government. This would allow American corporations a more tax-friendly method to conduct business here in Alberta.

In addition, unlimited liability corporations would provide certain advantages in terms of borrowing because the shareholders of unlimited liability corporations would stand fully behind the liabilities and obligations of the corporations unlike the normal limited liability corporations, which, of course, shelter directors and shareholders from any liability.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, our legislation as well as introducing a new business vehicle in terms of unlimited liability corporations will support the government of Alberta's policy to enhance the province's reputation as being a business-friendly jurisdiction. It would also incorporate more businesses to participate in the Alberta advantage. In addition, there are significant new safeguards for shareholders included in the legislation, and this will enable shareholders to have greater confidence when they invest in Alberta corporations.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my remarks in moving second reading of Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the debate about Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005, as presented, and I listened to the hon. member with a great deal of interest. Certainly, these are noteworthy goals that the hon. member is promoting with these amendments: shareholder protection, new safeguards for shareholders.

These amendments are possibly a result of some of the unsavoury practices that have been going on across the border in America. We see WorldCom. We see the former executive – Ebbers? I should know the name, but it's escaped me. We need to ensure that investors have confidence in our regulatory authorities. That's only one spectacular corporate failure and scandal in America. Enron is certainly another one, and we all know and we're all astonished at the implications of Enron's failure even here in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have to restore confidence in the whole issue of corporate governance and the accounting profession, and hopefully this bill will do that.

3:20

But one must be very careful. These are detailed changes to the act, and we're going to have to have a close look at these amendments, and hopefully it is legislation that we can support. We on this side of the Assembly certainly have to look at this in detail. I don't know what sort of consultation has been done by the government in regard to the drafting of this bill. I would only think that it has been extensive. We're going to have to do some research on this issue over the break, and I look forward to further discussions in the Assembly in regard to this.

In conclusion, if this bill is what the hon member stated, then it is an improvement, certainly when you look at the number of years that have passed since there was an amendment to the Business Corporations Amendment Act.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate on Bill 16. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 22**Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005**

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and move second reading of Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

As I outlined when I introduced this bill, Mr. Speaker, it will update and strengthen the legislation to apply to anyone causing distress to an animal. It will help prevent animals from becoming distressed, and Bill 22 will provide protection for those who report an animal in distress. It also requires a person who is responsible for an animal to provide adequate food, water, shelter, and other essentials. Those who properly care for their animals are protected under this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Animal Protection Act was enacted in 1967 and applies to all animals in Alberta, including livestock, companion, research, and zoo animals. The last major amendments to the act were made in 1988 and 1989. The expectations of Albertans toward the care of animals have changed over the last decade, and we are proposing changes to the legislation to meet these expectations. Albertans who are responsible for the care of animals in our livestock, research, education, and entertainment industries or institutions also recognize that expectations of animal care have progressed and that updates to our current legislation are necessary.

Mr. Speaker, we consulted with Alberta's livestock industry, provincial humane societies, municipalities, and other stakeholders in drafting these amendments. In fact, I'd like to thank former member for Leduc, Albert Klapstein, who led a review on this issue.

Last year the government of Alberta distributed a discussion paper to gather feedback from stakeholders on required changes. All of the input was taken into consideration when drafting this bill. The proposed changes strengthen the current legislation, that already effectively deals with animals in distress.

The duties of a person who is responsible for an animal will now be included in the act. This will help prevent animals from becoming distressed. It will also give peace officers the ability to deal more effectively with abandoned animals. Further clarification as to when an animal is in distress is also included in the bill.

In addition to protecting animals in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, we will also protect those who legitimately report animals in distress. The opposition members may call this whistle-blower legislation. This legislation will be strengthened to ensure that no action can be taken against any person who reports the distress of an animal to a peace officer unless, of course, it is done maliciously or without reasonable or probable grounds. Anyone who follows reasonable and generally accepted practices of animal care, management, husbandry, hunting, fishing, trapping, pest control, and slaughter will be protected from action under this act.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a leader in animal protection, and these amendments will help ensure that both the welfare of animals and those who take proper care of their animals are protected in our province. I would urge all members of this Assembly to give Bill 22 their full support.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005. In discussions about this bill earlier, it certainly is legislation that I would solidly endorse. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar and staff from Agriculture, Food and Rural Development for their time in providing a brief in regard to this bill. I appreciate that.

The Animal Protection Act is being changed because of the problems that exist on farms, unfortunately, throughout Alberta. The changes are a result of increased food costs and the inability of

some farmers to take care of their animals. Farmers are stuck in a very bad situation with BSE. It's totally out of their control, and unfortunately there have been cases of some neglected animals. This act will provide tools to peace officers, give them the ability to rescue animals before they become further distressed.

Under the previous act it's been stated that the peace officer had to wait until an animal was in a state of distress before he or she could rescue it. This act provides officers the opportunity to use their judgment on whether an animal will become distressed and take it in to protective custody, I guess we could call this, before any further deterioration may occur.

This bill also puts more responsibility on all animal, livestock, and pet owners, not only farmers but pet owners too, so that they will have to properly take care of their animals. In conversations that have been recently held with the director of enforcement for the SPCA, that director stated that in recent years with the fall in value of livestock they are finding a few cases, some cases, where animals are being left without proper care – no feed, no water, et cetera – and this bill is the result of a need to aid those abandoned animals before they become distressed.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Certainly, I can only think of a former researcher with the Official Opposition who has gone on maternity leave. One would visit her office and you would see posters, not photographs but posters, of various cats and dogs and calendars with cats and dogs on them. This researcher was very respectful of animals, and I think that if I was not to support this legislation, I would hear from that individual.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think it is time that we consider this legislation. I certainly hope all members of the Assembly will support the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar in this legislative proposal.

I would like to remind all members of this Assembly that these certainly are troubling times for some Alberta farmers, and we need good oversight to ensure that the animals are not getting harmed either through neglect or any form of abuse. Since the price drop in cattle and diversified livestock on game farms, there have been, unfortunately, as I said, some cases of neglect. There have been more animals in distress, and the peace officers involved should be able to immediately react to a situation or a perceived situation of coming distress before the animal is harmed.

This bill will change the previous legislation to provide more powers to peace officers so that they can perform their duties to protect animals. As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, the SPCA does not foresee large changes in their enforcement measures. Even with their new powers they believe that they will be able to react quicker. As I understand it, they are in support of amendments to the act, and so am I.

In conclusion, if we looked after our pets and we looked after our farm animals, there would be no need for this amendment, but unfortunately there are some situations where that does not happen. Again I would ask all hon. members of this Assembly to consider these amendments.

Thank you.

3:30

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Caldar.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon as well to speak in favour of Bill 22. I think that it's important that we stay, here in this province, on the same track as other jurisdictions across

the country in regard to animal protection legislation. Indeed, you know, I think it's in a larger sense a positive thing any time that we reach out to other species that we share this province with. In fact, it enriches our own lives as well. So I applaud the breadth of this potential legislation, and with perhaps a couple of exceptions, as I say, I think that we can support it.

I think that one issue that is apparent with this more extensive legislation is that anyone who is causing distress to animals may be prosecuted as opposed to just the owners. I think that that is a very useful thing in the current state of our agriculture, with a lot of feedlots proliferating across the province. That gives us just a greater breadth, being able to prosecute people who are mistreating animals.

Including hunting, fishing, trapping, and pest control under the exceptions to the rule, I think, is probably somewhat appropriate as well. The extended ability for peace officers to seize an animal in this legislation is very appropriate.

Again, we've seen some horrific situations. Sometimes it's a combination of larger problems we see across the province with animal neglect on farms, where some farmers have given up the ghost, so to speak, on their ability to run solvent operations. Nonetheless, the results of some of these abuses to animals are quite horrific. So, you know, if we have something stronger in place, I think people might think twice before they leave their animals to starve in the winter and such things that we've seen in the last few years here in the province.

I believe that the farmers and animal rights activists and pet owners and all sorts of individuals across the province who are stewards and have a vested interest in the welfare of animals would be accepting this potential legislation, and I would like to stand behind it as well.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of Bill 22 as it reads, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005. The purpose for this is, obviously, as it says, to provide protection for the animals.

I consider myself to be an animal lover, whether it be for personal use or whether it be for the means of farming or ranching. Game ranching may be the cause or a concern with regard to who is the loser in this particular case. When we look at game ranching, do we talk about the animal or the owner? What about elk velvet farms? In order to be able to get the velvet, one needs to be able to get the antler. Is this painful for the animal, and who is in distress? I would think so, but then, again, I'm not the animal. How would we address this particular concern with regard to being able to harvest a particular aphrodisiac for consumption? When the animal is in distress, would this act address this particular piece?

When we refer to section 10, Mr. Speaker, a peace officer may without warrant enter during business hours. We realize that the abuse doesn't normally take place during business hours. It takes place at all times of the day. Will this act be able to prevent such a thing? I don't know, but it certainly is worth raising a question for. Not everything occurs during the daytime hours, as I said, and I hope that this will provide more teeth because some zoos are being able to operate and have been around for many, many years.

One such zoo has been around. I'll refer to it as GuZoo. It operates here within Alberta, and it's very unfortunate, but this GuZoo has been around for a long time. It has been raised in

question period by opposition members for many years now. In fact, I'm holding up a decaying carcass picture here that was taken at the GuZoo. Is this the method in which the animals are fed, off each other, or is this something which the bill will prevent happening: decaying, rotting corpses out there?

Mr. R. Miller: Will you table that picture?

Mr. Bonko: I will do that. Not today, but I will do that.

Elk running in decaying corpses as well as water holes not fit for human consumption, let alone animals. Wolves, which are in fact supposed to be in the wild, are in captivity with filthy water conditions and no shelters. We have pictures at GuZoo with oxen, which like to have it cool and be able to graze, but unfortunately there's nothing in this legislation or in this farm that allows for that animal to be able to seek such refuge with regard to shelter and/or water.

So these are just a couple of questions. I wanted to know if this bill would protect. In fact, that's why I raise this GuZoo. This has been allowed to operate and allowed to fly under the radar of this government for many, many years. I hope this, in fact, is raised and is certainly addressed within this sitting. I'm hoping it will provide the SPCA with more teeth as well as more special constables in the way of funding. Zoocheck Canada is an advocate which I'm sure will be watching and listening with great intensity as this debate continues and this bill continues to slide through further readings.

These are just a few comments that I have today, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29 kicks in. Any questions for the hon. member? The hon. Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I just had a question for the hon. member in terms of game farming, whether he supports the practice or whether he does not support the practice of game farming.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think with the line of questions that I've had up to this point, it's quite clear that not only my opinion but the opinion of my caucus is that we do not support game farming as it's not sustainable.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions?

The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this bill. I realize that might cause some confusion across the way, but I am concerned about animal abuse. I hope that there will be an amendment during the committee stage that would address the need for more enforcement officers, given the extent of the problem of animal abuse in this province.

There have been a couple of very sad cases of animal abuse that I don't believe were intended. There was one particular case where the rancher was so ill that his wife was otherwise involved in caring for him, and unfortunately no one in the community knew that their animals were starving. This was not deliberate abuse, but possibly through enforcement officers we could have further eyes and ears out in the community that could intervene and not only help the ranchers but help their animals through no fault of their own.

Another problem that rural ranchers have experienced with the closed border and the advent of BSE and chronic wasting disease is

the foreclosures: the fact that they can't afford to keep their ranches. Their farms are being foreclosed at a very sad rate. What happens is that groups then take over the responsibility. When a bank forecloses on a ranch, there are potentially hundreds of animals dependent on the upkeep. Obviously, we've had this example of hundreds of animals dying because of an apparent feed mix-up. So it's rather important that when these animals are taken away from their owner, there's an appropriate mechanism to provide for their safety and feeding, and it looks like this piece of legislation will go a long way to addressing it.

Another concern I have is with regard to pet owners who by training animals, either by intent or by neglect, turn these animals into vicious beasts, basically. What happens as a result is that certain breeds get a bad reputation, but the problem more often applies to the owner's treatment rather than to the breed's characteristic. So, hopefully, some larger dog breeds will get a break, and it will be their owners that are put on the end of a government leash rather than the animals themselves.

3:40

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29. Any questions?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to go on record as supporting my colleague from Calgary-Varsity in his call for a way to bring more enforcement officers on stream.

As we've discussed this bill – and in many respects I think this is a very good bill proposing some very good amendments – it does seem to focus on the troubles on the farm these days and the need to protect farm animals. I certainly do not want to downplay that, but I want to expand it and extend it a little bit if I can, please, to the protection of animals in urban areas, to pets primarily, obviously, and I want to bring it back to this issue of the number of enforcement officers that SPCAs around the province have at their disposal.

There are a couple of issues, actually. One is if an animal is being abused or neglected. Neglect is easier to prove, I would argue, than abuse is unless you catch the act of abuse as it is happening, and I'll bring up an example of that in a second. There's that issue. Then, of course, once you've removed the animal for its own protection, what do you do with it if you don't have appropriate facilities to look after the animals?

Those are both issues, I think, within the city of Calgary. Last year I became aware of a story of an incident in the city of Calgary involving some bad neighbours in a particular community. There had been quite a lot of trouble in the neighbourhood. Quite a lot of neighbours had felt intimidated by these particular people. It eventually came to my attention in the form of a complaint. There were a number of complaints around this individual, but one of the most severe ones – and, certainly, it relates to this bill, Mr. Speaker – was ongoing complaints from people in the community that this individual was abusing his dogs.

As is sometimes the case when we're dealing with abusive people and people who would abuse their animals, this particular individual seemed to be rather tuned in to knowing how to get away with his crime. So he might abuse the animal while the neighbours were witnessing this, but by the time the enforcement officer could get there, everything appeared to be fine. The animals in question were rather large dogs, and this individual, as the story was told to me by a number of different sources, was very good at abusing, intimidating, torturing, working the dog up into an emotional frenzy without leaving any obvious physical scars, so when the enforcement officer would show up, there would be no grounds on which to lay a charge. There would be no hard evidence.

The problem comes in that the humane society obviously wished to take action against the individual but couldn't catch him in the act because they only have, I believe – and I could be a little off and a little out of date in my figures – two enforcement officers for the city of Calgary. For a city of a million people and Lord knows how many million pets – dogs and cats and fish and birds and gerbils and ferrets all put together – two enforcement officers to look after all of that and all those complaints.

The other issue from a Calgary point of view, from an urban point of view, again involving the Calgary Humane Society, is a shortage of space in which to shelter the animals that they do seize or the animals that are turned over to the Humane Society. The Humane Society has been working, Mr. Speaker, for a number of years on trying to get bigger, newer, better facilities. Of course, the issue there is funding and being able to come up with the funding, and thus far they've been unable to do that. Although they have funding initiatives in place, they do not have the money yet, as I understand it, to go ahead and build a facility of the size that they need.

Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005, is I think very, very good as far as it goes. But I wonder if it might be possible, Mr. Speaker, to take it a little further and take into consideration as we get into committee study some of the urban issues, perhaps, that exist as well, or more specifically although it may not be exclusive to the urban experience, issues around the abuse and neglect of animals who are kept as pets rather than kept as livestock. Just a little more attention paid to that.

One other concern, if I may, Mr. Speaker, on this bill that I would like to talk about in perhaps a little more detail at the appropriate time, and that's the amendment that would remove the responsibility of the minister to pay the expenses of someone who takes in a distressed animal. I gather that the caretaker, whether it be a humane society or an individual, might be able to require the owner of the animal to pay out before that animal is returned to the owner.

A couple of questions about that. Does this now make the caretaker of the animal in distress responsible for retrieving the money from the owner of the animal? Of course, if the answer to that question is yes – and I don't know that it is – then the obvious follow-up question is quite simply: how is the caretaker going to get paid if the owner of the animal couldn't afford to take care of the animal or animals? That is the sad circumstance that brought these animals into the care of the caretaker in the first place. Will the owner of the animal want the animal returned if they already abandoned it?

So, Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that I think that overall this is a very good bill, and I'm happy to support it in principle.

Mr. MacDonald: Is this the Rin Tin Tin bill?

Mr. Taylor: Well, you can call it that if you want, hon. member.

Although I'd be happy to support this in principle, when we get to committee study, I think these are some of the areas that perhaps we need to focus on a little bit more. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my contribution to this debate and congratulate the hon. member on bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29. Any questions?

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In general I think we all have the consensus here in this Assembly that we are concerned and care for the proper protection of animals. I guess from a rural aspect, though, I have to look and ask a few questions. The first one would be under section 1(2)(a) where they've expanded it from

“deprived of adequate food, water, care or shelter.” I guess I just have to ask the question: why have we gone on to talk about “adequate . . . ventilation, space, food, water or veterinary care or reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold”? As we expand the list, it seems that we exclude more things, and perhaps it should be added on there inadequate sunlight, improper nutrition, insufficient exercise, or possibly even not sufficient companionship.

I often wonder why we expand, trying to include more when actually we exclude more. Perhaps just an amendment to put something in there for the purpose of this act that an animal is in distress if it is not being properly cared for. It goes back to, I guess, common sense. It seems like with the proliferation of laws and rules and regulations we get burdened down more and more. I guess I’d just like to see that common sense prevails more than words and statutes to try and do something. To me that’s the reason why we have a legal system and a judge is to bring people forward that we obviously have a difference of opinion with. Here, on different husbandry practices.

I’m from a rural area. I’ve got hundreds of deer that live on my property, and I can show you very distressing pictures of how cruel nature is and what goes on in nature. Animal husbandry people are trying to look after them, so I don’t think that it’s necessarily the job of this government to be running around with policemen and almost wondering if they’re pursuing and could take on a bounty-hunting job to go and find animals in distress and thereby be able to collect money from the government or the former owner. I just worry about which direction we’re really trying to go here in trying to protect the animals.

I would just hope that as we get into committee, that common sense will prevail, and we’ll try to keep it as simple as possible rather than trying to add to it. There are such things where I understand, you know, they’re necessary to change from the Lieutenant Governor to the minister, and I appreciate those things.

Thank you.

3:50

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29. Any questions for the hon. member?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My concerns with respect to the bill revolve around the exception provided under the proposed section 2(2) as it relates to hunting, fishing, and pest control. The exception is that reasonable and generally accepted practices of hunting, fishing, and pest control would be excepted from the requirement not to cause distress. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor referred to a number of groups with which consultations had been carried out, and those included a number of groups in the agricultural sector and in the animal sector, including the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I’m curious as to whether or not sportsmen’s groups such as the Alberta Fish and Game Association might have been consulted with respect to the provisions of this bill, the Trappers Association, the aboriginal and Métis communities with respect to the application of this.

My concern is that the definition of reasonable and generally accepted practices of hunting, fishing, and pest control is necessarily going to be interpreted by a court of law, and those reasonably accepted practices could vary according to different circumstances, different parts of the province. For example, in the far north in the aboriginal communities certain practices may be the norm whereas in the more urban areas around Calgary and Edmonton they may not be the norm.

Of course, in the course of hunting, distress is necessarily caused to an animal. I’m wondering how this legislation might apply to bowhunters, for example. Would they be required to use certain types of arrow tips? Would they be required to have a certain power, number of pounds of draw on the bow? Would they be required to accomplish certain standards of marksmanship? All of these would be within the definition of what might be reasonable and generally accepted practices.

So my concern is with respect particularly to how these things might be interpreted and how they might apply to the hunting, fishing, and pest control, as I mentioned, particularly to sportsmen’s groups, sportsmen, trappers, and the aboriginal and Métis communities.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Possibly my fellow hon. member from Calgary could clarify whether it’s his interpretation that this bill has sufficient expansion to deal with wild animals – he pointed out examples of hunting, fishing, northern, southern – or is this bill primarily a domestic animal consideration? I’m just not quite sure about the interpretation of this bill. Possibly the presenter of the bill would wish to clarify further.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Brown: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. My reading of the bill is that it is a broad application to any animal to be in distress. That would include wild animals or wild animals kept in captivity on game farms or the like as well as domestic animals. So it is certainly one of very broad application, and that’s why I’m concerned, particularly with the nature, the very general wording of the exceptions to causing distress to the animal. As I said, in the normal course hunters necessarily cause distress to an animal when they kill it.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions?

Anybody else wishing to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor to close debate.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me just say that we’ve heard some sad stories today, which I believe shows the importance of passing Bill 22 as soon as possible. I would like to, first of all, thank all members for their input and their suggestions. I also thank them for their support. I’ve heard a lot of support today, but I’ve also heard a lot of questions, and I think they’re very good questions that the department and I will look into. We will go back and do some research on those, and certainly we will bring some answers forward in our comments when we go into Committee of the Whole. In fact, we will try to incorporate these comments and suggestions as much as possible in the next stage of the bill.

Therefore, I move second reading of Bill 22.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a second time]

Bill 14

Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, I rise to speak to Bill 14 and move it for second reading.

Bill 14 is the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005. This amendment act proposes some minor changes to some sections of the Student Financial Assistance Act related to loan limits and regulation-making powers. The three housekeeping amendments proposed in Bill 14 are intended to add clarity and better reflect the current student finance operational practices.

The main amendments are to the section on loan limits. These amendments will help ensure that loan limits allow for some flexibility for extenuating circumstances, clarify ministerial authority, and amend how loan limits are based. As the legislation stands, the Minister of Advanced Education is allowed to establish annual and lifetime loan limits for certain categories of students. The bill proposes deleting reference to categories of students. The concern is that the current wording of this section makes it hard for the Minister of Advanced Education to use discretion, to make the kinds of exceptions that may be required on a case-by-case basis. By taking this reference out, the legislation will have the flexibility to determine how loan limits should be set and whether there needs to be an opportunity for the limits to be exceeded in some exceptional cases.

The second amendment looks at existing wording that says that lifetime loan limits are based on the "outstanding principle amount . . . owed by the student," which essentially amounts to a form of revolving line of credit. That's not the intent of the section. It's not the department's policy. It hasn't been consistent with the practices across the country. So we need to clarify that lifetime loan limits are based on the total aggregate loans received by a student over his or her lifetime.

The final amendment proposes a minor housekeeping change to add clarity to the section on regulation-making powers. We want to clarify that the Lieutenant Governor in Council has the authority to make regulations related to eligibility requirements for financial assistance and the establishment of loan limits, including providing the Minister of Advanced Education with the authority to set loan limits.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has one of the most generous student financial assistance programs in the country. These amendments will help to ensure that the program remains flexible and responsive to the needs of students. I would just add that these amendments being proposed now are being brought forward in order to clarify the existing student loan regime and bring the legislation up to the practice that we have in place and to make it more flexible.

I would advise the House, as I have on other occasions, that we are doing an affordability review this year. We will be involving stakeholders, students, parents, and others across the province in discussing how postsecondary education can continue to be affordable for students and how finances can be removed as a barrier to advancing an education. This bill is not the bill that's being promised to do that. That is to come, and we're going to do that after a thorough discussion involving anyone who wants to be involved in the discussion. So as we move forward this year, I encourage members of the House to bring to my attention any instances that they've heard of where the student finance system that we have in place now does not assist students or where there are real or perceived barriers to the success of students.

Mr. Speaker, I again indicate that's not the purpose of this bill. This bill is cleaning up what's in place right now. The affordability review is something that will take place over the course of this year and, hopefully, will result in changes, whether they need to be legislative changes or not, at a future session.

4:00

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and engage in debate and continue debate on Bill 14, the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005.

I guess that I want to start off my contribution to the debate with a question. If we're about to undertake a system-wide affordability review in advanced education in the province of Alberta, then unless the Student Financial Assistance Act is collapsing under the weight of its own flaws, why do we need this amendment act to take care of, by the minister's own admission, you know, some housekeeping, some tidying up of details, especially when some of the tidying up seems to be to bring the law in line with the ministry's practices? Because that suggests that the ministry right now is engaging in practices that are in contravention of this government's own law. Again, I suggest to you that if that's not causing a huge problem, if this affordability review is about to launch, about to begin, you really have to wonder what the urgency of this bill is.

Now, I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that I'm on the horns of a dilemma to a certain extent because, of course, we in the Liberal opposition support making postsecondary education more affordable. That not only includes such issues as affordable tuition and proper base operating funding of our colleges, universities, and technical institutes, which we happen to believe requires a substantial infusion of cash on a regular annual basis over the next few years, but it also includes reducing the debt loads of students. Part of affordability is taking into consideration before that debt load is amassed what the debt load of the student is going to be at the end of four years of university or two or three years of a diploma or applied degree program, something like that.

So in a sense, Mr. Speaker, this bill and this debate on this bill force me to argue against some of the very things that we believe in. But it does that because of another thing that we believe in on this side of the House, and that is that we want to support lifelong learning, lifelong access to education, lifelong access to affordable education. Given the current system, we think that we should be allowing students to receive the maximum allowable lifetime loans, pay all or some of them off, and then return again to school and be eligible for loans again. Well, that's a revolving credit scheme, I guess, because that sounds an awful lot like the way my personal line of credit works.

The minister opposite has made it clear already that this is not what he wants it to be. He does not want it to be a revolving line of credit for students, and that's the goal behind changing from outstanding principal to an aggregate amount that the student may receive during a student's lifetime. The only problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that the student financial assistance regulation, section 27, itself uses the outstanding principal model of lifetime loan limits rather than the total aggregate amounts received.

So while we talk about wanting to bring what we're doing in this province in line with what other provinces in Canada do, we're also boasting about how generous the student loan program is in this province, and I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that you can't have it both ways. It's got to be one or the other. Either it's the most generous or one of the most generous programs in the dominion of Canada, or else it isn't.

Now, I quote from the regulations, student financial assistance regulation section 27(1).

Subject to subsection (2), a student is not eligible for a loan if that loan would result in the outstanding principal amount of all loans owing by the student exceeding the aggregate loan limit specified by order of the Minister or such higher aggregate loan limit as the Minister directs with respect to that student.

That gets to another issue that the minister brought up, which is his own ability, his discretion, to deal with some students on a case-by-case individual basis and determine extenuating circumstances and

say: okay, in this particular case involving this particular student, I find it advisable to allow for a higher limit than we normally would.

The Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005, also talks about setting loan limits based not only on categories of students, and the theory behind this apparently is that categories of students make it difficult for the minister to use his discretion.

Now, I'm looking at the student loan limits order, section 1(4), and, Mr. Speaker, if I'm reading this correctly – and if I'm not, I stand to be corrected and certainly would be eager to be corrected, but until such time as I am, I think I'm reading it right – this order I think gives exactly this kind of ministerial discretion. It says:

In the case of a student enrolled in a masters, doctorate or other professional program, the annual loan limits set out in subsections (1) to (3) are subject to any increase the Minister makes on a case-by-case basis . . .

Let me repeat that: "Subject to any increase the Minister makes on a case-by-case basis."

. . . where, in the opinion of the Minister, there are extenuating circumstances that warrant higher annual loan limits.

So I don't know why we need to make this change to the act since it seems that the minister already has the – can I use the term in this House? – "wiggle room" that a minister would need in these circumstances. Nobody's called a point of order yet, so I guess we can use the term "wiggle room."

So I'm left asking the question: why are we doing this? Are we fixing something that's not broken, or are we breaking something that's not broken? If we are breaking something that's not broken, why are we doing that, to what end, to what purpose?

You know, the borrowing limits established under section 17(1)(b) of the act for the purposes of section 17(2) of the act are \$40,000 in the case of most undergraduate students, \$55,000 in the case of an undergraduate dental hygiene student, \$60,000 for somebody enrolled in a school of chiropractic, \$95,000 for somebody who wants to grow up to be a dentist – gosh, if it costs that much to become a dentist, no wonder every time I get a bill from my dentist and I submit it to our benefit plan, I end up having to pay a little extra, if they're that far in debt before they even start practising – \$75,000 for law, \$95,000 for medicine, and, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on: \$50,000 for optometry and pharmacy and veterinary medicine and most masters degrees except for an MBA. An MBA has a loan limit of \$60,000, a doctorate has a loan of \$60,000, so on and so forth.

4:10

An Hon. Member: How much does it cost to be a talk show host?

Mr. Taylor: Oh, far less than it costs to learn how to be a dentist.

An Hon. Member: I'd like to get on your show.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but I can't afford to invite anybody to be a guest on my show today, so I will continue with the floor.

The situation here that I would lay out to you is this. You have a son or daughter, and your son or daughter is ready to go off to university and take a four-year undergraduate program, baccalaureate program, which, depending on the program that they're going to take, may or may not result in launching them on what will be their ultimate lifelong career path. But even if it does, there's a very good chance – we all know this – that at some point your son or daughter during the course of their working life is going to want to take a break from work and return to school to upgrade.

Maybe that upgrade is going to be a master's degree. Maybe it's going to be an MBA. Let's say that it's going to be an MBA. Let's say that they've got a four-year undergraduate degree, and some

years down the road they want to go back to school and get their MBA, by which time they may very well be married with children of their own, financial obligations, a mortgage to pay, a loan on the car, et cetera. But they're building their career. They're building their net worth. They're building their family lives themselves.

Now let's say, Mr. Speaker, that your son or daughter is the son or daughter not of a parliamentarian necessarily but of somebody who hasn't been able, or perhaps willing, to afford to send their son or daughter to university and pay the bills themselves. Let's say the circumstances were such that that student has already topped out at \$40,000, the loan limit for undergraduate students. But let's say that they, you know, have graduated, they have gotten a good job, they're on a career track, and they're absolutely diligent about paying back their student loans. So they've whittled the total debt that they've accumulated down significantly, and now they want to go back to university and get their MBA.

If they've paid back the money that they have borrowed from the people of Alberta, why shouldn't they be entitled to go back to the people of Alberta and say, "I want to improve myself, and I'd like your help to be able to do that, and I promise to pay the money back?"

How is that different, Mr. Speaker, from someone going to the bank, borrowing money, perhaps for the first time – I don't know – to buy a piece of furniture for their first apartment and paying it back, going back to that same bank the next time and saying: "I paid that loan back. Now would you give me a loan? I'd like to buy a car?" Then they pay that loan back, and then they go back to the bank, and they say: "Now, Mr. Bank Manager or Ms Bank Manager, I would really like it if you would give me a mortgage, and I promise to pay that back too. But perhaps before I get the mortgage paid off, I might come back to you again and say now I'd like to open a line of credit and borrow against that so I can renovate this house so that this house, in which you have an interest as my creditor, as my lender, as my mortgagor, is going to be worth more to both of us."

So how is it different? You know, we allow people to do that all the time in the private sector, and this government is so enamoured with the private sector that you would think that they would be falling all over themselves to adopt rules and regulations that mirror the private sector.

Mr. MacDonald: They don't like private-sector airplanes.

Mr. Taylor: Well, that's true, but you know that there's an exception that proves every rule, so I guess the airplanes are the exception. So why would this government on behalf of the people of Alberta, albeit with some prodding through the election and the success of the members on the benches on this side of the House, decide to make postsecondary education such a priority that they want to take it off a 12-year starvation diet? Why would they, having made it a priority, now want to make it more difficult for anyone in this province to get an education, especially when they say that access and affordability and excellence in postsecondary education are what they're all about?

I don't think it goes far enough. I think what we should have in this province is the postsecondary equivalent of Alberta's Commission on Learning, K to 12, to undertake a thorough, comprehensive review of the entire postsecondary education system to see what works like a charm, to see what actually stinks out the joint, and everything in between and make the needed changes. The Learning Commission was a big success K to 12. It would be an even bigger success if the government would hurry up with implementing the recommendations they accepted. You know, I think that approach to postsecondary education would be a stroke of brilliance. But failing that, I'll settle for a grade of B or B-minus or C. You know,

that's better than an F, right? So the affordability review is worth, I think, at least a C and perhaps as much as a B if they do it right.

If they're going to do this affordability review – and they've said time and time again that they're going to. They've given every student in the province of Alberta a one-year tuition fee rebate this year while they, from the students' perspective, hold the line on tuitions. From the colleges' and the universities' perspective tuitions continue to go up of course. It's just that the government is paying the increase this year. They've given a one-year break, a rebate, if you will, on tuition while they conduct this affordability review. They talk about this a great deal. So if we're going to do that, then why is any of this necessary? Why is any of this necessary? I'm not at all convinced that it is.

So I won't be supporting Bill 14, Mr. Speaker. I'll be interested to hear what my colleagues and what the members opposite have to say about it, but I'm very skeptical about the intentions of this bill. I think it's unnecessary, and I don't think it would kill this government or the people of Alberta to leave this alone, pending the results of the affordability review.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 14, Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005. My esteemed colleagues must wonder how it is possible to criticize in detail such a thin gruel piece of legislation as Bill 14. I would suggest that the recipe for success would be to provide greater explanation within the bill in the first place so that I and other members of the opposition, which together represent the majority of Alberta voters in spite of the number of Legislature seats that we occupy, could appreciate the bill's intent.

My first question has to do with section 17(a), which states: "The Minister may, subject to the regulations, establish . . . the maximum amount that a student may receive in any one academic year in the form of loans". This is quite clear in its time period, but doesn't clarify what the maximum is or how the maximum is arrived at. For example, does it take into account local inflation rates? Does it take into account cost-of-living factors such as the difference between housing costs and availability in Calgary or Fort McMurray as opposed to Lethbridge? Do the loans take into account the cost of the particular faculty that the student is enrolled in? For example, medicine and law courses and accompanying textbooks would be considerably more expensive than other faculties.

The (b) portion of section 17 states that the minister may, subject to the regulations, establish "the maximum amount that a student may receive during the student's lifetime in the form of loans." I hope that this province believes in and would not restrict access to lifelong learning. Are loan limits going to be placed on a person's second or third degree, a master's, or a doctorate degree? At what point does a successful student cease to qualify for loans? For example, are loans as available to senior citizens as they are to recent senior high school graduates?

4:20

I also have concerns about the intent of section 22(1)(c), which has to do with "establishing different forms of financial assistance for some or all of the purposes of this Act." There appears to be a number of tiers, or levels, of financial assistance rather than a level playing field. This suggests that the government is recommending a two-tiered, third-way approach to postsecondary financing, which creates a series of different levels of funding.

How are these different levels of loans arrived at? For example, if it is determined that there is a shortage of geologists, students

enrolled in these courses will receive loans at the expense of students, for example, pursuing a fine arts degree. Will that be the case? I hope that this is not the case as it would suggest a brave, new world approach to micromanaging education, which the Alberta government has frequently decried.

I also have concerns about the intent or meaning of the phrase "for some or all of the purposes of this Act." Which is it: some or all? What are some of the restrictions on financial assistance that are different from all for the purposes of this act? To facilitate understanding of the intent of this act, I would suggest that the hon. government members consider either providing more detailed elaboration or consider highlighting the amendment within the larger context of the appropriate section of the bill for further clarification.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask my hon. colleague – he referenced in the bill clause 17(b), which indicates that the minister may, subject to regulations, establish "the maximum amount that a student may receive during the student's lifetime in the form of loans." I'm wondering if my colleague is suggesting that perhaps the government has decided that it might not be worth investing in a student who has utilized the maximum financial aid, perhaps paid back their debts in a responsible fashion, and now requires additional support to further their education.

Mr. Chase: Well, you've grasped exactly what I was talking about. I'm a teacher. I've been a teacher for 34 years, and I'm sure hon. members across wish I was still a teacher. I've been engaged in the learning process, basically, for about 50 years of my life either on one side of the desk or on the other side. The idea of lifelong learning and the pursuit of excellence is extremely important to me. The notion that the government would arbitrarily determine at what point education is no longer important or should no longer be funded by the government, that to me is sort of a scary Orwellian scenario.

Did that clarify, hon. member, what you were hoping to hear?

The Acting Speaker: Does anybody else wish to ask a question? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: I just wanted to clarify that, yes, in fact that was the answer I was looking for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to speak on Bill 14 with a general sort of supportive attitude. I think that, you know, it's in most respects just a question of perhaps some clarification of some ambiguities that did exist in the previous legislation. So we don't have a big problem with that as such, but I do want to draw the House's attention to perhaps a larger concern which this bill is addressing, and that's the whole question of student finances.

It seems to me that what we've done over these past 10 or 15 years is made postsecondary education unaffordable to a large sector of our population here in this province. You know, I think we are running into what would potentially be a crisis situation, where we're not allowing access to postsecondary education to quite a large sector of the population who simply sees it as being unaffordable. Now, it seems that in this session of our Legislature we're going to release money into postsecondary education. My concern is that it is not addressing the fundamental problem that is keeping

more and more students out of postsecondary education, and that is accessibility and a knowledge that it will be affordable over the long haul for someone, say, on low income.

Myself, also having some experience in education, it tells me that more students are choosing not to go to university, for example, simply based on cost. You know, even the most conservative view of human beings would suggest that if you want to maximize your labour potential from your population, then you must make sure that you provide access to the people who are most able to be successful in postsecondary education regardless of their socioeconomic position in our society. So even looking at perhaps the most narrow or conservative or callous view of humans as being worker units, then denying access to postsecondary education to worthy candidates is inefficient at best.

This small amendment, really, to the student finance act also does have some troubling aspects in respect to having a maximum student loan amount for the entire lifetime of a student. Now, I recognize the practicality of that in some respects, but in other ways it sort of flies in the face of what we would hope to recognize as the purpose of postsecondary education, and that is to renew our knowledge and our employability, I guess, on an ongoing basis throughout our careers and lifetime. You know, who's to know where life will lead us in terms of postsecondary education, and who's to know what a maximum in fact is? I think we can leave that to financial institutions to look at individual circumstances of individuals and their financial state and make appropriate decisions based on that. So the maxing out aspect of this bill I have some difficulty with. Hopefully, we can resolve that before the bill is either passed or rejected.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to expand a little bit on a few of the points that have been brought up. I agree with many of the points that have been brought to this point, but I have one constituent who specifically approached me for the minister to take this into consideration. This idea of lifelong learning, as some of the other hon. members have brought up, it's a very difficult situation for a father who has three or four kids to go back to school. The loan requirements – this one specific constituent is not able to get enough of a loan to be able to go back to school because he has a family.

I'd just like the minister to be mindful of that and to realize that we are in a much different situation now with lifelong learning and needing to retrain. So perhaps some of those numbers need to be flexible and do it on a one-on-one basis in some of those areas.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

There being none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Bill 14, Student Financial Assistance, in the end who benefits from advancing these loans? Over several years they'll be paid off, but in the meanwhile who really benefits? Well, of course, small towns benefit, villages benefit, hamlets benefit, and large cities. There are these new graduates that come armed with the knowledge that they've acquired over several years, and of course with the knowledge comes the debt that they've incurred as well. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie mentioned thousands of dollars in debt, but it's not so much debt but

investments that are incurred over the years, and they're going to be paid through services that these people seek.

4:30

If someone such as myself wanted to go back for the purpose of lifelong learning – we hear all this talk about lifelong learning, but when it comes right down to it, the government is more interested in pinching pennies in the loan program than providing students with the resources that they need – I would incur 40,000-plus dollars to be able to go back and finish a degree. Political science or if I decided to go for something different, for surgery – who knows? But, again, it's very expensive and the fact that the loans may not take into account being able to go back again once the loans are paid off.

We have talked about work shortages, people for retraining. If those people wanted to seek retraining and wanted to go into debt but later on, halfway through, paid off, to return to the workforce, to go back to try and do something else, they're going to be penalized. I'm not sure if that's the case in this particular case.

My own children, I've got two. Of course, as you know, children right now as they're growing up want to experience life and are not sure exactly where they want to go. If their feet are moving, they're going in the right direction, I always tell them. But if they decide to go back to school for postsecondary and incur loans, again as a parent with two kids – I can't imagine someone with three or four, the financial burden on them because the loan program won't guarantee them enough, because they'll be living in poverty long enough to be able to reap the benefits of it. I'm just concerned with regard to that.

Is this government really determined to find a fix? I think they have to find a more consultative process out there – we had members of the universities here as well – at least speak to those kids that are enrolled in these programs to find out the financial burdens that they're facing and find out one-on-one. They, in fact, indicated to us that they would like to be part of a panel process to be able to meet with the members, meet with the bill decisioners, to come and hammer this out so that we go through the process once and have dotted the i's, crossed the t's so that we're coming to a fully recognized piece that will become a bill instead of having to go back and review it once again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, are you rising to ask a question or make a comment?

Mr. MacDonald: I'm rising to participate in the debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. There being nobody else wanting to ask a question or make a comment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. When we see Bill 14, Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005, it is with interest that I note that suddenly this government and this minister are interested in postsecondary education. Certainly, it has been referred to in this Assembly by another hon. member. There was a reference made to the starvation diet that postsecondary students have been on in this province for far too long.

This idea that before this bill becomes law, we have a commission or a study of the complete postsecondary education system and

exactly how we can make it better is a very good idea, and I think it should be a top priority. It certainly took us on this side of the Assembly a long, long time and many hours of discussion before we could convince this government to go ahead with the Learning Commission, the blue-ribbon commission. The former Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and a very distinguished educator, Don Massey, was promoting the idea of having a learning commission for the longest time, and finally this government did the right thing, and they implemented the Learning Commission.

Now they're having difficulty implementing some of the key recommendations of that commission, but it was a step in the right direction. Perhaps if we had a commission on postsecondary education, we would see firsthand just how skinny the students are after the starvation diet that they've been put on by this government.

Now, there are many different views on this, and certainly I'm quite familiar with the views of some of the government members, but accessible, affordable postsecondary education should be a cornerstone. It should be a basic cornerstone for all Albertans regardless of your age. Whether you're going back to school at age 35 or you're entering university from high school or whether you're entering a technical school or a community college, it doesn't matter. Those facilities have to be affordable, and they have to be accessible.

Is Bill 14 going to be an improvement? I don't know, but at a quick glance I don't think so. Here we have again more ministerial control without any specified guidelines. This government, it's been pointed out, likes to use ministerial discretion like it was some sort of royal prerogative. Specific rules and regulations help to establish accountability, and I'm disappointed – I'm very disappointed – that this government is again, it looks like, trying to do away with any of the rules around accountability.

How mysterious and how secret can ministerial control be? Well, for all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly, I did not know that a ministerial order did not necessarily have to be a public document. Now, perhaps I should have. Perhaps I had a great deal more respect for the system, if I could use that term, Mr. Speaker, than I should have. Perhaps I should have been a little bit more suspicious. I was disappointed, again, to realize that not all ministerial orders are public.

I found this out the year before last with a ministerial order, Mr. Speaker, to create this Utilities Consumer Advocate, this advocate that is still in hibernation. Hopefully, it's going to come out of hibernation soon and protect utility consumers. But this is an example of a mysterious process. Why should we give more ministerial control with Bill 14 without any specified guidelines? I'm going to have to watch this with interest and with caution.

Now, we hear all the talk about lifelong learning, but when it comes right down to it, this government seems to be interested in penny-pinching in one area and then living lavishly in another area. We're talking about lifelong learning. Well, let's use the farmers as a valid example. I have to return a phone call to a farmer later on this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, who is very interested in the idea of returning to school and getting trade qualifications so that he can work off the farm and participate in the oil sands construction boom that is currently going on. He wants to; he doesn't have the qualifications. I think we should be helping this individual along.

We should not be talking about lifelong learning and then signing some sort of deal last June to recruit workers on a temporary basis from foreign countries. Some of these workers, for gosh's sake, tried to overthrow a government in Venezuela, and they were sacked because of their activities. They tried to overthrow a government, and they lost their jobs. This is a pool of labour that this government

would rather attract into this province than trying to help out our farmers who, through no fault of their own, have very little income.

4:40

If we're going to be serious about lifelong learning, let's help some of the farmers who are interested and some of their families who are interested in trade certification so that they can participate in the economic boom that is occurring. We have given tax concessions to many of the major oil companies. We have given massive royalty reductions to facilitate this construction. Let's make sure that we give the jobs to Albertans and Canadians before we go on these recruiting missions and then in the next breath talk about how important postsecondary education is to Albertans and how important lifelong learning is.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's only one part of postsecondary education. There are those that would say that that is not part of postsecondary education, but I would certainly, hon. member, beg to differ.

We can't be creating a system that's going to exclude some students because of income. We've got to be very, very careful about this, what's good and what's bad public policy. When we look at the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, Bill 14, I don't think it is a step in the right direction.

Look at the amount of money that some students are burdened with upon graduation, and I know, again, that there are those that say: well, look at the increase in income level and how quickly they can pay that money back. But what about the people who could not afford to go there in the first place? What about all the students who just simply cannot afford to go? We're creating a postsecondary education system where there are many people who will not be able to go. They may have the ability, they may have the desire, but they don't have either the individual or the family income.

It has been discussed in this House, Mr. Speaker, by many people in the past about the economic miracle that has occurred in the last decade in Ireland. In the previous decade postsecondary education became affordable and it became accessible for all young people, and they have one of the most vibrant economies in all of Europe. I don't know if the Irish would appreciate this, but I was almost going to refer to it as all the economies in central Europe. I think they prefer to be a little distance away, and we've got to be respectful of all people who grow up on islands because certainly they're usually very independent, and they have their own opinions.

Now, when we look at some of the student groups – and there was one in here yesterday, Mr. Speaker – they have complaints. They have a wish list of what they would like to see occur with postsecondary education in this province. Are they concerned about the removal of reference to categories of students in the context of ministerial setting of loan limits? Are they concerned about this? Are they concerned about changing the lifetime loan limit from being defined as outstanding principle to amount received from the student's lifetime? They are, but they're more concerned about the cost of accommodation, the cost of tuition. They're more concerned about affordability and access.

Again, in conclusion, if we are sincere about improving our postsecondary education system, let's look at having a blue-ribbon panel, a blue-ribbon commission. In fact, we could get some former members of this Legislative Assembly to sit on that, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we could get the former Member for St. Albert, Mary O'Neill, who I understand was a teacher. She may even have been a professor. I don't know. But certainly that would be one individual that, perhaps, we could get to sit on this blue-ribbon panel. I don't know if the previous Member for St. Albert has something to do right now or not, but certainly we could consider this.

The postsecondary education system: we could have a good look at it just like we did with the Learning Commission. It was another idea from this side of the House that I'm pleased to see the government adopt. I'm very interested to see how they're going to proceed with improving our postsecondary education system. Forget about making it unaffordable and unaccessible by high tuition fees. Let's change the policy and make it accessible and affordable by having tuition fees that people can certainly pay for, and they're not left after graduation with a huge debt.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a), questions or comments? The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening with great interest to what the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar had to say, and he piqued my interest when it came to Venezuela as I've travelled to the country many, many times and used to do business in Venezuela and appreciate the hard work of those residents in Venezuela and the difficulties that they have. I'm just curious whether the member is aware of the history of their current president and how he came to power as well as whether he's aware of the direction his government is headed.

I just wanted also to thank the hon. member for his, I guess, endorsement of us appointing the previous MLA for St. Albert to help us in government in some committee. But I'd really like to know his comments on Venezuela.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, President Chávez was democratically elected by the citizens of Venezuela. A state-owned oil company, which certainly this hon. member doesn't endorse, is one of the largest employers in the country and also one of the largest sources of revenue for the government.

This hon. member can appreciate that we do not interfere with democratically elected governments. That is something that, perhaps, the Americans might not appreciate. But Mr. Chávez was elected. There was an attempted coup. He was put in a military base by individuals. Yes, he was held at a military base. Many citizens there without adequate food started to rattle and clang pots and pans in the streets, and the people who placed him in the military establishment, or the military base, decided it was in the interests of the country to release him. He was restored as president.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, this is supposed to be brief questions and comments. The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Yes. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar: I'm wondering how you would recommend empowering postsecondary students. How could they gain this government's ear in terms of whether it be financing or just input? How could postsecondary students receive input from this government? How would you empower them?

Mr. MacDonald: Well, certainly, I would hope that this government would implement, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie stated earlier, a complete commission to study postsecondary education. They could hold public hearings at the campuses: the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge, the University of Calgary, Athabasca University. They could also go to the community colleges. I would also like to see them go to the not-for-profit

universities as well and hold a series of public hearings so they can see first-hand the experiences and hear from the students just how difficult it is to get an education without going into deep debt. So let's have a blue-ribbon commission that holds public hearings.

Thank you.

4:50

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A comment and a question. First of all, the comment is that myself and other government MLAs did meet with CAUS, the Council of Alberta University Students, this morning. As a matter of fact, they were very happy with Bill 1 and with what's happening in the Legislature and postsecondary education in general.

My question, though, is: you mentioned this farmer going to school, and I've noticed that the Liberals have been putting a lot of petitions in about displaced farmers. I wonder if the Liberals realize that farmers in Alberta are in fact still working. In fact, they're working very, very hard. They may not be making any money, but they go to work every single day. Yet it seems that the Liberals want to send them to school or off to Fort McMurray to do a trade or something. The farmers have to look after their farms so that they can raise the food for us to eat. I wonder if the Liberals realize that.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased. I don't know what part of the oil patch the hon. member worked in, but I worked all over the province in the oil patch, and some of the hardest working people that I worked with were farmers who had trade certificates and worked off their place.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the five minutes allocated for this section has expired.

The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to be back and listening to the debate after 10 years. We start off in the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act and end up talking about Venezuela and the foreign workers, but I guess that in principle on the bill, anything goes.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I know that this is a narrow bill and it's a housekeeping bill, and that's fine. But I think that the important point that we have to look at here – and we're into endowment funds, we're into this, and we're into that, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talked about it – is that it was very much part of the NDP policy. The one thing: during the last election having an advanced learning commission was part of our policy.

It makes sense because I was there as a trustee, and we went through some very tumultuous times, you might say, with the teacher strikes. The one thing that the Learning Commission – and I have to admit that I was a bit dubious about where they would go to begin with because I thought, well, maybe the government will just bring in another bunch of government people, and it would be sort of a whitewash. But I was pleasantly surprised. The commission did a very good job.

The thing that was important with the Learning Commission, Mr. Speaker, is that it focused us on what was important in education. There are still a lot of things that have to occur. The job's not done by any stretch of the imagination in public education, but at least there's a bellwether there. We know what they should be doing so that the opposition and people in Alberta, anybody, can see if they've not followed through. For instance, a couple of things that

they still haven't done for needy students is the junior kindergarten and kindergarten. It was very important to the Learning Commission. But now there is something that we can judge the government with.

I think for exactly the same reasons we should do this in advanced education. Sure we have the short-term problems that we have to deal with. The short-term problems, of course, are accessibility and the student debt that we're talking about. We have to deal with them. We don't need a commission to deal with that, and we know it in the short term. But in the long term I think – and I don't know whether it's the Member for St. Albert or whoever – we'd want the best minds that we could get to look at the whole advanced education system in Alberta, spend some time at it, and come back with some very serious recommendations.

Then it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we could decide: is an endowment fund the way to go? Is this the way to go? Is that way the way to go? In other words, we would have a plan, and again it would set a focus that all Albertans could judge the government on as they have in the Learning Commission. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that that's what we should be doing.

I'd say to the hon. minister that the approach so far is piecemeal. I'm sure that some good things will flow out of it, but is it the right thing to do over the long haul? Let's deal with the short-term problems, as I said: accessibility. Let's deal with student debt. We can do that fairly quickly. But over the long haul we need to know: should there be more money going into universities? Should it be going into junior colleges? What should we be doing for the high school students to get them ready? What sorts of programs should we offer? We don't really have a clue here. So I'm suggesting that we . . . [interjection] Well, then you're a smarter man than everybody else, Minister, because everybody I talk to doesn't think that we have a plan.

I think that some of the steps that we're taking are probably going to be good ones in the future. But the point is that if we believe the Learning Commission worked well on public education – and I take it the minister believes it does, and the government believes it does – then why would the same sort of approach not work dealing with advanced education? It makes a lot of sense to me. I think that the Learning Commission was a good approach for everybody as it worked out. I think the government believes it was a good approach. So again I ask the minister: why not? Before we start spending all sorts of money in all sorts of areas that may not be appropriate, we could take the time to take a good, long look at advanced education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be interested in the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview's experienced opinion of the free tuition Ireland model that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mentioned previously.

Mr. Martin: Yeah, in an ideal world. Again, what we should start with is freezing tuition. We've had dramatic increases the last number of years. As I recollect, in the province of Alberta we've increased more than any other place in Canada. So at least freeze it and begin to work back in tuition. If we want to deal with our economy, our social and economic economy, the best way is to get as many kids there. It's part of the accessibility thing. The tuition is becoming a problem. It's especially becoming a problem for lower income kids, so I'm suggesting that this would be a good step. Freeze it, and work towards lowering it as quickly as we can.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2) the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: My question to the hon. member is: why is it that when you encourage the government to spend money on students' education, you want to call it an investment, but as soon as you consider the part that the student puts out, you call it debt when they're both exactly the same thing? They're both investing in their future. Why is it that when you deal with the student terminology, it's debt, but when government does it, it's investment? What's the difference?

Mr. Martin: Certainly, it should be clear even to this member that it's investment by both, but the reality is that these students are ending up with a lot of debt. It's not a very good investment for them. If they don't have any money and they can't get the jobs and they're in total debt, how do they invest in the economy? Many of them are not even getting the proper jobs that they're trained for because, again, we don't have a particular plan here.

I mean, the investment is the education. It's a good investment by government. It's a good investment by the student. If it's too high, the point that I'd make is that if the tuition becomes a problem, then only the kids with money or the parents with money will get there. So they will not make that investment in higher education if they don't have the money. That's when it becomes an accessibility problem.

I think we have to recognize that this is starting to happen, and putting our heads in the sand and denying it is not going to work. I guarantee you that.

The Speaker: Additional questions under the Standing Order section?

Then the chair is prepared to accept additional speakers. The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just generally looking at this bill, I would tell you that in my own lifespan, if it wasn't for the services – I went back to postsecondary and university level when I was an adult student, 21 years old.

5:00

One of the things that I'd like to mention regarding the bill is the fact of this information that you've made changes and even the loan factor that we've discussed this afternoon. I think it's very, very important to look at the business of communication to our student population. That's one thing that I think would be very, very important, trying to identify in terms of how this information will get to the student population.

Another issue, if I may just mention it, is the whole question of postsecondary institutions right now, and I'm thinking more or less of Grant MacEwan, the status of university degrees. It very much concerns me about what happens to a lot of students that want to come back to postsecondary in terms of diploma programs. I've asked the minister: what would happen to these students in terms of the transition that will take place? I think that's very significant.

It's also important that we look at the whole question of the total complexity of all the institutions across the province, and I want to compliment the government in terms of the number of parts of the Learning Commission that they've implemented. I think they're attempting to do a good job of that. But it seems to me that we should be looking at the complexity of institutions across the province and have a commission which would enable us to get a good vision of what every institution does, their specializations.

Therefore, I think this would be very much in order. So I just thought I'd mention that.

The other thing I'd just briefly mention. When I was at Red Deer College as the vice-president of student services, we started the first residence in Alberta there, sir. It does concern me that a lot of our information regarding residential housing across the province is the matter of Infrastructure. I'm not sure where that is, but I'd like to hear maybe the minister tell us where that is in terms of the residential housing for students and what's happening in that dynamic.

Anyway, I think that's about it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to share those few visions with you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Additional speakers?

Shall I call on the hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close the debate?

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly had some interesting comments about the full range, I guess, of postsecondary education in the province today, as one hon. member pointed out, ranging from foreign workers in Venezuela to what's actually happening here at home. I appreciate the comments.

I appreciate the fact that people are interested in postsecondary education, in advancing education, and making sure that Albertans have the opportunity to maximize the human capital, to be the best that they can be, and that's certainly what I aspire to as minister, that's what our government aspires to. I think that with the help of members in the House we can really make our postsecondary system, right from moving to literacy to moving to PhDs and beyond, sing in this province.

It needs to be affordable. It needs to be accessible. I think the comments that are being made this afternoon on those points are absolutely bang on. Every Albertan ought to have the opportunity to advance their education, and every Albertan is qualified to advance their education, so really the challenge to us is to make that system happen. Of course, that gets into the issue of how we allocate resources, how we can make sure that the resources that we have available are allocated so that the most people can get the best value out of the process.

Some comments were made about Ireland, for example. We have to look at the best practices around the world to see what we can bring into our system here, but we also have to be cautious not to jump to facile solutions. I'm looking at Ireland, for example, to see what's happened there. One of the things I'm given to understand – I'm looking for more research – is that in actual fact by lowering the tuition costs, there hasn't actually been an increase in the take-up. In actual fact I'm told that there's not a higher proportion of people going to advanced education there just because the tuition fees have been lowered.

Now, I'm looking for more information on that, and I think we ought to. I think we ought to take the time to explore and find the best practices around the world and see what we can do to make sure that our postsecondary system is leading edge and gives Albertans the opportunity to have the best education that they possibly can and lead in the world. So I think it's important to look around.

One of the members started talking about the fact that there needed to be opportunities for farmers who were struggling and perhaps should be getting a job in the oil patch, and we've had questions in this House about the foreign workers' agreement and what might happen with foreign workers coming in. The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that we do aspire to have every Albertan have the opportunity to take those jobs that are here. Those Albertans who want to, need to be able to step forward and access the opportunities that are there. I'm not aware of any of those Albertans being denied

an opportunity to upgrade, to get into a process where they can get an apprenticeship job if they want. If people can sign up for a job and get an apprenticeship program, the space will be there. So, yes, Albertans have to take up. Yes, we have to make sure that the transition programs that are necessary for aboriginal people who need to upgrade can get that opportunity to do so. Yes, we need to do those.

However, Mr. Speaker, today we were talking, actually, about Bill 14, and Bill 14 is a very simple bill. It's not about changing anything that's happening, but it is about the fact that in the current act there are some things that are not as clear as they ought to be and can be interpreted in a number of ways.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie indicated and read some policy statements, and he was absolutely right about the policy statements and the way the act is being interpreted. But it's been brought to our attention that the act could be interpreted in another way to suggest that those policy statements might not be the right interpretation. So the purpose of this bill is not to do all the things we've been talking about this afternoon. We've committed to do a review, and we're designing the form of that review. It won't be necessarily the Learning Commission format, but it will be something I think similar in substance to do that so that we have a full and complete review with the opportunity for all Albertans to have input to it.

However, it is also important to make sure that our act is clear and that it can be utilized in an appropriate way and that when an Auditor General looks at what we're doing, the Auditor General can say: yes, what you're doing is in accordance with the act. If there are instances where that's not as clear as it ought to be, then it behooves us to move as quickly as possible to make those amendments.

So while the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie suggests that we ought not to be here doing this, quite frankly I would like to agree with him. I think these are minimal. They're not the most important thing we're doing in postsecondary education, although they did engender a good discussion this afternoon, but what they are is fixing the stuff that needs to be fixed so that the law that we have right now is clear and the policies we have are clearly policies which are being interpreted in accordance with the law.

Now, when you talk about people who ought to be able to come back into the education system for adult learning opportunities later on in life, absolutely they should. Absolutely. And if they haven't reached their lifetime loan limit, if they're moving into a master's program or a PhD program and those loan limits are higher, absolutely they should be able to access them.

So what we're talking about is that we ought to look at all of the policies and find out how we can make student loan policies that are affordable and make sure that resources are available. When we're establishing different forms of financial assistance for some or all purposes of the act, obviously what we're talking about is saying that a loan might not be the most appropriate way of financial assistance in all purposes. So for the purposes of the act we might need a different form.

All of those things need to be discussed. The purpose of this bill is to clear up perhaps the ability to interpret the existing act in a couple of different ways, and it should be clear which way it was intended to be interpreted.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

Bill 20

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to move second reading of Bill 20, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005.

Under the changes proposed the act will be amended to parallel recent changes to its federal counterpart. There is also some clarification needed of amendments made last year to the royalty tax rebate and some technical amendments to ensure that the act is consistent with the current administration.

The federal Income Tax Act changes regularly, and it is important for the smooth running of the tax system that Alberta's legislation be consistent in wording and intent. By changing our legislation to parallel its federal counterpart, we keep the rules consistent across the country and prevent a patchwork defect in legislation. Tax returns are complicated enough without that.

5:10

Among the changes to parallel the federal act the government is putting forward changes to relax slightly a definition of "impairment" used to calculate the credit for mental or physical impairment. Under the old wording a person had to have impairment in "feeding and dressing." Under the proposed new wording a person must have impairment in "feeding or dressing."

A further change to parallel the federal act and be consistent with the current administration affects the eligibility criteria for the education credit. The amendment requires that students be at least 16 years of age to qualify for the postsecondary education credits. In general, both the federal and provincial education tax credits are granted to students enrolled in postsecondary and vocational job training courses that qualify for the purposes of the tuition fee tax credit. In the case of vocational schools, fees paid on behalf of students who are under 16 years of age do not qualify for the tuition fee tax credit. This amendment clarifies that a similar restriction applies for the purposes of the education tax credit. Generally, young students taking accredited courses at colleges or universities will still be eligible for this credit. Young people in either basic or secondary school who also take classes for personal interest will not, even if the class is at a designated institution. It's also important to note that the act has been administered according to the federal wording, so there is no significant change in how the rules apply.

There are also proposed changes to the foreign tax credit. The intent of the foreign tax credit is to prevent double taxation of income from foreign sources. Among the changes under the current legislation the taxpayer must be a resident of Alberta on December 31 to qualify. People who leave Canada during the year are denied the credit. This means people are often taxed twice on income they earned while living in Alberta. The proposed change will correct this by allowing people who were residents of Alberta but have moved to a jurisdiction outside of Canada during the year to claim the credit for the part of the year they were resident in Alberta.

Third, there are proposed changes to the treatment of part-year residents. A part-year resident is a person who arrives in Canada from abroad or who leaves Canada for another country midway through the tax year. Among the proposed changes, section 40 of the act unintentionally provides preferential treatment to part-year residents of other provinces who have business income in Alberta over Canadians who live in those provinces full-time and have business income in Alberta.

Changes will ensure that the legislation dealing with the credits of past-year residents does not result in the part-year residents of other provinces being treated better than full-year residents of those provinces. As well, the legislation currently denies the pension tax credit to all individuals who moved from Alberta to a residence outside Canada. The credit is denied both when the individual was

a resident of the other country and when the person lived in Alberta. The denial of the credit happens even though one person may have been taxed on enough pension income while an Alberta resident to make him eligible to claim the entire credit. The proposed amendments will rectify this situation and allow such individuals to qualify for the credit. These changes are consistent with the current administration of the act, and there is no change in how the rules apply.

Finally, last year's changes were made to the act to match amendments to the royalty tax deduction in the Corporate Tax Act. However, we found the legislation did not accurately reflect the intended calculation of amounts available for the credit, so some clarification is needed.

Mr. Speaker, the changes proposed in this amendment act will align the provincial act with its federal counterpart, prevent double taxation by ensuring tax credits are not unfairly denied, and clarify aspects of the Personal Income Tax Act. I look forward to hearing the debate on Bill 20. If any questions or concerns arise during the debate, I undertake to respond to them at the next stage of the bill process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to indicate that I would agree with almost everything that the mover of the bill has indicated. It is primarily a housekeeping bill which brings some clarification to various aspects of the existing bill and parallels federal legislation. I would like to thank the Finance minister for giving myself and my staff the opportunity to meet with some of her staff to go over the bill, and it was very helpful for us in understanding some of those clarifications that are being made.

I do have a question regarding the . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hate to interrupt you, but under Standing Order 19(1)(c) I must now put the question on the following motion for consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

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

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 9: Mr. Hancock]

[Motion carried]

Government Motions

Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

15. Mr. Hancock moved on behalf of Mr. Klein:
Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

[Government Motion 15 carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 20
Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005
(continued)

The Speaker: I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was a little caught off guard by all of that, but I gather that I get the rest of my speaking time, and I'm happy to have it. I was just getting into my comments on Bill 20, and if I remember correctly, I was thanking the minister for having allowed my staff and myself to meet with her staff and provide the . . .

An Hon. Member: It bears repeating.

Mr. R. Miller: So we'll have that on the record twice now, then, I understand. That's good.

As I had indicated earlier, that was quite helpful. I believe I was just about to ask or at least put on the record my question regarding the age limit of 16. I'll have to look into that a little more before we deal with this bill at committee, but I'm wondering if perhaps we might be somehow excluding bright young people under the age of 16 who would be attending some sort of postsecondary institution. That does, of course, happen on occasion although it might be rather rare.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that I really have an awful lot to say on this bill. I understand that at least one of my colleagues will have some comments on it, so I think I will cede the floor for the time being and look forward, as I said, to the opportunity to raise a question or two at committee level.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't take long because I know the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is just dying to get into it, and I don't think we'll get into foreign workers here.

The bill seems to be housekeeping. The only question that I have: I take it that the intent of this particular bill is to be revenue neutral. If that's not the case, I would like the hon. member to know that the only group that I can see that there is where it's not revenue neutral – and he mentioned that – was in terms of the foreign workers living in other places. I would hope that the minister or the member would talk about this if there's anything in there that isn't revenue neutral. That's my understanding of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. If there are questions – hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, are you participating in the question and answer portion?

Mr. R. Miller: Yes.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just going to ask the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview if he had been made aware of some electronic mail correspondence that my office had received from the Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation indicating that, as far as they could see, this particular bill was in fact revenue neutral?

5:20

Mr. Martin: Yes. I am aware that Mr. Carpay said that, and I quote, as far as I can tell, it probably will not increase or decrease anybody's taxes. It looks like this bill will help to clarify certain ambiguities which have arisen over time, which often arise in spite of the best intentions of legislators to be clear. That's his assessment.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is still available.

If not, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this time I have some questions for the hon. member to get on the record, and I look forward to a timely response. My questions in regard to Bill 20, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, are around the new proposed section 25, and we're discussing natural gas or related hydrocarbons or mineral deposits and the royalties from such. There are some changes in here that may or may not be housekeeping changes.

Now, in regard to the attributed Canadian royalty income, we are making significant changes to the existing section. Who is to benefit from these changes and by how much?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Additional members that wish to participate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: This is strictly a question of clarification. The hon. mover of the bill put forward the idea that we can capture revenue from our, sort of, snowbirds. They go down to the States during the winter months to enjoy the warmer climes. I'm just wondering if within this bill we have the opportunity to derive revenue from what I would consider almost sunbirds; in other words, those coming up from the southern climes to Alberta's mountains to escape the heat that they're experiencing in the south. If they were to have a temporary residency in Alberta, would we be able to collect revenue from them based on their time and stay in this province?

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Hon. member, has the question been called? The question having been called, that's the end of it.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a second time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 8 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Wednesday, March 23, 2005

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/03/23

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 2
Alberta Centennial Medal Act

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to move third reading of Bill 2.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in the previous debate of this bill, we fully support this bill because it provides a tribute to Albertans who have made a significant contribution to make our province a better place to live in, to raise our families in, and to work in. This bill is a one-time commemorative medal that will recognize the honour and extraordinary accomplishments of nominated Albertans during the province's centennial year.

The Alberta Centennial Medal Act seeks to award deserving Albertans who have contributed to our province in areas such as community involvement, leadership, volunteerism, or outstanding personal achievements. This is an act that has as its motivation the celebration of our centennial year.

Some questions were raised during second reading. I think the first one was surrounding section 4 of the bill. I'm still not clear what exactly are the criteria in determining who these individuals and organizations are. Especially, how will the government determine which associations, governments, and other organizations will be designated as having the ability to nominate a recipient? How will the government determine which individuals can nominate potential recipients? What is the process for this?

Other than further clarification around these issues, I can see no other provision of this bill that needs debate, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's Official Opposition fully supports this bill. Its motivation is based upon celebrating the province's centennial through personal recognition of extraordinary Albertans. The special men and women and youths who will receive this award will no doubt be worthy of this special tribute. We are not here to complain and whine. We fully support this bill and are willing to work with the ministry in celebrating our centennial year.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be very, very brief. I just want to say that the bill has the NDP caucus support. I raised some questions during the second reading of the bill, and the minister was quite specific and addressed some of those concerns that I expressed. One of those I think he addressed by way of suggesting that some of those concerns will be taken care of in the writing up of the regulations, and if I recall correctly, he thought he'd be willing to share that information as that writing is undertaken or would certainly consult.

So with that, if I'm correct in my understanding and recalling of what the minister had to say on that day in response to my questions, I'm very happy to support this bill in its third reading.

Mr. Hinman: I would like to also thank the minister and to put the

Alliance caucus support behind it as well. I think that it's important in this centennial year that we do look back and . . .

Mr. Mar: It was unanimous?

Mr. Hinman: Let me check. Absolutely.

It's important that we look back and recognize the great citizens that have contributed to this province and the sacrifices that they've made here as they came and they settled this land and worked hard. I'm just excited to see these awards get put out to deserving individuals, and I think that it'll boost the morale of the province. It's just exciting to see such awards going out to special individuals that have contributed so much to our province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development to close debate.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I believe that what my promise to the House was at the time in second reading was that I would convey the transcripts of *Hansard* to the drafters of the regulations so that they might contemplate the comments made in this House while they were drafting the regulations. So I have done exactly that. The drafters have in fact seen the comments that have been made by hon. members here, most of which I think we've been able to accommodate in the drafting of the regulation, which is not yet complete.

Apart from answering that question, I thank all hon. members on both sides of the House for their kind comments in support of this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

Bill 27

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move Bill 27, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005, at third reading.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to participate in the debate this evening in regard to Bill 27. I was hoping to get an opportunity earlier to discuss this, but now is an ideal time.

I notice Bill 27 is slightly different than the supplementary estimates that were provided in the booklet form, certainly in regard to the reconciliation of adjusted gross amounts. When one looks at Bill 27, again we see money for the last fiscal year and lots of it, almost to the tune of \$2 billion.

Now, I'm curious: in the supplementary estimates that were presented and debated in the Assembly in the past couple of weeks what is exactly the reconciliation about, and why is it not included in the bill? Certainly, I have been looking at previous government budgets, and I see where there is no reconciliation publicly listed from one year to the next. Research in the Legislature Library indicates that previous Progressive Conservative governments had a reconciliation from one year to the next, but it's a practice that seems to have stopped, oddly enough, at least publicly.

Now, I was surprised to see, Mr. Speaker, that there is a reconciliation listed in the supplementary estimates, and I was astonished not to see it in Bill 27. We see in the reconciliation that is listed in supplementary supply, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, that there was a transfer to the Department of Infrastructure and

Transportation listed. Children's Services is listed as a reconciliation. Community Development, there was a transfer to the Department of Seniors and Community Supports. Economic Development is listed. Education is listed. Energy is listed. Environment is listed, Executive Council, Finance, Gaming, Government Services, Health and Wellness, Human Resources and Employment, Infrastructure and Transportation, Innovation and Science, International and Intergovernmental Relations, Justice, Municipal Affairs, Restructuring and Government Efficiency received a transfer – and that in itself is interesting – Seniors and Community Supports, Solicitor General, Sustainable Resource Development.

The hon. members across the way can correct me if I'm wrong, but it's the first time I can recall or find a reconciliation of adjusted gross amounts listed this way in supplementary estimates.

8:10

Now, in regard to appropriation Bill 27 we are essentially adding on almost \$2 billion to the budget. Mr. Speaker, usually in June of each year the hon. Minister of Finance releases the government of Alberta's annual report, and the annual report details the revenue and expenses of the Alberta government in a number of categories including by ministry and by subject areas: supply and services, salaries and wages, travel and communications, et cetera. In September of each year the government departments release an annual report for each department. Each of these reports goes into greater detail than the government's annual report, but each report should contain the same basic information that is in the annual report. All of the annual reports provide Albertans with a good idea of how each department works and what kind of activities they endeavour to pursue.

With Bill 27 here we just have a general list. However, Mr. Speaker, these reports provide very little information as to exactly where the money was spent. For example, one department might claim they spent \$1 million on travel, but the annual report won't tell Albertans where they travelled to, how much was spent, or even who went. Now, that's no different than this bill we are discussing here this evening.

To answer the question, "Where exactly did the money go?" each May the government of Alberta releases the public accounts, also known as the blue book. The blue book lists selected payments made by the general revenue fund of the government of Alberta. It lists grant payments over \$5,000 in one category and in another supply, services, purchase of capital assets over \$10,000. Now, there's no such listing provided with this bill.

The public accounts document is prepared in accordance with section 17 of the Government Accountability Act.

The public accounts for a fiscal year shall include the following:

- (a) the consolidated annual report prepared under section 10,
- (b) the ministry annual reports prepared under section 14 . . .
- (c) any supplementary schedules, statements, explanations and financial statements that the Minister of Finance may require.

All three sets of financial statements make up the public accounts, so some time next year we will see where Bill 27 fits in this scheme.

Now, all three documents are interesting whenever they are compared. Upon comparing, Mr. Speaker, the amounts of grants and supplies and services listed in the annual reports with the amounts listed in the annual report, I have discovered in the past some inconsistencies.

Now, first one notices that the totals for each category do not match. For example, if we look at some of the past budgets, let's look at the figures for grants in the following table for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2002. It would be interesting to see how much of this money that we're discussing in Bill 27 is actually granted, Mr. Speaker, and how much is for supply and services. But for the fiscal

year ended March 31, 2002, in the public accounts \$13.5 billion was listed for grants, but the annual report has an amount of \$15.1 billion. I'm rounding this off, but the difference is \$1.5 billion. For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003, public accounts states again for grants that there is \$13.6 billion. The annual report indicates that there's \$13.8 billion. That's a difference of \$271 million. As you can see, the total amount of grants that the government of Alberta has given within the same fiscal year differs significantly.

The significant difference raises for this member a number of questions. Why are the numbers so different, especially considering that the transactions took place within the same fiscal year? Is there an explanation for the difference? Who or which parties were the additional funds given to? Perhaps most importantly, how are Alberta taxpayers' dollars being used? Is this good or bad public policy? We need to know how the tax dollars really are being spent. When we look at this bill here this evening, we have no idea. No idea. [interjection]

Now, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti says that this is terrific, and I have to disagree, Mr. Speaker. I would say that these are very valid questions, and we need an answer. The Auditor General of Alberta and the Department of Finance are able to provide an explanation and a reconciliation for this discrepancy. The public accounts book is calculated on a cash basis, and the annual reports are calculated on an accrual basis. Accrual accounting means that income and expenditures are recorded when they are brought to account or a contract is signed and not when the money is received or paid. A payment shows up in the public accounts book when the cheque, as I understand it, has been cashed, and in the annual report when the contract has been signed.

This leads to even more questions in regard to this. Firstly, why don't all government financial statements use the same method of accounting? We have in this reconciliation a lot of the government departments but not all. We have none in Bill 27 here. Then, second, having financial statements that don't use the same accounting method creates unnecessary confusion and makes it difficult for the public to understand, and I will say that it makes it difficult for this hon. member to do my job and my obligation and my duty, which is to hold this government accountable.

Now, furthermore, if a reconciliation of the two documents is available, then why is it not made part of the public accounts book? The government's financial statements cannot be considered complete without a reconciliation between the two documents because without one, the government is keeping two sets of books. To put it another way, is this government practising an Enron style of accounting?

Additionally, there is a second, more troublesome layer to this problem in my view. When you examine each department individually, Mr. Speaker, it becomes apparent that the totals in the public accounts documents and the totals in the annual report document do not add up. Furthermore, the totals of each department are higher or lower by drastically different amounts. The comparison revealed no regularities, no uniformities, and led to more questions.

8:20

For example, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003, the public accounts book states that \$545 million was spent on supplies and services, while the annual report states that \$290 million was spent. That's a difference of \$254 million, or 47 per cent. At first glance Albertans have no idea how to account for the difference. Is it because money was transferred, because cheques were cashed late, because contracts in a given year went over budget? Or is it for some other reason entirely? These questions also have to be addressed whenever we discuss Bill 27, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is that a reconciliation between the two different accounts is required in order for the government of Alberta to prove

not only to this member but to everyone else that it is not practising an Enron style of accounting. Furthermore, Albertans need answers to these questions and reconciliations so they know exactly where their tax dollars are going. When we look at this bill, we have no idea where these tax dollars are going. I think it's unfortunate, and I think it is disrespectful to the taxpayers, and it is neglectful of this government to not provide a public accounting of all their finances.

Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: You're saying this with a straight face?

Mr. MacDonald: You bet I'm saying this with a straight face.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I sent . . . [interjections] Yeah, you laugh. You've increased government spending from \$14 billion to \$22 billion, and you still have the same problems, whether they're with public education, public health care, or roads, or bridges. You want to close schools. You want to build casinos where we don't want them. I think you really should concentrate on building hospitals and maintaining schools and building schools on the edge of town and answering these questions.

Mr. Speaker, last summer I wrote the government and I wrote each respective ministry, and I have yet to receive a reply to my questions. These questions are as relevant now, when we're debating Bill 27, as they were last summer. [interjections] Oh, I'm going to look at my records and see exactly who I wrote to.

The Department of Justice is a shining example to you all. I think you should take the tour of the Ministry of Justice because it is one of the very few departments, Mr. Speaker, that in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003 – John Carpay would be impressed with this. The total listed in the annual report for that department for grants: \$28,980,000. The total spent by the Department of Justice according to the public accounts: \$28,000,979, a difference of a wee amount of \$329,000, and that is excellent. That is excellent. But I'm sorry that is one of the very few departments where the amounts balance between what was in the annual report and what is listed in the public accounts.

Now, the Solicitor General . . .

An Hon. Member: Children's Services.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, Children's Services. Oh, my gosh, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] The hon. member was not responsible, but for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003, general revenue fund, details of expenditures by Alberta Children's Services: for grants there was, according to the public accounts, in total \$568 million spent. I'm going to round this off, Mr. Speaker. This is a unique department because you have both a ministry and a department: total for the ministry; total for the department. I'm sorry; the books do not balance. So perhaps the hon. minister could work very diligently in the new portfolio and ensure that whenever I review this next summer, they do balance and there's a true accounting to the citizens.

Thank you.

Mr. Chase: Last Wednesday in this House I sort of joked that having done seven pages on the interim budget, I would just simply reverse the process and start from page 7 and work back to 1, but in honour of my esteemed colleagues I felt it was important to write a different speech. This presentation deals with philosophy and process as opposed to specific budget items, although I do refer to a number of departments. Please bear with me, and if you have any questions or comments in the midst of the presentation, please let me know. Also, I noticed that my hon. colleague from Calgary isn't

here to check, but I am not packing *Hansard*. These are all my notes.

Tonight I want to look at the derivation of a number of terms as they apply to the budgetary process. To begin with, I want to examine the definition of the term "supplemental," which comes from supply, in this case additional supply. I also want to discuss the meaning of the term "liberal," which is used frequently in this House in a disparaging, derogatory, demeaning fashion, especially when referencing federal Liberals, who are referred to as – insert the adjective of your choice – cousins.

If you look up the word "liberal" in the dictionary, you might get the sense of free flowing, for example. A liberal outpouring suggests turning on the tap and letting it run. "Conservative," on the other hand, suggests holding back, saving for the future, which brings me in a somewhat roundabout way to our discussion on the supplemental budget tonight.

Words like "perception" can be deceiving and subject to misuse. A supplemental budget suggests money in a separate account, perhaps in Switzerland or in some offshore location. It also makes one think of socking away funds or going to the mattress. Alberta's bountiful natural resources provide this province with an unusual problem, and that is money management: a balance between spending, saving, and investing. It is here where the traditional definitions of conservative and liberal no longer apply.

An individual who fits the traditional conservative definition to a T was Alberta's first Conservative Premier, the Hon. Peter Lougheed. Mr. Lougheed shared the same financial approach of the Biblical Joseph, who is renowned both for his coat of many colours and for his conservation approach. Joseph advised the king to store away provisions against the day when famine might savage the land. Likewise, Premier Lougheed came up with the notion of the heritage trust fund. In good times he set aside a figure which approached \$13 billion. This princely sum was to be left to grow in the form of an invested savings account which would be there in times of shortage such as declining resource royalties.

Unfortunately, a different form of Conservative philosophy followed, one that appeared from a Liberal point of view to be liberal in that rather than allowing the fund to grow, as was the case with Norway's fund, a series of Progressive Conservative caucuses kept raiding the fund, which at one point due to poor investments dropped to \$11 million. About that point, the more conservative Liberals suggested the need for an additional savings fund, a notion that the liberal Conservatives readily adopted. In this case, the idea or philosophy was worthy of adoption.

Another Conservative notion that appeared to make great sense at the time, in 1992, was the idea of providing temporary relief to oil companies when the price of a barrel of crude dropped out of sight by reducing by two-thirds the royalties oil companies were required to pay. Unfortunately, from a savings investment point of view the royalties remain reduced and continue to be at the same percentage established in 1992, although the price of a barrel has risen from the basement in 1992 through the roof now in this year of 2005.

8:30

One of the offshore neoconservative philosophies that this government adopted as a quick fix was the New Zealand model courtesy of Sir Roger Douglas. Rather than coming up with a fiscal philosophy that was relevant to the Alberta resource-rich experience, the government saw an opportunity to dramatically reduce the \$23 billion debt that they had run up from being in the business of underwriting a series of bad business investments. However, rather than taking a cautious conservative approach, the government raced ahead with liberal abandon, cutting and slashing health care, public

and postsecondary education, welfare, seniors, AISH. Hospitals and schools were closed. Infrastructure was put on hold. Seniors lost their health and dental benefits, which they and I are very glad to see restored a decade later by this government.

A funny thing happened on the way to the slash-and-burn forum in 1994. Thanks to the recovery of the world price of a barrel of oil and the rising cost of natural gas, we recorded our first billion dollar surplus. This signal of a turnaround in our economy wasn't sufficient to stop the axe or the social program chipper. In the name of the Holy Grail of debt reduction school boards lost their ability to levy local property taxes, which provided them with the ability to address local issues and accounted for 50 per cent of the revenue. Also in the name of efficiency, an Orwellian code word for control, the number of school boards was reduced and health regions amalgamated. The salaries of all public employees were cut back by 5 per cent for the next five years. Kindergartens were cut back, and instead of fireworks to celebrate . . .

Mr. Herard: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23(d) is one particular issue as well as relevance. We are in third reading, as I understand it, of a bill, and when we are in third reading of a bill, the debate has to be on the bill. In other words, it's no longer about what the bill should be, what it could be, what it should have been. It's what the bill is. I've really been enjoy listening to these speeches that the hon. member puts together, but I think that the hon. member has to learn that in third reading on a bill, he has to speak to the bill such as it is, not read some entertaining piece of literature that he's created. So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that you have to call this member to order.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you wish to speak on the point of order?

Mr. Chase: I've been trying to relate it to various departments. If you like, I'll literally cut to the chase, come to the conclusion, and hopefully you see the relevance.

The Deputy Speaker: I, too, have been listening and have been waiting patiently for you to tie this back to the bill, so if you would continue and speak to the bill.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. What I'm trying to get at is the whole idea of supplemental. I'd like to think that we could get a value to begin with so that we know an accurate amount, and therefore we don't have to add extra to it after the fashion. I hope you see this as relevant. It has to do with the Public Accounts Committee and perceptions.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: A week ago today I asked the question in the Public Accounts Committee as to what the dollar value of parks and protected areas was as we hadn't conducted a recent inventory. Therefore, we had no record of the infrastructure deficit or what supplemental monies were required to bring the parks and protected areas back to their past precut glories.

This past Thursday, Friday, and Saturday I along with the hon.

Member for Battle River-Wainwright attended a great parks and protected areas conference in Canmore, during which the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright presented a report on water strategies. In the sessions that we shared, I brought up the need for a water inventory so that we could track what supplemental budgeting was required to conserve and preserve the quality of this resource. While I don't want to commodify water as a sales item, I do believe we need to account for our water resources, which are depleting naturally and through man-made requirements.

I very much appreciate the members' patience, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Egmont for keeping me on track.

At this point I would like to adjourn debate on Bill 27.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 30

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move Bill 30, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005, for third reading.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's again a privilege to get to participate in the debate on Bill 30, which is essentially – well, I'll put it to you this way. It's like giving your teenage son an allowance before he shovels the walks. You don't know exactly what he's going to do first. This bill is no different than a teenager with their allowance. You have to make sure they do the right thing with it.

Now, this also could be considered an advance on that allowance, but we've got to look at how all this money is controlled, how it's accounted for. We were talking about that earlier, ironically, with Bill 27. When this government comes before the Assembly and asks for, actually, money to essentially run for the first three months of the fiscal year while they're sorting out the budget, that is considered a usual practice, but when you examine the public accounts of this government – and this bill is going to next year appear in the public accounts.

The public accounts is a very interesting document, Mr. Speaker. I was curious last year, when the Minister of Finance appeared before the Public Accounts Committee and was making a very eloquent speech about accountability, why the blue book is listed alphabetically from A to Z for not only grants but also for supplies and services. Why wouldn't it be like Bill 30 here? Why would it not be like Bill 30 and each department that has money would be listed? I realize that if you go through the public accounts books for grants and supplies and services, you will see an alphabetical listing and then you will see the respective department on the right-hand side of the page. But why couldn't it be listed by department?

Now, I didn't think for a minute: what's this government trying to hide? Why is it listed alphabetically? But I thought I would change that and do it by department. It took quite a bit of work, but there was no snow to shovel, fortunately, last summer, so we got at it, myself and a very capable and able researcher, and I was astonished with our results.

If we are to look at, for instance, Community Development – and Community Development is certainly going to get money in Bill 30. Community Development is going to get \$101 million. Now, if we look at the grants for Community Development, we see very worthwhile organizations. We even see the Beaumont municipal library board getting a grant, and it's good to see library boards getting grants. We see cities; we see counties; we see different

organizations. But there is a difference at the end, again, from what was stated in the annual report and what's in public accounts, and I'm still without an explanation to this. Now, this is in grants. Maybe supplies and services, Mr. Speaker, would be different.

8:40

We look, for instance, at Bill 30 and Government Services. Government Services is going to get \$17.6 million to get by on for a little while, and it's a relief to know that the utilities commissioner is not involved in that amount. Now, let's just have a look at this. You'll have to be patient with me for a minute. I just have home-made tags here. Through the general revenue fund, details of expenditures by Government Services – and this is Government Services alone. I would gladly give the Minister of Finance a copy of my work if she desires.

We start off with Government Services with an outfit called 1 2 3 PC Inc. A service was supplied, and the total amount was \$171,000. Now, we get down here to – and I believe these are information technology companies, but one doesn't have to go too far to add up significant tax dollars here. There's an outfit called Acrodex Inc., \$1.1 million. Never heard of them. There's BMC Software, \$355,000.

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Herard: *Beauchesne* 459. Mr. Speaker, if anyone in this Chamber has been here long enough to know what the rules are in third reading, this hon. member should. I've been looking at the bill, and I've been looking for references to what he's carrying on about, and I find that all of that is totally irrelevant. This is not a forum for his complaints about what he's able or not able to do in Public Accounts. This is about an appropriation bill, and I would ask that you enforce the rules.

The Deputy Speaker: On the point of order.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, in defence I can't help if the hon. member, after all these years in the House, does not understand interim supply. I'm sorry. We were talking here about \$17 million which is going to be voted on probably tonight to the hon. minister's department, and we do not know how this money is going to be spent.

The Deputy Speaker: Are you speaking on the point of order?

Mr. MacDonald: I certainly am, and I feel very strongly, Mr. Speaker, that I'm entitled to continue.

The Deputy Speaker: Please do continue but continue speaking on the bill and keep your comments more focused to the bill.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

Debate Continued

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. So for all those who are listening, Government Services is to receive in expense and equipment/inventory purchases \$17.6 million in this bill.

Now, where have they been spending the money, and why should we vote this amount to them? In the past they have spent, for instance, CGI Information Systems and Management Consultants, \$1.6 million. We see another computer services limited company,

close to \$500,000. We see Dell Computer Corporation, \$545,000. We see EDS Canada Inc., \$24 million. That's greater than the amount that is listed in the interim supply estimates. We see Global Direct Corp. getting \$3.6 million. We see IBM Canada receiving \$28 million. We see Imaging Solutions Ltd. receiving \$2.4 million. We see Intellex Systems Group receiving \$327,000; LogiCorp Data Systems Ltd., \$684,000.

An Hon. Member: Is Enron in there?

Mr. MacDonald: Now, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti said, "Is Enron in there?" No, we have to go back two previous fiscal years before we see an entry for Enron, but if the hon. member would like to see it, I could certainly find it and I will show it to him in due time.

Microserve business computer services received, Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 million; Oracle Corporation Canada, \$434,000; Neopost Inc., over \$2 million. This is all from one department. We are asked here in one line item, hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, to provide Government Services over \$17 million in this interim supply bill. There is no detail here, but there is detail in previous public accounts documents as to where this money is going to wind up. You can shake your head, but there's an issue of accountability.

An Hon. Member: Sad.

Mr. MacDonald: It certainly is sad whenever this government is no longer accountable to the taxpayers. You bet it's sad, and I'm disappointed.

Now, information services, again: Rational Software Canada . . .

An Hon. Member: So move.

Mr. MacDonald: Now, Mr. Speaker, an hon. member says that perhaps I should move.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Herard: *Beauchesne* 459. Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing relevant about last year's public accounts and this year's Bill 30, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005. Now, you know, it may be a lot of fun for some people to get up and make all these statements about last year, but it's got nothing to do with this year's bill, and I think we're here to try and do the business of this Legislature, not entertain people who want to read in all kinds of things that are not relevant to the discussion.

Please, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I will read *Beauchesne* 459. It starts out by saying: "Relevance is not easy to define. In borderline cases the Member should be given the benefit of the doubt, although the Speaker has frequently admonished Members who have strayed in debate." I would say that there has been some straying from debate, and I would ask that the member focus more clearly on the bill instead of continually straying.

On the point of order, Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Yes. Possibly I can help the Member for Calgary-Egmont to see the pattern that is trying to be achieved here. We get a series of one-line statements . . .

Mr. Herard: Mr. Speaker, is he speaking on the point of order?

Mr. Chase: I believe I am.

Mr. Herard: I don't think he is.

Mr. Chase: The point of order has to do with relevance, does it not?

The Deputy Speaker: If you wish to speak to the point of order, speak through the chair.

Mr. Chase: Sorry. I'm used to speaking to the person who brought up the problem as opposed to the protocol. Excuse me, sir.

What we're trying to achieve is not a series of rambling comments. We're given by this government a series of one-line items. We have no idea what these one-line items are. There's no justification for the items: \$17 million for this; \$24 million for that. We need the details, and this is our attempt to get out the details.

The Deputy Speaker: You asked to speak on the point of order, not to continue with the hon. member's speech, so I'll go back to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to continue his speech on the bill.

Debate Continued

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. I will continue on the bill.

Now, Government Services has asked for \$17 million in this bill. Let's go to another department. We did Justice earlier. We can't do Restructuring and Government Efficiency because it's a new, expanded cabinet. Certainly, there are less government members in this term than there were in the last, but the cabinet grew, to my surprise, and it grew through Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Now, Innovation and Science receives \$35.4 million; Education receives \$665 million; Energy, under \$60 million.

Economic Development, a small department, receives \$3 million less than Government Services. For a small department they get a significant amount of money, but I suppose the former Minister of Energy, Murray Smith, has to make sure that there's money in the bank whenever he gets his cheque. There has to be a lot of money in the bank because his cheque is pretty big. There are other activities going on with Economic Development that we could certainly talk about at this time, and that is the opening up of yet another trade office.

We're opening trade offices where 10 years ago a group called the Deep Six – now, the Deep Six were concerned about accountability and the wise and prudent use of tax dollars, and I'm disappointed that now we are not. I don't know if the Member for Calgary-Egmont was a member of the Deep Six. I forget.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. MacDonald: No, but Mr. Smith certainly was. The Deep Six has become part of history. The flip side of that: there's a 180 degree turn from government efficiency, wise and prudent use of tax dollars, to trade offices in places like Washington, Mexico City. Perhaps the hon. Minister of Economic Development can fill us all in on where they are because we're opening them so fast, I can't keep up. You know, the envoy, I believe the former member in here is called: well, that's an expensive word for ambassador. A very expensive word. We'll see how all this works out here in a year or two, perhaps, with this new office in Washington and see what

happens. But we're spending a lot of money on that, and a portion of it would be coming, certainly, from this line item.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at Bill 30 here, and we compare it to past government expenditures, and we look at how the accounting for other government expenditures worked, we can only ask ourselves how this money is going to be spent. Again, the hon. member is quite willing to participate in debate, in my view, but when we present this bill and ask for billions of dollars to carry us over until the budget is presented by the Minister of Finance and debated for a very short period of time publicly, you're asking for essentially a blank cheque for each one of these departments.

You, hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, may not understand – I don't know – public oversight, but it is perfectly valid to ask questions as to how this money is to be accounted for.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Could you direct your comments through the chair instead of debating with another member?

Mr. MacDonald: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

So when we casually look at this bill, and we look at all the amounts that are to be spent, Mr. Speaker, we should have the right, the duty, and the obligation to scrutinize each and every dollar. That's what one of our jobs is here. Not only should we spend money; we must spend it wisely, and we must be accountable for where it went. This system that is set up, that is currently employed by this government, in my view is not adequate. It is deficient, and it needs to be improved.

Now, the questions I've asked this evening: I expect and demand, respectfully, an answer. I have been waiting since last August for an answer. I have been waiting shorter than that, since September, from the respective departments where there have been deficiencies located, and it has been nothing but silence from the government benches.

In conclusion, I would like to say that in other matters that I have dealt with with the hon. Minister of Finance, correspondence has been answered straightaway, but with this matter it has not. I and the taxpayers of this province deserve an answer. Thank you.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on Bill 30, please.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 5 Family Law Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise to begin discussion in committee on Bill 5, the Family Law Amendment Act, 2005. I have tabled with the House amendments to the act that I'm introducing this evening. If they could be handed

around so that members will be able to follow along with my comments, which in large measure will relate to the House amendments.

My comments in second reading were extensive and in large measure dealt with the substance of the bill, so tonight I intend to speak principally to the House amendments and to questions or comments that were raised by hon. members in second reading. I think that the clearest way to deal with the House amendments will be to discuss them in terms of the original section as I go from the beginning to the end of the bill itself.

I will however make a couple of initial comments on the House amendments. First of all, as I said at second reading, the Family Law Act is a major piece of legislation, and we're committed to ensuring its successful implementation. We proceed with implementation activity, and as we continue to have the formal and informal consultation on the legislation, we are continuing to see ways in which the legislation can be strengthened. That is the reason I am bringing these House amendments in tonight to the amendment act.

The second comment that I have is that I would like to point out that a number of the House amendments change references to prescribed forms and procedures to words such as "designated" or "provided for" or "respecting."

9:00

If hon. members would look at section 107 of the Family Law Act, they will see that that section gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to make regulations over a number of things, including procedural rules in subsection (I) and forms in subsection (m). All of the regulatory powers in section 107 are powers to make regulations respecting the matters specified. Only the powers with respect to rules and forms are powers to prescribe.

The problem with saying "prescribing" is that it is very specific. Every time a rule is to be changed or a form has to be tweaked, the request will have to be brought to cabinet and an order in council will need to be obtained. Members will appreciate that this is a relatively cumbersome process and that it's not necessary. The Department of Justice has existing processes such as through the Rules of Court Committee to develop procedures and forms and to make them available to the public. The department has advised me that it does not know why "prescribed" was used in the context of rules and forms but has asked that a more flexible regulatory provision be provided to allow the existing processes for developing rules and forms to continue to be used without having to run everything through cabinet.

Also, before I proceed to look at some of the other House amendments, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora asked during second reading about implications of the marriage legislation before the House of Commons. I'd like to expand on the answer that I gave to the hon. member. Guardianship under section 20 of the Family Law Act pertains to the two natural parents of a child. Where one of the parties to the relationship is not a parent of the child, section 20 would not apply to that person, and the nature of the gender relationship wouldn't matter. Where one of the parties is not a parent but wants to be a guardian of the child, an application for appointment as a guardian would be made under section 23 of the Family Law Act. A more common approach would probably be for the nonparent to apply to adopt the child under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. Once an adoption order is granted, that person becomes the guardian of the child. There is no distinction made on the basis of sexual orientation under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

House amendment A adds a new section 4.1 to the amendment act. Section 4.1 would amend section 12(5)(b) of the Family Law

Act, which is a section dealing with the consent form to be signed by the surrogate mother in a surrogacy situation. Rather than prescribing the form by regulation, we will provide for the form in regulation thus giving the increased flexibility to deal with this form that I spoke about earlier.

House amendment B would amend the proposed section 20(1) by deleting the words "or agreement to the contrary between the parents of a child regarding the guardianship of a child" and replacing them with the words "regarding the guardianship of a child." We wanted parents to be able to agree to include one of the parents as a guardian even if the necessary relationship or residency criteria wouldn't be met to make that parent a guardian automatically. In other words, rather than force the parents into a court application, they could agree to share guardianship.

As drafted, however, the section will have too broad an application. The parents would have the ability to enter into an agreement to make a third party guardian or to terminate their guardianship. Third party guardianship is dealt with by court order in section 23 and the termination of guardianship in section 25 with conditions to ensure that the best interests of children are protected. Rather than give parents a general ability to contract about guardianship, we are proposing to give them a limited ability to agree that both parents should be guardians. After deleting the general provision in subsection (1), we propose to add a more restricted agreement provision by adding a new subsection (5), which reads, "Despite subsection (3)(a), if both parents so agree in writing, both parents continue to be the guardians of the child even after the child begins to usually reside with only one of them."

At second reading the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora expressed some concern about the expression "substantially equivalent periods of time" in section 20(3)(b). That subsection provides that both parents are guardians if the child lives "with both parents or alternately with each parent for substantially equivalent periods of time." The hon. member gave an example of one parent working in the north and only being able to reside with the child for 25 per cent of the time. He wondered if that would be an equivalent period of time and if not, would that be a fair result.

This is an issue that was considered. We considered whether we should try to define what a substantially equivalent period of time was, but we felt in the end that no definition could sufficiently accommodate all of the situations and circumstances that will be sure to exist. The saving grace is the parents will be able to agree to share guardianship. If they can't, they will have to go to court. Over time courts will develop principles to apply when there is an issue about substantially equivalent periods of time, but there will always be some people that will need the assistance of the court in resolving that issue.

Section 6 of the amendment act amends section 21 of the Family Law Act. Currently the Family Law Act lists the responsibilities and powers of guardians together in section 21(5). The intention of the legislation is that guardians have certain responsibilities that are mandatory and that they have a number of powers that may be exercised in order to fulfill their responsibilities. To ensure that the difference between powers and responsibilities is sufficiently clear in the legislation, the proposed amendment separates the two. Responsibilities will now be found in subsection (5); powers will now be found in subsection (6).

During second reading an hon. member expressed support for the concept that all parents in Alberta should become aware that there are responsibilities and there are powers in the exercise of being parents. That is precisely the intent of this section. We feel that the amendments clarify as to what is mandatory – the responsibilities are mandatory – and what is discretionary. In order to fulfill the

mandatory responsibilities, the guardian has a number of discretionary powers that can be exercised.

Currently the exercise of powers is to be done in a manner consistent with the evolving capacity of the child. That remains unchanged although this is now placed into its own subsection, subsection (7). As indicated at second reading, this means that a guardian is expected to treat an infant differently than a five year old, a five year old differently than a 12 year old, and so on. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora wondered how it would ever be enforced. For most parents and children it's just a reminder that one of the responsibilities of guardianship is to guide the child toward independent adulthood. Obviously that can't be done if a parent always treats a child as a five year old.

An example of enforcement, however, would be in the area of medical consent. The courts have developed a principle known as the mature minor principle so that a child who is under the age of majority but who is found to be mature and competent by a court can generally give his or her own medical consent to a proposed course of treatment. The general statement about exercising powers in a manner consistent with the evolving capacity of the child continues the ability of the court to determine whether a child is a mature minor. These types of cases do not happen very often, and they have to be determined by the courts on a case-by-case basis, but it is an important power to leave with the courts.

House amendment C would have section 7.1 added after section 7. Section 38(1)(c)(iv) allows regulations to prescribe who is an enforcement officer for purposes of enforcing an access order. This amendment would allow us to designate those persons rather than prescribe them, giving us more flexibility than is provided by a formal order in council.

9:10

House amendment D adds a new section 8.1 to the amendment act that amends section 65(1), (2)(c), (4), and (5)(b) by replacing the word "prescribed" with "provided for." These sections all relate to describing the type of financial information that must be disclosed for a spousal support or child support application. Subsections (1) and (4) relate to the disclosure of financial information by one party to another, and subsections (2)(c) and (5)(b) relate to the disclosure of financial information held by a third party pursuant to a court order. This is an example of something that we might wish to see in the Rules of Court rather than in a separate order in council regulation. It is an area where we would like to have greater flexibility.

House amendment E would see a section 11.1 added after section 11 of the amendment act. Section 11.1 would amend section 98 of the Family Law Act by striking out "prescribed" and substituting "provided for." Section 98 allows the court to require parties to attend any course or program prescribed by the regulations. An example is that the Court of Queen's Bench requires divorcing or separating parties to attend a parenting after separation course before their court action can proceed. This requirement is currently found in a practice note to the Rules of Court. We would like to continue to be able to use existing procedures for establishing courses and programs, and so would like to have the increased flexibility that the amendment would allow.

House amendment F strikes out the current section 12 of the amendment act and replaces it with the new section 12. The new section 12 amends section 107(1) of the Family Law Act by seeing a lot of different things which are quite detailed.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I can advise you and through you to members of the committee that we are working with the legal profession and with the courts on many details involved in proclaiming the act of the magnitude of the Family Law Act. We will be

continuing that consultative process as we move toward proclamation, which we have tentatively set as October 1 of this year. I anticipate that as we move closer towards proclamation, and particularly after proclamation as we gain experience with the legislation, we will find other areas that have to be fine-tuned.

Those are the comments that I have tonight, Mr. Chairman, and at this time I would ask that we move to adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 18

Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 18. This bill proposes to amend the Alberta Order of Excellence Act.

Mr. Chairman, the Alberta Order of Excellence is the highest award that can be bestowed on any Albertan. Since 1979 there have been only 58 awards given in the 25 years of this award, with the current bill allowing only for a maximum of five awards per year. This Bill 18 proposes to amend the Alberta Order of Excellence Act to allow that in particular in our centennial year we will be able to award 10 recipients of this act.

Mr. Chairman, any concerns that this provision will water down the significance of this recognition I would suggest are without foundation as there is a very rigorous process that leads to the awarding of these awards and that is intended to continue.

So I look forward to any other debate on this bill, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 18 again, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005. We fully support this bill. This is the highest honour the province can bestow on a citizen. I agree with the hon. member. I am really glad to support this Bill 18 that will allow 10 Albertans instead of five to be honoured every year. There are many great people in this province that deserve to be honoured by this award. We already have given the green signal to go ahead with this without any delay, so I don't want to say anything further.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chase: I just briefly want to speak in favour of this bill as well. Again I refer to my teaching background. Many times a number of students are worthy of rewards through academic proficiency, through physical proficiency, but because of restrictive programming we're not allowed to recognize these students. Increasing the number of excellent Albertans is a wonderful idea, particularly in the centennial year, and I thank the member for bringing forward this terrific recognition legislation.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would thank the hon. members for their support, and I would move that we close debate on Bill 18, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005.

[The clauses of Bill 18 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 3 City of Lloydminster Act

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Chairman, it's always a wonderful opportunity to get up and talk about the wonderful city of Lloydminster.

An Hon. Member: Tell us about it.

Mr. Snelgrove: Well, now, I'd love to.

But also the wonderful thing is that occasionally we have a bill in front of us that really doesn't need a lot of debate. This bill is identical, with the exception of the names changed, that Saskatchewan passed last year to identify the need in the city of Lloydminster to work with its changes to the charter. This bill, with the exception of the provinces changed, has been there. It's been through the stages.

The reason that they need the change is because probably, Mr. Chairman, oh, 60 or 70 years ago there was much more growth on the Saskatchewan side, so as they developed the city, the growth was patterned after Saskatchewan acts. Well, anybody who's been to Lloydminster knows that now about 10 times the growth happens on the Alberta side. That's very evident, and an example would be that if they last year built 300 homes in Lloydminster, 290 would be built on the Alberta side. So they've started to adopt more and more of Alberta models to deal with these changes in their city.

9:20

An Hon. Member: Is this relevant?

Mr. Snelgrove: Yes, very relevant.

I will be interested to hear any of the comments from all hon. members and try and answer any questions they may have about Bill 3.

Mr. Chase: Just one sad commentary that the city of Lloydminster represents. It used to be that when you drove out of Saskatchewan and into Alberta, you could tell by the conditions of the roads, but as the critic for infrastructure that difference no longer exists. It's unfortunate. We seem to be following Saskatchewan's example rather than leading by Alberta's wealth.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to speak on this truly important piece of legislation for the great Alberta and Saskatchewan city of Lloydminster. It is an important piece of legislation.

I have relatives all over western Canada, and travelling to see them and on occasional work opportunities, I've come to be in Lloydminster on a number of occasions. I can certainly remember a couple of times I stopped because of weather and overnights and other times where I've stayed a few days. Each time I've remarked on the warm hospitality of the good folks in Lloyd.

Mr. Chairman, Lloydminster has the advantage of being just far enough away from larger centres to develop its own unique community life. From the many performances at the Vic Juba theatre to the plays and such of the Lloydminster Blazers and all the activities at Lakeland College Lloydminster offers a vibrant community life to go with its many business opportunities.

Oil and gas service industries, agriculture, and the biprovincial upgrader are just a sampling of some of the economic drivers in the Lloyd area. I think the biprovincial upgrader has been an especially

fine example of co-operation in industrial construction as contractors and tradesmen from the Alberta side have often found substantial work there. Interprovincial mobility of labour can work, and I haven't heard much call for temporary foreign workers in that area.

I'll be brief, Mr. Chairman, but I must note a couple of interesting events upcoming in Lloyd. There's certainly the meeting of the Saskatchewan and Alberta provincial Chambers of Commerce there very soon. They will be meeting on Tuesday, May 10, through I believe to the 14th, and many people in Alberta and Saskatchewan are looking forward to that meeting.

As well, many people, I think, in Canada will appreciate the upcoming unique centennial hockey challenge, which is a centennial project for both Alberta and Saskatchewan. It's a unique concept where you get to see some of the best players in the WHL play a provincial competition between the best from Saskatchewan and the best from Alberta. To quote from WHL Commissioner Ron Robinson: we're fortunate that this game is a joint project of the Alberta and Saskatchewan centennial committees, and they're both going to be supporting the event along with the CBC in both their radio and television coverage of this event. It's expected to be quite historic for the local area. Many people will be attending that, and the eyes of the country will be on Lloydminster. It will also serve as a warmup for the city as it prepares to host the Allan Cup, the Canadian senior A hockey championship, from April 19 to 24. I look forward to this.

I support this bill, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your time.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and speak briefly to Bill 3, the City of Lloydminster Act, at committee. Certainly, Lloydminster is unique in its relationship with both the province of Alberta and the province of Saskatchewan, and as I understand it, this legislation will be very compatible to what the province of Saskatchewan passed last spring.

Now, the city of Lloydminster received its operating authority from the Lloydminster Charter and the Lloydminster Municipal Amalgamation Act in 1930. The charter served as a municipal act for the city since it is situated on the border between Alberta and Saskatchewan.

There are many similarities, Mr. Chairman, between the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster and the Alberta side of Lloydminster, but there are some differences too. Certainly, one doesn't have to go to Maidstone, Saskatchewan, to enjoy cheap automobile insurance rates. All the people on the eastern side of Meridian Avenue have much cheaper insurance rates for their automobiles than Alberta consumers enjoy.

In fact, this point was brought out I thought quite effectively by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who actually travelled to the city and compared auto insurance rates. Consumers enjoy much cheaper rates. I would think that if we're going to look at Lloydminster, we could also take into account not only the differences but the similarities, and we could enjoy almost as low an insurance rate in this province as the consumers currently enjoy in Saskatchewan with the public auto insurance.

Now, public auto insurance, Mr. Chairman, would be an ideal thing. Should we just bring it in entirely in the Lloydminster area? Should we start there? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster says no, but I'm sure that the consumers there would say yes. They like to save a dollar as well as the next person. Perhaps if the government here were to implement public auto insurance and they were to implement it in stages, well, because of the unique situation in the city of Lloydminster it would be an ideal place to start. Ideal.

Surely we all notice the growth in the area, and sometimes I find it astonishing that members on that side of the House are so quick to condemn government involvement in economic development and economic planning. I was listening with interest in here the other night to a debate, Mr. Chairman, in regard to the \$100 million that was set aside for tar sands research over two decades ago and how that investment in research had paid off. It had paid off in enormous returns not only to the Treasury but to the citizens of this province. That was government involvement by a Progressive Conservative government. Certainly, there have been some other involvements that have not been nearly as successful. They have been downright first-class boondoggles. Some of them have been quite spectacular. The hon. member pointed that out in debate, and it was successful.

9:30

Now, another success story – and this was not without significant taxpayer loss by not only the province of Saskatchewan and the province of Alberta but also the federal government – which certainly worked out for Lloydminster and the surrounding areas, was the support that was shown for what was called at the time the Husky upgrader. That has certainly paid off locally, and that was a form of government help.

Now, certainly, whenever the Progressive Conservative government was in power in Ottawa – I'm not talking about the one in Saskatchewan where a lot of them wound up trying to cash their severance cheques at the provincial jail canteen, but I'm talking about the last government of Mr. Mulroney. There were some significant cabinet ministers from that area. If one went around North Battleford, I believe there was a Mr. McKnight. There was certainly Mr. Clark, and there was Mr. Mazankowski.

I drive out there to visit relatives all the time, and I see the lovely twin road, and I think to myself: thank you very much. You can get to Lloyd in two hours, and maybe some day I will visit my sister in Saskatoon. The total trip from Edmonton will be five hours, and I won't be breaking the speed limit.

So those are examples of government involvement that have helped an area, and I think this bill will certainly clarify some things for the city of Lloydminster. I think that it will continue to grow and be a very prosperous part not only of Alberta but certainly of Saskatchewan and will make a significant contribution to the entire economy of western Canada.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I certainly would support this bill. It is interesting that things are developing in this way for the citizens of that municipal district. Hopefully, the government will at some point consider public auto insurance for the consumers of this province, and they too can enjoy the wonderful insurance rates that the motorists in Saskatchewan enjoy. So the citizens of Kitscoty will have the same rates for their insurance as those further east in Maidstone.

Thank you.

Mr. Snelgrove: This will be very brief. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning for portraying many of the showcase things we've got. The only one I don't think he said was the Western Premiers' Conference that's going to be held there on May 4 and 5, kind of an important thing for our area. But we appreciate the walking billboard. [interjection] Well, you've got to be sharp on these things.

The one thing I could agree with the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar about the people in the Lloydminster area is that they do elect good politicians. There's no doubt about that. We've got to go with that one.

Also, to the hon. members, when I was a wee lad, there were

6,000 people on the Saskatchewan side and only 2,000 in wee, little, Alberta. Now there are 7,000 on the Saskatchewan side and 16,000 on the Alberta side. It's got to be that government insurance that's attracting them. Well, now, just a minute. I think it does have to be that government insurance that's attracted those 1,000 people in the last 40 years.

So I think it's fair to point out that, you know, 20 blocks this way of the border they've got a hundred million dollar shopping mall development and expansion. Twenty blocks on the Saskatchewan side: well, for the last 10 there's nothing, and then there's Travel Alberta. That's just an example of why we have the Alberta advantage.

I really do want to thank the hon. members for their most productive comments on Bill 3. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 7

Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First off, I'm pleased to rise and address some of the questions related to Bill 7 that were raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre during yesterday's debate.

The member asked why miscellaneous amendments such as name changes and case changes in the names of the colleges were included in this bill and not in a Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act. These changes are clearly miscellaneous in nature and could have gone into a Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act. However, since other changes were being made to the Health Professions Act, it makes sense to group all of the changes to one act together in one amendment act. This streamlines the drafting process and is more easily tracked.

For instance, the question regarding the lower case of "the" was specifically requested by the colleges as the colleges want it that way for legal reasons so that the word "the" wouldn't be part of the official title of their organization.

The member asked why we were removing the terms "prescribe, dispense, compound." First and foremost, the terms "prescribe, dispense, compound" are not being wholly removed from the schedule as a restricted activity; they're being removed only from section 2(1)(h) with respect to vaccines and parenteral nutrition. This would leave the administration of a vaccine or parenteral nutrition as a restricted activity. Since vaccines and parenteral nutrition are scheduled drugs, the activities of prescribing, dispensing, and compounding are addressed in sections 2(1)(f) and (g).

The dispensing and compounding of schedule 1 drugs are further regulated by the Pharmacy and Drug Act and the Pharmaceutical Profession Act. Amending section 2(1)(h) serves to clarify and remove the conflicts.

Regarding protection of the term "specialist," the member was asking whether consultations occurred beyond the Alberta College of Pharmacists. Consultation with all of the health professions currently under or targeted to come under the Health Professions Act

have taken place in respect to all of the proposed amendments in the Health Statutes Amendment Act. The amendment makes the title of “specialist” a protected title. This will impact all health professionals governed by the Health Professions Act as they will not be allowed to use the title “specialist” with respect to health care provision unless they’ve been authorized to do so by the respective professional regulation. The amendment does not however force any profession to make such rules.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre asked whether the term “specialist” was being used inappropriately by some health professionals and what prompted the need to legislate this term as a protected title. This issue was specifically raised by the Alberta College of Pharmacists, who expressed concerns that pharmacists may claim to be specialists in a particular area of practice. This amendment was put forward to protect the public, and there was no negative feedback on it during consultation.

Regarding the nurse practitioner regulation and the registered nurses profession regulation, nurse practitioners will be regulated with other registered nurses under the registered nurses regulation of the Health Professions Act. This regulation is currently targeted to come into force in the fall of 2005. When the regulation is ready, an order in council will be issued to bring into force the relevant sections of the Health Statutes Amendment Act so that they will be brought into force concurrently with the registered nurses regulation. Therefore, there will be no gap time as the relevant repeals will be simultaneous with the coming into force of the regulation.

9:40

The registered nurses regulations of the Health Professions Act are currently being drafted in conjunction with the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, the regulatory body for nurses in Alberta. The content of the regulations will be similar to all of the other health profession regulations in that they will reflect the association policies in the areas of registration, continuing competence, restricted activities, alternative complaint resolution, titles and abbreviations, and reinstatement. Because this is a regulation, it will not be tabled in the House. Once drafted and completed, Alberta Health and Wellness will present the regulation to cabinet for final approval, at which point it will become a public document.

In relation to the Member for Edmonton-Centre’s question about who was consulted on regulation development, Alberta Health and Wellness has facilitated the drafting process, providing drafting instructions to Legislative Counsel that reflect the policies and procedures of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses. This is an ongoing process, with the association reviewing any number of drafts. The association is the regulatory association that licenses and represents over 26,000 nurses in Alberta.

As with all regulations under the Health Professions Act all stakeholders are consulted on their proposed policies to be reflected in the regulations. Once the regulations are in draft stage, all stakeholders are consulted again. In this case stakeholders include all health professionals under the Health Professions Act, other impacted government departments such as the Ministry of Advanced Education, and regional health authorities.

The member’s issues relating to workforce planning and the succession planning were noted and would be more appropriately addressed by the minister at a future time.

Mr. Chair, as the members who spoke yesterday indicated, Bill 7 is straightforward and deals with technical amendments. I ask the House to support Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for his remarks and his answers to the questions raised by my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. I think those answers take into account most if not all of our concerns, and I would be happy to go ahead from this point.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 13

Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I just want to clear up any confusion from this afternoon that might suggest that I’m opposed to road or railway development, particularly as it relates to Fort McMurray. What I’m concerned about is that projects of the magnitude that would be required to either improve the road or add a rail link are going to cost billions of taxpayer dollars, and it’s very important to me that projects of this magnitude be discussed and debated within this House as opposed to behind closed caucus doors. These are the concerns I raised.

I’m hoping that should a road or a railway be considered in the future – and I have spoken in this House about the need for improvements in, for example, both highways 63 and 43 – I would look forward to twinning and improving those two major roadways. With regard to the railroad I believe the group that would benefit most from this road would be the industries associated with Fort McMurray. I’m not sure that there would be as great a benefit for the individuals living there.

Thank you very much.

[The clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? It’s carried.

Bill 4

Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Doerksen: I just want to address some of the questions that were raised at second reading and make some comments here on Bill 4, the Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005.

As I’ve said before, there are significant opportunities that exist in the province for both ICT and the life sciences. In establishing the life sciences, the research institute will provide strategic advice and direction, and that’s a logical, necessary step to ensure a strong, prosperous future for the province.

There were a couple of items that were raised during second reading. First of all, the long-term goals of both institutes will not only have a positive impact from an economic development perspective, but the institutes also have a key role to play in enhancing our quality of life and benefiting the public good. A good example from the life sciences would be in bioproducts. Not only will investment in this area spur the agriculture and forestry economies in Alberta; it will reduce the environmental impact of certain practices and ensure the sustainability of this important industry. For example, we'll be able to convert agricultural waste into new products such as straw-based fibre products and generate energy from animal waste.

With respect to the ICT institute our investment will not only facilitate the economic future of Alberta's ICT sector, but it will also help support the growth and sustainability of the ICT infrastructure that is so important as we work to develop new knowledge and technology solutions. It will build on the good work being done by the Alberta informatics circle of research excellence, also known as iCORE, and increase the ability to attract and retain world-class researchers. It will build on the work done by organizations like TRILabs and universities and their commitment to ensuring that we have the necessary infrastructure to remain a leader in ICT.

Under reporting issues, an item that was raised in second reading, the Alberta Science and Research Authority Act clearly outlines the reporting requirements for the three existing research institutes. Under the act the agricultural, energy, and forestry research institutes are accountable to the Minister of Innovation and Science and are included in the ministry's annual report. Additionally, each research institute is guided by a strategic plan and prepares an annual report of key activities and initiatives.

These strategic plans and reports are available in the publications section of the Innovation and Science website, which of course is at www.innovation.gov.ab.ca, as well as in the publications sections of the research institute websites. The Forestry Research Institute website is currently under development, but its strategic plan and the annual report can be found on the forestry research section of the Innovation and Science website. The information can also be obtained directly from the research institutes. This same model of accountability and transparency will continue with the ICT and life sciences institutes.

9:50

The issue of board appointments was also raised. Board members are appointed based on their knowledge, their experience, and their ability to further our innovation agenda. MLAs are important members of these boards as they are a connection to the government and to their constituents. The innovation agenda is just one component of a long-term plan for the province. It will help to create opportunities for all Albertans in many areas and help solidify our foundation for the future. That future includes building a thriving province in all aspects, from a strong research system to world-class health care and education to a rich social and cultural environment.

So, Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I again encourage all members of the Assembly to support this bill and to move it into third reading. Thank you.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. All of the matters that have been referred to me on this particular bill by my colleague, the Official Opposition critic in this area, the Member for Edmonton-McClung, have been covered. The Official Opposition supports this bill, and I would like to just say that.

[The clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. At this time I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 5 and report bills 18, 3, 7, 13, and 4.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 18, Bill 3, Bill 7, Bill 13, Bill 4. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 5. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 19
Securities Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to move second reading of Bill 19, the Securities Amendment Act, 2005.

As I explained during the introduction of this legislation, Bill 19 follows up on a commitment we made with the signing of the provincial/territorial memorandum of understanding regarding securities regulation last September.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain some of the history behind the agreement. Early in 2003 Canada's provincial and territorial ministers responsible for securities regulation agreed to work together to make important reforms to the existing framework. They set the goal of developing an improved framework that inspires investor confidence and supports competitiveness, innovation, and growth through efficient, streamlined, and cost-effective securities regulation.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us for second reading will facilitate the establishment of an innovative passport system for securities regulation, a key commitment in the memorandum of understanding. The passport system will provide market participants with a single window of access to capital markets, reducing complexity and costs. They will be able to do business across most of the country by dealing with only one regulator and one jurisdiction's rules. At the same time we are making it easier for businesses

to access capital markets across Canada. It is important we also ensure the highest standards of investor protection.

Bill 19 enhances enforcement and compliance through a variety of means, including more broadly prohibiting misrepresentation, fraud, and market manipulation. The legislation increases maximum fines and administrative penalties and provides the Alberta Securities Commission with the power to order those who benefit from illegal activities to forfeit their gain. It also prohibits the unethical practice of front running to ensure that those who provide trading and advisory services to Albertans put the interest of their clients ahead of their own or the firm when trading. In order to provide more consistent regulation across Canada, this legislation will further harmonize various provisions of the Alberta Securities Act with those of other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would simply like to say that this legislation makes it easier to do business in Canada, while providing greater protection for investors.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 27
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005
(continued)

Mr. Chase: I will attempt to stay as focused as possible and just simply appeal that in order for opposition members and, I would suggest, government members to feel involved in the process and so that the public in general can at least be considered to be part of the

process and informed in a transparent manner, please in future supplemental budgets indicate where the money is primarily intended to go so that we and the public that we all represent in this House have a sense the purpose of the supplemental budget. If it's not completely clear to the people who have been elected to represent their constituents, I think the constituents that much further removed from the process must have a whole lot of questions themselves.

We have the wonderful circumstance in this province of having the money we need to carry out a variety of projects, whether it be education, health care, social welfare, regardless, but we need to know and the people need to know where that money is being spent and the justification for those expenditures.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a third time]

Bill 30
Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005
(continued)

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a third time]

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

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We did some very good work tonight, and at this time I would move adjournment of the Assembly until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 10 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 24, 2005** 1:30 p.m.
Date: 05/03/24
[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We give thanks for our abundant blessings to our province and ourselves. We ask for guidance and the will to follow it. Amen.

Please be seated.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, on this day in 1930 the Edmonton Grads beat the Seattle Ferry Lines by 59 points over two games to retain the Underwood Trophy and the women's international basketball title.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you 81 grade 6 students from Westlock elementary school, which is located in the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency. They are accompanied this afternoon by teachers Dan McDonald and Maggie Cournoyer; student teacher Melissa Nesbitt; program assistants Heather MacKenzie and Marlene Davis; parents Kathy Prodanuk, Curtis Snell, Cheryl Frose, December Brown, Lori Glebe, Irene Empey, and June Kandt; and bus drivers Margarite Riopel and Dee Kibler. They are seated in both galleries today, I believe, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 30 of the most outstanding Albertans this province has ever seen. We have students from Coronation school, my home town, and they are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Dan Kinakin, and parent helpers Gail Dabbs, Kim Thulien, Joan O'Toole, Donna Hawker, and Jo-Ann Sieger. All members should be so lucky as to have constituents like these. I ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of the members of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege and an honour to be able to rise in the House today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three more outstanding Albertans, who happen to be the three most important people in my life. My wife, Martha, my son Scott, and my daughter Jennifer are here from Calgary today to view the proceedings and probably pass comments to their husband and father on them later. They are seated in the members' gallery because they're going to be a tough audience today, and I would ask them now to rise, please, and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. *Pith!* is a play that was created here in Alberta. It's had a successful run in New York City, in fact so successful that the cast and crew have been invited back to New York, and then they will be continuing on to Ottawa for the Alberta Scene. We have some cast and crew members here in the gallery today. I like to introduce them to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. I'd ask you to rise as I call out your names: the playwright, Stewart Lemoine; the always elegant Davina Stewart, who's a performer; Leona Brausen, doubly talented, a performer and the costume designer for the show; and Ian Rowe, the stage manager that wrangles them all into organization. Please congratulate this very talented group of people.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maintaining the integrity of the Alberta Securities Commission is crucial. Our economy depends on it, as do members of the public and a great many honest and ethical corporations and dealers who rely on the ASC. My questions are to the Finance minister. Can the minister tell us if there has been any political interference in the appointment of members of the Alberta Securities Commission, or were all members properly recommended through the ASC search process?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell the hon. member at this point exactly how in the past members have been appointed. My understanding is, though, that there are recommendations from the board or from the commissioners, from the commission themselves, and then they're duly appointed. I would be pleased to search that information and respond at an appropriate time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the same minister: can the minister inform us about the composition of the search committee for the new ASC chairman and assure us that there are no political appointees to that committee?

Mrs. McClellan: I can tell the hon. member that the search is being handled by an external group. Beyond that, I have absolutely no information on who they have received applications from and/or what point they are at in their search.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. In light of the information the minister has received about interference in investigations, will she direct the Alberta Securities Commission to review recent high-profile cases involving ASC violations?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, to date what we have are allegations. These are serious. I expect a full and proper assessment from the commission when they've had an opportunity to review the information that they've received. I am expecting, from what they have stated themselves publicly yesterday, that they are going to make recommendations to me very shortly. We'll proceed from there when I receive that report from them.

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

Automobile Insurance Rates

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 22 in this Assembly the Finance minister indicated that there are some 72 companies that provide auto insurance in Alberta. According to the Automobile Insurance Rate Board website, there are only eight companies volunteering with premium reductions. One company has rolled back their rates by only 1 per cent. To the Minister of Finance: since the minister has only made the premium reductions a volunteer exercise, why didn't the minister make the cuts mandatory in order to protect all Alberta consumers?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I asked the Automobile Insurance Rate Board for a recommendation and advice in this matter. They clearly recommended yesterday that we accept the voluntary commitments to this point, the companies that have filed. They expect others to file in the very near future.

I want to remind the hon. member that what we did indicate yesterday was that it was about 50 per cent of the clients that would be within the companies that have already filed. So while it may be 8 per cent of companies, it's 50 per cent of clients, and they do expect others to follow shortly.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, I've accepted the rate insurance board's recommendation, and we will watch the market forces at work with interest. I have no doubt that if it is necessary, the Automobile Insurance Rate Board will recommend further action.

Dr. Taft: Well, that's very interesting, Mr. Speaker. Given that the auto insurance rate board that the minister refers to is dominated by industry executives and the Morgex Insurance CEO recently admitted industry executives are, and I quote, all card-carrying Conservatives, what is this minister doing to ensure that the interests of the consumers and not the auto industry are being defended?

1:40

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, fortunately for us there are an awful lot of card-carrying Conservatives in this province. However, I assume they do that because they agree with and believe in the policies and good fiscal management of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I am fully satisfied that the Automobile Insurance Rate Board has looked at this matter very carefully. They have said very clearly that they would recommend that we accept the voluntary reductions, that we watch the market forces at work and, if necessary, would follow up with further action. I would further remind the hon. member – and I'm sure he would recall this – that there will be a complete review done by the Automobile Insurance Rate Board this summer, and their final determination of what reductions should take place on the compulsory insurance will occur this fall.

Dr. Taft: Very disappointing, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister then for a change, here, do the right thing and remove industry representatives from the auto insurance board or at least provide an equal number of consumer representatives?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no reason to believe that the members of that board are not carrying out their duties faithfully and in the interest . . .

An Hon. Member: Could you put a Liberal on there?

Mrs. McClellan: It's hard to find one of those, if you heard the aside, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I don't hold with casting aspersions on the names of good people who put their service available to the people of this province. If the hon. member has any concern with any member of that board, he should do the right thing and bring it forward with the reasons for that rather than blanket doubt on good people.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview just mentioned, *Thompson's World Insurance News*, a well-respected insurance industry journal, recently reported that Alberta's Conservative government will lose long-time supporters in the insurance industry if it unilaterally rolls back auto insurance rates. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. Was the decision to allow voluntary reductions in auto insurance made to avoid alienating the Conservative government's core supporters?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that question really deserves an answer.

Mr. R. Miller: Mr. Speaker, will the minister now admit that the decision to not significantly cut premiums was due to the industry having the ear of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again, casting aspersions on good people who have allowed their name to stand and be a part of a board to act in the best interests of the consumers of this province I think is despicable. Again, I don't think the question dignifies an answer.

Mr. R. Miller: Let's let the consumer have a say.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the circumstances, then, would the minister now consider finally – finally – creating a lobbyist registry in this province so that we know who has the ear of the rate board?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again, I have extreme difficulty with members standing in this House casting doubt on the good work and the good name of people who serve the people of this province. If they have any evidence that any of these people are not working to the terms of their placement with that board, bring them forward. But to continually stand in this House and cast aspersions on good people for whatever gain I find reprehensible.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The great Alberta car insurance rip-off continues. Just last year the private auto insurance companies made profits of \$4 billion. Even the Conservative's own toothless Automobile Insurance Rate Board says that compulsory auto insurance rates are way too high and as recently as last month was calling for mandatory rate rollbacks. Instead, the government is leaving rate reductions up to the companies themselves, and that means, of course, that most people will get no rate reductions whatsoever. This question is to the Minister of Finance. How can the government justify letting Alberta drivers continue to get ripped off when its own rate board found that premiums are at

least 12.7 per cent too high even after allowing for normal industry profits?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll go through this one more time. The \$4 billion that the member refers to refers to the industry as a whole, not strictly automobile insurance, and to infer otherwise is really quite, quite wrong and unfair. I asked the Automobile Insurance Rate Board, which was put in place for expressly that reason, to do an interim review to see whether rates should come down in the short term. But I would remind the hon. member that that rate board will be reviewing all of the information this summer and will be coming back with a recommendation as to whether there should be further reductions.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's time this minister was fair to the drivers.

Why is this government allowing U.S.-based insurance giant State Farm Insurance to continue ripping off drivers by agreeing to reduce premiums by a token 1 per cent and allowing other companies . . .

The Speaker: There is a question there. The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, I haven't finished.

The Speaker: Well, I'm sorry. You only get one question, not three.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I again will remind the hon. member that in October of 2004, when reforms came into place, companies were at a different point in setting rates. Some had already had reductions in place; some had not. The 5 per cent applied overall.

Frankly, today an automobile insurance company can go to that board and ask to have their rate reviewed as to whether they want a reduction in the rate or feel that they should not have a reduction because of the point that they came into this with. So for the hon. member to try through his question to make the inference that everyone was on the same level when this started just simply speaks to his lack of knowledge about the actual reforms.

Mr. Mason: When is this minister going to find her spine, stand up to the insurance industry, and reduce rates for compulsory insurance by at least 12.7 per cent in excess profits?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I will just say one more time: the Automobile Insurance Rate Board has recommended to the minister that we accept the voluntary reductions, which range generally from 4 to 8 per cent. We expect that other companies will file. I will remind the hon. member that when they file, the Automobile Insurance Rate Board will review their business, and they will determine whether 1 per cent is appropriate or whether 4 per cent is appropriate or whether 8 per cent is appropriate. They will continue their review as they had planned this summer, and indeed we may see further reductions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Senate Appointments

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has consistently affirmed its support for a Senate that is equal, elected, and effective, most recently by holding a free and fair election for Senate nomi-

nees. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has again chosen to make his own appointments to the Senate. To the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Affairs: how will this latest development affect federal/provincial relationships?

1:50

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, while this government will not criticize the people that the Prime Minister has appointed or their abilities, we really feel that the Prime Minister has missed an excellent opportunity to appoint from the list that was provided to him by the Premier. That list was the result of 700,000 voters participating in the Senate nominee election.

Prior to the federal election the Prime Minister had also referred to western alienation, saying that if he didn't deal with it positively, then he would look at his term in office as unsuccessful. Well, Mr. Speaker, this has done nothing to restore confidence in Albertans and build upon positive working attitudes with the federal government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental today is to the same minister. Given that the Prime Minister has chosen his own Senate representatives, who won't face election for at least another twenty years, how will the Alberta government ever achieve Senate reform?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do whatever we can in order to move this issue on the agenda of not only the Council of the Federation, meaning all of the 10 provincial Premiers and the territorial leaders, but we will also have our Senate nominees participate as ambassadors in talking about Senate reform and talking about Senate reform not only to every Premier and caucus in this province but to any other organization that's interested in Senate reform. And we will continue to push this agenda with the federal government because it is in the best interests of all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton Gold-Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

TransAlta Utilities

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Progressive Conservative government is so weak and so ineffective that Albertans have had to turn to American authorities to find out about the marriage of convenience between Enron, the corporation with the crooked E, and TransAlta. Only a full, independent, judicial public inquiry will determine if TransAlta ever said: I do. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that this week an ineffective Progressive Conservative government has ignored the EUB's findings that TransAlta's past pricing strategies were unfairly overcharging Alberta consumers for power, why is this government failing to investigate TransAlta's relationship with Enron?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that before we answer any questions, we correct the preamble. It's very fortunate that Albertans have seen once again to elect a very strong majority, 62 members of this House, to return and form the government. Albertans continue to see that we're acting very much in their interest on this and in many of the issues if not all of the issues.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans see that you're weak and ineffective.

Given that in the year 2000 TransAlta spent as little as one-tenth of 1 cent for electricity that they would sell for up to 50 cents per kilowatt hour, why did the government so generously give the hydropower purchase arrangements to TransAlta for very little money, for next to nothing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of statements made about a marriage of convenience. They were taken from some transcripts. Those are things that have been brought forward, as he mentioned, from the Washington utility. Those have been examined by the market surveillance administrator. They've also continued to do the right things. The organizations that are in place to protect Albertans, being the watchdog, are acting, are watching, and are ensuring that these documents are reviewed, and that's why some of the information has gone to the federal Competition Bureau.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is also to the Minister of Energy. What role did the former vice-president of TransAlta, Jim Dinning, play in the hydropower purchase arrangement auction deal that was so sweet for TransAlta and so sour for the electricity consumers in this province?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I would invite him to go ask that question of the individual himself.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Diversified Livestock Industry

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last couple of weeks the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has claimed that the threat of chronic wasting disease is so great as to merit the dissolution of Alberta's entire deer and elk ranching industry. He's even gone so far as to point to studies from Health Canada that back up his claims. As an elk rancher myself I know that there is no question about the safety of either the meat or the velvet products. However, I am concerned that this study will cause Alberta's diversified livestock industry harm in the long run. All my questions are for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Does the minister know if this report is valid?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess in a word, as to the report, no. As I understand it, based on the quotes that have been provided to us, the report touted as presenting the truth about TSEs is in no way a valid scientific study. It's a draft report prepared for Health Canada which was found to be lacking in any scientific credibility whatsoever.

The scientific peer review, Mr. Speaker, performed by scientists from Health Canada and the CFIA found unanimously that while the report did consolidate some useful information, it was lacking in several key aspects. Not only that, Mr. Speaker – and it's important that this is out there – it lacked veterinarian and animal health

perspectives. It also failed to have any understanding of the practices of either the rendering or the abattoir . . .

The Speaker: I'm sure we'll get back to it in supplementals. The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What will the minister be doing to try to repair the damage done toward diversified livestock producers and to their industry?

Mr. Horner: Well, part of the problem is the idea that this report had any kind of credence, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, the scientific community found that this report lacked all critical review.

I've written a letter to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, asking for an immediate public apology for his comments. I'm also asking, Mr. Speaker, that he remove all mention of this report from the Liberal website although I understand that you can't connect to it anyway. His comments have hurt our industry and our producers, and he needs to rectify that damage that has been caused.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question: does the minister know if the current science shows that there is any health risk at all from deer or elk products?

Mr. Horner: Well, as I've said many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, in response to questions from the other hon. member, all current published scientific studies show there is virtually no risk to human health associated with CWD or Alberta's elk and deer industry. Even recent current scientific studies clearly show that there is no risk from elk velvet. To suggest otherwise is totally irresponsible and damaging to this industry, and I would urge the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View to apologize to our diversified livestock industry.

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

Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution-related Offences

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be effective and do their job, the laws that this Assembly passes to serve and protect the citizens of Alberta need to be proclaimed. Private member's Bill 206, the Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003, received third reading in this House on November 24 of that year and royal assent less than two weeks later, and it still has not been proclaimed. My question is to the Solicitor General. What hasn't it been?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The transportation safety amendment act will be coming before this House. I'd ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to supplement.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are about three or four amendments to the Traffic Safety Act that will have to be done to enable Bill 206 to be enacted. I personally feel that this is a very important bill, and it will be before the Legislative Assembly this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll direct this question, then, to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Can the minister explain, given that such laws are already in place in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and apparently working quite well, what the problem is with the Alberta version of the law that his amendments seek to address?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that the Manitoba government has had to change some of the laws enacting that. It has to do with the seizure of a person's private property. We have been looking at this over the last two years, and we are bringing forward amendments that will enable this to happen. Again I'll reiterate: this is a very important bill; it's something that's going to help society significantly.

Mr. Taylor: All right. Mr. Speaker, then I'll direct this to either the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation or the Solicitor General, whichever one prefers to answer this. Can either minister tell this Assembly when this legislation will be proclaimed? Can they give us a date?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the legislation can be proclaimed, as I was saying, the traffic safety amendment act will have to be put forward on the floor of the Legislature. We anticipate that that will occur this spring. If the Liberal opposition were to pass it immediately, then I think the bill could be proclaimed immediately.

The Speaker: Well, just so there's no innuendo here, it is not just one caucus that can pass it. The Assembly would pass it.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

2:00 Automobile Insurance Rates
(continued)

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Automobile Insurance Rate Board announced that many drivers will be seeing lower auto insurance premiums soon. Rather than hear the political spin on it, I think my constituents want to know what the facts are. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Why is there no reduction for drivers on the grid?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the reductions will apply to all private passenger vehicle policies below the grid. That makes up about 80 per cent of drivers. The remaining 20 per cent have rates that are already capped by the grid. The grid that was established in October provides new and less experienced drivers with fair and affordable premiums. As well, drivers that have at-fault claims and violations pay according to their records. Drivers below the grid received a 5 per cent rollback in October, and those drivers will continue to see benefits or further opportunities for savings.

Mrs. Ady: With companies representing half the driving market having put forward reduction requests, what is expected of the remaining insurers?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to further requests. The Automobile Insurance Rate Board has indicated that they have indications from other companies that they will be coming forward, filing for changes in their rates, and the Automobile Insurance Rate Board will be letting me know what further reductions come in over the next two weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I've made it very clear that if I feel there's further action required or the rate board tells me that they believe there's further action that's required to make sure that drivers benefit from this, I will move very quickly with action.

Mrs. Ady: My final question to the same minister: does the report by the board mean that premiums will come down further in October?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there's no way that I can anticipate for sure what would happen, but what I can tell you is that the Automobile Insurance Rate Board will begin their deliberations in June. This point I'm going to make is very important. The public will have an opportunity to provide input during this period, and I fully expect that they will. Any decisions that come out of that review will be announced in August and will take effect in July.* Now, that sounds a bit odd, but that's the timing that the rate board has established.

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

Wild Rose Foundation Grants

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wild Rose Foundation uses lottery funds to provide grants to volunteer, nonprofit organizations. Continually, however, opposition MLAs hear reports about the involvement of government MLAs in the granting and distribution of Wild Rose funds, potentially tainting the process with political favouritism. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. What role do government MLAs play in approving Wild Rose Foundation grants?

Mr. Mar: None that I'm aware of, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tougas: Again to the same minister: what role do government MLAs play in the distribution of Wild Rose Foundation grants including handing out the cheques?

Mr. Mar: Occasionally, from time to time, Mr. Speaker, MLAs are asked by groups throughout the province to support a particular cause. As good MLAs would, we respond to them. There are times when cheques are distributed by MLAs to such groups throughout the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What processes or systems does the government have in place to ensure that Wild Rose funds go to the appropriate organizations for the approved purpose?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, there is an auditing procedure that's put in place. It wouldn't be any different for the Wild Rose Foundation than for any other government-funded agency, board, or commission that distributes money to groups throughout the province.

*See p. 461, right col., para. 2, line 5

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have seen in the last 14 months a 6.1 per cent unemployment rate in the construction trades, and recently an internal Suncor communications document says that there is no shortage of construction workers, only a shortage of workers willing to work under the Christian Labour Association banner. To briefly quote from a March 9 Suncor memo, "There are shortages within CLAC because many [Alberta Building Trades Council] members will not work on a CLAC site, hence the need for foreign workers." My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. In light of the Suncor memo, will the minister now admit that the construction trade shortages are not a labour problem; they are a CLAC problem?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, to start with, like I've clarified in this House the last four days, I believe, in relation to the issue of foreign workers, one thing I want to clarify again is that recruitment of foreign workers is under the full control of the federal government. The employers here in Alberta have to do an exhaustive process to hire local people, Albertans, Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone can show me an example of a qualified person that applied for a job and was turned down for a job with a company that is hiring temporary foreign workers, then let me know. Bring that person's name, and I guarantee you that I will personally take it to Ottawa.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, this is the old dodge from this government. I quote from Alberta Labour Force Statistics, an Alberta government document.

The Speaker: Hon. member, hold on. Attention une minute, s'il vous plaît. There's a rule about preambles, a very, very definitive rule about preambles.

Second question. Please proceed.

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, the dodge is simply this: since a 2001 Alberta government document says that it's policy to facilitate the entry of temporary foreign workers in the construction trades, why does the government keep insisting that it's only Ottawa's problem?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, to start with, you cannot at the provincial level approve temporary foreign workers. So whose problem is it?

Mr. Martin: I'll make it clear, Mr. Speaker. The point is that the government pushed for this. Why did they push for this then?

Mr. Cardinal: All I can say, Mr. Speaker: the government can take credit for a strong, good, well-diversified economy with thousands of jobs in Alberta.

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

Road Safety

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Best practices in other jurisdictions have shown that the best way to reduce the cost of auto insurance and to substantially reduce the cost of health care is to

reduce the number of injury accidents on our streets and highways. Recently the McDerimid report dealt with similar issues. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: what are your plans to reduce the number of injury accidents on our highways in response to the McDerimid report?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think for the benefit of the House the first thing that we have to do is establish the magnitude of what we're talking about. Each year in Alberta there is roughly \$3.9 billion of cost through auto accidents. A considerable portion of that is actually in our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the McDerimid report was quite a revolutionary report in how it came out and how it was done. One of the aims of this report is to decrease automobile accidents in Alberta by 30 per cent by the year 2010, so five years from now we will see a decrease of 30 per cent. There are other elements of savings, but this savings purely from a monetary point of view will be \$1.1 billion for the citizens of Alberta and close to \$500 million in the health care budget alone, so my congratulations to the people who put together the McDerimid report.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: has the minister compiled a list of high-collision locations throughout the province where infrastructure improvements may help to reduce the number of injury accidents and the cost?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much. Yes, we have, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost we attempt to do upgrades at those intersections, at those areas of road that have the highest number of fatalities, the highest number of accidents. We tend to do those first, and we do have a list that identifies all of these different areas on roads.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's critically important. The safety of the roads, the safety of the people driving on the roads is something that's very, very important to this government, and we will continue to ensure that we have the best record in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental is to the Solicitor General. Since traffic law enforcement is key to reducing the number of injury accidents, what is this minister prepared to do to improve enforcement of our traffic laws to help reduce the number of injury accidents and thereby help to reduce auto insurance rates and health care costs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. The law enforcement community in this province is working with residents and the municipalities to look at those issues regarding where traffic enforcement should be set up, so there's that partnership between the community and the police.

I'd also like to state that the Solicitor General's department is co-chairing the Alberta traffic safety review with the departments of Justice and Transportation, and we're also on a subcommittee that is reviewing the best practices for the most effective enforcement strategies throughout this province.

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

School Infrastructure

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The conditions at the Montgomery junior high school in my constituency of Calgary-Mountain View are deplorable. The government's own 1999 School Facility Evaluation Report characterized the school as dilapidated to the point of being unsuitable for public school use. Despite this, the government has done virtually nothing, to the detriment of the students and staff. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: can the minister explain why they have not taken action on these infrastructure deficiencies?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We work in close conjunction with the various school boards around the province. Certainly, our top priority is the schools that are in the worst condition, and we're attempting to work down the list. We now have some schools that have audit scores of around 1,050 to 1,200. We're working right from the top and moving down to the bottom.

The key element to all of this, though, Mr. Speaker, is that the particular school board in the area has to be cognizant of this and has to put it together as to when and where they want their schools to be done. We have built roughly \$2 billion worth of schools and projects in the last several years.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this report indicates the presence of asbestos in the school as well as exposed lead paint, how can the government ignore these potential health threats?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, if there is asbestos in these particular facilities, there are a lot of different things that can be done in order to alleviate the concern. Health concerns are our biggest single issue when it comes to renovations of schools, and it's something that we take very, very seriously.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Calgary public school board has nearly \$400 million in deferred maintenance costs for the public system alone, when will this government make good on its commitment to deal with the infrastructure debt in schools like Montgomery now that it claims its own debt is gone?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we're dealing with in the system in general is basically an increase in the amount of space within the system. In Calgary public right now we estimate there are around 44,000 square metres of excess space. One of the things that we have to take a very serious look at is exactly where the schools are located, and we're presently doing that.

To give another order of magnitude, in Edmonton public there are roughly 168,000 square metres of excess space there today. The population of students is declining, Mr. Speaker.

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

Marijuana Grow Ops

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The safety and security of neighbourhoods are very important to my constituents. During recent meetings in the community their concern was the proliferation of growing marijuana, or grow ops, in private houses. These grow ops bring with them violent crimes, drug production, trafficking, and deadly shootings in public. My question today is to the hon. Solicitor General. As the top cop of Alberta, so to speak, what tougher measures are you taking to deal with this proliferation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Large-scale marijuana cultivation is indeed a major problem not just in Alberta but throughout Canada as a whole, and it does place a great strain on the health care industry, the policing resources that are out there as well as the education resources and Children's Services.

This government has provided \$5 million a year to the integrated response to organized crime, which is police officers working in an integrated model to combat those grow operations throughout the municipalities and throughout rural Alberta. We also are providing another \$2.4 million to Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta, which provides the intelligence-led information that's gathered throughout the municipalities.

Two statistics, Mr. Speaker, that I'd just like to provide to you. In 2002 \$18 million worth of marijuana was seized by the southern Alberta integrated green team. In 2004, after IROC was formed, that increased to \$101 million, a 500 per cent increase.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I have heard from the law enforcers is that there are more suspected grow ops than they can deal with, so my question is to the Solicitor General. How do you plan to solve this situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, the ability to integrate services, the ability to share resources between the major and the smaller policing community agencies that we have in Alberta has already started to show where we can and will be going in the future. I advise the hon. member that the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance will be releasing her budget in a few weeks, and at that point in time we'll be seeing where our plan is going to be going in the future to enhance our response to organized crime and grow operations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are an increased number of shops set up to sell greenhouse equipment, supplies, and fertilizer, and I believe that tracking the purchase of . . .

The Speaker: Remember the preamble rule.

Mr. Cao: My question is again to the Solicitor General. Do you have any plans to register and track these purchases, similar to monitoring the pawnshops?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, greenhouse equipment is used for legitimate purchases, especially this time of year, obviously, with the spring season coming and under way. But, no, we don't have any plans with regard to setting up some type of a model to track, I guess, the sale of legitimate greenhouse items at this point in time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Age Care Ltd.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January the Calgary health region announced that it would be partnering with a private company, Age Care, to construct one new long-term care facility and upgrade two others. This private company, however, has a former chief medical officer, Dr. Jivraj, and a former board chair, Mr. Jim Dinning, on its board of directors. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Was the minister aware that a former board chair and a former chief medical officer were involved with Age Care when in January the minister referred to this partnership as innovative?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, whether I was aware or not aware does not subtract from the idea of an innovative partnership to provide long-term care. I was not aware of that position, but I was never given any cause for concern that that might be a compromise situation as it results in delivering quality health to those that need it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: is this government's third way a way for former public managers and directors to profit off our health care system? [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. minister has the floor.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I spoke last Friday to the Alberta Medical Association on the ideas surrounding the third way, and I'll reflect back on what our Premier said about the third way. It's not about one big bang or one particular idea; it's about a thousand good ideas. It is about all the good things that we can do in Alberta to be innovative and creative and come forward with new ideas to not only improve access and shorten wait-lists but ensure that Albertans continue to be the healthiest people in Canada, that we target to be even healthier.

Mr. Speaker, there has never been any deleterious implication, as the member suggests, surrounding the third way.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: why is there no moratorium on public managers and directors prohibiting them for a certain period of time from becoming involved in commercial ventures with the same government entities they recently left?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I am really at a loss to respond to what I'm hearing across the House, which sounds to me like a bit of a drive-by shooting on good people who apply to do jobs in a legitimate fashion. Those kinds of allegations or insinuations do not serve the health care of Albertans. We should be building upon the best, and when we have the best who continue to be involved in the delivery of health care, why should we insinuate and damage, potentially, the careers of good people who are trying to continue to do good things?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Highway 8

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Foothills-Rocky View are concerned about traffic safety on highway 8. Highway 8 is the road that connects highway 22 in the west to the southwest corner of Calgary. In recent years there's been growing traffic on this road, particularly truck traffic, resulting in an increasing number of accidents, some very tragic. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Mr. Minister, could you inform this Assembly what is being done to improve the traffic safety situation on highway 8?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's actually very interesting what the traffic accidents are due to on highway 8. In doing a comprehensive study, what we found was that 43 per cent of the traffic accidents were actually due to wildlife coming onto the road.

In saying that, though, there are a significant amount of other issues that are on that particular road. We're presently up to about 8,000 vehicles a day. At the intersection of 8 and 22 what is happening is that people who are turning left when there is someone beside them in the right lane cannot see if anyone is coming from the north. So this year, Mr. Speaker, we will be putting in a turn lane, which will enable much better vision and much better safety at that particular intersection.

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, my constituents include those wildlife, so I'd like them looked after as well.

My second question to the same minister is: what is being done specifically at the intersection of highway 8 and 101st Street, which is the border of the city of Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my job to ensure the safety of people who are driving on that road. Unfortunately, there are animals that do come onto it.

The intersection of 8 and 101 is another one of these examples where simply doing things like putting in different signage or putting in different blinking lights, for example, will certainly help. One of the issues that we have with this particular intersection, though, is that it is also under the jurisdiction of the city of Calgary, so we're working closely with the city of Calgary to ensure that there is something done on that intersection. I can assure the hon. member, who is very concerned about his constituents, that there will be something done this year. Signage is probably one way to go, but we certainly are working with the city of Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you. My final question for the minister is: what are the implications of the new ring road in the southwest section of Calgary for the future of highway 8?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you. That's an absolutely excellent question, Mr. Speaker, because obviously the ring road is going to go right through highway 8. What we anticipate is that this will take a considerable

amount of truck traffic especially off 8. Right now what is occurring is that a lot of the trucks are using highway 8 as sort of a shortcut to both highway 22 and highway 1. We hope that the ring road, when it is constructed, will actually take a significant amount off that and, indeed, may actually delay the amount of time that is needed for four-laning that road. I think it's going to make it a much, much safer road for the citizens of the hon. member's constituency.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

SuperNet

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After numerous delays and months of setbacks the SuperNet file was removed from the hands of the Department of Innovation and Science and placed into the hands of the newly formed Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. That transfer has given this new ministry its heaviest and, as far as we can tell, its only workload. My questions are to the Minister of Innovation and Science. Can this minister explain to the House what went so wrong with the SuperNet that it had to be removed from his department and transferred to the superministry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Doerksen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased to answer that question. The SuperNet contract is probably one of the best examples of a partnership arrangement with private companies to deliver a service to all Albertans across this province, in every rural community that has a school, a hospital, a library, a government building that will allow digital traffic and actually renew the economies in both our rural areas and our urban areas. I'm proud to say that the government signed a fixed-price contract, and any overruns on the contract were borne by the private-sector company.

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister: were any jobs in his department affected due to SuperNet's move to this newly created entity?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, if I understand the question, when the corporate information officer went to the new department, those staff members would have gone over to that new department and currently are the responsibility of the department of restructuring.

Mr. Elsalhy: Given that the Ministry of Innovation and Science has not decreased in size despite the largest file being taken away, how is it, then, that this government is efficient? Why do we need two ministries to look after one file?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question. All of the personnel that were involved in that file under the corporate information officer were transferred to the department of restructuring, and we did not refill those positions in Innovation and Science. We've maintained the same staff load that we had to cover the other important areas of our ministry, which talk about the importance of delivering innovation and creating the opportunity for Alberta companies to compete globally, to provide an excellent lifestyle for our citizens, and, more importantly, to prepare the future for our grandchildren.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Minister of Finance would like to supplement an answer given earlier in question period.

That's a permitted procedure we have. It also then allows the originator of the question to ask a supplemental as well.

Automobile Insurance Rates

(continued)

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity. I really want to make a correction to when the rates would come into effect from the summer review, and in fact they would come into effect in October, not July. If you recall my answer, I questioned myself on it at the time, but it is October.*

Thank you.

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

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I will call upon several members to participate.

I'd also like to advise all members of the House that the television cameras in the Assembly will continue to roll until after the departure of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor this afternoon.

Thirty seconds from now I'll call upon the first of four.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

www.opentheborder.com

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The March 4 Montana court ruling was just another obstacle this province's cattle industry has had to deal with since a cow in northern Alberta was discovered to have BSE on May 20, 2003. We have all been affected in some capacity after the discovery of an infected cow, especially our rural communities and rural businesses. One might have expected our rural communities to be torn apart after they lost one of the largest economic contributors to the rural economy, but that has not happened. Our communities, both rural and urban alike, have come together in support of each other through countless initiatives.

2:30

One of these grassroots initiatives is the Open the Border website launched in Cochrane last summer by Cochrane Dodge dealer Alex Baum and retired pro wrestler Dan Kroffat. This website continues to raise awareness about the challenges our ranchers face during this difficult time and also provides Albertans with the latest information regarding the border closure. Through this website these two individuals have captured over 150,000 signatures on a nation-wide petition in attempts to make a difference and ensure that resolving BSE issues remains a priority for politicians on both sides of the border. Last fall they travelled to Ottawa and personally delivered the petition to Members of Parliament, gaining much national media attention.

On behalf of everyone in the Legislature I would like to thank and acknowledge Alex and Dan for providing inspiration to our communities. They understand that Canadians for the most part feel helpless in the plight of our cattle ranchers and have found one way that all of us can say that we care.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Market Value Assessments

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Spring is slowly returning to our province, the days are getting longer, the temperature is inching upwards, and in Calgary's and Edmonton's inner-city constituencies

*See p. 457, right col., para. 4, line 7

homeowners on fixed incomes are reeling from the effects of market value assessment. Market value assessment is kind of like the schoolyard bully that picks on the little kid. Every spring it creeps up the front steps, crosses the veranda, knocks on the door, and punches homeowners on fixed incomes right square in the nose.

In the city of Calgary this year, Mr. Speaker, the average residential assessment has increased 4.4 per cent, almost double the inflation rate, and in the inner city 1 in 10 homeowners will see their assessment jump by more than 10 per cent, which means that property taxes will climb that much as well.

Now, some people will say that folks whose assessments go up by that much have nothing to complain about. Market value assessment is a valuation of property based on real estate prices in any given community. So if your assessment jumps, it probably means that the value of your house has jumped and your net worth is a good chunk more than it was last year, which is okay up to a point: if you're still working, still building net worth, still in the game. But if you're not, if you're retired, on disability, or on fixed income of any sort, an increase in your real estate value is only of any use to you if you sell your home.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from many senior constituents who feel the very real dilemma of being forced to sell their cherished home just to pay the taxes on it. That's wrong, and that's unfair to the people on fixed incomes, to inner-city neighbourhoods, to the environment because it encourages urban sprawl, and unfair to cities, which are the economic engines of this great province but do not have the authority to raise the revenue they need to sustain themselves.

We need a change in the relationship between the province and its municipalities. It's time to find a better way than market value assessment and time to stop punishing the inner cities and the residents of urban Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Parent Link Centres

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and recognize the 20 parent link centres that are up and running across our province. Parent link centres are community planned and community based. They are centres of excellence that provide parents and families with comprehensive support in the form of four core services: parent education, early childhood development and care, family support, information and referrals.

These centres, which are funded by Alberta Children's Services, will serve approximately 5,000 children and their parents. In our rural communities family and community support services have taken the leadership in implementing the parent link centres.

I'm pleased to say that my own community and my own home constituency have responded to the parent links in a very innovative way. The community parents have created a network between St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, and Plamondon. By sharing resources, they are able to offer all four core services across these communities that are geared for local needs. For example, in St. Paul they are offering parent education workshops by working with the Boys and Girls Club and the local daycare centre.

Parent link centres bring new programs and resources to parents living in communities right across our province. Mr. Speaker, the parent link centres are not just about building more; they are about building better. By 2007 a network of 44 centres, firmly rooted in our communities, will provide information, education, counselling,

and resources to help parents and their families raise healthy, well-adjusted children who can become great citizens of Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Air India Flight 182

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been 20 years since the largest mass murder in Canadian history, 20 years since the world's second most deadly terrorist attack after only the attacks of September 11. September 11, 2001, is seared into the consciousness of every Canadian. Unfortunately, June 23, 1985, is not, yet it should be. It is the day that 329 people were killed on Air India flight 182 in a premeditated terrorist attack. A similar number of lives on another Air India flight were spared because a bomb exploded prematurely, killing two Tokyo baggage handlers.

Most of the people who were killed on Air India flight 182 were Canadians, Mr. Speaker. The terrorist attack was launched from Canadian territory, yet in the aftermath of the Air India mass murder the response of the government of Canada stands in sharp contrast to its response to events of September 11, which took place in another country. After September 11 the Canadian government pulled out all the stops to assist the U.S. government in its investigation. It adopted antiterrorist legislation which infringed on the civil liberties of Canadians, it increased border security, and it increased co-operation with American security forces, even collaborating in the deportation of Canadian citizens to third countries for interrogation under torture.

Contrast this to the bungling and inaction of the Canadian government after the Air India terrorist attack. The RCMP and CSIS investigations took years to get off the ground. Evidence was deliberately destroyed by CSIS. We still don't know why. Twenty years later justice has yet to be done.

The families, friends, and loved ones of the Air India victims deserve justice. That's why the NDP opposition supports the call for a public inquiry into this tragic event. It is unacceptable that the federal government, in particular public safety minister Anne McLennan, has rejected calls for a public inquiry. Only a public inquiry will answer crucial questions about the failure of Canadian justice in this case, including why warnings from the government of India were ignored and why critical evidence was deliberately destroyed. Most importantly, it may help ensure that such a tragedy never again befalls our fellow Canadian citizens.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed by 102 members and citizens of this province urging the government to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of [our] oil sands" unless all efforts have been exhausted in employing Albertans and Canadians, aboriginals, unemployed youth, underemployed landed immigrants, and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition with 101 signatures on it from Calgary and other centres

around Alberta petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to “prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers” until we have done everything in our power to make sure that all “Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers” have found jobs.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m presenting a petition here from good Albertans from Carstairs, High River, Chestermere, and mainly from Calgary calling on the government to “prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers” to work on pipelines and construction in the oil sands.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table in the Legislative Assembly a petition that reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

This petition is signed by 100 people from all over the province. Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to table a petition, in this particular instance 100 names of Albertans who have indicated their opposition to hiring foreign workers. I’m going to spare the members of the Assembly the preamble, but I will indicate that these various individuals are residents of Edmonton, Calgary, Airdrie, Fort McMurray, and other . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member may choose to determine his own rules for his participation in the Assembly; however, it is the rules of the Assembly that will determine the member’s participation in the Assembly.

head: 2:40

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday, April 4, I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I’m also giving notice that on Monday, April 4, I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 1 and 4.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table with the House five copies of a petition I received from One Big Voice, an association dedicated to assisting seniors not only in Alberta but in

all of Canada. The association is asking both provincial and federal governments to raise the minimum ceiling on monetary allowances while not reducing CPP or disability pensions. They’re asking for programs that ensure that all seniors’ homes meet national building . . .

The Speaker: Okay, okay. Let’s table it and move on.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is from a constituent, Mick Beale, with concerns about the situation of highway 63, noting that another young man had died on the highway and asking for the government’s support in fixing the road.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling three messages which I received from three people in my riding urging the government to support a full smoking ban in public places. The first one is from a family physician, Dr. Donna Manca, the second one is from another family physician, Dr. Nigel Flook, and the third one is from the executive director of the West Edmonton Business Association, Ms Karon Kosof.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present the latest letter from a University Heights constituent expressing concerns about development. To quote Patricia Muir, “this project is being rammed down our throats and for what?”

The Speaker: I think the hon. member just heard me caution the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The same thing applies. Table it, and let’s move on.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of the *Thompson’s World Insurance News* edition of March 14, 2005, which I referred to during question period this afternoon.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of tablings. I spoke yesterday about the deplorable conditions at the GuZoo, and these are the pictures to back up the statements then.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to rise to present five copies of five letters from government members’ ridings protesting the importation of temporary foreign workers.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. I'd like to table, first of all, copies of the communications plan from an internal Suncor document where it says that there are no shortages, that there are shortages within CLAC, that I referred to.

I'd also like to table a government of Alberta document entitled Prepared for Growth: Building Alberta's Labour Supply, which documents this government's involvement in paving the way for temporary foreign workers to come to Alberta.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table for the information of the Assembly the Fact-finding Investigation of Potential Manipulation of Electric and Natural Gas Prices. This document has been prepared by the staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It is dated August 2002, and it's regarding Enron trading strategies.

Thank you.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Under Standing Order 7(5) I would ask the Government House Leader to please share the projected government business for the week commencing April 4.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, April 4, in the evening under Government Bills and Orders for second reading at 9 p.m. we anticipate speaking to Bill 11, the Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act; Bill 12, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act; Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act; Bill 31, the Real Estate Amendment Act; Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act; Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act; Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act; Bill 35, the Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act; time permitting, third reading of Bill 3, the City of Lloydminster Act; and Government Motion 16, which is on the Order Paper, referencing a special sitting of the Legislature with respect to the Queen's visit.

On Tuesday, April 5, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders for second reading Bill 26, Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 31, Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 32, Animal Keepers Act; Bill 33, Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 34, Insurance Amendment Act, 2005; and at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole on Bill 7, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 8, Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 17, Agrology Profession Act; Bill 12, Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 20, Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 34, Insurance Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 1, Access to the Future Act; Bill 5, Family Law Amendment Act, 2005; and government motions as per the Order Paper. I should say that I anticipate that perhaps there will be a government motion on the Order Paper referencing the House leaders' agreement with respect to Members' Statements, and there may be a government motion with respect to other Standing Orders changes to be proposed. I will certainly provide copies of those to the opposition as soon as they're ready, and they'll go on the Order Paper when they are ready.

On Wednesday, April 6, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders for second reading Bill 31, Bill 32, Bill 33, Bill 34, Bill

35; third reading on Bill 3; and as per the Order Paper. Wednesday, April 6, at 8 p.m. in Committee of the Whole Bill 1, Access to the Future Act; Bill 5, Family Law Amendment Act, 2005; remaining Committee of the Whole depending on progress as per second readings on the previous two days; and government motions as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, April 7, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third readings as per the Order Paper depending on progress.

The Speaker: Hon. members, shortly I'm going to announce Orders of the Day. But prior to that the Lieutenant Governor will be attending to the Assembly in the next few minutes, and this will be the first opportunity for Her Majesty's representative in Alberta to do it. So remember – and I advised before – that laptops should not be in and operational when the Lieutenant Governor is here. And if I announce Orders of the Day, that means you can all bring in coffee. But may I just ask you very politely not to do that until after the Lieutenant Governor has appeared and departed.

head: **Orders of the Day**

Royal Assent

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[Mrs. McClellan and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members, while we await, just a couple of updates in terms of Her Majesty's visit in May. You've all been invited to attend the Assembly on that special day when Her Majesty does attend and invited to bring guests. If there's any clarification required with respect to who those guests might be, just kindly contact our office. But they're people that you choose to bring, and that's basically the ultimate decision with respect to that.

In addition to that, have a very, very safe, family-oriented Easter weekend. We'll see you back in 10 days.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, and Mrs. McClellan entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

2:50

His Honour: Hon. members, please be seated.

The Speaker: May it please His Honour, the Legislative Assembly has at its present sitting passed certain bills to which and in the name of the Legislative Assembly I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

So, really, I think that what I'm suggesting here is that although this Bill 10 may be a good first step – and I'm really thinking about supporting it; it's a good step in protecting both the tenant and landlord – more discussion is needed to determine the factors or the causes of why tenants and landlords run into problems in the first place, why they're met with difficulty.

There is also the angle which I think was missed not only in this act, but I think it was missed over and over. By that I mean the mediation or intervention between a landlord and a tenant. Now, I myself being an MLA have intervened at least twice over the past two or three months to facilitate and encourage compliance by the two tenants whom I spoke to while also urging the landlords to show some empathy and patience. Both situations involved tenants who were having difficulty paying, and I think it was mainly after the Christmas holiday season. They were low-income people, and they just couldn't pay their rent. They were served with an eviction notice. The people were just desperate, so they approached their MLA, and I picked up the phone and spoke to both landlords. Although the official answer was, "No. The notice was served, and we can't do anything," unofficially they showed some empathy, and they extended the grace period by 10 days or two weeks, if I remember correctly, and the situations were both resolved. Both tenants continued to be tenants, and the landlords are happy because they got their money.

Now, I'm proud to say that. You know, I'm very happy to have been successful, but this is not really the job of an MLA. An MLA should not be mediating in residential tenancy disputes. There should be a board or a committee mandated to mediate and intervene so that tenants and landlords will not resort to using the legal system unnecessarily. The government has a responsibility and a role to step in, I think, and rectify this.

We have to protect good tenants from bad landlords just as much as we have to protect good landlords from bad tenants. I am encouraged to learn that these amendments were proposed after consulting with the landlord associations and the tenant representatives in Edmonton, Calgary, and Medicine Hat. This is actually a positive and healthy sign.

I think that I would close by saying that I support this bill. I reiterate my position with regard to mediation and intervention, and I urge the government to consider putting this into the regulations if it's not in the act itself and allow people to resolve their differences peacefully without resorting to the legal system. Again, maybe to emphasize that anything we do here under this dome, be it for this particular act or for anything else that we discuss, it has to be clearly and promptly communicated to the affected parties. It's good that we consulted with the landlord associations and some tenants' representatives, but everybody needs to know so that the landlords will understand their duties and their responsibilities, and then the tenants would understand their entitlements and their rights. So I support this bill, and I would urge the government to consider my recommendations.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When looking at Bill 10, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005, I'm prompted to think about my own experiences when I rented, and I'm sure most of us have rented at least one time in our lives. I wouldn't know what was allowed and what one could get away with; for example, the use of water for lawns and/or trees. The place should be provided with that, but should that be tacked onto the utility bill as well as the power for the washer and dryer? One could state that because the

property looked so nice, it might have created the urge to apply and rent. So does this again justify the cost that one would pay with that being wrapped into the rent?

Now, with this bill a person could object and file with 14 days' notice, which would give a little bit of a level playing field to the tenant, in fact, if they don't feel that the landlord is realistic. In several high-profile cases within Edmonton and surrounding areas there have been such examples of that, but I won't name them though. I'm sure we all recognize which ones they are.

One question I do have in mind is the change in the way that the deposit cheques are returned. Now, landlords currently are required to be certified cheque or registered mail. I'm asked: why the change? I was given a preamble by the hon. member. One reason was because it's costing too much to send these out. One would ask how many people come and go in a year that the landlord would balk at the cost and perhaps prompt this change. What kinds of conditions exist that there is this kind of constant turnover? I'm not a tax expert, but I'm sure that this would come under the operating costs of a business that one could apply at the year-end for a tax return for the landlord or the owner. I'm not suggesting in any way that the mail would not get there, but through registered mail there is a guarantee with the signature, therefore eliminating perhaps a dispute in receiving the deposit. Or, you know, "It's in the mail." How many times have people heard that line, that the cheque is in the mail? This is just an amendment, but it could allow for this concern to be raised. Right now I'm just speaking on this concern, and I've raised this for consideration.

Overall, I think the bill does have some merit, and I would support it as I do feel that it does have balance between the two parties.

One could also argue for change with regard to when the deposit does not meet the amount of required repairs that are left from a neglectful tenant. There could in fact be something where the tenant and the landlord have to be brought back to the table to figure out and find resolve with regard to the outstanding damage. They could in fact have some sort of remediation with regard to this in the bill. Overall, like I said, I think it does strike a balance between the two parties, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 10 this afternoon with sort of mixed feelings. While it does have some aspects of the landlord tenancy act that are long overdue in terms of concerns that both landlords and tenants have had over the years, at the same time there are a couple of pieces of this potential legislation which I have difficulty with. First off, the provision for tenants to be able to move out based on the Public Health Act standards within seven days, I think it says, is definitely a positive.

You know, we have a wide variety of literally thousands of different rental accommodations available in Alberta, and there are just a real wide variety of standards that both are given to tenants and that are laid out to the landlords. So having sort of an independent standard from the Public Health Act really will assist, I think, people to even realize what they are entitled to have through their rental agreement.

3:10

I know from my own renting experience through the years and then also through working in my constituency that there are just some literally appalling – appalling – places that are rented out here in the city of Edmonton. For a lot of people they just don't know, for one thing, what the standards might be for them to be able to rent.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

A second problem for people in marginal rental circumstances is that they literally don't have any other place to go. You know, they get stuck in a place where the landlord knows pretty much that they're not providing the minimum standards for human habitation. At the same time, they also know that the tenants that they have enlisted for their properties really don't have much choice for whatever reason. There's maybe a shortage of low-rental accommodation available to them, or perhaps they've had some difficulties in the past with rentals. Whatever the reason, there are just literally hundreds of people living in this situation.

I'm hoping that this amendment act can reach out further and provide minimum standards that the renters can recognize from landlords and for those people to fix those places up and still allow the tenants to have a place to stay. This is the big problem that I'm seeing in many cases with low-rental units. I think it should be addressed here, but it's not being necessarily.

On that same topic, I would like to just also mention that, you know, the shortage of affordable housing in our large urban centres and other centres across this province is becoming an increasing problem. We see an acute shortage in Fort McMurray; in both of our larger urban centres, Edmonton and Calgary; Red Deer; Lethbridge to some extent; Lloydminster; and other places. Without being able to provide adequate places for our citizens to live in, I think that we're just leading the way to a whole host of other problems that we will have to deal with as a province down the road.

To have adequate shelter for a human being to live in I think is a basic human right, and it's a right that extends to all of the other sort of rights and needs for human beings to live a good and decent life. By shortchanging the opportunity to have decent habitation in low-income units for our citizens in Alberta, we are simply going to have to pay down the road, Mr. Speaker. Health concerns, health problems that are associated with inadequate housing include, you know, lung problems, catching colds, bedbugs, and all of these sorts of things, respiratory problems, and we end up paying. We think that perhaps we're saving money by not providing low-rental units in this province, but in fact down the road we all end up paying much, much more.

Specific to this bill, another aspect of it that I have difficulties with is changing the amount of time that it takes – if a tenant is not paying their rent, they're only given 14 days after which they can be evicted. Now, currently I believe that the law allows for the tenant to write a letter explaining extraordinary circumstances that might delay the payment of rent to the landlord, if I'm reading this correctly, and I would like clarification on this, if I may, from the hon. member supporting this bill. Is this an arbitrary sort of thing that's set in stone, and is there any other way, then, that a tenant can look for some appeal process if they're going to be potentially evicted from their property if they're not paying their rent after the 14 days?

I think that we can all think of a myriad of circumstances that would cause people to perhaps not be able to pay their rent, loss of a job or other extenuating circumstances, and 14 days just seems rather short to sort of have other means of income or social assistance or whatever to kick in to bridge the gap, let's say, if someone loses their job.

We have to remember at the end of the day that we have a fundamental responsibility for each human being in this province to have a decent place to live, and if circumstances are that someone is renting and they might lose their income for a period of time, it's important that we show compassion and realize that these circumstances do exist for some people and that they're able to have decent

accommodation for a period of time. The present legislation, in allowing someone to write a letter, I think is appropriate. It acts as an appeal process, and I would like to see further clarification in regard to this bill.

Finally, I think that, you know, people who engage in the business of being a landlord are in a special sort of business. They have to remember that they're not selling pizzas; they're not renting plots somewhere for people to rent for business. They are providing a place for human beings to live their lives. We have to have special circumstances in those regards, and the people who enter into landlord contracts have to realize that right from the beginning. This is the place, here in this Legislature, where we can make that crystal clear, that each Albertan's right to a place to live is sacrosanct.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, you've been recognized to participate in the debate.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak to Bill 10, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005. The main object of this amendment act is to allow landlords to deliver the security deposit by regular mail, to allow tenants to move out if a landlord doesn't comply with the Public Health Act standards, and to streamline the process for landlords to evict tenants who don't pay rent. The Residential Tenancies Act was passed in 2004 and came into force last November. The changes are the first to be requested by tenants and landlords.

The government says that it consulted with the Calgary Apartment Association, the Edmonton Apartment Association, and the Medicine Hat landlord association for landlord feedback, and the Boyle Street Co-op and the Calgary low-income tenants association for the tenants' perspective. Both sides agreed on these amendments, they said. The University of Alberta legal studies program also helped with the amendments.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta Liberals always believe in protecting the rights of both tenants and landlords. This bill allows landlords to object to a tenant's 14 days' notice of tenancy termination, making it ineffective if the landlord has complied with the public health order or been granted a stay of the order. This bill also retains the tenant's right to object to a landlord's 14 days' notice of termination unless the breach is nonpayment of rent.

This bill also allows landlords to return the tenant's security deposit by regular mail, not just certified or registered as before.

This act will change the wording of the section regarding the tenant's 14 days' notice to terminate tenancy based on the landlord's failure to comply with an order under the Public Health Act. Now it requires the landlord to serve the tenant with a written objection within seven days on the grounds that the landlord has complied or been granted a stay of the order or has complied or received a stay at the time of serving notice. The landlord's notice to terminate the tenancy is rendered ineffective if the tenant serves the landlord or pays the rent. Nothing in this act affects any notice given under the Residential Tenancies Act before this act comes into force.

I personally believe that tenants require certainty before relocating. If the landlord objects at the last minute, the tenants may have already committed to another residence, paid a security deposit and some moving expenses too.

3:20

The proposals also encourage landlords to communicate with tenants about public health orders and efforts to remedy them. The

proposed amendments would provide landlords an opportunity to object without placing undue hardship on tenants. Perhaps a booklet of guidelines could be given at the time of the rental agreement, therefore setting the record straight between the two parties.

Mr. Speaker, I think this bill strikes a balance between the rights of landlords and tenants, so I fully support this bill. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 10. Landlord and tenant issues are things that cross my constituency office's threshold only second to maintenance enforcement issues. The Member for Edmonton-McClung said that he had two issues he had to resolve. He's lucky that he's had so few. I've had many more.

Quite often they come from landlords with problems with deadbeat tenants and how to deal with the legislation. Many Albertans have worked hard over recent years, maybe bought an apartment and are looking to find ways to deal with the issues that arise from them. They generally have ways to do so. There have also been a number of cases of people coming and asking about problems they have as tenants and with difficult landlords.

Just a comment before that though. One of the major complaints I get from time to time is from people who have moved from Fort McMurray because of the great increase in rents. Some places have gone 100 per cent or more in terms of increases in the last six to seven years, and many tradesmen, many skilled people have moved out of there in order to get away from those high, high costs. It's a problem in getting skilled labour for Fort McMurray. It's one of the disconnects we have in that region.

One particular case – and I won't name names – here in Edmonton was somebody with a similar problem. It was in my constituency. They had their rent increased by 50 per cent in order for what seemed to be the owner's interest in selling the property. There is provision in the act for dealing with condo-ization and what happens with that and protecting the interests of the tenant in that, but it doesn't deal with condos that are already condo-ized but rented out by owners, and then they want to sell them and perhaps improve them in order to make the sale.

This particular issue was resolved by the person going to the media. With some help from some service clubs in the area in getting her moved and some other landlords in the area that offered her decent accommodation at a good price, the issue was resolved. But it did not deal with the problem of using huge increases as a way to jump somebody out of their home. I think that a mediation service or something that somebody could go through, as mentioned or advised by the Member for Edmonton-McClung, would be a good thing to look at in any future amendments to this law.

Another thing. You know, there are some irresponsible landlords. I had one particular case where the individual had come to Edmonton some years ago, come into a very – I don't know if you'd call it cheap – inexpensive apartment dwelling and working for minimum wage, having a very difficult time, a single mother. She was proud to ensure that she was working and making her own income and making her way in life. She managed to save some money to buy some new lino for her floor and to paint the walls, and the landlord increased her rent because he said it was a better place then.

She came to my constituency office on a night that was 40 below complaining that the landlord had cut off her car plug-in electricity because it was too expensive. I said, "Well, go to the landlord and

tenants; is it in your contract?" da, da, da. She said she had, and she said it was very difficult to complain because this particular landlord just wouldn't do things.

She also related a litany of problems with the particular landlord. She asked: can they come into the apartment? I said, "Well, only in emergency processes; the act outlines it," and all the rest of it. She said this landlord and his sons were using her bathroom. I said: "They're using your bathroom? That seems a little odd." She said it was costing her a lot in toilet paper, and she was not very well-to-do. She said she'd even managed to go to a pawnshop and get a cheap security camera and hooked it up, and they broke it on her. You know, they had a key for things.

She said she went to the police, and the police said that they did not have the time to adequately deal with this type of a case. It wasn't serious, and it's for her to deal with. She said it was very difficult for her to actually make complaints and let it be known to the landlord in that way because the landlord's sons were involved in the drug trade and could be violent sometimes. This is one of the problems that sometimes people in very low rental accommodations run into with the people that they're dealing with. No way for that person with low income, low power to deal with a problem. They're afraid to go to the media even because they're afraid of what might happen because of the activities of the landlord's family, and the police said they couldn't really deal with it. Somehow these people are lost in the system.

My best advice to that person was to cut her losses and leave, just for the good of her children. But I believe that there should be at least some mediation, some other process in landlord and tenant issues, understanding, of course, that as the other members have quite rightly said, most landlords are very responsible, most tenants are very responsible, and for the greatest part of the system it works. It's just those few situations where it doesn't that we run into problems, and there is no way out for these people.

That's all I have to say, Mr. Speaker. I support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions for the hon. member?

There being none, the chair recognizes the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few short comments to make on it. One, I too am generally in favour of this bill and think that it's important that we get a fairer system. There are definitely some inequities when it comes to renting, and it seems like the renter often is on the short side.

I guess the one comment I have to make is that in section 28(1) it talks about if "the landlord commits a substantial breach of the residential tenancy agreement" or if public health has basically closed it down. I still have to wonder why a person would have to give seven days' notice. I think it's an improvement to go from 14 to seven, but when they're in such a bad situation, I think they should be able to leave and go there when they've got that.

The other one that I'm somewhat concerned about is the registered letter. I realize it costs some extra money and a few other things, but it's just important. As our mail system is, letters don't always show up, and I like the idea of having to sign at both ends, knowing that the letter was in fact received, and then the question isn't there. To me it just adds one more thing that they can argue about, go to the courts saying: "Well, I didn't receive it. It wasn't there." I think that perhaps we should consider putting back in the registered letter. I know it's an extra cost, but it does put some finality on it. You understand that it did get sent and it did get received. I'd like them

to consider that amendment, the registered part. I think it's not maybe the best way to go to just send by regular mail.

Thank you.

3:30

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, like the Member for Edmonton-Manning I, too, end up dealing with a lot of rental issues coming from both landlords and tenants, but I have to say that the pendulum swings more to the side of the tenants. I tend to get more concerns being raised or more requests for help coming from tenants than I do from landlords.

I can speak from personal experience, having been both a tenant and for a short while a landlord. You certainly have to understand from the beginning that it is a contract between private parties in which each is agreeing to abide by certain provisions that are set out, but because it's involving housing, we have the government get involved to make sure that things are fair and that there is a reasonable amount of notice that's given to both sides.

You know, there are three areas that the Human Rights Commission gets involved in around discrimination: housing, employment, and access to government services. Those are the areas where if something has been prohibited as a grounds for discrimination, it's specifically prohibited as a grounds for discrimination in those three areas. We recognize that housing is integral in this society, especially in a northern climate. You can't not have housing here.

Having said that, we know that we're still dealing with an enormous housing problem in this province and in the city. I think from the last homeless count it was identified that we're now in need of some 6,000 units of housing, affordable or subsidized or even shelter spaces and transitional spaces in the province, and every year that we don't create those spaces, there are more spaces that need to be added to that number. The first time I did the homelessness survey, in 2003, I think, or 2002, we needed, like, 5,000 spaces, and now we're up to 6,000 and still counting. So we recognize as legislators in this government that it is something that needs consumer protection involved both for the landlord and for the tenant.

I argued very strongly last time and, in fact, was successful in getting an amendment through that essentially came down on the side of the landlord. I was arguing that if we wanted to get away from the adversarial system that we had set up for dispute resolution between landlords and tenants, we had to give people more time to work things out. I'm pleased to see that there has been no negative reaction to that amendment because it is noted, I think, in the comments from the sponsoring member that the changes that are proposed in Bill 10, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005, are what we see before us today.

Those are around adding the reasonable grounds, that the "tenant believes on reasonable grounds" that the landlord has failed to comply with a public health order, and changing the notice to terminate "within 7 days from [when] the landlord receives the notice, the landlord serves the tenant with a notice in writing objecting to the termination," et cetera, et cetera, and noting that the failure to pay the rent is not accepted as a reason for objecting.

You know, I've just come through the season of door-knocking, Mr. Speaker, and I have to admit that sometimes I find some of the landlords a little draconian in the way they deal with things. I mean, on the day that the rent is due, if you're going through some of these apartment buildings, the "you're evicted" sticker goes on the door at five minutes after 12. You're looking down the hall and the whole

hallway is papered. They actually stick the notice right to the people's doors, and you think: Okay, well, that was a bit dramatic.

But having been on the other side of it, where I'm trying to collect rent from a tenant who always seems to have another excuse day after day after day, and eventually it's me and my family that are out the money because we're having expenses, I have a bit better understanding of why the landlords move so quickly now to use every available protective device for them in the Residential Tenancies Act. I have a better understanding of that now.

On the other hand, generally speaking – and this is a very general statement – often those that are in a rental situation do not have the wherewithal to be able to purchase if they wanted to. So you may well be dealing with people who have a lower income or are struggling financially. Those people are often left with very few options when things go wrong for them, so they really need the protection that's available to them in the act.

The Member for Edmonton-Manning had outlined a number of scenarios that he'd already dealt with in his office, and all of them sound familiar to me, especially the ones around public health where, you know, a good tenant has moved in, things don't go well for them, they've got the landlord coming into the premises when they shouldn't, the place is filled with bugs and creepy-crawly things, the public health units have been alerted, and now the tenant has got to find additional money to help them move again. Worse than that, they've probably got creepy-crawlies in the rest of their furniture and in their clothing and everything else, and that costs them money to get rid of that, and they didn't have a lot of money to begin with. So they're literally out of pocket because they rented in that particular place. Those are often the times when they can't get their damage deposit back either.

What I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that we really need to strive to achieve a balance of protections for both the landlord and for the tenant when we look at the Residential Tenancies Act and anything covering that. Particularly, we have to be sure we're doing that around any kind of subsidized housing.

I have a couple of different kinds of subsidized housing in my constituency. We have the Greater Edmonton Foundation working in partnership, which is provincial money and some municipal and nonprofit management, to subsidize housing mostly for seniors but in some cases for citizens who are not seniors in entire units of subsidized housing. They're paying 30 per cent of their income for the rent, and again that's not covering the phones or the cable TV in those places, which I would argue should be included because in a lot of cases with seniors a telephone is not a frill. It's a necessity, especially if they have to be able to order prescriptions or food and have it delivered. If they have one of those MedicAlert alarms that works through the phone system, they have to have a phone system to make it work. So I would argue that we need to be looking at what we include in that subsidized rate a bit differently. But I digress, Mr. Speaker.

I also have the Capital Region Housing, which of course all of us have access to, which is subsidized housing for lower income individuals and where either there are entire buildings that are subsidized or social housing. But often they will sign contracts with landlords who will allow, you know – whatever – 10 per cent of the units in a given apartment building or five apartments in a high-rise apartment building are subsidized, and the rest are not. You've got to have both the apartment subsidized and the individual approved for subsidy, have those two things go together. If the individual leaves that apartment, they may not necessarily get another subsidized apartment.

We need to be careful that we are protecting those people, particularly when we're looking at very low vacancy rates. The Member for Edmonton-Manning referenced the situation in Fort

McMurray where people are – I know this is hard to believe – leaving that city, even though they've got good jobs, because they can't find housing options. My brothers, who are in the trades, and their families have lived for years in Edmonton, and they do the old up on Sunday, back on Friday night. And they've done years of that. It's not an ideal lifestyle, but at least they have a good home here. But they are separated from their families for long periods of time.

3:40

So the act is looking to change just a few things. The security deposits being delivered by regular mail: it doesn't take away the option of using registered or certified mail. It just adds regular mail as a possible option. I know that the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was arguing that the registered mail should be kept. Well, it can be if people still want to do that, but they can use the regular mail.

I'm pleased to see the section that's allowing tenants to move out if the landlord doesn't comply with the Public Health Act standards because that's going to help my tenants. I have certainly dealt with cases where that's what's happened to them, and now they're out the money for the rent, they're out the money for the damage deposit, and as I described, they're looking at paying more money for moving costs and another damage deposit, and they can't disentangle themselves from the current situation. So I'm pleased to see that assistance being offered to tenants.

I'm also sympathetic and supportive of the process to streamline for the landlords to evict tenants who don't pay. You know, I did argue very strongly that we should try and make the system less adversarial if we really mean it when we say that we want people to work this stuff out themselves and have less of everybody rushing to lawyers or rushing to small claims court to have this dealt with. That's true; we need to give people the methods by which they can resolve that.

We want to encourage more reasonably priced rental accommodation, and often that comes from individuals renting a floor of their house or even owning a small apartment building. I've got a lot of those three-floor walk-ups. You know, they've got four apartments on each of three floors, 12 apartments in all. We want to preserve that kind of housing stock and even encourage more of that housing stock, and that's very difficult to do when you've got landlords who feel that they keep getting shortchanged by tenants who aren't paying the rent. They need to be able to move faster on evicting them for nonpayment. I'm supportive of that. That is the contract. That is the deal between the two of them. The tenant gets a place to live that they should be able to call their own, and in exchange the landlord gets the cash. If the person is not paying the rent, that places a hardship on the landlord.

I'm more concerned, especially in the cities, that we continue to have less expensive rental accommodation available, and that is about the small apartments, that is about apartments and suites in houses, especially in the inner city. That's where a lot of our accommodation is available, and you're dealing with small proprietors then. You're dealing with individuals in many cases, and I don't want to discourage people from making this kind of rental accommodation available. That's what I'm trying to say. It is discouraging to them if they end up getting ripped off a couple of times. They're going to withdraw from the housing market, and I don't want to see that happen. So in this case I think this is a good idea.

All in all, the member has obviously identified what the pressing issues were with this legislation. Somewhere I read that the government had consulted with a variety of apartment associations

in Edmonton and Calgary and Medicine Hat and some of the low-income organizations in Edmonton and Calgary like the Boyle Street Co-op.

I think these look like reasonable amendments. I think we need to continue as legislators to be vigilant in ensuring that it is a fair playing field for both sides of this arrangement, and I think that we particularly need to look to ensuring that we have enough housing stock for people. In particular, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to plead the case for transitional housing, whether that is bridge housing for those with addictions that are moving from treatment centres back into the regular working, living world or women's shelters.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a): any questions?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly pleased with all the questions that were answered. But I guess I'd like to bring to everybody's attention, number one, that there was a full consultation with all the residents and tenants and landlords in the spring of 2004, and of course when it came into effect on March 1, 2004, there were some of these items, as I explained earlier, that really were what they wanted to do. So it was a give-and-take on both sides. I think what we've got arranged now makes it good because everybody was working together.

Just one comment on the registered mail for return of deposits. I guess they both agreed, number one, that it would cost more for the landlords, and somebody has to pay for that, and the tenants didn't want to pay for that.

In closing, I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-McClung for being the critic for Government Services and coming down to discuss this. I think it's very helpful for both sides.

At this time I'd move second reading. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

Bill 28

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005

[Debate adjourned March 22: Ms Blakeman speaking]

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had begun my second reading debate on Bill 28 the other day and didn't mark my notes, and I apologize if I repeat slightly, but I don't think it will be by too much. I'm very interested to speak in second reading to Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, although I will note that I think I have spoken to an amending act for the Municipal Government Act every year since I got elected – or at least that's what it feels like – which I hope is a positive sign that we are continuing to fine-tune the relationship between the province and the municipalities.

Sometimes I worry that there's not enough communication between the government and the municipalities, particularly the metropolitan municipalities of Edmonton and Calgary. I think what we're really needing to look for here is a redefined relationship, perhaps a constitutionally redefined relationship, between the province and the municipalities in this province. It is not an equitable relationship at this point, and it does not recognize the current realities of the size and the economic power of those two large cities. I should also include cities like Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Fort McMurray. They are in their own regions becoming just as much of a driving force.

We now have 80 per cent of the population of Alberta living in a city, and 20 per cent are rural. We have completely reversed those designations over the last 25 or 30 years. Eighty per cent of our population now lives in what's classified as an urban centre. So to have that constitutionally entrenched relationship where the municipalities are viewed as the children of the province is inappropriate in this year of 2005. I've now gone through two campaigns where my party has very clearly stated the need for a redefined, renegotiated relationship between the provincial government and the municipalities.

3:50

One of the places that is most obvious for inequities is around the economic realities, the taxation base, the amount of funding that is available for the cities to do the work that they are assigned or delegated to do. There are two parts to that. One is that there has been a great deal of delegation – whether it was appropriate or not I will leave to another discussion – from the province to the municipalities to carry out various programs and services that used to be not only paid for but also administered by the province. Those were delegated to the municipalities, I would argue, most times without the complete amount of funding that was needed to provide the program or service. So then we have the situation – oh, I did remember saying this before – where we've got, particularly, nonprofit agencies that have accepted some of the services out fundraising to deliver a program or service that the province used to do, which is a lot.

But the relationship between the municipalities and the province is a very unequal one for funding. One of the places that this shows up the most is in the taxes because the cities really have to rely primarily on property taxes. The provincial government and the federal government actually both have a number of other sources. So part of the ongoing requests for consideration coming from the municipalities has been: "Give us other tools by which we can raise money because we're kind of stuck. We've got property tax that we can raise money on but no other way." Frankly, some of the other cities in the world are looking at things like a civic sales tax. I don't know if that's being considered here in Alberta, but I know that other cities in the world are looking at it.

There are other drivers there that need to be considered, or we will continue to create a situation that, I think, eventually our municipalities, particularly the metropolitan ones, will just say, "That's enough; we're getting a raw deal here," and do something like declare themselves not city states but – I'm not going to remember the term. I'll have to come back to it. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. They started to do it, I think, in the U.S. and Australia as well, where they're incorporating themselves with a legal definition that makes them a different kind of entity than what they are now. I'll try and find the definition and come back to it.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions?

Ms Blakeman: Was that 15 minutes?

The Acting Speaker: You had six minutes left, Madam.

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few brief comments about Bill 28. I know the planes are on the tarmac ready to go and everybody wants to hit the road for the long weekend.

Mrs. McClellan: Some of the tires are on the Corvette too.

Mr. Tougas: Ah, very good. I don't have a Corvette.

Mr. Speaker, overall I'd have to say that anything that gives municipalities these days the additional tools to raise revenue is something that we can all get behind on this side of the Legislature. The fact is that most Albertans live in cities, and cities are under tremendous financial constraints these days despite the fact that the provincial government is awash in excess money. It's my understanding that the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta association of rural districts and counties are both supportive of the provisions in this bill. And why shouldn't they be? For years now the urban and rural share of the provincial tax pie has been shrinking, forcing the local governments to look for new ways to raise revenue.

The government is very fond of saying that in Alberta the only way that taxes go is down, which is not entirely true if you live in Edmonton or Calgary or Red Deer or Lethbridge or Medicine Hat or just about any of the municipalities in the province where city taxes have to keep going up all the time. Municipalities do need some new tools to create new revenue sources that go beyond the traditional methods of property taxes and user fees.

I see that there is something called the "community aggregate payment levy." As a city slicker I have no idea what that's all about. It does appear to be almost a levy on nuisance businesses, which is kind of interesting. So I wonder if you could apply that to the 7-Eleven and all the garbage that they leave behind, but that's for another debate altogether.

[Ms Haley in the chair]

Certainly, the most interesting of all these plans is the community revitalization levy. There are some concerns about it, however. As I understand it, this levy would allow for a property tax freeze for 20 years to encourage revitalization of the area. Now, the problem that most certainly will come up is literally: where do you draw the line? You could have one street with a property tax freeze while perhaps a block or two away the residents there would face their usual annual tax hike. Then again there is the question of a tax freeze, which some see as the equivalent of a subsidy for a developer. Also, there is the continuing problem of if an area is revitalized, then where do the poor people who were living in that area go? I think this is called gentrification. How things change. I guess there's not much you can do about that, but it is a concern.

Overall, Madam Speaker, the plan seems to allow for manageable debt and sensible repayment. In general, it appears to be an innovative plan, at least – I'm sorry; what is this one called again? – the community revitalization levy. It seems to be an innovative plan that could, if used properly, revitalize some decaying neighbourhoods. While the province of course has to sign off on any business plan, the onus falls on the local governments to make sure that the community revitalization levy is applied properly.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I encourage the government to continue to explore innovative ways for municipalities to raise revenue, especially since the government appears to have abrogated its duties to Alberta's municipalities.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Under Standing Order 29 are there any questions or comments? You have a question?

Mr. Flaherty: No. I was going to speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I just wanted to cover Standing Order 29, if there were any questions or comments on his speech.

If not, would the hon. member please go ahead.

Mr. Flaherty: Yes. Madam Speaker, we're talking about Bill 28 here, I believe. The question of property tax in St. Albert, Madam Speaker, is a very big concern for us because of our senior population. We're praying every day that the government will give us more money for our megaplex and also for our highway 2 designation because right now I believe our taxes are around the 13 per cent. So I'm hoping that the whole question of property tax can be looked at here in terms of the education tax on seniors because we're certainly finding that many seniors in my constituency are having difficulty existing with the high tax rate. Therefore, we hope the government will look at the tax aspect to give our seniors some relief.

The other question I'd like to bring to your attention is the question of infrastructure. This was – and I don't want to be disrespectful – a very big, contentious item in our constituency during the election. Dr. Gibbins spoke to the Chamber of Commerce. I was lucky enough to sit on the panel, and I noticed that the main candidate was not in attendance this day, and I don't know why.

Dr. Gibbins pointed out that across the province of Alberta we have an \$11 billion infrastructure problem. I hope that the government will look at his study because it does talk about relief for this in terms of how it can help the constituencies across the province, the towns and municipalities. He has a suggestion that we look at the Manitoba plan. The Manitoba plan I believe talks about taking a percentage of the gas tax off, 2 to 3 per cent, and helping us with the infrastructure problem with a 10-year plan. It's been very successful. If I'm not mistaken, they're in their third year with this plan. So I'm really saying that I hope the government will look at Dr. Gibbins' suggestion and utilize that to take a look at the relief of the infrastructure problem across the province.

4:00

There is another area here, Madam Speaker, that I'd like to talk about, and that's the whole question of a community revitalization levy. It says this: the amendment will allow municipalities to retain the education property tax and the tax increment of a tax equivalent to finance as well the municipal increment currently being used. Well, community revitalization in St. Albert would mean that some of our older communities would be revitalized and help our seniors, again, stay where they are. I think it has some good possibilities, but the thing that I think would be important is that we get some relief through the seniors being considered in terms of some relief there with the education tax.

So, Madam Speaker, I know people are anxious for me to sit down in light of the holiday coming up. I think it's important, though, that we look at these suggestions, and I do appreciate you giving me the opportunity to do so this afternoon. Happy Easter to you.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29 are there any other questions or comments with regard to what he has just said?

There being none, I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Ms Speaker. It's very refreshing to have someone of the female gender up there. That's great.

I would like to make a few comments on Bill 28 here this afternoon. There seem to be some very positive changes made through Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, and some that are in fact long overdue. The first change, it seems, ensures that commercial use is not exempt from municipal assess-

ment and taxation simply because it's located in provincial parks or recreation areas. In addition to private residences on such lands, which have already been subject to municipal taxation, this amendment will add commercial use such as ski hills, golf courses, restaurants, or stores.

The Alberta Assessors' Association found that municipalities were losing millions of dollars of property tax revenue due to their inability to assess commercial uses in provincial parks and recreation areas. Not only will this amendment stem this leakage of badly needed municipal revenue, but it will also level the playing field between businesses located in provincial parks and recreation areas and businesses not located on provincial lands.

The second amendment on Bill 28 creates a provincial registry for so-called linear properties. Linear properties such as power lines, pipelines, and telecommunication cables often cross municipal jurisdictions. A provincial registry will make it a lot easier for municipalities to properly assess the value of linear property within their jurisdiction and tax them accordingly. Such a registry will establish greater certainty for both utility companies as well as municipal governments, and it seems like a worthwhile initiative.

The third amendment to Bill 28 establishes a new tax on gravel and sandpits based on the tonnage extracted. Called a community aggregate levy, municipal governments will be given the option of implementing such a levy to a maximum of 25 cents per tonne on the basis of that. Given the impact of gravel and sand extraction on municipal roads and other infrastructures, it seems reasonable to allow municipalities to impose such a levy to offset some of these infrastructure costs.

So all of these above amendments seem positive for the municipal governments. The one proposed Bill 28 amendment that the NDP opposition does have questions about is the proposed community revitalization levy. This levy is intended to spur redevelopment in so-called blighted districts. It would allow a municipality that invests in redevelopment in such districts to recoup the expenditure by taxing the difference between the predevelopment and postdevelopment value of the property.

Before taking a firm position on the community revitalization levy, there are a number of questions that need to be answered; for example, a municipality would have to apply and get cabinet approval to put a community revitalization levy into effect. They would have to demonstrate that there would be, in fact, an increase in property values post development in order to make it possible to recoup their investment.

There has been a considerable amount of experience with these types of levies in the United States, where it is known as a tax increment financing, or a TIF for short. The record of tax increment financing in the United States is decidedly mixed. TIFs have been successful in increasing property values. However, the impact of a higher property value is not always positive. For example, higher property values can negatively impact affordable housing in favour of higher end housing. While higher income residents gain, this can be at the cost of displacing lower income residents. These concerns are being raised by the Calgary Drop-in Centre as a possible negative impact if a community redevelopment levy is applied to the East Village development proposed in downtown Calgary.

Moreover, research on the impacts of TIFs in Chicago, Illinois, has shown that this type of levy has not led to a net increase in employment in the effected areas. Also, this type of levy tends to favour bigger, more profitable businesses at the expense of smaller, less profitable family businesses. Since a municipality's ability to recover its expenditures depends on the increment between pre and postdevelopment property values, there is an understandable concern that municipalities will favour higher end developments at the expense of such lower end developments as affordable housing.

These are the questions that require answers before the NDP opposition will be prepared to support community redevelopment levies as a municipal revenue option for Alberta municipalities.

Thanks.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29 are there any comments or questions on the member's statement?

If not, I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak on this bill. You know, I see that many of these areas are just an ability to let municipalities have some more tax room, and maybe that's a good thing. In reality, what this reflects is just the sheer need of municipalities to deal with the growing deficit problems that have been unloaded on them by the provincial government because of their lack of support for municipalities.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

You know, we see the community aggregate payment levy. It's going to be two bits a tonne, which is actually quite a bit – people don't think that's much – on gravel operators to help pay for roads that aren't being funded by the province. It's going to increase the cost of housing in new subdivisions. It's going to increase the costs of roads in rural areas and such by this levy, but in reality it's necessary because municipalities need this.

The community revitalization levy. It's an innovative and another way for communities to seek to pay for things that aren't being helped for them by the provincial government. These provisions will help municipalities encourage investment and redevelopment in specific districts that do need help. With provincial approval the municipality would maintain fixed property tax assessments for up to 20 years, limiting regular property taxes for school and municipal purposes from the area. However, as redevelopment occurs and assessed value of the property in the target area rises, a special levy would be collected on the increased property values. The revenue from this special levy would be put into a separate fund to repay the municipality for its infrastructure upgrades and its other redevelopment expenditures in the target area.

This proposal, also called tax increment financing, was brought forth by the mayor of Calgary, who wanted to employ this method to revitalize and redevelop Calgary's troubled East Village. Under the scheme the city of Calgary would borrow \$70 million to pay for infrastructure upgrades in the city's dilapidated east core. This will presumably encourage new development from which the taxes would pay the debt.

Tax increment financing has been widely used in the United States, and it has rejuvenated some of the worst neighbourhoods, particularly in Chicago. The province of Ontario is also looking at using tax increment financing to assist their municipalities with remediation costs of many brownfield properties.

4:10

This amendment is necessary because the MGA, the Municipal Government Act, has provisions in it that limit the amount of debt that municipal governments can incur. You know, I worked for a long time with Laurence Decore, and one of the great legacies for many years in the city of Edmonton was the fact that this city did have no debt. He was, I think, very innovative. The city of Edmonton won international awards for its debt policy and for its prudence in dealing with municipal financing and dealing with the growth of the city of Edmonton.

The necessity of many municipal areas to not finance because of their restrictions in financing in this area maybe has been a good

thing. Nobody likes increases in property taxes. As the Member for St. Albert especially underlined, it's a huge difficulty for many that are seniors. There were, you know, some further items raised in a member's statement by the Member for Calgary-Currie about how the tax system is pressuring seniors who are on fixed incomes, who cannot get increases in their incomes and are finding that they have to move out of their homes because of this tax pressure.

The need to I think look at some of these things is that problem of lack of support in terms of this provincial government for its municipalities. I believe that has to be increased in the near future.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29, any questions?

If nobody else has any questions, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to take much of the Assembly's time. Many of the points I wanted to raise have already been raised. I recognize the merit behind this bill, and I appreciate the fact that it's time to allow some flexibility and some autonomy for the municipal governments in this province to exercise the powers that they were elected to in making decisions locally, decisions that pertain to day-to-day activities, taxation: things that they were elected to do. Yes, maybe this is the time to try to decentralize and reduce or eliminate the power of the province over its municipalities.

Municipal governments are duly elected bodies. I don't view them as being inferior or, maybe, any less important than the provincial government, just the same way that we don't view a provincial government to be inferior or less important than the federal government. All three levels of government should ideally work together. There is one taxpayer. There is one customer or client that all three levels are catering to. So, yes, I sincerely support any measure that would allow co-operation between the three levels of government. The end result is to benefit the taxpayer, of course.

I appreciate that this bill was brought forward after consultation with the municipal associations from both urban and rural and also the Federation of Canadian Municipalities – so that adds the federal angle to it – but I should probably comment that consultation is not only with the people running the show, the people who are elected to be in council, like city councils, or the people who are MLAs sitting in the provincial Assembly, or MPs representing us federally. I think we should go to the grassroots and ask people what they think. Many people have commented on the issue with the market value assessments or the property values and property tax estimates. Many times we've heard that people do object to the estimates because they feel that they increase the value of the property on paper when in fact the property value itself did not. It actually either stayed the same or maybe even devalued with age and time.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie commented that market value assessments themselves have to be reassessed. Maybe we should look at a city-wide average instead of a street-by-street average. You know, maybe the house down the road from me is worth twice my house. That shouldn't mean that my house is more valuable than it is. Seniors are particularly affected, and I think we have to understand the problem, listen to them, and maybe act on it.

Also, the thing about the infrastructure debt, which was referenced many times. We do have roads which are crumbling. We have old buildings which need revamping and maintenance. We have hospitals and schools which need work. The infrastructure debt should not be delegated to the municipalities to find innovative ways to deal with it and then have the provincial government say: "Okay. It's your domain now. It's your turf. You decide what you want to charge. You decide what taxes you want to collect. We're out of

it.” Then people would look at them as the villain, or the bad guy. The province still has a paramount responsibility to support its municipalities and to come to their rescue when municipalities are having a difficult time justifying raising taxes and justifying collecting more from the taxpayer.

I’m an MLA, I’m an elected official, and I realize the difficulties faced by the municipalities. I trust that people sitting on city councils in Edmonton and Calgary and all the other major cities and even in the small towns and villages – the majority of those Reeves and mayors are responsible and decent people, and they wouldn’t just haphazardly and indiscriminately raise taxes for the fun of it. They’re faced with shortages and with deficits, and those are situations which they have to handle and deal with. They’re faced with tough decisions, but they still have to look to the provincial government for support and help. I know that maybe I shouldn’t tell them to rely too much on the government, but it’s still part of the formula, an integral part if we’re looking at this from a team approach. The provincial government is one key team player, the municipal governments are another, and then the federal government is the third one.

There’s also the thing about the community revitalization levy, which was mentioned two or three times this afternoon. The one area which I would like to comment on is that, basically, I would hate for it to be perceived or to be used as a subsidy to the developers. These people are typically well off, and they don’t need subsidies that were meant to be passed on to the end user, to the consumer or the taxpayer. A homeowner is paying \$1,200 a year for property taxes, and then we say: “Okay. We are eliminating the provincial component of your school tax levy, and it should stay with the municipal government.” It should not be passed on to the developer because, first, they don’t need it; second, it wasn’t meant to go to them. That’s maybe the homeowner in me that is speaking now, not the MLA in me.

Lastly, I think that a partnership has to be defined between the municipal governments of this province and the provincial government in that it’s not only money that we’re talking about. We need to sit at the table and say: “Okay. What are your problems? Which areas would you like us as the provincial government to intervene in? What else do you need from us?” By passing laws that just say, “Okay, it’s your responsibility now; you go and explain it to your citizens and your constituents,” doesn’t really display or portray the right image. Consultation has to continue. We might tell them: “Yes, go ahead. Charge all you want for taxes, but we’re still here when you need us.” We have to show them that.

In closing, I would emphasize that, yes, this is a good piece of legislation, but consultation has to extend to the average Albertan, not just the people in power on municipal councils. We have to explain to the end-user or the taxpayer that this is how much impact it’s going to have on you, this is how much of that tax that’s going to the provincial government, this is how much of it that’s staying in your city or your town, and this is how much of it that might be going to a developer or a landowner and provide that clarity and that information to the taxpayers so they’re at least comfortable with the amount of taxes that they’re paying.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:20

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise and speak to Bill 28. I want to say from the outset that I think there are aspects of this bill which just clean up a number of things,

which clarify exemptions to municipal taxes, which create a registry for linear property, and I think that’s going to be very helpful for municipalities in particular.

Linear property, of course, is an important point of contention for municipalities. Many private companies make a great deal of money by using rights-of-way and so on in municipalities, and I think it’s important that municipalities have a clear knowledge of the linear property that exists and the various rights-of-way. This will be helpful.

The community aggregate levy is a tax on gravel and sandpits based on the tonnage that’s taken out to a maximum of 25 cents a tonne, and of course that’ll be up to the municipalities, so that’s a positive.

The one issue that’s contentious or may create a controversy in this is the community revitalization levy. This has been tried in other places. It’s been tried in the United States, in Chicago and so on, and as my colleague from Edmonton-Calder indicated, it’s had mixed results. It’s essentially an additional levy or an additional tax that’s placed on the people that own property within a fixed area within the city, and then that revenue is used to improve the area. That’s going to be a mixed blessing.

The problem that I have with respect to this, Mr. Speaker, is that the government is allowing municipalities to make the decision and then reserving to themselves, that is to the provincial government, the authority to approve or not approve any bylaws that might exist. In the review of the law that I did, there is nothing to indicate that the people to whom the levy is applied have any ability to approve it or challenge it or prevent it from happening or, in fact, conversely, to initiate it themselves. I think that that’s the weakness here. It shouldn’t be imposed on people without giving them first an opportunity to express their views, at least input, and if not outright require their approval. I think this is a weakness in this particular section.

There are pros and cons to the idea of a community development levy, but it really smacks a little bit of Big Brother here, that between the city council and the provincial cabinet they will decide whether or not areas are redeveloped and whether or not the people in there actually have to make a contribution towards that. You know, the old rallying cry of the American Revolution was no taxation without representation, and maybe it applies here, Mr. Speaker. I think this bill could be significantly democratized if it required municipal councils to get the approval of the ratepayers within the area or approval of the residents within the area that is going to have the additional levy. If it did that, it would not be nearly as controversial.

Urban redevelopment is important, and it’s important that municipalities have tools to promote it, but it’s very much a two-edged sword. The important thing is that it should be focused on the improvement of communities rather than on the improvement of property values. The two aren’t exactly synonymous, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen some cases I think in the United States where these things have been initiated primarily in the interest of outside private developers. Expenditures are made, property values increase dramatically, the profits flow to the companies, to the developers, and people are displaced from the community because they can no longer afford to live there. So it can become a real tool for gentrification, and it can in fact transform communities quite radically. To have that power without the capacity of the community to say no I think is wrong. So I would hope that we’ll be able to deal with some amendments that would make this provision more democratic and still allow that tool to be in the hands of municipalities who want to use it.

I’ve been involved for many years in attempts to revitalize communities, whether in the Alberta Avenue-Norwood area or in the

Beverly area, and it really is a struggle. In my view, Mr. Speaker, it needs to be done by the local people working with their local small-business communities, and it needs to involve everyone. The city can be a partner in it, but you should have the community directly involved in those kinds of activities so that they can have a say in the future direction of their own community.

That's a way to go, I think, that's very positive, and it can increase property values, particularly along commercial strips. It can be very positive for small businesses. It can change the nature of the community, but it does so gradually. By moving out pawnshops and second-hand stores and getting a better variety of storefront businesses in the community, it can be extremely positive, and communities welcome that. But if all of a sudden you're coming into an area and tenants have moved out because the landlords have sold their land to a developer who wants to construct condos or some commercial development, then the results can be very negative for the people in the community.

Just to come back to my main objection to this, Mr. Speaker, those kinds of changes ought not to be forced on people in a community. The people need to have some control, and this bill doesn't give it to them. That's, I think, the fatal flaw in this particular area, and if it could be corrected through amendments, I think that it would be seen as something that's beneficial for all communities. Certainly as someone who represents older inner-city communities with older business strips which need revitalization, I would be very interested in supporting a bill like that, but if it's going to be something that takes control away from people and away from communities, it's not something I can in good conscience support. That will conclude my comments.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking with regard to Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, I think everyone recognizes the costs of doing business as a municipality. They're becoming more and more expensive, especially here in Alberta as we attract more and more people, so you have to put that infrastructure in place. We could take Fort McMurray as an example: just affordable housing. I'm not sure how this would apply with regard to Fort McMurray, to be able to designate areas, because in that particular case there are no slum areas or devalued areas. It's the opposite up in Fort McMurray. In fact, it is on fire, if I could use that term. Affordable housing, or at least being able to find affordable land – the development up there is at an unprecedented rate.

4:30

Here in the city the municipality had to borrow to be able to finance certain projects. I'm not sure if this particular bill would allow for that case, the fact that municipalities are not being supported by the government. It's costing more and more money to put certain pieces such as the ambulance authority, the fire department, as well as the police department in place. They need to be able to be supported not only by their local tax rate. I believe that. You can't continue to go to the single, only source, which was pointed out. You need to in fact be able to be supported by the government, and that is what we're talking about right now.

We had lunch the other day at the Shaw Conference Centre. It was a mac and cheese lunch. There were a number of government officials there as well as city councillors, and I find it odd that they

weren't aware of Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005. So I'm just wondering how much consultation did take place with regard to our elected officials and how much input was allowed. They were I guess caught off guard or not aware of some of the implications here which rested on them. I would just ask that all parties that were included should be at least given an opportunity to be able to have direct input there.

Those are just some of the comments that I have with regard to that, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions for the hon. member?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, would you like to close debate on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs?

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a second time]

Bill 26

Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of areas that I'd like to just go over with members in introduction to second reading of this.

One area is the area of notices of objection. These are some notices of objection that we're proposing the industry be required to file. It's aimed to help the province stay informed of contentious issues and help forecast corporate tax revenue. It does not impose an onerous burden on industry. It simply involves that they would copy the Alberta government on the federal notice. We're not requiring a separate notice; simply a copy of the notice that they would file with the federal government.

In this bill we are proposing some steps to encourage compliance. That would be thus: if a notice is not filed with the province, any refund interest payable on the amount resulting from the reassessment would be reduced by the lesser of either 5 per cent of the interest otherwise calculated to a maximum of \$10,000. These changes would come into effect on proclamation. I would ensure that industry and related stakeholders would be informed of these changes through publications and special notices before they took effect.

The other area of, I think, primary interest in this bill is the area of assessment against non arm's-length recipients. We're proposing changes that would allow assessments against any non arm's-length individual or business that receives corporate property at less than fair market value when the corporation disposing of the property is unable to meet its provincial tax obligations.

To give you an example of a situation where this might occur: a corporation sells land worth \$10,000 for \$1,000, for example, to a company or individual not at arm's length for the purpose of reducing company assets and therefore amounts available to pay against the tax obligation it owes. This will ensure that companies do not try to avoid tax by disposing of assets improperly. If assets are disposed of at fair market value to a non arm's-length or arm's-length recipient, of course this section wouldn't apply.

Mr. Speaker, the changes that are proposed to the Alberta Corporate Tax Act and the ABC Benefits Corporation Act facilitate the smooth running and effectiveness of the tax system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. I look forward to future debate on this bill, and at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 34
Insurance Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to move second reading of Bill 34, being the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005.

During the introduction of this legislation, I outlined that the government is following through with a commitment made as part of the automobile insurance reforms that went into effect last fall. This government also said that the legislation would need to be amended to allow public insurers from neighbouring provinces to enter Alberta's competitive auto insurance market. One key point that Alberta motorists have to understand. If public auto insurers decide to enter our province's auto insurance market, they will be forced to follow the same rules and regulations that are currently in place for private insurers in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us for second reading also outlines that insurance companies are not entitled to compensation for lost revenue resulting from the government's auto insurance reform amendments. When the reforms were being developed, the government clearly stated that any costs associated with the new system would be covered by the insurance industry. This amendment confirms that.

When the automobile insurance reforms were passed in December of 2003, they were designed for insurance on private passenger vehicles only. A proposed change within this bill will clearly indicate that the all-comers rule, which doesn't allow an insurance company to refuse insurance or cancel a policy, addresses insurance on private passenger vehicles only.

Bill 34, Mr. Speaker, also provides better protection for consumers. Last October a consumer dispute resolution mechanism was established. Consumers who disagree with how their premium for basic coverage has been calculated, who allege that they were refused coverage, or who had their policy cancelled have access to a three-step process for resolution.

The first step is for consumers to talk to their broker or agent. If they aren't satisfied, then the consumer can file a complaint with their insurer. A complaint liaison officer will review the case and issue a letter stating the company's final position. If the consumer is unsatisfied with that final position, the next step involves the General Insurance OmbudService, or GIO. Professional mediators will work with both sides in the dispute to reach a solution that is in the best interests of both parties in a fair, independent, and impartial environment. It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 34 states that every insurer with a licence to sell automobile insurance in Alberta must be a member of the GIO.

If the problem can't be resolved at that stage, the mediator will prepare a report suggesting nonbinding recommendations.

The third and final step in the process is for the consumer to apply to the Automobile Insurance Dispute Resolution Committee. This committee will review the case and attempt to resolve the dispute. If resolution is still not possible, it will either recommend that no further action be taken or refer the issue to an arbitrator. The arbitrator's decision will be binding.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 34 would also give the Minister of Finance the authority to place specific terms or conditions on the licences of insurance companies. These terms or conditions could be determined on a case-by-case basis and will provide for more effective regulation of the industry.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, another change would see the superintendent of

insurance have the authority to provide interpretative bulletins and guidelines on various aspects of the act. This is consistent with the practice in other jurisdictions.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to say that the government is following through on commitments related to the automobile insurance reforms and proposing changes that will provide better protection to consumers.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to wish you and all members of this Assembly a happy Easter, and I would now move to adjourn debate on Bill 34.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

Bill 6
Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to speak in Committee of the Whole on the Fair Trading Amendment Act. As I indicated in second reading, I will respond to questions raised during debate during second reading.

In regard to concerns raised on moving parts of the act into regulation, all areas in the act are being repealed and will be placed in the regulations. Full consultation will be done with all stakeholders prior to any changes being made to the regulations, and consultation will include industry, consumers, and government departments.

The Fair Trading Amendment Act will not be proclaimed until all applicable regulations are ready to be passed; therefore, there will be no gaps in protection for consumers. The information that a credit reporting agency can and can't include in its reports will be moved to regulation. Moving these provisions out of the act and into the regulations will provide flexibility to deal with future issues.

In addition, we have strengthened consumers' rights by requiring their express consent before their credit reports are assessed. Demanding that a reporting agency disclose a person's file to that person on request and disputing the accuracy or completeness of information in a person's file will both appear in the regulation.

Mr. Chairman, Government Services is co-chairing a national committee that is examining credit reporting legislation and looking to other jurisdictions for examples of best practices. It is expected that many of the committee's recommendations will enhance consumer protection as it relates to credit reporting, especially in the area of assisting consumers who have been victimized by identity theft.

In regard to receipts issued by collection agencies, the regulation will clarify that receipts are required for cash payments to a collection agency, and collection agencies will continue to be required to provide statements of accounts to debtors.

We have added failing to comply with other legislation as a reason to refuse to issue or remove or suspend or cancel a licence. This addresses situations where a person requires a certificate and/or must meet other requirements under other legislation that directly applies to the activity licensed under the Fair Trading Act. An example

would be that an automobile repair business licensed under the Fair Trading Act would also be required to have a journeyman mechanic licensed under the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act.

Regarding the provisions on property freeze orders, the director can freeze property but cannot dispose of it. Persons affected by a freeze order can apply to the courts to have it varied or cancelled. If property were to be sold, it would have to be done by a receiver who is accountable to the courts.

If there are any further questions from the hon. members during the committee stage, I undertake to respond to your questions at the next stage of the bill process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, had already spoken to Bill 6 in second reading, and back then I expressed my support for the intent and the merit behind Bill 6. Even privately I have communicated with the hon. government whip that we support the amendments in principle. However, now that we are at the committee stage, I would like to maybe request some points of clarification, some things that caught my eye. I appreciate his offer to address and respond to every question that is raised by the opposition. This is, again, a good sign.

First, there is section 4.1, which is in the proposed amendment that reads: "The Minister may make regulations respecting the establishment of minimum standards for specific types of business that are subject to this Act, without requiring them to be licensed." So maybe that's an area that I would like some clarification on. First, you know, what would be an example of a business that would be subject to the Act but would not be required to be licensed? I, again, being a layman here, and maybe when I explain it to other laymen out there: what's an example of a business that might fall under the authority of this act and be governed by it but then is not required to be licensed?

Maybe even the bigger picture would be that I am concerned that it puts too much power into the hands of the responsible minister. As a citizen I always question, you know, the amount of power that a cabinet minister would have because too much power is not a good thing. So maybe a point of clarification here.

Reading into the proposed amendments more, there is section 7.3(2), which again I need some clarification on. It reads:

If an agreement under a consumer transaction to which section 7 applies has been assigned, or if any right to payment under such a consumer transaction has been assigned, the liability of the person to whom it has been assigned is limited to the amount paid to that person by the consumer.

I honestly didn't understand what this meant, so again any clarification would be tremendously appreciated.

Moving on, there is section 13, which basically says:

Section 29(6) is amended by striking out "Housing and Consumer Affairs Division of the Department of Municipal Affairs" and substituting "consumer services division of the department whose Minister is responsible for this Act".

I read this at least twice, and then my impression is: why is it being offered so flexibly? If it traditionally was the Department of Municipal Affairs, why are we offering this flexibility so it can be freely moved from one ministry to another? Should it stay with one minister? Should we not know where it's supposed to stay? So again maybe a point of clarification there. It didn't make sense to offer it so loosely and say: whoever is the minister at the time, you know, this is where the correspondence should go.

Again moving on, section 18. I am questioning the impact of this change because the new wording leaves it open for this information to be included in the regulations, which is fine. The hon.

government whip indicated that they will not proclaim the law unless and only after all the parties have been consulted. That's fair, and I appreciate that. But the wording reduces the definition of credit information so it excludes occupation and employers and place of residence and, you know, other pieces of information. It allows the minister, again, to have control over this. I can't tell if this is better or worse till I see the regulations. So maybe if the sponsoring MLA would promise to show us the regulations as soon as possible, that would be tremendously appreciated.

4:50

Section 20, which is on page 11 of the proposed amendment, takes out the list of information an agency can and cannot include in the reports and, again, puts it into the regulations. So I have mentioned that already. I am not going to know how to feel about this till I see those regulations, and maybe then I can make up my mind whether it was a positive move or was a negative move.

Section 21 – and I mentioned this in my response during second reading – which appears on page 12, and then also section 23, which appears on page 14, are now being repealed, and the hon. member assured the House that maybe they will appear again in the regulations. I'm concerned that when section 46, at least, is repealed, there is nowhere else yet in the act or the amendment that requires a reporting agency to disclose to an individual or maybe to that individual's representative what's on his or her file. Again a point of clarity.

These regulations have to be courtproof, you know. So if we're working towards making this act better, we should allow those regulations to be challengeproof by not cancelling the essence that was actually in the old act. Usually amendments are meant to improve on pieces of legislation, not to make them weaker.

Similarly, with section 48, which is now being repealed, as proposed by section 23 in the amendment: is there anywhere else in the act or in the amendment or in the proposed regulations, which will soon follow, that allows an individual to dispute the information on his or her file? I am really sensitive to this because, you know, I feel that it's only fair to allow a person to dispute or contest the information that might be on his file. Typically, credit reports are meant to be long term, so a person has to be able to say, "This is not entirely true," or maybe offer a clarification or contest it outright and say: "This is not valid. This is wrong or maybe even old, and I have since fixed my credit rating." And it should reflect in their report.

Moving on to section 36. Section 36 in the amendment repeals section 113 in the old act, and I'm going to actually read what was in the old act so the people would follow, you know, now that it's being repealed, what it means. Section 113 reads:

Every collection agency must acknowledge the receipt of any money that the collection agency or the agency's collector or the employee of either of them collects or receives from a debtor for distribution to the debtor's creditors by means of receipts that meet the requirements of the regulations.

So, really, my question in plain English: would this mean that they don't have to issue receipts now for payments made? I am concerned. If there is a person who owes money – and we all know how much harassment and maybe abuse a person who owes money is subjected to to pay up sometimes – now that he is making a payment, we have to prove to him that here is the receipt for this payment.

So now this section is being repealed. I am just concerned for the average citizen, you know, who might be having some difficulty but then is trying really hard and honestly to rectify and remedy the situation. Why are we taking away this guarantee or this proof that he made a payment?

Section 37 in the amendment repeals sections 115 and 116 in the old act. Again, I would like to read from the old act to comment on this. Section 115(1) reads:

- (a) within 120 days after the end of its fiscal year [the collection agency must] provide the Director with a report of its financial affairs in the form established by the Director and signed by an auditor acceptable to the Director, and
- (b) provide the auditor with access to every book and record of the collection agency that, in the opinion of the auditor, is necessary to carry out the examination.

So why are we repealing this? Why are we allowing them to be less accountable?

Section 116(1), again reading from the old act:

- (h) make any personal call or telephone call for the purpose of demanding payment of a debt on any day except between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Again, this section is being repealed, which, I think, would open the door for more harassment, midnight or even later after that. Why are people asked to be subjected to this ill treatment?

- (i) directly or indirectly threaten or state an intention to proceed with any action for which the collection agency or the collector does not have lawful authority.

Again, we're removing this guarantee, which might open the door for threats which are not justified or not founded.

- (j) make telephone calls or personal calls of such nature or with such frequency as to constitute harassment of the debtor, the debtor's spouse or adult interdependent partner or any member of the debtor's family or household.

People are complaining as it is. So now we're removing this to allow them to face this more and more. Again, the hon. member might say, "Okay, well, this is going into the regulations." But why are we actually removing the meat from the act and putting this same meat into the regulations? It just doesn't make sense.

- (k) give any person, directly or indirectly, by implication or otherwise, any false or misleading information.

So now we remove this, which in essence tells them that it's all right to provide false or misleading information, unless again the hon. member would say, "Well, it's going to be in the regulations," forcing me to question again why it is being moved from the actual act into the regulations.

Moving on:

- (m) contact a debtor's employer, spouse or adult interdependent partner, relatives, neighbours or friends unless

and it provides these specific criteria. Again, this is being repealed. It doesn't make sense.

- (n) contact a debtor at the debtor's place of employment if the debtor
 - (i) requests the collection agency or the collector not to contact the debtor there,
 - (ii) makes reasonable arrangements to discuss the debt with the collection agency or collector, and
 - (iii) discusses the debt with the collection agency or collector in accordance with the arrangements.

I think this was worded to provide a means for, maybe, working things out, and now it's being removed, in essence allowing the collection agency to be on the back of the person owing the money without allowing them a civil way to deal with the problem.

- (o) discuss the debt of a debtor with any person except
 - (i) the debtor or creditor of that debt, or
 - (ii) for the purposes of obtaining information respecting the debtor.

So maybe again I'm thinking more with regard to privacy and the protection of personal information. This section is being repealed. It might end up in the regulations, like the hon. member suggested, but till then it shows that this information is not restricted or not controlled to the debtor and the creditor. Now it's available. More people can get access to it.

Moving on to section 44, which appears on page 27. It says that "section 127(b) is amended" mainly by adding the following after subclause (v): "fails to comply with any other legislation that may be applicable." I was listening to the hon. member explain in his introduction to Committee of the Whole that other legislation might be in place that might take possible precedence, or there is overlap. But who determines if the other legislation is applicable? Is there a list of what's deemed applicable? Again, maybe taking this back to how much authority and how much power the individual minister would have, I think maybe a consultative process should be implemented to allow for more direct input by people who are affected by this law.

5:00

Third reading in general is a positive move, and I think the government, like I mentioned before, should be encouraged to take this forward. I truly support most of what the bill is proposing, but it's just these little concerns, you know. I still fail to see the merit of moving the substance of the act from the act itself into the regulations, which is usually a licence to change these regulations behind closed doors and without real or significant interaction with the stakeholders. So I would urge the government to listen to these concerns and maybe offer clarifications whenever possible. Again, in essence we support the bill, but we just want it to be even better.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 6 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Hon. members, before I call the next bill before us, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this House a very successful businessman from Lethbridge and a community leader. Mark Switzer is with us today here in the members' gallery. Mark is an owner of a number of businesses and land in Lethbridge but is also very, very active in the community up to and including a great assistance to me in my association in Lethbridge-West. So, with that, I'd like to have all of the members provide Mark with the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Bill 20

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to address a few of the questions that came up yesterday during second reading of Bill 20. First, I can confirm that this bill is revenue-neutral. It serves to clarify existing administration.

Second, a question that was raised was whether we are excluding from the education credit any people under the age of 16 who are pursuing postsecondary education. The answer is generally no. If, for example, a 14- or 15-year-old person is brilliant, has completed high school and moved on to an accredited postsecondary institution, that person would be eligible for the credit. However, if a 14- or 15-year-old student in high school is taking a dance class for personal interest at a vocational school, for example, the person would not be eligible. The Canada Revenue Agency deems that to be personal interest and does not permit the education credit in such a case. I also want to point out that the education credit is being administered in the way we are proposing to amend the act so there will be no change in the administration.

With regard to section 25 these are purely housekeeping changes. Last year changes were made to the Corporate Tax Act that need to be in parallel in the Personal Income Tax Act. However, when the change was applied in parallel, a mistake was made. This change corrects the error. No definitions are changing, no policies, and no calculations.

Finally, a question about snowbirds and sunbirds was asked. The rules for part-year individuals deal with situations where individuals actually move into or out of Alberta; for example, emigrants or immigrants. Snowbirds and sunbirds do not typically lose their primary resident status. When they go on extended vacation, they typically remain a resident of the country they initially resided in. Consequently, in general the part-year resident rules will not apply to these individuals. As a result, this bill will generally not change the treatment of snowbirds or sunbirds.

The changes proposed in this amendment act will align the provincial act with its federal counterpart, prevent double taxation by ensuring tax credits are not unfairly denied, and clarify aspects of the Personal Income Tax Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to speak briefly. I know that the Official Opposition critic for this bill has already spoken in second and has expressed generally the support of the Official Opposition for this bill. We do note that it is technical and administrative in nature. The stakeholders that we consulted did not raise any concerns with this bill aside from those that have already been raised and, indeed, just addressed by one of the government members.

I personally am pleased to see the clarification around the restrictions with persons with disabilities tax legislation, which should improve access for individuals with a disability. I have a number of people living in Edmonton-Centre that have disabilities, often with mobility issues, so any relief that they are able to achieve is always welcome and often even clarification is very welcome.

The member just partially addressed not my specific question, but I think there is some confusion generated out of section 16(2) of the original act around the clarification that the individuals described there are attending designated educational postsecondary institutions and have attained the age of 16 years before the end of the year. I don't think that this is connected – but I'll look for clarification – to the issue that arose in the fall when the changes in the social assistance rates for individuals 16 and 17 were changed if they were attending an educational institution.

It most affected constituents of mine and an organization existing in my consistency, Terra, where we had teenage mothers who were attending special schools and were living on their own. Their funding from social assistance was cut off because through a glitch in things they were no longer eligible. I wrote a letter of protest, as

did many others, and indeed the organization of Terra worked closely and quickly with the minister.

I need to note that this has not been resolved, and we have now lost a full term. I think that that affects our larger society as a whole, that we would not have addressed that issue more quickly to be able to get those students back in school and continuing with their education. Here we had these young women who have now lost a full year of school, two terms in essence, because of this funding, and they were specifically cut off specific to their situation, which I think is very poor judgment on the part of the government. So I'm wondering if this section has anything to do with that and if that's how they're trying to fix it, but it looks like it has more to do with postsecondary.

So, as I say, we're understanding that this is largely housekeeping and administrative to catch up with changes that have happened in various tax laws. On behalf of the Official Opposition I would like to get the answers to the questions I've raised particularly before voting on this in third reading. We are happy to support it at this point in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?
5:10

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report bills 6 and 20.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 6 and Bill 20.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading
Bill 3
City of Lloydminster Act

Mr. VanderBurg: I move third reading of Bill 3, City of Lloydminster Act, on behalf of the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give

accolades for this particular bill and suggest it as an example of intergovernmental co-operation. As a result, I would like to recommend that there is a high school built right on the border shared by Alberta and Saskatchewan, the specialization which would be studying interprovincial arrangements, and that would be cost-shared of course. The other thing that I would like to suggest is that taxes from Saskatchewan be given to Alberta this year in '05, and in '06 we reciprocate.

So, really, I'm suggesting it's a wonderful example of intergovernmental co-operation, the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta, and I think that it clarifies things and certainly clarifies a lot of ambiguities.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne to close debate.

Mr. VanderBurg: I'd call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

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

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to the Easter break adjournment motion previously passed by this Assembly I would first of all like to extend very warm wishes for those who are celebrating Easter this weekend, and secondly, I would like to move that we now call it 5:30 and adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 4.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; pursuant to Government Motion 6 the Assembly adjourned at 5:15 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 4, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/04

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome back.

This past weekend one of the greatest men of the 20th century left us. Pope John Paul II had a profound influence on his church and our world. He was a messenger for peace, a friend of the oppressed, an advocate for freedom, and a pope who led. He was pastor to a world in need of hope and reconciliation of the faiths. His pontificate showed him to be a man of true greatness. He changed the world for the better. We have been touched by his love of all people.

In a moment of silent prayer, may I ask all to remember His Holiness Pope John Paul II and to offer a silent prayer in your own custom for his eternal salvation. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Hon. members, would you now please remain standing and join Paul Lorieau, who will lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to introduce to you and through you 15 seniors from the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency who are participating in the Pembina and Smithfield lodges' Westlock Foundation tour of the Legislature. With us today are Marilee Jespersen, Evelyn Calkins, Bernie and Doreen Forbes, Sarden Semenuk, Dorothy Baker, Jenny Sterling, Claude and Kathleen Simpson, Kay Netrovich, Hilda Penno, Viola Baxandall, Catherine Keith, Donna Barr, John Kormendy, Susan St. John, Bill and Muriel Kleinsroth. They are seated in the gallery this afternoon. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce two different groups to you today. I'm very excited to have actually two different school groups here. The first group is one of Alberta's brightest and best, and that is the Thorsby high school. They are led by a very brave teacher, Mr. Andy McKee, and I'd ask if these students would stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

I also have with me today, Mr. Speaker, another group of Alberta's brightest and best students from Warburg school, and they

are led by their teacher Mr. Blair Mailer and also parent helpers Mrs. Marilyn Mosicki and Mrs. Gail O'Neil. So I'll ask if this group in the members' gallery would also stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you another one of my favourite schools from the constituency of Edmonton-McClung. This particular one is the Rio Terrace elementary school, and today we have 20 students and two teachers who are on their tour of the Legislature. The first teacher is Mrs. Sara Wanner, and the second one is Miss Ann Claire Magnier. I particularly have a soft spot for this school as well because these students are wonderful, their parents are great, and these teachers are truly outstanding. I would ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly as well a family from Spruce Grove who are in the public gallery today to observe the proceedings. They are all very active New Democrats and strong supporters of social justice in Alberta. Barb and Ross Phillips are successful small-business people who run a market garden just north of Spruce Grove and are also champion dog breeders. With them is daughter Hayley Phillips, the NDP candidate for Edmonton-Spruce Grove in the last federal election, and she's currently a student at Concordia College. Finally, their other daughter Shannon Phillips is our NDP caucus communications coordinator. I would ask them to rise now, please, and receive the strong welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have two introductions today. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly some important guests who have a keen interest in the Smoke-free Places Act before the House today. These guests are representatives from the Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta, a coalition of 16 prominent health organizations looking to reduce tobacco use in Alberta, including the Canadian Cancer Society. I would ask Les Hagen, Rob Cunningham, and Susan Mide Kiss and their associates to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

It also gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a friend and a colleague from the Alberta Alliance Party, Eleanor Maroes, who has been appointed as the interim leader of the Alberta Alliance Party effective April 15 of this year. Eleanor began her political career with the Reform Party in 1989, serving on boards and as president of two Edmonton federal ridings. She has been president and deputy leader of the Alberta Alliance Party. I'd like to ask our honoured guest, Eleanor Maroes, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to

rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly two people. The first is Mr. Kahan Singh Virk. Mr. Virk is a solid contributor to Alberta soccer, 27 years of service with the Edmonton and District Soccer Association, a recreation achievement award winner, and has a long history of involvement in the soccer world from board of directors to the president of EDSA.

The second person is Mr. Laat Bhinder, who has been a community worker for many, many years. Mr. Bhinder is always helpful to new immigrants and Canadian citizens in counselling. He also publishes an Indo-Canadian business directory for their assistance. They are seated in the gallery. On behalf of the Assembly I request them to accept these two centennial 2005 medallion awards and ask them to please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you two-thirds of the Ferguson family, Laurie and son Jesse, who are friends and supporters from Hanna, Alberta. If they would rise, we will give them the usual welcome.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Confidentiality of Health Records

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 670,000 health records that were lost last month are another example of the Tory government fumbling health care reform. This government has failed to thoroughly safeguard the personal information of Albertans, and now we learn that there is more. A recent ruling by the B.C. Privacy Commissioner has indicated that section 215 of the United States PATRIOT Act gives the American government, including the FBI, access to Albertans' personal health information through IBM, the company this government hired to handle our health records. To the minister of health: given that the government chose an American company to handle this province's health records, how is it ensuring that American intelligence agencies do not have access to the personal information of Albertans without even asking permission?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say on the missing records – and I examined what those records have. They have the name, and they have the health care number. They don't have a personal address, and they don't have a social insurance number. They have gender.

I am not telling you that to dismiss the importance of this issue. We take it very seriously. We look after and are the custodian of those records in a very serious fashion. Those records, through the contractor that manages this information – that is, IBM – on behalf of government, were being microfiched because it was tombstone data; in other words, not addresses, but it's serious what was there.

The latter point that the member opposite addressed relative to the potential – and it's unconfirmed for me at this point – of American access to data through any agency or organization is unbeknownst to me, and it may be a federal matter.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Madam Minister. It's a bit shocking that she's not aware of this risk.

To the same minister: given that this government has exposed

Albertans to this invasion of their privacy, does she have any idea which American intelligence agencies are drilling into our private health records and what they would be using the information for?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, a very speculative question here, making a number of assumptions, leaping ahead. Would we, in fact, approach the federal Deputy Prime Minister with the same attack and assumption that this hon. member has just made? I am committed to looking into what is being managed, how our records are being managed. These records were being transported by our contractor through other subcontracts, in our best acknowledgement, by a contract that would not have permitted access to any other offshore or federal agency. So what has been supposed by this member in this allegation is something I know not to be true.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will table the ruling so that the minister can be informed.

The Speaker: No preambles, okay? Please.

Dr. Taft: Will the minister now direct Alberta's Privacy Commissioner to investigate the potential violation of Albertans' privacy under the U.S. PATRIOT Act?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Privacy Commissioner has been engaged from the point of our understanding that there was an issue with this entire missing tape. I can assure this Assembly, this House, that if there is cause to be concerned under the issues that have been raised by the member of the opposition, then that duly will happen. Our Privacy Commissioner does not need further direction on how to conduct his investigation. He is most capable of doing it.

The Speaker: The second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Joint Fire and Ambulance Services

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day, another Tory health care fiasco. This government's continuous mismanagement of ambulance services is beginning to show serious consequences. The city of Medicine Hat is now concerned that they may have to shut down fire halls because this ministry did not take into account that some municipalities have EMS services in place that include both fire and ambulance services. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister explain how the department overlooked the fact that in many municipalities the fire and ambulance services work together to provide emergency services?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously there was no oversight in terms of looking at how the services were provided. That was not the issue when we suspended the transfer to the regional health authorities and moved to discover what was happening. The issue was that the costs that were being ascribed for this year's budget were considerably higher than what had been attributed to the initial report and the initial findings of the report relative to governance and operations of the ambulance system, not addressing the fire department or any other EMS service. In fact, Medicine Hat and any other jurisdiction that has questions will have an opportunity through the committee on governance, policy, and standards to represent their own issues relative to that.

May I remind this Assembly that at least 300 municipalities this

year received \$55 million towards their ambulance operation, monies that weren't there previously.

Ms Blakeman: Seventy-seven didn't.

To the same minister: why didn't this government's pilot projects in Palliser and Peace country health regions take into account the joint fire and ambulance services model that municipalities have used successfully for years?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an attempt to pre-empt something that only began on April 1, a couple of days ago. On April 1 the discovery projects of this whole integration will take place, and allegations of things that aren't going well or that might not go well or weren't taken into account will be discovered during this period of integrating that service delivery in a collective fashion. I don't think people should be pre-empting it; I'm sorry.

Ms Blakeman: They don't have enough money to do it. Again to the same minister.

The Speaker: The preamble thing is something that I have to enforce. Would you co-operate, please.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: why didn't the department, since you had four years of study, clarify earlier that there would be no funding for joint ambulance and fire services so the municipalities could adjust their funding accordingly?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, the whole of the delivery system varied between a number of places. The issues that may have been raised by Medicine Hat will be not only discovered this year, but on Wednesday I'm meeting with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association with at least one or two other municipal leaders. We will further converse on issues that they are raising already relative to either the pilot or other provision of ambulance service.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that what the health authorities' intent was with the original report was to help co-ordinate an efficient, cost-effective ambulance service delivery system, and in the best interest of the patient that's what we still intend to do.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mount Royal College

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One month ago the Minister of Advanced Education rose during question period and confirmed that Mount Royal College in Calgary needs to have an answer to its request for university status by early May and promised to "try and accomplish both the full and complete discussion and their timeline if at all possible." To the minister. My constituents are eager to know: is he going to make the deadline?

1:50

Mr. Hancock: I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. What I had indicated was not that they needed a decision by then but that they would desire to have one by then so that they could do the appropriate planning for programs to put it in place for the 2006 year. In response to the question at that time I also indicated that the decision as to whether or not Mount Royal transitioned to a university had to be made in the context of the overall postsecondary system, and we had promised a review of that system. That review will be comprehensive, will involve all the stakeholders, and will take a little bit more time than from now till May 1.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, given that people at the college were given to understand last week that the decision is now likely to be delayed until this fall and given the minister's answer, I'm wondering: is the minister suggesting that he's about to announce a commission on postsecondary education similar to the Learning Commission for K to 12?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will be meeting with representatives from the college this week, in fact, and discussing further the process that will be undertaken both in terms of the comprehensive review and in terms specifically of the Mount Royal decision and how that fits into the process. I will not be announcing a postsecondary learning commission, but we certainly will be having a process of looking at our postsecondary system in this province, the advanced education system in this province, how people access opportunities to advance their education in this province. It will involve a discussion with Albertans and with all the stakeholders.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. Mr. Speaker, given that the government has had this file on their desk for about two years now, can the minister assure us that the decision, whenever he makes it, will be based on the merits of the proposal and not on the mood of anti-Calgaryism apparent in some quarters of the Conservative caucus?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, one thing I can assure this hon. member – he obviously hasn't been here for very long or he would know – is that there is no anti-Calgaryism in this caucus. This government prides itself on serving all Albertans well and taking into context and making decisions in the interests of all Albertans, not the parochial interest of any particular area and particularly not the parochial interest that's been expressed by this member for his particular corner of the world.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Missing Health Records

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, personal health records containing current data on 670,000 Albertans may well have fallen into the hands of parties unknown who may be using this information to commit crimes like identity theft. The tapes containing these health records went missing over three weeks ago, yet this Tory government tried to keep things quiet, and the government only got caught thanks to a news media leak. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that a senior member of the Edmonton Police Service has publicly said that these records could be used for purposes such as identity theft, why did the minister fail to report the matter to the police for investigation?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding, when I first heard about it, that the reason it had been in fact transferred to the responsibility of the Privacy Commissioner was that there was not yet any concern that that tape may not have been still in part of the stream or system of delivery, that IBM may not have had it, that the subcontractor may have had it. There was a search that was being conducted.

The first alert that it was missing was in fact forwarded to the Privacy Commissioner, and we will await his recommendations. If, in fact, there is a need for police involvement or any other kind of review, then we'll do that, but there was not a supposition made that there was anything beyond following up on the privacy and making

that early alert, getting that investigation under way, and leaving ourselves open to expanding that investigation if necessary.

On another point . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, we'll go on. I'm sure we'll have a supplement.

The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How can the minister claim that there is no need to report this matter to the police for investigation when she ought to have known that any delay in reporting possible crime gives the bad guys a better chance of covering their tracks?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did not say that we had made a decision not to give it to the police or to turn it over to the Solicitor General. What I did say was that it was immediately forwarded to the Privacy Commissioner, and if there is a view that this investigation should be expanded – there was never any intent to keep this from public information or from the media or from anybody else. There was a need to identify what happened, what occurrence, the events that took place, and whether or not that tape was actually in the government's possession through one of the subcontractors. That's how it started.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Premier. Given at least three serious privacy breaches in less than a year, why is the government failing in its duty to safeguard the personal information of Albertans from those bent on stealing people's identities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we are safeguarding as best we possibly can the private information of all citizens. As much as I hate to say it – and it does happen in society – those with a criminal mind will find a way to undermine the system. When a criminal mind is at work, that's when the Solicitor General will come into play, and that's when the police will come into play.

Now, the only supposition of a criminal mind here has been raised by the hon. member of the ND opposition. He has created this suspicion. To my knowledge there has been no criminal involvement. If there is criminal involvement, if people commit a crime, if someone shoots someone or someone robs a bank or if someone breaks the law, the police will be in there like a dirty shirt, Mr. Speaker. But they are not going to act on the suppositions of the NDs. I'll tell you that for sure.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Definition of Marriage

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents in Peace River are closely watching the progress of the federal government's Bill C-38, which proposes to legalize same-sex marriage in Canada. They continue to express their support for Alberta to maintain its position of supporting the traditional definition of marriage in this province. My first question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update Albertans on the government's policy with respect to maintaining the traditional definition of marriage in the province?

Mr. Klein: Well, I can tell you that the whole issue of the traditional definition of marriage, TDM, was discussed at A and P, Agenda and

Priorities, later at cabinet, and later at caucus today, and there was a good, lively discussion. First, I can tell you that this government strongly reaffirmed its support for the traditional definition of marriage; that is, that marriage is between a man and a woman. Mr. Speaker, I know that that is contrary to the position of the opposition Liberals and NDs. I know that that is contrary to their position because they will stand up and say: we support changing the traditional definition of marriage.

Second, I can advise that no legislative action will be taken at this time pending developments at the federal level regarding legislation that the Liberal government may introduce. Well, it has introduced it, but it may pass it. It doesn't have to. That is if the Liberal government survives, which is a question.

There's a third point.

The Speaker: Okay. Well, we'll probably get it in the supplementary.

The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: I'm afraid not, Mr. Speaker. My first and only supplemental is to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Given the Premier's answer, in the event of a legal challenge to Alberta's Marriage Act how will the government of Alberta respond?

Mr. Stevens: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, I can speak as to the current situation in Alberta, and that is that the common law in Alberta has always recognized marriage in the traditional sense as a union between a man and a woman. It is our intention to oppose any court application through the courts that would change or purport to change that definition.

The Speaker: Did the hon. Premier want to supplement the hon. minister's answer?

Mr. Klein: I don't mind supplementing. I can tell the hon. Member for Peace River that the Minister of Justice and Attorney General will be canvassing members of caucus to ensure that while we await developments at the federal level, all our options will be clearly investigated.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

2:00 Fort McMurray Infrastructure Needs

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While communities throughout Alberta are suffering from a provincial government infrastructure deficit in excess of \$8 billion, this neglect has reached intolerable proportions in Fort McMurray. The sewage treatment centre, hospital, and schools are literally bursting at the seams. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier, in recognition of Fort McMurray's acute infrastructure deficiency, provide immediate financing for the necessary upgrades to the sewage treatment facility to avert a health care crisis?

Mr. Klein: I don't know where we are relative to sewage treatment. As the hon. member points out, and rightly so, there are a number of infrastructure pressures being brought to bear on Fort McMurray with an anticipated \$97 billion worth of new construction. I say "anticipated" because some of it is already under way, and some of it will take place down the road.

Relative to infrastructure – I see the hon. minister is not with us.

I'm sorry. As the hon. minister is not here to reply, I'll have the MLA for the area supplement.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we've been working together. We have a cabinet committee that the Premier has formulated. The Minister of Energy as well as the members for Vermilion-Lloydminster and Bonnyville-Cold Lake, the Minister of Infrastructure, and the Minister of Finance are on that. In fact, tonight I invite people to come. There's a standing policy committee tonight where a business case is being brought forward in terms of a framework that can work in terms of municipalities that are being faced with this \$97 billion that has been mentioned relative to dealing with something that one size doesn't fit all. Truly, if every Alberta city had \$97 billion taking place – it's showing that the Alberta advantage really is working, and we want to do it right.

Mr. Chase: It seems that in Fort McMurray it's going down the sewers.

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

Mr. Chase: Will the Premier commit to providing the necessary ongoing infrastructure funding that Fort McMurray has requested?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the hon. minister, although he is not the minister directly responsible, has pointed out that there is a meeting tonight involving all of the players relative to how to address the infrastructure needs. But I can tell you that in a number of areas – and I don't know about sewage in particular – the infrastructure problems are already being addressed. I know that the department of infrastructure is addressing the problem of transportation with the upgrades of highways 63 and 881. I know that the department of seniors has worked with industry to accommodate affordable housing in the area.

Mr. Speaker, we are working hand in glove with the industry to address these infrastructure problems, and I would strongly suggest that the hon. member take some time at supper and attend the meeting.

The Speaker: There was a point of order raised as well.
The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Along the housing concerns, how will the Premier guarantee that teachers and health care workers are able to find or afford housing in Fort McMurray?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out – and this is what's so frustrating because they do not listen. They do not listen. They just, you know, want to go like this all the time. They don't listen. I just said that the hon. minister of seniors has been working with industry to address the housing problem and make available land for affordable housing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has recently become apparent that the federal Liberal government is trying to sneak its Kyoto plan into effect by amending the Canadian Environmental Protection Act as part of its budget legislation. If passed, this amendment could be devastating to the Alberta economy, not to

mention my constituents of Drayton Valley-Calmar. My questions are for the Minister of Environment. What is Alberta's position on this approach?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in this Assembly to the members, we had meetings last week in Ottawa with the federal Minister of the Environment, the federal Natural Resources minister, myself, and the Minister of Energy from Alberta. I want to say that our three-hour meeting was very instructive in terms of Alberta's position. Without question the province of Alberta has been a leader in Canada in terms of what we have done. We have the only piece of legislation that was freely debated in this Legislative Assembly. Our encouragement to the folks in Ottawa is, number one, that the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the act that is under the budget, cloaked in the budget, is not the right way to go. That was our message. It was clear, concise, and asked them to follow Alberta's leadership on this important environmental matter.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: well, then, what will the Alberta government do to protect our industry and economy if they succeed in passing the budget with this amendment?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, Albertans care about the environment, as does every single member of this Assembly. We want a plan like Alberta's that makes good sense, s-e-n-s-e and c-e-n-t-s, where we can marry together environmental principles and economic principles in a way that makes good sense in helping the environment and at the same time not jeopardizing the economy. We have taken that balanced approach. We have freely debated it in this House. We're encouraging the federal government to do the same.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this could cost millions, what can Alberta do to provide industry with the certainty it needs to minimize its costs around reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, at the COP 10 in Argentina at Christmastime I had an opportunity to present a technology intervention. We want to mitigate uncertainty not only just to industry but to all Albertans in terms of what we're looking for, and I know that clearly the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers has indicated to the Minister of Energy that they want certainty like Alberta has provided. I think what is so important is that the technology in renewable resources that we're looking for in the future is the way to go, where we do not want one single cent from Canada, from Alberta to leave this country or this province to go to another country to buy a piece of paper called a carbon credit when we want it invested right here in Alberta universities.

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

Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago and \$3 million ago the government of Alberta announced a consultation process to help with land development issues between First Nation bands and oil field contractors. This agreement has yet to be put in

place, and oil companies continue to develop in disputed areas without first consulting First Nation peoples. To the Premier: why was the Lubicon Lake band not consulted about oil and gas activity on disputed Crown land in their area?

Mr. Klein: I don't know that to be true or not, but I will take the matter under advisement, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. McClellan: Ron can answer it.

Mr. Klein: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I'm advised that the Attorney General and Justice minister may be able to provide an answer.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this particular case negotiations involving the Lubicon were last held some many months ago. I believe it was 15 to 18 months ago. Negotiations relative to the Lubicon are the responsibility of the federal government. If we are asked to participate, we do participate, and that is the current status of the matter.

Dr. Swann: Again to the Premier: why has the government not completed the consultation and report in its commitment of 2002?

Mr. Klein: Again, I don't know if the allegations are true, but I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, at this particular point in time there is a consultation policy that is being reviewed. It's currently in the final round of focus group meetings with the First Nations and the industry.

As it relates to the Lubicon matter, Mr. Speaker, I can advise you that the negotiations did not, according to the information that I have received, involve any matter relative to the lands where these proposed oil wells are to go forward. In any event, before oil companies can drill, they have to go to the EUB and receive approval. That particular matter, of course, is under the auspices of the Minister of Energy, and he may wish to supplement.

2:10

Dr. Swann: Again to the Premier: will your government stop development in the Lubicon Lake area until a full consultation with native groups has been completed?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again, I don't know the situation relative to the Lubicon, but I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Stevens: Well, as I indicated, Mr. Speaker, the consultation process per se is in the final stages of approval.

With respect to the issue that the Lubicon have advanced, it is not with respect to lands that have been the subject of any discussion of potential settlement. That is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about some other lands. There is, to the information that I have received, absolutely no basis relative to the claim that there is some special protection associated with these lands. In any event, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the previous answer, the oil companies do have to make application to the EUB, and the Lubicon can make their case at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Attempted Child Abductions

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents and children in northeast Calgary, primarily in the community of Abbeydale, are frightened because of several attempted abductions that have recently taken place. These attempts have occurred while the children have been travelling to and from school. Many parents are keeping their children inside and not allowing them to walk to school for fear of the next attempt. My first question is to the hon. Solicitor General. What actions are the Police Service and the ministry taking to make sure that the individuals responsible are apprehended as soon as possible, before they are able to successfully abduct one of our children?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to assure the member that these types of incidents are taken very seriously by every police agency in the province and as well by every parent in this province. I as well want to assure the member that the Calgary Police Service has committed five officers to work on this case. They've received over 200 tips from the public so far. They are investigating each one of those tips that are coming in. As well, they have a composite sketch of the perpetrator, that has been provided to them by two of the young witnesses.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to advise you, though, that on this case as on other cases throughout the province of this type or nature, the policing agencies and communities work together in providing information and/or intelligence with regard to similar incidents that may have happened in another location in the province. So that information is there. The police agencies work together, and we hope to see this resolved in the near future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the Minister of Government Services. Given that the children have been able to provide a very clear description of the vehicle that has been used during these attempts, could a vehicle registration database be used to assist the police in tracking down these persons?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the registry could be used. The more information, of course, that we have, the better. But the police forces have access to that registry at any time. As the hon. Solicitor General has indicated, there are a lot of tips already. The more that we get, the better, even if it's just the colour, the year, the make, any of those kinds of things that we know about the vehicle. Even a partial licence plate is of a great deal of assistance. Of course, it's somewhat limited with what we can do, but certainly every vehicle, the colour of it, the year of it, the make are all registered. So as we put it together, we possibly could get a better lead.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Solicitor General. Given that these attempts are occurring near schools, is there anything that can be done with the schools to increase the safety of our schoolchildren?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the Calgary Police Service works in conjunction and in partnership with the Calgary board of education security co-ordinator with regard to this case and throughout the year as well. With incidents of this nature or other serious incidents they work together to determine an effective course of action as well as effective courses of crime prevention within their community. So there is a close working relationship between the police service and the board of education as well as the other areas within the police service regarding the community liaison officers, the school resource officers, and other investigators throughout the police service.

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

Problem Gambling

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week at a conference sponsored by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute, known as AGRI, some rather startling figures regarding problem gaming were revealed. According to the AGRI study, from 30 to 40 per cent of Alberta's gambling revenue comes from problem gamblers, who themselves constitute just 5 per cent of all gamblers. My questions are for the Minister of Gaming. Does the government accept this study as accurate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was also at the conference and heard the report that was given; however, we've been unable to this point to get a copy of that particular study. We do know that a couple of years ago – actually, I think it was in 2003 – the same research institute did a study and came up at that time with a figure of 30 per cent as opposed to 39, which was reported last week. We also know that that number is consistent with other jurisdictions across Canada, so it's not that Alberta is out of line with other jurisdictions.

We are addressing the problem of problem gamblers. We take it very seriously. Just in the past year we started a new division in Alberta Gaming called the social responsibility division, and their sole task is to work with AADAC, to work with problem gamblers. We made a lot of changes to the displays on VLTs, et cetera. So we are hopefully addressing the situation.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government still has not made good on its 1 and a half million dollar commitment to AGRI for last year's budget, why is the government dragging its heels over the continued funding of this world-class research organization?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Yes. No question that it is a world-class organization – we heard that many times at the conference on the weekend – recognized by people from Australia, people from the United States, people from eastern Canada.

On the question of the budget we'll have to wait for a couple of weeks to see how they make out in this year's budget. The contract with that institute is up for renewal, and that is being renegotiated as we speak.

Mr. Tougas: My final question, Mr. Speaker: will the minister assure this Assembly that the government will not interfere with the independent and arm's-length research done by the AGRI?

Mr. Graydon: Well, that's a very easy promise to make. We will certainly not interfere with the results of any investigations that are done or any research that is done. I do believe we have a responsibility – we're funding that group – to ask what we want researched, but as far as the results that they come up with, there'll be absolutely no political interference in those results.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Securities Commission

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has known for over a year about serious allegations of wrongdoing at the Alberta Securities Commission. In a January 9, 2004, letter a former ASC enforcement director told the government what had long been suspected; namely, that there is a two-tiered regulatory regime with one set of rules for normal Albertans and another set for insiders and the powerful. The letter further warned that a failure to act on these serious allegations would bring Alberta securities laws into disrepute if not open ridicule. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Why has the government for the past 15 months been covering up serious allegations of wrongdoing at the Alberta Securities Commission?

2:20

Mrs. McClellan: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd say that one of the most serious allegations is the one that this government has been covering up anything at the Securities Commission. That's absolutely incorrect and untrue.

Mr. Speaker, when the first issue was raised, there was a review done, and we were unable to find any evidence strong enough or in any way to carry this forward.

Secondly, when this surfaced most recently, I made it clear that certainly I couldn't and that I didn't think the commission could react to rumours, but I indicated that if we have a complaint that is signed or brought forward by someone in an appropriate manner, it would be dealt with. Well, indeed, that happened. The week before last, you will recall, Mr. Speaker, I tabled the letter that I wrote to the commission, I tabled the response from the commission, and I told them that I expected a report in short days and, in fact, have that now.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the point I'd like to make is this. Given that small investors have to have faith in the regulatory system, why has the government failed to protect the small Alberta investors by not telling them over the 15 months of serious allegations of favouritism and lax enforcement at the highest levels of the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat it one more time. That was investigated last year. It was investigated, and the allegations could not be substantiated, and they have been again investigated by an independent party that was brought in by the Securities Commission to review this.

I will say this. I have received the information. It is subject to solicitor-client privilege, so I cannot release to you the report, but I will provide you with what the report indicates on what you are raising because this is a very serious allegation, that there are improprieties on the regulatory side. The report indicates that the enforcement policies . . .

The Speaker: I'm sorry, but we're trying to maintain a 45-second rule, back and forth.

The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, we'll give her the opportunity. When will this report be released, and could she continue giving us an idea of what it's saying then?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just indicated, first of all, that the report has been provided through my deputy and the information to me. It has been provided on the basis of solicitor-client privilege, and I think that's very appropriate for the people who are involved in this report, who came forward with their concerns, but I can share with you what the report indicates.

The report indicates that the enforcement policies of the Alberta Securities Commission have been applied and continue to be applied consistently and fairly and with an even hand, and I think that's what's important. I think that's what this member wants to know, I think that's what the Official Opposition wanted to know with questions that were directed in the last week of the sitting, and that's what the investors in this province want to know. Today they know that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier last week the federal government announced a \$1 billion farm aid package, aid that was directed at more than just the cattle producers this time but also for the grain, hay, and oilseed producers, who've also seen their input costs grow at a staggering rate as well as the extremely low commodity prices. The federal government encouraged the provinces and territories to participate in this program, contributing the historical 40 per cent provincial share over and above the federal contribution. My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Given that the Alberta government has been quite clear they would not participate in the federal program, what are we going to do provincially to address the depressed grain, hay, and oilseed prices?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed true that our grain producers and really our rural community are kind of experiencing the perfect storm, if you will, of low commodity prices, a rising Canadian dollar, higher input costs. It really is a national challenge as opposed to a provincial challenge. We're looking for long-term solutions as well as some short-term relief.

Certainly, under the ag policy framework that's where we're headed with the CAIS program. It's really two components. One is production insurance; one is the CAIS program. Indeed, with the CAIS program for the 2004 advances, Mr. Speaker, we've already kicked out a little over \$260 million to get those dollars out into the producers' hands. We are looking at some other things that we can do with the CAIS program to ensure that that cash flow is out there.

Mr. Marz: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will future income support be channelled through the often confusing Canadian agricultural income stabilization program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the hon. member makes a good point. The CAIS program is under review. The ministers from across Canada are all going to be meeting to discuss how we might make that program a little more responsive for producers. I believe as do the other provincial ministers that CAIS is the program for the future, and I think I can safely say that after a little bit of tweaking, we're going to be using that program a lot more in the future. I would encourage producers to look to the program as their basic risk management program for the future in our agriculture community.

Mr. Marz: Well, given that some producers have reported to me that they've still not received their 2003 payments through that program, what is the minister doing to accelerate that process?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of complaints on that program with regard to getting the payments out. As I've said in the House, we've had a fairly large influx of applications all at one particular time. I think we're working our way through that, and the indications from AFSC, or the group that handles the CAIS program for us, is that producers will start to see a lot of those cheques coming out this week and early into the next week. We are working to make the program easier to understand, easier to apply for, and more responsive to the producers. Like any new program we're going to have some bumps in the road, but given that the program is going to be I think the basic risk management tool for our producers into the future, we have to get over these bumps in the road, and then the program will be responsive.

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

TransAlta Utilities

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Mr. Jim Dinning, the current front-runner in the Progressive Conservative leadership race, was a vice-president of TransAlta – [interjections] some may laugh – this government sat silent while that company on occasion charged Albertans 50 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity that cost less than a penny per kilowatt hour to produce. The government continued their silence when the EUB found that TransAlta's pricing strategies were unfairly overcharging Alberta consumers for power. My first question is to the Premier. Why did this Progressive Conservative government allow TransAlta to overcharge consumers for their power?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'll respond to the political part of the preamble. I don't know if Mr. Dinning is the front-runner or not. My job is not open, for one thing.

With respect to the second part of the preamble, the actual question, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there are procedures in place and certainly control mechanisms, the market surveillance administrator being one of them. There is also the Energy and Utilities Board. All of these groups do act to protect consumers and to see that they are charged fairly.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier:

why did the Progressive Conservative government allow TransAlta to acquire over 700 megawatts of hydrogenerating capacity in one giant power purchase arrangement giveaway instead of separating the hydro capacity generating units so they could be sold separately, as was suggested to the EUB by the industry?

Mr. Klein: Again I'll have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: Minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those power purchase arrangements were put out in an open auction, and clearly they had the opportunity along with anybody else to bid, and they were the recipients and were awarded some of those contracts.*

2:30

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: given that this Progressive Conservative government was warned in 1999 that large generation blocks of electricity could result in market power abuses and Power Pool increases of 200 to 300 per cent, why did this Progressive Conservative government give TransAlta over 700 megawatts of hydro capacity for next to nothing?

Mr. Klein: Well, I don't know that to be true, Mr. Speaker, but I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it's easy to make allegations. TransAlta or other companies may charge beyond what he said was related to cost. The real fact was that when we went through deregulation, it had much to do with supply and demand. During that deregulation period there was quite a shortage of power. One of the great successes has been that we have had over 3,300 megawatts of new generation come on, and no one's bemoaning the fact now that TransAlta is actually not even recovering their costs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

EPCOR Energy Bills

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For months my constituents and all Albertans being served by EPCOR/Fortis have received monthly bills that have had energy and delivery charges for different periods. I've heard that the Department of Energy is working towards a solution. To the Minister of Energy: has your department found a way to resolve this confusing issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member had mentioned, in the EPCOR/Fortis area of Alberta one of the improvements that has been made was to ensure that the energy and delivery chargers coincide their billing periods to make sure that the bills were more understandable and transparent to the customers. In that regard, there is going to be an alignment of that in the EPCOR/Fortis area. We've delayed that from April 1 to July 1 to help facilitate consumers at a low charging period, when the electricity usage would be lower, so that their bills would be less impacted.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you. That's great news. But given that this regulation will cause some financial hardship to many of those on fixed income, will you advise the utility companies to be flexible during the months that these new, aligned bills arrive?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that regard, I think that it is very important that the companies – and we have spoken to the companies in particular – work very closely with those customers. A number of them will be charged additional dollars for the catch-up period. Therefore, if there are problems in that regard, we will certainly work very closely with Albertans to ensure that it's fairly implemented.

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, finally, to the Minister of Government Services: given that our phones will once again light up with calls from constituents that do not understand this alignment, what will your department do through the utility advocate's office to help?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, we've been talking to EPCOR because, of course, they're the folks that generate the bill, and it's our understanding that already in the March bill there will be an insert that will give a lot of information as to what has happened. We will be also trying to get the message out that this is going to be a one-time thing. In fact, it will make it much easier to follow exactly what is happening with your energy costs when you relate both the transmission and the energy cost on one bill as opposed to the way it is now, where you can't follow because they're on different days. Quite frankly, it'll reflect more closely exactly what the costs are.

head:

Recognitions

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds I'll call upon the first of seven members to participate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Pope John Paul II

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The world today is a much emptier place. Humanity has lost an ambassador of peace and hope, over a billion Roman Catholics have lost our spiritual leader, Poland has lost its favourite son, the Vatican has lost a dignified statesman, and Canada has lost a friend. All of these losses came about with the passing of one great person: Karol Wojtyla, better known as John Paul II.

Mr. Speaker, the Holy Father's pontificate was filled with many accomplishments of historical magnitude. He was the first non-Italian pope in four centuries, was the third longest serving pope in over 2,000 years, he contributed to the collapse of the Iron Curtain, he was the most-travelled pope, and he was the first pontiff to enter a synagogue and establish relations with other world faiths. But perhaps most importantly, he was a man of strong moral principles who challenged all humanity to self-examine its conduct.

Mr. Speaker, Karol Wojtyla has left this world a better place, and on behalf of the Alberta Roman Catholic community I thank him for that.

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

Innisfail Meats/Mad Butcher

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to congratulate Innisfail Meats on launching their new brand name, the Mad Butcher, and on receiving two provincial awards for 2005. The Mad Butcher, located in Innisfail, is a great source of pride for the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

The Mad Butcher, which distributes its products province-wide, has been presented with the 2005 grand aggregate award for the best

*See p. 492, left col., para. 5

overall sausage at the Alberta Food Processors Association convention at Kananaskis and the best overall sausage at the Alberta Pork Congress specialty meats challenge held in Red Deer.

The owner of the Mad Butcher, Ron Burndred, credits the work of his 40 staff members, including several meat cutters, the deli staff, and two master sausage makers, for winning the awards. The Mad Butcher gives us another Alberta example of what can be accomplished when entrepreneurs are free to pursue their dreams.

I would like to ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Innisfail Meats, or the Mad Butcher, for its outstanding accomplishments.

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

U of A Golden Bears Hockey Team

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I attended one of the most exciting, well-played hockey games I've ever seen. I'm speaking of the championship game of the 2005 Telus University Cup, won by our University of Alberta Golden Bears.

University hockey has been a part of this province for 97 of Alberta's 100 years, starting at the University of Alberta in 1908. You might say that the team, the university, and the province have all grown up together. Edmonton and Alberta were proud to host the Telus Cup this centennial year and were even more proud to see our own team take home the trophy for a record 11th time.

The NHL lockout may have denied hockey fans a professional game, but more fans turned to the university game and gave our Golden Bears the attention and fan support they so richly deserve. They brought us all the skill and adrenaline of hockey and played only for the love of the sport, pride of the team, and honour of the university. And a game does not get much more exciting than a tie-making goal with 23 seconds left in the third period and a winning goal in overtime.

On behalf of all Alberta hockey fans, University of Alberta alumni, and this Assembly I congratulate coach Rob Daum and the University of Alberta Golden Bears on their 2005 Telus University Cup.

The Speaker: Well, I certainly hope that the Assembly will not censure me for what I'm going to say, but the hon. member is absolutely correct: that's the best hockey game I've seen in the Edmonton area in 15 years.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Immigrants of Distinction Awards

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society held their annual immigrants of distinction awards. The theme this year was A Century of Dreams, honouring 100 years of immigration to Alberta. The finalists and award recipients are outstanding immigrants who not only have achieved amazingly by themselves but have brought pride to Alberta and Canada in the world scene.

Honours in art and culture went to Alina Dabrowska from Poland, Karen Kang from Korea, and Myken Woods from Holland. Honours in community services went to Marichu Antonio from the Philippines, Dr. K.W. Chang from Malaysia, and Dinesh Dattani from Uganda. Honours in business went to Gita Boyd from Guyana and Abed Itani from Lebanon. Honours in distinguished professional went to Dr. Farideh Jalilvand from Iran, Dr. Daniel Lai from Hong Kong, and Dr. Adam Moscovitch from Romania.

I would like to ask the Assembly to join me in congratulating these outstanding Albertans.

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

2:40

Sandy McCallum

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an exceptional woman from my constituency. Sandy McCallum of Beaumont is competing in the Desert Grand Slam, which is a gruelling series of three marathons covering over 800 kilometres through the Sahara Desert. Sandy will be the first Canadian to attempt this feat, and on behalf of this House and all Albertans I would wish her great success.

Thank you.

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

Pope John Paul II

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend thousands of Catholics in Alberta along with the world mourned the passing of Pope John Paul II, the Catholic Church's spiritual leader for 26 years.

John Paul II will forever be remembered as the pilgrim pope, a leader who ventured beyond the confines of the Vatican to embrace the world with a message of unity and hope. Today we remember a man who displayed an unswerving kindness to all he met, whose common touch drew the adoration of crowds wherever he travelled. He was a revolutionary who took a strong position on human rights, becoming a friend to those in poverty and advocating for bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. Pope John Paul II opened dialogues with other faiths and sought to bring unity to Christians of the world. It is this commitment to forge new relationships of love and peace with all faiths that will be remembered as one of his greatest accomplishments.

Today we mourn the loss of a man of vision, a man who changed the face of the world through a dedication to encouraging a renewal of faith. He will be remembered in Alberta for embracing the traditions of aboriginal people and promoting in his appearance in Edmonton the hope that all people in the world can live together without conflict.

Thank you.

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

Tobacco Use

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April is Cancer Awareness Month, and the Canadian Cancer Society is making cancer history in their efforts for reform in the area of tobacco control. Tobacco use claims the lives of 3,400 Albertans each year, representing 20 per cent of all deaths within the province. Smoking is estimated to cause 82 per cent of all lung cancer cases, and it also causes cancer of the throat, mouth, tongue, lip, larynx, pharynx, bladder, kidney, and pancreas.

The illnesses associated with tobacco use, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and lung disease, result in tremendous pain and suffering and are very costly to treat. This needless loss and suffering places an enormous burden on individuals, families, communities, the economy, and our health care system. I am sure there are many members within this House who have personal family loss stories due to cancer similar to my own. I lost my grandfather and uncle and my father-in-law and mother-in-law to cancer.

Health Canada estimates that at least 1,000 Canadians, including 100 Albertans, die from exposure to second-hand smoke annually.

One in five Canadians has a pre-existing health condition that is affected by second-hand smoke. Research shows that there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Reluctant bar, bingo, and casino operators could do themselves a financial favour by directly appealing to the 80 per cent of Albertans who don't smoke while assisting the 20 per cent of addicts to wean themselves of their deadly habit.

Calendar of Special Events

The Speaker: Hon. members, as I indicate once a month, hon. members stand up and identify certain months. Then as we go through the month, I get all kinds of letters in my office from other organizations, saying: "How come no recognition was given to my month?" I'll draw to your attention what this month is all about.

In addition to Cancer Awareness Month, it is also Parkinson Awareness Month, Earth Month, National Oral Health Month, Stay Alert – Stay Safe Month, National Physiotherapy Month, Rosacea Awareness Month, National Pharmacy Awareness Month, and Irritable Bowel Syndrome Awareness Month.

April 6 is Unpaid Work Day. April 7 is Tartan Day. April 7 is also World Health Day. April 10 to April 16 is National Wildlife Week. April 11 to 17 is National Astronomy Week. April 14 is Law Day. April 16 is International Astronomy Day. April 16 to April 18 is Global Youth Service Day. April 17 is International Hemophilia Day. April 17 is also Equality Day in Canada. April 17 to April 23 is National Volunteer Week. That same week is also National Soil Conservation Week, and it also is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week.

April 19 to April 25 is Global Action Week. April 22 is Earth Day. April 23 is World Book and Copyright Day as is it Canadian Writers' Day as is it St. George's Day, and the month of April 23 to May 23 is National Physiotherapy Month. April 24 is Passover. April 24 to April 30 is Education Week as is it Administrative Professionals Week as is it National Immunization Awareness Week as is it National Medical Laboratory Week as is it Library Week. April 27 is Administrative Professionals Day. April 28 is National Day of Mourning, and April 29 is International Dance Day, and on this day, April 4, in 1906 the village of Vegreville was established.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on a petition?

Ms Pastoor: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand to present a petition with 101 Albertans' signatures urging the government to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers."

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from a number of good Albertans from the communities of Stavely, Okotoks, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, and largely from Calgary calling on the government to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on a petition.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it. I have a petition as well to present to the Legislative Assembly, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 120 signatures on this petition.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Bill 36 Police Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005.

These amendments will bring greater openness and public accountability to the investigation of complaints against the police. They also reflect recommendations accepted by the Alberta government following the release of the report of the MLA Policing Review Committee. The MLA committee's report was the first comprehensive review of the Police Act since 1988.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a first time]

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

Bill 38 Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce to the Legislature Bill 38, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill proposes to update the Pharmacy and Drug Act to reflect current pharmacy practice and to clarify regulation requirements for pharmacies and drugs in Alberta. Changes will allow the Alberta College of Pharmacists to set standards and regulations for categories of pharmacy services and will strengthen the rules that govern the operations of pharmacies and the practice of pharmacists who work in these operations. I move for first reading Bill 38.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 38 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 38 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: 2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on behalf of the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, indeed. Thank you, very much. On behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of the document referred to; that is, Privacy and

the USA Patriot Act: Implications for British Columbia Public Sector Outsourcing, October 2004, produced and distributed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table today pursuant to some questions that were asked on Tuesday, March 22 of this year, by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar – it was with respect to TransAlta's hydro pricing strategy back in 2002.

I will correct, actually, a statement I had in question period. They weren't in an open auction. That's correct. They were held back and excluded from the auction because of the unique structure and so that the benefits of the hydro PPA would continue to flow to customers until 2020 as the Balancing Pool holds the hydro PPA.*

I would also state that these same questions were asked to the Premier back in May of 2002, so I'm tabling just to refresh everyone's memory and to update any pertinent information.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table copies of two letters today. The letters detail the heartbreaking conditions that exist in long-term care facilities in Alberta particularly due to the lack of adequate numbers of properly trained staff. These letters are particularly disheartening considering the increased levels of service that were promised when the government hiked long-term care fees by 50 per cent.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter from Dr. Andrew Affleck, president of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians. Dr. Affleck indicates his organization's support for a complete ban on workplace smoking and notes that the CAEP recently passed a motion stating that they will schedule future annual meetings in those jurisdictions where "legislation ensures a 100% ban on smoking in indoor public places."

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter from the Youth Emergency Shelter Society of Edmonton indicating that the shelter does not receive funding from the family and community support services. I have the appropriate copies.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today in regard to Enron's activities in North America. The first is an e-mail dated July 24, 2000, and it is from Maureen McVicker to Robert Hemstock, Richard B. Sanders, and Richard Shapiro, to mention a few. This is in regard to Project Stanley.

The second e-mail is a privileged and confidential solicitor/client communication from Enron, and it is also in regard to Project Stanley, and it is encouraged reading for all hon. members of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling with permission the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received from a Mr. Stuart McGrandle, dated February 22, 2005, in which he voices his frustration with this Conservative government's push to recruit temporary foreign workers to work in Fort McMurray and his concern that there's a lot of misinformation out there with regard to the alleged skilled labour shortage and what he refers to as the supposedly first-class living conditions in the oil sands workers' camps.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of five letters from concerned Albertans indicating that there is not a shortage of skilled industrial tradesmen in the province and calling for the prohibition of the use of temporary foreign workers in the oil sands.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Hon. members, I have some tablings today. First of all, pursuant to section 44(1) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I'm tabling a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer, dated March 24, 2005, transmitting a list of those candidates in the November 22, 2004, general election together with the names of their chief financial officers who failed to file campaign financial statements with the office of the Chief Electoral Officer on or before March 22 as required by section 43 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

I'm also tabling a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer, also dated March 24, 2005, indicating the name of the candidate in the November 22, 2004, Senate nominee election and the name of the chief financial officer who failed to file a campaign financial statement on or before March 22, 2005, as required by section 43 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act I am tabling with the Assembly the appropriate copies of the following Members' Services orders: number one, Members' Services Committee Order 1/05, transportation amendment order (No. 5), which is deemed to have come into force on November 22, 2004; number two, Members' Services Committee Order No. 2/05, constituency services amendment order (No. 14), which comes into force on April 1, 2005; number three, Members' Services Committee Order No. 3/05, constituency services amendment order (No. 15), which is deemed to have come into force on November 22, 2004, and the schedule to section 1(3) of the constituency services order; number four, Members' Services Committee Order No. 4/05, the transportation amendment order (No. 6), which comes into force on April 1, 2005; number five, the Members' Services Committee Order No. 5/05, members' allowances amendment order (No. 9), which is deemed to have come into force on November 22, 2004; number six, Members' Services Committee Order No. 6/05, members' group life insurance and members' group plans amendment order (No. 1), which comes into force on the date it was passed: March 16, 2005.

hand:

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Forsyth, Minister of Children's Services: the Social Care Facilities Review Committee semiannual report, October 2002 to March 2003.

The Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. Minister of Environment. Citations are very helpful.

*See p. 489, left col., para. 4

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I quote 23(j), “insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” I want to say that it certainly created disorder for this particular Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo when it was said that my city was in fact going down the sewer. In having understanding of the exchange, I want to say that I acknowledge the good work that has been taking place dealing with the infrastructure that has been developing in the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo area. To say that the city is going down the sewer – as a former member of city council and its youngest mayor for over 12 years I can certainly say for the members that served on municipal council that is, shall I say, insulting to any elected member no matter what order of government. I do understand, though, since this motive is to help in getting infrastructure. I understand that the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity expressed an interest in attending the meeting tonight of the standing policy committee dealing with this specific issue. I’d ask the hon. member to withdraw his comment pertaining to my city.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think we may have a situation here where 494 may be helpful to us because, in fact, the note that I’ve had from the Member for Calgary-Varsity – and the Blues are not available to us. He was referring to the Alberta advantage going down the sewer. He did not specifically name the city of Fort McMurray. [interjections] Not in that phrase. He did not. So it may well be that we will have to fall back on *Beauchesne’s* 494 in this particular instance, noting that “statements by Members respecting themselves and . . . within their own knowledge must be accepted.” I note that “it is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts,” but “on rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.”

Mr. Speaker, I would put it to you that that is the situation we have here today with two separate claims being made. I will accept the word of my colleague from Calgary-Varsity that he did not make the comment – and I’ll put this in quotes – going down the sewer in reference to the city of Fort McMurray, but it was in fact in reference to the Alberta advantage.

An Hon. Member: Context is everything.

Ms Blakeman: I’m hearing from across the way that context is everything, and I think that’s true. Accuracy as to what was said or heard to be said is also extremely important, and in this case we have two different versions of what in fact was said.

I will take my seat with that, Mr. Speaker. I think we clearly have two different versions of the same incident. Thank you.

3:00

The Speaker: There are others on this point of order?

Mr. Chase: Just to clarify. I support the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and I would not say anything to malign his constituency nor the hon. member. As the critic for Infrastructure I would support all his efforts to improve the infrastructure of his constituency, and I realize that is his major concern and his major task. I support him.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, in light of the context of what the hon.

member has said and the clarity of what he has said, I’ll withdraw my point of order.

Speaker’s Ruling Preambles

The Speaker: Having said that, the Speaker is still going to make a comment. There was a point of order here, but it may not be the point of order that the two hon. members are talking about. The point of order has to do with preambles.

Now, if a member didn’t use a preamble, a member wouldn’t get into trouble. This is not the only member. He’s just the only one who got caught today. In this case the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity in his second question, where there are to be no preambles – everybody agreed to that, right? Three House leaders signed their names on a document, which means that they’re in charge of enforcement within their caucuses, right? Sure. So the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity starts off, “It seems in Fort McMurray it’s going down the sewers. Will the Premier commit to providing the necessary ongoing infrastructure funding that Fort McMurray has requested?” So yes. If we don’t use preambles, we don’t get into trouble. It’s pretty simple, basically. It’s a form of discipline that gets all of us. Just try and abide from time to time.

So having said all of that, all the other citations that I had to enforce this particular point of order, I guess, I won’t have to give today. I’ll save them for another day.

Mr. Martin: Point of order.

The Speaker: You want a point of order?

Mr. Martin: Yes. Just on your comments.

The Speaker: There’s no point of order on the Speaker’s comments.

Mr. Martin: I want to make it clear. In the House leaders’ meetings we did not agree on this. We couldn’t get an agreement, so it went back to the old way about preambles. I want to state it clearly . . .

The Speaker: No. I’m going to make it very, very clear. This Speaker has been going on with the tradition of this House. The hon. member wasn’t in the last two parliaments. Agreement in this House for a great number of years has been that there will be no preambles on the second question and the third question. That was basically indicated by the Speaker in a letter to all members prior to the commencement of this Assembly. It has been repeated on one or two occasions since then, and that is the manner in which we conduct ourselves.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, March 24, it’s my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today’s Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, March 24, it's my pleasure to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 1 and 4.

[Motion carried]

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

The Clerk: Motion for a Return 1.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The document requested in this motion has already been tabled in the Assembly and referred to the Members' Services Committee. In light of this, I would like to respectfully withdraw this motion for a return and encourage the Members' Services Committee to give careful consideration to the report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a unique situation, I guess, in which this motion was written prior to something happening, so there's a withdrawal request being made. I gather that all members would give their consent to having the motion withdrawn?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Anybody opposed? Okay. So be it.

Tobacco Industry Representatives

M4. Dr. Pannu moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing for each of the fiscal years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 an itemized list of all groups and individuals representing either specific tobacco-related companies or any association, group, or organization representing the interests of the tobacco industry who have met with the Premier, the Minister of Health and Wellness, the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, or any Alberta standing policy committee.

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

Ms Evans: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond that the government will be prepared to accept that motion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to conclude the debate.

Dr. Pannu: I thank the Minister of Health and Wellness for accepting the motion, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 4 carried]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

Bill 201 Smoke-free Places Act

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

Mr. Snelgrove: Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to introduce some necessary and important amendments to Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. Would the chairman like me to wait until they've been circulated?

The Deputy Chair: Just give a couple of minutes for them to be distributed, please.

Hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, you may proceed.

3:10

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we have heard, Bill 201 is a hot issue for many members and their constituents. The proposed amendments to this legislation, although numerous, propose basically one simple change. Instead of making all public places and all workplaces in the province smoke free, it makes public places and workplaces that permit minors to be smoke free. Outside of that change, there is a section of Bill 201 which was clarified, and I would like to mention that before I continue with my remarks regarding the inclusion of minors.

Section 11. Although the purpose is still the same, it has been cleaned up significantly, and we hope there is no longer any confusion on what it says, partly because this is an extremely important part of this legislation. As amended, Section 11 reads:

- (1) Nothing in this Act affects a municipality's power to make bylaws to regulate, restrict or prohibit smoking.
- (2) Where there is a conflict between a provision of this Act and a provision of the municipal bylaw that regulates, restricts or prohibits smoking, the more restrictive provision prevails.

Mr. Chairman, it doesn't get much clearer than that. This proposed legislation will be a province-wide minimum prohibition against smoking in all public places, workplaces, and public vehicles as defined in the act.

Also, Mr. Chairman, we have eliminated section 8. Section 8 referred to "a manager of a public place or workplace must not permit ashtrays or similar receptacles to be located in a part of the place where smoking is prohibited under this Act." It was just common sense that someone who inadvertently would find themselves in a position they shouldn't be in would have an opportunity to be rid of their cigarette without causing damage to property or a mess. In fact, many of these ashtrays or similar type devices collect litter, gum, packaging, and other things, and it was simply not well thought out.

Reality being what it is, Mr. Chairman, there are of course exceptions, those being group living facilities, hotels, and public places and workplaces that do not permit minors. By instituting a minimum standard for all Albertans, we would be promoting a healthier lifestyle while maintaining the status quo of choice for business, for municipalities, and for some community groups. This is an important choice for all Albertans, and one that I believe should not be taken away without seriously looking at the consequences of that action.

The time spent debating Bill 201 and the inadequate public consultation that has been done are not enough to convince me that a complete province-wide smoking ban is necessary, nor do I believe it is what all Albertans want at this time. I know that the town of Peace River doesn't want it, neither does Rocky Mountain House nor Wainwright. They are just a few examples, Mr. Chairman. It is obvious that more consultation needed to take place.

I therefore see these amendments addressing at a minimum three

areas of concern that have come to light since we began debating this legislation. The main compromise these amendments bring with them is that a minimum standard is being set concerning smoking in public places and workplaces across the province. While accomplishing these amendments, it also safeguards a municipality's right to implement their own more restrictive provisions. Currently section 7 of the Municipal Government Act gives a council the authority to pass bylaws for municipal purposes respecting "the safety, health and welfare of people and the protection of people and property" as well as "people, activities and things in, on or near a public place or place that is open to the public." Mr. Chairman, municipalities are more than capable of making appropriate decisions for their individual constituents, and I believe they are successfully doing that now and will continue to do it successfully into the future.

Secondly, the proposed amendments align Bill 201 with government policy instead of forming government policy, which is exactly what private members' legislation was designed to do.

Mr. Chairman, this is an issue that should not be taken lightly. We have seen in the media and through calls and e-mails to members' constituency offices that this issue is important to all Albertans. I believe it is important that the necessary consultation take place to ensure that government policy is in line with public opinion, as it should be.

Finally, the proposed amendments support the health and well-being of Alberta's children. This is a fundamental part of government policy, and any additional support this House can provide to support the health and well-being of Alberta's youth should be welcomed with open arms. It may be ludicrous to consider that anything can be done to prevent parents from putting their children's health at risk by smoking in their private residences or private vehicles, but those are the two places that children's health is at the greatest risk of being negatively affected by second-hand smoke. The proposed amendments do not restrict smoking in private residences, but they do help protect children in public places and workplaces. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the proposed amendments are a step in the right direction, and the debate that is taking place here is healthy and necessary.

Many have tried to make this issue an issue about leadership. Well, enacting legislation without proper consultation with a callous disregard for the financial effect to our business and tourism industries while infringing on the municipality's right to make decisions for their individual constituents is not leadership at all. As a matter of fact, it's dangerously close to dictatorship.

I encourage all members to support these amendments. In doing so, they will be supporting the right of municipalities to choose what is best for their communities as well as help protect the health and well-being of Alberta's children.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we shall refer to these amendments as amendment A1. Hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, I presume you wanted all the amendments to be dealt with together and a collective vote at the end.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I haven't had a chance to look in detail at the amendments, but let me say that raising the question of consultation in the context of this amendment or indeed the bill itself is a false concern. Indeed, we've been consulting

Albertans for the last 30 years about what they think about tobacco in public places. They have said repeatedly and increasingly that they're anxious and frustrated that the provincial government will not take leadership on this issue of environmental tobacco smoke. This is not fundamentally about any particular age group or gender. This is about human beings being exposed to a carcinogenic substance in the workplace. Let's be very clear about it.

This government has said that it's committed to health and has commissioned a number of reports, including the Mazankowski report, that have said repeatedly: we need provincial legislation to ban public places exposure to tobacco smoke. It's time for this government to show leadership. Indeed, the population has been calling for this, as I say, for many, many years. This is inefficient and so far unfair to business to ask each municipality to draft unique and variable legislation to protect nonsmokers and workers in the workplaces. We have said repeatedly and recent polls have shown that 500 different organizations in the province, health professionals, and two-thirds of the population have indicated, when asked specifically about public places including nightclubs and bars, that they want to see the smoke banned from these places.

Let's be very clear what we're dealing with here. Albertans are frustrated at the slow progress of legislation in this area. The majority want to see this human rights issue, this public safety issue, and health issue dealt with in a responsible way that will not disadvantage any businesses because everyone will be on the same playing field. The existing status quo is not acceptable. Let us be clear: if this government defeats this bill or creates these amendments, this will be a real knock in their vision of health for all Albertans and respecting the human rights of all workers in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, I just wanted a clarification from the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. You did send me a note that you wanted to speak, but I'm not very clear. Did you want to speak on the current amendments or deal with your amendments later on?

3:20

Mr. Hinman: I'll deal with my amendments later on because their amendments look like they're going to cover what I was . . .

The Deputy Chair: Right. Yes. That's the procedure. Thank you so very much.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to address the committee today regarding Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act, during the committee stage. There is no question that this bill has captured the interest of Albertans, and rightfully so. To some, smoking is their personal right. To others, it's a nuisance and a health hazard. Everyone has an opinion on this issue, and many have had a stake in this debate. Smokers, nonsmokers, restaurant owners, bar owners, casinos, and bingos have all had their opinion. Sometimes forgotten, but children have an opinion in this debate too.

Many of these interests and opinions are competing, and no matter what decision we make in this Assembly, we will not satisfy them all. This is not a new dilemma. We often have to make decisions that please one group while upsetting another. As MLAs we have been able to go out and talk to our constituents about their feeling on this issue, but Bill 201 has only been on the radar for a couple of months. Furthermore, because of it being a private member's bill, the government has not had a complete, comprehensive look at all

of the issues regarding the second-hand smoke. So it is up to each member to seek out their own feedback from their constituents or to increase funding to programs to help these Albertans who choose to stop smoking.

For these reasons, I am not convinced that the government nor the members of this Legislature have done their due diligence on Bill 201. I, like most of you, have had an opportunity to talk to as many stakeholders as possible over the past couple months regarding Bill 201.

As I mentioned previously, nearly everyone is a stakeholder when it comes to second-hand smoke. Smoking is about more than just second-hand smoke or about where and when it should be allowed. We also need to look at tobacco taxes, minors smoking, and much more. This includes looking at the current funding levels for programs to help individuals who choose to stop smoking. Yet right now and right here we are going to have to make a decision as to what we do in the interim.

When considering what I believe we should do, I thought about the competing interests and what effect we may have upon them depending on what decision we make. If we accept Bill 201 in its current form, we are eliminating choice for individual adults, for communities, and for business across the province. We are not really addressing the need to help individuals stop smoking. We are just moving the location where they will smoke.

In a recent discussion with an individual who lived in New Zealand, she talked about the effect the abandonment of smoking in a facility had on her. When the smoking bylaw came into effect, all of the individuals who were in the bar came out onto the street to have their smoke. At that time what happened is that she was approached when she was walking down the street where she walked regularly with her child. Her child was, let's say, addressed, and she didn't think that that was a proper form of regulation.

Governing is about finding a balanced approach. I believe we need to find an acceptable midpoint that takes into account a need to protect those who cannot protect themselves while considering the damage that we may do to charities and adult-only establishments. Adults know, or at least they should know at this point, that smoking is unhealthy and that inhaling second-hand smoke can be just as bad. Children, on the other hand, may not know the repercussions of second-hand smoke, or even if they do, they may have little choice and are unable to avoid it.

While I don't believe that adult Albertans need to be told to come in out of the rain, nor do I think they need to be told to get out of the smoke, some people choose to live in rainy environments even though they might be risking catching a cold, just as some people choose to stay in smoky environments knowing the dangers of second-hand smoke. We shall be narrowing our focus to provide support for those who can get out of the rain.

I support the amendments for Bill 201 to focus on protecting children from second-hand smoke. Children by law are not allowed to purchase cigarettes, nor are they allowed to smoke. By making it such that the public places, including restaurants, have to designate their premise either as smoking permitted or not permitted, there is no question as to allowing minors in. If you choose to allow smoking, there are no minors allowed. Period. It is that simple and that clear.

Furthermore, I support the amendment to give the option of allowing smoking in a workplace that is not open and accessible by the public. One of the concerns that I have heard was regarding those people who use their private vehicle as their workplace or those who use a company vehicle as their workplace not being allowed to smoke anymore under Bill 201. Some long haul truck driver who has smoked for 40 years in the confines of his own truck

being told that he cannot smoke, when the smoke and the second-hand smoke is only harming the primary user, is in my opinion getting a little bit ridiculous. Why would we bother to protect a smoker from their own second-hand smoke?

By amending section 5 with the addition of subsection (4), we will allow some leeway in situations like this, especially where an unsuspecting member of the public is not going to wander into the workplace, nor are they invited to have access by right or by express or by implemented invitation. Furthermore, there are many similar situations that this amendment will address to allow some choice, especially in the workplaces that are generally not open to the public and are only occupied at one time for one or very few people.

I am also in support of the amendment to change the wording of section 11. I believe we need to make it clear that municipalities should not be restricted from making tougher bylaws. As I am sure that many members here can attest, what one community or municipality feels is appropriate when it comes to smoking, another may not. If communities like Edmonton, Calgary, Sherwood Park, or others want, as many already have, to hold their public places to a more restrictive standard, the citizens of those communities should have that right. But just as we allow these communities to decide if they want a tougher standard, we shouldn't force other communities to live up to that same standard.

We allow municipalities to make many decisions when it comes to quality of life issues and the protection of citizens. We allow them to make decisions as to what level of fire protection service they have. We allow them to make decisions as to what level of police service they may have. We allow local school boards and health authorities to make local decisions regarding education and health care. As a provincial government we set standards for them to meet, but we don't hold them back from exceeding them. This is what the amendments to Bill 201 achieve. They set a baseline standard that we expect every public place and workplace in Alberta to meet, and we allow for local municipalities to exceed those standards.

I support the amendments for Bill 201. I would encourage all members to support them as well. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. For the first time in my political life, having gotten elected and into this House, I had a sense of what could be accomplished within this House. I heard government member after government member speak eloquently about the need for a total smoking ban. What the member has proposed in the way of an amendment is not an amendment. It is a complete rewrite of the bill. It is a complete denial of the intention of this bill. It is not an amendment.

3:30

What I don't understand – and forgive me for my lack of understanding because I'm new in this process. It has been declared over and over and over again through research, through poll, through public opinion that the public, 80 per cent at least of Albertans, want an all-out smoking ban. This is the 80 per cent that I referred to when I gave my Cancer Society awareness month speech. For the lofty reason of health care prevention, for the cost of treatment it would seem to me that it's logical to support an amendment that discourages smoking, that prevents people from contracting cancer from second-hand smoke. For lack of a better word, it seems like a no-brainer that we would be supporting a healthier Alberta.

From a more base point of view I cannot believe that members opposite, who in most cases have much more political savvy than myself, would vote against their constituents' wishes. We were elected to bring the concerns of the majority of our constituents to this House, and we were doing marvelously. In the first round only three speakers spoke against it or voted against the total ban. To do anything less than approve a total ban in smoking would do Albertans of all ages a disservice. Watering it down to protect a person in the first 18 years of their life, and then they have their birthday and they turn 18 and they're no longer protected, is like tag: you're not it now; you're safe; now you're it. We have to think about the well-being of this entire province.

As to the economics I don't know how many studies need to be conducted, how many examples. We've got examples within this province, Banff, where a bar owner indicated that after the township imposed a total smoking ban, his business went up by 15 per cent. We've got a closer example right here in St. Albert. The notion that certain bar owners or bingo hall operators or casino operators stand to lose money is absolute baloney. What they stand to do is to increase their number of patrons. From 20 per cent of the population they have the potential to go after 80 per cent.

As I mentioned in my comments on Canadian cancer awareness month, there is absolutely no valid reason – no one can give specific statistics in any country, in any city where smoking has had an adverse economic effect on the population. But the reverse is true. People live longer. The quality of their life is better. They can go to the bar, enjoy a drink of whatever type they wish. They can enjoy the pleasure of the music. The notion that we're just going to protect 18 year olds – in other words, for the first 18 years of your life you're safe, but after that you can risk a killing cancer in this province of Alberta because we don't have the guts as legislators to put forward a total smoking ban.

Please, government members, I hope you are not being handcuffed by a forced vote. I hope you have the ability within your conscience and within your caucus to vote as your constituents would have you vote.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak in Committee of the Whole on Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. There are three things regarding this act and this amendment that are important to me: the first is the health and safety of all Albertans, the second is a level playing field for all businesses in Alberta, and the third is responding to the evidence that proves beyond a doubt that second-hand smoke kills and that the legal liability that exists when ignoring the evidence will create problems for all of us.

Mr. Chairman, I would have been pleased to have voted for a bill that would have stopped smoking in all public places. I believe that it's just a matter of time until all Albertans recognize the dangers of second-hand smoke and agree with smoke-free places. At that time Albertans will make the choice not to impose second-hand smoke on other people. They will recognize that the health of others and the fairness of a level playing field for all businesses is important. They will recognize the liability that exists if governments or businesses allow second-hand smoke to affect others.

Mr. Chair, I know that some of the strongest chain-smokers are capable of giving up smoking during their working hours. Due to the volatile nature of the solvents that are used in the manufacture of fibreglass, the business that guy was involved in, it was necessary to impose a no-smoking rule at work. Our employees managed to wait

until their breaks to smoke. Many of these employees thanked us for helping them to reduce their smoking levels significantly and in some cases to even quit smoking.

Although I do not feel that these amendments are strong enough to protect all Albertans, I'm willing to accept them in order to protect children and to begin a smoke-free policy province-wide.

In the city of Red Deer a smoking ban was issued for some workplaces. It was not all-encompassing, and businesses that did not allow children on their premises were exempted. Businesses that could afford to build smoking rooms separate from other rooms could invite smokers to enjoy their services. Businesses that could not afford to build designated smoking rooms were out of luck. The city of Red Deer is now ready to go to the next level and to ban smoking from all public places. The concern now is: what about those businesses that paid for separate smoking rooms and that will now be paying for an obsolete option?

I believe that it's better to go to the second step right from the start. I also believe, however, that it's more important to do something than to do nothing. I would therefore support these amendments knowing that this may be the only way to begin a smoke-free-places policy in Alberta province-wide. We can start this way, as the city of Red Deer did, and then we can move to the next step, which will be a total Smoke-free Places Act. We need to help all Albertans to make this choice to prevent second-hand smoke from affecting others. This time will come, although not fast enough for some.

Mr. Chair, in order to arrive at a complete Smoke-free Places Act without taking choice away from Albertans at this time, we need to start by accepting these amendments. Like the city of Red Deer we can start this way and in time have a complete ban. This way will be better than doing nothing.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought I had to do a double take for a minute when I heard the mover of the amendments say that we haven't had enough time for consultation. I remember being here a few years ago, and we were being lobbied – I think probably they're here – by Mr. Hagen and ASH. I know that he's been at it for a long time. If there has ever been an area or an issue that we've had a lot of consultation about, surely it's smoking and having a smoking ban in this province. To think that this just came up, you know, a couple weeks ago with Bill 201 is ludicrous in the extreme. The point that I'm making: it's not because there has been a lack of consultation; it's because the government doesn't want to deal with this issue in a serious way.

Now, the point that I would make, and it's been talked about – and the minister of health I'm glad is here. I know she's looking at her papers. I'm sure she's embarrassed by these amendments, and she should be, Mr. Chairman, because she has said very clearly that she believes that there should be some sort of ban.

3:40

You know, we've talked about and the Premier has talked about the costs of health care, you know, that we have to privatize, that we have to do all these things, that it's so expensive, and that we should be looking at prevention. Well, here's a bill that could deal with the prevention in the most immediate way and down the way save a lot of money. I can't think of any other prevention that could save our health care money, if that's all we cared about beyond the deaths and the other things that occur with smoking. So surely we should be

promoting this as a prevention that will ultimately save health care money, save lives, save agony, save sickness: all the rest of the things. It seems to me to be self-evident. As one of the members said, a no-brainer.

To talk about the economics of it, I've had businesspeople in Edmonton say that they're worried because Edmonton will have a patchwork compared to others. If they go into the bar there and they can't smoke in Edmonton, they may move out to other municipalities. It doesn't make sense to have a patchwork across the province with various municipalities doing this and another one across the way doing that. That's unfair economics as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Chairman. The simplest way is to have a province-wide ban. Everybody plays, then, under the same rules. It's a level playing field, and the economics seem to me to be self-evident.

You know, to say that there's not consultation, again, every health care professional that I know of, people in the Cancer Society, every other group is saying: go ahead with this. As the Member for Calgary-Varsity said, 80 per cent of the people want it. So why are we not doing it?

The other thing is: why are we having amendments on a private member's bill coming from the government? I take it that the whip's on here. It seems to be. I don't think we're going to have a free vote here by what I see. I hope I'm wrong. I hope I'm wrong. The Member for Red Deer-North spoke very eloquently about why we need a provincial ban, and she said, and I think I quote: doing something is "better than doing nothing." Well, this is basically doing nothing. It's a status quo. Let's be real about that. We are doing nothing with these amendments.

I would hope that the government members would screw up their courage, Mr. Chairman, if they believe there should be a provincial ban, and vote that way instead of having a private member's bill with the whip on. I find that unfortunate and sad in many ways if this is supposed to be a democratic vote. It's not a government bill. It's a private member's bill. Again, to say that there's not been consultation on this is just absolutely ridiculous.

I want to say just in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, that this is a chance for this Legislature to do something very, very significant, and it's a chance for government members to do something very, very significant. You know, the whip should not be out on this. Do we care about health care? Do we care about fair economics? Are we concerned about second-hand smoke? We say, well, we're not going to have the young people there. What about the people that have to work there? I noticed that many of the labour leaders are saying the same thing. It's almost universal except in this Legislature that we need a provincial ban, and it's going to be very, very disappointing if the government members that know how they should vote, vote under a whip sort of approach here today. I would hope that they wouldn't do that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to the amendments proposed to Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. I'd like to point out that I still have concerns with the intent of this bill. I believe that the full intent of this bill is to make people quit smoking a completely legal product, and it's guised under the premise of making all Albertans healthy. I believe that trying to make all Albertans healthy, trying to force people to stop smoking is not our place. It's a slippery slope, as I mentioned in my previous remarks, that can lead to much more drastic measures.

What would be next, Mr. Chairman? If the health of Albertans is strictly and fully our responsibility, do we start to legislate what we should serve in public restaurants? [interjections] I can hear the other side groaning, but we know that obesity is the greatest epidemic in this province. It's across North America. In fact, I read some information that one-third of Albertans born in the year 2001 and thereafter will acquire diabetes in their lifetime because of their diets, what they eat and how much they eat, and the lack of exercise. If the health of Albertans is our concern and we're supposed to make Albertans become healthier, do we legislate what they eat and how much exercise they get?

Mr. Chairman, I believe the best way to approach this – and I'm not saying that we shouldn't encourage Albertans to stop smoking; I believe that we actually should. We should provide incentives through health care to make sure that smokers have access to subsidized treatment programs. I don't want to name any brand names, but, you know, you can go to the pharmacist and get prescriptions.

An Hon. Member: The patch.

Mr. Griffiths: The patch. Okay. Thank you. I'll say the patch and gum, likewise, to help people stop smoking, but there are no incentives to provide benefits to people to get them to use those sorts of initiatives, Mr. Chairman.

I also believe that health care premiums should be upped for people who smoke. They are an increased risk of a drain on the health care system, and I believe health care premiums should reflect that increased risk. I also believe it should reflect the increased risk of people who are obese, don't eat properly, don't exercise properly. I believe it's the job of this government to have those people pay more. That would give them more incentive to eat properly, quit smoking, and maintain a healthier lifestyle than the government telling them that they can't. We're not their parents.

I also believe, Mr. Chairman, that for employees who work in smoking environments, WCB premiums reflect the risk in those working environments. I still encourage that WCB premiums should be reflective of nonsmokers working in a smoking environment. I honestly believe that that would give businesses incentives to go to nonsmoking environments, and they would make the choice instead of the provincial government telling them what's good for them.

I hope that those initiatives will be adopted whether this legislation passes or these amendments pass. I hope that those sorts of initiatives are pursued, Mr. Chairman.

I did say in my previous remarks that I could support this bill if amendments made this legislation focus on smoking in public places in the presence of children. I still believe that. These amendments have done just that while still allowing flexibility to determine if smoking or children will be permitted but neither at the same time nor the same place. Mr. Chairman, that I can support. I know that there are places in Edmonton right now that allow minors onto the premises and into the business until a certain time in the evening, when then smoking is allowed and minors are not. The two do not coexist.

This bill has become one I can support. Though I am not pleased with telling businesses what they can do, in general, I understand this bill to provide businesses with significant flexibility so long as smoking and minors are not permitted on the same premises at the same time. With that understanding, Mr. Chairman, I endorse the amendments proposed by the Member for Vermillion-Lloydminster.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have thought a lot about Bill 201, and I have heard from many constituents. As I considered my position, I first of all looked at the past, the present, and where we're going.

Looking at the past, what was smoking like 30 years ago? Smoking was socially acceptable. The dangers were not scientifically made public. Lots of advertising was around to encourage smoking: magazines, billboards, and sporting events. It was socially acceptable to smoke. Film stars and famous people such as Churchill with his cigars were seen smoking.

Today: it depends on whom you ask. Many groups have formed to try to eliminate smoking. Many commercial interests want to retain smoking. Some try to argue that smoking laws are an infringement on personal freedom. Some argue that they have the right to a smoke-free workplace. Smoking bans elsewhere – California, Victoria, and Honolulu – show no loss of revenue for bars and restaurants. There are huge tax levies on smoking products.

3:50

Where are we going in the future? I think smokers will likely be penalized: different health care premiums, different medical coverage, for example. They may be ostracized; it will become unacceptable in most social circles to smoke. Even more intense efforts will be made to stop young people from beginning to smoke, and selling cigarettes may become illegal.

Then I looked at how it affects me and my friends and others. I refuse to go into restaurants where smoking is allowed. Some of these places I'd like to go to because I hear their food is very good, but I will not go there. I ask for nonsmoking taxicabs. I resent having to go through the front doors of a business where a lot of smokers are gathered smoking. I ask for nonsmoking hotel rooms when I travel, and I don't allow smoking in my home.

It's difficult for some people to stop smoking. I realize this because I know of someone who has had three cancer operations and is still unable to stop smoking. She is constantly apologizing for continuing to smoke. She goes to great lengths to tell people how she is controlling the habit. She is a sociable individual, and I'm sure that she would dearly like to stop. This is an example of how terrible this addiction can become.

How does smoking affect all of us? We all pay higher taxes to cover the medical ill effects of smoking on people in Alberta. For example, we need more doctors, we need more hospital facilities, and we need medical staff. We pay higher insurance premiums as a result of smokers who have caused fires and fire damage. We pay higher education costs for the programs in place to try to stop people from smoking. Those who choose not to smoke have their health impaired by second-hand smoke. We are unwilling partners in unethical practices when our government invests in tobacco companies for profit, for example the heritage fund.

I agree very much with this bill. Places where the public attends in Alberta should be smoke free, and here's why. Research has proven past a doubt the ill effects of smoking. Smoking causes lung disease. Smokers die earlier, often painful deaths. Smoking robs families of fathers, mothers, sisters, and aunts. Smoking forces us to spend much-needed health care dollars on caring for smokers' health when those dollars are badly needed elsewhere. Smokers have a choice. Those suffering from many other illnesses do not. The smell on people's clothing, in cars, and in smoking rooms is repulsive, and I don't want my family exposed to the damaging effects of smoke.

Taking a look at a logical reasoning approach here, smokers cost us all money; for example, worker absenteeism, fires, disability, lost income due to death and health care. For example, in 1992 smokers

cost Alberta taxpayers \$215 million in direct health costs. Aside from the personal and societal losses smokers cost all of us money that could be used for better purposes.

Another point is that smoking has been proven scientifically to be hazardous to our health. At some point there was a question as to whether or not this was true. Large-scale statistical studies, beginning in 1952, by the American Cancer Society have proven a direct relationship; 3,500 Albertans die each year from smoking, including strokes, heart attacks, and cancer. There is no longer any argument. The link between smoking and health has been documented and is no longer open to question.

As I look at what is, smoking has been proven extremely hazardous to human health. Smoking is allowed in public establishments across the province. Nonsmokers are exposed to second-hand smoke. We pay a high cost for smokers; for example, health care, fires, work loss, and premature deaths.

What should be? As a first step smoking should be banned from public places. We should protect the innocent from the evils of smoking. Buildings paid for by taxpayers should not make people sick. Commercial businesses should not expose their employees to smoke nor customers who are nonsmokers.

What should be done? Bill 201 should be passed without amendments. Let's find the courage to do that. Ways to prevent people from starting to smoke need to be examined. Workers' rights should include the right to a smoke-free workplace, and research into successful strategies that may be used to help smokers stop should be conducted.

My support is for Bill 201 without amendment.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise with pleasure to speak at this Committee of the Whole stage of Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. I commend the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for getting this bill to this stage, allowing for continued discussion surrounding some of the contentious aspects of this potential piece of legislation.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 201 has been a difficult piece of legislation from the get-go. People have different ideas about placing limitations on freedoms and have argued that we should only place restrictions on smoking to the extent that it protects the health of children. Although I would much rather support the bill in its original form, I think it's important to support the proposed amendments to get this bill through the House. I've learned in this job that a compromise is often better than no deal at all. The amendments on the floor will at least protect children from second-hand smoke, and this is an important cause. I see it as a first step and only a first step, but it's a big step in this important cause of protecting all Albertans from second-hand smoke.

At the end of the day we must decide if we should place restrictions on businesses. We as a province have always proudly given business owners as much freedom in decision-making as possible because we follow the belief that they are in the best position to make decisions that affect their operations. This is part of the Alberta advantage. Bill 201 may be straying away from this tendency, and this is the point of one of the amendments we are discussing. As long as an employer does not have employees under the age of 18 and as long as the employment area is restricted to persons 18 years or older, the manager will be able to decide whether the employees can smoke or not.

Now, this has always been the Alberta way. We recognize that adults are capable of making adult decisions, and we give them the

freedom to do so. Although I personally hope that they will choose health over wealth, Mr. Chairman, I understand the need for this amendment. One of the proposed amendments is to section 5(3), which if amended would read: a person may smoke in a public place not referred to in subsection (1) or (2) if minors are prohibited from entering or being in the public place. Then a further subsection would read: by declaration of the manager of the public place.

So an example of an area where this subsection could apply and where adults should be able to make decisions as to whether they could smoke or not is automotive repair shops. Most shops have a separate garage area for fixing automobiles and a separate area for an office. The general public is allowed to be in the office and is occasionally permitted to go into the shop area for inspection purposes. However, the public is generally not allowed in the shop where cars are actually being repaired. Furthermore, the manager could simply never allow children into this area, especially since it is dangerous and they are not needed there. For insurance purposes the public is specifically restricted from entering the shop areas without the express consent of the manager because of liability issues since mechanical shops are inherently dangerous.

Mr. Chairman, if the mechanics that work in this area, where members of the general public are generally restricted from entering and children could be reasonably excluded, want to smoke, then they may be permitted to do so. This is especially true if the shop area is closed off from the office area, which is usually the case because automotive shop owners and dealerships don't want to expose their customers to other dangers.

The reality, Mr. Chairman, is that the air quality in a mechanical shop is already poor due to vehicle fumes, the various gasses that are used for welding, vehicle brake dust, and several other sources, yet we don't make laws against these. So why are we wanting to create a law that will prevent these mechanics from lighting up in their workplace?

If the point of Bill 201 is to protect our workforce from the harmful effects of poisons in the air, then we should place much greater restrictions on all harmful substances that could be found in various work environments, which is, I think, ridiculous. We don't want to go there. But if the point is to try to listen to certain interest or lobby groups who advocate for the elimination of smoking in workplaces generally, then we should do so with a careful look at the balance between restriction and choice.

What has traditionally made our province strong and its people successful is the maximization of choice in every circumstance. If Bill 201 is going to take the choice away from our citizens, then we must take a very close look at our motives, and we must look for a balance between what makes sense and what doesn't.

4:00

I ask, Mr. Chairman: if a group of adults decide they want to smoke in their workplace, which I think is a bad choice, should we be telling them that they cannot do so? Is it not hypocritical to allow for the sale of tobacco products but to arbitrarily restrict where they can be consumed? This seems to be what the original wording of Bill 201 was doing. I would much rather that Ottawa ban the product altogether. However, we now have to decide if we want to amend the wording to allow for choice.

Of course we should be restricting smoking where children are allowed to be. Just like we restrict the sale of tobacco products from minors, we should minimize the second-hand smoke they breathe. This limitation is reasonable; it protects children.

Another amendment that would allow for the mechanics to smoke in their workplaces, if they so choose, is the proposed change which would say that a person may smoke in a workplace if the workplace

is one "to which members of the public [do not] have access as of right or by express or implied invitation."

Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier, members of the public are generally not allowed to enter shop areas due to liability issues. So why shouldn't mechanics be able to smoke there if they so choose? An even more important question is: what right do we have to allow the sale of cigarettes and then come to their workplaces where children and public are not allowed to enter and fine them for smoking?

What's next? Are the police going to come to my house and fine somebody who may be smoking in my house, which they don't do, but . . . Mr. Chairman, this idea is as crazy to me as the federal Liberals allowing for the use of medicinal marijuana, a drug that is illegal to sell and possess. Clearly, we are much more rational than the federal Liberals.

Another situation where it may not be practical to restrict smoking is in lounges. Lounges are places where only people who are over the age of 18 are allowed. We purposefully restrict minors from entering these areas because we want adults to be able to have a place to interact with other adults, a place where there are no children. Well, in these places adults are free to make adult choices, like to have a drink or perhaps a cigarette. We allow adults to buy cigarettes, and we give adults a place to be away from children. Maybe then we should be allowing adults to smoke there. Or is it better for adults to choose to smoke in their homes where there may be children present? It is possible that adults go to these lounges to have a place to smoke away from their children.

A proposed amendment to Bill 201, which I reluctantly support, is with section 5(3). The wording I'm referring to states that a person may smoke in a public place not referred to in subsections 1 or 2 if minors are prohibited from entering or being in the public place by reason of a licence under the Gaming and Liquor Act. This is a situation where, again, the individual business owners will be able to choose whether they allow smoking.

There are already lounges in Alberta where the owners have decided not to allow smoking, and that's awesome. Many of these do well because they attract a nonsmoking crowd. But the key is giving those lounge owners a choice. By giving the owners the choice as to whether they should allow smoking or not, we are allowing those businesses to operate according to their own circumstances.

Mr. Chairman, let me give you an example of what I mean. Let's imagine a lounge located in a town where, say, 90 per cent of the residents do not smoke. In fact, these residents who don't smoke actually hate smoking, and they hate having to breathe second-hand smoke. So by allowing smoking in this lounge for the few per cent of people who actually do smoke in this town, the lounge owner will be hurting his business' chances for success. Naturally, this lounge will become nonsmoking without government interference. This is because going nonsmoking would be a prudent business practice for the lounge owner. The owner will have more customers by not allowing smoking than by allowing it. So we should be allowing lounge owners to make these decisions on their own, and that's why I can support this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, before I conclude my remarks, I would like to add another comment about a proposed amendment. Section 11(2) would read "where there is a conflict between a provision of this Act and a provision of a municipal bylaw that regulates, restricts or prohibits smoking, the more restrictive provision prevails." The fact is that many municipalities around the province already have smoking bylaws in force. If it is not the individual business owners who decide whether smoking should be allowed, then it should be municipalities or individual communities. Again, the local body

knows best. The reason for this is that every community is different and should therefore decide for itself how far to go with their smoking legislation.

This is a much more democratic and representative method. In Drayton Valley, where I come from, the mayor and council decided to go smoke-free, and that's awesome. I'm happy to live there. I like this amendment because it essentially says that the province is going to have this general piece of legislation that protects children and respects choice, but municipalities are able to administer stronger legislation. Usually a municipality would choose to implement a tougher smoking bylaw if it has the support of the community. This is the democratic process at work, and it makes more sense than having the provincial government dictating how people should run their businesses and how municipalities should operate.

Mr. Chairman, Alberta has always been a land of choice where its citizens have historically been provided with choice. As we can see by Alberta's strong position in Canada, this approach has worked very well. Albertans have proven that when left on their own, they will make the best choices.

I supported Bill 201 in its original form; however, the amendments put forward seem to give us a balance between protecting the health of children and allowing the freedom of choice to be strong among adults. The bill is not going to be as strong as originally anticipated, but at least it is a step and, like I said, a big step in the right direction. So I feel that we must move forward with this. For these reasons I urge all my colleagues to join me in support of the proposed amendments to Bill 201.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm rising to speak on the amendments to Bill 201 in their entirety, I suppose. I'm rising reluctantly to have to say these words because, you know, for a while I really believed that this Assembly had a real sea change, so to speak, in dealing with smoking in public places legislation. The strength of the original Bill 201, which we were very prepared, myself and my colleagues, to support was very refreshing, and I think that most Albertans would have agreed with it in its previous condition. But, then, seeing these amendments appear today, it's disturbing, and I think it's disturbing to the majority of Albertans as well because we were expecting that Alberta was going to move along with the rest of North America in putting some real anti-smoking legislation into place in public places.

As we move along in this afternoon, I think that the flurry and swirling of misconceptions and confusions that I'm hearing from different hon. members is just getting worse, and quite frankly perhaps we would be better off to say less about this amendment, but you know there are just some glaring things that need to be addressed here. First of all, I think we all know the reason why smoking in public places is being targeted in such a specific way, and I don't want to have to go over that again. It's the leading cause of cancer in our society, it's costing us hundreds of millions of dollars in health care, and as we say, we're losing our family and loved ones prematurely as a result of smoking. It's not just the people who are smoking that it's causing those difficulties with, but it's the people who have to live in that smoking environment.

So what we were trying to do with Bill 201 – and that's why I support it – is limit that second-hand smoke from drifting out and poisoning people who are not smokers but have to be in that environment. Now, that is a very large distinction, Mr. Chairman,

from other forms of debilitation that some other members have mentioned here. One does not get fat from being in proximity to fattening foods, say, for example, right? You have to eat it in order to have that problem. But with smoking, you just are breathing, and you have no choice in that matter. So, I mean, arguments like that are not only spurious, I would suggest, but misleading as well and do us no favours here in this Assembly.

One of the issues that I would like to bring up as well, Mr. Chairman, is that almost all other jurisdictions that are addressing smoking of tobacco in public places are realizing that you have to go the full way to make it effective. So, you know, at the end of the day I can't help thinking that I'm going to be standing and speaking on this again some time in the future, making a proper ban on smoking in public places. Why don't we just do it now? Why don't we bite the bullet? Lord knows we're all democratically elected here. Look at the statistics. If you're worried about getting elected again, the vast majority of individuals in this province do not smoke and would welcome Bill 201 as it stands without these amendments. So don't worry about not getting elected. Even in the rural areas people will thank us for it later.

The role of the legislator in this province is to make the best decisions for all of the people in the province, right? We're not meant to look too narrowly and focus on some small group that might be pushing forward their thing, but rather we're looking for the broadest possible democratic representation for the best interests of all people. Amending Bill 201 goes against that fundamental principle. Again, I suggest that we're going to end up coming back to this in a few years, so what's the point? Let's do it. Let's do it now.

4:10

In terms of smoking in workplaces, again it's a question of majority, and it's a question of the vast majority of individuals in a workplace that are not smoking. You know, in terms of defining what a workplace is I would suggest that that is part of what the legislation can do. So a previous member, for example, mentioned, you know, banning an individual from smoking in his commercial truck or vehicle. I mean, that's absolutely, patently outside of this whole thing, and it does not exist in the bill as it stands. Certainly you can define those parameters quite easily through other legislation of what a workplace actually is.

Again, some of these comments on anti-smoking and freedom of expression and what are they going to do next, I mean, those are only misleading sorts of ways of taking up time rather than dealing with the issue which is to keep this bill as it is without the amendments, and I guarantee that all Albertans will look back and be very proud of us. I know that it's difficult. I'm starting to smell a whipped vote in this whole thing, but let's look past that and look ahead a little bit. Be forward thinking, Mr. Chairman and all of my members, and let's vote for the bill without the amendments.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, a lot of discussion today is about representing your constituents, and that's exactly what I'm here to do. These amendments are absolutely on the mark to reinforce the bylaw that's in the constituency where I live and grew up and have raised my family. That's in Whitecourt. The community is the only municipality in my constituency that chose to put in place a smoking bylaw. The other 27 communities have not – 27 communities have not. But these other communities

right now are in many cases really concerned. They just have one restaurant, one hotel, one legion, or one community hall. Many of my small operators are very nervous with this legislation. So am I. I'm married to a smoker.

Smoking, without a doubt, is a bad habit, and I hope that some day all Albertans that smoke quit, period. The fact is that smoking is legal, and to enact a bill that prohibits an adult to smoke in an adult establishment is going too far at this time. I do believe that in many parts of Alberta it's the will of the people of these communities to enact smoking bylaws of different nature. I'm supportive of these amendments because it continues to recognize the voice of local municipalities and makes a bold move to protect our youth from second-hand smoke.

I had a conversation on the weekend with a fellow from Whitecourt. His name was Brian Elko, from my constituency, and he stated that the government of Alberta entered into a partnership arrangement with hoteliers in this province for the operation of video lottery terminals and the collection of the 5 per cent hotel tax, soon to be 4 per cent tourism levy. Well, under this arrangement the hoteliers have operated, balanced, and provided the manpower and daily cash flow and have collected and remitted to the Provincial Treasurer substantial revenue generated by these two programs.

He further stated that Bill 201 as now proposed, to totally ban smoking in all facilities throughout the province, is like a slap in the face to our joint partnership in these programs. Revenues from these two sources will severely adversely affect both our businesses and the Alberta treasury if this bill is allowed to go forward as now proposed with a total ban on all smoking facilities. He shares the concerns of those who wish to restrict exposing minors to alcohol and tobacco product. That's why he wholeheartedly supports a proposal to ban smoking in a facility where minors are present.

He's absolutely supportive of the town of Whitecourt's recent smoking bylaw, which reflects this approach to restricting smoking to adults-only facilities. Brian asked me, when this bill is brought before the House, that provisions exist for smoking to be permissible in bars, lounges, and specified smoking guest rooms. Again, he felt that if this bill should be passed as now proposed, without adult-only facilities exempted, the impact would be felt not just by hoteliers but also on the two government programs in which we partner.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On this side of the House we were expecting some amendments to be made to this bill, but we weren't expecting it to be essentially gutted, as we've seen here. It's been really eviscerated, more than anything else.

I'd just like to address a few of the points that some of the members have brought up here. I think there was some discussion that the law would restrict someone from smoking in the cab of their truck. Well, this is ludicrous, okay? It's not in there, it never was in there, and to think that this law as it stands would have made someone a criminal for smoking in their truck is absolutely ridiculous.

There was also some comment that the bill would force people to stop smoking. Entirely untrue. There's nothing in this bill that says you can't smoke. It says: you can't smoke here. There's a major difference between saying, "You cannot smoke" and "You cannot smoke in this room." Major differences there.

I believe it was the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar who said that this was a first step. This is not really a first step. I mean, it's basically status quo. What we have here is a patchwork quilt of laws

regarding smoking, and we're keeping it. It's an ugly patchwork quilt, it doesn't work, it looks awful, but this is what we're keeping essentially. Now, why don't we take the big step instead of this proposed baby step and go all the way and be a smoke-free province? This just doesn't make any sense to me at all.

I believe the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar was also talking about a shop, like a mechanic's place or something along those lines. What happens if he has an apprentice who is 16 years old? I mean, does he have to ban smoking in his place until the guy turns 17 or 18, and then they can light up?

Now, this provision about 18 year olds, I don't understand that either. I mean, so you're protected from second-hand smoke for the first 17 years, 11 months, and 364 days of your life, and then the split second you turn 18, well, that's okay; you can start walking into a bar filled with smoke. There are just so many holes in this thing now; it's just absolutely amazing to me. It was a good bill as it stood, and now it's just not much of a bill at all.

The main place that the average Albertan runs into cigarette smoke is a bar, restaurant, casino, that sort of place. Not that I go to casinos, but any of those places that's where you're going to run into second-hand smoke.

An Hon. Member: You don't smoke either.

Mr. Tougas: No, I don't smoke either. That's right.

But this is where we're running into it now. Where you're going to run into it is those locations. Now they've been given carte blanche to continue with the smoking. It's just an amazing thing to me, actually.

The fact is that we are moving inexorably towards a full public smoking ban in North America, in Alberta, Edmonton, across Canada. It's going to happen, and you can put up these little changes to it and try to stop it, but it's not going to stop.

I don't support these amendments at all, and I think we should really maintain the bill exactly as it is. I'm very disappointed that this has been changed, and I certainly hope that the government members will vote this down.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Government Services, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

4:20

Mr. Lund: Mr. Chairman, it is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to make a few comments in Committee of the Whole on Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act. Just to set the stage a bit for myself, I'm not a smoker. I never was. No one in my family smokes, no one in my immediate family smokes, but certainly there are a number of friends that smoke, so I am around some smoke. On our farm we don't allow any of the hired men to smoke in any of the vehicles and/or on any of the machines. Of course, that, once again, can be accomplished. That's one of the reasons that I support the amendments because the way the bill was written before, an employer didn't have any option. It was black and white: you just cannot smoke in this location. But with the amendments now an employer can do what we have been doing for some period of time.

I find it rather amusing when people talk about: isn't it amazing that you're protected up to 18, but then beyond 18 there's no protection? Well, I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that in my own case, unless I'm with a number of people that insist on going into a facility that has smoke, I simply won't go in there. Nobody's forcing someone to go in just because you're 18. You know, I thought we believed in having some choices, and certainly I exercise that choice.

Now, I hear people talking about: well, 80 per cent of the people want this ban to be in place. Well, if that's true, then why is it that all of the businesses that currently have smoking don't move over and ban smoking? Their business should pick up. I think it's very simple, that it would take care of itself in that form.

We've also heard a number of comments about the number of people that support it. I was elected and continued to win all of the polls in my constituency because I've always believed that I'm here to represent the people that elected me, and I'm fortunate that in the last municipal election in Rocky Mountain House there was a vote. There were three questions on the ballot. There was a plebiscite on whether there should be smoking or not. It's unfortunate that there were three questions and that one of them was not: should there be no control at all?

But I just want to go through these because it's quite interesting. It's true that only 30 per cent of the eligible people voted, but it was well advertised. This was a big issue, so there was a pretty good turnout relative to what there has been in the municipal elections in Rocky. I've also got to make the point that the rural area didn't get in on this vote, and they were extremely upset because they were actually quite afraid that Rocky was going to have a smoking ban.

I'll run through these. The first question was: the town of Rocky Mountain House should propose a bylaw to prohibit smoking in any indoor place accessible to the public. Thirty-six per cent voted for that one. The second one: the town of Rocky Mountain House should propose a bylaw to prohibit smoking in any indoor place accessible to the public where individuals under the age of 18 are allowed. Twenty-one per cent voted for that one. The last one: the town of Rocky Mountain House should maintain its present policy where each individual business regulates smoking in their establishment. Forty-three per cent voted for that one.

What this all tells me, Mr. Chairman, is that, yes, the people in Rocky Mountain House believe that there should be some form of control on smoking in public places. Certainly, if you add the numbers, you'll find that the majority of them, really, I would suggest, 64 per cent, are suggesting that it should be a place where, if people under the age of 18 are allowed in that facility, there should be no smoking.

These amendments that we've got before us today fit right into what the people in Rocky Mountain House said in their plebiscite, which is not a poll. It's a plebiscite. The people had an opportunity to come voluntarily. They weren't phoned. They came voluntarily to voice their opinion, and this is what they said. So I think that the amendments really, really improve the bill. I've heard some comment that it doesn't go as far as some would like. Yes, we acknowledge that, of course. And there are going to be those people that don't believe there should be any type of control on it.

I like the amendment dealing with the municipalities as well. You know, it's interesting. People talk about it being a patchwork when municipalities can pass their own bylaws, but we do that in so many areas. We allow the municipalities to decide, which is good because now you've got the local people making a vote right in their own municipality on how they want to see their municipality run. Once again I've got to go back to the comments about it being a patchwork. Well, in fact, if there are so many people out there that think that there should be a total ban on smoking, then the municipalities or the business people in those municipalities should make sure that the bylaws fit into having them represent these locations that have absolutely no smoking.

There was somebody on the other side that made a comment about a whip being on or something along that line. Well, I can tell you that there's no whip on this for me. If there was a whip that said that the amendments were to be defeated, I guess I'd really have a

problem with it. The fact is that these amendments in my opinion set the benchmark across the province. I would really urge people that would like to see less smoking – I would like to see less smoking – let's get out there and do the education thing. Let's talk to the young people, really discourage them from ever getting started smoking, in fact, so that they don't, when they get much older, find it very difficult to quit.

Thinking of my own constituency, when I first saw this bill, I was thinking of the Legion where a number of elderly people have done this for years: they've come down to the Legion, they have a suds or two, they visit, they play cards, they do all those things. But lo and behold, they do smoke as well. I would find it very difficult if we all of a sudden said to those folks: "No. We know best. This is really bad for you. You're in your 80s, well up in your 80s, and your health is pretty good, so we're going to make sure that you don't smoke." I think that that is absolutely going in the wrong direction.

So I would urge members to support these amendments.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Minister for Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll make my comments reasonably short because we have been debating these amendments now for quite some time. We've explored quite a number of areas, quite a number of points of view, I think, and I'm sure that there are more to come, more amendments to debate as well on this, so let's not eat up all the time on this.

I do want to say, referring back to the comments of the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, who said that it's better to do something than to do nothing, that doing something wrong, doing something in half measures is not necessarily better than doing nothing. We have a patchwork in this province. We have a number of municipalities in this province – the hon. minister's constituency may not be one of them – who in fact for quite some time now have been calling on the government of Alberta to do something about making a consistent smoking law that applies equally, equitably to everybody across this province. Still the government hasn't done it. They've left it up to the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to show the foresight – I would suggest to this House the courage – to bring this bill forward, and they now seek to amend it in such a way that it pulls the teeth out of that bill.

Look, this is not about protecting the rights of the smoker. This is not a rights issue. You do not have a right to smoke. It is a legal product, yes. So provided you comply with the laws, if you're a smoker, around where you can smoke, how old you must be before the law recognizes that you can smoke, and so on and so forth, you have the same, I suppose, privilege to smoke that you have to drive a car once you get your driver's licence. But it's a privilege, not a right, and let's not confuse those two issues. It is a privilege, and it's a privilege that exists only to the extent that the smoker is willing to comply with the laws of the land, whether those are the laws of Canada, the laws of Alberta, or the bylaws of every individual city and town in this province, because this House has yet to work up consensus around what smoking control legislation in this province should look like.

4:30

This is not about protecting the smoker. This is about protecting the worker. This is not about protecting the 83-year-old veteran in a legion hall who has managed, as do many smokers who live to the age of 83, not to develop health problems from smoking: good luck, good genes, whatever. This is about protecting someone much younger, potentially without the same great genes and the same great

luck, who's standing behind the bar pouring the beer for the veteran in the legion hall. It's about protecting that worker, and we can't make exceptions to that. We mustn't make exceptions to that because regardless of their age, regardless of their workplace, regardless of what city or town or village or hamlet they live in, all workers deserve the same protection from a known carcinogen and a very hazardous substance, second-hand smoke.

So I don't support this amendment. There are clauses within this amendment that I might support should they have been presented on their own, but this is presented as a package with some good ideas in it to encourage us all to vote for the very, very bad idea, which is that we should create exceptions to a province-wide, uniform, equitable ban on smoking in public places and smoking in workplaces.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed had the right idea when he brought this bill in. This amendment is the wrong idea. I will vote against it, and I hope that everybody else in this House will too. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, I voted against this bill in second reading even though I supported the intent of the bill, but I couldn't support the bill in the form that it was in. Therefore, I'm quite happy that these amendments came forward because I believe that we do need to protect our children, but I also believe that we have to protect choices and choices of adults in this province.

You know, I think that I can step up to the plate and anyone else in here can and make a choice of not going into a premises or going into one. If I were to go out and purchase a piece of land and invest \$2 million or \$3 million dollars building a roadhouse, a restaurant, a whatever, I agree that we have to protect our children. Therefore, if I'm going to allow smoking in there, we can't have any children in there.

So when you say, "Well, I have a place. I'm only allowing people over 18 in. No one has to come into my premises. They can go down the street." If I as a businessman all of a sudden see that I'm not getting any business because I allow smoking, I'll probably quickly change my sign. But the big thing is that I've allowed people that choice. I've allowed people the choice that if they invest \$5 million, let them make the decisions on their destiny, on how they want to achieve their end.

I'm going to give you an example of that, Mr. Chairman. I think that I first started going to Disneyland in about 1979. At that time when you walked anywhere you wanted in Disneyland, you could smoke. As the years went by, when my children were small – the first time that I took them there was probably in the mid-80s – you all of a sudden noticed that not very many people were smoking. And probably by 1999 or 2000, the last time I'd been to Disneyland, there was smoking hardly anywhere. The very next year I got on an airplane and took my kids to Florida to Disney World, and the tourist situation there was different. They were bringing Europeans over, and you could even smoke in lineups in Disney World in 2001. That may have changed today.

I guess what I'm getting at is: we have a wonderful, beautiful province here also. We're pushing to have more tourism and bring visitors in to show them our beautiful province, and I think that we have to allow people that cater to those visitors, whether they're from out of country or out of province or wherever they're from, choices, allow them to have choices and make choices. This bill

actually really allows choices, and it also protects our children.

I think that's the main issue here: protect our children and allow people choices. And if you don't want second-hand smoke or you don't like second-hand smoke, you have the choice not to go into the premises that allows it. So I don't think I have to go on and on about that. I think everybody realizes my point of view.

I will support these amendments because I think that they're very good to the bill and they keep an open mind and open choices for Albertans to follow. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and participate in this debate this afternoon on amendment A1 to Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. Certainly, I'm surprised at how this bill, this fine piece of legislation which passed comfortably at second reading in this Assembly – I could stand corrected, but I think that there were only three hon. members that stood against Bill 201 in its original form.

Now we have this amendment, which one would think is the Smoke-free Places Act Lite, Mr. Chairman. That's the only way to describe it because we have taken very sound legislation and lightened it up.

Rev. Abbott: Less is more.

Mr. MacDonald: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar is talking in the background about less is more. Well, this is a case where less is not more. I'm sorry; I cannot accept that. This is an exception, and it's an exception that should not be allowed.

I can't for the life of me understand why the amendment A1 has been introduced at this time. I'm going through the bill, and I'm listening to the debate, and I'm wondering what influence the gambling industry has had in the production of these amendments. Hopefully they've had none, but whenever one looks at some of the implications that are going to come about as a result of these amendments, you have to look at who would benefit from this.

Certainly – I'm not going to be generic and say the gaming industry because it is a gambling industry – the gambling industry in this province is changing, and there are more and more First Nations people interested in having casinos and gambling places on their property. They are, as far as I know, totally exempt from this bill. Is this bill now being watered down so that casinos anywhere in the province that are not on First Nations land would then be able to have the same smoking rules or laws as those that will be constructed and operated on First Nations land? If this is what this is all about, I think hon. members across the way, and in particular the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, have some further clarification to make at Committee of the Whole in regard to amendment A1.

4:40

This is a series of exceptions that should not be allowed. As soon as we allow one exception, we will have requests for more. Where would the exceptions end, Mr. Chairman, once we begin allowing them? If we water down this bill now, further dilution will occur later I'm afraid. If this was asbestos, for instance, another carcinogen or some other workplace hazard, we wouldn't even be having these discussions about these exceptions. Smoking in the workplace is a workplace hazard and should be treated as one, no exceptions whatsoever. We should remember that this isn't about protecting the

smoker. This is about protecting the worker and all Albertans. We cannot allow exceptions, because we need to create a level playing field for all businesses.

Now, I heard this afternoon in the discussion around amendment A1 as to how we had to respect the bottom line for businesses. That's noteworthy, but the businesses will survive, and they will prosper in this province with the original intent of Bill 201 and not the intent of this amendment. By allowing exceptions, we're placing different businesses in different categories, and we are picking winners and losers. Again, this is something this government has said. I realize that this bill is a private member's bill, but this government has stated that what they're not interested in doing is picking winners and losers.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, a complete ban is necessary to level the playing field for all businesses. With that I will cede the floor to another hon. member of this Assembly. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is the first time that I've had the opportunity to speak not only to the bill, but I will limit my comments, I guess, to the amendment as I should based on the rules.

Mr. Chairman, smoking is obviously a terrible thing to become addicted to, and I know that from personal experience as someone who has struggled with it for years and years and years and continue to do so. I made the choice as a parent that I would not smoke in my home, that I would not smoke in front of my children, that I would not smoke anywhere where other people's children were going to be. I did that because I think it's fairly well known that if you come from a family of smokers, it's a lot more likely that you may become addicted to it as well, simply, I think, not so much from the second-hand smoke aspect of it but more from, you know, we do what our father does in a lot of ways. I'm actually quite proud that I do a lot of the things that my father did, but that's not one of them that I'm proud of.

I think it's important we recognize that, as representatives, this is something that will affect the entire province of Alberta. We all represent our individual areas and our constituencies, and I'd have to say that in my constituency overwhelmingly the constituents want us to act on some form of a province-wide basis that the municipalities can build from.

I think we've done that with these amendments, Mr. Chairman. Both of the major municipalities in my community have smoking bylaws that will probably be stronger than this particular legislation, so those bylaws will be the bylaws to be followed based on the amendments or based on the bill. I think the residents are comfortable with the bylaws that have been passed, and the businesses are adapting to those bylaws.

I'd have to agree with some of the comments that have been made by some of my colleagues that the marketplace will adjust the smoking habits of a number of individuals. I can remember, Mr. Chairman, travelling quite a bit as I did in my previous existence as an international trade executive. When I started travelling at length in South America, as an example, all of the planes had smoking on them. I found it quite interesting that I didn't really appreciate having to sit on a plane and to be in the smoking section, although I'd still every once in a while have a cigarette on a four- or five-hour flight. But it didn't take very long for the market to dictate to the provider of that service, the airlines, that a nonsmoking flight was a better way to go from a business perspective. Certainly, I think that

has kind of shown us the path, if we can manage this situation as we did with seat belts. It's a good idea to wear your seat belt. It's a good idea not to smoke. It's a good idea not to smoke where kids are because we want to protect kids, and that's really what this whole issue is all about: protecting kids, Mr. Chairman.

At the same time, we need to make sure that we are not inhibiting the choice that a municipality may want to make. We've heard from some of our colleagues where municipalities have had plebiscites on this issue and have said that they don't want to go down this road. So I think that we need to establish a base from which the municipalities can build. I think a lot of the municipalities are in a position where they may look at this legislation and say: that's as far as we want to go. Some may look at this legislation and say: we want to add our own bylaw that is going to be stronger than this.

As the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Mr. Chairman, I've also heard from a number of rural communities, and a number of our colleagues have talked about what this may do to some of our rural communities and our tourism industry. I think it's important that we understand and have some form of cognizance of what this may do to rural Alberta, where maybe there's only one restaurant in town. Maybe the curling rink has always been historically the place that people go. They go upstairs, and they're going to have a cigarette up there because there's alcohol served. I know that many of the members have been in the local curling rink, and most people understand that if they're going to go upstairs, there's going to be smoking there, there's going to be alcohol served, and the kids don't go up there.

I think it's important that we understand that rural Alberta has a lot of common sense to it, as does urban Alberta, and I think we need to let those municipalities, those institutions, really, make that decision based on the market, based on what the residents of the community are looking to have.

So, Mr. Chairman, I guess very briefly to put my comments kind of in summary, I agree that we need to do something. I agree that the amendments that are being proposed here will make this a much better blanket-type legislation for the province from which municipalities can then build on should they so choose, and in that regard I will be supporting the amendments.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. For the past 40 years smoking was far more acceptable because the consequences were not made public. Moreover, there has been plenty of advertising in magazines, on billboards, during sporting events, et cetera, that directly and indirectly encourages smokers.

Smoking is viewed in a different light today. Depending on who you ask, there are groups formed who try to eliminate smoking. There are many commercial interests who want to retain smoking. Some try to argue that smoking laws are an infringement on personal freedom. Some argue that they have the right to a smoke-free workplace.

In the future smoking will likely be viewed in an even different way than today. Smokers will likely be penalized; for example, different health care premiums, different medical coverage. Many smokers will feel ostracized as it may become unacceptable in many social circles to smoke.

There have been many, many intense efforts to help stop young people from beginning to smoke or pushing for the selling of cigarettes to anyone to become illegal. I refuse to go into restaurants or bars where smoking is allowed. Some of these places I would like

to go to because they are known for the good foods they serve. I ask for nonsmoking taxicabs. I ask for nonsmoking hotel rooms when I travel. I resent having to walk through the front door of a business where a lot of smokers are gathered. I don't smoke, and we don't allow smoking in our homes.

4:50

It is difficult for someone to stop smoking. I have a close friend who has had two cancer operations and is still unable to stop smoking. He is constantly apologizing for continuing to smoke. He goes to great lengths to tell people how he is controlling the habit. He is a sociable individual and I'm sure would dearly like to stop. He's an example of just how terrible this addiction can become.

Mr. Chairman, we all pay higher taxes to cover the medical effects of smoking on people in this province. We need more doctors, hospital facilities, and medical staff. We pay higher insurance premiums as a result of smokers who have caused fires, fire damage. We pay higher education costs for the programs in place to try to stop people from smoking.

Those who chose not to smoke have their health impaired by second-hand smoke. We are unwilling partners in unethical practices when our government invests in tobacco companies for profit, for example the heritage fund.

Workplace smoking bans really work in protecting employees. According to a joint study by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the Rosswell Park Cancer Institute, workplace smoking bans really do work in improving the air quality and protecting employees. In July of the year 2003 New York state introduced a ban on smoking in indoor workplaces and public places as well. According to this study, the ban greatly improved the air quality and reduced exposure of second-hand smoke.

Mr. Chairman, a workplace smoking ban does not hurt businesses. According to the New York City department of health and mental hygiene, in the year 1998 all California restaurants and bars went smoke free. According to the California Board of Equalization, the sales at places selling beer, wine, and liquor increased every quarter in 1998, 1999, and in the year 2000, the last period for which data are available. What's more is the sale increases at all other types of retail outlets. The experience in other jurisdictions is that once a workplace smoking ban is in place, support for it grows among bar patrons.

Again according to the New York department of health and mental hygiene, smoke-free workplace legislation has become increasingly popular. While 65 per cent of bar patrons in California strongly or somewhat approved of the law in 1998, almost three-quarters, 73 per cent, felt that way by 2000. Also, by 2000 87 per cent of bar patrons in California reported that they were as likely or more likely to visit bars since they had become smoke free.

A province-wide workplace smoking ban could even be beneficial to businesses. Businesses with smoke-free policies experience less absenteeism when nonsmoking employees are no longer exposed to second-hand smoke, which can trigger asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses. Employers also see lower housekeeping and maintenance costs because they no longer need to clean ashtrays, sweep up cigarette butts, replace burnt carpeting, or clean fabrics and other materials nearly as often.

According to Health Canada, in addition to the cost benefits studies show that smoke-free policies reduce costs for cleaning and fire insurance, and there is less damage to equipment and furniture. It is often argued that service industry businesses such as restaurants, bars, and hotels will suffer if smoke-free policies are introduced. However, studies in Canada, the United States, and Australia all show that smoking bans do not result in lost business. Indeed, every

objective study using official sales tax data shows that smoke-free policies have a neutral or positive benefit in the long term for businesses such as hotels and restaurants. Smoking cessation programs in the workplace may also achieve substantial cost savings as well as productivity benefits. Workers who have stopped smoking for at least one year lose significantly fewer days of work and have fewer admissions to hospital than those who continue to smoke.

I will vote for this bill only if it offers a total workplace ban without exceptions. As soon as we allow one exception, we will have requests for more. Where do exceptions end? Once we begin allowing them . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the allocated time for you has run out, I regret.

The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm privileged to rise today to continue debate on Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. Today we're discussing some important amendments that I believe need to go forward. If passed, these amendments will allow people to smoke in a public place if people under the age of 18 are prohibited entry. As a result, the owner of a restaurant would then have the option of allowing smoking or not within their establishment. Under the proposed amendments the people's right to choose would be protected. Without these amendments this Assembly would be restricting the rights of Albertans.

I would point out that the hon. member opposite here indicated earlier that a person does not have a right to smoke. Wouldn't it be lovely if the world were so black and white, and we could take such decisions so easily? The fact of the matter is that governments have to deal with conflicting rights and conflicting interests and find compromise solutions, and I believe that's what this bill represents. I would point out to that hon. member that you don't have a right to enter a bar either.

Personal choice is an important element of our society, Mr. Chairman, and something that this government supports. The role of government should be to enhance personal choice and freedom, not hinder it unnecessarily. It is important that business be allowed to operate without unnecessary restrictions on the choices that they can offer their customers. Businesses should have the ability to choose whether or not they wish to operate as a smoking establishment. The marketplace will then dictate whether a business succeeds or fails. Allowing business the choice between allowing minors in their premises or allowing smoking in their premises will ensure that supply and demand determine the success of a business, not the government. If there is no demand for bars or restaurants that allow smoking, then I'm sure that such establishments will no longer exist. It is doubtful that a businessman would continue to allow people to smoke in his workplace if no customers entered that workplace because it was designated as an establishment that allowed smoking.

5:00

Despite the fears the opposition seems to have of a free-market economy, I would not want to live in a society that does not have a free-market economy. Mr. Chairman, the marketplace should determine the success or failure of a business, not the government. That is why it's very important for these amendments to be passed in their entirety.

Mr. Chairman, the government does have an obligation to protect

to some extent the health of all Albertans. Skydiving can be dangerous, for example, but we do not prevent people from doing it. We can create regulations to increase the safety of people engaging in that activity. The amendments proposed by the hon. member share this logic by preventing children from entering areas where smoking is permitted.

Every year the Department of Health and Wellness spends a significant amount of money educating Albertans about the negative risks that are associated with exposure to second-hand smoke. From radio and TV advertising to classroom information, every Albertan has been educated to understand the risk of smoking. The government has a responsibility to people to ensure that they are aware of potential risk before they are exposed to that risk. After providing people with information, they can then make informed decisions. This is where personal responsibility enters the equation. The role of government is to provide the necessary information and allow for adults to make an informed decision as to whether or not it is safe to work or visit at facilities that allow smoking. You must be personally responsible for your actions as the government cannot and should not be involved in every aspect of your life.

The government does have responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. In regard to second-hand smoke, children may lack the information necessary and the ability to make informed decisions about whether or not they are safe entering an establishment that allows smoking. It is already illegal for minors to purchase or possess cigarettes, so it makes sense that they be prohibited from entering facilities which allow smoking.

Mr. Chairman, the more laws that are made, the fewer freedoms remain. Personal responsibility is equally as important to the protection of choice as government intervention is. Government is not designed to solve all the ills of society. As government becomes more intrusive in regulating behaviour, it creates more problems than it solves. Gerald Ford once said that if the government is big enough to give you everything you want, it is big enough to take away everything you have. It's important to remember this sentiment when we discuss these amendments on Bill 201.

In its unamended form, Bill 201 leaves no room for personal choice. By amending 201, we can allow for citizens and entrepreneurs alike to make the choice about what is in their own best interest. I firmly believe that individuals are best able to determine their own course of action. Amending this bill, Mr. Chairman, to include allowances for managers and municipalities to decide the smoking issue still protects the children of Alberta. Children will not be allowed in a smoking establishment.

The proposed amendments should be adopted by this Assembly. The long-term goal of reducing smoking is something that I am supportive of. However, I am uncomfortable with the government being overly aggressive and interfering with personal choice. I believe that these amendments will protect children, help reduce smoking over the long term, and preserve the integrity of Alberta's free-market economy.

Mr. Chairman, I would point out that I believe I am acting on behalf of my constituents in taking the stance that I have. As I pointed out to some of the proponents of the smoking bylaw in Peace River, sometimes when you go for all or nothing, you get nothing. I don't deny that there's an evolution going on in society with respect to smoking, but it's far from complete. Smoking is a legal activity, and I believe that the compromise proposed in these amendments represents a fair and reasonable and commendable approach.

In closing, I would ask all members to support these amendments. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My understanding is that we're going to be under time restraints, so I would ask that this friendly amendment be distributed to everybody so they can look at it.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, we still have an amendment on the floor, so we have to deal with it.

Mr. Hinman: I'm just going to speak to it. This is just something . . .

The Deputy Chair: We need to resolve the amendment that's before us before we can introduce a new amendment, unless your amendment is a subamendment to what we have before us.

Mr. Hinman: It is.

The Deputy Chair: Is it?

Mr. Hinman: No. I'm not putting that amendment forward. I'll just speak to it, and people are free to pick it up.

The Deputy Chair: You cannot speak to a new amendment.

Mr. Hinman: Okay. I'll speak to this amendment that we're talking about right now.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Even if we were to pass the original bill without the amendments, we would still be failing to protect the most vulnerable in our society. The thing that I'm most concerned about here is that we need to protect those who can't protect themselves. We've had some very good points brought up with parents who say they don't smoke around their children, they don't smoke in the house and those areas. A complete workforce ban would be an honourable thing to be working toward, but it seems quite evident that we're not going to achieve that, so we need to make compromises. We're stuck in our society here in a situation where we have a legalized substance that's both addictive and carcinogenic, and we're trying to deal with that in the free market because it is a legalized substance.

The comments that I would like to make are in regard to 3(a), where it says, "No person shall smoke in the following places." Then in the amendment in 5(3)(a) it refers to: "A person may smoke in a public place or workplace or part of a public place or workplace if the manager of the public place or workplace . . ." Then it goes on to give some designated reasoning there. I believe that we need to change that wording and to change it in such a way that it would say: a person may smoke in a public place or workplace or part of a public place or workplace where minors are prohibited by law. If we were to put that in there for section 5(3), it would therefore be much more conclusive in protecting those who cannot protect themselves. I feel that it would be a good move for third reading for the government to consider putting that in there.

I'm greatly concerned with this substance being able to be used of our own free will in the workplace currently. To be able to eliminate that is good, and I would urge that we consider keeping the bill that was originally brought forward but do understand the problem that it is a legal substance.

The other point that I'd like to make is the point of those who cannot protect themselves, and those are minors again. I very much would urge this government to make it an offence to smoke around minors and therefore protect them. Just as we protect them with seat belts and we protect them with bicycle helmets, we should protect them and make it an offence for anyone to smoke around minors in Alberta.

With that, I'll sit down and let the vote go forward. Thank you.

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

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have spoken in support of the principle of Bill 201 before, and I would like to speak again on the subject of smoking. I had a brother who died early because of disease caused by smoking. He stopped smoking when he realized it was bad, but he was short by two years of seeing his daughter graduate as a medical doctor. It was a very unfortunate situation in the family.

During the previous Legislature I had the honour of carrying the government bill to increase tobacco tax as a preventive measure to keep people from smoking. My preference is to ban smoking in public places and workplaces. This is to protect people from suffering the second-hand smoke impact, particularly protecting people who have not much choice. However, changes in society need transition. From what I've learned in life and from lessons of history, many human behaviours can only be changed effectively permanently by evolution and not by revolutionary measures, which politicians love to take and fail miserably. My experience in law-making tells me that there are many ways to get to the objectives, and we cannot rush with legislative half measures as they affect many constituents with different interests across the province.

Mr. Chairman, I never smoked. I drink tea at home, and we do entertain guests at home over cups of tea. At times . . .

5:10

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, but under Standing Order 8(5)(a)(ii) and 8(5)(b), which state that all questions must be decided to conclude debate on a private member's public bill which has received 120 minutes of debate in Committee of the Whole, I must now put the following question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:11 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Committee divided]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

For the motion:

Abbott	Herard	Ouellette
Cao	Horner	Pham
Cardinal	Jablonski	Prins
Cenaiko	Johnston	Renner
Coutts	Liepert	Rogers
Ducharme	Lindsay	Snelgrove
Dunford	Lougheed	Stelmach
Fritz	Lund	Stevens
Graydon	Magnus	Strang
Griffiths	McClellan	Tarchuk
Groeneveld	Mitzel	VanderBurg
Haley	Oberle	

Against the motion:

Agnihotri	Flaherty	Miller, R.
Backs	Forsyth	Pannu
Blakeman	Hinman	Pastoor
Bonko	MacDonald	Swann
Chase	Mar	Taft
Eggen	Martin	Taylor
Elsalhy	Mather	Tougas
Evans	Miller, B.	

Totals: For – 35 Against – 23

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The voice vote indicated that the clauses of Bill 201 as amended were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:25]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

For the motion:

Abbott	Haley	Oberle
Cao	Hinman	Ouellette
Cardinal	Horner	Pham
Cenaiko	Jablonski	Prins
Coutts	Liepert	Renner
Ducharme	Lindsay	Rogers
Dunford	Lougheed	Snelgrove
Evans	Lund	Stelmach
Forsyth	Magnus	Stevens
Fritz	Mar	Strang
Graydon	McClellan	Tarchuk
Griffiths	Mitzel	VanderBurg
Groeneveld		

Against the motion:

Agnihotri	Flaherty	Pannu
Backs	MacDonald	Pastoor
Blakeman	Martin	Swann
Bonko	Mather	Taft
Chase	Miller, B.	Taylor
Eggen	Miller, R.	Tougas
Elsalhy		

Totals: For – 37 Against – 19

[The clauses of Bill 201 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

5:40

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 201. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? Carried.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:41 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 4, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/04/04

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Alberta Ingenuity Fund

503. Mr. Knight moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider the advisability of increasing the value of the Alberta ingenuity fund to \$1 billion over the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years.

[Debate adjourned March 21: Mr. Goudreau speaking]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace? Okay.

Anybody else? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join the discussion surrounding Motion 503, increasing the value of the Alberta ingenuity fund.

Mr. Speaker, Benjamin Franklin once said: "If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it [away] from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." I believe this quotation to be true, and I also believe it applies very well to Alberta's current financial situation.

Alberta is in a good financial position at the moment with strong finances. However, with strong finances come continued requests for funding. Most governments would take this opportunity to spend, fund everyone that asks for money, support absolutely every initiative, but this should not be the nature of a conservative government. Conservatives should follow concepts like fiscal prudence, responsibility, and accountable spending. Although some spending is definitely needed and planned, we must be very careful in choosing where to spend. We have worked too hard in the past decade to blow our good fortune.

Mr. Speaker, adding \$500 million to the Alberta ingenuity fund is an example of fiscal prudence, it's an example of careful spending, and it is an example of responsible and accountable financial policy. This is especially true for a province that relies so heavily on its natural resources as a source of wealth. Doubling the size of the ingenuity fund doubles the advantage.

The first advantage to grow the ingenuity fund to \$1 billion is that we are essentially using energy revenues to do so. In essence, this gives our province some insurance when good times go bad. If we can no longer rely on our energy revenues and when times really get tough, we will have a billion dollars to have access to. Of course, this is not the full purpose of this fund, but at least this possibility exists for extreme situations.

The second advantage of using energy revenues to add \$500 million to the ingenuity fund is that the money raised by this fund can be invested in science, adding value to our resource base. Thus, the money comes full circle, from energy to science related to energy, and the best part is that we don't actually spend the money to do this.

A great example of how this money is used to add value to Alberta's resources is the scholar program. The purpose of this program is to create strong recruitment packages to help Alberta attract the world's best research leaders or emerging leaders. These

key people strengthen already outstanding research groups through ingenuity centres or build new research programs in strategic areas that benefit the Alberta economy.

For example, funding from the scholar program has recently attracted two research stars to the University of Calgary. Dr. Pedro Pereira Almaso from Venezuela and Dr. Steven Larter from the United Kingdom are working together as coleaders of the new Alberta Ingenuity Centre for In Situ Energy to study improved methods of recovering and upgrading bitumen resources.

Support from the scholar program was also instrumental in bringing three international scholars to the University of Alberta whose work will have a direct impact on Alberta industry. Dr. Steve Kuznicki was recruited as a top senior scientist to develop separation technology that may lead to a cleaner, more efficient oil sands industry. Dr. David Coltman was recruited to Canada from the United Kingdom to research how the development of natural resources impacts our environment, and additional support is expected to attract high-rated German researchers to research agricultural by-products.

In total, the scholar program supports five international scholars with a commitment of \$3.9 million. By doubling the size of the ingenuity fund, this number will also grow. Considering the potentially devastating impact of the Kyoto accord, the importance of these types of research cannot be overstated.

Mr. Speaker, by design the ingenuity fund is very safe. It operates at arm's length from the government, is governed by a board of trustees and headed by a president or CEO. These people work together along with the International Science and Engineering Advisory Council to make decisions as to where the interest from the endowment should go. All research applications are evaluated using a peer review system, and each application is assessed for quality by external experts and a review committee with representatives from Alberta and elsewhere. This is a rigorous process behind every application for funding under the ingenuity fund. It is prudent and responsible, and it produces excellent research and attracts the best people. This creates a snowball effect that benefits all of Alberta's postsecondary institutions, Alberta's economy, and the government. It's truly a win-win situation.

In addition to this, the endowment process is set up so that the fund creates maximum interest. The investment is managed by the investment management division of Alberta Finance. These are professionals whose job it is to ensure that the fund grows at an optimal rate. I am confident that this is a very safe use of the government's money.

The final procedural measure that has been put in place for the ingenuity fund is to ensure that the money is used properly and is accountable. Alberta Ingenuity reports to the public and the government of Alberta through the Minister of Innovation and Science. The fund has an annual report, that is submitted to the Legislative Assembly, and every three years a more comprehensive report is produced. Finally, an international board of review assesses the fund's operation every six years.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see by this process, those that receive funding through the ingenuity fund are the best of the best. They must undergo an impressive amount of scrutiny, and they must produce world-class results. With this type of system in place I cannot think of a more fiscally prudent, responsible place to invest. With these points in mind, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting Motion 503.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I speak in support of the concept of this fund, an ingenuity fund. For far too long Alberta has been dependent on our natural resources, as the hon. member across the way mentioned, and without diversification we're not going to grow.

I had the opportunity along with a number of members to attend the presentation of the Fort McMurray people, and it was a wonderful presentation. There were representatives from health care, from education, and, of course, from a number of the major tar sand oil producers.

One thing painfully obvious, though, is that the producers mentioned the fact they felt that there were at least another hundred years of refineable oil available in the tar sands. The forecasts that I have seen for natural gas, which is used as part of the process for extracting this oil, unfortunately seem to be at the potential of nine years, if that, for gas that's been discovered. Unless we through the ingenuity of this organization come up with alternative methods of extraction, we're going to run out of gas long before we can turn many more barrels of oil. Likewise, we need to be looking through the Ingenuity organization at cleaner ways of producing power.

Kyoto and the problems of Kyoto were mentioned in kind of a disparaging manner. Well, organizations that were represented today – for example, Shell and Suncor, to which I'll add BP Petroleum and Petro-Canada – have already reduced their emissions beyond the level that is required by Kyoto. So we already have technology to reduce CO₂ emissions. Where I would like to see this ingenuity fund come into play is coming up with technology that can deal with the cleaning of our coal.

Apparently, in Alberta we have 200, 300, 500 years of bituminous coal that we need to develop to a greater extent if we're going to continue to progress as a profitable province. This is a very cheap form of energy. The CO₂ that's produced is amongst the lowest amounts world-wide, and we need to tap this resource, but unless we have the knowledge and the ingenuity, which exists in the oil refining process, we're not going to go any further. We need to be using this coal-fired power as a future development for drawing out the oil from the tar sands. As I mentioned earlier, we can't just keep burning natural gas.

8:10

Of course, the other problem is where ingenuity is required. While all of these projects are proceeding in the Athabasca area, the accompanying natural gas projects have been shut down for fear that they would be taking pressure away from the necessary extraction. So we have to come up with some form of balance whereby we can use our cheap power, which is certainly not gas, use that cheap coal power to draw the oil out of the sands. We're gifted as a province that we have these resources, but if we don't have organizations such as would be funded by this ingenuity fund to create the new methodology for cleaner, more sustainable development, we're doomed to failure.

This ingenuity fund will hopefully be used to come up with support for health care development, new forms of techniques that will hopefully not only prolong life but prolong the quality of life. We need to be looking at new forms of education. We have to look at not strictly a technical education, *Brave New World* khaki workers, everybody up to Fort McMurray and the geological developments, but we have to look at visions for Alberta. That vision through the ingenuity fund will provide the education for the scholars, and it is that kind of investment that is absolutely necessary if Alberta is going to progress.

We have blessings, as has been pointed out by the hon. member, in the form of our natural resources, but we have harvested to such

a large extent resources such as our timber. We have this habit of sort of mowing down but not keeping up with the replanting. Hopefully, within this ingenuity fund we'll come up with a truly sustainable resource plan because the one we have right now is basically pillage and plunder and let's hope that the consequences don't catch up with us in the near future.

With the ingenuity fund increased to a billion dollars, we have the same sort of principle of investment that the Liberals proposed with the sustainability fund in the first place. As was pointed out by the hon. member opposite, this is money that comes from our current resource development, and it makes absolute investment sense to use this investment to triple our billion dollar initial layout, quadruple, quintuple, et cetera. This is seed money, and the farmer knows the value of seeding the ground and then reaping the crop that is produced. The ingenuity fund will provide this investment money, this seed money, and like the member across the way I am pleased to support the idea. Alberta needs diversification. Alberta needs to progress. We can't simply rerun the old once tried and true examples that no longer apply as we enter the 21st century.

Ingenuity: bring it on.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good evening. It's a pleasure to rise today and join debate on Motion 503, which urges the government to consider the advisability of increasing the value of the Alberta ingenuity fund to a billion dollars over the next three fiscal years.

The ingenuity of Albertans is the pillar of our province's success, Mr. Speaker. We rely on the inventive skills and imagination of Albertans to drive Alberta's economy, ensuring a prosperous and sustainable standard of living for all of our citizens in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago we heard His Honour the Lieutenant Governor speak about the past hundred years of innovation in Alberta. In his remarks he stated that back in 1905 Alberta was developing a telephone system. Well, in 2005 we see the completion of the SuperNet. When I say that the province's ingenuity is the pillar of Alberta's success, I am referring to examples such as these.

Mr. Speaker, that is a huge accomplishment in a mere 100 years. I'm proud to say that it is the inventive skill and imagination of every Albertan that allows our province to be a world leader in so many areas. I find it extremely important that the Alberta government continues to support and encourage the imagination and innovation of Albertans.

Just think, if we were able to come this far in 100 years, imagine what the next 100 years could bring and will bring if we stay the course and ensure that endowment funds such as the Alberta ingenuity fund continue to grow and continue to provide the necessary funding for current and future research projects. I'm happy that the government of Alberta has recognized this, and through Bill 1 they have committed to increasing the ingenuity fund by \$500 million to support basic and applied research in the province. The additional funding will double the size of the fund, building on its activities and accelerating innovation in the province.

That sounds familiar because it's exactly what Motion 503 is urging the government to do. It's good to see that everybody is on the same page on this one. What Motion 503 adds to the commitment made through Bill 1 to double the ingenuity fund is that it complements it by setting a reasonable timeline to accomplish this goal. Motion 503 urges the government to consider doubling the fund, a commitment made by the government through Bill 1, over the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years. I believe that's a very

reasonable timeline, especially if we consider what this type of research means for our province and all Albertans. Remember, telephones to SuperNet.

Not only is the ingenuity fund supported in current government legislation, but it's also part of Alberta's 20-year plan to unleash innovation in the province, as we heard in the 2004 budget, and I hope we'll hear about it again when the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler brings forward the 2005 budget. The Alberta government has said time and time again that the key to maintaining a strong and vibrant economy is the ability to create new opportunities by applying knowledge and technology. But as Albertans work to unleash their full potential, we must also manage our resources wisely for future generations. This is the commitment the province has made through the 20-year plan, to renew the government's commitment to investing in research and innovation that helps provide Albertans with a superior quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, this commitment can be seen every day through examples of continued research into alternate sources of energy, as the hon. member talked about, improving energy efficiencies and pursuing new emissions reduction technologies. In addition, we're seeing new and improved institutions that guide research and innovation as well as link, co-ordinate, and encourage cross-sector research and development in a number of Alberta industries such as information and communications technology, agriculture, environment, forestry, health, and bioenergy. Along with these initiatives we are seeing increased investment in the health research innovation centres in Edmonton and Calgary, the Alberta Heart Institute in Edmonton, the National Institute for Nanotechnology, as well as, as I mentioned before, the finalization of the Alberta SuperNet, which brings high-speed broadband service to Albertans across this province.

Motion 503 complements the past commitments made by the government of Alberta by putting a timeline on doubling the ingenuity fund to a billion dollars over the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years. I believe this to be a reasonable timeline and an initiative that this Assembly needs to support to ensure that Alberta remains a world leader and the best place to live, work, and play in North America, if not the world.

I encourage all members, Mr. Speaker, to support Motion 503. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support as well on Motion 503, and I echo many of the statements of the previous speakers on this motion. This process of endowment funds is a wise and prudent use of our surplus in these times of great royalty surpluses and other things that are coming into the process to the government of Alberta and to the people of Alberta.

Perhaps it just doesn't go far enough. The Alberta Liberals worked hard on a surplus policy and spoke at length on it in the last election. The purpose of these things, I think – to look to the future, look to the children, look to developing our economy through the use of our scientific research – is just incredibly important. It has worked for many, many years in medical research. You know, the former Premier in the '70s worked hard at that I think and really established some great precedents, and it has paid off in spades for Alberta, for Albertans, and for Canada – for the world, for that matter.

8:20

The types of research that can be brought forward in this I think

are really important because they can help in developing the oil sands; they can help in developing the really new technologies in scrubbers in the coal and in the oil sands. You know, some of the stuff in Syncrude and Suncor and Albion Sands over the last decade have been remarkable improvements, and if some projects in terms of research can be brought forward to look at that even more, sequestration of carbon dioxide, we can probably even look to making money off of some of the environmental advances that are possible.

You know, we look to the children. My nephew won a science fair award for Canada for grade 8 on an agricultural project for his science fair. It was phosphorus indicators on BSE prions in a nanotechnology science fair project. That's grade 8. You look at our young Albertans coming up, looking to develop ways to deal with BSE, for example, to identify a cheaper test, an easier test through the use of phosphorus indicators with nanotechnology is incredible.

You know, some of these Alberta kids and some of the people that are brought in to look at these types of research I think can only advance our society and advance our economy and advance the way we do things, not only in the real boom areas like the oil sands but to revitalize agriculture, to look at all the other areas that have been mentioned by some of the previous speakers.

The R and D in Alberta has been low. We have not been coming up to the numbers for the rest of Canada and certainly not to many of the western nations for many years, and I think this can hope to begin to improve that. I again say that I am in support of this motion, and I look forward to it being passed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, but under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a Motion Other than a Government Motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky to close debate on Motion 503.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 carried]

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, at this time I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to revert to private members' business under private members' public bills, particularly second reading on Bill 203.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

**Bill 203
Report on Alberta's Legacy Act**

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to stand and move second reading of Bill 203, the Report on Alberta's Legacy Act, on behalf of my colleague, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

This proposal that is found in Bill 203 is an important part of the Official Opposition Liberal policy that we developed and, in fact, which had great response during the last election. A number of my new colleagues that have been able to join us in the Assembly I think would credit this policy with helping to get them into these seats.

In essence, what's being proposed here, Mr. Speaker, is that we would acknowledge that there was a particular policy of investment for any surplus, so the bill is creating a surplus investment policy. What we are setting forth in the bill is that of any surplus – and we identify what would be the surplus because, of course, we're taking out the \$2.5 billion that goes into the sustainability fund. That initial \$2.5 billion always goes off into the sustainability fund. Any monies after that would be allocated in the following manner: 35 per cent into the heritage fund . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we are in Assembly right now. It's not committee stage. People should be seated in their own places, please.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, you may proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was outlining the allocation of surplus funds, and it would be as follows: 35 per cent of any surplus would go into the heritage fund; 35 per cent into an endowment fund for postsecondary education; 25 per cent into a capital account for infrastructure; and 5 per cent into an endowment fund to support the humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

I'm just going to loop back a bit here, Mr. Speaker, and note that the idea of the 35 per cent into an endowment fund for postsecondary education I believe has been picked up by the government and, in fact, was a prominent part of Bill 1, the flagship bill from the government, for their access bill, which was all about a postsecondary endowment fund. So you have the allocation. We know that this appeals to the government at least in part because they've already taken part of what our suggestion would have been.

The second part of what we're looking at being proposed in this bill, Mr. Speaker, is that there would also be a report that's required by the Minister of Finance. At the end of each fiscal year, starting with this fiscal year, March 31, 2005, the bill would require that the Minister of Finance prepare a report on how the financial affairs of the government would have been affected if the surplus investment policy was implemented. It requires that this report that the minister does would be made public, and as you know, that kind of accountability and real transparency is a trademark of the Alberta Liberals, and something we feel very strongly about. We push the government to do the same thing on their side, and we're very happy to lead by example with what we're proposing, in fact, in this bill.

As part of making the bill public, we would require that the report be tabled in the Assembly at the first opportunity, and if the House is not sitting, that a copy would be tabled with the Clerk and a copy made available to each member, which is a process that's available as a way of doing a tabling when we are out of session.

We've also made a provision because the 5 per cent allocation for the endowment fund to support the humanities, social sciences, and the arts is a fairly small allocation, and we've allowed that when that fund exceeds \$500 million, then the minister would supplement any additional funds available by allocating back to the other three funds. We lay out a proposal for that there.

Finally, we put in the act that there would be an automatic review of the act at the end of five years from it coming into force. That review would also be submitted to the Legislative Assembly within a year of beginning the review. In other words, five years from now we begin a review process that within a year must be completed.

8:30

As I say, Mr. Speaker, I've outlined what's being proposed in the bill, and I think what's important about it is that certainly when I was out during the campaign talking to people door-to-door, people were really captured with the idea of a vision that moved beyond

today. Everyone recognizes that we have enormous revenues available to us right now and for the short distant future coming from our natural resources, and what they most wanted to know was: is something going to be done with this money that will have a lasting effect, that would affect my children or my grandchildren or even my great-grandchildren? They wanted to know that it was being planned in a way that we wouldn't just look up 20 years from now and go: "Whoops, what happened to it all? I don't know." They wanted to know that there was something specific that it was being directed towards.

People were really captured, really caught by the idea of allocating it to these various funds. Everybody liked the idea of the postsecondary endowment fund. I suspect that that's why the government has picked up on it and in fact introduced it in their own Bill 1. But they also liked the idea of investing in and expanding the heritage savings trust fund. The choices the government has made over an extended period of time now have not grown the heritage fund. In fact, it's about the same amount of money as it was in 1986 or something, so it hasn't even replenished itself. It hasn't even kept pace with inflation. People really wanted to see that happen; they wanted to see that fund grow. So they like the idea of setting aside a certain percentage of money that would go there.

Certainly, most people recognize the need for investment in infrastructure. I've heard the figure of an \$8 billion deficit in infrastructure repeatedly, and we need to work hard to pay off that deficit now. People were certainly willing to give the government credit for paying down that deficit that was owed by the province, but they also were recognizing that in doing so, other deficits were created. One of the big ones was an infrastructure deficit. They really welcomed the idea of directing a certain portion of any surplus towards addressing those problems that have been created.

Finally – and this is a particular interest of mine – we have a lot of interest and there is certainly a lot of encouragement from the government right now to invest and bring in other partners to enhance our postsecondary educational institutions. I always have a caution there because there's a worry that we end up basically having mortarboard factories, that we're producing little engineers and little nurses and they all come out like little widgets, rather than concentrating on a good education and the ability to think and research.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in second reading to Bill 203.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I join the debate on Bill 203, Report on Alberta's Legacy Act. In reading this bill, I fail to find where and how it would benefit Albertans.

As members of this Assembly we have been entrusted with the solemn duty to represent our constituents' interests as well as the interests of all Albertans. I believe that each of us here is working in the interest of our constituents regardless of what side of the Chamber we sit on. Often there are disagreements about how to best serve this province and what course of action will offer Albertans the greatest benefit, but I believe that we are all working towards the same goal. This goal of working for Albertans has been evident in almost all of the legislation that I have seen in this Chamber, even those which I don't agree with. I'm sad to say that this has come to an end with Bill 203. Mr. Speaker, Albertans will realize absolutely no benefit from passing Bill 203. None.

This bill asks the government to prepare a yearly report on what might happen if the government directed a possible surplus in a

specific way. This bill is so fraught with errors that I hardly know where to begin. The bill asks the Legislative Assembly to approve the perpetual funding of research into an Alberta Liberal election platform. Perhaps next the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will put a bill before the Assembly asking the government how the Alberta party can pay off their debt.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is requesting that Alberta taxpayers pay to research an idea the opposition was trying to convince Albertans to accept not five months ago as being viable for the future of this province. I find this exceptionally suspect. First, asking taxpayers to pay for a campaign tool calls into question the ethical implications of this bill. Secondly, putting forward this bill essentially states that the Liberals have no idea what effect this policy would have on our province had they actually formed the government. I guess this shows that the members over here feel that touting some plan, any plan, is fine even if you don't know the consequences. Plans such as these would endow Albertans with quite a legacy. Quite a legacy indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, all questions of intent aside, I have a great many concerns about the content of the Report on Alberta's Legacy Act. Firstly, I am uncertain of what, if any, benefit would be realized by creating a report on something that the government is not currently engaged in or looking to as a possibility. It would seem that this report would be superfluous, especially in the face of the numerous budget documents that the government currently publishes. The budget, quarterly updates, and the annual report all give to Albertans a detailed accounting of the government's expenses and clearly outline the government's spending priorities.

Discounting the fact that creating a report of this nature would not benefit Albertans, I will briefly discuss the investment plan around which the report would centre. This act is focused on the use of Alberta's budget surpluses, and I would like to begin my comments here. At the risk of sounding redundant, I feel that it is necessary to point out that unbudgeted surpluses are exactly that: unbudgeted. They constitute unpredicted and largely unpredictable excess revenue coming into our provincial coffers. The majority of revenue streams on which a government traditionally draws are largely predictable. Corporate and personal income tax revenue, investment revenue, and most other revenue streams can be predicted. However, natural resource revenue is volatile and generally difficult to predict.

The budget surpluses that Alberta has enjoyed in the recent past are directly related to energy prices. Past experiences have proven these prices to be exceptionally volatile, and they tend not to be sustainable for long periods of time. So while we have recently had the good fortune to enjoy surpluses, they cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty into the future, and to suggest that they could would be certainly foolhardy. What would be even more foolhardy would be to entrust the realization of Alberta's priorities to budget surpluses. Yet this is what Bill 203 appears to do.

This bill would dedicate surpluses to the heritage fund, two funds dedicated to postsecondary education, and the capital account. These are concerns that have been raised by Albertans, and consequently they are being addressed by the provincial government. Mr. Speaker, postsecondary education has been identified by Albertans as being one of their top priorities. Alberta's future strength as a member of the dominion as well as a member of the international community is dependent upon the diversification of our economy. We can use our current and historical strengths in primary industries to build secondary and tertiary industries here at home.

Alberta's postsecondary education system is good, but there's always room for improvement. The provincial government has responded to this by bringing forward fiscally prudent and finan-

cially viable strategies to ensure that Alberta students will never be at a loss for postsecondary education due to spaces or financial circumstances. The creation of a fund dedicated to postsecondary learning, increasing the value of the Alberta heritage scholarship endowment fund, and increasing the value of the Alberta ingenuity fund exemplify the government's continued commitment to postsecondary learning in our province.

8:40

It is important to note that these initiatives are not dependent on the posting of a budget surplus to be achieved. The government is not gambling the future of Alberta's postsecondary institutions on \$57 a barrel oil and equally high natural gas prices. Bill 203 has all the appearances of doing just that. Albertans have said that provincial infrastructure is an issue which needs to be addressed. The government has responded by committing an initial \$3 billion to municipalities to assist in relieving pressure on their infrastructure system. Again, this measure is not dependent upon a budget surplus to ensure that this happens.

Mr. Speaker, a provincial budget surplus due to higher than predicted energy levels is a great thing. It indicates that Alberta's economy is on track and that Albertans are in a position to benefit from resource revenues. However, a budget surplus is not something to build future spending upon; nor is it something that can be depended upon. Albertans learned this lesson 20 years ago, and we are quite unlikely to forget it.

Mr. Speaker, passing Bill 203 would enact a law that would require a report on something that may or may not exist five to 10 years from now. That would be quite the report to have tabled in the Legislature. I can see the title now: Report on Budget Surplus that Does Not Exist.

Because of these few reasons that I have outlined as well as other reservations, I will vote against Bill 203. It is a law that will not realize benefit for Albertans and therefore serves no real purpose.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Another name for this act could be: A Future Formula. The hon. member who spoke before me suggested that surpluses in the future were not a guaranteed circumstance. Yet tonight we've been talking about vision, we've been talking about ingenuity, and we've been talking about renewal. I mentioned earlier on the notion that we heard from the members of Suncor, Shell, and a number of the plants that are working up in the tar sands, that they estimate that there are billions of barrels and therefore multibillions of dollars discovered, waiting to be extracted, and this is what our act is looking at.

In terms of value for money, this government over the last 12 years in royalties alone, oil and gas royalties, earned \$69 billion. Is there some sense that this government is going to stop managing the affairs of this province to the point where these record surpluses will no longer be there? That's what the member has suggested, that all of a sudden these surpluses are going to dry up and that we can't count on them.

What the Alberta Liberal Party is doing, rather than looking back, is looking forward. We're looking at the basis of research that has been provided by a variety of oil exploration companies, by a variety of natural gas companies. They've indicated to us that we're not at the end of the boom; we're basically at the middle or the beginning of it. If we can sustain the types of exploration and extraction, keeping in mind doing it in a safe, environmental manner, then basically the sky is the limit.

Premier Lougheed created the heritage trust fund. That was a vision. We're building upon Premier Lougheed's vision, and we're saying: let's take that vision, but let's not only build the heritage trust fund, which we would do by the expenditure of 35 per cent of future surpluses. We would also deal with the problem that, unfortunately, the government has failed to deal with, and that is the growing infrastructure problem. Three billion dollars over five years is not going to even deal with past projects, never mind keeping up with present and future projects. We need a guaranteed revenue source beyond just the general revenue. We can't keep upping health care taxes indefinitely. The government in its wisdom forgave seniors having to pay premiums, but we have to now come up with some other way of supplementing that income, and it's through ingenuity and through vision that we'll do this.

The idea that this is not a visionary move, that it's questionable, that we don't have the facts and figures: there's a reality. With the exception of one postsecondary constituency in the southern part of this province, every other postsecondary constituency obviously bought into the idea of a legacy fund.

I, for example, represent the constituency of Calgary-Varsity, in which stands the University of Calgary. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie represents Mount Royal College, which we hope will soon receive university status with funding based on our legacy fund. We have another representative from Calgary-Mountain View, who represents the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and the arts college. Of course, Edmonton-Centre: Grant MacEwan College, Alberta College, NorQuest. We have our hon. leader representing the constituency of the University of Alberta and on and on and on. Each of the postsecondary institutions, at least seven out of the eight, are represented by an alternative viewpoint, which obviously sold in this past election or we wouldn't be here.

This formula for the future spells out the answer to a number of problems that have been created by this government. First off, it deals with postsecondary. It offers 35 per cent. It doesn't offer it as a one-time. It doesn't offer it as a "Here's your \$3 billion." It doesn't say, "We'll temporarily freeze tuition for the fall of 2005, but, you know, we're going to review it." What it offers is in perpetuity, into infinity. As long as we manage our resources and provide a continual royalty stream, then we can rebuild the institutions.

That's where the vision is lacking. We've talked about \$3 billion. The government has talked about \$3 billion for infrastructure over five years. The government has talked about \$3 billion in terms of postsecondary. But these are one-shots. These aren't into perpetuity. They're not into the future. They do not address infrastructure.

In fact, the three of us from Calgary had a meeting this past Friday with representatives from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. They talked about their infrastructure problems. We've had similar meetings with the University of Calgary. We've had meetings with Mount Royal. We had meetings with – I'm trying to think of the name of the institution that provides postsecondary training – Bow Valley College. Excuse me for temporarily forgetting that name. But these various organizations have come up with unique ideas of joint shared responsibility where all campuses could come together in a downtown version where Bow Valley College, the U of C, Mount Royal, SAIT, the College of Art could all be sharing space in a very novel approach. That requires funding. That requires vision. So we have provided that vision with the 35 per cent we've suggested for postsecondary.

Infrastructure, the area that I'm the critic for. It has been brought out numerous times that it's an \$8 billion deficit. Well, I would suggest that that deficit is closer to the \$10 billion surplus that we're projected to receive this year. Unless we start dealing with the past problems, if we don't deal with the operating grants of the colleges,

if we don't fix the decaying infrastructure that they're currently experiencing, we can't move ahead to the future.

8:50

That is why as a Liberal party in the election when we went door to door, we suggested that there be 25 per cent of future surpluses set aside for infrastructure because we recognize that it's basically been abandoned for the last 12 years. The beauty of setting aside 25 per cent, which when you look at it in terms of these dollars that were existing, would be in the area of \$2,500,000,000 of this projected surplus that we're talking about for this fiscal year. Can you imagine what we could do in terms of repair? In fact, \$2,500,000,000 in a single year would be almost the equivalent of what our honoured members are proposing for a three- to five-year plan. Three billion over five years. Here, in a single year we could accomplish that.

That's the type of vision we need to be looking at, a vision that takes us into the future by first dealing with the past. Repair the mistakes, repair the neglect, build the various areas back to the state that they were prior to us dumping all our money into paying off the deficit and the debt. These are great, lofty ideas. We've had billions of dollars, but we're now still setting aside money to pay it off eight years from now based on the slow process of paying it off.

One of the biggest areas – this is another area of concern for me personally because I'm also the critic for parks and protected areas. I give credit to the idea that they're talking about a \$42 million investment in tourism. That's a great idea, but what happens when they get here? What happens when they drive out into the wilderness, and they see the deteriorated condition of our parks and protected areas?

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to join debate on Bill 203, the Report on Alberta's Legacy Act. Since becoming MLA for the constituency of Battle River-Wainwright in 2002, I've read and spoken to many pieces of legislation, including numerous private members' bills and motions. There have been plenty of good and timely pieces of legislation that generally addressed important issues affecting Albertans. Many helped raise awareness or potential concerns. Others served to improve how this province is run and managed.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, there have also been some not so timely or helpful pieces of legislation that not only didn't help address any issues or needs in particular but, in my humble opinion, wasted the time and the resources of this Legislature, time and resources which could have been devoted to other, more important issues such as rural development.

Having said this, I do not want to point fingers at any particular side of this House, Mr. Speaker. We've all been guilty of this. However, I am a firm believer that we as representatives of the people of this province should bring forward and pass laws that make a real difference to Albertans so that when the legislative session wraps up, we can be proud not of the number of laws we passed but, rather, the quality of laws enacted.

In my view, Mr. Speaker, Bill 203 falls in the category of bad private member's legislation. It is not the most efficient use of our time and resources. I say this because not only does Bill 203 deal with fiction, but worst of all it deals with bad fiction. The entire Liberal bill calls for a coulda, woulda, shoulda report. This should be called the Liberal Hindsight Report: Governing out of Your Rear-view Mirror.

We already have a report that tells how our financial decisions impact this province. It's a very good report, Mr. Speaker, one that is thoroughly informative and, most importantly, based on a true story. It's called the government of Alberta annual report, and I invite my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar and the members of this House to give it a read. It reflects the favourable fiscal situation Alberta currently finds itself in, i.e. the best place in Canada to live, and it is indicative of what our province has been able to accomplish through responsible fiscal policies and careful use of taxpayers' dollars.

The report also is a reflection of the fact that this government does not deal with fictitious situations and what-ifs. It's a reflection of the fact that the government's role is to govern and govern effectively by making sound fiscal decisions. Wasting time pontificating on what might have been is not a Conservative practice. Should we adopt this bill and pontificate about the choices this member would like to see made? Perhaps we should do several reports evaluating multiple scenarios. Perhaps we could have 83 different reports. Where would it stop, Mr. Speaker? And what would be the benefit to Albertans?

Mr. Speaker, the government needs to make the best decision possible with the information available and not constantly second-guess and pontificate to the point of becoming Mr. Dithers. That's the Liberal thing to do, not the Conservative way. The opposition can govern by hindsight saying, "We would have done it differently," but that's always looking back. That's always hindsight. To be honest, we know one thing for sure: even without this bill the Liberals would have spent, spent, and spent some more regardless of the revenues.

Albertans expect the government to be responsible and sensible with the funds they endow us, and it is in turn the responsibility of the government to give back to Albertans as much as possible through promotion of our economy, job creation, effective public services, and lower taxes. I know this is completely foreign to the Liberal agenda, but wouldn't it be logical to perhaps use portions of future surpluses to relieve the tax burden upon Alberta's families? After all, the whole concept of a surplus, Mr. Speaker, is that we took more than we needed. With the debt paid off, this is an opportune time to give back to Albertans what is rightly theirs.

Having said this, we on this side of the House and our Conservative colleagues across the way believe that the best place for Albertans' hard-earned money is in their own pockets because it is them and not us who ultimately make the best decisions as to where this money should be spent. Consequently, I believe that in times when we have large surpluses, the government should take it upon itself to consider taking a portion of the surplus and devoting it toward some type of tax relief. This is almost necessary as the federal Liberals tax us and all Canadians because they can only spend, spend, and spend some more regardless of revenues.

I agree that we have to continue to support and invest in our education system, maintain and expand our infrastructure, and contribute more investment dollars to the heritage savings trust fund, and we're doing it. We don't need another report to tell us what will happen.

As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, we have a report that tells us what happened over the past years as a result of our prudent fiscal policies. As a matter of fact, this year we have made a final move on our debt and eliminated one of the major fiscal liabilities that has been hanging over the heads of Albertans for decades. We will establish the access to the future fund, which will help us invest into our higher learning system and ease the cost burden on our students. As was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, the government will strive to create 60,000 new postsecondary spaces by the year 2020, 15,000 of which will be created over the next three years.

From the investment side, we will inflation-proof the heritage savings trust fund, which will grow the account over time and provide us further investment income to fund priorities including health care, education, infrastructure. Despite what federal or provincial Liberals in this country want to do, Mr. Speaker, we'll provide opportunity for us to allow tax relief to Albertans.

From the infrastructure side, the government has transferred \$1.1 billion into the capital account from the sustainability fund and is working with our municipal partners to alleviate the municipal infrastructure debt by providing a further \$3 billion directly to municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

We will also be further supporting our postsecondary education system by investing in humanities, social sciences, and arts through the proposed access to the future fund, which will generate an estimated income of \$135 million a year, every year, to advance postsecondary education opportunities in Alberta including those in humanities, social sciences, and arts. As well, Mr. Speaker, the government will create the Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship program, which beginning in the next academic year will provide some Albertans with a \$5,000 scholarship toward his or her postsecondary studies.

As you can clearly see, contrary to what the Liberal opposition would have Albertans believe, we are investing intelligently and responsibly in Alberta's priority areas. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, for the last 30 years Albertans have trusted the PC government to manage the public money wisely and responsibly. I suggest the Liberal opposition write their own fictional Liberal report outlining could have, should have, and would have. Might I even suggest a title: What Ifs and What Nots, Liberal Ideas in the Absence of Reality.

For reasons I have outlined in my remarks, Bill 203 is a reflection of bad legislation, one that is redundant and out of touch with reality in almost every way, Mr. Speaker. With this in mind, I cannot support Bill 203, and I urge all sensible members of this House to join me in doing the same.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on Bill 203 here this evening. It's a little bit confusing, I think, for us over here on the ND side because, of course, between Bill 1 and Bill 203, while there seems to be a great gap, a chasm of differences here as outlined by the previous members, in fact as far as we're concerned, both Bill 203 and Bill 1 are more similar than dissimilar. May I remind the Member for Battle River-Wainwright where, in fact, these monies do come from.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

head: 9:00 **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 11
Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to move second reading of Bill 11, the Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act.

Albertans are becoming increasingly aware of the value of a safe, secure water supply. For many communities across the province,

particularly in southern and central Alberta, water is blue gold. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, nine communities in the county of Stettler are facing serious potential drinking water shortages because of drought and increased growth. The Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act will allow Alberta Environment to issue a water licence to transfer treated drinking water from the town of Stettler to these communities. This will ensure that approximately 6,000 Albertans living in the communities of Donalda, Big Valley, Rochon Sands, White Sands, Byemoor, Endiang, Erskine, Nevis, and Red Willow will have access to the safe, secure water supplies they need to survive and to thrive.

Because some of these communities are in the Battle River basin, which is located in the North Saskatchewan River basin, Mr. Speaker, and the town of Stettler's water source is the Red Deer River basin, which is located in the South Saskatchewan River basin, this special act of the Legislature is required. The transferred water will be treated drinking water, not raw water, so there will be little risk of interbasin transfer of biological organisms.

Public consultations conducted throughout the region by the Stettler regional water services committee show support for this proposal. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to ensuring safe, secure drinking water supplies for all Albertans. It is the key goal of Water for Life, which is North America's most comprehensive water strategy.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me remind this House that secure water leads to healthy local economies. Sustainable water leads to people and business choosing to invest in the local community. This bill will ensure a safe, secure water supply for approximately 6,000 Albertans across nine communities in central Alberta. I'm pleased to have support from the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand in discussion of the second reading of Bill 11, Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act. The bill authorizes the transfer of water between the South Saskatchewan River basin and the North Saskatchewan River basin as has been indicated. This is due to the fact that the Stettler region has been experiencing problems with quantity and quality of water from their existing potable water supplies, and the licence is for a transfer.

We must recognize, however, and we have in a number of places in our policy recognized, the danger in the precedent and, in this case, the repeat of this kind of a transfer between basins. Such decisions especially have to be made with caution due to some environmental issues, health issues, and clearly the questions around sustainability of this kind of a practice. Is this a one-time intervention, or is it a preamble to permanent interbasin transfers? Is there any reason to think that the kinds of water conditions that we've experienced in the last few years in the presence of climate change are going to improve? How are communities going to maintain themselves in the absence of this until and unless we as government and members address what is a sustainable water supply in a particular area?

I alluded to the fact that this was a repeat. In 2002 the government passed Bill 33, the North Red Deer Water Authorization Act, which was exactly the same and had a greater volume of water, in fact, transferred to some different communities.

I have some questions about it. How will the water be used? Alberta Environment is the provincial department responsible for

water resources and under the Water Act governs the allocation and management of water and requires individuals, corporations, and municipalities to apply for a licence that authorizes the diversion or use of a specific amount of water, surface or groundwater. Under each licence a set amount of water is allocated, which represents the maximum amount of water that can be used or diverted. All allocations and licences remain under the authorization of the province.

Alberta Environment evaluates the water licence application based on the potential impact of a new licence on the needs of the environment, the amount of water that needs to remain in the watershed, the amount of water required to meet the apportionment agreements, and the amount of water being used by existing water users. There are already areas in the province where maximum allowable allocations and even above-maximum allocations have been reached. As Alberta grows and water demand rises, this evaluation process becomes absolutely critical that we get it right.

The Alberta Liberal opposition in general is opposed to interbasin transfers. The rationale is that they are potentially environmentally damaging, and they are extremely expensive. In general, major water diversions and storage projects significantly compromise aquatic and other ecosystems. They're not an acceptable alternative to sound conservation practices. They are, indeed, a crisis management and a challenge to all of us to learn and to plan to live within the limits of our resources in a sustainable fashion.

In addressing supply issues, interbasin transfers are unacceptable as an alternative to conservation and planning, and the use of interbasin transfers as a management tool is contrary to the government's own Water for Life strategy, based on the goal of watershed level management. Any need for interbasin transfers indicates a failure of water management planning.

We cannot plan for every crisis, but repeat requests must raise serious questions about our capacity to manage. Here are some of the questions. Does the new transfer affect the rights of existing licensees? What is the impact of the transfer on aquatic and riparian ecosystems? What is the possibility that it may lead to nonnative species entering watercourses with possible negative impacts on the new water system, recreational and commercial fishing, and other ecosystem health?

Planning requires adequate data. This is another area that we need to address. There is a lack of adequate data in Alberta Environment to determine how much water is actually being used. There are records kept on how much water is allocated, but it's not clear how much is actually used, and it's impossible to create a water conservation plan without an inventory of what's there and how much we actually use, both surface and groundwater. This is absolutely vital to move forward in a sustainable way.

Another concern is the commodification of water under these licences. This bill, which allows an interbasin transfer between the North and South Saskatchewan river basins, could force Canada to export water under the NAFTA bills that authorize the transfer of water between major river systems even within Alberta, and this could open up the trade agreements to water exports and access by trade agreement partner countries to Alberta water. I don't know about that as a reality, but I need to be reassured that this is not the case. The transfer of water in its natural state can be seen to make water into a product much the same as oil and gas and allow it to be subject to international trade agreements and commercialization.

The objection, then, that needs to be raised must address the failure of the province to implement a watershed level management strategy that would be sustainable into the long-term future. We must move forward on the water strategy, and there needs to be more investment in this in our view.

Having given those provisos, it seems clear that for humanitarianism and the case of sustaining these communities, we may have little choice this time, but I did feel the need to register serious objections to this being a repeat of a previous problem that has apparently not resulted in the kind of changes that we would like to see for a sustainable water management plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:10

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to my colleague for Calgary-Mountain View for laying out the concerns that he has as the Official Opposition environment critic around this bill. I note his caution at the end.

Boy, I'm really uneasy about this bill, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit this. It's one of those awful catch-22 situations. I mean, I know that we are talking about water for citizens of Alberta who need it because their own water system is no longer potable or is not reliable. But on the other hand, you start fooling around with Mother Nature, and she's going to get you. When you start talking about interbasin water transfers, that's what we're doing. We're fooling around here. To continue my analogy, if Mother Nature was going to effect these kinds of interbasin transfers, it would have happened over a very long period of time and quite possibly not connecting these two water basins.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View, you know, talks about the possibility of nonnative aquatic species entering different watercourses and the effects that can have. In fact, we know from infestations that have happened in other parts of the world what starts to happen. We had that whole thing with the zebra mussels in the Great Lakes and enormous environmental and economic repercussions as a result of that. So this is a very, very difficult situation, and I honestly couldn't tell you right now if I was going to vote to support this bill or not.

I'm really concerned that I don't see an overarching plan coming from the government that really integrates the rural strategy, or whatever they're calling it, their rural enhancement, the rural pep-it-up strategy. I don't see it being integrated with an economic strategy, with an environmental strategy. I see all of these things operating separate from one another, and I think that is very dangerous for us, and I think that results in the situation we get here.

This is now the second time that there's been an interbasin water transfer requested of this Assembly. I know that I spoke to this last time with the same kind of reservations, and I think that in the end I ended up voting against it because I was concerned that this is what would happen, that we would end up with a second and maybe a third and maybe a fourth request coming through to here. We cannot go forward like this.

It is not giving us any kind of a conservation strategy, and I think we really have to question – this is the difficult part, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to put the question out there anyway because I think we have to think about it. I don't want to go to any community – and I don't even know these communities, to be honest with you – and say: you don't deserve to exist. I don't think that's the question, but I do think we have to say: if we have them situated in a place where the land itself will not support them, should we be making extraordinary efforts to now change that very land, that very water system, aquatic system, water table system in order to keep those people in that place? Maybe that isn't a great place to have people living. Maybe there are other better uses for it that wouldn't involve fooling around with Mother Nature so much.

I don't see those kinds of questions being asked and answered here, and it may well be that there is no answer, Mr. Speaker. You

can tell that I'm struggling over this. Maybe there is no answer to this, but I'm really concerned when I just see: "Well, we'll do it again. We did it before; we'll just do the same thing again." I've seen nothing else happen in the interim.

I'm sorry; that's not quite true. In fact, the Water for Life policy was introduced between the last time we talked about an interbasin water transfer for Red Deer and what we're looking at today. That Water for Life, I would have said, as I understood it when I read it – and I did read it – that it would have precluded this. So I'm not understanding how we could have that Water for Life policy brought in and then have another request for an interbasin water transfer because that Water for Life was talking about managing for the long term. It was talking about managing for ecology.

To be honest, Mr. Speaker, we don't even know how much water we have. We know how much is above ground. We don't know how much water is below ground, yet we are embarking and we're taking another step here, saying, "Okay, we'll move waterways around and access to water around in this province," which is what's being contemplated here, when we still don't know how much water we've got. We're not going back and saying: is this appropriate?

Let me give you another example of what I'm talking about. We keep making choices to plant grass, not even particularly prairie wild grass, definitely not prairie wild grass. In some cases we still plant Kentucky bluegrass in our boulevards and along the side of our freeways. And what does that mean? Well, that kind of grass requires a lot of water. So now we've got to water the dang stuff, and we've got to cut it, and it costs our municipalities money to control that now. Why do we keep planting species of grass that requires water to keep it going when the natural water that falls isn't enough to keep it in good shape?

There are choices like that that we're making that I have to really question and say: Why do we keep doing this stuff just because we did it before? Maybe we should be looking at some other kind of groundcover that doesn't require a gas-powered lawnmower and the staff to run over it once a week to cut it down. Then we've got to have watering trucks come out and water it if it doesn't get enough natural rainfall. That's just bad planning, in my opinion, and it's certainly not conservation.

So I'm really torn with what's being proposed here because I don't see any improvement, and I don't even see the government following its own Water for Life management strategy in bringing forward this proposal. I see it responding to the requests, I'm sure the heartfelt dire requests, of these towns and villages to get them potable water so they can keep living where they're living. But I don't see it coming with it in this bill. I mean, let's face it, Mr. Speaker; the bill is one page and two sentences. So I don't see coming in this bill anything else that's talking about a larger strategy. I don't see anything that is addressing any other kind of water conservation to reduce the amount of water that would be required.

If we're going to take it as a given that the government's decision is, "We will bring water to these locations; we will provide that water to them," I would have thought that along with that would go, "Okay, and while we're doing that, we're going to have a conservation plan in place so that less water will be required." Could there be initiatives for the kind of plants that were there so that they didn't require additional water or a requirement to collect rainwater or grey water to wash people's cars and water the plants in their front yard?

9:20

There's no attempt at recognition that water is a finite source. It is a finite source, and we're doing nothing to try and conserve our usage of it or to cut it down in any way, shape, or form. We just go: "Oh, gee, you're out of water. Let us get you some more from

somewhere else.” Well, what do you do when somewhere else starts to run out of water? Then are we going to have another bill back here saying: okay, we’re now going to move water from place A to place B to place C? When does it end? There’s no other policy that’s being talked about in conjunction with all of this that starts to move this in the other direction.

I think we do need to have the discussion about, you know: do we want to continue with a rural strategy that says that even if you’re living in a place that the land doesn’t support anymore, we’ll now bring everything to you to continue to allow you to live there? Would those people have a better quality of life if they had incentives to move somewhere else that didn’t require that kind of extraordinary support? I don’t see that being discussed. I just see a mentality here of, “Well, we did it before, so we’ll do it again,” that I think is wrong, and I think it’s dangerous.

So I’ll be listening intently to the other speakers on this bill to see if I can find any reassurance for myself from the other speakers on the government’s side that this request is part of a larger cohesive strategy that brings together environmental conservation concerns, the Water for Life management strategy, the rural strategy, and some of the other things that I’ve talked about here. If I don’t hear that kind of thing, I’m going to find it difficult to vote in support of this bill because I just don’t see the government doing the job they’re supposed to be doing. But at the same time I’m really aware that this is, you know, a legitimate need from the people that live there and is really going to affect them, and I feel for them. I don’t want to cut them off unnecessarily, but I don’t see anything else happening that would stop this situation from being recreated.

So I’m looking forward to hearing the rest of the speakers on this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. I listened with a great deal of interest to her concerns in regard to this bill. I certainly didn’t hear it from the other side of the House, so perhaps you can help me, hon. member. Will this bill, which is similar to the one that we discussed here two years ago, the North Red Deer Water Authorization Act, force Canada at some time to export potable water to the United States? Do you have any concerns about that?

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Good question. It’s a good question, and it’s one that should also be considered as part of the mix that I was talking about there because that is a concern, that as soon as you sell water ever, it’s already in NAFTA that then everybody gets to sell water. So what we have to be very careful about here is that we don’t accidentally or deliberately stumble into putting a price tag on any of this.

Where that gets close for us is metering. Metering is part of the conservation effort, but metering is about saying that you need to know how much water you’re using so that you can use less of it and that we have some kind of a benchmark and a measurement of it, not that we would then use the metering to charge people for water. Right now what we do with metering is charge people to get water to them. It’s for the transportation or the distribution, but it’s not for the actual water.

We have to be very, very careful about that. We always forget, but that was prenegotiated in NAFTA. It’s quite clear that as soon as anybody sells water – it’s why everybody gets so nervous when in Newfoundland, another big island close to where Edmonton-Gold Bar came from, they start talking about dragging the icebergs and melting them and selling that. Same problem. As soon as they do

that, it opens it up for everybody else in Canada. So everyone sits there holding their breath, waiting for that one to pass by again and hope that nobody actually does it. But it’s a serious concern because we would all be affected by it.

I’m sorry, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to address that.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions or comments?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier on I had not intended to stand up and talk about this bill, but I feel that I must say a few things. I’m from Lacombe-Ponoka, and we’re just going through the process of building a waterline from Red Deer to Blackfalds to Lacombe to Ponoka and possibly to the First Nations at Hobbema. Many of these questions that are being asked by the members on the Liberal side here have been asked and dealt with on the waterline that we’re building from Red Deer north.

Some of the questions about the transfer of organisms and biological organisms from one basin to another have been answered. The water is being treated twice. First of all, when the water is used, it is treated in Red Deer for Lacombe, and I think in Stettler it will also be treated. So the water that is being distributed to different households and consumers will be treated. It’ll be filtered, and it’ll be chlorinated or treated so that there will be no organisms in it. Once the water has been used, it goes back into a waste-water treatment facility. It’ll be treated again before it’s released into the other basin. So there’s absolutely no possible way that any biological organisms can travel from one basin to the other unless there is some kind of a breakdown in the system, and that probably won’t happen because it goes through your tap first or your waste-water system first. So that is not a problem.

The concern about the use of water, the amount of water that’s in the river and that’s actually available for use, has been dealt with. The hon. members of the Liberal Party are concerned that there’s not enough water in the river. In fact, we have a strategy in Alberta where we have storage dams. We store water on the Red Deer River in the Dickson dam. This stores water from the spring runoff and holds it there for the entire season. This water then is being used for the city of Red Deer, other towns and villages both north and south. There’s the Anthony Henday pipeline, I think, that goes south to Olds and some towns south. This has been in use for many years. The water storage looks after Red Deer, and it looks after all the petrochemical plants in Joffre and Prentiss in the Lacombe county. So there’s plenty of water there.

Under the agreements that we have interprovincially half of the water that’s in all of our rivers that go across the border must go to Saskatchewan. So the Red Deer River, half of that water must go to Saskatchewan. I think at this point about half of the remaining water is allocated to the municipalities that already use it and some agriculture users. Of the balance that’s not allocated, I think the Red Deer north system uses about 1 per cent of the flow of the river. So there’s an adequate amount of water there. The Stettler system is actually less than 1 per cent, is less than the amount that’s going to the Lacombe/Ponoka system. So I believe there is enough water.

This has been studied extensively. There are many, many years of records that are available that show that the water is adequate and there is plenty of flow even in the lowest times. I can just tell you from the experience of the town of Lacombe that they are currently using about a billion litres of water per year. This is not an unusually high amount of water per person. It’s about 220 million gallons

for 10,000 people, and the aquifers that the town currently draws water from can handle about 7,800 people.

So what happens if you have natural growth and natural development in an area? Lacombe is more than a hundred years old. You can't stop development, so there are more and more people, and there is more and more demand on the aquifers. At some point you actually start to mine the aquifers, and the aquifers start to go down. This affects the water in the outlying areas: the rural areas, farms, and acreages that are near the town. This is happening in all these places, in Stettler and some of these other towns that are mentioned. It happens in Blackfalds, in Ponoka, as well as in Lacombe. What it does is it starts to affect the wells on the farms that are near the town. This is a problem that has been recognized for some years.

The solution is to manage your water, build these dams on the rivers. We have a dam on the North Saskatchewan River for Edmonton. We have them on the Bow River and the South Saskatchewan and the Oldman rivers for these different municipalities. We've been doing this for many years. Now it's the turn of the people in central Alberta. They must be able to access this water. There are other plans for water in Alberta to promote rural development. If we do not do this, you actually have to start depopulating these areas. I don't think that any member across the floor would say: you should go first, or you should go first. I don't see anybody putting their hand up and volunteering to leave these areas because these are good areas to live.

The water is there. We must use it judiciously. We must be very concerned about the environment, and I appreciate their concern, but I think the questions have been answered. They talk about: how will we ever limit the use of water? Price will limit the use of water. The cost of the service will limit the use of the water. If you have to pay a dollar and a half or \$2 a metre for water, you won't be watering huge lawns. People will get used to having lawns the same in town as they do in the countryside. If it doesn't rain, it doesn't rain.

9:30

So I think the actual cost of providing services will limit the use of water to a reasonable amount, and if it gets beyond that, it'll be rationed. It'll be rationed equally between all users. This is an agreement that we have in Red Deer. If there's not enough water in the river and it has to be rationed or the use has to be limited, it'll be equal across. It will be rationed equally. Water is not being sold, but the cost of the water is going to be determined by what it costs to process it and deliver it. That's why it'll never be sold. It'll never become a NAFTA issue because the water services are being marketed as to the cost of delivering the services, not the water. They get the water out of the river for free, and the consumers get it only for the cost of service.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think many of these questions have been answered. This is an absolute necessity for these towns, and we must go forward and support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the hon. member. The hon. member was talking about users of this water or this resource, and the licence, as I understand it, for the transfer of water is not to exceed 2,941 cubic decameters annually. What percentage of that water that's going to be transferred is going to be used for domestic residential purposes, how much is going to be used on farms, and is any of that water going to be used for irrigation purposes?

Thank you.

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

Mr. Prins: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I don't have exact numbers for that, but I think there would probably be none used for irrigation purposes as this is treated water, and the expense of it wouldn't allow for that. There might be a small amount of this water being used on farms, but I don't think it would be used for extensive livestock operations because, as in the Lacombe case, it just doesn't pay. You can't afford to be feeding this expensive water to livestock. The balance would be all used for municipal and residential use.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much. I have a couple of questions. For starters, I'm wondering if the member would be willing to share with us, to table in other words, documents that show that the treatment of the water is eliminating all organisms, including any that could come up during a transfer. My example was the zebra mussels. I think he's talking about bacterial, but can he produce the documents for us that show that absolutely everything is killed?

Mr. Prins: I don't have those documents, but I'm sure they're around. If the member really would like to see them, I'm sure we can find them and present them to you.

Thank you.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have actually a quick question to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. Is the water that's being transferred to these various municipalities being treated, and is it a tertiary treatment level before it goes back to the rivers?

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

Mr. Prins: Yes. I can only speak for what's happening in the Lacombe-Ponoka situation, and the water for sure is being treated in the city of Red Deer. The water that's going down the pipeline towards Blackfalds, Lacombe, and Ponoka is actually city water from Red Deer, the exact same water. If you would be in Red Deer, you'd open your tap, and that's the exact same water that goes to Lacombe. The pipeline was extended. Then it goes through a waste-water treatment in each of the towns downstream. It goes through a waste-water treatment plant and a lagoon system, and it will be discharged into where they discharge now, and it has to meet all the criteria that Alberta Environment would put on it now. It would be no different than it is presently.

Dr. Swann: Can I ask the hon. member, then, if he's talking about a perpetual plan to continue and increase interbasin transfers of water in the province?

Mr. Prins: See, that's something I can't answer because I would never say that it's a perpetual plan, but I'm thinking the Lacombe situation is a plan that has a lifespan of 25 to 50 years. If it goes for 50 years and there's a need to expand it, then you'll have to go back to the drawing board and see if you can actually then expand it. If you cannot expand it at that point, that would cap the amount of development that can happen in these communities. But I think that in 50 years there will be another generation of people that will look after that problem.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. I'm wondering. The member talked about that they could measure the amount of water that's in the river, but again there's nothing in the bill that's requiring a measurement, as part of the bill, of the underground aquifers. We know how much is above ground. We don't know how much is below ground. He was very descriptive in describing what starts to happen to the wells and some of the underground aquifers. Why is there nothing in the bill that starts to measure the underground aquifers?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka in 10 seconds or less.

Mr. Prins: I think what we have to do is focus on the bill, and all this bill is about is transferring water to authorize the Stettler regional water system. I think that some of these other questions could be discussed in a committee format but not right now.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I guess the time is over.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Excuse the voice. There seems to be conflicting information between the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who is proposing a basin transfer, and the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, who sort of suggested to me that the small draw on the current river would be such that there is sufficient water already there without requiring a basin transfer. What this comes down to – and this has been brought up by previous speakers – is that we don't have a water inventory. George Bush's WMD stood for weapons of mass destruction. In Alberta WMD stands for water of mass demand. We're putting a tremendous demand on water.

If we'd listened to Captain John Palliser when he talked about the dryness of the Palliser Triangle and so on, we probably wouldn't have had any southern settlements whatever. Through a degree of ingenuity we've managed to survive as long as we have for the past 100 years, but ingenuity can only stretch so far. We can have the odd dam, but if we overdo it, that water evaporates because it's collected in a still area and it doesn't replenish. We know that in Calgary we have the example of the depleting runoff from the glaciers. We know that due to global warming the glaciers are depleting in a rapid fashion. Therefore, the Bow and the Elbow are threatened by not being refilled.

The Water for Life strategy to me is a good policy, and I credit the Member for Battle River-Wainwright for having explained it at a conference that I attended in Canmore. But nowhere in that Water for Life strategy was there any discussion of interbasin transfers, and that is a major concern of mine. What we had was that over the last number of years we would have a drought in the south, and then it would be suggested that we draw water from the north. Then what would happen two years later is that the drought would appear in the north. Simply trying to manipulate the basins – you know, do we have taps at either end? We draw it one year one way, and then we draw it back the next year to suit the needs of less than brilliant irrigation methodology.

9:40

We should be asking ourselves: why is Stettler facing the shortage that it is currently facing? Part of the answer to that problem could lie in the drilling and the use of nonsaline water that's being injected into wells, that is no longer recoverable. If part of the policy for the

future of this government is coal-bed methane extraction to get that last little remnant of potential gas supply, then we're going to be putting our water in greater danger into the future. We have to have an inventory of water, and until we develop that inventory, the idea of drastic changes, of drawing water from one basin to another, just doesn't make sense.

We've had examples of both good and bad planning. An example of bad planning is what happened just outside of Stavely. Engineers, geologists recommended to the government of the time that the Pine Creek coulee that was a reservoir area should be lined. Unfortunately, at the time when it would have been considerably less expensive, that idea wasn't taken into account. What happened was that the water from the coulee kept disappearing, basically leaching into the numerous farm wells in the area and basically ruining the quality of the water. Of course, the farmers were then trying to redrill wells and get below that aquifer level, which was basically being polluted. So that's an example of a strategy that doesn't work.

Let me give you an example of water legislation strategies that do work. At that same Canmore conference that dealt with parks and protected areas, representatives from the town of Okotoks put forward a requirement on developers. They said: we have a water shortage here; we have to think in the future. Up until that time developers had only been required to put three to six maximum inches of topsoil back on basically land that was of a clay base. So what was happening was that the water was running off; it wasn't settling into the ground. It wasn't doing what it was intended to do, but the alderpersons and the mayor of Okotoks came up with a strategy where they required the developer to conserve water by putting a foot of topsoil into the new developed areas. By putting that water conservation strategy into place, the town of Okotoks was able to conserve water and save a considerable amount of money.

Another very positive example of water conservation is what's being proposed with the replacement of the current weir in Calgary. What they're going to be doing is creating a natural series of ponds where the fish will have the chance to go down the river and, in fact, come back up. That's the key part: the spawning aspect. It used to be sort of a one-way trip for the fish. Well, now, thanks to the new approach to the weir, the fish will be able to come up. So what we need is creative thinking where we conserve water, where we don't put one basin at risk by drawing from another basin.

Another concern I have is what has happened in the past. I remember very well when the dam at the Oldman River was proposed and increased in size. There was tremendous conflict at Brocket. It was actually an armed conflict, and it reminded me of what happened later on in Quebec at Akwesasne because the First Nations people did not feel that they had been sufficiently consulted in the building of that dam, and a shot was fired. Fortunately, no one was injured in that altercation, but it was based on a lack of consultation. There wasn't a plan in place, and that plan was not developed in a collaborative, consultative manner. As a result, misunderstandings occurred.

We have the Water for Life strategy. It makes a whole lot of sense, and I would just urge the government to take into account its own strategies. Water basin transfers are very suspect at best.

Another concern I have: I mentioned the business of the leaching effect on water in the Stavely area thanks to the Pine Creek coulee. We need legislation to govern the 600,000 separate wells that we have in this province. We have no regulations on how much water can be extracted. We have this principle whereby the first person to own that property is able to sell the rights to that particular water, but as the previous speaker from Edmonton-Centre mentioned, we have no idea how much water is there. We can't commodify that

water. We can't, then, transfer it or sell it because we have no inventory that would tell us to what extent this water could be used.

Right now we have great draws on the water, at least in Calgary, from a whole variety of bottling companies where makers of Pepsi draw the water, which obviously does not go back into the system and forms a large percentage of the soft drinks that are manufactured. This is water that, well, does not go back into the river in the same fashion in which it was drawn. Therefore, we have sewage treatment systems that, again, are very costly, and we don't limit the demands.

Another problem we have with water – and this is one of the reasons the gas-fired plant was turned down for being built in Calgary – is the tremendous amount of water required in the process of cooling the generators. If we don't take into account what we currently have, and if we fiddle by taking from the north to the south, then basically we're going to do ourselves in.

So I want Stettler to have the quality of water that Edmonton has, the quality of water that we have in Calgary. But I would like to think that that quality of water was something that we didn't have to continue to screen and strain and pour through a series of costly chemical treatments, that we would preserve the quality of that water that comes from the mountains, that comes from the Arctic Ocean, that comes from the Pacific, that comes from the Rocky Mountains: all these wonderful watersheds that we currently have.

If we don't come up with a strategic manner of conserving this water, then we're in deep trouble. We've taken our natural resources – and Water for Life is such a terrific title because without water it doesn't matter how much natural gas we have, how much coal we have, how much oil. Without the sustainability of water, I'll use the example of the Midas touch: what good is all this gold if we can't drink it, and we can't eat it?

We must come up with an inventory. We must come up with a Water for Life strategy. We cannot condone as a Liberal Party the unsustainable thought of drawing water from one basin to another. We're putting the lives of all Albertans, both in northern and southern Alberta, at risk if we start playing God. We can have various forms of ingenuity, but when we attack Mother Nature, we realize what happens.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, did you have a question or comment?

Ms Evans: Just a brief comment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my previous lifetime, I spent time with a number of municipalities engineering what was the second waterline to be built in Alberta connecting potable water from the city of Edmonton all the way out to Ryley. It was second to the Henry Kroeger line that was previously built. It was in some respects similar in design because it was taking good-quality water to people that required it at, hopefully, an affordable price.

9:50

I think that on all sides of the House we've had a lot of questions and comments tonight, but I can suggest that if we had had that same interest in the times that we were building that waterline, perhaps there would have been differences. However, at that time we were looking at PFRA for federal support of such programs and such program development as a waterline, and here, when local people define the interest and show the initiative and are willing to pay for and develop the line, I think they have probably addressed and asked these questions many times over that have been posed in the House.

The one caution I want to bring to this Assembly is this: if we, in fact, show a lot of assertiveness to go out and define where all of our water basins are, where water exists that's in good quality, et cetera, there may be a suggestion that we start paying for and providing that new infrastructure across Alberta, and that would be an incredible and huge investment that we may not be able to bite off until we look at a long-range plan for the economics of it.

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

Mr. Chase: Yes. Maybe in a kind of reverse questioning, I wonder, minister of health, if when these water pipelines, these sort of aqueducts were created, did it involve an interbasin transfer, or was it within the same water table or water area? I'm thinking that geographically speaking, it didn't involve an interbasin transfer. It drew from an existing basin.

The Acting Speaker: Does anybody else have a question or comment? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: I think we're talking about some very important things, but I have one question for the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity. I'm a little bit concerned where he referred to Milton Born with a Tooth and referred to the fact that we hadn't consulted, possibly, long enough. I have to question that, whether we talk for rest of our lives because we can't come to a unanimous decision. But I'm just wondering about his personal experiences with Milton because I found him a militant who there was no dealing with. Your discussion, saying that we hadn't discussed long enough: I think that we discussed it a long enough time. Maybe a comment to that.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much for that question or comment. Milton Born with a Tooth, that was just described, was the individual who was charged with firing the rifle, but he wasn't the man who single-handedly drove all the bulldozers, built the ramps of land, and for time on end, month after month prevented developers and the dam crew from going onto his territory.

This wasn't the action of a single individual. This was a concern that the First Nations in the Brocket area had. While this one individual may have taken things to an extreme level, he would not have been able to continue and express these concerns if other members of the Brocket reserve had not supported him and had not held off, basically, development for several months.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah, thanks. I appreciate all the comments tonight, and I thank the hon. member for again bringing forward second reading. I think it's important, though, to recognize – and this goes back, in actual fact, to the early '90s, when the then minister of environment in terms of the issue of interbasin transfers had the foresight to realize the important issue and the recognition of the valuable asset that we have with water and, of course, the then minister of environment was the Premier. In the environmental protection act of Alberta he, in fact, recognized that the exact debate we're having tonight is taking place right here, openly, in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, the five minutes allocated for this section is over.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, you had indicated that you wanted to speak on this bill.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with pleasure to speak on this issue this evening. I find it interesting. Something twiggled my memory about Rochon Sands and the White Sands area, Donalds, and Big Valley. So before I begin, I just would like to remind the Assembly that, in fact, we did have a Tory water program of sorts here in this area several years ago, when I believe the hon. Don Getty moved down to Buffalo Lake under duress to some extent, and they wanted to make sure that the lake was sufficiently full for the Premier to live down by Buffalo Lake. So we have seen . . . [interjections] Yeah. So we have seen some water programs down there before for sure.

I think, you know, we see all across central Alberta that there is a difficulty with the water table lowering. There's no two ways about it that, you know, from Lacombe, as the hon. member mentioned earlier, all the way up through Red Deer and over to Stettler and these affected areas, the water table is decreasing, and there's no doubt that the quality of drinking water from wells and the existing systems is diminishing as well.

So I do support this bill in the sense that I think it's important for us to develop a regional water strategy especially for drinking water because, you know, people do live there and will continue to do so, and it's important to have quality water in those places. But as has been discussed here previously this evening as well, my main concern lies around this sort of transfer between the water systems of the North and the South Saskatchewan rivers. Now, while the amount of water that is being suggested in Bill 11 is significant, it's not overwhelming. I think that we do need to remind ourselves just as to the potential peril and hazards of interbasin water transfer.

You know, while we like to look at the North and South Saskatchewan river systems as sort of our last great hope for clean water through many parts of the province, it's important to note that both of these rivers are down significantly over the last hundred years or so that they have been monitored. The North Saskatchewan, say for example, in the summer is down 40 per cent over the last 20 years, and the South Saskatchewan is down up to 65 to 70 per cent over the last 20 years. These rivers are fed during the drier seasons from glacial water, and these glaciers are retreating at an alarming rate. Also, we can see that the snowpack in both of the systems in the mountains has been decreasing at an alarming rate as well. So while, you know, one little bit here and one little bit there – certainly it's useful and necessary for people in these areas to have good, safe water – I think that we need to have a larger strategy in place so that we're not nickel and diming these river systems to their ultimate peril.

I think it's important to recognize that, indeed, we are just sort of coming out of a period in this province in general of relative wetness in terms of precipitation. I think that there's a very long, standing study that's just come out looking at the sort of algae development and remains in the bottoms of lakes as well as tree ring studies that suggest that really we're in a much drier province than we might have seen since the period of recent European settlement. In fact, the tendency seems to be moving into another dry period.

So while these larger, I guess, forces of nature we must just live with and adapt to, I think that it's important for us to realize that our own human impact on these things is significant as well. You know, sooner or later in this century we're going to really have to deal with what water shortage is about here in this province, Mr. Speaker, and the sooner we deal with that in an honest and comprehensive way, I think that the more reassurance that places like Rochon Sands and Stettler and Lacombe and Taber will have that they can have sustainable development in terms of water.

Otherwise, as I said before, putting in regional systems to ensure the integrity of the water I think is important. So I do support Bill

11 in that regard because, you know, upgrading the Stettler water system to supply these larger regional areas I think will mitigate potential problems in terms of smaller water systems or well contamination, so people in these areas could count on a consistent supply of water. But, you know, once again, as different places around the province look for a reliable and safe source of drinking water and water for the town's general use, I think that perhaps we could look at other forms of water use.

10:00

One of the things that I think we're having to come face to face with is the fact that, you know, we supply this water that we're all reaching for here this evening, for example, fine, fine drinking water that otherwise you could bottle and sell just as easily, and I suspect that's exactly what most companies do. But to use this water that's brought up to such a high standard for anything but drinking water purposes I think perhaps is something we need to look at in the future, in the immediate future, Mr. Speaker, because in fact the amount of energy and the amount of effort and processing required to build our drinking water systems might be excessive for the other uses of water that we use domestically in the cities and the towns of this province.

As several hon. members mentioned across the way here earlier this evening, by putting a price on water and that price being variable and ultimately increasing, we will set up a natural system for water conservation in this province through pricing. Well, I think that once again this invisible hand that the hon. members across the way like to use with impunity, you know, doesn't take into account all things and all situations in our province. Certainly, at the end of the day we have to make sure that everyone has access to good quality, affordable drinking water, and just allowing the price and the market to come to bear and let the chips fall as they may sounds rather irresponsible to me.

So at the end of the day I think that this Bill 11 on its own sort of stands in a small way, in a very practical way, to supply the regional water services for this area, but as I said before, I would like just to reiterate some of these larger concerns that many people are having across this province in terms of water management.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Just wondering if the hon. member knows of any communities that use a two-water system and could report on how that's working between treated and untreated water.

Mr. Eggen: I like this question system. I think these guys use it quite a lot over here, where you have a question, you set it up, and there it is.

Yes, in fact I have seen that system used in other countries. You know, I had the very unique and interesting experience of living in a country where there were serious water shortages, in southeast Africa, setting up a complementary grey and drinking water system in a town that I was familiar with. While initially it was more expensive to set up, while they were building this town, you could in fact set it up. Using the grey water to flush toilets and to water gardens while keeping a separate drinking system ultimately proves to be more economical.

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

Mr. Chase: Yes. Another question for the hon. member. I share the same concerns you have about commodifying. If you start putting

price tags on things and, as you pointed out, the market drives, then we're in trouble. But I'm just wondering how you feel about the need for some type of water inventory so we know what kinds of resource we have, and if you have any suggestions how we could develop that inventory.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thanks. That's a very, very good question. I appreciate it.

This is fun. I can get into this for sure.

Yes, absolutely. I mean, that's a huge problem that we are not facing with the water strategy as of yet. You know, I think it is important that we do look at water, as with other things as well, as a regulated commodity. Once again, we've been dealing with this in terms of energy. Water, I think, has to fall under a similar category.

For example, the city of Calgary, without a metering system the average Calgarian uses 800 litres of water, I believe, while the North American or even western standard for a large urban centre is only 300 to 400 litres. So you need that sense of regulation and a price to be put on these things, but ultimately people need access to good, clean water. We need to know how much is there and where we are going to put it in the next hundred years or so. And right here in this place, in this Legislature, is where that regulation has to start.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been a most interesting debate. Just a couple of points and then I certainly look forward to discussion in committee. This system here is actually less than .1 per cent of the average annual flow of the Red Deer River. The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka wasn't sure of the amount. It's actually less than .1 per cent.

I've been involved for many years, Mr. Speaker, with development of large regional waterlines, so that's why I said that I find this very interesting. I look forward to the committee and the discussion of the committee. I will certainly answer the questions that came up here, and I might add that a lot of those questions, just for a lot of the members as information, were also brought up during the water strategy. In fact, all the basin advisory committees that are out there now actually are looking at these same questions that were asked here tonight.

With that, I might add just for information that the North Saskatchewan basin and the South Saskatchewan basin are really a part of the Saskatchewan basin as are the Oldman basin, the Battle basin, the Bow basin, and the Red Deer basin. They're all part of the Saskatchewan basin, and in the end they all join in one Saskatchewan River and flow into the Hudson Bay.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

Bill 12

Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to move second reading of Bill 12, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005.

The purpose of these amendments, Mr. Speaker, is to clarify the basic principles of justice for victims of crime. No one expects to become a victim of crime, but in one black moment it can happen, and your life is changed forever. It's not just the fallen body that is a victim; it's the family that cries over that body that are also victims.

In 2002, 25 per cent of Albertans reported being direct victims of crime. A caring community provides services and support for victims of crime. The province of Alberta has been helping victims of crime through services and support since 1969, when the first piece of legislation, known as the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act, was passed. Twenty-two years later the Victims Programs Assistance Act created a fund to support programs and services for victims of crime. In 1997 the Victims of Crime Act consolidated the two former acts and established a 15 per cent surcharge on provincial offences. This money was directed to a regulated fund known as the victims of crime fund, separate from the government budget.

With the additional revenue, services to victims were enhanced and more money became available to assist crime victims. By working with our communities to help victims of crime, we make a difference in the lives of the many Albertans who, when they least expect it, become victims of crime and look to their community for assistance.

10:10

Today the Victims of Crime Amendment Act includes specific information in clear language to modernize and clarify the previous principles enhanced in this act. Mr. Speaker, this amendment act revises the basic principles that apply to the treatment of victims, that were endorsed in the new Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime. These changes will help to provide better and more effective services to victims of crime in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn the Assembly until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 10:11 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 5, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/05

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. From our forests and parkland to our prairies and mountains comes the call of our land. From our farmsteads, towns, and cities comes the call of our people that as legislators of this province we act with responsibility and sensitivity. Grant us the wisdom to meet such challenges. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 56 students and one adult from the Sturgeon composite high school. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have a second introduction. It's my pleasure again to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 12 staff from the Edmonton west office of Alberta Human Resources and Employment who are here today to tour the Legislature. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of energetic and promising young people from Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. Today we are honoured to have the grade 6 class from the Vilna school observing the proceedings along with their teacher, Mrs. Jean Muzyka, and Mrs. Roseanna Garner, Mrs. Sue Novosiwsky, Mrs. Shelley Gerlywich, and Mrs. Wendy Cozicar. Vilna school is a very diversified learning program and experience for their students. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just over 20 years ago I graduated from Winfield high school in Winfield, Alberta. [interjections] That's right; believe it or not. Now, today I have the privilege of introducing a group of grade 6 students from that very school. Included in this distinguished group of 16 visitors are the school principal, my former French teacher and basketball coach, Mr. Elwood Johnson, teacher Mrs. Cocke, and parent helpers Kathleen Zimmerman, Lisa Keirle, and Robert G. Lowe. I'd ask them all to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to

you and through you to all members of this Assembly a member of the council of MD 23, the MD of Mackenzie, who is in Edmonton to attend the AAMD and C conference. I would ask Mr. Ed Froese, seated in the gallery, to rise and accept the traditional welcome of the House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Growth Pressures in Fort McMurray

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday evening a unified delegation from Fort McMurray consisting of representatives from major oil sands companies, the mayor, the board of education, the health authority, business and First Nation leaders, who had obviously all done their homework, presented a business plan and an investment infrastructure plea to this government. The development of Fort McMurray is key to the prosperity of the whole province, but this government's lack of planning is putting that in jeopardy. My first question is to the Premier. Would the Premier briefly describe the government's vision for the residents of Fort McMurray as it relates to maintaining the Alberta advantage?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of attending a very fine presentation that was made by the group from Wood Buffalo. Indeed, it was an updated business plan because what the group from that area found was that their business plan that they'd presented to us had rapidly become outdated. They felt that it was important that they come and, indeed, brought a great number of people to that from the health authorities, the school boards, the advanced education area, the energy area and gave us a great review of what has happened, what is happening, and their projections for the future.

I would say finally, Mr. Speaker, that a number of ministers affected were in attendance at that. We heard their comments, and we'll be responding to them.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when municipal, health care, and other grants are provided to authorities in Fort McMurray, will the government now take into account the 7,000-plus workers who live in the surrounding camps?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, as I indicated, Mr. Speaker, in my first comment, a number of ministers were in attendance. A number of MLAs were in attendance last night. We received a very comprehensive document from the group, and the assurance has been given them that the appropriate ministers will work with them to work through this document to understand their issues around water treatment plants, waste water, housing. The minister of infrastructure has commented directly on land that could be available to them for housing.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. To the Premier: given that the people who work in and around Fort McMurray generate huge revenues for this government, why doesn't this government ensure that they have public services that are up to the standards of the rest of the province?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Deputy Premier pointed

out, we're working with industry on accommodating their infrastructure needs. Just to indicate one component of what is going on in the Fort McMurray area, we'll talk about housing, for instance. The minister of seniors recently awarded something like 700 acres to accommodate 2,000 affordable housing units. There are another 400 about to come on stream pending the bid process, so this is an area where we're working. In the area of transportation we've already committed funds to upgrade highway 63 and highway 881. So a lot of work is being done, and a lot of work will be done in the future.

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

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Securities Commission has been under intense scrutiny since a report was leaked last month indicating serious allegations regarding a two-tiered enforcement system, sexual impropriety, and workplace harassment. Yesterday the Minister of Finance said that she had received a report and seemed to indicate that she felt all was well at the commission. To the Minister of Finance: would the minister please clarify which report she based her comments on, the report prepared by Mr. Mack or the report from the Securities Commission to the minister?

1:40

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the first report that the hon. member refers to was exactly that. It was the initial report. As I indicated in my answers to questions in the House previously on this matter, there were, indeed, two reports prepared by Mr. Mack. The later one was received on the 21st of March. The commission dealt with the matters in both reports and then reported to me through my deputy. In that finding, they clearly stated that the reports indicated that the enforcement policies of the Alberta Securities Commission have been applied and continue to be applied consistently and fairly and with an even hand. I think that was an important message from those two reports.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How, then, will the minister address the very serious discrepancies between these two reports, or is she saying that the first report was completely off base?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the first report dealt with issues raised by persons who had concerns. The second report dealt with those concerns from more of a management level. As I indicated in my previous answer, on the regulatory side, the enforcement side the commission is confident that the workings of the commission are in order.

Mr. Speaker, they did raise in the initial report and responded in the second report to issues around human resource problems. The commission also responded to that in their report to me.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that up to 30 people are reported to have raised concerns about the management of the ASC and those complaints have occurred for years, how does the minister expect a report she won't even make public to allay all those concerns?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, first of all, as I indicated yesterday, Mr.

Speaker, it's not within my purview or my authority to release that report. It was released to my deputy, through my deputy to me, under the condition of solicitor/client privilege. That is, of course, to protect the people who brought concerns forward.

Mr. Speaker, the concerns that were raised on the human resource issues will be dealt with. The commission has assured us that their human resource committee takes these concerns very seriously and will be responding. I will be following up in that area.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As indicated by the minister, there have also been serious allegations surrounding the workplace environment at the Alberta Securities Commission. Mr. Mack's report indicates that the workplace culture was threatening and, indeed, unsafe for numerous employees. My question is for the Minister of Finance. The minister has responded to the enforcement allegations. Will she now report to the Assembly the commission's report on the questionable management practices and the oppressive workplace atmosphere?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I believe I just, in fact, did that. The report that I received from the commission, from the part-time commissioners, indicated that there were indeed some human resource issues. They also indicated in that that they took those very seriously and would be responding.

Mr. Speaker, I'm reviewing that section of the work and instructed my deputy to contact them yesterday so that I understand how they intend to proceed with those human resource issues. This is a professional organization. It is a very important commission, and I expect that it will be operated in a very professional manner.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister then: how can current and future Alberta Securities Commission employees be assured of a safe and harassment-free environment?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the employees at that commission understand that if they have issues, they feel very free in bringing them forward, which they did, and I appreciate that. Now the important thing is that these issues are dealt with and followed up, and I have given the Assembly and the members questioning this the assurance that I will be ensuring that there is a follow-up and that the appropriate steps are taken to correct any malfunction in the workplace.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister inform the House what those appropriate steps would be to ensure that the employees have a safe and appropriate workplace?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as soon as I have an indication from the part-time commissioners as to how their human resource division is going to proceed with this, I would be most pleased to inform the House.

Missing Health Records

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, it's been a month since the health records of 670,000 Albertans went missing and were possibly stolen.

Instead of notifying the police before the trail goes cold, ministry spin doctors spend their energies crafting elaborate talking points in case news of the missing tapes leaked out. Well, it did. Instead of trying to solve the crime, the Tories have spent their time weaving a bigger rug to sweep this mess under. My question is to the Premier. Given that identity theft has become a major problem, why has this government failed in its duty to protect the personal information of Albertans and then failed again to take immediate action to recover the lost or stolen information?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I dispute the remarks that action was not taken.

I'll have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness respond as to what action has been taken.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated yesterday, there was a review of what was actually occurring, whether or not the tape was in possession of one of the contractors entrusted with conveying the tape for microfiche.

In large part, the release of the information was pending the review of whether or not it was located with IBM, where it was located, and whether or not we could report it as missing or whether or not it was something that had already had some fraudulent or misconduct associated with it. We have had no evidence of that thus far.

We initiated the investigation, and I assure you and this Assembly that if there is evidence that we need to pursue with the police, that will be done.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the health records of 1 in 4 Albertans may have gone missing, why has the government failed to notify these Albertans that their personal health information may now be in the hands of parties unknown who could be, as we speak, using the information to steal their identities?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the very day, within the very hour of hearing about the loss, I phoned the vice-president of IBM. I had that same question about what could be done. Although at that time I wasn't fully aware of what was on the tape, I was aware of the fact that these secured tapes had been developed with very specialized equipment, that it would take a mainframe computer – there are three such computers in Edmonton that may be able to read such a tape. Since then and in this House I believe I have confirmed that only the health care number and the name is actually on the tape along with the gender. But I have never diminished the importance of tracking that information, no matter how little or how much is contained.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, why doesn't the government have a responsibility to notify those whose health data is missing or stolen, if for no other reason than to let them know how they can best protect themselves against identity theft, something this minister doesn't seem to understand?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we're very concerned about the loss of the tapes, unproven as to having been stolen as yet. The investigation is there. However, if it is imperative for us, in the opinion of the

Privacy Commissioner, to contact every Albertan that may have been listed with their health number, as per his requirements to fulfill our duty and our filial responsibility, we will do that. Presently, however, we are still investigating the matter. When we have more to report to Albertans, that report will be made.

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

Lynnview Ridge

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have raised this issue before in the House, but it has yet to be resolved. My constituents have been very concerned and frustrated about the contamination of their properties in Lynnview Ridge. So my question today is to the hon. Minister of Environment. Can the minister update the House on this serious concern?

1:50

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to inform this Assembly and the hon. member that we have in fact reached an agreement pertaining to the mediated settlement as early as 11 o'clock this morning. It's a great pleasure for me to say that this has been taking place for numerous years, and I want to say that the mediated action between Alberta Environment and Imperial Oil has been successful in protecting the environment and in protecting the interest of the citizens in Lynnview Ridge.

Mr. Cao: Well, that's great news, Minister.

My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that my constituents in the Lynnview Ridge area have been living with this contamination for too long – and I'm ready to celebrate the completion of the cleanup too – can the minister tell us when we can expect the cleanup to occur?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say from the onset that I'm going to be so pleased that I perhaps will not have to be answering any more questions from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort on this important issue.

I will say without any fear of contradiction and to all of the members of this House that Alberta Environment will not be paying for this cleanup. The mediated settlement has indicated that Imperial Oil, as stewards of the issue in dealing with the residents, will be doing this. In actual fact, we want to ensure that with any soil that has contaminated property, Imperial Oil will be beginning the cleanup as soon as, shall I say, at the very least, this spring and early summer. I think that's very important.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying that Alberta Environment is participating so that the residents in Lynnview Ridge, who have been very understanding and co-operative, can enjoy their properties now and into the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that Alberta is proud of legislation saying that the polluter pays, why is Alberta Environment contributing to the cleanup of Lynnview Ridge?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. I just want to clarify that in fact the Ministry of Environment is not. We have participated in a very small portion of the funding, but ultimately I want to congratulate Imperial Oil. They have agreed in the mediated settlement to cover the cost of this remediation to the benefit of all Albertans and the citizens specifically in the area that is in the hon. member's constituency.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Water Strategy

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fresh water is a diminishing resource essential to the very survival of all life. Albertans are becoming increasingly aware of and anxious for strong leadership in the province on its water resources. The government's water for life strategy provides the vision, but without resources and legislation no action and strategic direction can follow. My question to the Minister of Environment: given that measurement of Alberta's water supply is essential to making effective water management decisions, when will the government accurately measure the total water supply in Alberta, both surface and groundwater?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you. A very good question by the hon. member. I want to say that Alberta's water for life strategy is one of a kind in all of Canada, which really is demonstrating the leadership of the province of Alberta. The water strategy has three outcomes: safe, secure drinking water; healthy rivers and lakes; and reliable quality water supplies for a sustainable economy into the future.

Now, the Alberta Water Council, which the hon. member and I have discussed, and the watershed planning and the advisory councils are key in terms of the water strategy success in collecting the data that the hon. member has made reference to because when we're doing this, we want to do it right the first time.

Dr. Swann: To the same minister: given that the government has a policy allowing interbasin transfers, which indicates a failure of water management and planning, will the government commit to implementing legislation to make watershed planning management mandatory?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I want to first and foremost say that I am very proud of the environmental protection act that we have in Alberta. It's viewed by the majority of provinces across Canada as a leader.

One of the reasons for interbasin transfers is specifically – we're debating in this House now, in fact, one of those transfers. No matter how small or how large, it's accountable back to this particular Legislature, and I think that is clearly a strength of the legislation that we have in place. In fact, that was put in place when the then Minister of Environment, our Premier, led in terms of the importance of these initiatives.

As we go forward in collection of the data in terms of what the hon. member is asking for, I think it is going to be critical that we continue to report back to our Water Council people, that are involved directly at the grassroots of the forefront, the importance of this important resource, that we will continue to ensure that the water in the province is managed in a proper and orderly fashion to ensure that it's for the long term and into the future of the strategy we have.

Dr. Swann: Again to the same minister: given that the transfer of water can be seen to make water into a product or commodity potentially subject to international trade agreements under NAFTA, can the government absolutely guarantee to Albertans that our water will not be sold to the United States?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, under supply . . . [interjection] Well, the hon. member says: just say . . .

The Speaker: Through the chair.

Mr. Boutilier: Through the chair I'm not going to say what she would like me to say. I'm going to simply say that we are going to manage our water in a proper, orderly fashion. One thing for sure, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans value what I refer to in this House as blue gold. That blue gold is something that we will cherish, we will conserve, we'll use as good managers of now, today, and into the future without any fear of contradiction.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Forest Sustainability

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night during debates in this House the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity outlined his belief that the harvest of Alberta's forest is proceeding at a faster rate than reforestation. He used the words "mowing down" to describe the harvest and went on to use the words "pillaging" and "plunder." My questions are for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Are forest companies being allowed to pillage and plunder Alberta's valuable forest resources?

Mr. Coumts: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. I can assure this hon. member, I can assure this House, and I can assure Albertans out there that this industry, which is an important industry to the province of Alberta, is responsible and is committed to sustainable resource management. Our industry leaders consult with the public in developing management plans that go well into 200 years, and our forests grow more than they actually cut. We grow 44 million cubic metres of forest and only cut about 24 million cubic metres in Alberta. Our companies use the latest information and the latest technology, and, finally, they meet international criteria, which has been pointed out by an independent report published by Yale University professors who concluded that Canada's forest practices are among the most progressive and the best in the world.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. To the same minister: what checks and balances are in place to ensure that reforestation efforts are adequate in Alberta?

Mr. Coumts: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has some of the best managed forests in North America, and each year the amount of timber that is harvested in our province is less than the forest actually grows. Reforestation is mandatory in Alberta, and it has been that way since 1966. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, this maybe isn't very important to the folks across the way, but it is important to the industry and it's important to the 50,000 people that work in the forest industry. We have a delegated authority that looks after reforestation in this province. It's the Forest Resource Improvement Association, and we require compa-

nies to follow clear, defined legislative requirements to make sure that reforestation is done on public lands.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. To the same minister: what recourse does the government have in the apparently unlikely event that a forest company does not comply with reforestation requirements?

2:00

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, there are timber management regulations in place in this province that clearly state what the industry must do in terms of reforestation and making sure that the forest is sustainable for years to come. Companies could face significant monetary penalties as well as reductions in annual allowable cuts. As I mentioned earlier, Alberta's reforestation policy is designed to ensure long-term viability of our province's valuable forest resource. This is hardly plunder and pillage.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Wild Rose Foundation Grants

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Registered societies in this province qualify for Wild Rose funding because they register and file their annual returns with the province. Societies that do not file their annual returns with the province are designated as struck and do not qualify for Wild Rose funding. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. Why is it important that the Wild Rose Foundation prohibit funding to societies that are labelled as being struck?

Mr. Mar: I'm not sure I heard the last part of that question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Agnihotri: Why is it important that the Wild Rose Foundation prohibit funding to societies that are labelled as being struck?

Mr. Mar: I think I did hear the question that time, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what the answer is. I'd be happy to entertain the member's question. I'll have to take it under advice right now.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: is it acceptable for a struck society to obtain its Wild Rose funding through another registered society?

Mr. Mar: I'm not sure if that's the practice or not. Again, I'll entertain that question under advice.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: beyond accountability reports can the minister explain what kind of follow-up is done to ensure that organizations that have received Wild Rose funding use the money for the purposes that are stated?

Mr. Mar: There is a follow-up audit on all monies that are distributed through the Wild Rose Foundation, and there is a process by which the entities receiving monies must demonstrate that they are used for the purposes for which they are given, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Major Alberta Projects

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned before, last night residents of Fort McMurray told the government's standing policy committee and many other interested observers about the issues they face as a high-growth community. This morning the government released information that there is more than \$100 billion in major projects under way, with a lot of these projects related to Fort McMurray. My first question is to the Minister of Economic Development. What is the province doing to ensure that the economic growth is spread fairly across the province?

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, \$100 billion on our 100th birthday. What a centennial gift to the people of Alberta.

In the report that was released this morning on behalf of Economic Development and, of course, for the government of Alberta, talking about \$100 billion worth of projects, clearly the majority of that development is going to take place in the Fort McMurray area, and that's why the people that came in from that centre last night to make their presentation are to be congratulated. Of course, as the Premier and others have said today, there is a challenge there for us to deal with.

Now, as far as the rest of the province there are developments that are taking place, especially the Edmonton-Calgary corridor. But even in my little old Lethbridge, you know, there's a vibrancy now that is taking place, and congratulations to all that have been involved in it and especially the government of Alberta for creating the climate for investment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Due to the strong economy and activity in the oil sands, skill shortages are occurring in that industry. What is the province doing to help the industry in the Fort McMurray area during these shortages that they're experiencing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. Of course, I've said before that Alberta is committed to further developing the skills base of Albertans so that they can compete internationally. Presently my department spends \$280 million a year in training to help Albertans develop skills that are in demand. In addition to that, of course, we fund over 4,600 apprenticeship spaces along with advanced ed and career development. We have 56 employment centres across 43 communities in Alberta that provide various forms of employment support programs to Albertans out there.

In addition to that and the most important part, Mr. Speaker, if you'll give me a brief moment, we are also working with industry to develop skills for some of the groups that continue to be underutilized, including aboriginal people . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, thank you. It may be helpful to address the most important point first.

The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question and second supplemental is to the Minister of Energy. What is the province doing to ensure that we are doing more with

our resources than extracting them and shipping them without benefit to Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard about the \$100 billion potential investment in the oil sands area over the next 10 years and substantial opportunity for centuries yet to come. It is important that we set the framework and the groundwork so that we do more than just extract bitumen, that we have the opportunity to do the upgrading, the refining, and even working towards using bitumen as a feedstock for the petrochemical industry. These are all things we're working on very closely with the industry in particular. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo continually works with them in bringing those issues forward.

My one concern about this still comes back to this Kyoto issue. One of the clear problems of the Kyoto protocol, while it is very substantially flawed, is that you can and will potentially see the upgrading of the bitumen happening in the U.S. or China. Countries that are not signatories to the protocol do not have to comply with the standards that we have. We'll see more carbon dioxide emission and a greater global problem than by our using the right standards to do that upgrading and that refining right here in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Youth Emergency Shelters

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Children's Services said in answer to previous questions about youth shelters that family and community support services provides funding for youth shelters. This is not the case. Family and community support services does not provide funding to shelters because shelters don't fall under the FCSS's definition of preventative services. To the Minister of Children's Services: why does this ministry not define youth shelters as a preventative service when they clearly are preventative?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the hon. member. The government under FCSS does provide youth emergency shelters funding. We provided \$21,250 for public awareness and education in 2003.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: will the minister commit to a new funding regimen for youth shelters since they are not part of the FCSS definition of preventative?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, thank you. That's a good question. The ministry is going to be looking this year at how we fund youth shelters, so I'll be pleased to accept her recommendations. It's something that we are going to be doing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. Regardless of the semantics, you will then make sure that your ministry does ensure that shelters get funding?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, we're going to be reviewing how the youth shelters in this province are funded. I can tell her that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

2:10

Securities Commission

(continued)

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From Bre-X to the Boyle brothers a rogues' gallery of con men and scam artists have slipped through the fingers of this province's toothless securities regulator. Meanwhile, small investors are supposed to be satisfied with the vague assurances from the Minister of Finance to not worry and be happy despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, including documented evidence sent to the government 15 months ago by the Alberta Securities Commission's former enforcement director. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Why is the minister refusing to make public the very report she earlier claimed would clear the air?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question I would think maybe five times in the last two days. The information that was provided was provided under a solicitor-client relationship. This is to protect the anonymity of the persons who brought those complaints forward and to protect the reputations of persons that may have been referred to improperly.

Mr. Speaker, we have treated this very seriously. Immediately upon receiving the complaint, I wrote to the commission and asked them to investigate this matter. They did that. They employed an external, very well-respected person to do the investigation and provide the reports. What I have answered is on the basis of that. If the hon. member has a problem with the person who did that investigation, he should stand in this House and say so.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I know the minister's little exercise, but the small investors are the clients, it seems to me, and my question to the minister is simply this: how can small investors have any confidence at all in view of what's happened when the minister refuses to get to the bottom of it and make this report public?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we have gotten to the bottom of it. As I indicated, the commission has acted very responsibly. They employed an external person, a very well-respected person, to conduct the investigation. They have taken the information from that investigation, and they have said clearly – I will read it one more time – that the report indicates that the enforcement policies of the Alberta Securities Commission have been applied and continue to be applied consistently and fairly and with an even hand. That is an important statement. We have FOIP legislation in this province, and we abide by legislation, and we abide by solicitor-client confidentiality.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, if the minister can't make public this internal report, why doesn't she order an independent investigation of the Securities Commission to get to the bottom of the serious allegations that still threaten to undermine investor confidence in this province?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the commission hired an independent investigator well respected in this province. I do trust him, and if you have any reason not to, I think you should say that rather than make asides outside this House.

Mr. Speaker, the Securities Commission and the work they do is very important. For that reason I requested they do a review. They've done the review. They hired the external investigator. They have the report. They have made those findings public in this way. I see no value, frankly, in somebody sitting across the way reviewing what has already been reviewed by very, very, very credible people.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Health Services in Calgary

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, April 1, the hon. members for Calgary-McCall, Calgary-Fort, and myself met with members of the Calgary health region at the Peter Lougheed hospital in Calgary. At that meeting we were informed that the population-to-physician ratio in northeast Calgary is 1,521 to 1 while in other parts of the city it's 600 to 1. My question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. What is the department doing to rectify the situation so that hard-working, taxpaying northeast Calgary residents can have quality and easy access to health care?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite a national shortage, Alberta has done better in attracting physicians than almost any other part of Canada. For one thing, we have one of the best compensation packages in Canada. Our eight-year trilateral agreement is applauded.

We are working with the Calgary health region, who has initiated a project quite specifically to examine the northeast region. It is true. The figures represent a significant demographic shift there, and we'll take a look at both the needs of that region as well as the particular population groupings there so that, hopefully, we'll find the right mix. Mr. Speaker, the primary care initiatives, which will see teams of professionals work on-site in places like the northeast, might well help us to overcome some of the deficiencies of having a lower physician-to-patient ratio.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is the department doing about the shortage of 260 acute-care beds in Calgary and southern Alberta?

Ms Evans: Recently Alberta health officials and Alberta infrastructure officials met with the Calgary health region to take a look at this problem. Obviously, with the high-growth areas of the province, keeping apace with the bed needs is an important element. We have initiated and sponsored redevelopment work on the site in the southeast quadrant, which is by design easily accessible for parts of the north and the southeast. More than that, we're reviewing redevelopment plans at the Peter Lougheed centre, the Foothills medical centre, and the Rockyview hospital, and last year we approved a total of \$125 million of capital projects for phase 1 redevelopments of these sites.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time and time again in

response to questions on the Enron scandal in Alberta the Minister of Energy asks for more evidence. Every day the Official Opposition has provided this House with transcripts, e-mails, and other court evidence regarding Enron's electricity price-fixing schemes in Alberta. The tabled material proves at the very least that a full, independent, public inquiry into Enron's dealings in Alberta should be launched immediately. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Has the Department of Energy analyzed the evidence tabled in this House or otherwise revealed by American authorities regarding Enron's electricity price-fixing schemes here in Alberta?

Mr. Melchin: I'd be delighted to repeat some of those answers that need, I guess, reinforcement, Mr. Speaker. In this sense, we have been out in front of it. The market surveillance administrator does that precise work all the time. They specifically requested from the utility in the state of Washington all of the transcripts. It's those transcripts that have been reviewed. It's from those transcripts that there were some assessments. All that's in there thus far is a little bit of information, not enough to collaborate that there was any collusion or any of those kinds of things, but that's why they have asked the federal Competition Bureau to investigate.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that Albertans look to the minister, not the federal Competition Bureau, for leadership, why is this minister refusing to live up to his responsibility to protect Alberta electricity consumers?

Mr. Melchin: We look very much to the market surveillance administrator as experts, which they are, very qualified to look into these issues. They can assess the merit of whatever is on those transcripts and take appropriate actions. In this case, it involved parties that were outside of Enron and other parties that were outside of Alberta over which we don't actually have any jurisdiction to continue the investigation. That is why the federal Competition Bureau is involved.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how can the minister deliberately ignore the evidence that has been provided when Albertans are concerned that they may have lost millions and millions of dollars because of Enron's price-fixing schemes?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are deliberately protecting the interests of Albertans, and we are going to continue, in that regard, doing all that we can to ensure that Albertans are protected. It is actually the actions of this department and the market surveillance administrator that has been in front of this and has provided so that they could have access to the transcripts.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

GuZoo Animal Farm

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. There has been

much ongoing criticism of an Alberta roadside zoo facility called the GuZoo. Recent news reports indicate that the facility has recently had its zoo permit renewed. Given the somewhat checkered history of this facility, can the minister advise the Assembly what information was used to issue that permit and whether the facility presently meets all the standards required of it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to be clear here. There have been many public complaints received not only in our department but also in our office. The department also has some concerns about GuZoo. Recently GuZoo's zoo licence was extended for a short six-month period under some very strict conditions and very strict guidelines. The operator has acted on many of our requests for improvements over the previous three-month licence that was given, and these are showing up in his annual zoo plan, which we asked him to do. Our department continues to investigate GuZoo, and we have given the zoo operator written warnings regarding the specific conditions where we weren't satisfied with his performance, so we continue to monitor him.

Dr. Brown: Can the hon. minister advise whether or not there's a plan for ongoing monitoring of the compliance with the requirements of the department?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we don't continue to just take the operator's word that improvements are being made. Our department staff are inspecting GuZoo on a monthly basis, and we will continue to monitor, along with our other partners like the SPCA, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, as well as Environment and the regional health authorities. We work in close co-operation with them, and we'll take whatever actions are necessary with our partners to see that the operator continues to make the required improvements that are needed to follow the conditions that are set out in his zoo permit.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, my final question for the same minister: does Alberta's legislation and regulatory framework have enough teeth when it comes to enforcing these requirements?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question that has been brought forward. We're trying to take a very proactive approach on this issue, along with the SPCA and our other partners, to work within the mandates that we individually have, and we would like to certainly work closer together. Alberta's roadside zoos have all been issued only six-month permits while we work on developing zoo standards.

Our goal is to develop clear guidelines and standards for all roadside zoos and provide options for enforcement. Once the standards are completed, Mr. Speaker, the zoo operators will have a phased-in approach to meeting those standards under their plans.

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

Gaming Research Institute

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Gaming said that the government would not interfere in the results of research done by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. However, the minister also said that the government has a responsibility to direct the AGRI to answer government questions, noting that the contract for the organization is up for renewal. My ques-

tions are for the Minister of Gaming. Do the minister's remarks yesterday indicate that the government will now start telling the AGRI what kind of research it wants done as a condition of its grant renewal?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe it will be a condition of renewal, but I think we do have a responsibility, providing \$1.5 million annually for that institute. There are things that we want researched, so we will give them a list of things that we would like them to have a look at. They may have some things on their own list as well, but certainly there are areas that we want researched, and I think it's only prudent that they would research those items for us.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: is the government seeking more control of the AGRI because some of its past research has made the government uncomfortable?

Mr. Graydon: No, absolutely not. If the research makes us uncomfortable, so be it. We don't direct the results of that research, but we do have a responsibility to the taxpayers of Alberta to see that their \$1.5 million investment is secured.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the government gave out \$40 million in supplemental funding to seven regional exhibitions in Alberta, why is the government taking so long to give the AGRI its last year's grant of \$1.5 million?

Mr. Graydon: Two very separate issues, Mr. Speaker. The \$40 million that was distributed to seven regional agricultural societies from the Alberta lottery fund – another good example of lottery funds at work – was approved in this House by a vote under the supplemental requisitions. I think that explains where the \$40 million came from. It was identified in the third-quarter update as being surplus monies at that point in time, and we felt it only prudent to distribute it to some very worthwhile groups.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of four members to participate.

In the interim might we congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs on reaching a milestone today and call on the hon. Minister of Advanced Education for an introduction.

head:

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to introduce a class of students that has joined us during question period. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 42 enthusiastic grade 6 students along with their teachers, Mr. Bill French and Ms Colleen Reeder, and parent helpers Dave Baker and Gillian Drever from the George P. Nicholson elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They're here today to observe and learn with keen interest about our government. They're seated in the members' gallery.

I might say that from George P. Nicholson elementary school in the Twin Brooks area of my constituency, George P. Nicholson being a trustee of the Edmonton public school board is one of the few people that I know that's had a school named after him while

he's still serving as a trustee and therefore the respect that is accorded to him. I just wanted to mention that as I ask these students to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Members' Statements

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

Allan Brown

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sixty years ago today the greatest conflict in the history of humanity was drawing to a close. Seventeen thousand Canadian airmen perished during World War II. In the air over Germany in the early hours of April 5, 1945, 60 years ago today, men of 6 Group, Bomber Command, Royal Canadian Air Force, were dropping 5,400 tons of bombs on oil targets in Germany.

One of the aircraft on operations that night was a Halifax heavy bomber piloted by a young man from Midnapore, Alberta. After losing a third engine over the target and leaving for home, the aircraft was descending into the night. The pilot gave the order to bail out, and the pilot was ready to exit the aircraft, at which time he looked over his shoulder and saw his mid-upper gunner with his parachute hopelessly tangled in the fuselage. The pilot returned to his operations seat. Unable to put on his operating harness, he took the autopilot off and brought the aircraft down to a crash landing at night in enemy territory.

On exiting the aircraft, he noticed that there was not one of his aircrew present in the aircraft but three. It was only then that the aircraft caught fire. The men left the area, and five days later they were able to get back to the Allied lines. Meanwhile, the three crew members who had bailed out were taken prisoner of war.

The pilot officer of that night received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his coolness in bringing down the aircraft in enemy territory with only an aircraft airspeed indicator, a compass, and an altimeter. There was not a single light shining in that territory that night, and there was not a single loss of life.

That pilot was my father, Allan Brown.

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

2:30

Infrastructure Spending

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It occurs to me that the people of Alberta may be wondering why 12 MLAs from the Edmonton area, three from Calgary, and one from Lethbridge keep asking so many questions in this House about Fort McMurray. Well, it's because we believe that Fort McMurray and the challenges that it faces are in fact symbolic of the provincial Conservative's neglect of urban Alberta.

The province of Alberta is debt free in large part because a portion of its debt has been effectively downloaded onto municipal governments, regional health authorities, school boards, colleges, and universities in the form of infrastructure that has at best been neglected and at worst destroyed without replacement. Over the past decade inner-city schools and hospitals have been closed. Where are their replacements? Out in the suburbs where the growth is occurring? No. Not so much. People are still waiting for the new ones to be built.

Municipalities of all sizes throughout this province have suffered from the withdrawal of a variety of taxes, user fees, or in the case of Fort McMurray royalty profits without the proportional sustaining increase in grants which accurately reflect their rapid growth. Their populations explode; their infrastructure expires.

Back to Fort McMurray as the most glaring example of the Tory

neglect of urban Alberta. Fort Mac's water treatment plant was designed to accommodate a population of 40,000. Today the population exceeds 55,000. Two new schools are needed along with health care facility expansion to cope with the oil sands driven population boom. The province drags its feet on releasing land for housing construction so that it's almost impossible for teachers, health care workers, and other community service providers to find let alone afford accommodation.

Canmore residents are also experiencing a housing shortage. At the same time, their property taxes go through the roof. Calgary is reeling from the loss of half its hospitals, driving waiting lists to all-time highs. There is a growing disparity between the revenue this government sucks out of urban Alberta and the inadequate grants it returns. The result in cities like Calgary, Canmore, Fort McMurray, and many others is private-sector prosperity coupled with the public-sector status of a have-not province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

High School CPR Program

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure that I rise today to speak about a national nonprofit organization which is partnered with schools in my constituency to give students the opportunity to learn a valuable skill. The Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation, or ACT, is dedicated to helping high schools nation-wide implement a core curriculum CPR program. In order to facilitate this, the foundation establishes partnerships with communities so that CPR mannequins, teacher materials, and the CPR agency cost of teacher training is supplied.

The Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service Foundation, more commonly known as STARS, has partnered in this endeavour and has helped to ensure that the tools and training necessary for this program to be a success are available. This has included the donation of teaching mannequins and teacher training.

I am pleased to announce that the ACT Foundation has been and still is active within schools that are in my constituency. This foundation has partnered with both the Wetaskiwin regional school division as well as the Battle River school division. These partnerships will result in many students learning this valuable life-saving skill each year in these school divisions.

Students are taught not only the mechanics and techniques of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, but they also learn to recognize a developing emergency and the importance of reacting immediately and appropriately. In addition to this, students also learn the risk factors that are associated with heart disease and the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. Being taught these skills not only equip our students with the knowledge necessary to save someone's life, but they also gain self-confidence from learning and possessing such valuable skills.

I'd like to acknowledge and commend the work of the ACT Foundation as well as the STARS Foundation for the work that has gone into this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Heckling in the Legislative Assembly

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to say just a few words about heckling. Heckling is defined as verbal interjection by another speaker in public. All parties I'm aware of have participated

in heckling, and in no way do I intend to make this a partisan issue or to point fingers. Often comments are sarcastic, insulting, derisive, humiliating, or meant to unbalance a speaker and perhaps expose a weakness or gain advantage. Not all Legislatures in the world allow heckling. It is a tradition, however, of the British system, and it's our decision in Alberta whether to continue in the practice.

I'm not aware of many positive aspects to it, but the negative aspects that I see are: the issue at hand may not be constructively addressed, trust is undermined, credibility of both parties is diminished, there is an increased level of stress, and public cynicism and lack of confidence among children as well as adults about the political process and the unwillingness to become involved in political activities may be a result with the democracy deficit we've talked about.

Heckling is a choice for us individually and also collectively. I've met with the Speaker to seek guidance on how to sufficiently block interactions across the floor and, in fact, to have these comments banned. This would be a first that I'm aware of in Canada. The Speaker or his designate could provide the appropriate interventions, and I'm not exactly sure of how the enforcement and identification of heckling would be worked out, but I'm sure that creative minds could be put to this.

After a hundred years of heckling, heckling is an imbedded tradition in this province, and if we choose, we could be leaders in Canada. What might be the benefits? Public dignity enhanced, better human relations in and out of the Legislature, more honest debate and constructive outcomes, and increased public confidence.

The Speaker has suggested this issue go to the House leaders of each party for discussion. I would simply ask that all members consider it fully. Again, I advocate this as strongly as possible. We have an opportunity here to serve the Legislature, the people of Alberta, and democracy more fully.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from Albertans from the great Alberta communities of Didsbury, Busby, Camrose, Onoway, Ardrossan, Willingdon, Edmonton, and Calgary petitioning the government with the following words:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

This petition has been signed by 86 Albertans from all over the province.

Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition this afternoon that I'd like to table in the Assembly. It reads:

To the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, in Legislature Assembled: We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by 103 Albertans from across the province.

Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an important report that was just finished. It's titled the Mega Project Excellence: Preparing for Alberta's Legacy, An Action Plan. This document initiated and funded by the government of Alberta is the culmination of discussions that began in May of 2004 with major energy producers to develop solutions and strategies to address the megaproject cost overruns and skilled labour shortages, the major emphasis being unique demands in Fort McMurray.

2:40

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter signed by Georgina Szoke. Ms Szoke is concerned that the decision of the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency to require cattle sold by September 1, 2006, have an approved RF ID tag causes duplication and further expense to already beleaguered cattle producers.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a couple of documents here. One is the latest Stats Canada figures on construction unemployment in this country by province. Some figures, for example, are 37.9 per cent in Newfoundland, 23.4 per cent in Nova Scotia, 14.8 per cent in Saskatchewan, 16.4 in Manitoba, and also five copies of each of five letters from people protesting temporary foreign workers in the oil sands in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter dated March 21, 2005, to the hon. Minister of Energy from myself requesting the resignation of Mr. Martin Merritt, the market surveillance administrator, and his quick response on March 23 to my letter, indicating that he would not do so.

Thank you.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, our historical vignette of the day is that on April 5, 1908, the first dial telephones in Canada for general use were put into service here in the city of Edmonton.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 26

Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate March 24: Mrs. McClellan]

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to participate in second reading of Bill 26, the Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. As with many of the bills that we're dealing with in this spring sitting of the Legislature, this particular bill appears to be primarily of a housekeeping nature bringing Alberta into line with some of the changes that have been made at the federal level. I can indicate right up front that I will be recommending to my caucus colleagues that we vote in favour of this particular bill.

Mr. MacDonald: Is the whip on?

Mr. R. Miller: The whip. Well, that's a good question. The whip is on, Hugh. The whip is on. I'll take great pleasure in providing you with a whip if that's what you're looking for. [interjections]

An Hon. Member: Focus.

Mr. R. Miller: I'm trying very hard to focus.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford does have the floor.

Mr. R. Miller: I thought I did, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I understand from the comments of the Minister of Finance when she introduced the bill the other day as well as from some of the research that I've been provided with that primarily this bill will command companies to file a notice of objection with the provincial government, or at least a copy of their notice of objection that they file with the federal government must be provided to the provincial government as well. The bill introduces penalties for corporations that do not comply with that provision and as well addresses various tax evasion potentials, I suppose you could call them, for corporations transferring property to other corporations that may not necessarily be at arms length for less than what would be considered to be a fair market value.

I do question a little bit the need for commanding an Alberta corporation to provide the Alberta government with a copy of that notice of objection when, in my mind, it might have been easier just to have the federal department responsible CC the Alberta government when they receive that, thereby removing the onus on business to do that. I know that the minister in her comments the other day indicated that she didn't think this was an onerous task to ask Alberta businesses to do, but I would suggest that perhaps if we would work on fostering a better relationship with the federal government and its various departments, we might be able to convince them to supply that information to us as opposed to demanding that local businesses do so.

As well, the penalties for not complying with that seem to be particularly harsh, Mr. Speaker: a percentage of the refund – I believe it was 5 per cent – up to a maximum of \$10,000. If the task is not so onerous, certainly the projected penalty would appear to be quite onerous.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a couple other questions I suppose would be relevant in terms of asking. As always there's a question as to what exactly constitutes an arm's-length corporation versus not an arm's-length corporation. I understand that some of that is addressed in the legislation, but certainly there would be room for debate and perhaps some amendments at committee stage. Then, of course, the question of what is fair market value and how that will be determined.

I can say that my researchers and myself consulted with a number of stakeholders – particularly, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers – all of whom indicated that they had no particular concerns about this bill and understood that, in fact, we were in compliance with federal regulation and toughening up some of the regulations in terms of making sure that companies aren't hiding or evading property in order to avoid paying their corporate income tax obligations to the province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm going to take my seat and allow any others who have any comments to make them at this time. Thank you.

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

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a great deal to say other than some clarification. As the previous speaker mentioned, it's mainly housekeeping to bring us closer to federal regulations, which seems to make sense. What also seems to make sense is that it seems to be closing some tax loopholes. I suppose that allowing companies a little more leeway with respect to filing or refiling their tax assessments may eventually lead to greater compliance with existing tax laws. So, all in all, as I say, it's a housekeeping bill.

The question that I have, which I hope the minister would refer to when she goes through the Blues, is on the one change allowing corporations to report changes in the reports after they're filed with the Alberta government by giving the minister the ability to waive or postpone. I don't know what would cause that, that we'd go back. It seems to me somewhat unusual that we hand in a report like we do with the Chief Electoral Officer or somebody else, and then after the report is over, we can waive it and change it. There may be very good reasons to do this, but they escape me at the moment. So that's sort of one of the questions I'd like to put on the record, Mr. Speaker.

The other falls along the same line. Under 5(3) on page 4 this bill also allows the minister to postpone fines for a period of 12 months for corporations that fail to comply with reporting procedures or make mistakes or find new information with respect to their tax assessment. I guess in a world where we're all taxpayers, we'd like to postpone our fines for 12 months if we owed money to tax collection. Again, there may be a legitimate, very good reason for this, but on the surface it seems to be somewhat favouritism that others of us won't have. But I'd be interested, Mr. Speaker, in the minister's reasons for those two areas.

Other than that, I don't think there's a great deal here that concerns us, and I'll allow other speakers to participate in the debate. Thank you.

2:50

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

If not, then I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My suggestions have to do with clarifications, things that I would like to see included in the corporate tax amendment bill. One of the corporate taxes that I see in this province as being unnecessary is health care premiums. A number of corporations as well as individual Albertans have to pay hundreds of millions annually in terms of health care premiums, and this is one form of tax that I would like to see abolished both for individuals and businesses. We have the royalties in this province to offset those costs, and I would like to see them offset.

Another area in the area of taxes that I see is the potential for a royalty review. In 1992 Minister Rick Orman, at the time when the price of a barrel of oil was considerably low, reduced the royalties by two-thirds, and they haven't been increased since. I'm not suggesting that the government should unilaterally raise those royalties, but given the price of a barrel of oil being over \$50, I think it's time for Albertans to capture a greater degree of their nonrenewable resources. I think the government, instead of talking about reducing royalties further with schemes like roads for royalties or rail for royalties, needs to with industry input consider: should these royalties be reassessed?

I'm also concerned about the lack of clarification when it comes to collecting these corporate taxes, these royalties. There doesn't seem to be a delineation between what is an old tar sands project that is simply being added to and what is a brand new project. This is the Firebag business that came out. What muddies the whole process further is that Peter Elzinga at one point was advising the Premier while also being a consultant for the private oil company who was claiming that Firebag was simply an extension of an ongoing project. So if we don't know exactly what is new and what is old, Albertans are not receiving their royalties, and I'm very concerned about that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Additional members?

Hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, did you want to close the debate?

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to close the debate on second reading of Bill 26. As has been mentioned in some of the previous discussions, a number of these amendments are in fact housekeeping, but there are a couple of significant amendments to the bill. I would encourage all hon. members to support second reading.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a second time]

Bill 31 Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to move second reading of Bill 31, the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005.

Just a bit of background. On July 1, 1996, the Real Estate Council of Alberta, also known as RECA, became responsible for administering the Real Estate Act. RECA is mandated to protect consumers involved in real estate transactions and to provide services that enhance the industry and the business of industry members.

Now, an assurance fund was established for real estate agents in 1985, and mortgage brokers were included in 1998. The assurance fund is financed by levies placed on industry members and pays

judgments to a regulated maximum. Mr. Speaker, key elements are proposed to ensure that protection under the Real Estate Act is confined to consumers in keeping with the original intent of the act. The amendments will clarify the intent of the assurance fund and preserve its viability for consumers.

The Real Estate Act currently does not specify who is entitled to claim from the fund. The proposed amendments would specify that the following persons are not able to claim from the fund. They are financial institutions such as banks, credit unions, and loan corporations, or any person who in the opinion of the Real Estate Council knowingly participated in the fraud that led to their claim or was wilfully blind to the fraud that led to their claim. The documentation requirements for claiming from the fund are presently set out in the real estate ministerial regulation. The proposed amendment will move these requirements to the Real Estate Act. This is to strengthen their legal effect.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, amendments are proposed to the regulation-making powers in the act to provide clearer authority for some existing regulations and to delegate the authority of four regulations which are being brought into the act and to create new regulation powers.

The remaining amendments are housekeeping and will clarify how the court judgment becomes final. The proposed amendments will not affect any applications made for compensation based on judgments already issued.

Now, in summary, the proposed amendments will ensure that protection under the Real Estate Act is confined to consumers in keeping with the original intent of the act and ultimately preserve the assurance fund's viability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to contribute to the debate on Bill 31, the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005. Going over the proposed amendments, I don't really disagree with the hon. minister. I think that by saying so, I am proving once more that our purpose or our role as opposition is not, as some people would make the public think, to complain or stall. We're here to advise and facilitate when good legislation is needed. This is one more example of such a situation, and I commend the hon. minister.

The ultimate goal is always the protection of the consumer or the taxpayer or the citizens of this province by strengthening legislation that achieves this outcome. I am for it and I support that.

This bill actually excludes banks and financial institutions and trust corporations and big entities from being able to access the real estate assurance fund. I think not only as a legislator but as a layman or as a consumer myself I would support this because when I as a consumer or as a potential buyer of a house or an apartment enter into a transaction and then am faced with an unscrupulous broker or agent who defrauds me of my money – and, you know, to a consumer or a citizen this is their life savings, for example – it is tremendous. It is sort of a life-or-death situation.

A bank or a granter of a loan or mortgage: yes, they suffer losses, but I don't think that it's as detrimental to them as it is to a person or to a citizen. I don't want to sound like I'm trying to exclude them from reclaiming or regaining some of the damages that they might have incurred, but really I think that first and foremost we have to look after the citizen, the private person, the taxpayer, the person who entered into such a transaction, because they're affected more. Their suffering or their pain or their loss is more pronounced. It's more detrimental to them.

3:00

So, yes, I agree with the intent of this bill. You know, the banks or the mortgage granters or financial institutions or trust companies, these big entities have other ways of recuperating their losses or their damages, and I think they can also afford insurance on their own whereas a person, like I mentioned, you know, entering into a transaction like this doesn't have that luxury. I think they should have first access, or first dibs, into this fund.

I know that this fund is not big as it is, so it might not be adequate to repay or compensate more than maybe 10, 15, 20 fraudulent transactions per year. If the banks or the financial institutions try to access this fund, they will probably totally deplete it within one or two transactions only. So I think this negates the purpose of the fund, and that's why I emphasize my support for this bill. It really clarifies who has access to this fund and who shouldn't.

I just have one question very briefly. Section 4 amends section 84 of the current act in subsection (g), which used to prescribe the times within which a claim against the fund could be made, and now it's removed. I know that maybe the rationale would be that it alleviates the concern that, you know, some people would challenge the timeliness of these decisions, but I'm also concerned that by doing this, we might be cutting off some people who might have been delayed for some reason or another, like maybe they didn't file because they didn't know that the fund existed.

Maybe we need to advertise more, you know: "Have you been victimized? This fund is there for you and for your protection." Maybe they weren't aware of it or maybe they had other things that prevented them from filing in an appropriate time. By removing this and maybe moving it into the regulations – I'm not sure what's happening there – this could possibly undermine some people's ability to access the fund, or it might actually cut them off altogether. So I think maybe this is a point of clarification.

As with any piece of legislation, I'm a little uncomfortable. Usually the trend now is basically to strengthen regulations and maybe make the act smaller or more bare bones. I can see it sometimes being necessary when things are evolving and changing on a day-to-day or a month-to-month or a year-to-year basis, and the government doesn't want to amend the law every time. Fine. But in situations like this, I think the essence is clear, the mechanism is clear, so why go to regulations with such fervour?

Having said that, I think again I emphasize that I support this bill. It's good, and it makes sense to me. I would take my seat and allow other people to participate in the debate.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise this afternoon in support of Bill 31 with some reservations, but I suppose that's the function of second reading, to seek some clarity, perhaps, in bills in general and 31 specifically here. I think that as the previous speaker had noted, this is a way to keep the real estate fund viable. My understanding is that there was quite a large lawsuit from banks from September or from August that had the potential to actually break this fund. By removing banks, loan corporations, trust corporations, credit unions, or treasury branches from being eligible for compensation from the real estate assurance fund, I think that this leaves it open as a safety mechanism for individuals to be protected from fraud or indiscretion in the real estate market. So this certainly is a useful thing.

I think it's fine to see the government exercising its regulatory powers. Once again, as I've said many times before in the last few days, in fact the function of this House is to regulate different

industries. There's nothing wrong with that in any way. You know, this helps to make the real estate board a much more viable operation. While perhaps banks and lending institutions may be less than happy with this change, I think that these institutions have the capacity to protect themselves through their own insurance systems and resources, so I don't think we need to be so concerned about that.

There are, as I said, some clarifications that I would like to bring forward at this time. For example, I think that under this new bill any applicant to this real estate assurance fund would only have a year to do so. I think that one of the arguments from the court case with the banks was that their case was too complex for resolution within even the three-year time period. Moving it down to a one-year time period I think has some further potential problems because, of course, real estate and civil suits can be indeed quite complex and take up a lot of time. So perhaps one year before a deadline is not enough for an applicant to receive judgment from this fund.

Other than that, I don't see a great deal of difficulty with it, although I think that we need to seek clarification on the issues that I've brought up. Thank you.

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

On the question-and-answer period, Edmonton-Decore?

Mr. Bonko: Not so much a question, Mr. Speaker, but just to add to the discussion.

The Speaker: We'll make sure that no one wants to participate in the question and answer. None? Then we'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak on Bill 31, the Real Estate Amendment Act, and I'll try not to repeat things that have already been said. I think first we have to recognize that we're talking about the single largest purchase that an individual or a family may be making. They'll spend a great deal of time researching their purchase, but the market moves so fast and is based on the emotions of anxious people: the lender of the money, the bank or the broker; secondly would be the client; and third would be the agent.

There tends to be pressure. Banks want you to lock in for a time certainty to ensure that the lending rate does not move up, causing the client to pay more as a result of a percentage or two. The agent might want to apply pressure to the clients, indicating that others are wanting to view the place and maybe accepting offers. As well, I'm sure everyone's heard this line before: "What you look at today and what you're considering sleeping on, someone has looked at yesterday and has already slept on it. Your tomorrow is their today. So you'd better sign on the dotted line and make an offer."

When money is involved, rational people become irrational, and they get caught. This act states that it will be providing some protection against unscrupulous people. There are many examples. People have bought homes three or four times between themselves and flipped them, making a good profit, leaving a large mortgage in its place with only three-quarters of the value. Now, this wouldn't protect the banks but would in fact protect the consumers. There are a lot of potential places for abuse. The most well known was the Alberta Treasury Branches and West Edmonton Mall, but this will probably remain on the X files for some time.

I mentioned earlier mortgage fraud in Edmonton. We have a very limited ability to track and work with property and mortgage fraud because of the lack of resources or people in place. This bill could

also expand to include mortgage fraud. It also sets the base to perhaps add to this bill or to create a new bill to include mortgage fraud. The bottom line is that consumers need to have assurances that there is legislation in place for protection for the consumer that would in fact provide compensation for them in the event of fraud.

Who are these consumers that I speak of? Well, Mr. Speaker, my constituents of Edmonton-Decore and, of course, other constituents here within the Assembly. As I mentioned in my maiden speech, there are areas within my area that are being developed and are already developed, and this act does in fact enforce for misleading promotions. One that would attract buyers, when I look at the map of new developments, would be clients considering purchasing a brand new home. They come to the location, and in fact when you go into the show home, they have a map drawn out with the vacant lots and proposed school sites.

3:10

Now, I know full well from being on the school board that we don't have that many school sites available. When I was campaigning as a trustee, I came to several new, developing areas where they asked, "When is the school going to be built?" They were sold the home on the pretense of the potential school site. I think the act could go as far as having the broker or the builder for the home consult with schools so that they do not have included on the maps potential school sites knowing full well that there will never be a school built in this area. I think it's misleading, and to not inform the consumer of that could be a grey area that could be in fact brought into this bill.

Just a few examples, Mr. Speaker, as to things that this bill could be looking at and that I would hope that the members would be looking at as the days lead on.

I'd move to adjourn debate, then, when done, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Speaker: Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'm rising to speak to Bill 31, the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005. I believe that a lot of the points that I would like to touch on perhaps have already been mentioned by some other hon. members, but it really does call into question a number of things that I would like to reiterate.

Particularly, my hon. colleague from Edmonton-McClung asked again: why the rush to move so much, apparently, from legislation into regulation? Yet in one particular instance we're actually, to the credit of the minister, moving a regulation into the act. I would suggest that in the interests of democracy and openness and transparency for all Albertans, this is the direction I would like to see us taking much more often, not just in particular with respect to Bill 31, Mr. Speaker, but in fact with any number of bills that we're debating.

I have made the argument many times in the past that it seems to be the pattern of this government to move more and more legislation out of the act and into regulation and thereby have it dealt with behind closed doors by Executive Council without any input from the public, without any public debate, without any transparency for Alberta taxpayers and Alberta citizens to see. Certainly, that would be my major concern with this particular bill, that once again we seem to be moving more and more legislation out of the act and into regulation. I'm really not sure why.

Since second reading is to speak to the principle of the bill, that would be my concern: the principle of moving all of these various

areas into regulation. I'm not sure what the rush is for that, and I really question whether or not it's in the best interests of Albertans and the various stakeholders in this case to be doing so.

Those would be my comments, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the minister is here, a couple of questions. Clearly, this group was self-regulating, and obviously they couldn't self-regulate because of the suit. I believe it was the Royal Bank that created the problem.

I'm wondering. On the surface it always looks good that we are going to protect the smaller people with their mortgages, and we're going to go after the banks, you know, the bigger banks because they can do their own insurance and the rest of it. I certainly have no problem with that, but I always know that where there's a yin, there's a yang. I wonder if the minister, when he concludes debate or somewhere along the line, would indicate to us: what is the possible implication? I'm sure that he's had some discussion with the banks. If they're not able to access this fund, what have they said that they would do? How could that impact people that have mortgages within the bank and the rest of it? Is there a problem that the banks could come back on individuals that we're trying to protect here in a different way? I'm sure that the minister has had some discussion, probably had some concerns about that. I'd be interested in him bringing it back to us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Chase: I hope that within the act itself and within the amendments to the act there is protection for the property owner in terms of the possibility of identity theft and, in this case, property theft. We've had examples in Calgary where seniors have gone south only to find that their property had been falsely put up for sale in their absence. This kind of concern was brought to me by one of my constituents. Along the line of identity theft I'm hoping that within the Real Estate Amendment Act there are titles and searches that are required and identification that the individual actually is the owner of the property so that they don't have any surprises when they get back from a vacation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Then, shall I call on the hon. Minister of Government Services to close the debate?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 32

Animal Keepers Act

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development on behalf of the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise today and move second reading of Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act.

The current act, the Livery Stable Keepers Act, stipulates that any

person caring for animals can put a lien on those animals and then sell them at a public auction in order to recover unpaid costs associated with their care. This proposed act, the Animal Keepers Act, will replace that legislation, providing simpler, more modern, and straightforward language. The new act also includes revisions to deal with surpluses and dispute resolution.

The primary objective of Bill 32 is to provide animal keepers with a mechanism to recover costs associated with stabling, boarding, feeding, and caring for an animal. Under the act the person caring for the animals can put a lien on the animals and sell them to recover unpaid costs associated with their care such as feed, labour, and facilities. The act's strength lies in the fact that these liens have priority over existing liens or security interests as defined under the Personal Property Security Act.

The current wording of the Livery Stable Keepers Act best reflects application within the horse industry, although the act is used extensively by the cattle industry. For that reason, we consulted extensively with the cattle industry and other stakeholders in drafting Bill 32. As a result of these consultations, the proposed wording better reflects the application of the act by the cattle industry and other keepers of livestock. For example, the proposed act provides for flexibility in the method of sale to better reflect the method of sale common to cattle and hog producers. Animals can now be sold through public auction or in a commercially reasonable manner.

As well, provisions have been made to accommodate a sale of only some of the animals to satisfy an outstanding lien. Proceeds from the sale are applied against the animal keeper's lien and towards any costs associated with the sale such as advertising or transportation. Any surplus is then directed to the owner or another party who claims the surplus.

The current act specifies that surplus proceeds not claimed by the owner go to the Minister of Finance, and after one year unclaimed surpluses flow into the general revenue fund. The proposed changes would see unclaimed surpluses directed to the minister of agriculture instead of the Minister of Finance. These surpluses would be held in general revenue for one year, after which unclaimed funds would remain in general revenue.

3:20

While the proposed act is easily interpreted, we made sure to include a specific definition of animal to ensure that this act is narrowly applied to livestock rather than all animals. The changes mean that animal keepers can implement the act themselves at minimal cost and with little involvement from the legal system or government. As a result of the changes I have outlined, Mr. Speaker, the act is much more straightforward and should be easily interpreted by animal keepers.

Mr. Speaker, that sums up the nuts and bolts of the proposed act, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to give their full support to Bill 32.

I am moving second reading. Thank you.

Mr. Chase: Again, this is more in the area of clarification, and it may come out in the Committee of the Whole. Given the types of animals that are kept and nondomestic – I'm talking alpacas and llamas and our disputes over whether elk and deer should be kept and, of course, bison, and so on. I'm assuming that these types of animals that are produced for either their meat or their wool would fall under this act. So possibly at some point that clarification could be provided.

Also, in the Animal Keepers Act it appears, just basically as the member opposite stated, that after a year following a sale of animals potentially taken in the event of a farm collapse or a failure, if

members of the immediate family didn't lay claim to the residual funds, they would be out of the loop, so to speak, within that time period. I'm just wondering if there are any safeguards within the keepers act whereby there is a notification of the extended family that this money is due to them or if that's strictly their responsibility to find that information out.

So any clarification along those two lines would be appreciated. Just what are concerned, animals for sale versus the domestic? I realize that it's kind of a rural versus urban question, but I do appreciate the information.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: we appreciate that Mr. Goudreau took some time to advise us, to go through the bill with our staff. That was appreciated. The bill seems to make a lot – if it's common sense, then we should support it.

I'm just wondering, though, in terms of the need for the bill, why it's being brought forward now. Are we facing some more serious problems than we faced in the past because of the BSE crisis or anything like that? Or has this been on the line for a while? It seems to me to make sense. As I understood it, before there was no flexibility at all. You sold, and that was it. This way there's some flexibility, which is probably good for both parties. I take it that that's the nature of the bill, but I was just wondering if this had been a growing problem recently, if that's why we brought in the bill. Or is it just, as I say, housekeeping?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

There being no additional participants, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a few comments in regard to Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act. Certainly, the first part of my remarks would be to express gratitude to the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace for being kind and gracious with his time in regard to Official Opposition staff.

Whenever we're looking at repealing the Livery Stable Keepers Act, I thought it would be interesting to see how long this statute had been on the books, so to speak. Certainly it goes back to 1980, but I suspect it goes back a lot further into this province's history. It may be one of the very first statutes that this Legislative Assembly debated. It's kind of ironic that after all these years and the anniversary of our centennial, here it is being repealed, and it is being replaced by Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act.

Certainly, as I understand it from the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the main idea of the Animal Keepers Act is to clarify payment of liens for care of animals to animal keepers, and this could include stable owners and feedlots. It changes the requirements of the act before animals can be sold to cover defaulted payment.

Now, there are some changes in this act when you compare it to the repealed Livery Stable Keepers Act, but market changes in the sale of animals from public auction, which the bill demands when certain livestock are sold, is part of this. This new act allows for different types of sales that are more common. Times have changed, as I say, since we introduced this act. I have had a review of this section analysis, and I think it is acceptable. There are some needed updates from the previous legislation, as I stated, and these updates are needed to move this piece of legislation into the modern marketing practices of farming.

I do have one question for the hon. minister at this time, and if we could perhaps get the answer in committee, that's fine. In section 7 we're laying the groundwork for another delegated authority, and that could be established under the Livestock Identification and Brand Inspection Act. This has been an idea that has been discussed in this Assembly in the past, and I would have to ask: why do we need this delegated authority when we need to ensure confidence, particularly with cattle, in our identification system?

I think our identification system is far superior to other jurisdictions', certainly jurisdictions across the border. Our identification system has been declared excellent by many bodies, including international organizations, which are very confident that this identification system should be employed by other jurisdictions. So we are setting the groundwork for delegated authority to perhaps, as I understand it, take charge of this. I don't know, in light of the BSE issue, that this is a good idea. If the minister could clarify that for me during committee, Mr. Speaker, I would be very grateful.

Overall, I think this act is a step forward into the modern practices of agriculture in Alberta. Hopefully, all animals which are mentioned in the definitions will be included certainly in its scope. An animal is referred to as "cattle, horses, swine, sheep, bison, deer, elk, goats, mules and asses."

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity has a very good question there, and I would be interested to hear the answer in regard to llamas and alpacas and those animals who are now routinely seen in the Alberta countryside as one drives around. I, too, would be interested to know if they're covered under the definition in this act.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, and I will look forward to continued debate on Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act. Thank you.

3:30

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner on the question and answer section time. Do you have a question?

Mr. Hinman: No.

The Speaker: Okay. Are there any questions?

Then we'll recognize the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few questions that I would like to ask the minister. I haven't had the time to read it as closely as I wanted to, but one of the concerns in rural areas quite often is that we definitely have some animal owners that don't keep up their fences and understand the importance of this act.

Just going through it quickly – and like I say, we're moving along so fast today I'm not keeping up to the things that I wanted to do – the question that I have is: I don't see notification to the owner, to try and find the identification and notification of the owner. Sometimes there are also those neighbours that go out of their way to round up and to bring cattle in, and the notice isn't given to that owner until there's a fair substantial bill on there. Then the debate is, you know: where and how did these animals get out? If that notification is in here, I'm grateful for it, but if not, I wonder if they'd consider putting something in there to have due diligence to make sure that those animals are tried to trace back and the owner given notice as quick as possible.

Generally, I'm pleased with the overall bill and think that it's great that we're looking at trying to shortcut areas and to reduce the necessity of going to the courts to recuperate money when people are

in the problem of having stray animals and having to look after them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My comments will be brief, and I'm sure the members opposite will appreciate that. I'm going to primarily just echo the comments of my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar in that I think this is, in general, a good bill and probably, as he suggests, brings us up to speed on a version of a bill that has likely been around for a hundred years.

I really only have two points that I would seek clarification on when we get to committee stage, so hopefully I'll have the opportunity to be here for that. If not, I'd like to put them on the record now, and then perhaps the minister or the member who moved the bill would be able to address those.

There's been a little bit of discussion already, Mr. Speaker, about the definition of the word "animal," and I understood from the mover that a great deal of time and effort went into identifying and clarifying exactly what is meant by the term "animal" in this bill so as not to include pets or smaller animals like chickens or hamsters or something, I'm sure. A number of members have mentioned llamas and alpacas as livestock or potential livestock that should perhaps be considered in this act. While I was sitting here listening intently to the debate this afternoon, I was also in my own mind thinking of emus and ostriches. I'm not sure whether or not they classify necessarily as livestock, but certainly in terms of size and strength and agility they would most likely require the same sort of attention that is afforded to cattle and horses and so on as outlined in the bill.

So I would hope that once we get to committee, there can be some addressing of that definition and perhaps a broadening of it to include all large livestock and game that might be raised for a commercial purpose.

The only other thing that kind of caught my eye, Mr. Speaker, was that the Livery Stable Keepers Act, as it's currently called, has requirements in it for the cleaning of barns and fines for not completing that cleaning. I note that the fines were, I believe, \$10 and \$25, which obviously must date back to at least 1980 if not farther. I don't dispute the need to either dispense with identifying a particularly low number or perhaps dispense with identifying the fine at all, but I do question why we would remove the requirement of barn cleaning given that we've seen some particularly horrendous examples of livestock that were not looked after in this province and the devastation that can be caused to the herd if, in fact, we don't provide them with a safe and healthy place to bed down at night. So that would be the other thing that I would hope that once we get to the committee stage can be addressed as to why we're leaving out that particular requirement.

I note that in the new bill that's come forward, the Animal Keepers Act, we simply define the animal keeper as being "responsible for the proper care of the animals in accordance with accepted industry standards." Now, perhaps this is another example of where those standards are going to be defined in regulation as opposed to having them defined in legislation, but I guess I'll have to wait until we get to the committee stage to hear the answer on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Shall I call on the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to close the debate? The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some very good comments, and I'll be very brief. We will talk a little more about some of the questions in Committee of the Whole. I certainly took note of the very generous comments as to the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace and the consultation that he did with members of the opposition. I also want to commend him for doing that.

Just a couple of notes on notice. It was raised a couple of times by some of the members, Mr. Speaker. In the bill sections 7 and 8 are the sections where notice is applied, if the members wanted to have a look at that prior to us going to Committee of the Whole.

Aside from that, Mr. Speaker, I thank all members very much for their support on the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a second time]

Clerk of Journals: Government Bills and Orders for second reading. Bill 33, Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005. The hon. Mr. Horner.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call on the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, just an update. The distinguished young lady at the Clerk's table today went away last week to Jamaica and came back married.

Bill 33 Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: I didn't get my invitation, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Pardon?

Mr. Horner: Sorry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and move second reading of Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005.

As I said during first reading, Bill 33 will clarify the use of the Stray Animals Act and will provide regulatory authority to protect property and promote public safety. Most of the changes proposed in this bill will simply improve the operation of the act that originally came into effect in 1977. Through the years various amendments have been enacted; however, the basic principle of the act remains the same. Under this act the owner of the animal in trespass continues to be liable for damage and/or expenses attributed to the livestock.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 33 is a money bill because the amendments address how reasonable expenses in relation to livestock trespass can be recovered. Public monies collected through the sale of stray animals by public auction will be held in a trust account. These funds can then be drawn upon to address the expenses and damages associated with an animal in trespass. If the funds from the sale of an animal do not cover the expenses attributed to it, the owner will continue to be responsible for reasonable expenses incurred by the individual capturing the stray animal.

3:40

Under the act a person who captures and confines livestock in trespass must notify an inspector. A statement of capture sent to the

inspector details any expenses incurred by the person capturing the stray animal. Expenses may be incurred and recovered in relation to capturing, confining, impounding, identifying, maintaining, transporting, and selling livestock in trespass. Identification expenses are included as a valid expense. For example, the expenses that may be incurred when identifying livestock with Canadian Cattle Identification Agency tags. As well, expenses incurred to ascertain the owner of the livestock are included. The act also proposes that the person capturing the animal must notify the animal's owner if known.

Bill 33 will also provide regulatory authority to control designated species in order to protect property and promote public safety. An example of when we would enact this is in the case of wild boar that have escaped confinement, a major concern in some communities. Under the act if necessary the province would be able to enact a regulation to register wild boar producers, identify their animals, and deal with wild boar running at large. The act will allow the province to be much more effective in controlling these designated species.

In preparing the amendments to the Stray Animals Act, we consulted extensively with our stakeholders and believe we had their full support. Recently, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Livestock Identification Services undertook a joint legislative review of legislation relating to brands and brand inspection in Alberta. The Stray Animals Act was also included in this legislative review process.

As part of this legislative review, two stakeholder consultation processes occurred. In January 2003 a discussion paper and questionnaire were distributed to 225 industry organizations and other stakeholders. In December of 2004 a second discussion paper and proposed amendments were distributed to 310 stakeholders, and four public meetings were conducted. We consulted with Alberta's livestock organizations, municipalities, counties and municipal districts, breeders and pedigree producers, cow and calf operators, feeder and background operators, licensed livestock dealers, and auction marts.

The proposed amendments were well received by stakeholders, and their input was taken into consideration when drafting the bill. For instance, several municipalities requested that the act provide for a grazing use exemption so county road allowances need not be fenced off. As a result, we included this exemption.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I believe the proposed changes strengthen the current legislation and effectively deal with animals in trespass. That being said, I would encourage all members of this Assembly to give their full support as I move second reading of Bill 33.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and participate briefly in the discussion this afternoon on Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005. The highlights of this act, as I understand it, are to set up a trust account for the Crown to pay for damages caused by stray animals, and it removes the role of the assessor from the act.

Now, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has certainly outlined the consultation process that has taken place prior to this legislation coming to the floor of the Assembly, and I'm certainly impressed with the discussion paper that was circulated and the draft amendments that were distributed to over 300 different parties. They were posted on both the hon. minister's website and other websites. Public meetings were held in the northwest corner of the province, here in Edmonton, north of Calgary, and also in Lethbridge. The feedback that we've had on

this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, indicates that the proposed draft amendments were very well received by the stakeholders. I think this is a very good consultation process.

I'm disappointed that the hon. minister's seatmate, the hon. Minister of Energy, wouldn't have more open discussions involving electricity deregulation, particularly the export of electricity. That seems to be going on without any public consultation, and I'm disappointed. So hopefully the Minister of Energy can take a page out of the minister of agriculture's operations manual and have full public consultation as part of his department's future endeavours.

Now, we'll have an opportunity in committee to do a section-by-section analysis of this bill, but on first glance it certainly is worthy of support. I believe that this bill updates the legislation that we are currently operating under, and it will provide a method for the hon. minister to limit the liability of the government by using a trust account to pay the claims from farmers that have had their property damaged by not only stray livestock but, I believe, waterfowl as well. If we could clarify that, I would be grateful.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, certainly, that's all I have to say in regard to Bill 33, and I look forward to further debate as this bill progresses through the Assembly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, almost all these bills seem to be almost companion bills, updating. I was interested also in the consultation with the various groups, and it seems to me that they've come up with a good bill. I don't see much that I could argue with here even if I wanted to. The bill certainly makes it easier for people. I take it that in some parts of rural Alberta that is a fairly major problem, and this bill will make it easier for people who have to deal with stray animals to care for these stray animals.

I might want to add to the consultation groups that the minister talked about. You'll be surprised. You've even got another group that we checked with. We gave a call to the Edmonton humane society and talked to the executive director, Stephanie McDonald, and she is pleased with the bill. Now, I think that's something, when you get ranchers and the humane society and everybody agreeing that this is a good bill, so I have to compliment the minister in being able to do that.

She said that expediting captured animals that have gotten loose and then returning them to their owners as quickly as possible will save the animals some suffering. She indicated that she believed that the public grazing issue was never followed or enforced with the original legislation, so it's better that it's changed. So add that as one other group, as I said, Mr. Speaker, that is pleased with this particular bill.

I think that when you can do that consultation, and you've got everybody on board, far be it for us on the opposition side to not support this particular bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and join the debate on Bill 33, Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005, a very constructive building upon previous legislation, from all that I can see. As indicated in the past, the assessor role was removed, and I among others would be interested in knowing the implications of that. It's not clear to me what the role of the assessor and eliminating that would mean for the effectiveness of the bill, not knowing

enough about that process and placing it all in the hands of the minister. It may well be constructive. I'd just appreciate some discussion about it. Indeed, who would deal, then, with any conflicts between the investigator assessment and the individual who is claiming expenses?

Another area of question in my mind in reading it is: what animals were included, and what animals were excluded? Maybe that's been answered in the previous bill that was discussed. Specifically, are game-ranched animals included in this?

3:50

It clearly is a very constructive bill that adds clarity, surety, and due process to people who are trying to act responsibly in the face of a stray animal and sets out the rules for where the money will go and where it will come from. The trust account gives a sense of confidence and clarity to all involved.

It places in regulation for the purposes of public safety animals that are designated dangerous. It requires persons who import designated animals to obtain a registered certificate, keeping designated animals confined. Inspectors can inspect the site where the animals are kept. This is eminently sensible.

It allows for the trapping of designated animals and the means around which an animal can be hunted, trapped, captured, or destroyed. These seem to be very important dimensions for animal handling, animal maintenance, and animal care.

So I look forward to the discussion and appreciate the opportunity to discuss further this useful bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to also rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005. Yes, I have enjoyed listening to some of the previous hon. members who have raised most of the points I was going to raise, but I think it will not harm to re-emphasize some of them. I keep mentioning that any bill I study or go through, I approach from a layman's standpoint. You know, my approach is definitely one of trying to clarify to my constituents or to the public in general what things mean, what the law meant before, and what this amendment means to them and their daily lives and their day-to-day activities.

So I share the concern that by omitting the definition or the responsibility of an assessor, there is no clarity as to what we're doing instead. Are we delegating those duties and responsibilities to somebody else, are we asking the investigator to maybe fill in this role as well and wear two hats at once, or are we in fact putting it into the hands of the minister and saying: "Okay. You eliminated the assessor. You act in that capacity now." If that is, in fact, the case, I would argue that any situation that allows the minister to concentrate too much power would be ill advised.

Also, the aspect of moving the meat or the substance of the act from the act itself into the regulations. I appreciate that this might be necessary in some cases, but I don't think it should be the norm, and it shouldn't be the preference that every bill has to be scaled down and then the regulations expanded.

So my issue with the assessors and my issue with the regulations.

Also, there is the definition of the priorities as to which people are paid out of that fund and the order that they go in: which one takes precedence, which one is second important, which one is the third important, and so on. Actually, just going over it, I noticed that in the previous act the first person that would be paid out of the fund would be the person who is selling the livestock. Nothing wrong

with that, but then second to that person or that party would be the person capturing and confining the livestock. Now this is being suggested to be modified from number 2 on the list to number 5. So my concern, again, is that if I'm a farmer or rancher and I notice the stray animal, what is my incentive now if I am moved down the list of priority? Now I'm fifth, so four people come before me in trying to recover those costs or the expenses that they incurred.

One notorious phrase that many people are aware of might be applicable here: shoot, shovel, and shut up. You know, if I'm not going to recoup, what's my incentive as a person to capture that livestock and care for it and store it and then hopefully report it to the investigator and then deliver it to the person who might care for it a little more and then sell it. I don't think we're sending the right message there.

Possibly also the idea of testing it while it's in captivity. Now, that would be a good opportunity for testing for communicable diseases that might transfer or jump from one animal to another or might, in fact, actually jump from an animal host to a human host. This would be an opportune scenario to actually investigate and test during that time of captivity.

With that, there is that definition of livestock. I think one of my hon. colleagues covered that or touched on it. Why are we moving the definition of livestock from the act itself to the regulations? Would that change? We know what livestock is, and I don't see that we would omit from it unless these animals become extinct or we would add to it unless maybe we're doing some genetic engineering. So why are we removing it from the act when it should be a solid, nonchangeable definition into the regulations allowing the minister to add to it or remove from it? Again, I would appreciate some clarification there.

I just have to revisit the idea of what incentives we are giving to people to try and capture those without overburdening them and without having them down on the list of people to be compensated.

There is also the fact that there is a section that is being repealed, and it's section 40 of the previous act, requiring a person who captures one of those stray animals to report it to an investigator. Now this is being repealed. So that fits with my argument. Are we not requiring them to report it? Are we discouraging them? You know, they used to be asked to report, and now we're saying no. So I would appreciate some clarification as to the rationale behind repealing this section.

I would close by saying that this act is noble in purpose and I support it in principle, but just maybe the point of clarification so I can be more comfortable with it and know that I supported a good piece of legislation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, does the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity wish to speak on the bill?

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking in favour of the act as well. What I appreciate about the bill and hope that it will address is the complication associated with under whose jurisdiction or whose responsibility the stray animal appears. For the last three springs and summers I had primarily the joy of working operating a wilderness camp in the southeast Kananaskis. One of the problems I had was the fact that in the camp I was running, the infrastructure from Community Development had not been maintained over the years, so my wilderness campground was frequently under what I would call bovine attack.

The roadbeds and so on had filled in, and therefore the cattle had easy access. Whenever the creek was down, I would find up to 60

head of cattle sort of mingling with my campers, which caused no end of confusion, particularly at 2 in the morning, when a camper would find a 500-pound beast using a tent peg as a scratching post, and his wife and children were somewhat alarmed by this bull wanting to join the family in the back of the tent. So the notion of the jurisdiction is very important to me.

One what I now look at as a very amusing circumstance occurred, again, where jurisdiction came into play. A large steer had the misfortune to die half on land and half in the creek, and I reported this death to the conservation officers. Then, in the days that followed – and I should add that it was two days prior to the first of the trans-Rockies road races through the Kananaskis, which has become an international event of great renown. We had this steer half in the water and half on land.

So the following day the road above the creek basically became a parking lot. We had trucks from Community Development there, and we had Sustainable Resources, and we had conservation; we had fisheries and forestry. And it was to a degree somewhat comical because while the various organizations were working together, some with a great deal of equipment and some without, in the intervening time a young grizzly had claimed the carcass of this dead cow.

4:00

It added greatly to the complications, under whose jurisdiction the animal now was. Clearly, based on the size of the young grizzly, it was under the bear's jurisdiction. He claimed that he had captured it and was very loathe to relinquish it. So if you can imagine a number of young conservation officers, some equipped only with their radio because they were seasonal and others equipped with a variety of shotguns with heavy shot and rifles, tiptoeing along the creek, keeping an eye out for the grizzly. Of course, their comrades at the top of the road couldn't help but growl encouragement every once in awhile.

Eventually we contacted the rancher. With all the equipment we had on hand, we were able to winch the steer out of the creek, so the fisheries truck was able to go home. Once we got it out of the forestry area, the forestry resource officer was able to go home. Sustainable Resources wished the conservation officers well, and they departed. Eventually, with the help of the rancher, we winched the steer's carcass into the back of his horse trailer, and the various officials sort of bade a fond farewell. But the whole business of the jurisdiction and who was responsible came into account here. It was a little bit like the red hen asking who was going to help plant the corn but then everybody wanting in on the harvest credentials.

So thank you very much. The Stray Animals Act will hopefully clarify the complications that I personally experienced and will make other park operators that much more appreciative of the government's efforts on their behalf.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't have an anecdotal story such as that to share with you, unfortunately. I wish I did, but I don't.

I really hate to sound like a broken record, but I'm going to sound like a broken record. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-McClung mentioned it when he spoke to this bill as well, but once again we have a situation where we're moving stuff from legislation and into regulation. In fact, it seems to me that it is inconsistent with

the bill that we debated just a few minutes ago, the Animal Keepers Act. I'm really curious why in the case of Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act, we have the definition of an animal in the legislation, and then in Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, for some reason we're moving the definition, which as near as I can tell would be virtually identical, out of the legislation and into regulation.

So, again, I suppose, Mr. Speaker, we'll be looking for some clarification of that when we get to committee as to why in the one instance we're leaving it in legislation and in another instance, which I think one of my colleagues had mentioned a few minutes ago – actually, it was the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview who mentioned that the two bills, 32 and 33, seem to be companion bills, yet we're dealing with the definition of animals in a different fashion. I'm certainly curious as to why that might be the case and would hope that when we get to committee stage, perhaps we can have an amendment to leave the definition of animal in the bill itself.

Mr. Speaker, there's been some discussion as to the need to have that in regulation. In fact, I believe the website that was referred to by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talks about the need for flexibility and therefore the reason to move the definition into regulation. This Assembly, as you will know, sits every year for sometimes both a spring sitting and a fall sitting, and that would indicate to me that at least twice a year there's an opportunity to deal with changes in that definition if in fact there were a need to do so. I would think that nothing would be so urgent in terms of the definition of an animal that we couldn't deal with it once every six months or so. So when we get to the committee stage, as I say, that will be the position that I would take and I would expect our caucus will be taking as well, that we should be leaving that definition in the legislation and not moving it into regulation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, anyone else wish to speak on Bill 33?

I'd ask the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to close debate.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to all of the hon. members who participated in the debate. Some good questions, and we'll certainly be bringing forward some responses to those questions in Committee of the Whole. With all this support from the other side I may have to rethink the legislation – just kidding – but I do appreciate the support and call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a second time]

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, these legislative amendments are largely of a housekeeping variety. Overall, this legislation is good news for workers on two fronts. This legislation would also serve to extend the same protection to community-based members of the WCB's board of directors that virtually all government boards and agencies receive.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment proposed in section 17 of the WCA is aimed at clarifying an oversight that occurred when the corporate

structure of the WCB was changed to a board-governed model. Section 17 clarifies the wording to make clear that there shall be immunity for members of the board of directors. WCB employees are immune from court action as long as they act in good faith. With this amendment the same protection would now be extended to board members.

Good faith is a legal test that can be established by a weighting of evidence. The proposed amendment to section 17 would not provide members of the board of directors a one hundred per cent blanket of immunity. Acting in bad faith or illegally voids that protection; both are defined under law. Mr. Speaker, such an amendment would bring the same level of protection to these board members that essentially all members of board-governed agencies in Alberta enjoy. To be clear, we are talking about persons from various communities in Alberta who provide board oversight to the workers' compensation system in addition to their regular day jobs. Virtually all legislation in Alberta that creates authorities, boards, or commissions contains a provision that grants immunity to the appointed member provided they are acting in good faith.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, moving on to the second theme of these legislative amendments, third-party actions in the WCB's relationship with private legal counsel and pursuing said third-party actions. Section 22(1) through (12) and section 23(2) and section 31(1) and (2) all deal with clarifying the decades' old parameters governing the relationship between the WCB and private lawyers on third-party actions. Bill 15 would clarify the long-standing practice for how lawyers are paid for third-party actions involving WCB claimants. These amendments would close the door on a loophole that a few lawyers are attempting to exploit as a result of a single court case in 2003. This series of amendments will require private practice lawyers to observe certain standards and, perhaps most importantly, will regulate the fees they can charge.

Bill 15 also clarifies and confirms the worker's requirement to cooperate with the board on third-party actions. On third-party actions this legislation would confirm what has been happening for years in practice and what was intended, that the WCB retains and instructs the lawyers and that lawyers or firms are not allowed to charge the client more than a 25 per cent contingency fee.

Also, this would prohibit the practice used by a very few very recently of double-charging the WCB and the worker. By capping the contingency fee that legal counsel can take, this ensures more funds flow to the worker, who gets a minimum of 25 per cent of a court award. The injured worker would also be entitled to the remainder of the settlement once the cost of the action and the cost paid on the claim from the WCB's accident fund are recovered. Also, this is an employer-friendly move because more money is recovered to offset the amount of premiums that employers must pay to finance the 100 per cent employer funded system.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the third area addressed by the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act relates to allowing WCB to pay cost of living increases, or COLA. The proposed amendment to section 60 of the WCA deals with temporary disability benefits. This legislation will permit the WCB to pay cost of living increases to workers who are on extended temporary partial disability benefits. This amendment levels the playing field so that workers on temporary disability are all treated the same benefitwise, regardless of whether their benefits are partial or total.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this bill clarifies wording around the immunity for the board of directors of the Workers' Compensation Board. It confirms that the WCB can co-ordinate the action and regulate the fees charged by private lawyers working on third-party

civil actions and permits WCB to pay cost of living increases to workers who are on extended temporary partial disability benefits.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the previous bill, where there was consultation, this is exactly the opposite. This is how not to bring legislation into this Legislative Assembly. This is not a routine bill as the member has indicated. This is a very significant bill.

Mr. Speaker, just in terms of consultation, since we've got this bill, we've checked with a number of different groups, certainly labour groups and workers that would be affected by this bill. Nobody's talked to them, nobody at all. Most of the people, if I can do a couple of quotes from the Federation of Labour, have big problems with the provisions in subsections (9) and (10) that force a worker to be involved in the proceedings against the company by the WC Board. In other words, the draconian part to this is: let's say that they don't want to be involved; they have to be. They may want to go back and work with that company down the way, and they don't want to be on the opposite side there.

This is draconian and unnecessary. Just because the WCB lost a court case is not reason, then, to come in with draconian measures like this and take away people's rights. Before one brings in a bill – I thought we had an example, a very good example, Mr. Speaker, from the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development about consultation. This is exactly the opposite: no consultation at all. WCB loses a court case, gets angry, and comes to the government and says: change this.

And there's a retroactive feature to this. Any legislation that's retroactive is wrong, as far as I'm concerned. This is draconian and unacceptable, and I'd hope that the government, if they're serious about consultation as we just heard, would go back.

Other people that we've talked to say that the tying of full co-operation to entitlement to continued benefits in section 10 is draconian. These are the words that people are using. If that was not enough, they have enabled themselves – they're talking about the WCB here – to declare past compensation to be a debt owing that is collectible. What is there in current legislation that's been a problem that there needs to be correction? I mean, this is like, you know, overkill, totally, because the WCB lost a court case. We should not be allowed to come back here and give them this sort of power. Every person that we've talked to – we did do the consulting, certainly with labour groups – they're not happy about this, and they're going to make it clear.

I just suggest to the member: where's the consultation? Unlike the previous bill, probably a lot less controversial bill, where they took the time to do this.

To come to us here today and say that this is just a housekeeping bill is absolute nonsense. This is much more than a housekeeping bill, and the member must know this. I just can't believe that the board and only the board can have sole control over whether or not to pursue any claim on behalf of a worker. A worker has no rights. WCB says, "I'm going to do it," and you have to go along. Then they give the board the power to force a worker – to force a worker – to co-operate fully in the investigation, meetings, arbitration, medical examinations, even if the worker wishes not to do so. That sounds almost like a police state to me. And you call that a routine housekeeping bill? To give that sort of power to the WCB?

Then it goes further. If the worker refuses to fully co-operate, the board may withhold payment from the worker, recover previous

payments to the worker, and then eventually, if they co-operate, they may get 25 per cent back.

I guess the point I'm making is that because the WCB lost a court case, maybe they should look at their practices. If an impartial court ruled that they're doing things wrong, then perhaps they should change the way they do things, Mr. Speaker, rather than bringing in this type of legislation that takes people's rights away.

I would suggest to the government that perhaps this needs to be – we're only at second reading now, Mr. Speaker – at least thought about and some consultation with groups, not just the friends of the government but some other groups that are impacted by this. I think this member would be surprised. They do not see this – they certainly do not see this – as housekeeping.

This is a major bill, and I think that the government must understand this. I would say that discretion should be the better part of valour here. But take some time and begin to do some consultation because this bill is unacceptable, to me at least, in this Legislature at this time.

We will certainly be opposing this in the most vigorous possible way that we can. It's not that we want to oppose for the sake of opposing, as we just dealt with other bills, and the member knows that. But we see this bill as terribly flawed, unnecessary, and I'd hope that the government would have some serious second thoughts about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: 4:20 **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 6

Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As promised at committee stage, I undertook to reply to any opposition questions on Bill 6, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005. It is now my pleasure to do so.

Mr. Speaker, an example was requested of a business that is subject to the act but not required to be licensed. An existing example is a time-share. Time-shares are required under the Fair Trading Act and its time-share contracts regulation to provide certain disclosures and cancellation rights, but they are not licensed. A future example could be moving companies, where the minister may want to set some standards without creating a licensing requirement.

Mr. Speaker, clarification was requested on the following sections of the bill. Section 7.3(2). This section limits the assignee's responsibility to compensate the consumer to the amount the consumer actually received, and as such it operates to exclude amounts paid by the consumer prior to the assignment.

Section 29(6). Consumer services has been assigned to several departments over the years and is currently part of Government Services. This amendment provides flexibility in case consumer services is moved to another department in the future.

Sections 46 and 48. The repeal of these sections will coincide with these sections appearing in the regulation. Consumer protection will not be lost.

In regard to concerns on credit reporting, Government Services is currently working with the other provinces, territories, and the federal government on a national template for credit reporting. This is likely to include a harmonized definition of credit information. This process will also include consultation with the credit industry and other stakeholders.

The collection practices regulation will be going through an amendment process that will be completed when the Fair Trading Amendment Act is proclaimed. An expected outcome of the amendment process is that receipts will only be required for cash payments. Collection agencies will still be required to provide a statement of account to a debtor when one is requested.

Failing to comply with other legislation has been added as a reason to refuse to issue or remove or suspend or cancel a licence. This applies to situations where a Fair Trading Act licensee is not in compliance with other legislation. This addresses situations where a person requires a certificate and/or must meet other requirements under other legislation that directly applies to the activity licensed under the Fair Trading Act. An example would be that an automobile repair business licensed under the Fair Trading Act would also be required to have a journeyman mechanic licensed under the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act.

In regard to concerns raised on moving parts of the act into regulation, all areas in the act that are being repealed will be placed in the regulations. Full consultation will be done with all stakeholders prior to any changes being made to the regulation. Consultation will include industry, consumers, and government departments, and the Fair Trading Amendment Act will not be proclaimed until all applicable regulations are ready to be passed; therefore, there will be no gaps in protection for consumers.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that I've answered all the questions that were asked at committee stage. Therefore, I move third reading of Bill 6, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have spoken quite extensively on this bill, Bill 6, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005, in the previous stages, and I generally indicated my support for it. Any legislation that promotes or enforces fair trading would be advisable, and I would support it.

I appreciate the explanations that the hon. member gave, and I sincerely thank him for taking the time to research it and to come back to the House with these answers. I would still urge and take this opportunity to reinforce my request of this government and this department to try to communicate in a timely fashion and as clearly as possible with the public and with the stakeholders what each amendment means. Because the public doesn't read the bill and the public doesn't understand lawyer language – they want it in plain English, and they want it in clear terms – before we pass anything or after we pass anything in this Chamber, just tell the public what it really means and how it affects their lives and how they conduct business and how their day-to-day activities might change with that.

Also, again, I appreciate the explanation that the regulations will have to be passed before the final version of the law would be proclaimed, and the hon. member generously offered to share and consult with the stakeholders. He mentioned industry, and he mentioned government departments, but maybe I can challenge him to include the opposition in that list of consultees because, you know, we have ideas that might offer a positive addition to any piece of legislation that is being discussed. We might have an idea that might have been accidentally overlooked by the government and would enhance or strengthen the legislation.

I think, again, my rider is that the utmost goal of any discussion we have here under this dome is basically to improve and enhance and simplify people's lives. When business transactions are being scrutinized or being looked at, I think it's in everybody's interest to try to research and consult every possible source that might add to the discussion.

So, with that, I think my final comment would be that we've supported this bill in second reading and in committee, and we support it in third reading, but I would again emphasize my challenge to the hon. member and to the government to try to seek answers from the opposition whenever it's feasible and whenever it's convenient because we might actually add something to the debate that might have been accidentally overlooked, as I mentioned.

With that, I thank you, and I invite other people to participate. Thank you.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I just have a couple of comments before the member adjourns debate. The current legislation states that it's unfair to charge a customer a price that "grossly exceeds," I think the term is, the price of similar goods and services. Now we're dealing with legislation. I guess that it's always in the eye of the beholder what is gross in terms of excess need. So is there any attempt to sort of deal with this term? I'm not sure that in legislation it's particularly helpful just to throw out a term like that. It should perhaps be a little more specific about what we mean by "grossly."

The only other comment: under 24(c), (g), and (m), Mr. Speaker, there are the definitions. We've had a fair amount of discussion in this House about identity theft. My understanding about this is: I think we underestimate the ability of some very skilled people with computers to take a very limited amount of personal information and get a lot more if they have it. I go back to the discussion we've had over the losing, at least, of the health care records. I guess that I'm asking if the definitions regarding identity theft are added, what procedures in this case do we have to make sure that that doesn't happen? Definitions are nice, but what will we do about it? What can we do to protect that identity?

So just a couple of comments, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill 6, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005, as proposed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Certainly, I believe the hon. member was a number of years ago responsible for the first version of the Fair Trading Act, and whenever we look at the history of this legislation, it was needed then, and it is needed even more now. In the past we have seen some rather interesting cases brought before our court system as a result of this legislation. Hopefully, we are going to strengthen this legislation even more. But have we strengthened it enough? That is another question, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

Certainly, as recently as last summer the Alberta government had laid over 125 charges under the Fair Trading Act against four travel and time-share companies and a director for allegedly misleading consumers and refusing to provide refunds. Now, the parties that were charged in this matter include the Royal Club International A World Of Timeless Vacations; Resort Condominiums International, LLC, Mr. Speaker; the third enterprise, RCI Canada Inc.; and the

Royal Club Resorts Inc. Now, Alberta Government Services under the Fair Trading Act launched an investigation after several consumers complained that they didn't get their refunds after they had cancelled time-share and travel services purchased.

The first provincial court appearance occurred in Canmore, and it's interesting that it would occur in Canmore because every hon. member of this Assembly knows that there are a fair number of time-shares in that municipality. The parties faced various charges, and they were dealt with. They were dealt with under this act.

Now, there are other examples. Certainly, you know, we've heard in this Legislative Assembly as late as question period today discussions around personal information that had been misplaced by the department of health. This is not the first time this has happened. Now, I'm not suggesting for a minute, Mr. Speaker, that we have the department of health charged under the Fair Trading Act. I'm not suggesting that for one minute.

If we go back a little further to last year again, we see where for some members of Alberta's fine civil service some of their information had gone astray, and that was disturbing to say the least. It certainly wasn't the number of files such as the department of health misplaced, but it was significant. I understand on recollection, Mr. Speaker, that this information was being divided up by criminal elements in a hotel or a motel. Who knows what they were going to use it for?

In the debate, as we conclude debate on the Fair Trading Amendment Act in third reading, I don't think enough discussion has been given to the protection of personal information. Should it be limited? Should it only be limited to respective acts? Perhaps we should look at this whenever there is a violation under the Fair Trading Act. Now, there are shrugs. I don't think we can dismiss this, Mr. Speaker, because unfortunately personal information is being used in the marketplace. Is it being used fairly? Is it being used with permission of the individual? In some cases I would say no. It is something that I think we should look at and consider.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about ideas to improve the bill. Well, that's something that I think we should consider. Certainly, there are many people, many individuals, many companies that provide credit information and credit ratings, and the accuracy of those credit ratings can sometimes play an important part in a family's or an individual's ability to borrow money at reasonable market rates.

Now, sometimes those ratings are very inaccurate. I know the hon. Member for Edmonton – I always want to say Edmonton-McClelland, but I know that's not it.

An Hon. Member: Rutherford.

Mr. MacDonald: Edmonton-Rutherford. Of course.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has been telling caucus about some of the inaccurate ratings that auto insurance companies give their consumers, and sometimes rates are driven up regardless of the good driving record of the consumer. Have we talked about maybe implementing that in the Fair Trading Act? That would be something that I think we should have a serious look at because the current set-up I don't think is adequate enough for consumers.

Now, as we walk through this bill and we see how consumers should be protected, there are still improvements that can be made to this Fair Trading Act, Mr. Speaker. There certainly are some new sections to it. We have a new section that clarifies that a court or an appeal panel "consider the real substance of the entity or the transaction" as opposed to the form to determine if the act applies to the entity or the transaction. That is new in part 1.

In part 2 we have three new sections. Provide that a consumer and a supplier can agree to amend the estimate if the consumer requires additional or different goods or services: that's a new part.

Also a new part to this act is to prohibit a business from charging a fee for an estimate unless the consumer is told in advance that a fee will be charged and the amount of the fee, Mr. Speaker.

Also a new section of part 2 is to prohibit a supplier from automatically renewing a contract without prominent and full disclosure of the details and the consumer's express consent in a verifiable manner. Now, this is a step in the right direction, but perhaps, hon. members, it does not go far enough because included in these suppliers are the natural gas marketers and the electricity marketers, and I don't think we are being adequately protected.

Now, of course, the hon. Minister of Energy is going to tell us in due time that we have the Alberta Utilities Consumer Advocate, which is protecting consumers for both natural gas contracts and electricity contracts. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity was talking a little earlier in debate about bears, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that the Alberta Utilities Consumer Advocate is like a bear because hibernation occurs in the coldest months of the year. We have one of the most shocking disclosures in this province in a long, long time with the disclosure of the documents indicating Enron's activity down at the Power Pool in 1999, the year 2000, and again in the year 2001. I'm not satisfied with the silence of this Alberta Utilities Consumer Advocate.

4:40

Could we get more protection for the consumers with Bill 6, Mr. Speaker, the Fair Trading Amendment Act? I think we could and we should because certainly it is not adequate. We can make the argument that the Alberta market surveillance administrator is going to protect consumers with electricity contracts and with natural gas contracts. I don't see that. I don't see that happening at all. We have the consumer choice website customerchoice.gov.ab.ca. Sometimes months go by. Months. You'd almost think that I was the one that was responsible for updating that website. I do a very poor job of it. Sometimes I forget to do my own for long periods of time and that website is very similar to mine. It is not updated often enough.

The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. Well, of course they are to protect the public interest, but there were claims, and they were verified, of overcharging for electricity by various utility companies, and the EUB ordered that money to be given back. Two of those orders, if my memory stands correct here: one would be Engage Energy, the former employer of the current market surveillance administrator, and the other would be TransAlta.

We've discussed all these issues in the Assembly. Consumers don't seem to be getting the protection that they deserve from this government. While we're in third reading here on the Fair Trading Amendment Act, I'm disappointed that we haven't made another new section to protect natural gas consumers and electricity consumers from the whole idea of these marketers coming around to the doorstep, knocking on the door, and wanting to sell you a one- or three- or five-year contract. I don't see anywhere in this bill a proposed section that would say that.

I know that we have the 10-day cooling off period in here, but let's recognize that the natural gas market and the electricity market are very volatile, and it's a gamble. There are enough Albertans going to the casinos and putting their money in the VLTs and in the slot machines and on the blackjack tables and all that sort of stuff. If they want to gamble at the casino, they shouldn't have to gamble with their utility bill. In order to protect them, I think on the anniversary of the contract Alberta consumers should be able to exit

those contracts without any financial penalty whatsoever. This is one of the ideas that we could implement to improve Bill 6 at this time.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung is promoting ideas to improve this bill. Well, that is one. It would be an excellent solution to some of the concerns consumers are facing because, Mr. Speaker, this new era of competition that has been discussed at length in this House for electricity and natural gas is creating plenty of dark clouds for consumers. There are lots of warnings here. Certainly, the Alberta government has advised consumers to take a good hard look before they sign the deal. You've got the 10-day cooling off period.

The new agencies that we talked about here are not working out in my view. That's why I think the Fair Trading Act, even at third reading – maybe we should have a hoist amendment and move it back and have another look at this. Perhaps that's what we should do. We could do a referral. It doesn't matter to this hon. member, but I think maybe it's time we had another look at this to protect energy consumers in this province.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: I will make this extremely brief, and this is designed to be helpful. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung made the point that at times opposition parties have a role that could contribute. Unfortunately, we didn't have an opportunity yesterday, when Fort McMurray representatives came to town, to contribute at that meeting, but here we have the opportunity.

It's the electronic fair trade that I would recommend. A larger portion of trade is now being done electronically, and the Fair Trading Amendment Act doesn't deal with the potential for false advertisement, false contracting, basically fraud from electronic sources. So I would just suggest that the hon. member look at the electronic aspects because a larger portion of business is now being conducted electronically, and we need to make sure that this Fair Trading Amendment Act takes into account the modern methods of trading and assure people that they're not going to be ripped off electronically as they might be in the older fashions.

Thank you very much.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to have to pull out my whip here and chastise my colleague from Calgary-Varsity for stealing my thunder. I had whispered to him that I had some serious concerns about electronic fraud – I know that there are many members anxious to see that – in particular, concerns about Internet fraud. [interjections] I hear somebody kibitzing in the background about eBay. That is certainly one area where there are concerns about whether or not legitimate business practices are taking place.

As somebody who ran a small business for the last 25 years or so, I can tell you that there wasn't a day went by that I didn't have an opportunity to participate in some sort of scheme that would have, for the small investment of my banking information and a few thousand dollars, returned \$20 million to my company. For some reason I foolishly never chose to participate in those activities, but those opportunities arose almost daily.

In fact, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity referred to electronic

fraud. When these things first started, of course, it was something that we saw coming in by mail usually. Then as technology improved, we started to see opportunities such as that appearing on the fax machine, and for many years it was almost a daily thing on the fax machine. Now, more recently, and again in fact almost every day – and I've even had one of these e-mailed to my Legislature account, Mr. Speaker, an opportunity to invest in some sort of Nigerian opportunity that would return several million dollars, in U.S. dollars I might add, to my personal account. So as we've seen in other areas regarding the Internet and the unscrupulous activities that may take place on the Internet, certainly business fraud and misrepresentation are things that are happening on a regular basis and causing a great deal of concern to me and isn't mentioned specifically in this bill at all.

Now, with technology changing as quickly as it is, Mr. Speaker – just as an example, in the area of child porn we've seen local law enforcement agencies struggling to keep up with how quickly things change there. They're constantly demanding more and more resources to deal with that. Likewise the fraud department. The last time I spoke to them, which is not that long ago, probably in the last 18 months or so, the fraud department at the Edmonton Police Service indicated to me that they were finding it virtually impossible to keep up with the number of complaints they were getting regarding Internet fraud. So I would have hoped to have seen something in this bill that would address in particular the instance of Internet fraud.

4:50

Now, here I go again talking about regulations versus legislation. But I noticed that at the committee stage the mover of this bill from Bonnyville-Cold Lake said – and I'm going to just quote directly from *Hansard*, if I can find it. He actually reiterated it today, so maybe I can just ad lib and copy what he said today. He was saying that the reason for moving things out of legislation and into regulation was in fact to allow for flexibility and that consumers and industry and government departments would be consulted. As has been pointed out now by at least two speakers prior to me, there was no mention in there of consultation with members from the Official Opposition caucus.

I will acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that as a new member to this Assembly I'm not completely clear on how changes to regulations come about, but my understanding is that they don't involve consultation with the opposition caucus. I think that when we're addressing issues like democratic deficit – and I've raised several times the concern in this Assembly about transparency and openness of government – the fact that we're once again moving things into regulation, out of the public eye, out of the full view of the public and the opportunity for debate, that always causes me concern.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair]

Again, given that we're here twice a year, I certainly would think that we would be able to provide whatever flexibility is required within a six-month period to address any concerns that might come forward. I would really, really prefer to have seen those various areas not moved out of legislation, left in the bill, but given that that is the case and we're now at third reading – and I obviously can't change that anymore – I would hope that the mover and the minister responsible would give serious consideration to the suggestion from the members for Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Gold Bar and at the very least consider including the Official Opposition in the group of stakeholders when they get to developing the regulations so that all views can be represented fairly when it comes to drafting

those regulations. Perhaps the Official Opposition could thereby shed a little light and a little public participation as opposed to just participation from the stakeholder groups that the government might choose to select.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and look forward to any further debate.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Additional speakers?

Shall I call on the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to conclude the debate?

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank all the hon. members that partook in the debate. I'd like to send out a thank you to the Minister of Government Services for having entrusted me with sponsoring this bill on his behalf, and I'd now ask for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a third time]

Bill 20

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As promised at committee stage, I undertook to answer any opposition questions on Bill 20, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, there was only one question asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre about section 16(2). The issue raised is not connected to the personal income tax, and in fact Human Resources and Employment has addressed the concern through a regulation change which was announced via a news release on March 15, 2005. Also, I would refer the hon. member to review *Hansard* of March 22, 2005, when the Human Resources and Employment minister answered this very question.

Mr. Speaker, I now move third reading of Bill 20, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had indicated previously, this is one of those bills that the opposition has absolutely no problem with. We consulted the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, both of whom indicated that they were completely comfortable with the bill and the amendments that are being made to the Personal Income Tax Act.

Certainly, the fact that this bill accommodates paralleling federal legislation makes perfect sense to us. Something that we strongly support is the idea that we're ensuring that individuals will not be double-taxed on income. I don't know anybody who likes to be taxed, let alone double-taxed, so this is something, again, that we strongly support.

Mr. Speaker, that pretty much is the limit of what I have to say. It's a good bill. It accomplishes what it set out to do. I think I had indicated previously that the Minister of Finance had made available some of her staff to brief us on this bill, and they were very accommodating. I would like at this time to just express my thanks to them for having done so and would hope that we continue to see that sort of co-operation in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very briefly, the bill, again, as near as I can tell, is a housekeeping bill. It makes common sense. I think I asked the question earlier on, but I'll repeat it. As nearly as I can tell, this bill is revenue neutral. If that's not the case, if it's not revenue neutral, I wonder if the member could indicate to us whom it might impact. I believe that I asked those questions before. If it's revenue neutral, if it's not impacting anybody, that's fine. Generally, again, it's a common-sense bill, and certainly at this end of the House we will be supporting it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Just in keeping with an attempt to be helpful and indicate that the opposition does have worthy ideas, whether that opposition be from our hon. members from the New Democratic Party or from the Liberals, one of the suggestions that I would encourage for the Personal Income Tax Act – and this goes along with and I think would potentially be supported by the minister of health – is the idea of an exemption for registration in a community sporting activity specifically for children. Much in the same way that you get an education exemption for courses taken at the university level, you might consider the exemption for a physical activity such as a soccer registration or a registration in a community baseball team.

This promotes fitness. I hesitate to use the sports analogy, but it literally does create a level playing field for parents who due to financial constraints might not be able to enrol their students in sporting activities. Again, in terms of a potential income tax deduction for the future please consider the idea of sports registration in community programs to give parents a bit of a break and also encourage wellness and physical activity.

Thank you very much.

5:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in.

Shall I call on the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to conclude the debate? The hon. member.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'd like to thank all of the hon. members that partook in this debate, and I'd like to thank the Minister of Finance for having entrusted me with the opportunity to sponsor this bill. Now I'll ask for the question.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
(continued)

Bill 35

Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005

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

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm standing this afternoon to move second reading of Bill 35, the Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005.

As I stated during the introduction of this legislation, this act will allow the private-sector pension plan members better access to information and more transparency on the plan's financial status. It will also provide mechanisms to give the superintendent of pensions

more effective ways of ensuring that the pension plans are liquid and properly funded.

Mr. Speaker, we've all noticed in recent years the increasing focus on pension plans. There have been downturns in the investment markets and low interest rates, which have hurt pension plan funding. The result of those factors has been that some of the surpluses of the 1990s have often turned to shortfalls in the pension plans. So people are naturally concerned as they get near retirement age that their pensions are properly funded.

Also, pensions that are in private employment pension plans are the largest source of retirement income for a great many people, so it is important that Albertans feel confident in the security of their private pension plans. That is why the government is moving this bill to ensure that plans are properly funded.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation will provide the superintendent of pensions with more effective ways of dealing with and monitoring funding of the plans, as I said, and this will be taken into account in the enforcement provisions of this proposed bill. The superintendent will require most plans to file audited financial statements on an annual basis. He will also have authority to demand evaluation or assessment of the plans by an independent third party if need be.

Trust and insurance companies that hold pension funds would be required to notify the superintendent if an employer is not making the required contributions in time or in the correct amounts. This additional information along with the actuarially based reports every three years and the annual financial information would provide the superintendent with a complete and up-to-date picture of the plan's financial health.

Regarding enforcement, the superintendent will have the power to remove the administrator in extreme cases and to appoint a new one if the administrator's actions or inactions are jeopardizing the security of a plan. The superintendent would also have power to appoint an outside party, for example a forensic accountant, to investigate plans and require individuals to be interviewed as part of the investigation.

Bill 35, Mr. Speaker, also focuses on giving plan members better information so that they can see for themselves that the plan is liquid and running properly. Plan members will have access to the audited financial statements, any management reports that the superintendent of pensions has delivered following a plan examination, and they would also have advance notification of any proposed amendments to the plan which could adversely affect their benefits; for example, if the rules for taking early retirement were to be made more strict. These amendments would put the members in a better position to monitor their pensions long before they need them.

As well, Mr. Speaker, these amendments update the act to reflect changes in the pension community. Pension partners, that is spouses, will be able to waive preretirement death benefits. Many people have been asking for this flexibility now that there are many two-income couples and many people in second marriages with financial arrangements that they may want to maintain from their previous relationships.

At the same time, people signing these waivers of death benefits or survivors pensions will be required to provide proof to the plan administrator that they've received independent legal advice about signing such a waiver. In response to calls for more flexibility in dividing pension benefits on marriage breakdown, these changes would also enable couples to divide pensions based on an agreement rather than having to go to court to get a matrimonial property order.

Administrators of terminating pension plans, after conducting a thorough search for missing plan members, would be able to apply to the court to transfer the funds of missing members to the Public Trustee for safekeeping indefinitely, allowing the administrator to wind up the plan. The superintendent would make sure that Albertans, however, are aware that their funds may be with the Public Trustee.

Plans for business owners will no longer have to file documents with the superintendent, and this will relieve them of an administrative burden that, in our view, is not necessary because business owners are well able to look after their own interests and do not need the superintendent's oversight.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to sponsor this bill because it addresses some very important issues in the lives of thousands of Albertans: their pensions. The bill would make the employment pension systems better by giving the government better tools to monitor pension plans and to intervene if problems arise, and it will also give the plan members more information about their plans so that they can monitor them and be more confident that their retirement funds are being properly managed. I would urge all members of the Assembly to give their support to Bill 35.

Mr. Speaker, I move that debate on Bill 35 be adjourned.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we call it 5:30 and reconvene this evening at 8 o'clock in Committee of the Whole.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:08 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 5, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 05/04/05
 [The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 12
Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 4: Mrs. Jablonski]

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Mrs. Jablonski: Question. Yes, that's what I want. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Did the hon. Member for Red Deer-North want to move second reading of Bill 12?

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was able to do that last night, so I've completed my speech. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to speak about Bill 12, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005. This bill updates the principles of justice applying to the treatment of victims, and as was presented by the hon. member in her introduction of this bill, it's bringing together a number of bills from the past.

The background to this bill, as was mentioned, is first of all the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act of 1969, which assured assistance to victims of crime in Alberta. Then many years later the Victims Programs Assistance Act was approved, which created a fund to support programs and services for victims of crime, and in 1997 the Victims of Crime Act consolidated these two acts and created the victims of crime fund, which was a very important step to ensure that victims of crime are compensated for their losses. Now we have the amendment before us, and it expands on the key principles recommended by a review committee of last year, 2004, the Alberta Victims of Crime Consultation Advisory Committee. So many of the additions to this amendment act are based on recommendations of that advisory committee.

When one compares the amendments with the present act, it is obvious that many of the principles that were in the act are just continued forward and are perhaps listed in a more clear fashion so that we could see all of the principles listed from (a) to (k). Quite a few of them are simply just repeated, and some of them are new. So I'll just make a few comments on especially the new ones.

Section 2(c) is new, that "all reasonable measures should be taken to minimize inconvenience to victims," and that elaborates on the theme of courtesy and compassion and respect. The gist of the feedback of the report, the 2004 report that I referred to, is that victims feel that the "criminal justice system is not always sensitive to and respectful of the needs [and concerns] of victims." The system seems to be focused "more on the rights of the offender than

the rights of the victim." So these principles, if they are put into practice, would correct the perceived imbalance.

It is important that (d) is continued; namely, that "victims should promptly receive . . . financial benefits for the injuries that they have suffered." I assume that the goals and procedures of the victims of crime fund are outlined elsewhere in the Victims of Crime Act or in the regulations. As of last year this fund was at \$16 million, and one wonders whether the money is in fact promptly and efficiently allocated to the victims of crime. So the word "promptly" there is very important. I'm glad it's there.

The principles listed in other sections, (g) and (h) and (j) and (k), are also new. Section (g) ensures that victims be informed of all aspects of the process of the investigation; (h) ensures that victims be informed about all the services available to victims; (j) focuses on the needs, concerns, and diversity of victims. And especially when you think of the diversity of victims, I'm mindful of the needs of children, who really deserve special attention when they are the victims of crime. Section (k) ensures that victims are informed about the options that they have if they believe that the principles outlined in this amendment are not followed. Then they have recourse for appeals. So all of these themes are important.

The only point that I wish to raise of a critical nature is in respect to the issue of restorative justice. Now, there isn't much in these principles about restorative justice, and I'm disappointed in that. Section (h) refers to information being provided to the victims about services that are available, the victim impact statement program, and it uses the expression "requesting restitution." So there is a mention of the whole theme of restorative justice, but it's not enough. This is a very important issue, and it's a growing issue in terms of the treatment of people who are the victims of crime.

Addressing crime in a meaningful way requires society to focus on the harm done to individuals and communities. A focus only on the punishment of the offender is an inadequate response to addressing the harms done by crime. So holding an offender accountable for the harms they have caused and insisting that the offender make amends for the wrong that they have done in relation to the victim is to move away from punishment to restorative justice, and I think that's very important. The offender has an obligation to the victim and a responsibility to make amends for the wrongs he or she has done.

The 2004 report was very good in outlining the whole issue of restorative justice, and I'm disappointed that more of that did not get into these principles of justice. The report indicates that restorative justice is really important, in fact, for a victim and that "a victim may request a meeting with the offender if the victim wants to explain to the offender the impact the offence has had on the victim," and so on, and that can be arranged even if the offender is in a correctional centre. That kind of process is extremely important.

So what is it that we want to see happen when a person commits a crime in our community? There are actually three parties involved. There is the offender and the whole question of his or her accountability for the harms they have done. There is the victim and the whole question of the harms done to him or her, and this amendment outlines all the necessary points to consider in helping victims. But there is another party involved, and that is the community as a whole. What we want in Alberta is the creation of safe and healthy communities. What we want is a process of healing and the integration of both victims and offenders back into the community. What we want is restorative justice, and I don't think this list of principles is strong enough in emphasizing the need for restorative justice.

The advisory committee put it very well. "Alberta supports restorative justice programs in which victims feel safe and empow-

ered, offenders are held accountable and communities are involved.” But in order for this to happen, in order for restorative justice to happen, there has to be adequate funding for all the programs that help victims. So this victims fund has to be adequate and has to promptly deliver what victims need. There has to be adequate funding of sexual assault centres, for example. There are not enough restorative justice programs; for example, sentencing circles, alternative ways of bringing about mediation. The 2004 report recommends the reinstatement of long-term funding for restorative justice programs in Alberta. Such funding was eliminated in the 2002-03 budget.

8:10

Recently, coming from the United Church of Canada, we have begun to learn more and more about restorative justice because of the issue around residential schools and all of the harm that was done to students in residential schools. The United Church and other denominations throughout Canada have appointed people to learn how to carry out mediation, how to enter into dialogue with victims and bring about reconciliation, bring about restoration. And I think that’s extremely important. My concern for restorative justice is rooted in my understanding of all of the religious traditions which undergird our western traditions of justice and law, mainly that retributive justice is not enough. So much of the emphasis of our justice system has been on retribution, and that’s not enough. The ultimate goal of all world religions is the kind of forgiveness which restores and reconciles people.

So my reflections on this bill do not lead me to reject this amendment because I think it’s a very important elaboration on the principles of justice applied to victims. It’s a good start. I think we are on a long road towards shalom, towards reconciliation and peace. We have to learn and experiment more with restorative justice, and eventually our legislation will be more reflective of the goals of restorative justice. But this is fine as far as it goes.

So, Mr. Speaker, I recommend that we approve this amendment. Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to make brief comments on Bill 12, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005. By and large, I’m going to be speaking in support of the elaboration of the principles that underlie this piece of legislation.

I remember the very fruitful exercise when an all-party committee of this Legislature – I think it was the 24th Legislature, if I’m correct – went around the province to hold public hearings on reforms needed in our justice system. During those hearings members of the committee were very much impressed by the participation by Albertans in large communities and small, by groups and individuals, first of all participating very seriously and giving advice and making recommendations, and secondly, urging us to move in new directions in order to make our communities healthy and safe.

Two issues on which not only individuals, community leaders, and municipal government representatives spoke were the issues of restorative justice and community policing coupled with it. In order to make our communities safe, we need several things. We need community policing orientation, a change of direction in that regard so that we can prevent harm and injury, the creation of victims, if you wish; secondly, once a crime has been committed, then of course to compensate victims, make sure that they maintain their dignity and have our respect and our attention and responsiveness; and thirdly, to do this in the context of community participation in the compensation for victims through restorative justice.

RCMP presentations to us, I recall, emphasized very much the model of restorative justice that had been I think adopted already by then – I’m talking about 1999 – in places like Australia. So the RCMP presentations in particular focused on the importance of moving towards restorative justice.

When I see the principles enunciated here, they certainly are an expansion on the existing principles, and that certainly is an improvement. But when I look at section 2(g), the focus still seems to be on the retributive aspects of justice, and I think we need to move beyond that to what my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Glenora has already stated quite effectively: towards restorative justice.

Community policing is important, Mr. Speaker, although it’s not directly related to the contents of this bill. If we are to focus attention on merely the compensation of victims, their protection, their dignity, and not pay attention to how we can reduce the incidence of crime which produces victims, I think we will have failed. So that’s where community policing comes in: to make our communities safe. We need to both make sure that offenders pay for the infractions of law that they are responsible for, that they do so in a sort of community context reflecting community values and responding to them genuinely, but also what we need to do is make sure that there is a model of police services which prevents the incidence of crime which produces victims.

So community policing is an important but missing piece that should be related, I think, to the issue of compensation for victims of crime because it will speak to the way in which we can in the first place reduce the number of victims who need our care and our attention and respect and services.

On the victims’ side I notice again that we focus on the correctional system here. I suggest that victims can be, of course, of actions taken by state agencies. I think we need to broaden the scope of consideration of victims and compensation and protection for them regardless of whether these victims are the result of crimes, violent or otherwise, committed by individuals or by groups including the state and its institutions. So that is a bit of a lacuna here in the bill, that it focuses on, essentially, individuals committing crime against other individuals and not paying attention to that crimes can be committed against individuals and that victims can be produced by public agencies, including the agencies of the state.

Having made these few observations, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the bill makes an attempt to move forward in terms of elaborating and adding to the principles underlying the Victims of Crime Act presently in place, so I speak by and large in support of the bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, under Standing Order 29(2)(a) up to five minutes are available for questions or comments.

Seeing none, I’ll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel that there are some good ideas contained within this bill. I think we can all in fact recognize victims of crime. I mean, they happen almost every single day in our community. Whether it be the simple stuff from a store to a house broken into, everyone has that feeling of violation from the simplest to the most complex cases, and I do have a complex case that I will revert to a little bit later.

I think that the principles are respecting the rights of the victims of the crime. The role of the victims in the past has been limited to involvement in the criminal proceedings as a witness. The victims themselves have always claimed that the system is balanced in favour of the offender because the victims themselves have not been

able to have free access to counselling, education, and a variety of supports that are provided to the offender.

8:20

This bill clearly states that the victims of crime have a variety of rights including a right to safety, security, prompt financial benefits for the injuries they've suffered, and are entitled to the release of the information as to the offender, as to the investigation as well. These principles are crucial to giving victims a stronger voice within the criminal justice system. It's a crucial first step to establishing stronger support for victims of the crimes, confirming that these people should always be treated with compassion and respect first and foremost.

I spoke about a case, and I think everyone can recognize it. Just to give a little bit of history on that, it was Dougald Miller, who for all intents and purposes led a healthy, full life. He was, I understand, a caretaker. He went to check on a building one day, and unfortunately on November 21, 2000, he was left permanently brain damaged by a psychopath, Leo Teskey. This attack left Dougald unable to talk, eat, move, or do anything for himself. Unfortunately, this individual, Leo Teskey, was a well-known criminal with 164 charges and 34 convictions. He's now a dangerous offender, and he's jailed indefinitely.

The fact remains that this couple, the Millers, are victims of crime. In this particular case, how does one seek mediation? How does one begin to repay in a countable way for Mr. Teskey there? How does he begin to give back anything to these people? They've got to live now being robbed. The state that Mr. Miller is in right now is considered a locked-in syndrome. He's only able to communicate with his wife through a series of blinking, and that's it.

Right now the system allows, I think, for a one-time maximum payout for victims of \$100,000. Well, in this case the Millers have used most of that money if not all of it in being able to in fact find supports. As well, they were at one time asked to pay room and board for assistance. The government recognized their responsibility in that and helped them in that particular case but not before they exhausted that one-time money for the victim.

I think that in this case right now the Millers have to pay privately for therapists to make the husband more comfortable for the health care system does not support them and pay for this, which is very unfortunate. I would hold the government responsible for their care, for the health care and therapies, right now because they did not put this criminal away 10 years ago. What's happened to the Millers, unfortunately, could happen again to other people. I think that if the government recognizes once a pattern is appearing, they should act on it.

What, in fact, could happen to the Millers here? Like I said, there's a \$16 million surplus fund, apparently, that's put aside, and how was that fund established? Apparently, the government, when criminals are convicted, does charge these criminals approximately 15 per cent, which is topped up into this fund. But what happens if they go to a number of convictions where the people do not have money to make restitution to build into this fund? This fund will continue to be depleted. So I think there has to be another way, in fact, for this fund to be created. It must be supported by government in cases where the victims and the criminal have no means of restitution.

In this case, in fact, restitution is still being sought after by the Millers. There is, like I said, only one way for the husband right now to communicate, and it's through an eye tracking device that would help him communicate with his wife. Unfortunately, this costs approximately \$16,000. They're in no position right now to pay for that. It would be a perfect example of how the victims in

this case could continue to be funded with regard to this surplus fund, in ongoing supports with regard to a compassionate way of life, at least in the simplest form: for communication. I think that would be, first and foremost, a good start for restitution by this government.

There are so many other issues here that one can't help but feel sick for the fact of what Mrs. Miller is going through. She's now left alone. In fact, this year they're going to celebrate their anniversary, but what an anniversary to be able to celebrate here in this upcoming year: nowhere to go, no one to share those experiences. They're here on their own out of their native homeland, Scotland. They're the only ones here to support each other.

It's unfortunate, like I said, that she has no other way right now to communicate with her husband except for the blinking. This device, which I spoke about earlier, would certainly help the Millers be able to at least get a little bit of normality back in their life. It certainly in no way is going to undo what's already been done. This is just one example, I think, that the Victims of Crime Amendment Act could certainly look at.

Has the committee considered using, in fact, actual victims in the extreme case? Would they be able to give some experiences as well as perhaps some ongoing dialogue as to where supports could be? Right now the supports within the system are run in some cases by volunteers, but if the volunteers aren't there and there's no funding for them, I'm not sure where the system is going to go after that. It's going to fail.

Overall, this city continues to grow, the province continues to grow, but then with the growth come the problems associated with growth, with greed and crime. Crime is exactly what we're talking about here tonight. So those are just a few things to consider with regard to this bill then.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that I'm a little bit concerned with some of the comments that have been made and the continual onus on the government to look after these victims of crime. I guess that I want to go back and relate a story of an older gentleman that I knew some 20 or 30 years, when I was 16 years of age and had the opportunity to work with him on a farming operation. He had gotten drunk back in the '40s and had killed an individual. The long and short of it is that for the rest of his life he had to pay into the victims of crime fund, and there was a monthly charge.

When someone has become an offender or perpetrator, they've stepped out of their bounds, and they owe a debt to that victim or to the society as a whole. We continue to seem to put the onus on government to have to make up for those, and I think that the first onus should in fact be on that perpetrator that has committed the offence. I would like to see some resolution go forward or something changed more to realize that the perpetrator is, in fact, accountable.

Under Principles 2(1)(e) says, "The safety and security of the victims should be considered" – and I think that perhaps that should be changed to something like "will take precedence" – "at all stages of the criminal justice process, and appropriate measures to protect victims from intimidation and retaliation." Then perhaps it should be added in there again: from the perpetrator or any of their associates.

I have two accounts in my constituency where young offenders became very obnoxious and a problem to the community. The common joke amongst those two was that after they'd committed a

crime – and of course being young offenders, they got special treatment – they thought nothing of going up and down the streets in their small community. To anybody who wanted to speak out or against them or who would say, “You shouldn’t be doing that,” they were very bold and obnoxious and would come over and flat out tell them: “Do you realize that I know where you live? Do you realize that I have gas? Do you realize that I have matches?” Very intimidating.

I think that we need to seriously consider putting the onus back on these perpetrators. When we talk about people that are intimidating or showing retaliation, even if it’s verbal, they should be held accountable and that debt to society be held there and not just waived to the side after they’ve spent a little bit of time in jail or whatever it is for the offence. So this Victims of Crime Amendment Act I’m very much in favour of. I’d like to see it strengthened, and I would like to see the onus put on the perpetrator. As long as there’s an individual, perhaps, that needs an expensive device or something else, these perpetrators should be contributing to that victims’ fund and not be let off the hook after they’ve done a short amount of time.

Thank you.

8:30

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to speak on 29(2)(a)? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. In a situation such as that referred to by the Member for Edmonton-Decore where a victim is left desperately crippled and compromised and the perpetrator has absolutely no resources, do you expect, then, the victim to go without, or do you expect that in those cases society should step forward and fill the gap?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. A very good question. No. To clarify my statement, the first onus should be on the perpetrator. That’s the reason why we have society. That’s why we step in. No, absolutely. That’s why I say the perpetrators need to contribute to that fund throughout their life and to increase the fund. No, I would expect that fund there for those – too often those perpetrators are of little income and little productive lives, and they cannot compensate their victims. But I do not like to see them continue on with their life whereas their victim is strapped for the rest of their life, and the perpetrator after a short stint in jail gets to start over with no long-term consequences.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Yes. Mr. Speaker, just a further question to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. In the case of some individuals, you know, maybe they should be locked up to some degree and the key thrown away, and they will not ever have any income. How do you envisage them compensating individuals? How could the individuals who are the victims, in fact, get some sort of justice in terms of their own selves in those cases other than the government?

Mr. Hinman: Once again another excellent question. I guess it goes back to I believe that all human beings can be productive whether they’re in jail or not, and perhaps they should do some work, and the fruits of their labour should go towards those victims. But, once

again, many times those perpetrators, those offenders are not very productive individuals, and that’s why we have the victims of crime fund, so we can look after them. I just want those people to be held accountable and pay their debt to society. Often that continues for many, many years because we still have to continue looking after these people that have been affected with lifelong debilitating problems whereas, like I say, the perpetrator is off scot-free. There is no true restitution there given back by the perpetrator.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on 29(2)(a)?

Anyone else on the bill? Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie wish to speak on the bill?

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise and speak to Bill 12, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act. A victim of crime is anyone affected by a crime, from a person who loses his life in an act of violence to someone who has a bicycle stolen from a backyard. It also includes people who are indirectly affected. The parents of a teenager who is assaulted and the co-worker who witnesses a robbery are also victims of crime.

Bill 12 speaks clearly to strengthening the principle of justice for victims of crime. It’s a critical step in establishing stronger support mechanisms for victims of crime and confirming that these people should also be treated with compassion and respect. This bill updates the principles of justice for victims of crime. This amendment is the result of a 2004 report of the Alberta victims of crime consultation that recommended the incorporation of these principles. Mr. Speaker, this amendment came from consultations with victims of crime as well as those who work with victims of crime. It addresses many of their concerns and is part of a long-term commitment to giving victims of crime a stronger voice in criminal justice proceedings.

However, even though this amendment is a good first step, there are issues with whether this step is enough to address the ongoing problems surrounding the victims of crime fund. The victims of crime fund as of last year has been estimated to have approximately \$16 million in a surplus fund. This fund is designed to give grants to various victims services programs and also to offer financial compensation to victims and to help with expenses related to judicial operations that could be incurred by victims.

There is a 15 per cent surcharge that is levied on fines against people that have been convicted, and the money collected from this goes into the fund. So there is money accumulating in this account, and it is accumulating year after year after year. I would like to know where these surpluses are going. Are these going back into general revenue, or are the surpluses used in some other programs?

The question that must be asked is: why is this government not allocating the money in this fund more efficiently? There are numerous organizations in the province that are in need of increased financial aid in order to deliver programs to victims of crime. Many of the programs are run by volunteers. If there is a surplus in that fund of approximately \$16 million, then why is this government not using this surplus, which is supposed to be dedicated to be used with victims of crime, to provide funding to organizations like the sexual assault centres, the John Howard Society, and the Crossroads program so that they can focus their efforts on assisting victims and not worry about how to pay their bills from month to month?

This government needs to use the money in the victims of crime fund to fully fund community organizations and sexual assault centres so that they do not have to struggle to survive. These organizations need ongoing, sustained funding instead of funding that is tied to the delivery of client services in specific programs.

These are recommendations from the government's own reports as well as the sentiment of stakeholders who deliver supports to victims of crime.

Mr. Speaker, I support Bill 12 as it's a very good step to enhance the ability of victims of crime by participating meaningfully in the criminal justice system. However, there is much more that needs to be done by this government than just simply restating the principles respecting the rights of victims of crime.

The other point that I wanted to make pertains to the helpless victims of crime who are overlooked by this bill; for example, parents of teenagers who are assaulted, victims who are too scared to speak out because of fear of the reaction of the community, a lack of financial support, or perhaps even language barriers. Moreover, this bill does not cover all of the recommendations of the review committee formed in 2001. For example, certain groups of people, like aboriginals, may have specialized needs that are not always met by the current government. This bill is not inclusive to address the complication arising in the federal and provincial jurisdictions.

The good thing about this amendment is that victims of crime have a variety of rights, including a right to safety and security and financial benefits for the injuries they have suffered, and are entitled to the release of information about all aspects of the investigation and status of the offender. It also solidifies in legislation full access to information regarding the victim impact statement program. These principles are crucial to giving victims a stronger voice in the criminal justice system.

Thank you.

8:40

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think the important thing on any of these types of bills that look to compensate victims is that we should be seeing that they increase the ability of citizens in our society to be free from fear and to feel secure in their society. I'll just quote a few clauses from the United Nations declaration on basic principles of justice for victims of crime and the abuse of power.

Victims should be treated with compassion and respect to their dignity, and are entitled to prompt redress for harm caused.

Victims should be informed of their role and the timing and progress of their cases.

Steps should be taken to minimize delay and inconvenience to victims, ensure their privacy, and protect them from intimidation and retaliation.

States should consider incorporating into national law norms proscribing abuses of power, including political and economic power. They should also provide remedies to victims of such abuses, including restitution and compensation.

I think some of those clauses in the United Nations declaration speak to some of the issues of timeliness, which I think could be stronger in this bill in terms of, you know, getting things very, very quickly to victims. In terms of the restitution I believe that the hundred thousand dollar limit is certainly not sufficient in many cases, and it doesn't speak to some of the difficulties one might see in political and economic crime or, indeed, some of the abuses we've seen with pension funds and such by some people in the past.

But that said, Mr. Speaker, I'd move adjournment of this particular bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 17
Agrology Profession Act**

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I speak in favour of this bill. Generally, it's supported by the community and has a number of benefits for the profession, both in the professional designation and in the technical or technologist designation. There's some opposition in a few areas, but they haven't voiced it very strongly, and I support this bill.

The Chair: Anyone else wishing to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking at Bill 17, Agrology Profession Act, and under section 101, the penalty, it says:

A person who contravenes section 100 is guilty of an offence and liable

(a) for a first offence, to a fine of not more than \$2000.

So by reading this, it could be a fine as little as \$1. Am I correct in reading that? Then:

(b) for a 2nd offence, to a fine of not more than \$4000.

So that could be \$2,001.

I think they should have a base or minimum instead of a maximum, which you could put to the minimum of a dollar. So that could certainly be one of the first amendments that I would recommend, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

The Chair: Anyone else wishing to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to speak in Committee of the Whole on Bill 17, the Agrology Profession Act. Bill 17 is important legislation because it will strengthen the agrology profession.

Alberta has over 1,500 professional agrologists, who apply standards in science to every facet of the agricultural industry, from livestock breeding to food processing to soil protection. During the second reading of Bill 17 I outlined several reasons why this legislation is important to Alberta's agricultural and environmental sectors. I'd like to revisit some of those key highlights in this legislation.

Bill 17 seeks to repeal and replace the current Agrologists Act with new legislation that provides for greater public accountability, transparency, and equity in the governance of Alberta's agrology profession. This act strengthens the Alberta Institute of Agrologists, the professional organization that ensures that its members are qualified and competent to provide information and advice on agriculture, food, and associated natural resources. Bill 17 elevates the professional conduct of the institution members by specifying the requirements for complaint investigation, hearings and appeals, the use of alternative resolution processes, and the procedures relating to the decisions on disposition of records. The act also requires that

the institution comply with the record retention requirements of the Personal Information Protection Act to ensure personal privacy and follows other professional legislation in allowing complaints to be referred to the office of the Ombudsman.

Another highlight of this legislation is that it specifies the protected titles, words, and abbreviations which may be used by the institution members. They also have penalties and injunctions associated with illegal use of such titles, words, and abbreviations. The postnominal PAg is afforded only to those who meet the highest standards of the agrology profession.

These are just some of the main reasons for my strong support for this bill. By strengthening the agrology profession, we are investing in Alberta's agricultural sectors and our environment. I am proud to say that the Alberta Institute of Agrologists as well as stakeholders, private industry, other professional associations, and academic institutions strongly support this legislation.

In summary, the Agrology Profession Act responds to public expectations for more transparent and consistent professional legislation while strengthening a profession that provides vital services to Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

8:50

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got a question, actually, for the sponsor of the bill, the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. It's on page 68 under Penalty, section 101. Again, I think this government is setting fines, but really in some cases, like for CEOs, the fine maxes what a paycheque is for a week. In this particular case, I don't know what an agrologist makes on a professional level, but it says, "for a first offence, to a fine of not more than \$2000." So like I said before, it could be as little as \$1. Would the member be willing to make amendments so that it would be a substantial fine and couldn't be as little as \$1? If an offence is just a slap on the hand, what's the sense of even having, in fact, a fine, then, if it will never even achieve the maximum amount there?

Mr. Danyluk: The offence is going to be relative to the penalty, so if there is a higher offence, of course there's going to be a higher penalty, and that gives it the latitude and the flexibility for the penalty to be in accordance with what may be the correction as necessary.

Mr. Backs: Just another question for the mover of the bill. What is the difference between this and other organizations such as CECAB or ASET, the engineering technologists?

Mr. Danyluk: I'm sorry. With your acronyms I'm not sure who you're meaning, but you're asking what the difference is. This is very similar to the forestry professions act, and I would say that in most cases it very much mimics it and follows its direction.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Chairman, specifically to the mover as well. ASET is the association of engineering technologists, and they do represent some agrologists in the course of their organization, actually quite a large organization of technologists. They're currently lobbying for registration under an act similar to this or the Health Professions Act or something of that nature. How will those people be affected by this, or will they be taken out of that membership completely?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, first of all, there is no doubt that the membership of ASET would like to have its own accreditation. I mean, they

are striving to go in that direction, and the department is presently looking at it and from what I understand will continue to look at some of the concerns and the challenges that ASET has.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Chairman, another question to the mover: does the government in moving this bill envisage that the agrologists who remain with ASET might have a similar sign-off authority on some of the projects that they work on?

Mr. Danyluk: I would just suggest to you that in consultation with the technologists in the Agrologists Act, they have very much requested to be in this association, to be represented by this association, and to be under this professions act.

[The clauses of Bill 17 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 32 Animal Keepers Act

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very briefly. I've been through this bill section by section. I see absolutely nothing in here that causes us on this side of the House any problems whatsoever, and I would recommend that we go ahead with it.

Mr. R. Miller: Obviously, Mr. Chair, I did not have quite enough time to consult with my colleague before he made those comments. I was just curious if the minister might be able to address a couple of the concerns that were raised this afternoon regarding the definitions. If the minister wouldn't mind addressing those concerns that we raised this afternoon, I know I would appreciate it.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am truly happy to rise in committee today to respond to Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act, on behalf of the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Before I do that, I'd like to introduce some folks in the gallery who are with us tonight from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Rick Frederickson is the head of the beef branch in our livestock development division. Jo-An Christiansen is a legislative review officer in our regulatory services. Jason Krips is my executive assistant, and Cheryl Ryder also works in my office. If they could rise, and maybe we could give them a little thunder there. Thank you very much.

As I mentioned this afternoon, the proposed legislation will replace the Livery Stable Keepers Act and provide simpler, more modern, and straightforward language. The primary objective of Bill 32 is to provide animal keepers with a mechanism to recover costs associated with stabling, boarding, feeding, and caring for an animal. The proposed wording better reflects the extensive use of the act by the cattle industry and other keepers of livestock. The

new act also includes revisions to deal with surpluses and dispute resolution.

I would like to address some of the comments that were made this afternoon during second reading of the bill. The hon. members for Calgary-Varsity, Edmonton-Gold Bar, and Edmonton-Rutherford raised some questions regarding the definition of animals in this act. Animals defined under the act are restricted to those species raised commercially and most likely to be boarded by others. The proposed legislation would be unlikely to have any application to the animals that were mentioned by the hon. members.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity also raised a question about notification of immediate family or others that may have claim to surpluses. The responsibility for collecting surpluses lies with the individual or individuals that have a claim to them.

The hon. members for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Edmonton-Gold Bar asked: why now for Bill 32? As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did mention in his speech this afternoon about how far back this legislation dates, well, the answer is quite simple. The Livery Stable Keepers Act dates back to 1897, when it was proclaimed as law in the North-West Territories and applied to the area that would become Alberta. So it goes back a long ways, Mr. Chairman.

Various amendments have been made to the act over the years, the most recent one in 1980, but I'm sure my colleagues in the Legislature will all agree that the Alberta agricultural industry has changed dramatically since 1897 and even since 1980, and now so must the pieces of legislation that regulate it.

Earlier the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar raised a question regarding delegation of authority in section 7 of the proposed act. With sales of cattle and horses there is a requirement for brand inspection at sale under brand inspection legislation. This authority is delegated to Livestock Identification Services by the minister of agriculture. As part of the notice of sale clauses 7(2) and 8(2) allow for Livestock Identification Services to be notified to ensure that they are aware that a sale under this act is pending and that the sale proceeds would be claimed by the animal keeper to cover liens. This will prevent confusion at the time of sale when brands or documentation of ownership will not match the consignor's name.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner had some questions regarding animals under trespass, and I believe that he may be referring to Bill 33, which is up for discussion this evening as well.

Finally, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford wanted to know why a section regarding the cleaning of barns was removed from the act. In the proposed act obsolete procedures such as the requirement for cleaning with a mercury-based cleaner were omitted. This clause was removed because proper care of livestock is contemplated under other legislation and accepted industry practices. In addition, the use of a mercury-based cleaning solution is not an environmentally sound practice; hence, it was removed. As well, animal owners have a responsibility to ensure the proper care of their animals. As an animal owner if I'm not happy with the quality of care and the cleanliness of the facility, I have the option of boarding my animals with another keeper.

9:00

I believe this covers all of the points that were raised this afternoon or earlier today, Mr. Chair, and I hope I have been able to provide some clarification for the hon. members across. Overall, I am very, very pleased with the level of support expressed by members of this Assembly for Bill 32, and with that said, I would again urge all members of this Assembly to support Bill 32.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 32?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just wondering if the minister might be able to address for me, because I wasn't sure if he answered it just a minute ago, the discrepancy between Bill 32 and Bill 33 in terms of one having the definition of animal in the legislation and the other, which we're going to talk about in a minute, having the definition of animal moved to regulation?

Mr. Horner: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The difference is that there is not a wide range of animals that are kept in boarding, commercially raised animals that are normally put in a boarding facility. The industry wanted us to narrowly define that so that we can have more clarity in the act. For that reason, we did not include the wide range of all animals or any of those sorts of things.

In addition to that, it doesn't apply to things like a dog kennel, where pets or household animals might be kept. We wanted to maintain a very narrow definition of livestock, and that was the reason for the definition, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Pannu: I have a question for the minister, Mr. Chairman. Looking at the act, the section that deals with Option To Limit Lien. This is on page 3.

3(1) When an animal keeper has a lien on more than one animal or gear belonging to the same owner, the animal keeper may choose to limit the lien to one or some of the animals or gear towards satisfaction of the debt incurred for all of the owner's animals or gear that are or were in the animal keeper's custody and possession.

The question is about the use of the word "may." I would have thought that the keeper would sell only as many animals as would be needed to meet the debt obligations. What if the keeper chooses, in fact, to not just limit the sale to the limits of the debt? How is that addressed in the act? Some clarification, I think, is needed.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member raises a very good point. In the previous legislation, as I understand it, there was no "may." In other words, the keeper would have to place a lien on the entire consignment of the animals. This caused some uncertainty in the industry and certainly some angst with some members who might have a large number of animals under boarding but only a small amount of debt. Therefore, we wanted to have the option for the keeper to allow him to only take a lien on those animals that would cover that debt. So this is a step forward in the legislation, hon. member, as opposed to adding anything in there that might restrict.

Dr. Pannu: On the same point, it seems to me the language would suggest that the act is rather one-sided. It really leaves all the options in the hands of the keeper rather than putting some limits on the manner in which the keeper can deal with the issue of lien and at the same time protect the residual interests of the owner of the animals. So it seems a little one-sided. I wonder if you would like to respond to it.

Mr. Horner: Well, depending upon whom you're asking that question of, I think it's the idea that the money is owed to one person, not owed to the other. You want to be able to give those persons the ability to recoup their costs of taking care of those animals because they're under obligation to take care of those animals under another piece of legislation, which actually is before

this House as well this spring. The fines and all the liability then rest with the keeper. Therefore, I think it's fair to say that they should have that amount of flexibility to ensure that they can regain any debts or expenses that may be incurred on their behalf in taking care of those animals.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just going through this, listening to the debate, and I appreciate the candid answers from the minister. I'm wondering what effect, if any, this legislation would have on a situation such as occurred through this winter with Bonnett feedlots north of Ponoka, where a significantly sized feedlot went bankrupt. There continues to be contention over who owns the animals. We're also concerned about, well, how the animals were fed after the receiver took over the operation. So I'm wondering if this legislation would have any effect on a situation such as that.

The Chair: Before the hon. minister answers that, I'd just like to remind all the members of *Beauchesne's* 336. It's found on page 100. It refers to excessive chatter.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Chairman, I thought you were going to remind us about commenting on items that are before the court, which indeed the situation which the hon. member referenced is currently. So I'm going to very, kind of, in generalities talk about that.

I think the reality is that that's a reverse situation in the sense that the keeper went out of business. I don't really want to get into some of the other stuff that was mentioned with regard to allegations of improper feeding except to say that there is another piece of legislation that's before the House now, hon. member, that does look to the proper care of animals either on farms or in boarding areas, and the Animal Protection Amendment Act, I believe, is the proper name for it.

In the sense that we talk about branding and livestock identification, we do have another piece of legislation that was part of the review that both of these acts came forward with but is still under review in stakeholder consultation. It is, I guess, fair to say that we are monitoring the situation over there very closely because it may lead us to some more changes in that other piece of legislation but not necessarily this piece of legislation.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to acknowledge the willingness of the minister to address these seemingly minor questions.

This afternoon during second reading the minister was nodding his head when both myself and another colleague from this side of the House raised the issue of a couple of other large species which, in my mind, might be just as likely to be held by a boarding house as an elk or a bison. In particular I'm referring to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who asked about alpacas and llamas, and then I referenced as well emus and ostriches. I'm just wondering if you could clarify for us whether or not there was any consideration given to those four rather large animals as well.

Mr. Horner: As I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, in my earlier statements, those animals, exotic animals as you might refer to them, are not normally boarded because of their value, because of the fact that the herd size is usually not as large as, say, are the elk. Today I'm

not aware of any situation where these animals are boarded.

Down the road if that was to become a normal commercial practice in the industry, we would consider then adding those animals to the list. But, again, to clarify and keep a limited or tightly defined group of animals so we don't blend off into the pets and kennels and other situations that are out there, based on the stakeholder consultation that we did, these are the definitions that the industry wanted us to go with at this time.

[The clauses of Bill 32 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

9:10

Bill 33

Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm also pleased to rise in committee this evening to speak to Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005. This afternoon I described how Bill 33 will clarify the use of the Stray Animals Act and will provide regulatory authority to protect property and promote public safety.

Most of the changes proposed in this bill will simply improve the operation of the act that originally came into effect in 1977. The act provides a mechanism to recover costs associated with capturing, confining, impounding, identifying, maintaining, transporting, and selling livestock in trespass. Under this act the owner of the animal in trespass continues to be liable for damage and/or expenses attributable to the livestock. Bill 33 will also provide regulatory authority to control designated species in order to protect property and promote public safety.

I'd now like to address some of the concerns that were raised this afternoon when we were talking about it in second reading. The hon. members for Calgary-Mountain View and Edmonton-McClung wanted to know why the role of the assessor has been removed. The explicit definition of an assessor is being removed to improve the clarity of the Stray Animals Act. The detailed description of the role of the assessors will no longer be included. However, in section 4 we'll continue to provide the minister with the authority to appoint persons as required.

The member also inquired about the resolution of conflicts. As section 22 states, the minister has the final authority to determine what expenses are reasonable in the case of a dispute.

The hon. members for Edmonton-Gold Bar and Calgary-Mountain View raised questions of whether waterfowl and game-ranched animals, respectively, were included in the definition of livestock. At this time neither waterfowl nor game-ranched animals are included in the definition of livestock in the Stray Animals Act.

Further to that, I would address the hon. members for Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Rutherford's concern about the definition of livestock being removed to the regulation. It is essential for this definition to be flexible so that the species included in the definition can be adjusted to the needs of Albertans. As was raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the animals included in the definition could be adjusted if deemed appropriate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford points out that this is an inconsistency with the proposed Bill 32, Animal Keepers Act, and at the current time regulations under the Animal Keepers Act are not envisioned. The Stray Animals Act does and will continue to have them exist for the reasons that I mentioned before. Flexibility in a definition provided through regulatory change is deemed in the best interests of Albertans. The strength of the provisions and the coverage of species are not impacted by this change.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung also raised some concerns about the order of priority of payment. Expenses for transporting and maintaining the livestock have increased in the order of priority while expenses incurred in capturing, confining, and impounding the livestock have moved down. Stakeholders support this order as it is often the individual involved in maintaining the livestock that is impacted the most. As well, section 21 states that “where livestock are sold by public auction . . . and the proceeds of the sale are insufficient to pay the expenses referred to in section 19(2), the Minister may pay the expenses out of . . . the trust account.”

He also inquired as to why section 40 is being repealed and whether this may discourage the reporting of stray animals. Section 40 did provide a notification as the person finding the stray livestock is required to notify the brand owner or an inspector. However, in the interest of clarity, section 8(4) has been added. This new subsection requires the capturer to notify the owner of the livestock as soon as possible of the capture and confinement of the livestock. It appears directly under the notice to the inspector under those sections.

Finally, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity told us a very interesting story this afternoon regarding a dead steer and the issue of jurisdiction that it raised. Whether the rather large grizzly that he spoke of had jurisdiction or which department, given the circumstances that he related and if the bear was still there, I would suggest: don't argue with the bear. However, I believe that this issue is addressed in the destruction and disposal of dead animals regulation, not in the bill being discussed this evening.

So, Mr. Chairman, I believe that does address all of the questions and concerns that were raised this afternoon during the second reading of Bill 33. I appreciate the support expressed by members of all sides of this House for the extensive consultation undertaken in developing and ensuring that Bill 33 is a strong, modern piece of legislation that's fully endorsed by all stakeholders that we consulted. I would therefore encourage all members of the Assembly to support Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise again and speak very briefly to Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005. This act outlines the procedure for determining liability, compensation, and penalties that will be imposed for livestock which have strayed onto other people's property. It also outlines the rights of the livestock or domestic fowl owner in destroying stray dogs.

This bill updates the legislation and will provide a way for the minister to limit the liability of the government by using a trust account to pay the claims from farmers that had their property damaged by stray livestock.

Mr. Chairman, I fully support this bill, but I have a few possible questions to the mover of this bill. The first question is: why did the assessor role get removed from the act? Can you answer, please?

The Chair: Hon. member, do you want to ask all of your questions and the minister can respond? You have to sit down in between if you want him to respond individually.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just mention that I did touch on the explicit definition of the assessor being removed. It was for clarity in the Stray Animals Act, and the detailed description of the role of the assessor is no longer included. However, if you refer to section 4, that will continue to provide the minister with the authority to appoint persons as they are required in the Stray Animals Act.

Mr. Agnihotri: My second question is: with the increase in power for the minister, who is going to be the go-between when there is a challenge of what the investigator assesses? Will the farmer now have to take it to the courts?

Mr. Horner: No. As I understand it, Mr. Chairman, the minister has the final authority on those issues, so it would be an appeal to the minister.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, if I can just go back to the dead steer and the grizzly bear. I would certainly concur with the minister. I think the bear wins that argument every single time. But in reference to my colleague from Calgary-Varsity, who told the story, I'd just like to share with you that as the whip sometimes the Member for Calgary-Varsity wins the argument every time too. We all enjoyed listening to his tales.

If I could just briefly ask the minister as it relates to Bill 33 and the responses that he has given. I'll be very honest with you: I think my question just slipped from my mind. The one thing that I did want to mention is that I appreciate, again, the candour and the willingness to answer the questions.

I understand the minister's comments that the definition of animal in this particular case needed to be a little more flexible, but I would certainly like to reiterate my concern for moving things from legislation into regulation. I'm not completely convinced that there's a need to alter the definition of animal in the case of this particular bill more often than every six months or however often it is that we would be convening in this Legislative Assembly. I still have a concern about that despite his assurance that this is in the best interests of Albertans.

If I think of my question and I have the opportunity, I'll jump back up. Thank you.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Chairman, one point that I did not cover that was raised this afternoon. The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was talking about concerns relating to Bill 33 in that they didn't address notification of stray animals under the bill. The notification section is, as I mentioned in my other points, under section 8(4). I just wanted to point out to the member that if the owner of the animal is not known, then under section 17 notice is provided as will be specified in the regulation, which would be what is deemed appropriate; i.e., newspapers, notice at auction marts, that sort of thing. So notice is included in the legislation. I just wanted to make sure that the hon. member had his answer.

9:20

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the minister for stalling for me so that I could recall what it was that I wanted to question him on. He referenced my colleague from Edmonton-McClung and his question this afternoon regarding the fact that the capture of the stray animal in question may now be moved down the ladder in terms of being paid. I just wanted to clarify that the point the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung was making is that in order to have the animal in captivity in the first place, somebody has to do the capturing. If there is very little or no incentive for a farmer, for example, to corral this stray, then there is concern that the animal may do a certain amount of damage, somewhat more than would have been the case previously. That was the reason why we were questioning the moving down the ladder in terms of paying the capturer.

I'm not sure. I would certainly agree that once the animal is in captivity, there are likely to be more expenses incurred by whoever is holding the animal as opposed to expenses incurred by whoever captured the animal. The question is: is the animal going to be captured, or is it going to be left to roam free until it's hit by a pickup truck or does a certain amount of damage if we're not providing enough incentive to somebody to go out there and capture the animal in the first place?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of comments. First of all, many times it's the animals causing some damage or causing some other problems to the landowner, so his incentive is to stop that from happening. Therefore, there's his incentive for capturing that animal, but also stakeholders do support this as it is often the individual involved in maintaining the animal who is usually at the most risk. Also, section 21 states that "where livestock is sold by public auction . . . and the proceeds of the sale are insufficient to pay the expenses referred to in section 19(2)," the minister may pay the expenses out of the trust account.

We're going to try to capture all of the expenses, but I must reiterate that in most cases where an animal is out stray and roaming around, usually the landowners want to catch them to stop whatever damage or whatever other concerns there may be in that regard. So there is already an onus built into the system. But to answer the concerns of the hon. member, expenses will be taken care of.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand the point that the minister is making. I just want to make sure that my point is made as well. Through personal experience over the years – and it has happened several times – I have actually been involved in the capture of stray animals. In every instance that I can remember, the effort to capture was done out of a sense of duty, a sense of neighbourly responsibility, and a sense of compassion and humanity for the animal that might be in distress or in danger and not necessarily out of concern for damage that might be caused by the animal.

Again, I'm just not sure that moving the rights of that person who's involved in the capture so far down the list will allow that neighbourly charity to continue to take place. However, I understand and I appreciate the fact that the minister has been involved in careful consultation with the stakeholders, and I'm certainly willing to take his word that the stakeholders are supporting this.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will cede the floor and not ask any more questions. Thank you.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. I guess that as a stakeholder I'd like to speak also and just for general information. It is the landowners that generally take the biggest hit, and they're very much motivated to get the animal in, and it would no longer be neighbourly or charitable if you weren't helping. So we can't have one or the other if you want to be compensated. Generally the landowner is more than willing, and if he's not capable of doing it himself, he will hire someone to help him capture it, and then he'll get paid for doing that.

But I think that first on the priority list is the landowner where the damage is being done, and I support this bill and the intent thereof to protect the landowner from the damage done by stray animals, which does cause a lot of problems and has been a problem throughout history here in this great province of ours.

[The clauses of Bill 33 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 28

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, just to remind everyone, this is a bill that deals with a number of separate amendments to the Municipal Government Act. The variety of the bill was referred to by a number of speakers, and I just want to remind everyone that there are a number of provisions in the bill; first of all, a provision to allow municipalities to set and collect a community aggregate sand and gravel levy.

Secondly, there are amendments that will clarify issues relating to the flow of linear assessment and jurisdiction.

Next is clarifying the intent and assessment of Crown-owned property held under lease, licence, or permit in provincial parks and recreation areas. This is to reaffirm the existing policy.

The next provision is enabling provisions for a municipality to pass a community revitalization levy bylaw subject to provincial approval.

Finally, there is a regulation-making authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish any area as a community revitalization levy and set out the specific conditions that will be required.

Mr. Chairman, there were a number of speakers who spoke to this bill in second reading. I'm not going to repeat everything that was said, but for the most part I was pleased that there appears to be fairly good support by members on this bill. There were some questions that were raised. The Leader of the Opposition raised a number of questions, as did the Member for St. Albert, and I'd just like to take a couple of minutes to address the questions that were asked.

First of all, the Leader of the Opposition asked if the bill would have any implications on the issue of rights-of-way for transmission lines. That would fall under the provisions in the bill that deal with linear assessment. The bill itself has nothing to do with the location of lines. It only has to do with the determination of the value of those lines and the assessed value for tax purposes. The section on linear assessment deals only with streamlining the process for

determining the value and creating a system that is very similar to the traditional real property, the buildings and land that everyone is familiar with, so there will be a registry of linear property in the same way as there is a registry kept for real property like you have on your house or a piece of land. That's the provision here.

The second question that was asked was with respect to the provision of Crown leaseholds. The question asked was: will this bill affect Crown leaseholds? I'm assuming that the leader was referring to grazing leases and that kind of thing, and the answer is no. This only affects leases that are within provincial parks or recreation areas. It has to do with commercial. By way of explanation, when the Municipal Government Act was passed back in '94, there was a move to change to plain language so that the wording changed on the provision of the assessment of Crown leases within provincial parks. That wording was intended to reflect the same policy. But in changing the wording, the courts determined that there was a change in policy, and there were rulings made that in fact exempted a number of taxpayers who were never intended to be exempted. This has escalated over time to the point where we essentially have to close that loophole, return the taxing authority back to where it was originally intended to be.

9:30

While there will be some taxpayers who will begin paying tax and who haven't been for the last couple of years, it's not because of a change in policy; it's because of an enforcement of the existing policy that was changed as a result of court decisions. The government's opinion is that if there is going to be a change in policy – and arguments have been made that perhaps some of these should not be taxable – that should be a decision that's made by this Legislature upon appropriate reflection, not by an arbitrary decision made by the courts trying to interpret what the Legislature perhaps meant when the wording was changed.

The next question the leader asked was: who will municipalities borrow from if they use the tax increment financing? Municipalities have natural person power and can borrow from anyone they choose to borrow from. Historically, municipalities have found that the municipal financing provided by the province is probably as economical as any, but if they wish and are able to negotiate loans or debentures or any other financial instrument that is advantageous to them, they're free to do so. That's a decision that they make, and there's nothing that would be within this legislation that would commit them to one form or another.

Finally, the Member for St. Albert asked: will the bill look at municipal tax rates? The answer is no. There is no intention to deal with municipal tax rates in this bill. The only reference to municipal taxes is in the tax increment financing, and the bill indicates that mill rates established within the zone would have to be at least as high as tax rates throughout the rest of the municipalities so that there is no tax incentive for developers to locate within the zone. The incentive that is there is the enhanced aesthetics and the basic infrastructure that has been invested by the municipality.

So I believe, Mr. Chairman, that answers the questions that were asked, and I look forward to further comment and question.

The Chair: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I genuinely appreciate the helpful information from the minister. I really have two comments. In going around, you know, the normal activities of the opposition, I've bumped into a number of city councillors and have been surprised that they themselves haven't been directly aware of this piece of legislation. I know, clearly, the AUMA was consulted

and, I think, actively engaged – well, I'm sure they were actively engaged – in developing this legislation, and they're inside, and I suppose it's reasonable of the minister to expect the AUMA to represent its membership. But I suppose as a piece of information I've been surprised at how low the awareness is among some city councillors. I know at least one other member of my caucus has found the same thing in people she's spoken to: how low the awareness is of this legislation. I just provide that as information.

The only other question I have right now really comes under the community revitalization levy. I know it could become controversial when a city tries to enact that, and I think we talked in the debate in second about people being displaced from lower socioeconomic areas as those are redeveloped and controversies that could arise there and the perception that this could be seen as some kind of subsidy to developers.

All of that aside, I'm really specifically most interested in how this bill will affect the province's portion of the education property tax or what formula or methods might be brought forward or used for addressing issues concerning the education portion of property tax. If the minister can fill me in on that now, that's great, and if he wants to come back later, that's also fine.

Thank you.

Mr. Renner: It's up to the members opposite. Would they like me to take notes and answer all questions after all have spoken, or would you like me to respond now?

Dr. Taft: We're not going to have a lot of questions.

Mr. Renner: Okay. Then I'd be happy to respond. The issue of education property tax is that the education portion of the property taxes is dealt with exactly the same way as the city's portion of the property tax. It is diverted into this fund that is used to pay down the debt that is incurred by the municipality. So, in essence, what it means is that on incremental development the province agrees to participate with the municipality to the extent of the education property tax. In fact, it would apply to any other authorities that have requisitioning, so it would also apply to – there's some seniors' homes that have requisitioning powers in some municipalities. It would apply to them because the assessment is frozen at today's rate.

The thing to keep in mind, though, is that particularly from the point of view of education, the education property tax that goes into the foundation only constitutes a small portion of the total funding that flows through to our school boards to deliver education. The funding that is delivered to school boards is on a per capita, per student basis and is not in any way related to the funding that is collected through the education property tax. So I don't want to let anyone think that this is going to in any way jeopardize funding that would flow through to school boards. Let's be clear that that's part of the reason why the legislation is necessary, and that's why the cabinet has to also agree to the designation. The province does participate in this scheme.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member for some of the questions that were asked the other day and some clarification. The Member for Edmonton-Riverview did ask some of the specifics that I was going to ask with regard to consultation between municipalities. I mean, certainly, we can recognize the difference: Calgary has different needs than Edmonton has different needs than McMurray. It's good if we do an all-around consultation

with the members of those municipalities because each municipality represents the different needs of those members there. In fact, with regard to the school issue act – yeah, thank you for that clarification as well.

The community revitalization levy – that's the one – I was just tonight at a potential school closure, and people are always concerned with regard to school closures, in fact, devaluing property. Then what happens: you have depressed areas there, and people are reluctant to move into those areas because there is no school. People are no longer wanting to move in there, so they're talking about areas becoming depressed.

So now the scheme which was devised in Calgary. The mayor is in fact asking for approximately \$7 million to build up depressed areas within that city. The same could be used throughout the province. In Edmonton we've got areas that are depressed areas, but again there are concerns here. If you're on one side of the boulevard compared to the other, what happens if the property tax is frozen for a couple of years – and I've never seen it done, so I'm not sure why it would happen now – while on the other side of the street the development continues to grow? At what point does the one side of the street catch up to the taxes on the other side of the street? There's where you're going to have disproportions and you're going to have concerns with regard to a \$500 increase in tax by the time it's able to catch up.

9:40

So those are just a couple concerns with regard to the community revitalization levy. I'm not sure if the member wishes to comment with regard to those concerns raised.

Mr. Chairman, I will adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: Shall progress on Bill 28, Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Carried.

Bill 1 Access to the Future Act

The Chair: Is there anyone to speak on behalf of the sponsor?

If not, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, I know that things haven't moved along quite as quickly so far tonight as I think all sides of the House had hoped, and so we may not get as far in committee study of Bill 1 as we had all hoped tonight, but we will get a start on it here at least and try to move on from there.

I spoke at some length at second reading on Bill 1, as did a number of my colleagues on this side of the House, and I think the government now has probably some idea of the issues that we have with the bill. I want to acknowledge first of all that Bill 1 does signal renewed focus on and support for advanced education, and we're very pleased to see that.

However, we do have concerns, and they fall I guess generally into three areas. Reporting and accountability: we think that postsecondary institutions are burdened by numerous accountability and reporting requirements, and we think that there needs to be some equity and accountability and reporting between the institutions and the ministry as well, and we intend to address that. The issue of

ministerial control versus institutional autonomy: there's a delicate balance that needs to be struck in our public institutions, we believe, between ministerial control and institutional autonomy, and as we move forward in committee study of Bill 1, we will be wanting to introduce that as well. The third area of concern in order of the way I'm introducing them tonight but really first in terms of our level of concern is the money.

Now, Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, does a number of things, but primarily what it does is establish the access to the future fund, a postsecondary education endowment fund done somewhat differently than the way we would have done it had we been elected to the government in that it's done sort of within and under the heritage savings trust fund. We would have done it separately, as I've discussed here before. Nevertheless, it's being done, and that's good. What's not good about it in our view is the cap, the \$3 billion cap on the endowment fund, the size to which the endowment fund is being allowed to grow.

With that in mind, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move my first amendment to Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act. I would move that Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, be amended by striking out section 4(5). Now, section 4(5) says very simply: "The maximum amount that may be allocated under subsection (4)," the subsection that establishes the account for the endowment fund, "is \$3 000 000 000." Mr. Chairman, \$3 billion sounds like a huge number even in 2005, even with the extent to which we've seen inflation over the years eat away at the purchasing power.

The Chair: If I could interject at this particular moment, we will call this amendment A1.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. So \$3 billion, as I was saying, still sounds like a huge amount in 2005 even after all the erosion in the purchasing power of the dollar that we have all seen over our lifetime. But to put it in some context, it really is not a huge amount by any stretch of the imagination when the goal – and I believe that this government is sincere in its goal in Bill 1 – is to establish excellence in postsecondary education in the province of Alberta.

Three billion dollars even at current enrolment levels, when divided by the number of students in postsecondary and advanced education in this province, amounts to an endowment per student of less than \$17,000. I think everyone in the House would agree that \$17,000 does not go very far in this day and age. In fact, one might be tempted to say that for all the good \$17,000 will do an average student in the province of Alberta, rather than striving for excellence, we might be better off just forgiving \$17,000 worth of student debt or maybe just giving them the \$17,000 in the form of – I don't know – a new Toyota Corolla. That's about the suggested retail price of a new Toyota, stripped down, basic model, mind you, but \$17,000 will get you pretty close to getting a new car.

By comparison, at Princeton University, which has, admittedly, the richest per-student endowment on the North American continent, Princeton's per-student endowment is approximately \$1.3 million. Seventeen thousand dollars in Alberta across four universities and all our colleges and our polytechnical institutes; \$1.3 million per student at one university.

So, Mr. Chairman, \$3 billion is not enough. Three billion dollars is a great start, but in our view that's what it must be, a start, especially given that there is no absolute commitment on the part of the government to put any money into the fund. We trust them. We believe them. We take it in good faith that they will contribute money to the fund. But \$3 billion as a cap is the wrong way to go. Three billion dollars needs to be viewed as a start to this

postsecondary education endowment fund if, in fact, we want it to foster excellence in advanced education in the province of Alberta.

The fund needs to be contributed to not only this year and next year and perhaps the year after that till the \$3 billion cap is reached, but it needs to be contributed to every year in perpetuity. Perhaps – I don't know – 20 years, 50 years down the road, perhaps at that point a government in that time, the government of that day will say: "You know what? There really is enough money in the fund now to generate, at 4.5 per cent of the endowment, the funds to provide sustainable excellence in postsecondary education in the province of Alberta." But you're not going to reach that at \$3 billion, nowhere close.

So amendment A1 seeks to strike out section 4(5) by removing the \$3 billion cap and allowing this endowment fund to grow the way it really was envisioned to grow by those who envisioned it first.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the past decade and more postsecondary education has endured a funding drought that has left our system impoverished and struggling while the demands on it continue to increase. The message from stakeholders and voters during the recent provincial election was clear: reinvestment in postsecondary is overdue. Finally the provincial government seems to be responding. We face many significant problems exacerbated by years of neglect, deferred maintenance of infrastructure, the urgent need to attract and retain new faculty, and the struggle to keep up with advances in technology to name just a few. What we need now is rational, predictable, and sustainable funding from government, which will allow us to overcome these challenges and provide the postsecondary education Albertans want.

9:50

The proposal to uncap the proposed \$3 billion funding limit – that is, amendment A1 – is more than a matter of figures. It is a shift of mentality as much as of money, from a perspective of spending to one of investment. I point out a parallel in the energy sector. With world oil prices rising, development and production are not falling off. In fact, investors are borrowing to get a piece of the action when the projects they are backing come on stream. They recognize that rising costs reflect accelerating demand, and this creates a future.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to see us take the same view when it comes to the human energy generated by education. For more than 30 years economists have been virtually unanimous in recognizing that it is not resources or technology that create wealth but people. If there is any one area that deserves our attention and support, it is the drawing out of our people into their fullness, which is what the word "education" means.

Resources will eventually be expended, infrastructure and technology will become obsolete, but human potential is unlimited. I've spoken of human potential in quantitative economic terms, but it is far more than that. The human is the end and focus of our political, economic, and cultural activity, and education is a means of maximizing our humanity.

So finally I say: let us commit ourselves to investment in education, therefore, with the same unrestrained abandon with which this province has facilitated the energy sector. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on amendment A1.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can never speak quite as eloquently or with such heartfelt warmth as my colleague from

Edmonton-Mill Woods, but I would as well like to enter into the debate on this particular amendment.

Mr. Chairman, the other day I made a comment in this Assembly in reference to the price of oil. I indicated that industry analysts are suggesting that oil could reach \$80 per barrel. I was heckled and almost shouted down at the suggestion that oil might go to \$80 a barrel, and the next morning there was a news report from some industry analysts suggesting that in fact there may well be a spike on the horizon of somewhere in the order of \$105 per barrel of oil.

Now, I'm not sure, Mr. Chairman, and I'm assuming that we'll find out in a week and a day what number the government is using in their budget forecasts, but I suspect that the number is going to be somewhat less than \$80 a barrel and certainly nowhere near \$105. I'm guessing that probably more likely somewhere in the area of \$40 a barrel is the number that the government is going to be using when they make their budget forecasts. So given that every indication is that we're likely to remain somewhere in the area of \$50 to \$60 a barrel, perhaps \$80, maybe even, heaven forbid, \$105 per barrel, a \$3 billion cap, although as my colleague from Calgary-Currie suggested, a very big number, is almost like we're putting an artificial limit on a fund that could do tremendous things for the future of this province if we would allow it to do so, especially if we should be so fortunate as to see oil skyrocket, which there is some possibility it might do.

Given that, I would suggest that it would be prudent to remove the cap, as this amendment would allow us to do, and let the fund rise to whatever level it may rise based on the possibility of some rather incredible surpluses over the next number of years. If for some reason it starts to get to such a big number that it's not prudent to have that money in that fund anymore and it could be better used somewhere else, if we suddenly find ourselves with the very best postsecondary education system in the world and we realize that there's more money there than we can reasonably use, we can certainly find other things to do with it. I hear an hon. member behind me suggesting perhaps free tuition for all. Boy, wouldn't that be a wonderful thing?

So, Mr. Chairman, those would be my comments speaking in favour of the removal of this cap, and I look forward to continued debate. Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief. I rise to speak to amendment A1, which seeks to remove subsection (5) of section 4 in Bill 1, Access to the Future Act. I think it's to be noted that there's a developing consensus in this House and across the province that we have been underinvesting in postsecondary education for the last 10 to 15 years. That underfunding and underinvestment has caused serious problems within the system. Accessibility and affordability are just two symptoms of the larger problem.

Although the rate at which high school students graduate from this province is deplorably low, even many of those who graduate don't end up in the postsecondary system to take advantage of the education and training facilities that it makes available. In spite of that, we have an accessibility problem, a shortage of spaces, and a problem of affordability. Imagine if we were to successfully manage to encourage high school students to stay in school, complete high school, and then move on to a postsecondary system. The numbers wanting to get into postsecondary institutions would be much greater. In other words, those numbers are very dynamic. How many people, how many spaces there will be in the system is likely to grow, and if that happens, then the \$3 billion figure may look already out of date within the next four to five years.

So I think this amendment is good in the sense that it says that \$3 billion may not be enough. My only concern is that if we remove the reference to the \$3 billion here, that might be interpreted by some in this House and outside that we need less. Let me make it very clear that I will be supporting this amendment on the assumption that the amendment seeks to have a much larger amount given that the demand on the system and the participation in the system is likely to grow and grow very rapidly in the coming several years.

So that being the case, of course, you know, \$3 billion looks arbitrary without really asking the larger questions about the shape the system will take in the next few years. I've been talking about the need to establish a commission which looks at some of these important questions of affordability, accessibility, funding, the governance of institutions, the role of private, for-profit institutions within the system, and we can go on and on. So we will need, in fact, a serious examination of the system, and only at the end of that should we be coming to some sort of determination of what amount should be in this fund that will be adequate, that will be sufficient.

In light of all these considerations, I'm happy to support this amendment that's being put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. Thank you.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Obviously, I support the amendment as well. We pushed very hard on the idea of a postsecondary endowment fund last fall. We had a wonderful reception to it. There's a sense in Alberta that people want to grab the future. They have a feeling that we're changing chapters or we're moving to the next chapter in Alberta's development, and they see postsecondary education as absolutely the key topic of that chapter.

As my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods said so eloquently, education is about our humanity and investing in our humanity. It's about our children. It's about our future. I don't see why we should put a cap on that. We have a potential here to do something genuinely dramatic, as has been made clear by the Member for Calgary-Currie.

10:00

There are individual universities in North America and others that I know of in Europe with endowments that would dwarf this \$3 billion. If we're going to have a postsecondary education system that takes its rightful place with the MITs and the Harvards and some of the universities in Texas and the Cambridges and so on, we're going to need to provide those kinds of resources and those endowments. We need to stop thinking of this as an expenditure. We're not saying this is an expenditure. We're saying: put this into a savings account, a savings account dedicated to the children and to the future of this province through postsecondary education.

If we're making that investment – and it's widely understood by economists, by tax people, by public policy experts that this is perhaps the best investment a society can make – why would we put a cap on that? Why would we do that? Why would we limit how much we can put into education and postsecondary education? The evidence is very clear that in the long term for every dollar that we put into postsecondary education, a society will get many dollars back in taxes and in productivity improvements.

So I do not see any justification for putting this cap in place and would encourage all MLAs – I can see they're closely paying attention – to support this amendment to Bill 1. It would take Bill 1, which has a good heart to it, and make it a better bill.

On that note, I would like to move adjournment of debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: Shall progress on Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? It's carried.

Bill 5

Family Law Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The hon. Minister of Justice did bring forward some amendments. I'm assuming that the amendments are not up for discussion right now. That's my understanding, that I don't have to address the amendments at the moment but that I could address the substance of the bill.

The Chair: There are amendments on the floor.

Dr. B. Miller: There are amendments on the floor, so the amendments are what is to be discussed. Okay.

Well, the amendments that were presented by the hon. Minister of Justice are mostly housekeeping items. They're very complicated, and they're amendments to the original Family Law Act. The first amendment, section A, is really just changing language, and actually the same language is changed in different parts of the act, striking out the word "prescribed" and substituting "provided for."

Now, I don't think there's anything substantive in this change at all. I think the understanding that the minister communicated to the House is that the word "prescribed" seemed too specific, perhaps too harsh, and didn't give enough flexibility so that every time the rules are changed under the regulations, there has to be a rushing to the cabinet for a decision. In order for that not to happen, the words "provided for" are added. So I've no problem with those kinds of housekeeping changes.

In the amendment section B, section 5 is amended in the proposed section 20 by striking out "or agreement to the contrary between the parents of a child regarding the guardianship of the child" and simply substituting the words "regarding the guardianship of a child." I think that's trying to make this whole section simpler. This section is subject to any order of the court in regard to the guardianship of a child, so it's pretty straightforward. I think the understanding of the minister was that the longer sentence was making it too broad, allowing parents to perhaps agree that even a third party could be the guardian of a child, and that makes it too broad.

There's the adding of subsection (5), that if parents "agree in writing, both parents continue to be the guardians of the child even after the child begins to usually reside with only one of them."

Now, this whole bill is very complicated because of the legal language that needs to be in the bill to protect those involved, especially to protect the child. I've been reading the amendments and also the bill from the point of view of using as a threshold test: is this in the best interests of the child? It seems to me that that is the most important question in a bill that tries to define guardianship. Is this in the best interests of the child? The second principle that can be applied to this bill is the principle of gender equality so that both the father and the mother are equally regarded in respect to the definition of guardianship.

Then going on to amendment C, which again is just a housekeeping item of changing the language in respect to enforcement officers

and using the word “designated” instead of “prescribed.” The same with amendment D and the same with E. So these are all housekeeping items.

A question I have for the Minister of Justice, when he can respond to this, is under section F. It’s a bit of a puzzle to me what this means. There’s the addition of a clause “respecting financial information to be provided under section 65,” which has to do with financial support or financial agreements in respect to guardianship, and I’m just not sure how that fits in. I need some clarification, some explanation why there is a need for this amendment. That’s amendment F.

Those are my only comments on these particular amendments, and I would like a response to a couple of those points before we can go ahead and put them to a vote.

10:10

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to Bill 5, Family Law Amendment Act, 2005. I want to start by acknowledging the fact that the minister did brief . . .

The Chair: Are you speaking on amendment A1?

Dr. Pannu: Are those the amendments that are before us from the minister?

The Chair: Yes. We’re speaking to amendment A1 to the Family Law Amendment Act.

Dr. Taft: Those are from the minister.

Dr. Pannu: All right. I’m sorry; I was under the mistaken impression that those amendments were not to be under discussion until the minister’s convenience allowed it.

Yes. Many of the pieces of the amendments that are proposed in A1 are fairly straightforward. One of the places where amendment A1 attempts to amend the proposed act is in section 20(1), which currently reads: “This section is subject to any order of the court or agreement to the contrary between the parents of a child regarding the guardianship of the child.” This section 20, by the way, deals with the guardians of the child. Now, the amendment proposes to strike the last part of this first statement, so the section would then read: “This section is subject to any order of the court,” period, I think. So I have no particular concern with that change being proposed.

The other part of A1 speaks to amending section 20(4), Mr. Chairman. Section 20(4) at the moment in the proposed legislation reads as follows: “Despite subsection (3), a parent with whom the child has usually resided for one year is a guardian of the child even if the child no longer resides with the parent.” I think the change, the amendment being proposed to 20(4), says: “Despite subsection (3)(a), if both parents so agree in writing, both parents continue to be the guardians of the child even after the child begins to usually reside with only one of them.” That causes some concern. It makes the matter of who is the guardian of the child less clear than is the

case in the present legislation and, I think, will cause lots of problems for the child and the mother, particularly if the child is very, very young, was born in the hospital, and there’s a dispute over who the child’s guardians are.

So, Mr. Chairman, I find it difficult to support the proposed changes in 20(4) as part of amendment A1, so I won’t be able to vote in favour of it. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Yes. Mr. Chair, I think it would be appropriate for us, since we need to get some clarification from the minister about some of these points on his amendments – I would like to adjourn debate so that we can continue at another time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: Shall progress on Bill 5, Family Law Amendment Act, 2005, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Acting Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report bills 17, 32, and 33 and report progress on bills 28, 1, and 5.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 17, Bill 32, Bill 33. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 28, Bill 1, Bill 5. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the committee concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Acting Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon, Wednesday, April 6.

[Motion carried; at 10:17 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 6, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/06

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Grant us daily awareness of the precious gift of life which has been given to us. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and of our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 20 seniors from the Rendez Vous Centre in Morinville, which is located in the beautiful constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. They are participating in a tour of the Legislature today and are seated in the gallery this afternoon. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions to do today. The first one: I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly 15 students from the R.A. Reynolds school from the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. They are accompanied today by teacher Anna Laplante, and Anna is a former classmate of mine. She's also joined by parents Bob Cochrane and Brenda Bischke. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The second introduction I have, Mr. Speaker, which I wish to make to everyone here in the Assembly, is municipal leaders from the municipal district of Bonnyville. They are accompanied here today by their leader, Mr. Ken Foley, the reeve; councillors Judy Cabay, Werner Gisler, Andy Wakaruk, Ed Rondeau, and his wife, Annette. I ask you to please give them the traditional warm welcome.

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a good friend and former colleague of mine, the reeve of Lacombe county and providing good governance, Mr. Terry Engen. He actually lives in the constituency of Rocky Mountain House but provides good governance to the whole county. He is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask him to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly representatives of Lakeland county who are in Edmonton also attending the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and

Counties spring convention. Joining us today are Reeve Peter Kyrlychuk, Phil Lane, Robert Richard, Greg Bochkarev, Eugene Ugancz, Todd Thompson, Barry Kolenosky, and Chief Administrative Officer Duane Coleman. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask if they would rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Don Good, a councillor from the town of Peace River, a friend, and a former colleague. Don flew into Edmonton this morning for meetings. He's visiting us here in the Assembly today, and then he's going to fly home tonight, a feat that would not be possible without access to the City Centre Airport. I would ask Don to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly Cathy Bartlett. She is the mother of Leah Halliday, who is a page in the Assembly. Leah is very polite, hardworking, and conscientious, and she's a credit to Alberta's youth. Cathy Bartlett is in the Speaker's gallery, and I would now ask her to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly His Excellency Mr. Snanchart, ambassador of the Royal Kingdom of Thailand. With His Excellency today are the first secretary of the Royal Thai Embassy, Mr. Chatchai, and the honorary consul general of Thailand in Edmonton and, of course, a former member of this Assembly, Mr. Dennis Anderson.

Mr. Speaker, this is the ambassador's first visit to Alberta. In addition to our trading relationship, Alberta's postsecondary institutions have strong ties with Thailand in numerous disciplines. The people of Thailand have been in Albertans' thoughts after the west coast of Thailand was hit by a tsunami. The people of Alberta donated generously in helping with the reconstruction of the affected areas.

They're seated in your gallery, and I would ask them to rise, Mr. Speaker, and also ask for the very warm, traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me untold pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a rather large group of students from the wonderful school of St. Teresa Catholic elementary in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. We have a total of 72 students this afternoon comprising three classes as well as 10 accompanying adults with them. I'd like to just name the teachers and teachers' assistants as well as the parents that are with them this afternoon. We have, seated in both the public and the members' galleries, teachers Mrs. Thérèse Coates, Ms Lucy Roberts, Mr.

Charles Stuart, as well as teachers' assistants Mrs. Lois Boxall, Mrs. Debbie McDougall, and the parent helpers Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Pilger, Mr. MacLeod, Mrs. Ross, and Mrs. Colwell. I would ask that they please all rise and receive the very warmest welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three wonderful people from my own constituency. They are Mr. McGowan, Mrs. Marlene Deregowski, and Darlene Treder. Mr. McGowan has been the president of the Edmonton-Ellerslie Liberal association for many, many years. Mrs. Deregowski is my constituency manager, and Mrs. Treder is my constituency assistant. They are seated in the public gallery. I request them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two members of the parent advisory committee of North Edmonton school, which is of course located in my constituency. They are here to show their opposition to the proposed closure of their children's school, North Edmonton school. It's worth noting that this school was praised for its good work by the chair of the Learning Commission. The members here are Pam Bellamy and Adele Woo, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all hon. Members of this Assembly Ms Jette Badre and Ms Birgit Wildenhoff. Ms Badre is the president of a parents' organization for diabetic children known as POKED, Parents of Kids Enduring Diabetes. She is also the vice-chair of the Mill Woods southeast community health council. Birgit Wildenhoff is a successful businesswoman and serves on the boards of various Danish and Scandinavian community organizations, including the Danish church and the Scandinavian Trade and Cultural Society. She is also a founding member of the Danish library.

Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to add that the Scandinavian Trade and Cultural Society will be holding a midsummer fest in Rundle park in Edmonton on June 23 to celebrate Alberta's centennial. These two guests are seated in the public gallery, and I will now request them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Darren Popik, who is seated in the public gallery. Darren worked for Dale Johnston, MP for Wetaskiwin. Darren has been active in provincial politics as well. I would ask Darren to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Concerns continue about the Alberta Securities Commission. Yesterday under questioning the Minister of Finance said, "the commission is confident that the workings of the commission are in order." Well, what else are they going to say? It's the public and the investment community who need to be confident that the workings of the commission are in order. To the Minister of Finance: given the seriousness of the allegations, including regulatory favoritism and employee harassment over a period of years, and the fact that up to 30 interviews were held, is the minister confident that Mr. Mack in three short weeks had enough time and resources to thoroughly complete his first investigation?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking me for an opinion on judging how Mr. Mack utilizes his time. I would assume that Mr. Mack had the amount of time that was required. I don't believe that there was any time frame put on him.

Secondly, I should say again that it was the independent, part-time commissioners who submitted their findings to me based on some 700 pages of information that they perused.

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has any correspondence with the investment community that they are concerned or dissatisfied with this report, I would appreciate receiving it because I am not getting that message from the investment community. In fact, that message is coming from there only.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: has the minister spoken directly to Mr. Mack to discuss his first report and confirm that he had adequate time to complete his investigation?

Mrs. McClellan: No, Mr. Speaker. I have not nor do I think it's necessary or appropriate. Mr. Mack was employed by the Alberta Securities Commission's part-time members to investigate a complaint. I am sure that Mr. Mack was accorded the time that was required. If Mr. Mack had a concern about the time that he had, felt that it was important that he involve me, I'm sure that he would contact me. My address is quite available.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Finance Minister: given the threats to whistle-blowers in the ASC, including being publicly dismissed as cowardly and depraved by their bosses, why didn't the minister bring in an independent body to respond to Mr. Mack's report on the commission instead of allowing the commissioners themselves to prepare the report?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the hon. member does not seem to understand that it was the independent, part-time commissioners that responded to this report – independent, part-time commissioners. I find it interesting that he is concerned about these employees and their ability to bring forward complaints, yet doesn't want me to respect the solicitor-client relationship on which basis of anonymity they brought forward their complaints. A little contradiction here.

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

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Mack's first report was immediately turned over to the ASC commissioners, who were given more than five weeks to prepare a response. To the Minister of Finance: what were the roles of Mr. Sibold and Mr. Linder in preparing the second report, which dismissed the concerns of regulatory interference?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat one more time. There were two reports. The first one was a report Mr. Mack prepared on interviews with persons who brought forward concerns. The second report, which brings the balance, was the interviews with persons who would have been involved in those complaints on the other side. That report, as I indicated prior to that, was released on the 21st. I will repeat one more time for the hon. member, and I will say it very slowly: it was the independent, part-time commissioners that responded to me. Now, if the hon. member thinks that Mr. Sibold or Mr. Linder fit in that category, perhaps he has answered his own question.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Were the independent, part-time commissioners unanimous in their conclusions and in their production of the second report?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, they sent me the report. I didn't ask them if they had voted on the content or on the release of it, but I am assuming that when they forwarded it to me, it was a report of the body that sent it.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the nature of the allegations brought forward about the chairman and the executive director of the ASC and the relationship between those men and the part-time commissioners, how can the minister assure investors that these two men have not influenced the report delivered by the commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I respect the integrity and professionalism of these people who have agreed to serve in this capacity. I would expect there's a little more trust on this side in that integrity and that professionalism. These are very respected persons who sit on that commission.

The report has been clear in two areas: one, on the regulatory side that things are being handled consistently, fairly, and even-handedly – that was very important to the investment community – and secondly, there are some human resource issues within the commission. The part-time commissioners have made it very clear in their report that through their human resource division they will be dealing with those immediately.

I would just close with this, Mr. Speaker. I indicated yesterday that I asked my deputy to speak with that division to get a work plan or a timetable to ensure that that is carried out expeditiously and thoroughly.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

1:50

Oil Sands Employment

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. StatsCan information for February of this year reported high construction unemployment across Canada. For example, Newfoundland and Labrador stood at 46.7 per cent for construction unemployment. Nova Scotia was at

23 per cent. There was equally high unemployment in construction across the other provinces. There's clearly no present shortage of construction labour in Canada. The great challenge is connecting Canadians and Albertans to oil sands jobs. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Will this government require employers to provide the same transportation and accommodation costs to qualified unemployed Canadians that would be spent to attract temporary foreign workers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a reasonable question. Again, when you're talking about the issue of labour shortage in Alberta, I'd just like to indicate to the opposition how lucky we are and how blessed we are to live in such a fine province with a strong, diversified economy with thousands of jobs there for everybody.

Mr. Speaker, one thing we've said all along – and I've had a lot of questions on this issue since the House opened – is that the top priority is still Albertans, Canadians. Those have to be looked after first. The employers, who are the people that are responsible in hiring foreign workers and local workers, have to exhaust all avenues available to hire and train local people.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary question to the Minister of Finance: will this government call on the federal government to increase the northern residence tax deduction for Fort McMurray residents and workers and provide matching Alberta tax relief?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we consistently and constantly pray on our federal government to reduce taxes in all areas. If we continue to do that and actually get some response in those areas, we will continue to ensure that the federal government understands that the economy grows better and works better and is more effective through a lower tax regime.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: will this minister look to provide travel allowances or tax relief for all those Albertans who travel the long, weekly trek to the oil sands in Fort McMurray?

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House would not go into detailed micromanagement of private companies out there. Private companies deal with these issues very effectively.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Oil Sands Bitumen Export

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in reply to a puffball backbench question the Minister of Energy raised the spectre of Kyoto as an excuse for allowing the export of raw bitumen from the oil sands. The government's policy of allowing wholesale ethane exports to the U.S. is already costing 400 Celanese workers their jobs. Now the government seems prepared to put oil sands upgrading jobs at risk as well. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Will the minister today make a clear commitment that

the export of oil sands bitumen to be refined and upgraded outside Alberta will not be allowed by this government?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it has been and continues to be the policy of this government to support all the value-added opportunities that can and will exist. We continue to encourage the upgrading to happen from the Fort McMurray oil sands. We've got a Hydrocarbon Upgrading Task Force that's working on a very good project, using bitumen as a feedstock for the petrochemical industry. There are many things that we're actively doing to make sure that Albertans get the best value from that bitumen.

Mr. Mason: I didn't hear a clear commitment, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta already allows raw gas and petrochemical jobs to be exported down the Alliance pipeline, won't it take a clear position against allowing jobs in the oil sands to be exported as well?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I think we've been very fortunate to have set the right policies and climates to attract the billions and billions of dollars of investment into this industry. We're looking in the oil sands industry at potentially a hundred billion dollars over the next 10 years, and that's just in the oil sands. This is an amount of investment that's happening throughout this province to see that we as Albertans get the best value.

With respect to access and export capacities, clearly we want to have the opportunity to export. Even for the natural gas, before that capacity was there, we had a stranded value. We were getting prices substantially lower than what you could realize in the United States market. We this past year had about 6 and a half billion dollars in royalties from natural gas as a result of being allowed to trade with our partners.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That troubles me very much. Why is the government then giving massive royalty breaks to these oil sands companies, and it won't stand up and say that the bitumen must remain in this province to be processed?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify again. This is our policy, and we continue to work very closely with industry to do everything we can to see that the economics are right to upgrade and refine those products right here from the bitumen. We are doing just that. Companies are actively working on many of the upgraders. Suncor recently announced one of their expansion proposals for upgrading capacity for their project. That's just one of numerous proposals that are coming forward for upgrading capacity.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Definition of Marriage

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that those who say we need more tolerance are often the most intolerant and seek to take away the freedoms of conscience and religion as well as the freedoms of thought and expression from others, though we protect theirs. Last week the Alberta Human Rights Commission received two complaints over the beliefs expressed by Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary. My question is to the Premier. What is this government going to do to protect our freedoms of conscience and religion as well as our freedom of thought, belief, opinion, expression, and freedom to publish and communicate in peaceful assembly with our associates?

Mr. Klein: Well, as much as I hate to say it, Mr. Speaker, I agree with him. I have made public statements that although I don't agree with all the points raised by Bishop Henry, he certainly has every right – every right – to express those views.

I can tell the hon. member that relative to maintaining the traditional definition of marriage, we're on the same wavelength.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: will the Premier today tell Albertans and this Assembly how many citizens, how many thousands of citizens, a number, how many he would like present on the grounds of the Legislature on the 7th of May, 2005, at 1 p.m. in order for the Premier to perform his final flip on the issue and bring to this Assembly a marriage act that will declare that notwithstanding the definition of marriage . . .

The Speaker: We should have a question sometime.

Mr. Klein: Well, first of all, I wasn't aware that hundreds or thousands of people were going to converge on the Legislature on May 7. I have no idea what day that is. I have no idea where I'm going to be at that particular time. But to answer the question, if there was indeed a question in the preamble, although we believe in maintaining the traditional definition of marriage – by the way, so does the Parliament of Canada. As of 1999 they did, the result of a motion that passed, well, not unanimously but by a huge majority.

Mr. Speaker, we can't invoke a law that is unenforceable, that is unlawful. We are lawmakers, not lawbreakers. Now, if the hon. member wants to be different, that's entirely up to him, but I would remind him that he is here to make laws, not to break laws.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will the Premier lead the parade of two-thirds of Albertans for their traditions and values and not Joe Clark's parade and replace the constitutional featherweights who say that they can't win this fight to defend traditional marriage and put in heavyweights who not only say that we can but will win this fight?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I think that this government has led the parade. Absolutely. In terms of political action, in terms of exploring what appropriate legal action we can take, I have written to every Member of Parliament, including the Prime Minister. I have encouraged all Albertans to write to their Members of Parliament to have this bill killed or at least amended so that the government responsible for jurisdiction over the notwithstanding clause can invoke it. So we have indeed led the parade. Other provinces have succumbed to the will of the courts. There's never been a court challenge in this province, but we are firm in our resolve to defend with great vigour the traditional definition of marriage.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

2:00 Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's softwood lumber continues to pay huge countervail and dumping duties to the United States. Under the U.S. Byrd amendment the U.S. government can redistribute those duties to the U.S. timber companies that claim to be injured by the Canadian trade practice.

My question today is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. The Canadian government has announced retaliatory measures against the U.S., including 15 per cent duty on live hogs and cigarettes. Can the minister tell if the Alberta government was consulted on this retaliatory action?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the WTO, World Trade Organization, ruled some time ago that the Byrd amendment contravenes all existing trade rules. They also ruled that Canada can put forth various retaliatory measures such as the hon. member had mentioned. We were consulted as the provincial government. I was on the phone a couple of times with the Minister of International Trade, Mr. James Peterson, and we did have a discussion on this particular area.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: does the Alberta government support this retaliatory action by the Canadian government?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, retaliation when it comes to trade is a last resort. Given the fact that there was support from other countries, I believe about seven, that through the World Trade Organization were prepared to do something in this regard – although it is a retaliatory measure, we hope that the American government would see that it is time to repeal the Byrd amendment and come to the table and try to resolve some of these issues.

I know that on the issue over softwood lumber presently they're sitting on about \$4.3 billion of tariffs collected, and I don't think we'll see a solution to this recent effort in trying to resolve this issue unless they return that money to Canadian producers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is Alberta's share of duty paid to date that the Byrd amendment would like to redirect to the United States forest industries?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our forest industry has been paying cash deposits on a daily basis of about half a million dollars, which amounts to about \$180 million a year. Since the duty has been put in place, that has resulted in about \$500 million of Albertans' money that is there. We've been working with the industry as well as our partners to make sure that we can find ways to bring those deposits back to our industry. As part of the overall negotiations we're looking at ways and options of bringing that money back to Alberta. Our industry has been negatively impacted by the duty and what we think is an unreasonable Byrd amendment.

Thank you.

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

Water Strategy

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Economic Development released figures Monday reporting a record 946 projects worth \$107 billion, mostly nonrenewable energy resources, in Alberta.

Alberta's most precious and diminishing resource, fresh water, is under a constant threat from drought worsened by climate warming, population growth, and resource extraction. My first question to the Premier: with no significant increase in funding to Alberta Environment in a decade, when will this government commit to adequate financial resources in the Ministry of Environment so it can do its job of water management and protection identified in the Water for Life strategy?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister pointed out yesterday, I believe, the Water for Life strategy is one of the most comprehensive of any jurisdiction in Canada. I would ask the hon. member to wait and see what is in next week's budget before accusing this government of not backing the Department of Environment as it pertains to the Water for Life strategy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will this government here and now guarantee to Albertans that our water will never be subject to NAFTA and sold to the highest bidder?

Mr. Klein: That is a very interesting question. I don't know what the rules are relative to water and NAFTA, but quite clearly the policy of this government is that there be no interbasin transfers to send water to the United States. That's not to say that commercial bottlers of water can't sell bottled water to the United States. But there will be no interbasin transfers. I was contemplating just the other day – and I've got to research how that policy applies and whether it's a legislated policy or not. But if it's not legislated, then we'll make sure it is legislated.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will the Premier inform all Albertans whether maximizing economic growth will continue to override water protection policy into the future?

Mr. Klein: No, Mr. Speaker. I can't advise them on something that is absolutely untrue and false. I can't advise them on false assumptions of the opposition. I can advise them that the Water for Life strategy is a good strategy that strikes the right balance between industrial use and those who are concerned about the use of water, irrigators, those involved in the agricultural industry, those involved in the petroleum industry.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great demand for water in this province. The hon. member knows. He knows very well that this is a treasured resource in our province. You know, it's often been said that whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over. But we want to end the fight, and that's what the Water for Life strategy is all about: to strike the right balance.

Métis Hunting Rights

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, several of my constituents are concerned about the interim Métis harvesting agreement and would like to know how the Powley decision impacts Métis harvesting in Alberta. The first question I have is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Did the Powley decision restrict Métis hunting to traditional lands or place any restriction on where Métis may hunt?

The Speaker: The hon. member should be aware of *Beauchesne*

408(1)(c), which says that questions cannot involve a legal opinion. So I don't know if we're on that one or not, but, hon. minister, proceed with some care.

Ms Calahasen: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the court didn't make reference to site specific, but clarified this – and I think this is really important – by saying that the rights are the same as that of First Nations members. However, in the Blais case the same day it said that Métis were not Indians under the natural resources transfer agreement. The limitations to subsistence hunting on unoccupied Crown lands are in the natural resources transfer agreement, and this left the possibility that these limitations would not apply to Métis hunters. Therefore, we needed to clarify these kinds of unresolved issues as determined by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. Lougheed: Well, to clarify further, to the same minister: under the interim agreement can Métis hunting in Alberta occur in a more extensive region than that guaranteed by these decisions? Where in Alberta can Métis hunting occur?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll make every attempt to answer the question as to where they can. In order to reconcile Métis rights with Indian rights, which is what the Supreme Court directed us to do, we broadened the decision in some areas and narrowed it in others. For example, the decision left open the possibility of commercial hunting and might not have been limited to unoccupied Crown lands. Our agreement prevented these interpretations from occurring. In fact, we negotiated an agreement consistent with the Supreme Court decision by confirming that Métis, like Indians, can hunt for subsistence purposes on unoccupied Crown lands throughout Alberta.

2:10

Mr. Lougheed: To the same minister: under both the Powley decision and the interim agreement are there any restrictions on when hunting may occur and on what animals, like sheep, caribou, and grizzlies?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Powley decision did not limit the hunting rights by species. In fact, the matter of endangered species will be taken up in ongoing talks with the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Settlements General Council. Under our agreement, however, harvesting rights are clearly subject to restrictions for conservation purposes and safety closures. Hunting can occur during any season of the year but subject to conservation and safety closures.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Policing Services

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent years public confidence in the integrity of our police services has been undermined by numerous incidents involving police misconduct. There has been an erosion of public trust in our police that must be restored. My questions are to the Solicitor General. What concrete actions will this government take to restore the public's confidence and trust in our police services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Bill 36 was introduced for first reading this past Monday and will be entering second reading tomorrow afternoon, but I can add to the hon. member's question. Consultation throughout the province began in 1999, and over the past six years hundreds of submissions were received in ongoing consultation with the stakeholders throughout the province. The Alberta Association of Police Governance, the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, the Alberta Federation of Police Associations as well as members of the public have provided information to us with regard to what the legislation should look like in the future. This act is 18 years old, and it has been presented and is before this Legislature now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Solicitor General: given that the public and police commissions as well as the government's own reports called for a full public oversight of investigations involving complaints to the police, why does the government persist in refusing to implement a public civilian oversight process?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are four components of public oversight. Two additional, new components are going to be addressed. There is the Police Commission, which is an appointed body. There is the public director, which is a new position which will receive all of the complaints. There is the new position with the member or members of the public being appointed to oversee the integrity and the process of an investigation. There is also the Law Enforcement Review Board, another public body that's there to review appeals. There are two new, additional civilian oversight areas. We are one of only a few provinces that have this additional legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the public can't investigate criminal activities. They don't have the experience. They don't have the skills. They don't have the training. Police officers, trained police investigators have to investigate criminal activities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Solicitor General explain to this House as well as the public how his recent fact-finding trip to Las Vegas and Phoenix will improve the effectiveness of policing in Alberta?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, the intent of the trip was twofold. One was to look at the program that they utilize there for the retention and hiring of officers in two of the fastest growing cities in the United States, one being Phoenix and one being Las Vegas, where they have 6,000 people moving into their city per month. That puts a huge strain on the infrastructure of the municipality but, as well, a huge strain on hiring resources, hiring police officers. We received information from them with regard to how they look at their potential new recruits coming in-line and staying within a police service, their retention programs, their education programs, their training programs. As well, we looked at the corrections facilities, the tent city that has a remarkable background, with corrections officers and a thousand inmates that sleep under the stars or under the tents every night.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Highways 2, 7, and 547 Interchange

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been a high number of accidents during the past few years on highway 2 at the Aldersyde intersection south of Calgary, crashes that have resulted in serious injuries and, in too many cases, deaths. In fact, we had another bad one last week. This intersection is a junction of three highways, and there's a lot of heavy truck traffic due to the presence of a trucking company nearby and various industrial and intensive agricultural operations. People in the area and the rural municipality have been calling for an interchange in this location for many years, and one was promised back in 2003. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Could the minister update this Assembly on the status of this interchange?

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much for that very concise question. It was absolutely wonderful.

It's an incredibly important issue in the member's particular constituency. This has been an interchange that we have been planning for the past couple of years and, indeed, have been in negotiations with landowners. It is fairly complicated because there are numerous landowners. But through to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, that is one that is going to be going, and it should physically start happening as soon as we get the land purchased and hopefully will be in the ground in 2006.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Why has it taken the department so long to build the interchange given that the problems at this intersection have been obvious for so many years?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Quite simply, the traffic in southern Alberta has changed significantly over the past four or five years. We have understood this, and we have undertaken to purchase the land. Because of all the various landowners that surround this, because of the businesses that have to be relocated – there's also a railroad that goes fairly close to this as well – it has been a complicated issue. We're proceeding as quickly as we can, and as I said in the first part of my answer, we hope that we'll be starting construction on the interchange next year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. How much safer will the interchange be than the existing interchange that requires people to cross four lanes of highway-speed traffic?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most dangerous intersections and interchanges in Alberta at this time. Eighty-three per cent of the accidents involve a T-bone type of collision, which is someone going across the traffic and all of a sudden being hit by a car that's going 110 or 120 kilometres per hour. These are extremely serious issues. These are extremely serious accidents, and the sooner we can get this interchange under way the better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Energy and Utilities Board

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you ask Albertans in communities across this province, the Energy and Utilities Board is nothing but a toothless tiger serving the energy industry at the expense of the environment and of public safety. Now, in the name of streamlining and so-called efficiency, the EUB is proposing to further weaken its powers to enforce compliance with EUB rules. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Given the words of a respected environmentalist that the new policy will become a walk in the park with the EUB and industry holding hands, why is the government letting the EUB compromise public safety by further weakening its enforcement policy?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely false in preamble, in statement, in fact. The Energy and Utilities Board acts very judiciously in respect of Albertans to protect their interests. If it were a matter of just complying with the companies' requests, then we wouldn't need them, but they are there to ensure that we have the right enforcement, the right level of regulation, and the right balance so that we can both encourage development and ensure that the public is protected.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. To the same minister: why is the EUB pushing for a new compliance policy based on voluntary industry self-disclosure when this approach failed famously last December, when Acclaim Energy failed to notify authorities of a gas well blowout in Edmonton, leaving public health officials to learn about it from the news media?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware specifically of the instance he's referring to.

They are continually reassessing processes. You always have to ensure that you've got the right processes, and that is a reflection that they would be doing on an ongoing basis. I would encourage them continually to look at how to improve their processes for both the public and the companies.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Same minister: what action, then, will the government take to put a stop to the EUB adopting a new enforcement policy that increases risks to both public safety and the environment here in Alberta?

2:20

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the Energy and Utilities Board is acting to ensure that the public is protected. They are taking action to see that safety, environmental standards, any of those things, are not compromised. They are ensuring that there's an appropriate balance, that there's an appropriate window, an opportunity for people to know where they should go, the right body. So, in that respect, you always look for a better way and a more improved methodology to accomplish that task.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Fort McMurray Infrastructure Needs

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to Fort McMurray industry representatives, residents, city officials, and

local First Nations, the province's infrastructure plan isn't going to work. The province is only promising a fraction of the \$1.2 billion needed to improve the quality of life in Fort McMurray. To the minister of health: given that Fort McMurray is the only Alberta city of its size without an MRI unit, will the minister commit to funding one in this year's budget?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of work done by the regional health authority to analyze its needs both from a long-term perspective and for the diagnostic imaging equipment. We are looking at a number of innovative ways to deliver that service, perhaps even between more than one authority in order to save costs. There's a private entrepreneur that I met the other day that was showing me a travelling MRI that they are attempting to work with in some of the regions so that we can accommodate some other options. So we are looking at options to fulfill the need for patient diagnostics, as the member has asked for.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. To the minister of infrastructure: why is this government failing to be proactive in funding a water treatment plant so that Fort McMurray doesn't end up becoming another statistic like Walkerton, Ontario, or North Battleford, Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to water treatment, when it comes to the whole water issue, it's extremely important for our communities. Fort McMurray on Monday night put forward a proposal for around \$94 million for a water treatment plant. That's the first time that they have actually addressed that with me. I agree that if that is needed, we certainly will be there as a partner in funding water treatment in Fort McMurray.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. To the Minister of Finance: if it isn't acceptable for the province to be in debt, why has this government forced Fort McMurray residents into shouldering a debilitating debt?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a very interesting question. As I indicated in the House – I think it was yesterday – I had the honour and pleasure and privilege of joining many of my colleagues, including most of the cabinet ministers in this government, in a session with a group from the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo area. Included in that were their regional health authorities, their advanced education people, the school system – the superintendent was there – plus multi-companies. In fact, the presentation was made by a member of industry up there. That was Monday evening.

They gave us a very comprehensive report, that they had put a great deal of time and energy into. They had updated the report which they had given us two years ago and brought that to us. Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment at that time to work with them in all aspects of that report, and even the people of Wood Buffalo have not expected that they would have an answer by 2:25 on Wednesday from a Monday night presentation.

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

Regional Water and Sewer Systems

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The North Red Deer River Water Users Group plans to build a regional waterline that will supply water from the city of Red Deer to the towns of Blackfalds, Lacombe, and Ponoka. The group did receive funding from this government for the project, but the funding is now not enough to allow construction to proceed. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Could the minister update this Assembly as to the status of this project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When the project was initially put forward, the cost was anywhere from \$17 million to \$20 million. That project cost has now increased and ballooned to over \$30 million. We gave the commitment of funding 51 per cent of the original project, of the original program. Recently, through to the hon. member, I met with the mayors of these communities, and I again committed to retain the 51 per cent. So instead of being 51 per cent of \$20 million, it will be 51 per cent of \$30 million at this time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: given that Alberta has reached a stage of development where we should have a provincial plan for regional water and sewer systems, does the minister favour regional water and sewer systems over single community systems?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, as a general rule I think it makes sense. Obviously, there are exceptions to every rule, and I think there are probably some areas in the province where a single system makes more sense. But as a rule the more that we can get together, the safer the water supply, and, quite simply, the larger the economy of scale, the more money that is saved for the taxpayers of this province. As a general rule we like to do that, but I'm sure that there are going to be specific areas where a single water system will make more sense.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: what has his ministry done to encourage development of regional water and sewer systems?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, what we have done – I alluded to it in the answer to my first question – is we've increased the percentage of the actual project to 51 per cent for regional usages, and it's around 40 per cent for those that are single usages. Again, it is an important element. It's not necessarily the answer to everything, but it's pretty darn close.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

School Utilization

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Conservative government continues to lurch from crisis to crisis, providing partial fixes to problems of their own making. Most recently the government has claimed that it's evolving – not fixing, mind you, but evolving – its school utilization formula that pits community against

community. The latest game of survival of the fittest is being played out in schools like Strathearn, Terrace Heights, North Edmonton, and Wellington. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Given that the minister indicated previously in this House that the schools in Edmonton are being closed for the right reasons, does this mean that the current utilization formula is working well for Alberta kids and communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Edmonton we have roughly, according to our estimates, 160,000 square metres of unutilized space in our school system. That type of space costs money to heat, costs money to utilize, costs money to upkeep. What the Edmonton public school board is currently doing is looking at a rationalization through what they're calling a cluster approach, where they look at a cluster of schools and decide what the best way is for learning opportunities for those kids. I really must say that I commend the Edmonton public school board for their initiative in this. They're actually taking a look at how we can move students around to improve the outcome for the students, and that's, quite simply, the way it should be done.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit to adopting a school utilization formula similar to our community schools concept in which a partnership with community organizations can help keep schools open and surrounding communities vibrant?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, we are open to almost anything when it comes to partnerships. I think that's the key to the future for us in Alberta. It's partnering with our municipalities. It's partnering with our school boards. So the simple answer to that question is that we will take a look at anything.

What I'm attempting to do, though, is to put the onus on school utilization and school operation and maintenance where it should be, which is down with the school boards. So we are looking at a formula that will enhance the ability of schools to respond to the learning needs of their students.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good he's open to ideas.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to a moratorium on school closures pending the announcement of his new utilization formula, just as the government did with increases to postsecondary tuition fees pending the development of a new tuition fee policy?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, as I explained, there are roughly 160,000 square metres of unutilized space in Edmonton, and that space is going to cost money regardless. There is no formula that is going to pay for unutilized space, for space that is not being used by students, and I don't think anyone in Alberta expects that to be done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

2:30 International Airport Vicinity Protection

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The airport vicinity protec-

tion area, or AVPA, regulation for the Edmonton International Airport is currently undergoing a review. The current draft has created a lot of anxiety amongst residents and businesses in my constituency. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Can the minister assure this House that the revised regulation, while protecting the viability of the International Airport, will not unduly sterilize lands and stifle growth in Leduc and the surrounding areas of Leduc county?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of the airport vicinity protection area is not a new issue. In fact, the review that is under way now is having a look at a policy that's been in place since 1981. The purpose of these plans is to allow for a co-ordinated development approach between the airport and the municipality, and it certainly is not the intention of the regulations under review to sterilize any land from future development.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary to the minister: will the minister commit to further public input from stakeholders prior to the finalization of the new regulation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member knows, public meetings have been recently conducted on this particular review. Those meetings resulted in some very valuable input from a number of stakeholders. That input is now under review. It will be reviewed with the city of Leduc, the Airport Authority, and other municipalities within the affected region, and they will then have an opportunity to revise the proposals that are under way.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Recognitions

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I will call upon the first of seven members today to participate in Recognitions.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

PCL Construction

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the last 100 years Alberta has been host to a great number of companies and organizations that have helped build Alberta into the province that it is today. One such company has also been around since the very beginning. PCL Construction will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2006.

In the first three months of 2005 PCL has already received a number of awards: declared one of Canada's top 100 employers for the fifth consecutive year by Hewitt Associates; ranked 10th by the *Globe and Mail's Report on Business* of the 50 best companies to work for in Canada; acknowledged as one of Canada's 50 best-managed companies for 2005; a Platinum Club winner by Deloitte & Touche, CIBC, Queen's School of Business, and the *National Post*; awarded the Canadian Construction Association's 2004 national safety award and 2004 general contractor award of excellence. The CEO, Ross Grieve, received recognition with the University of Alberta's School of Business 2005 business leader award.

I congratulate PCL for all of their accomplishments, and I encourage all the other members to bring forward and recognize all of Alberta's success stories as we celebrate. Alberta is very fortunate to have a company of PCL's calibre.

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

Tartan Day

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has become home to families from all the nations of the world. My own family's ancestors include Langs, McCrays, and Crawfords from Scotland, so it's an honour for me to address this Assembly today, April 6, to recognize Tartan Day across this province, this country, and many parts of the world.

Tartan Day is celebrated to commemorate the signing of the declaration of Arbroath, which is also known as the Scottish declaration of independence, on April 6, 1320. This important day in history has been recognized by many around the world as one of the earliest expressions of the right of humanity to a peaceful and productive life which is free from oppression. This is, therefore, a significant day for Scots and non-Scots alike.

Tartan Day also gives us an opportunity to recognize the tartan as a symbol of Scottish culture and Scottish clans. I have prepared commemorative ribbons which consist of traditional Scottish colours pinned with an Alberta coat of arms pin to symbolize the recognition of this proud day for Scots in Alberta. I hope that all members wear these pins proudly and that the members of this Assembly join me in recognizing this important day.

Thank you.

The Speaker: To the hon. members for Lethbridge-East and Edmonton-Mill Woods: you each have an additional 30 seconds.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Under-18 International Curling Championship

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend in Calgary at the North Hill curling club and the Calgary Curling Club the 2005 Optimist Under-18 International Curling Championship took place. Fourteen male and female teams took place in the tournament, and the team representing Alberta won gold after a thrilling 7 to 5 victory over the team from Ontario.

Our Alberta team was made up of players from the Lethbridge Curling Club. The team is comprised of skip Casey Scheidegger from Diamond City, third Katie Wilson from Coaldale, second Jennifer Coutts from Fort Macleod, and lead Jessie Scheidegger, also from Diamond City. Their coach is Don Scheidegger, who is the father of two of the young girls.

Mr. Speaker, I along with the hon. minister from Lethbridge-West and the hon. minister from Livingstone-Macleod, who also happens to be the very proud uncle to one of these team members, would like to say congratulations on a job well done to the Scheidegger rink.

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

Jessica Robertshaw

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a brilliant young constituent of Calgary-Lougheed, Miss Jessica Robertshaw. Jessica has won awards in 15 speech competitions and placed in over 30 debate tournaments both as an individual and as a team member.

Recently this grade 12 student from Bishop Carroll high, which is

a school I was fortunate to teach at in my prior career, won the CanWest National Public Speaking Championships in Winnipeg, and this past Sunday at a speech and debate tournament in Cyprus she was named the third best speaker overall out of student champions from across the globe, and she captured the title as the best young impromptu speaker in the world.

In addition to all of this, Jessica has starred in several school drama productions, and she volunteers with the youth justice committee in Calgary southwest. I'm very proud to have Jessica Robertshaw in my riding, and I trust that all hon. members will join me in expressing appreciation for this incredible young Albertan.

Thank you.

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

Alberta's Promise

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's Promise is a movement to do more for Alberta's children and youth, and this movement is growing at a rate beyond expectation. In Calgary last Friday and then here in Edmonton yesterday the Premier, Mrs. Klein, and the Minister of Children's Services presented 128 new partners with their little red wagons to recognize their commitment to increase their support for children and youth programs. This brings the total number of Alberta's Promise partners to 246.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government made a promise to Alberta's children in 2003. This centennial year is the time to renew our commitment to the Alberta's Promise movement and to the children of Alberta. It is with pleasure that I ask the Assembly to recognize the 128 new Alberta's Promise partners, who have committed to making Alberta the best place in the world to raise our children and our youth.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, I appreciate the comments from the hon. Member for Calgary-West. From his training as a radio man in the past, he understands completely what a minute means. Well done.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

2:40

LaBelle Triplets

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and talk about a much lighter subject than we would normally discuss in the House. I speak of a phenomenon of nature that occurred in my constituency of Lethbridge-East, and I would like to inform this Assembly of that phenomenon and congratulate and recognize the people involved as I am also sure that I share this congratulatory message with my colleague across the way from Lethbridge-West.

On March 21, '05, Kevin and Karrie LaBelle had triplets: Emma, Olivia, and Samantha. The babies are all doing fine, and Emma, the last one, went home today. All is well. However, perhaps the parents may question that. The triplets also have an older brother, Cameron.

I would suspect that they may be the only triplets in this province for this year, the first in the next hundred years of this province. We can only guess at the changes that they will see in their lifetime.

Thank you.

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

Birth to Three Society

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pride that I bring recognition of the Birth to Three Society of Edmonton to this

Assembly. All children deserve a successful start in life. For some children, especially those with developmental delays, early support makes a tremendous difference.

Edmonton's Birth to Three Society offers two excellent programs to help these children and their families, the Edmonton early intervention program and the early Head Start. These programs have served over 700 children and their families in the Edmonton area to improve the quality of life by providing parents with resources and skills to enable their children to reach their full potential, individual screening and family support plans, information and education through regular home visits and parent sessions, occupational therapy, and speech language pathology consultation through Capital health.

There is no cost to families for the services provided. Partial funding is received from Capital health and the Edmonton and area child and family services authority. Additional funding is acquired through grants, sponsorships, and fundraising.

It is my hope that the members of the Assembly will join me with pride in recognizing the Birth to Three Society.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, our historic comment of the day. On April 6, 1967, George Brinton McClellan, former commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, was named Ombudsman of Alberta. Not only was Mr. McClellan the first Ombudsman of Alberta, but he was also the first Ombudsman in Canada.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed by 103 Albertans, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to present a petition, which reads that the undersigned, which number 107, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers" when in fact we have a large glut in our unemployed in Canada.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three documents to table today. First I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter signed by over 150 Albertans urging the government to "recognize the importance of community schools and to make proper investment to protect the long term viability" of community schools.

The second is a news release distributed by Martha Kostuch regarding EUB proposals that will weaken the enforcement policy of that institution.

Finally, I have an EUB bulletin dated March 21, 2005, which outlines the EUB proposals that I just mentioned.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have three tablings from my Calgary-Varsity constituents urging the government not to water down the smoking ban legislation. Dr. Liam Martin of the University of Calgary's Faculty of Medicine states: "It is time to ensure that Albertans have the same opportunity to work in a smoke-free environment as other members of the Canadian population."

In e-mails received from Bistrin Opacic and Floyd Paxman, the authors point out that by only protecting youth under 18, the province is compromising the health of the majority of Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter dated April 6, 2005, from me and addressed to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie in response to a question that he raised yesterday in the House that I undertook I would provide him an answer to.

Thank you.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 31

Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 5: Mr. Stevens]

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

Mr. Backs: Yes. On this particular bill, Bill 31, Mr. Speaker, the relevant stakeholder groups have been consulted. We found that there has been very little to speak against this bill, and we stand in favour of it, and I support this bill.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Additional speakers?

Would the hon. Government House Leader like to conclude debate on this bill? Then the question will be called.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a second time]

Bill 34

Insurance Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate March 24: Mr. Oberle]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had addressed my comments prior to adjourning debate, and I'd be pleased to listen to the learned comments of members from all sides of the House.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to lead off the debate for the Official Opposition on Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005. The mover of this bill, the

hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, has indicated twice now, I think, both in his opening comments and when he spoke to second reading, that the government is following through with commitments that it made last fall to reform automobile insurance in Alberta.

It would be my representation that, in fact, what is meant is that the government is trying desperately to fix the mess that was created by the Premier. While his Minister of Finance at the time was in the middle of negotiations and consultations to reform auto insurance in this province, the Premier said that Albertans would have the lowest insurance rates in western Canada, and he ordered an immediate rollback. As a result, he left the industry and the ministry scrambling trying to make that happen. Mr. Speaker, you and I and, I think, all Alberta drivers know that this has not occurred, and in fact many believe that the reforms have been a disaster for the average Alberta driver.

Mr. Speaker, one of the so-called highlights of this bill is that it will open up the Alberta market to public auto insurance companies from the neighbouring provinces of B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to set up shop and sell auto insurance in Alberta. I would suggest that this is a good step, albeit a very small step, in the right direction. However, the reason I refer to it as a so-called highlight is that, in fact, these public insurers have already indicated that they are not likely interested in operating in Alberta under the current conditions.

2:50

It's quite clear to most that would look at it, I believe, that in fact public auto insurance operates successfully under the monopoly situation that we see in those three provinces that I mentioned earlier. The fact that they have a monopoly is what allows them to be successful both financially and administratively. As I've already said, all three indicated that under the current circumstances they're not likely to even consider coming into Alberta.

Now, I'd just like to point out that if we look at the situation in British Columbia as an example, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, ICBC as it's more normally known, operates using a tort system without any artificial caps on injuries, Mr. Speaker. In the business year ended December 31, 2004, they declared a net income of \$389 million. Of this \$389 million, they use that profit to build their retained earnings, they use it to enable a low and stable rate of auto insurance, and they actually spend millions of dollars – now, this is the insurance company – on safety education and accident prevention initiatives. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I thought that I had the floor, but perhaps some members across the way feel differently. I'm not sure.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta continues to promote and support an open market that favours the industry, yet when it comes to the consumer, we've adopted a modified no-fault system that seems apparently to penalize the victims of accidents by failing to provide adequate claims compensation. In fact, in meeting with Kathleen Ryan of the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association, she has indicated that she believes we probably have the worst possible combination of those two systems.

The government continually claims to be doing what is in the best interest of Albertans, and it would be my belief and certainly that of my caucus colleagues that if, in fact, we want to do what is in the best interests of all Albertans, we should be looking seriously at instituting a fully public auto insurance system modelled after the British Columbia example; in fact, ICBC, which has for many, many years provided both stable, low auto insurance rates and very reasonable claims under their tort system.

I'd just like to speak to the claims, Mr. Speaker, because when the \$4,000 cap was introduced on soft tissue injuries in Alberta, one of

the arguments we heard time and again from both industry and the government was that claims were spiralling out of control. I look at the example that's coming from B.C. In the year 2004 their claims were a total of \$2.5 billion, which is roughly the same as they were in the year 2003. Certainly, it would appear to me that with a well-managed and well-legislated public auto insurance system – that is, a fully public auto insurance system – there's very good control of the claims history. It certainly seems to work both in terms of protecting the insurance company and also, as I suggested, protecting the consumer.

The controllable costs that the ICBC had in the year 2004 were actually 25 per cent lower than they were in the year 2000. Again, this is where the economies of efficiency are recognized, when you have a single public insurance company operating with a monopoly as opposed to inviting them to come in and operate under the current Alberta system, which really doesn't present much of an opportunity for them and, as I indicated, we're not likely to see.

Now, I mentioned the claims cap of \$4,000, Mr. Speaker. I have had so much correspondence to my constituency office both from constituents and from Alberta drivers across the province who are outraged, quite frankly, at the profits that we're hearing about in the insurance industry at the same time as they've been limited with this artificial cap of \$4,000 on soft tissue injuries, which even the medical community acknowledges are quite difficult to substantiate. So I really, really question the rationale for that to begin with.

Mr. Elsalhy: An arbitrary number.

Mr. R. Miller: It is, as my colleague from Edmonton-McClung has suggested, a very arbitrary number.

Another thing that the mover of the bill indicated when he spoke to it in second reading is that the legislation as it's presented to us now will clarify some of the rules regarding the all-comers rule in that they specifically only apply to private automobiles. Mr. Speaker, I think I mentioned in this Assembly the other day that as a small businessperson I have serious concerns as to why all of this legislation is applying only to private automobiles, and we seem to be ignoring small business, which is truly the backbone of the economy in this province.

I can certainly suggest, as an owner of a small business who has some experience with these matters, that the cost of auto insurance is one of those costs that has been literally spiralling out of control for small businesses over the last several years at a rate much higher than the 3.17 per cent rate of insurance that was reflected in the members' services allowance increase that we received from this Assembly the other day. In fact, most of the businesses that I've consulted with are experiencing somewhere in the area of 20 to 25 per cent increases in their auto insurance over the last several years. So this is a serious concern, and I would suggest that we should be doing something in this legislation to help out small business as well as the owners of private automobiles, Mr. Speaker.

Now, probably the most contentious part of this bill in my mind is section 5, where the government takes the almost unprecedented step of legislating against action brought to it by anybody in this province. I note in the press release that was done by the ministry that they talk specifically about outlining that insurance companies are not entitled to compensation for revenue losses caused by the government's premium freeze. In the press release it specifically says that they're referring to insurance companies, but when I read from the bill, section 5 of the bill is much, much more broad than that and, in fact, causes me untold concern. I was shocked, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, when I read this.

Mr. MacDonald: Appalled?

Mr. R. Miller: I was appalled. I was shocked. I was more than dismayed.

Clause (2) under section 5 says, “No liability attaches to the Crown for any loss or damages that have arisen or may arise in respect of the reform amendments.” And then it gets even worse, Mr. Speaker, because in clause (3) it says, “All existing and future causes of action in law or in equity against the Crown in respect of the reform amendments, including, without limitation” a specific action number “are extinguished without costs.” But the first part of that clause says, “All existing and future causes . . . against the Crown.” All. It doesn’t say all brought by insurance companies. It says all.

What that would indicate to me, Mr. Speaker, is that anybody who might be contemplating bringing an action against the government for any reason related to the reforms of the insurance industry have now had their right to the courts taken away from them if we pass this legislation. It is, as I suggested, almost unprecedented in Canadian legal history that a Legislature would pass a law like this and get away with it, if I can use that terminology.

The research that I’ve been able to do to this point would indicate that only twice in the history of this province have we specifically legislated against an entire group of people bringing a legal action against the government. I have to admit that I had some trouble finding out the second of those. At this point I don’t know which it is, but the one that certainly causes me to recall the events surrounding it was in the late 1990s.

3:00

A group of sterilization victims that had been resident at Michener Centre in Red Deer had brought action against the Alberta government for the fact that they had been sterilized and not informed of that action in their adult life. The Alberta government moved to legislate against their claim. This caused a huge uproar, Mr. Speaker, to the extent that within a matter of hours, literally a matter of hours, the Premier backpedalled, and the legislation eventually disappeared and was not brought forward.

I’m not going to suggest for one second that in this particular case an insurance company or any other insurance company that might bring forward an action would garner the same level of sympathy and probably shouldn’t garner the same level of sympathy that those sterilization victims did from the public, but I think the principle is exactly the same, Mr. Speaker, in terms of legislating against somebody’s right and access to the courts.

Now, I’ve had opportunity to consult with, I mentioned earlier, the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association and also with some legal representation for the company that is cited specifically in section 5. Mr. Speaker, I’d just like to refer to my notes that came out of that meeting. I think I mentioned already that I certainly believe and it would be the representation of the legal firm representing Kingsway that this particular section of Bill 34 is designed particularly to save the government and the Premier the embarrassment of having announced a rate freeze without first consulting the Minister of Finance when she was in those negotiations that I referred to earlier with the industry. In fact, I believe that announcement from the Premier was made without any real thought to the legal implications that might result as a result of his demand for a rollback.

I’m not here to make the legal argument for Kingsway. Certainly, that matter is going to proceed at some length in the courts, but it would seem to me that by naming a particular action, it’s quite clear that the government is in fact aiming clause 5 at one particular company. Again, Mr. Speaker, as the owner of a small business I

was beyond shocked to see that the government of this great province would specifically name a company and, to quote the bill, extinguish their action. This is an action that has been on the books and in front of the courts now for 14 months, well before the Premier made his comments about a rollback.

I think this is something that should concern not just the representation for Kingsway, not just the members of this Assembly, not just the owners of small businesses in this province, but every single Albertan I really believe should be very, very concerned by the fact that we have an example here of the government legislating the end to a legal action that was in place prior to the government making changes to a law.

As I said earlier, I’m not a lawyer. I don’t necessarily understand a lot of the legal implications here, but I can’t imagine as a citizen of this province that my government, which I now find myself a part of, would take what is almost an unprecedented step in the British parliamentary system to legislate against an action that I have legally brought forward prior to changes that that Legislature would make and then extinguish it and, in fact, extinguish not just the action but all costs that might be associated with it.

Mr. Oberle: Point of order.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River on a point of order. Proceed.

Point of Order Sub Judice Rule

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. member I refer you to Standing Order 23(g), which prohibits against the mention of “any matter pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination.” It says, “Where there is probability of prejudice to any party but where there is any doubt as to prejudice, the rule should be in favour of the debate.” I submit that by mentioning the company name and dragging on, as it were, and repeating the government’s unprecedented actions, we’re bordering on prejudice here. I would ask the Speaker to caution the member.

The Speaker: The hon. member on this point of order.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the point of order. I think that under normal circumstances my hon. colleague might be correct. Unfortunately, as I’ve indicated, I don’t view this as a normal circumstance. In fact, I view it as an extraordinary circumstance to the extent where, although the name of the company is not mentioned in here – and I can certainly refrain from using the name of the company – the specific action is referred to in the legislation. I do believe that that qualifies as an exceptional circumstance in this case, and certainly if the action number is referred to in the legislation, then I don’t see why I should be limited in speaking to that particular action in my comments when I’m referring to the bill.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Peace River, we’re not going to have a long debate on this. You’re still on the point of order. That’s fine. Go ahead.

Mr. Oberle: If I may, I just want to point out yet that the company is not named. The action number is named in the legislation. The fact that it’s, according to the member, unprecedented, although it’s not – it’s not mentioned in the legislation, nor is any of the ensuing debate mentioned in the legislation. As I said previously, I believe we’re bordering on prejudice here.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, it certainly is opportune and correct for an hon. member to rise on a point of order should the member feel moved, and Standing Order 23(g) is very clear. It says, "Refers to any matter pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination." There are two subsections to it. One is, "Of a civil nature that has been set down for a trial or notice of motion filed, as in an injunction proceeding, until judgment or from the date of filing a notice of appeal until judgment by an appellate court," and then, "Where there is probability of prejudice to any party but where there is any doubt as to prejudice, the rule should be in favour of the debate."

So before the chair today are two hon. members, the word of whom, both, the chair must accede to. The hon. Member for Peace River suggests that there could be prejudice. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford suggests that there could not be prejudice. The chair has to accept both views as both members are honourable, but we'll exercise a caution and rule in favour of the debate continuing.

Debate Continued

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be a suggestion that has been made to me by several of the legal consultations I've had that, in fact, section 5 violates the rule of law by depriving access of one particular company but not just that one particular company but by depriving access of all to the courts for the taking of their property. In fact, I understand that there may be a constitutional argument here as well.

As I've indicated earlier, if the government can do this in this one particular action that it references in the bill, it can do it to anybody. It could do it to me. It could do it to you, Mr. Speaker. It could do it to the company that I own. It could do it to the company that my colleague from Edmonton-McClung owns. It could do it to anybody in this Assembly, anybody outside this Assembly. That is really the argument that I'm making today, that we are taking a step here that I believe crosses the line in terms of the rule of law but probably more importantly just the rule of common sense. To suggest that anybody should be barred from a rightful action in front of the courts just doesn't make any sense to me.

3:10

Now, I wonder as well, Mr. Speaker, if this particular clause might not be bad for business in Alberta. When any given company might be looking at moving to Alberta, we always talk about being, you know, the best place in the world to do business. I don't necessarily disagree with my hon. colleagues when they throw that out and when they talk about the Alberta advantage. At times we have certainly questioned who the Alberta advantage is for. Nevertheless, it is a pretty darn good place to do business, certainly a great place to live, and we want to make sure that we do everything within our power to attract more business and make sure that companies look at Alberta as a great place to locate.

When companies start to see that if they were ever to bring an action against the government for any reason whatsoever, the government may just pass legislation that would invalidate that action even if, in fact, it was brought forward on a matter that was subsequently changed in legislation, they could have their action quashed, they could have their right to the courts quashed, and they could have their costs stripped away from them – I believe that that will seriously harm the so-called Alberta advantage when companies are looking to us as a place to potentially open up their business.

The Speaker: Others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung caught my eye first.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this time to briefly comment on Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005. I listened very carefully to the remarks that were made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and I would have to say that although he is my caucus whip, he didn't really require me to agree with him, but I totally agree with him because he made darn good comments. He made sense to me.

To start, I would emphasize that my understanding of this bill when I read it – and I read it very briefly. The first thing it's trying to do is to open the door for those extraprovincial insurance providers to enter into this lucrative Alberta auto insurance market. While I admit, like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford commented, that competition is usually viewed as healthy and useful, I am, in fact, a little puzzled. How will the private-sector companies from within Alberta or from outside compete amongst themselves to offer public auto insurance in Alberta? Are we talking public delivery of auto insurance, or are we talking private, for-profit auto insurance mechanisms? Is this government still expanding its current deregulated, charge what you can get market design, or are they backing off a little and trying to reinstate some degree of public control? I think this is a point that needs clarification so Joe Average out there or Martha and Henry would understand.

My simplistic definition of public auto insurance is that the government allows competition, yes, but stipulates acceptable or maximum ceilings to premiums, allowable profit margins. We've heard of that report – some of us actually read that report – that detailed the profits that were posted and the earnings that were made by the insurance companies in this province, and they were able to recover their costs and pay all their claims and then have 20 per cent of pure profit on top of that. We're not really against the private sector, and we're not against market forces, but we're really against extravagant or exaggerated profits when the public is not seeing any of that benefit.

With opening the door for out-of-province companies to enter our market, I need to be reassured that this competition would in fact lead to better service or more choice or more affordability. I would hate for it to be a mechanism by which we're opening the door to offer the consumers choice, but we're offering them a choice to either die by the electric chair or by the guillotine or by lethal injection. I don't think that this government will be able to demonstrate to us the insured or the public or the policyholders how this may be beneficial to us and to our pocketbooks. Again, I keep emphasizing that I'm not against those extraprovincial insurers moving into Alberta. In fact, I would probably be the first one to welcome them at the border with open arms if they bring insurance costs down and if they offer better service or more choice for the taxpayers and the consumers of this province.

The Official Opposition, of course, supports or prefers a public auto insurance approach – and this is well known and documented; I'm not saying anything new – while this government does not. They prefer the current deregulated model. Some people agree with the government, but I believe most don't. This could probably be easily verified with a simple yes/no survey if the government is really serious and sincere about asking for input and seeking guidance and direction from the people.

Now, having said that, I think what is really alarming about this proposed piece of legislation, as was talked about by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, is that it stipulates that insurance companies and the public are not entitled to sue the government for costs or damages incurred from or because of this Conservative government's auto insurance reforms. I know the hard-working *Hansard* staff would probably question that, but I'm going to spell it for them. It's d-e-f-o-r-m-s, so it's deforms.

This is serious business, ladies and gentlemen. If we allow a governing party to rule and dictate how we lead our lives, how much we spend, and which services are available to us, then I think that the least we could do is to hold them accountable. They have to answer to the people. They have to explain their actions.

I'm going to use a business model like my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford used. Let's assume that this is a company. Then the public represents the shareholders of this company. The cabinet, or the various government ministers, would represent the directors of this company. They're entrusted as leaders, as powerful people to lead and to make decisions and try to make our lives easier.

Now, if those directors misbehave or make the wrong decisions or if the shareholders start to lose on their investments, then these very directors are either questioned, disciplined, or ultimately fired. This proposed amendment though, much to my surprise – or, really, I shouldn't be at all surprised – immunizes the government from having to answer to the people. It negates the very essence of being accountable and responsible.

A couple of weeks ago and then also as late as yesterday we were debating right here in this Assembly and under this dome the amendments proposed to strengthen our fair trading provisions so that the people out there don't fall prey to unscrupulous business practices. We were offering victims of fraud, for example, a tool to have some recourse and possibly get some compensation.

Here, on the other hand, the government is telling insurance companies and the general public that if they disagree with the current deforms or if these companies and people were hurt by these decisions, they do not have any recourse. They cannot touch the government. The government is untouchable. How many times was it okay or allowable for any government to hide behind a cloak of legislation to protect itself from liability which is clearly stemming from its own ill-advised decisions?

Now, to generally comment on the insurance landscape in Alberta, almost every single Albertan is insured for something or another. Insurance companies, of course, are very important, and they play an integral role in day-to-day transactions be it home insurance, auto insurance, business insurance, malpractice insurance, et cetera. But, again, the outrageous profits that they have been bringing in and the ridiculous or minuscule so-called rebates or rollbacks that they give back to the consumers definitely and clearly highlight an injustice.

I for one have been driving for almost 11 years, a clean record, no accidents, good driving habits. My premiums kept creeping up. Then finally when I did get a rebate, it was really a joke, but I wasn't laughing. I got less than \$5 per year.

Mr. R. Miller: How much did you get?

Mr. Elsalhy: Five dollars of rebate per year. That was, like, good for a coffee and a doughnut. [interjection] Well, I have to walk now.

Many people share this concern, Mr. Speaker, but they feel helpless and abandoned. I am luckier than most. I can stand here and talk about it. Most out there are really helpless, and they have no avenue for expressing their disgruntlement and their frustration.

Maybe we should be open to the suggestion that these so-called government reforms were ill advised, or perhaps the way they were administered or implemented was contrary to public interest and definitely contrary to public opinion. I will be the first person standing in line to congratulate and commend this government if they genuinely and honestly decide to revisit their position on auto insurance. Voluntary rate rollbacks, as is preferred by the hon. Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier, in my opinion, sound like a bad joke and certainly are not entertaining.

3:20

I will end, Mr. Speaker, with something I found in this bill which is positive, and by that I'm referring to the consumer dispute mechanism that is being introduced. I have advocated previously, before and after I became a member of this esteemed Assembly, that we have to facilitate conflict resolution and dispute solving in all government departments so that our taxpayers and citizens are not forced to resort to the legal system and the courts unless absolutely necessary and as a measure of last resort. So this is one area that is positive about this bill, introducing that consumer dispute mechanism, and I commend the sponsor for having this section in there, which sort of offers a little sweetness about a bad deal.

I will now take my seat, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this chance to register my opinion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung a question. He said in his comments today that he and his colleagues have support for market forces in the insurance industry but that they are opposed to the excessive profits that have been taken by the insurance industry. During the previous term of this Assembly the Liberal opposition adopted a strong position of support for public auto insurance, and that, in fact, formed part of their platform during the most recent election. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung if that is still the policy of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Elsalhy: Yes, sir, in fact it is. By accepting market forces and by encouraging competition, we are in no way going back on our dedication and our commitment to having a public auto insurance system in this province.

What I said in my presentation, my debate on Bill 34, is basically that I would welcome any competition that results in rate reductions. If we're allowing companies to try to offer choice and to offer reduced rates for Alberta drivers, then why not? Public auto insurance has enough room for private providers if they fall under that ceiling which I referred to, the allowable maximums, the reasonable maximums, because 20 per cent on top of their claim expenses and on top of their typical operating expenses is really outrageous.

So, yes, we are committed and we are dedicated to having a public auto insurance system in place. We said that before the campaign, during the campaign, and after the campaign.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. A follow-up, Mr. Speaker. Given that the position, as I understood it, of the Liberal Party as well as the New Democratic Party in the last election was that public auto insurance meant that, in fact, the public system had a monopoly on the sale of automobile insurance in the province, how does the private sector and the market forces allow that? How can you have a public monopoly system and private competition at the same time?

Mr. Elsalhy: That's a fair question, and I think I can probably borrow from the Minister of Finance when she said that we have some 70-plus companies offering insurance. If these companies are looked at as brokers or as resellers, then we can probably allow them

to resell the commodity under a fully public system. So I don't think there is any contradiction in my approach to the registered Liberal Party platform. They are here. We can't really deny that they're here, and they're probably here to stay, so what we can do is make them work under a fully public system.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on the Standing Order 29(2)(a) section.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask my colleague from Edmonton-McClung if what he meant to say is that we would prefer to see a fully public auto insurance system in this province? If for some reason we can't convince the government that a fully public . . . [interjections] I said if for some reason – if implies a question mark at the end. If some for reason we cannot convince this government that fully public auto insurance is the best system, if he meant, then, that we would accept public auto insurance if it will help to reduce premiums, which is really what this debate is all about.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Yes, sir. The hon. members across are probably following this with keen interest because now we have both opposition parties trying to reiterate and reconfirm their positions from after the campaign. Yes, sir, we would really prefer to have a fully public auto insurance system, as we do prefer to have a fully public health care system, and as we do, you know, not prefer to have schools closed, those ill-advised decisions that the government keeps bombarding us with.

However, like I say, failing that, and if the government keeps adamant about rejecting our positions and our suggestions and insists on going about with their typical approach and their preferred way of doing things, then we have to be realistic, unlike the ND opposition, which doesn't even accept suggestions of different points of view. I think we have to modify our approach to some extent.

The Speaker: Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005, because this is very important to Albertans. I have a friend who was ticket free with an older vehicle but experienced two small increases in premiums since the provincial freeze on rates was applied. In both cases he managed to get the increase rescinded by waiting on the telephone for over an hour to get a review. The review supported his concern about increases in his premiums. My point is that the insurance companies may become as irresponsible as other monopolies in applying rate increases and charges across the board and expecting consumers to justify why they should not be charged rather than justifying their increases before the fact and clearly communicating to the consumer.

That made me take a look at this bill as carefully as I could in the time I had, and I'd like to make a few points about some sections that are proposed in this amendment that I do not support, although I realize that there are a number of points which deserve serious debate.

I oppose this bill because the government would be allowing Crown insurers – B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba – into this province, but this policy does not address the root of the insurance problems. As former president of the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association Kathleen Ryan argues, competition will not resolve the

serious problems associated with the small claims cap of \$4,000, competition will not address the obscene profits made by this industry on the backs of Alberta drivers, and competition will not improve driver safety policies in this province. As one who has experienced injury due to a car accident, I can say without a doubt that \$4,000 is not adequate in many cases of injury.

I, too, question section 5, the Crown immunity and the use of the word "all." This section exempts Albertans and industry from seeking compensation from the government for its auto insurance reforms. Preventing access to the court borders on criminal contempt of court. I believe section 5 can only be bad for business in Alberta. Out-of-province companies will be reluctant to invest more in Alberta if they can't sue the Alberta government for its wrong against them. Existing Alberta businesses, too, should take warning because the government can punish them if they are displeased with it. If the government of Alberta has caused anyone compensable damages, it should abide by the decision of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta in order to preserve the honour of the Crown and the confidence of the business community.

3:30

These reforms should be debated in the Legislature and not behind closed doors in regulations. The government appears, I think, to be clearly favouring insurance companies on the backs of Alberta consumers. For example, the Automobile Insurance Rate Board is dominated by industry executives seven to one, and the AIRB has made the premium reductions voluntary reductions, and the minister is abiding by their recommendations.

We need to clean up this auto insurance mess. Unlike the poorly managed existing policy in Alberta, this government should develop an auto insurance policy that puts consumers first with real choices.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Then I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to speak on Bill 34 with some hesitation. I'm finding that amongst all the bills that we've seen here this spring, this one certainly is one of the most, sort of, ad hoc and confusing of the legislation that we have to deal with here.

I think it's, quite frankly, a reflection of how poorly the Alberta government has dealt with the insurance issue here in the province over the last few years. This is another stopgap measure, I believe, to try to make some small attempts at regulation, but I would say that these are regulation without responsibility, Mr. Speaker. You know, regulation without responsibility is simply words and idle things on paper as opposed to anything substantive. I think that, really, Bill 34 as it stands is not deserving of support.

Just looking through various sections of the bill, Mr. Speaker, I think this idea of disallowing companies to sue for loss of revenue from this legislation is certainly a way to cover the legal options, but you know it's a reflection of just how on the fly this sort of legislation seems to be. In other words, it's being created as a reactive measure as opposed to proactive in trying to solve the problem of auto insurance, which has been, quite frankly, a blight on the people of Alberta for a number of years.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

I think it's worthy to note that everyone here knows as an elected member that auto insurance was a big issue in this past election, and by now refusing to deal with it in any substantive way, I think that

it's only going to compound the problem and make it worse. Rest assured that I don't think the Conservative government managed to pick up any seats or votes as a result of insurance, and, you know, I think it only can get worse.

I think it's a basic tenet of any government that if you have a law in place where you are obliging the population to have insurance, to have a certain commodity, then it's the responsibility of the government to provide an affordable, reliable, and functional system that they can plug into. You cannot simply tell people that they need auto insurance, and they require it by law, but then throw them into an extortionate market where they are not being served either through the premium rates that they have to pay or by the claims that you're running through the system. Let's not forget that, you know, we're all mostly fortunate to not have to take claims, but if you do have a catastrophic event with your vehicle, then, you know, that insurance is the very most important thing that you own.

So by not having consistency, by not providing the ability for someone who has had a catastrophic event to properly go and go through a due process and get the compensation that is fair to them, then, really, we are doing less than a disservice. We are providing the potential for disaster of anyone who has a catastrophic event with their vehicle here in the province at this time. So I know that there are various solutions out there.

One of the things I find the most insulting, quite frankly, about this Insurance Amendment Act, Bill 34, is allowing the idea of public auto insurance to be entering into the marketplace but not visiting the true spirit of what public auto insurance means. Public auto insurance comes from provinces that have made a commitment to their population that they're going to provide a stable and functional and reliable and affordable system for their population, for the people in their province. I believe we have such public auto insurance institutions in British Columbia and in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Now, if those public auto insurance carriers decide to enter the Alberta market, they're only going to do so to supplement the service that they provide back to the people of their own population, Mr. Speaker. So, of course, they're just going to enter the Alberta market as another competitive market player. I know that there is some propaganda built into this idea that: oh, here's the public auto insurers maybe playing in the markets in Alberta, and – look – they're providing the same rates as private providers. But in fact they're just here to make some extra dollars to help provide the money to provide an affordable rate for the people back in Saskatchewan or from Manitoba or in British Columbia. Indeed, we don't even know, clearly, if they will enter the market. It would be just a speculation on their part. You know, it goes around, and as I said, I find it slightly as an abuse of the whole concept of public auto insurance or misrepresenting public auto insurance to Albertans.

I think that most people are coming around. I can tell you from anecdotal evidence that more and more people are coming around to the idea that public auto insurance would be the best provider for auto insurance here in the province of Alberta. We owe it to the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Since we put in a rule that you have to have insurance, then it's our responsibility as legislators to provide something that's affordable for everyone. That's where public auto insurance can come in, and it's really quite a functional system. I know that vagaries of the private system sometimes on rare occasions provide something cheaper, but for the most part, over a long period of time, public auto insurance in British Columbia and Manitoba and Saskatchewan has been far superior to the service that we have been provided here in the province of Alberta under our current system.

So with that and a number of other things, I have serious concerns

with Bill 34. I think that we could go a long way to clear up all of these problems, this myriad of the need to regulate. I mean, it's not even fair to the private providers or the personal tort system, the personal injury claims system that we have in place here. Everybody is looking for something that resembles clarity, and without clarity it's very difficult to make a long-term business plan. It's very difficult to build a strategy for how you might penetrate markets because the system at this point in time is not being dealt with in a proactive way by this government. I find that difficult to believe why exactly.

I suspect, you know, the fact that insurance companies are still making dramatic profits from our population here might have something to do with it, even with the uncertainty. But I think that at the end of the day we need to have balance, we need to build a system that provides adequate insurance and the peace of mind that comes with that, and we do need to provide it through a publicly funded system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions or comments?

Before I recognize the next speaker, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to introduce today through you and to all members of this Assembly Mr. Ian Blue, who is a lawyer with the firm Cassels Brock in Toronto. I'd like to welcome him on his visit to Alberta and ask all Members of the Assembly to give him the traditional warm welcome of this House.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 34
Insurance Amendment Act, 2005
(*continued*)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to make a few comments on Bill 34. It's nothing we haven't heard before in the last few minutes, but I think they bear repeating. There are some very serious concerns with this bill.

3:40

I think a lot of these bills are sort of disguised as being innocuous. There's not much to them. It's called the Insurance Amendment Act, but inside these things are little tiny nuggets, little time bombs, that we have to be very careful that we watch for.

An Hon. Member: This is an atom bomb.

Mr. Tougas: An atom bomb.

We have to keep an eye out for these things because they're very serious. They have long-term implications even if it's just one or two lines in a document in this form.

First of all, regarding bringing public insurers into the province.

If this works to bring down insurance rates in this province, that's tremendous. We're all in favour of it. I don't think it will because there's nothing to indicate that public insurers will come into Alberta. It just doesn't seem that they have any great interest in it. Even though we have this province that is the wealthiest in Canada and people are driving around in brand new pickup trucks left, right, and centre, these guys are not going to show any great interest in coming into Alberta. And why is that? It's because they're playing by different rules.

You can say insurance is insurance, but it isn't really if they're playing by essentially different rules. I think you can equate it to a Canadian Football League team and a National Football League team. They're playing football, but they play by different rules, and you can't put them on the same field because the rules are different. It just doesn't work. Just for the record, by the way, private insurance is the NFL because it's bigger, stronger, hugely profitable. Public insurance is the CFL because it's user-friendly. It's like a community-owned team like the Saskatchewan Roughriders or something. So, I just thought I'd throw that in there for any football . . .

An Hon. Member: The Saskatchewan Roughriders?

Mr. Tougas: Well, that's a community-owned team. That's the big difference. The Eskimos are too profitable to put into that listing. [interjections] I'm not. I'm just throwing that in there for some reaction here. I just wanted to see if you guys are awake or not.

An Hon. Member: You got the reaction.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you. Any Eskimos stockholders in here? No? Okay.

On to other items, though. It would be great, as I said, if they do come in and bring their expertise. That would be wonderful. I question whether it's going to be anything more than window dressing and an attempt to sort of paper over some of the flaws in the insurance legislation.

Another matter of some concern is section 8. This hasn't been mentioned yet. Section 8 strengthens the Crown's authority by allowing it to impose terms or conditions on licences at any time it considers appropriate. Up until now, prior to this amendment, the Crown could only make such decisions at the time of issuing or renewing a licence. So what does this mean for consumers? I mean, if I can continue with the football analogy, is the government going to be allowed to change rules in mid-game? What does it mean for consumers? What does it mean for the insurance companies?

I would like the government to perhaps provide an example of where the Crown would change a licence at its whim and why? So it seems to be just another little piece of legislation that if they feel like it – nobody seems to really know why – they'll throw it in. A little bit worrisome as well for the insurance companies.

The big problem in this bill, though, as has already been mentioned, is section 5. This business of liability. It's amazing to me that the full weight of the provincial government, this Legislature, would be brought to bear to quash one lawsuit, and that's essentially what we have here. It's even mentioned by number if not by name. We're being asked to approve a piece of legislation that overturns a company's right to sue the government in an active lawsuit that's happening right now. This is an incredibly ham-fisted piece of legislation.

Now clearly it's intended as a way to quash a lawsuit launched by one company in one specific suit, but surely it's up to the courts to decide if this lawsuit has any merit whatsoever. I can't see any

particular reason why the government of Alberta should be injecting itself into this one specific case.

It also gives the government a surprising amount of immunity from lawsuits. I don't know why the government should have that right. If the government makes mistakes, if the government fouls up, well, they should be held accountable in court just the way anybody else is.

This is a very disturbing piece of legislation in many ways, and I certainly hope that the government will give some serious consideration to eliminating at least parts of this section from the bill because it is very, very disturbing for the long term. It's not just an insurance matter. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford said, it could be applied to perhaps other lawsuits. I hope that we don't get to the point where the government decides that they can start tabling legislation to wipe out any sort of suit that they just find irritating or vexatious or anything along those lines.

Mr. R. Miller: They've done it before.

Mr. Tougas: Yes, they have done it before.

This is a very serious piece of legislation here sort of hidden away into an innocuous insurance bill that does have some long-term implications. It's very serious. I certainly hope the government will give it some serious thought and decide that maybe this is not the way to go because it is not something that, I believe, the government should be getting involved in at this time or at any time, for that matter. The courts have a role to play, and I don't think the government should be interfering in that role in this fashion.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions or comments?

If not, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further comments on Bill 34. As I see more bills going forward where this government is actually legislating itself out of any responsibility for its own action, I always wonder about people or institutions that hide behind laws that only pertain to themselves and that the people who this government is responsible to and for appear to be totally irrelevant to the process.

In section 8 there is mention, it would appear, that midstream, so to speak, insurance contracts would be changed at any time that the Crown considers it appropriate. I believe that insurance contracts are already obtuse enough as to what's really covered, and the poor consumer only finds out what they didn't understand when they have to file a claim, and often it's too late. I would like to ask the Member for Peace River partly for my own clarification just what would be an example of what would change a licence in midstream of a contract that someone feels is set for that particular time frame that's been signed for and if he really believes that that sort of behaviour is fair.

The government seems to want all the power to make the rules but without the responsibility. I'm suggesting that perhaps they might like to grab a little backbone and actually run this industry themselves; i.e., public auto insurance as it has been proven to be successful in so many other jurisdictions.

I just would like to again refer to the hon. Member for Peace River. During the second reading on Bill 34 he said – it was on page 476 – that “the legislation before us for second reading also outlines that insurance companies are not entitled to compensation for lost revenue resulting from the government's auto insurance reform amendments. When the reforms were being developed, the govern-

ment clearly stated that any costs associated with the new system would be covered by the insurance industry. This amendment confirms that.” What I’d like to know is: is that statement correct, and will the government cite chapter and verse, a copy of the speech, press release, whatever, where the government has actually said that the costs associated with the new system would be covered by the insurance industry?

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour and a privilege to get to rise this afternoon and discuss the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 34.

Certainly we haven’t had much time to digest the most recent attempt by this government to reform the auto insurance industry in this province. Whenever there’s this short period of time, Mr. Speaker, one has to conclude that the previous insurance reforms were inadequate, done in haste, and not in the interests of consumers and, certainly in light of what has been discussed here, not considerate of the bottom line of consumers.

Now, we are allowing public auto insurance providers into the province with Bill 34, we are giving the province legal immunity from being sued by insurance companies and Albertans that had suffered at the expense of the government’s insurance reforms, and again we’re going to have a shifting of responsibility to regulations. I was left with the impression during the auto insurance reforms that we were going to have a more open, transparent process, but that, Mr. Speaker, doesn’t look to be the case. Certainly, I was surprised.

3:50

It was discussed in this Legislative Assembly during question period whenever Kingsway insurance contemplated and then filed a legal action against this very government over the previous insurance reforms. Then in this act we have the government inoculating themselves from that action and further action. Now, regardless of what we think of the insurance industry and their high profits these days, usually they stand behind their product. In that way they’re a lot different from this government because this government is now not standing behind its legislation.

I wonder how many other court actions may have been pending or there may be as a result of the reforms to the insurance industry that Bill 34 is going to stop if we pass it into law. Not only is Kingsway insurance a victim here, but there may be other victims of this Insurance Amendment Act that we are yet to be aware of.

Now, I think we have to be very, very concerned about the government’s direction here. I don’t think this is a confident government. I don’t think this is a government that has put enough into the insurance file. We had a long, serious debate, yet here we are with further amendments. That does not give this member confidence in the insurance reforms.

I got a cheque for \$12, \$1 for each month of the year, as a result of these insurance premiums. Many Albertans saw these insurance rates for their auto skyrocket, and then we get these measly cheques. In fact, I’m not going to cash my cheque. I think I’m going to frame it and put it up on the wall.

Mrs. McClellan: That’s a good idea. Would you write us a letter telling us that so you can get it off your chest?

Mr. MacDonald: Perhaps the hon. minister could visit the constitu-

ency office in Edmonton-Gold Bar after I get it framed, and I can show her because I’m going to show this to the constituents who come in and say: this is the result of the province’s auto insurance reforms.

We talk about this freeze as: zap; you’re frozen. Yet we all know that the auto insurance freeze, the premium freeze, was just a political tease to get this government through the election period, Mr. Speaker. Meanwhile, the election is not over for six months; we’re back here with a series of amendments.

Now, public auto insurance is certainly the way to go. The majority of consumers are going to see direct substantial savings. We talked earlier, before the spring break, about the city of Lloydminster and what should be done there to make it easier for the administration of that municipality that straddles the border. Everyone knows that the citizens of Lloydminster have considerably less insurance costs for their automobiles than the people in Alberta. It’s public auto insurance. British Columbia, of course, has a system of public auto insurance. It works rather well, and British Columbia reinvests . . .

Mr. Dunford: No, it doesn’t.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, it certainly does, and not only that, it operates at a profit.

Mr. Dunford: I’ll get my son to write you a letter.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I’d be delighted to hear from him.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, through the chair, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly to just check out the Consumers’ Association of Canada’s website and compare rates for insurance: various age groups, various districts, and also various automobiles. Not everybody has the luxury of going to the government car pool and getting a fancy luxury car. A lot of people can’t afford that, so they have more modest vehicles. A lot of people don’t have the risk management fund paying for their auto insurance either, you know. I would urge all members to have a look at the Consumers’ Association of Canada’s website and comparatively shop between various cities in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and also Saskatchewan and see who’s getting the real deal on savings for their auto insurance because it’s significantly cheaper in those places regardless of which form of public auto insurance is implemented.

Now, the public insurers have said that they’re not interested in coming into this province with this sort of arrangement. I can’t understand why this government is so opposed to public auto insurance when we have crop insurance. Crop insurance is certainly subsidized by the taxpayers. There’s no way around this. ICBC has a program of auto insurance that is not subsidized by the taxpayers; the same in Saskatchewan and the same in Manitoba. So if it’s good enough for crop insurance, perhaps it’s good enough for auto insurance.

Also, the co-operative spirit is alive and well in rural Alberta, Mr. Speaker, with gas co-ops, with electricity REAs. That service, that product, if you want to call it such, is delivered on a not-for-profit basis, on a cost-recovery basis only. So why could we not deliver auto insurance in that same manner to the consumers in this province? I don’t understand the reluctance.

What’s going to happen here: the citizens are going to see that Bill 34, Mr. Speaker, this Insurance Amendment Act, is not going to

change anything other than restrict and limit companies' ability to go after the government for their mistakes. That's all that's going to happen here, and they're going to finally tweak that perhaps we should implement public auto insurance. In fact, I've been reading some of the auto insurance trade manuals, and it has been suggested in there that if this series of reforms doesn't work in a year or two, then the Progressive Conservative government of Alberta is going to have to have a serious look at public auto insurance.

Now, we are also with the bill here – in the time that I have left, Mr. Speaker – going to make some changes to provide the Minister of Finance the authority to place terms and conditions on the licence of insurers at any given time. Perhaps the Minister of Finance can explain this, but what difference is that going to make to the Automobile Insurance Rate Board?

4:00

I'm looking forward to the annual report, and I'm astonished. It may have been tabled here, and a guy missed it, but I'm always anxious to get my hands on that report and read it because I find it quite interesting. I think it's been a while since we've seen that annual report or the latest version of it. In fact, we may be two years in arrears. I could stand corrected on this, Mr. Speaker, but there are a couple of annual reports on the auto insurance industry that are under the authority of the Minister of Finance, and I'm most anxious to see the latest version of those. Usually they're tabled in May. I realize that it's not quite May, but in light of the high cost of insurance and in light of the fact that many of the bigger operators in the auto insurance market in Alberta have made significant profits, table those reports.

I don't know how this rate board is exactly working. I hope it's working more effectively than it has in the past. I had suggested some changes to it. One of the changes was implemented, but I think we still need more consumer representation on that rate board. I would like to know how often it is now meeting, how long the meetings last, how many rate applications are denied, how many rate applications are approved, and how much time is spent on each application.

Now, I thought at one time, Mr. Speaker – and I don't see this in the bill, and it would be great if it was there – that whenever a rate application is made, there would be an advertisement on a website. You know, the website might even read: *notthecheapestinsuranceinwesternCanadaBut.com*. This website could alert consumers to the rate increase applications and which respective auto insurance company is applying. And if a consumer or a consumer representative wished to go – maybe the Consumers' Association of Canada would send a person – if they knew the time and the date and the location of the meeting, they could go, and we could have some public scrutiny of this whole process because it's still, as far as I understand it, a mystery, Mr. Speaker, how all this operates with the rate board. There have to be significant rate increases here in this province because the profits have just been up and up and up. Consumers are still not satisfied. They're still not convinced that this is going to work.

We're having this amendment to the Insurance Act, but I don't see any end to the discrimination against Edmonton drivers in here, Mr. Speaker, and that disappoints me. Edmonton drivers are no better or no worse than drivers in any other parts of the province, but we have this system of districts. For instance, Airdrie, Cochrane, and surrounding communities are not included in the city of Calgary district to set auto insurance rates, but in Edmonton we have Sherwood Park and we have St. Albert included in the area. The hon. Minister of Government Services shrugs, but if you were to work, say, in the city of Calgary, in the central district, you'd have

less time to commute, less distance than you do from Sherwood Park to the city of Edmonton.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 5: Mr. Stevens]

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you. I rise as critic for the Official Opposition on this bill. I don't know if I'm out of order, but I must compliment you, Mr. Speaker, on your fine tartan tie on this Tartan Day.

I look at this Bill 15, and I see a number of causes for great concern. It is not simply a housekeeping bill. There are a number of factors, however, that do appear to be housekeeping. You know, the measures for the protection of board rights, of course, are in there. It appears that the cost-of-living increase is certainly something of merit and should be dealt with, but there have been a huge number of concerns brought forward to me from a number of different sectors both in the business community and in the labour community.

A number of questions arise that I would certainly like to see answered in Committee of the Whole. Which stakeholders were actually consulted in the drafting of these amendments, if any? I really haven't seen that. Who endorsed these amendments other than the WC Board itself? In what ways does the government believe these amendments will change current practices? How do these amendments help workers who are injured by third parties gain timely compensation? How will these amendments affect long-standing contentious WCB claims?

A number of specific questions arise. One is, you know, because one of the sections deals with the 25 per cent rule on third-party claims. Where did that come from? Why does the WCB only give 25 per cent? What's the justification for that? If an award in an insurance claim is \$400,000, the worker can only get \$100,000 if that, in fact, was coming out the way they would subrogate it. Some of the questions deal with the surpluses coming from some of these insurance awards. Do they actually accrue to the worker if the WCB award amount or the amounts costing from it are of a lesser amount?

A number of businesses and, you know, members of chambers of commerce and certainly municipalities have not really known that this was coming down. Some of the members of the construction owners, some of the members of the Construction Association, aboriginal employers organizations: many of them have not seen this. There has not been proper consultation. For many of them there is great concern that there are some issues that could affect them directly.

The funding of the Appeals Commission. The Appeals Commission is looked at in this particular bill. Why is it actually funded by the WCB? Through that, in fact, is a charge to employers. Is this not a problem for what's supposed to be an independent body? In fact, why does this not come from general revenues or some other source in the department?

Also, in some senses can the third-party actions actually increase the costs to employers because of the fact that the lawyers are funded indeed by the WCB itself? And will employers get a rebate if a WC award is reduced, if some years down the road the worker's actual award is reduced and, in fact, his award was taken from an insurance claim in the courts?

4:10

One of the other groups that really raised some concerns was the Alberta Federation of Labour, which is usually consulted in these matters and was not in this case. Some questions that they have brought forward are: how does Bill 15 change the current practice? Where is the worker's role in this? In other words, does the WCB co-operate with the claimant in third-party actions, or does the board simply act unilaterally? Why were stakeholders not consulted? Why is the bill being brought up and pushed through the House so quickly? Could the bill be left on the Order Paper until fall in order to give stakeholders time to assess the changes? I think there are some very real and valid questions in that group of questions.

One of the things that very much – very much – has put exclamation points behind the desire to have this looked at maybe more thoroughly and perhaps over a longer time is the recent decision by the Hon. Madam Justice Moen in the Ana Gutierrez case, handed down just two weeks ago, which in fact gave punitive damages to the solicitor for Ms Gutierrez in that the WCB was in a conflict of interest and that the WCB was wrong. This type of 100 per cent payment of solicitor/client rates in that particular case is almost unheard of, and it raises great cause for concern.

As well, the bill has serious ramifications for thousands of Alberta workers. It expropriates retroactively the property rights of these workers. While every other Albertan has recourse to the courts with independent counsel when their lives have been damaged or ruined by careless or drunk drivers, Alberta workers are inexplicably singled out for heavy-handed paternalism by the board. By retroactively expropriating the rights of workers, these workers not only lose control over the recourse which they have in the courts, but they also lose the right to the assistance of independent legal counsel.

This is not only of academic interest. The board, as it was in Ms Gutierrez's case, may well be in a fundamental conflict of interest between its previous claim decisions and the worker's interest in that tort claim. The board attempts to solve this problem by legislating conflict of interest and any duty of care it may have to the worker out of existence by the use of this bill, Bill 15. The board has never had such power.

The Gutierrez decision has affirmed this. When board counsel argued this matter before the Court of Appeal, they were unable to articulate any public policy considerations that might support such broad powers. The board furthermore acknowledged that its demand to be the client rather than the worker is, quote, unnecessary to protect its interest in any litigation undertaken by the worker, unquote.

If the board has never had such power and cannot justify to the highest court in Alberta why it should have it and concedes that it does not need the power, then why does the board come to the Legislature for such power instead of cleaning up its administration of section 22 claims as the court has directed? If the board acquires the power that it seeks under Bill 15, it will have succeeded in creating the most draconian and most repressive system of its kind in Canada.

There are other Canadian jurisdictions where the Board does indeed have vesting power. Madam Justice Moen in her meticulously researched decision pointed out at page 64:

These cases are all distinguishable because they involve a different

statutory structure in which the worker elects to either sue in tort or to seek compensation under the workers compensation system. None of these jurisdictions have a legislative provision comparable to s. 22, giving the worker the right to take an action, subject to the Board's consent and terms.

And at page 65:

In my opinion, this unique feature of the Alberta legislation is significant, and indicates a different legislative intention within the subsection governing subrogation. However, the overall legislative intent in both Alberta and the other "election-type" jurisdictions is similar. Under either approach the legislation provides a worker with the ability to bring an action herself.

With Bill 15 the board wants vesting power without giving the worker the right to elect under which scheme he wishes to seek compensation, WCB or tort law. No other Canadian jurisdiction has seen fit to give their boards this kind of power. The reason for this is that neither rationale nor public policy can justify it. There are many, many considerations, and many people have raised that over the whole Gutierrez decision and some of the costs and unfairness that it could incur to workers and to employers.

A number of other seemingly innocuous areas seem to come to the fore as one looks through the bill even though some are, of course, of a housekeeping nature. The nature of the annual general meeting, 7.1, is generally a new and a positive step, but under subsection (4) it can discuss "any matters raised in relation to the reports by those present at the meeting." It doesn't really speak to public input. It doesn't speak to: will time be allotted in the agenda for questions from the public? What is the purpose of this meeting if there is no input from the public? Are stakeholders allowed to raise issues of importance to the board? Does the board require notification of such issues? In general, there's no clarification as to the purpose of the annual general meeting in public other than to allow the board to be heard on issues it desires and report it to the public via the open annual general meeting.

Some of the issues in 24(1), the firefighters legislation: badly needed, but the eligibility for compensation under this section is left to the board under the general guidelines and includes Métis firefighters.

You know, the government under section 24(4) is given the task of determining the regulations under which firefighters receive benefits after receiving a report from the WCB on the issue of determination of an occupational disease. There are many other problems that relate to firefighters such as loss of taste, smell, and other indirect problems that have arisen from job-related issues. These need further clarification. The WCB should be given direct responsibility to determine the compensable circumstances that would be acceptable under this section. Any report brought through under this section – and this bill should clarify that – should see what detail these benefits would have under this section.

Time limits, of course, are always a concern to many injured workers. You know, some of the 53,000 outstanding long-term, contentious claims that are out there are a problem of, indeed, people not knowing the time limits or being able to deal with them correctly.

Sections 46(1) and 46.1(1) refer to the establishment of a new review body as opposed to the previously existing Claims Services Review Committee. The board is paying the costs of the Appeals Commission from the accident fund of the WCB. Where, again, is the arm's-length process here? How is this totally separate from the board? Does the piper play the tune when an appeal is supposed to be seen to be independent?

Again to the annual general meeting, 13(1), 13(3), and 13.5 speak to: the Appeals Commission must hold an AGM open to the public. The board itself is bound by the Appeals Commission decisions.

Consensual resolution is privileged. The latest AGM of the Appeals Commission was held on a Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock and was published in a small column on the back pages of a newspaper. Questions were allowed from the floor, and the answers from the board of directors were not published or reported. In addition, copies of the annual general meeting with all of the questions and answers were not made available to the public. There must be an accounting to the public. Indeed, no MLAs or their staff were present at the annual general meeting.

The time frames for implementations of the Appeals Commission decisions are generally well adhered to within 30 days. However, the board does not report back to the Appeals Commission to ensure the completion of the implementation. Sometimes all aspects of the Appeals Commission decisions are not completed, and the claimant is unaware of any deficiencies. Follow-through must be noted by the WCB and Appeals Commission. Currently, no follow-up is done.

4:20

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, the allotted time has run out. Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments? Hon. Member for St. Albert, are you rising on a question?

Mr. Flaherty: Yes, I am.

The Acting Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Flaherty: I would just like to ask the hon. member – and I'm sorry about my lack of knowledge. You referred to the board. How are appointments made to the board, and are workers involved in setting policy of the board? Could you clarify that for me?

Mr. Backs: That's something, I think, that should be raised and are good questions for Committee of the Whole. It speaks to some questions as to the AGM.

You know, the AGM really doesn't look to these matters. I think the review body, which I mentioned, should look at that. The new review body that's in this act is simply a method of ensuring, really, quality assurance in a weak form of dispute resolution without the presence of an apparent arm's-length appeal. The new review body is being used to attempt to demonstrate that a review mechanism is in place. However, the actual mechanism of review and/or dispute resolution is not . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, this section is for brief questions and comments.

Does anybody else have any questions? Hon. Member for St. Albert, did you have another question?

Mr. Flaherty: No. I was going to speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. If there is nobody else, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your allowing me to speak. Let me just comment, if I may, about the staff of the WCB. I had the pleasure of doing an evaluation of the employee assistance program of the WCB with several colleagues at the university, and I want to go on record as being very positive about these people and the good work that they do. Many times I think they're dealing with very difficult situations, and we don't give them the support and the accolades that I think they deserve. I'm thinking in particular of one of my constituents from St. Albert when I say that.

Let me then comment on 7.1 of the bill, which refers to public input into the matter of when the board meets, to the agenda. I think there it says: are stakeholders allowed to raise issues of importance to the board? Does the board require notifications of such issues? In general, there's no clarification of the purpose of the AGM in public other than to allow the board to be heard on issues it desires to report to the public via the open AGM. So I think there we're talking about public involvement.

We look at sections 12(1), 12(2), and 12(3). These sections are supposed to take responsibility of the Appeals Commission away from the WCB and transfer it to the minister. Under this administration 12(1) and 12(2) allow the Appeals Commission to appoint officers. The costs of carrying on the operations of the Appeals Commission are paid by the minister. However, the sentence in 12(3) states, "Be reimbursed quarterly to the Crown by the Board from the Accident Fund."

I think one of the things that concerns me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that there is an arm's-length question of the minister's dollars being interpreted the wrong way. So I think there's a need there for some arm's-length funding, if you will. This would mean that the government through general revenues would cover the costs of the Appeals Commission to ensure that there is a clear separation. Therefore, that could, I think, be looked at.

If we look at 13(1) and 13.3 and 13.5, the Appeals Commission must hold an AGM open to the public. The board is bound by the AC decisions, and this is significant. Again, it's important, I think, that the public and the stakeholders get access and that the workers be represented.

I think that in sections 19 and 20 the board has been given wide powers of investigation, and "employer" is under section 18. I think the above two sections are good. The employer, to give this information further under section 20, now has the power under the Public Inquiries Act to complete the investigation. I think those are good moves.

Of course, my colleague mentioned the business of the firefighters. I think that's a good change and one of the things that caught my attention. The time limit of three years to report these injuries from the time of the legislation is a good move.

Section 46 to 46.1 talks about the new review body as simply a method of ensuring a quality assurance and a weak form of dispute resolution without the presence of the apparent arm's-length appeal. The new review body is being used to attempt to demonstrate that a review mechanism is in place. However, the actual mechanism of review and dispute resolution is not decreasing the number of appeals that are going to the Appeals Commission. In fact, the number of appeals has increased.

The review body is a watered-down appealed review that the case managers use as a vehicle to discourage further appeals. It is not functioning, it says here, as it was originally intended. The WCB believes that the decision review body is an effective tool to allow claimants to proceed to the Appeals Commission much faster. While that may be true, the actual review mechanism is faulty at best.

Let me just close here, Mr. Speaker, and mention one other section: 157.1. This section was to deal with the contentious issues of all claims and should be examined for what it does not say about the mechanism to handle this outstanding issue. The general impression of 157.1(2) is that this is woefully inadequate to address the issues that have arisen from many claimants. It states that "the Lieutenant Governor . . . may make regulations."

The rest of the section explains why the government will not fully address these potential claimants' issues in a manner that will solve the problem and not attempt to avoid them. This section should be

deleted and totally rewritten to enforce the obligation that the WCB has to deal with these claims in the form of a proper assessment, a plan of action, and a determination of entitlement and solution that is equitable.

Those are just some of my comments, Mr. Speaker, so I'll just sit down. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. This is a really important bill. When an individual is injured, it is a cost in many ways: to the injured, of course, the families, employers, health care, insurance companies, et cetera. In my own case, I was in a car accident after the unsatisfied judgment fund was removed by the provincial government. The individual who caused my accident was an assigned risk driver who could not get insurance and who did not have assets. The small settlement I received went to lawyers' fees and then Alberta Health to pay for my six months' hospitalization.

Something like WCB would have been a valued backup. I did not receive compensation coverage in my situation. However, I recognize the importance of WCB as one of the pillars of our safety net along with health care insurance and pensions that are needed in a compassionate society. It is important that we guard this pillar so that it can be all that we intend for Alberta workers.

4:30

I have some questions because I want to make sure that the rights of injured workers are protected. I need to understand the reasoning behind the proposed changes to the current legislation. For example, subsection (7) states that if an injured worker obtains a lawyer for a personal injury lawsuit that somehow involves the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act, the board will not pay any legal fees for that lawyer. It's unclear whether this subsection is actually a change in policy or whether it's simply clarifying an existing policy. If it's a change in policy, this could be controversial, and we need explanation. So I'm asking: is this the current practice or not?

Under subsection 11(d) the board can regulate the fees charged by private lawyers. Is this common practice? What are the typical fees for private lawyers? In what way does the board regulate those fees? How often does the board retain private legal counsel and under what circumstances? If the fees charged by private lawyers are more than the board regulations, who picks up the difference? Is it the injured worker, or is it the employer?

Then section 6 repeals section 31 of the act respecting a worker's right of action outside Alberta. Why is this being repealed? How is it going to affect the rights of workers who are actually injured in another province or country?

I am happy to see section 7, that says that the board will apply cost-of-living adjustment increases on extended temporary partial disability. This is a reasonable and necessary amendment in my view.

As we're going along, I don't want to repeat some of the concerns expressed by my colleagues. I wonder about the fact that workers or employers cannot opt out of the legislative requirements in terms of the third-party actions. That needs some explanation to satisfy my concerns.

This bill has serious ramifications for thousands of Alberta workers. It expropriates retroactively the property rights of these workers. While every other Albertan has recourse to the courts with independent counsel when their lives have been damaged or ruined

by careless or drunk drivers, Alberta workers are inexplicably singled out for heavy-handed paternalism by the board. By retroactively expropriating the rights of workers, these workers not only lose control over the only recourse which they have to the courts; they also lose their rights to the assistance of independent legal counsel. This is a concern to me.

I note that the board has acknowledged that its demand to be the client rather than the worker is unnecessary to protect its interest in any litigation undertaken by the worker. If the board has never had such power and cannot justify to the highest court in Alberta why it should have that power and concedes that it does not need the power, then why does the board come to the Legislature for such power instead of cleaning up its administration of section 22 claims as the court has directed?

With Bill 15 the board wants vesting power without giving the worker the right to elect under which scheme he wishes to seek compensation: WCB or tort. No other Canadian jurisdiction has seen fit to give their boards this kind of power. The reason for this, I believe, is that there is neither rationale nor public policy that can justify it.

This bill requires detailed study. It requires a lot of input from a lot of people whose rights are going to be damaged by these amendments. It requires convincing justification for these amendments, and ultimately any changes to section 22 should be carefully designed with full consideration of their overall repercussions. This bill reduces the accountability of the WCB and provides for it to act in its own interests and not the interests of the workers of Alberta. The government has failed to consult with stakeholders and interested groups that would be directly affected by Bill 15. The government has furthermore not allowed sufficient time for proper public scrutiny.

This bill will provide legislative sanction to the board to make decisions for the injured worker that include who and what to sue for and what settlement is acceptable without regard for the worker and their interests. Payment of compensation to the worker will be under the complete control of the WCB. Payments will only be made after the board has recovered its costs and legal fees have been recovered.

I go back to my opening statements about the importance of the WCB as one of the pillars of our safety net for Albertans just like health care insurance and pensions. These are needed in a compassionate society. I cannot support the suggested amendments to this bill because I do not believe it demonstrates that compassion.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: I might be out of order on this, but a quick comment to the mover of the bill. First, just a thanks for some of the consultation, answering of the questions. Secondly, I commend you on your tartan tie. That's for the Member for Calgary-Foothills on this Tartan Day.

Just a question to the previous speaker: do you think that the bill and the sections in it really in any way deal with the long-standing contentious claims issue?

Mrs. Mather: I'm sorry. I need you to repeat it.

Mr. Backs: Do the provisions in this Bill 15 deal in any real way with the long-standing contentious claims issue, and will it move to reduce that backlog of 53,000 cases in any way?

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. I can't answer that. I don't see that it will help. I need more information.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am rising to make comments on Bill 15 here today again with a rather heavy heart because, you know, since I've started this new position as MLA for Edmonton-Calder, it's come to my attention that amongst all of the various jurisdictions that this government has in this province, the WCB, the Workers' Compensation Board, is specifically one of the least functional and most problematic arms of the provincial government. The growing, mounting, evidence that the WCB is in fact causing more difficulties than benefits to the workers of Alberta is becoming more apparent every day.

So when I saw that we had a bill coming up to amend the Workers' Compensation Act, I was hopeful that we might see some clearing of the air in regard to the Workers' Compensation Board, but instead what I see here is further muddying the way by which we deal with our injured workers in this province. In fact, it seems as though we're moving the injured workers into some special category which is outside the law in a way. Where most regular Albertans might have the ability to go through a judicial process or a civil process, we have some extrajudicial creation here, which hardly seems democratic and will simply add to the pain and suffering that so many people are subjected to when they have to face a WCB claim.

At the heart of this matter I believe is that, you know, this bill has been brought through without consultation with any of the parties that might have some significant contribution to make it a better bill or to add to the bill in some way. As New Democrats we have consulted and been consulted very strenuously on Bill 15, and almost every worker group and law firm and building council and unions are all in firm agreement, yelling loudly and clearly that this Bill 15 must not go forward.

4:40

You know, at the very least, besides what they're actually telling us, Mr. Speaker, I think that the due process of a responsible government is to consult these various groups before you bring in legislation. If you're not making that consultation, then it's only exacerbating the conflicts that might ensue from provisions in this bill that are not in the workers' best interest, and at the end of the day we'll simply have to go back and revisit these at a later date, you know, trying to undo the damage that might be done. So my very first and most strenuous point is that consultation has not been carried out in a reasonable way before this Bill 15 has come forward to this House, and for that reason alone we cannot as New Democrats support any aspect of it.

Now, there are a number of specific concerns that we have with Bill 15, and again these are things that have been brought forward by various stakeholder groups. I think that the heart of the most ridiculous, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, aspect of this bill is that it retroactively expropriates the rights of workers to retain counsel and control their own injury claims by so-called vesting all existing and future actions in the boards. This vesting will indeed give the board ownership of the injury claim of the workers against the nonworkers.

Now, you know, this sort of goes against a very basic principle of law where you're entitled to be in control of your own file and look for resolution of that file. By putting it now into the hands of the WCB, which we're required to do, by the way, Mr. Speaker, then

we're simply left with no recourse whatsoever, and a whole section of our population is cut out from the due process of the court of law.

This idea of tying full co-operation to entitlement in section 10 of this bill is described as draconian at best. If that is not enough, the WCB has enabled themselves to declare past compensation to be a debt owing that is collectable by the board. What is there in the current legislation that has been a problem for them to suddenly need this collection, I would hasten to ask, and certainly I think it would be difficult to find a reasonable answer.

Also, the question of conflict of interest in Bill 15 is another point of contention. No matter how much conflict of interest there might be between a board decision on a claim and a worker's actual injury and losses, the concept of conflict of interest here has simply been erased – right? – annihilated and taken away from the due process that should be existing in the Workers' Compensation Board. So, again, I find this very difficult to believe, and in fact it gives this whole bill the feeling of some sort of unreality or, you know, as I said before, creating an alternate system, a parallel system for citizens as if we're not all equal under the law here in the province of Alberta.

You know, when you come across bills like this, one can only hope that the best thing for it is to go back and make a proper consultation process with all of the parties that have a vested interest in the Workers' Compensation Board in this province, Mr. Speaker, and that is, at the end of the day, the majority of the working population of this province. They are well represented, as I say, by workers' groups and associations and unions and legal associations. So I think that the most logical and the most reasonable thing to do is to go back and make consultation before this bill goes forward through second reading.

So in keeping with that, I would like to make notice of a reasoned amendment to Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, and I'm doing this for the benefit of Mr. Martin, our labour critic. He is moving that the motion for second reading of Bill 15 be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 15, Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, be not now read a second time because full consultation with appropriate stakeholders has not taken place."

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we need to have the amendment circulated, so we'll just give the pages a minute or two to distribute them. Thanks.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, you may proceed now.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. As I'm just circulating the reasoned amendment then, you can see that what we're asking for – and I don't think it's unreasonable – is that we go through a proper consultation process with the various groups that could give us the most clever and reasonable vision of how the Workers' Compensation Board might be able to function.

Please understand, Mr. Speaker, that my comments in regard to the Workers' Compensation Board as an entity certainly do not suggest that we do not need this institution in our province. Quite on the contrary. It's a very fundamental part of an insurance policy that we provide to workers in this province and an assurance to firms who are employing people that they will not lose everything in the event of an accident through their workers.

The potential for the Workers' Compensation Board is enormous, and I believe that the ability they have to educate and to reduce accidents in the workplace is enormous. I believe that the peace of mind and reasonable compensation that they can provide in the event of injury is absolutely necessary in a just, humane society and that

businesses deserve to have some collective agreement both to protect themselves and to offer safeguards against injury claims for themselves as well. What we do see here in 2005 with the present system and with this bill, no help at all, is a system that is in terrible need of fixing. I see little or nothing in Bill 15 that might fit that bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the amendment.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This amendment I think should be considered thoughtfully by all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview the other evening in discussing Bill 15 at second reading and was startled to hear from that hon. member that there had been less than a full consultation process.

In regard to Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, certainly I was surprised to learn that the Alberta Federation of Labour and other labour groups were not aware of the intention to introduce these amendments. Mr. Speaker, I would think it would be respectful and courteous of all hon. Members of this Assembly to hear exactly what those groups have to say, not only in regard to what's in this legislation but also as to what's not in this legislation and perhaps what should be in this legislation. If we had a consultation process with the appropriate stakeholders, then we could proceed with debate on Bill 15, but as far as I know and understand, that has not occurred.

4:50

Now, I heard that there was some sort of fancy meeting at the Royal Glenora Club with the WCB and government members tonight. I'm not on duty tonight, Mr. Speaker, so I don't know what will be the results, but I've heard that. If you're going to have a consultation with the board of directors of the WCB and all the movers and shakers of the WCB, then perhaps we should set aside some time, even if it's not at the Royal Glenora Club – maybe you could go to Tim Hortons – and discuss the implications of the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act with some of the respective groups that will not be at the country club. A great number of Albertans don't grace the doors of the country club. In light of that, we could perhaps consider the reasoned amendment provided to us this afternoon by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Another reason, another good reason, why we should consider this amendment is that during the last election it was advocated by the Official Opposition, the Alberta Liberal Party, that there be a full independent public inquiry into all aspects of the Workers' Compensation Board. We have been asking for nine years, Mr. Speaker, for a full independent public inquiry into the Workers' Compensation Board.

Now, a little meeting down at the Royal Glenora Club doesn't cut it. That's not a full independent public inquiry in my view, and certainly when you talk to the workers in Alberta, it wouldn't be their view either. The WCB has made some steps in being more accessible to the public – that's true, Mr. Speaker – with their annual general meeting, which is usually held in Edmonton or in Calgary. I suspect that at some time they will perhaps go to Grande Prairie or to Lethbridge, maybe to Medicine Hat, who's to say, to have their annual general meeting. Those meetings are public, and that is a step in the right direction, and I think we should commend the WCB for that.

In light of so many complaints that not only hon. members get but

the Ombudsman – there are respective legislative offices, Mr. Speaker, that get complaints from workers who simply have fallen through the cracks. Not all of these complaints are frivolous. Some of these injured workers have been frustrated repeatedly by the entire process. I know that we tried to fix the process. I know that we've had some consultation processes in the past. The hon. Member for Red Deer-South was involved in one. Certainly, a retired justice, Samuel Friedman, was involved in another. There have been various consultation processes, but there has never been a full independent public inquiry into how the Workers' Compensation Board in this province is functioning and how we could improve it.

So we're looking at this Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, and we're looking at this reasoned amendment, and I think it would be very worth while if we were to support this amendment and have some real sound public consultation. We could implement a full independent public inquiry. It could report to the Legislative Assembly. It could go to various towns and cities across the province, including Rocky Mountain House. There are a lot of workers in Rocky Mountain House that are phoning our constituency offices. They're frustrated. There's no doubt about that. They feel left out of this whole process. They feel that it's not fair. The public inquiry could make a stop there. Yeah. We could have a restoration of confidence in our entire workers' compensation system.

For those two reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly to support the amendment as it has been presented by the Member for Edmonton-Calder. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking earlier to the bill, I indicated that I didn't think through my communications that there had been proper consultation with many different groups, including many businesses in the province, many municipalities, cities as well, and certainly business groups. It's quite remarkable that there's been such a low level of consultation on this particular bill. I think that there is real reason to support this and to put it out into a wider consultative process in the province so that, indeed, we can come up with better legislation. I believe that is incumbent on us to be responsible in such a manner to do so.

I had proposed, you know, and notified the mover that I would be looking to amendments in committee. This would, in fact, preclude that if passed. I didn't know that we could move amendments on second reading, to be truthful, but it's an interesting amendment that I believe is worthy of support. Without amendments, if it were to go to committee, the Official Opposition could not support this bill. I ask that members look that we give people a second chance to see this and that we have the Legislature look at a better bill in a second opportunity.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wishing to participate in the debate on the amendment? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. I just would like to make a couple of very brief remarks on why I think it's very important that this be held off and that we actually pass this amendment. One of the things that actually frightens me as a nurse and as someone who has worked in geriatric care whose back obviously is under stress at many, many points is the fact that I always tried to stay away from WCB because, frankly, all of the paperwork scared me. I just didn't think that I

could handle all the paperwork. So what did I do? I went to my chiropractor and I went to physiotherapy because I knew what would help my back and get me back to work right away. But guess what? Both of those have now been cut back. So I may well have to end up going to WCB.

However, another thing that frightens me is the fact that as a worker I would not have a choice to either tort or actually go with the WCB, and then had I chose the tort method, I might not have had full access to my record. My record, to me, under WCB is exactly the same as my record under health care. That's my record. I want every single sentence. I want every single comma turned over to me because I own that file. No one else owns my personal file. That's why I think it's very important that this amendment be passed, so that we can take another good look at this bill.

5:00

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:01 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Backs	MacDonald	Miller, R.
Eggen	Mather	Pastoor
Elsalhy	Miller, B.	Tougas
Flaherty		

Against the motion:

Amery	Goudreau	Melchin
Brown	Groeneveld	Oberg
Calahasen	Haley	Ouellette
Cardinal	Hancock	Prins
Cenaiko	Jablonski	Rodney
Coutts	Johnson	Rogers
Danyluk	Johnston	Shariff
DeLong	Knight	Stelmach
Doerksen	Lindsay	Strang
Ducharme	Lund	VanderBurg
Dunford	McClellan	Webber
Fritz	McFarland	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 35
---------	----------	--------------

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 15 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the debate on second reading.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, certainly merits further discussion at this time, I believe, not for what exactly is outlined in the bill. Certainly, it has been promoted as a housekeeping bill, but I think it is more than a housekeeping bill, and I think it is time we give it some further debate, not only of what's in it, again, but what's not in it.

Certainly, we are clarifying wording around immunity for the board of directors of the Workers' Compensation Board. It clarifies the rights of all concerned when a third-party action is taken under the act. It confirms that the WCB can regulate the fees charged by

private lawyers working on third-party civil actions and also permits the WCB to pay cost-of-living increases to workers who are on extended temporary partial disability benefit. But if we could do that cost of living increase – and I'm disappointed that I don't see any reference to this in the bill, and I think we could put it in there.

The whole issue, Mr. Speaker, around the long-standing contentious claims has been an ongoing concern. I spoke earlier on the reasoned amendment on the need for a public inquiry. We've had various inquiries in the past. There was a commitment made – there was without a doubt a commitment made – to address the issue of the long-standing contentious claims, but that hasn't happened, unfortunately. As each and every hon. member of this Assembly knows, there is probably once a week a visit to our respective constituency offices from someone who would fit into the category of having missed out and perhaps once and for all could have their issue resolved one way or the other through a tribunal on these long-standing contentious claims.

Now, there are various statistics in regard to how many Alberta workers injured on the job through no fault of their own who have fallen through the cracks would fit into this category. There are some that would say it's 3,000 workers; some will tell you it's 7,000 workers; some will say it's as high as 15,000 workers. We don't know. There have been a number of estimates on the number of injured workers, but we don't know. At least, this hon. member, Mr. Speaker, does not. Bill 15 in no way addresses this.

There's also the concern of: where are you going to get the money to pay these people out if it is found that, yes, there is validity to their claim? That amount varies anywhere from \$20 million to \$230 million, depending on who you talk to. Businesses who fund the WCB through the payroll tax have valid concerns about this payment. But to my amazement the WCB changed their accounting practices and did away with a fund, a nest egg that they did have that could be used for this purpose. I think it's a debt we owe the injured workers. If it can be proven that they've been injured on the job and that after all these years all the suffering they have endured is a result of that workplace injury, then I think we owe them a significant debt, and I think we should make every effort to finally settle these claims. That's not in the bill.

It is interesting also, Mr. Speaker: I hear from workers and their families all the time about their exposures to toxic substances in the workplace. The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill worked very hard to help one group out, the firemen, and that was only the first step. There are lots of different trades, professions, and occupations in this province, lots of people employed in those trades, professions, and occupations who unfortunately come in contact with toxic substances in the line of their work. I would like to know why those injuries would not be considered in this legislation. If we're going to amend the Workers' Compensation Act, now is a good time to consider those workers.

5:20

We have welders – welders are a fine example – older individuals who have been in the trade for a number of years. Some of them have expressed considerable concern to this member that their lung capacity is reduced. The risk of cancer is increased. They notice that the cancer rates among some of their contemporaries are very, very high. Quite frankly, they're afraid, and they shouldn't have to be afraid. We should address this issue and address it now. There is no doubt that some of these older workers, before we improved our methods of protecting the workers from exposure – We have also better policed the job sites so that there has been enforcement of the rules, which not only convinces the employers that it's in their best interest to protect their employees, but also it's in the worker's

best interest to wear the equipment to protect them from welding fumes or any other toxic airborne substance.

We need to look at this. There are too many workers with their lives suddenly cut short as a result of their occupation. We have a bit of a fund set aside for that, and I believe it is related to asbestosis. Perhaps it's time that we increase the amount, Mr. Speaker, that's in that fund. This is a ticking time bomb on Alberta workers as the workforce ages. I don't see anything in this bill that would improve that for welders or any other individual that is exposed to smoke that is created as a result of striking a welding arc.

Now, we could also look at the NORMs. I don't see any direction in here on NORMs, which are naturally occurring radioactive materials that are in industrial process streams and fertilizer plants and in refineries, in the tar sands developments around Fort McMurray. These are naturally occurring radioactive materials, and whenever workers do routine maintenance on those facilities, whether it's the pressure piping or the pressure vessels, they routinely go inside. Some corporations in this province have to their credit developed regulations. But what does the WCB have to say in this? I think it's very important, and they have said nothing, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, in regard to this issue in Bill 15. I'm disappointed in that.

I know that in the past Alberta Human Resources and Employment has been working on some regulation. There has been a group working on this regulation to deal with this whole issue of NORMs, but I haven't heard a word in a couple of years. Hopefully, some hon. member of this Assembly could update not only myself but the public and the workers of the province on exactly what is going on with this regulation on naturally occurring radioactive materials in the workplace.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Bill 15 certainly is meant to clarify wording around immunity for the board of directors of the Workers' Compensation Board, but we have to consider the background in this. I would remind all hon. members that the WCB and its employees are currently granted immunity from lawsuit for actions and decisions taken in good faith.

Section 22 of this bill protects the rights of the WCB and the accident fund in situations where an accident, whether it's a motor vehicle, a slip, or a fall, products liability, medical malpractice, entitles an injured worker to a personal injury lawsuit against someone who is not an employer or worker as defined in the Workers' Compensation Act.

Now, these actions, as everyone knows, are referred to as third-party actions. It's interesting that in third-party actions the WCB is giving certain rights. These rights allow the WCB to recoup the costs for the accident fund, thus reducing costs to the workers' compensation system for all Alberta employers. Most times this works out, but it's surprising that 15 per cent, 20 per cent of the time it doesn't. Injured workers get immediate payment through compensation benefits without having to wait, and compensation is treated in this case, Mr. Speaker, like an advance. We have to ensure that the system will run effectively. It won't burden the

employers with a great increase in premiums, and it won't deny the employees the benefits that they themselves are entitled to.

I have some questions that, certainly, I would like to get on the record at second reading in regard to this bill, and they're similar to what others have asked, but whenever the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar, who feel very frustrated with the system, come in I know that they're going to ask about this bill. They're still asking about the last series of amendments that moved through this Assembly, and they're not satisfied that that has worked out.

On their behalf I'm going to ask formally: what is the reasoning behind the proposed changes to the current legislation? Does this bill signify yet another change in policy by the WCB? We heard about the stakeholders that were not consulted. Which stakeholders were consulted in the drafting of these amendments? Who endorsed these amendments? In what ways does the government view that these amendments are significant and will change current practices? Again, Mr. Speaker, how do these amendments help workers who are injured by third parties and hopefully gain timely compensation?

We certainly dealt with the issue of the long-standing contentious claims from the WCB, which are not, in my view, addressed in this amendment to the Workers' Compensation Board Act. Some people have said – for instance, a Mr. Adrian Gracy from the Alberta Building Trades Council has stated in consultation that he was pleased with this, I believe.

The Speaker: Hon. member, Standing Order 29(2)(a) now kicks in.

Mr. MacDonald: At this time I would like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: Sorry. Your time is gone. We're now at Standing Order 29(2)(a).

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. I'm sorry; you've already participated.

Mr. Backs: Can I ask a question?

The Speaker: Yes, you can.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like a little bit more elaboration from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the issue of long-standing contentious claims.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Well, thank you very much, hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, but the whole issue of long-standing contentious claims . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hate to interrupt, but the time for the afternoon's business has now evaporated. The House now stands adjourned until 8 o'clock this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 6, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/04/06

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, before we proceed with the proceedings of the evening, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature a group from the Edmonton-Glenora constituency, the 146th LDS Scout troop, eight scouts accompanied by their leaders, Eric Petersen, Keith Fields, and Kurt Kronebush. They are in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

head: **Government Motions**

Special Sitting for Royal Visit

16. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that notwithstanding whether or not the spring sitting of the Assembly has concluded, a special sitting of the Assembly be called the day of Tuesday, May 24, 2005, at such time as the Speaker may determine, for the sole purpose of the attendance by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the Assembly and any normal sitting scheduled for that day be suspended.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a historic occasion in which the Queen of Canada will be attending on Alberta to help celebrate Alberta's 100th anniversary, our centennial. It's an opportunity that we will only see once in our lifetime, and it's an honour and a privilege for members of this Assembly, in my view, to have the opportunity to be members of a Legislature, a parliament, where the Queen visits in person.

We've had the pleasure and the honour and the privilege of having our past Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole, attend on this Assembly and represent the Queen many times and our current Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, now in place, but we rarely and few parliaments ever have the privilege of having the Queen attend. We have that opportunity on May 24, subject, of course, always to confirmation by Her Majesty's office, but as we understand it, it will be possible for her to attend on the Assembly on Tuesday, May 24.

In the context of the motion we've left the time at the Speaker's discretion in order to accommodate the scheduling of Her Majesty and also have indicated, because of course we currently have a session on and normally Standing Orders would prevail, to suspend the normal sitting of that day if, in fact, there is one or to call a sitting for that day if, in fact, we're not sitting at the time so that we can have the honour and the privilege of the attendance of Her Majesty on the Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am rising to support Government Motion 16. More than that, I agree with the

hon. House leader: it is a special opportunity for all of us and one that I know we're all looking forward to. I'm hoping that I am going to be able to bring my 8-year-old niece to attend and perhaps watch from the gallery, which would be a very special occasion for her.

I know that the Member for St. Albert is very excited about this special sitting and has spoken at length about how proud he is of his granddaughter. I believe that she is performing for the Queen at some occasion in Calgary, and we've all heard a lot about that in our caucus because he's a very proud granddad. I know that he was looking forward to speaking to this motion, so I wanted to make sure that I put on the record how proud he is.

It's one of the great privileges and the great treats of being an elected member in this Assembly that every now and then you get to do something really special. This is something that I qualify as being really special. I'm very much looking forward to it.

I certainly appreciate all the efforts of the many people that have pulled together to organize the visit of the Queen and the special sitting and, I'm sure, thousands of hours of volunteer time. We're very good at volunteering in Alberta. We've showed that to the world over and over again, starting with the Calgary Olympics and the Universiad and the Commonwealth Games and the Masters Games coming this summer. We're exceptionally talented there, and I think we all need to be very grateful, I'm sure, in advance for the many thousands of hours of volunteer expertise that's going to be brought to this event and others around our centennial.

As I said, I'm rising to speak in favour of the government motion. I'm very much looking forward to the special sitting, and I will support the motion. Thank you.

Mr. Hinman: I also would like to speak in favour of this motion. It seems like the members of this Legislature are often accused of having a little bit of nepotism. I'm going to be guilty of grandmatism. My grandmother is 90 years old, and she's very excited about coming and meeting the Queen. She came from England, and she drinks her tea three times a day. It is exciting for all Albertans, and it is definitely a privilege to be here. I'm grateful that the Queen would take the time to come and visit this Legislature. We're very much looking forward to it.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I, too, rise to support this motion. The age of a number of members in this Legislature I think is very similar to mine. We all went through school starting off quite often with *O Canada*, followed by the Lord's Prayer, and in any kind of assembly we did, we usually ended that program with *God Save The Queen*.

Like a previous speaker, my grandparents were – I guess you'd have to call them monarchists because my grandmother had the Queen's plates, the Queen's teacups. She came from Armagh, just outside Belfast, Northern Ireland, and was very much in favour of the royalty, almost possibly to a fault. Likewise, my paternal grandfather played semipro soccer for the Norwich-Norfolk team. So my ancestry stretches from Northern Ireland through England, and it is with great pride that I support this event.

I'm looking forward to again seeing the Queen. It's been my privilege to have seen the Queen and been a participant at least as a spectator in a number of royal visits.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill during a member's statement yesterday recounted the heroic activities of his father during the Second World War. My father had similar experiences as well flying in Burma and managing to land his plane. He was the only one in 12 flights that managed to make it through a monsoon

and land safely along with the crew. He was ferrying victims from the front with the Burma-Japanese war going on at the time.

The reason I bring up my father in connection with the Queen is that we were stationed during the '50s at Namao, just outside the city of Edmonton. My dad was the pilot of what was called a Flying Boxcar, a C-119. These were the big, old, fat planes that were the forerunners of the Hercules. My father had the honour of being the person who transported the Queen's vehicles throughout that particular Canada tour at that time.

When the Queen landed at Namao air base, we were lined up just outside the hangars on the tarmac anxiously awaiting to see the Queen. My father, who had had personal contact and had been able to speak with her, was anxiously awaiting to see her and present his family at the time.

I doubt very much that there's still any resemblance, but back when I was about 8 years old, Prince Charles' proboscis and mine were very similar. So when the Queen and the Prince were walking along the tarmac and came to myself and my brother – of course, we were both wearing our little blue blazers with the British ensign on it and the matching caps with the ensign and the Union Jack – the Queen and Prince Philip both did a dead stop. They looked down at me, and it was like: I thought we left him with the Queen Mother back at home, but he seems to have made his way onto the tarmac. So this royal tradition that we follow within our system within this Legislature, I am very glad that we're honouring.

8:10

We've been very fortunate, as was mentioned, with our former Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole, and all the wonderful aspects and qualities that this very kind and loving lady has provided us. Throughout our nation we've had a series of Governors General, and lately there seems to have been a great deal of controversy about selections, but with Lois Hole there was no doubt about it whatsoever. With Normie Kwong we have another wonderful Alberta example worthy of the Queen and her representation.

The thought of being able to bring my wife and my daughter and my grandson to speak with Her Majesty is absolutely exhilarating for me, and I consider that one of the pluses of being elected.

I'm also very thankful to the Speaker, who sent out a notice to all the constituencies saying that we're allowed to bring one outstanding young person and one senior citizen obviously of worth. In my case, the young person that I was able to select was a student who I had taught, a young man by the name of Vin Mahtani. He demonstrated tremendous leadership throughout my experience at F.E. Osborne, my old junior high school. He was a great wrestler. He never gave up. He was a top academic throughout all his subject areas. It was wonderful when I had the opportunity to phone him this past week and ask if he would like to participate. Here we have a very young generation, but this individual was absolutely thrilled and excited about the opportunity to be in the presence of Her Majesty.

Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity. We are so fortunate to be in this province to celebrate our 100 years and to have a monarch of the great stature of our Queen Elizabeth to come and speak to us. Thank you very much.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I want to just briefly add my support for this motion, and I want to do it on behalf of the rural members of our caucus. I had the honour and the privilege of meeting Her Majesty when she visited our province a few years ago, and the things that struck me were, first of all, her personal interest in each and every person that she met, and secondly, but dear to me, her interest in all matters of agriculture and rural affairs and her knowledge of agriculture and rural affairs, particularly animals,

cattle and horses. The horse is a favourite of hers. She had such a keen interest in the agricultural community in Canada and in particular, at that instant, in Alberta.

I, like the member opposite, recall most of the community occasions that began with the singing of *O Canada* and closed with *God Save The Queen*, and I'm pleased to note that many of our rural agricultural organizations still hold that tradition. I've attended a number of functions where the singing of *God Save The Queen* closed the function, whether it was an annual general meeting or a conference. There's a lot to be said for holding those traditions, especially with our close ties to the Commonwealth.

It's wonderful for our province to have Her Majesty visit us in our centennial year, wonderful for all of our citizens and for our sister province of Saskatchewan. I've indicated that I live about 15 miles from the Saskatchewan border in sort of the south central and had many opportunities to visit with people from that area, and they're very excited as well to have Her Majesty visiting their province. It's wonderful for our province, it's wonderful for all of our citizens and certainly special for us that she will attend upon the Assembly, but I think it's especially wonderful for the schoolchildren of the province. It will remind them of our history and of our close ties with the Commonwealth.

Others have mentioned this, and I will too. It's going to be sad for us that the late Her Honour the Honourable Lois Hole will not be with us for this occasion. She was so looking forward to the Queen's visit. We are privileged that we have our Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, who will, I know, find this a very special occasion as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those brief comments, I want to add my support to the government motion.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to participate in this debate?

The hon. Government House Leader to close debate?

[Government Motion 16 carried]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I had a note, and I just forgot about it. May we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you on behalf of the Member for Sherwood Park a group of young Pathfinders from Ardrossan. There are 14 Pathfinders, and they're accompanied by their leaders Ms Shannon Stannard, Ms Dawn Sutton, and Mrs. Bernadette Villeneuve. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Could I add to the introductions? Have we moved on from that?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, you may proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. On behalf of the Member for St. Albert I would like to introduce Kaley Pederson, who is the identical twin sister of one of our pages, Jenelle Pederson. Could I ask Kaley to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

**Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 12

Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 5: Mr. Backs]

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I will continue the debate on Bill 12, Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005. Mr. Speaker, I was looking forward to this act with a great deal of eager anticipation, and I have to say that I'm disappointed when I actually read the bill because this bill was supposed to be so much more.

We had a victims of crime review, that was charged by the previous Solicitor General. It was put under the leadership of the Member for Calgary-Shaw, and that, I believe, was in 2001. The report itself was actually in the hands of the minister in about September 2002. I asked about that report repeatedly through 2003 and 2004, and the Solicitor General would not release any information or details or, in fact, the report itself.

8:20

I now see that the report has been released because I finally have at least a copy of the executive summary. So obviously it got released in late 2004 or 2005. I've gone through it, and some of what's been recommended by the review is, in fact, in this bill, but a lot of it is not. Considering the things that I was led to believe would be covered, would be dealt with, the outstanding issues that I kept asking about that I was hoping would come to some fruition and was led to believe would, in fact when we saw the results of the review and the accompanying legislation, it's just not here. I mean, Mr. Speaker, this bill is a page long, two pages long if you stretch it, including the principles. So it's mostly principles, and at the end it says, "Victims should report the crime and co-operate with law enforcement authorities." And that's the bill.

When we're looking for the action that the government would take around this and the changes that the government would make to facilitate better flow of information, more action, and directed funding, even the definition of victim, none of it happened in this bill. This is pretty thin stuff. Why the heck did we spend four years on this? There was a year in the development of that report, and then the minister carefully sat on it. Why? I mean, yes, the principles are important, but what about all the rest of the action that was supposed to happen?

I've spoken with a number of members on the other side, and I know there was some quiet frustration over there about the need to move this stuff forward. I repeatedly asked about the victims of crime fund that the Solicitor General was hoarding – I think it was up to \$13 million the last time I looked; it's probably about \$16 million now – money that was supposed to be directed towards some of these new plans that could be made possible because of the changes in legislation. Well, nothing that's in this legislation is going to enable that.

So I'm disappointed, really disappointed, because there are a number of people that were counting on the victims of crime fund review and on changes in this act to really make a difference in their lives, and it's not there. I get angry when I see that the government

has pussyfooted around something. If they've got a reason for it, then stand up in this House and tell us why they won't be doing those things. But to just come forward and give us, you know, the principles – as I said, very nice but lacking completely the action that we were anticipating and that we had been led to believe would flow from this review – it angers me, and I know it angers others in the community.

I haven't counted, to be honest with you, but I think there were something like 39 recommendations, and all of them could have been funded from that money that has been accumulated and set aside – I kept calling it hoarding – by the Solicitor General. So I guess that now I'll be told I have to wait until the budget on the 13th to see if any of it is going to flow. But I don't know what it would flow to.

An Hon. Member: You'll have to wait until the budget.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, I'll have to wait until the budget. Thank you.

There's no change in the definition of victim. I know I've been told that part of what was holding up some of the funding for other programs was that the definition of victim was too restricted. Well, that hasn't been changed here. There's no change in the definitions in this amending act at all. So that log-jam, that problem, still exists. Well, why? Tell me why. Why didn't you change that when you had the opportunity, when this act is before us? Why are you not doing that when it's something that clearly needed to be done? That's coming from the community, so if you've got a reason for it, get up and tell me. Put it on the record here, and explain why you've chosen not to do that.

That money that's been collected, that is sitting there targeted for this, is money that came from fines that were levied against people that have been convicted of certain crimes. It flows from the federal government, it comes to the provincial government, it is tagged for victims of crime, and it is sitting there. Every year the government spends less than it receives, significantly less, like at the 50 per cent mark, and every year I ask why you are not spending it all, and I've had a number of different answers. [interjection] Well, I'm hearing from the Solicitor General, and I'm looking forward to him participating in this. This is his bill. It's been sponsored by another member, but it's coming under his auspices. So let's hear the answers to the questions that I'm asking here. I want this done in public so those groups can understand why these choices have been made.

There was \$13 million the last time I looked, and that had been accumulated over four years, so that means it's accumulating to the tune of about \$3 million a year. That's significant money for the organizations that we're talking about here. I want to know: what is this legislation? Is it going to make any difference? Are these programs going to flow from it in any way?

I want to know why there was no change to the definition of victim that came through in this bill. Why were those choices made? Why was that not followed through on?

I want to know why there is nothing here that will facilitate the funding of sexual assault centres. Those sexual assault centres do not get operational funding from this government. They get piecemeal funding if they go and apply for a project grant from Health and they apply for a project grant through FCSS and they apply for a special temporary funding of some sort; you know, a volunteer co-ordinator through Wild Rose. There's a little bit of funding that comes through the victims of crime fund. It's for the counselling of victims, and it's only for the counselling of victims who have gone to court.

Well, in sexual assault cases there's no guarantee that they are ever going to choose to go to court. So those sexual assault centres apply for that money and get a little bit of money to counsel, but they can only use it in counselling. Out of their entire roster of clients, they can only pay for counselling for those that are actually proceeding through to court or proceeding through to court in this fiscal year.

So it's useful money, and they're really glad to have it, Mr. Speaker, and they wouldn't want to see it disappear, but it's not fulfilling what this government should be doing for sexual assault centres, and I want to know why the government is choosing not to fund sexual assault centres in a fully operational way. You know, they're not even funding them to the tune of what they're funding battered women's shelters. They're not even coming up to that mark, and frankly I would argue that that mark is not high enough. But they're not even coming up to that by a long shot.

I want to know why the government is refusing to fund sexual assault centres for operational funding. They make the administrators, who are there as good administrators to administrate a sexual assault centre – they put those administrators in the position of spending 80 per cent of their time scrounging for money. Is that really what we want these trained professionals doing: writing grant proposals to five or six different government departments and agencies, trying to cobble together enough money to operate? Is that a good use of these people's time?

This is the kind of short-term, poor planning that I'm getting increasingly frustrated with from this government. You've got agencies out there that know how to do this work. They're trained at it, they're good at it, they're delivering a good service, they have accountability up the wazoo for it, and they're happy to give you their audited financial reports. They're doing exactly everything the government says they want to see happening and not getting support. There's a choice that's being made here, and I want to know why that choice is being made. So a couple of questions I've raised then. Why did we get no action being brought forward? Why have we had no change in the definition of victim as far as meaning for funding out of the victims of crime fund?

See, part of the problem with the funding of the sexual assault centres, Mr. Speaker, is that nobody is taking them on; nobody is their champion. And every time I ask, I get bounced around. "Go to the Solicitor General because they're in charge of victims of crime." "Yeah, but they're only going to fund for people that are in court." "Okay, well, maybe try Health." So I go to Health. They are supposed to be the lead ministry in the intergovernmental agency or co-operative committee or whatever they call it. The cross-ministry initiative; there we go. So I go to them and say: "Okay, how are you leading? What's happening here? Where are you driving this to?" "Well, we're not really doing that. Go and check with Health." So I go to Health, and Health goes, "Sorry, we can't fund them because of the way . . ." "Well, okay. Fine. Where do I go?" "Go to Justice; see if Justice can fund them." Excuse me? Why am I doing this? I thought that's why you had an interdepartmental, cross-ministry initiative happening here.

8:30

Nobody is taking responsibility for this, and the buck has got to stop somewhere. If the Solicitor General is that interested, I'm asking him to step up to the plate and do something meaningful and make this happen because bouncing the ball around and constantly punting it to someone else is getting real tiresome. The truth of the matter is that this is primarily women's lives that are being punted around from ministry to ministry here. We are not providing the kind of programming support that we should be providing as

legislators, and I want to know why. I want to know why that choice is being made by the government to fail these people and to fail these agencies. I've been talking about it for three years now. I want to start hearing some answers from the other side.

So when I look at the executive summary of the things that were suggested, I look for things like "Explore the feasibility of providing emergency funding for victims of crime where critically needed," and that's not in the bill. You know, there's some good supporting information about it. When they're a victim of crime, especially those people on limited income, they may not have the wherewithal to find some emergency dollars or to borrow emergency dollars to get themselves through. Excellent idea. Why isn't that in the bill? How is that supposed to come into being? This isn't even a shell bill, where everything is being empowered to the minister to do something whenever they feel like it behind closed doors later on. There isn't even that happening here. I never thought I'd be proposing that as a step up or a step forward, but there you go. So what happened to that? What's the update on that?

"Increase funding to police-based victim services units." Okay. Is that coming in the budget? I guess I'll have to wait, but there's nothing that's being funneled through this bill that's indicating that that's going to happen. They acknowledge victim service units as "the backbone of support for victims of crime in Alberta." I'm on page 2 of the executive summary for the Alberta victims of crime consultation. Yeah, good. Absolutely good point. They've obviously been out in the community. They found out what people want, so where is it?

They talk about developing "standardized training for those providing services to victims of crime." Well, that doesn't necessarily have to be in legislation, Mr. Speaker, but where is it? What's happening here? Where's the rest of the announcement? I mean, I have certainly seen that in legislation, so they could put it in if they wanted to. It would have fleshed the bill out past a page anyway.

They're also talking about helping "communities develop, promote and support effective programs and services that assist victims of crime who have unique needs, particularly Aboriginal communities." They acknowledge that "'one size fits all' does not apply to victims of crime. Certain groups of people (e.g., children) have specialized needs that are not always met by current programs and services." Excellent point. Good consultation. Where's it reflected in the bill? It's not.

I mean, it talks about providing information, information being made readily accessible. Okay. Yeah, fine. Good idea. It doesn't cost very much at all, but where's the meat of what was supposed to happen out of this consultation? Why was all that time spent and, one presumes, government resources and interest? Why? For this? There were so many people that have waited so long for it. In 2001 we started on this road. Why are we still waiting? And we are still waiting. It's 2005, and we've got principles that say that people should be treated with respect and dignity. Absolutely. I would have thought that went without saying. Okay, you want to put it in your preamble. Okay. Good. But let's have the rest of the action.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Standing Order 29(2)(a). Hon. Solicitor General, did you want to rise on a question and comment? Any questions or comments? The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to clarify for the hon. member across the way. The purpose of these amendments as they were brought in at first reading was to clarify the basic principles of justice for victims of crime. The lead regarding the principles that we introduced was led by the federal

Liberal government with regard to these recommendations that have come forward. So what we're doing is that we're clarifying the picture here.

Now, the hon. member spoke as well about the lack of assistance to sexual assault centres, and I want to disagree with her on that because I've worked with the provincial Association of Sexual Assault Centres as well as the Calgary Sexual Assault Centre very closely. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I've investigated over 600 sexual assaults in my career. It's not just money that they need. It's not just money. It's the issue of working with them: different aspects in the community, different organizations working together to provide a service for those victims. It's not just dollars and cents. It's organizations working together to provide services for those victims, which we do, and we will continue in the future.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you so much. So I'll put the question to the minister again. Why was the choice made not to follow through and implement the action that was recommended from the victims of crime consultation? There is no action in this bill, and we waited four years for this. Where's the action? Where's the funding? And I take your point that . . .

Okay. That's my question one. For the second question I'll come back.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, again, I'll remind the member across the floor that the reason this bill was introduced was to clarify the principles which were led by the federal government and the federal Minister of Justice and the provincial and territorial ministers of justice to make it standard across the country.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. If that's the reason, then what is the result of the victims of crime consultation that was done by this government? Because if that is not reflected in this bill, and that seems to be now what the minister is telling me, why is it not reflected in the bill, and when are we going to see the action from the victims of crime consultation?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the report has been done. It was completed. It was provided to the Solicitor General some time ago, I believe two years ago. The report was taken into consideration and I believe has gone through the government process.

Mr. Mason: So, Mr. Speaker, to the Solicitor General: given that there's been extensive consultation among Albertans with respect to this, why is he instead taking his lead on the definitions from the federal Liberal government?

Mr. Cenaiko: We're not taking our lead from the federal government, but they did lead the process with regard to the federal/provincial/territorial meetings, Mr. Speaker. The issue was to ensure that each province and each territory had the same standards of providing services to victims across Canada.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. So the only purpose to this bill, then, was to follow up and to follow the lead of the feds. The minister seems to be clearly stating that there's been no attempt to move any of the recommendations from the victims of crime consultation into legislation and implement it. So when are we going to see the result of the victims of crime implementation at all, in any way? Who is going to take leadership on that side for the funding of sexual assault centres, which has been bounced around from all of the departments that I just talked about? Are you going to take responsibility for funding these people fully? I want an answer. All it does is get punted around.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I'd like to remind the hon. member across that the sexual assault centres have received funding from various government departments. They get funding from the community initiative program, from a number of programs throughout the province. There's a large association that just was formed last year, that I supported wholeheartedly, who are now organizing so that they can provide province-wide services and contacts throughout Alberta to ensure that victims of sexual assaults have the ability to have the needs that they require, whether it's psychological issues or whether it's the issue with assistance in attending court. These are some of the things that they need. It's not just dollars and cents.

She spoke earlier about volunteers in Alberta. Well, I can tell you this. The victim assistance units that are related to all the policing organizations throughout this province have in excess of 2,000 volunteers that assist police services here, and those are part of the resources that we use as well.

8:40

Dr. B. Miller: Now I'd like to ask a question. I raised this already in addressing this particular bill. In the report that's being referred to, there was a great amount of suggestions about restorative justice and the fact that restorative justice programs were also not funded anymore. The recommendation was that that funding be restored. You know, restorative justice is a new way of approaching the concerns of victims to not just stress retributive justice but restorative justice, to bring offenders and victims together to talk about reconciliation, sentencing circles, mediation. I wonder if the Solicitor General would comment about the future of the emphasis on restorative justice.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the five minutes allocated for this portion of Standing Order 29(2)(a) has run out.

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 12, Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005, does clarify the basic principles of justice for victims of crime and adopts the revised Canadian standards, our statement of basic principles for victims of crimes, that were endorsed in October 2003 by all the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers in Canada responsible for justice. Just before I conclude, I would like to state that it's very important that victims of crime be treated with respect and consideration along with the principles that are outlined in this act.

In Alberta there are 96 youth justice committees as well as 107 victims' services volunteer units and a number of restorative justice

committees for young offenders. These committees are beneficial for both victims and offenders. They bring healing when possible.

I think that it's important for this government to continue to lobby the federal government to support stronger sentences for violent and sexual crimes and that neither violent nor sexual offenders be allowed to serve conditional sentences in their communities.

The questions that have been asked from across the way came from a very passionate member who supports sexual assault centres, and I think that we'll be able to review more of those questions in Committee of the Whole.

I would like to address the question of prompt payment, which is referred to in 2(b) of this act, and 2(b) states on page 1, "Victims should promptly receive, in accordance with this Act and the regulations, financial benefits for the injuries that they have suffered."

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to call for the vote on second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

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

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

**Bill 10
Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005**

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

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As I stated in second reading, there are only three different items that need to be corrected on this bill, that was previously done in the spring of 2004 and came into effect on November 1, 2004.

At this time I'd like to take the time to answer some questions that some of my colleagues asked. I guess the first one is from the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. Government Services is working with stakeholders to create a dispute resolution service to offer a user-friendly process other than the court system for hearings that will focus on resolving relevant residential landlord and tenant disputes. This service will be user friendly in that it will strive to offer consistent and fair decisions combined with cost-effective, informal, and expeditious resolutions of residential landlord and tenant disputes.

Now for the answer for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. We have been advised that landlords experience a 40 to 50 per cent turnover rate during a year. Security deposit refunds are without problem in most instances. Landlords with large rental inventories advise that the high cost of registering mail, which is \$6.42 plus considerable time spent filling out postal forms and trips to the post office, compared to 50 cents for regular mail, is unfairly punishing the majority of landlord and tenant relationships. Requiring registered mail will not resolve the two usual causes for nonreturn of security deposits within 10 days: tenants not leaving a forwarding address and bad landlords who do not want to comply. All jurisdictions that have security deposits allow refunds by ordinary mail.

For the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. Communications between both parties resolving issues of extending the due date for rent owed by tenants is a usual circumstance. Landlords can apply

to the court to give them 14 days' eviction notice to terminate the tenancy. Under the court process for these evictions it is more costly and time consuming for both the tenants and landlords. The notice is void if the tenant pays the rent due. The most important obligation is for the tenants to pay the rent when due. Landlords have significant challenges in dealing with ongoing delinquent rent payments. The proposed change will do nothing substantial to harm honest tenants.

For the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. As noted earlier, an alternative service is being worked out, and there will be a stronger stakeholder support for this option, including Alberta Justice.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

8:50

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think probably one of my main objections is that I feel that the landlord doesn't have enough – what's the word? – power or enough permission to be able to actually get rid of a tenant. There are many tenants that we don't want, and I think the process is far too long. Being able to give 14 days is fine; however, if it's because of no payment, they can give you the payment, and then it starts all over again. I would like to see something a little bit stronger in this bill to protect the landlords.

Sending back the security deposit by regular mail. I have a little bit of experience with tenants, and, gosh, I have never known a tenant that was willing to wait for their security deposit to be returned by mail. They wanted it the minute they walked out the door. So I'm not altogether sure that that makes any sense to me. Registered and certified, of course, take far too long, and it's an expensive proposition when it can be done in cash. I think that just the fact that they could return it in cash should be more than sufficient.

I think those were just my few comments on that bill. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

**Bill 11
Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act**

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First off I'd like to thank the hon. members for the questions they asked, and I'd like to answer those questions for them. There were several.

The first question was: is this bill a one-time intervention, or will it lead to permanent interbasin transfers, and how are the communities going to maintain themselves until they address a sustainable water supply in a particular area? Well, the water is authorized under a special act, and a licence will be issued that permanently assigns the right to that water until the licence is either cancelled or

transferred to another user. Sustainable water supplies in particular areas are difficult to predict and subject to variability. The smaller the area, the greater the variability. Under the Water for Life strategy Alberta Environment is embarking on water use reporting initiatives that will provide greater certainty to the amount of water used and greater predictability of the water remaining in use.

On the question regarding whether this new transfer would affect the rights of existing licences. The new transfer and subsequent licence does not impact existing licence-holder rights. In the current system of priority set by date that the water is licenced or applied for, this water will be junior to the other existing licences. Existing licence holders are protected under the Water Act and will be respected.

What is the impact of the transfer on the health of ecosystems? Because the transfer is treated water only through the Stettler drinking water treatment facilities, there is little risk of the transfer of any organisms.

On the question regarding whether this bill could force Canada to export water under NAFTA. No. The Water Act, in fact, prohibits the export of water outside of Canada. That's under section 46. We are not selling water or exporting water even outside of Alberta. We have done this before, and we have said before that it will not force us to export water into the United States or any other country either under NAFTA or not.

Regarding the question of what percentage of this water that is going to be transferred will be used for domestic residential purposes, farms, or irrigation. The water is treated drinking water, and the proposal is that it be used for domestic purposes only and does not consider uses like irrigation, large livestock operations, or industrial uses. The volume wouldn't allow for that anyway. It would not preclude the use by small hobby farms, et cetera, for watering a few livestock, but the intent is for human consumption and daily needs.

With regard to the question: are there documents that show that the treatment of water is eliminating all organisms, including any that could come up in a transfer? Treatment is to the level of the Canadian drinking water guidelines and the Alberta standards and guidelines for drinking water, waste water, and storm water systems. The type of organisms, if any, that pass through the treatment system would not be a risk to the natural environment of the Battle River basin.

With regard to the question: is the water that's being transferred being treated, and is it at a tertiary treatment level before it goes back into the rivers? The water is supplied from the city of Red Deer drinking water facilities – we were talking about the Red Deer system at this time – and is treated to a very high standard. Any waste water from the municipalities undergoes a high level of treatment. Not all communities require tertiary treatment plants but can provide treatment equivalent to that with existing facilities.

With regard to the question: why is there nothing in the bill that starts to measure underground aquifers? The bill only authorizes Alberta Environment to issue a licence. The licence is where terms and conditions require reporting and monitoring of water diversions and would require flow measurement. A strategy under Water for Life is to further the collection of information on groundwater resources in Alberta.

With regard to the question: why is Stettler facing the water shortage? Water shortages occur for two reasons: number one, growth of the communities and, number two, drought conditions result in the loss of temporary water bodies such as sloughs for livestock watering, which increases the dependence upon wells, which further increases the impact.

Next question: when these water pipelines were created – and we're talking about the one from the city of Edmonton to Ryley – did it involve an interbasin transfer, or was it from the same water table or area? The line to Ryley and the regional system supplied by EPCOR is still in the North Saskatchewan River basin.

To the question: are there any communities that use a two-water system that could report on how that's working between treated and untreated water? Mr. Chairman, no municipalities have a two-water system in Alberta. We have areas with irrigation systems separated but not a two-water system in residences.

The next question: is there a need for a water inventory so we know what kinds of resources we have? How could this be developed? Well, Mr. Chairman, through Water for Life, water use reporting and an inventory of groundwater and surface water supplies, an inventory or understanding of available water, is being developed.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I welcome any further questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the hon. member about the use of water resources in that region by the petroleum industry. He mentioned two causes for a shortage of water. One was the growth in population and the strain that that puts on available water resources, and the other one was ongoing drought. But we also know that the oil industry, in order to recover additional oil from depleting wells, is increasingly using fresh water down these wells as a means of recovering the remaining oil. I'm asking the hon. member if in fact there is any of this activity in this area and if he could comment on that as a potential third source of shortages of water in this province.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There may be a potential for using groundwater or surface water for enhanced oil extraction in that area, but to my knowledge the use of that water is going down. I think that there's every indication that it's going to be looked at and perhaps be reduced more.

[Mr. Lindsay in the chair]

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

9:00

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much to the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for clarifying some of the questions that have been plaguing us around the issue of interbasin transfers. I'm reassured by some things and not others.

I guess a more specific question would be: if the existing agreement with water users is entrenched in legislation, how could we possibly make the changes that are needed to make the system more sustainable, in other words to actually require users to review, to reduce, and to possibly change their use of water at the present such that it might be more sustainable in the future?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, I think that in order to be able to do that, further development of the water strategy would address that very question.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All life needs water. It's transparent to say that where there is shortage, we have to replenish it. Why would anyone oppose this? The danger here is in allowing

not once but repeatedly this extraordinary practice and expensive practice and environmentally risky practice of interbasin transfer to become the new normal, which seems to be happening here in Alberta.

I quote the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, who Monday night indicated: "You can't stop development, so there are more and more people," and there is going to be "more and more demand." We have to start mining the aquifers, and "the aquifers start to go down. This affects . . . outlying areas." So we have to continue to build dams, and this we will continue to do for many years. If there's not enough water in the river, then we have to begin to drill, and the cost of water is going to determine – well, this sounds to me, Mr. Chairman, as if interbasin transfer is the new normal for Alberta. This is not what many of us had hoped to hear.

What I hear being discussed is the establishment of pipes and storage tanks and pumps. Far from being an extraordinary measure, interbasin transfer is now a way of life planned into the future of a number of communities in Alberta. The old saying is: technology will solve it. Well, technology has created the problem and unsustainable expectations of what we can have, how much we can consume and continue to manipulate nature in the interests of short-term, self-centred lifestyles. We need to look at the bigger environmental pictures. We have choice. We can continue to misuse and overuse our resources, and we will kill the very source of life if we don't learn the lessons.

I want to just quote a study from the University of Arizona. Karl Flessa reported that in his examination of the Colorado River and the expenditures on the damming and water diversions, he calculated that society is losing \$2.4 billion per year, and it's drastically reduced water flow and productivity in the river system. Using the monetary values that other researchers have applied to services provided to society, he compared the dollar value of ecosystem services provided by the Colorado River delta region before all the dams and after to current land-use types. The difference between the two figures is the benefit lost to society, and in this case he calculated it at 6 cents per 100 gallons of water, or \$2.4 billion annually.

Upstream dams and diversion projects trap and divert much of the Colorado River sediment load, important for growth. The day-to-day functioning of ecosystems in the absence of diversions provides benefits: waterfowl, fishing, et cetera. "The original ecosystem services provided are worth more than the ecosystem services we now get from the transformed landscapes" downstream.

He indicated that these types of projects fail to consider three critical elements, Mr. Chairman. The in-stream flow needs and how a critical level may be easily reached at which the ecosystems begin to decline in that area. In this article he referred to the Red Deer River Basin Advisory Committee. The in-stream water conservation objectives have to be clear, and they have to be consistent with the Water for Life strategy, which is in contradiction of these very activities.

The second aspect of appropriate cost-benefit analysis is full cost accounting. The full cost of the project needs to be assessed, including the loss of ecosystem services. "There would be limited economic return for the public commodity of river water."

The third has to do with ecological integrity. Portions of the river basin become degraded and further impacted as the proposed project gets more and more demanding over time due to unsustainable practices that are depending on it.

I appreciate the comments earlier with answers to some of the questions, but if drought is the new normal in Alberta, with the expectation that climate change and global warming is producing, we have to create a new normal expectation around some of this and

look for new ways of living and new ways of land use and new restrictions on water use. It does mean government taking leadership. Are we overallocating the resource? What is the management plan, including growth projections? What do we know of the full inventory? It was alluded to earlier that an inventory of the water is being established, but when is that going to be done? How can we make decisions now that have long-term implications under law and under community expectations if we don't have that to plan with?

We should be very cautious about making these decisions without that information. How will this interbasin transfer affect the whole ecosystem? Are we robbing Peter to pay Paul? Surely this will perpetuate an unsustainable management plan as long as we continue to fulfill the expectations of local regions. Have we examined ways of reducing the demand and improving efficiencies, changing the land-use practices, or do we simply carry on with whatever is being done at the present time? What would be the cumulative impact of this practice? Why are we not beginning to measure the cumulative impact of each of these technological events that we're implementing in our society?

The Water for Life strategy is a direction; it is not a plan. We need to see concrete funding, intersectoral planning as if people's lives and livelihoods matter and we depend on it. This is the test of government leadership. When we face the limits of growth, which we are doing very clearly in these particular areas, do we persist in the blind belief that we can defy nature, or do we recognize the limits to human intrusion on finite resources and learn to live as we all must do in our personal lives, within our means?

The environment is increasingly in debt, and there are few to speak on behalf of sanity and sustainability. Technology is a false solution. It is human beings that must change and commit ourselves to reduce, to reuse, to recycle with renewables as well as nonrenewables, Mr. Chairman. What is the plan for this? Will we be voting on this again next year, another special bill? Interbasin transfer is an emergency last resort. It must continue to be that.

I want to be on record as giving only provisional support, conditional on the government committing to further legislation, number one, to ensure that interbasin transfers are only for emergency situations and, number two, to require from all such communities requesting this assistance a regional plan to ensure sustainable water management in the future.

I thank you for the opportunity to participate, Mr. Chairman, and with that, I'll sit down.

9:10

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try and answer some of the questions that were raised here by the hon. member. The only way any additional water projects such as these can be approved or even considered is if, in fact, there is more water in the system than is presently allocated. This is the case in this system here. For a matter of record also, if there was not any more water to be allocated, there would be a moratorium on any further allocations as happens in southwest Alberta in the three rivers system.

The Water for Life strategy. In that committee the basin advisory committees have very much input into the very things that the hon. member mentioned, the in-stream needs and the aquatic environment.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I think that given the strategy that's there – the basin advisory committees that are set up to address some of the concerns that he has, the moratorium on further allocations if, in fact, in the minds of Environment there is no additional water – these do go a long way to answering the concerns that the hon. member has.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question, again, that gets raised is that we are making decisions assuming that we know something about the resource. We clearly do not know what the capacity of the resource is. We haven't done the inventory yet. So I'm speaking about surface and groundwater, and as you indicated, that's being done. But we are making long-term decisions on the basis of inadequate information, it seems.

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, in this case here we are talking about surface water, and in fact to the best of my knowledge there is a method of determining how much water is available, how much the stream flow is at any particular time, including the measurement of the snowpack on a year-to-year basis. So with that and the fact that they do know that there is an unallocated portion in this river system, that is why this project is even being considered.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First off, I want to thank the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. As a teacher I give my kids a whole series of questions and hope that they answer them. I give you an A on your effort. I'm holding back the plus because there are still some questions to be answered, but I do appreciate your efforts.

To me the interbasin transfer of water is really another example of robbing Peter to pay Paul, and in the end both Peter and Paul lose. What I still don't understand – it goes back to Monday night, and the understanding may be my problem, but I believe I heard the figure of the water transfer being somewhere in the nature of .1 per cent. Am I right in that? I'll sit down just to give you a chance to collect your thoughts on that.

The Acting Chair: Is the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat ready to respond?

Mr. Mitzel: I'm just trying to find the number. It is .1 per cent of the average annual flow of the Red Deer River. That's correct.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. The point I'm trying to make here is that if it's such a small percentage, could that water, that small amount that's being transferred not be allocated from the existing basin source? This is what I'm wondering. You know, is the transfer necessary? Could we get it somehow from existing water?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, to answer that question, I think that what we're looking at is water from the town of Stettler, potable water which is treated. There is no other treatment facility anywhere near any of that area, the nine small towns and perhaps some of the farms and in between. There's no other source of treated water. In that case, it doesn't transfer all of it there, but there are two or three of the small, little communities that are in the other portion of the basin.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much again, Mr. Chairman. You've heard me go on at great length in this Assembly about the Fort McMurray water treatment plant, and what I'm getting at is that you were mentioning that there weren't sufficient treatment facilities in

the surrounding Stettler area to treat the necessary amount of water. It made me think: is there the possibility of fixing the problem by creating greater water treatment potential within the Stettler community and then drawing from the local river and resources?

Mr. Mitzel: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that's exactly what we're doing. The town of Stettler actually does have the capacity to supply that extra amount of water, and it is treated. What I meant is that there aren't any treatment facilities anywhere near that. I'd have to get the map out to find the next town that would have a facility. Drumheller perhaps would be the next town, and that would certainly be a lot farther away.

Mr. Chase: The point that my hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View and I were trying to make: we look at the idea of a water basin transfer as an absolute last resort. I was thinking that if we could improve the facilities within that regional basin from which Stettler normally draws its water and then supplies it out to the surrounding communities that depend on Stettler – I gather that Stettler is the nucleus of the supply – could we not, by upgrading that system, avoid the transfer or at least – sorry; if I could offer another option – avoid future transfers by solving the problem locally?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, it would be nice if they possibly could, but the fact is that the town of Stettler actually resides almost right on the edge of the basin between the Battle River basin and the Red Deer River basin. It's almost right on the dividing line. You've got communities in one basin and in the other, so it would be rather difficult to try and even consider something like that because what you'd be looking at, to answer that question, would be actually having to have two more systems: one to cover these three or four communities, which take a very minimal amount of water in the big scheme of things, and four or five communities in the other region, that take, similarly, a minimum amount of water.

Mr. Chase: I want to follow protocol. This is not to prolong the discussion. It's brainstorming, and we're participating in it as members of the committee.

I'm urban based, and I'm not familiar with rural growth other than, you know, the bedroom communities developing around urban centres because the quality of life is often more enjoyable in rural centres. Do you think that for any of these small towns in the area of Stettler there is sufficient resource, sufficient energy, sufficient economic drive for them, that expansion is expected or is being promoted to the point where we could then justify another water treatment plant within the area?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, that's a good question, and it's a very, very short answer. It's what is happening in all of rural Alberta, rural Canada, rural North America. The very simple answer is actually no. What this water is going to be doing is actually perhaps sustaining those communities that are presently there rather than having them deteriorate any further. Especially in our lifetime I don't see a big economic boom in a lot of those smaller communities.

Mr. Chase: Thank you for helping me to understand that. That's always the hope of revitalizing rural areas, by having tertiary industries or whatever, and I would certainly promote that idea.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood brought up the point that seemed to be missing as to the amount of water that was potentially lost due to oil well injection, and my understanding

is that when you inject water – and my big concern is fresh water – this water is lost forever. Would you be able to comment on that concern?

9:20

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is correct. That is exactly the case. But as I mentioned before, that problem is an issue. It is being addressed, and hopefully the amount will continue to be reduced.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I don't know if you can push for it within this basin transfer Stettler water agreement or not, but the sooner we outlaw the injection of fresh water into wells as a method of recovery, the better we'll be. My understanding is that we have a tremendous amount of saline water. At this point it's of considerably less value than fresh water. Is it not practical to use a saline water alternative so that we don't draw from this fresh water?

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, I can only speak personally on this here, and it's really not to the transfer. In fact, yes, you're probably right. But at the same time – and this is my personal opinion – it is probably not economical at the moment, and this is maybe why there is some reluctance for industry to consider this. Also, in some cases it is not as easy to be able to acquire this type of saline water.

Mr. Ouellette: You know, I'm not exactly sure what saline water or any of this stuff has to do with this bill on a basin transfer. I think you've answered the question, and I guess I'm asking you again. You've stated that fresh water in use for oil flood systems or whatever has gone way down. I think the reason for that is they are using brackish water or saline waters, but I don't know if it has anything to do with this actual bill on basin transfer.

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Chairman, the hon. minister is right. It does not. The question that was brought up really was asking an opinion, and I stated my opinion on this.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Mr. Chair, the reason I brought up the need to reconsider this potential for water transfer and the reason I bring up saline water is that if we can conserve the existing water within the basin by using alternatives such as saline water – or CO₂ injection seems to be another method of withdrawing oil and at the same time getting rid of CO₂ emissions – it seems to me that we should use our modern technology to every extent that we can to preserve what we have in the way of water. That's why I made that comment with regard to saline. To me it is directly related to this interbasin transfer.

The question I would like to know – again, I'm not familiar with waterworks, and I'm sure the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is considerably more knowledgeable – is: how is this proposed transfer of water to take place? What will be the vessel or the methodology used to do the transfer?

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that just to follow up on the comments regarding saline water, if the people could find a way of desalinating the saline water that's there, perhaps that's an alternative. But, in fact, the question is with regard to how this

water will be transferred. It'll be done by pipeline. I believe it'll be done by pipeline. It's a water pipeline transfer. It is a closed system. It is closed to holding facilities within these communities and at the farms.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask if the hon. member is aware of a plan to prevent this from happening again next year? In other words, we can't control droughts, but is there a plan in relation to these communities to reduce the chances of this happening again next year in the particularly drought-stricken areas?

Mr. Mitzel: As I mentioned before, Mr. Chairman, the allocation is there. The allocation will be a transfer of allocation of the licence of water. Is there a plan to not do it again? It certainly depends on the need of the community, it depends on the needs of the area, and it also depends on the amount of water allocation that would be available because these people also have to be able to live in their community. Water, as the hon. member mentioned, is what sustains life.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Dr. Swann: Just a quick follow-up. What I'm asking is: is there any reason to expect this community to change the way it's using water in the future such that it won't be as likely to require a transfer next year, or are we simply going to continue to follow the same plans?

Mr. Mitzel: Well, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned, the water allocation is there. The ability to move the water is there. The ability to actually treat the water is there. The pipeline will be in the ground, and in fact those people will be receiving water from the treatment plant from Stettler for years to come.

Chair's Ruling Relevance

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, just as a caution. When we are in committee stage, the intent is to go line by line. While I appreciate that we have a fairly open latitude to try and ask many questions, generally we deal with line-by-line items of the bill. So we should try to stay within the scope of the bill, but you may make comments about issues that you do have. Okay?

The hon. Government House Leader.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been listening carefully to the exchange on this bill and am moved to make some comments relative to the fact that it would appear from the questions and comments that have been made that members of the opposition have a significant misunderstanding or perhaps a wilful misunderstanding of what's actually being contemplated by this act.

This is a very simple process. We have a law in this province and we have a policy in this province which says that we don't have interbasin transfer. The only way that you can have any interbasin transfer is if a specific act is brought before the Legislature. So here we have an act, which is being sponsored by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, to allow for a specific transfer of water on a licensed annual basis. It would be expressly for the sole purpose of allowing municipalities in a particular region of the province to enjoy a safe water supply.

It's not an interbasin transfer in the context that seems to be discussed here. It's not an interbasin transfer. Nobody ought to be alarmed about piping water from one basin to another on a regular and continuing and expanding basis but, rather, talk about municipalities in our province, the people who are living in those municipalities needing a supply of adequate, appropriate, and treated water and the fact that the water is drawn from one basin but serves communities who are in the other basin and that the outfall or the excess of water that results from a domestic water supply might end up in a basin other than what it was drawn from.

It's a very simple act, but because we have such strong protection against interbasin transfer in this province, it requires that it come to the Legislature to deal with it. I think members opposite are missing the point on this rather dramatically.

9:30

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'm compelled to enter into this particular debate based on the comments of the Minister of Advanced Education. I would argue that the members on the opposition side do not misunderstand at all what is happening here. The government has repeatedly said to us that it's so important that we understand that interbasin water transfer should not happen that there is therefore special legislation brought before the Assembly in order to deal with it. Our concern is that we are seeing a trend. This is the second application, the second piece of legislation brought before us within a very short period of time, and that causes us great concern.

We hear that this is so important they have to produce special legislation. Yes, we understand that, and we very much agree that extreme caution should be taken. We would prefer not to see interbasin water transfer. It's part of our policy around water management. Our concern is that this is the second time we've seen this in about as many years. That to us starts to say that this is being used more often as a solution than we are comfortable with.

Our questions are around: what else are you doing to make sure that this is not before us in a third piece of legislation next year? It's the demand side. So in the context of what's being discussed here, that is why we are expressing such concerns, and we are broadening and asking the questions around: what other issues have you looked at? What other methods have you looked at to address the reason, the demand for this interbasin water transfer becoming necessary? Because if nothing else is done in context here, if nothing else is done to address the demand, if nothing else is done to address the conservation and we end up with a third request coming forward, then we definitely have a trend. Then I would argue that, in fact, that has become the government's solution to dealing with this issue.

It is around conservation. It is around water use. It is around involving the municipalities. It is around the saline water. It is around how we are using water for industrial use and how we are using water in the municipalities. So this is a much larger discussion because we're agreeing with the government that this is so vital that we be so careful with water management and with interbasin water transfer.

We are concerned because what we see is the government starting to use this legislation as the solution, as a simple answer to a complex problem, as the norm, and that's what our concerns are around. So we're questioning the government closely, and I have to commend the hon. sponsoring member, who has been game to get up and do his best to answer back. That's why we're doing it.

You know, this is why we discuss this line by line, clause by clause, because what's being discussed here leads to a larger context, and this is the forum to be deciding that in. Second reading is on

principle. Third reading is on effect. Committee is line by line, clause by clause, and that includes all of the context that's being discussed here.

I sense that the government is annoyed with us, but frankly that is why we have a forum to discuss this in large and small detail, and that's why we're doing it. Thank you. [interjections]

I'm sorry. Now there are more people involved in the discussion.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I just want to draw everyone to *Beauchesne* 688. If you take a few moments to read that, it will clarify the purpose of committee stage.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, I just want to enter the debate and hopefully can be of some help and clarify some of these issues. I think it would be extremely useful for the members of the opposition, particularly the urban members, to familiarize themselves a bit more with some of these rural challenges and talk about solutions because the solutions are very limited.

I am as guilty as anyone. While I am in the city of Edmonton, I know that I can turn on the tap. There will be water. We sit on the North Saskatchewan River. When I'm in the city of Calgary, we're sitting on the Bow River. I am proud of the conservation efforts of our cities, as I am of our rural communities'. I recall in the drought years when the city of Calgary implemented voluntary restrictions on the use of water. I did not hear complaints from the citizens of that centre when that occurred.

When you move out of the urban areas – and particularly those of us who are in southern Alberta are maybe very conscious of this because there really are not any natural lakes. They are man-made. It would be extremely beneficial and I think everyone would enjoy understanding what wonderful things have happened in water conservation and water management, and I speak more about the south because, of course, I am more familiar with that.

You look at the McGregor Lake irrigation project. You look at the Newell Lake water conservation wetlands. Look at the Kinbrook park water conservation wetlands projects. None of these are man-made lakes. They are done, many of them, with PFRA, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, in days gone by – unfortunately, they're not involved in that as much anymore – and with Ducks Unlimited and other groups that are interested in this.

It is a real issue. The interesting thing is that it is expanding across the province, and one of the things that we want to ensure is that wherever you live in this province, you have the opportunity to have quality potable water for domestic use in particular. That is really what this is for.

This is an area of my constituency which came into my constituency just in the last election, and I can assure you that the challenges that the people who live in those communities have on quality water for domestic use are huge, and they have every right to have a solution to that. We've done extensive work with Environment Canada over the years through PFRA again in doing what we called monitoring wells to see if we could find better groundwater solutions for some of these issues. We were fortunate in a few, but unfortunately not as fortunate in many.

So for these communities this is the solution, and what we are talking about is utilizing about .1 per cent of the flow of a river. I think in every year we pass more through than we need to pass through under our agreements on interprovincial transfers. There's no question that in this province we have got to take a very serious look at how we manage our water supply. That's what the Water for Life strategy is all about. We are going to have to find more ways of capturing water in peak flow times for utilization when flows are lower.

I think that if one studies the water management practices in this province, one could be very proud. My predecessor, Henry Kroeger, who was the MLA for the area, minister of transportation, did extensive work particularly on the South Saskatchewan basin, left me all of his materials, and it's fascinating to see what types of water management projects have happened. We had a lot of discussion around the Oldman River, and it was startling for some people to understand that if it wasn't for water management, the fish in that river would die because there would be no constant flow.

You look at the Red Deer and what the dam has done for that. There is no flooding in the town of Drumheller. Well, very little. There's a ravine that sometimes in a heavy rainfall causes us a little problem, but the river doesn't. That's managing that flow, and while it manages the flow, it also affords opportunities for recreation and quality of life that people appreciate and utilize.

9:40

This is a small amount of water, but I want to assure the members that in this project and in the other one that was the Lacombe area, there is the greatest and utmost care taken in how that water is transferred and the disposition of the waste water that would come off of that.

I think it's important that when these do come forward, they need to come to this Legislature. I think it's important that we have the opportunity to discuss them and understand how we're managing this water, and I compliment everyone who has come to their feet in this discussion to try and better understand that this is a safe way to transfer water, and that all – all – other opportunities to supply that water have been looked at. But this is a life and death matter to these people, and it is for many, many of our rural communities.

I happen to be in the area where one of the first major pipelines was done. Water was brought up from the Red Deer River to the plant at Sheerness, and again through the foresight of my predecessor, the hon. Henry Kroeger, a large, oversized pipe was brought from Sheerness to the reservoir at Hanna, where there was a treatment plant that could treat all of the water that would be required to service the communities east of that. That pipeline originated and started, fortunately, mainly on a gravity flow so not a high-cost one to operate. It takes water to communities right down the line to Oyen. That has expanded since and has gone west to communities like Delia, Craigmyle, and so on.

I can tell you that at times our hospitals in Oyen could not develop X-rays. We had to close schools because there wasn't sufficient water to flush toilets to operate washrooms. That's something that for those of us who are here and will go home tonight and have a shower and not think about an interruption or not be concerned about the quality because we know that the treatment systems here – we may get a little odour once in a while from heavy runoff or something. But we're confident that when we utilize that water, it's safe. For these other communities, unless we do projects like that, they don't have that confidence.

It shouldn't matter where you live or what nature has done in the makeup of our province. To say to people: well, you can move or move your town. Well, I can tell you that you can't move this area, and we shouldn't. It contributes in a huge way to the economy of this province, and this project will allow those citizens to have what many of us take for granted.

So I support it. I hope that some of my comments have been helpful to the members opposite to understand this and would invite them, certainly, at any time to visit those communities and try to understand the challenges that they have and the depth that they have gone to in looking at other solutions. This is the only solution in this instance that makes any economic sense, but more than that,

probably the only way to deliver water to those communities that is safe and reliable.

I have every confidence in the people that will manage this supply, that they will do it with great integrity because nobody understands the value of water more than those of us who don't have much of it. If you look at the efficiency of the water management – and I said again that I speak mainly about the south – it is one of the greatest stories that could ever be told, and we should be so proud of it. Four per cent of our land is under irrigation, provides almost 25 per cent of the crop product in this province, and has allowed us to go into new crops and diversify our economy such as two potato plants to provide jobs and economy. I look at what the irrigation community has done in efficiency of utilization of that water, and it is an amazing story. For those of you who live in the south – and I know one of your members does – and look at the aqueduct, which was really maybe the beginning of water management in the south, we've come a long way, and we're always searching for new ways.

The hon. member who brings this bill forward has many examples in his area in the greenhouse industry of wonderful utilization and conservation of a very precious resource. Again, if you ever have an opportunity to see the utilization of hydroponics in that area and understand how every drop is important, it would be a useful experience for any of you.

So I urge you to support it. I urge you to continue to question how we utilize water. When we move along this path of the Water for Life strategy, we should all be involved. We're very fortunate in this province to sit on perhaps the greatest supply of fresh water there is in North America. It is in our best interests, and in fact it's our responsibility to manage that resource well.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not going to echo the minister's comments, but I'd like to assure the hon. members who asked the questions tonight that I truly appreciate the questions that they've asked. From my dealings with the environment and everything else I really appreciate the fact that this legislation is here so that we can debate like this any project that may come up on a case-by-case basis. I think that is so important.

One of the things with regard to this project is the fact that I think there are four main factors that have been considered by Alberta Environment that make the passage of this bill a requirement, a need, and I think it should be approved. First off, is the water available? Secondly, would any existing licence holders be affected? Thirdly, will we still maintain enough water to meet our agreements with Saskatchewan and Manitoba? Fourthly, will we still have enough water to meet the needs of the ecosystem? Those questions have been answered, and the answer is yes. In fact, the Red Deer River does have the amount of water that answers all those questions, and the town of Stettler does have the ability with their infrastructure to provide the water that's required in order to meet the requirements of this project.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I very much appreciated the discussion on this bill from both sides of the House to this point. I think that there are some very reasonable questions that have been answered. Whenever we consider a piece of legislation that authorizes an interbasin transfer of water, it should be carefully scrutinized, in my view.

I recognize that in this case, like the previous case that we debated in the House, we're talking about water that is for human consumption that will be filtered and chlorinated according to national standards. Essentially, the water from the tap comes from one basin, and when it goes down the drain and it's treated, it ends up in the other one. That's the type of interbasin transfer that we're talking about.

I think that as we see changes in rural Alberta, we're going to see more rationalization of our water systems, and we may well see more of these. But I do draw a distinction between that type of interbasin transfer, which makes the transfer of organisms or different life forms from one basin to another extremely difficult, if not impossible – it's different from the wholesale transfer of raw water through pipes that may completely cross-contaminate the biological ecosystem of one to another. So we draw a distinction in this particular case, and we recognize the importance of providing safe potable water to Alberta communities. In this case, we're in a qualified way prepared to support this bill.

9:50

Nevertheless, there are real, significant challenges facing Alberta in terms of its water supply. I have to disagree with the hon. Minister of Finance about sitting on the greatest freshwater resources in the country. I think, in fact, Alberta is perhaps the driest province in Canada and has more challenges relative to water supply and surface water than some other provinces. There are some significant problems. We've touched on the whole question of using fresh surface water in order to bring up depleted oil wells. I know that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has talked about his hope that this is continuing to decline. Mr. Chairman, we need more than hope on this question. We need a clear policy and strong direction from the government because this is water that we cannot afford to use in this way, and it should be completely eliminated as a practice as quickly as possible, in our view.

There are real challenges with the continuing growth of the population of this province and continuing urbanization and changes to agriculture. The demand for water is increasing very rapidly, yet the ability to meet those demands is declining. Not the least of the challenges is that posed by global warming. The government has admitted that global warming exists. That took some work on the part of the opposition during the last term of the Legislature, but they have acknowledged that this is fact. In fact, one of the problems that we have is that the droughts are becoming longer, and they're becoming more sustained and deeper. So that dries out the province. It dries out forests. It dries out agricultural regions as well. And that trend will continue if not accelerate.

Furthermore, much of the water in Alberta comes from rivers that are glacier fed, and it's the fact that they're glacier fed that makes them all-year rivers rather than seasonal rivers. In fact, the glacier feeding the Bow River is expected to be gone entirely within 35 years, I was told, and I think that's correct. Other rivers in this province that are glacier fed, like the North Saskatchewan, are going to become seasonal rivers within 50 to 100 years when the glaciers feeding them are completely melted. So what we're heading for, as demand for water increases and supplies of water decline, is a very serious crisis in this province sometime in the future, and we need to be very aware of that.

One of the things that we can do aside from eliminating fresh water use in oil recovery is to become stronger in terms of conservation. I'm not in any way attempting to suggest that the Stettler area has not taken vigorous conservation methods, but I think there's an example from my experience with the city of Edmonton that's very interesting. About 1995 the administration of the city of Edmonton proposed a very large expansion of the E.L. Smith water treatment

plant, something, as I recall, in excess of \$200 million to expand that and to build a large treated-water pipeline from the Rosedale water treatment plant as well, which added another 50 or so million dollars.

A number of councillors got together and pushed council for an alternative. The alternative was a water conservation program in the city of Edmonton. It was voluntary in nature but involved some changes to standards for construction, new homes and so on, and it talked about the reduction of water in a number of ways, including for the watering of lawns and so on. The result was, Mr. Chairman, that we were able to defer the construction of this plant, which has never been needed since that time, and we're looking now almost 10 years back.

Not only did we defer that cost, which would've been passed on to ratepayers in their monthly bill; we were able to save ratepayers over a five- to seven-year period about \$3 a month on their bill by simply implementing a voluntary conservation program. So not only is water conservation important for preserving our water supplies and meeting our needs into the future; it's a very important way of saving money for ratepayers as well.

I think the government could go much farther in encouraging industry and municipalities to implement these kinds of water conservation programs and may allow us to postpone or completely eliminate the need for some of these projects. Again, I'm not saying that this particular project would necessarily qualify under those terms, but it is something that we should be vigorously pursuing because it's the kind of policy that doesn't cost the government money. It actually saves the government and taxpayers and ratepayers money right across the board. I think that the government should pursue this kind of approach most vigorously as one element in a water strategy for this province.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I will indicate that we'll support this bill although we are concerned about the direction here, and I take my seat. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just one comment to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood that, indeed, in the case of this project and for perhaps all of eastern Alberta and all of southern Alberta the people who live there are in a water conservation mode at all times. That's a way of life for them.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I'll wrap up very quickly. I want to again thank the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for being so willing to answer what we believe are important questions. These are not intended to be clock stappers.

I also want to thank the Minister of Finance for providing the type of clarification that helped me with the decision. It is my intention to do just as you've recommended, to visit a number of the rural communities both in the south and the north. I'm looking forward to it in terms of the parks and protected areas as well as in my role in infrastructure.

The other quick reason for standing up is that I didn't want to appear in tomorrow's question period as: according to the debate last night, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity wants to keep Stettler from having a viable fresh water supply. I want the quality of life throughout all the municipalities maintained to the highest degree, keeping in mind the conservation methods I'm very pleased to hear about. I never suspected that Stettler wasn't, you know, being very responsible in its water usage.

There is a temptation when something is said – for example, when I talked about sustainable resources and ingenuity, I made a comment with regard to a specific forestry practice which I was concerned about. I've since had some interesting chats with members from the forestry association, who have assisted me with my understanding of the global process in Alberta. I still have concerns about the specific area of the Kananaskis, but I do appreciate the clarification. I do appreciate the offer to have a complete discussion. I wouldn't say tonight was debate; I would say it was more along the lines of discussion.

We're the members that the people of Alberta have entrusted with the well-being of their futures, and if we don't hold these discussions within this Legislature, my concern is that the discussion doesn't get held.

Thank you very much.

[The clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

10:00

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report bills 10 and 11.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 10 and Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:02 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, April 7, 2005

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/07

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Let us keep ever mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province, and in that work let us find strength and wisdom. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to have 20 guests with me from the Kneehill Christian school, which is in the community of Linden. The students today are accompanied by Miss Terri Miller, a teacher, Miss Dana Toews, a teaching assistant, as well as parents Glen Regehr, Mrs. Lois Regehr, Mr. Steve Berniko as well as Cheryl Berniko and Beverly Cottier. They're all seated in the public gallery, and I'd like the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me today to introduce a very large group from the Evansview school. They're accompanied by teachers Darlene Haggart, Bonnie Perrett, and Carol Baksa, and at this time I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce a group of students from probably one of the biggest school areas in Alberta. In fact, they're taught by the School of Hope, and only the school is centred in Vermilion. The children are home-schooled all over the province. They're here today with their group leaders Monika Poland and Chuck Marple and their parents Wanda Auld, Allison Mohr, Sharon Robertson, Kelley Thompson, Harvey and Val Younker, and Tammy Younker. I'd ask them and their students to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 18 of Alberta's brightest students from my constituency of Highwood. They are visiting the Legislature today from the Edison school, just north of Okotoks, and have come to see question period. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Joseph Smith and five parent helpers: Diane Duncan, Candy Erikson, Elly Singer, Karen Hodges, and Syl Mortensen. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure that

I introduce to you and through you my baby sister from Manitoba, who is a highly respected and prominent Liberal organizer in Manitoba, and also my nephew Michael Brennan. My sister's name is Florence Eastwood, and Michael is from Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a longish introduction. With your permission I take pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ruth Maria Adria, a highly respected elder advocate. She is accompanied by 13 other very concerned family members, many of whom happen to be seniors as well. The Elder Advocates of Alberta held a press conference this morning highlighting the following concerns: problems with Bonnyville health care centre . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, with the utmost respect, this is an introduction, not a ministerial or member's statement. There is an opportunity later this afternoon or next week if the hon. member wants to provide a statement or a recognition. So let's get on with it.

Dr. Pannu: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take your direction.

The names of the guests, Mr. Speaker, are Yvonne Nadeau, her husband Guy Brookes, Flora L'Heureux, Audrey Johnston, Louis Adria, Gordon Haig, Brenda Haig, Ed Marcum, Orpha Donnelly, Katherine Kutt, Joseph Green, Eva Makowichuk, Anne Romanow. I'll ask these guests to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: To the hon. members for Edmonton-Centre and Cardston-Taber-Warner, are your guests here now, or do you want to do the introductions later?

Mr. Hinman: Later on.

Ms Blakeman: I'm not sure if they're here or not. I will go ahead with it if that's all right with you.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm very fortunate in having a wonderful postsecondary institution in my riding, and I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a social studies 10 class from NorQuest College. I believe they're in the public gallery, and there are 11 students here today accompanied by their instructor, Michelle Tracy. If they're in the gallery, I would ask them to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly. I don't see them rising, so I'm assuming they'll come in later, and I'll send them the *Hansard* to let them know.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Others? The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you two individuals that are very close to me. In making the first introduction, I will be invoking the legislative immunity that we enjoy by sitting in this Assembly as

it is the birthday of my wife, who is sitting in the Assembly. At risk of dire consequences to myself I will ask my wife, Evelyn Oberg, to please stand. Sitting beside her is a resident of the Calgary-Glenmore constituency who has been very active down there and is somebody that is extremely wonderful. It is my wife's mother, Mrs. Katy Walter. Could you please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, 23 individuals have advised me today that they would like to participate, so brevity would be really helpful.

The first Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Finance assured this House that she trusted the full independence of the report compiled by her nine commissioners from the Alberta Securities Commission, yet former and current employees with that organization have indicated that the commissioners together with Mr. Sibold and Mr. Linder, the chairman and executive director, are a tight-knit group. What still remains to be seen is why this government continues to take the word of these part-time commissioners, paid \$288,000 a year, over the word of 30 employees who came forward and braved threats from an employer who publicly called them cowardly and depraved. To the Premier: what does the Premier have to say to the employees of the Alberta Securities Commission who want to come forward and speak out against the toxic work environment there but can't out of fear of legal threats from Mr. Sibold and Mr. Linder?

Mr. Klein: I don't believe that to be true, Mr. Speaker, but I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance speak to it.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have commented on this in the House prior to today. I think that it's obvious that the members of the commission staff feel quite comfortable in coming forward with their concerns, which they have done, and the commission in receiving that and, in fact, a letter from me requesting it launched an investigation with an external person to provide information on this.

The other point I want to make again is that the hon. member opposite keeps asking for this to be made public, when, in fact, these persons came forward on the basis of a solicitor/client relationship and anonymity. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the employees at the commission are in any way inhibited from coming forward with their concerns.

1:40

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, she's out of touch.

To the Minister of Finance: would the minister please explain why a number of enforcement employees at the Alberta Securities Commission were not even aware of Mr. Mack's investigation into the enforcement problems of the commission? What is the secret?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know that to be true. I have not heard from enforcement officers in the commission that feel that they were not able to provide information. As I indicated, the investigation, as I understand it, first dealt with the complaints that were raised primarily by staff in the commission. Secondly, the investigation included discussions with persons who would have been named in the initial investigation, and that report was brought forward as well. So I have no knowledge of that.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Premier: given the vital importance of the Alberta Securities Commission to the economy of this province and the nature of this controversy, has the Premier personally inquired into the operations and the concerns at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mr. Klein: The answer to that question is no, Mr. Speaker. It's in the good hands of the Minister of Finance.

The Speaker: The second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Infrastructure Needs in Fort McMurray

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Rod Love is a lucky man. He draws paycheques from private companies while flying high on Alberta government planes. He pockets salary from a company proposing a doomed rail link to Fort McMurray and consulting fees from the government's million dollar study of the same pricey railway scheme trumpeted by the Premier. My first question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What was Rod Love, a private consultant, doing on a government plane to Fort McMurray last summer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think probably the best way I could answer that is that you can talk to Rod Love and ask him.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: what portion of the government's million dollar rail study did Mr. Love receive in fees for service?

Mr. Klein: It's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that Rod Love, a consultant at the time, consulted with the consortium that proposed the rail on communications, and it was limited to that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will the Premier abandon further royalty reductions in the form of roads for royalties and admit that building and paying for public roads is the government's responsibility?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is alluding to Fort McMurray, we are looking for various ways to accommodate needed infrastructure in that area. That's what recent meetings have been all about, to find ways in which government and industry can work together to provide that infrastructure.

The Speaker: The third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Human Resources and Employment and the Premier announced the minimum wage increase some months ago. It still isn't happening. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employ-

ment. Will this government guarantee that this basic increase to \$7 will occur within our Alberta centennial year?

Mr. Cardinal: I can say yes, Mr. Speaker, but in addition to that I want to clarify for the member because it is an important question. It's a good question. The fact is that we advised the House here about three weeks ago that we would spend a bit of time consulting with the foods industry, in particular, that may be impacted in this particular change. We've done that. We've completed that. We've received close to 2,000 different recommendations. We are assessing, and we will announce the results in the very near future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the same minister. With industry lobbyists pushing for this, will the government consider that servers in fast-food establishments and restaurants are not worthy of the full minimum wage?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly who we are consulting: the food industry. They have responded. There are 2,000 submissions that have come in. We just finished that process. I am now in the process of tabulating the stuff and then reviewing, and then I'll go forward through the normal process we do to change policy.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. The lobbyists are also pushing for youth to have a lesser rate. Will the government consider that youth saving for their education and helping their families should get a lesser minimum wage than other Albertans?

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, like I said, we announced that the minimum wage is going to be \$7. We said that we will announce later as to how that may be implemented. That is still in place. We're always open to look at other options. We will continue monitoring the situation, and if there are future changes that need to take place, of course this government always listens, and we'll make the changes.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Protection for Persons in Long-term Care

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today Elder Advocates of Alberta held a public forum at which over 50 people, including family members of seniors in care, told heart-rending stories about the appalling conditions that elderly residents in long-term care are forced to endure. While seniors are being routinely overmedicated and neglected, family members are often intimidated into silence. Two years ago Alberta's Ombudsman outlined serious systematic failures in government oversight, yet the neglect and abuse continue. Mr. Speaker, I'll table that at the appropriate time. My question is to the Premier. Given that two years ago the Ombudsman report said that the responsible department takes the position that "it is exempt from the rules of natural justice," why has the government still not acted to protect seniors against abuse and neglect in long-term care facilities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the preamble, but I will have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness respond.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I too take exception to the preamble.

There's a generalization there that is not appropriate. Let me make a couple of remarks and then remind the Assembly that the Protection for Persons in Care Act, should anybody choose to make a complaint or file a complaint about it, resides with Aids to Daily Living in Seniors and Community Supports.

Over the past year we have increased funding. There have been some modest increases. Over the next three years we hope to provide assistance for further funding for long-term care. In terms of the drugs and the overmedication, as I've responded earlier in the House, it's appropriate, if people have concerns about that, to file them either with a physician or with the facility themselves or, in fact, let the minister know. We would be pleased to follow up on those cases.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that the Ombudsman two years ago clearly substantiated the complaints of residents, why has the government still failed to implement a proper process for investigating abuse and neglect in long-term care?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is in place a proper process, and I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we have been launching a number of initiatives, among those a comprehensive front-line staff training program. We'll have over 7,000 front-line staff trained by the end of June 2005. Should there in fact be circumstances where staff or administration in these facilities do not have the capacity to administer proper care, then those staff members should be reported.

Mr. Speaker, I think that at the time that we are able to talk about our new budget, we'll be able to talk about more supports still to long-term care facilities.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Ombudsman found that the department responsible for protecting persons in care failed to investigate complaints, why is the government allowing these dreadful failures to continue?

[Two ministers rose]

Ms Evans: We're all eager to tell you that, first of all, if there are complaints, very specific complaints, they could be tabled. The legislation currently resides with the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

But may I just invite the hon. member – and I like him a lot – to just sit with me and talk to me about it, and I'll do what I can to resolve the problem? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's true that we do have a 45-second guide, but sometimes too much information.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Live Hog Exports

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the U.S. International Trade Commission determined that Canadian live hog exports to the United States are not causing material injury to American

producers. My first question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Does this mean the end of trade action against our producers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been very good news, the ruling by the United States International Trade Commission, on a 5-0 vote, indicating that there is no harm done to American producers. Because the vote itself was unanimous, we anticipate that there probably won't be an appeal, but we have to wait a further 30 days to see if there will be one because that's within the regulations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. What will this ruling mean for Alberta's hog producers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to reiterate what my colleague has said: this is great news for Alberta's hog producers. While the \$25 million in tariffs is going to be returned, it's unclear as to how much our producers will receive of that.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, where do we go from here? The concept of dumping is questionable, especially when it's applied to industries such as agriculture, which is subject to production cycles and those sorts of things. In that light, we've proposed that antidumping rules be modified to take into account the cyclical nature of the industry, and that's going to make things a lot more equitable for our producers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Long-term Care Standards

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have just returned from that very disturbing press conference held by the Elder Advocates of Alberta, and to me it was very clear that the Protection for Persons in Care Act has shamefully failed Albertans. My question would be to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Has this government established who is ultimately accountable, not just has the authority to make recommendations but actually accountable, for the quality of life of vulnerable residents in long-term care?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, I inherited the responsibility for the Protection for Persons in Care Act when I became minister of this portfolio. As you know, this act was proclaimed in 1998. It was the first of its kind in Canada, and it has led the way. It's a model for the rest of Canada.

Hon. member, I am currently reviewing the 13 recommendations that were in the legislative review report, but this is not a matter of just amending the act to do an amendment. I'm also working with the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Health and Wellness, and the Minister of Children's Services in order to develop a comprehensive, co-ordinated approach to the Protection for Persons in Care Act.

I want to say this, and it's based on the earlier question as well. We take allegations of abuse very seriously. It is really important.

It is. It is important that persons that are living and being cared for in our public facilities are safe, that they're treated with dignity and respect. I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker: if this legislation does not meet those goals, I will make the necessary amendments to ensure that the act does.

Ms Pastoor: I certainly thank you for that answer. It is encouraging to hear that there are multimistries involved with this. However, my question would be: is there going to be a single ministry and I mean really accountable not only for the staffing but for the way these institutions are run?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've said in the Assembly before that the Minister of Health and Wellness and I are working very closely on long-term care standards, which, hon. member, you're familiar with. The way those standards are now, there are a number of very good organizations in the province that are assisting us with those standards, and that would include the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association, the Long Term Care Association, regional health authorities, our departments, and we are going to come forward with those standards together. But you know, hon. member, in that term "long-term care" there is care, but there is the board and room and housing part of it that is in my portfolio.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Yes, I'm very aware of how far reaching this problem is.

I guess my third question, please, if I might, is: when will the government be strengthening the Nursing Homes Act? Again, hopefully we'll have those province-wide standards that you're referring to.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Nursing Homes Act we have currently got a review of all of the standards pertaining to our long-term care facilities, including the Nursing Homes Act, and we will provide that information accordingly. I've got a number of pieces of it, but at this time I think we've covered the topic with the comments made earlier in response to the second question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Photoradar

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are some very disturbing rumours flying around that Alberta's picturesque highways may soon become Alberta's picture-risk highways; in other words, that photoradar may soon be coming to provincial highways. Can the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation either substantiate or put the lens cover on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the sake of brevity the answer to that question is no, absolutely not.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you very much. Given that recent news articles have also talked about adding demerit points to photoradar tickets, can the minister point out if that rumour has any merit?

Dr. Oberg: Again, Mr. Speaker, very, very quickly, the answer is no, we will not be giving demerits. For those of us who have teenage children who drive our vehicles, we certainly do not want demerits put on photoradar.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently members of the Lubicon First Nation confronted construction crews clearing bush for oil and gas development in areas designated as buffer zones according to the Grimshaw agreement. According to the Lubicon chief, the oil companies in question, with deep connections to this government, did not consult the band prior to the crews moving into the area. My first question to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: given that your ministry was given \$6 million to enable consultation with First Nations for these purposes, what are you doing about this failure?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me discuss the whole issue of consultation. We started in about June 2003 to be able to start developing a consultation process. Since that time, we've had a lot of different meetings with the various First Nations and, as well, with industry, and we're at the point now of making sure that we do a number of things.

One is that with the money that was given to us – each different ministry was given the money so that we could begin to build a capacity within government. We've been able to do that, and that has helped us to be able to work with the First Nations on building their own capacity. Since that time, we've also received money to be able to ensure that that capacity within First Nations would be also dealt with, and we have put money into what we call traditional land-use studies. Those traditional land-use studies are to be able to map where the First Nations have traditionally done their work, traditionally done their traditional activities.

The Speaker: I'll turn it over to the hon. member for a supplementary.

Dr. Swann: To the Minister of Environment: will you, sir, support an environmental impact assessment before the projected 512 wells are drilled in areas in and around the Lubicon nation?

2:00

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that EIAs, as they're referred to, environmental impact assessments, are very important tools to ensure the environmental standards that we enjoy here in Alberta. Certainly, when they are used with the parameters and conditions to make that determination, we are certainly not afraid in any way, shape, or form of having an environmental impact assessment if the parameters warrant such. What I would do is ask the Minister of Energy to supplement relative to the EUB process on that point.

The Speaker: Well, we'll proceed to the third supplementary.

Dr. Swann: To the Minister of Energy: given the disregard for Lubicon rights in these developments, will your ministry stop these particular developments in the area until these issues have been addressed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to respond to that. In this case I have been informed that the company has moved some pipe and has done some clearing around a well site. That is very standard procedure. This is in anticipation of the spring thaw. They have not yet gone forward to the Energy and Utilities Board, which is a requirement, but they will. That will come forward in due course. That does require public consultation, so there will be a process of public consultation before any licence is actually issued for drilling, as is the normal procedure.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Métis Hunting Rights

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like many members I am hearing constituents' concerns about the impact of the interim Métis harvesting agreement on the conservation of Alberta's fisheries and wildlife. Their message has been clear and in my opinion accurate. Good policy should be based not on the rights inherited from ancestors of some Albertans to harvest wildlife, rather good public policy should be based on the responsibility of all Albertans to conserve our wildlife for our children. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. If a lake or river has size and number limits on the fish that can be taken or if a lake or river is open only for catch-and-release fishing, do these limits apply to Métis fishermen, and specifically does the IMHA allow Métis netting of rainbow and brown trout on the Bow River?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If Métis are fishing with a rod and reel, then a licence is required, and all the provisions under legislation and regulations and the rules that are set out do apply. When Métis are wanting to use nets for subsistence fishing, then they require a domestic fishing licence – they do require a domestic fishing licence – and they must comply with conservation measures and provisions such as lake closures. There is no domestic – no domestic – fishing allowed on the Bow River. Domestic fishing is only allowed on a limited number of lakes and rivers such as the Peace and the lower Athabasca rivers in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental question is to the same minister. Can the minister tell us how many new gill net licences have been issued to Métis since the interim Métis harvesting agreement was signed? I have been sent a document circulated . . .

The Speaker: I think the hon. member has asked the question already.

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the hon. member – I have some stats – that over the past five years there have been some changes in the numbers of domestic fishing licences. In the year 2000 we issued 2,194 licences, in 2001 we issued 1,919 licences, in 2002 we issued 2,003 licences, in 2003 we issued 1,941 licences, and in the year 2004, which was last year, we issued 2,139 licences overall. That's just an example of the total number of licences over the past four years since before this interim agreement came into place, and you'll see that there's not a great variance.

Dr. Morton: My second supplemental is to the same minister. Can you clarify, please, for the House: are those individual fishing licences, or are those netting licences?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, we have limits in place and records in place to make sure that we know what kind of limits individuals holding licences have. They can apply for one body of water, or if they need to go for three bodies of water, then they have to have three different licences. There are also limits on setting mesh sizes and limits on the number of nets that are allowed, and we have records on that as well. You can be assured that we will be tracking the conditions on net checks as well as surveys and voluntary reporting. Our job in Sustainable Resource Development is to abide by the Supreme Court decision.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Security in Seniors' Apartment Buildings

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About a year ago it came to light that hundreds of legitimate residents of two subsidized seniors' buildings in Calgary's East Village were being terrorized and intimidated by drug dealers, crack addicts, and sex trade workers who were getting into and in some cases even living in the buildings. Murdoch Manor and the George C. King Tower are owned by the province. Despite assurances by the seniors minister at the time that action was being taken, residents are still complaining that things have not improved. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: when is the government going to do something about these appalling living conditions?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard of this incident at all. That's news to me, hon. member, and I'd look into it for you, but in the meantime I'd ask that the Solicitor General reply regarding the justice issues that you raised.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. In fact, my constituency assistant attended there this past Sunday and had breakfast with the seniors at the facility. There are a number of issues that we're dealing with there. One of the greatest issues is the fact that some of the residents, as well, that reside in the premises are allowing for the side doors to be opened, which is allowing some of the street people and/or the drug traffickers and the prostitutes to enter into the building. So we're working with the management company, Trinity Foundation, to look at ways that we can ensure the security of the residences there, but as well ensure that some of those issues regarding safety of the building itself are going to be there in the future.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, to the Solicitor General then: how does the government ensure that regulations regarding safety, upkeep, and residency in the seniors' buildings it owns are enforced?

Mr. Cenaiko: Another very good question, Mr. Speaker. Again, the safety and security of residents in any building, whether it's a government building or whether it's in their own residence or whether a condo or an apartment building, the residents themselves have to ensure that they all keep a watchful eye out for their neighbours and other residents and the facility that they're living in. The police are there to assist them in reporting any incidents that are

of a suspicious nature. As well, the crime prevention units of the police services throughout the province are there to assist in developing plans and action plans with regard to ensuring that their residences are safe.

Mr. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, then to the Solicitor General: with all of that in place, will he explain why seniors in these two buildings apparently cannot be protected from the criminals getting inside?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, I think I answered that the first time, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that if we can ensure that the residents that reside in the buildings don't allow those doors to remain open, then we'll be able to ensure that that premises is secure. One of the things that they're going to be looking at is the exit doors and that, but if the residents inside are allowing those doors to be open, we have to have a clear message to them not to open those doors.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Private/Public Partnerships

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year's budget foolishly committed \$1.2 billion over three years to finance provincial infrastructure through P3s. Since then skyrocketing costs forced the government to abandon two flagship P3s, the Calgary courthouse and the southeast Calgary hospital, which are now being built the old way through public financing. The third P3, the southeast Edmonton ring road, is only going ahead because the government misled the public when it said that it would be slightly cheaper to build a P3 when, in fact, it's going to cost tens of millions more. My question is to the Minister of Finance. In light of this dismal track record and the Auditor General's scathing criticisms, will the government do Alberta taxpayers a favour and abandon its failed P3 strategy in next week's provincial budget?

2:10

Mrs. McClellan: Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, you would not nor would the member expect me to elucidate to this House at this time about next week's budget. However, I am prepared to make a brief comment on P3s. What I understand from the Auditor General is not that you abandon P3s, but that you use a very rigorous process when you're determining whether a P3 is the appropriate vehicle. I will certainly say that we take that advice, and that is the process we use.

Mr. Stevens: Point of order.

The Speaker: Okay.
The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My question is a follow-up to the minister. Why does the government stubbornly cling to the faint hope that somewhere, somehow P3s will work when the overwhelming evidence both here and elsewhere is that P3s cost more and make government less accountable to taxpayers?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we cling to P3s. However, we have said that they may be – may be – an option in some projects. What is important is that you have a very rigorous process to determine if, in fact, that is an instrument you would use. I would suggest by the number that have gone forward that the process is rigorous and that we are not entering into a great number of them, but there may be advantages in entering into a P3.

If there was time in the 45 seconds, I would ask the minister of infrastructure to elaborate on the reasons for using a P3 on the Anthony Henday.

The Speaker: But this is question period, not debate period.
The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that this rigorous process is going to cost us \$40 million in Edmonton, how can the minister say that this is a process that's good for the taxpayers of Alberta?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the question that I would like to ask the minister of infrastructure to speak to.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the hon. member has misled this Assembly on two different occasions on this question, and quite frankly I'm tired of it. He said that we've got \$40 million more. Sorry, that is just not true. He also stated that we misled the public. There has not been a more rigorous process on P3s in the world than what we went through on the particular P3 for the Anthony Henday. It's time that these people came clean and actually stated the truth in this House.

The Speaker: Well, we have another point of order here, so this should be quite interesting later when we debate this.

But at the moment we're moving on to the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Self-managed Care for Seniors

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been approached by two seniors experiencing very similar concerns. Today my question pertains to an 81-year-old senior who has been wheelchair bound for the past eight years, is diabetic, suffers from high blood pressure, and has kidney problems. In 1999 Alberta health care paid \$2,053 per month to provide care for this senior in a nursing care facility. In 2000, after nine months of stay in the nursing home, she opted to move out into a seniors' apartment, accessing self-managed care funding. She received \$912 per month for that service. In 2002 this amount was reduced to \$847, and now it's been reduced to \$331 a month.

My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister shed some light on the self-managed care program and advise this House on how the department determines the appropriate and adequate amount of self-managed care resources for seniors who opt to live on their own instead of in a nursing home?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, since the Broda report the conclusions led us to try and provide options for seniors, either within home-care settings or within other facilities. Self-managed care, when it is perceived that either the guardian or the person is capable of undertaking that care, is done through an assessment by the health authority and funding through the health authority. It differs from home care in that the health authority funds and manages and provides it, but self-managed care is done when the seniors themselves purchase that type of care.

In the case of this particular senior, like other seniors that may be mentioned in this Assembly, with private details on a confidential basis I will follow up.

Mr. Shariff: Given that the example I gave is not an isolated incident, will the minister conduct a review of the self-managed care program to determine if Albertans receive adequate self-managed care funding for their conditions?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, all Alberta regions have self-managed care, and advanced home-care systems in Canada include Albertans as among the best. We have an appeal process in Calgary through the Calgary health region, and the client may wish to appeal that following the review that I would assure would be conducted. Other than that, to conduct a blanket review of self-managed care would do a disservice to some of those care facilities and the self-managed care that is going on in an exceptional fashion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Missing Health Records

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last annual report for the Ministry of Health and Wellness shows the department blew its health information and accountability budget by \$4 million, bringing the total spending on health information and accountability to \$53 million. This year they plan to spend about the same. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How could the ministry spend over \$50 million in the name of protecting health information and still lose data on 670,000 personal health records?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, at Public Accounts when we talked about the risks of IT and the assessment of how we manage risks in IT, there is a plethora of systems that help support over \$8 billion worth of health circumstances. The link with this tape is totally unfair in that the tape has been managed by a contractor. Internally how we manage data and collect data and store data and look after patient records is quite a different circumstance.

Ms Blakeman: Still in your department.

Again to the same minister: given that this ministry alone, not including regional health authorities, Government Services, and other departments, has handed out \$99 million to IBM over the last four years, what penalties will IBM face for losing the confidential information of 670,000 Albertans?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, as yet the investigation by the Privacy Commissioner has not been completed, and whether or not they have been the persons or the corporation that has effectively lost the tape, I cannot make that determination. But we will provide details at such time as it's appropriate.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. My final question, to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: when can we expect the report determining the effectiveness and reliability of outsourcing critical health management issues, such as the handling of personal health records?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you exactly when there would be a report done on that. The Privacy Commissioner is investigating all of these records missing right now, and I can assure you that our ministry is internally looking at everything right now, at whether or not all of our policies are being followed on protecting how all of these records are transferred or moved around. If any improvements need to be made, I assure the hon. member that they will be.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Battle River Water Strategy

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Battle River runs through my constituency, and along with many other Albertans my constituents rely on the Battle River for their water and livelihood. In recent years lack of moisture has compromised water levels of the Battle River, and as such there must be a better way to manage water levels in the Battle River to ensure the availability of water in the future. My question is to the Minister of Environment. If water is truly a shared resource, as we've heard, what steps are being taken to protect the economic interests of Battle River users?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is absolutely correct in terms of this resource, which I've referred to in the past as blue gold. Presently we are working on the Battle River water management plan. I want to say to the hon. member that this plan is very important, where we are having all of the affected parties involved so that when we are doing the correct work in managing this important resource, we do it right the first time.

Mr. Johnson: My second question is to the same minister. What will be done in the field this year to address our immediate concerns over water availability?

2:20

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, again another important point. An immediate impact of the water strategy is the decision to raise the weir which is called Driedmeat Lake, which I know the hon. member is familiar with, by about 60 centimetres this fall. Now, this is going to improve the water storage available to the city and to the county of Camrose. So it is an example of where we're working together with the management plan but also with the important stakeholders so that we can balance the economic, the social, and the environmental needs in this particular region.

Mr. Johnson: My final question to the same minister: why hasn't the department acted on requests from some groups in the river basin to simply divert water from the North Saskatchewan River to the Battle River?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, diversion is costly, and environmentally it is a complicated solution, but it doesn't mean that we will rule out any option in terms of doing this right, as I mentioned. Staff from the ministry will continue to work with the Battle River watershed advisory group. I want to assure the hon. member and this House that in terms of analyzing the options available, we'll ensure that we continue to conserve this blue gold that's important to all of us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Room and Board for Forest Firefighters

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Sustainable Resource Development has stated that they will be charging men and women who fight forest fires \$450 a month for room and board. These men and women provide an extremely valuable

service to the people of Alberta, risking their lives to protect public forests but, more importantly, human lives and communities. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: given that this policy will result in a substantial decrease in pay for firefighters to perform the same job as last year, how can this government justify the reduction to the men and women who risk their lives to get the job done?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Sustainable Resource Development about a year and a half ago had discussions with staff regarding an increase for meals and accommodations that would put us more in line with other Canadian provinces. We manage our firefighting resources to provide the best possible firefighting situation for Albertans and to protect Albertans' livelihood, protect Albertans' property. Changes to the department's meals and accommodation have been addressed so that there is equity among staff at this particular time, and a consultation was done over the last year and a half to bring that in line.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, given that the camp conditions have been compared to Third World conditions, will this minister implement standards for living conditions with the extra money from the supplemental request that he's asked for?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, staff can choose to be accommodated in whatever way they wish. They can choose to be in a department staffing situation or bring their own accommodation. For department staffing situations we charge \$150 a month, or \$5 a day, and to have meals provided, we look at \$300 a month, or \$15 a day. These are seen as reasonable rates.

In terms of the accommodation we try to make improvements to that, being that these are mobile accommodations, and keep them to standards that are acceptable.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, given that this policy will no doubt have an effect of chasing away the most experienced firefighters, how can this government assure Albertans that their lives and communities will not be at risk?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the ultimate objective of Sustainable Resource Development in our firefighting efforts: to make sure that property and people's livelihoods are not at risk. We have emergency firefighters that are well trained, and the staff are dedicated to making sure that the policy of preserving people's livelihoods is definitely a priority for them.

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

Application Process for Seniors' Benefits

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Albertans become seniors at the age of 65, they are entitled to assistance from many programs, both provincial and federal, but it is necessary for them to complete a large amount of paperwork. The necessary forms are confusing, and often it is necessary to contact the governments in order to get details to complete the form to send to the government. Making an error somewhere within these forms could easily result in a loss of benefits. My question today is to the hon. minister responsible for seniors. Given that all this information is already on file with either the provincial or federal government, why is it necessary for the senior to provide it again when applying for benefits?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can understand the hon. member's concern that some seniors may be challenged when they're filling out our seniors' benefit forms, but I want to assure you that we work very hard to make certain that those forms are streamlined, that they're easily accessible and usable for our seniors. Having said that, though, hon. member, we do require a consent to be signed by our seniors, and that's so that we can use the information for the benefit program as well as protect the privacy of the information that the senior has given us.

Also, Mr. Speaker, once a senior applies to our program – and in answer to your question, hon. member, we do keep the name and address and personal information – if they make reapplication for a form, we do not require that they resubmit that information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pham: My second question is again to the same minister. Is there any place that the elderly may go for one-stop assistance to help them through all these forms that they find themselves faced with?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, just very easily said, we do have a seniors' information line, hon. member. There are approximately 13,000 calls per month to that line. When a senior does call, they will receive information such as where the one-stop offices are located throughout Alberta. There is one here on Jasper Avenue in Edmonton, for example, and one in the Kerby Centre that you may refer your constituents to, hon. member. There's also a directory of organizations on our ministry website. But I'd like to leave you with that number for the seniors' information line, and it's 1-800-642-3853.

Thank you.

Mr. Pham: My third question is again to the same minister. Do we have plans to work with the federal government to try to streamline the process and get rid of duplication by providing a one-stop service centre for the elderly?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do have one of the most generous packages of seniors' benefits in Canada, yet we also know the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the applicants' information. Having said that, hon. member, we do provide basic information to other ministries. We do provide that information as well to the federal government. If a senior applies for old age security, for example, through the federal government, the federal government lets us know that about the senior, and then that senior receives an information package about our benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to invite the hon. member, who I know, my friend from Calgary-Montrose – he graduated at the top of his class at the University of Calgary in computer sciences – to meet with me . . .

Some Hon. Members: Time.

Mrs. Fritz: . . . and I'd work with you, hon. member, if you can think of another way to streamline the database.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Government Contracts

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General reacted in his last annual report to instances of sole sourcing and noncompliance with policies for some of the \$210 million worth of contracts entered into and managed by the Alberta Corporate Service Centre. To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: does the Alberta Corporate Service Centre now comply with the Auditor General's recommendations for all contracts?

Mr. Ouellette: That's a very good question, Mr. Speaker. We take any Auditor General recommendations very seriously, and at this time we are working very hard on adhering to all recommendations that the Auditor General has given us.

Mr. Elsalhy: Okay. To the same minister, then: how did the process for awarding contracts become so lax in the first place? Why weren't the rules followed to the extent that the Auditor General had to react?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I think the last instance that I heard from the Auditor General is that he was very happy with how we adhered to responding to what he had stated.

Mr. Elsalhy: Okay. To the same minister, then: will an audit be done for all contracts that are still in effect to ensure that this centre and the ministry are not exposed to the implications and the risk stemming from the recommendations not being met?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I think we'll leave that up to the Auditor General at the time. We will adhere to his recommendations, and if he gives us any more, we'll follow them.

The Speaker: Hon. members, thank you very much. Today we were able to get 17 different members into the question period. From time to time there were some interjections from hon. members saying "time." Well, just let me go through this as an elucidation, particularly for those members who said "time."

The first set of questions, initiated by the Leader of the Official Opposition, 3.5 minutes; the second set, 2.5 minutes; the third set, 2.5 minutes; the fourth set, initiated by the leader of the ND opposition, four-plus minutes; question set number 5, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, two minutes; question 6, 3.5; question 7, 1.5 minutes; question 8, Calgary-Mountain View, 3.5; question 9, four minutes; question 10, Calgary-Currie, was three minutes; question 11, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, 4.5 minutes; question 12, Calgary-McCall, 2.5 minutes. There seemed to be a lot of interjections at that one, yet it was 2.5 minutes in all. Question 13, Edmonton-Centre, two minutes; Wetaskiwin-Camrose not quite four minutes; question 15, Edmonton-Decore, three minutes; question 16, Calgary-Montrose, 3.5 minutes; and Edmonton-McClung, well, it was about three minutes maximum in all.

So actually there was pretty good brevity. But it just seems that the correlation between the interjections for time is disproportionate to the amount of time used in the question period. This is a strange revelation.

Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, would you like to clarify something for all your colleagues in the House?

2:30

Mr. Backs: I'd like to apologize, Mr. Speaker, for distributing a letter during the order. I wasn't aware that that shouldn't happen during Routine.

The Speaker: Hon. members, just in a few seconds from now we'll call on, first of all, five introductions, and then we'll deal with Members' Statements.

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

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

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly an exceptional group, what I consider some of the finest resources here in Alberta, and that's our students and our teachers. They've come here from Magrath high school. They left early this morning to participate and see what goes on here at the Legislative Assembly. Their goal as the Magrath high school Zeniths is to always strive and reach for the highest point, which is done both by their teachers and the students. Their academic and sports awards over the years, I believe, would be second to none in comparison to other high schools by number. I'd like them to please stand and receive the warm welcome from this Assembly, the students from Magrath high school, including my son Tanner Hinman.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier I tried to introduce my group, and I'm pretty sure they're now here in the public gallery. So once again I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very eager and interested social studies 10 class from NorQuest College. There are 11 students here today, and they're accompanied by their instructor Michelle Tracy. I will be going back out to talk to this group tomorrow, so I'm sure that they're looking forward to the discussion then and that they've enjoyed question period and will enjoy the few minutes more they have to stay in the Assembly. I'd ask them now to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, did you actually tell the whole world your wife's age today?

Dr. Oberg: No, I didn't, Mr. Speaker. I did invoke legislative immunity, but I did not say her age. Legislative immunity will only go so far.

Mr. Speaker, every once in awhile there's someone who moves to Alberta who's really going to make a true difference in our lives here. The introduction that I have to make today is one of these individuals. About a year ago we had the absolute pleasure of having Mr. Lance Carlson, the president of the Alberta College of Art and Design, move here, and he is now in the members' gallery. I would ask him to rise to receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While question period was ongoing, I noticed some gentlemen come into the members' gallery who I'd like to introduce. They are representatives of the Canadian Wheat Board, led by their chairman, Mr. Ritter. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

head:

Members' Statements

U of A Sports Achievements

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to recognize the great achievements in sport accomplished this year at the University of Alberta. There were countless examples of athletic success, but I'd like to point out a few in particular. The University of Alberta Golden Bears basketball team led by coach Don Horwood completed their season with an impressive record. They were tough to beat at the 2005 Canada West Championships, capturing the title with a convincing 72-54 victory over the University of Victoria.

The Pandas women's hockey team also had an incredible season with a record 28 wins and only one loss, sadly in the final championship game. For years they have been the number one women's hockey team in the Canadian Interuniversity Sport league.

The top-ranked Golden Bears volleyball team captured their fourth CIS title in March of this year with a 3-2 win over the Trinity Western Spartans. This was the closest national final in recent history.

Finally, on March 28 the number one seeded Golden Bears hockey team took the 2005 CIS Telus University Cup in Edmonton. In a nail-biter the team came from behind to overcome a two-goal third-period deficit to defeat the Saskatchewan Huskies. This ended a stellar year for the Bears hockey team. Led by coach Rob Daum, the team creamed the competition with 38 wins and only five losses.

Mr. Speaker, it's my honour today to rise and congratulate the many athletes, coaches, and support staff at the University of Alberta. I'm proud to say that my constituency of Edmonton-Riverview is home to these great teams. Their dedication to sport and athleticism truly makes Edmonton the city of champions. Congratulations again to the University of Alberta for achieving such success in sports.

Thank you.

Sue Moleski

Mrs. Tarchuk: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today in the Legislature and recognize a very outstanding individual who has touched the lives of hundreds of young Albertans. Sue Moleski, a teacher with Banff elementary school in the town of Banff, was named one of the best teachers in Canada when she recently received a Prime Minister's award for teaching excellence. This award honours achievements of exceptional educators who instill in their students the love of learning. Sue was chosen from among 236 nominees for her leadership, innovative teaching styles, and her impressive dedication to youth.

As a parent who was fortunate to have children in her classroom several years ago, I have seen first-hand Sue's commitment to the education of her students and her positive influence on their learning environment. Very simply, she loves kids, and she loves teaching.

Teachers have an incredible impact on the lives of children they instruct. They can shape minds, stretch imaginations, and challenge their thinking. We can all think of a specific teacher, a special mentor who had a dramatic impact on our own lives and is partly responsible for who we are today. For many students of Sue Moleski she will be that teacher. She knows how to inspire students as they embrace math, music, and the fine arts while also encouraging an appreciation and understanding of the cultural and ecological richness of their surroundings. Like all great teachers, Sue has that ability to bring out the best in her students and get them to believe in themselves and their own abilities. Much of a teacher's success is measured by the number of young lives they touch. In winning this award, it is evident that Sue has touched many, and we are fortunate to have her in a classroom in our province.

Please join me in congratulating one of Alberta's and Canada's exceptional educators, Sue Moleski.

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

2:40 **Teen Drug Addiction**

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, there are two ways to fight the growing drug problems that exist in our society. One is through education and prevention, and another way is through drug treatment. Drug abuse is a growing problem and is worse than what we experienced in the '80s. Two facts to prove this point: in 1992 6.5 kilograms were confiscated going across the Mexican/U.S. border; in 2001 1,360 kilograms of methamphetamine were confiscated. That's 6.5 and 10 years later 1,360 kilograms. This is a growing problem.

In a truck wash that my family runs, we were told about the problem of getting young men to drive trucks or just to get truck drivers. In one company 27 men applied for the job and went through a drug test. Of the 27 none passed the drug test. Only the 28th applicant was suitable for driving trucks.

Teens from a decade ago knew more about drugs than teens today, who think they are smarter than the drugs and that they can control them. We must increase the antidrug messages to our youth that include visual shock treatment. We must increase our drug abuse prevention efforts. And for those youth whose bodies and souls are already trapped by drug addiction, we need to give authority to caring parents to be able to step in and help their drug-addicted children when they see that their child who is abusing drugs is creating significant physical, psychological, or social harm to themselves.

Mr. Speaker, a parent has written to me pleading for help. You probably heard about the recent youth in Vancouver that killed a 32-year-old victim by swerving out of control behind the wheel of a stolen SUV. His desperate father was on TV last night begging the judge to help him with a stiff sentence so that his son might get professional help with his five-year-long heroin and crack cocaine addiction. The youth also expressed his remorse and apologized to the victim's family, saying that he didn't mean to kill that person but he has a \$200 a day drug problem.

Mr. Speaker, the whole purpose of society is to allow each individual an opportunity to have a healthy and happy life. We need to address the problem of drug addiction through prevention, education, and necessary drug treatment. This is our responsibility and our duty towards our children.

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

National Child Care Strategy

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Investment in quality child care and development is a smart investment, especially at the beginning of the 21st century. However, Alberta's child care system, particularly in the for-profit sector, is among the worst in Canada. Alberta has the lowest number of regulated spaces in Canada, and waiting lists for nonprofit child care programs grow longer by the day. Child care workers earn less than \$10 an hour after two years of postsecondary education. Special needs care and services for aboriginal people and rural communities are lacking.

These problems stem from Alberta's policy to leave child care to commercial operators. Early education development services availability must not be contingent on one's ability to purchase the services. Rather, it must be viewed as a public good and available to all those families who choose to take advantage of it.

A national child care strategy would go a long way toward better nonprofit quality child care in Alberta families. But this government chose to walk away from a national program because they do not want to be accountable for how the funds are spent and want to funnel the money to for-profit child care operators. The care and development of young children, Mr. Speaker, is too important to leave to the marketplace.

One argument this government has used against a national child care initiative is that it would penalize parents who want to stay at home. However, a national child care strategy does not mean that Alberta cannot develop its own policy for supporting parents who stay at home. We could support stay-at-home parents with community playgrounds, nursery schools, and other such services. But the fact is that 70 per cent of families with children under five have both parents in the workplace. These families need and deserve a quality and affordable child care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from a number of good Albertans from the communities of Lamont, Tofield, Stony Plain, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, and other communities which reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been assessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 100 in total.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition of approximately 101 residents that says that "We the undersigned residents of Alberta" urge the Assembly to "prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following" Canadians are considered: "Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers."

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to submit a petition that I received from 105 concerned Albertans. The petition reads as follows:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been assessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youths under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

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

Bill 205

Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005.

The goal of this bill is to provide Albertans with some relief from telemarketing, especially during their family dinnertime, by limiting the hours that telemarketers can call.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 2

Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act.

The bill addresses some necessary changes that result from the merger of Augustana University College, formerly Camrose Lutheran College, with the University of Alberta.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 3

Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 3 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Bill Pr. 4

**Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega
Right of Civil Action Act**

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act.

Mr. Speaker, a family in need has turned to us for help. I look forward to the debate, the careful consideration, and hopefully the support as this bill moves through the approval process.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 4 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table today the annual report for the year ended December 31, 2004, for the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am tabling responses to questions raised during supplementary estimates on March 16, 2005. The responses have been provided to the appropriate members.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: I have two tablings today. First, I'd like to table the required number of copies of the 2003-2004 Alberta Economic Development Authority activity report.

The second tabling is the 2003-2004 International Offices annual report.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to table two letters from Calgary-Varsity constituent Dr. Irene Kyle that were sent to the provincial Minister of Children's Services and the federal Minister of Social Development in which Dr. Kyle expresses concerns about the Alberta government's lack of support for the national child care system as many of Alberta's daycares are underfunded and of poor quality.

Similarly, constituent Allison Wagner has called upon the government to re-evaluate their position and direct more funding to child care in this province.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table for the information of the Legislative Assembly a letter that I wrote on April 4, 2005, to the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. It is asking the question: "When did the Edmonton Public School Board apply for capital funds to purchase and set up portables at Kenilworth Jr. High?"

Thank you.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the labour force survey from Stats Canada for the months of January 2004 to February 2005 showing extensive employment in the construction industry in Canada over that period of time; also, five copies of five letters from central Alberta communities from concerned Albertans protesting the use of temporary foreign workers in the oil sands.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the following document on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The document is the appropriate number of copies of the prebudget document prepared by the Parkland Institute. The report lays out a framework for building a socially sustainable and equitable economy.

I'd like to table copies of a letter dated April 22, 2003, from G.G. Scott Sutton, who at the time was the Ombudsman of Alberta. In the letter Mr. Sutton cites several incidences of administrative unfairness

in Alberta Community Development and raises concerns that “the Department believes it is exempt from the rules of natural justice.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of an article from the *Observer-Dispatch* in the state of New York outlining the story of a white-tailed deer recently diagnosed with chronic wasting disease that was served and consumed at the Verona fire department at its annual sportsmen's feast on March 13.

Thank you.

head:

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Hancock, Minister of Advanced Education, public postsecondary institutions' audited financial statements, public colleges and technical institutes for the year ended June 30, 2003, and universities and Banff Centre for Continuing Education for the year ended March 31, 2004; pursuant to the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board 2003-2004 annual report. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horner, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, pursuant to the Farm Implement Act the Farm Implement Board 2004 annual report.

head:

Projected Government Business

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the appropriate standing order I'm requesting that the government share with us the projected government business for the week of April 11 to 14.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to provide an outline of the projected government business for the week of April 11, 2005. On Monday, April 11, in the afternoon there will be private members' business: Written Questions, Motions for Returns, and Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders. From 8 to 9 o'clock that evening there would be private members' motions. At 9 p.m. second reading will continue on Bill 16, Bill 23, Bill 24, Bill 36, Bill 15, Bill 38, and Committee of the Whole on Bill 8 and Bill 12.

On Tuesday, April 12, in the afternoon there will be second reading on Bill 23, Bill 24, Bill 36, Bill 15, Bill 38, and Committee of the Whole on Bill 22, Bill 8, Bill 12, and Bill 15. On the evening of Tuesday, April 12, commencing at 8 p.m., there will be Committee of the Whole on Bill 1, Bill 5, Bill 23, Bill 8, Bill 15, Bill 25, and Bill 24.

On Wednesday, April 13, following question period there will be a recess till about 3 p.m., when the Budget Address will proceed. On the evening of Wednesday, April 13, at 8 p.m. there will be under Government Motions the main estimates supply motions and day 1 of 24 of Committee of Supply, commencing with Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

On Thursday, April 14, in the afternoon there will be Committee of Supply with the opposition leaders' response to the budget.

The Speaker: Thank you. Just to the House leaders, if you project

this time frame today and in the outline of the agenda next Wednesday afternoon say that there would be a recess to 3 p.m., we still have two orders of business to conclude this afternoon. I think we'll be beyond 3 p.m. You might just consider how this will work in this possibility next Wednesday afternoon.

First point of order, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point of order is under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), and *Beauchesne* paragraph 484(3) and relates to the first question posed by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, wherein he used the words “misled the public” in relation to a description surrounding the P3 relating to the Anthony Henday project. *Beauchesne* at the citation given says that members are not to “impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case.” This particular matter clearly falls into that category, and on behalf of the government I wish to say that the imputation is wholly untrue.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It looks like we'll have two points of order that will be somewhat similar.

Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding in looking through 23, if I follow what the hon. minister is saying, and my understanding in looking at the unparliamentary language that the Speaker was kind enough to hand out to us, that misleading the public was not ruled unparliamentary. That seems to be the words that we have. I thought misleading the public – I could have said it in different ways, but we believe that this is what happened.

I'll just quote why I said this, Mr. Speaker. In a question-and-answer background, and this was at the time given exclusively to government MLAs, this is what it says. The question-and-answer document states that the cost of building the southeast ring road conventionally is between \$452 million and \$497 million compared to the \$493 million P3 cost. By contrast, another document given to the public and the media on January 25 said that the cost of building the southeast ring road conveniently is up to \$497 million. Now, it seems to me that that's misleading the public, and it's there in black and white.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

The Speaker: Are there additional comments on this point of order?

Now, hon. leader of the third party, you rose on a point of order, too, which is almost identical. I can deal with these both at the same time or deal with them separately.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, it was the same term. The difference being in respect to the use by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, it was misleading the public, which is clearly not unparliamentary, and in the case of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation it was misleading the Assembly, which we believe was unparliamentary.

Mr. Stevens: On that point of order, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation I would like to withdraw his comments made that are the subject of this.

The Speaker: Additional comments?

Hon. members, this is the first opportunity that we've had this session to have to deal with these words misled, mislead, misleading,

or what have you, and unfortunately – and unfortunately – it depends on the context pretty much. *Beauchesne* 489 says that it is unparliamentary to use words like mislead. The very next section, *Beauchesne* 490, says that it has been ruled parliamentary to use the words misled, misleading at various times. I provided all members of this Assembly a large document of all the words and all the rulings since 1905 that have applied in this House with respect to this matter.

Then we have our own Standing Orders and our Standing Order 23, which has already been quoted today:

- (h) makes allegations against another member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.

Those two both specifically have “another member.” So we go back to the context in which it was used, how it was used in order to arrive at our conclusion in dealing with this today.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said the following, which led to the interjection from the hon. Deputy Government House Leader:

The third P3, the southeast Edmonton ring road, is only going ahead because the government misled the public when it said that it would be slightly cheaper to build a P3 when, in fact, it’s going to cost tens of millions more.

At that point that led to the interjection.

Well, if we want to then refer to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Marleau and Monpetit, and if you want to refer to page 526:

Although an expression may be found to be acceptable, the Speaker has cautioned that any language which leads to disorder in the House should not be used. Expressions which are considered unparliamentary when applied to an individual Member have not always been considered so when applied “in a generic sense” or to a party.

In the case of this first interjection the statement used by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was, “The government misled.” There’s nothing in the quotation that I can see that says that it’s applied to an individual member. So from that wide-ranging interpretation, we would not view this as a point of order.

On the second point, then, utilization of the words by the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, my understanding is that they have been withdrawn, and that would be the appropriate conclusion because those words, in fact, were addressed to an hon. member.

So there would have been a one-for-two or a one-for-one saw-off with respect to this, but the key thing is the utilization of the language in the context. I just really encourage all members to even try and avoid using words like that because that means we just would have saved eight minutes of time by not having used them.

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Motions

Amendments to Standing Orders

17. Mr. Stevens moved on behalf of Mr. Hancock:

Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended as follows:

 1. Standing Order 7 is amended
 - (a) in suborder (1)
 - (i) by striking out “Recognitions (Monday and Wednesday)”;
 - (ii) by striking out “(Tuesday and Thursday)” after “Members’ Statements”;
 - (b) in suborder (4)
 - (i) by striking out “on Tuesdays and Thursdays”;
 - (ii) by striking out “four” and substituting “six”;

- (c) by adding the following after suborder (4):
 - (4.1) Members’ Statements shall be allocated in proportion to the number of members other than members of the Executive Council in each party represented in the Assembly or as agreed to by House Leaders or, failing agreement, as determined by the Speaker.
 - (d) by striking out suborder (6).
2. Standing Order 8 is amended
 - (a) by striking out suborder (2) and substituting the following:
 - (2) On Monday evening, from 8 p.m. until the vote is called pursuant to suborder (4), the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:
 - Motions other than Government Motions
 - (b) in suborder (3) by striking out “on Monday evening commencing at 9 p.m.” and substituting “on Monday evening after the vote is called under suborder (4),”;
 - (c) in suborder (4) by striking out “shall retain its place on the Order Paper” and substituting “shall be considered”.
 - (d) by adding the following after suborder (4.1):
 - (4.2) Only one motion other than Government motion shall be considered on Monday evening.
 3. The amendments to the Standing Orders in this motion shall take effect on Monday, April 11, 2005.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader. This is a debatable motion, hon. members.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, it is debatable.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I am rising in support of the government motion. This, in fact, was agreed upon between the three House leaders: the Government House Leader, the Official Opposition House Leader, and the House leader from the third party. I think that what is proposed in the standing order will be of benefit to all members.

Very briefly, what we are coming to is an amalgamation of what we knew as Recognitions, which appeared in one-minute form on Mondays and Wednesdays, and Members’ Statements, which appeared as two minutes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There seemed to be some confusion over that, so we have negotiated and agreed between us that we would make them all private members’ statements, with the understanding of private members’ statements and the importance of preserving a member’s ability to speak on any topic they felt they needed to express within the boundaries of decorum. We have some Speaker’s rulings and precedents to rely upon if we wish to check exactly what that means. So we will end up having – I can’t remember how many each week – six a day. That’s all been divided out, and there’s a chart that’s accompanying the standing order that lays that all out.

Secondly, to help us to better organize the Monday evenings, when we have private members’ motions debated between 8 o’clock and 9 o’clock and we ended up with a situation where we could have two motions or even three up, we’ve decided to do one motion each night, and if we finish early, the agreement here is that we would go on to the government business, which usually follows at 9.

There were a number of other issues, Mr. Speaker, that we as House leaders were not able to get to. I want to be clear that that is not because in any way did we regard or certainly I did not regard the issues as being any less important than the ones that we are

looking at in this standing order change, but simply times being what they were and particularly the availability of certain members, we just couldn't meet often enough to negotiate all of the things that our members had requested us to negotiate.

In particular, I've been requested by one of my members, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, to underline that he had submitted and, in fact, has tabled in this House on a previous occasion his proposals for changing the Public Accounts Committee, which appears as Standing Order 50. I would refer all members that are interested in pursuing this – and, indeed, it is very much worth pursuing – that he has tabled that as a sessional paper, and it would be available through the usual channels.

There have been many discussions over the years about Standing Order 50, which sets out the parameters for the Public Accounts Committee. I want to reassure the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and, indeed, all members of the Public Accounts Committee that the House leaders' inability to have the time to meet on this is not a reflection on the importance of the committee. Certainly, it is on our list to return to it and to negotiate and carefully consider that.

There were a number of things we were looking at. Starting and end times – off the top of my head, I'm sorry, I can't remember all the other things that are on our shopping list still to be returned to and discussed, but just to reassure all members, there is every intention that we do get to that. More difficult for us to do while we're in session, obviously, but perhaps once the spring sitting has risen, we may have a bit more time to arrange the schedules of the three House leaders to meet.

3:10

Some of the things that were being proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar were around the ability to meet outside of session, the ability to call witnesses before the committee, the ability to charge the Auditor General to make special investigations and for him to call witnesses, the ability to report directly to the House and to comment on various reports that have come through the Legislative Assembly, and that the committee cannot currently entertain questions relating to the public policies or programs of the government but simply to the numbers that appear in the annual reports. There's also a suggestion that the committee have a budget for research or investigative staff.

So those are some of the issues that have been put before us by that member and, indeed, my reassurance that the report is still in front of us. In the meantime, I urge all members to support Government Motion 17, in which the content is dealing with the harmonization of recognitions and private members' statements and moving to one motion being debated each Monday evening.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Government Motion 17, and I look forward to its swift passage.

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

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are times in politics – people don't believe this – when we sometimes can agree on some minor things, and hopefully it adds to the House and makes the House sometimes, I suppose, more efficient, although that shouldn't be the prime requisite. Also, we should work sometimes to make it more democratic. So, certainly, all of us as House leaders got together on one day and did this. I would suggest that it would have been helpful if the House leaders could have had more meetings ahead of this session to look at other aspects of what's going on.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader alluded to Public Accounts, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we would agree that Public

Accounts should be changed. I look at the House of Commons and I see the good work that has been done by that Public Accounts outside of the House with all members of all political parties participating in it, and I think that we could learn something from that, where the Public Accounts becomes not as toothless as it is now and when even government members and opposition members can bring issues forward, as they do in the House of Commons. As we know, Mr. Williams, the chairman of Public Accounts, today was issuing a report that flowed from there to do with the particular scandal that's going on. I think we need to do more of that sort of thing, where all members, not just the opposition but all members, can participate in a much more direct way in democracy.

I think we should be looking, Mr. Speaker, down the way if we can get these sorts of agreements on other things, perhaps how we handle question period, perhaps how we do other things in this House, with the goal to be efficient where it makes sense. Right? So we're not just talking that there is some efficiency there but also where it can be more democratic and more democratic for individual members. We believe somewhat that sometimes there is a democratic deficit here for ordinary members. Hopefully, as the Legislature becomes a little more balanced, we can begin to look at some ways that we can add to the power, if you like, of ordinary members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Government Motion 17 carried]

The Speaker: Now, the three House leaders, just one little bit of clarification – okay? – now that this was done. On Motion 17 that you have on the Order Paper, under item 1(c) can you just sort of verify for me if there is agreement with respect to the allocation of these members, that the three of you have agreed to the allocation of who speaks on what day over a great length of period? Can you shake your head “yes” if you've agreed on that? Okay. So there's no reason for myself and others to spend the weekend trying to figure out the apportionment. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 19
Securities Amendment Act, 2005**

[Adjourned debate March 23: Mr. Knight]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I concluded my remarks on second reading when I adjourned. What I'm expecting is some pretty constructive debate on this bill given the importance of the Securities Exchange to all Albertans, and I look forward to that.

Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thankful to have the opportunity to open debate on behalf of the Official Opposition on Bill 19, the Securities Amendment Act, 2005.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, in the government's press release they talk about how this particular piece of legislation will harmonize Alberta's securities regulation with other provinces and territories, what is

largely being referred to as a passport system. It will be my representation today that that might be along the lines of some of the comments that were made about the smoking bill the other day when we passed it. In this particular case it might be better to get something rather than nothing at all.

In the research that I've done over the last week or so in regard to the passport system, it appears to me more and more as if really we should have seriously considered the idea of one overarching national commission as opposed to proceeding with the idea of a passport system. I'll speak to that further as we get into the debate this afternoon.

The bill is designed to strengthen various areas in terms of enforcement, and given some of the news, Mr. Speaker, over the last week or so regarding the allegations that have been made at the Alberta Securities Commission as it refers to enforcement and the various reports that we've discussed in this House, certainly I think there is probably a need for some stronger enforcement than what is in the current legislation and perhaps in the current rules and regulations.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance did make staff available to myself and my researcher when this bill was first introduced, and I would like to thank her for that again. The minister has always been very helpful in that regard, and we do certainly appreciate it. The staff indicated to us at the time that the feedback that they had been getting in developing the legislation was that there was a need for stronger enforcement. In fact, when we were speaking to various stakeholders, including a number of stockbrokers, some staff at the Alberta Securities Commission, various traders, and individual shareholders who buy and sell stocks in this province, there was continually sort of an allusion to the fact that perhaps we needed stronger regulation.

At the time I didn't pay an awful lot of attention to that when we were first doing our consulting. Then as the allegations and the information came forth that, in fact, these allegations were in place and that the minister had asked for reports, everything just sort of seemed to fall into place in my mind in terms of the fact that we had sort of heard these murmurings about a need for stronger enforcement. At the time I wasn't really sure why or where that was coming from, and now it all sort of seems to make a little more sense to me.

So I'm pleased to see that we have in this piece of legislation moved towards some stronger enforcement, and I think that's a good thing. I will be questioning, as we get into the debate at committee stage, whether or not, in fact, the stronger enforcement allows the Securities Commission to address more areas or if it gives them more jurisdiction, more bite, as it were, in the areas that they do now cover. I think that that comes, again, out of some of the comments that we've heard from the various stakeholders as we were consulting in preparation for debating this bill.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, the third point that I'm going to refer to – and I've apologized in the past and I will again for sounding somewhat like a broken record although I think it speaks to a pattern that we see with this government – is the whole issue of continually moving more and more items out of legislation and into regulation. When we met, in fact, with the minister's staff, they were quite open that this is something that the Securities Commission has been asking for.

I spoke to some people at the Ontario Securities Commission, and an interesting comment came out of that conversation. They indicated that they had absolutely no difficulty leaving in legislation items such as we're moving here into regulation or rules. They had no difficulty leaving those things in legislation in Ontario.

The reason that she gave was quite interesting, Mr. Speaker. She

indicated that in Ontario the Legislature sits far more days than it does in Alberta, and as a result they have not a lot of difficulty in having changes made to legislation when something arises that would be mandating a change. She suggested that perhaps the reason the Alberta commission might be looking to have more items moved into rules and regulations may have something to do with the fact that we don't necessarily sit as many days in this Assembly as the corresponding Legislature does in Ontario.

I found that quite interesting because I've indicated several times that certainly I would like to see us sit more days and longer and deal with as much legislation as possible in the interests of democracy and transparency and accountability as it relates to government. So that was an interesting revelation to me, Mr. Speaker.

Now, if I could just go back to the issue of the passport as opposed to one overriding commission, Mr. Speaker. I know that it's Ontario that was pushing for one single commission, but at this point only a very few provinces have actually signed on to the passport although all of the others, I understand, have signed a memorandum of understanding that they will be proceeding with that. I'm concerned that it doesn't really address the issues that arose when the federal government's Wise Persons' Committee first recommended an overriding commission. In fact, there seems to be an awful lot of support for a commission right here in Alberta from some rather influential people.

So that makes me wonder if perhaps this isn't another example of this government – I'm not going to say picking a fight because I don't think that's quite appropriate. But certainly there's a history over the last 12 years or so, Mr. Speaker, of this government pulling the Ottawa versus Alberta card out of their hat. In fact, the previous Finance minister correlated the idea of a national securities commission to the national energy program and tried to suggest that, in fact, the two were similar in terms of the impact they would have on Alberta. I don't think that was fair at all given the fact that right now Alberta is second to Ontario in terms of the amount of trading that is done in our commission. So I think we have an awful lot of influence in Alberta over what happens nationally.

I'm going to quote from some of the concerns that were raised by people, including some of the ones that I mentioned are Albertans, and I think we should be heeding some of their advice. David Dodge, the governor of the Bank of Canada, has indicated that Canada's international reputation may in fact be at stake in international financial markets, making it difficult for us to attract foreign companies investing here because of the fact that there is at times the belief out there that maybe differing sets of rules across the provinces make for loopholes. Certainly, the idea of the passport is to address that, and I appreciate that.

Now, the Investment Dealers Association, again a rather respected group of people, argued as well in favour of a national securities regulator to replace the various 13 provincial and territorial agencies. Again, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the passport plan that is contemplated by this bill will go some ways toward addressing that but not necessarily all the way.

Now, I mentioned some Albertans, and I would just like to refer to quotes from those people. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was Gwynn Morgan from EnCana who publicly endorsed the proposal from the Wise Persons' Committee. EnCana, as you know, is one of the largest players in the oil and gas industry, particularly natural gas, and generates billions of dollars of business in this province. I would say that when Gwynn Morgan suggests that we should have looked more closely at a national commission, we perhaps should have been paying some very careful attention to what Mr. Morgan had to say.

Mr. Speaker, Scotia Capital is one of the largest investment banks

in Canada. David Wilson says that he thinks we should carefully “consider the need to meet global best practices, investor protection and economic efficiency.” He says that “the case for a single regulator has never been stronger.” Scotiabank, he says, “see the passport model as a substitute for a single regulator,” and in fact he thinks that the provinces “are settling for second-best.” Now, this government time and again talks about doing what is best for Albertans. If we have Scotiabank, one of the very largest investment banks in the country, suggesting that Albertans are settling for second best, that causes me concern, Mr. Speaker, and when we get to committee, I certainly will be asking the Finance minister what her thoughts are on that.

There’s another one here, Mr. Speaker, that I want to refer to. It actually comes from Barbara Stymiest, the chief executor officer of the TSX at the time. This is a year ago now. She’s saying that they have long wanted a single regulator to reduce concern about investing in Canadian markets. She says that “a regulatory system whose rules, regulations and actions are shaped by the needs of all Canadians – because it is accountable to all Canadians – is absolutely vital to shaping an economic future in which all can share equally.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, in this age where free trade is a bigger issue all the time, where the world is literally becoming smaller all the time through technology, where people in Alberta invest not just in Alberta but across the country and indeed across the continent and even around the world, and in fact people from around the world certainly are looking to invest in Canada and, thankfully, in Alberta, I believe we should be taking every step possible to ensure investor confidence.

As I said, it’s been in the news a lot lately, and the minister has assured us that in fact we do only have one set of regulatory investigative techniques used in this province. I certainly have to take her word for that. I unfortunately don’t have the opportunity to see the report that she cites to guarantee me that. If I don’t get to see it, of course that means that investors don’t get to see it, and I’m not completely convinced that it has removed suspicions in the minds of investors. I certainly hope that it will, but I’m not convinced at this point that it has.

3:30

There are a number of other really interesting comments made here about political will, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the comment that I am going to refer to comes from the former Minister of Finance. He talks about whether or not one regulatory commission would be the best thing for Albertans and people looking to invest in Alberta. He says that the political will just is not there, and that causes me concern. If, again, it’s been identified that, in fact, a single regulator would be the best thing and political will is the only thing that’s standing in our way, then I think we’re missing the boat by accepting a second-rate system in the passport system. I’m wondering whether or not we shouldn’t in fact be pursuing that single system regardless of political will.

The former minister said, and here’s the exact quote: regardless of whether a single regulator would be good for the country or good for investors, even those from Alberta. This is where he was indicating that Albertans are still sore about the NEP of the 1970s. Now, I’m sorry, but correlating the debate over the way a Securities Commission should be run in the year 2005 really has nothing, if anything, to do with the NEP of the 1970s. Again, if it’s political will that’s getting in the way of what would be best for Albertans and best for investors wishing to put money into Alberta, I think maybe we’re just not working hard enough at that.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to address a couple of items that

come out of my reading of the bill, and again I know that when we get into committee, I’ll be looking at this a little more closely. A couple of ideas come out of it. In section 6 we talk about allowing the Lieutenant Governor in Council to “designate one of the members of the Commission as the lead independent member.” It doesn’t really refer to just how much power or what powers that lead independent member might have. I’ll be looking forward to hearing the comments from the minister as far as that is concerned in terms of defining just exactly what the role of a lead independent member would be and just how much power that member would have and who they would report to and so forth.

Another one that catches my eye is section 8 in light of the current situation with the ASC. Section 14.1(1) says that

if a member of the Commission resigns or a member’s appointment expires, the Chair may authorize that individual to continue to exercise powers as a member of the Commission in any proceeding over which that member had jurisdiction immediately before the end of that member’s term.

Now, this is opening up all sorts of possibilities in my mind in light of the current situation because, of course, we have a member of the commission who is about to leave early next month, a month today if I remember the date correctly. This clause, if it’s passed, would in fact allow a future chairman to appoint that commission member to carry on in his or her duties until whatever particular jurisdiction that member was working on is completed. It could be years.

In fact, at this point we’re not sure which particular items that member might have been working on. There have been suggestions that that member may have been working on the reports that were forwarded to the minister. In light of the current situation I’m really curious to see how that particular clause might play out, and when we get to committee stage, I will certainly be asking the minister about that one in detail.

Now, I also talked a little bit about the fact that we’re moving more and more legislation into rules, Mr. Speaker. My question will be to the minister, and she can either make note of it at this time and respond later, or when we get to committee stage, perhaps we can debate it. I’d like to know why we can’t harmonize our legislation with other jurisdictions as opposed to moving everything into rules and regulations and then harmonizing rules and regulations with other jurisdictions. If Ontario is comfortable leaving things in their legislation, we could certainly look at the Ontario legislation and harmonize our legislation with Ontario’s legislation as opposed to moving it into rules and regulations.

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s with mixed feelings that we talk about this bill. I believe probably, all other things being considered, it’s a step in the right direction, but I think we have some very serious problems with the Securities Commission generally.

I used to work under the Securities Commission with Investors Group as a financial consultant. I can tell you that even back then – that’s five to 10 years ago – there was a lot of dissatisfaction, a lot of people complaining, getting complaints from clients, others, people within the industry that the Securities Commission was basically a toothless tiger, that the Securities Commission just did not do its job. I’m talking specifically, of course, about enforcement.

This has led us to where we’re at today, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the serious allegations that have come forward from the former enforcement director. Mr. Alford has said that there’s a two-tier

regulatory system. I know that the minister has said that in her study, their internal investigation, that's not the case. But the reality is that there are a lot of people that know something about the Securities Commission – and I'm sure the minister is aware of this – that believe that's not the case. They're still not satisfied. That's why I think, perhaps, of some sort of public inquiry.

What's happening across Canada – and I'll come to that – is that people are seeing the Securities Commission in Alberta as a bit of a joke, and that hurts all of us when that happens. It hurts investors that might want to come from outside the province to do some investing, and it hurts the small investors here in Alberta. Now, whether that's true or not, if that perception is out there, this is a very, very serious matter, Mr. Speaker. Perception is everything in this business, and the reality is that especially when these rumours are floating around for a number of years and then the enforcement director comes public and says this, this just adds to the fire.

The point that I'm making – and we've had a number of phone calls and e-mails over this; I'm sure the minister has too – is that people are concerned, especially the small investors. The bigger ones will get by. They know how to work the system no matter what security system you have. But a small investor – let's say it's a fledgling company that's going on the securities market, wants to get some capital, and some small investors are interested in it. If all of a sudden they don't believe that there's a level playing field, that the rules are being enforced – and, again, that's the perception out there – they're probably not going to invest. That may be an economic stimulus, that small company in some small town or whatever.

3:40

I think that we should take this much more seriously than we have. Sure it's all right for the Securities Commission, you know, to investigate themselves and say, "Well, no, there's nothing to it," but it just begs, just cries out. Then people say: "Well, who is investigating who here? How do we know this is the case? How does the minister know?" As I say, I think that we should take this much more seriously than we have in the past.

Again, the problem with an internal investigation when people are working there: there's that sense of intimidation, Mr. Speaker. If they have a job that's paying pretty well, there are not many brave people that are going to throw that job away and come out if they feel that there's intimidation occurring there. That's just the reality. So if it's some sort of public – and I hate to use the term public inquiry because that's overused – investigation, and the public investigation comes back and it says virtually what the internal report has said, then great. All the small investors are going to say: "Well, I guess it is okay. I can have some confidence in the Securities Commission."

I want to say to the minister that this has not just happened. For 10 years there have been rumours about the Securities Commission in Alberta. You know, we've mentioned the names Bre-X, the Boyle brothers. There's a whole list that have gone through. Part of it is that even when they catch them, they can't get them to the courts. They take off. There are a number of examples of that. So it becomes really toothless there.

For example, Mr. Alford had said at the time – and this is where it becomes dangerous too, not only in the province, but this is going across the country. I'm quoting here from a group that hands out a business magazine in Ontario. It's called *Business Edge: Ontario Business News, With An Edge*. So this is what's going out right now in Ontario. Mr. Alford says, "The people who are the subject of a (securities) arrest warrant pretty much have to stumble into the police." In other words, even if the force was lax, even if we find them guilty, we never get them to court because there's no way to catch up to them.

He goes on and talks about the Boyle brothers. He talks about

Zelitt's absence at a trial in Calgary in March. He didn't show up. He's probably in Czechoslovakia. This is going out across the country about the Alberta Securities Commission, Mr. Speaker, and that's a serious matter.

Regardless of what is happening at the Securities Commission, we have people across the country who believe that the Securities Commission in Alberta is a joke. We have small investors in Alberta starting to believe that. If that's the case, again perception is very important here, and I think the minister would agree. So we have to do something about that perception at the very minimum, Mr. Speaker.

To come to the bill, I think the mover of the bill is correct. When you have 13 different organizations trying to regulate across this country, it becomes very confusing, and it just doesn't make a lot of sense. I believe that there's an attempt in this bill to at least move in the direction of a passport, to simplify it somewhat. Again, that's probably worth doing, but I guess I would say that I'd be for some sort of national securities regulator. I know Alberta has not been for that.

It's not the federal government. They don't want to be there. But surely there could be agreement among provinces. I've had some problems with this, having been here under the Alberta Securities Commission and having clients in B.C. or whatever when I was in that business. It seems to me that it would make a lot of sense if the provinces could get together and work out a national system that works for everybody. I don't know why we would not want to do that.

It's not the federal government. I know we have an aversion here to the federal government being involved in these things, Mr. Speaker, but it does not have to be the federal government. It should be 13 jurisdictions that could get together to set up a national program.

The advantages to this, Mr. Speaker, are sort of four, as I see them. The first one is the obvious one, the complexity. Thirteen authorities each pursuing their own regulatory agenda, you know, is mind-boggling, frankly, with the complexity of the costs, the direct costs of delays and inconvenience when dealing with the regulators, and the cost of accessing the Canadian capital markets is not worth the bother for foreign issuers and gives an incentive to Canadian issuers to expand by accessing the capital markets. So the complexity is a problem, I believe.

Then – I've alluded to it already – inconsistent enforcement. The perception is again, at least, that the enforcement in some jurisdictions is seen as quite diligent, while in others, like Alberta, it is seen to be nonexistent. To the extent that investor protection depends on enforcement, investor protection is inconsistent across the country. Again, another reason, I believe, for a national regulatory debate.

The other thing – it's part of the complexity – is when you have 13 different authorities. We're changing our policies here; maybe in the Legislature in Manitoba they're changing theirs. They may be complementary; they may not. We have no control over it. So, again, how does an investor keep up with this? Which regulations are you're working under, Mr. Speaker? As I said, it becomes very complex.

The other, of course, is infrastructure costs. To have 13 different organizations costs all of us more money than it would if we had one regulatory board.

Now, in saying that, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that there's an attempt here with the passport system to deal with some of these problems, but I think it would be simpler and easier not to worry about the passport system but to have 13 people sit down and have one regulatory system. I think that it begs out. Then we would not have to worry, as we are, about Alberta's Securities Commission

being seen as sort of the weak link and a joke among the rest of Canada and getting articles like I talked about right across Canada. We know it's happened in the *National Post*. All of these things have a very negative impact, and one of the ways then, I think the best way, would be to go to a national securities regulator with all the provinces involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. If I've got this right, Bill 19 is trying to make amendments to the Securities Act. The province is increasing the Alberta Securities Commission's enforcement for the legislation for a number of reasons. The province had been proposing that passport securities systems allow companies to apply for approval in just one province. Instead, the passport system allows market participants to enter multiple points at a single point as well, and the passport system for businesses approved by one province would be approved by several provinces then.

In the wake of the numerous corporate scandals that we've seen in the country not just this year, many years before, this bill attempts to increase the enforcement of the Alberta Securities Commission. While it strengthens on one end, it does nothing to encourage actual enforcement. This bill actually doesn't have much teeth, and I would have a problem supporting it.

The legislation removes public debate for changes involving the Securities Commission. In moving the procedures behind closed doors, there's even less public transparency and accountability for that.

When we go to page 7, the record keeping, here's part of the problem as well. "This section applies to every recognized exchange, recognized self-regulatory organization, recognized clearing agency, recognized quotation and trade reporting system," but it talks about the company with regard to maintaining and keeping orderly books. A lot of that can be the stem of the problem, as we've seen in a lot of cases. "The books and records that are necessary to record properly its business transactions and financial affairs and the transactions that it executes on behalf of others." I think that, again, if this has no ability to go in and take apart the books of a third party, then what's the point of this particular piece? Like I said, it doesn't do much to enforce the bill there. So I would have a problem, Mr. Speaker, in fact supporting this because it's far removed from where it was actually meant to be.

Thank you.

3:50

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions, comments, if any. No one else wishes to speak?

Seeing none, does the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky wish to close?

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think that we have had an indication here this afternoon of how important this piece of legislation is for Albertans. I do think that perhaps it might be prudent for me to again just outline in a very broad way what it is that we're attempting to do here.

What the Securities Amendment Act, 2005, does, Mr. Speaker, under three rather broad and key themes is facilitate the establishment of an innovative single-access passport system. There has been some mention that this particular passport system is not across Canada, and that is true. There are a couple of provinces that will be taking it to their cabinets shortly, and we expect that they will be

involved, although the province of Ontario certainly is not at this point in time.

The second thing that's, I think, important here that has been a timely topic is enhanced enforcement and compliance powers that strengthen investor protection. Certainly, I don't believe that any of us would argue that those particular points with respect to the bill here before us are not a good thing.

The other thing that this will do, of course, is harmonize the provisions of the Alberta Securities Act with those of other jurisdictions across the country, and this does, by the way, include Ontario. It will replace some provisions of our act and standardize them with national rules that are applicable across Canada, such as the new prospectus and registration exemption rules.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I think that what I would like to say is that we recognize the importance of the questions that we've had today, and certainly there are a number. The ones that we will deal with in committee will be done at that point in time.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

Bill 36

Police Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move that Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005, be moved to second reading.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendment to the Police Act covers many aspects of policing in Alberta, ranging from how policing is funded to how police commissions and police committees operate to how complaints against the police are monitored. Bill 36 ensures fair and objective investigations into complaints against police and enhances the credibility of the complaint review process.

The proposed changes to the act, the most comprehensive since 1988, also clarify how municipal police commissions and police committees in areas served by the RCMP are appointed and function. The amendments follow recommendations from the report of the Alberta MLA Policing Review Committee, released in 2002, and are the result of extensive public consultation.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to go through this bill and speak to selected sections. In section 6 we have changed the population threshold that determines which municipalities are responsible for providing their own policing and those that are not. Towns with populations of not more than 5,000 will not have to pay for police services. We have raised the threshold from 2,500.

Section 8 enhances the role of the director of law enforcement. This amendment makes the appointment of the director of law enforcement mandatory, whereas today it's optional. This director of law enforcement will monitor how police chiefs and commissions handle complaints against the police. Other duties of the director of law enforcement will include monitoring police services to ensure that adequate and effective policing levels are maintained, developing and promoting professional practices and standards, and training for police services as well as police commissions and police committees.

Mr. Speaker in section 23 we are proposing changes to the role of policing committees and how they are structured. Generally, the amendments make the terms and roles of police commissions and committees similar to each other.

In section 14 we have set a maximum of six consecutive years for any commission member. Expiry dates of appointments are staggered, and terms are no less than two years to promote stability

and consistency. As with police committees, the chair and vice-chair cannot be council members or municipal employees.

Mr. Speaker, a new section is added after section 28 of the Police Act concerning the public complaint director. This section states that each police commission or committee "shall designate a person as a Public Complaint Director," who will either be a committee or a commission member; an employee of the commission, committee, or municipality; or some other qualified person.

In sections 17 and 20 we are proposing changes to the way complaints against police are overseen. The primary goal, Mr. Speaker, is to establish a process that will assure the public that investigations are fair, objective, and complete. The objective is to enhance the credibility of the process and to assure the public that there is proper review of police service complaints. The chief of police will be responsible for providing progress reports to the complainant with copies to the commission on any complaint investigation, not just the results when the complaint is resolved.

This section also facilitates the informal resolution of complaints. The amendments will allow police from outside the province to be used for investigations or for disciplinary hearings. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that the process of investigating public complaints against the police must be a transparent process, where justice is not just done, but it is seen to be done.

Section 23 of the bill deals with serious incidents and deaths involving the police. A police chief must notify the police commission and the minister as soon as possible. Upon hearing about the incident, the minister may request or direct another police service to investigate, may appoint members of the public to monitor the process, or both. The external investigator or monitor will provide reports to the minister.

Those are my comments regarding Bill 36. The Police Act is a cornerstone of public security in Alberta. These amendments reflect Albertans' views on how the police should be overseen and the leadership role of the provincial government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As per discussion with the opposition I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 38 Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I take leave to introduce second reading of Bill 38, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005.

The act was passed in 1999 but was not proclaimed on the understanding that it would be reviewed and amended before it came into force. This act will replace the provisions in the Pharmaceutical Profession Act that regulate pharmacies and drugs, while pharmacists' regulations under the Health Professions Act are intended to replace provisions in the Pharmaceutical Profession Act that regulate pharmacists.

The proposed amendments in Bill 38 will make a series of adjustments to reflect current pharmacy practice and clarify regulatory requirements for pharmacies and drugs in Alberta. The amendments will further support the Alberta College of Pharmacists in regulating pharmacies and how drugs are prepared and distributed. The amendments will also strengthen the rules that govern the operation of pharmacies and the practice of pharmacists who work in those operations.

Mr. Speaker, the definition of the term "prescription" will be amended through this bill to remove the requirement that a certain amount of a drug be specified. Pharmacists will still be required to comply with the terms of the prescription as it is written. However, doctors, pharmacists, and patients will be allowed to work collaboratively to tailor drug therapy to patient needs.

The definitions of pharmacy, institution pharmacy, and patient will be revised through the amendments. The pharmacy definition will more accurately reflect the restricted activities that take place in pharmacies by expanding the definition to include compounding and selling or providing for sale as well as dispensing drugs.

4:00

The definition of institution pharmacy will be revised to include all publicly funded pharmacies, including those operating within federal institutions in Alberta. Pharmacies operating as a part of the public health system should be exempt from the licensing requirements. Clarification will also be added respecting the activities institutional pharmacies may carry out. The proposed changes will clarify the circumstances in which institutional pharmacies may sell drugs to the public, which in all other cases requires a community pharmacy licence.

The definition of patient will be amended to differentiate between the person for whom the drug is intended and the patient's agent, who may pick up the drug for them at a pharmacy. In order to protect the public, it is proposed that drug wholesalers and distributors be required to maintain and provide records to the college in accordance with the regulations.

An amendment is being proposed to clarify that only health professionals authorized by this act or another enactment may dispense drugs to the public and to clarify that such authorization through another enactment is not authority to operate a pharmacy.

Bill 38 will articulate new licence categories, which will recognize specific types of pharmacy practices, including licences for compounding and repackaging pharmacies, mail order pharmacies, and satellite pharmacies. Detailed operating standards for each type of licence will be specified in regulations. These changes recognize the broad scope of current pharmacy practice, and it allows the Alberta College of Pharmacists to set specific standards in regulation for various types of service delivery.

The licensing structure proposed in these amendments will require a licensee to hold a community pharmacy licence before they can apply for a satellite pharmacy licence or a mail order pharmacy licence. A satellite pharmacy licence will enable a licensee to operate a satellite pharmacy at a distance from the primary pharmacy. Satellite pharmacies will be allowed in communities that are currently not served by pharmacies. For example, a satellite pharmacy may operate one day a week in a rural community or on a reserve where there isn't a pharmacy. The licensee will be responsible for ensuring that the community pharmacy and the satellite pharmacy are both under the supervision of a pharmacist and that they operate in accordance with the act, regulations, and operating standards.

When an application for a licence is made, it is proposed that applicants show that they are able to and will comply with the code of ethics and standards for the operation of pharmacies.

Mr. Speaker, it is proposed that the new provisions address licence refusals and that checking is done for both pharmacists and proprietors. If the licensee or proprietor has been convicted of an indictable offence related to misconduct under the act, the registrar of the Alberta College of Pharmacists would be authorized to refuse to license an applicant or to renew a licence. This refusal could also come if the licensee or proprietor has been convicted of an indictable offence related to misconduct, fraud, or commercial matters.

In order to add a greater degree of fairness to the licence decision process, decisions respecting licensing issues made by the registrar will be allowed to be appealed to the college's council or to a body appointed by the council. It is proposed that a clause add prohibiting pharmacy owners from directing, influencing, or attempting to

influence the management or the operation of a licensed pharmacy. This change will directly prohibit an owner from directing a pharmacy to contravene legislation, regulation, code of ethics, and standards for the operation of pharmacies.

In the event of a bankruptcy, receivership, or when a pharmacy ceases to operate without plans for an orderly succession, a provision in the bill will allow the Alberta College of Pharmacists to apply to the Court of Queen's Bench for an order to appoint a custodian. This provision will help ensure that drugs are protected and patient records are available as required in order to meet patient needs in these types of cases.

The bill proposes to add a requirement that following a pharmacy inspection, a field officer must provide a report to the pharmacy owner in addition to the current requirement to give it to the college registrar and the licensee. The report will indicate findings of the inspection and any specific action required by the licensee and the pharmacy owner. If the report is unsatisfactory, it is proposed that the field officer direct the licensee or proprietor to take specific action to comply with the act, regulation, code of ethics, or standards for the operation of the pharmacy.

An amendment will be added to provide for an appeal of a field officer's directions resulting from a pharmacy inspection. A provision is being proposed to require a licensee and proprietor to accommodate practice visits under the Health Professions Act. Practice visits are an important component of ensuring professional competence. In situations where there's a clear risk to the public sector to proceedings against a licensee or pharmacy owner being completed, amendments will allow for conditions of suspension of a pharmacy licence. The licensee or proprietor may apply to the Court of Queen's Bench to stay this decision.

Mr. Speaker, to help protect the public, an amendment is proposed requiring a pharmacist to be in attendance in a pharmacy at all times that the pharmacy is open to the public. The exception would be when it is otherwise authorized in regulations. So if it's open, the pharmacist must be there.

Other amendments include providing authority for the college to ensure pharmacists have the necessary technology for good pharmacy practice, providing authority to create regulation governing where drugs and medicines may be stored, and expanding liability protection to licensees who make a report to the Alberta College of Pharmacists in good faith regarding proprietor misconduct.

Mr. Speaker, this is an overview of the proposed amendments, and having understood that this House is so agreeable, not only have I moved the second reading of Bill 38, I request adjournment.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 28
Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005**

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to talk about Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005. I believe it was last year that the Premier announced that there was \$3 billion for

municipal infrastructure. These investments in municipal infrastructure come at a crucial time. Many Albertan communities are experiencing unprecedented growth. All municipal governments face major infrastructure deficits and have access to only limited revenues to address them.

During this bill we were hoping that it would have, in fact, addressed many of the concerns that councillors and municipal leaders had. There was a short period that there was consultation. Consultation, in fact, did include the AUMA, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, which I think was good, but it might have missed a few of them. I raised this before in the past about the members of Edmonton city council not being aware of this on a number of particular occasions. These investments in the municipal infrastructure are very much needed, and there needs to be much consultation.

The AUMA has been engaged for several months in discussions about the allocation of the new provincial funds, and, like I said, every elected reeve and councillor needs to be included. The outlying areas could have been affected by a downgrowth in the economy, such as in Hines Creek, where they lost some 100 jobs and it's pulling \$6 million out of the economy. They, in fact, might be a perfect example as to how a rural town could be included within the discussions here. There, like I said: the loss of 100 jobs and \$6 million to the economy. They might be experiencing a downward trend of people going to those areas and wanting to set up stakes. That affects the school's viability in there. That would be a perfect example. I'm not sure if they were included.

Fort McMurray, which is on the other end of it, is experiencing huge growth within the economy. In fact, they're the ones that this bill could certainly benefit as well with providing affordable housing, which is certainly one of the concerns with regard to that.

How does one define infrastructure in the bill? Well, it's defined with all capital assets required to create and maintain a safe, secure, and sustainable community. But it shouldn't be limited to transportation infrastructure, which is roads, bridges, or public transportation, as well as utilities, environmental infrastructure, water delivery systems, which are certainly a topic in everyone's mind with regard to water basin transferring and certain areas of the communities drying up. That's certainly a concern when you've got people worrying if they're going to be buying a property in an area where there is no available water with regard to the decreased amount of rainfall. In fact, the rivers are running lower every year with regard to the environment. Does that have a particular piece with it? But, again, with the water is the delivery of the sewage systems, raw sewage treatment systems, recycling systems, and landfills.

4:10

We also talked about the sewage system up there for Fort McMurray, which was designed, I believe, to handle approximately 40,000 people, but it's boomed to over 50,000 to 55,000 people. I know that people up there in Fort McMurray were consulted. Calgary was certainly consulted because the idea was hatched down in Calgary with the mayor asking for an approximate \$70 million to be able to rebuild some of the depressed areas in Calgary and attract, in fact, more investments. Investments, obviously, would bring greater property values within the region and encourage more development, and again you would encourage more people to take up roots within that particular area.

Property values. If oil and gas companies move in that might pose certain other health risks and might have people, in fact, not wanting to move into the areas with the potential development of those areas. We've also had a number of cases – take Calgary, for instance – where there is back to talk of sour gas wells, and about eight of them

in the surrounding southeast area. There needs to be consultation, certainly, into that because there are definite health risks associated with the blowouts or with the sour gas wells in particular.

Going back to the property values, again. If oil and gas companies move into the area, certainly I, myself, wouldn't want to be raising a family or moving into the area, not to mention the sight, the sound of the continuous 24 hours of the pumps churning. But the smells. Perhaps they do some of the purging of the burn-offs. I know that some of the time they do have the ability to in fact have the odd time that they do need to do burn-offs. But what are the health risks? We've never actually gone there and investigated that.

Those are just a couple of the particular pieces when we discuss property values, Mr. Chairman, that I think this committee should certainly be looking at.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 28, Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005. The purpose of this amendment act is to give municipalities additional tools for revenue generation to assist them in addressing the needs of their residents. The bill proposes a series of four amendments, that include a community revitalization levy, a community aggregate payment levy, Crown lease, and the assessment of linear properties.

Mr. Chairman, the municipalities in Alberta have been pressing the government for years and years to assist them in revenue generation by amending the Municipal Government Act to allow them new tools. This position has been endorsed and brought forth to the government by the two main organizations that represent municipalities in their dealings with the provincial government, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta association of rural districts and counties. Additionally, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has also been a proponent of increasing municipal tax tools to create sustained revenue sources.

The rationale for this is that traditionally municipalities have been reliant on provincial government transfers and property taxes for revenue generation. However, the last decade has seen a dramatic decrease in government transfers, forcing municipalities to rely on the property tax base, which is generally narrow in scope. The results of this are seen in the massive infrastructure deficit not only in Alberta but across Canada.

If municipalities are to avoid infrastructure deficits in the future, they will require new revenue sources that go beyond property taxes and user fees. Such tools could also serve a more general purpose by ensuring that municipalities have greater self-reliance and that they have autonomous fiscal capacity to respond creatively to the needs and aspirations of their electorates. In order for this to occur, the MGA would need to be amended to allow municipalities to employ such new tax tools should they choose to do so, thereby providing a flexible sphere of taxation authority analogous to the existing sphere of municipal responsibilities.

Amendments would give municipal governments greater capacity to raise their own source of revenue through a larger and more diversified basket of tax tools. This would enhance community control and electoral accountability. Two of the proposed amendments to the MGA have been introduced to give municipalities two new tools for revenue generation: the community revitalization levy and the community aggregate payment levy.

Mr. Chairman, more discussion is needed on this bill around the community revitalization levy. This is a tool that can have benefits for the revitalization of a stressed community such as Calgary's East

Village, but there need to be discussions around the freezing of property taxes. Specifically, how does this affect the province's portion of the education property tax? This amendment will allow municipalities to retain the education property tax increment for tax increment equivalent financing as well as the municipal increment currently being used.

However, this exemption only applies to the incremental financing. This allows municipalities to retain this part of the property tax assessment to help pay off their loan for the redevelopment project. There are critics who say that this type of scheme amounts to a developer subsidy. There is also the issue of the impact on the taxpayers in the municipality. It seems that there is a question of fairness if one person's property tax is frozen for 20 years while on the next street over, out of the development zone, that resident is being forced to pay increased property tax. These issues need to be debated before support can be given to this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I receive many phone calls from my constituents regarding their property tax assessments. They want help to pay off their loans for the redevelopment project. They are happy in regard to the intent of this bill, but they are not so happy with the actual implementation of the bill. The provision says that the property assessments will be fixed and that the council can impose a levy on the incremental assessment value on property, increased since the assessment was fixed. The increase in the assessed value will not be included in the calculation of equalized assessments. For example, the municipality may spend a large amount of money on infrastructure to make the area more desirable. This may cause the value to increase, but what about the vacant land or vacant lot where the owner decides to construct in the future? The assessment went up because of new construction, not just because of the cost of new infrastructure. Why should this new building's assessment not be added to the equalized assessment when a similar building in another neighbourhood or even another municipality does?

Thank you.

4:20

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have already spoken to this bill, Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, and today I promise not to take too much time during this stage of debate. I have mainly expressed my understanding of having a proposed levy to help municipalities cope with the expenses that they're faced with and the decisions that they have to make in carrying out their duties as needed by their citizens.

Today I am just going to further comment on minor things with this bill with respect to the community revitalization levy because the way I understand it, it appears to be some sort of a tax increment financing scheme, which is really the buzzword now in municipal taxation protocols, whereas the government agrees to finance improvements for private development in a district or in a zone that definitely and urgently needs maintenance and upgrading and then hopes to recover some of that cost when the value of those properties goes up. Then hopefully the taxation goes up, and that kind of offsets the initial cost.

I don't disagree with this mechanism as such, but I think we should always have to view it in a bigger picture of fairness. You know, I have discussed this before. Anything we do should be approached from a fairness standpoint so citizens don't get burdened with extra taxes that could have been allocated differently from the provincial government. The hon. colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie has commented on what difference it might make to be living on this side of the street or one block over. So, again, we have

to take into account any decision that might affect people's taxation and people's pocketbooks.

Also, many different city officials and municipal leaders in Edmonton and elsewhere approached us as the Official Opposition and approached me personally and indicated that they really can't decide whether this is an excellent deal or not too good. They agree that the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association has been consulted, and they have faith in that organization, but their concern mainly was that the lack of detail regarding the administration of this bill is not making them comfortable. They see the merit and they see the positive side to it, and they appreciate the tool that is being given to them to deal with their financial questions; however, they're just not sure about the administration component. I think clarification would be advisable so that these municipal officials and local leaders would have the peace of mind that, yes, in fact we're empowering you with a tool, and we're also facilitating the administration and the usage of that tool so that they know what they're doing, and they can offer that same clarity to their constituents and their citizens.

Also, some of the concerns that were raised by those municipal officials rotated around or touched on the fact that this new revenue-generating tool is also based on property value. So I think they would much rather have seen it tied to other mechanisms for taxation like income tax or maybe a hotel tax or a share in government gaming revenues or something like that because it just adds extra burdens and extra pressures on homeowners, who are, I think, to some extent overtaxed as it is.

Also, on the idea of consultation I commend the government on involving the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. However, I think they should just expand more. Now that we're talking about regulations – it seems to be the favourite way of doing government business now – the city of Edmonton, the city of Calgary, the urban municipalities, the smaller towns and villages should all be involved in the drafting and implementation of those regulations so, in fact, they can get that satisfaction that they participated, and then the likelihood of their accepting the new law would probably rise because now they have been involved and they had a say in it. I think it would follow naturally, you know, if this government is really willing to involve them and get them to participate.

With that, I would voice my support for the bill and the intention and the direction that's it's going, and I will take my seat and, hopefully, listen to some more debate. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 28 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? It's carried.

Bill 5

Family Law Amendment Act, 2005

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: We are considering an amendment under that, amendment A1.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Thank you very much for the reminder. Yes, I am speaking on the amendment.

I will note that the government has gotten into the habit of giving us government amendments which, in fact, are amending multiple sections. I respect the guidance of the Official Opposition critic on this bill, who did not insist on a severance, to have these separated out so that each one required a vote on it, but I express my concerns when I see two pages' worth of amendments amending some six different sections, which are clearly six different amendments because six completely different issues. But our critic didn't ask for a severance, and therefore I will follow their lead, but I will express my concerns about what I see.

4:30

Now, I've read the opening remarks from the sponsoring Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and I've also read his remarks on tabling these amendments. The first section, section 4.1, is amending section 12(5)(b) in the original act. I know that what's being suggested here is around those legal definitions and the impact and import that particular words have, but I'm also noting that we continue to perpetuate what I see as a Charter challenge here. Once again we are specifically setting out gender roles here, which I think is problematic. That is – I'm sorry, I'm really struggling with these different sections – around the surrogacy and the guardianship, which I'm reading as section 8(1)(d). The original act was that "on a balance of probabilities, a male person is presumed to be the biological father of a child in any of the following circumstances" and then lists them. But, again, we are listing specific gender roles here because we are putting into the legislation male persons and female persons, and in other cases we're talking about mothers and fathers. We have got to watch this language.

I argued long and hard about this back on November 27, 2003, when we were looking at the original debates on the Family Law Act. Anyone that wants to see the amendments that I brought forward then and the arguments I made, please refer to *Hansard* pages around 1950. But I'm seeing the same thing happen here. I know that the minister is talking about establishing the circumstances in which a male is presumed to be the father of the child. The language is being changed to reflect a similar change to the language that's going to be used in section 20(2)(d), which is establishing automatic guardianship.

I still think this is problematic. If I were able to vote against this particular amendment as a separate amendment, I would be doing so because I think we have to move away from these gender-specific and sex-specific roles. The Charter is telling us that we have to stop looking at it that way, and I believe that, and I certainly have a number of constituents who are affected by that. I think we have to start thinking about parents rather than defining these roles according to sex.

That flows over into section B, as it appears in the amendment, which is amending section 20, which is setting up the guardianship sections. Again, we have the same thing here, Mr. Chairman, because we are specifically setting out the mother and the father, and elsewhere we are referring to male persons being fathers and female persons being mothers. You know, we have to get away – I heard somebody else in here saying: well, under the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act there were two sisters that were adopting a child. Well, now, they get into the same sort of complexities. Which one of them is supposed to be the mother, and which one is supposed to be the father? Well, they can't, obviously, because one of them is not a male person. So, you know, I think we have to move away from this kind of laden language and open it up so that we're talking about parents.

So that's my number one concern with the section B amendments, which are amending section 20, that there is, again, that laden language and that specific language that I think gets us in trouble. I still believe there's going to be a Charter challenge come back on us, and then we'll be in here amending it again.

My second concern around the guardianship is to make sure that the safeguards are still in place around the concept of coercion because I am supportive of moving towards the concept of equal parenting. I would like to see more men involved in strong and equal positions in raising their families. I think that's important for modern society, and I would like to see more and stronger involvement from men in family life. I also still feel it incumbent upon me to raise the issues of those women out there that find it difficult to raise their voice, and that is around any kind of coercion.

I agree with what's being said here, that there's an assumption of equal guardianship and equal parenting responsibility and equal parenting powers and all the rest of what the minister has laid out and what I read in the legislation here. I still have to put it on the record and make sure that there are protections against coercion because it's allowing that there can be a written agreement between the parents of the child regarding guardianship. I want to make sure that we're guarding against any kind of coercion, whether that would be, you know, physical or mental intimidation or financial incentives or disincentives that put people, usually women, that are coming from a position of unequal power in a position where they feel they might have to sign something. You know, women still make less money, although that's improving. We still have an imbalance there, and I think we need to ensure that that imbalance is not institutionalized and reinstitutionalized every time we open up legislation like this.

I mean, the point, after all, of section 15(2) of the Charter was to ameliorate those conditions of discrimination and to take action to ameliorate those conditions of systemic discrimination and inequity. I'm always going to raise in this House and question to make sure that we have not trod on that concept of addressing that inequity and of trying to ameliorate it and banish it, in effect. So while I agree with the concept that is being established through this amendment, I still disagree with the specificity of the language that's in it. If this were severed out, I honestly don't know how I would vote. I'd have to think much longer on it.

Section B(b), which is section 5 and amending proposed 20, I'm okay with as long as we have dealt with the coercion factor.

Amendment C, which is again back to the prescribed and designated language, I'm fine with.

Again, same thing with language around amendment D, which is, if I've got this straight, section 8, which is fine.

Again, the same kind of language in E, where we're striking "prescribed" and substituting "provided for."

The final amendment, F, amending section 12, regulation-making authority to define "party."

So, clearly, many of the sections that are included in this multiple amendment package are housekeeping, as the minister outlined. My two concerns are those issues that I've already raised around the guardianship and the use of language because I think it gets us into trouble. Again, I know the minister feels that this isn't affected, and he's a lawyer, and I'm not. But I have still found it worthwhile putting this on the record because years later I find out that in the end I was right, so I'm still going to do it.

Overall I'm supportive of most of the amendments that are brought forward here. I still think we are not addressing the gender specificity here, and that remains a huge problem for me.

I will look forward to others speaking on this and will consider carefully how I will proceed in the final votes in Committee of the

Whole and consider it further for the vote on the third reading. I thank you for the opportunity to outline my concerns here. I'm happy to hear from anyone on the government side that wants to speak to this.

With that, I will take my seat. Thank you.

4:40

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you. I've been confused a few times by that term.

I rise to speak on amendment A1, which is before the House in the debate on the Family Law Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 5. We have looked very carefully through the amendments. I must put on record the fact that we've been in touch with the minister and his office with respect to our concerns, and he has been responding quite expeditiously to the questions that I posed to him. So I want to express my appreciation for that.

While the amendments contained in A1 go some way in addressing some of the concerns that we had, I don't think they go far enough. I will try to put some of those concerns on record and then propose a subamendment to A1 in the hope that if that subamendment gets the support of the House, then the concerns that we have will have been addressed in a satisfactory manner, although I'm not holding my breath that that's what will happen.

Mr. Chairman, some of the concerns about this bill have been communicated to the minister by concerned citizens and some legal experts, so the minister is well aware of those. But here are a few things that I think are worth the attention of the House and perhaps worth reiteration so that they are on the record here. I want to express a concern that I share with a sort of submission that was made to the minister with respect to changes to section 20 of the existing act.

I understand that the motivation for the changes is to better reflect the equality provisions of the Charter, which the NDP caucus would generally support. However, as the Charter itself stresses, there have to be reasonable limits on the equality guarantees which can be imposed by government, and we think that this is an area where these limits perhaps should be given careful consideration.

The Family Law Amendment Act, Bill 5, by not restricting the 12 months of cohabitation during which the baby was born to the 12-month period prior to the birth of the child, already included as a joint guardian many putative fathers who were previously not recognized as joint guardians without obtaining a court order. The proposed section 20(2)(c), (d), and (e) further expand the detail of the legislation and may cause troubles for unaware men who will find themselves joint guardians, with all the responsibilities that may entail, to children who they know are not their progeny. No longer will they have to acknowledge a child as their own before the responsibilities are imposed on them. However, although this may cause some problems in some cases, it is likely that on balance it will give more protection to a child who will be disentitled from claiming support against a short-term partner who married or lived with his or her mother but failed to expressly acknowledge that he was the father of the child.

The real concern, then, is with subsection (3) of section 20, and there I think the concerns have to do with cases where people who have not been in a long-term relationship are in an equal position as the mother of a child in terms of guardianship. There is a problem of children born out this kind of a relationship, say, in a hospital. If the child is born in a hospital, then a man who may have only had a passing relationship with the mother may go to court to claim

guardianship of the child. This child would be stuck in the hospital until the court decides guardianship.

Similarly, if the mother of a child from a one-night stand decides to have the child at home and not in a hospital, then there is no question as to who is the guardian. The child is already at her home, and thus she is the guardian. This section in the view of family law experts – and we agree with them – is perhaps an overresponse to the notion of equality as guaranteed in the Charter, and the amendments in A1 do not address this concern.

There seems to be a circle of logic here in the provisions of Bill 5 before us. Where the child lives, for example, determines who the guardian is, that is section 20(3)(a), and who the guardian is determines where the child lives, section 21(6)(c). So there are problems with sub (3) of section 20 of the bill, and the main substantive amendment that I have to amendment A addresses that concern and the difficulty that we find with section 20(3)(a).

So, Mr. Chairman, I have a subamendment here that I'd like to now introduce. I have it available for distribution. I'll wait for a minute or two.

The Chair: We will call that subamendment SA1.

Dr. Pannu: I'll wait for the green light from you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: It will be distributed momentarily.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am ready to proceed then. I move that the government amendment A1 to Bill 5, Family Law Amendment Act, 2005, be amended in section B as follows: by adding the following after clause (a) – it reads as (a.1). The (a.1) reads as follows: in subsection (3) by striking out “and the father are both the guardians” and substituting the words “is the guardian.” So to make it clear again, the (a.1) in subsection (3): by striking out “and the father are both the guardians” and substituting “is the guardian.”

4:50

Subamendment (b) simply seeks to make a minor change in wording in clause (b) in the proposed subsection (5) by striking out “continue to be” and substituting “are.”

So these are the two amendments. The first one, clearly, the first portion of it, the (a) portion, is more substantive. The second portion simply, I think, cleans up the language.

I ask for our serious consideration of this amendment, both by the hon. minister and the hon. members of the House, and I seek their support for this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on subamendment SA1.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few comments, and I'd like to start out by thanking the hon. member for his interest in the matter and bringing the concern forward. There's no doubt in my mind that the amendment offers clarity. I appreciate what the hon. member is attempting to do, but I will urge the members of the House not to support the subamendment.

The amendments that we're dealing with generally have been predicated upon some court decisions criticizing the current situation that we're dealing with. Currently, the Family Law Act provision, that is based on the Domestic Relations Act, provides an arrangement which effectively the courts have said is contrary to the equality provisions of the Charter. So what we have done in bringing forward the new legislation, these amendments, is to address three considerations.

Firstly, we're trying to comply with the equality provisions of the

Charter. Either the legislation had to treat the parents equally or differences in treatment had to be justifiable. The new legislation had to be as clear as possible so that there will always be a guardian of the child who could make decisions for the child, and the new legislation should be in the best interests of the child.

Now, there's no doubt that this particular subamendment provides clarity, but where I believe it falls down, or I am advised by Justice officials that it falls down, is in the area of being able to comply with the equality provision of the Charter to withstand what we would see as a subsequent Charter challenge. The government amendment that is subject of this subamendment we believe meets the criteria because the default is to both parties until residence defines otherwise, and therefore there is equality.

The provision that is put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona would disadvantage fathers who wanted to be involved in the child's life and who have not established guardianship by virtue of the relationship provisions of the legislation. Unless they would be able to reach agreement with the mother, they would be required to obtain guardianship by way of court process. This would not be a level playing field between mothers and fathers and, as I said, in our opinion would create a Charter risk.

I do appreciate the interest of the member. I appreciate the intent of the subamendment to make the legislation better, but we have what I would consider to be a fundamental concern which we are attempting to address in the amendments we brought forward, so I would urge members of the Assembly to vote against the subamendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on subamendment SA1.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Thank you. I'm sorry. I'm looking for clarity from the minister if he would be so kind as to assist here. Where it's talking about “where the mother and the father . . . are not the guardians of the child,” does that not also cover situations where the child, for example, might be a temporary guardian of the state? No. This subsection (3) is strictly on residency. I'm going to take my seat and let the minister clarify that because I must have misread earlier statements.

Mr. Stevens: There are other pieces of legislation which deal with guardianship. The child welfare legislation I believe deals with guardianship when we're talking about children who are subject of a state intervention. With respect to adoption, you look to the adoption legislation to determine the guardianship. So there are other acts. This particular provision will not deal with the incident that the hon. member has mentioned; that is, where the child is subject to a state intervention.

Ms Blakeman: For clarification, then, we're really just looking at residency and the fact that the child may not be currently resident with either of the parents. That's what it's trying to set out, that if the child is not currently resident with either of the parents, one presumes grandparents, for example, or extended family possibly, that this clause is allowing that both mother and father would be considered guardians of the child until the child resides with them because this is around decision-making over other parts of the child's life. Are they going to take piano lessons or ballet lessons or soccer? With that, of course, are the far more serious concerns around medical treatment, for example.

So what the originating amendment act is really talking about is making sure that the parents are both regarded as guardians even if the child is not with them currently. The amendment, then, would

make only the mother the guardian. If that is the case, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to speak against this amendment because part of what I'm interested in is creating a less adversarial system here and one in which there is a stronger societal expectation that both parents would be involved equally and enthusiastically and vigorously in the upbringing and decision-making and guardianship of a child.

Therefore, to separate it out and to say, "No, we're not going to take one of the parents," in this case specifically the father, is I think running against the grain of what we're trying to move towards in Canada, which is to set up much more equal parenting and to try and take this out of that boxing match, that adversarial and hostile arena that we tend to force people into when we have parents who are not necessarily together and are trying to jointly make decisions and raise a child.

If I have understood that correctly, then I would be speaking against this amendment. I look forward to continued elucidation on this one.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on subamendment SA1.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. I would like to clarify or address the point that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has raised. I think that the concern about 20(3) arises with respect to situations where the father does not have a continuing relationship with the mother. I use the example of a one-night stand, a child born of that kind of relationship, or where cohabitation has been so short that there is no relationship of any consequence between the two parents or where the relationship of the father to the child cannot be claimed based on that virtually nonexistent period of cohabitation.

In those cases, I think that 20(3) muddies the water. It gives equal rights to the mother and the more or less nonexistent father, or the virtual father, if you wish, where parentage has arisen out of an accidental, you know, getting-together or relationship or whatever you want to call it. So that's the problem with 20(3), and that's why I propose changes to it, so the mother becomes, in fact, the guardian in such situations and only in such situations. The bill is not clear about this.

5:00

On the other matter, addressing the minister's concern with respect to a court challenge that might arise if 20(3) is dropped or changed in the form in which SA1 – is it called? I think I just want to simply read a section here from a letter that was addressed to the minister by a family law lawyer, a person who has been involved in the development of this bill and similar bills related to family law. She says this:

The provision takes away certainty from the law. A court hearing will be required to obtain the release of the child to one parent or the other. The removal of the automatic provision whereby if none of the provisions of s. (2) apply, the mother is the sole guardian of the child is a failure to recognize the basic facts of biology. It ranks with the failure of the Supreme Court of Canada in its first judgment on discrimination based on pregnancy to recognize that only women get pregnant, an error which the Justices subsequently recognized in a later decision when they changed the law.

So the matter that concerns the minister has already been addressed by the Supreme Court of Canada, and the provision of equality has been interpreted in a manner that is more reasonable and responds to the realities of biology as well as parentage.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms DeLong: I'd like to weigh in on this just a little bit. There is one strong overriding characteristic or input that a child could have in terms of what will make that child successful, and that is the

involvement of both parents in that child's life. What is most important to that child and I think what should be most important to us as a society is that we do whatever we can to encourage both parents to be involved in their children's lives. Whenever there is a piece of legislation which could possibly limit that involvement, I think it's something we should look at very carefully. I urge everyone to please vote against this.

Thank you.

[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The clauses of Bill 5 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. I move that we rise and report bills 28 and 5.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 28. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 5. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 28
Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 28.

Mr. Speaker, there was some discussion in committee at which I was able and happy to respond to a number of members. There was some further discussion today, and I'd like to have an opportunity to review *Hansard* and familiarize myself a little bit better with some of the comments and questions that may have arisen. I intend to do that over the weekend, and for that reason I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 28.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 13
Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Bill 13 is a bill that does a couple of things. It basically lays out that the compensation when there is a dispute will be handled by a specific board. It also lays out the appeal process when there is a dispute. It is a very short bill. It is something that will expedite rail traffic in Alberta, and I truly believe it is something that will help Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful bill, and we should pass it. With that, I'll certainly take my seat.

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

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll speak to Bill 13. Being an old railroader's son, my father used to tell me: you never build a railroad on muskeg because of maintenance and high operation costs.

5:10

Anyway, Bill 13 appears rather innocuous, much like the barely exposed tip of the iceberg. It seems to me that one of the questions we have to look at – the road authority and the Land Compensation Board result. It says here that Bill 13 changes appear to be of a grammatical variety as well as spelling out the powers of the operator of the railroad, the road authority, and Land Compensation Board to resolve disputes arising from land acquisition rights where railroads cross roads. This resolution is to take place within 30 days.

My concerns lie primarily with section 30 on the second page, which outlines the minister of transportation's role in making regulations affecting the Surface Rights Board and the Expropriation Act. Viewed in isolation, this Act appears to facilitate land disputes. The other side of the coin has to do with the government-sanctioned potential land grab. So, then, I'm suggesting that whether given this season of Easter or my jokes of opposition infrastructure watchdog, I'm going to play the role of a doubting Thomas and enter into speculation of a land variety. If my speculation comes even close to the truth, then the value of this has some questionable approaches.

My second point, the unanswered question in number 2, has to do with another floated trial balloon. Is this an extension of the roads for royalties type of railroad where there are a lot of spinoffs?

Those are my two reservations, and I'll sit, Mr. Speaker, after mentioning them to you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have questions. With regard to Bill 13, Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005, in section 2 we talk about what steps this government is taking to address the road authority and the way P3s might be involved then. Who is the road authority when a road is within the contract period of a P3 in particular? Part of section 2, as well: if a private contractor is the road authority, what steps are being taken to ensure that taxpayers' interests are being protected? How do private contractors as road authorities affect the dispute resolution process? Would the minister please define some of those particular stages as well?

If I go to section 3 . . .

An Hon. Member: Tell us what page it is.

Mr. Bonko: I will, yes.

How will the board members that are selected to sit on the Land Compensation Board and a board neutral to all the participating parties – how are these people selected to sit on this? Will the Land Compensation Board need to make any adjustments to accommodate any new road authorities? That's particular to section 3 because it clarifies and notes that when the operator of the railroad and a road authority can't agree regarding a cost, either side may apply to the Land Compensation Board to apportion the costs. Again, how are the board members chosen in this particular area?

When one moves to section 4, maintenance costs of highway crossings, again, what measures to the landowners near the highway and what role will they have in this particular process, Mr. Speaker? [interjection] To the effect of the bill, yes. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Those are just a couple of quick particular concerns that I'd have with regard to the couple of sections that I'd mentioned there, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

Bill 7
Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to bring forward third reading of Bill 7, the Health Statutes Amendment Act.

As you know, this bill makes minor technical amendments to three existing pieces of legislation in order to address issues related to health professionals. These issues have been brought forward by the respective professional associations and colleges in Alberta. The proposed amendments in Bill 7 will protect the term "specialist" for health practitioners, will refine definitions of restricted activities, and prepare for the regulation of registered nurses under the Health Professions Act.

I do appreciate the comments and support for Bill 7 that have been received from members of this Assembly to date and ask for your further support of third reading.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill in third reading. I had commented on the bill at other stages. As the sponsoring member has pointed out, it is essentially clarifying definitions and recognizing name changes of colleges.

I will point out that it does amend several different health statutes, and it is an omnibus bill in my opinion. I have had ample opportunity to go through it. We have been able to do a feedback loop with our stakeholders. They did give us a few concerns, which we raised. I think I was talking around workforce planning, and overall around planning. This also contains some amendments that were asked for by some members of the health professions community.

So at this point I'm prepared to support the bill in third reading. Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity to speak on this bill I think at second reading. I concur that most of the amendments that this bill seeks to make are of a technical nature.

They're either requests by professional organizations to make changes in nomenclature relative to the changes that have taken place in the professions themselves as to designations of specializations or additions of new titles resulting from subspecializations.

So if my assumption is correct, that it's essentially an attempt to introduce new terms to bring up to date the language of the existing legislation, and there's no substantive change being sought to existing legislation, then I'm happy to support the bill at third reading.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a third time]

Bill 4

Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 4, the Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill sets in place the ICT and Life Sciences institutes, which are important to the innovation agenda. I thank all the members for their participation in second reading and committee.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to again emphasize my support for Bill 4, the Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, as I have previously indicated. Now that it has reached this stage, I agree that it now stands read a third time and that it passes.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.
5:20

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have consulted with members of the scientific community on this, and I want to just outline a few concerns that we have received or heard. As the saying goes, the devil is in the details, Mr. Speaker. The information dissemination and review of grant proposals sound useful and in the public interest.

However, a concern has been expressed, and I agree with it, about the fact that these would be chaired by members of the House, MLAs. Undoubtedly, these would be members from the opposite side. It's highly improbable that anyone from this area would be on such review committees unless the minister can make a statement to the contrary and give an undertaking that that's not the case. So that's the concern. If that is the case, then the issues of transparency and objective judgment coming out of these reviews I think become a matter of concern.

Also, membership by ministerial appointment usually translates into membership of people who support the party in power and are exchanged as favours in the form of these appointments. You know, these appointments are really exchanges between those who strongly support the party and the party in power rewarding them for their support. So are environmental groups going to be invited to do the reviews here, or are some academic scientists with international reputations going to be on these review boards, people not necessarily with organic and institutional links with the party in power?

The reference to life sciences seems to be a bit too broad. This

would cover everything from submolecular biology to ecology. And as one scientist who wrote to me said, "I don't know anyone with the expertise to cover this broad area." This gentleman himself is a very, very respected, internationally recognized scientist, and this is what his concern is. Having come from academia myself, I know that in these fields that are so broad and so complex, to look for expertise in all the areas that this team may cover in one person who is on such review boards is highly questionable.

The institutes are a good idea. They can be good, but they should be totally at sort of arm's length from government. They should disseminate reports directly to the taxpayers, who sponsor them, not through a political filter. This doesn't mean that the ministers have to follow the institutes' recommendations but that when they do not, they must give good reasons. This sort of transparency, I would agree and I'm sure all members of the House would agree, is necessary for democracies such as ours to work and work well.

One such independent institute that's desperately needed is one on environment and wildlife. This province I think desperately needs such an institute that's independent of the government, is at arm's length, and gives government and this House the advice that's so badly needed given the state in which we find our water and soil and other resources at the moment.

So that said, I wanted to put on record, Mr. Speaker, very briefly some of the concerns that we have heard and which I strongly share. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science to close debate.

Mr. Doerksen: Just briefly, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the foregoing comments I would just point out that these institutes are set up in the same way as the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute, the Alberta Energy Research Institute, and the Alberta Forestry Research Institute, and they all have MLA co-chairs. This is consistent with that. The work of those three institutes I think you would find to be very good work and based on good science by good scientific people in the life sciences area. One of the persons that's working very strongly in that area is Dr. Lorne Tyrell, who of course is a very well-known, internationally reputable individual. So I don't think that the people we have on this has anything to do with it.

So I would continue to move third reading, and thank you for the support of the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

Bill 18

Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to move third reading of Bill 18.

This bill offers the opportunity to award an additional five exceptional Albertans the Alberta Order of Excellence.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again and speak to Bill 18, the Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act. This is an excellent bill. I commend the hon. minister for proposing this bill. There are many, many great people in this

province that deserve to be honoured by this award. Doubling the number of recipients is a wonderful idea. I'm delighted to support this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

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

Mr. Stevens: I'm pleased to rise and move that we call it 5:30 and reconvene at 1:30 p.m. next Monday, the business of the House on the agenda having been completed this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; at 5:28 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Monday, April 11, 2005

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/11

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. At the beginning of this week we ask for renewed strength in the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of the Legislature. We ask for the protection of this Assembly and also the province we are elected to serve. Amen.

Hon. members, would you now participate in the singing of our national anthem. We'll be led today by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Please participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Mr. Jeffrey Parker, the Canadian consul general, based in Seattle, Washington, and appointed in September 2004. Mr. Parker and his team are responsible for the four-state region of Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington.

These four states' economies combined are equal to one-third of Canada's entire domestic economy. They are important partners for Alberta trade, investment, technology, and tourism. Along with my fellow cabinet ministers and provincial government colleagues I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Parker today. We had a good, wide-ranging discussion. I would ask that our honoured guest, seated in your gallery, rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the pleasure of having lunch with two generous Calgarians today, and it's now my honour to introduce them to you and through you to all members of the Legislature. Every year the Calgary Homeless Foundation raises money by making fun of me. This year its annual Premier's roast was called Rootin Tootin Ralph, and part of the evening was a live auction. The gentlemen here today were the successful bidders on lunch with the Premier.

My guests are two members of the Calgary Homeless Foundation's board of directors: Sam Kolias, president and CEO of Boardwalk rental properties, and David McIlveen, Boardwalk's

director of community development and social services. As an aside, Mr. Speaker, Boardwalk is one of few if any private-sector companies that offers rental subsidies to low-income people. I see that our special guests are already standing. I'd ask that they receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has just designated two new occupations in apprenticeship and industry training: oil and gas transportation services and well testing services supervisors. These new designations mean that there will now be provincially recognized industry standards in these careers, giving people in these occupations a clear picture of the skills they need to succeed in these fields.

Today I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a number of people who have made this possible, beginning with my congratulations to the first five recipients of certificates under the new well testing supervisor designation, and who are in the members' gallery today. From Pure Energy we have Jason Tremblay and Mark Wohlgemuth, and from Lonkar Well Testing we have Kevin Peterson, Ryan White, and Allen Townsend.

Also with us today to celebrate this success are a number of other guests who work hard to ensure that Alberta has the skilled workers it needs for the future. Roger Soucy of the Petroleum Services Association of Canada is also in the members' gallery today. Seated in the public gallery we have Brian Bickley, chair of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board; Cheryl Knight, from the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada; Elizabeth Aquin, from the Petroleum Services Association of Canada; and Kim Dingwall, from the Petroleum Industry Training Service.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have representatives from the two companies who are currently employing our first five certificate recipients: Ed Klein and Glenn Berry, from Lonkar Well Testing, and Scott Dancey, from Pure Energy. I would like them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome and in the case of our certificate recipients the congratulations of all members of this Assembly.

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, today it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly some very special students who come from a community called Wabasca-Desmarais. They've travelled many, many miles. They're from the Mistassiny school, 26 visitors, and are seated in both the public and the members' galleries. They're led by teacher Edgar Bailey as well as parent helpers Don Tessier, Jennifer MacDonald, and Alvina Cardinal. I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you 23 visitors to the Legislature from the Rockyview Christian school in Pincher Creek. I understand that maybe some of them are in the members' gallery, and some of them are in the public gallery. These 23 folks are accompanied today by teachers Jeff Blosser and Lance Giesbrecht and parent helpers Galen and Gwen Toews, Jerry and Wendy Toews, Merle Unruh, Lavonne Blosser, and Karen Regehr, all from the beautiful, breathtaking constituency of Livingstone-Macleod. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce 10 energetic and young-at-heart seniors from my church, Christ community church. We call them the Diamond Club because they sparkle with energy and enthusiasm. They are led today by Mrs. Shirley Wedman, who is the group leader. They are in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Legislature.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 13 grade 6 students from Killam public school, who are the future of rural Alberta and this province. They are accompanied by their group leader, Ginette Dammann, and one of Alberta's many fine, outstanding, and quality teachers, Karin Brussé, who wrote a proposal for an Access Network contest, which means that these students are all going to be in our fine capital city for a week. They're seated in the public gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce to this Legislative Assembly a fine group of students from Dunluce elementary school. They're accompanied today by three teachers, Irene Huk, Lori Whalen, and Krista Penno, and also a student teacher who is about to begin teaching, hopefully, next year, Mr. Cunningham. Along with them are two parents, Mrs. Morris and Miss Turpin. Today their tour has been led by one of our employees from visitor services, who actually was my junior high school teacher perhaps some five, 10 years ago, Mr. Chuck Grelli. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two individuals who are not only visiting the Assembly but are also visiting our country. Nina Limacher and Baptiste PouBlang are two Rotary exchange students who have been going to school in High River since September 2004. Nina hails from Lucerne, Switzerland, and will be graduating from grade 12 this year. Baptiste is from Dunkirk, France, and is in grade 11. These two young people are accompanied by their Rotarian counsellor, Irv Cherneski, and his wife, Kaye. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three individuals. In the members' gallery today we have Dorothy Pacquette. Dorothy is the first female pipefitter accepted to the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters in northern Alberta. Randy Beaudry is her beau and accompanied her on her recent trek from Fort McMurray, the long walk to protest the use of temporary foreign workers. Jack

Hubler is a long-time leader in Alberta's construction and pipeline industry and is with the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters.

In the building here today Dorothy was awarded a centennial medal for her efforts to act as a role model for young women in our province seeking apprenticeship, for young aboriginals, and for all her efforts over the many years she's been working in the industry. I ask that they rise and that you all give the warm welcome of this Assembly to them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to everyone in this Assembly a constituent of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, seated in the members' gallery, Mr. Glenn Hennig, who is also the manager of the Lakeland REA and who will be watching the proceedings of the House. I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

My other introduction, Mr. Speaker, is a very distinguished Albertan, seated in your gallery, and through you I wish to introduce him to all members of this Assembly. This guest played football for the Huskies for three years, became the general manager and recruited players from Rocky Mountain House, Ponoka, Camrose, Wetaskiwin. It was the team that was the Canadian champion for 1962, '63, and '64. No other junior team won three consecutive titles. On May 27 the whole team and this gentleman, Mr. Don Hamilton, will be inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame. I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a young man from my constituency, Troy McDonald. Troy is seated in the members' gallery. Troy is a smart young man. He's a Tory. He said that he wants my job about 10 years from now. I'd like you to rise, Troy, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not just in Quebec where governing parties channel money to their friends. The list of government contracts in Alberta going to friends of the PC Party with taxpayers getting nothing to show for it is long indeed. The former minister of health handed \$400,000 of Albertans' money to his friend Kelley Charlebois, yet not one page of work exists, not a memo, not a letter, apparently not even an e-mail. The Auditor General of Alberta, lacking the teeth of his federal counterpart, refuses to launch a special investigation. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: can she tell us what Kelley Charlebois did for \$400,000 of taxpayers' money?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the amount referenced was over a three-year period. There was advice provided to the minister. I know that there were appropriate receipts for the travel expenditures. This was

discussed at Public Accounts, and at that time I made a commitment that the procedures were being followed. We are working very hard to make sure that staff are trained in appropriate ways so that this won't happen again.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister request that the Auditor General launch a full special investigation into what the \$400,000 was used for?

Ms Evans: No, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General has conducted his audit, and we have had a discussion about that in the context of a meeting with the executive committee, and I don't know that any more needs to be said. He has in fact examined those books. He has spoken out at the time of Public Accounts, and I'm not sure what more we would uncover.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: don't the taxpayers of Alberta deserve to know what that \$400,000 was spent on?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that that advice was provided to the minister. There were several issues that the minister was facing. I am told that the advice related to things such as the changes in the regional health boundaries, among others. I don't think more needs to be added.

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

Rod Love Consulting Inc.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the list of government contracts going to friends of the government, of the PC Party is long indeed. This government sank over a million dollars into a study quarterbacked by a group led by the Premier's friend and now chief of staff, Rod Love, only to learn, as many people predicted, that government money for a railroad to Fort McMurray is not justified. To the Premier: how many tax dollars of the 1 and a quarter million this government sank into this study went personally to the Premier's chief of staff?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know, and I say that quite frankly. I really don't know. I do know that Rod Love was hired as a consultant, when he was in the consulting business, to advise the consortium on communications. As to the amount he was paid, I don't know, but I'd be happy to find out.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Exactly when and where – exactly – will the Premier make this information public?

Mr. Klein: I don't know where, and I don't know when, but I can make this commitment. I will do it as soon as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of making things public, will the Premier instruct his chief of staff to make public the

directives given to him by the Ethics Commissioner regarding his private lobbying business, as Mr. Love promised to do?

Mr. Klein: I don't have any problems, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

1:50 Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week during question period, when pressed about the development of well sites on disputed Lubicon land, the Energy minister candidly stated that oil companies who had already commenced construction "have not yet gone forward to the Energy and Utilities Board, which is a requirement, but they will." This is "standard procedure." To the Energy minister: is it standard procedure for well site development and surface disturbance to proceed without the prior approval of the EUB?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it is standard in the sense that they can move pipe and equipment onto a site prior to the application being granted. No work can then be undertaken. No application, no drilling can occur. That has to go before the EUB.

Dr. Swann: Again to the same minister: how many leases are under construction across Alberta without the approval of the EUB?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, no licences go forth and there's no drilling activity that occurs without the complete and thorough review by the Energy and Utilities Board. They do an excellent job in respect to approving the 20 some odd thousand wells that are drilled annually in this province.

Dr. Swann: Again to the same minister: will this government order Deep Well Oil & Gas and Welwyn Resources to halt any and all construction in the disputed areas until the appropriate consultations can occur and environmental permits and approvals considered?

Mr. Melchin: That is part of the very normal procedure that the companies in that area are required to do. They have not commenced any operations. They have not gone forward at this stage to ask for a licence. That licence, when coming forward, is subject to public consultation.

In this case I would like to point out, though, that even the site where the pipes were put on, that the Lubicon had mentioned, is actually miles away from the territory that is expected to be included in the Lubicon reserve. It's even outside of that area. But that said, even with this public consultation is a requirement in granting a licence.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Health Resource Centre Joint Replacements

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, nine months after it was first announced, the Ministry of Health and Wellness reannounced a centralized intake registry for Edmonton, Red Deer, and Calgary and an additional \$20 million to fund 1,200 more hip and knee replacements in the coming year. Long delayed but still welcome. But this Tory government couldn't resist using this otherwise fine initiative to further its agenda of expanding private, for-profit health care delivery in this province. My question

is to the Premier. Why has the government opted to pad the bottom line of its friends at the private, for-profit Health Resource Centre by paying them a premium of at least 10 per cent over and above the cost of doing the same surgeries at a public hospital?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the issue here is not so much how much; the issue is alleviating pain and suffering. The people who suffer from joint problems, whether they're hips or knees or elbows or shoulders, suffer severe, crucial, excruciating pain. We want to find ways to alleviate that pain and suffering, that the NDs would have go on and on and on for years simply because of ideology.

Mr. Mason: It's the pain and suffering of the taxpayers we're worried about, Mr. Premier.

How can the government cling to the claim that improved access justifies the higher cost of doing joint replacements at a private facility when the government's own wait list registry shows that HRC has longer wait times than any of Calgary's public hospitals? Talk about pain and suffering, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know, and I don't believe that to be true. I know that many more operations relative to joint problems are being performed because of HRC and its ability to contract with the Calgary regional health authority. Again, it comes down to alleviating pain and suffering.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that the public system can deliver the services more cheaply and sooner, why is the Premier going on about pain and suffering when it's the pain and suffering of the taxpayers he should be worried about?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness supplement. But the simple fact is – and the hon. member knows it – you can't build operating rooms just like that. You can't build them overnight. Space is limited in the public system. That's why . . . [interjections] Am I going to be allowed to answer, or are we going to have to put up with this nonsense from the other side?

Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. minister supplement that question.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, this is very good news, done in concert with 13 orthopedic surgeons, three health regions, very good news because this year we'll accommodate 1,200 more hip and joint replacements than last year. Last year we had 5,300.

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

Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The forest industry has been paying duty and dumping for years now on softwood lumber exports to the United States, even though they have won negotiations with the World Trade Organization on the North American free trade agreement. Can the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations tell the House when Alberta's forest industry will have a resolution on this trade dispute?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, according to the Alberta Forest Products Association, the figures they've given us indicate that the industry that we're talking about is really Alberta's third largest manufacturing exporter. We are working hand in hand with the industry and the federal government. We met a few months ago in

Ottawa, we had meetings in Washington, and a group just recently met in Chicago. We share a common goal on both sides of the border and both governments, and that is trying to get free access and a durable solution to the lumber industry.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the Minister of Economic Development. With your value-added strategy do you also have a marketing strategy for other markets for softwood lumber to the world?

Mr. Dunford: We have, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, we are continually looking for new places to utilize the softwood products that we have. This past February we attended an aspen exhibition in Japan. The purpose of that exposition, of course, was to promote aspen for cabinetry and millwork applications such as doors, windows, panelling, that sort of thing. Right now, we have a study under way, again, looking at opportunities closer to home. We expect the results sometime in June, and the task of that study, of course, is to identify product opportunities for secondary manufacturing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the Minister of Finance. Since this is a disaster in the forest industry, would this qualify for funding under the sustainability fund?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the sustainability fund is there for unexpected situations that might occur throughout the year or could be natural disasters or if resource revenue dropped considerably. In order to trigger that, you'd have a disaster or an emergency declared. Cabinet would evaluate the information to see whether it applied or if, indeed, other options were available. One concern, of course, would be whether it would be considered by another country to be a subsidy and thus cause a problem with countervailing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Hospital Space in Calgary

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The city of Calgary is woefully short of acute-care hospital beds, and even under the best case scenario the bed shortage will continue until 2010. Last week the minister of health talked about what the department is doing about the shortage, but I note that the work so far is best described as preliminary. My questions are to the minister of health. When will the government approve and fund the plans it is now reviewing so that the Calgary health region can get on with the job of expanding the Rocky View, the Peter Lougheed, and the Foothills?

2:00

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, the budget comes out on the 13th. We'll be discussing the capital planning at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: can the minister assure the people of Calgary that the department has a contingency plan for coping with any disaster or epidemic that might hit Calgary during the next five years? Specifically, where will the sick and injured go?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, throughout Alberta our regional health authorities work very hard to provide the due diligence. If there was any pandemic or disaster of a regional nature, I'm sure that they would look at all of their contingency plans for just those circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm finding somewhat amusing is that on the heels of the question across the aisle about the hip and joint work that we're doing to try and accommodate other options with public dollars, there is concern now that we won't have space in public hospitals that we have, and we're trying every innovative approach to look at ways to facilitate the people that are sick and injured to get the best possible treatment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: could the minister please explain how her department allowed this chronic shortage of hospital space in Calgary to develop under its watch? Did you blow up all the hospitals?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, today in Alberta we hold no apology for being the best-funded health care system in Canada, the very best. We are doing everything possible to be responsible in cost-effective patient delivery. Where we've had rapid growth of Alberta, where the Alberta advantage has attracted many people, whom the Premier often reminds us don't bring their hospitals and schools, we are coping as well as we can. Should there be an emergency, we would do our best to look after them in that contingency.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Centennial Hockey Challenge

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 17 it was announced by the commissioner of the Western Hockey League that a challenge hockey game will be played as part of a joint centennial celebration with the province of Saskatchewan. I'm sure that our solid team of right wingers will prevail over those Saskatchewan lefties, but my question is to the Minister of Community Development. Could he tell us how this unusual competition came about?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the Western Hockey League is planning and organizing this game, which will take place on the 14th of April, and it will feature the Western Hockey League's very best players playing on Team Alberta and Team Saskatchewan. It'll be played in the border town of Lloydminster. The idea was conceived by the CBC in collaboration with the centennial offices of Alberta and Saskatchewan and the Western Hockey League. Fellow Albertan and well-known hockey authority Ron MacLean will be the emcee of the broadcast, that'll take place in both Alberta and Saskatchewan. This event is going to be a day-long celebration of the hockey history of this province and the history of our provinces, and it'll also be a prelude to the Allan Cup, which, of course, is emblematic of supremacy in senior hockey.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, just to simply say this: hockey has helped shape our communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It's a Canadian passion. It's a way of life.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental is

also to the same minister. Although a trip to Lloydminster is normally priceless, how much money did the Alberta government put toward this event?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, both centennial offices of the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta have each contributed \$35,000 in support of this game. The game is sold out, and proceeds from the game will be distributed to the Western Hockey League's education fund as well as Hockey Alberta, Saskatchewan Hockey Association, and the city of Lloydminster.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Private/Public Partnerships

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government is slow to learn from other governments' mistakes. Although Sir Roger Douglas's draconian New Zealand budget slashing was discredited, the Alberta government applied his philosophy with devastating effects to Alberta's public institutions. The Alberta government also thought it could escape the costly California deregulation fiasco. It didn't. My first question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Given that P3s represent strike three in a list of previously imported failures, will the minister abandon this private, for-profit, at public taxpayers' expense scheme?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, the first answer to that is obviously no. When it comes to P3s, they're an important adjunct to what we do in Alberta. Certainly, each and every one of the P3 projects are looked at extensively. There has to be an advantage to Alberta. Quite simply, that's why we don't necessarily approve every one.

It's quite interesting. The hon. member put out a press release last week and the interesting line that he put it out with is: Friends of Medicare is a "non-partisan [provincial] organization." So I found that quite interesting in the press release.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the same minister. With a projected royalty surplus revenue approaching \$10 billion, would the minister explain the need to borrow money privately?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, we have not to this date borrowed money privately per se. We do have a P3 project going on the Anthony Henday in Edmonton, and certainly the members of this Assembly have heard me talk numerous times about the advantages of what that P3 has done and more importantly what that P3 has done for Edmonton. The whole idea of actually getting a road two years early is certainly extremely important. The idea of the 30-year guarantee, so to speak, is also incredibly important for the citizens of Edmonton. Quite frankly, I find it quite shocking that the Liberal Party would talk against something that provides service to the city of Edmonton.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that Calgarians will have waited for over 12 years for the southeast replacement hospital to be built, will this government commit to public funding, transparent bids, and public administration of this much-needed resource?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that that question is about the how to, which, in fact, would be the Minister of Infrastructure, please.

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

Alberta/U.S. Border Crossings

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has three times the population of our neighbouring province Saskatchewan and does billions of dollars of export trade with the United States with twice the amount of truck traffic. However, Alberta has five border crossings, with only one that is open for 24 hours, while Saskatchewan has 13 crossings, with two being open for 24 hours. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Does the minister recognize how this arrangement is restricting the flow of goods and people into and out of Alberta?

Mr. Dunford: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. If we look at it on the tourism side, for an example, when we use that wonderful interstate highway system in the United States, it's pretty clear traffic from Detroit, Chicago through Minneapolis. As they move west on the interstate 94, when they enter the Montana border, if they want to stay on the interstate system, then they have to dip quite a ways south through Billings and then back up out through the western part of the state. If they were heading our way, they would have to perhaps come through Coultts, and it has added a tremendous amount to that particular journey.

Just think: if on the highway maps we could put and show a 24-hour border system at Wild Horse, all they have to do as they enter the Montana border is just make their way up to the number 2 in the United States and then, of course, onto 41, and I believe the rubber-tired traffic for tourism would increase exponentially.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplement is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What is he prepared to do to ensure that southeast Alberta will benefit from better border service by helping establish another 24-hour crossing at Wild Horse down in the southeast corner of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier on this year when I met with the Medicine Hat city council, it became very apparent that this was one of their top priorities. Having a 24-hour border crossing at Wild Horse I think is absolutely essential. I heard a lot of anecdotes about issues that they had getting to the border quite simply two or three minutes too late and being shut down and having to go back.

So, Mr. Speaker, I entirely agree with the hon. member that this is incredibly important and, subsequently, have written letters to the immigration minister, the CIC minister, as well as my counterpart, the transportation minister. I think from a transportation and an economic route, Wild Horse is absolutely essential to southeast Alberta, and we all know the good things that happen in southeast Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

2:10

Group Homes

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on a constituency question. An unlicensed group home funded by the government recently opened for business in my constituency. It rented a house directly across from the entrance to an elementary school. A short time later a 46-year-old developmentally disabled man from the home exposed himself as the kids came to school. The company shut the home in a week after some pressure, but at a public meeting last Thursday it was further reported that a child sex offender was also resident in the home. His chair in the picture window facing the entrance to the school is now empty, thank God. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Are there provincial contract guidelines to ensure that all group home businesses have the sense to not rent homes for child sex offenders next to elementary schools?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with the circumstances surrounding this case, but, hon. member, I'd more than welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you as it is in your constituency.

Mr. Speaker, you know that we have a Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board, and there are six regional boards. The funding is that there is a flow through of funding through budgets, through our provincial budget, through the provincial board, to the regional boards. The regional boards – I can tell you this, hon. member, whether this group home was licensed or not licensed – do have a policy called Creating Excellence Together, which sets standards for their service providers, and they work very hard to ensure that those policies are in place. But, as I said, I'm not familiar with this incident.

Mr. Backs: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: where does this government draw the line between community safety and security for seniors and children and funding placement of dangerous and sexually deviant individuals in our communities?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very difficult question to answer, hon. member. As you know, we guarantee individuals who are persons with developmental disabilities that they are safe, that they are secure, that they're treated with dignity and respect, and that we, through our provincial boards, our regional boards, have the funding that's allocated. As I indicated to you, those service providers that have facilities within the community are governed through standards, through the creating of excellent standards.

Also, we have through Children's Services, Mr. Speaker, an act, the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act, that would license group homes. I'm not familiar with this home, as this hon. member is indicating, so I'd be pleased to look into it.

Mr. Backs: A supplementary to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: can the minister ensure that this government will make every effort to inform neighbouring parents and at least school principals and day home operators that homes for deviants are being placed nearby them?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I would like to discuss this further with this hon. member. Hon. member, I can tell you this, too, that neighbours will certainly voice their concerns to the appropriate ministry. I'm not sure in this case if it's the Solicitor General or if it's the Minister of Children's Services or a combination of all three ministries, but I would look into this further for you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Horizon Oil Sands Project

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Shortly before Christmas the provincial cabinet unilaterally invoked a rarely used provision of the Labour Relations Code called division 8. This was done for Horizon oil so that they could move ahead in the tar sands. Now, this provision opens to the door to dismantling collective agreements by using the nonunion Merit Contractors Association and the company-friendly Christian Labour Association [some applause] – well, we'll see if they want to clap – to drive down wages and benefits in the oil sands. To the Premier: is it acceptable in a modern industrial society that purports to be democratic to cancel on a whim the collective bargaining rights of hard-working Alberta tradespeople, as has been done through the division 8 designation?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, it was not done specifically for that reason. It was done because CNRL Horizon desperately needed workers. We are very much aware of the situation relative to labour. We somewhat disagree that there are adequate tradespeople, skilled tradespeople, trained tradespeople in the province to fulfill the requirements of the companies. That is why that company asked that division 8 be proceeded with, so that they could get on with the job of hiring needed personnel to get their project on stream.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the unemployment rate across Canada is high in these areas, why is the government risking decades of labour peace by bringing in or invoking such an odious and undemocratic part of this labour code?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, relative to the unemployment rate – and I would like to address this – we have an unemployment rate in this province of 3.5 per cent. It's the lowest it has been in 25 years. This is fact.

In the oil and mining industry – and we'll refer to mining as the operation used, ostensibly, in the oil sands – the unemployment rate is 2.6 per cent. Mr. Speaker, this clearly indicates that there are more jobs being created than there are people to fill those jobs in that particular sector. Two point six in anyone's language, even the NDs' language, is virtually no unemployment because you take into account seniors and those who are unemployable, and they represent probably the 2.6. So virtually there is no unemployment in that sector, and we need to recruit skilled people from wherever we can.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the seniors will be interested to know that they're in the unemployment rates.

My question is simply this: given that this could lead to a major confrontation with the building trades after years and years of labour peace, does the Premier not see that this heavy-handed approach by his government could actually hinder development in the tar sands?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, to qualify, I meant retired seniors, seniors who no longer wish to work and have fulfilled their duty to society.

Mr. Speaker, again, I would remind the hon. member that Alberta has the hottest economy in the country and an extremely heightened demand for thousands, literally thousands, of workers. Speak to any employer – any employer – in the oil sands, and they will tell you

there are labour shortages. There are extreme shortages of skilled people, and at peak times there are simply not enough Albertans and Canadians to fill the jobs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Regulated Rate Option for Electricity

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small residential electrical customers, farmers, and small businesses are currently not required to go shopping for a power provider. In July of 2006, however, that may have to change. The regulated rate option, considering the lack of competition, is definitely the preferred method of choosing a power provider. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Will your department consider extending the July 6 expiry date for the regulated rate option?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The regulated rate option, as anticipated, was planned to go till June of 2006, and as such we have been reviewing the options of going forward past June 2006. It's important that those things are set in place well in advance. Our department has been reviewing both the wholesale and retail markets to ensure that we have the best options for all residential and small commercial, and in that light those options will be reviewed over the next few months.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: given that contracts offered to these consumers to date are not as attractive as the regulated rate option, can you tell us how many Albertans have signed an electrical contract in the past year?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, one of the main reasons why the long-term contracts aren't yet as attractive as the regulated rate option is not unlike your mortgage, where your long-term interest rate is higher. There's a premium for a long-term, stable, predictable, guaranteed rate versus the short-term rate. But in that light there's been very good progress being made by the retailers to all residential and small commercial. Many are starting to sign on, though it's early on. Only about 7 per cent of residential consumers have signed long-term contracts at this stage, about 37 per cent of the small commercial market.

Mr. Lindsay: Again to the same minister: if the regulated rate option is not extended and considering the lack of competition among retailers, how can these consumers be assured that they will be able to negotiate a fair contract for their electrical service?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, under all models, even if the regulated rate option continued or did not, if there was a flow-through rate as one of the options, customers are not required to actually negotiate or sign a contract with a retailer. There is and will continue to be a default provision so that they won't be compelled to sign a contract if that's not their wish.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Provincial Achievement Tests

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standardized testing for every student in grades 3, 6, and 9 and now imposed on supposedly underachieving grade 4 students is costly and bureaucratic. It is also unnecessarily stressful on students, encourages invalid conclusions on the effectiveness of teachers and schools, and reinforces an outmoded, narrow view of teaching and learning. My question to the Minister of Education: when will the minister begin consulting with teachers to reform these exams so that the full range of student aptitudes and creative abilities is properly encouraged and recognized by this government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, in fact, began talking with teachers about this last year. Those discussions have continued, albeit on an informal sort of basis. Nonetheless, the member does raise an interesting question about students who did not fare too well in the grade 3 provincial achievement test and will therefore not be retested until the grade 6 provincial achievement test comes around. So in the interim it was thought advisable to perhaps introduce a provincial achievement test at the grade 4 level. We're just evaluating the implications and results of that particular program of testing to see if it's one that should be continued or if perhaps more diagnostic testing should come in in its place. I'll have some answers very shortly on that.

Mr. Flaherty: Will the minister commit today to abandon his plan to retest underperforming grade 3 students, students that began grade 4, particularly given that the government has no serious plan to provide these students with remedial help?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of help available. The question really is identifying what the particular students' needs are in terms of literacy, numeracy, and basic problem-solving skills. Obviously, some students do better at those particular skills than others. Those who have demonstrated the need for more help are getting some of that, and through the diagnostic testing approach that I just indicated, perhaps we could take a look at it over a longer period of time to help students really achieve to the maximum of their abilities. That's what we're committed to doing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the students' aptitudes and abilities need to be assessed much earlier in the educational years, will the minister examine the possibility of introducing a screening process in the first year of a child's education with a commitment to fund the focused remedial programs, formally developed, that the child needs to succeed in school?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that we're studying very closely and have been for some time is the whole issue of children at risk. Now, we have significant programs with tens of millions of dollars going to help address students who have learning difficulties. That is not to say that we should be replacing the home environment. Those students coming from home environments where perhaps they have the benefit of more nurturing, caring, loving environments seem to do fairly well, but those who are so-called at risk – and there are a variety of circumstances we could describe here as to what we mean by at risk – are the ones that we

are trying to zoom in on and help the most. In fact, that's part of our class size reduction initiative and one of the reasons why we just rolled out 89 million new dollars in class size reduction funding this past year. I'm optimistic that on Wednesday perhaps we'll see some of that good news continued.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Integrated Land Management

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Alberta's growth has led to a steady increase in public land use by the oil and gas and forest industries, tourism, and people enjoying the great outdoors. What is the government doing to respond to these increasing land-use pressures on our landscape so that there's not a free-for-all?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. This is a very good question in view of the fact that in Alberta approximately 60 per cent of the land is public land, and of course wise use of that land continues to be a priority for the government, particularly because of our growing population and the demands on the land. That's why the government has committed itself to a provincial land-use framework that is consistent with the throne speech and our 20-year plan.

I'm currently working, Mr. Speaker, with other colleagues and other ministries to determine what that framework will look like, and the goal is to create a sustainable land legacy where Albertans can continue to live on the land, labour on the land, and leisure on the land.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you. Again to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: is the Alberta government talking to Albertans about its approach to access management on public land?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an important component. Not only do we have to talk to our colleagues, but we also have to talk to our stakeholders, including industry, on our approach to access to the land. We must involve the public in informing them of our shared values and our stewardship of the land as well.

One of the ways that we can do this is to encourage education and outreach and, particularly, to let people know about something that comes through SRD, our respect the land program. We want to build on the previous successes with land access and land management that we've had in the past, and we'd like to make sure that we have achieved local participation, like we did in the Bighorn backcountry area, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Groeneveld: To the Minister of Energy. Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the energy sector is booming in Alberta. Can the Minister of Energy please tell the House what his department is doing to supplement integrated land management?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that the

activity is very substantial in this province, not just what we've heard about the oil sands but throughout the province: natural gas and coal, coal development itself, conventional oil and gas. All of the industry supports very much a very sustainable life cycle, environmental stewardship of the land. It is very important when we develop that we can return the lands to their original state. It is important also to see that we can disturb the land for temporary times but also return it to a very original state of environment.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Affordability of Postsecondary Education

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each time this Conservative government conducts an affordability study or reviews its tuition policy, it ends up further entrenching its ideology of user-pay. Those determined to watch the forthcoming international infomercial on the third way would do well to take note. Equitable access to public services, as it turns out, is a slippery concept. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will the minister assure Alberta students and their parents that the forthcoming affordability review will result in every qualified student, regardless of their background, being able to afford to go to the program of their choice?

2:30

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have made it perfectly clear that as Minister of Advanced Education and with the support of this government we believe that finances should not be a barrier to any student getting an education. I think that answers the hon. member's question.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: if this government is truly committed to equal access to educational opportunities, why has the money available to students from the Alberta student loan program not kept pace with the dramatic tuition increases we've seen over the last dozen years?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, we provide student loans on a demand basis. In calculating the amount that's given out on a student's loan, it takes into account the tuition fee for the programs that the student is accessing. It puts forward a budget with respect to the cost of living. Those are adjusted on an annual basis. So to the best of my knowledge the student loan program does take into account the tuition fees that students have to pay.

Mr. Taylor: Interesting, Mr. Speaker.

To the same minister: if the loan program, then, really does provide students with the dollars they need, why did students at the U of A through their students' union this year alone need to provide over \$1.1 million in financial aid to their fellow students precisely because they had needs not being met by the Alberta student loans program?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is misdirecting rather badly by suggesting that because there are other forms of student finance such as bursaries or loans or scholarships or any other form, including loans or grants that may be available from a students' union, that means that the Students Finance Board is not doing its job. We have the best student finance program in the country in this province. I served on that Students Finance Board, as did a member

of the opposition caucus, and we served well together in making sure that the Students Finance Board served Alberta students well.

The Students Finance Board has reviewed programs on an ongoing basis and continues to do that. The affordability review will make sure that as we go into the future, finance is not a barrier to a student getting an education in this province.

There will always be a role for supplementary finance and supplementary assistance to students on an emergency basis. Most of the funds, as I understand it, that the students' union provides to students are funds that are needed by students on an emergency basis. That will happen from time to time, and there will always be other opportunities for students to help each other support their programs and support them financially. But the student finance system that we have in this province is a great system, and it will become greater.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Electricity Transmission Line Capacity

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the province a construction boom in electrical generation is occurring. In the past four years close to 3,000 megawatts have been added to the grid, and many great projects, including wind generation and other green power projects, are about to be announced. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that these projects are boosting our province's power supply, can the minister tell us if our present transmission system can handle all of the power being generated?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to assure all Albertans that our transmission lines and system can handle the power and the growth. That is also why we are looking long term into making sure that it can continue to sustain that growth. We are fortunate to have that challenge in Alberta with all of the growth in load and consumers in this economy providing that challenge, but we are also looking further into the future to ensure that it will be reliable for decades and centuries to come.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. To the same minister: does his department intend to create a formal long-range plan to address potential transmission shortfalls?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, in respect to the long-term plan, the independent system operator has already developed a 10-year plan for transmission. There are some applications before the Energy and Utilities Board at this stage in light of that 10-year plan. Those are very instrumental to ensuring that that reliability is there. The independent system operator is also currently working on developing a 20-year plan.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: can the minister tell us if an upgrade to the transmission system between British Columbia and Alberta or even in Montana and British Columbia could benefit Alberta's small consumers?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, adding transmission capacity and tie-

lines – we already have one with British Columbia, a very small one with Saskatchewan, and there are other projects being announced or contemplated at this stage with tie-lines through to Montana – adds, really, another generator at another end. That's really all that it's doing: adding another source of reliable power that can be brought into our system in times of need. If there are any capacity constraints of a generator going down, it would just provide us greater reliability for our own consumers here in Alberta.

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

Electricity Exports

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Calpine Energy applied for authorization to export up to 250 megawatts of electricity generated in Alberta to the United States. Increasing electricity exports from Alberta means that others will benefit while the only things Albertans will get are higher power prices and even more and more air pollution. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Why does this Progressive Conservative government continue to encourage electricity exports from Alberta to the United States when it will only lead to higher and more volatile power prices here in Alberta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I think there are some assumptions in there that are entirely false. It would only increase the reliability of our system to have more opportunity to bring power into this province when it's needed for what we need. Furthermore, we've never taken the view that we should be an island unto ourselves. There are opportunities to supply good, reliable source power to our neighbours and friends in the neighbouring provinces or even to the United States.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that Powerex and Enron made a good job of importing electricity into this province, how and why can we allow electricity exports when Alberta's own electricity regulator has stated that electricity demand will exceed supply by 2006? Again, why is this government adding to the problem by encouraging electricity exports to the United States?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we won't be lacking supply by 2006. Those aren't the forecasts. Furthermore, increasing transmission tie-lines, be it through British Columbia, be it through Saskatchewan, be it through the United States, will only increase the reliability and supply of power and reduce the volatility in price spikes that come by having a shortage of supply in any one market.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how can the hon. minister assure Alberta consumers that the \$1.5 billion that they'll pay to enhance the backbone transmission system is not simply prebuilding for electricity exports, where they will receive no economic benefit?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the \$1.5 billion referenced in transmission is part of the independent system operator's 10-year review of transmission needs in this province. They do form part of the backbone. It is very important that we do have reliable transmission lines to get the power to the customers when it's needed at the

appropriate time, and customers have always borne and paid for that cost to ensure that they have reliable power. It's the best thing that we could do.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six members to participate under Members' Statements today, but in the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour for me today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very distinguished individual who is the chair of the region 7 health authority's board. Region 7 is a model for the rest of the province and very much leads by example. If I could please ask the Assembly to acknowledge Mr. Don Schultz.

head: **Members' Statements**
Team Ferbey

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to recognize a very fabulous Alberta team. Yesterday Team Ferbey did Canada, Alberta, and Edmonton proud by winning their third world championship as a team. The win gave Randy his fourth world championship.

2:40

This year's Ford world championship of curling is being heralded as the greatest curling competition ever held, this win providing a fitting conclusion to what has been an outstanding season for curling's greatest team. Yesterday's win was even sweeter given that the past week had not been easy for Randy and the boys. At times they struggled, leaving themselves facing possible elimination in each of their last six games. Undaunted by adversity, Team Ferbey saved their best for last, curling 90 per cent as a team, easily defeating a stunned Scottish squad. When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

This year the Ferbey foursome played 148 games, winning nearly 80 per cent of the time. During the provincial, national, and world championships Team Ferbey amassed a record of 30 wins and five losses. This team has all the talent in the world. Randy Ferbey calls an outstanding game, Scott Pfeifer and Marcel Rocque are the best sweepers ever seen, and Dave Nedohin makes shots that other curlers are afraid to play look routine.

However, you cannot be successful on skill alone. Mr. Speaker, every team relies on their sponsors to help support them. Team Ferbey is blessed to have many wonderful sponsors. I am especially proud of Denmar Energy Services Ltd. of Bonnyville and owners Roger Fortier and Garry Lapointe. Roger and Garry have contributed to the success of the Ferbey foursome through sponsoring the team over the past four years. Both Denmar Energy Services Ltd. and Team Ferbey are Alberta success stories, and together they showcase all that is good about Alberta.

After a well-deserved summer break, Randy Ferbey and company will be headed for Halifax in quest of a spot on Canada's Olympic team en route to Torino, Italy, in 2006.

I know that all the members of this Assembly will join me in congratulating Randy Ferbey, Dave Nedohin, Scott Pfeifer, Marcel

Rocque, Dan Holowaychuk, and coach Brian Moore on their win yesterday. Congratulations, and good luck in Halifax.

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

Value of Education

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 2,500 years ago Confucius taught the rulers of ancient China: "To make a society prosperous, give it education." Society is still going strong today. In our modern times, reflecting on the importance of learning, the naturalist Charles Darwin said, "It's not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

I read a recent research report on the value of education by Stanford University. With global evidence it shows that education contributes to national productivity as well as to individual earnings and quality of life. Countries with strong institutions and infrastructure and effective governments arrange to provide their citizens with substantial amounts of education. The accumulation of human capital is one of the three important benefits that flow from good education infrastructure. The others are the accumulation of plant and equipment and the development of efficient production.

This research also shows that the countries of the world having achieved high levels of education for the average person have done so in varying combinations of self-reliance, government subsidy, and direct provision of education. One of the few favourable characteristics of the discredited socialist governments of eastern Europe was the provision of high levels of education. As the relative cost of education continues to rise in relation to other goods and services, the pressure of financing high levels of education is increasing.

Education is important. Learning and teaching are integral parts of education. As Alberta has many excellent student learners, we also have excellent teachers. I want to thank and congratulate teachers who are among the nominees and finalists for the Alberta 2005 excellence in teaching awards.

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

Pride Rainbow Project

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Pride Rainbow project was conceived in the fall of 2003 by four youth of the Unitarian Church of Calgary. The aim of the project was and is to show support for same-sex marriage in Canada and elsewhere.

The physical manifestation of this support is found in a perpetually growing fabric banner approximately five feet wide. Frequent sewing bees undertaken by a diverse and expanding number of dedicated volunteers have increased the length of the banner dramatically, from a mere six feet in the summer of 2004 to its most recent official measurement of 468 feet, 11 inches. The goal is to make it eventually 3.2 kilometres, or two miles, long in order to break the current record of one and a quarter miles set by a group in Florida. The banner, as the project name implies, contains the six colours of the Pride flag: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple.

This past Saturday the Pride Rainbow project celebrated the laudable milestone of its banner reaching 500 feet in length at a party in Calgary's Winston Heights, Mountview community hall. In addition to the guest of honour, the 500-foot-long pride banner itself, the event featured a number of speakers, booths, and displays dedicated to promoting tolerance and diversity in the province of Alberta.

The Alberta Liberal opposition applauds the participants in the

Pride Rainbow project on their convictions and their perseverance and stands with them in support. The Alberta Liberal opposition understands that same-sex couples who seek to get married, far from undermining the mainstream of society, are in fact asking us all to let them join the larger community as full participants with all the responsibilities as well as the rights that attach thereto.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Progressive Conservative Convention

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend people interested in participating in and shaping the political future of our province travelled from across Alberta to attend the Progressive Conservative Association annual general meeting. It was one of the largest of such gatherings ever held, with over 1,500 registered delegates representing a diversity of ages, professions, and interests.

It's my distinct honour, Mr. Speaker, to point out that the rural constituency sending the most delegates to the convention was also the constituency farthest away from Edmonton. Yes, my constituency of Peace River registered 54 delegates to the convention. We sent delegates from the town of Peace River in the south, from High Level in the north, Rainbow Lake in the west, and Fort Vermilion and La Crête in the east. Some of the delegates travelled close to a thousand kilometres to be here, and I want to express my intense pride for being able to represent such committed and dedicated constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly want to recognize the extraordinary efforts of Gary Friedel, our former MLA, Sylvia Kennedy, our constituency association president, John Watt, the mayor of Rainbow Lake, Ray and Al Toews from Fort Vermilion, Robin Erickson and Amy Murphy from Peace River, and all the delegates from La Crête that so honourably represented their community. I would also like to extend my personal thanks and my congratulations to all of the delegates.

Maybe we didn't exactly put the Peace River constituency on the map, Mr. Speaker – I think it was already there – but we sure highlighted it and were very proud to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Team Ferbey

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate the Ferbey foursome on winning their third world championship in the past five years. I'd also like to congratulate them on winning the 22nd world championship for Canada since 1968.

Ferbey's team was the talk of the Sherwood Park trade show this past weekend as three of the four members reside in Sherwood Park. Skip Randy Ferbey and second Scott Pfeifer both live in my constituency of Strathcona, and David Nedohin, the team's third, lives in the neighbouring constituency of Sherwood Park. The lead, Marcel Rocque, currently lives in Edmonton but grew up in Sherwood Park and was a graduate of Archbishop Jordan high school.

Sherwood Park resident Ed Thomlinson, possibly the Ferbey rink's number one fan, was so confident of their victory after the Brier that he suggested there would be plenty of opportunity to recognize the team after they won the world championship. But Ed and many fans around Strathcona county were a little worried about their chances when they lost three of their first seven games. In order for the Ferbey rink to dig themselves out of the hole they were

in, they had to win eight straight games in order to take home the championship.

The Ferbey rink did exactly what all Albertans do and what all people from Strathcona county do: dug deep, worked hard, and never gave up. They won the rest of their round robin games, won the tie-breaking game, won the three-four playoff game, the semifinal, and took it to the rink from Scotland in the final, winning 11 to 4.

Mr. Speaker, the Ferbey rink had two five-enders in the final game. Never in the history of the world championship has a five-ender been scored, let alone two of them. In fact, the Ferbey rink has never before scored two of them in the same game. They certainly knew when to turn it on.

I would like to congratulate the entire Ferbey rink for an outstanding Brier victory and for a memorable world championship win. I'd particularly like to congratulate my constituents, Randy Ferbey and Scott Pfeifer. This weekend's win gives Randy his fourth world championship and his third as skip of this team. Only two other skips have led their teams to three world championships, and I believe Ferbey's rink is the first to do so with the same four members.

Marcel Rocque, Scott Pfeifer, Dave Nedohin, and Randy Ferbey are truly fine Albertans. Join me in congratulating the members of this team, please.

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

2:50

Dorothy Pacquette

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise here today to speak just a few minutes on the importance of Dorothy Pacquette's journey from Fort McMurray. Her trek took almost two weeks. She arrived in Edmonton on Saturday and was greeted by hundreds of people here at the front of the Legislature while many of the people across the way were at their convention.

What she was trying to underline are the issues of aboriginal training, the issues of training the youth in our province, and the accessibility of other Canadians to the important jobs in the tar sands. The oil sands and the issues of labour availability, training, and infrastructure have been important issues in our body politic as we work through the biggest construction boom in Canadian history.

We have had an awful lot of studies on the demand for workers. We've had an awful lot of press and media on these studies, and all the rest of it, but we've had very little and very rarely studies on supply. These studies on demand come from many associations. Some of them have been very good and add to the knowledge in the area very well. But, for example, to go on a survey of all the associations that hire tradesmen for the oil sands is comparable to surveying all the grade 2 students and asking them how much candy they want in three months. Well, you might get the answer that there's never enough.

The supply side, however – and we see some great problems in the supply side in that it doesn't lend itself so much to the same types of studies. There are hiring halls, there's word of mouth, there's the foreman calling the crews that have been out of work. That's the way the industry works. It doesn't work very much through want ads. It doesn't work very much through these types of things that are being measured and sometimes reported, and that is why it's difficult to use these . . . [Mr. Backs' speaking time expired] I'm through already? Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling

Brevity in Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, might I thank the two hon. members today who understand the value of two minutes, the hon. Member

for Calgary-Currie and the hon. Member for Peace River. We've had a change in the rules today because members in the past have said that they couldn't participate within one minute. Well, four today conveniently found that they couldn't participate in two minutes either. So congratulations to them.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: On this day, from a historical point of view, in 1950 His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor and Wallis the Duchess of Windsor arrived in Calgary, and among the visits they made on this day in Calgary was to Alberta's first Legion branch, the Calgary No. 1 branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. Interestingly enough, His Royal Highness had turned the sod for the Legion building in 1919, 31 years prior to his arrival.

head:

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a petition signed by Albertans who are very concerned about the dangerous driving conditions faced by many workers in northern Alberta. In particular, the 522 people who signed are urging the government to "increase infrastructure development funding for Highway 63." This brings the total for this petition to 1,718 signatures.

The Speaker: We're on petitions. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting a petition from 102 residents of Alberta asking the government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with 100 names that would urge the government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with a petition from 117 Albertans from the fine Alberta communities of Bruderheim, St. Albert, Lamont, Evansburg, Ardrossan, and Edmonton. It reads: We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am presenting a petition signed by 405 Albertans from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Bonnyville, Lac La Biche, St. Paul, Ardrossan, Leduc, Calgary, and Canmore urging the government of Alberta to “introduce legislation allowing parents the authority to place their [addicted] children into mandatory drug treatment and to fund urgently required . . . drug treatment centres.”

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to present a petition from Onoway, Calgary, Alberta Beach, Gunn, Edmonton, and Spruce Grove, which reads: the people below signed urge the Government of Alberta to

prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill Pr. 1

Bow Valley Community Foundation Act

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

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill Pr. 1, Bow Valley Community Foundation Act.
Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. I would like to table the executive summary of an interim report by the Wait Time Alliance entitled No More Time to Wait. Alberta's wait times are embarrassingly far behind the benchmarks set out in this report.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table copies of government news releases from June 30, 2004, and April 8, 2005. The second appears to be an announcement of a previous announcement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate amount of copies of a brochure being distributed by Direct Energy currently. The brochure boasts of Direct Energy's ability to protect consumers from volatile and unstable energy rates. Of course, consumers wouldn't need such protection if our electric system had not been so disastrously deregulated in the first place.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today, two of which are from University Heights residents. The first is a copy of an e-mail from Bill and Norma Crooks, and the second is a letter from Mary Abel. These Calgary-Varsity constituents express their grave concerns regarding the impact on their community of the expansion of 16th Avenue to create access

between the Foothills and Children's hospitals. They feel strongly that there has not been adequate opportunity for meaningful community input concerning this project.

The third tabling is a copy of the nonpartisan Friends of Medicare document released last Thursday to all parties entitled Flawed, Failed, Abandoned: 100 P3s, Canadian & International Evidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table this submission with the required copies from Bev McKay, the founder of FAIRE, Families Allied to Influence Responsible Eldercare. It's regarding incidents of horrific elder abuse in care, with the accompanying photographs.

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

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Premier I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter the Premier sent earlier today to skip Randy Ferbey congratulating Team Alberta on winning the 2005 World Men's Curling Championship.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, April 7, I will now move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 1 through 11 inclusive.

[Motion carried]

Student Loan Defaults

Q1. Dr. Pannu moved that the following question be accepted.
For each of the fiscal years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 what was the total number of student loan defaults broken down by the last postsecondary institution or private vocational school attended by the student?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move an amendment to Written Question 1. I believe the amendment has been circulated. It would amend Written Question 1 by striking out “fiscal” and substituting “academic” in reference to the years; by adding “and” before “2002-2003”; striking out “and 2003-2004”; adding “Alberta” before “student loan defaults”; adding “for those students who have completed their studies” after “defaults”; and striking out “institution or private vocational school” and substituting “sector.”

With those amendments the written question would read:

For the academic years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003 what was the total number of Alberta student loan defaults for those students who have completed their studies broken down by the last postsecondary sector attended by the student?

With those amendments, I would be able to accept the question, Mr. Speaker. I could speak to the amendment now, if you prefer, to the reasons why those amendments are considered to be necessary, and there are a number of them.

First of all, while institution-specific data are available, such loan default information is currently not shared publicly. Each Alberta institution is provided with its own specific data. Institutions outside the province attended by Albertans do not get their data unless there is a problem with consistently high default rates. For example, Harvard, just to pick one, has never received a student loan default report from us. Information at the sector level, such as the university sector, is however available for public information.

Legal services has advised me that there are potential issues with providing information about individual institutions pursuant to section 16 and section 25 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It may be harmful to the business interest of a private institution as per section 16 or to the economic interest or other interest of a public body under section 25.

Legal services has also advised that we would be wise to consult with the institutions before we consider releasing this sort of specific data. Students with Alberta student loans are attending approximately 1,900 institutions world-wide, which would be an onerous task of consultation. It would require approximately three months' worth of work, and it would be also a considerable amount of work to generate sector-level data, such as universities and colleges. If we even received permission from the institutions to release the data, I'm advised that the resulting report would be likely in excess of 5,700 pages in length.

Default information is tracked based on people who have completed their studies in a specific year in question. Information for 2003-2004 is not available because students would have graduated in May 2004. They would have had a six-month grace period and then another six months before we would consider them delinquent, and that's the reason why we've asked to remove that year from the information.

Default information provided should only include Alberta student loans and not federal loans or other loans, obviously, obtained by students. Management reports associated with defaults are based on school leavers from the May 1 to April 30 period, therefore the academic year rather than the fiscal year.

It's for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, that we're proposing the amendments, to put the question into a context where we can provide as much information as we reasonably can provide and hopefully help satisfy some of the interests of the hon. member in asking the question but without putting an undue amount of work on the department to canvass fully the 1,900 institutions that might be involved to seek their permission to release the institution-specific information and, rather, grouping it by sector, which hopefully will provide at least some of the information that the hon. member requires.

The Speaker: We're on the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the amendment.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have carefully looked at the amendments that the minister has proposed to my question, which seeks information, I think, that's in the public interest. It's not just the curiosity of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that has led to the asking of the question in the first place. I think public interest is involved here. Public resources are involved here. Alberta's students need to know how different institutions perform, why students going into particular institutions default. They also need to know what percentage of students graduate and complete programs and what don't and yet get the loans from these institutions.

So while I would agree that part (a) of the amendment, which changes "academic" to "fiscal," may make sense because the minister's records, I suppose, are by fiscal year rather than by

academic year, if I understand the rationale behind part (a) of the amendment – it's striking out "fiscal" and substituting "academic" – Mr. Speaker, I would certainly appreciate the explanation on this, on the minister changing it from "fiscal" to "academic." Is it because he is willing to provide information for the programs that have been completed? Is that the reason for it, for "fiscal" to "academic"?

Part (b) of the amendment seeks to limit the release of the information to the end of the 2002-2003 academic year, I understand. Again, we are now into 2005. We're more than a year away, a year past the completed academic 2002-2003 year. The minister argued that the reason he can't provide that information is because it takes six months for the first report to come, another six months after that, and I'd suggest to the minister that this still allows the minister to have had enough time to have the information for 2003-2004. [interjection] Okay. Then part (c) of the amendment strikes out for that reason "2003-2004." I understand that the minister is giving me the facts as he has been advised from his department on the availability of this information, so I understand that one.

I do have concerns, however, with respect particularly to parts (e) and (f) of the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Under (e) the minister wants to add "for those students who have completed their studies." If the information to be made available as a response to this question goes back two years, then I don't understand why the minister would want to report only on programs that are completed and not on studies not completed. Lots of the defaults are related to students not completing the programs and quitting altogether.

I think it's important for us to have the information for each institution on how many students who do get the loans do in fact not only default but default as well as fail to complete the programs. Some of the institutions, as I understand it, have really quite miserable records on the completion rates. Default rates are not the only issue. The issue is default rates related to the failure rates, students failing to complete those programs by many of the private, for-profit institutions, and we've asked questions in the House before on that.

3:10

The last point here. Part (f) of the amendment is quite troubling. The minister is unwilling to provide this information by institution. We are not asking for information for every student. Information is objectified, impersonalized when you ask for information by institution, and I don't see why the minister should not in fact be ready to provide the information by institution regardless of whether or not the institution is private, for-profit and therefore business interests are involved, whether or not the institution is public and therefore can provide the information without raising any concerns about the protection of privacy of information for individual students or individual faculty or other employees of the institution.

I find it quite puzzling and, in fact, dismaying that the minister has sought to decline my request for information by institution, which in my view would be very, very important information for students to have, for their families to have. Families are supposed to supplement the studies of their children when they go to school. The loan program allows for that, in fact requires that. Families have an interest in knowing the record of completion, the record of default by institution, not just by sector, so that they can make intelligent decisions. If they are going to be treated as consumers in the marketplace of academic institutions, then the government, I think, will serve the public interest better, will serve the interests of parents and families and students better if it, in fact, decided to be transparent and provide information by each institution so that appropriate judgments can be made by families and by students before making

decisions on which institutions they would prefer to enrol in and pursue their studies in.

So I hope that the minister will change his mind on some of the parts of the amendments that he is proposing. I don't see any reason why he should stick to the amendments as proposed because not to have this information available, not to be transparent about the information that I've sought – certainly, amendment (f) will make information less transparent and more opaque, therefore taking away from parents, families, students the ability to make the right decisions given that they don't have the right information. Why would he withhold information that's critical to making intelligent, smart decisions with respect to enrolment and pursuit of studies in particular institutions based on a record of success or failure?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:14 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Cao	Jablonski	Morton
Cardinal	Johnson	Oberle
Cenaiko	Johnston	Ouellette
Coutts	Knight	Pham
Danyluk	Liepert	Prins
Ducharme	Lougheed	Rodney
Evans	Lund	Snelgrove
Forsyth	Magnus	Stevens
Graydon	Mar	Strang
Griffiths	Marz	Tarchuk
Groeneveld	McFarland	Taylor
Hancock	Miller, R.	Webber
Herard	Mitzel	Zwozdesky
Horner		

Against the motion:

Agnihotri	Elsalhy	Pannu
Bonko	Martin	Swann
Eggen		

Totals: For – 40 Against – 7

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: Now we have before us a written question that has been amended. Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona want to close the debate?

Dr. Pannu: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to conclude the debate. During the interregnum that we waited for this latest vote to happen, I had some opportunity to talk with the Minister of Advanced Education. I appreciate his expression of some concern that he didn't give me advance notice on it. I appreciate that. If we'd had an opportunity to talk, perhaps I would have been able to convince the minister to take out some of the more dismaying parts of this amendment proposed here, especially replacing "institution or private vocational school" with the term "sector." I think that's the most serious flaw in the amendment, in my view.

I want to make clear that my interest in seeking this information

was specific to those institutions, private and public, that operate in Alberta, not all the 1,000 and some institutions all over the world that are accessed by our students one way or the other when they're pursuing their postsecondary studies. Perhaps that wasn't entirely clear in my question, but had the minister's staff contacted me, I would certainly have readily modified my question and made it more specific by suggesting that we seek information primarily on institutions that are located in Alberta and operate out of Alberta under government authorization in one form or another to which our postsecondary students go and, in order to go there, get student loans, and some of them default on them.

3:30

We do know that the rate at which students default on their loans has a great deal to do with whether or not they complete their programs at many of the institutions, and the rates of completion are highly variable from one institution to the other. Somehow, I sense that there's a correlation between high rates of default and low rates of success in some of these institutions.

That's why having that information is exceedingly important for students and families to be able to make an appropriate decision and for us as legislators to make sure that the monies that we provide in the form of student loans are appropriately invested, get properly used, and students get the needed protection. Then this increasingly market model of postsecondary education that this government has been encouraging to develop in this province they have to work with. As consumers in the so-called marketplace they need this information, and that's why I asked the question.

So having said this, Mr. Speaker, I am not happy with the question as amended, but I would simply hope that the minister can provide as much information as he possibly can in spite of his amendments so that students are served and the interests of students and families are served just as much as the public interest in the province is served by getting this information, making this information public, getting it into the hands of the citizens of this province, particularly the families and the students who go to postsecondary institutions in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Written Question 1 as amended carried]

Student Loan Defaults

Q2. Dr. Pannu moved that the following question be accepted. For each of the fiscal years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 what was the total dollar value of student loan defaults broken down by the last postsecondary institution or private vocational school attended by the student?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to provide information as much as possible and, therefore, would be willing to accept this question if amended as I proposed by amendment which has been circulated. Essentially, this question is exactly the same as the previous question, except that it asks for the total dollar value rather than the total number, so the same amendments would pertain.

I would move that Written Question 2 be amended by striking out "fiscal" and substituting "academic"; adding "and" before "2002-2003"; striking out "and 2003-2004"; adding "Alberta" before "student loan defaults"; adding "for those students who have completed their studies" after "defaults"; and by striking out "institution or private vocational school" and substituting "sector." The written question as amended would then read:

For each of the academic years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003 what was the total dollar value of Alberta student loan defaults for those students who have completed their studies broken down by the last postsecondary sector attended by the student?

Mr. Speaker, I won't repeat the rationale that I gave on Written Question 1 for the need for those changes. Suffice to say that the advice that I have from legal services indicates that there are FOIP issues surrounding the release of the information without having a discussion with each of the institutions involved. While it would be our hope and in discussion with the hon. member who raised the question my intention to make sure that there are appropriate levels of information available to students to make appropriate decisions with respect to whether they should attend courses or attend institutions, and we'll certainly work to try and make sure that students and their families have all the necessary information, the rationale used for making the amendment for Written Question 1 still stands with respect to Written Question 2.

Therefore, I'd ask the House to support the amendments so that I can provide as much information as is possible in the current situation to the hon. member and to the House, and we will then take a look further outside the process of Written Questions and Motions for Returns to see how we can enhance the availability of necessary or important information to students and their families.

The Speaker: On the amendments, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is absolutely right. The amendments proposed to Written Question 2 are almost identical to those that the minister proposed for Written Question 1, and I have the exact same objections to the amendments proposed to Written Question 2 in the same way I had those objections to the amendments proposed to Written Question 1.

Mr. Speaker, I still find it difficult to accept the minister's argument that he is constrained by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act when it comes to making public information on default rates on loans by institutions. The FOIP Act, as I understand it, simply does not protect institutions from providing information that is public, that should be public, that is not about individuals, either individuals who are employees of those institutions or individuals who are students at these institutions. So I cannot accept the argument – it's simply not persuasive – that FOIP legislation constrains the minister from offering that information. There must be other reasons, and I can only wonder what those reasons are. Replacing "institution or private vocational school" with "sector" makes lots of information unavailable. It makes the whole information opaque.

This House is about transparency; it's about making information public. It's making institutions adhere to standards of openness and transparency that the public interest in this province demands and requires. To exempt them from releasing such information is to give them licence to hide the information that, if made public, would certainly serve the interests of families and students, who have lots at stake in going to postsecondary schools or sending their children to postsecondary schools. They spend lots of money and resources in enabling these people to be able to go there, and to deny them this critical piece of information is to really deny them a service that they, I think, merit, have the right to have.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the conversation that the Minister of Advanced Education and I had, I'm not going to spend all of my time and ask the House to again spend time on taking a standing vote on it, but I cannot support these amendments because they defeat the

very intention and the purposes that lie behind the asking of the question in the first place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, there's very little to be said about the amended question. I know that the minister will proceed to provide some very general information, which I'm convinced will not be of great use to the students and families whose interests are at stake here. But you get what you get, and I'm therefore willing to let the matter proceed to the next stage.

[Written Question 2 as amended carried]

3:40 Student Loan Numbers

Q3. Dr. Pannu moved that the following question be accepted. For each of the fiscal years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 what was the total number of students who received student loans while attending a postsecondary institution or private vocational school in Alberta broken down by institution?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again with Written Question 3 I would indicate that we're prepared to accept the question if it were amended so that it could be responded to in an appropriate way. In this case the amendments aren't as extensive because we can provide, in fact, information with respect to the 2003-2004 fiscal year in respect of the total number of students who received loans, so that amendment isn't necessary in this one.

I would ask and I would move that Written Question 3 be amended by adding "Alberta" after "received" and by striking out "by institution" and substituting "by the last postsecondary sector attended by the student." Written Question 3 will then read as follows:

For each of the fiscal years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 what was the total number of students who received Alberta student loans while attending a postsecondary institution or private vocational school in Alberta broken down by the last postsecondary sector attended by the student.

Again, the reasons for the changes are straightforward. Institution levels of numbers of students receiving loans are not currently shared, but information at a sector level is available to be made public. Legislative services have indicated again, as I indicated with respect to the other question – I won't go through the whole thing – that it could be a violation of sections 16 or 25 if we agreed to release the information without having prior discussions with the institutions, the private institutions under section 16 or the public institutions under section 25.

Approximately 200 to 250 of the 1,900 institutions attended by Albertans are within the province, so that answers the previous question that the hon. member raised. There are 200 to 250 in the province, and we'd need to consult with those institutions prior to releasing these data, which would be an incredibly time-consuming process. Our standard student loan reports by institutions also include other student assistance received, i.e. benefits and grants, and to provide an institution-level breakdown of loans would also require those reports to be manually severed to exclude the other assistance information.

So, again, while I always have the interest in providing as much information as is appropriate and possible without unduly taking away from the time that staff have to devote to the interests of

students in the postsecondary institution system, it is appropriate to make this amendment so that we can provide as much information as may be reasonably available while recognizing the FOIP requirements and making sure that we don't violate that particular act either knowingly or unknowingly and, also, of course, to limit the information we provide with respect to Alberta student loans as opposed to Canada student loans or loans from family, friends, or other financial institutions.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House agree to the amendment so that we might provide the hon. member with information on an appropriate basis.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amendment proposed by the Minister of Advanced Education is in two parts. Part (a) simply refers to Alberta students, and I have no objection to part (a) of the amendment. I accept that amendment.

My concern remains with part (b), where the word "sector" will replace the words "by institution" in Written Question 3. Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that I find that FOIP, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, is serving here more as a fig leaf to cover information, to refuse to release information which I see as important, which has nothing to do with the privacy of individuals. It has to do with the performance of institutions. Institutions must be judged based on their performance, and there's no reason for this minister or this government or this House to provide protection against the ability of these institutions to deliver the goods which they're there to offer to students if they are willing to undergo huge student debt and take out loans to seek those qualifications, seek those educational experiences that the educational institutions offer.

I think it's always important if you, particularly a government that regrettably seems intent upon the private, for-profit sector to grow within our public postsecondary education system, then turn around and protect those very institutions that in my view have very little useful role to play within the public postsecondary system, to provide them the protection that they neither deserve nor need to have. If they are going to be players within the postsecondary education system, then they ought to be held accountable for the record that they produce in terms of the success and failure of the students that enrol in them.

It's that information that will then be useful for future students to use to make decisions on whether they want to take loans from the government or public resources to go to the institutions which they know will not deliver on the promised goods. So why, for goodness' sake, keep this information from being available to students and families who have to make these critical decisions? We have heard in this Assembly time and again, year after year about the massive debt loads that our postsecondary students have. They have to have these in order to get to these institutions in the first place.

Well, if that is the case, if we are forcing students to take such high risks with respect to their own financial security present and future and encourage them to invest in their own future from their own resources, then I think we as a government, as a Legislature have a responsibility to stand up for them and call on the institutions to make the information public that would be absolutely necessary for these students to be able to say: yes, I want to go to this institution because of their good academic record, performance record, and no to that institution because I know that the government has provided me with the information that tells me that I shouldn't be seeking admission to this institution based on its past record.

It is that information that's being denied by way of this amend-

ment, and that's why, Mr. Speaker, I again find myself opposing very strongly the part (b) of the amendment as proposed by the minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that my question, Question 3 as amended, won't provide the information that's critical for students to have, for families to have. Regardless, whatever information the minister is willing to provide I will receive and then make a judgment, based on that, on whether or not to continue to persist in my attempts to have information made public that I think is in the interest of students and families to have.

[Written Question 3 as amended carried]

Student Loan Dollar Value

- Q4. Dr. Pannu moved that the following question be accepted.
For each of the fiscal years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 what was the total dollar value of student loans received by students in Alberta broken down by postsecondary institution or private vocational school attended by the student?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As with written questions 1, 2, and 3, Written Question 4 could be accepted if it was amended. Again, the amendments would be made in order to align with the type of information which we feel we can legally provide without having to do the thorough review under the FOIP Act.

3:50

So I would move that Written Question 4 be amended by adding "Alberta" before "student loans," adding "while attending a postsecondary institution or private vocational school" before "in," adding "the last" before "postsecondary," and striking out "institution or private vocational school" and substituting "sector." The amended written question will then read as follows:

For each of the fiscal years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 what was the total dollar value of Alberta student loans received by students while attending a postsecondary institution or private vocational school in Alberta broken down by the last postsecondary sector attended by the student?

Again, Mr. Speaker, I won't go through and repeat the arguments in detail, but essentially these amendments are perceived to be necessary as we could not agree to release information of that nature without doing a thorough FOIP review, particularly under section 16 and section 25 of the FOIP Act.

I have every interest, as the hon. member does, in making sure that the students have appropriate information in making determinations as to what institutions they might attend or what value they can get, but there is no value, Mr. Speaker, in giving people information which is not in a context or at an appropriate level. Certainly, there's no good reason for us to perhaps go to an extent where we might be violating our own laws with respect to protection of privacy.

I must say that the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act extends privacy not just to individuals but also to institutions under section 25 and to private-sector companies, which would include for-profit, private-sector schools, under section 16. We would not be able to release these data without doing a consultation with each of those institutions. While that might be a valuable thing to do, doing it now in the context of the types of information that we have and agreeing to do it now would not in our view be

legal. Therefore, we must decline to do that, and that's why we ask for the amendments.

What we do going forward to ensure that we look at how we collect data and how we work with institutions and what information might be available to be provided to students in making their decisions is something that I think is worthy of discussion, and I would certainly appreciate any input from the hon. member or other members of the House with respect to those questions.

Regretfully, we must ask for these amendments to this question at this time in order that we can abide by the laws of this House's past and ensure that we don't make undue use of the taxpayers' money using civil servants' time to gather information which is not being collected in the way in which it's being asked for.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the amendment.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise regretfully to oppose the amendment for the reasons that I would be repeating the fourth time around in the House if I spoke at length about why I am opposed to the amendment. The amendment simply defeats the very purpose of asking the question. Clearly, now, it seems to me that there are two facts here. One, the minister's inability or lack of readiness to supply information by institution calls into question the commitment of this government to hold institutions to account whether they are for profit, whether they have business interest or academic interest.

I think that this House and this government must hold all institutions accountable for the taxpayers' money that they receive. In this case we are asking for information that students receive to go to these institutions. It is not their money directly given to institutions – I would recognize and acknowledge that fact – but the point is that these are public dollars. Many students who take these loans go to some of these institutions of questionable repute and, in fact, never complete the programs. They fail the programs, and then they default on the loans that they have taken.

That default on student loans means that public dollars are being lost. Then the government calls on some collection agencies to get after these students to recover these loans and in the process loses goodness knows how much, 30 per cent to 70 per cent, whatever the take is of collection agencies, of the money that they're able to collect at the end of this arduous process after they have really harassed families and students for years.

So all we are doing here is drawing attention to the serious flaw in the decision of the government to make whatever information it makes public and perhaps some gaps in the information that ought to be collected that it presently does not collect. There's no reason to be complacent in the manner in which we account for public dollars and tax dollars that we spend either by way of loans or by way of some subsidy or grant to institutions. The answer in the question that I have raised here today would have helped us to account for every dollar that we spend on postsecondary education whether by way of student loans or through some other shape or form. Unfortunately, the minister has refused to do this.

The last point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is the what I consider inappropriate use of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. To use this act to withhold information which has nothing to do with the protection of privacy of individuals – all we are seeking is institutional records and information related to institutions, not to individuals – is to bring the efficacy and usefulness of this piece of legislation into question. When you use a piece of legislation for purposes for which it is not supposed to be used, you risk putting the credit of the piece of legislation into question, into disrepute.

That is my additional concern, Mr. Speaker, that I must make sure gets on the record. We shouldn't be using pieces of legislation which are not designed to deny people the information that's legitimately due to citizens, that's legitimately due to people who use these institutions: families, students, faculty, and taxpayers in general. My fear is that here FOIP is being used to do precisely that, and that's deeply regrettable.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully request that we move to private members' business with unanimous consent from the House, please.

The Speaker: We've just approved the amendment to Written Question 4. We still have to deal with Written Question 4 as amended. Now, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you want to conclude the debate?

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say on Written Question 4, eviscerated and emasculated as it is by the amendment proposed by the minister and voted for by this House, I am willing to receive the information that the minister will be providing with reference to Written Question 4.

[Written Question 4 as amended carried]

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I would request that we move to private members' business with unanimous consent of the House.

[Unanimous consent denied]

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

Ground Ambulance Services

Q5. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that the following question be accepted. Which reports, consultation groups, and stakeholder reviews have indicated to the government that \$55 million is the total amount needed to fully fund the provincial takeover of ground ambulance services on April 1, 2005?

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this question is self-explanatory, certainly, but there has been a significant increase in the amount of money that is reported to be required to implement this ground ambulance service. There are some municipalities that are still scratching their heads as to how all this came about. Some municipalities feel that they have been left in the dark and possibly could be left holding a significant bill at the end of this. All these reports, consultation groups that have had discussions with the government, and the reviews from stakeholders: it would be very interesting to see what they had to say initially. It is a matter of public interest because of the significant cost overruns from the initial estimate.

Thank you.

4:00

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm so delighted to rise. In a spirit of transparency and co-operation, we are prepared to accept Written Question 5.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close the debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I would like to express on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and other members of our caucus the acceptance of Written Question 5 and look forward to receiving all of the information in a timely fashion.

Thank you.

[Written Question 5 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on behalf of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Alberta's Representative in Washington

Q6. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Ms Pastoor that the following question be accepted.

How much money is being spent on leasing accommodation for the Alberta representative in Washington, D.C., for the 2004-05 fiscal year?

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. Now, certainly all members of this Assembly and the taxpayers know how much the Alberta representative – in some circles it is called the Alberta envoy, and in some other circles it's called the Alberta ambassador – is receiving in wages and benefits. I'm sure this accommodation has a thermostat on it, so if the honourable ambassador would like to put on a sweater and turn down the thermostat in that accommodation, he would be able to do so. But, certainly, in light of the costs of this office to date and the set-up for wages and benefits, it's in the taxpayers' interests that we know how much, if any, the leasing accommodation costs would be to the taxpayers for the fiscal year 2004-2005.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations to indicate his desire to accept this particular question as presented.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on behalf of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to close the debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Education. We look forward to receiving that information, again in a timely manner. Thanks.

[Written Question 6 carried]

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

Coal-bed Methane Wells

Q7. Mr. MacDonald moved that the following question be accepted.

Of the total number of coal-bed methane wells drilled in Alberta in 2004, how many produced either saline or non-saline water?

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All the information that is circulating around this province at the very moment about coal-bed methane production and the amount of salty water that is or is not coming from those wells is interesting because

of the different views that are being expressed by landowners. Some landowners are all for this coal-bed methane well drilling; others are not. This written question has provoked a significant amount of debate on that side.

Mr. Mar: Just your pronunciation. That's all.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I can assure the hon. Minister of Community Development that where I grew up, there are yet to be any coal-bed methane wells, and this is an interesting problem.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a lot of misinformation out there in regard to . . .

An Hon. Member: Mispronunciation.

Mr. MacDonald: There may be that too.

There's a lot of misinformation out there that needs to be corrected. This could be a very good industry for Alberta, the coal-bed methane industry, for a form of natural gas production. But I'm quite concerned, and the research that I have done indicates that there is significantly less produced water that is salty in the Alberta coal formations than there is, for instance, in the Powder River basin formations. Significantly less. I would like that verified: just exactly how much produced water is coming up with the gas, and what kind of produced water it is.

Written Question 7 is seeking that information, and hopefully this information would be shared with Albertans who are interested in this, and we could find out precisely what we're dealing with here. If we're dealing with a lot of produced water that is salty in some formations, then we can work at ways of disposing this water. Perhaps it could be used for enhanced oil recovery. Who knows? But I certainly hope that I can receive this information from the government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to indicate at this time our unfortunate position, being one of having to reject this, but I'd like to present an explanation and also give an undertaking. The hon. Minister of Energy has asked me on his behalf to communicate to the hon. questioner and to all members of the House that it's important to note first of all that most oil and gas wells drilled in Alberta, and most anywhere else for that matter, produce water, be it saline or non-saline. Coal-bed methane wells are not unique in this regard.

In specific response to Written Question 7, the hon. Minister of Energy wishes it to be noted that the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board has not yet finished compiling final coal-bed methane well figures and information for 2004. As a result, neither he nor I would be able to commit to providing the hon. member opposite with the requested information within the time period specified by our House process. However, the Minister of Energy did wish the questioner and all members here to know that he would undertake to provide the information as requested as soon as it becomes available.

4:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. In regard to Written Question 7 one will have to wait. I certainly thought that three months into the year that information would be readily

available, but if it is not, I will wait. Hopefully, I will be pleasantly surprised. Someday, Mr. Speaker, I'll come in to my desk before question period, and the information will be presented.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the hon. Minister of Education that I was specifically asking for coal-bed methane wells and their produced water records. It had nothing to do with oil and gas wells. Certainly, that is a separate issue. But I'm confident that if we share this information with the citizens, with the landowners, I think that we will avoid a lot of the misrepresentation that is currently circulating among some landowners. I find it disturbing that the information in regard to the benefits of this potential industry is not being circulated, because I think that we could stop a lot of potential problems.

Thank you.

[Written Question 7 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Automobile Insurance Rebates

Q8. Mr. Taylor moved on behalf of Mr. R. Miller that the following question be accepted.

Of the Albertans who received an automobile insurance rebate between October 1, 2004, and February 28, 2005, what percentage of these received less than \$50?

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that I'd have to put myself into that category, the percentage that received less than \$50. I think I got about \$12 back, in fact. And for those dates mentioned in the Written Question, I've yet to speak to a single individual who got a bigger rebate than that. So we're of course very interested in finding out how we're doing given this government's earlier undertaking that it would deliver a reformed automobile insurance system in this province that would deliver the cheapest automobile insurance in western Canada.

So thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, again I need to reject this motion as phrased, and I'd like to provide an explanation on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance. Just by way of background, briefly, there are approximately 1.7 million private passenger vehicles registered and insured in the province of Alberta through more than 70 automobile insurers. Insurance companies annually report their business written and claims paid to an appointed statistical agency.

Now, the Department of Finance does not receive the type of information requested in this particular question that has just been read into *Hansard* from the automobile insurers licensed in Alberta. That is to say that the Department of Finance does not get that information from those insurers. Therefore, it's unfortunate, but the Minister of Finance needs to advise through me to all members of the House that neither she nor the government are in a position to accept this particular question as presented, and so we will have to reject it.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to get up on this one because, you know, I'm appalled at the answer

that we just received by the minister. This was a government program. This was a program that the government established in order to try and control automobile insurance rates in this province, which were sky-high. Now they tell us that they don't have the information to determine whether or not this program had any effect at all. They don't collect it.

What was the point of the exercise, then, Mr. Speaker? If the government is introducing a program creating great turmoil in the insurance industry on the one hand, great expectations on the part of people who have to pay through the nose for their car insurance, and they can't even tell us whether or not a majority of people got any meaningful benefit from this program at all. That is a disgrace, and I think that the government should be ashamed.

Mr. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, just to close with some measure of disgust, I'm afraid. I don't know how a government that makes a promise that it will deliver the cheapest, most affordable automobile insurance system in western Canada can ever hope to keep that promise and be accountable not only to this Legislature but to the people of Alberta, the registered owners of those 1.7 million vehicles, if it doesn't keep these statistics and if it's not even prepared to make any effort to seek these statistics from the insurance industry. Why make a promise in the first place if you're not going to follow through with it?

So I have to close by saying that I think this is a most unacceptable answer from the government, and I'm disappointed. I'm deeply disappointed. I think an awful lot of Albertans will be deeply disappointed as well.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:17 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Agnihotri	Elsalhy	Miller, R.
Backs	Macdonald	Swann
Bonko	Mason	Taylor
Eggen	Mather	

Against the motion:

Ady	Horner	Morton
Cao	Johnston	Oberle
Cardinal	Knight	Ouellette
Coutts	Liepert	Pham
Evans	Lougheed	Prins
Forsyth	Lund	Snelgrove
Fritz	Magnus	Stevens
Graydon	Mar	Tarchuk
Griffiths	Marz	Webber
Groeneveld	McFarland	Zwozdesky
Hancock	Mitzel	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 32
---------	----------	--------------

[Written Question 8 lost]

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

AISH Benefits

Q9. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Ms Pastoor that the following question be accepted.

What is the breakdown of the total dollar value of cash, medical, and other benefits provided monthly to AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, recipients in 2004 by the government?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, certainly there have been a lot of questions around the entire monthly AISH benefit package. There were a large number of Albertans urging the government to increase the monthly benefit package. It was an issue during the past provincial election. Many people have felt very, very strongly that AISH benefits should have been increased. The government in the meantime has been arguing that it has been unaffordable, but this information would go a long way toward providing information in detail not only to the AISH community but to taxpayers.

4:30

Certainly, I was surprised and delighted as well to read in one of the papers today of a budget leak and hear that we're going to see a much-needed increase in AISH benefits. We're not going to get into the whole debate on budget leaks in this province. I think it would be an inappropriate place to have that debate, but certainly I would look forward to the information that we are requesting with Written Question 9 on this side of the House on behalf of the Member for Lethbridge-East.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to indicate that I'd be able to accept the written question if it was amended and also to let you know that this amendment was previously shared with my opposition colleague and circulated to members of the House, as the protocol with these written questions.

I'd like to move that Written Question 9 be amended by striking out the word "medical" and the word "other" and substituting for them the words "and health." The amended question would read as follows. "What is the breakdown of the total dollar value of cash and health benefits provided monthly to AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, recipients in 2003-04 by the government?"

Mr. Speaker, if it's all right with you, I'd like to share the rationale for making that change. The rationale for amending Written Question 9 is that the AISH program currently provides two types of benefits. First, it provides a living allowance, which is also referred to as a cash benefit, and that is \$850 per month that we provide to Albertans with severe disabilities to meet their basic needs. Following an MLA review of the AISH program, we committed to increasing the amount of the monthly living allowance, and I am looking forward to announcing details of that increase and other enhancements to the AISH program later this week.

But the AISH benefit also includes a comprehensive health benefit package, which includes free Alberta health care insurance, prescription drugs, eye care, dental care, emergency ambulance services, and essential diabetic supplies. The word "health" is the terminology used by the AISH program instead of the word "medical." These are minor word amendments – I recognize that, Mr. Speaker – which clarify the specific information that we are able to provide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the amendment.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. minister of seniors has answered one of my questions, and that was in regard to the definition of health benefit. I was pleased to hear that it does include prescription drug costs and that there is no ceiling on the amount of those prescription drug costs. So on behalf of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East I would like to say thank you. We on this side of the Assembly look forward to receiving that information, again, in a timely fashion.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close the debate on the question as amended.

Mr. MacDonald: Just in conclusion, Mr. Speaker – and I'll be very brief – I thank the hon. minister and look forward to receiving the information.

[Written Question 9 as amended carried]

Student Loan Program

Q10. Mr. Taylor moved that the following question be accepted.
What is the dollar value of all Alberta student loan program relief benefits and completion payments provided to students attending public postsecondary educational institutions, broken down by institution, in each of the 2000-01 to 2003-04 fiscal years?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be very pleased to accept Written Question 10 if it were amended so that we could provide the information in a manner in which it's available to us appropriately. Therefore, I would move that Written Question 10 be amended by striking out "provided" and substituting "awarded" and by striking out "institution" and substituting "sector." So the amended question would read as follows.

What is the dollar value of all Alberta student loan program relief benefits and completion payments awarded to students attending public postsecondary educational institutions, broken down by sector, in each of the 2000-01 to 2003-04 fiscal years?

Mr. Speaker, in changing it to "sector" as opposed to "institution," I would just refer to the comments that were made in debate under written questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 relative to the provisions of sections 16 and 25 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the advice that I've had from legal services with respect to the fact that providing information based on an institution-by-institution basis may, unless we've consulted with those institutions first, be offensive to the act.

I had committed to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that I would pursue that issue further, and I will make the same commitment to this member, that I will pursue that information further, because I am interested in providing students and families and all Albertans with information, if it's appropriate information, to allow them to make good decisions and good judgments about where to attend and if it's information that's relevant to the decision-making process. However, I'm very, very reluctant, as you may well agree, to have this Legislature order the production of information if by virtue of the FOIP Act we've put some process in place to determine what information should be released and how it should be released. So I would just raise that issue.

Then, of course, what appears to be a rather strange change from "provided" to "awarded." We're merely doing that because reports

identify the amounts that are awarded but not necessarily cashed in a fiscal year. The question needs to be rephrased to include amounts awarded to students because our student assistance tracking distinguishes between awarded, issued, cashed. "Provided" is not one of the terms that we use. So in order to be certain as to what type of information we are giving out, we just ask that the word be changed so it's clear that that's what's being asked for and not something that's not within the terms that we use in that area. But I can assure the hon. member that if he intended to get different information, I'll work with him on that and make sure that we provide, where it's possible and appropriate, the information that he needs.

So I would ask the House to amend Written Question 10 as I have moved.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, my grandmother used to say that half a loaf is better than none, especially when there's the tantalizing promise that the other half of the loaf may come in the fullness of time. I'll certainly accept the hon. minister's explanation for the need to strike out "institution" and substitute "sector." It would be nice to know institution by institution the provision or, I should say, awarding, I guess, of relief benefits and completion payments. It may be that I have to come back in subsequent sessions of this Legislature and propose much the same written question, substituting the word "issued" for "awarded" and then, again, substituting the word "cashied" for "awarded."

But as it stands, I'm satisfied with the amendments that the minister has proposed, and I'd be pleased to accept them and get that much information at least.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to close the debate, or should I just call the question?

Mr. Taylor: Just call the question, Mr. Speaker.

[Written Question 10 as amended carried]

4:40 Student Loan Program

Q11. Mr. Taylor moved that the following question be accepted.
What is the dollar value of all Alberta student loan program relief benefits and completion payments provided to students attending private, for-profit educational or training institutions, broken down by institution, in each of the 2000-01 to 2003-04 fiscal years?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would be happy to accept Written Question 11 if it were amended in the manner in which I would propose in order that I can give the information that we have in an appropriate way. I therefore would move that Written Question 11 be amended by striking out "provided" and substituting "awarded," by adding "the" after "attending," and by striking out "for-profit educational or training institutions, broken down by institution," and substituting "vocational school sector."

The amended written question will read, then, as follows. "What is the dollar value of all Alberta student loan program relief benefits

and completion payments awarded to students attending the private vocational school sector in each of the 2000-01 to 2003-04 fiscal years?"

Mr. Speaker, again, the explanation is similar to that provided for Written Question 10 with respect to the need to go to a sector-based reporting rather than an institution-based reporting. Also, we do not use the terminology "private, for-profit educational or training institutions," but we do use the terminology "private vocational schools." It essentially means the same thing, but it's more consistent with the terminology we use. Just to make sure that there's no question about what information we're providing and for what schools we're providing it, we would request that the amendment be made so that we can clearly comply with the direction of this House.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Well, I have no problem with the first two points under the amendment that the hon. minister is proposing: striking out "provided" and substituting "awarded" and adding "the" after "attending." I do, however, have a problem this time with substituting "vocational school sector" for "for-profit educational or training institutions, broken down by institution."

Mr. Speaker, we've been down this road now several times today on several different written questions. I understand under current law, current rules the minister's need to substitute "sector" for "institution." I understand that we have to do it on a sectoral basis, that we cannot do it institution by institution at this time. I appreciate the minister's undertaking that he would explore this further and hopefully, if I understood him correctly in earlier exchanges, get us to the point eventually where we can get this information institution by institution.

The reason why I have a problem in this particular instance is that in the private vocational training regulation, under Exemptions section 3(c) says that the act does not apply to "any program leading to the granting of a degree under the Universities Act." There are some other exemptions, too, but that's the one that really stands out for me. I think, Mr. Speaker, that this allows – and again I'm looking at a specific institution or, you know, in the future at perhaps more than one – at least one institution which has degree-granting status, although in many other respects you would think that it would fall into, as we phrased the question originally, the "for-profit educational or training institution" description. It lets that particular institution, I think, fall through the cracks, and for that reason I cannot support this part of the minister's proposed amendment.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: On the main question as amended, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to close the debate.

Mr. Taylor: Very quickly. I've made my points during the amendment. The amendment has now passed, so although my objections still stand to it, let's call the question, Mr. Speaker.

[Written Question 11 as amended carried]

head: Motions for Returns

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given back on Thursday, April 7, I would now move that

motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions 2, 3, and 5 through 18 inclusive.

[Motion carried]

University of Phoenix

M2. Mr. Martin moved on behalf of Dr. Pannu that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the ministerial order authorizing the University of Phoenix to operate in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to indicate to the House that we could accept and encourage the House to vote for Motion for a Return 2 provided that it was amended so that we can most appropriately comply with it. Therefore, I would move an amendment to Motion for a Return 2, as has been provided to the hon. member moving it and is now being circulated, by striking out "a copy" and substituting "copies," by striking out "ministerial order" and substituting "letters of approval," and by striking out "operate" and substituting "offer specific degree programs."

The amended motion for a return would then read as follows: "copies of the letters of approval authorizing the University of Phoenix to offer specific degree programs in Alberta."

Mr. Speaker, we're requesting that the amendment be made to indicate that the approvals were provided through letters of approval rather than by ministerial order and pertain to specific degree programs rather than as moved in terms of authorizing it to operate. The amended motion for a return will more accurately reflect what actually was done.

Approval apparently was granted to the University of Phoenix to offer specific degree programs in Alberta in 1999, and an extension of this approval was granted in September, I believe it was, of 2004. The approvals were granted through letters of approval, not ministerial orders. The relevant legislation at these times provided that approval be provided in accordance with regulation. As there were no regulations in place, the departmental approvals were issued using the letters rather than a ministerial order process. Again, the approval is not for them to operate but with respect to the offering of specific programs and therefore the need for the amendment in order to appropriately respond.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on the amendment.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the explanation from the House leader we would accept the amendment.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Motion for a Return 2 as amended carried]

4:50 University of Phoenix

M3. Mr. Martin moved on behalf of Dr. Pannu that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all documents including but not limited to memos, faxes, reports, letters, applications, and responses related to the approval of the University of Phoenix to operate as a postsecondary institution in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I would rise to accept Motion for a Return 3 on behalf of the government if it could be amended in order to allow us to comply appropriately. Therefore, I would move that Motion for a Return 3 be amended by adding "relied upon by the government of Alberta" after "documents," striking out "related to the approval of" and substituting "in approving," and striking out "operate as a postsecondary institution" and substituting "offer specific degree programs."

Again, in making those amendments or proposing those amendments, the amended motion would then read:

A copy of all documents relied upon by the government of Alberta including but not limited to memos, faxes, reports, letters, applications, and responses in approving the University of Phoenix to offer specific degree programs in Alberta.

The material referenced in this motion includes documents that are regarded as proprietary information; for example, the full curriculum for each of the degree programs as well as information submitted by third parties, including correspondence from the accrediting body. Although the release of this type of information is restricted by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, release of the information specifically used by the department to determine that the University of Phoenix meets the criteria for approving nonresident institutions to offer degree programs in the province would not be so restricted. Therefore, by amending it, we can comply, I believe, with the request being made by giving the information that was relied upon for the approval process while still adhering to the requirements of the freedom of information act otherwise.

I would encourage the House to accept the amendments so that we can provide as much information as is reasonably and legally possible to the House in response to the motion for a return.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on the amendment.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems, in a quick perusal here of the amendment we've just received now, that this limits what we can see in terms of the approval process. I'm thinking mainly in (b), where it says striking out "related to the approval of" and substituting "in approving." Well, this is a private institution, and I think the people of the province have a right to know how these private institutions all of a sudden come into the province and are set up and start offering specific degree programs. I think it's important that we actually have some idea how this happens. All of a sudden we hear down the way that, hey, the University of Phoenix is here.

I might relate, Mr. Speaker, that there are some problems – it's been documented on national television in the United States – dealing with this specific institution, some problems that were created by this institution in terms of funding and extra money coming in to them. So they don't have a lily-white record here, and all of a sudden they're here in Alberta, and some of the same problems that the Americans are talking about could be occurring here. It seems to us that we should be up front about this. How is it that after the problems they've had in the United States, we have this particular university coming here all of a sudden accredited?

What the minister is suggesting is just substituting "in approving." Well, that tells us nothing. It tells us absolutely nothing. We know that they're approved, and we're not going to get any more documentation. What we're interested in is finding out how they got

approved, especially in view of – the minister must be well aware – their record in the United States, where there is some controversy with this specific institution. All of a sudden now they're here in Alberta.

It seems to me that due diligence would have suggested that before we allow them to offer specific degree programs in Alberta, with some of the problems they've had in the United States, we'd want to know that. I think that it's only reasonable, in view of their track record, that we know this information, Mr. Speaker, and with all due respect to the minister, we're not getting much here. This is very, very narrow, and as a result I don't think it's what we want in the motion, and for that reason I certainly would oppose it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to conclude debate on the motion as amended.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess it's nice that we'll find a small document that they've approved the University of Phoenix, but it won't lead us any closer to why and how and, as I say, the record of this university. But I guess anything is better than nothing.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 3 as amended carried]

Coal-bed Methane Well Applications

M5. Mr. Eggen moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing for each of the fiscal years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 a list of applications to drill coal-bed methane wells that were denied by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 5 I rise on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy to indicate that, unfortunately, the information in the form requested by the hon. member opposite is not able to be provided as asked for because the information being sought is neither collected nor organized in the fashion represented by fiscal year. However, if it's acceptable to the hon. member and other members of the House, I would indicate on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy that he would reorganize the question somewhat and make the information available by calendar year as opposed to by fiscal year, which is how it's now worded.

That having been said, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy he has indicated through me to you that he would provide as much of the relevant information as possible by calendar year. As such, we will have to reject this motion for a return as currently worded.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to close the debate.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Well, I find it unfortunate that the hon. minister representing the Minister of Energy is unable to offer an amendment to this motion for a return then. I think we've seen a number of times here this afternoon that small amendments have been brought forward and that thus we're able to receive this information in a timely way.

I think it's absolutely essential that we do in fact receive more accurate information in regard to coal-bed methane exploration in this province. I think that everyone is recognizing the potential importance of coal-bed methane in the immediate future for our energy needs and export energy needs in this province, yet we're unable to perhaps evaluate it in a reasonable way without this information. You know, my understanding is that there are 3,000 coal-bed methane drilling wells in place at this time and thousands more being approved. It would be a simple matter of tabulating those things for us and getting a whole range of potential evaluations. It's just a matter of putting it on a spreadsheet.

So, yes, I would be happy, in fact, to amend my Motion for a Return 5, changing from fiscal to calendar, but as I don't see an amendment coming forward. Excuse me if I'm missing something here. Otherwise, it's impossible for us to go forward on it. Is that correct?

The Speaker: Well, actually, what the hon. member was doing was concluding the debate on the motion that he was putting forward too.

[Motion for a Return 5 lost]

5:00 Coal-bed Methane Well Applications

M6. Mr. Eggen moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing for each of the fiscal years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 a list of applications to drill coal-bed methane wells that were approved by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy I need to indicate to the hon. questioner and to all members of the House that the information being sought is not collected nor organized nor available by fiscal year. Therefore, we will find ourselves in a position of having to reject this motion as worded, but I would give the undertaking, as I did with the previous motion for a return, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy that he will provide you with as much relevant information as possible organized by calendar year since that's how that information derives.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to conclude the debate.

Mr. Eggen: It's becoming more clear now. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am certainly looking forward to receiving this information. As I said with my previous motion for a return, you know, if we are able to evaluate in a substantive way the applications that are being both denied and accepted by the Energy and Utilities Board, then we're in a position to make the balanced and weighted decision that is incumbent on this Legislature.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 6 lost]

Sour Gas Blowout Ignition Study

M7. Mr. Eggen moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents including but not limited to contracts, proposals, memos, and reports, including interim reports, relating to the P2406 sour gas blowout

ignition study in the possession of the Ministry of Energy prepared by the Bercha Group of Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the hon. Minister of Energy has asked me to convey some thoughts in respect to this particular motion. I think, as hon. members would know, the motions for returns process is not intended to be used to circumvent any of the processes and/or protections afforded by Alberta's protection of privacy rules. Some of the information requested in this motion for a return does relate to contracts, to proposals, to memos, and to other related documents. I think the hon. member posing the question is likely aware of the requirement to ensure the protection of privacy of any potentially affected individuals or entities such as may be inferred or referred to by this particular motion.

For the wide-ranging information being sought through this motion for a return, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should be using that process that exists under the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation. This would allow any potentially affected third party an opportunity to review the request and to respond to that request. That is an undertaking that we should all heed and abide by.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Energy we will have to reject this motion for a return.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to conclude the debate.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am somewhat surprised at this rejection of offering this information. As everyone here in this Legislature knows, the sour gas blowout situation is all on our minds. In fact, we did have an incident here just to the west of this city before Christmas, and then, you know, it's an ongoing problem throughout the province.

As the conventional sources of natural gas are depleted in this province, it's obvious that companies are going after less safe sources of natural gas, where the hydrogen sulphide content is increased and the pressure is increased. Thus, the danger to people both drilling these wells as well as living in the immediate area, be it a rural or an urban area, is also increasing, the danger to those citizens as well.

What we're looking for from this side, and I think most citizens of Alberta are looking for, is a comprehensive way to deal with both the application for drilling sour gas wells in this province as well as more rigorous standards by which to look at the safety of drilling sour gas wells in this province. I don't think, once again, that many members of this Legislature will be unknowledgeable about the gas wells that are being proposed for the southeast of Calgary. You know, this has been an issue that has been brought up to the forefront by many thousands of Albertans. At the end of the day we want to have a prosperous Alberta, but we also want to have a safe province for our citizens.

I know that some information that I have received in regard to this, the sour gas blowout ignition study in the possession of the Ministry of Energy currently, is very illuminating, and there are a number of other models that will describe the potential effects of a gas blowout in close proximity to an urban area. Quite frankly, the ones that I've seen are very much a doomsday scenario for people living in the immediate area, not just living in the safety control area of a potential blowout close to an urban area but many kilometres beyond that. So, you know, I think that in the interests of safety for

citizens living in proximity to sour gas wells, it would be very revealing and very helpful to people to actually have this information. So I am very disappointed with this refusal.

I'd like to move the motion, nonetheless, and take a vote on it. Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 7 lost]

Sour Gas Blowout Ignition Study

M8. Mr. Eggen moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the P2406 sour gas blowout ignition study, or a copy of the most recent draft of the study, prepared by the Bercha Group of Calgary for the Department of Energy.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question, being worded slightly differently and obviously having a very specific focus to it, does not appear to infringe on FOIP concerns, so on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy I'm pleased to indicate that he is willing to accept this Motion for a Return 8 as presented on the Order Paper.

[Motion for a Return 8 carried]

Gas Well Applications

M9. Mr. Eggen moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing for each of the fiscal years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 a list of applications to drill critical gas wells that were denied by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 9, this is a similar situation to the one I enunciated earlier with respect to motions for returns 5, 6, and so on. That is simply to state to the hon. member: thank you for the question. Unfortunately, it'll have to be rejected as worded only because the information is not collected, organized, nor available by fiscal year. However, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy I would communicate to this questioner opposite that the minister will provide as much relevant information as he possibly can organized by calendar year, and I hope that's acceptable to the hon. member.

5:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to conclude the debate.

Mr. Eggen: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as per, I believe, motions 5 and 6, I'm certainly willing to peruse and look at the information. I'm looking forward to the information in regard to critical gas wells. I think that I'm not the only one who would be interested in seeing this information, and I look forward to it at its earliest possible convenience to be released to the public.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 9 lost]

Gas Well Applications

M10. Mr. Eggen moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing for each of the fiscal years 2001-2002,

2002-2003, and 2003-2004 a list of applications to drill critical gas wells that were approved by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

The Speaker: The Hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 10 the answer is the same as for Motion for a Return 9, that is simply to say that the information the hon. member is seeking is not collected nor organized nor available by fiscal year. However, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy, he has asked me to communicate to the members opposite that as much of the relevant information as possible and organized by calendar year will be provided to the questioner as soon as possible. As such, we will have to reject Motion 10 as currently worded on that understanding.

[Motion for a Return 10 lost]

Minister of Sustainable Resource Development Business Expenses

M11. Mr. Bonko moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development's business expenses including but not limited to airfare, food, accommodation, and conference fees from February 18, 2003, to November 22, 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 11 and on behalf of the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development I would indicate that we would be pleased to accept this motion for a return if it were amended. I believe the amendment has been circulated in its totality to all members here in the House, or it currently is being circulated. In any event, the opposition colleagues were provided with the proposed amendment prior to 11 o'clock this morning as per protocol and procedures governing the House.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to just indicate to the hon. questioner and to all members of the House that for ease in reporting matters such as this, the categories that we have listed in the amended motion reflect the government's adopted procedures when reporting these kinds of credit card expenses. I would also point out that the specific reference to conference fees in the original motion is included under incidental and miscellaneous expenses, which I will read out shortly, and will be provided as a separate category under this particular subtitle when the response gets tabled.

So to accommodate accounting practices, we would like to propose an amendment to this motion. That amendment, in fact, would go as follows. We would strike out "but not limited to airfare, food, accommodation, and conference fees" and then substitute "travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses, including conference fees." Then we would propose to strike out "February 18, 2003, to November 22, 2004," and in place of those words, Mr. Speaker, we would substitute "February 1, 2003, to November 30, 2004," which of course would have the net effect of giving the hon. member more information than he's actually asking for. But from our point of view it gets it down to a monthly basis, the first of the month to the end of the month. So it helps us to provide the information in a form that it is already being collected.

So the final amended motion, Mr. Speaker, very briefly, would simply read:

that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development's

expenses including travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses, including conference fees, from February 1, 2003 to November 30, 2004.

I would like to move that motion as amended.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore on the amendment.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can accept the amendment as a friendly amendment, and we'll live with the results and look forward to receiving the information.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Motion for a Return 11 as amended carried]

Minister of Sustainable Resource Development Business Credit Card Statements

M12. Mr. Bonko moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2003-2004 issued to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development and the minister's executive assistant.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 12, I would again indicate on behalf of the government and, in particular, on behalf of the hon. Minister for Sustainable Resource Development that this particular motion as worded would be acceptable to the minister and to the government provided there were some amendments made to it, friendly amendments, I hope the hon. questioner would agree.

In any event, the rationale behind that, Mr. Speaker, would simply be to indicate that the issue of reporting is something we take very seriously, obviously. Now, for ease in reporting, the categories that we have listed in the amended motion, which I will read shortly, actually reflect the government's adopted procedures when reporting these kinds of credit card expenses, as I indicated in the response to Motion for a Return 11 as well.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that a considerable amount of time and effort would be required to prepare the document under the original motion's intent. I think members here would recognize that our provincial civil service is an extremely dedicated group of individuals who are doing an excellent job, doing excellent work on behalf of all Albertans. [some applause] Yes. Thank you for the applause, hon. members. I guess it becomes a question of understanding how best that time gets spent by our civil service and what the best use of their time, in particular, might be when you look at questions such as this one in its current form. Therefore, some good amendments have been put forward, and as I said, I'll get to them in just a second.

My final comment would simply be this, Mr. Speaker. Each department, as all members here know, is audited annually by the most professional and thorough of processes as conducted and convened by our own Auditor General, and he would have drawn out to our attention any anomalies that he may have found during his reviews in the past years. Of course, that has not been done. So we're offering these amendments in the spirit of at least trying to provide information in a form that it is currently collected. That having been said, we would propose, then, to strike out "a copy of all monthly business credit card statements" and substitute the words "a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel,

accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses” and, finally, strike out the words “issued to” and substitute the words “incurred by.”

In the end, Mr. Speaker, the amended Motion for a Return 12 would be worded as follows:

that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses for the fiscal year 2003-2004 incurred by the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development and the minister’s executive assistant.

I would move that Motion for a Return 12 be accepted as amended.

5:20

The Speaker: On the amendments, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I accept the hon. member’s reasons for the revisions there, and I’m pleased to accept the information as it does come forward.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Motion for a Return 12 as amended carried]

Department of Sustainable Resource Development Business Credit Card Statements

M13. Mr. Bonko moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2003-2004 issued to the deputy minister, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as with the previous two occasions, I’m going to indicate on behalf of the hon. minister and government our desire to accept this particular motion if it were to have some amendments, which I will read very shortly for the benefit of all members present.

Before I do that, though, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that in the amended motion we have again categorized expenses under those nomenclatures that the information is collected under: travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses. The reason for this is as a result of a decision by the government last fall to use these specific categories and these specific accounting codes within these categories for the purpose of delineating specific expenses, and those particular categories are used throughout government now. So there’s been a tremendous amount of standardization that has gone on here in the interest of openness, accountability, and organization. It’s our belief that by using these categories, we’ll be able to provide the response to the motion for a return and hopefully to the satisfaction of the questioner.

The second area of comment I’d like to make, Mr. Speaker, is just to provide information to the deputy minister level and not to the other positions listed in the original motion for a return; that being, assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, unit leaders, et cetera. I think there are some others rolled in.

So I want to just explain what the rationale for the wording is then. I indicated earlier that the Auditor General does an extremely

good and thorough job in analyzing all provincial department expenses on an annual basis, and he provides that report and any concerns he might have not only to this Assembly but to the general public of the province. To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, he hasn’t highlighted any senior department official’s expenses as being a concern at this point.

So I just want to indicate again that a considerable amount of time and effort has gone into preparing the response to this motion, and it would take literally dozens and dozens of hours to compile all the information in a form different than what I’m going to propose. So I hope that will be acceptable to the hon. questioner.

Our well-established process is in place through these annual reviews by the Auditor General that I’ve mentioned, and I think the hon. member and others present are well aware of other avenues that can be used to access even more information should they wish to do that.

That being the case, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest, then, that the amendment simply go as follows: that we strike out “a copy of all monthly business credit card statements” and substitute the words “a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses”; further, that we strike out “issued to” and substitute “incurred by”; and, finally, that we strike out “all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders” such that the final amended motion would be worded as follows:

that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses for the fiscal year 2003-2004 incurred by the Deputy Minister for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development.

I would move the motion as amended.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m just a little disappointed with regard to the striking out of the following: “all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders” for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development. When they are in fact hired by the department and they carry out any duties that incur costs, they are acting on behalf of the minister and/or his executive assistant. So I thought it would be pertinent and relevant to ask for the specifics with regard to the following members. Again, I’m a little disappointed that they are not going to be included, that the motion does, in fact, exclude them, then.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Motion for a Return 13 as amended carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I’m thinking that in view of the hour we may wish to call it 5:30 and adjourn until 8 instead of getting started on something and getting stopped in the middle of it.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:28 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 11, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/04/11

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Before we start, may we get consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 22 young visitors from the Redwater & District Pioneer Club. They are seated in the members' gallery this evening. They have just completed a tour and took a picture, and I'd like to thank them for that. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

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

Cleaner Energy Incentive

504. Dr. Swann moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement a royalty reduction program to provide incentives for industry to develop new technologies for cleaner energy.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This was developed early in our time as new MLAs, and royalty reduction was one of many issues that we talked about in relation to incentives for energy efficiency, cleaner energy, and renewable energy development. In fact, we don't support royalty reduction as the key approach to be taken in this approach to cleaner energy. We, in fact, want to make an amendment to the title of this motion, and my hon. colleague will be doing just that in the ensuing discussion.

The rationale for the amendment is in another way related to the Auditor General's report in 2003-2004. There was a recognition that the royalty reduction program to industry to provide incentives for the development of new technology is problematic. The Auditor General stated clearly that the Department of Energy needed to assess whether the royalty reduction programs are in fact "achieving their intended objectives" and, indeed, concluded:

The Department's initial objectives were broad and did not have targets for the performance indicators . . . Without targets for performance measures and timely reviews, the Department cannot adequately assess whether program objectives, that is, royalty reduction incentives, are being met, if the programs need to be changed, or if there is still a need for the programs [at all].

Indeed, there is a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous need at this time for incentives for renewable energy, for increased energy efficiency, for renewables. Climate change has created the context in which all of us feel a sense of urgency about the environment and about our dependence on fossil fuel resources for energy and the

need, then, to shift and create the kind of opportunities and incentives that would be a win-win-win: a win for the environment, a win for human health, and a win for the economy, with new jobs and new technologies developing.

The traditional approach clearly has resided in systems of regulation and permits and enforcement, where government sets the minimum standards. But under this system, Mr. Speaker, there is no incentive for industry to improve its environmental performance beyond the minimum standards. Clearly, the stick approach has to be complemented with a carrot approach and applied in relation to, particularly, our interest in preserving natural capital.

By natural capital I'm really referring to one of four types of capital that has been described across the country: natural capital in relation to economic capital, in relation to human capital, and in contradistinction to manufactured capital. Natural capital is really those resources such as minerals, timber, oil, and gas which provide the raw materials used in the production of manufactured goods.

Natural capital also includes the land and water resources that provide our quality of life and support the economic activity that we enjoy. It refers to living ecosystems that cleanse our air and water, reinvigorate our soil, and contribute to a predictable, stable climate. Wetlands, for example, are among the most fertile and productive ecosystems among the natural capitals. They're an integral part of the hydrologic cycle and contribute to storing and recharging and discharging of groundwater.

Natural capital is the subject of deterioration, and this motion is designed to try to balance the needs of the economy with the need to protect natural capital. What is absolutely crucial in this argument is to realize that environmental prosperity is a prerequisite, an essential precondition for economic prosperity. Without managing our natural capital in a way that ensures long-term sustainability, we not only threaten the viability of our land and water, our air and health; we also threaten our long-term economic well-being. So to ensure this goal, it's necessary to integrate our economic growth with the stewardship of our natural capital.

We're recommending, then, that government and industry look beyond short-term interests to consider the impact on Alberta and industry beyond the immediate future, to look 20, 50, 100 years in advance and examine ways of increasing efficiency, increasing our investment in renewables, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, and increasing the creative potential in our natural capital.

Currently, Alberta has benefited economically tremendously from the fossil fuel industry. These are nonrenewable. They draw from finite resources and are dwindling, becoming too expensive and too environmentally and health costly. In contrast, renewables such as wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, and others are constantly replenished and will never be used up. Expanding our reliance on these clean technologies will allow future generations to have reliable and affordable energy supplies. By promoting their development, we decrease pollution, combat climate change, increase our health, and create jobs, Mr. Speaker. It's imperative, then, to move towards this.

The Alberta strategy we would recommend would focus on these four areas: first, energy efficiency; secondly, deregulated power markets that do not provide sufficient incentives for substantial investment in energy efficiency; third, a strong energy-efficiency strategy that can transform the market to one with an increased percentage of energy-efficient strategies; and fourth, recognition that not having an energy-efficiency strategy impedes our economic competitiveness.

The policy challenge, then, is that, ideally, government policy is based on innovation and will create pilot projects, use economic incentives and information campaigns to spread the adoption of policy to the population. The policy challenge will also look at the

order for the demonstration projects to become economy-wide and require funding for those incentives that encourage innovation to become mainstream. Thirdly, this is necessary to promote the long-term strategy for technological innovation and climate change control.

Some of the suggestions that we're going to make have been used across the country. B.C., for example, implemented a 10 per cent research and experimental tax credit in 1999. The government could commit to consulting with all stakeholders, first of all, to develop what would work and what wouldn't work in the Alberta context. A venture capital fund could generate an industry in Alberta directly bound to the development of new technologies for cleaner energy.

In summary, then, Mr. Speaker, the policy we're trying to promote through this motion would set to guide the development of cleaner energy and renewable energy in Alberta. The policy would direct both research and commercialization for cleaner energy and renewable energy. It would encourage new investment in Alberta and result in new manufacturing facilities with new technology and more jobs with economic growth.

Leadership is needed in order to protect our environment from the demands placed on natural capital from resource extraction. During regional workshops conducted across this country through Western Economic Diversification, stakeholders called for refundable tax credits and incentives for capital investment in eco-efficient technologies to overcome known structural weaknesses in environmental technologies industries and to spur the development and survival of new firms.

This I leave for discussion and look forward to some debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

8:10

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to Motion 504, which urges the government "to implement a royalty reduction program to provide incentives for industry to develop new technologies for cleaner energy." I was actually a little surprised when I first saw this motion because for as long as I can remember, the Official Opposition has continually been insisting that Alberta's oil and gas royalty regime is much too low. I guess they finally realize that Alberta's royalty regime is actually pretty good. We've been telling them that for a long time and been showing them the billions of dollars of investment and hundreds of thousands of jobs that are supported directly and indirectly through the energy sector.

Our royalty regimes have been a primary driver for the successful development and massive growth of the energy sector in this province. Our policies have encouraged growth. We have a commitment by our Minister of Energy that he will be continually monitoring and evaluating our royalty tax and bonus system structure to ensure that it remains competitive and to ensure that Albertans receive a fair share of the resource revenue.

Growth, jobs, and revenue are only one side of the energy development equation, Mr. Speaker. Encouraging the development and implementation of more efficient extraction and environmentally friendly technologies provides a long-term economic benefit not only to Albertans but to the environment as a whole.

More efficient extraction techniques result in more usable oil and natural gas being pumped from our wells, resulting in more oil and natural gas having royalty taxes being applied for an extended time. We end up leaving a much smaller percentage of oil and natural gas in the ground, maximizing the return on our resources to Albertans.

The Alberta government has already put in place a royalty credit

program for companies that demonstrate the use of carbon dioxide in the development of Alberta's oil and gas resources. By injecting carbon dioxide into wells, higher yields of oil and gas can be obtained from the wells in addition to reducing Alberta's carbon dioxide emissions through storage of carbon dioxide gases in oil and gas reservoirs. The use of this technology in Alberta's energy sector can be attributed in part to the carbon dioxide royalty credit program we currently have in place. I thank the Department of Energy for having such a forward-thinking program in place.

When looking into this issue, we also come across the innovative energy technologies program, which has made available about \$200 million in royalty adjustments to energy companies that implement innovative technologies. I would like to again thank the Department of Energy for having such a forward-thinking program already in place. This government takes an active role in ensuring that our energy sector is utilizing the most leading-edge technologies when extracting our resources.

Alberta also provides a great deal of funding through partnerships in the Alberta Research Council to initiate, develop, and commercialize a large variety of technologies that maximize the extraction efficiency of our resources, reduce water consumption, and cut down on various emissions. The Alberta Research Council in partnership with a variety of partners has been at the forefront of carbon dioxide research, enhanced oil and gas recovery, and environment-protecting technologies.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government and the Department of Energy already have in place excellent programs and initiatives that help push forward new and innovative energy-sector technologies. I'm quite certain that the Minister of Energy will be very open to hearing the ideas that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the Liberal caucus have on building upon our very successful programs. I just don't feel that it's necessary to pass this motion to urge the government to implement a royalty reduction program that will "provide incentives for industry to develop new technologies for cleaner energy" when we already have programs in place to do this very thing.

I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for bringing this motion forward because it has helped to educate all members of this House about the wonderful programs the government already has in place and has implemented regarding technology innovation in the energy sector.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 504 as it stands urges the government to reduce royalties in order to provide incentives for industry to develop clean energy technologies. Now, I heard in the opening comments from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View that, in fact, there was something like an error that was coming along with this resolution. I do want to give the benefit of the doubt to the hon. member since I have heard him speaking out against royalty reductions on a number of different occasions. You know, in fact, the royalty reduction program that we do have in place here, I believe, in this province now fails to serve to create meaningful incentives for companies to reduce their carbon output, especially for large final emitters. So, you know, with that in mind, I'm sure that the hon. member meant something quite different, and in fact I think he's intending to amend it.

However, I still would like to speak with some criticism over the concept of providing tax relief for large oil companies at this moment in our history, Mr. Speaker. There's a definite need to develop clean energy technologies in this province, and there's a

definite lack of government leadership in this area. But far from getting us closer to the goal, the idea of tax incentives or royalty reductions really does quite the opposite. I would believe that, and my caucus does too.

I would like to remind members that the prices for oil and natural gas at this juncture are at all-time highs. Crude oil has recently been trading above \$55 a barrel U.S., and some analysts are predicting that prices could go as high as \$105 U.S. per barrel in the very near future. While there has been some increase in the amount of Crown royalties as a result of record high oil and natural gas prices, I would remind members that for every one additional dollar in royalties, three to four additional dollars flow directly into energy industry coffers. If anything, this situation, Mr. Speaker, would call for something that would resemble a royalty windfall tax just to balance out the massive, quite literally, movement of capital across the planet from various consumer industries and individuals to oil companies at this point in time.

Corporate profits for oil and gas producing companies are at an all-time high, and good for them. For example, Calgary-based EnCana had made a staggering \$2.6 billion profit in its most recent quarter on top of an annual profit of \$3.5 billion for its 2004 year. Do companies like EnCana need more royalty or tax breaks? I really don't think so, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure that most consumers here in this province and across the country would agree with that point.

I would also like to point out to members that the province's Auditor General, our own Auditor General, has been critical of existing royalty giveaway programs, and in the 2003-2004 fiscal year the province gave away over half a billion dollars – and that's with a "b," not an "m," Mr. Speaker – in a witch's brew of royalty reduction and giveaway programs. In light of a rather, let's say, liberal way of being rewarded here in this province for, you know, extracting oil, I think that if anything, we could stand to collect more of that money and not less of it. The Auditor General has criticized the Conservative government for not only failing to provide an account for these royalty giveaways but also for failing to prove that they even serve a useful purpose.

I think that we could go beyond the royalty regime and also look at a tax regime, as I said before; you know, something like an increased tax for sort of this bonanza season that the oil and gas companies are having at this juncture. I think the oil companies would be quite happy with that, and we would collect more of the money that otherwise belongs to the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Let's just remember that the royalties that we collect are not a tax on the oil and gas companies who are extracting that resource from the ground, but it's just a small portion of the money that belongs to all of us. Every single Albertan has some ownership in that. Isn't it time that every single Albertan received their fair share of what bonanza of money is being produced in this province here in 2005?

I'm definitely speaking in opposition to the royalty and the tax regimes to fall. Moreover, I think that, you know, the idea of a royalty decrease is built on an essential fallacy. This idea of the invisible hand that somehow will allow people, if you give them less royalty rates, to naturally fold the money back into something benevolent I think is a little bit naive, Mr. Speaker. How does giving even more royalty revenue away to energy producing companies at a time of record energy prices help those forward-looking companies not in the fossil fuel extraction business do what they want to invest in clean energy technology? In fact, it doesn't. In fact, it gets in the way. It's quite a backwards thing.

8:20

We have several large corporations in this province who have recognized the need to reduce carbon emissions, and, you know,

they have done it without any special, extra things. In fact, they can just read the writing on the wall, Mr. Speaker, and that's sufficient for them to realize that our climate is in the midst of change and that it could be catastrophic change without some absolutely categorical change in our own ways of doing things. Number two, those large corporations such as Suncor and BP realize as well that there's plenty of money to be made by switching over to Kyoto-friendly targets and practices.

I would encourage all members to read two excellent reports by two Alberta-based research institutes: the Parkland Institute, based here in Edmonton, and the Pembina Institute, based in Drayton Valley. Both reports reach the same conclusion. Compared to other energy producing jurisdictions, such as Norway and Alaska, the province of Alberta is capturing a much lower percentage of the economic rents in the form of oil and gas royalties than these other jurisdictions, particularly in years when energy prices are high.

If Motion 504 is in fact dealing with royalty rates, then certainly we don't want to do that, and I would suggest that some tax benefits would be meeting the same defeat if we look at them in the most judicious and accurate way, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this evening to move an amendment, as was suggested, to Motion 504, and I've supplied the appropriate copies to the table, so I assume that the members will be receiving them shortly.

Mr. Speaker, my amendment would strike out in the motion as it sits now the words "to implement a royalty reduction program." If it were to be received favourably by this Assembly, the motion would then read: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide incentives for industry to develop new technologies for cleaner energy." Now, I'm hopeful that this amendment will serve to clarify for the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and also the Member for Edmonton-Calder, who questioned whether or not the motion as it now stands might be somewhat at odds with Liberal opposition policy.

Mr. Speaker, as the mover of the bill, my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View, indicated, at the time that this particular position as it sits now was written, we were, quite frankly, to tell the truth, all raw rookies, and we had been informed that we had to write a number of motions for returns and a number of written questions in a rather short period of time, right around the Christmas break. So this motion was written, and quite frankly we got caught up in all of the other things we had to do to prepare ourselves for functioning in this Legislative Assembly as new members.

When it came to light recently that this motion in its current form was going to be coming forward, there was a recognition by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who had originally drafted it, that it didn't clearly indicate his intent in that although royalty reductions might not necessarily be at odds with Liberal opposition policy if, in fact, those reductions were particular to providing incentives for the industry to develop new technologies for cleaner energy, in fact that one idea may be only a small nugget in terms of the overall picture as to what the Liberal opposition would like to see and believes should be done in the way of incentives for industry. To tie it specifically just to the idea of further royalty reductions was not really capturing the scope that my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View had intended when it was first contemplated to bring this motion forward.

So with that background, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to expand a little bit upon some of the other ideas. I think my colleague from

Edmonton-Calder suggested that it may have been drafted in error, and I hope that I've clarified that it was not, in fact, an error at all but perhaps just part of a rather large learning curve that we were all undergoing and, as I indicated, did not necessarily capture the full intent of the mover when it was first drafted.

Mr. Speaker, there are several ideas, in fact, that the Liberal opposition would like to see promoted in and around the area of energy and environmental protection that would go a lot further than simply royalty reductions. We have talked in the past an awful lot about how this entire issue is going to require an aggressive approach in terms of developing renewable resource energies such as wind, biomass, and solar power, all of which there's great potential for in this province. If this motion were to go ahead specific to the way it's currently worded, without the amendment, then we might in fact not be looking at some of those other ideas that the Alberta opposition has promoted in the past and would like this Legislature to have a serious look at if the motion in its amended form were to be accepted.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Liberal Party, as I suggested, supports aggressive energy research that would serve to protect health and the environment. In fact, providing incentives to the industry to develop cleaner uses of nonrenewable resources as well as encouraging the new technologies during the extraction phase, that were referred to in the original motion, are all part of what we believe the province should be looking at.

The other thing I would like to say before I take my seat is that my colleague from Edmonton-Calder also mentioned the fact that he believes Albertans should be benefiting from this tremendous wealth that we're experiencing right now, especially with high oil prices, which are expected by a number of industry analysts to continue to climb for the next 18 months to two years, likewise with natural gas.

I would just like to point out – and again this ties into the fact that the amendment that I'm moving broadens the scope of the motion – that the Official Opposition has outlined a very innovative and exciting plan to deal with future surpluses, which of course are contributed to greatly by the royalty revenue that is collected right now. In that plan, in fact, 35 per cent of any surplus would go into the heritage fund to cause it to grow; 35 per cent into the postsecondary fund that we've talked about, similar to Bill 1 right now with its \$3 billion cap except that we wouldn't have the cap, of course; 25 per cent into the capital account to deal with what we believe to be an \$8 billion infrastructure debt; and as well 5 per cent into an endowment for the humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

Certainly, to address the concerns from the Member for Edmonton-Calder, I think the Liberal opposition has a very good policy that would deal with those surpluses and would ensure that Albertans benefit not only from the revenues that are generated currently by royalties from oil and natural gas but, in fact, from the overall strong economy that Alberta is currently experiencing.

I hope as well that I've addressed the question raised by the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka in terms of the royalty reduction aspect of the motion as it sits right now in clarifying that although, as I suggested, a royalty reduction in and of itself, were it to be tied to the development of cleaner energy, wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing, it does not capture the scope of the intent that was planned by the mover of the motion.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and look forward to debate on the amendment as it applies to the greater vision of the mover and the Liberal Official Opposition. Thank you.

8:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster on the amendment.

Mr. Snelgrove: Yes, on the amendment. I want to kind of give a little bit of a backhanded slap here. The hon. member has certainly done a good job in identifying the weakness in his original motion, but his amendment would have carried a little bit of credibility if it had said something to the effect: we would like to commend the Alberta government for the incentives it has already provided to the industry because, in fact, they have provided an enormous amount. In all fairness, many of the hon. members haven't been here long enough to really understand, and many on probably both sides of the House and, certainly, the general public in Alberta don't know the commitment and the extent of the investment into new clean technologies. That's somewhat why there is extreme frustration from the government as we deal with Kyoto. We believe and we have done so much ahead of the federal government in just doing exactly what the intent of your amended motion would be.

Particularly, I would like to talk a little bit about the innovative energies technology strategy. This is a major component of Alberta's energy innovation strategy. Its purpose was to respond to future energy needs by investing in results that focused on research and technology and innovation and helped create the highest commercial value with the highest standards of environmental performance. That represented a \$200 million commitment, and over the lifetime of its commitment the royalty returns are in the neighbourhood of \$660 million.

I don't want to say that I could have ever supported their first motion, and I quite honestly can't support the amended motion because we're light-years ahead. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would urge us to very carefully consider what we're saying and maybe take even longer next time when we're drafting motions. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I'd like to remind everyone that we're not speaking on the motion or the motion as amended. We're speaking on the amendment.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to the amendment to Motion 504, which stands on the Order Paper under the name of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. The amendment and the motion that it proposes to amend should both be considered in the context of the challenge that we face as part of the global community that's coming to us from rapid global warming. I hope all members of this House acknowledge the validity of the science of global warming and see that as an important challenge that we need to address most seriously.

The motion that's being amended and the amendment itself speak to the concerns that arise out of the scientific knowledge that lies at the base of the debate over climate change. I think we have come to a stage where, perhaps with a few doubters and dissenters, there is consensus that that science speaks the truth that we must listen to and then we'll pay attention to.

Now, it's another matter whether or not the government's own policies and positions on climate change and greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies are appropriate ones. In my view, the emissions intensity model that this government has adopted continues to allow the increase in the absolute release of tonnage of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and I respectfully submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House that that's not the way to seriously address the truth of science that lies at the base of climate change.

Kyoto is an incomplete, certainly imperfect first response, only a first response, a first step to our global attempt because it's a global problem. We can't solve it by taking action on it just in one place or one corner, but we can certainly develop nodes of leadership. Kyoto is an attempt to provide that opportunity for giving leadership

to societies and communities that are at the cutting edge of industrialization, scientific development, and prosperity. When you are prosperous, when you are leading the pack in terms of economic growth, economic development, you also have some social responsibilities, and one of those responsibilities is expressed in the form of Kyoto obligations that are accepted by a very large number of countries around the world, particularly countries like Britain, I want to draw your attention to, and Canada who say: yes, we have a social responsibility, and we should accept it and become part of the solution rather than continue to be part of the problem.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the motion itself – the amendment to the motion, of course, tries to amend the motion, so I can't speak about the amendment without speaking about the motion. "Royalty reduction," which is now being proposed to be taken out of the initial motion, draws attention to the fact that perhaps the original motion was narrow in its scope.

We not only need to address these legislative measures and motions and resolutions to the energy industry, industry in general but to research organizations, universities, community groups, renewable energy producers whether they produce renewable energy through wind power or solar power or biomass. These are other industrial activities and scientific activities that fall outside the energy, petroleum, natural gas production industries.

The motion itself concedes rather narrowly to somehow provide a carrot-and-stick model, that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View sort of used, as if we are dealing with only one person, one actor, and that actor being petroleum companies and gas companies. We're not. We should be addressing by way of this motion the larger question of how we can encourage the development of technologies, science that will lead to the development of those technologies wherever we can find parties and actors and institutions that are willing to lend their support in terms of their ongoing research activity and technological innovation to the development of technologies that will help us reduce our dependence in the long-run on fossil fuel as the primary source of energy and to move to others where we can begin increasingly to use renewable sources of energy.

The motion even when amended by dropping "royalty reduction program," in my view, still remains rather narrow in what it attempts to address. I think we need to have a debate in this House which looks at the picture as a whole and sees many players on the scene who are willing and able to make contributions to our desired goal, which is to slow down climate change, climate warming, and at the same time increase our reliance on energy sources that will not only help us slow down the climate change and the space and rate at which it's changing but also help us keep our environment clean, keep our communities clean, and keep our health in better shape than the fossil fuel consumption helps us to do. We need to have a debate which is broader, which has a larger scope and doesn't just focus on the oil and gas industry as this motion, even when amended, would seem to suggest.

8:40

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I think the amendment does move towards at least limiting the negative side of the motion, and for that I'm pleased; I'm happy. But I think that in the days when, in fact, oil and gas industries are making absolutely unheard of, unparalleled profits and generating huge revenues for themselves, it isn't the time to talk about royalty reduction as a carrot that they need.

I visited with the management of Suncor a year and a half ago in Fort McMurray, and they said: "We don't need any incentives. We have the technology. We think we can save money by using our own technology to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions plus sell that

technology to other producers of tar sands based fuels." All they needed was for this government to say, "Go ahead," but they were worried that this kind of positive response would be taken in a negative way by the powers that be in this province. Similarly, BP has not only reduced greenhouse gas emissions but, as a result of the technology that was developed, has increased its profitability enormously.

So companies in this day and age working in the area of fossil fuels making huge profits don't need any more royalty reductions as incentives or carrots. They are willing to do the thing so long as they get a strong expression of will from Houses like this which say: "This is what we expect you to do. Please accept your social responsibility as you are enjoying such huge profitability, and come with us. Let's all work together to work on reducing the rate at which climate is changing and also making our air and water cleaner than it is now."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on the amendment.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the amendment proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on the motion from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I think there's some wisdom that's been spoken by the previous two speakers, from Vermilion-Lloydminster and Edmonton-Strathcona. There is a need to have a broadening of the initial bill, and I think that this amendment speaks to that. There is a need to recognize that, you know, the government's royalty regime and some things in the past have done a lot of good. I think it might have taken a bit too long to get started in the tar sands, and it could've come a number of years earlier, but in the final analysis it has spurred on production and helped make the oil sands the booming sort of great enterprise for Alberta that it is.

The expansion of this bill through the amendment is very important, I believe, because of the need to look at the options that would allow the government to get into things like what British Columbia implemented with its scientific research and environmental tax credit in 1999. That program provided tax credits to qualified corporations that carry on scientific research and experimental development in British Columbia.

Now, we have some similar types of programs, but if we were to direct it at energy and direct it at some of the problems that we have associated with energy production in terms of our climate, in terms of our pollution, in terms of our many things that are so attached to the economic driver of our province, the carrot-and-stick approach can have some good effects.

I've talked to a lot of tradesmen, a lot of people in the construction industry and a lot of contractors over time, and, you know, people have said: "Oh, environmentalists – environmentalists. Yeah, yeah, yeah." But, in reality, much of the investment, much of the work that's done, much of the actual cost, and the wages paid have been done for the purposes of environmental projects in the oil sands, in the pipeline areas. The advances in the last 20 years have been remarkable. You know, we have world-class scrubbers in the Genesee coal-fired generation plant. We have similar world-class sulphur scrubbers and such in Suncor and similar types of technology being developed for Syncrude.

As the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona says, there's money to made in these things. But sometimes these technologies come forward not only from the big corporations, but they come forward from private interests that are much smaller. To provide something like tax credits or things like that which go beyond royalties, which

go beyond the initial, more constrained idea of the bill, I think, provides a much more utilizable tool for the government in dealing with this. We've got some areas that these types of research should be coming into and coming from some maybe smaller companies in the field, you know. CO₂ sequestration is an important area to look at that could be developed with Alberta leading the field.

We should not take a head-in-the-sand approach. We should not, I think, leave it a way, not have it as a tool for the government to encourage corporations through the taxation system in general. There's a real incentive, I think, a real interest on the part of many corporations. The people that work there are people just like everybody here and everybody that are neighbours in Alberta, and many of them are looking to not only have profits but also to have a real clean environment, clear air, good water for their children.

I speak in favour of this amendment, Mr. Speaker, and I ask all members to support it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of comments made tonight both with respect to this amendment and Motion 504. As amended, the motion would read, I believe: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide incentives for industry to develop new technologies for cleaner energy." Some of the speakers have said that this thing is too narrowly focused, doesn't include renewables, doesn't include possibilities that exist beyond the hydrocarbon world. I don't see anything in there at all that says anything about hydrocarbons. It says "cleaner energy." I would suggest that energy can come from a vast number of sources.

One of the speakers thought that the Alberta government, in respect to this thing once it would be amended, should be more aggressive. We should have a more aggressive approach to renewables. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that right now the province of Alberta is a North American leader in wind power generation. We're a leader in generation and construction of generation in cogen. We're a leader in biomass and other renewables that are tied into the grid. In about four years we produced 3,000 megawatts of additional power, a good percentage of which is renewables. On top of that, the Alberta government leads the country in the public purchase of green power.

Now, if we want to talk a bit about incentives, it's been mentioned a number of times, but I just have to go back to this thing: a five-year program, \$200 million – and it's a royalty offset program – for innovative technology to enhance recovery and reduce emissions. Some suggestions were that this thing is targeted at CO₂. Again, much, much broader than CO₂. We're talking about any innovative technology.

Mr. Speaker, besides those two small projects that we actually have on our books at the moment, Alberta has an ingenuity fund that has a value today of some \$560 million, and there has been a motion recently in this House to increase that to a billion. These types of initiatives by this government would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, to be almost at the edge of being aggressive.

8:50

The Alberta government has been suggesting for a number of years that the Kyoto protocol is flawed, and it will result in Alberta companies and Canadian companies purchasing hot air credits from areas of the globe such as Russia, a form of wealth transfer, Mr. Speaker, or global equalization program that has absolutely no value in the reduction of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere. That's why the Alberta government under the leadership of Alberta Environment

created the made-in-Alberta solution to climate change, and the solution already includes royalty adjustments that encourage industry. The more efficient we can get at extracting oil and natural gas, the less waste we have, the less energy there needs to be expended to extract the oil and gas, and the less water we'll use during these processes.

So back to the \$200 million of offset royalties. It seems like a lot of money, but with the efficiencies gained, as has been pointed out, more oil and gas will be extracted from existing pools, and this, again, what we would like today, I guess, to call conventionals, certainly increases royalty eligible production and hence the return on those invested dollars to the citizens of the province of Alberta.

Another part of the made-in-Alberta plan for climate change was the creation of AERI out of the old AOSTRA. AERI's mission statement simply says that what we want is "an abundant supply of environmentally responsible energy, creating economic prosperity and social well-being for Canadians." For Canadians. They have already seen success in Alberta's oil sands. In September 2003 industry and government collaborated on a new heavy oil extraction testing facility near Fort McMurray known as DoVap. It's a heavy oil research project using a vapex process and decreases the amount of energy required for extraction. It cuts operating costs and recovers bitumen that would generally not be recoverable.

All of these things are supported, Mr. Speaker, by the Alberta government. AERI provided \$7.5 million towards that project. In my opinion, that's aggressive, money well spent. We've seen amazing results from the test facility both economically and environmentally.

Mr. Speaker, we're also working and working hard in AERI and in other research facilities and research programs across the province, across the country, and certainly across North America, and, I might add, in certain circumstances globally to do exactly what it is that the member has asked this Legislative Assembly to urge the government to do.

Personally, I don't see any real requirement for us to support a motion that is just a motion. It doesn't create anything new, doesn't establish anything innovative; it only reinforces something that this government has taken very, very seriously for a number of years. I will for my part not be voting either in favour of the amendment or the motion.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We'll recognize the hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has placed an interesting motion before the House. I must admit that I was surprised by the proposed idea when I read it on the Order Paper. Instead of raising taxes, hampering the provincial budget process, or throwing more money at the health care issue, there appeared to be creativity contained in this proposal. At first glance Motion 504 had the appearance of an idea that I could support. It would help to stimulate the private-sector research in our province and advance clean energy research. This could possibly result in the creation of jobs and spawn a greater development of Alberta's knowledge-based industry. However, upon closer inspection the fatal flaw of this idea becomes readily apparent. The scope is too narrow. Alberta has traditional strengths in the oil and gas industry, but in order to better prepare this province for the coming years, it is necessary to expand our vision.

We have some of the world's leading minds conducting research

into a variety of fields in our province, and it would be foolhardy to ignore these industries. Mr. Speaker, when you are trying to build a house, you use all the tools at your disposal; not just a hammer, not just a level but everything in your tool belt. To do otherwise, to limit yourself by not making use of all the resources that are available just does not make sense. It would be remiss of this Legislature to urge the government to give financial support for research exclusively to one industry, especially considering there are other industries involved in clean energy research. This motion is limited solely to Alberta's oil and gas sectors when there are many other sectors that could benefit from a tax incentive for increased development of clean energy.

A great example of this is the integrated manure utilization system, or IMUS, that has been developed right here in Alberta. IMUS is a product of collaboration between the Alberta Research Council and private industry. Essentially, IMUS takes the manure from a 36,000-head feedlot and converts the energy contained in it into electricity and other value-added products. This type of technology is killing two birds with one stone. First of all, this system addresses a problem facing feedlots in our province: animal waste. When you have an operation dealing with 20,000 or 30,000 head of cattle, waste by-products quickly become an issue, a very large issue. Several problems associated with this waste include shipping and disposal costs, preventing contamination of ground and surface water, release of greenhouse gasses, and, of course, the odour.

The integrated manure utilization system currently being piloted by Highland Energy deals with these matters in an environmentally friendly way. Not only will the animal waste be dealt with, but it will be transformed into electricity, biofertilizer, and irrigation-quality water. This is accomplished through a sealed processing plant that utilizes anaerobic digesters to do the work. In sealed tanks the methane and carbon dioxide are drawn off and fed into a cogeneration plant. This provides electricity for the feedlot itself, and surplus power can be fed back into the Alberta power grid. The slurry that is left in the tank is separated, with the dry solids being sold as a rich biofertilizer. Nutrients can also be recovered from the liquids that are separated, with water that can be used for irrigation being the end product.

Mr. Speaker, while I realize that this is a bit of an earthy topic, the potential of this project is massive. The pilot project being carried out is designed for a 7,500-head feedlot. It has been estimated that this will produce one megawatt of electricity. To put this in perspective, three megawatts is enough to power a town of 5,000 people. The full size commercial application of this project, based on a 20,000-head feedlot, is predicted to produce 14,480 megawatts of electricity annually as well as over 13,000 tonnes of biofertilizer.

9:00

Mr. Speaker, this technology will relieve the provincial dependency on a fossil fuel fired generation plant, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions from this type of energy generation. At the same time, the system addresses environmental issues surrounding our cattle industry, such as reducing the amount of emissions that are created by spreading raw manure as fertilizer, protection of our water resources, recycling waste water, and, of course, odour reduction. This is but one of the many energy innovations that are being developed outside of our oil and gas industry. It is necessary to promote research and development across the private sector, not just in one area.

While I appreciate the intent of Motion 504, I feel that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has brought forward a proposal that is too narrow in its scope to provide a real benefit to Albertans.

Additionally, as other members have pointed out, the government already has programs in place to bolster research and development in the oil and gas sector. The action suggested by this motion would be redundant in the extreme.

Because of these reasons I find myself unable to support Motion 504, and I urge all my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View to close.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank all the hon. members for their feedback and excellent discussion. I in no way intended through this motion to limit the discussion to the fossil fuel industry, recognizing that there are a host of industries that need and deserve incentives, and I hoped that the amendment would cover that. I'm prepared to now open the floor to the vote and close debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 16
Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005**

[Adjourned debate March 23: Mr. MacDonald]

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 16, Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005. I would like to start by thanking the hon. Minister of Government Services and the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, who sponsored this bill, for taking the time to meet with me and with my researcher.

In the general scheme of things this bill appears to seek to harmonize Alberta's business corporations legislation with the national law, the Canada Business Corporations Act. Also, it permits the incorporation of unlimited liability corporations in this province. Plus, it offers some minor modifications and fine-tuning.

I agree with this bill in principle as it appears to be geared toward removing unnecessary restrictions on Alberta corporations. I definitely support liberating our private sector and business community, allowing them more freedom, more room to breathe, allowing them to prosper and to grow. I would like to see all of them unleash their power, and I would like to help them all realize their full potential. Of course, the main goal here would be that they continue to reinvest in this province and in Canada and to employ Albertans and Canadians.

I did some primary research around this whole business of unlimited liability corporations, and apparently Nova Scotia is so far the only other Canadian jurisdiction which allows them. The Alberta government wants to be at par with Nova Scotia to try to attract U.S. companies and capitalize on what it views as an unutilized revenue source. Here I would have to agree that making Alberta more attractive to business and providing opportunities or opening doors for foreign capital are things we all desire and support.

However, I'm concerned with regard to some points. I have some issues with this bill; namely, that we would facilitate the flow of investment capital into Alberta. But with the preferential tax treatment, will such unlimited liability corporations escape taxes on their investments in this province? On the one hand, we're bringing them in and, hopefully, allowing them to invest in our own market,

but then by offering them preferential tax treatment, are we allowing them to not pay their fair share?

Also, shareholders of an unlimited liability corporation are ultimately and fully responsible for any liability, even after the dissolution of the company. So what are the safeguards here? Are we letting the directors off easy? We've all heard of cases or numerous situations where financially sound companies, strong healthy corporations, were hurt or went under as a result of bad or irresponsible management practices. Are we letting those company directors off the hook? I would be more worried, of course, if they're from the U.S. If such a ULC, or unlimited liability company, folds, they would board the first plane out of here, and they would tell us: "See you later. Sayonara." The shareholders, some or most of whom might be Canadians, are left with the debt and the liability.

Also, what guarantees will the public have that after the initial phases, as I indicated, after the euphoria and the ecstasy subside, these ULCs will continue to invest here and employ Albertans and Canadians? Canadian companies at least, or most of them, one would hope, have some social conscience and show some respect and recognition for their role in society and their duties to sustainability and development. The question then: will these extraprovincial corporations share that vision? Will they honour the same obligations, or will they, as some would suspect, only focus on profitability and their own growth at all costs and without regard to our own workers, families, economy, or the environment? We have to stay alert and careful so as to avoid and prevent such scenarios from going sour. Allow them to come and operate here, but monitor them very closely.

Also, I would urge this government to stay alert to and mindful of the potential for those companies to push or lobby for the importation of foreign workers because they cost less and don't ask for much. There has been a lot of debate in this House about the oil sands and the proposed importation of foreign labour from outside Canada, and I think we have made it very clear as the Official Opposition that we are naturally opposed to any such move. Any and all available jobs in Alberta in any industry or trade must be filled by Albertans, Canadians, aboriginals, and landed immigrants first before any consideration is given to outside labour.

There is something positive to mention about this bill in that it is proposing some protection for a person from being liable for acting in good faith in reporting information to the auditor. To me, when I read this clause or this phrase, it really sounds like whistle-blower protection. Definitely, this is great and very commendable. Now, perhaps the natural thing to follow would be for this government to implement similar legislation to allow similar whistle-blower protection mechanisms for its own employees and for its own staff to ensure more transparency and accountability within government circles.

Furthermore, this amendment disqualifies a shareholder accountant from being an auditor of the corporation in which he or she owns shares. Again, this is a good move, and I commend the government on taking this direction. Similarly, it would make sense from a conflict of interest point of view to perhaps challenge this government to extend this provision to its own auditors. Can we opt for more transparency and truth in the government's audit procedures by only allowing neutral, unaffiliated, and impartial auditors to review the books and offer unbiased commentary and recommendations? If this day comes in our lifetime, this would be tremendous. Such a move will surely make Alberta a leader in Canada if not in the world and, in my opinion, will be a signature stamp on this Premier's legacy passport.

To conclude, we support the direction this bill is going but hope that the proper safeguards and assurances are in place to protect our

capital, our resources, and our people. I would look forward to hearing more comments on this bill perhaps at this stage or maybe in Committee of the Whole.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:10

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, hon. members, if anyone wishes to participate.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005, in its second reading.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset I want to thank the Minister of Government Services for his courtesy to invite me and our researcher, a staffer, to sit with him and his assistant to go over the main features of this bill, which essentially are in the form of amendments to existing pieces of legislation. I also want to thank, of course, the sponsoring member, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, for his work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try and limit my comments – it's a fairly extensive set of amendments – to the ones that deal with creating in Alberta a situation parallel to what presently exists in Nova Scotia for the benefit of foreign corporations, primarily American corporations, to register in order to avoid American taxes. That is the issue that I am going to address: whether or not we should adopt the Nova Scotia legislation to serve largely the same purpose; that is, to encourage American investor corporations to come into the province and register here and then do business wherever they want to.

The point of the Nova Scotia legislation is that it doesn't necessarily require or compel American companies that register, incorporate in Nova Scotia to necessarily bring business to Nova Scotia other than to bring business, I suppose, to the government services department of the province of Nova Scotia. American businesses so incorporating in Nova Scotia feel free to go and do their business wherever they wish. The only attraction for them to go to Nova Scotia is to somehow avoid having to pay taxes, the American taxes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the real issue, in my view, is the issue of creating tax havens in Canada for the benefit of corporations from outside, particularly U.S. corporations. The Nova Scotia model has a certain type of corporation which provides some benefits in terms of taxes to the corporation. This kind of a corporation has got an unlimited corporation entity – I'm trying to get the exact wording here – and the unlimited corporate liability means that it's part of this increasing number of parties which can be pursued in potential lawsuits as an ordinary corporation provides protection to its shareholders. So it really spreads the liability to all shareholders. In an unlimited liability corporation shareholders themselves can be pursued in case the corporation cannot meet its obligations.

So far Nova Scotia is the only province offering this unlimited liability corporation and, for obvious reasons, was flooded with requests from U.S. companies and individuals to incorporate these kinds of entities. The application fees were increased significantly in Nova Scotia, and it turned into quite a cash grab for the province. Since the people paying fees are primarily U.S. investors, no one really complains about this. It now seems that Bill 16 wants to bring that model of unlimited liability corporation right here to Alberta so that Alberta now would like to provide this corporate structure to U.S. investors and make it unnecessary for them to incorporate in Nova Scotia to attain the desired corporate structure.

Now, the argument could be made, I'm sure, in support of this bill that this will allow more American capital to come into Alberta,

thereby enhancing economic growth and economic activity in this province. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a pipe dream. As I said before, for American companies to come to Nova Scotia to incorporate there as unlimited liability corporations has not translated into those companies investing in Nova Scotia. There's no reason, therefore, to assume or believe that simply opening up this avenue for American companies to incorporate as unlimited liability corporations in Alberta will do anything different.

As I said, the actual location of the business does not change since a company could always incorporate in Nova Scotia but operate in Alberta and vice versa. It just keeps more of the corporate legal activity in Alberta. I think certainly some corporate lawyers would be happy that they will have some increased business because American companies may come here and seek legal services to get incorporated as unlimited liability corporations.

There's very little benefit, as I see it, in it for additional investments being attracted to Alberta by nonresidents by virtue of the passing of this legislation in this House. The Government Services department will probably make a few more bucks, but that's not, in my view, what the purpose of that department is. Its primary purpose is to ensure that there is appropriate legislative framework in place for corporations and businesses to do their work here within the bounds of the laws of this province and of this country.

The only people who will be happy, if this legislation were to pass and allow the incorporation of these unlimited liability corporations in Alberta, would be Alberta lawyers, who have up to this point seen much of this work go to Nova Scotia. The passing of this bill here simply will be another signal sent by this government to let their American friends know that Alberta is, quote, unquote, open for business. But business may in fact go elsewhere, with the exception of the legal business that may be attracted here if they pass this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have here a news release from CanWest news – and I will try to table it tomorrow – called Canadian Offshore Investment Jumps Eight-fold Since 1990. This says that

Canadian direct investment in offshore financial centres, including “tax havens,” has soared eight-fold since 1990 to a whopping \$88 billion in 2003, according to a report by Statistics Canada.

The report, released Monday – this says March 15 – rekindled opposition demands, including demands from the federal Conservative opposition

for a crackdown on Canadian firms' use of offshore financial centres to avoid paying taxes in Canada. It also triggered a suggestion that Canada cut its taxes to compete with legitimate low-tax regimes, such as Ireland.

In other words, a race to the bottom kind of argument emerges from this debate on the flowing of capital outside Canada to these tax havens and use of those tax havens to avoid taxes for Canada.

9:20

For example, there's a quotation here.

“From 1990 to 2003, Canadian enterprises invested substantial and growing amounts in countries known as ‘Offshore Financial Centres’ (OFCs), many of them in the Caribbean,” Statistics Canada said. “These centres include countries that are often referred to as ‘tax havens’, as well as those which have important financial sectors, such as Switzerland, but also Ireland,” it said.

The largest increases went into Barbados, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas and Ireland, the five countries being among the 11 nations with the most Canadian assets.

I'm sure everyone recognizes this name in this House; we sometimes wish we had an Auditor General like that.

Auditor General Sheila Fraser two years ago charged that multinational companies operating in Canada have avoided “hundreds of millions” of dollars in taxes over the past decade through the use of tax havens.

A more recent university study charged that Canadian banks

alone saved \$10 billion in taxes over the past decade through the use of tax havens.

The point, Mr. Speaker, that I'm trying to make is that if as Canadians we are unhappy with the fact that tax havens offshore help Canadian investors avoid paying billions of dollars of taxes of corporations, then we have to as individual citizens and taxpayers pick up in terms of our own income tax – what we lose in terms of corporate taxes, we are asked to make up through income taxes and other indirect service fees and indirect taxes.

We don't want to become part of this tax haven world, where Canada competes with Cayman Islands or Barbados or some other Caribbean offshore financial centre, OFC. We don't want to become that. We want to create conditions in this province and in this country that will generate interest in healthy economic investments, healthy economic activity, and investments which respect the laws of the land and want to do business in order to both profit themselves but also contribute to the social good and to the broader economy, which all of us are part of and are participants in.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, given that the main thrust of this bill and the part of the bill that I'm focusing on is an attempt to turn Alberta into something like Nova Scotia and then Nova Scotia and Alberta become more like tax havens as we now know exist offshore, which draw Canadian resources away, take our taxes away, I don't think we should compete with those and become like them. In fact, we should do everything that we can to attempt to limit the accessibility of tax havens and reduce the attractiveness of those tax havens so that everyone does honest business, pays taxes honestly, and enjoys the benefits of doing both in the places where these investors are and investments occur and businesses take place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone that wishes to have a question or comment.

Seeing none, anyone else wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise in support of this bill, moved by the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, and join with the Member for Edmonton-McClung from the Official Opposition in supporting this bill.

I do have a number of concerns and questions I'd like to have answered, though, in Committee of the Whole. One would be, you know: what are the reasons to allow the directors of a corporation to add all or part of the value of shares used in dividend payments to the capital account of the corporation? Before it all had to be put into the capital account.

Another question would be the provision that allows for beneficiaries of registered shareholders that hold shares in trust to vote on corporate decisions. The question is: what about blind trust situations?

Also, the area that changes the number of Canadian directors required by the corporation and reduces it from one-half to one-quarter. The question: why the drop in the Canadian requirement, and shouldn't we have Canadians fully represented on the boards of Canadian companies?

Another question – and this echoes a comment put forward by the Member for Edmonton-McClung – is the provision that protects a person from being liable for acting in good faith in reporting information to the auditor. Well, a couple of questions: isn't this whistle-blower protection, and will the government implement the same provisions for its staff?

The general thrust of the bill, especially the areas that put it in parallel with the Canada Business Corporations Act, I believe, is

very good and adds to the ability for corporations to act in Alberta. A number of the provisions for shareholders I think are especially important. You know, it allows electronic participation, making it easier. It allows registered holders of beneficiaries to vote the share. These provisions, among many of them that are in here – and I won't go on at length – I think add to a strong bill that works in a very comprehensive way to look at many of the changes that are necessary in this area.

I support this bill, in closing, Mr. Speaker, and thank the mover of the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

Bill 23

Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate March 21: Mr. Stevens]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 23, Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005, in its second reading. Bill 23 applies to what the bill calls decision-makers: boards and tribunals appointed under an Alberta act “to decide matters in accordance with the authority given under [the particular] Act,” as stated in section 10(b). Such decision-makers include, as the Minister of Justice pointed out in his introduction to this bill, in his second reading explanation of this bill, such boards as the Labour Relations Board, the Securities Commission, the Energy and Utilities Board. Actually, the minister named 12 different boards to which this bill applies.

The problem which Bill 23 addresses is the issue of constitutional questions. Most of these boards will not ever have to deal with constitutional issues such as Charter challenges, but some will. Which boards should have the power to deal with such issues, and which boards should not have such powers? That problem, that issue, is what this bill is trying to deal with.

In part, as the minister explained, the Supreme Court of Canada recently made decisions in respect to two cases, one in British Columbia and one in Nova Scotia, where boards and tribunals were set up by the provinces. In these two cases these boards did rule on constitutional matters. There was a challenge, and the Supreme Court upheld their authorization to decide on constitutional matters.

9:30

The problem is that the provincial legislation empowering boards and tribunals does not in most cases explicitly make it clear that such powers are granted to them to discuss constitutional questions. So all the Supreme Court could do was try to interpret the empowering legislation of boards in B.C. and Nova Scotia. In effect, the Supreme Court threw the ball back to the provinces to ask them to make it clear in legislation which boards have the authority over constitutional matters and which do not.

Bill 23 tries to solve this problem. First, it gives designated provincial decision-makers, those so designated in section 16 of this bill, power to determine constitutional questions. Second, it then deprives any nondesignated provincial decision-maker of jurisdiction to determine a question of constitutional law. So Bill 23 kind of has a positive side and a negative side. Positively, it gives some boards the authority to deal with constitutional questions, but it also deprives other committees of being able to deal with such questions.

At first when I read this bill, I was seized by a mild fit of paranoia, wondering if this bill was granting too much power to provincial boards, granting them permission to interpret the Charter and the

Constitution in whatever way seemed important to them, but the legal advice that I have received assured me that the effective and administrative tribunal or board decision on a question of constitutional law is quite limited. It applies only for the purposes of the board determined by the empowering act, and it cannot be made into a declaration of a law for more general purposes. If a board intended to have such a general effect, it would be making decisions which are unconstitutional.

Another way in which the decisions of the boards are limited is simply the fact that they are subject to the control of the courts. Anyone affected by the decision of a board dealing with constitutional questions has a right to appeal that to the courts by appealing directly to the court or by a judicial review, and the courts can set aside the decision. So given the limited scope of such board decisions, it does not seem that Bill 23 threatens our civil liberties or the rule of constitutional law.

Given what I've just said about the relations of boards to the courts, it is important to ask: what is the effect of this bill? What does it actually do? Is it really a solution to the perceived problem? For those boards which have already been dealing with constitutional questions, simply designating them as having the power to do so actually doesn't change anything. At the most this bill has the negative consequence of depriving certain boards of being able to deal with constitutional questions if they are not designated under 16(b). But what is the point of doing this? It's very hard to understand why this bill is coming to this House. What is the motivation for it? Maybe in Committee of the Whole we'll hear some explanation of why this bill is before us. It's difficult to not think that maybe there's some kind of hidden agenda here.

So I want to turn to two illustrations. The first illustration is the one provided by the Supreme Court, which is fairly clear. In that illustration an aboriginal person cut down four trees and planned to use the logs to build a porch on his house. Those logs were seized, and he was charged. In accordance with regulations set down by the B.C. Ministry of Forests, he shouldn't be doing this; this was against regulations. But that aboriginal person appealed on the basis that he has a constitutional right to do what he did. The board went ahead and dealt with that constitutional question in his favour, and the Supreme Court of Canada upheld that. So that's an interesting case. I'm not sure, though, whether this bill, which allows for the designating of such boards as being able to deal with those questions, would have made any difference in that kind of example.

The next example is more interesting for me, and this is kind of an imaginary example, but it illustrates the negative effect of this bill, which raises the issue of restricting access to justice. In other words, does this bill actually, then, make the whole process of access to justice just more complicated and so complex that, really, it's not in the interest of people who have appeals to make? The negative effect of this bill is, as I've said, to deprive certain boards or tribunals from being able to deal with constitutional questions; for example, take the illustration of same-sex marriage. By itself, Bill 23 would not directly impact the same-sex marriage issue. However, amendments to the Marriage Act along with this proposed Administrative Procedures Amendment Act could delay the application of the same-sex marriage legislation in Alberta. So in my view justice would be delayed, and access to justice would be restricted.

So let me explain. The Marriage Act as it exists now does not establish a tribunal to oversee the issuing of marriage licences. Appeals or challenges about marriage licences can be made to the director of vital statistics, or if alleged discrimination is involved, then appeals can be made directly to the Human Rights Commission. Since there's no delegated authority to deal with appeals regarding

questions of law, the government could amend the Marriage Act. I'm not saying that they should do this. I don't want them to think that they can add this to their list of options in dealing with the whole situation of same-sex marriage, but the government could amend the Marriage Act and establish an administrative tribunal to deal with licensing appeals. Let us call it the MLRB, the marriage licence review board.

Now, if under section 16 of the Administrative Procedures Amendment Act the MLRB as a decision-maker is not given the authority to determine questions of constitutional law, then it becomes impossible for anyone to appeal to such a board that their decision is unconstitutional. A same-sex couple who was refused a licence would not be able to appeal to such a board because that board cannot deal with constitutional issues. There would be no ability to seek a constitutional remedy from such a board because of exclusive withdrawal of its power to decide constitutional questions. The avenue open to such a same-sex couple would be to appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench in respect to the unconstitutionality of the empowering legislation of the authority of the board itself. Eventually, such amendments of the Marriage Act and such a tribunal probably would be struck down because it would go against the Charter.

Mr. Speaker, this is such a complex process, this designating of boards with powers to deal with constitutional questions or not, that I think the effect of it is that access to justice is severely restricted and limited. So I would vote against this bill for that reason. I'm asking myself the question: what have I accomplished in wading through all of this legal quagmire other than simply to waste my time trying to understand something that may be quite unnecessary? Perhaps the government should withdraw this bill and bring us something that really accomplishes something.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest to speak to Bill 23 here this evening. By and large I find that the bill is largely administrative in the sense that it's trying to keep up to some recent Supreme Court rulings that have taken place, as the previous hon. member has mentioned. There was, I believe, a Supreme Court decision, Paul and Martin – which is an interesting combination of words, isn't it? – coming from the Supreme Court. A coincidence, I suppose.

9:40

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

This decision was dealing specifically with a WCB claim and, you know, protecting, ultimately, the right for the WCB to make rulings on the constitutionality of the client's rights rather than a court making that decision. It's an interesting ruling, and I suppose that it is useful to bring in this bill before the Legislature to be in keeping with this recent development in the Supreme Court. In fact, I think that probably it is not an unreasonable thing to do, the main issue being that for all practical purposes we do create a myriad of tribunals and councils that administer everything from appeals and WCB to the tire recycling board, I suppose. Each one of these citizen groups, whether they're lawyers or not, are entrusted within a narrow scope of the interest of the boards to make some administrative decisions about, potentially, the constitutionality of what their jurisdiction is. Quite simply, I think that Bill 23 does satisfy that need.

I suppose that it does allow individuals to forego the expense and

potential delay of courts, to have their cases decided rather by a board or a tribunal that is specific to their needs, so there might be some practical purpose for that as well. Otherwise, I suppose each bill that we consider here in the House has cast some reflection on other larger issues that are bearing our concern.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The one that comes to my mind is, you know, if we're looking at, say, the WCB being able to make decisions in regard to a person's constitutional rights. But then I noticed that Bill 23 here does provide a balance where a judge can intercede and say: "No. You can allow a court of law to make a ruling on something as well." So this Bill 23 is quite balanced in that respect. It does allow for a judge and lawyers to intercede if they deem it necessary. Yet in other bills that we have put forward here, talking about the WCB, we're sort of limiting that ability for an individual to use the court of law. So while this bill seems balanced in that way, I think other bills that we've been discussing recently here in this same room in regard to, say, the WCB tribunal have been very unbalanced. So, you know, I guess that's the way the world works, not justice all the time everywhere, each time in each place.

Regardless, my reading of this Bill 23 is to give it tentative support. I'm looking forward to debating the specifics in the Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments. The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora if he's aware of any other English-speaking democracy that allows administrative tribunals to exercise this power of constitutional review. But since I can't ask him questions, I'll answer my question myself, and of course the answer is no.

I'd like to ask a second question as well, if he's familiar with the first principle of administrative law, which of course is that any administrative tribunal is the creature of the Legislature that creates in and, therefore, is subordinate to that Legislature, which of course explains the reason why no administrative tribunal in any English-speaking democracy exercises such a power of constitutional review. It would literally be the tail wagging the dog.

So I'm happy to speak in favour of this bill and correct a few misperceptions on the part of the hon. member.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to comment?
Anyone else on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?
Anyone wish to participate in the debate?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been called.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

Bill 24

Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate March 22: Mr. Stevens]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on this bill, Bill 24,

introduced by the Minister of Justice, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005. This bill is the culmination of a dialogue during the last few years involving many different interested groups. The debate has focused on the issue of finding a more effective method for public fatality inquiries.

The fatality inquiry process is, of course, extremely important to the public. Human life is sacred; every human life is sacred. Our society places a high value on human life. It follows that it is in the public interest to have a thorough investigation when there is a loss of life from what appear to be unnatural causes. Fatality inquiries which are thorough can teach us many things about how to protect human life in the future. Not only individuals but institutions are able to learn important lessons from such inquiries. Public confidence is at stake here. The public must have confidence that the government and the courts are doing all they can to investigate and make recommendations for the future.

I want to focus my attention on a couple of issues of concern in this bill. First of all, it is obvious that this amendment gives unprecedented powers to a single judge to seriously limit the nature, scope, and dissemination of information in respect of a public fatality inquiry. For example, a judge can meet with interested parties at any time and then proceed to limit the issues that will be under consideration in the inquiry. The judge will also have the power to stay the public inquiry if the judge is of the opinion that all matters related to the death have been examined and answered in another forum.

All references to a jury have been removed by this amendment. I find that interesting. I realize that no fatality inquiries have been held before a jury, but I think that it's one of the principles of fundamental justice in Canada that we have the right to have a hearing before a jury. Maybe we can debate that while this is in Committee of the Whole.

The addition in section 38 seems to change the power of judges. Previously a judge had all of the powers of a commissioner appointed under the Public Inquiries Act: powers to call in technical experts and legal counsel, not just clerks, reporters, and assistants. What was considered as a full investigation previously is now narrowed to what the judge considers to be required for the purposes of the inquiry. This is an inquiry limited, then, in the scope of its investigations, and it does not seem to me to be in the interest of a full, open, and transparent public inquiry.

If the goal of fatality inquiries is the prevention of future deaths, then we may well ask: why should there be any limits placed on the investigation of all the factors that led to the particular death? The goal of a fatality inquiry should not be to achieve efficiency, as the Minister of Justice has stated, but should be a full and public debate on the evidence, with full participation by everyone who can help us understand and save lives in the future.

9:50

That brings me to the most serious issue with this bill. Now, the Justice minister stated previously that one group intended to be affected generally by this proposal is the media. In Canada a fundamental freedom, according to section 2(b) of the Charter, includes "freedom of the press and other media of communication." Bill 24 would severely limit the participation of the media in public fatality inquiries. In this bill judges have the power to decide who should be present at a public fatality inquiry. Interested parties – that's the expression used – would have to make a good case that they have a "direct and substantial interest in the subject-matter of the inquiry." That's the phrase used: "direct and substantial interest." The minister interpreted this as meaning that substantial interest refers to personal or business or legal interest. Only parties

meeting this criterion would have the right to examine evidence at a public fatality inquiry.

The Minister of Justice told the Legislature that the role of the media is to report the news, not to make it. A reporter can report on the process without actually being there to listen and observe. Well, allow me to remind this House of the famous remark made by the 18th century British statesman Edmund Burke. He commented that there are three estates in Parliament, referring to the priesthood, the aristocracy, and the commons, but he pointed out that "in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important than they all." The fourth estate, consisting of journalists and authors, whose power consists of the words they write or speak, have for hundreds of years been seen as the guardians of democracy and the defenders of the public interest everywhere in the democratic world except, apparently, in Alberta, where we wish to limit the presence of the fourth estate at public fatality inquiries.

So the all-important question is this. If the media is restricted, how can such inquiries still be considered to be public? When a fatality occurs, whether the result of an accident or a crime, how is the public served if reporters are not permitted to attend such inquiries? We use the term "fourth estate" to refer to the media as a powerful watchdog revealing abuses of state authority and defending the democratic rights of citizens. How is democracy served if the fourth estate, our writers and journalists, are greeted at the courtroom door with a sign: "Private. Do not enter. No watchdogs allowed in here."? In so many different ways the public sphere is being eroded as more and more inquiries and decisions are being made behind closed doors. What we need in Alberta is more transparency, more openness, more public accountability, and more democracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would vote against this bill because it's going in the wrong direction in terms of public accountability. What we need is more openness at public fatality inquiries, not less.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in the debate on Bill 24, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005. The Fatality Inquiries Act, the legislation that exists in the province, I think already has some problems with it that are in the nature of the legislation being relatively weak in ensuring that the public has access to the procedures of the inquiry, to what goes on during the inquiry. There is a fair bit of discretion in the hands of the presiding judge or justice to make the decisions as to whether the information before the inquiry is public, who can be there, and in some cases can rule against the information being made public.

What this set of amendments in Bill 24 does is further aggravate concerns of Albertans who would want to see more transparency and openness to fatality inquiries in this province. Fatality inquiries deal, of course, with fatalities that occur under situations where lots of questions remain unanswered as to why someone lost her or his life. Under what circumstances could the death have been prevented? Did it occur because of either confusion or ambiguities in the procedures attendant upon the situation in which this particular death occurred?

In other words, fatality inquiries have two purposes. One, of course, is that the government wants to reassure the public and make it aware that it's acting to ensure that guarantees relating to human life are duly respected, and as we all know, the right to life and liberty is guaranteed by most constitutions in modern democracies. Nothing is more valuable, nothing is more sacred than human life.

So when a death occurs, say, in a hospital or in a school or on a school excursion, as happened in the case of a well-known private school in Calgary some time ago, there are many questions that those deaths raise, that those fatalities raise. Those questions need to be addressed in order to both make sure that those questions with respect to the particular death are answered but also that questions are answered in a way so that such unnecessary loss of life can be avoided in the future.

Protection of life, insofar as it's possible, must always be the highest priority of any piece of legislation or any court or inquiry or any action related to human life that's in the hands of governments and legislators. So what's the problem with the amendments being proposed here, Mr. Speaker? That is the question before us, and I am sure that we will have the opportunity to look in detail at the clauses of the bill as we move into the next stage of debate on the bill; that is, the Committee of the Whole. But here I'm talking more in terms of principles and whether or not, in my judgment, Bill 24 is likely to accomplish the goals of reassuring the public and making it aware that the fatality inquiries undertaken in this province are done in such a way that they help to ensure the guarantees relating to human life and that they are duly respected by public agencies, institutions, and offices.

Now, one of the problems with this bill is that, in fact, it closes the doors of these inquiries to being public and being reported on. With the changes, if they are approved by this House, then this law that we will be creating will take the media out of the running for interested person status. That's one important thing. The media's ability to get interested person status is simply put outside of this law. It's beyond the reach of the media to seek that kind of status. So that, I think, is a step backwards because as I said, there are two purposes to the act: one, to look at the actual reasons why a death may have occurred and whether it could have been prevented; second, to educate the public and ourselves in general so that we learn from such tragedies in order to prevent such occurrences in the future. The media plays a very important role in educating us all with respect to the second objective of fatality inquiries, as I see it. So eliminating the ability of the media to be deemed as interested persons I think is a weakness.

10:00

Now, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, of course, has argued that media don't need the power to ask questions or present evidence to the inquiry, but that's not the issue. I don't think that when the media gets interested person status, it automatically gets the power to ask questions or present evidence to the inquiry. I don't think that media intends to speak to inquiry issues, but certainly it intends to make sure that the inquiry is as open as possible and those of us who are not present at the inquiry learn on a daily basis about what goes on inside the inquiry room chamber.

Another problem is that the second or third amendment that the minister proposes says that a fatality inquiry will no longer be mandatory in the death of someone in care unless the death relates to government care. But there's a big grey area here. How would you know that a death was unrelated to guardianship without an inquiry?

A death when it takes place in a hospital. I remember the case of that young person who was rushed to the Foothills hospital in Calgary, I guess a year and a half ago or so, from High River, I believe. I'm trying to recall the details to the incident. He had, I think, appendicitis or some such infection. He was turned back from the emergency room by someone without thoroughly examining the person, and the person, I think, died on his way back. Certainly, that's not a death that occurred when the person was in the govern-

ment's hands. Nevertheless, it is important for us to learn why that occurred.

To be able to expect that a fatality inquiry in such cases would be automatically ordered is an important way in which we can learn from past mistakes and assure the public that we as legislators and governments and other institutions remain ever faithful to the principles of protecting life whenever it is possible to do so and learn from mistakes. There will always be accidents. There will always be misjudgments. But there's always room when that happens, if you pay attention to under what circumstances those judgments were made or errors were made, to learn from them and to improve in our future practice when similar situations occur again.

Given that, I think the amendments that are sought in Bill 24 turn the clock back rather than help us forward. It happens to weaken an already relatively weak piece of legislation rather than strengthen it so that it would serve us better in the future. For those reasons, I'm inclined at this stage not to support the bill, but I do undertake to take a closer look and a more detailed look at the provisions of this bill. Hopefully, during the debate in the Committee of the Whole I'll be able to change my mind if I'm persuaded through strong arguments made either by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General himself or my other colleagues in this House. Until then, I withhold my support of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to our learned and very objective friend across the way, the hon. member, would be this: hypothetically, given that the Gomery commission could turn into a fatality inquiry – in fact, the Liberal Party may die from it – would he think that the fact that the media, that isn't allowed to ask questions, that's controlled by the fellow who is the biggest crook in there, controls the CBC, or the fact that he appoints all the judges will be the biggest detriment to getting the truth out of what could be a fatality inquiry?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly don't want to wish a Gomery inquiry on this government because that might lead to further fatalities as well.

We do need to get to the bottom of matters, and inquiries sometimes do help. Regardless of who is on the fatality table, I think that such inquiries are absolutely necessary in a democracy. That's how citizens are able to see through what their rulers may be doing with their tax dollars and to them and to seek ways of eliminating future possibilities for politicians or crooks being able to do that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other comments or questions on 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise tonight to speak on Bill 24, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005. I'll make my comments brief since the hour is late.

Some Hon. Members: Thank you.

Mr. Tougas: You're very welcome.

The stated aim of this bill is to make the fatality review process

more effective and efficient. Now, while being efficient is all very well and good – and I believe that the government has created a whole department devoted to efficiency – it is not the be-all and end-all. The Minister of Justice and Attorney General indicated in his introduction of this bill that there was an extensive consultation process behind the act encompassing the Information and Privacy Commissioner, police forces, Canadian Medical Protective Association, and many other groups. It appears that the consultation process was quite thorough, covering virtually every interested party in the process with one notable exception, and I commend the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for conducting such a wide-ranging review.

As the minister himself said, “Some of the proposed amendments are procedural in nature, but many of them have a significant impact on the fatality inquiry process.” First, the amendment to call a limited investigation into the death of an Albertan that happens outside the province is certainly worthwhile. While a death occurring outside of Alberta falls outside the scope of Alberta law, there may be instances where actions taken in Alberta may have contributed directly or indirectly to the fatality. This part of the bill will allow for a less formal investigation to be held into the incident with an eye towards preventing further deaths in the future. I wholeheartedly support this section of the amendment.

The section of the amendment deleting the requirements for mandatory fatality reviews for anyone who dies while they are in the custody, care, or guardianship of government is another nod to efficiency, but it does have its drawbacks. There are certainly times when what is now a mandatory review would no longer need to be called, but I caution the government to proceed carefully in this regard. While, certainly, there are many cases where the death was entirely accidental and not foreseeable, it should not be mandatory to hold a public inquiry in many of these cases. For example, the minister himself used the hypothetical situation of a 16 year old under government care driving a car and, unfortunately, dying in a motor vehicle accident. At present, because that 16 year old is under government care, there would be a mandatory fatality inquiry. Under the new rules there would not be an inquiry. But I ask: what if that 16 year old who was under government care was impaired at the time of the accident? I would think, then, that in a situation of this sort perhaps a public inquiry would still be held to investigate why the 16 year old in government care was drunk and driving a car at the time. Now, I suspect that there are many times when a fatality review is not required. I urge the government to move with caution in eliminating the mandatory provisions of this act.

10:10

The one area of very serious concern in this amendment, as the other speakers have mentioned, is the tightening of the rules regarding who may appear at a public inquiry and examine and cross-examine witnesses. The current law has a fairly broad interpretation of who may be regarded as an interested person and be allowed to participate in the inquiry. The amendment tightens this up considerably, allowing only a person who has a direct and substantial interest in the subject matter of the inquiry.

As my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora has already pointed out, the minister himself admitted that one group intended to be affected by the proposal is the media. The minister said, and I quote, “The role of the media is to report the news and not to make it.” Mr. Speaker, this statement reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of how the news media works. The media is not supposed to be a service that simply regurgitates whatever was said at a public hearing or in the Legislature.

The media has always – and that is always – not only reported the

news but has made the news. It was the news media, after all that ferreted out the information on this government’s cavalier use of public aircraft as a high-flying taxi service. On a larger scale it was the news media that forced the Watergate scandal that brought down the presidency of Richard Nixon. Did the media make the news? Yes, it did. And we should be thankful for it.

In both of these cases and thousands of other cases over hundreds of years, it was the news media that created the news. Canada and all democracies of the world have been well served by a news media that did not just report the news but made the news. Only in dictatorships and communist countries is the media restricted to just reporting the news under the guise of the Tass news agency or Pravda.

It can also be argued, Mr. Speaker, that the government itself goes to great lengths to make news. This government’s vast Public Affairs Bureau spends a great deal of time and millions of public dollars making news by churning out the happy news stories about government accomplishments.

Like it or not, Mr. Speaker, one of the news media’s primary roles is to act as the eyes and ears of the public. The Canadian news media willingly allows for a number of restrictions to be placed on its freedoms in order to facilitate the fair trial process. The recent testimony at the Gomery inquiry upon which there was a publication ban placed, and which the Canadian media adhered to, is a good example. The news media in Canada has always shown a remarkable degree of restraint compared to the news media in the United States and particularly Britain, and I feel that it is unfair and unnecessary to further shackle the media as it attempts to do its job.

Perhaps in Committee of the Whole the minister will be able to supply this House with specific examples of how the media interfered with the effectiveness and efficiency of a public inquiry, but I sincerely doubt it. It seems to me that this government under the guise of increased efficiency is attempting to shut the door on public questioning at fatality inquiries.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to comment or have a question under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Does anyone else wish to participate in debate? I recognize the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I’m waiting for the voices on the other side of the House to say: hmm. But whatever. The reason I’m standing up to speak is because I really believe that open and transparent discussion is a part of strong democracy. Bear with me, voices on the other side of the House.

I’d like to speak to this bill because I believe that it has the potential to limit interested persons from attending fatality inquiries, interested persons being an interesting use of a definition. A judge actually would be allowed to narrow the scope of who would participate at an inquiry. All of this is being done in the attempt to be effective and efficient. I’m not sure that these words should ever be used when you put it on the value of a human life that would be then applied to the bottom line. Especially, open, transparent, and honest criteria should never be compromised. The public must know – they mustn’t just feel – without any doubt and have the confidence that inquiries are not tainted by politics. This bill could redefine the interested party. It could severely limit the participation of people or groups, and one of the groups that has been spoken about, of course – I won’t go into great detail – is the media at fatality inquiries. Very important that we have open discussions.

A government that controls the information or, worse, the distribution of any information to the public, frankly, scares me; one

more step toward creating a powerful, hungry dictatorship. There are examples of this behaviour in history, and the consequences of a government with this kind of power are not pretty. The public must be allowed to unfiltered information regarding fatalities.

This bill also limits the scope of what can be investigated within the inquiry, and it would appear that this is all being done in the name of efficiency. As I said before, efficiency cannot be applied to human lives. A family who has been waiting two years for a public inquiry into a loved one who was working alone and was killed by a client has contacted me. The pain and the uncertainty and the waiting for this family is, in my mind, cruel and unusual punishment for the families of this victim. They wait and wait for what should have been considered a timely response, and they feel that the government is just hoping that they'll go away as they wait for the court system to inch its way along.

It was stated in *Hansard* on March 22, '05, that there are circumstances in questionable deaths "that the public interest would not be served by a fatality inquiry," an area that would have been mandatory in the past. That, frankly, scares me even more. In my mind, this represents the slippery slope to information control that's just too scary, Mr. Speaker, just too scary for me to be able to vote for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 36 Police Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 7: Mr. Cenaiko]

Dr. B. Miller: Mr. Speaker, it's unusual for me to give three sermons in one evening. [interjection] Well, if you wanted to adjourn, somebody should have moved adjourn for the evening. So here comes my third one. I'm used to giving only one per week, not three in one evening.

I'm privileged to stand and respond to Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005, because this is a very important amendment to the Police Act, and it's overdue. It's been quite a few years since the Police Act has been amended. Because of changes in our culture and pressures from the public, it's certainly a timely amendment, the Police Amendment Act, 2005.

The purpose of Bill 36 is to provide legislation determining the proper relation between the police services of Alberta and the public. To that end, we have in this bill an outline of the function and manner of appointment of police committees and police commissions and an outline of the process for dealing with complaints concerning police actions.

The Solicitor General stated in his introduction of this bill that this legislation ensures fair and objective investigations into complaints against police and enhances the credibility of the complaint review process. I agree that that is the issue. In the organization of police committees and police commissions and the process of dealing with complaints, the issue is: do we have a system which the public perceives as fair, objective, and credible?

What I am hearing from the public and certainly the overwhelming viewpoint of the media is that we do not have a system of public civilian oversight of the police which fulfills the criteria of being objective and credible. This amendment to the Police Act fails in my estimation to provide the level of oversight which the public is demanding.

10:20

Recent serious incidents and complaints demonstrate the serious-

ness of the issue of dealing with police misconduct and the demand of the public for a better system of civilian review of police conduct. For example, the Overtime scandal involving a sting operation against a journalist and the former Police Commission chairman at the Overtime bar is one such incident; the recent ruling of a judge that excessive force was used with a taser by a police officer here in Edmonton; the death of a young boy, Giovanni Aleman, due to a police car involved in a high-speed chase in Edmonton, a chase where the police car didn't use emergency lights and sirens. There's the incident of the shooting of a man armed with a knife, which turned out to be a toy knife, by members of the Edmonton Police Service tactical squad.

Incidents such as these have seriously eroded the public's confidence in the Edmonton Police Service and other police services throughout Alberta. What the public is concerned about is how these incidents are dealt with in terms of investigating them and then reporting to the public, and there are even questions about the ability and the effectiveness of police investigating themselves. They're certainly concerned about the objectivity of such investigations.

Now, it's interesting that, you know, when police services first emerged in Britain a couple of centuries ago, the police were considered to be an extension of the public. The police represented the public. Sir Robert Peel was the founder of modern policing, and he served as the British Home Secretary during the 1820s. It was his act for improving the police in and near the metropolis that was passed through the British Parliament that resulted in the creation of the first law enforcement agency in modern history.

What is really interesting about Sir Robert Peel's proposal is something that's called Sir Robert Peel's nine principles. I'll just name two of them. The first one is that "the ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions." There never was the idea in the beginning of the formation of police services that there should be a separation between the public and the police. They are identical. Another principle of Sir Robert Peel is that "police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police." It undermines the ability of the police service to do their work when we see an adversarial relationship between the public and the police service. When the public loses its confidence in the police service, it undermines their ability to do their work.

Mr. Speaker, we need a rewriting of the Police Act which would put into place mechanisms to handle complaints that would bring together the police and the public. Public policing was imported from England and introduced into Canada in the 1830s. The theory of public policing was always that the police carry out their duties on behalf of the citizens. As democracy grew, the conviction strengthened that enforcement of the law is ultimately the responsibility of every citizen. It follows, then, that citizens and police have exactly the same goal, and that is the prevention of crime and the maintenance of public order. So, to that end, it's extremely important to have the right kind of model for handling complaints, and this bill does not give us the right kind of model, not the kind of model that is going to inspire public confidence.

There are five types of civilian oversight, and the type that's represented by this bill is not adequate. The first type is the in-house model, whereby police officers receive a complaint, investigate it, determine if the complaint will be substantiated, and take any necessary follow-up action. In other words, police investigate the police. That's the in-house model.

Then, secondly, there's the externally supervised in-house model, in which there is some involvement of citizens, but their involvement is very limited.

Thirdly, the investigation is completed by the police, but the adjudication and final disposition of the complaint are determined by an independent body. That's a third model, and the reverse is possible: the investigation is independent, but the police perform the adjudication role.

The fifth model is the fully independent model, where civilians both investigate and adjudicate the complaint.

What is proposed in Bill 23 is the second one that I have listed, the second type of civilian oversight, with the police doing the investigating. There is a civilian appointment to oversee the process, but that civilian appointment does not contribute to the investigation. I think this reflects the Solicitor General's remarks to this House when I asked him about the need for civilian oversight. He said: well, the public can't investigate criminal activities; they don't have the experience; they don't have the skills; they don't have the training. That, to me, is demeaning of the public.

We do not need the kind of approach that pits the public and its abilities and capacities against the police. It goes against the very fact that other jurisdictions, other provinces have formed independent civilian oversight bodies where the public does obviously have the ability to investigate incidents within the police service. What is not understood is that the majority of citizens simply do not have confidence in a process in which the police investigate themselves, the in-house models. So this variation of the in-house model proposed by this bill will not be generally accepted by the public in Alberta, and we'll hear more and more comments in the news media and articles printed in the newspapers calling for a better model.

One such better model is the model that Ontario has, the Special Investigations Unit, which was established in 1990 as an independent, arm's-length agency of the government, led by a director and composed of civilian investigators. They would be quite surprised to hear the Solicitor General's remarks that the public does not have the skill or the ability to be involved in investigations. Apparently, legislators in Ontario do have confidence in the public's ability to carry out investigations. The motto of the Special Investigations Unit is Independent Investigations, Community Confidence, and that, Mr. Speaker, is the commentary I would like to make on this Bill 23. It does not provide us with independent investigations, community confidence. Those two things must go together if we're going to have a proper rewriting of this Police Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to speak on Bill 36 here this evening. Now, it seems to me that it's funny in a way because I think there are two very distinct parts to this bill. The first part I find to be very reassuring, and I applaud the government's efforts to do so, while on the second part I have a number of serious questions.

First of all, the provision in Bill 36 to increase the province's responsibility to pay for the RCMP, essentially, from a population of 2,500 up to 5,000 is very welcome news. I think that the community policing that the RCMP provide in rural areas is absolutely essential. It's part of the glue that holds the communities together in rural areas. Indeed, the function of the RCMP in small towns extends far beyond the role of policing but also just adds a lot of stability and community contributions that have been a long part of our rural Alberta history.

10:30

So for the first part of this bill, certainly, I think this is welcome news, and I think that, hopefully, it's a reflection of this govern-

ment's commitment to increasing on-the-ground police services and forces not just in the rural areas and small towns but also in the urban areas. I think that the perception of an increase in various types of property crime right across our province is a direct reflection of a lack of police force on the ground. So the more individuals, quite literally, Mr. Speaker, we can put onto the streets and working in communities, I think the safer we all will feel and, in fact, will be. So this is a step in the right direction.

The second part of this bill is to deal with oversights over the various police forces in the province. While I think that, certainly, this is an attempt to survey a perceived need that's coming out from all quarters of the province, both rural and urban areas, there are a number of different ways to approach this. At this juncture I think that probably people across this province, and certainly we as well as the people especially here in this city, are looking for more civilian oversights to do with the police as opposed to less.

So I think that if we can work with that through the second and third reading, then perhaps Bill 36 might be salvageable to some degree. Otherwise, the outcries that we've been hearing for, I guess, the ability to have regulation on the various police forces around our province was not an outcry for the police to be further regulating themselves, although this is the first place where regulation does occur, and in fact it occurs on a daily basis through the chain of command. But, you know, looking for a civilian body that has oversight over more serious allegations and that can function independently, I think, is really what is at the heart of the need that's being brought forward here in this province over the last couple of years or so. I think it's important for us with this bill to reflect on what is truly an independent civilian oversight commission: what that would look like, what sort of powers they would have, and how that due process could function in a useful sort of way.

I think that at the heart of any police system that we choose to employ in a society is that compliance is the essence of a functioning police force, the compliance of the population to adhere to the law and internalize those laws for themselves. We don't have police hanging over our heads or watching around every corner to make sure that we follow the law; rather, it's a system that's internalized through our culture and through a confidence that we have of not only our policing system but our judicial system as well. We are a willing participant in that system, and we like to see a reflection that there is interaction to make that system work.

So having independent civilian oversight, Mr. Speaker, into the function of the police force I think really does contribute to that sense of confidence and interaction that we need with our laws, and it allows people to feel that there is a reason to be confident, to know that if, say, individuals in the police force are perhaps not following procedure, there's another level of oversight that will kick in and provide protection for us. You know, this is an ongoing thing. It's not as though we're born inherently with any sort of sets of law or justice; rather, we have to cultivate them in our society. So a civilian, independent oversight commission of some sort, I think, would be most valuable.

Some other things that I would like to bring up that we perhaps can discuss further with third reading of this bill might include the problem of having a one-year time limit for people coming forward for complaints. Always these time limits. I mean, of course, life and all of our lives are temporal, but just having this – sometimes crime and for people to come forward to speak about crime takes longer, so perhaps this is a bit too short.

I think that, as well, we are seeing in this particular bill as it's written now that there's perhaps too much discretion put into the hands of the Justice minister. So again, as I say, disseminating the power down into independent commissions I think would increase

the confidence of the public, the media, and the police as well to comply to some new regulation. The idea here, I guess, is that part of the reason that people find it difficult to comply with the current system is that there's just too much self-regulation. I think that with any industry you have to have in a sense an independent regulator to be there, be it the police or health or electricity or whatever it happens to be. By having that interaction with some independence, I believe that we can come to more intelligent conclusions, and that's a general comment, not just on the police.

Finally, I think that we're seeing an evolution towards external review and investigation. It's an essential safeguard for a free and democratic society to have this in place, and I think that as Canadians, in general, we've done a very good job in promoting this. As I would like to say one more time, that's how we indeed do have a just and free society, that people agree to comply with the rules and regulations of our society. The police are certainly there to help you. On some occasions you might need a little assistance and reminders about the laws, but otherwise it's an internalized process.

So people have to believe in the system. They have to believe that it's just. They have to believe that it's serving them. I think that by extending some independent, civilian oversight to our police system, we would all be better for it.

Thank you.

Ms Evans: I'd like to move to move adjournment of debate on the bill, please.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

[Debate adjourned April 6]

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

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I imagine that I'm not the only one who's feeling the delayed hour, and I will attempt to keep my comments brief in recognition of that. Most of what I have to say may already have been said in this Assembly, but just in case I want to get my thoughts on the record.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking to Bill 15, there are a number of things that come out. Quite frankly, some of them seem to point to a pattern that I've referred to previously in this House when it comes to some of the legislation that we're being told is of a housekeeping nature or a relatively minor nature in terms of what is trying to be accomplished by it. I find it interesting that in some cases some of the movers of the bills, some of the ministries involved have gone to great lengths to consult with various stakeholders. In some cases, some of the legislation that's coming forward, we're getting feedback from stakeholders that, in fact, there's been little or no consultation, and the latter would appear to be the case with Bill 15.

10:40

I'm not sure why that is, if there's a particular reason why this particular bill appears not to have received a lot of consultation out in the real world, as it were, if there's a particular reason why it appears that this bill is being rushed forward when, in fact, those that the Official Opposition have consulted with indicate that they wish that they had a little more time to review the bill and the ramifications and impacts that it might have. In fact, if I'm correct, there was a reasoned amendment brought forward previously on this bill, which would have seen it set back until the fall, and that, unfortunately, was defeated. So I guess we have no choice now but to go

ahead with the bill. I'm assuming that the government majority will see that it moves beyond second reading and into Committee of the Whole. Certainly, at that point there will be no shortage of debate and perhaps some amendments to it.

The Alberta Liberal opposition, Mr. Speaker, unlike the government, apparently, in this particular case went to great lengths to consult with the Alberta Building Trades Council, as an example, in seeking their input as to what they thought the impacts of this bill might be. We spoke to at least two employment lawyers, seeking their advice as to what they thought was good in this bill and areas where they thought there may need to be amendments. We spoke to the Alberta Federation of Labour and had some good response from them and also a WCB advocate who has extensive experience advocating for the rights of injured workers. Almost universally they came back with some positive comments but, certainly, some serious questions as to what exactly this bill might mean if it were to be passed in its current format.

Just to name a few examples, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Federation of Labour has indicated that they were quite upset, quite frankly, that they were not consulted, saying that in general the government has been very good consulting with them on WCB matters, and in this particular case there was no consultation at all. That, certainly, has raised some concerns with them. They're wondering, in particular, how Bill 15 will change current practices. When we talk in here about the subrogation that is contemplated by the bill whereby a worker's rights would be taken over by the WCB, certainly they're wondering why there couldn't be consultation and co-operation between the WCB and the claimant in third-party actions, why it would appear that, in fact, the WCB is given the power to act unilaterally.

I believe that when my colleague from Edmonton-Manning spoke to this bill the other night, he referred to a recent court decision whereby, in fact, the Alberta courts were quite firm in their judgment involving a case with WCB whereby exactly this case was in play where the WCB had taken over completely the rights of a worker and overruled the worker's wishes in terms of what action would be pursued next.

Some of the feedback we got certainly indicates, as I said, some good things. The fact that under this new bill the WCB would be required to hold an annual general meeting that would be open to the public at which any matters raised in relation to the reports by those present at the meeting would be discussed: certainly, those that we've consulted feel that this is a step in the right direction and applaud the government for taking that small step at least.

Mr. Speaker, there is certainly some recognition of the fact that changes were badly needed to ensure that employers would be required to supply appropriate information in the case of a claim. This perhaps wasn't strong enough in the past. Again, some of the groups we consulted with are pleased with that and say that this will be a good thing for claimants.

However, they certainly have concerns about some other areas. When we get to, particularly, the situation with existing old contentious claims, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be in this case a situation where once again – and I know I've referred to this several times in debate on other bills – more and more power is being given to the Lieutenant Governor in Council in terms of passing regulations. What that means to me is that instead of having it in legislation, where it's open to public debate and public scrutiny, once again we're giving an awful lot of power to the backroom boys to do their changes in rules and regulations in private without, as I suggested, the public scrutiny and public debate that they deserve. Any time I see that, I'm greatly concerned, so I have that concern again with the changes that are being contemplated to Bill 15.

Mr. Speaker, in general it would appear to me that this bill reduces the accountability of the WCB and provides for it to act in its own interests and not necessarily the best interests of the workers in Alberta. Again, this strikes me as being somewhat similar to Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005, which I spoke to the other evening here, in which we have a clause that actually not only limits but excludes the right of individuals to seek legal recourse in the courts against the Alberta government for wrongs that may have been done to them.

Here again we have a situation where the government through legislation is limiting legal redress, and it causes me untold concern when we see that happening. Certainly, there has been no shortage of examples over the years of people who have felt hard done by by WCB decisions. Anything that would be seen to be stifling their legal rights certainly is going to raise the ire of not only those that are involved in these long-standing contentious claims but probably should concern all workers, who might through their own misfortune sometime in the future find themselves involved in a claim with the WCB.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that it seems that this particular bill is being rushed through the Legislature, and in fact some of the stakeholder groups are quite concerned. As I said, not only were they not consulted, but they feel that they really need some time to explore the ramifications of the bill and what it might mean. I hope that the fact that that's happening is not a reflection of or a response to the court case previously mentioned that, if I can use the terminology, sort of slapped the wrist of the WCB, but it would appear to my untrained and certainly not legal eye that that might be the case. I would hope that it isn't, but it does cause one to ponder.

Mr. Speaker, payment of compensation to the worker under this bill would be under the complete control of the WCB. Payments would only be made after the board has recovered its costs and legal fees have been covered. Again, the real concern here is that workers don't have the right to elect to pursue compensation in tort on their own or to choose to fall under the auspices of the WCB, as they do in other jurisdictions. Under this legislation they would simply have no choice but to allow the WCB to subrogate their claim.

10:50

Mr. Speaker, I think, as I said, that most of those issues have been raised before. I wanted to be on the record as raising them again because this is an issue that touches almost all Albertans. Most of us do fall under the WCB in our working careers, and certainly, as I suggested, whether or not we've ever been involved in a claim, there is the unfortunate reality that we all might be. Were that to be the case, we would certainly hope that the legislation in place would do its utmost to protect the worker and not necessarily the employer. For that reason, I will be voting against this bill when the time comes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments.

Seeing none, anyone else wish to participate in the debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 8
Personal Information Protection
Amendment Act, 2005**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, the bill was pretty much housekeeping amendments, although there were a few questions in there, so just a short note on some explanations, and I would like to provide the further explanation on the amendment respecting health information.

In Alberta we have a comprehensive framework for privacy protection that applies to personal information in both the public and private sectors. Because of the special character of health information, Alberta also has a separate Health Information Act, that applies to the health information in both the public sector, which is the hospitals, and the private sector, which is the physicians. What this amendment does is carve out a body of information, health information that is covered by the Health Information Act, and make it clear that PIPA does not apply to that information.

At the same time, the amendment makes it clear that PIPA does apply to any health-related information that is not covered by the Health Information Act. For example, PIPA covers health-related information in an organization's personnel files, medical information requested by an insurance company in Alberta to issue a policy, and records of a psychologist providing privately paid services.

The Minister of Health and Wellness agrees to this amendment. The amendment ensures that there are no gaps in privacy protection, that there are clear rules as to which act applies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's always a healthy process when information access and privacy protection laws are reviewed and revised. The process is sometimes long and arduous, yet it results in greater awareness of these laws, and it assists us as legislators as well as public servants to become more informed and aware of the legislation too. Such amendments should also improve the legislation, especially if there is an opportunity for public and corporate input. I therefore wish to commend the government in bringing this forward.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I want to turn to some points of the proposed amendments that have been brought to my attention. Amendment 2, regarding section 4(3)(f), replaces what was previously a vague statement with a more specific one that establishes an order of paramouncy between two pieces of legislation; namely, that the provincial information and privacy act does not apply where the Health Information Act does apply. This jurisdictional issue between the two acts is better clarified here.

In amendment 2, regarding 4(3)(m) and (n), adding the constituency offices and associations is a good idea. I believe there was a case under our provincial FOIP Act, freedom of information and privacy protection, where an MLA's correspondence and financial records were requested, and the information requested was in the member's legislative office and the constituency office. There was some question as to whether the material stored in these offices was subject to the FOIP Act's section 4(1)(q)(ii). The ruling concluded that information in the custody of an MLA includes information in these offices. Now, most of the records being sought were not considered subject to the act, yet the Information and Privacy Commissioner interpreted that records in the legislative and constituency offices fell under the custody and control of an MLA

and were, therefore, under the act. That ruling by the commissioner gave section 4(1)(q)(ii) quite a broad scope.

Mr. Chairman, criticisms are sometimes made of judges, commissioners, and other nonelected officials making laws when they are, in fact, only doing the job the lawmakers gave them. It is important that we as legislators not hide behind such officials, leaving them to do the work and criticizing them for taking stands on matters on which we may not be prepared to commit ourselves. By clarifying the scope of coverage and specifically including legislative and constituency offices under the act, we are committing ourselves in accord with the earlier finding of our Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Whether we choose to act in support of rulings by officials, as this amendment does, or to overrule or correct these, as the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View proposed last Monday in a letter to the local newspaper, in both cases we are fulfilling our mandate as responsible legislators. This closer integration of legislative, executive, and administrative functions is a characteristic of our parliamentary tradition by contrast with that of the separation of powers practised by our sister democracy to the south. For this to work, we as legislators must be prepared to be responsible not only to our constituents but to each other to oversee the direction of government.

Mr. Chairman, responsible government as it is now practised throughout the world was a Canadian innovation from the 1840s. Britain already had parliamentary government, but British governments at that time were still often being led from an unelected upper House. Without an established aristocracy, Canada was the first country in the world to make her Executive Council responsible to a body of elected legislators.

If it seems that I have digressed into a discussion of our democratic heritage, it's not only because democratic renewal is dear to my heart. Most of the measures being proposed for democratic reform are imports from other systems that overlook the original strengths of our own system. Before we turn elsewhere for reform, I feel it is important that we utilize the means already available to us. We must commit to make the system work rather than simply work the system.

11:00

Greater use of private members' bills, such as we have been debating in this session, is one way to make our system work better. Another is the amendment before us, which confirms and strengthens the harmony between legislators, officials, and quasi-judicial bodies such as the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I am pleased therefore to speak in favour of this amendment with some of its points.

Another example of co-operation between different aspects of government, Mr. Chairman, is amendment 3 regarding section 43.1(1). This relates to common interests among provinces and between federal and provincial levels of government. Alberta's private-sector information legislation grew out of a federal initiative, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, which applied to all provinces until they enacted comparable legislation of their own. Alberta has now done so, yet the similarity with other regimes and other provinces and the fact that personal data crosses provincial boundaries points to the need for co-operation between jurisdictions. This is already taking place among the Information and Privacy Commissioners of Alberta, B.C., and the federal government.

The amendment regarding section 43.1(1) also deals with extraprovincial commissioners and refers to an information protection statute from the government of Canada or another province

which is similar. However, it does not provide criteria for determining this similarity. Does this depend on a federal view of what is similar, or is it up to the provinces? This is not clear from the amendment. Mr. Chairman, is the sponsor, the Member for Highwood, aware of this, and are there any measures being taken to clarify this by way of an amendment to this amendment?

Also, Mr. Chairman, section 43.1(2)(g) of the bill reads that "notwithstanding anything in section 41, [the commissioner may] disclose information for the purposes of exercising or performing any power, duty or function pursuant to clauses (a) to (f)." This does not state to whom the information may be disclosed. Is it to the extraprovincial commissioners? This may appear to be picayune, but I feel it better to err on the side of being overly precise on a matter that concerns disclosure of information.

It appears that the amendments in this bill relate primarily to matters of housekeeping. This is still important, for we must keep our house in order legally as well as financially and socially.

I am not pleased with the provision of amendment 6, section 63(1), to provide for an automatic review every three years, beginning July 1, 2006, and reporting within 18 months. I am proposing an amendment to this act which would strike out the proposed amendment 6 and retain the original section 63(1), which is a result of royal assent on December 4, 2003. I have the papers here for the amendment.

The Chair: We will refer to this amendment as amendment A1.

You may proceed.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Bill 8 amendment seeks to delay by a year the first review of the act by a special committee of the Legislative Assembly. The original required review was by July 1, 2005, eighteen months after coming into force on January 1, 2004. An amendment delays this first review until July 1, 2006. I am proposing an amendment to this act which would strike out that proposed section 6 and retain the original section 63(1), which is a result of royal assent on December 4, 2003.

Given rapid changes in technology, I believe that frequent review is a good thing. Innovations in biometrics such as the new radio frequency identity tags permit tracking of individuals who have received an injection. Such measures are being used experimentally in the U.S. on people entering the country as a response to possible terrorism. In addition, more established measures such as video surveillance cameras that do not record what is observed fall outside present privacy law. These are developments that need to be monitored regularly and closely.

Mr. Chairman, access to information and protection of privacy are twin foundations of our democratic and personal rights and freedoms. Without information citizens cannot return an informed verdict on government when they vote. Without assurance of the privacy of their persons and information they may not have the confidence to express themselves freely without fear of reprisals.

The need for recourse to legislation in these areas is not an intrusion by additional laws to regulate people's lives. It arises from the need to prevent intrusion into people's lives by an ensemble of sophisticated techniques beyond the reach of most citizens and to attempt a measure of transparency by those who have power – state power, corporate power, and technological power – in short, to balance the odds and ensure that those who have those means that others lack are subject to the rule of law. To the extent that the amending of this legislation is a means to that end and with agreement to my amendment, I'm happy to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Does anyone wish to speak on amendment A1 to Bill 8, the Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on the bill.

Mr. Backs: I just have a few issues here, and seeing the late hour I'd like to move adjournment of this bill for now. [interjection] Go ahead now? Okay.

I've got a number of questions, Mr. Chairman, on this . . .

The Chair: Have you withdrawn your motion to adjourn?

Mr. Backs: I withdraw the motion.

Some of these questions deal with the repeal of certain clauses in section 2 and the extension of where we go in this Personal Information Protection Amendment Act in terms of how this affects, for example, people in public offices such as service clubs or, say, for example, unions. I mean, a union like the provincial public employees union has tens of thousands of members and has a very extensive electoral process. Are they to be treated separately in their elections than somebody in a constituency association? There are a number of types of democratic organizations that are very, very important in our democracy. It does not just extend to parties in the political process or even municipalities and municipal politicians; it extends deep into the way our system is set up, and that's an important first question I'd like to see answered.

11:10

The Chair: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it quite clearly shows in the bill here that it's a registered constituency association, which would certainly pertain to a political nature such as we have here in the House. I know that it wouldn't cover the position that the hon. member is taking on the others.

Mr. Backs: Well, then, Mr. Chairman, I have some great difficulty with this because this bill does not allow for the full operation of democracy and, in fact, is biased as to what we do and only thinks as to what we do in the operation of political parties. I think that there's some significant cause for concern, and I think it's going to only be before us again in years to come because of people complaining about this particular extreme restriction of information that they will not be able to deal with in the same way that we deal with it. People should not be looking in our democracy at, I guess, people they see in the Legislature as being given a better deal on these types

of things than the rest of the types of elected bodies we have in our society.

There were some additional questions, but I really don't want to go on for too long. That's enough for tonight. Thank you.

Mr. Groeneveld: Mr. Chairman, I would like to remind the hon. member that this is strictly for clarification. It is not a change in the act per se as from the original part of the act.

[The clauses of Bill 8 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's been a very, very interesting and very productive evening, and I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 8, Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 8. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move in view of the hour that we adjourn and reconvene tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 11:16 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 12, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/04/12
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome.

Let us pray. Grant that we the members of our province's Legislature fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all of the people. Let us be guided by our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a long-time friend, a resident of the Stony Plain constituency, and a guest of this Assembly today, someone who needs very little introduction, a progressive Albertan who has served Albertans most of his life as an educator in our public school system and for the past 15 years as a member of this Assembly.

As an MLA Mr. Stan Woloshyn served Albertans as a private member, as the minister of public works, supply and services, as Minister of Community Development, and until his retirement in 2004 as minister of seniors. Mr. Woloshyn was an integral part of the Progressive Conservative government that positioned Alberta to enter our next hundred years debt free. Mr. Woloshyn is seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I ask that this outstanding Albertan stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am just delighted to introduce a young man, his class, his parents, and his teachers. His name is Levi Dibben, and his father works as the executive assistant for the Minister of Innovation and Science. He is accompanying today his teachers Mrs. Mair and Mr. Robertson and parent helpers Mrs. Sonnenberg; Mrs. Dibben, his mother; Mrs. Wells; Mr. Nowelselsky; Mr. Van Camp; Mrs. Robinson; Mrs. Chorney; and Mrs. Jamieson. They are members of the Lakeland Ridge public school community. They are two grade 6 classes, teachers, and parent helpers, and if they would rise now, please, and be given the warm welcome they so richly deserve.

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

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a class of 43 students from the Calgary French & International School. They are accompanied today by six adults: Grégoire Belland, Judi Poole, Marlene Wilson, Cecile Trigg, Robert Ward, Natasha Wosnock. They are seated, I believe, in both the members' and public galleries, and I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and

privilege to be able to introduce to you 24 people from Rosemary, Alberta. There are 17 grade 7 kids who are here with seven adults: Mr. David Blumell, Mr. Richard Hall, Don Plett, Brian Plett, Carol Reid, Phyllis King, and Chad Fika. I do want to bring attention to two things. First of all, these kids, who are actually just walking into the Assembly right now, two weeks ago shaved their heads and raised \$10,000 for one of their classmates who has cancer. The second point of interest: I talked to them and asked them how many of them I delivered as a family doctor, and I delivered eight of the 17. I would ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and pride to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly an instructor and students from Grant MacEwan's south campus in Edmonton-Mill Woods. Mr. David Kincade is a political science instructor and a fine researcher for the Official Opposition. He is accompanied by students Miss Andrea Pipke, Mr. Thomas Barr, and Mr. Marcus Durante. Would you please stand as I ask the Assembly to give you a warm welcome?

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

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Marcel and Bernice Desaulniers. Marcel and Bernice are the grandparents of Justin Laverty-Harrigan, who is one of our many hard-working pages. Among their many accomplishments Marcel and Bernice have been married for 52 years. I might point out that their grandson Justin did a great job of writing this out for me. I would ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two gentlemen who are seated in the members' gallery. They were here last month and enjoyed the proceedings so much that they're back again today to observe the proceedings once more. Mr. Joe Anglin is a resident of Rimbey, Alberta, and with him is Mr. Jim Graves, who was the NDP candidate in Lacombe-Ponoka in the last provincial election. I would ask them both to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of the Assembly three graduate students from the University of Alberta. They're currently engaged in a campaign to save Pembina Hall as a student residence. Some of you may have stayed in Pembina residence in your own student days. It's the third-oldest building on campus. The U of A is considering converting Pembina, a thriving academic and social community, from a residence into office space. This conversion would displace about 130 students, who were not consulted about the change and only informed about the impending decision just before final exams. They are Andrea Dalton, Meredith Kenzie, Bryan McKelvie. They are seated in the public gallery. I'll ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Dr. B. Miller: It is an honour for me, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to the House Bill Daly, a resident of the Edmonton-Glenora constituency. He calls himself a senior activist, but for me he is an important and valued researcher, providing statistical analyses of seniors' programs and health care in Alberta. I invite Bill, who I believe is in the members' gallery, to stand and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Smoke-free Places Legislation

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the Tory convention last weekend the huge majority of delegates voted for a province-wide workplace smoking ban. This contrasts dramatically with what we saw last week when this Tory government waded into private members' business to bring in watered-down amendments to the nonsmoking bill. What remains to be seen is whether this government's change of heart has anything to do with chief of staff Rod Love's former position as a paid lobbyist for the tobacco industry. To the Premier: given that Rod Love has strong ties to the tobacco industry, how can the Premier guarantee that the choice to water down this bill was not affected by financial concerns of big tobacco?

1:40

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that I have never, never, never been lobbied by tobacco companies or Rod Love on this particular issue.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the Premier: given that the majority of the Tory caucus itself voted to support the smoking ban after the second reading of Bill 201, will the Premier explain why, upon Rod Love's return to the Legislature after a month's absence, there was a sudden reversal on this vote on the smoking ban?

The Speaker: I'm not sure that, given the rules, that would be an appropriate question. An individual in this Assembly will vote his or her way or conscience, and I don't know how any member can control that.

The hon. leader. Third question.

Dr. Taft: Okay. Again to the Premier: given that members of the public have shown overwhelming support for a workplace smoking ban, will the Premier reconsider the decision to allow smoking in bars, casinos, and bingo halls and let the will of Albertans prevail?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, this bill is before the Assembly, and it's entirely up to the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus and members of the Liberal caucus and members of the ND caucus to debate the issue. I understand that it's at third reading now. It is before the Legislature, and it would be entirely inappropriate for me to address the issue at this particular time.

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

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The list of people raising serious

concerns about the operation of the Alberta Securities Commission has been joined by a prominent investor advocate from Ontario, Diane Urquhart, who raises worries about the blurring of policing functions and adjudicating functions at the commission. This controversy is becoming a national issue, and Alberta's role in Canada's capital markets is being tarnished. This is an opportunity for decisive leadership from this minister, not for dithering. To the Minister of Finance: given the information the minister now has, does she have full confidence that all is well in the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have not said at any point that all was well. In fact, I did suggest that there are some human resource issues at the commission, and they are being addressed. I have had word from the independent commissioners to say that they have engaged an external management company to deal with those issues.

I've received a copy of the letter from Ms Urquhart. I would agree fully with her that if a member has a conflict or information about enforcement proceedings, they should not be participating in hearings on the matter. I will also, when I reply to Ms Urquhart, make her aware that when this does occur, members excuse themselves from those hearings. Mr. Speaker, we also have a provision in our legislation that if there are a large number of our part-time commission members that may have a conflict in an issue, we have the ability to appoint people from the outside to sit on a particular matter, and I can assure the House that that would happen.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister, then: why does this minister continue to accept the word of the commission's part-time commissioners that there were no regulatory problems at the commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the House and the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the part-time commissioners derived their report from two separate reports provided to them by Mr. Mack. One was from the persons who brought forward complaints; the second was the review of those complaints. From those two reports the independent, part-time commissioners brought forward their findings to me. They did comment on some issues, human resource issues, and those are being dealt with, but they also stated very clearly that they believed the enforcement part of it was being handled even-handedly and fairly.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, I don't think she gets it.

To the same minister: given the growing voices of concern across the country, will the minister now follow the example set in Ontario when their Securities Commission faced controversy and call a full, genuinely independent inquiry into the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, if you have actual examples of enforcement issues, I would certainly deal with those. I don't mean one or two, given the number of files that are handled, because I think everyone understands that you can have those concerns. What I would be most concerned about is if people brought concerns forward and they were not dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, I think the person who doesn't get it is the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Travel by Elected Senators

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Electoral reform is a personal passion, but without any guarantee that the federal government would appoint Alberta's elected nominees to the Senate, this government wasted \$3 million on a senatorial election. Albertans responded to this ineffectual exercise by spoiling or declining 169,000 ballots. Now the government is planning to spend \$28,000 to reward the four nominees by sending them on an eastern Canada junket. To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: given that the \$3 million Senate elections have not forced the federal government into Senate reform, how is sinking even more dollars into this issue an efficient use of tax dollars?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, it's important for Albertans to understand that my ministry is dealing with efficiencies and restructuring inside itself, including corporate services and completing the build of the SuperNet. I have said from my first day as minister that my priority is to find efficiencies in my own department first and foremost, and as time goes by and we begin to assemble necessary resources, I will be happy to work with other ministries in these areas.

I actually believe that our Premier could answer this question.

Ms Pastoor: I think he's been cheating because my next question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, if I may, will this government institute a citizens' assembly for electoral reform as they have in B.C.?

Mr. Klein: There are no plans to do that, Mr. Speaker.

In response to the hon. member's first question and preamble \$28,000 is a drop in the bucket compared to the amount that was spent by the Senators-in-waiting back in 1990 or 1989, I believe, when they travelled. So \$28,000 is reasonable.

What they want to do is to explain to the rest of Canada that the government of Alberta remains committed to the democratic – democratic – ideals even though the Prime Minister has chosen to act undemocratically by not appointing Alberta's Senators-in-waiting, including Mr. Mitchell and, of course, one former member of this cabinet and another person: all good people. Well, sort of. But, Mr. Speaker, we will not abandon our support for democracy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: based on what you've just said, sir, if this government really wants meaningful, democratic reform, why does it keep stonewalling the Liberal opposition's great ideas like a lobbyist registry and fixed election dates?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, a lobbyist registry. I would remind the hon. member that her leader has no problems whatsoever finding out who's lobbying government. He asks a question every single day, so why would we need a registry?

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

1:50 Government Chartered Air Travel

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that this is a government of high fliers who like to flit across the country on the public dime. During the question periods of March 7 and 8 the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation committed to quickly making public the information dealing with this govern-

ment's chartering of private jets and aircraft. Over five weeks have passed, and guess what? The minister has yet to make good on this commitment. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Why is it taking so long to massage the chartered aircraft records, resulting in these records still not being tabled more than five weeks after the minister promised to do so?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say thank you to the hon. member for asking me a question when my students from Rosemary are here. I do very much appreciate that. The reason for this is that we actually do a lot of charters, and what we are doing is going through and taking out all of the personal phone numbers and personal information. I would anticipate that that will be done very quickly. The point of the question at the particular time had to do with seven or eight charters, but in reality the number of charters that we have is very, very extensive, whether it's for firefighting, whether it's for whatever. So all of these things will be tabled in the Legislature as promised as soon as the private information has been taken out consistent with the FOIP legislation.

Mr. Mason: The minister knows we're dealing with government use of aircraft.

When will the minister stop stonewalling by making public the promised information detailing the cost, frequency, and who flew where and when on government chartered jets and planes? What are you hiding?

Dr. Oberg: Actually, Mr. Speaker, we're hiding nothing. I would remind the hon. member that firefighters and members of government as well as the staff of government are the government of Alberta. It's critical to the running of the province of Alberta.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, can the minister specify exactly when this information will be brought forward given that the last time we asked him, five weeks ago, he said then that it would be quickly?

Dr. Oberg: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's researcher has been calling our office about each and every day, maybe every other day, to get this information, and we have told them essentially the same answers. This certainly will be brought forward as soon as we can do it. I would certainly hope that it would be within the next one or two weeks, and that's the time frame that we're aiming for. As soon as it's here, though, Mr. Speaker, through to the hon. member, it will be passed on and tabled in this Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Chiropractic and Physiotherapy Insurance Fees

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last October the government brought in reforms to the private passenger auto insurance system that included a streamlined approach to treating injuries. In the context of these reforms the government has set the fees that physical therapists and chiropractors can charge insurers for treating people injured in collisions. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Why has the government set treatment fees for these practitioners?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the process for setting those fees was consultation between the auto industry and the professional

organizations, but they were unable to come to an agreement or a conclusion, so government did in this case set those fees.

Mr. Rodney: Supplementary again to the same minister: does this action reduce the treatment available to Albertans who are injured in automobile collisions?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it absolutely does not reduce the treatment available. There is some reduction in the fees paid, but I would say that those fees are still very much in line with the Workers' Compensation Board fees, with the fees that the health authorities pay, and they are among the highest in Canada.

Mr. Rodney: My final question is again to the same minister. Will the savings that result from these fee reductions pad the profits of big insurance companies?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, no, Mr. Speaker. Actually, when you reduce the costs, you reduce the fees. At least, that is the way the marketplace works. So we expect that these savings will be passed on directly to the consumer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Arts Funding

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently in the arts community there have been rumours that there is a real risk of funding cuts from the Alberta government. The implication for Visual Arts Alberta is evident: without a sufficient budget this organization will be unable to support the flourishing Alberta arts community. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. Given that Visual Arts Alberta was created by this government to respond to the needs of individual artists, is this government planning to eliminate Visual Arts Alberta and bring funding for artists back under the direction of this government?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I say this with the greatest respect to the hon. member, who is new to this House. He knows or ought to know that matters such as the budget are properly dealt with on budget day, which will be tomorrow.

With respect to the balance of his question, however, Mr. Speaker, the arts: I'm glad that he acknowledges that they are a flourishing and important part of the province of Alberta, and this government places a great deal of emphasis on supporting them. With respect to the specifics of his question about the quantum that will be in the budget for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, I leave that till tomorrow.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: given that the government created these organizations, why after five years are they dismantling this one?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, there have been examples over the years where there has been an evolution with respect to the umbrella organizations that deal with the arts. At one time there were groups set up by the government to deal with the performing arts, the visual arts, the literary arts, and so on. Generally speaking, now they are all under the umbrella of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. That was a decision that was taken some number of years ago, I believe back in about 1994. The reason for that is because we wished to protect the funding in support of the arts, but we wanted to reduce

the administration costs. Obviously, there were administration costs associated with running three or four organizations as opposed to one. That's the reason why it was done, sir.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: given that Alberta is celebrating the contributions of the artistic community this centennial, will this government commit to continued support for these dedicated organizations?

Mr. Mar: Oh, indeed, Mr. Speaker, there is much to celebrate. The hon. member and members of the House should know that, for example, on the 28th of April some 600 performing artists, culinary artists, visual artists, and writers are all going to Ottawa as part of a national arts celebration called Alberta Scene. The provincial government in collaboration with the federal government has supported this program. It will be Alberta's gift of culture to the rest of the nation at the venue of the National Arts Centre among others.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the hon. member acknowledges that during the centennial year celebration of the arts is an important part of the centennial celebration, that the centennial is in part about understanding where we've come from, where we are, and what we aspire to be as expressed through our arts and culture.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Emergency Hospital Services

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health care budget has increased significantly over the last 10 years, far exceeding the inflation and growth rates during that same period. By and large our health care system is a good one, but one common complaint that we hear from Albertans is that they are not entirely happy with the service provided in emergency departments. My first question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Have there been any studies conducted regarding the amount of funding that is spent on emergency service and the level of service that is provided?

2:00

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in December the Health Quality Council did in fact identify the services in emergency rooms as being something that we should look at, but I'm not aware of any other studies that were conducted on this.

However, I'd like to make a comment. Last year the Capital health authority treated over 435,000 patients, and in Calgary over 360,000 patients were treated during the same period. At least half of the patients in either location waited two to three hours for a bed. So we are improving, but we still have work to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question is also to the same minister. Would the minister encourage regional health authorities to deploy additional staff to assist patients in emergency waiting areas?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, one of the programs that we're doing is a program that's done in conjunction with St. John Ambulance, and that is work with volunteers that are talked about or identified as Friends of the Emergency Room. In both Calgary and Edmonton these volunteers in this project, assisted by Alberta Health and Wellness, are trained to help families receive support while they're in the emergency room. The volunteers are giving extra comforting

presence in the emergency rooms in centres like the Royal Alex and in the Foothills medical centre in Calgary. I've been in emergency rooms in my tenure as minister, and I can see the benefit that they're bringing today, for example, at the University of Alberta. These volunteers are guiding people and giving them a sense of calmness, and I think it is providing additional support for the patients.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pham: Thank you. My last question is also directed to the same minister. Could the minister ask the regional health authorities to provide more non-emergency clinics during holidays and after hours to reduce stress on emergency departments?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the first solution that I'd like to raise is the Health Link in Alberta, which is providing some service relief. Some 800,000 calls a year are being alleviated from the emergency rooms because they are going straight through to Health Link, and qualified nurses are providing them with advice.

Beyond that, our new local primary care initiatives are having great success in identifying ways for patients to access the system earlier. Health teams there are providing support, and we hope by the end of this year to have at a minimum at least a dozen of these types of services available to give non-urgent service, thereby alleviating the congestion in wait rooms in emergency departments.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

School Closures

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government continues to fail Alberta parents and students who require sustainable public education. Its actions demonstrate that it cares more about the bottom line than students, parents, and the communities they live in. Given that the Valhalla school in Peace River and the Sangudo high school and the Bruderheim school have avoided closures, my question to the Minister of Education: will the minister support a moratorium on public school closures until such time as the new utilization formula, one that could save these schools, is developed?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I really have to take some exception to the preamble in that sentence because I don't think the school system or the government funding for the school system is failing anyone in this province. I'm very surprised to hear the hon. member opposite suggest that there is something wrong with the fact that we provide the highest per capita funding, the highest per student funding, and have on average the highest paid teachers in the whole country. I don't think that's failing the system at all.

Now, that having been said, with respect to the second part of the question, there were reasons why the school boards in the case of Sangudo and Bruderheim and Valhalla and perhaps other places made the decisions they did, and there are equally so reasons why, I believe, the Edmonton public school board is pursuing its options with regard to the cluster studies that they are studying, and that includes the school that you've referenced.

Mr. Flaherty: The highest dropout rate.

To the same minister: is the plan to give school boards more flexibility in these decisions, and are these decisions an attempt to off-load responsibility for closures onto school boards rather than the government?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, as the new member will come to learn very soon, these school trustees are elected and have that responsibility. They have that authority, and they're exercising that.

Now, specific to the utilization rate that was asked about earlier, it's true that from time to time you have to evaluate the particular guidelines and policies that we as a government pass on to our trustees to follow and adhere to. To my knowledge that has been done in this particular case, and it will continue to be done. Those are local decisions, up to the local boards to make.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the government's current policy will almost certainly force additional Edmonton schools to close, can the minister tell us today how many additional schools he's prepared to see close in the name of the bottom line?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I won't fault the hon. member for his newness to the system, but what I would like to point out to him is that the government of Alberta does not make decisions to close schools. Those are decisions made by locally elected trustees, who have the responsibility to be responsible to their particular electors. The point is that as you come to learn how that system works, perhaps the questions could be pointed in the proper direction.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Snowmobile Use on Public Lands

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Mr. Minister, with regard to the Petty Trespass Act could you please clarify what public use is allowed for snowmobiles on public lands?

Mr. Couffts: First of all, we need to advise the hon. member that the Petty Trespass Act focuses on private land and not public land. Holders of agricultural dispositions must provide reasonable access to recreation users under the recreation access regulation, Mr. Speaker, and this legislation allows for penalizing or removing of people who violate that, up to \$2,000 if they're on an agricultural lease without permission. The department expects our agricultural leaseholders and our recreation users to work together to enjoy public lands in a way that does not interfere with the use that has already been decided upon for that land. For unoccupied public lands the department supports responsible motorized recreation use of public lands, including recreational snowmobiling.

The Speaker: As there was an interjection when the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition asked his second question today, there will be one now as well. I refer hon. members to *Beauchesne*, section 408: "Questions should . . . not require an answer involving a legal opinion."

Proceed, hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the minister: how does this apply to lands under FMAs, or forest management agreements?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much. This is an important question. And thank you for the guidance, Mr. Speaker. Recreational users, including snowmobilers, can access forest management agreement areas and lands where there are trails that are integrated with a forestry use. In fact, this is a condition, Mr. Speaker, that every forest management agreement holder must have. I'd like to add that a number of our forest management agreement holders are already working with recreational trail users to make sure that that integrated trail system that I mentioned is in operation and for the enjoyment of everyone. That's what we expect under the department.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: can you share with the House any efforts your department is pursuing toward building a trail network on public lands that would assist this growing industry and popular outdoor pastime?

Mr. Coutts: A wide variety of recreational trails, of opportunities already exists in Alberta today, but we must look at the future. We manage high-traffic snowmobile trails on public lands through access management agreements and programs such as integrated management agreements as our approach to making clear guidelines on how trails should be managed and should be opened for snowmobiling and the recreation of all Albertans. This approach is working well, we feel, in Alberta, but as plans are being completed, it could work better, and as people want to leisure on the land, we will work with our off-highway vehicle community and with other stakeholders with an interest in public land to develop a framework for a trail management system, which will be part of our land legacy for the 21st century.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

2:10

School Closures

(continued)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Responsibility for public school closures falls squarely on this Progressive Conservative government's shoulders. They have demonstrated poor planning and an unwillingness to provide the necessary resources needed to keep central Edmonton schools like Strathearn, Wellington, North Edmonton, and Terrace Heights open and vital. The threatened closures will undermine students' educational experiences and weaken mature and thriving communities. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Given that there are over 30 – 35 to be exact – public schools within the public school district of Edmonton that could be deemed eligible for closure, which Edmonton neighbourhoods are the next victims of this government's public school closure policy?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, what an awful way to look at the school system, as if to suggest that there are victims out there. My God. And to level that comment toward the Edmonton public school board is particularly ridiculous because here we have a school system that is revered and respected throughout North America for having some of the best delivery programs anywhere. I will not stand here and allow this member to belittle what so many excellent teachers and excellent administrators are doing so well to uphold. That is just ridiculous.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is also to the Minister of Education. Given that this Progressive Conservative government recently spent \$3.2 million renovating Terrace Heights public school, why is this government now forcing that school to be closed? It's a waste of money.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me explain this again very slowly. We have a group of individuals out in the community who are elected to serve as trustees. They comprise what we refer to as a school board. In fact, we have two members in the gallery today from Calgary public. Mr. Gordon Dirks, welcome, and Dr. Brendan Croskery, welcome as well. I'm sure they're following with great interest this false line of questioning.

It's not the government of Alberta who initiates school closures. In fact, one of the most difficult decisions that any school board has is to look at declining enrolments, to look at increasing costs, and to try to balance and manage the two. It's been going on in this province for almost a hundred years, and I suspect that that particular style and that particular formula will need to continue because there has to be a way to rejuvenate and at the same time refresh. That's part of the process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that shifting students to other schools may drive utilization rates at the receiving schools, including Kenilworth junior high, beyond 100 per cent of capacity, is it this Progressive Conservative government's policy that increased use of portable trailers as permanent classrooms is part of the Alberta education system and policy?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, portables, add-ons, and now modules are all part of the education system, part of the capital infrastructure of the education system. I think it has to be remembered that tens of millions of dollars have been put forward in capital infrastructure over the last many years. I'm sure there will be more money coming as those needs arise. Portables work extremely well in some areas.

But now as you look at new school construction and you look at the type of life that a school would have after its normal life expectancy is over or the use for which it was initially created is over, it's important to look at what kind of new modules and modular systems are going to be designed for maximizing the use of that building after its life expectancy as a school, and that's what's happening, in fact.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Travel by Elected Senators

(continued)

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Conservative government, no doubt to placate the firewall crowd, has decided to send its four Senators-in-waiting on a taxpayer-funded junket across the country. The purpose is apparently to sell the people of Canada on the dubious merits of electing people until age 75 rather than appointing them until age 75 to an otherwise unreformed Canadian Senate. My question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. After spending millions of dollars in last November's election farce, tens of thousands more sending wannabe Senators on a cross-country junket, can't the government at least try to find more efficient ways to waste taxpayers' dollars than that?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I think the appropriate minister should answer that question. If the intergovernmental affairs minister would like to take that, it's all up to him.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was in 1905 when the province of Alberta was incorporated. It wasn't until 1929 that Alberta finally wrestled control of its natural resources from Ottawa. This is a just cause. We will continue on what we feel are the best interests to pursue on behalf of Albertans, and we're not going to roll over and surrender to Ottawa on this issue.

Mr. Eggen: Back to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, please: in the interests of improving government efficiency and saving taxpayers' money, why doesn't the minister undertake to fully recover from the provincial PC and Alliance parties the cost of these cross-country trips since only those parties even bothered to contest the election farce last November?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I have said this time and time again: what my ministry is all about right now is about finding efficiencies, what's happening within this government, not chasing around the countryside after other people.

Mr. Eggen: To the same minister: will he please try to explain to the Assembly whether funding a cross-country junket by wannabe Senators will make the Conservative government more efficient by filling up government planes, or will it make the Conservative government less efficient by wasting taxpayers' money?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm going to say that I think this belongs to a different ministry. If he would like to stand up and answer the question, he may.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the four Senators-in-waiting, the nominees, met with myself and our people in the department, and also working along on the file is our Member for Foothills-Rocky View. One of the tasks of the Senators-in-waiting is to not only talk to other provinces but also to travel to those provinces where they have been invited to speak with respect to Senate reform, to bring that information back to the Premier. One of the major tasks of the Council of the Federation, at the meeting that will be held here in Banff and hosted by the Premier, will be this whole issue of institutional reform.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to roll over and die on a very important issue, because this is in the best interests of the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Crop Production Insurance Changes

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two years later and the fallout from BSE continues to affect Alberta's agriculture industry. The impact has not only been felt in the livestock industry but by Alberta crop producers. I understand that some of the Alberta crop producers are really contemplating and challenged by how they're going to seed their crops this year let alone have enough money for insurance to protect themselves against low prices and/or weather

conditions. My question is to the minister of agriculture, if I may. What is the minister doing to help producers with these skyrocketing costs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member brings up a very important point. Our producers are experiencing some very difficult times, the perfect storm, if you will, of low commodity prices, high input costs, a difficulty that is going to be difficult to overcome. But we've announced today that we're lowering the producers' share of one of the production insurance options, and that's the spring price endorsement option. We're lowering that from 50 per cent to 30 per cent, and I think that's a valuable tool for our producers to enter into and participate in risk management. Aside from that, we've had a lot of questions about CAIS in this House. We have fast-tracked a number of those payments, and I expect that many of those payments are going to be out before the end of this month for sure on the 2003.

We've dealt with the snowed-under crops, Mr. Speaker, which was another issue that was hurting our crop industry up in the north, and we're working on making some changes. We're making some changes to the CAIS program and will continue.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The deadline is two weeks away. Is the minister going to be able to put the program in place in time for this crop year?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. The program is effective immediately, and we do encourage the producers to make their election. As the hon. member mentioned, the deadline is April 30 for them to do so, but the program which we've instituted and I've announced today is effective immediately.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental is to the same minister. Given that production insurance is not the only input cost that producers face, what is the minister going to do to reduce other costs such as fuel?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of the other things that we just spoke about, we recognize that fuel is an input cost, and it's a very high input cost given the price of oil and fuel in the marketplace today. We do have the Alberta farm fuel distribution allowance, which is a credit to producers of 6 cents per litre discount on diesel in Alberta.

Alberta farmers and their counterparts in every province in Canada continue to pay a federal fuel tax of 10 cents per litre on gas and 4 cents per litre on diesel. As short a period ago as yesterday I was impressing upon the federal minister of agriculture that, really, perhaps they should follow suit with what Alberta has done and give those tax dollars back to producers.

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

Edmonton Remand Centre

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not a new revelation that the Edmonton Remand Centre is hopelessly overcrowded. The

government knows this, yet they refuse to solve the problem. This negligence has led to the terrible incident of two men being raped by the same inmate while under the care of this government. My questions are to the Solicitor General. Given that the remand centre was built for 288 inmates but now houses at least twice that, what is the government doing to address the serious overcrowding that has led to the practice of double-bunking?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, that is a very good question. The first incident happened in April of 2003, the second happening in February of 2004, where the Edmonton Police Service investigated the incident and an inmate was charged with sexual assault. The safety of inmates is our top priority, and it's our policy to segregate known sexual predators. The second incident happened as a result of human error, and disciplinary action was taken against one of the staff members.

Mr. Speaker, double-bunking in correctional facilities is not unique in Alberta. In fact, it's not unique throughout all of North America, where double bunks are placed into the rooms. These are not hotels. These are corrections facilities for criminals.

Dr. B. Miller: Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: given the victimization of two men under the government's care in a remand centre waiting for trial, will the government live up to its responsibilities and provide long-term financial and emotional assistance to these two people?

Mr. Cernaiko: Mr. Speaker, while inmates are in custody, they are provided with rehabilitative programs to provide them with the assistance they may need to get back on the street again once their sentence is completed. As well, our ministry is looking at long-term capital funding programs in order to look at a new facility for the Edmonton Remand Centre as well as an extension to the Calgary Remand Centre.

Dr. B. Miller: Again to the same minister: why has this government not addressed these Third World conditions that threaten the health and safety of not only inmates but the guards who work there as well?

Mr. Cernaiko: Mr. Speaker, with the rise in gang activity and organized crime within our own facilities, we are reaching maximum capacity, but the issue is, again, that double-bunking is the norm in North America both throughout Canada and the United States. We want to ensure that our inmates are safe but, as well, that the guards are provided with the security they need to ensure their safety.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Energy Efficiency at the University of Calgary

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The University of Calgary announced a partnership with Direct Energy Business Services that will yield \$38 million in student and research support and energy savings. As the single largest user of energy in the city the U of C is showing tremendous leadership by combining support for students with energy-saving initiatives. My first question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Can the minister tell this Assembly what his department is doing with regard to energy savings in government facilities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had the opportunity of attending the announcement that was made with the University of Calgary and Direct Energy, and it was very, very exciting. In essence, what is going to be occurring is that over the next seven years there are going to be savings of roughly \$30 million in energy costs. The University of Calgary is going to be taking all of their business to the LEED silver level, which is leadership in energy and environmental design. They will be taking their buildings to that particular level. That will allow them to receive \$30 million in savings that they can put into student activities. They've done a tremendous amount of work on the LED light bulb, and they will be utilizing that to a large degree in their research.

Mr. Speaker, in our own facilities we are also stressing energy saving, and it's been said in this particular Assembly numerous times that 90 per cent of our energy right now is green energy. We're working with buildings to ensure that we can also get to the LEED silver level.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. To the same minister: what is your department doing to address the long-term challenges of energy consumption in public buildings?

Ms Blakeman: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: A point of order on this question.
The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the public buildings there's an awful lot that can be done. We did have some programs with regard to schools which showed that energy savings could be occurring within the next seven to 10 years. We're currently looking at all of our government buildings to ensure that the energy utilized is at the lowest amount possible.

Mr. Speaker, quite simply, what we're talking about here is the word that's on everyone's mind these days, which is sustainability. We're talking about sustainability and energy utilization for our buildings. This is incredibly important for the environment, and that's why we're doing it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. My second supplemental is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Is there a scholarship component to this partnership between Direct Energy and the University of Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, indeed, there is a part of the agreement which involves a \$3.5 million scholarship fund which Direct Energy will provide. It's to be used across the University of Calgary faculties to enhance student access over the next several years. This is a good addition to the \$45 million in scholarships and research grants that the University of Calgary already gives out each year, \$8 million of which comes from the Alberta government. I'd also note that about \$1.75 million will be directed toward a chair in sustainable energy.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great example of how the private sector can work together with our postsecondary institutions to ensure that we have enhanced access and enhanced quality. Direct Energy, like so

many other Alberta companies, is looking ahead to the future and seeing the importance of investing in postsecondary education in this province.

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

Student Finance System

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in question period the Minister of Advanced Education indicated that it's okay for a students' union to provide supplementary financial assistance for students for emergencies. This year 693 U of A students have received over \$1.1 million in aid from their students' union, or on average \$1,800 each. That's some emergency. To the minister: what kind of so-called great student finance system, as he referred to it yesterday, requires hundreds of students a year to rely on the charity of their fellow students like something out of a Dickens novel?

2:30

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the hon. member talk to his colleague from Lethbridge-East about the great student finance system that she and I served on with the Students Finance Board a number of years ago. We served on a Students Finance Board that helped to develop and continue the finest student finance system in this country.

The student finance system that we have provides assistance, and it provides maintenance assistance grants for those students who need supplementary assistance over and above what loans might logically provide. In a first year students going to university who need more assistance than the Canada student loan and who reach the threshold level get a student loan benefit, which is essentially a grant. Then we provide loans for the following three years of the first degree that a student might take. Then, Mr. Speaker, upon completion of the program a remission program, where virtually all of the money that's provided by the provincial student finance from Alberta coffers gets remitted, doesn't have to be paid back, and Alberta students end up with the lowest – the lowest – debt of any students across this country. It is a great student finance system.

Mr. Taylor: Eighteen hundred dollars each, Mr. Speaker.

To the same minister: if, as he claimed yesterday, the amount given out . . . [interjections]

An Hon. Member: We're cheering for you.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you. Thank you. Try the veal.

If as he claimed yesterday . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, the television camera is on the Speaker, not on the hon. member. Proceed.

Mr. Taylor: This wasn't done with the TV cameras in mind, Mr. Speaker.

If, as he claimed yesterday, the amount given out by the loan program takes into account tuition fees and is adjusted annually, why does tuition now eat up about twice as much of the maximum allowable loan as it did when the Conservatives last went through a leadership change?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the time reference that the hon. member used is totally irrelevant, as he knows. The question really is: are there sufficient resources available to ensure that finances are

not a barrier to a student getting an education in this province? We've committed to an affordability review to make sure that finances are not a barrier to a student getting an education.

In fact, we have a very good student finance system, but that does not mean that more work does not need to be done to ensure that people understand how they can access resources, that they know that the cost of getting an education, as much as it might be perceived to be, is still the best investment they could possibly make, and that the resources are there for them to finance that cost at whatever level it is.

Mr. Taylor: So, Mr. Speaker, I take it the minister admits that as good as he says that the student finance system is, it can be made better than it is today.

Mr. Hancock: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Of course it can be made better than it is today. We always strive to improve, to look to make this province a better place, to make sure that all Albertans have the opportunity to be the best they can be and that that opportunity is there and is seized by Albertans.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I will call upon the first of six hon. members to participate. In the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

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

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House two very honourable visitors that we have here today. First of all, we have the chief superintendent of the Calgary public school board, Dr. Brendan Croskery. Accompanying him is actually a former MLA and minister of social services from the Saskatchewan government, a trustee and chair of the Calgary board of education, Gordon Dirks. If they could stand and we could show our appreciation.

head:

Members' Statements

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Legislation

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I have a bill before this Assembly, Bill 202, a private member's bill, that can be addressed only on Mondays according to our procedures and only after written questions and motions for returns are dealt with. There are 50 written questions and motions for returns on the Order Paper sponsored by opposition members. I am issuing an invitation to the opposition today to help me realize the good work of Bill 202, to help me help the desperate families and teen addicts of this province, by responding positively to my request for unanimous consent each and every one of the remaining four Mondays between now and the end of the spring sitting, if needed, at 4 or 4:30 p.m. to ensure that my Bill 202 is addressed and has a fair chance of becoming one of the best, most helpful laws we could possibly pass this spring.

Mr. Speaker, today I received this photo album and a note from a parent who dropped off a petition, that I will table later this week. I have changed the names, but I would like to read this note to all my colleagues.

Dear Mary Anne,

This is my daughter Sara, my love. She is my heart. I want to thank you with all I am for helping us with Bill 202.

Along with the petitions, I would like you to have this little

album. It shows my daughter's progression with crystal meth. If you were here in front of me now, I would get on my knees and I would beg you: please don't give up. Please help us. I miss her so much. I love her so much. What would I do without my Sara, my love? Please don't give up.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all my colleagues in this House on both sides of the floor not to give up on Sara and the many others.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Crop Production Insurance Changes

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize some important changes to Alberta's production insurance programs that were announced today. Alberta producers continue to face hard times stemming from the BSE crisis and drought. Crop producers are dealing with both low commodity prices and high input costs this year. Many are struggling to even put seed in the ground this spring. It's around this time that producers make their risk management and seeding decisions for 2005, and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has taken steps to make price-risk programs more affordable for Alberta farmers.

To encourage as many producers as possible to participate in production insurance programs, the producer's share of the spring price endorsement, SPE, premium has dropped from 50 to 30 per cent. By enrolling in the SPE program, producers are automatically eligible for revenue insurance coverage at no additional cost. Benefits available under revenue insurance coverage increased today from 50 to 70 per cent. Both of these programs are designed to specifically address price risk, an important factor for producers facing increased costs.

Alberta's Agriculture Financial Services Corporation offers the most comprehensive suite of risk management tools in Canada. With these changes Alberta producers can protect themselves more affordably. The deadline for Alberta producers to purchase coverage is April 30. I encourage all Alberta producers to consider their risk management options and take the initiative to protect themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Definition of Marriage

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day for political freedom in Alberta and in Canada when a person is threatened with prosecution for criticizing government policy. I'm referring to the human rights complaint brought against Bishop Fred Henry for his public criticism of the federal Liberal's bill to authorize homosexual marriage. Rather than being charged with a hate speech crime, Bishop Henry should be celebrated for defending an institution that is essential to the well-being of children and, therefore, the very future of our society.

Traditional marriage is above all a child-rearing institution. Institutionalizing homosexual marriage would mean the deliberate creation of motherless children and fatherless children. Mr. Speaker, children have a right to both parents. Parents have a duty to meet that right, and if the Liberals legislate homosexual marriage, the law of Canada will be sending a false and destructive message: kids don't need both a mother and a father.

Mr. Speaker, opposition to homosexual marriage is not just based on religious belief. Abandoning the traditional institution of marriage would be contrary to the findings of an entire decade of social science research. This research shows that everything bad that can happen to a child in the 21st century – and we all know, as Mary Anne just alluded to, that there are a lot of bad things that can

happen – is statistically more likely to happen if both biological parents are not present.

2:40

Mr. Speaker, why would Canadians want to embark on such a massive social experiment, the consequences of which are unknown? The answer of course is: we don't. Two-thirds of Canadians oppose homosexual marriage.

No right is more fundamental to democracy than the right of the people to criticize government. I would like to congratulate our Premier for defending Bishop Henry despite the fact that Bishop Henry has not always been an outspoken defender of the Premier. The Premier did not say that he agreed with everything Bishop Henry said, but he defended the bishop's right to say it. This affirms the Anglo-Canadian tradition of liberty through full and public debate, and I urge all members of this House to spring to its defence.

Thank you.

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

Loretta Van Brabant

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a truly outstanding individual who teaches at St. Teresa Catholic school in the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. On March 22 of this year at a ceremony held in Ottawa Miss Loretta Van Brabant received the Prime Minister's award for teaching excellence. Teachers are selected for this award on the basis of achieving outstanding results with students, inspiring students to learn and to continue learning, and providing students with the skills and attitudes to succeed in a changing society and knowledge-based economy.

It is quite apparent upon reviewing the application package which was put forward on Miss Van Brabant's behalf that she not only meets but indeed exceeds all of these criteria. Now in her 34th year of a stellar career with the Edmonton Catholic school district, she continues to exhibit genuine love for, belief in, and respect for each child she teaches. Parents, colleagues, and students alike constantly applaud her efforts in exploring and embracing new approaches to teaching and learning. Like so many in her profession, Miss Van Brabant also somehow finds time to volunteer with the YMCA, her church, and various community and school endeavours, including running with and encouraging participation in St. Teresa's Running Club.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Jessica, a former grade 3 student of Miss Van Brabant, sums it up best when she says, "I know when I look back on my life, you will be one of the people that I will remember, who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself."

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating Loretta Van Brabant on her wonderful achievement.

Thank you.

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

Terry Fox

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a great Canadian. Once or twice in our lives someone special comes along who touches our heart, deepens our faith in people, and forever changes our perspective on life. Twenty-five years ago today Terry Fox dipped his foot into the Atlantic Ocean and began his marathon into Canadian history.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that Terry Fox was and

remains a special person to all of us. He touched many of us individually as he battled cancer during his run across Canada to raise funds for cancer research. The groundswell of financial and emotional support he gained has become legendary in our province, in our country, and around the world. Terry exhibited courage, selflessness, and compassion beyond his years, and his memory lives on in the hearts and minds of all Albertans and Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, on this very special occasion I would remind and encourage all members of this Assembly that the Terry Fox Marathon of Hope is not over. In fact, it has just begun as we continue to run for tomorrow, to run for hope, and to run for Terry.

Thank you.

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

Political Reform

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Canadians are rightfully appalled at the conduct of the Ottawa Liberals: kickbacks, threats, fraud, and of course massive campaign donations to the Liberal Party from corporations that received the money from the taxpayers.

Yesterday the Premier suggested that we have a higher ethical standard in Alberta. He offered no proof. Adscam was not uncovered by accident. It was uncovered by an Auditor General who is empowered by Parliament to co-operate with the Public Accounts Committee. Alberta's Auditor General is not similarly empowered by this Legislature. What we do have in Alberta is evidence of untendered contracts, ministers hiring their friends to produce no work, politicians and their friends jetting around in private planes on taxpayers' dimes, and Tory insiders moving around the political, corporate, and lobbyist worlds like a revolving door.

Ottawa's Adscam was also investigated by a Public Accounts Committee with real teeth and a full staff. We do not have that in Alberta. The chair of the federal Public Accounts Committee, Conservative MP John Williams, has criticized the way the Alberta Conservatives have weakened Alberta's public accounts process on several occasions. Alberta needs an all-party committee to closely examine how we can prevent scandal and corruption in our province. We need to look at a lobbyist registry so that Albertans know who is bending politicians' ears. We need to strengthen our Public Accounts Committee and its independence.

We also need real campaign finance reform. Since the sponsorship scandal, Ottawa has put a stop to corporations funnelling big money to their chums in political parties, but corporate money still funds Conservative and Liberal campaigns in this province. We need to follow the lead of the NDP government in Manitoba, where they have eliminated corporate and union donations to political parties. Alberta will not have a higher ethical standard until we eliminate big money from politics.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, today is a very important day in our history. Recognizing that it was in 1917 that Alberta became one of the first jurisdictions in the world to provide the franchise, the ballot, to women, it was some 48 years later on this day in 1965 that an act to amend the Election Act was assented to and came into force, allowing aboriginal people the right to vote in provincial elections.

head:

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition by 102 Albertans that says:

We . . . urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

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

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting a petition from 102 residents of Alberta asking the government of Alberta to

prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I rise today to table five copies of documents signed by 147 of your residents living in the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency. These citizens are requesting that the government implement changes to the Alberta Aids to Daily Living benefits schedule and have a custom-made breast prosthesis added to the schedule.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two letters to table today from Calgaryans who express considerable dissatisfaction with the government's stance on the Métis interim harvesting agreement. Mr. Kevin Klockow strongly questions the government's definition of subsistence and considers its position on the agreement "excessive and irresponsible."

Mr. Schwanky in his letter similarly labels the agreement "a disaster for wildlife management in Alberta."

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of six letters I have received from constituencies throughout the province expressing deep concern about our province's position on possibly opting out of the national child care strategy.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table two open letters protesting the dismissal of Don Hill, former host of the Wildrose Forum on CBC. First is a letter from Ted Woyillowicz, dated March 21 of this year, and it's addressed to Mr. Orchard, regional director for CBC.

The second is from Brian Staples, who writes on behalf of the Seniors' Action and Liaison Team, who has requested an in-person meeting with the CBC VP of communications.

Thank you.

2:50

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is from Nellie Samek, and she notes that she frequently hears the Premier saying that “our health care is very good and that he hears much praise and little complaint.” She begs to differ and outlines an episode that happened to her 79-year-old neighbour, in which she was sent home from the hospital with no support at home.

The second tabling is from a constituent, David Cournoyer, who is a student in a postsecondary education institution. He wishes to counteract the Premier’s notion that postsecondary education is well funded and gives a number of statistics and some personal notations to support that.

Thank you.

Point of Order

Urgency of Questions

The Speaker: On a point of order the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, the Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon during question period, during a question from the Member for Calgary-Bow directed at the minister of infrastructure around an announcement of a partnership between the University of Calgary and Direct Energy Business Services, I believe that the information that was being sought from the minister is readily available on websites and media releases.

I would argue, as I look at *Beauchesne* 409(5), that the question offered by the Member for Calgary-Bow does not meet the criteria of 409(5). That is:

The matter ought to be of some urgency. There must be some present value in seeking the information during the Question Period rather than through the Order Paper or through correspondence with the Minister or the department.

I would argue that the question today did not meet the bar that is set by 409(5). Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on the point of order.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m absolutely delighted to rise and respond to the allegations raised because, first of all, based on that standard, if that standard were to be applied, I would argue that virtually every question raised by the opposition today and every day would fall into it.

This particular question I’m delighted to respond to, and maybe the member herself would like to respond to it as well because it asks for information which is surely in the best interests of the public to know and is certainly current. As I understand the question that was asked, as I heard it, the question asked about what this government was doing about energy savings with respect to government facilities. By implication it asked how the announcement made with respect to the agreement between an energy-providing company and the University of Calgary, an institution which is obviously funded by public funds to a great extent, how it was able to save money and save energy and create – I heard in the answer talk about the LEED program. I don’t remember what the acronym stood for, but the hon. minister outlined that. Clearly, leadership and energy in environmental design – I guess that’s what it stands for – is certainly something of urgent and pressing necessity in this province and, indeed, across the country.

In fact, I’ve heard the members opposite on a day-to-day basis, not in this session but in other sessions, talk about issues such as Kyoto and how we can reduce greenhouse gases. Surely it’s important for Albertans to know when somebody makes a bold step forward by making an agreement between a private corporation and a public institution to reduce energy utilization. Surely that’s important to draw out and to say by implication how that sort of technology, how that sort of agreement could be extrapolated and provided further to other government buildings or facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on at length about how important that question was today, but I think I’ll stop there and afford us the opportunity to get on to the debate on other issues of importance to the public.

The Speaker: Are there other participants on this point of order?

Well, hon. members, I’m going to refer hon. members to *Beauchesne* 408, *Beauchesne* 409, all items within 409, actually – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, in raising a point of order, referred to 409(5); there are, in fact, 12 subsections in there – *Beauchesne* 410, *Beauchesne* 411. Quite frankly, if the chair would have enforced all the direct rules in here, I don’t think we’d have had a question period today.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 24

Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 11: Ms Pastoor]

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

Mr. Chase: Yes. I have concerns about the fatalities information act. My concern has to do with the availability of information that this act attempts to basically cover or hide. My concerns, that I brought out throughout my time here, have had to do with FOIP. I can understand the need to protect the privacy of victims of fatalities, but my concern has to do with how we protect that privacy. Is the protection of that privacy such that legitimate public inquiries from the press or from legal institutions are being prevented from occurring given these amendments? It seems to me that rather than creating greater transparency and accountability, we’re trying to once more cloak information.

I don’t believe in the notion of the term “ambulance chasing,” whereby a person gets access to a fatality file so that they can potentially gain money from the pursuit of that file. Like in *The Shipping News* I don’t believe either that the information should be graphically represented on the front pages of a publication or on TV. But there is a legitimacy to know how the fatality occurred, and if the fatality inquiry is behind closed doors, and either the public or the press, which is one of the instruments by which the public is provided with information, is prevented from having all the details of the inquiry, then justice is not being done.

Fatalities can be as a result of neglect. An example of a fatality and neglect might be the condition of roadways. I’ve had the misfortune of having to drive along a number of highways, typically the back-and-forth route that I take each week on highway 2, and the state of decline of these road surfaces is unbelievable given the fact that we’re Canada’s wealthiest per capita province. The government goes on at length about saying how we have the best health care system, the best education system. I question whether they’d be able to make those same statements about our roadways.

The inquiries are necessary. If you hide information or you withhold information, which is just another form of hiding it, then justice is not served. We need to know why people were killed. We need to know if the conditions of the roads were part of that fatality.

We need to know if signage was part of that fatality. A number of constituents of Calgary-Varsity have brought up the business of signage on semitrailers and their close proximity to the road and the distracting quality of these signs. They also question the safety and the enforcement by the government in terms of allowing these signs to be as close to the roadway as they are. We have examples of modern electronic signage where basically you're seeing large video screens on the edges of roadways, which are terrifically distracting. Later on I'll be proposing a motion with regard to cellphone use. All these things potentially contribute to fatalities, and if we don't know what all the contributing factors are when an inquiry is held, if that information is kept and it is not made public, then the public is not being served.

3:00

With regard to FOIP I have no trouble with the notion of FOIP being used to protect legitimate privacy, but when FOIP is used to just prevent information from being revealed, whether it be through the Public Accounts when we ask a particular minister to provide evidence of their travel credit card arrangements or we ask various members of that particular minister's entourage to provide that information. That is the type of information that should be available. When we ask, similarly, for information on flights and the reasons why certain members or nonmembers, as the case would be, were on that flight, that is no reason for the legitimacy of FOIP being used.

I have great concern that this fatality inquiry and the limiting of information in inquiries can potentially let people off the hook for their degree of contribution to the actual inquiry. My concern, again, is that without transparent availability of information in a timely manner following a fatality inquiry, information that is critical, that might be preventative in nature, will simply be swept under the rug because it will not be allowed to see the light of day.

I speak against this amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, but prior to that we do have Standing Order 29(2)(a) if anybody wants to participate.

Then, hon. member, proceed, please.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the question that has to be asked when we deal with legislation and this particular bill is: why is it coming forward? I've heard many times from the government and other people: we don't bring in legislation, unless we need it, for the sake of legislation. So there has to be an overriding reason for bringing in this legislation.

I think there was a quote – and I'm sure the minister will tell us if it's incorrect or not – that the goal of Bill 24 is to make fatality inquiries as efficient and effective as possible. But when we start dealing with issues dealing with the public, I sometimes worry about this idea of being efficient. There's a time for being efficient: when we're dealing with dollars and cents. I suppose being efficient would be not having Senators-in-waiting trotting all over the province, wasting taxpayers' money.

The point that I'm trying to make is that when you're dealing with a fatality inquiry, certainly the FOIP issues are there, but generally it's the public's right to know when we're dealing with these sorts of issues. I'm not sure that this is an area that we need to be particularly efficient at. What is more important is getting to the

truth, and when we get to the truth of a fatality inquiry, perhaps then that leads to changes that could be made so these types of circumstances don't happen in the future.

I'm not sure that our fatality inquiry process was that open to begin with, but it seems to be a move now to hide more, if I can put it that way, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this bill is going to make it not as open as fatality inquiries are now, and I don't believe it's going to be as open as it needs to be to protect the public's interests. This is the key: the public's interest. It seems that the minister wants to restrict the evidence that the media can see on behalf of the public and also take steps to make sure that the media are not present at closed portions of the hearings.

Now, there may be times when this is necessary, but already judges could do this without having to bring this into legislation. So we should be in a democratic society erring on the side of openness. We don't need this sort of legislation. If a judge in his opinion decides that we should go behind closed doors or that there are things that the public should not know, that judge can make that decision then. Why do we need to bring in legislation and close the process more than it is already?

The first amendment would put all documents filed at the inquiry off limits to the press unless a judge rules otherwise. Well, it seems to me that it should be the other way around. It should be open to the media and through the media to the public unless a judge determines otherwise, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that that's an assumption, that the media should have access unless a judge specifically rules against it. That makes more sense to me than closing the process and forcing the judge to go the other way for the public interest.

I think the minister's argument that a fatality inquiry often deals with sensitive documents such as medical records – fair enough. If that's the case, then FOIP. And a judge can do that. We don't need to set up legislation. It's just common sense. If there's something personal there that should not be out in an inquiry, they already have the authority to do this, Mr. Speaker.

The second amendment, to go on, Mr. Speaker, is aimed at restricting who can be named as interested persons. Well, I guess this is pretty obvious. In this case this is what I'd call the media legislation; we don't want the media there. Now, I know and we all know that sometimes we'd all rather deal behind closed doors. It's more comfortable not having the media there. But in a free society, in a democratic society that's the price we pay, and the media is a way that the public can be involved. Again, there should be a very good reason – a very good reason – and I haven't heard it yet, why the media should not be involved in this particular process.

I think that under the changes it says that only people with direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest in the death investigation inquiry would get standing in the closed portions of a hearing. Again, Mr. Speaker, I would leave this discretion with a judge. If there's a good reason, again, why there should be only certain people there and not the media, they can do that now. Why create legislation that seems to go against the idea of openness and the public's right to know? I would say that public access to fatality inquiries is only weakly protected now because a judge can already decide to go behind closed doors at his discretion. So why do we have to even make it worse? The judge already has that authority.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the third amendment, again along the same way, I guess, to control information, says that a fatality inquiry will no longer be mandatory in the death of someone in care unless the death relates to government care. Again, how do we know? There's an area there that we would not know whether it's government care or not.

I guess, you know, we can go through the whole bill amendment

by amendment, but I'm really, Mr. Speaker, at a loss to know why we need this legislation when I believe that we should always err on the side of openness, always err on the side of the right of the public to know, always err on the side of a free press. As I say, we already, I believe, have the protection. If a judge believes there's something that should not be public, should be behind closed doors, they already have that right.

I guess my question is – and I'd hope the minister would answer it. Efficiency is not a good reason here when we're dealing with the public's right to know. I mean, Mussolini made the trains run on time, but that didn't make him right, Mr. Speaker. He was very efficient. I think we have to be very, very careful if under the guise of efficiency we're taking away the right of the public to know.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, I guess, just in conclusion, I would hope that the minister would tell us in a little more forceful way than the bill why he thinks it is necessary to bring this in and to take away some of the rights that we expect. I think there has to be a better reason than at least I've been able to think of because we are, I think, going against democratic principles here to some degree. I honestly believe that there was protection before for the things that the minister was worried about without having this legislation. So I'd be interested if the minister somewhere along the way could at least give us some indication why he thinks this is so necessary, other than what we're dealing with in the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member if he thinks it would be prudent to have such time-honoured media institutions like the *National Enquirer* or Jerry Springer attend and ask questions at fatality inquiries.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I haven't really seen a keen interest for them to come to Alberta to check on our fatality inquiries. The point that I've made is that already we have the authority. If the judge says that because of the circumstances, FOIP or whatever – he can ban any media, whether it's Jerry Springer. Jerry Springer is running for the Democrats. You don't need to worry about him. He's gone. And I haven't seen the *National Enquirer* really jumping up and down to get to public inquiries here. I think that's irrelevant.

What I'm saying is that judges already have the authority to close on sensitive things. We do not need legislation. As a Conservative I wouldn't have thought you'd want all this extra legislation if it's unnecessary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, additional participants?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in my participation in this debate I am going to take a slightly different approach to this bill. I think one of the main reasons why we would have and why we would need a fatality inquiry is to assure the public that the government and the authorities are doing all they can and all that's in their power to protect human life. I don't think we're really talking about fatality investigations in cases which are not suspicious or for deaths which appear natural. What we are really discussing here is when the circumstances surrounding the death of a person are unnatural or extraordinary.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The legislation we're discussing is trying to limit access to, supposedly, public hearings. So why are we doing this again? It really puzzles me. Why is the government concerned, or what information might it be uncomfortable with if revealed? I can probably understand that if it's a situation like that unfortunate young person who fell down the elevator shaft, then maybe an investigation would reveal information that might make the government uncomfortable because he was in their custody or care. But like the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity said, we have fatality inquiries on highways and roads. So, I mean, the situation is totally different there.

I view fatality inquiries as almost a learning tool. They're almost educational, in a way, because they offer information that might prevent similar occurrences from happening again. They might be useful in allowing us to study our protocols. It might actually allow us to modify some of our practices to prevent similar situations from happening.

I don't support this bill, Mr. Speaker, because it clearly interferes with the level of transparency and accountability that we as the Official Opposition are advocating and fighting for. I don't think the government is only proposing to exclude media and news outlets. I think it's just a step amongst many to hinder or to interrupt the dissemination of information. It's also allowing a single judge to have enormous powers, and I don't think that that's the direction we should be going in this day and age.

Again I emphasize that information that is obtained from fatality inquiries is useful and usually timely because we can actually use this to study and look at our own practices and protocols and modify them, with the utmost goal being to prevent such occurrences from happening again.

In closing, I think I share the sentiments that were voiced and expressed by my hon. colleague for Calgary-Varsity and similar ones which were previously expressed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who is the Official Opposition Justice critic. I think that as it is currently worded, I cannot support this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Is there anybody else who wishes to participate in the debate?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are three particular pieces within this legislation that I'm somewhat concerned with. Again, some of them have been mentioned by previous speakers.

Transparency. The bottom line with a public inquiry is to examine the circumstances around a fatality to increase the public awareness about the factors that put the public or those lives at risk. Our society places a high value on human life and death. The investigation with regard to the legislation does provide a mechanism whereby the categories or the deaths that appear to be unusual may be investigated as well as explained.

Currently, on page 10 of this bill it reads:

49(2) The following persons may appear at a public fatality inquiry either personally or through their legal counsel and may cross-examine witnesses and present arguments and submissions . . .

(d) any person who applies to the judge before or during the inquiry and is declared by the judge to be an interested person.

Right now, the proposed amendment to section 49 is designated to redefine the meaning of an interested party. Essentially, under the

new amendment judges may grant interested person status only if those parties have a direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest in the death or the investigation or the inquiry. The amendment will severely limit the participation of people or groups in a fatality inquiry unless they can show a direct relationship that the judge will accept in this particular case. That's concerning there.

Other references such as a jury have been struck by the amendment. There no longer are any provisions for a jury of six people to sit at a public inquiry that gives the recommendations to the minister. This provision is contrary to the principles of the fundamental justice of Canada. The provision of a jury has always been an integral part of the justice system. In this instance, a jury, the public, can listen to all the evidence presented and make recommendations as to what action could be taken in the future to prevent similar incidents. Why is this government not allowing the participation of a jury at public inquiries? That would be a first question. The second one would be: why does this government want to limit the participation of the public in a supposedly public inquiry?

If I move to page 7, the amendment in section 38 changes the powers of a single judge in a public fatality inquiry. Previously the judge had "all the powers of a commissioner appointed under the Public Inquiries Act." This has changed now in the amended section 38(1). A judge can only "engage the services of clerks, reporters and assistants to assist him or her in the inquiry." Previously under the Public Inquiries Act a judge could have had "[legal] counsel . . . experts, persons having special technical or other knowledge or any other qualified person to assist them in the inquiry." This change will severely impair the ability of a judge to obtain specific expertise to advise him or her. The new amendment will only allow for clerical support.

3:20

Another section also says that it's taking away the powers of a commissioner under the Public Inquiries Act, which changes the scope of the judge's power as well. Previously under the Public Inquiries Act in regard to evidence the commissioner could order the summoning of witnesses and documents that the commissioner considered "to be required for the full investigation of the matters into which the commissioner or commissioners are appointed to inquire." The new amendment changes the wording to "that the judge considers to be required for the purposes of the inquiry." It appears that this change in the wording from "full investigation" to "the purposes of the inquiry" limits the scope as to what can be investigated in the context of the inquiry. Again, there seems to be the necessary substantial and direct relationship to the inquiry that is driving the evidence that's being sought after.

The entire reason for the death investigations is to investigate and explain how deaths occurred if they're involving government or care incurred. How can it be prevented in the future? It is absolutely critical that the preservation of human life and a full understanding of how the death occurred is determined and what actions could be taken in the future to ensure that a similar incident does not occur. That was stated by the previous couple of members as well.

Additionally, there are elements of public accountability by the government that can be determined through a full, open, and transparent scrutiny of the operations of public institutions and agencies when a sudden or suspicious death occurs. We have already mentioned one with regard to where the young individual was in care awaiting trial and fell down the elevator shaft.

Bill 24 severely limits the scope of these investigations and is contrary to the principles of openness and accountability of the government. In the end, if the goal of the fatality inquiry is the prevention of future deaths, then why would there be any limits

placed on the scrutiny of the events leading up to and including the death?

The goal, again, of the fatality inquiry should not be to achieve efficiency, as the Justice minister has stated, but rather should be a full public debate on the evidence with full participation not only from the media but nongovernmental agencies who may be able to contribute to the process. That, in fact, would save lives in the future.

The Justice minister also stated that one group intended to be affected generally by this proposal is the media, and there were expressions as to why or why not that should be allowed. The role of the media is to report news. In our society, under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms a fundamental freedom under section 2(b) includes "freedom of the press and other media of communication." The statement of the intent of the bill to exclude the media from participation in fatality inquiries appears to run contrary to the fundamental freedoms. Oftentimes it's complained that the media is the one that drives the story instead of merely reports it, but again I would revert back to my last statement there, that it's a transparency that we seek to be able to provide and contribute to the process that would save lives and prevent future catastrophes from happening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

There being none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak on second reading of Bill 24, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005. A couple of points I'd like to raise – and perhaps I could ask the minister to respond in Committee of the Whole to the questions that I will raise – and some observations as well.

I think part of what's being discussed by the other speakers today is the fact that democracy is not efficient. It is a cumbersome, noisy, time-consuming, awkward process. Nonetheless, all of us in this Assembly profess to support it, uphold it, and try to perpetuate it. I think that a fatality inquiry is part of that process. So if I may, I believe that an attempt on behalf of the government to make a fatality inquiry efficient runs contrary to its position in our democracy. It is there to investigate the circumstances and to make recommendations, and part of that is to give it a public airing.

I'm reminded of the situation that is being raised repeatedly around police commissions and investigation of incidents involving police officers. What we're hearing increasingly from the public is that that needs to be a process where people outside of the affected police department are conducting the investigation, and there is some suggestion that, in fact, it be civilian oversight.

The reason for that, I think, is that when you get the final commentary on the investigation, what's needed is for everyone to feel that the questions were asked and answered and that whatever decision is reached, the individual is cleared or condemned, frankly. The situation we're experiencing with those investigations right now is that there's no satisfactory ending to it at all. Even if an officer's name is cleared, the public is tending not to believe that they're truly cleared, which is very unfair to the officer. Likewise, if they're not cleared, nobody quite knows what to do with that one either and wonders if it wasn't swept under the rug.

I think the same requirements of the public regarding those kinds of investigations and inquiries also need to be reflected here. I'm arguing that the government should not be attempting to make this more efficient. I think what's needed and the primary principle

under government support for a fatality inquiry is that it is an opportunity to examine all of the facts of the case and to make recommendations so that that incident does not ever happen again.

One of the issues that is most concerning me is this phrase that I keep seeing, that participation is prohibited unless they can show a direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest. My question to the minister is: where does the nonprofit advocacy sector fall in these categories? I will be very concerned if they are not allowed to participate in these inquiries, organizations like Elizabeth Fry or John Howard or Bosco Homes or any number of other agencies that work out in the community and are very aware of the circumstances and, in fact, can appear and shed light on what has happened or what's the norm or the standard or all kinds of other bits of information. I don't see them included in what is proposed here by the government.

If that is the case, then, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where the business sector gets standing but the nonprofit sector does not. I would ask the government to defend that because I think it's flat-out wrong, and I think it would be very wrong to be cutting out the nonprofit advocacy sector, the social service sector. I mean, there are a number of ones that potentially can be involved in a fatality inquiry. I would be very concerned if I see the government elevating the business sector above that of the nonprofit sector in being able to influence or participate in these fatality inquiries. I don't see why the business sector would be entitled to paramouncy in being able to participate here, and I would like to hear a full reasoning from the minister if that is the case.

Frankly, I'd like to hear from the minister why the business sector is included at all. I don't understand why they're in there. If you're going to have the business sector in there, then why don't you have, you know, religious institutions or faith communities? It's very suspicious to me that we have personal, legal, or business interests, but nothing else. I'm deeply suspicious about what's going on here, and I'd like to hear from the minister during Committee of the Whole on that.

The other issue is that an inquiry would not automatically be called if someone dies in care that is not directly government care. Well, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because what we've seen in this province in the last dozen years is a devolution and designation. Probably 50 per cent of the government programs that used to be run directly by the government have now been designated or contracted out to a number of agencies, public and private sector, in the community. They're still offering what is government service.

3:30

Let's take foster care. Well, the government doesn't really run foster care directly anymore. It contracts out to a variety of other agencies, which then in turn provide the foster care. They are expected to meet certain criteria, in fact all of the criteria that the government meets and in some cases even more. But that foster care is being delivered because the government needs to be delivering foster care.

What I'm hearing is that the government is now going to go: well, if somebody died in care that was designated by us but not directly run by us, we're not going to have a fatality inquiry. I'm looking for clarification around that because it's not clear in the legislation if that's what's intended here. What about if someone dies on First Nations land or under care of a First Nations agency? Is that considered, you know, distant enough from the government that they would not require a fatality inquiry?

I'm questioning very much what the intention is behind that because I would argue that for the most part those services are

essentially government services. The government has entered into an agreement that somebody outside of government will be contracted to provide the service. Nonetheless, it's still a service that the government is responsible for and is responsible to the people for. So on the one hand we see the government devolving itself out of the business of doing anything. They don't offer anything themselves anymore. It's all subcontracted out to the whole community. On the flip side, they're willing to pass legislation that is very restrictive of people's personal lives at the same time as the government is devolving itself out of provision of services. So I'm looking for clarification on that.

I'm aware that there has been some preparation running up to this bill. It did not pop out of the minister's head on a whim. There has been a project, and it looks like it began almost three years ago with a committee involving the Chief Medical Examiner, the MLA for Calgary-McCall, and members of Alberta Justice to review this. Was that report tabled in the Assembly? No, that report wasn't tabled in the Assembly. Well, that's interesting too, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask that the report be tabled in the Assembly if that's the rationale that's behind this proposed bill.

That's something that we see this government doing a lot. You know, there's money put into developing a committee, a review, a report. It's taxpayer dollars that support it, but the public never gets to see the report. It remains in the murk, in the shadow behind the scenes. I would argue that they paid for that report; they should see it. In fact, they should see it before they see legislation that is midwived by it, that springs forth from it. You know, I find that the public is much more interested if they get an opportunity to find out what's actually going on. I believe in the good, common sense of Albertans, and I think that we need to listen much more carefully to what they're telling us.

Again, I see a trend where we don't tell the public anything, and we don't show them the reports, and then we just whistle through the legislation as fast as possible. For the most part it's only the opposition members that speak to it – very few government members speak – and it just whistles through this Legislature sometimes in a week. The public never gets enough time to know that it's up and being debated, and if they wanted to give input to their MLA, they should get on the phone or on the e-mail or letter or drop by their office and give them some feedback on it. Often by the time that happens, the bill's done. It's passed third reading, and it may have had Royal Assent by then. I think that's problematic.

The other question that I had. There's nothing in the current act that required the release of the report from the inquiry, and I'm wondering if that has been addressed here.

Those are some of the issues that I am most troubled about with this proposed Bill 24, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005, and I'm very cautious about supporting it in principle at second reading. I would like to have the responses to my questions before I would be more supportive of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in second reading, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General to close debate.

Mr. Stevens: Question, please.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a second time]

Bill 36
Police Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 11: Ms Evans]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I want to make it extremely clear, when I talk about this Police Act, that I am in total support of the variety of police forces that operate throughout Alberta whether they be the RCMP, the various city police, the municipality volunteers. I do believe that on the whole policing in this province is wonderful, and I promise my support to the hon. minister that should he wish to increase the size of funding for any of the police forces throughout this province, I will be a champion of that consideration.

However, I do take exception to something the minister spoke of when we were last discussing this bill. The minister suggested that the public lacked the skills to carry out an investigation. I would suggest that while the police receive a great deal of training at various wonderful institutions such as Mount Royal College, that we hope to soon become Mount Royal university, there are a number of public individuals who have a whole variety of skills that would lead them to be qualified to understand and oversee police investigations.

We trust the public to become jurors, as was mentioned by a previous member. We select jury members who are capable and who aren't prejudiced and who we believe have the sufficient skills to rule on a variety of court cases. I think that we can find sufficiently intelligent and capable public-representing individuals to be on civilian oversight committees.

Also, like any other profession police can make mistakes. I don't want to dredge up a whole series of mistakes that have occurred, but we've had the Edmonton circumstance where it appeared that a variety of police officers were involved with a sting that was set up to potentially entrap a local politician and a local media member for whatever reason. In the process we've lost that particular police chief, and the investigation basically, I gather, is still ongoing and continues.

3:40

There are a number of situations of similar concern that have happened in Calgary. There is a whole series of incidents where mistaken identity or a mistaken address has taken place. I think it was two weeks ago that we had a mistaken identity circumstance where the individual was wrestled to the ground and handcuffed. A great amount of force was used, although this individual didn't offer any resistance, to secure the individual, and it turned out later on that it was the wrong individual. This is where civilian oversight committees I think come into play.

The whole idea of investigating oneself we have difficulties with. I mean, we had the example – and we've debated this, and we've brought it up as members of the opposition – about the Securities Commission basically investigating themselves. Likewise when the police investigate themselves. There is a lack of public participation. No one is above the law, including the police officers whose job it is to enforce that law.

A situation in Calgary. Another example of, basically, mistaken identity having to do with an individual of Spanish background who was mistakenly thought to have committed a crime. The photographs of that individual following his arrest – although I will admit that he did resist arrest, as I think I would rather be doing as well, this individual ended up being portrayed in the news, and the various bruising that had occurred on this individual were in my mind overdone. Yes, if the police suspect somebody, they have to secure

that individual. They have to protect themselves in the securing of the individual, but shots to the head and so on are questionable.

There have been situations where the use of force, I believe, has been justified. There was an example in Calgary where an officer was stabbed and hadn't immediately realized the extent of the puncture wound. He was just coming back from the stabbing, and he was filling out the information. It turned out that he had approximately an eight-centimetre piercing in his chest. There wasn't use of a gun, and there wasn't use of a great deal of force. Potentially, in retrospect, he would have kept himself from injury had he used more force.

There have been other examples where people have been held. I think we had an example recently in Edmonton where a chap had stabbed his wife and stabbed his mother-in-law and was ordered by the police, justifiably, to put down his weapon. When he didn't do that, he was shot. He posed a definite threat.

Another example occurred in Calgary where an individual with an ethnic background, who had previously caused a great deal of difficulty in his community in the apartment that he was living, stabbed a police officer. The result of that stabbing was that he was shot, but not before he had created a life-threatening situation for the individual involved who was trying to make the arrest.

So we have situations where force has been justifiably used. We have other situations where police expecting that they were either going to grow up or to investigate a potential drug sale scared the heck out of families by busting through their front door and securing senior members of the family and so on. I truly believe that if you have a civilian oversight committee, you get rid of the perception of the potential of hiding information. We have examples from Saskatchewan where we had outside individuals doing the investigation where it occurred that people – again, in this case it was First Nations individuals who had had a history of alcoholism or other run-ins with the police – were basically driven out of town, in the one case the young man driven out in a T-shirt without shoes and basically left to die.

We must have independent organizations who are willing to oversee police matters, and police organizations and justice organizations should have the same type of faith in these external monitoring, oversight committees that the police organizations want the public to have in them. The idea of, basically, the fox, no matter how clever that fox is, guarding the chickens: we must think, under the best and the most quality hopes and wishes, that the person could succumb to a personal interest. Therefore, I believe that civilian oversight committees are necessary.

We want to increase the transparency, the same type of transparency that we talked about in terms of fatality inquiries. This needs to be there. Terms have been used in terms of dictatorships, have often been referred to in quotes as "police states." We don't want to take away the powers of the police force to carry out their duties, and that is not what I am suggesting, but in every single organization there has to be sort of an external conscience, a secondary review to ensure that procedures were followed and that the best interests of the public are being maintained.

For that reason, I cannot support Bill 36 at this time. Possibly when some of my concerns are brought out later in the Committee of the Whole, I'll be more understanding, but at this point I believe that civilians are capable of overseeing committees, and they would add a degree of transparency and legitimacy if they were allowed to do so.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must admit feeling rather uncomfortable during that last speech, and I would ask your advice with regard to Standing Order 23(g) on sub judice perhaps for that hon. member and for some of us old-timers who might not remember exactly what we can comment on in this Chamber with respect to matters that might be, could be without our knowledge before the courts. So what I would request is that perhaps the chair consider providing us all with advice on sub judice because I must admit I felt very uncomfortable. I know that the hon. member is new, and I wouldn't want to see him get trapped into that sub judice thing either.

Thank you for that.

3:50

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, there's no point of order. He had a request that information be provided.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. But how do we discuss this act if everything is sub judice?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, under *Beauchesne* 508(3) "the convention applies to motions, references in debates, questions and supplementary questions, but does not apply to bills." So that's a clarification. However, if the hon. member wishes to have more discussion on this matter, the chair would be more than happy to arrange for one of the table officers to sit down and explain exactly what constitutes sub judice.

Mr. Herard: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to participate in the questions or comments?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as I didn't see the need for the last bill that we debated, I think there was great anticipation for this particular bill to be brought forward. It's been talked about for a long time. I think it goes without saying that there has been some disappointment expressed by most people about the bill. I think the terms I've heard are window dressing or not dealing with the problem.

It's a difficult issue, Mr. Speaker. Whether it be the RCMP or city police or police in smaller towns in Alberta, we know and especially were reminded very dramatically in Mayerthorpe what a difficult job they have. But I would say that this whole concept of the police investigating themselves does not do a service to the rank and file policeman because there is a perception and there is the idea that with the police investigating themselves – whether this is true or not, and probably in most cases it isn't true, but that perception is there – they're not going to get a fair hearing.

So Bill 36 has done, I think, what I'd call some minor tinkering, but we really haven't dealt with the crux of the matter, and that is: on certain investigations should it be done by the police or not? Now, I think Bill 36 opens the door slightly – and the minister, if it's not the case, will I'm sure let us know – to independent investigation of serious police wrongdoing. But – and this is a big but – it would be entirely at the discretion of the Solicitor General. Now, I know he's wise and all-knowing, Mr. Speaker, but it seems to me that that's too much power in the hands of the Solicitor General. Given that there's no agency being established to conduct such investigations, it seems like the status quo of the police investigating the police will continue.

Now, I know the minister says – there's probably some truth to

this, and I'm not quoting him directly – that the rationale is that some things are so complicated that have to do with police matters that civilians could not begin to do a lot of the investigations that they need to do. Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister sort of defeats that logic though. If the minister says that that's the case, that we need to have police investigating police because of the complications and they need the knowledge of what was going on, why then would we open the door to independent investigations of serious police misconduct in instances involving civilian death or injury? The Solicitor General still has authority. He's given himself authority to do that.

Well, it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that if it's too complicated to do routine matters, on the one hand, but the public can do it when called upon by the minister, there seems to be a leap of logic there. It seems to me that if we wanted to ensure independent inquiries in the serious cases that he's talking about, he should make them mandatory, not just an option for the minister, who from time to time may be facing his own political pressures.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we don't always have to reinvent the wheel. I know that in Alberta we think that everything here is done the best and that we can never learn from anybody else, but there are cases, and I would like to refer the minister – and I'm sure he's aware, but just for the Assembly – to an example we have, especially in Ontario, where they do have the commission, the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. That is not the police; it's civilians that do this.

What is the role of that commission? Well, they say, Mr. Speaker, that it's an "independent quasi-judicial agency," and it carries out a number of duties which are primarily . . . decision-making in nature.

These are things they do, Mr. Speaker, and this is civilians.

These include . . . appeals of police disciplinary penalties; adjudicating disputes between municipal councils and police service boards involving budget matters; conducting hearings into requests for the reduction, abolition, creation or amalgamation of police services; conducting investigations and inquiries into the conduct of chiefs of police, police officers and members of police services boards; determining the status of police service members; conducting reviews of local decisions relating to public complaints at the request of complainants; and, general enforcement relating to the adequacy and effectiveness of policing services.

In Ontario, police services and police services boards are ultimately accountable to the public through the Commission. The mandate and duties of the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services are set out in the Police Services Act. The Commission reports to the Solicitor General.

Now, I'd say, Mr. Speaker: there it is. It seems to work well in Ontario. There's not a perception that the police are investigating the police. The police live under it. Things go along. They still have the ultimate authority. They report to the Solicitor General.

What can they investigate?

The SIU is a civilian law enforcement agency with a consequence-based jurisdiction to conduct criminal investigations. The SIU investigates incidents involving the police and civilians that have resulted in a serious injury or death.

Complaints involving the conduct of police that do not involve a serious injury or death must be referred to the appropriate police services and other agencies.

So they've got a combination of ways to come at it. They still have control. The Solicitor General still has control. They also have a director and 40 civilian investigators, nonpolice officers.

The point I'd make is that there may be a time when both groups, the police investigating the police and this group of civilians investigating – probably 9 times out of 10 they might come to the same conclusions. But to the public – and this is an important point,

Mr. Speaker – if it's not the police investigating the police but an independent board, are you going to accept the results of that investigation more than you would if it's the police investigating the police?

4:00

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we're doing our police officers a favour by putting them in this position, where they're always being second-guessed when they're investigating themselves. I've never seen a case where people necessarily believed them. But if it's an independent board, like in Ontario, then it is seen to be independent. For the life of me I can't see why we didn't go in that direction. I thought for sure that discussions and this whole Overtime bar situation in Edmonton – and I know the minister had some quotes at the time about it. That would have been handled by this group. [interjections] Sure it would have. They have the broad powers to do that. It says that right in here. I'll show them across the way.

The point is: this is still going on. We don't know what happened there, and again with the police investigating the police, it's going to be suspect. I think the minister would agree that no matter what comes out of this, it's probably going to be suspect when that comes down anyhow.

The only reason, I understand, that the minister – and correct me; I'm sure he will in closing debate or in Committee of the Whole. Why are we afraid to go that extra route? The minister has allowed the option that he can appoint a civilian board if necessary on a serious matter. Why don't we just do it? Why don't we just do it, Mr. Speaker? We could get some civilians, and the police can be in an advisory role to them if it's something that has to do with investigations or whatever. I honestly say to the minister that this would be better for the police. It would enhance their reputation for the vast, vast majority of police, that are honest, hard-working people under very difficult circumstances. We are not doing them a favour by having them investigate themselves.

There's only one other point, Mr. Speaker, in the bill where we have some concerns, and that has to do with the constitutionality of the one-year proposal. I don't know. I don't pretend to be an expert in this whole area, but I'm sure the minister has had some advice. There have been some thoughts that the proposed amendments to the province's Police Act that put a one-year time limit on filing complaints against police, including possible indictable offences, violate the Constitution.

Now, this has come from, as I'm sure the minister is aware, a U of A law professor. That's a major concern. He makes the point that if there were some rogue police, if I can use that term, they could very easily intimidate somebody so that they wouldn't come forward in that year. I don't know how often that would happen. But the more important point – and I'm sure the minister would want this to be bulletproof constitutionally. Mr. Stribopoulos – I think that's the way it's said – has indicated that he believes that this probably violates the Constitution. I would like the minister to indicate if he has some concerns about that. If it is, then we don't want to bring in a bill that would cost us extra money going into a constitutional challenge.

Mr. Speaker, let me just conclude by saying that I just don't understand the reluctance. The minister has allowed himself the ability to appoint independent civilians to do this. Why don't we just do it and get it out of the way, like other provinces are doing, so that the police are not investigating the police?

Again, I stress that it is not good for the rank and file police when people do not believe that they're being treated fairly, and I think you'd be doing a favour by taking this and going the way the public

wants and almost everybody demands in saying that this should not be the case, that we should have civilian oversight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of Bill 36 is to bring in greater public accountability and civilian oversight of investigations into complaints against police officers in serious incidents involving police. In October 2000 the Minister of Justice and Attorney General appointed an MLA committee to conduct a public review of policing in Alberta. I am impressed with the process established by this committee in an effort to meet its purpose. The committee chose a three-pronged approach to the review: to solicit public and stakeholder submissions in response to a discussion paper, to review the findings of the police strategic vision project, and to consult with experts on issues arising from these submissions.

The police strategic vision project organized a police strategic vision project that brought a wide variety of stakeholders together to develop a long-range and strategic vision of policing. The findings of this project have proven a valuable resource to the review committee, and in fact its main themes form the structure of this report. The vision project identified three themes for the future of policing in Alberta: equitable policing, provincial leadership, and public oversight of policing.

The concern about oversight of policing, including responsiveness to provincial and local priorities as well as the investigation of complaints against the police, is also my concern. Public oversight is a huge thing. The major principles of public oversight can be summarized by the following. Police must be governed by transparent, objective public oversight free of undue political influence. This means they must have well-defined roles and responsibilities undertaken by informed citizens. That is essential for effective public oversight. Local police oversight must be by locally appointed and suitably trained citizenry. Credible internal investigations by police are a prerequisite to public trust and confidence.

In looking at local public oversight, three issues arise in relation to providing effective local oversight: the structure of local police commissions and the relationship to the municipal council, the provision of local public oversight in communities contracting for police service, and the provision of local citizen involvement in areas that do not provide their own policing.

The government policing plan and response to the MLA policing committee board was released March 26, 2004. One of the core themes of this report was the need for public oversight. Police must be governed by transparent, objective police oversight free of undue political influences.

I realize that civilian oversight already exists through various mechanisms, but the problem is that they are rather loose; specifically, commission selection, political interference at the municipal level, and so on. We need a visible component that would ensure public scrutiny. The idea of having a police committee everywhere there is an RCMP detachment is great, but I wonder about the cost and who would pay.

The new amendment fails to give teeth to civilian agencies in complaints against the police. It fails to provide the level of public oversight that has been called for in the wake of several incidents involving serious police misconduct and the messages that they got in all of the process that they have undertaken to determine what is needed.

Incidents such as these serious police misconduct allegations have seriously eroded the public's confidence in the Edmonton Police Service as well as police services across Alberta. In the wake of these high-profile incidents, there have been serious concerns about the effectiveness of the police conducting investigations into the misconduct of their members. These investigations are conducted without any public oversight and without any disclosure of all relevant information. Essentially, we are supposed to trust that the police are conducting themselves professionally and without bias, and I do believe that that is probably the case most of the time.

4:10

However, in order to restore the public's faith and confidence in the police, investigations and prosecutions of allegations of police wrongdoing should be conducted by a body with no connections to either the individual officer or officers who are at the heart of the complaint or to the police service of which those individuals are members. This is the only way to restore public confidence.

It is entirely appropriate that some aspects of police disciplinary action can be handled internally. The concern that I have is the investigation and handling of allegations of more serious forms of police misconduct which by their nature directly engage or have clear implications of a broader public interest. This will involve complaints and allegations which suggest criminal behaviour and those which, while not criminal in nature, nonetheless are more serious than the purely internal. These middle-ground concerns, falling between criminal and internal on a spectrum of seriousness, will most often involve public interest and concerns about police misconduct.

The investigation of complaints requires two crucial elements to be addressed. The first is the need for an actual independence and impartiality in order to ensure that the matter is being dealt with in accordance with established procedures and values. The second is the need to preserve the appearance of impartiality and objectivity so that the members of the public maintain confidence in the system and will not be left with the impression that bias, favouritism, or prejudice had an influence in the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential that more serious allegations of police misconduct ought not to be left to the police themselves but conducted by a separate public body not connected to or part of the service being scrutinized. This is crucial to ensuring that there is neither actual nor the appearance of bias in reaching the appropriate concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of a line in a book on ethics by Joseph Fletcher, that sometimes you have to go against your principles to do the right thing. I believe that this is one of those times. I and my colleagues do support greater police accountability and civilian oversight of complaints involving the police. We support them so much that we are opposing this amendment, which provides neither.

Our vote against this bill is a voice that can be heard in three ways. To the government, we are not prepared to dignify window-dressing measures with the support of this side of the Assembly. We would like to see substantive oversight measures, and if they had been included in this bill, we would have supported them.

To those who have experienced incidents that call for greater supervision of police, I want it known that our opposition to this bill is not because we were opposed to the original principles behind it. In its present form it fails to meet up to those principles.

Thirdly, to the members of our law enforcement agencies, I want to assure you that our misgivings about this bill do not translate into general misgivings about our police forces. On the contrary, our belief that greater safeguards are needed grows out of a belief and

conviction that our police forces can meet a standard set by raising the bar higher than this bill does. The police, too, need the level of protection that effective civilian oversight can provide.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure members of the policing community and of the public at large that I believe that it is possible to address the concerns of both without sacrificing the essential well-being of either. I and my colleagues are convinced that such substantial measures are possible. Until they are included, our support of token responses will be denied.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a bit of history. Sir Robert Peel is the founder of modern policing. Sir Robert Peel served as the British Home Secretary during the 1820s. It was an act for improving police in a nearby metropolis that passed through the British Parliament that resulted in the creation of the first law enforcement agency in modern history. The beliefs and principles of Sir Robert Peel are just as relevant and viable today as when they were first authored. In particular, of the two principles applied today, the first bullet would be that "the ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions." That certainly speaks today as it did in the 1820s.

The second one of the beliefs was that "police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police." In saying that, the police are "only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence."

These two principles, which should be at all times guidelines to the police in the process, seem to be that the focus of the police services has shifted from the intentions as outlined in the founding principles to becoming adversarial with the public. The only way to restore the public's faith and confidence in the police is to realize that the best way to police the effectiveness of their job was to work with them and through the public and not perpetuate the perception that the police are a separate entity and do not have any scrutiny to investigate the procedures, which was stated in Peel's principles. The police are dependent upon a public approval of the Police Act to perform their duties, as I stated earlier.

These are just a couple of quick sections I would highlight there. I think it is, in fact, pertinent that one of the ways to restore public confidence is to have an independent public body. We had a couple of highlight incidents, where there would be the police chief's son involved or where a high-speed chase involved the death of a young individual due to the police car racing through the intersection without the use of emergency lights or sirens – and that was on Yellowhead Trail and 124th Street – and the incident where a young man armed with a knife was shot, and I think the member from Calgary mentioned that as well. I think it's of interest here that the same officer was involved in both these incidents yet is still on active duty, I believe.

Again, these are certain questions that are raised in the mind of the public. Just exactly how impartial are these investigators when, in fact, they are investigating their own? I myself, if I had to investigate the integrity of someone I worked with for 18 years, known him to be a fine, upstanding citizen above all, holding the law in the utmost degree – suddenly I'm asked to investigate their whole

principles. I've worked alongside them 18 years. I certainly would have a hard time maybe being impartial.

Those are, again, some of the questions raised by the community. I think that just begs the reason even further as to why there need to be impartial, independent bodies to review and watch over on occasion the goings-on and the investigations into police matters.

Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Mr. Bonko: I would move that we adjourn debate, then, too.

The Acting Speaker: I guess, hon. member, your time had run out, so somebody else may have to move that. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. At this point I would like to move that we adjourn debate on second reading of Bill 36, Police Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 34 Insurance Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 6: Dr. Miller]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Bill 34, Insurance Amendment Act, 2005, I haven't spoken on, and it does a number of different things. It allows public insurers from neighbouring provinces to enter Alberta's competitive market, so Crown insurance companies from across the prairies are able now to move into Alberta. It outlines that insurance companies and Albertans are not entitled to sue the government for costs incurred from the government's auto insurance reforms. It outlines a three-step consumer dispute mechanism.

4:20

So these matters – and there are others in the bill – my colleagues have addressed from their perspective of expertise. But from my perspective as an Albertan, listening to my constituents, regardless of what our opinion is on allowing Crown insurers into Alberta from other provinces, this added competition does not deal with the fundamental problem, which is that the insurance industry is making a huge windfall in profits at our expense. I believe in extravagant generosity, especially when it is directed towards the poor and the needy. Why we're being so generous and allowing private insurance companies to make so much money at Albertans' expense I have no idea.

Ms Blakeman: They think they're needy.

Dr. B. Miller: They think they're needy.

Well, this is a huge issue for all Albertans. I remind us that in other provinces this single issue has almost brought down other provincial governments, especially in New Brunswick. I think that it's an issue that needs far more attention as we move along. This bill, of course, is trying to repair aspects of the whole policy of the Conservative government, and it doesn't basically deal with the fundamental issues.

I think that in Alberta all of us are concerned about the situation

of having to drive in this province. The expression "driving scared" comes to mind. We all take risks every day, but especially we take risks when we drive our cars. Automobile insurance is one part of a vast social security infrastructure that helps us to deal with the risks that we take, but more and more we're realizing how costly those risks are. I just refer to a definition which I came across by the Insurance Bureau of Canada in defining the risks that we face, that "insurance replaces uncertainty with a degree of certainty, providing financial peace of mind in a world filled with risk." But what consumers are beginning to realize more and more and beginning to wonder about is: how much security can we afford as our insurance rates keep going up and up?

Nothing in this bill addresses this fundamental issue of the high costs of insurance, not the allowing in of Crown insurers from other provinces, not the increasing of competition that will not address obscene profits that the insurance industry has developed and will not alleviate the anxieties of so many Albertans who are now driving scared.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would not support this. I hope that in the future we can move in a completely, totally different direction as our Alberta Liberal platform suggests, and that is to put into place public auto insurance, which provides the kind of stability, the kind of security that Albertans want.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

There being none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Interesting on Bill 34: instead of dealing with it, this is almost the triumph of ideology over common sense. We're trying to keep fixing little problems here because we refuse to take it seriously. This is an issue where people that drive need to have insurance. It's compulsory. So it's not sort of at the whims of the market. The reality is that that price can keep going up and up and up, and the working person driving the car is finding it harder and harder to be able to drive.

Mr. Speaker, I quote Larry Phillips from the Alberta Consumers' Association. He says that for some auto insurance is beyond reach. If the market cannot deliver a product that is needed, then there should be a public system. It's that simple. There should be a public system. The reality is that now we're trying to put all the leaks out. [interjection] If you want 29(2)(a), please get up; I'd love to have the debate with you after.

But the reality is simply this: now we're trying to fix all the problems. We froze it at the top levels, and now there are supposed to be rollbacks. I got a cheque for a dollar for my insurance. That makes no sense at all. This particular bill might create more problems because now we have Kingsway insurance, that's going to sue the government – we don't know where that's going to go – because of the freezes and the rollbacks and all the rest of it.

So it's just a terrible mess that has been created, Mr. Speaker. We can argue about the public insurance, and I'm glad that the Alberta Liberals have now adopted NDP policy positions because it's been brought in by NDP governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia. In almost all those cases the Liberals fought against it. That's a reality of what happened, and now here in Alberta they've decided that it's worth doing. But if you check the records, Liberal governments have fought against it. In fact, Dave Barrett, who brought it in, said that they brought it in and the Liberals there were deathly against it, and that's been true in every case.

But the reality is that it makes sense, Mr. Speaker. It makes sense,

and what makes sense should occur, but unfortunately with this government we get into this particular thing where: public has got to be bad; private is good. It's just that sort of simple-minded ideology that leads us to these particular problems. Having worked in it probably longer than some people here did, the private sector works well in the economic area where there's legitimate competition. It doesn't work well when we're dealing with human needs and when it's in a monopoly situation. That's why the public systems in the other three provinces are able to be significantly lower in most cases, and that's a reality. The government can't turn off their ideological blinders and get there, Mr. Speaker, and that's a reality.

All this is basically a smokescreen. How many public insurers operating in a different system care about coming into Alberta to sell insurance? Somehow that's going to create competition? They're not going to bother, Mr. Speaker. They have better things to do. This is just for the government to pretend – just to pretend – that there's competition. That's a reality. Then because of this bill, I worry about – and I don't know; I'm not a lawyer; the hon. Minister of Justice is and the House leader is – how serious the challenge by Kingsway insurance is. Is that going to cost us an arm and a leg of taxpayers' money defending that? I mean, this whole insurance thing by the government has been sort of a calamity of errors, Keystone Kops. We keep doing it back and back and back and keep getting in deeper and deeper and deeper.

The public knows. In going door to door, the people were angry about the insurance. They still are, and this doesn't solve anything at all. It's just, as I say, a smokescreen to pretend that there's some competition.

I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that the more dangerous part of this is that the insurance was frozen at the top levels, and the rollbacks are a joke, frankly. There are many people that are working people that have been finding it very difficult to go to work with insurance rates the way they are, and when that becomes a serious problem to people, it's time this government should do something about it. At the very minimum, the insurance profits, I believe, are up 12 and a half per cent. Even if they don't want to go to public insurance, they could have mandatorily rolled it back to that level. But then, of course, you get caught into rollbacks and insurance companies and Kingsway insurance and the rest of it.

4:30

There'll be a day, even in Alberta, when there will be public insurance because it is common sense, Mr. Speaker. It works well in three other provinces, and it would work well here. But we'll continue to try to throw the finger into the dyke and change it. We'll have another bill, I'm sure, next year to try to do something else with the insurance. So we'll wait and see what happens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak in second reading to Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005. I was quickly trying to review what my colleagues had said on the record so as not to repeat what they'd said. Obviously, there are some key themes that are coming forward that everybody shares a concern in.

One that I'm seeing coming forward around this bill is the rather unprecedented step, I think, that the government has taken to prohibit a particular company, obviously, from taking any kind of

legal action against the government. I'm really interested that the government would actually write that into legislation and is making such an effort and has really made this quite a big deal, put it on the marquee, so to speak. So they must be pretty worried about this case if they're now trying to make it impossible for this particular company to proceed.

I do join with others that have expressed concerns that this bill is not doing anything to address what the public have asked us to address around problems in the automobile insurance area. People, certainly during the election, made it very clear that they felt that the government had not acted as a good steward and in their best interests around provision of automobile insurance given that we have the government insisting and through laws saying that you must have certain kinds of automobile insurance. Well, if that's a law and everybody must have insurance, then it's also incumbent upon the government to make sure that that is accessible insurance and that it's reasonable and that the benefits that flow from it are reasonable. What people are feeling is that it's not accessible anymore and that the government through its insurance board, the one that reviewed all the applications and allowed increase after increase after increase after increase – I think there was an astonishing number, 34 of them or something, in a fairly restricted period of time that just made the automobile insurance rate go up and up and up and up.

Finally, people started to revolt, and the government had to do something. People argue that they didn't really do anything. The rates have not gone down. I mean, basically they froze the rates at the highest possible point. Now we have some sort of tinkering that's being done to flesh out and firm up that original Insurance Act, that came out in the fall of 2003.

They didn't address the major concerns that the public have with insurance in Alberta and are not looking at incorporating best practices from other places, so the very worst of all possible worlds in that they are allowing Crown insurers and other insurers into the province but not using any of the best practices that flow from that public insurance. A number of people have alluded to that. I mean, the whole point and why those are viewed as better systems than what we have is that, you know, it is stable, it is a lower price, and any savings that are realized are reinvested because it's a public system, publicly administered, and the public benefits from it. So we have the government inviting public insurers in to compete in a free market without using any of the best practices that are in fact embodied by the public insurers. I don't know what to call it. I'm reminded occasionally of – no, I'm not going there.

There are issues around the government removing accountability for its actions from these reforms. That in particular, I think, is addressing the issues around not allowing anyone to sue them over this, removing the ability to sue the government. That's very problematic.

I'm also noticing in here that once again we are devolving a serious chunk of the bill to decision-making through regulations or by the minister through an order in council. I always object to that because it makes it very difficult for the public or the business sector or the NGO sector or the media to follow what is happening. It also takes away the ability of constituents to get involved in the discussion. They come to their MLAs, they want their MLAs to bring their voice into this Assembly and make sure that their voices are heard here, and then they can read and see what their MLA said.

The process that the government favours is one of operating behind closed doors. We have government members saying: well, you know, I spoke to this. Really? Where's the *Hansard*? Where are the minutes? Your constituents can't tell. You may well have spoken to it behind closed doors, but there's no way to tell that, and there's no way for constituents to find what their MLA said and hold

them to account or hold them on their record. So whenever something is moved out of legislation or a choice made not to put it in legislation but to put it in regulations or designate the decision-making power to the minister, I have real problems.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. I'm not talking about micromanaging these things. That's not what I'm talking about. But I am talking about transparency and accountability in this overall decision-making. You know, I have no interest in having it in legislation as to whether it's 50 cents or 55 cents. That's not what I'm talking about, and people should be careful not to try and misconstrue that. But where we have decisions of an import that they're going to affect people's lives in a significant way, that should come before this Assembly and be debated. We should all be held accountable by people watching us and being able to review what we're doing through *Hansard* or the online audio or the video streaming.

I did have one question. I did specifically read the mover's comments, and he did not touch upon this. I'm wondering what the purpose is to section 8, which is allowing the government to impose terms or conditions on licences at any time it considers appropriate? What is being envisioned here? What are the circumstances that the government anticipates needing this section for? If I could get a couple of examples, because it's just not clear to me why you need it. If it can be explained why you need it, I may well be fine with it, but I'd like to know what's being anticipated here. So I'll leave that for the mover of the bill to answer at some point, I guess in committee.

Now, the other thing I notice is that a different section is making it mandatory that all Alberta insurers, whether that's for home or auto, public liability for the public sector, whatever, must be members of the General Insurance OmbudService. This is supposed to be part of the government's process to make consumers more able to access a dispute resolution process. That's very interesting for me because I've been noticing something else happening here.

My ties are very close with the nonprofit sector, also sometimes called public administration, and increasingly the rates have gone up as much or more for those agencies with their required insurance or insurance that they really have to have to operate. I mean, often you can't get a grant unless you can prove that you have adequate insurance, and, you know, if you're running a children's service in any way, you've got to have a certain kind of liability insurance. Anybody pretty much has to have public liability: if somebody trips on your sidewalk, you know, that sort of thing.

But the rates there have been going up at an astonishing amount, and increasingly this is becoming a major factor in operating expenses for the charitable/volunteer/public sectors. I am really concerned about that.

4:40

Now, it's not regulated specifically by this government, and this is the first time I've ever seen direct reference to it. So in now requiring that it come under this, I'm wondering if there will be any further requirements around nonautomobile insurance. Ultimately, the public looks to the government for consumer protection. We can all think of disasters that have happened. You know, the person is interviewed on the street by the television crew, and the person goes: "Where was the government? Why didn't the government have a rule that would have saved us from this?" Ultimately, people go: "I can't make this happen. I can't protect myself from this. My boss can't, my company can't, and my family can't. We look to the government to have consumer protection laws in place."

My concern is that the government has done nothing to regulate the amounts that are being charged to that nonprofit sector for their

liability insurance. Although they're not required by law to have it, they pretty much have to have it to operate. Let's not kid ourselves. In some cases the government itself is requiring that they have adequate insurance; to apply for grants, for example.

I'd like to see what the government is going to offer and what consumer protection is going to be negotiated or limits by the government around the insurance to the nonprofit sector. This is as simple as community leagues. I just saw an e-mail go by where somebody is going around and giving little talks to community leagues about, you know, how much insurance they've got to have. I remember that was a whole deal that happened last year, where the community leagues went to renew their insurance and they were all told: "Sorry. Your \$800 policy is now five grand." That's an astonishing amount of money for a little community league, that has a budget of \$3,000, to come up with. I mean, literally, their insurance premiums were larger than the money that they usually dealt with in an entire year. The \$800 had seemed reasonable for a building that's used infrequently in many cases. In other cases it's used very frequently, and their insurance would have been higher. That is a huge issue for those community leagues.

I'm wondering where that whole scenario is going to shake out. Now that the government is insisting through this section 18 that all kinds of insurance be included, what's the next step? And will the government consider that?

Those are the issues that I wanted to raise during second reading. I don't know that there's anything really bad in this bill, Mr. Speaker, but there's nothing really good in this bill either. The thing that's really bad is the prohibition against the opportunity to use the courts against being able to sue the government.

I know that in many cases the government needs to be protected so that it can move on. You often see in legislation that the minister, as long as he's doing his or her job, is protected from being sued. But that's not what's happening here. This appears to be a deliberate attempt to stymie a legitimate court proceeding. And it's retroactive, which is even more chilling, in my opinion, and seems to be staking a claim to be farther reaching in that nobody would be allowed to sue the government under any circumstances. I'm thinking that there's an echo of this coming up in that WCB bill, Bill 15. So that's starting to look like a theme.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to Bill 34 in second reading. I look forward to some answers back from the sponsoring member, and I look forward to continued debate in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A common element in this afternoon's bill discussions is self-regulation over public protection. Possibly a new insurance theme or an election slogan of the government members might be: trust us, you're in good hands within Alberta state. Unfortunately, that trust has to be earned, and just saying "trust us" isn't sufficient.

Basically, the insurance board was given a licence to print money by continuing to allow a whole series of insurance increases rolling one after the other. It's interesting that members of the insurance board, while there was no public representation on that insurance board – it was an in-house, self-regulated, we know best, and you can pay the highest kind of circumstance. Again, there was no internal watchdog. This government believes in the free-enterprise principle, and yet free enterprise is no longer free. It's becoming extremely costly for the average Albertan.

What we have in Alberta is a forced demand but a limited supply, and now the government is basically dictating or picking off which insurance companies they favour and threatening to remove the ability for others to sue the government over limiting their market share. So in one sense we've got free enterprise, and then we have slightly free enterprise.

Also, with this idea of increasing the number of potential insurance companies operating within the province and the suggestion of a limited degree of public insurance participation, this is an extremely false premise. Public insurance depends on a large market share in order to spread out the liability costs and the cost of the insurance to the user. It's interesting.

An hon. member next brought out the fact that in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and B.C. the notion of public insurance was first brought out, and to his, I guess, principled party members who had that public insurance foresight, where it had been introduced in these provinces despite government changeovers, they kept the principle. So regardless of whether it was an NDP invention originally or not, it was well received. This was a good example of wisdom that I would invite into this province regardless of who had the creative idea to come up with an umbrella that protects people. I guess that's a different insurance logo, so I won't go in that direction.

In terms of questions that I would have for Committee of the Whole answers, I believe that in this morning's discussion it was suggested that chiropractors were not necessarily consulted on the soft-tissue injury situation. I'm just wondering, again, if physiotherapists were consulted. There is a dentist who shares my constituency office professional building in Calgary-Varsity, who basically has found that he has been driven out of business because it appears that when it comes to soft-tissue injuries, dental associations haven't been consulted either.

4:50

I personally believe that this soft-tissue, basically, trade-off, which, in order to try and meet the superior rates of public insurance companies, traded off a person's right for compensation and a court challenge – I don't believe this will stand up to a constitutional challenge. I don't think any government has the right to limit a person's ability to seek proper remuneration in the event of an injury suffered at a second party's causing.

It was interesting this past weekend, on the soft-tissue concerns, Licia Corbella, an editor with the *Calgary Sun*, talked about a situation whereby she was forced to be off two months from her position with the *Sun* based on what appeared at first sight to be a soft-tissue injury. Basically what happened was that she was pushed off the road and ended up hitting a large pole and suffered great damage. At first it wasn't physically apparent, I guess, in the same way that some AISH recipients don't physically appear to be having difficulties. With soft-tissue injuries at the beginning you see a bruising, but you don't necessarily see the structural damage below that bruising.

What Licia pointed out was that this whole idea of capping insurance at \$4,000 doesn't begin to address the needs. Again, this is the government sort of interfering with the process, saying that we know best and that we'll determine what is an acceptable compensation. To the best of my knowledge, I don't believe that what constitutes a medical soft-tissue injury has even been determined by the college of physicians. They were involved in coming up with some kind of a definition; whereas, as I mentioned earlier, I don't believe chiropractors, physiotherapists, or dentists received the opportunity for input. Hopefully, the sponsor of this bill can tell me to what extent these other medical practitioners – their worth is recognized, but they don't appear to have had their advice sought.

If we're going to have a fair and just insurance system that Albertans can afford, then we have to either roll back the current exorbitant costs that were allowed to proceed without any supervision, or we have to truly have a public insurance system, not one that is, you know, sort of a contrivance, an appearance of extending competition but with the reality that public insurance is dependent on a large share of the market.

It wasn't just New Brunswick, where Bernard Lord had a great deal of difficulty. The same concern over public insurance affordability happened in Nova Scotia as well. It seems that the Maritimers realized that the public good was more important than any particular party's interpretation of what the public good was, and I'm hoping that within the next two years that same sort of realization will become more pervasive in this province.

With that, I thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Peace River to close debate.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and provide concluding remarks on the motion for second reading. During the discussion we've heard some pretty interesting comments here, much ado, I suppose, about public insurance. I'd like to point out to hon. members of the opposition that, in fact, public insurers from other provinces are interested in participating in Alberta and have indicated that, certainly Saskatchewan has.

I don't object to the discussion, though, because it provides some fascinating and occasionally amusing insight. I've learned some new terms, like competitive monopolies, for example, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to apologize right now to my economics professor because apparently I missed that day in university. We've also had an interesting discussion on just what is and what isn't Liberal Party policy, and perhaps we can get that clarified later on in the debate.

There were some serious questions that I would like to address. First of all, the all-comers rule not applying to commercial vehicles: that is true. The bill is designed so that the all-comers rule applies only to private passenger vehicles. The reason for that is: a commercial sector has access to the Facility Association, which is an insurer of last resort run by industry, and this allows insurance companies to specialize if they wish, increase their efficiencies.

With respect to section 8 – and I address specifically the question posed earlier by the Member for Edmonton-Centre – there was some confusion here on the opposition benches that the insurance contracts could be changed mid-term. That's not the case. The licence to operate could be changed mid-term. We do this with all sorts of companies, with pulp mills or any construction company, anybody that violates or demonstrates substandard performance with respect to regulations. Be they safety, environmental, reforestation, the government reserves the right to put restrictive terms upon their operating licences.

With respect to the insurance company, again, anybody that didn't meet the regulations, failing to have an amount of capital on hand or a failure to meet reporting requirements for example, could allow the government to put restrictive terms on their ability to operate mid-term. Previous to this act they were only allowed to do that upon renewal of the licence. So an insurance company that was demonstrating substandard performance, we couldn't modify their licence, so that was the intent of that clause.

There's a section in here that I'm fascinated that we got some negative comments from the opposition on, and that has to do with the unilateral right of the government to force rollbacks. First of all,

I don't think this government needs to take any lessons from the opposition on creating a business climate in this province. I think we've done a pretty good job on that. This is a consumer protection mechanism. It would come into effect when, in fact, there are excessive industry profits, and I don't know why the opposition would object to it.

I had a question at the back from the Member for Calgary-Varsity on who was consulted on the soft-tissue injury cap. I can't speak to that, Mr. Speaker, because that's not a part of this bill. It was dealt with in the last session of the Legislature.

Lastly, the questions with respect to clause 5. It was clearly the government's intention that any impacts of the insurance reform in the bill last session were tempered by decreased liability and injury caps, for example. The government's wisdom in this regard is borne out by the insurance industry profits and the further rollbacks that we're seeing now and will continue to see. Again, this was a consumer protection mechanism and, overall, has had the effect of lowering insurance rates, and we'll see rather more dramatic rates in the very near future. I would like to point out that this restriction proposed by clause 5 is not unprecedented and is not a violation of the rule of law.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my comments, and I call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a second time]

5:00 **Bill 38**
Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 7: Ms Evans]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased as the Official Opposition critic on Health and Wellness to rise and respond to the minister's comments in second reading of Bill 38, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005. Overall I'm supportive of this bill, in large part because it was arrived at as a negotiation, an open and respectful negotiation between the parties involved, specifically the Pharmacists Association, the College of Pharmacists, and the Department of Health and Wellness.

As the minister did point out, in fact, this is one of those things that this government gets into occasionally, where they pass an act, but then it doesn't get proclaimed, but then it gets rolled inside of the next one that comes along. In fact, the first version of this was in 1999, the Pharmacy and Drug Act, and it was not proclaimed because it needed to be reviewed. I'm not sure why that wasn't done before the bill came through the Assembly.

I've gone back and checked and, in fact, the Liberal caucus supported the original bill in 1999. We did raise a couple of issues. It was around the minister of health making regulations. Again, that making of regulations out of sight of public scrutiny always raises a problem with us. But this was specific to making regulations regarding designation of drugs not covered under the federal statutes in the various schedules. If I'm remembering correctly, that has to do with the government's delisting and the concerns around the government's increased delisting of drugs that would be covered under health care for Albertans.

We noted that it did not contemplate alternative medical practices at all. We noted that a number of the definitions were not in the bill. They were left to be defined by regulation. Again, concerns were raised there because that becomes a sort of movable target in how things progress. You know, if you can define it as a duck today but a bird tomorrow, that affects a fair amount, and that kind of

significant change should come back to the Assembly and be debated. That was what was in the '99 version, and we raised that concern at the time. I think a large concern for us was that the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association, as it was called then, was not completely satisfied with the bill.

[The Speaker in the chair]

So we move forward into 2005. We have jointly drafted amendments that are proposed in Bill 38 – happy, happy, joy, joy – and now we have a number of things that are involved in the 2005 version of the bill, which has got the '99 version rolled inside of it, specifically a broadening of the licence categories to include the facilities such as compounding and repackaging centres, mostly because although those existed in '99, not to the level that they do now. They're increasingly becoming a factor in distribution of pharmaceuticals, and there's a need to bring them in a little closer under the scrutiny and licensing requirements.

Creating an avenue of appeal and review if for some reason the registrar will not issue a licence to a pharmacy. Registering the drug wholesalers: very important. And a number of other clarifications and minor revisions that have arisen over the seven years, I guess, or six years.

Essentially, we're looking at Bill 38 aligning the Pharmacy and Drug Act with the Health Professions Act, and this whole thing, in my understanding, is a bit of a hand-in-hand endeavour. We've got the Pharmacy Act now, and the Health Professions Act will be coming along shortly, and then both will be proclaimed in the spring of 2006. That is my understanding from the minister.

My main reasons for supporting this are because it has the full support and knowledge and participation of the major stakeholders. Nothing is a significant shift away from what I would expect to see. It is giving pharmacists more ability to work with patients to modify drug therapy to meet the needs of the patients. This doesn't mean, you know, changing the prescription in major ways, from giving you an antidepressant to giving you a muscle relaxant, but indeed being able to work with the dosages.

I think many of us have experienced that, where we are given a drug, and it works, but it's more than we need or not enough, we think. It's all working fine, it's not enough to go back to the doctor about, but it just needs a minor adjustment. Before, what you'd have to do is go back to see the doctor and spend that time and, of course, another billing through, which is a cost to the health care system as a whole. So to be able to work with the pharmacist one on one is a good idea.

It leads into something that the Alberta Liberals have been promoting for some time and, in fact, is a major part of our health policy as developed by the previous critic for Health and Wellness, who's now the Leader of the Official Opposition. For those of you following along in *Hansard* or at home on live audio, this would be policy position 10, which is recommending that we "reshape the way we manage our health care workforce. This includes reducing doctors' roles as gatekeepers to the system, evaluating alternative systems of payment, and gathering better data to plan for future needs."

The way I've been putting that to explain it – and part of that is facilitated in this bill, Mr. Speaker – is that we need to move to the point where doctors are doing what only doctors can do. Right now we have doctors doing a number of other things that, in fact, other health professionals could be doing for them. The relationship between the pharmacist and the doctors is one where we require the doctor to do administrative paperwork kind of stuff. Someone else could be doing that. We spend all of this time and effort in years

and years of training for these doctors so that they can deal with these life-and-death situations and long-range health care and all of that, and then we have them involved in minutia, micromanagement that is not a good use of their time.

Since we've all just come out of an election, the obvious comparison is the candidate during an election. There are certain things that only the candidate can do, and everything else in the campaign is handled as much as possible by anyone else that can do the job, to save the candidate for what only they can do, which is those personal appearances and participation in forums and that kind of thing. That same principle needs to be applied to what we're doing with our health care professionals.

If one of our major problems is that we don't have enough doctors in the system to be able to deal with everybody, let's look carefully at what our doctors, in fact, are doing. If we've got them doing a whole bunch of other tasks that, in fact, could or should or already are being done by other health professionals, then let's take that off the doctors' plates so that they're freed up to do what only they can do.

I see here a facilitation in this bill of that concept, and I'm obviously approving and supportive of it, seeing as it's part of the Liberal opposition policy on health care overall. Specifically, how that's happening in this bill is that a prescription is being redefined to give those pharmacists the ability to work with the patients and modify the treatment.

What I'm interested in hearing from the mover of the bill or from the health minister is whether it is contemplated in this legislation or in legislation to come that there are more roles that the pharmacists could take on from doctors in order to free up the doctors' time and, therefore, improve patient access to doctors. In other words, is there more that could be done to empower or delegate to the pharmacists, who are also trained health professionals, and free up the doctors to do what only doctors can do? So I'm very supportive of what's happening there, and I think that's the direction that we need to be moving in as much as possible.

5:10

A couple of other things that have arisen as I looked quickly at this bill are around the institutional pharmacies. Now, that's basically the pharmacies that are in the hospitals and nursing homes. Some of them, not many though. They're in an institution already. This act is clarifying that for the purposes of administering or prescribing the drugs to people that live in institutions, they're not required to be licensed. They're outside the purview of the College of Pharmacists. But if they are going to dispense pharmaceuticals in the way that we think of a pharmacist – they're selling them, or it's going to people outside of living in the institution – then they must be licensed and fall under all of the requirements of that.

I am interested – and I will put these questions on the record. Why are the institutional pharmacies not required to be licensed even though they're dealing with those patients in the institutions? What's wrong with having those pharmacists covered under the requirements of the college? We say that it's important enough for all those other pharmacists to have to be covered under this and to fall under those rules and regulations, and they must do it. They must adhere to it. Why are you not making all pharmacists do that? That's my query on that one.

I guess that by comparison I could say: well, are there any other self-regulated professions in Alberta that have some members exempted from the regulations of their college or their regulation-making association? I'm not aware of that, and if this is the only exception, then I'm really interested in why it's the exception. Is the government aware of any other provinces or any other jurisdictions

where, in fact, they're allowing some members of the pharmacy profession to not be subject to regulations?

Just in closing, Mr. Speaker, the final thing that I'm not happy about is that the institutional pharmacies are not required to be a licensed pharmacy. Sorry; that's in section 5, which I've already put on the record at some length.

I am really interested when I see the government start to align with the health care policy that's already been outlined by the Alberta Liberals; as I say, our policy position 10, which is talking about managing the health care workforce. And there are a couple of others that apply specifically. Policy 22 is that we would have a more extensive public pharmacare program. This is not talking about enlarging pharmacare, but it's coming close. I would invite anyone to check that out on our website, liberalopposition.com, to see what we're advising the government to do.

So, overall, I'm expecting that this bill will have a fairly swift passage through the Assembly. I am overall supportive of it. A couple of questions I wanted to put on the record. I am very lucky, Mr. Speaker, to be in a caucus where there are a number of people with a great deal of background in health care both from the nonprofit advocacy sector but also a professional pharmacist. I am going to recognize that they probably have more direct experience in some cases and also opinions that they would like to get on the record in this second reading debate, and I am going to cede the floor to my colleagues.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, support the intention of this bill based on the consultation that preceded the writing up of the bill. I also very much appreciate incorporating best practice and all-party input. I think that if we're all on the same side, then obviously this is going to be a successful bill.

I have a concern that was brought up by the Edmonton-Centre MLA in terms of the licensing for institutional pharmacists. It brings up a situation that, unfortunately, occurred at the Foothills hospital where off-site drug preparation and the accompanying mix-up resulted in two tragic deaths. I'm hoping that potentially through this bill before that medication makes it onto the tray and then is served to the patient, all the safety checks have taken place, the patient's history has been clearly read, and they will be receiving the appropriate medication.

I have an appeal to the creator of this bill, and that has to do with the affordability of drugs. We're, again, fortunate in this province to have such oil and gas and natural resources, and I would like to see the government providing a larger drug coverage for individuals.

I want to very briefly talk about an individual who is a diabetic whose business is found in my constituency. Basically, he was attempting to self-medicate in the sense that he was trying to reduce the amount of insulin he required because it was of a special type and it was extremely expensive. In order not to suffer financial hardship for his family, he was putting himself at risk. I would like to think that within this province we could potentially help or subsidize the cost of specific medications, especially those of almost an exotic nature, but ones that have been approved in Canada for use.

Another situation that I'd briefly like to discuss is a constituency association meeting that took place in Calgary-Buffalo. At that particular meeting a former health minister was present, and he talked about a situation that I would like to take almost out of his hands. He felt that he was put into the position of approving costly

drug treatments and having to almost put on a balance the value of a single life and the cost that it would be to maintain that particular single life versus the good of the whole. The notion of having to balance human life and those kind of values – I don't think we should be putting ministers in that position of having to play almost a godlike role, and that's why I would like to see the government support and underwrite the cost of expensive but required drugs.

The last situation that I'd like to briefly mention is that if it appears that one other level of government is failing, then I'm hoping that the province will come in and help out in the case of an Alberta resident. Very recently we heard the case of the young First Nations individual who required a rather expensive medication, and it wasn't sure, even though First Nations provisions come under the federal government's responsibility, whether that individual was going to have his needs met. I would just like to suggest that I'm hoping that within this bill or amendments to it at some point the needs of Albertans, whether they be exotic special medication needs or needs that other governments are not covering, that we'll rise to look after their well-being, to meet their needs.

So I support this bill in principle. I just encourage the government to provide the kind of coverage, the generosity of treatment that individuals find themselves in, where the cost of drugs is prohibitive and the quality of their life is diminished because of these costs.

Thank you very much.

5:20

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Then I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as far as the bill goes, we will support it. I think there has been a discussion, and we recognize, as I'm sure the minister does, that this drug distribution process is extremely complex and includes far more than just pharmacies, and of course the wholesaling of drugs is a federal jurisdiction, and it's very difficult. In saying that, the bill goes in the right direction.

There are a couple of things from the bill that I'd like to say to the minister that perhaps could be looked at and may have to be worked out with the federal government. There are some things, provincially, that we can do. One bill coming up – I believe it's Bill 204 – is about controlling crystal meth, and of course the Member for Red Deer-North has talked about the other end of it, the treatment.

An interesting idea, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps the minister could comment on it, that the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors has recommended a way to deal with this, and they say that striking at the source – that is, by regulating bulk shippers of crystal meth inputs – is an effective way of combatting the crystal meth epidemic. Now, it may be that that's an easier way to come at it with the same intent as I think it was the Member for West Yellowhead in his private member's bill, to try to deal with this at that level. That might be a much more effective way to get at it. At least that's the suggestion they're making, and I think it's one that, perhaps, might be worth looking at. It probably needs some co-operation, I don't know, with the federal government or not, but if we could do that, I think that might have a bigger impact. So I'd leave that with the minister.

The other suggestion I might make – and of course it's been alluded to – is that the cost of drugs is one of the biggest driving forces of the higher costs for health care. I think it behooves all of us to take a look at what we can do. I think we can look at other jurisdictions, and perhaps this is something that the minister might

take a look at in another bill very soon. I'm talking about setting up a couple of things: bulk purchasing of prescription medication sold at pharmacies and used by health authorities. There's some evidence that that can lower prices by 6 to 10 per cent in the first couple of years. That's a significant saving.

Along with that, as has been done in other places, is a reference-based pricing strategy so that we can use the lower-cost options with equal health care options. We don't often do this. Sometimes drug manufacturers are presenting the most expensive ones to pharmacies. It seems to me that there are some ideas that this has worked relatively well. B.C. introduced a version of reference-based pricing in 1995. They believe they saved \$200 million in the program in the first five years, and they save \$44 million a year. New Zealand has achieved big savings since creating the Pharmaceutical Management Agency. They believe that their pharmaceutical expenditures have I think gone up by 3 per cent as compared to the OECD average of 14 per cent. So I think that there are things that we can look at in dealing with the drugs.

The other area – and I don't know if the minister has had time or is aware of it – is the whole idea of education on how prescriptions are being used. There was, I think, last week a two-part series on CBC especially about seniors and being overdrugged – this was across Canada, but I expect it would be in Alberta – to the point where they've got one set of prescriptions fighting against the other one. Some doctors actually said that it was probably creating unnecessary deaths. So I don't know how we deal with this. It's not an easy matter. It seems to me that we have to start to focus on education, this whole idea of education, and what we do especially with seniors. If that's the case, one prescription fighting against itself, this is a serious problem. It's costly, lives are being put at risk, and all the rest of it.

So I think that beyond this bill, which we will support, I would really like the minister to take a look at some of these suggestions that are coming with crystal meth and ways that we can do bulk buying, reference basing, and how we begin to deal especially with seniors. It's not just the seniors at nursing homes and that. This was talking about right across the board that this was happening. So I think that we need to take a serious look at this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. Hon. member, there's no conflict of interest with respect to this bill?

Mr. Elsalhy: No, I don't suppose there is, and I actually cleared it with the Ethics Commissioner, Mr. Speaker. We're not talking money. He clearly indicated that if it is a money bill, then I cannot contribute.

Mr. Speaker, I just need guidance. I want more than three minutes to talk about this, so can I move adjournment on the bill so it comes back later?

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that given, then, that we have two minutes left, I would move that we adjourn until 8 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 12, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 2005/04/12

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 25

Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005

[Debate adjourned March 21: Mr. Stevens]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in response to the mover of Bill 25, Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005. This bill proposes to amend the Provincial Court Act to add the provision that provincial court judges can retire and sit on a part-time basis. This amendment is the result of the 2000 Judicial Compensation Commission, which recommended that there be adequate compensation for retired judges, enabling them to continue working as part-time judges. This amendment allows a judge who has reached 60 with at least 10 years of experience to exercise the option of retiring and continuing on on a part-time basis. Also, a judge who is approaching 70 can retire as a full-time judge and then ask to be appointed as a part-time judge, and he can continue part-time until 75. So this bill simply outlines the process for appointments and the terms of appointments and the rules for compensation.

For example, in terms of compensation it outlines that part-time judges can be paid an annual salary of up to 50 per cent of the annual salary of a full-time judge, but the total salary and benefits payable to a part-time judge cannot exceed the annual salary of a full-time judge. So this amendment to the Provincial Court Act obviously meets the need of providing our courts with more judges, especially given the fact that with so many impending retirements there will unquestionably be a shortage.

I have never been a fan of compulsory retirement, especially at 65, although I'm approaching that age. Thankfully, instead of facing compulsory retirement at 65, I was elected to the Legislature, so I have a new career.

An Hon. Member: But a short one.

Dr. B. Miller: No. It's going to be a long career, moving from one kind of ministry to another kind of ministry.

It seems to me that a society benefits from the wisdom of having professionals who have rich experience and can continue in their later years to apply that experience to the life of our province.

So this bill enables judges who wish to work only part-time to do so until the age of 75. Our courts and the public can only benefit from this step. All around the world, of course, retirement is being looked at more closely, and compulsory age levels are being removed as being something that's quite arbitrary and discriminatory, and we are increasingly unsatisfied with discriminating against people on the basis of age.

I think that the idea of compulsory retirement has always been based on the false stereotype that older people hold outmoded views and can't cope with change or acquire new skills, but they bring so much more to work: the experience of a lifetime. It has been said that ageism is the next and biggest battleground for equal employ-

ment rights because it affects us all. I remember that at the University of Alberta Olive Dickinson fought against having to retire at the age 65. She made a valiant attempt and didn't succeed, but I applauded her at that time in her effort.

I can only approve this bill making it possible for judges who have experience to continue on the bench and provide leadership in our province for years to come. So, Mr. Speaker, I recommend the approval of this Bill 25. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Thomas Howe. Thomas works in the oil industry in northern Alberta and has come all the way from High Level to observe the Assembly's proceedings this evening. I notice that Thomas is already standing in the public gallery, so I would ask all hon. members to give Thomas a very warm welcome, especially if you come from a cold part of the province.

head:

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 25

Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I'm allowed to ask this question. I was phoning a psychologist that helps me a lot . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, were you trying to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a) to ask a question, or do you want to speak?

Mr. Flaherty: I was asking a question.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. What happens is the first two speakers don't have the rule apply to them. It's the third speaker onwards. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora happens to be the second speaker, but you may participate in the debate.

Any other speakers?

Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister for Justice and Attorney General to close the debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a second time]

head:

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we will call the committee to order.

Bill 12**Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: No, I don't have any amendments, and I don't want to repeat all the points that I made in second reading. It's not the way we would like it – that's what I said in second reading comment – but the elements are here. The principles of justice, I think, are outlined here, especially the new one, so it's better than it was before under section 2(1)(c) and (g), and (h) and (j) and (k) are new.

I'm not going to go through each one because that's kind of redundant. The only point that I really want to make and what I regret not finding here is more on restorative justice. Under (h) there is just the one phrase "requesting restitution" that refers to the whole area of restorative justice. I think that we're not going to make much headway in dealing with the plight of victims and what the victims really want unless we have more on restorative justice among the principles of justice.

I'm not going to repeat all of those points that I made. I think I'll take my seat.

8:10

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, I'm also tempted to just say a few words. I spoke at some length to this bill in second reading, Bill 12, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005. I spoke in support of the bill in general, its principles. The victims of crime need our support. They need their dignity restored. They need violation of their person to be taken into account and compensated for. In general, the bill certainly elaborates on the notion of compensation and the manner in which it should be done.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to observe that while we all seem to agree that in a democratic and highly educated society such as ours, we need to move away from retribution toward a restorative model of justice and compensation to victims of crime. Their protection and restoring their respect is certainly one of the key commitments that we need to make. But restorative justice as an idea, as an alternative model to retributive justice also looks at the perpetrator of a crime, a perpetrator, perhaps, of violence against other persons or property.

I just want to submit that restoration of the person who breaks the law, who perpetrates violence is also important because, after all, it's in our interest as a society that wants everyone to respect our laws and to promote lawful activities. People who make mistakes, people who commit crimes, people who engage in violence and violate others also need in an ultimate sense to have our compassion and care. They need to change themselves. In order for them to change themselves, to rehabilitate themselves, to become normal members of a society whose rules and laws they may have broken, and in some cases may have broken them violently, they should nevertheless be in a position to hope that one day they will return to a normal pattern of behaviour having paid what society considers their due punishment for the crime that they have committed, and they should expect to be treated as if they have now paid their debt and can feel that we extend them the same dignity that every human being in a civilized society expects to have.

So, then, while the primary commitment that they make by way of this bill is to address the concerns of the victims – their protection, their dignity, their ability to function again properly in society – and do what we can to secure those conditions for them, we should not ignore and speak perhaps on the record of the need for rehabilita-

tion of those who commit those crimes. Ultimately, these are human beings, our fellow human beings, who have erred and have paid for their erring if they have been brought to justice. It's in our broad interest to make sure that they have the support that they need in order for them to be able to rehabilitate themselves, restore themselves to the position of normal citizens who enjoy our respect and have dignity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 23**Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, the House will be happy to know that I don't have any amendments on this one either. This is a very difficult bill to understand, and I think my speech in second reading should suffice, although it disappoints me that so many of the questions that we raise about these particular bills don't receive any kind of response from the minister, and some of these issues could be serious. I mean, in this particular bill we're dealing with giving powers to boards and tribunals to deal with constitutional issues and, more importantly, depriving certain boards and tribunals of being able to deal with constitutional issues. It's that negative part that really concerns me because it may impede the process of justice and not make things faster.

I think the purpose of the bill is that if the boards and tribunals so named in section 16 of this bill can deal with constitutional issues, then that saves time because people will not have to appeal to the courts to deal with constitutional issues. But my view is the opposite, that it may actually impede justice because people who disagree with the decisions of boards and tribunals on constitutional issues will have to take quite a circuitous route to try to oppose the decisions. They'll have to take on the very empowering legislation that established these boards, and that might be an appeal through the court system all the way perhaps to the Supreme Court of Canada. So I am concerned about that.

This kind of bill comes out of the experience of the courts, and lots of thought has gone into it, although I'm not really sure whether it was absolutely necessary. If this is the only kind of bill we're going to get from the Justice department – it seems like we're only getting household kinds of bills, to make things more efficient and so on, nothing really earthshaking. I don't see any way in which bringing in an amendment would help because in most cases it wouldn't succeed.

I think I will take my seat, and I recommend that we just go ahead and accept this in Committee of the Whole.

8:20

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is my first opportunity to speak to this bill, Bill 23, Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005. The bill has been inspired by, if you wish, the decision of the Supreme Court some years ago. I believe that it might have happened in 2003 sometime.

There's been some debate among judicial circles and legal circles over the years with respect to whether or not the Charter of Rights issues can only be addressed by duly constituted judicial courts or whether we need to democratize, as it were, the chances for Canadian citizens and individuals living in Canada to seek action on Charter of Rights issues from quasi-judicial bodies such as boards in this province, of which there are dozens and dozens and dozens. Many of these have quasi-judicial powers, but the boards are so constituted that we know that they may not necessarily have in their membership the legal sophistication or expertise that we expect our judicial courts to have available to them.

The issue of interpreting whether or not there is a bona fide issue related to the Charter of Rights may at times be somewhat difficult for these boards to determine on their own, but the bill does have, I think, some provision in it which allows the Minister of Justice to decide if a tribunal is sophisticated enough to handle a case involving the Charter of Rights and that the board or tribunal cannot proceed with such a matter unless an individual who has gone before this tribunal or board so requests explicitly and does so in writing.

So there are some elements to the process through which a board can address an issue at a person's request related to the Charter of Rights. It is addressed, I guess, by way of certain procedures. At this stage, although somewhat uncomfortable about seeing boards and tribunals addressing those issues, I'm willing to take a chance and go along with the provisions of this bill in light of the decision that the Supreme Court made in which it said that Canadians can fight for their constitutional rights at administrative boards and tribunals, such as workers' compensation boards, instead of being forced to go to a court.

The unanimous ruling win for two injured workers from Nova Scotia clarifies a long-standing legal question over whether boards and tribunals should have the same power as judges to interpret the Charter of Rights. We know that perhaps hundreds of administrative bodies across Canada which settle disputes involving issues such as rent, job-related complaints, workers' compensation, immigration and refugee claims, et cetera, are often composed of nonlawyers. There may be some former lawmakers on them, but certainly lawyers are not always present on the membership of these tribunals. The court, however, did not give such tribunals and boards constitutional carte blanche but ruled that there should be a strong presumption in favour of allowing them to hear and settle Charter claims.

Justice Charles Gonthier said the following: "Canadians should be entitled to assert the rights and freedoms that the Constitution guarantees them in the most accessible forum available, without the need for parallel proceedings before the courts." Those are his words. This decision, then, that the Supreme Court brought down dealt with the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, but Steve Barrett, a lawyer with the Canadian Labour Congress, predicted that it will have sweeping implications. We are seeing now those sweeping implications, I suppose, with reference to the provincial laws being amended to allow for such Charter of Rights issues to be heard by the boards and tribunals under certain defined conditions.

Mr. Barrett said that it will make a difference for Canadians who don't have the money to go to court. I quote Mr. Barrett here. He said, "It will have significant implications for individuals being able to raise constitutional claims in a way that is more expeditious and less expensive and more accessible to them."

For the last two decades the Charter of Rights has given judges the power to decide whether laws are in keeping with an established list of rights. These include freedom of religion, expression, and association; the legal right to life, liberty, and security of the person; the right against unreasonable search and seizure; and freedom from discrimination based on age, sex, race, or disability. Judge Gonthier said that it would not undermine courts to let tribunals in on Charter cases, particularly since judges would still be the final arbiters by deciding appeals. There is, then, some recourse to individuals if they find that the boards and tribunals for whatever reasons have made a decision that should be appealed, and that appeal will ultimately be heard by a judicial court in Canada.

I want to conclude quickly, Mr. Chairman, but I just want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that this Supreme Court decision in 2003 overruled its own judgment from 1996, when it said that human rights commissions did not have the authority to consider Charter claims. My hon. colleagues in the House will be interested to hear what Justice Beverley McLachlin, while she was still not the Chief Justice, had to say about it. In that ruling the then Justice Beverley McLachlin said that "the Charter is not some holy grail" that only courts can touch. She continues: "Many more citizens have their rights determined by these tribunals than by the courts. If the Charter is to be meaningful to ordinary people, then it must find its expression in the decisions of these tribunals." That's the end of the quote from her decision.

So I hope that the bill encapsulates in it the spirit of the observations made by Judge McLachlin when speaking to the issue of whether or not tribunals and boards should have the ability to hear Charter of Rights cases.

With that said, Mr. Chairman, I would like to conclude by saying that I am in support of the bill and hope that it does broaden access by Canadian citizens to Charter of Rights issues. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 23 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

8:30

Bill 24

Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. There were some questions that were raised during debate in second that I would like to address at this time. I'd like to begin with the issue of transparency and access as it relates to the interested party status. I want to stress that fatality inquiries will continue to be fully public hearings aimed at learning and bringing out the recommendations that may prevent future deaths from occurring. The public and the media have a right to attend.

The purpose of the proposed amendment is to specify that an interested party to a fatality inquiry is a person who has a connection to the deceased or to the circumstances of the death, someone whose arguments and submissions will help the presiding judge reach

conclusions regarding the circumstances of the death. The amendment ensures that the participants to an inquiry have a meaningful connection to that death. This may be by way of their relationship to the deceased or because they will be scrutinized during the inquiry.

I want to make certain that it is clear that this amendment does not prevent media from attending fatality inquiries. Fatality inquiries will continue to be open, particularly open to the media and to any other person who wishes to attend. Media reports are important to ensure that the circumstances of the death are known, and the amendments do not close the door on the fatality inquiry judge granting interested-party status to a media organization in proper circumstances.

It has never been automatic for media organizations to be granted interested-party status. They've always had to apply for it, as would any individual wishing to be an interested person. This amendment simply gives additional guidance to the judge in making that ruling.

To give some perspective, there are only a few instances in the past 20 years where the media was granted this status. If the media organization has sufficient ties to the deceased or to the circumstances of death and if the media organization should properly be given the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses and make submissions to the fatality inquiry judge, the judge may grant them status. I'd like to make that point again. This amendment is not intended to deny the media access.

There are other considerations that go along with being an interested party. Anyone with interested-party status has the authority to cross-examine witnesses and present evidence to the judge. None of the media outlets who have expressed their opposition to this amendment have championed their need to present evidence or cross-examine witnesses. I think the media themselves recognize that cross-examining and giving evidence without any relationship to the deceased or the ability to present unique testimony would not be advancing the purpose of a fatality inquiry in any meaningful way.

The hon. member spoke yesterday of restricting the media's participation at a fatality inquiry, and I want to make this clear: having the right or ability to attend an inquiry is very different from having the right to participate at an inquiry. This bill does not restrict the media's ability to report on the inquiry.

I believe that the media play a crucial role in attending and reporting on fatality inquiries. I find it more difficult to believe that there will be too many scenarios where the media testimony and cross-examination will be needed to help a judge make recommendations to prevent future deaths. The amendments do nothing to alter the existing provisions of the act that state that anything heard in camera, or in private, if you will, cannot be published. In camera hearings are very rare. They are done to protect sensitive personal information such as family health records or to protect the public interest. In some cases the judge may decide that it's in the public interest to not have certain evidence heard in open court. In these cases the evidence is held in camera.

Certain law enforcement agencies have begun to claim privilege over some of their internal documents for fear of their sensitive policies becoming widely known. This makes them unavailable to the inquiry and prevents the judge from having all the information when making recommendations to prevent future deaths. This amendment will provide more confidence that the internal safety procedures will remain confidential if, in fact, that is important.

Having interested-party status will allow the media to hear the evidence presented in camera but has never allowed it to be published. This is not new. Further, this amendment will not prevent people or organizations, including media organizations, from

being called as witnesses to the inquiry if they have facts and information that could help expose the circumstances of death or other relevant information.

The hon. members expressed some concern with respect to section 38, the power of the judge, and that is a situation where we want the fatality inquiry process to be efficient. If they would prefer, I could use the terms "focused" and "effective" instead. The amendments are aimed at ensuring that fatality inquiries are not confused or delayed by the introduction of issues that do not help to achieve the goals of fatality inquiries.

A fatality inquiry is not intended to be an open forum to bring forward grievances or concerns about any subject at all. It is intended to be focused on the death in question, what caused the death, what changes can be made to ensure that such deaths do not happen again, what the public needs to know to ensure that unsafe practices are avoided. These are the things that we must learn and that the judge must comment on, which brings me to the question of restricting the scope of an inquiry.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora referred to giving unprecedented powers to a single judge, but Provincial Court judges have always had the authority to determine the scope of an inquiry. It is the judge's right and responsibility to determine the best avenues to explore and to ensure that the inquiry meets its goals of preventing similar deaths. The amendment aims to ensure that the scope is defined before the inquiry begins so that all parties are aware of what the issues will be and to afford them the opportunity to challenge the judge's decision before the inquiry begins if they disagree with it. In his comments yesterday the hon. member indicated that the fatality inquiry shouldn't focus on being efficient, but we do wish to be considerate to the affected parties as defining the scope prevents delays and adjournments later on in the process.

The hon. member also commented yesterday regarding the elimination of the jury provisions in the act; that is, the repeal of section 37. He pointed out that it is a fundamental principle of justice in Canada that a person has a right to have a hearing before a jury. The right he speaks of is the right of an accused to be judged by a jury of his peers, and that argument simply isn't applicable in the case of a fatality inquiry.

The amendments to section 38 let the judge engage services of clerks, reporters, and assistants. By removing the reference to counsel, the goal was to make it clear that counsel appointed by the minister is counsel to the inquiry. Counsel appointed by the minister does not represent the minister or the government but is there to act as counsel to the inquiry as a whole. Practically speaking, if the judge wants an expert report, inquiry counsel would give the expert report.

I would also like to discuss the amendment that relates to mandatory inquiries for people who die in the care, custody, or guardianship of the government. That is section 33(3)(a) and (b). For example, a person may die while a ward of the government or as a result of an interaction with a peace officer. Normally, in these circumstances the Fatality Review Board would be required to call a fatality inquiry in the interests of finding out how and why the death happened, how to prevent similar deaths from happening in the future, and to reassure the public that the government is doing its best to preserve and protect human life.

The amendment is aimed at a very narrow set of circumstances where holding an inquiry simply is not necessary. The example provided in second reading was of a 16 year old under government care driving a car and, unfortunately, dying in a motor vehicle accident. At present, because the 16 year old is under government care, there would be a mandatory fatality inquiry. The amendment would allow the board, after reviewing the circumstances of the

death, to decide not to recommend an inquiry. Each case would have to be decided on its own facts.

8:40

If, for example, the driver were impaired or if the driver should not have been unaccompanied or if there were any other questions at all that are appropriate for further investigation, the board can still recommend that an inquiry be held. Further, even if the board thinks that a fatality inquiry is not necessary, the Minister of Justice can still call an inquiry. This new amendment will only be applicable in a narrow set of circumstances and is aimed at eliminating unnecessary proceedings in the clearest of cases.

One of the primary goals of a fatality inquiry is to inspire confidence that public authorities are taking appropriate measures to protect human life. If death occurs for reasons that are entirely unrelated to the issue of government care, the Fatality Review Board should not be required to recommend an inquiry. The board has been doing an admirable job working to protect Albertans for many years. There's no reason to believe that this would change as a result of these amendments.

I trust that these have gone some way to answering the questions of the members, and I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, and thank you to the minister for being in attendance and making an attempt to answer the questions that have been raised. I was asking a specific question around participation of not-for-profit advocacy groups. I understand the distinction that is made in the legislation between being in the room and observing the proceedings and participating in the proceedings. My question was around participating in the proceedings, and the minister did not address that in his remarks. I'm asking if he could please address that now.

Thank you.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, the definition is there, and if a group can bring themselves within that definition, indicating that they have a direct interest in the matter, then the judge will be able to address whether or not they're an interested person. Once again, the circumstances of the case are going to determine that particular situation.

I can tell the hon. member that what we have done here is taken a look at the definition and have specifically addressed it principally to the question of whether or not the media should as a matter of right have a position before the fatality inquiry as an interested person. I'm not in a position to advise the hon. member one way or the other as to whether there are no circumstances which would be available for not-for-profit advocacy groups to be heard before a fatality inquiry.

Ms Blakeman: But the minister, then, is leaving it to the nonprofit to be able to fit itself into the definition of direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest. So if I'm going on a known quantity, then, the fatality inquiry on the unfortunate senior who was scalded and died as a direct result of that, the Elder Advocates of Alberta, for example, and the FAIRE group were very involved with that. They were supporters of the family. They had additional information about what was happening that set a context for what was going on. My concern is that there would be an undue onus upon them to have to try and prove this linkage that might well be beyond their legal or financial ability to argue in front of the judge, and therefore we would lose a voice that should be able to participate in such an inquiry.

Would the minister consider an amendment that would clarify or reduce the burden on the organizations to have to argue before the judge that they were showing a direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest, or is he confident that the scenario I've described would be adequately and rightly captured under the legislation as proposed?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, what I contemplate is that every party that comes before the judge in a fatality inquiry will be required notionally to bring itself within this particular definition. There are some parties that, clearly, are going to be able to do that. So, for example, the family of the deceased will not be an issue. In a case such as that, if, in fact, a party is so closely aligned with the family of the deceased, they can align themselves with the family of the deceased, from my perspective, and support the family of the deceased and thereby get their issues before the court.

But I'm not in a position to confirm that advocacy groups per se are going to be able to bring themselves within this particular definition. It's going to be dependent on the facts of the particular case, and it's going to be dependent upon how the judge who's hearing these applications for interested party status considers it. From my perspective it's appropriate to have what I would call a substantial connection to the particular case in order that people bring themselves within a fairly defined and proximate relationship with the issues before the court.

I don't know how you go about dealing with the matter that the hon. member has raised, which is that there are not-for-profit advocacy groups which have interest in matters, and they should as a matter of course be recognized. I think I have an issue with the concept that because I'm a not-for-profit advocacy group, I should be recognized.

I think that we have approached it on the basis of establishing a close connection with the matter, and then you can deal with it. In the case that was used by the hon. member of having a close relationship with one of the parties, the family of the deceased, in the example, I think it's fair to say that if, in fact, such a close relationship exists, counsel for the advocacy group may in fact be counsel for the family, or they can work together to ensure that the interests of the advocacy group are represented if, in fact, the advocacy group doesn't get its separate representation.

Ms Blakeman: All right. I hear what the minister is saying, and I understand it. I guess what I was seeking was a recognition of what, for Charter cases, for example, we would recognize as intervenor status, in which an organization has to meet the tests that are set out, that they have a substantial interest in the proceedings of what's going on and wish to be regarded as an intervenor so that they're involved in the proceedings and can speak. As you have pointed out, once you're in that arena, once you're granted that direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest, you now qualify to cross-examine witnesses, et cetera, and you are a player in what's being contemplated here.

I was seeking a determination that if a group can meet the test, it could be granted similar to an intervenor status, and that's not set out in the legislation now. What I hear the minister saying is that the test they would have to meet is to somehow align themselves with showing a direct and substantial personal, legal, or business interest. Well, it's not going to be a legal interest, and it's not going to be a business interest, so they're going to have to somehow chum up to the family in order to be able to gain some status.

I would have preferred to have seen some ability to recognize intervenor status, but maybe I'll look at developing amendments for this, or the other possibility is to let it go and see how well this runs

and come back to it at some point in the future to see if, in fact, we had well-meaning groups. I mean, as an example for the minister, I'm thinking of the contributions that LEAF has made to a great body of work that has come out of the Charter challenges. I would argue that they have contributed substantially to what has happened with those Charter challenges. They were recognized and should be recognized. I don't want to set something up in Alberta where we would not be allowed to have that kind of participation from those groups.

Thank you very much to the minister for that clarification. I will do my best to send the *Hansard* out to the groups that I think would be interested in that, and then we will watch what happens with this and look at it in a year or two.

8:50

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have been listening to the debate carefully, and I want to thank the minister for the observations he made and the explanations that he offered for the changes that he's seeking to make in the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005. I remain concerned about two of the proposed amendments, the minister's explanations notwithstanding. I don't by any means want to discount the seriousness with which the minister has taken the questions that were raised in the debate and tried to address them, but my concerns remain.

I have, Mr. Chairman, two separate amendments. I seek your advice now.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, are you indicating to me that you have two amendments?

Dr. Pannu: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Did you want to deal with them together as one amendment or two separate amendments?

Dr. Pannu: That's what I was going to ask you. I think they could be dealt with, perhaps, as one amendment, although they are on two separate pieces of paper.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Well, pass them on to the pages. Let me have a look at it first, please. We'll just give the pages a few moments to distribute them.

Dr. Pannu: Yes, indeed.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, as indicated by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, he has distributed two amendments but chooses to deal with them as one amendment, so we will have one vote on both amendments that are before you. We shall refer to these amendments collectively as amendment A1.

Hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona, you may proceed.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I now speak, then, to amendment A1. Amendment A1 has two parts to it. The first part of amendment A1 deals with the concerns that I have with amendment 4(b). That's on page 2, I think, of the legislation. The amendment that I'm proposing in 4(b) to the proposed section 33(3) is as follows: strike out "or" at the end of clause (a), the second last paragraph on page 2, and strike out clause (b) on the bottom of page 2. It will have the effect of keeping the act as it presently is.

I think the addition of this part 33(3)(b) is to make the whole

procedure much too restrictive, in my view. I like the provisions of the previous legislation as it stands, which are stated on the opposite side, page 2. I think that by striking (b) from 33(3), it will allow all parties and the board of fatality inquiries to continue to do the job they've been doing, by and large, to the satisfaction of Albertans in general.

The minister's concern was with the efficiency. I think in matters of justice, in matters where human life may have been lost and there may be questions about why it has happened, in order for us to learn from that, the goals of efficiency must take second place to concerns about human safety and well-being.

So that's the purpose of the first part of amendment A1; that is, to maintain the current status of law, which has served Albertans well when they have sought redress and answers to questions which were related to a family member losing life or dying on a hospital floor or in a seniors' home or somewhere where they were supposed to be receiving care from third parties with some sort of public status. So that's the first part of the amendment.

The second part of the amendment, Mr. Chairman, deals with amendment 17 in proposed section 49, and there the amendment that I'm proposing calls for striking out clause (b). Clause (b) in the draft legislation that we are debating repeals subsection 2(d) and substitutes it with "any person who the judge, on application, determines has a direct and substantial interest in the subject-matter of the inquiry."

Mr. Chairman, clearly, the media has expressed concern about how their status will be changed with this amendment that the minister has proposed. I take the role of the media in inquiries such as this quite seriously. I think Albertans like to be informed, and perhaps their best means of being informed is through the media when they can't be present there personally, and most of us can't be present in person at these places.

The change in the law as proposed by the minister would take the ability of the media to seek interested-person status away from them and leave that matter entirely to the discretion of the judge. I think this will be a step backwards. We need information to be made public. We need this information to be made public through the presence of media, and I don't think this will in any way interfere with the proceedings that are conducted by boards of fatality inquiries. I don't think it will in any way reduce the efficiency of it, but certainly it will help increase the confidence of the public in the process that fatality inquiries follow. So I think it will be both to enhance the respect for and credibility of the fatality inquiries process and to make sure that the media's role in informing the public remains fully protected.

The second part of amendment A1, then, simply proposes to strike out clause (b) from section 17 in the proposed section 49. Thank you.

9:00

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the noise level in the Assembly is starting to rise. It's becoming difficult for anyone to listen to what is being debated before us.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief in my comments. I will be urging the members not to support the amendments put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I have commented on both of these matters both in second reading and in my introduction here in committee.

Briefly, relative to the interested-party issue and the media I will acknowledge that there are circumstances where the media is an interested party. Where perhaps the deceased person is in fact

employed by the media, for example, they will be able to be an interested party. The circumstances are that the media will have in any event an opportunity to attend and report upon the fatality inquiries and matters that are there to be seen and heard, that in the ordinary course of things the role of the media is to report the news, not make the news. There will be opportunity for them to participate if, in fact, they have a substantial connection to the event, and I think that the amendment that is put forward in the bill per se clearly puts the relationship of the media to fatality inquiries into proper perspective.

With respect to the other proposed amendment by the hon. member, once again this evening I talked about the example of a 16 year old under government care driving a car and, unfortunately, dying in a motor vehicle accident. Assume further that that is a situation where the 16 year old entered into the intersection and a third party failed to stop at a red light, blew into the intersection. It was clearly the third party's fault.

Under the current circumstances it would be necessary to have a fatality inquiry into that particular event simply because of the relationship of that child to the custodial party. We do not have fatality inquiries with respect to motor vehicle accidents where somebody goes through a red light or a stop sign and causes the death of another individual. That is not what typically occurs in fatality inquiries as a general proposition. If there's a police chase or something of that nature, yes, but in the ordinary course of things, no. So what we are saying here is simply that that is a situation where there is "no meaningful connection between the death and the nature or quality of care or supervision being provided."

Now, on the other hand, if that youth were impaired, different circumstances. But in the amendment that the hon. member is attempting to delete, the words are that there is "no meaningful connection between the death and the nature or quality of care or supervision." We think that it is important to allow for the review of this matter initially to take that into account.

So, once again, in the circumstances that I alluded to of the 16 year old driving a vehicle, being in an unfortunate intersection collision, the fault of the third party, where the 16 year old is under care, it would automatically give rise to a fatality inquiry today. There is no causal connection between the care and the circumstances of that particular death. There may be in other situations; for example, if the child is impaired. Sixteen year olds ought not to be impaired driving vehicles, and I can understand that somebody would want to inquire into that if the child was in care, but those circumstances can be taken into account in the amendments that we have proposed in this particular bill.

So once again I am asking the members not to support the amendments put forward by Edmonton-Strathcona. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it unfortunate that the choice of the third-party sponsoring members was to combine the two amendments into one because what's happened is that I would be very willing to support one of them; that is, the amendment of section 17, which, in fact, the minister and I had a number of exchanges on. I accept the minister's explanation of what is included in section 4, so I'm not in favour of amending section 4. So you have presented me with a dilemma, and I'm wondering if the member is willing to sever. Not likely, seeing as they just put them together, but I thought I'd ask. If they are not willing to have this voted separately, then I'm afraid I can't support it, but I sure wish I could.

Thank you.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, I am open to your guidance on this. Certainly, on the point that's been made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I'm willing to go back and have the amendment severed in order to allow the Member for Edmonton-Centre to be able to vote, at least on one of them, with me. But the ball is in your court. It's your advice that I need.

Chair's Ruling Separating Amendments

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I think it's a little too late in the process to change that decision. However, remember that we are at committee stage, and there is nothing precluding the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre from bringing forward an amendment that would address the issues that she has indicated.

Hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, did you want to participate?

Ms Pastoor: I wanted to speak on the amendment that was stuck together, but if it's going to be severed, then I'll wait.

The Deputy Chair: At this stage we are proceeding with it as one amendment.

Debate Continued

Ms Pastoor: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to speak on the amendment. Actually, both of them I could support. I just really feel that this allows too much power to be given to one person's hands. Right at this moment in time it's probably okay. We all know the minister. We are all very comfortable with the process. But I sometimes look into the future, and a misguided minister could hide and bury many, many mistakes by having that power to not allow fatality hearings. I wonder if I might ask for a clarification from the minister as to who would actually own the file if this went beyond a fatality into a court.

The other comment I wanted to make is about the minister having the power to actually – no, I'm sorry; that's actually to the bill, not to the amendment.

Perhaps the minister would like to answer my question when he's digested it. Thank you.

9:10

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the chair is being approached by the Government House Leader with a suggestion that the committee be given consent to have two votes, separately, on these two amendments. Now, the chair had made a ruling. The chair is a servant of this Assembly, and if we have unanimous consent that we split these two amendments again, into A1 and A2, and have separate votes, the chair will follow the direction of the committee.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I'll ask you. Would you like this to revert to two separate amendments?

Dr. Pannu: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to go back to the original intent that I had to have two separate amendments.

The Deputy Chair: Will the committee give unanimous consent that we proceed with this as two separate votes?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Does anybody oppose?

An Hon. Member: Opposed.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Hon. members, unfortunately, we were not able to get this unanimous consent, so we shall vote on them collectively as one amendment.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, I'm disappointed but, nevertheless, must proceed.

Amendment A1, the first part of it, proposes to change 33(3) by striking out “, or” at the end of clause (a) and striking out clause (b). I'm trying to explain why I think the amendment is necessary. The minister has given an interesting hypothetical scenario in which he thinks that the absence of a “meaningful connection between the death and the nature or quality of care or supervision being provided to the deceased person” is apparent. I think that in that hypothetical case that may be so.

I want to ask the minister if he would have any information on whether the existing legislation, which is under amendment now, has presented any problems where, in fact, fatality inquiries have had to deal with cases where they proceeded in spite of the fact that there was no meaningful connection between the death and the nature or quality of care provided. I haven't come across any such instance. It would seem to me that if there is no demonstrated need to change the act, then why do it? Doing this would seem to me to be restricting the scope of circumstances under which a fatality inquiry can be called. I think it's redundant, unnecessary unless a case can be made based on some past experience which has demonstrated that there's a need for this change in direction. I am not aware of that.

The whole idea of meaningful connection is itself something that's subject to debate. Parties often are in disagreement on whether or not there is a meaningful connection between the death and the nature or quality of care. That's precisely why fatality inquiries are often called for and needed. In the case that I referred to last night, in Calgary Foothills hospital in the emergency room, where a patient was flown in and then flown back without getting the appropriate attention and died on the way, whether or not there is a meaningful connection between the quality of care provided or the quality of care that the institution failed to provide is the issue, and there the fatality inquiry, in fact, was very helpful in sorting out the difficulties in the procedures which led to this particular fatality.

So I am kind of puzzled why the minister assumes that the meaningful connection is so obvious as not to be debatable, as not to be questioned, as not to be challenged by one party or the other. One of the reasons that we have fatality inquiries is to see whether or not we can establish a meaningful connection between the provision of care or failure to provide that care and the fatality. So that's the first part of the amendment. I would hope that members will reconsider and vote on it in light of what I've just said.

On the second part of the amendment, which deals with section 17, where I call for striking out clause (b), I think that's fairly obvious. I think the media as a present status is the one that needs to be maintained, and the intent of the amendment is to maintain that status.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Debate can continue on the bill. Does anybody else wish to participate on the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I might perhaps reiterate a couple of my remarks to the minister. [interjection] Then I'll just ask the questions and have them recorded. I realize that you were very busy and perhaps didn't exactly hear what I had said. It's just

a quick remark, and I wanted a couple of clarifications. One of the things that actually troubled me was the power that is being given to the minister – and perhaps I need a clarification on this – to actually appoint the judge. I thought that at very least the Law Society should select a judge that would be based on his or her experience in the area of question for that fatality.

Then a further question that I would have that came to mind sort of based on the amendment would be – we would be okay in the present, but the future might scare me in terms of perhaps a misguided minister that would have the power to hide and bury mistakes. Again, this would be, I think, probably a lawyer question, but the information that comes out of these fatalities that this minister would have the power to release or not release based on how he decided he would release it, would it be then allowed to be used in a court of law? It's an awful lot of power for one man.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. member, the judge that would be assigned to a fatality inquiry is assigned by the chief of the provincial court, not by the Minister of Justice. So there was never any intention to make any appointment of the judge. There is an appointment of counsel to conduct the inquiry but, certainly, not of the judge. That is done by the Chief Judge of the provincial court.

The amendments that we have brought in here clearly provide that the Justice minister has an obligation to make public the report when it is made available to him. Now, that's different than the circumstances at present. The legislation currently is silent on that particular matter, so there will now be an affirmative duty on the Justice minister to make that report public. I don't know if that wholly answers the question that the hon. member had with respect to the report, but it's out there in the public. These reports do not have a finding of liability. The purpose of the report is to talk about the circumstances of the death and to make recommendations, if any, as to how to make whatever we're talking about better so as to avoid these kinds of losses in the future.

9:20

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for that. Further to that, when that report is made public, I understand that it just comes with recommendations in that particular case, but is that information available to be used in a court of law that would then decide perhaps responsibility?

Mr. Stevens: I don't believe, hon. member, that that report would be of any evidentiary value in a case dealing, say, with liability. If there was a liability issue or if there were disciplinary hearings, those would be tried separately with fresh evidence, unless the parties to the particular case agreed between themselves that aspects of the findings of the fatality inquiry judge would bind them, but that would only be as a matter of agreement. There would be no operation of law which would see the findings of a fatality inquiry be binding on parties to some collateral, parallel proceeding.

One of the things I pointed out in second reading that is advantageous about the process that will be available upon these amendments becoming law is that a fatality inquiry will be able to in appropriate circumstances take advantage of adversarial proceedings that give rise to certain findings of fact or give rise to certain evidence to streamline a fatality inquiry. So a fatality inquiry in appropriate circumstances may be able to take advantage of other

adversarial proceedings that are related to but independent of and parallel to the fatality inquiry.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: I would just like to close debate on our side, and I would like to thank the hon. minister for answering all the questions we have raised in second reading and tonight. I found his remarks very, very helpful. I think my own tirade at times about the media being excluded from the proposed amendment fatality inquiry probably was more of a reaction to the hon. minister's explanation of the bill because he said that one of the groups affected by this bill would be the media, and I reacted to that.

If you just concentrate on the bill itself, then maybe it's not such a big issue except that, you know, it just makes it confusing when 49(2) says, "The following persons may appear at a public fatality inquiry . . . and may cross-examine witnesses." So I understand that the media wouldn't be in that kind of role, but if they cannot prove a direct and substantial interest, would they be excluded? I think your explanation indicates that they would in fact be able to be present to report on what is happening to the public, so it still is a public fatality inquiry. That was my main concern.

So as far as our support or nonsupport, I will take the whip off, and we'll see how we vote.

[The clauses of Bill 24 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 19 Securities Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I indicated when I spoke to this Bill 19, the Securities Amendment Act, 2005, in second reading that in consultation with the stakeholders it does again appear to be primarily of a housekeeping nature. The efforts to move us towards a passport system as opposed to having one, single, overriding commission, although they may not be exactly what I would have liked to have seen in a perfect world, I recognize that it certainly does bring us in line with what other jurisdictions are doing and at the same time recognizes the autonomy that is requested by some of these junior companies in Alberta, so I can live with that.

I do however have a few questions that I'm hoping could be answered tonight. I alluded to them when I spoke to the bill in second reading. In particular they are: in part 6 in the bill section 13 is amended. It says:

- (c) may designate one of the members of the Commission as the lead independent member, with the powers, duties and functions prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

My question, that I referred to in second reading, was just exactly what that range of powers might be, if the mover or the minister

might be able to describe for us what they envision as the duties and functions that would be given to that lead independent member.

I would comment: in part 7 section 14 is amending the remuneration for the chair, vice-chair, and members of the commission. It currently reads that that remuneration shall be set by the commission, and the amendment in the bill says that that would be "subject to the approval of the Minister." I would like to suggest that that's a good thing. We've seen in the past a number of commissions that are entitled to set their own remuneration without any oversight by the minister. I'm particularly thinking of the WCB a few years ago, that was in the news a lot in that regard. So I think this is a good thing that the minister would have final say.

In part 8 it refers to adding a clause after section 14:

14.1(1) If a member of the Commission resigns or a member's appointment expires, the Chair may authorize that individual to continue to exercise powers as a member of the Commission in any proceeding over which that member had jurisdiction immediately before the end of that member's term.

(2) An authorization under subsection (1) continues until a final decision in that proceeding is made.

I referred, when I spoke to this in second reading, to a concern that I have given the situation that is currently in the news with the Alberta Securities Commission: if, in fact, this might allow the extension of an appointment by a new chairperson of an existing chairperson that may in fact leave his or her position under a cloud, as it were. There is no provision here for the minister to review that decision. I'm wondering if there might be some consideration to that, given the current situation, that we might wish to allow the minister to have some oversight in that regard.

9:30

Then finally, Mr. Chair, the same old, same old that I go through all the time is my concern about moving things from legislation into regulations. Perhaps there's good reason for this, but I'm certainly interested in hearing the explanation. In this particular bill there are exactly 11 pages – 11 pages – of legislation that are being removed entirely and put into regulation. I understand the argument for the expediency required at times to change rules and regulations in reaction to things that might be taking place out there in the real world, if I can call it that.

I think I had indicated in second reading that in Ontario the Ontario Securities Commission has decided to leave all of this in their legislation because they're comfortable that they can have the appropriate changes in legislation made if and when they need to. In fact, what they told us is that it's because the Ontario Legislature sits more often. Now, whether or not that's accurate, whether or not there's really an impediment in Alberta I'm probably not the person to say, but I did find it interesting that that was the comment we had from the people in Ontario.

But, again, I do have a concern any time we're moving 11 pages of legislation into regulation and then allowing those rules to be made by Executive Council without the benefit of public debate and public scrutiny. That causes me a great deal of concern.

So those would be the questions that I would hope I might be able to hear an answer for tonight, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly want to thank the member opposite for his interest in the questions, and I hope that I'll be able to answer most of them satisfactorily.

Both members that commented in second reading, Mr. Chairman, asked why Alberta had decided not to pursue a single securities regulator to cover all of Canada. The reason for this is that the

memorandum of understanding we signed with other provinces focuses on a passport system that's highly harmonized and streamlines security laws across the country. It increases the communications between the provinces and other jurisdictions and also increases co-operation on securities regulatory issues. They're all consistent with steps that would be needed and would be taken in any event in the future if it is determined that a single regulator should be pursued. However, the provinces and territories with the exception of Ontario at this point are not prepared to commit to a single regulator. The focus for us in the short and medium term will be to continue the implementation and the commitments that we made in the memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to the lead independent member that's proposed in the legislation, this position is similar to that of a lead independent director in a public company. Private-sector best governance practices provide for the appointment of a lead independent director where the role in a corporation of a CEO and a chairman of the board are combined in one individual as is the case with the Alberta Securities Commission. This amendment is intended to ensure that the commission is subject to and provides the same level of corporate governance and transparency and effectiveness expected of the reporting issuers that it regulates.

Also, the member has brought up the situation with respect to allowing members whose term has expired to continue to sit and participate in an enforcement hearing with an expired appointment. Enforcement hearings are often conducted over a very extended period of time, and the loss of a panel member when they resign or their term expires may result in the loss of a prescribed quorum of members. That would require the appointment of a new hearing panel and the commencement of a complete new hearing in the worst-case scenario, or it could deprive the panel of one of the persons who has heard evidence from providing input and expertise to the final decision.

This provision should permit the member to continue to participate as a member of the hearing panel until the hearing is concluded and a decision and the reasons for the decision are handed down. The provision is limited to enforcement hearings and would not permit the individual to carry out other prescribed duties as a member.

The matter of enforcement, Mr. Chairman, has been raised by all three members who spoke. Much was said about allegations surrounding the Alberta Securities Commission. This legislation is completely unrelated to the allegations. However, I'd like to point out that one of the goals of the bill is to increase the enforcement and compliance powers of the Alberta Securities Commission. The enhanced enforcement powers in Bill 19 will allow the ASC to address a greater range of inappropriate market activities as well as providing a greater range of tools at the disposal of ASC when they're fashioning an appropriate sanction. This will be accomplished through a variety of means in the bill.

Mr. Chairman, there will be a replacement of the existing prohibition against misrepresentation, expansion of the prohibition against fraud and market manipulation, addition of a new prohibition against front-running to protect investors, and assurance that registrants and their representatives who provide trading and advisory service to Albertans put the interests of their clients ahead of their own and ahead of the firm when trading.

There's a new obstruction of justice prohibition that captures activities intended to hinder or interfere with reviews, investigations, and hearings such as withholding, concealing, or destroying documents. It will expand the current insider trading prohibition to include prohibition against encouraging a person or a company to engage in illegal insider trading in addition to the existing prohibitions against trading, tipping, and procuring in the provision.

Mr. Chairman, there's a matter of remuneration that had been brought up. I think really what's intended here in the legislation is to allow for just another level of transparency with respect to the remuneration. It still would be set initially and discussed in the commission and would be then vetted with an OC at the ministerial level.*

The final issue that I think was a concern to the members was the idea of moving sections of the Securities Act into regulation, and there were concerns with respect to transparency in that case. But, Mr. Chairman, what I'd like to note here is that many jurisdictions are moving to platform-style legislation in which the fundamental requirements that rarely change are set out in the statute, and the more detailed requirements that continually evolve to meet the changing market conditions are set out in rules.

9:40

So what we're doing here, Mr. Chairman, is nothing that's really unusual in the area of securities commissions in other jurisdictions in the country. The MOU commits the provincial and territorial ministers to developing and implementing highly harmonized and simplified securities legislation. However, the advantage of moving some provisions into rules is that it enables timely response to issues in the marketplace and changing market conditions.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that those questions would have been mainly addressed by my comments, and I would look forward to further debate if required. Thank you.

[Two members rose]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: It's okay. You can be the honorary hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Chairman, I am rising just to speak on a number of specific issues in regard to Bill 19. While I think that it's an honourable pursuit to look to harmonize Alberta's security regulations with other Canadian jurisdictions and develop some sort of homogeneity through what amounts to a passport system, I guess my only question, but it's a large question, is if this government and the hon. minister specifically is looking to this as a platform or a step forward to creating a national regulatory system. Now, the reason that I ask that – and it is specific to provisions that are built into this stage along the way – is because, in fact, if this is a step down the path towards a national regulatory system, then certainly I think that we could consider supporting Bill 19. However, if it's not, then I think that there are some specific things that are flaws in Bill 19, and we would like to address them.

I think that, for example, quite a number of investor groups that we had spoken to had very strongly in no uncertain terms suggested that only a single security system could strengthen the public faith and the investor faith in the security systems here in Canada. The patchwork system that we have currently is inadequate, and really the most logical way to solve that is to have not a federal regulatory system by any means but a national one bringing together each of the provinces and territories to create a cohesive whole.

I think that with a passport system, you know, you can still find the weak links in the system in regard to individual security commissions. This is a moving target, Mr. Chairman, in the sense that the individual security commissions and their administration can be either weak or strong over time depending on what happens to be going on. Currently, other provinces and jurisdictions are looking at Alberta's current commission as being weak, so this encourages the potential for abuse of the system and discourages investment in

*See p. 941, left col., para. 4

each different area, in this case Alberta. So, as I said before, if we could sort of get an assurance or a sense that these provisions are in fact moving toward a national system, then I think that we would consider supporting this particular bill.

What a number of different groups are bringing forward – say, for example, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the CCCE. In a publication they had last fall, they were suggesting that the national system is exactly what they're looking for. A gentleman by the name of Gwyn Morgan, vice-chairman of the CCCE and president of the Alberta-based EnCana Corporation suggested that "it is critical for provincial governments to recognize this passport agreement as a beginning and not an end," towards a national system. Other individuals have echoed Mr. Morgan's statement.

Someone else that we have had contact with is Diane Urquhart from Ontario, and she is suggesting that, you know, some of the weaknesses in the ASC could be cleared up by not only moving towards a passport system but, in fact, pushing towards a system with national standards for the enforcement and the adjudication of securities offences. Again, I think that considering our present difficulty, our pickle, so to speak, with our Alberta Securities Commission, with a national set of standards it might be easier to fix that problem.

So these are the specific comments that our caucus has in regard to Bill 19, and I would welcome any comments and answer to really that one main question. Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The two questions, I think, that I got from the comments from the hon. member were, number one: is this a step down the path towards a national regulator? I have to answer that by saying: categorically, no. All I said and what remains to be the case is that in the event that in the future we did end up with a decision, with other provinces and territories involved, that a national regulator was in everybody's best interests, these changes and amendments in Bill 19 would be necessary at that point in any event. So what this does is move us ahead, whether we are involved in the passport system with other provinces and territories or move to a national regulator. With the exception of Ontario I would suggest that all the other provinces and territories are onside with the passport system, and I believe that we will all move in that direction.

The other – and I'm not sure if it was actually a question – that outside of Alberta and across the country and perhaps even wider than that, there's an indication of weakness with respect to the Alberta Securities Commission. Again, I just have to reiterate and enforce: the case with Bill 19 has nothing to do with current allegations with respect to a situation that may or may not exist in the Alberta Securities Commission.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that that has answered the member's questions. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that does, in fact, make it clear, I suppose, in regard to the intentions of this bill.

I would like to just comment briefly, though, in regard to the ASC. I think that, you know, if we had a wider jurisdiction or if it was available through us to have a national adjudication of securities and, say, infractions in regard to securities, then it just makes it easier for us to move the problem and to dissipate it. You know, stock markets are volatile places, and there are many of them and lots of places to put your money. If there was a national system in place, this current

thing that we have in front of us – it would be easier to, let's say, let the air out of the difficulty because a national body would have a national set of guidelines, and they could move in and clear the air, and people could have a restoration of some degree of confidence.

Thank you.

9:50

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comments by the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky in terms of attempting to clarify the situation with the passport system as opposed to a national regulator, but I now find myself a little confused because the current chair of the commission is on record publicly as saying that a national overriding commission would be the best for investors in Alberta, but the political will just isn't there, he says. So my confusion, I guess, stems from – because you said emphatically no, that we have no intention of moving towards a national regulator, I'm wondering now: are you directly contradicting the current chair of the commission or simply confirming that this government doesn't have the political will to move towards a national regulator?

[The clauses of Bill 19 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 25

Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some very brief comments to make. We've worked very hard with the Provincial Court to develop a made-in-Alberta solution that improves our judicial system by meeting the needs of Albertans and the judiciary. Judges who want to provide a guaranteed amount of judicial service after retirement will be attracted to this option. As a result, highly experienced and competent judges will continue serving Albertans on a part-time basis after retirement.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Yes, Mr. Chairman, in second reading, which we had already this evening, I presented my ode to retirement and part-time work, so I fully support this bill. We're not bringing any changes or amendments, and I commend the minister for making it possible to draw on the cumulative experience of our judges and enabling them to provide service in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, I'll be brief in speaking to Bill 25, Provincial Court Amendment Act. The bill provides for the appointment of retired judges as part-timers. If they're 60 years or older and want to work as part-time judges, the bill does provide

that. It, of course, outlines the minimum requirements in terms of experience of 10 years, be 60 years old. On the other hand, they do retire at 70. So that's fine.

I think the fact is that justice delayed is justice denied, and the availability of judges is certainly a key factor in delivering justice on time. If this bill expedites the dispensation of justice, I think it's certainly worthy of support. I think it does, so we certainly would be happy to support the bill.

Of course, it will need more than just the provision to have part-time judges. We'll need more resources for the courts and for the judges, to pay their salaries and pay other staff that are needed around the courts. So I would urge the minister to work at the other end as well to provide the resources that will be required. If this commitment that's being made in this bill – that is, to expedite the judicial proceedings, make settlements available to people in a shorter time period, time cycle – is to happen, the government and the minister will need to certainly go through the budget so that resources are available for the court system to hire these part-time judges and have more court hours, through which, then, cases can be decided on and adjudicated in a shorter time cycle than presently is the case.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I simply say again that we support the bill and hope that matching resources are available to implement it as quickly as possible. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 25 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 1 Access to the Future Act

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we still have on the floor with us amendment A1, as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. Are there any comments, questions, amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do want to rise and speak to the amendment very briefly. The amendment is with respect to section 4 of the bill and proposes to strike out section 4(5), which indicates that “the maximum amount that may be allocated under subsection (4) is \$3,000,000,000.” Now, as I understand, some of the critique that's been provided both in the discussion of second reading and again when this amendment was moved was that the endowment fund should be allowed to grow to a number a lot larger than \$3 billion. I agree.

The endowment fund should grow to a much, much larger number. In fact, members of the House in speaking have alluded to endowments for some of the private institutions in the States that have large endowment funds. They might have mentioned that those endowment funds have grown from contributions by alumni and in other manners over the course of in excess of a hundred years to get to that amount. Hopefully, we would aspire in Alberta to have an endowment fund of such significant proportions created by, perhaps, an opportunity for private contributions or other ways of doing it, but this is a way to get the process started.

I'm particularly proud of the fact that Bill 1 provides for \$4.5 billion of endowment in the future, and if you add the \$500 million which the Premier announced in January with respect to the Alberta heritage medical research fund, that's \$5 billion of endowment in the future, and most of that, I would argue, is endowment in some way connected with the postsecondary system because the heritage medical research fund and the ingenuity fund, both research monies – most of those monies attract the best and the brightest to Alberta for research projects.

10:00

Then, of course, a billion dollars for the heritage scholarship fund and \$3 billion to the access to the future fund. So while we ought to aspire for endowing the future to grow and for those endowment funds to grow, \$3 billion is not a bad start.

Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to the House that we leave section 4(5) in the bill, not because it ought to be a cap for all times, but it ought to hold our feet to the fire, to say that we've committed to put \$3 billion into this fund, and we ought to be held accountable to put \$3 billion into this fund. Quite frankly, I would hope that the opposition, rather than suggesting that that limit be taken out, point to that limit every day that we don't have \$3 billion in the fund and ask why we haven't got \$3 billion in the fund. Then when we get to the \$3 billion, I will be with them to suggest that we should be amending that to raise the limit so that we can put more money into that fund.

I believe that endowing the future is the right way to go. I believe that Bill 1 really starts that process off with a good thrust, but it's the wrong way to go to take the \$3 billion reference in the bill out. Rather, we should be aspiring to grow the fund, but let's have a target that we can be held, as a government, accountable to reaching as soon as we possibly can. For that reason, I would ask that the House not pass this amendment but instead celebrate the fact that we have a bill before the House which is calling for \$4.5 billion to go into endowing the future.

If you add the \$500 million that's been announced for the heritage medical research fund, that's \$5 billion that this government is committing out of nonrenewable resource revenues, whether budgeted or unbudgeted, to be applied to the future of research and development, innovation, and leading and learning in this province, and I think that's a great place to start. It is a place to start. It's not the finish. It's not the end line. It's the beginning. But it's very important to have those targets in there so that the public can hold us accountable for that commitment.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to be able to rise and speak in Committee of the Whole to the amendment currently on the floor for Bill 1. I really appreciate the minister's enthusiasm, but, you know, only the government could have a limit as a target. Only this government could say that a cap is a goal. And you know what? They've got experience at it because it's happened before. This is why, although I appreciate the minister's enthusiasm, I think he's wrong.

We had the government bring forward a so-called cap on tuition fees for postsecondary education institutions. I think it was 20 per cent for universities and 30 per cent for colleges. At the time, you know, this was touted as being a cap, and no way would the government ever allow the universities to charge more than 30 per cent in the tuitions, and this was a wonderful thing, and it was going to benefit all students absolutely. Get out the parade; strike up the band; get out the bunting. This was the bee's knees. Mixing my metaphors there a bit, but you'll bear with me, Mr. Chairman.

What really happened from that is that the colleges and universities looked around and went: oh, you know, we're not at that amount, so that's not really a limit; it's a goal. And they started increasing tuition fees as fast as they possibly could to try and reach the cap because it had become a goal.

This is the kind of process that this government likes to put in place. Given the funding situation with postsecondary education institutions, I cannot fault the boards of governors and the leadership at our postsecondary education institutions for taking advantage and following the lead that the government dangled so enticingly in front of them. Of course they were going to follow that change. That's why the government put it in the legislation, I'm assuming. But the end result is we had ever-increasing tuition fees rapidly. You know, it really is a special talent, Mr. Chairman, to be able to say that your target is a set limit and that a cap is a goal.

So I'm speaking in favour of our amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Currie because I have to say: why would you be in this rush to stop yourself already? The Minister of Advanced Education says: well, it's not a limit; it's a goal because it's going to entice us and inspire us to reach that minimum maximum amount. I say: why? I mean, we haven't even started down this road, and you're already starting to put this limitation on yourself because, let's face it, it is a limitation. Just given the track record here, I cannot expect that the government will not find something else that it's going to want to start diverting the money to, and in fact this goal will become a limit very quickly.

The funds that we're talking about here are surplus funds, so why do we need to put any kind of a cap on it? You know, we don't know what the surplus is going to be, but we do expect that there will be a surplus, especially with the voodoo, black magic budgeting that this government likes to get involved with, especially around forecasting surpluses and the price of oil and gas. I don't think we need to rush to put a limit on this. Let's deal with the surpluses as they come. Let's start to build it over the years. I don't think we need that enticement.

I think the Alberta public understands very well the need for that investment. They spoke very clearly to me during the election and were very happy to support what I was saying at the doors, which was, of course, the Liberal policy on the surplus, and that included 35 per cent into the heritage fund, 35 per cent into a special postsecondary education fund, 25 per cent into infrastructure, and the final 5 per cent special for the universities enhancing an endowment fund for the arts and humanities. They certainly returned me to this Assembly with a fairly good margin, and I think it's policies like that that really helped. So there is no need to put a limit on this even if the government sees a limit as a goal. I just gotta love that.

The minister referenced the points that we'd been making about the size of the endowments that are really needed to adequately fund the money that's needed in postsecondary educational institutions right now, and I agree. We need a lot more money in there. I mean, honestly, Mr. Chairman, a \$3.5 billion endowment fund is going to give us about \$135 million a year. For the amount of money that we need in the universities of Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, our colleges, our apprenticeship programs, and our institutes of technology, 135 million bucks is a drop in the bucket. Considering all of the things that we need or want right now, I mean, good heavens, we're dealing with some amazing amount of infrastructure deficit – yeah, deferred maintenance for the two largest universities alone of approximately a billion dollars, and that's coming from the Alberta public interest fact sheet. So \$135 million isn't getting us very far.

You know, today in the session I tabled correspondence from a constituent of mine who, in fact, is a student and is, I'm assuming,

attending the University of Alberta. He was responding to some comments of the Premier, saying that there's a notion that postsecondary education in Alberta is underfunded, and he was taking issue with the concept of it being a notion. He points out that funding from the government per student dropped 24 per cent between '93-94 and 2003-2004 in constant dollars – dropped 24 per cent, funding from the government per full-time student. In 1982 for every dollar of tuition a student paid, the government gave \$10 to the institutions. In '02-03 the government contributed \$2.20 for every dollar of tuition put in by students. So this is starting to give you a feel for how much money we really need invested in those postsecondary institutions. Provincial expenditure on postsecondary education as a share of gross domestic product in '92-93 was 1.52 per cent. In '03-04 it was .91 per cent. Same problem. These statistics are all supporting the same thing. We are not investing enough money in our postsecondary institutions. Tuition at the U of A in '92-93 was \$1,610.40 – you can tell this is a university student; it's exact – for a full course load. In '04-05 tuition was \$4,537.20 for a first course load.

10:10

Mr. Hancock: On the amendment?

Ms Blakeman: I am on the amendment. The minister is concerned that I am not speaking to the amendment, which is to remove the cap. The point of removing the cap is to get more money in there because the cap, as the government has it, is \$3.5 billion, which is only going to generate \$135 million a year. My argument in looking at these statistics is that more than \$135 million is needed.

In 1983 tuition consisted of only 10 per cent of university operating revenue in Alberta. In 2003 tuition accounted for over 25 per cent. Remember where I started, Mr. Chairman, talking about the race to the cap, the universities going: oh, my goodness, we can increase our tuition fees in order to achieve that cap. There we have it going from 10 per cent to 25 per cent in a fairly short period of time.

I'm happy to support my colleague's amendment on this bill. I think it is the most important amendment that he needed to bring forward. I think that's signalled by him bringing it forward as the first on the bill. It's listed here and forevermore as amendment A1. It is deserving of support, and I appreciate what the minister's saying, that, you know, he's not going to view it that way. I appreciate his ability to reframe the way this gets looked at, but the fact of the matter is it's still a limit. We need more money available to go into postsecondary, and this is putting a cap on it. This is putting a limit on it, and I don't want to see that limit.

The recommendation of the amendment is to move the cap, remove it completely, and I think that is the right thing to do. I'm happy to speak of favour of it, and I will be voting in favour of it. So thanks for the opportunity to speak in favour of that amendment, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I as well will certainly be supporting my colleague from Calgary-Currie in his efforts to have this amendment approved by the Legislature.

I thought the minister was on a roll there when he jumped up and waved his hands and indicated how much he supported this amendment. If he had just stopped after the first sentence, we could probably have moved on quite quickly. He spoke in favour of the \$3 billion, and in fact maybe the amendment based on the minister's comments should be simply to change the word "maximum" to

“minimum.” I see his head nodding, so perhaps that’s what we should be doing, establishing that the government would automatically make that fund a minimum \$3 billion and allow it to grow. That would perhaps be a friendly amendment that would accomplish what it is that we’re trying to do here and at the same time help the government move a little quicker to the cap that the minister so desperately wants his government to move to. Really, I think that’s perhaps what we should be looking at.

Mr. Chairman, there are so many facts and figures that could be quoted here. I’m just going to name a few of them. In March this year there was a newspaper report that indicated that four Alberta universities, just four of them, the four big ones, project 160 million new operating dollars just to catch up to their peers. Now, I’m not sure exactly about the math that my colleague from Edmonton-Centre was quoting, but she was saying that on an investment of \$3 billion it would return somewhere in that range. So just one year alone with this fund, assuming that it was at the \$3 billion, would be used simply to help those four universities catch up to their peers in terms of where they feel they should be. I think that illustrates quite clearly that the \$3 billion is not nearly enough. Of course, one of the things that I’m quite sure we have already discussed in second reading of this bill is the fact that there’s no clear mandate in the bill as to when we would reach that cap, and the minister himself said that it is to be treated as a goal.

I know we’re all anxious to see the budget tomorrow, Mr. Chairman, and I’m particularly anxious to see the fourth-quarter results and find out just how big the budget surplus has ballooned. The numbers we’re hearing are somewhere between \$6 billion and \$8 billion. I honestly wouldn’t be surprised if it was a little bit more. At a time when this province is experiencing unprecedented wealth due to the unexpectedly high world prices of oil and natural gas, I think we’re shortchanging ourselves. I think we’re shortchanging our students and our future by putting what I see to be an artificially low cap on what is, admittedly, a very good idea, the idea of a postsecondary endowment fund.

I won’t spend a lot of time talking about whose idea it was – we’ve bounced that one back and forth a few times already in this Assembly – but it certainly is an idea that has captivated the imagination of all parties and certainly garnered an awful lot of acceptance out there in the real world, again from students and parents alike. So it’s a very good idea. The only real question is: why are we holding it back? Why are we putting this artificial cap in place when, in fact, as I suggest, if anything, we should be viewing the \$3 billion as a starting-off point and allowing it to grow from there?

I was also intrigued by the minister’s comments when he correlated this fund to what takes place at some of the larger postsecondary institutions in the United States and some of the endowment funds that they have, privately funded, that are many times more than the \$3 billion. I’m not sure whether there’s been any effort made to explore the possibilities of having private funds contributing to this fund, but there may be something there that we should be looking at as well that might allow us to race to this cap, as my colleague from Edmonton-Centre described, and get there a little sooner if, in fact, the amendment that we’re debating is not successful.

Certainly, Mr. Chairman, as I said, I just believe that by setting it at \$3 billion, by suggesting that it’s a goal and by not defining the parameters under which we will try to achieve that goal, given the fact that we’re experiencing this incredible wealth and given the fact that we’re probably in a better position than any other jurisdiction in North America to make that \$3 billion a minimum as opposed to a maximum, I certainly have to voice my very strongest support for

the amendment. If, in fact, we can’t do that, then, as I suggest, maybe with the minister’s consent we might be able to look at changing the word “maximum” to “minimum” and accomplishing something that perhaps both sides of this House could be happy with.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to add a few more words around this debate about why the \$3 billion cap is in the bill in the first place. I think I understand what it is the minister would like to accomplish, and I find myself hard-pressed to disagree with the minister philosophically. I think the minister gets it that this fund really does need to grow far beyond the \$3 billion mark, and I think the minister is taking at least a medium-term view.

I don’t know if I can say that he’s taking a long-term view. We haven’t had discussions that would allow me to peer that deeply into the minister’s psyche, but I do believe that he is taking at least a medium-term view and looking ahead to the day when the cap is reached or very nearly reached and perhaps coming back into this House with a new piece of legislation. Perhaps it will be called the Access to the Future Amendment Act – I don’t know – in, we should be so lucky, a year, maybe two, maybe three, maybe five years. I don’t know how long it’ll take to then raise that cap.

10:20

Philosophically I believe that’s where the minister is coming from. I can’t quibble with the philosophy. I can’t quibble, I suppose, with the principle. The process, the practical application of this, though, I think has the cart decidedly before the horse. If the notion here is that a performance target of some sort needs to be established in order to achieve the desired goals, I have no quarrel with setting performance targets, by any stretch of the imagination. My colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford has certainly defined one way that we could go about this, changing the word “maximum” to “minimum” so that the minimum amount that would be allocated under subsection (5) would be \$3 billion, not the maximum. That’s one way of doing it.

Another way of doing it would have been to perhaps look at section 4(4). If you’ll bear with me, Mr. Chair, because I know I’m now off the specific amendment into a different section, that subsection says:

An account from within the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund is deemed to be established to which is allocated, as considered appropriate by the Minister of Finance, money that is transferred to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund after April 1, 2005.

You see, Mr. Chairman, there was an opportunity right there – and, no, I didn’t propose an amendment on this, and perhaps I should have – to lock in a performance target, a performance requirement. If the desire here is to start this fund growing and to grow it rapidly in this race to the target, this race to the limit, if you will, then commit the Minister of Finance to putting in a certain specified amount of money on a regular basis.

Our plan, the Liberal opposition’s plan, during the election campaign, of course, was to put in 35 per cent of every annual budget surplus. We’ve talked about this. We’ve debated this. We’ve discussed it in the House. It’s in the record. I’m not going to spend a lot of time on that. I think it is a matter of public record that that is the way we would have gone about it, and if there’s any need to go further in getting that onto the public record, our Bill 203, Report on Alberta’s Legacy Act, will I’m sure make that abundantly clear as we come up to discussing that.

But the thing is that I don't know whether we should commit this government or commit the Minister of Finance to putting in a minimum \$3 billion to kick-start this endowment fund. I don't know whether it's fiscally prudent to demand an immediate infusion of \$3 billion. I imagine that's a bit on the high side. The way this province's economy is working, the way it's humming along, I think it's pretty clear that, God willing and the creek don't rise, we can achieve that \$3 billion figure – let me not call it a target now, Mr. Chairman, but a figure – in fairly short order.

Whether we could commit the Minister of Finance to dumping \$3 billion, writing a cheque for \$3 billion to transfer the money, supposedly new money, immediately into this account within the heritage savings trust fund – you know, I think there may be some real questions about the fiscal prudence of doing that. However, I think the minister could have been required and the government could have committed the minister to putting in a percentage or dollar amount that would have been reasonable and fiscally prudent. By taking that tack, the desire to achieve an endowment fund that ultimately is much bigger than \$3 billion could have been fast-tracked.

The minister alluded to discussions that have happened in this House, and I've certainly been part of those discussions myself, as have some of my colleagues. We're not going to get to the point where we have so much money in an endowment fund that we literally have, as in the case of I believe it's Princeton University – I don't have my notes right in front of me, but I believe it's Princeton – \$1.3 million per student. Yes, it is Princeton that has the endowment of \$1.3 million per student, which is the biggest in North America. We're not going to get there overnight. We're not going to get there in a couple of years. We're not going to get there in a decade. You know, maybe a 100-year time frame or a 50-year time frame for that level of endowment is realistic, but let's aim for it, Mr. Chairman.

That is the point of amendment A1 in striking out section 4(5), which sets a maximum amount, a cap – you can call it a target, but what it really is is a cap, an upper limit – removing that from the legislation, from the bill. It says, "The maximum amount that may be allocated under subsection (4) is \$3,000,000,000." So the language there, Mr. Chairman, is very clear. Yes, it's subject to revision, subject to amendment down the road by another piece of legislation, but unless and until that subsequent piece of legislation is brought forward, we are stuck with a postsecondary endowment fund that is capped in this province at \$3 billion. The minister's good intentions notwithstanding, there is absolutely nothing in this bill that would commit this or any subsequent government to reopening the legislation and changing the cap.

Now, as we all know, our mothers have all told us that we should be careful what we wish for. Perhaps the minister should be careful what he wishes for in suggesting that members on this side of the House should ask regular questions in question period until that \$3 billion target is reached. It might get monotonous. Yes, in question period we do have the opportunity, to a degree at least, to hold the government accountable for promises made, but really what we would be doing is asking: "Well, have you reached the limit yet? Have you grown this thing as far as you ever said that it was going to grow?"

We do not have the power to compel. The voters, I guess, in a subsequent election have the power to compel this thing to grow by changing the government, but we on the opposition side of the House do not have the power to compel this government to bring in a subsequent piece of legislation that reopens this issue and establishes a higher cap or removes the cap altogether.

So why wait, Mr. Chairman? Why wait to see whether the

government will do this? Even if we can assume that the government will, for the sake of argument, why wait until they do? Why not remove the cap now? Why not let this endowment fund start out from a point at which it can grow in perpetuity until it is worth \$300 billion or more? That's the right way to go about this, we believe. That's why I brought forward this amendment. I certainly intend to vote for the amendment, and I hope this House will too.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Oh, I'm not done yet, Mr. Chairman, not by a long shot.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move a further amendment to the bill, if I might.

The Deputy Chair: We need to have it circulated.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. I will circulate it first of all. My next amendment will be coming around to you all very shortly here.

10:30

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the amendment that is being distributed to you will be referred to as amendment A2.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, you may proceed.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is, as the chairman noted, my amendment A2 to the Access to the Future Act, and I would move that Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act be amended in section 5.

Mr. Chairman, a little guidance from you, if I may, please. Do I need to read this amendment into the record?

The Deputy Chair: Not necessarily. You have circulated it.

Mr. Taylor: It will take a while. There are quite a few changes. Well, I'll zip through it.

(a) By adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The Council shall consist of not more than 17 members comprised of the following:

- (a) the chair of the Council appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council;
- (b) the following members appointed by the Minister:
 - (i) 2 members representing universities, each nominated by a university board of governors;
 - (ii) 2 members representing public colleges and technical institutes, each nominated by a board of governors;
 - (iii) one member representing non-profit private colleges, nominated by a college's governing authority;
 - (iv) 2 members representing the academic staff of public post-secondary institutions, one nominated by a general faculties council or an academic council, and the other nominated by an academic staff association;
 - (v) one member representing the non-academic staff of public post-secondary institutions, nominated by a non-academic staff association;
 - (vi) one member representing undergraduate students of public post-secondary institutions, nominated by a students association;

- (vii) one member representing graduate students, nominated by a graduate students association;
 - (viii) not more than 7 members of the general public who may be representative of parents, alumni, business organizations or organized labour.
- (b) by striking out subsection (2)(a);
 - (c) by striking out subsection (3) and substituting the following:
 - (3) The members of the Council may elect one member to act as chair in the absence of the chair or in the event of the chair's inability to act.
 - (4) The Minister may designate an employee under the Minister's administration to attend meetings of the Council.
 - (5) Words defined in the Post-secondary Learning Act have the same meaning in this section.

Mr. Chairman, I know that there are other of my colleagues who wish to speak to this as well, and so I will be reasonably brief in speaking to this amendment myself. The point of this amendment – and I take you back to what I said at the beginning of committee study of this bill, that we really had three major areas of concern where this bill was concerned. Number one is the cap on the fund, and we spoke to that just a moment ago; number two, the composition of the advisory council; and number three, a need for some specified accountability on the part of the Ministry of Advanced Education, and we will get to that later.

This deals with the composition of the access advisory council, which is established under section 5(1). Section 5(2) goes on to talk about it to some degree, and of course we would strike out the part of that that in broad, general terms how the council might be established.

We think the terms in the bill are too broad and too general, to be blunt. We think that in order for this access advisory council to function as I'm sure the minister intended it to function, it needs to be specifically comprised of representatives of all sorts of different parts of the system, stakeholders in the system. I hesitate to use the word "stakeholder" because for some strange reason whenever I hear the word "stakeholder" I always think of the guy standing there with the platter next to the barbecue ready to put the steak on it, but I digress.

It needs to have specific representation across the system so that all sectors of the system that should be represented are represented and have a seat at the table. Not only that, Mr. Chairman. We believe that it needs to be seen by the public to have that kind of representation. Thus it is that we spell it out: two members from universities; two members from public colleges and technical institutes; one member representing the nonprofit private colleges; two members representing academic staff of public postsecondary institutions; one member representing support staff; one member representing the students, and we think they should have a place at the table; one member representing the graduate students, and we think that they should have a place at the table because they're still part of the system; and seven members of the general public.

Here we give some guidance to the minister as to who we think should be worthy of consideration for membership on the council. We think there should be some parent representation there. Parents, after all, do pay some of the bills for their adult children's postsecondary education, possibly not as large a percentage as the government believes the parents should, but they do pay some. Alumni, of course, have been through the system and in some cases fairly recently. Not to put them necessarily first among equals here, but who better to ask for input, for advice on an advisory council as to where the money in the access to the future fund should go than people who have been recently through the system?

Business organizations: of course business organizations have a stake in this. Organized labour: of course organized labour has a stake in this, you know, if for no other reason than that we include our fine apprenticeship training programs in any discussion that we have in this province on advanced education. That's part of it. So of course they should be on there.

Does that mean that the minister has absolutely no ability, no wiggle room if you will, to add somebody else who in his considered opinion deserves a seat at the table? No, not necessarily. We say, "7 members of the general public." The reason why we say not more than seven is because we just don't want this advisory council to get so unwieldy as to not be able to accomplish anything. But of the seven members of the general public we've only specified here four organizations that we think should be represented. We do not require that they be represented. We merely say that those members of the general public "may be representative of parents, alumni, business organizations or organized labour."

So there is room for others here, and even at that, although this admittedly would not be a voting member of the council, we've suggested that the minister have the ability and the authority to designate an employee under his administration to attend meetings of the council so that he's got a direct pipeline to what the council is proposing.

The chair of the council would be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. That's the one requirement that we suggest, to have someone other than the minister himself or herself appoint advisory council members. We are a fairly new bunch on this side of the House, but as we understand it, that brings a little more transparency and accountability to the process.

10:40

Of the people that the minister appoints, he has a great deal of discretion in there in choosing from among nominees put forward by, you know, their respective organizations, be it a board of governors of a university or a general faculties council or a students' association or whomever. So we think that this amendment – I would urge this House to consider it carefully, debate it, and I hope at the end of that debate approve it – not only ensures that there is fair and comprehensive representation on a very important council that will advise the minister on how to disperse this money but will be seen to do that as well. And that's key. That's key in a democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll allow others to debate now.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to briefly respond to the amendment put forward by the hon. member and, in doing so, indicate that I believe the intention of the amendment is, in fact, quite appropriate in terms of trying to put some parameters around how the access council might work. However, I would encourage members not to support this particular amendment because I think it is not useful at the start of this process to prescribe in too much detail how this might work.

While it may in fact evolve to this, and I would anticipate that on the council there might be a significant number of these organizations and institutions and students, et cetera, represented or their perspectives represented on the council, what it envisions with the access council is something very similar to something that we set up when I was in the Department of Justice. We called it the Justice Policy Advisory Committee, and in fact it was established based on the steering committee that came out of the justice summit. We found it very useful to have on that Justice Policy Advisory Commit-

tee not representatives of various groups but people who brought the perspective of various stakeholders and organizations within the justice system to the table. There is a distinction between a representative of a group and someone who brings the perspective of a group to the table.

When you're setting up this type of an organization, I think it's important to have the kind of flexibility to be able to work with it, to make sure that you can build it. Yes, it has to be open and accountable. Yes, the public has to know what's going on. Yes, there have to be ways of ensuring that that happens. We had the option, when we set this up, of prescribing it in this kind of detail in the act and chose not to go that route because there does need to be flexibility.

I'll just use the example that when we set up the Justice Policy Advisory Committee, we had a meeting. We were talking about mandate, we were talking about how it would proceed, and someone at the table indicated that it would be useful to have the perspective of a person from the community of persons with disabilities, for example. So we said, yes, that would be a great perspective to have at the table, and we went out and found an appropriate person from that perspective to come to the table. By the same token, we talked about bringing someone from the education sector into the process.

So sometimes when you look at what you're doing and you sit down and you say, "Well, these are the people who ought to be at the table," you prescribe it in this kind of detail, and you build a council of 17 members. Then you're saying: well, that's a lot of people to have around the table to be involved in these sorts of discussions. Then you say: but this is an endowment fund; wouldn't it be great to have somebody who has endowment experience on here? Or maybe we want somebody from the perspective of how we might transition this fund to grow in another way.

Maybe we want to look at the question of how endowment funds across North America have been able to obtain funds from their alumni, for example, and how we might engage in that sort of thing. So there may be talents that you want to have at the table. Yes, you could invite those talents on an ad hoc basis to participate. You could set subcommittees, as the bill suggests. You could bring in those talents in a number of different ways.

The point that I'm making, Mr. Chairman, is that in the bill as we have it, we have the context to the concept of the access council and the need to deal with the access council. So the public knows that it's there. It's not hidden. The public knows it's there. It doesn't have to be in the act. Many other councils and things are put together without them being prescribed by the act. It doesn't have to be in the act, but we wanted it to be in the act so it was very clear that there was going to be an advisory council, that decisions that were being made with respect to the fund weren't going to be made in secret, without anybody seeing them, without there being any input. We wanted to have the flexibility to design this properly and to be able to adjust it in its early stages so that it has the appropriate

perspectives brought to the table. Certainly we're open in doing so to having suggestions – and these ones are some good suggestions – about the types of people that ought to be involved in that discussion.

With respect to the hon. member: unduly prescriptive, unduly limiting, and I think would not in the early stages of the access council be the appropriate way to go. So I would ask members to not accept this amendment, in fact, to vote against this amendment.

I'm sure that there will be others that will want to speak to the amendment before we vote, so, Mr. Chairman, I would ask that we now adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Mr. Chairman, I'd move that we rise and report.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, I presume that you are moving that we rise and report bills 12, 23, 24, 19, 25, and progress on Bill 1.

Mr. Stevens: That's exactly what I meant by those few words.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 12, Bill 23, Bill 24, Bill 19, and Bill 25. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:49 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 13, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/13

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask for guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's official visit by Her Majesty the Queen isn't taking place until next month, if it takes place at all. Today we have a different kind of royalty in the legislative Chamber. The Ferbey Four have just returned from Victoria, B.C., where they captured the 2005 men's world curling championship. They are truly the kings of curling, having now won three world championships and four Brier titles.

If this past week was an emotional roller-coaster ride for Canadian curling fans, it must have been more like a tornado for the members of the team, but like true champions they fought through to the end and delivered a virtually perfect gold medal game. They certainly earned a day of fishing, although I understand they didn't catch anything, the first day of what I hope will be a relaxing summer for all of them.

Mr. Speaker, it's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Team Canada skip, Randy Ferbey; third, David Nedohin; second, Scott Pfeifer, who, incidentally, works for Alberta Energy as a policy analyst; lead, Marcel "Shot" Rocque; alternate, Dan Holowaychuk; and coach, Brian Moore, who couldn't be with us today. I see they're already standing. I'd ask that they receive the warm welcome and congratulations of the Assembly. [standing ovation]

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly His Excellency Mohamed Saad, ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia. With His Excellency is the honorary consul of Tunisia in Alberta and a former member of this Assembly, Mr. John Zaozimy, who is based in Calgary.

I was pleased to host our honoured guests at an official luncheon earlier today, and I want to say that it was a great pleasure. I want to let you know that it didn't matter what language you spoke when you were there, His Excellency is fluent in a number of languages. This is the ambassador's first visit to Alberta. Mr. Speaker, the ambassador is visiting Calgary tomorrow to formally install Mr. Zaozimy as Tunisia's first ever honorary consul in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that our honoured guests stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you 16 seniors from the Club 60 Roses in Legal, which is located in the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency. They are accompanied today by co-

ordinators Mrs. Georgette Cyr, Mrs. Lucille Dube, and their bus driver, Mr. Normand Cyr. They are participating in a tour of the Legislature today and are seated in the members' gallery, I believe, this afternoon. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms Calahasen: Yes. They are here, Mr. Speaker. I would like introduce to you and to members of this Assembly 26 students who are here again from Mistassiny school in Wabasca, a different group this time. With them are teacher/group leader Christine Gullion and parent helpers Aline Auger, Angie Holt, John Houle, and of course the other is Don Tessier, who is the principal and the bus driver as well. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour on this historic budget day to introduce to you and through your to all members of this fine Assembly a group of young women who work miracles every day with all of their colleagues and clients across the province. They work in AADAC's Edmonton executive offices and in the information services division. After I announce their names I'll ask them to stand. They are Sara Elliott-Erickson, Sandee Greatrex, Jennifer Hourihan, Susan Hutton, Sheryl Kapy, Trisha Keetch, Jenine Safioles, Habi Shariff, Clara Sinfield, Brandy Spence, Jan Tworek, Michele Watkins, Laura Wignall, and Cathy Work, and joining the group on their Legislature tour today is Shirley Noel, who is from the Ministry of Environment. I would ask all these amazing young human beings to stand to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I introduce somebody to you and through you by the name of Greg Pasychny. He's the very energetic and young mayor of Edson with lots of enthusiasm to bring this town into the 21st century. I'd like him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two individuals from my constituency. Jeannette Giesbrecht is a former editor of a local newspaper and currently serves as my constituency assistant. Mr. Peter Byrne is president of the Devon Chamber of Commerce and a Leduc/Nisku ambassador. Mr. Speaker, this gentleman takes his democratic privileges so seriously that at last November's election he was gravely ill in the Misericordia hospital and got a three-hour pass just so he could get home to Devon to vote in the election. They're seated in the public gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise today and to introduce somebody who is well known to this House.

Of course, it is budget day, so he'll be watching the budget very closely later this afternoon. I'd ask him to stand as I introduce him: the director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, John Carpay.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 41 students from Northmount elementary school. They're accompanied today by Mrs. Gloria Arsenaault, Ms Charmain Francis, and Miss Michelle Ellison, a student teacher. They're seated in the public gallery. I would ask them now to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House four seniors from the Glenora riding, the executive of Groat House Tenants Association: Jean Gateman, president; Allan Stacey, vice-president; and Esther Morgan, treasurer. With them also is Maria Garcia. I'd invite them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the assembled host Brian West, president of the Students' Union of the University of Calgary, the heart of Calgary-Varsity. Would Brian please stand, if he's arrived, and receive the traditional greeting from this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Ms Ireen Slater, a resident of St. Albert since '69, a tireless worker. She was the original founder of Stop Abuse in Families and was the executive director for 13 years. She has received many recognitions: the Queen's jubilee medal in 2002, the commemorative medal of the 125th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada in 1992. She was recognized by the United Nations with an International Women's Day award in 1998. Ms Slater is currently the vice-president of SUN for Alberta and chair of the St. Albert chapter. Would she please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly my guest who is seated in the public gallery observing proceedings. He will also be joining us later in the gallery for the presentation of the budget to see what the government has in mind for Alberta seniors. He's representing a very vibrant and active group called Seniors United Now. He is Ron Ellis. I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Bryan Harvard. Bryan is the chairman of the Lloydminster exhibition association, Lloydminster also being home to the Wayside

curling classic. It's Bryan's first trip to the Leg., and I'd ask that Bryan rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature the mayor of Rocky Mountain House, Jim Bague. Of course, he's very interested in what's in the budget because the taxpayers of Rocky have to spend just about \$150 per capita on policing. So he's interested in the budget. Jim, if you would stand and get the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two outstanding Albertans who, like the Ferbey Five, personify what the Alberta advantage is all about. Dr. Jacqueline Shan is the co-founder of CV Technologies, a spinoff company from the University of Alberta, and the co-discoverer of Cold-fX and currently the company's chief executive officer. She has double doctorate degrees in pharmacology and physiology and led the company's product development effort which resulted in the discovery of its lead product, Cold-fX, which is today found on pharmacy shelves in more than 4,000 retail outlets across the country. She was chosen as BioAlberta's 2004 entrepreneur of the year as well as a Global TV woman of vision. Therefore, it's not surprising that in January of this year Alberta *Venture* magazine named CV Technologies one of the 50 fastest growing companies in Alberta. Accompanying her today is Warren Michaels, who is the vice-president of communications for CV Technologies. I would ask the two of them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two wonderful ladies that work very hard on making sure I don't get into any trouble. That's Mrs. Jan Wasylshyn and Mrs. Lorna Willert. They're both constituency assistants of mine, and if anybody in the House would like to learn how to make sure that everything is streamlined for their constituents, they could have a meeting with them later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me today to introduce two elected officials from my constituency who share the same constituents as I do and who work very closely with me. It's a pleasure to have them here today: the reeve of the county of Mountain View, Al Kemmere, and Murray Woods, the reeve of Kneehill county. That is a position I once held. They're seated in the public gallery. Please give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly municipal leaders from the constituency of

Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Joining us today is the mayor, Ray Prevost, from the town of Bonnyville; mayor Johnnie Doonanco of the village of Glendon, home of the world's biggest perogy; and reeve Ken Foley from the municipal district of Bonnyville. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask my guests if they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Well, then I'll introduce two of my distinguished visitors today in the Speaker's gallery: Brian Schultz, the mayor of the town of Barrhead, and Bob Jackson, the chairman of the Aspen health authority.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Legislation

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. Member for Red Deer-North made a passionate plea to this Assembly in support of her private member's bill addressing treatment for crystal meth addicts. The Liberal opposition supports this bill. In fact, our critic of Children's Services has worked with the Member for Red Deer-North in a combined effort to advance the bill. But as a private member's bill there are no guarantees it will be passed or proclaimed. My questions are to the Premier. Given the support for an amended version of Bill 202 on both sides of this Assembly, do you as Premier support Bill 202 with its proposed amendments?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I do wholeheartedly support Bill 202, and I appreciate the phone call from the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition relative to seeing if it can be brought forward as a government bill at this late stage. We're looking into that right now, and I'll have the hon. Minister of Justice and House leader respond.

The Speaker: Let's go on to the second one. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Well, given that the Liberal opposition is prepared to work hand in glove with the government to pass such a bill on an urgent basis if it were brought forward as a government bill, will the Premier have the same issues brought forward as a government bill?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again, I don't know the procedures involved, and I'll have the House leader speak to this issue.

The Speaker: The hon. House leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an interesting issue because I'm not aware of a mechanism within our Standing Orders to move a private member's bill onto the Order Paper as a government bill. So we would have to either look at the opportunity as to whether the bill can be withdrawn at this stage and replaced with a government bill or whether it may be more appropriate just to simply complete the process. Private members' bills are bills in this House which private members own, which have the opportunity of being debated, and, in fact, are the only bills in this House which are subject to automatic closure or time allocation at each stage of passage.

So it may be appropriate to ask the hon. members opposite to use

that full co-operation that they've suggested that they'll so willingly grant so that this bill can proceed through the process that it's already in, which would be the easiest and most straightforward way of making sure it became law in this province.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: will the Premier give this Assembly his personal commitment that his government will undertake best effort – absolute best effort – to bring this forward as a government bill?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will use all of our best efforts to make sure that this bill is passed. Now, as the Government House Leader said and pointed out to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, there is an opportunity for this to proceed as a private member's bill and be passed, but if that can't be done, we will look at all the rules to see if there's any possible way that this can be brought forward as a government bill.

Speaker's Ruling Voting on Bills

The Speaker: At this point I'd like to caution all who participated today, including the Premier and including the Leader of the Official Opposition. If any member in this Assembly chose to rise on a point of privilege believing that their right to determination of a vote on a bill was now being compromised because of positions taken by leaders, that point of privilege would most certainly be upheld by the chair in this Assembly. Every member in here has the right to make his or her own decision and his or her own determination on the basis of every bill before this Assembly.

Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Standing Policy Committees

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing committees in areas of policy are standard in all the provincial, state, and federal governments in Canada and the U.S. These are all multiparty committees except for one province, Alberta. Issues like the crystal meth bill could have become a government bill with proper input from the opposition. My first question is to the Premier. When will the government make standing policy committees truly representative of all Albertans by making them multiparty?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has to understand how standing policy committees came about. It was after the leadership in '92 when we decided to change the way government operated and to have a bottom to top decision-making process that involved MLAs, private members, and cabinet members meeting as equals to decide and make recommendations on government policy. Hence, the policy committees came about. These are committees of cabinet and are government committees, so there is no need to follow the federal system, which is their prerogative. They can have any system they want, and we can have any system we want, and the system appears to be working. As a matter of fact, as a participant and president of Executive Council I know that the system works very well indeed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: why did

this government shut down opposition MLAs at a standing policy committee from asking questions of stakeholders on a multimillion dollar issue, as it did last week to the members for Calgary-Varsity and Edmonton-Manning?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea. That decision is entirely up to the chair. Perhaps – and I underline the word “perhaps” – the questions were frivolous. I don’t know. But that decision is entirely up to the chair.

Mr. Backs: Again to the Premier: when will this government begin a review of the standing policy committee process to make them truly democratic?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, they are very democratic. The process is thus. You know, I’d like to explain this to the Liberal opposition because that’s what they’re always going to be.

An Hon. Member: In your dreams.

Mr. Klein: No. Believe me; we’re going to leave the government in very good shape, in very, very good shape, so my successor can take over a good government and continue with the process we now have in place.

Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, items go to A and P, the Agenda and Priorities Committee. They’re steered to a standing policy committee, the appropriate standing policy committee. That committee then makes a recommendation to cabinet. The chairs of those committees sit around the cabinet table to speak to the recommendations. If a recommendation is approved, it’s reported to cabinet. If there’s no recommendation, then it’s reported to caucus.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

School Utilization

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has the highest dropout rate for high school students in the entire country. Meanwhile, many high schools across the city of Edmonton are overcrowded. Students are packed into classrooms like sardines into a can. Strathcona high school has a utilization rate of 116 per cent, McNally is at 108 per cent, Ross Sheppard is at 104 per cent, and W.P. Wagner is at a 99 per cent utilization rate. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Is this chronic student overcrowding the reason why the three-year high school completion rate is the worst in the country?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we don’t have the worst high school completion rate anywhere in the country. However, suffice it to say that the three-year high school completion rate is very, very low, and we are working on improving that. In fact, one of the first things I did when I became minister was I struck a task force to examine that question.

I think it should also be pointed out, however, that our high school completion rate for the four-year and five-year windows is about middle of the pack. It’s about 75 per cent. Then when we get to the actual age range of students, who are now young adults in the 25 to 35 year age range, we have an 89 per cent high school completion rate amongst that population, which is very good. So I think there’s a disconnect in the linkages that the hon. member is trying to make.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: if there’s so much surplus space in public education facilities, surplus space that is unfortunately being used to force schools to close, why is this government not using the surplus space for continuing high school education programs and saving thousands and thousands of tax dollars in the process? Use that space.

Mr. Zwozdesky: You know, that’s an interesting thought, Mr. Speaker, and in fact I think the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation would like to augment the answer I’m going to give because I know that he and I have been looking at new ways of utilizing school space, underutilized school space, and school space that might become available after the normal lifespan of that school has been exhausted.

So I’d ask the other minister to augment briefly if he wishes.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the city of Edmonton and Edmonton public there are roughly 160,000 square metres of unused space, which is the highest percentage anywhere in the province. They are not necessarily in the right place, and indeed one of the issues that we have in the province of Alberta is that the school space is not necessarily in the right place where the students are because of the change in demographics.

I can tell how anxious you are to have the next question.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: how much does it cost to lease all the current commercial space used for continuing high school education in Edmonton? Why are we renting space when we already own good facilities?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I’ll have to take that question under advisement. I don’t carry that statistic in my hip pocket, and if there is an answer such as the hon. member is looking for, I’d be happy to try and dig it up for him. I don’t know if the hon. minister of infrastructure might wish to comment further.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Sure. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The simple answer to that is that it is up to the Edmonton public school board. Edmonton public rents space in a couple of buildings downtown, where you have specific issues such as Amiskwaciy Academy, which is a rent-to-own type of space. You also have metro high school, I believe it is called, which again is a specific centre high, which is a specific type of school that is used for a specific purpose. As a general rule Edmonton public is very cost conscious about where they rent space, especially when there is space that is available elsewhere.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

2:00

Women’s Shelters

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government announced funding for 55 new spaces in Alberta’s women’s shelters this week. That’s welcome, but it’s a drop in the bucket when set against the shocking fact that 3,800 women and families were turned away from shelters last year for lack of space. Edmonton will get a grand total

of three new beds, while Calgary will get none. This is simply not good enough. My question is to the Premier. Will Alberta women and families only get crumbs from the grand banquet that you call the Alberta advantage? When will this government commit to appropriate funding for services for abused women?

Mr. Hancock: Point of order.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to await the budget. But relative to policy as it affects women's shelters, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to say that this isn't about Edmonton or Calgary. This is about serving the needs of all women and children in this province. I'd also like to indicate that the announcement that we made this week is servicing nine beds at Hope Haven in Lac La Biche. We're going from one end of the province on this announcement.

The other thing I would like to say is that we're facing a budget in an hour, and I'll ask the hon. member to stay tuned on that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier again: given that almost 4,000 abused women and their children were turned away from the shelters last year, is it this government's policy to turn a blind eye to family violence?

Mr. Klein: No, Mr. Speaker, it's not this government's policy, intent in any way, shape, or form to turn a blind eye to family violence. As a matter of fact, a lot has been done to combat family violence, and I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, no one in crisis gets turned away in this province. Let's be very, very clear. I think it's also important: if there is a crisis situation and the beds are full, we find other accommodations for them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Second supplementary to the Premier: given that Alberta has the fewest supports in Canada for women fleeing abusive relationships, including paltry affordable social housing programs and disgraceful social assistance rates, is it this government's policy to make it as difficult as possible for women to escape the cycle of violence?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I take great offence to those statements in the preamble. This is a wonderful province in which to live, and we look after those who are the subject of abuse and look after those who are less fortunate in society. Notwithstanding what some critics and the NDs would like to see, this government and my colleagues have a conscience that is so socially responsible that it would make their heads turn. You know, sit down and examine exactly what we are doing and the millions and millions and millions of dollars we pour into support programs for the less fortunate in society.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Border Closure to Canadian Cattle

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our hon. Premier indicates that his government represents Albertans, yet they seem to be scared of a little court challenge on important issues. Given that Alberta beef producers are Albertans and that the U.S. border cattle closure is devastating to many of them and on March 3 a U.S. district judge blocked the lifting of the ban on live Canadian cattle to the U.S., my question to the Premier: who from this government was representing Alberta in that Montana courtroom on the 3rd of March?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anyone from Alberta was at the court hearing, but I'll have the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations respond because this is his bailiwick.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Klein: Or minister of agriculture.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Horner: Indeed, the judgment out of the court case was somewhat biased, to say the least. There were a number of representatives in the courtroom that were feeding us information on probably a minute-by-minute basis. The Agriculture Canada representatives and their legal counsel were also working hand in hand with the USDA during their presentation and, in fact, were working on the amicus briefs that were presented to court, which were rejected by the judge. We all know where he stands.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: why was this government's own official U.S. representative, Murray Smith, not in the Montana courtroom when such an important case was being made?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if Murray had his feet firmly on the ground at that particular time when this ruling was made.

I can tell the hon. member that we have been very aggressive on this file, and we feel that the actions – Mr. Speaker, just to qualify. I don't know the rules and regulations and the legalities surrounding a Canadian lawyer appearing before a U.S. judge. Notwithstanding that, we feel that the judge's ruling should be challenged. I understand that it is being challenged. The federal government, of course, has a responsibility in this regard, as do other provinces. We are not the only beef-producing province in Canada, although we produce the most beef and the best.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we have consistently said that this has nothing to do with animal health or human health. It has a lot to do with protectionism and a lot to do with politics.

Mr. Hinman: Three months to land is a long time.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why were the Alberta beef producers not represented in this courtroom on the 3rd of March, when they could have been?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. minister of agriculture respond to that question.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, it wasn't up to this government for that to happen. They could not have been involved in the court case because the judge – Cebull, in this particular instance – is the one that decides that.

I would like to point out to the hon. member, though, that the representative in Washington that we have has been invaluable to us in accessing senators and congressmen to solidify our support in the United States. He's been invaluable, actually, in connections between the CFIA, the USDA, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, even our federal government is accessing some of the contacts that he has.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government has legal counsel engaged in Washington because we believe that's the best way for us to fight through their own legal system.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government is working closely with both the federal government and the USDA on the amicus briefs and the filings of the appeal currently going on in a California courtroom.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing more and all that we can to help this court case become overturned.

SuperNet Hookup Cost

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, schools in my constituency are concerned about the implementation delays regarding the SuperNet project and also whether or not the Ministry of Education is going to offset hookup costs. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Will the minister provide monies to all school jurisdictions for SuperNet hookup costs?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the SuperNet project is one of the most outstanding projects that our government has ever undertaken. In fact, I think the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency would confirm that our total package price for this particular new endeavour is about \$193 million. As the new hookups come on stream, yes, is the short answer. We did provide for that funding, anticipating it to have been completed in the '04-05 budget, and I hope to be able to continue that through into the next budget to help with those hookup costs on a monthly basis.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: how soon can schools expect to have those SuperNet hookups completed?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are several sites already set to go, and I expect, if I can remember the Minister of RAGE's comments correctly, that we will have the balance of the sites ready sometime later this year, perhaps even in time for our centennial in September. So the short answer is: very, very soon.

2:10

Mr. Webber: Again to the Minister of Education: will the minister be helping to offset hookup costs for those schools that have already chosen some other form of broadband carrier other than the SuperNet?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we did have some unusual circumstances last year, and we did our best to help them, but our project is specific to the SuperNet, the broad bandwidth that is provided specifically by the SuperNet, the partners that we have with the government of Alberta. If there are some unusual circumstances out there beyond that, then perhaps the hon. member could direct them

to my office, and we'll take a look at them, but at this time we are concentrating and focused much more on SuperNet exclusively and those costs involved therein.

Mountain Pine Beetle Control

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's \$23 billion forest industry stands threatened by an infestation of the mountain pine beetle. This tree-killing pest has already cost the British Columbia economy millions of dollars. As usual, the Alberta government is waiting for the threat to be a clear and present danger before acting. My question for the minister of sustainable resource: given that the threat of the mountain pine beetle has been evident for years, why is this government in reactive mode instead of proactive mode?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, the question is about being reactive. We're doing anything but being reactive. For the past five years Sustainable Resource Development and this government have known about the threat of the pine beetle coming across from the British Columbia side, where it was first started, and we've seen the spread of it over the past five years.

We have been in consultation every year with the B.C. government in identifying the areas where the pine beetle may have come across. We do aerial surveys. We work with the B.C. government. We do on-the-ground surveys to find out where those beetles are, and we put the financial resources to make sure that the beetle is going to be eradicated at that border.

As a matter of fact, during the joint ministers' conference in Cranbrook we had a very thorough discussion about the pine beetle and the threat of it, and the B.C. government has put a million dollars into eradicating the pine beetle at our border. As well, we just put a million dollars in this last March to eradicate the pine beetle to protect our sustainable forest industry.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, the devastation caused by the pine beetle in B.C. was described by NASA scientists as one of the biggest North American ecosystem disturbances ever observed. Can this government explain their ability to foresee this threat and act to protect Alberta's forest industry?

Mr. Coutts: I pretty well explained that in my first answer, so I will be brief. We will continue to monitor the threat of the pine beetle coming into Alberta along with our industry partners, the people that are actually out in the forest. We will make sure along with the federal government, that the research that is being done by British Columbia and the participation of the federal government for \$100 million to help them with their pine beetle will certainly be a benefit to us as well. So we're well aware of the issue and the situation.

Mr. Bonko: Third question, Mr. Speaker: why has this government concluded that a million dollars and a cut-and-burn solution of one area is the logical course of action?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, the best thing that we can do to get rid of the pine beetle, unfortunately, is to have about three to four weeks of very, very cold weather, minus 30, minus 40, where it doesn't deviate from that temperature. That will eradicate the pine beetle faster than any clear-cutting or any burning whatsoever. That's the best way to do it. But in the meantime, when we don't have that provision – we don't have the climate to do that, and B.C. doesn't have the climate to do that – we must take the measures that have been proven over the years, and that is, one, identifying; secondly, taking clear-cuts; and the third, burning it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Gambling Addiction

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very few of us in this Assembly who farm understand why gambling is an accepted practice when it comes to weather and pests, but I don't truly understand how or why anyone wants to indulge in the habit of putting coins into gambling machines that are programmed to beat you, particularly our youth. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I would like to know if the minister could indicate how many of our Alberta youths currently today have gambling problems or are developing some form of gambling allergy.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, this is a good question. AADAC identified in 2002 that almost 40 per cent of Alberta youth from grades 7 to 12 were actually experiencing some form of gambling, whether it's on a sports bus going to an activity, whether it's at school at recess time. We noted that there were actually about 3.8 per cent of youths that were considered to have a serious problem. Another in excess of 5 per cent were at risk of a problem. In total 9.5 per cent of Alberta's youth in the 2002 survey were identified as either being at great risk or potentially having a severe problem with gambling, a concern not only to this government but, clearly, to their parents, who know that children who are gambling are doing so illegally and developing a habit that is detrimental to their growth and development.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what's the government doing to address the emerging trends and problems associated with these gambling activities, especially amongst our youth?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, there are several things that we are doing. Briefly, on the heels of that survey this is the next year for a follow-up by AADAC with a survey that will be conducted this fall. I am at the present time cosigning letters with the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who is the chair of AADAC, to all of the schools and to community groups and authorities that would make them aware that we consider this a problem, that would put them on the alert to remind their circle of influence where youth are gathered to put up posters and really re-energize parents and community members to watch for youth that are engaged in gambling problems.

Currently AADAC has over 560 beds, and most of these beds are involved in treating detoxification and drug-related problems, but there are beds available for stabilization of youth with severe gambling problems and addictions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Highway 28

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Ribbons of tar are not holding together the asphalt puzzle pieces which for this government pass as highways. The deterioration and lack of timely government maintenance have led to an alarming increase in Alberta road fatalities. In May 1989 17-year-old Tara Grainger, 17-year-old Elizabeth Timmer, and seven-year-old Kelly Formanski were killed on highway 28. My first question, Tara's mother's unanswered question, is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

What upgrading has taken place on this stretch of highway since 1989 to prevent further deaths?

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, I'm not sure that we have the kind of an opportunity and time factor in question period to go back to 1989. That's 16 years of highway construction.

The hon. minister, as briefly as possible.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess as briefly as possible I will say that we have received one complaint on highway 28 in the last year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: why did the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation choose to ignore highway 28 for upgrades this past March 22 when the 2005 federal/provincial agreement was announced?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, when we choose which highways to do, it's purely by a priority list right around the province, and there are a significant number of highways that are, certainly, at issue. My apologies and my heart go out to the families who lost their children on this in 1989, but the issue, realistically, is that we look at the whole province, and we subsequently decide which roads to do on a priority by looking at the whole province and doing the roads that are the most important.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: why doesn't the government follow the Liberal opposition idea of a legacy fund to set aside sufficient funding for infrastructure?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'll take that question under advisement for the hon. Minister of Finance.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Sour Gas Well Safety

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new initiative to develop sour oil and gas wells in the Tomahawk-Drayton Valley area is causing safety concerns among residents in the area. It is anticipated that hydrogen sulfide, H₂S, levels ranging from 15 to 25 per cent could be encountered in the Nisku formation. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Has exploration of a zone containing H₂S concentration at this level ever occurred in the province before?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that over the last 50 years the development and exploration of sour gas and oil has occurred safely, and there are numerous areas throughout the province where concentrations of hydrogen sulphide are higher or just as high as the amount in this area of Drayton Valley. In respect to that, I would say that a lot of that safety is in large part because of the priority that the Energy and Utilities Board does place upon safety as being paramount in developing this resource.

Mr. Lindsay: Again to the same minister: how can these concerned residents be assured their safety is not at risk?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that anyone and all Albertans can participate in hearings of the Energy and Utilities Board if they are directly or adversely impacted by a proposed drilling site. So they should, if in the area and have those concerns, participate in those hearings when the applications come forward. I should also mention that in this particular instance the Energy and Utilities Board officials have met with the local community in the Drayton-Tomahawk area, and as part of the application process local residents will have the opportunity for input on this sour gas drilling.

Mr. Lindsay: Again to the same minister: will the government consider increasing the no-drilling safety zone around residential areas?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Energy and Utilities Board undertook back in 2000 a very large consultation on safety with sour gas, and 87 recommendations came out of that review. Part of that is they're developing a hazard risk dispersion tool that's going to help more accurately calculate the emergency planning zones that are required. That tool should be available sometime in 2006. That will only help increase and further improve the safety record when they're modelling and looking at setback zones in residential areas.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

School Closures

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education stood in this House yesterday and took no responsibility at all for school closures. He blamed it all on the school boards. However, this government's policies create the problem because the government could have a different capital plan and a different utilization formula. They did this in Ontario in 2003, where their Education ministry will "no longer recognize closed schools as creating eligibility for new school grants." My question is to the Minister of Education. When will Alberta stop holding school boards hostage and do as they have in Ontario and stop recognizing closed schools as eligibility for new schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member is confusing me with some member from the opposition who was asking a question and affixing blame. I did not affix any blame, as the hon. member obviously knows, and I think he should review his comments and withdraw them because I did not blame anyone for some of the difficulties that are being experienced in the system.

The point in yesterday's question period, Mr. Speaker, was to indicate very clearly where the responsibility lies for the difficult decisions that school boards have to make. As a former member of the school board the questioner should know that first and foremost. Secondly, nobody is holding anybody for hostage either. I would take exception to that comment. What we do is provide funding to the school boards, who then have the flexibility to apply it to the best of their abilities. From time to time we see changing demographics; we see changing population counts. School boards have to adjust to that just like everyone else.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the minister conveniently ignored the

question. My question is simply this: why does the minister refuse to follow the lead of the Ontario government, where it's now against the law to tie funding for new schools to the closure of existing schools?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think it's been clearly indicated in the House on several occasions – I'll indicate it again – that the minister responsible for the utilization rate formula, for example, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, has said that he is reviewing that particular formula. I am part of that review with the minister, and as soon as it's ready to come out – if he would just stay tuned, the hon. member will have it very shortly.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, they talked about the utilization. I'm talking about a school closure process coming from the provincial government.

I guess that my question, flowing from the minister's answer, is: why is the minister leaving this to the bean counters in Infrastructure and persisting with a policy that's a how-to guide for closing schools and gutting communities?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is correct in one part of the comment, and that is that there is a school closure guideline procedure that is referenced in the School Act. Perhaps it is time to review that particular school closure procedure. I would undertake to have a look at it and see if there are places where, perhaps, it can be streamlined or smoothed or somehow else fixed up, and we'll be doing that in tandem with the utilization rate review which the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is doing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Women's Shelters

(continued)

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new money for women's shelters that this government announced in a press release on Monday, April 11, includes 55 beds. This is still grant funding which can be removed next year. Once again this government is giving shelters and our vulnerable a one-time transfer of cash, leaving them to beg for adequate funding next year. To the Minister of Children's Services: are the 55 beds announced new beds, or were they existing beds previously funded through donations?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we did is that we provided the money to the shelters, and it was stable funding. In regard to her other question when she said "one-time" funding, I ask her to stay tuned. The budget will be done in about 30 minutes.

Mrs. Mather: To the same minister: what amount of this new money that was announced in the press release is for capital expenditures versus operational costs such as staffing, utilities, and maintenance to aid agencies to keep their doors open?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I think it's important that we understand this: this is a good-news story to the shelters that did receive the funding. We have provided them some funding for the beds that they currently have in place and then some, so they can fund raise for other initiatives. Again, you know, it's a good-news story. The shelters that we're hearing from are pleased with the initiative. They're pleased with the money that they're receiving. Again I ask her to stay tuned to the budget coming up.

Mrs. Mather: To the same minister: what policy does this ministry have to deal with transitional housing so that women and children will have a safe place to live after they leave the shelter and try to start a new, productive life?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, in addition we provide some second-stage housing projects that receive operational funding support for about 40 self-contained units in the province.

You know, this government is very concerned about the women and children that live in this province and has been for some time now. We had the forum that provided us with lots of ideas. We're continuing to work with all the shelter providers on the issues that they seem to think we need to address. I'd like the hon. member to know that we're also hosting the World Conference on Family Violence in October, which is very exciting.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Climate Change

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government announced today their long-awaited plan for implementing the Kyoto accord. My question is for the Minister of Energy. With the federal climate change plan will it make any change or any difference in climate in Alberta or the rest of our country?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member said, today just at 1:30 our own time, so we haven't had the chance to review in any details the work that the federal government has now announced on the Kyoto accord. In general I would say that, clearly, there are some aspects that can help facilitate the climate change improvement in this country, yet I would say that the Kyoto accord itself is a flawed accord. It will not actually solve the problem that it's purported to on a global basis. We need to have more partners, the larger countries such as the United States, China, India, and those, working co-operatively with us. We are pleased that they have taken some direction from us though very concerned about some of the suggested methodologies.

2:30

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, again to the same minister. Alberta is the first in Canada to pass greenhouse emissions. What else is the government of Alberta prepared to do on climate change?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we are the first as a province to actually introduce an act to talk about climate change. We have the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. It's that act that takes a very technological approach to solving the issues, to turning maybe a problem of carbon dioxide, which is not a pollutant – and I want to emphasize: is not a pollutant – into potentially an opportunity. As an example, even within the Department of Energy there's a \$200 million technology royalty credit program, that's driven towards technological improvements, some very specific pilot projects. You're looking at carbon dioxide sequestration that will help both enhance oil recovery as well as sequestering carbon dioxide.

Mr. VanderBurg: Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the federal plan calls for sectors, like the agriculture industry, to create and sell emissions. Is this in our Alberta plan as well?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are companies, there are certainly people in the agricultural and other sectors' industries that are already looking at trying, in anticipation of the federal government's plan, trading emissions credits for carbon dioxide. The problem we have is that we do not and, I would say, should not support any dollars from Alberta or this country going anywhere for just buying carbon credits. It does not solve the problem.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Corrections Officers

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 22, 2004, Kyle James Young fell to his death down an elevator shaft at the Edmonton courthouse while in the custody of two provincial protection officers. This tragic incident and the resulting public inquiry have raised serious issues about the training received by provincial protection officers. My questions are to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Can the minister explain what level of training courtroom officers receive to deal with such situations without resorting to the use of force?

Mr. Stevens: Well, my first comment, Mr. Speaker, is that the fatality inquiry with respect to this matter is still ongoing, and the issue of responsibility regarding these court workers is that of the Solicitor General.

The Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good question, and the issues with regard to training I'm sure will come out. As the Attorney General mentioned, the case is still before the courts, and the recommendations haven't come out yet.

Dr. B. Miller: Again to the Minister of Justice: given that a former courtroom officer has testified that he was concerned about the faulty elevator door that gave way prior to Kyle Young's death and was told to keep quiet by his superiors about these concerns, can the minister tell us if he is going to fully investigate these allegations of intimidation of employees by senior staff?

Speaker's Ruling Sub Judice Rule

The Speaker: Hon. member, there is a sub judice rule. Now, I have to be guided by the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. If this matter is still before the courts, then it would seem to be only prudent to wait for the final resolution by the courts by whatever document or whatever report they would give. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora wants to entice the minister to comment on something that's before the courts, that is not within the purview of the rules of this Legislative Assembly.

Dr. B. Miller: Can I ask my third supplemental?

The Speaker: Please proceed with your third one.

Corrections Officers (continued)

Dr. B. Miller: Can the minister explain – and this has happened before – why there is no protection available for employees who complain about safety in the workplace? In other words, why is there no whistle-blower protection in Alberta?

Mr. Stevens: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the employees in question, those are under the auspices of the Solicitor General.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Training is made available to all of the corrections officers and all of the provincial protection officers as well. In light of this incident, of course, those training issues are going to be reviewed as there is a parallel investigation going on within the department to ensure what our procedures are, to ensure the safety and security of not only our officers but, as well, those in custody.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Economic Benefits of Snowmobiling

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has many summer attractions – the Edmonton Fringe festival, the Calgary Stampede, for example – that attract millions of tourists every year. However, we need to promote Alberta as a four seasons destination, which means highlighting the activities available throughout the year and seasons. Alberta's winter culture includes snowmobiling, which is a great tourist attraction that supports hotels, restaurants, and other facilities. The province has more than 5,000 kilometres of snowmobile trails, roughly the distance from Edmonton to Halifax. My first question is to the Minister of Economic Development. What is the government doing to increase the profile of snowmobiling as a tourist attraction for the province? [interjections]

Mr. Dunford: I'm being asked what I'm doing, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to attempt to answer the hon. member's question as succinctly as I can. I see that we have a need for another member's statement about heckling, perhaps sooner rather than later.

I would agree with the hon. member that snowmobiling is an important recreation and tourism activity here in the province. Mr. Speaker, you might be as surprised as I was to learn, related to participation and to equipment purchases, that this is actually a portion of the tourism industry with about \$200 million of expenditures each year. So, certainly, Economic Development is not going to ignore this kind of participation in the province, and we will continue to work with snowmobile trail associations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one supplemental for the minister. What is the department doing to stem the tide of snowmobiling enthusiasts who head to other provinces to pursue this activity and taking the tremendous economic spinoff benefits across the borders with them?

Mr. Dunford: Well, this is a concern, Mr. Speaker. It's a concern not only, I might add, to snowmobiling but to our ski industry as well. We don't want to ignore, however, hon. members, that we have some excellent snowmobile trails in Alberta. We can talk about the Iron Horse Trail between Smoky Lake and Cold Lake. We've got the Golden Triangle between Whitecourt, Edson, and Fox Creek and, of course, in the Crowsnest Pass and some areas within Kananaskis.

I might inform the hon. member that the Bighorn access management plan, that was prepared by my hon. colleague in Sustainable

Resource Development, looked at the area west of Rocky Mountain House, and they also now have identified a number of snowmobiling opportunities.

So, hon. member, we're committed to this activity. We recognize winter sports as a Canadian thing, and of course we want it to become more of an Alberta thing as well.

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Victor Ringuette

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise to recognize a great Albertan. This past Saturday over 300 friends, relatives, and associates of Victor Ringuette gathered together to celebrate his lifetime of philanthropy and his 40 years as the owner of B & R – Eckel's Transport Ltd.

Beginning in 1965, working out of his home with his wife, Greta, as his only employee and his mother as his only investor, Vic Ringuette built a successful business through hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. Today B & R – Eckel's Transport Ltd. has over 300 employees across two provinces.

The road to success for Vic Ringuette has not always been a smooth one. In 1983 Vic lost 11 trucks and his entire maintenance shop due to a fire, and in 1986, when oil prices bottomed out, B & R – Eckel's nearly went belly up. Like a true entrepreneur Vic never gave up and always found the positive in even the most difficult situations. Vic held tight, and when the economy began to pick up steam in the late 1980s, so did B & R – Eckel's.

Although Vic has been an extremely successful entrepreneur, to the people of Bonnyville he is much more. He is first and foremost a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather. Vic also continuously gives back to the community that has given him so much. In his speech on Saturday evening Vic explained his philanthropy over the years by saying: "I believe a community is like a bank. You can't keep drawing without putting something back, and I like to give back to the community."

Mr. Speaker, without the commitment that Vic has shown to the community of Bonnyville over the years, Bonnyville would not be the place it is today.

Congratulations and best wishes, Vic, but most of all keep on trucking.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

2:40 ARFEX 2005 Culinary Trade Show

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to speak about the Alberta Restaurant and Foodservices Association and the ARFEX trade exhibition taking place this week in Edmonton. It's the largest of its kind in western Canada. The ARFEX 2005 marks the 24th anniversary and also celebrates Alberta's 100 years of tastes. With over 350 booths, this culinary trade show promotes the development of a greater culinary industry in Alberta.

I want to thank the ARFA leadership and members for raising Alberta to high levels of culinary arts and science. Restaurants and food services have become an important and integral part of Alberta's booming economy. They also enrich Alberta's diverse culture through taste and sense of food.

I believe Alberta now has its own what I call 'culi-culture', if I may say such a word. The quality and the variety of food produce available in Alberta have made food dishes prepared in Alberta among the top in the world. The skills of our Albertan culinary

artists have brought home many prestigious world championship awards. People told me that our Chinese Peking duck dishes are better than the ones in China, that our Mexican and Italian dishes here are better than the ones in Mexico and Italy, that our Vietnamese beef noodle soup is better than the one in Vietnam.

Mr. Speaker, the traditional advice of mothers to daughters is: the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. May I complete this advice by saying: the way to a woman's heart is to take her to a restaurant in Alberta.

Braille Menu at La Ronde Restaurant

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize La Ronde Restaurant, the revolving restaurant located on the top floor of the Chateau Lacombe here in Edmonton's beautiful river valley. I had the sincere pleasure to attend the annual general meeting of the Alberta restaurant and food association yesterday in my role as chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

At the meeting I was presented with La Ronde's first menu printed entirely in Braille for the visually impaired. I also had the opportunity to speak with members of the hospitality industry about disability issues. Inclusion is not just about wider doorways or ramps. It's also about Braille menus, sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, and making other services accessible along with the facility. It's one thing to be able to get into a facility and another to access the same services as everyone else. The new Braille menu offered by La Ronde will now offer some people with visual impairment the same dining experience as the rest of society. Furthermore, it allows them to maintain their dignity and their independence.

Mr. Speaker, it's often small things we take for granted that greatly affect persons with disabilities. The ability to enter a building, easily obtain transportation, or order from a menu are examples of things that persons with disabilities have to struggle with every day.

I'd like to commend La Ronde's executive chef, Jasmin Kobajica, and Chateau Lacombe's general manager, Paul Stephens, for their leadership. I know that their efforts are appreciated by persons with disabilities, and they are a role model for the hospitality industry.

Full citizenship for persons with disabilities occurs one step at a time. Mr. Speaker, I believe we moved one step closer yesterday, and I would ask the members of the Legislature to applaud that step.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

City of Edmonton Archives

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In January 2005 the City of Edmonton Archives completed two historical projects dedicated to the preservation of the city's heritage. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre for the recent completion of these projects.

The first project was a cataloguing initiative processing approximately 400 maps of Edmonton and Alberta. The catalogue acts as a guideline of the planning and development in residential, educational, recreational, and commercial areas of the city.

The second project consisted of mounting eight of the city's earliest tax rolls to the archives' website. These efforts were made to preserve the city's historical information and document Edmonton's development through the last century. The historical data acts as an informal yet important city census by detailing religious preference, family size, and education from Edmonton's earliest records.

Both initiatives hold considerable informational value for researchers and those interested in the development of the city of Edmonton. It is the continued support of the Alberta Legislature through provincially funded programs such as the Archives Society of Alberta that maintains and preserves Edmonton's and Alberta's documentary heritage.

Please join me in applauding the City of Edmonton Archives for their continued accomplishments in recording our city's history. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Legislation

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appeal to the members of this Assembly to pass Bill 202 as a provisional response to a clear and present danger that faces youth, families, and society at large. Jaded as we have become to alleged security alerts, to cries of wolf and code orange, some may feel that this language is exaggerated. I assure you that it is not.

Three elements justify this conclusion. There is the element of illness, which requires the same precision in response as other biological challenges. There is the element of addiction, which requires the same awareness as other chemical hazards, and there is the element of abdication of the self to a substance and its suppliers, which requires intervention to restore a user's autonomy.

The elements of danger to users beginning from a single experiment have been described and documented in earlier speeches in this Assembly. Moving testimony has been read and shared from families in distress. The need for some measure to cope has been amply demonstrated.

Another question that may arise from our cynicism of false alerts is this: whether calling "danger" may lead to a knee-jerk reaction in which the measures proposed are out of all proportion to the cause and may be used and abused for purposes for which they were not intended or foreseen. With the amendments that have already been made to Bill 202, some of which may be seen as watering down, there remain five days' detention and assessment for suspected users at risk. What remains is a limited, temporary measure that can be invoked when all else has failed and parents want the child's right to live to take precedence.

Mr. Speaker, let us dilute no more and delay no longer. The word "crisis" in the original Greek meant not panic but an opportunity to make a decision. This is such an opportunity. Let it not be said that we evaded when we could have acted.

Thank you.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling a petition signed by another 379 Albertans from Edmonton, Lac La Biche, Clairmont, Plamondon, Stony Plain, Blairmore, St. Albert, Devon, and Sherwood Park urging the government of Alberta to "introduce legislation that will allow parents the authority to place their children into mandatory drug treatment" and to fund urgently needed youth treatment centres.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present the petition of 105 Albertans from the good Alberta commu-

nities of Minburn, Wetaskiwin, Newbrook, Thorhild, Redwater, and Edmonton, which reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Bill 39
Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 39, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005.

The main objective of this amendment act is to make Alberta's roads safer for all road users. The Traffic Safety Act consolidated a number of statutes that have not been reviewed in many years, and since it came into force in May 2003, various requirements for clarification have come to light.

2:50

This amendment act will create new offences for speeding past parked emergency vehicles and past highway construction and maintenance workers. Too often, Mr. Speaker, the lives of fire-fighters, police officers, paramedics, tow truck operators, and construction workers are put at risk because motorists refuse to slow down. In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, this amendment act makes many other legislative and regulatory changes to improve traffic safety, including increasing penalties for driving with no insurance, addressing the sharing of information to ensure roadway safety, addressing operational requirements of the Transportation Safety Board and appeals to it, and enabling the minister to make safety enhancements concerning the management of commercial motor carriers. Finally, Mr. Speaker, this amendment act also makes changes to provisions regarding the seizure of vehicles involved in prostitution-related offences so these provisions can be proclaimed into force.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce this piece of legislation which reflects this government's very serious commitment to road safety.

[Motion carried; Bill 39 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 39 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 58(6)

the Leader of the Official Opposition may, by giving written notice to the Clerk and the Government House Leader prior to noon on the day following the Budget Address, designate which department's estimates are to be considered by the Committee of Supply.

With the permission of the Opposition House Leader I'd love to table an agreed-upon schedule in anticipation of the budget motion this afternoon in reference to Committee of Supply because we would anticipate starting Committee of Supply tonight, and I believe that all members of the House should be aware of the schedule as early as possible. I'd like to table the schedule and also provide copies for distribution to all members.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're in part of the Routine, and we need some time to set up for the Budget Address at 3 o'clock. Is there an immediacy to proceed with these other matters today?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, do you have a tabling?

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an appropriate number of copies of a document taken from Ontario Education: Excellence for All, 2004. The portion I am tabling details Ontario's policies on school closures, which is miles ahead of Alberta with its emphasis on the role of schools within communities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today from Mrs. Hughena Grainger, the mother of Tara Grainger. The two letters were sent to her MLA, the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment, expressing her continuing concerns regarding highway 28.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling for the Assembly this afternoon. It is a document prepared by Marilyn Carlstad on behalf of the Strathearn Elementary & Junior High School Parent Advisory Association and Strathearn Community League in response to the Edmonton public school board's recommendations to force the closure of Strathearn elementary/junior high school. I would urge the Minister of Education and the department officials to read this.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're going to declare a recess to 3 o'clock.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:54 p.m. to 3 p.m.]

The Speaker: Hon. members, could I bring you all to attention, please. The recess is now over.

head: **Transmittal of Estimates**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

As well, the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province and of certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: **Government Motions**

18. Mrs. McClellan moved:

Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2005-06 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, the 2005-06 government and lottery fund estimates, fiscal and business plans, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, prior to moving Government Motion 19, I now wish to table the 2005-06 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, as well as the 2005-06 government and lottery fund estimates.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the government's consolidated fiscal and business plans for Budget 2005 as required under sections 4 and 7 of the Government Accountability Act. Also provided for the information of the Legislative Assembly are business plans for each ministry, which must be made public under section 13 of the same act.

head: **Budget Address**

19. Mrs. McClellan moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and privilege to present to you and to all Albertans the first budget for our province's second century.

Two thousand and five is a special year for Alberta. It's a time to celebrate 100 years as a strong and vibrant member of the Canadian family. It's a time to look back at the contributions of literally thousands of Albertans who have built this province, a province all of us are so proud to call home, and it's a time to look ahead to build on the legacy of our first 100 years and invest in an even better future for our province.

As we enter this our province's second century, who can doubt the tremendous progress Alberta has made in its first 100 years? In our Premier's words we've gone from a remote, sparsely populated, untamed long shot to one of the most prosperous, highly educated, and lowest taxed places in all of North America. All that in just 100 years.

The best news for Albertans is that we enter our second century full of hope and opportunity with the best fiscal position in the country, an economy that's leading the country, and a clean slate for the future: no debt, just an unparalleled opportunity to build on all of the strengths Alberta has to offer. And I'd put a highly educated and talented workforce, an abundance of natural resources, some of the best minds in business, and that well-known can-do attitude of Albertans right at the top of the list of our strengths. Alberta and Albertans enter our second century with nothing to stand in our way, and the single overriding purpose of this year's budget is to invest in Alberta's second century, a century that promises even more opportunity for future generations of Albertans.

For people listening and waiting to hear about the priorities in this year's budget, the messages are very clear. This is an investment budget, an investment in Alberta's next century. It takes its lead

from the results of the It's Your Future survey, where an unprecedented number of Albertans told us what our priorities should be, and it follows through on the commitments that are outlined in this year's Speech from the Throne and our government's 20-year strategic plan.

Budget 2005 opens up new opportunities in advanced education. It reinforces our commitment to the best possible education for Alberta's children, and it supports our ongoing efforts and the efforts of health boards across the province to continuously improve Alberta's access to quality health care services. These are the priorities of Albertans, and once again our government is taking its lead from Albertans.

This budget substantially increases our investment in infrastructure to respond to and support a growing and thriving economy, and it increases our investment in a wide range of areas from improving safety in our communities to helping children, expanding benefits for seniors, and supporting Albertans that need our help.

Mr. Speaker, our province is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and thus revenues, and that has given us exceptional opportunities. But make no mistake; increases in spending must be affordable. In this year's budget we've been able to make significant investments because debt has been eliminated, our economy is strong, and because the medium-term outlook for energy prices is positive. At the same time, our spending must continue to be based on what is affordable over the longer term. So as we look ahead, the increases planned for future years will continue to be tied to the growth in our economy, and we'll avoid the temptation to let temporary spikes in oil and gas prices drive our spending decisions. It's the responsible course to take.

Yes, it means that there will be years when resource revenues are higher than expected. That is the nature of oil and gas revenue. When that happens, there are choices we can make about how surplus funds can be used strategically and deliberately to invest in Alberta's future. We could increase the sustainability fund. We could add to our current endowment funds or increase funding for capital to meet emerging needs for infrastructure. All of these choices are possible because of our strong financial position, and they will be made throughout the year as our financial forecasts are updated.

Mr. Speaker, 2005 is a year when we invest strategically in areas that build Alberta's future. It's also a year when we will challenge universities, colleges, schools and school boards, health boards and health providers, and all those who are entrusted with government funding to build on the legacy we've created, to invest the funding wisely, to embrace innovation, and to seek the best and most effective ways of delivering services.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, with Budget 2005 we'll aggressively move forward in three priority areas: firmly establishing Alberta as a national and international leader in learning; making sure Alberta continues to be the best place to live, work, and visit; and promoting innovation and positioning Alberta to compete and succeed in a global marketplace. This afternoon I want to highlight just some of the areas where Budget 2005 will make a real and lasting difference to Albertans and to the future of their province.

Mr. Speaker, there is no better investment we can make in Alberta's future than to invest in our children and youth and to make sure that they get the very best education we can provide, an education that lets them pursue their dreams and fulfill those dreams right here in Alberta. Strengthening advanced education is our government's top priority in this our centennial year and for good

reason. For our young people to compete and succeed, for them to have every opportunity to build this province and build their futures, we need an advanced education system that rates with the best in the world, and for Alberta's businesses and industries to compete and succeed, they need the best and the brightest, the most talented and highly skilled workforce we can provide.

With Budget 2005 overall program spending on advanced education will increase by 13.4 per cent. That will bring it to almost \$1.7 billion. The majority of that money will go to universities, colleges, technical institutions, and apprenticeship programs. It will open up thousands of new spaces and new opportunities for young Albertans. In the years to come we'll make sure no qualified young Albertan gets turned away because there's no space in the system. Over the next three years 15,000 new spaces will be added in our advanced education system, and that number will grow to 60,000 by 2020. With those new spaces stories about young people coming out of high school with high averages and no place to go will come to an end. There will be a place for everyone who aspires to advanced education. That's our promise and our commitment to every young Albertan.

To help fulfill that commitment our government introduced the new Access to the Future Act. With Budget 2005 we'll make the initial allocation of \$250 million in what will become a \$3 billion legacy to supports, innovation, and access to Alberta's advanced education system.

Mr. Speaker, our second promise to young Albertans is that money won't stand in their way. In our Premier's February televised address he announced a new centennial gift to Alberta's postsecondary students. If universities, colleges, and technical institutions must increase tuition fees in 2005, they won't send the bill to students; they'll send it to us. With Budget 2005 that promise will be fulfilled with a \$43 million one-time payment on behalf of all Alberta's postsecondary students.

On top of that commitment our government will invest an additional \$7.5 million in scholarships, grants, and bursaries, providing direct assistance to 30,000 students. As promised in the throne speech, a new Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship will be introduced to pay tribute to a truly great Albertan, a special woman who believed in our youth and in our province, who was passionate about education, and whose legacy will last for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, our government's investment in education certainly doesn't leave out Alberta's young children: the ones just starting out in kindergarten and the ones getting ready to finish high school and plan their futures. With Budget 2005 total program support for basic education will increase by just over 7 per cent to a total of \$4.3 billion. Support to school boards across the province will increase this year by 5.4 per cent. The best news for parents and students is that 1,015 new teachers can be hired over the next two years thanks to Budget 2005. That means that schools will be able to meet the class size guidelines recommended by the Learning Commission by the 2006-07 school year.

Mr. Speaker, investing in education is the top priority for Budget 2005, and it's the best investment we can make in the next Alberta. But investing in the next Alberta also means that we have to make sure that Alberta continues to be the best place in Canada if not in North America to live, work, and visit.

With Budget 2005 our government will invest in improving access and quality in Alberta's health care system, will lighten the load for Alberta's seniors, will increase support for persons with disabilities and expand programs for children, and will take important steps to improve the safety of communities all across the province.

Spending on health care will increase to over \$9.5 billion. That

means that 37 per cent of Alberta's budget now goes to support the rising costs of health care services for Albertans. Health regions across the province will see an overall increase of 11.3 per cent in base operating grants to allow them to bring quality health services to Albertans when and where they need them.

A new mental health innovation fund will be established. Targeted funding will be provided to increase nursing care in long-term care facilities, and support to the Alberta Cancer Board will increase by 25 per cent.

With Budget 2005 our government will also invest in information systems to help improve the efficiency and quality in health care and will move ahead with investments in new facilities such as the Alberta Heart Institute in Edmonton, the Children's hospital in Calgary, the new health sciences ambulatory learning centre in Edmonton, and a new hospital in the south part of Calgary.

In May our government will host an international symposium bringing leading experts from around the world to Alberta. As the Premier has said, our goal is to make innovation a hallmark of Alberta's health system. We'll take the best ideas from here in Alberta, from across Canada, and around the world and use those ideas to continually reshape and improve our health system and make sure that Albertans get the services they need, when they need them, and at a price taxpayers can afford.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2005 also substantially increases our commitment to Albertans who need our support. This year's funding for social service programs will increase by 8.3 per cent to a total of \$2.7 billion. This government cares about Albertans, and Albertans can count on us for support when they need it.

With Budget 2005 nearly \$250 million will be invested in the Alberta seniors benefit to provide much-needed support for thousands of low-income seniors. Seniors with lower incomes will also be eligible for coverage for basic dental services and prescription glasses. Ten million dollars will be spent to protect seniors from increases in school property taxes, and steps will be taken to add affordable supportive living units in rural communities and increase support for lodges.

Support for Alberta's AISH program will increase by 20 per cent, or \$80 million, in 2005-06. The Minister of Seniors and Community Supports will be announcing details on increases in monthly support and other program enhancements in the coming days.

3:20

In Children's Services additional funds will be used to improve services for children with disabilities, to improve community-based protection and prevention services, and to follow through on the comprehensive strategy for addressing family violence and bullying. Mr. Speaker, family violence has no place in Alberta. Last year's round-table process captured the ideas and passion of literally thousands of Albertans, and with the support of Budget 2005 we'll transform those ideas into action, starting now. We'll also take steps this year to address growing concerns about safety in communities all across this province.

Mr. Speaker, the deaths of four young RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe was a devastating blow not only to their families and friends but also to the communities involved and indeed to our entire province. It drove home the reality that Alberta is not immune to horrendous acts of violence, and it reminded us that crime doesn't happen just in our big cities. Every community in every part of the province is vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, with Budget 2005 we will take direct steps to support police efforts to tackle crime and ensure the safety of our communities. Nearly 200 police officers will be added in 2005-06. Funding for provincial policing programs will increase by 16 per

cent this year to \$153 million. This will provide over 100 additional RCMP officers under the provincial policing agreement and another 60 new police officers whose single purpose will be to fight organized crime in Alberta. Funding will also be provided to expand the Solicitor General's courtroom security and prisoner transfer programs, freeing up another 30 RCMP officers for front-line policing duties. In addition to all of this, we will increase municipal policing grants by 16 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the next Alberta will be a safe Alberta, a place where people feel safe in their homes and communities, a place where people get help and support when they need it, a place people are proud to call home.

Mr. Speaker, the next Alberta starts with the tremendous foundation Albertans have built in our first 100 years. We'll work together to foster innovation, to maintain and strengthen all the advantages Alberta holds today, and to make sure our economy continues to thrive and continues to offer more and more opportunities for Albertans to succeed here and around the world.

In the Premier's televised address earlier this year, we heard people say: "What isn't the Alberta advantage? Why wouldn't you want to live in Alberta? Everything I need is here in this province." They're right, and with Budget 2005 we'll take steps to ensure that it stays that way, starting with the lowest overall taxes in Canada bar none.

This year Albertans will benefit from targeted steps to strengthen that tax advantage even more. Albertans have always been generous people, willing to support those who need it the most. Steps are being taken to reduce the tax burden on seniors, exempting them from health care premiums and protecting senior homeowners from increases in school property taxes. Mr. Speaker, Alberta seniors have made a tremendous contribution to Alberta's first century, and we won't forget it as we begin our second century.

Mr. Speaker, we won't forget that young families sometimes struggle to make ends meet, especially those with low and middle incomes. Effective July 1, 2005, we'll expand the Alberta family employment tax credit, and that means direct benefits to low- and middle-income families in the order of \$25 million.

With Budget 2005 we also reduce the hotel room tax from 5 per cent to 4 per cent and convert that to a levy to support tourism marketing and development across this province. School property tax mill rates will be reduced by about 5 per cent, and the personal income tax system will continue to be indexed to inflation, saving Albertans a total of about \$35 million just this year. This year's package of tax incentives provides tax relief to those who need it the most, and it strengthens the tax advantage that makes Alberta a magnet for businesses and individuals all across the country.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the biggest announcements in Budget 2005 is our strong commitment to investing in Alberta's infrastructure. With Budget 2005 Alberta's investment in capital infrastructure will increase to \$9.2 billion over the next three years. That level of support is unmatched anywhere in Canada. In fact, it's more than double the average percentage of capital spending in other provinces, and it continues the significant investment in infrastructure our government has made in the last five years.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud of our investment in Alberta's infrastructure, and that investment is possible because of the steps we took to clear the books, get rid of the debt, and free up dollars to invest in Alberta's future instead of the past. First priority for capital funds will go to municipal infrastructure programs. In 2005-06 provincial support for municipal infrastructure will increase by more than two and a half times. Our government understands that the pressures of a growing and thriving province are felt in our big cities and our smaller communities across this province. We understand,

and with Budget 2005 we're taking action. In addition to municipal infrastructure projects, capital funds will continue to be invested in hospitals and health centres, schools and postsecondary facilities, and in the provincial highway network.

Mr. Speaker, investing in Alberta's next century means investing in innovation, research, and new ideas. We're blessed with an abundance of natural resources, but more and more Alberta's future will depend on making the best use of those resources, adding value right here in Alberta, seizing new opportunities to build a strong and diverse economy, and preserving our environment. Over the next three years over \$300 million will be provided for water management, including Water for Life initiatives, municipal water treatment, irrigation rehabilitation, and reservoir improvements.

With Budget 2005 we'll turn innovation into action. We'll step up our investment in research endowment funds. We'll forge Alberta's strong reputation as a leader in health, medical, and engineering research. We'll provide up to \$200 million in royalty relief as part of the Alberta energy innovation strategy to enhance oil and gas recovery. We'll support energy and climate change research with a priority on oil sands upgrading, clean coal technology, water management research, enhanced recovery of conventional oil and gas, exploring alternative energy sources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Drumheller-Stettler I'd be remiss if my first budget speech didn't address what is perhaps my first love, and that's rural Alberta and the future of Alberta's agriculture industry. It's been a tough time for Alberta's farmers and ranchers, and those tough times are being felt in rural communities all across our province. All of us had hoped the U.S. border would have been opened by now. We hoped the worst would be over. That wasn't to be. In spite of that blow, we're not giving up now, nor are Alberta farmers and ranchers. One farmer described it this way: a farmer has to be a particular kind of person to take on God, the weather, the international market, and a whole bunch of other stuff and say, "I'm going to survive." Well, Mr. Speaker, that will to survive has certainly been put to the test, but Alberta farmers and ranchers aren't quitters, and neither are we. We'll keep on fighting for a better deal, for better markets, and for a better return for their investment and hard work.

3:30

With Budget 2005 we continue to invest in developing new export markets. We'll step up our work in prion research to get to the cause of BSE. We'll continue our monitoring and surveillance programs and continue to assure the world that Alberta beef is safe and it's the best beef in the world. Mr. Speaker, we'll work with Alberta's farmers and ranchers to explore new ideas and new opportunities. We'll move ahead with the new rural development strategy. A new Alberta school of veterinary medicine is expected to begin accepting students in September of 2006, and together we'll strengthen rural Alberta and make sure that the rural way of life continues to thrive in the next Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, 2005 is a special year for Alberta. It's our centennial, and it's the year we turn the page on our first century and invest in the foundation for the next Alberta. A special year like 2005 deserves special recognition, and this year Albertans will see celebrations, events, and projects all across the province. In just over a month Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth will visit Alberta and join us in what promises to be a very special part of our celebration.

In September we'll officially celebrate 100 years in the Canadian Confederation. In the fall we get to see the brand new look of the renovated Jubilee auditoria in Edmonton and Calgary, and, Mr.

Speaker, I understand they are outstanding. Across the province over \$300 million is being invested in the construction and upgrading of community, historic, and cultural facilities. Alberta's centennial will also be marked by a substantial increased investment in upgrading and maintaining our provincial parks.

Mr. Speaker, let me close today by thanking our Premier, my colleagues, and all Albertans for the honour of presenting Alberta's first budget in this our second century. When our Premier came to office, he made a pledge to Albertans. He said that if Albertans helped us to get rid of the deficit and debt, they would reap the rewards for their hard work. Today our Premier delivers on his promise just like he always has. Budget 2005 is an investment in Alberta's future, and it's only possible because the hard work, sacrifice, and determination of Albertans put us in the strong position we enjoy today. Budget 2005 reflects Albertans' priorities, and it positions us for an even greater success in the years to come.

As I look ahead to the future, there is no doubt that this is a great time for our province. If we could talk to Alberta's earliest pioneers, the people who came to our province at the turn of the 1900s searching for a better life and a better future, I'm sure they would be amazed at what our province has become: the most prosperous place in Canada, a thriving hub of action, ideas, and opportunity, a driving force in the Canadian Confederation, and the best place to work, to live, to raise our families, and to build our futures.

Mr. Speaker, it's a great time to be an Albertan, and we've only just begun. As someone once said, the toughest thing about success is that you've got to keep on being a success. In typical can-do Alberta style our first hundred years have been marked by determination, hard work, and a strong belief that anything is possible in Alberta. We've stared down adversity, we've taken on the toughest

challenges, we've stuck to our principles and our values, and together Albertans have built a province that is an outstanding success. There's no stopping now. We have to keep on being a success.

We have one more promise to keep, a promise to Alberta's children, a promise to make sure that Alberta's next 100 years are even better than our first. Mr. Speaker, with the hard work and support of Albertans, I have absolutely no doubt that that promise will be kept.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to begin debate on Motion 19. The fiscal plans and policies proposed by the government will receive vigorous discussion by members of the Liberal opposition, and I look forward to leading the debate tomorrow.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I now move adjournment on Motion 19.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly do now adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we'll reconvene in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:37 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 13, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**

Date: 05/04/13

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Offices of the Legislative Assembly

The Chair: Pursuant to Standing Order 58(8), which requires that the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly be the first item called in the Committee of Supply's consideration of the main estimates, I now put the following question without debate or amendment on all matters relating to the business plan and proposed estimates for the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Support to the Legislative Assembly Expense	\$42,740,000
Office of the Auditor General Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$18,304,000
Office of the Ombudsman Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$2,237,000
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer Expense	\$2,497,000
Office of the Ethics Commissioner Expense	\$419,000
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner Expense	\$4,336,000

Restructuring and Government Efficiency

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you all know, this is my first presentation as minister to the Committee of Supply. I appreciate being the first minister on deck. I was originally hoping to watch other ministries first, learn from them, and then totally impress you. Instead, though, I have come to the conclusion that it's my job to set the bar for the rest of my colleagues, so that's my job tonight along with, of course, telling you more about the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

You may have questions about why we were created, what our plans are, how we're going to get there, and how much it will cost, so over the next few minutes I hope to answer most of your questions and tell you about my vision for the ministry, which includes government operating as one, single entity for Albertans, because in the end, as we all know, that's who matters the most.

I know that you each have a copy of our business plan, and I would like to take you through what I consider to be its highlights. Before I get to that, however, I would like to introduce some folks in the gallery. They have been working very hard over the past three to four months in creating this ministry and developing our plans for the coming years. They are Paul Pellis, my deputy minister; Wanda Vlahac, his executive assistant; Les Speakman, executive director, corporate services; Peter Crerar, executive director, standards and business information; Barry Devlin, senior financial officer; Cheryl

Arseneau, manager of business planning; Lorelei Fiset-Cassidy, my communications director; and Jason Ennis, my executive assistant.

Our focus, Mr. Chairman, is on how we can streamline government, how we can be more effective for Albertans, and how we can deliver programs and services more efficiently. After the election the Premier said that our new ministry should help government to focus on its most important job: providing programs and services to Albertans effectively and efficiently. The Premier said that the job is not about reductions or cutbacks; it's about improving and simplifying the organization of government. He also said that we have an obligation to provide the best possible service at the least possible cost, yet efficiencies don't have to mean cutting budgets. Efficiencies could also mean a better way of doing things.

So it's clear that the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency has a job to do, and we're at the cabinet table to do it. I plan on doing it with the other ministries as my partners. I plan on listening to Albertans. I even plan on listening to members of the opposition because even they have some good ideas now and then.

While we're a new ministry, a lot of what we do day in and day out is not new. When our ministry was formed, it was given the Alberta Corporate Service Centre from Government Services and the corporate chief information office from Innovation and Science. These two parts work well under the same umbrella. As well, we'll be able to get maximum benefit from our technology investment. Our business plan is the beginning of a new, integrated way where these two parts will work together. I'm excited with how this combined expertise will return positive results for government operations and, ultimately, for Albertans.

Our business plan introduces a new function: opportunity and restructuring assessment. In fact, you'll note that on page 296 of the estimates, we list this as core business 1. We list it as core business 1 for a good reason, Mr. Chairman. This is a priority, and it's certainly a major piece of the puzzle that I'd like to focus on tonight. Opportunity and restructuring assessment was mandated to make things simple and deliver programs and services better to Albertans.

First, I strongly believe in practising what you preach. I believe in cleaning up your own backyard before looking into the other backyards. So this department is going to look at our own ministry to see where we can make improvements, to see if there is any duplication, and to see how we can be more efficient. Ministers, government staff, Albertans, whoever has an innovative idea for efficiency: we'll listen, and we'll investigate. A number of suggestions have already come in from the public and my cabinet and caucus colleagues, and we're beginning to work on them. Our process is to figure out which ideas are the most important, then put those ideas to work with the other ministries.

I want to be clear on one point because opposition members have been looking to me to wear a policeman's badge and whistle. My ministry is not the policeman of government and other ministries. We are here to work in partnership with ministries to develop ideas and improve together. Our mission is not to change or discount services or to lay off staff. Efficiencies are not only about cutbacks. Instead, efficiencies can be about getting services over the Internet, about dealing with only one person to access programs from three different ministries, or about getting what you need faster. In essence, efficiencies are about serving Albertans better.

Our mission is to "champion excellence and innovation in technology and shared services and optimize the government's ability to deliver programs and services" to Albertans. Our vision is that Albertans will have more "convenient, efficient and timely access to government programs and services." This will take some work and some time. Since the formation of Restructuring and Government Efficiency last November the MLA for Foothills-Rocky

View has been appointed to the Regulatory Review Secretariat. Its mandate is to reduce regulatory red tape and complexity, and I certainly look forward to seeing the good work to come from there.

8:10

We'll also be looking closely at fees and charges to make sure that amounts charged are appropriate and necessary. We have been given a new beginning and an opportunity to make change. We are a service delivery organization, and we are focused on the future.

This focus includes ensuring that we stay on track with our four core businesses. Along with opportunity and restructuring assessment, we will also focus on core business 2, business transformation; core business 3, information and knowledge management, which includes the SuperNet; and core business 4, shared services.

Mr. Chairman, the government of Alberta was one of the first governments in Canada to use a shared services system for conducting day-to-day business tasks. Alberta's system includes more activities than any other province and is recognized by B.C. and Ontario as a leader in improving government business practices. Shared services now involve over 1,200 staff working on tasks such as mail delivery, procurement, human resources, desktop support, and other behind-the-scenes work. Streamlining and standardizing these functions for all of government reduces duplication, provides economy of scale, and ultimately reduces costs.

I want to make it clear that shared services continue to be a good idea and are here to stay. I would also emphasize that shared services operate mainly on a budget recovered through service agreements with other ministries and agencies. This is called credit or recovery in our estimates and is also referred to as dedicated revenues. As we go forward, to make sure that shared services are the most efficient and effective that they can be, we'll talk with other ministries about their needs and about how we can make things better, and we'll take action because if government operations are efficient, we can put more money toward programs and services for Albertans.

Shared services also identify opportunities for business improvement. This is the business transformation part of our work. It's about being proactive. As one recent example of this, our ministry notified the Privacy Commissioner of a potential privacy issue with the newer digital photocopiers and fax machines. My ministry now ensures that all hard drives are removed from these machines prior to returning them to the vendor. The options available for removing data from other devices, such as cellphones, are still being reviewed. I can assure you that this ministry will keep on top of it and determine the most appropriate solution for government.

By looking at purchases, we've been able to find more efficiencies, such as consolidated office supplies purchasing and increasing the government discount from 48 per cent to 70 per cent on approximately \$7 million worth of purchases. We've also just negotiated access to 18 databases of full-text articles from prominent publications, allowing ministries to drop their subscriptions.

Managing information and technology is no simple feat, Mr. Chairman. RGE is about discovering an issue and getting out in front of it, and I'm extremely pleased with what we've accomplished to date. Indeed, we've been doing a lot of things right, and we'll be talking more about them in the future.

The information and knowledge management core business includes the chief information office, Alberta SuperNet, and standards in privacy for information and communications technologies. We manage computers, their operating systems, software applications, and the infrastructure necessary to co-ordinate the government's use of technology. Over the coming year we'll be looking at the best way to implement IT standards and guidelines

and manage government-wide IT projects. In fact, we're carefully reviewing business cases and are considering a number of business models to move forward on, consolidating the government's ICT infrastructure into a co-ordinated and managed environment.

For example, we're looking at developing a common blueprint for technology across all government to reduce costs and share business solutions. In this way we can support ministries in decision-making and ensure that all solutions are compatible. This ministry believes that cross-government standards are very important. Again, this is about government operating as one for the benefit of Albertans. I intend to be as aggressive as needed to make that happen.

Another major goal of this core business and a much more visible one for the public is the SuperNet and making it come alive for Albertans during this our centennial year. Mr. Chairman, few would argue that the Alberta SuperNet could easily be recognized as the flagship of this year's budget theme, Investing in the Next Alberta. When we talk about investing in the priority areas of health, education, communities, and infrastructure, well, the SuperNet contributes to all of that. Today all 27 larger urban centres, or what we call base communities, are service ready.

In fact, our rural SuperNet communities will be connected to the network by the end of this month. I also have assurances that the vast majority of the thousands of facilities across Alberta will be connected very soon. Several hundred customers are using the network right now.

I had the distinct pleasure of touring the SuperNet management centre in Calgary, and I must say that it is impressive technology that will make a significant difference for economic development, education opportunities, and better health and government services primarily in our rural communities. In fact, I'm told that the Minister of Advanced Education will be using a SuperNet connection here in Edmonton tomorrow to speak at the second biannual Grande Yellowhead regional division video conference symposium in Edson, and the Minister of Education will do the same from Edmonton on Friday. Investing in the next Alberta with SuperNet will become increasingly clear over the next few months as ministries promote SuperNet and its next-generation technology as part of a province ready for the 21st century.

I know that some have said that by the time SuperNet construction is complete, the technology will be outdated, but those people probably don't realize how expandable fibre and wireless technology is. Alberta's SuperNet is designed to meet the high-speed telecommunications needs now and far into the future. In order to upgrade fibre, whenever that time might come, it's only necessary to upgrade the electronics at each end. Don't take my word for it. Take the word of the Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers, which said that Alberta's SuperNet, with its combination of fibre optics and radio-based long-distance links, "offers the best blueprint yet for a bridge over that digital divide."

What a bridge it is, Mr. Chairman. The length of the network and its technology to make that all happen: over 1,200 kilometres, the distance from my constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to Auckland, New Zealand. The number of hospitals, schools, libraries, and government offices that will be connected to the SuperNet: 4,200. The number of Albertans who stand to benefit: over 3 million. The building cost to the Alberta taxpayer: \$193 million and not one penny more. The cost of saving a life by sending instant, high-quality images from one hospital to another or watching a bright-eyed student take part in a high-quality video conference for the very first time: priceless.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize that we're not just building a network; we're building a future. We are indeed investing in the next Alberta, and I think we always have to keep

that in mind. Last year the *Globe and Mail's Report on Business* stated, "It's time for all of Canada to jump on Alberta's big broadband bandwagon," and now we're beginning to see other provinces follow our lead. Indeed, imitation is the best form of flattery.

Achieving our vision and mission and acting like one government will benefit all Albertans. We can realize e-government opportunities that provide more convenient access for Albertans. We can provide cost-effective shared services for all ministries. Restructuring and Government Efficiency can help make it happen.

With that let's take a look at the budget numbers, page 296 of estimates. The 2005-2006 budget for this ministry is \$258 million. It's important for me to stress that 68 per cent of that, over \$175 million, are expenditures on behalf of other ministries for the shared services. For example, we may do a large mail-out for another ministry, and that expenditure shows up in our budget, but it shows up in their budget too. When you subtract the recovery credits, the remainder is less than \$83 million for restructuring and government efficiencies.

Allow me to break down that \$83 million. The cost of running the ministry is about \$2.5 million. This includes things like my office, the deputy minister's office, and, of course, corporate management. The cost of the new core business of opportunity and restructuring assessment is \$3.3 million. I discussed this division earlier. This funding will be used to discover programs and service delivery opportunities, research best-practice solutions, and work with our ministry's partners to make it happen.

Initiatives in business transformation come in at just over \$1 million. This provides leadership strategy and development for transforming internal government process.

A number of activities in the information and knowledge management core business comes in a just under \$40 million, mostly for developing our information and communications technology strategy across all ministries. This \$40 million is about \$16.5 million over last year. For the most part that increase is the higher amortization of SuperNet. For those of you old enough to remember, we used to call this depreciation. The money has already been spent. Now for accounting purposes it gets written off. That's \$14.8 million of the \$16.5 million. The balance is about \$1.7 million, and that's for setting up the ongoing operations and management of SuperNet.

If you're keeping track, that leaves about \$36 million of the \$83 million, which pays the portion of shared services that we absorb in-house. It pays for nongovernment shared services, including agencies, boards, and commissions. It includes voice and data systems, debt collections, and supply management, to name a few.

Those in a nutshell are the budget numbers. Overall, we'll be operating on a voted budget of \$258 million, of which \$175 million is paid directly by other ministries for services they require.

8:20

Thank you for your interest in our new Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. You might ask how we'll know when we've become as efficient as possible, and to that I point to the Fraser Institute's 2005 budget performance index. Their report released in February explains how governments across the country are facing increasing pressures on a number of fronts. Some are calling for increased spending in health and education or for legislated debt reduction, something that, of course, we don't have to worry about ever again in Alberta. Alberta for the eighth straight year received the top score of 94.9 out of a hundred. The second place finisher score was well below at 61.9.

The bottom line, Mr. Chairman, is that Alberta maintains the smallest government with provincial and local spending just 15.8 per cent of GDP. Still, the report said, "Every Canadian jurisdiction,

even those ranking highly, has room to improve." I couldn't agree more. You'll see that our business plan addresses key strategies needed to unleash innovation and compete in the global marketplace.

My ministry is committed to the other pillars of the government plan, including leading in learning and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. I'm proud that what we do for Albertans is part of the overall government plan for the next 20 years. We are well on our way, Mr. Chairman.

Now, I'm sure there are questions, and I'd be happy to discuss them with you. If there are any that I can't answer, my staff up in the gallery will be happy to follow up and make sure you get the information that you are all looking for.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, might we revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie I am honoured this evening to introduce a group of young men who are visiting the Legislature this evening as part of the Knottwood Venturers, a scouting group. I'm going to read them off by name since there are not too many of them, so I won't take a lot of our time. They are Chris Carter, Benjamin Keyes, Brandt Oviatt, David Hanson, and Jeremy Colling. They are accompanied by their leader, Aaron Low. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Restructuring and Government Efficiency (continued)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll offer my congratulations at this point to the new minister of the newest ministry and thank him for the explanatory remarks that he made at the beginning. I was really looking forward to that because, frankly, this entire ministry is a bit of a puzzlement. I'm certainly in agreement that the government could use some efficiency watchdogs, but I have to admit that thus far that was not the sense that I was getting based on the performance of this ministry. So I was very interested to hear that the minister will investigate and will look at which ideas are more important and will try to achieve efficiencies.

But then he went on to say that he wasn't a policeman. By that I take it that he's not interested in enforcement. But it's not enforcement that I'm seeking here; it's investigation. There seems to be a schism between what the government says they're going to do and what the minister is going to do. On every issue we've raised with the minister in question period, for example, and said, "Well, are you going to look into the efficiencies here?" the minister has gone, "No, no, no, that's not me; go back to the ministry." You go to the ministry and they go: it's not me. So the government is dropping this all into this big hole in the middle, and nobody is responsible for figuring out where the efficiency should have been achieved and where it went wrong. So you're not following an investigative process. I mean, yes, I think that if things went wrong, then there should be an enforcement part of this, but I can't even get an

understanding of an investigative portion. You may want to clarify that based on my remarks here, but the minister wasn't even clear when he outlined that.

For example, will the ministry be looking at what happened in the department of health and between health and the municipalities with the misunderstandings of the transfer of the ambulance authority? Now, there's a case for inefficiency. There was something that was four years in the planning. It was announced with a great deal of fanfare a year ago. We get one month out from the rollout for it, and the whole thing is pulled. Now, it may well be that the Minister of Health and Wellness was absolutely right in stopping that particular endeavour, but it begs the question: how was four years of effort spent on this? And that cost money. That cost taxpayers' money. So why is that not being investigated? Or perhaps it is, and if it is, I'd like to hear that from the minister and what plans he is going to follow. I'll use that example as a way of an introduction.

So further questions to the minister are: how does he go about investigating efficiencies? What are the criteria that he uses? How does he set the timelines when he goes to investigate something that's happened in another department? How does he set the measurements for a successful investigation or suggestion or decision about which ideas are the most important? Or is this just sort of wading around and chatting with folks? I want to know what the criteria are and how this is all being laid out because it seems pretty loose and airy-fairy to me right now. I think that if we're going to spend \$258 million on it, there has got to be a better explanation than that.

I noticed in the minister's comments that he talked about reviewing the fees that are being levied by the government, and I'm wondering if the government is currently in compliance with the Eurig decision. If I could get an answer on that, please. Oh, that caused a quick look above my head to the staff. I'm sure that they know what it means. But it strikes me that we've strayed away from that again, and I would like to know if the minister is confident in saying that we are in compliance with the Eurig decision at this point in time. So I'd like to get an answer on that, please.

Of course, as with any ministry we are happy to receive responses to our questions in writing, but I would ask that we please receive those answers back before we are expected to vote on the budget because I think it's irresponsible of me to be voting on a budget when I don't have the responses to questions that I ask. You're going to have the most advantage over all of your colleagues, so if you can just please make sure that you've provided the written responses before we have to vote on this budget.

I'm interested in hearing where the minister is examining technology. What work is he doing around security levels and access levels? In the past several years of Auditor General's reports there have been concerns expressed that the security levels were not being properly instituted and maintained. In other words, someone that was only supposed to have a certain level of security clearance to get certain kinds of information, in fact, had access to other kinds of information, and that wasn't being rigorously enforced.

Of course, that's where it all falls apart for us. That's where we end up with disasters happening because if someone is determined that they are going to make nefarious use of a good government system, and we make it easy for them, that's where it's going to happen. So I would like the minister to discuss those security levels.

Dr. Taft: Will you give him a chance to answer?

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, I'll give him a chance to answer.

8:30

The other sort of grouping of questions that I had was around the SuperNet. Now, I'm wondering specifically if the minister can lay out – since this is definitively inside of his department and therefore I would expect that he would in fact answer these questions – what the supervision is of the contracts and particularly of the assets that are owned by the government but used in the SuperNet.

In Calgary, the office that the minister toured, I believe those computers are in fact owned by the government. How are they supervised to make sure that they are being used for government business only and not being used eight hours a day for something else? What kind of monitoring do you have in place to ensure that that is, in fact, the case?

I would like to know why the fine that was allowable under the terms of the contract was not imposed with Bell, because they were late. Why did the government choose not to enforce that fine or to charge that fine? They were late; there was no question. The government has admitted it on the record a number of times. Why was the fine not enforced?

I'd also like the minister to explain for the benefit of all members of the Assembly how the contract with Axia works – what is the costing for the contract with Axia? – so that we have that on the record from the minister.

I'm being urged by my colleagues to give you a chance to answer those questions. I gave you a couple of groupings there, ending with the SuperNet and starting with the investigation of efficiency power. So I will take my seat and look forward to hearing from the minister his answers to my questions. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Lots of good questions there, hon. member. I'd like to start by trying to clarify a little bit, if there were some misunderstandings when I was trying to explain, that we are not a policeman, and really you have to also remember that we do have an Auditor General in this province that looks at how anybody would be doing something that would be a complete waste.

What I was trying to explain is that what we plan on doing, what that part of this ministry is doing is to look for efficiencies and try to help other ministries in a partnership, in collaboration with them. We're not going to be a policeman or a heavy-handed person saying: you have to do this. We're going to look and present a business case that we believe would be a more efficient way for them to do certain things, that would make it better for all Albertans.

I believe that every morning when you get out of bed, you think the same as I do: we want to do the best thing for Albertans. I don't think that you really get up to come here and just give us a hard time to give us a hard time. You really believe that you want to do the best for Albertans even though sometimes you have to go a far stretch for that.

Anyway, I hope I explained that well enough to say that, really, we're not trying to step in the place of any other ministry, because that is their business. We're just going to try to help them and investigate things when people tell us that there's a better way of doing it. So if you have a better way of doing something, give us that suggestion. If we believe it's good, we will investigate if that way would work better, and we would try to present a business case on that.

I want to make it clear also on voting on the budget, the \$258 million. I want you to remember that \$175 million of that or over is showing up in everyone else's budgets. It's dedicated revenue

because we're doing a shared service, so we're looking for economies of scale, and different things like that is what that shared service is.

Security awareness is a high priority for this ministry. In fact, we have a dedicated corporate security office to encourage ministries to develop and deliver security awareness training. One of our first activities is to identify key areas that need attention and better training. We have already completed a survey of ministries and are working on developing the next steps. We are also gathering key resources and material from suppliers, external organizations, and other governments. We are actively encouraging ministries to participate in a security management committee of our chief security officer. We have also developed an activity plan for an education and awareness program to be implemented across government.

I can't read my own writing here all of a sudden.

I have to say that when I was in that office in Calgary – that's actually the control centre, and I'm not sure if the computers are owned by us. I'd have to find that out. But I will tell you one thing. What they're doing in there is controlling what's going on on the SuperNet. The computers are strictly hooked up to the SuperNet to watch all the functions that are happening, and it's actually very interesting how far they can drill down to find out exactly where there's a problem or not a problem. If anything goes down in that centre, they have a laptop there that they can pick up, take out to any one of the point of presence buildings, hook up, and they're back online and can run the whole system from there.

You were asking about measuring Axia's performance. We measure Axia's performance in terms of service and provision and financial performance. Axia is responsible for providing SuperNet service to all Alberta SuperNet facilities: government offices, learning and health care facilities, libraries, and municipalities in the extended network. Axia is also responsible for providing other customer services, providing access to commercial customers such as Internet service providers. We measure Axia's performance in providing service against the terms of the contract. Axia is also required to provide immediate, real-time reporting on any major disruptions in service and outline how the problem is being fixed.

We also monitor Axia's financial performance. We receive monthly reports from Axia on SuperNet costs and on revenue. Axia's year-end financial statements are audited against the terms and conditions established in the access, management, and operations licence agreement. We compare Axia's financial performance against the budget approved in advance by an independent third party, and if Axia exceeds this budget, they are responsible for paying the extra cost. I have to remind you that that's strictly on the operational end. On the build end, which is going on right now, that's strictly on that \$193 million contract. It doesn't matter how much money Bell spends. It doesn't matter how much money it costs. It's only going to cost the taxpayer \$193 million.

Ms Blakeman: Plus Axia's contract.

Mr. Ouellette: That's strictly operational and later. Axia's contract is going to – they're going to make money off of the hookups.

The SuperNet is overdue. I've got to agree with you there. There are penalty provisions built into that contract, and I don't want to speculate right now whether these provisions will be invoked or not. Our focus is to work with Bell and Axia to complete the project. We recently announced the completion plan, and I'm very pleased with it. Both Bell and Axia have agreed to those deadlines.

More than 390 rural communities will be connected to the SuperNet by the end of April. The vast majority of the facilities – government buildings, health care buildings, libraries, and schools – will be connected by the end of June, with the total network being

completed by the end of September. That gives us even more reason to celebrate our centennial in true Alberta style. This system is going to be so great for Albertans. It is such a complex issue, and I want to work with them in partnership and get the job done.

I think I've covered all of them.

8:40

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Committee Chair. Do not go gently into that dark night; rage, rage against the dying of the light. That is the literary theme of tonight's commentary, and I'm going to do my very best to be hard on the policy but soft on the person.

My first suggestion for efficiency would be to change the name. I've noticed already that I think it was the House leader this afternoon or the Deputy House Leader spelled it out, R-A-G-E, and then I noticed this evening you short-formed it to RGE. It's kind of like the Johnny Cash song, you know, *Boy Named Sue*, because no matter what you do, that name is going to haunt you.

Speaking of names haunting you, can you imagine what it was like for me going through numerous years of school, including a bachelor's degree at the university, when roll call was called out? Chase, Harry. So I know all about what can happen with names and so on.

I want to talk about how we could increase the efficiency of some of the other departments by changing their names. I'm going to use another literary reference to sort of try and put it in perspective. In George Orwell's novel *1984* the ministry of truth was actually the ministry of propaganda. That's not so far off from what's happening with our various government ministries. After all, was it not the ministry of infrastructure that blew up the General hospital? That seems kind of like a reversal.

Then we have the ministry of learning. Within that ministry of learning during the province-wide strike because learning wasn't taking place because of the large, crowded classrooms, part of the expectation for teachers was that you could not have two teachers gathering in one spot to discuss the notion of striking because that would have been against the law. If anyone spoke to a teacher, like, for example, a parent, you know, if they were overheard on the street saying, "How long are you going to be on strike?" well, we expected to look over our shoulder and possibly the ministry of supersize and efficiency would be coming to take us away.

Then, of course, with the current ministry of learning there was a lot of, sort of, bragging going on about what a great education system we have. I do admit that it's going to get better based on today's budget announcements, and I thank you for heading in that direction. But as a teacher for 34 years I'm very aware that 75 per cent of our ESL students don't make it through high school because the funding for ESL doesn't extend for a sufficient length of time.

Then if we look at the ministry of advanced learning, there's a bit of an oxymoron there, too, because the reality is that we have the least number of postgraduates in all of Canada. Hopefully, again, the budget announcements today will help address that, but currently that's not the case.

We had an interesting experience today in the Public Accounts Committee. The hon. minister came in with a whole slew of entourage. We had the deputy minister. We had the assistant deputy minister. We had the assistant to the assistant deputy minister. We had so many deputies that we could have had a posse right there and then. You know, I'm not sure about the efficiency of the number of deputy ministers. How many deputy ministers does it take to keep a minister headed in the right direction? So we have those kinds of concerns about efficiency.

Now, I have a couple of concerns about comments that were made within the House. There's been an awful lot of talk about the SuperNet, and there are a lot of schools, there are a lot of institutions that require being hooked up, but I'm not sure just how much time it takes within the department itself to make sure that these hookups are taking place. Then we go back to the department of infrastructure. It must be exhausting being the department of infrastructure right now and overseeing the installation of the SuperNet into schools because you've got to get it in there fast before you close them. So, you know, I'm not sure how efficient that is.

I also have heard, or at least the sense I got was that the department had not been able to check out the efficiencies of the other departments. I may have heard wrong – and you can certainly correct me, and I'm sure you will numerous times – but it seemed like the department was busy looking at its own internal efficiencies and had not yet had sufficient time to examine the efficiencies of the other departments. I gather it's an onerous task in both cases.

What was stated earlier was that the money shows up in two budgets. It appears within the Restructuring and Government Efficiency department, and it also shows up in other departments. I wonder if that's kind of like making the announcement about the \$3.5 billion worth of infrastructure three times, and now it's \$9.2 billion. Possibly that's part of it. Maybe it's double-dipping. I don't know. It's in this department and that department. You know, it's certainly questionable.

In terms of efficiency the Premier talked about having a smaller government, a more, sort of, responsive government, and then we added on another department. I'm not sure whether that was the way to go. I would like to think it's kind of like what I proposed in the wellness bill. We were talking about taking \$250 million out of a \$650 million budget, and the idea would be to promote wellness to such a point where smoking was no longer a problem. In other words, we would try and put ourselves out of business. I would like to think that that was the main point of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, to work so hard that you'd work yourself out of a job.

With that, I'll take my seat, and if you're able to answer the questions, that would be great.

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Chairman, I will give a shot at some statements here, but I really didn't catch much for questions out of that. I got a lot of comments, a lot of mumbo-jumbo, a lot of raging, and whatever he was trying to do there. Anyway, I will comment.

He was talking a lot about education. We have one of the best education systems in the country, and we have the stats to back all that up. So I don't know how you could say all the time, especially with 30 years of experience as a schoolteacher, we have a poor – you were the teacher. How can we have such a poor system?

8:50

You did ask about money being in our budget or in somebody else's budget or double-dipping. We do not have the money. We report it as money that we're going to spend, and that's why it's reported in our budget, but it's all in everyone else's budget, and it's dedicated revenue. So we show it as what the costs are going to be to supply the shared services across 24 ministries in government, and all of that money is in their ministries. We submit them a bill, and they pay it, but it's showing that we're going to spend it, so it's in ours.

That was about it for questions, wasn't it? Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I tried to listen intently to find out what this department is all about, Government Restructuring and Efficiency. I wondered if it made the trains run on time or whatever it's supposed to do.

You know, I went through this today, and it's the business plans, the core businesses, and it reminded me of when I was in the financial world with Investors Group. I mean, these things are all very nice on paper, but it really doesn't tell us much. Everybody has a business plan, and we're going to do this and that, and we're going to be more efficient. We're going to do – blah, blah, blah.

What we're trying to get a handle on – this is a brand new department – is why we would create a new department to become more efficient. I would remind this government that when the so-called Klein revolution was occurring back in '93, he cut, as I recall, the cabinet by 30 per cent, down to 17. Now we're edging back up, and now we're creating an extra department to make us more efficient. Now, I thought Conservatives were supposed to believe in small government, and I don't understand why we need to create another department to make the other departments more efficient and why we're adding more cabinet ministers as we go along. So we're trying to get, in the opposition, Mr. Chairman, a handle on exactly what it is that this department does and why we need this department to do those particular things.

Flowing from that, Mr. Chairman, I guess I'd like some – the minister said that they're not policemen. Okay? They don't enforce anything. I hear what he's saying. Well, then, if that's the case, we still want to know what they do. We know you deal with the SuperNet, and that's rather ironic although, admittedly, it's probably not the minister's fault. When we moved the SuperNet to Government Efficiency, we find out that it's been rather inefficient getting it going because the project was first supposed to be completed by July 2004, then it was January 2005, and I think now it's September of 2005. I'd be interested if it's even going to be done then. It is rather ironic that the most inefficient program has been put into the department of so-called efficiency.

I guess what I would like to get a handle on – because I would take it that one of the mandates from this department would be that it's to try to be efficient and save money down the way, taxpayers' money. I take it that that would be one of the mandates. Otherwise, I can see no other purpose of a ministry like this. So I would like some specific examples of things that this ministry has done to save money for the taxpayers of Alberta. That's one question, Mr. Chairman.

The other question that I would have, and it ties into that, is: who is benefiting from this ministry? I know the SuperNet is there, but it seems IBM and Bell Canada are doing well. Can you give some examples, then, of this department beyond saving dollars, the types of things that they've done that are socially valuable to the government that wouldn't have been done if a department was operating on its own? We need to have some specific examples. I know it's \$80 million – I'll give him that – to run his department, but that's a lot of money too. So we have to have some concrete examples about what's happening here, especially in government efficiency, because if we're wasting \$80 million, that's not very efficient, is it, Mr. Chairman?

Again, what I'd like to clarify from this minister is how this ministry is different from the Ministry of Government Services and, if it is different, why they couldn't be together in one department? Then, Mr. Chairman, I guess that gets into the whole duplication of services between this ministry and the Ministry of Government Services. The minister did allude that – correct me if I'm wrong – \$175 million was in his budget from other departments. Can he explain why that is? I'm wondering if there is duplication of services.

Then just a couple of quick questions that may give us an idea where this department is going beyond that, Mr. Chairman. If it's a department of restructuring and efficiency, is it part of their role maybe not to be a policeman, but I think the minister did say that, well, they'd go into other departments and lay out business plans and that sort of thing when asked, I suppose, by the other departments – for example, could they tell us why the information and knowledge management expenses, which have to do a lot with computers, of course, have increased by 70 per cent from last year, from \$23 million to \$39 million roughly, from the government and lottery estimates? Why have these costs increased so exorbitantly? Is this another form of corporate welfare for IBM?

So, Mr. Chairman, just to come back to the last question that maybe I didn't make clear, about the SuperNet. The latest was September 2005. Is that still going to be the time frame that the minister is shooting for, or are we looking at beyond that?

So, Mr. Chairman, with those general comments, and there are a few questions there, I'd open up to other members. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I guess you wanted to know where we've saved some money. We contracted digital imaging services for Health and Wellness at a cost savings of \$450,000 in this fiscal year. We saved \$737,000 on a cross-ministry quarterly volume purchase of computers and printers. We consolidated office supplies purchasing and increased the government discount from 48 to 70 per cent on approximately \$7 million of annual purchases. Projected savings of \$178,000 through increased rebates as a result of usage through our newly negotiated contract with the Bank of Montreal for employees' purchases on a new procurement card system. The credit card also offers better security and more detailed reporting for purchases so trends can be capitalized on.

We've also just negotiated government-wide access to 18 databases of full text articles for such prominent publications as *Harvard Business Review* and *Business Week*, allowing ministries to drop their individual subscriptions.

We saved \$15,000 per year by recycling boxes used to ship government records to be shredded. Each year we shred 130,000 cubic feet of paper records, microfilm, and computer data. The shredding service is paid for through the sale of recycled paper, and we recover some of our shipping costs when the shredding company reaches its threshold for the sale of recycled paper and provides us the excess, about \$650 per month.

The answer to your question on the SuperNet being September. It's yes, that's our plan. I have no reason to believe that we're anywhere off kilter. In fact, I think I just received another paper with 41 new ones, another 41 points of presence that were just connected. We have all of the different schools, hospitals, the final little connections, but the point of presence is the main thing. That's also the big benefit to go out to rural Albertans because that's where the Internet service providers can now hook up, at the point of presence. Now they can supply retail service at the same cost in most cases, in some places cheaper, in some more. It depends how competitive we get out there.

9:00

The 41 communities are all over the map. Pincher Creek just got hooked up, Lundbreck, Bocket, Milk River, Coutts, Iron Springs, Brant, Blackie, Willingdon, Two Hills, Seven Persons, Morrin, Hanna, Delia, Irricana, Carbon, Standard, Rocky Ford, Hussar, Milo, Arrowwood, South Cooking Lake, New Sarepta, Hay Lakes,

Redwater, Radway, Spirit River, Bonanza, Woking, Whitelaw, Eaglesham, Wembley, Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wildwood, Hinton, Edson, Enoch, Bragg Creek, Spruce View, Clive – and I've got four more pages.

I mean, when you think that in most cases anywhere in rural Alberta you can't even hook up to anything but dial-up service – and today you can't do business on dial-up service. All of a sudden we're going to have a system that they can buy, as wide a band as they need to do video conferencing, voice over Internet, all of that stuff, and that's going to be there. We're going to have the best system in the world for rural people.

I do have to say that, yes, we have a brand new name, but it isn't a brand new department. There is not \$80 million of new money there. Our total new money in this budget I think is \$3.3 million or \$3 million even. That's our total new money. The rest came with CCIO and with ACSC. Yes, I believe that we can do much, much better within ACSC and in putting ACSC and CCIO together because they both do a lot of things the same, and we want to streamline that.

I have to say that all of us in this whole building are here for the same reason: to make things easier, to make things better for all Albertans. It doesn't matter which party you're from or where you are. When you're walking out there, outside of this room, and you're talking to constituents, they all say: "Why is government so tough to deal with? Why is it hard to get this? We don't need all this red tape." That's part of the stuff that we want to work on. We want to find out maybe a better definition of rules and regulation as to what actually affects somebody when they need something done by government. Let's cut through that and make things better and easier for all Albertans.

I think I covered just about everything he asked about there. Thank you, hon. member.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You'll forgive me if I ask some questions that perhaps aren't exactly appropriate or relevant to the topic at hand. Forgive me; I know not what I do, fully. As members opposite are so eager to point out in question period so often about so many of my colleagues on this side, the member is new, and were the member more experienced, he might know the answers to these questions. But I'm going to ask a couple of questions that are really key to my understanding of the minister's department and the purpose for the minister's existence as a minister.

Question 1 is this. It came to mind as he was explaining all the savings in procurements, and I appreciate that explanation for the previous member who was speaking. Can the minister explain to this House, please, how any of that part of his business plan requires a separate government department? It sounds to me – and remember that I'm new here – like the business of the Department of Government Services. We have a ministry already, called Government Services, that I think ought to be responsible for making sure that the stuff that government needs is bought in bulk at a healthy discount, you know, and that efficiencies are sought all the way along the line there. I don't understand why we need the Department of RAGE to ride herd on the department of not doing its job. This is how it sounds to me.

Now, the other question, and this is why I beg the House's indulgence here. This is very definitely a question that comes from a person who is new to this, but would somebody please explain to me: why SuperNet? Why SuperNet? As I sit here and I listen – and I'll grant you that as a private citizen perhaps I should have paid

more attention to the issue of SuperNet as it was developing – it sounds very much to me as though here is a government that spent much of its first 12 years of existence trying to convince the people of Alberta that the government had no business being in business now providing a service that, it would seem to me, should be up to business to provide.

I mean, for heaven's sake, it can't be that difficult to get access to the Internet – can it? – from anywhere within the province of Alberta when all you have to do is go out to your Chevy half-ton or your Cadillac, turn on the engine, hit the OnStar button, and you're in touch with somebody from Atlanta, Georgia, who could tell you how to lock yourself in your car with your keys or whatever the deal is.

You see, it would seem to me, Mr. Chairman and hon. members opposite and the minister, that there are technological options that business could explore and make a reasonable return on, but I could be wrong about this. So please explain to me why it is that the government now has to provide a piece of – and I'll use the word "infrastructure," for lack of a better word. Maybe that's exactly what it is, and maybe when the minister answers my question, I'll be fully satisfied with the answer, fully and completely satisfied. But it seems to me that this is a piece of infrastructure being provided by government that is equivalent to telephone lines provided by a publicly held but private telephone corporation or power lines provided by a private business or many other services like that.

I know that some of the hon. members think I'm just jerking their chain here, but I'm not. It just seems to me that there's a disconnect between the government's overriding philosophy that it should get out of the way of business and let business do what business does best and, in this instance, an attempt by government to do, it appears to me, something that business does best. As we've seen so far – and perhaps this is all the justification for the minister's department that we need: if he can get this leaky old ship to sail in a straight line. It seems to me that this is a classic example thus far at – what? – \$200 million and counting of a system, a project that government has mismanaged.

So there are my questions, two of them. If the minister could answer them, please. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can see that really you weren't listening very closely when I gave my speech. You weren't listening very closely when I just explained that the total new spend, what this ministry is costing, is \$3 million.

9:10

Mr. Taylor: I wasn't asking about that.

Mr. Ouellette: Well, anyway, you were asking about the SuperNet: why the SuperNet? There are a million reasons why the SuperNet, but I'm first going to start with when you said: leave it to private business. We better go back to starting in Alberta. I was at a meeting with all the gas people last year, and they were saying: how did you ever get Alberta so gasified? The reason that Alberta is so gasified was because of rural gas co-ops. That's the only way it would pay to go out into rural Alberta. Why is rural Alberta so electrified? The same thing. Why are there telephone lines all over rural Alberta? Because Alberta Government Telephones put them in, and once the province was done all over rural Alberta, then private business could take it over and make a go of it.

The \$193 million that's going into SuperNet is going in to give rural Albertans the same opportunities as urban Albertans. It's going to enable rural Albertans to have e-business and e-learning and e-

health, and it's going to enable the small communities in rural Alberta to offer better services within their school system and possibly keep those schools open. It's going to enable people to have a business somewhere in rural Alberta and possibly have their people trained right there in rural Alberta instead of having to leave their families behind and go into an urban centre to go to school, to take their upgrading or their training or whatever they need.

So I think I've covered that. That was the big thing. You were asking about the \$200 million on SuperNet. That's a pretty good question.

You were asking about why we only have a \$3 million ask on a brand new ministry. Because from the money that was being spent on ACSC and CCIO before, we've already made efficiencies to make sure we can operate.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to ask a number of questions as they relate to information and communications technology, ICT, as most call it these days. I'd like to ask the minister what he's doing to stay on the proactive front when it comes to ICT security. I would also like to know more about the security architecture your ministry is designing.

Changing gears a little bit but still dealing with ICT, how exactly do you monitor security attacks against government computer systems, and what sorts of improvements have you made over the last year?

Finally, I'm wondering about spam and the nuisance it is. It seems to be getting worse, especially on our home computers, and I'm wondering if this is the case for government computers as well and, if so, what we're going to be doing about it.

Mr. Ouellette: I certainly appreciate the question because technology has become a big part of our daily lives. It can help us stay connected and be productive, and I don't know if anyone realizes that better than me these days. In order to effectively deal with ICT security issues, I believe we need commitment from everybody in the organization, and it needs to be ingrained in the entire business processes of government. It includes the need for government security policy, secure operating procedures, ICT infrastructure, an educated workforce, and most important of all, the need for enforcement.

You might be aware that we have a chief security officer, who reports to me. His mandate in technical terms is to design government of Alberta information security policies, strategies, and tactical operating processes, procedures, and standards. In layman's terms his mandate is to seek out security problems and get them fixed. I should make it clear that when we talk about security issues, we're not just talking about issues affecting government employees. It's important that we keep the bigger picture in mind and that we have policies and standards in place that protect the privacy rights of Albertans. It's one thing for a hacker to get into my computer. It's quite another for the hacker to then access through my computer the information of other Albertans. So our policies and standards define how systems are protected. For example, the policies define who should have access and how that access is granted. It also defines where and how the data is to be stored, handled, and disposed.

Last year the Auditor General noted that some departments are not complying with corporate policy. I can tell you with all assurance that corrective action is being taken. A questionnaire was recently provided to all departments, with a response rate of over 90 per cent. The analysis is ongoing to determine how to provide further guidance to the ministries.

In keeping with being proactive, we're also in the midst of building a training and awareness program. It's in the early stages, but we are working with other ministries in developing content and delivery options. The program will cover everyone from managers, technical personnel, and business users. Once complete, we'll get it out to as many people and places as we possibly can.

Our ministry's security architecture design is part of a comprehensive enterprise architecture that defines how systems need to be designed. For example, one section deals with how to separate sensitive information from less sensitive data, while another section sets the requirements for making sure that only authorized people have access to sensitive information. The government enterprise architecture is receiving great reviews from many large-scale organizations. We have a lot of exciting work ahead of us in this regard.

As I mentioned in my notes, over the coming year we'll be looking at the best way to implement IT standards and guidelines and manage government-wide IT projects. We're carefully reviewing business cases and considering a number of business models to move forward on, consolidating the government's ICT infrastructure into a co-ordinated management environment. We're a bigger purchaser of IT products, and defining standards and expectations ahead of time provides all suppliers a way to compete fairly. It's our way of backing free enterprise. I believe the best way to enhance IT development in Alberta is by keeping the best interests of Albertans in mind and by doing it in a cost-effective manner. That doesn't always have to mean going to the big guns to get the job done.

You also asked about security attacks and what sort of improvements we've made. There are a number of systems in place that detect Internet attacks such as viruses and attempted intrusions. Some of these systems cover the government as a whole, while others are designed to protect individual ministries and even single computer systems. One marked improvement has been the number of people dedicated to computer security who have been hired directly in ministries. Another is the level of dedication to security observed when new systems are deployed. For example, conducting vulnerability tests is becoming more and more frequent as a way to detect problems before they can occur. Restructuring and Government Efficiency is partnering with other departments to establish and maintain strong security of Alberta government computers.

To answer your question about spam, I don't know if you're aware of this, but the government of Alberta receives about 3 million e-mails a month. I'm told that a lot of these e-mails, upwards of 80 per cent, are spam, an industry average and no different than all those annoying e-mails we get at home. There are different types of spam. Some of it can be rather harmless, annoying but harmless, maybe offering the latest headache remedy, but a lot of spam can be offensive, malicious, or fraudulent.

Spam in the government is handled through a series of filters. We have a government-wide system in place for all departments, a number of department-specific solutions, and finally some filters at the employees' machines. This ensures that no legitimate mail is filtered out and allows decisions to be made at the appropriate level.

The government of Alberta has a working group involving most departments. This group is looking at all the technical issues to continue improving the handling of spam. We're also aware of a federal task force on spam, which is expected to table a report within the next few months. We'll take a close look at this report when it comes out because it's expected to set industry practices and legal options.

9:20

Whether we're talking about spam intrusions or other ICT security issues, it's important that we address these issues as one unit, one

government, one corporation. Even the Auditor General has pointed out in the past that our ministries don't always sing the same tune, and we don't always operate as one smooth-running machine. I said it in my notes, and I'll say it again: this ministry believes cross-government standards, including ICT security standards, are very important. This is about government operating as one and benefiting all Albertans.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to participate in the budget estimate debates on Restructuring and Government Efficiency ministry. The RAGE department certainly has grown. It's gone from zero to 1,272 full-time equivalent employees in less than four months. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was talking about the increase in the size of the government. In 2001 we saw it go from 16 cabinet ministers, 17 including the Premier, and now it's gone up by an additional one after this election. So we see a big budget, and we see a supersized government. The government has become supersized.

I have a number of questions directly related to Restructuring and Government Efficiency for the hon. minister. The first one centres around the fiscal plan tables on page 57 of the Fiscal Plan. Now, I notice in here where we see an increase in total full-time equivalent employment from last year to this year of over one thousand – one thousand more employees. This is a supersized government.

Now, the Restructuring and Government Efficiency department, RAGE, has an estimate for this budget year of 1,272 employees. So I thought, naturally, Mr. Chairman, that, well, Innovation and Science must have lost some, Government Services must have lost some employees, and perhaps those two departments were transferred over to the RAGE department. But I look at the estimates, and I find that not to be true.

Now, in Government Services we see a change. From last fiscal year to this year there are 16 more employees, so it didn't work out there. Innovation and Science, where the administration of the SuperNet was housed or parked or whatever you want to say, had 696 employees last fiscal year, and this year it's having the same number, so there was no change. Yet we see this department with a staff of 1,200 full-time equivalent employment positions, and I would like to know where those people came from. Are they former contractors? Because there's no other government department that has seen a reduction in staff, none except one: Legislative Assembly. There was one person less in that department than there was last year.

So I would like the hon. minister to explain to me where he got those 1,272 staff. That's my first question, and that's why I say that this is a supersize government now, Mr. Chairman. And I would be very grateful for an explanation of this.

Now, the hon. minister was also talking about rural schools and the closures of rural schools. Another hon. member talked about Red Earth and how far people had to travel there to get to school. I think a wise use of our money is building schools, and the ones that we have already built at taxpayers' expense should remain open. Now, we look at Wellington school, we look at North Edmonton school, we look at Terrace Heights school, and we look at Strathearn school, and at a public meeting Monday night I was told that the Ministry of Education paid for the SuperNet installations of those four Edmonton public schools that the public board is considering closing.

I and many people in the community are confused, and some people are outraged at this expense. Certainly, streets had to be dug

up to facilitate the installation of these cables into these schools. Why after the public board decided to go ahead with the closure process for these schools did the Minister of Education then pay for the installation of the SuperNet? If the schools are going to be closed and the students are not going to benefit from this, who exactly is going to benefit? What was the cost of each of those installations of the SuperNet to those four respective schools?

Also, while we're on the topic of restructuring and efficiency, how could it be that the government paid \$3.2 million to renovate, completely renew, Terrace Heights school – new wiring, new plumbing, some new windows, new exterior, asbestos removal, new desks, new gymnasium floor. It's a beautiful school now, Mr. Chairman. It cost taxpayers \$3.2 million. The government's utilization rate is forcing its closure. The public school board is now in the process of closing that school.

We asked this question last Thursday night at a public meeting. Why this expenditure? Why this apparent waste of tax dollars if you're going to close this school? The public school official who was chairing the meeting indicated: oh, well, we didn't know at the time that, poof, the government was going to spring money to build a new school in Jackson Heights. Their planning department had no idea that out of thin air the government was going to come up with enough money to build this school in Jackson Heights after the repairs were initiated in Terrace Heights. If the minister could clarify whether he thinks this is the efficient use of tax dollars or not, I would be grateful. Many people in the neighbourhood would be very interested to know that.

Now, another question I have is in regard – and this is on page 306 of the Government and Lottery Fund Estimates. On page 306 there is a breakdown of the full-time equivalent employment of this department of 1,272 individuals. The office of the chief corporate information officer has 112 employees, the regulatory review has one employee, opportunity and restructuring assessment has 16, and Alberta Corporate Service Centre has over 1,100.

Now, after the election I was led to believe that when the cabinet was expanded even further with this RAGE department, the chief responsibility of the minister and the department was to look at inefficiencies and overlaps in government and what regulations were not needed, what was going to happen with the size of government: we're going to look at this, and we're going to examine this. Why is there only one person in that department looking at regulatory review?

9:30

Now, I don't know what the Deep Six would think of that, Mr. Chairman, but I don't think even the Deep Six would be impressed by this. I can't recall – I know Mr. Hlady was, I think, a member of the Deep Six. Murray Smith was a member of the Deep Six. I believe the hon. Minister of Economic Development may have been a Deep Sixer. [interjections] No. Okay. I'd better not stray from budget estimate debates, because I think there are other members that want to participate.

I'd like to know why there's only one person. If the government considers it so important to have all this regulatory review, why is there only one person conducting that review? I think that is unique.

The Alberta Corporate Service Centre. That is quite an outfit now. Eleven hundred staff in there. But before I get there, Mr. Chairman, I have to remind the hon. minister of a comment from *Hansard*, before I go any further with the regulatory review, where there's one employee. The hon. minister stated this on March 17, 2005, St. Patrick's Day: "Our department is looking at all the contracts right now to make sure that we are adhering to all of our government policy and rules." If that is the regulatory review, and

there's only one employee in there, that individual is going to be getting a lot of overtime because they're going to be very, very busy keeping the commitment made by the hon. minister.

The Alberta Corporate Service Centre. This enterprise has caught the eye of the Auditor General. The 2003-2004 Auditor General's report pointed out many problems with the Alberta Corporate Service Centre in an area that this hon. minister took over. Has the hon. minister looked into the two contracts, valued at \$250,000, that were not in accordance with the centre's policies?

This has to do, I believe, with this notion of sole sourcing. I always hear this government and its members talk about free enterprise, but I think we should have competitive bidding on government work. I don't understand how we can have all this sole sourcing of contracts where only one person is simply given the contract, from what I can understand. Has the hon. minister improved the documentation for sole source contracts as recommended by the Auditor General because some contracts were apparently given without any documented reason?

I consider the government's reliance on sole source contracts as inefficient, and I don't believe anyone can gauge whether or not you're getting best value for money. We're looking at a department with a sizable budget. I think it's \$258 million. Wow. There are a lot of contracts in there.

Mrs. McClellan: It's just about as big as health.

Mr. MacDonald: It's just about as big as health, the Provincial Treasurer has commented. It's not there yet, but if you give it a couple of years at the rate it has grown in four months, it could be. It could be a \$6 billion, an \$8 billion department.

Why is there such a high threshold with these sole sourcing contracts for what could be considered a private contract? I can certainly see a thousand dollar contract or a fifteen hundred dollar contract or maybe an amount even up to \$5,000 or \$10,000 as is calculated in the public accounts documents for sole sourcing, but we're talking about some major dollars here. How many of the staff from the department are dedicated to making sure that the interests of the taxpayers are looked after in these contracts? How many internal watchdogs have you got in this department whenever we see so many employees with so much money to spend?

Certainly, there are other areas of interest that I have, Mr. Chairman, but with those comments, I will cede the floor to another hon. member of the Assembly. I wait anxiously for the responses, whether they be this evening or soon in writing from the hon. minister. Thank you.

Mr. Ouellette: I've written so much tonight now, Mr. Chairman. I don't think I want to write to him again. Now I'm having trouble understanding my writing here again because you had me going so much, and you were so far off topic half the time.

I do want to address for sure SuperNet at the schools because Restructuring and Government Efficiency confirmed with Bell that this particular school was being considered for closure, but a decision by the school board had not yet been made. Until we are notified to remove it, the facility would remain on the construction build list that Bell follows. Put yourself in Bell's shoes. They've been put under much pressure to make sure they stay on course now and make sure they get this done. You've got to remember another thing. This does not cost the taxpayer of Alberta one dime for hooking those schools up because Bell is doing the full build for the \$193 million contract regardless.

Ms Blakeman: The minister today talked about money from Education to pay for the rest of the hookups.

Mr. Ouellette: For hookups. I don't know if that school is hooked up. All I do is take it to the school. Plus, that school isn't going to close till '06, so if the Minister of Education wants to hook that school up, do you want to deprive those children even for one year from having the SuperNet hookup?

But as far as getting the hookup to the school, that's Bell's contract. It does not cost the taxpayer any more. I want to reiterate that. Our \$193 million investment in the network includes connecting all 4,200 facilities across the province. So to connect all 4,200 of those facilities is in our \$193 million. Bell is paying more than a million dollars to lay fibre and connect facilities in the base area, which is Alberta's largest communities.

Restructuring and Government Efficiency has set a very strict timeline for the completion of the network, and Bell is obviously wanting to have it completed on time. Should the school ultimately close, Education may have other uses for the facility, so I'll let the hon. Minister of Education answer that whenever he wants to. We work closely with other government departments on planning for all of this.

About contracting and what the Auditor General had said. This Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency takes the Auditor General's recommendations very seriously and is committed to ensuring that all necessary changes are implemented. I think I've told you that a number of times. All the concerns have been discussed with the Auditor General's office, and some had already begun to be addressed prior to the release of the report. For example, we've developed thorough policies and procedures for contracting, and I've assigned an individual to be responsible for training staff and monitoring compliance. This action was taken immediately and is now fully in place. I'm confident that our new contracting policies and procedures along with our new monitoring and tracking systems will address concerns of the Auditor General.

In regard to the specific question about sole sourcing, this was related to the storage of documentation to support the contract award. Now the documentation is stored in its entirety in the service office until its completion. Then it goes into the corporate office. This is part of the procedure that has been refined to address the Auditor's concerns. In another, similar case the supporting information was not being properly documented, and this too has been resolved by strengthening procedures. In fact, all of the Auditor General's recommendations have been accepted and have resulted in improvements in our contracting procedures.

9:40

One additional point worth making is that we have struck a contract review committee for all sole sourced and new contracts over \$25,000. This is over and above the standard policies.

I think you were asking me about page 306. I've got to find that. Okay, 1,272 employees. I want to tell you that the only new employees that our ministry is adding are 16 new FTEs, and that is for opportunity and restructuring assessment. All the rest of those employees came with the Alberta Corporate Service Centre and with the chief corporate information officer. I will say that we're asking for 66 new FTEs, but 50 of them have always been there. We were paying them, but we didn't have them actually listed, so we've made an adjustment to correct the error. There are 16 new FTEs in this business plan.

What else did he ask me? To comment on the one regulatory review. That one regulatory review person right now is looking at regulations and regulatory review. Our new opportunity and restructuring assessment – that's where the new FTEs come in – is what's going over the contracting and looking at the policies and that sort of thing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The minister just identified opportunity and restructuring and just briefly talked about it. I'm interested in learning more about your new business unit of opportunity and restructuring assessment. It is, after all, new money in your budget, at \$3.3 million. I certainly understand the need behind having to spend money in order to save money. It's probably taught in economics 101 somewhere, and that, maybe, is the class that I missed. How do we know if we're getting a good bang for our buck?

Mr. Ouellette: I certainly appreciate any opportunity to stress over and over how important this new business unit is to our ministry. In fact, it's so important that it's listed as core business 1 in our new business plan. Opportunity and restructuring assessment is mandated to make things simple and deliver programs and services effectively, efficiently, and economically to Albertans. Instead of a triple-E Senate, I guess you could call this a triple-E service. I might have to trademark that, you know.

This new business unit will consult and collaborate with ministries and partners in order to assess the business and service delivery practices of government. I anticipate those practices always changing as government changes with the times, whether it's proactive or reactive. So it will always be a bit of a moving target, but the end goal is to improve those practices, pure and simple.

This ministry will take a lead role in assessing and prioritizing opportunities to streamline, to restructure, to gain efficiencies and will do that by working with the other ministries. I should mention that I expect that these opportunities will be both internal and external, whether it's the way we conduct business amongst ministries or the way we deliver programs and services to Albertans.

The strategy of opportunity and restructuring assessment is listed in our business plan. But in a nutshell, it will work with ministries and partners to identify opportunities, research and evaluate alternative strategies, identify best practice for improvement, develop and implement a framework that will be the guide to continuous improvement, and then communicate effectively with all ministries and partners.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief to yield the floor to some others here, but the first and biggest question, I guess, that I've got for the hon. minister of restructuring is . . .

Mr. R. Miller: Take your time, Paul.

Mr. Hinman: Thanks.

One has to ask if the only thing that's efficient is if one is measuring the growth of the government. It's phenomenal how fast it is growing, but we really need to cut back on it.

I'll start on the Internet because one of the areas he mentioned tonight was Milk River. I wonder how familiar he is with it because there are only two that I am familiar with in the province. I'd like to talk a little bit about Milk River. The town asked them to please move the hub to a place that was located for the town to easily hook into and to reach out to the rest of the people.

He's talked about the importance of rural Alberta being able to have access to the Internet, and I think one thing that we do all realize and understand in today's world is that high-speed Internet is critical, and we do agree with that. But the problem that we're

having here is that we're still missing a high percentage of rural Alberta. Though they get it to a town, that does not get it to the people living outside the town, whether that's students living on a farm, small acreages, other areas.

Milk River has gone ahead and put up their own wireless Internet that actually worked out at the same price that they were going to be charged just to move the hub because Bell already had their plans and they couldn't be efficient and move it before – no, this is the plan; this is where we're told it's going to go in the town – and it wasn't close to their wiring and their hookups.

So if, in fact, we're looking for efficiency, the most important thing is that we need to be flexible and open-minded in order to be efficient. But that doesn't seem to be the case. We continue to spread out.

At another school where a friend of mine who has moved up to northern Alberta – it's a very small rural school. He's told me that they're spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to get it into this school, and they don't even have computers yet. They ask: wouldn't it be more in line to get computers and those things there?

Mrs. McClellan: What do you mean they don't have computers?

Mr. Hinman: No. I'll get you the name of the school and stuff there, hon. minister.

Mrs. McClellan: How ridiculous.

Mr. Hinman: It is ridiculous. I can't agree with you more on that.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, you better ask your school board where they spent their money.

Mr. Hinman: It's not my school board. But the point is there is no – this restructuring is just disjointed, out of touch. They don't understand what the problems are, and we need to have some communications between the different arms of this beast that says that it's efficient, because it isn't.

Anyway, down in Milk River they've set up this wireless Internet that's going to reach out into rural Alberta. When the government tried to hook up high-speed even to my own house – and we have two hubs. I live between Raymond and Magrath, within eight kilometres of each area. I'm not able to hook up to high-speed Internet with the new SuperNet because we're too far from the hub. We're missing a huge number, but percentage-wise I'm sure this government says: "Oh, don't worry about it. We've got the majority. That's close enough." But it's very disheartening.

The other area that I guess I'd like to touch on a bit is about the red tape reduction, the rules and regulations that seem to proliferate from this government, and I'll use BSE for an example. We know and understand that this is just about politics, not science, with the BSE problem. Yet here in Alberta we've had all kinds of new rules and regulations that are going out to the small abattoirs and butchers that are run out there, so much red tape and expenses that they can't even upgrade at the cost to meet the new regulations.

Mrs. McClellan: Oh, you have no idea. Unbelievable.

9:50

Mr. Hinman: You should come down and drive around my area then, hon. minister. Come to my side and talk to them then. We're definitely living in different areas or else on different planes. [interjections] No other free advice?

Anyway, B.C. has had quite a good plan, and they've really gone

at it. They've actually numbered the amount of statutes and regulations, and I believe they've passed a statute there that they can't put in a new one without eliminating two old ones. If we want to do something that's efficient, let's look at the amount of red tape, and let's start going through it line by line and hiring people so that we can.

Mr. MacDonald: You're going to need one guy doing that.

Mr. Hinman: I know.

The Chair: Hon. members, through the chair, please.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner has the floor.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We really do have a history here of free enterprise, entrepreneurship, and people, businesses, families that will put their whole heart and soul into a business, but they continue to be confronted with more red tape, more regulations that say that they're not reaching the new bar. It's very frustrating for small business to get up and running, and it's critical that this government does take a few steps back, looks at what's going on, and really goes through the regulations. Let's trim them down and make them as simple and straightforward as possible when people want to start and get a new business going.

I guess the only other comment that I'll make is the one that's been made several times this evening, and I just don't think it can be emphasized enough. We don't need more cabinet ministers. We don't need more branches of this government to give good service to the people and the industry of Alberta. We need less. We need less regulations. Trimming back the size of our government will do us more benefit in the future than all of the trimming that we've done and the huge debt that we've been able to pay off because we've made those massive cuts. Now it's time to cut this massive government and start being efficient as we go forward in this next century.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The only disjointed, disconnected, diswhatever that he was yapping about there I think comes from somewhere near what he was trying to call names of places, but I will say to you, hon. member: I know Milk River very well. I know southern Alberta very well. I have relatives that live down there, and I worked down there for 15 years as an oil field consultant.

I'll tell you that whatever Internet they hooked up to, when the SuperNet is up and running, they will never be able to get as wide a band of network for the money that they're going to be able to get rural Alberta for. They can purchase a full megabyte in rural Alberta for \$50 per month, which is cheaper than you can buy it for in the city. If you would have listened at all to the beginning of the speech or if you would have ever looked up what the Internet is about, never ever in any of the contract or in the \$193 million that the government is paying Bell were there any last mile connections. The total thing was to hook up approximately 4,200 schools, hospitals, libraries, and government buildings.

The rest of it is done with Internet service providers to create a competitive field out there. I want to tell you: right now Axia is saying that they're getting more calls from people, not just the people that are already in the business as Internet service providers but new start-up companies, another Alberta advantage of another opportunity for young people that want to start a company.

I will say that, yes, we're not looking at reinventing the wheel or doing anything like that. British Columbia has done a very, very good job with their red tape ministry. They've done a good job getting rid of rules and regulations, and their economy is way up on the upswing.

I'm just getting excited over nothing here. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you. I just have one question that I'd like to ask tonight. Could you please clarify why you need two core businesses to achieve efficiencies? There's the new business unit of opportunity and restructuring assessment, and you have another business unit called business transformation. It seems to me that this might not be reflective of efficiencies that your ministry is supposed to be searching for. Could you tell me about the differences between those two?

Mr. Ouellette: These two business units follow significantly different paths both in scope and expertise. Opportunity and restructuring assessment is really the design work of the ministry and its partners. Business transformation, on the other hand, is seen as the building function. I'll try to explain the difference the best I can.

Opportunity and restructuring assessment involves working with other ministries to identify projects that might be best co-ordinated or handled by Restructuring and Government Efficiency as a third party. This will involve collaboration with others outside the ministry in order to conduct research, take stock of the programs and services offered, then determine needs and opportunities. These needs will be prioritized, and business cases will be developed. We would then ask for all those impacted by the program or service to endorse the plans for change.

The type of expertise required for this new business unit and its related functions includes those with a strong background in research, trend analysis, planning, risk assessment, priority setting, relationship building, and business case production.

Now let's take a look at the business transformation unit. This unit takes on projects that require business process improvements, re-engineering work, or significant structural changes in order to produce further efficiencies. Its focus is on improvements to the delivery of shared services for government, including finance, large-scale procurement initiatives, human resources, administration, and information technology. Consultation prior to the current strategic plan has identified a number of key major program areas for re-engineering efforts in order to improve services and efficiencies.

The type of expertise required for this business unit and its related functions includes those with a strong background in public-sector organizational analysis, business process improvement, re-engineering, technology-based solutions, contract management, project management, problem solving, costing, and pricing.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm a little angry because the two questions that I wrote for the hon. minister were asked. I actually just need some elaboration from the hon. minister with respect to the full-time equivalent employment positions and then also with respect to their goal 1, opportunity and restructuring assessment. My question is: couldn't the 1,272 full-time employees do the opportunity and restructuring assessment without the need for \$3.3 million extra in budget expenses?

Then, my second question, very briefly, is from the ministry statement of operations by program, which actually reflects in the estimates a net operating result of minus, or negative, \$79 million.

An Hon. Member: What page number?

Mr. Elsalhy: Page 304.

In essence, I'm interpreting this as: we're spending \$79 million more than what we're bringing in, so to me it's like net loss or net shrinkage.

So the two questions. Why couldn't the 1,272 staff perform goal 1, and why do we need \$3.3 million on top? Then my second question is: can the minister explain to us very briefly why it seems like this ministry, newly formed, is going to lose \$79 million?

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

10:00

The Chair: Anyone else? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I don't believe time's up; I'm quite sure we have a few minutes left still. Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I noticed that the minister was preparing an answer, and I think out of respect to the minister I certainly would like, rather than calling the question, to give him another few seconds to hear his answer to my hon. colleague's questions. So my question would be: if the minister would not mind, would he please answer the two questions that my colleague from Edmonton-McClung has asked.

Thank you.

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Chairman, I will gladly get him those questions in writing.

Thank you.

The Chair: After considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$258,071,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

On the vote for the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates of the Legislative Assembly and the estimates of the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following departments.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, expense, \$42,740,000; office of the Auditor General, expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$18,304,000; office of the Ombudsman, expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$2,237,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, expense, \$2,497,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, expense, \$419,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, expense, \$4,336,000.

The main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, Restructuring and Government Efficiency: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$258,071,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:05 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 14, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/04/14
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Welcome.

Let us pray. We give thanks for the bounty of our province: our land, our resources, and our people. We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a parliamentary delegation from Malaysia. Our Malaysian visitors are engaged in a dialogue on parliamentary reform, counterterrorism, regional security, and economic relations with Canadian parliamentarians. They are in Canada on the invitation of the Speaker of the Senate of Canada. Malaysia and Canada have much in common, including an economy rich in natural resources and membership in the Commonwealth. The mission is led by His Excellency Dr. Abdul Hamid, the President of the Senate of Malaysia, and his wife, Elham Hamid. The delegation includes Senator Wong, Deputy President of the Senate; Senator Benedict; Nora Hardin, spouse of Senator Benedict; Senator Osman; Senator Norsimah; Mr. Zamani, Secretary of the Senate; Mr. Salleh, secretary of the delegation. This delegation is accompanied by Mr. Mat Dris, the consul general of Malaysia, based in Vancouver; and Mr. Mahathir, vice-consul. Providing co-ordination and support are Mr. Tonu Onu and Ms Astrid Ratzel. I would ask that all honoured guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Assembly Kimberley Coulter and Ronda Bellerose, who are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. Both Kimberley and Ronda work for the Deputy Minister of Human Resources and Employment, and they do an excellent job. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly on behalf of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Minister of Environment some 38 students and 9 adults from the Westview school in Fort McMurray. This is a grade 6 class. They're accompanied by helpers and parents Mr. Janes, Mr. Stephen, Mr. Hobbs, Mr. Boehmer, Mrs. Whittaker, and Mrs. Foster and their teachers, Miss Laura Lewis, Mrs. Laura Rogers, and Mrs. Pearl Field. I'm not sure which gallery they're in, but I would ask them to please rise and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a large group of grade 6 students from the Lacombe Christian school. They're accompanied by some teachers and parents, and I'd like to name them: teachers Mrs. Stephanie Littel and Mr. Tim Van Doesburg. The parent helpers are Darcy Dyck, Claire Talsma, Henry Luymes, Carolyn Vanderhoek, Sherry Vink, Willy Hoogenboom, Joanne Walls, Betty Scholing, Angie Salomons, Anneke Kassies, Lisa Ellens, Kim Walls, and bus driver Nick DenOudsten. This is a large group. They're bright students, but they're also vocalists. I don't know if you heard them singing a while ago. They came with a whole stack of birthday cards for me, and they serenaded me in the rotunda. So this was a great thing from the students. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House most of the board of directors of the hard-working Northwest Corridor Development Corporation, who are working to sustain and enhance the economic base and trade potential of the northwest corridor, linking the northwest to Prince Rupert and to the world. Today we have with us the chair, Mr. Jeff Burghardt; executive director Mr. Graham Kedgley; accompanied by boards members Mr. Wayne Ayling, the mayor of Grande Prairie; Mr. Mike Mihaly, the mayor of High Level; Graham Dallas from CN Rail; Marylin Davies, who is a councillor with Terrace; Jim Eglinski, a councillor from Fort St. John; Kelly Glazer from Prince George; Carolyn Kalebaba, who is a councillor with Northern Sunrise county and who I promised to introduce nicely; Don Krusel from Prince Rupert; Dave Menzies from Terrace; Bud Powell, a councillor from Dawson Creek; Ron Vanderlee from Terrace; and Ron Wiebe from Grande Prairie. They're seated in the members' gallery behind me, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly a constituent of Edmonton-Gold Bar, Mr. Merle Schnee. Mr. Schnee has been a resident of Edmonton-Gold Bar for over 40 years, is a former president of the firefighters. He is very active in the community and is a keen observer of all levels of government and the politics involved. Mr. Schnee is in the public gallery, and I would now ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am honoured to introduce four guests from the community of Warburg in my constituency. They own and operate a company called North End Oil Industries Ltd., and I would ask them to rise as I call their names and please remain standing: first of all, Arnold Bryant, Audrey Bryant, Kevin Hagel, and Bill Jewett, who is also a councillor for the village of Warburg. I'd ask the Assembly to please give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mr. Justin VannPashak. Justin is a young man who resides in Vancouver but was born and raised here in Alberta. He's here to observe the Assembly's proceedings as well as visit family and friends in Edmonton. He also happens to be the grandson of my distinguished colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I would ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Deanna Fuhendorf. She is the project co-ordinator for the Fort Road & Area Business Association, a tireless worker and driving force behind the effort to revitalize the Fort Road area. One such initiative is the historical town area, which will greatly enhance Beverly-Clareview for residents and businesses. I applaud and support her efforts and hard work. Accompanying Mrs. Fuhendorf today is Mr. Tony Jones. Tony is my constituency assistant in my very busy office in Beverly-Clareview. I truly appreciate his efficiency and hard work in keeping things running smoothly. I would ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an outstanding Edmontonian, Liz Iggulden. In 1984 Liz began working for the Old Strathcona Foundation, whose mandate, many of you will know, is to preserve and restore the historic assets of the area, making it a place where people would want to live and where businesses would prosper. She was hired on for a temporary two-week position way back then. Last month she retired after 21 years of service with the foundation, the last 10 years serving as its executive director. I want to take this opportunity to thank Liz for all her hard work and dedication and amazing service to the community of Old Strathcona. She is here today with her husband, Lee Iggulden. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. Also, Mr. Speaker, here with Liz today to honour her accomplishments and wish her well in her retirement is Old Strathcona Foundation executive director Karen Tabor. They're all seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Are there others?

The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly my first group of students from the city of Fort Saskatchewan. They are 28 students from Win Ferguson school. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Joanne Simpson, Miss Carrie Sannerud; parent helpers Mrs. Sandra Smorenburg, Mr. Mark Smorenburg, Mrs. Heather Cnockaert, and Ms Mary Couper. I would ask them to all rise – I believe they're seated in the gallery opposite – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Health Care Premiums

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government refuses to eliminate or even reduce health care premiums. These are a tax by any definition of the term, and they have soared in recent years, making a mockery of this Premier's claim that the only way taxes in Alberta are going is down. Likewise, this government takes more and more revenue from Albertans by allowing tax creep in the education portion of property taxes. My question is to the Premier. Will this Premier finally admit that health care premiums are a tax that hits middle- and lower income Albertans and small businesses the hardest?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that we have removed the health care premiums for seniors. The premiums are a way to have people understand that there is a cost to health care. Having said that, the amount the government spends on health care aside from premiums, the small amount that people spend on health care premiums, is in excess of 9 billion – billion – dollars. That is a huge amount of money.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that health care premiums just go into general revenues, not into the health department, why does this government refuse to give all Alberta families a tax break of over a thousand dollars a year by eliminating health care premiums? Why refuse to do it?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, whether it goes into general revenue or not, it still finds its way to support health care. It's part of that \$9.5 billion. That is a very large amount of money.

The opposition quite naturally are critical of the government.

An Hon. Member: Rightly so.

Mr. Klein: Not rightly so. It's their job. They have no other function, no other justification for living other than to criticize.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, then, I'll ask the Minister of Finance. How much do health care premiums cost to provincially funded organizations like school boards and regional health authorities and children's services authorities and the like?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to raise that question during estimates, and I'd be happy to bring the amount forward for him. But I want to reiterate that our expenditures in health far exceed our premiums, by about 8 or 9 to 1, obviously. We very deliberately in Budget 2005 did some very targeted tax reductions to low-income and middle-income persons and to seniors both on the school property tax side and on health premiums. I would also remind the hon. member that we have reduced taxes in this province by \$2.5 billion over the last half a dozen years, and I would remind him that health premiums have not soared. In fact, they were frozen in this province until about two or three years ago, when there was an increase.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Speech from the

Throne, the Premier's televised address, and during the introduction of Bill 1 Albertans were given the impression that the Conservatives had actually turned over a new leaf, were taking it off autopilot and were about to build a world-class advanced education system. But in yesterday's budget the government made a modest 8 per cent down payment on its \$3 billion access to the future fund without a commitment to make any future payments into that fund. To the Premier: why won't the government officially guarantee that it will continue to invest in the fund next year and each year after that?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, it was in the budget speech. I don't know if the hon. member was paying attention or not, but it certainly was in the budget speech.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very interesting to note what other people, especially those in the education field, say about Budget 2005, and I quote Carl Amrhein, who is the provost of the University of Alberta, where the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is a postgraduate student.

Since my grad school days, I have not seen a government here in Canada or even in the U.S. announce a three-year funding package for post-secondary institutions that will accomplish so much . . . I haven't seen anything like this in my entire professional life. This has to be seen as bold and visionary. This is just a wonderful thing, not only for the people who run universities, but it has got to be seen as wonderful news for the parents who have been worrying about where their children will go.

The Speaker: The document will be tabled later for the benefit of all members.

Proceed.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given all that accomplishment, can the Premier explain how a 6 per cent increase in base operating grants will build a world-class system when our colleges and universities experienced that big an increase in their operating cost last year?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, to answer the hon. member's question, again I have to quote, and I quote from the president of the University of Calgary, who understands, by the way, these issues, as opposed to the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. Dr. Harvey Weingarten said:

"It will make a huge difference in the number of spots we have, in the quality of educational experience we can offer students, also in how affordable post-secondary education is," he said. "All those things are good."

Mr. Taylor: Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. This is not about good; this is about excellence. Can the Premier comment on the fact that students can generate as much income per student next year as the access to the future fund will by each taking three empty pop cans a day back to the bottle depot?

1:50

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that's the level to which the Liberals will sink: pop cans. But I take my lead from those in the teaching profession, especially in the postsecondary system. I quote from Bill Cade, the president of the University of Lethbridge, who said: never in my 27 years in Canada have I seen an increase of this amount.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

School Closures

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March of this year a

concerned parent from Sangudo had to go to court to stop the public school closure process at Sangudo high school. The local school board failed to provide the parents the information required by section 4 of the closure of schools regulation. In August 2004 this regulation was amended to mandate that school boards across the province provide to all parents information on their long-range capital plan. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Why did both the Department of Education and the Edmonton public school board district No. 7 use an outdated closure of schools regulation to force the closure of four good public schools in Edmonton?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe any schools have been forced to close, at least not to my knowledge. Perhaps the schools being referred to are still open. I'm not sure if he's named them, per se.

However, I would have to say this with respect to the regulation. There was a regulation change made last year under the ministry of learning, and as people who deal with legal matters would know, you should really consult the *Alberta Gazette* or the Queen's Printer to get the most up-to-date and most current regulations or regulation changes, similarly with statutes. Information that exists on websites, regardless of whose they are, always carries a disclaimer to that effect.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. The parents have consulted the *Alberta Gazette*. The Minister of Education has not.

How can the parents of the students enrolled in Wellington, North Edmonton, Terrace Heights, and Strathearn – these are all parents that are affected by these closures – make an informed decision when the board, the public board, has failed to provide them with all the information required by law?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not intimately familiar with exactly what documentation the Edmonton public school board provided to whom at what time. But there are specific regulations that govern what has to be provided, and I'm assuming that the Edmonton public school board has done that through one form or another. So that question would be a very good question to ask the Edmonton public school board, and I assume the hon. member will do that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: given that parents were not provided all the information they are entitled to by law to prepare for the school closure meetings, will the minister now immediately stop the school process of closures that was initiated by the Edmonton public school board district No. 7 on March 8 because they broke the law?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anybody broke the law or not. I suspect that they haven't. The school board has its legal people who look after these matters. If they provided the type of information that is required surrounding a rumoured school closure or a rumoured set of school closures, those issues are dealt with at the local level, and I would seriously ask the hon. member to please put that question forward to the public school board. Until I see information to the contrary, there will be no need for me to intervene whatsoever.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Health Care Premiums

(continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's budget did little to reduce the burden on hard-working and middle-income Albertans. In fact, using the government's own figures, an Alberta family of four making \$60,000 a year will pay \$1,057 more in combined personal income and health premium taxes than the same family with the same income in Ontario. My question is to the Premier. Why won't the government accept the NDP opposition proposal to give a \$1,056 tax break to middle-income Alberta families by scrapping health care premiums?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we don't take our lead from the NDs. That's for sure. As the hon. Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier pointed out, we chose to make targeted tax reductions that would benefit those who need tax reductions the most. The family employment tax credit has been enhanced. Seniors, of course, are now exempt from paying any health care premiums at all, and senior homeowners will receive relief from increases in school property taxes. We've gone a long way to address the needs of those who are classified as being low income in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, why is the government then punishing Alberta families with yearly incomes between \$50,000 and \$150,000 by forcing them to pay, according to the government's own figures, a thousand dollars a year more in combined personal income and health care premium taxes than the same families in either B.C. or Ontario?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister of Finance respond relative to the details, but I will say this as a preamble. If we had the tax system of the next most competitive province, which isn't Ontario – it is British Columbia, and he mentioned British Columbia – Albertans and Alberta businesses would be paying almost \$7 billion more in taxes, or over \$2,000 per person.

The Speaker: The hon. member. Hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; I thought the Treasurer was going to respond.

Will the Premier admit that the reason middle-income earners pay more tax than those in some other provinces is because of Alberta's flat tax, which hits the middle class the hardest?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I just pointed out that if we had the same tax system as our most competitive province, British Columbia, Alberta taxpayers, including businesses and individuals, would be paying almost \$7 billion more in taxes, or \$2,000 per person.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Traumatic Injury Rate in the Aboriginal Community

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A study published by the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* stated that First Nations people in Alberta are four times more likely to suffer a traumatic injury. These injuries are often the result of motor vehicle collisions. My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. What is being done to address traffic safety issues in aboriginal communities?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, four times is really very traumatic when you think of the numbers. One of the recommendations in the McDermid report was to include and engage aboriginal leaders and elders in developing strategies to reduce highway traffic fatalities. Of course, the government accepted that recommendation. My department has been working with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to be able to see what we can do in terms of developing an Alberta traffic safety plan. What we're trying to do is make sure that we reflect all the importance of addressing the high rates of traumatic injury and death from motor vehicles.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are some of the contributing factors causing these high rates of traffic-related injuries and fatalities in Alberta?

Ms Calahasen: Well, there are a number of contributing factors, Mr. Speaker. Number one is poor road conditions on reserves. Number two is the lower seatbelt usage rates. Number three is the higher number of passengers in vehicles. Number four is, of course, increased highway travel due to the remoteness of aboriginal communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Solicitor General. Given that the same study found that First Nations in Alberta are also more likely to sustain injuries from stabbings and assaults, what steps is the Solicitor General taking to enhance policing services in these aboriginal communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We take these issues very seriously. We have 59 trained and skilled professional First Nations police officers that are serving on five different First Nations police services now in northern Alberta. These arrangements have been made in a tripartite agreement with Canada, the province of Alberta, and the First Nations band. We're providing these services through the First Nations themselves, who are taking a lead role regarding policing in their communities, and we are working on three new tripartite agreements with them. First Nations officers are expected to and do meet the same training standards as any other police officer in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Environment Budget

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Repeatedly Albertans have told this government, including the government's own pre-election survey, that environmental protection is a top priority, yet well below 1 per cent of the budget continues to be committed to Alberta Environment. Indeed, there's no ability to implement the vital Water for Life strategy despite commitments in the throne speech, the rural development strategy, and in this House. My question to the Premier: as the third top priority to Albertans why has there been no significant increase in proportion of funding to this ministry in over a decade?

2:00

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member says is not quite

true. If he examines the budget documents carefully, he will find that our commitments to infrastructure, including the Water for Life strategy, are ostensibly in infrastructure. That will be spelled out by the Minister of Finance, and I'll have her comment further.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there is, in fact, a significant amount of budget allocated to Water for Life. First, there are budget dollars in Environment's budget on the operational side, whether they're used for monitoring or watersheds and so on.

Secondly, there are significant capital dollars that are in this budget. I outlined some of those yesterday. I invite the hon. member to debate this issue in the House.

Thirdly, we have a Water for Life strategy. It's a tremendous strategy, and we have approved that as a government and accepted that. The Minister of Environment is working with his cabinet colleagues on putting together a very comprehensive work plan on all aspects of this very complex study.

Dr. Swann: My only supplemental, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: with a fivefold increase in applications for oil and gas development in this province in the past decade, how can anyone believe that Alberta Environment has the capacity to ensure compliance with environmental protection regulations without a commensurate increase in monitoring, compliance, and enforcement staffing?

Mr. Klein: This is a very interesting question, Mr. Speaker. It's one that the hon. Minister of Energy and myself addressed with representatives of the oil industry just recently. We need to revisit the whole issue of land reclamation in light of the number of wells now being proceeded with.

Mr. Speaker, it is not as simple as the hon. member points out. There are matters of reclamation that go to, well, the situation of the landowner being satisfied that the land has been reclaimed and that go to the situation of streamlining regulations and setting out rules, very specific rules, for the proper reclamation of land.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Cougar Management

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The recent report of a cougar attack on one of my constituents in Highwood is just one more example of how common these predators seem to be now. With a largely urban population in Alberta many of those who go out to our backcountry are not aware of the dangers they may face. What is the minister's department doing to ensure that Albertans are aware of the threat of these animals?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been an increase in wildlife in the province of Alberta, and particularly we've seen a slight increase in cougar activity in our province. Our staff work with a cougar management provision as well as with our partners in Community Development in parks.

Because cougars can be found anywhere in this province and because they are available almost all 12 months of the year, particularly our fish and wildlife officers are out there trying to educate people year-round in terms of how to deal with cougars when you come upon them. We go into communities, and we do information sessions. We're there seven days a week, 24 hours a

day, to make sure that when these cougar attacks exist, we're on the spot and look at the situation.

We're really relieved that the folks that ran into the cougar in the backcountry in the member's constituency only received a few scratches and that they're okay.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Does any of this management of cougars include relocating these predators to areas closer to the communities, which some rural Albertans have been alluding to?

Mr. Coutts: Definitely not, Mr. Speaker. We've heard these rumours as well, and we have to be clear here. We never relocate cougars in any way, shape, or form because there's a real chance of affecting their mortality when you relocate a cougar. But if we do need to move a cougar, we have expert biologists that go in and take public safety in mind when they do that. We have shown in cases in our history, in the past, that we would also close to human access areas where we felt there was a particular danger of cougar advances on human activity.

Mr. Groeneveld: Mr. Speaker, my final question is for the same minister. What guarantees do Albertans have that they will be safe in the backcountry?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, public safety is a key priority in wildlife management, everything from vehicle collisions to aggressive moose and elk and bears coming to garbage cans and that type of thing. Wildlife is a part of Alberta, and we can't guarantee their behaviour. Innovative education programs are necessary to make sure that industry and the public understand, and we have programs out there like Bear Smart and Living with Cougars. Many of our fish and wildlife officers are in communities, as I've said, to make sure with year-round programming in reducing encounters. We also manage vegetation on trails. We have programs that keep animals away from livestock in high-use areas. We're well served by our fish and wildlife officers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder was identified as a medical condition in 1973. There is no cure, and the damage is irreversible. A child with FASD becomes an adult with FASD. My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Given that many, many adults with FASD end up in the criminal justice system, has the department identified whether this is attributed to the lack of community support as an adult or a missed diagnosis when the individual was still a child?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that first of all the hon. member should realize that this province, Alberta, is leading edge on the issue of FASD, and I think that's very, very clear in all the work that we've done in the past.

I also would like to let her know that I have just taken over the chair of the Canada northwest fetal alcohol spectrum disorder partnership, and we're working on and researching some of the issues that she's brought forward.

FASD is a disease or an illness that this government is very, very vigilant on. We've got numerous pilot projects looking at what we're doing in regard to the children in this province plus the adults.

Ms Blakeman: I just wanted an answer to the question.

The second question to the same minister: would the province consider a pilot project for adult FASD specialized housing, group homes, with support workers and counselling services included in the model?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for Children's Services it's something that we could look at. I would be pleased to work in partnership with my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. My final question to the same minister: what is the timeline for the implementation of the strategic plan dealing with FASD composed by the cross-ministry committee?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think you can get into timelines on this initiative. I think it's an ongoing process. To have any timelines, period – I can tell her, though, that we are working very, very hard on the issue of FASD and would be pleased to sit down and show her what we're doing and explain to her. We've just increased the budget of one of the centres of research by \$2 million, and they're very, very excited about it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Rural Police Services

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With the tabling of the 2005-06 budget yesterday by the hon. Treasurer, I would like some clarifications on items in the Solicitor General's budget. My first question is to the Solicitor General. Rural municipalities have been calling for more front-line policing in their communities. How does the budget meet the West Yellowhead constituency's concern, especially in Edson and Hinton?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2005 was really an investment in the Solicitor General's department as in every other ministry in government. We know that the cost of policing puts an unusual strain on some of those municipalities that have a smaller tax base, and they don't have the funds that they can put into policing. Some of those smaller communities, like the hon. member mentioned, have their tax bases where up to 45 per cent goes directly to policing.

Thirty towns and communities with populations between 5,000 and 20,000 received significant increases. For the town of Hinton the new amount that they'll be receiving is \$275,000 a year, which is almost double what they received last year. The community of Edson will receive about \$262,000, which is more than twice the amount they received last year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Can he tell the House

where the additional police officers promised for rural Alberta will be placed and how soon they will be able to look after the streets and highways?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, this government recognized the need for additional officers in rural Alberta, recognized the fact that criminal activity takes place in rural Alberta, as it does take place in every larger urban centre. The additional 100 RCMP officers will be located throughout the province. Community needs will be looked at with regard to criminal activity. Those decisions will be made by Assistant Commissioner Bill Sweeney. But we have also been reassured by Commissioner Zaccardelli in Ottawa that the RCMP will be providing those officers to Alberta as soon as they can. There are officers in training in Regina right now that will be coming to Alberta, and new classes as well will be starting up, with them coming to Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question: the production of and traffic in illegal drugs, particularly crystal meth, is a growing problem in rural Alberta communities. Can the Solicitor General tell this House what he is doing about this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In our budget announcement yesterday 60 additional officers, 20 RCMP officers and 40 municipal officers, will be funded through the Solicitor General's office to provide enforcement with regard to our integrated response to organized crime throughout the province. These will provide officers that can work in an intelligence-based operational format as well as the enforcement format, all in undercover positions that can be mobilized and utilized anywhere in the province, from Grande Prairie to Medicine Hat to Fort McMurray to Crowsnest Pass.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Horse-racing Renewal Program

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's budget produced another winning ticket for the horse-racing industry in the form of a \$45 million lottery-funded subsidy. The horse-racing renewal program is entering into its fifth year and will have given out well over \$150 million to the government's friends in the for-profit horse-racing industry. My questions are for the Minister of Gaming. How much longer will this government continue with this extraordinary subsidy for this one for-profit industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased he's so interested in my budget that he's bringing it up today as opposed to waiting till May 4 in the evening, when we will go into the details.

Briefly on this point, it's not a grant. It's an amount of money that could be earned at the racetracks. Depending on the amount of gaming activity at that racetrack, in addition to the money that goes back to the industry, 33 and a third per cent of the money earned at the racetracks in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie goes into the Alberta lottery fund, which benefits every single Albertan.

Mr. Tougas: Again to the Minister of Gaming: how can the minister justify giving more money to the benefit of the for-profit horse-racing industry than to the community facility enhancement program, which benefits all Albertans?

Mr. Graydon: As I just said, the 33 and a third per cent of the money earned at the racetrack goes to all Albertans through the Alberta lottery fund. As well, we need to know that there are between 7,000 and 8,000 people working full and part time in the racing industry. As well, this industry contributes \$300 million a year to the Alberta economy.

Mr. Tougas: Same minister: given that this government is supposedly out of the business of being in business, why does this not apply to the horse-racing industry in Alberta?

Mr. Graydon: It's a rural-based industry. It goes all the way from the people who raise hay and grain to the people that breed horses to the jockeys that ride the horses. I think the hon. member should saddle up and move on to a different topic.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Capital Investment in Schools

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's touting of its increase in infrastructure spending is misleading and disingenuous to say the least. When you look at the actual numbers, capital investment is being cut quite severely in many key areas. Capital investment on schools is down 10 per cent compared to last year, capital investment on hospitals is down 30 per cent, and capital investment on postsecondary facilities is down more than 50 per cent. My question is to one of these ministers over there; I'm not sure. Maybe the Minister of Education: he's here. Given the threatened closure of dozens of schools throughout the province, why was the capital investment for new or renovated schools cut by 10 per cent in yesterday's budget?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation would like to comment on this at some later stage, but let me say this in a general sense specific to the school question, at least that part of the question that has been asked. We are looking at a new way of providing funding for new school construction or for major school renovation projects or for additions to schools, be that through the use of portables or modules or other forms of temporary accommodation for students. What we have found over the last several years is that because of the tremendously fast way in which costs related to steel, for example, and gyproc and labour and so on are increasing, it's very difficult to provide one single budget item at the beginning of a budget year without having to amend it several times later on. So we're looking at moving to a new way of doing that, perhaps on a quarterly basis, and the first announcements in those respects will likely come out in June of this year.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, it means this budget doesn't mean anything.

My question to the minister, then, is simply this: given that over half the schools in Edmonton are over 50 years of age, how can it make sense to cut 10 per cent from this year's budget for capital investment in schools? How does that make any sense at all?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the exact figure in mind,

but I think it's something like \$644 million will be provided over the next two, three, or four years for the types of school projects that I just indicated. I am sympathetic, as all members here would be, to schools that are aging and to the fact that there are declining enrolments in many of those areas whereas in other parts of the province there are some rapidly escalating student population counts. We're doing our best to come forward with a new formula that will address those realities.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the new reality is that we cut 10 per cent from the budget. How can we, then, Mr. Minister, have new schools in Edmonton and fix up the ones we have with a 10 per cent cut in the budget?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation along with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and myself and the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs attended a very interesting press conference this morning at which the announcement was made of how the \$3 billion in brand new monies are going to be rolled out to all municipal districts in the province of Alberta. That's all part of a \$9.2 billion capital infrastructure plan, and schools are going to be included within that bigger picture very soon.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Climate Change

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although they likely won't be around much longer, yesterday the federal government announced their long-awaited plan for implementing the Kyoto accord. My constituents were happy to see that it was taken out of the budget documents; however, we still have a lot of questions. My first question is for the Minister of Energy. How does this federal plan address the large final emitters, many of whom are industries based here in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to first state that this government has been the only province, really, that has taken a very proactive approach along with industry in trying to address and find solutions to climate change. In that light, though, I must state that the Kyoto accord continues to remain a flawed agreement, and this implementation plan of the federal government continues to remain a flawed methodology of application in trying to resolve the problem.

With respect to the large final emitters, they have reduced the megatonnes emission question to 45 megatonnes – I'd say that's at least in the light of trying to find a practical approach – yet only about 20 per cent of that commitment can be put towards a technology solution. The solution is all about technology. It's technology, technology, technology.

Rev. Abbott: Again to the Minister of Energy: given that the federal plan talks about a number of funds, including the climate fund, the partnership fund, and the GHG technology investment fund, what difference will those funds make?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of funds which are being outlined, potentially \$10 billion worth of funds, money that is going to come from somewhere to implement this plan. One of the

funds mentioned was a technology fund. That'll be upwards of about \$2 billion. That is at least in the direction we would suggest that it ought to go. Companies then can apply to that fund with respect to their applications and solutions to climate change.

There's a climate fund, however, that's the largest fund, probably in the magnitude of \$5 billion to \$6 billion, and it remains focused on hot air. That is their solution: a lot more hot air.

Rev. Abbott: Sad.

Mr. Speaker, my final question is also to the Minister of Energy. Given that the federal plan calls for the automobile industry to have a voluntary approach to climate change, is this something that the oil and gas industry can also look forward to?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, an application, once again, very inconsistent across the industries in this country. We do support that there ought to be a voluntary approach with the auto sector. I think that is a right. Those industries in that area have the best understanding and expertise to address the question in their provinces. However, when it comes to the energy sector the expertise, the regulatory environment, the ability to address the question remains in Alberta, and the federal government's approach is to enact the Canadian environmental protection act and to somehow, through their own regulation, regulate and take control of an issue on which they don't even have the expertise.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Securities Commission

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance continues to try and bury the serious concerns regarding the enforcement of regulations at the Alberta Securities Commission. She continues to take the advice of the part-time commissioners, who are investigating their own work and actions. My question is to the Minister of Finance. On Tuesday in this Assembly the minister inferred that it was acceptable for one or two enforcement breaches at the Alberta Securities Commission given the number of files that they deal with. Is the minister, in fact, aware of one or two enforcement breaches?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to take that information under advisement on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then to the same minister: how many enforcement breaches would be considered acceptable at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I would give the same answer as to the first.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why is the minister afraid to follow the lead of Ontario, where when the Securities Commission came under controversy, an independent inquiry was appointed? Will she call an inquiry into these allegations?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Finance is a very brave and courageous individual that acts to protect all individuals in this area of securities regulation, and she will continue to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

B.C./Alberta Transportation Issues

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In northern Alberta there has been a significant increase in oil and gas activity, forestry, wood products, tourism, agriculture value-added products. This has taxed not only our road infrastructure but our weak and deteriorating railway system as well, with the majority of our exports in northern Alberta destined for the west coast. We are therefore required and should be encouraged to co-ordinate with the B.C. government to expedite our transportation schedules. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What is the government doing to increase the export opportunities for our industries shipped for the west coast?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, trade, of course, is very vital to Alberta's continued economic well-being, and even though 90 per cent of our export trade is with the United States, as we look around at how the world is changing, especially the increase in value-added products and the growth in the Asian economy, we have to seize those opportunities. One way to seize those opportunities is to increase port capacity. We are working with the B.C. government. In fact, we're jointly co-sponsoring a northern corridor study, and that information will be coming forward to both governments as both governments are intensely interested in expanding port capacity.

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental to the same minister: what is the government doing to co-ordinate transportation policies and regulations between the two provinces?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, this had been on the top of the discussion list between the two cabinets, B.C. and Alberta, in the last three meetings. Both Premiers instructed ministers in charge to come back with a plan as to how we will continue to harmonize transportation regulations between the two provinces. We have moved, small steps but measurable. I believe the largest accomplishment of the two governments is a joint vehicle inspection station that will be on highway 1 at Golden. Rather than the truck stopping on the Alberta side and being inspected and then driving across the border to the B.C. side, we will now have one station, jointly manned. It will save this province about \$3 million in capital costs and about \$300,000 to \$400,000 in manpower costs in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much. My final supplemental, again to the minister: what investment does Alberta have in the port at Prince Rupert, and what are the future plans?

Mr. Stelmach: The file in Prince Rupert is rather complex, but very quickly: our original investment was in the area of about \$106 million; I believe one of the loans with respect to the grain port sits in our GRF at about a dollar. There are other issues there in terms of the ownership of the port authority in Prince Rupert, the grain-handling facility, and those, of course, in Vancouver, and we are working with all the parties involved. I believe there are about four grain-handling companies. I'll definitely have the Minister of Finance give a much more detailed answer to the member.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Government Efficiency

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What happened to this Conservative government's less-is-more mentality? This government has bloomed from 17 ministries in 1993 to a bloated 24 in 2004. The last addition was ironically created to make government more efficient. An expanded government is not an efficient government. To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: can the minister please explain how adding seven new ministries since 1993 and more than 1,000 new employees to the public payroll this year alone has made this government more efficient?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, in all the different articles you read out there, we run the smallest government in the country, the most efficient government in the country. We've got the busiest industry in the country, we've got the highest rate of population growth in the country, and therefore we are running the most competent government in the country.

2:30

Mr. Elsalhy: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency commit to making the government so efficient that he risks restructuring himself out of a job?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, we have 24 ministries in this government, and they're all very, very competent. Hopefully, we can get so efficient that I can sit with my feet up.

Thank you.

Mr. Elsalhy: Mr. Speaker, given that this ministry is spending over \$3.3 million to assess opportunities for restructuring, how many millions does the minister promise to return to Alberta taxpayers through more efficient government?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I'd love to be able to return all kinds of money to every Albertan there is, but we all know that we have to look after the business of government.

International Delegations

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, for our province to grow economically and culturally, it's important for Alberta to develop and maintain close relations with other regions, other provinces, and countries around the world. My first question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I understand that there's a delegation from the Chinese province of Shandong in Edmonton. What is the nature of the delegation's visit?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a 26-member delegation visiting Alberta. They're here to reaffirm a memorandum of understanding that was signed some time ago between Shandong University, the University of Alberta, the Alberta government, and the government of the province of Shandong, mostly centred around exchange of students, some technology. We hope that this relationship will lead to even bigger and better relationships with the province of Shandong.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you. My first supplemental and final question is to the same minister. Does Alberta have many types of these delegations come to our province?

Mr. Stelmach: Actually, Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question, the reason being that Alberta is certainly much more prominent on the world scene. Today the Speaker of this Assembly, yourself, hosted a very large Malaysian delegation. Roughly about 60 to 65 delegations visit Alberta on an annual basis, but I expect that number to increase in the future. As the province grows in size, we will see much more interest in what Alberta has to offer in terms of trade and investment.

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, in just a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Sara Renner
Thomas Grandi**

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today and recognize an extraordinary couple from the constituency of Banff-Cochrane. Canmore's Sara Renner and Thomas Grandi are both remarkable athletes, and this past ski season they proved to be among the best not only in Canada but in the world in each of their respective sports.

Sara, a two-time Olympian and Canadian cross-country skiing veteran, excelled in both distance and sprint events and started the season by claiming a gold medal at the Haywood Canada Cup pursuit race in Canmore. Thomas also had an incredible season as a giant slalom skier and captured World Cup gold medals not once but twice this year, in Italy and Austria. His win in Italy gave Canada its first victory in 10 years and was the first in the discipline by a Canadian male in the 38-year history of the World Cup circuit. Following on her husband's successes, Sara went on to win a bronze medal at the world sprint event in Germany, earning Canada's first-ever medal at the world Nordic ski championships.

What a breakthrough season for both: Sara's first world podium and Thomas's first two World Cup wins. The excitement back home after each of these wins was immediate and contagious.

Besides being inspirational to Albertans young and old with their athletic endeavours, Sara and Thomas are also inspirational with their community work. In fact, Sara donated all of the prize money she earned at the Canada Cup towards relief efforts for victims of the tsunami tragedy in south Asia.

Mr. Speaker, Sara and Thomas are great role models for our youth, wonderful ambassadors for our province, and true heroes to the Bow Valley residents. Please join me in congratulating these two exceptional athletes and individuals and wishing them well as they train for the upcoming season, World Cups, and 2006 Olympics.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Legislature Committees Structure

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we look back into the last century and celebrate Alberta's history, we must look at the importance that most of the governments in our history placed on select standing committees. There were many established for different areas of policy. Indeed, in the first days of this session we paid homage in this Assembly to former members who had passed on in the last year. In our dedications to these former members, including many who were in opposition at their time of service, we remembered their membership on standing committees like Agriculture, Education, and Railways, Telephones, and Irrigation.

The governments of those days valued contributions from all viewpoints even if they didn't agree with them and obviously considered multiparty committees as fundamental to democracy. Indeed, that remains the practice on much of this continent.

I will draw attention to the process in British Columbia. The Legislature of B.C. website clearly states that these types of committees are creatures of the House. There, they do not give these over to one-party caucus committees. These committees are comprised strictly of members of the Legislature, usually excluding the Premier and other cabinet ministers, and the membership mirrors as closely as possible party representation in the Legislative Assembly.

Some of the committees there are Health, Education, finance, and other committees. In these committees matters are allowed a more detailed and thorough examination than in the larger, more formal environment of the House. Opposition involvement ensures as full a spectrum of analysis as possible.

I submit that this process is responsible, representative, and speaks to the fundamental operation of this democratic Assembly and must be reinstated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Project Discovery

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. February 13, 1947, was a day that transformed Alberta and propelled our great province into the unimagined prosperity that we enjoy today. Today I rise to recognize Project Discovery, an expansion to the Leduc No. 1 oil interpretive centre, which is located one kilometre south of the town of Devon at the site of the Leduc No. 1 discovery well.

The Leduc/Devon Oilfield Historical Society, which is a partnership supported by the town of Devon, Leduc county, and the city of Leduc as well as industry and a host of volunteers, built an interpretive centre to capture the history of energy development in Alberta. The centre has evolved from its humble beginnings, and now, with \$1 million in funding from the Alberta lottery fund, a planned expansion called Project Discovery will be completed to highlight the ongoing evolution of the energy industry. This expansion will assist in increasing our opportunity to educate the public in understanding the value of Alberta's energy industry to the province and to all Albertans. As well, the expansion will be a great addition to the outstanding tourist attractions in the area, enhancing and promoting the local economy.

I would also like to recognize some key individuals who were instrumental in developing and maintaining the interpretive centre: Dan Claypool, Gord McMillan, and Don Hunter. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, Don Hunter is the son of the Leduc No. 1 driller, Vern "Dry Hole" Hunter. Along with these individuals, this project could not have been accomplished without the support of the Alberta lottery fund.

Hats off to the members of the Leduc/Devon Oilfield Historical Society for their dedication and hard work in telling a great Alberta story. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Old Strathcona Foundation

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty years ago in my constituency an area known as Old Strathcona was plagued by urban decay. Historic buildings had been run down, and the neighbourhood had a terrible reputation across the city. On November 13, 1974, the Old Strathcona Foundation was incorporated to turn things

around. By the mid-1980s the foundation had begun to work with various partners to transform the neighbourhood into the vital and dynamic community we know and love today. They were overseeing the restoration of historic buildings and the development of a pedestrian-friendly retail district that is the envy of the communities across the city.

2:40

The foundation has also played an integral role in the development of Edmonton's famous Old Strathcona Farmers' Market, the Fringe festival, McIntyre park, End of Steel park, the Silly Summer Parade, the merchants' association, and the Whyte Avenue mural. I have a particular fondness for the Silly Summer Parade, Mr. Speaker, in which I have participated for a number of years. When else do I have the opportunity to masquerade as Jimi Hendrix and Elvis Presley?

I have been truly fortunate to have the Old Strathcona Foundation as neighbours to my constituency office. The staff and volunteers there have always been helpful in keeping me up to date with what's happening in the neighbourhood and have always met me with a smile and a warm greeting.

One staff member in particular stands out in my mind. Liz Iggulden, who is now retiring after 20 years' service to the foundation, has been a hard worker, dedicated community activist, and good friend. I want to thank Liz and the entire Old Strathcona Foundation for all they have done for the neighbourhood and the city.

I would ask my colleagues in this House to join with me to truly wish Liz all the best in what I know will be an active and enjoyable retirement. Thank you, Liz.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

National Wildlife Week

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. National Wildlife Week is being celebrated across Canada this week. Protecting Alberta's natural spaces for wildlife has been a priority for the past 100 years. Parks and other areas protected by law conserve important habitat for many threatened or endangered plant and animal species. Of this, more than 12,000 square kilometres protect core woodland caribou habitat.

Hay-Zama Lakes wild-land provincial park is another protected area that conserves important habitat for the migrating waterfowl. During the fall migration 130,000 lesser snow geese, 47,000 Canada geese, and 200,000 ducks have been recorded at this site.

I would like to recognize all the dedicated provincial government staff who do an outstanding job of managing Alberta's lands, forests, fish, wildlife, and parks and protected areas. Natural resource management requires a balanced approach to ensure all values and uses are considered, including economic, environmental, and social values.

Over our last century science and technology have come a long ways, and at every stage Alberta has continued to use the best and latest science in managing our natural resources. Our centennial year brings to mind the fact that Alberta has been committed to managing our resources for the long-term benefits of Albertans.

Albertans have demonstrated their strong support over the years. It is the Alberta way to emphasize a collaborative approach to protecting and managing our natural resources. Albertans have worked co-operatively to protect and preserve wildlife. Alberta is indeed fortunate to have many residents who serve as co-stewards for the sustainability of our wildlife.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Alberta Centennial Multicultural Gala Night
East Coulee Spring Festival**

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recently my wife, Heather, and I had the privilege of attending two cultural events, one in an urban setting and the other in a rural.

On Monday, March 28, we had the privilege of attending Alberta's Centennial Multicultural Gala Night at the Jack Singer Concert Hall in Calgary. I wish to recognize in particular the efforts of the India Canada Association, the Southern Alberta Heritage Language Foundation, and the Calgary Federation of Filipino Associations for organizing such a colourful and entertaining evening of awe-inspiring cultural music and dance. The program included performances from talented artists of various ages from the Aboriginal, Ukrainian, Irish, East Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Colombian, Tibetan, and African communities.

It is through important events such as this that Albertans who have originated from across the globe can come together and share their rich heritage and traditions and celebrate the cultural diversity that contributes to the character of our great province. Congratulations to all the hard-working, dedicated organizers, volunteers, and performers on a tremendously successful event showcasing Calgary's vibrant cultural kaleidoscope.

This past weekend we once again had the pleasure of attending the annual spring festival in East Coulee, which is just east of Drumheller. East Coulee was once a thriving coal mining town, which had a population of over 3,000 people, primarily employed by the Atlas coal mine. The approximately 200 remaining residents, led by a variety of dedicated local volunteers including Marcel and Bev Deschenes, Antonia and Andy DeJong, Linda and Robin Digby, Vivian Deitz, Gillian Murray, and Lynn Van Kleef to name a few, organized this year's musical event. Numerous talented musicians from throughout Alberta volunteered their time to raise funds for the East Coulee school museum and the Atlas mine wash house. Alberta author Lawrence Christmas through his book *CoalDust Grins*, which immortalized the history of coal mining immigrants who came to Canada, serves as an inspiration for this annual event.

Among the talented local performers was the band Willow Creek, led by Don Howard. The show stealers, however, were five-year-old Tyler Ferguson, eight-year-old Jordan Ferguson, six-year-old Rachel Robinson, eight-year-old Jesse Robinson, and six-year-old Kaylie Peak. Three generations of the Peak family were represented, including Kaylie's mom, Velma Peak, and her granddad, Ed Peak.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of an historical vignette today I'm going to tell you something that's really, really odd, and it may be of particular interest to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. On this day in 1898 a sailor by the name of Charles Walker, who was a mate on a sailing ship, the *Orca*, arrived at what was then known as the Saddle Lake Indian reserve, which is located near St. Paul, after a walk of 2,500 miles to report the loss of his ship on the west coast of British Columbia.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and present a petition from good Albertans from the communities of

Kikino, Enoch, Wetaskiwin, Morinville, Bowden, and Edmonton. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 102 on this petition.

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 12 through 23.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 14 through 26 inclusive, noting, of course, that 14 through 18 inclusive were left over from this previous Monday.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

Bill 37

Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I request leave on behalf of the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance to introduce Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Bill 37 amends the Fiscal Responsibility Act so that debt retirement funds can only be used for that purpose and to increase the nonrenewable resource revenue that can be used for budget purposes from \$4 billion up to \$4.74 billion. This bill also amends the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Act, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act, and the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act to clarify the transfer of money into these particular funds.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a first time]

head: 2:50

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the report completed by the internationally recognized London Economics group which concludes that Alberta's move to an open, competitive electricity market puts the province in an enviable position amongst the provinces. The report, commissioned by the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta, was undertaken to review residential electricity rates across Canada while taking into account real factors, not considering comparisons by other organizations.

The price analysis suggests that the rates in other provinces would be 25 to 30 per cent higher if consumers were charged the full value of electricity they use and that the rates in those provinces can be expected to rise much more rapidly than those in Alberta over the next decade.

Copies of the report will now be tabled. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today before the House and table five copies of the Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board annual report for 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings, and I'm going to anxiously await the chance to read the hon. Minister of Energy's tabling. My first tabling is a letter I wrote on Friday, April 8, 2005, to the hon. Minister of Education. This is a letter indicating that the closure process for the Edmonton public schools is not in accordance with the closure of schools regulation 238-97, consolidated up to 170/2004.

The second tabling I have is a parent- and community-based solution to maintain the long-term viability of Strathearn school. It's a report to the Edmonton public school board of trustees. It's prepared by the Strathearn Community School Parent Advisory Association, and it is written by Deanna Dixon, president of the Strathearn Community School Parent Advisory Association.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have seven letters to table today from deeply concerned representatives of a variety of hunting and conservation organizations who call upon the government to re-evaluate its position on the interim Métis harvesting agreement, which they feel far exceeds the points of the Powley case and does not take the best interests of Alberta's wildlife into account.

The first two are from Tom Foss of the Alberta Bowhunters Association, followed by letters from Dr. Gerrow of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Brian Rufiange of the Spruce Grove Fish & Game Association, Kevin Williams of World Class Alberta Trophy Outfitters Ltd., Pete Mountain of the Alberta chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, and, lastly, Ron Watt of the Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table an op-ed piece written by Ricardo Acuna and Diana Gibson of the Parkland Institute. The piece argues that the budget tabled yesterday by this government does nothing to promote a sustainable and equitable Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Forsyth, Minister of Children's Services: pursuant to the Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act the Social Care Facilities Review Committee annual report 2003-04.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Subject to Standing Order 7(5) I would ask the Government House Leader to please share the projected government business for the week of April 18 to 21.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to do that. On Monday, April 18, in the afternoon we will begin with private members' business, including Written Questions and Motions for Returns, followed by Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders. On Monday evening at 8 we'll continue with private members' business. At 9 p.m. we will go to Committee of Supply, which will be the department of aboriginal affairs – that's day 2 of 24 – followed by second reading of Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 35, Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005; and Bill 39, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005; and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday afternoon in Committee of Supply we will review the Department of Advanced Education as day 3 of 24. At 8 p.m. we will go to Committee of Supply and look after Seniors, followed at 10 p.m. by Committee of the Whole on Bill 37, followed by second reading of Bill 35 and Bill 29, the anticipated Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005, and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday afternoon will be dedicated to Committee of Supply, the Department of Energy. Wednesday evening at 8 will be Committee of Supply for Sustainable Resource Development. That would be day 6 of 24. At 10 p.m. we will proceed with third reading of Bill 37 and then with Committee of the Whole on Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, April 21, in the afternoon Committee of Supply will deal with the Ministry of Finance, followed by third reading of Bill 37, and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

head: **Orders of the Day**
Government Motions
Provincial Fiscal Policies

19. Mrs. McClellan moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate April 12: Dr. Taft]

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to rise to reply to the budget as presented by the Minister of Finance yesterday and, frankly, to take an opportunity to present some of our own ideas for the budget.

I've come to think of Albertans as sitting on this amazing treasure chest of wealth quite unprecedented or unparalleled in the world. I've often said – and I'll keep saying it over and over – that this is probably the most valuable piece of real estate per capita, certainly, on the entire planet. Nobody in this world has the opportunities that we have here.

A few weeks ago I was going through a list of the metropolitan areas in Canada and the United States with populations over a

million people, and there are a total of 55 metropolitan areas in Canada and the U.S. with populations over a million. The very, very bottom of this list, the last one to make it on, is Edmonton, and the second-last is Calgary. So we have the two smallest populations of any cities in North America over a million; we just make it over that threshold. I studied the list for a while, and I realized that if you were to take every single Albertan and put them into one city, people from Rainbow Lake and Fort Chip and Elkwater and Milk River and everywhere in between including our big cities of Calgary and Edmonton and they were all in one city, we would only rank number 18 of cities in North America. That helps put it in perspective.

If you look at North America, we have a province here with a total population roughly equivalent to metro Seattle, yet we sit here on such wealth. We sit here with huge forests, a strong agricultural sector – struggling now but still strong, fundamentally – tourism, a hard-working, well-educated workforce. We live in peace and security next to the richest market in the world, the United States, and on top of all of that there are petroleum reserves that rival Saudi Arabia's, all of that divided among a population about the size equivalent to greater Seattle. Unbelievable opportunity.

It's our responsibility as legislators to make the most out of that opportunity, to recognize it for what it is and to steward it for future generations. I didn't feel or see that kind of spirit in yesterday's budget, although I'm sure the intent is good.

Some of the things we would do if it was our opportunity to present a budget, Mr. Speaker. First of all, put forward a surplus policy, put it down in black and white, and commit to it over the long term. Build up the heritage trust fund by taking 35 per cent of all surpluses and putting them into the heritage fund without capping it. Set up a second endowment fund and put 35 per cent of all budget surpluses into that and dedicate that to building the best postsecondary education system we can imagine. There's no reason that in this province we can't have the best technical institutes and colleges and universities in the country and, indeed, on the continent. Take another 25 per cent and put it into a capital account to address infrastructure. Finally, recognize the role and the importance of the arts and humanities to a fruitful and rewarding life, putting 5 per cent of surpluses into an endowment fund for the humanities, social sciences, and arts up to \$500 million. I didn't see any sense of that plan in yesterday's budget, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

On the health care front. Health care consistently is the first concern of Albertans and of Canadians. What we would aim to achieve in our budget would be a high-quality, sustainable public health care system based on bold innovation and steady management within a public framework. An accessible health care system is one of the top priorities for the Liberal opposition. We would like to bring in, we would propose to bring in a more extensive public pharmacare program, increase the number of residency training positions, proceed decisively with the new southeast Calgary hospital, eliminate health care premiums, and then some bold innovations because this isn't all about treating sick people. In fact, we need more and more to emphasize how to keep people healthy. So you would have seen a Liberal government here support a much stricter province-wide smoking ban in the workplace and taking tobacco tax revenues and putting them into a wellness fund to support building a healthier society.

We'd establish an independent health auditor to ensure that our health care system delivers value for money, a health auditor focused on asking the questions: what is the best way to deliver orthopaedic surgery or the best way to deliver cataract surgery or long-term care services, taking it and giving it a sound basis of a value-for-money

audit in our health care system? Frankly, we would require all major policies and funding decisions to undergo a health impact assessment to help us identify and plan for all major decisions of the government and understand their impact on our health care system.

We'd invest heavily and boldly in our education system, right from kindergarten to postgraduate studies. We'd introduce optional junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten, with a special emphasis on children at risk. We'd follow the recommendations of the Learning Commission and decrease class sizes, eliminate the need for school fees for education basics, and return to the day when we and pretty well all MLAs went to school, where school fees were to cover extras like field trips, not to cover some of the basics. We'd plan for an orderly renewal of existing school buildings, something that we don't see at all in the current budget, and support community schools.

Of course, we would establish, as I've already said, an endowment fund for postsecondary education with the vision of making the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Athabasca University, and all the colleges and technical institutes rank among the very best in the country.

The municipalities would also get particular attention in our budget. One of our first priorities would be to address infrastructure problems by providing \$3 billion to municipalities to address infrastructure needs, and I was glad to see that in yesterday's budget. We'd like to develop a three-year rolling grant funding framework to allow municipalities to plan their infrastructure well in advance so that we don't have this year-to-year, on-again, off-again game of unstable funding for municipalities. I think that, very importantly, we'd like to increase the local autonomy and create some new tax room for municipalities.

The environment also consistently ranks as a top priority for Albertans. We need to be protecting Alberta's natural resources, and that's of all kinds: water, petroleum, coal, wildlife, land, and landscapes. Some of the measures we would introduce include establishing an arm's-length standing committee to develop a province-wide water management strategy, implementing strategies to protect Alberta's remaining wetlands, reviewing water-intensive industries to ensure that they're using the best available technologies. I suspect there are dramatic improvements to be made if we really put our spirit into it. We'd phase out, more ambitiously than is currently proposed, the use of fresh water for oil well injections, and we would – we would – prohibit bulk water sales of Alberta water.

There are other things we'd like to do to build forward on our environment: supporting aggressive research into renewable energy sources – wind, biomass, solar energy – supporting the growth of environmental technology companies; helping to diversify the economy as well as protecting the environment. We'd like to create a revolving fund for energy efficiency to help Albertans retrofit their homes, increase their energy efficiency; protect Alberta parks and special places from environmental damage; and halt the current plan to sell off public lands. We'd design a comprehensive land use policy for all public lands in Alberta based on principles of conservation biology, and we'd fund and publicly share a comprehensive scientific study to determine the impact of sour gas flaring on human and animal health.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of our ideas that we'd like to bring forward in a budget. We'd like to see some bold and dramatic plans here. What I would love to see from any government here and any party would be statements like: making Alberta's universities the best in the country or making Alberta the most energy-efficient jurisdiction in Canada or even in the world within a decade or making Alberta's population the healthiest population in the world.

Those are the kinds of lofty goals and ambitions that motivate and drive Albertans, and those are failing us here.

The thing about approaching these in a comprehensive manner, Mr. Speaker, is that it's not either/or. It's not that we invest in health at the expense of education or invest in education at the expense of protecting the environment or invest in the environment at the expense of our cities. Indeed, a comprehensive plan addressing all of these would create a virtuous circle in which higher education levels contribute to better health, stronger communities contribute to better health and a healthier environment, a healthier, cleaner environment creates a healthier population, and on and on, so we can have benefits across the board. This is not an either/or proposition. This is a way of building a strong, robust, well-educated, healthy, coherent community in Alberta for the future.

That's the kind of vision I would like to see and that my colleagues in the Liberal caucus, I think, have for Alberta. There were baby steps taken in that direction in yesterday's budget, but I'd like now, Mr. Speaker, to raise some of the specifics in response to the budget presented yesterday.

There is no long-term plan to seize Alberta's opportunity. We are on the cusp, maybe on the apex of remarkable opportunity here, and it feels like we're letting it slip through our hands. It really does. There are some good initiatives in the budget, and we're happy that some of our ideas have been borrowed and adapted. That's fine. We're all here, ultimately, to advance the quality of public life in this province, I'm sure.

We're pleased to see issues or ideas like increases to AISH levels appearing – and we look forward to the announcement tomorrow on the details – increases in health spending, inflation-proofing the heritage fund, and investing in municipal infrastructure. Those are all good ideas, but they are not enough on their own to inspire confidence. This feels – and I give credit for a good line to the New Democrats – like we're sleepwalking into the next century with this budget.

Mr. Mason: Now I have to change my speech.

Dr. Taft: Well, you can borrow from us.

My disappointments with the budget. One of them, Mr. Speaker, was the postsecondary education endowment fund. I was really looking forward to something clear and dramatic there, something that would really make a difference, and I was, I must say, sorely disappointed. That was my greatest disappointment yesterday.

The headlines for weeks, perhaps months even, had trumpeted a \$3 billion postsecondary endowment fund, and what was delivered was a payment, a down payment, of a quarter of \$1 billion, that when the numbers are crunched will produce \$11 million a year for the entire postsecondary education system, Mr. Speaker. Let's put that in perspective. That would not have covered the increase in the electricity bill faced by the University of Alberta two years ago, not the whole bill but even the increase. That wouldn't have covered the increase in their power bill, much less have made a significant contribution to the rise of quality across the postsecondary education system. That was a real disappointment.

3:10

To make matters worse, as we read the budget documents – and I hope we're corrected – the government actually cut the capital budget, indeed slashed the budget for capital spending for postsecondary institutions in half. So we're left wondering: where will institutions house those 15,000 promised new spaces in the postsecondary system within the next three years? Are those real spaces, Mr. Speaker? We're left wondering if they aren't virtual

spaces, if we're not actually going to see home offices and base-ments counted as spaces because students are having to log on and learn through the Internet instead of getting a direct, in-place education at a campus somewhere.

So there were some real disappointments with postsecondary education, and as I say, I hope that as we go through the numbers and the details, we're proven wrong on those, but so far it doesn't deliver what it ought to deliver, Mr. Speaker.

On the K to 12 education side clearly there were some things to be pleased about, depending on how the details work out. If it's actually a net gain of 435 new teachers this year and another 580 the next year, it's a good thing, clearly, as long as it's a net gain.

Reducing class sizes so our kids have space to learn in is something we've supported, and aiming at achieving the objectives of the Learning Commission is commendable. We support that, and we'll work with the government to do that.

But infrastructure spending, Mr. Speaker, as we read the figures, is down for schools \$20 million from last year. It doesn't add up. Where are these teachers going to go? Where are the students going to go? How are we going to reduce classroom sizes when we're not investing in school infrastructure?

I can tell you from my constituency that schools are in rough shape. I tour all the schools of my constituency, and I still remember – and I don't think this has been corrected yet – going through one of the schools. The ceiling in the gym was leaking. I checked the emergency exit in the gym in an elementary school, and the door frame was so rotten that I could pick the wood frame apart with my fingernails. There's another school in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, where the cracks in the walls are so extensive and so wide that I can run a pen through them for metres and metres at a time. How are we going to correct that when our infrastructure investment in schools is actually dropping? It's cold comfort to parents and students and teachers.

So that's a concern, as is the pressure to close schools when, indeed, we should be converting these to community schools and looking at creative solutions to these issues and remembering that those schools 10 years from now might be the heart of a rejuvenated community and might actually play a crucial role in halting the urban sprawl when people want to move back into the central part of the city and they're attracted there because there's a school in the neighbourhood. If we've closed those schools or sold them off, what have we done? We've made a long-term mistake for a short-term gain. No addressing of that issue that I saw at all in yesterday's budget.

Health and Wellness. The first impressions look good. Base operating grants to health authorities are going to increase. Funding for the Alberta Cancer Board looks like it's up about 25 per cent, and that's good. Nobody is going to argue with that. It's a good move. Unfortunately, the demand is there, but that's the reality of a growing population.

It also suggests to me, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be looking at the impact of environmental factors on the rise of cancer, and we actually need to get more serious about things like smoking bans. You can see this strange and ironic paradox in this Assembly being played out, where we have a 25 per cent increase in funding for the Cancer Board, and we don't have the guts to come in with a province-wide workplace smoking ban. It's a sad commentary on our mentality in this Assembly.

AADAC funding is up 12 per cent. I guess if we need it, we need it. Clearly, as we will be debating, perhaps, later this afternoon, there's a need for treatment facilities for drug addicts: crystal meth and other drugs. But we also need to take a long-term view and recognize the importance that strong communities and excellent

schools play in keeping kids from needing detox centres and treatment services because when those kids end up as addicts, it's not just a breakdown of a family, and it's not just because they're weak individuals; it's also a breakdown of a community. We need to pay attention to the strength of our communities.

Calgary and Edmonton, as I've often said in this Assembly, have the most overcrowded hospitals in the country, so we're glad to see some action, some funding available to allow things like the ambulatory care centre to move forward in Edmonton and apparently – apparently – a solid commitment to the southeast Calgary hospital. I just hope it's delivered. I hope it comes through. I hope it's done properly and efficiently as a public hospital because I can warn this Assembly right now – mark my words – that if we end up in a P3 for the southeast Calgary hospital, we will lose control of that budget just like we did with the Calgary courthouse, and we will pay over and over and over for that facility.

As I mentioned near the beginning of my comments, we're delighted that the funding for AISH is being increased by \$80 million and look forward tomorrow to the announcement that we hope will see the monthly maximum benefits for AISH recipients addressed and perhaps some of the other issues around clawbacks of the AISH benefits addressed as well.

We're pleased that there's over \$7 million provided to help seniors cover increases to the costs of school property tax. Of course, we would have liked to have seen a cap put on the total provincial take from the education portion of the property tax so that there's more room for municipalities if they need that tax room or that seniors or all families and all homeowners in this province can get a little bit of a tax break there. Funding for housing under Alberta Seniors goes up, I think, some \$43 million, and that's great. We've got to look after our people.

Housing is crucial. Affordable housing is important. As we see the cost of housing in this province climb dramatically, we're going to have to pay more and more attention to this. The cost of housing in Fort McMurray is out of the reach of far too many people, and frankly the same thing is happening in Calgary. I heard a story two or three days ago about a house being listed in Calgary at, I think it was, \$319,000 and being bid up and finally selling at \$350,000 or \$360,000. The cost of housing in Calgary is getting out of reach of too many people, so we're going to need to pay attention to that.

Minimum wage doesn't have to be addressed through the budget. It would be nice to see it addressed clearly and firmly somewhere in some mechanism before this session is over. It links back, Mr. Speaker, to that issue of the virtuous circle I addressed. One of the clearest indicators of health problems and strongest predictors of health problems is poverty. If we help people who are struggling to get by – you don't have to give them a handout, but let's give them a fair chance – we will see in the long term demands on the health care system diminish. We'll see happier families and healthier communities and, frankly, a stronger society. So I would have liked to have seen some addressing of the minimum wage. Maybe that awaits later legislation.

3:20

There's no clear plan for the surplus. There's been some sort of sketching out of what we might see. It's interesting that just a few minutes ago a bill was given first reading, I think Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, which allows, as I'm reading it, as I understand it, the government to increase the amount of revenue it spends from nonrenewable resource revenues, and I'm not convinced that's a wise step for us to take. Is that really a sustainable policy to bring in, or are we losing discipline in our long-term control of our resources? We have to remember that every

\$4.75 billion we spend out of the nonrenewable resource revenues is gone forever. We could have an interesting debate on that.

Beyond that, what other plans are there in here for the surplus? Well, we'll see how the postsecondary endowment fund plays out, that little down payment that's going to produce \$11 million a year that I hope gets augmented rapidly, but there's no clear evidence that that's going to happen. I hope we pay serious attention to diversifying our economy away from our dependence on petroleum.

There's no mention in here of investing in our democratic deficit and investing in overcoming our democratic deficit, which I'd very much like to see. I'd like to have seen funds set aside to launch a citizen's assembly on electoral reform. I'd like to have seen support in here for a lobbyist registry. I'd like to have seen some of the technicalities addressed of how we handle an account for our money such as replacing the current government-only accounting principles with generally accepted accounting principles, which is, frankly, a recommendation that's been made by the Auditor General for years and years.

Of course, there are a few things that are downright irritating in here. Once again the horse-racing industry is receiving \$45 million, and I know that draws a reaction from some members of this Assembly, but why? Why, Mr. Speaker, are we supporting the horse-racing industry? Why not some other industry? Why any industry at all? If this is a government that wants out of the business of business, why are we still in the business of horse racing? What is the exit plan? This subsidy has actually increased year after year, and it's well over \$100 million in the last three or four years. Where does this end? Forty-five million dollars is more than the new money budgeted to hire police officers. It's more than what's given to seniors to provide dental and optical assistance. What's the priority here? When do we give the human race some priority over the horse race?

Mr. Mason: Good line.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you. You can use it in yours, hon. leader.

We're pleased to see the investment in municipalities, in particular the infrastructure issues that the municipalities face. I think some exciting leadership is going to emerge in local government in Calgary and Edmonton and elsewhere to really turn our cities into jewels, globally, among cities, not to take their place among the list of, you know, the huge cities, the Tokyos and New Yorks and Londons of the world, but to stand proudly on a list that might include Geneva or Zurich or Austin or Helsinki, to have Calgary and Edmonton recognized globally on that same list. We're not there yet, but we could get there. Let's try. Let's work on that.

Environment consistently ranks as a top priority for Albertans. There was some debate about that earlier today, Mr. Speaker, and there will be more. I don't see enough in here about the environment. We'll see if there's actual funding in here for increasing the number of fish and wildlife officers and other initiatives to protect the environment. Let's hope that there is. We'll see how the financing and support for the Water for Life strategy really plays out.

We'll see what efforts, if any, and what resources, if any, are committed to helping Alberta address the issues of global warming because, frankly and clearly, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Liberal caucus accepts the signs of global warming. We recognize the need that something is going to have to be done, and it's going to have to be done boldly. It could be done. We could be leaders. We could take this problem and say, "This is not a problem; this is an opportunity." If we deal with this opportunity properly, 10 years from now people from around the world could be coming to Alberta to learn

how to live with a lighter impact on their environment, how to generate power without burning so much fossil fuel, how to insulate their homes or how to design their buildings so that they have absolutely minimal impact on the environment. We should be looking at that as an opportunity, not as an obstacle. I don't see any addressing of that issue in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

I applaud the government for adding up to 200 police officers to fight crime in Alberta. It's a positive step, ensuring a safe community. I also applaud the particular focus to fight organized crime because I do think that's a rising problem in our province. The commitment to increase our police services is long overdue.

Our parks and protected areas are suffering from neglect, and I don't think this budget comes close enough to providing the necessary funding to return those to the proud state they were once in and to understand that they're a key part of a tourism strategy, which is part of diversifying the economy.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. I'm concerned that this budget, frankly, doesn't do much at all for the arts community. It shows once again that this government does not value the contributions of the artistic community to the vibrancy of our province. It's particularly galling that we can find \$45 million for the horse-racing industry and so little for the arts community.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that there's going to be other special business and important debate today. I know that there will be day after day after day of debate, department by department, of the budget. I look forward to that. I will be following it, and we will all be following it closely.

I'd summarize by saying that this budget takes some good steps, but it's not clear what road map we're really following. There's no sense of saying: "Albertans, rise to the challenge. You have the opportunity here to be remarkable." There's no sense of that here, Mr. Speaker, so I'm disappointed. We'll debate it department by department.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members should be aware that under our Standing Orders the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has up to 90 minutes to participate, and the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition left 57 minutes and 40 seconds on the table today.

Hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition, are you participating today?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, of course, get 15 minutes, and I intend to use all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in the debate on the budget for 2005. As I have said, and now I've been quoted by the hon. Leader of the Liberal Party, Budget 2005 can most aptly be described as sleepwalking into Alberta's second century. That's bad enough, but we all know that it's very dangerous to wake a sleepwalker, so we don't know what could happen then.

There's really so much more that this budget could have done for hard-working Alberta families. It could have scrapped health care premiums, which pose a particular burden on middle-class and low-income families. It could have scrapped the \$45 million annual subsidy for the horse-racing industry and got government out of being in the business of government, and then used the savings to cut tuition fees for postsecondary students by 10 per cent instead of providing students just a one-year stay of execution when it comes to tuition increases.

The budget could have kept the promise to implement full-day kindergarten and half-day junior kindergarten for disadvantaged

children. The government could have funded expanded kindergarten programs by scrapping the Alberta royalty tax credit, at a savings of almost \$100 million, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, Budget 2005 addresses none of these priorities.

3:30

Budget 2005 estimates a budget surplus of \$1.5 billion for this year, which is slightly more truthful than the \$300 million surplus claimed in last year's budget. We know, of course, Mr. Speaker, that last year's \$300 million surplus actually ballooned into a surplus of over \$4 billion.

Because the Tory government knows that they're underestimating the budget surplus to the tune of billions of dollars, instead of making appropriate provisions for expenditures in the budget, this government then gives itself permission to go on spending sprees later in the budget year, often after the ink has barely dried. Instead of properly budgeting up front, the government likes to throw money at problems in an unplanned way.

You know, the lowballing of budget surpluses has been a problem, Mr. Speaker, because the government quite consciously uses estimates for the price of gas and oil that are significantly lower than what they traditionally will be. Thus, instead of accurately budgeting the finances of the province, we get into the situation where we are used to having so-called unplanned or unanticipated surpluses. It's this, I think, that we would like to focus on a little bit.

The government should use accurate estimates for the price of natural resources and accurately forecast its revenues and its expenditures instead of using unbudgeted surpluses to fund things like the postsecondary education endowment. I think that the problem here is that we've opposed this approach of unbudgeted surpluses in the past, but now with this proposal, which the government has lifted from the Liberal Party's campaign book, they are institutionalizing the use of unbudgeted surpluses to finance ongoing government expenditures.

We think that that's a bad approach, Mr. Speaker. We disagree with it. By all means, we should put more money into postsecondary education, but we should not be creating the endowment fund from unbudgeted surpluses, as the Liberal proposal suggests and which the government has adopted. It should be budgeted money that goes into postsecondary education. So, by all means, let's spend a lot more money there because I think it is a good priority, but the approach is a bad one. I think that if the government is going to steal ideas from the Liberals, they should at least steal some of their good ones.

Mr. Speaker, this is a less than honest approach to government budgeting, particularly if infrastructure is taken into account. We think that it should be a priority, and it should be included in its entirety in the budget of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation rather than being doled out from the so-called sustainability fund at the whim of the Conservative government to meet their political needs.

Speaking of infrastructure, the monies being budgeted up front in Budget 2005 are actually quite disappointing. In fact, the capital plan outlined on page 46 of the budget's Fiscal Plan shows that while infrastructure transfers to municipalities are going up, capital investment in hospitals, schools, and postsecondary facilities is actually going down. In 2005-06, for example, capital funding for schools is actually 10 per cent lower than in last year's budget. The postsecondary sector fares even worse, with needed capital investment down more than 50 per cent compared to last year's budget. When it comes to health care facilities, capital investment is down some 30 per cent compared to what was actually spent last year.

Increased investment in municipal infrastructure is badly needed

and will help our municipalities begin to put a dent in their infrastructure deficits, but we should not be paying for it at the expense of infrastructure investments that are badly needed in other areas like schools, hospitals, and universities.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are crumbling schools across this province. We know that one of the things that's leading to the closure of inner-city schools is just the cost of catching up on their maintenance. It's time the government had a systematic plan to restore and protect these valuable community resources and to work with municipalities to revitalize the inner-city communities so that they aren't faced with a declining enrolment. We should be seeing these older schools as badly needed assets for our communities rather than as something that has to be closed before new schools can be constructed.

Mr. Speaker, if you're a parent and your child's school is facing closure, this budget will not help you. If you're a patient waiting for a hospital bed to open up so you can have needed surgery, this budget will not help you either.

I'd like to highlight another example of bad budgeting in this year's budget; namely, the \$55 million provided to municipalities for ambulance services. This government knows, based on documents provided by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, that it's at least \$12 million short, but instead of adding this shortfall to the budget, the Minister of Health and Wellness has tried to deflect the blame onto municipalities rather than putting the blame where it belongs, and that's with this Conservative government and its botched approach to ambulance transfer.

I must say that the NDP opposition is pleased that there were no further reductions in the general corporate tax rate. In last year's budget the NDP opposition stood alone in this Assembly to oppose the 9 per cent cut in the tax rate for larger corporations, from 12 and a half to 11 and a half per cent. This corporate tax rate was supported by the other parties in this Assembly, and we're pleased that the opposition that we have raised to this ongoing attempt to cut corporate taxes has succeeded again in preventing this measure from being introduced in this budget. Alberta's corporate tax rates are already by far the lowest of any province.

While I'm pleased that there were no further corporate tax cuts in this budget, I am concerned that the government still has not backed away from its eventual goal of cutting corporate taxes by another 30 per cent, all the way down to 8 per cent. The NDP opposition will keep up the pressure to ensure that the corporate sector pays its fair share for public investment in our schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, investments from which they are among the greatest beneficiaries.

Yet we do favour some tax reductions, Mr. Speaker. We favour a reduction in the tax burden for those for whom it truly is a burden, and that is for low- and middle-income families. Instead of cutting health care premiums and putting \$1,056 in the pocket of each and every hard-working Alberta family, the government is choosing to rack up a budget surplus of at least \$1.5 billion, and we know from previous experience that it's going to be a lot higher than that. Even going by the government's own lowballed revenue forecasts, the government could scrap health care premiums immediately and still end up with a sizable budget surplus of at least \$650 million. Why they don't do that is beyond me.

The refusal of the government to give hard-working middle-income Albertans a meaningful tax break means that they will pay significantly more in combined personal income and health premium taxes than if they lived in either British Columbia or Ontario. By the government's own figures on page 140 of the budget's fiscal plan, an Alberta family making \$100,000 per year will pay \$844 more in combined personal and health premium taxes than the same family

with the same income in the province of Ontario. Even worse, an Alberta family of four making \$60,000 per year will pay \$1,057 more in income and health premium taxes than the same family in Ontario.

On school property taxes this is the fourth budget in a row where the government is breaking a promise made in the 2001 budget to freeze school property tax revenues at a constant \$1.2 billion. In fact, when you cut through all the government's spin and talk about mill rates and look squarely at the bottom line, this is what you find, Mr. Speaker: next year Martha and Henry's school property taxes are once again going up, this time by 3.2 per cent. The government's take on school property taxes will increase to \$1.45 billion, or 20 per cent above the \$1.2 billion dollar property tax freeze promised in budget 2001.

As the government first announced on the eve of last year's election, Alberta seniors will get a provincial rebate to offset increases in their school property tax, but even there, Mr. Speaker, there's a catch. Seniors will only have their school taxes frozen if they remain in their existing home. This seniors-only freeze will cost the government a very modest \$7 million. By contrast, everyone else will have their school property taxes go up, and the government pockets \$40 million.

3:40

The same misplaced priorities as in previous budgets keep showing up; for example, the horse-racing subsidy is being kept at the same \$45 million level as last year. The multiyear horse-racing subsidy actually cost \$2 million more than a one-year tuition freeze for postsecondary students.

On K to 12 education, per-pupil grants to school boards are only going up by 2 and a half per cent, barely matching inflation. Moreover, the government is not expanding, only maintaining, funding for kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs. The government is breaking its promise by not providing funding for implementing the Learning Commission's recommendations to expand kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs for disadvantaged children, and I think that's a terrible shame, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of health care, the \$700 million funding increase does seem impressive at first blush. However, the government is not telling people that over half of this increase – that is, \$370 million – is being paid for by Ottawa as a result of increased health transfers resulting from last September's health accord. Moreover, the single biggest jump in spending is one of about 14 per cent in prescription drug costs for seniors and the poor. The government is keeping municipal ambulance funding transfers to municipalities at \$55 million and not funding the \$12 million shortfall identified by AUMA.

On policing, 200 new police officers is a good start. I'll recall the NDP election platform that would have put 500 police officers on the street in Alberta. I see that since we've been raising this, the Solicitor General has managed to squeeze a little bit more money out of the Treasury Board and bumped it up to 200. So that's a good start, Mr. Speaker, but I know that the people of this province want to have their municipalities properly funded for policing services. While these increases for mid-size communities are welcome, there is no increase in per capita police funding for the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, where the need is very great.

While \$6 million for fighting organized crime and gangs with 60 dedicated officers is welcome, not all of this money should be going to the enforcement side alone, Mr. Speaker. We also need to make sure that some of the resources go into crime prevention; otherwise, the call on the government's budget for policing will go up and up.

In terms of the assured income for the severely handicapped,

actual monthly benefit levels are not going to be made public until tomorrow. Looking at the \$45 million being allocated to increased monthly benefit levels, it appears that it won't even be sufficient to keep up with increases in living costs over the past dozen years.

I'm running out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I want to say that with the billions of dollars of petrowealth flowing into provincial coffers, this budget could have accomplished so much more. It's easy to budget in Alberta given the money flowing in from our bounty of natural resources, but it's tougher to budget well, and it's tougher to budget for all the people. It's tougher to meet the needs of low- and middle-income people ahead of the wants of the wealthy and the corporate sector. In this critical sense this budget has failed abysmally.

With that, I will conclude and take my seat. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

The chair is prepared to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, I ask for the House's unanimous consent so that the leader of the NDP opposition could complete his comments given that there are no questions.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Speaker: Well, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood suggested, at least in what I heard him saying, that he had concluded his remarks. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, before the question would even be raised, it sounds to me that unanimous consent would not be given, so I won't raise the question.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, shall I call the vote then, the question? I've been sitting here waiting for a minute. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you want . . .

Dr. Pannu: My request doesn't stand there anymore. I withdraw it. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. You had me nervous. I wasn't sure what the question was going to be.

I'd like to congratulate this Tory government on their budget and the excitement that they had in being able to do what they wanted to do and to express their view to Albertans. I'm very excited with the announcement of a health care facility that will be similar to that of the Mayo Clinic. That's exciting, and it will be a great addition to our province that we'll all truly benefit from.

I'm excited about the commitment, though at this time it seems more ceremonial than concrete, on the access to the future endowment fund. This has great potential. I hope that we will look at and want to have world-renowned institutions, like we will do with our health care system. I'm excited about the thousand teachers that have been announced being able to go out to help our youth, our future assets in this province. I was very pleased with the increased funding for law enforcement and the 200 new officers that are going out there. I commend them on all of these excellent programs. Albertans will truly benefit from that as we go into this new centennial century.

While this budget offers a peek into the future, it still leaves me

wondering what their 20-year plan really is. They say that they have one, but they just don't share it with us or the municipalities, and it makes it difficult to plan for the future. So I have a few areas of concern that I'd like to address today about the budget; namely, those concerning families and individuals, communities and small business, the role and size of the government, and the future and the direction of Alberta.

Help for families and individuals should be our first and highest priority. Past government surveys have shown that the number one desire of Albertans, after paying off the debt, was to reduce taxes. They're onerous and burdensome on the people of Alberta, and we've failed to look at that. But if we were to increase the basic personal exemption to \$20,000 in Alberta, we would not only be the best in Canada. We'd be a long way ahead. We need to leave the money in the pockets of the people, where it is needed and used best.

Tax cuts could have and should have been taken with the health care premium taxes for everyone. Property taxes and hidden taxes, fuel, and auto insurance are a few. Currently our Health and Wellness budget is huge. Our Premier is running out of time to present his much talked about reforms, and I have great concerns. Too often when it comes to essential services like health care and power, when we look at the reforms that he did in the power industry, it's been at the expense of small business and Albertans and didn't benefit them as a whole. I question his reforms, and I hope that he puts them and aims them toward the benefit of Albertans.

One of the things that I would like to see in their health care reforms is if funding was to follow the services provided. In my area, with the Chinook health region, they're desperately in need of an angioplasty unit, and if the funding was to actually follow the service, I know that we would have one down there. But right now, being micromanaged and being sent to two facilities, it's not serving the interests of Albertans.

The property 5 per cent education rollback is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. With the way our property assessments go forward, they actually have a net gain, I believe, of \$60 million, to the detriment of Albertans. Market value assessment is inflationary and adds to the problems. We only need to look back a few short years, 25 years, to see the real estate bubble of the past. We need to have a program where production value and purchase price must enter into the formula and have a higher weighting on the assessment to the economy. We could eliminate our health care premium tax, give a 50 per cent reduction in our education property tax, and increase our basic personal exemption tax to \$20,000 and still have a balanced budget.

We need to have more help for our communities and our businesses. We need to start downloading our surplus, not our debt, on our communities. We could do that. One example that I'll use is that currently we have the Community Development budget, \$247 million, that's been micromanaged, and applications were given and received, especially for this our centennial year. If this entire department was to be removed, we'd have \$247 million divided amongst Albertans, which would give a per capita of \$83 per person. The small town of Raymond, which I live close to and which was denied its centennial application, would receive a funding of \$250,000 for community development, and they would put that to very good use instead of being denied, which they were.

3:50

Communities with more than 5,000 people are very grateful for the increase in the funding from the policing dollars. This problem has been known for over a year. They've taken one step, but we need to take further steps. We need to have a higher graduated

program that will help benefit these areas. For the small town of Taber it currently costs their citizens \$150 per citizen for their policing costs. This will go forward to help them a great deal, but we need to take another step.

Businesses were promised a long time ago to cut the rate from 11.5 per cent to get it down to 8 per cent. This promise was also broken. We also have discussed in the province here a small business corporate tax threshold raised to \$500,000, which would truly give a boon to the economy.

The beef producers of Alberta need help protecting their assets. In the drought a few years ago the provincial and federal governments got together and realized that inventory replacement was hazardous to the industry because of the decimation to it, and programs like that could have taken place here and could have pushed the federal government to take that at no cost to the taxpayers. We need some incentives in the beef business.

This government understands the benefits to the oil business and has been very innovative and leading in its ideas there, yet there have been none presented in the beef industry. If we were to take the same principles that have been used in the oil and mineral exploration and put them into the beef industry and have those incentives – one would be as allowed in the tar sands – if there were no provincial taxes until the capital investment was recovered, it would truly be a boost.

This government could also take its surplus money and have a dollar-for-dollar loan match with a first mortgage fixed on that facility to be held by the province and, if in fact it was to go under, have it and sell it to recover the taxpayers' dollars. Such incentives would be a boost to the economy and help out the beef producers in this country.

Margaret Thatcher made a comment on the federal PCs, that they have become much more of an adjective and less of a verb. This government has grown at an unprecedented rate. We started at 17 ministries, as has been mentioned several times, and we've grown to 24. I imagine it will just be a short time before we reach Getty's full size of 25 ministries.

Efficiency would truly be increased if we were to eliminate the new ministry of restructuring and efficiency. As previously mentioned, the removal of Community Development and the downloading of those funds would truly benefit the local municipal governments. One Ministry of Education with deputy ministers would provide continuity and efficiency. With a good analysis we could easily reduce our numbers back to 16 ministers. That would truly serve Alberta with a lean, more productive, and efficient government.

The direction that we want to go in Alberta: we want a strong and diversified economy. We want to take those incentives – and we've seen how it boosts the oil industry – and give those incentives to other areas. If we were to have those capital expense programs where you don't have to pay until you've received your money back, then it would truly boost our economy in many areas, not just the oil and gas industry.

If this government would download the surplus to the people through tax cuts, it would not be compelled to grow and spend money. In 2000 their survey *The Future: Meeting Priorities, Sharing Benefits – It's Your Money*, Albertans were clear that after the debt was paid off, the surplus should go to tax cuts. If one-time spending is okay, why not one-time tax cuts? Or perhaps they could become permanent ones. But unless we try it, we don't know. The problem is that you say to the people, "It's your money," yet you keep it in your pocket, and you say that you know how to spend it better than the people do.

In conclusion, I guess I'd like to compare us to that of winning the lottery. We've been very blessed here, but that winning can be the beginning of our downfall. Too much money has often led to corruption, mismanagement, and flamboyant lifestyles. Can we sustain the huge influx of money without redistributing it and not cause inflation and possibly run into a brick wall in a few years?

The gap between our potential and our achievement grows with our added revenue. We are the envy of other provinces and even the world. It is my hope that we can strive to reach our ever-growing potential and not rest on our past achievements. We have seen not just good examples here in Alberta but excellent ones here in the province in the past. Wayne Gretzky was not just happy to be the top scorer; he shattered the previous records. The Sutter family was not just a good hockey family; they were outstanding. Let us follow our most recent example by not just saying that we're the best in the world. Let's clean the house, and let's score some perfect ends, like the Ferbey team just did.

It is not good enough to say that we are the best in the world. We need to rise to our full potential. We need to be hard-working, most innovative, and efficient. We need a formula that will restrain government growth, invest in our future and infrastructure and endowment funds, and truly put Alberta ahead of the race by reducing taxes and leaving as many dollars as possible in the pockets of the people to be used at their discretion.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a most recent survey entitled *It's Your Money*, Albertans have clearly indicated that their priorities post debt payment were, one, health care; two, education; three, infrastructure; followed by environment. I'm wondering what version of *It's Your Money* this member is referring to in saying that Albertans' number one priority was tax cuts.

The Speaker: The hon. member, if you wish.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. I just need to pull it out. I was going by the 2000 version. Until we had all this money, the question was always asked: where did we want to spend it? It was the deficit. There was one in 2000 and one in '97. In '93 it was debt-reduction surveys. You've had several surveys. In all the previous ones, except for this last one, which to me was a push/pull – it wasn't an opinion one – we asked for tax reductions. It was always number two.

The Speaker: Others?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to participate.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would then move adjournment of debate on Government Motion 19.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we could revert briefly to tablings.

The Speaker: I asked the House leader to do this, so please give him unanimous consent. Okay?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As offered by the Premier earlier today, I have two tablings on his behalf. The first is a tabling in which the quotes from Carl Amrhein, provost of the University of Alberta, and quotes from Dr. Harvey Weingarten, president of the University of Calgary, are contained. So there's that.

Also, a letter to the Hon. Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan, with respect to Alberta's and Saskatchewan's joint centennial celebration and, in particular, referencing tonight's hockey game, wherein a small wager is being placed and one Premier would wear the other Premier's jersey depending on the outcome of the game.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Red Deer-North, did you catch my eye?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. Following discussions between all sides of the House, I seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly to revert to Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders to address my private member's bill, Bill 202, in Committee of the Whole. I understand that I will also need to seek unanimous consent, once back in Assembly, to have the bill proceed to third reading today should the Committee of the Whole approve Bill 202.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking for unanimous consent of the House to move to Bill 202.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North is seeking unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(3) to allow for the consideration of Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call on the Clerk, this is most unique. This, perhaps, has never happened before in the history of Alberta in 99 years, so it's a wonderful example of parliamentary co-operation, the highest form of democracy. I congratulate you all.

Now I'm going to ask the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere to assume the chair in committee after the Clerk calls it.

head: **4:00 Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Haley in the chair]

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order, please.

**Bill 202
Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act**

The Acting Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Mrs. Jablonski: Madam Chairman, I rise to introduce amendments to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, PCHAD. There are copies of the amended bill being circulated. Would you like me to wait until the members receive them?

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, could we wait for it to be circulated, please?

Mrs. Jablonski: Yes.

The Acting Chair: Hon. members, I believe that everybody has the amendment now. We will refer to it as amendment A1. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Madam Chairman, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was created to protect Canadians from the potential misuse of power by the government. It was created to ensure that everybody, regardless of race, sex, or age, is treated with dignity and respect and to ensure that every Canadian is treated equally under the law. However, Charter rights are not absolute. The Charter and the courts both recognize that the government has the right to make laws for the good of most people, even if the law violates a Charter right or freedom. If a court decides that a law does this, the court will consider whether the violation can be justified under section 1. It says that Charter rights and freedoms are "subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be . . . justified in a free and democratic society." This is the test that is used by the courts.

Madam Chairman, the original wording of Bill 202, PCHAD, had two parts: a forced intervention, assessment, and detox and a 90-day mandatory treatment program. To avoid significant problems due to the Charter, I removed the 90-day treatment order from the bill at this time. This was because of a lack of specific, scientific evidence showing that mandatory treatment is more effective than voluntary treatment. Due to this lack of scientific evidence, in the opinion of several experts Bill 202, PCHAD, as it was originally written was likely to fail this Charter test.

I have looked for many hours to find scientific studies that prove that mandatory treatment is effective. Although it is difficult to find any saying this, it is also difficult to find any saying that it is ineffective. Furthermore, I have received many phone calls and e-mails from former youth addicts telling me that this measure will work. Addiction counsellors at the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre in Calgary and Bosco Homes east of Edmonton also state that mandatory treatment is effective. These people deal with addiction every day and are in a good position to make this assessment. In time the science will become more consistent with the anecdotal evidence. The scientists need to start asking the right questions.

After much research, however, I did find studies that show that mandatory treatment can be as effective as voluntary treatment. Furthermore, according to AADAC, an argument for compulsory treatment is that it provides better outcomes than no treatment, and it offers a viable method for retaining clients in treatment long enough for them to recognize that they have a problem and then to seek help. Additionally, AADAC admits that alcohol and drug treatment is more cost-effective to give someone than to incarcerate them. By shifting resources from the criminal justice system, additional funds could be made available to increase treatment capacity.

A critical aspect of PCHAD, Bill 202, is that it proposes to intervene and to treat children who are addicted to drugs before they become involved with the justice system. This would save the justice system and society even more costs associated with the problems that surround addiction and crime in the long run.

However, at the moment the difficulty and complexity in proving the effectiveness of a 90-day mandatory treatment order to the Supreme Court of Canada are the reasons for the amendments to this bill. The amendments, however, leave in place the first part of this

bill, which allows the addicted youth to be removed from the drug environment and be put into detox and assessment for five days. Five days has been deemed by the courts as a reasonable amount of time to hold someone against their will. Once the five days expire, we will ask the youth to consider voluntary addiction treatment, which could then potentially be enforced by contract if the youth agrees to a treatment program.

Madam Chairman, this is a forced intervention, with the option for the child to help themselves at the end. This intervention would be very helpful to parents, especially when they have the support of loved ones in trying to convince their child that they have a problem for which they need help. I believe that parents who need to help and protect their child will accept this tool for intervention even if it doesn't include further mandatory treatment.

Madam Chairman, this is far less than I had hoped for with this bill. However, mandatory treatment is a very complicated issue, and to withstand a Charter challenge, we will need more research and more consultation. The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act took two years to develop using experts from many fields, and it, too, had to be amended to avoid being deemed unconstitutional. More work is needed, and I intend to make sure that this work is done.

Madam Chairman, I have just explained to the members of this Assembly the main reason I had to amend Bill 202. Going back to the Charter, the Supreme Court of Canada stated that a limit on Charter rights is acceptable if the limit deals with a pressing and substantial social problem and the government's response to the problem is reasonable and justified. It's amazing that the Charter, which is supposed to protect everyone, can stop parents from keeping their children safe and protected from drug addiction.

According to AADAC's Alberta youth experience survey, uppers without a prescription and club drugs are some of the most frequently used drugs among youth. According to addicts of drugs such as crystal meth, one or two experimentations can quickly lead to a very dangerous addiction. My point, Madam Chairman, is that it would be very difficult to deny that we have a pressing and substantial social problem, and I believe that a five-day detox is a very reasonable response to this problem.

I also believe that having a forced treatment for 90 days is reasonable as well, but as mentioned, it would be difficult to have this withstand a Charter challenge without further research and review. Therefore, these amendments are important to ensure that this bill is strong. Although I am very disappointed with the changes that I've had to make to the bill, the intention remains the same, and that is to give parents a tool to intervene in a behaviour that is seriously harming their children.

People will be right when they say that five days is not enough time. In fact, five days is no time when it comes to dealing with the complex issue of addiction. In five days, however, the hope is that we could get the child away from the drug long enough to realize what a profoundly negative effect it is having on them, and this will hopefully help them to decide to go into voluntary treatment.

4:10

As my colleague from Peace River stated during the debate on Bill 201, "sometimes when you go for all or nothing, you get nothing." Trying to pass this bill with a 90-day provision is an example of going for all, and I am not willing to settle for nothing. If we vote to accept these amendments, we will be voting to do something now, with the ability to build on it later.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure everyone that the purpose of these amendments is to give parents hope. The hope is that this bill will help parents to help their children recognize that they have

a problem, and that will go a long way in the first part of treatment.

Madam Chairman, the United Nations convention on the rights of the child is the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history. In fact, except for two countries it has been ratified by every other country in the world, including Canada. This declaration of rights of the child spells out the basic human rights for children everywhere. The universal rights state that children have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated, the right to have the best health possible and medical care, and the right to be given guidance by their parents and family. Most importantly, article 33 states that children have the right to be protected from dangerous drugs.

Many critics of this bill, including civil libertarians, argue that it will violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To these people I say that it does not violate the rights of the child. It upholds these rights. Parents have a duty to protect their children, and Bill 202 will give them an important tool to help them do so should a child become addicted to drugs.

I would like to thank all of the members of this Legislature for seeing the importance of this legislation and for helping me to get it through this House. I would also like to thank all the parents and the youth and others who have supported and encouraged me in fighting this cause. Finally, I would like to thank David Gillies for his help, his guidance, and his support. I would also like to thank Peter Pilarski, our researcher, who has dedicated much time and great effort to this bill. The support for this bill has been amazing and is a testament to people's belief that it's the right thing to do.

I urge all members of the House to support the amendments proposed for Bill 202. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The next speaker is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for a very tenacious approach. If I may say so to the member, I think that taking a bill that somebody believes in very strongly and pursuing it and doing everything you can to bring it forward bodes well. That's what an MLA should be doing, and I congratulate you for doing that. I think it's very important that we do that. As I say, tenacious to say the least, we can say about the member. But she believes passionately in this, and she's prepared to go the wall for it, and I again congratulate her for it.

I just want to add to what the member is saying, and I want to just very briefly talk about a case that came to my constituency office last week. I think the Member for Red Deer-North would be interested because it's some of the same sorts of situations that I know she's had to deal with, and it shows some of the problems, I believe.

Obviously I'm not going to use names here, but it is a 14-year-old child. April 1 the child ran away from home. April 3 the mother and aunt contacted Children's Services, who already had an open case with this particular child, and they refused to intervene because the child had not been gone for a normal length of time, because she had run away before. For the same reason the police refused to intervene. So you can imagine the frustration here.

They believe that she's probably on crystal meth. They're not sure, but the way they read about the symptoms and that – and here they are. Because she's a problem, she's running away all the time, they want to get there quickly. They contact Children's Services; there's nothing they can do. Then they contact the police, and they say – and so they're caught. I think that's the type of people that

you're talking about. What do we do? Finally, on their own the mother and an aunt found the child, on their own initiative.

They went down to West Edmonton Mall, and they found the child. As I said, they're worried that she may have been using crystal meth. She had the symptoms. They're also worried that she may be involved in prostitution because often the two go together. Children's Services still refused to intervene even after this message was relayed. They said that she had to – this is the term that the person said on the phone – hit rock bottom before they intervened. Well, being down at West Edmonton Mall and running away from home and the potential, at least, they think, that she's on drugs seems to me to be pretty rock bottom.

So they're very frustrated, but they kept bugging the police, and the police finally intervened on behalf of the parents and kept her in a hold cell at West Edmonton Mall. The police officers then found that no one agency could intervene on their behalf, not the crisis unit, anybody.

What's scary about this is that this particular child was a friend of Nina Courtepatte, who we know was just murdered. She was in that group. So you can imagine the stress that they're going through after they read this. I think that this probably says as much as anything about the need for something to happen and the reason that the member is bringing forward this particular bill, because this is happening, and there's a great deal of frustration out there.

Madam Chairperson, in going through the bill itself, the member was disappointed because she didn't get all or nothing. But I guess that – and I think she alluded to this – it's much better to get a bill that can pass and do some good rather than one that's going to end up unconstitutional. Nobody's well served by that, and I think that's what the member has realized.

The changes, I think, are positive ones because the five days would have helped these particular people that I'm talking about. It would have helped them. They would have been able to move much quicker. They eventually did get her out, but they would have had a means to do it, so it would have solved their problem. Hopefully, in five days – who knows? – you give some opportunity. Again, you would like the 90 days, but if it's unconstitutional, then forget it.

The other thing that I think is extremely important, because there was a potential for abuse, is the idea that it has to be a guardian. I think that's crucial in terms of amendment, and I think that's very positive because you don't want everybody holus-bolus, from teachers to social workers, you know, involved in this. It should be a parental or guardian responsibility.

I would just conclude, though, and say to the member, because she's championed this cause and done it very well, and to the government: we can have it mandatory or voluntary, but there just are not enough treatment centres in the province. I think there's a growing epidemic – we know that – in rural Alberta. We're told that in Edmonton it's more coke than crystal meth. Who knows? It doesn't matter. Drugs are drugs are drugs. So the point that I would make: if she would take that same energy, talk to her colleagues even if it's in the budget, and get some more treatment centres. Even the ones that want to go in voluntarily now, there just are not enough there. I think the member is well aware of that. So I'm saying to the member across the way that if she would now take that same tenaciousness, that same energy, and really start to promote that end of it. That's the most crucial part of it.

Having formerly, in a different world, been a high school counsellor, if a person doesn't see a problem and want to change, it's very hard to change them. If they do see a problem, then you can work with them. I'm told that even for the students and kids that want to change and get off this, it's a very difficult drug, one that we're not used to. It's very difficult to change. So we have to have

more help there, and I'm convinced that the hon. member will use that energy to promote that, that we get more treatment centres.

So, Madam Chairperson, I just wanted to conclude by telling the member and the members of the Legislature about some of the problems. I know that she's talked about parents and one that just came to my attention last week, and I think that this bill would go some ways in at least temporarily helping those parents. That's just temporary, but the more long range is: how do we get more treatment centres?

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

4:20

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

We'll move to Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Madam Chairman. In one of his wartime speeches after the Battle of El Alamein I believe Winston Churchill said: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is . . . the end of the beginning." I believe we are one better than Churchill and the Allies here. We are at the beginning of the end. Now that the end in the time frame for the passage of this bill is in sight, we need to focus again on the other meaning of end: the purpose or goal of this exercise.

Madam Chairman, this bill is about a chemical, but it is not about just another chemical. In an age when we've come to accept the presence of trace elements of toxic chemicals in the clothes that we wear and the air that we breathe, we need to remember that though all toxins may seem equal, some are deadly, far more deadly than others, and crystal meth is one of these. There are some substances, cyanide for instance, that not even the most reckless experimenter would be likely to try once, because one try is all they'll get. Crystal meth is not quite there, but it's close. Addiction can occur from a single dose, from which inevitable damage follows.

Madam Chairman, this is a bill about abuse, but it is not only substance abuse. It's an abuse of the promise of youth and the hope of adulthood. It's an abuse of God-given potential to grow and manifest the divine image in relationships, re-creation, and service. It's an abuse of relationships among human beings – adolescents and their guardians, siblings and friends, significant others – who must stand by powerless to prevent the destruction they see happening. This bill opens a window, a small space through which they can try to intervene to pull a loved one out of a downward spiral.

Madam Chairman, this bill is about people, not just about some other people. In some way it affects us all. The timeless words, "you shall love your neighbour as yourself," are not just a noble ideal. They are a recognition of the fact that we are all connected and that, ultimately, we cannot do or be otherwise. How we love or treat another ultimately comes back to how we treat ourselves in the society we share.

I urge my fellow members in this Assembly not to reduce this to the level of a problem, a social problem, someone else's problem. I urge us to stand together, to commit in the resolve that crystal meth shall not pass the threshold of acceptance in our society, and that this bill shall pass in our combined and co-operative effort to find an alternative.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The Member for Calgary-Shaw, please.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you. I just wanted to rise briefly today and also add my comments to today's debate in committee. I'd just like to compliment the House in this centennial year. I think this is a moment in time when we all put aside our political differences and

do something for the right reason, and I commend all members of the House for the co-operation today here in the House.

I was thinking of my own four boys when they were little. I used to spend a lot of time and energy locking up poison. I know that the rest of parents can all remember the days when all things had to go on a high shelf or behind a locked cupboard. I was just vigilant about that. I never placed a cleaning element low. I never left anything in harm's way that I felt my boys could get access to and do themselves harm with. I knew what poison meant as a young mother with young children.

Now, my boys grew up, and they became teenagers. I could no longer lock the cupboards, and I could no longer put things on the shelves high enough. I had to send them out into that greater community. What I was hoping was that I had been able to teach them enough so that they would recognize the dangers of poison. Yet we know that there are those poisons out there. The fact that children today in their teenage years would feel inclined to take the things into their bodies that their parents have locked from them their entire lives is just astounding to me on some level, but we know it's true, and we know it's happening.

I'm thinking of a good friend of mine whose son got addicted, and she told me that she prayed nightly that the police would arrest her child. Now, I never prayed nightly that the police would arrest my children. I have to say that that was not a dream of mine, but that's what she had been reduced to. She prayed nightly that something would happen so that the police would arrest her child because she feared for his life, and she had no other tools at that point to work with. I see this bill, in the first, as giving parents tools, but I also recognize that there are some realities around this bill, that we can't necessarily take it to its full extent today, that we might encounter challenges that will mean that we'll lose the first half of the opportunity.

I recognize that sometimes as legislators we have to balance the intent with the realities of our current situation, so I'm going to support this amendment, although I will say also that my hope is that the member will pursue this.

I have a brother-in-law that actually runs one of these treatment facilities down in Utah, and I spent a good hour talking to him about the kinds of kids that come into his facility and the kind of help they can give those children. He has almost a 90 per cent success rate right now in his facility.

So I say to you that I think there are good ways to do this. I think that we can, first of all, take a look at doing the right thing in the first instance, bring these children in, get them tested, maybe get them in that five-day period to acknowledge and actually help us to get them into those voluntary treatment programs.

I commend the member, and I will be supporting this amendment because I also agree that we can't afford to lose this first step. So I thank you.

The Acting Chair: The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act. I must applaud the hon. member who sponsored this bill because it's an issue that needed to be addressed. This bill will give parents the capability to force their drug-addicted children into secure treatment facilities. This, in turn, will help to battle drug and alcohol problems in youth throughout Alberta.

This bill is the first of its kind in Canada. Madam Chair, under this act a person from the community can apply to AADAC to have the child admitted. This member of the community who is referring the child abusing drugs must have a valid belief of the child's drug

or alcohol problems. After the application is made, then AADAC must decide whether the child needs treatment. They can request that the guardian appear before them.

A child should be allowed to enter treatment voluntarily if the commission rules that that is what is needed. It can be at a facility or on an outpatient basis. There must be an agreement between the guardian and the commission about the treatment. This treatment would be no longer than six months. If the child does not go along voluntarily with the assessment, the guardian of the child may apply to the court.

When a child is apprehended, he or she will then be taken to a safe house, and a director within child welfare must be notified. The director will either give the child back to the guardian or confine the child in the protective safe house. If the child in the safe house has not appeared before AADAC on its initial assessment, he or she will be assessed involuntarily at the safe house.

Within five days of the apprehension the child's guardian must appear before the court to show cause for confinement. The child must be fully informed of the case against him or her. Under this act a child can be confined for 90 days. The child or their guardian can apply to end the period of confinement, requiring the child to live at home and work through the addiction as an outpatient. A child may be excused from a hearing if prejudicial information is being presented and the child should not be there. Protection of the child's confidential information – for example, the names of family members, et cetera – will not be disclosed.

4:30

The minister is in control of developing the programs to treat children on drugs or alcohol. The minister may decide what are protective safe houses and make regulations pertaining to the costs of treatment programs, the cost of guardians, the assessments done on children, the panels within AADAC that will make the decisions, and programs for treatment. This legislation will give many, many affected families a hope, our children much-needed drug treatment, and, consequently, make the fabric of our society stronger.

I have received many phone calls from my constituents about the recent problem of drug abuse among children. In some cases the parents are helpless because they don't have the right to step in and take care of their own children. I know some people argue that this is taking away rights from Alberta's teens and arbitrarily forcing them into treatment. What defences are in place to make sure that children who don't require treatment will not be forced into treatment? This bill is in reaction to the similar problems of drug abuse among children.

Madam Chair, the way that this bill will work in apprehending is the same as the protection of children in prostitution legislation. The parents will have to bring their case to the courts, and there will have to be a hearing with child welfare to determine the application. The threshold for the decision on whether the child will be detained will be created by AADAC. The child will then be picked up under a court injunction and detained for five days for an assessment to be made on whether the child should remain in secure treatment or returned to the parents.

The children will not enter the child welfare system other than the assessment part of it. There is no direction within the bill on what treatment will be provided. We support this bill but with some concerns for the question on granting this control to the court. What role does the children's advocate play in this bill? This is the question. What facilities are going to be used for safe houses? Who is going to pay for the police needed to perform these new arrests? How many new directors of child welfare will be required for the enforcement of this bill?

There are concerns about the treatment facilities available since there are very few treatment facilities throughout Alberta.

I am sure that this bill will give parents the tools to force their kids into treatment so that they can be helped. I agree that parents should have the right to step in and take care of their own children. The government must look into creating facilities for children so that there are enough spaces for the children to get the treatment they need. The government and the courts will have to exercise caution in the use of this new law to ensure that the rights of the children are not abused.

In closing, I want to say to all parents and teens who are affected by this: we will not give up on your battle against drug and alcohol problems in Alberta. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North. I commend the member for introducing this meaningful private member's bill and for her effort to navigate it through the legislative process.

The amendments may seem to soften the original bill, but like the philosopher Plato said: never discourage anyone who continually makes progress, no matter how slow. It's also said that Rome wasn't built in a day. Likewise, the Great Wall of China wasn't built all at once. I have been brought up in the Oriental culture, where strong family values of honest, clean, and healthy living and behaviour are the foundation of society. In fact, in that culture parents are the ultimate authority in keeping those family values. Due to some socialistic ideology, governments have interfered somehow in family life, so I see this bill as an opportunity for parents to claim back some rights to protect their children from modern societal harm.

I support this bill and amendments, and I urge all of you to support it as well. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, hon. Chairman. Regarding this Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, issues for us in St. Albert are simply that we don't have any intervention service, and we don't have any treatment service under the umbrella of the FCSS. Many parents have talked to me regarding our AADAC service in St. Albert, and we're pleading with the powers that be to evaluate the service because we don't think it's doing the job.

There are several points in here that I'll quickly touch on. It's the civil liberties aspect. What I've come to terms with is that for the well-being of the family and other community members, I think it's important that we support the aspects of the bill that talk about incarceration. Treatment and intervention is a focus that I think is very important. I believe in the wraparound service aspect of this particular underlying philosophy of treatment, whereby we focus not only on the medical but the spiritual, physical, social, and mental health aspects of the person. A must to address in this whole question are the emotional and behaviour patterns. They are the things we must look at, and the key here is therapeutic cognitive behaviour interventions.

Another aspect that I'd like to address is the question of lodging. I think it's important that down the road we look at halfway houses or a facility in a rural setting for the treatment of these kinds of people. It's key that we have trained staff with follow-up resources after the particular persons leave treatment.

Other aspects that I think have to be encouraged are the supports

for the pharmaceutical people in St. Albert, for example, that are supporting the behind-the-counter strategy for people not being able to get at the ingredients. I would hope that down the line we do a little more encouragement in terms of the research and start now into this very serious problem and continue it.

I also haven't had a chance to look at the Minister of Education's budget thoroughly, but I hope that the DARE program in the elementary school is reinforced, that it's looked at in terms of the problem of crystal meth, and that we start in the exercise of prevention.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll sit down. I want to just compliment the members on both sides of the House, women power, and also suggest that I support the amendments as they are.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: Thank you. Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very proud of the work of the MLA for Red Deer-North and also very proud to stand in this Chamber today and congratulate the members opposite for not having withheld the ability of this bill to come forward today. So I commend all of you.

I believe that all members of this House agree that the protection of children is one of the paramount duties that we have as legislators. I also believe that the members on both sides of this Chamber agree that the protection of children is the intent of the Member for Red Deer-North in bringing forward the bill and the amendments that I'm speaking to.

4:40

I fully support the premise on which this bill is based, the intent, and the desired outcome. The amendments which have been brought forward today preserve the intent of the member: to protect children. At the same time, these amendments ensure that the rights and freedoms of minors who are apprehended under PCHAD are fully protected.

Everybody knows how difficult it is today to parent because parents don't know where their rights begin and where they end anymore. They don't know what can happen to them if they simply try to bring some discipline into the lives of their children. So it's a very complicated world today to bring children up in.

I really didn't realize until some years ago that it was against the law to take your child for treatment with respect to this kind of a situation, but I'm aware of a family in Vancouver who had a 15-year-old daughter who had been away from home for something like seven or eight months, and this was the third or fourth time that she had not come back home. The parents were aware that this teenager had a rap sheet the length of your arm in terms of criminal charges and in terms of prostitution and everything else. They were aware that she had several times tried to take her own life. The last time they had seen their daughter was some three and a half months before they got a call one day that she had been seen at a particular location. They rushed over there, picked her up, and they came to Alberta, the entire family: mother, father, siblings, and this 15-year-old child. They didn't stop until they got to Alberta, and in fact they moved the entire family to Calgary because there's an adolescent addiction centre there with a fantastic record.

I'm pleased to say that today this young lady is an honours student, that has either graduated or is about to graduate with honours. But the interesting part was that had they been stopped on their way from Vancouver to Calgary, they could have been charged for kidnapping their own daughter.

So what this is doing is it's giving parents tools. As limited as

perhaps some people feel the tools are with respect to this, it's giving parents tools. You know, during the five days, once the assessment is done – and it says in here that they'll be assessed by AADAC and that then they can be in detox for a maximum of five days. The bottom line is that if they are determined to be type 3 or type 4 addicts, at least there's an opportunity to find a treatment centre that will take them on and work with them with this horrible illness.

We have to remember that addictions are illnesses, and addiction to drugs is probably one of the worst addictions or one of the most difficult to treat. I'm aware that in the treatment centre that I'm so proud to have in my constituency, the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre, it takes on average 11 to 14 months of very intensive treatment, where the children go and live in the homes of parents who have been through it with their own kids, where peer counsellors exist and work with the addicted because you can't snow the snowman. You know, they've been there, done that. They know all the lies. They know all of the shame. They know all of the things that happen to these kids.

So this is giving parents some hope that at least during that period of time that their children are under a court order, they can find a place that can in fact deal with the addiction, not just in the child who's addicted but also in the destruction that it creates in the entire family and siblings. I have been to graduations at the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre where three – three – kids from the same family graduated at the same time, but a fourth child was out there using.

So some people have some very, very difficult things to go through with the ravages of drugs. I'm just so proud to support the hon. member and the amendments that she's brought in while we can take some time to maybe deal with this problem correctly. I know that I agree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I think that we do need to look at dealing with this problem and having more facilities and beds available and programs that really work.

So I would urge everyone to support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, please.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm excited to be able to stand up and debate this amendment as well. I give my thanks to the persistence of the hon. Member for Red Deer-North in getting this to here. I think that, perhaps, the government is more to be thanked than the opposition in getting this here. I am truly thankful for being able to be part of this exceptional occasion, I guess, today being a first in history according to our Speaker.

I'm sad that we have to bring forth an amendment that's watered-down. The point that, I guess, I'd like to talk on this amendment is that, perhaps, we need to be innovative again, as we were to get this bill here, and to look at the second step on what we can do. If, in fact, this is the first step and we can pass this amendment, which I will agree and I'm excited about, we need to be looking at the second step. I would urge this government and challenge them to write a stronger bill and to bring it to this Assembly, that we could pass a second one, that we could – this is worth the fight – fight a constitutional challenge on the original bill. But let's pass this one first, and then let's look at taking the next big step, sticking our neck out and fighting for the youth of our province, not saying: this is a step and good enough. We want to take the next one.

I believe this is a situation of priorities, and as the hon. member just mentioned, we need to protect those who can't protect themselves. This is just such a predatory environment once they get into that lifestyle that we have to be able to reach out and to protect them.

The challenge that I'd also like to put forward is the priorities. Just as this has come forward, I think there are many other things that we could do for our youth in protecting them if, in fact, we agree to continue working together to do that.

But I am very concerned about the lack of facilities. I can't help but ask myself – today we've gone over it several times – how many facilities could a \$43 million transfer from horse racing to treatment centres accomplish? And I think that we have the funds that we can do it. I would challenge the government to put that in their priorities and where we spend the money.

But I'm pleased to be able to speak to this amendment and am looking forward to passing it here in the House. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before beginning comments, let me just congratulate you for the wonderful job that you're doing as chairman of the committee right now.

Madam Chairman, I'd like to speak on the amendment to this bill and make some comments about the bill itself, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, 2005. I want to first recognize and acknowledge the excellent work done by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North. I think this bill is due, a long time coming, and I'm glad that she has forced it upon us and taken the approach that she has to make it a unique process to have it passed in this session. I also want to thank and acknowledge all members of this Assembly from all sides of the House for their co-operation in moving this bill so fast through committee today.

4:50

I will support the bill. I support its purposes and objectives. But I want to raise a few concerns, and I think these are important issues that we need to really try and understand. First, why are our children finding themselves in this situation? We need to ask that question, and we need to find other amendments within our legislation to try and address solutions for this problem. First and foremost, what are we doing to those people, those perpetrators, those abusers who are bringing these drugs to our children? Why is our justice system not tough on them? I think these people should be – there should be no leniency whatsoever. If you are caught getting drugs to our children, selling it to them, put them behind bars. If it is for 30 years, so be it. Let's be tough.

My second question is: what has happened to our society today? Why are our children – and the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont just talked about a family with four children in the same situation. What's happening to our society? What's happening to the society that would oversee its neighbours? We were a small village at one time. We've become a big cosmopolitan centre. But I think we need to make sure that our schools, our other resources that our children go to have the monitoring abilities.

A third point I want to make is that as a former child welfare worker I have heard this again and again, that we are not funding the current resources for child welfare needs. I hope we have the courage to find the resources within our budget so that these issues are dealt with first and foremost.

The act also is proposing that the parents will apply before the court to obtain an apprehension and confinement order. So I raise this issue: do we have the capacity in our judicial system to have these parents go before a judge? Do we have the capacity to help the parents so they can prepare appropriate court paperwork and apply before a judge? Do we have enough court workers or child welfare workers who have experience to help these parents put the application in a correct format? So I think there is a lot of thinking that

needs to go through with the various departments to make sure that adequate resources are provided to our court system, our judicial system, and our families.

But, most importantly, I don't think we have enough services in this province to address the needs of such children. I hope that that becomes priority 1. As soon as we pass this bill today, we make sure that services and resources in this province are made available so that our children, the children of this province who find themselves in this situation, and parents who want to take responsibility and apply to the courts are able to go before the judge, get an apprehension order, get a confinement order, and have the child in resources on the very same day.

Finally, Madam Chairman and hon. members, I just want to make this statement. We as a society will be judged by how we respond to the challenges faced by our children. I hope we do not fail them.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The clauses of Bill 202 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Now I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 202.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 202. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Would all hon. members who agree in the report provided by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere please say aye?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I would ask permission from the House to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have in the members' gallery people who are very important in respect of this bill.

We have Audrey Bjornstad, who is the chairperson of PEP, Parents Empowering Parents; Marilyn Benay, who is the co-founder of PEP; and Gary Bjornstad, also a member of PEP. They worked very hard and dedicated many hours to get to this point. We also have Peter Pilarski, the researcher who put in many hours, and Susan Gosselin, my loyal and faithful assistant. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warmest welcome from this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, thanks again for recognizing me. To all sides of the House I thank you for your support today. I seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly to proceed to third reading of Bill 202.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **5:00 Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

Bill 202

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a true honour for me to stand here today for the third reading of Bill 202. Allowing for this process to go through the way it has speaks volumes about the compassion and social responsibility of all members in this House.

On November 16, 2000, members of this Assembly came together and took a bill through all the stages necessary, and we passed that bill in one day. That bill was the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act. That day I witnessed all parties coming together in support of a very important cause. That day showed me what could be done when we agree to work together.

Today is another example of such a special day. On behalf of all the parents who have been waiting desperately for this day I say: thank you. The Holocaust was one of the greatest evils ever forced on mankind. Perhaps with the help of Bill 202 we can heal another kind of evil.

I thank the members for Calgary-Shaw and Banff-Cochrane for helping me to get started. Without their initial help this bill would not be here today. I thank the members of my caucus for supporting me and the various members who provided useful advice. I also thank the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, and the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for doing their part in helping me to push this issue forward, and I thank the hon. members from the two other parties for helping me to get unanimous support to introduce the amendments and for allowing me to move third reading. To see everyone come together as they have is truly remarkable. I'm certain that parents and ex-addicts in the future will be ever grateful for this amazing work.

I must also thank the hundreds of parents who have phoned me, e-mailed me, and approached me about this bill, and I'm sure other members have had the same. Their words of encouragement have gotten me through the difficulties I have faced, and their stories have caused me to fight harder for their cause. This bill is for these parents, so they can help their children.

Finally, I would like to say a special thanks to David Gillies. David, you have been a wise and caring friend throughout this process, and your advice and assistance are greatly appreciated.

Today we have come together to give parents a tool for helping their drug-addicted children to overcome their dangerous habits. We

have given parents a way to take their children into detoxification and to help them to get their lives back. We have upheld the right of children in Alberta to be protected from dangerous drugs. Mr. Speaker, the members of this Assembly have come together today to do something out of the ordinary. Alberta's parents thank you all for this effort.

The only thing left to do today is to vote in favour of passing Bill 202 in third reading, and I encourage all members to do so. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an exciting day for us. The challenge of crystal meth is giving us an opportunity to think, act, and speak as a single body. I believe it is important to recognize that on matters of common concern we can come together and vote as a body, not in lockstep with party discipline or in keeping with preheld positions but as a conscious body of members acting in the common good.

In matters of this importance it matters not who introduced a motion or a bill, who spoke first and last, the constituency they come from, or the party to which they belong. What matters is that we are not only representatives or members of the Assembly but fellow human beings addressing an issue that touches our common humanity. If the disease of crystal meth addiction can propel us into a commitment to physical, emotional, and spiritual health, then, Mr. Speaker, we may look back on our deliberations and say: it was good work we did together here.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to join the debate on Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, in third reading. I'm going to be very, very brief this afternoon, but I guess I just want to say that I'm very heartened by this day, and I'm very heartened by this bill as I agree with my colleague from Red Deer-North and other members that we do need legislation that gives parents the tool to help their children break the dangerous cycle of drug and substance abuse before it's too late.

Mr. Speaker, in my community in Drayton Valley and the surrounding area, unfortunately, this has become a severe, severe problem, an epidemic. I can't tell you how many times I've had parents come to me asking for some form of a tool or some form of a way that we can help, that we can intervene.

I really appreciated it when the Member for Red Deer-North talked about the word "intervention" because that's what this is. When you have a friend that is in a crisis or that is in need, one of the best things you can do for them is to do an intervention. This is certainly what we will be able to do now if we can pass third reading of this bill today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm just very, very supportive and very thankful for what I've seen happen here this afternoon. I think it's a wonderful statement of co-operation and opportunity and democracy. I would just like to lend my support to the hon. Member for Red Deer-North and echo her in all of her thank yous around the House and urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am mindful of the time and what we're trying to accomplish here this afternoon, so I'll try to keep my comments brief. I've not had a chance to speak on Bill 202 yet, and I really do have a few things that I had wanted to say.

First of all, I'd like to add my voice to those many today who have congratulated in particular the two House leaders, I believe, who worked late into the night last night – I know because I witnessed it myself – to sort of steer this process that we witnessed today, make sure that it happened, and the third-party House leader and the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, who also were consulted. All indicated they would provide the unanimous support and make sure their whips provided the unanimous support to allow what you, Mr. Speaker, referred to as an historic occasion in this Assembly. I'm very proud and honoured to have the opportunity to be a part of that.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this bill in third reading because, quite frankly, I really couldn't support the amendment that we were dealing with in Committee of the Whole, yet I understood, as did the Member for Red Deer-North, that that was most likely the way that things had to be dealt with today. Once again, something is better than nothing, and I certainly appreciate that. My comments, then, really are more suited for third reading.

I am a parent of two teenaged children. I have a 17-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter, and touch wood, we've never experienced anything like this. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll be frank with you. I live in fear every day that my kids, in a moment of foolishness or a moment of submitting to peer pressure, might test just one time crystal meth. Just one time.

We've all seen pictures. We've heard the stories. Several of my colleagues visited Bosco Homes last week, and we saw first-hand some of the ravages that this drug, amongst many, can do. In light of that, I just think there is a duty upon us to do absolutely everything we can to help those parents who find themselves facing this challenge, a duty upon us to do everything we can to give them every available tool.

In preparation for debating this bill once I knew it was coming forward, I took time to arrange for a visit with Doug Green, who is a school resource officer at Harry Ainlay high school in my constituency. He's been in the news a little bit, Mr. Speaker, because he has a black lab that he visits various schools around the Edmonton area with, and there were some of the same concerns expressed about him visiting the schools with his dog that have been expressed about Bill 202 in terms of privacy and so forth. But it was a very enlightening morning that I spent with Mr. Green.

He showed me some crystal meth. Things have changed a lot since I was in grade 5 or 6, and a police officer came into the school with a bag of dope. Mr. Green pulled out a very tiny, about a half inch by half inch, plastic bag, and there were two little crumbs in that bag. Those crumbs were crystal meth. They were so small you could hardly see them. He told me that that was a day's supply.

One of my colleagues earlier asked: why have we let things get this way? Well, one of the reasons is that this drug is so dangerous because it's so small. It's cheap. That supply that he showed me is less than \$10 for a day. It can be hidden anywhere. It provides a high that lasts up to 10 hours as opposed to a joint, which may give you 15 or 20 minutes or half an hour of pleasure, as it were. Those are some of the reasons why this drug is so devastating. Not only is it so terribly addictive, but it's cheap, it's easy to conceal, and it provides this long high.

5:10

We've met with some of the members in the gallery, and we were told that one of the problems is that the kids perform better for the

first little while when they're on this drug, so it makes it so hard to detect. By the time they get to the point that we're talking about today, when the provisions of this legislation might actually kick in, quite frankly, it's almost too late. This is why I say that at that point you have to give the parents absolutely whatever tool might be available.

I would recommend to anybody who hasn't seen one of Mr. Green's presentations to take one in. He does them weekly throughout the city and the surrounding area. He has told me that they're open to the public, and he would be happy to have members of this Assembly join him for one of those. I would be happy to facilitate that if anybody is interested. I'm going myself next Friday to a presentation that he's doing in north Edmonton.

This program that he is doing with his dog is costing a grand total of \$5,000 per year, a pittance – a pittance – compared to the numbers that we talk about daily in this Assembly. He told me that one man, whether it be him or somebody else, could tour all of northern Alberta. So presumably two officers for the entire province could tour every school and educate students in every school in a year on a rotating basis. I don't know what that would cost, maybe \$60,000 or \$70,000 in wages and a few thousand dollars for the dog and some money for travelling and whatnot.

We're talking probably, in my mind, less than a quarter of a million dollars to have a full-time person doing what he's doing part time aside from his other duties as a school resource officer at Harry Ainley high school. It just seems like such a small investment because as much as we're concerned about the kids that are hooked on meth and are at the stage where they're going to benefit from this legislation, several have mentioned that not only do we have to talk about treatment, but we really, truly have to look at why they're getting to this place in the first place. Anything we can do to make sure that that doesn't happen is so valuable.

Mr. Speaker, I am a member of a rather select club. There may be others in this Assembly that I'm not aware of. I've lost a daughter. Thank God it wasn't to crystal meth, but I've lost a child. When you've lost a child, if anybody in this room has, they will know that everything is completely out of order when that happens. It's not the way God intended it to be. It's not something that you ever completely recover from.

One of the things that I did – this was 11 years ago – to deal with it was that I became involved with a group called Compassionate Friends, which is a bereavement society for parents who have lost children. For the first couple of years I was there because I had to be, and after that, I was there because I could help other parents who had lost a child. One of the most interesting things that I learned out of that was that there was at times almost a division in the room, almost a wall between two groups of parents. The one group of parents would have been parents like myself who had lost a child through an accident. All of a sudden, you know, your life changes in a flash. On the other side of that wall were the parents who lost their children through a disease or an addiction, and they had watched their child die in front of them.

It was always interesting because in our case we never had an opportunity to say goodbye to Nicole. We never had an opportunity to make one last trip to Disneyland or whatever. But in the case of the parents who watched their child die in front of them, they had to watch the suffering. They had to suffer themselves. They had to experience this daily over, sometimes, a prolonged period of time. I can't imagine what that would be like. I know in my heart the unbelievable despair that comes with losing a child, but thank God I never had to watch my child suffer. I never had to watch my child die in front of me.

It's for that reason that this bill, as watered down as it may be, gets my complete support. If I'm that parent, and I'm watching my child die in front of me, at that point, quite frankly, I don't care about personal freedom or liberty. I don't care about laws. I would do as the Member for Calgary-Egmont suggested and kidnap my own child. At that point I would do anything, and what we're doing here is making sure that these parents don't have to be criminals when they'd do anything to save their child.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that pretty much covers what I meant to say. I could go on a long time. I think perhaps members sense that, but I wouldn't want to do anything that might interfere with making sure that we get the business done that has to be done before 5:30.

Thank you.

Ms DeLong: I just wanted to express a quick thank you from all the parents in Calgary-Bow to the member for bringing this forward. It not only starts to solve the problem for those parents who really need it, but it also gives a backup to the parents who are raising children, to know that they do have more tools to be able to help bring up their children. I just wanted to say thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for the interest of members of the House – there's been a couple of mentions of Bosco Homes here – the Bosco program is called the adolescent drug and alcohol prevention and treatment centre, the ADAPT centre. It's for children and adolescents age 12 to 18 who are facing difficulties with a variety of drugs, including crystal meth. The program is available at a rural lakeside setting in Strathcona county, which is 20 kilometres from Edmonton. There is an in-patient program, which can last from six to nine months, and there is an out-patient day program offered in conjunction with the Bosco Homes schools.

The ADAPT program is based on the latest research in the field of addictions treatment, and the program is in place right now and can easily be used as a secure facility. So if any members run across cases where your constituents are looking for some sort of option, I encourage them to consider Bosco Homes. You can get in touch with them through their telephone number, which is 440-0708.

Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I'd be remiss as the Minister of Children's Services if I didn't add a few words on this particular piece of legislation and the hard work that has gone in by the Member for Red Deer-North. We held a meth conference about a year ago, and she was there every day from start to finish, listening to what had to be said and what people had to say at our particular meth conference.

I think it's a wonderful day in this province to see something like this go through, Mr. Speaker, and I have to stand up here and say, "You go, girl, and good for you."

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I guess I want to add to the thank you to our hon. Member for Red Deer-North and also state that in West Yellowhead it's quite a problem too. That's why I've got another bill coming up after. We did have a crystal meth workshop in Edson in September, and we had the Solicitor General there as well as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who is the chair of AADAC. We had over 150 people there, and we turned lots

away. So this problem isn't centralized within one area.

So I'm just proud of the member for doing what she's doing because that puts another tool in the tool chest so that we can look after our future.

At this time, I'd call the question.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd be remiss not to add my views in terms of Bill 202. To the Member for Red Deer-North I just wanted to indicate that I'm very pleased to see this bill go through.

From an aboriginal perspective I certainly have seen many of the aboriginal youth and parents who have had to deal with the issue of crystal meth, and as we have more aboriginal people move into the urban centres, it certainly highlights the need for some tools for the parents to be able to deal with it. I'd like to commend her for all the work that she's done and the care that she exhibits in dealing with children, most particularly in dealing with the issues that affect the children and families of today.

I would like to say congratulations to her.

5:20

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to conclude the debate.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before I conclude the debate, I would like to thank every member in this House for

proving through their actions that children are the number one priority in this province of Alberta.

I'd call the question.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a third time] [applause]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very, very historic day, indeed. I just want to briefly add my comments in relation to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, and to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for the courage to see this through and all members on all sides of the House for supporting it so unanimously. I've been in this House for 12 or 13 years, Mr. Speaker, and I've yet to see such tremendous co-operation. Wouldst it were so on so many other important pieces of legislation we do in this House, we could change the image of democracy as we know it in this entire country.

On that note and on the historic note of a historic budget as we begin the second century of our province financially and given the hour, I would move that we now call it 5:30 and adjourn until Monday, April 18, at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Before calling the question, let me just tell you how proud I am of all of you for being true parliamentarians.

[Motion carried; at 5:22 p.m. the Assembly adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 18, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/18

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. At the beginning of this week we ask for renewed strength in the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of the Legislature. We ask for the protection of this Assembly and also the province we are elected to serve. Amen.

Hon. members and to our guests here as well, today we'll be led in the singing of our national anthem by one of our tour guides, Inge vanDelft. I would ask all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Thank you, Inge.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Loughheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members assembled students from Strathcona Christian Academy, accompanied by their principal, Mr. Jim Seutter, and their teacher, Mr. Doug Zook. I'd ask that the students from SCA please stand and be acknowledged in the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you 26 students and four adults from your constituency, sir. They're led by their teacher, Anita Flese, and Mr. Michael Wiese, Mrs. Sharon Gilchrist, and Mrs. Marion Charchun. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, and may I also take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member on his new wedded bliss status as of last Saturday.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a distinct pleasure I have today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly the most beautiful woman in the world. She's kind, sensitive, intelligent, funny, warm, endearing, and I could go on forever, but either way she is the light of my life, and any person would be so lucky to know her. I'm the luckiest man in the world because this weekend she married me. I'd like to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly my wife, Mrs. Sue Griffiths.

Mr. Rogers: I don't know how to follow that, Mr. Speaker. But it is my privilege to introduce to you and through you some of the most exceptional students in this province. I have two groups of students here today. The first group I will introduce is from Covenant Christian school, and they are seated in the public gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher, Ms Colette Hayes, and parent helpers Wim Ruysch, Melanie Samuelson, Linda Van Doesburg, Joanne Gulley, Marianne De Boer, and Michelle Koopmans. I would ask that the students from Covenant Christian school rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the second group is a grade 10 social studies class from Leduc composite high school in the city of Leduc. They are led by their teachers, Mrs. Vanessa Andres and Mr. Stanley Staniszewski. They are also seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Lynda and Ron Jonson. The Jonsons are vocal advocates for improvement in long-term care facilities. Lynda has herself visited over 100 long-term care facilities in Alberta and describes them as plagued by an epidemic of neglect and abuse. I would ask that Lynda and Ron rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a group of 23 very bright and energetic young students from Princeton elementary school in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. They are seated in the public gallery and are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Unger, and their student teacher, who has been with them for the past nine weeks, Miss Joumaa. Also, parent Manfred Grunling has joined them for this visit. Princeton was one of several Edmonton schools considered for closure. However, thankfully they received word that they will get to keep their wonderful school for a while yet. I ask that these students and the staff accompanying them rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, have your guests arrived yet?

Dr. Pannu: One guest, Mr. Speaker, so I'll take the liberty of introducing her and wait for the others.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this House Pamela Miller. Pamela Miller's brother, Aaron Webster, was brutally murdered three years ago in Vancouver's Stanley park apparently for no other reason than the fact that he was gay. His death serves as a reminder that we live in a society in which individuals can still be hostile and violent towards gays and lesbians and other minority groups. At this time I'd ask that Pamela please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Electricity Marketing

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hundreds of hours of transcripts involving Enron and the manipulation of electricity markets are being made public through a trial in the U.S. The *Calgary Herald* reprinted some of those this weekend, but one they did not print is the transcript tabled earlier in this Assembly of a conversation between an Enron employee and an employee at TransAlta concerning ideas for manipulating markets. To the Minister of Energy: has this government or its agencies ever investigated the possible role of TransAlta in manipulating Alberta's electricity prices?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, those transcripts in particular that refer to TransAlta have been looked at. Those actually refer to transactions that occurred in the state of Washington, not in Alberta in particular. Also, actually, when they use words like "marriage of convenience," it refers to control areas. It actually talks about that any jurisdiction, companies included, can create control areas, and those have a very stringent regulatory requirement around them and a very high standard. So they talk about should they set up a control area, which is a very valid part of any discussion.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the transcript and other evidence, will the minister categorically deny that TransAlta conspired with Enron to price gouge Alberta consumers?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that those transcripts have been looked at. They didn't apply to Alberta in particular, and in that respect the market surveillance administrator continues to be a watchdog and does an excellent job in protecting Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister tell this House if the Alberta electric system operator investigation into potential market manipulation, reported in September 2003, was referring to TransAlta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the specifics in front of me with respect to 2003. I'd be happy to advise in due course.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, for years companies like Enron took advantage of electricity deregulation to manipulate power prices. An Enron senior executive declared in 1999 about Alberta that, quote, it's become clear how easy this is to do, end quote, referring to price manipulation. Despite the claims of this government, deep concern remains that Alberta's electricity market is still being manipulated. Again to the Minister of Energy: will the minister tell us clearly what monetary or legal penalties exist, if any, for companies that unethically exploit market loopholes to their advantage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, I've got to say that all of the things talked about are just allegations or statements. The facts have not proven out. There have been investigations in the past, but even with that, the market surveillance administrator has

referred some material to the federal Competition Bureau. They take these things very seriously, and they will ensure and act very judiciously on behalf of Albertans to protect them.

I would like to expand though. In 2003 there was legislation passed that gives substantial improvements, and it was done to ensure that there was a broad standard of conduct that all would have to abide by and that there would be very severe penalties for those that would breach those.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that current investigations, including the one by the federal Competition Bureau, won't tell Albertans how much money they are owed by Enron, why won't this government pursue Enron to recover undue profits, that should be returned to Alberta consumers?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the legislative hedges in place back at that time, 1999 in particular, that are referred to did just that. They protected Albertans, that they would not have been harmed by any profiteering or manipulation of the marketplace. Because the power at that stage was regulated – before the transition in selling the power purchase arrangements – there was a cap on the amount that any company could get on an upside, and any additional monies would go back into the power pool. Therefore, the consumers were protected at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, then, again to the same minister: is it, in fact, this government's and this minister's position that there was no price manipulation for Alberta's electricity?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I will state that Albertans at the time of 1999, in particular, were not harmed in any material aspect at all with respect to the case that he cites.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Budget Expenditures

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government appears to be playing a shell game. It has traded its fiscal debt for a down-loaded infrastructure deficit. While \$9.2 billion is a large sum of money, it will not restore the province in 2005 to its pre-cut 1994 state. My first question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Will the minister please explain why Calgary's postsecondary infrastructure repair and expansion needs, including the University of Calgary in Calgary-Varsity, Mount Royal in Calgary-Currie, and SAIT and the Alberta College of Art in Calgary-Mountain View were basically ignored in this year's budget announcement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member, having lived in the community and representing a community that has an institution in it, will know well that, for example, Mount Royal has engaged in a considerable amount of building over the last number of years and continues to do so, that SAIT has just finished an aerospace centre at the airport in Calgary, that the Alberta College of Art and Design has plans with respect to how they might proceed with the downtown urban campus site in conjunction with

the other postsecondaries in Calgary – and that's in the early planning phases – that the University of Calgary is looking toward building a digital library in the context of e-Calgary and the Calgary campus and is working with us in development of the Lois Hole digital library for across Alberta. There are many, many good things that have happened in, are happening in, and will happen in Calgary, and we'll continue to work with them on the planning process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: while Calgarians were pleased to finally hear the promised government commitment to publicly fund the southeast replacement hospital, when will this government provide the entire expansion funding for the needed beds that were lost due to the closure of half of Calgary's hospitals in the 1990s?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the hon. member totally ignores the fact that there has been a considerable amount of good work happening in Calgary and across this province in terms of building the health system, and the announcement with respect to the south Calgary hospital ought to be the most exciting thing that he's heard in a long time. The commitment to building the south Calgary hospital is not only about putting beds in place, but it's about new ways of delivering health and finding ways to make sure that Albertans stay healthy. So the hon. member ought to stay tuned and stay on tune with respect to the good things that are happening in the health system, including the international symposium that's going to happen in Calgary at the beginning of May.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Community Development: given the centennial spotlight on arts and culture, the heart and soul of Alberta, why were these two key societal pillars ignored in this year's budget?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, I'll just take that question under advisement for the hon. Minister of Community Development. Thank you.

Long-term Care Facilities

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the appalling conditions in long-term care facilities are Alberta's dirty little secret. Accommodation and related charges to long-term care residents keep going up, but living conditions remain deplorable. Staffing levels are woefully inadequate, facilities are overcrowded, and inspections are few and far between. My questions are for the Premier. Why, after this government has been in power for 34 years and posted billions of dollars in surpluses over the past 10 years, are the province's most vulnerable seniors forced to live in such appalling conditions?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the preamble is to say the least rude, insensitive, offensive, and totally false. The hon. member should apologize to all the good people who work in long-term care centres.

Mr. Speaker, certainly, it is a fact that the Friends of Medicare, the friends of the NDs and the Liberals, held a news conference this morning, sponsored by the New Democrats, as I understand it, to talk about problems with Alberta's long-term care system. Totally unbiased, of course. We recognized some time ago that the demands

on Alberta's long-term care system are going to grow. The reality is that we have an aging population. Improving long-term care is a priority for this government, and I will have the hon. minister of . . .

Some Hon. Members: Time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, why does the government keep ignoring the petitions and pleas of family members when they tell this government that there are simply too few qualified caregivers to look after their loved ones in these facilities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, it was in the budget, but as I said previously, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we said in the Assembly last week, the responsibility for long-term care is a shared responsibility. It's a joint responsibility between the Minister of Health and Wellness and my ministry. The area that I look after in long-term care is the accommodation area, which, of course, is meals, laundry, and that type of service, housekeeping services, utilities.

The question was in regard to caregivers and staffing ratios, and what I would say to the hon. member is that I will take that under advisement for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: notwithstanding the commitment we just heard from the minister, which is far too late, why has the government not already established minimum staffing and quality care standards for the vulnerable elderly and disabled citizens who live in long-term care facilities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we have. We have. We have been making tremendous progress. For example, we directed regional health authorities to raise the average hours of care each resident receives from three hours to 3.4 hours over the next three years. This means more hands-on care every day for residents. If the hon. member was listening to the budget debate, he would have heard that targeted funds will be provided to increase nursing care in long-term care facilities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Unbudgeted Surplus

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation made reference to another possible 35 new or upgraded school projects if there was a surplus revenue. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. How does the idea of further capital projects relate to potential surpluses?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the budget speech of Wednesday last, we do have options for unbudgeted surplus, options that would be for balance sheet improvements. Of course, some of those could be for capital, for the overall capital plan. It could be to improve the heritage fund. It could be to endowments such as the advanced education fund, the scholarship fund, or the science and engineering fund. So those unbudgeted surpluses will be dealt with in that way.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Ady: Yes. My first supplemental is also to the Minister of Finance. When will you know if there is additional money that could be allocated to these projects?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, it will continue to be our practice to do a first-quarter review, a second-quarter review, and a third-quarter review. If during that process there are pressures that need to be addressed in any of the areas I mentioned and if it seems prudent to expend any dollars in those areas, those decisions will be made through that process.

Mrs. Ady: My final supplemental is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Since 35 projects have been discussed, have you already decided what projects would take the highest priority? Which communities would get what if money was available?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Finance said the key word, which was “if” there is a surplus available. We’ve had each and every school board in the province give us their capital requests, give us their capital desires, and certainly we will look at that. But there have been no decisions made. Again – again – the key word is “if” there is a surplus and “if” we decide to put it toward capital infrastructure.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Student Finance System

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Students, parents, and indeed all Albertans are waiting anxiously for the forthcoming postsecondary affordability review, yet the minister’s recent defence in question period of the student finance system in Alberta, one that he described at the time as the “finest . . . in this country” and even “great,” leaves me wondering whether this affordability review is more about PR than seizing the opportunity for an honest look at the problems and the full range of possibilities. My question to the Minister of Advanced Education: given the vigorous defence of the current system how can Alberta students and parents be confident that the minister is willing to look at real reform rather than simply tinkering at the margins of the system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s because I’ve had the opportunity to talk with students and with members of the institutions and the stakeholders in the community. We’ve had open, frank, collaborative discussions about what’s needed and about how we go forward.

It’s not difficult to admit that we have the best system available in the country today, but also admit, Mr. Speaker, that there are students who feel that finances are a barrier to their education, and so there may be better ways to deal with it. We can look at other ways to ensure that rural students have access to education even if the costs of education are more than just the tuition fees: the cost of moving to school as well as the cost of going to school. There are many things that we can look at. What we’ve promised, and I think what the student leaders and others in the system are very excited about, is the fact of an open, honest affordability review, looking at all aspects of it and making the changes that are necessary after that review. That’s what we’ve promised to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the government expects to disperse \$105 million in loans this year but only allocates \$35.5 million to the loan remission program, can the minister clarify his recent claim that virtually all the money that’s provided by the provincial student finance from Alberta coffers gets remitted?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of details and questions on the budget I’d remind the hon. member that tomorrow in Committee of Supply he’ll have all the opportunity in the world to explore and ask extensive and detailed questions about the budget for Advanced Education, including a lesson, if he wishes, in how the student loan system works and how remission works.

Mr. Taylor: And I will, Mr. Speaker.

To the same minister: will the minister end the confusion among some student finance experts across the country, who tell me they can’t find the evidence, and table the documentation to support his claim that Alberta students end up with the lowest debt of any students across this land?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the information that I have is that Alberta students benefit and end up with the lowest overall debt, at least government-supported debt, across the country. I will find the information to back that up and have a discussion with the hon. member.

The clear facts are that we have a great student finance system, that students who want to go to school can apply. Yes, we expect them to earn resources themselves. Yes, we expect parental contribution and family contribution. Yes, we expect them to maximize their own investment in their own education. But we’ve also said that finances are not a barrier to a student getting an education, and it is clear that students in this province are in the best position of any students across the country when it comes to student debt.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Education Property Tax

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wednesday’s budget once again increased the education property tax, placing additional pressure on municipalities that are facing significant challenges providing service to their communities. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The budget shows that taxes are going down, but the education property tax requisition is actually increasing. Can the minister shed some light on this anomaly?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is an excellent question because it does tend to get a little bit confusing. The mill rate, in fact, went down but the requisition, the amount that will flow through to the government, went up. It’s not unlike reducing the income tax rate, but you have more taxpayers paying more taxes, and so the total revenue goes up. In this budget the intention was to capture the real growth, the actual new assessment, new buildings that weren’t there the year before, but not to capture the inflation. That’s why the rate went down, but the actual dollars that were collected will go up.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental is to the same minister. What will the impact of this requisition increase be on municipalities and homeowners?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, there really isn't one simple answer to the question because every municipality has a different rate of growth. I can tell the hon. member that in 40 per cent of the municipalities where there has been relatively slow growth, their taxes will in fact go down. The requisition will go down by 5 per cent where they haven't had the growth. The individual taxes will go down.

In the other 60 per cent approximately 43 of the municipalities, because of high growth, will be protected by the maximum 10 per cent cap that's in place. The balance of the municipalities will have an increase of somewhere between zero and 10 per cent on the requisition, which means that there may be some slight increases to the individual homeowners' taxes.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the same minister: how much education funding is coming from the property tax bill?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, and in fact it shows that the trend is moving in the right direction. When we amalgamated and took over the collection of property taxes in 1994, approximately 57 per cent of the total cost of education was being borne by municipal taxation. Through the years, by having a close hold on the increase in assessment to property taxes, that percentage has shrunk down to 34 per cent. So today only 34 per cent of education taxes are borne by property tax payers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Youth Residential Drug Treatment

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because of the growing demand for specialized treatment for adolescents, Alberta needs more youth treatment facilities. The good news is that this government has provided 12 spaces for each region. This means 12 new spaces for the entire city of Calgary and 12 new spaces for the entire capital region. To the Minister of Children's Services: given the magnitude of the problem identified through the Alberta drug strategy, why only 12 beds?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to try and answer that question as it comes under the minister of health. I can tell her that this government is concerned about our adolescents in this province. The private member's bill that the member is discussing was brought up last week and passed unanimously in the House. The minister of health has addressed that issue by providing 12 beds in Edmonton and 12 beds in Calgary. I think what's important is that we've got those beds now. We can assess the children that are going in there, try and figure out the needs, and if we need more beds, I'm sure the minister will address that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: given that

AADAC doesn't have the infrastructure or staff to run residential treatment, will AADAC receive the only new funding as compared to NGOs in the province?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's a difficult question for me to answer because it comes under the purview of the minister of health, but I will say that she is dedicated to the matter of dealing with children who are drug addicted, and I'm quite positive that AADAC, with all of the staff that they have and all the knowledge that they have contained within the department, will do whatever they can to address the needs of the children.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the existing not-for-profit facilities that provide drug treatment in Alberta have empty spaces, is the minister going to commit the funding to make these spaces available to our youth?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I really am having trouble following that particular question, whether she's talking about the treatment facilities under the minister of health under AADAC dealing with drug addictions or if she's talking about other facilities that are outside of that purview. I'd be more than pleased to sit down with her, like I have in the past, and discuss her concerns.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Bow and Elbow River Watersheds

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Environment. After the Walkerton inquiry, Ontario is moving forward with legislation and regulations to implement some of the recommendations of that inquiry, and those recommendations identify the protection of source waters as the first step in a multibarrier approach to protecting water quality. Ontario is now implementing source water protection plans on a watershed-by-watershed basis. Can the minister advise, given the fact that the Bow and Elbow rivers in the Calgary area are important sources of drinking water, what sources of potential contamination or risks have been identified in those watersheds?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say, as we've referred to in this House before, that this invaluable resource, which we refer to as blue gold – we will treat it and continue to treat it like the precious resource that it is.

I would like to say, though, that from the Bow River Water Quality Task Force, that studied the point that the hon. member has made, there are recommendations, and in terms of dealing with that, we are looking at contamination and what impact it will have on our quality of water. I want to say that the council that he makes reference to is working very closely as a stakeholder with the Ministry of Environment.

Dr. Brown: Will the minister advise whether his department has identified any specific risks in the Bow and Elbow watersheds with respect particularly to herbicides, pesticides, and any agricultural or industrial chemicals?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member again asks a very important point, and we're examining that. We're doing a data collection relative to the exact point that the member is talking about

because we want to ensure that at the end of the day the conservation of our water resources, one that we all as Albertans use preciously, something that I think we can all do a better job at. But even more so, we want to ensure that it continues to be considered the number one quality that we enjoy in this province, unlike, as you know, some other provinces that are experiencing extreme difficulty. I'm very proud, I want to say, of the resource that we have in this province based on the good people that are making that kind of positive effort.

Dr. Brown: Will the minister advise if there are any proactive steps being contemplated with respect to ensuring that there is an assessment on a continuing basis of possible risks from such things as herbicides, pesticides, and other risks to the aquifers in the Bow River basin?

Mr. Boutillier: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, without any fear of contradiction, we are proceeding exactly on that line. We will continue to do an analysis relative to what is today and what is in the future. As I said in this House before, we inherit the land and the water not from our ancestors but literally borrow it from our children. We want to ensure that that water, quality water, is left for our children in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Youth Residential Drug Treatment

(continued)

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the government's response to the MLA corrections review, the province decided to close correctional operations. Young offender units in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer are now sitting empty and collecting dust. It seems obvious that these spaces could be used for treatment centres for youths addicted to alcohol and drugs. My question is to the Solicitor General. Given that the treatment centres appear to be in Calgary and Edmonton, why has this government not considered using these existing rural facilities as treatment centres?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, with Bill 202 moving through the Assembly on Thursday last, that is one of the options that we are going to be looking at, to look at detoxification facilities for that five-day period, and we're going to be examining all types of alternatives throughout government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. You saved approximately \$3 million annually by closing them, and I'm thinking that it isn't a small price to pay for utilizing these facilities to help our children fight addictions. Is that right?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, the new Youth Criminal Justice Act, which came in, emphasizes noncustodial sentences to our youth, and this is why the review that was done two years ago was very important. It provided as well the ability to look at the young offender centres and the fact that about only a 50 per cent population is required in them right now as per the new justice act. So that is one of the reasons why we're going to be looking at the availability as well as the opportunity to assist with Bill 202.

Ms Pastoor: Given the importance of fighting the growing problem of crystal meth in Alberta, will you not commit to using these empty facilities to increase the number of beds available for detoxification and treatment?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that crystal meth is a very, very serious problem in Alberta and a very serious and addictive drug that our youth are being involved in right now. There are a number of strategies regarding our ability to combat organized crime as well as the ability to have centres that will be able to assist those kids in detoxification as well as, in fact, the mental health wellness aspect of it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Policing Resources

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last week a 13-year-old girl was brutally murdered, a hard-working Yellow Cab driver, a father of seven, lost his life while at work, and last Saturday another woman's body was discovered near Edmonton. All of these are big-city crimes, yet last week's budget failed to deliver any increase in the per capita policing grants for the major cities of Edmonton and Calgary. My question is to the Solicitor General. Given the long overdue and welcome police funding increases for Alberta's medium-sized communities, how can the government justify failing to provide comparable additional police funding increases for our two major cities?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the hon. member mentioned the fact of the female that was found north of Camrose this past weekend, and I can tell you this, that \$3 million is provided to Project Kare, which is a joint force and integrated model between the RCMP and Edmonton Police Service providing the homicide investigation with regard to the missing women. That is in place right now, and we are continuing to move that way.

There was obviously, Mr. Speaker, a definite need for additional funds to rural Alberta, to those smaller communities between 5,000 and 20,000, and those needs have to be addressed first. We've met with the mayors of the other cities and let them know what the schedule is for us to look at down the road. As well, we are providing Edmonton and Calgary and our other larger municipal services additional resources that'll be utilized with regard to Alberta's response to organized crime.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since these murders don't appear to be related to organized crime, how does the freeze in the per capita police grant help address the need of Alberta's major cities for more front-line police officers?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, the investigation that's taking place outside the city of Edmonton by the Project Kare team is utilizing analysts, is utilizing skills and experts from across Canada. They're doing psychological profiling on who the suspect or suspects may be. So there's a lot of work taking place at this very moment. When we talk about policing and policing resources within our major centres, there is a commitment by this government. Calgary received almost \$15 million this year and Edmonton about

\$10 million to provide initiatives toward assisting them regarding their policing costs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that both Edmonton and Calgary are improving community safety by hiring more police officers, why does the Conservative government refuse to at least share the financial burden, their refusal made evident by its failure to increase per capita policing grants for these two cities?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to providing assistance to those municipalities regarding their policing costs. As I mentioned, we are providing Edmonton with approximately \$10 million and Calgary with approximately \$15 million, but in addition we're also going to be providing 20 additional officers for Calgary that the province will be paying for, which will be working with the integrated response to organized crime. As well, Edmonton will receive roughly in the same neighbourhood and the RCMP roughly 20 as well. So we are going to be working in an integrated fashion between these police services, exchanging information, working together to better serve Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Foreign Investments in the Energy Industry

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January the federal government signed an agreement with China to encourage mutually beneficial commercial partnerships between our two nations, and last week saw two announcements of significant Chinese investment in the further development of Alberta's oil sands. My question is to the Minister of Energy. What can he tell this House about this source of investment and the possible implications it might have on Alberta's energy industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member does rightly confirm that there were two announcements last week. One was about a 16 per cent interest in MEG Energy, which is a Calgary-based company that holds some leases in the oil sands, and the other was with respect to Enbridge and PetroChina signing a memorandum of understanding at the exploratory stage of shipping oil from the oil sands through a pipeline to the west. In that respect, we have always made sure that our markets are open to outside investment. I want to reinforce, though, that Albertans do own this resource. It is in our interest to see that they are explored under the policies that we would put in place in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that Enbridge intends to include a Chinese partner in the Gateway pipeline project which would move Alberta oil sands production to the west coast, where it can be shipped to China, is this pipeline in the best interests of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of advan-

tages for us to source additional areas for supply of the oil that will come from Alberta, not just the oil sands but truly from the natural gas and oil that's in abundance in this area. That would source not just the Chinese market but also the southern California market by opening up further markets. That said, though, we will work hard with those companies to ensure that we get all the upgrading opportunities to happen right here in Alberta so that we're not just shipping raw bitumen out through those pipelines. We can look at upgrading, refining, and all the petrochemical-related activities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what specifically is the province doing to ensure that foreign involvement in Alberta's oil sands is not just about mining and removing our own nonrenewable energy resources?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is our policy that we look to all the valued-added opportunities for Albertans to maximize that hydrocarbon chain for Albertans. There are excellent jobs – highly skilled, professional jobs – that are available in the upgrading and the refining and petrochemical industries. In that light we will continue to work very closely with industry to ensure that an integrated approach to developing our resources occurs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mountain Pine Beetle

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development stated, "There is no epidemic of mountain pine beetle at this particular point in time." It appears that burning trees and clear-cutting is a strategy that has been adopted to protect our multibillion dollar industry. My question to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: why is it that we identify the problem, we cut and burn, and we wait for it to surface again? How is this strategy proactive?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget we do have some extra dollars that will go to ongoing programs. The first line, of course, is exactly as I stated in this House last week, that first of all you have to identify where the pine beetle are. Aerial surveys do that, as well as on-the-ground surveys, as well as taking into account the people that are actually in the forest. That's the people in the forest industry that help us identify where the pine beetle are. You take that first line of action, you clear-cut that, and you burn it to make the preventative measure. But in the long term we have committed and will be committing extra dollars to make sure that that pine beetle does not come into our healthy pine forest in this province. So it's an ongoing concern of ours, and it's an ongoing prevention that we go through.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, given that the B.C. government has committed \$150 million on top of the \$1.5 billion on long-term plans, can the minister inform us what financial commitments this government has taken besides the token amount mentioned last week?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, a million dollars is not a token amount. It's a considerable amount. The million dollars is also matched by

the province of British Columbia, and it's part of the ongoing agreement that we have with them. In addition, the federal government has come along to help the people in British Columbia to eradicate the pine beetle because basically there is no way of getting rid of the pine beetle except by identifying pockets of it, other than having the cold weather, minus 30 or 40, which is the only natural way of getting rid of the pine beetle.

So it's an expensive undertaking, and we will continue to make sure that we protect our healthy pine forests by investing the dollars, and this year's budget has a significant amount in it for that prevention.

Mr. Bonko: I used to fight my own fights as a kid. It sounds like this government's allowing someone else to fight their own fight.

The Speaker: That's a question, hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, it is a co-operative effort, and we are participating with both the B.C. government and the federal government to make sure that we protect Alberta's – Alberta's – pine forests. We don't want the same thing to happen in our healthy pine forests that has happened in British Columbia because of the pine beetle, which is an epidemic over there.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone knows that our fast population growth and our continuously booming economy are due to the right government policies. The megaprojects in the north and their supporting services across Alberta require thousands of skilled workers. This has generated a concern over hiring of temporary foreign workers. So my question today is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Minister, do we have shortage of a skilled workforce in Alberta?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a good question. Last month's Alberta unemployment rate was 3.5 per cent, and it is the lowest it's been in 24 years. In fact, this means that we are creating more jobs than we have people to fill those jobs. The hon. member is right. It's the right government policy that's doing it, in fact. So, yes, skill shortages are indeed a reality. But employers, of course, have to go through a rigid policy, an exhaustive policy, to ensure that Albertans are given the first opportunity and Canadians are given the opportunity to access these jobs, and that policy will remain.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. What is your proof against the claim that we don't have skill shortages where temporary foreign workers are being hired and that there are plenty of Canadian-/Albertan tradespeople who are available to do the work?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, that's another good question. An unemployment rate of 3 per cent or less indicates that there is a skill shortage. The unemployment rate in the mining, oil, and gas industry and the extraction industry is 2.6 per cent. Like I said

before, you know, the employers have to go through an exhaustive policy and actually make the application to the federal government to approve the process. It's costly and it's exhaustive. Employers do not prefer that. They would rather hire people here in Alberta and in Canada. In fact, I've said earlier in this House that anyone that can come up with a person that's a tradesperson that's applied for a job and has not been hired and is replaced by a foreign skilled worker: show me. Show me the person.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental question is to the same minister. What is the government policy to deal with the concern that temporary workers displace Albertan and Canadian work with cheap labour?

Mr. Cardinal: No. Mr. Speaker, any person that is approved to come and work in Alberta has to follow all our labour standards, including the wages paid to the employees. Again, it is not cheap labour because it is an exhaustive and a costly process to get foreign workers here. It's only common sense that employers will hire local people if they're available because they're not as expensive as bringing in foreign workers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are under the illusion that their government is in control of resource extraction and honours principles of environmental protection. In recent months, however, extensive land clearing for oil and gas activity on contested Crown lands has been allowed to take place without the companies seeking prior approval from government or consultation with the affected Lubicon communities. I have pictures here that I'll table later. To the Minister of Energy: given that the minister stated that companies are merely following standard procedure, how are issues of public trust addressed when a company is essentially allowed to bulldoze public land without approval from the EUB?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it's not without the awareness of the EUB. What has to yet happen is the EUB has to – when they come forward for an application of drilling for that well, that has to yet go forward at that stage. That's the next part of the process.

Dr. Swann: To the Minister of Environment: how can the minister assure Albertans that proper environmental protection exists when oil and gas companies are allowed to destroy natural areas without licence or approval?

Mr. Boutillier: Mr. Speaker, I want to first and foremost say, as I have said in this House many times in the past, that ensuring environment protection principles are always in place to protect the environment no matter what stakeholder is using the rich and valuable resource that Albertans own – and Albertans own the resource, no one else. Pertaining to the specific issue that the hon. member mentions, I can assure this House and the hon. member that all environmental principles will continue to be met based on the framework we have established. Pertaining to any that are licensed or unlicensed, I will also suggest that the EUB and the Minister of Energy will ensure that due diligence is taking place to ensure that they are licensed relative to the work that they do.

Dr. Swann: Again to the Minister of Environment: will the minister stop the unlicensed destruction taking place on this Crown land, publicly owned land, until a proper assessment is completed?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I can assure this hon. member and every member of this Assembly and all Albertans that are listening and watching at home that the environment protection framework and principles that we have to ensure sound environmental principles, also pertaining to stakeholder work that is done in this province, the principles set forth by this government, will be followed to the letter and to the law.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Bridge Repair and Construction

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many bridges and large culverts on rural roads are in serious need of repair or replacement because they're either nearing the end of their useful lives or were not designed to take the larger vehicles and heavier loads of today. My questions today are for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What is his department planning to do to address this important issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago we doubled the amount of dollars that were available for the bridge program from \$9 million to \$18 million. This, theoretically, will help the local authorities to put in more of these necessary structures. What we all realize and know is that if a road goes and comes to a bridge and if you can't cross the bridge, you're not going to go anywhere. So it's quite common sense that we have to do this, and we will be doing it in conjunction with the municipalities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: what assistance is his department providing to rural municipalities to help them access these available grants?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. From a purely monetary point of view we also have the municipal infrastructure program as well as the bridge program. One of the big issues is that actually even last year not all of this money was used up. It was not all given out to the municipalities because there is a significant amount of planning. You have DFO issues, for example, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, especially when it's over an active waterway.

So, Mr. Speaker, we continue to help them. We continue to help the municipalities with their planning, and we certainly hope that the municipalities will avail themselves of these dollars because obviously these bridges are extremely important.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Given that we're on the subject of bridges, could the minister update this Assembly and my constituents watching at home on the status of the twinning of the bridge over the North Saskatchewan River near Drayton Valley?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, it's very doubtful that the hon. member's constituents are watching at home because all of his constituents are too busy working. However, I have met with the mayor of Drayton Valley as well as the county of Drayton Valley and went over the bridge that the hon. member is referencing. It certainly is a very tough hill going down to the bridge, and indeed there have been a lot of accidents.

We had a functional study done in 1999, which did bring back some figures, but we're currently in the process of updating that 1999 study to 2005 standards, Mr. Speaker. This is something that is of tremendous concern to the hon. member as well as to his constituents, and we're going to do our utmost to ensure the safety of the people driving over this bridge because there's a lot of heavy traffic, a lot of logging trucks that are now going over this bridge.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mortgage Fraud

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When an Alberta family achieves the goal of home ownership, which allows them to raise a family and provide some financial security, there is an expectation that government registry services will protect their largest investment from fraud. Alberta has unfortunately gained the distinction of being the mortgage fraud capital of Canada, with some 2,700 cases of mortgage fraud in one year alone. My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Will the minister acknowledge that this government, having failed to protect the information and privacy of Alberta homeowners, will now commit to implementing increased security measures within the provincial land titles office?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, while there is a lot of fraud going on within the province, it's not unique to Alberta. As a matter of fact, this is one of the problems that's surfacing across the country, and we have put in place a cross-ministry initiative to deal with the issue. We will be coming forward with some different ideas on how we can deal with it, but we certainly would urge people to watch for certain indications where there may be transactions relative to property that are happening on a regular basis that indicates that there's an inflation. There are a number of other areas that, in fact, we will be trying to make the public aware of that would assist a great deal in preventing these mortgage frauds from occurring.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the land titles office, which his department refers to as merely a registry, is responsible under Alberta law for losses suffered by homeowners, including those resulting from fraud, what decisive action will the hon. minister take to prevent future fraudulent activities?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, there's more than just the land titles that is involved in many of these transactions, and as you probably have recognized, under Bill 31 we are trying to plug certain cases there where, in fact, the assurance fund under the Real Estate Council of Alberta would be held responsible for these frauds. Through the various means that we're going to be implementing, we hope to be able to curtail if not stop a lot of this fraud.

I've got to indicate that this is not just in Alberta. This is happening across the country. As a matter of fact, it is an issue that we will be discussing at our federal/provincial ministers' meeting coming up in June.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given this cross-ministry initiative my final question will be to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. How will the hon. minister work with Government Services to help them overcome this baffling inefficiency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the competent Minister of Government Services is taking the lead role on this, and I will gladly give him whatever help he needs to help him.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six hon. members to participate in statements, but in the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 25 bright students from Mountain View school in Hinton along with their teacher, Linda Muhly, aides Bonnie Gillespie and Mrs. Terri Bancroft, and parent helpers Mrs. Sarah Burns and Mrs. Debbie Corless. At this time I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm absolutely thrilled to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of very special guests: close to two dozen residents from Pleasantview Place seniors' lodge, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. These seniors are actively engaged in many healthy living and community projects. They have established a walking club at the lodge and have been exploring Alberta's many towns and villages. They recently visited the waste management plant in Edmonton. They've also raised funds for the tsunami victims. They are accompanied by Diane Loyer, a co-ordinator at the lodge. My guests are seated in the public gallery, and I will now ask them, please, to rise so that they can receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of historic comment for today on this day in 1966 an act respecting the establishment and operation of Mount Royal junior college received royal assent. Thousands of graduates, including our Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Norman L. Kwong.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

AADAC Youth Drug Treatment Programs

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The problem of addiction has been the cause of impassioned debate in this House

recently. As chair of AADAC I hear first-hand about the lives impacted and the corrosive effects on society that result from addiction. Substance abuse is a serious matter, and it's especially tragic when it involves children. However, the government has it within its means to intervene in a positive way, as was demonstrated recently in this House.

Thankfully the new provincial budget, announced last week, includes an increase to AADAC's funding, which will allow the commission to begin operating almost immediately youth detoxification and residential treatment in this province. I'm pleased to say that there will be two programs, located in the Edmonton region and the Calgary region, with 24 new beds, eight for detoxification and 16 for residential treatment.

The programs are designed to help youths who are in serious difficulty with substance abuse and who require intensive intervention. Both the detoxification and residential programs will treat crystal meth users as well as users of other addictive drugs. Regarding crystal meth AADAC will provide a treatment protocol designed specifically for youth who are abusing this dangerous substance. The residential program will be 12 weeks in duration. However, in cases of long-term or severe substance abuse AADAC has the capacity to provide youths with up to a year of treatment through its spectrum of programs. AADAC has also as of April 1, 2005, increased its accreditation standards for all youth treatment programs we fund so that we can doubly ensure that young Albertans in our care are receiving the highest standard of help possible.

The new standards along with the detoxification and residential treatment programs are excellent enhancements to AADAC's range of services for youths and adults. AADAC already provides comprehensive outpatient programs for youths and their families at 26 area offices.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Economic Development in Northern Alberta

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise today to draw attention to the importance of northern Alberta. As we move forward with the aggressive infrastructure agenda put forward through the 2005 budget, presented last Wednesday, it is of great importance that we don't forget about our northern communities.

Northern Alberta already makes a significant contribution to Alberta's economy and the quality of life that all Albertans enjoy, but it is only beginning to capture its full potential. There are tremendous untapped opportunities in the north. Government needs to work with northern Albertans to help enhance their current industries and make value-added concepts become value-added manufacturing realities.

In order to create more manufacturing and the processing of raw materials that the north exports, it will take more than local businesses to be erected and start adding value-added materials. As a government we must make a commitment to provide an opportunity for these Albertans to change how their economies operate. An investment in infrastructure will assist in the economic transformation the north is seeking to make. This includes ensuring having the necessary roads and railways to handle the economic growth taking place.

Tourism will also be playing a large role in the growth of the north. As almost all of the members of this Assembly can attest, northern Alberta has some of the most beautiful country in Canada and the entire world. Those who have not had the opportunity to

experience this vast, bountiful, breathtaking country must do so. It is a great place to visit, live, and invest.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Gifting of Promotional Attire

The Speaker: Before introducing the hon. member, might I remind all members that from time to time an hon. member will arrive in the Assembly with a certain different form of attire. But there was a rule established several years ago that if that member wanted to wear such distinctive attire, it would only be appropriate and in good manners to provide all members of the Assembly with a copy of such attire. Now, the chair is still waiting for the hon. Member for Red Deer-North to deliver the 82 jerseys that she promised to deliver to all other members of the Assembly. I suspect that the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster will be a little more prompt with respect to this request.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it would be rude for me to be quicker than the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, so I'll wait until she does.

2:40 Centennial Hockey Challenge

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan celebrated their joint centennials by staging a very special hockey game last Thursday in the border city of Lloydminster. This historic battle at the border featured some of Alberta's finest junior A hockey players face to face with their counterparts from Saskatchewan.

It was a game that truly defined the friendship and friendly, competitive spirit between our two provinces. More importantly, it showed that our young athletes are indeed true champions that personify Alberta's and Saskatchewan's reputations for sportsmanship and excellence in athletics. Mr. Speaker, through snowstorms and power failures the Centennial Hockey Challenge was a huge success that saw Team Alberta emerge victorious by a score of 7 to 5.

To the organizers, participants, volunteers, and especially the fans: your involvement in this biprovincial celebration of our centennial have set a standard that will be truly hard to match. For Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, it is just the start of a week of great hockey as the Allan Cup starts there tomorrow.

A special thanks to Premier Calvert and all the Saskatchewan MLAs who attended this nonpartisan event. However, thanks to the time-tested theory that a good team of solid right wingers leads to success, Premier Calvert will be wearing Alberta's colours in the Saskatchewan Legislature today in honour of Team Alberta's win.

I know that all members in this Assembly will join me in extending congratulations to head coach Dean Clark and all members of Team Alberta for writing the perfect ending to the 2005 Centennial Hockey Challenge cup.

The Speaker: It's XL.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge that April 17 to 23 is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week and to share with you a new initiative by the Kidney Foundation of Canada and Scotiabank that was launched in my constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat this past Friday.

The green wristband I'm wearing is part of the Live2Share campaign, which is designed to raise awareness of the importance of organ and tissue donation. Right now in Alberta 512 people are waiting for an organ transplant. Seventy-five per cent of them are waiting for a kidney. In 2004 41 Albertans died while waiting for an organ transplant.

For people whose kidneys have failed, the cost to the health care system is enormous. The cost of dialysis is approximately \$50,000 per person per year. A kidney transplant has a one-time cost of \$20,000, with \$6,000 per year for medications. More importantly, transplants offer individuals a new lease on life.

For some people talking about organ and tissue donation can be difficult, but for the more than 4,000 Canadians who are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant, it's a subject we can't afford to avoid. A very small percentage of people die in circumstances that make them ineligible to be an organ donor. We owe it to Albertans to make sure that every possible opportunity for organ donation is pursued. One organ donor has the power to save eight lives and to help 50 to 100 other people through the donation of tissues, corneas, bones, and veins.

Many people don't realize that while you can sign your Alberta health care card to show your support of organ donation, the decision is ultimately made by your family. Studies have shown that 92 per cent of families will donate their loved one's organs if they have discussed organ donation while only 53 per cent of families will give the gift of life if they have not previously discussed organ donation.

Mr. Speaker, until you've talked to a gentleman who's had a double lung transplant or a person who's had two heart transplants or a lady who's waiting for a kidney or a child waiting for a liver, it's perhaps difficult to understand how important it is to consider organ donations. I congratulate the Kidney Foundation of Canada on the Live2Share campaign and their commitment to improving the lives of the people in my community and of this province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to advise the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster that my jersey size is XL as well.

Caroline Mouris

Mr. R. Miller: Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise today to recognize the accomplishments of Caroline Mouris, a grade 12 student at Harry Ainlay high school in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. Caroline at the tender age of 17 is already an artist of some renown and just recently has been awarded a full-time, full tuition, four-year scholarship at Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. Cooper Union is located in New York City's East Village and prepares students for the professions of architecture, art, and engineering. The scholarship itself is worth about \$110,000 U.S. and will allow Caroline to pursue an undergraduate degree in the fine arts.

Mr. Speaker, although Caroline started drawing as a toddler, she credits her high school art teacher, Mr. Theron Lund, with teaching her how to take her abilities to the next level and encouraging her to apply at Cooper Union. Caroline has indicated that she has no particular preference as to what reaction her art invokes as long as it provokes thought amongst the viewers.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that we are bombarded daily with news stories about crystal meth, gang shootings, and troubled youth. It is the brilliance of young people like Caroline that reminds us of the

incredible potential of today's youth and gives us all plenty of reason to believe that our future is in good hands indeed.

I would ask all members of the Alberta Legislature to join me in congratulating Caroline Mouris on her wonderful achievement and in wishing her all the very best as she begins her studies in New York this fall. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

School Closures

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last few weeks ministers of this government have stood in the Assembly and denied any responsibility for the devastating school closures that are threatening several of Edmonton's core neighbourhoods as well as hurting many rural communities. Using their tired and unfeeling arguments about utilization formulas, rhetoric that is, of course, familiar to those of us who have attended school closure meetings, this government chooses to blame closures on the school boards. The reality is, however, that school boards are bound by the utilization formula set by the government, and the current formula is nothing more than a how-to guide in closing schools.

The impact felt by a community that has lost its school can be terrible indeed. It doesn't have to be this way. For example, Ontario has recently changed their policy to separate school closures and grants for new schools. In Alberta, by contrast, the policy rewards boards for closing schools because that's the only way they can get a new school built in new neighbourhoods. We can also look to B.C. for a different approach to school utilization. In B.C. they include after-hour activities from Boy Scouts and badminton to adult education classes in the overall determination of how much a school is being used. In fact, some areas have hired evening co-ordinators to ensure that schools are being used as much as possible by the community.

These approaches are wildly different from the irrational approach used by this government. In its obsession with the short term and the bottom line this government is promoting a vision of schools in communities as temporary and disposable. Instead, we should be building a sense of tradition in our core communities. We should be instilling our students with practical knowledge to prepare them for the world, but we should be doing so in buildings and schools that will give kids a true sensitivity to local history and a strong connection to their community.

Emphasizing community use of the school and detaching school closures from grants for new schools are two initial steps to recognizing the importance of schools in our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition from 105 good Albertans from the great Alberta communities of Anzac, Tofield, Coalhurst, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, and Edmonton. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am presenting petitions signed by 102 Albertans from across this province who also are dismayed at the fact that temporary foreign workers are being brought into this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour of presenting a petition to the Assembly. It's a petition signed by 3,400 Albertans who happen to come from all across this beautiful province of ours, from Taber, Coronation, Red Deer, Barrhead, Ponoka, Nanton, Wabamun, Slave Lake, St. Paul, Fort McMurray, Stony Plain, Camrose, Wellington, Drayton Valley, Bashaw, Forestburg, Daysland, Wetaskiwin, Thorsby, Eckville, Stettler, Edmonton, Calgary, and I could go on. The petition urges the government to

introduce legislation that will enhance the quality of care for residents in long term care and continuing care facilities by requiring health regions to increase the number of caregivers to at least one caregiver per five residents from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and one caregiver per eight residents from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: 2:50

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Bill 29

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 29, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 29 amends the AISH Act by expanding the definition of the benefit to include supplementary payments for emergent or personal costs outside the current financial and health benefit package.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday was Equality Day in Canada, which is the anniversary of section 15 of the Charter coming into effect. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a document called The Top 15 on 15. It summarizes 15 of the most important Supreme Court decisions made under section 15. I would encourage all members to review this document so that we can all renew our commitment to the importance of equal treatment for all Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am tabling with permission the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received from a constituent of Edmonton-McClung by the name of Cheryl Applewhaite expressing support for a total smoking ban in all public

places and also expressing her dissatisfaction with what she refers to as “disease driven health services” and “inadequate support for health promotion and disease prevention.”

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have seven letters to table today regarding the interim Métis harvesting agreement from the following concerned Albertans: Duane Radford, Richard Duquette, Fredrich Kegel, Ian Kopp, Jolin Fisher, Bryan Martin, and Aden Stewart. These individuals are frustrated that the interim Métis harvesting agreement proceeded without adequate stakeholder input and is not in keeping with sound conservation practices.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter to table from a constituent who questioned the value of his hard work in his apprenticeship training and becoming qualified in light of all of the temporary foreign workers that are being proposed to be brought into the province.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, April 14, it is my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today’s Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 12 through 23 inclusive.

[Motion carried]

Trade Show Expenditures

Q12. Mr. Elsalhy moved on behalf of Mr. Bonko moved that the following question be accepted.

How much money has the Ministry and Department of Economic Development spent on trade shows in the fiscal years 1992-93 through 2003-04 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Economic Development I would like to advise the House that the minister recommends that we reject this written question as the time period is sufficiently long that much of the requested information is now publicly available, archived material, or will have been destroyed. Consideration was given to amending the written question to cover only those years for the which the ministry is in possession of the relevant records. However, the process of collecting the necessary records required to answer these written questions would involve significant cost to the ministries.

The member’s inquiry can be made through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which sets forth a process for completing such requests, including a fee schedule to ensure that applicants cover a fair portion of the cost of collecting and disclosing relevant records.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you. I’m happy to participate in the discussion on Written Question 12, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I must express my disappointment to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. I have in the past used the access to information laws to try to gain access to some of this information. Some of it I have been successful with; some I have not. There is one file that certainly comes to mind, and that’s a trade mission that went to Tokyo and then went on to Korea; Seoul, as a matter of fact, not North Korea but South Korea. It took a great deal of time and effort to get this information.

We are spending significant amounts of money on these trade shows. There was even the design in this case of a booth that was done. Fortunately, it was done in Alberta. There were also two arts groups that went on this trade show, one from Calgary and I think a country band from out around Hinton. So there are significant amounts of money being spent here, and to say that one should have to go through access to information to get it I think is an error. To say that it is cumbersome for the department to have these records going back to the fiscal year 1992-93 is also an error. I think that is not respectful of the taxpayers. I would have to say in this case, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, that it’s neglectful of the taxpayers.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. My question and comment as well are addressed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I’m not sure that the minister is aware that every time a flight request is put out there, it’s the taxpayer who is basically paying twice for information to be provided. At some point I’m hoping that the government will realize that the opposition is equally important to the development and promotion of democracy in this province, and without the necessary information being provided upon request, we are simply putting the taxpayer further in the hole by asking for legitimate requests.

A question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs is: are you willing at this time to provide more recent information that is more easily convenient for you to come up with? For example, let’s go back to 2003-04, 2004-05. Would you at least consider tabling that information?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity should be aware that this is not a question-and-answer period. One has one chance to participate.

Mr. Chase: Can I ask him to take it under consideration, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: No.

Mr. Chase: Okay. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to close the debate.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar pretty much summed up my sentiment on this question. We will be maybe submitting another question in the near future that meets with the hon. minister’s criteria.

I move to close debate.

[Written Question 12 lost]

Trade Mission Expenditures

Q13. Mr. Elsalhy moved on behalf of Mr. Bonko that the following question be accepted.

How much money has the Ministry and Department of Economic Development spent on trade missions in the fiscal years 1992-93 through 2003-04 inclusive, broken down by mission and year?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government will be recommending that the House reject this question also. The question is similar in nature, and the rationale is the same.

3:00

Mr. Chase: Again, when travelling is undertaken for the express purpose of increasing the Alberta advantage – a number of, for example, what I would call trade junkets to the Orient have taken place – if there was value in these junkets, if we achieved more foreign investment, then I would suggest that it would be advantageous of the government to basically blow their horn with regard to all the investments they achieve through these junkets. If there's no proportionate return for value for Alberta taxpayers based on these trips, then I suggest that we stop them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I will be brief. I'm disappointed in the rejection of Written Question 13 by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. We look at the Department of Economic Development, and we look at the fiscal years where we are trying to get this information, from 1992-93. I think that if we were to get this information – and perhaps this is why the government is so afraid to provide it, so reluctant to provide this information – there would be a chart starting in 1992-93, and it would sort of flatten out, I think. Then as we got the information and we tracked the number of trade missions and the amount of money spent through to 2003-2004, we would certainly see a chart that would be reflective of this government's spending habits, which in my view in a lot of cases are excessive.

I don't believe some of this money is being wisely spent. We've seen dramatic budget increases. I would think that this chart, if we were to build one, would be very much like the Project Stanley hockey stick that's referred to in Enron in the electricity price manipulation. It would go along like this and then go straight up, Mr. Speaker, on a 45- or 50-degree angle, very similar to a hockey stick.

I hope I'm wrong, but those are my suspicions as to why we can't have that information. It would just show the excessive spending by this government in these sorts of matters.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to close the debate.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, although disappointed, in the interest of saving time and moving along, I move Written Question 13.

Thank you.

[Written Question 13 lost]

School Fee Revenues

Q14. Mr. R. Miller moved on behalf of Mr. Flaherty that the following question be accepted.

What is the total revenue received by Alberta school boards from school fees, broken down by school board and by fee type for the fiscal years 2000-01 through 2003-04 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to indicate to the House that we are prepared to accept Written Question 14 with some amendments should the mover or someone on behalf of the mover be so disposed to agree. In fact, this information was shared with the opposition colleagues prior to 11 this morning as required, and I think it's now been circulated throughout the House.

Nonetheless, the reason that we need to look at amending this particular question is simply because all school boards report their financial information based on their particular school year, which typically runs September 1 through to August 31 of each year, as most members here would know. So the amendment is simply to change the motion from "fiscal years" to read "school years." I think the same information would still be arrived at. The amended question would simply read, "What is the total revenue received by Alberta school boards from school fees, broken down by school board and by fee type for the school years 2000-01 through 2003-04 inclusive?"

So I would move acceptance of Written Question 14 as amended on the basis that I've just explained.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, we're speaking only on the amendment right now. Is that correct?

The Speaker: Only on the amendment.

Mr. R. Miller: Yes. Thank you very much. On behalf of my colleague for St. Albert I would like to thank the minister for his explanation as to the amendment and suggest that it is something that we are agreeable to. So I would speak in favour of the amendment.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on the question as amended.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to see that the government is willing to provide this information, and as I suggested, we're understanding of the parameters under which they're doing so. I would move that we close debate.

Thank you.

[Written Question 14 as amended carried]

School-based Fundraising Revenues

Q15. Mr. R. Miller moved on behalf of Mr. Flaherty that the following question be accepted.

What is the total revenue received by Alberta school boards

from school-based fundraising initiatives, broken down by school for the fiscal years 2000-01 through 2003-04 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm going to suggest that we accept Written Question 15, albeit with some amendments, and I would also indicate that this particular set of amendments has been shared with the opposition prior to 11 a.m. today as required, and it's now been circulated throughout the House.

Very briefly, the same rationale applies here, for the first part, as with Written Question 14, and that is that all school boards report their financial information based on a school year. Similarly, school boards' audited financial statements do not report at the school level. They report at the school board level. I should also add that in Alberta Education we refer to school-generated funds as funds raised at the school level to support programs that enhance educational services for students. For example, there might be some items that might be included that are actually optional school fees, such as the case might be for field trips or activities pertaining to graduation exercises, a yearbook, student pictures, locks, locker rentals, and so on.

As a result, I would again like to propose a suggested amended wording for this question so that it would read as follows. "What is the total revenue received by Alberta school boards from school-generated funds, broken down by school authority for the school years 2000-01 through 2003-04 inclusive?"

Should the mover or the person speaking on behalf of the mover be amenable to those changes, then we would be happy to accept and move the acceptance of Written Question 15 as amended.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm afraid that on behalf of my colleague for St. Albert I can't support the amendment. By striking out "fundraising initiatives" and substituting "school-generated funds," we lose the intention of the question, and that is, obviously, to identify how much fundraising is being done in initiatives outside of school fees. By lumping them together, as I understand this amendment would do, we lose the clarity we're looking for and the detail that we would be looking for.

Again, I guess I would make the same argument. If we have to deal with school authorities – i.e., school boards as opposed to individual schools – then we're once again going to lose the sort of detail and clarity that the writer of the question had hoped to receive from the government.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure about the legalities involved, but it would appear to me that although they have changed the wording of the question in the rewritten question to show that they're dealing with school years as opposed to fiscal years, that's not actually outlined in the three amendments, (a), (b), and (c), that are shown here. Oh, maybe I'm wrong about that. I think I'm wrong about that.

On those first two anyway, (a) and (b), certainly I couldn't on behalf of my colleague from St. Albert speak in favour of this amendment given that it takes away from the intention of the question in the first place.

3:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the amendment.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring to the attention of the entire House in regard to this amendment to Written Question 15 that schedule E of the standard format for auditing each and every respective school board in this province outlines the source and application of school-generated funds for the respective year. This information would already be listed in a document that was tabled by the hon. Minister of Education during this session. So to substitute "school-generated funds" and to strike out "school-based fundraising initiatives" completely changes this written question. If one looks at the revenue, the statement of revenues and expenses for the school year ended the 31st of August for whatever year you want to look at, there certainly is a line item for net school-generated funds that is totally different than the use of school-generated funds. I think this changes the written question.

The information that we were seeking in the original, unamended version would be of a great deal of interest to many parents who work very hard to raise money for their respective schools. The parents, some of them, feel very frustrated that public education is not being publicly funded adequately.

Thank you.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. What this amendment doesn't get at is how schools are funded. Basically, my experience of 34 years was that in the last number of years, when I taught at, I would say, an upper middle-class school with reasonably affluent parents who were able to participate in casinos and other fundraising activities such as selling coupon books, one-third of our total school budget was provided by the province in the form of grants. The other two-thirds came out of parents' fundraising through casinos, through cafeteria profits, through Coke machines, and school fees.

So basically, the point this question was asking was very specific to fundraising as opposed to school fees, cafeteria profits, and all the other areas, and I would very much hope that these concerns would be addressed.

[Motion on amendment lost]

The Speaker: Now on the debate on Written Question 15. Additional speakers? Shall I call the question then?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has already spoken on this matter. You'd be closing the debate here now.

Mr. R. Miller: I won't be closing the debate.

The Speaker: Any other speakers? Well, then, proceed, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Just very briefly, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] Well, thank you. I always appreciate the encouragement from the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

This is becoming a serious issue in terms of accessibility. I know that in the previous question, Question 14, by fees and now through school fundraising initiatives we're starting develop a bit of a tiered system here. I think one of the members alluded to it, the Member for Calgary-Varsity. If you happen to have the wherewithal and you're in a school where the parents have the wherewithal and ability to fund raise, that school is going to get more than some of the, for lack of a better term, high-needs schools because the parents don't have the wherewithal to do that.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that we should begin to take a look at how

education is being funded. How much of it is through school fees? How much of it in high school? If you've got three or four kids and you come from modest means, it becomes very difficult for those parents to just do the regular things. They have to do that, but if there are other things in high school that add to the student's education, add to the quality of the education, trips and that sort of thing, they're not going to be able to do it.

I'd like to see this information. I'm realist enough to know that that's not going to happen in this House today, Mr. Speaker, but I really say to the Minister of Education that we should begin to take a look at this whole area of fundraising and how that leads to, I think, an inequality from school to school within the same district. Of course, I'm speaking now of being on the Edmonton public school board, but it'd be true in Calgary in the bigger schools. Also the fees: more and more fees tacked on for what I'd call regular programming. Again, it leads to a two-tiered system because people from modest means certainly aren't going to be able to involve themselves in some of the trips and that sort of thing.

I think this is a reasonable question that people ask. I don't know why it is that we can't get this sort of information. I think it's sort of important. More importantly, if we had the information, Mr. Speaker, then we could begin to look in terms of the overall funding for education. Is there a necessity to increase the funding because more of it's through school fees? We could talk about the taxpayers, but those parents are the same taxpayers. I really worry about where we're going. It could lead, I think, to a two-tiered type of educational system.

So I would hope that the minister, even if they're not going to give us this information now, would look at it in the future and also take this as a very serious matter in the direction that education is going. I can assure you, having been a former trustee, that this was an issue raised to us by parents time after time after time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly unfortunate that members chose to defeat the amendment that was proposed, which would have allowed the Minister of Education to have this question phrased in language to which he could respond. Having not accepted the amendment, it's now in unclear language and puts him in a position where he can't adequately respond to the question, so we would have to ask members of the House to now turn down the question.

In saying that, it's interesting that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar made reference to the audited statements, which clearly refer to school-generated funds, which is something that school boards do report on as I understand it. That's the language that the minister was trying to inject into the question so that the information could be provided on an appropriate basis. I don't understand why the hon. members would turn down an amendment which allows the question to be answered, but having turned down the amendment, we now have to suggest that the question be turned down because it's not in language which can be answered on the basis of which the information is reported. [interjection]

The Speaker: Well, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity has moved. If I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, that closes the debate.

The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I'm having difficulty with the notion that the question is unclear. It clearly states "school-based

fundraising initiatives." We've accepted the former amendment of changing "fiscal" to "school" years, so I don't see where the confusion exists.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, the amendment has been defeated on this question.

Mr. Chase: But the turning down of the question . . .

The Speaker: Sorry. There's no debate. It's just a fact.

Additional comments? Hon. Member for Edmonton Gold-Bar, you can participate if you wish.

3:20

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I listened with a great deal of interest to the brief explanation by the hon. Minister of Advanced Education in regard to this written question and how difficult it would be to provide that information. The information for school-generated funds is in each audited statement.

Mr. Hancock: My point exactly.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. But the information – and this is my point exactly – that we're after is not, and there is quite a difference here. There is quite a difference in the information that was asked for and the information that's been offered.

I would remind the hon. minister that in this House last week the Department of Education didn't even have the proper regulation for school closures on its website. You had an outdated one on there. [interjections] Yeah, you fixed it up. You bet. You fixed it up on Thursday of last week. But that information wasn't adequate.

How are parents to know what is accurate and what is outdated information in this department when we look at the school closure regulation that had been passed by this government in August of last year and the Minister of Education and the Department of Education still had one on there, Mr. Speaker, from before that? So whenever parents look at this department and they're looking for information, on occasion the most up-to-date, accurate information is not available. I don't understand why there is a reluctance to provide this information in the manner that was asked for by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close the debate.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview perhaps expressed my sentiments and those of my colleagues best when he indicated that if it's not possible to get this information, perhaps the minister will recognize from today's debate how much interest there is in having this information and, certainly, how very much the parents of the students in this province would like to have this information. Perhaps, if nothing else, the government can take under consideration changing the way that they report the statistics so that in the future when this question is asked, they would be able to provide it.

Just as an anecdote, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie and myself visited Ellerslie north campus on Friday and were appalled to see that on their wish list that they're presenting to their parent council looking for items to be purchased by the proceeds of an upcoming casino was new carpet for the library. This is exactly why these sorts of things are so important for not just

members of this House but also for parents across the province to know because, certainly, the consideration is that perhaps schools are raising money outside of the fees, as my colleague from Calgary-Varsity suggested, outside of pop machines and cafeteria and so forth, for things other than field trips and, rather, for essentials for learning.

Really that is the crux of the matter, and that is why the question was worded the way it was, referring specifically to fundraising initiatives, and why the Member for St. Albert feels that it is so important to have this particular information. So I would certainly hope that the Assembly would vote in favour of this question, and I will close debate.

Thank you.

[Written Question 15 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Department of Energy
Communications Contracts Expenditures**

Q16. Mr. MacDonald moved that the following question be accepted.

How much money in total did the Ministry and Department of Energy spend on communications contracts in the 2003-04 fiscal year broken down by organization?

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, fiscal year 2003-2004 was a busy one for the department. The department on behalf of this government was trying to defend publicly electricity deregulation, natural gas deregulation. [interjection] I hear one clap over there, but there are a lot of government members in the Assembly this afternoon, and they obviously don't support that. It's sort of quiet.

Support for electricity deregulation and natural gas deregulation, or energy deregulation: certainly, consumers have had a number of campaigns directed their way. There are many people who think that all of these campaigns originate in the Public Affairs Bureau, but there are some that are contracted out to various communications agencies. It would be very interesting and very informative to know exactly how much money is being spent by this government to convince consumers of both electricity and natural gas that energy deregulation has worked, that choice has reduced costs and improved efficiency. It certainly hasn't happened. [interjection] Now, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky says: give it up. No, I won't give it up. Consumers are phoning, and they're saying: don't give it up. They feel that this whole process has let them down from day one.

The propaganda campaigns: they start, but they never finish explaining to consumers the benefits of energy deregulation. This is, again, information that we should have. We should know how many of these communications campaigns have started. How many have, for instance, tried to convince us, whenever a third-party marketer or a middle person or a middle marketer knocks on your door, of the merits of having a long-term contract whether it be one or three or five years? The Department of Energy's website: who designed that? The one that's updated as frequently as my own website, which is not too often. Certainly, there has been a lot of money spent telling people how wonderful electricity deregulation is. It's money that's been spent, and what we really should be doing is taking our low-cost plan for electricity deregulation and adopting that in this province.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to say that citizens of this province would probably be as startled as I if they knew the total

costs of trying to sell in the fiscal year 2003-04 the merits of energy deregulation to consumers by this government. The bill would be in the millions of dollars, and I would hope that I can receive this information and share it with all the consumers of this province, consumers who have not only in this fiscal year that we're talking about but in previous fiscal years had to bear the unfortunate burden of sky-high energy bills.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time on behalf of the Minister of Energy and the government I am recommending that Written Question 16 be rejected. I would like to assist the hon. member, though. If he has a question, perhaps he can make it just a bit more clear. Since there appears to be a question related to how the ministry spends its money in the budget, he may want to specifically as chair consider asking a question in Public Accounts Committee as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:30

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. This question again has to do with transparency and accountability versus hiding information within the FOIP requirement and then requiring, as we formerly mentioned, taxpayers to fund the bill and wait months to finally have the information.

One of the first moves the Premier made upon assuming the leadership of the Conservative Party was to bring the public relations department under his specific wing. Right now that public relations department costs taxpayers annually \$14 million, and there are approximately 266 employees employed to basically tell the people what a good job this government is doing. We don't need extra tellers unaccounted for. In other words, if we have extra individuals being contracted out by the Department of Energy on top of the \$14 million that taxpayers are already paying out, then at some point this self-promotion becomes rather prohibitive.

I would suggest that in the nature of accountability and transparency this question be accepted. If the expenses are legitimate, back them up by revealing them. Thank you.

The Speaker: Others?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the comment just made about the taxpayers' money, I'm not sure who the hon. member thinks has to ferret out all this information when a written question is asked, but I can assure him that many times when written questions come forward, when they're phrased in a global way that you can't narrow it down to the type of information that's being looked at, it takes civil servants hundreds of hours to get the information together, and it's not a very appropriate use of the taxpayers' money if it's a fishing trip. Often these written questions could be much more effective if the type of information that was really being ascertained could be appropriately described.

Many times in this House we have to move to amend a question to get it into the right language so that we can be sure that we respond accurately. When the Legislature orders a return or an answer to a written question or orders information be provided, you must be certain that the language is precise so that you provide the information that's being ordered. You would not want to be offside

an order from the Legislature. That is why often you try and get precise language in the questions. When a global question is asked which doesn't have the precise language, it ends up ordering civil servants – wasting taxpayers' money looking for a broad scope of information, and it's not a good use.

Now, the other comment that I wanted to respond to was when our current Premier became Premier of this province – if the hon. member wants to go back to that point in time and talk about Public Affairs and bringing the communications department under the government, it was this Premier who, as one of the first acts, brought forward a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which made a process for the public to access information that was in the hands of government in an appropriate way and to make those determinations as to how to appropriately acquire and how to pay the cost of acquiring information when people sought to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close the debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest comments from the hon. Minister of Advanced Education – I would have to say that was an unbelievable speech. We're talking about government waste here. We have to go no further than contracts to friends of the government that we don't know whether any work was ever done. Waste. Over \$40 million spent on the thoroughbred horse-racing renewal while we're closing schools: that's a waste.

The Speaker: Okay. The chair appreciates all of this, but relevance is important. Right now we have Written Question 16 before us.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. In regard to Written Question 16, I would not need to ask this question if public accounts were organized in such a fashion that each department was listed alphabetically. Then I could go through the document myself and see which communications outfits were hired by this government, for how much, and then I could pursue the questioning. Right now, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker – now I'm going to get in trouble with my colleagues on this side of the House – the public accounts documents are organized A through Z, not zee but zed, and they're not organized by department.

It would be totally unnecessary to ask this question if this government could provide to all Albertans on a department-wide basis exactly how much money they're spending and where, and with Energy people would be very interested to know how much money is being spent to convince them that they should like electricity and natural gas deregulation.

In conclusion, we were quite specific to the hon. Minister of Energy. We want the amount that was spent on communications contracts in the fiscal year 2003-2004, broken down by the respective outfits that were awarded these spin-doctoring contracts.

Thank you.

[Written Question 16 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations Hosting Expenses

Q17. Ms Pastoor moved that the following question be accepted. How much money has been spent by the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations on hosting expenses in the fiscal years 1996-97 through 2003-04 inclusive broken down by function and year?

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly the first to recognize the enjoyment of hosting and the value of networking, but there is a difference between the value that you get for your dollars networking and just plain partying. Further questions, I think, that could be answered are: how many people are actually meeting? How many are hangers-on? How many of these people actually have the information or, in fact, have the authority to move any of the issues along that might come out of this networking? I believe that the taxpayers should have that information.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I'm pleased to advise that Written Question 17 will be accepted.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to conclude the debate.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. I'll call the question.

[Written Question 17 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Information Technology Security Awareness

Q18. Mr. Elsalhy moved that the following question be accepted. What measures has the Ministry of Innovation and Science taken to improve the information technology security awareness of government employees as recommended in the Auditor General's 2003-04 annual report?

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My motive for submitting this question is in reaction to the cases where information was either lost or misplaced, and the Auditor General reacted by trying to encourage the Ministry of Innovation and Science to beef up security and try to prevent such losses or information being misplaced from happening again.

So I would really urge the House to support this written question. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond to this question because it's a question that should properly be directed to Restructuring and Government Efficiency as my ministry now has the office of the corporate chief information officer under its authority. Therefore, I must formally reject the question, but I would ask the Member for Edmonton-McClung to resubmit the question so that I may answer it. In fact, I encourage the member to resubmit the question because there are a number of security awareness measures under way that I would be pleased to share with him if he resubmits at a later date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to close the debate.

3:40

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would definitely go ahead and take this advice, and I will resubmit the question, although it appears that it could have been just answered by the hon. minister,

you know, in the interests of sharing the information. Again, like my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford indicated before, if they have something positive to show, and they would like to parade and show the efficiencies that they have now, certainly if I'm in the minister's shoes, I would be the first person to share this information even if the question was submitted to a colleague and not to myself.

However, I thank the hon. minister, and I will definitely resubmit this. Thank you.

[Written Question 18 lost]

Reforestation Timelines

Q19. Mr. Elsalhy moved on behalf of Mr. Bonko that the following question be accepted.

What measures has the government taken to ensure that reforestation timelines are being met by timber harvesting companies?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, we would be pleased to indicate to this House that we are prepared to accept Written Question 19.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to close the debate.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this certainly is a positive move, and I appreciate the co-operation from the hon. minister. I move the question.

[Written Question 19 carried]

Student Loan Program

Q20. Mr. R. Miller moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that the following question be accepted.

What is the dollar amount of student loans provided to students attending public postsecondary educational institutions in Alberta under the Alberta student loan program in each of the fiscal years 2000-01 to 2003-04 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be pleased to accept this question on behalf of the government provided that we can amend it for clarification purposes. I would therefore move that Written Question 20 be amended by striking out "provided" and substituting "issued." It may sound like a very small or picky change, but there are a number of different ways in which student loans are recorded.

We issue a certificate. The certificate is then taken to an institution for certification that the individual it's issued to is a student. Then that certificate is provided to the student loan provider, and funds are then deposited; in other words, the certificate is cashed. There are sometimes differences in the amounts between what's issued and what's cashed, depending on whether it goes over a fiscal year-end, although they're modest differences. The language that we've utilized consistently is the question of how many loans have been issued or the amount of loans issued, so that's the reason for the change. Otherwise, the information will be similar in nature, but it'll be more accurately reported.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the amend-

ment, then, I understand and appreciate the minister's explanation, and I would support the amendment and would hope that the remainder of the members would do so as well.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close the debate.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, in the interests of time and given that it would appear as if the government is going to provide the information that my colleague from Calgary-Currie is looking for, I would move that we close debate on Written Question 20.

[Written Question 20 as amended carried]

Student Loan Program

Q21. Mr. R. Miller moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that the following question be accepted.

What is the dollar amount of student loans provided to students attending private, for-profit educational or training institutions in Alberta under the Alberta student loan program in each of the fiscal years 2000-01 to 2003-04 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would be pleased to accept Written Question 21 on behalf of government if we could ask the House for a small amendment, in this case two points. I would move that Written Question 21 be amended by striking out "provided" and substituting "issued" and by striking out "for-profit educational or training institutions" and substituting "vocational schools."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the information that would be provided would be similar, but the language is the language in which the information is collected. We don't collect information on for-profit educational or training institutions, but we do collect information on private vocational schools. I think the information that would be provided is what the member would want, but it's again the precise language under which we collect the information. So I would ask for those amendments in order that we'd be able to accept the question and provide the information.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, no problem with the change in clause (a) as it's similar to what we did on a previous written question. On clause (b) my only comment would be that I find it interesting that this government continually admonishes the opposition, saying that profit is not a dirty word, and here they are taking it out of this particular question. So I find that a little bit ironic, I suppose, but I understand, again, what the minister is trying to achieve. In the interests of receiving the information that my colleague for Calgary-Currie is looking for, I would expect that we will probably be supporting the amendment, but I'll certainly give other members a chance to speak to it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Speaker: We're on the amendment.

Mr. Chase: Yes. Very definitely on the amendment. I'm discussing for-profit educational or training institutions and substituting vocational schools. Just for my own clarification an example: would the DeVry Institute of Technology be considered a vocational school?

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: On the question as amended, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close debate.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Currie that we close the debate, and we'll gratefully accept the information from the government.

[Written Question 21 as amended carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Former Chief of Staff Remuneration

Q22. Mr. R. Miller moved that the following question be accepted.

What was the total amount paid to the Premier's former chief of staff, Mr. Peter Elzinga, in each of the 2002-03 and 2003-04 fiscal years broken down according to salary, allowances, bonuses, and severance pay?

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue that has been not only in the news a lot over the last couple of years but certainly on the minds of many Albertans. It was an issue that arose several times for myself at the doorstep during the campaign. I think that there are many, many Albertans that would be most pleased to have the opportunity to review this information, so we're hopeful that the government will comply by providing it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Premier's office to indicate that unfortunately this question will have to be rejected, and the reason for that is because information pertaining to salaries and benefits for the former chief of staff for the office of the Premier is already publicly available in the 2002-03 and the 2003-04 annual reports for Executive Council. Severance payments are also included within the overall expenditure reporting on the financial statements in Executive Council's annual report. So that information is there should they wish to dig it up.

Thank you.

3:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Just, again, clarification. When the Premier's most recent adviser, Dr. West, was I guess terminated, the information was very clear. It came in the area of about \$186,000, and the time period was obvious. Is that type of clarification and detail available for Mr. Elzinga?

The Speaker: The minister can only debate once. This is not a question-and-answer period. You had your input.

Mr. Chase: Okay. Thank you.

The Speaker: Additional comments?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close the debate.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Minister of Education has indicated that that information is available to us if we dig deep enough, and I can assure him that we will begin digging.

[Written Question 22 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Current Chief of Staff Remuneration

Q23. Mr. R. Miller moved that the following question be accepted.

What is the total maximum amount scheduled to be paid to the Premier's current chief of staff, Mr. Rod Love, for each year of the current contract broken down according to salary, allowances, bonuses, and severance pay?

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the Assembly that most of the people that I have spoken to are particularly interested in the question of severance pay, and I will look forward to the government's response.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question will need to be rejected as well, and I want to briefly explain why. First of all, Executive Council publishes the salaries and benefits of the chief of staff in its annual reports. The 2004-05 annual report will be published – and I say that in the future tense – in September of '05. The salary range of senior officials, including the chief of staff for the office of the Premier, is publicly available on the public administration office website. Finally, if severance were to be paid, it would be included within the overall expenditure reporting on the financial statements in Executive Council's annual report.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Hopefully, I'm doing it right this time. The point of the question with regard to severance pay again goes back to Dr. West. The feeling not only by the opposition but by many members of the public was that it was exorbitant. Therefore, we have the latest adviser coming back on. It's sort of in a revolving-door format. Obviously, he's undertaken a contract, and part of that contract would include severance. We would like on behalf of the taxpayers to know what the payout will be that has previously been agreed to so that taxpayers can judge the ongoing worth of this individual and potentially how quickly he should be severed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close the debate.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my closing comments really reflect the comments of my colleague from Calgary-Varsity in that the intent of the question here is to gain some understanding as to how much Alberta taxpayers might be on the

hook for if, in fact, this current chief of staff is let go as quickly as the previous chief of staff was let go and whether or not, then, Alberta taxpayers are getting good value for their money. So that was really the reason for the question and, as I said, the particular emphasis on the severance pay.

Unfortunately, it would appear from the minister's response that we're likely to have to wait until after the fact to learn how much money we're on the hook for as opposed to knowing now. I really believe that Alberta taxpayers have every right to know up front what would be in that contract.

Given that, we'll move Written Question 23.

[Written Question 23 lost]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been served on Thursday, April 14, it's my pleasure to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 14 through 26 inclusive.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar

Minister of Municipal Affairs Business Expenses

M14. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of the Minister of Municipal Affairs' expenses including but not limited to airfare, food, accommodation, and conference fees from February 18, 2003, to November 22, 2004.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I would be anxious, as would the taxpayers, to see a full accounting of this minister's expenses as noted. Thank you.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate on behalf of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs that we are prepared to accept Motion for a Return 14 albeit with some amendments. These amendments were circulated prior to 11 a.m. to the opposition as requested and required, and I believe it's now been circulated to all members.

That having been said, you may recall that we had debated a similar motion to this one in this Assembly last Monday. In that context, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to indicate to the hon. questioner and to all members of the House that for ease of reporting matters such as this, the categories that we have listed in the amended motion reflect the government's adopted procedures when reporting these kinds of credit card expenses. They were successfully embraced a week ago, and I'm hopeful that they will be again this week.

I would also like to point out that the specific reference to conference fees in the original motion is included under incidental and miscellaneous expenses, which I will read out shortly as part of the amended motion. That information will be provided as a separate category under this particular subtitle when the response gets tabled in the House.

So to accommodate accounting practices, I would like to propose

an amendment to this motion. That amendment, in fact, would be worded as follows. First of all, we would strike out "but not limited to airfare, food, accommodation, and conference fees" and substitute the following words: "travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses, including conference fees."

Following that, Mr. Speaker, we would propose to strike out "February 18, 2003, to November 22, 2004," and in place of those words we would substitute the following words: "February 1, 2003, to November 30, 2004," which, of course, would have the net effect of giving the hon. members even more information than is being asked for, which is a good thing. From our point of view it gets down to this being necessary to report on a monthly basis, that being from the first of the particular month to the end of the particular month. So it helps us to provide the information in a form that is already being collected.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, the final amended motion would be phrased as follows.

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of the Minister of Municipal Affairs' expenses, including travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses, including conference fees, from February 1, 2003, to November 30, 2004.

I would like to move the acceptance of this motion as amended on the basis of the rationale provided.

The Acting Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

4:00

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the amendment that was read into the record by the hon. Minister of Education, certainly, with this Motion for a Return 14 that is acceptable, and I and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview will look forward to receiving the information through this Motion for a Return 14 as amended. Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Motion for a Return 14 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Department of Municipal Affairs Business Credit Card Statements

M15. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2003-04 issued to the deputy ministers, all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, that is, I think, self-explanatory. We have a duty and an obligation to ensure that this government remains accountable and each respective department remains accountable. We cannot forget the taxpayer in all of this.

The budget of this government is going up, up, and up. The government is growing larger. It's a big government, and these sorts of motions for returns ensure that there is transparency and accountability. I look forward, hopefully, to receiving this information from the Department of Municipal Affairs in light of what has happened in the past with some of the credit card expenses. Executive Council

comes to mind, certainly. This information would be of a great deal of interest to the taxpayers, as I said before.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 15 I would again like to indicate on behalf of the government and specifically on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs that this particular motion as worded would be acceptable to the minister and to the government provided there were some amendments made to it.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, as would other members in the House, that a similar motion to this was in fact debated and advanced in this Legislature last Monday, April 11. I understand that the amendment that I am now proposing on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been circulated in its totality to all the members in the House and that opposition colleagues affected were notified prior to 11 this morning as per protocol and other procedures.

I should indicate, Mr. Speaker, that in the amended motion we have again categorized expenses under the same categories referenced in Motion for a Return 14, that being travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses. The reason for this is as a result of a decision by the government of Alberta last fall to use these specific categories and these specific accounting codes within these categories for the purpose of delineating specific expenses, and those particular categories are used throughout the government of Alberta now. So there's a big effort for consistency of purpose there. Of course, there's been a tremendous amount of standardization that has gone here in the interest of openness, accountability, and organization.

It's our belief, Mr. Speaker, that by using these categories, we'll be able to provide responses to the motion for a return and hopefully to the satisfaction of the questioner.

The second area that I'd like to comment on, Mr. Speaker, is just with respect to being able to provide information at the deputy minister level and not at the other positions' level listed in the original motion for return, specifically, assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, unit leaders, et cetera.

So I just want to explain what the rationale for the wording is then, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated to the House last Monday, I think, during debate on a similar motion for a return, the Auditor General does an extremely good and a very thorough analytical job when reviewing all provincial departmental expenses on an annual basis. He provides that report and any concerns that he might have not only to this Assembly but also to the general public of the province and, for that matter, to anyone else who might be interested. To the best of my knowledge our Auditor General has not highlighted any senior department officials' expenses as being a concern at this time.

So I just want to again indicate that a considerable amount of time and effort has already gone into preparing the response to this motion, and it would take literally dozens and dozens and dozens of more hours to compile even more information in a form other than what I am proposing on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I hope that will be acceptable to the hon. questioner, Mr. Speaker, because our well-established process is now in place through these annual reviews by the Auditor General, that I've already referenced. I think the hon. member and others present are well aware of other avenues that can be used to access even more information should they wish to do so.

That being the case, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the

amendment simply go as follows: that we strike out "a copy of all monthly business credit card statements" and substitute the words "a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodations, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses"; further, that we strike out "issued to" and substitute "incurred by"; and finally that we strike out "all assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders" such that the final amended motion would be worded as follows:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses for the fiscal year 2003-04 incurred by the Deputy Minister the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the amendment.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. On the amendment to Motion for a Return 15, I'm astonished that this amendment would reduce the number of people who are actually going to be responsible and accountable in regard to the expenditure of tax dollars on who knows what. Certainly, this amendment where we're striking out assistant deputy ministers, executive directors, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders, whoever they are, from any form of public scrutiny I think is totally wrong by the minister.

What happens if and when these employees, these senior civil servants, pick up the tab for others? Perhaps it's going to be the minister that they're picking up the tab for. There will be no accountability if we are to accept this amended motion as described by the hon. minister. I'm not satisfied with that. I don't think taxpayers would be satisfied with that.

For instance, let's say that a delegation from this department goes to Mexico. Mexico comes to mind, Mr. Speaker, because there was a delegation that went there before, and it was quite a long trip to Mexico and various individuals went at various times during that interval, and they went off on little side trips as well. The information provided to me indicated that these side trips were there. So what would happen with this department if there were side trips, and the side trips were picked up on the credit cards of the assistant deputy ministers or the executive directors? No, I can't accept that amendment.

4:10

The hon. minister talks about the Auditor General, and he's correct. The Auditor General, what he does investigate, is thorough. But the Auditor General doesn't investigate each line item in the budget. There are things called test audits, and that's what is going on here. That's not satisfactory. In light of the past behaviour of this government I think it's shameful that we would even attempt to amend this motion as described by the hon. minister.

Now, certainly, Mr. Speaker, if one was to go to the *Alberta Gazette*, you could see hosting expenses over a certain amount, \$600. Perhaps we could have access to some of this information, but not all of it. If the tab was over six hundred bucks, well, then it has to be listed, and I think it's a good idea that it's listed in the *Gazette*. But what would happen if, for instance, let's say we went to a restaurant in Calgary, a steak house in Calgary, and the executive director picked up a portion of the tab, the unit leader picked up a portion of the tab on the government credit card, and the assistant deputy minister picked up the rest of the tab. So the tab was divided into three, and it would less be than \$600. Taxpayers would have no idea what the money was being used for and with whom it was being spent.

Mr. Mason: You'd even know the price of the orange juice.

Mr. MacDonald: No, the price of orange juice can get pretty high, as everyone knows. It doesn't matter whether it's freshly squeezed or frozen. In some jurisdictions it can be quite high, Mr. Speaker.

I, for one, am surprised at this amendment. I'm disappointed in this amendment as well, and for the sake of openness and transparency I would just have to say that, no, this is not satisfactory. There are a lot of people working, in this case the Department of Municipal Affairs, and I think that all senior managers should be accountable. Thank you.

Mr. Chase: I'm not going to go on, but I've got to give an analogy. We've got Snow White and the seven dwarfs in the ministry of diamond extraction. Snow runs up a large tab, but Dopey says, "No, I've got it, Snow." Then Snow goes off on a tour of other castles, the wicked queen, and the hunter, et cetera, and the bus tab comes up, and basically Happy stands up and says, "No, Snow, I've got it." So the point of what I am saying is that without the specific information we're getting snowed.

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: Another Liberal fairy tale, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to briefly get on the record and again say that I'm disappointed in this.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Ah, really?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is chatting over there. But I'm sorry; we have to have a government that is accountable and transparent. This motion for a return, the changes that have been initiated here, are not satisfactory. It's only a year since there was a great deal of debate in this Legislative Assembly about some of the habits, some of the excessive spending habits, of this government. It doesn't matter whether we're talking about orange juice by the glass or by the pitcher, the taxpayers have some concern whenever they feel that their dollars are not being used wisely. This motion for a return will help taxpayers have a lot more confidence in their government and how they spend their dollars.

Now, to water this down is discouraging. I'm not going to get into detail on this, but some senior civil servants have had their expenses questioned. Some of them, in fact, have wound up going through the court system.

We on this side of the House have a duty and an obligation. The government in this case, whenever it is so insistent on changing through amendment this motion for a return, I just have to say that I'm disappointed. You don't seem to have learned lessons from last year that taxpayers demand answers, and they demand answers through us as the Official Opposition.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 15 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Minister of Municipal Affairs Business Credit Card Statements

M16. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2003-2004 issued to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the minister's executive assistant.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is, again, self-explanatory. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is keen and serious about holding this government accountable, and it's reflected in this Motion for a Return 16. I would hope that we will receive this information in a timely fashion from the department.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 16 I would like to indicate on behalf of the government and particularly on behalf of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs that this particular motion if it were to be amended minorly would be acceptable to the minister and to the government. The amendment has been circulated, I believe, to all members of the House, and I believe it was also provided as a courtesy and as required to opposition prior to 11 o'clock this morning.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, the rationale behind the amendment is simply this, and that is to indicate that the issue of reporting is obviously something we do take very seriously on this side of the House, and for ease of that reporting, the categories that we have listed in the amended motion, which I will read to you very soon, actually reflect the government's adopted procedures when we are looking at these kinds of credit card expenses and the best way to reflect them and report on them. I believe I've indicated that in previous comments here in the House.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, each department, as all members here would know, is, of course, annually audited by the most professional and thorough of all processes, by our own Auditor General, and he would have drawn out to our attention any anomalies that he may have found during his reviews in previous years. Of course, there haven't been any, so that has not been done.

However, we're offering these amendments in the spirit of at least trying to provide information in the form that is currently collected. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I propose that we strike out "a copy of all monthly business credit card statements" and substitute the words "a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses" and, finally, strike out the words "issued to" and substitute the words "incurred by."

4:20

In the end, Mr. Speaker, the amended motion 16 would be worded in its totality as follows:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses for the fiscal year 2003-2004 incurred by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the minister's executive assistant.

I hope that's acceptable to the questioner and would move the acceptance of this motion as amended.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened to that

with interest. Certainly, at this time one might have to see with this Motion for a Return 16 just exactly what will be provided with this amendment. There was a great deal of fanfare when the government decided that they would put on each respective ministry website all reports and amounts spent on international travel. And, you know, there are certainly some departments in this government that travel more frequently to international destinations than others. Municipal Affairs is a department where there's very little globe-trotting that I'm aware of. Now, Economic Development, that would be another matter.

But when you look at the websites and you see what information is on there and you have a look at this amended motion for a return, I would be of the understanding that all travel, whether it be international travel, within Canada, or within Alberta, would be included in this motion for a return. It is for that reason that I'm going to on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview wait and see precisely what sort of detail we get from this Motion for a Return 16.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview we will look forward to getting that information and having an analysis done of it.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 16 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on behalf of the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Department of Learning Business Credit Card Statements

M17. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Mr. Flaherty that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2003-04 issued to the deputy minister, assistant deputy minister, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the department of learning.

Mr. MacDonald: Certainly, I think many people, including parents of public school students in this province, would be very anxious to see how much money is being spent and where by senior government departmental officials. Whenever we're having this debate across the city here, some of the central city neighbourhoods are being asked to just step aside and allow their community-based schools to be closed so we can save in some cases \$90,000 in operational costs, in some cases \$140,000 in operational costs. So if it's an issue of having very little money, well, let's find out exactly how much and where senior people from the department are spending tax dollars.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister for Education and Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to this particular motion, 17, I guess that it needs to be indicated once again that the motion can be accepted if it were to be amended. I'll get into that in just a moment.

I have explained this before, but for purposes of those people who only read selective motions or selective written questions, I will go through the procedure again and also remind all colleagues that this particular issue and a similar motion with a similar context and a similar amendment were debated in this Assembly last Monday. That having been said, I know that the amendment has been circulated to all members now, and it was also provided to our opposition colleagues prior to 11 this morning as required by protocol and procedures that govern this House.

I'll begin by indicating that in the amended motion, once again, we have categorized the expenses, standardized them, so to speak, under the same categories that were referenced in response to Motion for a Return 14 just earlier, those being travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses. The reason for this, of course, is as a result of a decision that was made by our government roughly a year ago or half a year ago or thereabouts, last fall in any event, to use these specific categories and these specific accounting codes within the categories for the purpose of explaining those specific expenses, and those particular categories are now employed throughout the government process.

So that's one of several efforts in government to standardize procedures that we have undertaken in the interest of being accountable and open and honest and so on. By using these categories, Mr. Speaker, we'll be able to provide the response to this motion as amended, and hopefully that would be to the satisfaction of the questioner.

I've already explained the comments pertaining to the deputy minister level versus the other positions listed in the original motion, and I would just explain what the rationale for the wording is, then, in this respect. As I've indicated previously in the House and earlier even today in the House and during last Monday's debate on similar motions for returns, our Auditor General for the province of Alberta does an exceptionally fine job and a very, very thorough and meticulous job in analyzing all expenses of all provincial departments on an annual basis.

Then that particular report with his comments, be they favourable or be they negative but nonetheless his comments, regardless of what they might be, is provided back to and through this Assembly to all members as well as to the general public of our province. To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has not highlighted any senior department officials' expenses as being a major concern to him at this point.

So I'll just indicate again that we have spent considerable amounts of time and considerable amounts of effort looking into the preparation for the response to this particular motion, as with previous ones of a similar nature, and it would just take so, so long to try and compile every little tidbit of information in a form different than what I'm proposing in the amendment. So I hope that will be acceptable to the questioner or to the person speaking on behalf of the questioner.

That having been said, the amended motion, which we could see ourselves supporting, would be worded as follows:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

A statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses for the fiscal year 2003-04 incurred by the deputy minister for the department of learning.

That having been said, I would hope that everyone would accept that as a suitable amendment to the motion proposed.

4:30

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the amendment.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Again for the record, just in case someone is reading *Hansard* and they haven't had a chance to look at the debate for previous motions for returns where the government has been very reluctant to provide all the information in regard to credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, reception, hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses, we would have to say this. Again, if we are to strike out, as has been requested here, the tabs that are to be picked up by the assistant deputy ministers, the directors, the branch heads, the managers, and unit leaders from the department of learning, we really are doing the taxpayers of this province a disservice, and we are being disrespectful of the taxpayers.

We are, as I said earlier, requesting schools to be closed so that we can reduce operational expenses by as little as \$100,000 or \$140,000, yet we can't make public the amount of money that assistant deputy ministers, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders may be spending by picking up the tab again. Who are they picking up the tab for? And why? And where? They're not doing it, in my estimation, for public schools. That doesn't seem to be a priority. In fact, this is the government that'll turn around and, just like that, order an audit of a public school. You know, they'll just turn around and, zap, you're audited.

In that case, why then can parents through the Official Opposition not have a look at how the monthly business credit card statements run and at what exactly is on them? I would remind the hon. Minister of Education that it's not too long ago, in the last two or three fiscal years – it may have been Municipal Affairs; it may have been Infrastructure – that there was some significant public discourse surrounding the behaviour of an assistant deputy minister or, I will stand corrected, Mr. Speaker, a senior member of the department. I'm on recall here, and if I were to make a mistake, I would apologize to the House. But there was definitely some wrongdoing, and I believe this matter wound up in the courts.

To say now that there's nothing wrong, I think that is an error because there have been some indiscretions in the past. This original motion for a return as proposed by the Member for St. Albert certainly, in my view, is in order. You can't exclude all these senior officials in the department. Why would you? Again, we go back to the same information that is published in the *Alberta Gazette*: hosting expenses over a certain amount, in this case 600 bucks.

So the parents in North Edmonton school don't find out that the assistant deputy minister, a director, and a branch head used a credit card to pay off a dinner with we don't know whom. Maybe it's an organization promoting charter schools. Maybe it's a group of private schools, and they're picking up this tab, but if the three of them are separating the bill, the taxpayers will never find out because the *Alberta Gazette* will not record that.

Again, I think this is disrespectful to taxpayers, to the public school system, to parents and pupils. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. We have the same argument again. We're asking on behalf of the taxpayers and the constituents, who sent us here, for transparency and accountability, and unfortunately we're not receiving it. The easiest way to deal with this would be simply to post the information on the website on a regular basis and make it publicly available to all interested parties. I can't see this as being particularly top-secret, FOIPed information which involves us going through a long, unnecessary process to get the information that should be there.

I'd like to remind the members opposite in the House that while there are only 21 of us here, the majority of Albertans voted against

the government and for parties representing the opposition, and that's because we were knocking on doors saying that we would try and improve accountability and transparency in this House. Yet every time we stand up and offer a legitimate suggestion for a small time period for travel expenses, and so on, incurred by a whole department as opposed to one individual, we get turned down.

Also, with regard to the Auditor General I think that under most circumstances the Auditor General is doing a wonderful job. However, he has not been given the powers by this government to investigate nearly as thoroughly as, say, the federal Auditor General, Sheila Fraser. So if you want true accountability and you want it to be handled through the Auditor General rather than through your own departments, I suggest that you give the man the sufficient power to make the changes.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar sort of moved me to make a couple of comments here. This particular department I've had some knowledge of in the past, and I go back. Certainly, when they didn't like things, they were prepared to audit the Edmonton public school board. The idea was that it's all right to waste the time and energy of the school board, but when they're asked for the same sort of audit on the assistant deputy minister, directors, and branch managers, they're not nearly as forthcoming.

I would remind people that the Edmonton public school board – and I was there at the time – was audited because we had the temerity to say that if the arbitration wasn't covered, we were going to lose a lot of teachers, which is precisely what happened. Immediately the Department of Education's response through the minister, taking the advice he was getting from these very same people, was: "Well, they must be wasting their money. We have to audit them."

But it seems that now, when the members are asking for a similar approach to these same bureaucrats – assistant deputy ministers, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders – well, then, it's too much work. It's too much work, Mr. Speaker, to ferret this out. I say that what's good for the goose is good for the gander, especially with this particular department in view of the record.

What was interesting about the audit – and I sat there with the former minister – were the things that they said about how we were inefficient. One of the major things was that we weren't closing down enough schools. We weren't closing down enough schools. That was one of their brilliant analyses. The other was that we should add teacher minutes onto people. That was how we were being inefficient. We should add more teaching time, and we should close down more schools. That's what they paid for in an audit, this brilliant bunch here, Mr. Speaker.

I think it should be appropriate – I know it wasn't this minister that was there at the time – that this type of great information that they got back, wasting all that time and energy auditing the Edmonton public school board, which this minister says is doing a great job – it should be fair that we check and see what's happening with them. I say, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that if they want to talk about wasting money, that was the biggest waste of money I've ever seen, a department doing that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate.

4:40

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. On behalf of the hon. Member for St. Albert I would have to express at this time my disappointment. This government claims to be open and transparent, but after this amended Motion for a Return 17 I have to say again that I'm sorry. I'm deeply disappointed in this government for refusing the original motion for a return as requested by the hon. Member for St. Albert. I'm very, very disappointed in this government in light of what's going on across this city and across this province with public education, that we can't have full accountability. Accountability with the Progressive Conservative government is not a two-way street.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 17 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Department of Innovation and Science Business Credit Card Statements

M18. Mr. Elsalhy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all monthly business credit card statements for the fiscal year 2003-04 issued to the deputy minister, assistant deputy minister, directors, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders for the Department of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Something tells me that I am going to listen to the same debate from the opposite side, but I'm hopeful that maybe this time it might be different.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 18 the explanation is identical to Motion 17 and to previous motions that have already been discussed and debated in this House, so I'll save the House the time by not re-repeating all of that at this time. Suffice it to say that if it's acceptable, then we would propose an amendment to this motion on the basis of the same rationale that had been explained earlier.

In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, that simply is that we categorize our expenses by a different nomenclature, and secondly, we do have an Auditor General, who examines all of the expenditures within government. I've explained all of that earlier, so I'll sum up simply by saying that we would support this motion if it were amended to read as follows.

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a statement of all credit card expenses categorized by travel, accommodation, meals, receptions and hosting, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses for the fiscal year 2003-04 incurred by the Deputy Minister for the Department of Innovation and Science.

I would hope that that motion as amended would succeed.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on the amendment.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the explanation from the hon. minister, but again I would have to reject the offer to amend this motion for a return. I understand and maybe agree with the nomenclature and changing the wording in section (a) and section (b). It still captures the essence of the question, so I am not in disagreement with point (a) and point (b). But, really, limiting the

information given to just the deputy minister and not disclosing the information as it pertains to the assistant deputy minister and the directors and the branch heads and the managers and unit leaders is really disappointing. The Auditor General might do a fine job reading the ministry records in general, but I think that really what we are looking for is detailed information that would allow us to answer questions that are fair and that are reasonable.

I think that failing that, we would probably have to resort to maybe hiring a forensic accountant or somebody who has experience combing through hidden information because now what the government is doing is not disclosing that information, so it is, in fact, hidden. I am really most disappointed. This is not an unfair question, and I bet you the information is easily compilable in the format that we requested. Like some of the previous hon. colleagues indicated, perhaps they could have simply posted it on the website and saved themselves and ourselves the trouble of going through a motion for a return to ask for it or, failing that, maybe even going to the FOIP co-ordinator and having to wait for several months and then having to pay through our noses to get this information.

So I would urge the House to not accept the amendment. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. As MLAs we're required to go through our expenses and be accountable for them. When I travel from Calgary to Edmonton or back, I claim expenses, indicating the kilometrage I travel. If I take a taxi and use the Diners card, then that bill comes back. All this information, I'm assuming, is available because it's being collected. I post it for myself for the benefit of the LAO every single week. The idea is that the information is there. It's available on a weekly basis. Possibly, it's just a matter of posting it so that it would be more transparent and accountable.

If it is such a difficult task to collect and post all this information, then I might suggest to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency to bring Steve West back in, that this time, instead of getting rid of 10,000 members of the public service, he start by removing deputies, assistant deputies, branch heads, managers, and unit leaders who are not willing to have their expenses publicly put forth.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to conclude debate.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As was previously expressed, I'm really most disappointed. However, I think we have to take what's offered and study it. Although it is really inadequate and it doesn't really answer the question, we'll just take it the way it comes.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 18 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

Ground Ambulance Services

M19. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any

documents from the Department of Municipal Affairs for the fiscal years 2003-2004 and 2002-2003 referring to the provincial takeover of ground ambulance services from municipalities on April 1, 2005.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this has created a great deal of debate in the province, this whole issue of the ground ambulance services and who is to fund them and how. We saw a significant cost overrun here. It was initially decided that between \$52 million and, I believe, \$55 million would be an adequate expenditure to provide for this takeover, but to everyone's surprise it was more than double that. It was more than double that. Some municipal districts were very concerned about their ambulance service and what would happen to it. There has been much talk about this.

There was also a lot of talk in the last election about the lack of vision of this government, and this was an example of that lack of vision. We see this dramatic increase in costs and one spokesperson for the government saying one thing and another saying another thing. It was a program or a takeover that certainly did not at this time work out. So the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is doing a great service to the citizens of the entire province by requesting this information through this forum at this time. I'm sure the government is going to provide this information, and I'm eager to receive it on his behalf.

Thank you.

4:50

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is prepared to accept this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, did you want to speak?

Mr. Chase: If the hon. members opposite are prepared to accept this motion, I strongly support their acceptance. Thank you for speeding up the process and adding clarity to our procedures.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to thank the hon. minister on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview for agreeing to this motion for a return. We look forward to having a look at the information and analyzing it.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 19 carried]

Alberta Office In Washington

M20. Mr. Elsalhy moved on behalf of Mr. Bonko that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents including but not limited to budget, business, and operational plans related to the establishment of an Alberta office in Washington, DC.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I wish to accept Motion for a Return 20 with amendments. The amendments have been distributed to all members and shared with the opposition.

I'd like to move that the motion for a return be amended by striking out "all documents including but not limited to" and substituting "the." Mr. Speaker, the amended motion for a return would then read as follows: "That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the budget, business, and operational plans related to the establishment of an Alberta office in Washington, DC." The hon. minister would be pleased to provide that information.

The motion as drafted refers to "all documents . . . related to the establishment of an Alberta office in Washington, DC." I'm advised that some of the documents requested may contain information potentially harmful to our intergovernmental relations and third parties and contain information that is considered privileged, such as advice to the minister and cabinet. For the wide-ranging information requested in this return, it is suggested that the hon. member use the process that currently exists under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This would give all impacted third parties an opportunity to review the request and provide their comment before any information is released.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move that Motion for a Return 20 be accepted as amended.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on the amendment.

Mr. Elsalhy: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the rationale given by the hon. minister. When we drafted this question, we didn't think that the words "all documents" were this big, really. We didn't expect it to be potentially troubling for the government. Although I don't agree that, basically, some of those documents might have been privileged or may be damaging to our relations with the U.S., I appreciate the approach offered by the hon. minister. I know that the hon. colleague from Edmonton-Decore would still like to see some of that information.

However, I just have this question. Basically, the amended version of this motion would offer stuff that I would have assumed to be readily available, perhaps on the website or perhaps in government printed publications. So my question is: isn't this information readily available? It was the other information that we were really after, but I would welcome more comments from colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just make a few comments on that because the three motions following are sort of all around the same issue. I'm prepared as the critic for International and Intergovernmental Relations to accept this amendment because although it's not great, at least we have access to the documents. I understand what a problem it can be waiting for third-party permission. Rather than wait, I would like to get something going. Because this is a new department, I'd like a good, strong baseline of information, and then I can worry about the other stuff. This is a department and an office that we will be keeping a very close eye on. So I would accept this amendment.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on the amendment.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. If I could offer a suggestion. We have through the LAO the availability of legal counsel. I would suggest that through that legal counsel, if there was any potential privacy, third-party circumstance that the legal counsel considered to be of

such a nature that potentially would affect intercountry relations, then that lawyer or member of the counsel could provide that information to all members.

At some point we need to be working together and sharing a common information base, and there has to be, obviously, an improved trust circumstance. With the availability of our legal representations to keep us straight on what is and what isn't acceptable information, we would all be playing on the same team instead of the LAO serving in the role of a referee. I appreciate what my colleague has said, and in the interests of getting the information flowing, I will sit.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to close debate.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Official Opposition and the sponsor of this motion for a return, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, will be awaiting the information as amended.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 20 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Alberta Office in Washington

M21. Ms Pastoor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all cost-benefit analyses for the newly established Alberta office in Washington, DC.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll repeat some of the remarks that I made to the previous motion. Because this is newly established, I think that now is the time to create a baseline so that we can get a true evaluation of what exactly is going on and what we're getting for our taxpayers' dollars.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, on behalf of the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I'm pleased to accept Motion for a Return 21.

5:00

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to conclude debate.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. It's concluded. I'd call the question.

[Motion for a Return 21 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Alberta Office in Washington

M22. Ms Pastoor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the detailed budget breakdown for the Alberta office in Washington, DC, for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My reasoning is basically the same. It is more detailed in the previous two motions, and again it's giving us a good baseline to see if, in fact, we are getting benefit for our tax dollars.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I would note that this hon. member clearly crafts very good questions and is most persuasive in her arguments because, once again, I am pleased to accept Motion for a Return 22.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to conclude debate.

Ms Pastoor: Well, thank you to the hon. member from across. Yes. I have been known to be succinct in my remarks.

The debate is concluded, and I would call the question.

[Motion for a Return 22 carried]

AISH Review Committee Submissions

M23. Ms Pastoor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all submissions to the renewing AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, committee between August 1, 2004, and December 31, 2004.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to indicate that I'd be able to accept the motion for a return if it was amended and also to let you know that this amendment was previously shared with my opposition colleague and circulated to members of the House as per the protocol with motions for returns.

I'd like to move that Motion for a Return 23 be amended by striking out "copies" and substituting "a summary"; striking out "renewing AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, committee" and substituting "MLA committee reviewing the AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, program"; and striking out "August 1, 2004, and December 31, 2004" and substituting "September 28, 2004, and January 31, 2005." So the amended motion, Mr. Speaker, would now read as follows: "A summary of [the responses provided] to the MLA committee reviewing the AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, program between September 28, 2004, and January 31, 2005."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you the rationale for making some of these changes. We did receive, as the hon. member knows, an overwhelming amount of feedback from AISH clients, their families, and Albertans during the MLA AISH review process. In fact, we received approximately 18,000 individual responses as part of the review. Copying all the submissions would result in significant costs and use of supplies, staff time, et cetera, and I don't think that was the hon. member's intent.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the time frame indicated in the motion for a return is different from the time period during which we received input from Albertans, as the AISH review was announced on September 28 of last year and input was accepted up to January 31, 2005.

Last Friday I released the MLA AISH review committee's report and was pleased to do so, Mr. Speaker. This report is a summary of the input provided by Albertans. It is responses which established the framework for the committee's recommendations and set the stage for the significant investment and enhancement to the programs which were announced last week.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member is very interested in

this area, just from conversation that we have had about this, and I'd like to invite the Member for Lethbridge-East to meet with the assistant deputy minister for the AISH program so that the member can review any submissions, hon. member, that you are interested in out of these 18,000 submissions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on the amendment.

Ms Pastoor: Yes. Thank you. I would accept this amendment, and as has already been described by the hon. member from across the House, we have sat and discussed this, and I believe that with these amendments I will still be receiving the information that I need. I particularly wanted to know how the budget had been based on some of the suggestions that had come out of those reports.

So I thank the hon. member for actually cutting down, probably, my workload and still getting me the information that I need.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Motion for a Return 23 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Temporary Foreign Workers

M24. Mr. Backs moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any and all documents pertaining to the June 2004 memorandum of understanding between the government and the federal government regarding foreign temporary workers.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just note that there's been a great deal of interest in this particular agreement, a lot of controversy surrounding this particular agreement as to what, indeed, were the real statistics used, any studies that were used regarding the actual unemployment rate.

I know, for example, that some of the trades, say last spring, for example, were experiencing quite high unemployment. There were a lot of complaints from a lot of construction apprentices about the lack of continued, steady employment so that they could stay in their trade and, certainly, in a number of other occupations and areas. There was not a lot of consultation on this with a lot of labour providers. It seemed like the Alberta government went after this agreement quite aggressively. You know, many people call this the Oberg agreement now, as he was the minister responsible at the time. Many people say that the whole agreement in itself is an attempt to distort the labour market.

I would appreciate that this information be forthcoming. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond to Motion for a Return 24. I am rejecting the motion for a return requesting copies of any and all documentation pertaining to the June 2004 MOU between the provincial and federal governments regarding foreign temporary workers. The MR could be interpreted very broadly, including correspondence from members of the public, which is submitted in confidence and contains personal information.

However, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's interest in this matter. As such, I am willing to table documents that indicate

the government's intent in negotiating this MOU with the federal government. I will table these documents to the Clerk's office tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

5:10

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. It'll certainly be interesting to have an opportunity to read those tabled documents tomorrow. When we look at Motion for a Return 24 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, I think it goes into a lot more detail than that. You know, I realize that the hon. minister is monitoring the situation, but in this case he's being very selective with the documents that he could release tomorrow.

I think the motion for a return as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Manning is much more appropriate. This is an issue that has created a lot of interest in Alberta and, certainly, in the rest of the country. I was as surprised as anyone to learn on the 2nd or the 3rd of June last year that this memorandum had been signed and that we were going to implement this drive to recruit foreign workers on a temporary basis.

Now, certainly, in the last day or two in the media there has been a great deal of speculation on the new policy from the federal government, the family reunification policy, and that is a good policy. We certainly need to increase the number of Canadians that are coming here from other parts of the world, but . . .

An Hon. Member: P.E.I.?

Mr. MacDonald: Now, there was an hon. member who said that P.E.I. was on the other side of the world, but it's not that far away, and it's certainly been a part of Canada for a very long time and has been making a positive contribution to this country for a very long time.

But when you look at this policy, where we're going to have these temporary foreign workers allowed into the country, we're not going to be training the new immigrants like we should be. They are in some cases having to wait for long periods of time to enter this country. It's not fair to them. It's not fair to them to suddenly recruit – whether it's through NAIT or SAIT or some other community college or some other organization – temporary foreign workers. It's not fair to them.

It's not fair to the farmers, who have faced very difficult economic times and have a very high interest in getting a trade certificate in this province so that they can participate in the construction of the new tar sands facilities. How do the farmers feel when they see this massive tax holiday that they're paying for? We have reduced royalties from 25 to 1 per cent, and they're not getting fair access to this employment because they've not been trained. It's not fair to the farmers.

It's not fair to the First Nations people, who have a very, very high rate of unemployment. Now, I was surprised that last week, I think it was, there was a member from the workforce in Fort McMurray – Dorothy was her name – who had walked all the way from Fort McMurray to Edmonton to protest this notion, this notion that we're going to recruit all these temporary foreign workers into this country.

Her original residence was over in Saskatchewan, east of the tar sands, and she told me that there were chronic rates of unemployment in the First Nations people in Saskatchewan. Why in the world would we talk about going to Venezuela and to other places to recruit construction workers on a temporary basis while this pool of labour is probably 300 or 400 kilometres away in northern Saskatch-

ewan? This is just poor public policy, and Motion for a Return 24 would satisfy a lot of the requests for all the information about this government's ill-conceived policy.

We have youth unemployment rates in this province. There are lots of young people in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar who are looking for apprenticeships, and they can't get them. They cannot get them, yet this government is trying to diminish the trade programs in this province and undermine living wages by recruiting these foreign workers on a temporary basis.

That's why I would ask the minister to reconsider in regard to Motion for a Return 24 and provide the information as requested by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. There are still groups in this province and in this country that have high levels of unemployment. This whole idea of having temporary foreign workers should be an action of very last resort, after all pools of labour have been trained in this province. We just can't be operating at the whim of the big oil companies here. We're giving them lots of tax breaks. They're willing to invest their money here. That's evident. They're not stopping investing their money, and that's a good thing.

But it has to be fair. It has to be fair to both the trained and untrained workers. It has to be fair to the farmers, the young people, Canadians from all across the country, and it also has to be fair to the immigrants who are already here. They shouldn't have to wait for training and access to jobs in the north because someone is more interested in recruiting temporary foreign workers from Venezuela.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to this motion, and I want to begin by expressing my concern that this particular motion has been rejected by the minister. Now, I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has been repeatedly disappointed today by the response of the government ministers because each time he's been disappointed, he's said so. So I know he's a very disappointed man, and I would like him to go away from our session this afternoon in a little bit more of an upbeat mood.

In a little more serious vein, this is a very important motion. I'm pleased that it's been made, but I am concerned that it has been rejected. Now, the minister, in rejecting this, said that there would be too many things that would have to be provided, and it could be interpreted very, very broadly, and all kinds of things like personal correspondence or issues related to personal matters could be revealed.

But if you go up a little bit higher to some of the motions that have been accepted by other ministers, they are drafted in a very similar form. So, for example, the provincial takeover of ground ambulance services: copies of any documents; all documents related to the Alberta office in Washington. These have been accepted by the respective ministers, but this minister has rejected this one. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why is he rejecting it?

Well, you know, there was a document that we tabled in the House a week or two ago from Suncor that basically detailed some of the labour shortages that they're dealing with. It was clear from a careful look at that document that the labour shortages were not general. They were a shortage within CLAC. In other words, CLAC, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, which is the company's favourite union, has difficulty attracting certain trades. Probably, at least in my view, this is due to the fact that that union does not fight as vigorously for its members as legitimate trade unions in the building trades and elsewhere. So CLAC has a

problem fulfilling the needs of potential employers for the construction of new projects, most notably the Horizon project, and can't fill its roster and supply the necessary workers in order to allow the government's section 8 to take effect and allow them to step in ahead of other trade unions.

So the government's plan has got to be seen in that light, Mr. Speaker. The rejection of this motion has to be seen in that light, as well, because I believe that these documents would demonstrate that, in fact, the government is conspiring with investors in the oil sands in order to replace legitimate trade unions with a company union, CLAC, or potentially even the Merit shop contractors, which is a non-union shop. In order to provide a low-cost wage environment for these employers, the government is willing to sacrifice not just reasonable wages, working conditions, and benefits for legitimate trades workers but also the employment of Albertans, including First Nations people, and other Canadians in order to fast-track the project on behalf of the Horizon project and further developments of the oil sands as well.

5:20

So, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that this motion that has been proposed, if passed, would provide ammunition for those of us on this side of the House who have argued that the importation of temporary foreign workers is unnecessary at this time and is in fact intended to undermine legitimate trade unions and the benefits that they bring to their members. They wanted to bring over a bunch of Venezuelan oil workers who at the instigation of the American government helped participate in a strike in a vain attempt to bring down the Chavez government in Venezuela and now find themselves without work. Now they want to bring them here to undermine the working people of this province as well. You know, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that kind of thing is not acceptable. I don't think we need to bring in the foreign workers.

But it would be very curious to be a fly on the wall if you were at the discussions between the federal government, which is, frankly, no better than this one when it comes to these matters, and this government as they put together their plan to bring in foreign workers to build the oil sands non-union. That's what this is about, Mr. Speaker, and that's why, in my view, the hon. minister has rejected this question.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Very frequently in this House what is thrown at us is, "Your federal cousins did this," or "Your federal cousins did that," associating us with those so-called federal cousins. Yet here we are in the House asking for information that supposedly our federal cousins passed along to the government, and the government is not willing to share that information, which, if nothing else, points out that we have no idea what our federal cousins are doing with regard to temporary foreign workers, and we would like a little bit of elucidation from this hon. member's department.

Also, it's been pointed out by my hon. NDP colleague that this is a very specific motion, requesting information for the month of June in 2004. It's not global, and it's not asking for details on the expenses of a variety of individuals, which have been the reasons for rejecting similar motions and similar questions. It's extremely specific. What we don't need from this government are translators, summarizers, or information sanitizers. We need specific detailed information.

As has been pointed out in question period and then through to . . .

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the noise level is beginning to rise. Please, if you have any discussions, there is room at the back in the Confederation Room or in the coffee area. You may proceed and have your conversation take place there.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity has the floor.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I know the hon. members would rather hear this information first-hand than spend long nights reading it in *Hansard*, although it might assist them with their sleeping patterns.

In this House we have brought forward a whole series of unemployment figures. Obviously, the Maritimes are suffering to a much greater extent than we in Alberta are suffering, but even as close, as has been pointed out, as Saskatchewan and within our own aboriginal community we have a number of workers who are practically begging for employment. Some of that employment would involve skill training, and we have the institutions within this province. We also have union organizations that have the skills to train the members to bring them up to the level of employment that the oil sands are requiring.

We are not opposed to legitimate refugees. We're not opposed to immigrants. We're not opposed to the work that is done that helps out local farmers and orchard people in terms of seasonal and migrational employment. Every year we welcome thousands of workers on a very temporary harvesting basis from Mexico, and it's thanks to their efforts and the Canadian working conditions and the co-operation that we produce a number of products that serve our domestic needs as well as exportables. So the idea of seasonal and migrational isn't a problem. But when we go to temporary foreign workers, one of the problems is the definition of temporary. If temporary means that they're over here for two or three years on the equivalent of an extended green card, then they don't fit the definition of temporary.

We have workers throughout our country who need employment. Each time we read one of these series of petitions, it starts out that first we should employ a variety of people, and it basically ends up:

and unemployed farm workers. We have the people here that need the employment. We would not want our federal government to be shoehorning individuals from other countries into this process to lower the standards of work and pay for Albertans and unemployed Canadians. You've heard the petitions enough that you should have it memorized by now without my having to repeat it. Let's look after Canadians first. Let's look after our immigrants. Let's look after our refugees. Let's keep Albertans number one, Canadians number two. We don't need temporary foreign workers whose temporary contracts extend.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to conclude the debate.

Mr. Backs: To conclude debate on that, Mr. Speaker. The use of temporary foreign workers is really very much an issue at the forefront of concern for many, many Albertans for many reasons. The papers – the *Edmonton Sun*, the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post* – have had many, many different articles on this issue which have tried to analyze it. We've seen numerous studies. *Fort McMurray Today*, of course, has had many, many things, the *Lethbridge Herald* – I even had an interview with the *Olds Albertan* in the fine community of Olds regarding the issue.

Certainly, there's a great interest in having the information brought forward, the full information. I'm surprised that the minister would say that there would be issues of a private and personal concern in a memorandum of agreement between governments on this issue, which will deal specifically with the oil sands and all of the important employment issues that we will have in seeking the construction of those huge facilities.

There was, again, an odd agreement on the division 8 application from CNRL. A lot of good people work for CNRL. A lot of them have done a lot of work on that, but it's again raised great consternation.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, it's 5:30 p.m. The House stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 18, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/04/18

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, before we proceed with the matters before us, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a whole bunch of people here tonight that I'm going to introduce in groups because there are so many of them. I'm going to ask the members of all of the groups that I introduce to stand up, and then we'll give them the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

From your constituency, Mr. Speaker, the Bishop McNally high school concert band from Calgary, with teacher Mr. John Ramsay; the Hunting Hills high school drama cast of *Peter Pan* from Red Deer, with Mr. Bill Jacobsen; the Eastglen high school dance group from Edmonton, with Ms Allison White; the Victoria school concert choir from Edmonton, with Mr. Gerhard Kruschke and Mr. Craig Daniel, vice-principal; art students from Louis St. Laurent from Edmonton, with Mrs. Claire Theberge, vice-principal. Please stand and receive the warm greeting of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the second group are all of the discipline reps from the Fine Arts Council of the ATA as well as the Alberta Teachers' Association district reps: Mr. Glen Christensen, art rep from St. Paul; Ms Andrea Coull, dance rep from Spruce Grove; Ms Kerry McPhail-Hayden, drama rep from St. Albert; Ms Sherri Larsen Ashworth, music rep from Sherwood Park; Ms Mary Dunnigan, Kim Fraser, and Mr. Harold Neth. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

We also have Ms Claire MacDonald, editor of the *Fine Facta* journal, from Calgary.

Finally, and by no means least, the person who made all of this happen, Mr. Speaker, a man by the name of Mr. Peter McWhir, past president of the Fine Arts Council, from Calgary. Please stand, Peter. This fellow took it upon himself to organize all of this today. I just don't know how to thank you except to say that I'm sure that all of the students really touched all of our souls.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of this Assembly a couple of people who are interested in government and certainly are interested in hearing the riveting speech from the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont. I'm talking about two people, Kristen McLeod and Vincent Tetreault, from Edmonton. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two guests with me

this evening. First of all, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mr. Graham Lettner. Graham is in his third year of a degree in electrical engineering. He has recently been elected president of the University of Alberta Students' Union. Since arriving at campus in 2002, Graham has been very active and has sat as an elected member of student council, representing the Faculty of Engineering, and was previously the president of St. Joseph's College. Graham, I would ask you to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

As well, with Graham tonight is Mrs. Samantha Power. Sam is in her fourth year of political science, where she studies the effect that the media has on the treatment of marginalized groups. She has been recently elected to the University of Alberta in the position of associate VP academic in the student elections that occurred in early March. I would ask her, as well, to rise and have her receive the warm welcome of the Assembly too.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the chair would not want to miss this opportunity to recognize the work of Mr. Ramsay and his staff at Bishop McNally, which is a school in my riding, and I'm very proud of each and every one of you.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

High School Credits

505. Mr. Herard moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider the benefits of requiring five credits in fine arts as a condition for high school graduation in the province.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion urges government to review the role that fine arts plays in our provincial education system at the high school level. Our province already enjoys one of the best education systems in the world. This is the product of good curriculum, good teachers, and great students, like the ones we have in the galleries tonight.

So why am I requesting this review of fine arts in high schools? There are a number of compelling reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I hope will convince members on both sides of this Assembly to vote for this motion. These include improved human development and learning outcomes, as supported by an abundance of research; historical and economic reasons resulting from technology and new globalization trends; and our ability to achieve our 20-year strategy to become the best place to live, work, visit, and raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, this motion calls for the government to consider the benefits of requiring five credits in fine arts for high school graduation in light of the significant changes in our world and the abundance of the new research supporting the benefits of including fine arts in high school for improved student learning.

There are those who feel that studying the arts has no practical benefit except for those who pursue a career in the arts. Mr. Speaker, the last 20 years has produced volumes of research that provides convincing evidence that learning music, dance, drama, or art helps kids learn better, live better, enjoy a better quality of life, and become better citizens. To summarize the research, generally speaking, creativity, innovation, and lateral thought are developed and enhanced through the studying of the arts. The ability to assimilate information, attention to detail, working in teams, worth ethic, discipline, and self-esteem are all other benefits that are recognized.

A few examples follow, Mr. Speaker. A study by physician and

biologist Lewis Thomas found that the top 66 per cent of students admitted to medical schools were music majors. In another example researchers from the Yale University School of Medicine have found that medical students are better at diagnosing if they are taught to analyze fine details in paintings. By studying art, medical students' ability to learn in other areas was also shown to be demonstrably improved. To paraphrase, an issue of *Neurological Research* published in March 1999 demonstrates that music rhythm involves ratios and fractions, proportions, and thinking in time and space. When compared to learning math on computers, students who took piano keyboard training performed 34 per cent better on tests measuring spatial/temporal ability or proportional reasoning, including ratios and fractions.

Dr. James Catterall of UCLA in 1997 tracked more than 25,000 students, which is a huge sample, Mr. Speaker, and found that regardless of socioeconomic background – and that's important – those with music training consistently got better marks in standardized tests in reading proficiency exams than those who had no music.

8:10

The important part of this is that an arts education helps level the, quote, unquote, learning playing field across cultural and socioeconomic boundaries. Other studies showed measurable impact on youth at risk: deterring delinquent behaviour and improving dropout rates. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm told that one of our own northern school jurisdictions reduced their dropout rate by over 30 per cent by introducing an arts program at the high school level. The program also helped develop a positive work ethic, pride in a job well done, self-esteem, and reduced substance abuse in the face of other socioeconomic issues.

Studies have shown that where schools increase opportunities for the arts to all students, test scores rise proportionately with no detrimental effect on test scores even in subject areas, Mr. Speaker, where time was borrowed in the school day to make time for band and choir.

Mr. Speaker, for those who need a more academic discussion, I would urge them to look at a study entitled *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts*, written by Kevin McCarthy, Elizabeth Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras, and Arthur Brooks, commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in New York in 2004. Time does not permit me to discuss this research in detail, but this study explores both the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of both public and private value of the arts in education and society. It deals in detail with instrumental benefits such as cognitive, attitudinal, behavioural, health, social, economic outcomes; intrinsic benefits including captivation, pleasure, capacity for empathy, cognitive growth, social bonds, and expression of communal meaning are also discussed in detail.

Mr. Speaker, there's no end to the literature that has emerged over the last 20 years that demonstrates the benefits of the arts in all school levels. I believe it's time to take this research seriously and get on with the opportunity for improved student learning throughout Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I know that some of my colleagues are worried about how rural schools will be able to integrate fine arts into the classroom and that the same options or opportunities may not always be available in the rural areas as are available in urban areas. If it turns out that the research shows significant benefits in human potential and improved student learning by studying the arts, why would we want to continue to disadvantage rural children in that way? As a province we invested in SuperNet in part to level the learning playing field between urban and rural students. Why would we not

want to level the learning playing field for the arts? Rural children deserve the best that we can provide.

This is why this motion is asking the government to at least consider the benefits of requiring students to have five credits in fine arts for graduation. Concerns such as rural issues can be discussed. Perhaps funding formulas need to be changed or more fine arts teachers hired, but again that is something that we as a province have the capacity to do to improve student learning in rural Alberta.

There may even be an opportunity for Alberta to move outside the box in terms of implementing fine arts with the help of SuperNet. Our best arts clinicians will be made available anywhere, any time via SuperNet video conferencing. I've visited schools who learn with the help of artists, and they all rank near the top in student achievement.

Mr. Speaker, historically, the last time that fine arts was extensively reviewed at the high school level was back in the information age, in the 20th century. The 21st century is the knowledge age, where the use of technology permeates most of what we do in life. Who could have predicted that the world would be so different when the last review of fine arts in high school was done, some 20 years ago? Who could have thought that the whole multimedia foundation of the 21st century knowledge age would rely on creative minds trained in the arts? We need to become a province that understands the relationship between multimedia technology and the importance of the arts and the humanities in defining who we are as people and how best to prepare our children for success in the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, increasingly when one examines the new economy of the 21st century, one finds creative artistic expression in most of the products of the multimedia age. Artists are used to build the billions of creative websites world-wide, websites of every description that are becoming the repository of the world's knowledge. The content industry has huge potential, and we're only beginning to see the implications.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, the most commercially successful computer games for children are not built by technocrats, but they're built by teams of artists working in concert with computer software experts. Some of the world's best animators, musicians, singers, Juno and Academy award recipients are Canadians, all with a solid background in the arts.

Mr. Speaker, the future importance of five credits in fine arts is what this motion seeks to examine because the demand for creative interfaces to the knowledge age is growing rapidly. I'll be listening with interest to others' comments.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to speak to Motion 505. Before starting, I would just like to compliment the government on the big band assembly yesterday at the music hall. I think it was a wonderful thing for the government to be sponsoring. Again, St. Albert was just at the bottom of hosting it, so it was very successful. I happened to have the opportunity to sit next to some of the trustees at the event and got my fill-in on 505.

First of all, it's my understanding that currently high school students require 10 credits from a select group of courses. Looking at these, they range from career technology, fine arts, second languages, physical education, locally developed and acquired authorized courses, one 36-level course from the IOP occupational cluster, one 35-level locally developed IOP course, or two 35-level courses from any trade in the registered apprenticeship program. The point I'm trying to make in this one, Mr. Speaker, is that it is a crowded curriculum, and I guess one has to look at where priorities

are when you come into school administration and the cost of these things.

I have to also say that in the Learning Commission, number 6, regarding curriculum enhancement and fine arts, suggests that “all students should have opportunities to learn and experience the fine arts at all levels in the education system.” So fine arts should be mandatory, it suggests in the commission report, and then optional in grades 10, 11, and 12.

Another consideration, I think, Mr. Speaker, in terms of this new program is school fees. Any time we introduce something, sometimes we have in fine arts especially the thing of school fees coming into play. I think this is something we have to consider and make a concern for parents that may not be able to afford the extra school fees to have such a fine program that’s been outlined for us this evening.

Also, much like other curriculum proposals for mandatory daily physical activity and second-language acquisition, this proposal will likely place additional pressure on schools’ infrastructure, equipment, teacher numbers, and training. Resources would have to be provided for implementation and would have to involve, hopefully, consultation across the province at the rural school level and also at the urban centres across the province.

One other aspect I’d like to emphasize: I think it would be important in such a fine program as this if we were to go outside the schools and talk to the many fine artists across the province and get some of their feelings and the information that they would have to offer.

8:20

Now, Mr. Peter McWhir – I haven’t had the pleasure of meeting him – I understand is hosting an arts education conference this fall, the 27th and 30th, and I guess that is tied into, as I understand it, the ATA Fine Arts Council. So I imagine he would be able to get feedback from school districts, teachers right across the province and get lots of input.

I think, in terms of thinking back to the crystal meth bill, it seems to me that one of the key things we require here is leadership. I was interested to see that the Minister of Education’s background is mentioned here in the statement: a former arts teacher and supporter of the arts coupled with his experience in the fine arts field. I think this would be of great benefit, and hopefully he can show us the way to get this new course implemented. I would suggest, too, that it would be nice to start it at the other end, from 1 to 9, so again I’m probably causing the problem of a crowded curriculum.

Let me, then, just say that some of the things like timetable, teacher availability, curriculum development, leadership at the ministerial level and also at the school system level is very crucial for this program. I would also like to say that in the discussions yesterday St. Albert schools would be most happy to pilot some of this activity. I hope that doesn’t mean that I have to be a Tory MLA. Anyway, I’ll let you look at that and be objective. I think that that would be a good way of introducing this program into the schools if we need a year to find out what some of the things are that we require and to look at some of the things that I have already mentioned.

One of the other things I noticed in a memo that I just got this afternoon from the ATA – it talked about teachers being needed. I think we talked about that. Something that I didn’t realize: it said that it would also be necessary to update the curriculum for all arts courses as most material is currently 20 years out of date. Now, I don’t know if that’s true, if that’s just ATA jargon or politics, but that surprised me. So with a program of this nature I’d have to get information, and probably I can get it from the minister someday,

regarding what is the need for upgrading curriculum in the school system.

Another interesting thing that the member across the way mentioned seems to be an increasing popularity of the arts. In the last decade high school enrolment was 23.4 per cent whereas enrolment in drama and visual arts has increased over 50 per cent. I found that very interesting. Enrolment in dance is up 700 per cent. I’m happy to say that my granddaughter in Calgary will be dancing in front of the Queen. She’s 10 years old, and she’s a wonderful lady, and I think that she’ll do a tremendous job.

It says here also, however, that despite the popularity of grade 10 arts courses, there’s a sharp decline in enrolment by the time students reach grade 12. I think it’s unfortunate that that happens, but evidently he’s indicating in this memo that that’s the case.

Before sitting down, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also say that the St. Albert constituency is very, very high on the arts. It’s very important to our community. Some of these things can be looked at. I emphasize the leadership of the Minister of Education to get this thing in order and shape it up. I think we would probably be very supportive of this proposal.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to add a few comments to the debate on Motion 505 tonight. I take great interest in any idea that may have a positive impact on our education system, and I would like to commend the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont for putting forth such an interesting one.

Motion 505 is urging government to “consider the benefits of requiring five credits in fine arts as a condition for high school graduation in the province.” Given the important role art plays in our lives, I think government should at least weigh the merits of this motion.

As the hon. member next to me stated, there is a steadily increasing body of knowledge that shows that exposure to the arts and training in the arts have a positive impact that extends far into other areas of a person’s life. It is also widely acknowledged that the skills developed through the process of creation and experimentation – that is, creativity, innovation, and lateral thinking – are extremely marketable in the current world labour force. Moreover, the benefits of arts training have been touted as improving students’ ability to not only perform in areas other than the arts, but arts training also prepares a student for the new demands of the information age. Alberta’s Learning Commission noted these benefits and recommended that all students should have the opportunities to learn and experience the fine arts. With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be shortsighted to not at the very least consider that Alberta students receive a minimum level of exposure to the arts given the many benefits.

Perhaps we could find out about and learn from the experiences in British Columbia and Nova Scotia. In recent years changes have been made to the curricular requirements in both provinces to make arts education mandatory for graduation from high school. A report of the Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum in 2001 stated that learning in the arts over time results in increasing control over creative and technical abilities. As students progress along the learning continuum, they increase their ability to create and generate their own ideas for work and make decisions about its development. Critical and contextual understandings are deepened so that students are able to form their own judgments and support them using correct terminology and a range of evaluative criteria.

That, Mr. Speaker, is quite the endorsement of arts education in our high schools. I am encouraged to hear that over the last 10 years in Alberta the number of credits that students have earned in the fine arts has increased significantly and that the government continues to look at ways to further develop a fine arts K to 12 program.

Given the modest nature of Motion 505, I support its intent. Let's investigate whether we can or should mandate fine arts within a learning system that still values the preservation of flexibility and choice for our students.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the opportunity to attend the inaugural Lieutenant Governor of Alberta's arts awards at the Banff Centre. Established under the patronage of the late Lois Hole, these awards were created to celebrate excellence in and underline the importance of the arts in Alberta, and they succeeded in doing just that. The evening was artistically very impressive, very motivating, and an incredible tribute to Lois, who was a dynamic force in the development of our appreciation of the arts.

In closing, I'd like to share some words spoken in Lois' public speech when she launched the Alberta awards last October:

The arts bring meaning to our lives. They prick our consciences, excite our senses, and inspire our own creativity. They make us think and feel and [strive] to do better. The arts bring comfort when we need it, and they make us uncomfortable when we need it too.

They are a reflection of all we are, an image of what we were and a call to what we could be.

These are wise words from a very wise woman.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage all members to support this motion and urge the government to review the role that fine arts plays in our provincial education system. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Minister for Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have the pleasure to rise and speak in favour of Motion 505 this evening. I would like to congratulate the Member for Calgary-Egmont for bringing up a very innovative and important, I think, innovation and perspective on our public education system.

I think, as several speakers have already brought forward, that it's becoming more evident that an applied and systematic study of the arts is beneficial in the broadest possible way for education of both young people and adults. You know, it also has the benefit of enriching people's lives, which otherwise, I think, is an important part of public education that we sometimes forget about, that we're not just producing working units to fit into various parts of our economy; rather, we are here to produce, Mr. Speaker, in our public system citizens of our province and of our country. Citizens that are well educated in the arts, I believe, have a more balanced view of life and are more capable of enjoying the world that we have around, physical and spiritual and intellectual. So by pursuing the arts, it means a great deal to me as an educator myself and with my own personal history of education. I taught for several years in a most wonderful school that we have here in Edmonton, the Victoria school for the performing arts, where, you know, we have seen sort of the tip of the spear of the potential, I believe, of the arts and education and how we can apply it to public schools.

8:30

I think, as well, Mr. Speaker, that we don't have to look any further than all of the wonderful guests that we have here this evening, the vivacity and the camaraderie and the wonderful opportunities that I think the arts provide for young students at various stages in their education. You know, I think that if each of us as members reaches back into their own public education

experience, some of their most fond memories might come from their participation in music programs or drama programs or the spoken arts and such things as that.

I do, too, have some reservations as an educator, specifically in applying more obligatory things onto the public education system. I think that we have to be careful with those applications because we know from practical experience of our own children going to high school or some of us teaching in high school that already the curriculum is very full. Students who are applying themselves and trying to get the most out of high school will often find themselves with 140 or 150 credits or more during the course of their three years of education.

You know, quite frankly, I believe that in the 20 or so years since I was in high school, the high school education really has improved. There's no doubt about it. The vigour has definitely increased and the level of expectation has increased, but, you know, along with that is a level of stress and time constraint that we have placed upon our young people. I think that we have to be judicious in how we apply new programming to our high school curriculum in particular and, I think, public education in general.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we might consider this motion in a broader sense and have it perhaps spread to the junior high curriculum or even the higher grades of the elementary curriculum because, in fact, this is a place where students have perhaps a more acute receptiveness to the arts, and we can start habits and appreciation of various types of visual and musical and performing arts that they can carry through with them regardless of what they pursue in high school.

Just to go back specifically to the high school curriculum, I think that one of the places where the arts and arts appreciation has made some inroads, Mr. Speaker, is in some of the accelerated, or advanced, programs that we have available to us now in the Alberta high schools. I know, again from personal teaching experience, that the IB, international baccalaureate, and advanced placement programs both have artistic appreciation elements built into the curriculums: in the English curriculum, in the history curriculum, literature, and language arts. You know, this is a place where we might be able to pursue these same things in our Alberta curriculum and recognize them as such.

I think that one of the walls that an arts focus runs into in our public education system at this point, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we have built, I think over the last 10 years or so especially, a public education system that is very much focused on a very reductive and test-oriented view of what an education is. The best and the most that we can gain from a good arts education and appreciation does not fit into that reductive and test-oriented view of public education.

So I think that perhaps the hon. member's motion actually is an opportunity for us to look beyond just how we are formulating our education system and perhaps look to not just trying to categorize our students so much and put them into boxes and to give them a mark and a stamp and off they go but, rather, to educate them in a more holistic way. I think it's a window of opportunity for us. It's a door, as I said at the beginning of my comments, to create better citizens who enjoy their lives more. As I say, focusing on arts is a wonderful idea, but let's make room for it by perhaps adjusting other elements of our education system in English and in social studies or even in math and in science for certainly these studies have applications in the arts as well.

So just by way of concluding, then, Mr. Speaker, I do fully support the spirit of this motion. I think it's wonderful and refreshing to discuss such things here in this Legislature. I think it's important as well. I leave you with the last observation that I have. It's that, you know, the arts are for everyone. I think that we perhaps

create a bit of elitism in the way that we approach fine arts, focusing on the very best of the best, you know, the great actors and musicians that we hope might become world renowned. But the true heart of the arts is where our own heart of humanity lies, and every single one of us with a beating heart and a mind has that within us. To stir that appreciation in every citizen I think will derive benefit for all of us in turn.

So I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wish to get a few supportive comments on the record for Motion 505 as presented by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont. Before I do, I just wanted to say hello and thank you for their attendance to all of our special guests, particularly our young guests who are here from Bishop McNally school, from Hunting Hills, from Eastglen, from Vic school of the arts, from Louis St. Laurent, from St. Albert, from Spruce Grove, and so on and so on. In that context, special thanks to Peter McWhir for having helped orchestrate the evening, so to speak.

I also would like to just quickly reference two special individuals who are here in the members' gallery, Mr. Speaker. My deputy minister, Mr. Keray Henke, is here – if he could just give us a wave – and Mr. Rick Morrow, who is our assistant deputy minister in basic learning. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here on behalf of the department to listen to this important discussion. Finally, to the ATA Fine Arts Council reps, thank you, as well, those of you who are here, to the teachers.

This is a tremendously important motion, obviously, and I want to make a few comments, first of all, as a former fine arts teacher at the high school and junior high level because it was at that level, Mr. Speaker, that I really came to appreciate how beneficial fine arts programs, fine arts classes can be to our young students. Later, of course, I had a very interesting career as a professional musician, as a performer, a composer, a conductor, and so on, but it was the teaching part that really zoomed in on me because of the tremendous impact it had on future generations.

Obviously, my own experience with the arts deeply enriched my life. I got to travel the world. I got to meet kings and queens and Rolling Stones and all kinds of wonderful people along the way. But those are just some of the opportunities that await these young folks who are here tonight and others who might be reading this later.

So today in my new role as Alberta's Minister of Education I want to express some support for this motion. In fact, Mr. Speaker, earlier this evening, I'll just point out to members here, the arts were used in a very special way by the young students from Lago Lindo school here in Edmonton with their principal, Mr. John Eshenko, who celebrated the Cycle of Life/Recycle program, a special concert program at the Winspear Centre. They provided songs that focused on the importance of caring for our planet with hit songs like Landfill Blues and the Life Cycle Dance and Grasslands and Bear in Buckingham Palace and the Voices of Nature. Well, you can appreciate where these young K to grade 6ers went with this special program that was presented by the Beverage Container Management Board. It gives you one way in which the arts can be used to promote other important life goals, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, it's not surprising, therefore, that Alberta's Commission on Learning supported fine arts education in recommendation 6, wherein it stated, "All students should have opportunities to learn and experience the fine arts." Also, the Commission's report recognized the demands of the high school curriculum and stated, "Fine arts should be mandatory [for students] up to [and including] grade 9."

8:40

Now, many students already choose to take fine arts courses in high school as well, which is what Motion 505 is really all about. In fact, it might interest members of the Assembly and our guests to know that last year 45 per cent of high school graduates had in fact completed at least five credits in a fine arts program. There are 18 such formal course programs offered in music, drama, and art and almost 200 locally developed courses created by schools to meet the unique interests and talents of their students.

I'm always reminded of the outstanding programs that are put on by our schools here, for example at J. Percy Page, where the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods sits and once taught. They use the arts to portray their love for our country during Remembrance Day ceremonies. Some fantastic arts programs have been provided by numerous other schools throughout our constituencies as well. I should also point out, Mr. Speaker, that students can earn credit for private music study from the Conservatory Canada program, from the Royal Conservatory of Music program, and from Mount Royal College.

Now, putting this particular motion into effect would mean overcoming some challenges, which have been alluded to. For example, we would need to ensure that we have enough qualified fine arts teachers, that there are prerequisites for these high school level courses, that the student course load for completion of diploma requirements would be workable, that there was enough classroom space, materials, and equipment, and so on. So there are some challenges. But you know, Mr. Speaker, there is that expression: obstacles are what we see when we lose sight of our vision. I wouldn't want us to lose sight of this particular vision, but I would like to put some of those cautionary points on record as we consider and, I hope, support this particular motion.

So Alberta Education is currently reviewing the fine arts kindergarten to grade 12 program of studies, and this might be a very appropriate time for us to do some additional consultation with our stakeholder groups: the school boards, the teachers, the parents, and so on. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this motion's suggestion of having a requirement of five basic fine arts credits for high school graduation would certainly be considered in that particular review.

As I wrap up, I just want to reference very quickly some comments by John Ruskin, a Victorian artist, author, and teacher, who once said, "Fine art is that in which the hand, the head, and the heart of man go together." It's truly an area that involves the physical being, the mind, and the spirit, and of course the fine arts are an important element of every student's education.

I'm going to support this motion, Mr. Speaker, as a teacher, as a musician, as a parent, and as Minister of Education. I also want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont for having brought it forward in such an eloquent fashion. I am obliged to say that we at Alberta Education need to be very careful how we proceed, should this particular motion be adopted here tonight, because we want to make it very clear that there will be some challenges in working through how this particular motion might be brought to bear for our schools, our teachers, and our students.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, the research, the facts, and the evidence in support of the overwhelming impact that the arts can have on student learning are irrefutable. The arts breathe an incredible amount of oxygen into our daily living. They impact the cultural, the social, and the economic life of our province, and they yield enormous benefits for our young students as they go about acquiring the knowledge, the skills, and the abilities to take their place as contributing citizens.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, and with those comments, I'm going to go on record as supporting this motion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member bringing forward Motion 505. I certainly listened with interest with regard to the previous speakers and especially the Minister of Education as he raised some caution. I think everything's good, but there's caution to be taken when you're approaching some new territory. He did raise specifics with regard to funding, and that would be included with instrument purchases or supplies and equipment as well as making sure that the necessary teachers are there to ensure that this motion and that the all-over intent is secured by the schools.

I think we can go back to say that some of the aspects of this motion include some of the earliest forms of our communication. Whether it be music or the visual or the performing, I think we can all attest that it's a no-brainer that we all, in one form or another, do appreciate it in its most simplistic form.

Coming from the school board, as I was sitting on the board of trustees, we made sure that that was part of our priorities embedded within our education system, that we did have music, art, performing arts as part of our priorities so that all students can have a basic form of appreciation for this. Coming from there, you would hope that it would take on a lifelong journey, so then it would go into the general public, so they'd have a general appreciation for it and carry it on to lifelong.

I think, again, this has excellent merits to be able to continue on, but I would just raise some cautions, as the minister has raised. I do support it with just some reservations with regard to making sure that this isn't just lip service that we're paying, that we are in fact ensuring that the basic things that we need to carry through with this are going to be supplied in the form of hard-core funding, that it will be able to be fully implemented throughout the districts as well as into the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise this evening to participate in the discussion and debate of Motion 505, a motion that raises the issue of a fine arts requirement for high school graduation. I would first like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Calgary-Egmont for understanding the benefits and the importance of the fine arts, not only in education but in real life. The education of Albertans has always been a priority of this government, and this motion raises another initiative that would enhance and contribute to the learning environments of young Albertans.

Motion 505 requests that the government examine the benefits of taking five credits, the equivalent of one course, at some point during the three years of high school to complement students' education. There are many different courses which fall under the category of fine arts. There would be more than a few choices to choose from. Fine arts encompass music, drama, graphic art, pottery, art history, dance, painting, and many others. The arts offer a vast variety of options and choices.

Mr. Speaker, what I find to be the crucial advantage of Motion 505 is the potential benefits it may bring to the students. Fine arts offer a unique learning experience, one that is not the same as writing an essay or solving a math problem. Music, drama, or visual arts provide tools that cannot be duplicated by any other form of learning. Fine arts inspire and motivate creativity while developing

intellect. After all, without Peter Pan how would we know the directions to never-never land?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw wanted to be here to speak tonight about her experience with her son about the importance of fine arts. He applied to medical school, and during the interview at Albert Einstein university in New York they didn't ask him about his neuroscience degree. They asked him about his fine arts courses. The question they asked was: what did music teach you? He answered: music was the first place where I learned to accept criticism and to manage it. He was accepted into the medical school and is now a successful student there.

Mr. Speaker, not only does education in the arts enhance one's creativity, but research findings indicate that arts education greatly improves a student's ability to perform in other areas. Fine art courses draw on a range of intelligence skills and learning techniques. These techniques may not be addressed in most educational classrooms, as learning settings have traditionally focused on verbal, written, and mathematical skills.

Mr. Speaker, over the last decade jobs in the workforce as a whole have changed dramatically. We have seen this change occur mostly due to the information age and information-based technologies and systems. Nonetheless, the skill requirements for workers are expanding. It is becoming increasingly important for workers to develop their ability to communicate, think creatively, and find several solutions or find alternative methods to deal with a problem.

Mr. Speaker, there are many life skills that are inherent through learning in the arts. The arts help students to acknowledge that components within a group interact and influence one another. The arts teach attention to slight variances and bring to light that small differences can have a large impact.

8:50

As much as I support this motion and find it valuable, I do have a concern that I'd like to express. Smaller communities have difficulties accommodating fine arts classes. Rural constituencies or ones surrounding smaller centres may not have the same choices and options available as schools in Alberta's larger urban centres. However, Mr. Speaker, why couldn't we have a teacher with a mobile classroom in the arts to visit classes in the rural areas once or twice a week? Have classroom, will travel.

Having said that, I do believe the potential benefits of an education in the arts, regardless that it is just introductory, will outweigh not requiring the arts course in the first place. Mr. Speaker, I feel that it is vitally important to give students a broad range of learning experiences. It is difficult for students to know the direction or path to take if they've never been exposed to alternatives. Some may argue that a mandatory fine arts requirement takes away from flexibility or control that the students have over their career path. Quite frankly, I do not believe that students will lose their ability to determine an education that suits their interest if one course in the fine arts is implemented as compulsory. A balanced education is important to student learning.

The findings of the Learning Commission support the idea of a well-rounded educational experience. The sixth recommendation in the report says that Alberta Learning should "maintain and continuously improve Alberta's comprehensive and balanced curriculum." There was also a further recommendation that "all students should have opportunities to learn and experience the fine arts at all levels in the education system." Training in the arts can assist in the building of general behaviours, skills, and attitudes. Moreover, these positive attributes can be broadly applied to extend beyond the realm of the arts program.

Mr. Speaker, this motion could possibly contribute to an enhanced

learning experience for Alberta students. It would also facilitate in providing choices and exposing new opportunities to our youth. I had the great opportunity of being the wife of Julius Caesar in our high school production of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The camaraderie and the bond that you share with your fellow thespians is unforgettable, and it stays with you for the rest of your life.

Mr. Speaker, if I could take artistic licence and paraphrase the great Julius Caesar, I would say this about the students that were here tonight to entertain us with their artistic skills: they came; they saw; they conquered. I strongly support this initiative and urge all my hon. colleagues to vote in favour of Motion 505.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do applaud the Member for Calgary-Egmont for the worthy objectives of this motion, which urges the government to consider five credits in fine arts as a condition for high school graduation in the province. This motion would ensure that fine arts programs exist in every school in Alberta.

There is a misconception that art and music are isolated subjects. Nothing could be further from the truth. The arts help children understand other subjects much more clearly. From math and science to language arts to geography art nurtures inventiveness as it engages children in a process that aids in the development of self-esteem, self-discipline, co-operation, and self-motivation. Participating in artistic activities helps children gain tools necessary for understanding human experiences, adapting to and respecting other ways of working and thinking, developing creative problem-solving skills, and communicating thoughts and ideas in a variety of ways. Mr. Speaker, Grant Wood, the author of *Art in the Daily Life of the Child*, states: "The aim of art education in the public schools is not to make more professional artists but to teach people to live happier, fuller lives; to extract more out of their experience, whatever that experience may be."

But those concerned with the flourishing of the arts in our province should remember that this government helped force the arts out of schools with their funding cuts.

Mandatory fine arts programming requires that schools have adequate facilities, equipment, and trained teachers. This motion extends the Alberta Learning Commission's recommendation 6 regarding curriculum enhancements in fine arts. According to the recommendations of the Learning Commission, "all students should have opportunities to learn and experience the fine arts at all levels in the education system." Fine arts should be mandatory up to grade 9 then optional for students in grade 10 to grade 12.

The Alberta Liberals oppose charging extra for materials, art classes, instrument fees for music classes, et cetera. This may also impinge on this motion if the fine arts required charging fees for the courses. The content selected for the courses should be developed primarily by educational professionals and remain free from political interference or censorship. This motion calls only for the government to consider the advisability of implementing the proposal. No final decision or policy direction is implied by supporting this motion.

Quality arts programs provide opportunities to address two things: number one, cultural perspective within multiculturalism and aboriginal cultures; number two, diversity, which includes socioeconomic status, ability, gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. In doing so, quality arts education programs ensure that students are able to see their own cultural and life experiences within the curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, I will support this motion with some reservation because I think that learning about the visual arts gives students a window onto the rich and interesting world around them, teaching them about their own history and culture as well as that of other people. Art is a subject that encourages children to think critically, solve problems creatively, make evaluations, work within groups, and appreciate different points of view. These skills are particularly suited to the complex challenges of the contemporary workplace. Students with exposure to the arts are not only happier but more successful.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, in looking at the time, I just wanted to advise the Assembly that given the extended time we used for introduction of guests, we will proceed with the debate until 9:07, at which time I will call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont to close debate.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise today and join the debate on Motion 505, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont. The motion urges the government to "consider the benefits of requiring five credits in fine arts as a condition for high school graduation." I don't think many Albertans would dispute the merits of fine arts education in the development of students' talent, character, intellectual skills, self-confidence, and many other important attributes required for successful and healthy lives.

One area I would like to discuss as we debate the benefit of making five credits in fine arts mandatory is the availability of resources. These resources include materials as well as teachers. While it could be possible to implement this initiative in high schools located in the main urban areas like Calgary and Edmonton, I do not think that it would be easy for some rural areas. It may be difficult for a small town or community to provide the necessary resources that would allow them to offer students the required options to fulfill the fine arts credit requirements.

9:00

Studies upon studies have demonstrated that children tend to perform better in school and other environments if they have been exposed to the art curriculum. Fine arts, be it music, drama, visual arts, dancing, or other forms, spur confidence, curiosity, emotional intelligence, and self-control. Exposure to instruction in the arts not only promotes talent but also teaches the young how to relate, communicate, co-operate, and, most importantly, tolerate one another on various levels. It is important that we put more emphasis in our schools on arts because there are undoubtedly hundreds of students in our province that may have talents that they or their parents are not aware of.

Currently the province is putting emphasis on physical activity in school. It, too, is important to the health of Albertan children, but as much as a healthy body promotes well-being, so does a healthy mind. If we are going to make physical activity mandatory, is it such a stretch to make five credits in fine arts mandatory? If I can remember correctly, the idea of school when I was there was to educate and open up the unknown so that the students can experience as much as possible. In doing so, school promotes strong and healthy minds as well as active, healthy lifestyles.

Mr. Speaker, to limit students to a certain set of predetermined classes because it is felt that any other type of educational experience would be a waste of time is very, very inappropriate. For all

we know, in each one of those children there could be a potential Michelangelo or da Vinci just waiting to be discovered and inspired. For example, in ancient Greece, Rome, China, Persia, India, and elsewhere people were renowned for combining art and science in order to understand the world around them and solve problems of the day.

Mr. Speaker, I support Motion 505 because it asks the government to consider the benefit of requiring five credits in fine arts upon graduation. I think one of the solutions to the problem of rural students accessing adequate fine arts options is giving them the ability to seek fine arts education outside the school.

Mr. Speaker, I see myself as a student of history. History teaches that what's left of the mighty societies of ancient civilization is not the wealth nor the power but the legacy in the arts such as the beautiful architecture of the pyramids, of the Great Wall. Through thousands of years what's left are the beautiful artifacts, the graphic depictions of their lives, the sound of their music in song, and the movement of their dances.

So with that, I urge all the members here to support Motion 505. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an important issue for our society, and I, too, want to thank the Member for Calgary-Egmont for bringing this motion forward. Thank you to all the guests who are here tonight in support.

The fine arts do two important things, both of which are hard to measure: they feed the soul, which we desperately need in an increasingly secular world, and they make us more creative. Both of these statements are hard to prove. Both statements defy measurement. It's like the wind. We know it's there, but it's hard to measure.

We need to support this motion because the arts have been sacrificed for everything else on the timetable for a long time. When a school has to cut the budget, the money is usually taken from the fine arts. It happens over time as well. The sciences have dominated the Alberta high school curriculum for many years, with the result that there are many trained scientists who cannot get a job, and the people who want to do arts are afraid that there won't be any work for them, so they take something else. We have lost a generation of creative people because of our focus on science and technology. That technology is useless if we can't find more creative ways of using it, and we lack the creative people in every walk of life.

The arts humanize. Social skills learned in orchestra and concert band and choir are directly transferable to the workplace. When we have a crisis, we look for comfort in music, art, literature, poetry, sculpture. The arts teach us how to live. In any civilization that we dig up, it is the arts which give us the clue to the psychology of the people. When people are prosperous, they have time to express themselves. Even the cave paintings tell us that that society must have had abundant food. You cannot create or express when you are hungry. The wealth of the arts defines the personality of a society.

The arts foster creativity. IBM and other corporations are desperate for creative minds. They have many brilliant technicians but not enough brilliant technicians who can see other possibilities. One of my favourite quotes about creativity and what it does for the people is by Brenda Ueland. "Why should we all use our creative power . . .? Because there is nothing that makes people so generous, joyful, lively, bold and compassionate, so indifferent to fighting and the accumulation of objects and money."

Five credits are the absolute minimum. We should maybe be

looking at 15. More importantly, every time you mandate something into the curriculum, like phys ed, something else has to be mandated off. The timetable is finite. You can't keep adding without subtracting. So we play around with it in a random fashion, but I think that it is time for a complete overhaul of the timetable.

What kind of people do we want running this province in 20 years? What kinds of things do they need to know? Our curriculum was formulated in the 19th century for the 20th, and now we're in the 21st century. Do we need our students to know the same things now that they did then? If we feel the need to mandate courses like science or phys ed or fine arts, then is that telling us that our present setup is inadequate? Maybe it's time to get a group of futurists together and decide what our students need to know when the oil sands are dried up.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, but under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont to close debate on Motion 505.

Mr. Herard: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank all hon. members for their well-thought-out comments. I was going to get into a number of issues that, possibly, conservative thinkers would have an interest in, reports such as, for example, from the Canada West Foundation entitled Culture and Economic Competitiveness, discussing how CEOs of corporations look for human capital centres. They look for highly educated managers and skilled workers, and these people look to places where they have an opportunity for an active cultural lifestyle and where quality cultural infrastructure exists.

I was going to quote a fellow by the name of Jason Azmier in an article in *Western Landscapes*, who clearly demonstrates that the west loses out big time in terms of federal funding for the culture. In fact, federal funding is \$45 per capita in the west and \$110 per capita in the rest of Canada. The reason for that is because there really isn't a cultural infrastructure here in Alberta to attract any more than what we're already getting.

So then the question becomes: can we really live up to the 20-year strategic plan when we talk about, you know, having the best place to live and raise a family? Those were the things that I still needed to cover.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hundreds of Albertans who sent me encouragement and expressed personal experiences as to the benefit of fine arts in their lives and those of their children. I want to say a special thanks to the many teachers, students, and the performers who travelled here to their legislative home and to make us feel first-hand the values of fine arts and to help make a difference in this decision, and I wish them a safe trip home. I want to thank my son Christopher, who's also a music teacher, who helped spread word of this motion to the arts community and garner a lot of support.

I want to close, Mr. Speaker, by quoting a notable Canadian artist and producer, Bob Ezrin, who produced albums for Pink Floyd, Kiss, Roberta Flack, and Rod Stewart amongst others. You may remember that he was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in the 2004 Juno awards right here in Edmonton. He used his time in his acceptance speech to express his concern about reductions in nonacademic arts programs. He said in part, and I quote: even though I'm the guy who brought you *School's Out* and "We don't need no education," I'm very passionate about music education; while the three Rs provide kids with the basic tools they need, the arts give them the imagination and inspiration to do something important with these tools.

9:10

Another notable that I wish to quote, a man by the name of Plato, said centuries ago, "Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul."

Hon. members, I urge everyone to vote in favour of this motion. Thank you so much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried unanimously]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

The Deputy Chair: As per our Standing Orders the first hour is limited between the minister and members of the opposition, following which it'll be available to any other member of the Assembly. Should the chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council wish to participate, he may be able to do so within the first 20 minutes allocated to the minister.

The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much, colleagues. Today, actually, I want to present the 2005-2006 estimates for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the 2005-2008 business plan. This is the ministry's fifth business plan, and it supports our vision of an Alberta that includes the full participation of self-reliant aboriginal and northern Albertans into the province's second century.

I'd like to thank my terrific staff, Mr. Chairman, for the hard work they do on behalf of all Albertans. With me today is my deputy minister – I don't know if she's seated over there; it looks like she's not – and the assistant deputy minister, Ken Boutillier. I don't know if he's over there. No? They're not here either. They're probably out smoking. Senior financial officer Lorne Harvey is seated over there. Do you want to stand and take a bow? Executive directors John McDonough and Neil Reddekopp. I don't know if they're both over there. It looks like I've lost them while we were waiting. [interjection] Oh, are they over there? Okay. Also my directors: Thomas Droege, Jason Gariepy, Gerry Kushlyk, and Allan Pard. Would you please stand so that everybody knows who you are? As well, NADC's acting executive director, Allen Geary. These are the individuals who keep me in line.

One person that I want to talk about today – and I know he's not sitting there, but he will eventually get here – is Ken Boutillier, who is the assistant deputy minister. This is Ken's last budget. He'll be retiring, actually, after 25 years. He'll be retiring in September. I want to say a thank you to him for all the hard work that he's done and thank him also for making sure that we had cutting edge programs and cutting edge policies that he's led. So I want to say a special thanks to him.

Achieving our mission involves developing partnerships with aboriginal people and collaborations with other ministries and the private sector. Together we will enhance the well-being and self-reliance of aboriginal and northern communities. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is a small ministry with several responsi-

bilities. We are not in the business of program delivery; however, the ministry does advance the social and economic needs of the largest northern geographical area in the province.

In addition, we strengthen relationships with approximately 200,000 aboriginal people in Alberta. We provide advice and support to other government ministries to address policy and service needs of aboriginal people. This includes guidance on how to work effectively with aboriginal governments and communities.

We facilitate, co-ordinate, and advise on the development of cross-ministry policies, strategies, and initiatives. This helps to ensure that all Albertans benefit from our province's opportunities and prosperity. Our mandate is to be responsive to the needs of aboriginal and northern Albertans, other government ministries, and the private sector. Our 2005-2006 estimates reflect this mandate and other key legislative requirements.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has a budget of \$39.4 million, which is up \$3.7 million from 2004-2005. A significant portion of the budget is for legislative funding requirements, or, as we call them, statutory funds, provided to the Métis Settlements General Council as per the Metis Settlements Accord Implementation Act. The act requires payment of \$10 million per year until April 1, 2006. As well, under the legislation our department provides funding to Métis settlements through the matching grants replacement agreement. The grant amount for 2005-2006 is \$4.1 million. This brings the total for Métis settlements legislative requirements and governance efforts to approximately \$14.1 million.

This leaves \$25.1 million for key departmental initiatives such as aboriginal affairs specific, \$22.4 million. The Northern Alberta Development Council receives \$2 million, and I know that I'm asking the chair, the MLA from Lac La Biche, to speak on NADC's efforts shortly. The Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal receives \$942,000.

In 2004-05 we had 79 full-time employees, of which 57 worked in the department, 15 with NADC, and another seven assigned to the Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal. This year we're adding 11 full-time employees, bringing our total to 90.

Our 2005-2008 business plan identifies five strategic priorities that the ministry intends to focus on. These are the aboriginal policy framework. We will continue to lead implementation of the commitments made in the aboriginal policy framework. This involves working with all Alberta ministries, the aboriginal community, and other stakeholders to address socioeconomic barriers facing aboriginal people.

On consultation we'll continue to lead development and implementation of provincial processes for consulting with aboriginal communities in relation to land and resource issues. We haven't completed that yet, but we'll get there.

Métis settlements. We will work with Métis settlements through the transition assessment and planning project to enhance self-reliance and to prepare for 2007, when statutory payments end.

Urban aboriginal initiatives. We will continue to work with federal, provincial, and municipal departments and agencies and local aboriginal organizations in urban centres to focus on aboriginal needs and priorities.

Northern development. We will continue to co-ordinate policies and strategies to address northern matters and to enhance economic and social development.

The department's business plan goals are linked to the four pillars of the government of Alberta strategic business plan, and our collective goal is to make Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. Our ministry has two core businesses for '05-08. These goals are consistent with government-wide business planning standards, and funding is aligned with core businesses, goals, strategies, and

performance measures. Our ministry's first core business relates to aboriginal people and issues. It is aimed at increasing aboriginal participation in Alberta's social and economic life of the province and to facilitate resolution of significant matters.

Our first goal is to "provide leadership in assisting government to manage significant Aboriginal priorities requiring a co-ordinated policy or strategic response." We will achieve this goal by, one, leading the implementation of the aboriginal policy framework through the cross-ministry aboriginal policy initiative; two, identifying and addressing barriers to socioeconomic opportunities facing aboriginal people; and three, continuing to collaborate in the development of cross-ministry consultation strategy. Together our department's participation in cross-ministry policy initiatives provides opportunities to co-ordinate responses to the priorities of aboriginal people and northern Albertans.

9:20

The strategies under this goal include leading in the cross-ministry API, which is the commitment under the government's aboriginal policy framework; working with Alberta ministries on economic development strategies that address barriers to self-reliance on First Nations reserves; developing and implementing appropriate arrangements with Métis governments in Alberta on harvesting rights, which includes striking a balance between respecting rights and addressing safety and conservation concerns; facilitating participation of Alberta ministries with Canada and First Nations on self-government; and co-ordinating the implementation of a proposed consultation strategy to address land and resource challenges.

There are two specific initiatives under this goal: first, developing First Nations economic capacity will play a more meaningful role in Alberta's economy – the cross-ministry initiative, Alberta Economic Development and Alberta Human Resources and Employment, includes building the skills, business planning, financial management, and knowledge and resources of First Nations to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities – second, utilizing the proposed consultation strategy to gain access to land for resource development while protecting sites of vital importance to First Nations. Traditional use studies are one example of how we are addressing land and resource matters in the province.

Our performance measures for goal one include the percentage of targets achieved in a cross-ministry aboriginal policy initiative. This is an indicator of cross-ministry progress on addressing aboriginal needs. We will also report on the percentage of Alberta ministries addressing aboriginal priorities in their business and operational plans.

Our second goal is to provide advice and specialized knowledge to ministries, aboriginal governments, and other stakeholders to identify and resolve emerging issues. Achieving this goal depends on our ongoing efforts to enhance provincial relations with aboriginal people, facilitate inclusion of aboriginal priorities in the development of government initiatives, and work with aboriginal communities, Alberta ministries, and other stakeholders to identify and resolve concerns.

Strategies also include working towards a timely resolution of land-related negotiations, which Alberta has an obligation to under the natural resources transfer agreement. It also includes partnering with Métis settlements to prepare for greater self-reliance in working with other levels of government and aboriginal organizations to address urban aboriginal needs.

Other strategies under goal two include advising and assisting ministries to develop policies to enhance the well-being and self-reliance of northern and aboriginal peoples. This includes address-

ing funding and capacity building strategies. We will continue to engage the ministries' aboriginal industry advisory committees to help us set our department's future direction, and we will continue to be active participants in federal/provincial/territorial processes involving aboriginal people.

Performance measures, of course, include Métis settlements' self-generated revenue. Another key measure is progress achieved in negotiation and implementation of land-related agreements. We will also report on a number of capacity building initiatives within aboriginal communities and organizations, which assist in resource development and creation of a stable environment for consultation and partnership.

Our second core goal is to advance the development of northern Alberta. This means that we'll continue to listen to northern Albertans to work with other ministries and stakeholders to advance economic and sustainable development. This includes advancing strategic priorities and identifying opportunities and challenges that will lead to the creation of a northern development strategy. We will also continue to support initiatives to improve skill levels in the north.

Other strategies include raising awareness of the importance of northern development, which means that we are active participants in the federal/provincial Northern Development Ministers Forum, the Northwest Territories/Alberta memorandum of understanding, and the Alberta/British Columbia accord, as well as on northern issues we belong to the Alberta-Alaska Bilateral Council. Alberta is North American vice-president to the Northern Forum, which advances the concerns of northern residents in a global context.

So we are looking at long-standing indicators such as partnership satisfaction survey results, return rates on bursary recipients, and a number of stakeholder partnerships to develop.

I'd like to ask the MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul and chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council now to please update what they've been doing.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you so much, Madam Minister. As you noted, the government is focusing on strategic priorities. The north has abundant natural resources and is one of the driving forces behind Alberta's thriving economy. It has 100 per cent of the oil sands, 40 per cent of the conventional oil and gas, 90 per cent of the potential productive forests, and 21 per cent of the provincial crop production.

Achieving our full potential requires better co-ordination on northern development. While oil sands' development is always at the forefront, it is important to add value to northern resources, especially in agriculture and forestry. There are tremendous untapped opportunities in the north. Much of the northern economy, however, is based on resource extraction. Northern Albertans want to enhance their current industries, capture the full value of raw products, and make value-added concepts become value-added manufacturing realities.

Developing northern transportation corridors, including air, road, and rail, particularly railroads to the western ports, is essential to provide access to markets, resources, and services. This infrastructure is key to development processing and the sale of products to allow the north to compete in global markets. We need to connect communities, enhance internal movement of labour and materials to meet high investment requirements, and develop tourism opportunities.

Northern Alberta growth is advancing quicker than the infrastructure and support services and trades. Northern Alberta Development

Council continues to promote the northern Alberta highway strategy and to work on the advancement on the northwest corridor and its connections to the port of Prince Rupert, reopening key rail links and establishing a container site.

Skill development is another high priority for council. We need to ensure that northern colleges and industry help provide a trained workforce, that northern residents benefit from development, and that there is greater aboriginal participation in the northern workforce. NADC initiatives that will advance skill development in the north include assisting northern students to make the transition from high school to postsecondary education, implementing a youth apprenticeship program, and encouraging graduates to return to northern Alberta to work and to live.

While there are barriers and challenges facing northern Albertans, Alberta's north holds the promise for incredible economic opportunities and sustainable development. I've enjoyed promoting northern development, and I look forward to working with the minister on these opportunities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you will be able to respond once. Did you have concluding remarks?

Ms Calahasen: Just a conclusion, yeah.

I would like to actually conclude by highlighting the ministry's focus on developing the next Alberta. Our vision is one of full participation by self-reliant aboriginal people and northern Albertans. This vision is achievable. It includes removing barriers to increase participation in Alberta's economy. It involves trusting and working with our partners and using the necessary resources to achieve our vision. We want to ensure that we continually set a vision for the next 20 years for the north. Strategically, we'll continue to develop and implement provincial processes that benefit our province. We will work with aboriginal people and northern Albertans to make our province the best place to live, work, and visit in our second century.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to lead off the debate on the aboriginal affairs budget. First of all, I'd like to start with a compliment, believe it or not. I know, I saw your head spin around there for a moment. I noticed that the Auditor General's report found nothing of any significance in the aboriginal affairs department, and aboriginal affairs was also one of the few government departments that maintained its budget for the last year. I think the other departments just – I think it was 22 of 24 – spent a little bit more money than they should have, and aboriginal affairs believed it had a budget and stuck with it. So congratulations to you for maintaining it.

Enough of the congratulations. Let's get on to the rest of it. You didn't think I was going to end there, did you? No.

I do have a few questions about the budget. As you mentioned in your opening address, it's another \$3.7 million that has been added to the aboriginal affairs budget this. Last year I believe there was another \$4 million or so added to the aboriginal affairs budget.

9:30

Now, the obvious question is: where is this money going? That's \$8 million over two years. That's a pretty substantial increase, and I don't find anything in these documents that tells me where this extra money is going. It's not a very big department, as you said

yourself. I believe it's \$29 million or something like that, and an \$8 million increase over the last two years is pretty substantial. I think it would be of interest to everyone in the House if we had a breakdown as to why you're getting another \$4 million.

I'm also curious about aboriginal affairs itself. Now, there's a line in these budgets that says aboriginal affairs budget. At one point it says \$17.4 million, and elsewhere it says \$22.9 million. This is the bulk of your department, and it comes up under a one-line mention that says aboriginal affairs.

An Hon. Member: Page number.

Mr. Tougas: It's on page 120, and it's on a number of other pages: page 20 of the budget document.

Why is there so little information about where the bulk of your department funding goes to? Now, we have all the other departments – you know, Energy doesn't have a listing that says, "Energy, \$5 million," and Learning doesn't say, "Learning, \$1 billion" or something. There's a detailed breakdown about where the money goes. What we have here is: aboriginal affairs, \$22.292 million. Where is it going?

Now, I suspect that if we wanted to spend the time, you could probably give me a detailed listing right here and now. Knowing you, you probably know it off the top of your head, but I don't think anybody wants to sit here and listen to it. So if you could supply it in writing, I'd appreciate that because it is of interest, and it's also very hard for me to do my job as the aboriginal affairs critic with so little information. So a little bit more would certainly be appreciated in this regard.

The same applies, too, for the Northern Alberta Development Council, the funding for that. I believe it stays roughly the same at about \$2 million every year. A little bit further information on where that money goes would also be appreciated.

Now, over in the five-year plan I've noticed that there's a substantial increase in the budget again under aboriginal affairs without any particular justification or any listing for what it's all about. For 2003-04 under aboriginal affairs the budget was \$14.7 million. The target for 2007-08 is \$24 million, so you're looking at almost a \$10 million increase in the aboriginal affairs budget, again under that one single line: aboriginal affairs. Now, the rest of the budget is actually going down, I assume, because of the end of the Métis settlements legislation. By 2007 that disappears, the way I read this, and your budget will actually decrease by 2007-08, except under the listing of aboriginal affairs. So, again, if we could have more information on that, that would certainly be appreciated.

I'd also like to ask you a few questions about the business plan. On page 116, there's a mention of the consultation process, which, as I understand it, has been going on for quite some time. I believe it's been going on since about 2000. I may be wrong; if I am, please correct me. Under Consultation the document states that the ministry will "lead the development and implementation of provincial consultation processes to ensure that Aboriginal interests are recognized in the management of Crown lands and resources." Now, as I understand it, the budget for this was about \$6 million going back to 2000, and we're now in '05-06. First of all, what is the status of that document? How far along are we with it, and how much is it costing us? I mean, are we out of the \$6 million now? Is it still going on? Is there more to come? What is the status of this document at this time?

I've also been told that some chiefs in the north have only received a draft document from last May, and they haven't heard anything since. If this is correct, why so? Are they being adequately informed about what is actually going on with the consultation document?

If the minister would like to interrupt and answer any of these questions, feel free to just carry on. I don't care to stand and talk for 20 minutes. If she'd like to make a few comments, feel free.

Now, concerning the recent developments with the Métis, there have been a couple of Supreme Court decisions, as you know, the Powley decision in particular, which seem to give the Métis increased hunting and fishing rights. The question that arises then is: will this lead to further rights for the Métis and perhaps on a par with the aboriginal people? Does that mean that this will put extra stress on the department? Will it mean that more funds will be needed? Does the minister see this as something that is going to be happening in the future? Will there be virtual parity between aboriginal and Métis, and will that mean more work for her department or more funding required?

Now, of course, we've been talking in the Legislature recently about the Lubicon, who found that industry was accessing Crown land near their reserve without any consultation originally. Now, the Minister of Energy has said in the House that the companies are allowed to bring in their equipment and develop areas on Crown land without permits in anticipation of winning EUB approval to begin drilling. My question is: is the consultation process working, when Lubicon members wake up to find that heavy equipment is moving onto land very near their territory? I don't know if this is the appropriate forum for this, but it is an interesting question, and perhaps you can address that at some point.

I'd also like to ask about the Métis harvesting accord. In the business plan on page 117 strategy 1.4 says that there will be cross-ministry work to develop the MHA. Again, I suspect the cost of this is probably hidden somewhere in these documents; we just can't find it. I would like to know exactly how much this is going to be costing the aboriginal affairs department. Is it going to be spread out with Sustainable Resource Development, or is it entirely an aboriginal affairs initiative? In the original MHA I believe the signature of the Community Development minister at the time was affixed to that document. Is Community Development still involved in this process, or have they been sent to the sidelines, so to speak?

Regarding the north, we have a serious situation developing in Fort McMurray right now with housing and infrastructure. Now, it seems to me that the area is moving along quite nicely on the economic side, and I'm wondering if there is a role for the council to play in addressing the increasingly serious housing problem in the north. Is this something that there may be more funds required for, or is this something that's sort of outside of the purview of the aboriginal affairs department?

This also brings up the question again of temporary foreign workers being brought into Alberta to alleviate this alleged shortage of trade workers for oil sands projects. Now, from an aboriginal affairs point of view is the ministry doing everything possible to ensure that aboriginals are getting every opportunity to participate in this booming economy? These northern developments are not going away any time soon. This is a long-term thing. This isn't a boom. We're going to be seeing this for years and years. It seems to me that we have a golden opportunity right now to make sure that every aboriginal who wants to participate in the oil sands development gets a chance to, and I don't know if that's happening.

It's a little hard to tell from these documents if enough resources are being brought to bear in this matter. We can't let this opportunity go by. I hate to think that there are aboriginals who may want to be working in the oil sands but that we're bringing workers from elsewhere who may be taking their place. That may not be happening, but this is a serious matter, and it's a great opportunity. I mean, we just cannot pass by this chance to make sure that aboriginals are doing everything they can to participate in the Alberta economy.

An Hon. Member: And the advantage.

Mr. Tougas: Yes, the Alberta advantage. Thank you very much.

Finally, I know I've touched on a lot of things here, and I see you're taking a few notes, and maybe you'd like to address some of these things afterwards. The question of urban aboriginals has come up. I believe you have a strategy for that. Again, I think that by 2007 . . .

Some Hon. Members: 2011.

Mr. Tougas: By 2011. Thank you.

By 2011 Edmonton will have Canada's largest aboriginal population. What is the aboriginal affairs department doing about this situation? It's not a crisis, but it is something that is developing. It's an emerging issue. I know you do have the urban aboriginal program, but I would like a little more information about what it's all about.

I also have here that the city of Edmonton has formed the Edmonton urban aboriginal accord initiative between itself and the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee. Is this part of the aboriginal affairs department, or is this something quite apart from it altogether? Or is it something that you're even at all familiar with? Is this the type of thing that the city is involved in? I don't see any mention of the province of Alberta in this document here. So perhaps you could fill us in a little bit on that.

If you'd like to address any of these questions, I'd be happy to sit down, and you can fill me in on a few of these things. I think some of our colleagues here have some questions as well. So if you would like to have the floor for a little bit, feel free.

9:40

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would like to talk about the urban aboriginal societies or groups that we are working with. It's true that we're going to have a large aboriginal population that's going to occur all across Canada, and you probably have that information from the Canada perspective because it's a huge issue.

One of the areas that we've been trying to deal with is: how do we work with the urban aboriginal communities and, more particularly, the urban centres like Edmonton and Calgary? We were in partnership with the federal government in Calgary and in Edmonton, and now we have also encouraged the federal government to include Lethbridge as one of the urban aboriginal strategies so that we could begin to deal with some of the concerns that have been brought forward. So with that we've actually committed a number of dollars to co-ordinate an overall strategy for accessing and improving the delivery of programs and services.

I'll just give you an example. In Calgary we committed to provide \$100,000 to the Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee for community-approved projects, and of course an official from our department sits on that steering committee. We're also working with the city of Edmonton, as I indicated, with the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee and the Western Economic Diversification Office developing an aboriginal accord between the urban aboriginal people and the city.

What we wanted to do was to make sure that we continue to work with these various groups and the various cities because, as you know, the urban migration from the aboriginal community into the cities has just been quite an interesting situation with the urban

people. So we've been wanting to ensure that we continue to do that. So we are working in partnerships with not only the cities but also with western diversification so that we can begin to look at priority setting and decision-making processes that would enable the aboriginal community to become more involved in the city to be able to determine what needs to be done.

We also, as I indicated, successfully partnered with the city of Lethbridge, and that would be to help with community-based strategies to address aboriginal employment issues in Lethbridge. What we want to do there is to make sure that we continually work together jointly on addressing the community's needs. We have to be able to work with other communities as well in those cities as well as across Alberta with groups such as the friendship centres. As you know, there's a friendship centre in Lethbridge, there's a friendship centre in Calgary, and there's a friendship centre in Edmonton. We've got friendship centres all across the province: in Pincher Creek as a matter of fact. We have them in small urban areas.

Of course, the Métis Nation of Alberta has also been a really good group to work with, and we're dealing with the urban aboriginal issues because they do live in the urban areas. Of course, what we've been trying to make sure we do is to include health, education, and employment of urban aboriginal people. Those are the areas that the communities that are located in these centres have been talking about and bringing to our attention, and we certainly have been working with them.

That was an important question. That's an area that I have a special concern about because when you see the concerns that the people are bringing to the table and you begin to see the cities dealing with that urban migration, we have to sit with them to determine what it is that we have to do to address those. So thank you very much for that question because that's, in my view, one of the bigger questions.

When we're talking about the north, I know that probably my colleague from the north will address some of the northern issues, but I want to talk about the temporary workers. We have been working with Human Resources and Employment, and that's basically to be able to start to figure out how the First Nations can get, first of all, an education so that they can begin to look at trades training.

Then from there, what we want to do is to make sure that they also have the ability – in fact, we've been working with Education as well as with Advanced Education not only to deal with the issue of education so that they can begin to look at trades but also to look at those projects that my colleague will talk about. We have to be able to see how we can encourage the aboriginal community to get that training so that they can access the next level, which is the trades training and more education so that they can begin to see the opportunities that are available.

We've been working not only on the educational side; we've got the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit policy that's in place. We also have the Learning Commission, of which 15 of the strategies were recognized as aboriginal-specific, and those 15 strategies are the ones that we also have adopted. They're the recommendations that we've said we would deal with, and those ones we're trying to put in place, working with our partners, which are First Nations as well as the Métis community, to see how we can begin to address the educational needs of the aboriginal community so that they can take advantage of what's happening with the Alberta advantage, as you've identified. Those are the areas, I think, that are very important for aboriginal communities to be able to see what opportunities are available to them.

We are also making sure that when we're dealing with the

economic possibilities in the province, when something happens in a community – I'll give you an example. We have Loon Lake. I don't know if you know where Loon Lake is, a community called Loon Lake. It's a reserve, actually. We have a community called Loon Lake, and within Loon Lake – Loon River, actually, is the reserve – we have all sorts of activity happening around the reserve. What we try to do is to make sure that we help them make the connections with industry to see what possibilities exist not only for employment but also training possibilities and to make sure that there are other opportunities for them in the contract areas so that there are full possibilities of their involvement in the economic participation.

So those are the areas that we get involved in and work with the communities as well as with industry and other departments to see how we can ensure that that could happen. It's a continuation of everything that we're doing and making sure that we do the cross-ministry initiative, which is called the aboriginal policy initiative. On that note, I think it's important that my colleague will address that as well, and maybe he can get up in a few minutes and talk about that.

The Auditor General. I want to say thanks for the compliments. As they say, anything before the but is, you know . . . But I want to say a special thanks for that. I appreciate that. We've worked very hard. My staff have worked very hard to make sure that we continually deal with the issues that the Auditor General brings to our table and try to address them. I know that he's continually making sure that we get better and better, and my staff has certainly been involved in that.

I'll have the chair of the NADC now address some of the northern issues, if he may, Mr. Chair.

Chair's Ruling

Questions to Members Other than Ministers

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, as per the Standing Orders there's no provision for chairmen of committees to answer questions or participate. We had the special provision that in the first 20 minutes that were allocated to you, you could cede some time to the hon. chairman.

The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Caldor.

Debate Continued

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you as well . . . [The sound system malfunctioned] I've got a little feedback action going on. It's kind of like an electric guitar effect, you know, in keeping with the arts theme that we were doing earlier this evening, I guess.

Thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to make comments on the budget. I, too, would like to make a general comment, that amongst the different critic portfolio areas that I am responsible for, I see Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development as being a very straightforward and well-organized budget document. I think that it's in keeping with the mandate of the ministry as well as looking at a number of important needs that need to be addressed in this area, so it is quite a good one to work with.

9:50

I have a number of questions. I'm just going to take the lead from how you were working with the other critic member and just give you a number of them, and then you can work with it as you see fit.

My first question is in regard to the overall spending in aboriginal affairs. Of the spending from last year my reading of it is that it's up by 31 per cent. I would be curious to know what specifically these extra monies were allotted to. I would be interested in some more

specific information. You can give that to me in writing or orally, if you like.

My next question is in respect to the Métis subsistence hunting and fishing area. I would like to ask the ministry if they are going to provide extra funding to solidify the membership lists in the Métis community because, of course, with the Powley agreement I believe we have some not confusion but some new developments in regard to hunting and fishing rights, so perhaps providing some more funding to developing membership lists would be useful.

Will the government be providing funding for education to Métis, First Nations, and hunting and fishing groups on this issue? I think each member of this Legislature should be receiving a great deal of correspondence from different groups in regard to the new developments in hunting and fishing rights, and I think sort of an overall education and consultation process is in order at this juncture to try to give some clarification to the public in regard to the hunting and fishing rights of everyone, really.

[Dr. Brown in the chair]

I have a question as well. My understanding is that there are \$10 million set aside to provide for the partnership with the Métis Settlements General Council to establish self-reliance in preparation for the end of the current funding agreements I believe in 2007. Are these settlements sort of ready? Is that a firm number or a firm date for those things to happen? What's being done as well, then, in conjunction with that to ensure that Métis nations will in fact be self-reliant by this date of 2007? I'm curious to know that as well.

By the government's own numbers the off-reserve aboriginal people of Alberta – we've been discussing this previously – have twice as high an unemployment rate as members on reserves. I should say it's twice as high as the overall unemployment rate in this province. So we're looking for specific programming – I know you spoke to this to some degree already – for employment training and direction in the urban areas because this is where, I believe, the highest unemployment level is for people off reserve.

Perhaps one of the things that comes first to my mind in terms of funding – and it's an important question – is that of urban housing. As the hon. minister has mentioned, we are experiencing a migration of people, a movement of people from rural to urban areas. This is sort of inevitable, and in a way we welcome the migration into our urban areas such as Edmonton, but the housing situation is critical. Affordable housing in Edmonton and Calgary and Lethbridge and Red Deer and other centres, Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, is severe. I know specifically in regard to aboriginal people moving to, say, Edmonton, in my constituency, there's a real acute need for more affordable housing. I'm wondering if there is a provision to budget for this from this department or to steer some directive from this budget into infrastructure, for example.

My last question would be in regard to the Lubicon Cree situation, which is ongoing and developing quite quickly in perhaps less than favourable ways. I would like to ask what's being done to include the Lubicon Cree, which are still without a treaty, in consultations involving the oil and gas exploration on their lands or the disputed lands. It's developing into a potentially volatile situation, and I would hope that this department could find resolution to that somehow.

Those are my specific questions in regard to the budget, and I welcome the response of the minister as she sees fit to do so.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I will address some of Edmonton-Calder's specific concerns. Then if I am not as thorough as he would like me to be, what we could do is go back, and I can find the questions, and I'll write to you about some of those because some of them I think will take a little bit more time than what we can find tonight.

The overall spending. You were talking about Métis. As you know, the Métis harvesting – this actually does have something to do with Edmonton-Meadowlark as well, on the Métis side, the Powley decision. Powley is actually an aboriginal rights decision, not a hunting case, and it is possible that it could have implications beyond harvesting, is what we assess. This is a matter for the future. For now harvesting is enough for us, and that's what we've been dealing with and trying to make sure that we take care of the concerns that are out there.

Community Development is a valued partner. You were asking about Community Development. They are part of what we've been doing and certainly are at the table with us. We're trying to ensure that those ministries that are to be at the table are at the table with us to address their concerns from their perspective. We co-ordinate and we try to get their input, whether it's Sustainable Resource Development or whether it's Justice or whether it's Community Development, to deal with the issues that they're responsible for. So they are definitely a valued partner.

Costs relative to the Métis, as both of you have asked, are contained within our existing budget, and that's what we've been dealing with in terms of the funding for the membership. The Métis community have certainly taken that on themselves and are working with us in terms of determining who is a Métis, which is an important part of the test for the community basis and self-identifications and that nature. They are taking care of that portion. However, we're involved to make sure that it does follow and meet the test that has been brought forward by the Powley decision.

You were talking about the Métis Settlements General Council, and are they going to be self-sufficient by 2007? We're wanting to ensure that we work with them as we work through the transition. We have got a process called the transition assessment planning, and that brings the concerns that they have and the areas of budgeting that we have to deal with, and that'll go through the process within government as we've always done.

We'll continue to work through that to make sure that we can see if there is going to be a gap that's going to result maybe from today to 2007, and we'll make sure that we continue to work with the Métis settlements so that we can address the concerns of a shortfall, should there be one. The \$10 million will end as of 2006, as I indicated, and certainly we want to make sure that we have a way to be able to make that transition, so we'll continue to work with the Métis settlements. They have actually brought forward the concern to our table, and we have now started that process to address the very issues that you're bringing to the table. I want to thank you for your interest there, though.

10:00

The unemployment rate. It's true that there is a huge unemployment rate that we have to be able to look at, and that's why it's important that we continue to work with Human Resources and Employment and also with Education and Advanced Education not only on the educational side but on advanced education to make sure that we have pre-employment training and also to ensure that there is going to be trades training and to ensure that if people want to go to university, they have that ability, as I indicated earlier, so that they can see that there are opportunities for them that they can achieve once they get to that point. So we'll continue to work with the various ministries.

As I indicated, my ministry works with other ministries. We don't deal with program delivery; however, we encourage the various ministries to incorporate these ideas into their ministries. As a result, I've seen some really good activity that has happened from the various ministries, ensuring that we do those kinds of planning and programming that would address those very issues. So it's a milestone, and we continue to make those milestones.

Urban housing. We do need more affordable housing, as you know, as the migration occurs. The cities are starting to feel that, and that's why we have the aboriginal committees and the cities that we've been working with as well as with western diversification to ensure that we address those very issues as we begin to see the concerns come forward. The only thing I can say at this time is that we will continue to do that and address it with those partners because we can't do it alone, and we don't intend to do it alone, but we need to be able to have the partners with us so that we can begin to work out these challenges that we have.

I call them challenges because if they're challenges, then we have to find solutions. As solution finders we can begin to address the concerns that have been out there for a long, long time, and we have to be able to work together to address those.

On the Lubicon situation I know that a lot of people don't know this, but as a result of my ancestry I'm eligible for membership in the Lubicon Lake band and, therefore, could theoretically share in the benefits of any settlement. I have actually handed off that file to the Minister of Justice to deal with that, so that's the reason why I don't deal with the Lubicon issue.

The issue of consultation, however, is another issue. That's another question from the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. It's been a couple of years at least since we started this process, and on the consultation what we have done is we took forward some information and some possibilities and some principles to First Nations. I met with the First Nation chiefs on a government-to-government basis, requested to have our technical people meet with their technical people so that we can begin to address the issue of consultation.

We have now reached a point where my colleagues will be looking at the consultation package once we've finished it, and then it'll go through the regular process. We're still at that stage. We're not finished yet, and therefore the consultation with First Nations doesn't happen to the extent that I believe that you and the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark have been asking about. So I think it's important to note that we haven't got to that degree yet. We will be, and I believe that we will get to that point eventually. That's the one that Edmonton-Meadowlark has been talking about. We will get to that point eventually.

The capacity building initiative. I think this is really new because you asked where the new money was going to go to. We are looking at capacity building to assist First Nations in developing an internal consultative process for resource development. That's what the additional money was for that we requested. Presently First Nations in Alberta do not have the physical ability to meaningfully consult with the government of Alberta or industry on resource development issues, so what we did was that we went forward and asked for more money for us to be able to work with First Nations to be able to do that.

The implementation of the consultation policy, of course, will create consultation fatigue, as you probably know with the small party group that you have, in First Nations under their present administration structure. Without adequate funding for capacity that consultation policy will probably not be successful or at least get to the goal to create a stable environment for resource development. So we wanted to make sure that we developed capacity within First

Nations to assist in a more stable environment for consultation with industry and, of course, the government on resource development issues.

We have money that we requested. The \$6 million that we had, the first \$6 million you asked about, was to be able to look at how we can develop the capacity within government. That was the first role because we also needed to develop our capacity within government, which we didn't have at the time. So it was divided amongst a variety of departments who were involved with our department. Once we finished that, then we went into capacity building for First Nations. With that, now we've got the economic capacity to be able to work with First Nations.

I'll write to you about the specifics relative to the additional money that we've asked for.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to get up and speak to this this evening. I want to commend the ministry in their vision and mission for aboriginal and northern affairs as they put out in the book: "an Alberta that includes the full participation of self-reliant Aboriginal and Northern Albertans in the province's opportunities and prosperity" as well as in their mission "to enhance Aboriginal well-being and self-reliance." Those are very worthy goals, and we're all wanting to attain those.

I guess I'll start and don't want to go over a lot of things, but I, too, would like a more detailed written answer on the breakdown of how the budget is being spent and especially on those huge budget increases. They are substantial, and I, too, would like that information in a written answer.

On page 114 the goal is to have aboriginal Albertans achieve "a socio-economic status equivalent to that of other Albertans." There I guess we're recognizing the fact that they're not equivalent to other ones.

One of the questions that I have is on unleashing innovation and that you're putting forward the SuperNet to aboriginal and northern communities. The question that I have, being from rural Alberta, is that you're putting in this connection. Is it just going to the schools? Is it going to community facilities? Do you have a program where it will actually get that last mile to their individual homes out in the country where many of them live? We spend a great deal of money to get it to maybe one area, but what percentage are we really getting it to when, in fact, so many live in a rural area? If you live more than three miles away from that hub, then they're not able to get the Internet. So I would like to know the answer on that.

Then I guess I have a little bit of a different angle, and I've received many letters and phone calls, and I've gone to meetings. But you have "supporting Northern bursary and stay-in-school initiatives." The question that I have in regard to that is not so much with the aboriginal but the programs that this government is putting out because of the socioeconomic status of a group that you want to encourage to stay in school. I guess I ask the question to the government as a whole that in section 15(2) in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms it talks about the amelioration of programs irregardless for "disadvantaged individuals or groups." If we find that this program is good for those that are socioeconomically challenged on the reserve, why would we not do that for other Albertans that are faced with the same situation and not just give it to one special group?

The last question that I have – and on this I've received probably the most numerous contact I've had – is on page 117, 1.4, which has been addressed a few times this evening. "Lead and co-ordinate participation of Alberta ministries with Métis governments and

organizations in developing and implementing appropriate arrangements for Métis to exercise harvesting rights.” The question that many Albertans are asking me is: why are we giving them special status?

This country was founded on harvesting and gathering and hunting. We no longer live in that age where we can go out and do that. Fish and Game and Sustainable Resources have looked at that, and we’ve got very good programs in place in Alberta. It seems like this proactive move of this government to allow another whole group special status to go out and to hunt and to harvest when up until now they haven’t had that privilege – to say that they need it for sustenance is somewhat confusing. How are they alive today if they haven’t been allowed to do it in the past? And now they get this special status. It just seems like if we’re going to really maintain our fish and wildlife and have a quota system, we can’t open up the door here and allow such special privileges in harvesting. Like I say, a great deal of concern with many outdoor Albertans concerning that.

10:10

I’d appreciate those answers and am looking forward to receiving them, written or oral. Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, I will also advise you that we will be within a few minutes entering into the second hour of the estimates, at which time I would be more than happy to recognize the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul should he wish to add any comments.

Ms Calahasen: That sounds like a good idea, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, let me talk about something that I think there’s been a lot of misinformation and misinterpretation of, what Powley and the Blais case are all about, because I think it’s important for Albertans to understand what this is. As a government we did not give Métis hunting rights. Those were actually recognized and affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada. What happened in the Powley case was that they recognized and affirmed aboriginal rights to Métis.

But on the other hand, on the same day they had the Blais case, which is Blais versus Regina in the fact that Mr. Blais said that he was an Indian under the natural resources transfer agreement in Manitoba. The NRTA, as you know, are under three provinces. So what happened was that he was not recognized. The Supreme Court of Canada said that he is not an Indian as recognized under the NRTA. The NRTA, or the natural resources transfer agreement, is what sets the limitations on First Nations hunting and trapping et cetera. So what happened was that with the two decisions what came out was that there was already a policy decision made. It wasn’t a policy by the government of Alberta. It then took into consideration that there was the aboriginal hunting rights for Métis but that potentially they could have had more rights than the First Nations.

So what the three negotiating groups did – and the negotiations took place with Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Justice, and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development – was that they then looked at what the issues were and tried to ensure that these rights would be confined under the NRTA; therefore, the limitations and closures and conservation and safety would be taken into consideration in those agreements. That’s basically what happened there.

What has gone out is that people are saying that we gave the rights to the Métis. I think that’s blatantly wrong, and I’d like to state here that that’s really not the fact. So we have to be able to address the

issue from the fact that if these rights are out there, how do we ensure that all the aboriginal communities can be under the same rule?

That’s, basically, why we went and did the interim measures. These are interim. That doesn’t mean that there might be a possibility of information that will come in as a result of the interim so that we can use that as we move in a direction of maybe a series or maybe final. We don’t know what that will bring until we know what these interim will do for us because that’s what interim is all about.

So I think it’s important for people to understand that also when those cases came forward, they didn’t tell us who it could be in terms of the specifics, but they also didn’t tell us where and when. We wanted to make sure that we could have those areas of concern that would otherwise not allow us to be able to deal with it in a way that we could manage the resource, so what we did on the negotiating was we talked about: who are the Métis?

We recognized a group called the Métis Nation of Alberta. We also recognized the Métis Settlements General Council. With those two agreements we then confined Métis to Alberta Métis, not necessarily across Canada. So then it would be that that community, whoever that community was, in this case the Métis Nation of Alberta and Métis Settlements General Council, those Métis would then be the community. In that way we would know if there is somebody who comes from somewhere else to be able to try to take advantage of what the Alberta scene was about. We confined it to that.

We also decided where the hunting would be, and we did it so that we called it harvesting lands. These are important because harvesting lands are all unoccupied provincial Crown lands in Alberta, the provincially protected areas, and other occupied provincial Crown lands in Alberta that have a designation or area designated for hunting, trapping, or fishing, as the case may be. We also talked about any privately owned lands in Alberta on which that person has been given permission. It’s not automatic. Under the agreement it talks about: you have to have permission to be able to go on these what we call privately owned lands.

Any body of water in Alberta in respect of which domestic fishing licences are issued and, of course, commercial trapping, commercial fishing were not part of that. We wanted to ensure that the commercial component was out of it. We wanted to make sure that we can look at it from a subsistence perspective.

We also wanted to ensure that we would deal with this situation from a perspective of making sure we had the relationship with that Métis community so that they can then also help us in terms of the policing aspect and so that they will also work on the conservation issue. That was a big concern for them as well. I want to thank them at this time and be able to say that this decision came out in 2003, and it took us till 2004 to come out with something that would be palatable for both sides so that we can deal with this as a conservation issue. We knew that we were dealing with a concern where people could be concerned on the conservation side, and that’s why we encouraged them to be able to allow us to work in a framework that would allow us to deal with these issues of safety, conservation, and to be able to determine where and who and when it can be done.

So we try to do everything we can to work with the Métis in that respect because, as you know, these agreements I think are basically trying to build a regulatory framework around the principles stated in the Powley and the Blais decisions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to address some of the concerns and some of the questions that came forward as well.

First, I'd like to address the comments made by the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner if I may, and that's in regard to the SuperNet. I'm going to paraphrase, but I believe your question was: what is SuperNet doing for rural Albertans over and beyond? Maybe I can add a little bit to say that, number one, of course, the SuperNet is not only going to our schools but also going to our advanced education, our postsecondary schools, which provide access. We think that that is very important in the development of the areas where they are very isolated.

The second aspect I want to talk about is health and telehealth. In northern Alberta we have communities that are very isolated, are eight hours away from specialists. If we can incorporate a telehealth system that assists individuals to come into health care units or come into hospitals or come in to see their doctors and with the use of SuperNet be able to transfer some of the information – and I say information: taking an X-ray of an individual, bringing it forward to a specialist in Edmonton, and having the return of that expertise going back into the rural areas – it is very beneficial.

10:20

Also, when we talk about access – and you mentioned access for, let's say, the local individuals – the SuperNet is going to tie into all of the libraries, not only to the library systems but tie into the libraries, which will provide access for anybody to come into the libraries, use the libraries, be able to use the widened pipeline. We can also add the northern municipalities and their functionality with each other and with the centres and the government.

I'm going to refer as well to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark made a comment about housing. I want to say that we feel that it's very important for the government to make some land available – we talked about in Fort McMurray – for housing because it does provide pressures, and it does provide I want to say challenges to individuals that are there. From that aspect I will also maybe put a brief point in that I think we should stay out of the business of development but make sure that we have the opportunities afforded to individuals.

Some of the major challenges that we have in northern Alberta are, I will say, advanced education, temporary workers, and human resources. It is very important for our colleges to offer a curriculum that will assist individuals to be able to take courses that are necessary for oil and gas development, for forestry development. There is no doubt that there is a higher unemployment rate. The jobs are there, but we need to do training. There are individuals in northern Alberta, whether it be from the aboriginal communities or from municipalities or towns, that do not have the desire to come into the large centres to take their training. I think it is important for us to develop these individuals, to give them the opportunity to be able to learn, and to give them the opportunity to go to school in our northern colleges and provide those courses. I think that will assist in the minimizing of the need for temporary workers coming from other areas. I think that's one of the concerns that you had to kind of offset all of those vacancies that have been afforded because of the greater development.

There was a comment also made, I want to say, that asked something on the aspect of transportation. There is no doubt that transportation is one of our most immediate and our largest barriers. We need to be able to tie the communities together. We need the mobility in order to see the communities flourish and in order to see the north advance.

Someone – and I think it was the Member for Edmonton-Calder

– mentioned the aspect of working together, and I think it's very critical that our ministries do work together. There is no doubt that we need to co-ordinate between the ministries because when we look at the north, there is a major tying together. There is a major need for co-ordination. I talk about Transportation and Infrastructure tying in with Agriculture, where we need a container port coming out of the western part of the province to be able to bring product to market, which would be on the west coast. We talk, of course, of the co-ordination between Energy and Environment. We talk about the co-ordination between, as I said before, postsecondary colleges and our education systems and human resources. We need to work together in those aspects. I suppose I could go on and talk about seniors and children's services and health care.

We need to tie the ministries together and have a single focus of what is necessary and work together with aboriginal affairs and the Northern Alberta Development Council for what is the best advancement for northern Alberta.

Let me mention one other point that was mentioned: what else are we doing? One of our major attractions, one of our major renewable resources in northern Alberta is, of course, our parks, and our parks have basically quadrupled their budget to refurbish and rejuvenate those parks. I'll quote the minister but maybe not verbatim. The Minister of Community Development did say that our parks are the embassies to the world, and to our visitors it is Alberta's signature.

That development, as I said before, is a renewable resource for northern Alberta. It is something that can be accented. It will bring people to northern Alberta, and some of those people will be professionals, will be tradesmen, will be labourers, and will want to stay, and that will also address some of the labour concerns that we have.

Mr. Chairman, I think that that maybe summarizes some of the questions that were asked, and I thank the minister for giving me the opportunity for those questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I've just got a couple of short ones because they seem to be easier to answer, rather than going on with 20 of them, in being able to just pick a couple of them. A couple of specifics would be: how much consultation is there with the Department of Sustainable Resource Development to ensure that we have sustainable resources for future generations, which is always being talked about with regard to northern development? As well, what does the Northern Alberta Development Council do with regard to ensuring that there is a dialogue with the Sustainable Resource Development department?

When we talk about development and exploration, I think there needs to be more consultation with the Energy and Utilities Board. In fact, with the Lubicon and other cases, it looks like it's better to ask forgiveness than it is to ask for permission when we start with development. They wake up one day looking at the pipes and pieces ready to punch holes into this. The logs are already piled up, and they're waiting for, I guess, permission with regard to the utilities board granting them the access to already start drilling.

Are we talking about, in fact, monitoring and ensuring that we have fresh water for oil injection with regard to taking out oil, and are we talking about developing with environmental impact assessments?

Those are just a couple of specifics that I'd like to raise for question and consideration with this ministry.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity also to respond to the budget for the ministry. As opposition it's our responsibility and our privilege to raise questions around the business plan and the budget for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. I guess I also will be very brief.

Thirty-five million dollars is a lot of money, a lot of Albertans' money, and it's not clear to me either where the money is going. Could you say a little about where the money is going?

Secondly, how we're measuring the impacts of this \$35 million. I identified with you some of the goals that you've articulated in the budget. It's not clear how you can measure achieving those goals.

The third question has to do with what's happened in terms of the \$6 million in the consultation. Where does that money go?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, did you want to respond?

Ms Calahasen: I would like to respond to, actually, Calgary-Mountain View first, and then I'll go to Edmonton-Decore.

10:30

First of all, I would like to talk about where the money is going. Let me first address the \$6 million that we received in the beginning. What we did with that money was divide it amongst the various ministries, as I indicated to the question that was asked by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. What we did – it was actually three parts to the MR that I took forward, and of those three parts the first part was to be able to look at capacity building within government. So the money was divided amongst the various ministries. There was Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Justice, Community Development, myself, and of course Energy and Environment. So we all had areas of responsibility that would be able to deal with consultation issues. We all had a portion of that money – I think ours was \$1.28 million – that we received as a result of the \$6 million that I received. I'm probably known as the Six Million Dollar Woman, but I didn't get all the money.

We wanted to ensure that our partners – because it is a cross-ministry initiative. The cross-ministry initiative would mean that all my partners would have to be at the table to address the concerns from a consultation process. So we wanted to ensure that that would occur.

The second portion was actually to be able to look at the First Nations' dollars so that we can begin to look at how we get money to the First Nations, first of all, for traditional land-use studies so that they can begin to map their areas of where their burial sites have been, where their gathering places have been, where the possibility of the ceremonial sites would have been. So it would give us factual information as to where they have traditionally used the land. The First Nations got the money to be able to do those traditional land-use studies.

Also, the other part of it was to be able to get money to them so that they can begin to build their capacity as well. Not only is it government that has to build capacity; the First Nations must develop capacity in order for them to be able to be consulted. We wanted to make sure that they had those dollars so that they can begin to build their expertise. That's where the money went to. On this portion now we are looking at how we can look at First Nations' economic participation, and that \$2.7 million would be used on that specific so that they can begin to look on the economic side.

In my speech I talked about where that money would be used, and if you will recall, I talked about a portion where they would be working on looking at developing First Nations' economic capacity

to play a more meaningful role in Alberta's economy. It's a cross-ministry initiative as well, and it's with Alberta Economic Development and Alberta Human Resources and Employment. It includes building the skills, business planning, financial management, and knowledge and resources of First Nations to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities. So it gives them the ability to be able to get those kind of skills so that they can begin to say how they can begin to take advantage of the Alberta advantage, as was identified.

So that's where that \$2.75 million will go, an aboriginal consultation initiative of \$1.45 million as well as \$150,000 for salary provisions. So when we're talking about those dollars, that's where the money will be going. [interjection] No. The \$6 million was before. This is now, the other money that I have been requesting for this year. I can write to you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: I'd just like to answer one of the questions from the Member for Edmonton-Decore. Your question was in regard to the dialogue between NADC and, for instance, SRD. To answer the question, I need to just kind of give you a little bit of a format on what NADC is and how they operate, and this is from the information gathering aspect.

The Northern Alberta Development Council has monthly meetings, and they do entertain presentations at those meetings from colleges, from municipalities, from individuals, from authorities, from community groups as to what they feel is important and what they feel should be advanced to the government or different parts of the government. At that time when we do have presentations, we do not only just have presentations in one area. We do circulate all over northern Alberta in different meetings, different months and try to get this information.

Then what we do is present it on to the ministries that it involves. So we take each isolated issue or else a collection of issues, and we do have a meeting with the minister. We do present it to the minister. Also, all of this information goes to our Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development minister. Just to let you know, what does happen is that those concerns of individuals are brought forward and are answered back. We make sure that we try to deal with those issues. If there are issues that need to be helped with, that is also another role for NADC.

I know that maybe I lightly just described, but I think I want to say that, yes, there is communication with different ministries. Yes, there is communication with Sustainable Resources. I can just use the example of Sustainable Resources. We have discussions with forestry. We have discussions with fisheries, trapping, leased land. Those issues all come forward, and we bring that forward to the minister.

Thank you.

Mr. Tougas: One last question and I think we're pretty much done. I believe that the minister in discussing the consultation process – I think you said it was going to be done "eventually." I think that was your term. Can you be a little bit more specific rather than eventually if it's been going on since 2000? Can you get a little bit closer or let us know: is it this year, next year? What are we looking at?

Ms Calahasen: It'll be this year. We are pretty close. As we do get to the point where we can share with you, we certainly will share with you that information. But we will go through our process and make sure we've finalized it and work with the First Nations and

make sure my colleagues are following through on the process that we have established. So, yeah, it'll be this year, and I'm looking before the end of summer.

Mr. Bonko: Just for some clarification then, Mr. Chairman. I'm getting some mixed signals, perhaps, from the members across. I just would ask it again, and perhaps I can get the answer then. How much consultation is there between the two ministries with SRD to ensure that there is sustainable resource development?

Ms Calahasen: I think this is really important. I know that my colleague was kind of making signals, and I think you misread that. What we have been doing is working together extensively, as a matter of fact, on every issue relative to land and resource management. So Sustainable Resource Development is one of the partners not only in the cross-ministry initiative on consultation but also on the Powley decision and a number of other issues that we have to deal with as we go through. Anything to do with Sustainable Resource Development that may affect aboriginal affairs or northern development, we certainly are at the table, and he never forgets us.

So it is extensive in terms of that consultation that we do have. It has to be. That's the only way we work, and that's why we call it cross-ministry initiatives. Cross-ministry means that if there's something that happens in Sustainable Resource Development, we have to be able to deal with it in Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and if it affects us, then we are at the table. So we have those cross-ministry initiatives to address those very issues so that we're not looking through stovepipes.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm still struggling to get any sense of where the budget goes and how you measure the results. Maybe you want to comment on that or maybe you want to send it over in written form, but there's no way we could assess the budget without more information.

Thank you.

10:40

Ms Calahasen: Let me first of all talk about some of the measures. I specifically did not go into measures in my speech, hoping that I would be able to address it as we go through. We have specific initiatives under the various goals, as you will see in the budget. You will see that there are certain goals. Then we have the initiatives, and then we have performance measures. We look at the percentage of targets achieved in the cross-ministry aboriginal policy initiative, and we have an annual report that we do give out identifying what we've been able to achieve and everything that we have been looking for.

In most cases what we're finding when we're dealing with aboriginal issues is that we have very soft measures. We found that across Canada it's very difficult to kind of get hard measures, to be able to do that, so what we've been doing is slowly with our partners trying to find ways for us to be able to even do greater measures. If you have any kind of suggestions, I'm always interested to see what other measures we can be looking at. If you have anything that you'd be able to offer to myself, I'll certainly look at those and see how we can incorporate those measures in the following budget.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Chair: The question having been called, after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$29,449,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the Committee of Supply now rise and report the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$29,449,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 37
Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance I just want to move Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, at second reading.

Mr. Speaker, this act includes amendments to the Fiscal Responsibility Act and other acts covering the heritage fund and the endowments funds. These amendments to the Fiscal Responsibility Act would do the following. They would lock in the funds in the debt retirement account so they could only be used for repaying the debt, they would increase the nonrenewable resource revenue that can be used for budget purposes from \$4 billion to \$4.75 billion, and finally, these amendments would clarify some of the more technical aspects of the legislation.

Now, with respect to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act and other endowment fund acts the amendments in this bill would clarify the transfer of money into those particular funds.

A few comments with respect to the debt retirement account, Mr. Speaker, if you will. Last year our government set aside sufficient

funds in the debt retirement account to repay the remaining accumulated debt as it matures. Alberta, of course, has become debt free. Three point five billion dollars in the debt retirement account will be locked in and will only be used and can only be used to pay off maturing debt as it comes due. Finally, it will continue to be against the law to run deficits in this province.

With respect to nonrenewable resource revenue limits there is an amendment that will increase the nonrenewable resource revenue that can be used for budget purposes from \$4 billion to \$4.75 billion, and over the last five years average resource revenue has exceeded \$8 billion, it should be noted. The outlook is for revenue to stay above the \$4.7 billion level in the medium term, so we feel quite comfortable with the amendment in that respect.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans told us that with accumulated debt eliminated and if resources are available, the government should address key priority areas much more aggressively. This amendment will in fact allow our government to do that.

Other, more technical amendments are being made to the Fiscal Responsibility Act including the following. The contingency allowance economic cushion will specifically be addressed, and the calculation of the contingency allowance economic cushion will be simplified in the process. Also, the contingency allowance will continue to be set at a minimum of 1 per cent of budgeted revenue for fiscal policy purposes. Finally, the previous requirement to set aside the net amount of the retained income of funds and agencies and capital cash requirements as part of the economic cushion will now be treated as an adjustment within the sustainability fund.

Just in wrap-up here, amendments are also required to clarify wording around a withdrawal from the sustainability fund for a

settlement involving a First Nation. Mr. Speaker, this is basically a housekeeping amendment that corrects omissions from the amendments that were made last year.

Finally, with respect to heritage and endowment funds amendments to the heritage fund and the endowment fund acts will clarify the transferring of money into these funds from the general revenue fund. As funds become available, the amendments will allow the transfer of the following to occur: \$500 million to the medical research endowment fund, \$500 million to the science and engineering research endowment fund, \$3 billion into the heritage fund for the advanced education endowment, and, of course, \$1 billion into the scholarship fund.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would urge everyone's review, consideration, and support of Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to adjourn debate on Bill 37.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been another excellent day in the Alberta Legislature, and on that note I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:49 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 19, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/19

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We confidently ask for strength and encouragement in our service to others. We ask for wisdom to guide us in making good laws and good decisions for the present and future of Alberta. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a 27-member delegation from the city of Grimma, Germany, led by Bürgermeister Berger, the mayor of Grimma. His Worship is accompanied by two aldermen; the consul general of Germany based in Vancouver, Mr. Michael Schwandt; and the honorary consul of Germany based right here in Edmonton, a man who needs very little introduction to us here, Mr. Fritz Koenig. Also accompanying him are Mr. Joerg Diecke, alderman, head of the partnership committee. In the delegation are business leaders, academics, and municipal leaders.

The mayor and his delegation are visiting Leduc this week and earlier today signed a joint partnership declaration between Grimma and Leduc, marking the first official relationship in North America for Grimma. This relationship builds on the 2002 twinning agreement between Alberta and the province of Saxony, where Grimma is located, which has already led to initiatives in the fields of education, training, science, and technology. Our Speaker visited Grimma, toured the city, and met the mayor. Grimma was in the spotlight during the floods of the summer of 2002, when the people of Alberta helped raise emergency disaster relief funds. These were matched by Alberta's Wild Rose Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that our honoured guests please rise in your gallery and in other galleries to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly guests that are seated in your gallery: from Capital City Savings & Credit Union, Mr. Dennis Horrigan, vice-president, direct banking; Mr. Doug Forsyth, vice-president, community branches; Ms Gail Stepanik-Keber, vice-president, marketing; Mr. Tim Downey, president of Priority Printing Ltd.; from Access Media Group Dr. Ron Keast, president and CEO; Mr. Ross Mayot, vice-president, administration and business affairs; and Mr. Gordon Sheppard, producer, creative services.

Capital City Savings & Credit Union Ltd., Priority Printing, Access, and Canadian Learning Television are community sponsors of the School at the Legislature program. This program gives grade 6 teachers from all over our province an opportunity to relocate their classrooms to the Alberta Legislature for an entire week. In the

fiscal year 2003-2004 over 714 students from 29 classes attended the School at the Legislature program. This program is supported by 29 teachers and 310 volunteers. We're very grateful for the support we receive from our community partners.

I would ask that our guests now rise and receive the very warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two grade 10 students who are participating in the Westlock Rotary Club youth exchange program, which is sponsored, of course, by the Westlock Rotary Club. With us today are Paula Mustonen, who is visiting Alberta from Finland, and Dawnia Myshak, who will be travelling to Switzerland in July. Accompanying them is an old friend of mine, actually, Mr. Les Dunford, a Rotarian who is also the editor of the *Town and Country*, which appears in several newspapers in your constituency, Mr. Speaker. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, in the city of Fort McMurray our city slogan is We Have the Energy. But it's not just about oil energy; it's also about youthful energy. Today it's my pleasure through you and to members of the Assembly to introduce students, teachers, and staff from Father Beauregard school. Of course, this is a Catholic school in Fort McMurray and quite appropriate on this day, when a new Pope was announced to the world. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd like to welcome the 45 grade 6 students, vice-principal Micheal Chaisson, teacher Mrs. Williams, and teaching assistant Mrs. Arbter. I'd like to invite the parents, teachers, students, everyone to please rise and show this Assembly we truly do have the energy in Fort McMurray.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a constituent of mine from Brazeau county. Cecil Andersen is a farmer and rancher, and his wife, Colleen, serves on the David Thompson health authority board. Cecil and I had lunch today, and we discussed the CAIS program, the interim Métis harvesting agreement, sour gas exploration, and other easy issues such as these. I'd ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of Panties Productions, who are taking their original production of *Burlesque* to the Alberta Scene in Ottawa. *Burlesque* is the story of the British comedienne Lydia Thompson and the introduction of the all-female extravaganza to America, which is particularly appropriate today, being the anniversary of the legislation giving women the vote in Alberta. They are sitting in the members' gallery. The writers and performers of *Burlesque*, by the way, were nominated for two Sterling awards this year as well as being the hit of last year's Fringe, so I would ask Jocelyn Ahlf,

Belinda Cornish, and Celina Stachow to please rise and the artistic team and crew, Jesse Gervais and Tomas Brabec, also to join them. If you would all please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I have a second introduction for you today, Mr. Speaker, another very special guest, and that is Mark Meer. Mark is best known to Edmonton audiences as Susanna. Her show, *Oh Susanna*, has become an institution in Old Strathcona's Varscona theatre. Hosted by Mark as Susanna Patchouli, this Euro-chick variety show features interviews, municipal gossip, local musicians and actors, plays by children, grilled cheese sandwiches, and all kinds of fun. I would ask Mark to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you two combined groups from another fine school in my constituency of Edmonton-McClung. This time it's Ormsby elementary school. Today we have 51 visitors on their tour of the Legislature. My grade 6 friends are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Linda Vanjoff and Mrs. Alana Eaton, teacher assistant Miss Megan Grainger, teacher assistant Miss Rushika Fernando, teacher assistant Miss Carole Desranleau, and two parents, Mrs. Brenda Johansen and Mr. Barry Olsen. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe our guests are in the gallery as yet, but we will recognize them when they enter soon. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 15 members of the Red Hat Society. Their group leader is Ms Isabel Maltby. They're the first chapter of the Red Hat Society in Fort Saskatchewan, which is an international society promoting fun amongst all 50-plus aged female members. This international society is now present in 20 different countries and 49,000 different chapters. This local chapter calls themselves the Crimson Chicks. If they are in the gallery, I'd ask them to rise, and if not, we will recognize them when they enter the gallery a little later.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, because of the historic nature of today, I'm going to give my historic comment now. On April 19, 1916, an act to provide for equal suffrage received royal assent in Alberta. The bill gave women absolute equality with and the same rights and privileges as men. That was for the first time in Alberta. It was also for the first time in what was then known as the Commonwealth. Women were allowed to vote in provincial elections and hold provincial office.

Since June 17, 1917, when the first two women, Roberta MacAdams and Louise McKinney, were elected as Members of this Legislative Assembly, 56 women have served as Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, including the 13 currently sitting as members today.

The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to

introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly two guests in the members' gallery who are here in Edmonton for a trade show and workshop. They operate Hang-Ups, a photo and art framing business in Lethbridge and Carmangay. Would Nancy Allen and Sean McFarland, the son of the Member for Little Bow, please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Municipal Infrastructure Program

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This provincial government has had a long history of fighting with the federal government over the notion of receiving money with strings attached, yet the same government then turns around and treats municipal governments in Alberta with the same Big Brother mentality. It is the height of Tory hypocrisy. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Given that this government has announced that municipalities will have to vet spending plans for infrastructure funding through the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is it the intention of this government to micromanage infrastructure plans made by elected municipal governments?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite the opposite. At the announcements that were made on Thursday, with the minister of infrastructure and myself in attendance, we made it abundantly clear that the program is to be as flexible as it possibly can be, that the priorities are to be established by locally elected councils, but that we wanted to have an opportunity to ensure that the priorities of the program were directed towards basic infrastructure and that the basic infrastructure was taken care of before moving into issues such as recreational facilities. We're trying to ensure that someone doesn't build a rec centre and then come back a year later and advise us that their sewer system needs upgrading.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that the infrastructure money provided for municipalities only addresses the infrastructure debt created by years of downloading provincial responsibilities onto our cities and towns, does this government have any plan to provide long-term, sustainable funding for Alberta's municipalities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three billion dollars is a lot of money in anyone's books. Municipalities appreciate the fact that this is one-time funding, but we've also indicated that we hear their concerns with respect to long-term, sustainable funding. This is an opportunity for us to engage in that discussion and over the next five years, hopefully, come up with a resolution to long-term funding. In the meantime \$600 million a year for five years is a very significant portion of that discussion that needs to take place.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: does this government have any plans to increase the autonomy of

Alberta's municipal governments, reflecting the fact that they are themselves democratically elected government bodies?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I indicated on Thursday, when I was asked the same question in Calgary, that I'm prepared to have that discussion. I'm not prepared to give the answer at this point, but I'm certainly prepared to enter into that discussion. I think it deserves some discussion.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Social Assistance Rates

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government gave \$45 million to horse racing in the budget but not one extra dime to poor families needing social assistance. Poor families have seen inflation erode their meagre rate by almost 40 per cent since 1993, when this government cut the rates by 20 per cent. All religions call for assistance for the poor, and many cannot work. This government only grudgingly respects that. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. With surpluses mounting, can this government pause to think of those in need and give an increase to those on social assistance like they gave to the ponies?*

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a reasonable question. Of course, I'm reviewing that whole situation of the 11,000 caseload we have where people are not expected to work. We are reviewing the caseload for the core benefits and also the shelter benefits. Since 1993, of course, there have been a lot of positive changes in relation to the welfare reforms. In fact, people have received health care benefits since then, and we normally provided for other needs such as daycare, work clothes, children's school expenses, utility hookups.

But going back to 1993 – and the member mentioned 1993 specifically, Mr. Speaker – that's when this government announced the welfare reforms. That's when we had a caseload of 97,000, and 80 per cent of the people using the welfare system were single people and couples without children. Our strategy was to move these people back into the workforce, and the money saved would be spent in the high-needs areas, including children's services and persons with developmental disabilities. Both of those have ministries now.

Mr. Backs: Time for an increase.

A question to the same minister: will this government encourage the needy to work by increasing the welfare personal income exemption from \$115 a month?

Mr. Cardinal: Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are always continuing to monitor the situation very closely. Any adjustments we can make to assist those people that cannot work of course our government will make. But anyone that's able to work and is on assistance will always also be given support to find jobs and stay on the jobs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A further question to the same minister: can this government tie our social assistance payments to something like its own market-basket measure instead of having our needy wait year on year, cap in hand, hoping for a pittance?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, of course, we always continue to

review the benefits, especially for those people in the high-needs areas, the 11,000 cases that are not expected to work. We review them very closely, and no doubt within the next three or four months we will be looking at some changes.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

1:50 Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent resource development on public land near Sawn Lake, Alberta, without proper approvals confirms what many Albertans already know, that the oil and gas industry calls the shots on resource extraction in Alberta. Neither the Minister of Environment nor the Minister of Energy, charged with regulating this industry, has indicated that anything unusual has occurred. Therefore, my first question is to the Premier. Do oil and gas companies require any prior government approval before trees are cleared, water reservoirs affected, and ecosystems irrevocably altered?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. Certainly, they just can't go in holus-bolus and start to raze the forests and drill. There are lots of regulatory processes to go through.

Turning to another issue, the preamble by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, the \$45 million to . . . [interjections]

Dr. Swann: Supplementary to the Premier: given that illegal oil and gas development is occurring presently near Sawn Lake in violation of the public trust, will the Premier please explain to Albertans why this is allowed to happen?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the situation, as I understand it, is under review. It's being investigated. I'll have the hon. Minister of Environment respond.

Mr. Boutillier: I would offer to the hon. member that if he is aware of any illegal activity that is in violation of Alberta law, Alberta regulation, I'd ask him and encourage him to please provide me with that. We will take swift action, immediate action, continuing to protect the environment that Albertans truly do value here in this province.

Dr. Swann: I'll be tabling more pictures today, Mr. Speaker, on that case.

Again to the Premier: will the Premier take steps to restore public confidence in our regulatory bodies by stopping development and fining the offending companies?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the situation well enough to stop the project, but I will assure the hon. member that all rules and regulations must be met relative to drilling activities and the removal of trees.

Of course, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is working on a framework agreement relative to the development of traditional hunting grounds. Perhaps she would wish to respond.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Long-term Care Facilities

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Serious problems faced by vulnerable elderly and disabled residents in this province's long-term care facilities have been well documented over many

*See p. 855, right col., para. 11.

years. These include inadequate staffing ratios, the need for better training of caregivers, lack of government inspections, and an overreliance on private, for-profit providers. Yet these long-standing problems have largely been swept under the rug while the government off-loads more charges onto residents in these facilities. My question is to the Premier. How can the Premier claim that seniors are well taken care of in long-term care facilities when they can go three or even four years without a government inspection?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, if that is indeed the case, I would ask the hon. member to provide evidence of that kind of neglect to the appropriate ministers. As I understand it, yesterday the Friends of Medicare held a news conference sponsored by the New Democrats. That news conference was to call for higher standards and more staff in long-term care facilities. Lynda Jonson, the spokesperson for the petition, says that she has witnessed staff and quality deficiencies in the system first-hand. Now, both ministers involved, the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports and the Minister of Health and Wellness, have offered to meet with affected parties to determine whether, in fact, this is taking place.

But I can tell the Assembly that improving long-term care is important to this government. We have been making progress. For example, we directed regional health authorities to raise the average hours of care each resident receives. This means more hands-on care every day for residents. But more importantly – and I think that this is the point that needs to be made – no allegation of abuse in publicly funded care facilities is ignored. None. As a matter of fact, we have put in place the Protection for Persons in Care Act, requiring mandatory reporting of abuse in care facilities. Every report is investigated. If they have evidence of abuse in long-term care centres, then report it according to the law.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, if long-term care facilities are indeed a priority for this government, why does the Premier not know how often they are inspected by government inspectors?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again, according to the law, will the New Democrats obey the law – obey the law – and report?

An Hon. Member: Answer the question.

Mr. Klein: The answer to the question . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I don't need a lot of chatter from the other side. I don't need a lot of chatter from the Liberals or the New Democrats.

Mr. Speaker, if there are allegations, according to the law, will those allegations be reported to the appropriate ministers?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell the Assembly, once he has familiarized himself with the inspection regulations for our long-term care facilities, what action he will take to beef up inspections at those long-term care centres and assisted-living facilities? That's the question, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Klein: To answer the question, Mr. Speaker, I really don't know, but I will have the appropriate minister or ministers respond.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Métis Hunting Rights

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For several weeks reports have been circulating that numbers of bighorn sheep have been

killed by Métis hunters just outside our national parks ostensibly for subsistence reasons under the protection of the interim Métis harvesting agreements. These agreements allow Métis to hunt, trap, or fish for subsistence reasons and allow “the occasional sharing of wildlife or fish between Members,” but they do not address the issue of taking animals for other than their meat or the sale of animal parts, which is restricted under our Wildlife Act and regulations. My first question is for the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Given the fact that the bighorn sheep is the official mammal of Alberta and is a species at risk throughout much of its range and that trophy heads are extremely valuable, can the minister advise what mechanisms are in place to track the number of bighorn sheep that are being killed and to ensure the preservation of the gene pool in this treasured symbol of Alberta?

Mr. Coumts: Mr. Speaker, our role in Sustainable Resource Development is definitely to manage the resource, and we do that by constant monitoring and enforcement of the resource. We have been monitoring aboriginal harvesting activities since the 1930s, and we have several systems in place that assist us in doing that.

I can report to the hon. member and to this House that all male bighorn sheep must be registered by all hunters, including aboriginals. During the last hunt and up to the end of March there were 145 bighorn sheep taken in the province, and I can report that of those seven were reported taken by Métis hunters.

Dr. Brown: My supplemental, Mr. Speaker, is to the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. What sort of lists or tracking mechanisms exist to enable peace officers to know who is a bona fide Métis recognized by the Métis Nation of Alberta or a Métis settlement member?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there are a number of ways that this is going to be done. Under the agreement we have, the Métis Nation of Alberta as well as the Métis Settlements Council will use their best efforts to advise members that when a member is subject to an investigation by Alberta officials of a potential harvesting offence, the member will identify himself or herself as Métis. When they have done that, Alberta will examine that the harvesting has been done in accordance with this interim agreement, and if that Métis harvesting has been done in accordance with this interim agreement and applicable legislation and regulations, Alberta will take no further action. However, should that not happen, then the applicable legislation and regulations will occur.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to talk about what kind of format will follow. There will be 45 days of . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, the rules prohibit legal interpretations.
2:00

Dr. Brown: My second supplemental, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Will the minister ensure that any new agreement with the Métis includes a provision specifically forbidding the sale of any animal parts taken under the Métis harvesting agreement?

Mr. Coumts: Mr. Speaker, under the provincial Wildlife Act we can prosecute anyone who tries to sell wildlife. It is illegal to sell wildlife and its parts regardless of who you might be. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development makes sure that it takes the lead in the continued negotiations with the Métis, and conservation is the key part of those particular discussions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

School Closures

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Accountable, responsible government is a precious commodity, one that seems to be scarce in Alberta. This government is eager to take credit for the oil and gas found in the ground but continues to avoid responsibility for public school closures. Closures are happening as a result of the policy guidelines and funding decisions of this government. My question to the Minister of Education: does the minister take no responsibility for the looming closure of four valued schools in Edmonton?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, funding for education in this province just increased by 7.1 per cent. A year ago today it increased by over 6 per cent. Two years ago today it increased by over 5 per cent, and I expect that it will increase by similar amounts in the years to come because we have an outstanding education system, and we are investing wisely in it.

With respect to the school closure issue, I have addressed that issue in this House countless times, and I'm going to address it yet again. If you carefully read through the regulations and the School Act, you will see that school closures and rumours to that effect are entirely at the whim of the local school board. You have former school board members in your caucus and in the NDP caucus. Why don't you talk to them about how the school closure process works? In that way, you'll find out.

Mr. Flaherty: To the same minister: can the minister update the Assembly as to whether proper documentation was provided to parents involved in the school closure meetings, or is the minister not interested in enforcing his own regulation?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, there are two questions there. Take either one.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the issue that I think the gentleman is referring to has to do with probably the cluster studies done by the Edmonton public school board. Now, as the member would I hope know, there is a set procedure and there is a set standard of information and timelines and time frames and so on that has to be adhered to and followed. To the best of my knowledge any time a school board undertakes a school closure process – it can take up to a year – they follow those particular guidelines. If the member has some indication that certain documents that ought to have been provided were not provided, then he should talk to the school board in question about that issue.

Mr. Flaherty: Parents need help.

A supplemental: what resources is the minister prepared to provide so that principals can work effectively with parents, who need to understand the long-range plan for renewing and building schools? What help will he give them?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, the cluster study included ample opportunities so far, perhaps more to come, for parents to have input. I assume that as part of their process there was a healthy exchange of information. If parents want more information, all they have to do is contact the school board or their trustees or the school superintendent's office, and they'll get that information. I don't know what information was provided by whom on what date for what purpose. It's all clearly spelled out, and each school board is

expected to follow that process. I would encourage the member to become more familiar with it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mount Royal College

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Advanced Education. People across the province, including my Calgary constituents, are concerned about access to postsecondary studies. Many are calling for Mount Royal College in Calgary to become a university in order to ensure that Calgarians have access to postsecondary education. In fact, this week there has been a letter-writing/petition campaign in the city of Calgary further calling for this to happen. My questions, as I said before, are to the Minister of Advanced Education. Can the minister advise us whether Mount Royal College has met all the requirements to become a university?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There isn't a set outline of criteria to become a university. It's not something that happens every day. There's no set procedure or process. What I can advise the hon. member is that we do have under the Post-secondary Learning Act the Campus Alberta Quality Council and that institutions that wish to offer baccalaureate degrees can apply to the Alberta quality council for approval of their degree program. The Alberta quality council will look at the institution to see whether it's capable of delivering the program and look at the program to see whether it qualifies for a baccalaureate degree and in that way ensure quality in the process.

We have committed, Mr. Speaker, to looking at the request from Mount Royal in the context of a process, an overall review of the postsecondary system, to determine whether moving Mount Royal from a college to a university is the appropriate way to go: what value it adds to the system, what value it adds to students in Calgary and southern Alberta and all of Alberta, what problems it creates and how we deal with those issues.

Mrs. Ady: Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the same minister. Has the minister discussed this approach with the officials at Mount Royal College, and are there other things that they could be doing in order to promote their request?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I have had a number of discussions with both the chairman of the board of Mount Royal and with the president of Mount Royal College. We have had discussions about their time frames, what would be helpful to them, what process they want to proceed with, and they understand the process that we're proceeding with, which will be a review of the system in the context of the overall system across Alberta. There are a number of decisions, not all of the same magnitude of the Mount Royal college/university issue, a number of issues that need to be decided in the context of that system review, and we will try and complete that review by the end of October this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Youth Residential Drug Treatment

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new money for youth drug treatment centres in Alberta is important for the care of children. The opposition agrees with the government that new spaces are needed. Our only concern is with the funding disparity for new spaces. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: why is the facility in Calgary being appropriately tendered while the ministry is funding a new facility here in Edmonton without tendering?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't aware that there was a difference in how the facilities were being acquired, but I will say that with the approval of Bill 202 we are looking at how we treat the youth. We're looking particularly at the emphasis in this legislation relative to detox and assessment, and we will be assessing our plans for how we advance what was in the budget, which was sufficient money to add some 34 staff in two locations to provide voluntary supports for youth. This new capacity to look at mandatory assessments will mean that I've instructed our deputy to take a full review of what our plans are and to see how we make sure that we have healthy protocols in place for these affected children.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:10

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: has the minister looked into the possibility of using existing programs in the Edmonton area rather than starting up a new program?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we've had an incredible example of the constraints that parents find themselves in when they have children with crystal meth addictions, for example, and they are looking to us to find new ways to treat their children and to respond to the needs of the children. So although there may be some capacity in existing facilities – and I won't suggest that they will not be used – the answer I've just given and will continue to give is that currently we are reassessing what our options are, taking a look at how we best provide for those children. In that case, the facility in Edmonton may be appropriate, but we also have to make sure that certain criteria are in place to make sure that it's secure.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: how are the 12 treatment beds being allocated in the seven other health regions outside Calgary and Edmonton?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will be developing a plan around that. Of course, those are voluntary beds. Again, when we have an opportunity for a review of what this new legislation can mean in terms of providing a comprehensive, well-structured plan, well-trained staff in place with the youth, when we take a look at what this new legislative piece will do, we'll be better able to answer how we will address other bed needs throughout the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Federal Gas Tax Agreement

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the province of British Columbia and the federal government signed an agreement to share federal gas taxes with their municipalities. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is this. Why hasn't Alberta signed a similar agreement?

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have been negotiating with the federal government and doing a very good job at negotiating with the federal government. I think what has happened in the past couple of weeks has added a sense of urgency to this. With the potential for an upcoming election in the federal government I think there certainly is a sense of urgency to get this signed. Indeed, I have been in communication with Ottawa, and we hope to have this signed within the next two weeks. We will be the second province in Canada to have this signed and, as I say, hopefully within two weeks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is good news.

My supplemental to the same minister is: how much will Alberta municipalities get once that agreement is signed?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, the nice thing about this is that it is very sustainable funding. It's over five years and very sustainable funding. It starts off at \$40 million for the first two years, goes up to \$80 million, and then \$159 million for the fourth and fifth years. So the stability, the sustainability, certainly is there. There have been some musings that it will go on beyond five years, but we really haven't seen anything final to that.

It is good news. Even though it's not as much money as we gave the municipalities, it certainly still is good news.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question, also to the same minister: how will those funds be distributed to our municipalities?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, one of the big things that we want and one of the things we do in this government is that we ensure that the bureaucracy is kept to a minimum, so we're going to be distributing it in exactly the same way as we've done our municipal infrastructure program. Certainly, there will be a ceiling for those small communities, and everything else will be delivered on a per capita type of arrangement. This has been an arrangement that has been accepted by the AAMD and C and the AUMA. Certainly, we want to ensure that as much money as possible goes out to the municipalities and is not used up in bureaucracy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Parks and Protected Areas

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has renewed its commitment to repairing decaying infrastructure in Alberta's national parks, which account for 8 per cent of our provincial land use. The provincial government, to its credit, is also starting to repair parks and protected areas, which together make up 4 per cent of Alberta's heritage land. A large portion of this year's Community Development parks and protected areas infrastructure budget will again be spent on restoring Canmore's world-renowned Nordic Centre. My questions are all to the Minister of Community Development. My first question: approximately what portion of the remaining money will be spent on reopening closed conservation offices and rehiring officers? Just ballpark.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, this would be a more appropriate question to be asking in Committee of Supply. The hon. member knows or

ought to know that that is scheduled for the evening of the 11th of May, day 24 of Committee of Supply. I can share with him the broad numbers that are contained in the budget, which he has a copy of, and I would refer him to page 82 of that budget, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the hon. Minister of Community Development: approximately what percentage of parks and protected areas will have their trails, buildings, and downed border fences restored?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, in approaching the issue of how to restore our parks to the kind of condition that they ought to be in, we've got to do it on a priority basis. It won't be done on the basis of a percentage of how many we'll be able to get done. There are some areas that remain in very, very good condition, that don't require any capital upgrades.

The long and the short of it, Mr. Speaker, is that I appreciate the hon. member bringing attention to the fact that we are making this effort. As an example, sir, under Capital Investment in program 5 on page 82 of the budget we are moving our gross expenditure to \$41.1 million. That is up from approximately \$9.36 million. So clearly a large investment, a significant increase, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Again to the hon. Minister of Community Development: will this government commit to a freeze on public land sales while setting aside more land for parks and protected areas?

Mr. Mar: Sir, that is not within the purview of the Minister of Community Development.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Abortion Services

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Women in northern Alberta are understandably concerned by Capital health's decision to no longer provide abortion services at the Royal Alexandra hospital effective May 13. This essential service should be provided in a public facility, and access should not depend on a sole, private provider. Waits for abortions are already two to three weeks, and longer waits simply are unacceptable. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. What action will the government take to keep the Royal Alex clinic open so that women in Edmonton and northern Alberta requiring this time-sensitive procedure are not forced to endure even longer waits?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, Capital health, as they are delegated to do, made the decision to assign to a private clinic the responsibility for abortions for a very good reason. They wanted to accommodate in vitro fertilization at the Royal Alex and have made accommodation to do so. It is their expectation that the staff at the private clinic will be increased to accommodate the increased volume of traffic. In speaking with the chief executive officer of the Capital health authority this morning, I'm understanding that once the new facility is constructed at the Royal Alex hospital, once again medically necessary abortions will be performed in this publicly funded hospital.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again: what steps will the government take to work with Capital health on a longer term plan to make abortion services available in a public facility rather than having women depend on an uncertain future of a single, private clinic?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, up until this point the Royal Alex has been providing the service. The clinic has got an excellent track record for providing service, has been accessible to women, and has been doing an exceptional job of counselling, so in fact the women in northern Alberta will not see a reduction in service or in service quality. I've already stated that the opportunity for public facilities to be used in future is part of their long-term plan. Currently they are making this kind of accommodation so that another needed service in northern Alberta for women, that women are asking for and that is important because this in vitro fertilization is an extremely important benefit of new technology – they want to accommodate it as well, and this is the best place for it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A further question to the minister: what steps will the government take to ensure that women in northern communities like Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray are able to access abortion services closer to home, putting a stop to the extra expense and delays involved with making a long trip to Edmonton?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's in fact an excellent question. The regional health authorities, especially in outlying areas, have challenges relative to the volumes of traffic that are there, and we've had an excellent presentation from Fort McMurray, from Wood Buffalo relative to their needs. We have been working with staff through Alberta Health and Wellness, with even the Capital health region to look at whether there are any linkages we can make with Northern Lights. For these outlying districts to provide the same level of service might not be practical, but we are working with them to ensure that as much as possible we provide the medically necessary services, and hopefully in the future we'll be able to abbreviate some of the wait and the inconvenience for people in outlying regions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

2:20 Benefits of SuperNet for Rural Alberta

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Access to the SuperNet will be a great benefit to rural Alberta in multiple applications. Telehealth used in conjunction with the SuperNet will allow for echocardiograms, MRIs, or dermatology images and pictures to be sent across the province to a number of leading physicians to provide the most accurate diagnosis without having a patient drive, as mentioned, hundreds and even thousands of kilometres to see their physician face to face. The technology is ready to help assist rural Albertans obtain the best the health system has to offer. We need the information infrastructure to be in place. My first question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. What steps is the minister taking to ensure that SuperNet stays on track and doesn't fall further behind, preventing remote rural Alberta from having access to health services and health professions urbans living . . .

The Speaker: I think we got the gist of the question.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is certainly right. The SuperNet will be of great benefit to rural Alberta. It's good to know the construction of the SuperNet is at a point where the challenges of building 12,000 kilometres of broadband technology are behind us. In fact, 36 Alberta communities were connected to the SuperNet just last week, bringing the total to 201. That's exactly half of the 402 communities to be connected. But halfway isn't good enough. Bell and Axia are well aware that I intend to continue holding their feet to the fire with penalty provisions for construction delays that include a \$100 million performance bond. As such, there's no reason to believe our deadlines won't be met for rural Alberta. The SuperNet will truly be part of our centennial celebrations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. When SuperNet is completed and all rural communities have high-speed telehealth transfer capabilities, will mobile MRI units be introduced to provide approximately 300,000 rural Albertans access to leading-edge diagnostic services?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly entirely a possibility. When I first received the opportunity to serve in this ministry, there were health authorities, health board chairmen that were telling me they were working in that direction. Alberta Health and Wellness is working with the radiologists and with the authorities to determine how best to provide standards of support for introduction of either mobile MRIs or some other capacity for regions to be sure to access the service. Currently if these tests are needed, doctors define the priority, and nobody is denied access to an MRI.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister of health also please tell us what other high-tech programs and services her ministry is looking into to help deliver high-quality health care to rural Albertans?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, Alberta telehealth provides service in 260 sites. Thirty clinical areas, including diagnosing lung cancer, monitoring heart and dialysis patients, and responding instantly to emergencies, are available. We have the leading record in Canada for our electronic record. We have 9,000 linked to the electronic record, and we are already seeing an impact in the reduction of duplication of tests. We know that our system is safer, and I think that we've advanced more in rural Alberta than they have in any part of Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Insurance Rates for Small- and Medium-sized Businesses

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small- and medium-sized Alberta businesses are being plagued by the escalating costs of all types of insurance: automobile, commercial, life, and disability. The government's auto insurance reforms, while chaotic in nature, have at least provided some minimal relief. However, they apply only to privately owned and operated vehicles and do nothing to address the concerns of Alberta's small-business owners. My question is for the

Minister of Finance. Why did this government make the choice to do nothing to protect small- and medium-sized businesses from skyrocketing auto insurance premiums?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, insurance is sold in this province under the private sector. When we looked at automobile insurance reform, we looked at the portion of automobile insurance that is compulsory in nature, thus saying that you cannot operate a vehicle in this province if you do not carry public liability and property damage. So it was very appropriate that the government ensure that insurance that we require people to carry be available to them at a reasonable rate, and that's, indeed, what automobile insurance reforms have done.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the government undertake to review the property and casualty insurance issues affecting small- and medium-sized enterprises?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a concern, but surely the hon. member is not saying – well, maybe he is – that we should regulate all private companies and their operations. Should we not allow car dealerships to sell cars at a competitive rate? Should we not allow insurance companies to sell insurance at a competitive rate? It is a competitive business, and it is a business. We encourage people to shop around and make sure that they are getting the most competitive price for that. If I were to review property insurance, what would the review accomplish? That's my question. Perhaps the hon. member will enlighten me on where he's going with this in his next question.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given outrageously high insurance premiums and reported record profits, will this government eliminate the hidden insurance premium taxes collected on all insurance premiums – all insurance premiums – paid by small businesses?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, there's a question I can answer, Mr. Speaker. Can I have the assurance that if we remove the 3 per cent tax on insurance, which partly covers the cost of regulating that industry in this province, the actual consumers will receive that benefit rather than the companies themselves?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Recreational Sport Fishing

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, a very wise man, who just happens to be my husband, always says that if you take your son hunting, you will never have to hunt for him; if you take your son fishing, you'll never have to fish for him. Thanks to this philosophy my family spent many happy camping weekends together, fishing the beautiful lakes and rivers of this great province. But something has changed. Many of my constituents are now going to B.C. and Saskatchewan to fish because the opportunities are much better there. My questions are for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What are we doing to support the fish populations in our lakes and rivers, and why are so many people leaving to fish in B.C. and Saskatchewan?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's lakes and rivers face the third highest angling pressures in Canada. We do have a tremendous sports fishery with about 300,000 fishermen. One-third of them don't pay for any fishing licences at all; they're either youngsters or seniors. We have a good fishery considering the fact that we only have 1,100 fish-bearing waters in the province as compared to 90,000 in Saskatchewan and many more deep lakes in British Columbia. Through our programs of conservation we really do have good success with ensuring conservation. I know that the hon. member is concerned about walleye fisheries in the province, and we've loosened up walleye regulations on 14 lakes in our province over the past two years.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: is fish stocking part of the solution?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, definitely fish stocking is a great part of our solution. We have a significant stocking program here in Alberta. There are about 300 waters that we provide fish stocking for, and 40 per cent of our recreational fishing comes from stocked waters. There are 3.5 million trout stocked in our province, and that's brown trout, rainbow trout, and brook trout. Natural populations, of course, are the most effective, but when trying to provide recreational fishing, we need to definitely have a stocking program.

2:30

Mrs. Jablonski: To the same minister: given that revenue from fishing and hunting licences goes to the Alberta Conservation Association, does any of this money go to stocking fish in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Conservation Association provides a tremendous amount of support to our provincial stocking program, and a breakdown of the revenue from fish and wildlife licences: 27 per cent goes to general revenue, 1 per cent goes to the Professional Outfitters Society, 22 per cent pays for computer systems for vendors, and almost 50 per cent goes to the association for fish and wildlife conservation. So a recent report from the ACA also shows that enhanced stocking involved 67 water bodies in Alberta and more than 118,000 trout in addition to many other fish programs in the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Edmonton Remand Centre

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The protection of basic human rights in Alberta applies to all people. In fact, the human rights act states quite clearly that "recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all persons is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace," quite powerful words that apply to all, including those housed in remand centres. My question is to the Solicitor General. Last week the hon. minister stated in regard to the Remand Centre that "these are corrections facilities for criminals." Can the minister explain if the people housed in the Remand Centre are included as all guilty of an offence, or does section 11(d) of the Charter of Rights of Freedoms apply?

The Speaker: Okay. For about the sixth time now in the last

number of days I'm going to say that the question period is not the place for legal interpretation.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question the hon. member raised is that the Edmonton Remand Centre does house individuals that have been through court or are making their way through the court process. They're remanded into custody by a judge until their court case is before the courts. So, clearly, they have their rights with them. They have the ability to meet with a lawyer, discuss their cases with a lawyer, but they're there in a remand situation not as an offender.

Mr. Agnihotri: My first supplemental is to the Minister of Community Development. Given the well-documented Third World conditions at the Remand Centre, that constitutes a violation of human rights, will the minister investigate these abuses of human rights that are occurring at the Edmonton Remand Centre? It is the responsibility of the government to protect all Albertans.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, it is not known to me what conditions are like in the Third World, and to try and compare them to the Remand Centre is, I think, a very, very difficult thing to do.

What I can say, however, is that the Human Rights Commission operates at arm's length from government. The government does not direct the Human Rights Commission in any way, shape, or form. It serves as a quasi-judicial function and as an administrative body determines its mandate and its process for investigating complaints that are filed against it or to it by, for example, in the case suggested by the hon. member, somebody who is in the Remand Centre.

I'm certain that the Human Rights Commission will take appropriate steps and process to investigate such things if somebody makes such a complaint.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: can the minister explain to the two men who were raped by the same inmate while under the government's custody why this government failed to protect their fundamental rights?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a confusion with respect to responsibilities. In this particular case the hon. member has talked about a criminal activity that took place on the site of the Remand Centre. So it's an appropriate step that the individual involved as a victim has redress by filing criminal charges. In any case where there is a criminal activity that is taking place – it matters not whether it's in the Remand Centre or outside of the Remand Centre – the appropriate steps are to be tabled by filing charges. It is not a matter of human rights in this case.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming to supplement an answer.

Social Assistance Rates

(continued)

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in question period in a question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning in his preamble he made a very inaccurate statement that the government was giving money to Horse Racing Alberta. The true fact is that Horse Racing Alberta has the ability to earn money – earn money – at the racing entertainment centres in four locations in the province.*

Based on the amount of entertainment money spent at those racetracks, a portion of that money is earned by Horse Racing

*See p. 849, left col. para. 5.

Alberta. As well, a portion of that money flows into the Alberta lottery fund to the benefit of all Albertans and many communities.

I would also point out that the economy of the province of Alberta benefits to the tune of nine times what they are able to earn at those racing entertainment centres.

The Speaker: As per our practices the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a supplemental question to ask if he chooses to.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The interest of Albertans is clear in any monies that are spent by Albertans, and certainly the monies from lotteries are included in the budgetary monies. My question is to the minister. Because of this large number, \$45 million given to horse racing, that could be given to other areas and, of course, is brought from all these realistic monies that are coming from raising funds that could go elsewhere, why cannot some of this be given to the poor families of this province?

Mrs. McClellan: I'm going to make one more attempt at this, and I invite the hon. member to take part in our estimates and talk about the budgetary process.

The Minister of Gaming has clearly laid out that this money is not given to Horse Racing Alberta. In fact, they earn those dollars through the racing entertainment centres, Mr. Speaker. I invite the hon. members opposite to get more acquainted with an industry in this province that not only provides entertainment but provides jobs, many of them in the area in this city just northeast of this building. I would invite them to examine the jobs, the work they've done in education with a program for groomsmen at Olds College, the improvements in the backstretch, the child care programs that they have initiated, and look at an industry that has a proud history in this province and is making a very real contribution to the economy in this province.

The Speaker: There's only one supplemental question.

Hon. members, I'll introduce a number of members to participate momentarily, but might we revert briefly to the Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: All right. The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, and I think there's identification that's pretty obvious here, but please proceed.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the consideration of allowing me to reintroduce these very special guests. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 15 very special ladies from the city of Fort Saskatchewan. They're the first chapter of the Red Hat Society to be registered, and earlier I read more about their background. On their website they say: "There is fun after fifty . . . for women of all walks of life. We believe silliness is the comedy relief of life and, since we are all in it together, we might as well join red-gloved hands and go for the gusto together." I am so happy that you are able to stay here and rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. Have a good look at their hats.

The Speaker: I think, though, an obvious correction must be made, hon. minister. There's not a lady up there over the age of 50.

The hon. Deputy Speaker.

2:40

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you Bea Niedersteiner, a co-ordinator, plus 30 other active seniors that are involved with the Didsbury District Community Bus Society. This trip to the Legislature today marks the very first trip for their newly acquired community bus, and hopefully they'll be able to get to use it many, many more times during our centennial year to tour our wonderful province. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: In just a few seconds I'll call on the first of six members.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Participation of Women in Politics

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta, home to the Famous Five, was in the forefront in extending political rights to women. Eighty-nine years ago on April 19, 1916, the Alberta Liberal government, led by Premier Arthur Sifton, passed the Alberta equal suffrage act, granting most, but not all, Alberta women the right to vote in provincial elections. They exercised this right in June of 1917 and elected Mrs. Louise McKinney and nursing sister Roberta MacAdams to the Alberta Legislature. For the first time in either a Canadian or British Assembly women were elected to serve as members.

In 1997 our province briefly led the country in electing women, with women holding 27 per cent of the seats in the Legislature. Unfortunately, this is the high mark in Alberta politics. Since then women have been rapidly losing ground, with only 13 women elected during the 2004 Alberta election, the lowest number since 1989.

This trend must be reversed. According to a survey released last fall by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada, 90 per cent of Canadians think electing more women will improve the political system. Canadians rank electing women higher than any of the other suggested reforms, including referendums and proportional representation.

If more women are indeed part of the solution to the burgeoning democratic deficit, Albertans are out of luck. In the last provincial election the Progressive Conservative Party offered only 12 women candidates, down from 17. Eleven of these were incumbents. We Liberals had 18 candidates, the same as last time, while the NDs managed to recruit 25 women candidates. Over half of the ridings in Alberta couldn't elect a woman even if they wanted to because all of the candidates were men. Unless there is a concerted effort by parties, pundits, nonpartisan groups, and electoral reform activists, Alberta's strong record of promoting women's political representation will be little more than a historical footnote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, simply because the Famous Five were mentioned here today, I'd just give you an update. The maquette, the major statuettes that are located in Ottawa, a replica figure will be coming here shortly. We made the arrangements with the Famous Five Foundation to have them housed in this building for much of the 2005 centennial celebrations.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Youth Secretariat

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the spring of 1999 our Premier announced the formation of the Youth Secretariat, to be housed in the Ministry of Children's Services. The Youth Secretariat was developed to recognize the importance of youth in Alberta. Youth play a significant role in this province and have demonstrated to us that they are innovative and inspiring contributors. The Youth Secretariat allows government to communicate openly with young people and together identify and address youth issues. Youth have the expertise as well as the solutions. It is our responsibility to give them an opportunity to use their voices.

It is my honour to work for and with the youth of Alberta as the newly appointed chair of the Youth Secretariat. Together it is important to ensure that we have a solid youth perspective on all youth initiatives. In my conversations with youth, community stakeholders, and the ministry staff we have identified that the Youth Secretariat's priorities to date are illicit drug use, identifying gaps in services for youth, putting together a new Youth Advisory Panel, and working with other youth networks across Alberta.

It is quite evident that youth are committed to making realistic change for their peers who are confronted with addiction issues. We look forward to continued communication with young people as we develop effective solutions in this area. The Youth Secretariat will be assembling a new Youth Advisory Panel for Alberta. Youth input will be crucial in setting the direction for the Youth Secretariat in the coming year. I look forward to updating the members of this Assembly on Youth Secretariat activities and sharing the great work of our youth in effective change in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Camrose Kodiaks Hockey Team

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night before a sold-out crowd of 2,200 the Camrose Kodiaks won the Alberta Junior Hockey League championships. They defeated the defending champion Fort McMurray Oil Barons 4 to 2 in game seven at the Max McLean Arena in Camrose. This is the third time in the last five years that the Kodiaks have won the Alberta Junior Hockey League championships. Led by head coach Boris Rybalka and assistant coaches Doug Fleck and Miles Walsh, this team of 24 up-and-coming hockey players came back from a 3 to 1 series deficit, staving off defeat by winning the last three games of the series.

The three provincial championships in the last five years are not their only accomplishment. In 2001 the Kodiaks won the Royal Bank Canadian junior championships. In 2003 they won the silver medal at the Royal Bank Canadian junior tournament. In 2001 and 2003 they won the Alberta/B.C. Doyle Cup. This is a very impressive record considering that the Kodiaks have only been in the Alberta Junior Hockey League for eight seasons. All Albertans are hoping this winning record continues when the Kodiaks first meet the Surrey Eagles this Friday in the 2005 Doyle Cup on their way to another Royal Bank Canadian championship to be held later in Weyburn.

The Kodiaks are owned and operated by the Camrose Sport Development Society, a nonprofit community organization whose purpose it is to promote and develop a strong sports program in the community. The Camrose Sport Development Society stresses the importance of combining a successful education with sport. Many of the Kodiaks of the past have been awarded scholarships to various universities.

The Kodiaks are proud to be members of the Alberta Junior Hockey League. The Alberta Junior Hockey League started in the

1960s with only five teams and now provides a high level of hockey for 15 Alberta teams throughout our province. The league itself encourages further education for all players, and it is an important part of our Alberta sport history.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Alberta: Land of Opportunity

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta, the land of opportunity. Alberta is the top destination for Canadian migration. Between 1996 and 2001 Alberta's net gain was around 120,000 citizens. In 2002 Alberta gained 18,000 newcomers. Last year alone 11,600 Canadians came, saw, and settled in this great land of Alberta. All indicators predict that this trend continues.

These are just numbers, but the real situation can be seen in the construction and expansion of residential communities, shopping malls, office buildings, warehouses, roadways, hospitals, schools, and many private and public facilities. The real situation can be felt in seeing the many happy faces at community events, the laughter of young children playing in the playgrounds, the waving of hands to new friends in the neighbourhood, the high traffic on the way to work, and the tasting of food varieties for dinner after a productive day.

In a recent newspaper headline it said: Alberta Is Number One Pot of Gold at the End of the Rainbow. I often wonder why Alberta has attracted so many hard-working people from many parts of the world and Canada. Positive can-do attitudes of Albertans plus sound governing policies must be the reason. The ancient Oriental proverb goes: good land, birds nest. May I say it politically, or rather Caofucius says: good government, people come.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is now like a well-disciplined and caring family, free of debt, living within its means. Without debt to pay, all of its incomes are dedicated to saving for the future and spending on essentials and growth development. All in all, Alberta is doing very well, but we cannot be complacent. We should keep on working together for this land of opportunity.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Pope Benedict XVI

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a most momentous day. Over one billion Catholics have a new spiritual leader with the election of Pope Benedict XVI.

At approximately 9:50 a.m. our time 115 cardinals from 52 countries burned their ballots from the fourth round of voting in the stove of the Sistine Chapel. White smoke, or, as they announce it, fumo bianco, poured out of Vatican City, signalling that they had come to a decision, and delighted crowds awaited, ripe with anticipation. Shortly after, Cardinal Jorge Arturo Medina Estevez appeared to introduce the newly elected pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Cardinal Ratzinger addressed the thousands of people in St. Peter's Square for the first time as pope. He described himself as a humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord.

2:50

I cannot express how pleased all Catholics around the world are today. The College of Cardinals had the wisdom to elect a gifted theologian, a man who has been a very influential member of the Catholic Church. Joseph Ratzinger was formerly the archbishop of Munich and for many years the prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. He also sat as dean of the College of

Cardinals. He served in the papacy of John Paul II with dedication and is a very fitting choice to be our 265th pope and the first Germanic pope since the 11th century.

Without question Pope Benedict XVI has some big shoes to fill. Pope John Paul II was a great man and led the Catholic Church with wisdom and kindness.

I would like to congratulate the Catholic Church on the election of Pope Benedict XVI. I pray he will lead our faith and the world with the same wisdom, humility, and kindness as his predecessor.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ken Fearnley

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We must express our gratitude to all those who provide affordable, safe, and secure housing for Alberta's seniors. One of the many not-for-profit organizations in Alberta that provide a secure and dignified way of living for seniors is the Greater Edmonton Foundation. The foundation has over 350 caring and dedicated staff, with an annual operating budget of \$15 million. This staff's prudent use of this budget provides housing to over 2,000 low-income seniors in Edmonton at 10 lodges and 10 self-contained apartment buildings.

Today I would like to recognize one of the many fine employees of the Greater Edmonton Foundation who recently retired after 13 years, Mr. Ken Fearnley. Mr. Fearnley was the chief administrative officer reporting to a board of directors appointed by Edmonton city council. Mr. Fearnley had a career that was outstanding as a public administrator. His dedication and commitment are an example for us all. At this time on behalf of all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly I would like to wish Mr. Fearnley and his family well in all their endeavours in his retirement.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank him for making our city, our province, and our respective communities a better place to live. His efforts do not go unnoticed nor unappreciated.

Thank you.

head: Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition signed by Albertans who are very concerned about the dangerous driving conditions faced by many workers in northern Alberta. In particular, the 428 people who signed are urging the government to "increase infrastructure development for funding Highway 63." This brings the total of this petition to 2,146 signatures.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and present a petition from 108 Albertans in the fine communities of Rochester, Calmar, Rolly View, Sylvan Lake, Stettler, Clyde, and Edmonton. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aborigines; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of around 1,350 signatures from Albertans who would like to see an increase in the number of caregivers per resident in long-term care facilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of an e-mail received by my colleague the leader of the NDP opposition. The letter is from an oil sands worker who is concerned that bringing foreign temporary workers to work in northern Alberta will reduce his wages and prevent Albertans from being able to get their start in the trades.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies from a group called the Coalition for Alberta's Future, consisting of "five thousand citizens and families who own land in excess of 5-million . . . acres" and are seriously concerned about the need for reform and how the oil and gas activity is regulated in the province.

A second tabling, Mr. Speaker, if I may: the appropriate number of copies of photographs taken around the Sawn Lake area, where development has been occurring without permission.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling this afternoon, and it's a document inviting everyone to a school closure summit workshop, which is to take place this Sunday, April 24, at 1 p.m. at Duggan Hall at 37th Avenue and 106th Street. It is a meeting that has been organized to provide Edmonton public school board and, hopefully, this government "with input about the principles [that] should be used to guide" the public school closure process. It needs to be changed.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Hon. members, it is my pleasure to table the appropriate number of copies of the fourth School at the Legislature Report Card 2003/2004. This is the Legislative Assembly educational program for grade 6 students cosponsored with community partners Capital City Savings, Priority Printing, and Access Media Group.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: Main Estimates 2005-06

Advanced Education

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to open Committee of Supply with a few remarks and then take the opportunity to answer questions from members with respect to the supply that we're requesting for the Department of Advanced Education.

Before I start those remarks, I'd like to introduce a number of people who are in the gallery to support me in whatever way they can, by signalling or waving or smiling or frowning or nodding or shaking or rattling or whatever it is that they can do to communicate with me, because we have a very, very dedicated group of people who work in and for the Department of Advanced Education, or, more appropriately, for the people of Alberta.

Having some familiarity, I think I can say that across government we have dedicated people working for Albertans. But I have to tell you that I am very impressed with and have had a great deal of assistance and direction from the people in Advanced Education. We've worked through the last three months postelection in a very truncated time frame, dealing with getting together the business plan for the newly constituted department, dealing with putting together the proposals, first of all, for the Premier's speech to the province at the beginning of February and then the throne speech and then Bill 1. This group of people and the people who work with them and for them have done yeoman service over the last three months and indeed through their considerable years of service to the province and to the people of this province.

3:00

I'd ask Dr. Bill Byrne, who's the deputy minister of the department, to stand; Phil Gougeon, the assistant deputy minister, adult learning; Shirley Dul, who's the assistant deputy minister of apprenticeship and industry training; Rai Batra, who we've just recently stolen from Community Development, who's the assistant deputy minister of strategic services; Gerry Waisman, who's the executive director of learner assistance – there's a man you want to know; he gives out \$480 million a year to Alberta students – Solomon Quarshie, acting director of financial services; and Michael Shields, director of communications. I'd ask them to stand because I want all members of the Legislature to be able to see what a wonderful team of people they have serving students in this province and advancing education.

Mr. Chairman, government has announced in Budget 2005 a strong commitment to advancing education that will go a long way towards addressing both immediate needs and future demands on postsecondary education in this province. These aren't just increases to line items in the budget. All these budget items are grounded in this government's overall 20-year strategic plan, a plan that's built on fiscal responsibility but one that looks to the long-term picture. This is a budget that puts wheels on that strategic plan.

This budget puts the leading in learning pillar into motion. Mr. Chairman, I would also say that although this is the Advanced Education department, we not only contribute to the leading in learning pillar but certainly to unleashing innovation, helping Albertans compete in the global economy, and above all making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. A key part of leading in learning is having a world-class postsecondary system based on accessibility, affordability, and quality, and this ministry has made concrete steps towards this goal by making it an integral part of our three-year business plan for advancing education.

Advanced Education's mission is for Alberta to be a learning society where all Albertans have access to the opportunity to develop the learning, work, and life skills that they need to achieve their aspirations and maximize their potential to the benefit of themselves and Alberta. To achieve this success, we've set out the four strategic priorities that will guide everything this ministry does

throughout the next three years. Those strategic priorities are leading in learning, one of the pillars in the government's 20-year strategic plan, so obviously it must be our ministry's main priority; access for all learners so that all Albertans have access to opportunities to achieve their aspirations and maximize their human potential; affordability for all learners to ensure that costs are not a barrier to a student getting an education; and quality and innovation. To be a leader in learning Alberta must continue to move ahead towards excellence.

All budget items are designed to address these strategic priorities and move Advanced Education toward succeeding in its mission, and that will ultimately move the Alberta government and Alberta closer to achieving our 20-year strategic plan. To that end, I'll go through the 2005 budget by looking at the four strategic priorities in the ministry's plan and key spending items under each area.

Leading in learning, a top priority in the government's 20-year plan, a key strategy in this ministry's three-year business plan. It's about the whole system. This includes all advanced education. Yes, university and college programs, but also literacy, trades and occupations, English as a Second Language, and other adult learning opportunities. That's the context for the 2005-2006 Advanced Education budget.

Over the next three years Advanced Education will increase its budget by nearly 30 per cent, or \$433 million, bringing the total program expense for the ministry to almost \$1.9 billion. This funding increase will begin immediately in the 2005-2006 year. Government is focused strongly on advanced education in order to leave a legacy of higher learning for the future, and a big part of that is making sure that the resource wealth that Alberta enjoys today isn't spent but is invested to help future generations of Albertans achieve their postsecondary aspirations.

That's where initiatives such as the access to the future endowment come in. In 2005-2006 the government will make a \$250 million initial payment towards the \$3 billion access to the future endowment. We asked Albertans what they wanted done with future surpluses, and they told us that advanced education was a priority. That's what this endowment fund is all about, Mr. Chairman: saving a portion of the unbudgeted surpluses for the future and investing them in a way which helps to create the future.

Another way we're preparing to lead in learning is by encouraging parents to save for their children's education through the Alberta centennial education savings plan. Funding for the Alberta centennial education savings plan in 2005-2006, its first full fiscal year, will be \$19.5 million. Mr. Chairman, the education savings plan has a greater good than just encouraging the parents to save for their children's future education. We know that people who have an expectation that their children will go to school have a greater degree of success in having their children go to school. By asking parents to consider opening an education savings plan at the birth of their child, we'll create the expectation at that child's birth that that child will go on to have an advanced education.

We're also increasing, Mr. Chairman, assistance to postsecondary institutions by more than 31 per cent, or \$382 million, over the next three years. That includes, as was requested by the postsecondary institutions themselves, sustained three-year budget increases of 6 per cent per year, or greater than 18 per cent, a \$205 million increase in base operating grants over the three years to enhance accessibility and quality instruction, \$90 million additionally in the access growth fund over three years to achieve the target of adding 15,000 postsecondary spaces, \$4 million annually to support degree-granting programs at private, not-for-profit colleges that weren't previously included. Funding to support operating costs of new

postsecondary facilities will increase from \$8.7 million in 2005-2006 to \$19.5 million in 2007-2008.

These line items will go a long way towards helping Alberta lead in learning, but as I've said before, more can be done. Does that mean more dollars? Better use of existing resources? New types of programs? We don't have all those answers yet, and that's why we're also undertaking a postsecondary education review this year. It will look at the funding issues. It will look at issues of affordability, and in fact it will look at the entire system.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned in the House earlier today, issues and decisions in the context of Mount Royal College versus Mount Royal university or other dramatic changes to the system have to be made in the context of Alberta as a learning society and what we need to have in place to make sure that we have the system necessary to make sure all Albertans have the opportunity to advance their education and that the education that Albertans can get here in our province will enable them to be world leaders.

The review will look at access and how we can make sure that there's a space for every qualified Albertan who wants to advance their education and how we can inspire Albertans to want to advance their education. In the meantime, Budget 2005 takes some very solid steps towards ensuring Albertans can find the postsecondary programs they want right here in their home province. As announced in the Premier's address in February, we're adding 60,000 additional student spaces by 2020. That's 15,000 in the next three years, 30,000 over six years, and 60,000 over 15 years. These spaces will be in universities and colleges and technical institutes, yes, but they'll also be in apprenticeships, in literacy, and in lifelong learning. Mr. Chairman, I can't emphasize enough that postsecondary education, or advanced education, is not just about the universities and colleges in this province. It's about every Albertan, wherever they're located in the province, being able to advance their education. It's about those Albertans who need to move to literacy as much as it is about those Albertans who want to move past the PhD.

As I mentioned, we're putting \$90 million in the access growth fund over three years to help achieve our targets. The government is also putting \$469 million into the postsecondary capital projects over the next three years, and \$17.6 million will be available in 2005-2006 to support a network of 180 community-based groups that provide access to programs such as family and adult literacy, English as a Second Language, and rural community programs in more than 80 communities across this province.

Mr. Chairman, I had the opportunity to speak to the community learning councils annual meeting and conference on Wednesday, just before the budget came down, in Calgary. There were probably 120 people there representing these 80 communities, many of them volunteers, many of them helping to make programs of adult learning available to Albertans in their communities. I want, again, to thank those volunteers and the people who work in that area because they help Albertans advance their potential.

We're also working very strongly to increase access in apprenticeship and industry training. It's a viable career choice for Albertans, helping Albertans meet the demand for skilled labour. Can't say it often enough, Mr. Chairman: a career in the trades, a career in the technology areas, in industry is a very, very viable career in this province and across the world. It's an area that we have to value as an advanced education because it is truly an advanced education.

3:10

Truly, there are very, very few places that you can work now that you don't need to have some form of advancement. I've said before even in the area of trucking, not to diminish that. That's a very good

career for those who want to do it, whose passion it is to drive. But if you want to be a truck driver, you need to know GPS technology, border crossing technology. You need to have skills and abilities.

In 2005-2006 there'll be a \$5.7 million increase for apprenticeship training, bringing the total funding to \$22.5 million. This funding will increase spaces in trades training to meet industry demands.

We want to also make sure, Mr. Chairman, that there are spaces in a high-quality postsecondary system at a cost that is affordable. We want to ensure that finances are not a barrier to a student getting an education. We're starting by addressing immediate concerns with a one-time \$43 million payment to postsecondary institutions to cover tuition fee increases this year. Scholarships, bursaries, and grants are a key to the student finance system, and we're increasing funding for scholarships, bursaries, and grants to students by \$7.5 million, to \$72 million this year. Also in 2005-2006 about 30,000 students will receive scholarships, including the new Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship, that will provide \$5,000 to four postsecondary students.

Alberta's student finance system is a leader in the country, and this government expects to disburse \$105 million in student loans in 2005-2006. Mr. Chairman, \$105 million in student loans, but you add to that the \$32 million in learner assistance bursaries, \$48 million in maintenance grants and special-needs bursaries and the Alberta opportunity bursaries, and \$23 million in heritage scholarships, for a total of about \$200 million that is being provided to Alberta students from resources in this province and an additional \$270 million approximately that is managed by our learner assistance branch to provide over \$480 million to Alberta's students. That is a significant amount of money.

The combined federal/provincial yearly student loan limit is increasing to \$12,140 in recognition of increased costs for students. That includes a 2 per cent living allowance increase. Lifetime loan limits for programs of study will increase by \$10,000 for those programs that have not recently been adjusted. Undergraduate programs of study will go from \$40,000 to \$50,000. Masters programs will go from \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Alberta is also working to make sure that if a student must carry debt after graduation, the bulk of that is not Alberta debt. That's where the Alberta student loan relief benefit that I mentioned comes in. In 2005-2006 this program will reduce the debt of students in their first year of study by about \$32 million.

I'm pleased to say that according to the most recent national graduate survey, average university undergraduate debt in Alberta is the lowest in Canada, excluding Quebec. Quebec operates on a different type of system. It opts out of the federal finance system. Across the country, as I said, it's the national graduate survey which shows Alberta student loan debt the lowest in Canada. On average, Alberta graduates at all postsecondary levels have among the lowest debt, both provincial and federal, at graduation in the country. Of course, in addition to graduating with among the lowest net debt in the country, Alberta's strong economy and the lower cost of living allows graduates to pay off their debt more quickly than those in other provinces.

These are some of the ways that we're working to help our postsecondary students, and we're going to continue to find ways to ensure that finances, costs are not a barrier. Of course, affordability is a key part of the postsecondary review that we've promised this year. We're doing a lot of great things. We're continuing to find ways to be better, to do more, and to find innovations in the postsecondary system.

Final key strategy in the Alberta education business plan has to do with quality and innovation in advanced education. We want to continue to move forward to find newer and better ways of providing

world-class postsecondary education. The budget includes a \$12.8 million performance program to reward institutions for meeting their performance targets in terms of responsiveness, accessibility, affordability, and research. The performance envelope is something that government has provided in the past as a one-time funding item. Now we recognize this as a key to the quality of systems, so we're including it as a line item in the budget.

The government is also making strides in the area of apprenticeship with key innovations. We're increasing the availability of distance and mobile delivery of apprenticeship technical training, as requested by industry. For example, in the steam-fitter/pipe fitter trade we're working with the college system and industry to provide apprenticeship technical training at the camps in the Fort McMurray area where the oil sands workers are staying.

We're also implementing ATOMS, the apprenticeship trade and occupation management system, which will give clients and stakeholders access to apprenticeship and industry training services 24 hours a day seven days a week. The service can be used to register employers and apprentices, update employee information, register for training, pay fees. These initiatives will help to ensure that the apprenticeship system is even better and more responsive to students' needs in the future.

Mr. Chairman, this government has a plan for postsecondary education, and it's a plan we're working on in partnership with all advanced education stakeholders. This budget is part of an overall plan that melds the government's fiscal plan with its strategic plan for the future of the province. We're moving in new directions every day, and Advanced Education's budget and business plan is just a part of movement towards truly leading and learning, developing Alberta as a learning society.

Mr. Chairman, I've said it in the House before: Alberta has a great postsecondary system. We've built a solid foundation to ensure continued and future success. Our fiscal plan and our strategic plan will take it to the next level and position our system on the leading edge of advanced education anywhere in the world. The government will continue to work with all stakeholders in the system not only to determine our postsecondaries' immediate needs but to look forward to what postsecondary education in Alberta should aspire to; in short, to ensure that Alberta as a learning society makes Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit, unleashes innovation, ensures that we're leading in learning, and allows all Albertans to be able to compete in a global economy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and my thanks to the minister as well for that overview of the estimates for the Advanced Education ministry within Budget 2005. I think there are many good ideas in the works and many ideas that could be good, could be great and, hopefully, will be someday when they're properly funded. I think there are some ideas that are being held back from greatness by the level of funding being allocated to them.

Mr. Chairman, the minister said yesterday in question period that today I would "have all the opportunity in the world to explore and ask extensive and detailed questions" and maybe even get a lesson, if I wish, "in how the student loan system works and how remission works." So I will get to those questions, and I look forward to the answers.

I want to start out, though, just with a very brief quote from one of a number of e-mails that I've received over the last little while having to do with people's thoughts, stakeholders' thoughts on what would constitute an ideal provincial budget for postsecondary

education in the province of Alberta, their budget wish list, if you will. This comes from an instructor at NAIT who says:

Increased accessibility is a wonderful goal. However there is a "serious" need to increase base funding . . . to institutions to repair the damage done by years of neglect. So it is not the total monies that go to post secondary education . . . it is how the funding is directed and the strings that are attached.

With those comments in mind, some questions. I'd like to start around the area of base operating grant increases if I could because, as the minister knows and, I think, as the minister has probably been told by a number of the same stakeholders that I have spoken to over the last several months, the fundamental problems in the advanced education system in the province of Alberta, as great a system as it is and as great as it aspires to be, really need to be addressed by a substantial increase to base operating grants. Institutions' operating costs are going up by about 6 per cent a year. Rather than improving the situation, this increase apparently just keeps them treading water. They're still behind where they were in real dollar per student terms back in '92-93, before cuts to postsecondary education began.

But I wonder if the minister could redo the math for me, if he would, please. He talks about a total increase over three years of \$205 million, or a little in excess of 18 per cent. That's in the three-year business plan, and of course years 2 and 3 of the business plan are subject to potentially major revision once we get to writing the actual budget for those years. In the budget per se for 2005-2006 he commits to a base operating grant of \$81 million. Now, Mr. Chairman, \$205 million minus \$81 million is \$124 million, and divided by two, that's \$62 million a year. So it appears that there is some fairly significant front loading of the increase in base operating grants. It appears that the percentage increase in year 2 and year 3 will not keep up with what's being done this year.

3:20

By my calculation we're actually doing about a 7.2 per cent increase this year, so my question to the minister is: why has he taken this approach? Why not an across-the-board 6 and 6 and 6? Even better, why not 8 and 8 and 8? That would perhaps get us closer to actually getting our colleges and universities the money that they need to function properly over the course of the next three years.

Also, what I don't see addressed in here – I'm not sure, and perhaps the minister can enlighten me on this: where it would be introduced, whether it would be introduced within a budget framework or within legislation – is a gap in base operating funding between institutions in the province, between the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary. I think that needs to be addressed possibly via a base instructional unit approach, as they use in Ontario, and I wonder if the minister would comment on that possibly.

Now, program spending increases. The minister, yes, did say that program expenses over the next three years, should we stick to the business plan, will increase by \$433 million, or almost 30 per cent, to reach \$1.9 billion cumulatively, but most importantly we're here to talk about what will happen in this coming fiscal year. There program expenses will increase by \$196 million, but capital spending – and again I want to focus on this year. The minister rightly pointed out that over the next three years of the business plan, if we stick to it, we'll increase capital spending in postsecondary education institutions by in excess of \$400 million, but this year capital spending is apparently being cut by \$117 million.

Now, that's my reading of it. I wonder first of all if the minister agrees with my interpretation, and if he does agree that my interpretation is correct, I'd like to know why he's done it this way. If he disagrees with my interpretation, I'd like an explanation of how

things are really working because no matter how I crunch the numbers, it looks as though we have sliced capital spending for this year from last by \$117 million. So if we cut on the capital side by \$117 million and we add on the program side by \$196 million, we're really only ahead by about \$79 million for the fiscal year, and that's considerably less bang delivered by considerably fewer bucks than it appears on the surface.

If the minister could answer this, please: what would be the impact of this on the access plans to add 15,000 spaces by 2008? Perhaps the answer is in year 2 or year 3 of the business plan; I don't know. I refer back to a study done by and a request made by Campus Calgary, which is the coalition of the five postsecondary institutions in the city of Calgary, in which they've said that there is a need for almost 20,000 spaces in Calgary alone. They attached a cost figure of that of \$1 billion, and that, yes, would have been over five years. We compare that to this ministry's plans to increase access by 15,000 spaces province-wide over the next three years for, more or less, \$433 billion. So I guess my question there to the minister – there are a number of questions. What is the plan? How will the increase in spaces be funded by his ministry? Does the department have a full base of understanding of supply versus demand of students regionally; the 30 per cent gap in spaces between Calgary and Edmonton again?

Mount Royal College, as I understand it, continues to operate with 30 per cent unused capacity. If Mount Royal College was, in fact, a high school, under this government's utilization formula it might be skirting the danger of having to close because it has too much unused space. My understanding is that Mount Royal continues to operate with 30 per cent unused capacity while turning away large numbers of students every year because it has yet to get extra money for additional instructors to fill the classrooms that it added a couple of years ago with capital funding from this government. So capital funding is obviously very important, yet if you don't follow it with appropriate operational funding, you end up with unused classroom space. Given the space crunch in so many other institutions, it's a bit of an anomaly.

On the access growth fund and the increases to that, \$90 million over the next three years, I wonder if the minister can share with us some details of enrolment growth, expanded apprenticeship training capacity. How many of these spaces are real spaces? How many are virtual spaces? How far will the money go?

I'd also like him to address, if he would, Mr. Chairman, the question: why funding envelopes? I mean, the system forces universities to try and find ways to move money that's in the funding envelopes out of funding envelopes to pay for ongoing programs and other expenses that aren't really being met. I got this from an instructor at SAIT who said that one-off funding, which refers essentially to envelope funding, is no substitute for ongoing, reliable funding. Either the opportunity to use the money is lost, given the size of many of these projects and the lack of time to do proper planning and consultation before you have to spend the money, or more likely, it's not spent in the best way possible. He made the note in an e-mail to me that neither is acceptable to him as a taxpayer. So I think that's a good question that deserves an answer.

Still on the access issue, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, a question which, I hope, is not too far off topic. I think it relates here. If it doesn't, I am sure the minister will be pleased to tell me that it does not. Again using Mount Royal College just as an example, 50 per cent of Mount Royal students are in university transfer programs, but to this day there is no guarantee of acceptance to the University of Calgary in third year. Even if all other things are equal, if the Mount Royal student and the University of Calgary student have the same marks coming out of second year, no

guarantee that the Mount Royal student will be accepted in third year. That is an access issue.

On student loans. You've got \$105 million in student loan disbursements and \$35 million allocated to the loan remission program, so I come back to my question in question period yesterday. I would love and welcome and encourage clarification from the minister of the claim that virtually all the money that's provided by the provincial Students Finance Board from Alberta coffers gets remitted.

I would also like to remind the minister of my request yesterday in question period for documentation to support the claim that Alberta students end up with the lowest debt of any students across the country. We found out today that, in fact, that's the lowest for students across the country in any province except Quebec. Of course, given events in Ottawa and the fallout from that, one doesn't know from one hour to the next, but the last time I checked, Quebec was still a part of Canada.

The annual loan maximum. It was interesting and encouraging to me and I'm sure to a lot of students in this province to hear that among other adjustments to the student loan program there's a 2 per cent increase in living allowance, but I wonder if the minister could provide on a sort of – I know this is very, very difficult to do on an average basis, and I'm not sure whether I should ask for this by sector or by city or how. In fact, I'm going to leave it up to the minister to decide how to answer this question.

Could he provide us with some information, some more or less typical information, for a university student in the province of Alberta, which certainly means that they go to school in either one of two big cities or in the city of Lethbridge unless they're going to Athabasca? If that student requires the maximum student loan, how much money is left over for that student to live on after university tuition and residence fees have been paid? I'd like to know about that.

3:30

I'd also like to know a little more about the tuition rebate, of course, which is a one-time \$43 million expense. What happens next year after the one time is over? Many concerns from many people who have e-mailed me that it's going to mean, as Christine Johns, vice-president external of the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary, said:

At the University of Calgary, tuition is still increasing to the maximum allowable amount. If nothing is to be done, in two years time students could be experiencing close to a 12% increase in one year . . . in order for Universities to even begin to think about not raising tuition to the maximum allowable level, [the university] needs a dramatic increase to base operating grants.

Some comment there. Knowing full well that the affordability review is coming, I wonder if we could get in advance of the review a little more detail of what the minister is thinking.

Finally, the access to the future fund and the \$250 million which is being put in this year. I suppose \$250 million is nothing to ever sneeze at except that it seems like such a shadow of the promise that was held out when the \$3 billion cap was mentioned in the bill itself. Where is the commitment beyond the minister's stated good intention and that of the Premier, who himself is one of these days or months or years going to step down, to put more of the \$250 million in? There is no commitment to do that in this budget that I can find. Maybe the minister can find it for me.

You know, the budgeted fund income for investment purposes in '06-07 and again in '07-08 is essentially \$11 million. It goes up a little bit, you know, in '07-08 because it's made a little interest on the interest, I guess, but again there's no more principal for it to be earning income on.

Since an endowment fund is supposed to produce proceeds to invest in, in this case, excellence in postsecondary education, this works out to an amount for investment in excellence that is equivalent to \$61 per student, or 16 cents per student per day, the equivalent of said student taking it upon himself or herself to return three empty pop or beer cans to the bottle depot each and every day, and at least the student knows that the bottle depot is still going to be around next year. So I wonder if I could get the minister to comment on future plans to grow this fund much more quickly, much more significantly, and in much more of a perpetual fashion than he has committed to thus far.

On that note, I will take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A number of good questions there. I hope I can read my writing, which is not always the easiest thing to do. Stakeholder thoughts; increasing across the board; serious need to increase base funding; how funding is determined; why 6/6/6 and not 8/8/8; where do you find the 6? The bottom line is that this budget provides for an increase in base operating funds of 6 per cent per year this year and in each of the next two. That's a promise. It's printed in the line. You'll very seldom find that these lines go down year over year unless something catastrophic happens. What you tend to find is that they go up.

The interesting thing is that institutions and many others in the province have asked for sustainable funding and have asked to know year over year what their funding is going to be. Well, the reality is that they have known year over year what their funding was going to be. They just didn't like the level of it. In fact, the year over year was 2 per cent, and that wasn't good enough. They told us so, and they were right. So it's moved to 6 per cent. They were expecting maybe 4 per cent.

I can tell you that the boards and the presidents that I've talked to are very, very happy with the level of base funding increase, both the amount this year and the amount committed over the three years. The 6 per cent is more than their inflation. It helps to cover the costs of unfunded students. It helps to cover some of the things that they've been scrambling on. They've asked, actually, that we do the funding in this way, that we look at increasing the base funding on an appropriate, sustainable, year-over-year level, and that's what we've done. We've done it at a level which is more than what they were expecting, more than what they were asking for. Indeed, in the global package it basically meets what the universities indicated in a letter to me they would like to have and would allow them to make some commitments with respect to access, which is what we wanted to go for.

Now, the other question that the member asked relative to funding and distributing base funding is the so-called gap or the allocation between institutions or between geographic regions. Of course, this is one of the strange things that has come forward over the last couple of years. People think that there ought to be a balance, as though a student were a student were a student, and that you can take a look at an institution and average the dollars over the number of students and say that some institutions are being shortchanged because their per-student average is lower than somebody else's per-student average. Of course, that's just a wrong way of looking at the world. Institutions have different students and different programs, and some of those programs have higher or lower expenses, so you have to fund on an appropriate basis.

The good news for the hon. member is that we're doing a funding review this year. We've promised every five years to do a funding

review. There's a funding review being done this year. If there are inordinate gaps in the way funding is allocated to institutions, that will be resolved. Every stakeholder, every institution will have the opportunity to comment on it, to participate in that review, and to ensure that their institution is fairly heard and fairly measured against what happens across the system.

We have to always look at these things, and in fact it's our role. In Advanced Education we don't actually deliver education. We provide the framework for the system and make sure that there's a system context and overall learning policy for the province, a way in which we can look at Alberta as a learning society. We work with the institutions and the community learning councils and the others to make sure that educational opportunities are there, that they're accessible, affordable, and equal. So when we talk about the gaps, first of all, one has to be careful about saying that there are more spaces in this place than there are in that place.

I hesitate to say Calgary and Edmonton because I don't want to get into parochial discussions about whether Calgary is doing better or whether Edmonton is doing better. The fact of the matter is that they're different places. They serve different populations, different geographic regions, and you can't measure it that way with any real sense of purpose. What we really need to do is to make sure that Alberta students have a place to go, an appropriate place for them to advance through education, and, if it's not here, that they have opportunities outside the province and can maximize their human potential. That's what it's about. It's not really about whether there are more spaces in Calgary or more spaces in Edmonton or those sorts of things.

I would ask the hon. member to take the broader view and to look at the system as a whole as to how we can make sure, working together, working collaboratively with the system, that we have the best system and we have an opportunity for every student that wants to go.

Capital spending, the whole mix of capital spending. I mean, when we get into this question of whether there are 15,000 spaces or 30,000 spaces, a lot of people tend to think: well, where are these students going to sit? Well, we have to build the 21st century campuses, the 21st century system, not the 20th century or, heaven forbid, the 19th century system. It's not about a new chair for every one of those 15,000 new spaces. It's about making sure that there's access, that there's a place.

That's going to be partly dealt with by e-learning opportunities. It's going to be partly dealt with by more apprenticeship spaces, partly dealt with by delivering mobile classrooms, partly dealt with by having courses offered at the campsite in Fort McMurray so that it's accessible to the workers there when they're off shift and able to take the learning side. It's about making sure that there's an opportunity in a small community to get ESL if that's what the need is or to have access to literacy programs if that's what the need is or a teacher training program or a nursing assistant program or a nursing program. You see opportunities where, for example, the University of Alberta has entered into arrangements with Blue Quill so that they had the first graduating class off campus of teachers from Blue Quill up in the St. Paul area. Those are the types of things we're looking at.

3:40

It's not about building two new universities. I mean, you talk about 60,000 new students, and you visualize it in the context of that meaning the size of two new universities. But you're not talking about actually building two new universities; you're talking about making sure that the spaces and the places are available. If you actually looked at the capital needs across the province, most of that

capital need is not in classroom space. Most of that capital need – and there is capital need – is in labs, is in space for academic staff. It's not the classroom space that's really in a crunch. In fact, if you had more instructors, you probably could utilize the classroom space much better.

The hon. member mentions Mount Royal College and the 2,500 spaces that are available. He expressed it as 30 per cent of the available space in Mount Royal College. Yes, we've got to take up that space. We've got to make sure that that space is appropriately used, as we do right across the system. So the single-point-of-entry process that we've promised in Bill 1, where people can apply online and have their application apply to all of the appropriate colleges or universities or technical institutes that they want to go to, will help us to make sure that we make the maximum use of the space. Also, the funding that's available will fund places in those institutions that if they have more space and more opportunity to offer courses and they have the demand, we can provide the funding to ensure that that happens.

Campus Calgary. Yes. In the process I would caution the hon. member with respect to the use of the number of 20,000 spaces, although over five years that may be an appropriate projection. There's been a lot of talk, particularly in Calgary, about the lack of access, and there's a significant amount of double, triple, and quadruple accounting in those numbers. There is a need for more spaces – there's no question about that – and this budget and this three-year business plan will address that in spades. But the global number that's been reported across Calgary in the media about the tens of thousands of spaces that are needed right now to accommodate students is not a reality. The reality is that it's probably closer to 2,000 or 2,500 spaces across the province of immediate demand that needs take-up, and that can be accommodated, I believe, within the resources that we've talked about.

We addressed the question of Mount Royal and its change of status, but Mount Royal can of course address space issues earlier on without the necessity of addressing the university issue, without impacting the decision on the university issue, and indeed can address the transferability issue by sitting down and working with other institutions in the system. There's no good reason why an agreement can't be made between Mount Royal and the University of Calgary or Mount Royal and Athabasca University – in fact, they have an agreement with Athabasca University – so that there can be an automatic transfer, automatic entrance if students achieve a certain level of standard. Of course, we don't tell the universities or the colleges what their admission requirements are, but given the admission requirements that they had, they certainly can work out an arrangement.

There is no good reason why Mount Royal students in a transfer program would not be able to know that there's a place for them if they successfully complete their transfer program. There is no good reason for that, and I will be working as a mediator or an arbitrator or in whatever type of process I need to to bring the system together so that there are no dead ends for anybody in the system. It's a ladder approach: people can take a course in one area and move to the next area. We have with the Council on Admissions and Transfer one of the jewels of the system across this country, indeed in North America, in terms of ensuring that people know where one course will take them into a next course or one program will take them into a next course. We need to do more on that because we ought to be in a position where every bit of learning that you do enables you to do the next bit of learning. That's certainly one of the agenda items for me.

Why funding envelopes? Well, purely and simply it's a good way to ladder, again, the system. The base funding is necessary,

absolutely. But if you put it all into base funding, sometimes you find that – and even institutions will tell you this – the pressures will drive the spending. So we want to make sure that there's money there for performance, there's money there for research, for example, and there's money in this budget which will help to provide some of the indirect costs of research. I think it's about \$12 million. We need to fund that directly to the places where that research is happening. So that's an envelope as opposed to a base-level budget item.

The student loans issue: \$105 million and \$35 million. What the hon. member ought to do is add those two numbers together, not subtract them, so \$105 million in student loans going out. That's not spending; that's an asset. It's converting cash to a loan asset, so it's not a spending item.

In addition to that, \$35 million goes out to students in student loan relief benefits. A first-year student in their first course of studies doesn't get a provincial loan; they get a federal loan. Once they've maximized the federal loan, the money that we would have given them as a student loan in their first year we now give them as a student loan relief benefit. So they don't get a debt; in essence, they get a grant. So \$105 million in student loans go out from the province; \$35 million additionally goes out in student loan relief benefit for first-year students in their first course of studies. I might say, Mr. Chairman, that in addition to that there is, and the line item that shows it – did I say \$35 million? Probably it's \$32 million this year on student loan relief.

But there's a total of \$80 million including that \$32 million which goes out for maintenance grants, special-needs bursaries, Alberta opportunity bursaries, achievement scholarships, and an additional \$23 million for the heritage scholarships. So the \$105 million and the \$35 million, just two of many numbers which add up to a whole lot of student relief and student assistance in this province. Then, of course, we add in the money that the federal government puts into the process, which is a considerable amount of money, and that means \$480 million going to students this year in this province for student assistance.

The loan maximum, asking about providing information for a university student: how much is left over? The programs provide for variable natures. Obviously, you have single students who are just leaving home, single students who are still living at home, married students, married with children – I guess that's a TV show or was. But there are many variables as to students and how much they get for cost of living. The long and short of it is that cost of living is often a lifestyle choice as much as anything. The question is: is there sufficient for a student to be able to afford appropriate living accommodation, appropriate food accommodation, appropriate supplemental living expenses?

The cost-of-living allowances are on the low side. Students raise that as an issue. The Students Finance Board has raised that as an issue. That's an issue we'll probably have to deal with, and I'm sure that's an issue that will come out loud and clear in the affordability review process, and it may be something that needs to be addressed over the longer term.

Again, I would go back to the fact that it is a variable expense. It's something that you can do a lot towards dealing with yourself as a student. For example, you can get a part-time job if you want to have a higher quality of life or a higher standard of living. You can do as many of us did when we were at university. I'm sure, hon. member, that when you went, you had to mitigate your living costs, so you probably shared accommodations, as I did.

I lived in a house where we had 15 students in the house. It only had four or five bedrooms, but there were 15 of us living there. In fact, the room that I lived in, there were three of us. I chose to live

in that room because, quite frankly, I couldn't afford a higher level of accommodation. But I did want to go to school, and I did want to live at or near the university instead of living with my aunt, so I made the choice to move out of my aunt's house. She lived in the west end. I moved into a fraternity house at the university, and I lived in a room with two other people. That was a quality of life choice that I made. It would have been a much, much, much better quality of life, if you measured it in terms of space and place, to live at my aunt's place. In fact, she would have made the meals. But those are choices you make.

I was chairman of a housing corporation at the university for a number of years, providing student housing for members of a fraternity and others who wanted to rent a place. It's interesting how the lifestyle choices change over time. Now you can't rent a double room very easily. People don't want to live two to a room. They like to live in a single room, and they need a place to plug in their computers and things like that. Things change.

The bottom line is that cost of living is important. The cost of going to school is something we need to look at. We need to do the affordability review. We need to make sure that it's not hazardous for someone to go to school, that they're not starving to death when they go to school. But there's a balance between how much society pays for the education and how much a student and their family pay. It's the students themselves who drive the question of the quality of life that they want or need to have in order to go to school. So that's a very important part of the equation. I don't say that to diminish at all the need to have appropriate cost of living, to be able to look at it across the province and say: how do we supplement it in areas?

3:50

Indeed, students can supplement across the province. If they live in a high-income area or a high-cost area like Fort McMurray, for example, they can always afford themselves the appeal route to supplement the amount of resources because their cost of living is higher than in other areas.

Tuition rebate. What will happen next year? Good question. Don't know. Would like to know, so we're going to spend a good year looking at it to say: what are the costs of going to school? What are the finances to go into those costs? How do we make sure that costs and finances are not a barrier to a student getting an education? Tuition is part of that package, but it's not the be-all and the end-all. Tuition is one of the costs. If you're coming from rural Alberta to a residential college or university in Edmonton or Calgary or even Lethbridge or some other place, the cost of living and the cost of travelling to school and the other costs are as big or greater a barrier than the tuition costs. So they have to be looked at in context.

The \$43 million that we put in this year was essentially to hold things steady for the year so we could have a focused review on the cost of going to school, and we've put in, as well, a substantial increase in the operating budgets for the institutions. So our clear expectation is – and I think all the institutions know this – that they will not do a double bump next year. But in terms of the overall context of how we get to how much tuition cost they should charge and how it gets paid for, it's part and parcel of that review process.

Access to the future fund. I love to talk about the access to the future fund. It's a wonderful concept, a concept which was originally brought to me – of course, I lived through this concept once before because I was on campus in the early '70s and graduated in the '70s, and there was a triuniversity fund.

Mr. Dunford: So you're the guy that got all the cheap tuitions, eh?

Mr. Hancock: I got the cheap tuitions. But you know something? I didn't earn as much when I graduated. So even though my costs of going to school were less, the return on my investment was substantially lower at the time. So it all balances out, of course.

I think I was talking about the access to the future fund. Well, how this idea came to us as a government was that in the '70s – that's where I was; I was in the '70s – there was a triuniversity fund. In fact, the assistant deputy minister of adult learning joined government at the time to administer that fund. Unfortunately, it was a fund that was spent down rather than an endowment. So the difference between that fund and this fund is that this is an endowment fund, not a spend-down fund, and this is a fund which is going to be available to all institutions and everyone in the postsecondary sector, not just the universities. But apart from those two substantial differences the concept has been there before and has been very useful.

So we have the Bannister chair in business at the University of Alberta. Now, why would I say the Bannister chair? Well, because Harold Bannister came to government about two and a half or three years ago with a concept.

I'll have to continue this later, I guess.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to put a few comments on the record and ask a few questions of the Minister of Advanced Education during this Committee of Supply debate on the Ministry of Advanced Education budget. Just a few questions that I have been keeping in my little notebook. One is: why do we see the capital plan going down? We're seeing cuts to the allocations: in '04-05, \$228 million; in '05-06, \$111 million, for example. So I'm just wondering why we're seeing that. I mean, I think at some point the figure \$10 billion was being tossed around as the infrastructure deficit in the postsecondary system, so I'm very concerned to see cuts to allocations there.

The next thing that's occurred to me is: can the minister provide us with information? This ministry, in fact, during my time here has been one ministry, then two ministries, back to one ministry, and it was two ministries before that. So we seem to get into this cycle with the government breaking it apart and putting it back together. The interesting part of it, Mr. Chairman, is that the money never goes down. So when it breaks apart to create two departments, there's great justification that, well, you know, now we've got two office spaces and two deputy ministers and two of this and two of that, so we need more money. But when it comes back together again, guess what? It doesn't reduce. In fact, it goes up.

So in the minister's office we've got a 42 per cent increase; deputy minister's office, 100 per cent increase; finance and admin services, 10 per cent; communications, 28 per cent. What gives? They should have saved us money putting these two departments back together, and we've got in some cases some fairly substantial increases. So I'd like comment and justification on that, please.

I do appreciate the efforts by the government to put more money into postsecondary education. The struggle that I see is one of trust. We know that there has been, however you want to term it, a starvation in this sector for some time, severe cutbacks, very low maintenance. However you want to describe it, the advanced education sector has been on a pretty low-cal diet for a long, long time. Again I'll note here the infrastructure deficit that's been created as well.

So now we have the government promising to put all kinds of money in, but it's in a lot of different piecemeal ways and a lot of sort of this fancy project and that fancy project or program. What

I'm seeing is mistrust from Albertans going: does this really mean that we're going to get more money and it's going stay, or is this somehow not going to turn out the way that we want?

I hear the minister talking about a three-year commitment. In fact, it's laid out in the budget books, but it's going to take a lot more than three years to restore what we had, to come back to the level that we had in advanced education, and more than that to achieve any kind of excellence in these areas. If I could get him to comment briefly on what the longer term vision of either this minister or the government is, I'd appreciate it. Let's talk 10 years out; let's talk 20 years out. I appreciate that there's a three-year plan here, but if we go through a three-year plan and then we're all going to tighten our belts again, then we did not even catch up to where we were before.

The Liberal plan for the use of surpluses contained two very specific investments into postsecondary education. One, of course, was the postsecondary endowment fund, which we now call the legacy fund. The government more or less took the whole idea and used it for their access fund, which is fine. I'm happy to let them take that idea. It's all for the good. We also had that an additional 5 per cent of any future surpluses would go specifically into the arts and humanities because we recognize that this is a group that doesn't fall comfortably, doesn't fall at all actually, into that sort of research-based, attract outside money to sponsor chairs. It just doesn't fall comfortably into that category like science does, for example, and even the maths. You just don't get a company that's really interested in sponsoring a chair in philosophy or French language or the fine arts, for example.

So those areas have really suffered severe cutbacks, and nobody is stepping up to the plate on them, which is why we as Liberals recognized that we still need a world where we have artists and philosophers and English majors and people who study languages and anthropologists. We believe that that's important for our society, and we didn't want that sector to continue to fade, frankly. We specifically targeted money there to help address that problem. I'm wondering if the minister, in any kind of blue-sky-envisioning exercises he did, if he or his government ever looked at addressing that imbalance with the arts and the humanities versus the other sectors, that are a bit sexier and attract that kind of investment dollar and research dollar that is so sought by the universities now, frankly, directed to be sought by the government, who values these things and I think even somewhere has a performance measurement based on whether they can attract those kinds of research dollars. That just doesn't happen in the arts and the humanities.

4:00

I appreciate that there is a Lois Hole scholarship that is going to benefit four students to the tune of \$5,000. But, you know, that would barely cover their tuition depending on which faculty they're in, and that's not addressing that whole range of educational opportunities and contributions to our culture and society as a whole that I'm talking about.

The minister has talked a lot about creating those spaces, and he's made it very clear that we are not to expect actual spaces, that he's looking at a combination of virtual spaces and other creations of access for students to be able to learn. I'm wondering if he has anything that he can table before the House that's showing us a successful version of this done somewhere else. Has any other country or province engaged in this? Can he give us some kind of success story or cost-benefit analysis or study in any way, shape, or form? Again, this is part of the trust factor. We're going out a bit on a limb here believing that these spaces are going to be created virtually. We want to know that that's going to have the effect that we think it's going to have.

I'll just give you a short example, Mr. Chairman. A long time ago when the cutbacks first started, the government had a saying: we're going to give people a hand up, not a handout. It was a great choice for a spin, for a slogan for the government to use because it really sounded good, and lots of people started singing that song along with them. But I think for many of those that were on the receiving end of that, it really meant something far different than what was being said.

What we saw years down the road were things like increased numbers of children on the child welfare rolls, which I think can be partly attributed to the cuts in the social insurance and a number of families and people being removed from the social assistance rolls. So, you know, great slogan, but it didn't turn out the way that most of us thought it was going to. I'm a little concerned that we're getting the same thing here. Great slogan, great idea, sounds like it's going to do what we want it to do, but not too sure that that's where it's going to end up. So I'm looking for anything the minister has – and surely he must have had something – that can give us some backup, give us something to prove that this is, in fact, a workable idea.

A number of the institutions in my constituency and, indeed, many of my constituents are in need of ESL training. There are various programs that are offered through the government. I would argue not enough. On the one hand, we say that we want new workers coming in here and making their homes here, and people often complain to me – like every time I'm speaking to a group – that the information that they were given in their home country about what the possibilities were here in Alberta is vastly different from what, in fact, is reality. They're very frustrated that their foreign qualifications are still not recognized here.

I don't know where foreign qualifications rests any more. It's been moved around so much in the government. Maybe it's under Advanced Education, maybe not, but it's an integral part of welcoming new Canadians into our social and educational and working fabric and helping them to get up and running so they are working with us and thriving in their own life, making a good living, raising their children.

I've always felt that we don't do enough ESL training, but tied in with that very much is that I also get a lot of concerns expressed by people about the level of subsistence that they're allowed while they go to school taking these various ESL courses or sort of make their way into the workplace, bridging courses that are offered, particularly by NorQuest College but also by some other institutions.

So two issues there. One, are we looking at offering additional ESL training? Is it possible that we could look at underwriting or giving more funding to those specialized, business jargon courses? I mean, every business has its lingo, has its jargon, and it's very difficult when you're speaking a second language to be able to pick up those buzzwords that are very specific to the area that you work in and specific to the idiom that you're in. If you come here speaking Russian, it's darn hard for you to pick up the buzzwords in the engineering field, for example, because your Russian ones aren't the same in English. They use different words.

So there are a number of levels of ESL that I'm questioning here: base funding for ESL, just the amount that we fund; specialized ESL for, you know, high-functioning professionals that are working hard on a second language to move and be very successful in their professions; the recognition of foreign qualifications and whether we're going to get enough support and funding into those areas to work again at a useful level. I can't believe how long that department or agency has been in existence and how low a profile it has and how many complaints I hear about foreign qualifications not being recognized. It may not be your area, but it ties into part of what we're doing here.

Also, the subsistence level of funding that is available for students attending ESL is low. You know, if we thought SFI was low, they're right in that range. Some of these students are trying to live on, like, \$300 or \$400 a month is my understanding, and then there's their tuition level. So we're losing folks that we could have functioning at a much higher level in our society and from which we all gain because we can't expend a few bucks at the beginning. It's another instance of being penny-wise, pound-foolish. We're being too cheap on the front end, and it's costing us a lot in human resources on the back end.

I'm wondering about the health centre funding that was received by Grant MacEwan Community College. How far ahead does this commitment go? Is the government going to hang in there? Now, this is partly an infrastructure question, I know, but is Advanced Education envisioning right through to the completion of this project and, indeed, to the rest of the projects that Grant MacEwan is envisioning as part of their downtown campus? Again, I don't want to see promises for long-term stuff that just never comes to fruition. How far has the minister gone in concrete plans on this? And if it's only three years, fine. Let us know. At least that tells us where we're at.

There's something else I want to question the minister about that's come up recently with this idea, in the universities anyway, of creating a position called lecturer, which I understand is a non research-based worker in the university system. I am really concerned about this and what it's saying or what I read into what it's saying about the government's understanding and value of universities as places of higher learning, of research, of challenge, of thought, in fact.

If we now downshift because we need cheaper people to teach the courses and somehow participate in a mortarboard factory, and they're just supposed to stand in front of the class and churn out that learning to whoever is sitting in front of them without understanding the content, I'm really concerned that we're moving away from the idea of institutions of higher learning and that we are getting more and more into the production of specified degrees as set out by the private sector. That's my overriding concern about what I'm seeing here.

When I was told about this idea of a lecturer – you know, we've seen that in a number of ways. The Solicitor General is still kind of thinking about these deputy constables, which would do a lot of the same functions as a police officer but get paid less. Then there's the question about: well, do they carry guns or not? In the university system we're now talking about . . . [interjection] Yeah. Well, we won't have the lecturers carrying guns. No.

Again, there's talk about a lesser level, somebody doing most of the same work of a higher paid individual, but this individual has – what? I don't know. Less training? They get paid less, certainly. I think that changes what we're doing with our universities, and I'm really concerned about what this signals as a long-range, value-based outlook from the government. I'd like to have the minister talk a little bit about what he's seeing there. I think ultimately that compromises intellectual freedom, and I think it takes away the challenge that we need to be coming out of our postsecondary institutions, to challenge us all about how we think about things. I don't think they should be mortarboard factories, and I particularly do not think they should be driven by the private sector, but that's what I'm starting to think I'm seeing.

4:10

I just don't understand why this government insists on constantly trying to dumb down a profession and pay it less. What is wrong with people earning a decent or a good living doing what they were

trained to do? What's wrong with that? Why do we constantly have to put in a junior level of something and pay them less for doing more or less the same job? It's just wrong. That's a personal expression of concern from me.

Another thing that the Liberals were talking about during the election that I got great reception on was blue-skying. Since we've got so much money, we could be extraordinary. We could set stuff in place today that would just make us blow everybody away. You know, we have the ability to be astounding, and I'm not seeing that kind of vision coming from the government.

One of the things that I'd looked at and had tried was the idea of having the second year of university provided free; in other words, no tuition. Not the first year but the second year because it's the second year where people seem to stumble, where they figure out that they've chosen the wrong path of learning, and they don't have the money now to go back and start over. They kind of have to plow ahead, or they've run out of their savings, and they're going to have to take time off to go and work.

It seems to be the second year where it's tougher for folks, and that was the one where I was thinking: well, gee, if we looked at tuition free for the second year, how far ahead would that put us? I started to look at some of the innovation that was happening in Sweden and some of the Scandinavian countries, and that was starting to look very interesting. Now, I didn't have time to completely follow that through, but did any of that sort of visioning come up as the minister looked at what to do to reinvest into Advanced Education?

I've given some very specific questions there and then quite a bit of questioning of his vision for the future of education. So I'll take my seat now and listen carefully to his response. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, some interesting comments. But I want to go back to where I left off because there was one question I hadn't fully answered from the hon. member earlier, and that's with respect to the access to the future fund, the \$250 million that was put in this year.

I think I was at the point where I was saying that Harold Bannister, whose family had endowed the Bannister chair in the '70s, had come to us several years ago saying: wouldn't this be a great idea in the centennial year to put in place an endowment fund? In fact, the Edmonton-Riverview Progressive Conservative Constituency Association, if I may say that, brought a resolution based on that proposal some time later to an annual meeting of the Conservative Party, actually – I think it was two years ago now – and it was endorsed I believe unanimously, but I could be wrong on that. If it wasn't unanimous, it was certainly very strongly endorsed.

I know that I had a number of conversations with Harold and with other members of government and talked about how we might move to endowing the future with the unbudgeted surplus revenues that were coming in because as a Conservative government, as any prudent government would do, when you have a volatile revenue stream like royalty revenue from oil and gas and revenue from land sales, which varies dramatically over time, it's not prudent to put your base budget on spending all of that revenue, nor is it appropriate to spend all that revenue on current Albertans.

Some people have said: "Well, it's our money. Send us a cheque." Well, it's not. It belongs to future Albertans as much as it belongs to us, so we have to find a way to manage those nonrenewable resource revenues in a way that builds the future. Again, we checked with Albertans through the It's Your Future survey and were told that Albertans wanted us to invest in the future. They

wanted to invest in priority areas of health care and education, they wanted to invest in infrastructure, which serves the future, and they wanted us to help build the future.

That's where the endowing the future concept built from. The Liberals like to say that it was part of their election platform. Well, they must have been listening to one of the constituents in Edmonton-Riverview who was talking about it long before they were. But it doesn't matter whose idea it was because it was a good idea. We don't need to fight over whose idea it was because now the idea because of this government is being implemented and implemented in a way which really will truly endow the future.

Now, the \$250 million is a bare minimum. It's a start. No question about that. Because we are budgeting revenue on a prudent basis, there can be an expectation, there probably should be an expectation in any given year – in fact, in the last two years we've seen that – where the prudent budgeting of resource revenue is outstripped by the actual amount of resource revenues. So while we're budgeting I think it's \$42 a barrel for oil as a forecast – and everybody knows that forecasting oil prices, forecasting gas prices is a very difficult thing to do. We're forecasting oil at \$42 a barrel and, I think, gas at \$5.60 or so, \$5.80. We know that the price of oil has been over \$50 a barrel for the last couple of months and has been as high as \$57 a barrel but as low as just over \$50 a barrel, so the volatility is even seen there.

So it's not prudent to put in the budget, you know, \$55 a barrel for oil and then say: "Okay. We're allocating that surplus to the fund." It is prudent to say: \$42 a barrel for oil and \$5.60 or whatever it is for gas. That gives us a surplus over and above the \$4.75 million that's being taken into revenue for program spending in terms of capital dollars and those sorts of things and allows us, then, to say: "Well, there's \$250 million that can go into the access to the future fund, which actually we hadn't intended to budget for – it is to come out of the surplus revenue – and, by the way, \$500 million to the heritage medical research fund."

So a strong start but just a start on endowing the future. The promises we made: \$500 million to the heritage medical research fund, which the Premier announced in January. That's about advancing our education because that's about driving research and development of research in this province. That brings the best and the brightest to this province to teach, to advance knowledge, all the things that the Member for Edmonton-Centre was concerned about in terms of cookie-cutter approaches and mortarboards. Well, no, I'm sorry. That's not the reality in this province now. That's not the reality in this province in the future.

The reality in this province is that we had the foresight as a government some 30 years ago to set up the heritage medical research fund, which has paid dividends in this province in terms of the amount of research that happens in the medical area, and now we're topping that up with another \$500 million. So that's endowing the future. Putting another \$500 million into the engineering and science research fund, colloquially known as the ingenuity fund, to drive research in that area, which again will bring and attract the best and the brightest to this province so that that research drives learning, drives knowledge, and drives teaching – that's an enhancement, too, and that \$500 million is in Bill 1.

The \$1 billion to the heritage scholarship fund, enhancing a scholarship fund that was set up by an earlier Premier and Progressive Conservative government, I might say. The demands on that heritage scholarship fund have outstripped the supply, so it's very prudent to endow the future by saying: "We'll put a billion dollars in. It'll be an endowment. We'll spend appropriately out of that on an endowment basis so that the fund remains there in perpetuity and

continues to grow and continues to provide that sort of funding, that scholarship and bursary funding, for Alberta students."

Of course, the access to the future fund, the \$3 billion access to the future fund. No one else in this country, that I'm aware of, has promised \$5 billion to enhancing, to endowing the future. No one has put away the money that's been put away already in terms of the heritage medical research fund and the ingenuity fund, and no one has promised the \$5 billion. And not just promised it. There was some skepticism in my critic's voice earlier when he was asking: when will we see it? It's in the act. The act says that there will be \$3 billion.

Actually, the hon. member brought forward an amendment to the act to try and take the \$3 billion out of the act, and I said to him: "No, no. Leave it in. Leave it in. Hold our feet to the fire. Make sure that we contribute that \$3 billion to the fund." It's in the act, and by being in the act, Albertans know that that's a commitment that this government has made to build that fund out of surplus revenues, out of the nonrenewable resource revenues.

4:20

Yes, because we recognized out of the current projections that \$250 million could go in and that that will drive out under the spending rule \$11 million, we've put the \$11 million into the out-years in the budget in each year as spending. But I don't think we should be under any illusions. If the oil and gas revenues continue as they are, that fund will be built, and that fund will drive out \$135 million, and it can come none too soon, Mr. Chairman, because people are already lining up. People are already calling and saying, "I want to make a gift to the university or to the college" or "We've been in discussions." The colleges, certainly, and the universities are calling and saying, "Somebody has stepped up to the plate, and we've been talking to them, but this access to the future fund has encouraged them to finalize the gift because they know it'll be matched, and they want to know that the money that they'll provide will be matched."

These aren't gifts that will drive specific private-sector control of the universities because the universities are under board governance. They have academic independence. They set their quality standards. They're not driven by the private sector. These are people who have earned money in this province and want to give some of it back. These gifts are coming from people who have benefited from the strong economy in this province and have earned money in this province or as a result of an education they've gotten in this province.

I'm going to get to the answers to your questions. Honest I will. Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, who had some skepticism in his mind, should put his mind at ease because there's the commitment in the act. It's there. This government has made the commitment that surplus revenues will go to the fund. They're going to have to go to the fund faster than anybody might think because . . .

Mr. Dunford: He can sleep at night.

Mr. Hancock: He can sleep at night indeed. He can sleep at night knowing that advanced education is in good hands with this government.

We not only have made the commitment to endow the future, Mr. Chairman. We've made the commitment in our strategic plan, which we've published – this is the second year that it has been published – indicating that in our 20-year look forward, advancing learning is a key component of unleashing innovation, leading learning, competing in a global economy, and making Alberta the

best place to live, work, and visit. Endowing the future is critical to the success of that program. So he can rest easy.

Now, Edmonton-Centre wanted to know about the capital plan and why it might be going down. What the hon. member should know is that we have changed the way we budget capital, so instead of having a finite number each year that has to be spent or it's lost, driving projects in an inordinate way or an inappropriate way, we have a long-term capital plan. Capital that's budgeted can flow through that capital plan. We've talked about a \$9 billion plan. That's a lot of money in anybody's books, \$9 billion dollars to build infrastructure in this province, whether it's roads or whether it's hospitals or whether it's schools or, yes, indeed in the postsecondary area.

That capital is very necessary to build the labs so that research can happen. We have, for example, at both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary health research innovation facilities going up. Those are going to advance learning and advance knowledge, and Edmonton-Centre was concerned about mortarboards being bought or some foolish notion. The reality is that research is happening. The ambulatory learning centre, a really novel partnership between Capital health and the University of Alberta to change the way that health education and health professionals learn and practise together, change the way that we deliver diagnostics and health services and how we learn more – that's in the capital plan, and that's going to go forward.

So the capital plan is a more fluid plan than ever has been allowed. We have a capital fund, so surplus revenues – that's where the challenge is going to be, the balance between surplus revenues going to building the future in terms of the capital infrastructure of the province, including postsecondary, and building the future by endowing the future in the endowment funds. What a good struggle to have: whether you build the future on the physical infrastructure so that you can build intellectual capacity or whether you build the future by endowing the future so that you can encourage a greater private-sector involvement in ingenuity projects like the Lois Hole digital library. What a wonderful, wonderful problem to have: how to split that up.

Talking about splitting up, the Member for Edmonton-Centre was concerned about the department being amalgamated into one and split into two and why the costs never go down, that they always go up. Well, I don't know what world she's lived in, but in the world that I live in, we've had huge technological improvements over the last 10 years, and technology costs money. One would expect that one would acquire some good technology so that you can do things better, cheaper, faster, so that you can give more information to more people.

In fact, we've gotten asked written questions from the opposition over the last couple of weeks that I've tried to address in terms of making sure that they have information about how many students receive student loans and how much they received in student loans and breaking them down, please, by institution and by default rate and all that sort of thing. Well, if you don't have the best in computing technology, you couldn't possibly even dream about getting that kind of information. You need to have management of information. That's just one way that costs go up, obviously.

While you can look at the numbers and say, "Well, you know, you've split the ministry and you've amalgamated and costs have always gone up," the reality is that costs do go up. What we do know is that again there's a Ministry of Advanced Education in this province, that there's a minister who's passionate about advanced education and will pursue that. We've built it into our strategic plan, and we've made it a number one priority this year, and it's going to be worth every single penny that gets spent on the office and the administration, I can tell you.

Cutbacks. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre talked about cutbacks. Well, I'm looking at numbers, Mr. Chairman, which indicate that we spent a little over a billion dollars on postsecondary education in '92-93 in this province, and we're spending a little over \$1.9 billion projected in the 2007-08 budget. There was a period of time when we were going through some severe fiscal restraint, in 1995-96, when that number dipped below the one billion dollar mark, but since that year of '95-96 there have not been any cutbacks in advanced education. The budget has grown and grown substantially. In fact, the uptick on that chart is very impressive.

But I can say this. We have made a huge commitment. It's been a public commitment. It's in our 20-year strategic plan. We've published it. It's been in the business plan. It says that advanced education is a priority. It says that leading in learning is a fundamental pillar of the 20-year strategic plan. It says that unleashing innovation is another fundamental pillar. You can't unleash innovation unless you're leading in learning, unless you have the top researchers and the top people finding new ways of doing things. So I think that any skepticism about that should be clearly put away, and as my seatmate here indicated earlier, she should be able to sleep at night.

The question of pursuing excellence is clearly, clearly part of the goal of this government, pursuing excellence so that Albertans can compete in the global economy, so that we can have the quality of life. That addresses another of the issues that the hon. member mentioned, quality of life. Living in a province like Alberta is not just about going to work every day, although some of us get excited about going to work every day. I know I do. But it's not just about going to work every day. It's about the full range of quality of life. It's about safety in our community. It's about having a good education system so that our children can seize the opportunities that are here. It's about having a good health system, and yes, it's about the arts. It's about the quality of life that's provided on the arts and the cultural side of the agenda. Yes, those are very important parts of it.

Now, I don't know why the hon. member thinks that there's no money here to support that because the access to the future fund isn't restricted to engineering students. It's not restricted to building engineering facilities. That might happen, but it is available across the board.

Indeed, the scholarships that have been announced, not just the Lois Hole scholarships, which are a very important symbol of the respect that we have for the former Lieutenant Governor and her commitment to the arts and humanities, but also the other scholarships which we're putting in – yes, that's only four scholarships. That's modest. It was only one piece of it. The Lois Hole digital library, however, will expand the ability to transfer knowledge and print resources and to digitize print resources and three-dimensional resources right across the province, and that will be funded out of the access to the future fund.

4:30

One of the reasons we put that in the throne speech was to show the broad parameters of the access to the future fund, the capacity of that fund not just to match private gifts, which is a very important way of encouraging people to give back to their community and to help build their community, but also to show the way in which the fund can be used on ingenuity and new ways of transferring knowledge, new ways of delivery, those sorts of things. So a very important part.

Also, the billion dollars going into the scholarship fund will be able to afford opportunities for students right across the board, not just in engineering, although certainly in trades, where we want to

encourage the trades. There will be more support for students in the trades and assistance to students taking the trades, but it's not limited to that.

Creating spaces. We're talking with stakeholders in the community, looking at best practices around the world, on how we deliver education in the 21st century. That's got to be a fluid approach. That's not something that I'm going to sit down and say: after three months in the department I have all the answers about how we advance education in the 21st century. Quite frankly, even someone with 35 years of experience in the department, I would suggest, would not have the temerity to sit down and say: I know all the ways that you can deliver education. No.

What we're talking about is working with people in our system, looking at best practices around the world, finding ways to make sure that every qualified Albertan who wants to advance their education – and quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, every Albertan is qualified to advance their education. What we need to have is a system which allows them to do that, indeed encourages them to do that.

Foreign qualifications was raised. The hon. member obviously missed that line in the budget which shows that the international qualifications assessment budget is going up by 37.8 per cent – I couldn't believe it when I looked it up – 37.8 per cent, from \$677,000 to \$930,000. That's another one of the untold stories that we have: international qualifications assessments. We have people who are ready, willing, and able to go anywhere in the world to assess qualifications if we need to bring people here to work in this province. I heard somebody earlier table an e-mail from somebody who is concerned that qualifications would go down. Indeed, that's not the case. We have our international qualifications assessment service, which makes sure that we can establish the qualifications, the credentials, of people from anywhere in the world, and we do that.

But we need to put more of a focus on prior learning assessment on international qualifications and make it more readily available. Indeed, I hear the complaints that the hon. member hears about people who come here with qualifications and can't work because they can't get entry, although we've added in the last little while 10 more internships, for example, for people who want to practise medicine here. Indeed, we need to work harder on those complaints because we need those talents.

English as a Second Language. Obviously, support for immigrants, developing an immigration policy for the province, working together with the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Human Resources and Employment so that we can have an immigration policy in this province which values people from other parts of the world, whether they've come to other parts of Canada first and then come here or whether they've come directly here. We need to value those talents, we need to welcome them, and we need to make sure that English is not a barrier to their success, specifically in the areas that they want to practise.

Mr. Chairman, I see that my time has come, so I'll have to continue answering those questions a little later.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Very quickly, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for recognizing me because I know there are many others who want to speak to this. But I did need to get on the record based on what the minister had to say about the access to the future fund, the \$250 million commitment to actually put hard cash dollars in there as opposed to the \$3 billion figure, which, in fact, is a cap, a floor, not a ceiling, and his comment that I moved an amendment to Bill 1 to

try and remove that figure. I tried to remove that figure for the precise reason that it is a ceiling, a cap, and not a starting point.

So while the minister likes to talk in glowing terms about getting it up there to that \$3 billion mark, where it produces \$135 million of investable income, the fact remains that the bill as it's written now – and that amendment was voted down in this House – doesn't commit the minister to anything. It says that up to \$3 billion may be put into that endowment fund. There is not a commitment beyond the \$250 million in this document. There is not a commitment to put another dime into that endowment fund. I know the minister wants to; I can see it in his eyes. I know that he has every good intention, and I know that the minister is passionate about advanced education. I also know that from time to time Premiers shuffle their cabinets, and maybe his successor isn't going to be as passionate about advanced education as he is.

Mr. Chairman, a recent opinion survey of Canadians on who they trust in various professions revealed that 16 per cent of Canadians trust politicians. We were at the bottom of the barrel. That is precisely why I want the minister to commit to a program and a schedule of putting money into the postsecondary education endowment fund, the access to the future fund, so that the people of Alberta can see that he really is going to make good on his intentions, on his promises. We don't have a commitment yet.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would hazard a guess that the statistics that the hon. member has used, saying that 16 per cent of people don't trust politicians . . .

Mr. Taylor: Do trust.

Mr. Hancock: Do trust. Yes. I would suggest that most don't. I would suggest that the biggest part of that problem has to do with much of the mudslinging and things that go on in this process. We should all make a commitment to do a better job of holding all of us up as very trustworthy in doing the people's work because I don't know anybody who's run for office and been elected to this office who did it for self-aggrandizement or for their own personal gain. In fact, anybody would be an idiot to run for this job for their own personal gain. With the amount of time and effort that goes into this job, you could make a lot more money in the private sector.

So I just wanted to say that because you throw it out saying: "People don't trust you. Why should we trust you?" People don't trust people because you're always talking about the fact that people don't trust you when, in fact, you should be talking about that we've put the commitment into the bill which says that we're going to put in \$3 billion. Yes, we ought to put in more than \$3 billion. I would hazard a guess – and this would be only a guess and not a commitment – that when we get to the \$3 billion or even before we get to the \$3 billion, the emphasis in the system is going to be so strong and the number of good projects is going to be so high that we ought to add more to the endowment fund to endow the future of postsecondary in this province. I would aspire to that. I think you aspire to that.

That was the purpose you brought forward the amendment, I think a well-meaning amendment, to take the \$3 billion out of the act and, instead, allow us to aim higher. Well, I aim higher, but I also know that if we put \$3 billion into the act, people can see that as a commitment to put \$3 billion into an access to the future fund, and that's a commitment we should aim at.

It's also interesting – and I raise this with a little bit of trepidation – that when we talk about a cap on tuition fees, everybody says that

it's a target and everybody's going to get there, but when we put a cap in the \$3 billion fund, you say: what's the commitment you're going to make to get there? I mean, at least we should be consistent in our critique.

Mr. Chairman, there were a number of other things that I wanted to address because I think it should be clear for every member of this House and certainly in the public that this government is committed to endowing the future. We've made a commitment to \$5 billion out of nonrenewable resource revenue to endow the future. We've committed in the budget documents to put \$500 million into the heritage medical research fund. We've indicated \$250 million into the access to the future fund, and we have Bill 1, which talks about the billion dollars for the heritage savings trust fund, which talks about \$3 billion in the access fund, which talks about \$500 million into the ingenuity fund. That's a commitment that people can take to the bank.

So I hope we can put that to rest because, yes, I would have loved to have said, "Let's budget for a \$50 price of oil, and let's show that that excess revenue is going to be in there." I would have even loved to have a line in the budget documents which said that 50 per cent of excess revenues are going to go into the fund. What Albertans know with Bill 1, the Premier's commitment hopefully when it passes this Legislature, if the members of this Legislature agree to pass it – and I hope they will – is that Bill 1 makes a commitment on this government and this Legislature to put money into that fund, \$3 billion, and \$1 billion for the heritage scholarship fund. That is a commitment that's not been made by anybody else that I know of from public money across North America.

The hon. member raised in discussion a number of times endowment funds from private universities in the States. I think he mentioned Princeton and Harvard, private universities in the States, which have had some 200, 300 years to build endowments and most of those endowments being built by graduates sending their money back. Well, what we're planning to do, Mr. Chairman, and what we've set in motion here with this endowment fund is a way in which our universities, our colleges can go to their grads. And we're seeing that: Grant MacEwan yesterday, the largest donation in its history, a \$5 million donation to the health care learning centre from Bill and Mary Jo Robbins, residents of Houston, Texas, who have business operations in Alberta, giving a little bit of money back, encouraged to do so, money which presumably could be matched by an access to the future fund, starting that process that the Princetons have had 200 and 300 years to build those funds. We're starting that process in Alberta with this endowment process, and it's going to be exciting. It's going to be very exciting.

4:40

I was talking earlier about foreign qualifications and ESL training, and I want to mention that the Member for Edmonton-Centre is bang on with some of her comments with respect to maximizing human potential, making sure that immigrants to our community can not only learn the English language and have access to ESL programs but through NorQuest and institutions like NorQuest can find job-specific language, which will help them be successful in their jobs. We know that at NorQuest, for example, if you want to take a nursing assistant program, you can take a course which will assist you with the language specific to that job. Those are exciting things, and we need to do more of that.

We need to work with Human Resources and Employment with respect to living allowances for people who need to be supported while they advance their education. Grasping that human potential, helping Albertans be the best they can be: that's what this is all about. That's what we aspire to, and that's certainly what I'm working with my colleagues in government to achieve.

The Grant MacEwan health centre has been talked about, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre raised the issue of capital planning for that. It would be absolutely ludicrous for us to announce that we're supporting the first year of building for a project like that and not have any intention for the second year or the third year. Obviously, that's part of a capital plan, and one of the beauties of the capital planning process that we now have available to us is that we can cash flow that. We can say to an institution: "That's an approved project. Yes, you can go ahead starting to do it." Or we can even say: "Well, go ahead and do the planning. Do the planning on a Bow Valley College. Go ahead and get that done."

Then before we make a commitment to the growth, obviously, there are a whole bunch, 30-some institutions in this province – and that's just the postsecondary institutions – and all of them have capital plans, so obviously there has to be prioritization. There has to be a strategic approach to how we move forward with them, but we need to work with each institution with respect to their aspirations. Obviously, once we say, "Yes, you can go ahead and build that building," the cash flow for that building has got to be there over the period of time of its build or the period of time that the postsecondary institution can process it.

The hon. member raised issues about a position called a lecturer, and I hope she's not suggesting that as Minister of Advanced Education I should go over to the university and tell them how to staff up or what kind of staff they should have, what sort of academic staff they should have, what they should be asking them to teach or not teach. Surely she wasn't suggesting that.

What I think she was trying to address, though, is the need for quality in our institutions at every level. In some cases that will be quality teaching, exclusively quality teaching. In some cases that will be research and a knowledge search, that we can advance knowledge. That's what the ingenuity fund and the heritage medical research fund are funding research in. There are all sorts of other research grants.

In fact, our universities are doing very, very well at bringing in research grants so that we can advance knowledge. We have people doing research and also teaching and involving graduate students in the research. We have our colleague from Foothills-Rocky View, who indeed was a political science professor, I believe, at the University of Calgary and, I'm sure, did some research in that capacity and added to the base of knowledge and wrote articles, some articles that I've read, Mr. Chairman, and that, I would say, are well worth reading. Some I may have to review again.

Mr. Chairman, government is not about telling the universities or the colleges how to do their job in terms of the quality of learning and the quality of teaching. It's about making sure that we understand that there needs to be quality of learning and quality of teaching. There needs to be those opportunities and appropriate funds in place to ensure that that happens and to ensure that they can do that, that the research happens that drives the creation of new knowledge and the ability to transmit that knowledge, that we have the technology available so that where it's appropriate, knowledge can be transferred in an easier mechanism.

My first class in university was an economics 200 class, and there were about 350 people in it. We had an excellent instructor, but she did stand at the front of the class and gave a lecture.

Now, with modern technology I might be able to actually access some of that knowledge electronically and perhaps have a better opportunity to be face to face with the instructor in a discussion group rather than sitting in a lecture hall with 350 people. I don't know. Different people learn differently. What we have now are many different ways of delivering educational opportunities, and we ought to be able to access them all, and we ought not to critique

them by saying: well, we're dumbing down the system by hiring a lecturer. Sometimes a lecturer might be appropriate, but far be it from me to tell a university who they should hire or what they should hire or what their qualifications should be.

I think that addressed most of the questions I had, Mr. Chairman, so I'll take my seat and see if there are more.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder how much time is left. It's quite a sight to behold to see our Minister of Advanced Education talking about the future of advanced education in this province, talking about advanced education for the 21st century with such glowing words, such optimism, and such passion and commitment. I must say that it's a sea change in the way this Legislature has heard the minister responsible for Advanced Education talk about it in the past. So I'm with him. I share his passion for advanced education and wish him luck with his colleagues sitting around the cabinet table as he seeks support from them for his plans.

With respect to this budget certainly there are steps in the right direction, I must say. The 6 per cent increase in base funding is certainly something that will go some way in addressing the concerns of institutions in the postsecondary system, the advanced education system, from universities to colleges to technical institutes.

The Premier here was quoting the other day the, I think, vice-president or provost of the University of Alberta as saying how hugely good this news is, you know, for the whole system. I just want to add here the concern that the Council of Alberta University Students, CAUS, has. It had a less glowing view of the budget that we're discussing here today. They talked about the government taking baby steps instead of great strides in the postsecondary education system. I just wanted to put this on record so that there is an understanding of the way different parts of the system view where this budget is going, how good a news it is.

Certainly, the budget today, if we keep going in this direction at least on the monetary side, fiscal side, will help institutions begin to repair some of the damage that institutions have suffered not due to any of their fault but simply because of the chronic underfunding over the last 10 years that they have faced from year to year. The minister talked about a 2 per cent increase, you know, on the average over the last 10 years on an annual basis. The costs have been going up for each of these postsecondary institutions at a much faster rate. The number of students going there has been increasing. The programs that they're offering: the expectations are that they should have more and more programs.

So all the institutions have been falling seriously behind on an annual basis with respect to their annual budgets. As a result, they've had to respond and have done lots of things, the first of them, of course, was to continue to increase tuition fees at rates which students found unaffordable and unacceptable. They have been protesting about it. This government came up with a very innovative tuition fee policy, the 30 per cent cap. I heard and saw the former Minister of Advanced Education walking in with a cap in hand which said: tuition cap. Well, tuition cap or not, tuition fees have been going up 6 or 7 per cent every year.

4:50

The increase has been certainly considered unaffordable by students and seen as not sufficient by institutions because they began to see tuition fees as a cash cow. That's the only source that they had where they could raise more funds in order to meet the deficits that were caused by the government's deliberate underfunding of the

institutions over the last 10 years. The result has been, as I said, an increase in tuition fees and the resulting increase in student debt loads. That's true here; that's true in other parts of Canada.

There have been shifts within the universities and colleges with respect to emphasis on programs. Cannibalization is a word that's used by academics. I met with representatives of the Faculty Association of the University of Calgary just a couple of weeks ago, and this word was used, the cannibalization of programs. When the government encourages or gives some incentives for the university to introduce a new program, the veterinary sciences college is one example, then the University of Calgary has to find funds from within in order to implement that particular program, to introduce that. In order for the University of Calgary to do that, they had to find monies within the system as is, take it away from existing programs and move it to a new program, a new college that's being set up there.

That's not the story just at the University of Calgary. That has happened in every institution, particularly at the university level. The University of Alberta is no exception to it. Funds have been going down for faculties of arts. Humanities programs have been cut back. Courses have had to be cancelled. Courses that were offered on a yearly basis which were needed for students to complete their degree programs on time began to be offered every alternate year to deal with the problem of unavailability of funds.

Faculty composition has changed dramatically over the last 10 years. More and more part-time teachers are being hired, more and more sessionals are being employed, and the full-time faculty numbers have been going down. Many sessionals have been hired on soft money, not on hard cash that is there from year to year. So there were uncertainties created within the institutions, the postsecondary system, with respect to faculty recruitment, faculty retention, the quality of instruction in classrooms.

The size. The minister said that when he was a student, in the first year he was in classes of 200, 250. That might have been an odd case then; now it is a regular happening, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister. It's not something to be celebrated. As a matter of fact, the drop-out rate from our universities and colleges is close to 40 per cent, according to the minister's own numbers here. These are students who qualify to get into college or university. They are not students who come with questionable academic records or background. They come with good preparation. They meet the admission requirements, the entry requirements. Yet 40 per cent of them do not complete their programs. Huge wastage of their resources, public resources, and a very great loss to the future of the province. The question must be asked: why is it that such high drop-out rates, such high rates of failing to complete, are there in the system? The minister hasn't really quite addressed that issue.

On the tuition fee issue, the minister has broadened the notion. He no longer wants to talk about a tuition fee policy as such; he wants to talk about affordability. I hope this is not a phrase that he will use in order to skirt talking about having a firm tuition fee policy in this province for our postsecondary students and postsecondary institutions. I hope he will tell this House that he will not encourage institutions in this province to continue to use increases in tuition fees to fund ever-increasing deficits in terms of their operation funds, that he will make a commitment to provide enough operating grants so that universities and colleges don't have to every year resort to huge increases in tuition fees.

I want to hear him talk about it not only in terms of, you know, the affordability in terms of the overall costs. Sure going to college or university is expensive. People have to pay money for their board and lodging, travel, all of these, particularly students who live away from major metropolitan centres. They have to leave home to come

to a university or college to get their education. Their costs are certainly higher than the costs of those who live close to or in those metropolitan centres.

The issue of affordability must not allow this minister and this House and this government to take its attention away from addressing the question of tuition fee increases. Tuition fee increases have been used by this government as a matter of policy to fund institutions in this province; 30 per cent was a cap. That has been reached in some places. In other places it will never be reached because the costs are going up so dramatically that we will not be able to reach that level for many years to come in most of the institutions. But that doesn't mean, therefore, that tuition fees should be allowed to increase indefinitely and at a rate which students, 80,000 of them in this province, do not find an acceptable rate at which they should grow.

On the overall minister's vision about advanced education for the 21st century – and he used quite a bit of time when addressing the questions posed to him by other hon. members on the budget to talk broadly about his vision of the strategic plan and how the postsecondary education vision that he has fits into that. He talked, I must note, about this fluid situation, that he cannot talk specifically, that he can't talk in any firm terms about what the system should look like over the next 20 years, but he has ideas. I'm sure the minister has ideas, and that's fine. But is the minister willing to in fact create a public forum to talk about the shape of the future education system, the system of the 21st century that he talks about?

Albertans are well-educated citizens. They have ideas that they want to share with the government. They want to have an opportunity where they can freely talk about this, perhaps in the form of an independent commission. I want to ask the minister: will he be willing to commit to using the opportunity of setting up a commission such as I'm proposing, one somewhat similar to the Learning Commission? It did a splendid job of going around the province listening to Albertans – parents, students, teachers, school board members, academics, experts from all over the place – and came up with 90-some recommendations, one of which was about asking this government to establish, in fact, a postsecondary education commission along the lines of the Learning Commission, an independent entity that will hold public hearings.

The hearings will be public, and Alberta citizens from all walks of life, not just corporate executives, not just university presidents, not just members of the boards of governors but ordinary, regular Albertans will have an opportunity to come and speak to this commission, share their views, share their vision of where Alberta should be going in terms of designing a postsecondary education system, an advanced education system, which will be a matter of pride for all as it serves the needs of the 21st century as it unfolds before us. I ask the minister to respond to this.

There are many questions that need to be addressed as the advanced education system evolves, the issues, of course, of affordability, accessibility, that the minister himself has identified as two important issues; the issue of the expansion of the system – what parts should expand? – whether we need more universities. Do we need to put a cap on the number of universities that are there? There's the issue of the role and place for private, for-profit institutions as part of the system, and the minister has remained, unfortunately, relatively silent about his vision and his own view with respect to the presence and the growth that's taking place of the private, for-profit sector within the postsecondary system.

There are NAFTA implications in there. Once you allow these institutions to set up business in the province, how can you deny them public funds? Are there NAFTA implications? The point is not, Mr. Chairman and minister, to simply shake your head and say

that you have no concerns about it, that that simply isn't the case. You haven't sought any firm legal opinion on it. You haven't heard in a public forum Albertans talk about the implications. I'm sure you'll get legal advice there too. The legal community will come forward to perhaps give you some advice on that.

5:00

These are questions that need to be asked. The role of the private sector, the private, for-profit sector within the system. There is a need to raise questions about governance. There is the Postsecondary Learning Act, which is an act which really centralizes the authority into the hands of the Minister of Advanced Education in ways which have been unknown in this province in the past. In debating that bill, we talked about one of the major problems with that act being the high degree of centralization of power in the hands of the minister.

I find the same problem with Bill 1 with respect to the way the minister wants to appoint the advisory council on the access fund. There's a concentration of powers into the hands of the minister, which, in my view, must be questioned and questioned seriously. Now, Albertans want to have a say in telling us, telling this Legislature, telling this government, telling this minister what kind of governance structure they want for their system: the governance within each institution, the governance across the province. Where should this power reside and how should it be shared among Albertans coming from various walks of life?

The issue, Mr. Chairman, with respect to advanced education for the 21st century which must be addressed by the commission such as the one that I'm talking about has to do with the role of the corporate sector in funding, in financing the system of advanced education. I just want to draw the attention of the minister – it's good bedtime reading for him, I think – to a book that has just been released two months ago, in February. It's called *The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education*, by Jennifer Washburn. A couple of brief comments on what's in this book. Barton Bernstein, professor of history, Stanford University, says this about this book:

This hard-hitting book will provoke controversy, upset rank-and-file citizens, and ignite the concern of faculty and alumni. Washburn raises fundamental questions: Who owns and controls university-produced knowledge? Who should own it and benefit from it?

Now, these are questions that need to be addressed. I am sure the minister in his own office can't address this. His able deputy minister: I doubt the deputy minister should be required or asked to address it. It's an issue that must be addressed by citizens of this province, to whom this system after all belongs. Let me give another quote here, by William Greider. He's the author of the book called *The Soul of Capitalism*. He's saying that

Jennifer Washburn's meticulous reporting and insightful analysis reveals how corporate intrusion is undermining academic freedom – and the foundations of scientific inquiry – within our nation's most prestigious institutions of higher learning.

He's talking about the U.S., but I'm sure it's a question that is pertinent for this province. It must be asked, must be addressed, and must be addressed comprehensively.

In the minister's plan, as I'm looking through his strategic plan here on Advanced Education, there's no concern with asking these questions. They're fundamental questions. We can keep on pouring more money into the system, but unless he asks some extremely important fundamental questions at the same time, we may find 10 years down the line that we have wasted some of those most precious resources that we are now committed to investing in the system.

The system needs a comprehensive, a close, and deep look at it. In this province it was in 1973 that the last comprehensive look was

taken at both the K to 12 part of the education system and the postsecondary system. It's about time, 32 or 33 years later, that we commit ourselves to undertaking that kind of exercise. Albertans want to have input. Their input has proven valuable in the past, and I'm sure, if invited, they will enthusiastically participate and be able to contribute a great deal to setting the direction of the advanced education system for at least the first 20-some years of the 21st century that we have moved into already.

Mr. Chairman, I will conclude at this point and let some other hon. members have an opportunity to speak.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments relate to the postsecondary institutions that have taken in in good faith over the past couple of years students that have not been fully funded by the Department of Advanced Education. I'm wondering whether the minister could enlighten us as to whether or not the 2005-2006 budget makes provision for full formula funding for all of those students that have been unfunded and, secondly, whether or not there is some provision in the budget separate and apart from the 6 per cent increase in the operating funding for those unfunded students.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask the hon. minister what is in the budget for our independent universities. Independent colleges and universities contribute a great deal to the education of Alberta students. They are funded at a fraction of the rate of public institutions, and they build their own buildings and require no capital budgets, so they are much on their own as far as building their schools.

The independent schools are not affected by the tuition freeze that applies to the public universities. Public universities seem to be getting an increase in base funding to compensate for the tuition freeze that does not affect the independent schools. Will the independent schools get the same benefits this year or in the years to come? Does the budget allow the independent schools to catch up?

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was hoping to ask the minister a few questions relative to the Learning Commission. If I've got it straight, I think he talked earlier in the discussion about a framework for funding postsecondary education. This blanket went to a decentralized level to each institution to follow. What I was trying to get at last night, listening to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development – I was wondering if the government as such, through the framework of funding that he was talking about, would ever consider some incentive funding.

When I looked at the Learning Commission, Mr. Minister, I looked at the need for aboriginal teachers, for example, and I looked also at the need for specialists in the area of remedial programs, career counselling, administration, and board governance. I was wondering, sir, if that could be covered under the framework, that institutions would be given an incentive nomenclature. For example, when I took my masters, I went there under the auspices of the government of Alberta having career counselling needs in the school system. That was the incentive: I would come into the institution, take training, but I had to serve three years in the school system that I had come from.

I see this as a particular challenge, and I think – and I'm sincere about this – that it's important that a government of the day take the

initiative to show leadership where there are particular needs for incentive funding. For example, last night we talked about – and I know this is not related – the fine arts. There's a time when we have to stimulate and direct, I believe, and provide leadership. I do believe that in terms of the aboriginal framework – and I know the argument about federal funding and everything else on that. But I talked to a former dean of the faculty yesterday, and he said: why not have incentive funding to help this kind of initiative and get that whole thing looked at?

I'll just talk about two other things, and then I'll sit down, sir.

5:10

The question of seniors going back through extension programs. I know one of the things that we hear about extension programs is that they are self-sustaining, that they don't need incentive funding. But let me suggest, sir, to you that there are people out there that I know of, in my constituency for example, that lack the dollars to go on. I think it would be fortuitous for them if we could have some stimulation or some help where they can take courses in such things as legal matters, pastoral care, helping with taxes, advocacy, bereavement, those kinds of initiatives. I think it would be very, very interesting to have you look at that, sir, if I may. They will return: "We're not dead yet, although we may look like we are. Come back into our communities and serve a very sincere population that is there."

The other thing that's dear to my heart that's left out – then I'll just sit down very quickly – is the whole area of student services. I really, sincerely would like your insight into this because I think it's somewhere forgotten in many institutions, and maybe you could just share your experience as to how this is funded. I didn't have a chance to study the budget as much as I'd like to. How do we get money for that from institutions?

I'll sit down. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have other questions. I'll bring them up later on.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I realize that our time is short, so I just have one quick question for the minister. The Member for St. Albert just talked about incentive funding. I guess my question is somewhat similar. I noticed in the budget that there is almost \$13 million that will be awarded to public postsecondary institutions through a performance envelope, and I think that's a great idea. I guess it's something that I feel is needed in our postsecondary institutions as well as perhaps in our K to 12 basic education. My question is: how will this work, and what is meant by a performance envelope? Perhaps the hon. minister could flesh out the details on that for us.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to commend the minister on the budget focus on advanced education.

My question is just regarding the yearly student loan limit, that's now increasing to \$12,140. The increasing loan limits will put students further into debt. How is the government going to address affordability of postsecondary education? That's my question number one. I would love to hear some comment from the minister regarding students attending private universities in terms of financing, in terms of assistance because with private universities, we don't have to provide capital funding to them.

Perhaps, if you have time, you could comment on the foreign

students in Alberta. How do we encourage them to come here and pay a lot of dollars to take their education from us and to build a good relationship down the road when they go back to their country and become the leaders there?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think we're very short on time, so I will just put my questions forward. If I could get some answers in the future, that would be great.

My first question would be in regard to: would the minister care to make a comment on the fact that there is no money in the budget, as we can see it, for planned operational and capital growth? Is this going to be funded by tuition increases?

In conjunction with that, with regard to tuition we would like to ask about when we would see some stability and affordability put into the tuition fee question. With all of the money that's being put in, we still have tuition fees that have more than doubled in the last decade, and it's becoming increasingly unaffordable for many students to even consider going to postsecondary education, regardless of what endowments might be available to them.

As well, I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona did mention this, but, you know, it bears repeating. Why does our province have such a low completion rate for postsecondary education? We're approaching a 40 per cent noncompletion rate for postsecondary students, and this is unacceptably high. We would like to see something in the budget to address this specifically.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(5), which provides for the Committee of Supply to rise and report no later than 5:15 on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday afternoons, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates of the Department of Advanced Education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$1,582,176,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements	\$117,400,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Chairman, it is with a great deal of regret because I didn't get the opportunity to go on – I was going to say go on at length, but that would have been a bad comment – to answer some of the questions, but I will commit to answering the questions I didn't get to in writing.

I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Advanced Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$1,582,176,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$117,400,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn until 8 p.m., at which time we return in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:19 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 19, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 05/04/19
 head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

Before we do that, may we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have several special introductions to make to you tonight, and I practised these names with my guests, but I'm sure that I'm going to get them wrong. It's a group that comes to us from the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, and they are learning English and taking a tour of the Legislature tonight. I'm going to introduce to you Kyaw Myint – and he's from Syria, so we'll get him to rise – and Nobumasa Nakajima and Mayumi Nakajima. They are from Japan. We have Hong Nguyen, and she's from Viet Nam; Jin-Young Eom, and I believe that she's from Korea – I may have that wrong – and then Abdulla Alkhatib. They are accompanied by my son Courtney, who is helping them to learn English. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm deeply honoured to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the 99th Girl Guide association from my riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie, a long established association providing girls with opportunities, experiences, and long-lasting friendships. This wonderful group of 17 students and their chaperones are here this evening to tour the Legislature. They are seated in the public gallery. I request them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Seniors and Community Supports

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I begin, I'd also like to take this opportunity to introduce staff that are in my ministry, and they're in attendance here tonight. I have my deputy minister, Ken Wilson – I'm going to ask that you rise as I introduce you, Ken – also Chi Loo, my assistant deputy minister for housing services and who has been our chief financial officer as well; Dave Arseneault, assistant deputy minister for strategic planning in support of living; and many of you, of course, know my executive assistant, Zoe Kolbuc, from my office. I'd ask that you give them a warm welcome.

Mr. Chairman, I'm really pleased to be here to present the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports 2005-08 business plan and the budget. I'd like to begin by providing an overview of our programs, as this is very much what this ministry is about and, of course, the many people that we serve. Then I'll be pleased, as well,

to go through our budget items with you in detail along with how this budget will further enhance the programs and the services that we provide.

As many of you know here in the Assembly, community supports programs were added to this ministry just this past fall, and I'd like to mention that this was the first time that responsibility for disability programs was placed under one department. That's a fairly significant change with the ministry. Prior to the reorganization the former ministry of seniors was comprised of three key areas: seniors programs, housing for lower-income Albertans, and public guardian services.

The ministry and the number of people we serve changed significantly with the addition of the assured income for the severely handicapped program, persons with development disabilities, and community support systems. As of April 1, Mr. Chairman, responsibility for the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program was added to this ministry from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and it was a welcome addition because that is where it will make the most sense, I think, at this time to be because of the change in the ministry's portfolio.

The vision for the new ministry is "a vibrant province where all Albertans live with dignity as full participants in society and experience the best possible well-being and independence." I'll briefly mention the ministry's four core businesses from the 2005-08 business plan. The first core business is to provide "services, programs, and planning for seniors and the aging population," the second is to provide "supports, services and planning for persons with disabilities," the third is to support "the provision and ongoing management of housing for lower-income Albertans," and the fourth core business is to provide "supports to enhance choice and well-being for clients of the Ministry."

With the expanded scope of the ministry total spending for Alberta Seniors and Community Supports will reach \$1.6 billion in 2005-06, which is an increase, Mr. Chairman, of more than 12 per cent over last year's budget. More than \$176 million in new funding for seniors programs, the renewal of the assured income for the severely handicapped, known as the AISH program, and provincial housing programs are highlights in this new budget.

But I'd like to begin with our seniors programs, Mr. Chairman. The budget renews our commitment to one of the most generous packages of benefits for seniors in the country. Although the focus of our benefit programs are on those seniors who are most in need of assistance, there are some benefits that are available to all seniors, such as premium-free Alberta health care insurance and Blue Cross coverage.

Approximately 143,000 seniors currently receive the Alberta seniors benefit, a program which provides a monthly cash benefit for eligible seniors. This year's budget increases the total spending on the Alberta seniors benefit program to \$249 million to fund enhancements that were announced last year. As of July 1, 2004, increased thresholds made 17,000 more seniors eligible for cash benefits from the program while existing recipients have seen their monthly payments increase.

In addition to the Alberta seniors benefit, Alberta also has the special needs assistance grant program. Last year this program provided more than 35,000 payments to lower income seniors facing one-time emergency or extraordinary expenses. And I'm also pleased that this program will continue.

Part of our commitment to supporting our province's generous seniors benefits package includes \$52 million in new spending to support three programs which you're aware of Mr. Chairman: the dental and optical assistance programs and the education property tax assistance program. About 80 per cent of the 336,000 seniors in

Alberta will receive some assistance through the enhanced dental and optical assistance programs, and the maximum benefit is \$5,000 coverage for basic dental health procedures every five years and up to a maximum of \$230 for prescription eyeglasses every three years.

This year we are also pleased to announce a program for seniors looking for education property tax assistance. In 2005-06 we estimate that approximately 115,000 senior households will receive education property tax assistance, which protects them from year-to-year increases in the education portion of their property taxes. Under the new program seniors can apply to be reimbursed for the difference between the 2004 and 2005 education property tax amount. This year's budget includes \$10 million for the education property tax assistance program.

As I mentioned earlier, the scope of the ministry has expanded, Mr. Chairman, from seniors and housing matters to include the assured income for the severely handicapped program. Approximately 32,000 Albertans rely on AISH and will be positively affected by this year's budget increases. We are increasing the AISH budget program by \$80 million, bringing total spending to more than \$488 million. Of this \$80 million increase, \$45 million will go toward implementing the MLA committee recommendations, and \$35 million will address increasing program costs. This is a significant investment, Mr. Chairman.

8:10

Without getting into too many details about the MLA review, I would like to mention that last Friday, with the support of my colleagues here in the Assembly, I accepted the committee's recommendations to renew the AISH program. The AISH living allowance will be increased from \$850 per month to \$950 per month and \$1,000 per month by April of 2006. These increases will cost approximately \$40.3 million in 2005-06 and \$62 million in 2006-07.

However, Mr. Chairman, renewing the AISH program is about more than just an increase in the monthly living allowance. It's about an entire package of benefits and helping those who need it the most. AISH clients will continue to receive a comprehensive health benefits package worth an average of \$300 per month. That package is at no cost to the client and includes premium-free Alberta health care insurance, Alberta Aids to Daily Living supports, all prescription drugs, complete eye care, full dental care, emergency ambulance service, and essential diabetic supplies.

Last Friday we also introduced supplementary benefits as a new addition to personal income support through the AISH program. Among other things these supplementary benefits may include school supplies for children, utility arrears, medical supplies such as wheelchair repairs and batteries, and support for guide dogs. The supplementary benefits, which will be available starting in October, will cost an estimated 10 and a half million dollars to administer for the remainder of 2005-06 and \$22 million next year.

We're also working to improve the earning power of AISH clients by increasing the employment earnings exemption for those clients who are able to work. As of October a single person who is an AISH client will be able to earn up to \$400 each month without affecting their living allowance. That's twice as much as they can earn now. Couples or single parents who receive AISH benefits can earn \$975 per month before it affects their living allowance.

We are also implementing a number of AISH enhancements that will be done within the current dollars allocated for the programs. These include requiring AISH staff to meet with clients to be sure clients are getting the best support possible, improving client service delivery, and partnering with disability organizations to provide ongoing training for AISH staff.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that we have followed through on the

commitment of renewing the AISH program. But I'd also like to take a few minutes to review our budget for the housing initiatives. The ministry is working with communities throughout the province to develop a range of housing facilities and support services that include emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, and affordable housing. New spending of \$16.7 million will be used to address increased costs associated with the operation of family and specialized housing units across Alberta. This includes funding for the upkeep of the approximately 25,000 provincially owned or supported units to ensure that our clients have a safe and secure place to live.

Support for operating homeless shelters located in major municipalities throughout the province will rise by \$6 million in 2005-06, bringing total provincial support for transitional housing and the homeless to more than \$23 million. We want to ensure that emergency shelter spaces are available. Keeping that in mind, we are also working to develop long-term housing solutions to assist people to live independently in our communities. I hope that the budget information that I'm reviewing today is useful in providing further guidance to the Member for Lethbridge-East, who asked a question last month about grant funding for homeless shelters.

Mr. Chairman, seniors' lodge assistance also falls within the housing portfolio. An additional \$6 million will be used for seniors' lodge assistance grants, bringing total program spending to \$21.7 million per year. This funding helps provide accommodation, meals, and housekeeping to approximately 8,900 low- and moderate-income seniors throughout Alberta.

In our constant quest to develop affordable housing, Budget 2005 includes \$25 million to conclude phase 1 of the Canada/Alberta affordable housing agreement, 12 and a half million dollars from the province and 12 and a half million dollars in matching federal funding. Phase 1 of this agreement has led to the development of approximately 2,400 affordable housing units in Alberta during the last three years. With the current funding program scheduled to end in 2006, we are currently discussing a second phase of this program with the federal government. To date these funding partnerships have resulted in new affordable housing units in at least 18 areas of the province, and we will continue to search for innovative ways to provide low-cost, affordable housing for lower income Albertans and for persons with disabilities.

My department is also now responsible for persons with developmental disabilities, known as the PDD program. In this budget I am pleased that we are committing an additional \$21 million to the PDD program, bringing total funding to \$489 million in 2005-06. This increase will help people who are new to PDD and requiring supports. In addition, it will work to enhance our communities' ability to support citizens with developmental disabilities, a concept known through PDD as community inclusion. Through community inclusion people with disabilities are encouraged to participate fully and make active contributions in their communities.

I am conscientious of the time, Mr. Chairman, but I'd still like to mention a few other budget highlights. Budget 2005 includes approximately \$2 million in new funding for the establishment and monitoring of accommodation standards in supportive living and long-term care facilities. Developing provincial standards and establishing an effective monitoring mechanism are essential for the well-being of people in supportive living and long-term care facilities, and these standards will address areas such as maintenance, housekeeping, food services, social activities, safety and security, and nonmedical personal services.

An additional \$400,000 has been committed this year to the protection for persons in care program. I know that protecting people in care is important to members of the Assembly as it was

already raised twice during this legislative sitting. This new funding will go toward implementing changes to the Protection for Persons in Care Act and for investigation services.

Just as we must ensure the safety of those in care, Mr. Chairman, we must also ensure that we help those who can't make decisions for themselves. The office of the Public Guardian, which provides assistance to individuals who are unable to make personal, nonfinancial decisions for themselves, will see an increase of approximately \$800,000. This funding increase will provide Albertans with the best possible service by reducing the client to staff ratio. Some of the funding will also go toward promoting personal directives across Alberta, an important issue that recently came into the spotlight with the recent case in the United States.

The newest addition to the ministry is the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program, which was transferred, as I said earlier, from the Ministry of Health and Wellness on April 1 this year. This program provides assistance to people who have a chronic disability or illness, and this program also provides assistance to individuals who require basic medical equipment and supplies which will allow them to be more independent in their home or in a home-like setting. In addition to its existing budget, which was transferred to my ministry, the program will see an increase of \$2.3 million to support annual caseload growth, price increases, and necessary maintenance to computer systems.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, as you can see and as I mentioned earlier, the elements of this diverse ministry are serving those Albertans most in need. I am pleased with the programs that we're able to offer to Albertans, and I am committed to ensuring that these continue to meet the needs of Albertans.

I'd also be pleased to answer any questions. Those that I'm not able to answer just in the course of time, I'd be pleased to respond to in writing if we're not able to get to them over this next period of time. I think it's by 10 o'clock.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8:20

The Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, could we revert to introductions once again?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members here Mr. Abe Neufeld, who is the director of the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers. They are suppliers to farmers. He is also a business owner in Grande Prairie. Mr. Neufeld is also a high school friend of our distinguished Minister of Advanced Education, and he also has a distinguished MLA, the Minister of Gaming, and also another MLA, our distinguished Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, in his business, I believe. I will ask Mr. Abe Neufeld to stand up and receive the warm welcome.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**
Seniors and Community Supports (*continued*)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really would like to thank

the minister. I think that under her direction there have been some very positive things and certainly an understanding of what's required.

The opposition is pleased with the increase in the budget, and it is a great first step and certainly a long time in coming. It's been many years since AISH recipients got an increase in living allowance, and seniors on fixed incomes were aided in their struggles to meet the ever-increasing costs that sometimes only allow survival. I certainly see an understanding of the importance of protecting our most vulnerable citizens, those in care, be it long-term care, assisted living, or in group settings, but in fact it's sad to say sometimes they need to be protected from their own families.

Safeguards are needed through standards and legislation to prevent physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. The AISH payments, I believe, should have been raised immediately to a \$1,000 a month level because there has been an increase in the cost of living of 30 per cent since they had their last raise. I've had numerous calls regarding raises of those who live in subsidized housing because out of the \$100 raise, the first \$30 will go to rent as their rent is based on 30 per cent of their income.

There's been so much talk of off-budget increases if the price of oil remains, and perhaps the government may have even used their forecasts and lowballed them. I'm wondering: could this ministry increase the AISH benefits before April 6 and perform the review before the two years? I believe that, in my opinion, that's too long. The other question to go along with that would be: what formula would be used? The market-basket measurement is very comprehensive, and I think that it really reflects local communities. Or perhaps the formula which is used for the MLA yearly salary adjustments.

Perhaps I'll stop there, and we can go forward after.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you. Hon. member, I'm pleased to see, too, that you're addressing the area of AISH because it is so recent with this announcement of the renewal of the WISH program. As you know, that review was fast-tracked. It was over a six-month period. There were 11 recommendations that came forward from the review, and we have implemented all 11 recommendations. But having said that, I know that you are looking for – we discussed this – that increase in living allowance to occur immediately to a thousand dollars. It is, as you know, in two increments, the first being \$100 and, as I mentioned earlier, the next, \$50, being April 2006.

But I want to tell you why that decision was made. It was made after a lot of discussion with the chair of the WISH review committee and with the committee members, and it was really thought that it would be much more beneficial in the context of what the budget was, which is \$80 million this year in that program and \$91 million next year, if rather than doing an immediate living allowance increase to a thousand dollars, we provided what had been asked for in the Alberta disability strategy report. It meets three recommendations out of the eight there.

Those recommendations related very much to a personal income support program, and that income support program, as I mentioned earlier, is to meet unique needs of clients that have not been met before. It was never a part of the AISH program, and it is very important, which is why I had introduced the bill yesterday, so that it will be placed in legislation, so that it will not be very easily ever removed from this program.

The personal income support program will of course provide on a case-by-case basis, for now, whatever that individual client finds that they require over and above what their living allowance

payment would allow for. So that's a significant addition into the AISH program, and that's why I say that it was within the context of the budget. I know, hon. member, that you don't see that as ideal, you know, about that increase not being immediate, but at least it will be there over the next year.

Also, you asked about the subsidized housing at 30 per cent of the income, the concern that some clients may have that they are not going to be able to keep their hundred dollar increase. We had heard that same concern from clients, and approximately two to three weeks ago – I can't recall the exact date – I wrote a letter to all of the management bodies to indicate that they are not to raise the rent based on this hundred dollar increase and that if they do, we will know about that immediately. We do have 25,000 housing units in the province, and I am hoping that with that direction being in writing and as firm as it was, the management bodies will follow through with that.

The benefit is being reviewed every two years. I know that we have, just as we're doing today, the normal process that we follow through with. We have the process, you know, of budgets being allocated and then going through this process with the Assembly. I don't look at that as an informal process; that's formal too. But I think it's more formalized when in two years we actually have a formal review of the program rather than what I think you were thinking about, indexing of the living allowance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you for that. Yes, I was thinking about indexing, but I guess what I wanted, perhaps, was it being very definitive: this is exactly how we're going to do it year after year so that they can at least count on it. Even if it's a small amount, at least it's a little bit that goes up.

The opposition is also very pleased with the increases to the seniors' benefits and increases for housing. Some of the concerns were with the standards for housing, with the enforcement to back that up, especially when public dollars are paying the private sector and after a number of years these accommodations are substandard with no legislation to ensure that any level of the standards are maintained. I think that you have answered the question, but I'll ask it again if you don't mind. Are you contemplating legislation along these lines, and if not, why not?

The other question I think I can fit in before we break for answers. The increase for seniors to help with the school property tax is certainly more than welcome, but I can't seem to find a timeline. I trust that it is yearly, based on the differences from year to year.

The Chair: Hon. minister, do you wish to respond?

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you. Hon. member, there is a line item in the budget regarding the maintenance for housing, and I had alluded to that in my opening remarks. I agree with you that for people that are low income to moderate income and for whom we are subsidizing their housing, we do need to be very certain they are living in facilities that best meet their needs, whether it's with a disability. You know, people with various disabilities require certain services within that housing component, and we do have grants in place to assist with that.

More importantly, I think you were asking that the housing be kept in good repair, and that is a responsibility that we have. I have made my deputy minister and my staff very aware that following session I would like to go out, and I'd welcome you, hon. member, if you'd like to come with me, and look at the housing market that we do have out there – I have not done that yet at this stage – and see where that new funding in the budget can best be allocated for

the repair of housing. As far as it being incorporated in legislation, though, as standards, no, I haven't contemplated that.

Thank you.

8:30

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of different categories of issues that I'd like to question the minister on. Thank you to my colleague from Lethbridge-East for letting me get in on some of her time.

The question has been asked a couple of times, and the minister has not directly answered it, but I'd like to know why the choice has been made to not index the AISH benefits to some kind of measure. We in the Liberal opposition have proposed a number of times to hook it to the market-basket measure, but the minister is not responsive there. So I would like to know why the choice has been made not to proceed with indexing to anything.

I'd also like to get the minister on the record to see if there have been any changes at all to the allowable asset levels for people on AISH. I know that there was a great deal of concern from the community that the asset level would be lowered in some way or perhaps some sort of staggered limit. I'd like to know exactly what the decision-making was there and if there are any plans to change that within, I take it, the two-year period that this current program is expected to run without any changes.

I'm sure that the minister is aware of the social determinants of health, and I'm wondering if those factor in in any way to the decision-making process that she uses in her department. Just for the record, social determinants of health as determined by Health Canada, the public health agency of Canada, include things like income and social status, social support networks, education and literacy, employment and working conditions, social environments, physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, health services, gender, and culture.

Essentially, once you take away the sort of preventable injuries like accidents and genetic predisposition, you can make people as healthy as you want, but if they're poor, they're still going to be sick. They're going to develop chronic illnesses. If they live in unsafe housing, they are going to manifest that difficulty through their health. We have not been successful thus far in getting the government to work with social determinants of health, and again I'd like to know why that choice is being made. I guess I should put on the record: is the government, in fact, aware of these? I'm assuming that you are, but let me put it on the record. Then, why the choice not to use it?

You know, for example, we ended up with, I think, the second-lowest or the lowest minimum wage in Canada. Well, that's one of the significant social determinants of health. If we're trying to get higher birth-weight babies, if we're trying to get more kids completing high school, and if we're trying to end up with lower chronic diseases, which cost our health care system a great deal, these things have all got to be factored in. I don't see the government following that, certainly not by the practices that we've seen, for example the very low minimum wage. There's also a real issue around housing. So I'd like to hear from the minister what the department's attitude is and whether they'll ever consider using social determinants of health to help them develop policy around this. Who do they work with for advice on this, et cetera?

The minister mentioned that there was a disability strategy – I think I heard that correctly – and that three of the eight recommendations were accepted. I'd like to know: what were the other five that were not accepted, and why weren't they accepted?

One of the interesting things that I noticed was that there was an awful lot of money being spent moving people from AISH onto social assistance and back again, trying to be able to help people access various medical benefit programs that existed in either place, and that was costing the department a significant amount of money. Could the minister tell us how much money was saved, then, by putting forward this additional health access program that is being offered and whether that relates directly to the additional cost in the program? In other words, if it was \$25 million that it was costing the department to move back and forth, is that the amount that has now been increased on the one side of the ledger and decreased on the second side of the ledger? Maybe you report back to us on that.

On housing could the minister please give us the exact plans for the expenditure of the housing dollars and, with that, the amount of money that is the contribution from the federal government and the corresponding, matching amount from the province and exactly how that money is going to be distributed? How many units are expected to be created within this fiscal year, and what type of unit is expected to be created? Also, since we're looking at a three-year plan put forward in this budget, I'd like to get those same categories extrapolated forward. I know that I can depend on the minister's excellent staff to provide the nitty-gritty detail of that in writing. I would just ask that we please receive it before we're expected to vote on the budget appropriation bill in May.

I note that according to various statistics – and they all say the same thing – in Edmonton alone we are looking at a need of 4,700 new housing units. That includes things like 275 emergency shelter beds or mats; 675 units of transitional housing, for example for women's shelters and counselling and treatment beds, drug and alcohol treatment beds; 1,750 units of social housing, with subsidized accommodation for low-income residents; 700 units of affordable housing; and 183 fully adapted units for the disabled. How is the ministry progressing towards achieving those targets?

Given that these targets are for the fiscal year that we're in – actually, I think those figures are from the fall, so we're now six months further into this, with I don't think having created very many of those units. So how is the department measuring up against that? Given that I highly doubt 4,700 new units are going to be built out of this year's budget, what is the plan to be able to catch up with this in the future? Given that these are Edmonton figures only – I'm sorry; I represent an Edmonton riding, and homelessness and transitional and social housing are big issues for my constituents – but, you know, easily the same number in Calgary and probably the same number again for the rest of the province, we're looking at a need for between 13,000 and 15,000 units in Alberta within this year. I'd like to know what the plan is to catch us up on that one.

In the extra hundred dollars that was given for the housing for the seniors' accommodation, I'm wondering if the minister has changed the regulations to allow the cost of the telephones to be included with the rent. Most of the management companies will not include the telephone, so that's an additional cost. For example, the senior is paying 30 per cent of their income for the rent, and then they're paying the cost of the telephone. For anybody living downtown, they're also paying the cost of basic cable TV or they don't get any cable TV, which might sound like an extravagance to many here, but frankly to a senior that doesn't have many activities they can participate in, being able to watch television, at least watching the news and keeping up on current affairs, is one way for them to keep in touch with what's going on and to have some kind of very limited interaction with other human beings. So it becomes very important for my constituents anyway. Those regulations didn't encourage that with the housing management companies, and I'm wondering if there's been a move – I hope there has – towards encouraging the

inclusion of the telephone and the cable TV into the 30 per cent rent.

Has there been an improvement in the housekeeping rates and the understanding of what housekeeping is for the seniors? A number of seniors talk to me and say that, well, they could stay in their own homes and be more independent if they could just get reasonable housekeeping, but the housekeeping services that are offered for them just don't do the job. They're far too limited. They won't help people with meal preparation, for example. They won't do the cleaning that's really required. Eventually the senior gives up and moves into some sort of care facility, which is much more costly, as the minister knows, and much more costly for all Albertans who participate in that.

8:40

Those are the specific issues that I wanted to get on the record that have come up in my constituency and a bit left over from my work in my previous role as the critic for Seniors.

There were some additional questions that had come up when I went through the budget briefing book. On page 310 of the estimates book, under vote 2.2.5, the dental and optical assistance program, which the minister also referred to earlier, I'd like to know what this is based on. She gave new figures for what it's possible for seniors to apply for, and I think I heard \$230 for a pair of glasses every three years. Is that three years based on anything? Do you have statistical information that tells you that seniors tend to replace their glasses every three years? I'd be interested in knowing that or, better yet, having the minister table it.

With the dentures, again, I often hear that as they age, their mouths are changing faster than they did, and in fact the time limit that was allowed for them to replace dentures is not adequate for their needs. So again I'm looking for any statistical backup that you have that sends you in the direction of saying: you can have this much money every this many years.

I'd like to know what is covered exactly on page 309 under vote 1.0.4, strategic corporate services. That budget increased by \$2.9 million, from \$3.8 million to \$6.7 million. Could I get a breakout, please, of exactly what that is?

Just generally for your budget, could I get a breakout, please, of how much was brought from each of the other ministries to create this new department? How much was brought from Seniors? How much was the allocation from housing? What was the amount of money allocated to PDD, how much to AISH, and now how much for Aids to Daily Living? If I've missed anything that has made up the budget for this department, I'll ask for that to be included as well, please. If I could get any kind of a report on whether that corresponding amount of money was in fact taken out of the departments that they were in, which would've affected Community Development the most, I think.

On page 312 if I could get an explanation, please, on vote 4.1.2, supportive living and long-term care accommodations, under management and operations. This budget is increased from \$506,000 to \$2.4 million; in other words, it increased fivefold. I'd be interested in knowing why. Under supportive living grants, the corresponding vote 4.2.1, has gone from \$4.5 million to \$500,000. Perhaps these are connected, but if I could get that explained, please.

I'm wondering if this department has any hand in program development or policy development for adult FASD, please.

With those questions, thank you for my being able to get those on the record. Given our very limited time tonight and the very long list of people who wish to question the minister, I'm happy to receive the answers to those in writing, but I do ask that they are received within the next couple of weeks, before we have to vote on the budget.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will take the opportunity to respond to a couple of the questions from the hon. member. The one that I would like to respond to is regarding the Canada/Alberta affordable housing agreement. The hon. member had asked questions about this program. I indicated that it was 12 and a half million dollars in funding from Alberta and 12 and a half million dollars in matching funds from the federal government to finish up this first phase of the program.

I have met with the federal minister, hon. member. We are in discussions on the next phase, which would be phase 2, and it is a matched program. Twenty-five million dollars in 2005-06 will provide funding for over 400 additional units. I know that you mentioned an awful lot just here in Edmonton alone and the 4,700 that you were concerned about.

This has been a very good program. It has provided over the past three years approximately 2,400 new affordable housing units. Those have been in very high-need, high-growth communities, and that was with \$53 million from Alberta and \$53 million from the federal government, for a total of \$106 million. We are continuing – and I think you know this, hon. member – to look at innovative ways to provide low-cost, affordable housing for our lower and moderate-income Albertans. I just want you to know, though, that we are in discussions for the next phase of the program.

Also, you asked a question regarding dentures, and I thought that that would be an important one for you to know as well. You were looking at the benchmark that we used and how we came to the conclusion that for the dental program that we were offering, first of all, that it was necessary to add this \$50 million into the budget for this program. It's two, dental and optical, which you know as well, but it has come into effect as of April 1.

We did involve very professional organizations to determine what that list should be of the dental care that seniors would require; for example, at the University of Alberta through Dr. Gordon Thompson with the dental faculty and the association. He and many others contributed why we should increase our dental program, which is currently \$5,000 over a lifetime and limited to basic dentures and maybe some fillings, you know, cleanings. Well, this list that we have now is much more extensive, which would include root planing and endodontics and, you know, that type of dental care. Also, they indicated that the \$5,000 per person over a five-year period was much better than what it had been, over a lifetime, and that that should meet the needs of seniors. I did meet with seniors' groups which you're familiar with. The groups are well-known organizations throughout Alberta, and they as well indicated that \$5,000 over five years would meet the needs of the seniors.

That's the same also with eyeglasses. We heard through the ophthalmologists and the optometrists, you know, that if we looked at a three-year period for \$230, that would cover prescription eyeglasses, and that that was an average for seniors. But I want you to know this: it's not that it's cut in stone, that if a senior came to us and they had lost their eyeglasses, or if somebody had stolen their purse with their eyeglasses or whatever, we wouldn't try to assist that senior. We do have other programs that would be of assistance, like our seniors' assistance programs.

I know you know that the other questions, as you indicated, we'll provide answers in writing. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the minister has at least partially answered one of the questions that I had for her on

behalf of a constituent who says that he had not noticed in news releases, in any event, relative to the budget anything in particular with regard to seniors referencing dental, glasses, general health care items, taxes, et cetera. He was specifically concerned about dental. He said, and I'm quoting here: it is difficult to contemplate doing certain necessary items such as extensive dental because of the very high costs.

Clearly, you've changed from \$5,000 over a lifetime to \$5,000 over five years, which I think is very good and very progressive. But for my information could the minister speak perhaps in a little more detail about what constitutes basic dental and what constitutes extensive dental. You mentioned a couple of examples there. I'm thinking about things like crowns or root canals or things like this, which can be, as we all know, very pricey at any age, manageable, obviously, if you're an ordinary working Albertan with an ordinary income and an ordinary, perhaps, group health benefit through your employer where you would end up paying 50 per cent of the cost of that. But certainly it would constitute a major setback, I think, for anybody on a fixed income who is required to pay 100 per cent. So I wonder if the minister could add just a little more detail about the dental.

8:50

The other question that I had also focused on transitional housing and homeless support initiatives and, of course, comes primarily from the Calgary perspective. I guess that much like my colleague from Edmonton-Centre, who referenced the fact that she's an Edmonton MLA, I'm a Calgary MLA. I suspect the stories in our two cities are very similar, but I'm, of course, more familiar with the Calgary situation. In Calgary it seems to me that we have in many respects a tremendous program for getting homeless people, who may present with a wealth of issues, off the street and into, really, a graduated program of taking them through substance abuse issues if there are problems there, mental health or psychological or emotional issues if there are problems there, upgrading of education, upgrading of skills through transitional housing, several-step programs, and so on and so forth. They work their way up the ladder, Mr. Chairman, kind of to the top and to graduation, at which point it's almost like they fall off the ladder and go back to the start again because of a chronic, acute shortage of affordable housing.

I wonder if the minister could give us a workable, serviceable definition. I know this is difficult to do because I'm asking almost for a one-size-fits-all definition here, and this is anything but a one-size-fits-all problem. Can she give us some insight into perhaps the definition the government uses of affordable housing and talk a little bit more about that?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to go back to the dental program because it is an important question, especially because it had been asked by the member previously. As I indicated, it did come into effect April 1. People are asking already: can that be retroactive? The answer to that is yes. We met with stakeholders just at the very end of March to indicate that, and it is going to be seamless. Seniors can apply in the dental office, because it's through Blue Cross, and once they've applied, they will not have to reapply and reapply. Especially if they're on our seniors' benefits program, they're already in our system, and we won't be asking for new information. But this program is for low-income to moderate-income seniors. It has changed in that regard as well.

We anticipate that approximately 80 per cent of all our seniors in Alberta, which is 267,000, are eligible to receive financial assistance

through the dental care and the prescription eyeglasses. Eligibility for the program is income based, as I just mentioned, the maximum coverage targeted to lower income seniors, who are most in need, but also to moderate, who will receive partial financial assistance. Seniors with annual incomes up to \$20,000 or couples with incomes up to \$40,000 a year will be eligible for up to the maximum amount, and that's about 186,000 seniors. Seniors with incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000 and couples with incomes between \$40,000 and \$60,000 are eligible for partial coverage, which ranges up to 99 per cent coverage. We're thinking that about 81,000 seniors will be eligible, and I mentioned how we came to the determination of the amount of money over the five-year period being \$5,000.

You asked then, too, about why the list is more extensive than it had been previously. Of course, it is going to include basic dentures, but as I mentioned, it's going to include not just diagnostics like X-rays and whatnot but what dentists refer to or will refer to as restorative, with root planing and endodontics. I think there are about 10 items on the list that we received from the college, that I'd be pleased to share with you for your constituents.

The whole area of transitional housing, though, too is an important area. Like you, hon. member, I have visited in the city of Calgary with the Calgary Drop-in Centre, with the Mustard Seed, you know, with different organizations, and my understanding is that there is a real change now in the continuum of housing for people that are homeless. It's happening right with the drop-in centres. You know from being there that there is transitional housing support in, I think, the top four floors for people that may have been homeless but are beginning to work in the community in some way, still want the supports that they've been provided with within that context, and will stay there, you know, for a few months.

The \$23.3 million budget for homeless support in 2005-06 consists of homeless shelters, \$13.5 million; transitional housing, \$6.8 million; and homeless initiatives, \$3 million. The additional funding of \$6.2 million that's going to be allocated in this budget is going to address the cost pressures experienced by operators who are struggling to provide basic services because of rising operating costs, and that will include utilities. I think that's important for you to know. The \$3 million budget for the provincial homeless initiative is allocated throughout the province, and that's to address the needs of the homeless. These funds in 2004-05 were provided to seven major urban centres. I know we've heard of the Calgary and Edmonton situation, but there are seven centres.

Also, I think it is important that you know as well that we're continuing to work toward a financially sustainable shelter system and toward fostering independence among homeless people by creating long-term solutions such as the transitional and affordable housing that we discussed earlier. But we can't do that alone, you know, which is why we're working with the organizations in this area.

Thank you.

Mr. Taylor: Might I ask just a supplementary question? Could I get the minister to briefly talk about what some of those longer term plans and partnerships are? Ultimately, that's where the system breaks down right now – isn't it? – at the point at which the client is through the transitional housing, needs affordable housing, and in expensive centres like Calgary and Edmonton, of course, affordable housing, although the definition changes depending on the person we're talking about, can be in terribly short supply.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, the long-term plan – and this is through the organizations that I've discussed this with and with the books there are. There is one written by the Mustard Seed that you may wish to

read, and you'll see what their goals are. The long-term plan is: what we refer to now as homeless shelters, people are looking more for transitional housing.

Mr. Taylor: Beyond that?

Mrs. Fritz: They are. Yeah. It's changed.

Then beyond the transitional housing, where people move out into the community to supportive living, whether that be in an apartment setting, even some still in a group home depending on whether or not they have addictions or whatever they may be experiencing. Beyond that, hopefully at that time, then, they are, you know, working as well as getting other supports, and then it moves on from there back to what we refer to as affordable housing.

I think that's a good plan. I agree with the community in that regard, and also I know from meeting with the federal minister, Joe Fontana, that that's very much the direction that they're taking now as well. That's not just here in the province of Alberta but throughout Canada.

Mr. Taylor: Just one more quick stab at this, if I might, Mr. Chairman. I'm in full agreement with the minister as far as she's gone so far, but what I'm trying to get to is: what happens after all that, when the homeless person has been through the shelter system, through the transitional housing, perhaps through the group home experience if that's applicable, and on to the point where that person is deemed by themselves or others or both to be now capable of living on their own, in their own accommodation, in a rental apartment or whatever? My understanding is that it is at that point where you often have a breakdown because there's simply a very small, virtually nonexistent inventory of that kind of affordable housing, the kind of apartment that rents at a level that someone on a low income can afford to meet the rental payments every month, the kind of apartment that carries a damage deposit modest enough that that person can reasonably expect to come up with it.

I'm using somewhat out of date statistics here, Mr. Chairman, I'm sure, but we are told that there have been times in the recent past where upwards of 50 per cent of the homeless people in the city of Calgary – and although I don't know for a fact, it would not surprise me if the statistics in Edmonton were very, very similar – are, in fact, people from another province who have come here without a job in search of the dream that is Alberta, you know, without a whole lot of assets of their own. They get a job easily enough, but it's a low enough paying job relative to the cost of living in a city like Calgary that they simply cannot scrape together the money for the damage deposit; ergo, they're homeless. So if the minister could address specifically that issue of affordable accommodation after you've been through the system, which does, admittedly, a very good job of transitioning people up to a point.

9:00

Mrs. Fritz: We do have a next program – I know we have a number of programs we're discussing here tonight – and it is a support program to our community housing providers, and it's very much in keeping with what you are asking about here tonight. There's been an increase of \$14.75 million allocated to this program for this year. Its additional funding was also planned for 2006-07, because I keep looking at the next part of the budget, which is a further \$4.1 million, and then 2007-08, another \$4.3 million.

It's to assist the local housing providers with increasing operating maintenance costs, that kind of thing, but also that they administer 8,200 provincially owned and 2,400 municipally owned community housing units. Those provide modest rental income for our low-

income families, for individuals or persons with special needs. These 10,600 community housing units provide safe, affordable housing as well to over 32,000 low-income Albertans.

I'm hoping that's answering your question. I know we've gone from homeless to transitional to group homes and now into the community provision of supportive housing.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to ask the minister for some clarification on behalf of some of my constituents in terms of the dental plan. It sounds better. Can you tell me specifically what it's going to mean to my constituent who's concerned about fillings that he needs to get done and has been waiting for, hoping that they might be covered? What is the cut-off level for getting the full coverage? Can you tell me those things?

Mrs. Fritz: I can. I apologize. I don't have the long list of services that are being provided with the dental plan. Those, as I said, did come through the college, but as I had mentioned earlier about that plan – I'll just go back to the numbers that I had. Just let me look here, Mr. Chairman. I want to be sure I have the exact numbers for the record. I know that it's full coverage of \$5,000 for five years for \$20,000 and less for a low-income Albertan, and then between \$20,000 and \$30,000 for a single person it is based on a scale of income. But for a couple it's not going to be that a couple is \$30,000. For a couple each person in that couple would be up to \$30,000, so it would be up to \$60,000 for a couple for coverage.

Mrs. Mather: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank, also, the minister for her excellent presentation on her department budget this evening. As chair of the Seniors Advisory Council I have enjoyed working with her and getting to know about the many issues related to seniors.

In spite of some of the media and opposition reports, I have visited many seniors' homes and facilities as the chair of the Seniors Advisory Council. I have visited many of these facilities and found them to be very nice places. The seniors and the people that live there are well looked after and, mostly, are very generally happy to be in the places where they live. My own mother lives in a seniors' home in Red Deer and enjoys it very much.

In her remarks the minister referred this evening to the fact that more seniors were made eligible for the Alberta seniors' benefit because of changes brought in last year. While that is good news, I still hear from some constituents that not enough is being done for those who fall slightly above the threshold. Does the minister have plans to review these thresholds on a regular basis? Maybe I'll just wait for an answer, and then I have another question.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the hon. member. As chair of our Seniors Advisory Council you certainly are doing a lot of work, hon. member, on behalf of our ministry, and it's well appreciated. I know that we had a discussion earlier today about this, and I know that you are thinking of looking at this issue in a more detailed way through the council, but thresholds were changed as recently as last July, and that made 17,000 more seniors eligible for the benefit. It increased the average monthly payment as well to those that are already on the program.

I have to say this again, hon. member – and I know that we're going to have more discussions about this – it really is the most generous benefit program in the country right now. It did add 17,000 more people to the threshold level, and the monthly payments as well are also the highest in the country. I would still be pleased to hear your views back from the council.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister also referred to new dental and optical programs, and I believe that these will be a welcome addition for our seniors. Can the minister advise how these programs compare to programs that the province used to offer to the seniors?

Mrs. Fritz: So how the dental program compares to other . . .

Mr. Prins: The way it was before.

Mrs. Fritz: As I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, this program is – well, it's like a renewal of the program because of the extensive list that will be offered in dental services. As well, the income threshold level is higher for the recipients of the program. It is streamlined so that it will be far easier for people to access, being directly through Blue Cross and indirectly through the dental office. As well, the amounts of money are the \$5,000 over a five-year period, and it's very inclusive of our population that will be able to access the program.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to break down two or three areas with a few questions. I think it comes down to some perhaps philosophical differences with the government, maybe not so much with this minister; I'm not sure of that. But we look at the AISH announcement, and of course any money that can flow to the most vulnerable in the society is welcome. I would suggest that in a very rich province with the oil and gas reserves that we have, we still could've done better. I expect maybe the minister tried to do better. I can say to the minister that my office has had a lot of phone calls, and they are not satisfied. They expected more in terms of the increases.

I've recognized that the health benefits and that have been helpful too, but I think that we have to look at this in perspective, Mr. Chairman. The massive cuts came back in the mid-90s. If we look back at 1993 and we take inflation – and it might even be higher with the living allowances now – just the CPI or something like that, up to the time that the minister announced the increases last week, they had lost 23 per cent of their income. Now, these are the most vulnerable people, that have no other means of doing this. It's not that you can take on two jobs or three jobs or whatever to deal with the very serious problem. The minister's announcement, while welcome, by next year when we get up to over \$1,000 that will be a 15 per cent increase. But the point I'm trying to make is that even after that people on AISH are still not as well off as they were in 1993. There are not a lot of people in this society that can say that, and these are the most vulnerable ones. So I think we have to keep it in perspective.

9:10

With all due respect to the minister about the indexation – I do believe that if she had her way I think she might agree to this, but I know she also has to go through a cabinet.

I was interested that at the news conference with MLA Rob Lougheed, who chaired the review committee, he suggested that the reason they didn't index it is they might want to in the future raise it more than indexation. Well, that's a rather ridiculous statement because you could still have the indexation. You can raise it to whatever you want. The government can do that. But it seems to me that that's a key point. There should be some form of indexation for the most vulnerable people there.

I know the minister will say: well, we'll look at it, I think, in two years. Now, I would remind this minister that her intentions may be good, but you have to go through a cabinet, caucus, and all sorts of things. AISH has been reviewed and reviewed and reviewed over the last 10 years, and whether they have a review in two years doesn't necessarily mean money in the pocket for those people. I guess I would say – I know this is what's going to happen at this present time. We know that's not going to change, but I would hope that the minister as an advocate for AISH and seniors will push for indexation and not say that we're not doing it because we want to give more. That just doesn't flow with people. I mean, it's just not an answer that's acceptable.

I guess the only question I have, well, a couple perhaps, from the AISH is: does the minister have some idea of what we're looking at in the future in terms of numbers? I think it's \$80 million overall, but there's probably some of that \$80 million that they're projecting in the next year, with more people going on AISH. Are there some rough figures that the department's working at that we're looking at in the next two- to three-year period? I think the minister said the numbers now are 32,000 – correct me if I'm wrong – on AISH. What are we looking at in the next couple of years?

I think it was alluded to by the Member for Edmonton-Centre that, as we know, the people on social services, those numbers are way down. What is the relationship between AISH and social services, if any? There is some speculation that people have been moving back and forth because of the benefits before.

Could I stop there and just do the AISH, or should I continue?

The Chair: Yes, you may.

I'd just like to remind the member of your referral to another member by his proper name instead of a constituency name.

Mr. Martin: Fair enough. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will make just a couple of comments on the AISH program because I know that you're fairly familiar, hon. member, with the people that are on AISH and that we do have 32,000 clients and that it is between two areas.

Now that we have disabilities under our ministry, there are two areas which people often mistake, but we're trying to have the recognition of what this is. That is that we have persons with development disabilities. There are approximately 8,000 people who've had from a disability from when they were born, a developmental disability, but there are also approximately 24,000 people that received their disability at some time during their life. This program is for people over the age of 18. AISH refers to both disabilities. It's the assured income for the severely handicapped, which people don't often realize is for persons with developmental disabilities as well. Approximately 92 per cent of people are receiving the AISH benefit.

When you take that into the context, which this review committee did, and they had 18,000 submissions from Albertans, when they put

all of that in place and were looking for a holistic program for people, to provide what I said from the Alberta disability strategies report, to provide that personal income support level for these unique needs, when you put it into its complete context, the review committee decided not to request an indexed living allowance, not to request it to be indexed. Rather than that, they put in recommendation 11, which I'll refer you to when you read your AISH review book, which explains why they made that decision.

They were under the impression, even from everything that they had taken in, you know, in regard to the information that was given to them, not just by people that made submissions but by the staff and others, that increasing and indexing a living allowance at this time would not be in the best interests of the development of this program because it may not necessarily meet exactly what people were looking for if it's just continual, continual. They were looking more for what is the true cost of having a disability and being in the community with a disability and what that would mean in the overall context, and they hope that part of the personal income support of that will be reached.

The other five recommendations in that disability strategy report that the Member for Edmonton-Centre had asked for addressed that as well. I don't know if that assists you. I respect what the committee came forward with in regard to that.

The future of the budget. It is \$80 million now for the 32,000 clients. It is \$91 million next April. That's \$171 million. When you include what we were discussing earlier about affordable housing, with four people based on 30 per cent of the living allowance, the cost, when you include that and what's in the budget here, you will see there is approximately \$30 million to address that as well. So over the two-year period that is at least \$200 million in this renewal of this program, but it's just a first step. It's a beginning, and then we'll see how it goes over the next 24 months and what the community identifies as needs.

I go back to this too, hon. member, that this is unprecedented across Canada, this increase and this way that we are viewing the program, to try to determine to have full inclusion of people in the community.

I'd be more than pleased, too, to hear from you over the course of time. I have heard from a number of organizations, like the Alberta Disabilities Forum, who have written that they are pleased with the personal income support, with the health benefits, with the living allowance, and with the housing that is being provided.

We are working with municipalities. I know that Edmonton, for example, is meeting some of the transportation needs through their bus-pass system. We are working with the transportation committee in the city of Calgary as well. So there are many other needs that will need to be addressed. This is just a start with that.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's nothing to say that we can't set new measures, but indexation can be part of those measures, and again I think we say that if it works here for MLAs, it should work for theirs. But you can set whatever measure and then index it. I don't think one follows the other necessarily. I know the minister is trying to make the best out of the situation.

The figures. I was trying to get a handle on the numbers because when we get into millions of dollars and that, it tells us about the budget. It doesn't tell us, you know, about what sort of numbers we're looking at in the future. It's largely irrelevant to the people here because we're happy to be in a boom economy because of oil and gas. We're wealthier than other provinces, perhaps other states even, because we're fortunate to have that, and that creates other

problems for people and the most vulnerable. To say that we're the most generous doesn't mean much to those people that we talk to out in our constituencies.

Let me just go from the AISH into just some general things. I have the release that the minister's department put out during the budget, and there are some steps in the right direction from where we were with the cuts in the past, no doubt about that. Enhanced dental and optical programs – I will come back to that just briefly – and the program to reimburse the education portion of the property taxes. But flowing from that – we've been asked this, and I'll throw it out – is that that's nice that the people that are fortunate to own their own homes are getting a tax break. We've had other seniors say, "What about us?" That's always the case when we do that. "We happened to sell our house, we're renting, whatever. There's no particular tax break for us." I'm wondering why we didn't take that into consideration, even if it's a marginal one. I know it's budget, but I throw it out as a question to the minister.

9:20

The other area, though, that I do want to talk very briefly about is long-term care. I think part of the problem that we're facing here – contrary to the member, we're getting all sorts of calls lately about problems in long-term care. Obviously, there are going to be some good ones around the province, but there are some serious problems. I know the minister has part of the department and Health the other part of it. I think that's a problem in itself. I think the government should look at putting it in one or the other. Probably the health minister has enough to do, and it probably should be there, but I don't know.

All these people that are going out to care centres – there are a number of elder abuse groups – are saying that there are some real problems, and they're willing to document them in many cases. I think we have a serious problem that we don't seem to have, sort of, standards and enough staffing, perhaps, in some institutions. There's got to be some good ones, but we do have some serious problems. I think for the government to, as the Premier did the other day, huff and puff and say that there are no problems there is just not right.

I think that one of the petitions that the minister is aware of was put in by Lynda Jonson yesterday, a petition with nearly 500 signatures, and she's been all over the province. A very sincere person. I'm sure the minister knows her. I think this makes something that we should be working for. They're saying that even though the staff wants to do the right thing, in many of these places, these long-term care centres, they can't do the proper job. They can't look after this one because they've got too big a client staff. I think it is a serious problem. She's suggesting that we work towards staffing levels of 1 and 5 during the day and 1 and 8 in the evening. Surely we can afford that in this province, because that could be our parents or a lot of other people's parents that are facing this.

The fact that there are so many groups out there, they can't all be wrong. They can't all be wrong. So we think that there are some serious problems there, and it's something that I hope that the minister of health and this particular minister are talking about.

I notice, for example, patients at the Bethany Care Collegesside facility in Red Deer have raised serious concerns regarding staffing levels and quality of care and food that they have received. That's been public, and I know the food is specifically in the minister's department.

So I think that we have to take a better look at this, because we think that there are some serious problems out there around the province, and it's not just us. It's not us manipulating these poor people. They're people coming to us that are saying that this is a

serious problem, and there are a number of different groups. Some of the horror stories and some of the pictures that I've seen are not pleasant. We will pursue it, and I hope the minister will pursue what's going on in that area. I'd be interested in her comments about the staffing levels at least.

The third thing I just want to generally talk about is something that's happening in the housing area, and I know that the minister alluded to that, and I think the Member for Edmonton-Centre asked for a breakdown. If I may speak about Edmonton – I expect it's true in Calgary; the minister would know Calgary better than I do – we have a growing population. There is always a downside to a boom economy. The downside is usually that there's a big migration into the cities, and the migration often is the very poorest people. Especially in northern Alberta this is what's happening.

When I was on the Edmonton public school board, we had the fastest growing aboriginal population or the fastest numbers coming in in the country, and it has implications for the school system. Many of these people are coming from very tough backgrounds, and they're the ones that often end up homeless and the rest of it. So even if we have housing – and I know the minister has talked about the dollars, and they're a significant amount of money – it's a growing problem, and I don't know how we can keep up with it because homelessness is growing in this city. So even what we're doing now, it's not enough.

Part of it has to do with the boom economy. It's all right to have the boom economy, and some people are doing very well, but the Alberta disadvantage is that more and more people are falling in the cracks, at least in this city. That has to do with housing and social services and a lot of other things, but the minister is responsible for housing. I think we have to take a look at that because even the money that's there, the numbers that I've seen are growing in this city even with what we're doing. So we have to relook at it, and I would hope that the minister would do that.

I would just conclude with two or three questions that are not related to either of those matters. It has to do, again, with the release, other new spending highlights on the release that was put out. One is an \$800,000 increase for the office of the Public Guardian to increase the number of staff to provide better services. You know, whenever I see more money and we're going to give better services, I'd like a little more specific idea of what they're going to do to give people better services.

The other one was right under that, the \$400,000 increase to implement changes to the Protection for Persons in Care Act and for investigation services. Are we concerned? I know the minister and the member from – I'm trying to remember. Edmonton-Strathcona: now I've got it; I can remember. They talked about that there wasn't abuse, the whole thing. Is that investigation service, that \$400,000, going to investigating abuse, or what is that all about?

The last thing is just about the money for glasses. We got into it, and the minister says that in studies, about every three years. That may or may not be enough. I don't know. I think in Blue Cross it's every two years for other people.

What I found interesting are the figures. Of course, many older people experience problems with their vision, ranging from difficulty reading or watching television to more serious impediments such as being unable to drive or read. This is interesting: about 3 million Canadian seniors, 82 per cent of the population age 65 or older, reported having a vision problem in 2003. In Alberta it was a little less, 79 per cent. With those figures, I don't know if that has implications on whether it's every two or three years, because obviously that's a significant portion of people. Well, some seniors can afford it, but we're talking about the ones that can't. I don't know if that should be reviewed or not, but it's just food for thought.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Hon. minister, I've had a number of people express a view to speak. Would you want to respond individually, or would you like to respond near the end?

Mrs. Fritz: I'll respond to these questions because there's such a range of them, Mr. Chairman, and not to all at this time, which the hon. member can understand, then, based on other people that would like to.

I'll go back to your AISH question again regarding the budget, et cetera. For the 32,000 clients on AISH the total budget is almost a billion dollars, and that's on that 32,000 client base. You asked for the overall figure. I think it's about \$980 million, when you look in the budget here, and of course that isn't inclusive of all ministries that provide programs in some way for people with disabilities. We have about 10 to 12 ministries that provide programs in some way, but for the area that I have, for the whole area of disabilities, it's about \$980 million.

9:30

The question that you had asked regarding seniors being concerned that on a universal basis they don't receive a tax cut, especially if they don't own a home and they don't qualify for the education portion of the property tax, shielding that's going to be put in place now. We do have other programs, and some may not look at this as a tax cut, but it is a change that puts more money in the pockets of seniors in a universal-type way, which you're familiar with. That would be the premium-free Alberta health care insurance. That was for all seniors, and it made them exempt from paying their health care premiums. It was a savings of \$528 per year for a single senior and \$1,056 for a senior couple.

Also, we have premium-free Blue Cross coverage for seniors. Premiums are paid for all seniors, their spouses, and their eligible dependants, and that's a maximum of \$25,000 in benefits per year and per person.

Then, of course, I mentioned earlier that we have the Aids to Daily Living program that was transferred to this ministry. That, too, is a universal program for seniors. It funds medical equipment and/or supplies that best meet their basic, medically assessed needs; for example, hearing aids, wheelchairs, compression stockings, oxygen, et cetera. I know that not all seniors own their own home and that that education portion of the property tax just refers to those in their own homes, but hopefully they'll see that we are considering all seniors with these others that I had mentioned.

You did ask as well about long-term care. That's a very important issue. It's significant. As you indicated, you know that this ministry is responsible for the accommodation side, which many people refer to as room and board, and the Ministry of Health and Wellness for the staffing side. You'd asked a number of questions about staffing and asked that I comment on those questions. There is an unbundling of the services, as you know, so that we identify what is housing, the housing area that would be for me, the health care, the care services.

It's a complex matter to do that because of the numbers that we have and especially because what's offered in the community is changing as we speak. Over the last three to five years, three or four years really, we changed the interim of housing in long-term care. We've gone from long-term care to designated assisted living to enhanced living, and in there are lodges as well and, of course, seniors in their contained apartments. So it's an issue that does require some careful, thoughtful discussion as to what we now provide in standards.

There are industry standards. The regional health authorities – I just met with the Capital health authority this week – have industry

standards which are excellent for long-term care, and so do the organizations responsible for the housing side, like ASCHA, the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association, and so do other organizations, including our department, that have contributed overall toward this, even the organization that may own the facility.

There are industry standards in place. Together the Minister of Health and Wellness and myself and Children's Services, because they're responsible for the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act, are looking at the development of standards overall that would best meet the needs of people.

You mentioned about meals and that that's under my portfolio, and you're absolutely right. That's the social side of care in long-term care, where people, you know, have meals together. We have facilities that I've visited throughout the province, like a couple in Camrose, Wetaskiwin, where they'll offer two choices of meals for their clients. We do need to have, I believe, dietitians in place – that would be a part of standards – who govern the meal plan because there are people who have different needs related to their health care needs, like a renal diet or a diabetic diet or whatever. It's an area where I could contribute to the standards when they are being developed, and we are working overall with that.

I apologize that I can't discuss the staffing because that's not in my ministry.

The office of the Public Guardian. You had asked about that \$800,000 and were wondering: how do you improve services, or are you just putting money into the existing administration? The budget increase was approximately \$792,000, and it is going to increase the client/staff ratio. Currently each guardian representative has approximately 60 clients, but the new funding is going to decrease the ratio to approximately 50 clients per Public Guardian representative. The office through the Dependent Adults Act, which you know we're in the current process of reviewing, provides assistance to individuals who are unable to make personal, nonfinancial decisions for themselves, and the financial decisions are made by Justice's office of the Public Trustee.

But that office doesn't just administer that part of it. It also administers the Personal Directives Act, which is being looked at in context with the Dependent Adults Act. It's legislation that's going to allow Albertans as well to choose a substitute decision-maker and provide specific care instructions in the event that they require assistance sometime in the future. Part of that additional funding is for promoting personal directives across Alberta.

Also, as I indicated, the two acts are going to be reviewed. The office currently provides public guardianship services to approximately 1,800 Albertans, and it assists approximately 8,000 private guardians in their decision-making roles. I hope that that reassures you that it's not going just into administration.

The rest of your questions I'll respond to in writing, if that's okay.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see the hon. minister has \$25 million in her budget for affordable housing. This is an important area, especially for those working Albertans who are struggling to make ends meet, and it certainly is no different in my constituency of Highwood in the towns of Okotoks and High River. I know the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has covered this off pretty much, and I appreciated the questions he asked and the answers he got. However, could the minister please explain how decisions are made about funding on affordable housing?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's a question that I hear often from the community, and it's actually a very simple procedure. We do accept applications from a variety of organizations that are interested in providing affordable housing. We evaluate those applications, and it's based on the needs expressed by the communities that have put forward the applications throughout the province.

I know that there is a total of \$25 million which was budgeted, as I said earlier, to complete the first phase of the Canada/Alberta affordable housing program. Since 2002 we have committed close to \$53 million in funding to develop almost 2,400 new affordable housing units, and these are in high-need, high-growth communities throughout Alberta. Those are where we receive the applications from. So it is through an application process based on need.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start off by commending this minister and the great improvements that she's announced with her budget. It's very enjoyable to see the compassion and the care and concern that she shows for those seniors and community services, which she is over. [interjection] She could hear that; be careful.

The thing I'd like to start off with, I guess, is that you've given those people on AISH the ability to earn an extra \$400 before clawback, \$975 for couples, which is commendable. It's also good to see that you're leaving dollars in the seniors' pockets with their health care premiums eliminated, the education tax going down.

I guess the first comment, though, I'd like to make is that to me the goals should be to help seniors to help themselves and to also help families to be able to help their aging parents. One of the problems that I haven't been able to find in here – and I believe B.C. is leading in this – is that too often we don't allow families to help their own aging parents. I'd like you to point out if there is anything that's in there. I feel that's critical, that a lot of families aren't able to support and help their parents because they're penalized by keeping them there, or they have no benefits if they're staying with their grandchildren or their children. I'd like to know if there are such accommodations made to enable families to help yet the seniors who are living with their families still receive the benefits. In the rural areas quite often they have allowed what they call granny apartments into the yards in larger areas, that have to be removed when the parents are gone.

9:40

An area that I'd like to address also, I guess, is that if they're getting an income of \$950 and they earn \$450, they're only getting \$1,300, \$1,400 a month. The question is: why would we want to start clawing back at such a low income? It just seems like a very onerous tax and no incentive for them to go out and really try and become more self-sufficient or enjoy the fruits of their labours to try and get ahead. So I'd very much like to see that increased to give them the chance to get ahead and the desire to improve their lifestyle.

Under Aids to Daily Living another question that I guess goes back to the same one. I've met some very wonderful front-line workers that are there helping these seniors in their homes and facilitating them in overcoming their difficulties in staying in their homes longer. I guess I'm always perplexed at the micromanagement, when we have such fine front-line workers, that they're not allowed to work on a more individual basis with those seniors and to help them in their living at home.

Another area I'd like you to look at. My understanding is that those seniors are not allowed to hire their own family to do work

when often they're the very best and most qualified to do that. Like I say, I believe B.C. is making accommodations for that now, and many of those seniors would prefer that. I think that our front-line workers are very capable of making those assessments on those people that need assistance, and it would be great if they had more autonomy in making those decisions to improve their quality of life.

I guess one or two other areas I'd like to address in Seniors is that we have a huge, thick book for benefits for them to go through, and it just seems like somehow we need to be able to streamline that for seniors that need help rather than having to go through and look at every different category and see: well, I can get glasses, but I need something else. It's a huge job, and it's time consuming for my constituency workers to have to help seniors going through and looking and trying to identify a program that would help them. It would be greatly appreciated by the seniors to streamline and have aid there if, in fact, they needed it and not have to fit into a certain category.

The other thing that I'd very much like to see – and I've talked of this in other areas. It's good to see that the education taxes are being reduced for seniors, but I have to ask the question: in order to help them stay in their homes longer and to facilitate them in that area, if we were to look at property assessment taxes. It seems like the government is perhaps its own worst enemy at causing inflation. If we were to take more of a market value, especially for seniors that have been in their home for 50 years and perhaps only paid \$50,000. Their income hasn't gone up, they live on a set amount each month, yet as their property is reassessed, it's spiralling up. and it causes them a great deal of stress. For the sake of the seniors, if they could have their property assessment at their cost rather than market value, that would be a great assistance to them and allow them to stay in there and have the incentive to stay in their homes longer.

Also, to look at the other concern that I've heard the most from seniors, the cost of electricity and gas, perhaps there could be some area where we could assist them in that that would allow them also to stay in their homes.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. members, the background noise is getting rather loud. If you would like to continue your conversations out back, it would be appreciated.

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Chairman, I will be brief just because there are other questions that hon. members would like to ask.

You had a number of questions that were interesting, excellent questions on behalf of seniors, some that I have heard about even through developers regarding granny flats and suites behind homes, that kind of thing. I know that when I phoned the city of Calgary to look into that for somebody that had called me, that is related strictly to their bylaws. It's not us that govern that through legislation, but I would be very interested in any information that you do have from B.C. in that regard.

In the area of us assisting seniors to stay together, what comes to mind for me when you said that is about seniors in long-term care, that we're working towards having seniors no longer be involuntarily separated and that in this new interim facility provision we provide through the designated assisted living or the assisted living facilities where there's room in that facility for the senior couple to stay together. If they're unable to, like if we hear of a senior that may be in a rural municipality and their spouse is 50 miles away or whatever based on where they had lived their lives, we do provide transportation funding for that spouse to visit their spouse in the long-term care centre.

We have other assisting programs as well, but we do encourage

families, of course, to help out with their loved ones, whether they're in a long-term care centre or whether they visit at home. We do provide home care services, Meals on Wheels through the community. You know, there's lots of assistance for seniors in that way to assist them with staying in the community.

Also, when you indicated that our benefit booklet is far too thick and too much information and difficult for people, we do try to keep it as clear as possible, as easily understood as possible, large writing for people to be able to see what the benefit is quickly, well categorized. I know that we are adding more of the dental, optical, and the education portion of the property tax to that as well.

But our seniors, too, are very familiar with this, that we have a seniors help line that I've been to see in the department. We have a number of workers there. The calls are answered very quickly, within one to two minutes, and we have about 30,000 calls. I think it's about 30,000 calls. I'd have to look at my staff, but I think it's about that per month, so it's well utilized. What seniors ask for is: where can they go in their community in order to have assistance with filling out the forms and whatnot? That's available too, a one-stop area in a lot of the communities throughout the province.

The market value that you had mentioned is with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's through the MGA, which I think governs back to the municipality about how they set the mill rate and whatnot.

I hope that assists you. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you. I'll be very brief this evening, minister. I was really happy to hear the minister talk about keeping couples together because that's been a big concern of mine as well. You know, you see these couples that have been married for 70 years, and then I just think it's tragic if they have to separate. So I'm very, very happy to see that the minister is sensitive to those issues and working at trying to keep senior couples together. I think that's a very important component of compassionate care for seniors.

The minister answered my question, but I just want to follow up with the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. He was asking about when seniors access. They often call my office and want to know what the new programs are – and we had some very good news in this budget – how they can access them. You talked a little bit about assistance for them to fill out forms. But one of the questions I have: are there multiple forms for them to fill out? Is this a very simplistic way for them to access these programs? I mean, they're at a point in their life where they can't handle that kind of great complexity.

Thank you.

Mrs. Fritz: In response to that question, Mr. Chairman, actually it depends on what the senior is applying for. I know that there can be more than one form, and depending on the program that they are applying for, they are required to bring in information with them. They may need assistance for clarification of what that information is related to that particular program. But what's important is that once they have applied, for example, for our seniors benefit program and let's say that they're then applying for assistance, that they had a unique need and are applying for our seniors assistance program, which is \$5,000 per year that they can apply for up to – once they've applied for a seniors benefit program, that's already in the computer, and we don't ask them to reapply, and we will not be asking for that re-application with the dental program.

9:50

Also, back to the seniors information line: I found it, and I think

it's an opportunity, you know, for you to utilize in your constituency office as well, although I know that in constituency offices MLAs help seniors with their forms too, but it's 1-800-642-3853 or 427-7876 in Edmonton.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I again would like to compliment the minister on a professional and informed presentation on a department that is probably one of the more difficult in government and one that has been really crying for some improvements for some time.

First off, on some of these things if I could have some written replies, I'd appreciate that. One is on AISH. Of course, the increase is very timely, and many people on AISH that I've talked to are happy to receive it and, certainly, are happy at the increase in the clawback levels. I have a number of people on AISH in my constituency. I have a number that worked on my campaign, and some of them have shown to me how difficult their lives really can be. To live on what was \$850 a month meant they couldn't have a DVD; they couldn't have a computer; they couldn't do a lot of things that people often take for granted in our society as just being normal.

Ms Blakeman: To have a holiday.

Mr. Backs: To have, as the Member for Edmonton-Centre said, a holiday. Simple things. Like, they would take turns on various months on having a bus pass, so sometimes they would walk. It's not like they were bad people; they just were ill. They'd attempt to make a life, and they cannot work. They need that.

I would ask the minister to consider, just like has been mentioned in a number of other programs, that if the surplus is looking up in this year that it be considered that it be increased to the higher level sooner rather than April. I think that that would go a long way to alleviating the lives of these people and to ensuring that we are in fact a caring and civilized society.

Home care has been mentioned by a number of previous speakers, and it is very, very important to ensure that seniors can stay in their homes for as long as possible. I must comment personally that with my own mother she was able to stay at home in a difficult situation, and the people who helped her were very, very professional, very good, sometimes wanted to maybe have a better living themselves and sometimes didn't think that their pay and benefits were adequate and expressed that but in reality were very caring, very professional themselves and very helpful to my mom.

In other areas, the training of group home staff and the actual provision of sufficient levels, there seems to be a real difficulty. There was an incident last week that I mentioned in this area and in the supervision even of the people by the managers of these companies, and it's a great concern in my constituency that this be very, very closely watched. It brings to light the sometimes conflicting objectives within a department and within government of many of the things that are done. The safety and security of seniors and children and the ability of our communities to be comfortable and vibrant cannot be compromised.

Another item as well is, you know, just the question on what sort of costs and what sort of things are really planned in the next year to look at preventing the abuse of seniors. What sort of cross-ministry strategies are really being developed?

Also, the cumulative impact of various costs on seniors. Some were mentioned by the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, the

various utility costs, some of the various rising long-term costs. What is being charged, you know, on various seniors because of their spouse's needs?

Other than that, I think many of my concerns were covered by the previous speakers, and that concludes what I have to say, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the member's questions. The AISH question I will get back to you in writing because I've answered it a number of times here today.

Home care, as you know, is working very well for our seniors, to assist them with staying in their homes. It's an excellent program. So are, as I mentioned earlier, Meals on Wheels, other public kinds of agencies that assist the seniors with staying at home. I know the home care program is with the Minister of Health and Wellness, but the program that I do have that assists seniors is the Aids to Daily Living program, that, you know, supplies people with the assistance that they need and can help them with staying in their homes. I agree with you, hon. member: people should be safe, and they should be treated with dignity and respect, especially people that are vulnerable in our society, whether it's our seniors or people with disabilities.

I know you did ask the question regarding the group homes and regarding standards and the education of people within those homes. I had mentioned to you before with this budget how it's allocated that it does go through to the provincial board for persons with developmental disabilities, but they then allocate it regionally to the six regional boards, and the board that's here in Edmonton, then, contracts to the agency or to the home. They follow standards that they've put in place just as we have the AARC standards, the rehabilitation standards. I think it's the circle of excellence or the centre of excellence, something like that is the name, but I could give you a copy of those, which they do follow, and that includes the training of staff.

The Protection for Persons in Care Act we did discuss earlier regarding the 13 key recommendations that were made. They are being reviewed. They're important. You know, if you look at the act and then you see the needs that the community has identified, I can tell you at this point that I agree with many of those changes, and you will see that over the next few months, that that, hopefully, then, will be here in the fall or the next year for the changes in legislation to incorporate those recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The changes to the amount AISH clients can work is an important part of the package of changes the minister announced last week. Does the minister know how many AISH clients are actually able to work?

Mrs. Fritz: That's a good question, Mr. Chairman. My recollection is that approximately 14 per cent of our AISH clients are able to work. But I can tell you that we're hoping that the changes that we've offered with the exemption that was referred to earlier – because we've doubled the exemption rate where it used to be \$200 and then the \$300 we had clawed back \$75, we've doubled the exemption rate so that it's now at \$500, and we've changed the actual exemption with the clawback, that it will be 50 per cent instead of the \$75. That, I'm hoping, will assist even more people to have incentive to work and increase that 14 per cent.

10:00

The single person who is an AISH client, as you indicated, is going to be able to earn the \$400. That was determined through the community. That scale came directly from many agencies in the community who determined the scale of work and the amount of money that people can have when they do work. It'll give them more incentive, but there's a limit to that, a capping at a place where they still receive their health benefit. They don't lose that if they earned \$500, and so that, too, continues to provide the incentive.

Couples and single parents, Mr. Chairman, who receive AISH benefits, I indicated earlier, will be able to earn \$975, which is \$200 more than they can currently earn, and that's before it affects their living allowance as well, hon. member.

I think the rest, about the thousand dollars, I stated earlier. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: My goodness. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to ask a couple of questions about homeless funding. First of all, can the minister please explain how the homeless funding is used? Is it provided to the municipalities directly? That's it.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I'd like to add to the previous question regarding the homeless funding from a member earlier as well as this hon. member because we do provide \$3 million in funding, as I said, to the high-need, high-growth communities. We had mentioned the two urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton, but there are seven, and that does include Fort McMurray and Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat. What we do is that we continue to work with communities to develop a range of the housing facilities and the support services which were mentioned. Your question was whether or not we give the funding directly to the shelters, and the answer is: yes, we do allocate funding to the agencies that are delivering the services.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. minister, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Seniors and Community Supports for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$1,582,528,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee now rise and report the vote of Seniors and Community Supports and request leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Seniors and Community Supports: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$1,582,528,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head:

**Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

Bill 28

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 7: Mr. Renner]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of this bill and just to make a few brief comments. You know, the Official Opposition stands in support of this bill. Some of the items that are involved in it, like the community revitalization levy, do hold some potential to really provide some tools to municipalities to try and redevelop areas that need that sort of thing. You know, it's called tax increment financing. It can be used to redevelop Calgary's troubled East Village. I think some of the areas in Edmonton that are being looked at could also use this scheme. It has some great potential.

We may need it in the future because of the closing of schools, as some communities do deteriorate because of that.

Ms Blakeman: It changes the neighbourhood, doesn't it?

Mr. Backs: It changes the neighbourhood. You develop a problematic sort of doughnut hole around certain older areas. When you don't have the driving core, like a school inside of it, you lose the attraction for young families. It's a similar problem that a lot of smaller communities had in the past in losing their grain elevators and their schools in the smaller centres.

The community aggregate payment levy, even at two bits a tonne, you know, may provide some additional funding, and there should be, I believe, some agreement on that part by the municipalities of some benefit to them.

In general, the Official Opposition does support this, and at that point I will just say that we'll support moving this.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just take a couple of minutes. I've had some discussion with the minister about this. It's always the details that we worry about. I'm speaking only and specifically about the tax increment financing. I think this has the potential to be a good thing or a bad thing, depending on how it's worked out. As the minister is aware – and we talked about it – apparently where this was tried in Chicago it has, I believe and from what I've been told, been a bit of a disaster. It didn't do what it was

supposed to. It didn't increase the number of businesses. It did not create a net increase in the number of jobs. It tended to increase residential property sales. People living there thought they'd lost control. So I think almost universally what I've heard about that is that it actually had the opposite effect; it just forced people out.

10:10

I think that's the major worry. A lot of this is going to happen in the inner city. I know that Calgary is probably further ahead in terms of wanting to do this, but I'm sure that it'll be looked at in Edmonton. There's some concern by inner-city residents that they may lose control of their neighbourhoods and be forced to find other places to live. So gentrification, you know: we do something here and then people that are in that area just keep moving out.

The minister said that he's aware of this, the problems that happened in Chicago, and I take him at his word. I don't know a great deal about it, but my understanding is that Vancouver has had some success in this sort of approach. As I say, the proof will be in the pudding here.

The minister I think said that the opposition could take a look at some of the regulations when they come in so that some of those concerns that we have about, you know, the inner city and things that happened in Chicago will not happen here. I'll take him at his word on that and look forward to seeing those regulations at some time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, anyone wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a) for a question or comment?

Seeing none, does the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs wish to close debate?

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the opposition for their comments. I think they were all very useful, particularly from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. He indicated that I had had some discussion with him, and I intend to keep my word on that. Not that I will share all of the regulations with the hon. member, but he had some specific concerns. I said that I thought we could address them in regulation, and I intend to work with him and take into account his concerns and deal with his specific concern. We will work with him on that particular regulation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

head:

**Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 39

Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 39, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005.

Very briefly in view of the hour, I'd like to make a few comments about it, and I'll do that now. The changes proposed by the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, I believe, reflect this government's commitment to road safety. In conversation with many of the members from both the opposition benches and the government benches, I believe that everyone here has a commitment to road safety. It's my desire and my hope that, frankly, this bill will get a smooth ride through this Legislature.

The main objective of the act is to make the road safer for all users of the road, in particular those people who are emergency responders, who are out there on our highways and byways on a very regular basis protecting us when we most need them, in other words when we've had incidents on the road, when we're going too fast, perhaps, for safe purposes, and to keep them safer. We've had many, many instances where our emergency responders – people like our firefighters, our police officers, our emergency medical people – are out on the road, and we've created situations where some of them have actually been killed on the roadways of Alberta and some of them have been severely injured. I'll talk at length about those later on.

Bill 39 creates new offences for speeding past these workers as well as workers in construction zones and sets speed limits for motorists passing those emergency vehicles. The amended act increases penalties for those people driving without insurance, and it improves road safety by helping government ministries, law enforcement, and the registrar share information more easily while still protecting the public's right to privacy. The amended act enhances the ability of the minister to make regulations that govern the safety of commercial motor carriers. Again, we've had numerous instances recently where this information and this information sharing becomes even more important.

The Traffic Safety Amendment Act came into force in 2003. It consolidated a number of statutes that had not been reviewed in many years, and Bill 39 addresses the various requirements for clarification that have come to light since 2003.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the time and the fact that I would really very much like many, many members of this Legislature to have the opportunity to hear other members debate, I would like to move adjournment of this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 1
Access to the Future Act**

The Chair: We are currently discussing amendment A2.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. I'm really glad that I was on and able to add a few comments in support of amendment A2. What we have attempted to do here under the guidance of our Advanced Education critic, the Member for Calgary-Currie, is to strengthen the access to the future legislation. There were three areas of particular concern for us that we felt could be made better, and this is the second of the three amendments that are being brought forward to do just that.

The first, of course, was to lift the cap on the \$3 billion because we felt, in fact, that more money should be going in there, that the \$3 billion shouldn't be treated as a ceiling but as a floor. We were trying to get the government to really commit and to fast-track that money. Unfortunately, the government couldn't support that. I hope that's not a reflection of their support for funding overall.

Mr. R. Miller: It could take them eight years at that rate.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. My colleague for Edmonton-Rutherford is noting that it could take them eight years at the rate they're going to actually get that \$3 billion in there, which is a little frightening.

But now we have attempted to convince the government to follow up with our second excellent recommendation.

Mr. R. Miller: Twelve years.

Ms Blakeman: I'm sorry. My colleague for Edmonton-Rutherford is now correcting himself and his math. That would be 12 years to reach the limit.

Concentrating on the amendment at hand, what's being suggested here is that we nail down the membership of the advisory council that is suggested in the legislation. The way the legislation stands, it's very vague about who would be on the advisory council. The way it is now, it just says that it would be established.

The Minister may, with respect to the members of the Council,

- (a) appoint [them] . . .
- (b) prescribe their terms of office, and [of course]
- (c) authorize or provide for . . . remuneration,

and the minister can designate who the chairperson is going to be. Then it goes on to talk about council responsibilities.

We felt that was very loose, and we wanted to make some concrete suggestions about who we felt should be considered for membership on the council, so we went forward. In this amendment what's being suggested is laid out very carefully, our suggestions on who we think should make up a 17-member council, including representatives from various levels of postsecondary, for example, the universities, the colleges, the nonprofit private colleges, academic staff, nonacademic staff, undergrad students, grad student representatives.

10:20

Then we go further and suggest seven members of the general public. What we were considering there were representatives representing parents, representing alumni, representing business organizations and organized labour. That isn't meant to be a hard-and-fast list. That's why we used the wording that we did, which suggests that "not more than 7 members of the general public . . . may be representative of," and then we list those four groups because we wanted, in fact, to be able to make a suggestion but not tie the minister to it.

Now, the minister has already responded to this amendment and has responded by saying that, no, the government finds this too restrictive. They deliberately wanted to leave this sort of loose until they got rolling with this advisory council and decided exactly how they wanted to get it to work. I appreciate that point of view, but I was looking for a bit more clarity from the minister. You know, I'm always interested to see where the government makes the choice to be very specific, in fact micromanage, and the other times when they just sort of take that big step back and go: "Oh, well, no. We're just going to let this flow, one with the universe." It's very interesting where they choose to do that.

I listened to the minister, and I reread his notes in *Hansard*. Not that the minister's words made me suspicious that there's anything nefarious going on here, but I sure am interested that a number of things have been nailed down in more detail, and to leave this wide open: I'm just curious about that. Let me leave it at that. Obviously, we would prefer to see things laid out and followed a bit more closely. A big part of that is accountability for us.

Now, the minister is saying that they can be accountable without that kind of detail. Yes, but the accountability gets less difficult to track. It's much more difficult for a group to say: well, we weren't consulted. That happens often with this government where they get

a good way into something, and then the group they supposedly consulted comes forward and says: "We never heard of that. Nobody ever talked to us about it." The whole thing grinds to a halt, and the government picks up sticks and goes back and actually consults with the group as they were supposed to.

Part of what you get from an idea like we've laid out is that you know exactly who you should be consulting with up front, who's part of that committee, who should be on it, and make sure that, in fact, that's who you're working with. So I'm interested that the minister was refusing to consider that. I had hoped he'd be more open to a higher level of accountability than what he's willing to work with on this particular bill.

This is two strikes, in my opinion. We've experienced difficulty. In our opinion, there's been difficulty in the government's stepping up to the plate on the funding of this in that we had the hesitation from the minister in removing the cap, so it remains a ceiling. Then we get the budget coming out a few days later, and, in fact, only \$250 million is in the budget for this year and no other money for it. We're nowhere close to that \$3 billion that is supposed to be going into this fund and no future commitment on any of the rolling three-year business plans. So we're starting to think: "Well, how long is it going to take to get this money in there? Where is the commitment for this?"

Then we get into this off-budget money, which reminds me a bit of off-track betting. What are we supposed to make of that? We'll all hang out now and hope that the government has pegged the price of oil per barrel low enough that the money is just going to roll in. It's unbudgeted and therefore, I might add, unaccounted for. That does not bode well here, Mr. Chairman. So, again, I'm wondering about the hesitation from the government in actually following through. I mean, Mr. Chairman, this is Bill 1. This is the flagship. This is the *pièce de résistance* from the whole spring sitting, from the whole 2005 term of the Legislature, and we can't get confirmation on the money. We can't get confirmation on who's making up the council. It's all beginning to look a bit like a wish, a hope, and a dream and nothing concrete to it.

I don't know that my words will move the minister to change his mind on this, but maybe at some point in the future he can look back and say: yeah, we should do that, and we should do it quickly. I do think the way the minister has it weakens the bill, and this amendment would have strengthened it. So those are the particular points that I wanted to raise around why we're proposing this amendment and what we'd hoped to see from it.

Because I represent so many students, I was particularly glad to see the inclusion of both an undergraduate student rep and a graduate student rep. I've found over the years that I've gotten some very interesting perspectives and very practical front-line recommendations from the undergrads and the grads that live in my constituency and give me commentary on the postsecondary education system and, indeed, on the proposals from the government for that system. I'm always impressed with how thoughtful their comments are, so I certainly would have included a rep from both the undergraduate and the graduate students programs, and in fact I was glad to see that the Member for Calgary-Currie did include those two sectors in his amendment.

So thanks for the opportunity to speak in support of this amendment, Mr. Chairman, and I urge all members of the Assembly to vote in support of amendment A2. Thank you.

The Chair: Any one else wish to rise on amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This amendment deals

with staffing of the authority that will be set up to oversee the access to the future fund. The bill provides for this to be done by ministerial appointment, and I have to agree with my colleague from Edmonton-Centre: it seems very vague. Our proposed amendment does not take away the ultimate authority of the minister but commits him to appoint nominees made by the postsecondary institutions themselves.

This delegation of the power to appoint is similar to our province's appeal to the Prime Minister to appoint Alberta Senators from a list of names nominated on-site, not from co-opting of the federal government's friends and supporters. But there is another reason, more than simply a geographic decentralization of authority.

Education has long been recognized as an expression of our culture and collective values that encompass us all. Educational standards, curriculum, and staffing should therefore rest on a broader base of support than simply that of the party in power. At the local level we recognized this in the past by setting up the school districts and boards separate from municipal district, city, town, and county councils. These boards enjoyed a measure of autonomy under the ministry. Now, while this government has curtailed the powers of school boards, the principle is still valid, and the structures remain in place.

I urge the government to recognize the validity of this principle in the structure it is setting up to oversee investment in postsecondary education by allowing an amendment to pass that provides nonpartisan local and regional input into the appointment process.

I have spoken appreciatively in the past of the hon. William Aberhart, who as both Premier and minister of education laid the basis of the standard of educational excellence that we in Alberta now enjoy. But there's another side of the Aberhart legacy that's less admirable. When the University of Alberta, bowing to pressure from faculty, reneged on an honorary doctorate it planned to award the Premier, Mr. Aberhart broke up and reorganized its governing structure. The U of A's tricameral system of senate, board of governors, and faculty council goes back to that act of political intervention.

10:30

I urge this government to rise above the temptation to make higher education and its administration a political football by including in the appointment process other stakeholders than the government itself. I urge all members to support this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. On this particular amendment one of the things that we have suggested that we should have done before we get into all this – and I think it did put some focus on it. I mentioned before that I had some thoughts that it was a waste of time, but it was the Learning Commission. It superseded what I thought it would do, at least put a focus in terms of things that should be happening in public education. We've said that we should have had the Learning Commission do the same thing in Advanced Ed to show where we're going. Obviously, they're not going to do that, at least at this time.

If that's the case, then, what we need is this council of people that is supposed to oversee what's happening in terms of advanced education and, hopefully, be giving the government some guidelines of what's important and what's not important, where we should be going. It should not be people that are appointed by the government, because they're going to think the same way as the government. They're not going to question anything the government says, and they're going to be sort of yes-people to the minister. Now, I don't

think that's even good for the minister ultimately because a lot of mistakes are made that way. Maybe some good Conservatives make a few extra dollars, Mr. Chairman, but I'm not sure it's the way to go in terms of setting policy for advanced education.

Looking at the amendment that the hon. member has brought in, it seems to me that this is an attempt, if we're not having a Learning Commission, to at least have some independent people that will give the government advice about where, if you like, advanced education goes. Mr. Chairman, I think it's important that this be as nonpartisan as it can. It should be broad, not just people that are hand-picked by the minister because I don't think that leads to very good policy development down the way. It's the great unwashed talking to the great unwashed.

As I see it, this is an attempt to make this a more independent, a more vital, and a much more meaningful council than it would otherwise be. For those reasons, I certainly would support this amendment to Bill 1. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be brief, but I did want to get on the record as supporting this amendment because I think it's very, very important that the government be at arm's length from any advisory council; too much government power and too little autonomy for the universities and the colleges, who, in fact, must establish their own culture and their own way of giving education.

I'm wondering, too, about letting the minister control the funding, sending to the institutions. What about private funds, and what about people who might want to give private donations? Going through a government agency is not how I think it should be done.

The chair of this committee that should be the 17 people should actually be chosen from within, voted amongst themselves. I think the most important thing is that the universities and the colleges absolutely have to have autonomy, and by having that autonomy, they also would respect the collective agreements that they have in place at the moment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm sure that members on both sides of the House are getting eager to vote on this particular amendment, so I, too, shall be brief. I want to thank my colleagues who have spoken in support of this amendment. I think they get it.

I want to note that the hon. Minister of Advanced Education spoke favourably, I guess, to the principle of what we're trying to accomplish with this amendment but suggested that the members of this House should vote against this amendment because he didn't feel that by prescribing who should sit on the advisory council, how it should be comprised, how it should be composed, it was flexible enough. I beg to differ with the minister. I think there is flexibility built in here in a number of different ways.

We've required, requested that up to seven members of the general public but not more than seven members of the general public sit on that advisory council. We've suggested, only suggested, that for the good reasons that I spoke to a week ago, it might be advisable for the minister to choose representatives of parents, alumni, business organizations, or organized labour, suggested that all four of those groups of stakeholders had a place at the table should he desire to offer them one, but I did not require that he choose from each or any or all of those groups.

He spoke at some length last week about using the Justice Policy Advisory Committee from when he was Justice minister as sort of the template for setting this up and suggested that one of the great

things about that was that as they were sitting around the table, they were able to say, "Aha, we need someone who is representative of persons with disabilities sitting at the table, and we need somebody from the education sector," that sort of thing. He suggested, you know, that if this is an endowment fund, you might want to have somebody with endowment experience on here.

Well, I would submit that all of that is possible. That flexibility is there right in subsection (viii), you know, the one that says, "Not more than 7 members of the general public who may be representative of parents, alumni, business organizations or organized labour," or, Mr. Chair, other groups. Plain and simple. There's flexibility in here in that although we have to a degree prescribed who should sit on the council or what organizations, what stakeholder groups they should represent, we've made it very, very clear that those groups would submit nominees and the final decision as to which of the nominees to choose would be the minister's. We said further that the chair of the council should be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council rather than just the minister himself because that brings a little more transparency and accountability to the process.

I have to acknowledge my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, who mentioned that she found it interesting that this government at times can be so micromanaging of organizations, yet at other times, which, you know, I took from her remarks meant at other times when it suited the government, the government can be very loosey goosey about all these things: "No, no, don't pin us down here. We want flexibility. Don't tell us how to do our job. We need that flexibility, but we're perfectly prepared to tell you how to do your job, right down to the dotting of the i's and the crossing of the t's." I think, Mr. Chairman, that what's good for the goose is good for the gander. Plain and simple.

When I introduce my next amendment, I'll be following up on that theme. What we need is some accountability. What we need is some autonomy. What we need is some arm's length here. What we need is a broadly based – this is an important concept, this advisory council charged with making good decisions about how the income produced by the access to the future fund should be invested in order to achieve excellence. I know. I know. To start it's only \$11 million worth of excellence, but, hey, it's a drop or two in the bucket anyway.

10:40

So this is important. Getting the composition of this board, this council right is important. Allowing this board to have the independence and the autonomy to make good decisions, objective decisions in favour of long-term excellence in public postsecondary education is vital. That is why, Mr. Chairman, I would urge that everyone in this House vote to support this amendment.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Oh, well, we'll try again. I have here my third amendment, 90 copies thereof.

The Chair: We'll call that amendment A3.

Mr. Taylor: Are you ready for me to speak to it now? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We will call this amendment A3, I believe the chair said. This amendment says that we move that Bill 1, the Access to the Future

Act, be amended in section 4 by adding the following after subsection (8). This would be: “(8.1) In the Ministry’s annual report, the Minister shall report on each grant from the Fund, including its objective, total value and the amount allocated to each recipient.”

Mr. Chairman, this is a reporting requirement. If this amendment passes, it won’t be the only reporting requirement in the bill. There is already one. The minister is specifically required by section 2(3) to report on access and affordability. “The Minister shall report on the progress in enhancing access and ensuring the affordability of advanced education in the Ministry’s annual report.” We simply believe on this side of the House that he should be similarly required to report on each grant. Again, we are talking here about accountability. Again, we are talking about, I guess, a quid pro quo of a sort: what’s good for the goose is good for the gander. Again, we are suggesting simply that if this government or this minister or this ministry seeks to require the institutions and organizations under its management to be accountable to it, it in turn should be accountable to this House and to the people of Alberta, many of whom pay a good chunk of the bill for their sons and daughters to be educated in our postsecondary institutions: our colleges, our universities, and our technical institutes.

So that’s what this is about. It specifically requires that the minister report on each grant in that fiscal year, I guess, in the annual report. Accountability requires that each grant from the fund be reported on by the minister in his annual report. This fund has been established for specific purposes. Therefore, it’s important to specify that accountability mechanisms are in place to support those particular purposes. It simply asks the minister to do the following: to tell this House in his annual report about each grant from the fund, who got what, to what end, for what objective, for what purpose, how much that particular grant was worth, the amount allocated to each recipient. Although I would hope that the minister in the course of his annual report would address this, there’s not even a specific requirement here that the minister tell this House whether the grant achieved the goal or not. But we do need to see, the people of Alberta need to see the value of the grant, the purpose of the grant, the recipients of the grant so that they can judge for themselves whether that was a wise use of the money.

The minister has made the point frequently – and I fully support him on this – that one of the purposes of the access to the future fund is to foster excellence in postsecondary education. It also addresses accessibility and affordability, of course, but excellence is the other key component here. Whether it’s \$250 million, which is all that we’re committed to so far – and I’m thinking back to my failed attempt . . .

Ms Blakeman: Noble.

Mr. Taylor: My noble but failed attempt, yes, to remove the ceiling, the cap on the fund. It seems so pointless now in light of the budget because that ceiling is so high that it makes this ceiling look like an eight-footer in this Chamber, Mr. Chairman.

In any event, whether it’s \$250 million or \$3 billion or \$30 billion or whatever this could grow to if the minister would do it right, it needs to be accountable. It needs to be accounted for by the minister because that’s the only way of ensuring that this money, the income that this endowment fund produces, actually goes to fostering excellence and not just fostering convenience, something that happens to be trendy in a particular year, some sort of applied knowledge for which there may be so many other sources of funding, and so on and so forth.

So that is why I have moved this amendment A3. I’m sure that many members of the House would like to debate this before it comes up to a vote. At this point, then, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Renner: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 1.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Acting Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly now stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 10:49 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 20, 2005** 1:30 p.m.
Date: 05/04/20
[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. In our mind's eye let us see the awesome grandeur of the Rockies, the denseness of our forests, the fertility of our farmland, the splendour of our rivers, the richness of our resources, the energy of our people. Then let us rededicate ourselves as wise stewards of such bounty on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly today His Excellency Ernesto Darias. He's the ambassador of the Republic of Cuba. His Excellency is accompanied by Ms Mary Carmen Arencibia. She's a commercial counsellor. He's accompanied also by Mr. Antonio Castañón, economic counsellor. It was our pleasure to host them for a luncheon, their ambassador's first visit to Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has close to \$51 million annually in exports to Cuba, primarily sulphur, wheat, peas, and machinery. Alberta companies are active in Cuba, including Sherritt International, which is now the largest foreign oil producer in Cuba. Alberta's postsecondary institutions, like NAIT, are equally active in numerous partnerships and projects in Cuba.

I'd ask our honoured guests, if they are there, if we'd give them our warm traditional welcome.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that lunch with the Premier has become somewhat of a popular auction item. That's proof, no doubt, of the quality of the lunches, sandwiches, and not necessarily of my conversational skills. Today I had the pleasure of dining and visiting with the successful bidders of this item at the Denim and Diamonds dinner and auction event. This incredible event raised more than \$121,000 for juvenile diabetes.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature my guests today: Len Kerekanich, president of Rotating Right Inc. – Rotating Right – Tyrel Kerekanich; Donna Micklos; and Barbara Armstrong, senior manager of resource and program development for juvenile diabetes in Edmonton. I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, it's always a pleasure for MLAs to introduce school groups to the Legislature. The group I introduce today is a school group from Veteran school in my constituency. Veteran is a beautiful little community in east-central Alberta and has a wonderful school. Today these students are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Letniak, by parent helpers Dawn Resch, Chris Eamer, Karen Nelson, and Darrel Durksen. I would ask that all members give this group a very, very warm welcome to our Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me as well to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members here 63 of the absolutely most bright and beautiful young students that Edmonton-Mill Creek has to offer. They are here visiting us from Blessed Kateri school. They are joined by some parents and teachers; namely, Robert Burghardt, Cathy Kahanyshyn, Eva Perri, who's a teacher assistant, Miss Diane Nguyen, who's a student teacher, and Francine Verbonac, Elaine More, and Melinda Giebelhaus. I would ask all of them to please rise and accept the very, very best wishes from all members here.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Elaine Ho, provincial director for the Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council, ACTISEC, and Brett Bergie, outgoing provincial director of ACTISEC, and Duncan Wojtaszek, the executive director of the Council of Alberta University Students.

Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council represents 100,000 college and technical institute students, and the Council of Alberta University Students represents 80,000 university students across Alberta. They're seated in the public gallery. They're here, no doubt, to hear more about the wonderful things that are happening in postsecondary education in our province. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a constituent of mine, Jim Quinn. Now, Jim Quinn is president of Quinn Construction, and today he's hosting a delegation from Cuba, the CUPET organization, who have come to our great province to explore opportunities in the oil and gas industry. Their visit to Alberta is focused on preventative maintenance training, turnaround management, foreign worker exchanges, specialized and advanced training, technical training at postsecondary institutions, quality control, and technology upgrading. The delegation is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them each to rise as I call out their names: Jim Quinn, president, Quinn Construction, Paulette Hanson, Mike Pitre, Steve Boomer, Ernie Groom, Ralph Farrell. The members of the Cuban delegation are Abilio Gutierrez, Janvier Dieguez, Sochi Cabarcos, Jorge Aristides, Mirian Acosta, and Antonio Machado. I would now ask the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly eight very special guests from the Dr. Turner lodge in Fort Saskatchewan. They're accompanied today by group leader Darlene Thorne. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly

32 bright, energetic students from the Centennial school in Wetaskiwin. These student visitors are accompanied by five adult leaders, including principal David Luck, teacher William Black, counsellor Eva Rasmussen, student teacher Rhonda Harbert, and parent Mrs. Cathy Robinson. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly another arts company from Edmonton travelling to Ottawa soon to showcase us at Alberta Scene. Concrete Theatre is working in the community using theatre to promote cultural diversity and explore social issues. They're taking a production of *The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito* to showcase us. This is written by Tomson Highway and targeted to children in preschool to grade 6. I've seen it. It's a very charming little musical cabaret in English with French and Cree. I'd like to introduce the company, please, and if you would stand as I call your name: Julie Golosky is the performer and a wonderful opera singer; Ryan Sigurdson is her accompanist for this performance; Mieko Ouchi, a very well-known filmmaker and director of this production; Gina Puntill, a famous stage manager; and Marian Brant, an old friend and general manger of Concrete Theatre. Please join me in sending them off to Ottawa. Thank you.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to have the opportunity today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a special guest who is seated in your gallery. Her name is Sandra Sayer, and she is here not only to watch the proceedings this afternoon but to pay particular attention to her son Mikkell, who is a page in the Assembly. I know she is very proud of him. Mikkell is a grade 11 student at Concordia high school, and I'm sure he won't disappoint her this afternoon. So I would ask Sandra to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Steve Bradshaw. Steve is currently the financial secretary and assistant business agent for the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 569, which is my old local, representing workers at Edmonton Transit. He's also an executive member of the Edmonton-Mill Woods NDP constituency. I would ask that Steve rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions to make today. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Frances Organ. Even at the age of 85 Frances continues to take classes in a variety of areas, epitomizing the idea of lifelong learning. Her long history of volunteerism in our community is remarkable and is greatly appreciated by all of those who she assists.

It also gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Sheila MacKay. Sheila is very involved in the society of Capital Care Norwood auxillary and volunteers two or three days a week helping to make patients feel more comfortable. Sheila has served two terms as secretary of the Alberta Health Care Auxiliaries Association, among other endeavours that she pursues. I would ask Sheila and Frances both to now rise and receive the very warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this Assembly Jeffrey Laventure-Johnston. Jeffrey is young, 25-years-old, and works as a buyer at Home Depot. He currently is also a caregiver for his brother who is an AISH recipient in Alberta. He is here today, I think accompanied by his brother, and they're both in the public gallery. I'll ask Jeffrey to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After weeks of pressure from stakeholders and investors and the Liberal opposition the Minister of Finance has handed off the Alberta Securities Commission file to the Auditor General. My questions are to the Minister of Finance: given that the Minister of Finance has told this Assembly that the report she received from part-time ASC commissioners indicated that there were no enforcement breaches at the commission, has the minister received new information that has caused her to change her mind?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased at the appropriate time to table the letter to the Auditor General in its entirety, but I would like to make sure that the Assembly understands that the Auditor General, as a normal course of his function, had proposed an audit on the Securities Commission. That was talked about in January.

Mr. Speaker, I have said this in the letter, and I think it's self-explanatory.

There have been questions raised regarding the Alberta Securities Commission's enforcement processes. The independent members of the Alberta Securities Commission have provided their assurance that enforcement policies administered [under] the Alberta Securities Commission have been, are, and continue to be applied consistently, fairly, and within an even hand. Nevertheless, given the critical role Alberta Securities Commission plays in capital markets, it is my hope that your review will be complete and timely. I hope that this report can be completed as quickly as possible, with a separate report by you made available to the Legislature and through the Legislature to all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given consistent allegations of enforcement breaches at the Securities Commission, will the Auditor General have the authority to investigate any unenforced complaints he discovers?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, one thing I neglected to say was that this letter was dated April 13, a week ago today.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has all of the authority that he requires to do a complete investigation, and if the hon. member was listening, he would have heard me say, "It is my hope that your review will be complete and timely."

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: will the Auditor General's investigation allow for any and all current and former employees of the Alberta Securities Commission who want to come forward to come forward with a guarantee of legal protection so they don't feel gagged by threats from their employer?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that it's appropriate that I be questioned as to the abilities of the Auditor General. That question is more properly put to him. What I have said and I will reiterate one more time is that I have asked him to ensure that his report is complete and timely, so obviously there will be absolutely no restrictions suggested, which would be entirely inappropriate to do anyway, by this minister.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Electricity Marketing

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's electricity consumers deserve straight answers from this government when it comes to electricity deregulation. They were forced to pay sky-high prices, but this government's explanations have left them in the dark. On Monday the Minister of Energy was decidedly evasive in response to my question, so I will try again. To the Minister of Energy: will this minister categorically deny that TransAlta electricity traders were involved in any manipulation of Alberta's electricity market?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we continue to be very clear that the market surveillance administrator is very active in protecting Alberta's interest to ensure that the system does work. At this stage there has been no evidence. Clearly, there's some old information that continues to come forward. It's old information. Much of it has been investigated in the past. The things with respect to TransAlta were actually not part of what happened in Alberta. It was part of what happened in Washington state.

Dr. Taft: The same pattern continues.

Again to the same minister, a repeat of a question from two days ago: will the minister tell this Assembly if the Alberta electric system operator investigation into potential market manipulation reported in September 2003, which the minister knows about, was referring to TransAlta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member is aware of when the question was previously asked, he'll also be aware of when the answer was previously given.

Dr. Taft: Again to the same minister: is it this government's position that there was no price manipulation of Alberta's electricity market?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, at this stage of all investigations there has been no evidence to suggest manipulation in that context.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

1:50 Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On July 19, 2001, Bill Williams III, one of the managers of Enron's trading operation, sent an e-mail stating, "We will be taking over the Dispatch of Enron Canada Corp.'s Sundance 3 and 4 Units for the evenings of July 19 – July 22." My first question is also to the Minister of Energy. How often did Enron's greedy American traders take control over electricity generation here in Alberta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, information with respect to Enron back in 1999 in particular has been investigated. There is some more information that has come forward at the insistence of the market surveillance administrator. That information has been forwarded to the federal Competition Bureau as to future dates.

No one takes lightly the fact that people might be acting improperly with respect to our electricity system. In that respect, evidence has still not been found at this stage to prove that there has been any wrongdoing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: why did this weak and ineffective government allow Enron's west desk, trading desk, in Portland, Oregon, to take over the dispatch of over 700 megawatts of electricity from Sundance power plants here in Alberta and sell it somewhere else?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'm not specifically aware of the time that he references. We'd be happy to look into the details. I don't have the specifics in front of me, so it's kind of hard to answer that detailed a question relating to some two to three years ago.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the same minister: given that this greedy takeover of Alberta generation by Enron occurred outside the time frame currently being investigated by the Competition Bureau, will the minister finally do the right thing and launch a full, independent public inquiry and find out once and for all how often and for how much the public in Alberta has been ripped off by this electricity generation scheme?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it's convenient to continue to bring forward suppositions, allegations, and so forth and try and put in preambles that undermine the integrity and confidence in the system, but I'm here to say that the market surveillance administrator is a very effective watchdog, with the professional competence to actually watch and monitor, and does an excellent job on behalf of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Automobile Insurance Rates

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before the last election the Premier promised Albertans auto insurance rates equal to those in other western provinces. He has yet to deliver, and yesterday's announcement of a 6 per cent cut fails to address the 12.7 per cent overcharging identified in an insurance board study two months ago. My question is to the Premier. Why has the Premier broken his promise to Albertans that he would reduce rates

to the level paid in other western provinces which have public auto insurance systems?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I understand the views of the hon. leader of the ND Party, who wants us to socialize everything, including the insurance industry. With respect to his preamble it's simply not true what he says. The intentions of this government were then and still are very good. They are intentions that I think that the hon. leader of the ND opposition would agree with, and that is that good young drivers should not be punished simply because they are young, good older drivers ought not to be punished simply because they are old, and good drivers generally in the age brackets in between ought not to be punished because they are good drivers. The insurance regulations clearly achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the chat, the chitter, the unwanted chit-chat from across the way, I can tell you that relative to my own insurance it is comparable, very comparable to that paid in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, not all Albertans have chauffeurs.

Will the Premier tell this House why, when the insurance rate board said in February that Albertans are being overcharged by 12.7 per cent, the government is only rolling back rates by 6 per cent?

Mr. Klein: First of all, Mr. Speaker, every Premier that I know has a driver, not a chauffeur, who acts also as security, but not every Premier drives a '77 Volkswagen. Right? Or a – I forget. It's one of those . . .

Mrs. McClellan: PT Cruiser.

Mr. Klein: PT Cruiser. Right.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the cars that I drive, you know, as opposed to what he drives.

Mr. Mason: Oh, Mr. Speaker, he got me there. Oh, yes.

Now, if we can get back to the subject at hand, Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier think that being gouged only half as much as people were previously being gouged is good enough?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, relative to the crux and the core of the hon. member's question, I'll have the Minister of Finance respond.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly, the hon. member has not followed the discussion that the Automobile Insurance Rate Board has had, nor does he fully understand the impact of the reforms in this province to date. First of all, there was a freezing, if you wish, a reduction of rates. Secondly, on the direct question on why, when the Automobile Insurance Rate Board stated that it was 12 per cent and they were only recommending 6, this is an interim reduction.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I did clearly outline that there will be a review. That was anticipated and planned. That will begin shortly. We will hear all of the terms of that review. This fall the final number will be made apparent. It may be 12, it may be 13, or it may be 10, but that will be determined. So, really, the drivers in this province are getting a reduction six months earlier than was anticipated in the reform, and the ones I talked to are very, very pleased.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Infrastructure Spending

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance described this current budget as one of investment for the future, and the minister of infrastructure has announced that additional money will go to schools. On behalf of the president of the Warner hockey school, Sandra Nelson – and, I might add, a long-time Conservative – will the ministers of Education, Gaming, infrastructure, Community Development, and perhaps even rural development meet with her and help her to make a centennial legacy for this province by providing the additional infrastructure funding needed to complete the Warner hockey school for girls? Perhaps Sandra's buddy MLA, the minister of infrastructure, could respond.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd be more than happy to respond to that. I have met with the person that he mentioned on two occasions. I had the opportunity to drive in a car from Raymond, Alberta, where we made a wonderful announcement about a new school in Raymond. I had the opportunity to drive from Raymond to Taber with this individual, and she put forward an excellent case about the Warner hockey school, about what they were doing with kids in Warner. Indeed, my next-door neighbour actually goes to the Warner hockey school. So to say that we know nothing about it I think would be very much an exaggeration. We know a lot about it. We're working very closely with the people of Warner.

Mr. Hinman: I certainly didn't say that you didn't know anything about it.

To the Minister of Finance: on behalf of the mayor of Milk River, Terry Michaelis, will the minister help the town to reduce its debt and interest rate with the Alberta Capital Finance Authority from the current 11.6 per cent to a lower rate?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly the borrowing from Alberta Capital Finance Authority is done under a set of terms and rules and conditions that all who borrow under it understand. It's a well-known fact that there is an advantage to borrowing under that financing arrangement. It's consistent, not subject to change. But I think that if the particular organization in question has some concerns in that area, they should most properly address them directly to Alberta Capital Finance Authority.

2:00

Mr. Hinman: They've tried. That's why they're asking for help.

To the Minister of Children's Services: will the minister commit to recognizing and providing core funding for the Taber Safe Haven women's shelter?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, we have, Mr. Speaker. I know the hon. member had a lengthy conversation with one of the members of my staff, and she explained to him about the funding that they're currently receiving. If my memory serves me well, they also received another \$10,000 under this budget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Access to the Future Fund

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is in an enviable position with respect to our economic activity, capital investment,

and subsequent revenue accruing to the province. A 20-year strategic plan has been developed, one of the pillars of which is leading in learning. My question to the Minister of Finance: with postsecondary education being a cornerstone of this province's future, how will the program be funded if the heritage fund for advanced education is to receive only \$250 million in the three years '05-06 through '07-08?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, first, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind all hon. members that advanced education received a 13.4 per cent increase, or \$196 million, in addition to the first instalment of the access to the future fund. I want to make it very clear that there is a clear commitment of this government to a \$3 billion access fund for advanced education. A clear commitment. We have made it very clear that the \$250 million identified in this budget was an initial investment and that future surpluses could be allocated to a number of things, one of them being the endowment funds. It will be built when we have the dollars.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. In the same time frame, '05-06 through to the end of '07-08, reallocations from the sustainability fund do not indicate any additional transfers to the scholarship fund or the science and engineering research fund. What plan is in place to address shortfalls in these areas?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, as was indicated in our budget speech of last week, we anticipate a \$1.5 billion surplus this year. There is an anticipation of somewhat of a surplus in year 2 and year 3 of this three-year business plan. It is very clear that those dollars will be allocated to the capital account to deal with infrastructure pressures that are beyond the \$9.2 billion capital plan that we have in place, that we will continue to fund the heritage fund to inflation-proof it, and that we have invested \$500 million to the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research endowment. With the \$250 million for the access fund in this year, it is very possible that there can be a significant contribution to that in this three-year business plan.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Horse-racing Industry

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this Legislature the Minister of Gaming went to great lengths to describe how the for-profit horse-racing industry, quote, earns, unquote, \$45 million in lottery revenue. A plumber earns his money. A carpenter earns his money. An opposition MLA earns his money. My questions are for the Minister of Gaming. Given that the gambling machines at Alberta's racetracks are owned and operated by the province of Alberta, what exactly does the horse-racing industry do to "earn" its \$45 million?

Mr. Graydon: Well, the Minister of Gaming is going to earn his money this afternoon.

I guess that a short answer would be that the machines are located at racetracks. The racing industry provides the entertainment, as far as racing is concerned, which invites people to those racetracks, and when they're there, hopefully they also spend a little bit of time

being entertained on the slot machines, a portion of which revenue goes to the racing association. Part of that revenue, obviously, goes to the Alberta lottery fund. They bring the guests in, and we entertain them.

Mr. Tougas: Well, if the government takes 33 and a third per cent of the money from gambling machines at racetracks, as the minister said last week, where does the other 66.6 per cent go?

Mr. Graydon: Well, obviously, part of that is what goes to Horse Racing Alberta. Another part of that goes to the facility operator, which is either Northlands, Stampede Park, Evergreen Park in Grande Prairie, and Whoop-Up Downs, I believe it's called, in Lethbridge. That's where the other portion of the money goes.

Mr. Tougas: Well, why does horse racing, which is a private, for-profit industry, get a 66.6 per cent cut of the profits from gambling machines at racetracks while charities at Alberta casinos get just 15 per cent?

Mr. Graydon: Well, we have to look at who builds the facility, Mr. Speaker. In the case of the racetracks the facilities are owned by Northlands or Stampede Park, as two examples. The other casinos in the province where charities get a lesser percentage, those facilities which cost multimillion dollars to provide and build, the nice new ones that we have, are owned by companies and not by the racetracks, or they're privately owned.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Project Kare

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The body of another woman was recently discovered in a remote area near Camrose, Alberta. Police have identified her as having led a high-risk lifestyle. This victim is added to a list of a dozen other women who died violently in our province over the last several years. The killer or killers are still out there. The latest discovery has created even more fear and concern among families and friends of women who also find themselves in similar dangerous lifestyles. To the Solicitor General: what are the police doing to identify and capture the person or persons responsible for these reprehensible crimes?

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This, of course, is a very tragic situation that has occurred, the abduction and senseless murder of another young Albertan. The RCMP have assembled a team of skilled investigators and analysts, 43, that are working on the case every day and have been for the last few years. Through the government of Alberta we are employing four Edmonton Police Service investigators that are also assisting on this case.

Mr. Speaker, last year the province and the Solicitor General's office provided \$2.9 million to provide funding to Project Kare, and in this budget last week that amount has increased to \$3.7 million, an additional \$800,000, to provide the financial support for these investigations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first and last supplemental: what is the province doing to assist the police as they are conducting their investigations?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, the person or persons responsible obviously have been preying on the most vulnerable in our society, and this is one of the issues, again, that we have to be looking at. The government, as I mentioned, is providing full support to the RCMP, full support to the Edmonton Police Service, as we do look at 41 homicides throughout this province, not just in the capital region but homicides going back to the 1930s. Obviously, the Project Kare team was developed in the last few years with regard to those serious murders in the capital region. We continue to monitor as well as assist the RCMP in whatever way we can, but we're also asking the public's support regarding any information they know and asking them to call Crime Stoppers at 222-TIPS.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

2:10 Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Current oil field development on disputed Crown lands in northern Alberta illustrates the lack of direct input Albertans have in ensuring long-term sustainability in the province's natural areas and economic potential. My question to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: before a surface disposition licence was issued to companies involved in oil and gas development at Sawn Lake, did the minister think it necessary to initiate an environmental impact assessment or bother consulting with affected communities?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with the exact incident that the hon. member has brought forward, but I'll certainly look into it. It sounds to me that it might be something the EUB might be having approval of, and maybe the hon. Minister of Energy might be able to supplement.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, what, if any, public consultations are completed before a licence is given to clear an area the size of half a township?

Mr. Coutts: Again, Mr. Speaker, I believe that when it comes to clearing sites, that's part of the application process to the EUB.

Mr. Bonko: To the same minister: does the minister consider the shoot first and ask questions later approach to be a responsible, sustainable practice in developing long-term integrated land management policy?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, there are processes in this province that have proven themselves for almost 60 years on how approvals are given for development in oil and gas and certainly in forestry, and those processes are followed. I will certainly take this question under advisement and get the details.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Courthouse Security

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Judges in Alberta have expressed concerns about the safety and security in courtrooms and buildings that they are employed in. In light of the fact that in 2004 there was an attempt to take a weapon from a guard in a courtroom and other incidents around Alberta, I have a question for the Solicitor General. That question is: what is the government doing to

ensure safety in Alberta courtrooms, not just for judges but for prosecutors and members of the public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We take the matter of courthouse security very, very seriously. We're well aware that judges, Crown prosecutors, defence counsel, provincial witnesses as well as the members of the public have to be protected within our public court systems. In this last budget we allocated \$6 million to provide security to the perimeter of our courts, but as well we're looking at in the future video conferencing throughout the province from our corrections facilities, working in conjunction with the Attorney General regarding video conferencing from a remand centre to the courthouse. So that's another project that we're working on this year.

Mr. Johnston: My only supplementary question is: can the minister tell the House if this increased security plan means checking individuals entering courtrooms or buying special equipment?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, this year we're providing additional funding to our provincial protection officers that do work in the courts. We're going to be hiring an additional 45 officers this year to redeploy 30 RCMP officers out of the courts and back to front-line duties. As well, this may create the fact that, yes, individuals going into the courts may be checked and security screened through a scanner and/or a metal detection device just to ensure the safety of the courts and ensure the safety of the public, the judges, the Crown prosecutors, and defence counsel within those courts. Each case that is held in court can vary from the degree of a high-risk case to those of normal proceedings, but again some of those high-risk cases do need that additional security.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

(continued)

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The future of a major heavy oil development near land reserved for the Lubicon Lake First Nation is very much up in the air, with the former partner in the consortium trying to block the project from going forward. The Minister of Energy has acknowledged in this House that the project has not received the necessary regulatory approvals. None of this, though, has stopped this oil company from moving in and inflicting major environmental damage on the site. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Why does the government allow Alberta's natural environment to be destroyed by energy companies like Deep Well Oil & Gas when their projects haven't even reached the first base in the regulatory approval process?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that for the benefit of all members of the House – this question has been asked before and addressed by not only myself but the Minister of Energy – I would like to say that the mineral rights, in fact, were applied for to the Ministry of Energy and through the EUB. In fact, they went through that process to receive their permission pertaining to mineral rights. So this House was not aware of that fact in previous questions, and I want to share that with the House and with the hon. member today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. To the same minister: why does the minister, who's otherwise meant to be protecting Alberta's environment, refuse to change the rules so that oil and gas companies can no longer clear trees, impact water bodies, and alter ecosystems until after their projects have been secured through all the necessary regulatory approvals.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say also that I would add that in terms of surface rights they also actually go through the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development, which I understand has also been taking place, that the members of this Assembly would not be aware of. But I can assure this House and all Albertans that the regulations regarding the protection of our environment will continue.

I also want to share that today, of course, 700 Albertans from across all corners of our province are here at the first environmental conference of its kind in Alberta, right here in Edmonton, and I'm very pleased to say that, you know, in the final analysis our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet and this Earth that we live on. We all breathe the same air, drink the same water, and as we go forth, I believe without any political stripe that the environment is something that crosses over all of the boundaries of the politics that are here in this House.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, why doesn't the minister step out of his message box once in a while and instead endeavour to change the rules so that oil and gas companies are required to have all necessary approvals before they can clear the trees, build roads, and permanently alter ecosystems?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and all members of this Assembly and Albertans that are watching that before any work is done, the rules of environmental protection are followed, will be followed. If there is any breach of that, I'd encourage the hon. member to bring it forward, and we will take quick and swift action pertaining to anything that is going on that is not following Alberta regulation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mental Health Strategy

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently the Mental Health Act includes provisions for mandatory treatment only after a person is proven to be a danger to themselves or others; in other words, a danger model. B.C., Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba have legislated a treatment model that provides people with serious mental disorders community-based treatment and supervision. Studies have shown that these programs reduce hospitalization, increase compliance, decrease victimization of the mentally ill, and decrease violence against members of the public. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will the government update the Mental Health Act to move from a danger model to a treatment model for the treatment of mentally ill Albertans?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of years there's been significant work done on the integration of mental health services at the regional level. Now, the question the hon. member asks is

worthy of consideration, and in the course of some of the innovative funding responses we get this year to things that we plan to do, we will be very inclined to working further with that. Perhaps during the Committee of Supply I can provide more detail on exactly how we see ourselves funding things. On the legislative requirement we'll take that under consideration.

Ms Blakeman: Again to the same minister: I'm wondering what the holdup is, what the delay is, considering that other provinces have already given us the model to work from.

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to reflect today on the remarks of a certain Senator, Senator Kirby, who spoke to me about, generally, the state of the nation and mental health. There's a lot of work to be done in Canada to improve mental health. There's been a stigma attached to it, and different provinces have described different solutions.

My feeling is that we're embarking on something entirely new with this integration service. We are adding to the supports for mental health. We are working with the professionals and with the training institutions relative to the capacity that we bring in the system. Legislation, although it is one tool, is not always the answer. Frequently the better tools are to work with the providers of service.

Mr. Speaker, one of the emphases that I know was part of the budget speech was on the work that we're going to do with children's mental health, integrating between ministries and also with the providers and the various authorities, and I hope we'll be able to get more answers. The hon. member is right: we're on the threshold of things that I think we can and will do better in future.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that the government has never allocated enough funding to support deinstitutionalization, will the minister under this new third way commit to the resources that we've all been waiting for for 25 years?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I think the track record of Alberta's funding for mental health has been appropriate in terms of institutionalization. I have worked in such an institution. It is not always the answer. Frequently institutionalization withdraws the member from the community and makes it much more difficult for them to integrate with the community later. So I think the most important thing is to individually tailor our response to the patient with the provider and take a look at what the most appropriate circumstance is.

Mr. Speaker, some of the supports that have been provided in individual family homes and other circumstances where trained professionals work directly with individuals have had much more success than the so-called traditional model of institutionalization. So I look forward to working on that and to expanding on this further when we talk through the Committee of Supply.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Electricity Transmission

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Alberta grows, so does the demand for electrical system services. The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board has issued a decision to approve the independent system operator's application to reinforce the Edmonton to Calgary

transmission corridor. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. In terms of these upgrades that are needed in Alberta's electrical transmission system, what significance does this particular project have?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This approval by the Energy and Utilities Board recently to build a 500 kv line between Edmonton and Calgary is very significant in the overall context of the reliability of the transmission system so that we can ensure that power can be delivered where it's needed when it's needed. We've had tremendous growth in that sector of population industry, and it's put quite a bit of strain on the existing. With the new transmission lines being built, that will add to efficiency. You will actually by greater efficiency see less line loss lead to a savings, which will actually pay for the new additions.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental is to the same minister. When is this project expected to be completed, and are there other upgrades being considered at this time?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, this project has two different phases to it. The first one just involves upgrading existing lines and facilities. That first phase is to be completed in the year 2007. The second phase includes a 330 kilometre line, which is to be completed in approximately 2009. They have the approvals at this stage to do that planning. There still has to be access questions for the specific routing of that line to be approved, and the contemplation is within 2009.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Commercial Vehicle Insurance Rates

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Finance ignored the concerns of small business owners in this province by refusing to provide them with relief on their auto insurance premiums. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Why did this minister once again ignore Joe's pool hall and other small businesses by excluding commercial vehicles from the mandatory, better-late-than-never premium reductions?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the automobile insurance reforms that were introduced in this province in October of 2004 were clearly to cover private vehicles and the compulsory portion of insurance. There was, I believe, at that time a commitment that we would review whether there should be any further inclusion in that and that we would after some experience with the initial auto reforms look at that, and I would expect that that is what would happen.

If the reference is to either the question in the House or to the release from us on the reduction, I'd like a clarification on that because I'm not sure if the hon. member is just referring to the release of the 6 per cent mandatory reduction or to the question on insurance on property, et cetera.

Mr. R. Miller: The question was about auto insurance.

I'm wondering now: will the minister expand the scope of the upcoming AIRB public hearings to include commercial vehicles?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Automobile Insurance Rate Board will very, very soon, perhaps today or tomorrow, be releasing the terms of reference for the review.

Mr. R. Miller: They announced it.

Mrs. McClellan: He tells me that they've announced it, so it was today.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's anything that would prohibit anyone from bringing forward information to that review. However, the review was very specific to deal with the reforms that we put in place in October of last year. Again, I repeat: for all of the criticism that we have heard from across the way on those reforms, they must really think they're working because they want more included in them, and I thank you for that vote of confidence.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third supplemental is to the Minister of Finance. I'm just wondering: would she please enlighten this House as to whether or not she reads her press releases before she sends them out?

Mrs. McClellan: I can answer that, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. I read everything that goes out of my office. Absolutely everything. Sometimes, though, it has a little XXXX at the top on the date, that it will either be today or tomorrow, and when I read the release, it didn't have those Xs filled in. There is nothing that goes out of my office that I do not read if I have approved it or signed it.

Electrical Permits

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, I'm a licensed tradesman, as are the members for Calgary-Foothills and Grande Prairie-Smoky, and I've had calls regarding the proposed changes to the permitting system that would allow journeyman electricians to apply for permits necessary to do electrical installation. Currently only master electricians can apply for these permits. My callers are suggesting that this change would impair the safety of Albertans as a journeyman electrician could have less experience than a master electrician. My first question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Can the minister assure these callers that this proposed change to the master electrician program will not compromise the safety of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to that question. First of all, let me assure the hon. member that nothing within our public safety division is of more paramountcy than the safety of Albertans within their homes, their workplaces, or their places of employment.

I also want to advise the member that there is, in fact, an ongoing review that has been under way since 2001 by the permit advisory group. One of the recommendations that they are considering is that journeyman electricians be allowed to take out permits for low-voltage installations only, such as single-family homes.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, Mr. Speaker, my constituents that have contacted me do not want this change.

To the same minister: why are you going down this route?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me emphasize that this is not a decision that has been reached yet. It is one that is under consider-

ation. There is, as I mentioned, an ongoing review of the Safety Codes Act and the permitting regulations. The process is designed to ensure that there is uniformity between the trades and between the policies with respect to the issuance of permits. So this particular consideration is in the context of many others, and the decision as to whether we accept those recommendations or not is yet to be made.

2:30

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: given that these proposed changes are being considered by your ministry, will there be an opportunity for further feedback not only from my constituents but other electricians around the province?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that concurrent with the review that's taking place, there was also an initiative by the Electrical Contractors Association of Alberta to review the master electrician program. In fact, they have a number of town hall meetings scheduled across the province to do just that. I would encourage the hon. member and his constituents and any Albertans, as a matter of fact, to find out when one of those town hall meetings is taking place within their community, attend that meeting, and voice their opinion and their concerns with respect to this particular issue and anything else to do with the master electrician program.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Private/Public Partnerships

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because this government prefers to conduct Albertans' public business behind its closed caucus doors under the cloak of FOIP, the restriction of information act, this people's parliament has the shortest sittings in the country. During question period opposition questions are often ignored and frequently ridiculed. Yesterday I received information that the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation had selected a single contractor for a \$300 million P3 project to build 25 schools. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Will the minister for the record either confirm or deny this latest P3 information?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I completely deny it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. To the same minister: given this government's P3 record, which includes the downsizing of the Calgary courthouse plan although the original \$300 million cost remained the same, why will this government not abandon its flawed P3 projects?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, first of all, in the member's preamble there were a lot of things that were, quite frankly, nonsense. For each and every P3 that we will do – and we will be doing more; there will be more P3s in Alberta – we'll take a specific look at the individual one. We'll be taking a look at the business case. It will be reviewed by a committee of private individuals.

Mr. Speaker, the P3s that we're going to do in Alberta are exceptional, bar none. There are no other ones that are out there at this particular time. Could there be some? Absolutely. But each and every one is going to be looked upon on its own merits and its own business case.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given this government's past flip-flops, will the minister commit to building Calgary's southeast replacement hospital in a transparent, publicly accountable, open-bid, non-P3 manner?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has been reading the newspapers again. The bottom line is absolutely. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Railway Container Terminals

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On April 15 the federal government, the province of British Columbia, and the industry confirmed their support for developing a container handling facility in Prince Rupert. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What are the implications of this new project on Alberta?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the news that came out of British Columbia, with the federal government and the British Columbia government and CN Rail working together to get the port of Rupert back in the shape that it should be, is absolutely tremendous news for Alberta. What we have now is another port where we can transport our goods.

Mr. Speaker, just for your information, as of today 38 per cent of the goods that go through the port of Vancouver are from Alberta. If there is anything – if there is anything – that shuts down the port of Vancouver, from labour unrest to any technical issues to anything at all, we're going to see that 38 per cent of our goods being an issue. By opening up the port of Prince Rupert, it enables us to have another, quicker, shorter route to our Asian markets. It's approximately 30 to 40 hours shorter from Prince Rupert to the Asian markets than it is from Vancouver.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: what are his department's plans to assist Alberta to take advantage of this new infrastructure?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're working on the rail links that we have in Alberta through our short-line railroads to link onto the rail to Prince Rupert, and that's probably the biggest thing that we can do. I will say, though, that I think the future is unlimited. If we can expand a pipeline along that same route into Prince Rupert, I think the opportunity is huge for us to export oil through that particular port.

Mr. Speaker, again, this is wonderful, wonderful news for the citizens of Alberta, and it opens us up, quite literally, to a whole new world.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental, again to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: what assistance might the minister be able to offer in developing a proposed container handling facility in the Grande Prairie region?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I was in Grande Prairie probably about four to six weeks ago, and I actually saw the site that they were looking at for this particular container facility. I like the idea. I think there's certainly a case to be made for the intermodalities of transport, and I think that we can certainly look at it. There has not been a specific business case that has been presented to us. There has not been a specific proposal that has been sent to us. However, I do believe that there is certainly opportunity there. Again, this is a wonderful site in order to group the product to ship it off to Prince Rupert and subsequently across to world markets.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six members to participate, but in the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a very special group of students from River Glen school in Red Deer-North. River Glen school is an anomaly because while it is located in the heart of the city of Red Deer, the majority of its students are from rural Alberta. These are well-rounded students who make us very proud. They're always enthusiastic and cheerful whenever I'm fortunate enough to visit their school. There are 44 very bright and energetic students seated in the members' gallery. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Bob Irwin, Miss Tracy Dreher, and Mr. James Stork, along with two parents, Mrs. Christine Richardson and Mrs. Leora Clutton. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 26 guests from my constituency. They are 20 students from the Meadowbrook school, five parents, and their teacher. I wanted to tell you that they're here for the School at the Legislature. They won the right to be here through an Access TV competition, and I'm very proud of them. I had the opportunity to visit with them last fall in their classroom. They asked brilliant questions, kept me on the hot seat for over an hour. I'd like to introduce them now, please. The parents are Kim Clark, Gary Wilde, Robert Wellspring, Debbie LeVesconte, and Leanne Simon, and the teacher is Mr. Robert Hodgins. I'd ask all of them and the 20 brilliant students to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on that point just raised by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, I really encourage you, when you're out talking to schools, to encourage them to look at the School at the Legislature program. Although it's located in Edmonton and it's very difficult for schools outside of Edmonton to do it, it is possible. That's the one message in terms of that, and I appreciate that because it's a tremendous learning experience for citizens throughout the whole province of Alberta.

head: 2:40 **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

National Soil Conservation Week

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise today in recognition of National Soil Conservation Week, which is April 17 to 23.

With the federal government's directionless Kyoto implementation plan being recently introduced to the public and few details available, it looks like the feds will let the eastern industries develop their own standards and force unrealistic standards upon the industries which are primarily located in the west.

Here in the prairies conservation, particularly soil conservation, is something that is practised not because it's what Ottawa wants but because it's the right thing to do. Farmers and ranchers are the original stewards of the land, and they pass on their knowledge and respect for the land to the next generation of farmers and ranchers, which is primarily their children. Alberta producers have been leaders in soil conservation and are continually improving their practices by developing the science and technology needed to ensure that our soils are able to continue producing the highest quality crops across the entire globe.

Through the environmentally sustainable agriculture soil quality benchmark program Alberta Agriculture staff work with producers to monitor and assess the quality of Alberta's soil to keep a strong commitment to one of Alberta's most precious natural resources. Producers benefit by using direct seeding and other management practices to improve water infiltration, increase seedbed moisture, enhance organic matter, and reduce the risk of soil erosion.

I would like to thank all the producers past and present for their work in sustaining and enhancing Alberta's soil. Let us leave the land in better shape than when we started.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

National Volunteer Week

Mr. Strang: Mr. Speaker, many of Alberta's great successes have been achieved thanks to the dedication and generosity of volunteers. From coaching soccer to building schools overseas, Albertans have always helped others.

This week we pay tribute to the voluntary sector through Volunteer Week. This is a nationally proclaimed week held to celebrate the valuable and momentous contribution that volunteers make to our lives. All across this great province many events and achievements are going to take place to recognize and thank the volunteers who play such critical roles in our communities. The Wild Rose Foundation provides a provincial focus to Volunteer Week activities. This year a record number of 153 Alberta communities representing more than 2 million Albertans are participating in this week-long series of events.

It is estimated that the volunteer sector is worth over \$1 billion to Alberta's economy and over \$14 billion to the national economy. The commitment of dollars from Alberta lotteries is continuing to strengthen the efforts of those citizens who are known for their generous spirits, willingness to give, and unfaltering commitment to improving the quality of life for all of us. Alberta leads the way in the voluntary sector, and we can all take pride in the great accomplishments.

I encourage this Assembly to continue its support and encouragement of volunteerism in this province. Throughout Alberta our volunteer spirit is contributing directly to the health and well-being of our citizens and communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Centennial Canoe Trip

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1670 King Charles II granted an exclusive charter to Prince Rupert, governor of the Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, for the trading of furs and other commodities on all the lands and streams draining into Hudson Bay. That company became known as the Hudson's Bay Company, and the land under Prince Rupert's control, known as Rupert's Land, eventually became most of what is now the dominion of Canada. Prince Rupert's royal charter required the Hudson's Bay Company to pay as rent two black beavers and two elk annually to King Charles or his successors whenever they should be in Rupert's Land.

Mr. Speaker, now that Queen Elizabeth II will once again be returning to Rupert's Land for Alberta's centennial, it's time to pay the rent. Young voyagers from Saint John's School of Alberta, located at Genesee in my constituency, will be joining the 1967 centennial race voyagers on a three-day canoe trip along the North Saskatchewan River from Rocky Mountain House national park to the Alberta Legislature Grounds. Once they arrive on May 22, they will be presenting the Hudson's Bay Company's rent to a prearranged recipient in the form of two elk leather signed scrolls and two tartan-backed beaver blankets.

Saint John's school is a residential school founded in 1968. It is known for its focus on academics and outdoor programming for students from grades 7 to 12.

I would like to commend the young voyagers from Saint John's school as well as the entire delegation who will be making the trek from Rocky Mountain House national park. These adventurers embody what it means to be Albertan and certainly show that the centennial spirit is alive and well.

And, Mr. Speaker, we all know what happens if we don't pay the rent.

Finola Hackett

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young Albertan who has once again proven that Albertans rise to the top no matter what the occasion. This past Sunday in Ottawa Finola Hackett, a 13-year-old student from Tofield, Alberta, was crowned the first ever CanWest CanSpell National Spelling Bee champion. During the event 22 competitors, including four from Alberta, competed in Ottawa for the CanWest CanSpell Cup, a \$10,000 scholarship, and the opportunity to be flown to Washington, DC, this May to compete in the prestigious Scripps National Spelling Bee. In the end it was Finola and Edwin Ho, from Toronto, battling word for word for 11 rounds before Finola correctly spelled otiosity to take the title. Ironically, otiosity, o-t-i-o-s-i-t-y, means producing no useful result.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all hon. members I congratulate Finola on her impressive victory, and I also congratulate all of our Alberta competitors: Mohamed El Mais, Matthew Fergel, and Mengya Zhou for their accomplishments. Making it to the national finals was no easy feat, and I commend them for all their hard work and dedication. These young Albertans are an incredible example of the talent that lies within every school in Alberta, and I know that they will all be doing great things in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

CKUA Radio

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CKUA Radio Network

is a true Alberta treasure. Founded in 1927 by a forward-thinking government, CKUA was Canada's first educational broadcaster and its first public broadcaster, predating the CBC by many years. Now in its 78th year CKUA Radio has evolved from a tiny, low-wattage station staffed by dedicated amateurs devoted to the still-newfangled gizmo called radio to a one-of-a-kind radio station carried by a network of 17 transmitters across Alberta.

The CKUA Radio library is one of the most impressive collections of recorded music anywhere in the world, with a quarter million LPs and CDs containing more than 1 and a half million pieces of music. However, this vast collection was briefly silenced when in 1997 a government-appointed board ran CKUA into the ground and forced its closure. Happily, thousands of Albertans rallied around the silent station and brought it back to life run by a volunteer board of directors and dependent for its survival on public support and thousands of hours of volunteer help.

This approach had never before been tried in Alberta, but it was and remains today a great Alberta success story. CKUA today gets most of its budget from its loyal supporters across Alberta, from Athabasca to Whitecourt, and from around the globe. In a world of rigid music formats and cookie cutter corporate control of the radio dial CKUA is truly an oasis for the ears. From folk to jazz, Alberta musicians to stars of world music, classical, blues, Celtic, and contemporary, CKUA has something for every discerning listener.

I urge all members of this Assembly to give it a listen. If you like what you hear – and you will – please join me in making a donation to CKUA during its current spring fundraising drive. There is no other radio station on the planet quite like CKUA, and it is something that all Albertans can be proud of, and it deserves our continued support.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Volunteer Achievements

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The theme of today's recognition is the importance of volunteers. The voluntary efforts of a number of dedicated parents and coaches encouraged the Calgary NASA Rockettes to not only win this spring's Calgary pee wee girls minor hockey tournament but to go on and win the provincial championship. One of the youngest contributors to the team's success was right wing number 8, Moriah Chaisson. Moriah's grandmother, a good friend of mine, not only runs a full-time, highly successful business, Gerry's Hair Design, out of her home, helps with the raising of her grandchildren, but also finds spare time as a volunteer to help adults overcome their addictions.

Last Saturday more than a thousand climbers and their supporters ranging in age from two to 90 participated in the Alberta Wilderness Association's 14th annual Calgary Tower climb. The members for Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-Lougheed, and I were there to acknowledge the participants' efforts. It was my honour to present iron woman, 90-year-young Phyllis Hart with an award for climbing the 916 stairs not once but twice.

Among the generous corporate sponsors who participated were EnCana Resources and Shell Canada. Shell is one of four environmentally conscious companies, including BP, Petro-Canada, and Suncor, that have already voluntarily reduced their emissions below the Kyoto requirement. Hopefully, Shell will show the same type of environmental ingenuity in finding an alternative method to dredging in a sensitive Canadian Arctic beluga whale habitat in order to access and transport gas deposits.

Thank you.

2:50 Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of an historical vignette for today, on April 20, 1999 – that's not very long ago – one of the really momentous agreements was signed in this country. It was actually signed here in the province of Alberta. It was not the first time, but it was renewed on April 20, 1999, and it was an agreement between the government of the province of Alberta and the Métis Nation of Alberta, which made it very unique in all of Canada.

This agreement was for seven years, and it basically said that it would focus on projects with positive and measurable outcomes for the Métis people in the province of Alberta. The agreement terminates March 31, 2006, but it's also a very good time to just recognize that we have at least four members of this Assembly who are of Métis heritage. To the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, the hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, and the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who all have Métis blood in their veins, congratulations.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* of April 15, 2005, by Professor Krugman, a respected professor of economics at Princeton University. In this document Professor Krugman describes why the most privatized health care system in the advanced world – that is, the U.S. system – is “also the most bloated and bureaucratic.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a letter dated April 13, 2005. The letter is from Kerry Barrett, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour. Ms Barrett is expressing her concern about the lack of consultation with labour in preparing Bill 15 and the serious impact that it has on “important principles regarding worker rights.”

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling this afternoon, and it is the document that I quoted in question period this afternoon. It is from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission library in Washington, DC, and it asks the question, “Did Enron undertake generating projects in Canada?”

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a further five copies of another letter from Kerry Barrett, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, asking for a delay in Bill 15 until there is proper consultation with all stakeholders that could be affected by this bill.

Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in question period, I would table a letter that was written to our Auditor General, Mr. Fred Dunn, regarding his audit of the Alberta Securities Commission.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: Main Estimates 2005-06

Energy

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to take the opportunity this afternoon to review with members of the Assembly the business plan and budget for the estimates for the Ministry of Energy as outlined over the next three years and, as certain members have certainly echoed here, the source of much of the money for this province and this government.

I'd like to introduce, if I could, a few of the members of the executive of the Department of Energy. We are very fortunate to have some very talented, excellent professionals, with great backgrounds, a tremendous source of expertise that is provided by officials in the government and this department in particular to the Department of Energy. I have Ken Smith as Deputy Minister of Energy. He's up in the members' gallery. We also have John Giesbrecht with the Energy and Utilities Board. We have David Breakwell, assistant deputy minister, and Kellan Fluckiger, who's head of the electricity division of our department. Others are I know participating, and we welcome them here and thank them for their excellent work on behalf of the people of Alberta.

Some opening comments. It's an interesting time for the business of energy in this province, very exciting times. A tremendous amount of activity happening across the province: from one end to the other end all across this province the energy sector has reached record levels of activity in 2004 and is expected to increase in the foreseeable future.

Ensuring that Alberta's energy resources are competitive, attractive to investors, nurture Alberta's growth, and create employment well into the future are the Ministry of Energy's most important responsibilities.

Albertans recognize the hard work that it's taken for our province to become deficit and debt free. This prosperity depends in large part on the sustainable development of the province's abundant energy resources.

We are entering an exciting time in this innovative and knowledge-intensive sector as around the world energy demand continues to rise steadily. In fact, sometimes very highly underrated is the level of technology that's involved in this industry, a very high high-tech industry itself, and it spawns a lot of other offshoots in the high-tech industry in the province as a result of the expertise that is demanded and needed to extract and manage these resources.

In today's world the energy sector is certainly worth a lot given the price and demand of that commodity. That is why Alberta has to continue to build the capacity and capability needed to support an innovative and globally competitive energy sector. Alberta's oil sands, conventional oil reserves, and natural gas are all tied directly into the continent's best energy infrastructure.

As the energy industry strives to meet demand, the ministry will continue to ensure that Albertans receive their fair share of resource revenues through royalties, taxes, bonuses, and rentals. Independent royalty regime assessments, including one by van Meurs and Associates of Calgary, suggest that Alberta has some of the toughest royalty terms in the world, and industry sources would concur and

support that assessment. It is important that we work towards receiving our fair share, and I believe we have achieved that right balance in Alberta.

We still must remain attractive to investors. Conventional oil and gas and oil sands investment in Alberta alone in 2005 is forecast to be over \$20 billion this next year, considerably up from previous years.

Albertans can expect ongoing benefits thanks to the bounty beneath our feet.

In the Department of Energy's business plan the province targets Alberta's fair share between 20 and 25 per cent of industry's annual net operating revenue through the royalty system. In our forecast for this past year, '04-05, the province received over 8 and a half billion dollars in nonrenewable resource royalty revenues.

In 2005-06 in the estimates before us resource revenues are forecast to make up almost 30 per cent of government revenues, about \$7.68 billion. These revenues pay for critical services, and of course Albertans reap the rewards of lower taxes, higher employment, and greater business opportunities as a direct and indirect result of the oil and gas industry.

3:00

On the utility situation we continue to monitor and are currently reviewing the restructured electricity market. Ensuring that markets are operating in the best interests of Albertans and bringing on new generation to serve our needs are key priorities. That means periodically reviewing and considering options that may be important in fine-tuning the system.

Natural gas consumers also have the protection of the monthly natural gas rebate program, which has just ended the second year of a three-year program. Rebates were activated when consumer rates exceeded \$5.50 per gigajoule during the high-demand season, November through March.

With respect to our energy price forecasts our current commodity prices remain very high in historical terms and have fluctuated significantly over this past year. This is due to a number of factors, including robust global economic growth, particularly in China, concerns regarding supply disruptions in Iraq, Nigeria, and Russia, and the high price of oil supporting above average prices for natural gas.

The Department of Energy benchmarks its oil forecasts with those of a number of private-sector analysts. Over the past few years the budget estimates were low compared to the nonrenewable resource revenues that were realized. For our 2005-06 forecast our Budget 2005 is based on an oil price of \$42 U.S. per barrel west Texas intermediate, which is between the low and average private-sector analysts' forecasts. Budget 2005 assumes that the natural gas price will average about \$5.60 Canadian per gigajoule in this fiscal year. As with oil, the natural gas forecast is benchmarked with those of a number of private-sector analysts.

Another consideration is the general economic outlook provided by Alberta Finance, which projects increased demand for natural gas. But Albertans' share of resource development is more than just royalties calculated on volatile market prices. Bonuses and sales of Crown leases and licences are forecast to generate \$886 million in the forecast year coming up.

I would certainly recommend that we continue in our estimates of forecasting. No one can project the future. It's impossible to know for certain. We have seen the cycles in the past. Just when you expect that everything is going to do nothing but increase, markets can decline, and other factors enter into the equation that would see a slackening of demand and price. In that light, I think it's imperative that we do continue an approach of estimating conservatively

that price forecast, that we not put at risk the ability to finance programs such as health and education, very vital, infrastructure-related questions of this province, based upon taking an aggressive or high forecast on oil and gas to support that.

Alberta Energy's business plan contains a new vision for energy development in Alberta; that is, Alberta is a global energy leader using its world-class knowledge, expertise, and leadership to develop the vast energy resources of the province and to market these resources and abilities to the world. Alberta will build upon its strength in resources, knowledge, and innovation to become a world-class energy leader, delivering value-added products to North America and offshore countries. Our knowledge, our expertise, our skills and proficiency, our leading-edge approach to energy research, and the vast resources themselves are all of the things that set us apart and set us up as a world leader.

This will require an increased investment in infrastructure, research and technologies, co-ordinated planning, and new approaches to ensure that we can develop these resources to their maximum value in an environmentally responsible manner for the benefit of all Albertans first and foremost, of course, and then to others around the world.

In the coming three years our ministry will focus and prioritize a few areas that I'd like to just touch on, that being Alberta's energy advantage as providing us with being the global energy leaders. I think it's imperative that we develop an integrated energy strategy that looks at not just the production of our natural resources but how it is that we can achieve a greater value-added and the maximum potential for that resource, beyond just being hewers of wood. We have tremendous expertise.

Much of this is starting to occur, but when we see various projects that could come in the oil sands taking a very heavy, heavy oil, we should look at: how can we take those in the producing, those in the pipeline industry, those in the refining industry, the petrochemical industry, and work co-operatively to realize the potential that could be had in taking that raw bitumen to synthetic crude oils or refining that to even refined gasoline products or potentially using bitumen as a feedstock for the petrochemical industry? We could use the expertise and the advantage of the Alberta hub to build upon those strengths and ensure that we can provide that product to not just ourselves in Alberta but to Canadians and, clearly, to the markets in the world.

We have the knowledge and the technology available for integration of that whole approach of focusing our research, focusing the curriculum and the work that's done in our universities and technical institutions to ensure that we have a highly trained and skilled labour workforce that's required now and for the future generations along with the research that we do targeted towards those areas of highest potential and value, given that the technology is at the source, really, of the opportunity, all parts of a further integrated energy strategy.

Secondly, we will continue to focus on and highlight even to a greater extent the oil sands in particular and the heavy oils. We hear about the vast resource likelihood and the 1.6 trillion barrels in place. Proven today are 176 billion barrels of oil, probable in the range of 311 billion barrels. Our resource in proven terms is second only to Saudi Arabia, not much lower than theirs, but in size of resource potentially much greater than any other around the world. It's this world-class resource.

We see and hear about much of the development that is starting to occur, the billions of dollars that are being invested annually, the variety of stakeholders that are being involved in that development. We will need to more aggressively, I would say, focus our energies toward ensuring that we realize the opportunity that's before us. How is it that we can see that the infrastructure is in place as

needed? That could be everything from the roads to schools, hospitals, housing, land available. How do we ensure that we have the right regulatory environment in place that can manage this resource for the benefit of all Albertans?

Thirdly, I'd just like to touch on the other huge challenge today. That would be the continued access to the resources, that are vast. I mentioned the oil sands. Natural gas is far too much considered as having been a declining industry. We really are only beginning to realize some of the potential in that area as well. With just improved measures of technology in conventional sources, we leave about 73 per cent of the oil in the ground and 40 per cent of the gas. Just a marginal improvement in technology and we'll realize a whole new Alberta right below us just in our conventional sources.

Then we add to it the nonconventional sources of natural gas in coal. Potentially, 500 tcf of natural gas is available in the coal seams that are there. Just a huge, huge opportunity. We've got this next year likely 3,000 wells that will be drilled just in natural gas in coal. We are just beginning to understand the scope and the size of that resource, and the investment is coming. In many cases this is going to have a large footprint on vast areas of this province.

So when you overlay the oil sands, our conventional sources that span this province, the natural gas in coal, then we can overlay the coal itself, hundreds of years of supply in coal, 800 years in particular, and with the continued improvement of the management of the resources, these will last even longer, I suspect.

Our challenge in Alberta is that we have the world-class size of resources. We have the opportunity to be the world leaders in the extraction of those, both for the development of it but also to show how you sustainably work through a life cycle. How do you ensure that Albertans continue to support that we gain access to the lands to do the work that would benefit all Albertans? So the access will become a third and very important part, that we continue to work with Albertans on to gain their acceptance of temporary disturbances on the surface, to then reclaim and put back to those original conditions, through a life cycle approach, for all the benefits of those vast resources that lie beneath the ground.

3:10

With respect to the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, they will continue to act on recommendations of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas. Significant progress has already been made on the 87 recommendations of that study that was conducted a few years ago. Often we might be asked: why would we develop sour gas around this province? Clearly, it's a lethal substance. You wouldn't ever undertake such an activity unless you could safely manage that product. We have had over 50 years of a very good track record in this industry. It's not without some serious accidents in the past, but no one of the public itself has ever been seriously injured as a result of sour gas. There has been a tremendous improvement in technology, in engineering, with respect to even our own regulation and control and management of the procedures so that safety is paramount.

Last year in particular we had around \$2 billion in royalty revenues off the sour gas. A third of our gas in this province is sour. That funds a substantial portion of the benefits that Albertans receive. It provides a clean fuel for the heating of their homes. I don't know about you, but in the middle of the winter it's nice to go to that thermostat and turn it up and have some warmth in the home, and that sour gas adds to the great value of being able to have a reliable, good, safe commodity in our homes. You take a substance that's dangerous and turn it into one that is very manageable and controllable and very worth while, in addition to the substantial economic benefits of jobs, employment, opportunity, and royalties that we derive.

With respect to the ministry's budget this year we'll collect, we're estimating, \$7.68 billion in revenues for the upcoming year, over \$6 billion in the following year, '06-07, and just under \$6 billion in '07 and '08. I would like to point out that the Department of Energy's budget has basically been flatlined for a number of years, yet some of the expenditures propose a net increase in funding of about \$13 million, or about 6.4 per cent, for the Department of Energy and the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. It is vital that we make these investments in order to continue to do our business effectively, and the increased costs in the EUB will also translate to manage the increased activity in the energy industry overall and reflect the need of additional resources within.

With respect to a breakdown of those increases, the document shows a request of an additional \$7.634 million. That's a little under a 5 and a half million dollar grant to the EUB: \$1.2 million of that is for salary increases, a million due to increased activity in the oil sands, a million for information technology, and a decrease of just over a million dollars due to amortization. Of the \$5.466 million grant to the EUB, \$2 million will be used for public safety, a million and a half for market salary adjustments, \$500,000 to oil sands, another \$466,000 to monitor Turtle Mountain, and a million for information technology.

Those are some of the details of the specific increases in the ministry's budget over last year. As you can appreciate, it takes resources to collect the billions that we receive annually in revenues, resources of people, systems, and infrastructure, and it's vital that we make these investments in order to continue to do our business effectively.

I thank you for the opportunity to introduce the estimates of the Ministry of Energy and look forward to entertaining the questions of the members.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to participate in the Energy estimates debate or discussion this afternoon. Certainly, I would agree with the hon. minister that the golden goose has to be maintained. The golden goose is aging. Our conventional crude oil production is declining. I would like to hear later on what incentives, if any, we're going to implement to ensure that we recover maximum amounts of oil and gas from our maturing fields.

I'm watching what the Americans are doing in the lower 48 states. I'm certainly not happy with their initiatives. I'm not happy with some of these royalty reduction programs that we have here now, but we'll get to that later. The Auditor General certainly has some concerns about that, some of which were discussed the other day in Public Accounts.

I'm pleased to see the difference in opinion from this minister to the previous minister in regard to thermostats and sweaters. I'm glad to hear that the hon. minister doesn't think that Alberta should have their own provincial sweater. I don't know what it would be, Mr. Chairman, whether it would be a cardigan or a pullover. If it was the former Minister of Energy and we were to name it after him, well, I think we'd have to have a pullover because he was trying to pull over electricity deregulation on Albertans all the time he was minister. So perhaps we could have the pullover sweater in honour of the previous Minister of Energy.

In that we have limited time and I do not want to waste any of it, there's one question that I would like to ask before I forget in regard to tar sands development. I understand that the oil sands royalty regulation, this OSR 97, is the reason for the significant development in the Fort McMurray area for heavy oil development or

synthetic crude production development. Now – and this has been discussed in the Assembly here in the past – if we were to transfer some of that development over into other areas of the province, like the Peace country, where there is not nearly the amount of tar sands and it's at different elevations, if there was to be a development there of synthetic crude production, would that royalty regime or holiday be applicable, or is it just applicable in the Fort McMurray region?

Certainly, as the roads and everything get congested in Fort McMurray, perhaps it's time to have a look at having investment in another area of the province where some of the same resource may be available, and it may be available under the proper economic schedule.

Now, I appreciate the hon. minister's opening comments, but certainly whenever we look at the fiscal plan and we look at what used to be in this book and what's not in it now, we always have a chapter on low operating costs for businesses and households. In the past we would always have a chart on electricity prices, and we'd have convenient comparisons. But this year again it has been omitted. We have business cost index. We have annual labour costs. Edmonton has the lowest labour costs whenever you compare us to places like Houston, Texas, Chicago, Toronto, Vancouver. Even Winnipeg is slightly higher. We have all these charts talking about low operating costs, gasoline prices, natural gas rates, but no electricity rates like we used to have in this report. That to me is a real indicator that this government is ashamed of their electricity deregulation policies because they know that they haven't worked. They know that if they do that cost comparison, it's going to be really, really high.

3:20

Now, the Department of Energy also has you know received fairly stable funding over a long period of time. We are requesting this afternoon a total supply of \$121.5 million for operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases. The ministry will be spending a little over \$200 million, and that's just a wee increase of 3 per cent, as has been previously stated, from last year's forecast.

There are no major spending initiatives or cuts in this year's energy budget. However, I do see where there is an increase in the number of full-time equivalents, or civil servants. There will be an increase of 67 civil servants, and I would like to know where they will be working and what they will be doing. Are these sort of contractors that are employed, or advisors that have contracts, with the department considered in this number, or are they in a separate category? Hopefully, a person will have a chance, Mr. Chairman, to talk about one of those contractors in particular a little later.

I see all kinds of line items in this budget, but what I don't see is what I would like to talk about first, and that's certainly Enron's Project Stanley. I don't see any money or resources allocated for a full, independent public inquiry into the Enron scandal or the Enron behaviour in this province. Why has this government never, ever considered launching a full, independent public inquiry into the Enron scandal in Alberta?

Some of the documents I've had the opportunity to acquire from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission library in Washington, D.C. I wonder if the former Minister of Energy is actually going to maybe grab a sandwich some day and trot from his office to this office of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and ask where the library is and have a cruise through their electronic version. There are some people there that are really helpful and will guide him if he needs assistance. We could get him researching Enron's involvement, Mr. Chairman, into their activities in Alberta.

Now, again to the Minister of Energy: has the executive director

of Alberta Energy's electricity division ever looked into the evidence showing that Enron manipulated Alberta's electricity market to drive up prices or price gouge Alberta consumers? This is an ongoing topic of discussion. Given that the federal Competition Bureau is only investigating Enron's activities for a period in 1999, for just this little window in 1999, but new evidence indicates that Enron was gaining Alberta's electricity market also in 2000 and again in 2001 before the outfit went bust, will the hon. minister launch an investigation, a public inquiry, to investigate these years? It's fine and dandy to say that the Competition Bureau is going to reopen this investigation from 1999, but what about the other years when these rascals were operating in this province?

I'm not confident in the limited mandate that the Competition Bureau has. I don't know what sort of authority they're going to have as a result of the manipulation that was going on with our tie-line to B.C. and the accusations and the allegations that are made there. I don't know exactly how the Competition Bureau is going to be able to do this.

Also, consumers are starting to phone our constituency office, Mr. Chairman, and ask: is the provincial government going to try to get some of this money back on behalf of consumers? Montana – it's hardly a year ago that the Attorney General there made an effort to get some money back for consumers. And the state of California, they're looking at it there, and other jurisdictions are also looking at this as well.

How will Albertans know how much money they're owed by the companies who unethically manipulated the loopholes in the market? How will this money ever be returned to them? We're at the will of the department here to get a refund – not a rebate, a refund, a refund on electricity deregulation. I bet there would be a lot of money involved in this because if we had stuck to that other system, the regulated retail system that we had, we wouldn't be having this discussion today.

Now, also, I realize that I have a FOIP application in, but we could save a lot of time and a lot of trouble here by someone on that side of the House explaining to not only members on this side of the House but to consumers of this province how often, where, and when Alberta government officials met with Enron in the setting up of all this deregulation. There are people that phone, again, and they tell me about the Enron jet and its frequent arrival and departure from the Calgary airport. There are the e-mails that are in existence that indicate that there was communication. Certainly, the last FOIP request that I put in some years ago indicates that there are at least 5,500 documents that were relevant between Enron and the provincial government here.

We know that when the power purchase arrangement press release was put out in the fall of 2002, the top ten list there, Mr. Chairman, one of the people was a gentleman by the name of Eric Thode. The phone number doesn't work, but it's in Houston, Texas. I looked that up. He was an Enron public relations individual, and he's featured on our own Alberta government press release. Yet people are saying, "Oh, no. We had no contact with these people." I would be in trouble if I put someone's name on one of our press releases without permission. Someone had to be talking to Enron. Now, I know the hon. minister was occupied with other things at that time, but someone has to accept responsibility for these rascals and their involvement in our unfortunate experiment with electricity deregulation.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the business plan on page 209, the energy resource portfolio diversification. There's a chart here, and it shows Alberta's electricity generating capacity. A recent report, and it's a 10-year study – the government, I believe, is obligated to do this by regulation – on the Alberta electric systems operator, and there is an

indication that demand for electricity in Alberta will outstrip supply in 2006. We're hearing all these speeches from government members that "Oh, everything is so great. We had this 3,000 megawatt boost in generation capacity and everything is fine." Yet we have this report indicating that we could have demand exceeding supply as soon as next year.

3:30

I think we need to have a good look at this. We need to know what we're keeping in reserve. What's it going to be? Are we going to have to reduce reserves in order to have the system operate? Right now it can be anywhere between 18 and 15 per cent in reserve depending upon whom you talk to. We have to be very, very careful about this. This is not the success story that everyone is talking about. We need to know what this government is planning to address this alarming situation. What solutions do they have? Does the government have plans to compensate companies or provide some kind of financial incentives to companies in order to encourage new generation capacity in Alberta?

Now, while I'm talking about that, I also have another question, and that is: is this government, as a result of the regulation that was passed last year, putting a tax on coal-fired generation in the area out around Lake Wabamun? The reason I ask this is that in the regulation I thought I saw – and I could be wrong – where there was going to be, I believe it was, a \$400,000 per megawatt tax on a generating facility if it was located in an area that had surplus generation capacity already in existence.

I took one look at that, and I thought: is this regulation trying to incent coal-fired generation, say, in the Brooks area or somewhere, maybe, on the edge of the growth load in Calgary? If this is not a tax, I would appreciate an explanation from the hon. minister in regard to that because certainly there is lots of generation around that area of the province, Lake Wabamun.

We talked earlier in question period about the transmission system, and we'll get there, time permitting, to talk about the transmission system. What plans, also, does the hon. minister have for a capacity market?

Also, on page 209 – I'm going back here to the business plans – the department is committed to establishing a competitive market framework for electricity and natural gas. Considering that energy deregulation has been an \$8 billion failure, an \$8 billion boondoggle, why is this government still clinging to such a huge public policy mistake, that this can actually work? Consumers aren't convinced. The silent consumer advocate knows what he's doing, what that office is doing. Consumers don't have confidence in this policy.

Now, considering the pressure the minister is getting to keep the regulated rate option going indefinitely, will the hon. minister commit to keeping the RRO as a permanent option for consumers? Consumers that are contacting our office do not want this flow-through pricing for electricity. Again, if they want to gamble, they're going to go to a casino. They don't want to gamble with their utility costs.

Now, in the estimates on page 126 the budget of energy and utilities regulation has increased to \$46.5 million this year from \$37.7 million in fiscal year 2003-04. This is a 23 per cent increase. In a department that stresses deregulation, why has the cost of the energy and utilities regulation increased by 23 per cent since 2003-2004?

Now, Grid West. This is another . . . [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired] I'll get to that later.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll attempt to answer a number of those questions now. If we miss some of it, then we'll respond in writing to the balance.

You started off with any incentives to recover the most we can from our resources. Our royalty structures are actually built upon a production rate that would be subject to volume of production and price. In that sense, you try and make sure that you're recovering in the appropriate economic rent, that smaller volume producing wells would have a lower royalty rate to encourage that they could also retain some of the profits.

We've also, as you're probably aware, put in a \$200 million royalty technology credit program to encourage specifically things like enhanced oil recovery. Fifteen million dollars has been put into carbon dioxide sequestration to both deal with climate change and look at how we turn that into an opportunity. Using carbon dioxide is already a proven technology, so how can we see that the economics work for that project? So there continue to be various projects that are looking at technological improvements in addition to the research that we'll help correlate, since this industry is very heavily dependent upon it, on more technology and improvements to technologies to recover a greater quantity of the resources under the ground.

You mentioned the oil sands royalty regulation, OSR 97, with respect to the Peace area in particular. That regulation, the generic royalty regime, does extend to all heavy oil, so it does extend into the Peace area itself. There are actually a few projects already ongoing in that area. Clearly, there's a good, sizable deposit. We talk about the Fort McMurray area, but clearly there are substantial deposits even further west of that, toward the Peace River area. What is happening first is that some of the most easily accessible surface minable areas have started sooner, and some of the in situ kinds of opportunities, the deeper resource, are starting to occur later. But that does also apply to the Peace area.

You mentioned no chart on electricity prices. I can't speak so much for the past, but I can say that it would be actually a great idea for us to continue to inform Albertans that today they receive the least expensive non-hydroelectricity rates of anywhere in Canada. A number of surveys have been done by various other provinces recently. I don't have those at my fingertips, but they continue to put Edmonton, as one of the cities that was surveyed out of about 21 cities around North America, in the top five. The only ones above it were jurisdictions that had a substantially higher percentage of theirs hydro based versus other forms of electricity fired such as coal and cogeneration and natural gas as a primary portion of our electricity generation in Alberta.

So we are very fortunate. Consumers today are reaping substantial benefits even in a marketplace where they're getting the commodity at below replacement cost of those industries. Quite contrary to this being a substantial problem to residential small consumers, they are reaping huge benefits today. They are truly seeing the opportunity of lower prices that have come in relation to new generation.

Many of the regulated models, you have to remember, came with a whole host of other high-cost structures because of guaranteed returns, no forces to actually drive the efficiency. As an example, when Genesee 1 first came on back in the early '80s, it was about trying to time the markets. It's an imperfect forecast, really. No one can know for certain, but a plant was built under a regulated model and had to actually be held off the grid until such time as the growth of the economy caught up to it. There was a recession that hit Alberta at that stage. Consumers paid in those dollars at that time \$650 million in interest costs spread over a long time, but it was under those models that we the consumer paid substantial costs for the risks associated.

3:40

Today what you've seen is that unlike all the other regulated jurisdictions around us, some of whom have had no growth – Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Well, it's pretty easy to manage no growth. You don't have to contemplate your ever running out if you don't grow. In a fast, high-growing area like ours, this marketplace has responded faster and better than any jurisdiction in North America. Thirty-three hundred megawatts of new supply coming in in a relatively short time is unparalleled in North America. That's from a variety of innovative sources. This isn't just from the few monopoly providers who provide something in the traditional format, maybe a coal-fired plant. It has been able to come from coal, Genesee 3, the very latest of technology that has come in. Some of these come in with higher costs because of the higher standards of environment: carbon dioxide emission, cleaner burning.

Those other provinces. Take B.C.: starting to run short of power. Ontario substantially has huge issues of generation of power. Quebec, even with all the hydro, is actually reaching some issues of supply. Those markets, without the substantial growth that Albertans have faced, still are now about to realize more on their consumer bills the cost of having to produce and generate new electricity under the rules and regulations of today.

When you look into things like Enron, you know, there was a period of time – and these aren't in our estimates, so I'm not going to go forward too much on this. This is in the past. Our estimates are to be looking forward in our budget. In that period of time we had a tight supply, and clearly that drives price. It has been a volatile market. It was early in its design. Substantial improvements to regulations, to the market surveillance administrator's authorities, new regulation and legislation brought in in 2003: a whole host of things done to continuously improve the rules around transparency and the like that will help ensure that the rules provide for greater behaviours and better protection of the public.

Any market produces some volatility. You wouldn't say that in oil and gas prices. We see all the time the volatility of it. We see that in interest rates, your mortgages on your homes. We've seen tremendous volatility. So we are looking at designs. If people want stability and predictability, how do you provide options for them to have stability and predictability?

There are ways to do that in a deregulated model as well. There's a variety of products that are being offered, and it's under a review that we are actually engaged in at the present time, looking at the wholesale and retail rules. Those would be under consideration when you ask things about: would we consider the regulated rate option being continued perpetually? Those are all questions that are being examined at this stage and are part of the business plan, the ongoing part of the Department of Energy, to ensure that we continue to mature and develop a very good market for a reliable supply of electricity: affordable and delivered when you need it and where it's needed.

I will say that when you look to some of the issues of the past, there were protections put in place. While there's no need to conduct a major investigation into the past, there were many legislated hedges put in place that would prevent the volatility of the marketplace being passed on to any one person before the power purchase arrangements were sold. After that, there was quite a tightening of some of the rules around how power would be brought in and out. But in particular, no, we're not going to conduct an inquiry into a company that is bankrupt and that has certainly been proven guilty of some things that were wrong in their behaviours. We don't condone, and we'll be very vigilant in always enforcing the rules that are here.

You mention an increase in a number of the full-time equivalents

in the budget. I think it was page 136 of the estimates. Those are both for the Energy and Utilities Board and for the department in particular. With the department there is an increase from 557 to 597. There's a conversion of about 20 contractors to full-time equivalents, and there is also an increase of another 20 personnel full-time equivalents for the department with respect to industry activities. The growth in the oil sands is one of the areas where we have added more staff. There's a tremendous increase in volume of activity in the oil sands.

We've seen record years in the sale of Crown leases. Over \$1.1 billion was the forecasted amount that came in last year off our bonus payments. That's just one indication of the tremendous increase in activity. You do need the resources both in the department and in the Energy and Utilities Board to ensure that you can be out and you can do the proper enforcement, that you have the ability to provide the right systems and technology in place. It's a response, really, as a result of the magnitude increase in the industry; therefore, an increase in both the Energy and Utilities Board and the department staff to accommodate that.

You talked about the electricity-generating capacity on page 209, the demand exceeding supply by 2006. I mean, there's a variety of forecasts out there. I'm not certain which one you may be referring to. We have in place about 12,100 megawatts of supply that's available. The peak this past year was – I can't remember the exact number – somewhere in the 9,500 megawatts range. Just even a normal growth will allow you to go well past 2006. You might get to 2007-08 under the worst-case scenario.

We know of numerous options and projects that are being planned. I can't say which ones may all come forward at which time, but what has happened is quite a creativity of people bringing on not just the large projects themselves, the large plants, but everything from the small cogeneration that might bring on a few megawatts of power has continued to add on the ability for the marketplace to bring on the supply as needed.

With respect to capacity markets and the like, those are things that are being looked at with respect to the wholesale market review at the present time. Likewise with the regulated rate option. All of those things in market design are on the discussion. We'll be bringing those back for policy decisions in fairly short order.

I'm not aware, in particular – and we'll have to get back in response to one question – about a regulation that said \$400,000 tax per megawatt in the Wabamun area, trying to encourage generation somewhere other than the Wabamun area. We'll have to respond to that one in writing.

The last question was on page 126 I think he said, and I can't remember in particular what the question was, so we'll respond to that one in due course as well.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise with some interest to ask a number of questions to do with the Department of Energy budget for this year. First of all, I would like to just make some general comments. I would like to, you know, offer some praise to the minister for putting together a very concise and straightforward budget. It's refreshing to be able to see with some degree of transparency where the money is going in this particular department. Of course, we have to remember that, in fact, the Energy ministry is more like the engine that generates the funds for many other departments and, indeed, royalties and benefits for all Albertans.

3:50

With that in mind, I guess I'm going to approach my comments and questions around a number of different themes. So I will lump the questions together similarly, as a group, and then the hon.

minister can make his comments as he sees fit, either verbally or in writing. I was just looking that the Ministry of Energy first of all is forecasting \$8 billion in revenue for this next fiscal year, which is a substantial amount of money. But given that the energy prices are hovering at near-record levels within some small deviation here, and it's expected that these levels will be maintained over the long term – most estimates from different experts from around the world suggest that we are in a new era of high energy prices – I would like to perhaps ask the minister when the government will start to have its forecasting more accurately reflect this new reality, this new platform of revenue that we seem to have found ourselves on, generally to the benefit of most Albertans, although it is a problematic situation because, of course, we do consume energy here as well. So we are paying these high prices along with reaping the benefits of these high royalty rates. But, again, to perhaps have the Department of Energy revisit the royalty structures to more accurately reflect the windfall profits that the energy sector is enjoying at this juncture in our history.

In fact, without addressing this, not just here in Alberta but right across the country and around the world we're seeing a major shift or a sort of migration of capital throughout the world to energy companies because of these massive profits, and it creates an imbalance. You know, part of the best practices of economics, regardless of what ideology you might subscribe to, is to look for certainty and to some degree of regulation in the movement of goods and services.

The second point that I would like to address is in regard to coal-bed methane. According to the Orphan Well website, industry pays for all of the costs incurred with this program. I quote from the website.

Industry funds all of the costs incurred by the OWA, mostly through an Orphan Fund levy. This levy is based on the abandonment and reclamation liabilities held by each company and it is collected annually by the EUB and then remitted to the OWA.

My question is then: will the government be hiking the orphan well fees as it moves towards the fuller realization of coal-bed methane production, which I think the minister knows requires a much higher density of drilling than more conventional forms of extraction?

Indeed, we are seeing the licence for thousands of new coal-bed methane wells, which are all sort of lumped, somewhat curiously, under an experimental sort of grouping, I think. We're seeing thousands of these together. It signals a new reality, I think, in energy extraction in our province. With each move forward we have to keep apace with this in terms of regulations, so I would like to have some new information about this well structure.

Again in regard to the coal-bed methane extraction it's important to look at how other jurisdictions might have addressed this new energy extraction process as it's affected their areas. I know, looking to the states of Montana and Idaho to the immediate south of us, that they have committed themselves or are in the midst of a full environmental review of coal-bed methane extraction, and I would like to ask if our government would be willing to commit to a similar full-scale study on the environmental effects of coal-bed methane extraction in our own province here.

Again in regard to coal-bed methane extraction, of course, water use is also a concern. This industry's appetite for water is well known, and there are potentially serious environmental concerns associated with the use of water not only with coal-bed methane extraction but also, of course, the oil and gas industry. So I would like to ask the minister: what sort of integrated study and focus is the Department of Energy looking at in regard to water use in the energy industry in general and the coal-bed methane extraction specifically? We had the opportunity to discuss this in a short sort of way in Public Accounts, and I'm curious and interested to hear more.

I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did touch more

elaborately on electricity and specifically the early years of deregulation in our industry, so I will speak less to that. But our caucus is also very interested in a public or judicial inquiry into Enron's activities in Alberta through the late '90s and the early 2000s. I think it's important. I know that we want to be forward looking in our budget development, but, you know, deregulation as an experiment is still in its early stages, and we've seen a lot of bumpy spots along the way, especially from the beginning. Although certainly my own caucus and I think the majority of Albertans do oppose deregulation, if we are going to continue down this path, the very least that we can do is look back and have an honest view of what has happened thus far and perhaps develop some honest answers for where we can go with this market.

You know, we have had a tremendous amount of growth in our economy in regard to electricity needs, and I think that the major players in this province have stepped up to the plate to meet those needs. But, you know, the volatility that has been created as a result of deregulation and the need for more generation in this province has ultimately created higher prices than what we should be paying, I think, in this province and, number two, has really cried out for a revisiting of the need to regulate this market and have it rise in a reasonable and equitable way. The casualties along the way for deregulation have been many. While we like to look, as human beings, toward the future, we have to gain our wisdom from the past. So looking into those early years of deregulation I think is vital for us to create a stable electric market in this province.

Recently Martin Merritt, the market surveillance administrator, voiced concerns over the deliberate attempt of some producers to depress the electricity prices in order to elicit what he termed as a price shock in the future. Now, while this strategy may seem reasonable considering the higher prices that we have today, they in fact do hit you in the pocketbook later down the road, of course, when you have a depression and then you have a corresponding swing upwards. This is what we, in fact, did experience in previous years.

4:00

Depressed prices, as we all know, tend to scare off producers. So now, interestingly enough, we do have a potential situation where the Alberta government may be forced to encourage producers to come to the province by offering incentives in order to meet our future generating needs. If not, producers may be scared off by the artificially low prices and forgo building new generating capacity here in the province.

When supply is tightened and prices rise, as we know, a few unethical producers may realize the lion's share of profits from the pockets of Alberta's families and our industries, particularly small businesses and small and medium manufacturing operations in this province. So I would have to ask the minister again to explain to Albertans how the government is working to protect all of us, really, from unstable price fluctuations as well as unscrupulous producers and electricity dealers here in the future. I mean, deregulation doesn't just mean wide open, a total lack of regulation, rather we do need to have certain basic standards to hang our hats on, so to speak.

Moving to my next group of questions, I guess. There's obviously a lot at stake to do with oil and gas development. One of the critical issues of this development is transportation of petroleum and petrochemical products. I'd like to ask the minister what the government is doing to ensure that pipeline development is being done not only in an equitable and safe fashion but so that Albertans receive their fair share of the petrochemical products that are being moved about the province and sold outside of the province as well.

We have a number of very large pipeline initiatives moving through the province from north to south and east to west. I know that a lot of industries that have staked a claim, let's say, for value-added production in and around Alberta here are now concerned that perhaps the products, the natural gas and oil, are being shipped without some of the compounds being extracted here in the province so that we can have value-added industry to diversify our economy.

We have to look no further than the string of plants that we have along the North Saskatchewan River east and north of our own city here to see the tremendous stability and profit that we have derived over the last 40-some years from value-added production at such installations as Celanese and Sherritt and Dow. You know, we want to ensure that we are creating those value-added installations here for the future, for good quality jobs, and for production for Albertans.

My last group of questions, I guess, has to do with sour gas and the increasing need, I suppose, for companies to pursue increasingly more volatile, let's say, sour gas wells throughout the province. As our conventional supplies of sweet natural gas dwindle, many energy companies are revisiting wells that, perhaps, were deemed to be too unstable or dangerous to be produced in the past. With that in mind, I think it's incumbent upon this Legislature and the Energy department in particular to make sure that sour gas extraction and production is safe for all Albertans.

I realize, of course, that our natural gas industry is very important to not only our export industry, value-added industries but just simply being able to heat our homes as well, and we do exploit natural gas and have done sour natural gas for a long time. As the oil and gas companies look to wells that are, perhaps, close to urban areas – as we see with the Compton sour gas wells close to Calgary, there and other high-pressure, high-percentage-H₂S fields that we have out in the province – we just want to ensure that safety is the first concern on the minds of oil and gas companies as well as the government.

For example, there are 61 sour gas wells in the Drayton Valley area that have been reclassified as critical, and many people do not know the dangers posed by sour gas. You know, one of my deepest concerns is to educate people about the realistic dangers associated with sour gas exploitation in their immediate area if they are living adjacent to these things, and I think it's important for us to be as realistic as possible. Disinformation is more dangerous than no information at all.

For example, I was taking a peek at the EUB website that's called Kidzone, and while it seemed quite interesting, I suppose – the Kidzone, for those who don't know or have a laptop open right now, you can take a look at it. It's an education website targeting children and trying to educate young people about the oil and gas industry. I think that when I look at something like that and the perspective that's taken in that EUB Kidzone website, I'm somewhat dismayed at the unbalanced nature of that education focus, not really acknowledging certain dangers that are there, the realities that are there and practically trying to inform children about those things, but rather just trying to sell lock, stock, and barrel, say, the sour gas industry as being this fine, fine thing. I mean, kids see through that, and adults see through it as well. As I say, sometimes disinformation or skewed information is more dangerous and damaging than nothing at all.

Then, finally, before I finish, just a couple of things from the Auditor General's report. We spoke about this in Public Accounts just briefly, but the Auditor General was talking about verification for oil sands royalties. I think we discussed this briefly previously. We're looking to see how the Department of Energy is improving its

verification process to see if we are in fact receiving the royalties that are due to us under the current royalty structures. Then the second thing that I wanted, and this is my last comment: when will the ministry release a draft of the royalty program objectives and performances that we would so like to see? [Mr. Eggen's speaking time expired] There you go. I just nailed it right on the head.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

4:10

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response to the questions from the Member for Edmonton-Calder, I'll start first on energy prices, record levels, clearly referenced. Some would say that we're in a new era of high energy prices, and you suggested that we should move more to accurately reflect the new reality.

I guess the challenge with that one is that I'm not certain who in here would be willing to sell all that they have and put that on today's energy price as being the new reality. It could be. I don't know how to forecast that future. But I wouldn't guarantee that we'd provide health and education and some of the services upon gambling on a high price.

I do think budgeting – it wouldn't matter whether it's a high price of a commodity. I think that when you put budgets out, you ought to be fairly conservative in your revenue forecasts if you've got to use those to sustain the services you need to provide. So I think it wouldn't be prudent for us to get too aggressive.

You know, we came through a period in the late '70s, early '80s when there was a new reality then too. I don't know that we'll go back to that. I'm not trying to say that. I'm just saying that high prices spur a lot of other things. They spur a lot of other potential sources. They spur a lot more reinvestment into new supplies. They signal that there's a tightness of supply and demand, and therefore they spike prices, but it then creates a lot of activity to go out and find more supply. It's entirely possible that they could find sufficient supply to dampen price. It might also allow for sufficient price to create other energy sources. We ought to be at the forefront not just of the hydrocarbons but, clearly, energy development in its entirety, whether that came from renewable or nonrenewable sources. But the one thing about high prices is they do spawn a lot of work to bring in other options for energy sources.

But in budgeting, in particular, I don't know. We could be at a new reality. I just think it's far too early to suggest that we're there, and there is downside risk. We know that high prices, as we mentioned, do cause less disposable income for consumers, you and I. We pay for it everywhere. Corporations have less disposable. It will cause some demand constraint kinds of questions. We know of the increase in the need for energy, and energy is very foundational to actually providing for a higher standard of living. Clearly, for the foreseeable future hydrocarbons will play a very significant part of that. But for budgeting, we'll continue to remain on the conservative side of forecasting or picking, really, a price. It's just impossible to foresee that.

You mentioned about revisiting royalty structures to address the windfall profits of industry. I guess, you know, so has the province had windfall revenues. In that light, our royalty revenues do reflect that we get a percentage, and we participate on the upside. You know, we normally only receive, average for the last 20 years, about \$4 billion per year. We had last year about \$10 billion in oil and gas revenues, forecasting another very strong year next year.

You know, for perspective, part of our royalty structures are more than just the price you see at west Texas intermediate, light grades

of oil. Much of our oil is actually heavy oil. Bitumen, in particular, has a huge differential. In the month of December, for an example, those in the oil sands that were selling bitumen actually were losing money because the differential was so great. The market was more flooded with heavy oils, not just from ours, but as the world has to find more oils, even in Saudi and some of those other countries they're having to go with some of their heavier oils, and there becomes an imbalance at times of too much heavy oil and not enough light grades of oils. So there are huge issues that still have to be resolved for us in getting our heavy oils to an upgraded state so that we can realize the higher opportunity.

Even in the oil sands when it's in the mid-50s, west Texas intermediate, there's a lot of work to be done to see that the capacity for upgrading and refining can handle that bitumen for us to realize a higher value for the bitumen. That's the one source – I'll comment a little bit later on one of your other questions – that still impacts substantially even in our forecast going forward. The differential is quite high at this stage for bitumen, and as such we won't quite realize in the near term because the profits aren't quite there on the bitumen side. Most of our royalties are coming from natural gas, and we participate very substantially on the upside of that question.

You talk about the high prices, and it's true of natural gas. They've been high historically. The finding costs – we have smaller pools that are available to find. Supply is what's needed. Some of the larger pools: I don't know that they're all found. There was a recent one by Shell in the Tay River area, a new find, a fairly significant find – they're yet trying to explore the extent of that find – but that's the largest find that we've had in some number of years. In our conventional sources we have quite a challenge, really, of finding costs and exploration costs to find that more marginal play to continue to address supply. Likewise, I'd say that we are trying to see that we get the right balance given that we participate also in the rate, in the profits, on the upside.

You mentioned about orphaned wells. Orphaned wells are tied, actually, to the number of wells that are abandoned, so there is actually a working as to the need for that fund reflected in the quantity and risk of the wells.

In particular, you're referencing the natural gas and coal because of the higher density of wells that could be. Even with that technology, it's not yet for certain whether the density is going to be substantially higher. I mean, they have looked at two to eight wells per section as a potential density that could be in those. We've talked to a few companies that are looking at a variety of horizontal drilling techniques, fewer well locations, a smaller imprint. So we're not really finished to come to a conclusion yet that there really is a substantially higher density of wells. Though initially it looks like there could be, there are many factors that could come into play to reduce that footprint.

That said, many of these areas are far more accessible. Many of these areas are where we are going to need to gain, I think, more co-operation. This does impact a lot of agricultural lands, many in southern Alberta. Really, most of southern Alberta up through to around Edmonton has a substantial play of natural gas and coal, and therefore in minimizing that footprint, they have a little bit more flexibility as to where they locate the wells. When you put two to eight wells per section, it isn't so much that they get it in only one spot but that they look at a broader field and how to drain that field. So there is some flexibility as to location.

Abandonment questions are fully paid for by the industry, and they fully support and we will continue to support that reclamation is the responsibility of industry. It ought to be and will continue to be, and we'll continue to work with industry to ensure that that is the

case. That ought not to be something that's left for a future generation as far as risk.

But when you talk about water, I still want to put one thing in context. The industry itself has an allocation of about 5, 6 per cent of the water allocation in total. It's only using about 2 per cent in actual use. Though very important – and I don't want to minimize this because water is a very scarce commodity, too, and very important that we manage it appropriately. We will work and have a commitment to work with Environment to make sure we have the right water strategies and continue to use the best practices. So that will be the foundation of how we manage water.

When you think about some of the areas, I think there is a little bit of a misconception on natural gas in coal. One of the zones, in particular, is the Horseshoe Canyon: very, very little water. A lot of this gas comes out cleaner, with less impurities than what goes into your home today. It comes out under lower pressure, so it's not the volatility and danger of some of the wells. So it's a more stable and benign source and a very good source and a very significant portion of that. Other zones, Mannville in particular, are deeper, and there is water associated.

But we have good rules, no different than in any other drilling in conventional gas. These rules apply to this as well. This is still gas. It's no different in management of water, still the same issues that have to be dealt with. Therefore, we have very good regulation around that issue already. So that'll continue to be the requirement. The modern water management practices are there so that we continue to reuse as much water as we can throughout the industry, not just in natural gas but whether it be in the oil sands, so that we minimize the need for the water usage. We'll work very closely with Environment on their Water for Life strategy and ensure that water is preserved and clean for now and for the future generations.

4:20

I also thought I'd mention that there is, actually, a fairly broad stakeholder group that's been working on natural gas in coal to deal with all the access questions, the density questions, environmental issues, public awareness. That initial discussion will probably be coming back at the end of May some time. We are trying to involve a broader stakeholder group with respect to natural gas in coal. Being given an education component and awareness and support for this is going to be very key to realizing the potential in this very, very large resource of natural gas.

You mentioned about Enron again and public inquiries. You know, if it weren't for the fact that many parties have already monitored and looked at and watched day in and day out to see what's happening, specifically looked at a variety with Enron, not just the 1999 instance in particular – I'm not here to support Enron. Enron has done some things wrong and been appropriately judged and should have been. That's what happens to companies that operate unethically, and enforcement ought to be there to ensure that we don't promote or condone anything. But with respect to their activities here, in the first years, actually, legislated hedges prevented any material upside.

Before the power purchase arrangements were sold, we actually had in place mechanisms where the rates of the power for the generators that were here in Alberta were capped at how much would be paid for by the consumer. So if the retail market was behaving as in a transition period and getting used to new rules, a very small capacity came from these tie-lines from B.C. It was a very small amount of power that could have influenced the overall market. Therefore, a cap was placed on it, and Enron would not have been able to participate with any significant upside. They

might have been able to do trade in a tight supply and have done some things to help, as anybody trading in the marketplaces might do some things that would lead to some volatility in that market.

But there's been quite a bit of examination already. The reason why the federal Competition Bureau was involved initially is we only had the jurisdiction in Alberta. Part of this deals with the tie-line into B.C., and we don't have jurisdiction there to really do any of the work on that. That's why it's a file of the federal Competition Bureau. Some of the recent inquiries or statements and allegations – and they are just that – in Washington state brought out some more information, and we thought: yes, the market surveillance administrator did make the right call. We want to make sure that we understand what's gone on and be clear about it and verify if the public safety has been protected in this case.

Many of the rules have been improved and are continually monitored to ensure that aberrations in the market or things that wouldn't make sense are corrected. So there's more transparency in the rules, a very complicated, really, market design if you get into the technical aspects of it.

I would tell you that when you look at those that have been involved, they know through tight supply that the market and the price curve is very much of a spike. When you get to the point where you have little supply, then the incremental power is priced very expensively because there's nothing left. Yet we demand and want the power when we want it. Therefore, it will be priced on those spikes.

Some volatility did happen through that period of time. I can't say otherwise. But I do want to make clear that the market surveillance administrator, AESO, and their oversight – certainly, in all of the reviews of this there's no new information to really bring forward.

Furthermore, you know, Enron is a bankrupt company. The Washington utility owes them a lot of money. Therefore, they're creating all of the innuendo and everything to get away from paying the bankruptcy credit trustees the monies that they actually owe. They're in a very different situation. We don't actually have monies that we owe to any party in particular, be it to Enron or otherwise. It's a bankrupt entity, no longer viable to collect and/or pursue.

I want to assure again that the market surveillance administrator, I'm going to continue to emphasize, has done a very excellent job in looking at and reviewing and has come to those conclusions and does not merit for reasons of trying to undermine the integrity of confidence – clearly, you might have an agenda that you don't want the deregulation to occur. So if you want to continue to put things to distill or destroy confidence in the market, I guess that you can continue to ask about the past and change everything. But the fact is that those that were aware have responded and can assure the public that at this stage, if evidence were ever forthcoming, they have acted on it and will continue to do just that. We have to look at facts, not just innuendo, but clearly they'll base their work on just that.

I want to state that it continues to be labelled improperly. We talk about maybe some of the concerns, but huge successes – I mean enormous successes – have happened in this marketplace with all of the generation that's come on in a short time and from a variety of sources, very much environmental kinds of sources, too, renewable sources. More wind power has been brought on in here than in any other jurisdiction in Canada. We have biomass as another alternative. We have numerous cogeneration kinds of choices. We have a greater diversity, probably more reliability in supply, than in any recent past, even with all of the huge growth that we've had.

We have a reliable supply of power in a growing economy that isn't equalled anywhere else in this country. We must remind

ourselves that the consumer today is reaping huge benefits. There are great success stories. We could go on at great length to outline how much lower the prices are here in Alberta for nonhydro – and they are – than anywhere in Canada. We don't have the advantages of having all the water and the hydro here in Alberta, so truly we don't have that part of the advantage, but we do have a very good, reliable supply of power, and it is very well serving the public today.

You talked about transportation with respect to the pipelines. Getting the value added, clearly, is our policy and going to be actively worked on. I talked about an integrated energy policy that we are putting as a high priority of the work that we're doing in the ministry. That means that for some of the components, it includes very much that value-added question so that we're not just shipping raw bitumen out of the country, that we're not just shipping the raw resources, that we are looking to do all of the upgrading that we possibly can, that we look to using bitumen as a feedstock. In fact, we have a Hydrocarbon Upgrading Task Force, that is looking at how to use bitumen as a feedstock for the petrochemical industry. How do you put more use on other energy sources than use of just natural gas?

I guess we'll answer the rest of the questions in due course and supply them to you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this chance to participate in this budget debate on the Department of Energy, and I will try to be brief.

My first question is with regard to the royalty tax credit program. In the minister's response to the Auditor General's recommendations the hon. minister accepted using measures to assess whether the program is meeting its objectives, which is recommendation 11 for 2003, and actually went ahead and drafted an objective and a list of performance measures. But in the response they indicated that they would have to work with Alberta Finance to get formal approval. So maybe this is an area where I need some clarification because, you know, you accept the recommendation, and then you go ahead and implement it. I'm not sure where the Ministry of Finance fits into this picture.

4:30

Many people are concerned, naturally, that the taxpayers of this province may not be getting their fair share. Royalties are in place to benefit every Albertan, and reducing them seems to be geared at maybe pleasing the industry. I really think that the difference between 1 per cent and 25 per cent is a huge and vast difference. My question naively will be: will these companies fold, will they go out of business, if they pay the 25 per cent? Are they not making handsome profits already?

This leads me to my second question, which is really with regard to the criteria for what constitutes an expansion and what is classified as a new project. Again, I would like some clarification from the hon. minister because it seems like, you know, you look at this, and it might be a way to get around paying the 25 per cent. Instead, they pay just 1 per cent, and they're happy.

Secondly, when I visited the Public Accounts Committee as a visitor last week I asked the hon. minister about his statement about how highly the industry thinks or approves of his department. I actually asked whether a similar survey was or is going to be conducted to ask the public what they think and how much they approve of the ministry or the government in general after deregulation. The minister indicated that because it's a policy question, it

could not be answered efficiently or properly in the deliberations of the Public Accounts Committee. So I think today I would like to re-ask the hon. minister and revisit this question because it is a fair question, and it is a reasonable question to ask.

If we look at the industry as one client of this ministry, I would argue that the public is a bigger and more important client. So you asked the one client if they're happy with their government and with this ministry, and they said yes. I can't remember the exact figure, but I think it was in excess of an 80 per cent satisfaction rating. I would be very interested if we asked the general public a simple question on a survey: are you pleased with the Ministry of Energy? Are you happy with deregulation? How satisfied are you? Then we can actually solicit feedback and some responses from the general public.

My third question to the hon. minister, Mr. Chairman, is with regard to hopefully keeping the regulated rate option indefinitely. It's about offering choice to the consumers. I, for one, as a taxpayer and as a consumer resisted the one- or three- or five-year deregulated services contracts which I was bombarded with. I was receiving door knocks every second day, almost, from somebody who was trying to sell me a contract and trying to get me to sign on. I am, really, certainly happy to have resisted and rejected and declined those offers. I am currently on the regulated rate option, and I think many people are doing the same. Many of my constituents in Edmonton-McClung have approached me, and they said that they're worried that once this option expires and if it is not extended, they will be forced to surrender, succumb to paying higher prices, and we will all be at the mercy of utility companies with nowhere to go and no one to turn to.

I would urge the minister to consider keeping or extending the regulated rate option indefinitely for the benefit of all Albertans. Again, my approach is one of choice, offering choice to the consumers. It's a question that I get asked a lot, and I think today would be a suitable opportunity for me to present it to the minister. I would hope that he would offer a definitive answer there, please.

With that, I will take my seat, look forward to the answers from the minister, and invite further discussion. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I may have missed some of this. If so, we'll look at *Hansard* and respond later.

Your first one I think was a question about the ARTC program, particularly with Finance and Energy jointly administering. The policy for the Alberta royalty tax credit lies in the Department of Energy as to its structure, program, and the like. The administration, because it's actually administered through the corporate income tax or through the Income Tax Act itself, is therefore actually audited and verified for compliance and all of that through Finance in the administration of the taxation. That's why Finance will look to the administration of the program, but in light of the program relating to energy the policy itself lies with the Department of Energy.

You talked about a fair share. As I caught the drift of the question, I think it was about the oil sands. Why not go to the 25 per cent now versus the 1 per cent of gross until payout and then go to 25 per cent of net after payout? The assumption is that profits are already there. I have to re-emphasize again that just in one month in particular the royalty rate is still on bitumen. It's calculated. The bitumen rate is not the west Texas intermediate rate you see posted. In fact, it's a substantial discount based on market prices. The real discount at least is going to reflect the cost of upgrading that to the light oil grades that is the west Texas intermediate grade.

So we've got to take a product that's bitumen. Those are very costly upgraders that they have to put in place. It is our wish and expressed policy to work with the industry to see that we do all the upgrading we can of that bitumen here. But while that's happening, simultaneously the demand for heavy oils at any one time has quite a differential based upon the supply of heavy oils versus light oils. Refineries can only handle so much capacity of heavy oils, so you can get a glut in the marketplace of heavy oils, which is what happened last December, for example. They were actually losing money through that month of December, not making any money, despite that you would have seen fairly high prices for light oils.

In that light, I would say that the risk is still very large for these industries to get payout when you're thinking – many of these projects, when you add the upgraders, \$5 billion to \$10 billion some of them recently announced, up front have a huge risk. These are going to take a long time to get back. It was designed about how you see, given that high risk, that we participate in the life cycle of the project with them also. It isn't a matter of always having to get it all up front, but you look at the economic rent available through the life of the project. That's how the regime was chosen: a deferral of some of it up front and participation after some of the large risk capital has been recovered.

I would still say that it has proven very successful in a high risk when these are 30- to 40-year projects, and the volatility of commodity prices can be anything over a fairly short time period. Yes, they're high today. The good news about that is that'll pay their projects out faster too, so we will participate even sooner with less bitumen being extracted. We will then have a larger resource we'll be participating in at the higher royalty rates. We are benefiting. All it's done is moving up sooner the time at which we're going to get there. So this is a huge win for Albertans, maybe not in direct cash today but coming to them very soon as a result.

When you think about these projects and when they're looking to attract capital, they have to compete with capital around the world for various competing projects even in the energy industry. These projects aren't actually raising capital upon a rate of return expectation higher than the normal conventional plays. In fact, they're actually still sold at a basis that's somewhat lower because you know the security of the supply, and therefore they're not really realizing this real windfall in the oil sands that some might believe that they are yet.

4:40

If in the future those things continue to hold out, I guess we can always review that down the road if the economics really change. We aren't there yet, and Albertans are benefiting by the fact of the huge amount of investment in jobs and in opportunity that's happening and being created in Alberta for a long time. You build those upgraders: good, highly paid, skilled jobs. Those are the things that build a lot of capacity for how we benefit not just in royalty structures but by employment, by personal tax, by corporate tax. We get that back in a lot of ways by having encouraged investment to continue to flood in. In fact, the more we can do to attract investment to this province, the more opportunity that we will have truly to be able to sustain all of the things that we value even in all of our other programs.

One of the questions I didn't get a chance to answer in the previous relates to the upgrading. Everybody mentions, yes, there's support of the upgrading to happen here. I just want to raise a concern that I still have with respect to the implementation by the federal government of this Kyoto plan. If we want to do upgrading, if we want the petrochemical industry here, if we want the refining

here, those are industries that produce carbon dioxide in fairly substantial amounts. So if we want to go back to targets pre-1990 but have an industry in growth and population that is magnitudes larger than ever it was in Alberta itself, we put it at peril and risk because that will happen, that upgrading and refining is going to happen somewhere. The choice is: should we locate it here in Alberta?

I really worry about the application of the protocol, not so much that we shouldn't look at climate change and best practices in technology and carbon dioxide sequestration. It's not about that. I just think the methodology of the protocol itself is flawed, and the application of that by the federal government is very deficient and puts potentially at huge risk those kinds of questions. So I'm hoping, when we come back, that since there's such overwhelming support that we do that upgrading and the refining and the petrochemical industry, there's support for those kinds of questions when it comes to those challenges that we face, too, so that we're not just hitting the one side of the coin. It comes with both.

You mentioned the expansion versus new project, and that's very important. We do have quite a series of rules and regulations that outline what's a new versus an expansion program in the oil sands. It's not just a matter of them arbitrarily choosing. They are therefore also going to have to come back and prove that it really meets all the tests, that it's an expansion versus a new.

The net present value of that project is not to be impacted to Albertans, so there are even financial criteria in that that see that we're not harmed as one might be by clever arrangements, I guess, to try and call everything an expansion versus a new project. We are going to have to make sure we're very clear with industry that they can understand and have a predetermined awareness of what will be expansion versus new projects. That's why in the recent one with Firebag and Suncor the department ruled, given all of the criteria, that that's a new project, not an expansion.

You mention an awareness, a survey, the department looking to the public versus just asking the stakeholders. In this case I'm not certain if those are the questions or not. I do think I would concur that it's very important for us to have a greater awareness with the public. We have talked a lot internally about how we gain support from the public to continue to realize the opportunity that lies with this resource. It's probably only going to happen if we can continue to have the support of the public to do so.

When it comes to having to get access to the surface of the land, you want to take vast tracts of land in the oil sands area, and there's a life cycle kind of a question. You want to disturb that land for a number of years yet support standards to reclaim it, or you want to get access to the farmer's field for that natural gas and coal, or you want to think about sour gas, which is around the population everywhere – those wells are everywhere. Being able to do that is going to be very conditional upon the approval of the public. Therefore, our need to get out and talk and engage the public, I'd agree, is a very important aspect of what we must do in a greater measure. As to how that's framed and structured, whether it becomes questionnaires or other ways, I support the objectives to which you speak.

Therefore, we are working towards a higher awareness campaign, and it's not just to put messages out, but it's to engage people. It's to understand the issues. It's all about making sure that we have the confidence of the public to develop the resources that are theirs and to provide greater predictability, really, to everybody: Albertans, industry, investors, and clearly regulators.

With respect to the RRO being kept indefinitely and offering choice to consumers, I mentioned earlier that we were in the middle

of some review of the wholesale market and retail market designs. We will continually be monitoring. I think these things are continuous. It's not a matter of events. You're always making sure that you have the best structures in place in any regulatory environment. In this case those are discussions that are on the table. I don't know the answers yet to what that'll mean in design. We plan to bring that back in the very near future for discussion.

As you know, the regulated rate option is scheduled to end on July 1, 2006. So in anticipation of that, we're reviewing those kinds of questions and will be happy to report back after we've finished some more due diligence on that topic.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few more general comments and maybe a couple of specific questions at the end. I was interested when the minister was talking about budgeting. I remember the budgeting that he talked about in the '80s. As I recollect, it was a Conservative government then, too, and I remember us saying at the time: they're putting on rose-coloured glasses. The times were different then, and I think that they often overestimated the revenues, and then we'd end up with a deficit each year. It wasn't good budgeting. I agree.

[Ms Haley in the chair]

At the same time I think we've had a tendency here in the last number of years to deliberately underestimate the budget, so we get these huge surpluses that say: "Aren't we brilliant? We've got all this money rolling in." I agree with the minister. I think the minister used the term that we can err on the side of being conservative in terms of our estimates, and we should do that. We should do that in our own household budgeting, of course. You don't say: "Well, this is the best-case scenario. We're going to budget there." But at the same time you try to be as realistic as you can.

Now, I recognize that trying to figure out the price of oil and gas over a year is not easy. It's probably harder in this province than others because of that nonrenewable resource, but I think we can do better. I don't think it gives us a lot of confidence when all of a sudden we have billions of dollars in surplus after. Then we can begin to budget into the trust fund and other things that we should be doing, building that up.

So I'm not saying, you know, take the best-case scenario. It could be \$50 or \$60, or whatever it is. Surely the department is sitting down over a period of time and they have not the best-case scenario and not the worst-case scenario but what they think is going to happen. I think that's what we should be shooting for. I think that they've deliberately been too conservative, if I could put it that way, in terms of those estimates, and I don't think that's good budgeting either.

I'm not going to say a lot about deregulation. I'm always amused by watching government ministers come and go and talk about what a great success story deregulation is. The public just doesn't buy it. I think most people see it as a triumph of ideology over common sense or, maybe, Steve West's revenge on the government and the rest of us here. No matter how you spin it – and the minister is pretty good at spinning, you know – it just doesn't ring true with people.

4:50

Most people know that deregulation has not worked. It hasn't worked in California and most places because it's not the type of commodity where there is that – I mean, the private sector works well in the economic area where there is legitimate competition.

When you're dealing in a situation like this, it doesn't make a lot of sense, and the minister can say that with all the supplies coming on and all the rest of it, spin it however he wants, but the public knows. The public is well aware. You talk to anybody on the street, and they all say that it's been a disaster. That's spin from them and spin from us, and we can debate that for a long time.

I want to talk, though, very quickly about the tar sands. I see the government's strategy. Admittedly, the tar sands are very important to this province, but I see us sort of bent on moving as quickly as we can, no matter what happens, at getting the tar sands out. I believe now that's why Mr. Smith has gone to Washington. It's to get into that market as quickly as possible. So we wipe away any impediment to big oil to get there.

We've had this discussion about division 8 in the tar sands with the Horizon project coming up. I think that's going to be a major mistake down the way because the qualified people are the building trades people that are there, that are from the unions. They have the skill, not the other ones, no matter how much you bring in, and to have labour unrest at this time that the government wants to move ahead, I don't think it's very smart economics. I see this as all part of: let's get in there quickly, let's dig it out, and let's get moving as fast as we can into the American market. I think we have to temper it with fairness, and we have to temper it with some common sense if this is going to happen.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

I want to tie that into the royalty rates. I was almost going to bring out my handkerchief and cry when the minister was talking about the poor companies losing money in December with their bitumen. You know, I thought: boy, maybe we should have a handout here so that we can give them some money because things are so tough. I admit that in royalty rates you have to find sort of that middle ground that's fair to the people of Alberta. It's their resource, and we should get a rent on that, the royalty rates, and enough incentive so that the companies will drill. I know that's not an easy situation, but I would suggest that any studies that I've seen – and the minister says: well, the money will go elsewhere. The figures that I've seen in Norway, where they have the equivalent, and Alaska, because there aren't a lot of places in the world that have similar heavy oil or bitumen to what we have – their royalty rates are much heavier than they are here, much more expensive than they are here, the rent is much more to those governments than it is here.

So I think that's what we have to look at, what our competitors are doing, and we should be at least competitive with them. I suggest to you that I don't think we are, and that hurts in the long run. Sure we've got money coming in right now. We've got a lot of money going through this province because of oil and gas and the tar sands. I will come to the length of time that we're talking about because I think it's alluded to in the budget statement in your department on page 203 where you talk about the future. It seems to me that one of the most important things that we have – and it was Mr. Lougheed that brought it in – for the future is a trust fund.

We have to grow that because there may be a point sooner than this government thinks – and I'll talk about that in a minute – when the oil and gas revenues start to dwindle and times change and technologies change and the rest of it. We have that trust fund there, and I think we should be growing it faster. That could be, if you like, what it was set up to be: our hedge for the future. We haven't grown it, as the minister well knows, for a long period of time. So it's been stagnant.

You know, the minister talks. I think in here it says: "Alberta's

energy sector is not declining. It is on the verge of a transformation that will see Alberta emerge as a world energy capital." Later on they say that the "production of marketable oil sands is expected to reach two million barrels . . . to three million barrels per day by 2020. They talk about the next 20 or 30 years, that this will be there for us for sure – maybe – but I don't think anybody can say that with any certainty for some reasons. Whether we like Kyoto or not, that's a reality, and a lot of companies around the world are going to be changing their technologies. So I don't think we can be absolutely sure that this will be the case. Maybe so. Maybe it won't come on fast enough.

Alternate energy. We are doing something in alternate energy. I think we should be doing more to maintain our role as the energy capital of Alberta. Mind you, I said that 20 years ago when we were sitting in here, and I think we should be doing more, but I don't think we should have all our eggs in one basket. That's why I'm talking about growing the tar sands, and that means getting the best royalty rate that we can and still be competitive to go ahead with some of these projects. But let's not be so complacent to think that this is a truth just because we write it down here. I think we have to be cautious about that, Mr. Minister, because of what may be happening in the world with technology very quickly in alternate energy and the rest of it.

So maybe the minister's statements here or his department's statements might be right 30 years from now, but he or I might not be around 30 years from now to find out if it was right or not. If it's wrong, and we've thrown all our eggs in one basket, so to speak, it would be an absolute disaster for this province. So I'm saying: let's temper that, let's build a trust fund, let's get the royalty rates that we can, let's develop as much alternate energy as we can to maintain being the energy capital. That does not rule out moving on the tar sands, as we should, in a more moderate way.

The other point that I would like to make to the minister – and he correctly talks about things that we can also do in the tar sands: "The need to extract more oil from existing fields may be met by using CO₂ . . . while oil sands upgrading may provide new feedstocks for Alberta's refining and petrochemical industries." Fair enough. Good. But what are we doing now with the gas? One of Premier Lougheed's dreams at the time, as you recall, was that we weren't just going to ship the raw materials, sell it with the gas. So we set up a petrochemical industry.

Now, we're doing that with the pipeline, I believe. We're doing the opposite of what the minister is saying we should do in the tar sands. I think companies like Celanese, for example, that's one of the reasons that they're giving, that they no longer have to take the value-added products and do it here when we're going to be shipping this gasoline. That was our advantage. So I would really suggest that it's reasonable to talk about upgrading in the tar sands, but I think we've forgotten what we are doing in the petrochemical industry here in the province. I believe that that's costing us jobs. It certainly is one of the reasons, at least with the Celanese plant, that they're talking about.

The other point I would want to make – and we get into natural gas in coal. I don't know about this. There's a lot of argument. I'm sure that the minister will say that we can do this, that there's such a thing as clean coal, you know, in protecting the environment. There are many people, I'm sure the minister is aware, that argue that there is no such thing in terms of the environment. It can be better than what we've done in the past, but it's still going to be harmful for the environment. Again, the point I would make: if around the world people are worried about the environment and they're into the Kyoto protocol, and people are using coal here, there may be a problem in terms of marketing our product. I don't know.

I don't pretend to know whether there's such a thing as clean coal, if we can get it to that level or not. But, as I say, many experts that I've read about, I'm sure the minister is aware, would argue that point, that there is no such thing. So I just caution there.

5:00

Mr. Chairman, those are general comments, but a specific question, because it ties into what I was talking about, has to do with the last Auditor General's report and the government's response. I'm looking at number 10, oil sands approvals, where the Auditor General recommends that the Department of Energy "set expected ranges for analyzing the costs and forecasted resource prices submitted on oil sands project applications" and "incorporate risk into its present value test used to assess project applications." It says in the government's response that it's been accepted and that this will be developed in 2004-2005. I wonder if the minister had some general comments ahead to indicate to us how they're going to follow there.

Number 11, evaluation of industry reporting, says, "We recommend that the Department of Energy improve its documentation of its verification procedures for oil sands royalty information and its audit results." "Accepted. Several improvements have already been implemented." This would be more written material, I expect, rather than if he has some general comments, but I'd be interested to know what's happened there.

Finally, number 12, which we were talking about. The Auditor General says, "We again recommend that the Department of Energy document and communicate the objectives of the Alberta Royalty Tax Credit program and use measures to assess whether the program is meeting its objectives." Now, I stress that he says, "We again recommend." The government's response says, "Accepted. As noted in the audit findings . . . the department has developed a draft objective and performance measures." Well, obviously, I guess that the Auditor General didn't accept that. And it says that "the Ministry will work with Alberta Finance to obtain formal approval of the objective."

Mr. Chairman, I would like just to find out what is happening there. Again, if it's too long an answer, written answers later would be fine. Those are, I think, very important Auditor General recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you mentioned, you had a number of statements throughout. Maybe I'll start with the Auditor General since I have those in front of me just right now. We will be happy to supply maybe a more detailed response in writing, I think, as an appropriate response.

Number 10. The information I have is that these ranges are still under development at this stage, but we'll be happy to expand upon progress and status on that one.

Number 11. He's taken some of the following actions, and he says: reviewed and updated file documentation standards to ensure that the project risk analysis and audit procedures are adequately documented; prepared a sample working paper file to be utilized as a reference for audit standards for oil sands audits – this will be used to assist in the training of new auditors – and created permanent files for each oil sands project to record the project's audit history as part of that.

Number 12. Likewise, we'll see that we get some written response to the Auditor General's comments.

With respect to the budgeting, you know, you pick a number, and I'm not certain whose you get, what satisfaction. I guess we could go into what's reasonable, what's realistic, what's too conservative. I don't think, actually, that Albertans are harmed in any way if you still continue to be fairly conservative on forecasting commodity prices given that they are so volatile. We've seen price swings of \$5 in the last week, up and down. I just don't know how to pick a number. Therefore, I don't know how we'll ever come up with a number that will get everybody to say that they think it's too conservative or not. But I appreciate the comment. I think it is important that we give our best estimate given the nature, that in a budget you're trying to not overdeliver or overpromise on a forecast that could have severe impact.

On deregulation, that the public doesn't buy it. You know, it is clearly about: how do you provide adequacies of supply, which then delivers the price that people want? In today's market, really, what the public is getting is a very good, reliable product at a very affordable price. Therefore, those are things that they want and ask. I don't think the public ever wants to know how to do any of these things – I don't care to figure out how my suit was made – and what all the intricacies are.

An Hon. Member: Tell them the price of it.

Mr. Melchin: Of what? Our suits?

Clearly, I don't think it's the domain of the consumer to have to figure out the intricacies of how it's delivered, but they do want to see that they can have a variety, a selection, of products that can deliver the things they like. Some might be prepared to accept volatility, and markets do come with volatility. I think that's one of the things that should be clear about the design. All commodity prices bring some volatility, and therefore you need to provide products that, if people don't want to live on the spot markets, they have opportunities to have something that's more stable, more predictable, or longer term products to protect on volatility. Those usually in any format come with a premium of a hedge of some fashion. Regulated or nonregulated markets do similar things.

The oil sands. You know, you want to create a structure and a climate that allows activity to occur. I don't know how as a government you get in the way of causing it to occur or preventing it from happening. I'd be worried that we would get in the way, trying to prevent activity when the market conditions and the investment climate are there to do it now. That still means that we have to do some things in order. I don't think that means otherwise. I do think that means you have to see how we can accommodate the regulatory issues, the infrastructure-related questions around that.

It's going to take some time – these are long-term projects – to make sure that we've got it right with the integration of the upgraders being put into place. Not all of the people that are developing the bitumen in the oil sands are large players, and all of them don't have the capacity to look at the upgrading and committing capital upgraders. So we've got a lot of work to do, I think, to help facilitate and correlate that and put that in a fashion that can realize the benefits for Albertans. So I appreciate your concern in that respect.

When we compare rates, though, to Norway and Alaska, Alaska's fields, pools that they have were magnitudes of 10 times larger if not more – I don't have the specific number with me – than our pool sizes when you look at daily production volumes. Norway's are magnitudes of about a hundred times. I'm trying to think of the multiples. They're certainly a hundred times larger in pool size, some of the fields they have, than ours. When we look at competitiveness – that is, I think, the right question – you have to look at not

just Norway and Alaska but, clearly, the Gulf coast and a lot of those areas around the world. Our royalty structures in comparison do put us in many respects on the more stringent end of the rate in the structures.

We look at the economic rent of the question, and that's what Alaska and Norway would look at too. They might be on the early side of some with some large pools. In our conventional sources we're actually on smaller pools, trying to get the most out of declining resources in the conventional plays, technology trying to improve the extraction of it. Therefore, really our largest ones are yet to be discovered in the conventional and/or the natural gas in coal, which is a large play but still has some technology in developing it appropriately. So you have to compare all of the factors of the economic rent, and they do come back that Alberta in various comparisons is not anywhere near the bottom of the list as far as most competitive. We still are on one of the studies put actually higher on the list.

5:10

As to the trust fund, you know, that's in another department's portfolio. I won't necessarily comment on it other than one comment about savings. We have actually saved substantially over this past decade. The vehicle was: do you save in the heritage fund? Do you build up assets or pay off debt? The net worth of this province has increased by \$23 billion from debt repayment. That's now meant that our savings are unencumbered in total. That's a huge amount of savings. That went into a different instrument rather than the heritage fund, but it's the same outcome of net worth, improvement in the province.

We've also added the sustainability fund, 2 and a half billion. We've added to the medical fund and the ingenuity funds. You've got to add those funds up, but that's another \$4 billion to \$5 billion in savings very recently, and therefore those questions are appropriate to address: when you have surplus like this, how do you prepare yourself for the future? I won't continue to go down that given that it's out of the policy of the ministry that I'm in.

World energy capital. You know, I guess one of the messages I did want to place – and I do think you're right on some issues. This is supposition – I don't know for certain the forecast in the future – but you could find that the greater risk to our resources isn't that we will run out of resource as it will be in discovering new energy sources that might replace them at some stage or use renewable or other alternative energy sources. Therefore, we do concur that we ought to be positioning ourselves to be at the front of energy development in whatever the technology, build off the base that we have, and be at the forefront of leading technology in other forms of energy too. We ought to be an energy capital and use and build off the hydrocarbon base that we have.

With that said, in any foreseeable future, even if new technology was to come on fairly soon, the infrastructure to replace the hydrocarbon – you know, we're a long ways out. I mean, under almost any scenario that they can forecast, you're still decades out from replacing hydrocarbons. If you're looking at hydrocarbons and the worst-case scenario for hydrocarbons, short term we clearly have, you know, decades. I would think that 20 or 30 years would be a very positive outlook on the use and development of our own hydrocarbons. But I'd like to say that there can be and should be the opportunity to develop technology that says that these can be valuable resources in the energy mix forever, you know, for a long time. Use it wiser so that they can extend longer.

Also, addressing the environmental questions, they truly are technological kinds of questions where you lead into the clean coal. It's kind of the same question. I don't know how to answer that

today either. We haven't got it to a zero emission standard today, though there are many things and projects that are looking at: how do you get to a zero emission question even on coal?

All of our energy sources today have environmental impacts and imprints in some fashion. There are various trade-offs. Even when you look at hydro, for example, as a source of electricity, it comes with huge environmental impacts of flooding vast tracks of land. So they all have various trade-offs, and I do think that with continuing to push and explore the technology, we could expand the life and opportunity of even the hydrocarbons to be part of that mix for centuries, not decades but a long life, and including technology to solve the environmental impacts and questions. We ought to. I don't think there's anyone here that would support industry or otherwise that wouldn't want to support a clean environmental approach to the development of that industry.

Oil sands. We do want to share the gas, for example. The one thing the Alliance pipeline did bring to us was that we had stranded gas in the province and were trapped at prices well below the market price that we could have, which has now realized in this past year magnitudes of \$6 billion to \$7 billion in royalties off natural gas, where without the capacity to export, we would be back in substantially smaller amounts. We have allowed for tremendous value to come to Albertans by allowing greater capacity. That said, we do want to take advantage of gas from the north and all those opportunities to build in extraction of those liquids here for the petrochemical industry. I fully concur that that ought to be our direction and is part of the integrated energy strategy that we wish to address.

With those comments, if there are some that we missed, we'll answer later. Thank you.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Energy, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(5), which provides for the Committee of Supply to rise and report no later than 5:15 on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday afternoons, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Energy for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$121,467,000
---	---------------

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed?

An Hon. Member: No.

The Chair: Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Energy: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$121,467,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we return in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:19 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 20, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**

Date: 05/04/20

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order. The committee has before it estimates for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development. As per our standing order the first hour will be allocated between the minister and members of the opposition, following which any other member who wishes to participate will be able to do so.

Hon. members, before we proceed with the estimates, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly this evening a group of cadets from the 2836 RCAC squadron. They are seated in the public gallery, and they are led tonight by the officer in charge, Officer Cadet Jeff Johnson, and the NCO in charge, Corporal Stefan Strangman. I would ask that they please rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Sustainable Resource Development

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, colleagues. I'm pleased to be here tonight to talk about the Sustainable Resource Development 2005-06 budget.

I'd like to take a moment to introduce our staff from my department who have accompanied me here tonight and are sitting in the members' gallery. We have Jamie Curran, my executive assistant; Brad Pickering, my deputy minister; his officials Stew Churlish, assistant deputy minister, strategic corporate services and senior financial officer; Craig Quintilio, our assistant deputy minister of public lands and forests; Cliff Henderson, assistant deputy minister of the forest protection division; Jerry Sunderland, acting assistant deputy minister for strategic forestry initiatives; Ken Ambrock, assistant deputy minister of fish and wildlife; Lesley Chenier-Aussant, manager of policy and planning; Joan McCracken, our assistant director of communications, who has done an excellent job in putting together our business plan and making sure that our notes tonight correspond with that business plan; and Paul Leeder, executive assistant to the deputy minister.

These are just a few of the folks and a handful of our 1,900 dedicated and professional staff who work in Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. Each and every day our people do excellent work that helps improve the quality of life in Alberta's communities. I'm proud that SRD staff are well known and respected by Albertans. They do an outstanding job day in and day out, and I commend them for the excellent work that they do.

Sustainable Resource Development has an important and far-reaching mandate. It's our job to ensure that Alberta's natural resources are sustained and properly managed for the benefit of future generations. To do this, we have to strike the right balance between conservation and development, and that means taking into consideration the economic, social, and environmental values of all Albertans. Important management decisions are based on these principles.

The ministry has key responsibility areas which, broken down in their simplest manner, are forestry, which looks after wildfires, timber allocations, et cetera; land, rangeland management, disposition management plans, et cetera; wildlife, fisheries, habitat management, et cetera; and quasi-judicial boards, the Natural Resources Conservation Board, the Surface Rights Board, and the Land Compensation Board.

The ministry continues to face a number of challenges in delivering its services, among them responding to increased pressure on the land base as a result of our booming economy, minimizing the industrial footprint, protecting critical wildlife habitats and increasing stewardship efforts, responding to increased demand for more resource managers. These are just a few of the difficult challenges we face heading into Alberta's next century. Albertans can be assured that my department will continue to deliver top-quality services that contribute to balanced and sustainable management of Alberta's natural resources. We want Albertans to feel proud about the incredible natural resources in this province and confident in the way they're being managed.

Budget 2005 will help us build on excellent work that has already been done. The department's 2005-06 proposed operating budget has been increased by about \$20 million. The additional funding is great news not only for the department, but it's also great news for Albertans. We are targeting the money to Albertans' top priorities. It's something that they've been telling us for the past few years.

In terms of manpower one of these priorities is manpower. For a number of years Albertans have told us that they want to see greater department presence when they are enjoying the great outdoors. Some have expressed particular concern about the number of fish and wildlife officers and the number of people in the backcountry. I'm happy that the department is now in the position of addressing these concerns.

Money has been set aside in our 2005 budget to hire a range of new staffing, including up to 10 new fish and wildlife officers. This will help support all aspects of our wildlife management programs, including problem wildlife and illegal harvest. Five fish and wildlife staff will carry out important public outreach and education initiatives, and six biologists and one caribou/grizzly bear manager will conduct important scientific research that will help address the growing pressures facing Alberta's wildlife populations. We will also look at five permanent fisheries staff, who will conduct important fisheries inventories to ensure healthy fish stocks in addition to assisting with fisheries management.

We're also going to be looking at 16 seasonal forest guardians, who will help address the pressures of increased recreational use of public lands. We will use these guardians to educate the public about our respect the land stewardship program. So we'll have upwards of 40 front-line staff at the community level, and that's good news for Albertans.

Fish and wildlife. A key business of our ministry is the management of our fish and wildlife resources. Many Albertans have a deep-seated connection with this wonderful natural resource as it provides more than just personal enjoyment. It's their livelihood and a means to provide for their family. Alberta's fish and wildlife populations support more than 20,000 jobs in Alberta and generate

in excess of \$1 billion a year to our provincial economy. We recognize the importance of this valuable natural resource and the importance of ensuring that it's managed for sustainability over the long term.

Over the last year I've heard from a number of Albertans about the province's grizzly bear and caribou habitats, and I can say with certainty that Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is responsibly managing these wildlife populations.

Grizzly bears. In terms of grizzly bears there is more on-the-ground management in Alberta than ever before, including an ongoing DNA-based population census that will give us a more accurate picture of Alberta's grizzly bear population. It is incredibly difficult to estimate grizzly bear population numbers. They hibernate through the winter and roam over hundreds of square kilometres the rest of the year. Despite these challenges, we've been doing good work and a good job, and Alberta is internationally recognized for being a leader in grizzly bear research.

We've taken a leading role in protecting and preserving sensitive caribou populations. We've been at the table on a number of committees that have helped lead the caribou recovery team, and to protect caribou habitat, the department chose to rule out permanent timber allocations north of the Chinchaga and reduce the annual allowable cut in the E8 forest management unit by 30 per cent. We've also brought industry on-board by requiring caribou protection plans as a condition of operation. Over the last few years upwards of \$1 million has been committed by government and industry toward monitoring and researching initiatives, more research and industry co-operation than any other jurisdiction, I might add, Mr. Chairman, and through Budget 2005 we will continue to support the long-term conservation of Alberta caribou and grizzly bear habitats.

We're setting aside an additional funding of approximately \$600,000 to increase monitoring, research population inventories, and map habitats. This important work will help strengthen our understanding of Alberta's caribou and grizzlies and the pressure they face, and it is that knowledge that will help us refine our long-term planning goals to ensure the sustainability of these populations for generations to come.

In terms of species at risk the department also continues to make significant progress in support of Alberta's species at risk. Over the last year Sustainable Resource Development supported 14 recovery teams and over 16 stewardship, research, monitoring, and sampling projects. A draft woodland caribou recovery plan has been developed and is being reviewed by the department, and we will continue to commit in 2005, by setting aside an additional \$130,000, to fund species-at-risk projects.

8:10

In terms of fisheries to improve our ability to manage Alberta's fishing resources, the department will commit an additional \$2 million to our fisheries program. This money will help strengthen our fisheries population inventories and monitoring. It will also improve fisheries habitat, support the province's fish stocking program and disease testing, and implement the commercial fisheries rationalization program that was started. So far, the move to reduce the number of commercial fishing licences has been very successful. Since we began the program, the number of commercial operators has been reduced from 800 to around 200.

Métis harvesting. While on the topic of fish and wildlife I'd like to take a moment to touch on another important issue facing the department. Following a federal court ruling, the Alberta government entered into a harvesting agreement for Métis residents to hunt and fish for subsistence purposes. The issue has caused concern

among many Albertans, particularly conservation groups and sport hunting and fishing organizations. The department is taking their concerns very seriously, and we will continue to monitor fish and wildlife populations to watch for any impact upon these resources. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is the lead department on this agreement, and they will continue to work with Métis leaders to educate Métis about their responsibilities as well.

In terms of education it's an important part of responsible resource management. Talking to people, engaging them on the issues that we face, is critically important, especially when it comes to managing Alberta's fish and wildlife resources. These are shared resources that require the co-operation of all Albertans to ensure their long-term sustainability. The department recognizes this and is committed to an additional half a million dollars toward educating Albertans about hunting and fishing issues and regulations. The money will help cover on-the-ground outreach initiatives in regions all across the province. The need for education is increasing every year. Last year over 201,000 sport-fishing licences were sold, and nearly 100,000 hunters purchased over 261,000 hunting licences, an increase of 2,700 hunters over the year before. Despite the increasing pressure our fish and wildlife officers continue to do an outstanding job, in addition to the hunting licences and fishing licences that are out there.

Over the past year we have been working on a number of priority projects, like the West Nile virus monitoring program and the chronic wasting disease survey.

Forestry is another priority area for the department. The Alberta forest industry is a significant contributor to the economy of this great province, with at least 50 Alberta communities being participants. The industry provides more than 50,000 jobs for Albertans and generates about \$1.4 billion in household income.

Unfortunately, it's an industry at risk. The mountain pine beetle has the potential to devastate the Alberta forest industry. In B.C. the beetle has infested more than 14 million hectares of trees and cost the B.C. forest industry about \$9 billion. As soon as the department identified the risk these beetles can pose to the Alberta forest industry, we took immediate action. We imposed a ban on the transportation of wood bark across the border between Alberta and B.C., and we continue vigorously to enforce this ban through weigh station operators who conduct truck checks and in the handling of firewood by campground operators and campers.

Through education we get the message out to Albertans from the ground up. We have expanded our surveillance and reporting programs to include the general public. Now Albertans can report mountain pine beetle cases through our eye in the sky program. We've also been working extensively with Kananaskis Country, with Parks Canada to identify and fight the spread of these forest pests. So far, our proactive approach has paid off. We've been able to cut and burn affected stands of trees before the beetle has had a chance to spread beyond our control.

We must not be complacent. The outbreak in B.C. poses a very immediate and serious threat to Alberta forests. Right now the mountain pine beetle is set to strike our mature forests along the eastern slopes. In fact, cases have recently been reported in Jasper and Banff, and every day the beetle is moving closer to the border near the Willmore wilderness area. Through Budget 2005 the department will step up its efforts to take immediate action to stop the beetle at the border, and we're allocating an initial \$2.6 million towards strengthening, preventing, and detecting our control efforts.

Value-added strategy. The department is also committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of our timber industry. We will continue to build upon our relationship with the industry to work towards ensuring this renewable resource is utilized to its fullest

potential. In Budget 2005 we've earmarked \$600,000 towards promoting forest products and market diversification. This money will go to strengthening our value-added strategy. To help us along, we're entering into a strategic partnership with Forintek, the national wood products research and development organization. Ultimately, we want to take a value-added approach that focuses on a higher dollar return for every tree that's cut.

Reforestation. To ensure the sustainability of our timber resources, the department is committing \$1.5 million a year for the next three years to reforestation. The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta is very successful delegating administrative organizations that promote responsible reforestation activities on behalf of small commercial operators with permits less than 10,000 cubic metres. It has three core programs: the forest resource improvement program, the wildfire reclamation program, and the community timber program. The funding is to be used to do some catch-up reforestation of older cut blocks held by community timber program permit holders and small quota holders. While the specifics are still being worked out, the funding will be directed in the areas that have the greatest potential to be successfully reforested.

Softwood lumber. The industry continues to show its commitment to innovation and to the future of our forests despite challenges like the softwood lumber dispute. SRD will continue to work closely with our colleagues in government, other provinces, the federal government, and the industry to find workable solutions to that trade dispute.

Capital spending. While I'm on the topic of forests, I'd like to take a moment to highlight capital spending that's been allocated to the department. Money will go toward two projects that relate to the province's ability to fight wildfires. As you may recall, last year's fire season was particularly bad in the northern part of this province. All told, the department fought more than 1,600 wildfires, which burned nearly 235,000 hectares of land, an area more than three times the size of Edmonton.

Air tankers. To help us more effectively battle these wildfires, capital spending will be used to upgrade three provincially owned CL 215 air tankers. These are commonly known as water bombers. The plan is to spend \$28 million over two years, starting in 2006, to begin converting the plane's existing piston-powered engines to turbine power. These modifications will make the air tankers 32 per cent more effective and reduce maintenance costs. The conversion will also allow the airplanes to operate more effectively in higher altitudes and reload from a number of water bodies.

The second project involving upgrading for our firefighting is seven air tanker bases across the province: \$12 million, or \$24 million over three years, will be used to replace and expand the concrete and asphalt surfaces at these bases. The modifications are necessary to accommodate the weight and size of today's modern air tankers. Both of these projects are necessary to ensure that the department is well equipped to safely and effectively protect Albertans and their communities from wildfire.

Public lands. Each year the economy grows, and there continues to be an increased demand on Alberta's 100 million acres of public lands. A major priority for the department will continue to be the wise use of this land base. We've committed to a provincial land-use framework. Albertans have told us that they want to benefit from land today and tomorrow in a way that recognizes and adapts to the changing needs of the land base. We will work within government to flesh out this framework and create a sustainable land legacy where Albertans continue to live on the land, labour on the land, and leisure on the land. If the past is any indication, it's not going to be an easy task. In 2003-2004 the volume of dispositions on public land increased to more than 15,000 from 12,000 the year

before, an increase of 24 per cent. As demand increases, we need to develop and implement policies, guidelines, and practices that will help minimize the footprint on Crown land.

8:20

Access management. We're making some very good progress by working with the public and stakeholder groups on a number of access management plans. The Ghost-Waiparous operational plan, for example, is nearing completion, and we expect to begin implementation later this year. It takes a lot of consultation with a range of stakeholders to develop comprehensive management plans that are the right fit. I'm proud of the work that has been done to ensure that there is a balance between environmental protection and recreational opportunities for Albertans.

Agricultural dispositions. We will continue to explore new ways of providing stability to Alberta's farm and ranch operators who rely on Crown lands to do business. We continue to show innovation in management of grazing lands and integrated grazing with other land uses to help Alberta's farming communities. We are in our second year of successful legislation to balance the needs of recreational access to leased agricultural land, and we are committed to the latest in rangeland practices that ensure rangeland health and show environmental and economic benefits.

To ensure that we continue to deliver the best quality services to Albertans, the department will invest an additional \$1 million in our land management program, and we are committing \$1.75 million to a digital disposition mapping system that will help us improve our resource activity data as well as speed up the process.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure this evening to introduce to you and through you Dr. Barbara Lacey, a constituent from Lethbridge-East, a friend, and my former colleague on Lethbridge city council. She presently sits as a four-term alderman on city council. Dr. Barbara Lacey has played a very significant part in the water strategy of southern Alberta and presently serves as the chair of the Oldman River water basin council. I know that she follows with interest the Water for Life discussions. I'm sure that my fellow House member from Lethbridge-West joins me in expressing our welcome. I would ask that she rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Sustainable Resource Development (*continued*)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be able to rise today to discuss the impact of this budget, which is Sustainable Resource Development. I'm actually amazed and I think the public should be amazed or, at least, horrified that we talk about millions and millions of dollars that we're supposed to come to an agreement

or an understanding on within about a two hour and 50 minute time frame. We're talking about the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development and their allocation request for \$230.1 million.

There's a lot that the minister and his staff have actually put forward in the first 20 minutes. I'd like to talk about specific breakdowns by core business and the difference from the request this year to the request that was there last year.

Wildfire management. Now, I know that we have the threat of fires that are increasing every year with regard to the dryness and the conditions. Right now I believe the ministry is asking for \$75.8 million. That's down \$130 million. This leads to the supplemental requests that we have every year. I don't know why we don't accurately request what we know we're going to be using. If we're going to be down about \$200 million, I think if we could come within a couple of hundred million, people would be a little bit more forgiving. But when we're lowballing it by \$130 million, I don't find that good government. I find that being in fact not accountable to the taxpayers whatsoever.

Natural resources and public land management. The request is \$130.7 million. That's an increase of \$28 million. Land, access, and compensation boards: that's only up \$0.9 million. As well, the ministry support services, which is up \$0.9 million. Environment statutory programs: the request is \$4.9 million. That's an increase of \$2.6 million. Then the adjustments and other provisions. It's, you know, quite insignificant there.

The first question, again, that I would ask the minister is: why the discrepancy of what they know is to be used and what they're actually asking for? Why the big difference with regard to the supplementary requests?

Can the minister go through line by line the government and lottery fund estimates that they get from the lottery funds, and can they table a document that explains each line item and identifies exactly which programs are funded through which line item?

Program 1, ministry support services: the budget for both ministries is increasing modestly by about \$20 million. Why is there new money being allocated to these offices, and what will the money be allocated for?

If we look at the human resources budget, it's being increased by almost \$100,000. The ministry is reporting no new increases to staff. The question would be: why is this money being allocated to the department? What will the extra money be used for in the upcoming year?

Moving on to the strategic corporate services budget, it's increasing by approximately \$383,000. Why does this line item require such an increase in funding, and what will the extra funds be used for?

These are some of the specifics, but they're not actually explained. They're embedded in there, and it's us as the opposition that are supposed to ask the questions with regard to these to find out the information that the public so dearly requires so we keep our accountability there.

The breakdown for \$809,000 in the minister's and the deputy minister's offices. I ask for the cards and the salaries for the permanent positions for the ministers, the deputy ministers, the chiefs of staff because as they're carrying on the duties on behalf of this ministry, I think it should be incumbent on them to be able to produce the receipts as to what exactly these deputy ministers and these department heads are in fact using that money for, the salaries of the permanent positions, salaries of the nonpermanent position people, salaries of the contracted positions as well as the travel expenses, the advertising, telephone, communications, and hosting expenses. I mean, we can go on. How much was spent on, you

know, bonuses for the previous year? What was the largest bonus given out, to who was it for, and what was it given for?

Moving on to program 2, wildfire management.

Mr. Dunford: This is estimates, not public accounts.

Mr. Bonko: Well, give me the information I ask for, and I won't have to go through the line by line item. Thank you for that, minister.

If we want to go to the firefighters, the ministry has asked for a supplementary request for approximately \$125 million. He's answered some of the questions for the upgrading of bombers, I'm assuming, with regard to new technologies to be able to take the water and be able to disperse it. But will some of that money be used to buy new equipment for the firefighters? I know that they're expected to pay room and board. I'm just wondering about new equipment. When these people put their heart and soul into it, are they going to be provided with the equipment to be able to fight the fires as well?

Why is the government expecting such a decrease in revenues in premiums, fees, and licences? The ministry budgeted and it shows that it's expecting to receive \$142 million in revenues from premiums, fees, and licences. Last year the minister took in \$172 million. Again, is it expecting a decrease, then, from the premiums, fees, and licences? Is the ministry planning on decreasing the timber royalties this year compared to last year? What assumptions or criteria is the ministry using to come up with this estimated figure? Will any premiums, fees, or licences increase or decrease next year? Which ones, and how much?

I'm glad the minister did in fact mention some of the impact that industry does have with our land use. We talk about reducing the effect of the developmental footprint. I think that's why I was quite pleased to be able to have this ministry. When I'm able to go out and take my kids hunting or at least drive down the lands, I don't want to see the cutlines through the forest, which you do see, in search of that precious oil and gas reserve.

I think we're in between a rock and a hard spot trying to have balance with industrial encroachment which, in fact, impacts our wildlife such as the caribou, which is on the quarter. I hope we don't see the grizzly on it one day because of its extinction. It almost makes me wonder if, in fact, the caribou are there one day with regard to the encroachment and all the land development that we do have within the eastern slopes of this province.

The minister talked about having more conservation officers out there with regard to being able to do more monitoring towards harvesting. The word "harvesting" is, in fact, one of the terms in e-mails and letters and cries of concern that I have with regard to being able to talk about with the Métis harvesting. The minister talked about harvesting. Is this the type of harvesting that he is in fact concerned with? It leaves a kind of blank and asks a person to wonder.

8:30

With regard to the Métis harvesting, trophy hunting, or big game trophy, the big one that the lottery, in fact, attracts so many people from down in the States, this, in fact, I don't believe is taken in with the Métis harvesting agreement. We met with a group, and it wasn't even touched, and the minister from northern development and aboriginal affairs says that, in fact, the Métis harvesting agreement does not even touch on the fact of big trophy or trophy game. That's obviously concerning.

On page 352 under premiums and fees it states that for timber royalties and fees the government is estimating approximately \$80.7

million in revenues as compared to actual figures of \$116 million. Again, why is there such a discrepancy between the two figures? We've been at this long enough; certainly we can plan and be able to significantly come up with an accurate budget. Is this government planning to significantly decrease its timber royalties as compared to last year? One has to wonder. If not, why, then, such a low estimate? Can the minister provide a breakdown as to how much it has received in royalties in the past four years and from whom those royalties have come, which companies?

On page 353 under Revenue, internal government transfers from department for forest fires, the government is estimating approximately \$16.7 million. Last year the actual budget was \$148 million. That is an amazing difference. I'm not sure why. Every year when it comes down to the forestry fires, the government, again, still can't provide pure and accurate estimates with regard to year by year. Again, why the discrepancies?

This year it's again the same problem. On the same page the estimate for the year is \$28.7 million as compared to last year's of \$162 million. Can the minister explain the budgeting practice and how we come up with such a large discrepancy from year to year?

The business plan. What other innovative approaches is the minister considering to address the volatile costs related to fighting the forest fires? The minister states that part of the strategy was to "reduce the economic burden of wildfires on communities . . . by implementing the Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program in partnership with Municipal Affairs." Has this program been fully implemented, and what would be the timeline for that implementation? Can the minister offer what measures have been developed and the efficiency of this program when they're in place? How will they be monitoring that year by year?

The business plan states that the ministry wants to "provide a clear, balanced approach to forest and forest landscape management." That would be listed in strategy 2.1. What is the ministry doing to ensure that the oil and gas industry has the same responsibilities for reforestation as the forestry industry? Whose responsibility is that? It's well known that the oil and gas industry does have the same burdens placed on it in terms of forest conservation that the forestry industry does and is required to do under the timber management agreement. Why does the minister not comply with the oil and gas industry to make sure that they have the same standards that apply to the forestry industry?

What's the ministry doing to ensure the future sustainability of the forestry industry in Alberta when economic maximization of its reserves that drives the forest behind the policies – you know, again, supply and demand. I'm quite concerned about that whole particular piece. I want to make sure, again, that that forest we develop and we rely so heavily on is going to be here for the next hundred years. We have timber management agreements in place, in fact, for 30 and 40 and 50 years. How do we know that we're going to have that forest, that it's going to be there for that 40 and 50 years? Who's monitoring the timelines of the reforestation?

Strategy 2.2 states that the ministry wants to manage the insect infestation "through effective detection and management strategies." That was probably released, as well, with their document today when they talked about more money with regard to the mountain pine beetle, which I'll get back to in a little bit. Will the minister release the details for the strategy for the mountain pine beetle infestation that's threatening our province right now? During question period he talked about the \$1 million allocated that is shared with B.C., and I told the minister that I thought that that was a token amount considering that the ministry in B.C. has allocated \$150 million on top of the \$1.5 billion, which is a long-term, 15-year plan with regard to the pine beetle there. It's already destroyed, as

the minister has said, \$9 billion worth of timber within that province.

Certainly, Alberta has just as much at stake, if not more, when we talk about the amount of people and the amount of resources that are at stake, just to mention natural resources. I'm not sure if the minister, in fact, can take some of that money that he is allocating to that program – why don't we find an Alberta-made solution? We have, certainly, some of the best and brightest minds within our universities. Why don't we in fact allocate a million dollars here to find a homemade solution with regard to the pine beetle right here in Alberta. I'm sure, like I said, that a million dollars wouldn't be wasted money. I'm sure it would be better than slashing and burning the trees, that he indicates is the best solution that he's found already.

Will the minister briefly elaborate the strategy that I've touched on right there. Maybe he'd like to specify something else besides the problem. What role is Murray Smith playing in the resolution with the softwood lumber? Certainly the ministry is aware of that. We have \$4 billion, I think, tied up with regard to tariffs and court costs. I wonder what the minister over there in Washington is doing with regard to being able to find a resolution with regard to the softwood.

Strategy 3.2 states that the ministry will "ensure that wild species are sustained for future generations by encouraging land managers to conserve habitat; maintaining up-to-date management plans." I think that's commendable, but, again, how much is enough is enough? I mean, we talk about ensuring that there's wildlife not only today but tomorrow and for future generations. We've just begun to celebrate here in the province of Alberta 100 years.

I think that's, in fact, why the Métis harvesting agreement was put in place: to ensure that these aboriginal people do have their hunting rights for the next hundred. I think they can see something that the rest of us here on the Liberal side do, that conservation is not going to be enough, that the encroachment within the public lands and the sale of the public lands and the amount of development is going to in fact drive these animals – caribou, grizzly – to extinction. They want to make sure that if there is going to be hunting allowed, they're going to be the ones that are going to be able to do the hunting. That's why they're having this agreement now, that's going to be passed down through their generations over the next hundred years. They see something, I think, that the rest of us had better be taking quite a good point on.

Are we going to be "implementing species-at-risk initiatives through expanded partnerships with conservation agencies, industries, government and academia," with universities? How will the government encourage land managers to conserve the habitat, and what plan will that be for? How will that timeline be implemented, and will they enforce timelines with regard to that?

Why is the government condoning the spring grizzly hunt when their own scientists have stated that they are species at-risk? They've talked about, in fact, putting on more conservation officers, that they're going to be doing ongoing monitoring, but I believe that these same conservation officers, these same experts that they employ within their staff, have told them already that the hunt should be halted until there are more accurate records. The minister has said, in fact, that it's very tough to track them when they're in hibernation. I agree with that point wholeheartedly, but in the spring and into the fall they've got to have a little more accuracy with regard to how many grizzly bears there are, in fact, in Alberta.

Until that time I think there should be, in fact, a stay with regard to the spring grizzly bear hunt. I think they would do a disservice, again, to the people in their employment if they completely ignore the urges of their own people as well as world-renowned scientists, mentioning that David Suzuki, in fact, wrote the Premier urging him

to cancel the spring hunt for grizzly bear that is threatened in Alberta. Why is the minister not postponing it again until the levels are more sustainable or can be more confirmed?

Moving on to another strategy, 4.1 states that the ministry wants to “provide a clear, balanced approach to rangeland management through a . . . framework that optimizes the long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits that Albertans [can] receive.” I, too, want to make sure that those are there, and that’s why I’m asking the questions I am today. Can the minister explain how the government policies are working to achieve this goal? What programs and/or initiatives is this government using to ensure that Albertans and their forests are protected? Can the minister provide a complete breakdown of what policies, legislation, regulatory provisions are being employed to achieve this strategy? Does the minister have any management plans with respect to the caribou?

8:40

I know I’ve touched on a number of specifics, more than I’m probably going to get answers to in the next 20 minutes, but I’m willing to sit down and hope that the minister can in fact enlighten me on some of the questions with regard to some of the questions that I’ve asked.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’ll look forward to it and will stand up again.

The Deputy Chair: Hon minister, do you want to respond, or do you want others to speak and participate at a later stage? What would you prefer?

Mr. Coutts: There are a number of questions that came through, and I’ll try to respond to as many as I can. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore spoke almost as fast in giving me the questions as I did in my initial remarks, so I was trying to write down here as quickly as I could. I’ll get as many questions answered as I possibly can. I was trying to write as fast as he was speaking.

The member opposite asked about lottery funding and where lottery funding might fit into our budget and some of the things that we might spend lottery funding on. He made sort of an inference that it might be hidden in some of our revenues and our expenditures. Well, there’s no hiding at all, hon. member. We don’t have and we do not use any lottery funding in our department at all, so that’s why you don’t see it there. We don’t go after the lottery fund, which is managed by our Department of Gaming. So that’s a fairly easy one.

You talked about ministerial staff and some travel and expense sheets and all the rest of that type of thing. I have to say that it did sound a lot like a Public Accounts question, but we’re very accountable in the department in terms of our expenditures and making sure that we have that. I’m sure at another time, when we get in front of Public Accounts, we can bring some of that historical data. But I can tell you that in this particular budget what we’re looking at doing is making sure that we’re being effective in the department. My deputy minister is a very good manager. He is a good administrator, and the people that he has behind him in human resources will make sure that those dollars go to the right place and to a very effective, on-the-ground management.

You talked about new staff and why we’re having extra dollars and you don’t see us hiring any more staff. Well, we’ve got a number of senior employees. As a matter of fact, we’ve got some employees that have been with us for 43, 44 years. Some of those folks are now retiring, and there’s some attrition going on, so the new staff that we have coming in for our fish and wildlife and some of those positions that we were talking about for biologists, some of

the positions we were talking about for our education programs and our guardians – that’s the reason why we have no new net increase in our FTEs.

You talked about our wildfire budget and the \$75 million that we need to get started, and you talked a little bit later, by your own admission, about the volatility of the fire season. Of course, a lot of that depends on whether or not we have a wet season, how dry it is in the forest, how dry it is on the rangeland, as well, when we’re close to the forestry. I’ll get to that in a minute about our FireSmart communities. But you talked, in addition to that, about the extra dollars for firefighting and upgrading equipment. Naturally, we want to make sure that all of our firefighters are very well equipped. We have to keep improving our equipment, and certainly as technology goes on, we have to keep up with that as well in making sure that our firefighters have the best equipment.

In terms of firefighting, just for interest, the number of wildfires we had in our wildfire year of 2003 was 1,188, and the number of hectares that were burned was 74,000, and that’s about 185,000 acres. Our five-year average is about 1,600 wildfires per year. So when you take a look at the number of wildfires that we have each year and you look at the \$75 million that we have, that just basically gets us started and will help us defend some of those smaller fires.

When we have a major fire – and we can never predict when we’ll have a major fire, and that goes back to the volatility that you talked about – we have to be prepared. We’re always prepared for a major fire, and our wildfire crews do an excellent job under the direction of Cliff Henderson, our assistant deputy minister. There are 40 years of firefighting experience just in that assistant deputy minister. His entire crew do a great job of looking after our wildfires, but if we have a big one, Mr. Chairman, and we go over this expenditure, what we do is go to the sustainability fund or an emergency fund to make sure that that fire is put out. If we go over our budget, then we can go to the sustainability fund and make sure that Albertans’ property is protected, our green space is protected, but also their homes and communities. So it’s a good system, and it works considering, by his own admittance, that there is volatility in the year.

In terms of additional dollars that we’re needing for our FireNet radio system, that’s another expenditure where we’ve got to have more reliable and improved safety and effectiveness in our wildfire operations. If you’ve ever been at a wildfire, you’ve got bombers coming in picking up water off lakes so that they can take it and put water on certain sections of the fire. Then you have other airplanes going to tanker bases and getting filled up with retardant. It’s a very sophisticated and very well-managed process to fight our wildfires. It takes a lot of dedicated people, and they do a really good job of that. The communication that’s required not only on the ground but also in the air is very, very important. Our new FireNet radio system will go a long way to making sure that we have a safe system in the future.

We talked about timber royalties, and I believe your reference was page 352. You talked about the discrepancy in the increase or decrease, and I wasn’t exactly sure about where you were getting all the numbers from, but just to let you know that there is an increase of \$18.7 million from the 2004-05 comparable forecast of \$113 million. You know, \$2.1 million is for the general provisions of manpower and \$4 million, again, for our fish and wildlife officers that we need, and \$2.6 million for pine beetles.

Now, there’s an interesting scenario. The pine beetle, as I’ve said in this House, is the biggest threat that we have to our forestry industry and to our healthy pine forests. The hon. member talked about the \$110 million that the B.C. government is putting into that, and I just wonder if he knows and understands that a hundred million

of that came from the federal government to help them do some reforestation, help them clean up some of the salvage so that they can get their forests back to a healthy state.

8:50

We have worked very closely with British Columbia over the past five years. They notified us a number of years ago that the pine beetle was on its way. Now, I don't think the hon. member fully understands that the pine beetle is a difficult beetle to get rid of. What happens is that once it's finished destroying a tree, there's no natural food for it, so the pine beetle then goes to another tree. Very often the prevailing westerly winds can carry that beetle a good three miles, so it can hop and skip over a healthy forest and land about three miles away and then start infesting a new part of the forest. That's what makes it very, very hard to get rid of and very hard to detect. There's no way of spraying with chemicals for it because they do, as I say, get into the wind, and they're carried all over the place.

It's very, very difficult to get rid of. The best way to get rid of it is for us to continue doing the types of things that we're doing in terms of aerial surveys, making sure that we do on-the-ground surveys, looking at our own industry to help us identify where the pine beetle is because they want to keep it away as well, and taking those areas and those sections and cutting it and burning it.

Now, he asked about a made-in-Alberta solution. While I was in Washington, DC, I stopped in to see the director of forestry for the entire United States of America. That gentleman, Mr. Boswell, was stationed in Kalispell, Montana, where they have a lot of pine forest. This was before he got his job in Washington, DC. He accounted to me the various strategies that they tried to use in getting rid of the pine beetle infestation of about 20 years ago, and they were doing exactly what we're doing today. They had to identify, they had to cut, and they had to burn because there was no other way of getting rid of these beetles. He said that the best thing that could ever happen is if there was a continued five to six weeks of minus 30 to minus 40 degrees to get rid of the beetle because the beetle can't survive those kinds of temperatures.

The member opposite comes up with lots of good suggestions on how we might get to eradicate the beetle, but we do have a made-in-Alberta solution. It's taking best practices from other areas, adapting it to our landscape here, and making sure that we continue to preserve our forests.

He talked about our conservation officers and the additional number of conservation officers. As I mentioned, we're looking at a number of conservation officers. Yes, with the Métis agreement we certainly could stand a few more folks out there on the ground. One thing I'm hearing – and I've heard it for years – is that we need more conservation officers on the ground. One thing I'm hearing from the fishermen of Alberta. They're saying to me when I go out and visit with them: "I just want to be checked to see if I have a fishing licence. If I'm being checked to see if I have a fishing licence, I know that they're out there checking a whole lot of other people." That's the security that people need to see, that our fish and wildlife officers are out there checking creels and making sure that people have licences. That's part of our whole balance and our sustainability and our conservation messages and methods for the fish resource. So more conservation officers and fish and wildlife officers are definitely needed, and it's expected by Albertans, and that's what we're going to do.

In addition to that, because of the pressures that are on our fish and wildlife officers, we're going to have more folks going out there and doing some education and letting people know the rules and the regulations. That's a welcome thing in this budget as well.

Particularly this summer, when we have many of our experienced staff and our dedicated fish and wildlife staff off for their own summer holidays, we're going to have the guardians to take their places so that there is a presence in the backcountry, that there is a presence on the eastern slopes, particularly with access management plans. Municipalities and people that use the backcountry like to see some enforcement out there, and they've told me for a number of years in my own constituency, as a matter of fact, with the Castle access management plan: please, have some more enforcement on the ground. So that's what we're doing, and it's a good thing for Albertans.

I've got to go back to the timber dues because I got sidelined by the way all the questions were coming from different areas. Timber dues: basically, you'll see an increase projected due to higher commodity prices for our timber products. A number of years ago we put a timber dues process in place where the timber dues would be linked to the market. Of course, we have a very, very high market right now, and that certainly reflects the high market.

Some of the discrepancies that the hon. member is looking at: we've had a number of increases in land and grazing fees due to higher oil and gas activity on public grazing lands. So those are the reasons. We've also had decreases, primarily due to timber permit auction and bid and, certainly, higher commodity prices for timber products than in 2003 and 2004. Overall, that's the answer there.

Now, reforestation. I tried to explain reforestation. I thought I did a really good job in the speech. It was prepared by our communications folks, who did an excellent job because it really outlines exactly that in 1994 we turned over reforestation from the department to a delegated authority called FRIAA, and this was done to make sure that we sustain our timber resources. They've been saying to me that they need extra money to make sure that some of the cut blocks that were done prior to 1994, before the new timber dues came into place, get reforested as well as some of the areas that were hit by forest fire previous to 2004. So what we've done is that we've committed \$1.5 million a year for the next three years in this budget to make sure that that reforestation goes ahead under the very capable direction of FRIAA.

They have three programs, and they have three separate accounts. They identify those accounts and where that money actually goes and how the money should get into the system and into the reforestation. They do surveys of cut blocks. They find out the type of soil and everything else to make sure that the species that they want to plant there will survive. They also take a look and see if there has already been growth and where they might have to do fill. They do evaluations of that, and if there's been a cut block that has had many years without any reforestation – maybe the conifer was taken off it but now the deciduous trees have taken over – they have to assess whether or not it's even worthwhile going in there.

It's a lengthy process, it's an expensive process, but they do a very, very good job on their timber resource improvement program, on their wildfire reclamation program, and their community timber program. There are those three programs, and they just do a really, really good job. They're dedicated industry people that know that the sustainability of the forestry industry relies on that reforestation, so they have a very strong responsibility there.

Now, let's talk about species at risk. The hon. member was asking some questions about species at risk, and the Species at Risk Act shows that the federal government supports the accord for the protection of species at risk in Canada. That was signed in 1996. However, in Alberta we had strong legislation in place at the time with our Wildlife Act. The Wildlife Act allows for nests and dens of both threatened and endangered species to be protected throughout the year. The Wildlife Act provides for penalties for killing and

trafficking an endangered species of up to \$100,000 in fines and/or two years in prison. So the Wildlife Amendment Act gives Alberta the authority to order penalties of up to \$100,000 and/or two years for poaching and particularly for species such as grizzly bear.

Mr. Chairman, I could go on.

9:00

The Deputy Chair: Yes. Hon. minister, I'm really impressed that you're using the full 20 minutes.

Hon. members, we have now passed that first hour. The following hon. members have indicated that they would like to speak, and I'll recognize them in this order: Edmonton-Calder, Highwood, Peace River, Edmonton-Gold Bar, interspersed in between with the minister's comments. If anybody else wishes to speak, please draw my attention.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very happy to rise to speak to the SRD budget, and I'd like to thank the hon. minister for a very complete presentation. His initial presentation was quite illuminating for me. Nonetheless, I do have a number of questions and areas to consider. I will group them together, and you can feel free to address them as you see fit, either orally or through writing or both.

In looking at the line items of this ministry's budget, one of the things that strikes me – and I know that it's by virtue of sort of the unpredictability of wildfires – is that you have such a high discrepancy between years of budgets. But, you know, at the same time I think that we can look over a longer time period and see that the ministry consistently underestimates the funds that are required to fight wildfires. Indeed, we are in a larger cycle of drier climate. Plus, the increased human activity in our northern boreal forest in particular results in more forest fires over time, over, say, the last 10 or 15 years than the previous 30. So I suppose that on a larger scale, perhaps nature's timeline rather than human fiscal timelines, we could probably more accurately predict that we do need more money to fight wildfires.

You know, in the 2003-2004 budget the ministry was almost 90 per cent overbudget for fighting wildfires, in 2004-2005 65 per cent overbudget. This budget devotes \$14.6 million to the wildfire operations budget, while last year's actual cost was on a scale of \$185 million. My first question – you can, you know, work with this later – is: why has the ministry consistently underestimated wildfire budgets? My feeling is that we could look at it in a larger sense and realize that we're going to be up against the wildfire problem in a large way over the next many years.

One thing that I find a bit disconcerting is that, you know, this will be often thrown in as a reason to alter the overall budget of this province. I know that our hon. Finance minister will bring it up as one of those things that needs to be addressed, and, well, we need to put hundreds of millions of dollars into forest fire fighting. Well, I mean we should know that from the budget from the beginning so that perhaps we could have a larger fund.

I don't know what an endowment fund to preserve our forests would look like, and that could include wildfire expenditures. I mean, this is not an unreasonable approach, I think, to be used, in a similar way that Advanced Education has created an endowment fund. We know that the forests are going to be under threat, and I think that we need more stable numbers here when we're doing budgets for wildfires.

Furthermore, in regard to the firefighting elements of this ministry, the men and women who put their lives on the line in order to fight these fires I believe – and correct me if I'm wrong – are being charged room and board to the tune of approximately \$450 a

month, or at least this was the practice in the past. Perhaps if I could just ask if the ministry still pursues this program, and is this part of a way to offset budget shortfalls to fight wildfires? I know, again, that it's a volatile situation and you have a seasonal labour market that is involved with this, but I'm just wondering how this fits in to the overall budget mix.

This year's budget included an additional \$4.4 million to enhance outreach and education, resource management, and enforcement activities including the hiring, I believe from the release today actually, of 40 full-time and seasonal staff. According to the *Edmonton Journal*, Alberta fish and wildlife officers have found Métis citizens of this province to be shooting big-game animals out of season under the guise of their subsistence rights that they have recently won under the Powley agreement. Furthermore, we are quite concerned that fish and wildlife officers themselves may not be adequately informed or trained on the full implications and details of the Métis hunting and fishing agreement.

So my question to pose to you, then, is that perhaps the ministry should rethink the amount of funding that is going to fish and wildlife officers. My suggestion – and I think this same suggestion is echoed by many people across the province – is that we need to increase the ranks of our fish and wildlife officers in a very significant way, not just with larger numbers but refocusing the intention of the wildlife officers across the province, not just engaging in enforcement but in education and in conservation in the widest possible way.

I know from reading some criticisms from, say, for example, the different sectors that in order to properly enforce the wildlife rules and antipoaching activities, we do have to pay for it. I know that with increasing pressures on our wild areas in this province – our population is increasing, and northern activity is increasing geometrically – it's just absolutely necessary that we have a greater presence in the wild areas of this province in terms of enforcement and education and other conservation practices.

The fish and wildlife officers, I believe, are represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, and one telling observation that AUPE did make in regard to fish and wildlife officers is that, you know, from the year 2000 – these numbers are to 2003 – the amount of contacts with the public that fish and wildlife officers were able to make was in the year 2000 approximately 230,000 contacts, which is quite healthy, and then by 2003 it was down to 70,000 human contacts with citizens. We all know that through either education or politics or whatever it is we're trying to do with human beings, you need that individual contact to have an effective impact on people's behaviour. Right? By cutting back the hours that fish and wildlife people have been allotted over the last five years and, presumably, the amount of officers in the field, the reduction in contact with citizens I think is somewhat troubling.

9:10

As the hon. minister pointed out, if people feel as though the system is working in regard to fishing – and I agree with this as a fisherman myself – if someone is checking their licence, this speaks very largely to the way that our society complies with the law in a general sense. The first rule of having your population comply with laws, in this case with fishing and hunting and conservation laws, is for the population to have the impression that the government or the governing body is there enforcing and protecting other people from breaking those laws. If somebody is out there fishing in his boat and they have that feeling in the back of their mind that Fish and Wildlife is in fact there protecting their fish from other individuals taking more than they should take, then they themselves will be less likely to go over their limit or to poach or whatever. It's all a question of confidence.

Unfortunately, with the lack of clarity in a number of different areas and then the lack of presence of fish and wildlife officers in the field over these past few years, I know from anecdotal experience and a systemic analysis of the situation that that confidence has been eroded. People feel that if there's less enforcement out there and the other guy might be taking more fish and maybe the Métis hunting rights are going to change the equation, well, I might as well go ahead and try to get away with it as well. This is an unhealthy thing, and we need to nip it in the bud.

I think a significant increase in fish and wildlife officers would really go a long way to restore the confidence of sportspeople across this province that, in fact, the SRD is serious about enforcing conservation measures in this province. So the \$4.4 million to put new officers into the field I really don't feel is adequate. I would like to ask just a question of clarity. Are we going to hire 40 new people, or are these 40 sort of new FTE positions that we might be able to pull from different places? I think that that would be a useful clarification.

I think, as well, that you have to give some confidence through the ranks of the fish and wildlife officers. I know a number of officers in the Edmonton area, and there's a real sense that they have been hard done by in the last number of years. You know, I think they could really use a vote of confidence right now, and swelling the ranks to adequate levels would go a long way.

Other questions that I would just like to ask about with this year's budget. On the press release from today, I would like to know how exactly the money that's being allocated to increase outreach and enforcement is going to be disseminated. Through which arms of the ministry is that going to be spent, and what specific programs do you have in mind? I know you mentioned a couple in passing, but through what arms of the ministry will that education element be realized?

I think that there's a general feeling amongst the fish and wildlife officers that more and more is being asked of them over time. Say, for example, the officers were involved in the culling of deer along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border to try to guard against the CWD, chronic wasting disease, epidemic that was being passed through the deer in that area. You know, I think that whole CWD decision – I realize that it's a bit of a crisis, but it seems to be sort of an ad hoc way of dealing with this thing, and then, of course, the fish and wildlife officers were thrown into that. Perhaps a more systematic way of dealing with this whole issue would be in order, and a longer term plan that goes outside the SRD, I would suggest, would be in order.

On the topic of CWD, again, this disease may have devastating effects not only for Alberta's game farmers but also, of course, on Alberta's wildlife. Government officials have so far assured the public that CWD has not touched Alberta's game farms. If it does, the results could kill an already embattled industry. It's a cross-ministry problem, and I think that it doesn't just touch on Agriculture and SRD, but it's also a health issue, and I would like to have – I think the public would as well – more clarification on what the plan is for dealing with CWD over the next few years.

There's a welcome allocation of funds in this budget to fight the Rocky Mountain pine beetle infestation in our forests. I think that much of what the hon. minister had just spoken previously about answered most of my questions about that. I just would like to put it forward that we must realize that the pine beetle infestation is directly linked to climate change. With fewer cold snaps in the winter more of these beetles survive, and away it goes, as you have mentioned. Now, counterintuitively – and this is just something to consider – the government's efforts to combat wildfires may unknowingly aid the pine beetle infestation in some manner. Fires

are a part of the natural cycle of healthy forests, and as we stifle fires, the forests become denser, and this makes it easier for the beetles to jump from one tree to another.

Although I'm certainly not advocating for more forest fires or even less wildfire combats, we would like to push for more research on the Rocky Mountain pine beetle infestation here in our northern climes. I think that we've seen this across North America. If we could allocate at least some of that \$2.6 million and devote it to research, I think that it would not be money poorly spent, especially field research because, you know, the dynamic of each area, from Colorado, as you mentioned, or somewhere that Mr. Boswell was operating from too. Here in Alberta it's a different situation, and we fight these battles ridge by ridge, and it might be interesting to have more field study on that. Okay.

So I just would like to conclude my comments. Again, going back to the line budget items, you know, I think that amongst the different ministries that I have had an opportunity to review so far – and you can give me some clarification on this, hon. minister – this one has the widest variation in budget from year to year, not just in the wildfire management section but also in your overall ministry expenses. Going from the 2004-2005 to now 2005-2006, there's just a massive variation in the numbers. I would like to seek comment on that. Besides the vagaries of fighting wildfires, there must be other things that would, you know – my understanding is that there's a 40 per cent change here from last year to this year. So I am curious about that.

I would invite your comments, and I thank you for your time.

9:20

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coumts: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I know the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore wants to ask a few more questions and maybe some clarifications, and I've got a few more answers for him that I wasn't able to get to in my first responses.

But the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, I'd like to respond to his questions. Hon. member, you made a number of comments, and I want to thank you very much for your comments about our fish and wildlife staff. You hit a number of issues, you know, and challenges that they have every single, solitary day in trying to make sure that we can serve and make sure that our fish and wildlife are going to be there for generations to come and the pressures that they have.

Certainly you're right. The \$4.4 million that we're getting for fish and wildlife officers is really, really important. Could it be more? Would it be better to have more? Would it be nicer to have more? Absolutely because, you know, we've got 3 million people in the province now. Our population is growing. We have an educated workforce. Albertans have a lot of time to go into the backcountry. They like their toys, and they want to be able to go back there with families and camp and fish and hunt, and they want to make sure that that's preserved for future generations. It's something that we're going to have to keep our eye on in terms of the manpower that's needed.

You asked whether these are new positions. Yes, they are new positions, up to 10 new fish and wildlife officers to help with our management programs and including, you know, the enforcement side to make sure that there aren't poachers out there and that we have people that deal with the illegal harvest and those kinds of things and to make sure that our wildlife problems – some of the things that we're experiencing now in the cities, and we work with recreation departments in the cities.

You've seen the coyote, sort of, epidemic over the last few days and the cougar attacks in the backcountry. We talk about the

education component, letting people know when they go into the backcountry what they might be able to experience and how they should maybe defend themselves against bears, against cougars, and that type of thing.

Our fish and wildlife staff, five more of those will help with those. As well, our outreach and education folks will help deal with, you know, taking some of the pressure off our enforcement guys to make sure that they can get out there and do their job. At the same time, the education goes on to help people contend with the issues in the backcountry and the issues that we find right in our own river valley parks.

So it's welcome, the \$4.4 million, and I have to thank the Treasurer and Treasury Board for that. Those are all new positions.

In addition, five new, permanent fisheries staff, and they'll conduct the surveys. I think the surveys are really, really important in terms of making sure of the inventories for our healthy fish stocks and our programs to assist in our fish management and to make sure that we do have a lake and that the habitat will make sure that the fish that are stocked in there will have a fighting chance of surviving so that years down the road the fish stocks will remain. So it's important that we have those.

There are 16 new positions for seasonal forest guardians. We have young people that are just itching to get into the business of conservation, and this summer they'll be out in the backcountry doing some education, doing some interpretation for folks that have questions about fishing regulations, hunting regulations, and things like that. Talking to people about our respect the land program will be very, very valuable in helping to preserve our stocks for the years to come too.

You talked about the firefighting wildfire budget. Some years are lower; some years are higher. It depends on the number of wildfires we have. But on the average it costs about \$195 million a year to fight fires and protect people's property and make sure that we save lives in this province. We talk about that being underfunded. Well, the nice thing about having the availability of the emergency fund, or sustainability fund, to supplement when we have a big fire is, certainly, the security that Albertans like to have. They know that when a fire comes, our staff are out there, and the people are out there to get the job done. So we do get the dollars if we need it for emergencies.

Talk about our room and board policy for our firefighters, and it is a new policy. The changes came into effect April 1, 2005. Basically the changes will apply to about 975 seasonal forest protection staff and all department salaried staff. Emergency firefighters and lookout personnel will not be affected by the change, but staff who choose to use the department's accommodation and meal services will be charged about \$450 a month. A daily rate is also available: \$15 a day for meals and \$5 a day for accommodation. This applies to sustainable resources department staff working in Alberta.

The policy was updated to make the meals and accommodation charges fair and reasonable, and these fees for meals and accommodation are comparable to other provinces. For example, British Columbia charges staff \$200 per week per pay period for the same type of service. Saskatchewan charges their staff \$18 a day, and Ontario charges their staff \$20 to \$30 a day. Staff that may want to use – they may choose to use what services they want and the applicable rates will be deducted, certainly, from their paycheque. You know, the province will recover up to about a million and a half dollars as a result of that policy change.

The chronic wasting disease. You brought up a very good point about a preventative measure that was used with the threat of chronic wasting disease that appears in Saskatchewan deer herds and

particularly up in the Chauvin area. During the summer deer from the Alberta side of the border and the Saskatchewan side of the border go along the river valleys, and there is some contact made with Saskatchewan deer. So a preventative thing is to make sure that the deer are culled on our side when we get too many deer because if we get too many deer and there's a threat of that disease coming into Alberta, it will threaten game farms as well. We want to protect not only the domesticated game farms but also our wildlife. Let me reassure you that the animals that are culled will be tested, and if they found out that there is no disease, that meat will be used for the needy.

You mentioned pine beetle again, and just let me make it very, very clear that the strategy that we have for pine beetle is to stop the spread of pine beetle coming over and threatening our healthy pine forests. B.C. presently has about 300 million cubic meters of dead pine forest over the past 10 years, and along our eastern slopes we have about 300 million cubic meters of healthy pine forest. Some of that is in parks. Some of that's in our own provincial parks; some of that's in our national parks. If the pine beetle comes in and all that turns red, all those trees are dead, it's going to ruin our scenery; it's going to have an effect on our tourist industry as well. As well, when it gets down into some of the FMA areas, it's going to have a devastating effect on our timber industry. So the best thing to do is that we want to stop it at the border, and we use the tactics as I mentioned earlier in answering the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

9:30

I think that just about sums up most of your comments. Again, I want to thank you for your comments about our fish and wildlife guys. They work very, very hard in trying to protect the fish and wildlife stocks, using conservation methods, so that our children and our grandchildren will have that resource down the road. And with this extra manpower that we're getting, we see, hopefully, a definite improvement not only in the education but also in making people realize that there are enforcement people out there and, of course, in stopping the poaching and that type of thing. So thank you very much for that comment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the Member for Highwood, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly a person who was my first campaign manager on my first political campaign.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

It was a successful campaign in grade 10 in Souris regional high school in Prince Edward Island. It was a very modest campaign, Mr. Chairman. She took bristol board and black magic markers and convinced enough of the student body that I could make a good treasurer of the high school. She compared me to Edgar Benson. I would now ask my sister, Dianne MacDonald, who is in the city this week on business, to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Sustainable Resource Development (*continued*)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It just quickly pops to my mind, for the benefit of the poor sister, that you can pick your friends but not your relatives. I'm sorry, hon. member.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the hon. minister for his concise presentation this evening and certainly congratulate him on the knowledge of the issues contained in his ministry. However, I do have one question, and rather than a shotgun I'll just use a single shot here, Mr. Minister. Many Albertans, including those in the Highwood constituency and I'm sure those in the Livingstone-Macleod constituency of yours, continue to be interested in the Alberta grizzly bears, including their management and the annual spring hunt. Albertans simply want to see these bears remain on the provincial landscape in sufficient numbers for future generations. I know the Member for Edmonton-Decore touched on this briefly, and you answered some of the questions. But, Mr. Chairman, can the minister please explain how the department's new budget will enhance the grizzly management?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. When it comes to grizzly bears, this is a very emotional and sensitive issue for Albertans. It depends on what side you're on. If you're on the preventative side and want to see the grizzly bears saved, which we all do – we want to make sure that grizzly bears are on the landscape – you will not want to see a hunt. On the other hand, if you're a farmer in Twin Butte, Alberta, and your kids are on their way out to meet the bus, your wife is standing at the kitchen sink looking out the window, and your children are about, oh, a quarter of a mile away, and between you and your children there is a grizzly bear and her cub going across the path, then you have a concern. So it's different for different people in different circumstances.

We believe that the grizzly bear hunt is part of the management of grizzly bear in the province, part of the management because Gord Stenhouse in the Hinton office has done just a tremendous job of grizzly bear research, probably ground-breaking research on grizzly bears: their habits, their habitat, their territorialism, everything about the grizzly bear, particularly in Alberta and on the eastern slopes. He is the foremost authority in North America on this issue, and some of the things he's come up with, like DNA testing, are helping us to decide exactly how many grizzly bears there are in this province. But it takes a long time to determine that.

We took a number of projects. Part of our management was to preserve the grizzly bear. We shortened the grizzly bear hunt by two weeks. We increased the fines for poaching. Poaching for grizzly bear is a huge problem, but last year there were no grizzly bears taken by poaching, so we think the \$100,000 fine and/or two years in jail is a big deterrent. That's a huge part of our management program as well.

Can Gord Stenhouse in Hinton use some help? Yes, he can. One of the biologists that we're going to hire with these extra dollars this year will help co-ordinate our cariboo and our grizzly bear research, that will help address the issues associated with grizzly bears. Approximately \$350,000 of the budget will be used to make sure that we increase our grizzly bear monitoring, to research our populations, and to try and map habitats. And we can try and track the grizzly bears from that standpoint. We believe that with this extra staff and the sensitivity around grizzly bears we will strengthen

our understanding of grizzly bears and the pressures that they face with human contact.

I met with a group of PhDs over at the university here a couple of weeks ago, and their assessment is that the biggest threat to grizzly bears is the human contact. Grizzly bears like to eat by the side of the road, et cetera, because it's wide open. Some of the cut blocks that we have where vegetation has started, they like to eat there, and it's wide open. It's the human contact that is the biggest threat to grizzly bears.

So we will be able to continue with the grizzly bear inventory that we began in 2004 based on that good, sound DNA that is now an example for North America. Other jurisdictions are starting to use it, like our folks in British Columbia, so that we can compare. We have systems now where we can compare DNA, so we can track the bears going over the border into British Columbia. We also know that the bears go down into Montana. As a matter of fact, you will see bears go all the way from Sundre way down into Glacier park and further south. So the DNA is the best way to track our grizzly bears, and this is what this extra biologist will help us do to make sure that we know the numbers and keep that research program going.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I should say at the outset that I'm a professional forester, and I've been employed in the resource management industry in Alberta for 16 years now. I'm happy and lucky, I guess, that I've had two jobs in my life that I've absolutely loved and one that I absolutely didn't, so I guess I'm ahead in the game.

Being involved in forestry, I've met some just great people in the industry and some of them are seated in the gallery behind me still, I think. I've met a couple of real characters, and at least one of those is seated in the gallery behind me, as well. Being involved in this industry, I just want to stress that I don't agree with some of the negative comments and the criticism that come from the opposition benches here. There's always room for improvement, and I think the department is seeking that.

9:40

I've done things in my career here that I couldn't have done in any other province or maybe even in any other country, being involved in the conservation strategy and the establishment of the sustainable forest management network. There are some wonderful things that have happened in this province and continue to happen. I had the incredible honour a few years ago of travelling to Boston with some department staff, when I was employed in the industry, to deliver a lecture at Harvard University about some of the things that happen in resource management. Alberta is leading in North America, so I don't agree with some of the negativity. As I've said, there's always room for improvement, and I believe the department and the staff are trying to achieve that.

I did have a few questions for the minister. I want to focus, I guess, on what I believe is \$10.3 million on the operational side of the funding here, the \$10.3 million identified on page 347. I have a few questions about programs, I guess, sort of in relation to that.

First of all, the mountain pine beetle, and the minister correctly identifies the potential threat there. I thank the minister for his comments in answer to the Member for Edmonton-Decore. I wholeheartedly hope that we reject a made-in-Alberta solution in that it would be insanity for us to reject the tremendous body of academic and operational research that's out there already. I don't agree with the other hon. member who pointed out that our condi-

tions are different. There's been a tremendous amount of research done on the reaction of pine beetles to various temperatures, altitudes, wind directions, and all that stuff. We'd be insane to reject that out of hand.

In the pine beetle program I'm wondering how much of the funding is targeted at – the minister identified \$2.3 million. Are there actual staff commitments there, research commitments? With respect to the \$100 million that the federal government supplied to B.C., that's necessary because of the serious situation that B.C. is in. We're not in that situation yet, and we're not going to expect those kinds of costs if we can stay ahead of the beetle, which is the trick in pine beetle infestations. But I am wondering: is the federal government ready to commit or talk about any commitment to Alberta? Is that possible at all?

With respect to reforestation the minister identified \$1.5 million per year over three years. Does the minister believe the department has the adequate monitoring systems in place to ensure that reforestation is happening in the province, not just the reforestation that the province does but the vast majority of which is industrial reforestation? Given that there's quite a shift in philosophy about reforestation over the last few years with respect to ecologically based standards or specific standards, does the department intend to focus any additional resources into research to adjust its standards over time?

[Ms Haley in the chair]

The interim Métis harvesting agreement has been mentioned a few times tonight, and the minister mentioned 10 new additional officers. Maybe I do agree with a member of the opposition here about: is that sufficient? Is the minister confident that the enforcement end of it can be accomplished? He spoke at length about the monitoring end of it. Also, is the minister contemplating any research like additional wildlife inventories, or anything like that?

The last area, I guess, is the area of forest tenure, and the minister didn't address that tonight. It wasn't asked. How does the department plan to respond to pressures on the tenure system from such things as the softwood lumber dispute that we're having and the pressures that the Americans are putting on our tenure system? New ways of practising forestry, like ecological management. The pine beetle could have an effect on our tenure system if we want to adjust to meet the demands that we're going to face there.

Also, we're seeing a consolidation in the industry, partly in response to the softwood lumber dispute, and that's put pressure on local communities and on our tenure system. I wonder if the minister could say anything about how we're planning to respond there.

Lastly, I had a question, and this is more of a plea, I suppose, than a question. The minister talked about improvements to airports and to the water bomber fleet. I wonder if I could ask the minister on a personal note and on a constituency note that the department sometime this year review the fees that the department pays for airport use. We're an incredibly significant user of northern airports in particular and in my constituency Manning, Fort Vermilion, and High Level, and I feel that we should ensure that the department is paying fair and competitive rates for airport use there when those small northern airports, that are so important to the north, are under such pressure.

I'll leave my comments there and invite the minister to respond.

The Acting Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman, and thanks

to the hon. Member for Peace River. I want to thank the hon. member for his valuable input to our ministry and to me personally. Your expertise in the forestry industry over the years in some of our talks certainly has helped me with some of the decisions that we've had to make, and I really, really appreciate that. I know that you have a passion for the industry, and I know that it's an important industry for your area, and you represent your constituents well in terms of what forestry means. More importantly, what I've found is that the long-term sustainability of the forestry industry is important to you, and you really do express that well not only to me but to members of this House.

You talked about making sure that our forests are healthy forests, about our ForestCare, that you had a big part in, and conservation, that the research that's gone into all of that is used wisely and that it's used by the department. Absolutely. It's an ongoing initiative on behalf of the department: looking at certification, looking at standards, making sure that our forest companies are all part of that, looking at our reforestation, monitoring, making sure that the surveys that are being done by FRIAA actually fit the bill, and making sure that the reforestation is done in a sustainable way because that is big. Not only is the pine beetle going to have an effect on our resource and our annual allowable cut in the future but also the reforestation and the speed with which our forest grows as well.

You talked about the federal government, their commitment of the \$100 million to B.C. Has the federal government committed any dollars directly to Alberta? We're doing some monitoring, particularly in our parks, which the federal government is responsible for, and that monitoring will decide whether or not the federal government participates. We'll certainly make sure that we continue the dialogue with them to make sure that not only their forests are protected but also that when and if – and we hope it never happens – it does get to the national park boundary on our side, it doesn't spill over into our forests. So that is something that we continue to monitor and work with the federal government on.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Métis harvesting. This also responds to Edmonton-Calder and Edmonton-Decore about Métis harvesting and the number of people, the extra enforcement officers, that we would have. Right now I'd like to report to the hon. member that certainly in terms of big game, Métis, if they've taken a trophy sheep, for example, have got to register it with us. The same thing for goat and the same thing for cougar and grizzly bear and that type of thing. They have to register.

9:50

In terms of: has it escalated beyond the capabilities of our enforcement officers to keep up with it? Up till this September 145 bighorn sheep were taken in the province, and of that, seven were taken as declared by Métis. Now, the thing is that we don't know whether those Métis were in previous years normal hunters. Right now we don't see a proliferation of taking some of these trophies by the Métis. We feel that we have a right balance between the number of enforcement officers out there and the numbers of wildlife that are taken, but it's something that we have to continue to monitor and manage, again, for future generations. If we need more enforcement for that type of thing, if we see a proliferation of it, then of course we have to react to that.

You talked about tenure. The 20-year tenure system has worked well for certainty not only for the companies on wood supply and management plans. It's given them the opportunity to come up with cutting plans, et cetera, et cetera, and you're more versed in this than

I am. It provided certainty for the company, but more importantly it also provided certainty for Albertans that their resource was going to be reforested and that the annual allowable cuts wouldn't be exceeded, et cetera, because the industry itself wants to make sure that it's sustainable for the future.

In 2006 we're going to see a tenure renewal pretty well across the province. We're not going to change that because it's worked well. The 20-year tenure has worked well. It might look somewhat different but not a lot different. We've got to make sure that we keep the innovation and that the research that companies like you were working for and the research that's shared with the department and the new technologies that are out there are taken into account. Plus, as you mentioned, the softwood lumber negotiations that are going on stream: we also take that into account and whether or not some of the exit ramps that we're looking at for the duties that are being put on and the negotiations that allow those exit ramps to come off would be incorporated into the tenure.

There are a couple of other things that we need to address as well. We've got a value-added, secondary manufacturing industry that is looking for fibre all the time. In order for them to survive, they need fibre, so there's been an initiative under way. In the tenure should we put a provision that they must sell to our secondary manufacturing? Those kinds of negotiations continue to go on.

A review of fees for our airport use. I'll certainly take that up with the department. You talked about the viability of your northern airports, and that's the responsible thing that you should do as an MLA, so we'll certainly review that.

Thank you very much for the questions.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hear that the members across are wanting questions, and I'm willing to give some more.

Just to get back to the minister with regard to some of his comments that he had for me. I appreciate that he does have some people with 40-plus years of experience. That's how this industry is able to remain strong and vibrant, because of that ongoing expertise. I commend him in being able to attract and retain people for that long.

With regard to understanding the pine beetle, I did have an opportunity to speak with the Member for Peace River, who did give me a bit of an understanding that you just cannot spray these pests as they do in fact bury themselves within the wood itself. I asked the member and quoted to him: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Is there, in fact, a natural predator that can be released with regard to taking out the pine beetle? You didn't think so. In fact, you've got to worry about introducing another species because that would have an effect on that as well.

Cold weather. We realize that it's going to take cold weather for five to six weeks to be able to kill off the beetle. You know, my memory goes back, and I don't think we've had cold weather now for a couple of years. I believe that if we do get it, it may be a freak occurrence now. The weather is getting warmer. The seasons are not like they used to be 20 years ago. That's just a fact. So it's certainly nothing that we can rely on. I think that if we're going to get a cold snap, it might be every five or six years if we're quite lucky.

The reforestation on burnt-out lands. I'm not sure, in fact, as to who's responsible for that. If it's the ministry itself and they will in fact hire this FRIAA to do some of the reforestation and have them go in and monitor, I'd appreciate that information. I would appreci-

ate a little bit more background with regard to FRIAA and their overall impact and what their intent with regard to the industry is.

The biggest threat, I think, that we have with regard to wildlife and land use remains basically the development and the encroachment with our industry. Again, as I indicated earlier, that puts us between a rock and a hard spot because our economy is basically driven by the natural resources that are out there with oil and gas, and we have to be able to maintain a balance. Education is one of them but, again, balance and to be able to extract what we need in a reasonable process, keeping people employed but, again, respecting the environment. That's the biggest thing right there, and I'm quite concerned that we're able to have some of the lands and the resources and the natural habitats, the wetlands, around for future generations.

Education is certainly part of the picture. I'd use education the way that this ministry used it to warn Albertans with regard to West Nile. I thought it was a good communication strategy. In fact, I saw the commercials throughout the summertime. So a commendable effort on that particular piece.

We talk about the early spring awakening, or the thaw, with regard to the grizzlies. We were able to in fact feed these bears so they weren't going to go off too much out of their regular migrating season or area. We were going to be giving them roadkill, or at least that's what I anticipated or heard. It was roadkill. When we get some of this roadkill that we are feeding the bears because of a lack of food with regard to their early hibernation, do we test this roadkill for CWD as well? That way, we have an idea as to how much of it exists within the wild.

I appreciate some of the comments with regard to the cull on the Saskatchewan border. I'm just, again, skeptical. Obviously, the deer cross in more than just one path, but research has told this ministry that this is a good indication that they should be going here. They did take about 300 deer, which is quite a large number, but what about the vacuum effect? I've heard that industry people have talked about that once those deer disappear, there are going to be more that are coming across. How do you, in fact, effectively monitor the migration? Some had indicated that they are only within a one kilometre radius, and I've had others that say that they can migrate more than 300 kilometres. I mean, who do you believe on that particular thing?

Again, if I could make another plea with regard to the grizzly bear. We appointed a grizzly bear recovery team that called for the postponement of the spring hunt, and the reasoning was that they found that the present number of the grizzly bears in Alberta was around 500. I realize that we are in fact talking about DNA analysis. I'm not sure if we're setting up barb tests for that and then individually picking out the hairs and doing DNA samples on that or if it's through other means of DNA samples that they're able to do this.

The team recommended that the number of grizzly bears should be placed at about a thousand to be able to warrant a hunt. A thousand would be a healthy population. Even this number, according to the World Conservation Union, would still be listed as vulnerable and would still therefore be considered facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. The whole crux of this is this government's refusal to listen to not only, as I mentioned before, science but the Albertans who have also demanded that the spring hunt for the grizzly bear be suspended. I would again urge not only on behalf of my constituents but other Albertans that have written me and e-mailed me even through the election and just after I raised it within this House, that are still very much concerned about making sure and maintaining these wild bears in their natural habitats. Those would be a couple of specifics that I would just ask the minister to comment on.

10:00

Then, finally, the lowballing, again, of the overall budget, with an explanation as to how we come up with about a 30 per cent or a 40 per cent difference with regard to even the fighting of the forest fires. I know that there is, in fact, about a \$110 million shortfall in some cases, and that's when the supplementary request comes in.

I've asked a number of questions again here right now, and I'm hoping that the minister will be able to answer them for me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$219,215,000
Capital Investment	\$20,500,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates of the Department of Sustainable Resource Development and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Sustainable Resource Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$219,215,000; capital investment, \$20,500,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head:

**Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 37

Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 18: Ms Evans]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this evening to speak to Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. I would just like to comment that of the several bills that have

been presented so far this sitting in the Legislature under the guise of housekeeping, this one is, perhaps, most appropriately described that way, and I will be recommending to my colleagues that we support this bill. [some applause] Thank you. It is, indeed, as near as I can tell, a housekeeping bill which allows the government to enact various other pieces of legislation that have either been passed or will undoubtedly be passed in the next few weeks.

Having said that, there are a couple of items that I'm sure you're all anxiously awaiting my comment on, and in particular, I think, would be the striking out of the \$4 billion capping of expenditures of resource revenues and lifting that to \$4.75 billion. I found that really interesting in the government's press release, where it described that the spending of resource revenues would be limited to \$4.75 billion, and it didn't actually refer to the fact that we're raising it by \$750 million. So it was sort of interesting the way that that was spin doctored, if I can say so.

It really does beg the question as to whether or not this government has any sort of a concrete plan for budget surpluses, and again I'll cite the Alberta Liberal Bill 203, which is before the House right now and which refers to a solid plan that deals with surplus revenues and how we believe that they should be dealt with in order to ensure that there is, in fact, a legacy for not only today's residents of this fine province but, in fact, for our children and their children and their children. Unfortunately, I don't see that we're addressing that by lifting by \$750 million the amount of resource revenue that the government is allowed to spend, so I would certainly like to point that out.

The other thing that I find interesting, and perhaps when we get to the committee stage, the minister will enlighten me on it, is the fact that we are including under this proposed act now the provision for adding settlements with First Nations as an expense that would not be – sorry. I don't have the exact wording here, and I'm looking for that. It would not be an actual expense of the government and, therefore, would not constitute a deficit if, in fact, it were to go over the estimates. I guess the question, really, in my mind is: why was this not in there before if there's so much concern?

The minister is indicating that it was in there before, but that's not the way I read the bill. If you can explain for me, you know, when we get to the committee stage or at some point, I would be interested to hear that because I'm just wondering if it was an omission when the bill was first drafted or if, perhaps, there was something on the horizon that I'm not aware of that caused some concern and prompted that particular provision to be added into the bill now. If the minister is indicating that it was there in some other fashion before, and she would provide that information for me, I would be interested to receive it, for sure.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, as I said, it does appear to be truly a housekeeping bill. I could comment on several aspects of it, the \$3 billion cap, but of course we've had ample opportunity to mention that before. I'll just briefly say again that I do believe that capping it at \$3 billion is, in fact, a mistake. If anything, we should have set that as a floor, not a ceiling, and I am disappointed in the budget that we're only committing \$250 million to it this year when at that rate it will take us 12 years to reach the ceiling. The government's own projections show only an \$11 million return on that investment this year, which is, quite frankly, a pittance to postsecondary in the way of an endowment. So I'm disappointed in that. Nevertheless, the act will be passed, and this will allow us to put that \$250 million in there. It is important to at least begin with that, so I'm not going to hold that up.

10:10

The other thing that I am pleased about, something that I've been talking about both personally and now more recently in my capacity

as an MLA and the Finance critic, is that we are taking some steps to inflation-proof the heritage savings trust fund, and I'm certainly pleased about that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will recommend to my colleagues that we support this bill. I see several others anxious to rise and speak to it as well, so I will take my seat. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am happy to rise and speak in favour of Bill 37. I find it refreshing that we see at the heart of this bill an increase in utilizing nonrenewable resource revenue to increase our program spending in this province. I think that it's a useful and necessary thing to do at this juncture given the practical, other details of this budget but also as a way to set a precedent to place more of this money into program spending.

You know, it's important, though, at the same time to realize that we need to come up with a longer range plan by which we cannot just spend or put away this money in the, sort of, post debt scenario in this province but also to put away and make a plan for a post oil and gas era for Alberta as well. I mean, I realize that that is a long-term planning thing to ask for, but I think we owe it to the future generations of this province to have a plan like that in place and for our own peace of mind, to know that we are not spending away the assets that we currently enjoy in this province at the expense of future generations.

I think that one aspect of this act, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, that I would perhaps like to bring forward – and we can discuss it in third reading or committee stage – is putting some of the money that we have as surplus back towards the heritage savings fund. I think that, you know, the heritage savings trust fund has been languishing somewhat in these past years. When we build a budget and if that budget is reasonable to meet the programming needs of our province, then it seems reasonable that the heritage trust fund should see some of that surplus to build for the future.

As well, I hear a lot of talk from the two other parties in this House about using surplus funds for planning for education or for other aspects of our jurisdiction here as a Legislature. But if we planned for the way that we should program in the first place, then it would seem to me that, you know, we would be more responsible in funding programming such as postsecondary education and not just sort of leaving it up to the vagaries of surpluses to build the proper foundation, say, for an expansion of our postsecondary education or, let's say, our public health regime that we have or public education from K to 12, et cetera.

In a way I'm hoping that Bill 37 might be a bit of a contagious act, Mr. Speaker, in the sense that we can be more honest in looking at what our true revenues are going to be instead of being so notorious in our lowballing of those revenue numbers and then coming back later in the year to announce to the grateful public that we have such huge windfalls. You know, I'm hoping that this precedence, I suppose – that Bill 37 suggests that we spend more money on programming in the first place, I think that that is an altogether more honest and realistic way to budget for Albertans and show transparency for Albertans to see where their money is going.

So, again, just to conclude, we are certainly in support of Bill 37, and we'd like to see more of these proper program funding increases in the budget in the future.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In regard to Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, I just have one question that hopefully will be answered during the course of debate. That question would be around the accumulated debt. It's slightly less than \$3.5 billion, and one of the concepts that we're looking at here this evening is to lock by law the final \$3.5 billion to retire the debt into the debt retirement account in a fashion that, I think, is going to continue right through until 2017. Some of these instruments are long term, and they don't come due until that time. It could be even later than that.

But what, exactly, is going to be the manner in which the interest is going to be used on this account? There have been discussions in the past, certainly whenever the government was so reluctant to adequately fund the public school boards to settle the issue between the teachers and the school boards. There was a suggestion from this side of the House that some of the money that had been previously set aside, the interest from that could be used. This could be a lot of money generated in interest revenue from this. Exactly what is that money going to be used for? Certainly, whenever we consider that it's this government's policy that it's forcing the public board in the city of Edmonton to close four good schools to save in operations costs anywhere from \$140,000 to \$90,000, perhaps some of the interest that's accumulated in this account could be used to support neighbourhood community public schools.

I look forward to the answer from the hon. minister. We could be talking about a considerable amount of money here, and I would like to know how that's going to be used.

Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there have been some excellent comments and questions, and I think I understand from the members who have asked that they would be quite pleased to entertain some further dialogue in Committee of Supply, and as I introduce it in Committee of Supply, I will make comment and answer questions and all of that.

Those would be my closing comments on Bill 37.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a second time]

Bill 29 Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to move second reading of Bill 29, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005.

10:20

This important amendment will offer a new personal income support program for AISH recipients through the introduction of supplementary benefits. As you know, when the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports was created last fall, it was the first time that responsibility for adult disability programs was placed within one department. In responding to the recommendations of the MLA committee reviewing the AISH program, we knew the importance of addressing the recommendations in a comprehensive and coordinated way that is responsive to the needs of people who rely on our programs.

All members know that there have only been two types of benefits available under the AISH program. The first is the living allowance, which I announced last week would be increasing to a maximum of

\$1,000 by next April. The second is the comprehensive health benefit package, which is provided at no cost to AISH clients and includes full coverage for their health care premiums, prescription drugs, as well as full dental services, eye care, and essential diabetic supplies. That package is worth approximately on average about \$300 a month.

Last week I was pleased to announce that this year we will introduce a new benefit for Albertans on AISH: the personal income supports through supplementary benefit program. This minor legislative change outlined under Bill 29 will allow us to offer this new benefit which was previously not available under the AISH program component. This new benefit will help make AISH a more holistic program and be more responsive to our client's needs.

The new supplementary benefits will cover a variety of costs, and I'd like to briefly tell you about just a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker. There are more than 1,000 single parents on AISH as well as about 400 couples with children, and we've heard that some have had difficulty making ends meet when it is time for their children to go back to school each fall. In addition to the living allowance increase, which would help ease some of the pressure, the client will now be able to also apply for the new supplementary benefit to help cover the cost of school supplies or school fees. Previously this was not possible under AISH because the program didn't have a separate, flexible benefit category to offer that coverage.

Clients could also apply for additional financial assistance to cover such costs as wheelchair repairs or wheelchair batteries, which, as you know, can be very expensive, in some cases up to \$400. For those clients looking to enhance their skills so that they can work, this benefit would also be used to cover such costs as transportation to employment or training programs that may help the clients improve their skills.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but given the hour, I won't. The reason I could, though, is because the coverage that will be offered by the new supplementary benefit program I think will be as unique as the needs of the clients. Through this new personal income support we will offer supplementary benefits and be better able to assess and address the needs on a case-by-case basis. At first the benefits are expected to provide an average benefit of about \$180 to \$200 a month for eligible clients.

It is important to note that these supplementary benefits will be available for all AISH clients who have less than \$3,000 in liquid assets. That's approximately 80 per cent of the client base. To be clear, we are referring to liquid assets. This does not include the individual's home, their vehicle, or other items in trust. This was the level that was indicated by the MLA committee, and we spent a lot of time carefully choosing that figure because, as I said, it's approximately 80 per cent of the client base that would be eligible. Most importantly, it will help ensure that those who have few resources to cover unexpected costs will have some extra help.

The supplementary benefits will be made available for AISH clients later this year. This fiscal year it is expected that these benefits will cost approximately 10 and a half million dollars. It's actually beginning immediately, but it takes time for the IT and whatnot to be set up, which is why it won't begin this month. Next year, the first full year the benefits will be available under AISH, it is expected to cost approximately \$25 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, last Friday I did announce the renewal of the AISH program, and that renewal included an unprecedented investment in the AISH program, which was an \$80 million increase in the budget, bringing total program spending to \$488 million this year. In addition to the new funding, as a result of the MLA review process we are making important changes that will make this program more responsive to AISH clients. The renewed

AISH program offers clients a significant package of benefits, especially with the new addition of the supplementary benefits through this personal income support program. And that, as I said, will address the clients' needs.

So with that, I would move adjournment on Bill 29, the AISH amendment act, for discussion at a later date. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 11
Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to move third reading of Bill 11, the Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act.

I'm very pleased to have the support of the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler for this bill. This bill will ensure a safe, secure water supply for approximately 6,000 Albertans across nine communities in central Alberta. This act will allow Alberta Environment to issue a water licence, Mr. Speaker, to transfer treated drinking water from the town of Stettler to the communities of Donalda, Big Valley, Rochon Sands, White Sands, Byemoor, Endiang, Erskine, Nevis, and Red Willow.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill, and I will just make a couple of comments because I know that we discussed this in great length, which I think was one of the better debates that I've heard since I've been in this House. There was a great deal of information shared. There were a great deal of concerns expressed from this side of the House that were answered, and I think that made me a little more comfortable with this. There were three things. The Liberals certainly wanted a water protection plan with a conservation act that went with it, and I believe there was some good discussion around that conservation. I'm not altogether sure that this bill totally addresses how deep I would like it to have gone, but it certainly is a start.

Another thing that was discussed that is very alarming, or could be alarming, to me is – and I'm hoping that we have that assurance that we would be protected and not ever sell our water so that we would become involved with a NAFTA problem that could blossom into a softwood. We certainly don't want to go that route.

The other thing that I think is very good about this bill is that any time there is a water transfer in water river basins, it must be approved by this House. I think that from all Albertans' point of view, because this is so very, very important and we are changing the way our whole geographic and environment works, it must come to this House.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate?

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has moved third reading of Bill 11, Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act.

Mr. Eggen: I don't know if I caught you. I was going to speak.

The Acting Speaker: I did not recognize you, and I'd already recognized the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate, so I don't think there's provision that I could come back to you now.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

Bill 19
Securities Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tuesday night I spoke in response to questions regarding Bill 19 during Committee of the Whole, and I hope I was able to clarify some of the concerns the hon. members had about this legislation. However, my colleagues will be very disappointed, but I must confess an error. Bill 19 will require ministerial approval of remuneration for the chair, vice-chairs, lead independent member, and commission members. For the record I wish to clarify a remark that I made during Committee of the Whole when I noted that remuneration would be vetted with an OC at the ministerial level. No OC is required, but ministerial approval will be required.* This will provide for an appropriate level of government oversight through increased accountability and minimize potential conflicts of interest.

10:30

Before we proceed to third and final reading, I would briefly like to highlight the importance of this bill. As I've stated, this legislation helps to fulfill a commitment we made with our provincial and territorial partners in a memorandum of understanding to reform the existing securities framework and inspire greater investor confidence. In order to provide more consistent regulation across Canada, this legislation will further harmonize various provisions of the Alberta Securities Act with those of other jurisdictions.

The recent allegations against the Alberta Securities Commission, though unrelated to this legislation, have nonetheless highlighted the importance of enforcement. Mr. Speaker, Bill 19 gives the commission more bite, as one of the hon. members commented, by enhancing enforcement and compliance powers through a variety of means, as I outlined during second reading and in my comments Tuesday. It sends a message that the government of Alberta takes security legislation very seriously and is working to improve our ability to enforce those laws.

Tuesday night some of the hon. members also repeated their assertion that we should pursue a single securities regulator. I responded to this during committee, but I would like to just repeat that the memorandum of understanding focuses on steps we would need to take if in the future the provinces and territories wanted to go that way.

In any event, Alberta remains committed to working with the other provinces and territories to improve securities regulation that inspires investor confidence and supports competitiveness, innovation, and growth through efficient, streamlined, and cost-effective securities regulation.

I urge all members to support this important legislation that makes it easier for businesses to access capital markets across Canada while at the same time ensuring the highest levels of investor protection.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 19, the Securities Amendment Act, 2005. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I indicated when

I spoke to this bill in second reading that I was willing to accept that it is better than nothing, and it certainly is a step in the right direction. I recognize that the passport system, while it might not be the single entity that I would personally prefer, certainly is some ways along that route. In fact, in a personal conversation I had with the minister, there was some indication that there may be some possibility at a future date of having an overriding, overarching umbrella that would operate above the various provincial commissions.

So I'm a little confused, quite frankly, because the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky indicated in his comments during committee that there was absolutely no way ever that this government intended to look at a single commission, yet tonight he seems to have maybe backed off on that a little bit. I'm not sure if that's what he meant or not. I hope it is because I think there is value, at least, in considering that based on some of the comments that we've had from various stakeholders that that might have been their first choice in a perfect world and given that the political will wasn't there to proceed in that regard, this is a good alternative. So I'm just hopeful that that's what he meant tonight when he made his comments in third reading.

I appreciate his recognition of the fact that there was an error in his comments the other day. I think I indicated that I was actually pleased to see that the minister has final authority in setting the remuneration of those various members because I do believe that there is value in that in this particular case. The fact that the minister would have final say I believe is a good thing.

The fact that this takes us into a situation where we're in line with what other commissions are doing across the country and allows for a more seamless approach by various investors when they look to do business in Alberta I think is a good thing. I've mentioned that already.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, although it might not be everything that I would have hoped for, it certainly is not a bad first step. Given those comments, I will again be recommending to my colleagues that we support this bill, and I look forward to seeing, hopefully, the positive effects of it.

The last comment that I would make, Mr. Speaker – and, again, I think I made this comment when I spoke to it in second reading – is that when we were speaking to stakeholders, there were allusions to the fact that maybe some of the enforcement changes in here didn't go quite far enough. At the time I wasn't necessarily sure why we were hearing that because nobody was coming right out and saying: you should do this, or you should do that. There were sort of veiled concerns that maybe it wasn't quite enough.

In light of some of the stories in the news now and the fact that the minister has requested a review by the Auditor General, I'm hopeful that, in fact, these changes will be enough. I'm also looking forward to the report from the Auditor General, which the minister has indicated will be tabled in the Legislature and available for all Albertans to see. That is a good thing because it's paramount that investors have every confidence in their investments in Alberta and in the commission that overrides the Securities Commission. So I'm hopeful that the bill will accomplish those things and address the concerns that we were hearing in a sort of veiled fashion from some of the stakeholder groups. If it doesn't, I suspect we may be back here a year from now looking at further amendments to address that, but I'm hopeful that, in fact, this will accomplish that.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to recommend to my colleagues that they support the bill, and I look forward to any further debate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

*See p. 726, right col., para 1

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, had made rather extensive comments in regard to Bill 19 during second reading. The main issue, my main concern, I guess, with Bill 19 was in regard to how it was going to flow through and indeed support and encourage the development of a national securities regulator. That's not to say a federal but a national body that could oversee the securities exchanges of each of the provinces and territories.

Considering that we didn't receive entirely a clear answer to that, I do have a notice of amendment that I would like to pass out to each of the members now. This amendment from my colleague, Mr. Martin, is to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 19, the Securities Amendment Act, 2005, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 19, Securities Amendment Act, 2005, be not now read a third time because it inadequately addresses the need for a national securities regulator."

The NDP opposition has during earlier stages of this bill highlighted the need for a single national securities regulator to better protect investors and catch corporate bad guys, so to speak. It's important to note that a national securities regulator does not mean a federal government regulator. In fact, a single regulator would be a collaboration of the 10 provinces and the three territories modelled somewhat along the lines of the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. Nor does a national securities regulator mean that all of the activities will take place in Ontario. While SEC's head office is in Washington, DC, in America, it has a number of regional offices located in other centres more or less proportionate to the amount of capital market activity that originates there.

10:40

When it comes to investor protection and pursuing corporate crime, Canada is a rather small player compared to the much tougher laws in the U.S. Enron, WorldCom, Martha Stewart, and Tyco have all been prosecuted in the United States, where they take corporate crime very seriously and have the tools to pursue it. Let's take the comparison to the track record that we have here, let's say, for example, with Bre-X, which arguably was one of the biggest scams in corporate securities history. Due to Canada's weak securities laws, none of the Bre-X principals were ever held accountable for their crimes.

A big part of the reason for this patchwork quilt of securities regulation in this country is because of this provincial regulation that we adhere to. I don't think Bill 19 will do much to improve the situation. In fact, the passport system implemented through Bill 19 could, I would suggest, even make things worse. According to Wayne Alford, the former director of enforcement for the Alberta Securities Commission, the passport system could contribute further to, as he said, a race to the bottom. Alford notes that with 13 jurisdictions the incentive is to lower standards in a province relative to other provinces in order to attract capital market participants. Of course, this is not necessarily in the best interests of any investor anywhere.

I want to briefly quote from a guest column Mr. Alford published in the October 2004 *Economics Society of Calgary* newsletter. In it he states:

The Passport System will perpetuate many of the current complaints. There will still be infrastructure duplication. There will still be thirteen regulators who can make whatever rules they see fit. There will still be inconsistent investor protection and enforcement. Government oversight will still be inconsistent.

For the above reasons, I urge members to support this amendment at this time, and I invite you to reflect on it and make comment as you see fit.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, just for

the record, this reasoned amendment that you moved was moved on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Is that correct?

Mr. Eggen: That's correct. That's right. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we have a reasoned amendment before us. Anybody wish to participate?

[Motion on amendment lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

Bill 23

Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General I move third reading of Bill 23.

As he indicated during second reading, the bill is in response to two Supreme Court rulings that have made it necessary for provincial governments across Canada to specify the authority of tribunals in their jurisdiction. The bill streamlines the regulatory process, preserves access to justice for the boards that have the capacity to handle constitutional issues. Bill 23 ensures that boards up to the task of determining these complex issues will have the jurisdiction to do so and makes very clear that boards that do not have that same capacity will be free to do what the Legislature needs them to do. The bill will cut down on unnecessary litigation concerning the jurisdiction of Alberta tribunals and will save time for the litigant as he or she will not have to have the question of jurisdiction slowly winding its way through the various appeals.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, Bill 23 is a necessary piece of legislation that will greatly enhance the administration of justice by clarifying the roles of our boards and tribunals while at the same time maximizing meaningful access to justice.

I'd ask all hon. members to support Bill 23 at third reading.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been following – I don't want to use the word monitor – the progress of Bill 23 through this Assembly since the day it was introduced, and I'm not convinced that this bill is necessary at this time. Now, the hon. Minister of Advanced Education spoke about the need for this bill and specifically section 12 and the notice of question of constitutional law, but I'm not convinced that we need this at this time. I'm not convinced that the reasons that the hon. minister has just recently given are in this case valid.

We are looking at what has been described to me as an unusual procedure, and it's also being described in the research that I have done to be an elaborate legal stunt. I would certainly caution all Members of this Legislative Assembly before Bill 23, the Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005, is passed into law, that we reconsider this. I know from my time in this Assembly that this will not happen, but I just find at this time in the history of this country and as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms continues to be defined by various levels of our parliamentary process that I don't understand why this is necessary.

With that, I will take my seat, but I'm not convinced that this is

something we need at this time in this province as we see the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms unfold. I don't understand why we need it.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker: The question has been called. Hon. Government House Leader, would you like to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a third time]

Bill 32 Animal Keepers Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to move third reading of Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act.

As you know, this act will replace the Livery Stable Keepers Act to better reflect its extensive use by the cattle industry while retaining its clarity and ease of use by animal keepers. Extensive public consultations were undertaken, and I'm confident that we addressed any concerns that were raised about Bill 32 during these consultations and also in committee. I believe this legislation reflects the needs of today's livestock industry, and stakeholders will welcome its proclamation.

I want to thank the staff of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development for their help and guidance on this bill. I do appreciate the excellent comments and support from the members of this Assembly for this bill. That being said, I'd like to move third reading of Bill 32, the Animal Keepers Act.

10:50

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Bill 32 certainly seems to be an improvement, and anything we on this side of the Assembly can do to assist, we're quite happy to do it. The process to date certainly seems to have been more than fair. Everyone has had an opportunity to have input into this change. I almost think it is just an update, really, and would be glad to support that.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For someone who has difficulty keeping goldfish, I obviously had to make many phone calls to find out what this bill was about.

An Hon. Member: What happens to the goldfish?

Ms Pastoor: My goldfish run away.

The people that I did speak with had nothing but good words for this bill, that they are updates that were way behind. So I stand up to support this bill, and I do have the support of many of the people that I spoke with that are in the livestock industry behind that.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to reiterate some of the comments I made when we were back in committee, I believe it was or perhaps in second reading, and that is to compli-

ment the minister and his ministry for the tremendous job they did in consulting with stakeholders.

I would hope and plead with him, actually, that he would implore some of his colleagues to do the same when they're developing bills in the future because it is a comment that we do hear from time to time, that various stakeholder groups have not been consulted enough. I'm thinking particularly of Bill 15, the amendments to the WCB act.

This is such a pleasant thing. As opposition when we're contacting stakeholder groups to see what comments or input they may have, and they indicate to us that they have been fully consulted by the department, that is really pleasing for us to hear. It does in fact make our job as opposition that much easier, too, to know that there has been an effort to include the various stakeholders.

So I would just like to once again commend the minister and the ministry for doing that and again would encourage all other ministers to do the same because it really does, I think, contribute to the democratic process.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace to close debate.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd now ask for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a third time]

Bill 33 Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move third reading of Bill 33, the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

I'd like to thank all members of the Assembly for the debate on this bill at second and in committee. I understand that the minister was able to answer all the questions that were raised. We believe it's a solid bill after consultation with the stakeholders and would ask the Assembly to agree to third reading.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has answered the questions that were presented earlier in debate, and there are no problems on this side of the House with the Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005.

I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly to pass this bill immediately because there seems to be a need for this legislation on the far reaches on that side of the House. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour I'd move that we adjourn to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:56 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 21, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/21

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome.

Let us pray. As we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue our work with the people in the constituencies we represent. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Order of Excellence is the highest honour that the province can bestow upon a citizen, and today it's my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a distinguished group of Albertans seated in your gallery. They represent the 2004 inductees. I would ask yours and the House's indulgence to just say a few words about each of these distinguished people because their contributions to our province have been considerable. I'll ask them to stand as I call out their names.

Ann McCaig is a dedicated fundraiser and advocate for a wide range of Alberta organizations. Her focus has largely been on education and children. Over the years she has lent her tremendous energy and support to organizations such as the Alberta Children's hospital, the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre, the Banff Centre, and the University of Calgary.

Eric Newell is someone members will know as a leader in the development of Alberta's oil sands. Eric served as president, CEO, and chairman of the board of Syncrude before retiring in 2003. He is now chancellor of the University of Alberta. In addition to his work with postsecondary education, Eric continues to provide community leadership in areas such as workforce development, the aboriginal community, and the environment.

Bryan Perkins is a farmer who represents the best of Alberta's pioneering and entrepreneurial traditions. Bryan's innovative approach to his own operation near Wainwright has grown into a new model of farming that's benefiting hundreds of families across the province. Over the years Bryan has also made significant contributions to industry boards and organizations.

John and Barbara Poole are dedicated supporters of a wide range of social, educational, cultural, and environmental causes across Alberta and Canada. While a large portion of their work is done anonymously and without fanfare, I can tell members that there aren't many arts or postsecondary institutions in this province that haven't benefited from their support.

Mr. Speaker, accompanying these distinguished guests are members of the Alberta Order of Excellence Council. I would introduce council chair Dr. Bob Westbury, council members Bunny Ferguson of Edmonton, Jack Gorr of Three Hills, Harley Hotchkiss of Calgary, and Harold Storlien of Medicine Hat.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to give these distinguished visitors a hearty welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two very distinguished and respected Albertans, Dr. Sandy Mactaggart,

chancellor emeritus of the University of Alberta, and his wife, Mrs. Cécile Mactaggart. The Mactaggarts are no strangers to members of this Assembly. They are leading Edmonton businesspeople and philanthropists. Sandy is an officer of the Order of Canada and a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence.

The Mactaggarts are respected and admired throughout this city, across this province, and throughout Canada not only for their impressive and inspirational business success with Maclab Enterprises but, more importantly, for their vast charitable and philanthropic efforts, that have improved this community and our province in so many ways. Yesterday the Mactaggarts took their charitable efforts one giant step further with an impressive \$37 million donation of rare Chinese artifacts and collectibles to the University of Alberta. [applause]

Mr. Speaker, I can only then thank the House for the way in which they've warmly welcomed our respected guests.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you well know and as do all members of the House know, this Assembly works in partnership with municipal elected leaders throughout the province. Looking up into the members' gallery this afternoon, I'm very pleased to see that Mr. Bob Hawkesworth, president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, AUMA, and his executive, who have been visiting with ministers throughout the Legislature Building over the past few days, have joined us for question period today. I would like to introduce Mr. Hawkesworth, who is a former MLA of this Assembly, and also as part of the delegation another former MLA, Mr. Ed Gibbons, councillor for the city of Edmonton, as well as all the other members of the executive of AUMA. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them. I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional recognition of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you 20 grade 8 students from Jarvie school, which is located in the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency. They are accompanied this afternoon by teachers Len Seatter and Mrs. Debra Jackson and parent helpers Colleen Chapotelle and Robert Cardinal, who is the brother of our distinguished Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Among the students is Alissa Cardinal, niece of the hon. minister. They are seated in the public gallery this afternoon. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly four very special guests seated in the members' gallery. They're members of the Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I would ask them to rise as I call their names: Ms Heather Edwards, Ms Kelly O'Donnell, Mrs. Holly Solinski, and Mr. Bin Lau. I'd ask this Assembly to give them a traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two Human Resources and Employment department communication staff who are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. Fiona Wiseman and Jason Maloney are both new to Human Resources and Employment and are here to observe question period. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members 56 of Alberta's brightest and best students from Calmar school. These students are Mrs. Biddell's and Mrs. Wilson's grade 5 and 6 classes. Their guide today is Natalie Wilson, a former page of the Legislative Assembly and Mrs. Wilson's daughter. The parent helpers with this large group are Mrs. Karen Stepanko, Mrs. Crystal Fandrick, Mrs. Laurie Workun, Mrs. Pat Carson-Handley, Mrs. Michelle Erickson, and Mrs. Denschikoff. I would ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

1:40

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am really honoured to be welcoming two of my constituents from Edmonton-McClung who are seated in your gallery, Michael and Mary-Louise Mitchell, who are the parents of Chelsea Mitchell, who is an Assembly page with us and one of the most energetic and most helpful pages in this Assembly. They live in an area of Edmonton-McClung called Rio Terrace. It's an area in which I door knocked very heavily during the campaign, but in case I missed you, I would really like to invite you to visit me at the constituency office. If we don't talk about concerns or issues or suggestions, we can spend half an hour talking about Chelsea and how wonderful she is. I would invite them to stand up, and I would invite the hon. members to join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the Sir George Simpson grade 6, 30 wonderful students, and their teacher, Lindsey Anderson, and helpers or volunteers Annie Gouldson and Charlene Marklund. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two guests to introduce today. The first is Joanne Jarvis, who currently works as a guard at the Bashaw RCMP detachment and is involved with the Lutheran local council as a choir director for ecumenical services. She is accompanied today by Jim Graves, who ran for the NDP in the riding of Lacombe-Ponoka in the previous election. I would ask that Joanne and Jim rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a very well-liked

and successful student leader, Paul Zits. Paul is the outgoing president of the Grant MacEwan College students' union here in Edmonton and has served as the chair of Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council, known as ACTISEC. His continuing efforts to promote a more accessible and affordable system of postsecondary education is commendable and much appreciated. I'll ask now for Paul to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Hank and Sharon Hoekstra from my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They're the proud parents of Elaine Hoekstra, one of our very talented and wonderful pages. Sharon is a kindergarten teacher at Earl Buxton elementary school, a great elementary school that also happens to be located in my constituency. She's been teaching for 30 years. Hank retired this past fall from nearly 30 years of service at the University of Alberta's instructional resource services centre. Mr. Speaker, they're seated in your gallery, and I'd ask that they please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome and thank you from our House.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it's always an honour to introduce a school class, and, again, today I have the honour of introducing to you and through you to members of the Assembly students and teachers and parent helpers from Morrin school. Morrin is located just north of Drumheller. This group has as its accompanying teachers and leaders Bev Deschenes, Mr. Harvey Saltys, Hiruki Kanazawa, Mrs. Dawn Herd, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Richmond, Mrs. Susan Doyle, and Mauricio Rincón. I would ask, if they are in the Assembly, in the public gallery perhaps, to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mactaggart Art Collection

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today and have the honour and privilege of acknowledging and celebrating the generous and impressive donation of rare Chinese artifacts to the University of Alberta announced yesterday by Sandy and Cécile Mactaggart, a donation that will serve as the foundation for the university's new centre for Chinese studies.

Over the years the Mactaggart family has demonstrated in countless ways their commitment to this city and to this province. They are among Edmonton's leading business success stories and have used that success to make their community a better place in so many ways. Yesterday they demonstrated their immense generosity and vision once again by donating a rare collection of Chinese art and artifacts to the University of Alberta, a donation which has been valued at over \$37 million and comprises the largest private donation to the University of Alberta in its history.

The collection includes over 700 items of east Asian art, textiles, and costumes. It will be housed in the University of Alberta's museum collections and will be named the Mactaggart Art Collection. The collection will provide the basis for the university's new centre for Chinese studies, which will house the world renowned expertise on Chinese culture and history.

Members will recall that in the Speech from the Throne the new access to the future fund is intended to support innovation and

excellence in postsecondary education, and the creation of this new centre for Chinese studies at the University of Alberta was specifically referenced in anticipation of this gift. We had the honour of having Mr. Mactaggart and his daughter Fiona here on the floor of the Legislature when the Speech from the Throne was read. In fact, it is fair to say that the promise of the access to the future fund played a role in ensuring that this collection, unique in North America and courted seriously by institutions in Toronto, New York, San Francisco, and elsewhere, remains right here in Edmonton, in Alberta.

This new landmark institute will help to promote greater understanding of the culture, language, and history of China, one of the world's largest and growing economies and a country with which Alberta has long enjoyed a special economic and cultural relationship. The centre will anchor current initiatives between the University of Alberta and China and take those initiatives even further. It will serve as an excellent means of strengthening academic research, business, and cultural ties between Alberta and China. It will also be a means for Albertans to learn more about China and to connect with Chinese people both here at home and abroad.

Given the increasing importance of international connections in the global economy and increasing importance that China is playing in that global economy, an economic opportunity, I can tell you, that is recognized in our government's new 20-year strategic plan, this centre for Chinese cultural studies will be a most valuable and strategic addition to Alberta's postsecondary system and to Alberta itself. Mr. Speaker, the Mactaggarts have been strong visionary advocates for this new centre for Chinese studies, and they've backed up that vision with a donation which will go down in history as one of the most generous and, I believe, meaningful donations ever made to a postsecondary institution.

The Mactaggarts and the University of Alberta – and I might say that the chancellor of the University of Alberta, Eric Newell, has joined the Mactaggarts today as he also joined the Alberta Order of Excellence inductees – and all of those involved in the planning and development of the centre for Chinese studies deserve to be commended for their vision and innovation. In the years ahead it will undoubtedly be seen as one of the world's best, if not the best, Chinese cultural institutes outside of China itself.

Mr. Speaker, once again, may we thank the Mactaggarts for their visionary contribution to this province of ours. [applause]

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As with the Minister of Advanced Education, it is my great honour today to rise to acknowledge and celebrate the largest single donation to the University of Alberta in its entire history. The Mactaggart family's unprecedented donation of a \$37 million Chinese art collection is really a priceless gift to the people of our province. This collection is one of the finest in North America and includes paintings, calligraphy, scrolls, and silk robes. The collection will form the foundation of the university's new centre for Chinese studies. This exciting initiative will be the most impressive Chinese learning centre in Canada. The students, faculty, and community will benefit enormously from this first-rate facility. The centre will bring researchers from all over the world to study the Mactaggart collection's unique items.

I'd like to commend and recognize the family responsible for this extraordinary gift. Sandy Mactaggart was 11 years old when he was shipped to Canada as an evacuee during the Second World War. He went on to graduate cum laude from the Harvard Business School before coming to Edmonton in 1952 with his business partner the late Jean de La Bruyère.

1:50

The company they established, Maclab Enterprises Ltd., has contributed enormously to the landscape of this city, and it's founder, Sandy Mactaggart, has always been a triumphant supporter of postsecondary education, as has his accomplished and always-elegant wife, Cécile. From 1983 to 1994 he served on the University of Alberta board of governors and chaired the university's real estate advisory committee. He went on to donate the 257-acre Mactaggart nature sanctuary to the U of A and the city of Edmonton. Then in 1990 Mr. Mactaggart held the respected position of university chancellor for four years. For countless reasons Sandy Mactaggart was inducted as an officer of the Order of Canada in 1997 and into the Alberta Order of Excellence in 1998.

Cécile and Sandy Mactaggart along with their family have shown true vision in this unprecedented donation. They have recognized that our society's most important asset is its students. By contributing this selfless gift, they continue to make the University of Alberta a better place.

My thanks and the thanks of all MLAs to them.

The Speaker: I have received notification: the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner would like to participate. Unanimous consent would have to be given.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be amiss to not be able to stand up and congratulate the Mactaggarts for this wonderful gift to the province and to the University of Alberta. It's a wonderful way to start off our centennial celebrations with such a gift to go into the next century, and philanthropists in the past have made a great part of Alberta. I'm grateful also, as all MLAs are, for such a wonderful gift and hope that that will help us as we go forward and to continue to trade and to work with the Chinese government and to continue to work and to make our world a better place. I'd like to thank them also.

Thank you.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance has called in the Auditor General to, in her words, dispel concerns about the Alberta Securities Commission. We don't need the Auditor General to dispel concerns as if this were simply a misunderstanding. We need someone who will get to the bottom of these problems. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Given that the Alberta Auditor General has been the auditor of record for the Securities Commission and has repeatedly given the commission unqualified audit approval, will she do the right thing and bring in a genuinely independent out-of-province investigator?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition I have the utmost confidence in the Auditor General, who, I might remind him, is an officer of this Assembly, and I find it distasteful, unusual that such a comment would be made in here of a person of such a respected position.

Dr. Taft: To the same minister: will she admit that the Alberta Auditor General has no credibility on this issue given that year after year his office has given the commission a clean audit report?

Mrs. McClellan: I would absolutely not agree with that statement. Again, I find it unusual and distasteful that an officer of this Assembly would be questioned in this way. The Auditor General of the province of Alberta has provided great service to this government and to this Assembly. His report will be presented to the Assembly through you, Mr. Speaker, and I have the utmost confidence in this gentleman's work.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the same minister: will she admit that the only reason she has asked the Auditor General to prepare one report for her and a separate one for the Legislature and the public is to keep the public in the dark about the real goings-on at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, that speaks to how little the hon. Leader of the Opposition understands, one, my letter to the Auditor General, which I presented in the Assembly yesterday.

I am almost speechless at his attack – I have to call it an attack – on the credibility of the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, as I indicated yesterday, was going to do an audit of the Securities Commission as part of his business. This was identified in January. On April 13 I wrote a letter to the Auditor General and asked him that in view of the lingering concerns out there, despite the report that was issued that identified that the regulatory process was being handled in an even-handed and fair way, identified that there were some human resource issues which are being addressed, Mr. Speaker, because of the importance of the Alberta Securities Commission to the business and investment community, if he would do his report in a complete and timely manner and that he would present that report to me and to the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The situation for employees at the Alberta Securities Commission grows worse by the day. Senior management at the Commission have now hired KPMG to conduct a forensic audit of employee e-mails. This is just another example of the fearful and intimidating climate that ASC whistle-blowers, many of whom came forward in response to a request from the Minister of Finance herself, are being forced to work in. To the Minister of Finance: will the minister do the right thing, protect whistle-blowers who came forward in good faith, and order an immediate end to the KPMG witch hunt?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, again the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition shows a great deal of ignorance of the manner in which this is being handled, and I would like to help him with that. The internal audit that is being done, the forensic audit, is to protect the security of the systems at the Alberta Securities Commission. In fact, he should be applauding that rather than suggesting that it's a witch hunt.

Mr. Speaker, this very same leader was the one that wanted me to table reports in this House, which I refused to do to protect the anonymity of these very employees.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the KPMG witch hunt will give both the chairman and the executive director of the commission the names and e-mails of employees who have spoken out against misconduct at the commission, will the Minister of Finance ask the RCMP to investigate the e-mails of the chairman and the executive director?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the integrity and the good reputation of the Alberta Securities Commission. As I have indicated time and time again in this Assembly, this is a very, very important institution to the business and investment community. I am going to continue to conduct this in a professional manner rather than making allegations and attacks against people where there has been no foundation laid.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what guarantees, if any, can the Minister of Finance give Securities Commission whistle-blowers that they will not suffer any reprisals for their efforts to bring attention to the problems at the Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I have already proved to the employees of the commission that came forward that I will protect the confidentiality of them bringing it forward, unlike the hon. member who wanted the report with names and whatever in it laid before this Assembly. That is what he calls protection. I call protection respecting the confidentiality, respecting the anonymity, and I have not had any concerns from those employees that they are worried about coming forward because of repercussions from this minister.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

2:00

Electricity Marketing

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2002 TransAlta admitted to the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that it used some of the same questionable electricity trading schemes that Enron used in California during 2000 and 2001. [interjection] He may laugh; consumers do not. These dubious tactics, dubbed "ricochet" and "megawatt laundering," unfairly drove up electricity prices. During that same time Alberta electricity consumers saw power prices triple. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. What evidence does the minister have that TransAlta did not use the same tactics here in Alberta to drive up prices?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, he's comparing it to the same tactics of, I guess, another company, which at this stage no investigations have proven has done things to warrant manipulation of the market.

That said, clearly at that time when deregulation occurred, there were shortages of supply, the primary reason why prices increased. Today we actually have the converse. We have an excess of supply, were very successful at having brought on over 3,300 megawatts of power. Today consumers are enjoying the lowest non-hydro rates around the country.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that the EUB told this Progressive Conservative government that TransAlta unfairly overcharged Alberta electricity consumers \$3.7 million in the year 2000, why were TransAlta's trading activities never the subject of a full, independent, public investigation?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there is continual monitoring of the marketplace. The market surveillance administrator continues to act on that behalf. If he has some specifics relating to something that goes back, he says, to 2002, I guess we'd ask that he forward it to us, and we'll take a look at it.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the evidence is tabled daily.

Again to the same minister: is TransAlta a part of the investigation into market manipulation here in Alberta currently being conducted by the federal Competition Bureau, or is it just Enron and their activities to manipulate prices here in Alberta?

The Speaker: I'm not sure the minister can answer that question, but try.

Mr. Melchin: I'm not. I don't know exactly all the specifics; therefore, I won't.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Border Closure to Canadian Cattle

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's inaction in getting the border open to cattle exports to the United States is very disappointing. First the government forgot to provide input during the first USDA consultation on border reopening last year, and then Alberta's \$400,000 man in Washington was not able to find his way to the Montana courtroom where R-CALF got its injunction in early March. Now the provincial Tories are being put to shame by their federal cousins, who are applying to intervene in the July injunction appeal. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Why did the government fail to pursue the option of intervening in the appeal of the U.S. District Court injunction, which is scheduled for July 27?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that the hon. member doesn't understand a lot of what's happened in the last two years, given this particular case. The Alberta government has been and will continue to be a provider of information and resources to the various numbers of groups and individuals who are working to help us open the border; namely, the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States government, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the Alberta Beef Producers association, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. Those are the groups that have the best impact in these court cases because it's their courts.

We sympathize, and we appreciate the bid by our federal Conservative Party. The amicus brief application that was done previously failed in what I would consider, Mr. Speaker, a hostile courtroom. The chances of anything further than that are somewhat slim, so we are putting our resources into the appeal process, where we believe we're going to have a better effect.

Mr. Mason: Excuses, excuses, Mr. Speaker.

Why does the government remain on its collective duff instead of pursuing every available legal option to ensure that the views of Alberta cattle producers are actually heard in the U.S. courts?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member has not spoken to the industry. We met with them last night and continue to meet with them on a daily basis. The Alberta Beef Producers, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, who are the industry the hon. member is talking about, are working with us in partnership. We are exploring every available means to try to get the border open and every available means to be successful in the court case.

As to the Washington allegation, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations would like to supplement that answer.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Why has this government chosen to blame bad science and R-CALF for this crisis instead of actually working to resolve the political and legal problems that have actually caused the problem in the first place?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, that's got to be one of the silliest questions I've heard in this House. We are working together with the industry, and we are working together with our American partners in this issue to resolve what is a North American integrated market problem. I believe that we're on the right track with the industry, working in partnership not only to sustain our industry in Alberta but to build it, to make it stronger, to make it more aggressive, to make it more flexible. I believe also that we're working in a cohesive effort with our American government counterparts in this issue against what is a left-wing, socialist, protectionist group in Montana using their own court system against us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

ESL Funding

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Northeast Calgary has a rich and diverse ethnic/cultural component. In most schools in my riding some have more than 70 per cent of their students coded as ESL students. In fact, in some schools over 30 different primary languages are spoken, and English is not one of them. The Calgary board of education earlier this week passed a motion urging our government to lift the five-year cap on ESL funding because this diversity leads to educational challenges. My question is to the hon. Minister of Education. Considering that by the minister's own admission Calgary has over 50 per cent of the ESL-coded students in the province, would the minister consider raising the amount of money he provides to students and school boards for ESL programs in Calgary?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, the intention of our ESL, or English as a Second Language, program is to help students become fully integrated into our K to 12 education system, and that is why two years ago ESL funding was increased by about 71 per cent. In the budget provided just last week, there is a further increase of another 30 per cent. So we are providing over \$40 million now for ESL programming to school boards. In addition to that, we've also provided a significant per-student funding increase as well, so the member should be happy to see that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that statistics and educators in the field of ESL program delivery have told us that the five-year cap on funding can limit their later success in school, would the minister lift the cap to provide funding as needed for individual students?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the funding cap that was introduced last year came in at the same time that our renewed funding framework came in. Whereas it was deemed appropriate to set a five-year cap on the standard ESL program, so too was it deemed important to increase the rate of funding and the overall funds for standard ESL programming. However, if within that envelope of time the students in question haven't shown the appropriate progress that teachers feel and that families feel they ought to have shown, they certainly could be looked at for additional funding under our enhanced second language funding program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister tell the House what other supports are available for ESL students and their families so they can become productive members of our society?

Mr. Zwozdesky: I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that one of the best places to turn would be to the school principal and/or, in turn, to the school superintendent and see how the enhanced second language programming dollars might be employed to help those children in need. It was always the intention of the education system to see as full an integration as possible of these students within a three-year window. However, five years may be more appropriate for some. In other cases it might actually take longer than that because we know that in some cases students, unfortunately, come from a totally illiterate background, and that doesn't just mean English. It could be in the home language. They could have severe literacy problems in their home language as well. So we do provide additional funding under both scenarios, and we just instituted an additional package of monies. I think the total now is about \$357 under the enhanced portion over and above the standard.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

2:10 Workers' Compensation Appeals

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Long-standing contentious claims with the Workers' Compensation Board continue to be a huge burden for many Alberta families. Previous ministers have at times dangled the carrot of hope before these many thousands of Alberta families by saying that something would be done. Then they backed away. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Will this government finally begin some meaningful process to at least move forward slowly on these long-standing contentious claims?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, and the answer is reasonably short. It is a complicated issue, it's a challenging issue, but it is an issue that I feel and the organization, which is an arm's-length operation, feels the existing appeals processes that are in place can deal with the existing long-term cases that are out there, and they are being dealt with on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Backs: Most people don't believe that, Mr. Minister.

A further question to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: will the minister have the Appeals Commission budget moved from being funded by the WCB to his general budget so that there's no connection between the two and so there's no charge to employers and workers for this arm's-length service?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Backs: A further question to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: what is the government trying to do to reduce the incredibly long wait of more than a year and speed up actions brought to the Appeals Commission for workers' compensation?

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not true because the appeals process that is in place is working very well. In fact, we do get very, very few complaints through the MLAs. The complaints have been reduced considerably. The existing process works very well as it is.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Highway Construction

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 19 is a very busy road that runs from Nisku to Devon and contains a lot of industrial and heavy traffic. This highway is a source of frustration for many of my constituents who use this highway to commute to their jobs in Nisku or Edmonton. In fact, there was a very serious accident just two nights ago involving a transport truck and a vehicle containing a young pregnant mother and her small child. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. When will this highway be twinned in order to make it safer and more efficient for passenger and commercial traffic?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows and I'm sure is fully aware, twinning a road will decrease the traffic accidents by about 47 per cent, so you're seeing a significant decrease in traffic accidents by twinning a road.

Also, as the hon. member I hope knows, we have just done a functional inquiry on that particular road, and indeed it is nearing the level at which we will twin. There are some significant issues that we have to work on, one of them being land acquisition for the twinning, but certainly it has been suggested that that road will be twinned in the near future. The definition of the near future depends on a lot of things such as funding as well as the land acquisition costs that are out there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the minister then: are construction priorities set in stone, or is there some flexibility and ability to change current construction plans?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, in Alberta we have such a buoyant economy that we see a lot of needs changing, and we attempt to have at least a three-year plan or, potentially, a five-year plan. We actually do see priorities change. One of the issues, obviously, that is out there as well is funding. As funding becomes available, there will be more and more roads that are going to be paved, that are going to be twinned, that are going to be put into better condition.

So the short answer to the question is yes. Priorities can be changed, and we look at each one on its individual merits.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for those points.

My final supplemental: how does his department set priorities for these types of projects?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of different ways that we can do it. First of all is condition of the existing road. What takes priority first is that if you have an existing highway that is deteriorating, we don't want to lose that particular infrastructure. Apart from that, the most obvious one is utilization. How many vehicles are actually utilizing this? How many people are actually utilizing this highway? There's a wide myriad of reasons and rationales as to why one particular road is put to the top, but those are probably the two largest ones that we use right now: the number of people and the condition of the existing road.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Oil Well Drilling on Crown Land

Mr. Bonko: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second clause of the EUB's Guide 56 well site application states that consultation with affected land stakeholders is required prior to clearing land. In addition, according to the EUB's Informational Letter 2001-5, section 11, clearly prohibits "preparatory or incidental" operations before a well licence can be issued. Rules have been broken. Albertans want answers. My question to the Minister of Energy: why did the government say that all the proper procedures have been followed by oil and gas companies operating at Sawn Lake when this was obviously not the case?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, with respect to this clearing in particular, information we received at the time is that the mineral rights have been granted, the surface rights leases have been granted, so those permits have been in place. With respect to the well application we said at that time also that the well application licence was yet to come forward. We are going to continue, and we have been, as ministries, the three departments in particular, working cooperatively on this to ensure that all rules in place have been followed. If not, we will continue to enforce the appropriate standards.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since Guide 56, schedule 4, states that consultation with the affected land stakeholders is required prior to development, why, then, were the Lubicon not notified about the loss of their traplines and hunting grounds?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we'd be more than happy, in particular if it comes into traplines and so forth, to gather that information and complete facts surrounding the issue and report in due course.

Mr. Bonko: My final supplemental to the same minister: can the minister table these documents completed by all companies operating at Sawn Lake, proving that all the steps, including the EUB's Guide 56, were met?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that the EUB does act in making sure that all the rules and requirements are met; likewise among our various departments with SRD. We'll be happy to report complete aspects of the details of this case.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Dental Assistance for Seniors

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After giving so much to the province over the years, a number of seniors in my constituency – and there are many – remain concerned with the level of assistance they receive from our provincial seniors' programs. In particular, I've received complaints about the lack of assistance for dental care provided by the province. My questions today are for the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Can the minister tell the members of this Assembly which seniors will actually benefit from the new dental assistance program she announced on budget day?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do recognize that dental health is an important part of healthy aging, which is why we have put in place a new dental assistance program for our seniors. There are approximately 267,000 seniors, which is 80 per cent, that will be eligible for this new program. Full coverage will be provided to seniors that have an income of up to \$20,000, full coverage for a couple with an income of up to \$40,000, partial coverage for seniors with an income of up to \$30,000, and partial coverage for a couple with an income of up to \$60,000. This program has a total coverage for seniors of \$5,000 over a five-year period, which is fairly significant. I hope that assists your constituents, hon. member.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will signing up for this program be complex and involve more confusing forms for seniors to fill out?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, no, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it won't be complex. It's fairly straightforward and accessible for our seniors. We do have seniors that are in our Alberta seniors' benefits program. There are approximately 220,000, which then means that they have already signed onto the program. Also, we've been assured by dental offices that they will assist seniors with knowing who is eligible and how they can apply for the program. Those that are not already a part of our Alberta seniors' benefits program can call our seniors' toll-free line at 1-800-642-3853 in order to help them with the application process.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister also tell us what types of dental services are covered by this program?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to know that the program came about with the assistance of the Alberta Dental Association and College as well as the Alberta College of Denturists. Their assistance helped us to be certain that the program is a basic dental service program. Included in that, hon. member, there are various services offered, which are diagnostic services such as

examination and X-rays; preventative services such as polishing and scaling; restorative services like fillings; oral surgery; endodontics, more commonly known as root canals; periodontics for gum disease treatment; and full and partial dentures.

Also, Mr. Speaker, seniors can receive more information regarding that list from their dentists.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Education System

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I like to give credit where credit is due. After much pressure from parents, teachers, school boards, and the Official Opposition, the government has finally evolved its way to scrapping its achievement tests for grade 4 students in favour of more meaningful diagnostic testing. Since the government appears to be so open to our advice, I thought I might offer some more. My first question to the minister: given that the funding to public schools is scheduled to increase by little more than 3 per cent for years 2 and 3 of the fiscal plan, how does the minister expect school boards to implement diagnostic testing at the K to 3 level?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the pilot test that was conducted last year in June was done entirely for the right reasons, and that was to try and help remediate those children who, unfortunately, did not do as well on their literacy and numeracy tests at the grade 3 level as was anticipated. So in order to not let three years go by before they were retested, a pilot program of testing was brought in. I have reviewed those pilot test results, and I've spoken with teachers and with parents and other administrators and trustees and so on over the past several months, but I don't ever recall having heard of this matter from the opposition. Nonetheless, I accept the kudo that this was an appropriate move to make at this stage.

The challenge now, Mr. Speaker, as the questioner has correctly identified, is to bring in some form of replacement, a new remediation program that would help these students achieve the degree of literacy and numeracy that we would all expect. There will be monies to help do that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why are private schools receiving a 17.4 per cent increase over three years when public school boards are only receiving 12.5 per cent? Public schools should be made the schools of choice, sir.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the questioner has apples and oranges mixed up in the same basket, unfortunately. I don't mean to deride the question or the questioner.

The point is to make it clear that we provide about 60 per cent of 100 per cent of the funding for educational programming needs, and we provide zero funding for capital and plant and operation and maintenance needs for private schools. So to make that kind of comparison of statistics is simply unfair to both the public system and to the private system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when will the minister provide real direction on issues such as wellness, English as a Second Language, fine arts education, and

speech therapy so that boards, teachers, and families know that there's an educational plan from this minister?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a very sound educational plan that is yielding the best results in Canada. You might like to be reminded of that. In fact, when it comes to mathematics and reading and problem solving, generally literacy and numeracy, we rate either first, second, third, or fourth in the whole world. So obviously there's a plan, and obviously the plan is working well.

There will be additional information coming out in time for the health and wellness curriculum for September of '06. I'm working with the Minister of Health and Wellness on that now. There will be additional information as well, some of which has already gone out, but there will be more going out on the second languages programming as well as on fine arts – we just had a motion debated in the House to that extent – and on other important programming needs for all of our children because we want them to continue being the best.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Community Policing

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today concerned Albertans attended a memorial rally for the latest woman involved in street prostitution to be brutally murdered and left for dead near Edmonton. Now, obviously, we all want the police to get this killer or killers as soon as possible. My question is to the Solicitor General. The budget had no new funding for community policing in our major cities even though we've had a raft of these horrendous murders, at least in Edmonton. My question is simply this: why has the government refused to provide extra funding in the major cities for community policing, which would help protect these most vulnerable citizens?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The budget provided over \$6 million to municipal services throughout the province with populations over 5,000. The two largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton, were looked as having the tax ability to provide the resources they need with regard to policing, but this year we provided almost \$15 million to the city of Calgary and over \$10 million to the city of Edmonton to provide funding with regard to policing services within the city of Edmonton. In addition to that, this year's budget provided 40 municipal officers in addition to the \$25 million that I just mentioned to provide an integrated response to organized crime. Part of that organized crime that the hon. member speaks about may include homicides and serious crime in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point I'm trying to make is that we're saying: direct it to community policing. My question to the minister is simply this: would he not agree that community policing in these areas could help prevent the crimes to begin with and perhaps give us some leads on the previous murders?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The \$10 million that we are providing to the city of Edmonton can be used

towards community policing initiatives if that is the choice of the city council and the Edmonton Police Commission. Those dollars are used for policing initiatives, for new resources, for their policing budget, and that's the determination that the city and the Police Commission have to make.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, beyond the policing I'd like to direct the third question to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. My question is simply this: when will this government raise Alberta's woefully inadequate social assistance rates so that vulnerable women are never again forced to make the choice between letting their children go hungry or prostituting themselves in the streets?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, that's a degrading question. As you're aware, the welfare caseload at one time was over 97,000 cases, and a high percentage of those people were young, single, employable people using up those dollars. Through the welfare reforms we managed to move dollars; for example, children's services has a budget with a ministry, persons with developmental disabilities has a budget with a ministry. The rates themselves, the core rates, because we've changed the system so successfully that the persons that are really in need – the caseload at this time is only 11,000, and I have started reviewing the core benefits for those rates. In fact, they've gone through the process already, and we will be looking at them in the near future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wild Rose Agricultural Producers has been active in Alberta for a number of years, operating under the banner as Alberta's only real umbrella farm organization. Funding has always been an issue for this organization. My questions are for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Is the government considering a funding formula for this producer group?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this issue has been raised and been around for the past 15 years or so and has been brought forward by the Wild Rose Ag Producers and its predecessor, Unifarm, over those number of years. It is an umbrella organization. It has, as I'm told, approximately 1,000 farm unit members, and certainly they have been quite vocal in raising the issue of their finances with this government, but as an umbrella organization we really do believe that it's appropriate that the funding for Wild Rose would rest with the commodity organizations and the producers that it represents. We would encourage Wild Rose to work with those commodity organizations and other groups and, certainly, the individuals that are going to support its ongoing work.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is for the same minister. If Wild Rose is unable to garner resources from its membership, is the province considering a check-off of licence plate sales to support its work?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, a general check-off actually might be possible under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act to provide funds for things like marketing and research purposes. However, the Wild Rose Ag Producers would have to demonstrate that the majority of the province's farmers agree with the concept before we would consider it. I understand that in previous years this organization has held a lot of public meetings and made some effort to gain some popular consent in rural Alberta, but we haven't seen that support materialize.

Mr. Groeneveld: My final supplemental, Mr. Speaker: if the Wild Rose Agricultural Producers feel that they are financially strapped to the point where they are unable to represent producers, who will speak for Alberta's farmers?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me be very, very clear. The Wild Rose Ag Producers do have a voice with this government, and they have been heard. But there's also a whole chorus of other voices in this sector, and we're well served by them. There are volunteers and there are staff people in a lot of the commodity groups. We have, certainly, feeder associations, cattle associations, ag societies, even groups like 4-H, who all have a strong voice with this government and the rural MLAs that they represent.

In fact, early in my tenure as agriculture minister I convened a meeting of some 40 representatives of different farm groups so that we could sit down and talk about solutions and moving forward with the ag industry in Alberta. In fact, Wild Rose Ag Producers had representatives at that meeting along with the other 39 different organizations that we had at the meeting in Government House. It's a diverse industry, Mr. Speaker, with a lot of diverse industry views and a lot of diverse industry challenges, and we listen to all of them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Government Efficiency

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a show of unbelievable arrogance the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency said last week in the House that he hopes the government can "get so efficient that I can sit with my feet up." Well, taxpayers don't pay the hon. minister's \$123,000-plus salary so he can sit with his feet up. To the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: can the minister name five solid actions that he has taken since becoming minister that have made this government more efficient?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I'm very sorry that the hon. member misunderstood my statement last time. I meant that if we could get everything very efficient and I didn't even have to have a job, that would be a good thing. But, you know, I would always – always – be working towards finding efficiencies for all Albertans.

Mr. Elsalhy: Given that the minister also said that "we run the smallest government in the country," how is it true with 24 ministries compared to Saskatchewan's 16 or British Columbia's 19, for example?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, there's an awfully big difference between the population of Saskatchewan and the population of Alberta. I think it's three times, to be exact, and we definitely don't have three times as many ministers. And the activity that's happening in Alberta is probably 10 times.

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister then: couldn't this government have spent the \$45 million it gave to horse racing more efficiently by reducing Alberta health care premium taxes for all Albertans instead of collecting \$1,056 every year from every family in this province?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I think it's been said to the hon. members across that we don't give any money to horse racing. They actually earn their money, and they do a good job in Alberta. The minister of agriculture would like to supplement.

Mr. Horner: If I may, Mr. Speaker. The horse-racing industry has taken some hits in this House of late, and I wanted to bring the House's attention to the fact that this industry generates in our economy over \$295 million annually, provides over 7,000 jobs to Albertans. This is an industry that is valuable in this province, that contributes to the economy, and contributes to the lottery fund in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Motorcycle Driver Licensing

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is an increasing number of motorcycle accidents in Alberta involving inexperienced operators that are causing serious injuries and deaths. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Based on the ever-increasing number of motorcycles being registered, is the minister considering a review of the legislation regarding the licensing of operators?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, indeed, we are considering that. As a matter of fact, we are actually doing that right now, and we hope to have the report done by the end of the year. What we're taking a look at is what is happening in other jurisdictions, both national and international, and then determining, quite simply, if there do need to be changes to the motorcycle licensing. Certainly, I have seen, especially this time of year when motorcycles come out, that there seems like there are an inordinate number of traffic accidents involving motorcycles. So it is time that we did take a look at it. We are doing it, and hopefully we'll have an answer by the end of the year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental is to the same minister. Will the minister consider introducing legislation to make motorcycle operating safety training a compulsory component of the licence qualification process?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that that will be included in the review that we're doing, and that could indeed be an outcome of that review, so I'm not entirely ruling it out at all. I am leaving it to the people who are doing the review to bring the recommendations to me, and if, indeed, they are recommending legislation, then we will put in legislation. I have no problems in doing that. But we need to see what is being done in other jurisdictions, both national and international, and attempt to follow suit on this very, very important issue.

Physiotherapy Insurance Fees

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, there's an interesting correlation between health care reforms from the province and continued deals for the insurance industry. Neither bode well for Albertans. We get less health care; they make more profit. The latest is reduced fees paid for physiotherapy treatment by insurance companies under automobile insurance reform and a cap on the number of treatments. My questions are to the minister of health. Why did the government allow this reduction in treatment to Albertans injured in car accidents?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, this is a question for the Minister of Finance.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think I addressed this question in the House some time ago, actually maybe as much as six or seven sitting days ago. What is first anticipated and attempted is a negotiation between the practitioners and the insurance companies. When they are unable to come to an agreement on fees, then we are asked to step in.

What I will tell you is that we have set the fees. This was some weeks ago. In fact, what we've tried to do in coming to a resolution of this difficulty when the insurance companies and practitioners themselves were unable to was to review what other fees were paid and to try to introduce fairness. We looked at WCB fees. We looked at what regional health authorities pay and other payers. Even though these fees are somewhat less than they were, they are the highest paid in Canada that we can find anywhere.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Back to the minister of health again. The physiotherapists feel strongly that they were given an edict rather than allowed to negotiate these changes. Can the minister tell us what went wrong?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. I do not do insurers. I'm not sure whether or not that reference was, in fact, to the minister of health or to the Minister of Finance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Minister of Health and Wellness: is allowing a reduction in physiotherapy fees, likely forcing some therapists out of business, part of the government's health workforce planning strategy?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, if we're not talking about insurers but if we are talking about what the Capital health and Calgary health region have done, I could advise that physiotherapy services provided in those areas are still provided to those who are low income who need the services. The dollars that are being expended on these allied services – which, incidentally, are supplementary to medicare kinds of coverages but at the discretion of the provinces and the authorities – are focused on providing the maximum coverage for those that are most in need.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Species at Risk

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The federal government's Species at Risk Act came into force on June 1, 2004. Did this affect Alberta's efforts regarding protecting species at risk?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, the Species at Risk Act shows that the federal government supports the accord for the protection of species at risk in Canada that was signed by all the provinces in 1996. However, Alberta has strong legislation through our Wildlife Act. In our Wildlife Act we have the kinds of provisions that allow for nests and dens of threatened and endangered species to be protected throughout the year, and that's an additional protection. Among other things our Wildlife Act provides for huge penalties for poaching. So, actually, Alberta has been very active in managing its species at risk for over 25 years, and we've done it in a very responsible way. That's why we have the kinds of protection under the Wildlife Act that we do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Some people criticize Alberta for not enacting a stand-alone species at risk legislation. Is such a piece of legislation necessary?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe that in Alberta we have something better than stand-alone legislation, and our efforts are a model for all jurisdictions across Canada. We have a number of amendments that have strengthened our Wildlife Act. You know, you can have all the legislation in the world. You need good legislation, but more importantly you also need the resources to go behind that legislation to make sure that you enact and enforce the legislation. In enacting the legislation, our wildlife officers are on the ground. We also do research with universities and that type of thing on endangered species. Also, our budget this year allows for another \$100,000 in addition to the \$300,000 that we have for species at risk, plus another \$300,000 for caribou work, which is vitally important for that endangered species.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the same minister. What successes has Alberta achieved when it comes to species at risk?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, in the last 30 years we've restored the peregrine falcon, as a prime example, from less than 10 breeding pairs in 1970 to 48 breeding pairs in 2001, and we have hundreds of species that have three approved recovery plans and 11 recovery teams at various stages. So we have very good success with our legislation and our regulations.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to a Legislative Officer

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm rather concerned about the first series of questions today in the House. I want to refer the House leaders for reading, please, between now and Monday to *Beauchesne 493*, all sections related to it, and to the booklet *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, particularly the section on page 524, Reference by Name to Members of the Public. Now, it's very clear

that one should be very, very careful about any comments of any kind of a suggestive nature which may be questionable by others to individuals who are not part of this House.

In the first series of questions today, however, these questions were about an agent, an officer of this House. In the years that I've had the privilege of being in the chair, I do not recall any such line of questioning of any such type of suggestive behaviour. I've also been a member of this House since 1979, and I do not recall questions that even came close to the type today.

So I'm going to look at the Blues over the weekend, and I would invite all of the House leaders to look at them as well, as well as the citations in the text with respect to this. I'm also going to ask the chair of the Legislative Offices Committee to undertake a similar review herself as the officer in question is an officer of this Legislative Assembly, the Auditor General, and has no way of defending himself. This is serious, in my view.

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Education Week

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next week, April 24 to 30, is Education Week. This year's theme is Public Education: Proud Legacy, Inspired Future, a theme that recognizes our centennial year.

In 1905 part of the establishment of our new province was the development of a school system and a unification of education efforts of schools, large and small, in all corners of the province. That year 121 school districts were inaugurated to serve students in both rural and urban areas.

For many years Albertans were served by one-room schools, that provided a place for learning for children and also served as a community centre for gatherings, town meetings, social functions, fundraising events, theatrical and musical events. Many new ideas and initiatives were launched within the walls of these early schools. Many young scholars found inspiration for a life of achievement in the arts, sciences, medicine, engineering, politics, business, or community service. Many a dream was fulfilled, many a romance began, many an antic was hatched, much laughter was heard, and some tears were shed in our schools over the years.

Mr. Speaker, these stories and the events of our centennial year in the classroom and in communities across Alberta will help students to reflect on the past and provide an opportunity to learn more about their province. At the same time as they see how the stories evolved and how people lived their lives and faced their challenges, they will be inspired to think about their own legacy to our history and their potential to shape our future.

I ask all members to take time next week to celebrate learning, to honour our students' achievements, to commend our teachers and school administrators, who contribute to our world-class education system, and to mark Education Week.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Leduc/Grimma Partnership

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 19, earlier this week, at the Leduc-Nisku Economic Development Authority partnership breakfast in my constituency a joint declaration of co-operation was signed between the city of Leduc, Leduc county, and the city of Grimma in Germany. This breakfast was attended by almost 400 business and political leaders including the hon. Minister

of Education, the hon. Minister of Economic Development, Consul General Hans-Michael Schwandt of the Federal Republic of Germany, Honorary Consul Fritz Koenig, myself, as well as the mayor of the city of Leduc and the reeve of Leduc county, and many other city and county officials and staff.

The partnership began several years ago, Mr. Speaker, after the city of Grimma was flooded in August of 2002. Mr. Koenig toured the affected area and upon returning to Alberta secured some \$50,000 in financial support from the German-Canadian business association as well as \$25,000 from the government of Alberta. Through Mr. Koenig the Leduc-Nisku EDA invited Matthias Berger, the bürgermeister, or mayor, of Grimma to tour our region and enter into an economic partnership. However, it quickly expanded to include a full delegation of 23 political and business leaders from Grimma. This delegation was hosted at a luncheon by the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations and introduced to this House.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta and the province of Saxony in Germany already have an established relationship of co-operation. The city of Grimma and the area comprising Leduc county and the city of Leduc have many similarities, including farming, a large industrial park, and an airport. This co-operation agreement is a great example of how Albertans continue to think outside the box and find opportunities throughout our global village to continue to enhance the Alberta advantage. Congratulations to Leduc county, the city of Leduc, Leduc-Nisku EDA, and our German partners for this great initiative.

2:50 **Stollery Children's Hospital**

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise and inform the Assembly about an important fundraiser currently going on for the Stollery children's hospital. The Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation radiothon began yesterday, April 20, and continues today and tomorrow. Children, families, and health care professionals gather each year during the radiothon to share their experiences, showing what makes the Stollery a special place of hope and healing.

Last year's radiothon raised over \$1 million. Over 80 families and hospital staff shared their experiences on the air, and the community responded with 5,674 pledges in support of the Stollery children's hospital.

Mr. Speaker, over 80,000 patient visits occur at the Stollery children's hospital each year. Children come to the Stollery to receive the very best in state-of-the-art pediatric health care.

I would like to thank all the sponsors of the radiothon for their hard work in making this very important fundraiser happen. I also want to thank the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation for its efforts in helping to save the lives of children. Without the efforts of the foundation the hospital would not be where it is today, a national leader in specialized children's health care.

The foundation raises money for miracles, Mr. Speaker, so I urge Albertans to call in and make a pledge. Let's beat the million dollars that were raised last year. To make a pledge, the local number is 407-5437 or toll-free at 1-866-407-5437.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Legislation

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe in the power of members' statements, and I would like to thank the Speaker and the House leaders for the continued evolution of this kind of private members' avenue for expression in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as you remarked last Thursday regarding the unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Order 8(3) to allow for the consideration of Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, this was an historic occasion. The all-party consensus was, to use your words, a great "example of parliamentary co-operation, the highest form of democracy."

I wish to sincerely thank all who had a hand in making third reading of Bill 202 possible. What is left to do is royal assent and proclamation. Before the end of the spring sitting, royal assent will occur. Hopefully, not too long thereafter the bill will be proclaimed into law by cabinet.

What happens between royal assent and proclamation is the good work of preparing Bill 202 to be functional in law and administration, and I ask all who are anxious to see the fruits of this bill to be patient as all stakeholders move assuredly toward seeing the first of many young lives saved by the empowered intervention of their parents, the resources of the province, and caring professionals. Mr. Speaker, what better work can we do here than this. Last Thursday we saved young lives.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Democratic Renewal

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to address the topic of democratic renewal, one that is important to many of us in all parties on both sides of this House. I want to start with a fundamental of democracy, the franchise. In our secular, pluralistic society there are few things that truly bind us together except for our quest for security and material well-being. The exercise of our free will in voting is one of the few values that connects us all. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms includes a five-year limit on Legislatures and general elections as part of a list of democratic freedoms. It is on this freedom that I wish to focus.

Mr. Speaker, how can we assure that the ballot is truly a free expression of a public that is being consulted and not merely polled and manipulated? First to be looked at is the date we go to the polls. It is not government for the people if a vote is timed to favour an incumbent government's chances of re-election or an opposition's chance of unseating a government.

Second is the need to make sure that public funds are not used to favour one interest over another. To ensure this, a sitting government must bring down a budget well in advance of a scheduled election, with no additional expenditures, grants, or handouts while a campaign is on.

Third is the need for a public audit before a campaign begins. Knowing the state of the books beforehand will make it harder for a party to make rash promises to get elected and then renege on those because the cupboard is bare and harder for a government to stash away surpluses that can be doled out to cover programs not discussed in the election.

It is barely 100 years that we've had the secret ballot, less than that since we've had universal suffrage. Let us look on those past achievements as examples of and as a spur to a government that is truly of, for, and by the people.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Raymond Comets Cardston Lady Cougars

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to stand and recognize the outstanding achievement of two high school girls

basketball teams in my constituency. The first is the Raymond Comets, who won the 4A provincial championships last month. The Comets represent a fine example of Alberta spirit: no challenge is too big, and never give up. The Comets hail from a small 2A school of 230 students. Nevertheless, they choose to compete in the 4A league and go up against the largest schools in Alberta. The Comets are a fine example of rural Albertans, people who accept challenges even when they are faced with overwhelming odds. The Comets were able to defeat E.P. Scarlett, a Calgary school with approximately 1,500 students, 73-64 in the final. This David and Goliath story shows just how much team spirit, good coaching, and dedication can achieve.

The second team is the Cardston high school Lady Cougars, who won their second straight 3A provincial championship. The Cougars won their first provincial championship 50 years ago; however, this time it only took a year to repeat the feat. The Cougars defeated Springbank community high school 77-69 in the final.

Both of these schools have very talented and dedicated athletes and coaches, who played a very vital role in their march to their respective championships. As Wayne Gretzky once said, "The highest compliment that you can pay me is to say that I work hard every day, that I never dog it." That is exactly what these young ladies and their coaches did this year.

I would like to express my appreciation to the players, coaches, and parents for the fine example of commitment and hard work. I am honoured to recognize the Raymond Comets and the Cardston Lady Cougars for their championship season.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from a number of good Albertans from the communities of Wetaskiwin, Camrose, Fort Saskatchewan, Ponoka, Evansburg, Mundare, and Edmonton. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 104 on this petition.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present this petition of 106 residents of Alberta that urge the government to "declare the Grizzly bear an endangered species in accordance with recommendations made by the Endangered Species Conservation Committee, scientists and other wild life experts."

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions

for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places as well with the exception of motions for returns 24, 25, and 26.

head: 3:00 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the hon. leader of the ND opposition I would like to table a letter from the Calgary Local Council of Women. The council would like to see the Alberta minimum wage raised to \$9 per hour to ensure a living wage for low-income workers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. One is the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board Informational Letter IL 2001-5. Five copies there.

The second one of five copies is the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board Guide 56, schedule 4, well licence application, to which I referred today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is a document titled: Is Your Public School at Risk? This is a document that lists over 20 schools, unfortunately, in the city of Edmonton that could be closed because of this government's cumbersome and out-of-date utilization formula.

The second tabling I have is a notice of amendment for Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act. This is an amendment that will give this bill another chance at committee in this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the March 2005 labour force statistics, actually from the government's report. It states that construction jobs are down 11,600 between the months of March and February in this province and 1,900 between March this year and March of last year.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, the Minister of Health and Wellness, pursuant to the Health Disciplines Act the Health Disciplines Board annual reports, January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2003, and the same report for the period January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2004. On behalf of the hon. Dr. Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, aircraft charter documents, April 2001 to December 2004.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Under Standing Order 7(5) I would ask the Government House Leader to please share the projected government business for the upcoming week of April 25 to 28, please.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, April 25, 2005, at 9 p.m. or as soon as Motions Other than Government Motions is completed, in Committee of Supply we have Economic Development on day 8 of 24. Following that, second reading of Bill 35, Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005; Committee of the Whole on Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; and third reading of Bill 5, the Family Law Amendment Act, 2005, and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, April 26, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders Committee of Supply and the Department of Environment, day 9 of 24. In the evening at 8 under Government Bills and Orders Committee of Supply, Children's Services, for day 10 of 24. After the Children's Services estimates have been completed, Committee of the Whole on Bill 1, second reading on bills 36 and 29, and as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, April 27, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders Committee of Supply, Infrastructure, day 11 of 24. Wednesday, April 27, at 8 p.m. in Committee of Supply Executive Council estimates in day 12, and thereafter third reading on Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, should it have proceeded to that stage, Committee of the Whole of bill 15 and 16, and as per the Order Paper.

Thursday, April 28, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders Committee of Supply, day 13 of 24, Human Resources and Employment, and as per the Order Paper.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, the historical comment for the day. On April 21, 1971, two retiring cabinet ministers were made honorary life members of the Alberta legislative press gallery. Provincial Treasurer and Member for Alexandra Anders O. Aalborg and minister of mines and minerals and Member for Lacombe Allen Russell Patrick were awarded the membership. Mr. Aalborg was a cabinet minister in the Social Credit government from 1952 to 1971 and Mr. Patrick from 1955 to 1971.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Finance

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce these estimates by introducing some very talented people in the members' gallery who are responsible for putting together the budget and the business plan for Alberta Finance. We have present with us Mr. Robert Bhatia, who is deputy minister of revenue. I understand that Deputy Minister of Finance Mr. Brian Manning is going to join us. We have Tim Wiles, our comptroller. We have Rod Matheson, treasury management; Lukas Huisman, ADM in revenue; Peter McNeil, chief administrative officer of revenue; Bonnie Lovelace, senior financial officer; Darwin Bozek, financial services; Juliette Blair, business planning and reporting; Richard Shelast, financial services; Linda Chupka, office of the Deputy

Minister of Finance; Richard Purnell, office of budget and management. I'm particularly pleased to introduce Nicola Sargeant from financial services, who is our co-op student. I welcome Nicola to what I'm sure will be an exciting afternoon. We have also in the gallery from my office Maureen Osadchuk and Jeff Haley.

Mr. Chairman, this is a pretty straightforward set of estimates. It's in support of a financially strong, sustainable, and accountable government. Our strategic priorities in our business plan will be focusing on a number of key areas, particularly our fiscal framework. Now that our province is debt free, we have to make changes to our legislation to ensure that the money that's set aside in our debt retirement account is locked in. Of course, we reference also in those changes the commitment to adding to our endowment funds, to our capital plan, and of course savings.

Pensions, Mr. Chairman: we've seen in this House policy changes that will better reflect the changing needs of plan members, administrators, and the industry as a whole.

Mr. Chairman, another item that we've debated in the House through legislation is the provincial/territorial initiative to establish a passport regulatory system in Canada. We are also making what some may call – and probably they are – housekeeping changes so that our securities legislation is in sync with Canadian jurisdictions. All of these things we think will ensure consistency for market participants and investors.

Mr. Chairman, we also intend to continue to maintain our tax advantage. Albertans and Alberta businesses pay the lowest overall taxes in Canada. We hear from time to time that if you take some very specific areas, there may be some tax discrepancy between provinces, but I don't think anybody can legitimately argue that Albertans do not pay the lowest overall taxes in Canada. We intend to continue that.

The heritage savings trust fund in this business plan begins to be inflation-proofed. As all members would be aware, there was a commitment to inflation-proof the heritage savings trust fund once the debt was paid. That obligation begins now.

I'm not going to go into a lot of detail in the various estimates. I thought I would try to pick out some areas that I thought would be of interest to members. Our overall budget in some areas is down. Where we have increased spending is in areas to implement our automobile insurance reform and the Automobile Insurance Rate Board. The Insurance Act enables recovery of costs from the industry: pension, insurance, and financial institutions. We still have to show that as an expense even if it is recovered.

3:10

The other area where we're increasing some spending, and I think members will agree it's an important area, is to enhance our investment capability, capacity, and quality assurance. This will allow us to invest in alternate asset classes and introduce specialized products to generate higher investment returns. Again, about 50 per cent of this is recovered from clients outside of government.

Further funding is in one of my staff upstairs' favourite places, improved compliance and audit coverage tax and revenue administration. This is in direct response to a recommendation from the Auditor General. An additional \$350,000 is also identified in the tax area, which is required to administer the tax-exempt fuel users program, or as we affectionately call it, TEFU.

Mr. Chairman, there are some further small additions in the investment administration division, and the increase there is offset by a \$7.8 million reduction in budgeted debt servicing costs. Statutory spending, pending legislative approval, will increase funding to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund for the access to the future fund and the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical

Research endowment fund. I think all members would agree that the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research is a fine example of what can be achieved by investing funds for tomorrow. Additional funds for the Alberta heritage foundations, of course, are also included in science and engineering research.

We have an increase for the Alberta Securities Commission, and that relates to the FTE increase to strengthen enforcement in capital market resources.

Revenues: the increase in department revenue is primarily from personal and corporate income taxes. That is not due to increasing taxes, of course, in this province, but it's due to a very strong growth in personal incomes, high energy prices, and healthy corporate profits.

The implementation of the tourism levy is also found in this budget, and it is to provide funding for tourism marketing and development, as tourism is a very important part of our economy.

Fifty-two of the 86, or 60 per cent, of the FTEs that are identified here for externally funded agencies. I'll mention those: the Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation, the Alberta Securities Commission, and the Alberta Insurance Council. Of the remaining, 17 respond to an Auditor General's recommendation on audit and compliance, and six are for the new rate board.

That is a very quick overview of operations and estimates. We can certainly go into these in more detail as you bring forward your questions. As always, I make the commitment that if I do not answer your questions in the House today for lack of time or, in fact, not having the answer at my hand, I will make the commitment to have that answer back to you in writing, and those responses will be back to you before our budget debates in this Assembly are concluded.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think that with those comments, I'll take my place and await your comments. I do want to just close hoping that all members present would acknowledge the hard work of the staff that are in that gallery. I don't think anyone will disagree that we had very tight time frames for putting together a very complex and large budget, and they did yeoman service. In fact, I was kidding, but it wasn't a joke, that the Easter bunny had to deliver the Easter treats to the Terrace Building this year and other finance and revenue offices rather than their homes. They do a great service for us, and I thank you, and I think all members of the Assembly do.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased and, in fact, honoured to have the opportunity to rise today and speak on behalf of the Official Opposition to the budget estimates for the Department of Finance for this current fiscal year.

I, too, would like very much to make some introductions, Mr. Chairman. I would very much like to introduce my researcher, David Kincade, who has worked yeoman hours himself trying to prepare me and make me sound like I have some reasonable understanding of this document today. Unfortunately, David Kincade is the only researcher I have, and in fact I have to share my researcher with two other MLAs. He's busy today tearing into his next department, so I'm left to do this on my own.

I would also like, Mr. Chairman, to introduce my communications staff, particularly Josh Stewart. Unfortunately, I share Josh Stewart with about seven other MLAs, so he can't be here today. I would very much like to introduce my administration staff, who support me and make sure that the material that comes out of my office looks professional and represents the Official Opposition well. Unfortunately, I also share Mark with seven others. So none of those people can be here today. I appreciate very much the thanks that the

minister has given her staff, and I can only hope that some day I may have that number of staff working for me.

Mr. Chairman, it does beg the question, and this is the first question. I'm going to first of all comment on the fact that although I very much appreciate the absolutely astounding gift of the Mactaggarts to this province, the extra-long festivities today did cut into my time. I'll try to be fairly brief, and I'll try to hurry along, and I hope that I don't speak too fast for the minister, because that comment was made last night in budget debate. If I do, please let me know, and I'll give you some of these questions in writing.

I also very much appreciate her comments regarding getting answers back in writing. She has held to her word up until now. I appreciate that very much, and I expect that she will do the same again.

One of the comments I'd like to make is that because of the fact that we're not likely to see Finance come up in Public Accounts, some of my questions may actually be more appropriate for Public Accounts. If the minister can accommodate me, given that we won't have the opportunity to ask those questions in Public Accounts, I would very much appreciate that as well.

The first question I would have is: \$645,000 for the communications budget for the ministry, and I'm wondering if she could share with us just exactly how many staff are involved in communications with her ministry. In fact, Mr. Chairman, one of the questions that I had hoped to ask was which companies, which ad agencies the ministry uses. I'm not sure if that's something that I would be able to get an answer to as well, but if possible I would like to have that.

I mentioned last night in debate around Bill 37 – and I know that the minister has committed to answering it when we get to committee on Bill 37, but I'd like to get it on the record here as well – the very effective use of communications in her department. In particular, I'm referring to the fiscal plan, page 30, where there's discussion about the lifting of the cap of expenditures on resource revenue to \$4.75 billion from the current cap of \$4 billion. Interestingly enough, both in the press releases and then in this document it refers to the fact that “amendments to the Fiscal Responsibility Act will limit the amount of non-renewable resource revenue that can be used for budget purposes.” The wording, obviously, would lead the untrained eye to think that we're keeping things down whereas, in fact, what we're doing is lifting the cap by \$750 million. Again, on behalf of the minister I'd compliment the communications staff for their effective use of the English language in that regard.

3:20

Now, I just want to touch on taxes briefly. There were in this most recent budget basically no tax breaks for Alberta taxpayers. That certainly causes me some concern. One of the things that I had suggested – and I think it's perhaps in a motion that is on the list but won't likely see the light of day in this legislative sitting – is that we could consider lowering the flat tax from 10 per cent to 8 per cent given the fact that we're experiencing, you know, absolutely tremendous resource revenue right now and oil and natural gas prices are at the highest they've ever been. If we're ever going to give the citizens of this province a tax break, now might well have been the time to do so.

The other thing we could have looked at, of course, would be to lower the income threshold for low-income earners to once again give them some recognition for the fact that they've paid the price over the years in terms of cutbacks. Given the current fiscal situation that the province finds itself in, now would have been an appropriate time to do so, I think.

One of my colleagues from the NDP caucus mentioned the other day that when you include the health care premium tax that we

charge families in this province – and I think my colleague from Edmonton-McClung suggested that it's \$1,056 per family every year – you can actually find many situations where we're paying more tax in Alberta than Ontarians do. So it's certainly debatable as to whether, in fact, we do have the lowest tax regime in the country.

There's nothing in this budget that provides any relief for small business. I've mentioned before that I'm a small businessman, so I recognize the struggles that small business has in this province. It's not to say that it isn't a very good climate to do business in, but certainly there are challenges for small business, and corporate tax is one of them. There's nothing in here that addresses that. I'll speak to that a little more in a few minutes, Mr. Chairman.

A hundred and eighty-six million dollars collected in the coming fiscal year on the insurance premium tax. Again, I've suggested that if we want to give Alberta drivers a break and, in fact, if we were to eliminate that, it would benefit not just privately owned insured vehicles but small business vehicles as well, which everyone will know is a cause that I've been on this week.

The hotel tax, or levy as it's now called, the minister referred to in her opening comments. You will know or you can certainly check *Hansard* where I complimented the government for, in fact, reducing the rate of that tax and still finding a way to make sure that that reduction would result in more dollars for the promotion of tourism. However, at the moment it's not clear whether or not consumers are actually going to benefit from that reduction as we have several groups including the hoteliers' association in Edmonton musing over collecting a 1 per cent tax to promote themselves. So, in fact, we may not see any reduction at all. Although the Alberta government may collect less tax, the end result for the consumer might not be any different whatsoever.

I'd referred a few minutes ago to the lifting of the cap on resource revenue expenditures to \$4.75 billion, and it gives me one more opportunity to reference Bill 203, which is a private member's bill from our Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar which brings forward the Alberta Liberal's plan for a legacy act and would have seen 35 per cent of any surplus revenue put into the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, 35 per cent into the advanced education endowment, 25 per cent into addressing the municipal infrastructure debt, which we've calculated to be somewhere in the area of \$8 billion, and the remaining 5 per cent of any surplus to go into the arts and humanities endowment fund.

Just to use this year as an example – I know we don't have the final fourth-quarter results yet – it's looking like probably somewhere approaching \$6 billion in surplus. Using that number, Mr. Chairman, had we had the Alberta legacy act passed, you would be looking at \$2.1 billion this year going into the heritage savings trust fund and an equal \$2.1 billion going into the advanced education endowment fund, which, quite frankly, would dwarf the \$250 million that this government has committed to put into the fund this year. I think when you look at \$2.1 billion that could have gone into the advanced education endowment fund, you can see why we were suggesting that a \$3 billion cap is not really appropriate because we'd get there in a year or two without any question.

I'm going to move into the books now and just kind of whip through them, and I'll have some questions for you. I hope I don't go too fast, and as I said, if I do, please let me know. The first comment is that the revenue assumptions were based on a crude oil price of \$42 a barrel. I've gone on record as saying that I'm actually surprised that the minister chose to use a number as high as \$42. Not that I didn't wish she would use a higher number, because I suspect that something more along the lines of \$45 or \$48 might be more realistic, but I had expected, quite frankly, that she would be down around \$40, so I was pleased to see that.

For the coming two years, '06-07 and '07-08, we're using the figures of \$32 and \$31, and I'm not so sure, again based on some of the recent projections we've heard from industry analysts that are predicting a spike as high as \$105, whether or not \$32 and \$31 are going to be terribly realistic, but I will be the first to admit: who knows? I have said before, and I will say it again on the record in this House, that one of the reasons I'm an Alberta Liberal is because I became very, very frustrated in the late '80s, when the Treasurer at that time and the Premier were forecasting oil at \$30 a barrel and basing their budgets on \$30 a barrel when, in fact, we were looking at \$16 and \$17 world prices. So I would certainly much rather have this problem than that problem, and I'm not afraid to say that on the record. It's certainly much better to have money left over than to come up so short as we were doing back then.

The other thing that catches my eye when I'm looking at the economic assumptions is that this year we're basing the assumptions on a Canadian dollar valued at 83 and a half cents American, which is perhaps a little low based on what's happening right now, but we're certainly likely to hover somewhat above 80 cents, so it's probably reasonable. The following two years we're using projections of 85 cents. I'm not sure whether or not that's realistic. It might be. I suspect it's a little high, but certainly it does impact on the overall financial picture. In fact, most of you will recognize that if it ends up being somewhat lower, our numbers look better in the end because of the fact that we're a resource-based economy, so it may be one more way in which we can sort of lowball the bottom line and end up at the end of the year with an even bigger surplus than we might have predicted.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to just touch briefly on the heritage savings trust fund. I know the minister did as well in her comments.

Actually, first, before I do that, I'm going to just talk very briefly about the Auditor General's recommendations – and she did indicate that most of them have been accepted and that there is some money in the department's plan to address those – particularly, though, number 16 from last year's AG report, where the recommendation was made that for high-risk employer pension plans, in those situations, that

the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions obtain:

- assurance from pension plans' auditors on the plans' compliance with the Employment Pensions Plan Act,

and also

- information on pension plans' governance structure and practices.

The minister has indicated in the fiscal plan that plans are under way to reach those recommendations by March 31 of 2006, and I'm just hoping that she can update us as to exactly where we are at with that because although it says that we'll get there by the end of this current fiscal year, I'm curious how far along that road we are at this point in time.

Also, the AG's recommendation 17 indicated "again." When they use the word "again" in the Auditor General's report, I'm assuming that means the recommendation had been there previously and hadn't been dealt with. I could stand to be corrected, but that's certainly the way I read it. They "again recommend that Alberta Treasury Branches ensure its lending officers comply with corporate lending policies." Certainly, in here it indicates that the government's response has been to accept that recommendation and that, in fact, most of the significant changes will be implemented by June of this year. But given the fact that we are now not much more than two months away, I would hope that we could be updated on that and just be assured that we will in fact meet that target since it's obviously not the first time that it has appeared in the Auditor General's report.

3:30

I'm going to move now to the business plans of the ministry, Mr. Chairman, and touch on some questions that I have there. The first thing that jumps out at me is business goal 1, which calls for "a financially strong, sustainable and accountable government." I'm sure we all would like to see that. Everybody in this House would like to see that.

In the performance measures it's referenced that when surveyed, the "percentage of Albertans who think they get enough information on the government's financial performance" – the last actual year that we have data for that was '03-04, and it was only 57 per cent of Albertans who felt that way. The target for this fiscal year is 70 per cent, which I suggest is laudable. My question would be: what plans does the government have, what plans does the minister have to get us there? Is there an advertising campaign involved, or do they have some other plans to get to that point?

Then I'm also wondering if we had actual measurements for 2003-04. I'm going to assume that there may be measurements coming for '04-05, but there was no target for 2004-05. So I'm just wondering. Not that there's necessarily a discrepancy, but it does cause me to question: did we decide at some point that we didn't need that information last year or that it wasn't valuable enough to include it as a target to improve on that number of 57 per cent in the last fiscal year? I'm not sure. So if the minister could provide some clarification on that, it would be helpful.

Goal 2, Mr. Chairman, calls for "a fair and competitive provincial tax system." When I was referring to that a minute earlier, I suggested that if ever there were to be a time when we should be considering a slight decrease in personal income taxes, I would have thought that it would be now given that, in fact, the government does have the money in the bank to pay off the debts as those instruments come due and given the fact that even in this budget we are projecting a 1 and a half billion dollar surplus. If we're ever going to make any move towards that, even just a small token move, at least some show of good faith to Alberta taxpayers, particularly low-income earners, that in fact they can benefit in this way as well from the so-called Alberta advantage, then I really believe that this would have been the time to do it. So I'm a little disappointed to see that we didn't take that step now.

The other thing is that strategy 2.1 on that same page refers to the implementation "as affordable" of the business tax plan, which, I mentioned earlier, would have reduced the corporate income tax from 11.5 per cent to 8 per cent. I understand that it's still a strategy that you're working towards, but perhaps you could provide us with a timeline; you know, whether that's something you hope to have in next year's budget or the year after. Or is it still sort of a pie in the sky thing that we hope to attain some day? Again, given the current fiscal situation, I would have thought that perhaps we could do it now.

I'm going to jump over a few and go to goal 8, which calls for "reliable and competitive financial and insurance products and services," and just highlight one line in there, where it says that "Finance will monitor the availability and cost of other general property and liability insurance for businesses, non-profit organizations and individuals." In other words, other than auto insurance here's an opportunity for the department to address some of the concerns, I believe, that I've been raising this week in the House as it relates to small businesses and nonprofits and the tremendous burden that they carry right now as it relates to all forms of insurance, not just auto insurance.

Goal 9 talks about having quality and competitive financial services available and accessible to all Albertans. In particular, it refers in here to the Alberta Treasury Branch and the services that

they provide to rural Alberta. I'm not going to suggest for one second that they don't provide a very valuable service to rural Albertans, but I did notice this year, when the Alberta Treasury Branches announced their expansion plans, that they're concentrating very, very heavily on expanding in, primarily, Edmonton and Calgary and other urban centres, with very little expansion planned for rural Alberta. Given the fact that we have suggested in the past that we're out of the business of business, I would have hoped that we would have moved into a situation where we were going to expand more in rural Alberta and address some of the concerns of those smaller communities.

Mrs. McClellan: I'm going to cover just a few of the items. It might help with questions that other members have. I'll try and be brief.

You asked how many communications staff I have in Finance. I hope you'll remember that we manage a budget of just under \$26 billion when I give you the answer. There are 6.4 FTEs in my communications department in Finance, and there are two staff that are assigned from the Public Affairs Bureau. That is the sum total of those wonderful people that try to ensure that people are understanding well what we're doing.

I appreciate your comments on Bill 37 and the limit: \$4.75 billion. I guess I like the wording that I used.

Taxes. I've got to take a little exception to you saying there's no tax break for Albertans because I think you're really ignoring that tax breaks that are in this budget are targeted, and they're targeted to the very people who most need those tax breaks. If you are a working family with an income of some \$32,000, \$33,000, I suggest to you that the employment tax credit that we implemented, increasing the number of children allowed under that from two to four, lowering the threshold from \$6,000 to just over \$2,000, was incredibly important to those people.

I guess that when I search my conscience and my thoughts, if you had to make choices, which is what this budget really was about, choices of investing in health, investing in advanced education, investing in infrastructure, which I think you've all agreed were good investments, investing in increasing benefits to AISH – and I have to really applaud our Minister of Seniors and Community Supports for the package that AISH recipients got because it is very complete. It is about more than just a cash benefit. When you look at the additional services and programs that they have eligibility for, I think she's done a fine, fine job in that area.

But it was about those choices. We did remove the health premiums from all seniors. Again, I think that for people who generally – I say generally – are on fixed incomes, this was a good move. To freeze the property tax for seniors, who again are quite often on fixed incomes and have trouble adjusting to these fluctuations in costs, I think was a good move.

So if I had a choice – and I did – of lowering perhaps the corporate tax rate a half a per cent or giving the tax break in the areas that we did and still being able to invest in those important programs, I believe we made the right choice. Of course, we all have the right to our own opinion.

To consider that because we're forecasting a surplus, we could have done a tax break is very unwise, and I think the hon. member actually would agree with that. You do not want to do a tax break unless you can ensure that those dollars will be there in the next year and the next year and the next year. The one thing you don't want is to be going back and forth on this or reducing programming spending to keep your tax break in place.

3:40

We have said very clearly that we will continue our program on reducing corporate tax to 8 per cent as we can. This year was not the

year. The 13.4 per cent to Advanced Education, the 7.1 per cent to Education, the increase to AISH recipients, the abilities to assist those who are more vulnerable in our society with tax breaks were, in our view on this side of the House, the right ones to do this year.

When we do introduce a tax reduction – and we will. I've said that I'm all for it. I pay taxes the same as everyone else in this Legislature. I'm right in the front of that parade. But when we do that, they will be sustainable, and they won't be at the cost of services to students or to people who need health services. So it was about choices. I think that was pretty transparent. I think I was pretty straightforward in that.

The 3 per cent insurance premium has come up. Again, look at it as part of a tax package that we can do. I'd like to be able to do that as well or, at least, lower it to the cost of providing the service. However, I want to ensure that if we do, that reduction actually flows to the consumer, and the ditch isn't filled. The hon. member himself raised the question as to whether the hotels are going to fill a ditch, an area that we removed ourselves from. So that's important.

You also mentioned a private member's bill, and I appreciate very much the principle of that bill. However, for me to support it and vote for it, there would have to be a change in the bill because I am in disagreement in one area. I think you tie your hands too much by putting specific percentages in because it may be that you need more money in capital. I raise the Fort McMurray presentation that was made, that we talked about in the House, where they have high growth and some big challenges. You may want to put it all in endowments in one year. You may want to put more in capital, less in endowments.

Certainly, our desire is to get those endowments to the full figure as quickly as possible, but I don't agree with tying your hands on absolute percentages because, you remember, we're talking about unbudgeted surpluses. We're talking about future surpluses and choices of where you put them. You may decide to put more in science and engineering, more in the arts and humanities, more in the scholarship funds, maybe, a novel thought, more in savings to actually gain a revenue stream for future years. So I agree with your bill. I don't agree with the percentages, but we'll have more discussion on that.

Forecasting oil and gas prices: well, an interesting exercise. I could go back in *Hansard* and go back in news clippings and point out to the hon. members how many times they were wrong last year, but that would be kind of a useless exercise, wouldn't it? We use the best information we have from the best analysts we have, the same people that you talk to, I'm sure. The only thing I was interested in was on the future years because, frankly, I can't find an energy analyst that's really comfortable about forecasting out in the second and third years, and I think you'd find the same thing.

I've said that this is a reality budget. It's transparent. It's straightforward. It's putting it on the line as we see it, and our best information from our analysts in all information was that the low 40s was probably a pretty prudent place to look at oil.

Now, I'm going to get picky here. If I heard this right – and I'm going to read *Hansard* over; I always do – 83 and a half per cent is too low. I heard that. I might not have heard it right – it might be lower, something like that – and 85 per cent might be high. I'm going to suggest that the hon. member is splitting hairs and getting picky.

Mr. R. Miller: I said that 83 and a half might be a bit too high.

Mrs. McClellan: Yeah. I'm not sure because you didn't tell me exactly where it should fall. But, again, we use the best information

we have. Today it was just under 81 cents. It fluctuates, but it has stayed maybe a little lower than I had thought it would the last couple of weeks.

Heritage savings trust fund: total agreement. We need to inflation-proof it. We need to continue to grow that fund and have those targeted investment dollars available for future years.

Auditor General, pensions. We're continuing those consultations. Our stated goal is still our stated goal of March 31, '06.

For the ATB we think that those targets can be met. I have no indications that they can't be.

We will continue to monitor other general property taxes and so on.

What I haven't entirely come to any conclusion on in my own mind is what you could do or should do or how much intervention or interference you have as the government into what is a private market. I've said consistently that we felt that we should enter the automobile insurance area under public liability and property damage because we say that you have to have those before you operate a vehicle, and of course we were finding that a number of people were not insuring their vehicles because of the cost of insurance. So we'll monitor it and go on from there.

You had the target on the number of Albertans who think they get enough information on our financial performance. The 2004-05 target was published in Budget 2004. That target was 70 per cent in '04, and we're still on target for that for '05 to '08. We don't have our actual results audited for '04-05, so I can't be any more specific in that area. It should be available in our annual report later this summer.

The last one quickly: ATB, cities expansion. I think if you look at the capital investment that ATB has done, they did the majority of their investment of capital in rural and now are attending to urban, which is an important part of their portfolio. Now, I'm not sure, when you say that we talk about not being in business, whether you have anything further to say on government participation in ATB or not, but I'll look forward to that in your next line of comments.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I can't believe how quickly 20 minutes goes by when you're having fun. Must be having fun.

The next question that I had for the minister. On page 247 of the business plans under Ministry Statement of Operations, net income from commercial operations, I'm curious what that is because I did mention getting out of the business of business. I see that in the last fiscal year, '04-05, the forecast was for a net income of \$155 million from commercial operations. That jumps to \$167 million in this coming fiscal year and goes all the way up to \$214 million in the years '07-08. I referred to being out of the business of business, and then I noticed the commercial operations. I would like some clarification from the minister as to exactly what commercial operations we're involved in that we're realizing a revenue of \$214 million by the year '07-08.

[Ms Haley in the chair]

3:50

Now, I did want to jump to the heritage savings trust fund and, in particular, talk about ethical investing for just a minute because this is an issue that I've raised before. In the business plan it talks about varying the allocation of assets to enhance returns, and it says, "Based on the outlook for financial markets, Alberta Investment

Management may vary the allocation of liquid assets to enhance returns.” Certainly, this is a concern for myself. We talked before about ethical investing and the fact that we currently hold about \$11 million worth of shares in tobacco companies in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. My line of questioning a couple of weeks back in question period was to try to determine whether, in fact, there was any limit as to where we would put our investment or was it solely based on return on the investment. To this point the minister’s answer has always been that it’s return on investment that is the primary consideration when we make those decisions, and that causes me concern, quite frankly. I’d just like to be on the record as saying that at some point I would hope that we can move to an ethical investment model.

As an example, when we’re talking about tobacco companies, we know the damage that tobacco causes, we know the cost to the health care system and to society in general, yet here we are heavily invested in tobacco companies, reaping benefits from not only their success but then also taxing the product and putting an awful lot of money into the coffers that way as well. So that’s a concern I have, and I would hope that at some point we can address it.

Now, I’m going to try to quickly rip through some questions here because I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Centre has some questions that she’d like to get in as well.

In the estimates book on page 156 – I know that the minister has mentioned that the debt-servicing costs are down, but just for the record I want to remind all Albertans that this year, even though our debt is in theory paid off and we have the money in the bank to pay those instruments when they come due, we are still paying \$45 million in debt-servicing costs this year, and it’s a pretty big number. So, again, the communication staff, even if it is only 6 and a half of them . . .

Ms Blakeman: It’s 6.4.

Mr. R. Miller: . . . or 6.4, whatever the FTEs were.

Nevertheless, they’ve done a very good job in terms of managing to convince a number of Albertans that, in fact, we don’t have a debt anymore, and those of us in this Assembly know that we really do still have debt. We also have money to pay it off as it comes due, and that’s not a bad thing, but in the meantime we are paying this year \$45 million in debt servicing. It’s a substantial amount, and I want to be on record as having noted that in this debate.

On page 160 under Financial Sector and Pensions I notice that last year we spent \$4.2 million, and that I’m quite sure includes the \$1.4 million from the supplementary estimates which was for the advertising campaign on the auto insurance reforms. We’re down to \$2.827 million this year, which I believe the minister indicated reflects the fact that she has no plans to conduct a similar promotional campaign this time around. I’m just wondering whether or not her thoughts on that have changed in the last couple of weeks given some of the changes in the insurance industry and the reaction from the industry when the mandatory reduction was announced . . .

An Hon. Member: Rollback.

Mr. R. Miller: It’s not a rollback; it’s a reduction. We wish it was a rollback, but it’s only a reduction.

. . . and the fact that I’m hearing from some consumers that it’s still not enough given that premiums climbed anywhere from 20, 25 per cent all the way up to in some cases 45 or 50 per cent in the two years prior to the freeze in October of 2003. So I think that even though the minister was very kind in sending me a letter showing that the number of contacts with her department has dropped since the 5 per cent rollback and then now a further reduction, neverthe-

less I’m not sure that that’s an indication that people are necessarily completely satisfied. Perhaps they’ve just given up, maybe resigned to the fact that this little bit of a reduction is all that they’re going to get.

Another question I have. On page 162 under Statutory Programs the interest payments on corporate tax refunds – and I have to acknowledge here that I was blown away by this number – the forecast for the last fiscal year: \$30 million. It’s in this year’s budget to bring that down to \$20 million, and then it doesn’t have any estimate for the year after. Even \$20 million – I mean, obviously, I understand that if it was \$30 million last year, it’s good for us to try to get it down to \$20 million. But I would like some explanation as to why we ended up paying \$30 million in interest on corporate tax refunds, whether or not there’s something we could be doing better as a department to make sure that we get those refunds out quicker, or what. I’m not sure. But that certainly caught my eye.

Page 166, department statement of operations, under Income Taxes. The minister mentioned that we’re collecting more money in tax even though the rates didn’t go up, but one thing I did notice here is that personal income tax in this coming year has only gone up a hundred million dollars. That surprised me. Since we know that there hasn’t really been a reduction in income tax, and the government talks a lot about the number of new jobs and the fact that people are coming to Alberta from all across the country and even from Venezuela, apparently, to work here, I would have thought that our personal taxes would have gone up dramatically, and they’ve not. So I’m kind of curious about that.

In fact, since 2003-2004 there’s only a very modest increase in the amount of personal income tax that’s being collected. I’m a little surprised at that. If, in fact, we’re seeing the number of new workers that the government likes to reference, why isn’t that number higher? I would have expected it to be.

I wouldn’t mind a quick explanation from the minister, if she has time, as to what the statutory debt-servicing costs are because that number is \$238 million. So we have, you know, the \$45 million that I mentioned for debt-servicing costs, but then also there’s stat debt-servicing costs of \$238 million.

On page 169 under Heritage Savings Trust Fund we’re forecasting an investment income of that fund this year of only \$684 million, compared to just over a billion dollars in the previous year. Perhaps, if she has time, she can provide a quick explanation as to why that number has dropped so dramatically given the fact that the world economy seems to be on pretty solid ground right now.

On page 174 there’s a reference under Expense for the Alberta Insurance Council, special projects, this year totalling \$65,000. Last year it was \$34,000. I know that it’s not a big number, but it is more than double what was there last year. Those are the kinds of things that jump out at me as a layperson when I’m reading this document, and I wouldn’t mind an explanation as to what special project is being undertaken there.

Briefly, I’ll just comment on the FTEs. She mentioned that in the department they’re up 34 FTEs, which is somewhat less than 10 per cent. It’s probably about 6, 7 per cent. The Pensions Administration is going up 37, and ASC, 17. I’m not going to quibble with either of those because I recognize that in both cases we’re trying to enforce regulations and make sure that we have confidence in those two, the corporation and the commission respectively. Certainly, I’m not going to quibble with that because I’ve gone on record in the House as suggesting that we need stiffer enforcement in both of those areas. So I’m comfortable with that, but perhaps a little more explanation as to the 34 FTEs being added to the department itself.

With that, I will take my seat and look forward to some answers. Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: I'm just going to reference that there were a lot of questions, and I think I can respond very well in writing. I know there are others anxious.

I do want to make a comment just in one area that's more of a policy area than a detail, and that's in ethical investing. I have not said that we should simply look at rate of return, but I think that's something that we really have to have some conversations and discussions on because what I may consider ethical investing may not always be agreed to by others.

I do want to say this, though. In the scope of our investment division we are not heavily into investment in tobacco companies, in the scope of the whole investment picture. Tobacco sales are a legal entity. We all know the damage that use of tobacco can do to people, but nobody has ever had the courage to take that issue head on; you know, maybe ban it outright. I don't know. Prohibition didn't work when it was tried.

4:00

I have had some experience in ethics as minister of health and working in health ethics. It's a field that really does require a larger discussion by a number of people and the investment community, perhaps, in the whole country to look at what is ethical. We can all pick something that we don't agree with or we don't like for philosophical, ideological, or personal reasons. So I certainly don't want it left on the record that this government is uncaring about the issue of ethical investing. We are very much.

The corporate tax refund: that was probably due to a very complex negotiation. As you know, the federal government collects our taxes, and we're sometimes vulnerable on their time frame on getting information, but I will make sure that you have the exact explanation on that and also on the statutory debt servicing because there is a difference between debt servicing and statutory debt servicing.

I think I will let the Member for Edmonton-Centre have a chance to get some questions in, and then we'll see where we go from there. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. There are four areas that I wanted to cover with the minister this afternoon. They are risk, the issue of insurance for nonprofits, the health care premium tax, and funding for sexual assault centres.

Mrs. McClellan: That wouldn't be in my department.

Ms Blakeman: No, but I'm going to once again talk about your leadership and prevail upon you on that one.

So starting with page 243 of your business plan, I'm looking at goal 7, the proactively managed risk section. I note that the last actual data that is noted here as a performance measurement was \$15.8 million, and the target for this year is \$6.9 million. My question is: why is the risk more than double the target? If we could get an explanation on that.

The minister's staff has always been very good at getting those kinds of detailed questions answered in a very quick turnaround, and I've always appreciated that. But as with the other ministries I'm asking if we could please get that information before we have to vote on the appropriation bill in a couple of weeks. I'd appreciate that.

Second to that particular question then: what is the minister's plan or the government's plan to mitigate this risk? To my eye this risk is more than double the target. I understand you're working with figures that may not be up to date, so perhaps the '04-05 actual

figures are lower and start to come into line with the target. But, boy, that's way out of line. So why is that risk that high, and what is the plan to mitigate it?

Mrs. McClellan: Give me that page, please.

Ms Blakeman: Page 243.

Finally, I'm wondering if the ministry has looked at the potential cost to taxpayers for risks not being mitigated. Does that expose them to any real cost that could be mitigated in any way, and what are the plans for that?

So that's the series of questions under risk.

I know that the minister is not responsible, that there is no legislation that covers the mandatory provision of insurance other than for PL/PD for automobile insurance, but this is the only place that this issue can come up. I think that there is increasingly a crisis being created in the not-for-profit sector, and I am talking across the board: social service agencies, advocacy groups, arts and culture, sports and recreation. I have heard from all of them over the last 18 months. Actually, I think it was almost exactly a year ago I was at a media conference for HIV Edmonton, whose insurance had gone from I think it was \$4,000 to \$20,000 in a leap, and actually they were having trouble getting coverage at all.

I'm wondering if there's been any consideration by the government to looking at some kind of regulations or consumer protection that could be put in place by the government because the insurance companies seem to be trying to squeeze the nonprofits to the point where they give up and don't have insurance because it's so expensive for them to carry it. Maybe the insurance companies want out of the business of offering that kind of regular insurance to these groups. If so, they're going about it in a strange way.

But costs have risen. The costs that I've looked at have gone from double to fivefold, and these nonprofits, you know, get limited government funding and have to fund raise privately for the rest of their dollars to provide services. And I don't think I'd find anyone in here that would argue with me that these services weren't needed and valued. This is an enormous strain on them, and once again they're out there trying to fund raise dollars not to provide a service, not to provide counselling for a battered woman or recreation for a child or, you know, STARS ambulance service. No, no. They're trying to raise money to pay the insurance costs to keep the doors open. Here I'm talking about the regular public liability, you know, if you stumble on the sidewalk kind of insurance.

In some cases some social service agencies, particularly, for example, foster parents, are expected to carry a level of insurance to make sure that they're covered in case something goes wrong while they have children in their care, and that's substantial. The insurance that midwives are now carrying – I mean, in every case the insurance is just going up and up and up, and I don't know why it's happening.

This is the only minister that liaises on a regular basis with the insurance industry, and I don't know what to do anymore. There doesn't seem to be any stopping it. A few insurance companies have stepped forward and said, "Well, you know, we'll try and cover this particular agency." Okay. Great. What do we do about the rest of them? I'm not particularly in favour of more legislation, but I don't see that we see an end to this. When it starts to impact the service and opportunities for Albertans, then I'm going to raise it, and I've raised it.

So I'm looking for something, anything that this minister can try, any suggestions at all to see what we could do to be able to get a handle on this. Maybe the insurance industries have their government liaison people read *Hansard* will read this and come back to

me with some suggestions or explanations about why these rates are going up so much. This is creating more than a difficulty, and I think this is a consumer protection issue.

I know the government has made a choice not to eliminate health care premiums, which we view as a tax, but I have to put on the record the concerns raised to me by my constituents with their extreme unhappiness about this – what's the word for it? It's not a progressive tax; it's a flat tax because, you know, a family pulling in \$100,000 pays \$1,056 a year, and a family that's pulling in \$30,000 pays that same rate. It is an additional tax. It does cost the government money to collect it. It's not dedicated revenue for the department of health. It does go straight into general revenue. I still argue that it should have been eliminated, and so do many of my constituents. I was obliged to get that on the record with the minister to underline again how unhappy people are with this, and they do feel that it is – oh, what is the word I'm trying to get? – a discriminatory tax. It differentially impacts the middle-income earner much more than a higher income earner because it's essentially a flat amount of money.

4:10

The last issue I want to raise with the Finance minister both because she ultimately controls the purse strings – she leads the Treasury Board – and she is the lead female on that side. There's no question the power and influence the Minister of Finance holds with that caucus. [some applause] Heartily agreed to by a number of her colleagues. I'm once again appealing to her for some way to fund the operational funding of sexual assault centres in Alberta. I talked to her about this last year. We have not had any movement on it.

I know that the government feels that they offer some funding through the victims of crime fund. It's very limited funding. It only applies to counselling offered to people that are in the court system. I'm sure the minister is well aware that the percentage of women who have been sexually assaulted and the percentage of women who are seeking support from sexual assault centres, the ones that actually go through to a court process, is very small. And that's really the extent of the formal funding that these centres get.

Now, beyond that, they apply to Wild Rose, they apply to CIP, they apply to CFEP, they apply everywhere, try everything, and in some cases they are able to get funding through the department of health. But in each and every one of these, you know, clearly those programs are set up to say: don't come to us with ongoing operational funding; come to us with short-term finite projects. So they have to keep reinventing a new reason to apply for these funds. And we have the administrators of these centres spending all of their time trying to raise money through different project grants to fund this.

I don't understand – and the government has never been able to give me a good reason – why we don't fund the operations of these centres. So maybe you can convince me this year why you don't fund the operations of these centres, but it would have to be a darn good argument because I don't buy it. I think they've fallen between the cracks for years. I think they were lumped in with battered women's shelters for years, but they're not that. Then there was an attempt to sort of put them in with family violence and bullying. They're definitely not that. You know, they do have a higher percentage of stranger assault, but, yes, it also involves family members at times. It involves younger people and older people. They just don't fit in the categories the government's got.

I will appeal to this minister, and I have already spoken to the minister of health. Somehow this government has got to find a way to address this problem. As I say, I look to this minister with the influence that she has in this caucus to try and find some funding somewhere that would be ongoing operational funding for these centres in Alberta.

So those were the four issues that I wanted to raise with the minister. I think we're all aware of the number of people that want an opportunity to question her, so I'll leave that with her. If she wants to try and answer some of those now, that's great. If not, I'll accept it in writing after the fact.

Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, I'll be quite quick so that others can get in, and I'll write you something more detailed on the risk side, but generally it is because we expect higher settlements, and the cost of repair to damaged property, as you know, is increasing for repair and replacement. But I will give you a more detailed answer on that.

I wanted to just touch on a couple of areas because they're areas that I've been concerned about. Insurance costs for nonprofits: we all face that, whether it's our riding arenas, our swimming pools, our hockey rinks, our Cub Scout houses. You know, for a long time – I can speak to rural more than urban – the town carried these various groups on their insurance as a rider. Unfortunately, the concerns in that area in liability have increased so much that some towns, not all but many, have said: we can no longer carry you; you are going to have to get your individual insurance. Then it really gets high.

We had this issue with our ag societies, big time, and there are so many of those out there. What we were able to do in that area was get the ag societies to come as a group because there is a general association of those and then work with them through the department of agriculture, through the support area that we have for ag societies and then look for an insurer that would do a group insurance to try and make this manageable. It was difficult because the ag societies are all different sizes and shapes, and that's the strength of them and the beauty of them and the effectiveness of them: they reflect their community. So it was a tough one, but we were able to do that.

This is increasingly a huge problem. Once you have to start covering the costs of operation with the higher costs there, you either have to charge more for people who are using them, which makes them less affordable, or you're out there fund raising. And you're right; we get applications to every program we have for help in that area.

I think the one thing that you can do with groups that are common across the province is what we did with the ag societies: try and find a group type of insurance. There have been one or two companies that were pretty good to work with in that area. So I wish I had the answer because if I had the answer, I wouldn't have the question at home in my constituency. And you can well appreciate that I have a lot of them.

Now sexual assault centres. I'm not going to take a lot of time here, but I will have a discussion with both the ministers of Seniors and Community Supports and Health, and I will involve the Solicitor General as well in the discussion. I think you may have hit on the issue though. It's because it doesn't fit in any one of the particular boxes we have or compartments or lines. I know that they perform a very, very important service in the community. It has to be one of the toughest areas for anyone to either work in or have to seek help for, and I will certainly endeavour to carry on the discussions you've had with those ministers and see if there's a way that we can make them fit.

Now, I am assuming that the municipalities contribute to those, as well, through our tax base. I assume that when I'm here paying taxes, some of those dollars go to contribute to centres like that and other community services that we enjoy here. I would hope so. I guess what I need to understand better and, I admit, I don't understand well is just where they receive their funding today, and maybe you could help me out on that and what level of funding and from whom.

So I'm going to let somebody else ask some questions, and I'll give you some more detail in some of those other areas.

I'm not going to ignore the questioner, but I am going to slip out just for a minute. I'll be right back, and I'm going to ask my colleague to take notes while I'm gone.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

4:20

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I know some of the questions that I wanted to ask were previously asked and put on the record, but I can just maybe re-emphasize how important they are and maybe shed some more light on them.

One of the issues that was touched on was the issue of the health care premium tax. The hon. minister said that, you know, it wasn't a priority, that it wasn't deemed to be an item high on the agenda, and that, in fact, it's useful for providing all those health services, and so on. I agree that maybe we need to provide those services because Albertans deserve it. This is one of the richest places on earth. And \$1,056 per family per year seems like a lot of money. But when the government keeps bragging about how taxes can only go down in this province, and so on, I think this is one area that they could have attacked first, you know, because many people, not just from the opposition benches but many people on the street, if you asked them, would say that it's an unnecessary burden given the wealth and the richness of this province.

Also, the other question which was touched on was ethical investments. The hon. minister indicated that the definition of what's ethical or what's moral varies from one person to the next. I agree, although I and many of my colleagues disagree with investment in tobacco companies at all. Also, we disagree with investment in weapons companies and arms manufacturers, and so on. So I don't think it's really a matter of interpretation or personal values; it's just something that is either right or wrong. But having said that, I notice that of the eight companies that received the \$11 million investment, one is Canadian and seven are from the U.S. So if we absolutely have to invest in a tobacco company, why can't we invest more in Canadian companies than ones in the U.S.?

Now, my main question is really the trend that is obvious in off-budget spending. Every year the government, like my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford indicated, lowballs the estimates for prices for oil and gas, and then at the end of the year they post a huge surplus. Being a first-term MLA, I noticed that during supplementary supply we were okaying billions of dollars in supplementary supply. I put it on the record during that debate, and I'm going to repeat that today: it really is a deficit. As a businessman you have a budget. Myself, I have a budget. And then I stick to the budget, and if I'm really close to it, I'm proud of myself and the work I have done and my team. My accountant would not allow me to be off budget by more than maybe half of 1 per cent, which is acceptable, you know, in the business environment. But now this government is off the mark by \$1.8 billion or \$2 billion, and they bring it into the House, and we have to agree to pass the supplementary supply bill in a day or a day and a half or two days, and then that's it.

Mr. R. Miller: An hour and a half.

Mr. Elsalhy: Or an hour and a half even, and then that's it.

I don't think this is acceptable. I mean, we're lucky we have the surpluses, and we have the oil and gas riches, which is really an act of God. I mean, we're just purely lucky. The ruling Conservatives have this approach that it's illegal to run a deficit, and I commend

them on it. However, it's I think a matter of spin doctoring or, again, propaganda. We have people working in the communications departments, people working in the Premier's office to modify or present the facts.

Mr. R. Miller: Almost 300 people.

Mr. Elsalhy: Yes, the Public Affairs Bureau.

What we're doing here is taking all those riches from the surplus and putting them into the capital account and the sustainability fund. Then when we spend a little more than what we have budgeted for, we take it out of the capital account and the sustainability fund and inject it into these areas. And then, voila, we don't have a deficit or we don't show a deficit, but I really maintain that we do. We run deficits every year, and this is contrary to the accounting practices that the Tory government brags about.

My next question is with regard to investing in the heritage fund. I noticed that the hon. minister didn't think, again, that this was a top priority in this budget. I beg to differ because the oil resources and the natural resources that we have in this province will eventually run out. Now, I listened with keen interest I think it was yesterday when we discussed Energy, and the hon. Minister of Energy indicated that we have reserves to last us for God knows how many years, which is good. However, they are destined to be depleted, and they will run out. Unless we find alternative ways of producing energy and alternative sources of revenue and income, what we have as a boom today will be a bust tomorrow.

Why do we Liberals care about investing in the heritage fund? Like I say, it's investing for the rainy day. It's investing for a day when we have to rely on alternate sources of revenue. How much would we have invested? I noticed that last year the government budgeted the annual revenue at \$22 billion but ended up with \$26 billion, so that's a \$4 billion supposed surplus. Now, that would have meant that if we had forecasted this more accurately, we would have invested \$1.4 billion into the heritage fund.

Mr. R. Miller: It's actually a \$6 billion surplus because of the \$2 billion in supplementary supply.

Mr. Elsalhy: Well, here you go. So \$4 billion on the record, \$2 billion off the record. The total would be \$6 billion. That's 6,000 million dollars. That's nine zeros after the six.

So how would we compare against other jurisdictions which are similar to ourselves? I would compare Alberta to a place like Alaska or Norway. Alaska's petroleum fund, which began the same year as our own heritage fund, is almost triple our value. Norway's fund, which is 16 years younger than ours, has more than \$120 billion U.S. in their bank account. We are nowhere close to that. Are these people more prudent? Are they more worried about their future? Maybe, but I think we should be as well.

With Alaska, again, I pose this theoretical question to the hon. minister: would Alberta ever consider giving dividends to its people? We cannot expect cash handouts all the time, but I think what we are asking for is a fair share of the boom. The industry is producing. They are making money, and our surpluses keep growing. What does the average Albertan expect if we're not giving them a tax reduction, if we're not allowing them to pay what they consider fair on their utility prices, if they are paying through their noses at the pump? So maybe, possibly, consider the Alaskan model and offer them dividends. That's just a theoretical question, but it's really an intriguing one, and I would definitely appreciate an answer to this.

My next question is more of a policy question to the hon. minister with regard to the AISH payments and the health care premiums,

again, because I just want to know: who makes the call? Who decides whether we waive or do not waive the health care premiums? Would it be a recommendation from the minister of health; that is, around your caucus table? Would she say, "No, Madam Minister, we don't think we should waive the Alberta health care premiums"? Or is that a decision that is made by the Ministry of Finance based on revenues and estimates and expenses and so on?

Also, I know that you indicated that you are going to increase payments to AISH immediately by \$100 and then after that by \$50 the year after, and so on. Again, who makes this decision? Would it be the Ministry of Finance, based on budgeting considerations, or would it be the minister responsible saying, "No, I think we should only pay them \$100 dollars this year and \$50 the next and then whatever else the third year"? Who decides?

Also, the assistance for persons with developmental disabilities budget funding is increased by 4.5 per cent in 2005-06. Again, that's positive. That's commendable. But why only 4.5 per cent? Aren't we rich enough to double that?

I know some questions might not be readily answerable today, but I would definitely appreciate any feedback I receive from the hon. minister, and I thank you for your time.

Mrs. McClellan: I'm going to be brief and give you a detailed answer. You asked a question on health care premiums. Yes, \$1,056 a family is a lot of money, but so is the excellence in our health system. I haven't run across a lot of Albertans that pay health premiums that have accessed services that consider it a burden. Obviously, all of us would prefer not to.

4:30

I don't know if any of you had an opportunity to listen to the Stollery children's health centre radiothon that's on CHED today and yesterday and will be on tomorrow. I recommend to anybody to listen to some of those stories that parents tell about the young person who's had 11 surgeries, I think it was, in 12 years. Very sad, but isn't it wonderful that we have these facilities. I've heard nothing but praise for the people who work in those facilities and who access the services we have, especially children's leukemia. The strides that have been made in the very recent years, just very recent years, where there wasn't even a treatment just short years ago. I invite anyone who's used the health system to ask for a copy of their statement.

So, you know, I'm not making excuses for health premiums. I think it was designed first to pay 50 per cent of the cost of I think it was just doctors' services. It's one-ninth of our budget today of all health services that we provide. We provided just around three-quarters of a billion dollars for Health for additional dollars this year. Health premiums are around \$1 billion, just under, in revenue. Should we have gotten rid of premiums and not given Health that money? It was about choices, as I said. I want tax reductions as bad as anyone else, but when we do it, I want them to be sustainable, I want them to be affordable, and I don't want to cut necessary programs to do that. So it's choices.

Ethical? Moral? You made a very good point there. You have your beliefs. I don't think I'd be far off from agreeing with you on some of them. As I said, I think that's a bigger discussion that we all need to have.

Heritage fund investing. I've kind of covered that. We're inflation-proofing that now. It will increase each year. There is the opportunity to add to that if we have the dollars available.

Alaska and Norway. I hope you had that discussion when the Minister of Energy's estimates were up. I didn't hear it come up. We read a lot about Alaska and Norway, but we forget that you can't

compare oil and gas development and activity and recovery in this country, or at least in this province, with those two because they have a totally different product, a different cost associated with retrieving it. I don't think anybody is going to argue that the oil sands, which do have a higher cost of recovery, haven't been a huge benefit. At least, you shouldn't argue that there hasn't been a huge benefit if you live in Edmonton because this region really does feel a great deal of the advantage in that investment there.

So you could take somebody else's model in Canada – that's what I'd rather you did – where you have more similarities and say: does our model work better or does theirs, where they tax them heavily and don't have any development? I don't know. Obviously, I'm agreeing with the model we have, where we have a balance between good return and strong activity, because we all benefit.

Would we consider giving dividends to Albertans? Well, you know, what Albertans told us in It's Your Future is: "Don't send us a cheque. Lower our taxes. Make sure that we have the excellence in health services, the excellence in education programming. Make sure we help those who are most vulnerable in our society. But you can give me the dividend in my paycheque by lowering my taxes." I think that's important.

I do want to make a point because we talk a lot about taxes, and I wanted on the record to make sure that we all understand. There are some good graphs in these books to back this up, but if we taxed at the level of the next closest province to us, not the furthest out, not the middle but the next closest, we would collect \$7 billion more tax in this province. Well, we'd have \$7 billion more revenue, but conversely Albertans and Alberta companies would have \$7 billion less to invest in our province.

So I asked my department if that gap is narrowing. We have seen moves, and I applaud them, in other provinces and federally to lower taxes, although the federal lowering of taxes is sort of, well, the layaway plan – you really see the benefit in about five years – whereas what you see here is immediate. In fact, they tell me that the gap is widening, that we are maintaining and growing our tax advantage, not losing it. So that's important to know.

As I said earlier, you can be selective. I know one of the hon. members will get up and be selective and say: a family of this, this, and this in B.C. or Saskatchewan. But they forget to add that they have a PST added to their costs. They can't buy anything, virtually, that you might want to buy other than food without paying it [interjections] – I'm getting them going – and that's important. But you have to look at it on the family side, too, where we treat the spouse the same as the other partner. That doesn't occur in very many, if any, other provinces. That is also in here. So we have a significant tax advantage here. We want to grow that tax advantage. I think it's important.

You asked a question on AISH payments. I want to reiterate: don't look at only the cash benefit in AISH. That was important, and it's significant to those folks – that's for sure – but I think the other improvements that the minister made in access to other services, whether they were in health services or dental or drugs, other supports, are incredibly important as well. The ability to earn more money without it being clawed back I applaud heartily because I think there should be the ability for people to go out and earn money and not have it all clawed back. So when you look at the AISH package, I encourage you to look at the whole package because it's pretty significant.

Certainly, some of it is about budget as to how you implement it, but again it's making a package that's most beneficial. There was a great deal of work done by the review committee in consulting with the people who use those services, and generally I have heard back from them that they like what we've done. But the minister is

the one who designed the package through her consultation and made those decisions. Could she have done more if she'd had more money? Obviously, yes is the answer, but within the dollars she had – and that's the case in each department. They have the best information, the most knowledge, and they definitely are the ones that should make the decisions as to how to use the dollars that are allocated. They do make their case on the number of dollars that they get on the program that they want to provide, and that is debated long and hard, and it's quite an interesting exercise.

Ms Calahasen: She's tough.

Mrs. McClellan: She's not very tough; she's soft.

But I think that one of the things that we really tried to do in this budget on the tax side was assist the lower income earners. It was targeted, and I think Albertans told us that if there was limited flexibility, they wanted those dollars or those abilities to keep dollars, which is really what tax reduction is about, for our lower income people and people who are on fixed incomes.

You do know that on health premiums there is a sliding scale, and if you are at a low income, you don't pay. Now seniors pay none, but there is for the working family as well. Are those thresholds right? Are they, you know, as they move, right? We could debate that. We talk a lot in this about seniors and so on. I suggest that working families, especially young families that have two, three, and four kids, really needed this break as bad as anyone in our society. So that's where we chose to put it in this budget, when we had limited ability, and I don't apologize for that. I think that when faced with a choice, it was the right choice to make. I will give you some more detail in a written response.

4:40

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I'm pleased to get up and make a few comments and ask a few questions with respect to the estimates for the Finance department and for the minister.

I want to start out, I guess, with a few things about taxes, and I want to again distinguish the position of the New Democratic Party on corporate taxes from the position of the Liberal and the Conservative parties, who favour continuing with a plan for reducing corporate income tax. This plan was initially outlined by Steve West when he was the Minister of Finance just prior to the election in 2000, and it would have the corporate tax rate paid by the larger companies decline steadily from what was then 15 per cent to 8 per cent. I think we're somewhere around 11 and a half now, and there's not a further reduction in this budget, and that, in our view, is a good thing.

We do not support the further reduction of the corporate income tax in this province. We think that it's important that there remains a good balance between sources of revenue and tax burden, and we think that given the province's dependence on oil and gas revenue, which can be volatile, to reduce our standard tax base too far puts us at risk. I still recall the difficulty that the government found itself in when there was a sudden drop in oil and gas prices. A number of social programs had to be cut on a fairly emergent basis, and I don't think we should be putting ourselves in that kind of vulnerable position. So maintaining a reasonable tax base with balance and fairness is an important priority for us.

I notice that the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance talked about that if Alberta tax rates were set at the level of the next highest

province, we'd have \$7 billion of revenue that would otherwise be available to Alberta companies to invest in Alberta. I think that I got that right. Except that the point I would like to make is that these are not necessarily Alberta companies, and they don't necessarily invest that money in Alberta. There's a certain amount of profit-taking that takes place by American companies in particular, which dominate our oil patch, and some of that money gets returned to parent companies. So I think that's an important point that needs to be made.

The other tax policy issue where we have a significant difference with the government and apparently at least some of our Liberal colleagues has to do with a rate charge in the flat tax, and we don't support the flat tax. One of the reasons that middle-income Albertans pay perhaps more than their fair share and certainly more than they might in some other provinces is because the flat tax benefits primarily very wealthy people, and the government has of course supplemented that with a significant increase in the personal exemption. We can't argue that the poor are being hammered by that. But the wealthy are certainly getting off very, very lightly and not contributing their fair share, and the result is that middle-income Albertans pay proportionately more. So we don't support the flat tax.

I guess the minister anticipated some of my comments with respect to the tax burden on people in the middle-income areas. Certainly, if you add in – and we got this out of the ministry statements directly. This is not original research. The budget documents show that middle-income Albertans can pay significantly more if you include the health care premiums than they would, say, in Ontario and somewhat more than in British Columbia. Health care premiums, of course, cost a typical family of four over a thousand dollars a year, and that's paid regardless of income, so that's a very flat tax. That's not even a percentage. That's an absolute payment. So I want to come back to that.

I want to address the minister's comments about sales tax as being an offsetting factor relative to what middle-income people pay. I think that's an incorrect placement of that question because the lack of a sales tax in Alberta was always attributed to resource revenues. It was not attributed to other aspects of the taxes that are paid, income tax and corporate tax. It was always argued that the reason Alberta doesn't have a sales tax, doesn't need a sales tax is because of the extra resource revenues that we receive. So I would argue that it's not correct to include that in the calculation.

I want to come to health care premiums because I'm a little bit puzzled about this. They are very significant. There are only two provinces in Canada that have them, including British Columbia. Of course, what really happens is that the provincial governments pay the health care premiums into the federal system so that effectively there are no health care premiums in eight of the provinces. But our take is very significant. It's not a billion dollars, but it's getting up there. This is not allocated towards health care specifically. It goes into general revenues, and of course if you pro-rate it, some of it pays for health care, some of it pays for roads, and some of it pays for other government programs.

Given the wealth of the province and the extra revenues that we have, I am at a loss to understand why the government stopped short of cancelling them for all Albertans. They did move in the right direction with respect to seniors. I think that was a good move. But the government can afford to do this. This is perhaps the least fair tax that is imposed, and it's not related to health care. It's a general revenue tax. So my question is: since we can afford to do it and since it's unpopular and, you know, since even some members on the other side have advocated this, why not just get rid of it?

I want to talk a little bit about securities, and I have a couple of questions. First, on general policy, and this relates to some of the

controversy whirling around the Alberta Securities Commission right now. I'd like to know what progress is being made in terms of establishing a national standard or a national organization to regulate securities, and I don't mean federal. I don't mean that the provinces should just turn this over to the federal government but, rather, establish a national agency. I know there are some discussions around that. I don't know how the minister feels about that. It really seems to me that in this day and age of rapid international investment and globalization and so on, the concept of each provincial government regulating securities in their own province is maybe a little bit outdated. I think we could just move towards a national regulatory framework there. Certainly, I'd like to be brought up to date.

4:50

I have another specific question with respect to some of the activities of the Alberta Securities Commission with relation to the present controversy. I don't share the view that it's inappropriate for the Auditor General to look into this; I think it is. That may not be the end of it though. Once the Auditor General's report is received, then I think that we need to assess whether or not there should be something that goes a little bit further. I am a little bit concerned about the forensic audit that KPMG has been asked to do in terms of leaks and so on.

The minister invited people who had concerns to, you know, get in touch, and I've got it here. On the 12th of April:

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you have actual examples of enforcement issues, I would certainly deal with those. I don't mean one or two, given the number of files . . . because I think everyone understands that you can have those concerns. What I would be most concerned about is if people brought concerns forward and they were not dealt with.

The minister basically asked for people to submit evidence. Now, legitimate security concerns on the e-mail system are one thing, but I'd like assurance from the minister that, you know, having invited these people to come forward, she's going to make sure that this forensic audit or other actions by management there do not punish people who heard what she had to say and responded in good faith. So that's that point.

I want to I guess deal a little bit with insurance. I'm curious about the decisions around asking for a voluntary reduction in rates and then why that became a mandated reduction of 6 per cent. Why was 6 per cent chosen when the report that was done for the insurance review board said that rates were 12.7 per cent too high? Why was the reduction only 6 per cent?

I'd like to know a little bit about the process that's going to be used for the rate review. There are going to be public hearings, but I note that these public hearings are set for summer months and are only going to be held in Edmonton and Calgary. There's a considerable process around these, so it's not the kind of thing where people with their private insurance rates in their family going up can go down to a hearing in Lloydminster or in Hinton or even Lethbridge or Red Deer or Medicine Hat and express their concerns. They're very formal. There are steps that have to be taken in order to be heard. They're in the summer, and they're only in Calgary and Edmonton. So I guess that's number one; I have a concern about the process. It doesn't look particularly accessible to me.

Secondly, I'd like to know from the minister what exactly the process is intended to do and what powers the review board has. Would they be able to roll back insurance rates even further or to recommend that? What sort of framework do they work in?

Those are the concerns. I could hector the minister about the advantages of public auto insurance, but I've done that enough. She knows what the right thing to do is. Nevertheless, I'll spare her today with a view to maybe getting out of here. It's such a nice day.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. McClellan: I'm going to just cover a few things. You're right. I do know the right thing to do, and it's not proven anywhere that I've seen that public insurance is a better thing.

In fact, much has been said about B.C.'s system and how much cheaper it is. You know, one of the problems you have when you drive as much as I do is you get a lot of time to listen to the radio. I was listening to a talk show and just have to share this.

An Hon. Member: Was it *Rutherford*?

Mrs. McClellan: I can't remember. It was an afternoon, I think.

There was a gentleman who came on. He had moved to Alberta from B.C., and he said, you know, that he had heard all the horror stories about the insurance costs in Alberta, so he hung on to his insurance as long as he could, right to the last day. Then he went and got his insurance, and he just kicked himself all over the place because he could have saved so much money by insuring in Alberta as soon as he got here. I mean, you can find that, and you will find somebody else.

Well, one of the things we've tried to say in this whole thing is that you've got to look at the driver, you've got to look at the record, and you've got to look at their driving habits and their patterns. It's easy for me to pick that person or you can pick somebody else who would pay less in B.C. or Saskatchewan, but the main thing is that Albertans are seeing a reduction in their rates. They are able to afford their insurance. It's a little like taxes. I always get a kick out of this. If something goes down \$5, it's minimal. If it goes up \$5, it's like, you know, Mount Everest. It's over the top. That's what we do in this business, I guess.

On the process this summer: it is pretty clearly laid out. I think there is an ability for people to put submissions in writing if they can't put them in any other way. This review was planned; the interim reduction was not. So the 6 per cent now mandatory was not planned. It was planned that any change in rate would have been this fall, but given the appearance and, subsequently, the knowledge of profit, which is not a bad thing – excessive profit is – it was determined that you would reduce the rates on an interim basis for those drivers. There will be an adjustment made again this fall if it's warranted, one way or the other, so if the 12 point whatever per cent still holds, that will happen then.

On the forensic audit that's happening, I heard you say that you agreed we had to be concerned about breaches in the security system. That is, as I understand from the commission, what they are reviewing. It would be very serious if the system was breached in any way because of the confidentiality of the material there, of course, and we want to maintain the confidence of the investment community.

People who have raised concerns do not have any fear of reprisals from me. I think they are confident that I will treat information that they want to share with me by e-mail or letter or by phone confidentially, but I do appreciate that people will come forward and, if they have concerns, have them addressed. I think the important thing that I said in that response in *Hansard* was that it isn't whether it's one or two companies that have a concern. The point is that if they have a concern on how their case was handled, that has to be dealt with. They may not get the answer they want in the end, but they have to feel that they have had a satisfactory review of that, and that's how you have confidence in the system. So I maintain that.

We're not going to ever quite agree on taxes. We know that, and I appreciate that. But I do think that you would agree that we should not lower taxes of any kind at the expense of programs, and that continues to be my point. Would I like to remove the health premium? Would I like to lower taxes? Yes. But given the choice of funding health this year and advanced education, which would be pretty near exactly the amount of the health premium reduction, I

couldn't make that choice in this budget time. Certainly we intend to continue to lower taxes in any way we can over the next while. B.C. and Alberta are the only ones that have health premiums, but I live very close to Saskatchewan, and they have a personal sales tax, which they consider goes to health and education. At least that's the way it used to be. I don't get over there much now, as much as I used to. Their personal tax was really dedicated to paying the costs of some of those important programs. So you can use words and semantics; the fact is that every province in Canada has services that they need to provide to their citizens, and we all, in each province, search for the best way to provide those services to our citizens. We have chosen this way.

5:00

I don't think anybody can argue that lowering taxes in Alberta hasn't paid dividends. The growth is substantial, the confidence in companies. We want companies to come here and do business. We want them to be profitable so they can pay their employees and invest further in our province. I said that \$7 billion – I said Albertans and Alberta companies because the \$7 billion I referenced, we all get the benefit from that. It's not just simply companies.

So I think, as I say, we've agreed that we're not going to philosophically or ideologically or in almost any other way come to a total agreement on tax policy. But I appreciate being challenged on ours. Every time you choose to do that, you make me think, and that's what it's really all about.

Securities. National standards. That is the aim. All of the provinces in Canada support the passport system, and the passport system is having national standards. It still allows you to do your regulation in your own province, but if a company anywhere wants to invest, they will know what the standards are. They would be consistent across Canada. The only province that does not agree with the passport system to date is Ontario. I'm not sure what they really want at this time. They haven't completely filled me in on that. So the passport system is, we think, a good system.

I have had the opportunity to talk to investment companies, banks, and if they start out saying, "we'd like a national system," and you ask them about a passport system being implemented successfully – would it be as good? – they generally agree that that would work. What they want is national standards, and they want national standards adhered to. I'm quite relieved that you don't want to just turn it all over to the federal government.

With that, I'll give you some more detail on some of that, and I'll let somebody else have a chance.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner has been . . .

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much . . .

The Acting Chair: It's Cardston-Taber-Warner, hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: I won't be long enough, probably, to take up all the time.

I appreciate the opportunity, Madam Chair. There are a few things that I would appreciate to address. It seems like we're going over some things many times, and we probably will continue to do that because we all have diversity of thought here.

I want to start, though, by reading from page 238: "review policies to ensure a fair and competitive tax environment in Alberta." I'm very pleased with the steps that we have taken so far and the targeted tax reductions that have taken place, but I must say that I am concerned that we're not continuing to be as competitive as possible. In any competition when one sits on his laurels, it isn't too long

before someone passes us and we realize that we've lost the advantage that we've had.

So I would urge this government to continue looking at being as competitive as possible in our tax regime and not just saying that we are the best. If we can do better – and I believe that we really can – I would like to see those great strides being taken, including the reduction on corporate tax. I think that it has been proven throughout the world that whenever countries reduce their corporate tax, it is to the benefit of the citizens there because corporations are in the business of making profits, and if their taxes go up, so does the expense to the people. So I'd urge the government to fast-track to the 8 per cent as I believe New Brunswick is leading us now in that area in attracting business to that province.

I just want to touch base on the auto insurance for a minute. We seem to be batting this back and forth. The government this week announced that they're going to have a mandatory 6 per cent rollback. I don't see any reason why in that 6 per cent rollback – the minister has mentioned many times that if they took the 3 per cent off, how would they ensure the consumers would reap that benefit? I think it would have been just as easy for the minister to announce a 9 per cent rollback and tell those corporations that that 3 per cent was in the government, and we could have received that \$171 million back to the people. If they can mandate 6 per cent, I think 9 per cent would have been just as easy to do, and it would have been a benefit for all Albertans.

I've really had to struggle, I guess, with the development of a new ministry to have Restructuring and Government Efficiency. It does not seem efficient to expand in order to look at trying to reduce that, and the money that's being spent there and the extra bureaucrats that are being hired and the wages and things there, I think that each ministry has within itself the ability to be efficient and should look at reducing that. It seems like it's almost a confession that we don't know how to analyze our own area and we're going to get someone else to. I think that we can be more efficient through having internal audits and looking at those areas.

This government continues to increase. My understanding is from the budget that we're looking at 1,000 new bureaucrats. I don't believe that they're necessary. I think this government should be looking very strongly at attrition and trying to reduce the size. We have the highest number of bureaucrats per capita anywhere, I believe, in North America now. I believe that's getting close to 150 to 1, and that's not something I want to be proud of and say that we're leading here in Alberta.

I guess an area I want to talk about a little bit is just with health care. One of the things that doesn't seem to have been brought up recently is this question on how many health care cards we have out. We just went through an enumeration recently. I thought this government would maybe be looking at that and tracking down, and perhaps they are, and if they could tell us that they are doing that, but it is a question on whether we have a lot of health cards out there. I've heard some very extreme numbers, as high as 80 being issued to one individual. Perhaps with our recent enumeration we could somehow be efficient and check that. We've made great strides with the Alberta driver's licence, and perhaps we could look at something to continue that security and do that with the health care system. If there is a lot of fraud going on there, let's identify it and make the health care really be working for all Albertans.

We've talked many times, and Albertans are always appreciative of the one-time spending that we have, whether it's in infrastructure or whatever area that it is. When we recognize a problem, and I think that Albertans are – well, they understand enough that if, in fact, we were to have a surplus, there would be nothing wrong with one-time tax cuts, even if it was only perhaps for one year. But I think history has shown us that when tax cuts are implemented, even though the cuts are taken there, revenue actually increases. That's

been shown in many places in the world, and I would urge this government to take some leap of faith with that, whether that's in education property taxes to leave the money in the people's pockets, or I would really continue to urge on health care premiums, that we would see the increase in tax revenue even though we've reduced it. We would therefore be further and faster and more efficient than other areas in the world at what we're doing.

I've been disappointed again in that there seems to be very little to address the packing industry. This government understands and we see the benefit of those whether you want to say relief in tax royalties, in capital expenses in the oil and gas industry and exploration in minerals, and I really feel that it would be no burden to taxpayers. I realize that part of this is a major fight with Ottawa, and I feel that Alberta could lead much stronger debate with Ottawa in demanding some tax reform to spur business, especially in the cattle industry.

5:10

I mentioned on another occasion about during the drought period and how those ranchers were given a break in not having to immediately replace their inventory. Things like that would really help the cattle industry. I know many, many feedlots last year that went out and had to buy cattle because if they didn't, they were going to have to pay because of the reduction in inventory. I feel that this is a battle very worth taking to the feds and getting a concession there and perhaps even waking them up because they're naive to the problem. I would love to see that go forward.

It would be very nice to see concessions to capital money going into the packing industry. We talk about value-added products and how that helps our economy. You talk about the horse-racing industry earning \$45 million. I'd like to see this government become innovative and see a way for the beef industry to earn \$45 million by increasing capital expenses in packing plants or something else. Let's be innovative and give Albertans the opportunity to invest in some good business that really is for the benefit of all Albertans.

An Hon. Member: You can't race cattle.

Mr. Hinman: Oh, you've never chased one.

I want to talk a little bit about the heritage trust fund and perhaps what could be an Alberta opportunity. We know that history repeats itself. It wasn't that long ago, in the '80s, when we went through horrendous interest rate spikes. Something that alarms me to a great extent here in the province and throughout Canada now are the short, open-ended mortgages that people are faced with when buying their houses. The incentive is to go short-term, perhaps only one to three years, to renegotiate those terms. When I was young and working with my father, a 20-year mortgage, locked in, was standard in the industry, and they wouldn't even consider going shorter. That's not even accessible in our market today.

We have two banking institutions here in the province, the Alberta Treasury Branches and the credit unions. If we were to put the money from the heritage trust fund, perhaps like we've done in the past and felt it was to our detriment, where we locked in long-term loans out of province, if in fact that money was to go into our local banks with the mandate that it was to go to long-term mortgages for housing and locked in at 6 or 7 per cent, that would stop inflation, which we're sure to see around the corner. We don't know when. It would really help disperse that bubble that could come in the real estate industry. So I would be very pleased to see something for Albertans to be able to go in and lock in a 15- or 20-year mortgage at the ATB or credit unions here in the province.

I guess that the thing I want to go back to again is the federal government. If we fail to stand up for ourselves, we'll fall for

anything. It seems like we're falling for the leadership of the federal government to spend, spend, spend and more and more programs. Our equalization payments are huge. It's no longer, I feel, equitable that this is simply a transfer of wealth from one area to another with no accountability to Alberta on where that money is going. I would like to see a strong Finance minister that would really go to the table . . .

The Acting Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but our time has expired on this. Pursuant to Standing Order 58(5), which provides for the Committee of Supply to rise and report no later than 5:15 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday afternoons, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Finance for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$123,381,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements	\$69,651,000

The Acting Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report the Department of Finance and beg leave to sit again at another time.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Haley in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I call on the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Finance: expense and equipment/inventory purchases,	\$123,381,000; nonbudgetary disbursements,	\$69,651,000.
---	--	---------------

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? Carried. So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a very, very interesting and thought-provoking afternoon with very much information exchanged on both sides of the House, all of which provided greater clarity for the emolument of all members, and because of that, I move that we now call it 5:30 and adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 25.

[Motion carried; at 5:17 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 25, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/25

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. Let us keep ever mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province, and in that work let us find strength and wisdom. Amen.

Hon. members and to all of our guests in the various galleries today, please join in the singing of our national anthem in the language of your choice. We'll be led today by Mr. Paul Lorieau.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The islands of Indonesia and landlocked Alberta have much in common, especially a healthy reciprocal trade, growing economies fuelled by energy, and a wish to further our relationship. It is my great privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly representatives of Alberta's 14th largest trading partner. We have the consul general of Indonesia, Mr. Saptomo; the consul, Mr. Djundjungan; and vice-consul, Mr. Pringgau. The consul general is on his first official visit to our province. He was appointed just this January and has made Alberta one of his first stops. We welcome this opportunity to say in person that our thoughts are with the Indonesian people as they rebuild. I would now ask the three gentlemen from Indonesia to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What an honour it is today to introduce some amazing and enthusiastic students from my constituency of Sherwood Park. They are from Madonna school, and they are going to spend almost a week here at the Legislature learning about various parts of our government. Their group leaders, of course, are teacher Pat Rykes and education assistant Don Ireland. They have parent helpers Francine Jans, Lynnette Kaminski, and Annette Bunnin. Please join me in welcoming almost 40 in the delegation from Madonna: 32 wonderful students plus their five helpers.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 48 grade 10 students from Tofield school who are seated in the public gallery. They are accompanied today by teachers/group leaders Mr. Fred Yachimec, Mr. Rick Bobier, and Mrs. Anne Digout. As I say, they're from Tofield school visiting our Legislature today, and I would ask that everybody welcome them with a very warm, enthusiastic applause.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to inform the Assembly today that we have some RAP-ers in the House. No, it's not what you think. With us today are seven guests who play important roles in the apprenticeship and industry training system and, more specifically, in the registered apprenticeship program, or RAP, as it's commonly referred to.

The government has announced that the number of available RAP scholarships will increase significantly from 50 to 500. Mr. Speaker, this is outstanding news for the 1,200 high school students who are currently enrolled in RAP as it gives them an even greater opportunity to receive a scholarship that will help them continue their apprenticeship training after graduation. And it's great news for industry in Alberta, that is experiencing or expecting an increase in demand for skilled labour. I met with these guests earlier today to discuss the exciting announcement and was very impressed with their dedication to apprenticeship and industry training in Alberta.

With us today are two past recipients of a RAP scholarship, Scott McManus – I hope he's been able to join us – and Brad Olynyk. Scott is a second-year plumber and gas fitter second class apprentice, and Bradley has completed his apprenticeship and is now a certified journeyman welder. In talking with him earlier today, I learned that because of the amount of time that he was able to put in while still in high school, he achieved that status before or upon the age of 20, which is remarkable. We also have two current RAP students from Edmonton, Nicole Diogo and Jacob Pelletier. Nicole is a structural steel and plate fitter apprentice, and Jacob is a cook apprentice, both of them remarkable role models for students in their schools.

Also joining us today is Don Oborowsky, CEO and co-owner of Waiward Steel Fabricators. Don has been hiring and training apprentices for many years and is a great example of why Alberta's system is one of the best in the world. Also with us to celebrate this announcement is Deb Meraw from St. Joseph high school in Edmonton. Deb is the RAP co-ordinator, working very hard to promote the trades to young people and get them set up in the program.

We also have Rod Moore, board member of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board. The board played a key role in making these 450 new scholarships a reality, and they work continuously with industry and government to make our system better. And last but certainly not least, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Advanced Education responsible for apprenticeship and industry training, Shirley Dul. I'd ask that all guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly two constituents from my riding of Dunvegan-Central Peace. It's not very often that I get to introduce individuals from the

Peace, so I look at it as a real privilege. The first is Mr. Walter Doll, reeve of the MD of Fairview, and the second individual is Mr. Robert Jorgensen, chief administrator for the same MD. They were here earlier meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Both are standing in the members' gallery, and I would ask that we extend the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my hon. colleague across the table it is certainly my honour and the first time that I've had this opportunity to introduce someone from Lethbridge. It is a group of grades 7 and 8 students from the Gilbert Paterson community school. They're not only bright students, but they also are a band that has been here performing in Edmonton at the canto band concerts. They're accompanied by their teachers, Doug Scales and Tom Spackman. The parent chaperones are Wendy Funk, Evelyn Dreilich, Laurie Haig, and their bus driver is Franklin Kuehn. I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

1:40

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very special guests today: Naomi Mackin, director, Old Strathcona Youth Co-op, and her colleague, Karen Leighton, an outreach worker. The Old Strathcona Youth Co-op is located in my constituency, and my constituency office had some modest role to play about seven years ago in the establishment of this very valuable agency, which provides services for youth in need. I would like to express my appreciation for the work of the co-op and ask Naomi and Karen to please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to be able to introduce to you today my nephew Mr. Kevin Niddrie. Kevin is just finishing his co-op degree with AGLC as an auditor in the forensic audit department, and he's going to be employed in about a month's time with the accounting department of TransAlta. I would ask Kevin to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and honoured this afternoon to have the opportunity to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a gentleman who is not only a very valued and experienced campaigner but a trusted adviser and certainly a true friend. Mr. Marion Semaniuk is his name, and he is seated in the public gallery. I would ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the same day the Minister of Finance stood in this Assembly and assured me and assured all of us

that there wasn't going to be a witch hunt at the Alberta Securities Commission, going as far as to tell me that I should applaud the forensic computer audit, the first axe dropped on an ASC employee. I'm sorry, but I'm not going to applaud the firing of Alberta workers who stand up for what they believe is right. To the Minister of Finance: will this minister categorically deny that the firing of a senior official of the Securities Commission last week was a result of his coming forward with allegations of wrongdoing at the commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can neither deny nor confirm it because the persons who came forward came forward on the basis of anonymity. I do not know whether that person is one that came forward. Newspaper reports might suggest that, but I have absolutely no knowledge of that person or the names or identities of any of the other persons who came forward.

I will stand by what I said last week, and that is that no person who came forward will be penalized for coming forward with concerns. I cannot say that no person will be terminated or rebuked for acts that were unprofessional or perhaps illegal.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister explain to this Assembly and to all employees of the Securities Commission what she will be doing to finally protect the rights of employees who followed her instructions to come forward with information about wrongdoing at the Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I stand by my last statement: no employee will be terminated or rebuked for coming forward to raise concerns. However, I cannot guarantee that there will be no terminations or rebukes of employees who may have acted in an improper manner.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, given that coming forward with the information she asks may put an employee's job in jeopardy from the chairman and the executive director, how in the world is she standing back to let this whole thing play out?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, one, I don't cast aspersions on people on the basis of rumour. I don't stand anywhere and besmirch a person's good name without a strong foundation for doing that. That would be substantiated information or evidence. The Leader of the Opposition may feel comfortable in that role. I do not.

The Speaker: The second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a significant sector of Alberta's economy and business future is at stake here and at stake in the proper running of the Securities Commission, has the Minister of Finance made any inquiries at all into the dismissal last week of a senior official of the Securities Commission? Has she looked into it at all?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have had a conversation with persons at the commission. I have been assured that the matter was handled not on the basis of any allegations coming forward because, frankly, the persons who would have brought this action forward don't know the identities of the persons who brought the complaints forward. I don't know them. They don't know them. I have researched the documents entirely, and there is not one identifier in

those documents that I can find that gives the identity of any of the complainants.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why, given all the allegations of enforcement and human resource problems at the Securities Commission, did this minister allow the people at the centre of the controversy, the chairman and the executive director, to be involved in the KPMG e-mail witch hunt?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is making an assumption that, in fact, these people are involved. Maybe he would like to show me his evidence that that is the case because what I have from the part-time commissioners does not indicate that in any way.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why – why? – is this minister opposed to a full forensic audit of the Securities Commission, including an investigation of files where enforcement irregularities are alleged?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been the one in this House who has supported the investigation. There is a forensic audit going on now. That's the subject of the discussion here today. So if the Leader of the Opposition picks his type of audit, it's okay, but if the commission moves forward with an audit, it is not okay.

Mr. Speaker, I have said consistently that the Alberta Securities Commission is very important to the investment community, the business community in this province. We do need to know if there are improprieties there. We have been assured that the enforcement and regulatory activities are being handled properly, even-handedly. We have been informed that there are human resource issues there. The commissioners have engaged an external company to assist them in dealing with those. I think that to this point that is what we would want to see happen.

The Speaker: The third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Utilities Consumer Advocate

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 23 of this year the Utilities Consumer Advocate released a report indicating that the main thrust of the Department of Energy is the promotion of retail competition without consideration for consumer interests. As is typical practice of this Tory government, any information critical of this government is kept hidden from the public and government critics. My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Will the minister finally make public this report by the Utilities Consumer Advocate of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's pretty important to point out to the member how unfortunate it is that the Liberal researchers don't do their work. The fact is that what they are commenting on and what was in the paper is simply a report by an advisory committee, and it's in response to a paper that was put out for discussion purposes – discussion purposes – by the Department of Energy. I really take offence when it sounds like the advisory

committee is attacking the Department of Energy because that is not true. The fact is that it's a response. The paper that somehow was leaked is a draft. It is not the final paper.

1:50

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister: given that this government seems very eager to win the approval of the energy industry and not that of the Alberta public, does the minister have or plan to obtain approval figures from the general public on how electricity deregulation was forced upon all of us?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important to point out that there have been a lot of gains made since there was restructuring of the electrical industry. As a matter of fact, the ability to generate electricity has increased dramatically over that short period of time. As far as gathering information to see what the public wants, there's the advisory committee. They've been holding some hearings around the province, and the discussion paper by the Department of Energy is out. They're getting feedback from all the consumers, from the generators, from the transmitters, and from all the people that are involved in the electrical industry.

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister: given that the Utilities Consumer Advocate's expenses are fully recovered from utility industry funding, when will the minister fully fund and empower the Utilities Consumer Advocate so that he can operate at arm's length from the government and truly help and advocate for the helpless consumers of this province?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I think that's just a horrendous leap to ever suggest that because there's funding coming from the Balancing Pool to pay for the work of the advocate that, in fact, the advocate is in some way unable to do his or her work. The fact is that the advocate is there to help protect the consumer. As a matter of fact, the advocate, through the intervention and hearings with other stakeholders, has in fact taken some \$85 million and passed it back to the consumer, rates that would have been increased by the generators. So to ever suggest for one minute that the advocate is not doing their work is absolutely wrong.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government has been consistently wrong in its claim that competition would lead to lower electricity rates when, in fact, the so-called retail electricity contracts are a consumer rip-off that have institutionalized higher electricity rates for residential, farm, and small business customers. Now it seems that government proposals would extend this to all consumers. When the utilities advisory committee issues a report about utility customers getting ripped off by the Tory deregulation scheme, the government suppresses the report. My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Why is the government hiding a report which has been done for the Utilities Consumer Advocate advisory council that has concluded that all future options for residential electricity sales will penalize bill payers and benefit the electricity companies?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an even worse stretch than the first line of questioning because the fact is that the report that the gentleman is referring to was a draft report and it was in response to questions that were asked through a discussion paper from the Department of Energy. Through the fullness of time the final report

from the committee will be out. It'll become part of the discussion as it relates to the discussion paper put out by the Department of Energy, and in the fullness of time they will see the report. In fact, I hope that they will feel a bit ashamed for the comments that they're making today because that is not a final report.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the government that should feel ashamed for hiding this report.

Will the minister please tell the house why, in fact, the government is stamping "draft" on this report? Is it so that you can simply change the conclusions before the public sees it?

Mr. Lund: That's so interesting, Mr. Speaker, because when that draft report came through, the government didn't put "draft" on it. That was a report that came from the committee, and it's a draft because they're still working on it. They're still holding public meetings, and there's one coming up at Bonnyville – I believe it's on May 12 – and I would encourage people in that area or I would encourage the hon. member to go out and see what happens at that meeting.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Is the government simply trying to hide bad news about its failed electricity deregulation scheme and keep such information out of the hands of Albertans, or will the minister table that report immediately?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, we're not hiding anything. Draft reports are just draft reports. The fact is that there's been in excess of 3,000 megawatts of power generation that has happened since the restructuring of the industry. Someday if the member cares to have a 101 on electricity and how the whole system works, I'd only be too happy to provide it to the member.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The two previous questions kind of lead up to my question except that I'll be looking for some facts and asking a sensible question. In 2003-2004 I sat on the advisory committee that recommended that we have a Utilities Consumer Advocate made up of everyday Albertans, and you know, the government responded, and we got that body that's getting all this criticism right now. I'd like the Minister of Government Services to tell me and all Albertans: who are the members that sit on this committee?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, we're extremely fortunate to have 10 people that are very clear-thinking average Albertans. As a matter of fact, the composition is made up of three farmers, three people that are just residents, and then four people who are business/residents. So we have a broad range of people that are in the category of under 250,000 kilowatt hours per year, and those are the ones that are currently under the regulated rate option. Certainly, I think this advisory committee does an excellent job of representing those people.

Mr. VanderBurg: Again, Mr. Speaker, given that these advisory members don't get their information out of the newspaper, I'd like to know: other than Bonnyville where do these members travel to, and where do they get their information from?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, they've held three other meetings: one in Hinton, one in Vauxhall, and I'm sorry, but it slips my mind where the other one was held. What I've asked them to do is to make sure that they hold one or two hearings in all of the service areas where we have the different generators and the different systems and operations so that they'll get a broad cross-section from all corners of the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Horse-racing Industry

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and ask some real questions now. Last week in the Legislature it was established that the government leaves behind 66.6 per cent of the revenue from gambling machines at racetracks that goes to Horse Racing Alberta and to the facilities that host the gambling machines. My question is for the Minister of Gaming. Can the minister tell us exactly what percentage of those funds go to Horse Racing Alberta and what percentage goes to the facility operators?

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, another week, another day, and another attack on the horse-racing industry, one of our proud agricultural industries in the province, but I am pleased to answer his question. As noted, 33 per cent goes to the Alberta lottery fund, 15 per cent goes to the facility, whether that be Northlands, Stampede Park, or whatever, and the balance, if he cares to do the math, would go to Horse Racing Alberta.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister give us some actual dollar figures, rather than just percentages, based on last year's numbers?

Mr. Graydon: Well, we have a number in the budget, but it's not a firm number because it's based on revenue generated. So the number in the budget, which they bring up daily, is \$45 million, I believe, to Horse Racing Alberta. That is not a firm number. It could be much less than that if the activity is less at the race tracks.

Mr. Tougas: Well, in that Edmonton Northlands and Stampede Park are in line to receive more than \$10 million each from the lottery fund on top of their take from the gambling machines, is this not a case of double-dipping into the lottery jackpot?

Mr. Graydon: Well, both Northlands and Stampede Park, again, while their primary focus, I would say, is agricultural activities, they certainly provide a broad range of activities. There are many user groups there every single day of the year at those two facilities providing entertainment, education to groups all the way from 4-H clubs, youth groups, to lots of seniors' groups. They're very well-used facilities, and they deserve the support of this government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Funding for Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Health care remains a very important topic to all Albertans, and in our recent budget a very large increase was devoted to health care. However, it also showed

a difference in how the money is allocated to the different regions in Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Could she explain or help us to understand how the regions that received a 4.2 per cent increase, as opposed to a region like Calgary that got a 12 per cent increase, can be expected to deliver the same services or continue operating in the same system?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, one of the other facts that I should point out is that this year with the allocation to the health authorities, on average East Central is funded on a per capita rate at \$1,652 per person, which is higher than the provincial average of \$1,276. The population-based formula is adjusted for age, for income, and for the capacity each region has. Simply put, in the smaller regions in the outlying areas there is not the capacity, because there's not the population, to deliver the same kinds of services.

So, Mr. Speaker, health care has been organized so that province-wide services are delivered largely in two centres, like the Calgary health authority and Capital health, but we do try to pay attention to the innovative projects from various regions who come forward with niche markets, which they can use to support their own health care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question. The import/export dollars that the regions use are taken from the budgets of the smaller regional health authorities, and we are very appreciative of the services we get in the larger regions. My question is to the minister. What innovation or what policies is she bringing forward that might allow these regions to deliver the services in their areas?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. The chair for East Central has discussed with me a number of the initiatives, including working to make sure that MRI services can be available, working to make sure that there's a plan, if necessary, to provide mobilized services, and to recognize some of the other kinds of supports we can offer the community. In this year's budget the capital for East Central will include a 48-bed long-term care facility in Vermilion, 2 and a half million dollars in Vegreville for their care centre.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes a very good point, and that is that we have to continually examine the capacity of the import/export formula to deliver the services and work to unleash innovation in the regions so that where they can increase their performance, it will be done.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Arts Funding

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a fact of life in Alberta that the funding for organizations through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts is simply not enough. Alberta is floundering behind other provinces when it comes to funding for the arts and for the book publishers. This is a sad reality given our vast resources. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Given that per capita cultural expenditures by Alberta are the second lowest in Canada, can the minister inform us if there are any plans to address this funding inequity and strengthen the arts in Alberta?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the arts are a very, very important part of

the culture and the fabric of the province of Alberta. The reality is that they are a very important part of an economic driver in this province. Albertans themselves are among the best attenders of theatrical performances, cultural festivals, and other such elements of the arts life of the province of Alberta. They're very supportive. They're very strong supporters of the arts. People are voting with their feet, and they're going to these things in record numbers.

So to suggest that we're not doing enough for the arts I think is wrong. We have done much for the arts that has allowed it to flourish over the last 20 years. As an example, in 1982 there was just a handful of cultural festivals in the province of Alberta. Now, some 20 years later, there are over 500. Mr. Speaker, we can always do more for the arts, and clearly the arts community themselves would argue in favour of greater support. I can say in answer to the question that we have done much to work with Community Development through the budget process to do much for certain elements of the department like . . .

The Speaker: Thank you. We'll just go on to the next question.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: can the minister tell us why the funding for the book publishing industry in Alberta lags behind that in other provinces in Canada?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, as I was concluding my first answer, I'd like to say that what we have done in the area of Community Development's budget has been dramatic in terms of increases in the budget for certain elements of the department.

To have 10 priorities is to have none at all, and in this department we have focused, in particular, in this budget cycle on our parks. Our parks are like embassies. They're like signatures of the quality of life in the province of Alberta. I don't discount the importance of the arts and the role that it plays in the quality of life in the province of Alberta, but we have quadrupled our funding for parks. This was a very important area, the highest priority within the Department of Community Development.

Mr. Agnihotri: Again to the same minister: couldn't this government use some of the \$45 million given to horse racing to support book publishers and struggling Alberta artists?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I think clearly this question falls within the difficulty of a non sequitur. It had nothing to do with the original question and, furthermore, contrary to the rules of this House, calls for an opinion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Class Sizes

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About 18 months ago the Alberta Commission on Learning released its report regarding basic education in Alberta. One of these recommendations covered class size. Last September, in 2004, approximately 1,250 new teachers were hired to reduce class size. In my constituency I've certainly seen that in the kindergarten through grade 3 sizes. My questions are for the minister of learning. In this year are we going to see more teachers hired, and would we see those class sizes reduced, say, in grades 4, 5, 6, maybe up through junior high?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the class size reduction initiative has been one of the most successful programs ever in the former

ministry of learning and even today in the Ministry of Education. The reason is because the school boards have been given the flexibility to employ those dollars – in this year's budget alone it's about \$110 million – in whatever way they wish.

Flexibility is the key to the success of this particular program. We have neither placed specific directions nor any restrictions on it other than to endorse what the Learning Commission had said, and that was to please look at the K to 3 system first, and if you're okay at that level go to the next, then go to the next. School boards have the entire flexibility of working with their own superintendents and school principals to make those kinds of decisions, and when they're made, school boards do report back to us annually. So we have a pretty good handle on it. We're pretty comfortable with the success and the future direction of the small class size reduction initiatives.

2:10

Mrs. Ady: To the same minister: in some of the schools in my constituency those buildings are just full, so when it comes to trying to meet class-size targets, as well, must students bus out to other schools within the jurisdiction when they face challenges in classroom space in order to meet these class-size guidelines?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the school boards have to bus students out, but certainly the option is there should they wish to do that. Nonetheless, we did recognize that there was a bit of a difficulty in this area. So in the current budget I was successful with the support of all my government colleagues in adding about \$6 million, over and above the \$110 million I just recognized earlier, as a one-time initiative to address specific problems, should there be any, with respect to things like transportation services, with respect to other things that help out our school boards.

So the short answer: no, we're not compelling anyone to do that, but they do have the option to do that if they wish. Let's remember that the small classroom size initiative is a three-year program. It was five. We've sped it up down to three, and it's been very well received out there.

Mrs. Ady: My final supplemental is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What is this minister doing in order to help schools that are squeezed for space but need to meet classroom size targets?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Included in this budget, which will be debated later this week, are 45 new schools as well as 109 new school projects of major renovations. So there's a lot of space going into the system. We are also prepared, though, to add portables because one of the issues is, quite simply, that in many locations the school space is not necessarily where the students are. So we are adding a considerable amount of portables. We hope that we will be able to accommodate it this year. If not this year, certainly next year the accommodation will be there.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Water Strategy

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has repeatedly stated that the protection and sustainability of Alberta's water resources are a high priority. The hon. Minister of Environment reinforced his commitment last week at the environment

conference. However, the recent budget has left Albertans wondering if it's all talk with no capacity to deliver. My first question to the Minister of Environment: given the grossly inadequate budget for the Water for Life strategy, can the minister inform all Albertans what concrete actions he's prepared to take in achieving this goal?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member and other members of this Assembly who attended the first environmental conference of its kind in Canada right here in our province last week. I want to thank the hon. member for attending, like my other colleagues.

Here are some concrete actions that we are taking in the Ministry of Environment. A comprehensive water treatment facility review, of course, across the province's water facilities is taking place as we speak. We have over 500 water treatment facilities in our province. Over the next two months these will be reporting back to me as the Minister of Environment. It's a good example that when we released our Water for Life strategy, that was one of the first identified priorities that we wanted to undertake.

Also, I wanted to say that our water councils, of course, are in place, which is so important, another part of our Water for Life strategy unmatched anywhere in North America.

Finally, if I could give you one more concrete example, the water use stakeholder group reported and recommended phasing out water use for oil field injection. Of course, this is under way as we speak. Again, it's part of our Water for Life strategy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a full inventory of Alberta's water resources is essential to a long-term water conservation plan, is the minister prepared to allocate the necessary resources to gain an accurate measure and report on the sustainability of Alberta's surface and groundwater supplies?

Mr. Boutilier: Well, Mr. Speaker, a very good point and a good question. First and foremost, the short answer is absolutely yes. We intend to allocate the necessary resources in fulfilling our mandate that has been established in Water for Life.

If I could, though, one of the key points is monitoring, which we are doing. Last Friday, in actual fact – and members may not be aware – the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance issued their first report. Of course, these water councils are so important because they're right on the ground level in terms of what's taking place in their communities. Identified were some weaknesses in terms of agricultural practices that we need to improve, which we're committed to. Also, from a municipal waste-water perspective we need to look and see how we can conserve our water even more so because it truly is our blue gold of this province.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that the allocation for Stettler county referred to in Bill 11 far exceeds what the population level requires, can the minister explain what rationale was used to allocate nearly 2,500 cubic decametres of drinking water, which is twice what the usual population would consume?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. Thank you, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who, of course, was carrying Bill 11. I want to say this. I can assure all members of this Assem-

bly that in a growing province such as ours, in communities such as the hon. member has made reference to – this is treated water, and this treated water supplies water for areas like Donalda, Big Valley, and other areas. That is so important in the Stettler area because when they turn on their tap, they require drinking water. So what we've tried to do in that bill is deal with not only the pressures of today in a growing economy and the conservation principles that are so important but also deal with the future growth that's taking place, so we've planned for over the next 20 years, to the hon. member.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Charter Air Travel

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Conservative cabinet ministers, MLAs, political aides are corporate high flyers with little or no regard for what their extravagance is costing the taxpaying public. The information tabled Thursday on chartered jets and airplanes is frankly shocking: 258 air charters in a little more than a three-year period, costing taxpayers over \$1 million. All aboard Air Tory. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: how can the government justify chartering aircraft on no fewer than 258 separate occasions when the government has its own fleet of four airplanes and these planes fly empty over 300 times a year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The majority of times that aircraft are chartered is when one of our own aircraft is down. As the hon. members on the government side certainly know, our King Air 350 has now been down for about eight or nine weeks. The reason we have four planes is because we need these planes, and that's consequently what we're looking at. These charters are very important and were subsequently followed through because the people on this side, the people in the government of Alberta, have to get around to see Alberta.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the aircraft must be down a lot.

The question I have to ask this minister is: how can the government justify, at the cost of several thousand dollars a trip, chartering aircraft to ferry cabinet ministers and political aides to places like Vegreville, that are within an hour's driving distance of Edmonton, especially when these same ministers get expensive cars and SUVs courtesy of the taxpayer?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on each individual flight. For example, the flight to Vegreville may well have continued on to Calgary or other parts of the province, so I think that's a very unfair question. Our members certainly on this side utilize those planes in the best possible fashion, and it would be very difficult for me to comment on each individual circumstance.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, does not the minister see that the taxpayers would be offended by this gross waste of public money no matter what he says about tootling all over the province?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member not see that it's very important for our ministers to get out around the province and to go all over the province and do our job?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development announced a reduction in the producers' share of the spring price endorsement premium, but many producers in my constituency are wondering why, given the low commodity prices and high input costs, they should even bother putting seed in the ground this year let alone buy crop insurance. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Why should producers buy into this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:20

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member brings up a very good point and a good question. The spring price endorsement and the risk insurance coverage are two production insurance options that were implemented to deal with exactly the scenario of low commodity prices and higher input costs. If commodity prices were to continue to drop, that would trigger a payment. We are working hard to respond to market conditions by giving producers a break on this risk management tool and reducing the producer's share, or portion, of the premium from 50 to 30 per cent and increasing the benefits under the risk insurance coverage from 50 to 70 per cent.

Our goal is to make it more attractive for the producers to participate in the programs because we want them to have a backup, and we want them to have something that they can have confidence that if crop prices do drop, they will have something. We have asked the federal government, Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions to help with the other premiums and the other insurance. To date we've not heard anything back.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental is for the same minister. Do producers have some time to consider their risk management options?

Mr. Horner: Well, I believe that the hon. member is referring to the deadlines, Mr. Speaker. I didn't quite hear the whole question. They do have to move quickly because the deadline for the options to be undertaken is April 30, which is this Saturday. I would certainly encourage producers to drop by their AFSC office or to call the AFSC call centre to see if this option truly does fit for their farm and to see what kind of benefit they may be able to get out of it in the event of lower commodity prices.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Apprenticeship Training

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later this week we will mark the International Day of Mourning for workers killed on the job. At the same time, with industry whispering in its ear, this government is considering lowering even further educational and safety standards in the apprenticeship training system. The proposed reductions will almost certainly result in more workplace injuries. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Can the minister explain how moving from three journeymen for every apprentice to one journeyman for every apprentice, in effect tripling on-the-job class

size, will support maintaining or improving the quality of training for Alberta's apprentices?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the hon. member opposite I don't prejudge the experts that we get to review these issues, to have discussions with industry on all sides, both employers and employees, and to make recommendation. The hon. member would know, if he's had anything to do with this discussion at all, that the matter is currently before the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board and that they do a thorough analysis of these issues and talk to all the stakeholders before they bring forward recommendations. He will also know that in the historical context many other trades have moved ratios from more than 1 to 1 to 1 to 1 without a significant disaster or any disaster at all, as the hon. member pretends. In fact, the whole premise to his question is absurd, that anybody would change ratios with the knowledge that it was going to affect safety on the job.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Advanced Education then: given that the provincial apprenticeship committee voted unanimously to retain the current 3 to 1 ratio, if the minister can get past the absurdity of my previous question, would he support worker safety and training standards by committing today to retaining that ratio?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the toughest part of that question is indeed getting past the absurdity of his first one. However, as I said in my answer to the first question, I do not and this government does not prejudge the issues that we ask experts and people involved in the business to give advice on. It's before the training board. I will look forward to the training board's report before I make any determination or act on any recommendation. I don't know what their recommendation will be, and neither does the hon. member.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment then: given that a disproportionate number of workplace injuries occur during the first year on the job and two workers die every week in this province, why is the minister considering changes that will almost certainly result in more workplace accidents and fatalities?

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course we wouldn't encourage more fatalities. We are reviewing the Employment Standards Code now, and the things we do presently are the hours of work, overtime, vacation, general holidays, maternity and parental leave, and termination of employment.

In addition to that, the other thing we're looking at very closely is that a lot of the accidents that happen are not on the work site. Sometimes there is a misunderstanding and people think that because there's an accident, it's on the work site. Mr. Speaker, a high percentage of the accidents happen on the road to work and back home, and we are looking at that very closely to try and define and target where the problem is.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Minimum Wage Rate

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. In February 2005 the minister announced that Alberta's minimum wage would be raised to \$7 an hour. This is good news for low-income, hardworking Albertans. Today the minister announced that this increase would be introduced all at once in contrast to the idea of a staggered increase. So reflecting the inquiries from business owners in my constituency, I would like to know why the minister has decided to increase the minimum wage all at once?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, that's the best question I've had in this House so far. First of all, I'd like to advise the Assembly and the member that all Albertans were given an opportunity to participate as to how the minimum wage of \$7 an hour would be implemented and when. Nearly 2,000 inquiries came in with recommendations, and 40 per cent of the 2,000 were employers. About 30 per cent felt that it was not necessary to put in a phased-in program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Some Canadian provinces such as Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia have set different categories of minimum wages such as entry level or workers receiving gratuities. Will the minister consider a similar approach for Alberta?

Mr. Cardinal: Another good question, Mr. Speaker. No, absolutely not. The government abolished the tiered minimum wage back in 1998, and it seems to work very well. Alberta's minimum wage rate of \$7 an hour will apply to all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you. The last question is to the same minister. What will you do to ensure that employees are not laid off and employers not forced out of business because of the increase in payrolls?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. Of course, there will be some additional costs to employers. That is why we've given four months for an employer to make the necessary adjustments. I believe the new rate is also competitive with other jurisdictions in Canada. You know, the average wage in Alberta right now is about \$18.50, and the average wage for a youth is over \$11.50.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Health Care Staffing

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even though new graduates will soon be entering the workforce, we still haven't addressed the serious shortage that resulted from the slashing of jobs across the health sector during the 1990s. Almost a decade has passed, and we have yet to recover. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given all of the resources available to the government, why has it done such a poor job of anticipating future staffing needs?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would think there's at least one area that should be looked at very favourably, and that is that this past

year we graduated more registered nurses than ever before. We exceeded a thousand. We are working with the learning institutions, with the universities and colleges, and with the professional associations themselves. In fact, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the hon. member's opinion, in Alberta we are head and shoulders ahead of many other jurisdictions in Canada.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: why doesn't the minister adopt the Alberta Liberal opposition's recommendations on long-term and stable health workforce planning?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I know that I should be faulted for saying this, but I've never read the Alberta Liberals' position.

Ms Blakeman: You would learn a lot.

Again to the same minister: given that the long-term care sector has asked to increase the hours per patient per day from 3.1 to 3.6, why did the government decide on an increase to only 3.4 hours of care per day?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted that the hon. member opposite has asked me about staffing for long-term care because we are working with the regions on this. We are talking about it from several vantage points. In one instance you will have a facility that has patients with a significant degree of acuity – in other words, they need additional staffing – and our regions, with their standards and with the work with private, not-for-profit, and publicly funded facilities, work with that facility to make sure that the care plans in those facilities for the people that are involved are appropriately staffed to the acuity required for that patient.

I see that you're not anxious to hear the rest of my response, but . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, that's totally inappropriate. We have a guideline of certain sections, and there's going to be no filibustering in the answer period as well as the question period.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Access to Postsecondary Education

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Northern Alberta is experiencing serious shortages of trained tradespeople and professionals in many areas. While there are a number of colleges in the region, the number of programs that are available are limited, and the cost of attending postsecondary training is a financial barrier that keeps many students from pursuing an education. My first question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. What plans does the minister have to increase the number of educational opportunities or options available to students being educated close to home?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government certainly recognizes that Albertans in rural and remote areas of the province do face greater challenges in obtaining postsecondary education, and I can speak from experience on that, having travelled some 500 miles from home to go to university. That's why when I talk about access and when we talk about access, it means more than just opening more classrooms in universities. It means improving access for Albertans who don't live close to a postsecondary institution.

There are several programs in place to help Albertans access

postsecondary learning opportunities close to home. Athabasca University, for example, has distance education courses in many degree programs as well as a group of colleges and technical institutes working together under the umbrella of eCampusAlberta, developing even more courses for online delivery. We've recently announced that we'll allocate \$90 million to the access growth fund to achieve the target of adding 15,000 postsecondary spaces over the next three years. We're committed to making sure that there's a place for every Albertan who wants to advance their education, whether that's in a physical seat or a virtual seat, a rural seat or an urban seat. We support the efforts of postsecondary institutions in rural areas to work with regional industries to meet labour market needs and to work within the regional economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's quite a number of programs and opportunities to expand the opportunity for education in the rural areas.

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental is to the same minister. He did mention industry. Could I ask the minister: in which way is he working with the industry and other employers to make sure that the number of students required fills the needs of Albertans and, in particular, northern Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are listening to industry, we're listening to people involved in postsecondary institutions, and indeed we're listening to students and to parents and to communities. Based on what we've heard, we've agreed to boost postsecondary funding significantly. As I've mentioned, we have targeted some of that funding to the high-demand areas. We're encouraging and supporting institutions to develop and deliver quality learning experiences. For example, we've provided \$1.5 million to Athabasca University to accelerate their program development and \$1.2 million to eCampusAlberta.

At the other end of the spectrum we have our community learning centres, and the budgets for the community learning centres are going up as well so that they can assess what's needed in their neighbourhood, what's needed in their community, and make sure that programs are brought in or access to the programs are made available. So it's a wide spectrum. In addition, there are things like Alberta-North, a consortium of six northern colleges and Athabasca University, to support the delivery of learning opportunities in more than 50 communities.

Mr. Speaker, there's a wealth of opportunities we're working on, and we're looking for more ideas from Albertans to help make that happen.

The Speaker: The hon. member I'm sure has another question.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: more specifically, how does the minister plan to address the acute shortage of skilled tradespeople in the north, that is adversely affecting the commercial and residential development?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just today we announced the increase in the RAP scholarships, and we had the RAP scholarship winners in the gallery this afternoon. Five hundred registered apprenticeship program scholarships issued this year as compared to 50 last year, a significant increase. Over a thousand apprenticeships and technical training classes; 16 per cent of the currently scheduled classes will be offered north of Edmonton.

Establishing the Alberta aboriginal apprenticeship project, which helps aboriginal people enter and complete apprenticeship programs. The youth apprenticeship program, which is a pilot in northern Alberta, helps students in grades 7 to 12 explore career options. Promoting the registered apprenticeship program, which allows people to start their apprenticeship training while still in high school. Increasing access to training in the trades by recognizing prior learning and work experience.

An Hon. Member: Four more years.

Mr. Hancock: I'm glad that he would want four more years.

As the Minister of Education would want me to say, it's a great question and a great program in Education Week, that we're sponsoring more apprenticeships and starting right in grade 7 and moving up. Skills in Alberta will be having a competition of Olympic-style proportions to demonstrate the value.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair is aware that there is a full moon out.

Thirty seconds from now I'll call upon the first of half a dozen members to participate.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, this historical vignette of the day may be of particular interest to those interested in water in the province of Alberta.

On this day in 1914 CPR President Thomas Shaughnessy formally opened the Bassano Dam on the Bow River, a project to provide water for the eastern irrigation district, an area over 600,000 hectares. The earthen dam has a 107-metre wide base and extends over 2,150 metres beyond the spillway, which can handle a flow of 3,000 cubic metres of water through the sluice gates.

Almost 300,000 cubic metres of earth were moved to build the dam, which in 1914 was referred to by the *Scientific American* magazine as "America's greatest irrigation project."

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Earth Day 2005 the Alberta government announced our province's newest provincial park, the Lois Hole centennial provincial park. This park honours a remarkable woman's love for the land and her commitment to our children and their future. It also honours our earth and Alberta's centennial.

Mr. Speaker, the park lies next to Edmonton and the Hole family's hometown of St. Albert, and it includes the former Big Lake natural area. The site is globally recognized as an important bird area for its nesting and migrating waterfowl and shorebirds, attracting bird watchers from around the world. For 144,000 school children in the area it is an unequalled outdoor classroom. As a provincial park it will enjoy a high level of protection and recognition.

2:40

Our former Lieutenant Governor once said, "If we hope to preserve our way of life," we need to "rediscover our respect for the land, the water, and the entire natural world." Mr. Speaker, the Lois Hole centennial park is a place of life where we remember a great Albertan who celebrated life and who wanted to celebrate Alberta's centennial.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ian Seright

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a true friend to the residents of east Calgary and to the people of Alberta. Mr. Samuel Ian Seright passed away peacefully last Wednesday, April 20, in Calgary.

As a long-time resident of Calgary-East he gained the title of the unofficial mayor of Forest Lawn. Ian proudly served as our dedicated and enthusiastic centennial ambassador and had often proudly remarked that he looked forward to adding the title of Premier to his lengthy contributions to this great province.

Ian was married to Dorothy for nearly 50 years before her passing. He was both a dedicated father and a loving grandfather. The love and dedication that he demonstrated towards his family was much like that which he dedicated to our province: unparalleled and truly genuine. His uncanny ability to remember the slightest details about all of the people whose lives he touched will forever remain in the minds of those who knew him. His ability to remember meetings, birthdays, anniversaries, and other important events was what made Ian a true friend to those who knew him.

Following his retirement from the city of Calgary, Mr. Speaker, Ian continued to celebrate all aspects of life: family, friends, politics, religion, and community service. His love for the residents and community of Forest Lawn and the people of Alberta were beyond measure. A sympathetic and sensitive person, popular with the people of Calgary-East and the greater Forest Lawn community, cheerful and enthusiastic in all his endeavors: that was the Ian that we all knew.

He was proud to be an Albertan, and today I am proud to speak of his contributions and his dedication to this province. I believe that if Ian were listening today, his warm smile would be evident, and he would want to reassure all of us that the world will go on as usual, that this tragic event is nothing out of the ordinary, and that, in fact, all is well. God bless you, Ian.

Colleagues, please help me recognize the contribution of this great Canadian.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

School Closures

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are 35 public schools in and around Edmonton which are eligible for closure according to enrolment or utilization criteria. These schools and the communities where they are located could be the next victims of the provincial government's school space utilization rate as defined by Alberta Infrastructure. There are over 6,700 children attending these schools.

The school closure process not only affects the communities of Wellington, north Edmonton, Terrace Heights, and Strathearn but communities across the city. The following public schools in Edmonton meet the school board's criteria for closure. I hope your school is not on this list: Balwin, Braemar, Duggan, Eastwood, Gold Bar, Grovenor, Hardisty, Horse Hill, John A. McDougall, King Edward, Malmo, McKee, Mill Creek, Queen Alexandra, Rio Terrace, Ritchie, Rutherford, Stratford, and Talmud Torah.

The only positive benefit that has occurred as a result of the Edmonton public school board's recent cluster study regarding school closure is the recognition for immediate changes to the entire process. Parents and communities feel that their issues and concerns are not being addressed. The closure process is proceeding too fast.

The province of Ontario has recently approved a policy on school

closure that examines as mandatory considerations prior to closure the value of a school to the student, the community, the school system, and the local economy. Notice of a year must be given if a closure is to be considered. Moreover, a task force headed by a trustee with board membership is mandated to hold public hearings, solicit feedback, and gain community consensus, including consideration of the value of the school to the local community. A school can only be considered once in a five-year period for closure.

The frustration expressed by parents regarding Edmonton public's closure process sends a clear signal that we can and must do better. The public school system and the closures that surround it affect us all. Why are we forcing one community against another?

Thank you.

Registered Apprenticeship Program

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the announcement from Advanced Education that 10 times as many scholarships, worth half a million dollars, will be available to students in the registered apprenticeship program, more commonly known as RAP. This is great news because, as we all know, Alberta's economy is strong, and the demand for skilled tradespeople is high. Alberta's innovative RAP program is a win-win opportunity for students and employers. Students are able to start a career in the trades while completing high school, and employers have the opportunity to train future workers.

RAP is a program that allows high school students to become employed as apprentices and get on-the-job training hours while they complete high school with no delays in graduation. Students also earn an income of at least minimum wage while they are working. Students from across Alberta have said that RAP provided them with an extra incentive to do well in and graduate from high school. They've also said that RAP has helped them become more aware of the career options that are available to them.

The RAP scholarship is a \$1,000 award based on letters of recommendation from employers, teachers, and counsellors, comments from the student indicating their interest in a career in the trades, and the student's academic marks. The purpose of the scholarships is to encourage students to continue with their apprenticeship program after high school. Increasing the number of RAP scholarships from 50 to 500 is a great way to highlight apprenticeship training as an exciting postsecondary education option.

I commend this government for demonstrating such a strong commitment to addressing the increased demand for skilled workers as well as a strong commitment to young apprentices in Alberta. These scholarships will encourage even more young Albertans to see apprenticeship as a rewarding career pathway.

Thank you.

Wes Montgomery

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, sadly, today Edmonton and all of Alberta has lost a broadcasting icon. Wes Montgomery, a popular radio morning man and sports dinner master of ceremonies extraordinaire, passed away at the age of 66. Wes began a 47-year career in radio at CKYL, Peace River, a station which was owned at the time by a former member of this Assembly, the late Al "Boomer" Adair. CHED, K-LITE, CISN, CFRN, and for the past 12 years CFCW listeners woke up to Wes Montgomery morning shows for just about as long as anyone can remember.

There are few personalities in radio who are recognizable in just about any northern Alberta community they visited, and Wes was one of them. That's because at some time in the past he accepted an invitation to emcee a sportsmen's dinner or a local fundraising event

whether it be for an agricultural society or a charitable organization, or more than likely he took part in a bonspiel and all the other stuff that goes along with bonspieling.

Wes was an unabashed supporter of Edmonton, the Eskimos, and, of course, the sport of curling. He had no time for those who wanted to put things down and had no time for media smear campaigns, but he would spend endless hours on air talking about people of all walks of life who did good things. Many times those endless hours of storytelling were to the chagrin of the station manager.

There are few people who enjoyed every day of life more than Wes. From the days of the Point After to the Riverbend racquet club to a curling rink somewhere in the province there is a better person today because they knew Wes Montgomery. To Wes's mom, two sisters, eight children, and eight grandchildren our deepest sympathies, but knowing Wes Montgomery, he would be proud if this tribute were signed off by simply saying: have a happy doorknob.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with my colleagues from Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Varsity last Thursday I had the honour of attending the 12th annual Calgary Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts. The luncheon celebrates the arts, artists, and partnerships that are forged between business and the arts. I believe it was Denise Carpenter of EPCOR who said that the businesses represented at the luncheon get it. They understand the value of arts and culture to a civilized society.

There were three major artists' awards. The Enbridge emerging artist award was won by Michele Decottignies, who, among many other things, is the founder and artistic director of Stage Left Productions and Balancing Acts, the longest running disability arts festival in the world. The Telus artistic innovation award went to EMMedia Gallery and Production Society, a nonprofit media arts organization that provides equipment, technical support, and programs for independent video, audio, and multimedia artist-producers. The EPCOR established arts award was given to artist, mentor, innovator, arts administrator, educator, curator, writer, and community activist Sandra Vida, who has arguably done and seen nearly everything that is possible for an artist to do and see in her 35-year career.

Oh, there is one thing Sandra Vida has not seen in the last 17 years of her career, and some of the people she mentors are young enough that they've never experienced such a thing. That would be an increase in provincial government funding for arts and culture in Alberta. There hasn't been one since 1988 even though funding for arts and culture doesn't come from tax dollars. It comes from gambling revenues, which I'm willing to bet have climbed dramatically, phenomenally, astronomically over the last 17 years.

Mr. Speaker, EPCOR's Denise Carpenter says, and I quote: as times have changed, the arts have increasingly converged with business and everyday life; art teaches important lessons about adaptability, flexibility, critical thinking, and problem solving, characteristics that enhance our employability and ultimately our citizenry. EPCOR gets it. So do Telus, Enbridge, and dozens of other Alberta businesses that do their part to support the arts. The question is: why doesn't this government?

head: 2:50

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from a number of good Albertans, largely from Fort McMurray, Calgary, Edmonton, Sherwood Park, and a lot of other communities in Alberta, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aborigines; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 101 good Albertans on this petition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition with 100 signatures on it. The petition notes that Alberta's labour community was not properly consulted before the introduction of Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, and asks that the bill not be passed by this Assembly.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Bill 206

Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 206, the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act.

Pharmaceutical drugs represent the fastest growing cost in our health care system. Not surprisingly, it is also the most privatized component of health care delivery. Bill 206 would take the first step in reducing these costs through such measures as reference pricing, bulk purchasing, and reductions in demand that, unlike user fees and copayments, do not punish the sick and the elderly. I would therefore like to move first reading of Bill 206.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Bill 207

Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 207, the Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act.

This bill will create a nonpartisan association of former Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Membership would be open to all individuals who have been but are not currently a member of this Assembly. This association would be able to use its knowledge and experience to promote the ideals of parliamentary democracy in Alberta and throughout the Commonwealth.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a first time]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to

table today. The first is a letter from Mr. Stan Buell, the president of the Small Investor Protection Association. His letter condemns the recent firing of the director of administrative services at the Alberta Securities Commission and asks that the minister intervene to protect whistle-blowers.

The second item I have to table today is a letter from Mr. Paul Pomerleau. Mr. Pomerleau points to the role of unions in creating the so-called Alberta advantage and raises concerns about foreign temporary workers and other issues facing Alberta's working people today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is an e-mail from a Calgary-Varsity constituent, Mark Hambridge, that was sent to the Premier. Mr. Hambridge identifies himself as a concerned citizen who is among the many who are bitterly disappointed with the decision to "allow smoking in certain public places, contrary to the wishes of the vast majority of Albertans."

I am also tabling five copies of the program of the 12th annual Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts, at which Calgary's Liberal caucus clearly heard the arts community's plea for provincial funding support.

Speaker's Ruling

Referring to an Officer of the Legislature

The Speaker: Hon. members, the other day, Thursday, at the conclusion of question period statements were made by the chair with respect to the conduct of a certain member with respect to certain questions that were raised and innuendo with respect to an officer of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta. Comments did arise, and I invited members to return on Monday, that being today, to offer suggestions with respect to this matter. Should hon. members choose to participate, I'm now offering them that opportunity. I do have a statement that I intend on making at the conclusion of hearing those members who wish to participate.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When you rose and requested that we review this matter, I would advise you that I was at that time in discussion with the Minister of Finance about whether or not a question of privilege ought to be brought. I have not brought the question of privilege because the process which you put forward would have pre-empted that process, or it would have been premature. I still have the intention, subject to what you have to say today, to bring forward a question of privilege to be determined if that's the appropriate course.

The reason I say this is this is not a matter which is being overstated, to say that the comments that were made are, in fact, a breach of the privileges of this House. Just to refresh so that we can speak to this in context, at page 947 of *Hansard*, speaking with respect to April 21, Thursday, the comments in question are the phrase:

Given that the Alberta Auditor General has been the auditor of record for the Securities Commission and has repeatedly given the commission unqualified audit approval, will she do the right thing and bring in a genuinely independent out-of-province investigator?

And a second statement at page 948:

To the same minister: will she admit that the Alberta Auditor General has no credibility on this issue given that year after year his office has given the commission a clean audit report?

Those were statements made by the hon. Leader of the Official

Opposition, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. They were made last Thursday afternoon and provoked quite a deal of outrage in the House and comment by yourself, and rightly so because the Auditor General is an officer of this Assembly. The Auditor General, however, is not in this Assembly, cannot respond to those sorts of comments, nor ought to be called on to respond to those sorts of comments.

It's not to say that auditors general or other officers of the House or the subjects that they deal with are not properly the subjects of questions which can be brought before the House. In fact, I think most parliamentarians challenged to do so could raise the issues without slugging the character, reputation, independence, or otherwise of the individual involved, in this case an officer of the House. So it's not to say that there should be a shutdown of questioning but, rather, that questions or comments, for that matter, outside of question period must always be put in an appropriate manner because the one thing that all members of this House and all officers of this House have is their integrity, their character.

When the character of a member of this House or an officer of this House, even the employees, quite frankly, is drawn into question in the manner in which it was put forward, it brings the whole context of governance into disrepute. There's one thing that we ought to do as members of this Assembly, in my humble opinion: it's to raise the level of respect for this House, not lower it. We should constantly be on our guard to ensure that the public knows and understands that each and every member of this House and that each officer that serves this House is here to do the best for Albertans. We can have a difference of viewpoint as to whether we are doing the best for Albertans or what the right thing is, but we ought not to be bringing our character into disrepute in the manner that was suggested.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, it's my humble submission that this is a matter which is far more serious than just a point of order or just a comment made in question period. In fact, I would suggest that it's far more serious than one in which the normal process of this House might be that a person would rise and withdraw the comment or apologize.

We saw that happen in this House on March 23, page 410 of *Hansard*, where a point of order was raised when the same member, the Leader of the Official Opposition, in a question to the same minister, the Minister of Finance, said, "Who is she trying to protect?" A point of order was raised because, again, although the issue that the hon. member was trying to raise might have been perfectly appropriate, the manner in which he raised it called into question the character of the minister. That was drawn to the House's attention by way of a point of order, which was referred to at page 420 of *Hansard* that day. Then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rose and on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Riverview withdrew the remark. The Member for Edmonton-Riverview didn't show up in the House himself to withdraw the remark but had someone rise on his behalf and withdraw the remark.

In my humble submission, Mr. Speaker, that would not be the appropriate way to deal with this. In fact, I would refer us to *Beauchesne's* 24.

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of . . . rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and . . . enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded . . . services of its Members; and by each House.

So it's not necessary for a question of privilege to be raised against an individual member. It can be a question of the privilege of the House, and in this case I think it is appropriately so.

I won't go on at length to speak about the question of privilege

because I think that would be more appropriately done if, Mr. Speaker, when you make your comments, you indicate that that's an appropriate course of action. However, I do believe that we should speak to the question of privilege on this matter as outlined, as I said, by *Beauchesne's* 24, 25, and 60.

I think we should also be looking at *Montpetit* 524-525 in that context in talking about the protections of officers of the House, and in that context I would even quote page 524, chapter 13, of *Montpetit*.

This is a longstanding tradition in our Parliament that we be cautious when we attack individuals or groups, particularly in the judiciary, and those who are unable to come in here and have the same right of free expression as we enjoy with impunity here.

That quote, by the way, is a quote from one of our own previous members, McClelland, who at that time was sitting as the Acting Speaker in the national House. The quote is a very important one.

Montpetit goes on to say:

While it is permissible to speak in general terms about the judiciary or to criticize a law, it is inappropriate to criticize or impute motives to a specific judge or to criticize a decision made under the law by a judge.

Now, that's with respect to the judiciary and judges, but I would suggest to you that the same logic applies with respect to officers of the House. They can't be here. They can't defend their reputation on the floor of the House. The issues are important, but the manner in which they are raised is so very important because all we have is our character, our good name, and if we want the public to respect this institution and to respect governance and to be involved in the process, we have to raise, not lower, the standards.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the appropriate way to deal with this matter would be to refer it to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing or to Leg. Offices or both because Leg. Offices is the appropriate place if one does have a concern about the competency or the independence or the aspects with respect to an officer of the Legislature. There is an appropriate way to deal with it, and that would be through Leg. Offices, raising it at Leg. Offices. But in this case, raising it in the manner that it was raised in order to make a partisan political point denigrates this House, denigrates the members of this House, and breaches the privileges of this House and ought to be referred to the appropriate standing committee for a discussion about how we would deal with those sorts of circumstances, how we can ensure that the rules clarify that it's not appropriate to act in that manner, and to sanction the member.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is an interesting thing, the opportunity that the Speaker has presented to the Assembly, in that it is not a point of privilege that is being discussed but a general discussion of the point of interest raised by the Speaker. I'm in somewhat of a quandary on how to respond to what has been placed before us now by the Government House Leader. I'm not responding to a point of privilege, but that's certainly what is underlying the comments that he's made. I assume that if a point of privilege is indeed made, the proper notification will be given, and I will be given adequate and fair opportunity to respond exactly to the point of privilege.

Which brings me to the discussion today. The Government House Leader raised a number of issues, and if I may, I will go through and respond to some of them. In particular, the Speaker had referred all members of the Assembly to review *Beauchesne* 493 and *Marleau and Montpetit* 524. I think what's important here is to look at the wording that was used by the Leader of the Official Opposition very

carefully. The specificity of language is important in these cases. At no point was the Leader of the Official Opposition impugning directly on the individual but on the office and on the work of the office.

In the directives of *Marleau and Montpetit* 526 directs us to look at “the tone, manner and intention”; in other words, the context of the comment. In this case the preamble was clear that our concern was not with the Auditor General, his professional abilities, or his integrity.

Our concerns were threefold. First, the formal mandate and power of the Auditor General is very restricted.

Secondly, the minister had artificially restricted the scope of his investigation by already putting parameters around it, encouraging the Auditor General to prejudge the investigation specifically “to dispel concerns,” which is a direct quote; in other words, the government’s publicly stated expectations. Our concern was with those publicly stated expectations rather than with the Auditor General’s character or professionalism. That’s not what we were questioning. We were questioning what the government had set out.

Third, perception is everything, and in this case it’s in the vital interest of the province that the public’s confidence in the ASC be restored. It is not impugning the character or professionalism of the office of the Auditor General to insist that it is best done with an investigation carried out by someone with no previous history with the Alberta Securities Commission. That’s not impugning anyone. It’s saying that if we’re going to have someone that’s truly independent look at it, then the public perception of independence can best be assured if the individual comes from without.

The issue of credibility has been raised, and I think that we need to reaffirm that credibility is by definition not an individual virtue but rather about an individual’s ability to instill confidence in others. In other words, we’re claiming that the office of the Auditor General’s audit is not likely to have the desired effect of restoring public confidence not because we think that any results would be fudged or any past history would leave lingering doubts, but it’s exactly because there have been repeated audits done, and we believe that in the minds of the public that would leave lingering doubts in the minds of the investment community. It is vital to Alberta’s interests that full confidence be restored. This is not a happy situation, to not have that public confidence firmly in place. That’s why we were clear to say that the situation with the Auditor General’s office did not have the required credibility.

3:10

When we look at *Marleau and Montpetit* 524, the text does not prohibit referencing members of the public. It merely discourages doing so, strongly discourages it, but it discourages it. It specifically permits it “in extraordinary circumstances where the national,” and I would argue provincial, “interest calls for the naming of an individual.” Now, we of course didn’t name the individual. We were talking about the office of the Auditor General and the work of the individual that heads that.

It can be argued, perhaps, that we have such a situation here. We are very aware on this side that this situation has now been discussed in the national press around confidence in the Alberta Securities Commission. I think that that is a fairly extraordinary circumstance and one that affects the well-being of all Albertans.

I’ve already pointed out that the Leader of the Official Opposition did not name any member of the public, but he did name an officer of the Assembly, who is charged with doing the business of the Assembly. If I may, that office is an employee of the Assembly and answers to the Assembly, and if we cannot criticize the work of an employee, who can in this context? That employee, that office does

report through the Legislative Offices Committee but does work for all of us in this Assembly.

I believe that members of this Assembly must be permitted to question whether charging that officer or that office with a specific task is the most prudent action to take by the government. The public interest here is not only getting to the bottom of the matter but also to be seen by the public and the investment community to be getting to the bottom of the matter. I would argue that the minister’s comment about dispelling concerns along with the historical connection between the audits done by the Auditor General and the ASC make it impossible to achieve the latter even if the office is fully capable of achieving the former; that is, the audits that have already been performed.

The Leader of the Official Opposition did not slander or slur the Auditor General directly or indirectly as a person. [interjections] There seem to be a number of people who wish to join in this discussion, and I’m sure that the Speaker will recognize them when they choose to be recognized.

Finally, if I may, Mr. Speaker, looking at *Beauchesne* 493(3), the use of protected persons and the phrase “those of high official station” has never been fully or finally defined. The example that we’re given is that it deals with “senior public servants,” and that may well be determined to cover the office of the Auditor General and the staff therein.

Again, this attack was not on the individual but on the suitability for this specific task at hand. The question was specifically around that if audits have already been done and been given a passing grade repeatedly, to ask them to do another one in which there may well be improprieties places that office in a very difficult situation. They’re either going to have to contradict themselves now or before, seeing as those audits exist and are on the public record.

I would argue that the questions that were asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition are not appropriate to be referred to the all-party committee on privileges and elections. Neither do I think they constitute a point of privilege individually or collectively, Mr. Speaker. It is the function of the Official Opposition to hold the government accountable. There were repeated attempts to in this case hold the Minister of Finance accountable for decisions that had been made, and given the context, we had to reference the work of the Auditor General and the staff therein and the work that was cited. There was no intention to directly comment on anyone’s character, but there is an issue of credibility that needs to be addressed, and I would argue that it is significant enough to fall within the parameters of what had been outlined in M and M 524.

So I look forward to the Speaker’s comments on the situation that has been brought before us, but I maintain as the House leader for the Official Opposition that we must have the latitude, respectfully of course, to question the government on the choices and activities that it engages in. That includes, I believe, specific to this case because it was raised, in fact, by the minister, that we had to be able to discuss the activities and credibility of the office of the Auditor General in context with the issue that was before us. To not have done that, we would not have been doing our job in asking the questions that needed to be asked around that issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to be able to discuss this on the record. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won’t take a great deal of time because both members, I think, went to the appropriate 493. I think just on the legal aspect of this 493(3) says that “the Speaker has traditionally protected from attack a group of individuals

commonly referred to as ‘those of high . . . station.’” I think the key point here – at least to my knowledge we have not done that in the Alberta Legislature – is that “the extent of this group has never been defined. Over the years it has covered senior public servants, ranking officers of the armed services.” Obviously, it’s not appropriate to here. Perhaps at some point we should decide in this Legislature who we are talking about, and the Speaker has cautioned members to exercise great care. The other reference is vague in this area too.

So I go to the *Hansard* and look at the questions. I take it that there are two things that seem to have caused some concern.

Given that the Alberta Auditor General has been the auditor of record for the Securities Commission and has repeatedly given the commission unqualified audit approval, will she do the right thing and bring in a genuinely independent out-of-province investigator?

Then the other one probably is that

the Alberta Auditor General has no credibility on this issue given that year after year his office has given the commission a clean audit report.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps we could say that the questions were intemperate, perhaps a little careless, but I think we do have to err on the side of free speech as much as we can in this Assembly. I would interpret this that it was not the Auditor General that the Leader of the Opposition was going after. He was suggesting that we needed a more public – and I’ve said the same thing – audit than necessarily the Auditor General.

Admittedly the language here, if I may say so, is careless, but I think that if every time in this Assembly somebody uses careless language, we’re going to go to privilege, that’s all we’re going to be doing time after time after time. I know that the Speaker has alerted our attention to this matter, and I think that’s a lesson that we can all perhaps learn, but I would think it’d be overkill, to say the least, if we went to privilege and wasted a lot of the Legislature’s time.

3:20

The point, Mr. Speaker, that I’m making is that you brought it to our attention, and perhaps we need to take a look at 493 in terms of what are the officers that we’re talking about here, because that’s very vague, and perhaps learn from this situation rather than taking a sledgehammer to sort of knock in a nail here. I’d be very careful. Once we go down this slippery route, then I think that it creates a lot of extra time. I say to members that we should always in this House err on the side of free speech and not try to control people.

You could take the interpretation, I suppose, in one way. The government did. I took it another way. For that reason, I don’t think that we should be having to go through that whole privilege motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, who is also the chair of the Legislative Offices Committee.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is in that capacity as the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and as past chair of the all-party search committee which recommended Mr. Dunn’s appointment as Auditor General in March 2002 that I would like to add a few comments to the record regarding some comments by the member, the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, that appear to be questioning the credibility of the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dunn’s appointment was recommended and approved by a unanimous decision of the Select Special Auditor General and Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee, which included the hon. member in the membership. Mr. Dunn’s career achievements and community service were well documented in the search committee’s final report, which was the

subject of Government Motion 23, passed in the House without debate on April 15, 2002.

Since his appointment as Auditor General Mr. Dunn has also received the highest honour available to a chartered accountant, which was his election as a Fellow of the Chartered Accountants in February 2003. This recognition by his peers where his career, professional, and community achievements – and I quote from the Chartered Accountants of Alberta website – “have brought honour to the profession” confirms that Mr. Dunn is held in the highest esteem and would also appear to indicate that his character is above reproach.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other member wishing to make a comment on this matter? Well, then, hon. members, on Thursday last the chair was very, very dismayed by the tone of the questions, so then looked in *Hansard* on Friday to make sure that, again, this was not a mistake and looked at *Hansard* again on Sunday and then looked at *Hansard* again today, and after those four reviews still comes to a conclusion by looking at *Hansard* on page 947 and quoting the following, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview:

We need someone who will get to the bottom of these problems. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Given that the Alberta Auditor General has been the auditor of record for the Securities Commission and has repeatedly given the commission unqualified audit approval, will she do the right thing and bring in a genuinely independent out-of-province investigator?

Further, the next question:

To the same minister: will she admit that the Alberta Auditor General has no credibility on this issue given that year after year his office has given the commission a clean audit report?

Go on to the next question. Once again the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview:

Again to the same minister: will she admit that the only reason she has asked the Auditor General to prepare one report for her and a separate one for the Legislature and the public is to keep the public in the dark about the real goings-on at the Alberta Securities Commission?

I’m a pretty imaginative person, but I cannot believe that we’re talking about any person other than the Alberta Auditor General in any of this. There’s only one Alberta Auditor General, and the Member for Banff-Cochrane has clearly identified who that Auditor General is and the process by which the Auditor General is among us.

Now, I do want to expand upon some of those comments that were made last Thursday, especially reflecting officers of the Legislature, and it is on the point of officers of the Legislature that I make my comments. I started off by saying that perhaps this was still early in the life of the 26th Legislature, but the fact is that this is not early in the life of the 26th Legislature. This is day 27, I believe. Including the evening sittings probably makes it 54. So the time for inexperience and the time for being a novice and the time for being a rookie is behind us. That’s not an excuse anymore.

The chair wants to identify for members that the officers of the Legislature are the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ethics Commissioner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Ombudsman. These individuals are all appointed or reappointed on the recommendation of a special search committee or the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. Each and every appointment is the subject of a motion in this Assembly. All are debatable, and all are amendable. These five officers occupy positions that by statute are independent of government. The fact that the sums required to run these offices are not part of the government’s estimates but those of the Legislative Assembly reflects this principle of independence from the government.

Last Thursday the chair referred members to paragraph 493 of *Beauchesne's* and page 524 of Marleau and Montpetit, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. The same principle of not reflecting on certain persons in debate is found in *Erskine May*, the 23rd edition, at pages 438 and 439. If there is any doubt after reading those authorities, it is the chair's view that the officers of the Legislature in the province of Alberta occupy positions of "high official status," as the term is used in *Beauchesne* 493(3), similar to judges and senior public servants even though they are not specifically mentioned. To be absolutely clear, this chair will not tolerate personal attacks against officers of the Legislature.

Hon. members, so that there's no misunderstanding, the chair is not attempting in any way to become involved with questions on the grounds that they deal with sensitive issues. This was not the reason for the chair's comment last Thursday. The chair intervened because it was the chair's view that there were allegations or innuendos about the individuals who serve as officers of the Legislature. This chair takes very seriously the rights of members to freedom of speech in this Assembly. However, it is the chair's role to ensure that this important right is exercised fairly and within the limits that have been recognized in this and other Assemblies over many years.

The chair also wants to take this opportunity to say that for the most part the use of language in this Chamber and the decorum of members is of a high standard amongst jurisdictions in Canada. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview cautioned us about having to deal with this on a regular basis. The fact is, hon. members, that we deal with this on a very infrequent basis. If hon. members want to go back in *Hansard*, hon. members can go back to 1999, when to the chagrin of most of us, on November 23, 1999, when one hon. member was providing to the Assembly the report of the information and privacy committee, the then member for Edmonton-Riverview said, "Whose pocket is he in?" in reference to an officer of this Assembly. That created quite a commotion in this Assembly on that day in 1999 and led to considerable anxiety amongst the various members. It led to a retraction, and the retraction came before further serious damage could have been done to a particular individual.

Then from 1999 we switch to March 23, 2005. Hardly a frequent occurrence, a very infrequent occurrence. On March 23, 2005, another Member for Edmonton-Riverview used the following phrase in saying this about another member: "Who is she trying to protect?" That led to a discussion and was dealt with by a two-line retraction on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

So this is not a frequent thing. This is an infrequent thing. The House is not wasting its time in dealing with these matters. The House's time is well used in terms of dealing with this.

I repeat: for the most part – and this is the 99th year of history of this Assembly – the use of language in this Chamber and the decorum of members is of a high standard amongst jurisdictions in Canada. In fact, I believe the highest standard of decorum of any jurisdiction in Canada is found in this Assembly, and that's good. However, members may have recently noted that the tone and content of proceedings in other Assemblies in this land may not today be of the similar high standard that they were accustomed to seeing even in those Assemblies. There has been a deterioration in two Assemblies for sure, but that deterioration is not the tradition and it's not the practice in this Assembly.

3:30

I believe that people of Alberta expect members to conduct themselves in the best traditions of parliamentary democracy. This chair intends to meet those expectations for the good of this institution and for the good of all of its members.

The chair views the question of what constitutes proper parliamentary language in an Assembly in the 21st century as such an important matter that I'm now going to make a suggestion to the Assembly. Regardless of whether or not a motion for privilege is proceeded with – and I would hope, in fact, that on the basis of what I've said, that we've now entered a new century, perhaps there is an important time every once in a while to stop and review everything that we are doing and ask ourselves the question: is this appropriate for the time that we're now in?

I'm going to ask the hon. members through the various House leaders to consider a motion to refer this whole matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing or by creating a special select committee to look at this and other parliamentary issues as was done in 1993, when the chair was the Government House Leader, to review in particular the language, such things as put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, the specific identification, even though the chair has already indicated that in his mind the officers of the Legislative Assembly are those people who meet those offices of high standard, and generally to review this whole question of decorum and decorum in our Assembly.

We'll soon be entering our 100th year, and I believe that there's a caution that must be given to all members that we have to be better than what some members would see us be on any given day. I think the people of Alberta expect that of us, and I think that if there's any gift we can give to the people of Alberta on our 100th anniversary of this Legislative Assembly, it is to recognize that the highest calling in the land is to be an elected person, and we should be expected to act in the highest possible standard.

I want all members to know that if there are questions such as the type that were raised in this Assembly last Thursday, there will be an immediate intervention from the chair henceforth, and if that means that that time is now lost in the question period, that is the way it will be. Those questions will be ruled out of order, and the member will also be told that that's it for his or her participation in the question period on that day. There will be a vigilance. I will not allow people who are officers of this Assembly to be chastised in this Assembly.

Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Appropriate notice having been given on Thursday, April 21, I now rise to move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Appropriate notice having been served on Thursday, April 21, it's my pleasure to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 24, 25, and 26.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I would like to request unanimous consent to reduce the time between division bells to one minute specifically in connection with any divisions which may or may not arise during Motions for Returns this afternoon.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there is a motion before the Assembly. The chair can only assume that there has been some discussion between various House leaders with respect to this matter. The motion basically is that if there is a division, shorten the time between bells to one minute. So there's anticipation there's going to be a division. It would be shortened to one minute. That's the motion.

Anybody want to participate on this? It's a debatable motion.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would have to suggest that at least on the first division we should not agree to that because members are perhaps not aware that the bells would be shortened, and it would be unfair to them.

Now, there may have been a lapse of communication this morning. I understand from discussion just now across the House that it was raised with my executive assistant, but this is the first that I'm aware of the request, and certainly I have not taken the opportunity to apprise caucus members, so they may be anticipating that they would have the full 10 minutes to arrive.

Now, after that happened, I wouldn't have any objection once members had been in the House, had been called, and were aware of the process for the afternoon. Shortening the bells at that time would be quite an appropriate process.

The Speaker: Okay. Normally these motions are not debatable because it requires unanimous consent, but because I saw so many heads shaking with respect to this and in the light and the continuation of what I said about harmony in the Assembly just a few minutes ago, I allowed that interjection of the Government House Leader.

So we have a motion which requires unanimous consent. Not a problem. If you're opposed to it, you've already said it.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, do you wish to continue?

Temporary Foreign Workers

M24. Mr. Backs moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any and all documents pertaining to the June 2004 memorandum of understanding between the government and the federal government regarding foreign temporary workers.

[Debate adjourned April 18: Mr. Backs speaking]

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We spoke to this particular motion for a return quite extensively last Monday and ended the session with it. I just have to say that it's a very legitimate request that would be in the public interest to show Albertans that any and all . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, excuse me.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order. If I could ask the Speaker to clarify that last ruling. I'm confused as to whether or not the motion was debatable. If it was debatable, I certainly wanted to debate it.

The Speaker: It was not.

Mr. Mason: It was not?

The Speaker: No, it was not.

Mr. Mason: Thank you.

Debate Continued

Mr. Backs: Just to continue, Mr. Speaker, we spoke this through quite a bit last Monday, and a number of speakers spoke to it. The key issue is that these documents should be released in the public interest. That there would be things that were submitted in confidence that would be released by letting this go forward I think is questionable to me. It would be certainly in the public interest to do so. I think that this request should go forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 24 on behalf of the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment I just wanted to reference for everyone's attention that this particular motion did receive considerable debate.

The Speaker: You know what, hon. member? When I recognized the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, it was to close the debate, so I now have to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 24 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:38 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Backs	Hinman	Miller, R.
Blakeman	MacDonald	Pastoor
Bonko	Martin	Swann
Elsalhy	Mason	Taylor
Flaherty	Mather	

3:50

Against the motion:

Boutilier	Johnson	Oberle
Cao	Johnston	Pham
Coutts	Knight	Renner
DeLong	Liepert	Rodney
Evans	Lougheed	Snelgrove
Forsyth	Magnus	Stelmach
Graydon	Mar	Stevens
Griffiths	Marz	Strang
Groeneveld	McClellan	Tarchuk

Herard Horner Jablonski	Mitzel Morton	VanderBurg Zwozdesky
Total	For – 14	Against – 34

[Motion for a Return 24 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just take the Government House Leader's lead one step further and now make the motion that subsequent division bells, should there be any for the remainder of the afternoon, be limited to one minute in duration. I believe all members have now had a chance to understand and hear what the intention behind that shortening of division bells was all about. I would put that motion forward for consideration at this time.

The Speaker: Hon. members, such motions that require revisions to the routine require unanimous consent. Is there any member opposed to this motion put forward by the hon. Government House Leader?

Ms Blakeman: Yes, sir. I'm opposed to it.

The Speaker: Okay. That's it.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Department of Energy Salary Contracts

M25. Mr. MacDonald moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the salaries of contracted employees and/or consultants employed by the Ministry and Department of Energy during the 2003-04 fiscal year broken down by amount and position title.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would appreciate getting this information from the Department of Energy. We know that in one case – I believe it's the business unit manager for electricity that is a hired hand from California, and I just wonder how many more hired hands there are in that department that do not work directly for the department through the normal hiring processes around our civil service.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, precisely how many contracted employees there are I think would be interesting reading. We know what the costs for civil servants' salaries are, but in a lot of cases we don't know what the costs of these contracted employees or consultants would be, what costs would be involved, and how many other consultants there are in that department. We know that that department has been having a great deal of trouble figuring out what to do with the mess over electricity deregulation.

Mr. Speaker, there is trouble in that department. There seems to be a great deal of trouble, and I for one can't understand why we would need to hire an expert from California. Surely to gosh there would be some home-grown help here that could try to fix these problems. I don't know. Maybe they could even read our low-cost energy plan and have a look at that and use that as a model to get out of this policy dilemma that we're in with electricity deregulation.

Certainly, that would be my interest in seeking this information at this time, Mr. Speaker, to find out just how many contract employ-

ees there are, how many consultants, and how much they're getting paid. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure. Based on the motion on the record pertaining to that of contract employees and consultants employed by the Ministry of Energy during the fiscal year broken down by the amount and position title, the government is quite prepared to accept MR 25.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Environment for that information, and hopefully I will not have to wait through the fullness of time to receive that information because I'm very interested in having a look at it quite soon. Thank you, and I appreciate it.

[Motion for a Return 25 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Minister of Energy Noninternational Trip Expenses

M26. Mr. MacDonald moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed breakdown of all expenses incurred by the Minister of Energy, his staff, and/or designate on noninternational trips during the 2003-04 fiscal year.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, whenever we talk about noninternational trips, we are talking about, of course, travel within Canada. We on this side of the House on more than one occasion check out respective ministerial websites just to see how much money has been spent on international trips. The last international trip by the Department of Energy is one that's going on right now, and it's costing over \$8,000, a trip to Washington, DC. I don't know whether it's to check up on our envoy or our ambassador there – is there a mid-term report card on the ambassador? – or what's going on. I thought the ambassador could look after things in Washington, and the Department of Energy could spend less time travelling there because the agent was in place, the job details had been described to us, and the man was going to get to work, but now we find out that \$8,000 has been spent on international trips just recently.

With noninternational trips – that's trips within the country – it would be great to find out just what is going on with this department. I was astonished to find out in question period this afternoon that one of the King Airs was worn out, that it was on a 10-week maintenance schedule. I can understand that with all the trips the government members make in these airplanes, it would need a lengthy maintenance overhaul because, certainly, with our government airplanes, they're up and down. They take off and land more often than a crop-duster would. Some of these take-offs and landings would be on trips that are occurring within this country, and certainly with the Department of Energy it would be good information to receive just to see where and when the Minister of Energy is flying within in the country and with whom.

Thank you.

Mr. Boutilier: I don't have much experience with crop-dusting, so

I can't offer any more insight into the hon. member's comments. Clearly, in the government's spirit of openness and transparency, which is important to all Albertans and that I know all members of all sides of the House certainly adhere to, it's indeed my pleasure on behalf of the Minister of Energy to again indicate that the government is quite prepared to accept MR 26 as was requested relative to showing "a detailed breakdown of [the] expenses incurred by the Minister of Energy, his staff, and/or designate on noninternational trips during the 2003-04 fiscal year." That's something that I think should put a smile on everyone's face in that spirit of openness and transparency accountable to all Albertans.

4:00

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I'd just have a question for the person sitting over there: who are you, and what have you done with the real Minister of Environment?

Mr. Boutillier: Mr. Speaker, I could potentially call the hon. member on a point of something, but I will not. To the hon. person on the other side I want to say: I hope you're enjoying this beautiful day that God and the Ministry of Environment delivered today outside. He might consider going outside for a breath of fresh air and to contemplate the beautiful day that we enjoy.

Mr. Mason: That's the minister that I know and love, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You've already spoken, so you can't speak again.

Mr. Mason: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on the motion?

[Motion for a Return 26 carried]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 201
Smoke-free Places Act**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon, everyone. It is a pleasure to rise today and introduce third reading of Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act. As sponsor of the bill it should come as no surprise that I would have preferred an unamended version in third reading, but I want to point out that I'm very appreciative of the work that was done to find a wording that could be agreed upon by the majority. I'd therefore like to thank the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing forward the amendments during Committee of the Whole debate. I would also like to thank all of the other hon. members who participated in the debate.

I believe Bill 201 in its current form supports and reflects AADAC's Alberta tobacco reduction strategy as well as government policy. This is an important aspect of any private member's legislation. Bill 201 also respects the authority of municipalities to make what they think are the best decisions for their constituents and for their local business community.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to acknowledge the remarkable debate which has taken place on this issue over the past couple of months both in the Legislature and throughout the province of Alberta.

Upon reviewing *Hansard*, I was encouraged by the level of debate which took place. I also recall the number of members who in their maiden speeches and replies to the throne speech called for a session full of lively and productive debate, and I'm pleased that this bill provided an avenue for exactly that. I believe that this has at least in part inspired the majority of Albertans to take again an active interest in the proceedings of this House, and that can only be a very good thing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge all of the Albertans who have called, e-mailed, and written letters to me over the last number of weeks. It's evident that this is an issue Albertans are concerned about and have an opinion on.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of my colleagues. It's unlikely that Bill 201 could have made it to third reading without the work that the members in this House have done to establish a compromise that is acceptable to the majority of Albertans both urban and rural.

Mr. Speaker, there are individuals who feel that this legislation is not going far enough, and I will not disagree with that opinion. However, the fact of the matter is that not every Albertan is ready for an extensive, province-wide ban on smoking quite yet. What may be most important to this process, however, is the increased awareness of the impact of second-hand smoke, the increased support for the wellness agenda, and the increased personal interest in a healthy lifestyle by Albertans. I believe that the amended bill does at least two things extremely well. It protects children and respects choice, and these are both extremely important ideals.

I do not believe that the Smoke-free Places Act as Bill 201 was in its original form would have received majority support anywhere in Alberta 20 years ago. However, an increase in information and education concerning the hazards of smoking and the health effects of second-hand smoke has resulted in smoke-free places being established throughout the province in the last while, and I find that extremely encouraging. Cities such as Edmonton and Calgary have reached a point where they along with their constituents are ready for an extensive prohibition on smoking in public places and workplaces, as are the municipalities of Banff, Airdrie, St. Albert, and others.

However, there are other jurisdictions throughout Alberta that have held municipal plebiscites on this issue which did not pass. So it is clear that these areas are not yet ready for an extensive prohibition on smoking in public places and workplaces. I am confident, however, that in a short amount of time these jurisdictions will be ready. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, it is not the duty of this Legislature to force all Albertans to prohibit smoking. Instead, it is our duty as stewards to provide the tools necessary to promote a healthier province.

At this point I would like to remind our hon. members that although this legislation is in a sense a smoking ban, it is not about forcing smokers to quit smoking. Rather, its focus and purpose is about protecting the health and rights of nonsmokers who are involuntarily exposed to second-hand smoke. Unfortunately, this basic objective of Bill 201 may have gotten lost during debate from time to time. It's crucial that we keep this objective of protecting nonsmokers from second-hand smoke as the priority of this legislation. Mr. Speaker, Bill 201 is not about protecting the health of smokers or taking away the rights of smokers. It is about protecting the health of nonsmokers and protecting the rights of nonsmokers.

There is no doubt that smokers put a strain on Alberta's health care system, as do alcoholics, and obesity is also considered a strain on the health care system. In fact, many consider that it is quickly becoming a major epidemic. However, the difference between these afflictions and those of second-hand smoke is that drinking alcohol

and problems with weight are more often than not addictions and health problems that are isolated to the individual.

Exposure to second-hand smoke is different from these diseases in that it does not just affect the individual who chooses to smoke and put their own health at risk; it also affects individuals in the area around them, especially children. It's important that we make this distinction between affecting the rights of smokers and protecting the health of Albertans, especially children, who are involuntarily exposed to second-hand smoke.

I'm confident that Bill 201 in its current form establishes an acceptable provincial baseline throughout Alberta concerning smoking in public places and workplaces. It provides the bottom rung of the ladder, which municipalities, the province, and our country will hopefully continue to climb one rung at a time soon.

While this legislation has been altered from the original intent, more importantly, it is a step in the right direction. One of the most important lessons I've learned in life is that overcoming obstacles is best achieved through the utilization of careful, well-thought-out strategies. I've also learned that achievement is gained in increments with both individual responsibility and team effort that allow for proper consideration for the consequences of others.

I'm confident that our municipal partners will continue to institute smoking bylaws which reflect what is best for their constituents and their areas of business. I am confident that Alberta will one day soon see a province-wide smoking ban equal to the original intent of Bill 201. Until that time I know that we will continue to move forward in small steps, and I hope that all members will agree that prohibiting smoking in establishments which permit minors is an appropriate step at this time. While we protect the health of Alberta's children and respect the choice of Alberta's municipalities and businesses, we continue to move toward the ultimate goal of a healthier, safer Alberta for all Albertans.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would again like to thank my colleagues for their support and consideration. It's been an incredible experience, and I'm honoured and humbled to have been a small part of it. I look forward to this last stage of debate of Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act, and I encourage all members to support this legislation as a sign of our mutual progress towards a healthier Alberta and a step in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:10

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to participate in debate on Bill 201 this afternoon, the Smoke-free Places Act. I was listening with a great deal of interest to the sponsor of the bill, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, and his explanation as to why we should support this bill at this time. Certainly, the hon. member's presentation has some merit, but when we look at Bill 201 and we see Smoke-free Places Act as its title, unfortunately after the amendments that were passed by this Assembly, the bill now reads Some Smoke-free Places Act in this province. We have completely changed the whole intent of this bill from a total workplace smoking ban without exceptions to what we have now.

If we look at what AADAC had done whenever they conducted a poll in 2003, they found that a large group of Albertans, nearly 80 per cent of people, across the province supported banning smoking in the workplace, and 77 per cent supported the prohibition in restaurants. These numbers varied little, it is interesting to note, across the province, whether it was in rural or urban areas. So we proceeded, as everyone knows, with this private member's legisla-

tion, and I was surprised whenever it was amended and it then became Some Smoke-free Places Act, not a total smoking ban.

Certainly, there were concerns raised by many hon. members in this Assembly that a workplace smoking ban would in some cases protect some employees but not all employees, but if we had a total ban, we would really be protecting employees. Now, is there going to be, as a result of this amendment, a change in WCB premiums? Are we going to have restaurants that have employees that work in the nonsmoking section or a bar or in any other public place employees that work in the nonsmoking section – are they going to pay less WCB premium than those that have to work in the place where there's all kinds of second-hand smoke? I have not heard an answer to that in the discussion to date on Bill 201.

We also have this idea that a workplace smoking ban, if we went ahead with this bill as it was initially drafted, would be bad for business. Well, experience shows that customers may be turned away, for instance, from a bar on a temporary basis, but they come back, and they adjust, and I think we're all better off for it.

Now, there shouldn't be any exceptions, Mr. Speaker. We can't just start making exceptions to smoke-free places. As soon as we allow one exception, we will have requests for more. Where do the exceptions end once we begin allowing them? If this were asbestos or some other comparable toxic workplace hazard, we wouldn't even be having these discussions about exemptions, and I think we're forgetting too quickly some of the nonsmoking advocates who have been pleading with not only Albertans but Canadians to quit smoking. Smoking in the workplace is a workplace hazard, and it should be treated as one. There are no exceptions. This isn't about protecting the smoker, I don't think. This is certainly about protecting the worker. A complete ban is necessary to level the playing field for all businesses.

Now, when we look at this, we remind ourselves again and again that most Albertans are ready for a smoke-free environment. If Bill 201 in its current form is acceptable, it is unacceptable to the grassroots Progressive Conservatives, the majority of the Progressive Conservatives from Alberta who attended the policy convention the first of this month. There was a vote. There were perhaps one-sixth of the delegates – I wasn't at the convention. I would like to have free observer status to the Tory convention sometime. I'd like to go, but it'd have to be free.

Mr. Graydon: We'll work on that.

Mr. MacDonald: I'd appreciate that. If you could work at that, I would be grateful.

There was a policy session there, and grassroots party members voted 250 to 4 to support a smoking ban in all public buildings. The same idea was expressed originally by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Now, at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce an amendment at third reading here to Bill 201 to give all hon. members of this Legislative Assembly a second chance at giving the Progressive Conservative grassroots members their wish. I will take my seat, Mr. Speaker, until the amendment has been circulated to all hon. members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The amendment that is being circulated I would like now to read into the record. I'm moving an amendment that the motion for third reading

of Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following: “Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering section 5(3).” That section 5 has to deal with the exceptions that we talked about earlier.

When we look at this, I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly to have a good, hard look at this amendment. Now, I was stating earlier that the Conservative Party delegates resoundingly backed a resolution demanding much stronger antitobacco laws from the government than it is going to pass with this Bill 201. The Premier stated this: “It can’t be done in this legislative session.” The Premier told some reporters that were assembled at the close of the Conservative Party convention.

This amendment in third reading to recommit this bill to Committee of the Whole gives this Legislative Assembly another chance at this time. It’s sort of the equivalent of the patch, but in this case this is a political patch because we can repair a bill. We can stop the process of this bill, and we can move it back, and we can repair it.

4:20

Now, as I said earlier, the majority of Progressive Conservative grassroots delegates that were at that policy session strongly endorsed a smoking ban in all public buildings. Also, it is interesting to note that the Premier stated at that policy convention that there is little that he can do to tinker with Bill 201, the Smoke-free Places Act, because it is too far through the legislative process to reconsider a blanket ban. Well, it’s not. We’re not all the way there, and hon. members we can move this back. We can have a look at the exemptions under section 5 and perhaps abide by the wishes of not only the citizens that are expressing their interest in a total smoking ban with AADAC but also the members of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Thank you. Please vote for my amendment.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the amendment that has been made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I think that it certainly reflects the thinking in the New Democrat caucus as well, that we ought not to read this bill for the first time, and it should be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole.

I think the motion that has been made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar doesn’t go far enough, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to propose an amendment to his amendment, and that amendment would read as follows: “Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 5(3) and 10.”

So I’d like that motion to be distributed as well, and when members have it I’ll speak to it.

Mr. Snelgrove: Well, Mr. Speaker, I’m not sure whether we have to deal with the second amendment or the first amendment, so I’ll deal with the first amendment.

At that convention that the hon. member talks about, there were over 1,800 people, one of the biggest political conventions in this province’s history, and they dealt with a lot of issues.

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: You don’t have the floor.

Mr. Snelgrove: Well, I’ve got it over you.

The simple fact is: if we start to revisit these bills, where does it quit?

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe I have the floor.

Point of Order Subamendments

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps if you would allow me to read what you’re doing.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster is asking for clarification.

I would ask the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood: is this an amendment to the amendment?

Mr. Mason: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: So it’s a subamendment to the amendment.

Mr. Mason: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. So we would speak on that first when we decide to speak on it, after everybody’s got a copy of it.

The hon. Minister for Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if I could get some clarification from the floor. These are somewhat unusual amendments. Can you advise if there is further debate allowed on this bill after these amendments have been dealt with, or if these amendments would be treated in a similar manner to a hoist amendment, in which case there is no further debate after the amendments have been dealt with? I think it will make a difference on whether or not members wish to participate at this stage or at a later stage, after these amendments have been dealt with by the House.

The Deputy Speaker: There would be a vote on each of the amendments, and then there would be further discussion on the bill as amended or not, but there would be no immediate question as in a hoist.

I could provide some further clarification to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. This is an amendment in itself, not an amendment to an amendment. So we would have to deal with the amendment on the floor first. Then if you want, introduce this as an amendment, but this is an amendment to the bill, not an amendment to the amendment.

So we are back speaking on the amendment as proposed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that. Then I’ll continue with my comments, and maybe you can reset my clock.

Debate Continued

Mr. Mason: I want to just indicate that I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and indicate that while I think this section 10 should be added as well, this certainly will do the trick.

Now, I want to indicate that, Mr. Speaker, in fact, I was extremely disappointed with the amendments that were made to the original bill. If we go back to just before the session, the New Democrat opposition had a news conference at which we outlined plans to introduce the following motion to the Assembly, Motion 507: “Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to prohibit smoking in public buildings and indoor workplaces.”

Shortly after that, Mr. Speaker, there was quite a bit of interest in the introduction of Bill 201, which proposed to do exactly the same thing as the motion that we had put on the Order Paper for this

session of the Assembly. We all know the reasons why that is, and I think that the real question here that we need to focus on is whether or not people who are employed in an employment capacity should be exposed to second-hand smoke.

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed has indicated that some parts of the province are not ready for this, and the question is: whether or not parts of the province are ready or not, should they then be permitted to expose others to second-hand smoke? Whether or not those people want to or not, they are exposed as a result of their employment capacity. So should we then allow majorities in certain parts of the province to override the concern that we have for our workers who may work in bars and at bingo halls and so forth?

Mr. Speaker, I think that there are not very many times that I agree with the Conservative Party's delegates at their convention.

Mr. MacDonald: Their grassroots.

Mr. Mason: Their grassroots, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar reminds me. This is a government that prides itself in keeping in touch with the grassroots. Yet shortly after the confusion of the Conservative government and caucus over what they were going to do with this bill and the Premier's statements that swung back and forth like a weather vane for a month or so there, then they finally decided that they were going to amend this bill and essentially gut it, essentially take out the important aspects of the bill and allow, basically, smoking to take place in workplaces. Then, sure enough, the Conservative grassroots in a rare flash of logic indicated that – they passed a motion. They voted, in fact, 250 to 4 to support a complete smoking ban in all public buildings. So, obviously, the government and the Conservative caucus are offside with their own delegates to their own convention.

4:30

In a further demonstration of irony, Mr. Speaker, at the very same time that this bill was watered down, the state of Montana – which has served as Marlboro country in magazine ads which depict rugged cowboys puffing on cigarettes while riding a fence line – has moved to outlaw smoking just about everywhere but the great outdoors. The state Legislature voted earlier this month to ban smoking in all enclosed public places, including bars and restaurants. The Senate of that state passed the measure 40 to 10. Now, the governor has also said that he's going to sign the bill. I think that it's interesting that the lawmakers in that state have "acknowledged the health dangers of secondhand smoke and instead argued over whether the ban is the kind of heavy-handed government action that riles Montanans, who have long admired the rugged individualism represented by cowboys."

Now, Senator Joe Balyeat of Bozeman – and he's a Republican, Mr. Speaker, so, I mean, he's, you know, a sort of a distant cousin of members opposite – said, "Smoking is just plain stupid. But if this Legislature decided to outlaw stupidity, I think two-thirds of us would be behind bars. I just don't think we can legislate against stupidity." So he mirrors or echoes the statements of our own Premier, but he is not at all in the majority down there, and common sense has prevailed in Montana.

So I want to just suggest to members opposite that we should send this bill back to Committee of the Whole and reconsider the amendments that have been made by this Assembly, which I view as ill advised and not productive. Now, I know I have a lot to say about smoking and the effects of smoking and the public policy as it respects smoking, but I think, Mr. Speaker, that those points have been made before, and so I will take my seat.

Thank you.

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, briefly on the amendment. The amendment suggests that we should send this back to the committee. There is so little time in this House that we get to use for private members' business that I'm quite frankly surprised that the opposition doesn't seem to have any problem wasting Monday after Monday on questions they may feel are important. We've passed one private member's bill after a very passionate plea from the sponsor, and now we're caught up finally, getting close to having resolution on a second bill, and we want to go study it again. Well, to the colleagues from your side and the colleagues from this side that have their own private bills that are very important to them too, they deserve the time in this House, and one bill shouldn't take all our time.

So if you think that we have more duty to one private member than the other by giving more time for private bills, I disagree. I think the time that the private members have in here is too small as it is. We should deal with this matter and get on with other more important issues.

Dr. Swann: Well, with all due respect, I think there are some bills that are more important than others. This is a critically important precedent in Alberta, the first provincial bill that I'm aware of that would regulate smoking in public places. I think that anyone who has worked with people with sensitivities to tobacco, anyone with chronic lung disease, anyone with allergies, anyone with cancer or who has watched someone die of cancer has to recognize that this is a critical time for Alberta to take some leadership. I know that you can, and I know many of you want to. I guess I would just encourage the Assembly to take this opportunity and review this once again.

In that context, I just want to say a few things about what it means to me as a physician and what I think it means to most Albertans, as indicated in many of the polls, and particularly in the workplace, where we are exposing young people, pregnant women, and unwilling nonsmokers to a carcinogenic substance and a substance that actually aggravates asthma, chronic lung disease, and heart disease.

It's unconscionable that we wouldn't take the next step, as many jurisdictions are – and we're far behind some jurisdictions already at this stage – that we wouldn't honour the commitment that the original mover of this Bill 201 had in mind when he suggested that all people's lungs, whether young or old, deserve to be protected from environmental tobacco smoke. I know that most of you have indicated that in the first and second readings of this bill.

It's clear, also, that the economy will benefit from this legislation, not only the local economies, but also our health care budget would be less impacted by removing second-hand smoke from those who are wanting to avoid it. The health of people, a fundamental ethical issue promoting the health of our population: this flies in the face of investments in cancer therapy when we know that this is a cancer-causing agent and we are yet not prepared to reduce that possibility of impacts on young and older employees in the workplace.

I would just simply ask sincerely that all members give this amendment due consideration and consider the possibility of really showing some amazing leadership in this province to give it yet a second review and help us to move Alberta into the forefront in Canada.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to thank

the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing Bill 201 forward originally. I supported this bill because I believe it is the right thing to do. I'm disappointed that this bill has amendments that result in a watered-down version of the original.

We have lots of research and evidence that smoking is harmful to smokers and to those who experience second-hand smoke. We also know that health-related costs for smoking are enormous. Bill 201's original intent was to make a real difference for our society. We know that smokers who work in an environment that's smoke free are more likely to quit smoking. There are other studies that show smokers have decreased productivity, extra time taken on smoke breaks, increased sick days, increased health care costs.

There's evidence that a workplace smoking ban doesn't hurt business. I was looking at a report on it from 1998. All of California's restaurants and bars went smoke free. According to the California Board of Equalization, sales at places selling beer, wine, and liquor increased every quarter in 1998, 1999, and into 2000, the last period for which data is available. What's more, sales increases at these establishments outpaced by nearly 8 per cent increases at all other types of retail outlets.

Again, according to the New York department of health and mental hygiene, smoke-free workplace legislation has become increasingly popular. While 65 per cent of bar patrons in California strongly or somewhat approved of the law in 1998, almost three-quarters, 73 per cent, felt that way by 2000. Also, by 2000, 87 per cent of bar patrons in California reported that they were as likely or more likely to visit bars since they had become smoke free.

4:40

I quote also from the New York City department of health and mental hygiene.

Businesses with smoke-free policies experience less absenteeism when non-smoking employees are no longer exposed to second-hand smoke, which can trigger asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses . . . Employers also see lower housekeeping and maintenance costs because they no longer need to clean ashtrays, sweep up cigarette butts, replace burnt carpeting, or clean fabrics and other materials nearly as often.

Smoking cessation programs in the workplace may also achieve substantial cost savings as well as productivity benefits. Workers who have stopped smoking for at least one year lose significantly fewer days of work and have fewer admissions to hospitals than those that continue to smoke.

This is about protecting the worker and not about the smoker. The evidence behind a total workplace smoking ban is clear.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we're speaking to the amendment to the bill, not the bill itself.

Mrs. Mather: Okay. I'll go to that.

I referred back to the intent of the original bill and that the amendments that we were going to be looking at today have watered this down considerably. It is with that that I need to say that on the basis of discussion with parents and students in my constituency I want to support this amendment because it will give us some real meaning, some real teeth. I believe that the watered-down version does not do justice to the intent of the original bill.

So I support the amendment to Bill 201, as I see it as addressing a smoking situation which has created a huge health concern in our province. I see this as a small step towards a province-wide smoking ban and better health. The amendment, however, can result in a larger step and, I believe, make a real difference.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who brought forward a good bill, seemed to indicate that he's somewhat satisfied under the circumstances with getting what he can. I'd say to the hon. member that you're easily satisfied. I honestly believe that these particular amendments that were brought forward on the original bill gut the bill totally.

In terms of the 5(3), which the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is asking go back, it "designates the public place or workplace or a part of the public place or workplace as a place where smoking is permitted." Well, virtually a whole town could set up a number of places that they could designate as smoking. I mean, it's almost an encouragement to set up these places if you want to, and many of these places where they want these particular bars or whatever the case may be, they're going to do it. As a result, we're not going to be any further ahead, I don't believe, because a good bill has been gutted.

I know that it's not easy being a member of the government when this happens. But there are some times, hon. member, that you can't come back and say that you're satisfied because you can't be satisfied with this particular bill. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you have to go along, I guess.

I'm surprised because I think there's an opportunity for the government. It was mentioned that there were a couple things that happened. I don't think it could be clearer than when a Conservative convention votes 250 to 4. That's a pretty strong message that they're sending to do something. They're sending it to this caucus and this government. I would've thought cooler heads, the idea that we can't do anything at this stage – the amendment from Edmonton-Gold Bar is that we still can do something about this bill, and we'd be satisfying the grassroots of the Conservative Party and Albertans, generally, with this approach.

I see, as my colleague talked about, the Marlboro place, you know, moving ahead; other provinces are moving ahead. Here we're going to be Alberta, the home of smoking, compared to other places.

The reality is that part of it is the second-hand smoke. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed is well aware of that. It's second-hand smoke that people, if they want to work in a certain place that's been designated as smoking, are going to have to inhale it or they don't have a job. For many people that's not an option. But we've allowed them to go ahead and do this with this amendment. The Senate – I shouldn't say it. I won't even talk about that. There should be something of some sober second thought here in this Legislature. We still have the opportunity to do this.

Those things have occurred: the Conservative convention and Montana moving ahead. Those are two significant events that have happened since we debated this bill. If, as my colleague said, they care about the grassroots and what the people at the convention are saying, they should be prepared to go back and redo this.

The other point about it beyond the health hazards and the smoking is that what has happened in this province is a checkerboard economically. If you happen to be in one municipality that's outlawed smoking and there's another one close by, that's created some economic hardships for people in that municipality. Well, this is still going to do that. One municipality says: oh well, we're going to have this smoking; we'll vote on this; we're going to designate this as smoking where minors can't come in, and this one and this one. The same thing is still there. We're still going to have a checkerboard. Some businesses where municipalities have done the right thing and banned smoking are going to be still at a disadvantage economically if they live closer to another area because

those people can just drive out. Say it's Clareview or Beverly. They can drive out to Sherwood Park or others.

I guess we haven't accomplished what the members set out to do in this bill. I know that we've put on our rose-coloured glasses, and we try to say: well, it's a step in the right direction. I honestly don't believe it is. I honestly believe that this bill has been gutted, and the same things will occur that occurred before because it's going to be an easy thing to designate a public place or workplace or part of a public place where smoking is permitted. So as I said, the check-board is there, Mr. Speaker. I don't see that anything has really changed with this bill.

That's why the amendment should get some serious second thought from members over there, so that we can go back and bring the bill back to the Committee of the Whole. Do what the Conservative grassroots want, do what Albertans want, do what the opposition wants, do what I believe the minister of health and the Minister of Community Development the first time they voted wanted, do what the Member for Calgary-Lougheed wants and have a bill that we can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member, this is not a step in the right direction. It is the status quo as far as I'm concerned. For that reason, I would hope that the members would take a look at this and refer it back to the Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering section 5(3).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak against the amendment, and there are a number of reasons that I would like to do that. The main reason I would like to speak against the amendment is because I think that the most important thing is to get Bill 201 passed. The reason I think that's important is because just as my city of Red Deer, the city of Edmonton, and the city of Calgary have gone about this thing in stages, I think we need to do that for the rest of Alberta as well.

Red Deer has the law right now where if you have anybody coming into your facility under the age of 18, there's no smoking allowed. I think it's worked in a wonderful, wonderful way because there is no restaurant in Red Deer that you can go into that allows smoking. I suppose there may be a smoking room to the back or to the side which I've never experienced, but in all restaurants when you walk in, there is no smoking. So it's done a marvellous thing for the locations where you'll find children most often. Within the next year I believe that Red Deer is going to move to a total ban. It's going to be something that our city council is going to decide, and I'm very proud of that.

I'd like to see a total ban in the province, but I think it's unfair to expect communities that haven't taken the first step to go all the way to the other end without going through the stages as well. I do remember going to some of our rural areas and into the restaurants and choking on the smoke that's in those restaurants. I'm going to be very glad to see that we take the first step, the first stage, because I think that the majority of restaurants will no longer have smoking. I think it's a good first step. I think we need it.

4:50

There are three things that I've always been concerned about. I think that even though this bill doesn't go as far as most of us want it to go, it still goes to that first step that I think is critical and urgent that we pass in this Legislature as soon as possible, and that is to stop the smoking in most workplaces. I know it will follow. I know it will come in time. Red Deer is going to a total smoking ban, I

think soon. I think Edmonton is, and I think Calgary is, and I'm not sure who else. I believe that when you take this step, the next step comes. Yes, the next step is the most important step, but I don't think you can get there without going here first. Certainly, it's not fair to allow the communities that we also have to listen to that haven't even taken the first step.

Although I'm not happy that this bill doesn't go all the way, I think it's really important that we pass it the way it is so that we can get started. Who knows? Maybe it will be back again next year, and we'll go all the way, or in two years. Whatever it takes. Right now I think it is important that we pass this bill and get the first step happening and have a healthier workplace for the majority of places even though it's not for all places.

One of my colleagues mentioned in the first debate on Bill 201 that sometimes when you go for all or nothing, you get nothing. I'm not happy to settle for nothing. I want something. I think this is a good first step. That's why I would not vote for this amendment but indeed vote for this bill in third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on the amendment.

Mr. Elsalhy: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I am standing to support the amendment as proposed by my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Why do I do that? As a pharmacist I think we should not be allowing smoking in any public place whatsoever. I think the amendment allows us to bring it back to committee and debate it some more. Also, because the constituents in Edmonton-McClung were about 99 and a half per cent in support of a total smoking ban as represented in their e-mails and letters to me, I am very comfortable making that presentation today.

What we're discussing is an issue of health promotion and disease prevention. We're not discussing what's good for business or what's not good for business. We're not discussing what's good for rural versus urban zones in Alberta. What we're discussing is second-hand smoke. What we're discussing is safety, health, disease prevention, and so on.

I commend the hon. member who sponsored the bill. I commend the brave hon. ministers who supported it in its initial stages of debate and swam against the current and stated their minds. I commend and applaud the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar because now he's allowing them to bring it back to the table and debate it some more, to listen to the grassroots as was previously mentioned.

I would urge all members to support this amendment, and let's debate it some more. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to speak in favour of this amendment, and I do so, I think, with a certain sense of urgency at the importance of this amendment. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said that it was not important. That's not what the constituents of Edmonton-Manning have told me. They have told me very, very clearly that these amendments have indeed made this bill nothing from what it was originally intended to be and originally hoped for by many of the constituents of Edmonton-Manning. Certainly, it does not seem to be what was hoped for by many members of the Progressive Conservative Party.

On Monday, April 11, 2005, there was a report in the *Edmonton Journal*. Some parts of it I'll quote.

Premier Ralph Klein said Sunday his government will not rush to change its position against a province-wide smoking ban, a day

after one group of Conservative party delegates resoundingly backed a resolution demanding much stronger anti-tobacco laws than the government is poised to pass.

"It can't be done this legislative session; it simply is not possible," Klein told reporters at the close of the Conservative party convention. "So it would be another year anyway. I will leave it up to caucus, but I doubt very much if it's going to be raised again."

Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear that this amendment leaves open an option to deal with this, and the Premier was wrong in his statement that was quoted in the newspaper.

Another quote from that article:

"It was approved for 99 per cent of us, and this gives you some food for thought," said one delegate.

Others underlined the importance of the party to heed the delegates' message following a Saturday renewal session in which the party committed to a decentralized form in which top officials take direction from the base.

There again, Mr. Speaker, I believe that it's very important that this broad cross-section, broad multiparty support for a full ban as originally intended in the original bill is what Albertans really desire on this.

I think that in terms of business, realistically what we need is to have a stable business climate where the rules are clear considerably into the future, not where we will be looking to doing something again next year, as the Member for Red Deer-North put forward. That we do this in steps is I think irresponsible to our business owners. It's really, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview mentioned, the helter-skelter, hodgepodge network of municipal laws that will create situations where people will go outside of the boundary and leave one business that's one block in and go to one business that's one block out in order to take care of their habit. This can only create problems for those businesses within those areas.

Of course, it's a workplace issue as well. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar mentioned the WCB potential problems, you know, where we will have different jurisdictions having different wellness and different health concerns, really, with the way that they are dealing with the smoking issue.

The necessity of bringing this back to the Committee of the Whole, as envisaged in the amendment, I think is proper and necessary and, indeed, supported, I can only say, by the majority of Albertans. I would ask all members to support this amendment in its entirety and to look toward a much more realistic debate, for the government members of the Progressive Conservative Party to look to their own members and their own members' motion in that it clearly gave them some direction on this matter, and that we move on this as a means to also better the health of all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, sir. I, too, would speak to the Smoke-free Places Act and the amendments put forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar to take it back to the Committee of the Whole. In my constituency of St. Albert 70 per cent of our constituents supported the original bill, and 30 per cent suggested – and these were fundraising people, and I think this is very important. Fundraising groups in St. Albert were somewhat reluctant to support the bill because they were worried about their nonprofit ability, the ability to raise money for their kids' recreation. I think this is a very risky situation for them, that they would go out and have to raise money and risk their health for the well-being of their children. I think that's one of the reasons we're for the bill being accepted as it was put forth after the adjustments were made to the bill.

I think there's another situation here in terms of the group called Smoke-free St. Albert. This was a group that lobbied hard in the community of St. Albert and brought forth the realization of the changes in the workplace as of July 1, 2005. Their wish was to push on this, and they actually got it approved at city council. Their wish now is to have protection for all citizens applied on a provincial scale. They say that there's no doubt that the research shows that exposure to second-hand smoke is a major health hazard and that eliminating this risk in public and workplaces should be a top priority of this government. The savings to Alberta health care could be enormous. Many other Canadian provinces and other countries have already gone this route, and it's time the Alberta government stopped dragging their feet and did this job for Albertans.

5:00

I think that what happened in Ireland is also significant. I say with some pride that the tough Irish smoking ban implemented last year paid off and made the smoking ban the most popular move by the government of that day for all of Ireland.

So I'm speaking in favour of this bill going back to Committee of the Whole, and I think all rational research suggests that for the good of our children and our families this is the way it should happen, and this should take place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a geriatric nurse who has nursed many people with lung cancer and mouth cancer as they lay dying, I think that further discussion on this bill is certainly warranted. I've had numerous e-mails and contacts through my office with overwhelming support for Bill 201. Since the newspaper articles have been published regarding the grassroots vote by the PC Party at their convention, there have been even more from people, who understood that Committee of the Whole from third reading could go backwards, mainly asking if, in fact, there could be no changes made at this late date.

Discussion in Committee of the Whole could bring out even more facts in support of Bill 201 in its entirety and unamended by the first amendment. I would trust that the mover of the . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the member, but according to our Standing Orders, all questions must be decided in order to conclude debate on this motion once the time has elapsed.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:02 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Backs	MacDonald	Pastoor
Bonko	Mar	Rodney
Elsalhy	Martin	Swann
Evans	Mason	Taft
Flaherty	Mather	Taylor
Forsyth	Miller	

Against the motion:

Cao	Johnston	Pham
Coutts	Knight	Renner
Graydon	Liepert	Snelgrove
Griffiths	Lougheed	Stelmach
Groeneveld	Magnus	Stevens
Herard	Marz	Strang
Horner	Mitzel	Tarchuk
Jablonski	Morton	Zwozdesky
Johnson	Oberle	
Totals:	For – 17	Against – 26

[Motion on amendment lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, to close the debate.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank all of the hon. members who participated in the first, second, and third readings of debate of Bill 201 as well as in the Committee of the Whole debate, and I would very much like to thank all hon. members for their support of this bill as a step in the right direction. Considering the amount of discussion there has been in this House and in this province in the last number of months, I believe I've nothing further to add at this point, and as such I would like to close debate on Bill 201.

[The voice vote indicated that motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:17 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Agnihotri	Jablonski	Morton
Bonko	Johnson	Oberle
Cao	Johnston	Pham
Coutts	Knight	Renner
Evans	Liepert	Rodney
Forsyth	Lougheed	Snelgrove
Graydon	Magnus	Stelmach
Griffiths	Mar	Stevens
Groeneveld	Marz	Strang
Herard	Mather	Tarchuk
Horner	Mitzel	Zwozdesky

5:30

Against the motion:

Backs	Martin	Pastoor
Elsalhy	Mason	Swann
Flaherty	Miller, R.	Taft
MacDonald	Pannu	Taylor
Totals:	For – 33	Against – 12

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a third time]

The Speaker: Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 25, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/04/25

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Hand-held Cellphone Use while Driving

506. Mr. Chase moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce amendments to the Traffic Safety Act to prohibit the use of hand-held cellular phones while operating a motor vehicle.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. members opposite and throughout the House will permit, I have a number of statistics and names, and I would like to refer to the sheet to provide you with the specifics of why I feel that this motion is important. It falls, to me, in the same line as Bill 39 because the intent of this motion is to prevent injuries and accidents and also, with luck, to save lives by putting a greater onus and an efficiency on the person who is operating a vehicle.

Like any new technology cellular wireless phones bring with them a mixed bag of benefits and potential problems. Some of the dangers associated with using cellphones while driving include missing exits and traffic signals and then attempting to overcorrect, failure to yield, failure to adjust speed to conditions, and becoming involved in more near collision incidents with other vehicles or simply running completely off the road. More incidents of speeding, following too closely, and running red lights have been noted with people using cellphones.

A Transport Research Laboratory study in the United Kingdom found that a driver travelling at 70 miles per hour who is using a mobile had a braking distance that was 46 feet longer than one who was not and 33 feet more than that of a drunken driver. Also, just the idea of using a cellphone in itself is distracting. Driving, whether it be in the city or on the highway, takes a great deal of concentration, and if you allow yourself to be distracted by the use of a phone, then obviously you're not being efficient.

The other distraction that cellphones provide is the ringing. That ringing has a jarring effect to it. The response is almost the equivalent of Pavlov's dog. You have this immediate need to answer that ringing or at least to turn it off, and that can distract you and basically shock you. Phone calls are interactive and draw the driver's attention. Sometimes we wonder when we're driving the highway how we got from one place to another. It seems at the time that driving does not take a whole lot of mental capacity, but the reality is that if you slip for the slightest part of a second, you can be involved in or cause an accident.

The people who are most at risk are the young, and they're partly at risk because of the fact that they're just learning to drive, but they are the most likely to be involved in accidents caused by cellphones. We know that drivers aged 16 to 24 use cellphones more than any other age group, and as a result they are more likely than older, more experienced drivers to be involved in collisions that result in death. That information comes from the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Learning to drive requires a person to do many things at once [such as] steering, braking, shifting gears and watching for traffic . . .

When a novice driver adds a distraction like talking on a cellular phone, a task that in itself requires variable levels of cognitive effort, the results can be disastrous.

That quote comes from an ongoing study by University of Calgary associate professor Jeffrey Caird. Jeffrey's work was acknowledged by the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation in this weekend's *Herald* articles. Jeffrey Caird is the director of the Cognitive Ergonomics Research Laboratory at the University of Calgary, and part of his studying equipment is a driving simulator. His study, which is currently under way, is the first of its kind to focus on novice drivers and will have its results issued as of this August.

The younger generation is also fond of text messaging, which is extremely dangerous while driving. It's bad enough to carry on a conversation, but if you're trying to dial and send off messages while driving, then the amount of distraction is extreme.

Studies show evidence of accidents due to cellphone use. According to an article by the CBC, the laboratory of transport safety at the University of Montreal found that cellphone users have a higher crash risk than non-users. The North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center found drivers using cellphones nearly twice as likely to be involved in rear-end collisions. A 2002 study by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, part of the Harvard University School of Public Health, found that drivers using cellphones cause 1.5 million accidents annually, resulting in 2,600 deaths and 570,000 injuries. A similar study in California by the California Highway Patrol found that at least 4,699 accidents were blamed on drivers using cellphones and that those accidents killed 31 people and injured 2,786. The study period was only nine months. If you project those rates, the total number of accidents involving cellphones could be well over 6,000 for the year.

Listening and responding to relatively complex messages as might occur when using a hands-free cellular telephone to conduct business or deal with important domestic issues was found to significantly degrade driving performance in a series of driving tasks. My motion puts forward hand held, but there is also distraction associated with hands free.

Medical opinion is in favour of the ban. Canada's top medical journal is calling for laws restricting the use of phones while driving, arguing that it's, in quotes, a no-brainer that using one behind the wheel is risky. According to the *National Post*, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* calls for the ban. This goes back to the year 2001.

I won't go through all the countries that have banned cellphones, but let's just say that at the beginning we go to Australia; in the middle, Norway; ending up with Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe. These countries have all done what I am recommending we do beginning tonight in the Assembly.

I am hoping that the medium, in this case myself, does not get in the way of the messaging. This is an important motion. To me it will not only reduce accidents, but it has the potential of saving lives, a number of those lives being young people who we would like to see productive and continue on to our age and, obviously, to old age. With that, I encourage debate and discussion.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased tonight to participate in the debate on Motion 506. This is an important debate because in many ways it tends to differentiate those who believe that government should be regulating more and more individuals' lives

and freedoms and those, like myself, who feel that individuals need to accept responsibility for their actions.

8:10

Mr. Speaker, technology advances are moving at a rate that this Assembly, attempting to pass laws, will never be able to keep up with. Technology is going to continue to move forward, and we must embrace it, and we as legislators must be very cautious when creating laws surrounding such technology. Our motives might be in the right spot, but the outcomes we get from these laws may not be what we expect. This motion, which is to prohibit the use of hand-held cellular phones while driving, gives us a perfect example of such a situation. There is no doubt in my mind that there have been people who may have caused accidents because they were driving with a cellphone in their hands, but there have also been accidents caused by people who were thinking about their day at work, others who may have been trying to quiet their children in the back seat, and still others because they were just simply daydreaming and not paying attention.

One has to ask: where does common sense prevail? Recently I was driving down Crowchild Trail in Calgary and noticed this young lady passing me who was talking on the cellphone, driving with the other hand, and holding a cigarette between her fingers. She was speeding as well because she passed me. However, I caught up to her at the next light, and while stopped, I noticed that she was also drinking a soda. As she pulled away from the stoplight, I also realized that not only was she talking on the phone, smoking a cigarette, having a sip of soda pop; she was doing all of this while driving a stick shift, and I thought: that is multitasking. I just wished that she was doing it on something other than driving. My point here is that no law would protect people from such stupidity. It would, however, prohibit legitimate cellphone use, which I will deal with later.

Mr. Speaker, science does not agree that banning the use of hand-held cellular phones will effectively eliminate the dangers of driver inattention. Furthermore, according to scientific studies driving and talking on a phone is not necessarily dangerous because of the physical act of holding the phone but, rather, from the mental act of having a conversation. To legislate against the physical act of holding the phone, then, seems to be somewhat counterproductive.

This view is supported by both the Canadian Automobile Association and the Alberta Motor Association. Their recommendations about driver distractions state that legislation that only bans hand-held cellphones is discouraged as research shows that the intensity or nature of the conversation is the primary cause of driver error. The associations do suggest, however, that the use of cellphones is dangerous while driving and further recommend that drivers should pull off the road and stop in a safe location before making or answering a cellular phone call. Additionally, they proposed that voice mail services for cellular phone subscribers be promoted as a means of eliminating the need to answer phone calls while driving. Mr. Speaker, these recommendations are consistent with the views of Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation, who strongly encourages drivers to wait until they can safely pull over to use their cellphone or have a passenger make or answer calls.

Cellular phones have become a very effective tool for police in recent years, and according to the Solicitor General, police caution that they receive many calls from motorists using cellphones who report traffic safety issues, including impaired drivers, and they would not like to see legislation of this nature hinder this current practice. If members from the Liberal caucus would like to know more about this, I suggest that they speak to my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs, who has himself made this type of call to police from a cellphone.

Mr. Speaker, these are the different views on this topic. Technology is both a gift and a curse, and as legislators we must find a balance between practicality and safety. We must also base legislation we create on scientific evidence. The bottom line for Motion 506 is that science does not support the claim that the use of hand-held cellphones is a greater cause of accidents than any other driver distraction.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw all members' attention to some pieces of information that I find helpful in understanding this issue. There is a lot of literature written on this topic by many different organizations like the AMA, the CAA, Transport Canada, the Insurance Corporation of B.C., and the Independent Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta. They all come to the same conclusion. The literature from all sources urges the government to follow those conclusions instead of going against them.

I think we should look at urging government to address all driver distraction. As well, we should urge the government to continue to conduct public awareness and educational campaigns regarding driver distraction, which includes cellphone use. Even better, we could urge the government to create more of a focus on this topic in driver education programs and driver licence examinations. Maybe government should even examine whether insurance coverage is breached if it is clearly proven that an accident was caused by cellphone use although I have my doubts that this could ever be proven.

An unfortunate part of life is that accidents do happen. More unfortunate is that most of these accidents are preventable since the majority are caused by human error. As Conservatives we believe in educating people and trusting that they will make the right decisions. Unfortunately, sometimes they do not, and people suffer as a result. But we learn from these instances, and we pass on these tragic stories and hope that others will learn from them as well. It's called living in the real world and not in a bubble.

I don't agree with the policy of legislating people to the point where they are so constricted and restricted that they can't hurt themselves or others. According to this philosophy the best way to avoid accidents in vehicles is to prohibit driving altogether, and perhaps the best way to eliminate danger generally is to never leave home. We must come up with more acceptable strategies to address the root of the problem.

We should be prudent when making legislation around technology, and Motion 506 is not prudent. In fact, it goes against reason and science, and that is why I urge all of my colleagues in joining in voting against this motion.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's disappointing that the Member for Calgary-West was so negative with regard to the particular cellphone piece. He says that, in fact, people should be monitoring or governing themselves with common sense, that government has too much control of their lives. Hence, today we passed a smoking bylaw. We did not leave it up to the public to decide for themselves whether smoking is hazardous or healthy, but instead we passed another amendment here as well. [interjection] That's right, that the members, in fact, voted for.

We also did in this session crystal meth with regard to that.

Seatbelts are another thing that's legislated. People would be able to make up their decision on that, but again we have a law that governs safe driving and mandatory seatbelt use.

You know, we talk about drinking and driving. People still do it. Common sense doesn't prevent them from doing that.

This particular piece too. I think that people can in fact have safe driving as well as doing hands-free. Hands-free is the key, not a total ban of cellphone use within the vehicle, for being able to use it in emergency cases, which will prohibit the police from using it as well or, as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs mentioned, from phoning on a vehicle that was driving erratically. I, myself, have used that same apparatus, a cellphone, to phone on a vehicle that was being driven while impaired.

I think it's absolutely a necessity. In fact, it's a communication device that has been given to us, and it's to be used responsibly. We can use it hands free. There's new technology, which is Bluetooth, that's out there, which allows the individual to use it and still keep constant communication while having both hands on the wheel. Watching people drive was mentioned by the member across. I do it daily coming to work. People are either putting on make-up, they're catching breakfast, they're talking on the cellphone, or they're doing both and driving with their knee. It's amazing how these people don't get into accidents.

Do we have to have a law that puts two hands on the wheel? I don't think we need to go that far, but as I said a good piece of it is keeping people and their attention. They've got the radio going. They've got the cellphone going. People have a conversation with themselves. Unless they've got a hands-free thing, you've got to wonder what's going on there. But I think, again, this would certainly speak to the safety issues.

Edmonton is getting busier by the year with economic prosperity coming. Fort McMurray, Calgary, all surrounding areas are in fact having an influx of people. So there's more traffic coming into these cities and surrounding areas. Now, that's more people to have to contend with. I think that people need to be fully aware of their surrounding environment and what's going on. As well as the increase in traffic flow, you've got to worry about the weather.

One less thing to worry about would be the cellphone. If a person finds it absolutely necessary to talk on a cellphone, again, as I mentioned, there is hands-free technology out there relatively cheap. I, myself, would be inclined to in fact stop using the cellphone on the earpiece and go right to the hands-free if this law was passed.

I admit it. I'm one of those people that does occasionally drive and talk on the phone too. I'm not saying that I'm perfect. I do in fact find myself able to do it, but I would be far more comfortable if everyone was off the cellphone and had one hundred per cent concentration while driving. You can't protect yourself from someone coming from behind you as they're reaching down dialing a number, and you're sitting at a red light, and you get rear-ended while they're trying to make that phone call or text message.

8:20

Technology is becoming increasingly convenient, but unfortunately so are some of the nuisances and distractions. They also have digital dash DVD players now that take the driver's attention away from the road scene and in fact put them right there on the newest DVD that they can play right on their in-car dash. Now, I realize that police are pulling people over for that particular distraction. That is, I would argue, just as distracting if not more distracting than a cellphone.

You have the rings going off. You've got people in the car. Maybe there could be four or five conversations going. That's all distracting for the driver, but again they could have hands-free, and I stress hands-free.

I think it would amiss to not give this good consideration. Perhaps the member from across the way isn't aware that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is in fact quoted with a study, that they are looking into or at least talking about the ban of cellphone

use. Maybe it's because it has come from across the floor that the idea isn't palatable. I would hope that that wouldn't be the case. I think the idea has got good merit regardless of who puts it forward. If it's going to benefit the public and a safe and a good environment for driving, then I think it should be explored, not just because it came from one opposition member or another. I think that's quite petty, and the public is not served best in that particular way of dealing with things.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think I would urge the other individuals out here to support this particular piece that is before us. In fact, it would come with more education. He certainly mentioned about education within driver's ed, having people in fact explicitly giving a particular piece with that driver component about the pitfalls of cellphone use.

Again, I would urge the fellow speakers who are coming behind me as well as those maybe not able to get up to speak to this tonight to consider it and the merits about it and not just because science or the studies don't say that it's of merit. There are other countries in the world here that are in fact recognizing that it is a distraction. It's an idea whose time has come. I guess the idea is now to recognize it and ban cellphone use before more people are hurt or injured. We talk about the busy highways, in fact trying to twin them because of the congestion. Cellphone bans would certainly help with that as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise this evening and offer my remarks regarding Motion 506, which urges the government to prohibit Albertans the use of their hand-held cellular phones while driving. I acknowledge the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity for his intention on traffic safety.

From what I understand, this idea is not new in this House. In fact, in 2002 the former member for Lacombe-Stettler introduced an identical idea in the form of a private member's bill which, if passed, would have banned the use of hand-held cellular phones during the operation of a motor vehicle. But this Legislature at that time felt that such legislation was flawed from the beginning.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that the use of hand-held cellular phones by careless drivers has caused traffic accidents, some of which have been extremely tragic. However, I also realize that passing laws every time we have an issue in our hands is not the best or the most appropriate way for us to govern. It is very reactionary for us just to jump on the bandwagon and argue that Alberta needs legislation banning cellular phone use in motor vehicles because it can cause accidents.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree that talking on hand-held cellular phones while not paying attention to traffic can be distracting and can cause accidents. By the same token, drivers do many other things while driving, including playing with the radio or talking to their passengers, which can be as distracting as conversation on the cellular phone. However, nobody has suggested that we make those activities illegal.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but there simply isn't any sound proof that cellular phones constitute a major cause of traffic accidents in the province or elsewhere. No doubt, there have been studies that have found that cellular phones can hinder one's reaction time because they tend to take away some of the driver's attention.

One of the more recent studies on this particular subject came out from the University of Utah just this year. Its conclusion was rather surprising. It found that the reaction time of a 20-year-old driver with a cellular phone was comparable to the reaction time of a 70-

year-old driver without a cellular phone. Concerning, Mr. Speaker, perhaps. However, reading further, the study also finds that hands-free phones were just as distracting to drivers as hand-held phones and that any conversation that the driver may be involved in, be it on the phone or with a passenger, is likely to impair his or her driving abilities.

Does this mean that we should ban passengers from vehicles since they assuredly could distract the driver or cause a collision? Perhaps we should also consider banning radios, CD players from vehicles because they, too, can be distracting to drivers.

Mr. Herard: Don't forget seniors.

Mr. Cao: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont also talks about seniors driving too.

Maybe we should also ban drive-throughs as they promote eating and driving, which can be as distracting as talking on a cellphone. So where would this end, Mr. Speaker?

At the end of the day the fact is that we simply don't know how many collisions in Alberta have been caused by cellular phone use. According to the Alberta traffic collision statistics report last published in 2003 by the department of transportation, the leading causes of driver's actions contributing to casualty collisions in the province included following too closely, running off the road, turning left across oncoming traffic. Nowhere does the report mention categories like distracted by cellular phone or was talking to the wife or that playing on the radio caused a collision.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for us to sit here and say: well, here's a potential problem; we really don't know how bad a problem it is, but we'll pass legislation just in case. If the government operated in this manner, I doubt we'd be allowed to do anything, let alone own a cellphone or operate motor vehicles. If we don't have hard evidence suggesting that cellphone use is a major cause of accidents, I believe that banning the use of cellular phones exclusively, without looking to other distractions, would be rather biased and shortsighted.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I am also of the opinion that Albertans don't need another law telling them what to do. I believe that the majority of Albertans are responsible drivers who recognize that one should be careful when using a hand-held cellular phone or pursuing another activity while driving. There is a law against undue care in driving.

I trust that the majority of Albertans do drive responsibly, pay attention to driving conditions, refrain from using their phones or other devices in situations when their undivided attention is most required. Albertans don't need this government constantly looking over their shoulder and telling them what they can and cannot do. I trust their judgment to do the right things, and I don't think that the poor judgment of a few should spoil it for the rest of us.

I would support this motion if it just urged the government to investigate or to explore the use of cellular phones while operating a vehicle, and indeed I read that the ministry of transportation has been doing something in that regard. Therefore, I encourage the member to withdraw this motion.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate having an opportunity to speak briefly on Motion 506. I find this motion intriguing, and I appreciate as well the comments from the Member for Calgary-Fort, the very latter part of his comments; that is, that he would consider supporting this motion if it, indeed, urged the

government to further investigate this problem of people using handsets while driving. You know, I sort of see the spirit of this motion as being that. Thus, I do in fact support this motion as it's worded.

8:30

I think that every time new technology is introduced into our society – perhaps I'm showing my age to suggest that, you know, hand-held devices are a new technology, but it's still emerging as to how we use it in our society. In fact, we can see cellphones evolving literally by the month with new sorts of additions to entice people to use them, with cameras and text messaging and whatnot.

So, you know, still looking at it as a reasonably new technology, it is, in fact, our duty in this Legislature to look for responsible ways for that technology to be used in our society. I object to this categorical idea that "less government is better, and don't tell us what to do, by golly, and away we go" because, of course, that goes against the very existence of this Legislature in the first place as being a place to put forward responsible ways by which people can live their lives, in this case using handsets and using cellphones in vehicles.

I think perhaps we have somewhat of a dearth of information, specifically here in Alberta, that might suggest how many accidents are specifically caused by people using cellphones while driving, but we can almost guarantee that the insurance industry is gathering that information in a comprehensive manner because, of course, every accident that takes place is a financial issue for insurance companies. You know, it's an easy thing to track in a way because, in fact, if you have your hand-held device and you are in an accident and that phone call is terminated, then you know exactly what that person was doing up to the point where the accident took place, and indeed the line could still be on.

So it's not any different from any other investigation of an accident where an officer can lay the charge of undue care and attention. What we are doing, simply, with something like this is focusing that issue of undue care and attention and targeting probably something that does in fact cause a lot of accidents on our roads today.

I mean, I can use my own anecdotal evidence, watching for people who are doing things on the road that they shouldn't be doing. If you watch carefully – and I would invite all members and those listening here this evening to just watch. Watch when you see an infraction on the road for the next week or so, and just make a note of whether that person has their cellphone up to their ear at the same time. I think you'll find it quite startling that for lots and lots of infractions, lane changing and not taking a look and speeding and whatnot, those people have cellphones stuck to their ears at the same time.

Myself, as a bicycle commuter I make a special point of watching for the whites of the drivers' eyes as I'm negotiating the streets of Edmonton because, of course, a small accident in a car with a bicycle can be fatal. Again, I see more often than not that someone who does sort of a grossly negligent lane change or whatever will have a cellphone attached to their ear.

You know, enforcement of a ban like this would be difficult, but one of the things about laws is that when people realize or feel as though a law is just, then they will police themselves. I'm starting to see an increasing amount of people who will choose not to drive and use their cellphone at the same time because, you know, it's becoming increasingly obvious and apparent that it does take away your abilities to concentrate on the road, especially in urban areas. I think all of us, if we are honest inside our hearts, would realize and we would say that that is true.

You know, there are a number of studies. One study I found very interesting, not a study, I should say, but a law, in the otherwise quite libertarian state of Colorado in the United States. They have a graduated driving licence system. In other words, people who pick up their licence, for the first couple of years, usually young people, are only allowed to drive during the day or not drive on certain freeways, et cetera, et cetera, and they're also not allowed to use cellphones for that first two-year period while driving.

So, you know, there are a lot of different ways to approach this, and I think that that is an innovative and interesting possibility. They've had quite a high degree of success in targeting the sector of the population that has the most accidents – and that's why they pay the most insurance – which is the people from 16 to 24 years of age. I mean, this is a way to perhaps deal with this as well.

Let's not forget – and I don't want to go on all night about this – that across this entire country 3,032 Canadians died in 2001 as a result of traffic accidents. I mean, the rate of carnage on our roads is something that we seem to take for granted because, like, it just happens all the time, and, you know, it's so sad for the people who are losing their family members and whatnot. But until we start to address this carnage on the road and this loss to our society in a systematic way, in a responsible way in provincial Legislatures across this country and in the federal Legislature, then I really don't think that we are doing our jobs.

To lose 3,000 or 3 and a half thousand people per year across the country on the road is simply abhorrent, and it's immoral, unacceptable. I believe that investigating the possibility of limiting the use of handsets and cellphones is a step in the right direction. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Motion 506, which pertains to urging the government to introduce amendments to the Traffic Safety Act to prohibit the use of hand-held cellphones while operating a motor vehicle. The objective of this motion is to prevent collisions on the road, to make the province safer for everyone.

Lately there has been a lot of talk about the dangers of cellphone use in automobiles while driving. A growing debate has arisen concerning whether the use of cellphones by drivers leads to more accidents. Several studies have shown that driving while talking on the phone increases the risk of a collision. Drivers have difficulty multitasking, and it poses a significant distraction, the leading cause of a number of accidents. These studies also have found no meaningful advantage for hands-free phones over hand-held phones. However, whether it is hand held or hands free, the issue lies in the multitasking thinking process that, apparently, increases the risk of a collision. The more heated the conversation, the greater the risk. I, for one, can attest to driving while under the influence of a cellphone, and there have been numerous situations where being on the phone could have caused a negative situation on the road.

Cellphone use makes life more convenient, no doubt about this, and safe, no doubt. Clearly, there are benefits of having a cellphone in the vehicle in case of emergency, but it should be turned off and available only if need be. People can co-ordinate their schedule with friends and families, parents can check up on their children, stranded motorists can call a tow truck or get help in an emergency, and motorists frequently use cellphones to report accidents and fires to the police.

More than 40 countries have restricted the use of hand-held cellphones in automobiles. On April 1, year 2003, Newfoundland became the first and only province in Canada to do so. More than

95 per cent of the population had supported such a ban prior to its implementation. Over a dozen countries, such as Australia, Brazil, Spain, and Switzerland, prohibit the use of hand-held cellphones while driving. Israel, Japan, Portugal, and Singapore prohibit all cellphone usage while driving. Drivers in the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, and the UK may face fines if they cause crashes while using cellphones. Drivers in the UK and Germany can lose automobile insurance coverage if they cause a crash while using a cellphone.

8:40

Mr. Speaker, I support a total ban on using cellphones while driving automobiles, with no exception, even if stopped at an intersection or in a traffic jam. Brief conversations, in my opinion, also should be banned, such as a motorist asking a caller to hold while he pulls over. There would be no exemptions for emergency services, although transport officials will consult on such details.

I urge all the members of the Assembly to support this motion. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to join the debate on Motion 506 tonight. I guess the old saying that there are no new ideas, just new politicians, holds some truth. I believe this idea was last debated in the House in 2002. It was voted down at that time, and I hope it will be voted down again tonight.

My reasons for not supporting this motion are many, but I first want to clarify that I certainly support the hon. member's intentions. I assume that the hon. member's intention was to see a reduction in the number of traffic accidents that occur due to drivers being distracted by the use of hand-held cellular phones.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important to look at the facts, to avoid being distracted by perception only. I want to thank my researcher, whom I share with four other MLAs, for getting the facts for me, just the facts.

Traffic accidents cost Albertans millions of dollars each year and hundreds of lives. Without question we need to be diligent in our efforts to eliminate traffic accidents, particularly those that are preventable, but we need to start by separating perception from reality. In a 2002 study completed by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, it was reported that half of the survey respondents felt very strongly that legislation was needed to ban the use of all cellphones while driving. It was also reported that respondents felt that using a cellphone while driving was more dangerous than poor road conditions or vehicle defects. This, Mr. Speaker, is the perception out there.

In the same study it quotes a study done in the U.S. in 2001 that analyzed the causes of 32,000 traffic crashes. Only 8.3 per cent of accidents were attributed to driver distraction. Of those, only 1.5 per cent could be attributed to the use or dialing of a cellular phone. Adjusting the radio or changing CDs accounted for 11.4 per cent of the same accidents, and being distracted by other passengers accounted for 10.9 per cent. So to put it in other terms, out of the 32,000 traffic accidents investigated, less than 40 of them could be attributed to cellphone use. Over 300 of them could be attributed to adjusting the radio and changing CDs.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what I speak of when I state that perception does not meet reality. The reality is that changing CDs and being distracted by other people in your vehicle are causing many more traffic accidents than using a cellular phone, yet about half of the Canadian population believe that using a hand-held cellphone is much more dangerous.

Mr. Speaker, you can't legislate against every single distraction. It wouldn't make sense. As soon as you prohibit one, you have to prohibit all of them. You can't legislate against people changing their radio or CD without legislating against talking to another passenger in the vehicle.

There are many distractions that have been identified by various studies. In addition to the aforementioned, looking for an address, looking at a map, programming a GPS device, adjusting climate controls, smoking, drinking coffee, and even sneezing have been identified as causes of motor vehicle accidents. Some people have even been seen shaving, doing their nails, reading the newspaper, changing clothes, and other very distracting actions while driving. Again, we cannot make separate laws for each and every one of these possible events. As soon as we prohibited one, some drivers would just find another. That's why we already have a law in place in Alberta that fines drivers who are driving carelessly.

As I've mentioned before, I am a strong believer in education programs that promote wellness and injury prevention. This Assembly might find it interesting to know that traffic accidents, while quite costly, are still not the most frequent preventable injury in Alberta. In the 1997 Alberta injury data report created by the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, it quite clearly states that falls are the number one cause of preventable injury. Between '93 and '97 over 50,000 Albertans were hospitalized because of a preventable fall. During that same period just over 16,000 Albertans were hospitalized due to motor vehicle related incidents. I point this out not to say that motor vehicle accidents are not a problem; they certainly are. But we have other preventable injuries that are even more of a problem.

When considering the hon. member's motion, I had to think that we are not looking at the big picture. Preventable injuries are an epidemic in Alberta. Focusing our efforts on outlawing an action that is not even one of the major contributors to traffic accidents seems to be very short-sighted. I would akin it to us banning people from using ladders because often people fall off them, causing injury. As I pointed out earlier, if we begin to ban one distracting action, we should too be banning other distractions, especially those that have proven to be more distracting than talking on a hand-held cellular, such as changing CDs.

Passing this motion would be an example of poor lawmaking, and as it has been pointed out in this Assembly on many occasions, we are not in the business of making bad laws. I applaud the hon. member for his intentions. I share them and know that he will provide valuable input in future discussions regarding the general theme of reducing preventable injuries. But unless we are willing to legislate against all distractions while driving, I would encourage all members not to support this motion.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try to keep my comments brief. I find this the height of hypocrisy, quite frankly, when I listen to some of the comments coming from the other side. The Member for Red Deer-North just spoke about the fact that this bill was debated in this House two years ago and that it's inappropriate for us to be debating it again, yet we've had several examples in the last week, including one this afternoon with the smoking bill, where members opposite were suggesting that they didn't get what they wanted this time but that they'll be back next year. How is it any different?

An Hon. Member: You're right.

Mr. R. Miller: Absolutely.

Unfortunately, I cannot help but think that my colleague from Calgary-Varsity was correct when he suggested that, in fact, the opposition we're hearing might be due to the fact that this motion is coming from this side of the House. Given the fact that we saw some tremendous co-operation last week on a bill dealing with crystal meth, which again didn't go as far as had been hoped and is going to be coming back to the House at some future date to hopefully extend it and accomplish everything that was hoped to have been done with it in the first place, I'm just astounded, quite frankly.

I'm going to suggest that if we were to believe the arguments that we're hearing from the other side tonight, we would not have passed the smoking ban tonight, we wouldn't have a seat belt law in this province, we wouldn't have a bicycle helmet law for youth in this province right now, we wouldn't have PCHIP legislation, we wouldn't have passed the crystal meth bill, and on and on and on. At some point you have to do what you know is right, and I think everybody in this room in their heart knows that banning hand-held cellphone use in a car is right.

8:50

I'm going to use some anecdotal evidence here. I know that anecdotal evidence is not necessarily something that some members pay a whole lot of attention to, but quite frankly we're not experts in this Assembly. We can all find websites that will support our argument, whichever side of it we happen to be on. There isn't one person in here who hasn't seen examples of cellphone use that scared the bejabbers out of them.

I'm just going to cite one that I saw last year while travelling in Salt Lake City. It's interesting that this comment about how cellphone use hasn't been proven to be any more dangerous came out of Salt Lake City. Here I am in Salt Lake City – and I'll admit it; I was speeding. I was doing 135 kilometres an hour, which is a little over the speed limit down there; not much over, mind you, because their limits are higher. A Cadillac Escalade passed me. He was doing about 160, in one hand a cellphone and in the other hand a hamburger. Now, you guys have all seen examples like that.

I know we can't legislate against stupidity, but the bottom line is this. Given that there are many people in this room who travel back and forth on highway 2 between Edmonton and Calgary, it might well have been one of you that I saw, but I saw somebody the other day reading a newspaper as they were driving to Calgary. I mean, these sorts of things happen. But the bottom line is this: every day you will see not one person reading a newspaper or not one person with a pet on their lap or not one person changing a child's diaper as they're driving, but you will see literally hundreds of people distracted while they're driving because they've got a cellphone in their hands.

I mean, we can all find examples of people doing stupid things when they're driving, but this is one that we all see time and time and time again. So it's gotten to the point, I'm afraid, where it's out of hand, and at some point legislators do have to act. Legislators do have to get involved because, quite frankly, people just aren't getting the message.

The Member for Calgary-Fort talked about accidents having been caused by people turning left in front of traffic or unsafe lane changes or driving too fast. Unfortunately, the stats aren't kept as to why they're turning in front of traffic or why they're changing lanes unsafely. Very often, I suspect, it's because they're talking on the phone. Those stats aren't kept. That information has come out from the other side tonight.

So just to suggest that because this has been dealt with previously, it's wrong for us to be talking about it in here again tonight I think

is really, quite frankly, a sad comment. I just can't help but think that the real reason is because the motion is coming from this side of the House.

The other thing – and somebody pointed it out already – is this: this is simply asking the government to look at the situation. We're not even talking about passing a bill. We're just saying: give it some more thought, give it some more study, and if in fact it's true that there hasn't been enough information looked at yet, maybe it's time that we did that. That's all we're asking the government to do: some sober second thought. Perhaps two years ago we made a bad decision. Maybe it's time to look at it again. That's all we're asking to do. So I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

I will take my seat quickly because I know that there are at least two other members that wish to speak to this. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and join the debate on Motion 506. Motorists on Alberta's roadways who do not pay proper attention to the road when they are driving are a hazard to other motorists. Speaking on a cellphone, tuning radio stations, eating food, drinking coffee, shaving, and even watching movies as more vehicles are being equipped with DVD players cause a driver to be distracted.

While looking into this issue, it's quite apparent that studies are unable to confirm or deny that hand-held cellphones are any different than the countless other distractions drivers are faced with each and every time they get into their vehicles. When I say that studies being done are unable to come to a consensus as to whether there is a concrete relationship between hand-held cellphones and collisions, I don't mean that the cellphone industry is conducting studies saying that driving and talking on the phone is safe.

The studies being done are from independent and generally unbiased groups. These organizations are just trying to find out whether using hand-held cellphones while driving increases the risk of collisions enough to warrant a separate piece of legislation. Insurance associations, national safety councils, and universities and colleges from countries across the world cannot reach an agreement on whether banning hand-held cellphones while driving would be effective in reducing collisions. While almost all the studies completed on cellphone use and driving indicate that cellphones can be a distraction, they are just not conclusive enough for us to enact special legislation to address hand-held cellphones.

Mr. Speaker, there is already a law in place to deal with motorists who are not operating their vehicles with proper care and attention. Charging drivers with undue care and attention is an option our law enforcements do have if they believe a motorist is operating their vehicle without the attention necessary. If drivers are not paying attention and weaving all over the road, the police need to pull them over and give these people tickets, and the police will pull over these individuals who aren't paying attention regardless of whether the driver's attention is being distracted by a hand-held cellphone, radio, or DVD player.

I don't think we should put forward special legislation against one specific type of distraction when that type of distraction still hasn't been proven to be any different than all the other forms of activities that drivers do when they're on the road. I think it would be a very slippery slope to start legislating certain types of behaviour because they are perceived to be more dangerous.

I do not feel that it's this government's job to legislate against common sense. Pulling over and having a long conversation on a cellphone makes sense, and many Albertans do so. We should be encouraging Albertans to do this more often and increasing the use

of hands-free devices as well, not dictating to them what they have to do when it hasn't been universally proven to be any more dangerous than having children fighting in the back seat of a car. Albertans should have options like hands-free devices brought to their attention. As responsible as Albertans tend to be, I am confident that the majority of Albertans will make a common-sense decision to use hands-free devices more often.

Since it's already illegal to be operating a motor vehicle with undue care and attention, creating another law would just be a process of redundancy. Instead, we should be encouraging the creation of more awareness campaigns to help educate drivers about the increased risks associated with talking on a cellphone, reading, or eating while driving a motor vehicle. We certainly see through other vehicle safety campaigns that drivers do take notice and change their behaviours once they are aware of the risks associated with their actions.

AADAC, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and various other agencies have been doing an excellent job in Alberta educating drivers about the danger and risks associated with drunk driving. I think the education and awareness campaigns put forward around drunk driving have done an excellent job in helping to reduce the number of deaths and injuries on Alberta's roads by reducing the number of people who choose to engage in drunk driving. What wouldn't be as effective as increasing the awareness of the dangers of drunk driving would be to create an additional piece of legislation stating that it's illegal to drive your vehicle while intoxicated with shots of vodka. Putting forth such a piece of legislation would be equivalent to Motion 506, which is redundant in nature.

Creating awareness and reducing the number of collisions on Alberta's roads is something we should look into doing more often. I see great benefit in having drivers become more aware of the risks associated with talking on a cellphone and driving their vehicle, but it's also just as important to make drivers aware of the risks to them and other people on the road when they engage in other distracting practices.

I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Varsity for bringing this motion forward, increasing our awareness, but I don't see the benefit of encouraging the government to amend the Traffic Safety Act to specifically indicate that hand-held cellphones are a distraction. This motion is encouraging redundant laws, and I feel that Albertans will feel that creating redundant laws would not be a very efficient use of our time and the time of the government employees. I feel that the best way to address improving safety on Alberta's roads is through awareness campaigns, not the creation of more laws which are very similar to the laws we already have in place.

I will not be supporting this motion, and I encourage all of the members to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to get up on this bill because I thought it was fairly straightforward. I commend the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity in wanting to bring this forward, but I can't help but think that there's some road I can't remember that's paved with good intentions.

My first question to every member in here is: how many people – and we all talk about all of these things, knowing in our heart that it's not right – can stand up and say, "I don't drive with a cellphone?" I think the responsibility of driving is serious. It's important. There are far too many deaths on the highway, but the fact of the matter is that 90 per cent of all accidents are preventable. They're from undue care and reckless driving, and there are, as mentioned several times, laws out there regarding that.

I also feel that we've got far too many laws on the books already, so I have to ask the question. If we really are concerned about safety – and this always seems to be the intention of government in its bills and its regulations: safety, safety, safety – well, then, perhaps we should ban vehicles altogether and go back to horses. There weren't so many deaths. Or go back to the '20s and '30s and perhaps lower the speed limit to 30 miles per hour. How many accidents are fatal over 30 and under 30? There are many things that we can look at.

The fact of the matter is that we're supposed to be responsible when we're behind the wheel of a vehicle, and I expect each and every person to be that way, and we have laws in place. So I'll sit down, and I'll vote against this motion, though I understand the good intentions of it.

Thank you.

9:00

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity to close debate.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As to individual responsibility this province sees fit to set age limits for voting, driving, drinking, et cetera. We legislate seat belts. We legislate helmets. So we do actively intervene when we consider either age a restriction or safety a concern.

As to embracing technology, yes, let's look at technology, but as the member behind noticed, there is the possibility of hands-free cellphones.

In terms of multitasking I would suggest that the least appropriate place for multitasking is behind the wheel of a car.

As to the idea of the difficulty primarily being with the conversation that's being held on the phone versus the phone itself, I would suggest that if you weren't holding the phone, you might not be carrying on the conversation.

The notion of reporting traffic problems: you can do that once you've pulled over.

Education and public awareness are important components and for this motion to be successful would be a necessary part of the promotion of this motion, but they're not exclusive to active law enforcement.

The idea that came from the Calgary-West MLA that says that this goes against reason and science: I would suggest that the hon. member appears not to have heard the scientific information and research that I've provided.

Obviously, we need exceptions for specific groups, such as law enforcement officers, and that could be part of the motion when brought to law.

Extreme arguments like the best way to avoid driving accidents is to stay at home add nothing to the debate. Exaggerations or comparisons like banning radios and CDs are far removed from the active participation involved in dialling and text messaging.

How many deaths and accident statistics does the minister need before acknowledging the threat that cellphones pose and passing similar legislation? Other governments have done the investigation and research. It's about time this government recognized the value of other countries' studies rather than claiming that Albertans deserve special rights or exemptions due to their obvious or professed superiority. Alberta is already perceived by many as having a maverick mentality, which is different from rugged individualism. Alberta laws prevent passengers from riding in the box of a pickup truck because of the perceived danger. I would suggest that some of these ministers opposite would find that a restriction of an individual's freedom. This government is prepared to limit a number of rights when it suits them, such as access to information.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North recognized the risk of crystal meth to young people. I would suggest that in terms of injury prevention and death, we would be more likely to save young people with this legislation than by keeping young people off the street for five days in a detox cell.

What have falls and slips got to do with driving a half ton of metal while talking unnecessarily on a cellphone?

It is unfortunate that passing a motion which would have a measurable result on reducing injuries and death is viewed by the members opposite as restricting individual freedoms.

This government has turned down opposition proposals on wellness, the promotion of literacy through a free library card, and now accident prevention. Albertans want to hear from all voices with the hope that all parties can work collaboratively for the betterment of this province. While a degree of progress was initially made on the smoking ban and the crystal meth bill, even those government member initiated proposals were severely watered down, rendering them considerably less effective than they were initially intended. Albertans expect more from their elected MLA representatives than they are currently receiving.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 506 lost]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Economic Development

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Economic Development. [some applause]

Mr. Dunford: Thank you. Thank you, kind colleagues. Mr. Chairman, I want to begin tonight by using a prop. This T-shirt, which reads "Biotech Rocks," was presented to me earlier today by an organization representing young people, high school people, that are in a competition that was displaying various work that they've done in biotechnology at the University of Alberta. I have to tell you that of the 12 exhibits that were being shown, I understood very little about any of them. I do know, though, that what that tells me is that there is a lot of good and neat stuff going on in biotechnology that we need to celebrate. I wanted to begin that way just in case we had high expectations about the knowledge that I might have about biotechnology. So I want you to be gentle over there.

Also, we have a number of people that have given up time with their families tonight in order to be here, and there are two purposes for this, Mr. Chairman. One, of course, is to provide technical advice to me if it is so required, but also it's a learning and training experience for people within our department so they see how the political system works. It's a constant reminder to them that they don't work for a car manufacturer. They don't work for a biotechnical company. They work for a political business. I think it's important that they have the reminders of just how this thing works, and of course it will be encouraging to them to see the level of intellectual intelligence that springs back and forth across the floor this evening. [interjection] Well, we have high expectations of some of you. Absolutely.

Let me introduce these folks to you. Rory Campbell is the deputy minister; Bob Scott, assistant deputy minister of tourism marketing and development; Rick Sloan, assistant deputy minister, industry and

regional development division; Janice Schroeder, communications director; Susan Cribbs, executive director, business planning and knowledge management; Mike Shyluk, director, financial services; Georgina Riddell, human resource director; Duane Pyear, executive director, policy and economic analysis; Shelby MacLeod, my executive assistant; and Warren Chandler, assistant in our office.

Now, we're here collectively tonight to request the nearly \$80 million required to implement Alberta Economic Development's 2005-2008 business plan. Our vision is that "Alberta is the best place in the world to live, visit and do business."

9:10

Before I talk about what we will achieve with this three-year plan, I want to outline how we do our work. We use a business model that seeks to facilitate economic growth by the private sector. This government is not in the business of business, but we are in the business of helping business be better. I want to highlight that we are a catalyst and not a banker. We are the catalyst who encourages the private sector to invest in Alberta, helps them address specific constraints, and works with other departments to ensure that the business climate is strong and that the Alberta advantage is effective. While Alberta is blessed with natural resources and our economy is firing on all cylinders, we are not complacent. We are continually looking for ways to improve our business climate and economic outcomes.

Economic development is about teamwork. We team with provincial departments on key cross-ministry projects like upgrading oil sands to refined products and petrochemicals. We work with Infrastructure and Transportation and our counterparts in British Columbia on issues relating to moving goods through the congested ports of Prince Rupert and Vancouver. We work with municipal and federal governments on regional development.

Much of our work is focused at the strategic level. We don't offer extensive programs. We have developed and are implementing *Securing Tomorrow's Prosperity*, Alberta's international marketing strategy. We work closely with Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and other departments to implement the Place to Grow rural development strategy.

We have lead responsibility for the tourism industry, and a major focus of the department is on marketing the province internationally and at home. In this centennial year we plan to promote Alberta as the best place to take a vacation.

Our most important stakeholder is Alberta employers, from the smallest new company to the largest oil sands investors. These employers, the jobs they create, the goods and services they produce underlie this province's wealth. When the economy is strong and productive, the government has the revenues which enable us to provide the priority programs. A strong economy is what pays for our hospitals. It's what pays for our educational system. It's what pays for our social programs. When we make Alberta the best place to work and to do business, then quite naturally flowing from that we also make the province the best place to live.

The department's three core businesses help to achieve this vision by, first of all, providing "strategic economic leadership and business intelligence"; second, increasing "industry and regional development, trade promotion and investment attraction"; and third, facilitating "tourism marketing and development." Staff in 11 regional offices across the province, in headquarter offices in Edmonton and Calgary, and in nine international offices are how those core businesses become real.

Core business 1: "Provide strategic economic leadership and business intelligence. First to provide strategic economic leadership in business intelligence; in other words, first to ensure that we have

the right fundamentals for a prosperous economy and then to provide the information and advice people need to make better business decisions. On a broad scale, *Securing Tomorrow's Prosperity*, the value-added strategy, is the economic pillar of our government's 20-year plan. This strategy is the cornerstone of our department's business plan, and many other departments have initiatives to support it. Our future prosperity and economic diversity depend on our ability to move up the value chain towards products and services that are of greater value to our customers and, of course, to customers right around the globe.

The energy sector drives our prosperity. To make all Alberta prosperous, we need to grow other sectors in step: transportation, logistics, business services, manufacturing, processing, et cetera. The opportunity facing the province is huge: how to lever our strengths in primary sectors and grow globally competitive in other sectors, in value-added energy products, agrifood, building products, information and communications technology, biotechnology, environmental technologies, and, of course, tourism. There are broad issues which determine the effectiveness of the Alberta economy and the success of Alberta companies in getting their goods to market. Alberta Economic Development advances the province's interests on those issues.

For example, the announcement two weeks ago by the federal government and the government of British Columbia for \$60 million in funding to expand the container port of Prince Rupert is exciting news for Alberta. This combined with rail improvements will improve access to Asian markets and reduce the congestion that west coast ports are experiencing.

The need for infrastructure to support economic growth, the role of air travel, and the issues facing megaproject development are all examples of the large issues the department helps government to address.

Besides keeping our eye on the big policy picture, we also support Alberta's business climate in more immediate ways. This leads, then, to our core business 2, "increase industry and regional development, trade promotion and investment attraction." AED provides support to help individual business growth. The business link in Edmonton and the Calgary Business Information Centre, which we operate in co-operation with the federal government, are important resources for entrepreneurs. These centres provide advice, training, and practical assistance. Thousands of Alberta entrepreneurs and small-business people phone and, of course, surf for information. For example, funding enables brown-bag sessions where people can learn about starting a business, exporting, marketing, and managing cash flow. We help people figure out the rules so that they can focus their energies on making their business successful.

To encourage industry growth, AED has established sector teams. They develop strategies and activities to address industry needs, things like business growth and expansion, investment attraction, and information needs. These teams provide advice to the government, work with industry players and projects, and identify where the government can play a role in increasing the growth, the diversification, and the competitiveness of their sector. They identify the strategic issues, and they deal with the nuts and bolts realities of what companies need to grow. New initiatives will include increasing the expertise we provide to some key value-added sectors such as petrochemicals, transportation, and value-added wood products.

Here is a practical example of how we can help manufacturing companies be more productive, and that's our lean manufacturing assessment initiative. Our staff provide information and training to small- and medium-sized Alberta manufacturers. The program is

very effective and helps the businesses find ways to improve their productivity and competitiveness. I'm pleased to report very positive results, including a manufacturer of custom-printed circuit boards that was able to reduce production space by 1,500 square feet. In another example, an industrial firm in the oil and gas sector has reduced production time for one of its manufactured components by 20 per cent. These results are very encouraging for the business, and it speaks well for Alberta's ability to compete globally.

Film is another sector with growth potential. The movie business is a clean industry with business opportunities in a number of areas of the province and possible spinoffs in tourism. The film commissioner provides that programming.

The department also supports regional growth. To help extend the Alberta advantage to all regions of the province, the department provides administrative and financial support to regional economic development alliances. Currently about 90 per cent of Albertans are represented in these alliances, and significant work is under way to expand their regional economies.

In rural and urban economies alike an important component of successful business is people. Employers are saying that they can't get the skilled people that they need. Naturally, our preference is that they hire Albertans for the work and make the most of the people who are already here. When that's not an option, employers need to look beyond our borders. Lots of people have chosen to come to Alberta from other parts of this country. However, there are still areas where employers cannot find the skilled people they need. The provincial nominee program helps them recruit foreign workers to high-needs areas. The program has been a pilot, and it will be important to continue its work. Specific efforts are also being made to involve aboriginal communities in regional alliances. With new funding we are increasing our work with existing alliances and expanding the number of alliances we support. The department also promotes Alberta as a place to invest because investment is an important part of economic growth.

9:20

On the investment front Alberta is doing quite well. The Toronto-Dominion financial group recently singled out Alberta, and particularly the corridor between Edmonton and Calgary, as a strong economy. They call us the western tiger. This is a reference to Alberta's explosive economic and population growth that rivals many U.S. metropolitan areas for productivity and high standard of living.

These are key considerations for companies considering investment in our province. We have seized this opportunity and devised an innovative campaign featuring a tiger for our investment attraction efforts in the United States. Our message is simple. Alberta has the human energy, the highly skilled, well-educated people who make up Alberta's dynamic workforce. Alberta has the business energy: entrepreneurs who are innovative, determined, and competitive. But most of all we want people to know that Alberta means business. People are not wasting their energy by exploring opportunities here.

To help drive exports, the department also operates nine international offices. In the past year international offices have co-ordinated nearly 200 seminars, trade shows, exhibitions, and outreach programs. They have brought more than 300 investors and companies to Alberta, and they have organized delegations abroad for more than 400 Alberta companies. Trade promotion staff help export-ready Alberta companies by making sure their products and services are known in key markets. We partner with industry to showcase Alberta capabilities at events like the World Petroleum Congress, which will be in South Africa later this summer, and the

Offshore Technology Conference in Houston, which is on next week.

We're also the eyes and ears of small- and medium-sized companies. The electronic business intelligence system, EBIS, or "e-biz," as we call it, is one of the ways we disseminate market intelligence. The focus of EBIS is on the energy goods and services and environmental goods and services. Opportunities are mainly in Mexico, and we have piloted e-business in other markets such as India, Russia, and Kazakhstan. We continue to refine our focus.

Now, Mr. Chair, it's a circle. When staff help companies be successful, more companies want them to help. As business opportunities increase, the use of international offices by Alberta companies, educational institutions, and other departments increase.

Our third core business is to facilitate tourism marketing and development. Industry and government promote Alberta as a world-class tourism destination. These joint efforts are co-ordinated through the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council. The government budget for tourism marketing will increase by 75 per cent to \$42 million with the conversion of a 5 per cent hotel tax to a 4 per cent tourism levy. At the same time this will provide an \$11 million savings in the cost of accommodation here in Alberta. Realistically, this is an \$11 million reduction in taxes. Of course, we all know that the only way taxes go in Alberta is that they go down. Funds from the levy are being used for tourism marketing and development to make sure that our industry is competitive with other provinces.

Centennial celebrations will offer great opportunities to promote more in-province travel. Travel Alberta has developed programs like electronic postcards and the travel cards that offer online specials to encourage Albertans to do just that, and of course we will continue to market Alberta as the premier vacation destination to international travellers.

Plans are also in place to further develop Alberta's convention and incentive travel business. We will contract new sales reps in Toronto and Washington, DC. We're also planning more comprehensive research to better understand our markets and customers. The website travelalberta.com will be upgraded to add a mapping feature so that visitors can search and map out their vacation plans. The department supports tourism through the Travel Alberta collection of spectacular photographs and videos. It's an online library with thousands of pictures of the province's landscapes, attractions, and people. That library helps tour operators get the images they need to promote their areas.

I've talked about how we get the visitors to Alberta. Now I want to touch on how we get the maximum economic benefit from their visit. Our key resource is well-trained, knowledgeable travel counsellors. We run the Alberta visitor information program and provide training and support to over 90 community visitor information centres throughout the province, and those centres will be opening in about a month's time. Community counsellors can also attend Travel Alberta training sessions and attend an Alberta visitor information provider conference each year. But not all the counsellors can travel for training, so we created a training video called *The Promoter* and a CD-ROM, *Experience Alberta*, to bring the information to them.

I want to conclude my remarks by saying that our economy is hot. We see job ads, cranes, growing communities, and lineups. The province has just marked a milestone of a hundred billion dollars in major projects on the go. So we're in great shape, and I hope to be able to convince everyone of that this evening.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be able to speak on such an exciting and dynamic portfolio here that the

minister has outlined there as well. The vision of the ministry, it says, is: "Alberta is the best place in the world to live, visit and do business." I tell you, I get goosebumps when I read that particular part.

We talk about some of the specifics here.

Mr. R. Miller: It's the air conditioning.

Mr. Bonko: That's right. It could be the air conditioning as well.

We talk about unleashing innovation, leading in learning. Opportunity 3 is "competing in a global marketplace" and opportunity 4 is "making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit," as mentioned in the vision statement.

If I go to some of the specifics there, I'd like to say that, in fact, I was a little disappointed that the ministry had not adopted some of the more adventurous ideas such as implementing a 10 per cent provincial credit for eligible expenditures in scientific research and experimental development as well as implementing a 30 per cent provincial tax credit for investment in the qualified early stages of Alberta-based technologies. As the Liberal Party these are some of our platform particular pieces. We asked about creating a \$150 million Alberta technology venture fund funded jointly by the industry, universities, and of course government to generate venture capital in the industry. Now, that wouldn't invest in individual businesses. Rather, it would ask them to create opportunities for further investment.

Another particular point that could have been in the overall portfolio was creating a provincial technology program to harmonize technology and commercialization programs across the province.

Lastly would be introducing a 20 per cent Alberta film and television tax credit for Alberta-owned and -controlled production companies. We've seen some of these particular movies come, and I'll mention some of those a little bit later on.

If this government and the ministry are serious about unleashing innovation, why doesn't it provide tax incentives for companies to invest in research and development? Technology start-ups are leaving Alberta for other jurisdictions which have friendlier tax regimes and have more access to venture capital. Why is this government not following behind other provinces and allowing some more lucrative deals and keeping the incentives here? What steps has the ministry taken to increase access to venture capital in Alberta, and what plans are in the works in the future for those?

Other particulars around that. Does the ministry keep stats on how many start-up firms leave Alberta for other jurisdictions that have better access to the venture capital? This is even more reason to adopt the particular bullets that I read previous to that for Economic Development policies. I do think there is some merit. Regardless of where they come from, I think they could at least be explored and considered.

We talk about the role of arts and sports, recreation, and economic drivers. I know one of my other colleagues would like to speak on that, so I won't particularly speak on that one.

What does the ministry do to improve Alberta's quality of living to attract and retain young, knowledgeable workers? I know that it's a great place to live. There's an abundance of recreational spots, and it's just big sky. But what do we do?

9:30

Young, knowledgeable workers value a strong, diverse arts scene as well as ample opportunities for sports and recreation. How does the ministry work with the Ministry of Community Development in order to support the Alberta arts and recreation sectors? Is this minister acknowledging the strong role that arts and culture as well

as sports and recreation play in the economy? We've got professional sports teams in Edmonton and Calgary. We've got the centres. We have the Winspear here, that was donated by Francis Winspear, that is a hallmark of centres, as well as the Jubilee Auditorium, that is undergoing renovation as well, but we also have that down in Calgary. Again, we have to recognize that there are, in fact, opportunities to increase that with regard to the arts portfolio.

International and interprovincial trips. How does the minister know or how do they measure how successful international trade missions are? Does the minister measure the increase in trade after a mission? At what level has it increased the trade? How does this minister consider these trade missions a success? By a 5 per cent or a 10 per cent increase? How does the minister perform a cost-benefit analysis after these trips have been completed?

Tourism is also a big driver of the economy here as well. How does this compare to years ago, say, even five, 10 years ago? Over the past 10, 15 years how much has tourism grown here in Alberta?

We talk about film, and I think that's in your portfolio on page 180 with regard to some of the core business. Recent economic development markets have been attracting film companies such as *Snow Day*, that was shot here in Edmonton, and *Unforgiven*, attracting stars such as Clint Eastwood and Morgan Freeman. I know I saw the film, and I was taken by just the whole majestic sunsets and the overall display of that wilderness. I realized that it was shot right here in Alberta, and it made me even prouder. Why can't we attract more businesses and films like that?

Recently the *Calgary Herald* had an article that stated that the film industry here in Alberta is losing approximately \$200 million because over the past 12 months they've been driven to more incentives from other provinces and cheaper labour elsewhere. What would the ministry do to reverse those particular trends in that area of film? Does the minister introduce a film and TV tax incentive like every other province? I'm not sure why we haven't got one, but certainly that should be considered. Why are there no performance measures related to film and television production in Alberta in the ministry's business plan; as an example, the number of film or television projects with total dollars invested here in Alberta? What drive does that have on the economy, and what sort of market does that have with employability? I wonder if the minister could comment.

He's requested right now about \$79.75 million, and that's just estimates. But there are differences with the percentages. Ministry support services is getting approximately \$4.8 million. That's an increase of about 2 per cent. Industry and regional development, trade and investment is about \$26 million, and that's up about 15 per cent. But the biggest one, tourism marketing and development, is at \$42 million, an increase of 74 per cent. So those are some increases, but you know, they're broken down. Maybe just give me some more specifics as to some of them.

There is reasoning beside one, which is, as I mentioned, strategic economic leadership and business. The budgets for international trade development and relations are slightly down from last year, and I'm not sure why that is. I didn't see any specifics with regard to that budget, so I'm wondering if the minister could comment on that as well.

As well, the budget for regional development is seeing approximately I think it's a 58 per cent increase from last year. Can the minister provide some details as to the large budgetary increase? What's the reason behind it? Specifically, where would the monies be going? What tangible results can Albertans expect to see from this overall increase, and how will success be measured? Again, it's all that measuring. How do we know that we're getting good value for that dollar being spent?

On page 106 of the budget, investment and industry development has increased by 25 per cent. How exactly will that money be used? What will that funding be used for?

In terms of funding for industry development, what industries get the most support from the government? How does the budget for industry development help Alberta's film development and television industry or our high-tech industries?

One of the other ones emerging from the budget: overall tourism, like I said, is up about 74 per cent. The budget for emerging opportunities is down 35 per cent though, so we have, you know, varying degrees right there. What causes that particular decrease in that emerging opportunities area? What kind of industries or businesses will be affected by that decrease? Should the Ministry of Economic Development be seeking emerging opportunities and not turning them away? As we said, we're in the business to promote business. Turning away or putting up roadblocks certainly wouldn't be reading with that statement. This decrease is obviously disappointing. It exhibits a lack of economic leadership on this government's part.

I know that there are a number of questions within that piece there, so I'll sit down and look enthused as I hear some more information here.

Mr. Dunford: Well, you can be enthused. You don't have to even look like it. Just let it happen naturally.

I want to first make it clear that tax credits and tax incentives have been very, very difficult for this government. There's a philosophical problem, there's a problem in terms of ideology, and there are some practical problems with it. So when you come to a situation like we faced in 1993, where we had looked at a previous administration that had done a number of things to diversify the economy and tried experiments in some other areas – and most of it worked. I think it was a very exciting and a very challenging time, of course, for them, but it left the Alberta taxpayer in a financial situation that those of us that were elected in '93 deemed a situation that had to be rectified.

So what we did then was first of all attack the deficit so that we'd stop the bleeding in terms of the debt, and once we had that in hand, then we started to challenge the debt. When you have a government focused, as this government was, on getting the debt to zero, then there wasn't a lot of room for some of the more exciting things that you maybe brought up in your remarks. I have to tell you that despite the items that you listed that were perhaps in your Liberal strategies in the past – and of course we've heard about those before – we just simply weren't in a fiscal position to be able to entertain that kind of thing.

Now, I think that to our credit we have not tried to hide those facts. I think that we've been open and up front with businesses in Alberta, with businesses in Canada, and with businesses, really, in the rest of the world. I could provide anecdotal evidence of where we have lost businesses coming to this province because we simply refused to subsidize.

Now, there are companies that make a practice of going around to all the states in the United States, to all the provinces in Canada just to see what kind of subsidy arrangements are available. Alberta, my understanding is, again anecdotally, from reports from those companies is that we basically stand pretty much alone because we have maintained over that now 12-year period that we are not in the business of doing business. So tax incentives and access to venture capital, these kinds of things, basically have been a different situation in Alberta than elsewhere.

9:40

You began your opening by making reference to our business plan, and I thank you for that. But if you went to page 4 of the

business plan, you would see at the bottom of that page under Benchmarking Alberta's Performance, I think, that we're quite up front with you, with people that will be reading *Hansard*, people that will be reading our business plan, that when we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions in things like research and development intensity, you'll see under chart 2, venture capital, those kinds of things, that we are far, far below the average.

So now this is something that we have to of course deal with as we move forward. We have shown in the past that we have the ability to do that. There's no question that at one time, at one particular point in our fiscal history, we removed the access to government funding in terms of the film business. We saw, of course, what happened in that particular instance, where our film industry dropped dramatically. So we had to recognize that with film we have a special situation, and we have to provide some consideration in that area. To this government's benefit, of course, we did then start to put money back into the film and TV business and have been able to retain the previous levels of that particular industry.

Now, there's more to go. There's no question that other jurisdictions have gotten very aggressive in these particular areas. But what is so frustrating to me as a steward of taxpayers' money is that these other jurisdictions providing these incentives, you know, are running deficits and running a debt. We know how they do it, of course, and that is just simply to do it, to start writing the cheques and make them available, but it's difficult for those of us that have gone through the rapids, so to speak, of the 1993 to '96 era in Alberta to understand how they can get away with that kind of thing while they have debt.

We've moved from that. We're now in a position where I believe the Minister of Finance has said publicly that we will be reviewing our tax policy here in Alberta. So there are some tremendous opportunities, I think, for people within this Assembly, then, to provide the kinds of direction that they think we should go forward in the future.

The venture capital situation is basically the same. Again, we've not provided the tax credits that other people have and, especially for my labour friends, my social democrat friend, have not given the boost to so-called labour funds, that has happened in other jurisdictions.

One of the beliefs that this government has is that the government does not create jobs. We create the climate that will allow businesses then to expand their operations, to move to Alberta, and it provides, then, the opportunity for young knowledge workers. Just an example I might give you: Dell Computer of Austin, Texas, decided to get involved in Alberta. Again, it's not Economic Development's job to say, "Come to Edmonton" or "Come to Tofield" or "Come to Lethbridge." It's our job to say, "Come to Alberta," and then allow the business and the municipalities to work together to finally define the location.

But we had a tremendous day at the ribbon-cutting for Dell Computer. They had originally estimated, as I recall, something like a nine-month period before they would get to 500 employees. At the time we were talking, they were already there after I believe it was three months, and they had actually developed plans then to go to their corporate board looking for another 250 people to work here in the city of Edmonton for Dell computers. Again, just a tremendous example of how when you have a climate, business will respond.

I absolutely agree about the role that arts, culture, and sports will play within not only the Alberta that we know today but the next Alberta. It would surprise many here in the House, perhaps even the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, to know that there are over 105,000 workers that make their living working full-time in the arts

and culture industries here in this province. It's a tremendous economic driver, but it's two things. Of course, it sets up the kind of communities that people want to live in. We've learned in Economic Development that there's a lot to say about subsidy arrangements, there's lots to say about economic climate, but where businesses flourish and where they expand and they grow is where the managers and the owners and the investors want to be associated, where they want to live. There's been a sea change in how we've looked at that situation over the last 20 years. So there's no question about that. We have to believe in the role that arts and culture will make.

As a matter of fact, part of the vision that I have in the developing of Alberta is that along with all the oil and gas and all the agri-food situations and the petrochemicals and all of that, a couple of additional areas that people need to think about: I think we're going to see the development of Calgary as a further financial centre here in western Canada, and I believe that Edmonton will challenge Montreal as the festival city of Canada. I think this is a part of a vision that we should have. The situation here in Edmonton, such a cosmopolitan centre and all of the activities that are going on – the critical mass is really here to make this a dynamite city for an economic development driver that is in arts, culture, and sports.

Now, I don't want to start getting calls from my constituents in Lethbridge and constituents in Cypress Hills. You know, this goes all over the whole province. I'm simply speaking about how dramatic the situation could be in the future here for Edmonton.

As far as the international trips and how we measure and the cost-benefit analysis, it's very difficult because things usually don't happen overnight. Most people, I think, would understand that. For an example, on a recent trip to Germany we got talking with an individual who would like to come to Alberta not because Alberta has a huge population base and would be, you know, a huge customer, but they need a certain resource called peat that we have in Alberta. Basically, he wants to focus on the California market. Of course, with the free trade agreement, the NAFTA agreements, and the I-15 highway system in the States, with the Canamex system coming out of Alberta, he sees a real role, then, for his business.

9:50

Now, the only thing is that we need some assistance from our friends in Sustainable Resource Development, and maybe we can make this happen. So who knows? I mean, I might be able to stand in here at some point, hopefully, introduce a person in the gallery from Germany, and announce that we have a peat moss plant. We don't know, but I can tell you this: had we not gone to Germany with our maps, I'm not sure that we would be accomplishing what we hoped to. So it'll be difficult.

You know, the accountants that are only interested in black numbers on white paper I think will find all kinds of opportunities to criticize me as the minister. I learned in business that promotion and marketing were very, very important, and it didn't happen while you were sitting on your fat ass in your own office. You had to get out and promote yourself.

An Hon. Member: Unparliamentary.

Mr. Dunford: Oh, can I say that in this House? I guess I've already said it. [interjections] I was talking about mine. I personalized it, so I guess it's all right.

In any event, if there are people in the House that don't think I should travel, I'm going to give you lots of room to criticize because I'm going to be out promoting Alberta as best I can. We're going to go to areas where we think we'll have the most impact. Those areas,

of course, are available to you, hon. member, and to others here in the House, right throughout Alberta within our AIMS document, the Alberta international marketing strategy, so you can get an idea of where it is that we'll be heading.

As early as next week I'll be heading to Houston to attend the Offshore Technology Conference. I'll be going then to Austin to drop in and say thanks once again to Dell and then on to Denver as a follow-up to the recent meeting that we had where Colorado public officials and Colorado business investors came up to look at the oil sands and some of the other opportunities that we were able to show them on their particular visit.

Tourism was identified and, again, the 74 per cent increase, which represents now the tourism levy, Mr. Chairman. Of course, there's a situation there where the industry challenged the government for a number of years, saying that the hotel tax is a tax that should be provided, then, to the tourism industry. We accepted the challenge, reduced the tax, and now make the challenge back to them in the sense that they can grow their business, similar to horse racing. You know, the opportunity is there, obviously, to have more people in the accommodation facilities around the province, to market not only their facility but to market, then, the whole province and increase accommodation, thus increase the levy, and increase their ability to market in the future.

You're right: we don't have performance measures based on the film industry, but that's something, now that you've raised it, that we'll want to have a look at.

You asked about some tourism numbers. I have a document that is called *Tourism Insights*. It's from Travel Alberta. You can go to travelalberta.com and receive the same information that I have in front of me. It's the May 2005 issue, and it talks there about entries into Alberta and some of the accommodation indices. You'll see that we have a rise so far in 2005, but I want to tell you, hon. member, that there were a couple of tough years in Alberta: of course, the 9/11 situation; also SARS, that appeared mostly down east; again, the jitters that arrived over the mad cow issue and people, especially in the United States, not understanding that particular issue.

In terms of the questions on the estimates, the international budget we've kept the same. We think that we wanted to focus this particular year not just because it was centennial year, but we wanted to focus on Alberta. We felt that there was work that had to be done in this particular area. So the increase in the industry and regional development and trade was primarily due to increasing the funding for the regional alliances.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm an Albertan by choice, not by birth. I was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, but most of my life and my whole working life and university have taken place in Alberta. Alberta offers an unbelievable tourist potential. We're more than just a movie backdrop, but we do that very well when subsidies are provided for film companies. Prior to the last couple of years a lot of American film companies came up north, and we had Canadian investment as well in Alberta, but that has dried up considerably based on the lack of subsidy and promotion of the industry.

Alberta does provide an unbelievably dynamic natural variety, but unfortunately we don't seem to have sufficient pride or sufficient forethought in terms of preserving our natural beauties. For example, the Cypress Hills, a historical site: whisky traders, the wild west, a very unique natural area where we have grasslands, we have the cypress trees, we have a lake. You name it. Everything possible

is there within that one circumstance, yet we're talking about having wind farms set up for alternative energy in the midst of the Cypress Hills grasslands.

We have the Whaleback. Again, absolutely fantastic western, just right out of the movies type of scenery comparable with the mesas in Arizona, but right now the Whaleback continues to be threatened by further sour gas exploration as we try and get every last drop of gas squeezed out of these natural areas.

Jasper, a world-renowned tourist destination, is being threatened by mining.

Horseshoe Canyon: at one point the government was considering letting this go for a golf course, and now the area is being threatened by coal-bed methane exploration.

Writing-On-Stone, in the south near our Alliance member's area, has only recently had its petroglyphs protected. There was a considerable amount of vandalism being permitted and allowed, and it's only recently that it has been fenced off.

I think we undervalue what it is that we're trying to sell to the world. And what I find interesting is sort of the paradox. We've just increased our tourism budget by 74 per cent, but when people get here, what kind of support do they receive? If they're strictly coming to a convention in Calgary or Edmonton or Medicine Hat, and they don't leave those cities – they fly into the airport; they get a taxi to their hotel; they attend potentially the Calgary Stampede, or they go to Klondike Days or one of the local music festivals – if that's the extent of their tourism, then we have the hotel hospitality, we have the restaurants, we have the service industries to provide them.

10:00

But what happens if they want to venture out onto our roads and go to some of our parks and protected areas? Well, the reality is that this province has only set aside 4 per cent of our land use for provincial parks and protected areas, and even within that land use that's supposedly set aside and designated for protection, we still have, as I pointed out before, clear-cutting in the surrounding areas. Not only do we have clear-cutting in the surrounding areas, but once the large companies have done their work, then the smaller companies go in and pick up the remnants.

I mentioned specifically what happened in the area of Cataract Creek. Not only was the cutting permitted throughout the night all summer during a fire ban, but the following summer a company was allowed to use the trails, the roadways within the park, bulldoze out one of the optimal sites so that they could, then, clear-cut and access forestry on Mount Burk and down to the Cataract Falls. This same company that did the majority of the cutting in the area, with only minimal reforestation, I might add, has the contract to cut all along highway 40, which is the back door to the Kananaskis.

So what happens? We encourage people to get to Alberta, and we encourage them to rent RVs, especially our European tourists, who are looking for the last remnants of the old west and for whatever reason choose to come to Alberta because they consider it a smaller population and potentially safer than some of the crowded Disneyland/Disney World type western destinations in the States. They choose Alberta, but what do they find when they come here?

It used to be when we were growing up that you would go into a park and you'd have an interpretive centre, and there would be a wildlife show, and you'd be taken on a trail for a hike, and you could count on a couple of these shows at least every week. Well, given the cutback in park staffing, this no longer is possible.

Safety is a concern. A number of the foreign travelers don't realize that if they get off the trail or into the wilderness, they better find a conservation officer first to report where they're planning to

hike because they're basically dependent on self-rescue. We have cut back conservation officers and conservation offices and tourist information within the close vicinity of the parks to such an extent that people are left to their own devices. Sure they can pick up a pamphlet here or there, but they would like to see a friendly face and know that they were safe, and it could be an enjoyable experience heading into the background and the backcountry.

One of the major attractions for tourism to Alberta would be a strongly funded Alberta arts and culture. A number of local areas have had to cut back on their festivals due to lack of support. A number of country initiatives are doing their best, and they're basically doing it on their own with very little funding from this government. An example would be the Rosebud Theatre. Recently I had the opportunity to travel down Drumheller way to East Coulee, and basically the local organization with volunteers has provided the majority of the funding for their East Coulee coal mining museum. Likewise, they're trying to restore a wash house.

These are all local initiatives, and while I applaud local initiatives, there is a role for the government in terms of providing support. We have the potential of expanding our museums and getting more out of the box and onto the display case, but again that requires funding. In Calgary, for example, we have the Museum of the Regiments, which receives very little funding in terms of the total percentage from the provincial government. Likewise, we have our art gallery located in the convention centre in downtown Calgary. It's a wonderful site, but because we have to have so many of the displays packed up in back rooms because there isn't sufficient expansion to show them, this is a sad circumstance.

We still haven't got to the point where we feel that we need to preserve our public land. It's still being sold off. Ranchers who would like to purchase it or at least continue to have their grazing leases when they can't afford to buy the land are frequently being denied access, and that's because the land is being packaged and sold off for potential development that is not in keeping with the natural surroundings, whether it be ranching or agricultural uses.

Alberta requires an investment. We need to move forward, and in order to do that, we need to consider subsidizing local industries, made-in-Alberta solutions. I know the government is wary of such subsidies. There have been mistakes with MagCan. There have been mistakes with Daishowa. Most of the mistakes have occurred when we've invited foreign investment, but we have laid the majority of the money down for these foreign investments, whereas there's been no proportional investment in made-in-Alberta solutions, and this is why the hon. member brought up the need for subsidies, whether it be for films or whether it be for local industries.

Alberta has unbelievable potential. We need not only to market it, but when people arrive, we have to promote it. We have to have roads that are safe to drive on to access the backcountry. We have to have trails that are safe to hike upon. We have to have benches that are no longer decaying. While I worked in my particular park at Cataract Creek because there was very little, if any, budget for replacement, I took down more staircases, patched up lookouts than I could possibly replace. The fact was they were a safety concern, and there wasn't sufficient reinvestment. People were charged a fee, two and a half dollars of which was supposed to go back into maintaining infrastructure, but despite the \$45 million announcement for parks and protected areas, very little of that money is actually going back to restoring and renovating parks. With the exception of the recent announcement with the Lois Hole that took over the name from the Big Lake, there are – at least, they are yet to be mentioned – no plans for further extension of parks and protected areas beyond our current 4 per cent.

As I've mentioned – and I will shortly sit down – there does not appear to be sufficient appreciation for protecting the little bit of

wilderness that we have remaining. There has to be a balance between nature and industry, and unfortunately that balance hasn't been achieved at this point in this province.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dunford: Yes. I just need a minute here. A number of things that the hon. member discussed I want to reply to. In the film area I'd like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the fact that we have a DVD that is ready to be circulated. In fact, a staff member of my office was working on it earlier today. It provides a view, first of all, of some of the many movies that have been made in the last little while although when you're my age you can look back with some affection on a movie that was called *River of No Return*, not only with Bob Mitchum but Marilyn Monroe. She just looks as fresh today in that video as any of them. It's an excellent, I think, production that we have, and as I say, it will be circulated. It might surprise you, first of all, not only the range of film that has been done in Alberta but, actually, the quality of those films as well.

10:10

One of them that was on there was Kevin Costner, who, of course, I think produced and directed as well as starred in the film *Open Range*. I know that people have often talked about how a film done in New York, it was just like New York became almost a character in the cast. I think we can say that in *Open Range* that magnificent country southwest of Calgary was really a character in that movie. It was just tremendous.

There's no question about movies, the impact that they can have on the tourism industry. I don't know if you've seen the film *Sideways*, hon. member. Recently produced, it's a story about a couple of guys on a little tour, you know, as a stag almost before marriage, and they tour the wine country of California. Pinot Noir was highlighted as a wine. It's just been absolutely amazing. Two things that have happened since that movie is all the people doing the wine tours, and of course Pinot Noir, you know, has just taken off. I don't drink, myself, but I'm told that Pinot Noir has taken off now as a product.

So we will be looking at ways to further enhance the movie business in Alberta. There's no question about that. I think we can agree that we have to do this. Where the disagreement might come at some point is: how do we get there? But we're on the same page as far as trying to magnify that industry here in the province.

You mentioned Writing on Stone, and I wanted to highlight that because, again, part of our tourism objective is to do two things at the same time. One is not to diminish the Big Three in the province, which is, of course, the city of Calgary, the city of Edmonton, and the Rockies, but also to expand the tourism product in areas, then, outside the Big Three and particularly east of the so-called corridor between Edmonton and Calgary.

Some of the things that we're going to be looking at are the enhancement of the Canadian badlands, the Dinosaur Trail, which, actually, will have its genesis, I guess, at Writing on Stone, somewhere in that particular area, maybe at Devil's Coulee at Warner – I'm just not exactly sure – but certainly in the Cardston-Taber-Warner constituency. Then it will run in a northerly direction up, of course, through Drumheller, and then it's going to cross the corridor into the dinosaur tracks at Grande Cache and then on up to the River of Death, as they call it, near Grande Prairie. This is a phenomenal site. Who knows what happened way back when dinosaurs roamed this part of the country. Something happened, and there was a whole herd – or is it a flock of dinosaurs? [interjections] What is it? Well, they say that dinosaurs led to birds, so let's call them a flock of dinosaurs.

I wanted to point out also the tremendous – and the member talked about it. When they come to a convention in Calgary, it's not just that they're in Calgary or they're just in Medicine Hat and then they leave. We have to capitalize on giving them reasons to move around while they are here. Looking forward from here to 2010, we're going to of course try to find ways to capture the imagination of foreign travellers coming to Canada for the Olympics in British Columbia in the year 2010. We'll do that not only as a province, but we'll try to do it as a region, to include British Columbia, perhaps Saskatchewan, but also through our membership in PNWER, which is the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, to capture that whole area of opportunity, then, for a person from Germany or Latvia or Russia, that when they're going to be in Canada, there would be opportunities here in western Canada.

We talk about it being a small world, and there's no question that information technology has made it a small world, but it's still a big world. When you are in Germany, for example, and you look at what you have to do in order to get to the 2010 Olympics, then you're going to have to come to, you know, a particular spot, a little dot on the map, but obviously we need them to expand their vision and, of course, expand their travel.

Quite a bit about parks. We are very supportive of the Ministry of Community Development and the focus that they've had on parks this year. There's no question that the parks need upgrading and more support. That, again, is part of tourism, not only the fact that it would attract campers from beyond our borders, but still the biggest tourist in Alberta is an Albertan. While I don't camp, others of course do and in great numbers, so it's obviously something that we need to do.

In arts and culture you mentioned the Rosebud Theatre, and as a matter of fact just last Friday Mr. Owen, the federal Minister of Western Economic Diversification, and myself were announcing a western economic partnership agreement, and Rosebud Theatre was actually part of this. About \$500,000 of Canada and Alberta funds are going to expand the meeting rooms, dining facilities, kitchen, and an investment centre. So again both levels of government have recognized what a little gem that Rosebud Theatre is and are moving forward on that.

10:20

You digressed a bit, I think, from the estimates to talk about MagCan and Daishowa, and I think the record needs to be straightened out for the purposes of those people that might be reading *Hansard*. I don't think I would disagree with you about MagCan being an experiment that failed, but with Daishowa I don't know that there were government dollars that went into that operation back whenever it was that Alberta was intrusively trying to diversify the economy.

I have a note from my colleague that indicates that it's the fourth largest company now in terms of revenue generation, a major timber-rights holder in Alberta, controlling, managing 1.75 million cubic metres of annual allowable cut through the Peace River pulp. I mean, all of this is meaning employment, so perhaps it was just said in error, trying to show where there has been failure. I don't know that anybody on this side of the House would include Daishowa in any sort of list of that order.

With that, I think we've approached at least most of the comments that you made. What we've missed, not only for you, hon. member, but other speakers that were previous or will come later, we of course will research *Hansard* and provide answers to the appropriate questions.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very delighted to rise and speak in regard to the budget estimates for Economic Development this evening. As I have previously, I'll ask my questions in clusters, so the hon. minister can answer them here this evening or in writing, however he might see fit.

I am encouraged by the overall numbers of the Economic Development ministry. My understanding is that we see a 37 per cent increase in the budget this year from last, and the bulk of that increase in spending is going specifically to tourism marketing and development. You know, it's been my belief that over the past number of years we have not been marketing Alberta as a tourist destination sufficiently in the international markets. Hopefully this money will target North American travellers from other parts of Canada, from the United States, Europe, and Asia because, of course, we have a tremendous product, if we could call it that, in our province as a tourist destination, but there is a great deal of competition in the tourist industry internationally.

We have to have a product that meets the level of advertising that other provinces and destinations around the world are marketing. I think we have to look no further than, say, the Newfoundland and Labrador advertisements that have been out in the last couple of years. You know, we just don't have that level of effectiveness with our own Alberta marketing. With this new money we should perhaps step up to that level because, of course, consumers look at their tourism dollar just like any consumer choice. The level and quality of advertisements really do make the difference to attract or not attract people to our province.

The hon. minister, of course, pointed out that the majority of the tourism trade in this province is coming from Albertans themselves, but you want to keep people longer in different destinations. You want to move them to areas where perhaps they haven't been before. Again, in this age of advertising and sort of a level of advertising we have to meet those expectations in order to attract people to perhaps new areas in the province that they haven't visited before and such things like that.

I'm very encouraged to hear that the hon. minister is less inclined to have Economic Development be in the business of being in business. Certainly, it's our position as a caucus that some of the businesses that our provincial government has endeavoured to support and subsidize in the past have been unmitigated disasters. You know, by being once burned twice shy, I hope that we will continue on our path to stay out of open and sort of large-scale subsidies of businesses in this province because, indeed, at the end of the day it usually turns out less than favourably.

I have a number of questions just in regard to the different areas that Economic Development is controlling, so I'll just go through these reasonably quickly, I hope. Within the Ministry of Economic Development, under the deputy minister's office, there is a service known as corporate communications. My question, looking at the larger function of other parts of the government here, is: what's the difference between corporate communications within the deputy minister's Department of Economic Development and then the office of the Public Affairs Bureau? As far as I can read, their descriptors have almost exactly the same sort of mandate. I think that perhaps some differentiation would be in order between these two. I would appreciate some information in regard to that.

Perhaps this is a place where we can look for redundancies because, of course, communications within this government employs a tremendous amount of people, and I believe, as we like to say or as the hon. member's party likes to say, that they want to stay out of the business of being in business. Perhaps they can pull back in some of these areas of communications, of which we have legions, I believe, in this government.

My next sort of grouping of questions is to do with trade mission offices. I know that this government has pulled back from their trade mission offices in past years for the sake of efficiencies, but now we're seeing these offices opening again in new and different places. Certainly, our caucus recognizes the value of having trade mission offices in various locations around the world, but I just wanted to get some clarification on some of these offices.

For example, I would like to know why there are two international offices in the city of Beijing in China. Now, of course, China has surpassed the United States as the world's largest consumer of raw materials, and again Alberta cannot ignore China as a potential and real market for expertise and goods and services. However, for the sake of efficiencies, perhaps we would be better served by a single office in Beijing and perhaps another one in another Chinese city such as Shanghai, which is another focus of great economic development in this country, or perhaps, you know, in Guangdong province, which is a special economic zone in southern China that we might be focusing on, or our sister province in China. I believe Harbin is the capital, so our representation is there.

Another trade office or special office to the province, of course, is the recent one that was opened in Washington and I believe is housed in the Canadian embassy in Washington. Again, you know, I think it's a useful thing to endeavour for greater and better trade relations with the United States, especially at this juncture in our history with that country. I'm just curious about the operation of this trade office in Washington. Last week Greg Melchin, the Minister of Energy, travelled to Washington to get in front of the regulators, quote, from his press release. I'm thinking that perhaps Murray Smith, who has been in Washington for some time now, would be the point man for such operations in Washington. Furthermore, when Mr. Smith did go to Washington, he said that his focus would be, in fact, energy, the portfolio for which he was the minister before he left to go to Washington.

10:30

Perhaps, you know, we could be looking at some efficiencies in regard to this trade mission and, specifically, different jurisdictions. I think that Washington is certainly a great centre of lobbying as well, probably the very biggest one in the entire world, and there are many professional lobby outfits in Washington. Perhaps we could find efficiencies through hiring people who are, in fact, paid professional lobbyists in Washington.

Just very briefly looking at some of the other trade missions in Korea, I think that this is a fine place, certainly, to have a trade mission. If I could just point it out to the hon. minister, and perhaps someone can look at it. I couldn't help but be somewhat critical of the website for the Korean trade mission. You know, it just didn't seem to be at a level that other websites that are produced by this government are performing at. It's just very difficult to use and quite amateurish and has lots of grammatical mistakes and things like that. In Internet-savvy places such as Korea this is the first face that our province has given to potential investors and tourists and whatnot, and perhaps this website could be revisited.

Through a number of the interactions here previously this evening the hon. minister mentioned the potential for Prince Rupert as a port for our province. I, too, and our caucus are very excited about this potential. I think it's a strategic move, and it's a fantastic economic move as well, but we have to be careful to make sure that our interests are best served through this endeavour. My own constituency has the main line of CN running through it, so I know some of the political things that are going on with CN in regard to building this port in Prince Rupert and how Illinois Central's purchase of controlling interest in CN is very much a part of this development of Prince Rupert as a port.

Again, I applaud it. Certainly, the potential is enormous, but, you know, when I speak to some of the CN people, how they describe it, particularly through Illinois Central's perspective on it, is that they look at Prince Rupert as being 72 hours from Chicago, Illinois. Right? This is their focus, which is fine. From Prince Rupert to Chicago, 72 hours, moving goods and services back and forth. I just want to remind the good people at CN and then hon. members here as well that we're in between those 72 hours, and for us to be able to have goods and services stopping and interacting with our economy in the best possible way is very important.

We have to be very firm in our negotiations with the Americans with their intentions of the Prince Rupert port because I know that they're looking at it as a strategic port for their own interests, of course. But we have to do hard negotiating. It's like the pipeline with the gas coming through our province. We have to make sure that we negotiate, that we take a portion of that value to develop value-added industry in our own province rather than just having the pipeline pass on through.

There has been quite a lot of discussion about film. Again, it's a difficult industry to break into, I know, and we have had some degree of success in the past with some filming. I think it's more by virtue of our specific settings that filmmakers might be looking for, certain landscapes that we have or beautiful places and vistas that they're looking for, rather than a focused effort to build a film industry here in the province. I know that this is a two-headed beast because, of course, you want the potential for film development in this province. It really does bring in a lot of money. We have to look no further than British Columbia to see what it has done for that province's economy.

But so often the film industry is a bit of a race to the bottom to attract filmmakers and to have them stay and work in your city or your province or your locale. You know, I really object to this bending over backwards, so to speak, giving tax breaks and special provisions and whatnot to companies, which at the end of the day are subsidies by any other name. I would like to make sure that filmmakers are coming into Alberta and paying their fair share for what they are taking from the province.

Most of all – and this hasn't been discussed too much, but I hear it from local film people. They've asked me specifically to bring it up: to have specific provisions to hire local talent for these productions. So often these guys are bringing in the whole kit and caboodle from Hollywood or from Toronto or wherever and setting up without producing appreciable lasting jobs for our local actors and actresses and film workers of all sorts. I don't pretend to know the industry so well, but certainly hiring Albertans first should be a priority at all stages along the way.

Finally, economic development, you know, is a funny thing. Sometimes right means left and left means right. I'm a firm believer in allowing, certainly, businesses to sink or swim on their own accord. For certain essential services we require that our electricity be affordable and that we have water and accommodation and adequate healthy food to eat and all of that kind of stuff, but for other businesses certainly the market should dictate and must dictate. So I hesitate at allowing and giving large tax breaks to different sectors and all of this kind of thing, but I think that we do need to look at diversification. We all recognize that as a pressing need for future generations as our energy-based economy changes. We want to be ahead of those things.

So one thing I would like to suggest in terms of a long-term economic plan for budgeting for economic development in conjunction with energy is that if we could take a specific amount of energy monies, look to perhaps increasing the royalty rates that some energy producers are paying for our oil and gas, and encourage industries

that produce alternative green technologies made in Alberta. I think that the combination of sort of using that old energy money and investing it in new renewable energy technologies is a very appealing plan. I think that we could go a long way to diversifying our economy and building something good for future generations.

10:40

I was in southern Alberta about a month ago and looking at the wonderful wind generation capability down around Pincher Creek. Almost all, I think, of those turbines are either produced in Europe or they're produced in the States, a few of them – right? – and it would just be such a wonderful thing to take some of that old energy money and put it into building our own wind turbines here in the province. You know, it's just one small way by which we could diversify our economy. I know that we don't want to be getting into central planning and five-year plans and stuff like that. I know that makes you guys itchy, but there are lots of reasonable, capitalistic ways that we can do that by having this money enter into our money markets and by allowing businesses to diversify and build a strong economy for the future.

So I do have some praise for the minister. I think that he certainly feels better to me than the last Economic Development minister. Let's put it that way. I encourage him to move forward and be successful in his endeavours.

Thank you.

The Chair: I would like to remind the hon. member of *Beauchesne's* 484, which refers to referring to another member of the House by name.

Mr. Dunford: Well, I'm going to accept the compliments of the member and point out that there's quite a bit of difference. I am not running for the leadership of this party.

I also want to thank the member for his support for the tourism dollars. I think that this has been a good move for everybody concerned. As far as I can tell, taxpayers of the province, my constituents, and people here in the House have really supported this. I don't know if I've heard anybody that's been opposed to it. So I think it's gone well for the tourism industry, but the challenge, of course, is that they use it and that they actually make it grow. That's what we're really after.

Corporate communications. I think it's an excellent question, but in a sense the answer is one that would remind the member about the complementary nature that there would be in terms of communications. The Public Affairs Bureau, of course, is there to promote the government of Alberta in some of the 60,000-foot level kinds of things that government would do. As a matter of fact, our communications people in the individual department, at least some of them, are actually employed by the Public Affairs Bureau. Then, of course, we have people within our communications branch that report to us and are paid by us.

I don't know if you've heard any of my speeches in public, but when I stick to the script, they're great speeches. Where I get in trouble is when I start to digress or when I make it up off the top of my head, although that's being open and transparent because you can see the top of my head. [interjection] I knew it. I knew it. It works every time, that one.

But I'd like to remind all the members of the House, then, that at the ground level, where we as the department and the minister operate, there are specific details that we feel are important in providing information not only to other members here in the House but to the general public or to specific public. I sometimes tease my staff by indicating that we must be the ministry of reports. We have

a tremendous number of reports that are circulated, and I think they are excellent documents.

We noted your criticism on the website on Korea. Certainly, as I was making notes, I glanced upstairs to see that they're making notes, and I'll be getting a briefing, no doubt, in a day or two on that particular website. These are the kinds of things that we get involved in. I have to tell you, hon. member, that I can't believe the activity that we have. As the previous Minister of Human Resources and Employment we had over a billion dollar budget. We had all kinds of things that we were trying to do in terms of reforming and changing and improving, yet I never got asked to go and speak hardly anywhere. I'm not sure how to explain that. I guess it was just the kinds of things that we were dealing with. We tended to be more reactive than proactive. But now, within Economic Development, I mean, you have a budget that's 95 per cent smaller than what we had previously, yet it's unbelievable the invitations, the requests for Economic Development and, thus, the minister to appear and to speak.

As we stand here, I can't really tell you on a daily basis how many people are actually working on speeches for me, but I don't know if a day goes by that I'm not speaking, you know, to some group. I've had days when there were five speeches that were prepared for me and were presented, obviously with the little note: check against delivery. [interjection] You got that, did you?

Certainly, on the trade missions: again, this is an area where I will be open about what we're going to do, and of course I'll be open to criticism for what we are doing. I don't know how else to deal with it except that when my time in this department is over, I want it said of me that he wasn't afraid to go, you know, into the lion's dens around the world to promote Alberta. As I said, we'll be doing it next week in Houston, the week after that will be a tourism function in Saskatoon, then on to Ottawa to talk to federal counterparts, and then on to Montreal to see what we can do about biotechnology in this province. Quebec is probably the leader in the country. I don't know that we can operate the way that Quebec does, but I want to look in people's eyes and see if there's some kind of model that we can come up with to inject some more energy into our biotechnology areas.

I want to say that when I started this evening, I poked fun at myself about the biotechnology area and the function that I was just at. But the young people, these high school students that were there and the fact that they were working on ways to identify and control breast cancer cells, the fact that they were looking at various ways to enhance canola, the fact that they were involved in other communicable diseases and that sort of thing: I mean, I didn't have to understand the science necessarily behind it to know that here were these young people that are working right at the cusp of modern science and research as it relates to primarily medical factors. In biotechnology what we're doing is that we're taking the science of biology and then combining it with technologies that are available and moving forward.

So I need to actually give myself, I think, a little more credit, Mr. Chairman. I'm not as dumb as some people might think I am in this particular area. But I did like having a bit of fun with it.

10:50

On the two offices in Beijing it was astute, of course, to recognize it. For a long time we have had a combined organization that is the China-Alberta petroleum corporation, so that's one of the offices that we have in Beijing. Then, of course, the other is co-located at the Canadian embassy and provides, then, normal kinds of services. Your pointing out Shanghai I think is something that this minister or ministers that will follow me are going to really have to have a look

at because that's a very, very exciting place right now if for no other reason than just to tie it in again with the B.C. ports strategy.

When we were out touring Prince Rupert and the port of Vancouver a couple of weeks ago - I guess it was during the Easter break - everything we heard about in terms of containers had a tie-in to Shanghai. Everything we heard about the huge tower cranes that are used to load and unload container ships onto container ports: Shanghai. Just a little anecdote. You might find this interesting. As we speak, ships are being built in Shanghai that will carry 8,000 containers. These ships are so big that they will not be able to get through the Panama Canal. So that's going to create some interesting dynamics, of course, for the western part of the U.S. and Canada.

But the port of Vancouver, both in Burrard Inlet and also at the Delta port, is expanding and, of course, they need more of these cranes. Of course, to get into Burrard Inlet you've got to get underneath the Lion's Gate Bridge. These cranes are so huge that they will not be able to get under the bridge in the final constructed frame. What they will have to do is that they'll have to wait for low tide, and they've also had to not finish off the construction of it so it can get under the bridge. So you're getting a tour of the harbour, and you're looking up at the Lion's Gate Bridge, and you think: well, that's a long way up there. You can just imagine the size of some of these structures. Shanghai is likely going to have to be a possibility in the future.

I don't like passing the buck. I'd like to take the buck. I'd like to have the Washington, DC, office but that's Ed Stelmach's area. [interjections] Oh, I'm sorry. Did I just do that? The Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations has that office.

The Chair: Hon. minister, just a reminder that it's *Beauchesne's* 484 if you're interested in looking it up later.

Mr. Dunford: Yeah. Actually, I need to do that, don't I?

On the comments about Prince Rupert, again you've recognized, as we have, the importance, and certainly we're following the CN situation and looking for opportunities that that might be able to present. About 60 per cent of those containers that are coming back from the Memphis area up to Chicago and then west, as I remember from our briefings out in the ports, are going back empty, so tremendous opportunities for Alberta products to be in containers that are already built, and of course in terms of back-loading prices.

I agree with you absolutely about the jurisdictions and trying to compete for film. You termed it a race to the bottom. I agree with that, and I don't understand how they can do it, but clearly money goes to where it's welcome. Again, it's going to be a constant challenge, I think, for any jurisdiction trying to get film. You know, it is a great industry in that sense.

Before politics I did a number of things, and one of them happened to be providing some management assistance to a number of small businesses in High River, Alberta, in 1990 or '91. I forget which year exactly. *Unforgiven* was being filmed in that part of the world, and it was just phenomenal what it was doing for the motel business and the restaurant business in that area not only in High River but in Longview as well.

I'm not sure how we could deal with your thoughts about siphoning off some of the energy stuff to invest in a particular business, but certainly the green technologies are part of the future of Alberta. I would just remind the hon. member and direct him, actually, to the EnergyINet. This is an initiative that I'm incredibly excited about. To have all of those reserves that we have here in Alberta, it'll make us the energy capital not only of Canada but of the world. The fact of the matter is that each technology we will use will be greener than the one previously used and that at some point

in time we're going to have huge energy coming out of this province and zero emissions. Now, there's a vision.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate being able to get up and talk about our economic development here in the province. We definitely do have a province where the economy is booming. We have increased industry, as the minister has mentioned. Economic prosperity and diversification are coming forward. He referred a little bit to greater value to our customers around the globe. He has talked about value-added product instead of exporting our raw materials, attracting investment from international markets. He has been travelling around the world. I do appreciate that and him being willing to take on, as he says, the tigers. I didn't see any claw marks or teeth marks, though, so I don't think they're that unfriendly.

He commented, though, earlier in the area where I want to get to. He says that they don't participate in subsidies and tax incentives, and the area I have to question the most is that where our economy is booming the best and doing the best and you're making your trips and putting in a great deal of effort, and that is in the oil and gas industry. We've got an absolute boom and, as has been mentioned, a hundred billion dollars worth of investments coming up there.

It just appears to me that one has to ask the question: do we have to have such great incentives for them to come with their capital expenses? They're giving away a lot there, and I guess what's even more disheartening is that it's obvious there's a major rush for those commodities. It seems like we're saying: you can have the commodities for free at 1 per cent royalty until you've paid off your capital investments.

We've got such a boom that we can't even keep up with the infrastructure there. There isn't enough land available. There aren't enough workers available to do it. The infrastructure isn't there to even accommodate that many people, but we're going gangbusters there. The incentives are so low, we're on sale and, like I say, giving away our products.

I guess what I want to turn that to is your talk about the tiger in Alberta. It seemed like the tiger is claiming our land, and it's not leaving any room for the beef industry. That's the area where I'd like to focus in all of that. You've made many trips to different areas in the world. You're going to make more. I would ask that you would put the beef industry and the packing industry in the top of your priority list.

This is a billion dollar industry. We've talked about a lot of smaller industries. They're all good and important, but the packing industry and cattle, specifically, is one of our largest ones, and we've been devastated. I've referred to it before that we've had a tsunami that's come across our land, and it's wiped out a great deal of the money in the industry. It's gone to big business, specifically to packing plants that have a monopoly on exporting our beef. No one has, so I've asked the minister to please put very high on his priorities to try and focus and take all of those innovative and initiative ideas that we've had in our other industries and try to attract business in cattle.

11:00

I specifically want to point out that I'm very worried that our efforts have all been to focus on opening up the U.S. border. They've got chronic waste disease in their wildlife, and for them to continue to say that they don't have any mad cow – we don't want to be the fools lined up to get in there, only to be locked up with them with trading in the rest of the world. I would urge this government and this minister to go to those areas.

In goal 3 you specifically have in there that Economic Development has developed Alberta's international marketing strategy and target priority markets for investment attraction and trade. We need that in the cattle industry. Out in the rural areas they're getting very discouraged, especially trying to get up the small packing plants. They continue to be told what they can and cannot do specifically when it comes to testing BSE.

In every disaster there's always something good of it, and I feel that what would be most critical and important is that we are to go out and develop new markets in the Middle East, China, Japan. There have even been delegations from Europe come here and say that we can export into Europe even with the ban on hormones because we can ship out natural beef.

In closing, I just want to reiterate, I guess, the distress that rural Alberta is in. Their perception of the cattle industry in rural Alberta is that this government is declaring losers, and those losers are small businesses in rural Alberta. They're willing to help big business, big cities.

Perhaps your vision would be best described for many rural Albertans: Alberta is the best place in the world to live, visit, and do business unless you own cattle. We've got to change that around. The mission to many of the rural areas and small businesses and small packing plants that are trying to get up and running is to facilitate big business and prosperity in our cities. I ask the minister on behalf of the cattle industry in rural Alberta to please focus on them. We know that we have the product here, and if we put our minds to it and be innovative and seek and put an effort into that, we can see the cattle industry prosper again.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dunford: Yes. Quickly, to focus on the beef industry, to make sure that I get those comments in, certainly, there are two areas. First of all, on the slaughterhouse side I agree about increasing the domestic slaughter capacity, and that fits two of our initiatives. It fits the value-added initiative, and it fits the rural development strategy. So we'll be working in that particular area. Where the difficulty comes, of course, is: how do we inject money into an enterprise?

Also, I would remind the hon. member that – and, first of all, I agree in diversifying the export of beef into other countries, and in order to do that, while we wouldn't invest in an actual business, we did provide \$30 million to the Canadian beef marketing organization. I don't remember its exact title. Then this was followed up, I don't know, a week or so later by \$50 million from the federal government.

Basically, we recognize the need to diversify not only our own economy but to diversify our export relationships, especially in the area of beef. I don't know that we'll agree on all areas as to how we get there, but certainly I think we can start from the same base, anyway, in terms of how we would deal with this area.

I think our regional development alliances are important aspects of the rural development strategy. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, something like, I guess, 90 per cent of Albertans are now covered by a regional economic development alliance. Of course Calgary and Edmonton each have theirs. You are aware of SouthGrow; you've attended the meetings. I don't know if you've had a chance to attend the Palliser economic development region, but again there they are. They're people at the ground level, people that are aware of the kinds of facilities, the kind of inventory that's already within their community, so they're trying as best they can, then, to come up with the kinds of ideas, the kinds of initiatives that

they can support at the local level and that we can support at our particular level.

The royalty structure, I think, is the most misunderstood issue in Alberta right now. I don't think it's nearly as bad as what opposition members would tend to have us believe, and I think that at some point the Minister of Energy – I don't know if his estimates have gone on already but . . .

Mr. Coutts: Yes, they have.

Mr. Dunford: Have they?

Mr. Coutts: Yes.

Mr. Dunford: Okay. Well . . .

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. minister, but in accordance with Standing Order 58(4), which specifies that a "vote on an estimate before the Committee of Supply shall be called after it has received not less than 2 hours of consideration," I would now call the vote on the estimates of the Department of Economic Development.

Agreed to:
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$79,750,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It has indeed been a very enlightening evening, and the Minister of Economic Development has done his usual great job explaining it all, and for that we are all grateful. I would, therefore, move that the committee rise and report the budget of Economic Development and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Economic Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases \$79,750,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? Carried.

head: 11:10 **Government Bills and Orders**
 Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the committee to order.

Bill 37

Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I don't know where to begin because I had three particular questions. [interjections] Now, don't encourage me, guys, because otherwise I'll take my whole time. I'm quite willing to stand here and use my time if that's . . .

An Hon. Member: Filibuster.

Mr. R. Miller: I will filibuster. I will learn very quickly how to filibuster, if there's a need to do so.

Mr. Chairman, in second reading, there was a commitment made by the minister to answer three particular questions at the committee stage, and I'm hoping that we'll be able to fulfill that commitment tonight. In particular, they were regarding the raising of the cap on resource revenue spending from \$4 billion to \$4.75 billion, the fact that the native land claims were being added in as a consideration outside of the regular government spending, and on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar a question as to what would be happening to the revenues generated by the funds that are to be set aside in the debt retirement account.

Assuming that we can hear some answers from the members opposite as to those three particular questions, I had already recommended in second reading that we were willing to grant our approval to this bill.

So it looks like I might well be receiving those answers, and I look forward to that.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the hon. member asking the questions, I just wanted to indicate for him and for other members here that the Minister of Finance will, indeed, during her remarks in the next day or two specifically answer the questions that have been referenced and will elaborate further at that time.

Mr. R. Miller: Is it my understanding, then, that we're not going to get the answers to those questions before we're expected to vote this bill through committee?

Mr. Zwozdesky: I think the intention is to finish with committee tonight and then move on to third reading hopefully by not later than Wednesday, and during her remarks on Wednesday prior to the vote you will have the answers to the questions you require.

Mr. Chase: I'm wondering if at this point, then, we should adjourn the Committee of the Whole so that we can have those answers as part of the process rather than proceeding to the third vote. I'm just suggesting that we adjourn at this point, then, the Committee of the Whole so that we can have those answers.

I move that we adjourn the Committee of the Whole so that we can have the required answers before proceeding to the third stage.

The Chair: I believe the proper motion would be rising and reporting progress out of committee, not to adjourn it.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Agreed. Why don't we do this – I understand where the hon. members are coming from – I will undertake to get them those answers before third reading starts, so that they'll be able to be guided. The answers are very straightforward, but it will be up to the Minister of Finance. She did have some other urgency tonight and apologizes for not being able to be here in person to provide them. But I'll undertake through her office to get it to all the members, especially the two members questioning it tonight, if that alleviates their concerns, and I hope it will.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not going to belabour the point at length because I understand that, in fact, the Finance minister did have some other urgent matter come up. It's just a little frustrating, quite frankly, because I am aware of the fact as well that there were negotiations going on between our House leader and the assistant to the Government House Leader in this matter. At one point this bill was taken off the agenda for tonight, and then it was put back on. It was off, and it was on.

My understanding, when ultimately it was put back on, was that we would be receiving answers to the questions that were asked at second reading before we were expected to pass this bill through committee. Obviously, we're not going to win any vote anyway, quite frankly, but I'd just like it to be on the record that I'm a little frustrated with the fact that a commitment had been made that we would receive these answers before the bill was voted at committee. I do appreciate the hon. Education minister's commitment to make sure that we have them now in advance of third reading. I certainly hope that that does take place because as I had indicated in second reading, I have no intention of holding up this bill. It is truly a housekeeping bill, but at the same time a commitment was made, and I had hoped that it would be honoured before we would be asked to vote in committee.

Having said that, I will continue to recommend to my colleagues that we support this bill, having noted that I'm somewhat less than enamoured with the fact that we didn't get the answers that we hoped to have received tonight. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 37 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 37.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I'd like to remind everyone before we proceed that tomorrow the Forum for Young Albertans will be taking place here in the Assembly, so if everyone could remove everything from their desktops tonight, it would be much appreciated. It won't be there in the morning if you don't.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 37.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 35
Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 5: Dr. Brown]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to be able to rise this evening and open debate on behalf of the Official Opposition on Bill 35, the Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005. This bill, on the surface at least, appears to be a positive step forward, particularly as it refers to private pensions. I understand that it is designed to increase the superintendent's strength for monitoring and enforcing private pensions, designed to increase employee access to information for pension plans, designed to facilitate provisions for dividing pension benefits on the breakdown of a marriage, and designed to allow terminated pension plans to be turned over to the Public Trustee on behalf of members that cannot be located. These, as I said, certainly would strike me as being good things, yet having said that, there are certainly going to be a number of questions that I would like to see addressed before we grant our approval of Bill 35.

11:20

I know that I've been accused by some members opposite of sounding like a broken record already, but once again in this bill we do find an awful lot of situations where legislation is being moved into regulations. I'm on record many times already as indicating the concerns I have for that and questioning whether or not it's really necessary or if it's simply a matter of convenience. It certainly causes me concern when we take things out of legislation and thereby, whether intentionally or not, limit public scrutiny and public debate. So that is one negative comment that I do have about this bill.

It does, however, appear to relieve some basic administrative burdens, and I think any time we can eliminate paperwork, especially for small business, that's something that I'm passionate about, having operated a small business for 25 years. So that's certainly something that I would be supportive of.

I'm just going to quickly rip through some of the questions regarding various sections. I would expect to dig into these with a little more voracity or in a little more depth once we get to the committee stage, but I can sort of run over them quickly now.

Section 2 talks about clarifying and defining terms. One significant change in section 2 is that a person who does not contribute to a pension plan for 52 weeks would not have that pension plan terminated. In particular, this reflects federal changes as far as maternity benefits, and I think that that's a good thing, of course.

In section 8 we strengthen the act by legislating that all pension plan documents have to be within the scope of the act, and if, in fact, there are documents that are not a part of the act, the superintendent has the authority to make them comply. Again, on the surface that

would appear to be a good thing. I would be asking when we get to committee whether or not it could be explained to us exactly how the superintendent would in fact enforce administrators of the pension plans to comply with that particular section of the act.

Included in section 11 is more information that would ensure, again, that all pension documents are within the act. It does raise a couple of questions in terms of why it's so important to have all of the pension documentation comply with the act, what sort of documentation is going to be considered, and what might actually be considered to be outside of the act, and it raises some questions, in my mind at least, about privacy issues and who might have access to all of those documents and so forth.

Section 13 gives members the power to access their pension plan, and that would, in my mind, be a good thing. It would outline that they'd have to be notified of changes to the plans. Particularly, I think that if an employer were to make changes that might be disadvantageous to the employee, there's a requirement that the employee would have to be notified. So, obviously, this is a good thing and certainly will have my support.

One question that's raised in my mind there is that if the law is going to stipulate that employees do in fact have more access to the statements of their pensions, we're wondering what assurances the member can have that employers or custodians will actually provide the information to the employees and what remedies there might be for employees if, in fact, they feel that the employer is not making that information available.

Again, in section 13(e) more employer access is allowed to pension documents. A question arises there about privacy as well and whether or not, in fact, the employees would be protected if perhaps there was information in those documents that they might not want their employers to have access to.

Section 23 allows funds to be unlocked by expatriates, thereby in theory at least making it easier for people to access their money and perhaps move their pensions into a plan in another country. I certainly think that that would make good sense, Mr. Speaker.

Section 31 again appears to strengthen the enforcement provisions of the act, and I would support that although a couple of questions again. There's a discussion in this section about stress tests, as we're calling them, where cabinet can actually pass additional plans to test a pension, for example, to see whether or not there are, you know, sufficient funds in a plan or what would happen if a plan were to suffer some sort of a calamitous drop. It does beg a couple of questions, whether or not Executive Council would in fact apply those stress tests evenly across all private pension plans, and again I think sort of mirrors some of the concerns or some of the questions that I heard when we were dealing with Bill 19, the Securities Amendment Act, 2005, and exactly who might have authority there and whether or not that authority would in fact be arm's length from the government.

Section 33 talks about a pension fund. If it's not receiving appropriate funding, the trustee must inform the superintendent, which would seem to be a good thing. Even though there may well be good reason, Mr. Speaker, for a plan not to be performing well for some reason, I think it would certainly be in the employees' best interests to be notified of that. One of the questions, certainly in my mind, would be whether or not the superintendent . . .

An Hon. Member: Are you nodding off?

Mr. R. Miller: I am nodding off, actually. The note from my researcher isn't making sense in my head, and I'm thinking: why would I read that to the Assembly if it's not making sense to me? So

I think I'll just skip to the next one. We'll just leave that alone for now, I think. Hopefully, I'll figure it out either in my head or in my researcher's head before we get to committee.

Section 49, Mr. Speaker, provides the superintendent power to go out and investigate a plan, such as appointing a forensic auditor, and it requires people to be interviewed during these investigations. Again, I'm just wondering about privacy issues, and we will dig into those a little deeper when we get to the committee stage.

I would just like to acknowledge some of the stakeholder groups that we spoke to in investigating this and, again, provide some accolades to the government for also having done what I would suggest appears to be a good job in terms of contacting stakeholder groups as well.

We spoke to the Association of Canadian Pension Management, the Pension Investment Association of Canada, *Benefits Canada* pension magazine, Ken Smith with the Alberta Society for Pension Reform, and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. In most cases, again, these groups seem to indicate general approval of Bill 35 and what it would appear to accomplish, and certainly that goes a long way toward allowing me to recommend to my colleagues that we would most likely be supporting this bill given that the stakeholder groups that we've consulted seem to be in general agreement with the bill as it's presented to us.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to ask that we adjourn debate, and I'll take my seat.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: 11:30 **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 5
Family Law Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 5, the Family Law Amendment Act, 2005.

As I've indicated previously, this act strengthens the Family Law Act before its proclamation in October of this year. The amendments will give mothers and fathers a more equal opportunity to be guardians of their children. The amendments also clarify the powers and responsibilities of persons who are guardians of children and correct other small errors and oversights.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora advised the committee that he was considering the provisions of Bill 5 in the context of the best interests of the children. I appreciated hearing him say that, and I believe that that is the approach that was taken by all hon. members with respect to this legislation.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre raised some issues with respect to how the Family Law Act dealt with same-gendered couples. She had concerns about the presumptions of paternity that continued to exist in section 8 of the act. She suggested that the act should speak of parents rather than mothers and fathers.

The purpose of the section is, however, not to speak about parents but to speak about fathers. Except in the case of surrogacy it is always clear who the mother of a child is. It is not necessarily clear who the father of a child is, so the law has developed common-sense rules to say who the father is. Section 8 provides those common-sense rules so that we don't in every case have to make purported fathers take a blood or DNA test. For the overwhelming majority of parents there continues to be a need for common-sense rules that define the legal status of the male parent. I don't believe that we are

discriminating against female parents because we continue to have presumptions of paternity for male parents.

When the hon. member criticizes the guardianship provisions of section 20 for the same reason, she is forgetting that section 20 deals with natural parents only. Where a proposed guardian is not an actual parent, section 20 does not apply, whether that proposed parent is a member of a same-gender or a different-gender couple. A proposed guardian who is not an actual parent has to apply for guardianship or apply to adopt the child. This is not a matter of discrimination against same-gendered couples.

The hon. member says that some aspects of the law may have to change to recognize same-gendered couples if the federal government proceeds with its legislation. I believe that hon. members could disagree with her suggestion that sections 8 and 20 of the Family Law Act are sections that would be included in such a process of change.

I'd like to thank hon. members for their interest in the well-being of Alberta families and children as has been expressed in debate in committee and in the House. Although there were some disagreements over amendments, the discussion was always in the context of what was in the interests of the families and in the best interests of the children.

So with thanks to all members for their considerations I would urge the members of the Assembly to vote in favour of Bill 5.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. For the record I want to point out that the Family Law Amendment Act does not take into account the very vital role of grandparents. I am concerned that grandpar-

ents, particularly in somewhat estranged family relationships, are considered guilty until they prove themselves innocent when it comes to having access granted to be with their grandchildren. As a grandparent recently myself I feel that this Family Law Amendment Act should at least in future amendments consider the vital role of grandparents.

In the Speech from the Throne the notion of entire families being responsible for the raising of children was brought out, yet grandparents, while being stated as an important part of a child's rearing and growing, are ignored in this Family Law Amendment Act. For the record I would like it noted that grandparents deserve greater credit for their role, and they deserve greater access to their grandchildren. Quite often for whatever reason families that have become dysfunctional end up punishing grandparents and denying them their vital role in raising their grandchildren. To me the Family Law Amendment Act does not sufficiently address this concern, and hopefully in future revisions it will do so.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to all members for the excellent progress tonight. With that having been said, I would move that the House now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:36 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 26, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/26

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, and welcome.

Let us pray. Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an impressive group of 45 senior high school students from across the province. These students are participating, as they do annually, in a nonpartisan learning experience called the Forum for Young Albertans.

As students do each year, they come to the provincial capital to learn first-hand about the day-to-day workings of the provincial government. The students are working with politicians and representatives from the public service, the legal community, academia, and business to examine and review political concerns of the day. This week these students are breaking bread with all Members of the Legislative Assembly at a special dinner. On Friday the group is holding a model parliament in these Chambers, Mr. Speaker, and I trust that the members of this Assembly will remember to model first-class parliamentary behaviour for the students today.

The students are seated in the members' gallery and the public gallery, as I understand. Mr. Speaker, I won't mention each name individually, but I'd ask them all to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Madam Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 15 staff from the Public Affairs Bureau touring the Legislature today. I won't list each name individually, but I can tell members that the group includes communications staff from Children's Services through to Infrastructure, Seniors and Community Supports, as well as staff from the Alberta call centre and the Queen's Printer bookstore. These valued and dedicated staff are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, from the oil sands capital of the world, the regional municipality and city of Fort McMurray, two grade 6 classes here today with parents and teachers from l'école Dickinsfield school and Boréal school. They were actually rock climbing last night. I didn't get a chance to rock climb with them, but I look forward to doing that in the future. I'd like to ask the students and teachers and all the parents that are with them on this important trip to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Jodie Bakker. Jodie is a graduate from the University of Alberta criminology program. She spent the last year working for Alberta Justice as a research officer in management and leadership services. Jodie took the initiative of doing an e-mail to my office asking if she could job shadow for a day because she was interested in learning what the minister did and to see the political process in action. She is with us today visiting the Legislature. I'd ask Jodie, who is in the members' gallery, to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a member from my constituency of Calgary-Shaw. His name is John Bachynski. There are two things noteworthy about him. He lets me put a big sign in his yard during elections, which I appreciate, and the second is that he's the father of a constituent of mine who is now 6-8 and growing. He's 15 years old, and Centennial high school is basing a lot of their future basketball hopes on him. I'd ask him if he'll rise, John Bachynski, a member of my constituency.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a good friend of mine from Lloydminster. Mr. Glenn Soloy has spent many, many years working with the governments of Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories both in restructuring and in many of the affairs with the First Nations people. Glenn is here to watch proceedings today. I'd ask Glenn to rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you two members of my constituency seated up in the public gallery, and the third member is my secretary. Kim Hutchings is the secretary for the Douglasdale community association. She's been there for 16 years. She was one of the original founders of the Douglasdale Estates Community Association. As well, Darrell Hutchings. If they could rise. And the person that keeps me organized daily, Donna Elms.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you 21 visitors from the Trochu Valley school in my constituency who are visiting the Legislature today, accompanied by their teacher, Bill Cunningham, and parents Ruth King and Kathy Samson. Although they're not in the Assembly right now – well, five are in the gallery, and they've already been introduced by the Premier as young Albertans in the Forum for Young Albertans. The rest will be in during question period, but I'm sure they would appreciate the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, your group is not in right at the moment. We'll do it later.

Ms Evans: Thank you.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Office of the Chief Internal Auditor

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To give the impression that someone is guarding tax dollars, this government created the office of the chief internal auditor, which they refer to as their own CIA. When you look at the committee that oversees the chief internal auditor, you see that the only two public members are both high-ranking PC Party insiders. To the Premier: could he explain how appointing the PC Party's vice-president of finance and one of the Premier's closest buddies as the only public members on the government's internal audit committee provides objective oversight of the government's expenses?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the chair of the finance committee would have some financial knowledge. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has not named the other person. If he names him, I'll find out if he is, in fact, a close buddy. Lots of people purport to be close buddies. Maybe he is a close buddy. The only other person I can think of is Mr. Halpin, who's a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, very qualified, but he happens to be a friend too. Nothing wrong with that.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that official government of Alberta documents state that the Auditor General is expected to "rely on the work of the [chief internal auditor]," isn't this just a way to have the PC Party insulate this government from the efforts of the Auditor General?

1:40

Mr. Klein: No, Mr. Speaker. That's wrong. The answer is wrong – or the question is wrong. The answer is right, of course. Jack Halpin I don't think is on the audit committee any longer. I think it's George Cornish he alludes to. George Cornish was the former chief commissioner of the city of Calgary, a very knowledgeable individual.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: given that the committee of the internal auditor is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Executive Council, what role does the office of the internal auditor have in the investigation into the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, none at this point.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this Assembly the Minister of Finance said in regard to the Securities Commission controversy that she has personally "researched the documents entirely" and that she could not find one identifier in those docu-

ments "that gives the identity of any of the complainants." It's right here on page 974 of *Hansard*, actually. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Given that no complainants are identified, why won't she, in the interests of openness and accountability, release those documents publicly?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think that if he'd have researched *Hansard* back maybe a week or two ago when I answered this question previously, I explained very clearly that those documents were provided to me on the condition that they would not be released by me under solicitor-client privilege. I accepted those documents under that understanding and that undertaking, and I remain committed to that.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A simple question to the Minister of Finance: who is the client in that arrangement?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the clients, in my understanding of that undertaking, are the persons who came forward with complaints.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. To the same minister: will the minister categorically deny that there has been any interference in enforcement and investigations at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a couple of things very clear. First of all, the Alberta Securities Commission is a quasi-judicial body and operates at arm's length from this government. In most instances that's what the opposition would want. Therefore, I do not involve myself in the day-to-day operations of that commission, nor do I think it appropriate.

Secondly, the issues that have arisen at the commission, primarily, as I understand it, in the human resource area, did not come up in one day. Certainly, it'll take probably more than one day to fix them. I am pleased that the commission has brought in some external management consultants in the human resource area and have given me every undertaking that they wish to resolve these issues as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Electricity Deregulation

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even top Tories cannot support their flagship policy, electricity deregulation. Top Tories are reluctant to gamble on long-term electricity contracts because they know that electricity deregulation has driven the price far too high. My first question is to the Premier. Why is this government continuing to penalize electricity consumers for the benefit of electricity companies?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that is false. What we want to do is to let the private sector prevail in accordance with our government's policy of promoting entrepreneurship and free enterprise. The hon. member is obviously alluding to media reports that stem from a draft discussion document, as I understand it, that was prepared for the Utilities Consumer Advocate. So nothing is final yet, but when the final report comes in, either the Minister of Energy or the Minister of Government Services or both will be reviewing those recommen-

dations and subsequently will be making recommendations to cabinet and caucus.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the Premier: given that top Tories are not interested in buying into electricity deregulation, why is this government continuing to force expensive long-term electricity contracts onto reluctant residential electricity consumers?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is totally false. Customers have the choice. I'm the top Tory, and as far as I know, I'm still on the regulated rate. I don't pay that much attention to it, but I can tell you what my bill is for my condo here in Edmonton. It averages about \$24, \$25 a month. Now, admittedly, I'm not there that much, but I keep the air conditioning going, and I keep the fan going. [interjection] Yeah, the fridge is going, and when I'm home, I watch television, leave the lights on. I try, you know, and conserve energy when I can.

But I'm the top Tory, Mr. Speaker, and I'm on the regulated rate, so no one is forcing me to do anything.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the top Tory: why hasn't the top Tory purchased a long-term electricity contract if it's such a good deal? Why do you expect Albertans to buy into it when you won't?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, they have a choice. They have a choice, and that's what this issue is all about. It's about choice. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with choice.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP opposition has obtained and will table the report on retail electricity options that the Minister of Government Services tried yesterday to dismiss as a draft. This final report of the advisory council is a scathing indictment of the deregulation of electricity. The advisory council expresses disappointment that consumer protection is not even on the radar screen of the government, and instead electricity policy is being driven for the exclusive benefit of companies. This is to the Minister of Government Services. Why is this government hiding, deflecting, and spinning a report from its own advisory council that concludes, "We are surprised and disappointed that consumer protection is not even a decision criterion considered by the Department."

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, that is a draft report that the member has. As a matter of fact, that report is dated February 23, and on February 17 the committee held another public hearing in Vauxhall, so of course they didn't have time to incorporate into the draft report the results from that meeting. As a matter of fact, the final report, after it has gone through the whole process, will be out for public viewing. This is in response to a discussion paper that the Department of Energy has issued. This is the committee's draft response to that discussion paper.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't say "draft" anywhere on it.

Given the advisory council's scathing criticism of Conservative deregulation policy, will the minister start doing the right thing on behalf of smaller electricity customers and stop forcing Albertans to choose electricity retail options that even the minister himself admits are a bad deal?

1:50

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, that last part of his preamble – I haven't even discussed publicly and/or with the minister the issue about whether I have a contract or not. Clearly, since the restructuring of electricity started to occur, there has been some 3,000 megawatts of generation created, and there is not one bit of public debt connected to it. That is just one. We'll readily admit that the retail section of the restructuring has not matured yet, and of course we're looking at the possibility of extending the RRO. That's what this discussion paper is all about.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that he's misled the House about this being a draft and admit that he's forcing the committee to rewrite it to suit the government?

Mr. Hancock: Point of order.

The Speaker: There's a point of order recognized.

Does the hon. minister want to respond to the question? There were three questions in there. Take the first one.

Mr. Lund: Well, maybe I'll deal with the first comment, about misleading. There is nothing misleading about what I said yesterday nor what I'm saying today. That is a draft report, and there will be another report that will be dealt with. That one is simply a report that was sent in originally.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Griffith Scott Middle School

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents in Millet are interested in the future infrastructure improvements at the Griffith Scott middle school. Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation inform this Assembly what government is doing to replace or renovate the school?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On March 22 of this year I met with the Wetaskiwin school board to discuss this very issue. This issue is a very pressing issue as the audit score of this particular facility is 1,040, which is actually one of the highest audit scores that we have in the province. They have subsequently put this school forward on their capital list, and we're certainly going to be looking at it.

Mr. Johnson: To the same minister: since, as you mentioned, the audit score is 1,000 or higher, why has this school not been renovated prior to now?

Dr. Oberg: That's an excellent question. In 2001 this school was actually awarded money to be replaced, but the school board came to us and said that rather than replace the Millet school, they would sooner build a new school in Falun, which is also within the school board area. The money was subsequently transferred to Falun at that

particular time. The Millet school has now come back on their priority list, and we're currently considering that.

Mr. Johnson: My final question to the same minister: how is it determined whether the school will be renovated or replaced altogether?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of answers to this one. First of all, the typical answer is that if the cost to renovate a school is 75 per cent of the cost of a new school, we will undertake building a new school. The school board has asked us for \$2.7 million. It's estimated that a new school would cost about \$5.7 million.

The interesting component of this, in talking to the school board – and this is where the hands on of talking to the school board actually helps – is that, apparently, this school is built on a zonolite formation, which has caused it to shift almost continuously. It will bulge and then decrease. So I think that what we have to do in this particular case is take a very serious look at the engineering diagrams and see whether we should replace it purely because of where the school is as opposed to the actual cost of doing this because it may well benefit us in the long run to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Missing Computer Tapes and Microfiches

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Information and Privacy Commissioner released a report on the investigation into the loss of computer tapes and microfiches containing personal and private information on 77 Albertans. The shipments of these tapes were not tracked. The Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation was not even aware that the microfiche copies were being produced of each pension cheque and that the microfiche processing was done by a private-sector vendor. My questions are to the Premier. How will this government protect the private information of Albertans and prevent further incidents of information loss or even theft?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether the hon. member is talking about health tapes or pension tapes. In either case I'll have the appropriate ministers respond. I can preface it this way. Whenever these matters come to our attention, we take whatever steps are deemed necessary to protect the rights of individuals and the privacy of individuals. But I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, on the pension tapes I can tell the hon. member that the Alberta Pensions Administration has accepted all of the Privacy Commissioner's recommendations. The Privacy Commissioner did say that there was a limited amount of personal information on those. In fact, the APA, or Alberta Pensions Administration, did individually talk to or inform each of the affected individuals, and the APA will be working with IBM to develop better processes, ensuring that this doesn't happen in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that no action against IBM, the information records private contractor, has been taken and that the loss of these private records was discovered in

January but not reported to the government till March, can the Premier tell us how the government plans to react when another breach occurs? Will these private contractors ever be held accountable?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again I'll defer to the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the very best action to take in this is the action that has been taken, and I believe that making sure to the very, very utmost of our abilities that there are no further breaches is the best way to respond. As I said, we have accepted all of the Privacy Commissioner's recommendations. We are working with IBM to ensure that there are safeguards, that there are checks in place to ensure as much as you humanly possibly can that this breach does not occur again.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you. Given that IBM and the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency both confirmed that producing the microfiche copies was a continuation of an old practice, will the Premier or the hon. Deputy Premier instruct the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency to stop this costly, unnecessary, and potentially risky routine?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that that has already occurred. It was identified that it was not necessary today to retain microfiche, and that practice is not intended to continue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

School Construction in Calgary

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier our government announced a \$9.2 billion capital investment in infrastructure for the next three years, including \$3.1 billion in municipal infrastructure, \$2 billion in highway construction, \$1.6 billion in health facilities and equipment, and \$1.1 billion in schools and postsecondary institutions. This is very good news. Reflecting the inquiries from my Calgary constituents, my question today is to the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What is the capital investment in infrastructure for education at all levels allocated to the Calgary area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Included in this particular budget is roughly \$175 million for K to 12 school infrastructure. Those are projects that, yes, have been announced before, but these are schools that will either be started or finished within the next three years. Through to the hon. member, there are 16 new schools that are included in those 20 projects.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental question to the same minister: hon. minister, given that you base the sharing of \$3.1 billion in capital investment in municipal infrastructure on population, how do you allocate the \$1.1 billion capital investment in infrastructure for education in a highly populated area like Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much. The simple answer to this, Mr. Speaker, is: on need. When we look around the province, we see schools of different ages and different conditions. Quite simply, there is a higher need in some areas than in others. If we had all of the school districts on the same need, then I think there's a lot of merit to what the hon. member is talking about, on a per capita type of funding scheme. But, unfortunately, at this particular time we do not have that, so therefore it is based on need.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the same minister: hon. minister, in terms of investment in education, how do you plan to address the pressing needs from the fast growth area of Calgary, Alberta's strong economic engine?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that the hon. member is from Calgary, which is certainly a booming part of the province, but in reality there are a lot of booming parts of the province, including northern Alberta, including southern Alberta, including central Alberta. It's a very nice problem to have, but we do have to keep on top of the educational needs. We do have to keep on top. After paying off the debt, this has freed us up significantly for some of the things that we can do. Again, we're going to be looking very, very closely at the school needs of all the school boards in the province because, realistically, the whole province is a strong economic engine at this particular point in time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

AAA Cattle Company

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week this government disregarded its own processes when it approved the feedlot development of AAA Cattle Company near Didsbury. The company had expanded beyond the terms of its approval, and the Alberta Court of Appeal also ruled against this, stating that there had been no proper assessment of risk to the environment. My first question to the Minister of Environment: given this ruling by the Alberta Court of Appeal, why has the government failed to do a proper environmental impact assessment before allowing the NRCB to expand the operations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first and foremost say that this government is without question committed to protecting and managing our water supply and the environment. As you know, I've referred to it in this House in the past as blue gold.

In the case that the hon. member mentioned, Alberta's role is to consider issuing, of course, a water licence under the province's very progressive Water Act. The impact assessment that the hon. member makes reference to is used there in terms of collecting specific information and data to assist the decision-maker, and in this case it's the NRCB, the Natural Resources Conservation Board. In addition, before we issue a water licence, we want to make sure that

there is enough water available for the existing water users and, of course, for the use of the actual licence.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that in this particular case a comprehensive review based on historical data that we work in close association with shows that there is ample water available. I can assure the hon. member and all members of this Assembly that we want to make sure that the conditions of monitoring and reporting, which are part of our licence, will continue to ensure that this valuable resource will continue today and well into the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: given that this company had been stopped in the past for illegal development without approval, why is the company now being rewarded?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me explain. The Natural Resources Conservation Board is an independent, quasi-judicial board, and it would be very inappropriate for me to comment on the decision. However, the decisions that are in place balance the interests of the livestock industry as well as the environment and public safety.

I can talk about the process, Mr. Speaker. In this particular instance the NRCB followed the Court of Appeal's direction. They reviewed the environmental risk of AAA Cattle, particularly on its pre-existing operations. The review looked at AAA's updated application and took that into consideration in their decision as well as considered stakeholders such as the county of Mountain View, I believe, plus Alberta Environment and Alberta Transportation and the committee for the Lone Pine neighbours and the community members.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you. Again to the Sustainable Resource Development minister: given that the original approval was only 2,500 head of cattle and the NRCB is now allowing 18,000 head, how can the public be confident that you are protecting the public and environmental interests?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, as I said – and I would be very cautious here – the Natural Resources Conservation Board is an independent, quasi-judicial board. I do not enter into their final decisions. The board has a good process, and we are responsible under the legislation for the process. We are also responsible to the legislation that is under the Agricultural Operation Practices Act. Therefore, the board takes that process, considering the legislation – they have open hearings as well as court appeals, and every operation is reviewed on its own merits and considered on its own merits and its own application. The NRCB has been working for the last three years and doing a diligent job on this for confined feeding operations in the province, and it's the responsible way to go.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Daily Physical Activity in Schools

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of our government's attempt to increase physical activity amongst our youth and in response to the recommendation contained in Alberta's Commission on Learning, the Minister of Education has announced the daily

physical activity initiative. This will require all students in grades 1 through 9 to participate in 30 minutes of daily physical activity, and school boards are now preparing for its implementation starting this fall. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Can the minister explain the rationale behind the initiative and mostly how he expects this to happen?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think the rationale is predicated on two premises, one of them being common sense and the other one being a study that was done back in the year 2000. Now, the Learning Commission looked at both of those predications and also determined that obesity amongst our youth is growing at a very alarming rate. As we all know, in later years and even in some earlier years that can lead to problems and complications with things like diabetes and heart attack and stroke and so on. So when our Premier announced the new health and wellness framework in his speech in January or February of this year, it was contemplated that the daily physical activity, which is going to start in September of this year, would be the first part of that particular initiative, and that's how we see it being implemented.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you. For my first supplemental: will the minister please clarify what he meant in his comments that he made to school boards last month where he indicated that physical activity must be safe, structured, and supervised in order to qualify as daily physical activity?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you for that question. That's a very good question because I, too, have been receiving letters from some school boards asking for that clarification, and I hope to put something out that will be a follow-up to the message I sent out about a month ago. I should get that out within the next few weeks.

Mr. Speaker, in a nutshell safe would mean in accordance with the safety guidelines as teachers and principals would know them, structured would mean something planned, and with respect to supervised that, too, would be in accordance with the school regulations, where we mean supervised by an adult or someone like that who's actually in charge. It should also be an enjoyable activity, and students also should have an understanding of the importance of that activity.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you. For my final supplemental: assuming that this initiative is successful for grades 1 through 9, is the minister considering making physical activity mandatory for kindergarten through grade 12?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that in a perfect world and if there were more time in the school day, we would see physical activity being mandatory right throughout the entire system because those are habits that shouldn't stop at the end of the ninth year or the 10th year.

However, let me say this. Within the broader spectrum of a curriculum review and the new health and wellness framework that we are now working on for implementation in September of '06, I will take that comment under advisement because it has been asked by others. I would do it with the caution and cautionary advice that the school day right as it sits today is extremely busy already, and the options right now are not that abundant.

Tobacco Reduction Strategy

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, the government has recognized the immense cost of cancer on the health system by increasing funding for the Alberta Cancer Board by 25 per cent this year, an increase of almost \$48 million. Increasing funding to address patient treatment and growing drug costs is not a sustainable solution, especially when the government had the perfect opportunity to reduce important cancer risk factors but instead made the choice to support a weakened smoking bill. My questions are to the minister of health. Can the minister explain this inconsistency between policy and action?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would approach it this way. I presume that the increase that we have given to the Cancer Board is being applauded by the hon. member opposite because at 25 per cent it recognizes the costs of cancer drugs, the technology that should be in place, and funds as well as possible the initiatives of the Cancer Society and the Cancer Board in making sure that we do as much as we can to attack cancer. I believe that relative to the discussion on the private member's bill that was given third reading yesterday, it would not be appropriate to comment.

2:10

Ms Blakeman: What a shame.

Again to the same minister of health: given that smoking is the leading cause of preventable illness and disability and accounts for nearly 20 per cent of all deaths, why has the government not taken a more active role in prevention?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has taken an active role in prevention. In fact, this government is notorious for its tobacco reduction strategies. The work that we have done with youth, the work that we've done in recognizing the importance of looking after youth and addictions is unprecedented. Since shortly after the year 2000 a very aggressive tobacco reduction strategy has been in place. But if today we are being flogged for what happened yesterday, may I remind the hon. member opposite that at least three members of the hon. opposition chose to vote for the bill that will provide for Alberta's children an opportunity to visit public places without smoke. Now, that is a considerable step forward.

Ms Blakeman: To the minister of health again: does this government, in fact, have a concrete plan and a definitive timeline to create nonsmoking in public places?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, contrary to what some might assume would be the appropriate way to proceed with this, we have only recently had that bill pass in the House. There's an opportunity for royal assent. There's an opportunity for dialogue with the regions. We have a tobacco reduction strategy currently in place, but it will be amended given the more aggressive stance that this government has taken as a result of discussions in this House yesterday, a stance that will see us move forward on the tobacco reduction strategy and look beyond that strategy to what opportunities we have in the future in areas which I have been approached about dealing with a tax on discount cigarettes and dealing with the positioning of the way we market cigarettes in various places where people can buy them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Kindergarten Programs

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in 2003 the Learning

Commission recommended the expansion of junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten for at-risk children. Despite overwhelming evidence that junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten make a huge difference to the lives of high-needs children, the government has been dithering on implementing these recommendations for more than 18 months. My question is to the Minister of Education. What is the holdup? Why has the government not proceeded on these two very important recommendations?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, and I like the way that he's framed the latter part of it. Those are two important initiatives that were recommended for the very proper reasons by the Learning Commission. What government said was that we would take those recommendations and study them a little more carefully, a little more in depth. We would talk to the system. We would talk with other education stakeholders to make sure that we help in particular those children who are deemed to be at risk.

Now, in furtherance of that, Mr. Speaker, I did canvass all 62 school boards during January and February, and I found there still to be a very wide-ranging split opinion on both the issues of: should there be a junior kindergarten program introduced, and secondly, should there be a full-day kindergarten program introduced? What the school boards told me in a nutshell is that 95 per cent of our aged five children already are in a kindergarten program. However, with respect to the junior kindergarten some felt that it was just too early an age for four year olds to be away for too long a period of time. So we're still considering both options at this time.

Mr. Martin: Well, considering and studying and dithering.

The question to the minister is simply this. The evidence is overwhelming that this is especially important for high-risk students. Why could we not at least begin to start at that level and do it right away?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do put over \$100 million into kindergarten programming already, and within that \$100 million we do help children who are deemed to be at risk. Now, there are many definitions for what we refer to as at-risk children. Some of them can be language deficient, or they could have a numeracy problem. We provide additional monies through ESL. We provide additional monies through PUF, the program unit funding. We provide hundreds of millions of dollars for special-needs children and for other special remedial help programs. So the suggestion is a good one. It is under consideration. No decision has yet been made, but as soon as it is, I'll be communicating it one way or the other to this House and to the public.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, let's be a little more specific. Given that the Edmonton public city centre education project won a Premier's award for excellence last year mainly because of its innovative programs and early childhood education such as junior and full-day kindergarten, why is the minister not pushing ahead with these recommendations now? Eighteen months is long enough.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, in actual fact we are pushing ahead with coming to a decision on it, but the fact is, however, that there are split opinions on this. Now, after we get past the educational concerns of the educational stakeholders – the teachers, the principals, the superintendents, and the trustees – we still have a group out there called parents, who have the ultimate responsibility for their children. In many cases they have written and they have expressed an opinion. I have to listen to their concerns as well, and they're not quite as sure yet about either of these two decisions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Sale of Liquor to Minors

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past few weeks my constituents have been asking me what our government is doing to keep alcohol out of the hands of minors in this province. My first question is to the Minister of Gaming. Can the minister please tell me how he knows that licensed establishments are not selling liquor to minors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each year for the past three years the inspectors from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission have gone out to the liquor stores, lounges, clubs, and bars to see if those liquor licensees are complying with the policy. It's called the under-25 ID policy. It demands that serving staff ask for ID from patrons if they appear to be younger than 25. Last year a team of younger looking AGLC inspectors visited 1,659 licensees across the province and tried to purchase alcohol. Those inspectors were asked for identification 1,385 times. That equates to an 84 per cent compliance rate.

To answer your question, I know that licensees are asking persons who appear to be under the age of 25 for ID. They've been investigated, and that's the 84 per cent compliance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is again to the Minister of Gaming. Upon hearing his answer, I'm wondering: are you saying that the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission is sending minors into licensed establishments to purchase alcohol?

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, all AGLC inspectors are over the age of 18 years of age, and they would never – I repeat, never – ever send a minor into a licensed establishment. Last year Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton and Mount Royal College in Calgary were contacted, and student inspectors were hired from those colleges who were enrolled in the law enforcement and the security diploma programs. Having the opportunity to be an AGLC inspector is a valuable and positive learning experience for these aspiring enforcement professionals.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question, again to the same minister: why do you feel that this has been such a successful policy compared to others?

Mr. Graydon: The owners and operators of Alberta's licensed restaurants, bars, and lounges are, indeed, a hardworking and responsible bunch. The AGLC does a lot of work with them to ensure that they know the rules. We have an educational poster that we display in licensed premises, Mr. Speaker. It says, "Hard to Tell – Have to Ask."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

2:20

Special-needs Education

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too often this government strikes a task force, sets up a committee, commission, or study only to have it collect dust on the shelf. When it comes to this government's misguided health reforms, this inaction is a blessing, but when it comes to providing educational support for children with special needs, we need strong leadership and a firm commitment. My question to the Minister of Education: now that the wasteful grade 4 achievement testing is gone, when will the minister take serious action on developing a system-wide early identification and screening process for children as recommended in the government's own five-year-old study?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Commission on Learning had something in the order of 95 recommendations. As I recall, the government responded and accepted something in the order of 86 of those recommendations. Three were left up to study, and three may have been rejected outright or something along that line. In addition to accepting the ACOL recommendations, government also spent something in the order of \$340 million to implement those recommendations that could be implemented. That's a significant commitment given the importance of that particular report.

Now, specific to the earlier grades, as I indicated in response to a question just earlier this afternoon, we are very well aware of what some of those complications are for those young people, and that's why we've augmented our total education budget this year by more than 7 per cent. There are 287 fresh, new millions of dollars going in, for a total of \$4.3 billion this year, and within that envelope there will be ample money to help out the very students that this particular member is asking about.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the minister make this a priority by committing the ongoing dedicated funding for educational specialists since school boards still say that they don't have enough necessary resources?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, a good question. I'm a very strong believer in having more specialists, and I think that in the short term, perhaps the medium term, I would like to see an increase in guidance counsellors and other counsellors as well as education specialists. Let me just give the hon. member and others here one example. We're trying our best to increase speech and language therapists as one speciality, and we would if they were available to be hired. The fact is that there's a world shortage in that area, and I just cite that as one example. As soon as we can see more people being trained in audiology and speech therapy programming, we'll be more than happy to take them into the system so they can help our children.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister provide the Assembly with a timeline for when teachers will be given support, including adequate preparation time and professional development opportunities, to deal with the special-needs students in their classrooms?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, there's been a rapid increase in the number of special-needs children who require special help. In fact, that's one reason why we increased our funding this year for mild and moderate and for severe special-needs children, and those

increases have been very significant. For example, severe special-needs students are now going to be receiving about \$14,415 per student in that category alone. So we've done a lot. We're up around the 300 million-plus mark for dollars spent on special-needs programming. I do recognize that more needs to be done, hon. member, but you have to do this within the limits available, and you have to do it in tandem with the school system so as to not overload or overburden.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

School Operation and Maintenance Funding

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've met recently with representatives of the Wild Rose school division and the Black Gold school division in my constituency, and they've expressed concerns about the level of operation and maintenance funding provided to school boards. This concern is in light of the rising costs of utilities and the ability of school boards to meet these costs. My first question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Was there an increase in operation and maintenance funding to school boards in budget 2005?

The Speaker: The hon. minister will be debating that budget tomorrow.

Dr. Oberg: Yeah, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just going to comment on that. In the proposed budget that will be before the House tomorrow there is \$351 million for plant operation and maintenance included in that estimated budget. That is a very, very small increase of \$2 million this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first supplemental is to the same minister. Given that maintenance and utility costs are on the rise, can school boards expect relief in the coming months?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult for me to comment on that, considering that we are just dealing with our budget tomorrow. I think the school boards have put a strong case forward. Certainly, the Wild Rose and the Black Gold school districts have put forward very strong cases as to the increasing costs that are out there on operation and maintenance. So although we are just dealing with our budget, we certainly are cognizant of these issues in the school boards as they are perceived today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. How is funding for school board operation and maintenance currently calculated, especially in light of some of these rural boards that have older schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently there are about four different things that are taken into consideration when it comes to the amount of operation and maintenance money that a particular school board receives. There's utilization, sparsity, distance from a major centre, and quite simply the size of the school. We are

currently, though, working on different ways around this particular formula, and I think that there probably are some better ways out there. It's currently under development, but we're looking very closely at some better proxies than what is out there currently. We're working very closely with Alberta Finance to ensure that this formula will be coming out, and I hope to have this formula in place very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Insurance Costs for Nonprofit Sector

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of this government's downloading, Alberta's volunteer and nonprofit organizations are expected to provide ever-more vital services to those most in need. Sadly, they are struggling with the high cost of insurance. Often these organizations are forced to settle for reduced coverage and higher deductibles. My question today is for the Minister of Finance. Since it is this ministry's responsibility to regulate the insurance industry, why does the government appear to be doing nothing to protect the voluntary sector from the escalating costs of insurance?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's any question in anybody's mind that the opposition have supported public insurance. If that's not correct and if I'm misunderstanding, I'm sure I'll be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, we did discuss this issue somewhat in my estimates. I did say that I have a similar concern. We're finding that many towns who used to carry the arena, the riding academy, a number of things like that, on their insurance have had to tell these volunteer organizations that they can no longer do it because, of course, of this cost of settlements and the liability issue.

I can tell you what we have done with ag societies in particular. There are some 300-and-some of those. We got the ag societies together through their association and looked at a group insurance package, which did work for a great number of those and reduced their costs significantly. I think we can continue to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister at least exempt these organizations from the hidden 3 per cent insurance premium tax?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing hidden about the 3 per cent tax. It's very much there. We have had discussions about that tax. If the tax were removed, would the policies go down 3 per cent? Interesting debate and comment. Again, we discussed that during my estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I think what would be more practical would be for those of us in our various areas who have voluntary groups to try and look at a group insurance package. There are companies that will do that. Most of these volunteer groups have overall associations, umbrella associations, and a good model for this is what has happened with the ag societies in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'll be calling on the first of six in just a few seconds from now, but might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I had the privilege of spending just a few moments with the Elderberry Belles chapter from Sherwood Park. This is a group of ladies with the Red Hat Society. Our Premier noted how lovely the ladies look in their red hats. They I think improve the lives of all of us in Sherwood Park with their attention to being lively and enjoying life, and it contributes to the health and wellness of our community. Please today, members, would you join me in welcoming these lovely ladies. There are 10 in the members' gallery.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly Shawna and Jenna. Jenna is here studying Alberta's legislative process on a grade 6 field trip. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I have a second introduction through you to Members of the Leg. Assembly, Mr. Speaker, two staff members from my department, Shawna Brilliant, research assistant, and Kristin Hillenbrand, legal specialist. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Armenian Genocide

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 90 years ago my grandparents escaped the brutal massacre of the Armenian people by the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Ironically, it was a Turkish family that saved the lives of my grandmother and my grandfather. Although both their families were among the 1.5 million Armenians murdered by the butcher battalions, my grandmother always taught us that it was better to love your enemy. Her story and her lessons are not forgotten.

On April 24 of each and every year people around the world, including Canada and the United States, remember the first genocide of the 20th century, the brutal annihilation of over 1 and a half million Armenian men, women, and children, just as every year on April 22 we remember the Jewish Holocaust.

There is a connection between the Armenian massacre and the Jewish Holocaust. They were both predetermined, carefully planned genocides, and because people around the world chose not to acknowledge the brutal butchering of the Armenian people, Hitler was encouraged to brutally butcher the Jewish people. After all, Hitler said, "Who remembers the Armenian genocide?"

As we remember the Armenian genocide we, too, remember the other massacres that remain a source of pain and horrible suffering today. We also remember that hope survives these atrocities. Today many people in Armenia and Turkey now work to support peace and reconciliation through the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission and are attempting to restore their economic, political, and cultural ties.

I wish to extend my warmest wishes and expressions of solidarity

to all Armenian people at this solemn time of remembrance. If anyone in history should ever ask again, "Who remembers the Armenian genocide?" we can say that we remember.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Education Week

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today during Alberta's Education Week to pay tribute to the teachers, principals, and trustees of Alberta's public and separate school systems. Working with parents and the dedicated professionals in the public service, these individuals do so much to support quality public education for Alberta students.

I'm particularly pleased by this year's theme, Public Education: Proud Legacy, Inspired Future. Public education has played a central role in building the Alberta we know and love. Ensuring that every Albertan has the opportunity to succeed, flourish, and contribute to this great province is the best legacy we can leave to younger generations. In fact, it's more than a legacy; it's a profound duty.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. Many schools still struggle with the legacy of underfunding, others needlessly face the threat of closure as a result of poor planning and policy, and almost all: important educational needs that are not being met.

Amidst the problems lies great potential. The foundation of this potential is our teachers. Beneath all the performance indicators, utilization formulas lies a relationship between teachers and students. This is the key. For education is a social process dependent on the professional educators having the ability and opportunity to engage students in this process to inspire them.

Let's reflect for a moment on what this engagement requires in our second century. It requires that we meet the needs of educating an increasingly diverse public. It requires that we recognize and fully support the diverse learning needs of our students. It requires that we engage parents more effectively, not just in fundraising and cutting cheques for school fees. It requires that we help principals provide educational leadership to their colleagues in the classroom, and it requires that we recognize the true value of schools to their communities as well as the value of the communities that schools at their best become.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Education Week

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pride that I rise today to echo some of the comments of the fine hon. Member for St. Albert and add perhaps slightly different perspectives as well. I'd like to recognize all the great people associated with education in our fair province, from kindergarten to grade 12. Education Week, indeed, is April 24 to 30, and our Albertan people can be very proud of the great educational legacy that has been built in this province over the past 100 years.

During this week back in 1905 two school districts, Leachville and Coalfields, began educating their students. Throughout 1905 another 119 school districts were formed as the new government of Alberta took shape, and that was just the start of something incredibly special. Today many results show that Alberta's students outperform students from across Canada. Not only that, on the international stage they score the highest marks in reading and are among the top three in science and math.

Mr. Speaker, their parents' efforts are inspiring as well. Albertans

enjoy one of the most educated populations in the country with 55 per cent of 25 to 54 year olds boasting a postsecondary education.

As is the case with so many other personal, professional, and political realms, Alberta continues its attitudes and actions of firsts. For example, Alberta is the first province to establish a registered apprenticeship program, or RAP, to help students begin to learn a trade while in high school, and Alberta is the first province to establish a technology system that has 99 per cent of Alberta schools connected to the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, many of my aunts and uncles were educators, and my mother taught me a bounty of lessons in my youth. That's for sure. My father taught me five subjects in high school. A couple of careers ago I spent 13 years in three countries at all grade levels as an educator and administrator, mostly here in Alberta. As such, I have just a tiny bit of first-hand knowledge of the great sacrifice and contribution involved with those in education today. I trust that our hon. members will join me as they congratulate the people in their local areas for the incredible things they've done in education.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Agricultural Industry

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I met with the people involved with Growing Canada and Growing Alberta, the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers, and CropLife Canada. Our professionals and businesses in agriculture play a vital role in nourishing our lives in Alberta, Canada, and the world. It is important to know that Canada's agriculture and agrifood exports amount to over \$25 billion per year. Canada's balance of trade in processed agrifood products has shifted from a \$2.1 billion deficit in 1989 to a \$1.8 billion surplus in 2003 and growing.

Agriculture in Alberta increasingly contributes major parts in these areas. During the past 40 years, through commercial fertilizer and related high-yield farming practices, our farmers have tripled food production while using less land. Our fertilizer production is valued at \$3.8 billion in export and \$2.5 billion in our own agricultural use. To fertilize the crops only with manure would require an additional 7 billion cattle. We would have to clear the rest of the world's forests to grow the cattle forage required.

Our agriculture technologies have strong track records. Our dwarf wheat introduced in 1960 helps increase yields by 70 per cent. Our genetic technology introduced in 1973 allows crops to adapt to the prairie environment. Canola, introduced in 1974, now leads the world with its production of 75 per cent of global business. The first biotech crop production in the world was in Canada in 1995. The golden rice produced with Canadian technology in 2000 improves the health of the world's billions of undernourished people. With the improvement of plant nutrition and growth the agriculture in North America generates about 454 million tonnes of oxygen annually, helping to counter the so-called global warming.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's grow Canada, grow Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

2:40 Health Sciences Ambulatory Learning Centre

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning the government of Alberta announced a major investment of what is sure to become a major landmark in our beautiful capital city. I'm referring to the health sciences ambulatory learning centre at the University of Alberta hospital. This facility will change the way patients are diagnosed and treated and how medical students are trained. It will provide co-ordinated diagnostic and specialist

services all under one roof while providing unprecedented research and educational opportunities for health sciences students from various faculties in a team-based approach.

Mr. Speaker, this will mean that a patient who meets with a specialist and then requires a series of diagnostic tests or consultations with other health professionals will have more time, care, and convenient services. In addition, University of Alberta health sciences students will have interdisciplinary educational opportunities, and graduates will provide more comprehensive and balanced patient care.

I had the opportunity to be at the event today to introduce my hon. colleagues the ministers of Advanced Education, Health and Wellness, and Infrastructure and Transportation. I was able to see the kinds of results that are achieved when health authorities, postsecondary institutions, and governments work together for the benefit of all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, by investing \$577 million in such a health and learning centre, the government of Alberta shows once more that health and postsecondary education are top priorities.

In closing, I would like to commend Capital Health and the University of Alberta for their commitment and vision. The health sciences ambulatory learning centre will be great for Edmonton and great for Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Environmental Sustainability

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are rightfully concerned about their environment. The people of this province have told this government time and time again that environmental sustainability is an issue for them but to no avail. The government's own It's Your Future survey showed that the environment is one of the top priorities for our province. How did the government respond? Not a dime in new spending in this year's budget for the environment.

What's more, the Energy and Utilities Board is proposing to revise their enforcement policy. The proposals will allow industry to jump two or three regulatory steps at the discretion of the boards. The new policy was developed without any public input, and instead of setting out guidelines for industry that they must follow, they have changed it to regulations that the industry may follow. This policy will result in an increased risk of environmental damage as well as an increased risk to public health and safety. This government is undermining what small public confidence there was left in the EUB.

All of this while coal-bed methane production is proceeding full steam ahead. Sour gas wells in close proximity to populated areas are being drilled. Our water resources are being taxed by industrial and population pressures, not to mention the impact of climate change on our air, water, and soil.

Our environment minister likes to call water blue gold, Mr. Speaker. Does this mean that the strategy is to sell off this resource to the highest bidder? Where is the EUB when we need them?

Farmers and landowners have banded together to fight the changes in the EUB. They, like most Albertans, want a stronger, more independent board with real environmental regulations. Let's face it. The EUB has a 98 per cent compliance rate because it's so easy to meet those needs.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to come and listen to the people it purports to represent.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of a historical comment today, on this day in 1887 Joseph Ora Card and a small group of Mormons founded the community that was to become Cardston in

Alberta. They were dryland farmers. They introduced a variety of new crops, and they began the introduction of irrigation in southern Alberta. Their temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the first Mormon temple built outside of the United States.

head:

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had certain bills under consideration and wishes to report as follows. The committee recommends that the following bills proceed: Bill Pr. 1, Bow Valley Community Foundation Act; Bill Pr. 3, Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005.

The committee recommends that the following bill proceed with amendment: Bill Pr. 2, the Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act.

The committee also advises that its consideration of the following private bill will be deferred to the fall 2005 sitting of the Legislature: Bill Pr. 4, Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had under consideration the fees charged for petitioning for private bills and recommends that Standing Order 87(1) be amended to increase the fee to \$500 for petitioning for a private bill.

As part of this report I will be tabling five copies of the proposed amendment to Bill Pr. 2.

Mr. Speaker, I request the concurrence of the Assembly in these recommendations.

The Speaker: This is a debatable motion.

The last recommendation has caught the attention of the chair. Is the hon. member saying that the committee is amending the Standing Orders of this Legislative Assembly?

Dr. Brown: Not at all. Mr. Speaker, we're requesting that the appropriate standing committee would take that under consideration. We're simply recommending that the standing order be amended to increase that fee.

The Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Opposed? Carried.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition from some good Albertans from the fine Alberta communities of La Corey, Red Deer, Millet, Blackfalds, Hinton, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Two Hills, Alberta Beach, and other communities, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Mr. Speaker, there are 109 petitioners on this petition.

head:

Introduction of Bills

Bill 40 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 40, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, by brief explanation I should say that this amends the Personal Income Tax Act to enhance and expand the Alberta family employment tax credit effective July 2005 and to index the phase-out threshold and credit amounts to inflation effective July 2006.

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a first time]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a report entitled Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity produced by the Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council. The report finds that discussion papers on retail options for small utility consumers are "without consideration for consumer interests."

Thank you.

head: 2:50

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Stevens, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, pursuant to the Legal Profession Act the Law Society of Alberta annual report, 2004. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, a package of information relating to the memorandum of understanding between Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Alberta Learning for the entry of temporary foreign workers for projects in the Alberta oil sands.

Speaker's Ruling Items Previously Decided

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to moving to the point of order, I have to advise the members of an administrative matter that we need to deal with by way of this definition. If hon. members look in the Order Paper, members will find Motion 507 in the name of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. That motion standing in that member's name is due to be considered next Monday evening, May 2, under Motions Other than Government Motions. The motion reads: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to prohibit smoking in public buildings and indoor workplaces."

This motion raises issues virtually identical to those considered in connection with private member's Bill 201, which received third reading just yesterday, April 25, 2005. The chair finds that Motion 507 duplicates the issues already debated and decided by the Assembly with respect to Bill 201.

This is not the first time that this type of issue has arisen in the Assembly. On March 28, 1995, Speaker Schumacher ruled the motion by the then Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark concerning electoral boundaries out of order on the grounds that it violated the

rules of anticipation found in Standing Order 23(e) as there was a government bill, Bill 20, Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, 1995, standing on the Order Paper for second reading. This rule is based on the principle that the same question should not be raised twice during the same session.

Speaker Schumacher quoted *Beauchesne* 566(7) as follows: "A motion dealing with the same subject matters of a bill, standing on the Order Paper for second reading, cannot be considered." The rationale then as now is that a bill leads to a more effective result than a motion, as stated in *Beauchesne's* 513(2) and *Erskine May*, 23rd edition, pages 388-9.

In this case Motion 507 does not merely anticipate a debate, but it clearly deals with a matter already decided during this session. Bill 201 received third reading yesterday. It is fair to say that its ultimate fate and contents were in doubt up to the concluding vote.

The chair could have ruled the hon. leader's motion out of order earlier, but in fairness to the member and in keeping with the latitude the chair gives private members, there was no intervention. At this time, however, it is clear, even clearer than the 1995 example, that the House would be considering the same issue twice. To allow the motion to proceed would depart from the precedents of the Assembly and mark a relaxation of the rules as they have been applied.

Clearly, this is a unique circumstance, so in keeping with the practice of this and in granting private members the greatest leeway possible in bringing matters before the Assembly, the chair is willing to relax the interpretation of Standing Order 39.2 and to invite the hon. member to present a revised motion to the Clerk's office by the end of business tomorrow afternoon, Wednesday, April 27, 2005, for inclusion in Thursday's Order Paper and debate next Monday evening.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under our Standing Orders 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member." Earlier today in question period the leader of the third party used a word that I don't believe is parliamentary, but worse yet, the word "misleading" – the dictionary definition of that is, of course, is: cause to have wrong impression about someone or something.

I believe that he violated 23(i) on two accounts. One was to make it sound like the draft paper that is a matter of discussion was in fact not a draft. Of course, that is absolutely not true. The fact is that in due time you will see a final report from that committee. I guess that worse yet was that it seemed to be indicating that I was trying to leave a wrong impression, Mr. Speaker, and in fact that is anything but correct. I have no reason to believe that the member did not have yesterday a copy of the draft report.

I find it extremely interesting because in *Hansard* on page 976 from yesterday the member asked a question of me. I won't read the whole question, but the part that is relevant to this discussion reads, "Will the minister please tell the House why, in fact, the government is stamping 'draft' on this report?" My answer to that was, "That's so interesting, Mr. Speaker, because when that draft report came through, the government didn't put 'draft' on it." Now, the member, I noticed today, does have that report, and I notice that there is no "draft" on it. So what was his motive yesterday for saying that there was "draft" on the report?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on this point of order.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. leader did not have the report. Today we do have the report. It was given to us yesterday. I was there when it happened. I have never seen a draft report in all my years of being in politics or in other businesses that didn't say "draft" on it if it was a draft report. Here is the report. Nowhere does it say "draft" on that report. So it seems to me that if the minister is saying that it's a draft report and said a number of times yesterday that it was a draft report, then that just doesn't follow. If it's a draft report, it would say "draft" on it. The minister has already alluded to that.

So we have to take that this report, the recommendations of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, was submitted as a final report; otherwise, it would say "draft." In that case, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that it was misleading if this was not a draft report. One could speculate: if we have a final report here, why wasn't it being released to us? That was part of the question. It seems so logical that if this report came out in February not saying "draft" on it, we have to take into consideration that it's not going to be very favourable or what the government wants. What's going on in that period of time? Why is that not being released publicly so that we have to leak it here, get it to us, do what the government should be doing?

It seems to me that at the very minimum a draft report is a draft report, and this does not say "draft" on it. So I would say to the Assembly that it seems to me quite misleading when you call it a draft and we don't have a draft report. When we see it, it doesn't have "draft" on it. So what are we to take? That this is some sort of final report.

The other fact is that this was done on February 23. Here it is two months later, and we haven't even seen the report, Mr. Speaker, so we have to wonder as an opposition what's going on in those previous two months. I don't think the minister has much ground to stand on. If it had "draft" on it, he might have something to complain about, but it does not have "draft report" on it.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a fairly important question that needs to be addressed, and I'd like to raise a particular issue. First of all, our rules are very clear: ministers, members making statements in this House are to be believed. The minister said that it was a draft report. The hon. member says that because he has a copy of a report – he doesn't know the origin of the report. He doesn't know where it came from, or at least he hasn't identified that. He doesn't know whether it's a draft report or not.

Mr. Martin: It was tabled in the House.

Mr. Hancock: Tabled by whom?

Mr. Martin: By me just a few minutes ago.

Mr. Hancock: The hon. member says that it was tabled in the House, and therefore that answers the question of whether it was a draft report or not. The fact of the matter is the hon. member does not know.

The Speaker: Can you just speak through me, please?

Mr. Hancock: I'd be delighted, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hancock: The hon. member has no knowledge as to whether

it's a draft report or not a draft report. All he knows is that somebody purloined a report and gave him a copy of it. The hon. minister knows whether it is a draft report or not a draft report and has said so in the House. The hon. minister, by the rules of this House, is to be believed.

3:00

If the hon. member wants to know why that report that he has in his hands from whatever source he got it, dated February 23, has not been released to the public, that's a fair question. If he wants to know what's happened since that time, that's a fair question. If he wants to question whether anything further has been done with the report, that's a fair question. If he wants to ask whether, since the time of the minister saying that it was a draft report, a full report has been prepared, that's a fair question. But for him to get up and say that the minister is misleading the House because he said that it's a draft report and the hon. member with no personal knowledge otherwise doesn't believe so and then impugns the integrity and character of the minister by saying that he's misleading the House, that is not appropriate.

Therefore, I would suggest that it's a very valid point of order raised by the hon. minister.

The Speaker: Thank you very much for that participation. Hon. members, let me just first of all draw to your attention certain citations in *Beauchesne*. *Beauchesne* 494, Acceptance of the Word of a Member.

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

Then I'd draw your attention to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, and I take you to page 526.

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the [Assembly]. Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day . . .

Should the Speaker determine that offensive or disorderly language has been used, the Member will be requested to withdraw the unparliamentary word or phrase. The Member must rise in his or her place to retract the words unequivocally. The Member's apology is accepted in good faith and the matter is then considered closed. However, if the Member persists in refusing to obey the directive of the Speaker to retract his or her words, the Chair may refuse to recognize the Member until the words have been withdrawn or may "name" the Member for disregarding the authority of the Chair and order him or her to withdraw from the Chamber for whatever time is determined.

So we have a situation today where the word "misled" has been deemed parliamentary on some occasions and unparliamentary on other occasions. We did have an occasion here earlier in the year, on April 17, when a member used the word. It dealt with a point of order, but it was not directed against a particular individual, and it basically said something quite differently than is being said today.

Today the statement is very, very clear. The hon. leader of the ND opposition said the following: "Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that he's misled the House." That was a direct statement against the minister, and clearly our rules prohibit such statements.

So, in conclusion, this language is unparliamentary given that it's been directed against a minister, and I'm requesting the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to withdraw the remark. But I'll accept the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who is his spokesperson today, to withdraw the remark unequivocally, please.

Mr. Martin: Well, I cannot withdraw another person's remarks. I'll take your advice back to the hon. member.

The Speaker: Then this will be the last time that I'll accept this to happen. If the member knows that there's a point of order against him, he has a responsibility to be in the House to deal with the point of order.

Member, you should instruct the hon. member, please, who happens to be the leader of the ND opposition, that I will not recognize him tomorrow until he withdraws the remark.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Environment

The Deputy Chair: As per our Standing Orders the first hour will be allocated between the hon. minister and members of the opposition, following which any other member may participate.

The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I intend to be brief to allow questions from the members across the way and, of course, from all members of this Assembly.

First of all, I'm very pleased to be here to present Alberta Environment's business plan and budget for the fiscal year. Albertans have told us that the environment is a major priority for them. In fact, during last fall's It's Your Future survey over a quarter of a million Albertans said that the environment is a top priority and on the minds of them and their families. I'm pleased by that, and it's really encouraging because Alberta has experienced tremendous economic and population growth, fuelled by our success in attracting investment to our province.

It requires balance: how we have environmental principles, which are so important in protecting what I refer to as the mother ship of our environment in terms of what we've been blessed with, and at the same time in a province such as ours, that has a bounty of natural resources, how we balance the economic pressures that are attracting so many people to our province. Obviously, I believe that our environmental principles are first and foremost if we're ever to be successful in any of those other principles that I've made reference to. This combined with growing demands for information and participation has put a tremendous amount of pressure on our ministry.

In fact, I pose a question to you all, a rhetorical question. For example, in 1995 the Ministry of Environment had 55 requests for information under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Last year, we had almost 1,250 requests, which accounts for over 45 per cent of the entire government of Alberta. So if you can imagine, 45 per cent of the requests for information

were by our bosses, Albertans of course, and this is only one of 24 ministries. That percentage demonstrates a tremendous amount of pressure and interest as well, I might add, by Albertans. Overall we continue to meet the growing expectations of Albertans for action and input.

I want to thank Members of the Assembly, in particular the Environment critic from Calgary-Mountain View, for attending the first environmental conference, that took place last week. Amazingly, we anticipated over 200 delegates; in actual fact, we had close to 700 delegates, which reinforces the statements that I made earlier. I also want to thank the Chairman of the Standing Policy Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, who also participated in that conference with me last week. I appreciate the participation of both members from this Assembly in that important conference.

3:10

My ministry's operating budget this year will in fact increase by about \$12 million. This is the first increase over the past five years for our ministry. We have been challenged by that economic growth that I made reference to earlier and the demands of Albertans for a sustainable environment but also a vibrant economy. We need better government-wide policies, though, and part of the business plan this year, I want to say, is about how we continue to break out of our silos for the policies and rules and regulations that affect our environment because the environment, I believe, doesn't have any political stripe. I believe the environment crosses all boundaries of every corner of our province, our country, and, for that matter, every corner of the world, even though I realize there are not corners to the world. The point is that it crosses every boundary because we all know and recognize how important the environment is to us.

I want to say that a cross-ministry partnership, supported by information and knowledge and resources of our stakeholders and environmental conditions, is so important as well.

I also just want to take the opportunity to introduce, actually, two members of the Environment ministry who are with us today; that is, the Deputy Minister of Environment, Peter Watson – if Peter could rise – and also my executive assistant, Laurent Auger. As you can see, our incredible staff that are here with me today are going to address, hopefully, all of the questions that are being asked in this important debate this afternoon.

The budget for the Ministry of Environment last year was approximately \$125 million. This year increasing it by \$12 million puts it at almost \$138 million. Again, as I said, this is an increase for the first time in numerous years. About \$10.2 million of that is going to be used for key stakeholders in terms of building on the success and a better way to manage Alberta's resources and protect our environment. We've allocated about \$10.2 million of that particularly to launch our budget relative to the important assessment and information relative to protecting our environment.

I also want to say that there is \$7.8 million for expanding and monitoring networks and technology upgrades so that the information systems of our staff, our partners, and Albertans throughout the province can better communicate effective environmental management. This requires reliable, accessible information.

About \$2.4 million will go towards policy development and innovation, and of course this investment will help us develop new policies because we have to continue with our attitude that we can always do better, be it in health care or education or the environment. There holds the three perhaps most important priorities of this government in terms of what Albertans have told us.

I'd like to say that as we go forward down this important path, the investment will help us in developing and integrating existing

policies. I refer to it as IRM, an integrated resource management approach, where we continue to break out of our silos so that we can in actual fact work on a more comprehensive plan. If you really think about watersheds, air quality, no matter what part of the environment I'm talking about, they do not look at political borders or institutional or jurisdictional boundaries. You know, we need to take this approach in terms of what boundaries it crosses over. That's why we work so closely with the British Columbia government as well as with the Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments on important issues of water monitoring.

I also just want to take a moment to move towards climate change. Alberta and its partners are truly, I believe, Canadian leaders and in some ways world leaders in taking action on climate change. As you know, this Assembly, of course, approved and passed the only climate change legislation in Canada. I believe that is an important part of the leadership that Alberta shows. But, again, we can take the attitude that we can do better.

I believe also that investing in technology and research and renewable energies is equally important. I had the honour and privilege of being with my federal counterpart, the Minister of the Environment, in Buenos Aires in Argentina just shortly after becoming Minister of Environment. We talked about the importance of renewable energies and technologies. It's important to recognize that technology is only one part of the equation of continuing to build on our environmental sustainability.

I want to be able to say that we will maintain our climate change program at its current operating level. Once again, we have Climate Change Central based in Calgary but work taking place in all corners of this province. This \$2 million over the next three years will continue to support practical actions, which I believe is so important. I want to say that part of our budget is introducing once again, because of its success, retrofitting and doing more energy fits for things such as furnaces. In fact, Albertans can benefit from and have benefited from the retrofit of their furnaces in the past, but now we're actually moving to washing machines and other devices that can help in practical applications to help become more energy efficient.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by saying that Albertans place a high value on the environment. The renewed investment that I am proposing will demonstrate our government's continued commitment. Obviously, as we go down the road into the future, there are so many important initiatives that I look forward to speaking about further this afternoon such as the Water for Life strategy and a lot of others.

I will yield my time now to perhaps address some of the budget that is in the Ministry of Environment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It'll be my pleasure to answer any questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister for submitting his budget for review.

Alberta is the richest province in Canada. Albertans rightly have the expectation that we should be finding leadership on all fronts, especially on the environment, which, as the minister has clearly stated, is the mother ship of all else that we do. Leadership, Mr. Chairman, for me means commitment. It means having the courage to stand up against a lot of forces that would undermine and take advantage of and exploit our environmental commitment. It means listening to the public. It means transparency to those who have an interest, a vested interest, a long-term interest in our environment. It means treating the resources that we have, this natural capital that we have inherited and that we pass on to our children and grandchild-

-ren, as an inherently valuable resource in and of itself quite apart from what it provides monetarily.

We have had tremendous development, industrial and resource extraction, in this past decade particularly, and because of the boom there is a real sense in Alberta that there may be some compromise to our environment. There's a strong sense, frankly, that we don't believe that anyone in this government knows if we are managing our resources sustainably. The question for most Albertans is whether in this deregulated environment anyone is ensuring the long-term sustainability of our natural capital.

To do this, to know whether we're managing our resources sustainably, we have to know what is there. We have to have an inventory of our water, our soil, our forests, our natural capital. What is the flow through in these areas? What is the depreciation? What is, indeed, the value of leaving it the way it is, including, Mr. Chairman, a measure of cumulative impact? This has been talked about for many years, and there's an urgent need for us to develop the capacity to measure the impact not only of isolated activities in our province but the total impacts in a particular bioregion which depends on that bioregion for its sustainability.

The talk of sustainable environment otherwise becomes simply rhetoric. How much water do we have? How much arable land? How certain are we about the long-term impacts of our massive oil and gas extraction, including coal-bed methane? How well do we know the long-term implications of this experiment of which we are all a part? What about our food production in the future, with more and more land being taken up by expanding cities and towns and resource extraction? What is going to happen to our tourism, hunting, and fishing when in every quarter, every section of land we have development encroaching?

3:20

The very least we expect from the Minister of Environment is to begin to provide the tools for good decisions, for good policies rather than the crisis and catch-up and secondary role that this department has played for decades. Alberta Environment must begin to set limits for our development, and that is going to be the test for this ministry.

In terms of the budget, Mr. Chairman, \$138 million constitutes less than 0.5 per cent of our budgetary expenses this year, grossly inadequate to fulfill what Albertans have said is the third most important priority in this province. This is an outrage, it's an embarrassment, and it's a shame to all Albertans that we place so little value on the protection of this vital long-term resource. The questions remain. Given \$138 million in the budget, how are we spending it? Are we getting the best value for long-term protection of our natural environment? The answer would require an ability to measure, again, to monitor, and to make public how we are doing on the key indicators of sustainability.

The Auditor General in past reports has indicated that there is a need to make a closer link between goals, indicators, and outcome measures, and I know that the department is working on that. It's clear to me that there needs to be more resources applied to this, and not only applied to the measurements, Mr. Chairman, but to the analysis of the measurements. Data is just data until it's interpreted and transmitted to those who can make decisions in the long-term interests of protecting the environment.

Let me go on, then, more specifically to look at some of the programs and the spending priorities. With respect to the much-discussed Water for Life strategy, the budget is much the same as last year. It's fundamental, especially to those of us who live in southern Alberta, that we invest in and use wisely the water that has been given to us. It appears and there's scientific evidence to show

that this resource is indeed depleting not only as a result of climate change but also as a result of the depletion of our mountain glaciers.

I've mentioned the need for establishing an inventory of water, surface water and groundwater, so that we can establish the extent to which we are managing it sustainably. I don't need to reiterate that. That's fundamental, and it's a clear and expressed value for Albertans.

The government has also stated that it has allocated money in the Infrastructure budget for implementing the Water for Life. While infrastructure is an important dimension of water quality, it says nothing about the need to sustain water quantity over the long term. The allocation of \$27 million to infrastructure will effectively develop water management infrastructure, but how will this contribute to the long-term sustainability of our water supplies in the lowest rainfall areas in southern Alberta? Why was there a decrease in this infrastructure investment over last year? It dropped, in fact, from \$30 million in 2004-05, by \$2.4 million this year.

Can the minister explain how infrastructure funding for the existing problems will indeed protect the water that we have into perpetuity? What projects are being initiated to ensure our sustainability with these dollars particularly?

We need to measure increasingly how dollars attached to particular programs translate into results in the long term. How much of the money is being used to develop and implement a watershed source protection framework that addresses, again, the cumulative impacts on a watershed on a larger scale, including the wetlands that are so vital to not only the biodiversity but also to ongoing inflows into the water supply?

The government states that water conservation and sustainability is a priority, but they continue to call for interbasin transfers as opposed to looking at a long-term plan that will ensure adequate supplies into the future based on conservation measures and minimizing the need for interbasin transfers. How is it that Stettler county in Bill 11 has been allocated up to 10 times more than was actually needed on a population basis? It appears that we're planning for growth instead of saying to an area, "This looks like a critical area; it's time to start thinking about limits to development in this area," such as Okotoks has done. It set a limit on its boundaries. It set a limit on its growth. Anything without limits is clearly in this context going to require continued, ongoing, special dispensation from this government to provide interbasin transfers and piping and great expense not only to the pocketbook but to the environment itself.

In terms of climate change I need to acknowledge the important contribution this department has made through Climate Change Central in its communications, its advocacy for climate control, for greenhouse gas reductions at the citizen level, at the corporate level, at the municipality level. I see some excellent material and some excellent vision coming out of Climate Change Central, and I want to acknowledge that. I'm not sure that \$5 million, again, is going to be sufficient to do that when this has become the pre-eminent issue in the 21st century for all of us in the western world, indeed all of the planet, to deal with. I have to hope that that will continue to be an important role for Climate Change Central.

I would say that I would also like to see some breakdown of what the evaluation of Climate Change Central is. What impact is it, in fact, having on citizenry? What impact is it having on industry in terms of greenhouse gas emissions? Recycling is part of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Are we moving towards especially organic material being recycled, composted as opposed to going into landfills and creating more greenhouse gas? How much bang are we getting for the \$5 million in Climate Change Central?

The other aspect that needs to be said about climate change is,

again, the setting of limits. This government and the federal government, in fact, are both very reluctant to set limits. We must have limits if we are going to make an impact on climate change.

Intensity measurements are one step towards meaningful and absolute reductions in greenhouse gases, which is what we as a country have committed to. We as a country in the north have, clearly, tremendous advantages with respect to our resources, our capacity to adapt to climate change. In fact, living in an area where we are less likely to be flooded, where we are less likely to have extreme weather events, where we have more capacity to respond to emergencies, where we can deal with the transmission of infectious diseases that are moving north through mosquitoes and other arthropods: all of these things say that we have an ethical imperative to be leaders on the greenhouse gas issue. I see a straggling in the federal government, and I see a straggling in the provincial government on this issue. We are not leading the way as we could be. As a pre-eminent country in the world we should be showing real leadership on greenhouse gas reductions.

If we cannot learn to live within the means of the planet, we will pay a huge price. This is not being discussed enough. We read every day in the newspaper about how impossible it is for business to meet these targets, how impossible it is for Alberta to meet these targets. We don't hear how seriously this climate change is going to impact the health and well-being of millions and millions of world citizens, including Canadians and especially our north, where food supplies and ice flows are changing dramatically. The tundra, the permafrost is gone in many places, and we're already seeing dramatic changes there.

3:30

So we have to take this seriously, and I would like to see a very vigorous, constructive dialogue with the federal government. I resent as an Albertan the inability of this government to work with the federal government on issues of such importance and mutual benefit.

I noticed that in relation to line 3.0.2 under program 3, sharing environmental management and stewardship, the allocation of \$5 million, then, for climate change was a decrease from last year. Why was there a decrease? What does that mean in terms of our commitment to climate change action?

On page 220 of the business plan under line 1.13 the government states that it will "initiate actions that make Alberta a leader in energy efficiency improvements, carbon management strategies and adapting to climate change and variability." What new programs can you manage given the limited budget that you have? What new initiatives are planned? How will these programs make Alberta a leader? Given the current crisis in the number of inspectors in your division, how can we give assurance that these investigators and inspectors are really going to be able to match the task that's needed in relation to greenhouse gas emissions and monitoring those good practices of energy efficiency leadership that we feel we can take?

What performance measures do we have in Alberta Environment to ensure that the programs are having the effect that we have called for? Can the minister explain what progress has been made to ensure that the largest emitters will indeed reduce their emissions?

Again, I look to the minister for leadership in relation to our federal/provincial relations and a more constructive relationship than has been there in the past.

In terms of reclamation and emergency preparedness, page 220 of the business plan, the ministry states that it will "resolve contamination and liability issues through flexible tools and incentives to promote the restoration of contaminated sites to productive use." On page 225 there's an estimate of \$4.9 million for reclamation

purposes, which is down from \$5 million. What does that mean? How is it that we can reduce our investment in reclamation and contamination?

Given the December 2004 licence liability report from the Energy and Utilities Board, stating that there are 31,000 unreclaimed abandoned wells in Alberta, can the minister tell us how he expects to monitor the remediation and reclamation of these sites with such a shortage of resources? My understanding is that we actually visit the sites of only about 10 per cent of these wells that are shut in and reclaimed. Clearly, that reflects an inability to do a full assessment and raises the question of liability for all Albertans in the foreseeable future.

What is the ministry doing to ensure that more environmental assurance staff are monitoring the refineries, the batteries, and the other infrastructure, the pits, mines, and wells that are in operation around the province in increasing numbers? How can we be sure that in this environment these spills and contamination sites are actually being reported and addressed? How do you ensure that the surface isn't being cleaned up while the subsurface is grossly contaminated unless we do more visiting and monitoring on-site?

What programs is the Ministry of Environment involved in in terms of emergency preparedness? How much money will be dedicated to this strategy since, again, the increasing anxiety of Albertans is reflected with the growing encroachment of oil and gas developments closer to populations? Is the minister involved in rapid response to emergencies, especially in relation to the release into water and airborne contaminants? How assured can we be that these will be identified early and communicated to the public?

In relation to compliance and enforcement – and I'm looking here at line 2.0.2, page 140 – there will be \$9.4 million allocated. This is an increase over last year. Given the lack of environmental officers to ensure compliance, how will this slight increase give us assurance that we are conducting inspections, or we are doing appropriate monitoring and issuing appropriate environmental protection orders? How can we know that these inappropriate actions are actually being responded to and stopped and fined, in fact?

Can the minister provide a breakdown of what proportion of the staff have been changed over the past decade? My understanding from looking at the budgets over the past decade – it's difficult because you split off from Sustainable Resource Development – is that there does not appear to be any substantial increase in your staff capacity over the past decade.

More specific to the financial questions, line 1.0.5 of the estimates indicates an increase in funding from the previous year in corporate services. It's up to \$7.9 million from \$5.8 million. What does this extra \$2 million constitute? How is that being spent, and how does that add to the strength of the department in carrying out its mission and goals?

Line 2.0.7, again an increase of about \$2.9 million in policy development and innovation. Can you give us details on what this consists of? What policy initiatives has this resulted in?

Line 2.0.3, an increase of \$17 million from last year's \$14 million for monitoring and evaluation.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the 20 minutes allocated to you has now elapsed.

Dr. Swann: Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, would you like to respond, or would you like more members to participate before you respond?

The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Well, thank you very much. I also thank the hon. member for some important points that he's made that I believe are important to all Albertans. I want to just take a couple of moments to add to this important debate. I think that's important, as I said, to all Albertans and all Canadians.

I want to first comment relative to the issue of Climate Change Central and the leadership that Alberta has taken but also in reference to, in fact, the federal government. I just want to reflect for a moment back to just recently in December. Indeed, it was my honour and privilege on the invitation of the federal government at a COP 10 conference, where, in fact, the federal Minister of the Environment shared half of his time in addressing 187 nations with the province of Alberta, talking about not only is this province recognized for its natural resources in terms of what we have but also why we cannot be viewed as the environmental capital of Canada when it comes to some of the leadership we've demonstrated.

The hon. member and others are aware that we are the first province in Canada to have the electronic recycling program that we launched just a couple of months ago, but also the federal Ministry of the Environment asked for Alberta's advice relative to the importance of technology and renewable energies. Now, those two points are only two pieces of the puzzle when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases in terms of protecting our environment when it comes to the glacier and in terms of what is taking place. We all have a role to play in terms of working towards that.

I want to say in terms of the relationship federally with both the Deputy Prime Minister and the federal Ministry of the Environment that on my invitation, of course, they visited Calgary. Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, they visited Calgary at Climate Change Central, which we often refer to as C3. This is really very interesting from the perspective that it's a public/private partnership, where it's not just driven by government. It needs to have stakeholders from all sectors. I'm just very pleased to say that the public statements made by the federal Minister of the Environment as to Alberta being a leader in having the first agency of its kind was something that's a tribute not just to the ministry but literally to all of those that are involved.

3:40

I want to say that I will share the hon. member's comments with the board of directors, who are made up of NGOs, who are made up of industry, who are made up of government officials at our next board meeting that's going to be taking place in Calgary. Relative to the good work, the president and CEO is Allan Amey, and I do know that they continue to do good work in advocating on behalf of the environment in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which I think is so important.

Also, I want to say in this House that recently we talked about what we are doing regarding so many wells being drilled in Alberta. Of course, we have an important enhanced oil recovery program. How are we going to better conserve the water that we have? It's such a rich resource in our province, but we have to do a better job in terms of how we manage that natural resource.

If I can give an example, it's my vision that we will continue to be, you know, good managers of water, but I believe that's not good enough. It may be okay as a North American standard, but we have so much to learn from other water users where it is truly considered rare and in such incredibly short supply. I use the example of Israel. The Israelis, of course, are the most incredible managers of water because they're in a desert that has a dense population. It's my hope that each of us in North America and specifically in the province of Alberta will continue with their consumer behaviour. It's about how

we modify behaviour in terms of conservation. It seems like we don't want to wait until we have such a short supply. Let's do it today in terms of what it is and how we manage.

Energy conservation in terms of water conservation is so important in terms of what we're doing. As I mentioned in this House yesterday relative to enhanced oil recovery, we want to make it and continue to make it a top conservation initiative that, certainly, I as minister and I know representatives of this government are committed to.

I want to take a moment, though, to also make reference to the issue of engaging other agencies in developing a common strategy for environmental monitoring, that the hon. member has made reference to, not only the monitoring but also the evaluation and collecting data. Once that inventory of data is collected, then the question is: what do we do with it? Certainly, this ministry over the next year is engaging so many agencies, of course, in terms of collecting that data, then analyzing that data as we go forward with our Water for Life strategy, which I believe is so important

The hon. member also mentioned recycling and, of course, organics. You know, it's such a top priority in terms of our municipal waste action plan. Of course, that was released recently this year. So we are continually working with our stakeholders on that waste management program. I'm very proud of the leadership we demonstrated when we released that program. We want to continue with that in terms of organics, in terms of recycling.

You know, composting continues to be a top priority. I ask members of this Assembly: how many in this Assembly today, in fact, compost? I had the privilege about a month ago of meeting with Dr. David Suzuki, who is considered to be a leading environmentalist when it comes to so many initiatives. In actual fact, on the invitation from Alberta he, of course, participated at a very exciting program at the Cochrane school, where wind power as well as solar panels were used in terms of generating enhanced energy for that school. The students I truly compliment in terms of that initiative. It really gives me comfort knowing that our students in the province of Alberta play such an important role in terms of the seeds we plant for the future, ensuring that sustainability for it.

He also makes reference to, I believe, an important point on the tools for continuous improvement. I want to say that some of the tools that we want that he made reference to, you know, are in terms of developing innovative support, planning for activities, guiding our decisions, and ensuring environmental quality but also sharing in the environmental management and stewardship. We're all in this together in terms of the mother ship that I made reference to earlier, that I believe crosses over all political boundaries.

Reviewing and updating Alberta's wetland policy and developing an action plan are very important in terms of the implementation plan that we're going forward with.

Establishing our provincial water advisory councils.

Also educating and scoping and preparatory work for development of a government-wide provincial land strategy are very important for us, which is, of course, one of the objectives we want to continue to build on.

Also educating Albertans to better understand the value of this rich resource that we have in terms of water, in terms of our Water for Life strategy.

It's my hope that the environmental principles and standards that we develop, that we continue to build on based on the important data that we collect and the analysis that we have, are some things that we've got to continue to build on. Some of the ministers on the front bench here that are economic ministers, we have to ensure that balance is right because there is no question the province of Alberta has a reputation for its development of industrial wells, going from

10,000 to 20,000. Well, we have to ensure – and it's certainly my mandate as Minister of Environment – that that balance is right, to ensure that we don't jeopardize.

A good example of that is if we look to the neighbours to the south. If you look at how they have managed their water in terms of the water canals and diversions that they've done in the United States with over 330 million people, if you examine what they have done relative to where we are with only 33 million people and 3 million in Alberta, we have a tremendous opportunity to learn from that history of what our neighbours south of the border have done and haven't done right, based on the tremendous industrial development as well as the people that are of course consuming.

If you look at the city of Los Angeles today, they have more people than our country, over 35 million people. Of course, how they divert and try to consume and how they conserve water is putting tremendous pressure on them. Well, I'm proud to say that the province of Alberta has 3 million people, and the issue and the challenge for us is how we continue with our practices and our behaviours to ensure that the tools that the hon. member makes reference to are in place, to ensure that we will never ever be faced with what larger centres in the United States are. In Colorado and in Los Angeles, you know, they are in literally, I believe, a situation where we can learn from that history in terms of what we do managing this valuable resource that we have.

I want to also say that implementing the CASA, the clean air strategic alliance, electricity sector recommendations is so important as a tool. Also, implementing, of course, our climate change action plan will continue to be a top priority of ours as well.

So I want to say, Mr. Chairman, that we continue to consult, to learn from our history as we go forward. Also, if I could just use an example. In terms of our inventory of surface water and groundwater we want to continue to expand on our monitoring networks that we have developed. That is so important as well as part of our additional \$12 million that is part of our budget.

So, Mr. Chairman, I want to say today that as we go forward, I share in many of the outcomes that we're looking for. I think should we base our success not only on the money we spend but also, more importantly, on the outcomes that we achieve. Of course, all of us in this room and in this province are stakeholders and have a role to play to achieve those objectives.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate having the opportunity to rise to speak on the Environment budget here this afternoon. I would like to thank the hon. minister and his staff, I guess, as well for putting together a very readable, comprehensive budget. I have my questions in several categories, which I will address in clumps, and then the hon. minister can answer them as he sees fit.

3:50

I must say that in doing a number of these budget estimates over these past few days, I've found this Ministry of Environment one perhaps more troubling than the others. I know that we hear a lot of rhetoric in regard to the importance of the environment and environment protection, but you know people put their money where their mouth is, and when we see the budget for the environment here, in fact the overall budget as I'm reading it has only increased by 4 per cent. Considering, at least by the government's own estimate, a 2 and a half per cent inflation rate, then we could really see almost a negligible increase to the overall environment budget here in Alberta for this coming year.

Quite frankly, I find that disappointing because there are just so many prescient issues coming to our attention and becoming so increasingly obvious in regard to environmental degradation in the province of Alberta that, you know, we can only reinforce our commitment, if, indeed, there is a serious commitment on the government's side to the environment, by putting money forward. Show us the money where we can in fact make substantive differences in the way that we conduct ourselves personally, through business, governments, and agriculture so that we do at least try to approach a sustainable culture here in this province, at which we are entirely unsuccessful at this juncture, I would suggest.

I appreciate as well the minister's enthusiasm. I think that I have been impressed from the beginning with his interest in the environment, but you know at the same time I sort of feel sorry for the lack of tools that he has been given to make substantive changes in our environmental practice here in this province. The ministry, as I have come to know it over these past few months, has been systematically sort of dismantled in terms of its teeth, its clout, its ability to effectively monitor the different aspects of the environment across this province and to administer directives to other ministries as to how they should proceed. It's an unfortunate circumstance, and I can only wish the minister some better tools in the future to be able to work with perhaps the very most important part of our Alberta heritage, which is the physical environment around us.

As I said, I'm only seeing a 4 per cent increase, and I would like to ask: why only such a small amount considering the reinvestment that has been going on in other ministries and the perceived increased focus in the environment, as often expressed by the minister?

It seems as well that the ministry has focused its expenditures this year. My understanding is that you're taking money away from the sharing environmental management and stewardship program quite substantially, a decrease of 18 per cent, and putting more money into the ministry support services program, probably a comparable percentage amount, up by 19 per cent. Within the ministry support services program spending is increased in the human resource section and corporate services. I'd be extremely curious to understand: what's the change in priorities here? What's the change in focus that would suggest such dramatic moves of money from one area to another, increases and decreases respectively?

As of the 1st of February, 2005, there's been an environmental fee imposed on new computers, related equipment, and televisions. I applaud this initiative, and I'm hoping that we can see the monies collected from that fee to target specific environmental concerns, especially in relation to recycling or dealing with electronic equipment specifically. The new fee will cover the cost of collection, which is great, transportation, recycling materials, public information and awareness programs, and such things. What I would like to know is if you could tell us approximately how much so far has been garnered from this program. I realize that it's only a couple of months in, but what's the direction? How successful has this been so far, and what changes need to be made perhaps?

I just want to have a reassurance here, again, that this environmental fee will specifically target the disposal and/or recycling and/or reusing or reduction, all of those r's, of electronic equipment specifically and not just go into general revenues.

My next group of questions is in regard to enforcement and monitoring of our environment. Of course, this is such a massive task. It's such a daunting task that, again, I'm quite disappointed with the amount of money allocated to this most important part of the Department of Environment. Without proper monitoring and enforcement the ministry is rendered ineffective and unproductive. Say, for example, the program for assuring environmental quality

has its budget increased by \$7.5 million, an increase of 9 per cent. I guess it's something, I suppose, but it seems inadequate to just how wide ranging this assuring environmental quality mandate really is.

Consider, for example, the clean air strategic alliance recommendations for this area. The CASA board of directors recommended that ambient air quality objectives for numerous substances such as nitrogen oxide and benzene be developed. As well, the same report also recommended that additional information on other substances including aluminum and radionuclides be compiled over the next three or four years. So I'm asking: can the minister please inform us if these recommendations are being implemented and, if so, where in the budget have these resources been allocated? I'm curious to see that.

Also, the Auditor General in his 2003-2004 annual report recommended that the Ministry of Environment improve its "process for developing new performance measures and ensure the measures in its business plan assess the results each goal aims to achieve." This is the very core focus of the Auditor General and how he evaluates the relative success or failure of each ministry, and it seems as though the Ministry of Environment is the most wanting in this regard. I know it's perhaps the most difficult place to measure but certainly wanting, nonetheless.

The ministry accepted the recommendations of the Auditor General in principle and said that "these recommendations will be considered in preparing the 2005-08 Business Plan in the context of the government's standard for 2005-2008 ministry business plans." So I'm asking, of course: has the ministry, indeed, updated its performance measures in accordance with the Auditor General's report? According to the ministry's website, the last time that there was a comprehensive review was way back in 2001, so I'm very curious to hear a specific update on this information, and I think many people are as well.

Furthermore, the Water for Life strategy is a new initiative I would like to applaud. I certainly appreciate the different stakeholders that have been brought into the process, and it certainly is a comprehensive and much better funded initiative than others. The Water for Life strategy calls for performance measures in order to be effective, as well, for measuring success, and I'm just curious to know what has been done in regard to those. Say, for example, a drinking water safety initiative providing an indicator for the "performance of facilities delivering safe drinking water, and demonstrates continuous improvement of facilities" and their operations. A very large but essential task. To provide affordable, safe drinking water to every citizen and every resident of this province I think must be a priority. We need performance measurements to ensure that that's being done safely every step of the way.

4:00

Water quality and doing an assessment of what exactly we do have. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has pointed out on a number of occasions, until we have a comprehensive inventory of our water cycle here in this province, it becomes almost a moot point to be dealing in percentages and bits and pieces of things here and there when we don't know how much we are in fact dealing with. If we do – I'm not going to use the word, that "m" word – it's confusing without a baseline from which we can work. Confusing indeed.

Finally, I would like to – well, almost finally – just speak specifically to one site and one coal mine. I think it's interesting just to look as a case in point at the Cheviot mine sort of southwest of Hinton. I think it brings up a number of interesting points that I've been talking about in terms of monitoring and doing adequate measurements before a company is allowed to come in and do their work.

The minister approved a list of recommendations designed to lessen the impact of the road to the Cheviot mine. One of these recommendations was that wildlife, including grizzly bears and wolves, killed by the trucks driving to and from the mine be reported to the government within 24 hours of an incident. I would like to know specifically if the ministry could release those numbers and, perhaps, put that onto the ministry website if this mine comes online and stays functioning, as it seems to be.

You know, one of the things that I found the most disconcerting about the Cheviot mine project is that the mine was approved and the site was approved with some degree of comprehensiveness in terms of an environmental assessment but the road that goes back and forth from the mine was not. In fact, in terms of overall square kilometres of impact on the land this road is much larger and much more damaging to the environment in this area than the actual mine. So, you know, I find it very difficult to believe that the existing regulations are adequate for us to be truly protecting the environment.

We've had exchanges before where, you know, I've been asking about regulations and adherence to regulations, say with the Lubicon incident, and while the ministry comes back by saying that all of the rules have been followed, I think that we need to take an honest look at whether those rules are adequate in themselves. Sometimes it seems like regulation is a dirty word around here, but that's the reason that we have a Legislature in the first place.

I think that we need to revisit some of these regulations and give them teeth and give them impact so that people follow them. You can throw all the carrots around you want, but a lot of these energy companies and mining companies are not particularly vegetarian in terms of eating or chasing after those carrots. They could use a stick just as easily, and they'll stay around and they'll follow those rules because they know that the returns are so much of a windfall for them, regardless, that they'll follow the rules. Lots of responsible companies are happy to follow strictly enforced, comprehensive rules. We're not doing anyone favours by letting them off easy.

Anyway, back to the Cheviot mine. We're talking about the road specifically as a case in point, if I might say. Can the ministry explain any steps taken to ensure that wildlife are less likely to be killed in the first place on this road? I was speaking to Mark Boyce, a University of Alberta biologist, and he said that the Cheviot mine is in one of the best bear habitats on the eastern slopes anywhere in the Rockies. Undoubtedly, the mine does disturb bears. How is the ministry ensuring that the impact on the bears from human activities is minimized?

Finally, talking about climate change, of course this is just a massive area unto itself. I do echo the Member for Calgary-Mountain View in certainly saying that Climate Change Central does produce good things from what resources it does have, but to suggest that Climate Change Central is the linchpin that's going to effect proper limitations in greenhouse gases in this province is facetious at best. I mean, Climate Change Central is a way for different groups to get together and share ideas and come up with suggestions, but to suggest in any way that it would actually impact the reduction of greenhouse gases to the levels that we are required to do so in this province is absolutely – I won't use the "m" word again – confusing at best, I would suggest.

I think that we could do a lot better and we must do a lot better, or I think that we will be an embarrassment to our children and grandchildren when they see how little we did at the crucial point in history when we should have done something. Five million dollars, I would suggest, for the climate change program is an absolute token amount. I think that it reflects a deep lack of commitment toward climate change in this province, and it's really nothing more than

public relations money, you know, to make things look like there's something going on when there's really not much going on at all.

What we do need to arrest climate change is a real reduction in our output of greenhouse gases, including large final emitters, in this province. In fact, some of the deals that have been going on with the feds and Stéphane Dion I find to be objectionable at best because what they're doing is constantly reducing the amount that final emitters need to contribute to our reduction in greenhouse gases. Of course, the bulk of the responsibility is then being shifted onto regular consumers, hard-working Canadians and Albertans in particular who will have to bear the brunt of the cost of dealing with climate change. That is quite frankly embarrassing, and as a representative of some 45,000 Albertans I refuse to let that stand as an alternative.

There has been some talk about using underground storage facilities to deal with CO₂. Until this technology becomes realistic, I think again that it's misleading to always come up with this sort of patent solution that makes everyone think that we can deal with this without having to make any comprehensive change in our lifestyles or economy or what have you. The CO₂ injection process is being bandied about a lot these days amongst industry representatives, and I read about it in the press a lot more.

You know, I just say that we must try to be as honest as possible with these sorts of solutions and realize that they're only a piecemeal solution at best. Again, it's confusing for the public to suggest that, you know, if we inject all of our CO₂, we don't have to worry, and we can keep blasting around with our Dodge V-10 trucks and SUVs and heat your house at any point that you want to.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the 20 minutes allocated to you have now elapsed.

The hon. minister.

4:10

Mr. Boutilier: Well, thank you very much. I have a question across the floor that I'll ask first of all. Are there any members on the opposite side – I say to the opposite side and I'll also ask to this side – who drive SUVs? I'd be very interested to know. I'm proud to say that I turned in my SUV, which was a government vehicle, and drive a much smaller vehicle. In fact, I'm looking at a variety, but I have a very small vehicle.

Having said that, I must admit that sometimes I want to be sympathetic to those who do drive occasionally. I use the example when I travel the massive highway 63, travelling to my own home constituency. I can say that wildlife, of course, travels that highway, and the ideal situation there would be to have wildlife fences, like we'd have on every highway. Maybe in the years to come we'll have wildlife fences on every highway as you see in our national parks, of course Banff and Jasper where they have esthetically pleasing wildlife fences. In fact, that is something that I can't disagree with the hon. member. But we recognize that members have the choice of a variety of vehicles on all sides of the House, of course, as our members choose to use. I guess ultimately we're all in this together in terms of climate change.

In terms of industry playing a key role and in terms of large final emitters, what they do and how they do it, they have a role to play. If I could use just one small example in terms of the oil sands and emission intensity. In actual fact, because of technology and the investment that they have put into technology, which I am a huge advocate of continuing on, they've reduced, in terms of emission intensity per barrel, the actual CO₂ emission by about 50 per cent over the last 10 years. Is that good enough? No, it's not. Can they do better? Yes, they can, and sure, they will based on the important

work that we have done and continue to do through Climate Change Central.

I made a public statement that hon. members may not be aware of at the Alberta Chamber of Resources. I indicated to the CEOs of industry across all parts of Canada and Alberta that it's my responsibility to keep their toes to the fire when it comes to what they do today, what they are doing tomorrow, and what they plan to do 25 years from now, their reinvestment.

My encouragement – and I'd be interested in terms of this important debate – would be that I would far prefer that the money is kept right here in the province of Alberta, at both hon. members' universities: the University of Calgary for the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View but also here at the University of Alberta for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, which I had the honour and privilege of being able to teach at. Why don't we keep that money right at these institutions rather than a plan of having it going across the sea? It's a global issue, and we recognize that. But why do we want to see money, billions of dollars, leaving our province and our country to go to buy a piece of paper called a carbon credit?

Globally it is an important issue, but I'd far prefer that that money is used right here as one piece of the puzzle in technology at the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary or the University of Lethbridge, where they are doing wonderful work on water. I know the minister of infrastructure is working with the University of Lethbridge as well.

The fact that emission intensity has been reduced by 50 per cent per barrel over the last 10 years is good. It's impressive, but we are looking for even greater technologies, where someday we can say proudly in this Assembly that it's actually zero emission in terms of what is coming out of the resources that we are in fact utilizing.

I want to say also to the hon. member with all due respect that my calculation is that we're just almost at 10 per cent in terms of our actual financial increase this year going from where we were last year. I'm just doing some quick math here, but, again, a 10 per cent increase of funding for Environment, which I certainly appreciate the Minister of Finance's close ear on when she, of course, heard our presentations at Treasury Board when we came forward, working together.

I want to say that as we go forward, the \$3 billion that has been utilized and allocated, the only province in Canada that \$3 billion is going toward not only physical infrastructure but the human infrastructure that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View mentioned earlier when he talked about human infrastructure and what that means. In fact, I just had a meeting today with a gentleman from a conservation group that is going forward, and we talked about how we can use all of our waste, about creating the natural trails that we have through Trailnet, which is just one good example of how we can do that. But I want to say that some of the \$3 billion for infrastructure going to municipalities will go toward, of course, water treatment plants and water infrastructure, which is so important. So the almost 10 per cent increase in our budget is so important.

I also want to say to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder that you have my assurance and reassurance when it comes to all of the dollars going towards a recycling plant. In fact, I invite all members of this Assembly, if they would like, to visit one of our sites down in Rimbey, Alberta. I want to say that all of that money goes directly into recycling for the mercury and for the electronics that are melted down. That is going directly to the whole issue of helping our environment. It does not go back to any other fund but is specifically targeted for that particular authority, and I'm very proud of that.

Also, a couple of other issues on computer information. That's so

important in collecting information. We have about a \$3 million upgrade that's going to be taking place, part of our increase of \$12 million. That's going to be, of course, to help us with infrastructure tools in terms of our environmental monitoring, which is so important. I believe that Albertans continue to have an important expectation of government in terms of that.

I failed to mention, though, just in terms of a statistic – I don't know if members would be aware that from an electronics recycling perspective, our management recycling authority will continue reporting back to me on a quarterly basis. But I'm also very pleased by the fact that with electronic recycling, did you know that we have recycled to date about 900 tonnes of material? If you can imagine 900 tonnes, you know, in terms of the electronics that we have, that's a lot of the laptops that we see in here and others that are being recycled. I think that's important.

I might add also, if I could share with you, that tomorrow I have a conference call with all of the provincial ministers of environment or similar ministries and also the federal minister. It was really quite interesting that they were all asking how it is going in terms that we are the only province in Canada that has a recycling program. It's really quite interesting. Also, I want to compliment the predecessor of this ministry, Dr. Lorne Taylor, for his work in terms of his vision, in terms of going forward on that. I think it's been very, very important, and it's being recognized across the country.

In terms of climate change, we are the first ones with a law. We're the first ones with an agency. But I also want to say that we are now consulting with stakeholders relative to being the first ones to get an equivalency regulation. That is so important relative to getting it right and dealing with this very complex issue.

Sometimes I look at performance measures, and I want to just take a moment because the hon. member rightly mentioned: how do we measure, and what are our performance measures? Specifically, we'll continue to work on improving our performance on a variety of issues. But if I could just give you eleven examples: from a drinking water safety indicator to a river water quality index, to an air quality index, to an effective infrastructure, to a flood-risk map, stakeholder satisfaction as well as municipal solid waste, our initiative there, renewable and alternative energy generation, not to mention of course the beverage container return rate that we have and are very pleased with, and also our used oil recovery rate, and finally our water use efficiency and productivity indicator – just a small example of measurements that we're using in terms of being able to measure how well we are doing.

I want to say to the hon. member that he raises some excellent points relative to where we are. I also want to say that in terms of the issue of compliance and enforcement, which the hon. member mentioned, a significant element of next year's program will be the implementation of the compliance assurance education strategy. Again Alberta has been a leader in working with Albertans and industry to ensure that they understand the role they play in protecting our environment.

Of course, education is so important. In fact, not that long ago I was meeting with some chief executive officers, a combination of environmental and industry people, and I told them that I would prefer to not talk to them but to their children because I believe, in actual fact, that their children, from what they're learning in our education system today, are the ones that are planting the seed in terms of influencing not only other young students but also their parents and grandparents. I think that is encouraging, and I guess I remain optimistic as an elected official that young people will continue.

4:20

I saw CEOs shaking their head, but I'm, like: "If you don't get it by now, figure it out. If you're not going to hear it from government

regulators and other elected people, then you're going to hear it right at home from your spouse or from your children or your grandchildren." That is a network that we want to continue to enhance because, as I said earlier in my opening remarks, we all have a role to play, not just the CEO of a company, not just the president of the Sierra Club or the Suzuki Foundation. We all have a role to play in that.

As minister I want to say that if I can in any way, shape, or form be a bridge to so many of those areas that appear to have been polarized in the past – and I'd use just one example. It appears that environment people, which I meet with each and every day, are concerned with the environment. But you know what? It's okay for them to be sustainable in terms of recognizing that dollars are so important to achieve their objective, just like from industry's perspective it's so important to recognize that the environment principles are so important to their children and their families, not just what they're doing at their company. So we have that understanding and bridge between environment principles and economic principles.

I'll continue to be that bridge and not have a polarized world. In actual fact, I used it in here, and I'll try it again, about commonality, if I could. It was by Robert Frost where he talked about in the final analysis the most common human link being that we all inhabit this small planet, we all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's future, and we're all mortal.

If you look at the polarization that takes place between some of the development that goes on in industry and environment, the challenge for all of us is if we take that as the starting point. In fact, last week at our environmental conference, that the hon. members in this Assembly are fully aware of, we talked about connecting and collaborating, not compromising but connecting and collaborating, where environmental principles can be maintained and sustained well into the future once we're long gone.

The question we should be asking is not what we are going to do for the next 25 years or the next 100 years but what will this place look like a thousand years from now? We have over 6 billion people in this world today, and the reality of it is that we have to change our behaviour. We ultimately have to change our behaviour if we are to be able to reach – as I shared with some of the hon. members yesterday, scientists are predicting that we actually should be able to, if conservation practices are enhanced, allow 20 billion people on this small Earth of ours, 20 billion over the next long period of time. But today we need to change. We've got to be thinking like the Israelis think when it comes to water management today because they're faced with that shortage. We've got to think in terms of what people in the Netherlands are doing when it comes to recycling.

I made a comment. I said that it's my hope that there will be no landfills in the future in this province or, for that matter, in this country. What I meant by that – I used the example of the small condo that I rent in the community here. I take my waste, limited as it is, down to a chute that goes into a bin, that ultimately, then, is trucked away to a landfill. It's my hope that we will have an underground landfill right in the municipality. The municipality, then, will convert that waste into useful energy in an environmentally friendly way, where there are no alleyways and dumpsters so that we ultimately can be conserving and using our resources as valuably as we can.

I want to share this with you. A Conservative, a former leader, Preston Manning said – and it was very interesting; he of course worked with the Canada West Foundation – that today the challenge for the next political party is how importantly they pay attention to the environment. But I think our challenge can even go further. It's

not for a political party; it's for our society. As a society where is it that we're going to go to in terms of protecting the mother ship?

I believe that the word "conservative," that we all use and where our party comes from, still comes from the same root word that "conservation" comes from, and the word is "conserve." Be it a conservative or be it a conservationist, the bottom line is that "conserve" means: don't waste my natural resources and don't waste my money. I think that those two principles are very important as we embark on the future of what holds in terms of environmental principles. Each of us has a responsibility.

I just want to say to the hon. members that have asked questions that I'm trying to cover off as best I can some of those. But the tools that we have, the data we collect, and what we do over the next period of time will be the ultimate challenge if we are truly going to sustain the importance of protecting our environment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you. I don't know if I should name them or not, but there is a car company – you will recognize the commercial pitch when I say it – that keeps saying in its commercials that – should I name it? – at Ford we keep thinking about the perfect sedan or how to build a sedan or how to build a great sport utility vehicle or whatever. And, you know, whenever I hear those commercials, the thought that always occurs to me is, well, you know, that's great that you all sit around and do the thinking about building a great sedan or a great car or a great vehicle, but as the guy who might be persuaded to drive one of your vehicles, all I care about is that you get on with building it. Mr. Chairman, I'm feeling a little bit of that same sentiment here today.

The minister certainly, I think, cares in a philosophical, theoretical way, in principle, about the environment. I think he cares deeply about it. He may even have hugged a tree or two in his day. I don't know. And, by the way, if he has, I would say that there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, and I would support him in that endeavour.

Nevertheless, we have I think here a couple of specific problems in these estimates in terms of how the minister is going to play his role. And, by the way, I fully agree with the minister that this is a shared responsibility that has nothing to do with political parties, with partisan politics, with politics for that matter. It has to do with all of us changing our ways. It has to do with all of us grasping the concept of sustainability, first of all, and then taking real concrete steps to change our ways so that we live a sustainable lifestyle. Right now the average footprint of an Albertan – in other words, the average amount of resources that an Albertan consumes in terms of the lifestyle that we lead – represents somewhere between six and seven hectares per person. It has been expressed in another way, that if everyone on planet Earth lived the highfalutin lifestyle that we do here in the great province of Alberta, we would need something like five planets Earth to support life at that level.

[Ms Ady in the chair]

So certainly action needs to be taken. And I don't know, Madam Chair, how we're going to take that action in meaningful ways with a budget – and we can use the minister's numbers if we wish – that has a \$12 million increase from last year's budget to this year's budget. Or we can use another way of looking at it which doesn't look quite so good: a net increase of \$5.5 million from the 2004-2005 forecast to this year's budget. It's not much of an increase. And I'd like to know specifically what can be accomplished with numbers like that.

For instance, there are 31,772 unreclaimed abandoned wells in the province of Alberta, according to the December 2004 licence liability report. I'd like to know how the minister expects to properly remediate these sites with an estimated budget of \$4.9 million for reclamation purposes, down from last year's \$5,005,000. I'd like to know what the minister is doing to ensure that more environmental assurance field staff are actually in the field. I'd like to know what the minister plans to do around compliance and enforcement. That area, line 2.0.2 of the estimates, sees a slight increase, \$600,000, over last year allocated to compliance and enforcement. I hope that at least some of that increase is going to hiring more environmental officers, but I would argue that \$600,000, even if every penny of that is spent on hiring environmental officers, is not going to make a huge difference. We have a real shortage, as the minister knows, of environmental officers to ensure compliance. It's been an issue in this province for years. It is a situation that his ministry can really only act on specific complaints.

4:30

By the way, this is nothing that is unique to this minister or this department or even this level of government. I mean, it happens at all levels of government in some areas, where you do not have enough compliance officers of whatever sort to be proactive. You're reduced to, you know, waiting until somebody complains. Like in the city of Calgary, for instance, there are not nearly enough bylaw officers to enforce the bylaws. Now, in many respects given the city of Calgary that's a good thing because there are far more bylaws than any city of a million needs. But, for instance, if you've got a dog running loose, a dog bites, you know, and you complain, eventually a bylaw enforcement officer will get around to you, but the bylaw enforcement officers don't exist in numbers to be on the lookout for dogs running loose, that sort of thing.

Taking that back to what we're talking about here in terms of the environment, if we want to achieve the kind of environmental stability, I would argue, that the minister is talking about, it's not enough to just have a minimal staff of compliance officers who can only act when they get a complaint because that is reactive; that is not proactive. Every time you react to something like an environmental complaint, you are in essence shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted. The environmental damage has been done. Some of that can be remediated. Sometimes all of it can be remediated. Sometimes all of the damage can be repaired, but sometimes it can't.

So I wonder if the minister can tell us specifically how many environmental officers his department intends to hire over the next fiscal year, how far \$600,000 will go in that area or how much of that \$600,000, in fact, he's going to spend in that area.

Can the minister provide a breakdown of the percentage of total staff change, let's say, in the past decade for the Ministry of Environment? Can the minister provide the number of environmental officers and investigators employed by the ministry for the past five years? I don't expect the minister, of course, to have those numbers necessarily at his fingertips. I would be quite satisfied if the minister would undertake to get back to us with those numbers.

I want to take a look at page 219 of the business plan, strategy 1.4. It states that the Ministry of Environment will "work with other ministries, governments and stakeholders to begin to implement . . . Water for Life," which we have been told time and time again is vitally important to all the people of Alberta, to this province's future, going forward, and to this government. Again, I think it is tremendously important in theory and in principle. I just worry that there aren't the dollars going to this that can actually put that importance into practical terms.

Some of the implementation strategies include:

- Developing and implementing a phased, long-term strategy to protect Alberta's drinking water;
- Developing water management objectives and priorities for watershed plans to sustain aquatic ecosystems, and enable sustainable economic development; and
- Supporting best management practices in sectors to improve the efficiency and productivity of water use.

Some questions around that, Madam Chair. Can the minister provide specifics, please – specifics, please – as to how he will achieve these goals with other ministries? What other jurisdictions is he in consultation with, and could he report to this House, please, on the progress of those consultations? How can the minister follow through on these goals, as laudable as they are, without adequate funding? Or if the minister believes that this funding is adequate, can he convince me?

Are there any other ministries involved in implementing Water for Life besides Infrastructure? I know that this perhaps should be mined in more detail when we do the estimates on the Infrastructure and Transportation budget, but if I'm looking correctly here, there is an allocation of \$27.6 million in the Infrastructure budget to effectively develop and maintain water management infrastructure, and that is a decrease of about 2 and a half million dollars from last year.

We have been told by no less than the Premier, the top Tory, as he described himself earlier in this House, that, in fact, much of the implementation of the Water for Life strategy was going to take place within the area of the Infrastructure budget. I guess I would like to know: is the commitment of Infrastructure here only for the upgrading and maintenance of existing water treatment facilities? What about new facilities for water treatment? What are we doing additionally? What are we planning to do additionally, not just to hold our place, not just to – if you'll pardon a dreadful pun here since we're talking about Water for Life – tread water but, in actual fact, to move forward with the Water for Life strategy?

I fully agree with the minister. His predecessor did an awesome job in coming up with that strategy, shepherding it through. It's an excellent policy document. It needs to be considerably more than a policy document. We all know that. It needs to be implemented, and it needs to be implemented in the most timely fashion possible. That is what concerns me. We're not really doing that, I fear. We're just trying to stay put, just trying to hold our place. I believe the minister knows that we need to move forward with it, and we need to make progress quickly.

So I wonder if I can prevail upon the minister – and I'm a little bit leery of asking the minister to respond right now because I know that there are others who would like to get some questions in on the floor. Of course, it's up to the minister to decide how he wants to respond, but I'd be willing to hear briefly, orally now some of these specific answers, or if he wants to provide more detail, since we are running short of time here, and take some other questions, that would be fine with me if he'd provide those in writing, as well, or any combination thereof.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Boutilier: Madam Chair, I thank the hon. member for some important points that he has raised, and I will endeavour to answer many of his questions.

Starting with our staff. Within the Ministry of Environment, of course, over the past five years there were many other branches that now are potentially in Sustainable Resource Development and other areas. We have just under 800 full-time members on our staff, with a budget that the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has noted. It is our intention this year to be hiring just over 20 more environmental

enforcement officers and staff to the Environment ministry. Is it enough? No, it's not, but certainly it's better than the alternative. So we are moving forward. That will bring our complement to over 800 members on the environmental team.

I would like to say also that on the Water for Life strategy – and I appreciate what he has acknowledged – presently, today, we have over 500 either private or public water facilities. I think history is such a wonderful teacher that we can learn from the situations that took place in Walkerton. It's just one example of what we or any province or any country never wants to see happen in terms of a loss of life because of poor quality and not proper monitoring and other things that took place.

4:40

I want to say, of course, that I'm looking eagerly for the review, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View mentioned earlier in his remarks, relative to not only collecting information, analyzing it, and determining what changes we have to make. It's almost a system study. First of all, we analyze. Then after we do the analysis, we interpret. Then after we interpret, we have to implement, of course, and that is an important part of our Water for Life strategy over the next period of time.

I want to say from a compliance and enforcement perspective, which the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has brought up, that we respond to about 13,000 calls per year. In fact, we do on average over a thousand inspections.

It's almost like a bylaw to a degree. In fact, in my former life as a mayor and an alderman, of course, sometimes complaints are initiated based on people who call in to complain about something that's going on, and that's okay. In fact, I have examples of where we had enforcement officers that were too eager in the bylaw department because they were going around and putting tickets on cars that actually were turned the other way on a typical street. I had a person come over to me when I was mayor, and they took a picture of my car that was parked the opposite way on the street too. This was about 10 years ago now, and at the time what we began to realize was that on the street someone was washing their car, and they turned it the other way to be able to get to the hose to use the water to wash the car, and we had an overzealous – it really is so important to use discretion in terms of how we apply.

As my grandfather once said, you know, the whole problem with common sense is that it's not so common. I could add another term to that, that when he said "the whole problem," he did insert a particular profession that we seem to be about in this Assembly when it came to common sense. So I am trying to take heed of his remarks relative to being in public office and applying some common sense.

We do require more staff – I recognize what the hon. member is saying – as I'm sure other ministries do. From a reclamation perspective I could just use one example. The underground petroleum tanks, or UPT, as it's referred to, does fall in part under, of course, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, which in my previous ministry I had the honour of going forward with, where we commissioned \$80 million that was used for underground petroleum tanks, where we took the high risk. But presently in my Ministry of Environment under reclamation, of course, we have just under \$5 million specifically for reclamation, particularly in the Smoky River coal mine, which is just one example.

I want to say from the onset that the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the proper remediation and reclamation is taking place – for instance, in this example and others, oil and gas, they have the financial responsibility to do the proper remediation and reclamation of abandoned sites or whatever the activity is. My responsibility is

to ensure as a regulator that they are doing their job relative to the rules that we have and the regulations we have.

I once again will commit to this Assembly that in terms of the laws we have in place, they are first and foremost in terms of environmental initiative. Second of all, ideally it would be wonderful some day not to have to have laws, but we require laws and regulations because of the fact that we can only judge industry, we can only judge others based on our lowest denominator, not by the ones who excel in environmental sustainability but those who are not doing the job. In fact, what they do is taint all the others that are doing good work. So where we have been of course focusing is on 10 per cent of our high-risk activity areas, based on their history, based on their reputation, and based on practices. We have taken that approach, and it's been very successful for us from an enforcement perspective when it comes to what different activities are going on within our province.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

On the 10 per cent increase that the hon. member mentioned earlier, I want to say that in terms of some of the things we're embarking on this year on top of just the Water for Life strategy, we're moving forward aggressively with our climate change plan, our regulation and our consultation, our electronics recycling. Our new standards for coal-fired power plants, of course, are an important initiative, not to mention our air and watershed groups as well, which are so important as we go down this road in what I call important enforcement and compliance.

I want to say at the beginning, though, that the words "enforcement" and "compliance," I had some stakeholders say that they sound like strong words. In other words, they view them as nail them and jail them as opposed to fair and square. Certainly, I can say to the good people that work in the Ministry of Environment, they're experienced, they're young, they're energetic, and they're committed. So I believe and it's my observation that for those over 800 employees that are in the Ministry of Environment, they have the passion that I think is an important ingredient in ensuring that that common sense that my grandfather talks about as important be applied to rules and regulations and, at the same time, to how we can enjoy the wonderful bounty of natural resources that we've been blessed with in this province.

Some of the information going back 10 years, unfortunately, I do not have, but we'll endeavour to get that to you, hon. member.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to reference my remarks, first of all, to goal 3 in the business plan. Goal 3 states: "Albertans work with others to safeguard the environment." Under that it states what it means. This means "the Ministry works collaboratively with other ministries, governments, organizations, associations and communities to effectively manage the environment." Then it goes on to say, "With knowledge and opportunity, Albertans can be actively involved in caring for the environment." It goes on, then, to talk about strategies, and in relation to water strategies 3.11 states: "support Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils to continue watershed management plans," and 3.13 states: "support the work of the Alberta Water Council on watershed management issues in the province." So my comments relate, then, to watershed planning as is stated here in the business plan.

My concern really relates to the progress that is being made in terms of watershed planning as it relates to the Battle River watershed area, and that includes the Pipestone Creek area, which feeds

into the Battle River, and Driedmeat Lake, and so on. This watershed or waterway provides water for the Camrose area. It provides water for Wetaskiwin. It provides water for other centres further down, such as Forestburg and so on. Last year we ran into a rather serious problem where there was a shortage of water, and they had to open the weir at Cold Lake and let extra water down, which meant that the level of Cold Lake was lowered considerably. But there is some urgency here in this watershed, particularly as we consider the economic development of the area.

So my question to you is: what is being done in terms of studying the alternative solutions to this particular problem that exists? What is being done in terms of making decisions on the alternative action that would or should be taken?

I notice in your budget that there are dollars for Water for Life. There are dollars for water operations. I noticed in the capital budget that there is \$171 million over three years for planning, but I don't know how any of this relates to this particular issue and this particular problem. I would like to know from your department how advanced we are in studying this issue and coming up with a solution. So could you enlighten me on how this budget, then, addresses this issue as it relates to my constituency and other surrounding constituencies as well?

Just to conclude, going back to my original comments relating to goal 3, making reference to other ministries that might be involved in coming up with a solution here, I would ask: what other ministries are involved in this and where might I find dollars for this particular study and to solve this problem in other budgets, perhaps? Can you enlighten me on that?

Thank you.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member. From a perspective of watershed planning, ultimately, as we look in terms of how we go forward, our Water for Life strategy, of course, deals with many of those issues. The hon. member pays specific attention to the Battle River relative to the situation there, and he's absolutely correct. In fact, I've appreciated his insight on how we move forward with the knowledge that we have garnered in the past and from the money, of course, a lot of the infrastructure money, that we are going to be utilizing to assist the hon. member's particular area. The Battle River area is in the ministry of infrastructure.

4:50

I do know that the minister is very much aware. We work very closely in terms of my ministry and the policies we develop in watershed councils as well as our watershed planning and with the ministry of infrastructure, who has the money for doing some of the weirs, some of the diversions, some of the ways that we can ensure that in the future and well into the future.

The hon. member is fully aware that in his particular area it's a growing population. There are tremendous pressures that are being faced in his area. More people are moving there now that they celebrate the Alberta junior A hockey championships. They continue to go back. I'm not too particularly pleased with that one, though, in light of the fact that they actually defeated the community and junior A team that are in my area.

The money is there to direct it so that the planning that we have already undertaken, that we're moving forward on, will be used in a way that makes the most sense, that common sense I talk about, ensuring that we conserve the water that we use and even find better ways to do it so that it can be enjoyed by all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to state right from the very beginning that I have faith in this minister. I believe he's sincere, and there's no doubt in my mind about his integrity. But what I see is that all the other kids got brand new shiny budgets, taking into account population and inflation, and his ministry received hand-me-downs. Unfortunately, funding, especially in this province, is symbolic of importance. This was brought out by two previous speakers. That's a concern for me.

Another concern I have is not only the stewardship and the accountability of the Environment ministry, but, being a member of the Public Accounts Committee, each time we question a particular ministry, it's almost typical that it's a new minister. There seems to be very little continuity from year to year with all the ministry changes. It is my hope that our current Environment minister will have a chance to set and realize a vision although given the funding that he's been provided, managing the vision will be difficult. I find it, as I say, frustrating that when we go to ask questions about a specific year's budget, we don't at the same time have a chance to see where that department is going or what the vision is. We don't get a sense of continuity from year to year. To me this is where accountability and stewardship need to be improved.

I also believe that this minister has been placed in a very difficult if not impossible position due to the fact that he's Environment minister and he is also the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Within that particular constituency that he represents there are so many different demands coming at him that I think that sometimes he must feel that he's a referee wearing a striped shirt and carrying a whistle.

We have heard from the delegation from Fort McMurray about how their infrastructure is very much in need of support increase. The public infrastructure is not able to maintain where the private infrastructure is headed, and we have this great demand for more and more oil: let's cash in on the world markets; let's produce, produce, produce. But within the member's own constituency what is happening at the public level and what is happening at the private level do not jive.

He's also put in a kind of difficult position because as the Environment Minister he has to improve environmental expansion within his area so that further houses can be built, and they're extremely necessary. I'm not stating that this is a conflict of interest. I'm just saying that the minister is wearing so many different hats that I'm sure it must cause a great deal of difficulty.

He's being pressured by industry to provide developmental permits. He's being pressured by the citizenry to allow greater land expansion for housing developments. There are pressures on his own environmental responsibilities within his area because the tar sands and the ponds and the extract continue to grow, and what will be done with them in the future, I think, is a large concern. To me, what I equate it with is the Sydney tar ponds in Nova Scotia. It's not the kind of legacy that we want to consider in the environment. So I do have a great deal of sympathy for the minister because he has so many things to juggle, and he doesn't have a budget that reflects the importance of what he has to juggle.

The other concern, again, that has been brought up by previous members is the lack of co-operation between the two levels of government, between the federal government and the provincial government. We have had cases – and I've repeated them before – of outfits like Shell, BP, Petro-Canada, and Suncor who have already met the Kyoto protocol requirements. They've done it with existing technology. Suncor, especially, is one of the bigger players in this area, and if they can control their emissions voluntarily and with current technology, I don't quite understand why this government isn't pushing some of the other big players for similar environmental

responsibility and stewardship. These company's bottom lines went up, not down, when they showed this type of stewardship.

The other area that I'm concerned about is the co-ordination between, say, Energy, Sustainable Resources, Community Development. It seems that the protection of the environment is potentially in a conflict, an ongoing conflict, with industry and the pursuit of wealth. It always seems that the environment is the last consideration. We've been told frequently in press releases that we mustn't bite the hand that feeds us, but unfortunately that hand is not only feeding us; it is constraining the quality of our life.

There is some kind of need for a communications ministry, and I certainly don't believe that RAGE has that ability to co-ordinate the various related ministries. There has to be an interrelationship between, as I was saying, Energy, Sustainable Resources, Environment, and Community Development, which is responsible for a portion of what I think should be under Environment, and that's parks and protected areas.

I'm not convinced that there's sufficient talking between departments, that there's an ongoing dialogue. As I say, I've experienced this in the wilderness, where people weren't exactly sure who was responsible for what. When we magnify that by thousands and thousands of employees, we have to eliminate that confusion. Unfortunately, the thousands of employees aren't available within this environmental department. They should be, as far as I'm concerned, the ultimate steward, the ultimate assessor, the ultimate approver. While you have to balance economy with environment, given the choice of the two, I will favour environment. So we need that kind of communication to take place.

Also, we've referred to – and it has been brought out in one of the member's statements today – the role of the AEUB. Frequently we hear the term "arm's length" applied to this organization. It's certainly not arm's length from industry. Industry supplies 60 per cent of the Energy and Utilities Board budget. That's hardly arm's length. Then the other 40 per cent of the budget is basically made up by the government and, as was noted, a 98 per cent approval rating for exploration and development and a constant pressure on this Environment minister and ministry to speed up approvals.

5:00

Again, I talk about the minister's own backyard where we're talking about billions and billions of dollars of development and yet insufficient road work, insufficient infrastructure. To me the balance has been lost. In terms of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board I don't believe they're representing the public concern. I believe they're representing the concerns of private industry based on the approval rating.

Just one last thing. If the Environment minister could consider the possibility of taking over the area of parks and protected areas, to me that would go a long way to having consistency in policy. I would also urge the Environment minister to think about the low percentage of parks and protected areas we have. I know that it's not strictly his ministry, but he has an overriding responsibility for the environment. Right now with the ongoing sale of public lands and the fact that only 4 per cent of Alberta's lands have been set aside for parks and protected areas, and even within those 4 per cent there are industrial intrusions, I think very soon we need to increase that percentage. We need to increase the enforcement of the protection of the area, and we have to have ministers in place long enough for a vision to be realized.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Thank you very much to the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, and I want to say that many of the comments that he raises are, I think, very, very on the mark relative to work that has to be done. In fact, it's really quite interesting that the Ministry of Environment in its present structure has been in place now for just over four years. It's true that history can be an excellent teacher in terms of doing a comparative analysis. In fact, we then have to ensure that what we are comparing is accurate so it gives us true data – that's important, as members have mentioned earlier – in terms of the appropriate action.

I would like to just ever so briefly talk about some things that are happening that may not be directly suggested in the budget, but let me try to fill in some of the gaps. It's coming from northeastern Alberta, my home constituency. There have been duly noted important questions raised relative to the massive investment that's going on and also the footprint and cumulative effect that is taking place, not only just for species at risk but, as well, in terms of what's taking place. I want to say that the approach, you know, that we are trying to take is one that is more based in the community as opposed to where jurisdictional boundaries are. We want to look at things in a way that takes a look at the global picture. That may even cross over to other borders. It's something that we have to continue to do.

I do feel, of course, having played hockey, that not only am I a referee with a whistle; I want to provide assurance to you that as Environment minister I'm the only referee with a whistle that also is carrying a stick. I'll call it a hockey stick, but it's a stick that is appropriately used where deemed appropriate. So I appreciate the hon. member's comments.

Because of the things that are taking place in northeastern Alberta, my family and my neighbours and the people where we live actually value the environment equally if not more than others because of what we're seeing taking place. You know, some of my very close friends that I worked with on municipal council are aboriginals: Chief Boucher, Chief Waquan, Chief Cyprien, and Chief Janvier. You know, we enjoy a city of 70,000, yet you can be on a float plane, enjoy the waterways, and still be out in the country within minutes from what will soon be perhaps the third largest city in all of Alberta at the growth that it's going. But we've got to ensure that that balance is right. I totally agree with the hon. member relative to that.

If I could just briefly say, about a month ago I was invited, in fact, by the Alberta Chamber of Resources, which is made up essentially of industry folks, to comment, and in actual fact, to their credit, they invited the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, and the Minister of Environment, and it was the first time ever that they had all three ministers in a room during their annual general meeting. We had a very healthy discussion. It was where I was quoted as saying that I intended to hold their feet to the fire when it comes to their responsibility for proper reclamation and remediation and in terms of also the social responsibility that they must do.

What I'm encouraged about is our initiative right now relative to IRM. IRM is integrated resource management, where we break down the silos that have been mentioned here this afternoon in the budget discussion. No matter what ministry we're involved with, be it Infrastructure or SRD or Energy or Environment, we need to come together relative to policies because each of our ministries, as much as we're silos, crosses boundaries.

I want to say that a former Deputy Minister of Environment, who then actually became the deputy of Executive Council, of course has done some excellent work on this. He is Vance MacNichol, and they referred to the MacNichol report, and of course I'm studying the report. It's not a public report, but I'm quite eager to say that it appears to be the most talked about report that's out there.

The ultimate mandate for us will be as we go forward. The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne is chairing the committee, a sustainable development committee called integrated resource management, where we are going to be going forward with what's referred to as a more integrated – in fact, let me put this challenge out here today. What worked 30 years ago in this work that we are initiating as the chair of the standing policy committee may not be where we go in the future.

If I can give you an example. The AEUB, that the hon. member mentions, as a regulator of SRD and the NRCB, and the regulation that we have within my own ministry – we are doing a comprehensive review to say: is the NRCB, is the AEUB the environment regulators that we have? Perhaps there's a better way than what was working 30 years ago. Perhaps there's a better way today based on what Albertans, our bosses, are telling us relative to how we manage the resources that we have and that we value so dearly.

I want to say that in this budget I believe the integrated resource management of the three ministries and others that are involved is going to play an important role in terms of new policy development, and when we develop what that policy is, then there is limited interpretation of what that means in terms of managing our resources.

So I'm excited by my other colleagues as well. When I heard from the Alberta Chamber of Resources that it was the first time that they had three ministers in a room talking about this integration – because as much as industry looks for certainty, one thing for sure is that if we can find a better way, we will never compromise our environmental standard and the environmental commitment that we have. So if we can become more effective – and I want to say this. The word streamlining does not mean compromising. If there is a way, maybe it will not even look like the AEUB in the future. Maybe it won't look like the NRCB. Maybe it won't look like the environment regulator. Maybe there is a better way, but one thing for certain is that we need to break down those silos.

In fact, some of the questions in the Assembly this afternoon talked about important issues. There are a variety of regulators and quasi-judicial bodies that are involved. Perhaps there is even a better way of doing it, that my ministry and other ministries are committed to doing, and on that you have my solemn pledge.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would ask, just in making my final comments, that the minister make the MacNichol report available to us. If it's leading us in a specific direction with respect to regulation and integration of regulation, I would hope that we would have a chance to have some input into that.

Thank you very much for your feedback.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much. You have my commitment, as I'm studying through the report, that I will make it readily

available because I think it will create a very healthy debate as we all have ideas on how best we want to see this Alberta look in the future relative to protecting and conserving our important resources.

5:10

The Deputy Chair: Are you now ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Environment for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, you are ready for the vote.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$136,003,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements	\$1,000,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report the vote for the Department of Environment and request leave to meet again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Environment: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$136,003,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$1,000,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we return in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:13 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 26, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/04/26

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we will call the committee to order. Before we proceed with the estimates before us, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly four wonderful teachers from the St. Albert Protestant separate school division. They have joined us in the public gallery this evening. It's very fitting for us to honour these guests during Education Week.

First of all, I would like to introduce Sarah Varghese. Mrs. Varghese was nominated by a parent in her school as one of the 15 teachers from across Canada to be chosen to receive the prestigious Prime Minister's award for teaching excellence. This award was in recognition of her innovations in the creation of an inclusive environment for students with diverse needs. Her reward is a \$5,000 award for her school, which I'm sure will be well spent. I would also take great pleasure in introducing three St. Albert teachers who have been chosen as finalists for the 2005 excellence in teaching awards. We're honoured to have these four in the gallery with us this evening.

One of these people is Mr. Ron Hansen. Unfortunately, he was not able to be with us this evening. I'd also like to introduce you to Percy Zalasky. Mr. Zalasky is a mathematics teacher at Paul Kane. Mr. Zalasky is being recognized for his ingenious approach to students, diligently and patiently working alongside students and helping them to learn. I'd also like to introduce Mr. Glenn Wilson. Mr. Wilson is a physical education specialist at Leo Nickerson elementary school in St. Albert. Mr. Wilson has a keen sense of the physical education philosophy and puts his philosophy into action. The final person I'd like to introduce is Mrs. Liane Zutz. Mrs. Zutz is a biology specialist teaching at Paul Kane high school in St. Albert. Mrs. Zutz has an excitement for her field that infects all of her students with a desire to learn. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other introductions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group who is just walking in. They're grade 7 students, and they belong to the 395 squadron air cadets. I just had a picture taken with them. I stood in for my colleague for Edmonton-Calder. These young cadets are accompanied by Second Lieutenant Leonard, Flight Sergeant Campbell, Sergeant Egeto. Also, they're accompanied by parents Miss Dominique Smith, Mr. Andrew McLellan, and Mr. Eden Fehr. I would ask these cadets and the adults accompanying them, please, to rise now to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Chairman, due to a potential conflict of interest relevant to the item of business under consideration tonight, I will withdraw from the Chamber and ask that it be duly recorded.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: It shall be duly recorded.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Children's Services

The Deputy Chair: For the information of members in the gallery we are at the committee stage, which is much more informal than the proceedings of the Assembly, so you will see members moving around and maybe taking off their jackets. Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. This evening I am pleased to present the 2005-06 budget estimates for the Ministry of Children's Services. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge all the hard work done by some very talented, incredible staff from my office, my deputy's office, and staff from across this province. For this, I give them a big thank you, and I'm honoured to be their minister.

Mr. Chairman, our spending over the next few years reflects our continued commitment to an Alberta where children and youth are valued, nurtured, and loved, an Alberta where children and youth will reach their full potential through enduring relationships, healthy families, and safe communities.

The 2005-06 budget for Children's Services is \$798.6 million, up \$32 million from last year. The budget invests \$82.8 million towards caring for children with disabilities, \$28.8 million towards the prevention of family violence, \$14.7 million towards resources that support parents in giving their children a healthy start in life, and \$6.6 million towards stopping the sexual exploitation of children.

In 2005-06 regional CFSAs will receive \$592 million to help children reach their full potential. This includes grant funding of \$588.6 million from Children's Services and \$3.4 million of other revenue. This is \$18 million more than last year to deliver quality services for children, youth, and families across Alberta. This includes increases to continue implementing the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act. This CFSA funding is 74 per cent of the total ministry budget.

The cross-ministry strategy for the prevention of family violence and bullying has committed more than \$35 million over three years to implement its action plan. We will develop a new provincial response to family violence and bullying with improved protection and preventive services in our communities for children and their families who are impacted by family violence and bullying. We will do this with sustained and secure funding to women's shelters and for prevention activities. Our total commitment to prevent family violence in 2005-06 is \$28.8 million.

In October, Mr. Chairman, Alberta will host the 2005 World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence. At this conference we will learn from the latest programming and research on family violence prevention across this world and share the progress being made in Alberta.

Our budget does not include any dollars for new or expanded services related to the federal initiative on child care. We are participating in negotiations with the federal government, other provinces, and the territories on a new child care agreement. Should the federal budget pass, we anticipate receiving our share of new

federal funding for this initiative very soon. This year that amount will be \$70 million.

A \$3 million increase to the youth in transition program will give youths who are or have been in government care a helping hand with education and training. Family and community support services will receive a \$2 million increase this year to address population growth and cost-of-living increases. The government remains committed to the children and youth in this province. By 2007-08 funding will reach \$851.3 million, a three-year increase of \$84.7 million.

Over the next three years funding is allocated to three key areas under the core business of promoting the development and well-being of children, youth, and families. Approximately \$190.2 million of the total budget will be used for services that focus on young children. This includes family support for children with disabilities, early intervention, and child care. The ministry will continue to operationalize the new Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act with resources to help families meet the needs and promote the capabilities of children and youth with disabilities, helping them to reach their potential.

Spending to prevent family violence and bullying will increase to \$33 million by 2007-08. With planned spending of approximately \$32 million to 2007-08, the ministry will continue to develop community-based parent link centres and other programs to assist parents in giving children a healthy start.

8:10

Funding for the family and community support services program will increase by \$5.4 million to approximately \$69 million by '07-08. Through this program we'll support families so that vulnerable children are kept from entering the child intervention system. Under the core business of keeping children, youth, and families safe and protected, 56 per cent of the total ministry budget will be spent on child intervention services, protecting children from sexual exploitation, foster parents, maintenance rate increases, and contracted agencies' salary costs.

The ministry will continue to implement the new Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. We will act on the recommendations to the foster care review by focusing on the training needs of foster parents, kinship care providers, adoptive parents, and those seeking private guardianship. In partnership with First Nation communities we'll explore ways to achieve permanency for aboriginal children and youth.

The ministry will redesign the protecting children from sexual exploitation program to focus on prevention, awareness, and treatment services. We will increase educational activities for children and youth at risk of sexual exploitation through prostitution, Internet luring, and child pornography. In fact, on May 18 at 9 p.m. we will be presenting a TV broadcast on Access TV to educate parents on safe Internet practices for their children.

We will further develop the role of the Child and Youth Advocate to ensure that children in the system are heard and their rights are protected.

Finally, under the core business of promoting healthy communities for children, youth, and families, we will provide \$12.7 million for community-based activities and initiatives for children, youth, and families. Total planned spending will reach \$38 million in '07-08. We will provide \$975,000 per year to attract greater private support of Alberta's Promise, and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research will receive \$2 million per year to support applied research on issues affecting children and families.

The ministry faces significant opportunities and challenges that we consider when developing initiatives and strategies. For instance, the aboriginal population in Alberta is growing quickly,

and the aboriginal population is much younger than the general population. Aboriginals have a high representation in the ministry's child intervention caseload, and aboriginal children at risk are more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than nonaboriginal children. However, there are opportunities for us to partner with First Nation and Métis settlements and organizations to provide effective child intervention services.

Trends in family violence are demanding more space in women's shelters. That's why we've made recent investment towards services and support for victims of family violence. We will be providing stable funding to 489 women's shelter beds. We will expand community-based prevention and outreach programs. We are developing safe visitation and access sites, and we are launching a public awareness and education campaign for bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

We also have significant opportunities to develop strategies to reduce the potential for youth to be at risk. This includes, Mr. Chairman, providing support to children at risk of sexual exploitation and helping young people successfully become independent through things like the advancing futures bursary program.

I'd now like to ask the MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, who is chair of the Youth Secretariat, and then the MLA for Calgary-Hays, who is chair of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, to please update what we are doing. After they speak, Mr. Chairman, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the minister is ceding part of her time for the chairman of the Youth Secretariat. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Minister. It gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak on the roles and the importance of the Youth Secretariat. I want to emphasize – and we have youth in our Assembly today – that youth are our future. I know it's a cliché, but I want very much to re-emphasize that youth are our future, and it is very important to know and to realize how knowledgeable, how intelligent, how resourceful and resilient youth are. They are very much the assistants to the decisions that we make.

The Youth Secretariat works with stakeholders, but I want to emphasize that the main stakeholder for the Youth Secretariat is the youth. Youth in our province, in our country today are very much challenged and, I would say, at times enticed by different attractions, by different opportunities, and not all of them are positive. But I will say that it is the youth in this province that are also part of the solution, part of the help, and part of the willingness to transfer and to transform some of the direction that is taking place. They are the experts, and we need to listen. They are and have the solution. They need some support and resources as long as we give them some opportunity.

The Youth Secretariat's role is to talk with the youth to involve them in the decision-making and to get their input in the decision-making that affects them. Earlier this month we had a meeting, and we heard from a number of youth. Their presentation had to do with the drug issue dialogue. These are youth that were addicts. These are youth that were involved in the high use of drugs. They had been clean for a number of years, and they were there to help with the solutions. In May at the Children's Forum we heard from youth again – the forum dealt with bullying and violence – and their aspect and their presentation. Youth will also have another opportunity to get involved during a feedback weekend this summer.

I want to stress to you again the importance of decision-making and the importance that the youth bring to us and that we need to

listen. Today's age is going very quickly, and when we as legislators now maybe look at 20 years ago, it's a different situation, and it's a different direction. It's very important that we have the involvement of youth who are experiencing the challenges of today.

When we talk about speaking to youth, yes, I very much emphasize the importance of speaking to them, of involving them on what affects them, but most of all, we need to listen. We need to listen to what they have to say, and we as legislators are the vehicle to bring forward their ideas into something that is going to be fruitful. I want to make sure that the Youth Secretariat and ourselves as legislators are making the right decisions for youth that will help Alberta grow and help the youth grow with it.

I would also like to say that through the Youth Secretariat we will continue the Youth Advisory Panel. That is a forum where we have youth that come from all over the province and provide insight into what they feel some of the issues are. We can talk about crystal meth. We can talk about all sorts of different issues, but the Youth Advisory Panel is an opportunity again for youth from the province to come collectively and provide us their experiences, their challenges, and for us to take that message and bring it to the legislators and bring it to a direction that is going to be positive not only for them but for this province.

Again, thank you very much, Madam Minister, for giving me the opportunity, and thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the minister is also ceding the balance of the time to the chair of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

8:20

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister. Just before I get to the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, I'll just give you my background. I was on the Social Care Facilities Review Committee for two years, and I was last involved until April 2004, so approximately two years.

There are approximately 4,000 facilities under the jurisdiction of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee. These include day cares, nursery schools, out-of-school care facilities, foster homes, child and youth social care facilities, and women's emergency shelters. As the eyes and ears of the hon. Minister of Children's Services, we review those social care facilities and investigate any complaints against them. Our committee conducts 225 reviews each year. A review involves meeting with the service recipients, their families and guardians, and staff. We hear about the services they provided and whether or not the clients were satisfied. This year our members will visit facilities in four of the nine CFSA regions, and those are Calgary and area, central Alberta, east-central Alberta, and Edmonton and area.

If I didn't indicate, I'm now the chair of that Social Care Facilities Review Committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I struggled to deal with the wealth of data in these estimates, I found myself wishing there was contour and relief to the landscape to help bring some sense to the statistics. As I pondered this problem and shared it with colleagues, it suddenly dawned that this was the dilemma: how does one discover and deal with the reality of human lives in a statistical context?

I'm reminded of a parallel predicament faced by the federal government years ago in reporting unemployment statistics. Its

measuring tool was the number of EI claims. They were called UI then. At any one moment they would give the statistics for UI. It was assumed that once an unemployment insurance file was closed, that person was no longer unemployed. In reality, Mr. Chairman, it simply meant that the person was no longer drawing UI. Perhaps their period of benefits had run out. Perhaps they had run afoul of one or more rules of the program, failing to fill out their cards properly or to report sufficient progress in trying to find a job. Perhaps they had become discouraged and simply stopped trying.

In any case, Mr. Chairman, we would never know because those persons – for that is what they are and not simply statistics – had fallen off the radar screen of the federal government's reporting system. We assumed that they were no longer unemployed, but we had no right to that assumption. Some other means of measurement was needed than participation in a single program if we were to have the truth.

One of the most pressing needs of our time is for a qualitative perspective. We have become very good at statistics, so good that we often ignore issues that do not lend themselves to the mode of measurement. In the case of children's and other social services we have adopted the mode of the business plan. What does that mean? Let us listen to the word as it was once spoken and as it is still spelled, with an "i" or a "y" in the middle: business or busyness, or activity.

A business plan deals only with the level of activity according to some predetermined indicators such as files opening, closing, or transferred, expenditures in a particular program and in a certain column. A business plan does not tell us about children's lives, the quality of those lives, their hopes, dreams, and disappointments. For these we must look deeper than sheer statistics. The problem, Mr. Chairman, is not in the money we spend but in our minds, with which we see and make sense of the issues and try to figure out the figures.

Yet even in limited statistical terms there is an indication that the business plan approach is missing something. That clue is the number and size of supplementary estimates. I do not begrudge these figures, Mr. Chairman. I doubt if any feeling person does. They reflect a reality of children's lives, a reality we need to know more about. The fact that they show up as supplementaries is a sign that our planning is missing something.

As I considered the budget for Children's Services, I learned about the changes as a result of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. Under the Child Welfare Act and the previous model a file could be opened under CWA as assessment for 30 days, and this could be extended for a further 30 days if needed before formal voluntary or involuntary services. This no longer occurs. I'm not sure of the process, but I believe files are now opened under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act under enhancement or intervention. If under enhancement, there is initial assessment or extended assessment and/or a family enhancement agreement, which I think is similar to the old support agreement.

Under the new act children who need secure services can be opened under a family enhancement agreement if parents consent to secure services. Prior to the new act a TGO, temporary guardianship order, was needed for secure services. Changes in the act and different terms make comparisons from year to year very difficult. It's essential that the statistics used are clear in the scope they cover and that consistent definitions are used.

I have some questions to help me understand what the numbers in the business plan for 2004-2007 mean. Perhaps the minister can try to answer some of these when I finish. There may be far too many here for you to answer tonight, I understand. Are the above statuses – initial assessment, extended assessment, secure services – included

in the enhancement services statistics, the 85 per cent? If they did include enhancement, initial assessment, and extended assessment and secure services with parental consent, then the baseline statistics need to include the previous 30-day assessments, support agreements, and any secure services with guardian's consent.

Also, do enhancement statistics include or exclude families who were open more than once under enhancement? Are there any statistics for families that come to the attention of Children's Services after enhancement files are closed or while files are still open? What is in place to determine efficacy of the Alberta response model? Are you doing any preimposed Alberta response model program evaluations?

Enhancement agreement with youth should include youth under care. Custody agreement with child was the term used previously. Are those agreements included in the enhancement statistics?

I would like to present some general questions before I go into specifics about the budget. I realize that some of these questions may require more thought, and perhaps I can get them in writing later, but I present them now at least as food for thought. I am concerned about the uncertainty of revenue for youth shelters. At present they do not qualify under FCSS because they are not preventative. Contracting and grant funding are not enough. Are there plans to change this so there will be predictable, sustainable, and stable funding to youth shelters?

Another grave concern of mine is that foster parents are not paid enough, and we need assessments that are thorough to help place children with families where they will fit best. Assessments need to be up front to make decisions about appropriate placement services and work with schools. Appropriate placements can be preventative and can enhance the opportunity to meet the goals of Children's Services. Are there any plans to help establish more funding for foster parents and plans for a placement model that will serve the best interests of all children?

Children's Services, schools, Justice, and AADAC need to work in partnership to do what is best for families and children. As other areas are cut back and if the cutbacks involve families, Children's Services generally has to pick up the slack because in the end it is this department that is responsible for the safety and security of children. We hear from parents who are caught in the system between the education department, health, Children's Services, and local school boards. Is the cross-ministry initiative working? Is there a one-stop place for a person to go so that this bouncing from ministry to ministry can stop and parents can get the services that we all know these youngsters deserve?

I quote the minister from 2004-2005: "Alberta has a Children's Services ministry that strives to nurture, cherish, provide homes for children in need and provide opportunities for families to feel supported no matter what their circumstances." This is a tremendous mandate and an honourable one. It causes me to wonder about the need for supplementary budgets. Why are we underfunding in the regular budgets? The supplemental budget for foster parents maintenance was \$4 million. I wonder if this is even enough. Why was it not included in the original budget? What do we have to do to avoid the need for supplemental budgets?

8:30

Another supplemental item was for the \$2.5 million needed to implement the family violence and bullying incentive grants. I believe that this is a very worthwhile project and wonder again why this extra need was not forecast with the original budget.

I have to ask the same about the \$3.6 million added for the implementation of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. I realize that some of this went to the development of transitional

plans for children and the costs for providing intervention services, including the retraining of front-line delivery staff. Could this have not been predicted earlier?

I know that this is often an unpredictable business, such as the extra dollars needed for the networking of the parent link centres, but I believe we should be working towards a goal of eliminating the need for supplemental budgets so that we get a truer picture of needs when the original budget is presented. Predictable funding is essential for the health of any organization.

I have a serious concern about the decrease in the number of subsidy applications for child care. I have heard from parents who lost benefits because of criteria changes, parents who still need help but no longer qualify. I'll quote from one of the letters.

Back in August of last year, they arbitrarily changed the rules so that subsidy would be based on gross income, not net income. This sounds ok at the outset, however, for single parents who are in positions like myself (lower paid secretaries . . .) it was devastating. I have no control over mandatory deductions the government takes from my pay, and in the past, the daycare subsidy office would take this into account when determining my subsidy. They no longer do this. For example, my gross salary is \$3,092 a month, however, I only take home a net salary of \$2,001 a month. After rent, daycare, food, utilities, clothing, etc, there is literally nothing left. To lose my subsidy has left me in a precarious position . . . There are a lot of parents who did not "choose" to leave the subsidy system, and a lot of us who were hoping and praying that this federal program would come through [quickly].

How can we be certain that we are really providing choice in these cases?

I'm looking now at child care and early childhood development. The increase to child care money is less than \$1 million over the previous year's budget. There have been many issues with quality of care in Alberta, specifically in daycares and family day home facilities. I'm referring to page 64 of the government and lottery estimates.

In a press release on April 21 we learned that the province is seeking public input on child care programs.

Alberta's negotiations with the federal government on a national child care program have gone well from our perspective, and we're ready to go forward once we have finalized key details relating to an agreement . . . To be prepared, we want to hear what's important to families in terms of caring for children, whether parents choose to go to work, go to school or stay at home. We're also interested in knowing what's working well now and what improvements are needed in the future.

This is encouraging news, and I commend the decision to listen to Albertans. However, I do have some concerns about this consultation process on child care. If there's no provision for representative balanced responses – that is, a proper sample – this can become an exercise in propaganda. I hope that this is not the case and that we will have integrity as we consider what needs to be changed.

Alberta's regulations for infant care require fewer staff than some provinces, and enforcement of compliance with regulations is problematic. Accreditation is a step in the right direction, but our daycare centres are underfunded. Staff are often poorly trained, and there is no incentive for training as the pay is so low.

How much money is this survey on child care announced on April 21 costing this ministry? What money is going to inspect daycare facilities and family day homes? We had the concerns this year about children being left behind here in Edmonton. How much of the money going into child care will raise wages of daycare workers? I believe we must start an effort to promote work in daycares. This means that we must provide adequate pay and subsidized training to improve care and provide incentives to attract

people and to keep them in this very important role. What are the plans for monitoring unlicensed care providers? Government oversight is essential as a check.

Another quote from the survey:

The Alberta government is committed to helping children and families get the best possible start in life by supporting families and communities with comprehensive programs that ensure parents have choice and flexibility in their child care decisions.

Would you please explain what you mean by choice? What do you see included as options for parents? With so few announced dollars will there be any change to the availability of child care subsidies to parents? What are the next steps in working with the federal government to get some of the \$5 billion announced in the national daycare plan?

Another area of concern, as I mentioned earlier, is related to youth shelters. Youth shelters have no source of stable funding other than grants they get from year to year, and that is not enough. The province has announced a review into this, but why do we have to wait for a review when all the agencies have been asking for the same thing that horse racing gets, which is steady, sustainable funding from year to year? Why is there a set amount for women's shelters, on page 62, government and lottery fund estimates, section 3.3.1, but not a set amount for youth shelters?

I quote from the minister's comments in *Hansard* for the 2004-2005 budget.

My understanding is that the funding is very piecemeal and their administrators end up spending a lot of time trying to figure out which different grant program to apply to this year to try and get them up to the level of funding they need to operate.

Does this government have a plan for youth shelters and how they are funded?

We know the welfare of children is strongly linked to their nonoffending parent's safety and emotional well-being. Thus, there must be attention paid to secure shelters for women who are abused. I know of an instance where an investigator had to return a woman who was pregnant and had been beaten by her common-law and then given crack back to the home where this man still lived. The woman believed she was not safe anywhere because this man would find her, as he had on previous occasions when she'd been placed in a shelter. What do we need to do to ensure safety and security for women such as these and their families?

I reviewed the Alberta shelter statistics from 2002, information from the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters released by the office for the prevention of family violence. In 2002 woman sheltered, 5,194; children sheltered, 5,546; women turned away, 8,443; children turned away, 9,017. This is a tragedy. What part of the Children's Services budget addresses this tremendous need?

8:40

As I look at child intervention services, there is a \$20 million increase over the previous year's budget amount assigned to child intervention services, but this is only a \$2 million increase over last year's forecast. Page 64 of the budget. The regions have required supplementary money for funding to perform these tasks. Can we get a breakdown of what programs the \$401 million will be funding? By programs I mean how much goes to agencies, to government social workers, to directors of child welfare, and the courts process? How much is spent on hiring teams to investigate the programs in agencies? Goal 3.3 on page 153 of the ministry's business plan clearly states that permanency planning for kids in care is an important goal of this ministry. What programs are going to be introduced to ensure that the workers and agencies that care for these children are going to have the stable funding required to provide that environment?

I believe this is a good-news budget, but there is much more to be done. It is good that money is going to more beds and shelters for youth. We have been at a crisis level for so long, and caseworkers have been overloaded and without adequate supports. The current minister and deputy minister are demonstrating a better understanding of and perhaps closer connections with the department. Now that we are investing more money, there must be judicious planning.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Many, many questions coming from the opposition and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. I was trying to keep up with her, but as she said, she had a lot of questions. We will as in the past be pleased to answer her questions by letter, but I'm going to try and start with some of them.

She started off talking about the statistics and stats. I can tell her that under the new legislation of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act one of the goals is to enhance the quality assurance system to improve the quality, the consistency, and the accountability of child protection across this province. I can also tell her, in my short tenure as minister, about the incredible information that's contained in the case files that we receive on my desk on a daily basis.

While I don't disagree with her on follow-throughs, I can give her some personal history of some things that I found when I was dealing with the protection of children involved in prostitution. I was very eager, wanting to find out what was happening after we apprehended children, and was particularly involved in one very, very sad case where we brought a child back from Vancouver and met her at the airport with her mom and dad. The little girl got off the airplane in her working clothes, street clothes. We got her in there, got her into one of our protective safe houses, and from there she entered drug and alcohol treatment in Calgary by the name of AARC.

I went to her graduation after she graduated from that particular program and with an enquiring mind decided at one time that, gee, I wanted to find out how this young child was doing. I guess maybe because of my personal involvement and because sometimes your heart leads before your brain, I phoned the parents. I wanted to know how their daughter was doing. He politely said to me: "Heather, we're moving on. We've gone through a very, very difficult period in our life. She claims she's sober, and we're moving on as a family and closing that part."

So, you know, when we have some people entering our system – and we have had some horrific cases but have had a lot of very, very successful cases – to follow through when they're moving on with their lives and they want to get off the paths where they've been receiving support services from the department, we appreciate that. But we do know when we've opened cases, when we've re-opened cases: all documented very, very well. Some of the money that we've asked for in our budget is for technology, just trying to incorporate all of the paper copy into the new system of the computerized world so that we can I guess make it easier for the people who work out in the province, trying to do these stats and keep up with these families that sometimes tend to move around.

I can assure her, though, that we do keep incredible stats. I can tell you how many times we've had interventions, how many times we've dealt with a particular child. In my mind very, very good stats, hon. member.

You touched on youth shelters a couple of times, and you also toward the end of your comments talked about the fact that, yes,

they're being reviewed. You know, you asked me this particular question in question period about a youth emergency shelter. To this day, to this hour, at a quarter to 9 I have not heard from them. I have not had a phone call from them. I indicated to you when I answered that particular question that I'd be pleased to sit down and talk with you. I'd be pleased to sit down with the shelter. I have not heard from any of the shelters in this province except for one in Grande Prairie on youth shelters.

Some Hon. Members: That's the one.

Mrs. Forsyth: Different one? Same one? Sorry.

Anyhow, if you're talking about the youth shelter in Edmonton, I can tell you that I haven't heard from them, but I have heard from a shelter in Grande Prairie, and we're working with them on that.

The foster parents, yes, we're working with them on increasing their funding and have been working very closely with the Alberta Foster Parent Association and the president, Norm Brownell. They do a remarkable job in this province, and we're very, very appreciative of all the work they do.

You talked and asked about the cross-government ministry. We've had some very, very successful cross-government ministries. I'm very proud of what this government is doing. I think that when you were talking, you indicated about Health talking to AADAC and AADAC talking to Justice or the Solicitor General or even Children's Services. I think what you saw recently with Bill 201 and the private member's bill and the government getting treatment centres shows that we've had some incredibly successful cross-government ministries. I can allude to the family violence initiative and the round-tables and the cross-government ministry and the buy-in from all the different departments on that.

You asked about supplementary estimates and why. You know, I don't have a problem when I'm dealing with supplementary estimates and a particular region comes to me on the child authorities and says: you know, we don't have enough money; we need to get some more money. If we have to go back because they've got a huge, increased caseload in regard to the population that they're serving, which is our children or families in this province, then it's difficult to try and judge.

You spent a lot of time talking about child care and about the daycares and the funding. I have to tell you that I'm very, very proud of what this province has done. It has been watched across Canada in regard to the daycares that we have in place, the accreditation program that we have in place. In fact, I had the federal minister here several months ago to look at our accreditation program, went out and talked to the people who are setting up and establishing the standards and strengthening the best practices within the accreditation program.

We have a huge percentage of success in the '90s for daycares coming to us to talk about the accreditation program. It's a program that is the first in Canada. It's going to address the issues that you asked about. That's staff recruitment and the retention of the child care sector. I'd be pleased to show you that, let you meet some of the people that are working on the accreditation program. It even surprised the people in the accreditation program. We had to hire extra staff because of the overwhelming response from the daycares in this province signing up to be accredited daycares.

You also talked about where we are in the negotiations with the national daycare program. I can tell you that we're cautiously optimistic. I can tell you that I had a verbal agreement on all of the issues that Alberta wanted addressed from the federal/provincial/territorial meeting in January from the federal minister. I have sent him two letters since then asking him for confirmation. I would

encourage you to write him. Tell him that you would appreciate him responding to the letters that Alberta has sent.

We have been very pleased with the progress that we're making, and we'll continue trying to sign the agreement. As I explained, we had a verbal commitment from the federal minister a few weeks ago. We have sent two letters since then asking him for written confirmation. My understanding from talking to Minister Dryden is that at that period in time there was some negotiating going on with the Northwest Territories and Prince Edward Island on base funding, plus around his own cabinet table about the French language issue. So we're waiting. No deal has been signed yet, but we've placed a call to him, and hopefully we'll move forward on that: \$70 million for sure to Alberta.

8:50

When you talked about the online survey – and I stand to be corrected, but I will tell you that I think it was approximately \$2,000. For us it was important even though I have received hundreds and hundreds of letters in regard to this issue about what parents see as choice. They have told me over and over again that they want a choice of daycare system whether it's for-profit, whether it's nonprofit, or whether it's kinder-care.

An incredible amount of response in regard to stay-home taxes. I can tell you that when I brought that up to the federal minister, he said at that particular time that that wasn't part of the negotiations. That was not on the table. But parents have continually told us, even when I appeared on *Rutherford* today, that they want the choice to be able to choose what's in the best interest of their children.

I was somewhat dismayed at the very end of your conversation when you talked about the fact that you know of a particular case where a woman was returned to her home. I can only say to you that when you come across incidents like that, I beg of you, for the woman that you're referring to, to call our office. It's important that we're aware of this. It's important that we know. We will do everything in our power to help if there is a situation.

I am told over and over again that no woman who is in a crisis situation is turned away from a shelter. If there's not room in the shelter, then we make other accommodations, whether we put them into a motel, into a secure environment, but if they're in a crisis situation, hon. member, my understanding from talking to the shelters is that they're never turned away. If they're thinking about leaving, then there are other things that they'll do. They'll talk to them. They'll talk about other ways that they can deal with that particular issue. If they're running and they're accessing a shelter, then they're never turned away. We will put them into a motel or something.

I know I haven't answered all your questions, and I apologize for that. We've got another hour and 10 minutes, and I know other members will probably want to ask questions, so I'd be pleased to try and get all of your questions answered.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you very much. I know that there's a lot of information that we're dealing with here. I know that we've got a very good system, but I don't think that we should ever stop trying to stretch beyond our own shadows. We can do better.

The points about accreditation are good. I'm glad to hear about the desire of many agencies to be accredited. I'm still concerned about the compliance with regulations and so forth.

The last part about the woman who was returned to the home that wasn't safe: the concern there was not that there weren't spaces but that there wasn't safety. How do we protect these people? I'm not

expecting you to answer that right now, but the problem is bigger than just having the space available.

As I do not want to continue talking for a long time, and I've got other members who want to talk, I do want to just – I think there was one point you made if I can just look back here for a minute. I guess what I'd like to do is request that we get any written responses before we vote on the budget. Is that possible? Can you do that?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the discussion should go through the chair.

Mrs. Mather: I'm sorry. Okay. Thank you.

Can we get the written responses before we need to vote on the budget, Mr. Chairman?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the matter is before the committee, and the committee at the end of the day will vote, and the committee can decide whether they want to vote or not vote or reject or accept. The chair will follow the instruction of the committee.

Mrs. Mather: I'm just asking, Mr. Chairman, if we can get written responses as soon as possible so that when we vote on the entire budget, we've got that information.

The Deputy Chair: The chair cannot assure that. I don't know if the minister wants to make a remark to that effect.

Mrs. Forsyth: My understanding, Mr. Chairman – and I'm at the will of the table, obviously – from my past experience in this Legislature is that we have a call for the vote on the budget at 10 o'clock. If it's the will of the people around here, they'll ask for a call for the vote, and if the vote passes, then it does. If it doesn't, then obviously – I will give my commitment to the member that we will respond, as we have in the past, to the questions that she asks by writing, but I can't possibly within the next hour.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, did you want to speak on this matter?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods. I don't believe that she is asking for written answers within the next 63 minutes; rather, she is asking if we can have the answers to her question in writing before we go to appropriations for the budget itself. That would be the request that she has put on the table.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, just for the clarification of every member in the Assembly, at this committee stage anybody can participate in asking as many questions as they choose. I am not so sure if there is an obligation on the minister to provide answers to every single question, but by and large I believe most ministers make an effort to respond either directly on the floor or by follow-through with a written response.

Does the Minister for Children's Services want to make any comments about this request?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Chairman, if I may. We will endeavour to provide as much as we can as far as written answers to all of the questions the hon. member has. She knows from past experience that when we've debated other things on this floor, we have gotten back to both her and the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in writing.

There is an incredible amount of questions coming from the opposition at this particular time, and I've just dealt with one member. I have an incredibly busy ministry, but I will do whatever I can to answer as many questions as I can before the budget. Some of the questions that the particular member is asking are even difficult questions for me to answer; for example, when she talks about the stats and the outcomes, how she started at the beginning. So some of these things may not be physically able to be answered. The questions that she's asked that went point-blank to the budget about the supplementary estimates, when she's asked about the, you know, increases or decreases in the budget, we will do whatever we can to answer.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and make a few observations on the budget for the Ministry of Children's Services. This is, in my view, one of the most important ministries. The ministry deals with children, families, and I know that the minister has very strong commitments to strengthening our families, supporting them, and providing services to our children that they need.

I am assuming that the minister knows that child care services in Canada, particularly daycare services for Canadian children, don't rate very high among the OECD countries. With the exception of Quebec the child care services, particularly the daycare services for children, are judged by OECD experts to be seriously deficient. Alberta falls in that category of provinces that provide patchwork services that are not properly funded, services that are not available to families that will want to use them, take advantage of them.

9:00

There was a hope over the last six months or so that the provincial governments and the federal government will get together, and with the new commitments that the federal government was making with respect to children's services, daycare services in particular, provinces will receive new funds which they would then use in co-operation with each other to provide high-quality daycare services, quality that would be measured with reference to some sort of national standards, not federal – I must clarify this – and the services would be provided in daycare centres that are primarily there to provide quality services and not there to operate in order, primarily, to maximize their returns on their investment. In other words, these services would be provided in nonprofit centres that will be funded adequately by the two levels of government, federal and provincial.

Secondly, these services would be universally available. They will not be denied to families which don't make the cut, as it were, that the government of Alberta's practice currently is, to provide subsidy to parents, not to daycares anyway, whose incomes fall below a certain level. That's not universality. Children in this province and children in Canada deserve an opportunity to take advantage of child care services that are universally available, and these services should be paid through taxes.

The federal government, it seems, was willing to go ahead and provide some funds, and according to my numbers Alberta would have received as much as a hundred million dollars from this federal budget if that budget were to pass and if the province were to move ahead and co-operate with other levels of government and with other provinces on agreeing to establish some national standards – the provinces together would establish those standards – and to provide these services, properly accredited, appropriately staffed with qualified staff who are adequately paid to provide quality services for our children.

Any expert that you talk to who has done work on child care or on early childhood development tells you that any money spent on quality child care and early childhood development and education is a return manyfold later on. So it's an investment worth making. If we were to look at it purely from the economic returns point of view – and I'm sure that all of us agree that there's more to it than just economic returns when you think about children. Children's welfare is far more important than merely the economic returns. Even in terms of the narrow criteria of economic returns money spent on early child care is money well invested, yet I find that there are rumblings around that the Alberta government may in fact be having some second thoughts on co-operating with other provincial governments and working with the federal government to use the opportunity to work together, to work collaboratively, to get extra resources to improve the child care services in this province.

Mr. Chairman, if you look at the past five provincial budgets for child care, you see that the Alberta funding for child care has not even kept pace with inflation and with population growth. We spent less than one-quarter of 1 per cent of government revenues annually on child care and only about \$3.22 per capita of our personal income tax and \$1.63 per person of our corporate income tax on children's services in this province.

It certainly raises some questions about the priorities that this government has and how high the early development and education of children figure in that list of priorities of this government. Looking at the record of funding for these services, it seems to me that it enjoys a very, very low priority on the government's list of priorities, yet I think it is here in this group of our population, the young children, our children who are our future of tomorrow – they are the ones in whose future we should be investing and investing far more adequately than has been the case.

I have some concerns with the politics on child care that, according to the statements that I've been reading in the press, statements coming from the federal Conservative Party, suggest that the provincial government of Alberta is playing along with the federal Conservative Party to delay signing on to the national daycare program. I have a quote here, Mr. Chairman: "It looks to us like the Klein government is going to play along with the federal conservative party and delay signing on to the national child care program while they consult Albertans." Mr. Harper, the leader of the federal Conservative Party, in a speech to the Cambridge, Ontario, Chamber of Commerce earlier this week said, "The Conservatives don't support a national child care system that will drive taxes up so high that young couples won't be able to afford to have children."

Now, I want to ask the minister if the minister supports Mr. Harper's observation that spending money and investing in our children somehow will run us bankrupt, run families bankrupt, and in fact will lead to such high taxes that families will be dissuaded from having children. This is a position, certainly, that the federal Conservative leader has taken, and I wonder if the minister wants to comment on this.

9:10

In fact, I would hope that she would reject the position taken by the federal Conservative leader and urge him to help the federal government at least pass the budget, which makes a commitment towards our children which is quite substantial. The province of Alberta will benefit to the tune of a hundred million dollars this year if that budget were to pass. The government of Alberta spends about \$70 million on children's services, on child care in particular, and imagine with another hundred million dollars added to it how many more resources there would be at our disposal if we were to see that budget pass. So I would urge the minister to take an initiative on

that and tell this House that she is going to write to the leaders of all the federal parties and urge them to pass this federal budget, which, in my view, makes some very important and promising commitments to provide the daycare services that children in Canada and Alberta so badly need.

Mr. Chairman, I have another question here, but let me go back and conclude my observations on the federal undertaking or promise in the budget that it's made to provide new funds to provincial and territorial governments were all of them to agree on some sort of national program on child care. The Children's Services budget, that we're discussing, does not include any provision for new or expanded services related to the new federal initiative on child care. What's the minister's position? If tomorrow the federal budget were to pass, where are the provisions made in the budget for the minister to be able to set forth a new set of programs or policies that will help improve the quality of child care services and the availability of quality child care services to parents in this province?

Another question that I have here for the minister to address, Mr. Chairman. The minister probably is aware of the KPMG study that did a sort of forensic accounting study of the child care services in the province, daycare services, facilities in 2002. It was entitled, I think, Supporting Day Care Professionals: Issues and Options. That study found that a subsidy for low-income Albertans paid for about one-quarter of its own costs directly by offsetting welfare costs, yet the maximum daycare subsidy available for low-income Albertans is \$475 for youngsters ages zero to 18 months, the beginning of life to 18 months, and \$380 for children 19 months and older. Given that daycare can cost up to \$880 a month, this subsidy is not nearly enough. If there were greater supports available to low-income Albertans, the benefits could be tremendous. Also, I think the vacant child care places – and there are thousands in the province – would be filled. I know that one of the answers that I've got from the minister's department as to why it's not investing more in increasing the number of spaces available for daycare in this province came in the form saying: well, we already have lots of vacancies; Albertans are not using the spaces that are available.

We've got to get to the bottom of this statement that was made, Mr. Chairman, to see why it is that daycare spaces that are available in the province are not being used, not being filled when in fact we know that 70 to 75 per cent of parents with very young children are participating in the labour force, and they have children that need care when they themselves are at work, and 70 to 75 per cent of the parents who are working want to have their children in daycares which are appropriately funded, appropriately staffed, are safe places, and where children not only can be babysat but can in fact learn and engage in early childhood development programs, daycares that are not only properly funded but are staffed with people who are appropriately educated and trained.

So why is it, then, that these spaces in the thousands, I think, go unused? I think the answer, Mr. Chairman, is very clear to me, and the minister may have some information on it that she would like to advise me of. It is that the government's policy of funding low-income parents only leaves lots of parents and families, hard-working families, in a situation where they don't qualify to receive the subsidy that they need in order for them to be able to afford to put their children in child care centres or daycare centres.

Now, the minister may have information that contradicts the information that I am aware of, and if so, I am sure she would like to share that information with the House and with me. So I'll sit down, let her answer two or three questions that were raised, and then I'll come back to ask some more.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and again try and answer some questions from the member of the opposition. He has spent a fair amount of time talking about the daycares, and I had thought or hoped I'd addressed some of those issues to the member previously, but I will endeavour to try and address some of his questions.

He started off talking about daycares not rating very high except in Quebec. I would like to let the hon. member know that this year in the budget we have worked very, very hard to deal with programs and to focus on the design and the implementation of daycare centre accreditation systems to achieve what we consider three goals. One is to raise the standard of care in the province and improve the best practices in daycare centres and family day homes. The second one is to support families through the provision and identification of higher quality care. The third is supporting child care programs and working towards achieving accreditation standards of high quality.

I want to emphasize to the hon. member again that this is a first in Canada. It's been very, very successful. We had the federal minister here – I believe it was in January – to look at the accreditation. He went and visited with some of our accreditation people and was very, very interested in what we were doing. The Alberta child care accreditation program establishes standards of quality and strengthens best practices in early learning and child care programs across Alberta. The accreditation will support families through the identification and provision of higher quality services.

Daycare centres that attain preaccreditation status will be awarded quality improvement funds, of which a minimum of 80 per cent must be directed to child care staff certification. The remaining funds must be directed towards ongoing quality improvement in order to ensure that child care staff are receiving the benefit of the quality improvement incentives. The recipients will be required to submit audited financial statements.

9:20

The other question that was asked was on the compliance to daycare regulations. I'd like the hon. member to know that under section 8 of the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act there is a section called Order after Inspection, which is issued under that particular section, and it's issued for serious noncompliance and specifies what the centre must do and the timelines for compliance. Other enforcement actions include notice of deficiency, notice of suspension or cancellation, and stop orders. If we think back, we can see where we closed a daycare in Edmonton because of some serious issues that that particular daycare was faced with and complaints that we had received, that we investigated and dealt with in what I think was a very, very quick manner.

He talked about the national child care. I would like to first of all tell the hon. member that it's not a hundred million; it's \$70 million. Those are the numbers that we are getting from the federal government. So while at one time maybe a hundred million might have been under discussion, we have heard that it's \$70 million from the federal government. It's a lot of money, and it's something that Alberta has been negotiating in good faith right from day one with the federal minister, right from the time when I went to Victoria to the federal/provincial/territorial meeting.

It was important as the Alberta minister responsible for Children's Services that we bring forward what was important to Albertans, and that was that Albertans have choice. Any choice for them was whether it's for-profit or nonprofit, but they wanted choice. The accountability and reporting requirements that the federal government was pressing for were far too cumbersome a burden, and we believe that it was important for that – while we don't mind accountability and reporting, we told them in our three-year business

plans and our annual business plans that we report to Albertans and received support for that.

We talked with the federal government at length about program inputs and outputs versus child-focused outcomes. The federal government was talking about space. What was important to the province was the outcome and what the child was getting once they came out of that particular daycare.

Lengthy, lengthy discussion at that particular meeting about funding issues at that time. There were no real dollar values. It was important for us to understand, before we could establish what was happening, the funding that it was getting, that it was confirmed within the budget how the funding was being delivered. There was talk about trust funds. There was talk about the CST, the Canada social transfer. It was important for us to know how we were able to draw.

The last thing was federal legislation. The federal government has made a number of statements regarding future federal legislation. I want to reiterate one more time that we wrote to the federal minister on March 31. We wrote to him again on April 15. I can tell this member that the negotiations that we have had with the federal government since January have always been very, very positive and in the best interests of the parents and the children in this province.

So I would encourage you, like I said to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, to write to the federal minister, ask him to respond to Alberta. We are just asking him to confirm our conversation from prior to March 31 about agreement with what was important. I can tell you that in that conversation – and I'll repeat what I said to the member of the opposition – at that point in time he agreed verbally to all of the concerns that Alberta put forward and was at that time dealing with the Northwest Territories and Prince Edward Island on base funding. He was also dealing with his own federal cabinet in regard to the French language issue. To me, hon. member, this has never been about politics. It's about providing the best quality service so that Albertans in this province can have choice in the best interest of their children.

I'm not even going to comment on Harper's comments. I have not had a conversation with the member of the federal Conservatives. In regard to any of the comments that you have made, I can only say – and I can't speak for the federal Conservatives – that from what I've read, they're very, very supportive of the children in this country and concerned about many, many children's issues. But that's something that I haven't talked to them about previously.

Why the money is not in the budget is because we haven't got the budget. We will put that into the budget process once we have confirmation of the \$70 million and once their federal budget is passed.

I think those are most of the questions you had on national childcare. Again, we will try and write to you on the other questions if I've missed any.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of issues that I wanted to raise with the minister around the budget debate for Children's Services, and just before this slips my mind, the question I did want to get on the record is: how exactly does the minister anticipate allocating the \$70 million should it come the way of the province? We'd like to get the specific details on how that would be allocated, and if you could provide that in writing before we have to vote on the budget, please.

There are a couple of areas that I would like to talk about tonight. One is funding for sexual assault centres; funding and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth, especially around

bullying initiatives; a little bit on childcare, although I will note that my colleagues from Edmonton-Mill Woods and Edmonton-Strathcona have done a superlative job of covering that issue, so I won't speak very much about it. I'd also like to talk about insurance for the nonprofits and agencies that provide services in this sector and, finally, funding for women's shelters.

Starting with the funding for sexual assault centres. I often tell people that if I talk about something 500 times, it finally happens, and I'm beginning to see that payoff around the funding for the sexual assault centres. I think I'm approaching the 500 mark, and I can see it paying off here because, in fact, the province has released as part of its larger initiative that it is developing a comprehensive provincial strategy for the prevention of sexual violence, and specific to that is \$500,000.

[Mr. Oberle in the chair]

The initiative is working "towards improving services available to survivors of sexual violence in Alberta" and facilitates the "sharing of information and resources to enhance and inform sexual violence program development and research." So I'm taking that right out of the news release of April 19, and the background of it came with that. Finally, thank you, and I'm glad to see that. I've been very frustrated with the cross-ministry committee that was in place because for a long time nothing happened, and that seems to finally be working there.

I will note a couple of things that the sector has already done. Specifically, they have done an environmental scan of what the current situation is. A few nights ago I was lobbying the Minister of Finance to take the leadership and start to move this issue forward, and she'd asked me for what was happening at the moment. In fact, I can and will provide her now with a copy of this scan that's been done by the sexual assault centres of Alberta. They have also provided me, and I'm sure could provide the minister if they haven't already, a listing of their funding and where their funding comes from. I'd just like to talk about that a little bit because this is actually the nitty-gritty details that I have spoken about more generally in the past.

9:30

When we look at funding for a number of the sexual assault centres in Alberta, this one, I think, is Edmonton but very interesting. What we have here is that 3.8, so less than 4, per cent of their total funding came from the Solicitor General, 4 per cent exactly of their total funding came from Alberta mental health, and 14.8 per cent came from Children's Services, so three different departments and totalling 22.6 per cent of the Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre's total budget, not a very large contribution overall to what they were doing. Significantly more amounts of money came from the United Way, for example, 25 per cent, and through funding from the municipalities.

So very interesting that the funding, as I had said, was very piecemeal, coming from different departments for different reasons and usually for short-term projects that were not renewable. This is what I think we need to address, to get some long-term stable, predictable funding in place that covers the operation of these centres and not just a program here and a program there.

One of the things that I looked at in their environmental scan where they were talking about that same topic of secured sustainable funding is how many of them have only one-year funding, and that runs out every year. Then they have to spend so much time reapplying annually for the funding, and it's never guaranteed, so other funding such as support from foundations is typically used to

fund special projects or ongoing programs for counselling rather than providing finances to support the organization's infrastructure.

The donations they're getting from local corporations and service groups are also one time, and a significant portion of the shortfall is made up by fundraising activities, that have mostly had to be done on a volunteer basis by the staff, who come in on their weekends and after hours to organize fundraising events to keep the centres going. It does have operational consequences for the staff of the centres. Setting aside the stress of not knowing what your budget is, it's darn hard to be a good manager when you can't predict how long your centre is actually going to stay open. Should you be managing to close it with honour and pay off all of your debts and close everything out and pay off your staff, or do you try and manage to keep going for a few more months, hoping that something is going to come together?

Now, I'm not saying that all the centres in Alberta are dealing as close to the edge, but it certainly does impinge upon your ability to be a good manager to run your centre in the long term. Rather than being able to focus on the victims and the survivors of sexual abuse, you have the staff focusing on securing additional funding to get them through the next year or the next few months.

The Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres has recently identified six core service areas that sexual assault survivors and their families should have access to throughout Alberta, and they consider these services essential in each community in order to provide a co-ordinated approach to service delivery across the province. These include crisis services, counselling, police and court support, education, outreach, and volunteer support. With a few exceptions Alberta's eight sexual assault centres do provide all six core service areas across the province, and they go through this in the environmental scan that they have provided.

There is some discussion in this environmental scan as well about new co-ordinated, multidisciplinary approaches like advocacy centres and some discussion about how well they work. An example of that: they seem to work particularly well for delivery of services to child victims of sexual abuse. You have an example here that, in fact, has been funded through the minister's previous ministry as Solicitor General. I'm sorry; that might have been through Justice. It's the Zebra centre, that's located just down the block from here. There must be funding as well from Children's Services. But the consideration here is more about provision of services to adults, which is the area that tends to get left aside.

So I'm encouraging the minister to continue along the right track that she set out on. We do need the funding. I'm hoping that at the end of the time for this comprehensive provincial strategy we have the minister continuing to work with her colleagues to secure the operational funding that needs to be in place so that we can get out of this cycle that we've been in.

I'd like to talk now about the bullying initiative, which I haven't been very involved with because I was generally approaching it from family violence or violence against women, and the bullying initiative just didn't work for me there. The other issue was the sexual assault centres, and they didn't fit into that bullying strategy either. But I'll tell you: somebody that does fit into the bullying strategy is lesbian and gay youth, and, boy, do they understand what bullying is all about. I mean, if we want to look at some of the studies and descriptions of what these kids go through, they understand bullying.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

I am a little curious because there was a project that's been brought to my attention that was to fund through the office for the

prevention of family violence, through the bullying initiative. They'd asked for funding for the Out Is In project, which has been funded by the Department of Justice Canada's community mobilization fund. Interestingly, Justice Canada was saying: we'd like to keep funding you, but you've got to have some indication of interest from your provincial government. They've never been able to secure funding for the excellent work that they do through this minister's department and through the office for the prevention of family violence. So I'm wondering if perhaps the minister is funding other groups that are working with this particular group of kids.

I would argue that this is one of the most vulnerable groups of youths, vulnerable to bullying and very particular bullying in the whole province. I mean, if you want to talk about kids that have been physically assaulted because of who they are, you want to talk about, you know: two-thirds of gay and lesbian students have heard homophobic remarks made by kids at school. Thirty-seven per cent of gay and lesbian youth questioned feel like outsiders at school. I mean, this is the epitome of bullying victims here. Forty per cent of gay and lesbian youth surveyed have dramatically low self-esteem.

I can tell you that the one stat that is the saddest statistic of all is that the youth group that is most likely to commit suicide is this group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth by far. In particular, those rates are very high following any sort of public upheaval around the issue of gay lifestyle or same-sex marriage or Delwin Vriend or any of those public discussions of those issues. Their suicide rate goes up because they see a public reaction, and they think: I can't deal with this. So it's very high.

The project that was brought forward – in this case, they were looking for funding for the Out Is In project but in particular for a camp called Camp Fyrefly, which was to help work with provincial gay and lesbian youth as a co-ordinating network and also to work with them on a leadership package. I mean, what's more worthy of funding through this bullying project?

So I'm interested to hear whether the minister has been funding other gay and lesbian youth groups. Or if they haven't been funding any, then why not? Maybe I could get the ministry to go back and have another look at what's been put forward in this group. I mean, this Camp Fyrefly: "leadership weekend attracting more than 40 youth from across Alberta and designed to help develop the capacities" of gay and lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth "to address violence and bullying in the home, school, and the community." I mean, it's tailor made. It fits exactly what's supposed to be happening here.

9:40

So, you know, lots of volunteers, including teachers, social workers, and other professionals donated their time. I'll just ask the minister to go back and have another look at that particular group and see if there's something else that can be done to fund them this year or to assist them in some way. That certainly qualifies, in my opinion, under the bullying initiatives, and we should be able to help all kids.

Another question under family violence and bullying. There's a \$14 million increase in the amount of funding for family violence from the 2004-05 budget to the '07-08 forecast and a \$10 million increase in this year alone. This is appearing on page 158 of the business plan. We would like to get a breakdown of where that \$10 million is going. Some of it is in the press release, but if I could get the details of where all of it's going, I would appreciate it. I mentioned that \$500,000 was going to the sexual assault initiative, and there were a couple of other things in that press release. The women's shelters are part of it, the community incentive fund, an additional \$2 million to the women's shelters, but if we could get the complete breakdown, please, I would appreciate that.

As part of that, there was a specific question about how much money will be spent on more conferences. There's also a question on youth in transition, an increase of \$3 million to the youth in transition budget, which appears on page 60, vote 2.3.4. How is this money going to be spent? Will it get tendered to agencies? How many new transition spaces are expected to open?

Finally, ministry support services, over \$2 million increase in ministry support services over the last year's budget. Why is most of this money going into corporate services? If we could get written responses to that, that would be good.

I continue to be concerned about the actions that the government has taken on child care, particularly, because I think it has jeopardized our funding, and it's certainly jeopardized the funding of the federal plan across the country. That's what happened the last time the feds tried to come up with a federal program. It was Alberta that stymied the whole thing. It's happening again, so I certainly hope the minister is going to be able to work this one out with her federal counterpart. I agree that choice is important.

You know, the government seemed to understand – at least, they were arguing with me – the idea of incrementalism in implementing this smoking ban, and that was the reason for not supporting the bill the other day, that it was to be done incrementally. Well, if you can propose it in that, why can't you propose it in the funding for daycares and at least keep going or enhance what we've got but not blow the whole thing in trying to go for something that's not possible?

I'd like to know what the minister is doing to work with the agencies that are under her portfolio and that contract under her portfolio, supply services that are important to the people that she serves around the absolutely astronomical increase in insurance rates for those agencies. We've seen increases from double to fivefold. A lot of the ones that I've spoken to in the last couple of weeks have looked at changes, increases over the last 18 months from, say, \$4,000 to \$10,000. That's really, really tough to find in monies for social service agencies, and somebody on that side has got to do something. The government regulates insurance. You've got to do something to help these nonprofit and charitable agencies for what's happening to them and how they're being charged for their public liability insurance by the insurance industry.

Also, I'm wondering – my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods was quoting the shelter statistics from 2002, and I know that the ministry then stopped releasing the shelter statistics. I always suspected at the time it was because there were more women and children being turned away than being served by the ministry, and it just looked so bad that they stopped releasing the statistics. I'm wondering if, in fact, they have gone back to releasing them again or if the most recent stats that are available are from 2002. If that's the case, then could the ministry please work with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters to give us an updated number on that? Also, I would like to hear the reasoning behind why those aren't being released publicly if that's still the case.

I know that there is a rush for everyone else to get in on this one, so I thank you for the opportunity to be able to raise those comments. I invite the minister to respond to me in writing just given the shortness of time because my colleague who's the official critic for this department would like to get up one more time to ask some questions.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I will be short because, as the member has indicated before, she'll accept some of the

questions she's asked in writing, but I think it's important for me to get some things on the record, and I would really like the time to be able to answer that.

I want to go back to the answer on the national child care and Alberta once again being painted the black sheep for holding up nine other provinces and territories. To me that's an incredible statement of all the other ministers across this country who don't have the initiative to stand up for their own provinces and Alberta, one province in Canada, being blamed for stalling a deal from our federal counterparts. What Alberta did is they made it very clear what was important to them and what was important to the people that they serve in this province, both Albertans and children in care. I can . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, the book is in front of the microphone, and therefore it's not picking up all the sound. You may proceed.

Mrs. Forsyth: I can tell the hon. member that when we were at the negotiating table in January with the federal government, at that particular time we were ready to sign an agreement called an asymmetrical agreement, but the federal government would not pursue that. After that, we went out and had a press release, and he said at that particular time that he was going to be negotiating with the provinces. I want to reiterate one more time that with my recent conversation with Mr. Dryden, he verbally agreed to all of Alberta's concerns. He indicated at that particular time that the stall was from the Northwest Territories and Prince Edward Island in regard to the base funding plus discussion around his own cabinet table in regard to the French.

I am pleased that the hon. member acknowledges the fact of the money we have given in regard to the sexual assault shelters and the \$500,000. I can tell her that the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres was very, very grateful for the money that the government was providing, and we're going to continue to work very, very closely with them and monitor what's happening with the money and how they're going to use the money and how they're going to deal with the particular issue. I can tell you that it's been a struggle for the sexual assaults because they have referred to sexual assault as a hidden disease, something that people don't want to talk about and again were very, very pleased with the money.

The member talked about the issue of lesbian and gay bullying and the initiatives that were dealing with that. What I want to say on the bullying issue is that it's all encompassing. It does not matter if you're a lesbian. It doesn't matter if you're gay. It doesn't matter if you're black, green, purple, short, tall, whatever. Bullying is bullying no matter who's doing the bullying. I think that what the government is doing on the bullying initiative is recognizing bullying as a problem. We're even seeing at this particular time cyberbullying become a huge problem, and we'll look forward to what we see coming out of the community incentive grants.

She talked about youth in transition. The increase in the youth in transition is related to the advancing futures bursary program that was implemented from the Children's Forum. The success of the advancing futures bursary program and the anticipated uptake that resulted from a very successful program is why we've increased it to \$3.2 million. The youth in transition initiative is intended to develop policy and programs for youth in transition, and as the member indicated, the chair has been very, very successful in regard to this particular initiative, and the kids like it.

Due to time, what we'll do is we'll allow the critic to ask some more questions.

9:50

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to address a couple of issues, one of the issues brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Centre and also the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, mostly in regard to the youth initiatives that are taking place.

I think it's our responsibility not only as a government but as a society to always look for better directions, to always look for more effective and efficient solutions to some of the challenges, to some of the concerns that we have that we deal with with youth. I know that it is difficult, and I know that it is a situation that may seem as if the solutions arrive very quickly or very easily from the outside, but I would suggest to you that some of those solutions that we could arrive at aren't long-lasting solutions.

I think it is absolutely imperative that we engage our youth in the decision-making that we are doing right now. I could give you a number of examples, and I think the Member for Edmonton-Centre talked about some of the tragic areas involving youth and gay individuals. I want to say from that aspect that I think that when we have youth forums or youth gatherings between staff and between myself as the Youth Secretariat and youth, we very much look at all of the different aspects and all of the different challenges that are brought forward. We look at all of the different avenues where bullying is being effected. We look at all of the different directions where violence takes place.

The question, of course, that arises is: how do we engage youth? How do we involve youth to a more successful outcome? I think that on a regular basis that is the goal, that is the direction we should be following. We need to involve youth, and we need to listen to what youth say because they are experiencing the issues exactly at the time when the issues are prevalent. We can look back to our past and what experiences we've had, and we think that we can apply that knowledge to the youth of today. That always doesn't happen. So when we have youth and we engage youth, I know that the solutions they have are more practical. As I stated earlier, the knowledge that they have is one that is immediate and, if I can say, one that is practical because they understand the situation now.

I want to say that I talked about the involvement of youth in the bullying and violence forum. Now, those youth came from across the province. Those youth came from as far south as Kainai. They came from the northern part of the province. They came from urban and they came from rural areas. They came from intercity areas, all having different issues, all having different perspectives of the challenges that youth have in their communities.

Most recently we had a meeting with a group of youth in regard to the challenges they have with drugs, the experiences they had, and the initiatives that they brought forward to that meeting, that they brought forward to a meeting that involved the chair of AADAC and at this particular meeting the Premier, who also dropped in for part of the meeting to listen to youth, some of the solutions that they had, the desires that youth had to be involved in the solution-forming direction – let me give you some examples if I can. We talked in a round-table with the youth that were in attendance – and they came from all different types of social situations, economic situations, from very wealthy homes as well as homes that were very much struggling to survive – about how they got involved in drugs and how they got involved in schools where they were basically enticed to partake or to get involved with peer groups that did not give them the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Now, these individuals came to us and came to the meeting with solutions. They want to help. They want to help their fellow students. They would like to work in a situation where they could as students go to schools, meet with children, present their experiences to classrooms, present their experiences to audiences, to

parents in order for other children not to get involved in those sorts of activities. They relayed to us the different types of experiences that they had, the different types of challenges that they had and what directions could better assist them in bringing their message forward.

“What needs to be done?” you ask. So what needs to be done? As I said before, what needs to happen is that we do need to involve our youth. We need to get them involved. We need to get our children and our youth involved. Now, we do have to assist them. We have to assist them in the manner that we need to support them. We need to support them going out into the communities. We need to support them with . . .

Mr. Snelgrove: The tools.

Mr. Danyluk: I appreciate the advice that’s being given to me by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

I believe and we know that with that support, the message will be clearer when it comes from children to their own peer group than if we send, let us say, officers or politicians to send the message, and that message will be very clear.

Mr. Chairman, I understand that my time is just about up. I just want to summarize by saying that I very much believe that with interaction with our youth, with the support that we can give our youth, we will find solutions, and we will continue to look for solutions, to strive to make their world just a little bit better.

Thank you very much.

10:00

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, we only have a few minutes, but, yeah, go ahead.

Dr. Pannu: Two minutes. Okay, Mr. Chairman.

I’ve got two quick questions for the minister. One is on the cut of 11 per cent for the early intervention programs in the budget. The budget for 2005-2006, the current budget, allocates about \$10.7 million, whereas last year’s budget had \$11.9 million for the early intervention program. So why that dramatic 11 per cent cutback?

The second quick question, in the last 50 seconds, has to do with the child, youth, and family services program. There the budget seems to have been even more dramatically cut, from close to \$7 million in the 2004-2005 budget to about \$2 million in 2005-2006. There’s quite a dramatic cut. I don’t think there is time for her to answer now. I’m sure she will answer these questions in writing.

How much more time is left, Mr. Chairman?

The Deputy Chair: About three more minutes.

Dr. Pannu: Oh, three more minutes. Okay.

I would like to return to one of the issues that I feel very passionate about. The minister talked last time around and continually talks about our child care system being one of the best in Canada, and I respectfully disagree with that. I ask the question because I want the minister to perhaps take another look at it and see what measures she can take to improve it.

The Ministry of Children’s Services’ own studies indicate that when we compare ourselves in terms of child care staff qualifications, we don’t really compare very well with Ontario, where 80 per cent of child care staff have a two-year early childhood education certificate or higher compared to only about 43 per cent in Alberta, about half as much as Ontario’s EC staff.

The median hourly wage in Ontario is about 62 per cent higher than in Alberta. In Ontario it was about \$13.50 per hour; in Alberta it was about \$8.30. With that kind of low wages for our child care

workers, you can’t get them at \$8.30 an hour if they have a university degree or two or three years of college education, and you need well-educated, well-trained people to provide good education. To keep these people, if they are well educated, in child care services, you need to pay them well. What programs does the minister have which will address these two issues which determine the quality of child care in Alberta?

Another question, Mr. Chairman, for the minister. It’s information that she would perhaps like to look at, comparing Alberta with Quebec. Quebec’s child care program and system is considered the best. It works the best. It has the highest ratings. Eighty-six per cent of Alberta’s total child care expenditures for regulated child care spaces goes to parent fee subsidies. Nothing goes to operating grants in Alberta. At the other end of the spectrum . . .

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department’s proposed estimates, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Children’s Services for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$793,954,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’d move that the committee rise and report the vote of the Department of Children’s Services and request leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Children’s Services: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$793,954,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

Bill 1
Access to the Future Act

The Deputy Chair: I am given to understand that we are currently on amendment A3, that's before the Assembly.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chair, I adjourned debate on that, so I'm not proposing to continue speaking to that. I just wonder if we could revert to introductions for a moment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Our guest this evening for the Bill 1 debate is Paul Zits, outgoing president of the Students' Association of Grant MacEwan College. So at the start of our committee debate on Bill 1 tonight I would just like to recognize him. If he could rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House, please.

Bill 1
Access to the Future Act
(continued)

The Deputy Chair: Did the Government House Leader want to rise and be recognized?

Mr. Hancock: Just briefly. I understand that the amendment that's on the table is A3, which proposes an amendment to add a subsection (8.1) to Bill 1. I don't have the amendment in front of me, Mr. Chairman, but the amendment essentially would call for putting into Bill 1 a requirement that there be a full and complete reporting on all of the commitments made under the access to the future fund, so to report what commitments have been made and how much had been given to whom.

Of course, that's part and parcel of reporting and disclosure in this government. We have a government which prides itself on being open in publishing all of that information. I would indicate to the House that it would be absolutely remiss if that information were not in the annual report of the Department of Advanced Education each and every year in terms of what commitments had been made and what funds had been expended out of the access to the future fund.

10:10

So while I understand the desire of the Member for Calgary-Currie to bring forward the amendment to put sort of belts and suspenders in place to make sure that the public has all the information it needs, the reality is that that's the way we do business, so it's not necessary for it to be in the bill. It's not necessary for every bill to be full and complete with all the rules and details. In fact, often it's helpful to have framework legislation. I know the opposition tends not to like framework legislation and things being done by regulation, but that often makes it much better legislation, in fact.

I have nothing against this amendment, but I am going to ask that the House not approve this amendment because it's redundant. It's

surplusage. The fact of the matter is that that information is and will be reported.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do agree with the hon. member across the Assembly. Belts and suspenders are good; elastics around the waist are even better. Good, solid accountability. My mantra throughout my political life has been exactly what he has said: open, accountable, honest governance processes.

I think it's very important, especially with dollars of this magnitude, that we have a complete breakdown of the grants and where these grants are going. In fact, the education community and the student community deserve to understand exactly how these grants work. There are some very specific recommendations, and I think that it would be interesting to have that breakdown in terms of the dollars that actually go toward education delivery as opposed to the administration of the grants.

Some of the things that were said, just to put them on the record because I know the hon. minister across has actually read them: the minister would report on each grant in the annual report; the fact that this fund is established for particular purposes, and it's therefore important to specify that the accountability mechanisms are in place to support those particular purposes for which they were made; and the minister would be specifically required by 2(3) to report on access and affordability. We also believe that he should be required to report on each grant in that manner. I think that he sincerely feels that there isn't any need for this amendment, but I would like to see it go through as I feel that it really addresses the belts and suspenders part of this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're returning to debate on this amendment after a break of almost one week. I don't have the amendment before me, but the intent of the amendment seems to be such that it merits the support of the House.

It's a bill that has very little specificity and detail to it, but we are dealing or are going to be dealing, hopefully pretty soon, with \$3 billion worth of taxpayers' money; \$134 million a year are promised to flow down to the postsecondary system on a yearly basis. But we need some clear ground rules and some reporting mechanisms so that we know how the purposes and the objectives of this particular piece of legislation are achieved. In order for us to make that assessment on whether or not the objectives are indeed reached or achieved or are well-served by the way that \$134 million will be allocated in the years to come on a yearly basis is if we legislate that there be full disclosure of the monies allocated, grants made, monies transferred to different institutions. Only if we as a Legislature and as representatives of the people of Alberta have that ability to scrutinize and look at the numbers and see how the money is spent will we be justified voting for this bill. So I support this bill.

Another concern that I have is about the minister of higher education's general claim that this government operates transparently and always discloses information. My experience over the last eight years in this House tells me that that's not always the case, especially on a new venture of the sort that this Bill 1 proposes to undertake on behalf of the postsecondary system and on behalf of close to 200,000 students and teachers who work in the system.

I think that it's important that the information with respect to the grants made to institutions, to programs, to research applications, to researchers, students, and others be made public. This bill is somewhat equivocal on whether or not the funds from this endow-

ment fund will in fact be accessible by private, for-profit institutions, that are growing by leaps and bounds in this province. I have some amendments later on to propose. Hopefully they'll be accepted, and we will not have to worry about any dollars flowing to private, for-profit institutions in this province. Until that happens, I think it is an additional reason that there be full disclosure about the way the monies from this endowment fund are distributed and the destination of these monies, especially with reference to whether they go to all institutions in the public system or whether they also go to private, for-profit institutions, which are being approved year after year to operate in this province by this government.

For those reasons, I speak in support of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A sardonic comment first of all. Here we are talking about a piece of legislation governing post-secondary education, and the critic from the third party and the hon. minister do not have a copy of the amendment with them. They failed their homework assignment tonight, sir. But, seriously, folks, as we say.

Obviously, and I'm on record from last week as feeling that this is an important amendment, as I felt about amendments A1 and A2, which did not succeed in this House. What we see here, for the record, is an example, I think, of the philosophical differences between the governing party and the opposition parties. The two sides of the House, it is my experience in my brief time in this House, do speak different languages using the same words. The government feels, and the minister just said so, that framework legislation – oh, the minister has found his homework; the dog did not eat it. I don't know if he's going to turn it in for marking afterwards or not.

As the minister said a moment ago, the government feels that framework legislation is best, laying out the legislation in broad strokes and then leaving it to the regulations to dot the i's and cross the t's. The government feels philosophically – I accept that this is a philosophical bent of the government – that doing it through regulation gives you better legislation, perhaps more flexible legislation. I don't know.

10:20

On the comment about better legislation, we are considering during this session some 40 bills, 39 of which I believe are amending bills to existing legislation. So that begs the question, a rhetorical question for tonight: how good is the legislation if you have to amend 39 existing acts in every session? But it's a rhetorical question, sir.

Philosophically, the government believes in framework legislation and working out the details through regulation. Philosophically, Mr. Chairman, we believe on this side of the House that whether or not it is the most efficient way to write legislation, writing legislation properly with all the details in there and working together collaboratively to amend legislation that can be improved and doing it on the floor of this House, passing amendments, passing bills through their various stages, making law on the floor of this House is the most democratic way of doing it.

There have been other forms of government in history that have been very efficient at getting the trains to run on time, but they've had some pretty unsavory aspects to them. I'm not suggesting for a moment that I'm making a comparison here. I am suggesting, though, that efficiency, a quest for efficiency, a desire for efficiency should not be the highest philosophical, ideological, moral, or ethical

calling of a political party or a government. The highest philosophical, moral, and ethical calling is democracy and the respect for our bosses, the people of the province of Alberta, a respect that allows us and requires us and compels us to do our business in public in an open, accountable, and transparent fashion.

At the end of the day the results may be the same, but we value democracy in large part because it is about process, because it is about an openness and a transparency and an accountability when done properly, when done right that allows the people to see that they are being democratically and responsibly represented and that they can hold their representatives to account. That's why we proposed these amendments, plain and simple.

Now, I'm not going to drag out debate on this one any longer. I'm going to suggest that we put it to a vote, but I wanted that on the record because this is why we have done what we have done.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, I do have four other amendments to Bill 1, and I would very much like to debate them and talk about them in this House, and I hope to get the opportunity to do that in the future. I'm also aware that the critic from the third party has some amendments of his own. The committee study of Bill 1 so far has been my show, I guess, our show, my honour to have the opportunity to introduce my amendments. I know that the member from the third party would like to get his amendments or at least some of them on the table, on the floor in play as well.

So if I may, Mr. Chair, at this point in hopes of getting back to my remaining four amendments, I would like to table my amendments if you'll allow. I have the requisite copies here.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. With that, I cede the floor to the member from the third party.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I just need some clarification. It's my understanding that there are four amendments that you are circulating.

Mr. Taylor: Tabling.

The Deputy Chair: You're just tabling?

Mr. Taylor: I am tabling them only, sir.

The Deputy Chair: You are not moving for debate?

Mr. Taylor: I'm moving no amendments for debate at this time. It is my hope that we will get back to those amendments in further study in committee before the end of this session, but that's a decision of this House. In the event that we might not, I simply want to get these amendments on the record, so it's a simple tabling.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I should also thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie for deferring to my desire to propose some amendments to Bill 1, Access to the Future Act. I have the amendments ready. The first amendment I'd like to propose is to section 4 of the bill, actually section 4(2). I have the amendment ready for circulation. Here we go.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, are you moving an amendment?

Dr. Pannu: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. We shall refer to that amendment as amendment A4.

Dr. Pannu: Okay, Mr. Chairman. I will wait for a minute or two while amendment A4 is being distributed.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, you may proceed.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to draw the attention of the House to some of the concerns that I expressed when I spoke to Bill 1 in its second reading. At that time I had expressed some concern about the equivocal language used in the section of the bill, specifically section 4(2), which reads in a way that it leaves room for interpreting this subsection as including private, for-profit postsecondary institutions in the coverage of what this section 4(2) provides. I call this equivocal language. The bill neither says yes nor says no to it. Therefore, it leaves room for private, for-profit institutions to make valid claims on the resources of the fund.

Section 4(2), Mr. Chairman, reads as follows at present.

The purpose of the Fund is generally to support innovation and excellence that enhances and expands opportunities for Albertans to participate in accessible, affordable and high-quality advanced education opportunities and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing.

Then there are several other subs that follow this.

10:30

My concern is that there's a lack of specificity in that paragraph that I've read with respect to public institutions as being the only ones in which these education opportunities will be enhanced. The amendment that I am proposing, Mr. Chairman, proposes to amend that section 4(2) by adding "in public post-secondary institutions" after "education opportunities." It removes the ambiguity. It addresses the problem with equivocation of the language of section 4(2) and clarifies that the purpose of the fund is generally to support innovation and excellence in public postsecondary institutions.

I don't think I need to say much more to this amendment, Mr. Chairman. It's self-explanatory, and I think it is an eminently supportable amendment because all it does is improve the language of the bill and clarify the intent of the proposed legislation to enhance these activities related to innovation and excellence and thereby enhance and expand high-quality advanced education opportunities but in public postsecondary institutions.

So with that, I'll sit down and hope that the House would support this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While I certainly appreciate the sentiment raised by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I would urge the House not to accept this amendment and for very good reason. While it should be obvious to everyone that a matching grant out of the access fund, if that was the proposal, or an ingenuity project out of the access fund would not normally go to a private institution – in other words, you wouldn't use public money to build private assets; that's clearly not in the cards – you also don't want to limit the efficacy of the access fund by suggesting that, for example, a scholarship fund or a bursary fund set up to allow a student to take an education would preclude a student going

to an educational institution, even a private educational institution if that was the appropriate choice for the student.

So this is one of those situations which I was directly dealing with before, where you don't want to be too strictured in the act because you might rule out things that you didn't intend to rule out. While I think it's clear that the intention of the hon. member is to rule out the concept of grants coming out of the access fund going to a private, for-profit institution, the fact of the matter is that there are plenty of educational opportunities in private, not-for-profit institutions which we support students in going to through student loan processes and through bursaries. In fact, there are choices for students in private, for-profit institutions which we support through student loans and through Rutherford scholarships.

So to put this amendment in place, while the intention is honourable, it's exactly one of those things that I was mentioning earlier, where by codifying too strictly you end up having unintended consequences and where it's better to have the framework in place and then deal with the regulation.

I would certainly intend to bring forward the regulations and the policies to this House so that people could see them, so that they're open and transparent, but make it apparent that we ought not to delimit it in such a way that you wouldn't have the opportunity of someone coming forward and saying, "I want to put forward a scholarship fund or a bursary fund to bring students out of northern Alberta," for example, and then say that because you went to a private, not-for-profit institution or you went, for that matter, to a private, for-profit institution in a course that was an acceptable course of studies for a student loan program, it would be not acceptable for this type of a scholarship fund.

So you can set up a scholarship fund, I would think, under the access to the future fund. If somebody wanted to donate money to set up a scholarship fund or a bursary fund, it could be matched, presumably, out of this, and that would be available, then, to students who meet the criteria for the scholarship or bursary. But this amendment would say, well, if they're going to anything other than a public institution, it wouldn't qualify. Honourable intention, but clearly one of those areas where by putting in too much stricture, you may have unintended consequences.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was an interesting explanation, which begs a couple of questions that I wonder if I can get the minister to address in terms of perhaps explaining or giving us some insight in the House as to how he sees these sorts of scholarship or bursary programs operating.

While the minister doesn't want to put too much stricture on things here because of unintended consequences, I'm left wondering, if we do not pass this amendment, whether one of the unintended consequences could be that public money in Alberta is following Alberta students, then, to public or private, not-for-profit or private, for-profit postsecondary educational institutions in other provinces, states, or countries around the world. Is that the minister's intention, to take the access to the future fund and use it to in effect endow other institutions around the world?

Mr. Hancock: Clearly, the intention of the fund is not to endow other institutions around the world, but one of the intentions of the fund is to promote access to Albertans to advance their education, and Albertans can advance their education in public institutions, in private, for-profit and private, not-for-profit institutions. Those are choices that Alberta students can make, and those are choices that are currently supported through the student finance process if they're

appropriate courses of study. Not all private, for-profit courses of study are supported through student finance, but some are.

We've indicated that there will be a process of defining the parameters because this fund isn't going to do everything for everybody by any stretch of the imagination. The parameters do have to be defined in terms of what will qualify and what will not qualify. But my point is that in defining those parameters, which would be inappropriate to do in the act itself, it would also be inappropriate to preclude certain things from happening.

One of those things which immediately jumps to mind when you see this amendment is the concept of a bursary or a scholarship fund that might be privately supported. I can think of a number of proposals that have come forward already, because I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that just the fact that we're debating this fund has spurred a huge amount of interest in people bringing forward gifts and bursaries and suggestions as to how they might give, give some money back, give some of what they've earned in Alberta back. The thirst for this has been phenomenal, even more than I anticipated.

In bringing those forward, people agreeing to put forward a scholarship or a bursary, to automatically preclude accessibility to a student who lives in Alberta, who's grown up in Alberta, whose family has paid taxes in Alberta because they might want to access that opportunity at a private, for-profit institution or a private, not-for-profit institution in Alberta or elsewhere is something that we ought not to be precluding right off the top.

When the regulations are designed, because the fund is only so big and only goes so far, that might be something that would be delimited or prioritized, but obviously it ought not to be precluded.

Mr. Taylor: So let me just make sure that I clearly understand what the minister just said, and I do this strictly for the purpose of understanding. In the Access to the Future Act, Bill 1, the minister has the intention of allowing the money to enhance the educational opportunities of the Alberta student – as the minister just said, yes, there will be some restrictions, some provisos – regardless of what jurisdiction the student then chooses to pursue his postsecondary education. Is that correct?

Mr. Hancock: There may be appropriate circumstances where a student who lives in Alberta, whose family has paid taxes in Alberta, and who we hope will return to Alberta with their capabilities, strengths, and knowledge may need to go elsewhere to get that, and there's no good reason why they should not have that kind of support.

10:40

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the minister's explanation, his response to the amendment, and the reasons why he can't support the amendment. The strictures on the bill, on the flexibility that he wants to have built into the bill are important from his point of view, but I think what he has said deepens my concern about what I see as a flaw in the bill. I am concerned that public dollars, in light of the explanation the minister has given, are now put at the disposal of private, for-profit institutions as much as they'll be there for the use of institutions that are part of the public system.

My intention by way of introducing this amendment is not to deprive having access to the funds for private, not-for-profit institutions in the province. My concern is with profit-making institutions that, as I said, are growing in numbers in this province. We are getting some complaints from students who have had, perhaps, the misfortune of entering some of these institutions and finding that their interests are not at the centre of the operations that these private, for-profit institutions undertake in this province.

There are some institutions here, Mr. Chairman, in this province operating now that have in fact been fined across the border for

violating contractual obligations. They've been fined to the tune of millions of dollars for those infractions. I am saying why, when this fund is being introduced with such fanfare and such hoopla, are we taking a chance of this fund becoming accessible to institutions, some of which clearly should not be in this province and, if they are, should not have the right to enjoy access to this bill?

My concern is enhanced, not mitigated by what the minister has said. I would certainly ask members in this House to support this amendment, to clearly lay out the purpose of the bill and define the type of institutions that will have access to it and such other institutions, such as for-profit ones, which will not have access to the dollars from this bill.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce a second amendment, and I have it ready for distribution.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, you may proceed.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm again speaking to a subsection of section 4 of Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act. Specifically, what I'm proposing will amend subsection (7) of section 4. Subsection (7) at present reads as follows.

The Minister of Finance shall annually, in a manner determined by the Minister of Finance, pay from the General Revenue Fund to the Access to the Future Fund an amount equal to 4.5% of the total amounts allocated under subsection (4), as adjusted under subsection (6).

Now, the amendment amends the language of subsection (7) by adding "and such amount shall be included in the estimates for that fiscal year" after "adjusted under subsection (6)."

So, again, this amendment, I think, is a friendly amendment. It simply clarifies the language of the bill and strengthens the bill. The major intent of this amendment is to ensure that the fund is built up without using unbudgeted surpluses. Unbudgeted surpluses give the government an excuse to hide money away in other ways and not put the money in rather than being up front in their budgeting, and for that reason it also suggests that the provision as presently standing in the bill doesn't really represent a strong and firm commitment to postsecondary education because it doesn't, by way of the budget, make commitments. We have seen already that although the bill is supposed to sooner or later grow to \$3 billion, this year we put only \$250 million into it.

I think that being up front in budgeting is helpful in both ensuring that the government maintains and continues this renewed commitment to postsecondary education and that it is included in the budget. I think that will improve the piece of legislation that's before us, and that's the only reason that this amendment is being proposed here, not to change either the intent of the bill or the scope of the funds and the manner in which they'll be used.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, before the committee can deal with this amendment, you will have to move it.

Dr. Pannu: Okay. Mr. Chairman, consider it moved.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

Hon. members, we shall refer to this amendment as amendment A5.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Chairman, again, I would have to ask the House not to pass this amendment. The rationale for the amendment that's just been put forward is that it will require the funds to be voted, but the hon. member has confused the money going into the heritage fund to be allocated for this purpose and the money coming out of the heritage fund and into the access to the future fund for spending. So this amendment will not, in fact, enhance the flow of money into the fund but will have a different effect, and that is to change the money coming out of the fund from being a statutory amount of 4 and a half per cent of whatever is in the heritage fund allocated to this purpose and, rather, put it into an estimate amount, which means that it's subject to an annual vote by members of the House as to how much should actually come in.

In effect what the hon. member's amendment does is say that although the act provides for 4 and a half per cent on a statutory basis, the act calls for that to be transferred into the fund for expenditure purposes. In fact, that's statutory. That's a requirement. That's something that has to happen. By making this amendment, what he's suggesting is that it becomes a voted amount, which is then at the will of the budget process every year in terms of being able to use that to balance the other numbers. So this has not the effect that the hon. member had requested.

10:50

In fact, it doesn't have anything to do with how fast the \$3 billion is built up in the fund. It has nothing to do with that. Section 4(7) doesn't deal with that. It deals with the amount being paid out, which is 4 and a half per cent of whatever's in there and accumulated.

So the theory of the fund is that \$3 billion goes into a special delineated account in the heritage fund. It grows by inflation. Four and a half per cent of whatever has been contributed in there comes out through the general revenue fund into the access to the future fund to be allocated to these projects. The effect of this amendment will make that a voted amount rather than a statutory amount, which is not exactly what the hon. member wants to happen.

Dr. Pannu: I must confess that I am at least 50 per cent persuaded by the minister's explanation on this. I think the manner in which he has drawn attention to the fact that this is a statutory commitment to put 4.5 per cent of the total amount into the fund to be made available for use every year makes sense too.

Is it possible, by any chance, to withdraw the amendment, Mr. Chairman, on this? Just a procedural guidance.

The Deputy Chair: Sorry?

Dr. Pannu: Once we introduce an amendment – I've never been through this – is it possible to withdraw an amendment? If I'm persuaded by the minister's rather fairly clear explanation of it, can I simply withdraw the amendment at this stage?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, yes, it can be done. All we have to do is request unanimous consent to withdraw it, and it can be done.

Dr. Pannu: I think I'm willing to do that, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: So you are asking for unanimous consent to withdraw the amendment?

Dr. Pannu: Right. Yeah.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who has moved amendment A5, is requesting unanimous consent to withdraw the amendment.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We probably set some sort of precedent. I've never seen an amendment being . . .

An Hon. Member: It's not a precedent.

Dr. Pannu: But I'm pleased to do this.

I have one more amendment, Mr. Chairman. This will be amendment A6, I believe. I would like to move it. So I move that Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, be amended in section 9 by striking out "This Act comes into force on Proclamation" and substituting "This Act must be proclaimed no later than one year from the date it receives Royal Assent." So here is . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, we need to have the amendment circulated first.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, you may proceed now.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: This amendment I'll refer to as amendment A6.

Dr. Pannu: A6. Yes. Mr. Chairman, amendment A6 is a fairly straightforward one. I have expressed my reservations about this bill before, so I won't go over those again but simply want to say that the amendment attempts to ensure that the promises, albeit insufficient, that are made in this Bill 1 actually do come to fruition within a predictable time period. The amendment gives a deadline for any necessary regulations to be completed and for the act to be proclaimed.

The minister, while speaking to amendment A4 or A5, indicated that already the bill has generated very high expectations, and he's receiving inquiries from interested institutions within the post-secondary system about the fund and the availability of new dollars so they can begin to access these new funds as soon as possible.

I guess my amendment addresses this heightened interest on the part of member institutions of postsecondary systems to have access to this bill within a finite period of time, and that is that the bill be proclaimed within one year of the passage of the bill so that access is guaranteed to institutions to the amount of funds that will be available at the end of the first year after the bill passes through the Legislature. So its proclamation will be made certain within a year of the completion of the debate here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hancock: Again, Mr. Chairman, while I appreciate the support that the hon. member is giving to the sentiment of the bill, it's an unnecessary amendment. The fact of the matter is that this bill is going to be proclaimed very, very quickly because there's a high degree of enthusiasm for this to happen, and the fact of the matter is that the budget that was presented and the business plans that were presented have indicated that some money is going to be allocated to it. That can't happen unless this bill is passed and proclaimed.

The forecast for next year and the year after forecast that even of the amount which is indicated already in the budget that will be applied to this fund out of the surpluses – there'll be \$11 million next year and \$11 million the following. They anticipate that

number to be much, much higher as a result of surplus funds going into the fund before now. But none of that can happen if this bill isn't proclaimed.

So I don't think the hon. member need have any worry about the speed with which this bill will be proclaimed into law if the Legislature passes it soon, I hope.

Dr. Pannu: To quickly conclude debate on this, Mr. Chairman – it seems as if no other member is going to be speaking on it – I think that the minister agrees with me that the bill should be proclaimed as soon as possible. All the amendment intends to do is to make sure that the bill doesn't sit there awaiting proclamation beyond one year. If it's proclaimed sooner, so much the better. This is one amendment that the minister should find very easy to accept.

I'll urge him and the House to vote in support of this amendment so that we get it out of the way and move on to whatever business the House has before it after this. Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

[The clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

11:00

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and may I say thanks to members of the committee for the manner in which we've been able to deal with the issues raised on the bill tonight.

Now, having agreed to report the bill, I would move that the committee rise and report Bill 1.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly. I would also like to table copies of documents tabled during Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker: So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 29
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 20: Mrs. Fritz]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I support and would ask my colleagues to also support this bill and the extra supplementary benefits that will become a part of the AISH program. These supplementary benefits are in addition to the living expenses and the medical expenses that people on AISH will get.

I will just use a very quick analogy. If someone would have a guide dog that they are reliant upon, the guide dog's expenses, the extra food and the veterinarian and whatever else that dog would require, would come under the supplementary benefits as special dollars for people that have special needs. It doesn't have to come out of their living expenses.

I think this is a very good bill, and certainly I am pleased to see that the government is listening to the opposition and that we, in fact, have listened to the grassroots Albertans, and now by listening we have improved the lives of the elderly and the disabled.

I don't think there's a great deal more to say on this one other than I think it's very good. I think it's positive for people on AISH, and I would ask my colleagues to support it.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to Bill 29. Bill 29 is about the changes that have been overdue for a very long time that needed to be made. Over the last eight years that I've been around this House, we have been talking about the need to increase the monthly payments for Albertans on AISH. The recipients, as a result of the changes that the government announced in the budget, certainly are getting an increase of a hundred dollars immediately, making their total monthly payments \$950. By April 2006 they will get an increase to \$1,000. So they'll have to wait till April 2006 before they get the increase to the \$1,000 level.

Mr. Speaker, we were hoping that the increase would be to \$1,050 immediately. This would have made up for what was lost to inflation over the past 12 years. Then we were hoping that AISH would be indexed, of course, to the cost of living using the market-basket measure. That would ensure that the severely handicapped would be able to meet their needs on this program without having this Legislature return to amend this piece of legislation again in two years' time. MLA salaries are indexed to inflation, so there's no reason why Albertans who are on AISH should not expect the same kind of adjustment on an annual basis.

It seems only reasonable that the real value of what AISH recipients receive is maintained from year to year. We do know that that value is eroded on an annual basis by the increases either due to inflation or the cost-of-living increases, which are inevitable and do happen on a predictable, ineluctable basis. So there is, I think, a disappointment here that indexation is not part of the adjustments that have been made.

There are some new medical benefits that recipients should be made aware of. We welcome those benefits. We think they are long overdue. But the problem with the new benefits is that, according to the minister, they will be dispensed on a case-by-case basis. We think programs should be a lot more universal than that. We also

know that this kind of approach requires people to advocate for themselves. We have to bear in mind that this is the severely handicapped we are talking about here who may not be able to advocate for themselves, certainly not all the time. Giving people more bureaucracy to navigate is not the answer.

The government has also doubled the amount recipients are allowed to earn to \$400 before getting AISH clawed back. That's a good thing, but that amount should be reviewed annually to keep pace with the cost of living again.

So we are certainly not entirely happy with the increases. We don't think that they go far enough. They are, nevertheless, a welcome change. The reason that we are not happy is simply this, Mr. Speaker. Since 1993 AISH recipients have lost 23 per cent of their income to inflation. Current increases mean a 15 per cent increase, and recipients will have to wait until next year for the whole increase. This means that this increase still falls far short of inflation, by about 8 per cent, more if you factor in inflation for the next year, which will likely be higher than usual given the oil prices and the way the energy prices are going up. In any case, those are some of the concerns I wanted to put on record.

That said, I think the change is welcome, and I know that the AISH recipients appreciate the increase that they have been waiting for for very long. I have lots of them in my constituency, and I've been hearing from them on the phone and through my constituency office. They are happy, but they don't think the change has gone as far as it should have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to Bill 29, the AISH amendment act. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, if I could just indulge you for a minute. The chair did not realize that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was the third speaker, so if there are any comments or questions, we have five minutes available for that purpose.

If not, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill to continue.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports for her leadership in bringing forward these much-needed changes to the program and for implementing almost all of the changes which were recommended by the MLA AISH Review Committee. I was pleased to be part of that committee and to have a role in renewing the AISH program. As MLAs the AISH program is one of the programs that we hear about quite regularly from our constituents.

11:10

In reviewing the submissions made by numerous stakeholders and in reviewing the questionnaire that was circulated, many of the concerns which were raised were about the ability of AISH clients to make ends meet on the living allowance of \$850 a month. Many people also criticized the so-called clawback that affected the living allowance of those AISH clients who were able to do at least some work to supplement their income. The committee also heard from clients and families who said that the administrative processes under

the program were too complex to be easily understood. I'm glad that the committee's recommendations for these important changes in all of these areas were accepted and that the minister will be moving forward to implement those changes.

The package of benefits announced last week represents a renewal of the AISH program, and part of that renewal is the new supplementary benefit that will be available to those clients with assets of less than \$3,000. This supplementary benefit is the reason for the minor amendment which is being proposed under Bill 29. This is an important change for AISH clients as it will give them access to an additional benefit when they're having difficulty making ends meet because of special needs. More importantly, this benefit will be tailored to a client's special circumstances.

I know the minister has already shared with the hon. members a few examples of the types of expenses that may be covered by supplementary benefits, and I would like to address one more. As severely disabled Albertans most AISH clients have regular medical appointments with specialists for treatment or ongoing monitoring of their conditions. While the living allowance covers their basic needs and their health benefit package covers the cost of their health care and prescription drugs, in the past there was no benefit to cover things such as additional transportation costs. So if a client needed to come to Calgary, for instance, to see a medical specialist and they lived in Drayton Valley, Lloydminster, or Etzikom, for example, there would be a large cost associated with that and a transportation cost they may not be able to absorb.

Under this new category of benefits, the supplementary benefit, a client will be able to speak to their AISH worker about emerging expenses, and on a case-by-case basis the program may offer additional benefits to address the needs of those clients. This is a very significant change, one which I believe will help make the program more flexible and more accommodating to the unique and individual needs of each AISH client.

Given that through Budget 2005 the minister has been allocated funding to implement this change, I support Bill 29 and this amendment which will allow for this new benefit to be offered under the AISH program. I've heard people often refer to AISH as simply a living allowance. They often aren't aware of the comprehensive health benefit package or the earnings exemption. With the changes that the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports announced last week, including the introduction of supplementary benefits as outlined in Bill 29, we are renewing the AISH program on behalf of nearly 32,000 disabled Albertans who rely upon it.

I urge all hon. members to support the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:15 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 27, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/27

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. Give us the strength to labour diligently, the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly His Excellency Poul Kristensen, ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark. His Excellency is accompanied by Mr. Ole Jorgensen, honorary consul for Denmark here in Edmonton, as well as his wife, Mrs. Else Philipp. I was pleased to host our honoured guests at our official luncheon earlier today on the ambassador's first visit to Alberta. We had a great discussion about our two regions, value-adding, tourism, education.

Mr. Speaker, Danes first settled in Alberta before we became a province. The first Danish settlement in western Canada was founded in Dickson, Alberta, in 1903. The town of Dickson is now home to the Danish Canadian National Museum and Gardens. Today Alberta companies are active in Denmark's oil and gas sector. In addition to our trade ties, Alberta's educational institutions are actively engaged with their Danish counterparts. The University of Alberta is itself a leader in Nordic studies. We look forward to working with His Excellency towards expanding on the Alberta/Denmark ties and opportunities.

I would ask that our honoured guests, who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Rajan and Pushpa Bali from my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They are, of course, the proud parents of Janiesh Bali, one of our very talented, dedicated, and hard-working pages. Rajan is an electrical engineer and owns his own company, and Pushpa works with Rajan as the bookkeeper and accountant of the company. They've been the proud owners of this business over the past eight years.

I wish to share with you and all members of the House that our page Janiesh will be shaving his head today for Cuts for Cancer, a fundraising that they've done at his school, Harry Ainlay. He has to date raised personally \$1,100 for this great cause, and I'm chagrined to say, Mr. Speaker, that he did it without my help. Although he's a neighbour of mine, he did it without my support because one of his classmates got to my door first. [interjections] Okay, okay. I'm going to match that donation.

Mr. Speaker, Rajan and Pushpa are seated in your gallery. I'd ask that they please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome and thanks from this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of 45 enthusiastic and promising young people from the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. Today we are honoured to have the grade 6 class from Glen Avon school from St. Paul observe the proceedings along with their teachers, Shane Boyko, Dave Doonanco, instructional assistants Christine Reaney, Karen Odegarden and parent volunteer Dale Drummond. These students tell me that they are very excited and looking forward to May 12. That is the day when the sod-turning for a long-awaited new school is going to take place. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two groups of children from the Lacombe upper elementary school. They're a grade 6. There are about 50 children and 12 adults. This is the group that was intending to come some time ago and was stopped by the bad weather. Their teachers are Mrs. Heather Mackay-Hawkins and Mr. Derek Rankin. Their parent helpers are Mr. Bill Crawford, Mr. John Alden, Mrs. Bev ter Steege, Mr. John ter Steege, Mrs. Kayrn Anderson, Mr. Travis Thacker, Mrs. Susan Prins, Mrs. Debbie Sissons, Mr. Darren Howie, Mr. Rob Smillie. They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a tireless advocate on behalf of firefighters' and, indeed, emergency workers' rights in this province. He's been instrumental in a number of bills that this House has put through this Legislature in the last couple of years, including the firefighters cancer bill as well as the Blood Samples Act, and he's very interested in the new Traffic Safety Act. I'm very proud to call him my close personal friend. I'd ask Gord Colwell, the president of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association, to stand in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if my guests are here, but just the same I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Jasmine, Charlene, Jaylene, and Alise Bishop and Sharon, Danae, and Renée Caouette. These are two parents and their children, who are home-schooled. They're from my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, and I'd like to welcome them to this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to

introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Dr. Roger Gibbins, president and chief executive officer of the Canada West Foundation. Joining Dr. Gibbins today is Mr. Barry Worbets, a senior member with the foundation. The Canada West Foundation is a leading public policy organization that is well regarded by Albertans for its strong western vision. It's currently engaged in a number of projects, including how to balance economic development with landscape considerations. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is continually working to help improve safety on Alberta's roads. Today I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly an individual who has been a key champion in the effort to promote safety, high standards, and continued excellence in the transportation industry. Cliff Soper, who is with us today in the members' gallery, is the executive director of the Transportation Training & Development Association. I met with Cliff and with other members of the association today to discuss a potential certificate in transportation and truck driving skills at Red Deer College. Mr. Soper is an example of how stakeholders and the government are working together to make a difference in industry training, standards, and safety. I'd ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a couple of guests of the Grande Prairie caucus who are visiting us today. I'm pleased to see, up above, Alderman Bill Given from the city of Grande Prairie and an employee of the city of Grande Prairie, Mr. Greg Scerbak. I would ask them to rise and be welcomed to the Assembly.

head: 1:40 **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance has been sent a letter from a large group of Alberta Securities Commission staff alleging that the work environment there is abusive and intimidating, that there has been no effective leadership for months, and that this has a negative impact on the future of Alberta's capital markets. This is the latest in a series of problems brought to this government's attention concerning the Securities Commission, but this government seems incapable of decisive leadership. To the Finance minister: given that this government has suspended duly elected school boards and regional health authorities for serious management problems, has this government considered suspending the current Alberta Securities Commission Board and appointing an interim administrator?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, in the preamble the hon. member alluded to a letter that I had received from a number of staff. Let me make it very clear what I did receive. I received an unsigned letter that has a blank with a number, 35 in fact, filled in. I can't table the letter or refer to it directly because I have not spoken to the sender

of the letter because I don't have that identity. I do have an assurance from the letter that they would be prepared to have at least some of those employees sign on the basis that I keep their names with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

Dr. Taft: Well, I guess she avoids the question, so I'll ask it again. Has this government considered suspending the current Alberta Securities Commission Board and appointing an interim administrator?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not avoiding the question as I have not avoided any question on this matter in this House over the last several weeks.

I met with the chairman and the part-time commissioners this morning for about two and a half hours, almost three hours in fact. One, we discussed the transition, as the present chair's term ends a week Friday. Secondly, we discussed the management issues, particularly around the human resource issues.

Mr. Speaker, I have said in this House previously and I'll say it again that the Mack report and the report from the part-time commissioners do say very clearly that the regulatory and enforcement matters of that commission are being handled with consistency and even-handedness; however, there are issues on the human resource side. We discussed the human resource issues. I impressed on them the importance of resolving those as quickly as possible, and I am satisfied at this point that the commission is dealing with this.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, then, does this minister have full confidence in the board of the Alberta Securities Commission and its executive director?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I met with the board this morning. We discussed the issues.

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for me to deal with allegations without a basis in fact. It is very difficult to deal with unsigned documents. I would say, given the seriousness of the role of the Alberta Securities Commission, that if the hon. Leader of the Opposition has any concrete evidence – I mean concrete, not rumour, not innuendo – that besmirched the names of people, then I think he has a duty to bring that forward. I can assure him that if he does that, I will act swiftly.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. She is avoiding answering, so I will repeat the question. Does the Minister of Finance have full confidence in the Alberta Securities Commission Board and its executive director?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I answered the question. I met with the board and the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission this morning. I spent three hours with those folks. We reviewed the actions that are being taken, and I have confidence that the board is proceeding in a manner that will address those issues.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: is the minister concerned about cases of alleged irregularities in enforcement at the Alberta Securities Commission? Is she concerned?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think the key word is “alleged.” I have said consistently and over and over again that you cannot attack people, you cannot attack a commission, you cannot attack a board on allegations.

This is a very important commission in this province. It is important to the business community and to the investment community, and it is the second-largest securities commission in Canada and has been and continues to be highly regarded for its ability to bring forward improvements to securities legislation in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a fair way to do anything. If you have anything to support those allegations, you should bring them forward or you should cease and desist to cast allegations, innuendo on these issues.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: who does the Minister of Finance believe is effectively investigating cases where enforcement irregularities are alleged?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, Perry Mack, I believe a highly regarded and respected lawyer in this province, reviewed a number of these issues. He reported to the part-time commissioners. The part-time commissioners relayed to me that they were confident from the findings of that report that the regulatory and enforcement matters of that commission were being handled consistently and even-handedly. That is where I take my information from.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Electricity Marketing

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is yet another blackout in this government’s communication system. This morning the Minister of Government Services said that no decision on extending the regulated rate option would be made until June. Yesterday the Premier, who is still the top Tory, advised consumers not to sign long-term electricity contracts but to stay on the regulated rate option. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Why is Alberta Energy still trying to force consumers to sign up for long-term electricity contracts when even the Premier wants consumers to stay on the regulated rate?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I think, first off, the Premier spoke as an individual in this case as to what he would do in contracting, and that’s what we’ve tried to do, is allow all Albertans to have a choice of getting the products that would best match their need. As in any market short-term instruments come with volatility. If volatility is something you don’t want to manage, then longer term contracts are the better way to proceed.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, given that the only choice here is higher or even higher electricity bills, my next question is to the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee here and now to electricity consumers that the regulated rate option will be extended immediately and indefinitely past 2006?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, he does not tell the complete truth. Now, his leader was in the scrum. I was asked the question by a member of the media – what would I do personally as a consumer? – as a consumer, not as the top Tory but as a consumer. I said that I pay very little on my condominium power bill here in Edmonton. My

wife looks after the bill in Calgary. As a consumer I would probably stay with the regulated rate. That’s where we are right now. I was speaking not as the top Tory but as a consumer, as a private citizen. I would ask that he get his facts straight, straight from the horse’s mouth, and that’s the leader who attends every meeting.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Energy: will the minister post on the Department of Energy’s website the Premier’s advice that consumers should avoid signing long-term electricity contracts and stick to the regulated rate? That’s real consumer protection. Why don’t you do it?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we’re very fortunate that the Premier made a very clear statement just now, and all Albertans are going to be able to have that record in *Hansard*. That’s a very public document, and that is the source of it.

With respect to the issue at hand there has been a tremendous amount of progress that Albertans have received because of deregulation. We now have the lowest nonhydro electricity rates in this country because of a great supply of electricity that has come on, a new supply, secure and reliable for the long term.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP opposition has said for years that retail power and gas contracts are a bad deal for consumers and are priced up to 25 per cent higher compared to regulated rates. In past years, when electricity rates hit an all-time high, the Premier and the then Energy minister not only defended the contracts but promoted them as a hedge against high prices. Yesterday the Premier finally admitted that the retail power contracts are such a bad deal that even he hasn’t signed on. My question is to the Premier. Why has the government been promoting the benefits of the so-called consumer choice, leading almost a hundred thousand residential, farm, and small business customers to buy a high-priced product that even the Premier is now calling a bad deal?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I’m not calling it a bad deal, and I want the hon. member to listen. Deregulation has worked very well in many areas, in most areas. It has brought thousands, literally thousands, of new megawatts of power on stream. It has provided industry and large businesses with options as to how to buy power and where to buy from. It’s allowed Alberta to become a leader in green power. You know, the hon. member can ask any producer of small power, green power in particular, if it was through deregulation that it was allowed to happen. Most importantly, it’s ensured that Albertans have a secure, stable, and affordable source of electricity for generations to come. That’s what deregulation is all about.

Now, my advice to Albertans is not to sign any contract, be it a mortgage or a cellphone or a long-term power contract or cable television or anything else, without reading the fine print and being satisfied it is the best option, the best option for the consumer and his or her family.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that a hundred thousand Albertans or more have bought their retail power and gas contracts on false pretenses at the urging of this government – and I will table information from the website that does say that – will the government now compensate those consumers for the difference between the lower regulated rate and the higher contract rate?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we do not tell consumers whether to sign or not to sign. We're saying caveat emptor, let the buyer beware, and make sure you read all the fine print in a contract. I'm sure that the hon. member being a smart person, albeit a member of the NDs but being a smart person, would read a contract.

Mr. Eggen: If the Premier won't compensate Albertans who fell for this sales pitch – and I know of many, many seniors, especially in my constituency, who did so on good grounds – will the government, then, take immediate legislative action to allow any Albertan who is locked into these three- and five-year high-priced contracts to cancel them now without penalty?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, this is an arrangement between a power company, a retailer, and a consumer. We don't get involved other than to offer advice. We have a department in the Department of Government Services, the consumers' affairs department, that warns people, just as I'm warning people, to read the fine print and don't take as gospel what a salesperson tells you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's easy to figure out how to lose any battle, race, or debate, but to win requires the best. We need the best fighting for Albertans when it comes to BSE, energy, auto insurance, and Ottawa's intrusions. There is no free market without competition. The current rates and regulations this government has set benefit the power industry, not the people of Alberta. To the Premier: will this government continue or reregulate the residential and small-business and farming portion of the power industry until there are rules that will allow competition in the power market for the benefit of Albertans?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I can understand that being a new member there's a lack of understanding as to the whole situation relative to deregulation. [interjection] The hon. member for wherever he is, the former school board and MLA who's now back, is yapping and he knows better.

Mr. Speaker, 93 per cent, as I understand, of consumers are on the regulated rate. Ninety-three per cent. The hon. member is talking about 7 per cent who have preferred to sign contracts. Ninety-three per cent are on the regulated rate option. Deregulation, when it was introduced back in 2001, I believe, applied only to the generation side of electricity. Through deregulation many thousands of megawatts of new power were brought on stream.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will you put Alberta residents, agriculture, and small business first, who are only 15 per cent of the load and use less than one-third of the coal-fired power generated, and reregulate them back to the competitive coal-fired prices?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the situation relative to businesses and farm operations, but as I pointed out, certainly 93 per cent of all individual residential consumers are on the regulated rate, so I don't know what he's talking about.

Mr. Hinman: That's obvious.

Again to the Premier: will this government change the rules and turn the table 180 degrees for the consumers and make the power

producers who generate the power bid, with the lowest bid getting the contract and not the highest bid setting and raising the selling price for all the producers at the cost of the consumers?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm confused. In the hon. member's preamble he talked about the free market, and he talked about free enterprise, and now he wants us to interfere. You know, you can't suck and blow at the same time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Long-term Care Standards

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are all to the Minister of Health and Wellness. A resident of Bethany long-term care in Camrose is on a hunger strike to protest a lack of staff and, therefore, care in the new Bethany long-term care facility. Can the minister tell us if this facility is meeting the standard of care expected of Alberta's long-term care facilities?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, this is a brand new facility. The Health Facilities Review Committee was there in January and at that time found that both the staffing and the facilities were appropriate, but we take very seriously every complaint that comes to us and follow up on every single one. I have a great deal of concern about a senior anywhere in Alberta that represents such an open demonstration of concern. I have not previously had contact with this senior, but the hon. member opposite certainly made me aware last evening that this is a concern for her and for her family.

As we speak, the regional health authority has officials at the Bethany care centre to review both the staffing and the issues that may be affecting this senior and other residents there. It is both a long-term and an assisted facility. We want to make sure that the staffing mix is appropriate to the gravity that's faced by each senior.

2:00

Mr. Johnson: My first supplementary: is there a shortage of qualified care attendants to work in our long-term care facilities in Alberta and particularly in our rural facilities such as those in Camrose?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are shortages in all manner of health care disciplines throughout Alberta. Rural Alberta is not unique, but it does include personal care attendants. I think that in rural Alberta we have some wonderful facilities and wonderful staff doing an amazing job, and I want to table that at least first.

This year, Mr. Speaker, along with a 10.3 per cent increase, \$522 million more for all of the health regions in Alberta, we added \$15 million over and above that to emphasize the importance of quality of care and quality of care for every senior and every resident. Some of those dollars will assist us not only in training and enhancing staff credentials but in working to make sure that we attract the appropriate mix of staff in every long-term care facility.

Mr. Johnson: My final question to the same minister: can the minister clarify the role of the Health and Wellness department and the regional health authority in providing adequate funding to long-term care providers like Bethany in Camrose?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly, the dollars that are provided for the health authorities are distributed based on their particular needs and priorities. There is an obligation, however, with every facility, whether it's a long-term care facility or some other form of assisted-living facility, for that facility's management to report to the

health authority, and the health authority in turn reports to Alberta Health and Wellness. Alberta Health and Wellness examines whether or not those facilities are meeting the expectations, the quality, and the standards. In turn, we have been working on new standards both in nursing homes and long-term care and examining standards for assisted living so that we can ensure that we're closing the loop on standards for seniors and those frail elderly in our province.

Coal-bed Methane

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, coal-bed methane production in Alberta is increasing rapidly. There remain concerns, considerable concerns. The impact on our lands, our environment, our health have not been fully considered even though production is expanding at an alarming rate. My question to the Minister of Energy: given that coal-bed methane development may occur on public lands, will the minister ensure that public members who demonstrate a genuine concern can have intervenor status in order to protect the public's interest in this process approval?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He does mention that natural gas and coal have an enormous potential, potentially 500 tcf of gas that's in the ground. We know that the expanse of the coal seams that are there and the gas is really just in infancy of discovery and exploration at this stage. In that light, it is true that the landscape that it covers is far reaching. Two-thirds of the southern half of this province has the potential for natural gas and coal. In that respect, we have already existing very good high standards of regulatory processes for where to site wells, locate wells, and the density of wells so that those impacted by that would be consulted and be able to participate in that before well licences are issued.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister of agriculture: given that the EUB allows up to eight wells of coal-bed methane drilling per section compared to the conventional wells of one well per section, what is the minister doing to aid farmers who will lose farmland and value with this type of development?

Mr. Horner: Well, they are compensated, Mr. Speaker, for this type of development and negotiate with the oil companies as well. There has not been to my office any particular concerns other than the concerns of the industry, and we're working with the industry to negotiate on various aspects along with the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development as well as the Minister of Environment, so we're doing a cross-ministry type of discussion.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, my third question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is this government doing to protect the vital long-term interests of Albertans with respect to water, grazing, food production, fishing, and hunting on public lands?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are many questions in there. It starts out with coal-bed methane and ends up talking about fish and wildlife, and certainly in between there's water quality, which comes under the purview of the Minister of Environment.

Coal-bed methane. Let's speak to that. It's another form of

natural gas, and the same stringent rules that apply to surface regulations, that have been developed over the years, also apply to conventional gas and also apply to coal-bed methane. Our role in Sustainable Resource Development is to make sure that we manage the surface impacts of coal-bed methane and other energy development in exactly the same way as conventional oil and gas.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Electricity Marketing Review

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans enjoy the lowest non-hydroelectric rates in the country, and there is ample generation to meet growing demand. However, there is currently under way a review of the wholesale and retail electric markets. My first question is to the Minister of Government Services. Has the Utilities Consumer Advocate provided feedback to the review?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. As a matter of fact, our advisory committee has been out and around the province gathering information. As has been discussed in the House over the last two or three days, there was a report written on February 23, and in that paper it clearly suggested that the advisory committee was suggesting that there needed to be something other than what was proposed or suggested in the discussion paper. The committee has also in that paper suggested that there were some problems. They've now come forward with another paper, that I will be filing today, that clearly indicates some of the proposed solutions to the problem. So we will be making sure that the Department of Energy has this in the mix as they design what needs to go forward.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Again, given that Albertans enjoy reasonable electricity rates and ample supply, why has the minister initiated this review?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The regulated rate option is anticipated to expire on July 1 of 2006. Before that would happen, we wanted to make sure that we had the review of both the wholesale and retail markets to ensure that the rules that are in place are functioning well, that they will ensure that there's an adequacy of supply of electricity for the long term as well. Those things will help ensure that we have reasonable prices. Therefore, there would need to be sufficient time needed, whether we extend that rate or not – all of those things are the options we're talking about – whether that continues or whether we find other options. Those are the parts of the review that we felt had to be completed by this June.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: No further questions. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Stony Plain Youth Justice Committee

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Restorative justice and alternative measures are effective ways to deal with youth crime outside of the court system. Signed decisions of community justice committees are binding unless a prosecutor refers these decisions to the courts. Last night one-quarter of the members of the community justice committee of Stony Plain and area resigned, including the chairman and half of the executive, because of government meddling in their decisions. My question is to the Solicitor General. How do you plan to restore confidence in the powers of youth justice committees given the events in Stony Plain?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can't discuss any specific case involving young persons within the Assembly. However, I am aware that there is some disagreement about how a recent case was handled that resulted in the resignation of some members of the committee, and I will explain our sanction review policy to address this question.

2:10

The youth justice committees administer the extrajudicial sanctions program, Mr. Speaker, under the supervision of their local probation officer. Extrajudicial sanctions are what was formerly known as the youth alternative measures program. The probation supervisor of the youth justice committee is obliged to approve or vary the sanction imposed by the committee. There are occasions when the sanction is found to be unfair or inappropriate, depending upon the circumstances of the case, but the youth justice committees across the province impose hundreds – hundreds – of sanctions each year, and fewer than 1 per cent have ever been varied by a probation supervisor.

Mr. Backs: Supposed to go to the courts if they don't.

Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: what directives to government representatives will you give so that the decisions of youth justice committees are not interfered with arbitrarily?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the youth justice committees meet under the supervision of their local probation office, so clearly the system is working very well now.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you that the youth justice committees are incredibly successful. Alberta is a leader in the country in youth justice programs. We have 116 youth justice committees and 1,500 community-minded Albertans who volunteer their time. The program deals with first- and second-time offenders involved in minor and nonviolent crime, and the consequences that are provided by these committees are varied and are based on the offender's attitude and the nature of the offence. These sanctions include community service, essays, a cash donation to a charity, an apology, or counselling.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, this was one of the most successful committees of its type in Alberta. To the same minister: will you have your department representatives ask the chairman and other resigned members of this very effective community justice committee, which has made hundreds of successful recommendations, to return to their positions?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, our department will be working, obviously, with the probation office in that community, but as well

I'm sure there has been conversation between the youth justice committee and our office.

I want to ensure that the hon. member is well aware that last year the committee dealt with 2,500 cases and, as I mentioned, 116 youth justice committees throughout the province, but 2,500 cases, Mr. Speaker, at a cost of almost \$400,000. So the program is working very well.

Mr. Speaker, just a final note. A follow-up study shows that 80 per cent of the offenders in this program were not in the justice system two years later.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

National Child Care Initiative

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently there has been speculation about the status of the Liberals' national child care initiative and how close the provinces are to an agreement with Ottawa. Section 92 of Canada's Constitution states explicitly that matters of a local or private nature are provincial responsibilities, and certainly raising children is both a private and a local matter. This federal initiative is a crude attempt to usurp provincial jurisdiction, and many Albertans are concerned that their government not be bought out on this issue by the feds' abuse of their spending power. My question is for the Minister of Children's Services. Is Alberta close to signing a deal with the federal government on a national child care initiative?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I can tell the hon. member that Alberta is cautiously optimistic about signing an agreement. We've had many, many discussions with the federal minister, starting with a federal/provincial/territorial meeting in January, then some telephone conversations with him. I can tell him that he agreed verbally over the phone with Alberta's concerns and what we wanted entailed in the agreement. We have written him twice and have called him once and are awaiting written confirmation to ensure that he understands what Alberta has agreed to, and we would like to have it writing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can you assure this Assembly that Alberta families that choose to raise their own children, that choose not to use daycare, will be treated fairly by the new federal Liberal initiative?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that I brought that question up at the federal/provincial/territorial meetings in regard to tax relief for stay-at-home parents, and the hon. Minister Dryden indicated to me at that particular time that it wasn't part of the discussion and that it wasn't on the table. What he wanted to talk about was daycare. I can assure the member that we have been very, very adamant that we want to respect Alberta's rights and let Albertans make the choices for their children, what's in the best interests of the children, whether it's nonprofit, for-profit, kinder care. We look at ourselves in Alberta at providing tax relief for stay-at-home parents.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how

are you protecting our province's long-term interest in preventing Ottawa from taking away our constitutional and democratic right to made-in-Alberta child care and family policies?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, as the member indicated earlier in his preamble about constitutional rights, it was very important to us, to Alberta, for the federal minister to understand that this is provincial jurisdiction and provincial responsibilities and that we wanted our parents to be able to have choice, not dictated what Ottawa wants. So we were very adamant. That was part of the negotiations all through the process. We are, again, cautiously optimistic. We're waiting for a written response from the minister. He agreed verbally with what Alberta wanted.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Long-Term Care Standards

(continued)

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years this government has created a crisis in long-term care through a combination of understaffing, overcharging, and lax inspections. Last week the Premier said that this was totally false, but it was the Premier that was wrong. In fact, as already mentioned, the seniors' long-term care facility in Camrose has gone on a hunger strike to draw attention to the problems in long-term care. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Is it going to take seniors going on hunger strikes to finally get this government to address the severe understaffing in long-term care centres?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think my earlier response today would indicate that it does not take anything more than one complaint, one note to the authorities or to this minister for follow-up action to occur.

Relative to long-term care staffing over the last two years we've been working on standards to increase the staffing. This year it'll go from about 3.1 to close to 3.3, in some circumstances 3.4. As seniors' facilities expand, not only in terms of staffing numbers but take a very close look at the personal care pattern for each senior, at what is required for each individual in the facility. That is the most important question because today lodges in this province aren't what they were 30 years ago. Lodges frequently have people with much more fragile needs, much more typical caseloads like long-term care facilities. We're working to make it appropriate staffing to the people that are within the facility.

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question to the minister: does the minister consider it acceptable that long-term care centres are so severely understaffed that elderly residents get, if they're lucky, one bath per week? If not, rather than the rhetoric, what is the government going to do about it right away?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, although there is a regulation relative to having one bath per week, that is a minimum standard, a minimum acceptable standard. It applies to many long-term care facilities that I have been in that many times as many as three attendants will lift a person into a very specialized type of bath facility and make sure that they have a proper and thorough bath.

But, Mr. Speaker, again relative to the individual care plan, if patients are incontinent, if they're incapable of bathing themselves, if there are some other reasons from a health perspective that they need assistance and need more frequent bathing, then that is done on the basis of the care plan for the individual.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the minimum standards seem to be the maximum standards.

Given that petitions, direct appeals from seniors and their advocates, an Auditor General's investigation, and now a hunger strike have failed to move this government, what is it going to take to get action from this government to address the serious long-term care problems that are occurring right now?

Ms Evans: Well, there are a number of initiatives that are under way. I know that the hon. member is probably keenly aware, as I am, that the Auditor General has been reviewing circumstances for managing care in long-term care facilities and very soon will release a report. At that time and through the Committee of Supply I will be pleased to further expand on some of the things we're doing.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, we're currently planning amendments to nursing home operation regulations, reviewing our monitoring mechanisms to support quality of care, reviewing the funding methodology in concert with the regional authorities, enhancing the skills of staff providing specialized care, particularly for persons with Alzheimer's, and implementing a standardized provincial quality-indicator reporting system.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

2:20

Access to Medical Services

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received many calls and letters from my constituents concerned about eight- or nine-hour wait times for services at the Grey Nuns hospital in Edmonton. Sadly, this is also an issue that I have had first-hand experience with recently. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How does the minister explain the government's failure to ensure that Edmontonians receive timely access to essential services?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, one comment I'll make in responding to that question is that in Canada there is no better graded or better recognized or premium quality-of-care delivery region than the Capital health region, and we should applaud their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, as to individual circumstances for waiting and access, there are certainly issues that we still have relative to diagnosis, the kinds of assessments that are necessary. As we learned fairly recently, although it may not apply to the hon. member's illustrated case, with hip replacements and joint replacements sometimes 40 per cent of those patients waiting need more care, more health-assisted living kinds of support before they actually are able to have the surgery. So frequently it's not the fault of the system but, in actual fact, relates to the condition that the patient is in when they come forward to receive services in health.

Mr. Agnihotri: Again to the same minister: considering that it's not uncommon to have as many as 80 to 100 people waiting in emergency for admission, how long will it take to translate the government's promises of funding into action and results?

Ms Evans: You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that question was asked because it allows me the opportunity to comment on an initiative of my predecessor, which is local primary care initiatives, which will see us reconstitute the way we access health systems and not after hours necessarily go to emergency departments but go to places where teams of health care professionals including doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, mental health specialists, counsel-

lors, nutritionists, and other specialists will be able to address the concerns which may be of a very important nature but not necessarily urgent. One of the problems in the emergency departments of Alberta and all over the country is that frequently people who access these departments are not going for urgent reasons but for important reasons.

Mr. Agnihotri: Again to the same minister: given that wait times create unsafe conditions for both patients and staff, how can the government continue to claim that the Alberta health care system is number one in Canada?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, it isn't us that are saying it, although I'm happy to reiterate it. I'm very happy to applaud those people. But everything we're doing, including the focus on the international symposium looking at ways that people are doing it differently elsewhere, I can assure you, will be brought to bear to the best practices of the health system. Perhaps the best illustration is from Dr. Alastair Buchan from Oxford, who had defined our stroke strategy. He went back to the United Kingdom, and when he came back, he said: you know, we're better here than they are there. He said that in some circumstances we are nine years ahead of Oxford.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

School Construction

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two days ago the Edmonton Catholic school board revised their capital plan, which they will present to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. In their revisions the school board moved the proposed Castle Downs high school from a top priority to a bottom priority. Instead, the board decided to build an elitist academic school on the south side of Edmonton. This suddenly changes the events, appearing to have little correlation with the dire need of a high school in my riding. Mr. Speaker, my first question is to the minister of infrastructure. Does this government or your ministry have any influence on where and when schools are built?

Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

The Speaker: Hon. member, and hon. minister, it is our tradition that when a particular estimate is up before the Assembly, questions are really not directed that day in the question period for that particular estimate. It so turns out that this afternoon, I do believe, the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation will be in the Assembly to answer those questions. Perhaps we might wait just half an hour or so, hon. member.

Proceed to your second question.

School Construction (continued)

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I'll proceed to a question that has no financial implications. My supplemental to the minister of infrastructure: once a capital plan is filed with the ministry, does the ministry have any influence on the possibility of a revision?

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The process is that each and every school board in the province puts forward their capital proposals. We then go through and attempt to find out which capital project is a higher priority when it comes to between the particular school boards. So we do have the ability to fluctuate

between the school boards. When it comes to the actual school board on their specific priority list, it is very difficult for my department to change what is on their priority list. We certainly can ask the school boards for justification. In this particular case what we saw was one particular school, which had been on the list for two years, taken off the list and another one put on. So we do have to question why this was done in this particular circumstance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental to the Minister of Education: does the minister encourage school boards to establish such elitist schools that require students to have an average of over 85 per cent in order to be accepted?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that local school boards with their locally elected trustees have to be responsive to the needs of their students and the families in the areas that they serve. So if a local school board wishes to pursue a particular style of policy implementation, that is entirely up to their discretion. We do not encourage or discourage. All that we try to do is ensure that they follow the laws of the province, the guidelines that we have set forward, and that they themselves look after their own policies and adhere to them to the best of their abilities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Access to the Future Fund

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Increased investments in advanced education are certainly welcome on this side of the House, even if they amount to fixing damage done by years of underfunding or starvation diets, as the minister has described it. The proposed access to the future fund certainly has potential, even if that potential is being stunted somewhat by inadequate funding. My concern today – and I hope that it can be allayed – is that the public relations strategy is considerably ahead of the legislative process. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Why is the minister publicly committing money from the fund even to worthy projects when this Assembly has yet to pass the legislation that establishes the fund?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When you're in government, you have to do planning, you have to look forward, and you have to deal with the issues as they come up in the context of planning and looking forward. Every year a government, as this member will know having sat through one of them, brings forward a throne speech which outlines what its program of activity is for the year, and in that throne speech there's a plan and a program for the year. The government also brings forward a budget, and in that budget there's a plan and a program for a year. Obviously, in the context of both the throne speech and the budget there are things which are proposed which the government has the intention of bringing forward but which are always subject to the approval and sanction of the Legislature.

In the throne speech this year there was promise of an access to the future fund to be funded at a level of \$3 billion, which would provide funding for certain types of projects, and in that budget there were two projects mentioned as demonstrations of the breadth of the fund. One of them was the Lois Hole Campus Alberta digital

library, and the other was a centre for Chinese studies at the university.

2:30

So commitments were made in the throne speech, commitments which have been followed through in Bill 1. When the bill is actually passed, if the Legislature passes it – if the Legislature doesn't pass it, of course, as minister I will have to go back and make some explanations, but the government expects that the bill will come to the Legislature and be passed – we will follow through with the commitments.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: I'm a bit confused about the difference between an intention and a commitment, I guess. Why is the minister publicly committing money from the fund before the advisory council envisioned by the fund has been set up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the throne speech there was a commitment made to show the breadth of possibility that the fund could produce. One of those was a centre for Chinese studies. That commitment was in the throne speech. The other was the Lois Hole Campus Alberta digital library. That commitment was in the throne speech.

One of the things that has happened since that time, Mr. Speaker, of course, is that there's an enthusiastic groundswell of activity, with people looking at the promise that's been made in the throne speech and in Bill 1 and saying: when does this start, and how does this happen? The clear answer to that has to be that this fiscal year it starts. How does it happen? Well, we can give some general parameters to it and, indeed, yes, say to people: this fits into the broad parameters of access, affordability, and quality. So we can give some assurances that particular gifts will fit within the parameters of the fund even as we wait for the access council to design the specifics on some of the other aspects.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, why is the minister publicly committing to projects when the promised rules and regulations around eligibility haven't been established?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, when the proposed gift fits so obviously within the parameters of what the fund is going to establish, it's not difficult to in fact encourage those gifts to be made and indicate that they do fit within the parameters. Where the rules and regulations are going to come in, clearly, is with respect to defining the parameters and the margins. So the question about matching gifts in kind: there might have to have specific rules around that, certainly rules with respect to what type of a gift or what type of a project might qualify that's a so-called ingenuity project or a project that doesn't require matching grants. There are lots of areas where there have to be rules and processes and procedures put into place, but in many cases the gift is so obviously going to fit within the parameters that it's very easy to encourage that gift to be made.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I will apologize to the six hon. members that I was unable to get into the question period today. It seems that in the days in which I was recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, we actually got more than 14 members in.

Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests before we move on?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 33 special guests from my constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. These guests are members of Wanna Walka seniors' group. They meet in the Bonnie Doon mall for their walking and are engaged in many charitable and community-building activities. They're accompanied by Germaine Lehodey and Carol Lockhart and are here this afternoon to observe the proceedings of the Assembly. My guests are sitting in the members' gallery. I will now request them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 67 students and nine adults from the Roland Michener secondary school. They are seated in the members' gallery as well as in the public gallery from what I gather. They are accompanied by their teacher, Miss Tracey Crain, as well as teacher's assistants Mrs. Sheri Smears, Mrs. Tina Rediron, and Ms Melody Wilson as well as parent helpers Mrs. Brenda Grove-White, Mr. Renato Pablo, Mrs. Julie Sparks, Ms Allyson Goyette, and Mr. Mark Carnegie. I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I introduced to the House Mr. Cliff Soper. I won't go through the full introduction. I will send that to Mr. Soper as a copy of *Hansard*, but I would ask him, now that he's arrived, to stand and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Anne Frank Memorial

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a young Jewish girl who was caught up in the human tragedy of the Holocaust of World War II, yet she brought inspiration to millions of people around the world.

While hidden by a Dutch family from the Nazis in a secret annex of a house in Amsterdam, Anne Frank documented her life and thoughts in a diary. Her diary was discovered after the liberation of Holland by Canadian troops. It was published as *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

While Anne did not live to see the end of the war, her wisdom and courage carry on through her diary, which has been read and loved by people of all ages around the world. I've had the opportunity to visit the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, and the exhibits there are thought-provoking, chilling, and yet inspirational.

Her father, Otto Frank, felt that in her diary his daughter chal-

lenged him to champion the causes of reconciliation and human rights throughout the world, and that task is also for us as we work for unity and peace. It is important for all of us to remember victims of the Holocaust, like Anne, who have suffered from hatred and injustice. By remembering, we can help to ensure that such horrors never happen again.

Albertans are able to reflect on the life of Anne Frank and the Holocaust by visiting a remarkable exhibit: Anne Frank in the World, 1929-1945. The exhibit is currently at Calgary city hall until May 1, and following that, the exhibit will be moved to the Beth Tzedec Synagogue in Calgary until May 8. I encourage all members and all Albertans to take the opportunity to learn about the life of this young girl and this dark period in history.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Northlands Park

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past several weeks some members of the opposition have questioned the funding of organizations such as Northlands Park and Stampede Park without perhaps understanding what these organizations do. I'd like to share some of the activities in which Northlands Park is engaged so that in the future the members opposite will be able to ask informed questions.

Northlands is first and foremost an organization which is volunteer driven. Each year more than 20,000 hours of service are contributed by 700 volunteer supporters. These volunteers and the organization which they support are dedicated to enhancing economic and social benefits not only for Edmonton but for northern and central Alberta as well. This is accomplished through the production of agricultural, entertainment, and business events and maintaining multipurpose facilities.

Northlands is also Edmonton's second-largest tourism attraction and draws an estimated 3 and a half million visitors to its site each year. The economic impact of the various events produced and supported by Northlands is estimated to be \$400 million per year.

While Northlands Park is justifiably well known for horse racing, they also represent world-class events such as the Canadian Finals Rodeo and Klondike Days Exposition. Klondike Days are not only a fun event with many economic benefits for Edmonton businesses, but this event also benefits charities. For over 50 years Northlands Park has partnered with Edmonton's major service clubs to raise funds for charities during Klondike Days. Each year approximately \$500,000 is raised for multiple projects, including the Glenrose hospital and the Salvation Army.

Mr. Speaker, money which this organization earns from the Alberta lottery fund is utilized to ensure that events such as those that I have just listed are possible. I believe this is a great social investment for central and northern Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Catholic High School Construction

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two days ago I attended a board meeting of the Edmonton Catholic school board during which the board approved several brand new and innovative curriculum programs for its students. These programs included jazz dancing, film studies, and science technology adventure, programs aimed at educating the whole child. These new programs underline and reinforce the fundamental value of public education, being all

inclusive, comprehensive, and accessible and relevant to all children. Furthermore, these programs will entice students to discover their talents and potentials. The school board should be commended for creating such distinctive programs for our children.

2:40

However, Mr. Speaker, at the same board meeting the school board approved construction of a high school which will not be accessible to all of our children. This new high school will be constructed only for the academic elite. Placed in an affluent Edmonton neighbourhood, this high school will only admit children with a grade score average above 82 per cent. This will be the Harvard of high schools.

Mr. Speaker, as an educator, a parent, and an MLA I am concerned. I appreciate the need of challenging our gifted children with extracurricular assignments and instruction, but this can be accomplished in a regular high school setting. We must not allow our public education to become segregationist, where bright kids are set aside from average kids, who, in turn, are in a different setting than elite athletes. This violates the fundamental principles of public education and prevents our children from sharing their talents with each other. As such, I hope that our Ministry of Education will examine this issue accordingly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Agriculture Industry

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Between 1901 and 1905 40,000 homesteads were granted in what became the province of Alberta. Homesteaders were given freehold title to their land in exchange for paying \$10, agreeing to stay on the land at least three years, breaking a certain amount of land each year, and, finally, building a house.

That was a century ago, Mr. Speaker, and over the past 100 years new technologies, management practices, and economic environments have challenged Alberta's agricultural industry and transformed our province into a mainstay of our provincial economy and the global marketplace.

The strong foundation of Alberta's agricultural industry and the continued successful growth is due to Alberta's agricultural innovation. From its humble beginning through the introduction of Marquis wheat, irrigation, the Noble blade cultivator, and numerous other advancements Alberta's agricultural industry has proven itself a success and resilient.

As Albertans celebrate our great province's centennial and look back at where Alberta began, the agricultural industry both planted the seeds of what Alberta has become but is also positioning itself to nurture our province for future generations. Through expanding research and development in the agricultural industry, Alberta is on pace to increase value-added production to \$20 billion and increase primary production to \$10 billion by the year 2010.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the essential role Alberta's agricultural industry continues to play in the success of our province yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Edmonton Public Schools

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we celebrate Education Week, I would like to share with pride some of the work Edmonton public schools is doing to provide over 80,000 students with an

outstanding education. As a district Edmonton public schools is committed to achieving superb results from all students. It is concentrating on improving both high school completion rates and student achievement results. Edmonton public schools believes that all of the students should leave grade 3 knowing how to read at a grade 3 level, complete and pass their grade 10 courses, and complete high school.

As part of the district's planning process each school has selected an instructional focus to address the most pressing academic need among its students, such as reading comprehension, writing, or critical thinking. Individual schools in the district as a whole have also set a number of targets for improving student achievement and high school completion which align with the district's priorities and provincial requirements.

Over the past few years Edmonton public schools has been making progress in improving its student achievement results and high school completion rates. For example, on the provincial achievement tests the district has been making steady increases in the percentage of students achieving the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence over the past five years.

To better support the work of teaching and learning, the district has been increasing the opportunities for collaboration among staff and fostering the use of research-based teaching practices in its schools. Edmonton public schools is also involving parents, business, and community partners in supporting the work of teaching and learning. The district is committed to offering a wide variety of programs to assist students in achieving superb results. In partnership with parents the district has developed 30 alternative programs, including language, sports, dance, cadet, and faith-based programs as well as programs based on particular teaching strategies or philosophies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Chris Muller

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a heavy heart that I rise in this Assembly today to recognize a truly outstanding Albertan who has left this world far too soon. Chris Muller, only 29 years old and a resident of Cochrane, was killed in a hang-gliding competition this past Friday near Orlando, Florida.

Chris was a champion in the very truest sense of the word, having won both the Canadian hang-gliding and paragliding championships on multiple occasions. He was among the very best foot-launched, free-flight pilots in the world, yet he was perhaps the most humble man I have ever known. From their home-based school on top of the big hill at Cochrane Chris, along with his dad, Willi Muller, and his mom, Vincene, taught hang-gliding and paragliding to thousands of enthusiasts and operated one of the most successful businesses of its kind anywhere in the world. Almost everyone who has ever spent an afternoon in Cochrane enjoying the famous ice cream has looked up at the big hill and marvelled at Willi, Chris, and their friends soaring on the breeze with the hawks and the eagles.

Even at such a tender young age Chris was not only a friend but a teacher and a mentor to all who knew him, including those of us who were many years his senior and even many who had been flying long before Chris began his aviation career. Most recently Chris flew as an extreme aerobatic pilot for the Red Bull Air Force and travelled the world representing his sports, his province, and his country. It was Leonardo da Vinci who said, "For once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return."

Mr. Speaker, Alberta and the sports of hang-gliding and paragliding have lost a favourite son, an invaluable ambassador, but most importantly a remarkable young man. And for that we are all less well off today.

Thank you.

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30 I wish to advise you that at the appropriate time I intend to move "to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance"; namely, the loss of investor confidence in the Alberta Securities Commission's ability to adequately regulate the securities market and the resulting threat to Alberta's capital markets.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the required copies of the response to the Department of Energy's call for comments on its discussion paper on the wholesale and retail market, and I would just like to read a little bit of what it's about.

The Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council has reviewed the options available to the Government concerning retail electricity policy. We believe that the deregulation of the Alberta electricity market has been successful in many ways. For example, competition in the market for electricity generation has added new generation and has removed inefficient generation from service. We characterize . . .

The Speaker: We're into tablings, hon. minister, not Ministerial Statements.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table an e-mail from Brad Wutzke, the vice-president of TWU local 204 in Calgary. The e-mail details initial lockout actions Telus has apparently used against their unionized workers. Employees at Telus have been attempting to negotiate a contract . . .

The Speaker: The same admonition provided to the hon. Minister of Government Services will now be provided. We're into tablings.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

2:50

Mr. Eggen: I'm under pressure now.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a document that casts a solemn shadow on Alberta's first hundred years. On the eve of International Day of Mourning, which is tomorrow, the Alberta Federation of Labour has released a tally of the number of Albertans killed on the job in the first hundred years: 9,219 individuals.

I would also like to table an excerpt from the government of Alberta's web page called Consumer Choice. This page offers several arguments for purchasing competitive retail long-term alternatives.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, it would certainly be my hope that we could get the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood back into the question period. Did you want to be recognized, sir?

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Mason: I'd be pleased to do that.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I used certain language in my questions to the hon. Minister of Government Services in suggesting that he had misled the House. I know the parliamentary rules a little bit now, having been here, and I recognize that such an expression is considered unparliamentary. I also know the rule that you're expected to accept the word of a member when he makes a statement. My, I guess, frustration with the answer caused me to overcome my normal tempered good judgment, so I would withdraw those comments and apologize to the member and to the House.

The Speaker: That should now conclude that matter, and the hon. member will be recognized in the future if he chooses to be recognized.

head: **Request for Emergency Debate**

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition on the Standing Order 30 application.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to propose the following motion.

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the loss of investor confidence in the Alberta Securities Commission's ability to adequately regulate the securities market and the resulting threat to Alberta's capital markets.

If I could just speak for a very few minutes, Mr. Speaker, as to the urgency of this. Alberta is a major business centre. It's the second largest centre of business head offices in Canada, and it's home to one of the world's largest concentrations of petroleum corporations. This sector depends on a credible capital market, as do thousands of jobs, especially in Calgary. Capital markets are under terribly close scrutiny these days in light of scandals at Enron, WorldCom, Martha Stewart, Hollinger in Canada, and so on. Capital is incredibly mobile. It can move from country to country with the flick of a switch.

The problems at the Alberta Securities Commission have been building for well over a year, and they've now reached the crisis stage. They are clearly interfering in the enforcement activities of the commission, and if action is not taken urgently, they will interfere in all aspects of the commission's activities. Today we see the leading financial newspaper in the country, the *Financial Post*, plastering this story all over its front page.

Markets depend on one thing more than any other: trust. If investors cannot have trust and confidence that a securities market is operating fairly and efficiently, they will move elsewhere. Thousands of jobs are at stake, billions of dollars, and it's not an exaggeration to say that one of the cornerstones of Alberta's economic future is at stake.

Today there is an active movement to consolidate all securities activity in Canada in Toronto, pulling control out of Calgary and putting the guiding hands for the future of business in Alberta in offices on Bay Street. Delaying action on the Alberta Securities Commission feeds that movement. The Legislature must turn its attention to this issue urgently, today, now, or we'll be sending a signal of neglect and inaction to the world.

Mr. Speaker, debate on the estimates of the Ministry of Finance have concluded. The emerging issues at the Alberta Securities Commission require extended discussion. Questions clearly have

been raised repeatedly in question period, but many of the most serious issues remain unanswered and unresolved. This requires a discussion not constrained by the procedural parameters of question period. The minister and the commission itself appear to be at odds regarding who has authority to release which information. This Assembly and the public need immediate clarification on who has authority over this complicated investigation.

Alberta Securities Commission staff have indicated that they are, quote, unable to perform their jobs effectively due to an environment that continues to deteriorate daily, end quote. The minister has defended the current course of action because the problems are, in her mind, limited to the human resource side and says that the Alberta Securities Commission remains a functional regulatory and enforcement body. However, employees in large numbers are indicating that the toxic workplace environment, quote, will negatively impact the future of the organization and the health of Alberta's capital markets, end quote.

Mr. Speaker, the Securities Commission governs the second largest financial market in the country. Shaken or diminished confidence in the Securities Commission will result in significant financial repercussions to Alberta investors and businesspeople and a loss of national and international confidence in our markets. Every day that passes with unresolved questions and continued uncertainty about the future of the Alberta Securities Commission and the ability of staff to do their jobs makes the ultimate resolution of the problem more difficult. It also gives ammunition to those who are pressing right now to centralize securities regulation in Toronto. Alberta needs to resolve this issue if we are to retain regional control of these markets.

Mr. Speaker, an extended debate is needed immediately to clear the air on this issue. Putting aside our ordinary business and having this debate will demonstrate how seriously this Assembly takes this issue and send the proper signals to the investment and business communities that this issue will indeed be resolved in a timely fashion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 30(2) indicates that the member, in this case the Leader of the Official Opposition, "may briefly state the arguments in favour of the request for leave and the Speaker may allow such debate as he considers relevant to the question of urgency of debate." So I'm prepared to recognize additional members. The hon. Minister of Finance on the urgency.

Mrs. McClellan: Yes. If I may speak to the urgency. First, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that this has been a subject of question period for many days, so it has been discussed. Secondly, there was a two-hour opportunity during my estimates to discuss this further just last Thursday. So there has been an opportunity for discussion.

I would say to the House and to the hon. member that there is no evidence that the issues at the Alberta Securities Commission relate to investor confidence or pose a threat to capital markets. The evidence on enforcement activities and the regulatory function administered by the Alberta Securities Commission, as quoted in their report from the review of this, states clearly that those enforcement policies administered by the Alberta Securities Commission have been, are, and continue to be applied consistently, fairly, and with an even hand. Mr. Speaker, I continue to have confidence in the staff at the Securities Commission to carry out that work in our province.

I would remind the House that the Auditor General as part of his audit process is going to look at the systems and processes there,

beginning almost immediately. Given the importance of this commission in our capital markets, I've asked the Auditor General to expedite his review and report to this Legislature as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the focus is on human resource matters. I would be the first to say that if this continued, there could be – could be – possibly linkages to work performance, which could – there has been no evidence to this date – cause some concern on the ability of staff to carry out their duties.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. members of the sequence of events. Early in January, when it was brought to my attention, I wrote to the Securities Commission part-time commissioners, told them that these issues had been raised with me, asked them to investigate and respond as timely and completely as possible. They engaged an outside person, Mr. Perry Mack. He subsequently interviewed the anonymous complainants, presented a report on February 16. The persons who were involved in the allegations and other staff were then interviewed by Perry Mack. A second report was presented to the commission members on about March 22, in that time frame. Then the part-time commissioners forthwith reported back to me.

Mr. Speaker, there was a confidence in that report on the regulatory and enforcement matters. There were human resource matters raised. I spoke of that in the House. Part-time commissioners immediately engaged BearingPoint, a very credible firm, to assist them in dealing with those human resource matters and questions, and that is under way. Subsequently, to ensure the security and the integrity of the systems at the Alberta Securities Commission, KPMG was engaged to do a forensic review of their systems.

To suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this is not being dealt with, to suggest that we are at odds as to who owns the information is completely wrong and should not be used to lend credence to an urgency. I don't go by newspaper reports. I have said clearly in this House that the information that is under question, the Mack report, was provided to me on condition of solicitor/client privilege to protect the identity and anonymity of the persons who brought the information forward. If I were not prepared to accept the report on that basis, I would not have taken that report. I think it would be a lack of credibility. Obviously, the report is not mine to give. I don't have that ability. That is not, I don't think, in anything other than the comments by the hon. member, to clear that up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't agree with the hon. member. There is no hard or even soft evidence that this is affecting our business community and our capital markets. I've encouraged the hon. member if he's receiving information from them other than from the newspaper reports. I have some letters that have been raised with me. I have responded to those people immediately. Much of what I hear is based on newspaper reports.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with this. I have confidence in the commission's desire to have this dealt with thoroughly and completely. As I indicated earlier, I spent three hours with those members this morning. They have every desire to protect the integrity of the Securities Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the last point. The issue of a national regulatory system has been in the works for, I would say, at least two years. Now, it is clear that the passport system is endorsed by all the provinces except Ontario, so to suggest that because there is a desire in Ontario to be the single regulator is cause for this issue certainly does not hold any credence with me and does not speak to urgency. This is a matter that has been going on for some time. In fact, the passport system is designed to be in place in Canada in August of this year.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe there is an urgency. I do agree that this is an important matter, but I do believe it is being dealt with.

The Speaker: I'm going to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the urgency of this, of course, I think we'd all agree about the public importance, namely the loss of investor confidence in the Alberta Securities Commission. This is a very serious matter, and I do believe it is urgent. Contrary to the Minister of Finance's approach that this is ongoing, and we're looking at it, and the Auditor General is going to be involved – this is true – the reality is that it crosses two important groups that have to believe in the Securities Commission.

One is what is happening nationally. We can talk and pooh-pooh the idea that these are in national newspapers – the *National Post*, *Globe and Mail*, *Financial Post*, and all the rest of it – but the reality is that investors read those particular newspapers. If you're an investor and you're looking at those headlines that are occurring almost on a regular basis, as the minister said, since January, ask yourself if you're going to invest in the Alberta Securities Commission. The answer is probably not, unless you're a real gambler, and then probably you'd want to go to Vegas in that case. So perception is everything, and that's the important point here: perception. That's what's going across Canada.

I have here in front of me one that might be even be more particular. It's called the *Business Edge*. It's Ontario business news. This came out March 31. The whole article is about what they see happening on the Alberta Securities Commission in terms of enforcement. It's very damning, if I can put it that way, Mr. Speaker, if you're a businessperson, an investor reading this. It says here, just one quote: "The people who are the subject of a (securities) arrest warrant pretty much have to stumble into the police." Whether this is right or wrong is not the point. This is what's going out nationally. If you're an investor, you're not going to say: well, I've got a few thousand dollars here, and there's something that looks good on the Securities Commission in Alberta. You know, it seems to me to be logical that you're not going to want to do that unless you have money that you want to throw away.

The second group, Mr. Speaker, is the same sorts of things. We're getting, and I'm sure the Minister of Finance and the leader of the opposition are, e-mails from a lot of small investors in this province. Again, these are people with perhaps a few thousand dollars who want to invest in some new, fledgling company that looks good, and they looked at the prospectus and all the rest of it. If they don't believe that there are rules and regulations there that are followed – and, again, they're reading the news reports and seeing all the problems that are occurring. Perception is the important thing here because we don't all have the facts. Perception is everything.

I think it would behoove us to say: okay, this Legislature sees this as a very serious problem and of some urgency because, as the Leader of the Opposition was talking about, it certainly could be hurting investment in this province not only in the short run but if this thing festers on. Sure, the minister is going to have the Auditor General report, but my understanding is that the Auditor General is not going to report back on this until July. You know, in investment time that's a long time. After the House is over – and we don't know when we'll rise; perhaps sometime in May. Who knows? Then there's going to be not even the focus there.

If I'm an investor both nationally and provincially, I'm saying: what's going on with that Securities Commission? What's happening? Not even an Auditor General's report on this coming down, I

believe, until July. That's what I've been led to believe. I think there is some urgency to deal with this. At least it would show to the people of Alberta and to the people of Canada – and I might point out that there are American investors that I'm aware of and world investors that invest in the Securities Commission too. At least they're saying that the Legislative Assembly is taking this seriously if we have this urgent discussion. Perhaps some direction could flow from this because if we just let it fester and fester and fester, I can absolutely guarantee that this will impact investment in Alberta. I don't think there's any doubt about that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

3:10

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've recognized three hon. members to this point in time. I've indicated that I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, and then if there's one additional speaker from the government side, perhaps that would be pretty good leeway under Standing Order 30.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak in favour of the motion, in particular to the matters of urgency. The issue of question period has been raised. We work under the constrictions of what is set out by parliamentary process. Question period is too limited to be discussing the range of issues that is involved in this particular issue. The issues are in fact unresolved. The crisis is growing. We have had three reports done, each one leading to the next one, and no resolution is forthcoming from this, again showing a trend for the issue continuing to grow with no resolution.

Dr. Taft: It festers.

Ms Blakeman: Continuing to fester.

The staff clearly do not have confidence and have expressed that. Their concerns and, indeed, their actions that they have been taking have continued to grow. The Auditor General will not be reporting until July, which does not resolve this issue as far as investors are concerned and as far as our concerns as expressed are. It has been four months since this issue was identified, and as I say, we get more reports, more concern, more activity, and the issue is not being resolved. It is festering.

We need an urgent conclusion to this. I believe that there is urgency to this issue, and I ask the Speaker to rule in favour of the Standing Order 30 and in support of the motion proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only question really on the table at this point is a question of urgency. There has been all sorts of discussion about importance, but very little discussion about the urgency of dealing with it today. As well, if I might say, there's been no comment on what light, if any, would be brought to the topic by having a discussion today and whether or not, in fact, having a discussion today might create more of a problem than it solves.

The issues that we have before us with respect to the Securities Commission. The Securities Commission is a very important body, and confidence in the Securities Commission is very important. Nobody will deny that. The fact of the matter is that the issues that have been raised have been out for a considerable period of time

now. They've been out, as the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned, publicly since January and had been ongoing before that. There have been steps taken to deal with the issues. The reality is that there is no evidence of consumer nonconfidence in the Securities Commission. There's no evidence of the things that the hon. member has raised about the problems.

Notwithstanding the exhibits which the hon. Leader of the Opposition blatantly exhibits, breaking the rules of the House yet again and probably not again apologizing for it, just as he did last week when he raised egregious comments about the Auditor General, notwithstanding that, Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence of urgency. There is a very good chance that by moving to a public debate with the people who are the least knowledgeable about the issues and ignoring the fact that the Auditor General has his study ongoing, that there will be a new chair appointed to the Securities Commission imminently – now is the last time, Mr. Speaker, that we should be moving to an uninformed discussion this afternoon about an issue without any resolution but just merely discussing yet again in public, engaging in the same witch hunt that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has engaged in in the past.

It's not an urgent issue. It is a very important issue. The Securities Commission is very important, and one should not take lightly the discussion of the Securities Commission, its regulatory processes, and the effect on the public markets. Certainly, we shouldn't go to a discussion this afternoon without any evidence, as the hon. Minister of Finance indicated earlier, that there is a lack of consumer confidence in the commission or anything else that could be repaired by a discussion this afternoon.

The Speaker: Hon. members, under Standing Order 30(2) the Speaker must now rule on whether the request for leave to adjourn the business of the House is in order. I would like to point out at the outset that the application was received in the Speaker's office this morning at 11:15, so the requirement of providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker has been met. The motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the loss of investor confidence in the Alberta Securities Commission's ability to adequately regulate the securities market and the resulting threat to Alberta's capital markets.

To be in order, Standing Order 30(7) requires that "the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." I would refer all members to Marleau and Montpetit's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at pages 586 to 588 and *Beauchesne* 390 with respect to genuine emergency. Clearly, there's no hesitation in the chair's mind that this is a serious issue as demonstrated by the number of questions that have been raised in the question period over the past month.

In reviewing the proposed Notice of Motion, the chair notes that the hon. leader is saying that the matter of urgent public importance is "the loss of investor confidence in the Alberta Securities Commission's ability to regulate the securities market." I would however like to point out that that requires a very subjective interpretation. The chair is hard pressed to condone a statement that there is a "loss of investor confidence" of such a magnitude to constitute a "genuine emergency" in the province of Alberta and to justify adjourning the ordinary business of the Assembly. I want to emphasize the subjective interpretation of "the loss of investor confidence."

As the chair indicated in granting a request by the then Leader of the Official Opposition on May 24, 2000, which the chair notes was the last time that an emergency debate occurred in this Assembly, things can change in the matter and in a manner of a day to make

something a genuine emergency. The chair is prepared to recognize and watch this evolving situation.

The chair would also like to point out *Beauchesne* 428(e) with respect to newspapers, and hon. members might want to just reflect on that as well.

At this time, based on the arguments submitted today, the chair does not find the request for leave in order.

Speaker's Ruling Estimates Consideration

The Speaker: Now, hon. members, we come to a very, very interesting time in parliamentary democracy in this Assembly. I would like to refer all members to Standing Order 58(5), which says that "on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday afternoon, during the consideration of the main estimates," this being a Wednesday, and we are considering the main estimates, "the Committee of Supply shall be called not later than 3:10 p.m." – and it's now 3:19 p.m. – "provided that Orders of the Day have already been called" – they have not – "and shall rise and report no later than 5:15 p.m."

So in order to proceed, we need unanimous consent of the House to waive this standing order so that I might say "Orders of the Day."

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: 3:20 **Orders of the Day**
head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**
Infrastructure and Transportation

The Chair: The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to all hon. members who have allowed me to come today and allowed me to speak here, and thank you for the unanimous consent.

An Hon. Member: It was tough.

Dr. Oberg: I know it was a close vote, so I truly do appreciate that. It is certainly an honour for me to serve as Alberta's Infrastructure and Transportation minister and present the ministry's estimates for the 2005-2006 fiscal year. I'll also provide a few details about some of the ministry's extensive programs and activities.

I wish to publicly thank my deputy minister, Mr. Jay Ramotar, and his executive team and all Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation staff for their outstanding work, and I'm sure they're out doing that outstanding work right at this minute. I'm proud to have such a group of hard-working people.

This upcoming year marks the third year that the department's estimates have been completed using the new fiscal framework. That means the committee will have two votes, one for operating expenses and equipment/inventory purchases and one for capital investment. This fiscal framework, which was first introduced in Budget 2003, allows the ministry to address infrastructure needs in a more predictable way and has allowed a significant increase in the level of capital spending.

The department's estimates to be voted include approximately 3 and a half billion dollars for operating expenses and equip-

ment/inventory purchases and roughly \$700 million for capital investment. It's an overall budget of approximately \$4.2 billion. Of that \$4.2 billion \$320 million is for noncash items such as amortization and consumption of inventory. This translates into an actual spending target, then, of approximately \$3.8 billion. This \$3.8 billion will be spent in two broad categories: first of all, operation and maintenance, noncapital plan programs; secondly, investment in government-owned and -supported infrastructure, or capital plan programs.

The first category, operation and maintenance, includes plant operations and maintenance funding of \$351 million for school facilities. This supports the lights-on requirement for schools, including utilities, caretaking, insurance, routine repairs, and minor maintenance such as snow removal, groundskeeping, and painting. There's another \$279 million for government operations and services. This includes property operation leases, operating the Swan Hills Treatment Centre, capital and accommodation projects, maintenance of government-owned facilities, site environmental services, land services, centennial projects, air transportation services, and vehicle services.

Still within the first category, operation and maintenance, we have \$217 million under provincial highway systems and safety for highway maintenance, vehicle inspections stations, rest areas, ferries, and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in provincial parks and on Indian, or native, lands. It also includes \$30 million for vehicle and driver safety programs, monitoring the commercial carrier industry, numerous traffic safety initiatives as well as the operation of the Transportation Safety Board.

Finally, \$285 million is budgeted for the energy rebates program.

The second category of program spending is investment in government-owned and -supported infrastructure, which represents our capital plan programs. Over the next three years another \$762 million has been budgeted to cover increased costs on previously committed education, health, and road costs. I want to reiterate that: \$762 has been budgeted for cost overages on existing projects. These costs are the result mainly of increased labour and material costs and in some cases increases in the scope of the projects.

For 2005-2006 \$2.6 billion will be invested in roads, schools, health facilities, and municipal infrastructure to build strong communities and support the future growth of the province. Municipalities will receive over \$1 billion in infrastructure funding to address local transportation and infrastructure needs. Of that, \$600 million is part of the new five-year, \$3 billion municipal infrastructure program. The ministry will invest \$308 million in provincial transportation grants, allowing Edmonton and Calgary to continue to receive funding based on 5 cents per litre of fuel sold within city limits. Other cities, towns, villages, and eligible municipalities will still receive funding based on \$60 per capita.

Rural municipalities will continue to receive formula-based grants and support through the local road/bridge program. Rural municipalities are also eligible for funding through the resource road program. This program provides funding assistance to address increased industrial, resource-based, or heavy truck traffic on local roads. Cities other than Edmonton and Calgary may also apply for funds under the cities' special transportation grant. This program assists these cities in addressing transportation infrastructure affected by rapid growth.

The ministry will also provide approximately \$32 million to the municipal water and waste water partnership program to municipalities. This partnership provides funding assistance for municipalities to address water and waste-water infrastructure issues. This program also includes \$7.2 million for the Water for Life strategy for regional water systems.

A further \$40 million in federal funding will be provided to municipalities. The province will receive the funds from the federal government for the recently announced new deals for cities and communities and will then allocate the funds to the municipalities, depending on whether or not there still is a government in Ottawa.

Finally, \$37 million in grants will be provided under programs such as Canada/Alberta municipal rural infrastructure program and the infrastructure Canada/Alberta program. These are cost-shared programs between the federal, provincial, and municipal governments.

To keep Alberta on course as a leader in learning, we have allocated \$201 million in '05-06 to continue 109 major ongoing school projects, including Victoria school in Edmonton and nine other ongoing school projects in Edmonton; 19 ongoing school projects in Calgary, of which 16 are new schools; and approximately 81 school projects in other parts of the province. Additionally, \$105 million has been allocated for postsecondary facilities to support planned renovations as well as ongoing expansion projects. Such projects include the University of Lethbridge service building replacement, Banff Centre renovations to Sir Donald Cameron Hall, University of Calgary Craigie Hall renewal.

In '05-06 \$392 million will go to continue 55 major health projects, including commencement of construction on the south Calgary hospital, the health sciences ambulatory learning centre in Edmonton; continued redevelopment of the Red Deer regional hospital, the Royal Alex in Edmonton; the first phase of the Foothills medical centre in Calgary, and the first phase of the Peter Lougheed in Calgary, as well as completion of the Alberta Children's hospital in Calgary and the Alberta Heart Institute in Edmonton.

Over \$640 million will be invested directly in the provincial highway network for new highways, highway resurfacing and widening, interchange and intersection construction, and improvements in bridgework. Major projects include continued twinning of the north-south trade corridor; continued work on Douglasdale Drive interchange on the Deerfoot Trail in Calgary; the Calgary and Edmonton ring roads, including construction of the southeast section of the Edmonton ring road and continued work on the northwest section of the Calgary ring road; 16 interchanges, including those on highway 2 at Innisfail, highway 16 at the campsite road, and, most importantly, the Trans-Canada highway and Cassils Road in Brooks, highways 16 and 21, highway 2 at Airdrie; 12 bridge replacements and 13 new bridges; and work on almost 2,071 kilometres of highway across Alberta.

On a final note regarding highway construction, Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation will be building the southeast leg of Edmonton's ring road using the new made-in-Alberta P3 process. As you'll note in these estimates, the capital investment vote for 2005-06 does not include funding for this P3 project. The \$83 million shown for this project on the statutory program page represents the projected funding requirement to deliver this project as a P3. This is not voted because no cash outlay is required by the government up front. It is the private sector's responsibility. The capital investment vote includes \$25 million per year for this project contributed by the federal government.

3:30

Finally, the ministry will invest nearly \$28 million in the construction and rehabilitation of the province's water management infrastructure. This includes components such as dams, canals, and spillways. The major project is the continued rehabilitation of the Carseland-Bow River headworks system in southern Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, it's been my pleasure to present Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation's estimates for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

I would be pleased to answer any questions the hon. members may have. If I'm unable to provide a specific answer due to time or whatever, I'll certainly provide one as soon as possible in a written format.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. My comments are mostly of that nature. There are a few questions, but I'm sure there will be a response.

It is my belief that infrastructure and transportation are two highly important portfolios which should not have been combined. To paraphrase the Biblical reference, you cannot serve two masters. I would suggest that no matter how qualified an individual minister is, they cannot be expected to successfully manage two separate responsibilities upon which the development for and safety of all Albertans depends.

Both the crucial areas of infrastructure and transportation have been neglected by this government over the past decade of cutbacks. The excuse repeatedly put forward in interminable press releases and government slogans has been the need to pay down the debt. I would like to inform this House and, through the House, all Albertans that it was this government that created the \$23 billion debt and not the people of Alberta, who are forced to suffer its consequences.

Although this government over the past 12 years has received over \$69 billion in oil and gas royalties alone on top of the numerous property tax, health care premium, long-term care rent increases and deregulated electricity rate increases in addition to allowing private insurance to jack up their rates by 60 per cent, from which this government receives a cut, between a third to a half of the government's debt was borne on the backs of public infrastructure, including public and postsecondary schools, hospitals, the public service, and public roads and the 3.2 million and rising Albertans dependent upon them.

The \$9.2 billion over three years infrastructure solution to a decade of downloading onto the municipalities will not restore lost or eroded infrastructure to Alberta's two major cities of Edmonton and Calgary, never mind the needs of Alberta's fastest growing, government neglected, oil sands rich, provincial infrastructure poor city of Fort McMurray or of all the other municipalities throughout this province which have been the recipients of the government's downloaded infrastructure debt.

This afternoon I will begin by addressing the need to eliminate the department of infrastructure as a separate entity. It is my firm belief that infrastructure should be a component of each ministry's budget rather than a far-removed overseer of funding to which all other ministries must come on bended knee and cap in hand for omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent needed funding. I contend that it would be far more efficient for the various ministries to control their own infrastructure funding so that they could make the critical decisions and be able to carry out their own long-term planning.

This used to be the case, for example, for the ministry of public education, which was able to decide along with publicly elected local school board representatives where and when school upgrades as well as new construction were needed. Since Infrastructure took over this role and the government in its infinite wisdom took away local autonomy and responsibility to collect and appropriately invest the education portion of property taxes, which formerly accounted for 50 per cent of local school board revenue, both school programming and school infrastructure have suffered badly. When you add to the schools' suffering a prejudicial funding formula based upon

a flawed floor utilization space plan which includes hallway space as teachable space, older, now inner-city schools are drastically disadvantaged.

This ministry of infrastructure with its tag-team partner the ministry of learning attempts to wash their hands of their collective guilt or wring them in the air and protest their innocence. However, it is their fingerprints rather than those of local school board members who are all over the school closures crime, whether it was the previously closed Parkdale elementary school in Calgary or Strathearn and the other 19 schools in Edmonton on the chopping block.

Prior to 1994 school closures were rarely considered as schools were considered the heart and soul, the epicentre of the community. Now, due to this government's lack of foresight, established older neighbourhood schools are unnecessarily being forced to close. Closing inner-city schools is the death knell for reinvigoration, for growth, and as an incentive for young families to move in and renew the community cycle. The government not only robs Peter to pay Paul but uses the divide-and-conquer strategy of forcing parents in new suburbs to combat with families in older neighbourhoods to have a school. Given the billions of dollars of royalty surplus, this forced, either/or, divisive battle is totally unnecessary.

The government, while starting to correct the mistake of overcrowded classrooms, the result of punishing pupil-teacher ratios and unsupported inclusion practices, has either not addressed or poorly addressed the school infrastructure problem. Last year, for example, the total infrastructure spending, which included school renovations as well as new construction, was in the area of \$109 million. Contrast this amount, for example, with the Calgary board of education's deferred infrastructure repair bill, which now sits at over \$300 million. This government has a preference for temporary portables and new, lunch box K-3 schools with no gymnasium/auditorium although it has mandated a half-hour daily exercise, which I gather is supposed to take place in hallways or between crowded rows of desks and tables.

If education is an investment in the future, then educational infrastructure has to be an important part of this investment. Lack of investment in educational infrastructure is not limited to public education alone. An equally grim reality exists in postsecondary education, where a single dollar's investment produces a fourfold return. Alberta has on a per capita basis the lowest number of postsecondary graduates in Canada. This certainly runs contrary to the so-called Alberta advantage notion. Last fall 25 per cent of eligible students who could afford the dramatic increase in tuitions over the last decade as the government shuffled off its funding responsibility could not find spaces.

The government has announced its bold reparation plan to provide 15,000 new spaces by 2008, which is rapidly approaching, with a total of 60,000 additional seats by 2020. This sounds impressive. Unless these are virtual seats connected to the SuperNet, the government has shown no concrete evidence of carrying out its plan. I would invite all Albertans who are fortunate enough to have postsecondary institutions in their constituencies to look out their windows or walk through their neighbourhoods to search for the telltale signs of cranes looming over their horizons, which would support the government's claims. While I am pleased to see these cranes, symbols of active learning accommodation, from my temporary Edmonton apartment balcony, I am sad to say that they are not in evidence at the University of Calgary in my Calgary-Varsity constituency or, to my knowledge, at any other postsecondary sites throughout the province.

This is not an either/or, Calgary versus Edmonton competitive scenario. All postsecondary institutions in Alberta must have their

infrastructure needs addressed. Are the 60,000 spaces by 2020 a pipe dream, a distracting rhetorical scheme to win back lost favour, or a reality? Show Albertans the plan and the money.

A second strong argument for allowing ministries to manage their own infrastructural needs is the diminished state of health care in Alberta. The lack of foresight or connection to reality, especially the future, shown by this government in its lack of support for educational infrastructure is echoed or mirrored by this government's approach to health care infrastructure. As has been the case with schools, more hospitals have been closed by this government than opened despite its annual billions of additional royalty wealth.

It wasn't enough for this government to simply close half of Calgary's hospitals on the clearly foreseeable eve of a population boom of Alberta advantage seekers. They had to blow up the General. The footage of this unnecessary implosion should serve as a pictorial monument to mindlessness for all future governments, never mind in this province alone but throughout the country. Wings of this hospital were newer than those of Calgary Foothills.

3:40

As a result of this blundered, debt-riddled demolition, a series of shockwaves continue to be felt throughout the province which the rise and fall of the Premier's third way – private, for-profit, at public expense – proposal will not address. While the impact of this infrastructure closure decision is most keenly felt by the million-plus people of Calgary and its surrounding regions forced by the government to be underserved by the Calgary health region, this one combined with other health care facility cutbacks or closures throughout both rural and urban centres has created a forced exodus of thousands of health care professionals, which the province is having considerable difficulty attracting back. Even if we could entice them back, where would they literally operate?

Albertans have seen the preview of the Premier's third way in private operating rooms in what was arguably western Canada's top women's services hospital, the Grace, prior to its fire sale to its current private, for-profit operator. Since insufficient public operating space is now available due to premature closures, Albertans are on the hook for an additional 10 per cent premium to have hip and knee operations performed in this private facility, which has added to the waiting list times rather than reduced them.

If the Premier's third way includes further facility closures, reduced service provisions, delisting of coverage, increases in private health coverage, and private, for-profit contracting out, then Albertans will see first-hand the U.S. model which has resulted in 42 million Americans not being able to afford health care insurance. Calgarians will have waited for over a decade for the southeast replacement hospital to finally come online. How much longer will rural residents have to wait for health care infrastructure relief?

The fact that I have only begun to address the problems of the infrastructure ministry with little time left for transportation signifies the enormity of the problems associated with combining these two significant but should-be stand-alone ministries.

Albertans are very aware of the deteriorations of their roads and highways over the past 13 years. What they are probably not aware of unless they derive pleasure from surfing the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation's website is the projected government forecast that it is acceptable for 44 per cent of Alberta's roads to be in either fair to poor condition by 2008. Where is this ministry's concern for either highway-dependent commerce or public safety?

What Albertans don't need are infrastructure and transportation band-aids. They need a separation of the departments, a return of

the infrastructure funding authority to the individual ministries, and a sustainable long-term vision.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, will just make a few comments if I can, as there really weren't a huge number of questions that were just recently raised.

First of all, on the merging of infrastructure and transportation one of the things that has to be very much remembered is that in many ways an engineer is an engineer is an engineer. When it becomes a road, an engineer works a considerable amount on it. When it becomes a building, that same engineer has the ability to utilize his expertise on the building of the particular facility.

Mr. Chair, the whole idea behind merging infrastructure and transportation was to get economies of scale. The suggestion that we should put the buildings back into the individual departments could be accomplished two ways: first of all, increasing the amount of dollars to allow each department to hire their own engineers, their own architects, their own designers could be one way; or, secondly, to contract out the whole system so that each department would have contracted-out services on their particular element.

Mr. Chair, we don't feel that either of these are acceptable. We feel that we can get economy of scale by having our staff that are responsible to us in Infrastructure and Transportation actually doing the work. There are some cases where we will contract out consultants when it comes to a particular area of expertise, but these consultants are on the hook to people in my department and ultimately to myself. We feel that that is extremely important.

By having each department have their own mechanism for doing their own building, for doing their own engineering, what we're looking at is a gross lack of economy of scale, a gross overusage of taxpayers' dollars. The whole idea behind this was to gain the economy. We've brought together information systems. We've brought together concepts that have been taken from the transportation industry that can equally be utilized in the infrastructure industry.

In reality what should happen is what is happening, which is basically that the departments such as education or health care determine the priorities, which is what their operational core business is, determine the operation of their facilities. They then instruct Infrastructure and Transportation on what to build, where to build it but not how to build it. Because how to build it, quite simply, is the responsibility of the engineers, the architects, and the designers that are included in my department, Mr. Chair. I really believe that that makes a considerable amount of sense, especially in some of the smaller departments. For example, in some of the seniors' residences there's \$4 million per year that is spent on seniors' residences. In that \$4 million there's no way that you can have architects, designers, engineers employed by the department. You can, however, go and contract them out, but I find that a little bit hypocritical on what the hon. opposition has put forward in the past.

There was also a comment made about P3 schools. Mr. Chair, at this particular point in time – and I use this particular point in time – there have not been any P3 schools that have been approved. We have looked at several of them, and quite frankly one in Canmore I thought would have been an excellent P3 project purely because 20 years from now I think it's very doubtful how many students will actually be in this one particular subdivision in the town of Canmore. I think we're going to see costs there go absolutely through the roof, and I think the young families are probably not

going to be able to afford to live in Canmore. The utilization of a school 20 years down the road is very much of a concern. Any school that's put there will have to have the ability to be turned into something else, whether it's a community centre, whether it's a senior citizens' residence, whether it's another community facility. So a P3 component would have been very good.

We did the numbers on it, we costed it out, and as we do with each and every P3 project, we determined the viability of it. The viability of this particular project was not to proceed with the P3, and subsequently in this budget there was funding announced for that Canmore school to the tune of around \$11 million.

Postsecondary institutions. I will challenge the hon. member when it comes to the actual number of cranes that have been on our campuses. In Calgary, for example, there have been numerous buildings that have been built. You have the health research innovation centre, which is under way right now, which is under way today. So there are, certainly, cranes that are going on there. That is the university building that is affiliated with the Foothills hospital.

There was recently an engineering building that was built and just finished. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, in my former capacity as minister of learning I had the opportunity to put my handprints in the topping-up ceremony, and as recently as last week I actually did a press conference at the newly finished school of engineering. We have also turned over the Esso building, which was a research facility. We turned that over to the University of Calgary. There's also money that is in the budget for a veterinary school at the University of Calgary.

Mr. Chair, at Mount Royal College within the last two or three years there was a \$93 million project that was completed. At the University of Alberta all you have to do is drive over there and all you see, quite simply, are cranes. There are projects upon projects upon projects at the University of Alberta.

There are numerous other components. There has been a capital plan at Red Deer College. There was capital construction at Medicine Hat College. Bow Valley College is currently in line for capital construction. There's capital construction at Donald Cameron Hall in Banff Centre, which was one of the worst buildings in the province when it came to our audit scores. So I do take exception with the hon. member when he states that postsecondary institutions aren't being looked after.

3:50

I will also add one comment, and I do apologize, Mr. Chairman, for going very broad on the element of postsecondary institutions, but I really do believe that we have to look at the utilization of these facilities. We can build and build and build, but if the schoolrooms are not being utilized, then at what point do we decide that enough building has occurred?

At the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology at 9 o'clock in the morning there are approximately 30 per cent of the classrooms that are being utilized. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon there is roughly 80 per cent, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon there is roughly 40 per cent again. We have to start utilizing these classrooms. We have to start getting central registries so that these classrooms become utilized.

A professor does not have the right to put his name on a classroom and use that classroom exclusively only when he is teaching. A typical professor at the University of Alberta or Calgary teaches somewhere between six and nine hours a week. Those classrooms have to be utilized for other classes during that time frame.

Mr. Chair, I think there arises another very obvious question, and that very obvious question is: what are these universities and postsecondary institutions doing during the summer? Do we put out

billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars simply to have these facilities sit idle during the summer? I don't think so. I think we have to move to a trimester system to allow students the ability to obtain a university education, a college education, a college diploma during the summer months as well. There's no point in building new buildings simply to keep them empty for four months of the year.

When we talk about 60,000 spaces, we have to, in all conscience, take that into consideration when we are looking at these new spaces. I think the new spaces are critical. I think it's essential that every student – every student – in Alberta goes on to a postsecondary education, whether it be apprenticeship in trades, whether it be university, whether it be college or technical schools. However, those spaces are there, and we do have to utilize them. We have to start taking into consideration the empty space, the unused space when it comes to this very critical issue.

I'll make two other comments, Mr. Chair, if I can.

An Hon. Member: Make several.

Dr. Oberg: Make several? Two others. First of all, when it comes to the whole idea of Alberta graduating the fewest university and postsecondary graduates, well, what's not taken into consideration is the tremendous apprenticeship and industry training courses that we have. We currently have 40,000 active apprentices, and this was not taken into consideration in the study that showed that there were fewer university and postsecondary graduates in Alberta than anywhere else. In Alberta we have an excellent, excellent, excellent apprenticeship system, and it encompasses some 20 per cent of the Canadian market when it comes to apprentices. These students were not included in the numbers that were shown to be the university and postsecondary students.

The last point I want to make. Much of the time was spent, actually, about schools. I agree with the hon. member that we do need to build schools and that we do need to put schools out there but for a completely different reason. The main reason is not demographics. It's not that our students are increasing. When we plot out the number of students that we have in Alberta, right now it's a zero per cent increase per year and actually declining. Over the 10 years we predict a 5 to 10 per cent decrease in the number of students, and indeed in many rural areas it is not so much: where do we put the new schools because we have a lack of space? It's what do we do with the declining student enrolment? That tends to be the most significant issue that is happening in a lot of rural schools.

In the urban centres the issue is different. Again it is not lack of space. The Edmonton public school system, for example, has 160,000 square metres of extra space. The issue, quite simply, is that the space is in the wrong areas. We used to build the beautiful sandstone schools, the beautiful permanent schools. Well, what has happened is the kids have moved away, and I don't think anyone – anyone – in this Assembly who is concerned at all about taxpayer dollars would want some of these facilities being utilized at 20, 30, 40 per cent. It just doesn't make sense when there's another school three or four blocks away.

So, yes, we do have to build some schools in some of the new areas. We have to be smart though, and we have to take a very serious look at modular schools. Anyone who thinks that they can predict demographically what's going to happen to an area may get it right for one or two years, but in reality over 10 years they're going to get it wrong. We have to make the schools flexible so that when and if a student population completely goes, you can still have a gymnasium, administration space, a library that can be used by the community on that particular site, but the classrooms, the modular

components of the classrooms can be moved elsewhere to where the students are. This I believe is an essential component of anything that Infrastructure does in the future.

Mr. Chairman, I've kind of rattled on a little bit here, but some of it was in response to what the hon. member has said. I'll certainly take my seat and await any other questions that come up.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this budget debate of the Infrastructure and Transportation department. I had written a few questions. Most of them were answered by the hon. minister, but still some more to go.

I'll start with aging infrastructure, page 311 of the business plan. Does the government consult MLAs on the priority of which capital projects receive funding? Could the minister please provide the names of the companies that bid on the recent renovation for the Calgary Rockyview hospital?

I also request you to please explain why, on page 244 of the 2005-06 Government and Lottery Fund Estimates, voted equipment/inventory purchases is \$39 million this year compared to \$48 million last year.

Please explain the cut to postsecondary education infrastructure funding from \$133,300,000 in 2004-05 to \$88,500,000 in 2005-06 on page 247 of the Government and Lottery Fund Estimates. The capital plan indicates cuts to postsecondary facilities from \$228 million last year to \$111 million this year.

The following postsecondary institutions are expected to receive postsecondary infrastructure funding: the Cold Lake campus of Portage College, Lethbridge Community College, Red Deer College, Medicine Hat College, Northern Lakes College, and Grant MacEwan. This is all in the capital plan, page 72. Why are a number of the other postsecondary institutions – SAIT, U of A, U of C – left off the government's infrastructure list?

4:00

The next one I see is on page 312 of the same business plan. What specific measures is the government taking to reduce traffic fatalities on Alberta highways? Could the minister please provide a list of the fatality rates of all highways in Alberta? What factors does the minister take into consideration when determining which roads will receive upgrades?

In regard to roads and royalties what is the department's current position on this option? Could the minister please table any documents related to roads for royalties? Will the minister please release any and all records he has regarding any plans to implement a roads for royalties program in Alberta?

I'm looking at page 246 of the 2005-2006 government and lottery fund estimates. Why did the transportation safety services budget barely increase by \$800,000? Would the minister please explain why, on the one hand, it argues that it supports traffic safety initiatives while, on the other hand, it has reduced its provincial highway systems and safety budget from \$342 million in the year 2004-05 to \$331 million in 2005-06?

The next question is regarding economic growth and changing demographics on page 312 of the same business plan. What specific upgrades are planned for highway 63 to Fort McMurray? Could the minister also please provide a timeline for these projects?

Given that the government acknowledges on page 312 of the business plan that seniors will need accessible transportation, what is the government doing to address this concern? Will it release all records and reports relating to seniors and transportation?

What steps is the government taking to ensure that there is an adequate number of commercial drivers as a number of them start to retire? Will it release all the records and reports relating to this subject?

Next, on page 312 of the business plan it states, "The construction industry that provides vital support in maintaining and rehabilitating the province's infrastructure is also faced with an acute shortage of skilled trades personnel." What information is the government using to base this claim on? Will the government deny that it is trying to make a perception that there is a shortage of skilled labour in Alberta to justify more non-union workers in the trades and, number two, to justify cheaper foreign labourers? This is the question. Would the minister please release any and all records he has regarding a shortage of skilled labour in this province?

Another question is about the intersection at 23rd Avenue in Edmonton. I just want to know because it's very close to my riding, just outside my riding. What's the present position? Is the development going soon? Is the civic government waiting for the money?

That's all I want to ask today. If you can answer today, that would be fine. Otherwise, please give it to me in writing any time.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Obviously, there were a huge number of questions that were asked. I'll attempt to knock off a few of them, and any that I didn't catch or any that we can't answer here today, we'll certainly undertake to get you written answers on that.

First of all, the names of bidders on Rockyview hospital. Under our privacy laws we are not allowed to give out any of the names of bidders except for the successful bid. That is private information, and certainly it's something that we can't do.

There were some questions – and I apologize for missing some of it – on traffic fatalities. In the province of Alberta each and every year there are approximately 400 traffic fatalities on the roads. Although the RCMP has this rate actually co-ordinated with the particular elements of the road, particular aspects of the road, we do not. We do not keep track of that. The RCMP does, and the police detachments do.

Just purely for the sake of interest, Mr. Chair, the 400 fatalities, that's compared to 60 or 70 homicides each year in the province of Alberta. I would just question to the Assembly how many dollars are spent on investigating the 60 to 70 homicides versus how many dollars are spent on the 400 traffic fatalities.

We have undertaken in our road safety 2010 initiative to decrease the number of traffic fatalities in Alberta by 30 per cent by the year 2010. We feel that we can do it through, obviously, increased education, through increased enforcement, through increased knowledge of what is happening on the roads as well as road quality.

We've taken huge steps with the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005. Actually, the act that you have before the House at this particular point in time has several initiatives that should decrease traffic fatalities. The idea of slowing down going by emergency vehicles is huge. Certainly, those people who are running emergency vehicles should not have to worry about getting mowed over as soon as they open the door of their vehicle. That's critically important whether it be fire, whether it be ambulance, whether it be any emergency vehicle.

Secondly, the whole idea of enforcement where we have doubled the fines in construction zone areas I think is critically important because we have to raise the awareness that when there is an active construction zone, you can't just zoom by because people will walk

out when they're under construction, and we just have to have that acceptance that it's there.

The roads for royalty. I just caught a little bit of it. There is no intention on the roads for royalty. One of the issues, of course, is our royalty regime in Fort McMurray, which is a well-documented regime. I think it could raise some significant issues if we went into the regime and actually changed it because that could cause investor unrest due to the fact that that regime was opened up.

Highways 63 and 881. There are going to be a significant number of improvements included in this budget, and included in the three-year time frame is around \$120 million that is specifically for the Fort McMurray, highways 63 and 881 areas.

Briefly, what we're looking at doing is putting a significant number of passing lanes in highway 63. We're also putting some staging areas. One of the staging areas is going to be about halfway on highway 63 as well as a very significant one at the junction of 63 and 881. The rationale for there is that the heavy loads, the over-height, overweight loads, are destined to go through Fort McMurray between the hours of 1 o'clock and 3 o'clock in the morning. What we're doing is putting a staging area that will enable them to get through Fort McMurray in that two-hour stretch. So that will be significant.

4:10

From the junction of 63 and 881 through to Anzac we're looking at widening the road. One of the issues there is that the roads essentially have no shoulders, and these huge loads are going through towns with basically no shoulders on the road. So it is essential. We do have some land negotiations that have to take place there, and we're currently attempting to do that as quickly as possible.

I think highway 881 affords us a huge amount of potential. It is another route. It is an optional route that we could quite easily turn into a truck route that would take a lot of the pressure off highway 63. Highway 881 will have some significant improvements to it this year again. Approximately 40 or 50 kilometres of paving will occur. Another issue with 881 is the potential for truck traffic to go on there, albeit it would be a little bit longer. I think we have to take a look at alternative routes up to Fort McMurray.

Another interesting question which arises on the whole Fort McMurray traffic issue has to do with highway 63. Realistically, the number of trucks and vehicles on the road on Sunday nights and Thursday nights is huge, but the rest of the week, Mr. Chair, actually, there is not that significant a number of cars and trucks on that road. During two days of the week there certainly is a significant issue, and I think that can be addressed in several ways.

The skilled labour is a very interesting point. Albeit not in my particular department, I'm really glad, actually, that the hon. member asked me that question because I was the minister of the day who brought the skilled temporary foreign worker agreement through to fruition. Included in that document, which has been tabled in the House, is the need that there has to be comprehensive advertisement and evaluation of the labour markets. It has to be shown by the companies to the federal government that there is a labour shortage before any temporary foreign workers can be brought in. Those foreign workers must be paid the going rate. There can be no decreased salaries for these foreign workers.

Interestingly enough, as well, Mr. Chair, included in this is the requirement for the Department of Advanced Education to actually physically go to the country and certify these people in their country before they come over. We don't necessarily want someone saying that they are a welder in a particular country, arriving here, and having no usable trades that can be done. So they are going to be certified in the country before they come over here.

Lastly, the whole idea behind a temporary foreign worker is just that. It's to protect our workforce. It's to take these workers, bring them over here for a temporary period of time when they are needed, when there is the workforce boom that is going on, when we can't supply it, and then at the end of three years they have to go home. They cannot stay. They do not become landed immigrants. They must go home at that time. I think that that's very advantageous to the unions. I think it's very advantageous to all of the workers because we don't then have the glut that can certainly be created by the influx of the actual jobs.

We all see the huge amount of construction jobs that are there at the moment, and we know that this is not going to continue. It may continue for the next five or six years, but after that we don't necessarily want a bunch of unemployed construction workers. So, Mr. Chair, that's why they're going home, and that's why it's a temporary foreign worker program.

The other question was the intersection of 23rd Avenue. Mr. Chair, that is a municipal responsibility. The municipal government in Edmonton has stated that that is their number one priority, and they're going to be looking at doing it.

The interesting point about that interchange, for those of you who are wondering about price, is that it's estimated to be \$107 million for that particular interchange, which is an absolutely massive amount of dollars for one interchange, albeit a very important one. It's very close to the hon. member's riding, which was just alluded to, but it is a lot of money. The city is looking at doing this as one of their priorities with the municipal infrastructure funds that were just given out to them.

Mr. Chairman, through to the hon. member, I'm sure that there are a lot of questions that I didn't answer. We will endeavour to get the answers to them and to the hon. member in as expeditious a time as possible.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few general comments along with the odd question along the way. I notice, and of course it's been trumpeted, that the budget for infrastructure is increasing by 10.6 per cent to nearly \$4 billion. That all sounds extremely impressive. It's a lot of money, but it's relative. I think we would all agree that there's been an infrastructure deficit in this province. There's no doubt about that, whether we're talking about schools or hospitals or seniors lodges or whatever. So it's hard to tell at first blush, because we've allowed the infrastructure to fall behind for so long, whether this is enough or not. Probably not. My guess is that in the next budget year there'll probably have to be almost a similar increase.

The only point that I'd make in a general sense, though, is when we look at parts of the deficit. I know that the \$3 billion – the bulk of this is what was announced before – that's going across the province in new infrastructure was roughly a billion and a billion and a billion, which didn't quite work out that way. That money is needed. There are just a couple of questions flowing – I think the minister alluded to this in question period at one point, but there is always sort of the Big Brother's control. We always argue about the federal government meddling in terms of provincial affairs. It seems that we give out the money, but the minister still has some control, I believe, of how that money is going to be doled out. I'm not sure why we needed that because I think most municipal governments know what their needs are. Maybe the minister – he did expand on it in question period – could expand on it a little more.

The only other point I'd make about that particular amount of

money is that one size doesn't fit all. Rural areas have different sorts of infrastructure problems, probably mainly to do with roads. Cities have different sorts of problems. The point I'd make as an Edmonton MLA: when this eventually came out, I believe that of the billion here it's \$678 million to Edmonton, and I think the capital region gets \$952 million, as I recollect.

The only point that I'd make to the minister is that the core in Edmonton is different in the way it has grown. The core is in the city of Edmonton, and the city of Edmonton does have different problems in infrastructure than the surrounding areas do. Somehow, the sort of broad brush – and I'm not sure there's an easy answer to this – of a third here, a third there, and a third there doesn't necessarily work, I don't think, especially well in the Edmonton area because the inner city or the established part of the city is older, has more infrastructure problems, has more people coming into the city. The other places don't need to worry about LRT and these things.

I would hope that in the future perhaps – and it probably won't be easy – we find a way to get away from this one size fits all because I do think that hurts the inner core, especially in the city of Edmonton. So I'd leave that with the minister. If he has some comments on that, that would be fine.

He would be surprised if I didn't go into some other areas like chartered flights and school closures and P3s and these sorts of things. The chartered flights. We've had some debate about this, and I guess I would say to the minister that I think there is an abuse here, perhaps not meant to be, but it becomes too convenient, I think. All of us, especially with Adscam and the rest of it, all people in public life are being judged, I think, differently and perhaps rightfully so. I don't think it will ever be business as usual.

4:20

So I look at the fact that we have our own government air and vehicle fleets – and all charters have two pilots on board – and there's been some discussion, as the minister's well aware, of whether that's been abused or not. I understand his point that sometimes a minister has to go to a place in northern Alberta or southern Alberta. There is the odd time that you have to do that. I don't think any of us are questioning that. I think what is questioned by the public and others is whether it becomes sort of the means and not always the end.

Then, when I look at the private aircraft charters that the minister released the other day, it's hard. Maybe there's some legitimate reason, but when you go through them, you know, we see planes flying empty between Calgary and Edmonton. These are the charters that I'm talking about, that people have mentioned in question period the other day. Here's one, a mystery one, a charter costing \$3,576.50 simply called one trip but destination and passengers unknown. Then we have two unnamed passengers fly from Edmonton to Vegreville. That's an hour away.

The minister said there may be a good reason. I'm sure he doesn't know, and I don't expect him to know, every one of these flights. But I guess the point that we would make, I think, maybe to the minister is that there has to be some better controls over both the government flights and the air charters, especially when we say we don't know. You know, it's a mystery flight. In this day and age I think we have to be more accountable than that.

I remember the minister being – what did they used to call you guys, the Deep Six and that? You were going to control government expenses and get government out. Here's a good way to start. You can be a Deep Sixer again and start to look at how this is being used or abused. I think, perhaps, to come back with some guidelines – and maybe the minister is looking at that about when this could be used and how – then there would not be this criticism of the

government. I think that if there's not the criticism, all politicians are served better whether we're in opposition or in government.

So, Mr. Chairman, I go on from there to P3s, one of the minister's favourite topics. Now, I honestly don't see why we are rushing into some of these P3s. The big one is Henday, and I'll talk about that in a minute. But the record with P3s all over in Canada and all over everywhere I've seen is not very good. The minister's well aware that the Nova Scotia government, a Conservative government after a Liberal government brought them in, got rid of it because it said the work was shoddy; they were paying too much. There are just many, many cases of where this is happening.

I know the minister says: Well, we check to make sure that we're getting the best bang for the buck. And, you know, the Calgary courthouse – they eventually did get out of it. But I wonder why we need to do it, I mean, especially in building. There may be a case for a P3 like the SuperNet maybe or something like that. But in the traditional way, especially when we have as much wealth as we do, even if we needed to borrow money, which we don't right now, we can get it at a very low rate, cheaper than companies can do it. And there's still the private sector involved in terms of tendering and the rest of it. So I almost think it's ideology, the triumph of ideology over common sense and why we need to do this.

Now, we've had this discussion in question period about Anthony Henday, the southeast Edmonton ring road. Well, I looked through the figures – I'm sure that if the minister thinks I'm wrong, he would be not too shy in pointing it out. But, Mr. Chairman, when we go back in the history, on September 22, 2003, the estimated cost of the 11 kilometre stretch of road connecting highways 2 and 14 was \$300 million. Eighteen months later the cost is now \$493 million, almost a 60 per cent increase. The government's justification is that in addition to construction inflation – well, inflation may have been that we waited too long instead of waiting for a P3 – which is running 8 to 10 per cent, they've added things to the project including two additional bridges, six lanes instead of four lanes, maintenance of 14 kilometres of southwest Anthony Henday as well as the southeast ring road.

Now, I don't pretend to be an expert to know whether we needed all those things or not, but I wonder. In September we didn't think we needed it, and it was \$300 million. Now we need all these things with the P3, and it's gone up to – well, the minister has said that it would cost between \$452 million and \$497 million if it's built by conventional financing. But the P3 costs, we're told, would be \$493 million.

The minister sort of spun it that it would be a \$4 million saving. But then the government release that was put out, as the minister is aware from question period, said it would have cost up to \$497 million, that it was a range. So we don't know if it's the low end of the range or the middle point or whatever. In fact, the cost could be up to \$41 million higher under the government's own figures because of the range. So you can say that at the top range the best case scenario is \$3 million – right? – on that end, but it could be at the other range. It could cost us \$41 million more. I think it should be a little more definitive than that.

Mr. Chairman, I don't think we need P3s, but I would ask the question flowing from this. The Auditor General has issued a set of six recommendations on P3s:

1. improve the definition of a P3
2. determine key prerequisites to identify projects most suitable for P3s
3. define when differences in key processes are appropriate
4. improve the timeliness of information and the overall analysis of alternatives to decision makers
5. define what constitutes a significant change in project scope
6. evaluate transparency and accountability of P3s.

My understanding is that the government has accepted them, so I guess the question that I'd ask the minister is: will the minister apply these recommendations from the Auditor General retroactively? That is, will the minister, for example, evaluate the transparency and accountability of the Edmonton ring road under the P3? Even if you believe philosophically in P3s, those are the things the Auditor General has laid out, that we should all have access to know whether we're getting a good deal or not. So that's a question that I have for the minister, if he is going to do that and lay out to the public and the Legislature how he's followed those six recommendations from the Auditor General in that thing.

Now, one of my least favourite topics, because I've had to deal with it, is school closures. The minister has alluded to that. Mr. Chairman, the minister talks about unused space and the rest of it. I was there. I know, you know, the arguments one way or the other. But I think we have to look at schools differently. I know this is not in the minister's area. It's in education, but the minister is the former minister of education.

This school closure process as set down by this government just doesn't do the job. It's almost a recipe to close schools. We've mentioned that in Ontario they've changed that because they look at schools differently. They know what it does to the community if you close a school down, whether it be in rural Alberta or urban Alberta. So they made it a much more rigorous process to do it. It doesn't mean you can't close a school down. It doesn't mean, Mr. Minister, that schools – and I've said that – can't close themselves down. They can. But when we get into what's happening in the Edmonton public with the cluster groups fighting each other, one principal on this side, parents on the other side – it happens in rural Alberta, and the minister's well aware of it – it's a very divisive process. So we should come at it from a different way. I'm sure the minister is aware of it. He's had discussions, I think, with the school boards.

4:30

Let me give you an example. Older schools – and most of them in Edmonton are older schools; probably in Calgary too – are just different than the new schools that the minister is talking about. I have no objection to this modular approach with the new schools, but that's not the reality of most of our schools. I think in Edmonton – don't quote me on this, but it's pretty close – in the next couple of years over 50 per cent of our schools in Edmonton public at least will be 50 years of age or over. Now, the problem with the older schools, when you use the utilization rate that the province is using, is that it doesn't take into consideration the difference because the older schools have thicker walls, wider corridors, and smaller classrooms. So we take the building, and everything is included.

Let me give you an example of one of the potential schools that's on the block, Mr. Minister. This is from back when I was a public school trustee, and we had the board look into this. It says that older schools before 1950

generally have much wider corridors, smaller classrooms, and, in some cases, thicker walls. When an area per student factor based on current design standards of 60:40 is applied, it results in the school having a larger rated capacity than is realistic. For example . . .

And I'd like the minister to look at this. The minister was well aware. This school was praised in the Learning Commission.

. . . North Edmonton School has wide corridors and large separate boys and girls mud-rooms. The school's 14 classrooms rated at 25 students would generate a capacity of 350. The current formula, based on area per student, does not allow for the older architectural style of the school and generates a capacity of 448.

If you go into that school right now, all the classrooms are being used. I don't know where you'd put them. There are 200 there. I

think even 350 is too much. Certainly, 448 is patently ridiculous. I mean, if we're going to use the utilization rate, at least it should apply to a per-student factor in what we would term instructional areas. I think there's been some discussion. Perhaps the government is looking at their utilization rate, so we could talk about that.

I guess what I'm saying is that we should look at the school closure, and then we should begin to look – and I thought the minister was sort of alluding to that – at a school as a community centre. We're doing that with some of the new schools: the George P. Nicholson school for example, as the minister is well aware. The Y is there. Capital health is there. That makes sense. If it makes sense in the new schools that the minister is talking about, surely it should make sense in rural areas and in the inner-city schools.

The minister is right when he says that people just want to look at demographics. We don't know what those demographics are going to be. In fact, many of the people can't afford new schools. Eventually young people out in the suburban areas are going to have to look back to some of the inner-city places if they want to buy a house. That's starting to happen. In fairness, I don't think the Edmonton public is aware of that, and I've made that case. They always look at the demographics, and they could be outdated right away.

Why don't we say that if it's good for the taxpayers, if there's a seniors' group in there, if there's daycare, if there's this or that, and the school's being used – it's all the same taxpayers – why can't we include that as part of the utilization? I think makes eminent good sense. As I've said, we've sort of accepted that, and the minister, I think, half alluded to that in the new schools. Why don't we do that and avoid this divisive process that we go through?

In 2001-2002 the Edmonton public school district provided almost 70,000 hours of after school community use in gymnasiums and classrooms. Again, I suggest to the minister that it's all the same taxpayer. Maybe it's not from the one department. It could be from Children's Services, seniors, all the rest of it, or whatever. That make sense for the community. Then the community can begin to cut down the spaces. Maybe you have to demolish part of a school or whatever, as the minister is talking about, but keep the school there as a community centre.

It's especially crucial for high needs. Now, I'm as upset with the Edmonton public school as I am with the minister because in high needs areas – and these are kids that I've always represented – this idea that bigger is better and they can offer more programs is ludicrous. The evidence is overwhelming right across here and from the Edmonton city centre project that small schools are the best for those kids, especially high-needs kids. They need the stability, if you like, of caring teachers. They need the stability of a small school because they come from unstable backgrounds.

The Chair: Your time has elapsed, hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Okay. I could go on longer.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank very much. The hon. member has raised a lot of issues here. I'm going to touch on as many as I can.

First of all, I want to combine two of his issues. His first issue was on the relativity of the infrastructure dollars and whether or not there is an infrastructure deficit. I don't think anyone, certainly on the government side, would deny that there is an infrastructure deficit in Alberta. There are a lot of things that need to be built. There are a lot of schools that need to be built. There are a lot of roads that need to be built. There are a lot of things that need to be

done. All of that is very much a sign of a booming economy. It's a sign of an economy that's taking off, but it's also more than that, Mr. Chair. It's a sign of a government that paid off its deficit and paid off its debt because that's what the people who elected us told us to do, so it's also a sign of a government that did its job.

Our job now, though, is to go after infrastructure. It's to improve roads. It's to build infrastructure. It's to get it back. I'll be the first one to say that we probably let some projects lag over the last 12 years due to the fact that we were paying off our debt, but there's a new horizon now. There's new ability with the debt paid off so that Albertans can truly realize the issues that they have seen over the last 12 years.

[Mr. Lindsay in the chair]

I want to now put that into the context of a P3, and I'll use the Anthony Henday as an example, Mr. Chair. The Anthony Henday is a project that cost \$493 million, and it's very unfortunate that the hon. member wasn't at Public Accounts this morning because we got into a very interesting discussion on risk assessment, risk management, and risk assumption. It became very, very apparent that the P3 element of risk assumption by the private sector was very valuable to us and was a very important component.

Included in this budget are a lot of cost overages. In fact, Mr. Chair, of the \$9.2 billion that is included in this budget, included in this three-year plan, there's \$762 million in cost overages – \$762 million in cost overages. These are dollars that have not gone to improve facilities. They're not dollars that could have been used to build schools. They're dollars that have simply gone because the economy is booming, because the price of wages has gone up, because the price of steel has gone up, because the price of the economy has gone up. So those dollars have been used for that.

The point that I'm trying to get at here is that on the P3 the whole risk assumption is done by the private sector. We have one cost, and that one cost is \$493 million, that we will be paying back over the next 30 years. Included in that cost is the ability to operate the system. Probably more importantly, in a conventionally funded project we have a guarantee for one year, possibly two years on some projects. On this particular project, because the private sector continues to assume the risk, there is actually a 30-year warranty, or a 30-year guarantee, on this project. So there are no cost overages, there's a huge warranty, and all the risk assumption is in the private sector. All that's wonderful.

More importantly, I have not taken \$493 million out of this budget and simply put it towards one project. I have enabled this government to do other projects around the province to develop the other infrastructure deficit that is out there. There is more to this province than simply Edmonton or Calgary. There are a lot of other areas in this province that need a lot of infrastructure work. If I were to sterilize \$493 million so that we could not use those dollars in other elements of the province, quite simply, there would not be any roadwork done in Brooks, Alberta. There would not be any roadwork done in Bonnyville, Alberta, or in Olds, Alberta, Mr. Chair.

4:40

That's exactly what we did on the P3s. They are borrowed money that's going to be paid off over a period of time, Mr. Chair. That's the rationale for P3s. It frees up dollars. It gives us a 30-year warranty. The risk assumptions on cost overages are all on the private sector.

The hon. member raised the question of the municipal infrastructure program and the whole idea of control. In a perfect world, Mr.

Chair, we would simply turn over the money to the municipalities, and all the municipalities would use the money in absolutely the best possible fashion. We are still stewards of the taxpayers' dollars in this particular Legislature, and those dollars are going through to the municipalities.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

This program is for needed infrastructure within the municipalities. We have to ensure that a municipality doesn't say, "Oh, by the way, I'm going to put this money to a recreation centre," and then next day come back and say, "By the way, I also need a water treatment plant." I think we have to recognize and realize that there are some priorities in life, and some of the priorities that are extremely important are water treatment, water sanitation: things like that.

This is not going to be an onerous task. It is not going to be a task that's going to require a lot of time or a lot of paperwork. Quite simply, we want to ensure that the municipalities have a capital plan, that they follow this capital plan in their priorities. As a matter of fact, Bob Hawkesworth, a former colleague of the hon. member, has put forward as the president of the AUMA that each municipality should have a capital plan, and these dollars should follow that capital plan. If that were to occur, then the approval process would be extremely, extremely simple, Mr. Chair.

The other point I wanted to make was a billion, a billion, and a billion. Again, we've got to get over the Edmonton-centric type of viewpoint on this one. If Edmonton were to receive a billion dollars when in actual fact it would be due \$677 million, then Lethbridge, Red Deer, Bonnyville, Wainwright, and all these other towns in the province of Alberta, and Olds especially, Mr. Chair, would not receive the same amount of per capita funding. Certainly, the point can be made that Edmonton has unique needs, but the point can also be made that Bonnyville has unique needs, that Olds has unique needs, that every other part of the province has unique needs. I think a wonderfully unique need is the amount of roads, particularly in some of these small municipalities where there is a small population but there's a vast amount of roads that need to be worked on, that need to be paved in these particular areas.

We have to recognize that in government simple is better because the more complicated we get it, the more it costs us to actually administer a program and the fewer dollars that actually go down to the municipalities to actually do the things that are needed.

The simple way to do this was to do it on a per capita. I think we had to recognize, and certainly we did, that there are some municipalities that are just too small, but they still have some infrastructure needs. We can't have them paving 15 feet of road one year and 15 feet of road the next year. We have to give them a critical mass, which is the reason why \$500,000 was set as the amount that all municipalities would receive regardless. This amounted to 99 per cent of the dollars being given on a per capita basis.

Also, what it did is that the metro Calgary area accounted for \$972 million, and the metro Edmonton area accounted for \$952 million. Realistically, Sherwood Park, you know, being two miles or so from Edmonton, should have the same population needs, have the same issues as metro Edmonton. Certainly, the hon. member made a point about Edmonton being older and its downtown and some particular areas, and that's true but no more true than it is in High Prairie, Alberta, no more true than it is in Bonnyville or Brooks.

So every municipality has individual needs, every individual municipality has unique needs. This program has been embraced by these municipalities and encompasses all these various needs. So you're right: there is no easy answer to this one. But what we've

attempted to do is deliver these funds out in as fair a fashion as possible, and I really think that we have achieved it.

Since I've arrived at this ministry, there have been numerous questions about charter flights, about aircraft flights. It's been in many ways a sexy issue du jour. The *Edmonton Journal* did an interview with me back in June. They spent a lot of money on it, trying to dig up dirt. In reality, what they got was not necessarily dirt, but because they had spent so many dollars, they had to spin it into a story over a five-day period. I think what it did was successfully alienate a lot of rural readers. It successfully alienated a lot of people we see on an everyday basis because of these planes, because we're able to go out and visit rural Alberta, because we're not in our cars for three and four hours a day. We're actually having meetings; we're actually carrying on the business of government.

Quite honestly, Mr. Chair, if I were an opposition member, I wouldn't want government to have airplanes either because it makes it too convenient. It makes it too easy to go out and see our constituents, to communicate what we're doing, to tell people what we're doing, all elements of a good, good government. Quite simply, I wouldn't want it either if I were them, but it is a good way to do it.

A couple of things have arisen, though. I haven't made these announcements, but for every troublesome bit, for every problematic bit there is some good that comes out of it. I'll give credit where credit is due: to the opposition members.

An Hon. Member: No.

Dr. Oberg: Okay. I won't.

In going through the charter logs – and I'll do two; I'll do one for the opposition New Democrats and one for the opposition Liberals. In following through on the charters, what we found was that our records were not very good. There were some significant issues in how our records were kept from the chartered companies. I think that the hon. member alluded to a couple where there wasn't a destination on them. The unfortunate part is that we did not have that information. I have now alleviated that. There is a strict regime and a strict protocol so that even on charters we have to know what it's for, where it's going, and who is on the plane.

The second issue was actually raised by the opposition Liberals, and that was the issue about the wonderful bookkeeping system that the federal government has when it comes to planes. Well, we looked into this. The first thing we did, of course, was the easy way, which was to go on the Internet and attempt to find the flight logs. Well, Mr. Chair, they're not on the Internet. They're not posted on the Internet.

So we contacted the federal Liberals, and we asked for their flight logs. They said, "Well, the flight logs are public." I said, "Yeah, and we would like a copy." They said, "Well, there's an issue." I said, "Well, what's the issue?" "Well, the issue is that they're in the library." And I said, "Why don't you just copy them and send them to us?" They said: "No. Sorry, we can't. You have to come to the library in Ottawa in order to get them." Despite the fact that they have said that they're made public, the actual accessibility to the public is very, very limited.

Mr. Chair, we are going to be putting our records, our transcripts, our charter records in the library, as well, so that anyone who wants to come to Edmonton to take a look at them, in very much the same fashion as the federal government, will be able to.

I will emphasize, though, that out of something negative comes something good, and I think we have really gotten a better record keeping system. I think a lot of the issues that have been brought up in this House are due to poor information, poor record keeping, and

I've certainly tightened that up since I've become minister. As I say, part of it certainly is due to the opposition and their line of questioning.

The other point I wanted to make was on the P3s. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore asked a very good question of the Auditor General at Public Accounts today. He asked the Auditor General: could you please explain your comments on P3s? The Auditor General said that P3s are a "viable" alternative that should be looked at in each individual case. Again, that's why we look at them in each individual case. I'm not saying that in every circumstance a P3 is the direction to go. I'm not saying that in every particular case conventional financing is the way to go. What I am saying, though, is that we owe it to taxpayers to take a very close look at each and every opportunity that is there to (a) get a good product and (b) use as little of the taxpayers' dollars as is absolutely possible.

4:50

The other point was about the \$450 million to \$496 million range, and that was outlined very clearly in Public Accounts this morning, where we can have on any project a plus or minus 10 per cent of what we estimate the cost is going to be. If it is more than 10 per cent, then we consider that unacceptable, and we take a very serious look at what could be causing it to be more than 10 per cent. It could be a shortage of workers. It could be an increase in products. It could be that we made a mistake in our estimates. But we take a very close look at it. In any project there is a plus or minus 10 per cent from an estimate. There is no guarantee that an estimate is the price that something will be built for.

Again, I'll use the example of \$762 million in cost overages that are presently included in this budget that are part of that plus or minus 10 per cent that occurs. The unfortunate part is that these days we don't get many that are in the minus 10 per cent range. We get a lot that are in the plus 10 per cent, and that's where these budgetary commitments are.

The hon. member makes a reasonable point about the financing costs. The interesting point about the P3 is that the financing costs included in that P3 are about 6 and a quarter per cent. We probably could have borrowed the money for about 5 and a quarter to 5 and a half per cent, so we might have shaved off about three-quarters of a point. But even with those dollars this proposal came in cheaper than what we could have done it for. So all the benefits that we talked about already, the 30-year plan, the risk assumption, all of that was included in this P3.

I think we have to seriously take a look, as the hon. member has stated, at potentially accelerating some infrastructure building by looking at alternative ways of financing. Whether or not it's us financing, whether or not it's a private company financing, I think we need to keep our brains open to whatever possibilities are there. You know, the hon. member just makes some pretty good statements such as: they're all the same taxpayer. We've got to remember that when it comes to things like school utilization and paying lights and power and things when you're lighting an empty school.

You know, one of the unfortunate parts about being transferred from one department to the other, in my case from being minister of learning to being Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, is that you kind of have to put your money where your mouth is. I was one of the outspoken critics of the utilization formula on this side of the House. So we are taking a look at it, and we feel that we can get a better system than the utilization formula.

The hon. member was absolutely right when he talked about thickness of walls, when he talked about distance in hallways, when he talked about gymnasiums, all of these different variables that are

out there. I think the utilization formula was good for what it was initially intended, but we are going to be taking a look and ensuring that a different formula will be in place. Included in that is a different distribution of the dollars. I will not say that it's going to allow any changes to whether or not a school stays open or a school closes because, quite simply, that was not the rationale that Edmonton public, as an example, was using for their school closures.

I'm kind of running out of time here, but there's one other very important element that I just feel I cannot leave, and that's the whole idea about small schools. For those of us who have been to small schools, I think there are a lot of attributes. But at times we have to move beyond the intuitive nature of education, and we have to start looking at some hard-and-fast facts.

One of the very interesting things about small schools – and I'll use the rural schools as an example. If you went exclusively on class size as the only determinant of whether or not a person is successful in schools, what you'll see is that rural students do not do as well statistically – and it is statistically significant – as they do in urban schools. One of the issues that we have to find, that we have to identify is: what is the reason for that? My belief – and I think that there's a valid component to this belief – is that it does tend to be learning opportunities. Quite simply, in many of the rural schools there are not the varied learning environments, there are not the varied learning opportunities.

I think that the whole idea of the SuperNet is going to enhance rural schools. I think it's going to be a huge, huge mechanism to give the rural schools an opportunity to stay open by simply offering more classes. I think we do a disservice to our students by only offering a few classes in some of these exceptionally small schools. Smaller is not always better, Mr. Chairman, in all sorts of things in life. Especially when it comes to schools, there's a point to be made that there is a critical mass that is needed for a school.

Just to close, in any study that has been done in Canada, in the last study that was done it showed that 15-year-old kids actually did have a correlation with class size. The larger the class size the better the students did as 15 year olds.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Budget 2005 has set in motion a \$9 billion construction plan. This will ensure that the infrastructure that Alberta needs in place to support the future growth of our province will happen.

The recent announcement of \$577 million worth of construction for a world-class health and learning centre in Edmonton will change the way patients are diagnosed and treated and how medical students are trained. If this facility was being built in my constituency, I'll tell you, we'd be shooting off the fireworks, and we'd have one party. But given that there was very little recognition for this announcement, I will thank you on behalf of the constituents of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne that will use this facility. This is a great announcement for Edmonton and for all of Alberta.

I had some mayors contact me with regard to the Alberta municipal infrastructure program, and I'll list off a few questions with hopes of bringing back some answers this weekend. I have a small community like Alberta Beach that needs some new projects to deal with their water and sewer, and this new infrastructure funding will be given from your department to them over the next five years. What they need is all the funding at one time. They may have a project that's about \$600,000 or \$700,000 – not \$600 million or \$700 million – and I'd like to know whether the community could ask for lump-sum funding.

Also, I've had the county of Lac Ste. Anne ask me if the cash from this new infrastructure program could be used to gravel roads. Again, I didn't have the answer off the top of my head. Then, again, the same municipality asked me if a group of municipalities – remember, I have over 20 mayors and reeves – could pool a portion of this new funding and dedicate it towards a regional project like a seniors' facility. So, again, I didn't have the answer, and I was hoping for some clarity.

Then the summer villages. I have 12 summer villages with 12 mayors. Some of them don't even live in my constituency. They live in other parts of Alberta, but they do a great job of representing their local summer village, and they're asking more about the clarity of the funding, how they got the funding versus larger communities. So I thought maybe you could expand on that.

Then moving on to another issue – and it was brought up by the previous speaker – about airplanes. Well, those airplanes come into my fire base carrying fire crews. I think little gets said about that, and I'd like to know if you have a little bit of information with regard to the fire crews that we carry around our province and across to Saskatchewan and British Columbia and I think in previous years even to Washington and Montana, that we use our Dash for. We really hear nothing about that use of our airplanes.

5:00

My last point is this big structure that's just north of this building. It's been empty for a number of years. It's the old federal building, and it's been a pet peeve of mine that I've brought up every year during this period, wondering if there's anything in this budget to either paint a sign that says, "For Sale," or just demolish the damn thing and get rid of it.

That's it for me, and I look forward to those answers.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, and thank you for those excellent questions. First of all, with the \$577 million on a program in Edmonton the hon. member is absolutely right. In Alberta we tend to get spoiled. Five hundred and seventy-seven million dollars on any project anywhere in the world is absolutely huge. To have it in a particular hospital or a particular ambulatory learning centre, as this is, is massive. As a medical doctor and now as the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation I'm extremely proud to be able to take this part in health care reform, and I really see this as the next step in health care reform.

I had the opportunity of working in the Colonel Mewburn Pavilion, which was on the site of the University hospital. It had 32 patients in one ward. I then had the opportunity to be one of the first medical students in the Walter C. Mackenzie health centre, which is the new hospital that is over there, to see the advances and some of the trials and tribulations with that. Now I have the opportunity to see the next evolution of health care reform.

For those of us in rural Alberta I think it's underappreciated what is going to happen here. In rural Alberta this is huge because what it simply means is that you can make one trip into that facility and see all the specialists and have all the tests at one time or over a period of two to three days as opposed to making trips back and forth. This is sort of the Mayo Clinic approach to medicine, and I think it's the way of the future. I think it is going to provide excellent service. I think it's going to provide quick diagnosis and quick treatment to all the patients who utilize this. It is not necessarily a hospital where there is going to be a huge number of beds, but I think that this is significantly better. So I agree with the hon. member that this is just a huge announcement, and quite simply I

wish I could have made the announcement in Brooks. It would have been absolutely wonderful. In Edmonton, though, it manages to make it on to page B27 of the paper, which I guess is fitting.

The municipal infrastructure program. I'll attempt to address your questions. They cannot get all the funding at one time, but they do have the ability to save it. They will get a cheque each and every year. They will be getting five cheques. They will have 10 years to spend it, and there's no problem with them actually accumulating it and, indeed, accumulating the interest as well. The interest can be utilized towards their capital funds. They can't for example, though, take the dollars, put them in the bank, and use the interest off those dollars to run their town. It can't be used for operating. It still has to be used for the capital expenses. So that kind of does the lump funding as well.

Gravel roads. Sure. If the highest priority in a municipality is the gravelling of roads, then I see no reason why that can't be done. Again, though, we have to ensure that these are the highest priorities. We're attempting to eliminate some of the infrastructure deficit and debt in the municipalities. Gravelling roads is probably on the borderline of being a capital expense, but on the other hand if that's their highest priority, then certainly they'll be able to do that as long as everything else is done.

A group of municipalities pooling funding. As opposed to saying anything against that, I would strongly encourage it. I think it's absolutely the way to go, especially where we have a bunch of municipalities in a small area that can pool these funds together and actually achieve a greater economy of scale. So I would certainly encourage that, and from my point of view the ability to do that is huge, and I would like to see it.

Summer villages. What we decided is that we could not use the \$500,000 range for summer villages because there were some that had, you know, 50 people, and these 50 people were temporary people. We could not give \$500,000 to 50 people for their summer village. What we did do, though, is we used a formula that had \$50,000 as a base grant plus the \$904 per capita. So \$50,000 plus \$904 over the five years is what was done, and I think that that's a pretty good system to do.

The airplanes. The hon. member is absolutely right. Too much time and energy has been focused on whether or not a particular minister took someone on an airplane to a meeting and what the meeting was for. We have to remember that these planes are there on an urgent basis when there's a fire, when there's a natural disaster.

I was up in Grande Prairie attending an AAMD and C convention, and I'd flown up there in the morning. I came there, and the plane was gone. The reason the plane was gone is that there was an incident in a town in northern Alberta where someone had a gun and was holding his wife hostage. Our planes went down, picked up the RCMP SWAT team, and brought them up to that particular community. So you cannot put a price tag on that type of ability. These are the things that we see. Thankfully, that was not a common occurrence, but it certainly is an occurrence. Fire crews, however, are a very common occurrence.

The other issue that we have with our Dash is that each and every Thursday that Dash flies down to Calgary for the land sales, which bring in huge amounts of dollars for this government, and typically there are 30 or 40 people on the plane. So we achieve a huge cash savings to us by allowing these people to utilize that plane.

The last question – and again this goes a little bit back to the comment that I made. When I started off in this government, I actually lived at the Inn on 7th for a short period of time. I walked past the federal building, back and forth, each and every day and each and every night, and I, too, felt the same as the hon. member

saying, "What the hell are we . . ." I mean, Mr. Chairman: "What are we doing? What are we doing?" I'm sure *Hansard* will correct that.

An Hon. Member: You said: what the heck.

Dr. Oberg: That's right.

"What are we doing with this building that looks like it's had such good potential?" Well, here we are 12 years later, and I, too, have been critical of this, and I, too, have been wondering what was going to be done with the building. Now I am in the position where something has to be done, and I will vow that by July of this year, August at the latest, there will be something done with the federal building.

We have undertaken a study of the federal building, the Annex, and the Terrace Building to see what is the best utilization of these three aged buildings. It's not entirely altruistic as well. One of the issues that we have with the federal building is that within two years we're going to have to put in \$250,000 to replace the roof. Do we put \$250,000 into a building that is just going to sit there? What makes more sense to me is: why don't we plan for what this building could actually be? Let's utilize this building. Whether it's selling it, whether it's turning it into offices, whether it's turning it into condominiums, well, let's use it. It's too nice a building and it's too important to Edmonton's downtown to be sitting there empty. I will certainly give an undertaking to the hon. member that that will be done this summer.

Included in this study, of course, is going to be the Terrace Building. The Terrace Building is having to undergo some renovations very, very soon. I think we have to ask ourselves the question: is that the right place for an office building for our employees? The Legislature Grounds is a place for the people. It is a place for the people of Alberta, and I think we should endeavour to do what ever we can to ensure (a) that it's beautiful, (b) that it's functional, and (c) that it is accessible to the people of Edmonton and the people of Alberta, and there are lots of different things that can be done with that building. It's such a gorgeous sight looking out over the river valley that I really feel that it's extremely important to do something about it. So we will be endeavouring to look at that. That's why we had the study done.

I think there's probably not a person who is not architecturally challenged by the sight of the Annex. For anyone who says that the Annex provides a beautiful piece of landscape to Edmonton, I think there are other places that we could take you, and some of them have locks on the doors.

Mr. Chairman, the mayor of Edmonton talked about architectural design, talked about architectural standards, and I completely commend the mayor on what he has said and what he is looking at doing. The interesting component is that regardless of what architectural standards are being put forward in Edmonton, I really don't think that the Annex is going to fall into that particular design structure unless we go for a wonderful retro look in Edmonton, which you never know. We may come into the multicoloured retro look. I would caution people that we really don't want to do that.

5:10

We are taking a very serious look at what should be done with these three buildings and what the future is for our Legislature Grounds and going back to the key purpose of what this Legislature is for, which, of course, is for the people of Alberta and the people of Edmonton particularly.

With that, I believe I've answered the majority of questions that you have given forward. If there are any others that we haven't, I'd be more than happy to take them. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's with interest that I get to participate in the debate this afternoon on the budget of Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation, as we're calling it these days. In the limited time that is available, I have quite a number of questions.

Now, the first question. Again, I'm not satisfied with the answers that were provided to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on the provincial utilization rate. Certainly, everyone agrees that the current method of calculating utilization rates in the provincial government's guidelines for new school funding is forcing particularly the Edmonton public school board here to close schools that don't need to be closed. It is a well-known fact that the Edmonton public school board is under pressure from the provincial government to achieve an 85 per cent utilization rate for the city. According to a provincial government document the utilization rate is important because it is used by Alberta Infrastructure to determine a school district's eligibility for new school construction.

It is unfortunate, and I'm getting my information from the Strathearn community school parent advisory association and the community league, their response to the Edmonton public school board's cluster study. Now, they go on to say here that it's unfortunate that schools in the inner city are being sacrificed in order to build new schools in the suburbs, that one school should not be closed before another is opened, or one neighbourhood should not be pitted against another.

The provincial government is currently in the process of rethinking the way utilization rates are calculated. That's a good thing, but prior to the current system Strathearn school, for instance, would have been assigned a capacity of 475 students. It now has an assigned capacity of 195 more, at 670.

As architectural styles and design standards have changed over the years, schools built in different eras, as pointed out by previous speakers, have large variations in the ratio of instructional space. For example, older schools generally have much wider corridors, smaller classrooms, and in some cases even thicker walls. If an area per student factor based on current design standards of 60-40 is applied, it results in a school having a larger rated capacity than is realistic. A solution – and I would be grateful if this would be considered – would have the area per student applied only to areas used for actual student instruction as opposed to the boiler rooms, vestibules, which support learning but do not function as classrooms.

Now, the Edmonton public school board has stated that the proposed closure of Strathearn is due to concerns about limited educational opportunity for the students enrolled there. However, the public school board's three-year education plan states: "The efficient utilization of space is clearly a goal of this district. The utilization rate should be used as a yardstick by which the district can measure its responsible stewardship of public facilities. Within this plan, space reduction initiatives are proposed at Belvedere, Horse Hill, Parkallen, Richard Secord, Ritchie, Hardisty and Strathearn schools." Given this statement, one would have to conclude that the main goal of this cluster study was to close schools. Of all these schools listed, only Strathearn has been slated for closure.

Now, the authors of this report propose that all school closures be put on hold until the new utilization rate is calculated. The new rate may offer relief for older schools in older neighbourhoods. If the province is using the utilization rate as a measure for school closures, all schools should be given the opportunity to be rated with the new formula. So again I'm asking the hon. minister to put a halt to all this talk of closures until after we see this new utilization rate.

While we're talking about the new utilization rate, I would be interested to know what the current utilization rate is of the minister's office and, if he would know, also, what the utilization rate is of the Edmonton public blue building.

Dr. Oberg: It's 120 per cent.

Mr. MacDonald: It's 120 per cent capacity at the blue building. [interjection] Oh, in your office. Okay, 120 per cent.

Also, when we're talking about repairs of schools, I'm still puzzled as to why we're having this talk of closing Terrace Heights after taxpayers have put over \$3 million into that school.

Now, I also have some questions about the School Infrastructure Manual: A Guide to Existing Legislation, Regulations, Policy and Guidelines. Could the minister tell the House, please, whether all school boards are obligated to follow this document? Is this just a guideline, or is it mandatory? We were startled to discover at a meeting at Strathearn school that the Edmonton public board just considers this to be guidelines. The chief of planning over there stated at our public meeting: oh, this is just a guideline.

I would like to know if the minister could clarify that for me because there are many interesting procedures and policies in this manual. For instance, how does procurement of portables occur? It states in the School Infrastructure Manual in section 3, Provincial School Capital Plan and Funding Process, "No other space is available in another school in the jurisdiction, or in schools belonging to another jurisdiction in the community, or in the region, to which transportation may be feasible." Now, if that is the criteria – certainly there is lots of space available – why are we placing portables at Kenilworth to take the students that are currently being educated at Strathearn school?

Portables are considered to be part of expansion funding, and in the funding application process one of the general considerations in section 4.3.4 states, "Making more efficient use of existing space available in other schools or other facilities in the community, in other communities in the region, in the sector, or in other school boards." Now, why are we not doing that before the public board is applying for funding for an expansion project which includes portable classrooms? If we're going to make these rules and regulations, I think we certainly should abide by them.

I could go on at length, Mr. Chairman, in regard to that guideline, but I would really like to have those questions answered. If they could be answered in writing if we don't have time today, that would be fine.

Now, I'm also looking at the *Alberta Gazette*. We're talking about increasing funding to Infrastructure and Transportation, but I see in the *Gazette* that there are always contracts where we've seen approval for increases in the amount of contract given. Now, we've got one here. It's got a contract number. The contractor is Cox Brothers Contracting and Assoc. Ltd., and this is for excavation and related construction costs for a contract. Per cent of increase: 38 per cent.

5:20

We've got another one on the next page, and it is a significant contract. It's at Hamelin Creek north of Blueberry Mountain. In the contract amount there's an increase of 61 per cent, or \$2.7 million. The contractor is Alberco Construction Ltd. We have another one here for Ledcor, by the Iosegun River west of Two Creek, a \$7

million contract with a 12 per cent increase. There are others in here that are of significance. Here's one with a 190 per cent increase. Another one with a 56 per cent increase.

How are all these contracts worked out? Is there a tendering process where people can go back, or is there not a set of engineer's drawings that gives the estimate?

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$3,463,437,000
Capital Investment	\$699,618,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates of the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Infrastructure and Transportation: expense and equipment/inventory purchases,	\$3,463,437,000;
capital investment,	\$699,618,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we adjourn until 8 o'clock p.m., at which time we'll return in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 27, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**

Date: 05/04/27

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone. I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

Before we get started, may we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly the Jacobs family. The Jacobs family is in the public gallery. We have with us this evening Mike Jacobs and his two sons, Len and Ron, and Len's son, Mike Jacob's grandson, Brett. They are in the gallery this evening after attending the rally outside in support of Canadian families concerned about some of the labour practices of this current government.

Len and Ron are both members in good standing of boilermakers lodge 146, and they are not only very good boilermakers. They're very, very, very good hockey players. It's very difficult to get the puck off those guys in the corner; trust me. They're in the public gallery, and I would now ask the Jacobs family to please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to rise and introduce through you and to all members of this Assembly Brent Clouthier, a good tradesman, a member of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, lodge 146, a member of the executive board. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Executive Council

The Chair: I would recognize the hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you. Mr. Chairman and hon. members, I'm pleased to appear before this committee to discuss the 2005 to 2008 Executive Council budget estimates and business plans. Programs under Executive Council include the office of the Premier and Executive Council, the office of the chief internal auditor, and the Public Affairs Bureau. My remarks this evening will include a fiscal overview for 2005-2006 and details on upcoming initiatives listed in the business plan.

Executive Council spending for 2005-2006 is forecast at \$26.2 million. That's an increase of approximately \$1.8 million over the 2004-2005 budget. That increase includes \$600,000 to cover the 3 per cent salary increases taking place in all ministries, \$500,000 for operational costs such as software and staffing for the office of the chief internal auditor, some \$275,000 for upgrades to Service Alberta call centre equipment, \$220,000 in one-time spending to cover costs related to the centennial and the visit of Her Majesty the Queen, \$160,000 for two new FTEs, full-time employees, and

\$90,000 to allow the Lieutenant Governor's office and the Alberta Order of Excellence Council to respond to the increasing costs of doing business.

The budget also shows a \$3.6 million decrease in revenue. This is due to discontinuing cost recovery for the office of the chief internal auditor, and I'll address that change later in my remarks because the figure that I just cited comes from other departments.

As I just mentioned, FTEs for Executive Council will increase by two. These new positions are to meet the communications needs of Restructuring and Government Efficiency and the personnel administration office, and both ministries have very small communications branches. The personnel administration office is seeing increased responsibilities due to growing cross-government efforts to attract and retain the best possible staff for the Alberta public service.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like now to offer an overview of the priorities outlined in the business plans, and I'll begin with Executive Council proper. For the benefit of any new members, I'll offer a quick overview of Executive Council offices. They're located in 307, on this floor. They include secretarial support to cabinet and cabinet committees – the cabinet room is also on this floor – my offices here in the Legislature and in McDougall Centre in Calgary, the protocol office, administrative support for the office of the Lieutenant Governor and the Alberta Order of Excellence Council, and the deputy minister's office, which includes support for policy coordination and business and strategic long-term planning for the government as a whole. The Deputy Minister of Executive Council is also located on this floor.

Strategic long-term planning is a central focus not just for the deputy minister's office but for my cabinet colleagues and for me. Last year when I appeared before this committee, I referred to the launch of the government's 20-year strategic plan. Since that time ministries across government have been working with Executive Council and cabinet to ensure that the government's short- and medium-term strategies all contribute to the larger picture, and that larger picture is the strategic plan's ultimate vision of a vibrant and prosperous province, where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children.

The vision is particularly meaningful in the context of Alberta's centennial year because this year is all about the future. Albertans have built a remarkable province in a relatively short period of time, 100 years. The plan will help give future generations an even greater level of prosperity, security, and quality of life than we enjoy today. Executive Council's activities in the coming year and every year will focus on making sure the government does everything possible to contribute to that goal.

The centennial is also an important time for the protocol office and the office of the Lieutenant Governor, believe me. Both offices are hard at work putting final touches on what promises to be one of the highlights of the centennial, and that is the royal visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh. I'm beginning to wonder if she thinks that everywhere she goes, she smells fresh paint. As members may know, the official itinerary was released last week. It includes major public events that offer ample opportunities for Albertans, all Albertans, to see the royal couple.

Alberta's new Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Normie Kwong – Norman Kwong, as he likes to be known – will be a central figure in the visit in his role as the Queen's representative in Alberta. I know that the Lieutenant Governor is very excited about his new duties, and he's dedicated to serving his fellow Albertans with distinction. I think he'll do a wonderful job as our official host to the royal couple and as Alberta's Lieutenant Governor. I had an opportunity again to see and witness his sense of humour last night at a roast for

the Progress Club. It was something to behold indeed. He doesn't miss a beat.

Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss in discussing the office of the Lieutenant Governor if I didn't mention the passing of the late Hon. Lois Hole. As members will know, Alberta submitted a formal request to have her term extended, and Mrs. Hole dearly wanted to help celebrate the province's centennial as Lieutenant Governor. Although she put up a courageous fight, she lost her battle with cancer before that wish could be realized. Albertans can take comfort, however, in knowing that her legacy will live on. Her contributions to this province are already reflected in scholarships, a new provincial park, and other honours, and I'm sure Albertans will continue to find ways to remember and honour her many contributions.

8:10

I'll now turn to a very brief discussion of the office of the internal auditor. That office was created in response to an Auditor General recommendation to centralize internal audit functions across government. The goal of the office is to help government managers and employees be more productive and effective in their jobs while ensuring that taxpayers get maximum value for dollars spent. Since the office was opened last March, the chief internal auditor has worked to recruit and train staff, and those staff members have completed almost 200 audit projects. The office will continue working in the coming year to ensure that government ministries are as productive and efficient as possible.

Members of this committee will note that performance measures for the office are under development, which is standard for any new initiative. The office will work over the coming year to flesh out those measures so that Albertans can see how the office is performing.

As I mentioned earlier, this budget reflects a change in revenue for the office. This is largely related to a difference in accounting processes. Instead of charging back the cost of internal audits to each ministry, the costs will now be covered centrally through Executive Council. So while it reflects a larger amount in my budget, really the dollars across government are the same. At the end of the day the same tax dollars are being spent. The government pays for the cost of the services whether they are charged back to the ministries or are covered centrally. This change will simply make the process more efficient.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like now to touch on the business plan strategies for the Public Affairs Bureau. The bureau's goal is to increase communications with Albertans in the areas they identify as top priorities and, of course, areas that are identified by the government as top priorities. The business plan organizes upcoming communications activities into four strategic priority areas.

The first is to ensure that Albertans have the information they need to take part in the 2005 centennial celebrations. That's important. A sample of centennial communications includes programs related to centennial medallions for Alberta students, those who have turned 100 years of age this year, special guests of course, the public, the Alberta Premier centennial invitation program, which encourages Albertans to invite former Alberta residents back home to celebrate, and a wide range of other programs from the recent Centennial Hockey Challenge, which Alberta won, to local centennial events to legacy projects across Alberta. Of course, this all leads up to the biggest event of all, and that's Alberta's official 100th birthday party on September 1. Mr. Chairman, I can tell members that plans are under way to make sure the party is one that Albertans won't soon forget.

The second strategic priority communications area for the bureau is to "ensure Albertans are aware of opportunities available to

themselves and to their families." This falls under the broader government goal of making sure the next Alberta is even better than the province we enjoy today. Mr. Chairman, the list of specific communication initiatives is far too long for me to go into here, but a sample includes the Alberta centennial education savings plan, new postsecondary funding to create thousands of new spaces and expand scholarships, and new spending to hire more teachers, reduce class sizes, and improve student learning. It also includes increased funding to regional health authorities, the new mental health innovation fund, and new facilities such as the Alberta Heart Institute and the south Calgary hospital.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I could run out the clock just listing the range of opportunities and initiatives that this government has the responsibility to communicate to the public. Suffice it to say: the list covers the gamut, really, the whole gamut from health care and education to capital investments, to environmental initiatives like the Water for Life strategy, to community priorities like policing and municipal infrastructure, to economic development opportunities.

The third strategic communications priority area is helping to "communicate Alberta's position on national and international issues." This is where this province is playing a much larger role. As all members of this committee know, Albertans take a highly unique and original approach to everything they do. It's what stands behind a good part of our success, and that is the ability to think differently and having the courage to try different things.

It's important that the government of Canada and major trading partners such as the United States hear and fully understand Alberta's unique position on key issues. This area of the plan focuses on ongoing communications related to BSE, mad cow disease, marketing choices for Alberta's grain producers, Alberta's new office in Washington, DC, and other issues. It also includes providing communications support to the Council of the Federation, which, by the way, will be meeting here in Alberta in 2005 in Banff. Of course, we'll be chairing the Western Premiers' Conference next week in the fine border city of Lloydminster.

The fourth strategic communications focus of this business plan is providing "disadvantaged and vulnerable Albertans with information on available programs and supports." Again, the list related to this communications program is varied and very extensive.

What they all have in common is a focus on making sure that Albertans receive information on the supports they need and on opportunities to build a better life for themselves and their families. It includes upcoming communications-related programs to help people develop the skills they need to find and keep a job, programs and supports for disabled Albertans, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention, prevention of family violence including Alberta's role as host of the upcoming World Conference on Family Violence, prevention of childhood sexual exploitation, parent link centres, crime prevention campaigns, workplace safety awareness and promotion, and the list goes on and on.

I'd like to turn briefly to the bureau's goal 2, which is to "make government information more accessible." As I mentioned earlier, the budget includes an upgrade to Service Alberta call centre equipment. Service Alberta is the government's main toll-free switchboard. Service Alberta agents process one million calls a year. The agents work from special consoles, and those consoles are rapidly showing signs of wear and tear. As it stands now, if even one console breaks down, an operator would have to sit idle as the stock of backups is depleted. On average each operator answers 70,000 calls a year, and the upgrades will make sure that the system is able to keep up with them.

Another key access point for Albertans is the Alberta government home page. A new initiative is the introduction of the RSS technol-

ogy, which essentially allows government to automatically deliver news and updates to regular website visitors. Albertans who sign up for the free service receive regular updates directly to their computer so they can stay on top of the latest news quickly and easily. Alberta is one of the first provincial governments to offer the service along with Ontario.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my introductory comments, and I welcome members of the committee to ask any questions they may have about the 2005 to 2008 business plans and the current year's budget for Executive Council. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciated the Premier's comments, and I'm sure we'll have an interesting debate here. I assume, as we've done previous years, we can go back and forth a little bit. It keeps it more interesting. I hope so. Is that okay with the Premier if we ask questions and get answers? Is that how you'd like to proceed?

8:20

Mr. Klein: However you want. If I can answer, I will.

Dr. Taft: I appreciate that. I'm sure that's always the case.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the budget and the business plans for the Executive Council. It's a substantial amount of money now, as the Premier said, I think over \$26 million. The largest portion is for the Public Affairs Bureau, which, as I've said in the past, I think is this government's secret weapon and an effective communications organization albeit a very large and well-financed one as well. In fact, I didn't hear in the Premier's comments if he indicated how many full-time equivalent positions will be working this year in the Public Affairs Bureau. It may be in the business plan, but that's always useful to know. If the Premier has that information, that would be terrific.

Last year there was some discussion about the corporate identity program for the government and plans that were under way for perhaps updating the logo and going far beyond that to include other issues involved in corporate identity: colours, all kinds of design issues. I'm curious to know if there's been progress on that, if it's on the government's corporate identity work. We discussed it a bit last year, and I'm just wondering where that went, whether that's just limited to the centennial logo, which is on all the letterheads and so on, or if it's beyond that. Of course, it's useful to know how much it's costing to modernize or to update or change the corporate identity of the government of Alberta. Because everything costs money, I'd be interested to know how much that costs.

Last summer there was some interesting media coverage on the role of the Public Affairs Bureau in developing and providing extensive briefing books and even a secret website available only to Tory MLAs. I guess I have some problems with that because I don't think the Public Affairs Bureau is meant to be a partisan branch of government in the same way that, say, cabinet's direct staff are. So I'd be curious to know some more information on that and the role of the Public Affairs Bureau in preparing the briefing binders that are provided only to government MLAs. I think it's an intranet site that's also available exclusively to government MLAs.

I'd like to know what that costs and whether the Premier sees that as a legitimate role for a branch of the public service that is funded, frankly, to support everybody in the province, not simply Tory backbenchers. So if there is some information available on that. It did get some extensive coverage in the media last year, last summer.

There are three questions. Does the Premier want to respond now?

Mr. Klein: I can respond now, Mr. Chairman. I'll try and answer the last question first. This is relative to the secret website. If the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has the home page, I would surely like to know it because, you know, I'd like to get in on this. I know of no secret website on the Internet, but if you have the web page, please send it over, and I'll put it on my computer.

Relative to the corporate identity, I really can't answer that question. Perhaps my officials can advise me as to work on the logos and what is being done relative to developing the corporate identity. I know that a logo has been designed for the centennial year, and it's being used on all our letterheads and virtually on all our communications. It is designed, of course, to create awareness of the centennial. I'll attempt to get that information.

The Public Affairs Bureau's full-time equivalent staffing for 2005-2006 totals 133. Now, I don't have the names of all the people, but I can get them, I'm sure. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this bureau is not the secret weapon of the government but really helps the government to communicate with Albertans on priority issues.

In the Public Affairs Bureau on the communications side there are 80 full-time employees. I can mention – and I think this is worthy of note, Mr. Chairman – that of the 133 employees this is 100 fewer employees than when I took over as Premier in 1992, so we have reduced the size of the total Public Affairs Bureau by close to a hundred. The FTEs for communications support in Restructuring and Government Efficiency account for two of the new full-time employees, and I mentioned that in my opening remarks.

Basically, the Public Affairs Bureau supplies professionals to 23 government departments to develop and implement communications programs. It provides communications planning and consulting support to government. It co-ordinates government communications to and from Albertans on priority areas, on government initiatives and during public emergencies, and it provides specialized writing and editing services to government.

There are 34 full-time employees in a branch of the Public Affairs Bureau that is the part that communicates directly with Albertans. This involves managing the Service Alberta call centre to give Albertans toll-free access to government, and I mentioned that in my opening remarks and how we needed to upgrade some of the equipment. It provides Alberta Connects call centre support for comments and information on major government initiatives. It provides the management of a two-way flow of information through the Alberta government website, which is not secret. It provides technical support for major government news coverages and announcements and provides communications technology support to the Executive Council and Internet consultation to departments and manages the province-wide distribution of news releases. That involves 34 full-time employees. Most of these are technical people and administrative people.

There are 11 full-time employees working on publishing and selling Alberta's laws and other government materials, and then there are eight full-time employees offering administrative services, and that is the overall management of the Public Affairs Bureau: managing the human resource and finance needs of the Public Affairs Bureau and developing business plans and budgets and performance measurements and annual reports and general administration. So we have eight, 11, 34, and 80, to bring us up to 133 employees in the Public Affairs Bureau.

Corporate identity project. I received some information from my staff: the logo hasn't been redesigned. I don't know what logo

they're talking about. Are they talking about the 2005, or are they talking about the stylized Alberta?

8:30

Mrs. McClellan: Stylized Alberta.

Mr. Klein: The stylized Alberta. The logo hasn't been redesigned, but it has been reformatted so that it can be applied to more formats such as the electronic website uses. It looks the same, but it's more flexible, as I read from the note.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Well, continuing for a moment with the Public Affairs Bureau, a substantial amount of the almost \$10 million is spent on advertising and promotion and that kind of thing. I'm wondering what role, if any, Highwood Communications has in government advertising and public relations, and how much of that \$9.7 million will be managed by them? I'm sure you've heard of them.

Mr. Klein: I don't have the exact number, Mr. Chairman, but I'm sure my staff heard the question. Highwood, like any other advertising agency, would have to bid. I think that they do some work for the government in one of the areas. Relative to advertising, we do advertise; there's no doubt about it. We spend significant dollars on advertising because government has a duty to tell citizens about its decisions and policies and about upcoming initiatives.

If we didn't advertise, we would have to depend on the media and the daily scrum, and there are not always assurances that we can get our message across. I can tell you that I attend the scrum every day at 3 o'clock, and the Leader of the Opposition is there for reaction, and it's often the reaction that gets the headlines and not the action, or it's the reaction to the reaction or the reaction to the reaction to the reaction.

So advertising campaigns in 2005-2006 will inform Albertans about a range of topics from new government programs and services to risk to public health and safety. I can tell you – and I don't want to belabour this point – but I can't address the Highwood situation specifically because we contract to a number, I believe, of advertising agencies.

The advertising campaign topics include education awareness of bullying prevention, the Alberta centennial education savings plan, marketing choices in agriculture, prevention of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, prevention of childhood sexual exploitation, our 2005 centennial celebrations, Alberta's water strategy, the Asian bird flu, the Healthy U advertising campaign to keep Albertans healthy, West Nile virus, Alberta child health benefit program, Work Safe Alberta, traffic safety, crime prevention, wildfire prevention, and the list goes on and on. There are just so many issues that need to be properly communicated to the public.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. At this time I'll switch to the chief internal auditor, which I think last year the Premier indicated was unique in Canada. I'm still not convinced that it's a necessary job, but fair enough. The Auditor General seems to support it, and we'll go along with that for now anyway.

There are some questions around how the two public members are selected for this position. I raised this issue a day or two ago in question period: one is the vice-president of finance for the PC Party, and the other is Jack Halpin, who is a long-time supporter of

the Premier. Fair enough. I would be curious about two things with the role of the public members on the chief internal auditor's committee. How were they chosen? What was the process through which members were chosen for that committee? And in this budget what's their honorarium? How much, if anything, are they paid?

Thank you.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Chairman, the audit committee would not be included in my budget. The audit committee is separate and apart from the function of the chief internal auditor. You know, I would like to comment, but I think more appropriately it would be a question that should be addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance. I don't know if the hon. minister has had her estimates heard yet, but that is a question that ought to be put to the hon. minister. Perhaps she can make a note of it and supply that information to the hon. member.

The office of the chief internal auditor is recommended by the Auditor General. Basically, every department, every ministry, has an internal auditor, and the internal auditor's job is to make sure that that ministry is running properly, including Executive Council, including International and Intergovernmental Relations, Finance, Advanced Education, Economic Development, Innovation and Science, Solicitor General, Seniors. They all have internal auditors.

The work of the chief internal auditor for the ministries is not generally reported publicly because the office is a government branch. It's not the creation of the Legislative Assembly. Basically, the chief internal auditor and his staff report to an external audit committee, and that's the committee to which the hon. member alludes. In addition, all that work of the chief internal auditor is examined by the Auditor General to ensure quality and to avoid potential duplication. If the Auditor General – I think this is very important – were to deem a chief internal auditor matter of sufficient importance, he could choose to bring it forward publicly. In other words, if there's something that is so overwhelming and so obviously wrong in a department, the Auditor General can bring it forward publicly.

Oh, Highwood: I've got the information. The question was specific to Highwood. I was going to report this, but I wasn't quite sure. Highwood is one of three agencies of record for the government. I think we put out tenders, and people bid on whether they want to become the agency of record. They have a contract for a three-year period through a competitive bid process. Basically, their job, because it's broken into segments, is to negotiate the purchase of advertising space, and they get a commission of 4 to 5 per cent to provide that service. They did not win the component that involves the design of ad campaigns. So each campaign – purchasing, design, and I don't know what the other one is – is tendered to a different agency.

8:40

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I've been listening with a great deal of interest to the exchange between the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the hon. Premier. Certainly, the office of the chief internal auditor is a new office when you look at the annual reports of Executive Council going back a couple of years, and I'm surprised to see that it goes from zero, essentially, to \$5.25 million in expenditures so quickly. If it's to save money, I don't know how this is to work. Certainly, if we go back two years in the annual reports, there seems to be very little interest in this office of the chief internal auditor. I became aware of this office for the first time last summer. It has been mentioned on several occasions in Public Accounts since.

I had some questions for the Auditor General in regard to public accounts, and I'm still not satisfied with the answers that I have received from the government. But I was doing some additions to the public accounts, and for the last fiscal year that was available, I discovered that there was a percentage difference from the public accounts to the annual report of Executive Council of 34 per cent. There was a total spent in the department of \$3.5 million, but listed in the annual report was only the actual amount of \$2.3 million. So perhaps the chief internal auditor could start at home.

But I do have some questions. The first one is: how often do the Auditor General and the chief internal auditor consult? Do they decide which work each office is going to do? Do they have exit interviews with one another after an audit is completed? The last time that the Premier visited Public Accounts, he was gracious enough to introduce Mr. Nick Shandro, who was a former employee of the Auditor General's office. I believe he was the chief internal auditor of this office. The experience I've had with Mr. Shandro is that he's a very fine fellow and very capable, very able. Does the Premier consider that a conflict of interest, now, to have a senior employee go from the Auditor General's office to this chief internal auditor's office?

Mrs. McClellan: What did you have for supper?

Mr. MacDonald: What did I have for supper? Well, that's an interesting question. I bet it's a lot less than the hon. Minister of Finance has had. I was startled to see outside the Assembly this evening two stretch limousines. They were longer, Mr. Chairman, than a King Air. A black one and a white one, stretch limousines.

An Hon. Member: It was the boilermakers.

Mr. MacDonald: It was the boilermakers, was it? No, it was not the boilermakers. Certainly not. There were two stretch limousines out there, and I'm sure the government caucus was getting taxed or ferried or whatever you want to say to a rather elegant meal. [interjections] I didn't have that elegant of a meal, nor would I accept that kind of transportation. I was surprised to see the black and white stretch limousines parked right out there, and this was before all the tradesmen and the tradeswomen arrived to express their opinions.

The Chair: Hon. member, if we could have your comments directed through the chair, I think it would be helpful.

Mr. MacDonald: Sure.

Now, getting back to the public accounts and our budget here. This is a significant increase in budget amounts if we go back, say, two or three years in the Executive Council's annual reports. I see in the past, Mr. Chairman, where the Executive Council has paid over \$200,000 – and this is for fiscal year 2002-03 – to Environics Research Group (Western) Limited. Highwood Communications in this fiscal year got \$1.5 million. Margaret Kool Marketing Inc. got \$350,000. National Public Relations Calgary Inc. got close to \$60,000. The Royal Rubber Stamp Co. only got 50 bucks. So there's quite a range in expenditures there.

Now, could the Premier tell us how much is budgeted in this budget year for Highwood Communications Ltd., how much is budgeted for Margaret Kool Marketing Inc., and Environics Research Group (Western) Limited, how much are they going to receive in this budget, if any?

Now, this is a very small department. In the \$26 billion budget it may look like a small department, but when you look at it and you look at previous fiscal years for this department, this is definitely a budget that is getting quite extravagant. Quite extravagant indeed.

Before I cede the floor to an hon. colleague, my last question to the Premier will be this. If the chief internal auditor is busy working in other departments – and I assume from his response before that other departments are going to pay for those audits that are going to be conducted by the chief internal auditor – will we perhaps have the RAGE minister look into the significant increase in the budget of Executive Council?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Relative to the hon. member's second-last question, the amounts that were paid out of the Public Affairs Bureau advertising budget to Margaret Kool, Environics, and Highwood Communications, I don't have that breakdown. I honestly don't. Perhaps the administrator of the Public Affairs Bureau has that breakdown and can supply that information. I just don't have it here.

Relative to the internal auditor, Mr. Chairman, the budget did not go from zero to \$5,254,000. The budget went up by \$625,000, and that accounted for wage increases generally. The reason it appears in my budget as having gone from zero to \$5.2 million is that the internal audit functions from all the departments were taken out of those departments and centralized under Executive Council. So the amount of money is the same, and I think I explained that in my opening remarks.

The office of the internal audit was set up by reassigning audit staff, all the staff from the various departments, that were individual departments, to consolidate them in one location. I would be more than happy to have the RAGE minister look at it. We believe and the Auditor General believed that it resulted in more efficiency and more consistently high standards.

8:50

Now, the question was also asked: how often does the chief internal auditor report to the Auditor General? I don't know for sure, but I would suspect that they are in fairly constant communication. He would certainly report at least once a year, but I'm quite sure that they are in constant communication because they work hand in glove.

So the chief internal audit office is not an entirely new office; it's simply a consolidated office.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the chance to participate in this debate. I have two or three very brief questions for the hon. Premier. My first one is with regard to the strategic priorities for the years 2005 to 2008 on page 230 of the budget. My preamble, if you like, is basically that the Premier indicated that efficiency is a priority for this government, and for every question we ask of any respected minister, they default back to answering how efficient this government is and how competent the ministers are and so on.

For example, in the strategic priorities priority 1 talks about providing "Albertans with the information they need to participate in 2005 Centennial celebrations." My question here would be:

couldn't this have been done by the Minister and the Ministry of Community Development? The second would be to "ensure Albertans are aware of opportunities available to themselves and their families." Again, isn't this the responsibility of both the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Human Resources and Employment? Third, it says to "help to communicate Alberta's position on national and international issues." Again, I see this as the prime reason to have an international and intergovernmental affairs minister. Four, it says to "provide disadvantaged and vulnerable Albertans with information on available programs and supports," and this is where the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports comes in. I think, to put it mildly, this is duplication of services.

Moving on, I would touch on the Public Affairs Bureau. I know that two of my colleagues have previously discussed this or asked questions about it, and the hon. Premier replied. My take on this, again as a layman: the Premier highlighted the fact that the Public Affairs Bureau is comprised of 133 employees, and he actually went ahead and divided them as to who works at the call centre, who works at the Queen's Printer, and so on, and who is an administrator, you know, who actually has direct contact with Albertans, and so on, which is fine. Why do we have 133 employees who actually report directly to the Premier? Because the Premier is the head of the Public Affairs Bureau. I see this as an unnecessary concentration of power, if you like, in the hands of one person.

Again I would ask the Premier: why do we have such a big number compared to a province like Saskatchewan, which has 96, or a province like Newfoundland, which has 39? [interjections] Oh, you're laughing. Hear this. Why do we have 133 employees compared to the White House, which has 55? I don't think this is a laughing matter. [interjection] Yes. Is the White House less important, or are they less capable of conveying their message? This is a serious question, and I don't think it's unfair.

Also, having said that, this does not really preclude the communications personnel and resources in each ministry. I know that the hon. Premier indicated that they're hiring two full-time equivalent staff to look after the needs of the newly formed Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, so two people are going to be added to that battalion of information officers, if you like. I would still argue that this is unnecessary because if you add all these communications people from all these ministries – we have 24 ministries now – it would probably be a lot more.

My question to the hon. Premier would be: does this represent a reduction from 2002 levels? We have a copy of the 2002 Public Affairs Bureau telephone list. On that list there were listed 260 employees. Can the Premier state that maybe the number has been reduced?

The Public Affairs Bureau is a media outlet, or they're more of a propaganda machine, if you like. They advertise, and they tell Albertans how wonderful the government is and so on. Examples of those campaigns or projects that the Public Affairs Bureau worked on would include a campaign that cost the taxpayers about \$3 million to tell us and convince us how wonderful deregulation is and how great it is and how it is not a big mess. They also spent about \$1.5 million on turning public opinion against Kyoto. They also spent over \$1 million convincing Albertans that Bill 11 was such a good deal. Very recently, in the year 2003-04, they spent about a quarter million telling people that the budget was a good deal.

Mr. MacDonald: What about gas contracts and electricity contracts?

Mr. Elsalhy: The majority of Albertans don't want to buy into long-term contracts through that deregulated market scheme, but once that regulated rate option expires in June of 2006, people will be left to make this tough decision and swallow this hard pill.

The Public Affairs Bureau has a budget of about \$15 million. I honestly think that this is unwarranted and unnecessary for the simple fact that the Public Affairs Bureau advocates a one-way flow of information. Every time I or one of the hon. colleagues from the opposition asks a question, the government minister in charge stands up and says, "We're telling people and we are informing people of the merits of the program. We're telling them how wonderful it is." We've had that with Energy. We've had that with Agriculture. We've had that with Sustainable Resource Development, and every other ministry you talk to will tell you how wonderful and how great their programs are and why the average Albertan should buy into it and should be extremely happy that the government is doing this and that. So the flow of information is one way.

The government tells Albertans what's good for them and why they should be happy and how they should react. They're not as eager to receive information the other way, basically to listen or survey or ask questions. Satisfaction surveys are mainly geared at stakeholders, at the industry, not at the public. I see this as a one-way flow of information, and I think it's humongously expensive to spend 15 million bucks to tell people how to think.

Also, I think it's not telling the bigger picture, where we have other government departments which appear to be at arm's length who have their own communications departments. Take the regional health authorities for example. The government would argue that they're quasi-independent, but they have their own marketing departments.

9:00

My final question is to the hon. Premier. Again, with efficiency as the theme or the preference we added one ministry in 2004 after the election, the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, and it looks for opportunities for efficiency. In his introductory remarks the Premier said that the chief internal auditor is also looking for ways to streamline and make government departments more efficient, so I see this as duplication. He also said that the chief internal auditor reports to or works with the Auditor General. I again disagree because if the Auditor General is provided and empowered with the right tools and the right mandate, we don't need a chief internal auditor. The Auditor General can do it, as they do federally.

Lastly, the hon. Premier indicated that the protocol office does a wonderful job in promoting Alberta and now with the Queen coming and so on. I don't disagree. The protocol office is needed, but I think the entire department has to be sort of trimmed down. Twenty-six million, as the hon. colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar said, compared to \$26 billion might not seem a big percentage, but if we're looking for opportunities to streamline and be more efficient, I think that saving one dollar would be advisable.

So with that, I would cede the floor and invite the answers from the hon. Premier. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you. There were quite a few statements there that I have to disagree with, to say the least. One, the comparison to the White House is totally unfair. Mr. Chairman, there are literally hundreds, thousands of communications people in the U.S. federal government and, I might add, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds in the Canadian government. I've seen them all plugged in and

wired. When you go to 24 Sussex, you can't find a place to sit down because of communications people, and they don't work for us, I'll tell you that for sure.

On Saskatchewan, I don't know, and I'm going to ask Premier Calvert next week, when I see him in Lloydminster, just how many people work in the public affairs bureau or in communications in Saskatchewan. I know it's more than six. Maybe he's right about 54 or so in Newfoundland; I don't know. But you've got to compare apples to apples. You know, in my own office I have three communications people and one administrative person on advertising out of my office.

To answer another question that was raised relative to why the Department of Community Development doesn't advertise, why the Department of Economic Development doesn't advertise, they do. The way it works is that the individual departments are responsible for designing the advertising and the preparation of the advertising campaign. The Public Affairs Bureau simply co-ordinates the purchase and assists with the design of ads based on the departmental plans. But it's the department that makes the decision as to what should go in the ad and how the ad should be framed and the message that the department wants to get across. The Public Affairs Bureau, using the expertise that's available in that department, simply assists with the design of the ads and co-ordinates the purchase of the advertising.

Mr. Chairman, I have a note here. It goes back to a previous question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. It mentioned Margaret Kool, and it somewhat relates to the question that was asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. Margaret Kool advertising and other companies mentioned were primarily the companies that designed and ran our Kyoto campaign ads.

Now, the Liberals across the way might say that it was anti-Kyoto, and it was. But it wasn't anti greenhouse gas reduction, and it wasn't anti-environment. It was pro doing the things that made sense and the things that could be accomplished without hurting industry to the point where we might have an industrial shutdown. Kyoto is not the end-all and the be-all. Believe it. You know, I could tell the hon. member that one way we would contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases, at least about 3 per cent, as I understand it, is to have everyone on Earth die, and then we would stop breathing and emitting CO₂. That's only 3 per cent, but that would be more than the whole country of Canada would achieve under the Kyoto protocol and the reduction of greenhouse gases.

We think that our legislation is much more sensible and presents a much more reasonable time frame. We needed to get the message out that we are not anti global warming. We understand that there is a problem, but we understand that there is an issue here of sustainability and that you have to achieve environmental remediation and at the same time allow for economic development and growth, and that is what is generally referred to as sustainable development. Basically, that's the message we're trying to get across.

The other issue that the hon. member alluded to was the advertising campaign relative to deregulation. I can tell the lone member of the media up there and the Official Opposition that this has been a frustrating thing for me because deregulation has something to do with the generation side, but everyone blames everything on deregulation. As a matter of fact, natural gas – I'm getting blamed for deregulation of natural gas. Well, that was done in 1985. Write that in the newspaper. Write: gas was deregulated in 1985. But the Liberals would have people believe that, no, it was this government that deregulated gas.

Mrs. McClellan: Yesterday.

Mr. Klein: Yesterday. So gas has been deregulated for a long, long time. I was the mayor of Calgary. I don't even remember it being deregulated, but I guess it was.

This hon. member – you know, Mr. Chairman, I hate to say it, but he's more guilty than anyone in this Assembly of saying that deregulation is responsible for all the problems related to power bills. It has nothing to do with the retail side. Ninety-three per cent of the consumers are on the regulated rate, the regulated rate that was in place 30 years ago.

Mr. MacDonald: But it was cheaper 30 years ago.

9:10

Mr. Klein: So was everything else. So was Coca-Cola, and so was gasoline, and so was everything else.

The only thing that has been deregulated – and this is why we had to advertise: to get the facts out because, God forbid, we weren't getting the facts out any other way and certainly not through the Liberals. The only thing that was deregulated was the generation of power, and that allowed about 3,000 megawatts of new power to come on stream. So we had to advertise.

Bill 11. Again, a massive campaign of misinformation: this is the slippery slope on the way to that so-called evil American two-tiered health care. It was a benign bill that simply allowed better access for people suffering in pain who needed joint replacements and so on, to allow clinics to operate on an overnight basis so that we could free up space in the public system to allow people to get joint replacements. A benign bill – people crawling over the bannister and pounding on the doors and ripping the door handles off. This was the misinformation being spread by the Liberals and the NDs. So we had to advertise to get the truth out about this bill.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, the truth squads. We forgot about those.

Mr. Klein: Right. You know what? We needed the truth squad at that time because we had the lying squad over there.

To talk about the budget. Well, the budget was a good deal. I don't think the ad said: folks, the budget of the Alberta government is a good deal. But we spelled out what the budget contained. All you have to do is talk to the people who are affected by this budget to determine whether it's a good deal or not, to people like the president of the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, the University of Alberta, Athabasca University, the presidents of Grant MacEwan College, Mount Royal College, Lakeland College. You have to talk to the people who are directly affected, the people in postsecondary education, the presidents of the various student councils in the colleges and the universities and the technical institutions. Talk to the people involved in health care.

Here's one from Red Deer College just handed to me by the hon. Deputy Premier. It's addressed to Minister McClellan, and it says:

Congratulations on a great budget to launch Alberta's second century. The Board of Governors at Red Deer College commend you for your leadership in providing sustainable, predictable, adequate funding for post-secondary education.

I could table countless letters like this.

This significant investment will help us to provide quality learning programs and services that are accessible to students.

Those are the kinds of people you need to ask. But, no, what we get is reaction from the Liberals, and predictably it's going to be negative. It's going to be negative. They can't say anything nice.

Mr. MacDonald: Whenever we do, you take our good ideas.

Mr. Klein: No. Whenever they say something nice, sir, I start to wonder, and I say, "Oh, my God. What did we do wrong?"

Mr. Chairman, we have to advertise to get the facts out.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by congratulating the Premier on the program and the vision set out in the throne speech and also in the budget which his Minister of Finance has proposed and which is now under debate in the House. The investments in that budget will certainly ensure that Alberta continues to be on the leading edge in infrastructure and education in the years to come.

As regards the Executive Council business plan I do have some questions regarding the operation of the chief internal auditor. As I understand the mission of the chief internal auditor, the auditor is to provide advice to the government regarding measures to identify and mitigate risks and to identify improvements. Given the fact that the office of the internal auditor has now completed its first full fiscal year, could the Premier give us some idea of what the effects of the office of the internal auditor have been, how effective it has been, and could the Premier also advise what the office's priorities might be for the coming year and whether or not the reports generated from the office of the chief internal auditor would be made public?

Mr. Klein: Well, first of all, the hon. member is correct. The restructured office, the consolidated office of the chief internal auditor has just ended its first full year of operation. It's important to note that the internal audit function has existed in government for decades, and I pointed that out loud and clear in my opening remarks. We have always had internal auditors. They've been assigned to the departments. Prior to last year there was no uniform internal audit process, and virtually all departments had their own internal auditors. Some departments did not, some of the smaller departments.

The Auditor General did an investigation of this whole situation, and following on the heels of a recommendation by the Auditor General in his 2001-2002 annual report, the centralized internal audit function was created and housed in Executive Council. Now, it could have been housed in Finance. It could have been housed in IIR. It could have been housed anywhere, but they preferred to house it in Executive Council. The thing is that having this service centralized brings greater consistency and accountability to the internal audit function. That could be one of the reasons that the Auditor General recommended that the office be established.

Basically, what the office provides is one set of eyes across all of government, ensuring that accountability and financial and measurement systems are consistent and effective and properly administered.

Now, as I understand it, over the last year the office of the internal auditor has been very busy. It has conducted almost 200 projects and worked with every ministry of government. It's important to note that in all of their work, the chief internal auditor and his staff strive to use the most rigorous standards and principles available. All of the people, as I understand it, are skilled, and they're well-trained members, dedicated individuals.

Hon. members should be aware that the office reports to an audit committee made up of senior public servants and external members, to which the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition alluded. In addition, all of its work is examined by the office of the Auditor General, and that is to ensure quality and to help the Auditor General's office avoid unnecessary potential duplication because the

work of the internal audit relative to any of the departments of government may be audited as well by the Auditor General, and he just wants to avoid that duplication.

9:20

The work of the chief internal auditor is not generally reported publicly, as I stated in my opening remarks. This is because the office of the chief internal auditor is a government branch and not the creation of the Legislative Assembly, unlike the Auditor General. But as I mentioned previously, if the Auditor General were to deem a chief internal auditor matter of sufficient importance – in other words, if he found something dramatically wrong in any of the departments . . .

Mr. MacDonald: Like what?

Mr. Klein: Well, you name it. You find out, as you're so capable of doing. Report it. If it's a matter of significant importance, right? If he finds that you have your hand in the cookie jar, or someone has their hand in the cookie jar, if he deems it appropriate, he can make it public.

In the new fiscal year I understand that the chief internal auditor's office will be focused on four key areas. These areas are government programs and functions with an eye to improving efficiency and effectiveness of management and control systems, assessments of whether current controls are adequate to manage identified risk . . .

The Chair: Hon. Premier, your time has elapsed.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of things here. I first of all would like to thank the hon. Premier for giving me the opportunity to ask him some questions. I will be honest with the members of this Assembly. I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would have this opportunity, and I'm very pleased to have been elected and have the opportunity to stand here tonight and ask the Premier some questions.

My business partners would certainly, probably, have my head if I didn't raise this issue, so on behalf of my business partners I'm going to ask the hon. Premier about the \$50 that was in the 2003 expenditures to Royal Rubber Stamp. I'm wondering if the Premier can enlighten us as to how much money Executive Council has allotted to rubber stamp purchases for this current year because my business partners would certainly want to get in on that action, I can assure you. I have to say that I was going to really make a lot of noise about this until a little further down the page I noticed that CompuSmart that year took in a grand total of \$6 worth of business from Executive Council, and then I decided that maybe I shouldn't make so much noise because Royal Rubber Stamp did relatively well compared to CompuSmart.

Mr. Chairman, I, too, saw the big black limousine out front this evening and the big white limousine, and certainly they weren't hauling opposition MLAs around, I can assure you, and they weren't hauling boilermakers around. It did cause me to notice in the 2003 expenditures for Executive Council \$14,000 on limousines, and I wouldn't mind knowing how much of this year's budget is allocated to limousine service given that that seems to be a topic of some interest tonight.

I did notice in that year's expenditures \$26,000 allocated to CFRN for the paid government infomercial that takes place every January, and I would like to know if the Premier could tell us how much is allocated in this year's budget for the upcoming January infomercial

that we're most likely to see once again. I would just remind the Assembly that every year, of course, the Official Opposition asks for equal time. We never get it, but we certainly make a point of asking for it. More recently I noticed that this government's federal Tory cousins asked for equal time last week when the Prime Minister made his address to the nation, so certainly I would expect that there would be some understanding on the other side as to how we feel about that given that their federal cousins obviously experience the same frustration.

In the 2003 expenditures there was \$128,000 listed for the Bank of Montreal. Now, there's a number of other bank charges listed in there and they're smaller amounts, \$1,000 here and \$2,000 there, but \$128,000 to the Bank of Montreal. I'm wondering how much would be in this year's budget for similar charges and which banking institution might be benefiting.

So those would be the questions that, if the Premier wouldn't mind answering, I'd be pleased to hear. If not, perhaps I could see answers to those at a later date in writing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Chairman, I'll try and get the information relative to the \$50 expenditure for Royal Rubber Stamp and the \$6 paid to CompuSmart. Limousine services: I don't know what the \$14,000 was spent on. I won't even venture a guess, but obviously there are officials in the gallery who heard the question. Well, I will venture a guess. First of all, I can tell the hon. member that none of it was spent on me. I don't take limousines. You know, I have a car. Well, there's a driver here who acts as security. When I drive my own car, I have a '77 Volkswagen.

An Hon. Member: Yellow?

Mr. Klein: Red. No, it's blue. Blue. Tory blue. Yeah. It wouldn't be red. Orange and blue. It's got an orange top and blue bottom.

I would suspect that the limousine service involves traffic from the international airport. You know, I don't know what it costs, but people tell me that it's about a \$50 cab bill or whatever the limousine is, 50 or 60 bucks. A lot of money. You know, it used to be a \$5 or less ride down to the muni. I'll check that out, but I suspect that that's what it is.

The Bank of Montreal is the government bank, and all departments have charges that are levied by that bank for various banking services, but I'll try and get the hon. member a breakdown.

How much in the budget for the Premier's address? It's an opportunity I take once a year to basically give a state of the province account of where we're headed and give some ideas to the public of what is upcoming in the throne speech and the budget. I don't have the breakdown as to how much is in the budget, but I can tell the hon. member that immediately after the show, the next day, I received a phone call from the president of Shaw Communications, J.R. Shaw, offering to broadcast free and, as many times as he possibly could, to rebroadcast that speech. My advice to the Liberals would be to contact Shaw and put a show together. They can use the talent, I'm sure.

An Hon. Member: I thought you said the Liberals.

Mr. Klein: The Liberals. Right. I'm sorry.

They might. I don't know what. I can't speak for Shaw. I know that we received an offer to rebroadcast it for free, which was quite flattering actually, because Mr. Shaw was very impressed with the presentation.

What was the other question? Royal Rubber Stamp, CompuSmart, limousines. That was it. Okay. I'll attempt to get the exact figures and what the limousine service was all about.

9:30

The Chair: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make reference to the introductory comments of the Executive Council business plan where I read that the office of the Premier/Executive Council provides administrative support to the Alberta Order of Excellence Council. I'm not sure just how long the Order of Excellence Council has operated, but earlier this evening I was discussing this with Dr. Bob Westbury, who told me that he was involved in this right from the beginning, and it seems to me that it goes back to the '80s or thereabouts. Anyway, he was very, very supportive and very positive about this council and considered it an honour to be involved.

Now, it seems to me that there are always many benefits to recognizing Albertans and honouring Albertans for outstanding work. It's the proper thing to do, I believe. I wonder if the Premier might comment on the value of the Alberta Order of Excellence program for Albertans. Is this program being profiled and promoted as well as it should be and could be? Will any of this year's budget increase go to raising the profile of the AOE; that is, the Alberta Order of Excellence?

Mr. Klein: Well, an interesting question about the profile of the Alberta Order of Excellence. It certainly is a wonderful ceremony. I've had the opportunity of attending, and so has the Deputy Premier and, I believe, other ministers and members of Executive Council and members of the Conservative caucus and perhaps members of the ND and Liberal caucuses. It's a wonderful program.

The Order of Excellence is the highest order that the province can bestow upon a citizen. It's the province's equivalent to the Order of Canada. The act, as the hon. member pointed out, was created in 1979 to recognize Albertans who have rendered service of the greatest distinction and of singular excellence for or on behalf of all the residents of Alberta.

There are currently, as I understand it, 58 members of the Alberta Order of Excellence. They come from all walks of life. They represent very different fields of endeavour. Those include agriculture, education, science and research, the arts, health care, business, law, politics, engineering, the military, and, of course, community service.

Each year names are put forward through a public nomination process. There were five previously, but we've expanded that to 10, beginning this year. Ten of those nominations are chosen by the Alberta Order of Excellence Council for induction. The people who are chosen for induction into the order are selected because of their extraordinary contributions to this province. Members are all people who place a high premium on service to others whether through their professional work, through philanthropic contributions, or through volunteer activities. The contributions of members can be seen in many cases at the national and even at the international level.

I'm very, very proud as Premier and as an Albertan of the men and women who have been inducted into the Alberta Order of Excellence. I'm also proud of the members of the council, who have devoted their time to examine and screen those worthy candidates. The chancellor, of course, is none other than His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong, and the chair is Dr. Robert Westbury, as the hon. member pointed out. Council members include Bunny Ferguson, Jack Gorr, Harley Hotchkiss, Walter Paszkowski, and Harold Storlien.

To their credit the council has instituted a number of changes in the past years, and it's all designed to create public awareness of this order. The call for nominations to the order has resulted in a record 44 nominations, so that obviously has improved. This is a drastic increase from the average of four nominations received in previous years.

As well, planning to develop a new members' gallery in the Jubilee auditoriums in Edmonton and Calgary has begun, so that will bring a focus to those people who have been inducted into the order. In addition, the council is encouraging those who have been inducted into the order to wear the pin, very much like people wear the Order of Canada pin, to show that they have this very special distinction. The council will also be designing this year a website specifically for school-aged children, one that could be used as a learning tool in Alberta's elementary school curriculum. Additional events may be planned to attract both media and public interest.

You know, this province boasts many resources, but the greatest resource we have, I've always said, is the great people of this province. The Alberta Order of Excellence is a wonderful program that properly honours the very best that we have in this province.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. Premier, previously, when I called time on you, apparently there was an error in setting the clock, and you actually had an extra five minutes. So just for the record I'd like to clarify that.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for record, I appreciate that. I won't take up the five minutes, but I would like to apologize to the hon. members of the Liberal opposition. I used an unparliamentary phrase in that I called them the lie squad, and for that I apologize.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, I've seen many wonders here tonight in the short time that I've been in the Chamber.

I appreciate the opportunity, as well, to ask the hon. Premier some questions about his budget. In some of the comments that he was making earlier, he ranged rather widely and touched on a number of issues including postsecondary education, Kyoto, health care, and so on. I might ask about some of those things as well, but I do have some fairly specific questions for him. This is one of the few times other than question period, Mr. Chairman, that you actually get an opportunity to ask the Premier questions in a broader sense about the operations of government generally and the Premier's office, and so on.

I'd like to start with the question about the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. I'd like to start by asking the Premier why he created this ministry in the first place. You know, it's certainly always enjoyable to ask the minister questions in question period, but I really don't see the reason for this ministry at all. In fact, it looks to me like the Premier has just taken the SuperNet out of Innovation and Science and created the ministry with the ironic title of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. I think that this particular ministry should be the first target of any restructuring or attempt to bring about greater government efficiency.

9:40

I see a number of things in the business plan for that department, and I know, Mr. Chairman, that we're not talking about that depart-

ment's estimates tonight, but we could just go through some of the core businesses that it's supposed to be doing.

- 1: Define and prioritize opportunities for business improvement and service delivery with and on behalf of government.
- 2: Lead the transformation and improvement of priority business practices for government in optimizing the delivery of programs and services to Albertans.
- 3: Integrate information and communications technology and knowledge management standards, practices and frameworks with the business needs of government.
- 4: Deliver and continuously improve shared services with ministries and partners.

In answer to questions in the Assembly from the opposition, the minister has said that the only focus he has, at least at this time, is the SuperNet. So my questions to the Premier are: what is exactly going on with this department? Why is it necessary, and why doesn't the Premier just wrap it up? It's got expenses of \$258 million. So that's a big cost, Mr. Chairman, and I think that the Premier should make a compelling case why this department shouldn't simply just restructure itself out of existence.

I do have a comment on the Premier's infomercial. In fact, is the Premier going to take Mr. Shaw up on his offer in the future and hold his Premier's address on cable TV for free and spare the taxpayers the costs of doing it on Global? That's a good idea, and I also like the idea that there should be equal time for all three recognized opposition parties in having an opportunity to respond. So I think that's an excellent idea by Mr. Shaw, and I hope that the Premier will accept his offer and save us the costs.

Now, I wanted to ask about some of the expenses. On the Premier's website there are a number of costs related to expenses for international travel, and I wondered if the Premier would agree to also post information respecting his office's domestic travel on the website. Some specifics, Mr. Chairman. On September 12, 2004, the Premier and six guests travelled from Edmonton to Ottawa and back again on a private chartered aircraft. The total cost was \$41,514.81. Could we not have accomplished this more efficiently just using a regular domestic air service? And that, of course, doesn't include the whole cost. The Premier travelled at one point to Washington with one guest, and the total cost including airfare, accommodations, and meals was over \$10,000. There was a trip from Calgary to Toronto with the Premier and six guests on July 23, 2003, that cost taxpayers \$22,628, and the Premier and his guests stayed, and the plane came back empty.

This question is to the Premier, and it's more broadly around transportation for the government. We've recently received information from the minister of infrastructure relative to air charters that show over a million dollars in expenditures over the last three years on charters in addition to the four government aircraft that we also know about. I am wondering what steps the Premier thinks are necessary in order to make sure that the most cost-effective transportation is used by the government at all times. Is there, in fact, a system there to evaluate these decisions and direct ministers and other officials of the government and government caucus members to take the most cost-effective means of getting around? I think a review of that would go a long way to eliminating concern in the public about unjustified expenditures for those things.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to talk a little bit about the Public Affairs Bureau. It's become customary. I see that there is a 6 per cent increase yet again. This is one of the most well-developed propaganda arms of any government in the entire country, and we have often found, for example, that the government can afford to send highly paid full-time staff to monitor our news conferences or our scrums or put out counterspin to work that we do with a very small budget. I really wonder if that's what the public information bureau

is really intended for. It seems to have become a rather partisan arm of the government and is used, I think, basically to try and counter-act opposition comment.

I was interested earlier when the Premier was going on and on about how the terrible opposition parties with their tiny resources had been able to brainwash the entire population of the province on postsecondary education, on Bill 11, on Kyoto, and so on. I really don't think that that's the case. I rather think that we're outgunned pretty significantly on those matters, and if there weren't some real concerns on the part of the public of Alberta, those issues would not have been as big as they are.

The question I have relative to the budget and the staff positions that are identified in the Executive Council budget for people from the Public Affairs Bureau would be: how many people in similar communication jobs are there that are to be found in the budgets of all the line ministries of the government? It would be nice if we could have a complete accounting of every communication professional working for the government in all departments.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my questions and comments, and I look forward to the Premier's response.

The Chair: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the responsibilities, of course, of the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency is SuperNet, and that is a project that is imminent. This ministry will oversee that project, but certainly that is not its only function.

In government, Mr. Chairman, there are literally hundreds of functions and activities that take place each and every day. There are regulations that I think, if they were stacked up, would probably consume all the space in this legislative Chamber. Those regulations have been developed over years. There are volumes of legislation, volumes of reports and policy manuals, and the job of the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency is to really get rid of a lot of those rules and regulations that no longer make sense.

9:50

You know, they use the acronym RAGE. I could call it the dumb rules ministry, and it is the responsibility of the minister to really look for efficiencies and determine what makes sense.

Now, I'm going to give you an example. This is one example involving one segment of government. The hon. leader of the ND opposition doesn't know this, or maybe he does know it, but he's not telling anyone. Well, I'm going to ask him a question. Maybe he would like to answer it. I bet you he doesn't know. Maybe he'll answer it publicly. How many departments deal with disabled people?

Mr. Mason: Too many.

Mr. Klein: How many?

Mr. Mason: Four at least.

Mr. Klein: He's so wrong. He is so wrong. There are far more than that. But, anyway, there are numerous programs to deal with disabled people under 13 different ministries. Thirteen different ministries. What the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency will set out to do is co-ordinate those activities to achieve efficiencies and more consistency in the delivery of services to disabled people. There are literally — well, I don't know how many. I understand about 24, not four but 24, programs that extend to

people with disabilities under 13 different ministries. That is phenomenal.

In the areas of environment and energy there are constantly conflicts. So how do you sort those conflicts out?

We find throughout government that there are silos and there's some turf protection. I went through it when I was Minister of Environment, and after I became Premier, of course we started to sort things out, and I'll give you an example. I was not as Minister of Environment going to give up the Environmental Centre at Vegreville. I was not going to give it up to the Alberta Research Council, although it made sense. I said, "No, this is under environment," but when I became the Premier, of course I said, "It makes a lot of sense for this to be under the Alberta Research Council."

There are many instances like this where things need to be co-ordinated and someone needs to drive the public service into giving up turf, and that can only be done through policy decisions and through the power of a minister. So that's why the Department of Restructuring and Government Efficiency was created.

The hon. leader of the ND opposition asked me to take Mr. Shaw up on his offer. The offer only extends to this year's broadcast, and that is to rebroadcast this year's broadcast free. Now, to buy the time is the most inexpensive part, as I understand it, of the whole production. It's the production time, you know, the amount of time that goes into it, and whether it's on cable or whether it's through a commercial station, Global or CFCN or CFRN or CBC, you still have to do the production. I will pursue with Mr. Shaw whether they would make the air time available. I'll pursue that with him, but it's the production time, really, that is the cost consumer.

Mrs. McClellan: That's very gracious of you.

Mr. Klein: It is very gracious of me.

Mr. Shaw did not give an undertaking that he would provide the air time for next year's broadcast. He said that he would provide air time to rebroadcast the tape that had already been made of this year's broadcast.

Back to the department of government restructuring. All of the other questions related to that department should have been asked when the minister appeared before this committee I think about two weeks ago. He was the first minister after the budget to appear before this committee, and those questions should have been asked of him at that particular time. Why they weren't I have no idea. I can only answer as to why the department was created.

Relative to travel again I don't know if the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation has appeared before this committee or not, but those are questions that ought to have been asked of him. I simply go where they wind me up and tell me to go, and I always ask the question: is this the most efficient and effective way to go? In other words, does it make sense?

By the way, they are not guests. They are not guests. You know, this is one of the problems that I have. The leader of the ND opposition stands up and says that the Premier and his guests, you know, flitted off to Toronto or Washington. They are not guests. They are public service employees. They are not guests. As a matter of fact, sometimes I feel like I'm the guest. They are public service employees who would be going to those places anyway and paying a full fare on an airline. So what we do is measure the cost of chartering or taking our own aircraft against the cost of buying full-fare tickets on airlines, and we try and work that out. That's all I can say about that. Relative to the detail it's a question that more appropriately is asked of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. But I would just like to reiterate that they are not guests, Mr. Chairman, and I can't say this enough. This is the same frustration.

The question is: why do we advertise? Because there has to be a way to get the truth out.

Mr. Chairman, to stand up and imply that the Premier and his guests – that is the kind of thing we have to contend with on a day-to-day basis. Oh, by the way, it is not this government that has all this all-consuming, overpowering power. No. It is the vocal minority. You know, it's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. It's the NDs and their Friends of Medicare and all the people that they can round up to create noise and to bang drums and to smash windows and to climb over the bannisters – that's what creates the news, and they know that – and then send them over to the local drinking hole over here where all the union people and the media go and then boast about, "Boy, did we ever get those Tories, yeah," with their good NDP buddies sitting there, you know, lapping up the beer.

10:00

The Chair: A point of order has been called. On a point of order?

Point of Order

Factual Accuracy

Mr. Mason: Yes, please. As much as I was enjoying that, Mr. Chairman, I want to assure the Premier that we didn't order anyone to rappel over the sides of the public galleries.

The Chair: Will you provide the reference for your point of order and what it is?

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I will. The Premier was using language which imputed motives and was likely to create disorder in the House, and I'll get you the numbers in a minute. But, you know, we of course both know what they are.

The Chair: Hon. member, if you're going to stand on a point of order, the chair would expect you to stand and give a reference immediately.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Chairman, the point of order is under 23(h), (i), and (j). That is when someone "makes allegations against another member." That's (h), as we both know. Citation (i) is "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member," and (j): "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Now, I want to be perfectly clear that the Premier is not correct in saying that we incited anyone to come over the railings during the Bill 11 debate or sent anyone over to disturb the cabinet ministers in their beer. So I think the Premier should apologize and withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Chairman, for the sake of the decorum of this House I will apologize. Thank you.

The Chair: That should deal with the matter.

Debate Continued

The Chair: After considering the business plans and proposed estimates for the Department of Executive Council for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:
Expense \$26,246,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Chairman, I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates of Executive Council and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Executive Council: expense, \$26,246,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head:

Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

60th Anniversary of VE Day

20. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on May 5, 2005, welcome to the floor of the Assembly three representatives of the Canadian armed forces, one from each branch of the services, with one of those members being invited to address the Assembly to mark the occasion of the 60th anniversary of VE, Victory in Europe, Day.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege tonight to move Government Motion 20. As you're aware, the Speaker's office has arranged for a celebration and commemoration of Victory in Europe Day on the date that we sit closest to the actual day of the 60th anniversary of victory in Europe. In inviting members to participate and to help commemorate that particular day, it was perceived to be an opportunity to pay particular remembrance by inviting representatives of the service to the floor and have an historic occasion, one of very few that have happened in this Assembly or in any parliamentary Assembly, to invite someone other than someone elected to the floor or the representative of the Queen to attend on the Assembly and speak. Victory in Europe Day is a very, very important day in our history, in the collective history of democracy, and I would ask the Assembly to afford this opportunity for us to commemorate it in a most appropriate and special way.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Government House Leader mentioned May 8, 2005, as being Victory in Europe Day, VE Day, which was the official day of celebration of the end of World

War II. In fact, May 5, which is the very day that the motion refers to, at 8 a.m. local time was when the surrender happened on the British and Canadian front in Europe, on the European front. So May 5 in itself is a very significant day as to when the enemy forces surrendered. In fact, the last three Canadians were killed on that day, May 5, 1945, in the European theatre.

So this was a momentous day in Canadian history. I think the hon. members ought to remember two things with respect to that particular time in Canadian history; first of all, the very significant role that Canada played in World War II right from the outset. On September 10, 1939, only one week after the declaration of war by Great Britain, Canada entered that conflict. We were in it for six years, and during that six years a million men and women served in uniform in this country, a remarkable number for the size of the country at the time. We had at the end of the war the fourth largest air force in the world, the fourth largest navy in the world, and the first Canadian army which fought as a unit in the European theatre. So Canada played a very significant role in that conflict.

The second thing that we ought to remember is the huge sacrifice made by Canadian forces during that conflict: 45,000 Canadians perished in World War II.

I mentioned that during the period of 1939-45 a million people served under uniform. That constituted 41 per cent of all men in this country between the ages of 18 and 45, and there was no other nation on Earth that came anywhere near to the per capita participation in that conflict as to Canadians. Given the fact that it is 60 years since the end of that conflict, I think it is also an opportunity for this House to remember some of the veterans which are still around, and this will be the last great, significant decade anniversary of the end of that conflict.

So I would urge all hon. members to support the motion made by the Government House Leader. I think it is extremely fitting that we would have not only the three members of the services appear on the floor, but I know that the Speaker has planned to invite a number of veterans to join us in the gallery on that special day.

Thank you.

10:10

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak in favour of this motion. I think it's a very appropriate motion, and the Official Opposition, of course, supports it.

The victory in Europe 60 years ago from that date that we will celebrate is one of great importance to many, many Albertans and many Albertan families. If we go through every town, every summer village, every place that has been around since that time, you'll see a memorial. There is a memorial even in the halls of this Legislature that speaks to those who passed in that great conflict.

Many families were hurt by it, you know. I don't in my own family look to the history as being special or unique. It really was something that affected almost everybody. As the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill said, 42 per cent of the population was somehow in the armed forces. To have them here on that particular day to commemorate that event, I think, is just a perfect thing to do, and it is indeed the last probable decade anniversary that we'll see for some of the veterans.

My father's cousin was shot down in a Spitfire in the Battle of Britain. My uncles, a number of them, were in the Netherlands, and they spent the war taken away and were in slave labour. My dad was in the Dutch underground and fought with the Stoot Troepen and was attached to the Canadian forces in the occupation and the liberation, indeed, of the Netherlands.

It was a day of tremendous rejoicing in western Canada. That day almost 60 years ago was a day of incredible rejoicing in Europe and especially in those places that were liberated through the sacrifice of the many Canadian forces that were present there.

I speak strongly in favour of this motion, and I'm pleased to support it here today, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased as well to rise in support of this motion, and I appreciate the effort that the hon. Minister of Justice and Government House Leader has made in bringing this forward and certainly believe that the approach that he's suggesting is extremely appropriate.

The Second World War, Mr. Speaker, was a horrific war, the scale of which we have never before seen and which, hopefully, we will never see again. We in the New Democratic Party take pride in our role and reputation as people who fight for peace, but sometimes war is unavoidable. In this case, war was unavoidable, and the fight was necessary, justified, and required acts of supreme sacrifice from millions of individuals.

The war was a battle against fascism and militarism that enslaved millions in the world. Estimates on the number killed in the Second World War are difficult to estimate exactly, but anywhere between 30 million and 40 million people were believed to have been killed. The horrors inflicted by the Nazis on the Jewish population and other populations of Europe are unparalleled in history.

Canada played a very proud role in that struggle, Mr. Speaker. Most of the effort was directed against the Axis Powers in Europe, Nazi Germany, and fascist Italy. Canada, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill has pointed out, played a very, very large role. We fought in Italy, we fought in the Battle of Britain, we fought in France, played a major role in bomber command in the bomber offensive against Germany, and took on a major responsibility for the defence of shipping in the Atlantic. In fact, the western half of the Atlantic was under Canadian control and the sailors, including the merchant sailors, who made tremendous sacrifices.

We shouldn't forget the battalions that were involved in the defence of Hong Kong against the initial Japanese onslaught either. That was one of the tragedies of the war. A very small Canadian force was overwhelmed by a very much larger Japanese force in the defence of Hong Kong.

So Canadians played a full role throughout the war, and I think the prospect of having three veterans of that war from the different services with us in the Chamber to help mark that occasion is a tremendous opportunity that we should accept. I want to express the support of the NDP opposition for this step.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader to close?

[Government Motion 20 carried]

Korea War Veterans Day

21. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize July 27 to be Korea War Veterans Day.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also an honour and a privilege and, I think, quite fitting on the same night to move Motion 21. A number of jurisdictions across this country have moved to recognize Korea War Veterans Day on July 27. It's full time that Alberta joined in making that recognition. This request has been brought forward by a number of people, but none other than a former member of this House, Mr. John Gogo, from Lethbridge, requested that we move ahead with this consideration and I think, again, on a timely basis.

Many Albertans served in Korea, and every year when I attend the Remembrance Day ceremony in Edmonton, as I know others do across this province, there are many who are there whose time of service and sacrifice and contribution was in Korea. Again, it's fitting that we remember the service that was provided and that we recognize that day, which is being recognized in many other jurisdictions as well, as Korea War Veterans Day.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm also honoured to rise to speak to this motion, which resolves that the Legislative Assembly recognize July 27 to be Korea War Veterans Day. The Korean War is often called the forgotten war. As I was collecting my thoughts to speak to this motion, I couldn't help thinking of the great memorials we have to World War I and, in particular, the magnificent memorial at Vimy Ridge, which my wife and our two sons have visited and I commend wholeheartedly to every Canadian as a place to visit. It's overwhelming in its power.

I think of the events of World War II that have entered the common culture of Canada, names like Dieppe or Ortona or the liberation of Holland and the north Atlantic battle, for example, and how each of those are marked. In some cases there are veterans still surviving those. My own father served in the western command of the north Atlantic on an aircraft that spent endless hours patrolling for submarines.

10:20

The Korean War has too easily disappeared from our memories even though it's the more recent war and even though there are more veterans surviving that war than World War II or, certainly, from World War I, so we need to take this step to give those veterans their due. I know there are constituents of mine who served in the Korean War under United Nations command. It was, I think, the first and, I believe, remains the largest single United Nations intervention or action of its kind. Substantial numbers of Canadians served, substantial numbers suffered, and substantial numbers died.

I have had conversations with veterans of the Korean War, and what struck me most is how, even though it's half a century later, those memories are so close to the surface of the minds of those people. Within minutes of opening a conversation, they're actually sometimes in tears because those memories are so fresh. We owe these people the recognition that this motion would bring forth, and I am privileged, genuinely privileged to support this motion.

I do have one question for the Government House Leader, who made the motion, and that is to confirm that this, in fact, will be an annual and ongoing recognition. It's not just July 27 of this year, but that it is an ongoing and permanent fixture on the calendar.

I'm sure that all members of the Liberal caucus will be proud to support this motion. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader to close.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only to confirm that there is, in fact, no year in the motion, and therefore as I read the motion,

the intention of the motion would be that July 27 in every year would be known as Korea War Veterans Day or, at least, accepted as such and remembered as such by this Legislature.

[Government Motion 21 carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 37
Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I did make a commitment to respond in writing to my colleagues across the way. I hope that they've had a chance to review that. There were responses that were referred to the hon. members for Edmonton-Riverview, Edmonton-Gold Bar, and Edmonton-Calder. I hope that they had a chance to review those. I do have copies of them here that can be tabled if that's appropriate.

Dr. Taft: That would be useful for us. Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: If that's appropriate, I would do it now if the page wouldn't mind taking them. We will table those.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support that we've had from members across the way on this bill, constructive comments on the bill, and questions that have been asked that I hope I was able to answer for them.

The amendments essentially do three main things: lock in the funds in the debt retirement account so they can only be used for repaying the debt; increase the nonrenewable resource revenue that can be used for budget purposes from \$4 billion to \$4.75 billion. That, of course, allowed us to make our increases to health, education, advanced education, community policing, supports for AISH, and many others that were outlined in the budget, and I think we've had considerable support from all quarters on those. The other amendments are to really make available the amendments to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act and other endowment funds to clarify how the monies can be transferred into those funds.

That really is the essence of what we dealt with in this act. I don't think I'll get into the technical amendments. I think we were able to deal with anything that was in that. I think I would rather take the time that's remaining for any further questions or comments. Again, in the interests of time – it's entirely up to the members – if they have further questions, I'll respond in writing or this evening if they wish.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and wait for comments from members.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This bill will increase the amount of nonrenewable resource revenue the government can use for the budget from \$4 billion to \$4.75 billion. It will simplify the contingency allowance to be 1 per cent of revenue, and it will eliminate the schedule of allowable accumulated debt. It has implications for Bill 1.

I just want to briefly indicate that we support the increase in the amount of nonrenewable resource revenue for program spending, but we are seriously concerned, though, Mr. Speaker, that the government doesn't seem to have a plan for a postpetroleum Alberta economy. We think that they should be doing more to build the

Alberta of the future, whose economy is driven by innovation and by technology, not by oil, gas, and forestry.

We are concerned that there's no timetable for Bill 1. This year's budget will only put \$250 million into a \$4.5 billion commitment. This is a concern, not that it's \$250 million but that, in fact, there's only \$11 million available for students in the present funding of the endowment.

We believe that the funding towards the endowment should be on budgeted money and not from unbudgeted surpluses. We believe that the government should accurately predict its oil and gas revenues, or as accurately as possible, and budget money to put into this fund because the approach that's been taken, I think, both by the Conservatives and the Liberals is to grow this endowment through unbudgeted surpluses. We just don't believe in unbudgeted surpluses. We think if the money should be going into the fund, it should be accurately budgeted and should be put in there in the budget in a fixed amount every year. To say otherwise is only to encourage the government's practice of lowballing oil and gas revenues.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I'll conclude my comments and take my seat.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are nearing the end of the debate here, I'm sure. I must thank the Deputy Premier. She and I lock horns on various issues, but I do appreciate her coming forward with this information. She's consistently quick to respond to our questions, and that is appreciated by us all.

Frankly, I think part of the bill is fine, and part of it concerns me. Clearly, we're supporting the idea of setting aside money to pay off the debt, keeping it locked in an account. Terrific. Good. Terrific idea.

My one concern is with the other part of the bill, which raises the threshold for spending from nonrenewable resource revenues. I am concerned about us becoming overly dependent on nonrenewable resource revenues on an ongoing basis to pay for ongoing programs. I am not convinced, and it's not clear to me that there is a solid, long-term plan for managing the various revenue streams that this government has: the nonrenewable resource revenues, the personal income tax, corporate tax, and all the other revenues. I would feel more comfortable supporting this bill if I could see that in the long term we are not getting off balance on what we can sustain in the long term. I won't go into the details of my concerns. I'm sure the Minister of Finance understands where I'm coming from.

So I'm a bit torn on this bill, but after all, it does lock us in to paying off the debt, the last step in that process, and let's get on with it. With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and allow the Minister of Finance to wrap up, I think.

10:30

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that have been made by members. I will inevitably write them a note.

I'm not sure that this is a good sign, but I actually am in agreement with the Leader of the Official Opposition that it's incredibly important that we ensure that the dollars that we commit from resource revenue are sustainable. Certainly, that is why there are some unbudgeted dollars. Because of the uncertainty for future spending, it is not wise to expend those dollars when you don't know they'll be there next year, especially on program spending. It is important that we invest those dollars, and we've laid out some ways. I think that the Official Opposition agree with the endowments. We may not agree entirely on the mechanism but have some

agreement on how those investments should be made. Of course, those will be further discussed.

I thank all members for their comments, and I will respond in writing to give fuller answers in some of the comments.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

**Bill 16
Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The clerks and the pages are presently circulating a House amendment. This is a minor amendment to Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005. The nature of the amendment is to correct a drafting oversight. In the section that is being amended, the terms "unlimited liability corporation" and "limited corporation" are actually being used in an improper context because those terms were previously defined in the old act as being Alberta corporations. Since we're dealing with the transitional provisions dealing with unlimited liability corporations, they were used in an improper context. The proposed amendment reworks the wording of the section to simply take those definitions out of there and to make sense in terms of the unlimited liability corporations.

So I would move the amendment to Bill 16, which is now circulated to the House.

The Chair: We will call this amendment A1 and recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to speak on the amendment.

Perhaps we'll just wait a bit until the amendment can get circulated. Does everybody have it? Okay. Proceed.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I would like to start by thanking the sponsor of the bill and the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, who invited me yesterday to receive advance warning of the amendment. I thank him for sharing it with me. Although I admit that unlike himself I don't have a law background, I checked very briefly, and we don't have any problems with this amendment. It doesn't seem to be difficult or malicious or ill intended. It's basically to correct a drafting oversight in the language of Bill 16.

Having said that, I would like to voice our support as the Official Opposition for this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any more speakers on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Anyone wish to speak on the bill as amended? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we close debate on this bill, I was under the impression that the sponsor of the bill, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, would actually come back to committee with some answers to questions that were asked in second

reading. If I am correct in this assumption, I would appreciate it if the hon. member would present these comments.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have some comments to make with respect to the questions that were posed in second reading. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung had asked questions regarding whether unlimited liability corporations would escape taxes on their investments in this province. I can simply answer that by saying that the advice that we've received from the officials in the Department of Finance is simply that that would not be so, that they would be taxed, in fact, the same as any other Alberta corporation.

Other jurisdictions do treat unlimited liability corporations in a somewhat different manner. For example, the United States of America deals with unlimited liability corporations as though they were a quasi-partnership, so it's a different type of investment vehicle as pertains to them. But being incorporated in Alberta, they would pay taxes exactly the same as any other corporation.

The other question that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung had asked was regarding the shareholders of the unlimited liability corporation being ultimately and fully responsible for a liability and whether or not there were any safeguards or we were letting the directors off easy. Of course, generally in Canadian companies we would not have shareholders being liable. That is the whole purpose behind limited liability corporations, and that is the reason that that vehicle exists, primarily: to encourage investment and venture capital.

10:40

Generally speaking, Canadians would not be likely to enter into such a relationship with an unlimited liability corporation because there would be no tax advantage as far as our citizens would be concerned. In the unlikely event that a Canadian was a shareholder, there would likely be an agreement in place between the shareholders that would state that the American shareholders would take care of those debts and liabilities of the corporation to an equal and joint and several extent as any Canadian shareholders.

In Alberta the unlimited liability corporation is still a regular corporation for all intents and purposes. As far as directors go, directors would have the same responsibilities and liabilities as they would under the existing Business Corporations Act either federally or provincially here in Alberta. Granted, there is nothing that would prevent a director from heading across the border. However, if anything, the debts and liabilities of the unlimited liability corporation are better secured because the shareholders are directly liable. Not only is there director liability, but the shareholders are personally liable for all the debts and obligations. Of course, that is not the case for either directors or for shareholders in a normal corporation.

The hon. member had asked: what guarantees will the public have after the initial phases, after the euphoria and the ecstasy subsides that the unlimited liability corporations will continue to invest here and to employ Albertans and Canadians? I'm not sure whether there would be any euphoria or ecstasy over the introduction of the unlimited liability corporations, but I can advise the hon. member that I have had telephone calls in the last two weeks from two different law firms in the city of Calgary who have advised of very significant business deals coming out of Toronto. They're interested in knowing when this bill is going to pass because there are deals that are ready to be done but which would flow into Nova Scotia rather than into Alberta if this legislation is not passed in a timely

fashion. So there is, obviously, a demand out there for this type of an investment vehicle and to do business here in Alberta. I'm not sure about whether or not investing in any of those unlimited liability corporations would be advisable for the hon. member or myself unless they are prepared to risk all of their personal assets.

As to the issue of whether or not they would continue to invest here and employ, the best assurance that we have is to maintain that connection, to have a business-friendly environment here in Alberta with a competitive regulatory taxation agreement and a competitive environment as far as governance of the corporations. That's why the unlimited liability corporation vehicle being brought here is something that I think is a great advantage.

The unlimited liability corporation, like other corporations, would still have to have 25 per cent of their directors resident here in Alberta or in Canada. So they would have to be residents here.

Now, the hon. member also asked whether or not there would be more transparency and truth in the government's audit procedures by only allowing neutral, unaffiliated, and impartial auditors to review the books. I'm not sure what government audit procedures are being referred to. Normally, the Alberta government would have no direct role in auditing any corporation's books. However, what the government can do and does do is to ensure that any corporations that fall under our jurisdiction – that is, if they're incorporated under the Business Corporations Act – do have specific audit requirements.

In the case of a corporation – that would be in the case of a private corporation – any shareholder could demand an audit, demand that the books of the corporation be audited. So even if one shareholder objected at the annual general meeting to the waiver of an audit, it would be required. Of course, public corporations are certainly required to have audits as well.

So the proposed amendment would clarify some of these interpretations.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning had asked further about the issue of the dividend payments to the capital account of the corporation. Just by way of explanation, currently only the declared amount of a dividend has to be put into the capital account. The problem is that the term "declared amount" is being interpreted in two different ways, so there's an ambiguity there in the act right now. Either the directors right now can arbitrarily declare the amount, or the amount could be determined by the value of the stock. What we're trying to accomplish with this amendment is to clarify that the second interpretation is correct; that is, the amount to be determined is the value of the stock. So the amendment is going to reduce potential abuse by directors.

Another question asked by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning was with respect to the provision that allows for beneficiaries of registered shareholders that hold shares in trust to vote on corporate decisions. It was asked: what about the blind trust situations?

Now, this provision does not obligate beneficial owners of shares to vote on corporate decisions, and a so-called blind trust is something that is created by virtue of contract. In such a situation the property or share owner, who is known as a cestui que trust, agrees that only the trustee can control the asset. Therefore, in a blind trust situation the trustee would continue to exercise the powers given under the trust agreement and would vote on behalf of the beneficial owner. So if there was any clarification required as to who gets to vote on those corporate decisions, that should be addressed in the trust agreement.

Another question that was asked by the opposition members was the issue of the area which changes the number of Canadian directors required by the corporation and reduces it to a quarter. The question was asked: why is there the drop in the Canadian require-

ment, and shouldn't we have Canadians fully represented on the boards? Of course, the answer there is that this is a balancing act. While we want as many directors as possible to be Albertans and Canadians, the business practically dictates a more liberal approach to the residency requirements. [interjections] Okay. Okay. So lowering the residency requirement mirrors the change in the Canada Business Corporations Act.

The original 50 per cent residency requirement was instituted to ensure that the Alberta corporations remained here, but even with the Alberta advantage it's now having the opposite effect, as Alberta corporations, even though they carry on business here, are incorporating in other jurisdictions and moving their offices to other jurisdictions where they have that flexibility and they don't have to have such a high proportion of Canadian and Albertan jurisdictions.

I think I've addressed most of the questions that the hon. member has, but if he has anything further.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that the members opposite are eager to either adjourn debate or go home, but I'm only going to take one more minute of their time.

For the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, when he mentioned that he wasn't sure what I meant when I talked about neutral, unaffiliated, and impartial auditors, I'm hoping to clarify that and shed some light on it. I was referring to a part of Bill 16 which was proposing to disqualify a shareholder accountant from being an auditor of a corporation in which he or she owns shares. Back in second reading I was encouraging the government to adopt the same approach and implement some provision to its own auditors, making sure that these auditors, like the Auditor General or like the chief internal auditor and people like that, be neutral, unaffiliated, and impartial auditors when they're looking at government books. So I was hoping that the government would expand this idea and adopt it in all its transactions, not just when it comes to the Business Corporations Amendment Act. This is just a point of clarification.

With that, I would invite further debate. Thank you.

10:50

[The clauses of Bill 16 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any questions, amendments, or comments with respect to this bill?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Chairman, certainly I was prepared to wait until the next time we consider this bill, but I think the hon. Government House Leader would have soon kept me out of his system.

I'm pleased to talk about Bill 15, which is a bill that we have a lot of difficulty with. The NDP opposition has heard Albertans' concerns about this bill. We've talked to labour groups, their lawyers, and regular rank-and-file workers. It's our belief that Bill 15 is a step backwards and negatively impacts workers' rights.

Instead of empowering workers, the government is trying to take their rights away through this bill.

One of the things that concerns us the most, Mr. Chairman, is tying the co-operation of the worker to the benefits under 22(9). We think that's draconian at least. It allows the Workers' Compensation Board to eliminate benefits, not based on the medical condition and how it was caused and how it affects the worker's ability to do his or her job but on whether or not the staff of the Workers' Compensation Board believe that the worker has been compliant and co-operative with them in going through the steps. It introduces a massive subjective element to the assessment of workers, and we don't think that it should be supported at all.

The government and government members themselves have heard loud and clear about the long-standing claims. In fact, many people on the backbenches of this government have been vocal advocates for some of the workers and the problems that they have had under the previous workers' compensation regimes. Can you imagine the problems that we're going to see, the complaints where workers have been essentially denied benefits because they were deemed to be difficult or unco-operative? This is completely unacceptable as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Chairman. It should be taken out.

We talked to the Alberta Federation of Labour, and they certainly agree that section 22 could be used to force a worker into a proceeding that he or she doesn't wish to be involved in. If a worker doesn't wish to fully co-operate with the board, including submitting to medical examinations, then the WCB would be entitled to withhold payment from the worker and to recover previous payments made to the worker. So workers in that position may be subjected to loss of previous benefits. A Workers' Compensation Board e-mail has confirmed that a case where a worker does not want to be involved in a lawsuit is very rare. The e-mail goes on to state that such a case is rare and that a scenario like this has happened only a handful of times over the past 10 years. So why would we use legislation to force a worker to comply when these situations rarely happen?

We don't think the government has listened to the concerns of Albertans on this, Mr. Chairman. Not at all. In fact, the lack of consultation has been a serious problem. Instead, the government has chosen to listen to the Workers' Compensation Board's senior management, and that management in our view is not always acting in the best interests of the working people in this province, the people that they are pledged to protect. We've voiced Albertans' concerns about this bill in the House, and we introduced a reasoned amendment to Bill 15 on second reading on the basis that the government has not listened to or consulted with Albertans on their concerns on this bill or its effects.

The bill appears to be more of a reaction than anything else to the loss in the Alberta Court of Appeal, Workers' Compensation Board versus Gutierrez, March 16, 2005, than about improving the governance at the WCB. The Alberta Court of Appeal's decision on March 16 of Mrs. Ana Gutierrez versus the WCB went in favour of Mrs. Gutierrez. The court ruled at that time that the Workers' Compensation Board never had the ability to usurp the rights of a worker to take legal action against a third party. That's section 22(3).

Furthermore, the court ruling states: "No legitimate reason has been advanced for the condition the Board has imposed . . . There are no public policy considerations behind the Board's position nor is there any legal basis for it." Yet the government is here asking us to pass it into law. This bill, if it becomes law, will apply retroactively and will nullify the Gutierrez decision.

In other words, Mr. Chairman, here's the situation. The WCB was imposing conditions and making rules that it had no authority to do. The court found in favour of a worker who was wrongfully treated,

improperly treated by the WCB. Now the WCB in a knee-jerk reaction has gone to the government and said: we've got to override this court decision; we didn't have the right, according to the court, so give us the right to do this.

The government, without in my view doing any real consultation among workers or labour organizations or even employers, has just accepted the request, rubber stamped the request of the WCB to put this legislation forward without ever asking the WCB to be accountable for what it's done or, in fact, making sure that anyone besides the WCB is interested in this particular power. It hasn't asked whether or not it's necessary for the WCB to have this power. Clearly, it's not, Mr. Chairman.

So I would suggest to my colleagues on both sides that we not in fact pass this legislation. Let's pull it off the table, have the government do some consultation because the WCB sure won't do it, and decide whether or not this is good public policy, good legislation, and a prudent power for the WCB to exercise. Don't forget some of the abuses that the WCB has been involved in in the past. Mr. Chairman, that's what I think we should do. The government should pull the bill, do some consultation, and re-evaluate whether or not they're taking the right course of action or whether or not they're just assuming that the WCB is acting in the best interests of the people of Alberta, the employers of Alberta, and the workers of Alberta.

That concludes my comments at this stage, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

11:00

The Chair: Shall progress on Bill 15, Workers' Compensation

Amendment Act, 2005, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that the committee rise and report Bill 16 and report progress on Bill 15.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 16. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 15. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:01 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 28, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/04/28

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. On this day let each of us pray in our own way for all who have been killed or injured in the workplace. Life is precious. When it is lost, all of us are impacted.

In a moment of silent contemplation may we now allow our thoughts to remember those taken before their time, those who have suffered through tragedies and reach out to the families, friends, neighbours, and communities most immediately impacted. May God provide them eternal peace. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud today to introduce to you students from the St. Francis of Assisi school, which is located in Red Deer. There are four classes of grade 6 students. This school has the privilege of using Alberta technology, Smart board technology, in all of their classrooms. I'd like to introduce to you the students as well as their teachers, Miss O'Brien, Mrs. Kelly, Mr. Munro, Mr. Diduch, Mrs. Snow, Miss Musgrove, and teacher assistants Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. McEachern along with the parents. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly two people today. The first is Garnett Genuis, who is an 18-year-old student at Old Scona academic school in Edmonton, where he is the president of the debating society. He's graduating this year and is off to Ottawa, where he just received a scholarship to study public policy at Carleton. He's received numerous awards, including top youth parliamentarian in Alberta, where he has played the role of Premier in the model Legislature. He has represented Canada for the last two years in the international speech and debate competitions, and I believe the last one was in Cyprus. He hopes to study law and to serve the Canadian public in some capacity in the future. His favourite activity is to engage in question period.

The second introduction is actually that of his father, Dr. Stephen Genuis, who is an obstetrician/gynecologist in the city. I've had the privilege of knowing Stephen on two occasions, first of all as a resident, when he was a resident and I was a medical student during medical school, and secondly, as a member of the Premier's council on the family.

I would ask both of them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great pleasure to rise today and introduce some very special guests who are here. I'd like to introduce them to you and through you to all

members in fact. First of all, a very, very dear friend of mine, Shahnawaz Ahmad, and his lovely wife, Hildegard. Today they are accompanied by two special guests from Austria, Mrs. Leopoldine Stefan and her son Michael. We had a wonderful tour of the Legislature earlier. I think they're seated behind me, and I would ask all four of them to please rise and receive the thunderous applause of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Innisfail artist Andy Davies. This time last year Andy was pushing an oil drum from Red Deer to the steps of the Legislature to draw attention to Alberta's low oil and gas royalty regime. I would ask that Andy now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature a young man from my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. His name is David Taylor. David is a grade 12 student at J.H. Picard high school. He is currently the president of the students' union there and recently won the best delegate award at the University of Alberta's high school model United Nations. He has most recently been selected as a page for the Senate and will be going off to Ottawa this August and also plans on studying ethics at the University of Ottawa. I would ask David to please rise and receive the very warmest welcome.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just say, I did have the honour as well of presenting David with one of the silver centennial medals this afternoon in my office, and I was very pleased to be able to do so.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two executives from TD Meloche Monnex, the third largest provider of automobile insurance in Alberta, employing over 500 Albertans. I'll ask our guests to stand as I introduce them. We have Mr. Chris Daniel, who is the Alberta chairman of the affinity market group, and Mr. Richard Evans, senior vice-president of claims. I would ask our hon. members to give these gentlemen a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Maria José da Silva, who is a founder of the formation of rural women workers' program in the state of Alagoas, Brazil. She's leading the struggle of rural women in Brazil's northeast for dignity, human rights, gender equity, and sustainable family income and is in Canada as a special guest of the 30th anniversary celebration of the Rainbow of Hope for Children Society. Her presence here is to thank the Alberta government for helping to achieve what women in Canada struggled for and achieved only a few generations ago: gender equity. She's accompanied by Sister Claire Novacosky, a Canadian who has worked in Brazil for over 30 years, and Dr. George Bunz, president of the Rainbow of Hope for Children

Society and a member of the beautiful constituency of Battle River-Wainwright. I'd ask the three people to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce Ms Vicki Lindsay, a tireless volunteer in the constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs, who is a retired nurse and also shares her talents with the Victory Church and their hot soup kitchen, helping out the less fortunate in Edmonton. I would ask her to rise – she is in the public gallery – and accept the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

1:40 **National Day of Mourning**

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. April 28 is the National Day of Mourning for workers who have been killed on the job. Last year in Alberta 124 people died from job-related injuries or illness, and 124 families, of course, and countless friends were left devastated.

We must do more to ensure that all Alberta workers return to their families safe and healthy at the end of each workday. Occupational health and safety is a social responsibility. The government remains committed, with our partners in industry and labour, to reducing workplace fatalities and injuries throughout the Work Safe Alberta initiative. We will continue to assist employers and workers to make safety part of everything they do at work. As an employer the government of Alberta strives to provide a safe place for the employees. The public service recently developed a workplace health framework that includes an occupational health and safety component.

Workplace safety is an important issue. A death in the workplace touches all of us. We honour our fallen workers by remembering them at ceremonies being held in communities across the province and by renewing our commitment to safer workplaces.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his thoughtful statement, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the very appropriate moment of silence to commemorate our workers who died in 2004. These men and women were co-workers, they were friends, and they were family. They were somehow working to build their lives to help their families and ultimately to build Alberta and make it work.

A death in the workplace is sudden and often shocking. When it happens on a large construction site, for example, the news, the feelings, the hurt spread like electricity. Most often that job site is shut down for the rest of the day. This shutdown is always in honour of the fallen but also reflects the altered state of mind that happens to everyone close by. It simply is not safe to work. People must reflect and mourn. Days like this help as well.

I have seen the aftermath of job site death. It is often not very pretty. Most times it seems senseless. Sometimes it is shameful. A little bit of hurry up or a little bit of oversight or even cutting corners leads to tragedy. We must be ever vigilant to ensure that job site safety is of the highest standard and has full acceptance from all levels of the workplace.

Often when a worker dies in the workplace, a collection of donations for the family takes place. These donations give some solace, some closing for those that give, as they hope to help sustain those that are left behind. I have delivered donation cheques to widows, and it is a very difficult thing to do. The future ended yesterday for them. Life as they knew it ends abruptly. The shock, the hurt, the sheer tragedy is hard for them to overcome. I've had a widow break down, sob and cry for 10 minutes as I held her. I said nothing. Then she said that the thought and the money helped, but the hurt would not stop.

Everyone must try to end workplace deaths so that we can stem those tears so that they will never flow again. A hundred and twenty-four deaths of Alberta workers in 2004 was 124 deaths too many.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party to request unanimous consent to participate?

Mr. Mason: Yes, for my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Martin: Thank you to the Assembly, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year's Day of Mourning reminds us of the stories that will go untold in our centennial celebrations. The Alberta Federation of Labour added up Alberta's workplace fatalities and found that 9,219 people have been killed in the workplace over the past 100 years. For much of our history the workplace fatality rate slowly dropped, but during the last 15 years further progress has eluded us. Today's National Day of Mourning comes on the heels of another report released yesterday by the Institutes of Health Research that shows that Alberta has the highest number of workplace injuries in Canada. Workplace deaths and injuries, attacks on collective bargaining, the weakest labour legislation in Canada: the list of wrongs that must be righted is long. However, today we remember all those people who have been killed on the job, and we're proud of all the women and men of the labour movement who have fought for an end to workplace deaths.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night at about 10 o'clock the Alberta Securities Commission issued a news release placing severe restrictions on the Auditor General's investigation into the commission. For example, the Auditor General will not be allowed to look into enforcement concerns, complainants must provide sworn testimony and submit to being cross-examined, and the ASC will have a representative working with the Auditor General in all dealings with the ASC staff. This pretty much guarantees that the Auditor General's investigation will have little credibility with investors or the public. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Has the minister received any concerns from business, from investors, or from others about the impact of this controversy on confidence in the ASC?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have received limited correspondence on this from business and a small amount from the public. Most of the concern that's raised is raised over the controversy, not the actions of the commission.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to the news release from the Alberta Securities Commission, and I would be pleased to provide that to the Assembly at the appropriate time. I think he was very selective in his use of that news release. It does state that the Alberta Securities Commission is required by section 45 of the Securities Act to hold confidential all information involving enforcement matters.

I have every confidence that the Auditor General and the Securities Commission and their legal people will interpret the appropriate sections and ensure that within the bounds of the legislation the Auditor General will receive all the information that's pertinent to his investigations.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Alberta Securities Commission or perhaps the Auditor General provide legal counsel to employees being cross-examined?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think that question could well be put to the Auditor General and certainly to the Alberta Securities Commission. I have not had a request from anybody involved to provide them with legal assistance, but if that does arise, it will be responded to appropriately.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: if the Auditor General cannot examine any enforcement matters, cannot review information subject to client/solicitor privilege, and can only accept sworn testimony from employees prepared to be identified and cross-examined, what exactly is left for the Auditor General to investigate?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the Auditor General has fairly broad powers to do audits. The Auditor General had proposed an audit of the processes and systems of the Alberta Securities Commission. He's proceeding with that audit.

Again, the Auditor General is bound by an act of this Legislature. The Securities Commission is bound by an act that was passed in this Legislature. I have every confidence in the people that will work with them to do a legal interpretation of what authorities are accorded to either party under that act. I would not expect the Alberta Securities Commission to breach their legislation.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

1:50

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Concerns with enforcement issues have been raised by a substantial number of the Alberta Securities Commission staff, by former staff of the commission, by national investor advocates, in court, and who knows where else. Not surprisingly, the Alberta securities commissioners themselves, whose job it is to oversee enforcement cases, dismiss any claims of enforcement irregularities. Again to the Minister of Finance: why is this minister wholeheartedly accepting the commissioners' claims that there are no enforcement issues at the ASC, when this group would be essentially turning itself in?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we plow this ground day after day, week after week. The Alberta Securities Commission did engage an external person, a Mr. Perry Mack, I understand a very highly regarded lawyer from the city of Calgary. Mr. Mack prepared two reports. He provided those to the part-time commissioners, and they provided me with their assurance that from those reports the issues around enforcement and regulatory matters were being handled consistently and even-handedly and fairly.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what will satisfy this hon. member because I receive far more innuendo or supposition. I have asked repeatedly, if he has anything that can be substantiated, that has any fact behind it, to please give it to me, and I will respond to it. To this date I have had none of the above.

Dr. Taft: Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that Mr. Mack's first report did convey concerns about irregularities in investigations, isn't the very reason for investigating allegations to see whether or not they are true?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again, that was the second part of the report by Mr. Mack.

Mr. Speaker, I live in a province where I believe that if persons have concerns, they have the ability to raise them, but I also believe that the persons who they may be raised against have the ability to be heard. That is what I consider fairness in a democratic society, and that's what I expect to happen in this case.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: when so many people – staff, national investor advocates, courts, and so on – are witnessing these allegations, how will investors ever know if they are true or not unless they are investigated?

Mrs. McClellan: Allegations. Allegations. You investigate the allegations to see if there is any substance or fact or basis to them. Frankly, the investors are not calling me saying, "We have a great deal of concern with the credibility of the Alberta Securities Commission." The person who is most obsessed with this is the Leader of the Official Opposition, and he's doing the least to move this along.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Electricity Marketing

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's advice to electricity consumers to hang on if they're on the regulated rate option didn't sit well with Mr. Robert Hemstock, Direct Energy Marketing Limited vice-president of government and regulatory affairs, who suggested that the Premier was out of line to provide sweeping advice to Albertans. He stated, quote, it does have important implications to our business. End of quote. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Given this government was so desperate to get some retail competition in Alberta's electricity market, did this government guarantee Direct Energy that the regulated rate option would end in 2006?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I don't know of any promises in the past. There was a policy that was put in place that the regulated rate option would be put in place till July of 2006. I don't know that there were promises that it would continue or not continue. That's part of why we're actually even doing a review at this stage.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the same minister: why is this govern-

ment allowing electricity retailers 45 per cent markups from wholesale power prices, which add an additional \$200 million to as high as \$300 million extra on already skyrocketing power bills?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, those assumptions as to the rates that people are paying are entirely false. We have the lowest nonhydro electricity prices in this country. The wholesale market has benefited the residential consumer substantially. They are paying and getting tremendous benefits, tremendous savings today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: why did this government deliberately create an electricity market that uses a fear factor to drive small electricity consumers into the hands of the greedy retailers of electricity?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it's easy to throw out lots of innuendo and slander. Let me continue to emphasize the many benefits that have happened from this. We have the most supply that's come on in a growing economy; over 3,000 megawatts have come on. We have the lowest consumer prices of nonhydro. We don't have the capacity of the hydro, but we have the innovation of wind, of biomass, of green alternatives, quite an inventiveness that's come across from this electricity deregulation, plus residential consumers are benefiting and are being protected very well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do have a question today. Yesterday the government tried to pass off an April 14, 2005, report by the Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council as some sort of vindication of retail electricity deregulation. Nonsense. In fact, the report concludes that residential farm and small business customers will face electricity rates 40 to 45 per cent higher than they are now under the Tory deregulation scheme than they would under the model proposed by the advisory council. My question is to the Minister of Energy. [interjection] It's your council.

Given that next year's deadline forcing utilities consumers onto these high-priced contracts is coming up fast, will the minister stand up and commit to reversing this high-cost, anticonsumer policy?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it's convenient to select a few paragraphs. Let me start with the executive summary in that same report that was tabled. "We believe that the deregulation of the Alberta electricity market has been successful in many ways . . . We characterize the success as the 'New Alberta Advantage'."

Mr. Mason: Will the minister commit to not forcing small electricity consumers onto a long-term contract? Yes or no?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, this has all been about consumers having choice, that they are not being compelled to do anything. There are many great products that are being offered to fit the individual needs of those customers.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the choice the minister talks about is either 40 per cent more or 45 per cent more. Will he cancel this policy?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how anybody foresees the

crystal ball of the future as to predicting those prices. Today consumers, as a result of tremendous success in deregulation, are seeing the best prices in this country.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

West Nile Virus

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the cold wind blowing today, I am confident that spring and summer are coming. Last summer the province introduced a mosquito control program to help Alberta communities reduce the risk of infection from the West Nile virus. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Do Albertans have reason to be concerned this year about the West Nile virus, and will the larviciding program continue?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the program will continue. Too little is known about the prevalence and the patterns of West Nile. We had last year, for example, only one case of the West Nile virus, and it, purportedly, was a case where the person was infected in Arizona, but the year before we had 275 cases. With the Minister of Municipal Affairs we have sent letters to municipalities. This year 104 municipalities will be funded. We're spending about \$1.25 million, and we are providing this funding for those municipalities selected based on what we perceive to be, with the best advice from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, the best places in the southeast portion of the province predominantly.

2:00

Ms Haley: Well, my second supplementary to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: could the minister elaborate on her explanation about giving assistance on the larviciding program to some municipalities versus others such as the MD of Rocky View, where right beside it the municipalities are being funded for this program?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question from the hon. member. In the consultation we did about monitoring and seeing where the most appropriate course of action was to fight this potential situation, we consulted with Environment; Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Municipal Affairs; and Sustainable Resource Development. We noted that there's no direct scientific evidence to be conclusive that the larviciding program actually works, but I think we feel a greater degree of confidence that when we use it, we will prevent it. It was deemed that the MD of Rocky View is in a lower risk area albeit, as the member has noted, adjacent to that area.

If municipalities choose to fund larviciding and if there can be some indication that we should consider that at some future point, we certainly will. But, Mr. Speaker, presently this is the decision that we have made with the resources we have available. That's not to say that that MD could not consider doing it on their own.

Ms Haley: My last supplemental is to the Minister of Environment. Could the minister please indicate what his department is doing to ensure that mosquito control is effective and safe for all Albertans, not just those areas where there's a larviciding program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to say that within the Ministry of Environment we have insect experts, and we've been able in the four quadrants across our province to

determine the high, medium, and low risk areas. To the hon. member in the Airdrie-Chestermere area it certainly must be welcome news to realize that it's been determined that this is in the lowest risk area. We continue to work with our municipal partners, and, as the hon. minister of health indicated, certainly it's still an option for the municipality to consider. We continue to work with and train our municipal partners in terms of dealing with this important issue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Long-term Care Standards

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Camrose on Monday an 86-year-old diabetic woman goes on a hunger strike to bring the government's attention to underfunding and staff shortages in long-term care. In Edmonton on Wednesday a glistening stretch limo glides Tory caucus members to steak and lobster dinners sponsored by an unnamed lobby group looking to bring the attention of government to their interests. Who gets the Alberta advantage? My questions today are to the minister of health. Given that the long-term care sector has asked for \$86 million for long-term care facilities, why did the government fund only \$10 million, a mere 11 per cent of what was asked?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to clarify that I've been in no stretch limos lately. It's been years and years since anybody asked me on a date.

Mr. Speaker, I would clarify that we gave a 10.3 per cent increase to the regional health authorities. We gave \$522 million to the regional health authorities, and we added \$15 million over and above that – not \$10 million but \$15 million: \$5 million at the conclusion of the 2004-05 budget and \$10 million in this new budget – to make sure that we work towards quality of care and continue to accelerate the work we're doing on standards for long-term care. We moved, also, from a staffing ratio of 3 to 3.4 this year. Our expectation is that regional health authorities will continue to work to improve care wherever that is needed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: why were four brand new living units constructed for 56 seniors in Camrose, but staffing levels were not changed to cope with the heavier demands?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, always surprises, and now an offer for a date.

Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you exactly why that proportion of residents was put into that particular facility. Regional health authorities have the responsibility of setting priorities, establishing standards, and providing the opportunity for care where care is needed. We also have partners in the private sector, not-for-profit societies that get involved. So that's a question that I can gladly take from the hon. member and direct to the regional health authority.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: why has the minister allowed LPNs to be delegated medication duties, effectively adding to their workload and making it difficult to get all of their assigned work done?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in the early '60s I went into the honourable

profession of nursing at the Holy Cross hospital, and at that time as a student nurse I learned that there are many hands that are involved in the care of and the proper professional attention to the patient.

Mr. Speaker, I have noted the concern of the hon. member opposite, but I've noted something else. The most important thing to do for a patient is to treat the patient holistically with caring, professional, supportive staff in whatever kind of discipline most clearly affects the work that's required to make them as healthy as possible. Sometimes an occupational health and safety worker is the person who can break the barrier; for example, for people who have dementia or Alzheimer's. So you can't simply define a program for a facility without looking at the patient themselves, considering their needs, the capacity of the family, or the adjacent caregiver.

Mr. Speaker, if people would only listen to my response, perhaps it would be clear what I'm trying to say.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Cattle Rustling

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been hearing concerns from my constituents in Cypress-Medicine Hat about cattle going missing under suspicious circumstances. Farmers and ranchers depend on their livestock, and some of their herd being stolen or disappearing mysteriously seriously and needlessly affects their income and livelihood. For example, for one rancher 35 calves and seven heifers over a one-year period is indeed serious. Calls to the RCMP have not resulted in anything achieved substantially at this time. My first question is to the Solicitor General. What's the RCMP doing to deal with the cases of cattle rustling?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, cattle rustling is something that may sound from the days of the Old West, but it is, exactly as the hon. member mentioned, a very serious issue in Alberta when you look at the geographics of the size of this province.

Cattle rustling is pure theft, and the RCMP are combatting this issue by having two experts that are learned in the area of the livestock industry. They have one officer that works in northern Alberta and one officer that works in southern Alberta. They provide the training and the expertise to other RCMP officers and municipal services that have any issues with regard to this type of theft in their communities. They're there to assist, provide support to those RCMP officers as well as doing enforcement on the highways, livestock inspections, and being members of the livestock association and the rural crime watch association. So they have the skilled-expertise officers providing this service throughout the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental, then, is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. What role does brand inspection play in cattle rustling cases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Brand inspection plays a very important part in the recovery of stolen cattle. When the cattle are stolen and the RCMP report is made, it is sent to our

Livestock Identification Services unit. LIS is the brief for that. It provides brand inspection services to the livestock producers in all of Alberta. They work with the RCMP to ensure that the investigator that is in charge of the case has all of the information they need, including the brand records. If the missing cattle were branded, all brand inspectors at slaughterhouses, at the stockyards, at sales rings would also be put on the alert to look for those brands, so it is quite an important part of the investigation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

2:10

Workplace Safety

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we commemorate today those 124 Alberta workers who died last year, it is absolutely imperative that job site safety see renewed emphasis. Syncrude and other oil sands plants have created remarkable records of safety in difficult work environments and should be congratulated and copied, but a just-released study places Alberta, with 10 per cent of its trauma cases a result of workplace injury, the worst and highest level in the nation. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Will the minister push for and hire new occupational health and safety inspectors to stem this shocking statistic?

Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

The Speaker: Hon. member, the question is fine. It's just that this afternoon the estimates we're dealing with are exactly that of the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. If the question has to deal with his budget, then I'm afraid we're going to have to move on to another one. If it's policy, that would be accepted.

The hon. minister? Okay.

Please proceed with your second one.

Workplace Safety (continued)

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, I'll just do a supplemental. Has your ministry investigated if hurry to get the resources out of the ground and too much overtime is putting Albertans at risk and, in the end, creating greater costs for the Alberta economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, you know, we do have a very diversified, strong economy here in Alberta. We have over 1.8 million people working. Alberta also has the highest workforce participation rate in Canada, at 73 per cent. So we have more people working and more activity going on, which creates more challenges.

Of course, you know, the report the member is referring to I haven't seen yet. I will as soon as I can get hold of it.

We'll continue working – we do have over 80 officers already working, and you know they do a good job. The Work Safe Alberta initiative, which was implemented just a few years ago, resulted in just over 10,000 fewer lost-time claim injuries each year in this province, saving the employers over \$150 million. So we will continue doing our best to ensure that there is a reduction.

One of the things that's very, very important and that the Assembly should hear, Mr. Speaker, is that a lot of the accidents that happen do not happen on the work site but happen on the way to work and on the way home. No one has really identified that yet, and we're working on that.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, a supplemental to the same minister. Will the minister undertake an immediate investigation into why Alberta's trauma statistic for workplace injuries is twice the level of industrialized Ontario?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I believe, you know, again, a lot of this is based on the economic activity. And, again, I want to make sure that when we're talking about work site injuries, et cetera, we haven't – I don't know if there's any jurisdiction in Canada that has identified and provided a breakdown of where the accidents are happening. I think that in order to deal with this effectively, we have to define exactly where the accidents are happening. Are they happening on the project sites, or are they happening on the way to work and back home? I tend to think a lot more accidents happen on the highways that are work related, but they do happen.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Foreign-trained Physicians

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a shortage of family physicians in Alberta, which has resulted in many general practitioners now interviewing prospective patients before agreeing to accept them. Concurrently, in Alberta we have many skilled immigrant doctors who are not able to practise their chosen profession and are underemployed in our society. My first question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Does the ministry know how many immigrant doctors are in Alberta who are currently unable to practise?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we recognize the need for more physicians. We have acknowledged that there is a shortage. In terms of foreign-trained physicians who are in the province that are presently unable to practise, the number that I have just received is 224.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the same minister. Why cannot we utilize these foreign-trained doctors to address the needs of Albertans?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are taking action to harness the capacity of these foreign-trained physicians. We have discussed this issue with the college, and we are working to try and resolve some of the issues surrounding it albeit there have been federal issues relative to immigration.

The issues in Alberta that we're working on and following up on are these. First of all, they have to have met the training standards in Canada. Doctors who are working in nonmedical fields are usually doing so because they are not meeting our licensing standards, and that's a fact. That's a licensing standard that they must meet before they are able to practise. We are, however, considering some of the opportunities we have to suggest to the college that they could work as attendants or residents in hospital settings in order to gain some practical experience if that's what's wanting. They can apply to be licensed by the college under its special register. Finally, Mr. Speaker, it allows the physician to practise on a basis for a 30-month maximum, usually only in communities that have an emergency medical need.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is not a new

issue and we have heard these ideas before, does the minister have any plans to improve the process so that these foreign-trained doctors either receive accreditation or are retrained in order that we can utilize them ASAP?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a work in progress. There are certainly partnerships that are involved here with the colleges I've noted. Since 2001 the Alberta international medical graduate program has worked to place foreign-trained physicians living in Alberta, and they continue to do so. When they get their residency and complete their residency, they are fully licensed. The program has established 43 two-year family residency and 24 specialty residency positions. Nineteen physicians have completed their residencies. I think the challenge is now identifying sufficient sponsoring physicians so that they can gain that work experience.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Police Recruitment and Training Centre

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2002 the MLA Policing Review Committee report was issued. In the 2004 response to that review recommendation 11 was accepted, and it called for the creation of a centre of policing excellence which would deliver standard, high-quality recruiting and ongoing training. Rather than being shelved, I would prefer to think that this response is on the to-do list on the member's desk. My first question is to the Solicitor General. Given the importance of establishing standardized training, why has this government not acted sooner to begin this process?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question. In fact, this ministry is working on that very project at this time. We are developing the proposal. The review of the special constable's role is actually in the works right now, which will provide us with the level of education and training that those officers are going to require and may be legislated in the future to have.

For the training college itself, Mr. Speaker, we'll be working with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Advanced Education regarding the curriculum that's going to be determined, that will be required, that the Alberta chiefs of police are going to want their officers and/or peace officers to have in the future.

So we are working on that, Mr. Speaker. The location has not been announced. The RFP has not been announced, but we'll be working towards that goal in the next month or so.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the same minister: given that Lethbridge Community College has all the tools needed to establish a provincial centre of police excellence, will the minister commit to meeting with officials to discuss the possibility of establishing such a centre in southern Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I have already met with officials from the college and with the police chiefs from southern Alberta as well with regard to that training college. Their college is one of a number of colleges that we have, including the Calgary Police Service's Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre as

well as the Edmonton Police Service's training centre. So, yes, there are three police colleges in the province. We're looking at one college to provide training to all police officers as well as the 3,000 peace officers that we have in this province.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the Minister of Advanced Education: given that there's an increasing demand for police officers in Alberta, will the minister honour the commitments made in the throne speech and provide some of the 15,000 promised seats to Lethbridge Community College?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't specifically indicate that additional seats will be promised to Lethbridge Community College. I can specifically indicate that the promise in the throne speech to expand our postsecondary system by 15,000 places for Alberta students will be kept.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Health Symposium

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Health and Wellness announced taking the government's third-way three-ring circus on the road in June, no doubt causing their Conservative cousins in Ottawa to wet their pants. In January the Premier went on his own speaking tour of his business-friendly audiences at the Canadian Club, the Empire Club, and the Montreal board of trade. In those speeches the Premier vowed that this time there's no turning back on finding a mythical third way. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: in the June consultations will the government be preaching its third-way message to the converted in front of Tory-friendly audiences, or are there plans to actually rub shoulders with average Albertans, who can't afford the two-tiered system the Premier's corporate buddies are pushing for?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It's an excellent question indeed. What we have been attempting to do, without pre-empting the international symposium, is to have conversation about how we will proceed to use the information.

First of all, the symposium itself will give a number of good ideas, best practices world-wide. The attendees at this particular symposium are principally physicians, members of regional health authorities, and people that represent the health care disciplines. We will be most anxious, Mr. Speaker, to listen to their thoughts after, and when the Premier spoke in Calgary at the Canadian Club luncheon, he invited regional health authorities to be innovative and to look to their resources to create new opportunities. I will be listening to what they have to say after that symposium.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why won't the minister admit that next week's health symposium is a pretext for softening up Albertans to accept the government's third-way blueprint of user fees and further privatization?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I won't admit it because I speak the truth, and that's not the truth.

Dr. Pannu: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: if the minister is

sincere in saying that there's no agenda for user-pay health care, why is the Graydon report, which is a recipe book for new user fees, including health care deductibles, still an option being promoted by the minister in the June consultations?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referencing an oblique reference to the Graydon report as reported in an article today, that is not the source of conversation relative to how we are going to follow up. Our Premier distinctly said that the Mazankowski report gave us an excellent framework for reform and for looking to the third way for the thousand good ideas that would improve the health system.

What I hope for at the international symposium is that ideas and the best practices elsewhere are explored, that we have a full and open discussion. We have no preconceived notions about what will come forward, but we should be looking at the fact that in terms of the money we spend, Canada is in the top three OECD countries, yet we're very much in the middle of the pack for performance.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Long-term Care Standards

(continued)

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Red Deer has a number of very good long-term care facilities, many of which I have visited. Some are public, some are private, for-profit, some are private, not-for-profit, and one is a P3 partnership between the David Thompson health region, Red Deer College, and Bethany Care. In every one of these facilities I have been told two things. The staff who provide care are excellent. They are caring, compassionate, and gentle, but they would like more staff. Two, the food could taste a little better. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. What are the current staffing requirements in Alberta's long-term care facilities?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer the hon. member's question and clarify the situation on a number of points. We recognize that we're an aging population, that there are increasing demands, and that we have to have a plan to deal with the fragile elderly. Appropriate staffing to meet the needs is important, so last year we requested that the regional health authorities move from 3.0 hours of direct care per day to 3.4. I think that the hours per day is part of the confusion. What you find when people go into these facilities is a care plan developed on their own particular needs. Some people need less, and some people clearly need more and more support. So it's important to note that these are average hours of care. The actual hours of individual care are set based on a person's needs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister explain, then, why the staffing requirements are measured in hours of care rather than a set number of residents per worker?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member poses an excellent question. This is, in fact, a formula that has been used because it creates a standard and it gives some known quantities for people to examine, but over this period of time and since I have assumed responsibility for this ministry, I have asked that we review and prepare new standards of care and examine these formulas. That

work will be discussed with regional health authorities, with members of the Long Term Care Association, with patients themselves, and with care providers in all sectors: public, private, and not-for-profit.

Mrs. Jablonski: My last question to the same minister: is there, then, an intent to change the basic care standards for all long-term care facilities in Alberta?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear that we need some improvements on the basic care standards if only to address the needs of an increasing population, if only to address the fact that many people are bringing their extended families here as they move to Alberta and gain jobs. We have noted, for example, announcements made last year in Calgary for a need for 600 more beds. We have to find ways, when families don't support their family members, the elderly at home, to look after these people in a better fashion. So I think we have to get creative and innovative. Yes, these new standards, I think, will reflect many of the good things that are going on, as the hon. member has noted, but, in fact, create improvements as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Métis Hunting Rights

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The interim now more than seven months old, and the provincial government has done little to explain this agreement. This, in turn, has created an uproar among the fish and game groups across the province because of the lack of communication they received before this agreement was signed. To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: given that the Métis nation is performing public consultation that will shape the new Métis harvesting agreement, can you explain the ministry's role in this consultation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Calahasen: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there are a number of other ministries that are involved with us. Number one, Alberta Justice will make sure that we deal with the issue from a context of what the Supreme Court of Canada has decided. Secondly, we have the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development, and Sustainable Resource Development will provide the information on what potential impacts could result as a result of the interim agreements. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development's job is to make sure that we continue to bring all the information together so that all three ministries can work together to see how we can address the concerns that have been brought forward not only by all Albertans but also by the Métis.

2:30

Mr. Tougas: To the same minister: will the minister commit to presenting the final Métis harvesting agreement to the government caucus for their input before it is signed?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that something that, certainly, our government intends to do is to be able to work with our caucus. As a matter of fact, we've had a few meetings that we'll be able to address the various concerns that their constituents have brought to our attention. We will certainly address those concerns as we move forward and will continue to work with our caucus. It

is, after all, this government's position that we work with our caucus and make sure that they know what issues are out there, and then that way, we can ensure that we bring that to the table as we move forward. Whether it is a final agreement or a series of agreements we don't know yet at this stage.

Mr. Tougas: Well, I didn't hear an answer to my question, Mr. Speaker, so I'll ask it again. Will the minister commit to presenting the final Métis harvesting agreement to the government caucus for their input before it is signed? Yes or no?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, it is our rule to be able to ensure that our caucus is going to be involved in whatever decisions we come up with. Basically, once that information is presented, our caucus will have input. That input will then go to the regular process that we utilize within government, and we'll ensure that our caucus has input in terms of what is going to be, if there is going to be, a final agreement or a series of agreements. So we will make sure that our caucus will have that input. Definitely.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Affordable Housing in the North

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Northern Alberta is experiencing increased pressure on social housing and assisted living facilities in both the numbers and expectations. As a result, seniors in northern communities are leaving the places where they have lived and worked their entire lives due to the lack of adequate and affordable housing and support services. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Can you advise what steps are being taken to support seniors in having the choice to remain in their northern and rural communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two programs that come to mind for me in addressing the hon. member's question. The first, of course, is the lodge assistance program, and the second is the rural affordable supportive living program.

The lodge assistance program, Mr. Speaker, is for independent seniors who may require some assistance from the community through meal preparation or housekeeping or laundry. Over the past four months we have increased the lodge assistance grant itself by 40 per cent, and that's through a \$22 million budget. That program is ongoing, of course.

The rural affordable supportive living program is new. It's a \$50 million budget over two years, and that's to assist seniors with higher health care and personal care needs than in the lodges and to assist them to remain in their rural remote communities that the hon. member has asked about.

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental question is again to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. The lack of affordable and adequate housing is also hurting recruitment and retention of labour necessary to maintain the northern industries. What steps are being taken to support northern remote and rural communities to address the affordable housing issue?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, we assist the northern remote communities through the Canada/Alberta affordable housing program and, as well, through the sustainable remote housing initiative program. The

Canada affordable housing program has provided 2,400 homes to low-income people, hon. member, over the past three years, and that program is ongoing through a \$25 million allocation into the budget this year, which will assist the community. Also, the sustainable remote housing program: we have approved 50 housing units, and we are currently working with the community to assist with providing more housing units.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental is to the same minister. Could the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports tell us whether she sees any merit in striking a committee to look at the housing challenges specifically related to the economic growth given the importance of housing to Alberta's social and economic well-being?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the hon. member, I do share his concerns regarding housing in the northern remote areas of the province, you know, in the rural areas, for our seniors, for low-income individuals, for people with special needs. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to establish a committee at this time although I know the hon. member wishes that to happen. That's because I believe that our department is addressing the needs in the best way possible. Having said that, I would offer to the hon. member that we have staff who are very knowledgeable in this area, and they would assist the member as chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Education Funding

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education Week is an important time to take stock of our public education system to celebrate the successes as well as to take a hard look at where we can do better. This Conservative government, sitting with record resource revenues and bending to public and opposition pressure, has finally decided to reinvest in our kids. My question is to the Minister of Education. Can the minister assure this Assembly and Alberta's educational community that all school boards will in fact get the 5.4 per cent increase in base operating funding he has promised?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the exact percentage in my head, but I can tell you that overall the education budget has been increased by about 7 per cent. Within that 7 per cent there are \$287 million of new wealth, and those monies arise out of needs that they've identified in meetings that I had with them in January and February and in needs that have been presented to me by members of our caucus.

I should point out to the hon. member, who I know is new, that education spending has gone up consistently in this province since 1995, not just this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: can you explain why some school boards might be anticipating that the financial impact of the budget will actually be less than 3 per cent, clearly not enough to keep pace with increased operating costs?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, I would invite school boards who feel that

they might not be receiving adequate funding under the renewed funding framework or through other increases such as the 30 per cent increase in ESL, such as the 11 per cent increase for special needs, particularly severe special needs, such as the increase we're giving for francization, such as the increase that we're giving for a number of areas: First Nations, Métis, Inuit initiatives. If they are having a problem there, they can certainly contact me or one of my officials. Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to take a look at their extenuating circumstances if, in fact, there are some.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: will you immediately release the projected impact of the new budget for all school boards, including charter schools, so they can plan effectively?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the process works like this. A school board submits its best available information on projections and statistics for the year coming up. Our officials work with them to renew that. We do sort of a quasi-soft audit, if you will, to make sure that the figures and projections are more or less in line with where they were projecting those from the year previous, and we work with them on what's called a jurisdiction profile. The member asking the question has some familiarity as a former teacher, in fact an administrator within the system, and if she'd like to request that information from the school board she taught with, for example, I'm sure they'd be willing to speak with her.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, very shortly I'll call upon the first of a number of members to participate, but I have a question, and I know it's one on everybody's mind. The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness announced that she had a date proposal. Our question is: are you going to accept it?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm accepting every one.

Ms Pastoor: Mr. Speaker, I might ask my hon. colleague across the table: if it's any good, might he have a brother? [laughter]

Rev. Abbott: It's springtime.

The Speaker: Yup. Thursday. Full moon.

head: 2:40

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Rural Development

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago I was elected, and three years ago the government of Alberta committed to extending the Alberta advantage to all Albertans through a rural development strategy. I was fortunate enough to begin this work on that rural development strategy with my hon. colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake only days after I was elected, and I continue to do that today.

Meetings in fully 25 per cent of the communities of this province with hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals from all walks of life gave us a vision and a plan. That strategy recognizes the critical nature of thriving rural communities and makes recommendations around ensuring that the four pillars of a community are strong, those pillars being health care, learning and skill development, economic growth, and community infrastructure. It also

makes recommendations around components of a community such as youth, seniors, arts and culture, and environment.

Most importantly, it recognizes two critical elements, Mr. Speaker: first, that rural development is not a one-year fix or a two-year initiative but must be a 20-year plan for the future, not just for the benefit of rural Albertans but for the benefit of all Albertans. Secondly, it recognizes that rural development is not the sole responsibility of the provincial government, the federal government, or any local, municipal government. It's everyone's responsibility including the communities themselves. If a community is to survive, grow, and prosper, they must start the initiative, and then the governments must work with them if at all possible to make that vision happen.

The tip of the iceberg came with Budget '05, with over 30 initiatives, Mr. Speaker, that just begin the process of rural development. This is not the end of rural development; this is not even the beginning of the end of rural development, to quote an ancient colleague. It is only the end of the beginning. We know the road. We know our task. Now we undertake the long journey of success for rural Alberta and for all Albertans. To quote a gentleman named William Jennings Bryan: tear down your cities and watch them spring up again as if by magic; tear down your farms in our rural communities and watch the grass grow in every city street in this country.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Forum for Young Albertans

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to be able to rise and recognize a group of involved and engaged youth who are participating in the Forum for Young Albertans. The Forum for Young Albertans is a program allowing students the opportunity to gain insight into the parliamentary process and legislative system. Through speaker presentations and forums, which I also participated in, group discussions, tours, and formal activities students are able to listen, learn, and question various legislative staff, media, university professors, and MLAs on how government works.

It is important that we engage our youth more in government and politics in general. I'm not one to use clichés, but this one rings very true: Alberta's future is dependent on our youth, and we are in great hands.

I would like to thank the Forum for Young Albertans for helping to get more young Albertans educated and interested and involved in the parliamentary and the legislative process. Thank you to all of those involved, and thank you to the students who participated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Glendale Elementary School

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week schools and communities throughout our province are celebrating Education Week, and today the Minister of Education and I have an incredible success story to share. Students in grades 4, 5, and 6 at Glendale elementary school in Calgary recently produced a film called *Frankenstein*, which has gained international attention. *Frankenstein* is being screened at the prestigious New York International Independent Film and Video Festival on May 2, 2005.

This film explores Mary Shelley's popular story and its themes of love, acceptance, and belonging, with a particular focus on the consequences of separating spirit, intellect, and heart.

The students at Glendale school were responsible for every part of this film including editing the script, filming, acting, and set development. Judges were very impressed with the quality of their work. In fact, *Frankenstein* is the only Canadian film produced by children that is being screened at the festival.

This project is just one example of the great work being done in Alberta's classrooms.

I would like to congratulate the students and staff at Glendale school in Calgary, who are listening to this special recognition in their classroom, on their extraordinary achievement. Well done, Glendale. We are all very proud of you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Police Recruitment and Training Centre

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Five years ago this government commissioned the MLA policing review to examine policing in Alberta. Recommendation 11 of the 2004 accepted response to that review stated that a centre of policing excellence should be established that would deliver standardized, high-quality recruiting and ongoing training. A consortium of police services – Taber, Blood Tribe police, Medicine Hat, CP Rail, and the Lethbridge regional service. To be noted: it is the first regional police service in this province and an accredited member of CALEA.

This service has worked with the Lethbridge Community College, already a nationally recognized centre of excellence for their criminal justice program, and has created an approved curriculum as well as a memo of understanding and a business plan projecting the viability of this police centre of excellence. In addition, the community college has the infrastructure for gun training and other specific training techniques; for example, diving and taser training. This program will provide 30 credits and would allow a seamless transfer for further academic education at the university level.

The police chiefs of the future will require a masters level education. We have a very sophisticated criminal element in our society. Our police forces that protect our lives every day with their lives deserve no less.

There have been inquiries from other provinces and northern Alberta expressing support and wanting to send their members to Lethbridge for training. Southern Alberta is ready to go and serve. This provincial government's political will is now up to the plate. This initiative is the perfect fit for this government's own rural development strategy, and I paraphrase from that document: it looks to a future where rural Alberta is a place to grow new opportunities, new ideas, and new potential for the future.

I urge this government to look south of the 50th parallel to establish a true centre for policing excellence. The city of Lethbridge stands ready to deliver.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Electricity Deregulation

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to try and clear the smokescreen this government repeatedly deploys over electricity deregulation. The government likes to say that electricity deregulation created 3,000 megawatts of new generation in Alberta, but what they fail to mention is that most of this new generation is fuelled by expensive natural gas. Thirty-eight per cent of Alberta's power generation is gas fired, and gas almost always sets the price paid to all generators at the Power Pool. The electricity market is now so dependent on natural gas that a run-up in the price of natural gas

directly translates to a run-up in the price of electricity in Alberta. This leads to huge volatility in electricity prices.

This volatility will continue to grow in the future as new generation coming on stream is all gas fired and older, coal-fired power plants are decommissioned. This is yet another example of poor long-term planning from this government.

The government has also failed to properly plan for the long-term electricity needs of Alberta. Information from the Department of Energy shows that electricity supply and demand may come into critical balance in 2008. The Alberta Electric System Operator is less optimistic, stating that electricity demand in this province will outstrip supply by 2006. A shortage of electricity supply will cause prices to skyrocket just as they did in 2000 and 2001, when power prices tripled.

This government needs to realize that electricity is not a commodity: it's an essential service. It's something we use every day. It's something we can't live without.

We need to return to low-cost power in Alberta, and the Alberta Liberals have a plan to do it. Our plan will save electricity consumers money without being forced to shop around for the best deal. Consumers will get one low, stable rate without having to sign an expensive, long-term electricity contract. We would make power bills easier to understand, and our plan will be able to count on a steady supply of low-cost electricity power for years to come.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Public Health Care

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next week the Alberta government will stage another expensive health care three-ring circus, this time to try to sell Albertans on a scheme to privatize their health care system by stealth with the so-called third way. The third way is a label stolen from the United Kingdom in order to import a health system from the United States. It's a cynical public relations ploy aimed at selling Albertans on an idea they totally reject: privatization. Albertans want the Canadian way, the best way, which is public health care.

2:50

The basis for the upcoming symposium and the consultations are the Mazankowski and Graydon reports, which recommend more user fees, delisting more services, and more private delivery. These proposals mean Albertans will pay more and get less from their health care system. No wonder Albertans have said to this government time and again that they don't want private health care.

Albertans' fears about privatization are well founded in all available research. Private health care in the United States costs taxpayers more. The U.S. spends more on health care while much of that money goes to bloated and bureaucratic health care corporations. Furthermore, Alberta's own misadventures with privately delivered health care show that wait times are longer and procedures are more expensive when done by for-profit providers. The people of Alberta want their government to defend public health care, not find elaborate public relations strategies to undermine it.

The NDP opposition, Mr. Speaker, is calling on this government to abandon its commitment to its friends in the for-profit health care industry and renew its commitment to universal public health care once and for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of a historical vignette for

today: at 4:10 a.m., April 29, 1903, a huge 74-million-ton slab of limestone slid off the east slope of Turtle Mountain and swept 1.6 kilometres through the Crowsnest Pass Valley and the coal-mining village of Frank, burying the mine entrance and killing at least 70 people in 100 seconds. Only 23 people survived, and 17 trapped miners dug themselves to safety 13 hours later. The slab was 400 metres high, 1,200 metres wide, and 150 metres thick.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition signed by Albertans who are very concerned about the dangerous driving conditions faced by people in northern Alberta who use highway 63 on a regular basis. Yesterday the minister committed to investing in improvements to highway 63, and I know that the 651 people who signed this petition will be watching to ensure that that promise is kept. With today's tabling the total signatures on this petition so far is 2,797.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition from a number of good Albertans in the communities of Calmar, Red Deer, Carvel, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, and other fine other Alberta communities. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 102 good Albertans signing this petition.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from 101 residents of Alberta asking the government of Alberta to

prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 24 to 31.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns 27 to 43 be dealt with on that day. There being no further motions for returns at this time, there are none to stand and retain their places.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Services.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board I am pleased to table five copies of the 2003-2004 annual report.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and table five copies of a response to the Premier's request last night during Committee of Supply debate for a home page address of the secret website available only to Tory MLAs developed by the publicly funded Public Affairs Bureau. The Premier asked us to send the web page over if we had it, and so we will.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the second part of a series of op-eds done by respected health policy analyst Paul Krugman, the op-ed piece in which Dr. Krugman, a professor of economics at Princeton University, flags private health care insurance for being far more expensive and concludes by asking: when will decision-makers understand that relative to health care, market competition is the problem, not the solution?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, do you have a question? You're to ask a question of the government to see if they're going to release their agenda for next week.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not know the standing order number, and I'm not sure if I have to quote it, but I would like to ask the Deputy Government House Leader if he could share with us the projected government business for next week.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: I think that was all clear enough. I've got a script. I know what I'm supposed to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The projected government business for the week of May 2, 2005, begins on the evening of Monday, May 2, at about 9 p.m. with Committee of Supply on International and Intergovernmental Relations, followed by Committee of the Whole on bills 31 and 34, third reading on Bill 16 and second reading on Bill 35, and as per the Order Paper.

Moving to Tuesday, May 3, in the afternoon there's Committee of Supply for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, followed that evening, commencing at 8 p.m., with Committee of Supply for Justice and Attorney General, and then at or about 10 p.m. third reading on Bill 1, second reading on Bill 36, Committee of the Whole on Bill 29, and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, May 4, in the afternoon Committee of Supply will proceed for the Department of Economic Development, and then that evening at 8 p.m. Committee of Supply for Gaming, and at or about 10 p.m. third reading on bills 31 and 12, Committee of the Whole and third reading with respect to bills 36, 29, and 22, second readings on bills 40 and 39, and as per the Order Paper.

On the afternoon of Thursday, May 5, there will be the 60th anniversary Victory in Europe Day ceremony as per Government Motion 20, which passed on April 27, and then Committee of Supply for Municipal Affairs and as per the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Hon. members, today is a commemoration day for the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill. A number of years ago he arrived in this world.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Human Resources and Employment

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

3:00

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm here today, of course, to present the 2005-2006 estimates for Alberta Human Resources and Employment. In the gallery today I would like to recognize and thank some of the staff that have been involved in preparing these estimates: Ulysses Currie is our deputy minister; Alex Stewart, assistant deputy minister of corporate services; Duncan Campbell, senior financial officer; and there are also, I believe, some other staff that are here to lend their support. I'd like to thank them for all the good work they've done.

Human Resources and Employment is looking to build a better future for Albertans, a future in which Albertans are even less dependent on government support, where employers can find the skilled labour they need, and where the risk of workplace injury or death is minimal. To build that better future for Albertans, Mr. Chairman, I'm asking for \$778,691,000 to support the work of the ministry. The ministry includes the Department of Human Resources and Employment, the personnel administration office, the Alberta Labour Relations Board, the Appeals Commission for workers' compensation. Of course, the Workers' Compensation Board itself, which is an independent employer, a funded organization, is not included in the ministry's business plan.

We all know that Alberta is a great place to live and work. Our economy is booming, and continued growth is forecast for the coming year. We help ensure that everyone can benefit from our economy by helping people get and keep jobs while meeting the basic needs of those who cannot work. The ministry works with employers, training providers, and the people of Alberta to address labour shortages and skills deficits. For example, we encourage participation in the apprenticeship program by helping apprentices with their tuition and living expenses. We work to increase the participation of aboriginal people, people with disabilities, immigrants, youth, and older workers in the labour force. We match people with jobs. Human Resources and Employment delivers Alberta Works services, including income support, health benefits, training, and help to find and keep jobs. In addition, we reduce workplace injuries and disease through Work Safe Alberta.

The ministry strives to create a positive labour relations environment in the public and private sectors. We make sure that the workplace is fair, enforcing employment standards. HR and E makes it possible for Albertans to appeal decisions that impact them in certain areas such as workers' compensation, employment standards, and income support. As well, the ministry supports the ongoing development of Alberta's public service. By any measure our ministry is a significant contributor to the government's success and has been for many years.

In 1992 under this government the ministry implemented some major welfare reforms to help train and get Albertans to work. At that time, Mr. Chairman, 80 per cent of the welfare caseload was considered employable; in fact, couples without children and single people. If the welfare caseloads had remained at the same level as they were before the reforms in 1992, the government would have spent an additional average of \$600 million per year, or a total of \$8 billion. That is a lot of money saved as a result of the ministry's efforts.

We have 59 service centres located across the province, where we provide a wide range of services to give Albertans a hand up to become productive. Mr. Chairman, we don't have welfare offices anymore in Alberta. We have employment and training centres, and employers turn to us to help fill job vacancies. Eighty-five per cent of the over 1 million visitors to our offices are looking for employment and training assistance and not income support or welfare. Our services include resumé writing, career and education planning, job placement and maintenance services, and referrals to training. We have also developed innovative ways to work in partnership with business.

Income supports is a statutory program. Our budget requirement is lower in 2005-06 due to the success we've had with those clients who are able to work. Our focus is on getting these Albertans the skills they need to find work and keep the jobs. Alberta's approach to providing a hand up is working. Even with an increase in population the number of employable people receiving support has dropped drastically.

Alberta's unemployment rate remains the lowest in Canada at about 3.5 per cent in March, the lowest since October 1981. Last year we reduced our caseload of people who were able to work by almost 2,200 cases to less than 18,000. This success has been partially offset by an increase of about 1,900 cases of people who cannot work.

The Alberta government is committed to helping people in need, and the income supports program is targeted to help those who need it most. On August 1 more than 18,000 families receiving income support will also see their monthly income increase by \$17 per child. The province will flow the increase through the national child benefit supplement. For a family with three children this means an additional \$51 per month, or \$612 per year. People also receive health benefits and more money for needs such as daycare, work clothes, children's school expenses, and utility hookups.

The number of people receiving benefits through the Alberta child benefit and Alberta adult benefit programs has increased to almost 72,000. The increased number of Albertans receiving health benefits shows our success at moving people off income support and into employment. We want to continue to support and encourage people's desire to work by ensuring that funding is available for health care benefits.

Now, skills programs are not statutory; however, the skills programs are key to helping people get into the workforce and take away the pressure on the income supports program. We know that job skills training leads directly to employment for learners. In 2005-2006 HR and E expects to spend \$288 million to help people get the training and information they need so they can get meaningful employment. We will be able to help over 2,000 more learners than in 2004, bringing this year's total of learners helped to over 25,000.

Eleven hundred more people will also have access to academic upgrading and English as a Second Language, for a total of 15,300. There will be 630 more opportunities in job skills training, immigrant bridging, and integrated training programs, for a total of 5,400. Three hundred more apprenticeship opportunities will be available, for a total of 4,300.

Investing in the next Alberta means working with the underrepresented in our workforce by allocating \$6 million for First Nations training and employment programs for such things as skills to get a job, paid work experience, placement, and follow-up support services, spending \$1 million for enhanced language training for immigrants, and increasing spending by \$2.8 million to provide access to training and employment support for people with disabilities.

We've also increased the maximum tuition we will pay for a learner in year one from \$10,000 to \$15,000. This is to broaden the occupational training opportunities for individuals. Finally, we have set aside \$2.2 million to cover tuition fee increases for upgrading, English as a Second Language, and integrated training.

3:10

Phase 2 of the Work Safe Alberta strategy is under development and will identify new opportunities to reduce injuries on Alberta work sites in the next five years. The focus of this very successful program will be on youth and industry sectors with poor safety records. A stakeholder consultation is planned for the fall of 2005.

Since we have implemented the Work Safe Alberta initiative, the lost-time claim rate has been reduced from 3.4 in 2000 to an estimated 2.6 for 2004. A lost-time claim is the claim for an occupational injury or disease that disables the worker beyond the day of the injury. The lost-time claim rate represents the risk of disabling injury or disease to a worker during a period of one year of work and is calculated by dividing the number of lost-time claims by person-year estimates and multiplying the results by 100. Over the past few years in partnership with industry and labour we have planned and implemented our Work Safe Alberta initiative. This is a 24 per cent drop, a record low, and it means that there were 10,000 fewer workers injured last year compared to where we would have been if we didn't have this program in place. It also means an estimated injury claim cost savings of over \$151 million in workers' compensation payments in 2004. The number of workers being injured is decreasing in spite of yearly increases in our workforce, which is over 40,000 jobs. The Workers' Compensation Board funds the workplace health and safety program by contributing in excess of \$12 million to support Work Safe Alberta.

Now I'd like to take a few moments to explain the personnel administration office. It is important to continue having a strong public service, one able to help develop strong public policy and deliver the kinds of high-quality programs and services that Albertans expect and deserve. The Alberta government will face the same kind of demographic challenges as other employers in the next five to 10 years. Today 30 per cent of the public service executive managers are over the age of 55; 45 per cent of all public service managers will be eligible for retirement in 2008. We need to invest now in developing our future public service leaders if we want to minimize the impact of these changes that are coming.

The personnel administration office's 2005-06 budget has increased by over \$4 million to almost \$13 million, the first budget increase for the PAO since the mid-1990s. The initiatives that the PAO will be undertaking with this increase will benefit all ministries. They include the creation of a program where executive managers can enhance their skills by moving between ministries through development assignments and investment in other leadership development initiatives also, success in management strategies to make sure that there are public service employees ready to step into leadership positions when leaders are ready to retire.

Workplace strategies to improve overall health will begin for the public service, including the new workplace health framework for the public service, human resource information technology systems

so that public service managers have access to accurate and timely information when making human resource decisions, and other initiatives such as attracting and retaining talent in the public service, continuous learning, service excellence, and employee performance and recognition.

The other important area we have, Mr. Chairman, is the Appeals Commission for the Workers' Compensation Board. It is a separate government entity, independent from the Workers' Compensation Board. The commission hears appeals from workers or employers to a decision of the review bodies of the Workers' Compensation Board. The operating costs of the Appeals Commission are paid from the general revenue, which is reimbursed from the workers' compensation accident fund. The budget for the Appeals Commission has increased by \$1.5 million.

In the past two years the Appeals Commission has received 250 more appeals than in the past 5 years, which is a pretty good average. This has a significant impact on the timelines for processing appeals. The increase in funding will provide for additional hearing resources so the Appeals Commission can hear more appeals and, of course, gradually reduce the timeline for processing appeals to an acceptable level.

This year Alberta Human Resources and Employment will invest over \$770 million in Alberta's people skills and workplace investments. These dollars make a difference to people every day in communities across the province.

I look forward to hearing comments and questions from the hon. members about these estimates. Any questions, of course, I can't answer today, I'll get my staff to review *Hansard* and provide the answers in writing.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and reply to the hon. minister today. I do have a number of questions and a number of comments, and I'll go through them in sequence here.

First off, you know, many people have told me that they're quite pleased to see the minimum wage rise to \$7 in one move in 2005, but many students have in fact called me and said that they're not going to be able to have that increase to help them with saving for their tuition and learning expenses in the coming year because it will be after the summer.

One question in looking at some of these things. We've seen in some of the government statistics that there actually are presently in the public sector a certain percentage on the minimum wage. I wondered if there were any actually working in the public sector for the provincial government on the minimum wage, and will this \$7 dollar increase affect them, and how much will that, in fact, cost?

The low-income individuals in our society and poverty will certainly be helped by the working poor having a higher minimum wage. Certainly, 60 per cent of the people who are presently earning minimum wage are older than 20, I believe. The incidence of people on the minimum wage that are in the older age groups is increasing, and it shows an increasing tendency for our elderly who don't have pensions, who have not had the ability to save over the years, to have to augment their income. The minimum wage in places like fast-food outlets and in other types of employment are increasingly becoming important as an income augmenter to people with low pensions or no pensions. Certainly, the Canada pension and other supports for most individuals are not enough.

Some other questions. Why has the government reduced its commitment to youth seeking employment? There's been a reduction of \$1,113,000 for the Youth Connections career info

program. Why does this budget seem to abandon people who are in need of assistance but remain capable and willing to work? There are \$2,261,000 less in health benefits for people expected to work. What is the reasoning behind the significant reduction in living allowances for learners, which again affects youth and students more than any group? That's \$1,815,000.

We've seen quite a hold-the-line approach on STEP funding, and that program does provide a great deal of help for a lot of students in summer employment. Many members, in fact, employ STEP students in their constituency offices in the summer, and the numbers in the budget for that are not increased, yet we have still, even with the freeze on tuitions, a huge need for students to have at least some summer jobs to increase their ability to have a higher education.

3:20

The skills investments area is quite crucial, and in the supplementary estimates some time ago in this Legislature we were told that \$13 million at the end of the last budget year was transferred out of skills investments into other areas in human resources and not used to develop the skills of Albertans. Will the government ensure that skills investments does take a priority? The development of our workforce is important to ensure that we have the important skills to develop our economy and to ensure that we have the proper resources for our own people to learn and get the necessary skills for employment.

Some of the areas stayed the same. Youth Connections: \$4,767,000. Training for work, job skills training from the gross comparable '04-05 budget actually went down from \$63 million to \$62.7 million. The self-employment training, you know, is a very important area in our economy to encourage people to self employ. Many people are getting home offices, doing all of these things, and we've seen no increase in that area. As I mentioned, the STEP student allocation stayed the same at \$8.195 million to \$8.195 million again.

The actual lottery expenditure for immigrant supports went down even though there are a million dollars in there as a special expense, and I heard the minister speak about that shortly in his speech. I wonder if he could be more specific about what that million dollars is for. Is that for temporary foreign workers, to help in their transition back and forth? Or what, in fact, is that?

As well, there's a huge increase in R and D. Well, \$2,200,000 is pretty major for an HR department. I just wonder what that research and development is all about.

The WCB. You know, you mentioned that the Appeals Commission is reimbursed from the WCB accident fund, but in effect being reimbursed from the accident fund ensures that it's still charged to employers, and there is a connection. I've heard often enough of a lot of connections between case managers who are calling appeals case managers if they are in fact going to let their decision go, and I think that that's far too close a relationship. That sort of contact should be ended, and certainly the funding through the WCB accident fund should end so that it is not a cost to employers or to workers.

There's a great importance, I think, in ensuring that we have a productive workforce, and I think part of a productive workforce – it's certainly in the area of other ministries somewhat, but there are so many cross-ministry functions in government that I think HR and E should look very seriously at it. It does deal with ensuring of jobs for aboriginals, and I think that something like the roads from La Loche in Saskatchewan, where there's a strong and well-trained workforce of tradesmen, would be a very, very productive investment for Albertans and Alberta and our oil sands and our economy.

As well, there's a strong potential in transportation and upgrading some of the winter roads we have in other areas, certainly from Wabasca-Desmarais on the west side of the Athabasca River, without a bridge, without the huge cost of a bridge on that large river. Wabasca-Desmarais is a large population area in northern Alberta and quite often has continually high unemployment levels and good potential for work in the tar sands. You know, often construction and mining can be seasonal or cyclical. For those who'd like from time to time to get back to their homes in Wabasca-Desmarais or Red Earth or Sucker Creek or Driftpile or all those other areas, such a winter road would really I think provide a great deal of ease of access to the workplace and better employment levels and less cost in other areas.

I think that we must ensure that the aboriginal training programs – I was looking at the April 7 document – are fully implemented and that all efforts are made to ensure that our First Nations have a very strong ability, from all aspects, to enter the workforce and to be part of the prosperity of Alberta. Of course, much of that is under federal jurisdiction, but I think that increasingly, you know, we're seeing a burgeoning urban population that can be used to work in the huge economic area of the oil sands. We must help that in every way possible. I think there is a responsibility for the provincial government to do whatever they can.

In terms of the PAO I think there are some concerns that we have to look at in terms of the retention level. There are certainly demographic concerns. There are some internal reports, I think, that are saying that the demographics of the public sector and the public service here in Alberta are a time bomb. It is one of those areas where we will see some huge retirements in the near future. The necessity to train leadership: I was very pleased to hear that. I'm sure that there's a strong public service leadership that is multi-sectoral, multidepartmental. I was very pleased to hear that. I think that's a good innovation.

I'm not too pleased to hear the continued high percentage of dissatisfaction with employment in the public service: 1 out of 5. I think that's still far too high, and something must be done to somehow address that. You know, the target is only to move to an 83 per cent satisfaction level, which is still pretty close to 1 in 5 dissatisfied. When you have a dissatisfied workforce or at least a large percentage of it, it starts to affect the productivity and the ability of that workforce to function in a way that benefits in the best possible way the interests of all Albertans.

I think that there's a huge and crying need for proper information on labour supply. It's something that is, I think, of crucial importance as we enter the end of the baby boom.

3:30

I'll just make a note on the baby boom though. Some people try to put it forward as being something a little bit more immediate than it is. We were just talking about VE Day and having the people from the armed forces, the three branches, all here, and it's a wonderful thing, but if you look at VE Day, 1945, it is now 2005, 60 years later. The servicemen that came back in 1946, 1947 and got married – and it takes usually nine months to start a baby boom. Realistically, that baby boom started in about 1947 and continued to the mid-60s. So what that puts us at is an actual retirement date for those very first baby boomers seven years from now if we look at it as 65. You know, my colleague from St. Albert would probably argue with me that 65 might be a little young for retirement. The importance of using older workers I think will increase as we see a healthier older workforce, and these are issues that we must look at.

When we look farther down the road, realistically the middle area of the baby boom does not come into place for their retirement at an

age 65 level for another 17 years, and some of the baby boomers at the end of the baby boomers are still having children. So there are some aspects to that baby boom that I think are a little bit overblown, and it will be with us in the working sector of the population for quite some time.

As I said, the supply and demand area of what constitutes skills in our workforce is often thrown at us in many different ways. People will give us statistics if they have a particular axe to bear. We've seen a lot of demand studies that look to the interests of certain employer organizations, and certainly many of them have been well done and are comprehensive on the demand side. But if you look at the demand side, it is like looking at the interests of grade 2 students, for example, who are surveyed on their demand for candy three months down the road. Well, there will never be enough. Certainly, when you survey employers about their needs for employees six months or two years down the road, there will never be enough because that is an input that is absolutely crucial to them and they want to ensure that there is enough there.

It's important to the economy that we ensure that there's enough there and that people are well trained and that we keep the supply going, but often there is a danger to oversupply, and this is a concern for many Albertans. There have been a few petitions presented in this session that have spoken to that and the concern that many Albertans have to having temporary foreign workers brought in when they consider that it is not necessary to come into their certain occupational and skill areas.

Even the December study by the Alberta Economic Development Authority and the action plan on megaproject excellence did not forecast a huge need, and in fact many of the trades look at a lower level of demand in four years than we're actually seeing today. Actually, this year is a high-demand year for many trades. It fluctuates. It's the nature of the industry. It's the nature of the oil sands that we've been building for many years.

I first worked at Syncrude in the 1970s, and there was a huge blip and a huge necessity for people to come in and work. There were many people that came in from other provinces: from Quebec, from Ontario, from Newfoundland, and many from the Maritime provinces. These people helped build Alberta, became Albertans. Many of them went back, though, because that is the nature of our flow of labour in this country. It's actually the history and the interprovincial history of how it works.

To utilize temporary foreign workers to provide employees for companies just because many of the existing Albertans and Canadians do not want to work under the particular work regime creates huge problems and the potential for labour strife. The situation and the statistics that we look at from the labour board and all the other areas show that we have not seen very much labour strife. In fact, I don't think there's been a true strike in the oil sands from the unionized sector for quite some time. We're beginning to see the phenomena of the non-union strike, which is odd. We saw that last November. The *Fort McMurray Today* reported that when a whole parade of tradesmen decided to leave a job site at Suncor . . .

The Chair: I hate to interrupt, hon. member, but your time is elapsed.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much. Those are very, very good comments, very good suggestions, and very good questions. I'll try and answer starting off with your first question, which was on the minimum wage and possible, you know, support for youth in a special way.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, the minimum wage

increases to \$7 an hour starting September 1, 2005. All minimum wage earners, including students, youth, and hospitality workers, are equally deserving of the increase, of course, and the minimum wage will be equal for everybody at this time. I know that there was some talk, but there are no plans at this time to subsidize employers for the wages they provide to students.

There are some jurisdictions that have that now, and I'm looking at it closely. We'll monitor the first part of the changes in the minimum wage and closely look at other programs that are available. In the future if a process changes, then of course it will have to go through the normal approval process.

The Employment Standards Code sets the minimum wage that employers must pay workers within the province of Alberta. Higher minimum wages are negotiated between employers and employees or their unions. The minimum wage is intended to be an entry-level rate of pay. By increasing Alberta's minimum wage, the government of Alberta is ensuring that the workers have a better start in the workforce. Of course, due to Alberta's vibrant and booming economy, there are not too many people working for minimum wage.

The second area that was mentioned was Youth Connections, the cutback in the budget. Youth Connections has been reduced by a million dollars. Well, we can do it within the existing organization and the existing funding, and we'll monitor it closely. If in the future there is the need to increase the funding for Youth Connections, then of course we'll restore their dollars, but in the meantime we can do it within the existing organization.

In relation to the student temporary employment program, which is a very important program, the budget this year is projected to be \$8.2 million, which is the same as '04 and '05. Approximately 3,600 students will gain valuable work experience through the STEP program this summer, just about the same as last year. Eligible employers include registered nonprofit community organizations, First Nations, Métis settlements, municipalities, regional health authorities, regional school divisions, and postsecondary institutions. So, again, we will review the budget each year as we move forward to see what, if any, changes are required in that very valuable program.

3:40

The other area that I was mentioning was in relation to the enhanced immigration services that we provide. My department will spend about a million dollars in '05-06 on enhanced language training, and of course we'll continue providing that valuable service to the people that are coming here and require support.

The other part is that the immigration support services are not dollars for temporary foreign workers. That's a different program completely. We share responsibility for immigration with the federal government and other provinces under the Constitution and work collaboratively with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to support settlement programs through integrated services programs. Federal funding for settlement services in Alberta is mainly targeted at the government-assisted refugees in their first year of arrival. Alberta's funding, \$1.9 million in 2005-06, is for all newcomers who have been in Canada less than three years. So that is a very valuable program.

The other area that was mentioned was a productive workforce, which is very important. With a strong economy like we have in Alberta, we do need a strong, productive, local workforce of Albertans, Canadians, First Nations, and persons that require additional help.

The issue of jobs for aboriginal people was mentioned, and that is a must because definitely there's still high unemployment and

underemployment of our aboriginal people. A lot of people still live in poverty while the economy is booming out there, and we need to do a lot of work in that area to improve that.

On the provincial side the people that live off the reserve and the Métis people and, of course, the people that needed the support, through the welfare reforms that were done by this government – I mentioned earlier that 80 per cent of the cases were single people and couples without children using up most of the dollars that were needed for the high-needs area. Those people, through the reforms, are now gone. They're back into the workforce and have become independent and self-sufficient.

One of the things that we need to work with – and I hope you will support me on this and support our government at different levels – is to push for some changes at the federal level, to get the feds to try and change some of their socioeconomic policies on the reserves. The way they're structured right now the First Nations people are not happy. The chiefs are not happy. I don't think the taxpayer out there is happy to see people still caught living in poverty while they want to work. The feds I think should be encouraged to change their policies, to start using those same dollars they provide free for social supports to encourage people to train and get back into the workforce. So I could sure use your support there.

The other area, of course, is the integrated road network. It is necessary. The way our economy is growing, in order to continue the movement of the commerce that's required out there, we need to make sure that the roads are built. The member mentioned, you know, specifically 63, 813, La Loche road. All those roads need to be fixed up, in fact built and paved and fixed up. When you look at a road network from La Loche to Fort McMurray, Fort McMurray to Fort Chip and on to Fort Smith and then another road from Fort McMurray to Wabasca and on to Peace River and then another one from Rainbow Lake to Fort Nelson – that type of road network needs to be put in place. I know that it'll cost millions of dollars, but we're spending that now on social support programs. These people can commute to these job sites. Wabasca, for example, which the hon. member mentioned, has a population of 5,000 yet has 80 per cent unemployment and underemployment with our First Nations people.

So we definitely need to improve the infrastructure to ensure that people not only are provided with training but also have access to jobs and training that are out there.

The PAO, of course, was mentioned. Yes, definitely, we need to get more managers within our system to apply for jobs within a department or other departments that become available. I understand right now, in fact, that it's fairly difficult for a young person that just graduates, say, from a university or a technical school or that just wants to apply for jobs to access our government department. So we need to make sure that we look at how we may encourage a lot more young people also, not only the managers that are in our existing system, to better access government jobs.

There used to be wage position money available to hire people if there was work to be done, jobs to be done, and what happened was that a lot of those people then applied for regular jobs in the department, and it worked quite well. It brought a lot of people into the government system. I think we need to definitely look at that.

The other one that was mentioned, of course, is proper information as far as labour supply. I think that, you know, generally the governments at different levels – federal, provincial, municipal – and private industry and the unions, no doubt, are doing a fairly good job, but one of the things that's lacking is the ability for anyone to identify – for example, at Al-Pac, which is in my constituency, a thousand jobs, we really don't know what Al-Pac's needs are for the next 10 years. There's a postsecondary institution down the road that really doesn't know what the needs are for that specific project.

We need to make sure that we do an inventory of what's needed for 10 years and then design our programs to match that, not only in forestry but also in the oil and gas industry and agriculture and tourism. So definitely that's a very good point you brought up. It is a key to ensuring that we do provide the opportunities for people to be able to plan better than what we are right now.

The issue of temporary foreign workers. Again, I've mentioned here, you know, that the last resort for any company is to bring in foreign workers. Our policy, of course, as a government is to make sure that Albertans get hired first, Canadians, local people, First Nations people, persons with developmental disabilities, and persons that are caught in our social support system with very high needs, that need a lot of support to move off the Alberta Works program to become independent and self-sufficient.

You know, to bring in temporary foreign workers – like I've mentioned before, that it is a federal program. The federal government does the approval. We have a memorandum of understanding between the feds and the province to make sure that they follow a rigid criteria before they can bring in temporary foreign workers. They are more expensive to bring in, and it's definitely not cheap labour. We will continue to monitor that area very closely to ensure that Albertans are looked after first. That will be our top priority.

I believe those were some of the questions. I want to commend the member for being so thorough and for asking questions directly. Like I said earlier, you know, some things I might have missed. If I do, the staff will pick it up in *Hansard*, and we'll answer it in writing.

3:50

Again, there are areas where we will also need your support. A very important one is in relation to the First Nations and the federal policies. You know, all of us need to work together, I think, to see that change. I'd like to see that change in my lifetime because one of the reasons I got into politics was to work towards reforming the social support system in rural Alberta, diversifying the economy, and ensuring that people that wanted to be off welfare and working had that opportunity. At the provincial level I think we've been reasonably successful. We need to do a lot of work yet, but at the federal level changes need to happen, and it's not going to be easy. One government, one ministry cannot do it. We'll need your support to achieve that.

The other, of course, that continues to be challenging and quite complicated is the issue of bringing in foreign workers. You know, as a government we'd like to see Albertans work first, of course. Canadians, aboriginal people, personal development – that's another area where I think we need to continue working together as a government and this Legislature, to make sure that our people here are looked after first. If that can't be accommodated, then maybe there are times where, for a short period of time, people have to be brought in, but hopefully not at the cost of local jobs. People that have trades that want to work definitely should be given the first opportunity. I think that in this day and age we're advanced and sophisticated enough and have enough knowledge and expertise out there amongst us that we should be able to sit down and resolve these issues.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with regard to this ministry. I've got some specifics with individual criteria. The one that's on page 240, your internal government transfers. It says, "Contribution from Lottery Fund."

I'm not sure what that specifically would be used for. Some of these first questions, again, would be line-by-line items, and after that I'll go into some more general concerns with regard to that.

Also, the salary contingency that was listed under the Workers' Compensation appeals. It was just a one-time line item, but it no longer is there, so I'm just wondering why that particular piece disappeared. If I look at Workers' Compensation appeals there was, I believe, a \$200,000 increase for the appeals and \$1.3 million for the Appeals Commission as well, so I'm not sure why the increase there. Although I have an idea, I'd certainly like the minister to be able to comment specifically on that.

If I go to page 231 – and that is program 3, skills investments, Youth Connections – and if you look over the previous couple of notes in there, it went from \$4,767,000 to \$5,880,000, and then it's back down again. So it was up, and it was down. The question would be: why is there not a consistency with its increase? We are talking about youth. We are talking about connecting with youth with regard to employment.

The other one would have been – well, I'll just go on to another one here. This was raised in question period. We thought it might have been a little more relevant if we'd have raised it here. Will the minister hire new occupational safety inspectors, OHS, to ensure that the statistics of injured workers and those that are in fact killed on the job site don't increase? As we realize, we are trying to extract those resources at a very alarming rate. In fact, we have the industries continuing to do expansion pieces, so that just tells us that we are creating jobs. We're doing it very quickly, but we also have to do it at a rate that isn't going to jeopardize anybody. The question came out: are we in fact risking people's lives for the sake of extracting this stuff? Again, that's where the question on that particular piece comes from.

The money for – and you did answer this – new immigrants coming in. There was a million dollars to be going into training to deal with language barriers. I'm not sure if that was specifically intended for immigrants that are currently here, residing now, or if that would be to aid the temporary foreign workers with regard to language barriers. I find that a little disturbing. In fact, if we're bringing in people that are going to be expected to be able to work and take the jobs of Albertans and Canadians, why would we have to train them to deal with the language barrier? I thought there would certainly be something, a little bit more of a transition, so that we wouldn't have to worry about that.

I would like to see increased rates of apprenticeships with regard to the overall amount that we are in fact training. Right now I don't think we have a good way to monitor the group that is graduating. What I would like to see is it reported on a year-by-year basis until they reach journeyman status. Ideally, with your first year, for example, you've got maybe a thousand people that are applying for pipefitting and/or welding. After the second year what have you got there? The same with the third year and right up to the fourth year. If you have a difference in that, can you explain why they're not in fact seeking and continuing to retain these people, which has got great opportunities for employment, as we always say?

The other one is that I was just out front last night with a number of other MLAs, and there were at least a thousand people, and this is in direct response to the temporary foreign workers. There were about a thousand people who were coming out on a cold day. They've probably got better things to do, but they're very concerned – and again you did mention that – with the temporary foreign workers being brought in.

This is a little off topic, but it is relevant to this one. We've got an interim Métis harvesting agreement that, in fact, is ensuring that the Métis have hunting rights guaranteed. These people are only asking

the same thing that the Métis have been just granted. They're wanting to ensure that the jobs are going to be there not only today but tomorrow for them, their children, and their grandchildren. They want to ensure that that is going to be a consistent line and a commitment from this government.

When I hear about the people being brought in as temporary foreign workers, I get quite concerned as well. Like I said, we talk about the Alberta advantage, but when you're willing to bring in people, that in fact is very concerning. We talk about the amount of aboriginals that are unemployed. Certainly, we can add more to that stock and train them as well. I'll let you go on about that one.

I'll talk a little bit about the WCB. I was on WCB once myself, and I didn't have terrible treatment. In fact, I was quite pleased. [interjection] I can see that you did, then, as well. My concern is the push to get the people out of the system. I don't think that the WCB people that are dealing with the clients really show some empathy.

I've got a number of cases. The majority of the people that are coming through my office come and talk about the WCB, the process and the treatment. In fact, a number of them didn't feel that they were heard. They were being forced back to work because they were being constantly pushed to do more than their limit. These people know their limit, but the doctors or the people who are there are pushing them back at an alarming rate, they're saying, and they're further injuring themselves.

That's just outright crap when that happens. These people shouldn't be subjected to that. They were doing a job on behalf of an employer, and they're injured. We've got to have a little bit of compassion for these people. The biggest thing is that these people are being pushed back. Who do these doctors work for? I realize that they're being paid by the WCB, but whose best interest are they out for?

I've got a neighbour who said that he was further injured when he was trying to do the exercises that the doctor was explaining that he should be able to do. "It could be in your mind. No, I don't see any injuries here. You should be able to go back and be able to be completely and fully trained within a little bit here." In fact, some people are cut off because they are not doing some of the exercises. They're quite concerned about that, and that does concern me as well. I think we have to recognize and do a little bit more research on that.

We pay these people bonuses. I'm not sure why the bonuses are paid. Would the bonuses not be better served if they went right back to the employers that are paying these specific increases as a way of rewarding people for no injuries? I mean, we talked about today being International Day of Mourning for workers injured in the workplace. That would certainly be something if we, in fact, put money back to those companies, recognizing the number of injury-free workdays, as a matter of fact. I realize that they are given reductions after a certain amount of time. I can appreciate that.

My last thing that I'd probably comment on is about the \$7 which we're going to see as the minimum wage. Right now the minimum wage is \$5.90. I do know, in fact, that there are people who are working at the minimum wage. They may work at the minimum wage as a base salary, and then the rest of it will be, in fact, as perhaps a commission, but if the commission part doesn't fulfill itself, they're relying on that base of a minimum wage. I would have rather seen it in summer, when it's the busiest time, when the students have an opportunity to take full advantage, putting in 40 hours, versus in September when they're back in school and not able to take advantage of that increase.

Those would just be a couple of issues and concerns and ideas that I would raise for the minister. Thank you.

4:00

The Chair: Before I recognize the next speaker, I'd just like to caution the member on his choice of words in the last exchange. According to *Beauchesne's* 489 there was a term that was unparliamentary that you used.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much. Those were very good comments. Most of the issues in relation to the Workers' Compensation Board. Because it's an arm's-length operation and they're not here today, I'll get them to answer that in writing, except in the area of the Appeals Commission and the increase in their dollars.

The reason there is an increase in their dollars is that they're hiring more people so they can process the backlog of appeals. That's happening. The other thing, you know, is if there are any MLAs that have some difficulties with an officer, a worker at the Workers' Compensation Board, I have no problem arranging a meeting with the government liaison and also the chairman of the board and the MLA to sit down and put this stuff on the table and see if we can resolve it. I'm willing to do that. I have no problem with that, so if you want to do that, we can.

The Youth Connections. Again, I mentioned earlier that, you know, if additional money is needed to run that program, there is no problem. We will find the dollars. But what's happening there with the youth is that now a lot of the youth are going directly into jobs – they're not going into training – and there are lots of jobs out there, especially in the north half of Alberta and Edmonton and other areas. The youth are walking into jobs themselves without our support or our help. They're taking jobs, so you know I guess that's good in a lot of ways, but as far as statistics, then, in our budget, they don't show up. But we'll keep monitoring that. We'll monitor it closer. If there is more money needed, you can be assured we will find it and put it in because youth are our future as far as employment and training.

OHS, of course, continues to operate, you know, quite well. We're far from perfect, but they're doing a good job. We have 83 officers now that are out there working, doing inspections and reports and monitoring projects very closely. Again, if there is, you know, we'll monitor closely. Work safety is definitely still a top priority, and we will continue monitoring it closely. If there are additional needs for additional staff, then we'll have to look at it in next year's budget, no doubt.

Apprenticeship training is only mentioned, touched on briefly. Again, it's not under my department. Well, part of it is. The part of the apprenticeship support we do is to about 4,500 students. We support some of the living allowances because the EI portion was pulled out. I think you used to be able to access EI the first two years while you were taking your apprenticeship. That was pulled out. We are providing about 4,500 students a year to supplement some of their living expenses.

But the apprenticeship program, itself, I think we need to look at very closely because the average age of a journeyman in Canada is about 51 years old. The average age of a journeyman completing their four-year program in Alberta is about 26 years old, and when you look at schools like in Athabasca, Lac La Biche, that whole north half of the province, 65 per cent of the students want to take technical trades. They know by the time they're in grade 8 or 9. Why is it taking until 26 years old to complete the four-year program?

So, you know, although we train, I think, 20 per cent of all the apprentices in Canada – and no doubt we have the best program – still, because of our booming economy, our high demands in the future, we can't sit back and say it's good enough. I think we need

to keep moving forward to make sure that the proper apprenticeship programs are provided.

There are some. Careers: the Next Generation is in there, the RAP program is in there, the youth apprenticeship program, which I was involved partially in some of the design. It's designed to start apprenticeship training right in the regular K to 12 school at about the grade 8 level, and it's tied in with the technical schools. By the time you finish grade 12, you could have up to the equivalent of two years of training, say, in carpentry for an example. By the time you're 16, you've got two years of training already, and you walk into a job. The employer has a trained person. By the time you're 18 or 19, you've got your ticket. Those are some of the things we need to look at in the apprenticeship field, I believe.

Again, Youth Connections, of course, I mentioned, and the apprenticeship training. You mentioned lottery dollars, and I'll get the department to address that particular issue. The temporary foreign workers. Again, you know, we're going to need your help on that. It's challenging. It's a complicated issue. We want to keep pushing. The federal government does the approval. The employers have to first of all do an exhaustive process of advertising and recruiting and training of local people: Albertans, Canadians, aboriginal people, persons with developmental disabilities, and other people that are probably in a high-needs area of my department that could use support.

That has to be a top priority. Now, you know, it's going to be a challenge, no doubt. There will be times that we will maybe need some temporary foreign workers. I don't know that, but maybe in order to build some of the projects. We'll see. We'll have to monitor the system very closely.

The last item you mentioned I believe was the minimum wage, and again we'll monitor it as we move forward. We'll see what impact it has on the employers and the employees, see how many of our caseload of the 11,000 that are not expected to work because of the minimum wage and some of the financial support we provide in health care, see how many of those files may be closed and people will move on on their own, maybe with some transitional supports in health care and other areas. So we will monitor that closely.

In fact, when the minimum wage was designed here in Alberta, we did pull the figures out from Ontario on what youth programs they have there. They do have a program there where, you know, it's operated very similar to what we have except it involves a private industry, where the government topped off I think it was \$2 an hour to an employer that hired a student that is going back to university.

So we're looking at it. I mean, we're open to look at anything, and if you have any good suggestions in the future, we're sure open to look at that.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few comments to make. Just to the hon. minister, it's nice to see him across the way because when I used to know him, he was standing beside me, usually heckling me over on that side. [interjections] Yeah. Something like that.

Mr. Chairman, just mainly comments. I want to just look into a couple of areas to begin with. It seems to me – correct me if I'm wrong – that the big losers in the ministry's budget are the people investment department, whose budget is being cut by about \$6 million, and workplace investment, whose budget was slashed by 46 per cent from last year. Within the people investment department the government is cutting the income supports program by about \$9 million. Especially hard hit within that program, the people

expected to work program was cut by some \$12 million. Now my understanding of the people expected to work program is that it's an income-support program designed to help folks out only for a short period of time. I guess what I'm saying is that the minister could perhaps tell us why that's happening.

4:10

But I want to come back to a debate that we held the other day when we were asking, perhaps, the demonstration about the unfortunate murders of people in the inner city, prostitutes. I made the case with the minister and got that there are some cases where people are actually in prostitution – you could talk to the prostitution awareness people. It's not me making it up – they actually know of people, young women with kids, that actually do make those sorts of decisions. I'm not saying all of them are, you know, but that is going on. I think that we've been pared back in terms of social assistance. The minister will take great pride in that, perhaps, as there are some good things that have happened, no doubt.

But I think now we're down to sort of the core people, and a lot of those are children and single parents. I think that we really have to, Mr. Chairman, review the social assistance rates. Definitely, we have to do that, and they have to be raised significantly because if we're just down to single parents, people struggling with children and the rest of it, then those are the people we really have to be somewhat concerned about. I was disappointed that it's not in this budget, and I'd ask the minister to comment when we might look for some increases in that area.

The minimum wage has already been discussed, Mr. Chairman, but I do have a few comments to make. I would say that it's long overdue. I think this is an embarrassment to me as an Albertan that we have the lowest right now, \$5.90 an hour. I know that it's been raised to \$7, but the point that I'd like to make: I don't know why we didn't do it right away rather than wait until September because the minister is well aware that there's going to be a flood of young people, students from universities, high schools, NAIT, SAIT, Mount Royal colleges, wherever in the province.

They're going to be coming out, looking for work, trying to make enough money to go back to university so they don't have big debts. They could have used that money because for many of them it would have been, well, almost a 20 per cent hike. That would have been very helpful. So I really suggest to the minister – and I know it's not going to happen – that it would have been helpful to have done that immediately, especially for those students.

Even though we've raised it to \$7 an hour, the minister talks about a boom economy, and he's right. We happen to have oil and gas here, and the economy is booming. I would say that even with the raise we're still fourth in the country in terms of the minimum wage. Yeah, we're in the middle, but fourth, if we can put it that way. That doesn't mean that some others might not raise it along the way too. In B.C. they have a booming economy right now because of their resources, and it's at \$8 an hour. I know that the minister knows this. Ontario and Quebec are at \$7.45 an hour.

Even with the raise coming in September, we're still in the middle. If you have expenses, in a boom economy your expenses are higher so you need to make more money just to be even, and we're not going to be there even with the \$7 an hour.

I've wondered if the government has always ruled out this idea. I could take it if it were raised to \$7 if they said, "Okay. We're going to look at the CPI or inflation," like MLAs' salaries or whatever, "and have an indexation to that minimum wage." Therefore, people wouldn't be falling behind at least. We can always review it from time to time, but that indexation, I think, would be important, and I'm wondering why the government would

not consider that. If it's good enough for MLAs, it should be good enough for the people that are lowest on the totem pole in terms of wage earning.

Moving along, Mr. Chairman, because I don't want to run out of time again, we had some discussion briefly about on-the-job injuries, and of course today, as the minister brought out in his ministerial statement, is the Day of Mourning. The figures, I think, in Alberta are not good. I alluded to this, and I think some others did too. Albertans who suffer serious injuries are more likely to get them on the job, according to a national trauma study. Nearly 10 per cent of major injuries requiring trauma treatment occurred in the workplace. When you look at the national average, it's 7 per cent. Ontario's average is 5.5 per cent.

Now, I think that's fairly serious, and again that may well be part of a boom economy, but it's there. These figures, I think the minister would agree, are unacceptable. I know he said in his statements that we have 80 officers, and I'm sure they're doing the best they can, but 80 officers across the province: with a boom economy, if we want to come back to the minister's statement that it's a boom economy, that's probably not enough. We've got to do something there.

I would caution the minister. When we get in, I'll have something to say, as I'm sure he'd be aware, about division 8 and temporary workers in apprenticeship. But I worry about us going the opposite way. There could be more serious injuries. In part, I see all this happening, the division 8 and temporary foreign workers and apprenticeship, all wrapped up in, sort of, one issue.

I notice that the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board is now – and I know that this doesn't fall in the minister's department necessarily, but he certainly has some influence, I would say. The Merit contractors, the non-union people, want to change the ratio of apprentices to journeymen from the current 3-1 to a 1-1 ratio. I recognize that not all the trades have the 3 to 1, but some of the most dangerous jobs do. Boilermakers, ironworkers, pipefitters have a 3 to 1 ratio. Of course, they are vehemently against this sort of change.

I would say to the minister that if we go ahead with this, this is a potential, again, for more injuries, more deaths on the job. I would say, Mr. Chairman, that for that reason I think we would have more skilled people because of the 1 to 1 ratio, but I think that there's a big safety thing here too. I really would say to the minister that if he has any influence at all and he cares, as I know the minister does from the statement about the Day of Mourning, that this is a very dangerous thing, I believe, if we move in that direction.

I know why the Merit contractors and CLAC and those people want it: because it's cheaper. It's good for them, but I don't think it's good for the people of Alberta, and I certainly don't think it's good for the tradespeople. I think that could even add to this high rate of trauma treatment that we have.

I know this is not going to change. I think that all the years I've been in the Legislature we've been talking about the weak labour laws in this province. I think that all those things, the cutbacks that happened, some of them necessary no doubt, the various things that have occurred, the weaker labour laws, add to this potential for injury. I think the lack of whistle-blowing legislation and these sorts of things can all lead to it. So I'm saying to the minister that, if possible, one minister could influence everybody else if we're really concerned about on-the-job injuries. I think all these things play into Alberta's high rate. I honestly believe that.

Let's just talk very briefly if I can, because we've had a fair amount of discussion, about so-called temporary foreign workers. I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Minister. It's tying all the things in together. I think the villain here is this division 8 of the labour code.

I can't believe that anywhere else in Canada we'd ever have this as part of the labour code. I know it's been used very sparingly, I believe maybe once or twice in the '70s. It is my understanding that the unions went along with it at that time. I think that was probably a mistake.

4:20

The cabinet, I believe, has made the decision that Horizon can if necessary use this as the code and do what they want. Now, this is very dictatorial, I think, and undemocratic because it virtually allows – and it's starting to happen with the negotiations. If you talk to the building trades people, they're trying to get cutbacks in terms of time, double time to time and a half, when people work, whether it's Saturday or Sunday. Those things are already occurring. What it does is give them an absolute hammer. This is why I think the people are so upset. They're tying all these things together, Mr. Minister. They see that, and then they believe and I believe that Horizon would do this. They could say: well, if you don't roll back and you don't do what we want, we'll have the right to look at another union that will be more amenable. That's where CLAC comes in, and that's where the Merit contractors come in.

That's why there's so much anger building, and the Member for Edmonton-Decore talked about the demonstration yesterday. They tie that in to the weakening of apprenticeship. They tie that in to this idea, then, that if the workers don't do what they're told by Horizon or any other groups up there, well, we'll bring in temporary foreign workers that will do that.

Now, the minister says that temporary foreign workers can be more expensive. In the short run that could be true, but if you can roll back all the collective bargaining rights and people are working for a lot cheaper, that might not necessarily be the case. What they're tying in and why the anger is there, I believe justifiably so, is that division 8 and where that could lead.

I say to the government that this would be a big mistake. The building trades unions have made this province. They've developed the tar sands. They've worked at times with no-strike contracts and all the rest of it. They're a very highly skilled group. If we want to move on with the tar sands, the last thing we need is labour unrest up there, and there will be labour unrest with that group if we continue in this pattern. So I see this as all together.

Now, we can argue whether there are shortages or not. The minister says 3.5 per cent unemployment. As he knows, the figures that we had were 6.1 per cent in the construction trades. The reality is that the Suncor memo said that there's no shortage of workers in Alberta, Canada, but only a shortage of workers who are willing to work on CLAC sites. Well, that's a difference from a shortage overall. A lot of the people that are in unions will not go to work for them. That's where the shortage is. So maybe CLAC should change, you know, and become part of the trade union movement rather than a company union.

There's another interesting thing, Minister. I don't know if the minister has had a chance to look at this; I just sort of got it myself. There is the Alberta Construction Association foreign workers survey results. The Construction Workforce Development Forecasting Committee, comprised of industry, labour, and government, concluded in May 2004, and I quote: if all the major industrial projects proceed as they are scheduled, we will again see considerable strain on our supply of skilled trades for 2005 running into the first quarter of 2007.

I wondered where they got that information. If it came from this survey that they did, they have 1,751 member companies. Only 60 responded. Now, if there's a shortage that they're talking about and they have 1,751 member companies, you would think that more than

60 would respond if there was a big problem there. Of the 3.4 per cent of the member companies that responded, only 68.3 per cent of those say they experienced a shortage of trades. So I don't know where they're coming from unless they want to move towards what I'm talking about, you know: slowing down and not employing the building trades so that they can move into CLAC and Merit.

So I'm saying to the minister that that's why the anger is there. It's not anti-immigration. It's not that. Everybody knows. The discussion has been held. The minister has said very clearly that we have to do more for aboriginal people in these areas. We have to do more for our landed immigrant people that are already here. We have to look after Canadians first. Well, I think it's greater than that. I think that this is big oil moving ahead trying to get into the market, get it out fast, and get it out to the American market as cheaply and as quickly as they can.

I'm probably going to be running out of time fairly soon. I thought I'd put it there, but I didn't.

Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to bring up one other thing that I meant to yesterday, but it seems to have been brought back. It's highway 63. I know the minister knows a lot about this because he's talked about this. There are a lot of accidents occurring going back and forth from the job. Frankly, highway 63 is one of those roads that is in desperate need. As the minister is aware, I've been presenting petitions. Today, the latest one we have, I think, is 2,797 petitions. It's not nicknamed Death Highway for no reason at all, especially by those people who work in Fort McMurray.

As the minister said, and I agree, if he can talk to his colleague to the left of him – and I doubt that he's on his left politically – that should be a very high priority with what's going on in Fort McMurray. As the minister talked about, protecting workers means more than just on-the-job protection. If he has any influence at all, that highway should be the highest priority that I can think of in the province because it's a death highway, and it's getting worse. The traffic is worse. I hope I made it in time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Those were very good comments. There were some questions, but a lot were comments, and I really appreciate that. We'll definitely seriously consider some of your good suggestions.

The first item you mentioned was in relation to the skills investment and the needs of people, the high needs in particular. Right now, in fact, I am definitely looking at that along with the minimum wage. That's one thing we heard last election, that not all Albertans are gaining equally from the Alberta advantage, that we need to look at the AISH, the seniors, the persons that are not expected to work. The rates in those areas: although we increased some of the supports we provided, the dollars really haven't increased; I'll be very honest. The dollars haven't increased for the core benefits and the shelter for those people not expected to work. They haven't increased since '92-93.

Part of the reforms that we made was to tighten up on the system because the budget was \$1.7 billion back in '92-93. You know, 97,000 caseloads, 180,000 individuals, and 80 per cent of those people on the system were single people and couples without children that were very healthy and able to work. They were using up the dollars that the high-needs area were to use. What we did when we designed the program was to take those people off through training programs, and we spent hundreds of millions to train people to move them off. It worked successfully.

While we did that, part of the plan was to design a process that

would look after all the children in Alberta, which includes some of the individuals you mentioned possibly – you know, the real high-needs area, young people – to move those and create their own ministry with its own budget to deal with children. That has happened now at Children's Services as its own ministry to look after that particular portion.

The other portion that we said was real high needs was persons with developmental disabilities. What we did with that also was to design it so that it could move on with its own ministry. That has happened now. We have a minister in charge of that particular department with a fairly good budget. So parts of the welfare reforms moved those areas. What it allows us to do now, no doubt, with our debt paid off, our budget balanced – we will be able to in the very near future find the dollars that would increase the benefits for those people that are the most needy. I'll be very honest; I've already taken it through the standing policy committee. I've taken it to cabinet and caucus to look at an increase for those rates. As dollars become available, we will no doubt look at the implementation of increased benefits for those people most needy. They are needy. A lot of people still live in poverty. We have a healthy province, balanced budgets, and a lot of program dollars. We should be able to look after those people that are most needy. You know, those were good point you brought up because you hit it right on. That was one priority that I still have: to make sure that we look after.

4:30

You mentioned students a bit. Indexation is something we looked at also. Like I said earlier, we'll monitor that very closely through the summer, and if changes need to be made in relation to students, no doubt we'll be seeking your help to get some ideas on how we may improve the benefits for individuals attending postsecondary education and other schools.

Again, injuries on the job. One of the things I've asked the department to look at to work along with other ministries is in relation to how many of the injuries are actually happening at the job site. It may be that many are happening on the road to work and coming back. You know, let's face it: we're all in a hurry. The road network definitely needs to be improved – and I'll get to that very shortly – but we're all in a hurry out there. You know, we drive fast to get to work, come home fast, maybe to go to a second job or something else. We need to start looking at that. I want to make sure that in the near future we define how many of the accidents are actually happening at the work sites and how many are happening away from the work site. Once we define that and identify it, then we'll be able to design a program to target areas where we have the problem. It may mean the improvement of roads in some areas or speed limits in some areas.

The apprenticeship program and the ratios. That's not under my department, but definitely I'll be working very closely with the Minister of Advanced Education and the Minister of Economic Development in relation to some of the thoughts that are out there. You mentioned the ratio of electricians; for an example, how many journeymen do you need for one apprentice? That's out there, and it's being discussed a bit.

The other area, of course, is in relation to weak labour laws and stuff you mentioned. We always have to continue looking at that. I am going to definitely look at the labour code to see where we can improve it to strengthen it for the benefit of Albertans and for the benefit also, of course, of the employers and the staff we have.

The other area mentioned that's very, very important – I don't want to miss that – is in relation to the road network. Our economy is booming in Alberta, and it looks like it may continue like that.

It's a diversified economy. There are thousands of jobs now; there are going to be thousands of jobs in the future for Albertans. But I think we're a bit behind in the road network infrastructure.

You mentioned highway 63. It is critical that that road be improved. The other one, of course, along with that is 881 from Lac La Biche going north. Of course, we're working on that already, but it's not finished. The road to La Loche in Saskatchewan; of course, 813 north of Athabasca through Wabasca and on to Fort McMurray. Already Al-Pac has a road to Chip Lake. Add another hundred kilometres, and you're at the Fort McMurray oil sands, right in the middle of it, so we definitely need to connect those. Of course, another road to Peace River across Red Earth, another one from Fort McMurray to Fort Chip and on to Fort Smith, another one from Peace Point to Fort Vermilion and High Level, and a connector to Fort Nelson.

You definitely need to lay out a plan, I think. As you said, it's not under my jurisdiction, but I'll be working very closely with the minister. I think our government, of course, should look at definitely laying out a five-year plan, a timeline when it should be completed, even prioritize the construction timelines, and commit some dollars. While you're doing that, you're also creating a bottleneck north of Edmonton. There's highway 28, you know, and highway 2, that bypass around Edmonton on the west side, and other connector roads in the Fort Saskatchewan area. We definitely need to do that.

The other one that's important that I think we need to support in the whole transportation sector is the development of airports. I know CNRL is looking at developing an airport so that they can move people back and forth from, say, Edmonton or Calgary or other areas of Canada – so make sure that we hire local people in those jobs.

Again I'd just like to thank you. You know, if there's anything I didn't cover here, we'll do it in writing and pass it on to you. Thank you very much, and thanks for your comments. They're very valuable. You haven't changed in 16 years.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased on this day, when so many people wished to be able to engage in the debate on the Human Resources and Employment budget, that I, in fact, was able to get some speaking time. So thank you, and thank you, as well, to the Official Opposition critic, the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

A couple of things that I would like to raise today, just a discussion about organized labour and what could be done in the labour code, a short discussion on philanthropic foundations and what they're doing on gap funding given that the welfare rates are too low. I'd like to talk a bit about the aboriginal people's access to the workplace. There are some specific issues around female-headed single-parent families, living allowances for learners, which I know other hon. members have already raised, some questions on the pharmacy co-pays for people on welfare. And I think that's it. So that's the list. If I can get through it in 20 minutes, that will be great.

I just wanted to start out by again recognizing the role that organized labour has played in Alberta and, I think, the due that we owe the organized labour movement. It was through them that we got things like public education, and even some credit is due there for public health care. A number of systems and processes that we have come to see as needed and normal came as a result. You know, things like workplace safety codes and occupational health and safety have come about because of the work coming from that movement.

Two of the things that I continue to seek and I encourage the hon. minister to pursue are replacement worker legislation and first-contract certification. Those are the two reasons that we end up with very long-drawn-out and nasty labour disputes in this province. What's there as an incentive for a company to negotiate with its workers when they can bring in replacement workers? There's no incentive for them to sit at the table with their unions. So I think we need replacement worker legislation.

We also most definitely need first-contract certification legislation in that we get unions that are duly formed, that pass all of the hoops and hurdles that they are required to do by law and by legislation, and then they cannot get their employer to sit down and negotiate a first contract with them. That has led to very ugly labour disputes like the Shaw Conference Centre, the *Calgary Herald*, and Dynamic Furniture, to name a few. I know that that's not likely on the agenda for the government. It probably doesn't match a particular philosophy. Nonetheless, I will continue to urge the government to pursue those two pieces of legislation.

4:40

I've been reading a really interesting document, that I know was sent to various government members and ministries, from the Winspear Foundation special fund. It's an analysis of the Winspear Foundation special fund, 1997 to 2003, which was released in the fall of 2004. They raise a number of issues of where their special fund is addressing a funding gap, and they actually provided a fairly detailed sampling of one month's worth of disbursements from the special fund. If the minister does not have a copy, I'm happy to make a copy of mine and send it to him, but I'm sure that the Winspear Foundation would have provided him with a copy.

One of the issues that they're raising specifically is that a single person receiving social assistance, or welfare, or Alberta Works, they're saying in here, was at that time receiving \$402 a month, or less than \$5,000 a year. It's just not enough. It has not kept pace with cost increases in utility rates, insurance rates, food, transportation, medication, certainly not recreation. That's not even a dim possibility for people on social assistance.

I know that others have talked about the importance of indexing this. I agree, but I just think these rates are shockingly low. What we end up with now are philanthropic foundations, who have, essentially, different guidelines of disbursement of their funds, having to step in and pick up the gap that's been created between government support programs and the workforce. I don't know that it's appropriate for these groups to be doing that. They are doing it, and I think they're trying to flag to us that the government needs to pick up the pace here and pick up the slack.

They also note the difficulties around rent and damage deposits given that the rent structures always require a very high amount of let's call it front-end load. You're going to have to pay your first month's rent and the damage deposit, which is usually equivalent to the rent, and often first and last months' and a damage deposit. That's a lot of money even for people that have a savings account. It's an impossibility for most. They end up, basically, borrowing from Peter to pay Paul, and that eventually gets them into trouble. So they're suggesting that people need access to a payment structure that could be spread out over time, something like a rent bank, for example, where they could borrow money at a minimum rate and be able to pay it back over an extended period of time.

Of course, affordable housing and access to affordable housing is a key component, especially for people on social assistance. In Edmonton-Centre I have a very large stock of older housing and apartment buildings, which tend to be cheaper rent, but there are also issues around utilities because they're not well insulated, older wiring and plumbing and things. Everything doesn't operate as efficiently as it should, and that's reflected in higher utility costs.

Then there is the fact that we are paying 45 per cent more in utility costs than we were a short time ago.

These are all social determinants of health. If we're trying to create a healthier population and keep them out of the health system with acute health problems, this is where it starts. It starts with how much money they earn or they have to spend. It starts with the housing. It starts with education and personal safety.

Speaking specifically about personal safety, there continue to be gaps created for women, especially women with children, who are leaving abusive family situations. I know that the government has tried to address this, but it seems to not be successful. We have women that are trying to flee an abusive situation. That is one example. Two, they're trying to move out of second-stage transitional housing and make that bridge, that leap, to permanent housing somewhere. They end up going home. They go back to an abusive situation because it's just too hard, and they just can't get the money. That seems shocking and incredible to many of us, but that's what happens because they just can't get the money.

So when we're looking at things like – you know, again, the Winspear is suggesting a transition fund for reoccurring costs for people that are trying to start over where they're looking at moving expenses, storage costs, maybe replacement of some basic furniture, rent, utility hookups, and damage deposit. That's important stuff. Right now the Alberta Works program, which used to be welfare, used to be supports for independence – those programs are so narrow in what they cover that this is very difficult to get. I can tell you for sure that you can't get it on a Friday afternoon.

The second area that they have identified, and I've identified it as well, is around funding for learners. What's it called? Living allowance for learners. I notice that there's actually a reduction of almost \$2 million in this budget for those living allowances for learners. Now, I often am asked to go and speak to the classes at NorQuest College, and this they consistently raise as an issue: why is such a small amount of money made available to them in subsistence? It isn't even subsistence.

Since we're trying to capitalize on an asset there – that is, people who have likely come here as a refugee or an immigrant, want to contribute to society, and need that bridging and extra education – we make it very, very difficult for them to succeed. All they need is one thing to go wrong, and they're out of the system. All they need is to get sick and miss a couple of days of work, and then they don't have enough money to pay their rent. Then they're out and they're homeless, and there's no way they can continue their studies. It just strikes me as very, very short-sighted not to make that investment up front. That living allowance is too low for those folks, and it needs to be looked at. I just don't understand, and I never will, why this government insists on such a low subsistence rate for people. It is without dignity certainly.

The other issues that were raised by this are not specifically covered by the minister's department, so I'll raise those issues with other departments as they come up, but those were the ones specific to them.

I think it's very interesting that we're getting a special report, and it's not the first time. I've had a couple of conversations with philanthropic foundations recently that are really starting to comment on the lack of support from the government.

I think others have raised and I will underline the importance of those aboriginal peoples who have trade certification being able to get connected to the job, to physically get to the job. Very interesting. We've had a lot of discussions back and forth today about transportation and access to transportation: roads, airports, and planes. You know, this is what I expected the government to do last fall when we had an election. I expected that kind of big-picture thinking about where we were going to go. We've got all this

money. How do we make ourselves extraordinary? How do we make Alberta fantastic as compared to just good? This was the kind of big-picture thinking I was expecting, and I'm really disappointed that I didn't see it. We really have done nothing to move ourselves forward in those big pictures.

I have a constituent – and I've tabled letters from him in the Assembly – named Mike Beal. He keeps writing to me about people dying on the roads to Fort McMurray, and he's right. We should not have people dying as they try to get to a good job because the roads are so crappy. I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I used that word again. We'll just move right on.

You know, it's not as though this is a new problem. I mean, the oil sands were started – what? – 30 years ago now. It's the same dang road. It's no wider and no better. You know, this is a wealthy province. We should be able to do far, far better on that than we're doing.

4:50

The connected issue there is being able to get aboriginal peoples, who, by the way, get trade certification in Canada 20 per cent higher than the general public – very interesting. There's a group of people who really understand the importance of trade certification. They're getting it, and then they can't get to where the jobs are. There's been a lot of discussion about the roads and stuff that are needed, but I think that's the kind of big-picture thinking that we need. There's an issue with remote areas like Sucker Creek or La Loche, places like that, where they can't get out to get connected to the actual jobs.

I'm noticing that from the studies I've been looking at, there has been no improvement and in a number of cases there has been a backward trend for female-headed single-parent families slipping back in poverty. Again, we should be better at this by now. This is not a new game. We should be far ahead of this. If we're going to look at social determinants of health, if we're going to look at a healthier population, if we're going to look at getting people working, you can't look at this stuff in isolation. It is about hooking together all of those things I've mentioned: transportation, housing, utilities, education, the wage that they make, or the assistance level that they get.

Somehow people have got it in their heads that women are okay now. Well, they're 52 per cent of the population. We have an increasing number graduating from high school or from postsecondary education institutions. Everything should be great. Well, it's not. They're still not breaking the glass ceilings. In Alberta the wage gap is further apart than in other provinces, which is even worse, and those in poverty are overwhelmingly women. So, folks on the other side, what does that tell you? You've got a big problem. You're the ones in charge. Let's see the movement on this one because, frankly, I think the rest of those women are going to be voting for us.

There's already been a lot of discussion this afternoon about the fact that the welfare rates are too low, so I will just underline that as a concern for my constituents as well, and I won't repeat the arguments.

I've talked about the living allowances for learners.

One of the things that I would like to raise, and perhaps this has been phased out, but I don't think it has. A few years ago the government gave welfare recipients \$5 more a month, and they called it a medication copay allowance. Then they required the pharmacist to charge three prescription copays at \$2 each per month. So the patient had to pay out of pocket two bucks on each of these, so \$6 a month, and they were given five bucks to cover it. I remember that coming in a few years back, and I thought: I wonder if this ever got dealt with? I don't think it did, but the minister can get back to me on that one.

What tends to happen is that very few of the patients are able to

pay or do pay that three prescriptions times \$2 each copayment and in many cases use excuses for avoiding the payment. It's an unreasonable burden on the pharmacist, and it subjects the pharmacist to being a bill collector on \$2. I mean, this is ridiculous. So I'd like to know if that is still in place, and if it is, I'd like to know when the minister is going to remove it because that is a ridiculous amount. You know, it's another one of those: sounded like a good idea at the time but really doesn't work. Somehow it was supposed to make people value prescriptions more. Well, it didn't, so get rid of it.

I just want to loop back again to the last statements on division 8 and the bringing in of labour. You know, I come from a family of hard-working tradespeople. I believe very strongly that it should be Alberta first and then Canada, and I see no reason to be subjecting another country's disadvantaged people to be brought in here to somehow do slave labour and be sent back home. I don't think it's to their advantage, and it's not to our advantage. It should be Alberta first, followed by Canada first. We have enough skilled labourers here, union members, to do the work. I hear the minister saying that this is complicated. Yeah, life is complicated, but there's also a commitment to Alberta workers that I am not seeing come from this government.

I didn't give the minister many questions to answer. I mostly gave him comments. Sorry about that. Oh, I'm sorry. There are a few questions.

The budget has been reduced for people who are in need of assistance but remain capable and willing to work. I'm wondering if the welfare rate in the budget was a volume decrease to have fewer people asking for the programs, or are you paying out less money to each of those people? I'd like to know on the record why there was a reduction in the living allowance for learners. Again, are there fewer people asking for it, so it's a volume decrease, or is it a benefit decrease? Which of those? There has also been a reduction in the spending for freedom of information and privacy – why? – and a reduction for the Youth Connections career information program. So all of those had reductions, and I'd like to know why each of them had the reduction, please.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to get those questions on the record. I'll take my seat.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to thank the member for all those comments and all those valuable recommendations she's made. I'll definitely, seriously have a look at those recommendations. Also, I wouldn't mind to get a copy of that report. I don't know if I have it. I haven't seen it yet. I'd like to get a copy of it so I can have a look at it.

A couple of pieces of legislation were talked about: replacement worker legislation and first-contract certification legislation. I'll let the department also have a look at that and respond.

Generally, the comments, again, were based on, I think, what we heard out there last election, that not all Albertans are gaining equally from the Alberta advantage and that we needed to look at the high-needs area. That, of course, includes persons with developmental disabilities, people on AISH, the seniors, the people that are not expected to work. That is why we started working on, for example, changing the minimum wage and reviewing the welfare which we do provide for those people that can't work or are not expected to work, although that particular caseload now is so far down compared to what it was in '92-93. We're down to under 28,000 total. Only half of those are expected to work. The other half are not for various reasons. But the half that is not expected to work no doubt will have to look at more supports in the existing supports we have.

At the same time, as we move forward in redesigning, you know, some of the benefits we provide, especially for those people that are expected to work, we need to make sure that the benefits provided in B.C. and Saskatchewan are comparable to what we have here in Alberta because people do move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction to access supports. If you design your program to accommodate that – and as a government the last thing we want to do is to design a system that will encourage people to come to Alberta, especially if they're not interested in working. I feel personally, and I think our government is in the same position, that the way to deal with poverty is, number one, to have a government that creates the environment for industry, private industry in particular, to create the jobs and the wealth – and I think that's happened here in Alberta – but at the same time give people, you know, the transition supports people need.

You know, the hon. member mentioned a number of areas, a lot of areas in fact, that need support. It goes into other departments also, but that's fine. They're very, very important issues. We want to make sure that people are offered the training they need, that people are provided with the jobs and the supports that are necessary, and continue their health care benefits while they transition to independence, self-sufficiency.

5:00

In the years that I worked in this field and in government and in private industry before, I don't know of anyone that wanted to be on social support systems or welfare. I don't know of anyone. I don't. No one wants to be on it. There are so many people that continue to remain on social support systems because of various reasons. And we need as a government, now that our budget is balanced and we have money to work with and the time I believe to deal with these high-needs areas – definitely I think we should continue working. I take your recommendations very seriously because they are important issues that, no doubt, you've identified through your work and your contacts. So I'd like to thank you for that.

The other area you mentioned towards the end, of course, was Youth Connections, that there was a reduction in the dollars. What happened there is that we can't provide the services that are needed out there right now. What's happening with the youth is that there are so many jobs out there, and they're accessing jobs directly, without coming through the processes we have in place. Or not as many.

The technical schools out there, the colleges are experiencing the same problems. There is a decline, and you'll see why there's some decline in allowances. There is a decline in the number of people entering the technical schools because people are going directly to work. That's, I guess, positive in a way. In the long run it may be negative. So we need to monitor that very closely and try and make sure that the changes that take place accommodate that process.

First Nations. Definitely a very important area. It definitely should be a priority for all of us in this province and in Canada to make sure that people do not continue to live in poverty because it creates a whole lot of other problems. I think we need to work with the federal government also and municipalities and jurisdictions across Canada to look at changing some of the socioeconomic policies that the federal government has. It can be done. We've proven in Alberta that we can work towards getting more people into the workforce, moving the dollars we save to high-needs areas, and we need to continue doing that. There's no reason why we can't do that across Canada because none of the First Nations that I know want to be on welfare. None of the chiefs want their people to be on welfare. So it is a priority. Again, we'll need your help in that particular area.

With that, I'll get my staff to have a look at *Hansard* and seriously, seriously look at the recommendations the opposition has made here today, and we'll see how much of it we can implement because we do realize, too, that there are people with high needs.

Again, I'd just like to say thank you very much, and thank you for giving me the time to present the budget.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to participate in this budget debate of Human Resources and Employment. I would love to add some more questions.

I'll start with the long-standing contentious claims, which are a huge burden on many, many Alberta families. When is the government going to direct the WCB to begin a process to at least start a review of long-standing contentious claims? Even a couple of panels with two private-sector qualified individuals and two WCB or Appeals Commission personnel could begin to make a difference. They could randomly select cases and begin to work through these contentious claims: a yes or a no to many, many claimants with reasons why they would either properly compensate them or give them closure in knowing why their claim might have no merit. This process would at least present some hope for those with long-standing, contentious claims.

Mr. Chairman, I want to talk about some other issues. On page 295, under Significant Opportunities and Challenges,

Alberta is expected to enjoy continued economic growth, low unemployment, high labour force participation rates, and high workforce productivity. Strong economic growth leads to labour shortages and skills deficits, wage demands and more pressure on the workplace. Other factors such as the value of the Canadian dollar . . . (BSE), U.S. protectionism and offshoring of jobs could result in the need for labour market adjustments and supports for transitions in some industries. The social fabric of Alberta is changing [no doubt about this]. The fast-growing population is aging and becoming more ethnically diverse with increased immigration. Despite the prosperity enjoyed by most Albertans, there are still people with incomes below the Market Basket Measure low-income threshold. There continues to be a need for greater labour force participation by groups under-represented in the workforce such as Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities. Also, the Government of Alberta continues to emphasize making government more efficient and effective and is striving to ensure the long-term sustainability of its programs and services . . . “The Alberta public service is respected for its attitudes, knowledge and skills, its effective management of public policy and its dedication to achieving quality, affordable services for [all] Albertans.” Achieving this vision within a competitive labour market with changing demographic and economic trends presents challenges for human resource management.

Mr. Chairman, the next issue I want to discuss is the Alberta Labour Relations Board.

The Alberta labour relations field is a dynamic one that responds to changes in the economy, demographics, technology and other factors. The Board must respond to these changes while maintaining the underlying principles of Alberta's labour relations legislation.

Specifically, the Board is currently meeting the challenges created by the Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, providing mediation and adjudication services for the affected parties as they deal with the transition from seventeen Regional Health Authorities to nine.

5:10

I have some general questions to ask the hon. minister. Why has the government reduced its commitment to youth seeking employment? [interjection] You already asked? Okay.

How will the new funds for immigrant support services benefit new immigrants to Alberta? Would you please share that with us if you have the time today, or maybe next time you can give it to us in writing. Other than wage increases what programs, services, or purchases will be made with the increase to corporate human resource services? I think it's \$1.57 million. What new or existing research and development projects require the R and D spending to increase by \$2.2 million?

In the budget, Mr. Chairman, this government has clearly abandoned people who are capable and willing to work but still require government assistance. This government has its priorities misplaced by not investing in people who are learning and students in general who are seeking new or better employment opportunities.

So these are the few questions I wanted to ask you. If you have the answers today, please, or otherwise give them to us in writing whenever you have the time.

The Chair: After considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of Human Resources and Employment for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:
Expense and Equipment / Inventory Purchases \$778,691,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

I will call on the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report the vote for Human Resources and Employment and seek leave to meet again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Human Resources and Employment: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$778,691,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? Carried.

Before I call on the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, there are two things I'd like to remind the Assembly of: first of all, a memo to clear off your desktops for the weekend and, secondly, the Speaker's ruling in a memo of February 28, 2005, that speaks to the prohibition of cellphones, cameras, and pagers. They are prohibited in this Assembly. You can expect that the chair will be enforcing that in the future.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn until Monday at 1:30 in the afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 5:16 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 2, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/02

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, please join in the singing of our national anthem. It will be led today by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Please participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a delight it is today to welcome two classes from Strathcona Christian Academy. They are accompanied by their teachers, Alan Foster and Gord Robideau, parent helpers Mr. Wade Marke, Mrs. Deeann Knott, Mrs. Bauman, Tonya Shurvell, Heather Eifler, and Gange Morgan, with apologies on that pronunciation. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of all of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly a group of 26 grade 6 students from Rimbe elementary school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Garland, Mrs. McNaught as a teacher aide, and some parent helpers, Mrs. Service, Mrs. Braat, Mrs. Nawrot, Mrs. Vandenhoven, and Mrs. Adam. These are great kids from Rimbe. I was talking to some of them a while ago, and some of these kids actually went to Europe last winter and played hockey there and came home with a silver medal, so congratulations to them. I'd like to ask them to rise in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some very special people. In particular, our staff are very special to us, but the mothers of staff are even more special to us. Today I'd like to introduce – and I'll ask her to rise – Ms Valerie Kincade, who is the mother to David Kincade, one of the researchers

with the Liberal caucus. She is a risk management consultant at the Atlantic Health Science Corporation in Saint John, New Brunswick. She's here today with her daughter, David's sister I think, Mrs. Kendra Johnson. I'd ask her to please rise. Mrs. Johnson is employed as an air traffic controller with Nav Canada at the Edmonton International Airport as well as being the mom of four kids. They've both risen, and I would ask the Assembly to please give them a warm welcome.

My second introduction today, Mr. Speaker: more special people. These are staff in my office. Today we have joining my staff Cheryl Williams. She is going to be the summer student in my office from now until the end of August. She's just completing her second year of a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology, so she can study how humans behave in a constituency office all summer long. Thank you very much and welcome. With her is Jane Wisener. Jane is from the Maritimes, but we got her to come out here. She ran a very successful campaign during the last provincial election and gave us my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and I thank you for that, Jane. She is now the constituency manager for Edmonton-Centre. I would ask you all to welcome them, please.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce a guest in the public gallery. This man has recently moved to Drayton Valley from the great city of Montreal. Currently in Drayton Valley he is one of our reporters for the weekly paper there, the *Western Review*, so he's going to give me lots of good stories after today. I'd ask John Michael to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Tony Clark. Tony is currently the sessional research assistant with the NDP caucus. Tony is a dedicated and hard-working member of our group. As a rough-and-tumble rugby player no one messes with him. I'd like to ask him to rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly today.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a young student who's just back from completing her second year at Western. The daughter of my communications director, Michael Shields, Sarah Shields is with us today, and I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very talented and dynamic young lady from Lloydminster. Miss Kierstin Smyth has already packed a lifetime of accomplishment into her few short years: she's a swimming coach; she's a music instructor; she's majoring in the faculty of arts, political science and history; she's a Rutherford scholarship winner; amongst many, many others. She's here today with Bart West and Aleksandra Nowacka. She's doing a summer internship with ATCO with regard to government relations. I would ask that all three rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day the efforts of the Alberta Securities Commission to prevent a proper investigation into its operation grow more desperate. We now have a situation in which the ASC is placing unacceptable conditions on a proposed systems audit by the Auditor General. It is making many people wonder what there is to hide there and is increasing the calls for a public inquiry. To the Minister of Finance: in other situations does the office of the Auditor General normally have completely unfettered access to files and people when they do their audits such as, for example, of government departments?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker. I know that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is referring to a series of audit letters that have gone back and forth between the Alberta Securities Commission and the office of the Auditor General. The Auditor General will audit the processes and systems at the Alberta Securities Commission, and we will await his results.

1:40

Dr. Taft: I'll try the question again, Mr. Speaker. In other situations does the office of the Auditor General normally have completely unfettered access to files and people when they do their audits, for example of government departments?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think that question is more properly placed to the office of the Auditor General. However, I can tell the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that in all departments that I have been minister responsible for over the period of the last 17 years, the Auditor General has had full access and complete co-operation.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, if the minister is so determined to have the Auditor General investigate the ASC, has she asked the part-time commissioners to ask Mr. Linder to exercise his authority within the Securities Act and allow the Auditor General access to enforcement files?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I understand from the references that I've received from the passing back and forth of audit letters, the Auditor General will deliver an audit letter to the Alberta Securities Commission tomorrow, and they will begin their audit.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-five employees of the Alberta Securities Commission have sent a letter to the Minister of Finance stating that they are afraid that, quote, the continued deterioration of the work environment will negatively impact the future of the organization and the health of the Alberta capital markets, end quote. These employees say that in light of the dismissal of the director of administrative services they feel too intimidated to speak to consultants investigating problems at the commission, but all 35 will make their names available to the minister if she agrees to keep their names confidential. Again to the Minister of Finance: what information concerning interference with

enforcement cases in the Alberta Securities Commission does the minister now have in her possession?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to the letter that, as I indicated in the House, I received last week. It does state: Dear Minister McClellan, We, the blank – then written in handwriting is 35 employees. They did say in the final paragraph of the letter that they had spoken to a few of the above – I assume that that's the 35 – and that they were willing to bring their names forward. They felt certain that many others would, if approached, as long as they were guaranteed confidentiality.

Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly – in fact, I think I'm the one that stands in this House day after day and supports their request for confidentiality and anonymity. However, Mr. Speaker, other than speaking here today, I can't convey that to the employees because not even one signature was there for me to reply to. So I have said that if they wish to provide their names to me, I will hold them in confidence and then approach their concerns, those that are specific, with the commission.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What information concerning interference with enforcement cases at the Alberta Securities Commission does the minister now have in her possession?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have references in that letter. Most of the information in that letter – and I think it was published on the front page of the *National Post*, so I don't think it's a secret – is around human resource or employment or workplace issues, but there were references to the regulatory side. In my recollection, I have a letter from one of the previous employees who worked in the enforcement division. I have a letter, which I think has also been made public, from another previous employee in the same area.

What is difficult is that they refer to things that they didn't agree with on the regulatory side, but they are not very specific. It's very difficult to deal with something when they do not give you a specific example or case. So that's two. I've had probably three or four letters that I've seen to date from the public inquiring about this as well as a letter from I think you'd call this lady an advocate from eastern Canada and two offers of help from consultants that work in this industry in eastern Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to get to the bottom of this, so when will the Minister of Finance do the right thing and call a full public inquiry into the controversy at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have complete confidence in the Auditor General of the province of Alberta. Absolute confidence. The Auditor General will do his audit of the Alberta Securities Commission. He has agreed to bring on some extra people to give this a priority and to bring the results to us just as quickly as he possibly can.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A detailed examination of the Project Stanley scheme here in Alberta written by Mr.

Seabron Adamson, Enron's hired consultant, estimates that the cost to power consumers due to Project Stanley was \$45 million in one single day. To the Premier: has the government on behalf of power consumers asked for a refund of the more than \$45 million that Enron's Project Stanley cost the Alberta Power Pool in one single day?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge, but I'll have the hon. minister respond.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The \$45 million does not take into account the legislated hedges. I've said over and over again that Albertans were protected, that that money would have gone back into the Power Pool, and that anything that was above a certain capped rate that any of the generators could have had prior to the power purchase arrangements being sold – they were protected. There was no way in which \$45 million could have benefited at all Enron.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Energy: has anyone from the Department of Energy or the market surveillance administrator's office on behalf of power consumers interviewed Mr. Seabron Adamson, the author of this report? Have you talked to the author?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there was an extrapolation in that report of \$45 million. It's correct in that, but it failed to take into account the legislated hedges that would have seen that all of those monies that were above the capped amounts at that stage would have gone back to consumers. It was put in place to protect consumers. It was put in place while there was an introduction and transition to deregulation, getting accustomed to the new rules. If there was any volatility of that kind in the marketplace, consumers would be protected.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that the Frontier Economics report was available on the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's website since April of 2003, when did the Alberta Department of Energy or the market regulators first review this document?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we're talking some time ago. I don't have the specific date. I am fully aware that this has been known and has been reviewed, and in that case, to ensure that Albertans were protected, the market surveillance administrator did look at this. They did examine it and ensure that Albertans have been protected.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Health Care Privatization

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During February my NDP opposition colleagues and I travelled around the province to hear first-hand Albertans' concerns and solutions for our health care system. Albertans told us that they want a more comprehensive system where public funding covers not only hospitals and doctors but, eventually, needed drugs, home care, and long-term care.

Albertans told us that they wanted a stronger public system rather than endless experimentation with delisting, user-pay, and privatization schemes that cost more and deliver less. My question is to the Premier. Why won't the Premier admit that the reason that he keeps pushing the failed privatization agenda is to enable private health care corporations to pick the pockets of taxpayers and not because it will do anything to fix health care or give Albertans the health system they want and deserve?

1:50

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The health care symposium is not about private, for-profit health care. It's about looking at what exists in other jurisdictions and finding out what works and what doesn't work and discarding those things that don't work and considering those things that do work. There is nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, I think it's an extremely good initiative, something that has never been done before in this province. The ultimate goal, of course, is to achieve sustainability in the health care system so that it's there for you and me when we need it.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, if the objective is to eliminate those things that don't work, will the Premier then cancel the provision of joint replacement and cataract surgery in private clinics in Calgary, which cost more and have longer waiting lists?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that to be true. I do know that it has taken tremendous pressure off the public system. It simply makes sense. It simply makes sense that if you can go someplace else, you don't go to the public system. It involves simple mathematics. You know, the more people who don't go to the public system, the less pressure there will be on the public system. It makes sense. It's mathematically correct.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, math has never been the Premier's strong suit.

If in fact it costs more and provides longer waiting lists and if there is no public option in Calgary, why is it preferred to do it through private delivery, Mr. Premier?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, it's poppycock what he talks about. You know, if he can't understand me and very, very simple arithmetic, maybe he can understand the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time that the Calgary health authority signed a contract with HRC for hip and joint replacement, it added an extra capacity to treat 500 people who had considerable pain and suffering while they waited on long lists. It's true that we still have a lot of people on this, 4,800 at last count last week, but we are making a difference. The new process with the arthroplasty and the work that we're doing in the three clinics across Alberta: we'll continue that. We are enhancing the service; we're not detracting from the service.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Natural Gas Rebates

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past few years this

government has recognized the extra expense to Albertans coming from the increased cost of natural gas. Though we understand that we live in a world where energy prices are dictated by commodity markets, it's nevertheless made Albertans rather fearful to open their gas bills every month, especially in the wintertime. Albertans are also grateful for the natural gas rebate, which has been in effect for these past few years, but it's due to end early in 2006. Greenhouse operators are especially concerned in order to plan for their future. My question today is to the Minister of Energy. Does the minister intend to renew this rebate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The natural gas rebate program was put in over a three-year period, and he's correct in mentioning that it's scheduled to end in the spring of 2006. As part of that, there was a commitment that we would undertake a review of that. Our department has already begun some initial review of that program, and that will likely be completed later this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: would the minister agree to extending the rebate indefinitely and making it for a full 12 months rather than for just five months?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, while I would like to emphasize that Albertans have benefited tremendously by this – over half a billion dollars have been given to Albertans in a time of high prices of natural gas, when we received the royalties, to see that Albertans benefited from their Alberta energy advantage – I would say that it's a little premature at this stage to say whether that program would be indefinitely continued. That's part of the review process that we're undertaking.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: if the outcome of the review were to suggest not extending or renewing this rebate, will he then consider a rebate for those rural users such as greenhouses, exotic oil processors, and irrigators, some of whose bills are in excess of \$30,000 per month and some of whom may not qualify for any rebate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to highlight in light of those commercial greenhouse operators, forage dehydrators, grain dryers, agriculture irrigators that the program was actually modified to see that they could accommodate their months of highest usage. They could choose any five months in the year where they had the highest usage and apply for the rebate on those months. They can yet have through to June of this year to apply for that if they have missed it for the 2004-05 year, and we would encourage them to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Midwifery Services

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thursday, May 5, marks the International Day of the Midwife, but midwives in Alberta are

finding it increasingly difficult to operate because of a lack of recognition and funding. In 1997 money was put toward developing the integration of midwifery services evaluation project, and since then the entire midwifery community has been anxiously awaiting a decision. My questions today are all to the Minister of Health and Wellness. When will the integration of midwifery services evaluation project report, now eight years old, be released publicly?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, although I cannot tell the hon. member opposite when the report will be released publicly, I can assure you that there is still work being done relative to the Health Professions Act relative to the integration of service delivery by other health professionals and disciplines. We have been paying attention to what the midwives have been saying, that they can work with us, and with the inception of primary care I look forward to the day when even more service involvement can happen because of the involvement of midwives.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: will the minister restore the position of consumer representative back to the Midwifery Health Disciplines Committee?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I have been looking at a number of the committees that have been providing advice and support in the health care delivery system. I have not yet made a decision relative to that, but I would welcome the hon. member to provide me a briefing on how she believes that that would be an important addition to the committee.

Ms Blakeman: Happy to, Madam Minister.

The third question to the same minister: given that midwife-attended home births cost the system \$2,800 compared to a \$4,100 price tag for a hospital delivery, when will the government instigate reforms for a sustainable health care system and include midwifery services under health care coverage?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly it's an important distinction the hon. member has made, but quality health care isn't all about examining the bottom line. Quality health care is about engaging in those practices that deliver the health care, as it should be, to people who are in need of it. The hon. member has pointed out the cost-effectiveness of midwives. We've had some conversation between the other partners – the physicians, family practitioners, and others – and I know that midwives anxiously await the results of that. When we're ready, we will provide further information to the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Health Symposium

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Health care is a great concern for my constituents as well as for Albertans and Canadians at large. My constituents worry about access to and quality of health care. They also worry about the increase in public spending on health care and the cost to themselves. Given that tomorrow there is a symposium in Calgary with international experts, my first question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister explain why the government is hosting this symposium?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the most important reason is that in Canada we rank third out of the OECD countries on the amount of money we're spending. Alberta has consistently been one of the biggest spenders in health care.

However, in terms of performance, Mr. Speaker, while we have an amazing health care system, a wonderful, publicly funded health care system, we only rank about middle of the pack in performance. We believe that the opportunity to listen to 27 speakers from nine countries will enhance not only the regional health authorities' understanding of some of the best practices elsewhere, but we'll all learn from that exchange of ideas and information.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:00

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the subject of health care is heavily politicized and my constituents have been confused by political campaigns, my straight-to-the-point question is to the same minister. Will the symposium lead to increased privatization in Alberta?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that our critics would like to say that we're challenging the Canada Health Act. We believe that it's about improving quality. It's about improving access. It's about improving patient care. It's not about challenging the Canada Health Act. It's about doing the right thing for Albertans so that they continue to support a system that they know is better than in most places anywhere in the world.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Centralized Teacher Bargaining

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government tends to centralize power, which has consistently hurt the ability of local authorities to carry out their mandates. Local school boards are charged with bargaining but have been stripped of their ability to raise money, and the province hasn't always funded the local settlements. Some school boards are now supporting a move to centralized bargaining despite considerable evidence that such schemes don't work. My question is to the Minister of Education. Is the minister prepared to implement this centralized bargaining model despite the fact that it is opposed by teachers and close to half of the school boards across this province?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the hon. member is referencing recommendation 81(a) as it appears in the Alberta Commission on Learning report, which called for a province-wide or provincial bargaining association to be established. Now, that particular motion went forward. It was supported by the Alberta School Boards Association membership, and I expect to receive a copy of it any day so that I can review it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What specific evidence does the minister have that centralized bargaining will produce more productive labour relations or superior educational outcomes for communities than local bargaining? What evidence does he have?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Alberta Commission on Learning did an incredible job with an enormous amount of in-

depth study and review of best practices and various types of bargaining models before they made that recommendation. I'm sure that if the member wishes, we might be able to find some of that information for him. The fact is that they brought forward the recommendation because they perceived there to be an imbalance between the way the ATA, the Alberta Teachers' Association, was able to negotiate versus the way individual boards were able to negotiate.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister considering moving educational decision-making even further away from the local level by eliminating elected school boards and appointing regional boards across this province?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think the key word is, obviously, "local," and this was a decision made by those locals on the weekend. As soon as I have a chance to review it with the Alberta School Boards Association and perhaps other education stakeholders, that will be a time, then, to give an appropriate answer to those kinds of questions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe we can learn more about this issue. Alberta's Commission on Learning made 95 recommendations to the provincial government. A lot of progress has been made on the 86 accepted recommendations, but some are still under review. Recommendation 81, for example, called for a legislated employer bargaining model, but some people are concerned that a provincial employer bargaining association might weaken local relationships between school boards and local ATA members. My question to the Minister of Education: can the minister explain the true purpose of recommendation 81 and why it has been delayed?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, recommendation 81(a) sought to correct what the Alberta Commission on Learning saw as an imbalance between a very powerful and highly structured Alberta Teachers' Association in comparison with a loosely knit group of local school boards. Those were words that the Alberta Commission on Learning used or words to that effect. It's proven to be a very sensitive issue. At the time that it was brought forward to the government, the government said that this would require further review and study, so it went to the Alberta School Boards Association. They did a review. They did a study. They did a preliminary vote in November of 2004. That vote said: go ahead and find a model and bring it back. That model took time to develop, and that really is part of what the delay has been about.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How will the outcome of this weekend's vote by the Alberta School Boards Association affect local bargaining?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, if government were to accept what the local school boards accepted this past weekend, it would really mean that local bargaining would become centralized bargaining, and you would have a parity of models. What the ATA currently has, the Alberta School Boards Association would then have, so essentially that's what would happen.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question: can the minister tell us what the next steps are to address the results of the ASBA vote?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I believe I have a meeting already set with the chairperson of the Alberta School Boards Association. The purpose of that meeting is for me to first of all receive a copy of this new model, which responds to recommendation 81(a), and at the same time have an opportunity to chat about it and review it in more detail, discuss it, and at the same time, too, to meet with other stakeholders. I understand that the Alberta Teachers' Association have also contacted my office, and they want a meeting, so I'll meet with them as well.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important to also note that there was a second vote that was taken, and that one has to be looked at in tandem with 81(a). It's generally referred to as 81(c), and in a nutshell that particular vote was with respect to what can and cannot be bargained for should a centralized unit in fact come into place. So things like pupil-teacher ratios, classroom size, minutes of instruction would all be put on the table.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Gang Violence

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Early Sunday morning the community of Mill Woods once again was jolted by the sounds of gunfire. This incident caused yet another fatality, the third in the past two weeks. Even when such events are targeted and not random, residents of my constituency are extremely concerned that the next bullet may hit them or their children. My question is to the Solicitor General. What is the Solicitor General doing to facilitate antigang activity by the various municipal police services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was indeed a tragic incident that occurred this weekend, where the life of a 19 year old was taken. Again, the Edmonton Police Service homicide unit and the gang unit are investigating. There are highly skilled and trained officers that are investigating this incident.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the larger question is the drugs that are involved in 98 per cent of these cases. It's just shown that it took the life of a 19-year-old boy. Our condolences are, obviously, with the family of this young man.

Mr. Speaker, gangs are a breeding ground for organized crime. This government has supported the Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta as well as the integrated response to organized crime by providing funding for them each year. As well, these officers that belong to these units work with the Edmonton Police Service, the RCMP, and the Calgary Police Service. They do have the skills to investigate this, and they, obviously, are at this present time.

Mrs. Mather: To the same minister: given that more constables on the street are the most effective way to fight crime, will the minister commit to providing additional funding to major urban police services to hire more new officers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Solicitor General did

provide the Edmonton Police Service with \$10 million in municipal policing grant funding this year, that they can use towards whatever they feel is necessary for their police service budget. We've increased the amount of funding by \$6 million, from \$37 million to \$43 million, for municipal police grants this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. Again to the same minister: can the Solicitor General tell us what types of preventative strategies are being developed to help keep our kids from being drawn into the gang lifestyle?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of programs throughout the province. They do vary by school board in conjunction with the school resource officer; that is, a police officer that works in the community. A number of those programs are done by the local police service, whether it's a municipal service or the RCMP. In fact, some special constables that are hired by the municipalities are as well providing instructional and prevention programs to school classes from grade 7 to grade 12. Some of those programs include DARE. Some include some other projects.

2:10

As well, Mr. Speaker, the school resource officers that are in our high schools and in our junior highs are a tremendous resource for school boards and for those schools to utilize to speak to the kids, to let them know that drugs and their involvement in drugs are, obviously, a criminal activity. They do see the bigger picture in the fact that a number of young lives have been taken throughout Alberta in the last few months.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Securities Commission (continued)

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister is not exactly showing stellar leadership when it comes to the Alberta Securities Commission. One day the minister vows to protect whistle-blowers, only to be sandbagged by the ASC commissioners, who fire the director of administrative services while he's on medical leave. Then the ASC hires a forensic auditor to try to catch other whistle-blowers. Finally, the ASC refuses to co-operate with the Auditor General's investigation called by this minister. My question to the Minister of Finance is simply this. When will the minister have had enough of the senior brass at the Securities Commission thumbing its collective nose at her and the province's Auditor General, and when will she take decisive action to put a stop to it?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in an earlier answer, the Auditor General and the Alberta Securities Commission have been exchanging letters of audit and responses to letters of audit. This is not uncommon. What is uncommon is that we trade them and exchange them in the press. Because of the interest in this, a lot of that is happening right now. Any government department that has been audited by the Auditor General's office would probably exchange a letter of audit, or we'd get a letter of audit and respond to it.

Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear in my earlier answer that the Auditor General, subsequent to their discussion last week, is submitting a letter to the Alberta Securities Commission tomorrow,

Tuesday, on the audit. The Auditor General will conduct his audit of the Alberta Securities Commission. Under the act that is in this Legislature, the Auditor General has the power and the authority to conduct that audit, and he will do it.

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, on the question of letters of audit and audit letters going, it seems to us, the public, that the Auditor General should have every right to go in and do the audit, as the minister wants. What is the holdup?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it's not a holdup. I mean, this is I think moving along quite quickly. They had discussions last week, exchanged letters, and on Tuesday – that's the Auditor General's time frame, not mine. I think that in view of all of the activities that the Auditor General has, he's moving this along quite expeditiously.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Securities Commission operates under statute, and if any of the members wish to read those statutes, they would understand their obligations. I think the Alberta Securities Commission understands their obligations. I don't think that the minister has to direct them or call them or let them know how to interpret their legislation. Certainly, I have every confidence that the Auditor General understands his power and authority, and he will carry that out.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, to the minister: does it not seem passing strange to this minister that the Auditor General, who, we said, is a top officer of this Legislature, has to go hat in hand to the Securities Commission before they'll offer him the right to do what he's supposed to do?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, that speaks to maybe the naïveté of the member, or maybe he just doesn't understand that in any audit process it is an accepted procedure that you have an audit letter, or a letter of audit. It outlines the parameters of your audit and prepares whoever you're auditing for to have the material available to you. That is done in every audit that I've been involved with, in any department that I've had responsibilities for. That is a common practice. What is not common is that we share them with the press.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

SuperNet

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. [interjections] Yes, this man right here. In February the minister announced a completion plan for the Alberta SuperNet. We were told that rural communities would be able to connect to Internet service providers by April 30. That date has come and gone. Have we hit the mark, or is the SuperNet schedule still falling behind?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We reached a very significant milestone on Friday afternoon. Our completion plan definitely hit the mark. I'm pleased to report that 421 of 429 communities are now ready to connect Internet service providers via the Alberta SuperNet. We have eight more rural communities to go, and we're working closely with each community to jointly address SuperNet construction needs as quickly as we possibly can.

I'm proud of the work that we've done with Bell and Axia and

with the efforts over the last two months that they did to make this happen. The rewards are clear. We're able to bring high-speed to all rural communities. What a huge milestone to meet and in our centennial year. It's great to live in Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Webber: Again to the same minister: I'm wondering why there are eight remaining communities still not hooked up. When can we expect to be able to take advantage of the SuperNet?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, at this point we only have eight more points of presence to go, and we did not schedule these sites for April completion because we knew that there were challenges in a few different areas of the province. Throughout the SuperNet's project it's been a joint effort with each individual community, and there are local construction needs to consider. The remaining sites will be completed between now and September 30. That's the date we announced that the whole network would be complete.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Webber: Thank you. Again to the same minister: can he tell us what the next step is toward full SuperNet completion?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes breaking large projects into smaller phases means that we can make a better tracking process, and we can track it better. We did that in February when we announced that we would be completing in three different phases. We hit our first target, and now nearly 400 – 400 – rural SuperNet communities are ready to connect to service providers. The next milestone is June 30, when the majority of our facilities will be connected. In February when we made this announcement, we had less than 500 connected, and today we have over a thousand connected. That's significant progress.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. AISH clients have recently received news that the long-overdue increase to AISH payments will be implemented by this government. The 5 per cent of AISH clients who live in assisted care facilities have not been so fortunate. Albertans with disabilities so severe that they require daily living assistance in a care facility are provided with room and board, which is paid to the institution, and a measly personal living allowance of \$175 a month. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Why are the AISH benefits increases not being implemented for all AISH recipients, including those in the assisted care facilities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member indicated, we do have a specialized program within AISH, which is known as the modified AISH program. It is for about 2 per cent of Albertans, which is approximately 800 Albertans of low income that have a severe disability. Those people reside usually in a long-term care setting that can provide the type of assistance that they do need,

but some are moving to designated assisted living, which is a bit of a lower level of medical care. The amount of funding that is available for people with modified AISH is based on a per diem set through Health and Wellness of \$42 per day, which is a little over \$1,200, and that includes, then, accommodation, meals, laundry, health care needs, prescription drug costs, et cetera. Quite a wide range. Also, they do receive, as the member indicated, \$175 per month for their personal care needs.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the same minister: does this government consider the needs of assisted living care clients to be less than those who are able to live independently?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, not at all. In fact, I'm surprised the hon. member asked that question. As I said, this is a very specialized program for people with a severe disability that reside in long-term care centres, and in fact the amount of funding that they receive is above the basic AISH program. With the basic AISH program, as you know, we've recently increased the benefit to \$950 immediately and a thousand dollars by the end of the year, but the AISH client that the member is speaking of is a client who receives a benefit of almost \$1,400 a month for all of that listing that I had described regarding health care needs and whatnot and who also receives a benefit of \$175 per month.

Ms Pastoor: Again to the same minister: will this government review the level of funding it provides to disabled Albertans living in care facilities?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, yes, I'm pleased to answer that as well, Mr. Speaker. That's in keeping with recommendation 11 in the AISH review report. The chair of the AISH review, the Member for Strathcona, who is also the chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, has been meeting with staff in the department. Part of that will be the modified AISH benefit. I think you're asking the question about the \$175 benefit, and that is being reviewed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Regulatory Reform

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has recently praised British Columbia's efforts at cutting red tape and reducing regulations. My question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. While Alberta is known as one of the most effective and efficient governments in Canada, might there be a need to follow in the footsteps of British Columbia?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I certainly don't mind giving credit where credit is due. The B.C. government is well on their way to regulatory reform, and I believe that they could have a good model for success. I don't think we have to reinvent the wheel here. I think we can look at other places where there's success. In fact, I plan on and I've been trying to get some meetings with them, and I think I'll be meeting with some of the people from B.C. that brought this in as soon as their election is over and when our House comes out of sitting.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: with Alberta's new regulatory review initiative will this focus on the number of regulations we have in place or the cost of enforcing those regulations?

Mr. Ouellette: We're in the midst of defining our regulatory secretariat's mandate and where the focus should be, Mr. Speaker, but I would expect that it will encompass both the number of regulations and the cost of those remaining regulations.

Interestingly enough, I was in Washington, DC, last week where I discovered, among many other things, that the Gettysburg address has 266 words. There are 1,322 words in the Declaration of Independence. Even the Lord's Prayer has 66 words. Yet I'm told that one state's regulation on the sale of cabbage totalled 26,000 words.

Of course, the need for regulatory reform is not confined to south of the border, Mr. Speaker. We will forge ahead with regulatory review and cutting red tape and streamlining services to benefit all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will this new initiative on regulatory review be a one-time-only initiative, or do you envision it to be an ongoing effort?

Mr. Ouellette: Without question, Mr. Speaker, regulatory review is here to stay, at least as long as this government is in place, which will no doubt be during my lifetime and my children's lifetime. Regulatory review would become a permanent feature of this government's ongoing efforts to strengthen the Alberta advantage.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Support for Active Living

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sports play an important part in building a healthy community and enhancing our quality of life. It fosters the kind of spirit that contributes to a vibrant community. This government has pledged to take steps to make Albertans the healthiest people in the world. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Given that the recent budget did not provide any additional funding for sports and recreation, does this mean that active living is not a priority for this government?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, quite to the contrary. If one looks at the budget for the Department of Community Development, significant amounts of money have been spent through centennial legacy projects for restoring aging infrastructure for recreational facilities. We look also at what we've done with parks as an example, a quadrupling of the budget for parks, clearly an important part of our recreational infrastructure, \$17 million reinvested in the Canmore Nordic Centre, a remarkable piece of infrastructure required for sport and recreation.

I think that the hon. member needs to expand his understanding and definition of what recreation is, of what sport is. It's not simply what's funded through the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation, but there is an enormous infrastructure worth hundreds of millions of dollars in this province that allows kids to play hockey, allows children to play on sports fields, to be out in the

winter at recreation venues throughout the province. So, Mr. Speaker, we have a very strong commitment to this.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: given that the Alberta sport plan was submitted to the government in 2003 but has still not been implemented, will the minister tell us if he's planning to consider implementing any of the 180 strategies put forward?

Mr. Mar: The simple answer is yes, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta sport plan is a document of some extensive recommendations. At this point we've looked at a number of different options in terms of getting the sport plan out there and how it might be funded. We've taken some steps that have gone beyond the sport plan. As an example, we recently met with the province of British Columbia and cosigned an agreement with that government with respect to joint use of Olympic infrastructure facilities so that Canadian athletes will have access to some of the best facilities both in British Columbia and Alberta in their efforts to become medal winners at the 2010 Winter Olympics in British Columbia. So there are steps that we're taking with respect to the sport plan. It is not a complete set of responses at this point, and there are some elements where we've gone beyond that which has been set out in that plan, sir.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: will this government commit to implementing long-term policies to support our grassroots and high-performance athletes?

Mr. Mar: We already have, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of a number of members today, but first of all the historic comment of the day.

2:30 Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: On May 2, 1923, Florence Lassandro, née Filumena Costanzo, was hung for the murder of Constable Steven Lawson at the Fort Saskatchewan jail. She was the first and only woman to be hanged in Alberta.

In 2003 the Calgary Opera and the Banff Centre commissioned and produced an operatic version of her involvement in a sordid tale of booze smuggling and crime in the Crownsnest Pass. The opera *Filumena* opened Canada's National Arts Centre's two-week festival of Alberta culture, Alberta Scene, in Ottawa last Thursday.

Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and privilege to introduce to you and through to you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 22 visitors from Holy Cross collegiate in Strathmore. There are 16 grades 7 and 8 students as well as Mrs. Holly Rawlek, Michele Barrett, Shirley Boiteau, Mr. Glydon, Mrs. Bauhuis, and Mrs. Murray. I would ask them all to rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so happy today to introduce to you and through you the second half of 150 students, teachers, and parent helpers from the Percy Baxter school in Whitecourt. They are currently studying local government and are visiting the Legislature today to learn more about what goes on in this building. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Alberta's Research Environment

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government's 20-year strategic plan talks about how it will achieve the goals of unleashing innovation and becoming a leader in learning. Two recent announcements move us closer to this commitment to building a world-class research environment in Alberta and highlight the province's ability to attract and retain the high-quality professionals needed to move the innovation agenda forward.

Last week the province announced that Dr. Stuart Kauffman, a medical scientist known around the world for his groundbreaking protocols, has chosen Alberta as the place to work on his research, which involves new ways to treat cancer. Dr. Kauffman is the latest in a line of world-renowned researchers brought to the province by the Alberta Informatics Circle of Research Excellence, otherwise known as iCORE, which was established in Alberta in 1999. iCORE was created to strengthen the province's university-based research system and attract top talent to the province. Alberta is now home to some of the world's best researchers working in emerging areas like wireless communications, artificial intelligence, and nanocomputing.

Mr. Speaker, another important incentive for keeping and retaining graduate students is scholarships. Last week the Minister of Advanced Education announced that more than half a million dollars in scholarships are being awarded to 35 graduate students studying in a variety of fields, including clinical psychology, electrical engineering, neuroscience, and molecular and cellular biology.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans should be proud of the investments the government is making in the future and the world-class research environment being created in this province. Alberta continues to be one of the best places to live, work, and raise a family, and by supporting this talent and fostering an environment for education and innovation, this province definitely has a bright future ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Emergency Preparedness

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about the importance of emergency preparedness. Earlier today I accompanied the Minister of Municipal Affairs as we demonstrated the emergency public warning system to municipalities and broadcasters in the constituencies of Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat. This event showcased the province-wide system and how it uses radio, television, and cable broadcasts to warn Albertans of life-threatening disasters and emergencies. With this implementation in southeast Alberta it is my understanding that the entire province is now covered.

As this week is Emergency Preparedness Week, it is important to all Albertans to know the role they play in keeping themselves and

their families safe. Floods, fires, tornadoes, and severe weather are some of the scenarios that can occur to any Albertan at any time. Being prepared means understanding the risks to your area, devising a family emergency plan, and making sure you have necessary resources on hand. Work with your family to prepare an emergency plan. Make sure your family understands the plan, and practise it at least once a year. Further, be sure your child's school has your current contact information. You should also be familiar, Mr. Speaker, with the emergency plan for your workplace and keep a list of emergency numbers close by.

Having emergency kits on hand is another essential element of being prepared. Kits for your home should include basic equipment like waterproof matches, a small flashlight and batteries, and a can opener. You'll also need to have food and water available and should also include candles, a crank or battery-operated radio, prescription medications, and copies of your important documents.

These are just some of the steps Albertans can take in preparing for an emergency. Alberta is seen as a leader in emergency management by helping Albertans, its municipalities, and other stakeholders prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Wetaskiwin and Camrose Leaders of Tomorrow Awards

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize the efforts of young volunteers in my constituency and the achievements of eight of my constituents.

Each year both Wetaskiwin and Camrose hold separate Leaders of Tomorrow award ceremonies. These awards recognize young people who have made exceptional contributions to their communities by volunteering. Between the two ceremonies there were 68 young people nominated for their commitment to volunteering. While only eight received an award, the appreciation of the hard work of all those nominated was shown at both of these ceremonies.

On April 18 four outstanding Albertans from Wetaskiwin and the surrounding area were recognized for their efforts. They are Destiny Schmidt, Katherine Fraser, Sonja Fedorak, and Christopher Kirwan. On April 21 the achievements of four exceptional young people from Camrose and the surrounding area were acknowledged by their community. They are Kalynn Dobos, Kari Arnston, Jordan Lee, and Erika Mundel.

Those honoured during these ceremonies ranged from six to 25 years of age. The causes to which they donated their time include church organizations, mentoring other young people, helping out at school and with sporting activities. While the organizations which benefit from these volunteering efforts are as different as the young people who donate their time, one characteristic binds these people together. This is a desire to make their community a better place to live.

These individuals have been recognized by their communities as leaders of tomorrow, and their actions leave no doubt that they are also leaders of today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Nursing Week

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise today in recognition of Nursing Week, which will be celebrated across Canada and around the world from May 9 to May 15. The

theme for the week will be Patients First: Safety Always, which is very reflective of how committed our nurses are to ensuring that Albertans receive the best-quality treatment available.

Nurses are often the front lines of health care systems and play an incredibly large role in providing top-quality health care for all Albertans. A nurse's job and dedication doesn't end with their shift either. Countless charity and volunteer organizations depend heavily on the time and expertise donated by the incredible people who take up nursing as a profession.

Nurses don't just work in large hospitals in our major cities. In rural Alberta especially our nurses help administer care to nursing homes, home-care programs, clinics, and a variety of other services, including a very useful Health Link call centre. They are critical in ensuring and maintaining a high quality of life for rural Albertans, and we need to continue to encourage nurses to relocate in rural Alberta.

We need to remember not to take for granted all the hard work nurses do to improve Albertans' lives and our quality of life. I ask all Albertans to go out of their way during Nursing Week to thank one of our wonderful nurses for the job that they do every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

2:40 Events Attended by Member for Calgary-Varsity

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the evening of Saturday, April 16, members of the Canoffer group, which began with 10 families who had originally immigrated to Fort McMurray from the southern state of Kerala in India in 1980, held their 25th annual fundraising banquet. Over the quarter century the group's membership has grown by hundreds, and their aid donations to a variety of countries and causes have grown by the thousands. Local CBC radio host and Calgary volunteer extraordinaire Jeff Collins was the emcee for this great event that I had the honour of attending in my Calgary-Varsity constituency.

During the afternoon of Sunday, April 17, my wife and I had the pleasure of attending the Chrysalis 10th annual achievement awards, which recognized the tremendous volunteering accomplishments of developmentally challenged individuals, their families, and a whole host of volunteers and corporate sponsors who recognize the value of these individuals' contributions and provide numerous workplace opportunities for them to demonstrate their talents. The Chrysalis sponsors and business partners include Casablanca Video, Chrysalis Awards Committee, Chrysalis Charitable Foundation, Chrysalis staff and volunteers, Community Natural Foods, Country 105 FM, Leland Industries Inc., Marjorie and Francis Lefaire, the Red Cross Society, and the Delta Bow Valley Hotel.

I've never seen so much pride and so many hugs at a single event. My hope and that of the Chrysalis Society is that the Alberta government will step up to the plate by recognizing and providing funding for this highly supportive program.

This past weekend at the University of Calgary the public, including all members of this Legislature, were invited to attend a health care conference co-sponsored by the nonpartisan Friends of Medicare and the Parkland Institute entitled Weighing the Evidence. The hon. members for Edmonton-Centre, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Edmonton-Calder, Calgary-Mountain View, and myself along with over 300 concerned Albertans heard international, national, and provincial experts praise the Canadian system of inclusive, publicly delivered, administered, accountable, and affordable medicare.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Definition of Marriage

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had the privilege of attending a pro traditional marriage rally in Mill Woods, right here in Edmonton. At the rally Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary expressed his concerns over the complaint filed against him with the Alberta Human Rights Commission. He questioned how a pastoral letter written by him and published in a Calgary newspaper could cause a complaint to be filed against him. This really is an attack on his rights to freedom of religion, speech, and association.

The Supreme Court's reference decision regarding the definition of marriage did not give an answer to the fourth question posed by the federal Liberal government, which asked if opposite-sex requirements for marriage are consistent with the Charter. The Supreme Court has stated that to answer this question has the potential to undermine the government's stated goal of equal civil marriage. There is no compelling basis for jeopardizing acquired rights, which they say would be the potential outcome of answering question 4.

The court also pointed out that it was only the Attorney General of Canada who has publicly adopted the position that the opposite-sex requirement for marriage was unconstitutional, not Parliament or the Supreme Court. This is contrary to their decision in *Egan versus Canada*, where it was stated that same-sex marriage, "neither in its purpose nor in its effect . . . constitute an infringement of the fundamental values sought to be protected by the Charter." The court did not say that the government should change the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples, only that it was within its jurisdiction to do so.

It is evident that the Supreme Court has given provinces the opportunity to defend traditional marriage. Alberta is in the position to do it. This government can respond to the majority of Albertans and its own caucus and entrench and protect traditional marriage in Alberta for the benefit of all Canadians. All we have to do is nothing to lose this battle. We can protect traditional marriage, but we must act now.

Calendar of Special Events

The Speaker: Hon. members, as this is the first day that we're sitting in the month of May, at this time I'll advise hon. members of the various dates and weeks that are being commemorated in the month of May.

We already know that the year 2005 is the International Year of Microcredit and the International Year for Sport and Physical Education, but more importantly, it's also the Year of the Veteran.

May is Cystic Fibrosis Month, Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, Medic-Alert Month, Huntington's Disease Awareness Month, Speech and Hearing Awareness Month, Hepatitis Awareness Month, National Fitness Month, Hearing Awareness Month, Museum Month, Motorcycle and Bicycle Safety Awareness Month, Asian Pacific Heritage Month, Red Shield Appeal Month, Child Find's Green Ribbon of Hope campaign month, and the Light the Way Home campaign. April 1 to May 30 is also Girl Guides sandwich cookie weeks, or month. April 23 to May 23 is National Physiotherapy Month. April 25 to May 1 is Library Week.

May 1 was May Day. May 1 was also the Annual Hike for Hospice Palliative Care. May 1 to May 7 is National Summer Safety Week, as it is Spinal Health Week, as it is Emergency Preparedness Week, as it is National Forest Week, as it is International Composting Awareness Week, as it is International Youth Week, as it also is North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, as it also is Drinking Water Week and Allergy Awareness Week.

May 2 to May 8 is Respect for Law Week, as May 2 to May 8 is also National Hospice Palliative Care Week, as it also is National Mental Health Week. May 3 is World Press Freedom Day. May 3 is also World Asthma Day. May 4 to May 5 is Provincial Leave a Legacy Week. May 5, later in this week, is Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah. Also, 60 years ago was the armistice, the signing of peace, between the German invaders and Holland and the liberation of Holland. It's also the day on which the bully and coward Adolf Hitler killed himself.

May 5 is also the International Day of the Midwife. May 5 to May 7 is the multiple sclerosis carnation campaign. May 6 is International No Diet Day. May 6 to May 15 is Information Technology Week. May 8 is World Red Cross Day, as May 8 is also Optimist Day of Non-Violence. May 8 to 15 is Alberta Crime Prevention Week. May 8 is also Mother's Day. May 9 to May 15 is National Nursing Week, as it also is National Mining Week. May 10 is National Denim Day. May 10 is International Day for Physical Activity. May 12 is International Nursing Day, as it also is Canada Health Day, as it also is Fibromyalgia Awareness Day. May 14 is Raise the Flag Day. May 15 is International Day of Families.

May 15 to May 21 is National Police Week, as it also is Emergency Medical Services Awareness Week. May 16 to May 19 is the Children's Forum. May 16 to May 22 is Intergenerational Week. May 17 is World Telecommunication Day. May 18 is International Museums Day. May 20 to May 26 is National Road Safety Week. May 21 is the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.

May 22 to May 28 is Safe Boating Week. May 22 is International Day for Biological Diversity. May 23 is Victoria Day. May 24 to May 27 is Aboriginal Awareness Week. May 25 is National Missing Children's Day. May 25 to June 1 is the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. May 29 is International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, as it also is Schizophrenia Walk the World day, as it also is World Partnership Walk day. May 30 to June 5 is National Sun Awareness Week, and May 31 is World No-Tobacco Day.

So that's important in the event that members want to give recognitions this month. We don't want to miss anybody.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition from some good Albertans from the fine Alberta communities of Brooks, Lacombe, Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood Park, and the beautiful Stampede city of Calgary. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 104 fine Albertans on this petition.

Thank you.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to table on behalf of the hon. leader of the NDP opposition copies of

the final report from the series of public hearings we held across Alberta. The hearings provided an opportunity for Albertans to share their vision for a strengthened health care system.

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling this afternoon, and this is the most recently posted information, on April 25, 2005, of the current membership of Grid West. It lists here as active members the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, two representatives, Mr. Chan and Mr. Tiberi.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is a notice of amendment to Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005.

I have a second, which is also a notice of amendment to Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005. I have the copies here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that written questions standing on the Order Paper today stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Oil Sands Royalties

Q24. Mr. MacDonald moved that the following question be accepted.

How much additional revenue from synthetic crude oil and bitumen royalties does the Ministry and Department of Energy estimate will be collected per year once the royalty rate for oil sands projects increases to 25 per cent for the years 2005 to 2015?

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This written question, if it was to be answered – and I certainly hope it will be – would provide all Albertans some information in regard to the long-term revenue forecast or projection for synthetic crude oil and bitumen royalty. Certainly, whenever we look at natural gas and by-products royalties and conventional crude oil royalties, they will be in significant decline by 2015 because, particularly with conventional crude oil production, there will be significantly less even if the price remains at today's levels or even goes higher. The western Canadian sedimentary basin is a mature basin, and in light of our dependence as a government and as a province on natural resource royalties, it is an important question.

When we look at synthetic crude oil production and the royalty holidays that some projects are having or are implemented under or are developed under in the oil sands, we see a 1 per cent royalty until

all costs, including labour costs, are paid for. It's a significant royalty holiday. We've used this royalty holiday to attract billions and billions of dollars worth of investment, but at the same time we're asking workers in those construction sites to work for less. The royalty rates are generous. When the capital costs and labour costs are paid off and we start collecting 25 per cent, exactly how much will we be getting?

Now, if we go back to the budget, for instance, Mr. Speaker, for 2003 and we go to the business plan 2003-2006 on page 137, we will see that the target for the synthetic crude oil and bitumen royalty was \$141 million. If we compare it to this year's budget, the estimate on the business plan for Energy at page 213, we see where there is close to \$400 million estimated to be collected, \$393 million to be precise. So that's a significant increase. It has certainly more than doubled from the budget estimate of two years ago. If we look at the budget for this year, we again see synthetic crude oil and bitumen royalty estimates listed at \$393 million. The forecast for the year before was \$674 million. So there's a significant range of estimates and targets here. It's interesting to note that for the fiscal year 2007-08 in the business plan for this year's budget, it goes up as high as slightly over \$700 million.

If I could have the information as outlined in Written Question 24, I would be grateful. I would read it with a great deal of interest, and I'm sure other Albertans would, too, because there is an impression – whether it's right or wrong, it's not my job at this time to say – that this is a royalty giveaway. If this information could refute that impression, I think we would be doing the entire province a service.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I appreciate that it would be nice to be able to give that kind of information – he's got from 2005 to 2015 – I'm going to have to reject Written Question 24 in the sense that we do publish the three years, but when you're extrapolating out on the record, "Here's what we expect royalties to be in an actual number," it's impossible to project one year out, let alone 10 more years out, what the price of oil is going to be, not just the price of oil but the differentials. With bitumen, which is based on bitumen versus the synthetic crude levels, we've got to build some upgraders to make sure that we've got it to that level, to make sure that we reduce the amount of the differential.

There are so many involved issues in getting to a calculation not just of the west Texas intermediate worldwide price of oil but then to get to a bitumen price and then even to project precisely all of the projects, the billions of dollars that are being invested over this next time, as to when they might precisely finish those megaprojects, when they'll come on stream, at what volumes of production. There's so much activity that all we could do is start providing scenarios: here's the range of possibilities. That doesn't necessarily supply the information that's requested so that we could give that projection.

What we do is – you see that on page 213 in our business plan of Energy – provide the next three estimates of \$393 million up to \$560 million up to \$710 million in each of those years. The good thing that is happening, I guess, with respect to this is that with the higher price of oil we are seeing a faster payout of those projects with less volume so that we are going to start realizing sooner the higher rates of royalty. We've seen it already on some of Suncor's. There are about 20 other smaller projects that have reached payouts. We're going to see it on Syncrude. Probably within the next year is projected for Syncrude. So we are starting to see that realized.

We will do our best in our estimates to project that forward, but

going out for 10 years is just too far to make it worth the paper that it's written on.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In looking at the importance of this issue – that is, royalties for Albertans – one of the key questions that many are asking me in my constituency is: given that the oil sands royalties are at about 1 per cent for well into the future, how can we be sure we're getting our returns from a public resource?

3:00

Indeed, the Auditor General in 2003 and '04 recommended some changes in the way we're assessing the royalty program for heavy oil in particular with a view to being more transparent, being more clear with Albertans about what could and should be expected of the returns on this public resource. The findings that were reported at that time included a review of 10 approvals out of 48 active oil sands projects, identifying certain deficiencies, some of which the department is making progress on but others not.

I quote here from page 128 of the Auditor's report. With specific auditing of five projects out of 48 active projects they found that the risk assessment in five files was deficient because it did not deal with certain common risks to the Department. For example, the risk that a project operator may have a history of making aggressive deductions, the risk of royalties being reduced by non-arm's length sales or costs, the risk of duplicate costs being claimed in the project or in two projects owned by the same organization, or the risk that recovered costs are not being reported in full to the Department.

Secondly:

For all five files, there was no indication of the nature of the work performed to ensure costs were eligible under OSR97 [which] requires that costs be directly attributable to the project, reasonable in the circumstances, incurred by or on behalf of the project owners, incurred on or after the effective date of the project, and incurred for one of ten purposes outlined.

Finally, "all five files did not document that the costs were paid in the time period required by the OSR97".

So the question of royalties I think needs to be addressed. I think the people of Alberta deserve to know just how long these are going to be deferred by new capital projects in order to maintain the 1 per cent royalty and that there is an accountable, transparent process to make sure that the huge resources and the huge potential revenues are addressed appropriately in this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close the debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that I'm very, very disappointed to hear from the hon. minister that we are not to receive that information. Certainly, the taxpayers and people who rely on government programs would be also very, very disappointed to learn that this government for whatever reason – we can look at the price or we can look at the paydown of those development costs by those respective oil sands developers – may change, but someone over there must have an idea of where we're going to be in the future. The minister certainly quotes page 213 of the business plan for the Department of Energy, but I would encourage the hon. minister and his staff, for that matter, to also look at page 209 of the same report.

We're talking in here, Mr. Speaker, of oil production in thousands of barrels per day. We have oil sands production listed at 853,000,

and going over to the year 2010 it doubles. Surely someone over there must know what kind of royalty take we're going to get, where that production is coming from. Is it coming from facilities that have paid down their development costs, or is it from facilities that have yet to pay down their development costs? These statistics are sourced from "Alberta's Reserves 2003, Supply and Demand Outlook 2004-2013, Alberta Energy and Utilities Board." So I would urge the hon. minister to take another look at this and perhaps visit the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board and see if they now have information that is through to 2015 and give us, please, the information that we are requesting with Written Question 24.

Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board is also a source for this information in the Department of Energy's business plan. "National Energy Board: Canada's Energy Future Supply; Scenarios for Supply and Demand to 2025; Supply Push Scenario."

So there are all kinds of places where I think the minister in all sincerity could get this information. We're not asking for a figure that is going to be locked in stone, but certainly someone over there must know how we're going to be able to finance this government's expenditures in 2015 and what percentage of that will come from synthetic crude oil and bitumen royalty rates.

I think it's again a very important question. I'm again disappointed and I'm dismayed as well with the hon. Minister of Energy for being so reluctant to provide this information. I think there are organizations that would help the Department of Energy out. I realize that they're very busy these days trying to get a handle on electricity deregulation, but there have got to be some people over there that could perhaps phone the Energy and Utilities Board, the National Energy Board, or other departments to get this information. Perhaps the hon. Minister of RAGE, Restructuring and Government Efficiency, could help out if the minister's staff are all tied up trying to get a handle on and finding some solutions to electricity deregulation. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed.

Thank you.

[Written Question 24 lost]

Student Loan Defaults

Q25. Ms Blakeman moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that the following question be accepted.

What is the rate of default on Alberta student loans for students attending or graduating from all eligible institutions in Alberta broken down by institution over each of the fiscal years 1994-95 to 2003-04 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would indicate to the House and to the member who raised the question on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Currie that we would be prepared to accept the question provided that there were certain amendments which would make it more readily . . .

An Hon. Member: Answerable?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you. That was the word I was looking for: answerable.

I would therefore move an amendment to Written Question 25, that Written Question 25 be amended by striking out "attending or graduating from all eligible institutions in Alberta" and substituting "who have completed their studies," striking out "institution" and substituting "last postsecondary sector attended," striking out "fiscal" and substituting "academic," and striking out "2003-04" and substituting "2002-03."

The amended written question would then read as follows:

What is the rate of default on Alberta student loans for students who have completed their studies broken down by last postsecondary sector attended over each of the academic years 1994-95 to 2002-03 inclusive?

Mr. Speaker, in moving that amendment I would just inform the hon. members that the institutional level of rate of default information is currently not shared publicly. Rather, the information is available at the sector levels, such as the university sector, college sector, et cetera.

There are potential issues with respect to FOIP, section 16 and section 25, that may be harmful to the business interests of a private institution or economic or other interests of a public body. Therefore, sharing the institution-by-institution information, as I've indicated in response to a number of other questions that have been raised in the House earlier, would not be appropriate without having done the review and previously requested of the institutions affected the permission to share the information.

3:10

Now, as I indicated, we are reviewing that area and looking at the question of whether that type of information might be appropriate for students and parents and the public to have at hand in order to make appropriate determinations. So as we go forward, we're looking at the question as to indicating to institutions that that information will be shared, but with respect to historical information the advice we've received is that we would have to go back and make those requests, and that would be a significant pile of work to do. For that purpose, we're proposing that the question be amended to provide it on the sector level as opposed to the institutional level for the purposes of this question, not necessarily for the purposes of for always.

Default information is tracked on the basis of people who have completed their studies in the specific year in question. Information for 2003-2004 is not available because students who would have graduated in May 2004 would have a six-month grace period and then another six months before we consider the amount in default. That's why we've amended it to move the year back one year, because there are, in fact, no defaults for the 2003-2004 year as yet. Management reports associated with defaults are based on school leavers from the May 1 to April 30 period, the academic year. That's the reason for that amendment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would move these amendments so that we can answer the questions in as appropriate a way as possible without moving into potential violations of FOIP and so that we can put the information into the categories in the manner in which it's actually collected.

The Speaker: On the amendment.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm responding to the amendment that's been proposed by the Minister of Advanced Education. We believe that it's important to be able to look at this issue of rate of default of Alberta student loans based on an institution-by-institution comparison, so that's why we keep asking for the questions worded the way that we do. We're not trying to be difficult. We just believe this is the way the information should be available not only to the opposition but, as the hon. minister noted, to the public and to the parents and students themselves. So I will protest again, but I understand why the minister has offered the amendment in the way that he has.

He did not comment or I didn't hear clearly as to why there was an amendment around students "attending or graduating" to "have completed." It doesn't tell us what's happening to student loans while they're in their undergraduate years but, rather, just once they

have completed their studies. We only get the final year rather than any of the intervening years and, again, not the total sum of information that we were looking for. So I question and protest that one as well.

I understand what he's saying about the sector. I still insist on the institution, and of course it often happens that the ministry can only provide us information based on certain dates or in this case academic years rather than fiscal years and the notation that the minister has already done on the default rate, finishing the last year available.

The rest of those changes are fine with us. I still argue that we should be able to get and the ministry should be able to provide the institutional information, but I have instructions from the member whom I'm speaking on behalf of, that is the Member for Calgary-Currie, to accept the amendment with the protest that I've put on the record. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is concerning to me, and I'd like to just enlarge on what the Member for Edmonton-Centre said.

We've had a proliferation of private institutions in this province. I'm sure that the minister has got complaints from time to time. We have to know what's going on with these private institutions because students are paying out big money to go to them. They're told that these institutions follow certain criteria, certain guidelines, and they get there, and it's not what they expect. I've had complaints in the constituency about this.

I guess the minister is saying that FOIP is involved here, and I'm not sure that I understand why. Surely this doesn't ask for, you know, an individual student's records or the rest of it; it's asking for an institution's. Certainly, through student loans it's public money going into these private institutions. Surely there should be some accountability here, Mr. Speaker. If we can get the information from the U of A or NAIT or SAIT or the U of C or Mount Royal or Grant MacEwan or whatever the case may be, the same accountability should be there for these private institutions.

I don't know how FOIP works to the minister. FOIP, I thought, was for personal information that might get out. If all of a sudden you're asking how many graduated in a global sense from a particular institution, I can't see how FOIP is involved in that. You're not asking for the individual names. You're asking for an overall record of how many people graduated and how many didn't. That seems to me pretty valuable information for parents if they're looking at students that are looking around for various things because the last thing people want to do – I've heard of one case where a student ended up with a \$13,000 debt and a useless course, so they're not going to proceed.

There's got to be a way around this FOIP. If we're going to give public money to private institutions, there has to be that accountability. I'd like the minister at some point to indicate why FOIP is a necessity to protect the institution, the private institution. FOIP to me is for personal information, that you wouldn't put out particular students or names, but you certainly should have a record of how many are in the school, how many are passing, and what's happening there.

So I'd ask, you know, on the amendment as to why that is the case. I know we'll get FOIP all the way along on some of these, and I think it's important for us to know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: On the question as amended. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, do you wish to close the debate?

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Please close debate.

[Written Question 25 as amended carried]

Student Loan Maximums

Q26. Ms Blakeman moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that the following question be accepted.
What is the total number and percentage of Alberta student loan program applicants receiving the maximum allowable loan over each of the academic or administrative years 2000 to 2003-04 inclusive broken down by year, learning institution, and program of applicant?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I would indicate to the House and to the member raising the question that we would be prepared to accept Written Question 26 provided that it was amended to allow for us to provide the information in a compliant way. Therefore, I would move that Written Question 26 be amended by striking out “learning institution, and program of applicant” and substituting “undergraduate or lower program category, and graduate/professional program category.”

3:20

Mr. Speaker, the reason for proposing the amendment is that information on maximum allowable loans issued is tracked at the undergraduate or lower program level and at the graduate/professional program level only and not by learning institution or specific program of applicant. So getting the information, other than going through an extensive manual process to provide that information, could not be readily done. With the amendment we can at least provide information which could be made available based on the program level of study rather than by institution.

We are spending a considerable amount of resources in upgrading the technology that's available. I'm sure that with that upgrade there will be many variable fields available, and perhaps we'll be able to extract information in a number and varied ways. But at the present time, as I am given to understand it, providing the information in the way in which it was asked, if not impossible, would require a huge amount of manual work.

The Speaker: On the amendment.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I want to be efficient with use of resources here, but it is highly questionable to me that this information is not tracked by institution. I, of course, will take the member's word that it is not, but I still find that very curious. It does not allow us to compare between. In addition, it's not allowing us to compare between what we would call the public system and private offerers as well, as was raised by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, which I think is an excellent point, especially as we move into an age where there are more private providers of education. We should be able to compare between institutions, especially when we're talking about student loans and those who have maxed out their possible loan program.

The second question that occurs to me is that in this question the minister is telling me that numbers are available from undergraduate and lower program categories and graduate/professional program

categories, yet in the previous question he told me that that wasn't available. It was only available for graduating as a final: “who have completed their studies.” I'll let the member explain to me on the record, then, what the difference is between those two. What strikes me is that the undergraduates appear to be available in this question. These are relatively similar questions. I'd like to know why it's not available in the previous question.

Again, I have instructions from the sponsoring member to accept the amendments from the minister, but if I may, I strongly suggest that we do look at tracking by institution. I'm very curious that we don't. I think that if that is truly an oversight, it's one that we need to address immediately.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, do you choose to close the debate, or should I call the question?

[Written Question 26 as amended carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Student Loan Appeals

Q27. Ms Blakeman moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that the following question be accepted.

What is the total number of Alberta student loan program applicants who have appealed their award over each of the academic/administrative years 2000-01 to 2003-04 inclusive broken down by year, learning institution, reason for appeal, and whether the appeal was successful?

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Now, there is an extensive amendment, which the minister, I'm sure, will get up and go through. Once again, I note that we are unable to be provided with information broken down by institution, which again I think is an oversight. I look forward to the reasons that the minister will give for amending this written question, which I have now moved.

Thank you.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the last two written questions there was a significant difference between the two in that with respect to 25 we're talking about school leavers or graduands and default rates as opposed to the other one, which was maximum loans. The information is categorized and available in different ways depending on whether they're in the default category or the other category. I don't profess to be an expert on all of this stuff, but that's what I'm advised. So there was a significant difference between those two questions.

With respect to Question 27 I would indicate that we're prepared to accept this question. Again, it would have to be with an amendment. I would move to amend Written Question 27 by striking out “learning institution.” The question, then, as amended would be:

What is the total number of Alberta student loan program applicants who have appealed their award over each of the academic/administrative years 2000-01 to 2003-04 inclusive broken down by year, reason for appeal, and whether the appeal was successful?

Mr. Speaker, in moving that amendment, I'd indicate that all

we're doing is taking out the request to break it down as well by learning institution. While I'm sure that the same arguments apply with respect to this question as had been raised in the other ones – and I have to say that I don't necessarily disagree with those arguments; I think that information might be useful – the fact appears to be that we don't have it in that manner. Appeals are tracked by reason code, not by learning institution or any other format, so apparently we're unable to fulfill the request by learning institution.

Management reports identify successful appeals based on commencement of study period and unsuccessful appeals based on the date they entered the system. This is extra information just so that when the answer is provided, it can be provided in a context that you might understand it. Also, a number of appeals remain pending for periods of time awaiting additional information from the applicant. Therefore, in any given fiscal year the total number of appeals approved and rejected does not equal the number of appeals actually received in a given year.

Just so that you know, when we do get the information, the reason why it doesn't add up is because of the different methodologies with respect to successful appeals, rejected appeals, and the timing of appeals. We have 56 different appeal reason codes, and of course applicants may have more than one reason for their appeal, so that would be another reason why the information might not appear to add up.

We'd be happy to provide the information with respect to appeals provided that the requirement to do it by learning institution is taken out because, again, the management systems that we have right now apparently don't break it down in that fashion.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Written Question 27 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Theft of Public Property

Q28. Mr. R. Miller moved on behalf of Mr. Bonko that the following question be accepted.
What is the total dollar amount of public property lost due to theft in the Department of Sustainable Resource Development for the 2003-2004 fiscal year?

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the reason for asking the question is quite self evident, and I will happily await the response from the hon. minister.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development I would be pleased to accept Written Question 28.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions?

[Written Question 28 carried]

3:30 Full-day Kindergarten

Q29. Mr. Flaherty moved that the following question be accepted.
What consultations, studies, research, or other information-gathering exercises pertaining to full-day kindergarten are

currently planned or under way under the auspices of the Ministry of Education?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to indicate on behalf of my ministry and the government that we will accept Written Question 29 as it stands.

[Written Question 29 carried]

Calgary Ward 10 Election Process Investigation

Q30. Mr. Flaherty moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that the following question be accepted.

What is the total dollar amount spent by the Department of Municipal Affairs on the investigation into Calgary's ward 10 election process following the October 2004 municipal election?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs I'm going to indicate to the House that we are prepared to accept Written Question 30 with some amendments. This information was shared with the opposition prior to 11 o'clock this morning, as per procedures, and I'd ask that the amendment be circulated if it hasn't already.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, the rationale behind amending the first part of this question is because the process is ongoing. Therefore, to answer a question as to what the total costs are before the process is finished is not possible. The other minor change replaces the word "investigation" with "provincial inspection." This adjustment adds clarity and accuracy to the question.

The amended written question will read as follows then:

As of March 31, 2005, what is the total dollar amount spent by the Department of Municipal Affairs on the provincial inspection into Calgary's ward 10 election process following the October 2004 municipal election?

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Written Question 30 as amended carried]

The Clerk Assistant: Written Question 31. Dr. Pannu.

The Acting Speaker: There being no mover for the motion, the motion will be dropped from the Order Paper.

head: Motions for Returns

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate there was no mover for that last one because we might have been able to actually accept it. However, let's move on.

Proper notice having been given on Thursday, April 28, I'm pleased to move that motions for returns 27 through 43 inclusive be dealt with today.

Mr. Speaker, I might just add, there being no additional motions for returns, there are none to stand and retain their places following this motion.

[Motion carried]

Software Licences for Schools

M27. Mr. Flaherty moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all documents including but not limited to letters, faxes, memos, meeting notes, reports, contracts, and competing bids related to the October 2004 agreement between the government and Microsoft Inc. for the provision of Microsoft Office software to Alberta's educational institutions.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, this particular motion is directed to Alberta Education and also partly to Advanced Education, and I want to indicate to the hon. member that I'm prepared to accept this on behalf of government albeit with some amendments. I believe that the amendment on 27 has been circulated, and all members should have a copy of it now. In addition, I should just point out quickly that this information has been shared as of 11 this morning with the opposition colleague, which is, of course, the requirement as per our procedure.

Assuming that all members have now had a chance to look at it, I just want to indicate that this matter requires just a little bit of background information. If I might just speak to the amendment at this time, I would indicate the following. First of all, the contract in question deals with Microsoft Inc., and since the vast majority of school jurisdictions and postsecondary institutions in our province were already using Microsoft Office software, it was deemed best to enter into a broad, province-wide agreement that would reflect that particular fact.

So the provincial Microsoft licensing agreement in effect was arrived at, and it actually is going to save the educational system in this province in both sectors, K to 12 and postsecondary, about \$10 million over three years. That will be done by achieving some economies of scale. So that results in a cost savings of approximately 25 to 40 per cent. I thought that that information might be sort of important to have on the table.

Now, the scope of the information the way it was originally requested, however, in this particular motion for a return would have been rather extensive and would have required us to go back to October 2002, which would have meant spending considerable amounts of time and other resources to provide something akin to an answer for what was asked for.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, due to the business considerations by the various entities that are involved, including some competitive advantage considerations, it would have become necessary to consult with Microsoft Canada as well as with a very large number of account resellers that participated in the bidding process, and that would likely have proven to be an extremely lengthy and overly involved process, which, even after it had been attempted, might not have yielded precisely what the member was requesting in the first place.

As I've indicated, this is an important motion. I recognize that.

I should just indicate very quickly that prior to this particular agreement having been arrived at, Mr. Speaker, the school jurisdictions as well as the postsecondary institutions actually had separate agreements, which came out of their own technology budgets. Now, however, because our government decided to step in and take care of those costs directly ourselves as a government on behalf of the jurisdictions and the schools boards and the institutions and so on, we have been able to see a number of dollars freed up, which are dollars that now can be directed to other education priorities. So that sort of explains a little bit of the rationale behind it as well.

In the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to accept this motion with the amendments that have been circulated, and I would just now like to read that proposed amended motion into the record,

which I hope will suffice and accommodate the hon. member opposite and his query. That

a copy of the October 2004 agreement between the government and Microsoft Inc. for the provision of Microsoft Office software to Alberta's educational institutions and related documents including requests for quotations, list of vendor applicants, and other materials be provided as required.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and look for the support of the House on the motion as amended and moved.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

3:40

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, and thank you for the explanation from the minister. I'm assuming, then, that he can provide us with supporting documentation for the claims of savings that he has just made, which is by way of reasoning for why the amendment is being modified in the way that it has been.

To me, Mr. Speaker, what the Official Opposition was looking for was transparency in a process. We're often told, "Oh, you know, you can view the contracts" and "You'll have a look at everything" and "Everyone can look at it themselves and figure out if everyone thinks that it's a good deal." But when we actually come right down to it: "Oh, well, sorry. No, you can't now look at this contract because it's covered under solicitor/client privilege" or "It's covered under FOIP" or "Sorry, you can't see it." So all the great promises of transparency and accountability are gone because they're now all cloaked in some sort of after-the-fact reasoning.

So if the minister is telling me that this is all going to be available, good. Then I'm glad we're on the record here with *Hansard*. I'm sure he'll be providing that information directly to the sponsor of the motion for a return. I do want to see any supporting documents that he has in support of his claims of savings.

Secondly, I'm not specifically familiar with this, but I take it that the October 2004 agreement between the government and Microsoft has not already been released in some other form and that, therefore, this is something new that is now being released by the government, when the amended order shows that a copy of this agreement will be provided. We were looking for quite a bit of detail that led up to the agreement. What all was involved in the negotiation? That's what we wanted to see. We also wanted to see, you know, notes and other things that help people make decisions about this. What did the contracts look like, for example, and the competing bids?

Now, I don't know if in the minister's opinion a list of vendor applicants – that's not the same as competing bids, and request for quotations is not the same as competing bids. So we're not getting what we asked for here. We're getting quite a different thing entirely. We asked for a whale and we're getting a fish. They both swim in water, but beyond that, there isn't a lot of connection between the two of them. Nonetheless, being in the opposition in this particular Assembly, we're always grateful for any information that we can manage to squeeze out of the government.

I'm sure the member is likely to support the amended motion. Nonetheless, I felt it important to get the rest of those points on the record. Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for St. Albert, would you like to close debate?

Mr. Flaherty: It's closed, sir.

[Motion for a Return 27 as amended carried]

Postsecondary Tuition Fee Documentation

M28. Ms Blakeman moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all documents including reports, studies, statistical data, stakeholder submissions, meeting agendas, and correspondence prepared or received by the Ministry of Advanced Education, formerly Learning, between January 1, 2002, and February 28, 2005, relating to legislation or regulations governing Alberta's postsecondary tuition fees.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to ask the House to reject this motion, and I do that with some regret because, actually, I had wanted to accept the motion, but the material that I've received again indicates that a considerable amount of time – the estimate is about 30 days – would have to be spent in reviewing the requested stakeholder submissions to determine which portions would be exempted from disclosure according to FOIP.

Now, I'm not too certain as to what in stakeholders' submissions would fall into a FOIP designation, but I'm uncomfortable enough with the advice that I wouldn't want an order from the Legislature to return the information if indeed it was to violate the FOIP Act.

In addition, we've been advised that a further consultation with applicable institutions would be wise prior to the releasing of the information. So while this is a question which I would be happy to provide as much information as I possibly can on, because of the nature of the advice I've received relative to FOIP, I should have brought forward an amendment to say: subject to the requirements of FOIP. Then I would have found it acceptable. But I didn't do that on a timely basis, so unfortunately I'm going to have to ask the House to reject the question.

Ms Blakeman: Well, yes, it is most unfortunate. I will hold the minister to his comments in *Hansard*, to promising to provide as much of this information as he can without coming up against the constraints of FOIP.

Mr. Speaker, this is a perfect example of why the Official Opposition and members of the public get so frustrated with this government. That Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act was meant to share information of what was going on behind closed doors with government, and it has turned into exactly the opposite. It is about protecting and keeping information from the very people who should be able to see and scrutinize it.

I'm not specifically criticizing the Minister of Advanced Education in this particular case because I believe him to be an honourable man, but this is an increasing problem with this government. It is very indicative of its reluctance to release information and allow their decision-making to be a transparent process so that members of the Official Opposition, the third-party opposition, the single member of the fourth-party opposition, and members of the public can in fact follow along and make sure that they're in agreement with everything that's happened. It's important to know how government arrives at decision-making.

Here we've had several things happen around tuition fees in Alberta, and we can't tell how the government arrived at that decision. This is what people find frustrating. This is what leads people to find the government, you know, full of secrets and working behind closed doors and deal-making and all those other stereotypes which are heaped upon them. This is what makes people believe they're true.

I know that we've had reviews of the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation, but I also note: those are all-party

reviews, and the membership on those reviews are reflective of the number of seats held in the House. So we end up with a Tory majority who once again votes that secrecy through. There's something really, really wrong with this system when members of the public cannot see how the government came to make its decisions. This is a perfect example of something that should be straightforward and easily accessible to everyone that is now cloaked in secrecy that doesn't need to be. It does raise people's suspicions and impairs the government's credibility when it tries to make claims of being open and accessible. It is obviously not.

[Motion for a Return 28 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Alberta SuperNet Project

M29. Mr. Elsalhy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all documents pertaining to the government's decision to transfer responsibility for the Alberta SuperNet project from the Ministry of Innovation and Science to the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is something that has been on my mind as the critic for Innovation and Science and also on people's minds because the transfer happened immediately, with no warning signs, after the November election. The newly formed ministry was established, and it appears that they just wanted to create some sort of an agenda or a mandate for this new ministry. I would be real eager to receive information on the rationale behind this decision and why it was deemed to be appropriate and timely.

Thank you.

3:50

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is prepared to accept this motion.

[Motion for a Return 29 carried]

Accreditation Approval for University of Phoenix

M30. Ms Blakeman moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all documents pertaining to the government's approval for the University of Phoenix to offer accredited baccalaureate or master's level degrees in Alberta including but not limited to all submissions by the University of Phoenix to the Private Colleges Accreditation Board, PCAB, written decisions, or recommendations by the PCAB to the Ministry of Advanced Education, formerly Learning, correspondence between ministry officials and representatives of the University of Phoenix, and the ministerial order or order in council granting the approval.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'd earlier circulated a proposed amendment with respect to this motion for a return, but on further review, I'm going to ask the House to actually reject this motion for a return. The reason for that is that we've dealt substantively with the issues provided for in this motion for a return in

responding to Motion for a Return 2 and Motion for a Return 3, as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, accepted as amended on April 11, 2005. The amendments that I was going to propose to this motion would have essentially put us in the same position, that we'd be providing the same information that we already agreed to provide, which is the letters of authorization and the other information regarding information relied upon.

This is substantially the same motion that has already been approved. Therefore, rather than go through the process of amendment, I just ask that the Assembly reject this one, and we'll respond as we've already promised with respect to motions for returns 2 and 3.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to close debate.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Well, given that the minister feels that it's essentially the same answer to the same question, then I'm asking that any information that is provided to the third party in response to their questions 2 and 3 also be forwarded to the Member for Calgary-Currie if the minister feels that it answers the questions he's raised, the documents that he has requested actually under Motion for a Return 30.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 30 lost]

Student Loan Repayment Systems

M31. Ms Blakeman moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all documents currently in the possession of the Ministry of Advanced Education including but not limited to reports, studies, statistical data, and correspondence pertaining to income-contingent student loan repayment systems.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of government I'd be prepared to accept this motion for a return. In accepting the motion for a return, I would just provide some information to the House. We're not currently actively reviewing income-contingent student loan repayment systems. The current position – this is, of course, subject to the full review of affordability that will be taking place this year, so it could be subject to change – is that strategies are needed to ensure that debt levels are manageable upon completion of studies.

Programs to support debt management take many different forms, including interest relief, combined grants and loans, or through the Alberta student loan relief program, and it's not felt that it makes sense to provide loans to individuals whose income potential would make it virtually impossible for them to ever repay, even under an income-contingent repayment plan. For those reasons we haven't been actively engaged in looking at income-contingent repayment plans although, certainly, that's an option which could be or would be or should be on the table as we look at the affordability review.

It should be noted, as well, that as part of the pan-Canadian ongoing review of students' assistance the federal government, along with the provinces, is looking at debt management as a topic for review. Possible future options like income-contingency repayment, graduated interest relief, and other options will be on the table.

I think those are issues that will be explored more fully both in terms of our affordability review and then, of course, because we're part of an overall Canadian student loan program as well and often

try and align our programs. Those issues would be studied on a national level as well, with other provinces and with the federal government. We're not currently doing it now, so there won't be an awful lot of information there but certainly accept the question and provide whatever information there is.

[Motion for a Return 31 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Anthony Henday Drive Project

M32. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Mr. Chase that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a financial statement detailing the private-sector loan interest rate compared to that of the government for the proposed Anthony Henday Drive P3 project.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. Now, certainly we hear throughout the debate in this Legislative Assembly from one certain side the merits of three Ps, but there is also the argument to be made that the government can get a much better interest rate on borrowing than the private sector because, of course, we have a very, very good credit rating in this province as a result of the debt retirement. [interjection] Now, someone over across the way has said that it's good management.

It's the same Conservative government that spent this province, at one point, into the red significantly – there was an amount over \$20 billion – the same Progressive Conservative government. Then they took an Alberta Liberal policy of fiscal prudent management and implemented it. As a result of that policy and rather robust energy prices the debt paydown went a lot quicker than anyone had anticipated. Perhaps that is the reason why we have such an excellent credit rating. I know it is, and I don't understand why we would go this route with a P3 when we could do it ourselves.

Now, the P3s have been called by some other members of the House – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has referred to it, Mr. Speaker, as rent to own. It's no different than rent-to-own furniture. We are renting to own a vital piece of our infrastructure, and I think the hon. member is correct. The former member for Edmonton-Glengarry used to refer to the P3s as "private political pork," I think is what he used to say. We still don't have any answers as to the benefit or the merit of these projects, and if we look at what's gone on in the courthouse in Calgary, well, that has not exactly worked out.

Mr. Hancock: It worked out very well. You haven't got a clue what you're talking about.

Mr. MacDonald: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education has stated that it's worked out very well and that I don't have a clue what I'm talking about, but the hon. member is wrong in that regard. We had this project. The Calgary courthouse is a P3, but it had to be abandoned because of increasing costs. I don't know how the hon. minister could look at this failure and view it as a success. It escalated beyond belief in costs. The government has had to take it over.

4:00

In fact, there were questions, hon. member, asked last week in Public Accounts. I'm disappointed that the hon. member hasn't had a chance to review the *Hansard* from Public Accounts because he would see that there were questions raised there about the total amount as allocated in the annual report for the department of

infrastructure, and no one could answer the questions. Hopefully, we will receive a written question very soon as to how all these costs were shifted around with the courthouse in Calgary.

In regard to Motion for a Return 32, Mr. Speaker, it would be good information to receive, and perhaps the government, when they provide this information to us, could provide once and for all the merits of these P3s. If it's so much cheaper to borrow money that way, show us.

Earlier this session, as a matter of fact last week, we found out that one of the government's programs that they talked about and suggested other Albertans buy into, the long-term electricity contracts, whether they were three-year or five-year contracts – the public was astonished to find out that neither the Premier nor the Minister of Energy nor the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne had thought it was prudent financially to buy into these contracts. So perhaps now they will provide us this information that the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity is seeking. The public would be a lot more comfortable with this whole notion of P3s.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the time the hon. member took to ask the question, we could have laid a few miles of pavement, but we will accept Motion for a Return 32 on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. I wish to move that acceptance.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the motion, I can't let the remarks of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar with respect to the Calgary courthouse go by, putting that kind of absolute twaddle on the record. The Calgary courthouse project was a very good project, went ahead very well, went ahead under a P3 process for the full duration of the time, and is being built at a contract price which is exactly what was being proposed. It didn't rise in cost.

There was considerable confusion raised, primarily by people who didn't understand P3 processes with respect to how you account for costs and the different way of accounting for costs, whether you're dealing with the present value of long-term contracts or whether you're putting it on the books as a capital lease type of project or how you account for it. But the fact of the matter is that that project is going ahead on a contract which is the same price as it was originally intended. The process worked very well. The process got a very important piece of infrastructure for the Calgary and southern Alberta region into the ground on time.

The fact that the financing was changed to government financing from private-sector financing at the last did not make one whit of difference to the concept that went forward in terms of the P3 and making sure that the construction costs of that contract were very well known and well understood. For that hon. member to put on the record this afternoon that the costs are unknown and that the costs rose and the process drove the costs is absolute, pure twaddle.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak in favour of this motion. I think it's important information, and I'm pleased to hear the government is going to release those interest rates.

The P3s, however, you know, remain I think a way to hide information in many ways. There should be full disclosure of all contracts, all interest rates, all of the information that is pertaining to them just like in any other public endeavour. They become something, I believe, in the way that they've been established in this province, and under the Anthony Henday example, for example, that does not necessarily save money for the taxpayers of Alberta. That takes away the ability for other companies looking at the work being done there, for taxpayers in general, for all the many interested parties in Alberta to fully see a transparent process. It takes away from that.

The ability to build these projects faster is only because, I think, of the fact that the government is not willing to incur what I guess you might call debt, even though I wonder if we would have to even do that. It just does not, you know, answer the question: does it save money? Is it efficient? Is it something that is actually good for the Alberta taxpayer?

Many of your smaller contractors that work in areas like road building – in fact, I'd say the vast majority of them – are very displeased with this process and would like to see this type of process end. I'd like to see the government just do a full survey of all of the contractors working in the business to see what their responses might be. It is, indeed, a good comparison to call this a rent-to-own process. If anybody is looking at that, that's a business, of course, that fills a particular niche, but I certainly don't think it should be in a niche that we're looking for to construct public facilities.

That concludes my statements, Mr. Speaker, and I support the motion.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to conclude debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity I would like to express my gratitude to the government, and I look forward to receiving this information and reading it with interest. In conclusion, I would have to say, particularly in regard to the Calgary courthouse, that if it was such a fine idea to proceed with this, why was not the project continued as a P3?

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 32 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Private/Public Partnership Proposals

M33. Mr. MacDonald moved on behalf of Mr. Chase that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a list of all projects that are potential P3 projects being considered by the government.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I don't know how much further the government is going to go with these P3s, but we understand on this side of the House that there seems to be a genuine interest in the further contracting of P3s. Certainly, the three big ones to date have been, as we mentioned earlier, the Calgary courthouse, the Edmonton ring road, and – I'm just looking at the Infrastructure and Transportation business plan for 2005 through '08, and for the ring road in Edmonton there is a target to have in two years 40 per cent of the ring road open to travel. Certainly, the ring road in this city has been neglected for some time. Many citizens are relieved to see the progress to date on this ring

road, and they feel that regardless of how it's being financed or constructed, they are anxious to see the entire ring road completed.

4:10

There's also the hospital, Mr. Speaker, in the southeast sector of Calgary. The Auditor General has released a review of P3s in his last report. Certainly, the Auditor General in Public Accounts has gone on the record as stating that in some cases a P3 may be the way to proceed, but we all know what the AG had to say in regard to P3s. I'm sorry if it's a sensitive subject in this House, but I certainly have an alternative view than the hon. Minister of Advanced Education in regard to the success or failure of the P3 project that is the Calgary courthouse.

Now, when we talk about Calgary, we certainly recognize on this side of the House that there's an urgent need for a southeast Calgary hospital, and we have to question the planning, or the lack of planning, of this government. We all know that there was a hospital imploded or blown up in Calgary, and we have to question whether that was an efficient use of taxpayer dollars now that the city is in dire need of additional hospital space, hospital beds. That facility that was blown up was almost identical to the Royal Alex here in the city of Edmonton, and the Royal Alex is still providing very useful service not only to the citizens of this city but to residents in northern Alberta and throughout the province for some specific procedures.

Certainly, as we look at going ahead with a P3 in Calgary for a hospital, we forget sometimes that there was a perfectly good hospital there, almost the same model year as the Royal Alex, but for some odd reason this government decided to destroy it. I'll never understand the logic behind that one.

P3s, Mr. Speaker, have been reported as an inefficient way of doing business by other governments that have used them in the past, and I don't understand why we are so anxious in this province to continue with them. Certainly, a list of all projects that the government is contemplating under the P3 model would be information that would be of a great deal of interest not only to this side of the House but to the taxpayers. The Edmonton ring road has added \$40 million to the total cost that is estimated for that road over a long period of time. I think it's a 30-year period of time that this figure has been discussed as what the additional cost would be instead of just borrowing the money and building the road.

With that, Mr. Speaker, hopefully, we can receive positive news on Motion for a Return 33, the same as we did with Motion for a Return 32. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister for International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation we will accept Motion for a Return 33.

I just want to add a few more comments, though. There was some question raised in terms of transparency with respect to small contractors. I'd like to add to the record that with respect to transparency there was a full third-party review of the transparency of the P3 project, the Anthony Henday, and it got full marks for how all parties were included in drafting the proposal.

In terms of small contractors they were all involved under the Alberta roadbuilders. They, as well, were very satisfied with the process and also know that over the next number of years in this province there will be a considerable amount of work given not only the amount of capital that will be going into the provincial infra-

structure by the government of Alberta but also by the \$3 billion that'll be going to municipal governments.

There is an issue, or perhaps an area, the opposition does not pay attention to, and that is opportunity lost. The sooner this road is built, the sooner we will add to the total competitiveness of the north-south trade corridor. A study that was done in Edmonton indicated that truck movements were 25 per cent less efficient. They can spend all of the money on the rest of the north-south trade corridor, but there is a bottleneck here. The sooner we get the Anthony Henday completed, the sooner we'll improve the competitiveness and, especially, the truck flow from Grande Prairie down to Montana.

It also provides tremendous savings in the staging of the construction. We're going to be hard-pressed on the human resources side and also the number of contractors. Then the contractor will stage the various components of this construction, whether it's the bridge, the dirt work, or the paving, at the most appropriate times and as a result will also add to the savings on this very, very important but large project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, you know, I'm pleased to rise in support of this motion, and I think it, again, is an important motion to see which projects are being considered in this. I take interest in some of the comments regarding the construction of roads and roadbuilding.

There's been a long and well-established bidding process in roadbuilding, and I know the government works very closely with the Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association as mentioned by the previous speaker. It has had an open bidding process for decades that has worked to involve many players in the industry and to involve many of the small contractors. The incidence of P3s begins a process where many of them are not involved through that same process. Sure, there were a number that were brought into the Anthony Henday project, and the ring road project in general is something that must and should go ahead quickly. But does it have to be done under a P3? That is not necessarily I think determined.

There can be found to be other financing means that would be just as effective and more effective and more accountable to the taxpayer and in effect be a better deal for the taxpayer in the long run. Many jurisdictions have found difficulties with P3s. They are indeed rent to own in terms of roads.

Certainly, with the Anthony Henday and other parts of the ring road process, it's important that it's staged with, you know, the roadwork being done and the paving being done in different parts. Usually the paving is done after the roadwork, and the bridge is usually done before the paving as well, because there's no paving to be done if there's no bridge to be paved on.

But the notion of P3s – I think we have to take a considerable look at it in terms of: how is it really of value to the taxpayer? Does it save money, or is it just an expedient factor to try and ensure that the government is not going into debt in order to fulfill a political promise of no debt when, in fact, in many of these types of projects debt is something that happens over time?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to conclude debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity I look forward to

receiving a list of all projects that are potential P3 projects being considered at this time by the government, and I appreciate the information.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 33 carried]

4:20

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Appeals to Pensions Administration Corporation

M34. Mr. Miller moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all appeals received by the Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation for the fiscal years 1994-95 through 2003-04 inclusive.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I was appointed as the critic for the Finance department, I have had many, many correspondences cross my desk outlining concerns with the appeal process and outlining concerns with the apparent lack of transparency of the appeal process. This caused me to ponder just exactly how many appeals are coming forward and what issues are being brought forward in those appeals; therefore, the motion for a return that the Assembly sees before it today.

I look forward to the response from the government. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Motion for a Return 34 as presented by the member opposite, I'm going to have to indicate on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance that this particular motion, unfortunately, has to be rejected, hon. member. I'm going to just briefly explain why.

The subject in question is copies of all appeals received by the Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation. In actual fact, Mr. Speaker, administrative reviews that are conducted by the public-sector pension plan boards on behalf of the Minister of Finance involve very personal information relative to the individual plan members. As members here would know, those documents related to those kinds of administrative reviews are subject to the protection of privacy provisions under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

We have to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that the FOIP Act cuts both ways. Yes, it's there to allow information to be accessed, but it's also there essentially to protect individual privacy. Therefore, this particular motion as worded will have to be rejected.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to conclude debate.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Needless to say I am somewhat disappointed that we're not going to be able to see this information from the government.

Quite clearly, as the hon. minister has pointed out, the FOIP Act does work both ways. Unfortunately, it seems to work far, far more in favour of privacy than it ever does in favour of freedom of information. I'm certainly not the only person that has raised that concern. In fact, I've often heard members from the opposite side make the same allusion.

So I'm certainly questioning the value, I suppose, of that particular act in the first place. Having said that, I would suggest that that particular office, the freedom of information and protection of privacy office, seems to be very, very good at blacking out personal

information when we receive information from them. If that's the only concern, perhaps the minister and the government might consider releasing that information with the names blacked out because certainly we're not looking for the names of the individuals. What we're really looking for, as I had indicated, was the total number of appeal applications received and, in particular, the reasons for those appeals coming forward in the first place. That was the information we had hoped to receive. I certainly have no particular interest in the private information of those filing the appeals.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 34 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

International Health Symposium

M35. Mr. Martin on behalf of Dr. Pannu moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing an itemized list detailing the honoraria, speaking fees, travel, and other expenses being paid to each of the speakers and presenters to the international health symposium being held in Calgary from May 3 to 5, 2005.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is great fanfare that we've announced this symposium. We were not supposed to talk about health care during the election because it was far too complicated for ordinary Albertans to understand. We were said to wait for the symposium, and we'll bring in all these experts and the so-called third way, which is a code word. We believe and we know that it is for more and more privatization. So I think it's incumbent that when the government says that health care is not sustainable and if we're going to spend a lot of money on so-called high-powered speakers, then surely we, the people of Alberta, have a right to know what the cost is in this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the government would see the need to be transparent about this major initiative by the government.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate that the government is prepared to actually accept this one, but I can't let the opportunity go by, given the comments I've just heard from the member opposite, because there are some inherent inaccuracies in the hon. member's perception of the health care system as it exists in Alberta.

Earlier today, for example, we heard about the wonderful announcement at the University of Alberta for the new Heart Institute, which commits \$156 million of provincial taxpayer dollars toward a first, a one-of-a-kind in this province. The week before we heard an announcement of \$577 million by the government of Alberta toward the health sciences and research centre at the university, and I could go on. But the key here is exactly the word the member mentioned and that is sustainability.

When it comes to this motion, which talks about a health symposium – and the purpose, in part, of that symposium is to look at ways that the health system, such as we know it, can be made sustainable so that it doesn't keep growing by 8 to 10 to 12 per cent across different jurisdictions for fear of collapsing under its own weight. Access, affordability, all of those things are part of that question.

This specific motion about the symposium talks about a process that we've put in place, which will be quite an open process,

obviously, to look to find best practices and to take a look at what other jurisdictions are doing. We in this province are not closed-minded enough to think that we in Canada alone have all the solutions to those sustainability issues.

So, that having been said, I'm pleased on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness to accept this particular motion for a return as worded.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to complete debate.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate that we'll get the information, but I too would like to comment on the previous speaker's comments.

Almost all of us know that the name "the third way" came from Tony Blair in Britain, but it's become a code word. I think Albertans know this as well as anybody. The third way is more privatization. What else can it possibly mean? For the government to hide behind code words, the third way, this and that, and not be honest about their intention – and we believe the intention of this symposium is to highlight as much as possible the idea of more and more privatization. If you look at other parts of the world, some of the so-called privatization experiments by certain parties, certainly in Australia, which the Premier's talked about, they're backing out of them. They've been an absolute disaster. So we think that they're buying into a flawed system. No matter how you word it, more and more privatization leads us more and more to an Americanized system.

The idea that it's not sustainable. Of course, there are things we can do better in terms of the health care system. There's no doubt about that. The Member for Edmonton-Centre asked about midwifery. That would save money. There are ways that we can have a better system: community clinics, all sorts of ideas that can be done through the public system. We can have the alternate clinics. We can have cataract systems, that are costing us 10 per cent more in Calgary, done by the public system, as the Manitoba government has done, where they took over private companies and are actually making it work.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, the point that I make: the inflated dollars are a bit of a bogus issue too. The minister talked about that it can't be sustainable. If you look at the costs back in the '70s and with inflated dollars, it's really not that much more expensive today than it was then. That becomes just I believe a red herring so that we can move more and more, as this government has tried to do time and time again, towards private health care.

But in saying that, Mr. Speaker, at least we'll get the cost of this particular symposium, and we do appreciate that. Thank you very much.

[Motion for a Return 35 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Canmore Nordic Centre

M36. Mr. Martin moved on behalf of Dr. Pannu that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing details and costs of the construction upgrades at the Canmore Nordic Centre for the calendar year 2004 and to March 21, 2005.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason that we brought

this forward is that we're trying to get some handle on the figures. We notice that \$2,801,000 was mentioned in the supplementary budget estimates, and that follows, of course, June 2004, when the now Minister of Education announced \$16.5 million to upgrade the Canmore Nordic Centre in support of the bid to host a cross-country World Cup race in 2005. According to the Community Development website, the Canmore Nordic Centre is scheduled to be upgraded for the cross-country skiing World Cup in 2005. We're trying to figure out if the \$2.8 million is in addition to the \$16.5 million announced in 2004, and I guess following from that: have the costs of the upgrade increased?

We're trying to get this information, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This particular motion certainly touches a chord in my heart because, as the previous speaker just indicated, I was the one privileged enough to make the announcement along with our colleague from Banff-Cochrane. That was last year, and it was a great announcement for a very great project. The Canmore Nordic Centre is, of course, one of the wonderful legacy items from the Winter Olympics of 1988 in Calgary, which the Speaker and so many other members here are intimately familiar with, I know.

In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, what we found was that the world standards for cross-country skiing had changed. They have been updated significantly since 1988, and those particular premises had experienced a wearing down over the years, so it was deemed very advisable to improve them and at the same time to make sure that those construction upgrades catered to the new world standards and put that region of Alberta into the driver's seat for competing for the World Cup cross-country skiing, which the previous speaker just alluded to.

So that was done. Several kilometres of track have been improved. There may be some more tweaking to be done later this year and into the fall session. Different types of snow-making equipment might be required there, different tracking equipment, and so on. So there's quite a bit that had to be done.

The final thing I just wanted to mention for the member's comment here is that this summer in Edmonton we're hosting the World Masters Games. This will be the single largest participatory sport event in the history of Canada. We've got well over 14,000 athletes already signed up. Now, I only reference the World Masters Games for this summer because there is now also contemplated a World Masters Games for the winter, and Calgary and Banff-Canmore are going to be very much in the running, hon. members, as a result of the upgrades that are talked about in this motion.

So with that having been said, I'm very pleased on behalf of the hon. Minister of Community Development to indicate that the government is prepared to accept this particular motion as worded.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to conclude debate.

Mr. Martin: Thank you. I'm almost tempted to quit now while I'm ahead, but there are a number more to go.

I'm not arguing that these things don't happen, but it's interesting that when we talk about sustainability, some things are sustainable no matter what the cost; others aren't. I take it that the minister is saying that there still could be some further upgrades from what we know from the budget estimates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 36 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Alberta Office in Washington

M37. Mr. Martin moved on behalf of Mr. Mason that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all memos and reports submitted to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations or his office by Murray Smith or any official at the Alberta office in Washington acting on Mr. Smith's behalf since Mr. Smith's appointment.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Smith went to Washington under great fanfare, and he's to do all sorts of wonderful things for the province, having the office in Washington. We're wondering what has happened so far. Certainly, the Premier's trip was a bit of a disaster in terms of the planning. We wondered what was happening with the BSE Montana court case where R-CALF surprised us all and won an injunction there.

It seems to me that Mr. Smith in Washington is certainly well paid, and there's certainly an office there that's sustainable no matter what the cost, if I could put it that way. So we would like some idea of what he's doing. From our perception here we don't see a lot happening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you. Perhaps some of those questions that are raised by the hon. member can be answered this evening when we're in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be accepting this particular motion for a return. It requests documents that would be considered advice to the minister. They are documents that would be exempted under section 24 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. There's also the added concern that release of any documents of this nature could potentially be harmful to our intergovernmental relations, as outlined in section 21 of the same act.

So, Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, unfortunately, I must reject this motion for a return.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to conclude debate.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I probably should have quit while we were ahead with the first two.

I'm not surprised. I mean, FOIP seems to be sort of: whenever we want to use it, it becomes the reason. I'd say to the minister, though, that there has to be some accountability here. Here's a man making lots of money, taxpayers' money, a big office down there, and as I said, there was a great fanfare about what he was doing. It's not the government's money. It's not the minister's employee. This is an employee of the people of Alberta. Where is the accountability?

4:40

When one looks at the record – as I said, the Premier's trip, which wasn't well organized, and we see the BSE and R-CALF – we've got to wonder what's going on. What's the accountability for Mr. Smith in Washington? Now it's FOIP, I suppose, again. I think he's calling it cabinet solidarity or whatever they're calling it. I guess there's going to be no accountability for this person at all. How do we find out what is going on? That's the point, Mr. Speaker, that often with this government this is what happens: a Conservative

friend, down in Washington, lots of money, and he's supposed to be doing great things. How do we ever know? Certainly, the record of what I'm seeing right now is not very much. [interjection] Yeah. I guess we'll find out when the next screw-up occurs.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 37 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Meetings of Private Colleges Accreditation Board and Campus Alberta Quality Council

M38. Mr. Martin moved on behalf of Dr. Pannu that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the minutes from the Private Colleges Accreditation Board meetings for the calendar years 2000-2004 and January 1 to March 21, 2005, and the Campus Alberta Quality Council from January 1 to March 21, 2005.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that during this time the board did approve DeVry to offer academic programs. We also have concerns, as the minister is well aware, about the University of Phoenix and the university of Columbia. These minutes should be basic accountability measures. These meetings impact the public; the schools receive money; the minutes should be made public. Also, it's my understanding that these schools received money from HRE through their skills development programs. Again, we're getting caught in the proliferation of private institutions getting government money. We're trying to get some idea why the government did approve DeVry, for one thing, and what's happening with the other ones.

So I'm interested to see if the minister will accept this motion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to request that the Assembly reject this motion. I had received advice that we could accept this motion, but then in doing so, we would have to temper our reply with a number of things. As I go through them, it's very clear that this is something which is more appropriately done by way of a FOIP request than here because of the nature of the review that needs to be done to the documentation. Again, as with an earlier motion for a written question I guess it was in that case, I could have just amended it to say: subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. But I could not accept this question in the manner in which it's written.

The hon. member may well be aware of a FOIP request relating to a matter back in 2000. Maybe he or his colleague even were the people who put that request forward. I don't know. It was with relation to this type of an area, and as a result of that, I'm aware that there was a lengthy consultation and a review of the material, and certain portions of the records had to be excepted from disclosure under freedom of information.

The estimate on this one is that it will take about 30 days to review, and in doing so, portions would run afoul of the FOIP Act and, therefore, wouldn't be able to be released. So rather than having a motion for a return from the Legislature which requires the return of documents which might put us in a position of having to then violate the FOIP Act by releasing information because the Legislature would have ordered it released, it would be preferable to make this request in the FOIP process, and then the appropriate FOIP review could be done.

Now, I can say to the hon. member that the Campus Alberta Quality Council, which in addition to its own functions will be performing the functions that the Private Colleges Accreditation Board previously did, has the intention of posting its minutes on the website. So it'll be clear on a go-forward basis that the activities of the council will be public, that the minutes will be public, except, I suppose, in those situations where they might need to go in camera.

It's for that reason that I would suggest that this question should be rejected. There is an appropriate way for the information to be obtained, and we'd request that the hon. member proceed in that way.

Mr. Martin: I'm saying, I think, to the minister, Mr. Speaker, that then we're creating some policy problems here in how we get the information. It comes back to what I was talking about earlier. We're having a proliferation of private institutions. Some may be good; some may be bad. But we're having more and more of them. There doesn't seem to be a reasonable way that we can make them accountable, and this was just an attempt to see, you know: what's their charter, these sorts of things, and where do we go?

Maybe we can do it through FOIP, but if we're going to have to do everything through FOIP, it's time consuming. It costs a lot of money. Well, it does, but the reality is, Mr. Minister, that if we're going to put public money into these private institutions, there's got to be a better way for the taxpayers and for us in the Legislature to check on what's happening with them because there's government money flowing into them. It shouldn't be through FOIP or all the rest of it.

We get reports from the universities and the others, as the minister is well aware, and there's an accountability mechanism. I guess what I'm saying is: where is the accountability mechanism as we have more and more of these private institutions going in? They don't have the same accountability measures as public institutions. I would think, Mr. Speaker, that that should be a serious concern to the minister. How are we going to deal, if you like, with these hybrids? They're not private; there's public money there. How do we get to the accountability mechanisms? I would hope, then – we could try with FOIP, but as I say, he knows that that process is a very difficult one – that the minister is putting some thought into how we begin to deal with the accountability. If they want to be private, let them be private without public money, but even then we're accountable for certain standards in the province.

I think it's a serious matter, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 38 lost]

Southeast Edmonton Ring Road

M39. Mr. Martin moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all contracts and agreements signed between or on behalf of the government and the P3 consortium selected to construct the southeast Edmonton ring road.

Mr. Martin: Gee, one in my own name here. It's back to the P3 debate, Mr. Speaker. Now, I know we've had just even previously today a debate about P3s. We have the one P3 that we've been told by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation we had to do, that we're not sure of the costs. It could be \$41 million more or \$3 million less, depending on whose figures you use. But the major reason I get is that they can do it quickly.

I've never understood that. If you want something to move quickly, under the traditional ways of doing contracts and tendering and bidding you can get it done quickly. What has gone from two

years ago \$350 million now is \$449 million because we had to add some bridges and a few other things. Over the 30 years – I mean, they say that it's not a debt, but it's going to be \$32.5 million a year – that's going to be over a billion dollars. We're told that this is the only way they could get it done. So we're asking, because this is a very expensive project, for a return showing what we're into. I think the government should even see that this should be public knowledge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:50

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the comments from across the way and some of the questions raised and the information exchange and still further questions coming on this particular project, we're going to work extra hard to work with the opposition and get the information across. We probably won't be able to convince them, but we'll provide all that information to them.

So I'm very happy to indicate that the government is prepared to accept Motion for a Return 39.

Mr. Martin: We're back on the winning track here, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we probably will have another debate about P3s, no doubt about that. But I'm pleased that we will get that information in due course. Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 39 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Columbia College

M40. Mr. Martin moved on behalf of Dr. Pannu that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence, memos, letters, reports, minutes, e-mails, and studies concerning Columbia College for the calendar years 2001-2004 and from January 1 to March 21, 2005.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think the purpose is self-evident. We're trying to get some accountability for some of the private institutions. So I'll wait and see what the minister has to say about this one.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to ask that the House reject this motion. There's no specific target or intent in this motion, so basically the result of it is to say: publish all the files that you have on, in this case, Columbia College. Well, the next question will be: publish all the files on the next college.

It would involve the release of all files in the department that relate to Columbia College for the period that's referenced, including those held by the private institutions branch with respect to the licensing of the college vocational training programs, those held by the public institutions branch with respect to access funding provided to Columbia College, those held by the former private colleges accreditation branch, those held by student finance with respect to students participating. It would take probably four months at least to go through and complete the documentation. The question isn't specific enough for us to be of any real assistance. Then, of

course, that four months is just for compiling. That doesn't deal with the FOIP questions or the third-party information or protecting the interests under sections 16 or 25 of the FOIP Act.

In general, we have private institutions. At last count there were probably 148 institutions licensed under the Private Vocational Schools Act providing over 600 programs, often programs that are specific to a vocation; for example, hairstyling, acupuncture, commercial truck driving, health care, and information technology, all essential to the economy and to personal and professional needs.

Mr. Speaker, access to higher education is a broad area, and there's a wide spectrum of opportunities and access choices. I don't have any problem at all in making sure that the public has the widest information available to it, becoming informed and engaged citizens and charting the future approach there.

I would say that I have spoken with the hon. member who put forward this motion on the Order Paper and indicated a willingness to co-operate to make sure that he had access to information, that we would arrange an opportunity for him to meet with our director of private institutions to get information with respect to the processes and how it works and even, perhaps, to help narrow down the question so that we could actually find a question that we could legitimately answer in this process. The question is way too broad. In fact, as well, I understand the president of Columbia College has indicated, because it's specifically referenced in this motion, that he would be pleased to meet with the hon. member and provide him with information relating to the institution.

So there's no question that it would be very useful for the hon. member to educate himself about this particular institution and private institutions in general but not through the process of a scattergun, shotgun approach, saying: give us all the information you might have in government files on private institutions. That is just an inappropriate way to pursue information through Written Questions and Motions for Returns. We might as well just bring the files over from government and table them on the floor of the House and have them recatalogued, you know, documented, and put downstairs in the library. Well, that's not a good use of anybody's time or anybody's space, and that, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is not what written questions and motions for returns are really for.

I want to put on the record that I am willing to co-operate with the hon. member who brought forward the motion. I had this discussion with him. I indicated to him that we would arrange for a meeting with the people in the appropriate branch so that he could raise his questions and they would be answered. As well, we went so far as to contact the institution named in this motion, and they indicated that they would be prepared to invite the member down.

Just while I'm speaking to this motion, I want to address the comments that were made by the hon. member with respect to the other motion because they're applicable to this one too, and that's the question of accountability. The fact of the matter is that the government does not fund private institutions per se. There is some funding that goes to not-for-profit, private institutions that offer accredited courses, that have gone through the course accreditation process.

That accountability framework has in fact been changed and, I think, strengthened so that through the Campus Alberta Quality Council there are two processes that an institution, whether public or private, has to go through if they want to give degrees or have programs that are publicly funded. They are, first of all, the process of having the Campus Alberta Quality Council review and ensure that they are capable of delivering the program, that the institution itself is sound and capable of providing the program that they're proposing to provide, and then, secondly, if that's found to be the case, to go back through and look at the program itself to make sure

that the program is of a quality and nature as to warrant being offered and to provide the accreditation being offered for it. There is an accountability process there.

Of course, there's accountability for all public money that goes into that through our normal processes of government, and we certainly don't have any problem at all being accountable. We do have some problem as government being asked to be accountable for private, for-profit institutions. You know, they have to get permission to come in and offer their services, but when the government is not paying for their services – people in Alberta can look at them. It's a situation of saying: is what they offer what I want? There has to be some role for the individual involved in making an assessment as to whether or not it's an appropriate course for them. Obviously, as the Department of Advanced Education, while we can't protect everybody from everything, we want to make sure that the quality of educational opportunities in the province is of the highest order.

We're not held accountable for the financing of the private institutions except to the extent – and there's only one, I think. I think it's DeVry, actually, which offers an accredited course that qualifies for some modest public funding. There are eight private, not-for-profit university colleges, as we discussed in estimates, where we do provide some funding, albeit a modest amount, I think an additional \$4 million in this year's budget to add the four institutions which weren't previously being funded.

5:00

There's no desire on my part or on the government's part to hold back useful information, but in the context of this question really it's such a broad-based question that it essentially says: go through and haul over all your files. If we complied with this question, then the next question would be with respect to one of the other, as I say, some 148 private institutions in this province. That's just a witch hunt, Mr. Speaker. That's not the appropriate way to go about it.

We're prepared to be co-operative. I have offered to be co-operative and provide access to the people who are involved in reviewing these situations and holding them accountable. Then if there are any specific requests that come out of that with respect to specific information, I'd be more than happy to try and do the best we can to make sure that that information is available.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to conclude debate.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the minister that we were asking about one institution, not 148. That begs the other point. He says that there are 148 different institutions, and it's growing in this province. The minister sort of, I thought, was saying that there's not really any responsibility here, or at least limited responsibility, by the government in terms of this proliferation of private institutions. I would suggest that he alluded there is because they get student loans. That comes through the taxpayers' money. Some schools, at least, receive money from HRE through skills development programs. That's taxpayers' money.

It seems to me that if they're operating in the province, and they're advertising and saying, "This is the type of program that you're going to get," and you don't get that sort of program, surely there's responsibility on the government side to be monitoring whether there's adequacy of these programs. Even businesses have to do that for the Better Business Bureau and the rest of it. As I say, there's government money flowing to begin with in student loans and the rest of it. If people are setting up shop in Alberta, if they're purporting to offer a certain level of program, surely there has to be some obligation that we're checking that out. I can't believe that it's not.

I guess what I'm saying, then, to the minister is that I know that there has been a meeting with some of the people that he talked about already, and we're looking into that with our research department. We appreciate that, Mr. Minister. I'll take this back to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

I again stress that there is a growing problem – and I think it's going to begin to bite the government somewhat – with the proliferation, at least from what I'm hearing, of private institutions. There is some obligation on this government's part to make them accountable. I honestly believe that has to be the case. Otherwise, you're going to have a lot of fly-by-night outfits – I'm not saying that they're there now – taking government money through loans, leaving kids in disarray and not getting the program that they wanted. It's happening in some cases, and I'm sure it will come forward to the minister in a very short time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 40 lost]

Southeast Edmonton Ring Road

M41. Mr. Martin moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents that compare the cost of constructing the southeast Edmonton ring road using a private/public partnership versus the use of conventional public financing for its construction.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe before I go on about that, the minister seemed to indicate that some of these might be accepted, so I'll wait and hear what he has to say before I conclude debate.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation we accept Motion for a Return 41. We'll be happy to provide the information.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to conclude debate.

Mr. Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We'll save the debate for another time about how good P3s are or not, but I appreciate getting that information.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 41 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Correspondence in WCB Case

M42. Mr. Martin moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence, including letters and e-mails, between the Workers' Compensation Board and the Ministry of Human Resources and Employment pertaining to the case of Ana Gutierrez.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the reason for this, of course, is that the government has brought an amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act that directly is the result of this particular case. If we're asked to pass an amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act, we should have the information before this amendment is passed. So we think this should make eminent good sense to the government if they want this amendment passed.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister for Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond to Motion for a Return 42. I advise the Assembly that the government will be rejecting this motion for a return due to privacy rules in FOIP and because the matter is before the courts also. I believe the documents mentioned are best requested under FOIP, and government would be happy to respond in that manner.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This particular MR42, I think, is actually quite timely. It's an important issue, this case between the Workers' Compensation Board and the Ministry of Human Resources and Employment and any information they might have pertaining to the case of Ana Gutierrez. This case has seen the board rule in conflict of interest, and the actual justices in this particular case ruled that client solicitor costs to the full level of a hundred per cent, which is quite unheard of, would be awarded in this particular case.

The issue of conflict of interest, the issue of the ability of the board to intervene in these cases I think is something that is of great interest to many people in the community. Indeed, there's a bill before the House, Bill 15. Actually, much of that bill in its section 22 speaks to this issue. Many people in the community and certainly the Alberta Federation of Labour, some other groups, some contractors privately would not like to have their names named because they seem to say that they really do not want to be singled out in any way by the board, and that's disturbing.

The Ana Gutierrez case would be, in effect, if that bill was to go forward, deemed retroactive legislation to, in effect, kill that case, and that's also something that's very disturbing. The actions of the board in this matter seem quite arbitrary, quite willing to move without speaking to the interests of the workers and even the employers in this particular issue. The issue is how insurance claims are dealt with when the board has an interest, how the board can subrogate those claims, and how the worker, the employer, and the insurance company as well act or interact in the dealings with these issues that arise from this particular thing.

5:10

I think the motion is a good motion. I'm disappointed that the minister said that this would have to be FOIPed. I would hope that the member who is proposing this is able to get that information through FOIP without being forced to pay exorbitant costs, and I hope that he will share that information.

I do speak in favour of the motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to conclude debate.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the

minister said that one of the reasons he can't do it is that it's before the courts. Well, if that's the case, why are we dealing with Bill 15 in the Legislature now? What's the hurry with this? It is very dictatorial, very heavy handed, and it's got, as the Member for Edmonton-Manning says, a retroactive part to it. So the minister says that he can't give us this particular amendment because it's before the court, yet we have Bill 15 being foisted upon this Legislature at the same time. If it was that important that we can't talk about it because it's in the courts, why are we dealing with the amendment now that flows directly from this particular court case. The minister said it himself.

I would hope, then, at the very minimum that if the government is not going to give us this information if it's before the courts, this had better not go any further in terms of our debate here in the Legislature. It can't be both ways. It's either before the courts or it's not. If the minister says, "It's before the courts, and I can't give you this information," well, how can we deal with the debate on Bill 15 that flows directly from this particular case? It's one or the other, it seems to me.

So to the minister: I would hope, then, that we put a stop to any more debate on Bill 15 in the Assembly if it's before the courts, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 42 lost]

Labour Relations Practices Review Report

M43. Mr. Martin moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the government MLA, Member of the Legislative Assembly, committee report reviewing labour relations practices in the construction industry, including MERFing and salting, submitted to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment in late 2003 or early 2004.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a major issue with the building trades unions. Certainly, the Merit contractors are the ones that are saying – I believe wrongly, and the building trades deny it – that there should be evidence that there is salting going on. I don't think there's any evidence of it. If there is, I'd sure like to know. It seems just to be a pipe dream by the Merit contractors.

It seems to me MERFing is a legitimate way for the building trades to operate within their own union to build on contracts. It's a free society. It seems to me that this makes absolute sense in terms of bidding, but unfortunately CLAC and Merit contractors don't like an equal playing field. Regardless of that, this was a report done for the government, and I would hope that the minister would see that it should be submitted to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond to Motion for a Return 43. I am rejecting the motion for a return requesting "a copy of the government MLA, Member of the Legislative Assembly, committee report reviewing labour relations practices in the construction industry, including MERFing and salting." The Member of the Legislative Assembly report was submitted to the previous Human Resources and Employment minister I believe in the spring of 2004. I am reviewing the report

and its recommendations. Many stakeholders have provided their input on labour relations practices, and their opinion must also be considered.

I appreciate the hon. member's interest in this matter, and I do intend to make the report and the government response public once I am done with my review.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've read the initial report. I haven't seen the review, of course, that might be contemplated by this question. I'm not exactly sure, but I know that the one report is on the ministry website from last year, and it speaks to MERFing and salting. Many people that I've talked to in the industry don't really consider these to be actually a problem and that they, in fact, can be a benefit to the industry in that they provide some continuity, the MERFing certainly, and the salting doesn't really exist.

Where there are cases of salting, I think they should be brought before somebody to see where they're in fact happening. To pass legislation would be very restrictive in a free and democratic society in many ways because I think you would be starting to infringe on the ability of individuals to go to work where they're working, the ability of individuals to get into certain workplaces through the restriction from some perceived salting behaviour.

What we see often in the construction industry is the movement by some contractors to act in an ideological manner to avoid the traditional building trades. Some of them are doing it for the purposes of trying to pay less or pay cheaper or pay no pension. To deal with these types of problems, there was the creation of the Merit shop contractors in the early '80s. It was an organization that was formed with the sole purpose of avoiding the traditional building trades. At the same time, there was a move to create an avenue or a vehicle through an existing rather small unit at the time called the Christian Labour Association, which was used for non-Christian purposes, realistically to avoid certification of some of these building trades organizations in order to not be working under their collective agreement terms and conditions. This has grown and been fostered.

5:20

We now have the Progressive Contractors Association, the PC Association so to speak, with the former Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Calder in the last Legislature, actually, acting as their spokesman. They are, in fact, almost entirely contractors who are utilizing this tool to avoid the building trades organization called CLAC, or the Christian Labour Association of Canada. This particular practice is causing great consternation among many people in the construction industry that have been members of the traditional trades for many, many years and who value their trade, value their ticket, value the history of the organizations that they were involved with to get that and how, in fact, they have gained the benefits of their pension and their overtime and all the other many things that they consider to be part of their working life and, indeed, part of the history of this province.

What we see in these so-called problems of MERFing and salting: I think they're really nonstarters. They'd be very difficult to legislate against. I think you would see challenges against them, and I don't think that they're realistically a problem. Many of the contractors who do participate and are actively involved with the MERFing process are, obviously, in favour of these processes and do work within our economy. It would be, in effect, distorting the way that they deal with the market by trying to pass more laws, more

legislation restricting the traditional building trades than we already have on the books today or the way that the laws and the legislation are interpreted through the way they have been ruled on in certain cases of the labour board.

I believe that this motion is in order, and I speak to it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in regard to Motion for a Return 43 I'm disappointed that we cannot receive this information. The government seems to be reluctant to release it. I can't understand why. These labour relations practices of MERFing and salting are in no way harmful. There are very few construction unions using the MERFing technique, but those that do use it successfully. Their members are anxious to see these practices continue. What the government MLA committee report wrote about in regard to these labour relations practices is of enormous interest to construction workers and to construction companies, both union and non-union, in this province.

Certainly, there have been a number of times in the last decade where the heavy hand of government was going to come down against these practices, and to date certainly it hasn't, and I would hope that it never does. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview talked about earlier, these are rights, these are freedoms, and these practices should continue.

Now, specifically with MERFing, there has been the notion put forward that this is unfair, but I believe it to be proven that to suspend the use of a MERF would be a violation of an individual's constitutional rights, as would be the whole idea of salting. Perhaps I could be proven wrong if this report was to be made public at the wish and the request of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. These practices have been well known but, unfortunately, misunderstood by the members opposite.

Ms Blakeman: Deliberately misunderstood?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't think we could go that far and say that it was a deliberate misunderstanding but certainly a misunderstanding. Perhaps it is deliberate, and one way of disproving that would be the release of this report, but that probably won't happen. Maybe I'll go to the library someday and I'll be looking around, and, voila, it will be there.

But there is no need of this, and I think the hon. minister could do a lot to foster and enhance positive labour relations by releasing this

report and ensuring that we have stable, positive labour relations with the construction industry as we continue to build this province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to conclude debate.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister said that he has it and that he's looking at it and that in due course, if I understood him correctly, he will release it along with his recommendations about it. Therein lies the problem because often by the time the government makes some of these practices and recommendations from the practices, it's too late. With this government, if I may say so, that's why the labour movement is concerned. They know the past history of laws that come from this particular government, that usually is not favourable to labour. So that's what the worry is.

We've talked about it before. The weakest labour laws in the country are right here in terms of fairness on the one side, and we're going through the whole division 8, with the labour code and how that relates. We've had that discussion on the foreign workers. We see the possibility of apprenticeship being cut back to 1 to 1 from 3 to 1 in certain trades. We hear more and more about MERFing. All we want to know is: what's in the report? What are the people saying? I mean, Merit contractors are talking about salting like there are hundreds of these labour people that go running into a construction site and do this and then leave again and then run into another site. Most people know it's patently ridiculous, but I hope the minister is not listening to that.

The MERFing, to me, is where an individual worker says, "My union says that to bid on this contract, can we get some movement on benefits that we're going to do?" and they get an agreement with the union. What could be fairer than that? What could be absolutely fairer than that? It's an individual choice by a worker working within a union contract so that they can compete on equal footing. Why are we even into this? Obviously, somebody got to the government before about the report. I hope it's not this minister. Now the minister is saying, "Well, I'll review it," and in due course we'll get the recommendations, but often in due course it's too late. They've already made up their mind, and that's a problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 43 lost]

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 2, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/05/02

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, before we proceed with the business before us, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the members of the Elder Advocates of Alberta Society. This organization is comprised of advocates on behalf of the frail, dependent, and elderly in our society. The Elder Advocates Society is here today to show their support for our motion regarding long-term care and seniors' rights. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions this evening. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Ireen Slater. Ireen is currently the vice-president of Seniors United Now central chapter. Ireen is the recipient of many awards for her tireless work in the community, including the United Nations International Women's Day award for exemplary service. She is here today in support of our motion on long-term care, and that's great.

My other set of introductions is much more of a personal one. I have my family: Genevieve, Ava, and Somboon Eggen. This is the nuclear family of the Eggens, the reason that I do all of the things that I do. They give me all of the support in the world, but they did wonder where I was going all the time in the evenings, so now they've followed me, and now they know. Ava, by the way, is collecting money for Jump Rope for Heart. Her school is the very top school for donations for jump rope, the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Every year they raise the most money in the entire province of Alberta. You might see something like this coming by you this evening; you never know. I would appreciate your support. Could everyone rise and please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Long-term Care Standards

507. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate steps to improve the quality of care provided to Albertans living in long-term care facilities by improving staffing ratios, introducing enhanced standards for long-term care facilities, and implementing more frequent and rigorous facility inspections.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to briefly speak to the motion. I was telling my son after supper – he asked what I was doing in the Assembly tonight – a little bit about this issue. When I told him some of the conditions that seniors are forced to endure in a long-term care facility, he was concerned, and I think he was also, frankly, skeptical that it could be as bad as it was.

Now, some of the stories that we have heard from people who have looked into this that have travelled and visited nursing homes – and Lynda Jonson has visited over 100 facilities in this province – are shocking and, in fact, hard to believe at first. The fact that people would get at most one bath a week, that they would not have their sanitary needs taken adequate care of, that there would be bedpans that were not emptied, that the facilities were unclean: these were all shocking to him, and he was a bit skeptical. When I said that in some cases people weren't even being adequately fed in the facilities, he frankly didn't believe it.

Mr. Speaker, when I heard some of this stuff for the first time, I was also skeptical. I felt that it was perhaps being exaggerated, but the more we look into it and the more we hear from people, we realize that, in fact, these conditions do take place right here in Alberta, and they're not rare. They're relatively common.

Of course, I want to indicate that it really has to do mostly with staffing levels. Most of the staff, almost all of the staff that work in our long-term care facilities are in fact dedicated, caring people who try to do the best with what they have for the people, but there are just not enough of them.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that there are no legislated standards in this province for people in long-term care. There are no staffing standards at all for designated assisted-living facilities. More and more beds are being built as assisted-living beds, not nursing home beds where there is some minimal standard.

The case that we've seen in Camrose at the Bethany care centre is a good example. It was redesignated from a nursing home to an assisted-living facility. As a result of that, eight registered nurses were let go by the facility on January 31, 2005, and the result is that there is no longer enough staff to provide minimal care. That has directly led to the issue that we've seen where Marie Geddes, an 86-year-old diabetic, began a hunger strike to protest what she considers to be a severe staffing shortage in care homes around the province. She has since ended that strike, but the support for her cause continues to grow. Most recently the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees added its voice to the growing criticism of the nursing home situation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we would all agree that we need to have higher standards in care. Right now the province has required 1.9 hours of care per patient. The standard that we need to aim for is four. I hope that we can move to increase the standards so that people receive the care they need.

Another aspect, Mr. Speaker, is the question of inspections. I was shocked to learn that, in fact, there are no guarantee that nursing homes in this province will be inspected at least annually. Sometimes in many cases they receive an inspection in only two or three years, and that is unacceptable.

What we need, clearly, are stronger standards for staffing levels, inspections to ensure sanitariness and cleanliness in the facilities and to ensure that people are not abused. We need to have, in my view, as well, councils of people who have relatives in care that can act as advocates for people within those facilities, and we need to have adequate training for people who are involved in the provision of this care.

8:10

You know, we like to talk about seniors and the contributions they've made and how they built the province. All of that is true,

but we also need to remember in their declining years that they have made a contribution to this province. We should not be turning our backs on them. In fact, we should honour them and treat them with the dignity that we also would expect for ourselves and for our loved ones. That, I think, is the direction that we need to go.

I would ask, then, for support from members of the House. We've tried to present this in a way that's positive, that isn't pointing fingers, and in a way that will make a difference, we hope, if the political will is there, for the seniors of our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Good evening, Mr. Speaker, and thank you. I would like to make an amendment to the hon. member's motion to more accurately reflect some of what is already occurring and maybe to remove or correct some misleading language in the motion. I believe the hon. member's intent is admirable, and I think all members of this House truly do care and want to see that our seniors are looked after in a way that respects their dignity and their ability to live the quality of life that they deserve.

I'll just wait till the amendment has been passed out, and then I'll proceed.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you may proceed.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we strike out the word "immediate" and substitute it with the word "further"; that we strike out the words "improving staffing ratios, introducing enhanced" and substitute that with the words "reviewing staffing levels and"; lastly, that we strike out the words "implementing more frequent and rigorous facility inspections" and substitute that with the words "ensuring that frequent and rigorous facility inspections continually occur."

Without question the Alberta government cares deeply about those people who are living in long-term care. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood would have some believe that they are the only ones who care about the residents in Alberta's long-term care facilities, and that is simply not true. Politicizing individual residents in long-term care is not something that you will hear any member on this side of the House do tonight or ever.

I would like to remind members that it was this provincial government that brought forward the Healthy Aging: New Directions for Care report in 1999, also known as the Broda report. It was the Alberta government that brought forward the Protection for Persons in Care Act in 1998. It was a previous PC government that brought in the Health Facilities Review Committee Act in 1978. It was the former Member for Calgary-West, a member of the government side, that brought forward Motion 506 in 2001 to identify palliative care as a core service. It was also the Alberta government that in its most recent budget set aside \$10 million in additional funding specifically to increase paid hours of staffing in long-term care facilities.

All of this being said, I listened very intently to the hon. member's opening remarks, and I have read his motion very carefully. It reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate steps to improve the quality of care provided to Albertans living in long-term care facilities by improving staffing ratios, introducing enhanced standards for long-term care facilities, and implementing more frequent and rigorous facility inspections.

The problem I have with this motion is not its overall general intent. We are already doing most of this. But I do have a problem with some of the words that this member has proposed.

The first line currently is to "urge the government to take immediate steps." Well, Mr. Speaker, as much as we all would absolutely love for the government to be able to snap their fingers and see any and all issues immediately resolved, that just isn't reality. I guess we shouldn't be surprised. Reality is not something on which the hon. member always has a firm grip.

Even if the government decides that they wanted to increase the number of staff members in long-term care facilities tomorrow, it would take considerable time to find, train, and hire the requested staff. We already have a health care worker shortage in Canada. You can't just pull workers out of your hat, as some members might believe.

I also take issue with some of the wording regarding staffing ratios. Ratios talk about the number of workers per resident. I'm not sure why we would use this as a measure of how well we are doing. You could pack a long-term care facility full of employees and still not see the levels improve.

The government has decided to focus on actual patient care rather than a ratio of warm bodies. This government has also made a commitment of moving from the current level of an average of three hours per day per patient care to 3.4 hours of care per patient per day by 2006-07. This is a significant increase. With over 14,000 residents in long-term care that is an additional 5,600 hours of care per day, and that could require some 700 additional employees.

I also have a problem with the wording that the government should implement "more frequent and rigorous facility inspections." The Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee has already done some stringent standards and conducts many inspections every year. I do believe this is something that needs to be commended and continued, but to suggest that this needs to be implemented would say that we don't already have rigorous and frequent inspections, which we do.

Mr. Speaker, I was a very proud member of the Health Facilities Review Committee for close to three years with the former hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and I know that the people that sit on that committee were as caring, as diligent, and as compassionate as any people that have sat on a board anywhere in this province. The scope of their investigations included but weren't limited to

- Care and treatment of patients or residents that respects both their privacy and dignity.
- Opportunities that permit well-informed and independent choices.
- Accommodation that is comfortable, clean and safe.
- Professional and support staff who are caring and accessible.
- Diagnostic and therapeutic services as well as rehabilitative and recreational programs that are accessible to patients and residents.

Also, to work with

- Volunteer and community groups who are involved and provide support.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on to the number of inspections they reported every month there, but with a team of about 11 inspectors working close to 14 or 15 days a month – many of the facilities took several days, three or four days in some of the larger ones and some just one day – the reports came back and they were portrayed as people who knew what to look for, who knew who to talk to, who knew how to find out how the people were being cared for, and I believe the members on this committee deserve more respect than the inference that they aren't doing a diligent and very good job for the seniors in this province.

Mr. Speaker, while I do have a few problems with the motion, it's not all bad. Most of what is being urged in the motion is already being done or already under way by the government, certainly a work in progress. We are already working to improve the quality of care for the residents of long-term care facilities. We are already increasing the number of hours of care provided. The Minister of

Health and Wellness is looking at updating our standards, and the rigorous inspections are continuing throughout the province.

I believe this amendment will more accurately reflect the practices that are in place already while still reminding us that we must continue to take strides to make the best system in Canada even better. On behalf of all the seniors in Alberta I would urge all members to support this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest to speak to the amendment from the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I'm pleased in some sense that he is supporting, presumably his caucus as well, some spirit of the motion that my fellow caucus member put forward. I think that it's important for us to make some differentiation here between certainly the wording of the amendment and how it changes the spirit of Motion 507, that we, you know, spent quite a bit of time and effort and consultation to put forward.

I think that, first of all, each of the government members in this House would agree of the importance of looking after seniors in our province and, indeed, anywhere in the world. It's an important thing to look after people who are least able to look after themselves, and while we sometimes forget that in the middle of our lives with some degree of power and independence over our actions and our futures, we begin our lives requiring care, and we certainly end our lives requiring care. I myself fully intend to and look forward to becoming a senior in this fine province, as I'm sure most hon. members here do as well. I want to make sure – this is on a very, very selfish note – that we have absolutely the best care possible for everyone in these places. Because you know what? We're all going to end up in one of these places, right?

8:20

It's very important when you walk into an extended care facility – and I've been to many, many of them – that there is a caring, dare I say, a loving and a healthy sort of situation for our seniors to be in. We require, we expect that for our parents, and I think that we would expect that for ourselves. So please remember what we create here several years hence down the road will be the place that you might end up in. So perhaps there might be some degree of enlightened self-interest, in the fine words of Alexis De Tocqueville or someone like that, that would motivate us to build the very best extended care facilities that we can afford here in this province.

Since we're looking for support with the amendment, I'm certainly not entirely opposed to, I guess, the spirit of wanting to have adequate staffing levels or to review improving staffing levels. I guess you're moving it to "reviewing staffing levels." I think that it's important to understand what the reality of this province is in terms of staffing levels and supervision at this time. By no means are we bringing this motion forward to be critical of the fine work that people do in extended care facilities often understaffed, often overworked, and I daresay often without the guidance of clear principles from this Legislature to ensure minimum standards and to encourage exceeding those minimum standards.

My own wife, who is here this evening – and I'm not grandstanding for her by any means – is, in fact, an extended care worker. She is a health care assistant who has worked in these facilities for many years. In the various places that she's worked, I've seen varying standards of care; that's for sure. She fills my own anecdotal evidence with plenty of stories, you know, both positive and, unfortunately, sometimes negative as well. I think that we can

do better, and I think that the first thing to do is to set clearly defined goals of what those minimum standards should be that equate to adequate service for every single person in this province in extended care.

I think we need to legislate requirements for the number of nursing staff and staff-to-resident ratios. Currently Alberta has no minimum requirements for nursing and general staffing ratios. I think that I heard some noise about bringing it up to 3.2 hours a day. I think that we require at least four hours of nursing care per day.

An Hon. Member: What makes you an expert?

Mr. Eggen: I've got plenty of experience and plenty of people that I've spoken to, thank you very much.

I think that the 1.9 per health care resident per day, our minimum requirement, is well below 4, and certainly we have the capacity to fill the ranks of people who are willing to do this sort of thing. It's a question of training, and it's a question of paying and having the will to do so. It's not an expensive thing relative to the care and the output that you get. Often nursing care attendants and LPNs are people who will give out extra anyway because they're of a caring nature. So by giving them some latitude and allowing more care, you in fact get more than the minimum, which is what we see right now. People are in desperate circumstances, and they can't have enough hours in their shift to get through more than 1.9 hours of nursing care per person per day.

Standards, qualifications, and training for staff I think are needed as well. Alberta has no legislated standard qualifications for health care aides who do otherwise provide most of the day-to-day personal and nursing care to residents. Okay? We have some excellent training programs throughout the province, and certainly it attracts more and more very first-rate and caring and interested individuals, but without a bottom line of standards it's very difficult to measure and it's very difficult to evaluate.

Let's not forget that when we're talking about extended care, we're talking about an arm of our overall health care system, and until we are honest about the way in which we evaluate any changes or even what the current state of our health care system is, then anything else is just experimentation. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that experimentation on our own citizens, especially our own senior citizens, is nothing short of irresponsible. So to put those minimum standards in place and legislate them here is our job. That's what we're meant to do here, and this is what this motion is encouraging.

Finally, we must take inspection and enforcement more seriously. Again, the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster made a very impassioned sort of plea for the people who are doing the inspections, but there are simply not enough of them. We need more inspectors, and we need to have a schedule by which each health care facility is inspected on a regular basis. That doesn't happen now, and it's something, again, that we can do here in this Legislature.

Unfortunately, a senior citizen had gone on a hunger strike in Camrose. This is an extreme manifestation of the frustration that many people across this province feel, the workers and the seniors in extended care facilities and the families that have their senior members in these facilities. I think that there is a tremendous amount of love and compassion and support that comes from extended care facilities. It's a place that, I confess, I enjoy visiting more than any other part of my constituency, but it's also a place where you can see the limitations of what we have put forward here as a Legislature, as legislators, the limitations that have a direct effect on the quality of people's lives.

For us to compromise the quality of people's lives, especially towards the end of their lives in their golden years, I think is something we need to look back on. I think that we need to swallow some of our personal differences that we might have from this motion coming from this side of the floor and rise together to create something better for everyone. So while I have some reservations on this amendment, just with the language, I encourage all of us to support the spirit of Motion 507. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. In speaking to the amendment and speaking to the attitude in general, I would ask the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster to shave some of the criticism off and comments like references to "reality," which I see as a form of ridicule. Every time we as a collective group stand and try and put forward an alternative, it should be given the dignity of a full debate. It concerns me that every time a suggestion comes from this side of the House, it is somehow viewed as a less valid alternative or having no basis, as the case was commented tonight, in reality.

We're all elected. Every one of us represents somewhere between 35,000 and 40,000 constituents. They expect us to work together for the betterment of this province. Every time we come up with a suggestion or a potential solution, I wish that the ideas were at least greeted with respect if not the members who suggest them.

You all are aware of my teaching background. If I went into my classroom with the type of attitude and type of demeaning circumstance which seems to resonate in this House, I would have no respect from my students. In question period there's a rivalry here. There's desk pounding. There's a degree of taunting and so on. I don't agree with it, and neither does the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, but that's a tradition. The tossing of insults back and forth when a motion or a bill is introduced I think should have a higher level.

8:30

With reference directly to the amendment, the amendment wants to strike out "immediate" and substitute "further." How much further do we have to wait for action to be taken? A number of groups have commented about: when is the process going to result in improvements?

The Auditor General, Mr. Dunn, agreed last spring to look into long-term care conditions, facilities, staffing ratios, and so on. Because of what I consider to be a premature election call in the fall, his report was not brought to this parliament. We're still waiting for that report. Hopefully, when the recommendations are provided by the Auditor General, this House will work immediately – I'll use the initial word – to institute the reforms that he is suggesting.

"Further" just means add on. It doesn't deal with the immediacy of what seniors are currently experiencing, and it's not experiencing at the hands of staff who, for the most part, are caring. It's the number of them and the fact that they don't have the time to give the patient care that is required.

Let's look at (b). It says, "reviewing staffing levels." The Auditor General, again, will have done that review. It is gravely apparent that we are understaffed. I don't see how there could be any argument about that staffing ratio. What I would invite each and every member to do if they haven't been in a seniors' facility lately, whether it be a high-end or a lower end facility, is go in there. Don't just do a quick tour of the room. Visit a senior, particularly one in a ward where dementia is frequent, and spend some time with the wife or the daughter or the son who is there with their senior, suffering great difficulties. Possibly, a larger degree of empathy could be achieved.

With regard to the (c) amendment, what was asked for was "implementing more frequent and rigorous facility inspections." Implementing, ensuring. "Ensuring" to me doesn't – unless you build in how you're going to ensure that these rigorous facility inspections continually occur, I support the initial wording of "implementing." I would like to add some stronger language myself, such as guaranteeing and putting a timeline and a regular inspection expectation, but I'm very hopeful that the Auditor General will have a comprehensive report and, when that report is finally in this House, that it will be greeted with support and enacted.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to speak to this amendment. I wasn't sure of the exact protocol, if I could make comments about it in the comments that I wanted to make on the motion itself, so I will just make a very brief comment about the amendment. I really feel that this amendment is strictly verbiage to help the other side feel less guilty and responsible for 86 year olds going on hunger strikes.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else on the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was one of the fortunate people who worked with the Health Facilities Review Committee for a number of years. I chaired the committee and worked with citizens from all over the province who took their duties very seriously, who were all severely normal Albertans, who saw problems as they were, real or imaginary, and reported back, and subsequent actions were taken.

Possibly one of the things that has changed – this was in my first term, and of course I'm now on my fourth term, so it's been a while – over the years is the case mix, and the severity of illness or acuity of illness may have changed. But I do recall that back in the days when I was chairing that committee, if there was any concern whatsoever with respect to staffing levels, one could request the health department to go and do an audit of acuity to see if, in fact, the case mix in that facility was such that it would require additional staffing. So it's not at all like some people would like others to believe, that nobody looks at these things and there aren't standards.

The fact of the matter is that if the people across the way feel that, you know, you need a minimum of four hours in terms of staffing levels, well, in which facilities? They're all different. They all have a different case mix. They all have different acuity. Many of them are in fact reverting back to something that is closer to a lodge and not necessarily a long-term care facility, and from what I'm hearing from across the way, that doesn't seem to matter.

I guess the big thing is that governments typically operate putting things in pigeonholes, and if the pigeonhole doesn't fit, then you've got problems. I'm more for flexibility. If a facility requires more help because of the type and mixture of cases that are there, then, fine, provide it. If a facility requires less service because of the type and mix of, you know, people who are there and how ambulatory they are and whether or not they eat by themselves – they don't have to be fed – all of these kinds of things, then I think that a facility like that should have the flexibility. I'm going to support the amendment because I don't think that hard-and-fast rules are what work in this kind of situation.

Now, with respect to the inspections, I felt, when I was there, that one of the best aspects of that whole thing was unannounced inspections; in other words, the facility didn't know when you were

coming. It almost sounds to me, from listening to what I'm hearing from the other side, like they want regularly scheduled inspections so that, you know, you've got time to get yourself shipshape for the inspectors. Well, I'd much prefer unannounced kinds of inspections because then you get to deal with the people who are there on that particular day – the visitors, the relatives, the friends – and you get to see a little more reality.

I think that the amendments that were brought forward by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster are quite appropriate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else on the amendment? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, I'd like to say that I presently have the honour of being the chair of the Health Facilities Review Committee, and I'd like to say a few words about the work that this committee does. The mission of the Health Facilities Review Committee is to ensure that quality of care, treatment, and standards of accommodation are maintained in these health facilities throughout Alberta. This committee is responsible for conducting regular and, as the previous speaker mentioned, unannounced routine visits at hospitals and nursing homes for the purpose of reviewing and inspecting them and for investigating complaints about care, treatment, and standards of accommodation made for and on behalf of individual patients and residents in these facilities.

8:40

This committee is currently responsible for 216 facilities in the province, and, as was mentioned, they conduct routine reviews approximately every 18 months to three years, depending on the current financial, committee, and staffing resources. The reviews are always conducted unannounced, and a specific time frame is not announced to enable the committee to vary its visiting schedule so members are not expected when they visit. The number of reviews per year can vary depending on the number and complexity of complaint investigations being carried out in any one fiscal year.

This committee is hard working and is committed to obtaining feedback from the users of the system. There really are several mechanisms in place to evaluate the effectiveness and performance of Alberta's health care facilities, but the committee's unique perspective, I feel, through the collection of feedback directly from users of the system, is an invaluable and critical part of the overall program delivery and accountability.

I think I'd like to take this opportunity, too, to thank the various stakeholders and advocacy groups who continue to lobby the government and who provide valuable feedback about the health care delivery system, its deficits and its areas for improvement, through the expression of their concerns. We take these concerns very seriously and are striving to work with the system to address these.

I think we're working hard to improve our own processes and the quality and the content of our reports in order to become even more effective in our work. We take any feedback and concerns expressed very seriously and are committed to doing the best job possible on behalf of Alberta's citizens.

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: I just want to be clear, Mr. Speaker. Your guidance: I am entitled to speak to the amendment as well as the main motion?

The Acting Speaker: We have an amendment on the floor, and the hon. member can speak to the amendment. When we revert back to

the motion as amended, you have already spoken at that stage, so you will not be able to speak.

Mr. Mason: So I would just close then.

The Acting Speaker: No. You're not closing debate right now. You are speaking on the amendment. We haven't voted on the amendment as yet.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you will also receive the five minutes to close debate.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you. That's what I wanted to be clear. I just wanted to deal with this amendment, Mr. Speaker. I don't support the amendment, and I think there are some good reasons for this.

It seems that the government wants to expunge from the motion any implied criticism that they may not have done an exemplary job in this area, and that seems to be the purpose of the amendment. The purpose of the amendment seems to be to find a way to not vote against the motion but to pretend that everything is absolutely just exactly the way it should be. Some of the language, for example, is to take "further" steps to improve the quality, and "reviewing" staff levels instead of increasing them is a bit of a problem.

I want to respond to some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont. He says that we need flexibility because each institution is different and there's a different level of acuity and the care mix is different in each one, so flexibility is required. In saying that, he's implying that these are the factors that are taken by the operators of long-term care facilities when they reduce their staff. I think that that's absolutely incorrect, Mr. Speaker. They have economic reasons for reducing staff and funding reasons for reducing staff. It is simply not a question of matching the staff to the patients, or we wouldn't have some of the problems that we've been hearing about. So the flexibility he's talking about is really the flexibility of the people operating these facilities, in many cases private owners who reduce staff below what really is necessary.

He also tries to imply that we're promoting regularly scheduled and previously announced inspections, and there's nothing that we've said or nothing in the motion that would lead any reasonable person to believe that. Of course, there should be surprise inspections, but there need to be inspections on a frequent basis. In fact, if you go to 2000-2001, that year only 56, or 32 per cent, of the province's 176 long-term care facilities actually received an inspection. That's the problem, Mr. Speaker.

So here's the difficulty with the amendment. I think that it's really a straightforward motion, Mr. Speaker, and it's positive. It focuses on improving things in the future. I think the government is simply watering it down far more than is really necessary.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and speak to this motion. I support the amendment to the motion, and I also support the spirit of this motion. I guess I'd like to make a few comments. I agree with the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont in the fact that I feel it's sad and disheartening to think that we live in a time when society thinks we can be protected by more rules and

regulations and having to get everything down to a certain hour, a certain cost.

It goes back to, I guess, one of my basic beliefs in that we need to hire good people to manage these facilities and let them have the ability to make those decisions if they need extra staff because they have four seniors who have come in that need extra time as opposed to four that are working fairly well. I think what's important – and it will be reiterated again many times tonight, I'm sure – is the spirit that we do need to improve the level of care that we are giving, that there are times when the staffing is short and they struggle to provide the care that is maybe necessary, and they can fall back on their regulations and say: "Oh, but we did this once a week. We met our standards." We need to put, like I say, more of an onus on the actual operator of those facilities and to have them actually manage them to the best of their capability.

We seem to get stuck on the fact that we need to see the letters behind a person's name to see whether or not they're qualified, and we have to see whether or not they're part of a union and whether or not they can work there. We continue to put ourselves in these pigeonholes that basically stop us from giving the care and the attendance that we need to give to these seniors.

So I hope that we'll continue to have an open and honest discussion. The fact is that the inspections need to be improved, it sounds like, but keep them spontaneous so that they can show up and do that. Perhaps the area that seems to be hit the most is that we don't have the inspections there. So I hope that this motion will go forward and that we'll be able to improve the care and the attendance for our seniors in our facilities here in the province.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder – sorry, Edmonton-Decore, did you want to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: You need a name tag.

Mr. Bonko: Yeah. I think I have a name tag. Thank you.

I think this is very timely. We do have that one particular case that is, in fact, out there in the rural area. Speaking on behalf of the residents within Edmonton-Decore, I have two long-term care facilities. One would be the Dickinsfield extended care centre, and I also have an Alzheimer's centre, not to mention that we could certainly use more facilities of those types. But just in speaking of those two in particular, I've toured those, and I've been inside. In fact, I've had grandparents, both grandparents, that were in fact within facilities, and I can only speak on what I've seen. Certainly, the staff do have compassion and they do care, but I think we have to recognize that the levels certainly could be increased with regard to the amount of people.

If we look at how much we give our pets as well as care, it in no way equates to the amount that we give to the seniors. We treat our pets with more dignity than we do our seniors, unfortunately, and I agree with that statement wholeheartedly. When we talk about the fact that we give revenues and that they're earned by the gaming commission at Northlands Park and we don't give that sort of money to the seniors, is that because they're no longer valid and no longer contributing members of our society because they aren't in fact earning a paycheque? That's unfortunate when we look at it like that.

8:50

I mention the other member who, in fact, had said that these people have contributed to Alberta in a meaningful and a significant

way. Eventually we're all going to be there; it's just a matter of fact. I would hope that when we do put some of these provisions forward, we don't continue to amend them, that we do have some long-term vision with regard to what we are going to need over the next 20 years. The system is certainly going to be stretched to its maximum capacity to be able to accommodate the amount of boomers that are coming through there.

I would like to see standards that won't have to be continually amended but are going to be amended because we do have some sight with regard to what we're going to need not only three or four years from now but 10 years from now and start making the necessary arrangements to have standards for those people as well as monitoring in place to ensure that we don't have concerns being raised on a daily basis. There might be the odd particular piece with regard to an individual basis, but overall we need to ensure that there are, in fact, standards that can be palatable to all the groups as well.

I think I would support the motion as it reads currently. I don't have any problems with regard to seeing some of the amendments in there. I think Motion 507 sits fine as it is then, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: On the motion as amended, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In case you smell burning in here, it's probably the smoke coming out of my ears. I'm just a tad excited.

In answer to something that may come over from that side, yeah, I am an expert. I've fed people, I've wiped bottoms, I've hugged and kissed, I've put people to bed, and I've held the hands of people that died. This is a very timely issue that must be addressed. I'm delighted that the member has brought this motion forward because I have Bill 213 waiting in the lineup, and in all likelihood it wouldn't make this session, so I'm pleased that this is coming forward and that I can at least talk about it.

I really believe this has to be more than a debate. There has to be action on the part of this government, and my bill would be more comprehensive in that the staffing problem is not confined to what we seem to be talking about and understanding as long-term facilities. It has to be discussed in terms of anyone receiving long-term care regardless of where they live, be it long-term facilities, lodges, assisted living facilities, designated living facilities, or group home facilities for the mentally or physically disabled. We can put all the fancy names that we want on bricks and mortar, but bricks and mortar have nothing to do with care. It's actually this government that had mandated, when these new lodges and new facilities were being built, that everything had to be private rooms. Therefore, the space was much bigger, and the staff didn't meet that bigger space requirement. Bricks and mortar have nothing to do with care, responsibility, and dignity for the persons living in these facilities.

There appears to be a huge disconnect between this government's obsession with the bottom line and the dignity of humanity. When an elderly couple has been married for, say, some 40 years plus – and in an example that I have personal knowledge of, this couple had been married for 72 years. They were living in a lodge, and the husband was taken to hospital. It was clear that he could not return to the lodge as his acuity of care needs were more than was provided for there. So to wait for a bed in a long-term facility, he was transferred to an outlying town in hopes that later there would be space in the town he came from to be near his wife. This action, of course, was based on the first available bed policy. In the meantime,

the wife was crying practically nonstop because she was legally blind, very frail, and she kept repeating: I just know he's going to die before I see him again and say good-bye. Believe me, I listened with no answers.

There are certain levels of care for each person, and I know how difficult it is to manage, but keeping our seniors together that really need these different levels of care isn't even being discussed.

Presently there's a government initiative to have care workers in long-term care facilities given a 12-hour course and then obtain a certificate. This is not what I would consider updated standards. It's all well and good and probably expensive, but it does not address the real problem of staffing levels.

One of the important questions is: who gives out the medication, and who is qualified to do so? Having the staff of any care facility or staff working with those still living in their homes ensure that the red and blue pill is given at noon and has been taken from a blister pack prepared by a pharmacist is just not good enough. People trained to recognize adverse reactions, either instantly or over a period of time, is crucial. How much time and money is wasted at any care facility when in the case of an emergency, real or not, 911 is called because the staff cannot handle the situation?

All of that aside, I'd repeat from my maiden speech the importance of the dignity of the vulnerable in our society. It takes time, and time is money.

Alberta's long-term care legislation is badly outdated. We need to replace the Nursing Homes Act and certainly strengthen the Protection for Persons in Care Act. In fact, it is my opinion that there are no teeth at all. The Broda report has been in the making six years, and the government has yet to pursue new legislation.

Motion 507 identifies staffing ratios as an area of major concern. Alberta's minimum staffing standards are among the lowest in the country. My bill would ask that there be established recommended codes of practice for long-term care. Again, I want to reiterate that long-term care means anybody that is in care that is requiring chronic care, not just in what we traditionally know as long-term care facilities.

Also, in Bill 213 I would propose that there be a selected special standards of care committee established consisting of seven members of the Assembly, and I would of course like to see that all parties were included in that.

Motion 507 requires a commitment to interdepartmental co-operation and collaboration. At the same time, it's essential to identify which department is accountable. In my mind, I think that's one of the problems. Part of the care and responsibility is in Seniors and Community Supports, and the other part is under Health. I know these two departments do attempt to work together, but I think that something seriously has to be looked at instead of dividing off these responsibilities.

Improving the quality of life for seniors in long-term care involves setting standards for staffing qualifications and introducing a system for province-wide licensing and monitoring requirements for long-term care. The province-wide licensing I think is very important as we move further and further into the privatization of the delivery of care for the vulnerable people in our society.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else on the motion as amended?

If none, I'd recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Although I am disappointed that the motion has been considerably watered down by

the amendment, I think that there's a saying – and I'm sure it's not Alexis de Tocqueville – that half a loaf is better than no loaf at all. I've not had the experience yet in this Assembly of having the government actually pass one of my motions.

I think, you know, there are some positive things to be found in this. I'm assuming that once they amend a motion, they're going to vote for the motion as amended. But you know what? I've been disappointed so many times before.

I want to be a little bit specific. I want to be a little bit specific about what the NDP opposition is calling for, and that includes four points: minimum requirements for the number of nursing staff and the staff-to-resident ratios. Currently there are no legislated minimum requirements for nursing and general staffing ratios to require at least four hours of nursing care per day. Alberta's requirement currently is 1.9 hours of nursing care per resident per day, and that is simply not good enough.

9:00

There should be standard qualifications and training for staff. Alberta has no legislated standard qualifications for health care aides, who do provide most of the day-to-day personal and nursing care to residents.

Finally, to take inspection and enforcement seriously. I have to express concern, Mr. Speaker, about the concept that we've heard tonight of a committee of MLAs going around and conducting inspections of these facilities. There should be dedicated professional staff that do regular random tours and inspections of these facilities with the power, in fact, to enforce changes immediately if they find that things are in a substandard manner. I appreciate the commitment of those members who have undertaken this task, and I don't mean to question at all their dedication to the people in those facilities, but I do believe that this needs to be done by professional inspectors with real powers to make changes.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that a senior citizen in Camrose had to go on a hunger strike to draw attention to the situation with respect to long-term care in this province. I think that in our centennial year it's time for the government to treat the people who built this province with the respect which they deserve.

This motion has one positive aspect, which is why I'm going to support it as amended, Mr. Speaker. This is the operative clause: that the government take steps "to improve the quality of care provided to Albertans living in long-term care facilities." That means that the motion is not completely obliterated, that there is a very positive message that's retained within that. So I appreciate that and think that we should support it.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this is not lip service just to pass the motion and move on, because I know that there are many people who fought long and hard for seniors. The families of seniors who are in these facilities – there are hundreds of thousands of those people – and the New Democrat opposition are going to be watching. If the government doesn't take real and meaningful action, then, that is certainly going to be an ongoing issue in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 as amended carried]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

International and Intergovernmental Relations

The Deputy Chair: As per our Standing Orders the first hour will be allocated between the minister and members of the opposition, following which any other member may participate.

The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good evening, everyone. I'm here tonight seeking approval of the 2005-2006 budget and the business plans for the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

We are privileged, Mr. Chairman, in this province to have some of the finest professional, most experienced people, who work very hard on our behalf implementing the ideas and policies as directed by this Assembly. These people have also worked very hard in positioning our negotiations in health, child care, fiscal imbalance, and institutional reform. We have some of them here today in the gallery, and I would like to introduce them. They are Mr. Gerry Bourdeau, who is the deputy minister; Wayne Clifford, assistant deputy minister, international relations; Helmut Mach, Alberta trade representative; Garry Pocock, assistant deputy minister, Canadian intergovernmental relations; Lorne Harvey, who is our director of corporate services; Aniko Parnell, director, international governance office; Kathryn Wiegiers, our communications director; and, of course, my executive assistant, Mr. Ron Glen. Let's give them a warm welcome.

Mr. Chairman, this year the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations is asking for a \$10 million budget, up from \$8.3 million, which was budgeted last year. The additional funding is for three purposes: intergovernmental meetings, trade negotiations, and the Alberta office in Washington, DC. Most of the increase is a one-time cost to host the Western Premiers' Conference later this week in Lloydminster and the Premiers' Council of the Federation meeting in Banff in August.

Before I get into the budget details, I'd like to briefly outline the ministry's goals and mandate. IIR's 2005-2006 business plan has three goals. The first focuses on Alberta's relations within Canada by "promoting the interests of, and securing benefits for, Alberta as an equal partner in a strengthened, united Canada." The second goal looks outside Canada to "promoting the interests of, and securing benefits for, Alberta from strengthened international relations." The third goal is "promoting the interests of, and securing benefits for, Alberta from greater trade and investment liberalization, internationally" and here at home.

Our business plan supports the larger government goals of improving the economy, increasing our international competitiveness, having a strong partnership with other orders of government, and a financially stable, open, and accountable government. In supporting these goals, IIR works closely with other ministries to negotiate important intergovernmental agreements, plan conferences and missions for the Premier and other ministers, and provide information and advice to other departments.

The upcoming Western Premiers' Conference and the Council of the Federation will deal with important national issues like federal/provincial relations, energy, agriculture, and health care. They also give us the opportunity to highlight Alberta's centennial on a national stage. Every province takes a turn hosting these meetings, and we've had ours moved up a year to coincide with our centennial. In the past Premiers met about once a year. However, since January 2003 they've met six times, leading in part to an historic national agreement on health care funding. That agreement secured \$4 billion in funding for Alberta over the next 10 years.

Alberta will attend at least two more Premiers' meetings planned for this year through the Council of the Federation and its secretariats. The premiers have developed ambitious plans to work together on health care, literacy, the environment, and disaster relief. As chair of the Council of the Federation this year Alberta will lead important discussions on a variety of national issues, including internal trade, health care, child care, climate change, and aboriginal, municipal, and fiscal issues.

We're also working more closely with our neighbour to the west to improve services and save taxpayers' dollars. For example, Alberta and B.C. will save millions of dollars in infrastructure costs, not to mention the time and money businesses will save because we'll share a truck weigh scale on the Trans-Canada highway instead of having one on each side of the border. This closer co-operation with B.C. is also leading to other efficiencies in education and children's services.

9:10

Over the next few weeks and months there will be national meetings of trade ministers, health ministers, finance ministers, and others. My ministry will be busy preparing agreements and providing support to the Premier and cabinet members who take part.

Mr. Chairman, there are fiscal realities that come with being a leader in federal/provincial relations just as there are with establishing a presence in Washington, DC. With the important Alberta office in Washington, DC, now fully staffed and operational, additional funding is required annually to operate the office.

The United States is by far Alberta's most important economic partner. Washington is where important decisions are made that affect our interests. One thing we learned through the BSE issue is that the U.S. regulatory process is extremely complex and time consuming. We're fortunate to have someone representing Alberta on the ground in Washington who can help monitor and influence U.S. policies that stop the free flow of goods from our province and who can also promote the safe and stable supply of our energy sector. Alberta's annual trade with the United States is close to \$60 billion, or almost \$18,000 for every man, woman, and child in Alberta. The cost of operating the Alberta office in Washington is about 50 cents per Albertan per year.

Alberta's U.S. presence does not take away from our commitment to other international partners as we are truly global players. For instance, Alberta is working on improving transportation links to the west coast. We're doing this so that we can increase our trading opportunities in the Asia Pacific region.

Our international twinnings with 14 states and provinces on five continents advance Alberta's relationships with key trade and investment partners, involving schools, businesses, and municipalities. To mark the 25th anniversary of our province's twinning with Hokkaido, we'll undertake a mission to Japan that includes the 18 mayors from Alberta towns and cities twinned with communities in Japan. This fall a pagoda, a gift from Ganwon, Korea, will be erected on our Legislature Grounds in honour of the 30th anniversary of Alberta's twinning with that Korean province.

Alberta continues to share its governance expertise with countries throughout the world. In China and South Africa we're working on public-sector reform. In Ukraine we're working on agricultural reform.

The ministry also requires additional funding to prepare for the upcoming Doha round of World Trade Organization negotiations. The World Trade Organization negotiations are vitally important to the economic health of Alberta, especially our agricultural community. There will be a critical WTO ministerial meeting in Hong

Kong in December, and I plan to attend as part of the Canadian delegation.

The softwood lumber dispute also continues to require our full attention. As you may know, discussions have resumed with the United States to try and resolve this dispute. We're working hand in hand with Alberta's forest industry to find a long-term, durable solution that will provide free access to the United States market for Alberta's softwood lumber producers. The softwood lumber industry is the second-largest manufacturing export sector of Alberta's economy. It supports 69,000 well-paying technical jobs. They are the mainstay of Alberta's rural communities as well as important parts of the economic makeup of the Calgary and Edmonton regions.

Our trade experts also continue to work through the Council of the Federation to reach an agreement so that provinces and territories have a role in international negotiations, agreements, and forums. We've certainly seen what's happened with the Kyoto accord, where the federal government signed an international agreement affecting areas of provincial responsibility without bothering to include provinces in the negotiations.

Our trade area will build upon and enhance the benefits of the agreement on internal trade to promote the free flow of goods, services, capital, and labour within Canada. Freer trade within Canada brings many benefits to Alberta. Alberta companies will be able to bid on government contracts anywhere in Canada. Licensed professionals will be able to move freely between provinces, and we could eliminate provincial or regional favouritism by the federal government in procurement decisions, for example.

While these are some of the highlights of IIR's major initiatives and our funding requirements, there are, of course, many other issues being dealt with and projects under way to meet Alberta's national, international, and trade priorities.

In conclusion, IIR faces a busy year ahead as our province hosts intergovernmental meetings and becomes chair of the Council of the Federation. We're working to strengthen Alberta's international relations, especially with our most important trading partner, the United States. We'll continue to protect Alberta's interests through trade negotiations and in the softwood lumber dispute along with continuing support to Alberta Agriculture on the BSE file.

I respectfully ask that you approve the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations 2005-06 budget and business plan. I'm certainly happy to answer any questions or take any comments from members of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will try to be brief and just ask the questions without a whole bunch of preamble around them because I know that there are others that want to ask questions, and often the time has run out at these what I think are particularly important discussions.

One of the first things I'd like to ask is about the Canadian intergovernmental relations. On page 344 of the business plan you're promoting "solutions to redesign federal/provincial financial arrangements including the Canada Health Transfer, the Canada Social Transfer, Equalization and cost-sharing arrangements." How specifically does the department propose to redesign the Canada health transfer, and how would this department redesign the federal equalization program?

I was going to ask questions on the Alberta office in Washington, DC, but I have already asked for some of that information in writing, and I assume that it will be here before the appropriation time.

The international trips. What internal reviews are conducted on

international trips to determine the efficacy, and what was achieved on the trips that have been taken? If there are no such reviews, how does the minister know that these trips are successful and whether the taxpayers' money is being spent appropriately?

Exporting water. Who is the department consulting on this issue? What work has the department done in examining the issue of water export, and have any policy options been developed? What research is being conducted on either future exporting or, in fact, present exporting?

The BSE. Can the minister provide us an update on the BSE situation, and how has this ministry helped in opening the U.S. border to Canadian beef, and when does the minister expect the border to open? I know that those are sort of almost redundant questions, but I think that they merit being put on the record. What contingency plans are in place if the U.S. border does not open? I would suspect that that would be partly financed in terms of helping the co-operative producers actually create value-added products.

Page 266 of the financial estimates. The overall spending on international and intergovernmental relations has increased, as you've mentioned, not perhaps in these exact forms, but they've increased by 20 per cent this year, approximately \$1.7 million, from roughly \$8 million last year to \$10 million this year. Can the minister explain how the 20 per cent budget increase would increase Alberta's international or intergovernmental presence, preferably I think discussing it from the international perspective? Why was there such a jump in spending, which I assume would follow on to the discussion of the international dollars spent?

Page 267 of the estimates. The spending on Canadian intergovernmental relations has increased from \$2.546 million in 2004-05 to \$3.356 million in '05-06. It's an increase of 32 per cent, or \$810,000. Last year the department spending was only by 60 per cent. Can the minister explain why the item Canadian intergovernmental relations has received large increases two years in a row, and could you provide a breakdown on that particular budget item?

9:20

Another thing that I would like discussed, particularly from this ministry, would be the electricity exports to the U.S. What work has the department done on examining the issue of electricity exports? What discussions on exporting electricity to the United States has the minister been involved in, and what were the outcomes of these discussions? Who is the department consulting on this issue, either Canadian or American? What policy options have been developed by the ministry or in conjunction with this ministry, and what research is being conducted as we speak?

NorthernLights Transmission, an arm of TransCanda Corp, is proposing to build multibillion dollar transmission lines from Fort McMurray to southern California, as was reported in the *Edmonton Journal* today. What does the minister know about this project, and what discussions on NorthernLights Transmission's proposed export power lines has the minister been involved in?

I thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no idea if he had a chance to keep track of all of those, but if he would prefer to give some of the answers to me in writing, I would take that because I know other people want to speak. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll follow up with detailed responses to your questions. I'm going to try and catch up with as many as I can. I'll probably miss some, but we'll check *Hansard* and then get back to you in detail.

Just generally speaking, I haven't had any meetings about electricity. I haven't been involved in any personally as a minister, and if there have been with the Minister of Energy, we'll be able to report on that. Our role, basically, is that if there are any agreements made between provinces or between, let's say, the province of Alberta and Canada and the United States, then we would be reviewing those agreements as a department, but we don't really enter into any agreements ourselves other than some of the ones that we would be reviewing for health or child care or fiscal imbalance. Our department doesn't meet directly with, let's say, energy providers in the States and negotiate those agreements.

I think you asked a question on water and what agreements we have in place. Water is outside NAFTA, so other than selling bottled water to the States, there's no provision to sell water, you know, channel a river or whatever into the States and charge them for the water, although I know that this issue comes up once in a while, kind of like a scare tactic: "Oh, the Americans want our water and Alberta is going to sell water," et cetera. Quite frankly, in your area of the province we don't have any water to license with the activity that's happening there in terms of food processing, agriculture, and other industry. I believe that most of the water available in the South Saskatchewan has been allocated. So, really, with respect to water there are no agreements being negotiated because it's just not something that we're selling or going to be selling to anyone.

With respect to the budget increase it is a 17 per cent increase, and it covers the two main meetings: the Council of the Federation and also the Western Premiers' Conference that will be held this week in Lloydminster. There are also additional dollars for the Doha round of negotiations with the WTO. It's the Doha round of the World Trade Organization meetings that will be held in Korea. I believe for that we've allocated about \$150,000.

We will be sending representatives there because we want to be part of the action to make sure that the provinces are involved in the decisions that will be made. The reason being, to give you a little bit of an idea of the difference across Canada especially when it comes to agriculture, I believe that in Quebec and Ontario more than 50 per cent of their farm cash gate receipts are from the protected industries, feather and milk, and in Alberta – I'd have to consult with the minister – I think they're probably around 5 to 6 per cent. I would think that there might be different interests expressed by those provinces in advancing some position at the World Trade talks, so we want to make sure that we're there in the room with the federal government and the other provinces to make sure that the feds don't sign something off that leaves us vulnerable just in that one area of agriculture. That is why it's so important that we do have representation there.

On BSE. This is perhaps an issue that's the most sensitive because, without a doubt, at the moment the opening of the border is really tied up in the courts. Of course, with the one court case in Montana a judge refused to listen to evidence from parties other than R-CALF and reached a tentative decision. That is being appealed in the court in California, the ninth circuit court. We will of course be working very closely with our trade representative on that particular file.

There are two tracks here. There's the legislative track, which is the President and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The President has indicated that he would veto any move by the two Houses if they were to move to keep the border closed because he sees the long-term need of a fully integrated North American beef market. That's the legislative component.

This is a legal track, and it more than likely will take a while longer to get through all the appeals, and this is what can happen in the United States. Here in Canada it's a little different, but in the

United States they could appeal it to the court, and as a result this would probably tie it up for another eight to 12 months, and sometimes it could be more. You know, it's hard to predict. We're certainly not going to be very optimistic and say: well, you know, it'll be settled in a few months. Appeal decisions do take time and depend on when the courts will hear all of the evidence and how much time they take to make a decision once the evidence is heard.

International trips. This year the Premier will be doing some, and of course he will be very busy at home as a result of the two meetings. We do have the hosting of Japanese visitors celebrating the 25th anniversary of the twinning with Hokkaido, and we are planning a small mission to Japan to reciprocate those that are going to be travelling to Alberta in celebration of the anniversary.

We measure performance in a number of ways. Before, we would poll different people and say: well, are we doing a good job or not doing a good job? By doing that, we pretty well followed the total performance and their support in the province by the public. We have worked with the Auditor General and have come up with a different system of evaluating performance of the department. This would be pretty well a summary document of all of our activities, and of course we would share this with Albertans.

9:30

The other is that there are some changes in that two months following any trip we would be posting on the web the full expenses of that particular mission. If you were to go to the web now, you would see the costs of, let's say, my visit to Washington prior to the office being opened in March.

I hope I've covered some of them, but I'll check my notes and catch up with the rest.

Ms Pastoor: If I might, just a couple of clarifications. I'd like to know more about the court cases in the U.S. and California. I don't think that we should send a whole herd of people, but I'm wondering if, in fact, there would be at least one lawyer and, I don't know, maybe you yourself as the minister, someone who's trained in U.S. law as well as Canadian law who would actually sit through those hearings, if you have that in mind.

As far as the performance measurement goes, I would suspect that the outcome would be a far better benchmark to look for than something about what the party has sort of – from a total business point of view, to pick out an outcome, a Carver method or one of those easily defined ways of looking at if you've been successful or not and to evaluate it, and chuck it if it hasn't.

Mr. Stelmach: I want to clarify: that's what we used to do before. We don't do that anymore. We have client survey questionnaires as opposed to just doing a poll and trying to feel what Albertans or business, et cetera, felt about the effectiveness and efficiency of the work we do in the department. We now do client surveys every two years, and those are a much better measurement of the performance of the department generally as opposed to what we did in the past. I'm sorry because I maybe wasn't clear on what we did in the past and what we do now.

It is the Doha round. It's not in Korea, but it is the Doha round of the world trade talks. So maybe I said – it is the Doha round, but it'll be held in Korea.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to this budget with some interest. I certainly don't question the need for the existence of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I think

that it sometimes is a thorny issue in general between what is a federal jurisdiction in this area and what the province can be delving into. In general, considering the importance of export trade and import trade to our overall economy and the future of our economy, I certainly see the existence of this department to be very useful although there are some specific concerns that we have.

I think the most difficult area for this department is the question of accountability. I'm also sitting on the Public Accounts Committee, and the most important measuring stick for the success of any given department or any given venture is to have clearly defined goals and then measuring those goals against the money that is expended and then coming to some conclusion about that.

You know, in the intergovernmental affairs bureau I do have some difficulties that I would like to point out here this evening. I'll ask a group of questions, if I may, and the hon. minister can you know answer as he sees fit or in writing as well.

The first one I have is, perhaps, more a structural question. I'm wondering to what degree these two ministries are merged now and if it's not possible to completely combine the two together. I'm looking for efficiencies – I guess we have a ministry for that as well – perhaps to more completely merge these two ministries together. I would be curious to know to what degree this has gone on and if there is a plan in the future to in fact bring the two together entirely.

The intergovernmental relations budget, according to what I can see here, is up by 32 per cent. Again, in terms of indicators and rationale, what's the idea behind that? What indicators could we watch for that would suggest that this increase is successful?

Again, this is a structural kind of issue. I am curious for the hon. minister to differentiate in specific terms between international and governmental affairs and economic development. I really do see the mission statements of both of these ministries to be very close, so I'm looking, again, for efficiencies or, I guess, clarification in regard to differentiation. I'm not suggesting that perhaps we could have another merger, but I just need and I think the public as well could use greater clarification in that regard.

This ministry seems to have been responsible for the Senator-in-waiting part of our vote in November. According to the website, this exercise cost \$3 million, approximately, from the whole budget. Now, I want to know if that is \$3 million tagged onto the existing structure of the vote. Or were you including using the established vote, which is already in place, and then factoring in the cost of that to the overall cost of conducting this poll?

Of course, our question is whether this was a good value or not. Did Albertans tell the government that this is something that they in fact wanted? Our suspicion, I think, is that there are certain interests that are seeking Senate reform through an elected Senate. While this is an interesting possibility, I'm wondering if all avenues were explored. Or is this just, you know, a horn that likes to be blown? Does it represent the interests of the majority of Albertans? There are different approaches to Senate reform, and this is just one of them.

Unfortunately, the voter turnout for the last provincial election was perhaps the lowest or amongst the lowest in Alberta's history. My understanding is that there were 20 per cent of spoiled ballots or declined ballots on the Senate part of this election, so I guess that I would like to see clarification on that. Does that mean that only 35 per cent of Albertans did in fact cast their vote for the Senate election ballot? If so, you know, I think that we do spend a lot of money here in this Legislature, but I'm really questioning the value of this overall process.

I think that there were some Senate appointments recently, and I don't know if any of the people who were elected actually were chosen. I don't know what sort of progress we've made in regard to

Senate reform. Certainly, I'm interested in Senate reform too, but I don't see if we've made any sort of advancement to the cause here with this \$3 million election, which had very poor participation rates.

9:40

Now, again, going back to performance measurements in the ministry, I just would really like to see a more clearly defined set of performance measurements built into this ministry. I have, say, for example the Alberta Washington office performance measurements available to me here. You know, they just didn't seem to be very specific, and they just didn't seem to have a lot of information. That's one that I'd like to just make a quick comment on.

I guess, just to close off, there is the question of the Washington, DC, office, which is under this department's management. You know, the numbers have been very, very public, and there's been a lot of controversy surrounding this office, which I believe is located in the Canadian high commission embassy in Washington. I'm just wondering if, say, the salary for the main person there, Murray Smith – I understand that it's \$223,000 a year as a base salary – is a prudent amount to be spending on this. Where was the salary brought forward from? Is it in keeping with the performance that we should expect from this office? I think a lot of Albertans find it to be too much – right? – exorbitant somehow. So I'm wondering how this figure was arrived at. What specific performance measures do we have in place to see that we are getting value for our money with this office?

Just briefly, in closing, as I said before, I certainly see the value of reaching out with this ministry, and I think that we need to – well, I won't say expand, you know, necessarily in a dollar value, but I think that as this ministry evolves, I'd like to see more focus on performance measurements and an ability to see where we can focus our efforts so that Alberta might have a good export/import profile across this country and across North America and around the world.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to merging the two departments, our work is considerably different from Economic Development's. I guess the best way to describe the department would be one of a diplomatic role, not only amongst the governments, provincial and federal, in Canada but with the American government and also American states and other governments around the world. There is no question that we are unique in Canada as a province. We're unique in that we were the first province, dating back to 1971, that had an international relations component to this government. I think the division at that time was in order to position ourselves economically in Canada and on the world stage. We had to do a lot of our own body contact with people around the world.

Economic Development, I would think, is more looking at how to create the environment, whether through regulations or some other manner in terms of growing more wealth in the province. Ours is to ensure that we negotiate some of these trade barriers that we're facing, and in fact we're probably moving on trade barriers more with our neighbours to the south than we are with our neighbours to the east. We have accomplished a lot with our neighbours to the west; there's no doubt about it. I think we've moved more in the last three years with that government than with, well, I'd hate to say how many governments previous to that. So that is good news. The good news is that we're going to improve our competitiveness, and we're going to get our product to market. So we are certainly focused on

wealth creation, not on wealth distribution. That is the major component.

We also provide the support for the Premier in his missions and also in evaluating positions taken by other provinces and other governments.

So that's in capsule our role.

Now, I will go through the one-time increases for the department. Again, they're tied to the Western Premiers' Conference in Lloydminster – and that's \$215,000, one-time – and staging the Council of the Federation. That's \$695,000. So those two are one-time expenses. The Council of the Federation will be meeting in Banff in August.

Now, to fully operate the international office in Washington is \$380,000. Again, the participation in the WTO is \$150,000. To meet the salary expenses expected from the bargaining unit is probably about \$110,000. With respect to that budget, that kind of gives you a bit of an idea of where the major expenses are.

[Mr. Webber in the chair]

Before I talk about institutional reform, Senate reform, I'd just like to talk about the office in Washington. I don't know if the hon. member has visited Washington, DC, but actually it's worth while taking the trip just from a perspective of seeing this sea of lobbyists, hundreds of thousands of people that are there for one reason only, and that's to get their message out. To give you an example of how far behind we are in getting the message out, there are some still in Washington and, actually, in a state that does a fair amount of business with us, Colorado, who when they were invited to Fort McMurray and they accepted the invitation – they were there a month ago – thought that in Fort McMurray they'd still see dirt streets and wooden sidewalks. So that is a bit of the scope of the task ahead of us in terms of getting the information there.

Controversy. I don't think there was any controversy. The salary is based on senior official level. It is \$233,000. There's an additional allowance of \$30,000, and that goes to any official that lives outside of Alberta, outside of Canada, and that's to make up the difference in the dollar exchange and some of the differences in the cost of living as a result of them being in a different country.

Now, this is the only office, Washington, that's in our department, and simply because it is one of more of a diplomatic role, we are in the embassy. We're the only province to be there. It took a fair amount of work to negotiate that, but I think that it's going to do yeoman's service not only in getting the message out in terms of secure supply of oil and gas but to keep a thumb on what's happening on BSE, softwood lumber. Those are very, very complex issues.

I know the question came up of whether we'll be attending the court. There's no sense sending politicians to court. We have to send lawyers, and that's what we'll be doing with agriculture. We do have a very good trade lawyer in Washington on retention, and she's been with us for many, many years.

How do you measure performance of an office like that? I suppose that if tomorrow we could settle the BSE and find an overnight agreement on softwood lumber, well, we would then not have to do much more in that office for the rest of its existence because just in softwood lumber I think we've got – what? – \$4.3 billion tied up in tariffs on that side of the border that are being held by the government there, and of course the BSE has been devastating to us.

9:50

Just one more point on BSE and why this Washington office is important. The province of Alberta worked very hard on getting

boxed beef, muscle cuts into the States. Quite frankly, we got it there quite quickly, even though the federal government signed this agreement, a protocol dealing with BSE, back in the late '90s. The only reason we got there that quickly, Mr. Chair, is the relationship that dates back to the late '80s with the chief negotiator and the Agriculture secretary in the States, who worked at negotiating some of the agricultural NAFTA agreement with the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada at that time, Don Mazankowski. What had happened is that his assistant was a lady by the name of Ann Veneman, that worked for Clayton Yeutter, who then went to California as the Secretary of Agriculture and then came back under George Bush. Those are the relationships that, quite frankly, we built almost 20 years ago that proved to be advantageous to us.

Mr. Horner: Were you here then?

Mr. Stelmach: No, I wasn't there. But that's just an example of how important building working relationships is.

I want to just talk briefly about Senators-in-waiting. I don't want to sound disrespectful to the other side, not you guys but over there, but when we talk about good value in democracy, in the November election the total votes cast for the NDP were 87,580. The total votes cast for the Senate nominee elections were about 2.2 million. If we break that down further, the hon. member who just asked the questions got a total of 4,067 votes. The total for four elected was 22,843. The one Senator who got the most votes, just the one, received 312,000 votes. So 90,000 across the province; the one Senator received 312,000. I think we got good value.

I know that this is one file that takes a lot of patience in terms of institutional reform, but I submit to the hon. member and to all in this House that this issue is going to be even more pressing as we enter into a period of uncertainty in this country with what's happening in Ottawa, and we're going to have to keep eyes fixed on this one area very closely. We're not only talking about Senate reform, hon. member. We're also looking at institutional reform, working with other provinces to see how we could maybe make changes to the selection of judges to the Supreme Court. Senate reform is just one area, but I think that at the end of the day Alberta wants to have their voice heard. Given the growth in the province of Alberta, the amount that we contribute to this country, that is going to be an issue. There will be some finger-pointing, I suspect, at Alberta as we, of course, grow our wealth and, quite frankly, share a lot of it with other provinces in Canada.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, my MLA.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank my constituent for recognizing me.

To begin with, I'd like to thank the minister for following in the footsteps of his predecessors in answering questions. It's very much appreciated. This, for those who care, to me is the most democratic part of our whole organization. I have seen from previous ministers as well a very honest attempt at providing the answers that not only the opposition but, obviously, Albertans are asking, and I do appreciate it.

I'd also like to put in a word of thanks to the hon. Environment minister, who was down in Calgary along with the Premier and the former Minister of Environment at the icebreaker on the Bow. It was thanks to the current Minister of Environment that myself and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View were recognized at that event. Again, it's just one more of those small protocol things that sees us playing on the same team.

I'd also like to thank Alberta ambassador Murray Smith for leaving the Calgary-Varsity constituency door keys under the welcome mat before leaving for Washington. It was nice to find them there and to find the office in order, although I will add that I replaced his oil rigger 1970 furniture, complete with the outstanding orange, brown, and yellow filing cabinets. They've now gone to the Boot Hill of retired furniture, so we're starting afresh with a new office and a new professional look, and I thank the Legislative Assembly office for making those arrangements.

What has been discussed quite a bit tonight – and I appreciate the minister's answers. I'm not sure that he'll be able to add a whole lot to this concern. The Washington office represents almost a fifth of this department's budget, and we do need a justification of that expense. My concern is that it's potentially a duplication of federal services. I have been to Washington on two occasions. My father-in-law worked in the Canadian embassy in Washington, so I had two occasions to visit Washington first-hand and see the flurry of activity there. My concern, as the minister pointed out, with so many lobbyists is: how effective is our voice? Are we being heard in Washington?

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Of course, there are four concerns that I think need to be raised in Washington, not only in Washington but in closer states, and that's, of course, the softwood lumber, that has been previously mentioned. With regard to BSE, to me that is partly an issue of our creating in that we had the misfortune of having an animal test positive. It also has more to do with science than economics, but I think that what we need to do to assure not only our U.S. trading partner but the world is to have 100 per cent BSE testing.

The reason for this comes after the reverse, to get beyond the Premier's unfortunate comments of shoot, shovel, and shut up. We need to build up the confidence of countries based on that unfortunate statement. We need to assure countries that our testing is equivalent to that of Japan and, therefore, considerably more efficient than that of the States, which tests a very small percentage of its beef. We have a chance to be the number one beef exporting province within the world, never mind within Canada. We should be trying to steal a larger portion of the market, as far as I'm concerned, from our southern neighbours.

The second point I'd like to make – and it sounds a bit like a joke. But speaking of foreign relations, do we have an Alberta office in Ottawa? By that, I don't mean a place for a Senators-in-waiting Canadian reunion tour to hang out, but I'm just wondering what kind of representation Alberta has in Ottawa. It seems that the Premier sometimes flies in and flies out, and I think he has more of an attraction for Hull, Quebec, on the other side of the river, than he does for spending time in Ottawa.

10:00

A recommendation – and I would very much welcome the minister's comments – is on foreign locations. Instead of FOIP travel junkets disguised as trade commissions, what I would like to see is the same kind of established office in China and Japan, for that matter. Well, China obviously is the growing nation in terms of economy. It's a powerhouse. For that matter, based on population, it would probably be a good idea to have a trade mission in India as well. But with offices in China and Japan it wouldn't be that far in terms of travelling to the other countries, until we at least had similar trade offices set up. I would welcome the minister's comments on: does he think that it's viable to have a trade office in other countries like China, Japan, and, potentially, India?

Although there was a degree of joking about the office in Ottawa, I would appreciate a response. It would be nice to have someone on the ground there on a regular basis who was doing the rounds. Washington is a main lobbying centre, but so is Ottawa in its own smaller fashion. So are our Alberta interests being constantly represented in Ottawa?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you. Let me start from the bottom, working up. In terms of offices there are offices in other countries, and they're under Economic Development because they're more trade offices as opposed to diplomatic offices. However, in Japan we do have space in the Canadian embassy. We've had a person there for many, many years.

In China we're in the World Petroleum Congress offices. We established that a few years ago, I remember, and we are, I believe, in another six locations, but I can't recall them offhand. We do have a small office in England, and I know that we're in other parts of Southeast Asia. But we'll get that for you.

Ottawa. You know, I ought to be careful when I think about an office in Ottawa, what I'd like to say and what I should say diplomatically. We do travel to Ottawa on a regular basis. The deputies meet, of course, supporting the Council of the Federation. We are looking at expanding the Council of the Federation and having an office that would be reporting to the Council of the Federation. We're just working out those details in terms of administrative support, who the individual may be, and where that office will be located. So there is work being done on that.

The cost of the Council of the Federation is over a million dollars across the country. Our share is about \$115,000, I believe. So those costs might increase if we have an office there. I would think that we'd probably share it with the Council of the Federation; it wouldn't be an Alberta office only. But that is in the works.

With respect to Washington and duplication of services, having been there and having been at a number of American states over the years, especially as I had the pleasure of serving this province as minister of agriculture, there's no question that in some areas, when it comes to marketing, Alberta and Ottawa just couldn't be farther apart. In fact, when we were in Washington in February, at the two meetings that we had we had the note taker for the federal government interrupt our discussions to remind the Senator at that time: well, you know, Canadians are supporting the Canadian Wheat Board. When we did take a vote in this province, there were 67 per cent in favour of a dual marketing system, or choice. That is the kind of difference when you say duplication. It's what Ottawa thinks Alberta wants. It's got nothing to do with what Alberta really wants. That was just the one meeting where we attended with the minister of agriculture.

We had the same issue when we met with energy officials. Clearly, in December of 1929 we wrestled from the federal government ownership of natural resources. So if somebody wants to talk about building a pipeline for Fort McMurray, they have to talk to Albertans, to this government. They don't talk to the federal government because they're our resources. We will make that decision. So they can enter into all kinds of MOUs and make all kinds of advances to other governments, but at the end of the day Albertans will decide, not the federal government.

That's why it's important that we have our person there. It's really to complement the work. It's not to work against the ambassador or against the embassy there, but it's to complement the work. Quite frankly, there have been some instances where the kind of

intelligence we gathered was better as a result of sharing information, what our envoy and our ambassador managed to receive through meetings. I think the new ambassador is doing quite well. There's a good working relationship, and I hope that that continues. At the end of the day I know that both of them will work for the better interests of Canada and Alberta.

You know, even to be the only provincial jurisdiction to be invited by the Smithsonian Institution to develop a show – trade, culture, arts, culinary – an exhibit in the Washington Mall, it means that we are getting our word out. They know where we are. They have a working relationship now with the University of Alberta. Those are all, you know, tiny steps certainly, and it will take a few years to position ourselves and to communicate to the Washington decision-makers about Alberta's potential. It's not only in the energy and the secure supply of oil and gas, but it's agriculture, our technology that we have to offer, many of the research projects that we're doing here related to energy as well.

With respect to beef one of the reasons we're there and sending boxed beef is because we were the first province in Canada to introduce trace back. Prior to the late '90s we didn't have any way of tracing an animal back to its origin. We began that in 1997-98. We made it mandatory, and that in itself has built more confidence in the products that we have to offer, our beef products here in Alberta. It's one of the reasons why very quickly we were able to trace the background on all of the animals that happened to be tested coming from the same herd that this one cow came from. If it wasn't for the trace back, we probably wouldn't have been able to accomplish that in such a short period of time.

Testing and trying to win the market in Japan – there are some pretty startling figures in terms of trade in bovine products and beef with the United States and also Japan. I'm not quite sure if that country could ever replace the States with the volume of beef that we send there in the future. The other thing is that we have to remember that once the animal is processed here, the product is put in a truck, and it's shipped by truck, and it's in the States. To go to another country, it'll be truck, rail, marine. We need the port capacity, and all those additional costs will eventually end up being paid by the producer unfortunately. I mean, we're not going to discount any market. They're all important.

From a scientific point of view, in terms of testing all animals, 30 months of age doesn't make any sense. However, I'll leave that to the ag minister. He'll be doing his budget tomorrow, and you can ask him about the science of that.

I think I've covered pretty well everything. Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: At this stage I'll just remind members that if there is any government member who wishes to participate, I will recognize that member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

10:10

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Just two more questions. I guess it was almost a month and a half ago that representatives from PNWER were here and we met up on the fifth floor, and one of the comments that I made to a representative from Washington was: did he believe that we were being an equal partner or a sufficiently concerned partner in the market manipulation that EPCOR undertook? The sense that I got was that there was a greater role for us in working with PNWER in terms of going after the manipulation.

It appeared that Alberta was being used as sort of a testing ground to see what, potentially, Enron could get away with. I'm just wondering: does our connection with Washington give us greater access to the information that might lead us to discover to what

extent Enron either did or didn't or potentially manipulated our market?

Secondly, given the Washington office, have we worked towards border monitoring in terms of a smoother trade transport crossing at the border? Ever since 9/11 there is a great fear in the States about infiltration from Canada. I'm just wondering if we've been able to establish our Alberta security border crossing validity. I know, again, that this sort of overlaps with the federal government, but it would be nice if our direct relationship with Washington could produce almost a passport where we could have a smoother trade, where the trucks and trains, and so on, crossing would receive less – well, I don't know – regulation, or sometimes it's bureaucracy.

Then the other area that I alluded to just very briefly was the idea of not only having representation in Washington, but something that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder brought up was the need – when court decisions are taking place in the States such as the Montana judge and the closing of the border, I really believe we should have, if not intervenor status, at least observer status so that we know what's happening and we don't rely on transcripts or media for our direct information.

So, again, power market manipulation, PNWER: are we holding up our end? Secondly, the border monitoring; thirdly, representation at other state levels besides Washington.

Mr. Stelmach: With respect to PNWER I just want to make this one particular comment, and that's that we're kind of sorry to hear that none of the members from across the way will be participating in the PNWER meeting this coming year. We've always had representation from the opposition. I think it's a worthwhile opportunity for all members of this House, those that have been assigned that responsibility in PNWER, to rub shoulders with our colleagues south of the border. I hope that perhaps the opposition may change their mind and send some representation.

PNWER has been a success. It has opened heart-to-heart, face-to-face discussions on many issues. One of them certainly has been trucking. We have accomplished some movement in regulations, although we have to move a lot of that through the federal government. We've expanded capacity for trucking inspection, new technology. I believe that on the American side it's reciprocal. They understand the need for efficiency and the free flow of goods.

The one issue we still have, though, is that some of these trucking regulations are actually trade barriers. So if you reduce the size of the load – if you license 60,000 pounds and you only allow 40,000, that's a 20,000-pound payload less. That increases the cost of the 40,000 pounds of product going there. It's an interesting point if you look at even states like California. It's a bit of trade protectionism on their part in terms of when it comes to transportation, but we're slowly, slowly nibbling away at the regulations, and I think that we're getting there. I think a lot of the American states are now aware of how big their market is here in Alberta, especially California. If we could work together, we will bring down the consumer prices for those products because right now, at the end of the day, it's the consumer that's paying the cost.

With respect to manipulation of energy markets, I have no idea at all. We'll leave that to Energy to respond to.

The court in Montana. The judge only allowed evidence from one group, and that was R-CALF, and did not allow any evidence from the American Meat Institute nor from the United States Department of Agriculture. So even if we had had someone in the room trying to present, it would have been unsuccessful. In fact, I believe they cut the hearing time from four hours down to two. Unfortunately, the way the decision was written, it almost smacked that it was predetermined before all the evidence was heard. That's, like I said

before, a real complex issue, but we do have our expert people in the field of trade law, and we'll be following it up very closely. We will be doing it as well in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Whatever I didn't ask, the Member for Calgary-Varsity may want to try and ask as well.

The minister spoke about client performance, and I've got some questions about that, about the department's success. Who are the clients that he referred to, and how far are they removed from the money with regard to his department?

The other one would be specific programs on initiatives by the Washington office. How do they evaluate these outcomes as to the outlined business plans within the ministry's portfolio as well?

We look at the overall budget. It's \$10.1 million in operating expenses, equipment, and inventories. This is up 18 per cent, but the overall increase is 32 per cent due to budget for Canadian and intergovernmental relations. But one might just ask: in the name of efficiencies could this whole department not be combined with one of the other ministries and that way effectively having one less ministry to worry about, in fact under RAGE or whatever? I'm sure that, again, \$10.1 million isn't a large budget with regard to some of the other ones that are into the hundreds of millions. Would it not be better utilized under one department, using some of the people that are already there instead of creating a new department and, in fact, hiring staff and that? That would be some of the big specifics. Again, would the department not be better served, or could the people still receive the same outcomes and measurements under a combining of this department then?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Stelmach: I thought I answered the question in terms of combining the two earlier, but I'll attempt again for the hon. member. This department is more related to diplomacy than economic development. Economic Development has certainly its own policies in terms of looking at creating the environment and working with the private sector to bring about the kind of economic environment that will grow our wealth.

Our role here is completely different. It's more of a diplomatic role. We work with other provinces, trying to negotiate things like trade barriers. We work with the federal government in our agreements, whether it be fiscal imbalance equalization with the United States. Remember, working with the American government is quite unique for Alberta. Generally, the federal government would negotiate on our behalf, but in this particular area, where of the 25 most important markets 21 of them are American states and where 90 per cent of our exports go to the States, we have to have a presence there. There's no doubt about it.

10:20

We can't rely on Ottawa – and I say that with all due respect to them – to get the message out in terms of what is the most important card right now, and that's now energy. Yes, there is BSE and softwood lumber. Those are very important, and we're working on those files. But it's more negotiating and diplomacy as opposed to economic development, where you would be pretty well selling the province more from an economic development point of view.

When we say that we have the same people in other departments, no, we don't. The staff in IIR are very professional. They're very knowledgeable in very key specific areas, for instance trade, which is very complex. I can assure you that we won't have anyone in

other departments as knowledgeable and dedicated to one area, for instance trade or even intergovernmental relations, whether it comes to Senate reform, fiscal imbalance, or equalization. There are maybe half a dozen people in Canada that understand the equalization formula, and I'm sure that we have at least one person in our department. So these are areas which are quite complex.

The other is that we provide support for the Premier. It's not only international missions, but to provide support in terms of the kind of briefings that come forward with many issues on a regular basis. We provided a tremendous amount of support in the last round of negotiations, where all the provincial ministers met and negotiated the health deal. We had people assisting the Premier and the minister of health at that particular time in terms of their expertise and background.

So the departments are considerably different. To marry it with economic development: I'm not quite sure if we would get the same effect, I would think, because this is intergovernmental and international. It's free-standing more from a diplomatic point of view.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I'm quite sure this will be my last question. With regard to the R-CALF and the Montana protectionism, President Bush said that he'd veto any attempts to prolong the border closure. How has our Washington office – could you potentially give us a little background on initiatives – worked with the American federal government and bordering states to speed up this border opening process? If you or the agriculture minister could comment on the behind-the-scenes initiatives that are trying to get that border open speedier.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: It's actually a good question. With respect to working on this very complex issue, our Washington office works very closely and monitors all the information flow in Washington when it comes to the BSE file. As I said before, there are two tracks. There's the legislative track, and that's the United States Department of Agriculture, who wants the border open. They put in effect the rules, and those rules are supported by the President, who has indicated that he would veto the two Houses if they voted against the opening.

The other track is the legal one. It's the American way that they can challenge the rules in court. Unfortunately – and I don't think I'm saying anything out of turn here – there wasn't a total presentation of the evidence at that court. It was only from R-CALF, and it really wasn't a decision made. I think the first round of the appeal will be as to whether the judge has jurisdiction. If the judge has jurisdiction, then I assume that this court will start again and might hear more evidence, I would hope, you know, to balance in making a good decision. But on a regular basis, through the contacts that our envoy has, our trade lawyer and the support staff there work very closely together monitoring the information flow not only amongst the departments but also on how the various groups are preparing their evidence and their position in court.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. One really quick question for the minister. I note that his staff is going up by a modest amount of three. I'm not sure. I've been out of the Assembly a couple of times tonight. You may have mentioned that, but it is about five per cent, and I'm just wondering if you can tell us where those three FTEs are going?

Then, on a little broader note, page 343 of the business plan indicates that you plan to follow up on the report of the MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation. That, of course, is a report that's relatively close to my heart because it was written by the former Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and it was something that I did pay a certain amount of attention to last fall leading up to the November 22 election.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us what specific ways the department plans to follow up on the committee's report and whether or not they've taken any steps to address the issue of support in Alberta for separation and what work the ministry has done or is doing in examining issues surrounding the firewall concept, particularly, I suppose, whether or not we're looking at or continuing to look at the ideas of an Alberta pension plan or a provincial police force as examples and whether or not we've made any conclusions in that regard as of yet and if you have any documents or reports that you would be willing to share with us on those two points in particular, i.e., the pension plan and the provincial police force.

Also on page 344 of the business plan – and I know that a little bit was discussed about the Canada health transfer, but you also refer in there to the department promoting “solutions to redesign federal/provincial financial arrangements.” Outside of the Canada health transfer there's also the Canada social transfer and equalization and cost-sharing arrangements. I'm wondering if you can tell us if the department has any particular plans to redesign in particular the Canada social transfer and the equalization transfers.

So those would be the questions tonight, Mr. Minister, and I'd be happy to hear your response. Thank you.

Mr. Stelmach: I was just hunting in my notes here for the FTE breakdown, but I'll go by memory. We provide support and corporate services to aboriginal affairs, and we have added I believe two additional people. I'll get that to you in writing. My memory has slipped this evening. I've got it in a book, and we'll get that to you.

With respect to our role in Confederation the Solicitor General will be undertaking a review, of course, of some of the roles in terms of the RCMP, et cetera, but some of the others, like with the issue of collecting taxes or even the pension, if we were to take over pensions in Alberta, I recall it would be about an \$80 billion liability, so I don't know why we'd be moving in that direction. Collecting taxes. There are various opinions on it, and some of them are quite strong in terms of collecting our taxes here and then just giving to Ottawa what we feel may be fair.

Those are all issues that are on the minds of Albertans. But I think a bigger issue that will be facing this province will be the fallout of what's happening in Ottawa today.

10:30

If you recall, some time ago there was an issue in the province of Saskatchewan with some public money, small amounts of public money compared to what's coming out of Ottawa at this particular time, where people actually did some time in jail.

At the conclusion of the inquiry and where millions of taxpayer dollars are missing and if nobody – nobody – pays the price for that kind of, I think, just obscene behaviour, that's when we'll all have to put our heads down and be careful as to how we guide ourselves during that period of time. I can assure you that there will be tons of frustration in this province if people aren't held accountable for the kind of behaviour that's really left quite a black mark on this country coming out of that inquiry over the last few months. I think the future will tell as to where Albertans will direct their government and how frustrated they're going to be with the process.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a small question relating to the Alaska national wildlife refuge. In some recent weeks our representative in Washington was quoted to the effect of saying that Alberta was supportive of the efforts of the U.S. to drill in the Alaska national wildlife refuge.

As the hon. minister is aware, that is the home of a 120,000 numbered porcupine caribou herd, which is governed by an international treaty between the United States and Canada. Those animals migrate from their wintering grounds in Canada to the calving grounds in Alaska on an annual basis. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has predicted that there could be quite precipitous consequences for the herd if drilling were allowed in the Alaska national wildlife refuge. I wonder whether or not the Alberta government's activities in Washington include any representations or whether the government is taking any position with respect to drilling in that wildlife refuge.

Mr. Stelmach: In terms of taking a position, it's not our decision to make. We would of course pay attention to whatever decision is made with respect to drilling in that area, but it's not up to the Alberta government. It would be up to the federal government and, of course, the American government there. Unless the hon. member has other information, I am not aware of us taking a position on either drilling or not drilling in that very environmentally sensitive area, although caribou have been found to kind of warm up to the pipelines that are on the surface and find it a little warmer, and they have something to scratch through sometimes, but not in this particular case.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you. [interjection] You snooze, you lose.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of Alberta going alone, I'm wondering whether or not opting out of medicare, as the Premier has mused about doing in the past, might be something that you're looking at. You know, we talked about the pensions and the police force. Is that something that's being discussed around the cabinet table as well?

While I have the floor, I will just mention – I'm quite sure the hon. minister knows – that there are two criminal cases before the courts right now regarding the sponsorship scandal. The Prime Minister has said that anybody who is found criminally responsible will go to jail. That's been his commitment all along. I can assure all members of this House that if and when it is proven that there were criminal acts that took place, every member on this side, as well, would want to see anybody responsible going to jail. I think all Canadians feel that way, and we're certainly no different in that regard.

But if you could address the issue of opting out of medicare, I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Stelmach: The success of health delivery in this country is based on wealth creation. We have to ensure that we have policies in place and good vision well into the future to create the kind of wealth that's going to pay for not only taking care of an aging environment but the new technology and the new drugs that will be coming forward.

In terms of opting out, I'm not aware of any discussions. There's nothing on the table. Our task here is to provide the best health program in Canada. I really do believe we're leading in that regard, and one of the reasons we're leading, Mr. Chair, is because we are

creating the kind of wealth that we need to pay. Today we had the honour of participating in Canada's finest, if not the world's best, health institute, a research centre right here in the city of Edmonton. You've got the most modern burn unit in the world – I think there are only two other burn units like that in all of the world – here at the University of Alberta. You've got the most modern neonatal unit over at the Misericordia hospital. You've got tons of additional services and new technology that's being offered in Calgary. We've got the best regional health authority in the world here in Edmonton.

So let's focus on the positives and at the end of the day also look at how we're going to create wealth in the future so our grandchildren can appreciate, you know, the same standard of living and the same health programs, so that we sustain them well into the future.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. There were two questions that I hadn't had answered there. The minister concentrated on specifics of amalgamating departments. I'll clarify these ones again.

When he spoke about client performance there with the department's success: who are the clients and how are they reviewed, or at least how far are they removed from this department and the money? Then the other one was specific to programs on the initiatives of the Washington office, to evaluate against the outcomes as outlined in the ministry business plan. Those would be just the two.

Mr. Stelmach: In Washington I believe we'll be looking at the number of meetings, the amount of work that our representative will be doing there with all kinds of agencies, governments, whether they be state governments or the American government.

In terms of the client survey, it's with people not only inside government but outside, private sector, other governments other than the Alberta government to gauge in terms of whether we are earning our keep and bringing value to the taxpayer. I would say that given the kind of work that this department did on two key files but especially the one on health, you got your value because those negotiations weren't going anywhere until such time as we provided a lot of the direction that other Premiers accepted and got a health agreement.

So that is, in short, some of the strategies that we're going to implement in terms of measuring performance. But we'll give you a more detailed answer in a written format.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, and I apologize. I thought I was through asking questions. This has to do with health care and intergovernmental relationships. One of the things that was brought out at the Weighing the Evidence health conference that I attended on the weekend was the fact that the cost of drugs is probably the highest cost and continues to rise.

I know that the provinces pushed the federal government for some kind of a co-ordinated drug plan. Basically the provinces called upon the federal government to undertake the funding of this comprehensive drug plan, but it was found to be, at least from the federal point of view, too expensive for them to foot the total bill. My question is: do you think there is a place for the provinces to participate, using the idea of economies of scale, in a total participatory drug plan whereby we do the ordering in bulk and, therefore, saving the cost of drugs at provincial levels? Is this a place where Alberta would like to go, demonstrate leadership, push the federal government in terms of sharing the responsibility of a co-ordinated drug purchasing plan?

10:40

Mr. Stelmach: I believe those questions would be more appropriately asked to the minister of health, but just for the record I want to say that we do have the longest list of insured drugs in this province compared to any other province in Canada and, once again, only because we can afford it. And if it's still the norm or it's still the statistic, not only do we have the longest list, but I think we also have the largest amount of drugs that, unfortunately, aren't used and have to be environmentally treated at the end of the year. It's in tons as well. But without a doubt, we do have the longest list of insured drugs.

The Deputy Chair: After considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$10,079,000
---	--------------

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Chair, I would move that the Committee of Supply now rise and report the Ministry and Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

International and Intergovernmental Relations: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$10,079,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Bill 31
Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just with respect to Bill 31, the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005, and on behalf of the hon. Minister of Government Services, I'd like to respond to some of the questions that were raised during second reading.

For Edmonton-McClung, the Real Estate Act currently allows the minister to make regulations regarding the time limit for submitting a claim to the assurance fund. The amendment act that is being proposed removes this authority and instead places what was in the regulation into the actual act. After the judgment on a claim becomes final, people have one year to claim from the assurance fund. This change ensures that claimants will be able to access the fund even if the court process is delayed.

For questions that were asked by the Member for Edmonton-Calder. The three-year time period to submit a claim from when industry members were last registered has been removed from the legislation. A claimant will now be able to take all the time that is necessary to obtain a judgment. After the final judgment is received, a claim must be submitted to the assurance fund within one year, and as I just indicated in response to the question asked by Edmonton-McClung a bit earlier, this will ensure that claimants will be able to access the fund even if the court process is delayed for whatever reason.

Edmonton-Rutherford had some questions, and the answers are that the regulation changes being made in this act will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to decide which corporations or entities cannot apply for compensation from the assurance fund, and the minister responsible will be able to prescribe additional information and documents that may be needed in the future. Also, all regulations will be consulted on with the relevant stakeholders prior to being passed.

Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview had some questions, and the answers are: regarding the implications of these amendments with respect to banks, it should be noted that the assurance fund was established in 1984 to pay consumers and unsophisticated claimants who have unpaid judgments resulting from acts of fraud or breach of trust by industry members, and of course that will remain in place. The fund was not established to compensate financial institutions and sophisticated investors who have access to independent legal advice or to in-house appraisers and so on. In fact, there have been no direct discussions with financial institutions on that one specific issue. However, the options and requirements to clarify the intent of the fund were researched to preserve it for consumers and small businesses.

To achieve the long-term viability of the fund, the Real Estate Act is being clarified to restrict claimants, to establish time limits on filing claims, and to set limits for compensation for losses. The Ministry of Government Services does not believe that institutions will penalize clients who become victims of fraud or breach of trust by industry members.

So I hope, Mr. Chair, that that clarification of some of the questions and some answers on behalf of the Minister of Government Services is helpful to speed along the discussion this evening on Bill 31. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I speak in favour of the act. This act supports the government's contention that it's not in the business of being in business, which is a direction that we in the opposition applaud. It is clear that the fund's intention is to protect consumers, not banks and lending institutions, who can afford insurance when dealing in real estate to cover their losses. So it's protecting the

people, and that's extremely important to us. This bill will protect the fund from large claims from lending institutions that would potentially make the fund go broke. Albertans are being protected. Business is being put on notice, and I appreciate that.

Thank you very much.

[The clauses of Bill 31 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

10:50

Bill 34

Insurance Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I had indicated in second reading that I did have a number of comments and questions to make regarding this bill, most specifically with section 5.

I'll start with section 2, which is the clause that outlines the legal definition for a Crown insurer. Specifically, I'm wondering: the government has said that any Crown insurance company moving into Alberta to do auto insurance business in Alberta will have to meet the same rules and regulations and play by the same rules as any other company that is operating here. I don't think there's anybody in my caucus who would disagree with that, but I'm wondering if either the minister or somebody speaking on her behalf might be able to outline for us just exactly what they had in mind when they indicated that because in my mind it would have seemed to be rather obvious that a Crown insurer coming in would have to play by the same rules. Nevertheless, it's written into the legislation, and I would like to know just exactly what thought went into that particular clause.

I don't really have any problem with sections 3 and 4. They appear to be just housekeeping.

Section 5, the infamous section 5. I think I said in second reading that I was shocked, dismayed, disgusted – and I probably used several other adjectives – at the fact that the government of Alberta is not just limiting but, in fact, taking away the right of Albertans' access to the courts.

I asked in second reading – I didn't get an answer from the hon. Minister of Education tonight; I guess I'm the first speaker, so I didn't get an answer at all; perhaps I will get one – to be informed of what I understand would be the second, other case where the Alberta government has legislated against the lawsuit. I understand from Alberta Finance that there have been two instances in the past where the Alberta government has taken such a spectacular move in legislation. The one that I know of was the case of the sterilization victims from Michener Centre in Red Deer. I have been unable to find the other instance where it was done.

As near as I can tell at this point, this is only the second time that the Alberta government has taken such a broad brush against every single Albertan when they say in clause (2) that "no liability attaches to the Crown for any loss or damages that have arisen or may arise in respect of the reform amendments."

In clause (3), then, it goes on to specifically extinguish without costs – and I love that word “extinguish” – a particular action that is already before the courts. Now, I have to admit that I don’t know how often this step may have been taken in legislation, but again I’m shocked and appalled. The thought that somebody could come before the courts with a legitimate claim against the government and through legislation have it extinguished while it is before the courts scares me as a small businessperson in this province. It scares me as a citizen of this province. It smacks of Big Brother in *1984*.

It really does beg the question for all Albertans: if the government can take this action against, in this case, Kingsway insurance, who’s next? I really, truly believe that everybody in this province should have alarm bells going off in their heads right now when we debate this bill in this Legislature because I just don’t know where it can stop. Once you open up this Pandora’s box, literally who is next?

I understand from the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association that they actually are planning a constitutional challenge to this particular clause in the bill. At this point the information that I’ve received from Kingsway is that the amount of their claim is down to \$3.4 million. Now, if you were to believe Kingsway – and I’m certainly not a lawyer, and I don’t know whether they’re right – their argument is that their claim would be the only one based on the circumstances of the case, that the reason nobody else has filed suit against the government is because nobody else has a claim against the government, at least as it relates to the initial freeze on auto insurance premiums. If their argument were to be true and their claim is down to \$3.4 million, I wonder what the cost of defending a constitutional challenge to this government is going to be. I suspect, knowing the time period involved in going to the Supreme Court of Canada, defending ourselves in that circumstance . . .

Mr. Bonko: Two years.

Mr. R. Miller: My colleague from Edmonton-Decore suggests that it could be two years. The number of resources that would have to be poured into a defence like that could well add up to far more than \$3.4 million.

Given that this lawsuit appears to have been brought forward in good faith under all of the proper rules, to wilfully waste money defending what I believe is bad legislation to begin with at the Supreme Court of Canada is certainly not, in my mind, a good use of taxpayers’ dollars. So I would really, really like to hear from somebody on the government side as to how they can defend clause 2 and clause 3 in section 5. Those just cause me untold concern, and I know that they have caused a lot of concern for not only Kingsway General Insurance but for the Civil Trial Lawyers Association and certainly all of the colleagues in my caucus.

So I’m hoping that somebody could provide some insight into that tonight at committee stage, Mr. Chairman, and I will take my seat and await a response. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to respond to the comments of my hon. colleague. First of all, as it relates to section 2, Crown insurers, he indicates that it goes without saying that the public insurers would have to adhere to the rules of the province of Alberta. Why did we legislate it? That’s to clarify that Crown insurers from neighbouring provinces or from wherever would have to abide by the rules in the province of Alberta, which are different than the province they may originate from, such as having certain capital requirements, paying the same taxes, maintaining Alberta offices, whatever the regulations may be. That had to be clarified

because they are currently licensed to operate in other provinces.

Now, with respect to section 5, first of all my hon. colleague requested to be informed about other similar cases, and my recollection of the debate under second reading was that the Finance minister undertook to answer that question. Certainly, the member has discovered one such case. I’m not personally aware of any others, but I understand the Finance minister was going to get back to you on that.

With respect to the case named in section 5 and the supposed constitutional challenge thereof, I would caution the member that the lawyers for that particular insurance company are free to say what they want; that doesn’t make it so. Certainly, any bill proposed by the government is reviewed by the department of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and certainly we proceed on their advice. So I will defer to the hon. minister if he wishes to make further comment – and that would be a no. I believe that we’re certainly in compliance with everything we’ve been advised by our lawyers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I would very much like assurance from a representative of this government that inclusion of public insurance isn’t just tokenism and an attempt to quell the concerns about not having a public insurance program in Alberta. Again I’ll refer to the economy of scale. For a public insurance system to offer lower rates, they have to have a larger population base in order to offer those rates, and given the small portion of the market that out-of-province insurers might like to capture, I’m not sure how many would be interested as opposed to a full-blown public insurance program within the province, that would save Albertans considerably.

11:00

My esteemed colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford also talked about subsections (2) and (3) of section 5. To me it’s an escape clause on this government’s part. I’ll use not only the Orwellian model, but I’ll use the fact that it’s draconian to think that this government legislates something that’s above and beyond the law. With regard to the Orwellian ideology that was referenced, the line or the ideology out of *1984* is that he “who controls the past controls the future,” that somehow we can rewrite the future and our responsibilities. I don’t believe that either subsections (2) and (3) or the notion of putting a limit on soft tissue injury compensation will stand up to a constitutional challenge, and I look forward to those challenges taking place.

In one sense Kingsway has brought up a particular concern. I’m not concerned about Kingsway. I’m concerned about the legitimacy of trying to negate future claims more so than Kingsway’s monetary concerns, and of course I’m concerned about the legislating or attempting to legislate compensation for soft tissue injury. I don’t think it’s within this government’s power or should be within this government’s concern to try and limit that type of compensation.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess it’s difficult to comment on my hon. colleague’s assertion that the section relating to public insurers is window dressing. It reads pretty clear to me that Crown insurers are allowed to operate within the province of Alberta. Whether they choose to do so or not is entirely up to them, but with passage of this bill they would be allowed to do so.

This government is not now nor ever going to create a monopoly for Crown insurers to operate in this province, but it's certainly offering the opportunity for them to do so. Should they decide that they can compete, they're free to enter the market. In fact, my understanding of the situation is that at least one insurer is ready to enter the market.

With respect to section 5, again, this bill says nothing about soft tissue injury. That's a bill passed by this Legislature in the previous session.

With respect to the Orwellian question, I thank the member for his literary lesson. I have another one myself: as much as a member may huff and puff, he won't blow this House down. We believe that this is a sound piece of legislation, and it will survive challenge.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to mention that I appreciate the effort that the Member for Peace River is making in answering our questions tonight as we move this bill through the committee stage.

Section 8 refers to strengthening the Crown's authority by allowing it to impose terms or conditions on licences at any time that it considers appropriate. My understanding is that prior to this amendment the Crown could only make such decisions at the time of issuing or renewing a licence. I'm wondering if you might be able to share with us what this change will mean to consumers most specifically but also what impact it might have on insurance companies and if you could give an example of where or why you would change a licence, you know, halfway through its term or a third of the way through its term.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. An excellent question, and I can point out that this clause is entirely inserted as a consumer protection measure. The government of Alberta grants operating licences to a wide variety of companies: pulp mills, anybody running a boiler – I'm sure some of your colleagues would be familiar with that – all sorts of operating licences. In most of the cases that I'm aware of from my past experience in industry the government can impose operating conditions at any time for violations of safety regulations or environmental regulations, reforestation regulations, as in my previous business.

This section is inserted so that the same would apply to insurance companies with a licence to operate in Alberta. Should they violate any of the regulations under the Insurance Act, the government could mid-term impose operating restrictions. This would impose some hardship on the company, with good reason, for violating regulations, and would impose some protections to consumers. Examples of violations might be not meeting the capital requirements, violating the all-comers rule, something like that.

So if the government received complaint or under its own investigations discovered that a company was violating the regulations or the terms of its operating licence, they could restrict the practice of the insurance company within the province.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know the details of the Kingsway suit in particular. I don't know what they're all about, but I just find it very disturbing that we would pass a piece of

legislation that would go out of its way to quash a lawsuit. It seems to me that these people have the right to go through the courts. They've launched a suit. They have the right to see it go through to its conclusion.

This is very disturbing to me in that way because everyone has a right to due process, and it seems to be that by doing this – you know, is this the beginning of a trend? Can we do it the next time there's a lawsuit up against the government that it doesn't like, that we can just pass the legislation to stop it? Maybe if you could address that. The rest of the bill is – I don't know – mostly house-keeping stuff, but there's a little, tiny, very disturbing element to this. Perhaps you could let us know: will this happen again? Next time around, when the government has their back against the wall in a lawsuit, are we going to pass a law to stop it? Can you address that, please?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Clearly, I can't address the hypothetical "will we do it again?" portion of that question. I don't speak to what this government will do in the future or what some future government may do.

I will point out to the hon. member that his own colleague just pointed out that this is not unprecedented, and clearly this government doesn't believe that it's Orwellian or anything else. The fact of the matter is that this government is following through on its legislation passed in the last session to reform private automobile insurance. It was clear in the intent of that previous legislation that the insurance companies were not going to be compensated for changes in the insurance regulations, and all that this bill does is follow through on that commitment. Again, it's not unprecedented.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to remind the Member for Peace River that the last time that this government brought forward a piece of legislation that extinguished the rights of a group of Albertans, the Premier backed up on that within 48 hours, and that piece of legislation was dropped.

It might be wise of this government to consider doing the same with this particular piece of legislation because it really does open a door to a path that I'm not sure any one of us really cares to go down. It causes me, as I said before, untold concern. I'm just not satisfied with the explanation we're getting from the Member for Peace River, and I'm, quite frankly, disappointed that there aren't many other members in this House standing up tonight to speak against this particular section in the legislation.

Having said that, I would like to jump on to section 14, which I see adds a clarification as to making sure that the consumer rep on the Automobile Insurance Rate Board cannot be a member of one of the public insurance companies or their affiliate if they should choose to come into the province, and that's a good thing. I would like to remind the House it was actually my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar who brought forward the notion of having a consumer rep on the AIRB in the first place. We certainly want to protect the integrity of that position. If anything, there should be more than one consumer rep, but I am pleased to see that we've made that clarification.

11:10

Section 18, again, outlines some of the General Insurance OmbudService, that was talked about in second reading, and I applaud that. It looks as if we've outlined relatively clearly for

consumers what the appeals process would be, and I do believe that that is a good thing.

I did have another question here, and I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to remember it before some hon. members might suggest that I'm sleeping. In fact, I'm not sleeping, but I'm looking for my third question or my third comment.

I will take my chair, Mr. Chairman, and look for that other question and allow somebody else to take part in the debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I appreciate the point the hon. member made about the soft tissue concerns being a separate issue.

I would like to know: does this amendment address or is the government proposing a future act that would address the automatic passing of rate increases by the insurance commission, which led to incredible insurance profits and a rise, a 60 per cent increase, that was allowed by the insurance commission prior to the government discussing rollbacks? Then, of course, with those rollbacks we went the voluntary route, and when that didn't work, we rolled back the insurance an additional 6 per cent. I think we've probably now gone back about 13 per cent of that 60 per cent increase. Will this amendment or other proposed acts of the government deal with insurance profits, or will it simply be a further rubber stamping once they've had this initial setback?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's amazing. I think Bill Cosby once said that if you go back and sit down, you will remember what it was you were thinking of, and as soon as I sat down, I remembered what I was thinking of.

One of my pet peeves throughout my time here at the Legislature, particularly as it concerns the auto insurance reforms, has been the fact that in so many cases the reforms apply only to privately owned and operated vehicles. We seem to be leaving business, particularly small business – I'm a member of that community – out of the equation and not doing enough to support small business in their efforts to be competitive.

In section 12 the change that's being made specifies that it applies only to private vehicles. The inference I'm left with is that previously it applied to all vehicles, and now we're changing it to apply only to private passenger vehicles. Again, if the Member for Peace River wouldn't mind commenting on that, I would be curious to know why we've chosen to go that route in this case and, at least in my mind, appear to once again have neglected the needs and concerns of small business.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to address the comments again on the Kingsway case. The government is just acting to protect Alberta taxpayers from having to compensate insurers. It was in the process of developing the reforms. The government stated clearly that the costs associated with the new system would be covered by the insurance industry, and I would remind the hon. member, my hon. colleague, that there were corresponding liability offsets, and the losses were not that significant in that regard.

With respect to his comments about the rate review board I would remind him that I take a little bit of exception to the rubber-stamp concept. First of all, the rate review is not complete. All we've

done so far is that the minister has signalled her desire for a voluntary rollback, that not forthcoming, a rollback imposed. But the rate review process is still under way, and we're awaiting an answer to that in the fall of this year. What this bill does is allow a mandatory rollback not just on basic insurance but also on extra insurance, on collision, in the event that there's profit-taking in that sector. So this adds, again, more consumer protection powers to the minister.

With respect to small business I hear clearly and I'm sympathetic and I believe the government is sympathetic to the commercial insurance sector. The reason that this bill applied strictly to private passenger vehicles was that it's a completion of last year's private insurance reform. I believe the clause that the member highlighted indicates that the all-comer rule applies to private passenger vehicles only. The reason for that is that the commercial vehicles already have an insurer of last resort.

As I said, I'm sympathetic, but at this stage a review or a redo of the commercial insurance sector, if required, would also require a full-blown public involvement, a public input process, and the government is anxious to complete reforms to the private insurance process started in the last session.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'll close comment and call the question.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In reference to the comments just made by the Member for Peace River, when the government undertook their reforms, one of the things that I know they were hearing loud and clear was the concern of new drivers and, particularly, young drivers. Certainly, that is a major concern for small business when they're looking at hiring, whether or not this person that they're hiring fits into those so-called high-risk categories and whether or not that's going to add to their cost of doing business. Although there may well be an insurer of last resort, there's also a huge cost related to that. The young driver has benefited greatly by the reforms on privately owned, privately operated vehicles. Unfortunately, small business has not benefited to the same extent at all when they're looking at hiring young people. So that was the reason for my raising the concern today.

Now, the Member for Peace River said during second reading – and he said it again tonight, in fact – that the government clearly stated that any costs associated with the new system would be covered by the insurance industry. I happen to be privy to the government documents that have been produced in relation to the Kingsway lawsuit, and I've gone through that, pored through it with a fine-toothed comb. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I can't find anywhere in that documentation produced by the government in its defence that they're preparing for the lawsuit where they say that.

I'm wondering if the Member for Peace River could either show us a copy of the speech or the press release or the public statement or the media report or whatever where during the reforms the government said that the costs associated with this system would be covered by the insurance industry, because I can't find that in the brief that they've prepared in defence of the Kingsway lawsuit.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 34 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the Committee of the Whole now rise and report bills 31 and 34.

[Motion carried]

11:20

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 31 and Bill 34.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 16
Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise tonight to move third reading of Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005.

In so doing, I want to address a couple of concerns that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung had raised regarding the accountant's independence. The legislation does provide that an accountant is disqualified from being an auditor of a corporation if the accountant and/or his business partners are shareholders of the corporation. Furthermore, a corporation is required to state the reasons for replacing an auditor of a corporation, which it was not required to do before, and the auditor is allowed to comment on the corporation's statement.

The Business Corporations Act came into force in 1982 and has not been substantially amended since 1987. These new amendments to the Business Corporations Act will modernize Alberta's legislation to keep pace with changes that have been made to the federal corporations laws and will help to harmonize many of the provisions of the Alberta Business Corporations Act with those of its federal counterpart. The amendments will also allow the greater use of electronic technology, they will facilitate shareholder and director involvement in the governance of the corporations, and they will enhance shareholder protection in keeping with the trends in other jurisdictions.

There are significant new safeguards for shareholders in this legislation, and that will enable shareholders to have greater confidence when they invest in Alberta corporations. These include expanded disclosure requirements for directors and officers, who may include any interest in material transactions as well as any material contracts in their disclosures.

Mr. Speaker, those conclude my remarks in moving third reading of Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I would just like to applaud and recognize the wisdom of the sponsor of this bill, who is also, I believe, a Calgary-Varsity constituent. It has been noted that 72 per cent of individuals populating the constituency of Calgary-Varsity have postsecondary degrees, so it's no wonder that we've seen such intelligence recognized and shared within this House tonight. I applaud the member. It has to do with living in the constituency, I'm sure.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, I get a little concerned when we hear "Question." If people don't want to give to the debate, perhaps they should go home if that's the case for some of the people.

For myself, our concerns with this particular piece were basically addressed to some extent. We do support the bill and would like to see it, as the whole thing does unfold, with respect to the unlimited liability corporations. We also agree to the standardization with regard to the provincial laws and with regard to the federal status as well.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill to close debate.

Dr. Brown: No further comments, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 35
Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 25: Mr. R. Miller]

The Acting Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very exciting and productive day and evening here in the House, perhaps in celebration of VE Day. Regardless, it's a wonderful tribute to all members of the House, and on that basis I would move that the House now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motioned carried; at 11:26 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 3, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/03

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. We give thanks for our abundant blessings to our province and ourselves. We ask for guidance and the will to follow it. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct privilege today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two honoured guests from Kenya who are seated in your gallery. The guests are the Hon. Richard Kalembe Ndile, a member of the National Assembly of Kenya, and Mr. Davinder Lamba, who is the executive director of Mazingira Institute of Kenya. These visitors are on a Canadian tour. They're going to be visiting Quebec, our province, and the province of Ontario. They're already up on their feet, and I would now ask the House to give them a warm welcome.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you graciously hosted a tea this morning in the Legislature Library, and we were honoured that librarians and chairs of library boards from various parts of Alberta attended. On your behalf I would like to introduce two of your guests from the Legislature Library tea today who have remained with us to view question period. They are Joanne Morgan, librarian, Morinville public library; Maureen Wilcox, chair, Yellowhead regional library. They are seated in your gallery this afternoon. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you undoubtedly the brightest students in Alberta: 64 grade 6 students from Graminia school from the constituency of Stony Plain. These students are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Gloria Wolff, Mrs. Rhonda Stewart, Miss Michelle Pernisch, and nine parents. They're seated in both the members' and the public galleries. I'd ask that these guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of 18 incredibly active, vibrant, and politically aware young people from the Petrolia 60 Plus seniors. If I can take the time, I'd just like to quickly introduce them. They're led by group leader Jim Muldrew, and joining Jim today are

Preterita Zegarra, Doris Lees, George and Marce Eykelbosh, Jacob and Anne Gukert, Tannis Betts, Cecil and Golverdina Marshall, Doug and Bernice Hanon, Jack and Betty Evans, Bill and Marj Jardine, and Eugene and Leone Prozny. I had the pleasure of joining them in the cafeteria this afternoon for lunch, and we all agreed that the ham and split pea soup was wonderful. They're very much enjoying their visit here today. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Laura Paquette. Laura is a University of Alberta student in elementary education and serves on the social justice committee at St. Charles Catholic parish. Laura was recently hired as our STEP position in Edmonton-Calder, so I will have her with me for the duration of the summer. We in the NDP caucus are very thrilled to have her with us and would invite her to rise and everyone to give her the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you have another introduction?

Dr. Pannu: I'm done, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Others?

Then, hon. members, just allow me to introduce one of your own to you. If hon. members would like to know what true happiness and bliss is, let me introduce the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who today is celebrating his 30th wedding anniversary with his delightful lady.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's becoming increasingly clear that Enron didn't rip off Alberta electricity consumers alone. It had help from other power companies. The testimony of an energy expert filed with the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission last January states, and I quote: Enron was able to achieve this higher price by colluding with other market participants to play along. End quote. It's referring to the prices in Alberta. My questions are to the Minister of Energy. Does the minister know who colluded with Enron to manipulate electricity prices in Alberta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'm not specifically aware of the instance that he's quoting. I'd be happy to look at the information, and if there is information to verify and substantiate collusion, those are precisely the pieces of evidence that we'd asked for so that the proper investigation can occur.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll table the information.

To the same minister: given that TransAlta admitted to U.S. regulators that it used some of the same electricity trading schemes that Enron became infamous for in California, how can the minister be sure that TransAlta didn't collude with Enron to drive up power prices here in Alberta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like he's talking of events that happened in the United States. Whether similar events or anything like that happened in Canada, we'd ask him to bring forward the evidence. We've had and we do continue to have a very good monitoring system to investigate and to follow up to ensure that Albertans are protected.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. Given that TransAlta has donated almost a quarter million dollars to the Tory party since 1992, is this Tory government refusing to investigate TransAlta, stonewalling because it doesn't want to stop the big cheques from rolling in?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I find it unfortunate that you can get up in the Assembly and through assertions and aspersions and other doubt try to belittle and slander the names of companies that certainly have operated well on behalf of Albertans. If there is evidence – and we'd ask if there is evidence – we would be the first to act on appropriate evidence to see that Albertans are protected. We don't support a slanderous approach, innuendo, or anything like that.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The close connection between the Alberta electricity market and the Pacific Northwest markets allowed Enron to manipulate Alberta's prices with Project Stanley and make unjust and unreasonable profits. Between January 2000 and June of 2001 Enron ripped off consumers in these markets for over \$940 million. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. How much of this unjust and unreasonable \$940 million rip-off by Enron was taken from the pocketbooks of Alberta's electricity consumers?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it's I guess convenient to pick some numbers like 900 and some odd million. Why not pick a billion or two billion or whatever number you wish to take?

We still ask for and always have asked that there be evidence. When there were cases brought forward in the past, Project Stanley or anything else that may have been like that, those investigations have occurred by the market surveillance administrator. They've also involved the federal Competition Bureau because some of that transaction was alluded to have happened with parties outside the province. In that case, we still would ask and look for the evidence. That's the best and the only way that you can ensure that investors are protected.

It's convenient, I guess, just to start picking numbers out of the air.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These numbers weren't picked out of the air; they were picked from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission investigation.

What efforts is the government making to get some of this money back for Alberta consumers?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there still is no evidence that consumers have been taken for that money. It's still just an assertion. If he has the evidence, I'd ask him to please forward it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, these documents will be tabled after question period.

Given that this government was so anxious to go after a couple of AISH clients who were supposedly ripping off the system, how come this government is so reluctant now to pursue Enron and its greedy partners, who ripped off the electricity system and consumers here in Alberta? Why go after the needy and protect the greedy?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, totally unfair comparisons, not related incidents. The facts aren't even related. They just don't even relate to the story at hand.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Domestic Violence

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2003 a Red Deer man shot and killed himself and his estranged wife after a court-ordered visitation with their child. This was a brutal murder/suicide that shocked Albertans because this man had previously been threatening to kill his wife. This raises serious questions in regard to police procedures in handling domestic violence as well as the effectiveness of domestic courts. So my first question is to the Solicitor General. Will the Solicitor General address the 91 areas of improvement that an internal RCMP probe of this situation recommended in the wake of this tragedy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the member from the opposition correctly states that there were 91 recommendations. Chief Superintendent Rod Knecht of the RCMP studied the report and made the recommendations. Thirty of the recommendations have already been put in place since this tragic incident in 2003.

The issue is, Mr. Speaker, that, yes, we have to. The RCMP as well as every major police service in the province has to work with the families, has to work with organizations, and with those support services that are in the community with regard to domestic violence cases. These are serious issues that have to be dealt with. As well, we have to continue to work with those shelters that are providing shelter for women and children with regard to those issues.

There's a lot of work that still has to be done with reporting an incident and, as well, enforcing a zero tolerance mechanism with regard to domestic violence itself.

Dr. B. Miller: My second question is to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Given that this horrific incident came about as the result of a court-ordered visitation, will the minister review the procedures and strategies that domestic courts take in dealing with violent spouses in relation to court-ordered visitations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we are doing that I can tell the hon. member about is that we are in the process of evaluating a risk assessment group. This is a group that would be able to identify high-risk situations and take appropriate action through a number of different specialists. So, for example, you would have specialized police, specialized prosecu-

tors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and the like. We are in the process of establishing a business plan for that. There is a model for this in Ontario, which has had incredible success, and as I understand it, at present that particular group has been able to avoid death in all of the circumstances in which they have been involved.

Of course, there is a high correlation between high-risk family violence situations and the tragedy like this particular situation that the hon. member has referred to.

Dr. B. Miller: Again to the Minister of Justice: given the call by reports and stakeholders for an integrated and co-ordinated response to family violence, what initiatives are being taken to ensure that rural communities as well as urban communities benefit from the approach of a unified domestic court?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, one of the initiatives that we have in place in Edmonton, in Calgary, and in Lethbridge at this point in time is a domestic violence court, which deals, of course, with the crime of domestic violence. As a result of the policies that we have and the good news that will be coming forward later today, I can advise you that our plans are to expand that beyond those three centres.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Securities Commission

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it's broke, it's probably time to stop dithering and start fixing it. The Alberta Securities Commission has become a national embarrassment. In denying the Auditor General access to enforcement files, the ASC has shown contempt and belligerence toward the Minister of Finance and this Assembly. This should have been the final straw. My question I guess to the Government House Leader: how much longer will the government put up with this dysfunctional securities commission before some decisive action is taken?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance has day after day in this House answered similar questions. The fact of the matter is that the Minister of Finance requested the Auditor General to expedite his audit of the commission, to do a particularly special audit of the commission, and has indicated that she wants to await the results of those. As part of doing an audit, of course, there has to be the terms of the audit worked out, and that's the issue between the Auditor General and the Securities Commission as we speak. Hopefully, those two parties will be able to come to terms with respect to the terms of the audit, and that audit can proceed, and we can get to the bottom of this.

Mr. Martin: Dithering, Mr. Speaker.

Given that investors clearly have no faith in this Securities Commission, isn't it time to push for a national – and I stress: not a federal but a national – securities regulator?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The two issues are not related. This government has been part of discussions with respect to national securities regulation over the course of a number of years. There are many good reasons to have a passport process in

place, as we do now, and to have a national commission in place, and that discussion is ongoing. That's a different question. That doesn't mean that you would abandon the need for security regulation in the province. We have a very vibrant economy, a very strong need for a good, vibrant, strong securities commission to regulate the process of public companies to make sure that appropriate information is available. Two separate issues.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, unlike the minister, investors do not have faith, and given that a single national regulator developed by the provinces makes it easier for small companies to raise capital and would save the province millions, why won't the government exercise national leadership and work with other provinces for a solution to this problem so we don't end up in the mess we're in now?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, in respect to that question I'd like to just respond that there was a very strong initiative taken among the provinces to work to create greater harmonization in the securities regulation, and all of the provinces at one stage were in unanimous consent. At this stage Ontario is still watching and would prefer the other, but our markets have been well served by our securities commissions. I do want to state that the majority of those companies that are raising capital are energy companies. They rely upon both the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Venture Exchange. Both on the TSX and Venture exchanges primarily from Alberta are energy companies. They are very successful in raising capital. Their investors are receiving very good rates of return. The marketplace is very efficient, and its operating very well, and there's a great degree of confidence both among those companies raising capital and among their investors that are putting the monies in.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

School Construction in Edmonton

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a November 27, 2002, *Edmonton Journal* article, which I will table, Mr. Charlie Koester, chairman of the Edmonton Catholic school board, stated that "the board's first priority is to construct a \$12.6-million high school in the fast-growing neighbourhood in north Edmonton." The school board's 2002-2005 capital plan, which I will also table, lists this project as a number one priority. To the Minister of Infrastructure: considering that Ms Engel, the present chairperson of the school board, denies that such a project was ever a construction priority, can the minister advise this House whether capital plans filed in his office support the past chairperson or the present chairperson?

1:50

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I'll only respond to that question with the facts of what was actually tabled by the Edmonton Catholic school board. On June 30, 2002, we had a slightly different category system for tabling them. The number one category for new school construction was, and I quote, a construction of a high school in northwest Edmonton. On June 30 of 2003 there were also priorities put in for the 2005 school year, and at that time number one was to move 10 portables, and number two was the Castle Downs high school. On June 30 of 2004 the priorities for 2005 from Edmonton Catholic were put in. The first one was to relocate 12 portables, the second one was to construct links to support portables, the third one was an elementary school in southwest Edmonton, and the fourth one was a grade 9 to 12 school in northwest Edmonton in Castle Downs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you. Since the minister has the capital plans, can the minister advise this House whether a high school project in Terwillegar has ever been of any priority on this school board's capital plan.

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, in reviewing the capital plans of the last three years, the answer is no.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Considering the confusion in the school board on what their priorities were and what they are, will the minister audit the school board's capital plan drafting procedures?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really feel that first of all I do have to sit down with the chair of the Edmonton Catholic school board as well as with the superintendent, and I will be doing that on Thursday. I'm sure there is a good honest explanation for this, but I really feel that it's imperative that I speak with them first. I'll be doing that with them on Thursday of this week.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Support for Low-income Albertans

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Poverty and homelessness remain a scourge in resource-rich Alberta. Housing costs are high, and tens of thousands of daily requests are made to food banks. The disadvantaged get hurt in boom times, and if you don't have the right job, you're not rich in Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. When will this government announce a timetable to raise support levels for those who cannot work and for the working poor?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Of course that's a very good question because it's definitely a priority for this minister. As you are aware, the other day we did announce the increase in the minimum wage starting September 1. Of course, that will have some positive impact on those people that are struggling through some challenging times.

As you are aware – I would hope I can have a bit of time to explain this, what's happened here in Alberta in relation to people the member is addressing. That's the high-needs area. It's definitely a priority. You know, when you go back a number of years ago, we did reform the welfare system, Mr. Speaker, because at the time 80 per cent of dollars were being utilized by single, healthy, young Albertans. The caseload was 97,000, a \$1.7 billion budget.

Mr. Backs: A supplementary to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: what is this government's plan to cut the waiting times for the thousands of low income families hoping for decent, affordable housing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a very important

question because we are working hard to provide affordable housing for our low-income individuals, families, people with special needs. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities just this year alone through their statistics did indicate that the cities of Edmonton and Calgary have one of the shortest waiting lists across the country for subsidized housing. I think that that is in keeping with the federal program that we have in place, that we've mentioned before hon. member, and that's the Canada/Alberta affordable housing program, where we have provided over the past three years \$106 million and constructed 2,400 homes for people. That program is ongoing. There's \$25 million in that program. Through the rent supplement and the subsidized housing, we provide for 43,000 families, individuals, people with special needs in Alberta. We provide housing for those individuals through a budget of \$49 million, which has been an increase of \$17 million this year. Hon. member, I can tell you that it is a serious issue, and we will continue to work in that regard.

Mr. Backs: There are thousands still waiting.

A supplementary to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Given the challenge many disadvantaged families face in our booming economy, when will this government begin a full review of basic needs and supports for the disadvantaged?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have been reviewing it already and have taken some plans through our regular process. We are talking, you know, about 11,000 individuals that are in a category of not expected to work. Those benefits, yes, have not been increased since '92-93, except there have been additional supports provided: health care coverage, daycare, clothing, children's school expenses, utility hookups, and, of course, child payment supports, et cetera. We are doing that already, but definitely the rates are being reviewed right now.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

School Construction in Calgary

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary board of education has expressed concerns that inflation and construction cost escalations will cause funding delays for new schools in Calgary. The original cost estimates were based on 2001 construction prices, and these costs have since increased. Many of my constituents are concerned about possible delays and are looking for some assurances that funding will cover these increases. My questions today are for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Will provincial funding be put on hold for previously approved Calgary schools due to construction cost increases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In this particular budget I made the cost overages a priority to this department. Included in my budgetary estimates this year were \$762 million on cost overages for various projects right around the province. So I have given a commitment that any school, any hospital, any road that was already committed to, that was already announced, will be built despite the cost escalations. The cost escalations are built into the dollar amounts that are given to Calgary public, and it will not delay the construction of their schools one iota.

Mrs. Ady: I just have one supplemental for the minister. My final question is: how is the province responding to the increasing need for new schools in Calgary, over and above those already approved, to address the growth in the Calgary area?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, included in this budget, as well, are approximately 16 new schools that will either be finished or started within the next three years. All the schools that have been announced, including the five that were in the paper today, will proceed. Chaparral and Citadel, for example, which were in the newspaper today, actually already have been approved to tender. The other three are very close to being approved to tender.

Mr. Speaker, those dollars will follow. We want to ensure that the taxpayer gets the best benefit for the dollars, but we also want to ensure that those schools will be built. I'll give complete assurance to the hon. member that those schools will be built regardless of the cost overruns that are presently in Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Municipal Infrastructure Spending

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Provincial infrastructure grants to municipalities are considerably smaller than the variety of taxes, including income, property, fuel, and health care premium taxes, that are extracted by the province from these communities. As a result of a decade of deficit downloading, Alberta's two major cities would alone require the entire \$9.2 billion announced for the province over three years to meet their infrastructure needs this year. My first question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Given that the Liberal caucus has been informed that the city of Edmonton requires over \$4.5 billion, how will the minister address the funding gap beyond this year's \$700 million budget provision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that everyone in this Assembly has to realize and recognize is that there is an infrastructure shortage right throughout the province, whether it be in Brooks, Fort McMurray, Edmonton, or Calgary. So to address part of that infrastructure shortage, we allocated \$3 billion this year, and \$3 billion is a lot of money. Is that going to take all the infrastructure woes that are in the province and cure them instantly overnight? No, it isn't, but it is certainly going to go a long way. The key to this program as well is the flexibility that is involved in it so that the individual jurisdictions have the ability to put those dollars to where they are needed the most.

Mr. Speaker, it is a good start. We are in no way saying that \$3 billion is going to clear up all of the infrastructure deficit, the infrastructure woes in the province, but it's going to go an awful long way to doing that.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. My second question is also to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Given the discrepancy between this year's budget allocation announcement for Fort McMurray of \$60 million over three years and the \$1.6 billion requirement, how will the minister address this funding shortfall?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, at around 9 o'clock this morning I

made an announcement of \$530 million in Fort McMurray to deal with Fort McMurray infrastructure. This project is committed over 10 years. I've also given the undertaking to Fort McMurray to ensure to decrease that time frame by at least four or five years, and we hope to see it in the next four or five years. As the hon. member fully well knows, this was money that was included in my budget this year.

Mr. Chase: Well, I'm glad to hear that we're a third of the way to solving Fort McMurray's problem.

To the same minister: to avoid future fiascos like the ambulance transfer and given municipalities' dependence on the province for grants, will the minister commit to providing a five-year infrastructure base amount to assist long-term municipal planning?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, again, in Edmonton and Calgary they receive between \$80 million and \$90 million in a guaranteed amount from the fuel infrastructure that is in place. The fuel tax that is in place goes right back to the municipalities. There have been scores of municipal grants that go out on a yearly basis. This year alone we're at roughly \$1.1 billion including the \$600 million, so there is about \$500 million that is going out to Alberta municipalities this year alone.

One of the issues that the municipalities have raised is the sustainability of these grants, and the five-year granting program for \$3 billion has gone a huge, huge way to showing them the sustainability that is there. Those monies are there; those monies are guaranteed to be there, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Highway Improvements in Northeastern Alberta

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite alluded to the importance of the oil sands in northeastern Alberta, my question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. First of all, northeastern Alberta is experiencing a very rapid growth due to heavy investment in the oil sands projects. While the investment and growth are welcome, it does put pressure on the highways in the area. What is his department doing to reduce the pressure on these highways?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I previously stated, this morning we made an announcement of \$530 million over the next 10 years. We've included numerous works on highway 63, including another 25 kilometres of passing lanes, some three or four staging areas, which are critically important. We're widening parts of highway 881 from the junction of 63 and 881 to Anzac, which has been an incredibly important issue. We're also paving roughly 40 kilometres of road on highway 881, which would only leave approximately 75 kilometres that are not paved.

Mr. Speaker, the nice thing about these announcements is that they go on and on and on. We're also four-laning from Suncor to Syncrude. So we're doing a lot this year, but more importantly what we did this morning was we laid out the plan over the next 10 years, which I hope to accelerate to the next four or five years because I feel that Fort McMurray needs it, as does all of the north.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. More

directly, when will highway 881 be fully paved between Lac La Biche and Anzac?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've stated, there are roughly 70 kilometres of road that as of this year will not be paved. I recognize that this is critically important to the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul as it goes right through his community.

I'm pleased to announce today that by the year 2007 and potentially sooner those 70 kilometres will be paved as well, which will then have the whole 220 kilometres from highway 63 right up to Fort McMurray paved. This will provide an alternate route to highway 63 to Fort McMurray that is paved and in good condition, Mr. Speaker, so it's extremely valuable for Fort McMurray.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. Will the department be fast-tracking other projects that were announced this morning as well?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about this announcement – I'm sure you wouldn't really want me to do that – but we are looking at fast-tracking this overall plan in northeastern Alberta. We're looking at fast-tracking it to the next four or five years depending on dollar availability, depending on potential budgets in the upcoming year. We've made the announcements for 10 years, but I really would like to see it accelerated. Directly to the hon. member, probably the first area that will be accelerated is finishing the paving of 881 sooner as opposed to later because it is so critical.

Camrose Women's Shelter

Mrs. Mather: Recently the government of Alberta in a move to develop the property around Camrose's new casino gave the city \$5.2 million. Within weeks of that decision they also denied new money to the local women's shelter, a remarkable showing of this government's priorities. To the Minister of Children's Services: why was the Camrose Women's Shelter overlooked when the government was increasing funding to shelters?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have I think done a fairly good job in regard to trying to deal with the issue of family violence and bullying plus the women's shelters. We announced a few weeks ago a substantial amount of money to deal with what we considered to be the priorities in the province. It was done in consultation with my staff and to address the needs of where we thought the priorities were in the rural areas that we gave the last funding to.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the development of the casino will likely bring more problems with gambling to Camrose, wouldn't it be prudent to be proactive and have more shelter beds available to Camrose and the large surrounding area it serves?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a difficult question to answer because she's talking about the casino and the problems the casino will bring. I can't look into the future and second-guess what's going to happen. I can tell her, though, that we will be

vigilant and watching what's happening with family violence in this area, and we will monitor what's happening in Camrose.

We have a good relationship with all of the shelters in this province. I'll be touring the province after we get out of session, and we'll be meeting with the people in Camrose and be able to talk to them. If in the future there are problems with the casino and an increase in family violence, which I'm hoping won't, then we'll deal with that particular issue at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: given that Camrose is a hub for surrounding communities and family violence is a concern of Children's Services in its commitment to the rural development strategy, will the minister reconsider and increase the funding for the shelter?

Mrs. Forsyth: Again, Mr. Speaker, we just announced a fairly substantial amount of money to the women's shelters in some of the rural areas on a priority need. We will continue to consult with the shelters, talk to them, assess their needs at the time, and if there is more money required in Camrose, certainly we'll look at it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Long-term Care Standards

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night members of this Assembly finally acknowledged what thousands of Albertans already know: conditions in long-term care facilities are unacceptable, and something needs to be done about it. We passed an NDP opposition motion last night calling on the government to "take [further] steps to improve the quality of care provided to Albertans living in long-term care facilities by reviewing staffing levels and standards for long-term care facilities." It's now time for less talk and more action. My questions are to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Given that this motion calls on the government to act on staffing levels, when will this government commit to the recommended four hours of care per resident per day?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member does raise a very important issue. I did support, as all the Assembly supported, the motion that was before it last evening regarding long-term care as it was amended. I'm just going to let the Assembly know once again – I have discussed this before, hon. member – that the area for long-term care that is with my ministry is for accommodation, which would include room and board and in that line that would mean, for example, meals, the utilities. It's not the care portion. The care portion is with the Department of Health and Wellness. We are working together in looking at the development of standards for long-term care and in clarifying them and making them more useful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta does not require an annual inspection of every long-term care facility and that barely a third of Alberta's long-term care facilities are inspected in any given year, when will this government commit in law to more rigorous inspection and enforcement?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, long-term care facilities are being inspected, as the member did mention. Some of the inspections are random. There are some inspections occurring, and that of course is through Health and Wellness through the Health Facilities Review Committee. The licensing, of course, is with Children's Services through the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member in raising this question is raising a very important issue of when it will be further clarified in regulation and be placed into legislation. I am hoping that following the Auditor General's report, which we're all expecting here fairly soon, with the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness – Children's Services would be included in this as well with the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act – and myself working together, we'll have that before the Legislature within the next session, which may be the fall or for legislation in the spring.

Dr. Pannu: My final supplementary to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that this is the centennial year of the province and that the centennial year is the perfect time to say a special thanks to our seniors, who have built this province over the last 100 years, will this minister and this government at least take the first step and reverse the 50 per cent increase in long-term care fees it imposed on them recently?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very interesting question. I'll take that under advisement for now and look at the fee process and get back to the hon. member.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Community Policing

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While attending the AUMA regional seminar in Edmonton last week, municipal officials were expressing their concerns about policing in their communities. In Budget 2005 the Solicitor General's department announced an increase of nearly 200 police officers across the province and an increase in provincial and policing grants to help ease these financial burdens on smaller towns and cities. There is some confusion, and my question is to the Solicitor General. How are these 200 police officers going to be divided up in the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a very valid question. Of the nearly 200 new police officers that are going to be funded in Budget 2005, 100 new RCMP officers will be assigned to rural communities throughout the province of Alberta under the provincial policing agreement. RCMP Assistant Commissioner Bill Sweeney has assured me that he is responsible, and he will utilize a process to determine where the officers will be posted. Of course, that's going to be based on identifying priority areas throughout the province.

On top of the 100 new RCMP officers, Mr. Speaker, an additional 30 RCMP officers are going to be redeployed from port security positions as well as prisoner transport services and will be redeployed to front-line policing in rural Alberta. On top of that, an additional 20 RCMP officers will be utilized with regard to our integrated response to organized crime throughout the province of Alberta as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Given that many communities are concerned that last year's policing grants, which were set at \$16 per capita across the board, have actually been reduced this year with the new formula, how does this new formula benefit these communities?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, policing grants have increased by \$6 million this past budget year, from \$37 million to \$43 million, and those towns and cities between a population of 5,000 and 20,000 will be receiving significant increases, anywhere from a 36 per cent increase to almost a 200 per cent increase with regard to the municipal police grants over last year's amounts. For example, Bonnyville, Alberta, with a population of just over 5,500, will be receiving a grant of \$245,000, which is almost a 170 per cent increase from what they received last year. Cities and communities that are between 20,000 and 100,000 will be receiving a \$100,000 base amount payment as well as \$14 per capita. Again, none of those eight communities between 20,000 and 100,000 people will be receiving anything less than what they received last year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: could the Solicitor General clarify why some communities are stating that the highly successful drug awareness and resistance education program, known as DARE, is being cancelled in some communities and only requires a few police officers to help teach it?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, the DARE program is a very good program that is provided by RCMP officers as well as municipal services and by special constables that are hired by municipalities throughout the province, but the DARE program, like any other program, has to be evaluated over a certain period of time. That's, in fact, what the Solicitor General's department is doing right now, looking at the DARE program, looking at other programs that are out there, and we will be bringing a new model that's coming out. DARE is actually being revamped. It is being tested in seven communities throughout the province right now. But we also want to continue to look at how the program works, the results we get from it, and what, in fact, kids in junior highs and high schools are actually telling us they want.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Coal-bed Methane

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I attended along with my colleague from Calgary-Varsity a public meeting in Ponoka where people expressed concern with the rapid expansion plans for coal-bed methane in the Horseshoe formation of south-central Alberta. The Energy and Utilities Board and the Pembina Institute highlighted the economic opportunities and the environmental threats of potentially 50,000 coal-bed methane wells in the next few years. The general public and private landowners all over Alberta are increasingly concerned with the pace of development and potential impacts on water, land value, agricultural sustainability, tourism, fish, and wildlife. To the Minister of Energy: given the mission of the Energy and Utilities Board to act in the public interest, how do you assess the long-term impact of 50,000 wells on the public interest?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Energy and Utilities Board and our own department we've had a multi-advisory commit-

tee going for some time looking at the opportunity and all of the impacts of natural gas in coal, or coal-bed methane. It is true that our resources of natural gas in coal are vast. They are larger than our conventional sources, potentially 500 tcf of gas, a very significant quantity. It covers vast tracts of land. All of that's very true. There is huge opportunity to bring – you mentioned the Horseshoe Canyon. That's actually where you can bring natural gas out of a seam that's purer than much of the natural gas that goes into your home. It comes out under less pressure. It's a very easy, manageable source of natural gas. There's no water in that zone. It's actually easier than most of our shallower conventional sources of natural gas.

That said, it is very important to work with the landowners on access, ensuring that the mitigation of those and working with those people impacted are appropriately addressed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment: will the minister guarantee that these 50,000 new wells will not adversely affect water quality and quantity into the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say an unequivocal yes. I will guarantee that based on the actual rules that this province has had in place for so many years. If I could give you just one small example from our neighbours to the south of the border in Colorado and Wyoming, where in fact some of the saline from the water that used to come up spilled over the agricultural land and destroyed thousands of acres of land. I want to say to all members and to everyone that is listening that, in fact, we have rules in place today to protect the environment, to ensure that any type of negative impact to our environment is clearly prevented.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the presence of 3,000 coal-bed methane wells already in central Alberta, will the minister authorize an impact assessment including cumulative impacts on water, agricultural productivity, land value, tourism, and wildlife before approving the development of another 45,000 wells?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, we will certainly ensure that this resource is developed in a way that, in fact, has no negative impact environmentally but also from the perspective that the hon. member mentions relative to wildlife and other areas that are so important to Albertans. I want to assure members of this House that on the protection of the environment – I'd say the mother ship of this province of what Albertans say is so important – we want to continue to study, continue to enforce and to ensure that people are complying with the rules so that there is absolutely no harm to our environment now, tomorrow, or well into the future, and I can assure all members that that is the case.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most every weekend when I travel through Whitecourt-Ste. Anne to my home in

Whitecourt, I meet with constituents that are employed in the forest industry. The issue of the softwood lumber dispute becomes part of our weekly discussions. My questions are directed to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Currently an export tax is one option to move forward to resolve this issue. What progress has been made on this option to date?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a free trader. The export tax is just part of an outline of a potential agreement that is being presented to the United States. The Canadian industry sees this as a starting point for discussions. The idea is that the federal government will lift this export tax once policy changes are made across this province and we move away from this allegation that has been made by the U.S. that we are somehow subsidizing the industry.

Mr. VanderBurg: Again to the same minister: given that this file has been going on I think since I've been elected, in 2001, is this option of an export tax the best way to make progress on this file?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, our ultimate objective is free access to the United States. This idea of an export tax has been presented as a way to break into some meaningful discussions with the United States as an interim measure until a full agreement can be reached in the near future. Without this discussion of an import/export tax we feel that more than likely we won't be able to break the log-jam nor get some of the money that is sitting with the Americans, about \$4.3 billion that the industry wants to get back, bring it back to Alberta, and invest it in Alberta industry as opposed to leaving it in the United States.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Postsecondary Education Review

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is planning to undertake two more reviews of parts of the postsecondary education system this year while persisting in its failure to establish an independent learning commission to look at the big picture. Now, past funding and affordability reviews failed to take institutions or students off their starvation diets, so I'd like to know whether we're simply wasting our time and taxpayers' money on this next go-round. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Since the government is covering this fall's tuition increase rather than freezing fees at their current rate, will the minister assure students that they will not face a double tuition increase once the affordability review is complete?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I have to deal with the introduction to the question because the premise on which the question was based wouldn't be the full story, to no one's surprise. The fact of the matter is that we're doing a full and complete review of the postsecondary system in this province this year. As part of that review we'll be developing a learning strategy for Albertans, so Alberta as a learning society, and there will be more to be said about the form and structure of that review in the weeks to come.

As part and parcel of that review, of course, we'll be doing both the affordability review and the funding review. There's a comprehensive review in process, being designed as we speak, which will be launched very shortly, and that will cover the full aspect of the whole system, right from literacy to post PhD.

Now, to get to the question. The budget that has been put in place this year, the funding that has been put in place this year, which has been received so well by postsecondary institutions in this province, should be sufficient to ensure that there's not a double bump in tuition. We, of course, leave to the institutions the design of their tuition and the needs for their tuition, but the money that's in the system now should assure students that there's no need for a double bump.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the minister explain specifically why the tuition policy the government created last year after considerable time, effort, and expense is broken and needs fixing again?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be presumptuous of me to say that it's broken and needs fixing again. What we do know is that there's considerable concern among Alberta students and their parents and families about the cost of going to school. A good part of that concern is focused on tuition, but the real concern is focused on the overall cost of going to school, so we have committed to this affordability review. In the process we've indicated that we will hold tuitions constant this year so that the focus can be on the review of the cost of going to school and the review on tuition rather than on the immediate concern about rising tuition.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that we are reviewing tuition policy again, my final question is to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Could the minister please explain to the House what measures, systems, processes, rules, regulations, budgetary provisions, or even, you know, gentle suggestions he's considering so that this sort of inefficiency doesn't happen again?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, but I think it should be directed to the minister in charge of that portfolio.

Mr. Hancock: I'd be delighted to answer that, Mr. Speaker. The fact that there's an ongoing and evergreen discussion of public policy in this province does not mean that there's inefficiency in the process. One should always be prepared to look at the way that you're doing things to determine whether it could be done better, to look at the cost of going to school to see whether affordability can be done better, to make sure that finances are not a barrier to a student getting an education. Any time you stop looking at that, that's when you should quit your job.

The Clerk: Members' Statements.

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to arriving at that point in the Routine, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House some constituents of mine who I see have entered our gallery and have been watching question period. These two individuals are active members of the Alexander band, which is in the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert constituency. As I call their names, I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House. They are Richard Arcand and Gordon Burnstick. They are in the members' gallery.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Acquittal of Wheat Board Protesters

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an important victory for freedom, for justice, and for western grain farmers. Yesterday the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal overturned the conviction of 22 farmers. What was the terrible crime of which they had been convicted? Had they assaulted a neighbour, or had they stolen someone's property? No. They were going to be punished for the simple and innocent act of selling their own grain on the free market rather than to the compulsory monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The Canadian Wheat Board is another example of how the federal government treats western Canadians as second-class citizens. Mr. Speaker, farmers in Ontario and Quebec may legally sell their grain at whatever price they want to whomever they want, but western grain farmers are compelled by law to sell their grain to the Wheat Board at the price set by the Wheat Board. For grain growers in Quebec and Ontario there is choice. For grain growers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta there is no choice.

2:30

The fight being fought in Saskatchewan echoes a similar battle that 13 courageous Albertans fought in October of 2002, when they were sent to jail for the same so-called crime of selling their own wheat and barley on the open market.

Mr. Speaker, it is fitting today that this House recognizes the courage of these 13 Alberta farmers whose peaceful civil disobedience led them to jail. For the record, the 13 brave Albertans who went to jail to promote the cause of free markets and fair treatment for western grain farmers are Rod Hanger of Three Hills, Noel Hyslip of Vulcan, Jim Ness of New Brigiden, Jim Chatenay of Red Deer, Bill Moore of Red Deer, John Turcato of Taber, Ike Lanier of Coaldale, Martin Hall of Vulcan, Mark Peterson of Vulcan, Ron Duffy of Lacombe, Gary Brandt of Viking, Rick Strankman of Altario, and Darren Winczura of Viking.

Mr. Speaker, along with the Premier, I had the honour of participating in the rally to support the efforts of the Lethbridge 13 in October of 2002. The recent court ruling in Saskatchewan should remind all Canadians that the federal government continues to impose a discriminatory and unfair treatment on western farmers.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal . . .

Speaker's Ruling
Time Limit for Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm really sorry, but a little while ago we changed the rules in this House to go to two minutes. At that

point in time there was some debate that one minute was not enough. Now, invariably, this is going on on a daily basis. They're now going on for two minutes, which only goes to point out that whatever the rule is, it's going to be challenged.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Calgary Exhibition and Stampede

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard last week about the success of a wonderful institution called Northlands, and today I'd like to speak about another agricultural fair, that was first held in 1886, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, that has held a place of pride in the city of Calgary as the organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The culture of the Stampede is so well known world-wide that it is synonymous with the city named Calgary.

Historically its volunteers and staff have been a reflection of the community itself. Over 2,200 volunteers serve on 50 committees, contributing tens of thousands of hours each year to plan and deliver a wide variety of programs.

The 10-day festival drew 1.2 million visitors in 2004. It features a rodeo that was Canada's first million-dollar regular season professional rodeo. Although the Stampede's signature event is the annual 10-day festival in July, events take place in the park virtually every day of the year. Year-round operations include active facilities that host more than 1,500 events a year, including trade and consumer shows.

Aside from the more than 2 million people who typically attend Pengrowth Saddledome events annually, 2.6 million people visit Stampede Park facilities on an annual basis, which means that roughly 4.6 million people visit Stampede Park over the course of a year. Overall, park visitors spend an estimated \$345 million in the province of Alberta.

The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede has embarked on a 15-year visionary redevelopment of the existing park and adjacent lands in Victoria Park.

The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede is an unparalleled example of stable, long-term partnerships that create measurable economic and social benefits.

I'd like to at this time thank Don Wilson, the outgoing president and CEO of the Calgary Stampede board. He's been a volunteer for the Stampede for over 35 years, serving as president for the last two years. He truly is an example of a lifetime of volunteering. He will be missed but I'm sure ably replaced by the new president, Steve Allan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Kristen Hedley

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a moment to recognize the achievements of a very special young lady from Consort, Ms Kristen Hedley. Last weekend in Olds the 4-H's annual selections program took place. During this year's program Kristen was chosen from among 126 strong candidates to receive this year's Premier's award.

This is no ordinary award. The Premier's award is the highest award for Alberta 4-H programs and is given out to the young 4-H member who shows exceptional leadership, communication, and personal development skills. Kristen exemplifies everything that is extraordinary about 4-H youth in this province. She's a remarkable young woman and has devoted her life to community service and improving rural life.

Kristen comes from a strong 4-H family. She has been a member of the Consort Creative Hands 4-H Club for 10 years and during that time held several executive positions and has participated in 4-H activities across the province. She also qualified for the 2004 provincial public speaking competition and was selected as a junior staff member for the 2004 provincial 4-H Club Week. But her devotion to her community doesn't stop with 4-H. Kristen was also the vice-president of her school's students' union and was president of Students against Drunk Drivers as well as editor of her school's yearbook. Currently Kristen is a student at the University of Alberta, where she is working towards her education degree.

As our Premier's award winner Kristen will represent Alberta at numerous 4-H events here and across North America, including a wonderful exchange opportunity in California.

Mr. Speaker, along with Kristen, the selections program in Olds also appoints 14 other young members in 4-H to act as ambassadors for the program at a number of events across Alberta over the next two years. I'm sure all members will agree with me on how fortunate we are to have our province represented by these fine young people not just for the future of rural Alberta but for the future of all Alberta. As well, how fortunate we are to have such a wonderful 4-H program here in Alberta, the best in the country, I would add.

Please join me in congratulating Kristen and all the ambassadors on their accomplishments.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

4-H Ambassadors

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize the achievements of 14 outstanding young members of Alberta's 4-H program. The 4-H is an organization with a long and proud history in Alberta and throughout its almost 90-year existence has stayed faithful to its mission to help our province's youth become self-reliant and contributing members of our society. These 14 young people exemplify the spirit of this wonderful organization, and during last weekend's annual selections program at Olds they were chosen to be ambassadors of Alberta's 4-H program.

Please join me in congratulating Ricki Fleming, Jessica Wilkinson, Taryn Parkinson, Lyle Weigum, Shari Hagstrom, Justin Janke, Jessi Sunderman, Lacey Fowler, Kim Headon, Mathilda Gabert, Shanna Holmes, Jeff Binks, Monika Ross, and Kristen Hedley, who is also the recipient of this year's Premier's award.

Mr. Speaker, these 14 young people were chosen because of their leadership, communication, and personal development skills. For the next two years they will serve as ambassadors travelling across our wonderful province to promote 4-H to members and nonmembers in our province.

Please join me in congratulating these very deserving young ambassadors.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Royal Alexandra Hospital Volunteers

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the unsung hero. The hero I speak about is the volunteer. We all know someone who has and does volunteer. The volunteers I want to highlight are those of the Royal Alexandra hospital. These people come from all over the city, province, and in some cases the United States to give freely of their time and talents. These people are an integral part of the Royal Alexandra family.

Last year's volunteers logged 66,000 hours. These volunteers

play a critical role in enhancing care and support for both patients and families. These supports range from greeting patients and visitors, delivering newspapers and flowers to patients, visiting and spending time with patients, particularly those in the palliative care program, cuddling babies and knitting for them, assisting with administrative tasks, and teaching crafts. The list goes on.

While we all have respect for the highly skilled professionals who keep the Royal Alexandra hospital running, I wanted to profile the dedicated volunteers and the tremendous contribution they make each and every day. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Health Care System

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks I have been tabling op-ed columns by a well-respected American economist, Dr. Paul Krugman. Published in the *New York Times*, his analysis highlights several of the threats posed by this government's continued efforts to privatize health care in Alberta. Specifically, he identifies two obstacles in the way of effective innovation within the U.S. health care system: ideological obsession with privatization and powerful vested interests.

As we speak, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is hosting a by-invitation-only symposium on health care. At the symposium the Premier will be advocating for what he calls the third way in health care, which is nothing more than a slogan imported from the U.K. to disguise a health care system imported from the U.S. What is it that we would be importing? A system where 15 per cent of health care dollars are eaten up by administration compared to an average of 4 per cent in countries with public health care. Even worse, we'd be importing a system where 45 million people, roughly 20 per cent of the U.S. population, are left without any insurance coverage whatsoever.

Clearly, the main threat to health care sustainability and affordability in Alberta is further privatization. Despite clear evidence that experiments with private delivery in Calgary have led to longer wait times and increased costs, this government continues to bulldoze ahead with privatization.

It's no secret that those with vested interests in private health care, those who stand to make profits from illness and injury are very close to the Premier, and as long as there are revolving doors between people holding powerful positions in government and private-sector lobbyists and consulting groups, Albertans can only guess how much influence those vested interests will continue to have on health care policy.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the Assembly's attention to the NDP opposition's report on health care, which was produced after grassroots consultation with health care users, providers, and advocates. The report was tabled in the Assembly yesterday and is also available at www.newdemocrats.ab.ca.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:40 Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, our historical vignette of today refers to an event that occurred on May 3, 2000. On that day a ceremony was held on the steps of the Legislature Building to commemorate the repatriation and burial of an unknown Canadian soldier.

The grave of the unknown soldier serves as a tribute to Canada's war dead and a memorial to all of those who died striving for peace in the defence of this country. Located in Ottawa, the grave includes soil from the north, south, east, and west portions of the Alberta Legislature Grounds, a contribution symbolizing that Alberta's contribution to Canada's war efforts has come from every corner of the province.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition from some good Albertans from the fine Alberta communities of Rimbey, Ponoka, Holden, Mundare, Ryley, Carseland, and the great Stampede city of Calgary. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two items to table today. The first is the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board 2003 annual report, being tabled in accordance with section 14 of the Alberta Police Act. The board is the appeal body for complaints concerning police members, and during the period covered by the report the board made decisions on 44 appeals.

Mr. Speaker, the second document that I have is the victims' programs status report for 2003-2004. This annual report shows that more than \$2 million in grants were provided to 81 victim assistance programs. These programs reported handling more than 32,000 new cases, over half of those involving assistance to victims of violent crimes.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first one will be the 2002-2005 Edmonton Catholic school board capital plan.

The second one would be a November 27, 2002, *Edmonton Journal* article.

Last would be my correspondence addressed to the Edmonton Catholic school board, in particular to Ms Debbie Engel, chairperson, dated May 2, 2005.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the report and recommendations of the MLA AISH Review Committee.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in my member's statement I recognized the efforts of two nonprofit groups, the Canoffer Society, which celebrated its 25th anniversary, and the Chrysalis group's 10th annual celebration. Today I would like to table their programs and award recipients.

With the Speaker's permission I would also like to share four lines of a song cowritten by Garth Brooks and Victoria Shaw entitled *The River* that was printed on the Chrysalis program.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

Too many times we stand aside
And let the water slip away
'Til what we put off 'til tomorrow
Has now become today
So don't you sit upon the shoreline
And say you're satisfied
Choose to chance the rapids
And dare to dance the tide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and table a letter to me from Sterling Eddy, the president, CEO, and registrar of the Certified Management Accountants of Alberta, in support of Mount Royal College's request to become an undergraduate degree-granting university.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is the official program from The King's University College graduation ceremony which occurred on Saturday, April 30, 2005, at Ellerslie Road Baptist Church. The King's University College is quite a famous institution in the community of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

My second tabling this afternoon is a document from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It's actually a transcript of the scandalous dealings of Project Stanley and how it affected power prices not only in Alberta but in the Pacific Northwest. There is direct reference – and I certainly hope that hon. members of this House read it – that calculates the totally unjust profits to the tune of \$940 million for the periods that we discussed earlier in question period.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the third part in a series of op-eds by respected health policy analyst Professor Paul Krugman. In this piece Dr. Krugman warns of the dangers of an ideological obsession with health care privatization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I promise not to sing.

I have one document to table today. It is an excerpt from *Alberta Politics Uncovered* by Mark Lisac in which he describes the Alberta government's refusal to participate in a national securities regulatory body.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a memo that reads that the so-called displaced farmers are actually going to work every day. They work very hard, and although they are currently not making any money, they do have a job and therefore are not able to work in the oil sands, as the opposition naively think.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and table a release from the Edmonton Social Planning Council released today on the social determinants of health as an innovative approach report. It shows how the social and economic indicators are twice as important as the actual health care system and the cost for health.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, the Minister of Health and Wellness: pursuant to the Public Health Act the Public Health Appeal Board annual report 2004, and pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta annual report 2004.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed a pleasure to introduce the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Prior to getting into it, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House some guests that are in our members' gallery this afternoon. These are folks that work diligently every day, sometimes 24/7, for the ag producers in this province and the value-added side of our province and the industry as a whole. In the gallery with us today are John Knapp, assistant deputy minister, sustainable agriculture; Brian Rhiness, assistant deputy minister, industry development; Lou Normand, executive director, rural development initiative; Brad Klak, president of the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation; Jeannie Munroe, the deputy minister's executive assistant; and Bard Haddrell, executive director of ag info services.

2:50

I would also to acknowledge, if I may, Mr. Chairman, some folks who are not in the gallery but who have had a great deal to do with the budget presentation today: Faye Rault, executive director of the ag corporate services; Krish Krishnaswamy, vice-president of finance, Ag Financial Services Corporation; Terry Willock, director of communications; and my executive assistant, Jason Krips.

I'd ask the members in the gallery to rise and receive the welcome of the House, if I may.

It's very easy, Mr. Chairman, to look good when you have a great executive team, which I have in this department.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure this afternoon to present the estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. We find ourselves travelling in a little bit of uncharted waters again, but thanks to the unparalleled guidance and support from our industry and our MLAs, we've been able to help steer our industry in all aspects. While we might not have reached the promised land yet, we are on course to do so.

The last five years or so have not been the most happy time in our industry. From floods to droughts to pests Alberta's farmers and ranchers have faced one of the worst combinations of circumstances

in our province's history. They've had to deal not only with natural obstacles but man-made ones as well. High input costs, border closures, trade disputes, and unfair tariffs have all tried to grind our industry down, yet our producers survive and meet the challenges and prosper.

Even with our obstacles Alberta continues to have one of the most diverse and innovative ag industries in the country and perhaps even in the world. We're fortunate enough to have an industry that is willing to continue to innovate and continue to move forward into the future.

And that's what this budget does: it will usher our ag industry into the future while ensuring that the present challenges are met. We made sure that this year's budget reflected not only the realities agriculture faces today but the reality we want for tomorrow. We have some mighty big goals for our ag industry, 20-10 by 2010; that is, \$20 billion in value-added production and \$10 billion in primary production by the year 2010. That goal is still in sight. It's achievable because of initiatives like the ag value processing business incubator in Leduc, and it's achievable with the work we're doing on the eight industry-identified key growth initiatives, key areas of growth for our industry.

While some of this growth is directly dependent on government determining what we can do better to promote growth in other areas, nontraditional areas especially, like functional foods and natural health products, these nontraditional areas will provide important diversification for our industry.

We're also looking to the future of our primary industries. For example, we're making a long-term investment into our ag research associations with a \$1.5 million increase. This will help to bridge the gap between pure research and farmer-ready advancements. And by helping them, we are helping our primary producers, our rural and urban communities, and our entire province. It's a smart investment in the future of our industry.

Speaking of a smart investment, Mr. Chairman, I was pleased to see such a strong investment going into rural Alberta through this year's provincial budget. This is in large part because now we have articulated a vision for rural Alberta in the rural development strategy. We recently released the strategy *A Place to Grow* and formed a task force to guide its implementation. The strategy, built on more than two years of consultation, will be led now by an MLA task force chaired by the Member for Battle River-Wainwright. Joining him will be the members for Cypress-Medicine Hat and Dunvegan-Central Peace.

We are committed to ensuring that rural Alberta has the initiatives, the programs, and the tools they need to remain sustainable. That's why Budget 2005 dedicated some significant investment toward helping rural communities. While many of these initiatives don't fall under my ministry, I probably point to them to show that we're moving forward on the rural development strategy.

However, there are some very important things that my ministry is doing to support the rural development strategy and our ag industry. We've more than doubled the funding for Alberta's ag service boards with a \$5.6 million increase. This will help our agriculture service boards continue their 60 years of dedicated service to our industry and to our rural communities. We're also providing \$22 million in funding to irrigation rehabilitation, improving the efficiency of our irrigation networks.

Of course, it would be foolish to talk about building value-added in our rural communities without first dealing with what's happening in our cattle and ruminant industry. Perhaps the most disappointing thing about this whole situation is that everyone – from the U.S. president, our federal government, our industry, the U.S. industry, their processors, our processors – wants the border to be open. But

for a single judge and a small group of protectionist ranchers it would be open. However, we're focusing our attention on what we can change and not on what we can't change. Moving the U.S. court process any faster is one of the things that falls into the can't category, but moving forward on our six-point plan falls into the can category, and we are moving forward in that direction.

Capacity is up more than 22 per cent from 2004. With planned capacity coming online later this year and early next year, we should be able to process virtually everything that we produce. Our inventory management programs continue to stabilize the market while being as market neutral as possible, and we're committed to keeping them going as long as the industry needs them. In that light, Budget 2005 invests more than \$133 million to continue the Canada/Alberta set-aside program in response to the continued border closure.

Testing for BSE is at an all-time high. In fact, we've already met our targets for 2005, and it's not even June. We're going to keep those number up, which is why we're investing \$15 million for ongoing funding for BSE surveillance. This investment will ensure that Alberta leads the country in animal disease surveillance.

We continue to make adjustments to our other income stabilization programs like CAIS to make sure that they are responsive to our producers' needs, and we're investing \$114 million to support those changes and the ongoing delivery of the program.

We need to diversify our markets and become less reliant on the United States. It would be naive to think that we could replace them as our number one customer, but we do need to reduce our reliance upon them. That's why we've dedicated \$30 million in last year's budget for the beef market development and retention fund, that will help industry seek more markets and build on existing ones.

But we also need to know more about this disease, how it works and how it spreads, which is why we're committed to ensuring that Alberta becomes a center of excellence for prion research.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me to speak about an industry that I and many others in this House love very, very much. However, now I must speak about the budget and what we're doing this year. Let me sum up what planned increases we have for this year.

The department's voted spending has increased from the 2004-05 budget by approximately \$160 million. This increase includes more than \$133 million to continue the Canada/Alberta set-aside program in response to the continued border closure and \$15 million for ongoing funding for BSE surveillance, ensuring that Alberta leads the country in animal disease surveillance. And as I mentioned earlier, we've more than doubled our funding for Alberta's ag service boards with a \$5.6 million increase. We've increased spending for irrigation rehabilitation by \$3 million, which increases grant support provided through this program to \$22 million.

This budget is based on several assumptions: that commodity prices will not decline further is one assumption, that interest rates will remain stable, and that we will not experience a disastrous year of claims under the income stabilization and crop insurance programs. These assumptions mean that achieving the plan is subject to some major risks: widespread crop production losses due to poor weather conditions, including drought; a major livestock disease outbreak such as foot-and-mouth; further declines in global commodity prices, particularly crops; and changes in the economy such as an increased interest rate or a stronger Canadian dollar. These four items could affect farm income dramatically and in turn impact indemnities paid out under crop insurance and the Canadian ag income stabilization program. We've not built that into the plan to deal with another disastrous year of claims, but it is something that should be noted.

I want to assure all hon. members that the prosperity and sustainability of our agricultural industry remains a priority of this government. Also, I want to thank the hon. members for their support throughout this past year. The industry is growing and changing rapidly, and we know that to respond to this growing industry and to help its development, we have to change and grow with it.

I thank you for your time this afternoon. I look forward to the comments and questions, Mr. Chairman, and will conclude my remarks with that.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the budget estimates this afternoon for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. This is one of the bigger departments, certainly, with well over a billion dollars in spending.

Certainly, the minister is absolutely correct when he states that it has been rather difficult for some sectors of our rural economy. In the last few years there have been ongoing issues: trade, weather, you name it. We certainly have to ensure that we have good public policy in the future to enable food to be produced in rural areas and sold in urban areas that is affordable. We sometimes overlook the fact that we produce so much food at affordable prices. It would be the basis of our economic prosperity. Sometimes that's overlooked, and it is unfortunate.

3:00

I for one think it is very good public policy to ensure that food production remains in the hands of many, not concentrated in the hands of a few. Whenever we see market concentration at its worst, we have to look at the beef processing industry in this province. I don't think it is good public policy to ensure that maybe two or three different enterprises control such a large part of the processing industry for beef and beef products, and a lot of the producers feel very strongly about that too.

Specifically to this department, Mr. Chairman, we look at the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development and the four program areas, and there are many very good programs, but there are some that certainly raise questions for this hon. member. Steps have been taken by this government. We look at the BSE issue. The government has spent billions of dollars on farm programs, but the prices of particularly beef are probably going to remain stagnant for the farmers.

Now, we all know that the border has remained closed with America, and quite possibly it will be closed, unfortunately, for a longer period. I hope that in July it does open, at least partially. At first I think we can expect a partial reopening of the border, and then maybe within six months or so there will be full trade. I think it's very important that this happen very soon before we start dealing with the next round of U.S. presidential elections. In some of those states in the Midwest, unfortunately, the Americans may play the protectionist hand, and that doesn't serve our interests whatsoever.

I don't understand why there is no money that I see in this budget to facilitate the developing of packing plants through co-ops in this province. I would also, Mr. Chairman, like to know how the relationship between Cargill and Rancher's Beef meets our interest. I don't know how all this works out, how this is going to help the producers. It has been reported that although Rancher's Beef or Ranchers Own was not supposed to receive money from this government for its development – that's what my research indicates – why did that company report that it was receiving money from the

provincial government through the county? Is my research accurate, or is it inaccurate? How come this company received funding when no other company that I'm aware of has received any of these allocations?

We understand and I think this side of the House fully supports some money going into BSE research. There certainly was a huge amount of money set aside for research into BSE. I would like an update on the progress of the research being done into BSE. Hopefully, the efforts that are being made in this province are not being duplicated in another jurisdiction. I hope to hear that we are working co-operatively not only with the federal government but also other provinces that have been affected by this unfortunate outbreak of BSE.

Now, the cow-calf set-aside program has come to an end, but if there's new money, where is the new money to keep these cattle on the farm? Where is that coming from? What are the farmers to do now that the border has remained closed and prices have remained so low for so long?

This gets us, certainly, to the Washington trade office. I would be grateful for an update on how much work our envoy, our ambassador, Murray Smith, has done on behalf of Alberta agriculture and Alberta producers to facilitate the border opening. What sort of lobbying is going on there?

Now, the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation is quite an operation. In fact, it states on the 2003-04 annual report, "Unique Financial Services." That's quite a description. I hear every day, in fact we heard in question period a little earlier, about free enterprise in this province, and I'm astonished to look in the local weekend papers and see advertisements from Agriculture Financial Services Corporation for loans. I know we already own our own bank in this province, the Alberta Treasury Branches, but how does this fit the philosophy of the government? We are advertising that we have this money to loan not only to farmers but to small businesses. How do the charter banks feel about this set-up, and exactly why are we involved in this?

I can see in specific cases here where we're going to subsidize crop insurance. We're going to have income support programs. We're going to have hay and pasture insurance, hail insurance, waterfowl and wildlife insurance. I can understand that, and I can certainly live with that because what's unique here is the farm community. But why are we all of a sudden branching out with Agriculture Financial Services Corporation for advertising all these loans? If this isn't a subsidy, I don't know what is. I don't know if the charter banks have complained to the ministry about this process or not, but I would be interested in an update for this.

I look at the board of directors of this government company, if we can call it that, and there's a lot of money here. There's all kinds of money in this annual report: how it's spent, where it's spent, if we have a deficit or not. In fact, we had a deficit the previous year of over \$290 million, I believe, but there's a significant budget. Now, how do we set up the boards of directors? I'm sure they're accountable to the minister, but exactly who are these people, and how do they govern themselves whenever we have a board committee membership, an Executive Committee, an Audit Committee, a risk management committee, a Credit Committee, and a Hearing Committee? It just seems to be a circle. I would like to know if there are any governance issues with the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation at this time.

3:10

Certainly, the government has had complaints about the lateness of CAIS payments, and that has been discussed in question period in this House. It's unfortunate that farmers are having to wait so long

for their money, but why was there such a delay in the CAIS payments? I understand the minister had to step in and blow the whistle and read some people the riot act. I commend him for doing that, but I don't think it should have happened in the first place. Also, how much does it cost to process one CAIS claim from the start to the time the cheque to the farmer is in the mailbox at the end of the lane? I would like to know how the administrative costs for the CAIS program compare with other government ministries and other government programs.

Now, the rural development strategy. The government has announced its next step in rural development is focusing on what can be done to aid our small towns. I understand that this is going to be the number one priority, and I believe we're talking about page 135 here. What is the minister's plan to help keep buildings such as schools open in rural communities so that municipalities can maintain their services? Is the ministry working with the ministry of infrastructure to implement the whole idea of community schools?

Certainly, to keep their high school open, the citizens of Sangudo – one parent, to his credit, had to go to court and force the school board up there to halt their closure process. In another town, Bruderheim, the citizens had to work very hard and work collectively to reverse a decision to have a public school remain in their town.

An Hon. Member: What's wrong with Bruderheim?

Mr. MacDonald: There is absolutely nothing the matter with Bruderheim, and the citizens of that community should not have been forced to go to those extraordinary measures to save their schools.

There are certainly in low-enrolment areas, whether they're in the city or in the rural communities, other uses for those facilities. Hopefully, that is going to become part of this government's rural development strategy. Maybe we could deliver health care from some of those structures. There are lots of good ideas. Maybe even for some of the agricultural offices that were closed in 2002, if there's no space, we wouldn't have to lease any space. Maybe we could take one end of a school and convert it into an office so that a farmer doesn't have to travel for two hours and pack a lunch to visit an agricultural office or an adviser. There are a number of things that could be done.

Another issue for a lot of rural communities is the issue of the ambulances, and who's going to pay for the ambulances. What is the ministry doing to help municipalities with the rural development strategy? I know there were big promises made, and it was only going to cost this much to transfer this to the province. In a lot of the rural communities volunteers – and we should be very grateful for their time – provide the ambulance service. People even take time off from work to help with the ambulances when necessary. If we're going to have a rural development strategy, that should be part of it. Exactly how are we going to develop a province-wide ambulance system?

Now, environmentally sustainable agriculture. Certainly, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has some interesting ideas on that.

Getting at this time, Mr. Chairman, to the specific financial questions in regard to the budget, I see on page 142 of the business plan that while farm income support last year certainly was close to a billion dollars, this year it's forecast to be \$800 million, and into the future we're looking at less than \$400 million. Two years into the future we're looking at \$400 million in farm income support. That may be optimistic. I certainly hope that is an assumption, that our border will open with America for live cattle, but what is the

basis for that assumption? That's a significant drop in an expense program for farm income support. How does the minister calculate that?

Now, certainly, debt servicing costs – and that's why it's so important that we have good governance with the Alberta financial services corporation. There is on an annual basis close to \$50 million in debt servicing costs there. Again, we need to have confidence that that corporation is being run well.

Also, while we're there, I would like to talk about the Feeder Associations. It's not long since we in this Assembly had an amendment to deal with the Feeder Associations. How much, if anything, would the Alberta government be on the hook for loan guarantees to the Feeder Associations if the border is not to reopen in July to live cattle? Again, on this feeder cattle program, how is the feeder cattle program working? I assume that these loan guarantees are through the chartered banks. Are the chartered banks or the Feeder Associations satisfied with the current arrangement, or are they starting to get nervous? How is all this working?

Before I cede the floor to another member, in cases of feedlots that go bankrupt and they've been in business for quite some time, who pays for the clean-up costs? Who's on the hook for that? You always hear, particularly down around Lethbridge, you know, the huge volumes of waste that are created as a result of the concentration of livestock. Now, is the groundwater affected? What happens to the neighbourhood around the feedlot? [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired] I hope to continue with this later.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

3:20

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. A whole raft of questions in there. I will try, hon. member, to answer as many of them as I can possibly can. Should I either not get to them or can't answer them, I will certainly get back to you, to any hon. member, with a written response that would include the detail and the answers. We will also review *Hansard*, as many other ministries do, and ensure that we've got the answers to your questions so that you're not left wanting for any of those sorts of things.

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member was talking about good public policy in regard to market concentration. At the outset I thought he was talking about something in the way of market access and concentration of market access with one customer because in my past days in the food industry it was always considered an extremely high risk if you only had one customer for your product, be that Safeway or be it the IGAs or whoever it was, because if that customer all of a sudden delisted you, you were out of business.

So I was thinking about a response in terms of that's why we have stepped up to the plate, prior to the federal government stepping up to the plate, to invest \$30 million with the beef industry through the Canada Beef Export Federation on a 10-year program to diversify those markets and to get ourselves in a position where we are much more diversified in our marketing strategy, which gives us a much stronger footing should something happen in any one of those markets or countries or customers.

But the hon. member went on to talk about market concentration of production. I guess that my comment there is something that I've said to a number of producers and groups and associations around the province. It isn't of terrible concern to me in terms of ownership as long as there are a number of different owners because a number of different owners create a number of different buyers.

Of the groups that are forming today and over the last four or five

years, we've essentially had three major buyers of cattle in the province. We probably will have five major buyers of cattle by the end of this year, and I think that's an extremely positive step for the industry as a whole. It's an extremely positive step from where we were before. I think there's the very good likelihood that by the end of next year we may add two, maybe three more buyers into the marketplace, which means two or three different owners of processing facilities in the province. So I agree that you don't want to concentrate the number of buyers in the province. You want to have a number of different buyers in the province, and we're working towards that goal.

There was another comment, Mr. Chairman, that we had spent billions of dollars on farm programs, but prices remain stagnant. He was talking a little bit about the set-aside program and perhaps a partial reopening of the border. I know at the back side there was also a question about how the set-aside is working, so I'm going to tackle that kind of combined.

Essentially, what I think has happened is that we are learning – and the industry is learning with us – as to how we develop and work the set-aside program. Remember, it's based on a national committee. In Alberta we have the added benefit to our producers of the set-aside with a basis included in that. In other provinces they do not. We're working with our industry and our association to manage the marketplace as best we can by pulling those cattle back from the processors and creating a demand for cattle that may not have been there had we not done anything.

I would say, Mr. Chairman, that overall in the last four to five months the set-aside program has worked rather well because we have stabilized feeder cattle up in that 80-cent range. I know that we had a little drop in that a couple weeks ago, where we dropped down a little bit. That was a combination of factors. In the marketplace you have what we call fundamentals. If you were to look at this type of a regulated marketplace, the fundamentals were pointing to a lowering of the price, so the market actually reacted to what they perceived was going to be the number of cattle coming out of the marketplace before the committee even made their decision.

I think we've rectified that. I think the industry's working toward being more aggressive on setting more cattle aside. I think that as an industry/government partnership it's been working quite well to stabilize those prices. By doing that, Mr. Chairman, when you stabilize the prices of the marketplace, you actually draw animals through the system. You create a market for those cow-calf operators that are out there raising calves this spring, a place for those calves to go. I think that's very, very important when you look at how we're managing the entire situation.

The hon. member talked about the billions of dollars that we have put into the programs. I would point out that at this juncture in May of 2005 the provincial government of Alberta has contributed close to \$3.3 billion to on-farm income through drought and BSE assistance from 2002 to today. Of that \$3.3 billion we've received from the federal government a little over a billion dollars. I think that speaks, Mr. Chairman, to the commitment that this government has set forward to helping our producers in the province. We're basically on a 2 to 1 ratio with the federal government. It would be wonderful for them to step up to the plate a little bit more and help us out with that.

The hon. member also mentioned the protectionist forces in the United States and his concern that we may be going to another presidential election or that the politics of the Americans, if you will, may cause us more delays, as it did a couple of years ago. I think it's certainly a concern. It's a far-out, in terms of time, concern that I think we might look at. But in terms of the idea that the protectionist forces are working against us, I think we have to keep it in

context. We have probably 85 per cent of the farm community in the United States on our side. We have the President of the United States on our side. We have the United States Department of Agriculture on our side. We have the National Cattlemen's Beef Association on our side. We have the American Meat Institute on our side.

We have a large number of people who are realizing that the longer the border stays closed, the more harm comes to the U.S. industry, and the Canadian industry grows stronger. So I think we've got a lot of friends on that side of the border. I think we've got a momentum building now because they're starting to see the damage this is causing them. They're starting to see that the longer they keep their border closed, it may be that the longer the Japanese keep their border closed to them. That, indeed, is something that is of concern to a number of the American producers.

I can talk a lot about when I think the border might open. Really, if you talk to five Washington lawyers, you're going to get five different answers as to when the border's going to open. So it's very, very difficult for anyone and probably even somewhat irresponsible to pick a day and say that that's when the border's going to open. So I'm not about to do that. I can tell you that we're working very, very hard with the Alberta Beef Producers, with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, with the federal government, and with anybody else who has a legitimate chance of achieving some sort of success at moving the ball forward on gaining market access and opening the border and getting that USDA rule as it was put in applied and open.

The hon. member also mentioned something about a relationship between Cargill and Rancher's Beef. You know, I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, but I'm at kind of a loss as to what that relationship might be because, as I understand it, there is no relationship between Cargill and Rancher's Beef. I'm not exactly sure where he's going there. It may be simply some innuendo to try to raise some concern. I don't know. But as far as I know, there is none.

In terms of the Sunterra operation, north of Calgary is the proposed site, in the MD of Rocky View. The hon. member was asking the question as to whether or not there have been grants directly made to that operation. I can say: no, there has not. The MD of Rocky View, like all MDs, has the ability to apply for structural and infrastructure grants through our department. It's open to any other county. It's for one-third of the infrastructure that might go into water, sewer, all those sorts of things. So the MD is actually making that application, and we're supporting the MD in that application.

In terms of funding for other beef packing plants, I think it was about this time in his discussion that he was talking about: what are we doing in that regard? It's interesting that he brings up the Ag Financial Services Corporation a little later on in his discussion, asking why we're doing that. Well, the two of them are combined because we are using the Ag Financial Services, which is a previous amalgamation of the – and the member may actually remember this. I don't know if he was involved at the time that this particular group was around, but it was called the Alberta Opportunity Company. The Alberta Opportunity Company was more or less a lender of last resort in the province for rural Alberta. AOC, as it was known then, has been around for many, many years. It was amalgamated with AFSC, Ag Financial Services Corp., in 2002. The whole methodology around AOC was to provide loans to businesses with higher risks than what the chartered banks would be willing to lend.

3:30

What the amalgamation was and the reason that you'll see those types of lendings in the annual report, which the hon. member has,

is because it allowed for administrative savings and to relocate some program delivery. AFSC is a lender of last resort for small rural businesses in the development of specific sectors in agriculture. Specifically, in the last 18 months they've been doing yeomen's work on adding value to our beef processing industry and, in fact, have involvement in a number of projects which I believe are going to go ahead.

Those projects are developed based on a business plan and a business case. They have presented themselves as doing their homework and showing that they know where their markets are, which is probably the most important and key element in a value-added industry, and AFSC has stepped up to the plate, perhaps where a chartered bank wouldn't. Certainly, when we talk about farmer co-operatives or new generation co-ops, that's an area of lending that the chartered banks are probably a little skittish on right now because it's something new.

We're stepping up to the plate, Mr. Chairman, to help new generation co-ops achieve their dreams of diversifying the value-added beef industry in this province and any other industry, whether it be poultry or the hog industry or, indeed, if we ever had a free market in grains, perhaps we'd have some value-added in the cereals end of things, and we might be able to actually add in something along those lines. I hope AFSC is there to lend to those new generation co-ops just as they are there today to lend to the beef industry.

The hon. member talked about our efforts on BSE and the TSE research. I'm pleased to tell the hon. member that we did indeed this year, out of last year's budget dollars, set aside \$38 million that is to go toward prion research. What we did before that, Mr. Chairman – and this is very important – is that we had the Department of Innovation and Science, the department of agriculture, and the universities that are now currently involved in some of this go through and do an inventory of world research on prions and what's happening in the U.K., what's happening in the United States, what's happening in Europe, and what's happening in Japan, the studies and the research going on there.

The last thing that we wanted to do, just as the hon. member mentioned, is to redo something that somebody else is already doing. Certainly, we want to fit the gap that might be there. Using our experience here that we've gained in BSE research, we wanted to fit that gap and make sure that our dollars went to that and perhaps even attract some of those leading researchers from around the world to come here and complete their research and make us the centre of excellence for research in TSEs. That would include BSE. That would include CWD. I know the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is very interested and concerned about CWD. We want to make sure that we know as much as possible about what is going on around the world.

The hon. member also talked about what the Washington trade office is doing for us. I can tell the hon. member that I've only been to Washington one time as an elected official. I had been to Washington previous to that in my past life in the real world of private enterprise, but going there as an elected official and visiting some of these locales where the Congressmen or the Senators have their offices is a totally different experience because it is a lobbying mecca. It is filled with a river of lobbyists, and we can get lost in that river very, very easily. Having someone on the ground that is representing our interests and knocking on those doors prior to our visit made all the difference in the world.

I was able, Mr. Chairman, to meet with the Senator from Montana, one who we thought was going to be rather opposed to our view of the world. My comment to him was that all politics is local [interjection] – no, I didn't say that, though I was tempted – and that we

understand that he has to play to that particular group that is centred around his state. But it was interesting to note that he also understands the integrated nature of our beef industry. Had it not been for our representative, or our envoy if you want to call him that, on the ground to open those doors, it would be highly unlikely that the minister of agriculture from Alberta, a province which most of those Senators are still trying to find on a map – oh, I'll probably get in trouble for that one – would have got the meeting.

I think the other thing that is extremely important for us is information and intelligence coming out of Washington in terms of what the Congressmen and what the Senators are thinking, where some of these things are going, because Canada as a whole has a whole raft of issues that they're dealing with with the United States. Sometimes our Alberta issues might get lost in the shuffle around that. Obviously, BSE has been at the top of the radar screen from a national level, but having an Alberta representative there to talk specifically about Alberta issues, whether that's BSE, whether that's the forestry industry, which was brought up today in question period, whether that's the oil and gas industry, whether it's pipelines, whether it's, indeed, even goat shipments to California, Mr. Chairman – there are regulatory things that are only dealt with in Washington, and we need to have somebody there.

Quite frankly, it has been extremely valuable for us to have someone that I can pick up the phone as the minister and say: "What's going on with this? What's going on with this Senator? What's going on with this Congressmen?" So I think it's been a very, very prudent move for us to do that. I think we should probably do it with Ottawa as well. That's a personal opinion.

The hon. member was also talking about advertising of AFSC. AFSC does a fair bit of advertising, Mr. Chairman, because many of our programs have deadlines, and one of the problems that we run into is that many people call us and say: well, I didn't know it was a deadline. It's important for us to get the advertising out, and certainly with AFSC being the deliverer of a number of these programs, it's very important that they do spend the time and spend the dollars advertising.

A good example of this is the spring price endorsement premium reduction that we did this spring to help farmers with their input costs and to give them a risk management tool that could potentially save them some grief in the fall. It may not work for all producers, but we should encourage them to do the calculations and see if it would work for them. It was important that AFSC get that out there very, very quickly because we had a three-week window.

Even I saw in my local community papers a number of advertisements from AFSC talking to producers to make sure that they got their election in on their crop insurance, to make sure that they contacted the office to find out if it was right for them. Certainly, if we have some business enterprises that may be looking at a lender of last resort, like AFSC is, we want them to know that we're there. If we have a new gen co-op that wants to present a business plan, we want them to know where to go to present that business plan and to see what may be an outlet for them to see their dream become reality.

The hon. member also talked about slow CAIS payments. I see my time is drawing short, Mr. Chairman, so perhaps we'll be able to get a little bit more into this after the next set of questions.

The hon. member is very, very correct. We did have some issues with slow CAIS payments. I don't think that the minister used any kind of coercion or any kind of – I forget what the hon. member's comment was about stepping into it to make it happen. I think I have an excellent team of advisors and executives that run AFSC and a huge commitment on behalf of the staff of AFSC to make CAIS work and also a huge commitment on their behalf to support

the ag industry because they are intimately aware of what's going on out in the country. They knew they had to get things going faster. They knew that they needed to do some things to get those dollars out there in a very, very quick fashion.

I'm very, very pleased to say that, yeah, while I may be a part of the team, it is a team effort, and they did a wonderful job in getting close to \$300 million out in probably a two-week period to producers who needed it for spring seeding this year to help offset input costs. I think that is a miraculous achievement given the complexity of the program, given the volume of the applications and the complexity of the applications, that have to be audited and verified. That's part of accountability, which I'm sure the hon. member would want us to have in the department and in the program. Certainly, the Auditor General looks at those things. So we have to be very aware of the time that it takes for each of those applications.

Perhaps I'll get some more time later, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

3:40

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one quick question about the budget, and then I'll make some comments in some of the same areas that have been covered but with a slightly different perspective.

I noticed that in the industry development program I believe there was a \$17 million drop in agrifood investment. Specifically, processing investment is being dropped. I'm sort of interested in why there was that \$17 million drop. The minister, I think, was talking about the need for diversification in rural Alberta. It seems to me that that would be a major initiative, but there seems to be a drop. There may be a legitimate reason for it, but I'd be interested in the minister's comments.

The second area, though, I want to go into in a general discussion with the minister because it's been raised with us. It's about crop insurance. Some farmers are telling us that they're concerned about crop insurance. I'd like to lay out their concern and see if the minister has some comments about it.

As the minister is well aware, production insurance pays when a farmer's harvested yield falls below their protection guarantee, or their coverage. Payments for yield shortfalls are based on spring insurance policies, which are established in January so they are available when producers are making their insurance decisions. These prices are a forecast of the average market for the upcoming year. I believe for this year there were some adjustments, as I recollect, on that. The minister could maybe fill me in as a press release maybe came across my desk.

The concern that they have about this form of insurance is this: they say that there are a couple of problems. Number one, distributing funds on average yields can cause problems. We spoke with a farmer from Mannville. A couple of years ago his crops were nil. In fact, he didn't even bother combining due to the drought. Because insurance is based on yields over a five-year average, one very bad year pulled his average yield so that he must have a very rotten year in order to get adequate funding. In other words, he seems to feel that there's a better way to do it than over that five-year average. If you have that sort of year, according to him, that creates that sort of a problem.

Then the farmers went on to say that per-acre funding is not always equitable. Larger farmers have economies of scale at work, and the cost for a large farmer to, say, increase their production by one acre is less than for the smaller farmer, yet the smaller farmer and the larger farmer are both compensated the same per acre through this crop insurance system. Increasingly, small farmers are

finding it difficult to compete. So I guess they're asking if there is not a better way than the per-acre funding.

Another question. I think I probably know the answer to this because they treat it as an insurance policy. The question was asked: why can't farmers get 100 per cent coverage on their crop insurance? Currently farmers can only get 80 per cent maximum coverage. They point out that if a farmer's crops fail completely, they can only get 80 per cent of their five-year average back. It's like a 20 per cent deductible. The question this particular farmer was asking was: why can't farmers pay the extra money to get the extra coverage? I take it that the answer is that it's probably like an insurance policy. It's a 20 per cent deductible. But his point would be: why can't it be offered that they could participate even if they paid more in their payments? So I'd like the minister's thoughts about that if I could, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to try to get a handle on the CAIS program because there have been some questions asked in the Legislature here, and there have been some press releases that the minister has put out. I think he's acknowledged it. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talked about payments, and I didn't quite hear whether they were up to date now or not. I know that they were behind.

The other thing about the CAIS program. The minister has indicated that he believes that at least the concept is a good idea. As I recollect from a March 9 press release, "Provincial and federal governments have agreed for the need to revisit the . . . CAIS program," and they'll be working "with industry to develop alternatives for the deposit requirement." I don't recollect seeing these details. Perhaps I've missed them, but the details on this were to come through by March 31.

The other thing that I alluded to: the 9,000 outstanding claims were to be done, I believe, by the end of last month. Have all those claims been handled?

The third thing about CAIS that I want to come back to: has the minister met with the other ministers of agriculture to look at this program, as they said they would do? What has come out of that to make it a program that is better? I think one of the complaints I've heard about the CAIS program is similar to the crop insurance, that if you have the five years – and we've had so many years in agriculture, whether it be BSE or drought in the grain sector or whatever – the amount of money that they can get keeps going down. I wondered if that's one of the things that they're looking at. If the minister can update us on that.

Mr. Chairman, just to move from CAIS back to BSE, I'm sure not our favourite topic because of the devastation, I notice that this year's budget has trimmed \$622 million from last year's budget that was earmarked for BSE relief. The funding at that time, I understand, was one-time disaster funding, but we're still having the same problems. I wondered if the minister sees that the budget is enough, or are we going to have to revisit this? I know it depends on, partly, when the American border opens. But if the minister can give us his best analysis of that.

Mr. Chairman, I'd be remiss if I didn't, from question period, talk about the Conservative Party of Canada. As the minister is well aware, they went after the federal Liberals and said that they wanted to get intervenor status whenever R-CALF came back to court, and they accused the Liberals – apparently, the Liberal government had attempted to get intervenor status and was turned down. That's my understanding. I think they quote in there that they're too timid and all sorts of things. Well, as I said, if their kissing cousins thought the federal Liberals were too timid, perhaps they thought the same about us.

I know the minister said that we prefer to work with them, but sometimes you need the stick too. It seems to me that if the federal

Conservatives are applying for intervenor status – and I say: good for them – then perhaps the provincial government should do it too to add a little more clout. I would hope that they might revisit that because I think the minister said – and I agree – that a lot of this is politics. We understand that. But it's politics to show strength there too. Whether it's a court case or not, the minister would admit that it was politics that led to the court case, so the more strength we can show in dealing with the R-CALF group, I think it's important to do. I would just say that the same criticism could be leveled here as the federal Conservatives are leveling at the federal Liberals.

3:50

The other point I'd make – and the minister has alluded to it – is that we have to increase slaughter capacity. I know that he said that there are more groups coming on, and that's probably true, but there are still three or four major players here. If I look at a CanFax report, they're still doing very well, getting that cattle cheaply from the farmers. Their profits are booming up to where they were a year or so ago. So we have this problem.

The minister back in one of the releases also talked about, I think it was, \$30 million, \$32 million to look at marketing in other parts of the world than the United States. I think that's great. I think we have to do that. Many people, many cattle producers are telling me that in some ways maybe this has been a wake-up call about the American border. We had too many of our eggs in one basket. Maybe this will help us diversify our marketing strategy and get into some other markets.

That, I think, means that we're going to have to change some things here. I don't know why the government is so reluctant to move to the testing of animals 30 months and over and perhaps deal with – I don't know if it's a safety factor or not; I don't pretend to be a scientist – the prion testing of animals prior to slaughter. I think we're going to have to begin to do these things. We can say that the science does not advocate that we have to do all this, but if the opinion – and it's starting to happen in Canada – around the world is that they want this, then the reality is that we're going to have to do it.

The minister shakes his head, but that's what the European common market and others are doing. We don't believe that it would be that expensive. I think that's one of the ways, I say with all due respect to the minister, that we're going to have to move if we want to increase markets around the world. I think that's going to happen, whether we like it or not.

I know the point that you want to make is that the science here, we think, is solid. The minister has said that. But perception is everything, Mr. Minister, and if people don't believe that and because of the things that the Americans are doing to us – and it's around the world – I'm saying that we should do everything possible. Two things: increase our slaughter capacity, and whether people believe the science or not, let's do things differently with prions and the testing of animals if we have to do it. That's what I'm saying. I think that's going to come, Mr. Minister, whether we like it or not.

Tying into that, I wonder why – and the minister said that he'd have something to say about this – the government hasn't been more supportive of 600 and some farmers who want to do a co-op in the Peace River, the Tender Beef Co-op. They're prepared to be far more rigorous. They say that a hundred per cent of their animals will be tested prior to slaughter, that the animals would be raised without hormones, and that they'd have a private lab. They think they can do it. They think they can get markets, especially in Europe, Germany, and places like that, if they do these sorts of things. I guess I would say to the minister that I would be encourag-

ing them, if economically they can do this, to begin to do this. Talking to them, there would be a lot of very positive environmental things flowing from this. But there seems to be some sort of hiccup here with the provincial government. I know it wasn't in this minister's time, but I don't know what the problem is, why we would not be encouraging here increased slaughter capacity plus doing things a little differently, that may lead us to those markets.

Mr. Chairman, I always lose track of time here. I think I have a few minutes left. I'd like to just talk a bit about the Wheat Board. I quote from the minister – well, not the minister but the throne speech, but he probably had something to say about it. The throne speech said:

We will work to strengthen this vital sector by continuing to advocate for marketing choice for wheat and barley. The global marketplace is demanding that we move to a more competitive marketing system. Alberta will push for a new business model for the Canadian Wheat Board, one with market choice, so that Alberta farmers can be more competitive in the value-added market.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's foolish in the extreme for farmers to think that just because you have a computer now, you can somehow beat the Cargills of the world in the open market. But saying that as it is, the Wheat Board, it's my understanding – and the minister would be well aware of this – is trying to adapt to this new reality. When they were here meeting with the Wheat Board – I think they had a meeting with the minister. No. I guess it was cancelled. But I did meet with them.

What they are doing, it seems to me, is taking advice from the Speech from the Throne. Last year 3 million tonnes were sold in outside sales, the highest tonnage ever. Selling that makes sense. They now have an option to sell on their own. Like a mortgage there's a variable rate or a three-year fixed price for farmers who want to sell on their own. So they're moving in the directions somewhat that the Speech from the Throne talked about. This new crop year there's going to be another option: daily cash prices. Farmers can sell in the U.S. I suppose this is like the stock market. They can gamble on the daily price on the U.S. market if they want to. So it seems to me that the Wheat Board is attempting to adapt to some of the criticisms that this government has been promoting.

I believe that there's a reason we got into the single-desk selling many years ago. I think it's foolish in the extreme to say that most farmers would benefit if you didn't have a Canadian Wheat Board. Certainly, it would be an advantage if you're closer to the border. It's certainly not going to be an advantage to people in the Peace River or in northern Alberta.

I'd think that the fact that they're attempting to adapt, to let farmers play in the open market – that's what I'm told that they wanted – would make this minister happy and this government happy, but it seems that they're not happy unless they dismantle the whole thing. That's not going to happen in the other provinces because the other two prairie provinces want to keep the Wheat Board.

So we can keep arguing this time and time again, but there is some encouragement here to do this. As I say, I don't know if the minister has met with them recently or not, but I make the case that they've moved some way in this, in what the government wanted, and there should be some encouragement rather than continually haranguing the Wheat Board. Remember that they run in elections, just like we do, and the farmers that believe in the Wheat Board keep getting elected. [interjection] Well, I mean, I could say the same thing. I don't like all the Conservatives that get elected in rural Alberta, but the fact remains that this election is just as democratic as elections where we get elected. The minister shakes his head. Well, you know, you're not talking to the same farmers that I'm talking to then.

Let me just conclude. Yeah, it's nice that we try to do it, and I'd certainly agree that we try to do as much rural development as we can in small towns. But there are towns, and then there are really small towns. There's a very big difference between a place like Wainwright or St. Paul and a place like where I grew up, a place called Delia, and the rest of it. It's changing. I'm saying that we can do all the world development we want, but if we don't get a handle on the agriculture problem, if the farms keep getting bigger and bigger, all that will be left will be collective farms and corporate farms – I'm not saying that we're there yet – and the rural way of life down the way will be dead. Now, we can argue about how we go about doing that, but I tell you, there's a deep concern, when I go around rural Alberta, about their future, and I think the minister is well aware of that.

So I'm probably close to my time. [Mr. Martin's speaking time expired] Hey, how's that? Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4:00

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Where to begin? I would love to begin at the end with the Canadian Wheat Board, but I'm going to save that.

The hon. member mentioned the difference in the budget in industry development funding levels, the drop. In the last quarter of last year's budget we did put out \$7.1 million in the beef product and development program, \$7 million for precommercialization for specific risk material, the SRM material. We want to find new homes for that, new products, and perhaps add some value to something that used to have value that no longer has value. So we committed some dollars for that.

We also put out some dollars for the other ruminants. You know, we talk a lot about BSE, we talk a lot about beef in agriculture these days, but our industry is everything from fish farming to poultry to turkeys to, as I mentioned earlier, goats to California. So we did also announce a program of not only a per-head payment on other ruminants, which I believe the feds have finally contributed their portion to, but we seem to have to put our money out there to shame them to do that every once in a while, as we did on the \$30 million. They came to the table on that. The \$17 million drop that you see was actually because it was added in in this calendar year but in the last quarter of the last budget, so there was no necessity to put that in. We want to make sure that those programs are off and running and going before we do some difference there. So I hope that answers the hon. member's question in that regard.

With regard to the crop insurance, you know, as long as I've been in the cereals industry, we've had issues with crop insurance in terms of how we do the adjustments. We have some very dedicated folks out in the country that are going out there and doing the adjustments and trying to be fair, trying to do the right thing for the producers, and sometimes one producer may not agree with what the adjuster is saying.

The idea that one bad year in five is going to put you into that one bad year category: I think I'd like to get a little more information from that particular producer that you talked to because I think there are maybe some facts there that we're missing. As you know and are aware, as MLAs we sometimes get one side but not the other side, and maybe there's a little more information there. So I'd really be interested if the hon. member would like to get that gentleman to come talk to me. I'm sure we could probably help him out in that regard.

We did a number of things, though, this year with crop insurance. I mentioned briefly the spring price endorsement with the revenue

insurance component. We dropped the producer cost of that to 40 per cent. Now, there are a number of areas in the province where producers don't take the spring price endorsement or the spring price endorsement as set by the actuarials. This leads to a question that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar had talked about: how do we set these things?

Well, you know, we do the best we can in terms of forecasting. The third-party insurance that comes with this does the best to figure out what the premiums are going to be, what the actuarial costs will be. Then setting those dollars and those targets for those dollars in the spring price endorsement becomes a bit of a crystal ball type issue. But for the producers who look at the spring price endorsement, do the calculations, they may find that there's a huge benefit there or a huge comfort there for them to take that particular piece of insurance.

In terms of the principal insurance or the basic crop insurance, some of the other things that we did this spring, the hon. member will remember that last year we had a fairly significant number of snowed-under crops up in the north country and in some other areas. We've made some adjustments as to how we were paying out on those snowed-under crops. Again, the intent was to get some dollars into those producers' hands so that they have some hope that this spring they can put a crop in, that they can cover some of the high input costs that we're experiencing right now, that they can actually take off that crop in whatever shape it may be. We're experiencing some difficulties with some wildlife damage up there in the north country right now that we're trying to address. Certainly, the Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace has talked to me about that as well as from Peace River. I think there are some things we may be able to do on that basis.

The other comment that I caught from the hon. member was per-acre funding, the per-acre funding in terms of an ad hoc payment. I wanted to just touch on this idea of ad hoc payments. The billion dollars that was recently put out by the federal government, albeit welcome news – we do welcome the federal government's contribution whenever they would like to send some money our way to our producers' hands. Even with that, as I mentioned earlier, we're still at a 2 to 1 to them in terms of putting dollars in producers' pockets. It was kind of on an ad hoc basis. I was given very, very short notice, as were the other ministers of agriculture across Canada. One can imagine the joy that they felt at waking up in the morning to an announcement that they knew nothing about, and I think it was expressed in a press release that went out shortly thereafter.

I think ad hoc payments are the way of the past. They're not the way of the future. What we need to do is develop a program, a risk management program for our producers to do exactly what the hon. member is talking about. Let's make the family farm, however big that family farm may be, as sustainable in the long term as we possibly can.

I guess that when you talk about the 80 per cent crop insurance coverage, there is a deductible amount there that we want to maintain. There are other things around crop insurance. The hon. member talked about small farm versus large farm per-acre payments. That's why we are so keen on CAIS. CAIS has to be the backstop for every producer in the province. It has to be the thing that is going to cover you whether you're an elk rancher, whether you're a hog producer, whether you're a poultry guy, whether you're in canola or flax or wheat or barley. It doesn't matter. What we want to get to is a point in time when we have a program that is risk management based, that the producer is participating in, that he sees the value in the program, and that all of the producers in this province, all 54,000 farm units, are involved in CAIS. That's their backstop. That's what they need to have the comfort in that they can be around next year.

That kind of leads me into the next comment that the hon. member made: where are we going with CAIS? There are four issues with CAIS that we have heard and that I know hon. members of this House have heard as well. One is the complexity of CAIS: the complexity of the application, the complexity of the program as it was developed. Another issue is the inventory, the valuations, how that's managed, how it's taken through the application process. The third thing is – and the hon. member mentioned it – the five-year rolling average. When you had four bad years, you just rolled your average down to a nonproductive or nonviable situation. So how do we address that? Quite frankly, the fourth issue that we have to address – the member asked if we had met as ministers of agriculture across Canada, and the answer is yes – pertains to that, and that's sustainability of the program, affordability.

In Alberta we're blessed in the sense that we have the ability to cover our 40 per cent of what have been some fairly dramatic years. I mentioned the dollars. You know, we've been able to push those out through CAIS. I mentioned the dollars that we've pushed out most recently. In other provinces they are not so blessed, and they are having a great deal of difficulty given the fact that not only Alberta, but Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia have all had four disastrous years. CAIS was not exactly set up to be a disaster program. It was set up to be a farm risk management program.

What we have done in Alberta is we are leading the charge, so to speak, in terms of talking to the other provinces and suggesting some solutions to these. We've had consultations with the industry. We are currently setting up a consultation with industry again, with the industry groups. The hon. member may recall that I had an industry group round-table in January. We had some 38 or so industry associations from around the province, as I said, everything from the fish farmers to the canola growers. It was an extremely worthwhile and productive session, that gave us some ideas as to where to go outside of the cloud of BSE.

We're bringing that group back together again, and we're going to present to them our ideas as to how we see that we can make CAIS less complex, that we can make it affordable in the long term, that we can make it responsive to the producers' needs, that we can have a disaster component to it that will allow for these perfect storm years like we've had and thereby keep that reference margin in a reasonable manner that will be a backstop to every producer in the province that he can count on. We believe that we'll be able to do that and present that to the other ministers this July.

We are fortunate that Alberta is hosting the federal/provincial/territorial ministers' meetings in July of this year. The timing is very, very good. We have a great staff, as I've said before, that has been working on this for the last three or four months, and I think we've made excellent headway. We've had some very good input from some producer groups so far. We're going to be, as I said, bringing it forward and making sure that we involve the industry in what we're doing, although I think the industry is already there, hon. member. I think they have already come forward with some ideas, that we're all kind of on the same page right now.

4:10

Certainly, in terms of the 9,000 claims, I'll get maybe a little bit to some of the specifics. There were 9,000 claims that were of a smaller dollar value. When I say smaller, we're probably talking about under \$50,000, which is no small change. There were a lot of them there that we needed to get out quickly, so we did. There are some that will still require some extra information.

Talking about the complexity of the program: if you've had a farm operation that has grown three times in the last six years and you're

trying to develop a program to try to give a risk management backstop for that type of an operation, how do you take into account that the farm has grown three times in six years? How do you manage the tax information, the revenue information, and all those other sorts of things? There has to be a certain amount of complexity in whatever program you're going to develop.

After all, we are talking about 54,000 small businesses in this province. Some of them are large businesses, but for the most part they're small businesses. We have to educate our producer groups that they need to look at it as a small business in a lot of ways because that will fit in with the complexity or with the risk management decisions that they have to make. Most of them, Mr. Chairman, are very, very knowledgeable about their business. They're very, very knowledgeable about the marketing of their product. They're very, very knowledgeable about how to produce probably the best product in the world.

The hon. member talked about intervenor status and the Conservative caucus applying for intervenor status. I did receive a letter from the Alberta Alliance Party. I believe it was from their Justice critic, as I recall. One of the things that the letter said was that the Alberta Beef Producers and I think it was the CCA have all applied for intervenor status, and why aren't we? That's wrong. It's just blatantly wrong.

The ABP has filed an amicus brief, and we are supplying information to that amicus brief. We are working with the Alberta Beef Producers very, very closely. I meet with them probably at least every two weeks, if not at least once a month, dependent upon what's going on. As a matter of fact, we called an emergency meeting before the red meat reception to discuss the set-aside program, as we talked about. We wanted to encourage them to be a little more aggressive. That's part of the industry consultation that we do along with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. Dennis Laycraft and Darcy Davis and I have each other's cell numbers on our BlackBerrys and call each other fairly often.

It's important to note that the intervenor status in Judge Cebull's courtroom is about as relevant as the ruling that he gave us on March 2. He's not going to give anybody that he doesn't want to intervenor status. He's just not. He's probably written the most prejudicial judicial ruling that I've seen ever, and a number of my colleagues who are in the legal profession look at it and shake their heads.

That tells me that our chances of success are not in his courtroom. Our chances of success are in the appeal court, where we can win an appeal and lift that injunction and show him, by way of an appeal court, that he made an error in his judgment. That's where, hon. member, we're going to put our resources because that's where we can win, and I think others in the industry – ABP, CCA, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the American Meat Institute, all of those industry allies that we have – would agree with that.

You mentioned, hon. member, politics. There's good politics and there's bad politics. My concern would be: how would it be viewed, a foreign government becoming involved as an intervenor in that courtroom? Certainly, by Judge Cebull it would be viewed very, very negatively, and I think that was the general consensus that we came to in our discussions with industry. Has the Conservative caucus or the Conservative group that is pushing ahead talked to the CCA and ABP about this? I don't know. I've not had discussions with them on that regard. Is there something that I would say that they shouldn't do? No. I look for all the help anywhere that it comes. But I think that from our perspective, working as a team with our Alberta industry, it's not something that we were asked to do, nor is it something that we think would have positive benefits.

Slaughter capacity, profitability of slaughter plants. You mentioned that this should be a wake-up call on market dependence. I

agree a hundred per cent with the hon. member on that remark and have used it numerous times in my discussions with other industries: take a look at your market dependency. I mentioned at the outset, when I was responding to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, the example of having only Safeway as your customer. If you have a market dependency on one client, I hope your relationship with that client is extremely close.

It behooves every business, regardless of what industry they're in, to ensure that they have a backup plan or that they have a diversity of market choice to be able to survive in the event – it could be something as catastrophic as a border closure. It could be something as catastrophic as your largest client going bankrupt. There are numerous things that can happen when you're in industry or when you're in business.

The 100 per cent testing question. The hon. member may or may not have heard my comments with respect to 100 per cent testing. I'm going to try to get this out in the short time that I have, which means that I'm going to have to come back to you on the CWB and a few other things. On 100 per cent testing I have yet to have a government confirm to us that if we do 100 per cent testing, they will open their market to our product, full stop. I have yet to see a letter from a customer that says that regardless of what their government says, they will buy product that is 100 per cent tested, full stop. Not seen it.

The other thing that has to be considered, and many marketing experts probably are looking at this more closely than some of the proponents of a slaughter plant, is that there is a potential here to damage the marketability of product here at home by a perception – as the hon. member mentioned, perception is very important – that our beef is somehow not safe. There are, certainly, discussions in the Alberta beef producers' circles and the Canadian cattlemen's circles that we have to be very, very, very careful about the risk of ruining our own market based on a perception that it's not safe because we say that another country says that it's not safe, and therefore we must 100 per cent test.

I think it's an important point that if you can find a country that'll open, in writing, if we 100 per cent test, if you can find a customer that's willing to buy regardless of what their country of origin or country of destination says, if you can satisfy your domestic market with, "Don't worry; we don't test yours, but we're testing theirs just for market access," and you don't lose demand on this side, then, hon. member, I probably would support that, but none of those conditions have been met.

The other thing I'll say very, very quickly on beef packing plants, and I've said it before a number of times. If a beef packing plant comes to me and says, "We are going to have the greatest product, that nobody else can do, we can do it better, we're going to have a hundred per cent organic, and we're going to have all of these other things" – any idiot can build a slaughter plant. It's not a hard thing to do. It's not a hard thing to write a cheque and have an engineer or somebody come in and build you a plant. It's what you do after that that is going to gauge whether you're successful or whether you're going to go down the tubes in a hurry. If you do not have a client or a market that's already identified that you will have easy access to, you're going to have two years of total problems because you're going to have a whole bunch of beef backing up, or you're going to have a whole bunch of cash-flow problems, with working capital tied up because you won't have the marketplace.

It's very important, it's very critical that that happen. Many of the business plans that I have seen in the last five months – it's hard to believe I've only been doing this for five months – have lacked severely in their marketing effort on the business plan side of it. Of the 30 some odd proposals that were on my desk in January, my

guess is that they're probably down to about 10 that have a serious chance to move forward. If they have the market, if they have the location, if they have the material supply and access to that supply, if they have the working capital, they're probably going to be a business that anyone will finance or anyone will buy into. It isn't a matter of me making that decision; it's a matter of the marketplace making that decision. Hon. member, if they don't have customers, they're not going to sell anything, and I'm not going to wear that. I've been very, very up front with many of these processors who have come to the government to talk to us about those sorts of things.

Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op. I've never said no to meeting with them. They think they can get a marketplace . . . [Mr. Horner's speaking time expired] Well, I can add to that later.

4:20

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly an engaging discussion this afternoon, and as the minister said: where to start? Whether we keep going on BSE, I'm not sure. I'll probably just hit a few subjects, and then we'll go back so that I don't miss any and run out of time at the end.

Just a short, quick start on irrigation. I'm not sure – and I didn't have my research team because I haven't got enough funding yet for one – but we used to have the policy that 25 years had to pass before you could upgrade a canal or something that had received funding from the province. Technology has really jumped ahead a long ways, and there are irrigation districts that want to rehabilitate different facilities that aren't as efficient as they should be, but because they've been inside this 25-year period, they don't qualify. I think that's an area that we really need to readdress because water, as your side has said so many times, is blue gold, is valuable, and technology now allows us to upgrade and put in these pipelines that 25 years ago just weren't feasible. So I'd appreciate it if the minister would look into that and perhaps be a little bit more lax on these irrigation districts that want to upgrade different legs of their irrigation to the newer technology.

I also want to urge them to continue pushing hard to store more water. It's an area that's very critical.

I want to touch on crop insurance for just a few minutes, and maybe I'll start with the spring price endorsement program. From those producers that I've talked to – we're at a very low period right now on the pricing of our commodity – most of them see that as, you know: what are the chances of it going down another 20 per cent and getting a payout? Perhaps the government would look at putting a price reduction or a coverage in another area that would truly help the producers where they need to buy the coverage. Yet there is no ad hoc program to help them on the bare purchase of the insurance, only on the price endorsement. I've had a few that are concerned about that.

It's been mentioned by the minister, for both Dunvegan and Peace River – and I'll also reiterate it – that fecal contamination from the wildlife is a problem. I hope and urge you to continue to try and come up with an answer for that.

Also, the amount of crop that has been snowed under. We still seem to have the policy that until it's processed in the spring, we're not going to do anything. We have enough of a track record that we should be able to at least give a 50 per cent payout or something to assist these farmers that have got a double whammy by not being able to get their products in. [interjection] Super.

Another complaint that I've received, especially from the start-up farmers, is that you have to have a track record to get full payment

in crop insurance. Another problem that they have is that it seems like every time a program comes out, it's based differently – on who owns the land, on who's renting the land – and it's always changing. If we had a system and a policy that was in place, whether it was saying that the money always goes to the landowner, then the renters could always put it in their contract that any money received by the landowner would go through to the renter.

Because the programs always change, the renters are changing to try and think: well, last time it was given out on this basis, so we'll put that in our contract. Then the next time it's switched to something else. Rather than the landowner, it might be the renter, and it's always flip-flopping back and forth. Very difficult to know how it's coming out. I'd urge the government to have a set program, whether it's on land ownership or whatever it is, so that the renting farmers and those that are taking over from their elders, who are maybe stepping to the side, know how it's going to be implemented every time and put it into their contracts. They always seem to get missed when the supplement money comes out.

Just to touch on CAIS for a few minutes. You referred to a few things, and complexity is definitely a problem, but two other ones I've come across. In the purebred industry advertising is a huge part of their costs, and especially in tough times like this, how do they get the message out, especially when that cost, which sometimes is one of their biggest expenses as a purebred breeder, isn't allowed in the CAIS program? It's very difficult for them to work on that.

Another one is major capital costs. In farming today the price of a combine is \$200,000, \$300,000. When something happens or they need to upgrade, it's a huge cost. Yet, again, that's not taken into CAIS. It's over too long a period of time. It can really affect their bottom line, so we need to look at capital costs.

I guess the other thing that I'd urge on that is that with the \$300 million that has finally come out, that's great, but we've got to come up with a better program somehow so that it doesn't take 18 months to get out to these producers. No business can stay in business waiting 18 months for their insurance money or their support, if you want to call it that. It's brutal on an industry that's already been devastated because of problems. We need to be able to address it quicker and to facilitate those farmers in getting out there.

I'm sorry that the minister didn't get to address the Wheat Board for a few minutes. I was looking forward to that.

Mr. Horner: I'm coming to that.

Mr. Hinman: Well, I wanted to hear your response so I could adjust. [interjection] Well, I've got to bring up different points, you know, get him steered in the right direction: to the left, to the right, from the right to the left. We've got to steer him down the road.

Choice of marketing has been a problem in western Canada since the Wheat Board was implemented. For those who are wondering about the implementation, it came in in the '30s. I guess it was earlier. Because there were no markets available, it did serve a purpose. It was originally supposed to have a five-year grandfather clause. I think that any time programs come in, we need to put in grandfather clauses so that they don't become permanent. Programs are not the answer to supporting our industries, but when we're hit and we're devastated, like with BSE, perhaps a grandfather clause to get us through is an important thing.

The Wheat Board is very damaging to value-added products. We've got to do something. If in no other area, we have to fight . . . [interjection] He's a very small minority.

Mr. Martin: Not in northern Alberta.

Mr. Hinman: Well, the choice is what's important.

When it comes to value-added products, that's one area where we surely can stand up to Ottawa and get value-added products taken out of the Wheat Board and allow some innovation and some farm corporations, small entities to get up and process their product and be able to move it out. So I'd urge that that's one area we can certainly fight on and put a mandate out to the farmers that choice is very important. I was very pleased to hear that Saskatchewan today ruled in favour of those farmers. It was a sad day when we jailed our own farmers. We might as well be in Russia, jailing farmers for wanting to sell their produce.

Switching over, I guess we'll start talking a little bit about BSE. There's no question that the bottleneck is the packing industry. We can make all of the other comments we want on whether we have foreign markets, what the standards are, or anything else. The bottleneck and the problem is the packing plants. We need to address that. Those packing plants have been brutal on the producers. They've taken every dollar, practically, that the governments have put out straight into their pocket by price reduction. As soon as the money is put out there, we see the dollar drop on what they'll bid every time. The government has got to step in and do something about that, but I don't know how you do it because we've got two years of billions of dollars being sucked out of the industry to the profitability of these major foreign corporations, that have benefited the best or the most from that.

I'm very, very concerned – and so are many of the producers I've talked to – about waiting for the border to open. They have chronic wasting disease down in the States in their wildlife. We all know and the world knows that if that's there, BSE has got to be there. Because they've been covering up for so long and they're so good at it, it doesn't mean that it's going to continue. The people that I've talked to are very concerned that the day the border will open, it will be because the U.S. is ready to announce that they have BSE, and we're going to be locked into a market that we can't export to.

I would really encourage this government, when they talk about developing new product processing and servicing and facilitating capital investment and developing networks and facilitating market access, to take that \$30 million – and I'd like to know where that's going to and what we're doing because we don't have packing plants, to my understanding. Those U.S. packing plants know where they want to market the beef, so what other markets are we looking at when we don't even have packing plants that are willing to sell there? I'd like a better understanding of what that might entail, what markets and access we're looking for when we don't have our own packing plants to direct in those areas. Anyway, if we don't have our own packing plants, we're going to be hooped again in part of a system that we can't get out of, and that's a deep concern for the producers that I've talked to and who are looking at that.

4:30

I guess to go on a little bit more about packing plants. In Alberta we're very innovative. We reduce the royalties, the taxes, and we understand the benefit of the capital investment that's going into the oil industry. I don't understand why we haven't been innovative in the farming and specifically in the ranching industry when it comes to this.

Some new ideas that I've heard just in the last few weeks – I guess I'll start with the first one. There are many cattle producers that want to be involved with these co-ops, and they have a great deal of faith that they can make it work. Many times we seem to fall back on the fact that we don't have contracts, we don't have areas that we can sell this beef to, so how could we possibly build these packing plants and possibly lose it? The demand for our beef is here, no

different than the golf courses. There have been many, many golf courses built in the province. Many have gone under, but I don't know of too many that haven't been snapped back up and are still being used. I believe that the packing industry would be the same. If we were to have thrown some money at it, and heaven forbid it was bad money, and the packing plant went under, the facility would still be there.

Many irrigation farmers have four pumps that they need in order to keep their irrigation up during the high-stress period. They buy a fifth pump hoping to never have to use it. I don't think it would be the worst thing in the world for Alberta to have some extra packing facilities here to process the beef. I really believe, because of the new state-of-the-art technology, we could be drawing beef in from the U.S. if, in fact, we were to have the new packing plants, if we were to look at having the value-added, no different than what we're looking at in health care and education. We can be state of the art. We can be the centre and be bringing in and processing other people's raw products rather than saying that we have nowhere to go on it.

I've talked about it in the past, whether you want to call it angel investment or something else. It's time that Alberta stands up to Ottawa and says: enough is enough; we're not going to have you rule on everything that we want to do. Taxes are a major problem that we seem to be constantly fighting. I want to, I guess, jump back to farming and crop insurance. We need to reduce our taxes on the input costs for the grain farmers, the producers, whether that's on the fuel, the fertilizer, the machinery dealers, the production. We need to fight. We understand here in Alberta the benefit of low taxes. We really need to fight in agriculture to reduce those burdensome taxes on our inputs, especially at this time when things are so tough.

We need to do that, though, with the packing facilities. There's got to be ways that we can step forward and allow the capital investment to go into these facilities. It's critical, and if we don't do it, I just don't see a future for the Alberta beef industry if, in fact, we don't have the packing facilities here. It's all about value added. We know it. We understand it. You have your 2010. The best way to reach that is with packing plants. That's the highest return and our biggest industry. We need to put the money there, and I don't think Albertans will be too upset if, in fact, a few hundred million dollars, let alone the billions of dollars, wasn't hit the best on that packing industry.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: this is a tsunami. It's gone across the province. It's gone across the country. We need to build the facility. It won't be perfect, it's not the best, but we have to do it. We need to do it now. We can't say that the border is going to open in July, and we'll be connected to them. We need the value-added here in Alberta.

Another area where producers are frustrated. We believe in being free enterprise here in Alberta. I've talked to many, many producers that are upset with the check-off price that they get caught on selling their animals. Some animals get a check-off as high as five times before they get to the market. There are many producers that are more upset with the check-off and having to be part of ABP than they are with the Wheat Board at this current time.

I feel that we have to have a volunteer association. This has outgrown itself, like many organizations have. Once they have complete power and control, it's very difficult to break that. A volunteer association would be great, but if we can't have that, then we need to be able to look at directing those fees somewhere – we're getting some actual communications. Yes? No? May be possible? There are many farmers and ranchers that would love to be part of those co-ops, but because of their situation they can't raise the capital. If, in fact, some plants were put up and people could sign

into those co-ops saying, "I want my check-off to go to pay for that" – another head shake, a negative one at that, sorry to say.

They need to have a choice. This iron grip that the ABP has on their check-off is not appreciated industry-wide. They could also put it into a support fund. There needs to be something there other than this \$21 million just going to a group of individuals that have the right to decide how and where it's spent. I realize that the government is very close to them, but not all the producers are as close to the ABP as the government is and would like, I guess, to get rid of that.

Ralph Thrall, a very well-known, profitable rancher, two years ago said that the most important and best thing we could have done was to buy the packing plants when the border was closed. We know that we're not going to do that. Rick Pascal, another prominent feeder, has said: why have we allowed the gouging that has gone on? This government could step in and should step in and put in a minimum base that can be charged or put in there by that packing industry, those foreign owners, and keep the price up closer to that in the States. There has been a huge spread there, and it's not necessary. The profits are there, and this government can and should do something about that in the eyes of many, many producers.

I want to touch a little bit on CFIA and on testing for BSE. Once again, we can say that there are no markets, that there's nothing else. If, in fact, there was the freedom – for example, the new generation processing plant in Pincher Creek that sent in their plant plans to CFIA with a lab on site and were told no. For a small fee of \$240,000 – and I can't remember the name of the company; I forgot to bring it up here – they can have a testing lab that can test and have the results within eight hours and costs \$19 a test. I believe in free enterprise. If someone wants to make that part of their business plan and go to Japan or somewhere else, why does the government stand in and say, "No, we're not going to allow you to do it"?

I understand that we don't want to pass and say that there's not going to be 100 per cent testing. I agree with that. But a group that wants to start a packing plant and are looking for an industry, to say, "No, you can't do it" I believe is very wrong. The technology is there. Japan, Europe, they recognize those areas. We need to allow them to get into that.

We're going to run out of time here, I see. Another area I want to touch quickly on is inventory adjustment for BSE feedlots and farmers and whatnot. During the drought, that was allowed. We need to lobby the federal government. We've got to change this draconian tax system on inventory. We need to protect them. If they can afford to buy for one or two years, they shouldn't be hit with owners' taxes saying, "Oh, no. You've got to pay up on that inventory" when, in fact, they need to be able to get back in in a couple of years. It's very damaging, and it isn't doing our industry any good.

The technology in the packing industry is phenomenal in Australia and over in Europe. We need to change our attitude. We still think like in the 1960s with computers. Only the biggest corporations even looked at computers and said: it's the only way we can compete. Technology in the world is changing greatly, and we need to be able to keep pace with it. Small packing plants can and will be competitive if, in fact, we'll let them in. The walls they have to climb and the red tape and CFIA have been very damaging to them, and the tax incentives also have not been there for those small packing plants. They can and they will be effective if we'll let them come here.

Somehow we've got to pull in our horns and say: "You know, this is a disaster. We don't have the answer, but we need Alberta-owned packing plants for the benefit of those people." Like the small computers that we use today, we can accomplish it. There's the hot

deboning process that's coming along. There's the instant freezing. There are many, many things that are coming through. They're processing and having them cryovaced into those cookable containers.

I'm running out of time, so I'm rushing along here. There are many areas that we can and should address. I wish that we'd be more innovative and look at the ideas that the small farmers are putting forward. They can and will be successful, but we need to put them forward.

Well, I guess I'm out of time.

4:40

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first thing that I'd like to talk about is the irrigation and this 25-year rule which the hon. member will probably be very pleased to know no longer applies. Working with the Irrigation Council and the 13 irrigation districts, they're the ones that set the priorities as to whether those things are going to go. They've been working very, very well together. They are setting those programs. I'm really, really pleased that we've been able to add \$3 million in this budget to augment and bring it up to \$22 million so that we can have some innovative uses and some upgrades of the water use.

I'd like to applaud, actually, the irrigation districts for the environmental stewardship which they've shown, for the ability to recover or not lose the water to evaporation. As I understand it, over the years they've become almost 40 per cent more efficient, if not more. I think it's something that, you know, as you mentioned, we call the blue gold in Alberta and that we hold very, very dearly. As part of the Water for Life strategy, obviously agriculture is going to be playing a key role in that.

I would hope that you're pleased to hear that that 25-year rule no longer applies. I'm not sure when you were talking to those folks, but it has been a while, so you may want to get back and talk to them.

You mentioned, just going through here, an ad hoc program on the premium for crop insurance. You know, I kind of go back to what I was talking about with ad hoc programs. I don't like them. I think we have the ability and the skills across this country to come up with a program that works. It's going to take us some time to get there because, obviously, we're creating something from scratch here, or it's an amalgamation of other programs that we thought would work, so we threw them together. But remember, this is a national program. You've got all ten provinces, all the territories are involved in this, so you need to have the agreement of all those provinces whenever you're going to change something for the signatories because you want the feds to be on side. You want the dollars that they're going to have to commit to this. In fact, I'm going to be asking them to commit in a very substantial way on the disaster component.

You mentioned, too, about why did we go with the spring price endorsement. I asked the federal government to participate in what we were doing, and I asked them pointedly, that a reduction in crop insurance across the board would have more effect on our producers' input costs and their income and their risk management than anything else that they could possibly do. I asked them to participate with us, if they were going to come forward with more dollars in our basis program, in the set-aside program.

You mentioned a little bit later on in your comments about some of the tax systems. I don't quite get the angel investor part, but I'll leave that for another day. You talked about reducing taxes on the inputs, the farm fuel. We do that in Alberta. We rebate farm fuel.

We have the farm fuel rebate. It's \$33 million. It's in the budget. It's a line item, \$33,500,000. I asked the federal government to participate in that. What did I get? I got a phone call at 7 o'clock on Monday telling me that they were spreading a billion dollars out to the wind Tuesday morning. I think they'd have been far better served to have a little more consultation with the rest of us and say: here's a better idea, something that works. So we're going to continue to push on that side. We're going to continue to talk to them about working co-operatively with us as we do with the industry to come up with better ideas, better ways to manage the dollars that they are, I think, obligated to put in our producers' hands.

Under the snowed-under part, we have increased, actually. The payment has gone from 50 per cent to 75 per cent, I believe, on the snowed-under crops in the Peace district. Certainly, there are issues there, as I mentioned before, about, you know, crop adjusters going up there, as you're going to have with any type of insurance. You're always going to have those individual issues, and we try to address them one-on-one. Certainly, any of the colleagues here in the Legislature are more than welcome to bring the individual concerns to my attention, and I will bring it to the attention of the appropriate personnel in AFSC.

With regard to the rental land issue that you brought up, I believe it was that when we kicked out a payment, sometimes that payment didn't go to the guy that was actually doing the farming. We've kind of rectified that now. Again, that mostly applies to the ad hoc situation, which this minister doesn't want to do, so I'm hopeful that we're not going to be having that situation.

You talked a little bit about CAIS and the qualified expenses and capital costs. I talked a little earlier in my comments about how we are doing a step-by-step process of not only consultation but revamping, trying to put some new ideas out there on CAIS. One of the things that we are doing is bringing together a group of farm accounting personnel to sit down with our staff at AFSC and our policy secretariat folks in the department and talk about the complexity of the application, talk about inventory management, talk about what would make more sense from a small business perspective. Farm accountants, the guys that have been doing this, the guys that have been phoning, the guys that have been saying that there's got to be a better way: those are the fellows that will be sitting around a table within weeks so that we can fine-tune what we're going to present to the industry in our round-tables when we put those together as well.

So we are looking at all of those things. But, again, CAIS is under the ag policy framework, which is under the national program, and it's important that it stays there because that's a 60-40 funding split. Even with that 60-40 funding split, because of the amount of dollars that we're kicking out in CAIS, there are a number of provinces that are having huge, huge issues with trying to make up even their 40 per cent.

You talked about the timing on the 18 months. I agree wholeheartedly. Again, that's part of the whole process of the review of CAIS. We've probably done it faster than a lot of other provinces have done it with some of the more complex CAIS applications.

One of the other questions that came up earlier – and I believe it was Edmonton-Gold Bar that brought it up – was about what it costs us to do a CAIS application. It's roughly around 700 bucks, more or less, which is about half the cost of what the federally administered provinces are running at right now. Obviously, this is the first year, two years, 18 months that we've been doing CAIS, so we're going to get some finer numbers, and we started from scratch here. You have to remember that you're starting from scratch. As we get better and as the farmers get better with the applications and the

information and you get the history and things start to move down the road, this will become a very simple process for most producers as they get down the road and we all become more familiar with what is required and what we require from the producers' side. I think that answers those.

The other issue, then, was that the hon. member talked about the bottleneck being the packing plants. I don't know that I would agree that the bottleneck is the packing plants because the majority of the packing plants by agreement are running six days a week. That puts tremendous stress on the staff, on the personnel, on the equipment, on all of the things that they need to do. They're doing that because we need them to continue to kill so that the whole set-aside program works.

You mentioned that your feeling was that they had a case of BSE and that they're simply hiding it. Well, you know, I'm not going to say whether I believe that to be true or not. The important part for us is that we're not waiting for anything like that to happen. What we're doing is we're following through on our six-point recovery plan and restructuring plan. We're following through on the court cases to make sure that the court side of this thing is taken care of because the industry side of it is open to us. They want us to be able to ship product across the border, and they want us to import products up here, which we will probably end up doing once our slaughter capacity gets to where I think it's going to be within the next 12 to 18 months.

We won't be locked into anything. One of the things that the United States government has done – and this is very important for all members to note – is that prior to us getting BSE, our rules said that we would not accept beef from any country that had any case of BSE for a long period of time. Closed door. The United States had the same rule. So had it happened there first, would we have gone to the world community and said: "Hey, look. This is stupid. We should create a new rule that is the minimal risk rule that the world can adopt"? Would we have done that? I don't know. But that's what the U.S. has done. The U.S. has essentially created a new ruling that the world will hopefully follow and is following that creates a new category of minimal risk. They did that for us. Now, obviously they did it in the event that they get a case too, but I think we have to recognize what they have done as opposed to what perhaps some might think they haven't done.

4:50

The \$30 million in marketing funds is actually \$30 million provided to the Canadian Beef Export Federation for I believe it's called the legacy program, which will be a 10-year program. The federal government has also contributed \$55 million to that 10-year program, and as much as the hon. member may not like the Alberta Beef Producers, they are, through the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, also contributing to this program.

The gist of the program is to reduce our market dependency on the United States. Their target is to go from 76 per cent to 50 per cent. Hon. member, I think it's dollars well spent if we can achieve that 50 per cent because that means that we've diversified our markets in the world, and I think that's very, very important.

So we're not saying that we don't have anywhere to go, as the hon. member said. We're saying that we've got a ton of places that we need to go, and we're putting the resources and the horses behind it to do it in co-operation and integration with the industry.

The hon. member also mentioned – and I'm just looking at some of the other comments – that more producers are upset with the Alberta Beef Producers than the Wheat Board. I would challenge that assertion, and I would suggest to you that it is totally false. I have yet to have a phone call from a producer telling me that he

wants to get out of the Alberta Beef Producers. I have had numerous calls telling me that had the Alberta Beef Producers not been there, had they not been working in collaboration with us, had they not established the programs and the BSE recovery and the six-point plan working in collaboration with us, we probably would not have an industry in this province today after May of 2003.

They have been, I think, a very good advocate. Obviously, there are people in any organization who disagree with what that organization might be doing, but I think I would take from the majority of producers who are in the industry that they are doing what they need to do. I do not hear the type of angst that the hon. member is referring to. I think they've done quite well.

The hon. member mentioned a potential plant that might want to go and spend \$250,000 on a BSE testing laboratory and put it in their plant. I think I know the company that he's referring to or the project that he's referring to. I've met with these folks. In fact, we are talking to CFIA to actually prove the point that Japan would open their market if you 100 per cent test it. I have said this to producer groups around the province: I don't think that Japan at this point in time would open their market to anybody, regardless of what they did, until they've figured out the politics between themselves, the Americans, and us. It is not a point of food safety. It is not a point of whether you test or not test. As the hon. member previously said, this is a political discussion, and it's a political issue, and it's a trade issue. It's a trade issue between Japan and the United States. It's a trade issue between the United States and Canada and Canada and Japan. That gets very, very complicated.

I think we have a much better opportunity here, hon. members, not to use 100 per cent testing for market access but to use age verification for access. We have an opportunity in this province because of the CCIA tagging and the RFID tags, that will be mandatory in 2006, and the platform that they have developed. We can be the only jurisdiction in North America to 100 per cent age-verify all of the beef in our province.

We are working to that direction because, hon. members, I see that as opening up more markets to us than 100 per cent testing because the Japanese even want to move away from 100 per cent testing. How is it going to be that they're going to say yes to 100 per cent testing on imports and then try to explain to their own domestic customers, "We want to move away from 100 per cent testing"? It's not going to work. Age verification will work, and that's the direction that I think we need to go, and our department is going to work towards that.

The hon. member talked about a tax system on inventory from the feds. I agree. I wish they would listen to some of our ideas too.

Technology in the world; small plants have too many walls to get in. I would challenge that assertion as well, hon. member. Again I go back to this. If you have a customer, if you have a need that you're going to fill that that customer is willing to spend money on, you will build a plant, you will produce that product, and you will probably be prosperous. If you have an idea for a plant and you have no idea who might want the product from that plant, you're going to have problems.

I would suggest to you that many businesses fail in the industry. The number used to be that 80 per cent of business start-ups failed within the first five years. Many times that's because they had a great idea, but they didn't have the rest of the package. All of these proposals have to have the whole package or, quite frankly, I'm not really keen on risking taxpayer dollars. We do that through AFSC. If AFSC approves it through their credit, due diligence, they're the entity that may or may not do it. I'm just not keen to do it on the basis of "I've got a great idea" or "I've got a new technology that nobody's ever seen before; I have no idea if they'll buy it." I'm just not keen to do it on that basis.

I think I've covered most of the points from the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. I'm going to go back now to some of the other points.

Rural development. In the cross-ministry initiatives that we were doing, there was some talk with regard to, actually, the high school in Sangudo. My wife went to the high school in Sangudo and is from that area, so I have some knowledge of that area.

An Hon. Member: I hear that they have a good MLA.

Mr. Horner: I understand that they have an excellent MLA, yes.

I guess that the point I was going to go with, hon. members, was that the rural development strategy is working on cross-ministry initiatives, and the cross-ministry initiatives tie in all aspects of rural life. They tie in health care. They tie in education. They tie in infrastructure. They tie in all of these things. The Rural Development Strategy Task Force has only recently been organized. I would encourage the hon. member to look at the report that was produced and the recommendations that came from it.

The task force's primary role at this point in time is to advise us as to how we might implement those strategies and those concepts that are in the report. It's made up of Albertans. The AAMD and C and the AMA have representation on the task force. I think they're very, very excited about the direction that they're taking. They're very excited about some of the recommendations that they believe they can have some input on and some impact, most notably the impact, Mr. Chairman.

We were also talking about the Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op and the idea: why are we not helping them? We've never really been asked to help them. To the degree that I've never said no to meeting with them, I would welcome them to come and talk to me about it. To my knowledge they've not made any approach to Ag Financial Services Corporation, which is the vehicle we would use to help them financially if their business plan was one that warranted that kind of support. I don't quite understand what the issue might be there, so I would encourage them to give me a call if they believe that they have a business plan which would be worth AFSC having a look at.

The other thing that was brought up was the Canadian Wheat Board and perhaps some of the issues surrounding our marketing choice campaign. I wanted to first of all start by saying that it is not the intent of this government nor this minister to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board. Far from it. It is the intent of this government and this minister to let them live up to what they're telling us they are, which is a fine organization that's willing and able to do wonderful things for producers. I believe that in a competitive marketplace they would do just that. I think we should give them the chance to try.

By doing that, we may find that they would be a much better corporate entity than they are a government-funded entity. I think they would probably find that they may be able to be a little more accountable to producers. We believe that accountability is important in this province. I think they might find that the changes that they're making are exactly the types of changes and the path that we want them to head. There are just a few more components that they have to do to make it worth while. Then it will be worth while.

In the way they're doing it right now, hon. member, they're pushing independent grain companies out of business. They're becoming a grain company. They're becoming a grain company outside their mandate to become a grain company. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I have information that they may even actually end up owning assets in a roundabout way, which would be totally outside

of their mandate. You know, again, I believe that they should own assets, but I don't believe that they should have a monopoly.

I believe that the Canadian Wheat Board, if they were to look to Australia as an example – the Australian Wheat Board is still a single-desk export seller, but domestically they have deregulated their industry. They have added value to their value-added industry. They have provided choice. They have provided additional premiums to their producers. They've created an efficiency in their logistics. They have created a . . . [Mr. Horner's speaking time expired] That's it?

5:00

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to rise to the issues around this review and thank the hon. minister for some of the important comments he's made and his elucidation on some of the issues. I want to be brief and focus particularly on some of the environmental issues associated with the agriculture industry and talk just briefly about some of the challenges I see that have been expressed to some extent already on this side.

Clearly, what I'm hearing from the public and from some constituents has to do with issues around water and sustainability and its management, the issues of encroaching oil and gas activities on agricultural producers and on land and productivity, confined feeding operations and how that affects local municipalities, and their interest in having more influence and control and participation in integrated planning for their communities around confined feeding operations particularly.

I'd be interested in his comments on organic farming and where that's heading in terms of sustainable agricultural management, the renewed and perhaps significant increase in the urban population's interest and access to organic farming produce as a tremendous opportunity.

More specifically, I wanted to ask some questions about game ranching and what that's done in the province, how it's fared in the province, where it's marketed, how sustainable it is, some of the key questions that aren't clear in the budget. It's not clear how much that particular sector spends, it's not clear how much that particular sector earns and raises and, particularly, how much subsidization the agriculture ministry has been giving over the last 20 years to an industry that from the outside doesn't look sustainable.

Indeed, with some of the discussions we've heard about BSE and chronic wasting disease, how is that going to impact in the long term this particular industry? Without fences around our province, without testing for live animals, how can we ensure that we know that the animal population is going to be sustainably healthy and not be part of the propagation of disease, which is so concerning to not only confined feeding operations in the cattle and hog industries but increasingly in the wild animal and game ranching?

Another related issue is to what extent public lands will be used for game ranching, and that's a concern to wildlife people, to fish and game, and tourism issues, how that's going to impact the public lands issue.

So I don't need to take any more time with the questions. I would welcome any and all comments the minister can make around those key issues. Thank you.

Mr. Horner: Well, that was quick. So I guess I can go back to some of the other comments that I was going to make. How much time do I have, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: Five minutes.

Mr. Horner: Okay. I should have enough time to do both because I did want to talk on a couple of other things on the Canadian Wheat Board.

One of the things that is very, very important to me is that we want to be shippers of value-added products, not shippers of commodities. We have competitors around the world like Brazil, like China, like eastern Europe who are going to be in a position very, very soon to be a much lower-cost producer in terms of a base commodity than we can do here. They're going to be able to do it in a much larger volume than we can do it here, and the quality will be there in a certain period of time. It's important for us to move down that value chain to be able to be competitive in the world marketplace and not be dependent upon a price-taker type of attitude in terms of commodities.

The Canadian Wheat Board was established to do one thing. It was established to ship large volumes of commodity out of this country as fast and at the best possible price that they can do. I think it's time that we moved down the road and cut that umbilical cord that's dragging us down, quite frankly, in terms of the expansion of our value-added and the expansion of the marketing opportunities that it would provide. I think it's important for us to look at our cereals industry in the same way that we would look at our beef industry, in the same way we would look at any other industry. The more buyers you have in the marketplace, the more sellers, the more market access you're going to have, the better off your industry as a whole is going to be.

There was a comparison made about elections in the Canadian Wheat Board and this Legislature. Hon. members, everyone in this Legislature was elected. Not every board member of the Canadian Wheat Board was elected. A third of them were appointed, and I don't think that's very democratic either. Nor is the weighted voting even on the radar screen with them.

I think we need to satisfy the issues that we have with the Canadian Wheat Board, and I think there's a win-win for both sides, and that win-win is to move down the road to something akin to the Australian model, and I believe that we'll be working on that in the weeks and months ahead.

With regard to environmental stewardship of the land, obviously, the hon. member is very, very correct: agriculture plays a key role in environmental stewardship of the land. We are intimately involved with it. Our livelihood depends on it. The message that is out there under the ag policy framework, under all of the other agreements that we have, is that it just makes good business sense to be good stewards of the land because it relates to the other issue that was raised by the hon. member: urban population. We want to be seen as good stewards of the land to the urban population that is all around us and is, indeed, the customer that we're trying to sell to. It certainly makes no sense to have environmental issues come up that make agriculture get a black eye.

This department is working very hard through our technical services division to establish environmental farm plans in the province and establish a protocol, if you will, of how those environmental farm plans are put in place. We have made a very good start in that process. They've done hundreds of environmental farm plans for producers already and are working on doing many, many more.

I would like to see a way that we can create some revenue growth in that issue for on-farm as well, perhaps tie it to this wonderful Kyoto accord, where we'll be able to buy credits of air somewhere. It's terribly disappointing to me to have a Canadian or Alberta company spending money in Chile in a hog operation to buy a credit for something they absolutely don't know whether it's even a valid credit or not. I think it's important that we be able to develop those credits here and that the dollars stay here, and that pays the cost,

hon. member, for what is already a stretched industry, in terms of input costs, to do the right things in terms of environmental stewardship and food safety. The two things go hand in hand.

Agriculture is, I believe, the largest user of surface water in the province, so it's certainly valuable to us, and it's certainly something that we know we have to conserve. We've taken a very large role in the Water for Life strategy, and we'll continue to do so and to be a part of that, to monitor the progress of how that's going to work with environment, have our technical services division working with environment. We need to ensure, as I said, that we're viewed as good stewards of the land so that we can make sure that the urban population is pleasantly surprised about having a value-added agricultural industry move next door to it. That would be the hope, hon. member.

We need to do things like expanding the use of biodigesters. I believe that there is a real opportunity in agriculture in the future to not only add value to on-farm or create a revenue for on-farm but that the manure, the sewage, or the waste material that is created on-farm can be used in, say, a regional biodigester which would create methane and power to put into the grid. Because of deregulation we can do that, and it can be economical in this province. Not so in many other provinces. [interjection] That was just for you, hon. member.

We can create methane gas, which is obviously something that can be used on-farm to fuel many things. In Europe for many years they've been using methane gas converted not only to heat their homes but perhaps to even use as a fuel source for vehicles or whatever. Is that possible in Alberta? I don't know, but our department is looking at it.

We're looking at using waste material to reduce the input costs on the value-added side. We're looking at things that would create more value-added because we would be lowering their input costs, whether that's in the sugar beet industry or the potato industry, to have the value-added proponent, taking that produce with the waste material being another product that the producers can produce for that value-added sector.

The biodigester in the feedlot at Highland Feeders is a good example of what can be done, given the number of animals in that feedlot, the fact that all of that material is going to be turned into water and fertilizer and power.

5:10

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a number of those regional-type facilities around the province that perhaps followed the model of the federated gas co-ops or the rural electrical associations, and we created a regional biodigester, environmentally friendly power generators, gas generators. I think there are a lot of things we can do in agriculture to protect the environment, to make us environmentally friendly, and to actually add to the bottom line of the average producer in the province.

Urban population sprawl is an area of concern, and it's certainly a concern when you talk about confined feeding operations. It's an area of concern, quite frankly, when you talk about acreages. The idea that folks that are moving to the country may not be prepared for what they see, hear, or smell, given the fact that they're moving closer to agriculture. But there are some realities to living in the country. There are some realities to what you might see, smell, or hear living in the country, and I think we need to educate our urban population about what goes on on the farm.

That's one of the things that we are going to be doing a lot more in the department: trying to get that education component going between urban Alberta and rural Alberta to talk about what happens. It's something that the rural task force is involved in. It's something

that our department is going to be involved in. It's something that 4-H is involved in on a fairly regular basis. I think it's important that urban and rural Alberta live in harmony.

The Chair: I hate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(5), which provides for the Committee of Supply to rise and report no later than 5:15 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday afternoons, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$649,515,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, I'd move that the committee rise and report the vote for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and seek leave to meet again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases \$649,515,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we call it 5:30 and that we adjourn until 8 o'clock this evening, when we'll reconvene in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:15 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 3, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/05/03

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone. I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Justice and Attorney General

The Chair: I'd call on the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Needless to say, I'm very pleased to present the budget estimates for Alberta Justice tonight. [some applause] Wow. I didn't hear anything from over there.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Mr. Stevens: Oh, it will come later.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce some of the very good people from Alberta Justice who are here with us this evening. Basically, it's the executive management committee and senior officials: Terry Matchett, deputy minister – maybe you can just wave, Terry – Peggy Hartman, assistant deputy minister for the legal services division; Ken Tjosvold, ADM for criminal justice; Barb Hookenson, ADM for court services; Dan Mercer, ADM for the strategic services division; Shawkat Sabur, senior financial officer and executive director of financial services; Kevin Quail, acting director of the maintenance enforcement program; Sharon Lepetich, senior adviser to the deputy minister; Mark Cooper, who used to be gainfully employed in the media but who is now my director of communications; and, of course, Jeremy Chorney, my executive assistant.

An Hon. Member: Where's your mom, Ron?

Mr. Stevens: She's watching on television.

The business plan guides the overall direction and sets goals for the ministry on how to meet our vision and mission. Our vision is "a fair and safe society supported by a trusted justice system," and our mission is

to protect the rights of all individuals in Alberta and advance the interests of society by fostering: safe communities; access to justice; respect for the law; understanding of and confidence in the justice system, and the legal foundation for social cohesion and economic prosperity.

The budget supports the direction laid out in the business plan by funding initiatives that meet our goals. Our five goals are as follows. Goal 1 is to "promote safe communities in Alberta." Goal 2 is to "promote a fair and accessible civil and criminal justice system." Goal 3 is to "provide access to justice services for Albertans in need." Goal 4 is to "improve knowledge of, and confidence in, the justice system." Goal 5 is to "assist government ministries to achieve their objectives through provision of effective legal and related strategic services." Our objective is to make using the justice system easier, more understandable, and more user friendly for Albertans when they need it. We also must ensure that the system is working effectively.

I will begin this evening by providing you with some highlights of initiatives we are undertaking this year with the new funding we have been allocated in Budget 2005. You will see how these link to the goals in our business plan. I would then be pleased to address any questions you may have.

I'll begin with initiatives that come under our court services division. The overall purpose of court services is to promote fair and equitable access to the justice system for all Albertans, which, of course, aligns with goal 2 in the business plan. This year's budget is more than \$135 million, \$8.2 million of which is new funding. One of the key initiatives this budget supports is new funding for the family justice services. More than \$1.8 million has been allocated in the '05-06 year to expand services to assist families going through breakup.

With the proclamation of the Family Law Act coming this October, we're consolidating all aspects of provincial family law under one act. The Family Law Act is part of a larger strategy to encourage people to resolve family law problems in a more constructive way. The new funding for family justice services will support that strategy by providing more dollars for such things as counselling and information to help people understand court processes, mediation to help with parenting issues, education sessions about parenting after separation, and helping people get information and resolve child and spousal support disputes. These services help families understand and resolve issues and disputes related to co-parenting and child and spousal support. The breakup of families is obviously a very difficult time for everyone involved. By improving access to these services, handling the necessary legal processes will be easier, faster, and less confusing.

The new funding means that we can enhance our out-of-court dispute resolution services, including family mediation. Mediation helps separated parents come to an agreement regarding the parenting of their children in a less confrontational manner than appearing in court. We've had a great deal of success using these approaches and projects throughout Alberta. The new funding will also allow us to strengthen the existing services and expand them to other communities in the province. We can expect to hire more family court counsellors in areas of the province that haven't had them before, such as central and northern Alberta. We will also be able to hire additional staff to prepare court orders so people in provincial court receive their orders on the same day, and that makes the justice system better.

Helping presufficiency in the court system, we will spend \$2.7 million this year to facilitate the overall modernization of court operations. A portion of the new funding will go towards expanding the court computer network. This means that the remaining 19 unserved circuit court locations in smaller centres like Boyle, Hanna, Stettler, and others will have access to electronic court information systems, the Internet, and e-mail. Access will be provided via Alberta's information highway, the SuperNet.

The new funding will also provide enhanced service to the judiciary and other court users. Digital audio recordings of the court proceedings taking place in these locations will be immediately available to judges anywhere in the province, and court services employees will be able to enter results of the court session into automated systems right at the circuit points. Judges will also be able to access the electronic judicial research resources from anywhere in the province.

As well, traffic courts will be equipped with computerized cash registers that provide instant updates to the traffic ticketing system and more computers and faster printers. This will improve efficiency, allowing for better and quicker customer service. Information technology is constantly evolving, and we need to keep up with

new technologies the best we can. That's not to say that we need the newest systems every year, but it does mean that we need to stay current.

We are working with our counterparts in Infrastructure and Transportation and the Solicitor General's department on the comprehensive court security plan. Alberta Justice's part of that plan is supporting video conferencing for routine court appearances. The system will be used for first appearances, bail hearings, entering of pleas, and some matters pertaining to preliminary inquiries. In addition, the system will be used to facilitate appearances by designated counsel and the prosecutors and to receive evidence of witnesses. It will be particularly helpful to receive evidence from those who are considered to be vulnerable witnesses.

Pilot projects of this state-of-the-art technology were launched in January 2004 in several court locations throughout the province, such as provincial courts in Camrose, Cold Lake, and St. Paul. It uses real-time audio and video transmission and eliminates the need for prisoners to be transferred to court to deal with routine procedures. Building on the success of these pilot projects, new funding of almost \$660,000 in 2005-2006 will allow the leasing of more equipment. This will allow video conferencing to be expanded to other areas in the province.

There have been a number of incidents that could have been prevented had video conferencing technology been in place. For example, last fall in a St. Albert court a prisoner jumped over the rail of the prisoner's box in an attempt to escape after being denied bail, and more recently you may have heard about the inmate who threw his shoes at the judge in Calgary provincial court as the judge was making an order for his detention. The expanded use of video conferencing will increase security in the courtrooms because fewer prisoners will have to appear in person for routine court matters, and that means that we can prevent incidents like this. As well, there's no driving of prisoners back and forth, so there's no risk of them threatening people inside or outside the courtroom, and that helps keep Albertans safe.

8:10

In 2005-2006 more than \$750,000 will be spent to strategically expand civil mediation programs to more communities in the province and to increase the compensation we pay to court interpreters and witnesses. Increased mediation services mean more civil disputes can potentially be resolved without going to court, and that means judicial and legal resources can be used where they are most needed. Mediation works. Whether it's for family law or civil matters, it gives people with disputes a way to work out a solution for themselves. These programs have been successful, and I'm very pleased that we are able to expand their use.

Alberta Justice has a constitutional obligation to provide interpretation services for people with disabilities and all individuals who require these services. By increasing compensation for interpreters, we are ensuring that qualified staff are employed so that language barriers do not impair the ability of court participants and the court to understand what is happening, the relevant testimony given, and the evidence presented. Witnesses also play a crucial role by appearing in court to give their important knowledge about a case. By appearing as witnesses, they assist in promoting safe communities in Alberta. Increasing the travel reimbursement rate or mileage we pay to witnesses will encourage more participation in court proceedings. Justice can't be served if people can't understand what's going on or if witnesses are reluctant to come to court to testify.

Now we move on to the criminal justice area of the ministry. The overall purpose of criminal justice is to promote safe communities

in Alberta, which aligns with goal 1 of our business plan. This year's budget is \$43 million, \$2.5 million of which is new funding.

Sadly, Alberta continues to have an unacceptably high rate of family violence. We need to provide victims and witnesses with services as soon as possible and protect them from further abuse. We also need to impose sentences on perpetrators that will reduce the likelihood of their reoffending. So we are allocating almost \$900,000 in new funding to support specialized Crown prosecutors and staff, domestic violence courts and court processes, and to provide training for dealing with family violence situations.

The domestic violence courts with specialized Crown prosecutors are an integral part of the provincial family violence treatment program framework. The framework is a cross-government initiative that's designed to provide co-ordinated and integrated assessment, treatment, rehabilitation, and follow-up services to victims and perpetrators of family violence. Linking government with community services improves our efforts to deal with domestic violence cases more quickly and effectively. Because Albertans who are dealing with family violence situations need help and they need it as soon as possible, we can now do a better job providing it. I'm optimistic that this new funding will contribute to breaking the cycle of family violence and will protect the safety and security of children and families in our communities.

Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms Crown prosecutors must provide the accused with a copy of all relevant evidence gathered by police during the investigation of the crime. Before providing this evidence, the Crown prosecutor must remove all of the personal identifying information of civilian witnesses. This process is known as disclosure, and it is a major issue and challenge for those in the criminal justice system. In Alberta police transfer almost all case files to Crown prosecutors in the form of a hard-copy court brief. Obviously, this is extremely time consuming, and as the number of cases in the system continues to rise, it's only going to get worse.

New funding of \$471,000 this year will allow the development of a secure computer system to support electronic distribution of court briefs rather than transferring them by hard copy. The system will allow the efficient flow of information between police agencies, the prosecution service, the accused, and defence counsel. It will facilitate and support prosecution of criminal cases, thereby promoting community safety, and in doing these things, it will contribute to the public's confidence in the justice system.

Overall, the budget for civil law is almost \$24 million for 2005-2006. The purpose of this branch of the ministry is to provide effective legal and related services to government and other ministries, which aligns with goal 5 of the business plan. New funding, commencing in 2005-2006, will allow development of a computer system to manage a database of legal opinions. We are spending \$417,000 this year to get things started. In their role of providing legal and related services across ministries, civil law legal teams are located at numerous sites. The new system will link those various sites electronically. It will significantly reduce the time spent on legal research, allow for more consistent information, and will increase the amount of legal information available to all civil law lawyers.

The best part about this initiative is that by increasing efficiency, we will save taxpayer dollars. The savings will be fully realized in the 2006-2007 year and are estimated at \$300,000. This will even become greater in the years to come. The savings come from the fact that we won't have to hire as many additional staff in the longer term to cope with the increased demands in the area of civil law. It's a lot more efficient for a computer to search through legal opinions.

The medical examiner's office investigates all sudden, unexplained, natural, and unnatural deaths in Alberta to determine the identity of the deceased and the cause of death. Each year in Alberta there are more than 3,000 cases of sudden, unexplained deaths. The office provides a key service for families of deceased, Crown prosecutors, lawyers, police, funeral directors, insurance companies, and other government agencies. It aligns with goal 3 of the business plan, providing access to justice services for those in need.

In the 2005-2006 budget for the medical examiner there is more than \$6 million. This year new funding of \$1.1 million has been allocated to this office. The additional funding is to achieve salary equity for medical professionals within the office with their colleagues in regional health authorities in other provinces and for operating costs. We provided money to increase compensation paid to rural medical examiners and to other agencies that support the medical examiner's office.

The medical professionals in this office provide the expertise we need in difficult investigations. The services they provide affect testimony and criminal investigations. They also operate the toxicology laboratory and provide the scientific investigation necessary to assist with the determination of causes of death and prevent these in the future. Obviously, our ability to maintain and improve the level of professional expertise necessary to perform the work at the medical examiner's office is absolutely fundamental to the delivery of these services in an effective fashion.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my comments. The initiatives that I've laid out show how we are determined to meet our goals in improving access and increasing efficiency in the justice system. I also believe that they will be able to make the system easier for Albertans to understand. I'd be happy at this time to address any questions that the members may have.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the hon. minister for his opening remarks. I wish to convey to the Department of Justice my best wishes, and I think they've done splendid work. I would also like to compliment the minister and his staff for the clarity and concreteness of the business plan of 2005-2008. From the vision statement and mission statement to the outlining of the goals and strategies, it is a well-written, clear, and concise document. There are lots of items that could be discussed tonight.

I was especially impressed by the list of significant opportunities and challenges on page 351. I think that's an important compilation of the tremendous challenges that we face with respect to the issues such as identity theft, aboriginal justice, organized crime, family violence, child sexual exploitation, illicit drugs, and so on. I appreciate the sentence in the business plan which says that "the Ministry is presented with the challenge of being held accountable for outcomes for which the ministry does not have sole responsibility" because on all of these tremendous challenges to our society, there needs to be collaboration and the involvement of all departments and levels of government and especially the involvement of all communities if we're ever going to reach the day when we can be assured that Alberta is a safe place and that we can diminish the amount of crime in Alberta.

8:20

This leads me to some basic questions about the overall approach to justice, which I want to raise at the outset before we get into looking at specific budgetary items. At the beginning of the description of the Justice Department's vision and mission we read statements such as "the Ministry will continue to invest in Alberta's

communities to make them among the safest in North America by getting tougher on those who commit violent offences." I guess the word "tougher" just grabbed my attention. Of course, the Criminal Code falls within the federal jurisdiction, so there is this other comment that the department will "continue to pressure the federal government to take tough positions against violent crimes and those who commit them."

Well, this is one school of thought in response to crime: get tough with criminals. This approach usually leads inevitably to tougher sentencing, for example more mandatory sentences, building more prisons, hiring more judges and prosecutors, strengthening the war on drugs, and so on. But, of course, there is another school of thought, another approach which could be named a more progressive and – dare I use the word? – liberal approach, which focuses on alternatives to the court system for dealing with certain kinds of offences, which focuses on decriminalizing of certain offences such as marijuana, which attempts to get at the root causes of crime and deal with those causes.

Of course, both approaches assume that changes to the criminal justice system will reduce violent crimes. Both approaches would probably be an overestimation of that, in my view, because I think that assumption has to be qualified. It's not just changes to the criminal justice system; it's widespread change to our whole society. It's social and community development, education at all levels, and efforts to deal with poverty and racism. If we don't put our resources into dealing with the root causes and with social community development, we can't expect that crime will be diminished, and we won't achieve the kind of society of safety that we're looking for. Without antipoverty programs, Head Start programs, and safer community grassroots initiatives, the goal of reducing violent crime will not take place.

These matters, of course, take us beyond the Justice department, and maybe that's my opening sermon on justice, so I should get on to some of the specifics. Let me comment on the goal 4 because I think what I've just said is relevant to goal 4, which is to "improve knowledge of, and confidence in, the justice system." Now, I think the focus of this goal and all of its strategies is to try to inform the public about the processes and the strategies of the Department of Justice, so it's kind of a public relations strategy for the Department of Justice, which I think is fine. What I was trying to get at is that the public understanding of crime goes much deeper than just looking at the justice system.

I mean, how do we learn about crime? How do we achieve public understanding about crime and the way to diminish crime? Now, of course, the biggest challenge is dealing with the media because it's through the media that we learn about crime, and unfortunately the media focuses on violent crimes. Violent crimes are only 5 per cent of the reported crimes in Canada, so we get a skewed view of crimes by just focusing on the media. Over 50 per cent of Canadian newspaper articles are about violent crimes, so this kind of reporting encourages fear and the consequent law-and-order approaches to criminal justice. When the public feels powerless, then a tough approach is in their estimation better than nothing although I must point out that a 1987 survey by the Canadian Sentencing Commission asked people to name the one thing which would have the greatest impact on crime control, and the answer was: 47 per cent said reducing unemployment rates; 27 per cent said harsher sentences. This suggests that Canadians don't think that crime will be controlled by a get-tougher approach. I think that's very important.

I wonder: do the strategies outlined under goal 4 go far enough in dealing with the media, dealing with the whole issue of public education to enable the public to understand crime and the root problems, the root issues of crime and not just the intricacies of the

justice system? Public knowledge of the justice system is fine as far as it goes, but it's not enough. What we need is a broad-based discussion and debate in our society on the nature of crime and the ways to prevent crime.

I'll always remember the short time that I was a part of the John Howard Society when I was living in St. Paul. Of course, the John Howard Society always focused on the prisoners who came out of correctional institutions and helping them adjust in the community. They decided many years ago to change their focus to look at prevention and to put a lot of resources into public awareness of crime so that crime could be prevented. I think that's important.

Well, let me go on and just ask some questions about this budget, which is a budget that focuses on all kinds of different issues. In terms of a few questions here in the business plan, on page 355 strategy 1.5 states that the ministry will "work with partners to develop a provincial response/policy," in particular in regard to the integrated response to organized crime. That's IROC. I just wondered about the support for IROC and whether the ministry is continuing to look at trying to bolster the effectiveness of the IROC team.

Especially, I'm concerned about the issue of identity theft. I think the public is becoming much, much more concerned about identity theft than ever before. We hear all kinds of stories of how our identities get stolen through credit card robbery but also the whole issue of mortgages and the fraud in the mortgage, people discovering that there's a for-sale sign on their front lawn. There are just some terrible stories about identity theft across Canada. I was wondering if the minister could identify how we're going to deal with that issue and what resources will go into dealing with that.

Of course, the issue of children and the sexual exploitation of children through the Internet is of tremendous concern to the public. On page 355 1.6 talks about that, and again I don't see any reference to the ICE team, the provincial internet child exploitation team. I was wondering about the support of the ministry for that. Also, in the reference to putting pressure on the federal government to toughen sentences – here I might be contradicting my own statement – is the provincial Justice department influencing the federal Justice department to change the Criminal Code to toughen sentences in respect to child exploitation?

Now, on page 356 there are a couple of references to the Ministry of Justice's co-operation with the Alberta Law Reform Institute, 2.4 and 2.11. I was just curious about that because it's my understanding that in 1999 there was a report from the Alberta Law Reform Institute on powers and procedures for administrative tribunals outlining some points that could be adopted. The government has not seen fit to put that into practice. That relates to Bill 23. I don't want to get back into the discussion of Bill 23, but the whole issue of access to justice concerns me.

8:30

When I was dealing with Bill 23, my understanding was that it would speed up the process of justice, but some legal opinions that I've received indicate that it may in some cases actually restrict access to justice, depending on the situation and what tribunals were being dealt with. So the question, I guess, has to do with putting into practice some of the reforms suggested by the Alberta Law Reform Institute and really helping the whole process of access to justice to be the reality in Alberta.

I am really concerned. The business document outlines the challenges, the challenge about aboriginal justice. I didn't hear any reference to putting funds into dealing with aboriginal justice. It still continues to be the case that almost 40 per cent of inmates in our correctional institutions in Alberta are from our First Nation

communities, and that is a tragedy. Unless we deal with that, we're not going to make much progress in having justice in Alberta.

I know that that issue is huge, and we have to deal with community initiatives and so on, but I was just wondering if the ministry has any intention of putting resources in the future into dealing with aboriginal justice, certainly the whole area of alternative mediation approaches and the appointing of special courts to deal with aboriginal justice. My neighbour in Edmonton for some time was the widow of Justice Morrow, who established quite a lot of reputation years ago when he travelled by plane into the north. I think he was one of the first to initiate alternative justice approaches with our First Nation people, and I think that's very important.

Well, I have a lot of financial questions. The Justice department's program expense looks like it's about a 7 per cent increase, and the Minister of Justice has outlined where the new money is going. In some of those areas it's quite encouraging to see the modernization of courts and the money going into the support to family services and the progress on the Family Law Act. I guess that my question about that is: does this mean that we have moved closer to the ideal of a unified, one-stop centre for families so that they don't have to go to federal court to deal with divorce issues, they don't have to go to provincial court to deal with other issues, but they can deal with a whole variety of issues at one centre? Is that the way the money is going to be used, to create that? If that's the direction, then that's something that we would applaud.

Of course, all of the references to the modernization in terms of the use of computers are quite laudable.

Some other questions in terms of finances. Under Ministry Support Services there's a reference at 1.0.4 to strategic services, a \$1.5 million increase. I believe it is in strategic services, but I wasn't sure what that was really referring to. So I wonder if the minister could explain what the breakdown is there.

Now, in honour of my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre I need to raise an issue about maintenance enforcement because I think she raises it every year. She's not here, and I would like to raise it on her behalf. A lot of the questions she has continually asked every year I think are still relevant. How many staff work on maintenance enforcement? What is the total amount that Alberta is collecting in maintenance enforcement? What is the percentage collected in relation to the total ordered in maintenance enforcement?

I'm also curious about interprovincial jurisdiction. I understand that laws have been changed in the recent past to enable the courts to go after spouses who leave and go to other provinces, but I'm receiving complaints from people within my constituency that they have a great deal of difficulty getting answers from other courts in other provinces. I just wonder about that.

Also, under Court Services, reference 2.1.1, program support services, there's been an increase in funding of \$5.9 million from last year. I was wondering what that increase in funding is for. Perhaps you did explain that in terms of court services. I'm not sure.

In terms of the number of employees there are 78 new full-time employees listed in the business plan. Are they Crown prosecutors? Are they judges? What is the issue? Why is it necessary to have so many new employees?

Well, those are some of the questions I have, and I would like to sit down now and hear some response.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Well, thanks very much. Let me begin by thanking the hon. member for his compliments of the people in Alberta Justice who do very good work. Certainly, I agree with his compli-

ments, and I do thank him for recognizing it and stating his appreciation so clearly.

There were a lot of comments and questions that the hon. member had, and I'll see if I can address a number of them at this time. Of course, should I fail to address them, we'll provide a response in writing on a timely basis.

There was a question with respect to the increase in the number of FTEs within the department. The FTEs are budgeted to increase by 78, as indicated by the hon. member. The breakdown for that is as follows: there will be seven in renewal of prosecution and legal services; eight, ticketing processing; two, aboriginal consultation; 18, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act; 11 for the family justice services area; nine in Calgary Provincial Court, Criminal Division; seven in the Public Trustee alternative funding area; six, specialized family violence; four, criminal services IT sustainability; two in the mediation program; two in information document management; and two in the electronic distribution of court briefs.

Just for the benefit of the member, the 2,307 budgeted FTEs by program are 81.5 in ministry support services, 1,243 in court services, 778 in legal services, 143 in the Public Trustee's office, 45.5 in the medical examiner's, and 16 in motor vehicle accident claims.

There were some general comments at the beginning of your comments, hon. member, that I would like to just spend a moment talking about. There's absolutely no doubt that there are many challenges, as you have noted, within the Justice ministry. You're quite right that it's necessary to collaborate with other ministries and with groups within the public at large who have some aspect within their purpose for being that overlaps with the Justice ministry goals.

8:40

For example, it is very usual for us to collaborate with the Solicitor General, because from my perspective the Solicitor General's department really is the other side of the justice or the law and order coin. We are inextricably connected to the people who enforce and do the investigation. We have a lot to do with Children's Services as a result of domestic violence issues. We have quite a bit to do with Health and Wellness as a result of matters such as diversion programs and mental health, in the context of Aboriginal Affairs with respect to aboriginal affair's initiatives, Education with respect to the education programs and curriculum that we work on in ensuring that people in our schools have access to current and relevant information with respect to our justice system. Obviously, we are taking advantage of the good work of the Minister of RAGE in his efforts of ensuring that the SuperNet will be once again back on schedule so that sometime this fall we will be able to plug in and do some of the things that I referred to in my opening comments.

As it relates to the community at large, I can just give you an example of a meeting that I had last week. There's a committee that we have called the Justice advisory committee, which arose out of the justice summit back in the latter part of the '90s. That particular committee was originally struck to ensure that the recommendations that came out of the justice summit at that time were ultimately implemented. That work has largely been done, so now we're dealing with the second aspect of the mandate for that group, and that is to provide advice and direction to the Justice ministry in the work that they are doing.

The meeting that we had last week included members of police forces. For example, there were members from the Edmonton police force and the RCMP K Division. We had, obviously, members from the Justice ministry at that meeting. We had a representative from the John Howard Society, we had different representatives from different locations dealing with domestic violence, we had members

from the aboriginal community, both First Nation and Métis, and we had representatives from our courts, the superior courts and also the provincial court. That gives you some flavour of the broad representation.

The purpose of this particular meeting was to once again revisit the mandate of the committee and say: "Is it still relevant? Should we be changing the mandate? How can we do this job better?" I can tell you that we had a very good discussion at that time, hon. member, and that it was agreed by the people in that room that this committee continues to be relevant and that it is important to Alberta Justice to hear from them. What's necessary is that we do a combination of allowing for those who are part of this large diverse group to bring forward ideas and feel free to do that, and that we also use it as an education opportunity for Alberta Justice to talk about some of our initiatives.

That is the type of reaching out that we do in Alberta Justice, not only to other ministries but to the community at large. We recognize that there are people out there on the front lines who are working in the justice system, whether it's mediation or from the John Howard Society or whatever, and they see things that we don't necessarily see that they can provide input on into how to make this justice system of ours more accessible, more user-friendly, more understandable, whatever the case may be. So as a general proposition we are definitely in favour of ensuring that the broader community have an opportunity to participate, and we will be working with that group, going forward, developing agendas which will be meaningful for everybody at that table. I hope to be able, as time goes on, to share with you some of the initiatives that come out of that.

There was some discussion with respect to this government wanting to get tougher with respect to crime. In that particular area part of what we talk about, without a doubt, is getting tougher. We seriously believe and have for some time that it's necessary for offenders of serious crime to do serious time, and this particular issue in large measure centres around conditional sentencing. My predecessor at Alberta Justice, now the hon. Minister of Advanced Education, going back some four years did a paper with respect to the need to change conditional sentencing because it is being used in ways that were in our view never contemplated by the federal government. The Criminal Code wording was such that it was ultimately interpreted by our courts in a way that was never intended.

Essentially, what we have been saying is that in our view there should be a situation where conditional sentencing is appropriate, and that is for less serious crimes. Absolutely, not everybody who commits a crime should be going to jail. There are lots of examples of where conditional sentencing is quite appropriate. But the ones that gain the headline, the ones that ultimately cause the grief for people who are dealing within the system are ones where there is serious violence or sexual assault and similar offences, including sexual assault on vulnerable victims such as children, impaired driving, dangerous driving and criminal negligence involving death or serious bodily harm, and theft committed in the context of breach of trust. Those are situations where we believe the Criminal Code ought to be amended in some fashion so that there is going to be jail time rather than house arrest, if you will.

Another area where this is particularly prevalent these days – and I think there was another example of it in the paper just yesterday or today – is trafficking where there was house arrest. People who have grow ops, people who have these meth labs ought to be going to jail, and part of the problem with respect to that has everything to do with the conditional sentencing provisions.

So my predecessor in conjunction with, I believe, principally the justice ministers of Manitoba and Nova Scotia put together a

proposal where there are four options outlined, and I can tell you that at the January meeting of justice ministers and attorneys general, the FPT meeting in Ottawa, that matter was once again brought up by us, and everyone around that table was in agreement that something had to be done. There was no disagreement with respect to the need to change the wording in the Criminal Code to toughen up, if you will, the conditional sentencing provisions. That matter has gone to the deputy ministers for further review. They will be coming back to the ministers, and we will be talking about it again.

The paper that we put forward is one that has four options, and the issue going forward is: which of the four options can we agree on? There's one that we prefer. There are obviously ones that other provinces prefer. From my perspective any of those four options is better than where we are today. So, hon. member, I can tell you that this is an area where all of the justice ministers, all of the attorneys general in Canada at this point in time are in full agreement that something must be done in that area.

Now, having talked about toughening up matters, I also think it's important that you understand that we recognize that you have to go to the root cause of these issues in order to address some of these crimes. So, for example, we have domestic violence court. Domestic violence court is another one of those examples where we work with other ministries. We work particularly with Children's Services and Health and Wellness in developing a system where the perpetrator and the families have the opportunity to receive the support and treatment and assistance that they need. There's an example of this court here in Edmonton, and there's an example of this court in Calgary and also in Lethbridge, so that's where they are at this point in time.

8:50

In Calgary the initiative is now over four years old. It's been around for four years. We've had fairly good results. In fact, the results have been the subject of a study, which is unusual in this area, that people can find the funds to study it, but that is the case. The results are awesome. The recidivism rate has dropped from 34 to 12 per cent, and when the full support of the treatment program is provided to the perpetrators, it drops to less than 6 per cent, some very, very powerful statistics. That's why we are completely supportive of it. That is why we are putting more money into it, and that is why we would like to ultimately have that expanded beyond the three centres that we have at present.

Another example of this kind of idea. Although it's not yet a reality, there are a couple of proposals, I believe one from Calgary and one from Edmonton, that are the initiatives of people at the local level, principally the judges and, I think, people perhaps from the bars, to have drug courts where something similar would be provided in terms of support from the social services and from health. These particular applications were done in response to a call from the federal government for applications for drug courts, and there are three or four other locations, I believe all to the east of Alberta, that are also vying for that.

We will wait and see what happens, but if we are successful in having one or two, we will certainly work to ensure that those pilot projects get up and running with a view to trying to provide some assistance early on in the piece because part and parcel of the justice side of this is to deal with these problems quickly rather than to allow them to fester in the court system for weeks and perhaps months. If that happens often, you lose the opportunity that you might otherwise have had.

I certainly share your perspective regarding the media and the role of the media in communicating information regarding the justice system and in large part moulding the public's opinion. I would also

agree that typically what you read with respect to justice matters are sensational stories or ones which grab the public's attention. But I can tell you that the media are also very responsible from time to time in this area.

For example, we have had very, very good coverage regarding the HomeFront program. We have a dedicated prosecutor, Val Campbell, who heads up the domestic violence program for Alberta here in Edmonton, and she's been getting very, very good press for the good work that she is doing in educating. I think at this point in time she has now educated over 2,000 police, court workers, social workers, people of that ilk, judges on domestic violence throughout the province. And we've been getting very, very good response to our dedicated prosecutor on child pornography and luring, Steve Bilodeau, who has had some wonderful success in prosecuting child pornography and luring cases, which of course are sensational and troublesome in a society, but the fact is that he has been receiving good press for the work that is being done by him and by Alberta Justice.

Ontario has approached this problem in a way that we are following. The Attorney General there this past January set up a joint committee involving the media, the solicitor general, justice, and the judiciary with a view to working on issues of justice and the media. I think the general theme is that both the media and the justice system have something to learn from the other about the level of understanding. If we can identify some of these problems and develop ways to gain a better understanding by the media of the justice system and vice versa, we might be better able to get our messages out. So we understand that particular point, and I can tell you that we're very conscious of it.

We work very hard at trying to get out good messages with respect to the justice system. For example, I just met with the mayor of Grande Prairie a couple of weeks ago, and during the course of this he said: "You know, we'd love to have some material that could go into our local press that relates to our community. Obviously, the local press would choose to run it or not. But if you can give us statistics on the justice system and what you're doing in our community, what initiatives you have, things of that nature, we'd very much appreciate it because we would like to hear more about that." So when communities like Grande Prairie come to us and say, "We would like an opportunity to hear more about the justice system," we get right on that. In fact, we're on it now, and we're trying to develop stories that would be of interest to the Grande Prairie vicinity that they can run in their media.

The Alberta Law Reform Institute. There was some discussion with respect to that. I just met with a committee of the Alberta Law Reform Institute a couple of weeks ago. The purpose of the meeting was to have a general discussion but was more specifically to talk about some very good work that they are doing on a rewrite of the *Alberta Rules of Court*, which haven't been revised in a meaningful way since the '60s. There have been band-aid fixes here and there but not a complete overhaul. We have an Alberta Rules of Court Committee, which is over here, and then you need a body that has the resources and the time and the dedication to actually do the fundamental work of the background philosophical material, and I'll talk more about that later.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and make some observations on the estimates before us tonight, the estimates for the Department of Justice and Attorney General. I want to thank the minister for giving his introductory remarks, which were precise, focused, intelligible to us the people who are lay to the justice system and to the legal profession.

I also want to applaud the work that the members of the department, who are perhaps sitting in the members' gallery, have done in assisting the minister to prepare the business plan, the budget, and perhaps the notes for him to bring forward to us, gave him good briefing on that. So thank you to you who are sitting back there watching us look at what this ministry has to offer by way of this budget and its programs.

Mr. Chairman, I'm looking at page 351, which talks about "significant opportunities and challenges," draws a broad picture of how the system works, the incidence of crime, the increase and decrease in percentages of particular kinds of crime. That information is useful to take stock of where we are and where we might want to go and why we are not getting to where we want to go.

I just want to draw to the attention of our colleagues in the House some crime statistics. The latest year for which they are available is 2003. "The national crime rate increased by six per cent. Alberta's crime rate for that same year increased 7.7 per cent, with a 9.5 per cent increase in property crime and a two per cent increase in violent crime." I think it's refreshing to see the department confronting some facts head-on. It is sobering that the national rate is increasing – it increased by 6 per cent – but the Alberta rates increased even faster. Such a sobering statistic under Justice and Public Safety Trends. That's the section that I'm looking at. Then it gives a breakdown in terms of the types of crimes that are there.

9:00

Then I go down on the same page to Aboriginal Justice, and the numbers there are always, of course, chilling in their tenacity. You know, year after year after year we find that in spite of the best efforts of all levels of government, the level of crime in our aboriginal communities refuses to decline, or shrink. The figure given here, again, is that that's the part of the Alberta population where the youngest age group is the largest in proportion. One-third of the aboriginal population is 14 years of age or younger. That in itself presents great opportunities but also challenges.

The department does recognize that the crime rate in the aboriginal community both in terms of the numbers of victims and offenders is a serious challenge, a serious matter. The overrepresentation by far of aboriginal persons in custody or in jail is really staggering. They form only about 7 per cent of Alberta's population while their numbers in provincial youth and adult custody are, as quoted here at least, one-third, 33 per cent. So it's four times to five times the proportion that the aboriginal population constitutes of the provincial population. It's a challenge that we cannot let fall by the wayside. We need to find ways of addressing it with the co-operation, of course, of the aboriginal communities and the leadership from those communities.

One other fact that I just want to note here, Mr. Chairman – and again I think the department has done a good job of addressing the issue head-on – is family violence and protection of children. What it says here again concerns me a great deal. "Addressing family violence is one of the priorities for the Government of Alberta." I've been around for eight years, and this is true. This is a commitment that's made every year, yet "one-quarter of all victims of violent crimes reported in Canada in 2002 were family violence related. Of those, nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) were spousal and 85 per cent of the victims were women." It's the last sentence here that really is worthy of note. "Alberta continues to have the highest rates of family violence in this country." There is, clearly, a chronic problem. It continues to have the highest rate.

That raises very serious questions in my mind. This is also the province where the official policy is to strengthen family, to strengthen the traditional family structures. In spite of that, in spite

of the fact that officially the government commits itself to supporting family structures, it's also the case that that family structure produces the highest rate of family violence in the country. I think we need to seriously ask the question: why is this the case, and what are the limits of the role that the government can play and this ministry can play in battling down this particular statistic? On the other hand, we need to ask: what are the limits to the ability of the government departments on this, not only this department but other departments in the government, too, that deal with family support and family issues?

I think it's too easy to simply make the observation and then move on and not ask some tough questions about what can or cannot be done. I think it's about time that we paid some more serious attention to it. Again, as I said, these pages are very, very helpful in coming to grips with some of the problems that we face and asking the questions about how we can approach these problems and make a dent in reducing the incidence of some of these acts of violence and of crime.

Traffic safety is another I think key problem in Alberta. It's growing, and I'd like to ask the minister: what particular actions are built into the budget here, if any, to deal with that problem as well as the family violence issue?

If I may make one suggestion to the minister, one that the minister's staff, I'm sure, would be paying attention to. When I look at Justice and Public Safety Trends, the first paragraph there, the percentages given are not very helpful, those numbers. Alberta's population is growing. One could argue, of course, that the percentage increase in the crime rates is lower than the percentage increase in population. I wonder if the rates of crime could be presented in relation to population units, whether it's 10,000, 100,000, whatever, so that we could get a better handle on whether or not these percentage increases, in fact, are just due to a rapid increase in population or whether these are just, you know, last year's numbers.

Those numbers are a function, I guess, to some extent of the increase in population. To get a better handle on whether or not the incidence of crime is really increasing, if we reported these crime numbers related to per unit of population, that might help us keep better track of whether or not the crime is increasing in fact. I was looking at the numbers, and I'm saying: "What do I make of this? Should I really get terribly concerned about the increase in crime, or does it just reflect more numbers and, therefore, percentages going up because of the more numbers in the population?"

One last point on that is the changing legislation as part of the same challenges here. The Fatality Inquiries Act is mentioned as one initiative that the ministry has taken. That particular reference to the Fatality Inquiries Act led me to look at the strategic priorities section, which is on the next two pages, from page 353 onwards. I notice there that the second major priority is partnership and public knowledge. "Justice will continue to place a high priority on maintaining a constructive dialogue with our stakeholders and the public in order to ensure our services continue to meet the needs of Albertans in the most effective way possible," and on it goes.

One of the reservations that I had about the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005, is that changes being proposed there, in fact, will make it more difficult for the public to continue to have the capacity to take a direct look at how the system works. The transparency and the ability of the media to be present during the fatality inquiries is a public oversight. Their presence, even if they cannot report and do not report and can't become, in fact, parties with some interest in the process, gives the public some confidence that the system remains open. The public has good reasons to have confidence in the system because it is open and is subject to public oversight. People do rely on the media for getting to know what's

going on around them, including what's happening in the public justice system and how it works and fails to work sometimes. So there are some concerns that I have.

9:10

While the commitment under the strategic priorities with respect to keeping in touch with the public and making the system accessible both in terms of the public knowing how the system works and getting the results when they go to the system in a quick and expeditious manner is a good thing, there are some contradictions that I see between the actions taken and the commitments made here. The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005, is one of those contradictions that I notice there.

Organized crime: again, I find here on the priorities. It says, "Globalization has facilitated the commission of organized crime." I thought organized crime, even prior to the era of globalization, was already global in some ways. That's why we called it organized crime. It wasn't that it organized and operated within national jurisdictions alone. No, it didn't. It moved across boundaries. So that's kind of a quote, unquote, global statement.

I'm not sure if I understand what's meant by this statement that says that globalization has facilitated the commission of organized crime. Technology may. Transactions across borders through, you know, electronic media and electronic technology may do it. Internationalization of financial operations and transactions will do it. But globalization as such, as I understand it, I don't know how it's directly connected to this.

Since it's an official document of the government, I think we need to make it clear enough, lucid enough so that we can understand exactly what's meant when these big terms are used in contextualizing the government's commitments or anchoring them in those kinds of terms and phrases. That said, I have a few questions.

I saw somewhere that as part of the priorities there's also an emphasis on making the legal system, the justice system more accessible to those in need. Legal aid is one of those mechanisms, I suppose, that allows people to be able to go to our courts even if they cannot themselves pay for very expensive legal costs.

When I look at the ministry's budget, that's one item where I think the money allocated for 2005-2006 is, in fact, somewhat less than it was for the year that's just gone by. It's reduced by about \$900,000, reduced by 3 per cent. I would ask the minister to explain why that is the case if legal aid does in fact serve as an important means to facilitate access of certain members of the community to the justice system and the court system.

We have had over the past many years concerns from lawyers, members of the legal community who work as part of the legal aid network, the Legal Aid Society. They have had concerns about being paid much less than their services would fetch them in the legal marketplace. I wonder if this further reduction from last year to this year in the legal aid funds would in fact impact on payments to lawyers who provide this very necessary legal service to Alberta citizens who need these services.

Court services. I don't know exactly what it means. I think it probably includes judges and prosecutors and others. Again, the reduction in the court services budget for this year is to the tune of 11 per cent. It's cut back from close to \$127 million in 2004-2005 to \$113.2 million for the current fiscal year. I would like the minister to explain, perhaps, how this reduction is going to be managed and what negative impact, if any, it might have on the operations of the court services.

Ministry support services have gone up by 27 per cent on the other hand, from \$14 million to close to \$19 million. Again, there's

obviously a redistribution of funds within the line items in addition to it being a fact that overall the budget has increased by some amount. Or has it? No, there's actually somewhat less in the ministry programs. It's somewhat less than last year.

So these are some concrete questions related to the budget. I have made some observations on general policy issues and priorities of the department. Maybe the minister would like to respond to some of these questions if he so chooses. Then I'll have another opportunity later on.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for his compliments to the members of the ministry and also for the many insightful comments and questions that you've asked. I will address some of those now, and you will have the balance addressed in writing at another time.

I thought I'd start, perhaps, with a couple of comments regarding legal aid. I've had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the Legal Aid Society, and their opening line to me, hon. member, was: things are excellent. That is not to mean that there aren't challenges in legal aid, but things are very good in Alberta with respect to legal aid at this particular point in time.

As it relates to the budget, we have a situation where the current five-year program regarding funding for legal aid still is in place. I believe it expires in the spring of next year. The money that legal aid has available for the criminal and civil work that it does is principally from the province of Alberta, so we are the principal funder. There is some money that comes from the federal government for sure, but we are the principal funder.

The money that you see in our budget is not all of the money that they, in fact, expend. What happened at some point in the past is that a special fund was endowed, if you will, with significant dollars. If legal aid's budget for this year according to our information is, say, \$30 million, it will be more like \$40 million, with them utilizing the dollars that have been set aside in this special fund to pay for the work that is actually being done. That money is in place and will be available to cover off the needs of legal aid for the balance of the term of the current contract. So all is good on that front, hon. member, and we can provide you with some more specifics on that, but that's the gist of how it works.

At the justice ministers' federal/provincial/territorial meeting in January one of the major issues of discussion was a renewal of the agreement between the federal government and the provinces and territories regarding ongoing funding for criminal – another five-year term, I think, is generally what was asked by the ministers – but there was also a demand for an expansion of the funding that the federal government currently provides for the civil side. At this point in time there is very little in the way of civil legal aid funding from the federal government. There's some in the immigration area, and there might be a very niche area that they provide some funding to, but generally speaking very little.

9:20

The ministers across the board said that that was an area where federal government could do more. The current Justice minister is sympathetic but indicated that his sympathies might not generate into support in an economic sense from his colleagues at the cabinet table. That is where that one was left, but there's absolutely no doubt that the justice ministers across Canada are interested in the federal government renewing their commitment to this going

forward. We're all on the same page on that, and in fact from my perspective in Alberta we are doing very well at this point in time, and the people that I have met with are happy with the situation as it currently stands, recognizing that there are issues going forward. There are issues going forward in everything that we do, but we are going forward from a very good place.

Some comments, perhaps, regarding aboriginal justice. As a starting point, I think it's important to recognize that Justice is a co-champion of the aboriginal policy framework, I believe, and we're also involved in most of the matters that aboriginal affairs is dealing with. We're involved, for example, in the consultation program that is currently being put in place. We're involved in Métis harvesting, in providing advice with respect to that. The short of it is that justice is inextricably linked to aboriginal matters.

The statistics that you were alluding to are absolutely correct. There is a fundamental, systemic problem of perhaps a near crisis or crisis proportions, certainly when you take into account the long-term trend that would appear to be based on what is currently happening. I think that the government has identified that. It's not that we haven't identified it. It's not that we aren't working in a collaborative way. I would imagine that virtually every ministry is part of the aboriginal policy framework with perhaps the exception of one or two that just don't have a direct connect, and even there they probably have some connection. I'm thinking of Gaming, for example, which wouldn't necessarily logically apply, but there in fact is an aboriginal policy in the Gaming ministry.

We're talking about aboriginal justice today, and I think that I'd like to talk about some of the things that we are doing. I can tell you that there is a program to educate the Crown prosecutors to deal with First Nation people, and there are three levels of training courses provided to Crown prosecutors. The first phase is general aboriginal cultural awareness, the second phase is cultural camp, and the third phase is a program that blends the study of significant legal issues arising in criminal cases involving aboriginal people with aboriginal awareness and spirituality.

By March of 2003 close to 100 per cent had taken phase 1 of the training, and this year phase 1 training will be made available to the newly hired prosecutors who have not yet attended the program. We have an active aboriginal cultural awareness program that is alive, well, and is working with the Crown prosecutors because, as you noted, hon. member, there is a very direct relationship between aboriginal people and the criminal justice system and, indeed, an overrepresentation of aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

We have developed innovative options for diversion. We've got the aboriginal Crown prosecutors liaison program. We have aboriginal courts, and we have court worker programs that are referred to in the budget, which are to assist aboriginal people who are interfacing with the court system. I can tell you that we are just in the process of reviewing that particular program. I think some 3 million plus dollars is expended on the aboriginal court worker program, and the time has come for us to assess exactly how that has been working to determine whether we can establish some benchmarks, whether we are getting all we can out of that particular program given the money that we are spending.

That is a program that is in the process of being reviewed, very early stages. It's just a start-up, but some time over the next year, perhaps a year from now, I'll be able to report to you on what the outcome of that is and how we might be able to make that particular program more meaningful both for Justice in general and for aboriginal people in particular. There are a number of things that we are doing, and in the written response I'll provide more detail, hon. member.

There was some comment with respect to the seriousness of domestic violence, and there's absolutely no doubt about that. It seems that every week we read about new cases that are simply horrific, and that is one of the reasons that there is this program that Alberta Justice has been working on with a number of partners and police services called the Alberta relationship threat assessment and management initiative.

[Mr. Lindsay in the chair]

There was a situation here in Edmonton where a woman was stalked by a man for 17 years. This is a situation where this woman met this man, passed him in the hallways at high school, and for the next 17 years he followed her. As I understand it, she ultimately left the country. Her family remained here. She'd come back from time to time, and he was always there. About three or four years ago he was charged, finally. It's very difficult to deal with stalking because the criminal law really doesn't have the appropriate charge tools. In any event, there was a charge that was laid at that point in time, and it was determined that the individual in question was mentally ill, so he is now spending time in a hospital here in Alberta rather than in jail because that is where he should be.

The gist of it was that this woman, who has become an expert in stalking by virtue of her unfortunate situation, approached my predecessor and said: I think that you ought to take a look at this because I think that there's something that you can do; I think that you can help people like me who are in high-conflict situations. If you have the understanding, if you have the tools, then you will be able to intervene more quickly and more appropriately. The gist of this particular initiative is to provide a co-ordinated resource that could professionally assess threats and their level of lethality, formulate mitigation strategies, develop safety plans, assist the judiciary, and potentially conduct death interviews.

The situation is that under the current thinking you would have a unit like this in Edmonton for northern Alberta, a unit like this in Calgary for southern Alberta. You would have experts. You would have specialized prosecutors. You would have specialized police officers. You would have psychologists, psychiatrists. You would have these people on call to provide assistance as required. You might have bomb experts. The point is that you would have this cadre of expertise that would be brought to bear. This particular initiative was brought forward as a result of domestic violence and this very specific, horrific stalking incident.

The recent events in Mayerthorpe indicate very, very clearly that this particular situation is not only in domestic areas; it's throughout our society. There are high-conflict individuals doing things that have to be identified early so that we can address them appropriately and avoid the horrific consequences, which in the situation in Mayerthorpe and in many situations of domestic violence involve either death or very, very serious injury.

9:30

This particular initiative is going to be developed into a business case. It's an example involving the Solicitor General. I am sure that Children's Services, Health and Wellness, and perhaps other ministries will be involved, but more importantly it is going to involve the community: the Edmonton police force, the RCMP, the Calgary police force, and a number of other people in our communities, probably the people who work in the domestic violence field on the support side. So a very, very good initiative and one that I hope to be able to tell you more about when the business plan gets done.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

I can tell you, hon. member, that I've discussed it briefly with the Solicitor General, and we're both quite excited about this. I'm hoping that we can move it along through our system so that from a policy point of view it can be adopted by this government. That would be my wish, and if it is, hopefully we can work it into the business plan and the budget for the next year. But that is something that is a work in progress.

You asked about the court services, and you said that you didn't know exactly what it is. The situation with court services is that they, essentially, provide the administration, financial, and judicial support services to all levels of court in Alberta – the provincial court, the Court of Queen's Bench, the Court of Appeal – which, of course, are presided over by our independent judiciary. The program has about \$135.6 million dedicated to it, so it's significant. The manpower budget is about \$101.8 million, and 1,190 FTEs are involved in that particular area.

Some of the things that are being done there involve the funding of the family justice services, that we've referred to, and funding for the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which, of course, formerly was known as the Child Welfare Act. Both of these pieces of legislation have put significant resource issues to Justice that we have to address. Fortunately, we have funding for that. The funding for the family justice services is some 1.776 million dollars, and we've got funding for the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act of some 1.78 million dollars. So there are significant resources that we are putting into that. Those are some of the things that are going there.

For example, under family justice services we are implementing the Family Law Act and aligning services by rewriting the current content of services to conform with the new legislation. We're reorganizing the services. We're commencing expansion and standardization of services, including the expansion of family court counselling. We're expanding family mediation, putting more money into the parenting after separation program and child support resolution projects, and we are putting significant dollars into court-generated orders because in the family court area it's important that the orders be prepared when people are in court so that they can walk out of court with those orders knowing full well what their rights and responsibilities are. So we're working very seriously in that area.

Those are some of the things in specific that we are spending this year's new money on. Generally speaking, court services are everything that you would find in the administration of our courts.

So those are some of the comments that I have, and perhaps somebody else would like to make some comments and ask some questions.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to thank the minister for his introductory remarks and response to questions. They've been very helpful and encouraging. I commend the minister and his department on the work that's being done to address the strategic priorities for 2005 to 2008.

I'd like to talk about the first priority: children, youth, and families. It's stated – I'll sort of summarize here – that

families are the foundation of society and children and youth are our most [important] resources. While it is important to promote self-reliance of Alberta families . . . services must be in place to respond to family violence, spousal [abuse] . . . and related legal issues. The Ministry plays an important role in providing . . . social supports to vulnerable children and youth to assist them in achieving positive outcomes. When youth do become involved with the criminal justice system, they must be held appropriately accountable and options must be in place to [help] them to behave more responsibly.

I really support the efforts to provide social supports, to offer justice to our vulnerable. Unconditional support for all in need among us is the mark of a civilized society. On the other hand, my experience as a high school administrator at times required work with students involved in criminal activity, sometimes taking advantage of the vulnerable.

Unfortunately, I agree that sometimes we do not do enough to help these individuals make better decisions and behave responsibly. Resources are limited, and they will take advantage of that. I've spoken with probation officers who felt helpless and used up because they do not have enough tools or enough consequence to make a decision. The lengthy process of going to court does not help, and they lack the resources to really monitor their clients. Some students who repeatedly broke probation expectations would eventually go to a court again and get more probation.

I also support your statements in priority 1 regarding the need to hold individuals appropriately accountable. I do believe that we must provide more help to front-line workers through staffing as well as some changes in the Criminal Code. I believe that tougher consequences can be a deterrent for youth who might be considering involvement in criminal activity. I also believe that consequences must be quick and not delayed. But I realize that addressing the root causes and providing proactive programs is essential, and I'm really glad to see the money that's going in that direction and supporting pilot programs.

So those are my general comments.

I do have some specific questions, though, regarding page 355 of the business plan, strategy 1.4, where it states that consistent with the Alberta drug abuse strategy Justice will

work with partners to enhance strategies that focus on enforcement and reducing the supply of drugs to [reduce] availability . . . and address community concerns about the environmental and health impacts of residences used for drug labs and grow operations.

We've paid a lot of attention to drug addiction, especially crystal meth, in this session, and I'm passionate about doing whatever we can to help eliminate this terrible problem. I'm wondering what specific strategies the ministry might be initiating to address the issue of grow ops. How are they addressing the issue of crystal meth in particular? Are there any plans to provide funding for more community- and school-based drug awareness programs similar to the drug abuse resistance education program, DARE, perhaps at the junior high level or into high school? Are there strategies in place or being developed to deal with persons with addictions, and will the ministry be actively involved in implementing treatment programs and detox centres for youth addicted to crystal meth? I know we're moving in that direction, but I'm wondering what role the ministry might have in this critical fight against crystal meth.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the hon. member for her comments. Generally speaking, I think it's important to recognize that Justice Canada handles the drug prosecutions rather than the provincial prosecutors. Now, there's a possibility of a certain set of circumstances which would see our prosecutors handle the case, but generally speaking, drugs are handled by the federal prosecutors.

9:40

There's no doubt, however, that the use of drugs impacts the general criminal justice system in the sense that there's a lot of violence and there's a lot of theft and there's a lot of damage and mayhem that goes along with the use of drugs, the sale of drugs, and all of that, the drive-by shootings and so on and so forth, which we

are responsible for. So while I started out by saying that we don't handle drug prosecutions, the fact of the matter is that day after day after day after day the people who do our prosecutions in our courts and who work for Alberta Justice are well aware that drugs do have a direct and significant impact.

I guess that some of the things we've looked at are that there's a Crown prosecutor from special prosecutions who's involved in a cross-ministry committee to make recommendations for both federal and provincial legislation, changes that would address precursor control, public health and environmental concerns with respect to methamphetamine in particular. One of the hon. members, I believe, has a private member's bill that will be before us in the next week or two regarding the issue of trying to deal with precursor control; that is, some of the component chemicals that go into the manufacture of methamphetamine.

The assistant director of regional prosecutions is involved in the AADAC community response model through the illicit drug-use working group, and several other government departments are also working in that group. He is also working closely with the drug-endangered children's strategy under the lead of the RCMP. The departments of Health, Children's Services, and Solicitor General are also part of that strategy. So there is no doubt that we are working on this area.

I know that the IROC committee – and we have special prosecutors in organized crime – are definitely working in the organized drug crime area as far as enforcement is concerned. When I met with the three other justice ministers of western Canada last December and we agreed upon a take-away from the meeting, it was that we would see if we could develop a conference on methamphetamine. The three prairie provinces in particular, more so than B.C., seemed to be concerned about this. That's not to say that B.C. is not concerned. It just seems to be a higher priority here, and my colleagues in Manitoba and Saskatchewan are particularly alarmed.

Now, at that point in time we'd already had a methamphetamine conference here just recently, so it may be that our level of understanding is a bit higher. There was some very, very good work that was done in the States at a conference. I believe it was the western attorneys general in the States that had this conference which in large measure dealt with methamphetamine, and some good material came out of that in I'd say the last three or four months.

I'm hoping that we can work together with the other justice ministers and have a conference, that we'd gladly participate in. It would probably be in Manitoba because Manitoba took the lead and said that they would be happy to move that matter along. So I'm hoping that some time in the next three or four months something might transpire in that regard. We take it seriously.

It's a very, very difficult subject to address. It's just so profitable. I can tell you this, hon. member, that I've seen statistics, and I'll see if I can find them. They're actually sort of encouraging only in a relative sense. You know, we talk about the profitability of drug production being so great in Alberta and elsewhere that the sentencing, particularly when you have a high probability of giving a conditional sentence, just simply does not provide either deterrence nor denunciation. But I can tell you on the basis of what I know that the Alberta courts are providing sterner sentences than, for example, British Columbia's. It's not to say that it's where we should be, but that type of thing in British Columbia, from my memory of the statistics, almost invariably results simply in house arrest rather than actually doing real time. That just simply is not ever going to deter people from engaging in what is such a lucrative area.

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've just been listening to the hon. Minister of Justice and wanted to ask him in terms of the legal aid, and this is more from my background and experience. I was just wondering in terms of foster parents. When I was working with them, they seemed to have difficulty getting access to legal aid from a point of view of dollars, and then there also seemed to be a shortage, especially in the rural areas of the province. I wonder if you would comment on that.

One other question I'd like to ask, and I wrote it down as you were talking: has there ever been thought of a loan program, for example through a financial institution, that would enable a foster parent to get access to legal aid and be able to get a loan and then pay it back? Has any system like that been thought of, or have you ever heard of such a thing across Canada?

Thank you.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you to the hon. Member for St. Albert. I'm not aware of any such system, and I'll have to ask the department to comment. The legal aid program, of course, is not run by the Department of Justice; it's run by the Legal Aid Society. We can provide particulars with respect to your specific question on foster parents and what the criteria are generally with respect to legal aid, but I can't answer that particular question at this time.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Back to the minister. I want to thank him for his attempt to answer in detail some of the questions that I had asked. With respect to court services his explanation was quite detailed, but my question was about the reduction in the budget by 11 per cent. How do you explain that? You know, there's \$13.4 million less budgeted for court services this year than last year. The population is growing. I suppose the number of judges is growing, and you have more prosecutors and others. How is it that you can do it on the cheap this time around? So that's one question. I have a couple of others.

Spousal violence. Thank you for giving some detailed account of what you're attempting to do to respond to this large problem. But my one question has to do more with prevention rather than dealing with matters after the fact. You know, much of the arrangements that you're talking about, the cross-departmental initiatives that you're taking about, seem to be focused on how to deal with the consequences rather than dealing with the question of how to reduce the incidence of spousal violence.

I drew your attention to the statement in the business plan where up front the department I think acknowledges that our rate of spousal violence is the highest in the country and has continued to be so year after year after year in spite of the fact that we value so highly our families and our commitment to family values and so on and so forth. First of all, I can't understand. I can't square the two: a province that pays so much attention to the issue of having healthy families also has the highest rate of family violence in the country. How do we understand this?

If we answer that question, that might help us get to the next question: how do we prevent it? How do we bring down the rate of family violence in this province to bring it perhaps closer to the national average, if not aim for some more ambitious goals? Is there a place in business plans to set such targets, as a matter of fact, that we're going to bring the family violence rate to the national average? If it's a desirable thing to do, why doesn't it see any representation in our strategic plans and business plans? And the same thing about aboriginal communities and the incidence of crime and violence. Why can't we at least try and set some sort of goals and then work towards them?

9:50

I see in the business plan references to measures of satisfaction, you know, with some of the practices and policies, but I don't see any bold initiatives and attempts to say: well, we're going to set some goals and move towards them; it may take us three-year business plans to get there, six years or whatever, but here are some of the steps that we are going to take based on some research, based on the knowledge that we've gathered from the past, and we hope that we'll start moving in that direction. That would give us a sense of hope and a sense of some positive sort of commitment of resources to those challenges.

I'll stop there. These are just two or three reaction comments that I had.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much. It wasn't that long ago that we had the conference on bullying and family violence. I think it was under the auspices of Children's Services or under the auspices of our now-Minister of Health and Wellness. I'm not the best person to speak about the outcome of that particular conference although I did attend for a while.

My sense of it is that it's a complex societal issue with many causes. It's sort of like when you start talking about poverty. You know, we can talk about it for a long time, and we can talk about a lot of strategies, and ultimately we end up doing our best and picking certain strategies which we hope will make some difference.

What I can tell you about Justice is that by the very nature of what we do – that is, deal with conflict – we are at the conflict end of the equation. The good news is that given that we're at the conflict end of the equation, we have developed alternatives to what is often a very poor way of addressing conflict, and that is to have the conflict addressed by a judge in a courtroom in an adversarial process. So we have developed family mediation so that we can have a collaborative, hopefully consensual agreement arise out of a recognition of the alternatives.

When we talk about family violence, we talk in terms of the good work that is being done in the HomeFront program in Calgary and in the Edmonton domestic violence court and the Lethbridge domestic violence court. There is an example of the justice system working in collaboration with Health and with Children's Services to provide the healing tools, if you will, to address not only the perpetrator but also the victims in the family. I've provided some of the numbers associated with that. They are documented. They are real, and they are very, very encouraging, and we are going to expand that program in the province. I think it's an example of the justice system working at the other end, if you will, to try and move people back to the other side of the equation where they can live better and more peaceful lives, and our communities will be safer. I believe that that is a positive initiative. That is the type of thing that we can do.

That threat assessment program that we're in the process of I think is another example of what the justice system can do, recognizing that there are some very bad people out there who are going to commit violence. What's necessary is that we identify who they are and that we intervene in an appropriate way. I alluded to this in an answer to Edmonton-Glenora's questions during question period today. The model in Canada that exists at this point in time is an Ontario police model. It's operated by the police department. I understand that they have been very, very successful in intervening by virtue of having the appropriate tools and have avoided any death in the circumstances in which they've intervened. It doesn't mean that people aren't still being murdered in Ontario as a result of

family violence. That still occurs, but they've been successful, as I understand it.

So what I'm hoping we're going to be able to do here is recognize in the justice system alternatives to having a judge alone determine the matter and have sensitive, well-trained prosecutors, have the appropriate resources supplied by Children's Services, Health, Solicitor General, whoever it may be, to provide healing tools to the people who are part of this conflict.

At this point in time I don't have a better solution, hon. member. I'm sure that's why we continue to reach out to people who are on the front lines saying: "Here's what we're doing. What do you think? How can we go from there?" Of course, we're very happy this year to have \$10 million of new money in our budget, which is a great deal of money for us. But \$10 million, as you know, in the scheme of the budget of this government is a relatively small amount. Now, that's not to say that Children's Services, Health, and Solicitor General don't also have additional dollars. They do, and a lot of those additional dollars are going into some of these programs that I've talked about, particularly the domestic court where they supply the healing tools that go along with this.

The Chair: After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Justice and Attorney General for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$287,531,000
---	---------------

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates of the Department of Justice and Attorney General and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Justice and Attorney General: expense and equipment/inventory purchases,	\$287,531,000.
--	----------------

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 1
Access to the Future Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to move third reading of Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act.

We've had quite a considerable amount of discussion on the act, including a number of proposed amendments in committee, but I think it's fair to say that all members of the House agree with the intent, the concept of the act, particularly with the access to the future fund, which is going to provide such a substantial boost to postsecondary education in this province, advancing the knowledge and learning of Albertans in this province, and the 4 and a half billion dollars of endowing the future, which is referenced in the act.

10:00

As well, of course, we shouldn't overlook the other things which are built into the act with respect to accessibility, affordability, and quality in our advanced education system and, in particular, the proposals to move forward with a common application process, which will simplify the way by which students get access to the postsecondary system and are assured that they can easily access the postsecondary system right across the province; the searchable inventory for scholarships, bursaries, and other financial assistance in order to make it easier for students to access financial assistance in getting an education; the proposals, the ability under the act to plan to increase participation of those who are disadvantaged due to social, economic, geographic, or cultural factors who are not participating at the same level as other Albertans in the system; recognition of prior learning. Again, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer as well as IQAS, the international qualifications assessment, do a wonderful job for Albertans.

But more remains to be done overall both in ensuring that financial need is not a barrier to pursuing an advanced education in this province and, as I like to say when I'm talking with Albertans, in having an opportunity for every Albertan who wishes to, who desires to, to move from where they are now to where they can be so that we can maximize the human potential of this province, not only so that people can have the economic benefits and rewards, which are, of course, important, but also so they can maximize their potential so that they're in the best position possible to give back to their community, to help create a better community, a better place for future Albertans.

So, Mr. Speaker, without further ado, I'd ask members of the House to support Bill 1 in third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, this could have been so much more, so much more than it is. It could even have been what was promised two months and a day ago, when Bill 1 was first read in this House. Even if it had delivered on the promise, it would have been so much more than the bill that we are being asked to approve today, and it could have been so much more than the promise too.

A \$3 billion cap on investment in the endowment fund. The minister opposite is right, Mr. Speaker. We have spent considerable time in debate and discussion around some of the fine points of this bill. I don't know whether the minister would consider the cap to be

one of the fine points or not. It seems to be one of the pretty major points to me. We did get into an interesting discussion, almost an Orwellian discussion really, of what is meant by the term "cap." You see, on this side of the House we take a cap to mean a ceiling. We take a cap to mean the point to which the fund can rise and then it can't go any farther, at least not without a review, an amendment, a change to the act to allow it to do so. The minister regaled us and entertained us at some length with some discussion about how it's more of a floor than a ceiling, really, an incentive to put money into the act.

Then along came the budget, and the \$3 billion cap, the ceiling that has magically become a floor, turned out to be the basement. The budget promised and committed \$250 million to the access to the future fund – \$250 million – one-twelfth of the promised \$3 billion. Is it difficult to understand why, with the exception of three university administrators whose gushing praise for the budget was quoted by the Premier the next day in question period, so many college and university and technical institute faculty and staff, support staff, administrators, and, perhaps most important of all, students and their parents are feeling somewhat let down, somewhat disappointed by this?

We started out talking about the possibility of a real postsecondary education endowment fund that would produce significant income on a yearly basis, not as much as this side of the House would like to have seen, but that's all on the record. I don't want to spend a great deal of time reviewing that. At \$3 billion it would have produced \$135 million in income annually to be invested in excellence in postsecondary education in the province of Alberta.

The minister is quite right, Mr. Speaker. Everyone in this House does agree with the intent of Bill 1: to improve accessibility, to improve affordability, to improve the quality of postsecondary education, not just to improve it but to make it the best in the nation. So at \$3 billion we would have had from the endowment fund \$135 million worth of income to invest towards that excellence every year. At \$250 million we get \$11 million a year, or \$61 per postsecondary student in the province of Alberta per year. If you break that down further, divide it by the number of days in a year, 365, you discover that it amounts to 16 cents per student per day.

I've used the comparison before. A college or university student in the province of Alberta could achieve on his or her own behalf as much as this bill promises to deliver, to actually deliver, by taking three empties a day back to the bottle depot. At least he or she knows that the bottle depot is going to be there next year. We don't know if there's going to be any more in the fund next year than is being put in the budget this year. [interjection] Oh, the minister says: trust us. Well, you know, for 12 years now the postsecondary education system in the province of Alberta and the students who go to it have been on a starvation diet, so you might be forgiven, if you're someone who's a stakeholder in that system, for perhaps not feeling all that trustworthy towards this government when they say: "Oh, don't worry. We'll put that money in someday." I don't know when. Maybe they'll put it in next week. Maybe it'll be an off-budget item, that they'll find the money next week. Maybe it'll be a week before the election. They'll magically come up with \$2,750,000,000 and say: "See, Alberta? We delivered on our \$3 billion promise. Now please vote for us." Maybe they will; maybe they won't. Maybe they'll put more in someday.

The point is, though, that the people of Alberta, the students of Alberta, their parents, their professors are left to play the waiting game and wonder when the other shoe is going to drop, and that's the way it is with this government all the time. There's a boom-and-bust mentality that exists on the other side of the House. Even with the creation of a sustainability fund, which was another Liberal idea

that they adopted – and good on you for doing that – they still haven't quite gotten past that idea that everything must go in a boom-and-bust cycle. So when we have money, we'll spend it like there's no tomorrow. Like the bumper sticker said, "Please, God, let there be another oil boom, and I promise I won't bleep it all away this time." Only every time there is a boom, they bleep it away, and then there's nothing in the kitty when the bad times hit. You know, this could have been done in a much more predictable, sustainable way, but that's not their style. I understand that.

I was told at the beginning of this session of the Legislature that what we do in third reading is we debate the effect of a bill. Well, unfortunately, there's not much effect to debate in this bill. Oh, there are some good things about it, no question, but the centrepiece of the bill, the money, the fund, the endowment fund, is sorely lacking, and it won't do much at \$11 million. It won't do much for the system, and it won't do much for all the students in the system, and it won't do much for the future of Alberta. It might do a great deal for one or two programs, one or two chairs in research perhaps or a couple of bursary or scholarship funds or maybe some combination thereof. Listen, that's more than we have right now. I'm not knocking the fact that \$11 million a year is \$11 million a year more than we have right now. It's just that in comparison to what it could have been, it's not enough.

10:10

That brings us to another I think failing of this bill, and that is that the advisory council that is supposed to advise the minister on worthwhile projects and programs for the endowment fund's modest income to go into is continuing to be a creature of whatever whim the minister has when he decides to appoint this thing. Now, we tried to move an amendment there that would specify to some extent who should be represented on the access advisory council so that it's making good decisions. The minister said that it was too prescriptive. Well, okay. But, again, the people are looking, I think, for a predictable plan and a way to get there, and I don't believe that this bill delivers on that except that we come back to the minister's entreaty to us all to trust him and to trust his colleagues on the government side of the House.

I'm not for a minute suggesting that this minister would do such a thing, but in the way that this bill has set things up, with really no obligation to even consult with the advisory council and full authority to design that advisory council however the minister sees fit, it gives a minister, in effect, a significant – I was going to say "massive," but \$11 million isn't massive, folks – slush fund, the opportunity to do things with that money that are not necessarily in the public interest. There are no checks and balances written into legislation to prevent a future minister from doing precisely that, and that, Mr. Speaker, is wrong.

We moved an amendment as well dealing with a reporting requirement, an accountability requirement on the minister's part. Again we were told: no need to pass that amendment because we're going to do it anyway. Well, okay. Where is it written that you're going to do that? It's not written that you're going to do that.

We tabled some other amendments as well dealing with issues of ministerial consultation with the council, that in making grants from the fund, the minister would have to consult with the council, dealing with issues of clarity and accountability around the purposes of the fund, and so on and so forth. Those amendments we tabled, Mr. Speaker, to get them on the record. We did debate the three amendments that we felt were the most key: removing the cap on the fund, the composition of the advisory council, and the accountability requirement on the minister's part. I and my colleagues on this side of the House and, I think, not just in this party continue to believe

that this bill would have served the students and all people and, in fact, the future of the province of Alberta better if those amendments had been passed. It simply would have made it a more democratic bill if nothing else.

Lookit, there are some problems in the postsecondary education system in the province of Alberta. The minister recognizes it, and the government recognizes it. The people recognize it. Fifty per cent of the people of Alberta in an October of 2004 Decima poll agreed with the statement that "every qualified student should be guaranteed a place in a university or college even if that means spending more tax money." Seventy per cent of Albertans agreed with the statement that "university and college tuition fees in Canada are too high." Seventy-seven per cent of Albertans, the highest percentage of any province in the nation, answered the question "Do low-income Canadians have the same, better or worse chance of going on to university or college?" by saying "Worse."

The playing field is not level. It's perhaps impossible to ever make the playing field perfectly level. Maybe it's not even advisable to try for perfection. But it is advisable, and it is the right thing for governments to do, to try and level the playing field, to create a playing field as level as humanly possible so that all Albertans have the opportunity to at least reach for the dream and perhaps realize the dream of rising above the station that they find themselves in if nothing else.

We have in this province the second-lowest university participation rate among 18 to 21 year olds, 16 per cent; the second-lowest university attainment rate among 20 to 24 year olds, 11.3 per cent – the national average is 13 per cent, and Ontario is at nearly 15 per cent – and the lowest percentage of high school leavers who proceed directly to postsecondary education, 43 per cent. Quebec is at 77 per cent. Quebec also has a very favourable homegrown tuition regime for their own students, and I think there may be a lesson there.

We need to do work. I don't want to give the impression that there is nothing good in this bill; of course there is. Some of the points around accessibility and affordability – establishing enrolment targets, minimum entrance requirements, trying to come up with a common application process for entrance to public postsecondary institutions, a searchable inventory and simplified application process for scholarships, bursaries, and the like – are good initiatives; no question about it. But there's also no question that no matter how you hold this bill up to the light, no matter which way you turn it, no matter whether you read it upside down, backwards, front to back, back to front, you know, end to beginning, the centerpiece of this bill is the access to the future fund.

In that area, Mr. Speaker, this bill is sorely lacking. It could have been more than was proposed even. The point, the truly sad point is that it's much less than proposed, and the minister himself admitted it when he said that there is \$4.5 billion, because he likes to also refer to the ingenuity fund and the heritage scholarship fund and what's proposed to be put in there, referenced in the bill but not delivered.

Mr. Speaker, with Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, the number one piece of legislation in this legislative agenda, the showcase piece of legislation of this session of the Legislature, the piece of legislation that this government said would address the very real concerns of Albertans about the quality and the state of their postsecondary education system, this government looked greatness in the eye and timidly backed away, and that is a crying shame.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and continue the debate on Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, spon-

sored by the hon. Premier. I would like to focus my remarks this evening on the comments made earlier in the debate by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity. I know that the hon. member is especially concerned with this issue because the University of Calgary is in his riding. As a professor at the U of C for the last 24 years I would like to suggest that I am better able to comment on this issue and the conditions than someone such as himself, who by his own admission in this House has been to the university a number of times.

The hon. member mentioned the annual rankings of Canadian universities by *Maclean's* magazine and the fact that traditionally the U of C has not fared very well. Mr. Speaker, it is widely known in academic circles that this survey is so statistically flawed as to lack any practical value. It is a ranking based on reputation, and a ranking based on reputation does not reflect the reality of the quality of education that a student receives at a particular institution. Basing his evaluation of the University of Calgary on what is said in the *Maclean's* survey discredits the very pretext for the hon. member's criticism of Bill 1.

10:20

Part of the reason that the University of Calgary ranks lower than expected in the *Maclean's* survey is that the focus of the University of Calgary has been on increasing access. The University of Calgary has enrolled more students than any other postsecondary institution in Alberta for the better part of the last decade, but *Maclean's* magazine punishes the U of C for this access policy.

At the same time that the university has been admitting record numbers of new students, it has been steadily increasing the average grade point of the incoming first-year class. To date this year 97 per cent of the high school applicants to the University of Calgary have entering averages of 80 per cent or higher. In other words, the U of C has been achieving the goals of both quality and quantity in its undergraduate student body. First-year entry grades make up a large portion of the *Maclean's* criteria, which immediately places Alberta universities at a disadvantage. Why? Because Alberta's high schools have higher grading standards than the other provinces. We have not had the grade inflation witnessed in Ontario and other eastern provinces. Alberta is penalized by *Maclean's* magazine for producing outstanding high school graduates and increasing access to universities. Personally, I'm happy that I live in Alberta and not *Maclean's* magazine's ideal world.

In his comments the hon. member referred to the administration building at the university and criticized the government for not addressing infrastructure within Bill 1. He was very concerned over the colour of the walls and the shape of the doors in the administration building. These concerns may have been heartfelt but, of course, are completely irrelevant to the real priorities of a university. Mr. Speaker, colourful walls and fancy doors do not an education make. Bill 1 focuses on improving quality and access to our universities, not on interior decorating. Bill 1 and this government are focused on what happens within the building and getting people into the classrooms, not on what the walls of the classroom look like. As a university professor I share and applaud the focus of Bill 1.

I noted the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity's concern that the president's office is located in the administration building, with its ugly walls and big doors. Now, the hon. member may be excused for lobbying for a nicer office for one of his constituents, but I think that our resources would be better directed toward the classroom, and I think President Weingarten would also. In point of fact, over the past decade almost all major lecture halls at the University of Calgary have been upgraded and retrofitted with state-of-the-art audio, video, and Internet services. Contrary to the hon. member's

speech, U of C staff and students do not work in "Third World infrastructure" conditions.

Now, I know that the hon. member is concerned with the lack of infrastructure and the presence of portable trailers at our universities, but he appears not to have noticed that the U of C has recently opened the ICT, or information and communications technology, Building. This building is state of the art and allows the U of C to remain a leader in IT engineering, education, and research. Likewise, the health research innovation centre, the largest capital project in the university's history, will double the amount of space available for multidisciplinary and collaborative health research and will help Alberta continue to develop outstanding health science professionals.

Mr. Speaker, libraries are also extremely important to research, and evidently the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity has not visited the sprawling state-of-the-art learning commons on the second floor of MacKimmie Library. Having visited hundreds of universities across North America, I can attest that this is one of the best student-available access points for campus-wide Internet of any I've seen in North America.

On the subject of libraries, I'm especially pleased to see that the access to the future plan will be used to create a digital library in recognition of Her Honour Lois E. Hole. Linking students and professors from across Alberta enhances educational quality and opportunity and will allow Alberta to remain a step ahead of other jurisdictions.

The \$3 billion access to future fund as outlined in Bill 1 creates an endowment that will benefit future generations of Albertans. It will ensure access and encourage innovation in all Alberta universities and colleges.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity was notably silent on the many remarkable achievements of the world-class faculty at the University of Calgary. Despite a decade of financial duress in 2003-2004 the University of Calgary achieved a new single-year record of \$247 million in outside grants. That is a quarter of a billion dollars. There are 200 professors at the University of Calgary who earn their salary alone just in the outside research grants that they attract every year. This places the U of C in the top 10 universities in Canada for winning outside research funding. This somehow went unnoticed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Speaker, in the academic world when a university attracts a large number of outside grants, it means that it is succeeding in attracting and retaining quality researchers and professors. The endowment fund created by Bill 1 will help to attract still more top professionals to Alberta and the University of Calgary.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if all hon. members, but specifically, again, the Member for Calgary-Varsity, are aware of what's called the BlackBoard software program. With this program the term "blackboard" has taken on a whole new meaning from when I or any of you started university. This innovative software creates an online virtual classroom. Through this virtual classroom students and professors are able to communicate with each other 24/7. Students can hand in assignments online, converse with other students, access class notes, and receive handouts that they may have missed in class, 24/7. It's so simple that even I was able to set up my courses on BlackBoard in the last two years. This type of innovation is already occurring at the University of Calgary. It will be further enhanced by the Bill 1 endowment fund.

There are numerous other innovations being brought to life at the University of Calgary. The new Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy, known as ISEEE, is unique in the world for combining the interdisciplinary focus on these three key fields to Alberta's future. ISEEE has already attracted \$16 million in private

donations and public grants and will play an important role in Alberta's future in helping us to balance environmental protection with sustained economic prosperity.

Likewise, philanthropist Allan Markin's recent \$18 million gift to establish the Markin institute for public health will establish the U of C as a national leader in health promotion and prevention. Bill 1 will further enhance this type of world-class innovation and ensure that the U of C and Alberta's universities continue to produce the leaders of tomorrow.

Alberta already has a world-class postsecondary education system. However, the best system in the world is not helpful if people are not able to access it, and this is why Bill 1 addresses the issue of accessibility. By committing to increase the number of places available to Albertans in postsecondary institutions, we are ensuring that Alberta will be able to meet the needs of the knowledge-based economy going into the 21st century.

Bill 1, unlike the failed Liberal election platform, is a complete package. It focuses on access, innovation, and quality. With Bill 1 we are further strengthening an already strong postsecondary education system. Bill 1 allows Alberta's universities to excel and remain among the best institutions in Canada despite the unsubstantiated and unscientific claims made by *Maclean's* magazine and the Liberals.

As one who has taught at Alberta universities and colleges for the past 24 years, I can say with complete confidence that Bill 1 will successfully launch Alberta's postsecondary education into our second century. I would urge all members to support students in this province by voting for this government's very positive plan to enhance postsecondary education in our great province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for any questions or comments.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 1, Access to the Future Act, in its third reading. In spite of the attempts made by the opposition side to make amendments to the bill, the bill remains unamended and therefore is rife with all kinds of questions. It's a band-aid solution for a problem that's been allowed to burst out of control under this government's watch. Because of a sorry record of investment in the postsecondary sector, cuts, tuition hikes, other user fees, and replacement of stable funding for base operating grants for the minister's pet projects in the form of annual funding, we have a big mess on our hands in the postsecondary sector.

Do we really have a mess on our hands? Let's look at the facts. According to Statistics Canada low-income students are 2.5 times less likely to attend a university than their higher income counterparts. Tuition is now about \$5,000 for one year of undergraduate education, but the federal Human Resources and Skills Development department reports that 75 per cent of jobs in Canada require some kind of postsecondary education.

10:30

Meanwhile, debt for students with loans is on average about \$22,000 a year. This doesn't include all the private credit and credit card debt many students are now forced to rack up because the loan system is inadequate. Because departments are constantly cutting their budgets, sessional lecturers earn poverty-line wages with no benefits, and the private sector is increasing their involvement in both the funding and the kind of postsecondary education we offer here in Alberta.

The mess is just as big as the mess that this government made of the K to 12 sector in the lead-up to the teachers' strike in 2002. One of the ways this government started to dig itself out of the hole it created for itself in the K to 12 sector was to strike a Learning Commission, a good idea recommended by the leadership of the Alberta Teachers' Association. The Learning Commission was independent. Its recommendations were far reaching. Although the government is still stalling on some of the most innovative and worthwhile recommendations, it's a good basis of research and consultation.

One of those recommendations that was made by the Learning Commission was for this government to set up an independent commission to study postsecondary education. We need the same thing for this sector, Mr. Speaker. A crucial criterion for a postsecondary learning commission would be full independence; otherwise, it would be a waste of time and money. Indeed, I would like to ask the minister and this government precisely what they're afraid of in appointing such a commission and allowing it full independence. There are too many vested interests in this sector for it not to be independent.

The government has allowed too much involvement in the postsecondary sector by private, for-profit interests, either by allowing them to set up shop to sell degrees or allowing them to name buildings or sponsor programs of study or by appointing executives and other corporate players to the boards of our public institutions. We must take a clear-eyed look at this sector and not be blinded by the dollar signs that large American corporations see in the provision of what is called higher education services.

Bill 1 is ostensibly about access. A postsecondary learning commission would ask: what kind of programs will we want to make sure Albertans have access to? How do we make sure those programs have adequate resources? A postsecondary learning commission would be able to answer some of these questions and would give us a clear answer.

In Bill 1, however, access means a narrow commitment to putting bums in seats. It doesn't address what kind of education we want Albertans to have access to. Programs in the liberal arts faculties are being cut all the time. The U of C will cut 5 per cent from its departments this year. In the departments of sociology and political science at the U of A essential program enhancements like reading rooms and learning resources have been cut. Most new dollars go to hard sciences and business faculties. Envelope funding and tinkering with the university, college, and technical institute mandates mean that the government has oriented our postsecondary sector increasingly towards the needs of the private sector rather than making sure we contribute to the knowledge commons.

A postsecondary learning commission would also ask: access to what kinds of learning conditions? Classes are larger. Learning conditions are deteriorating, especially for undergraduates. The undergraduate experience is no longer one of developing relationships with profs and peers, debating ideas, and getting instant and constant feedback. Undergraduates are crammed into classes of 200, 300, or 400 or more.

Bill 1 is also supposed to address affordability, but the so-called tuition rebate is only for one year. A postsecondary learning commission would ask: what's an appropriate level of tuition? Is having among the highest tuition in the country acceptable in a province awash in so much cash? Is the current tuition fee policy serving well the students, their families, and the institutions they attend? Evidence would suggest that the current tuition fee policy is not serving students or institutions.

The Auditor General has pointed several times to inconsistencies in the calculation of the so-called tuition cap, where noninstructional

costs are included in, for example, the University of Alberta's general operating expenditures, meaning that the students were footing 30 per cent of the bill for university expenditures that had nothing to do with their education. This government is fond of touting the fact that students only pay 30 per cent of the cost of education. This assertion is false, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure that a fully independent postsecondary learning commission would find this.

University budgets in particular have ballooned due to the huge amount of research they are doing. Much of this is research for the private sector. There are many costs associated with this research, costs that have nothing to do with the cost of undergraduate education that students are subsidizing with their tuition dollars. These are called the indirect costs of research, and they include maintenance and infrastructure.

Students are paying far more than 30 per cent of the cost of their education. A postsecondary learning commission would re-examine the balance between student and government contributions to the cost of education and re-examine how, if tuition is allowed to increase. We need a fresh look at this issue. No more rhetoric about a phony 30 per cent formula dreamed up by Public Affairs.

Bill 1 proposes to address affordability, but only does so through a one-time, very small expenditure on tuition that could well be reversed or even charged back to students next year. Student loan limits have actually been raised, giving institutions more latitude to raise tuition and put students further into debt.

The minister talks about the best loan system in the country, but an independent postsecondary learning commission would put that bit of the government spin to the test. Here are some things that they would surely find. First, they would find serious gaps in our loan system. Parental contribution requirements mean that many middle-income students cannot access loans even if their parents cannot afford to contribute or refuse to do so. So they have to access private credit at sometimes loan shark rates of interest, which puts them further into debt.

A cap on part-time earnings means that students have their loans clawed back if they work in order to top up their student loans living allowance, which is currently at \$730 per month. Students are punished if they find that they cannot live off that and want to work in order to have enough money to live on. The part-time earnings cap should simply be abolished. It makes absolutely no sense in a province that builds myths and ideology on the notion that every individual should work as much and as hard as they can to contribute to the cost of their education.

The second issue surrounding our student loan system is the lack of accountability and the fiscal irresponsibility of such a system. Over the life of a loan every dollar this government lends out costs the government 50 cents in administrative costs. This information comes from the Students Finance Board. On every loan of \$22,000 this means that this loan will cost the government an additional \$11,000 for the period of the loan. This is not responsible use of taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker. We should be replacing our willingness to give out loans at large expense to taxpayers with a system of grants. A postsecondary learning commission would no doubt examine such an option and where this has worked in other jurisdictions.

The other issue is student loans for private, for-profit institutions. Because student loans cost taxpayers money in terms of administrative costs, the public has every right to know how much of their money is going to padding the bottom line or to shareholders of private, for-profit universities, colleges, or private vocational schools.

We know that for-profit universities such as DeVry and Phoenix

have very high tuitions. We also suspect on reasonable grounds that default rates for students who attend private, for-profit institutions are higher than students who attend public institutions. Is this a good use of public money? We need the answer to that question. Bill 1 does nothing to address it. A truly independent postsecondary learning commission, however, would examine the appropriateness of money flowing from the Students Finance Board to the bottom line or to shareholders for American-based multinational corporations like the so-called University of Phoenix.

Speaking of fiscal responsibility, I'd like to make some final points on the endowment fund set up by Bill 1. This endowment fund is a flawed concept from the very beginning. It relies on unbudgeted surplus revenues in order to grow. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that this kind of ad hoc, unbudgeted, unpredictable approach to funding postsecondary education is the very root of the problem and is the reason why we are in the mess that we are in. Investment in postsecondary education must be budgeted and predictable.

I'd also like to take issue with the kind of fund we are setting up with Bill 1 and indicate to the House that I have serious misgivings about this fund because it's not a far-reaching or visionary proposal for how to fund postsecondary education but a pot of money earmarked for pet projects and initiatives that will further involve the minister in the setting of priorities of academic institutions and further involve the private sector.

Neither of these outcomes is desirable for a public institution or a postsecondary public education system. Neither of these outcomes is suitable for institutions whose very reason for being is founded upon the need for a society to have places where we can seek knowledge for whatever reasons unrestricted by petty politics or the narrow self-interest of the marketplace. With this endowment fund the minister has far too much latitude in deciding which projects will receive funding, projects that require matching funds from well-heeled donors or from the private sector. That's a diserving way to disburse millions of dollars.

10:40

Also, this endowment fund is flawed because it funds only new projects. The reality is that existing programs are starving for cash because of a deliberate and sustained attack on the university, college, and technical institute base operating grants for the past decade. Bill 1 doesn't address that reality.

A postsecondary learning commission would recommend ways we could dig ourselves out of the various holes we have dug ourselves into in postsecondary education. There are so many questions to be answered. Tonight I have talked about affordability, equality, and accessibility, and at least touched on some of the ways that Bill 1 fails to adequately respond to pressing needs.

There are many other ways a fully independent postsecondary learning commission could contribute to the public debate on the future of one of the most important social institutions, social programs in this province. There is the problem of governance, which I've touched on in my comments with respect to the endowment fund, but the problem is infinitely more broad than that. It has to do with corporate and private-sector influence, the independence of general faculties' councils, and the role of students, departments, and faculties in setting institutional priorities as opposed to government and university administrations dictating what programs are offered under what conditions. There's also the problem of faculty recruitment, retention, and renewal, particularly in light of the appalling wages earned by sessional lecturers and their total lack of job security and benefits.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to say that Bill 1, although in principle it looked good and the fanfare with which it was of course put forth here on the floor of the House suggested that it will work miracles, unfortunately is flawed. Had the opposition amendments been incorporated into the bill, it would have addressed some of the serious problems with this bill. Regardless, we are at a stage where we can't look back and say: "We should have done that. We could have done that." We know that the bill has not been amended, and therefore it's very difficult to support a bill that carries so much baggage, raises so many questions, and fails to address the pressing problems that our postsecondary institutions and the system as a whole face and must address if it is to be able to serve the interests of Albertans – economic, social, and cultural interests – in an effective way over the next two or three decades.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I close my remarks and hope other members will want to speak to the bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, anyone else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Premier to close debate.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few remarks. It's unfortunate that members of the opposition, both parties, are not able to recognize that Bill 1 is not intended to be a budget. Bill 1 is not intended to cover every aspect of postsecondary education. Bill 1 did cover and does cover and makes a very strong leap forward in terms of setting up an endowment, which will endow the future of advancing education in this province and make a significant contribution.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie talks about the \$3 billion as a cap or a ceiling and totally misses the point that there's a target in the bill which the government is committed to. This government is committed to reaching a \$3 billion endowment fund. That doesn't mean it can't go up, but it certainly is something that's out there as a significant promise to Albertans. It was always the case that all of the endowments were going to be filled from surplus revenues.

In fact, he claims the concept as their own, which couldn't be any further from the truth because, as I mentioned earlier in this House, the concept was brought forward in many different ways but certainly by Harold Bannister. I want to thank him for his proposal some three years ago in terms of talking about a centennial endowment fund for the future of education. When the Liberals do claim that this was their policy, as I understand their policy, it was to fund it out of surplus revenues, so they wouldn't have included any money in the budget for it. So the fallacy of his argument is apparent.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, it's a great bill. It's a great concept. The access to the future fund has already engendered a huge amount of interest from people both within and without Alberta wanting to invest further in postsecondary education so that Albertans can advance their potential and help to create a great province.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 36
Police Amendment Act, 2005**

[Adjourned debate April 12: Ms Blakeman]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005.

This is a 17-year-old act but a very important one, and it's overdue. The purpose of this bill is to bring in greater public accountability and civilian oversight of the investigations into complaints against police officers and serious incidents involving police as well. There are provisions to clarify how municipal police commissions and police committees in areas served by the RCMP are appointed and function and provisions for a clearer process for the handling of complaints against the police.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments follow recommendations from the report of the Alberta MLA Policing Review Committee. The report was released in July of the year 2002. I am pleased and impressed by the committee following an effort to meet its purpose.

The amendments to the Police Act, that is supposed to provide for greater public accountability and civilian oversight of investigations into complaints against police officers and serious incidents involving police, fall far short of what the public and police commissions have been asking for. The new amendment fails to give teeth to civilian agencies in complaints against the police. Mr. Speaker, this amendment seriously fails to provide the level of public oversight that has been called for in the wake of several incidents involving serious police misconduct.

These incidents include the stakeout of a journalist and the former Police Commission chairman at the Overtime bar and the ruling of a judge that excessive force was used with a taser on a youth in an incident involving former police chief Bob Wasylyshyn's son, which the police originally delayed handling. In addition, there have been incidents involving the death of a youth, Giovanni Aleman, due to a police car involved in a high-speed chase without the use of emergency lights and sirens and involving the shooting of a single man armed with a knife by members of the EPS tactical squad. Mr. Speaker, incidents such as these have seriously eroded the public's confidence in the Edmonton Police Service as well as police services across Alberta.

In the wake of these high-profile incidents there have been serious concerns about the effectiveness of the police in conducting investigations into the misconduct of their members. These investigations are conducted without any public oversight and without any disclosure of all relevant information. Essentially, we are supposed to trust that the police are conducting themselves professionally and without bias. However, in order to restore the public's faith and confidence in the police, investigations and prosecutions of allegations of police wrongdoing should be conducted by a body with no connections to either the individual officers who are at the heart of the complaint or the police service of which those individuals are members. This is the only way to restore public confidence.

10:50

Our position should be that when there has been a form of police misconduct falling in terms of seriousness which can be dealt with internally, there should be an open and public forum responsible for examining the matter carefully and then ordering the appropriate measures to be taken to address any wrongdoing which is discovered.

There are two crucial elements to be addressed here, Mr. Speaker. The first is the need for actual independence and impartiality in order to ensure that the matter is being dealt with in accordance with established procedures and values. The second is the need to preserve the appearance of impartiality and objectivity so that members of the public maintain confidence in the system and will not be left with the impression that bias, favouritism, or prejudice had an influence in the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario has a special investigation unit which operates to oversee the police who act in the province. Their mandate is limited to situations in which death or serious injury may have been caused by police misconduct. The question here is: if the Ontario government could respond to the needs of its citizens by creating a truly independent civilian oversight, why can't the government of Alberta respond in kind to the wishes of its citizens?

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that with further amendments to this bill the concerns of both the police force and the public can be addressed. Substantial measures in the form of an independent civilian oversight are crucially needed in this province to serve the security needs of Albertans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any one wish to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make some brief comments on Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act. The police services play a very, very important role in our communities, in our society. They make our communities safe. They take huge risks at times to make sure that we feel safe and that criminal activity is either prevented from taking place or if it takes place, that those who are responsible for it are apprehended and dealt with according to law. I think it goes without saying that the importance of police services is highly appreciated and is critical to the stability of our society, to the well-being of our communities, and to the feeling of safety and security at a personal level by all of us.

We want to make sure that the legislation that deals with the members of the police services, with the commissions that handle matters related to police and its conduct are of the finest quality and of a kind that will inspire faith and trust, as between citizens on the one hand and police services on the other. We place in the hands of the police lethal weapons, the use of which can in an instant lead to loss of life, so there has to be a relationship between the citizens and the police services, a relationship of a type which is based in mutual trust, mutual respect, and accountability to the public.

When the Police Amendment Act was yet to reach this House but was being talked about, there was some anticipation that it would certainly lead to the very badly needed improvements in the current legislation, that it would fill those gaps effectively. Having done that, it would address the issue of the trust and confidence of the public in the police services and the conduct of police personnel when they're on duty on the streets, around our neighbourhoods, or on watch in general.

This anticipation, I guess, was further underscored and sharpened by the incident in Edmonton during the last provincial election, an incident that happened near or related to the Overtime bar. Mr. Speaker, on that evening I was also one of those politicians who were invited to the reception. I literally walked in and out, so I didn't realize what was going on. I spent about 20 minutes in the bar, but I had to go and door-knock in my constituency, so I quickly left after wishing the hosts the best for the evening. Little did I know that they were being watched by the police. That particular incident raised a whole lot of questions about who oversees the conduct of the police and whether or not the police should be accountable for the conduct of its members to the public. This bill was expected by Albertans to address their concerns.

Now, this bill really is in two parts. One part, of course, deals with the financing of policing services in rural areas and small towns and who pays for the RCMP and enhancing the police services. That part is good. That part is something that deserves the support of this

House, no doubt. I think it will help make our rural communities safe. It will hopefully help to reduce the incidence of crime that has been on the increase in rural areas as it has been in urban communities.

Just a while ago as we were debating the estimates of the Department of Justice, our attention was drawn to the challenge of ever-increasing rates of crime in the province. The part of the bill that deals with enhancing the ability of police and the ability of small communities across our large province to provide law enforcement services that are better staffed, where costs are picked up by the government, I think that's a very good part of the bill. I want to express my support for that part of the bill.

11:00

The part of the bill that raises concerns and where I think this Police Amendment Act has failed, in fact, to address the concerns has to do with the failure of this bill to allow independent investigation of serious alleged police wrongdoing. The bill makes such independent investigations possible only if the Solicitor General in his wisdom thinks that such an investigation is justified. It's not mandated by law. So it opens the door slightly to independent investigation but still leaves all the powers in the hands of the Solicitor General, and Albertans are supposed to hope that the all-knowing Solicitor General will always make the right decision when such a decision is called for.

Given that no independent agency is being established to conduct such investigations, it seems as if the status quo of police investigating the police will continue to prevail in this province. The problem with this is that if the status quo prevails, the concern that I have is that the bill will then fail to restore the broken relationship, a relationship of trust, as I said, which is needed to be there, that broken relationship that presently exists now between the police and those who are subjected to surveillance by police, in many cases ordinary citizens, innocent citizens who should not be subjected to the kind of investigation, the kind of surveillance that police use and the information that is entirely inappropriate for them to use in order to engage in this kind of surveillance. So this bill, I'm afraid, does not help to repair the broken relationship.

What I wonder about, Mr. Speaker, is why it is that the civilian oversight mechanism has been rejected by this piece of legislation out of hand, why a provision has not been made, why space has not been created for such a body to be there in order for independent investigations to happen when there is a serious and compelling reason to engage in some investigations related to the alleged misconduct of the police service either in this town or in some other town across this province.

As we speak, we are now searching for what are called best practices around the world to import them into Alberta to strengthen our health care system, which ostensibly, according to the government, faces a challenge of sustainability. We're willing to go around the world to fish for best practices that we would then want to bring and that this government would want to bring into this province to make our health care, quote, unquote, sustainable. But why are we not willing to do a little bit of looking outside of the box, looking outside of this province, across this country to see if there are some successful practices that have already been adopted in other places, in other provinces which provide civilian oversight and, therefore, have served the purpose of strengthening the bond of trust and mutual respect between citizens and the police?

Ontario has such an agency, such an institution, called the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. I just wonder why the Solicitor General has simply not seen fit to bring along something similar. It doesn't have to be identical. Our situation is different.

Ontario has provincial police; we don't. Certainly, we could adapt that practice to our own reality, to our own conditions, and could have made that arrangement part of this bill. It's not.

Now, it's true that if the police actions caused serious injury or death of a civilian, it would be investigated by a special investigations unit, a specialized civilian agency with the forensic and other expertise to conduct these types of investigations. That's provided for in the bill, but why not go one step further, as demanded by the recent experience of the Overtime bar incident, and establish and provide for an independent civilian agency in this province to conduct the investigations where those are needed?

Another flaw in the bill, Mr. Speaker, is that it imposes a one-year limit on making complaints against the police, and if one does not make a complaint within the one year, then the opportunity is gone forever. That's not a step in the right direction. Many people feel intimidated and wait for a long time before they make up their mind and want to take a chance, in the face of intimidations and all, to go and lodge a complaint. Limiting this period to one year I think is another very serious flaw in this proposed piece of legislation. As U of A law professor James Stribopoulos says, limiting the period in this way is generally problematic because what it does is reward people who have intimidated their victims so much that they don't report that crime for some years. Again, I don't understand why we are rolling back the period that's been previously allowed in the legislation for people to be able to lodge complaints, within perhaps a two-year time period. To roll it back to one year I think makes the bill less acceptable than the current legislation.

So these are some of the concerns that I have about Bill 36, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could support the bill. The first part of it, as I said, I'll support, but the second part of the bill falls far short of the expectations of Albertans with respect to what is needed to be done to improve the existing piece of legislation, and this Bill 36 certainly does not measure up to those expectations.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to rise on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Anyone else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Solicitor General to close debate.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to close debate, please.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a second time]

Bill 40
Alberta Personal Income Tax
Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill 40, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), for second reading.

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak at second reading of Bill 40, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). This bill proposes amendments to the Alberta family employment tax credit that will enhance the credit available to low- and middle-income working families.

The Alberta family employment tax credit was introduced in 1997. It aims to support low- and middle-income families and to

encourage work effort. Families receive a refundable tax credit phased in at a rate of 8 per cent once the family meets the threshold of working income. One amendment in this bill would reduce the entry threshold to \$2,760 from \$6,500. This change will make more low-income working families eligible for the program. Because the credit is phased in, lowering the threshold will also increase the amount many low-income working families receive.

As a further improvement to many Alberta families, amendments in this act will extend credits to the third and fourth child in families that qualify. Currently only the first and second child qualify for this credit. This bill proposes to increase the maximum credit for the first child by \$50 to \$550. With these changes qualified families can receive a maximum of \$550 for the first child, \$500 for the second, \$300 for the third, and \$100 for the fourth. Overall, these changes will increase the benefits available to qualified working families.

11:10

Finally, to make sure these changes are protected over time, the Alberta family employment tax credit will be indexed to inflation. This indexation will begin with the July 2006 payment. The only element that would not be indexed is the entry level threshold. Not indexing this threshold means that low-income earners would not be moved out of the program if their working incomes do not advance with inflation. The credit will remain targeted at low- and middle-income working families by phasing out the credit at a rate of 4 per cent on a net family income over \$25,000.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the changes proposed to the Alberta family employment tax credit will serve to expand the credit to more families, increasing the amount available to many qualifying families, and indexing credits to inflation. I urge all members to support Bill 40.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the committee to order.

Bill 29
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. minister of seniors.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to make a few remarks in Committee of the Whole this evening on Bill 29, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, nearly all respondents, in fact about 95 per cent of them, said that they wanted AISH clients to have access to another type of benefit that would be more responsive to their individual needs. This is exactly what we will offer many AISH clients as a result of Bill 29.

As I said during second reading, I believe that this new benefit will make AISH a more holistic program. The living allowance recognizes that the severely disabled face challenges earning a living, and it provides them with a monthly benefit to cover the cost of their basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter. AISH also offers a comprehensive health benefit which is very responsive to the

complex health needs of clients. In the past the program was unable to cover any costs that fell outside of these two areas because there wasn't an additional benefit category under the AISH program. That's why this new supplementary benefit will make such a difference in the lives of AISH clients.

With the increased living allowance and earnings exemptions for those who work, many AISH clients will be able to cover the various costs they experience throughout the year. Other clients may not and due to their personal situation may face pressures making ends meet. In those cases, AISH clients with liquid assets less than \$3,000, those clients who need our help the most, will be able to apply for extra assistance for their personal expenses through supplementary benefits.

One example of a supplementary benefit would be in cases where clients are dealing with utility arrears. Clients who are having difficulty making ends meet might put off paying their utility bills, and their accounts could fall into arrears because of it. This is the type of expense that could be covered by the new supplementary benefit program on a case-by-case basis.

For those clients who are parents, the supplementary benefits could also be used to cover extra child care expenses or, as I said during second reading, school supplies or school fees. Other clients may benefit from courses to help them use computers or to build their skills that may allow them to work or simply be more active in our communities. These costs could be considered under the new supplementary benefit program.

The cost of food for those with special diabetic diets or diets connected to another medical condition may be quite high, and the supplementary benefit could offer some additional assistance here as well. We expect that the average benefit for eligible clients will be up to \$200 at first, Mr. Chairman, and the expenses covered by the new benefits will be as unique as the needs of our clients. That is why this is such an important change to the AISH program. It will give AISH the flexibility that it didn't have before.

We have invested significant new funding in the AISH program, Mr. Chairman, \$80 million in new funding this year alone. That brings our total spending on the AISH program to more than \$488 million a year, and we are working to update the computer system so we can administer the new supplementary benefits later this year. We've budgeted 10 and a half million dollars for these benefits this year and \$25 million for next year.

This is a significant investment in this new benefit, Mr. Chairman, but having said that, I know that there are still going to be new ideas that come forward such as the one that was given to me this evening by the hon. Member for St. Albert, who has a constituent that has identified that there are gaps in some of our disability programs and that there's a newly formed group, Disabilities Without Barriers, who is advocating for the creation of a program, which is called the nurturing assistance program, which I know would have been helpful to this constituent. Apparently, this program is available in four other provinces, is funded by other provincial governments, and is offered through the family centres in some locations.

I know that we will continue to look at programs such as these that are brought forward at appropriate times that may not fit exactly with the personal income support program but can still be reviewed to see if it can be incorporated in another way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wish to thank the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports for presenting this bill and steering it through second reading and now into Committee of

the Whole. In her opening remarks in second reading she outlined the fact that there is a proposal of a living allowance, \$1,000, by next April as well as a health package which amounts to almost \$300. This bill deals with a supplementary benefit for special-needs clients, and of course it's extremely important. As she has already said tonight as well as in her introductory remarks, it helps cover the costs of medical supplies and special transportation and child care.

I'm very excited about this bill because it demonstrates a shift to focusing on the real needs of clients to respond to what they really need. What does it cost for the medical supplies that they need? What does it cost for the extra things like school supplies that they need?

One of the reasons that I am involved in politics today – I think I was awakened from my political slumber in Alberta in 1994, when there were such severe cuts to social services. At that time I formed an organization called the Quality of Life Commission. We appointed commissioners to go into the city and listen to stories of people living in poverty. Among our commissioners were Senator Doug Roche and the late Lois Hole. They heard the stories, and we documented the stories. We brought them to government ministers and were told that, well, they were anecdotal.

I heard many sad, tragic stories, especially of people like single parents who were trying to survive, but the numbers just didn't add up in terms of being able to pay for rent and pay for food and pay for all the extra costs, especially something like school supplies, something so basic that most families take that for granted. Yet many single parents, those especially who were on AISH, could not afford to buy school supplies. At the particular church where I was minister, we actually organized grandparents to go out and shop for single-parent families so that they would have school supplies like sneakers for kids going to school. They need them. We did that out of the compassion of our hearts. At the same time, we bore quite a bit of resentment because we felt that the government should attend to the real needs of people, especially people on AISH. So I am very encouraged by this step. It's a step forward.

11:20

Of course, it's also important that there are well-trained people, preferably social workers. One of my laments is that social workers have been taken away from front-line intake in terms of the old SFI program and AISH. We need people who are well trained on the front line to be able to assess the real needs of people and be able to recommend what people should get in terms of medical equipment, school supplies, whatever.

I guess my lament in the past and, actually, my sadness still continues in respect to one item, and that is that there's no tying in of AISH rates with some kind of indexing, with some kind of annual review. At the economic summit a number of years ago it was Bettie Hewes in the socioeconomic sector group that proposed that there should be some mechanism so that we can get beyond the arbitrariness and the necessity of having to wait so long. People have had to wait 10 years before they could get a proper raise of the AISH allowance. I think that's tragic because the standard of living continues to go up, and people fall behind. So there should be some mechanism for an annual review so that it's not completely arbitrary.

I don't know why the government wants to put itself in the place of being a kind of paternalistic donor of money to people, keeping them dependent. What we need is to have a system that ensures a sense of security in people, that they know that as the standard of living goes up, there's going to be a mechanism in place that will examine and recommend changes in the income allowance and changes in the various items that they need. That would go a long way to instilling the confidence of people in the AISH community in the government.

In the case of the disabled community, Mr. Chairman, I think what ought to drive us in our support for the AISH community is not primarily a concern for finances – I know that was the issue 10 years ago – but it should be compassion and empathy for those that cannot work because of their disability. We ought to pour out our compassion for these people.

So I support this bill because it's a step in the right direction.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm grateful for the work and the care that has been put into this bill. How much difference this will make in the lives of Albertans on the current AISH levels is yet to be seen. I certainly hope that this is just the first step.

In the last 12 years the cost of food, housing, and other necessities of life has increased by 30 per cent. AISH support rose by only 5 per cent, one-sixth of the rise in living costs. Those who relied on this basic amount found themselves falling further into poverty. The government has said that it will review AISH support levels every two years but made no commitment to adjust the allowance after these reviews, and that is a concern. I believe this support needs to be reviewed and adjusted annually.

A constituent of mine sent me a letter this week detailing how a debilitating medical condition has left her in a position where she has lost everything she has worked hard for: job, home, pets, children, transportation, and, most important, her independence. So what will this extra \$150 mean to her? I hope it's a sign that for the first time in 12 years voices are being heard and that they will be receiving the extra support they need.

I am pleased with the provision of the supplementary benefits program because I believe it has the potential to help, certainly, some individuals that are in terrible, terrible straits. That shouldn't happen. I think that as a government and as a society we must work hard to keep this momentum going. We need to keep an awareness of the severely handicapped in our society and make sure that this positive step is just that, a first step.

I wonder how we came to this position where those among us who have needs must suffer and feel inadequate. Somehow in this richest province in the 21st century we've got a 19th century Scrooge attitude, where breaks for business are justified while help to individuals is a drain on the public purse. The serious question is whether a maximum \$1,000 per month will provide a decent quality of life.

One ignored fact about AISH recipients is that about 85 per cent of them are not capable of working. They have a severe permanent disability. What the vast majority get through AISH is basically their income. They need help. When AISH became an issue in the last election, the focus was upon what level of handicap was necessary to qualify as severely disabled. An unfortunate chance utterance by the leader of the government proved fortunate in forcing us all to look at this question more seriously and to revise our attitudes as well as the income level at stake.

I believe the focus has now shifted from the handicapped to the reflection on ourselves. An unconditional support for all in need among us is the mark of a civilized society. I believe we must ensure that the differently able among us enjoy a greater measure of the prosperity we enjoy living in this province. To the extent that this measure is a step in this direction, I support it, Mr. Chairman, yet it is only a step, and there is much farther that we can go. I would prefer that we move from looking on this as assistance to one of investment in the lives of our fellow citizens, as we are doing with the future of education.

I support this amendment to AISH with the hope that it is the beginning of strong and decisive action to adequately provide for the individuals who require this assistance. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 29 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report Bill 29.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 29.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, in light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:29 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, May 4, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/04

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

On the Holocaust remembrance monument located on the grounds of the Alberta Legislature are found the following words: "I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the tormented." Those words were written by Elie Wiesel, a survivor of the Holocaust, a poet, and a Nobel peace prize recipient. As we pray, may God provide all innocent victims of racism and genocide eternal peace. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great privilege and an honour for me to rise on this glorious Alberta day and introduce somebody who probably needs no introduction and that is because she was the MLA for the Drayton Valley constituency from the 19th to the 21st Legislatures for the Progressive Conservative Party. Currently she is a tireless volunteer in the riding and has taught me how to door-knock and how to get elected. So I would like the hon. Shirley Cripps to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group representing the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Alberta division. I'd like to welcome Neil Pierce, the president of the MS Society, Alberta division, and Adeline Blumer and Christine Purvis, staff members of the society. They'll be joined shortly by Judy Gordon, a former member of this Legislature and a member of the board of directors of the MS Society. They're in the Speaker's gallery and I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a group of 17 visitors from the constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, namely from the Living Waters Christian Academy in St. Albert. They're a great-looking group of grade 9 and 10 students who are very keen on what we do here and are interested in the proceedings. They are led by group leaders Mr. Keith Penner and Mr. Nikke Gauthier as well as parent helper Mrs. Alida Milne. I believe they are in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great deal of pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you Mrs. Margaret

Rodger from Acme and 38 other seniors from the Acme-Linden area that are here today to visit the Legislature. I learned just this last weekend from another senior in Acme that Acme was the former home of a very prestigious Albertan, the Hon. Helen Hunley, who was the first female Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta and the second female Lieutenant Governor in Canada. So I would ask the Assembly to welcome them all as they rise in the public gallery to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 15 students from the Blackie school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Margaret Speelman, and seven parents: Bev Bennett, Angie Scott, Jodie Parker, Jackie Pope, Heidi Siewert, Elsie Baker, and Deb Gore. This is the school that I graduated from, but please don't judge these students by my intellect. They are very bright students indeed. I believe they are scattered in both galleries, and I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a dedicated Albertan and a colleague from the Alberta Alliance Party. Phil Gamache has recently been named the Edmonton region president of the Alliance Party. He was a candidate in the last provincial election, and he is committed to the citizens of Alberta, just as all of us are, in making our province better. I ask Phil and his wife, Carmen, who are seated in the public gallery today, to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this group.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly the future of rural Alberta and this province in general. We have 40 students from the Blessed Sacrament school with us here today, and they are accompanied by their teachers, parents, and group leaders Mrs. Folk, Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Shopland, Mrs. Smith again, Mr. MacDonald, and Mr. Norris. They're seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have some guests today in the public gallery. Earlier today some MLAs from central Alberta met with the ATA presidents from the same region, and we had a very excellent discussion about some important issues. I would ask if Jere Geiger and the other presidents of the ATA would just stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, which this year falls on the 5th of May. This week, as Canada and other countries celebrate the 60th anniversary of VE Day, Yom ha-Shoah reminds us of the price that the world paid as a result of the many horrific events of the Second

World War. The highest cost of all was to the 6 million Jewish men, women, and children who were systematically persecuted and eradicated by the Nazi regime. Yom ha-Shoah reminds the world of the atrocities of the Holocaust as well as the senseless killing of millions of others through acts of genocide. Memorial services will be held in Edmonton and in Calgary to honour the many victims of this horrific period of human history.

In 2000 the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act was passed unanimously as an act of this Alberta Legislature. This legislation reaffirms Alberta's commitment to value the diversity of Alberta's cultural mosaic and to combat racism, violence, hatred, and persecution. The act reminds us how much the respect for justice, liberty, and human rights defines the way of life in our province, and the events of the Holocaust remind us of what can happen to civilized people when bigotry, hatred, and indifference reign.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great humility that I rise today along with the Minister of Community Development to acknowledge and reflect on Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day. In 1959 Israel's parliament proclaimed a day to memorialize the 6 million Jewish people murdered during the Second World War. This day is known as Yom ha-Shoah. Shoah means whirlwind or destruction in Hebrew. Yom ha-Shoah is a day of remembrance and a day of hope. It is a remembrance that transcends all race, all religion, all humanity. We remember the unspeakable tragedies of the Holocaust in Europe, but we acknowledge all victims of genocide whether it be in Rwanda, Bosnia, or even present-day Sudan.

At the outbreak of the Second World War the Nazis' goal was to cleanse Germany of its Jewish population. As they conquered Europe, more Jewish populations fell under Nazi control. Jews in Poland, Ukraine, Italy, and France were methodically forced into concentration camps. The Holocaust evolved into the systematic and efficient murder of any person with Jewish roots. Six million people, including 1 and a half million children, were shot, gassed, or otherwise murdered. A full one-third of the world's Jewish population was entirely wiped out. Entire families simply disappeared.

1:40

So let us remember what today symbolizes. Yom ha-Shoah is observed around the world with candle-lighting, poems, prayers, and singing. It is a day of mourning and a day of hope. With the memories of concentration camps, of gas chambers, and of mass graves in our minds we must also remember the acts of courage, those who opposed the Nazis and risked everything to help the persecuted. They're called righteous Gentiles, a phrase used for non-Jewish people who risked their lives to save the Jewish during the Holocaust, people like Oskar Schindler; people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian who was persecuted, imprisoned, and eventually killed because he valiantly opposed Hitler's regime.

In a world that continues to have the Bosnians, the Rwandas, and the Sudans, let us continue to recognize and help those who fight for the oppressed.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, might we have unanimous consent to allow the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona to participate?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is Holocaust Memorial Day, a day when we acknowledge and remember the horror of the wave of mass murder that swept across Europe during the Second World War. By the end of the war approximately 6 million people, mostly Jews, including 1.5 million children, perished at the hands of the Nazi murderers. The Holocaust remains one of humanity's darkest hours, and as such it will never be shelved as simply another moment in history. Indeed, for those who survived the concentration camps, for those whose families were violently torn apart, the Holocaust is a living and persistent reality.

As legislators and as citizens of a global community we have an obligation to ensure that each new generation understands the horror of the Holocaust and the ever-present possibility that humanity could plunge to such depths again. Indeed, if we are to be honest, we must acknowledge the atrocities of our own generation, such as the slaughters of Rwanda and the ongoing devastation in the Darfur region of Sudan.

On behalf of my colleagues in the NDP opposition and with all of the hon. members of the Assembly, I stand in remembrance of those who have suffered the horror of genocide and to renew our commitment to building peace throughout the global community.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, might we have unanimous consent to allow the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner to participate?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. I am truly grateful and humbled also to be here today with this Assembly to recognize Yom ha-Shoah. I, too, would like to add how important our freedom is and the importance of remembering the horrific genocides of the past and the importance that we always have the courage and strength to defend people's rights to life, liberty, and property and that we are diligent at removing all the forms of hatred and persecution in our society and that we run and stand at the sides of those who are being persecuted.

Thank you.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Calgary Ward 10 Election

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's unwillingness and ineffectiveness to get to the bottom of allegations and scandals is mushrooming. This government ignored requests for a full public inquiry from the Liberal opposition, the people of Calgary, Calgary city council, and even the Court of Queen's Bench in the ward 10 scandal. Instead, they copped out with a weaker public inspection that may now never find the truth. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Given that the ward 10 scandal goes straight to the corruption of democracy, why did the minister let down the people of Calgary by calling a public inspection instead of a full public inquiry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a couple of points very clear to the hon. member. First of all, the process that was instigated by this government and by this minister was designed to accomplish two things. First of all, it was designed to allow a police investigation to determine whether there were any irregularities that were contrary to the Local Authorities Election Act and lay charges against any individuals if that were the case. That has in fact taken place. Charges have been laid. The police were also to investigate to determine whether or not any criminal offences occurred as a result of this election. I understand that that investigation, in fact, is still ongoing, and that process is unimpaired by the inspection process.

At the same time, we appointed Mr. Bob Clark to conduct an inspection to determine whether there were flaws within the electoral system that needed to be corrected, and Mr. Clark was to conduct an inspection and provide the government with recommendations on where those flaws were and what should be done to correct them.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister inform this House about any conversations he has had on this subject with the Member for Calgary-Montrose?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I have had no conversations with the Member for Calgary-Montrose. The Member for Calgary-Montrose is a part of my caucus, I have conversations with him about many other things, but on this particular matter I thought it was inappropriate for me to have those kinds of conversations.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the Member for Calgary-Montrose is prepared to testify with what he says is a lot of information that may be interesting to the public, will the minister now call a full public inquiry?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the reason the process that was implemented was chosen was so that it could allow for two concurrent processes to take place at the same time, the police investigation, which will arrive at any wrongdoing individuals, and an inspection, which will determine whether there were flaws within the system. This was a process that was specifically chosen to allow those two processes to go on concurrently. To do anything else would have required waiting until after the police investigation, which, I mentioned earlier, is still ongoing, before we get into the next step, and frankly I think Albertans deserved a lot better than that.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Legal transcripts explicitly reveal Enron traders cavalierly joking about manipulating power markets in Alberta, yet the Minister of Energy continues to be evasive and to ignore all the evidence that shows that Enron ripped off electricity consumers here in Alberta. Meanwhile, several U.S. states have initiated lawsuits to return the illegal windfall profits of Enron to where they rightfully belong, in the pocketbooks of power consumers. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that Project Stanley materials have shown up in a number of lawsuits and investigations in Texas and in New York, has the minister or his

staff contacted authorities in those jurisdictions where similar market abuses have taken place?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it was at the investigation insistence of both, clearly, our department and the market surveillance administrator asking for and requesting transcripts of one in particular, of Washington state. We have always been interested to make sure that we have the complete and full information of any evidence that's coming forth. That said, there have been some investigations in the past. This continues to be a subject that we've said is a serious matter for the market surveillance administrator. They will continue to act on any evidence that is brought forward. If they've got some new information, please bring it forward.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: has the minister or his staff contacted the U.S. Department of Justice office in northern California where criminal indictments for similar offences have been issued?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, with that specific instance I am not aware of it. If there are some more, we'll be happy to inform him later.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that the following Enron traders, John Forney, Jeff Richter, and Tim Belden, admitted – admitted – their guilt of power-price manipulation in the United States, how many of these greedy traders appear in the Project Stanley tapes conspiring to drive up prices here in Alberta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, Project Stanley at that time has been investigated. That does go back to a 1999 circumstance. It does also correlate specifically with a time when legislative hedges were in place. Alberta consumers were not harmed by this if they attempted to accomplish it. They were not because any excess volatility in price would have been returned to the Power Pool, in which Alberta's consumers would have been protected.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Policing Services in Crowsnest Pass

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Crowsnest Pass residents are stunned by the decision to hold back police funding for their community. This government has ignored legislation requiring them to provide more funding for police, has not lived up to its commitments to provide more policing to rural areas, and has behaved like a neighbourhood bully. My questions are to the Solicitor General. Can the minister explain specifically what part of the Police Act allows the government to supersede the Crowsnest Pass regulation, that is in effect until 2012?

The Speaker: Hon. member, we all know – and I've said this several times before – that interpretations of statutes are not purview and part of the question period.

Hon. minister, if you wish to comment, go ahead.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Crowsnest Pass regulation deals only with the calculation of grants. It is not applicable to the Police Act with regard to the fact that the province pays for policing to a certain threshold.

Mr. Speaker, I've met with the mayor on several occasions now, and we've discussed the issues. The special regulation under the MGA, the Municipal Government Act, does provide the community of Crowsnest Pass with the opportunity for provincial grants that they can receive, whether it's three small or four small communities or one large one.

The issue is that under the Police Act it's specific that the population threshold is 5,000. It's for policing grants, not for municipal grants. It's for policing grants, as was discussed with the mayor.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be very careful because this is a difficult situation, other than the fact that there are communities, like Ponoka, Rocky Mountain House, Peace River, all with the same population, which are all receiving roughly an increase of about 150 per cent in their policing grant this year, which will give them approximately a quarter of a million dollars, about \$150,000 more than they received last year. So these are some of the issues we're dealing with with the town of Crowsnest Pass.

Dr. B. Miller: When will the minister table the intimidating letter that was sent to the municipality of Crowsnest Pass, which the mayor described as being "like something out of *The Godfather* – we'll have your signature on this document, or your brains"?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't an intimidating letter. It was a letter that was provided to me by the department, which drafted it. It was also in consultation with the Minister of Justice, with regard to the fact that we did get an interpretation of the act from Justice to ensure that our position was just in fact that, that they are treated as a municipality that is over 5,000 as their population is 6,200. Therefore, the letter did go out. They have an opportunity to sign the agreement and receive a cheque from the province for \$250,000.

Dr. B. Miller: Did the minister consult with the residents of Crowsnest Pass before deciding that the Crowsnest Pass regulation was superseded by the Police Act? Why was there no public consultation?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are 30 communities between 5,000 and 20,000, all of which received this funding model this year and anywhere from 36 per cent to 198 per cent increases over last year's funding. We didn't consult with those communities. We did consult with the AUMA and the AAMD and C. The AAMD and C president, as well as the AUMA, is extremely pleased with the funding they've received for those smaller communities with regard to the smaller communities they have between that 5,000 and the 20,000 threshold.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Securities Commission

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is allowing the Alberta Securities Commission to act like a bunch of belligerent, sullen bullies, and it's time we grounded them. The arrogance and intransigence are astounding. This notion that they're going to take the Auditor General, who is an officer of this Legislature, to court to

stop him from getting to the truth is beyond the pale. How does this look to investors not only in Alberta but across Canada? My question is to the Government House Leader. What is it going to take to get this government to stop the ASC from challenging the authority of this Legislature?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance has over and over in this House indicated that there's a process in place to review the issues arising out of the Alberta Securities Commission. The Minister of Finance has indicated that the Auditor General will be doing a review. The Auditor General and the Securities Commission are in the process of determining the scope and the type of documents that will be available and the access. The Auditor General has an act which he follows, the Securities Commission has an act which they follow, and it appears that in the course of their discussion they may have to consult the court as to how those two acts interrelate.

Mr. Speaker, that's a normal process although perhaps an unfortunate one. One would hope that they would be able to sort those out themselves, but when the interim chair of the commission is appointed imminently, I'm sure the appointment of that chair will help to resolve the issues so that those two organizations, the Auditor General's office and the Securities Commission, can come to an agreement on the scope of the audit, and that audit can then proceed.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said that this has never happened in 25 years, him being taken to court. He's an officer of this Legislature. I'm asking the minister in regard to that: if there's a problem with the Securities Act, will the government change the Securities Act so that the people of the province can get some real answers here?

The Speaker: The hon. Acting Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure this will be a learning process for all of us with respect to what might need to . . . [interjections] No. We should be open to learn from procedures.

This situation has come up where the Auditor General is looking at an audit of the Securities Commission processes. The Securities Commission has concerns under its act with respect to the information which it has and the circumstances under which it holds that information, and it has obligations under its act. If they can't come to an agreement about access after both having had legal advice, there may be an appropriate circumstance for the court to determine what's appropriate, and we'll learn from that process.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, this is becoming a joke across Canada. When will this government find its spine, dismiss all the ASC commissioners for their contempt and belligerence, and appoint an interim trustee to run the Securities Commission?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very presumptuous of the hon. member to suggest that all members of the commission ought to be dismissed. Certainly, if there are any issues that come out of the review, that will be determined at that time.

As I indicated, the appointment of an interim chairman is imminent. The current chairman's term is expiring within the next day or two. The new interim chair will be independent and fair and will ensure that there's a thorough review conducted. We expect that the interim chair will work with the Auditor General and the commissioners to help come to grips with the scope of the audit and

resolve that process, and we expect this to happen appropriately and in due course.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Electoral Reform

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past two months the Premier has stated that he's had to put his foot down on traditional marriage and oppose the original smoking ban legislation. Between 1995 and 2001 citizens' initiative legislation was brought to this House six times and was not passed. This government has stopped legislation to improve democracy and accountability in Alberta. British Columbia is having the first set-date provincial election in Canada, eliminating the opportunity for the government to time an election. My question is to the Government House Leader. Will this government follow the leadership of the B.C. government and commit to democratic reform by providing Alberta with a set date for our next election?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Acting Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has provided leadership to British Columbia on all sorts of matters that the government of British Columbia has followed with respect to democratic renewal. They have looked at our processes with respect to our standing policy committee processes. They have looked at processes in terms of governance and efficiency. We, in fact, have been leaders across the country in many aspects of democratic renewal, and we will obviously also look at other things that happen across the country, including B.C., with respect to democratic renewal. It's in everybody's interest to make sure that the public is interested and informed and active and involved in the democratic process.

Mr. Hinman: The question was on set election dates.

Mr. Speaker, again to the Government House Leader: will this government improve MLA accountability and return the power to the people, where it belongs, by passing legislation giving Albertans the right to recall their elected representatives?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that the question was about a set election date, so I'm not sure what the supplemental about recall might be then, and one certainly couldn't have discerned the question from the preamble. However, the answer is: we're not at the present time looking at recall legislation.

Mr. Hinman: To the Government House Leader again: will this government allow Albertans to have direct input into issues like defining and solemnizing marriage here in Alberta by passing citizens' initiative legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. Acting Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Citizens' referendum legislation has been brought before this House, as the hon. member mentioned in his preamble, quite a number of times and certainly could be brought at any time by a member through that process again. It's not currently on the government's legislative agenda.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Emergency Preparedness

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is National Emergency Preparedness Week, and Albertans are getting lots of information on how to prepare for emergencies. In fact, an event on Monday in Medicine Hat focused on the emergency public warning system and the role it plays in giving Albertans advance warning of emergencies. My first question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. With Emergency Preparedness Week focusing on helping Albertans prepare for disasters and emergencies, what is the provincial government doing to ensure that it is prepared as well?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is quite correct in pointing out that this is, in fact, Emergency Preparedness Week. The message that the government is asking citizens to do is to assess risks in their lives, to prepare a plan should an emergency exist, and to prepare the necessary infrastructure so that they can be self-sustaining for a short period of time during an emergency. That's exactly what the government does within its own bounds through Emergency Management Alberta, which is a division within Municipal Affairs. This EMA is known across North America as a leader in emergency planning. We work with each of the departments to ensure that there is continuity should an emergency arise in Alberta, and we work with municipalities to assist them in their emergency planning as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you. My next question is to the same minister. What is the government doing to help municipalities prepare for these emergencies?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, almost on a daily basis our officers work with every municipality, with First Nations throughout the province to ensure that they have adequate plans in place to deal with emergency situations, and on a regular basis they rehearse and demonstrate through mock disasters that they are capable of following through on those plans, identify concerns that need to be addressed, so that they truly are ready in the case of a real situation.

Mr. Prins: Again to the same minister. The other day there were reports in the media regarding the RCMP's terrorist tip line. What is government doing to protect Albertans from threats of terrorism?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the issue of the antiterrorism tip line is more the responsibility of the Solicitor General, and the member may want to ask the Solicitor General on the specifics of that.

I would like to comment that we have an antiterrorism plan in place that is through EMA, that links the private sector and the public. It's been in place for over three years. The plan that we have in place is, again, being acknowledged as a leader in North America. Our counterterrorism crisis management plan has impressed not only other provinces and the federal government but has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for the comprehensiveness of its approach. The department is inundated almost daily with requests from other jurisdictions in North America for some information on the plans that we have in place here in Alberta.

Natural Resources Conservation Board Appeals

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, the role of the NRCB is to make fair

rulings on large developments like confined feeding operations. Advisers to the NRCB aid them in specific areas that deal with development of regulations. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: are advisers of the NRCB allowed to represent companies in appeals to the NRCB?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, the role of the NRCB is to have a process put in place for applications for confined feeding operations under the legislation that is put in place under the department of agriculture, under the AOPA best practices legislation, to make sure that the environmental impacts of confined feeding operations are taken into consideration during the entire process. Where the process requires consultation with applications that are in front of the board, definitely the people that are making application have the ability to go in front of the board to make their case.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: does it suggest a conflict of interest on behalf of the NRCB to have a lawyer advise them on public policy and then the same lawyer represent a company in appeal of that NRCB ruling?

The Speaker: Well, I've warned once before about interpretation.

Mr. Coutts: I'm going to answer that question, Mr. Speaker, by the fact that the NRCB has been dealing with confined feeding operations over the last two and a half years. Part of the legislation was to have a review at the end of two and a half years. We're doing a review of the process right now, and those are the types of things that are being reviewed by the independent consultant.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question to the same minister: will the minister commit to investigating if there have been actual conflicts or potential conflicts in a situation in regard to advisers to the NRCB turning around and representing companies applying to the NRCB for expansion approval?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, through the review that's being presently put in place and in front of all stakeholders, those are the types of things that will come forward in recommendations, and we will deal with the recommendations when they come to not only our department but to my desk.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ghost-Waiparous Access Management

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ghost-Waiparous area, northwest of Cochrane, is highly regarded by Albertans as an ideal place to enjoy a host of outdoor recreational opportunities, everything from OHV trail riding to camping, hunting, fishing, and horseback riding. Significant growth in the province has made this area an even more popular one, and increasing usage has raised some safety and sustainability issues. In response, government has committed to developing a management plan that could effectively preserve the area while still ensuring accessibility for users in the future. My questions are for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Firstly, with the ongoing public consultations to

resolve these issues, can the minister tell us what the timelines are for getting an access management plan in place for the area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Following some very good consultation over the past two years, including something that's never been done before by our department, a public phone survey, we're moving ahead with a plan for the Ghost-Waiparous area, which is in the member's constituency. This summer we'll focus on implementation efforts of that plan based on public safety, education, and awareness. This summer also we will continue to make sure that we enforce applicable legislation that is in place by having more forest guardians on the ground to help us with the enforcement. We'll take a look at, also, public and stakeholder consultation, and we will continue to work on a plan for the Ghost-Waiparous area that is based on public safety, reducing the impact on our resource, and reducing conflicts between the users but, more importantly, for a variety of recreational uses.

Mrs. Tarchuk: To the same minister: how are the minister and his department responding to the growing concerns of OHV users regarding significant reduction of access to them specifically?

2:10

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. Albertans want to be able to leisure on their land, and the Ghost-Waiparous remains a good place to do this. It's not about stopping off-highway vehicle use; it's about planned use. We've had a couple of situations in the Ghost. The original trail system was not built for the type of activity or the amount of activity in off-highway vehicle use in the area. In addition, what's happened is that unplanned trails have been developed because of all of this use over time.

Albertans want a managed trail system. We found that out by the phone survey. What we're going to do is that we're going to balance the environmental impact as well as the recreational use, and we'll work with the stakeholders over the summer and into the fall to develop that plan.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Lastly, to the same minister: what preparations are under way to manage the thousands of users expected in the Ghost-Waiparous this summer, starting with the May long weekend?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking about public safety and the need for more enforcement to ensure that public safety, and I want to assure Albertans as well as this hon. member that that is a priority for our department as well. This year's budget has given us new resources to employ more folks for education and enforcement. This particular summer we're going to have between our department, the RCMP, the Department of Community Development, and the Department of Environment 30 enforcement staff out there in the Ghost, and we'll have more people on the ground to make sure that public safety is a priority. Therefore, education outreach and enforcement will definitely be our priority.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Ministry of Seniors Financial Statements

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 2003-2004 annual report the Auditor General issued a reservation of opinion to the

ministry of seniors as the audit found that approximately \$21.7 million worth of assets which were retained by management corporations were not stated in the financial statements. My question to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: what measures has this minister taken to address the issue of incomplete financial statements?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do take the Auditor General's report very seriously. The area of management bodies, as you know, is through the Alberta Housing Act, and in the Housing Act, that was put into place about 1994, management bodies are arm's length from the government.

The operating surpluses, that the hon. member has brought to the Assembly, actually are an important issue. What happens is that management bodies retain operating surpluses for their future operations and some capital, but also part of the operating surpluses are given to the ministry. Management bodies report theirs in their financial plan each year, and the ministry has not been recording that along with the ministry's operating surpluses. So we will be working with the Auditor General and the Finance department in order to make that happen.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you for that answer. It partly fits in with my next question. How was the \$21.7 million in the surpluses and assets reported, and has interest been accumulating on that amount?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is, as I indicated, that the management body reports their operating surpluses within their own financial report. The ministry reports through our financial process, but we are putting both together in that we're moving the management bodies' operating surplus reporting through to the department and the ministry. As I indicated, hon. member, it's an important issue. This has to change, and we are working with the Auditor and the Finance department in order to make that happen.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Further to that explanation, can the minister ensure that the ministry and department would not deviate from generally accepted principles of accounting?

Mrs. Fritz: I can ensure that that will happen. As I indicated, I am learning from the Auditor as well as the Finance department how to put the measures in place that are meeting the objectives of what both the management body has and what the ministry has, hon. member, and I will ensure that that will happen. You'll see that change by the next report.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Municipal Infrastructure Program

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of 17 municipalities in the riding that I represent, I want to commend the government for \$3 billion of infrastructure funding over five years. The questions that I actually have come from municipal leaders in my constituency, and they deal with a little bit of uncertainty on

accessing this particular funding. My first question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I would like him to clarify on his behalf for these municipalities if they, in fact, have to provide matching funds out of very limited reserves.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. I'm pleased to report that not only do municipalities not have to use their own funds to match these dollars; in fact, it's been noted in this House before, but I think it's worth noting again, that there are ongoing infrastructure grants that are also flowing through to municipalities this year of some approximately \$400 million. That added to the \$600 million from the allocation this year is almost a billion dollars.

Municipalities are free to use the grants that were included in the \$600 million to match other municipal infrastructure grants that are available to them each and every other year. So not only do they not have to match the infrastructure dollars; they can use the infrastructure dollars to come up with matching dollars for other government programs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because of the varying sizes and various scopes of different projects, these same municipalities have asked me to ask you, Minister, if you could clarify for them the types of projects that they can actually use to qualify for this funding.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, when I met with municipalities before Christmas in preparation for the budget and in fine-tuning this plan, I heard repeatedly that the program needed to be as flexible as possible. It needed to reflect the priorities of locally elected councils. That's exactly what this program does. The program will be as flexible as it needs to be to accommodate the priorities as established by the locally elected councils.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, and again it's a clarification. Some of the constituent municipalities, Minister, have heard different, varying reports. They would like to know if, in fact, they can use some of these funds to purchase new or replacement heavy equipment.

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, yes, they can is the very quick and dirty answer to that one. We will be sitting down with the municipalities and going over some of their priorities. Again, as the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs alluded, we will be offering a sign-off on the particular projects. We want to ensure that before they buy heavy equipment, for example, their water treatment plants are in proper condition and that their roads are good. So the quick and dirty answer is yes, but the proviso is that it has to be in the top list of their priorities and, more importantly, their needs for infrastructure within their particular municipality.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Wildlife Protection

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildlife protection in Alberta

is a laudable goal, but from this government it's been all talk and no rock. This government has made it increasingly difficult for wildlife officers to do their job in enforcing poaching laws, and they have not taken decisive action to provide enough enforcement officers in the field. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Can the minister explain how it's possible to efficiently catch poachers and protect endangered species with only 127 officers for the entire province?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little surprised at the question because even though his comment about 127 enforcement officers is accurate, the budget and the estimates were before this House on, I believe it was, just last Wednesday night, a week ago, where the extra dollars that we are getting are going into more enforcement on the ground – not in offices, not in towers, but on the ground – for fish and wildlife so that they can get out there and do the job that Albertans want them to do. We expect, with the increase in our budget, to hire 15 additional enforcement officers for this year.

2:20

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that we were having conflicting announcements – it was 10, and then it was 40, and now it's 15 – when is this ministry going to commit sufficient money to have necessary resources so that officers can conduct routine, proactive patrols and nab poachers in the act instead of having to only react to calls once they've been made or complaints?

Mr. Coutts: In addition to the fish and wildlife officers that I just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we are also hiring an additional 10 guardians that will help do some outreach and some education in our communities to let people know about wildlife issues in their area as well as the regulations that are out there on fish and wildlife. Not only do we have more fish and wildlife officers, but we have guardians that will be out there on the land, talking with people, doing education and outreach, and they will be involved in monitoring of the resource as well. So all in all, this particular budget for fish and wildlife is good news for the first time in about five years.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, the fish and wildlife officers in the field, the Alberta Fish and Game Association, and even some members of the Tory caucus have stated that the number of fish and wildlife game officers, including the numbers that are being proposed to be increased, are inadequate. Why won't the government make a commitment to hire enough fish and wildlife officers to do the job properly here in this province?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly if you want to have a fish and wildlife officer on every square mile or whatever they are today – I'm sorry; I'm in miles. I'm a little old-fashioned. There will never be enough money to do that. In addition to the 15 staff and the 10 guardians, we're hiring more support staff in the rural offices to help handle phone calls and those types of things.

Again, all in all, we continue to make upgrades. Albertans expect that. Albertans have wanted that for a long time. We're making those moves, and we're making that commitment to Albertans in this budget to improve the enforcement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Postsecondary Education Review

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, yesterday I think we

did get some good news in this House as the Minister of Advanced Education announced a complete review of the postsecondary system in Alberta. I'm encouraged that the minister has apparently moved from separate funding and affordability reviews to something more complete, more comprehensive. The next step, a small but important one, is to accept the Learning Commission's recommendation and make it independent. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Will the minister clarify whether his statement yesterday that "we're doing a full . . . review" means that this review will be an internal government exercise and not an independent review, as called for by the Learning Commission?

The Speaker: The hon. Acting Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This should be no surprise to the hon. member. I've mentioned it in the context when we've discussed questions with respect to the change in status of Mount Royal College. I've discussed it in the context of estimates. We are looking at the postsecondary system in this province in a full and complete manner to determine whether we have a system in place which will mean that Albertans can meet all the opportunities available to them and compete out into a global economy. That's what it's about: being best in class. That's the review we're doing. We're doing it involving stakeholders in the system, we're doing it involving external experts, we're doing it in a broad-based manner, and we're doing it comprehensively.

Mr. Taylor: Aah. But, Mr. Speaker, who's the "we"? Who's going to conduct this review?

Mr. Hancock: That would be my job, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Taylor: Hmm. Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, given that most of the public voted for parties other than the government party in the last election, will the minister at least consider including members from all parties in the forthcoming review process? Can't hurt.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, as I've always said, I'm open to advice and direction from all parts of the House and from all parts of the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the report from the MLA AISH Review Committee was tabled in the Assembly. This is great news for my constituents that depend on AISH and other community supports to function on a daily basis. While AISH recipients are pleased with the increase to their basic monthly supports, they are concerned, however, about the delayed benefit that they are entitled to. My question to the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: given that it is a lot easier to access employment opportunities available to AISH recipients during the spring and summer months, why was the ceiling on extra income for AISH recipients not increased in April with the increase in basic income supports?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are making a number of important changes to renew the AISH program. The hon. member

did mention one, which is increasing the earning exemptions for our AISH clients to assist them to be able to keep more money at the end of the month. In order to make this happen, it's necessary to go through the regulation and the legislation. For example, we were in Committee of the Whole last night. That has to be put in place and proclamation, Royal Assent, those kinds of things, with the legislation. I'm hoping that will take place by the middle of June. Along with that, we also need to update the computer system. There's a lot of work to be done there. I know the deadline, as the member mentioned, is for October, but I have directed my staff to implement those changes as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister answered my second question, but I'll ask my third question. Given that the government accepted the MLA committee recommendation to review how income is treated under AISH, can the minister tell us what the criteria for that review will be?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to meet with a number of community organizations, and the reason I have done that is, first of all, they called, knowing about the AISH review and whatnot, but also because they have the ideas about how they would like to see this income clarified. That's the income that's fully exempt or partially exempt or not exempt at all. As you know, AISH recipients may have income in another way. For example, it could be insurance settlements, investment in trusts that people have left for their loved ones, or federal benefits. There's a variety of ways. The plan is to continue to meet with the stakeholders. I've assured them of that. It will take time to formulate the overall clarification of the rules.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Achievement Testing

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Provincial achievement tests, particularly in the early grades, are costly, bureaucratic, and provide little information that can actually be used to help students, yet despite calls for change from teachers, testing experts, provincial advisory committees, and the government's own review of special education, we've yet to see any real action. My question to the Minister of Education: when will the minister follow the example of Manitoba and cancel its grade 3 testing program in favour of diagnostic testing that can provide specific guidance on how to help kids learn?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, provincial achievement testing has its role. We do it at the grades 3, 6, 9 levels, as all members here would know. In fact, I've had some active discussions about this issue with parents, with teachers, with school boards. It's one of those issues that on any given day can go one way or the other. Generally speaking, I think there's an understanding if not a desire to know where your child fits or how well your child is doing in comparison with all the other children at that grade level across the province. I don't by any stretch of the imagination want to infer that it's necessarily 100 per cent of the people involved with education who feel that way, but the majority still do.

Now, I should just indicate, too, Mr. Speaker, that if there are children who have difficulties with exams or have other reasons for not wanting to write them, superintendents have the ability to waive them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister's position that the time spent on memorization and teaching to the test is more valuable than targeted remediation for students with learning problems? Is that what he's saying?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think I made it pretty clear when I addressed the issue of grade 4 provincial achievement tests what some of those feelings I had were. They're very strong feelings because we all want to help those children who are in need of extra assistance with numeracy skills or literacy skills. That's one reason why we increased funding in those areas by tens of millions of dollars. It was to help out FNMI students, to help out ESL students, to help out special-needs children, and so on. Now, as more of this comes to my attention as we look at other ways of delivering diagnostic assessments, for example, for those children who didn't do so well in the grade 3 tests, then more programming will be developed to address their specific needs.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister's own five-year-old report *Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs* calls for a program of early identification and screening of students, when is the minister going to act on this report?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't recall it being my report because I've only been in this portfolio for five months, not five years. However, I wouldn't mind visiting that particular document. It hasn't come across my desk just now. If there were some undertakings there from previous ministers to look at it, I'll certainly be happy to do that, but at the moment it's not on my radar screen, although there might be ideas and suggestions from it that have already been taken forward. Certainly, a vast array of them were likely covered by the Learning Commission, and I'll be commenting on that further during the estimates for Education this afternoon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Home Schooling

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I and other MLAs on the Standing Policy Committee on Education and Employment have been hearing from a number of constituents asking us about the home education regulation changes. When will the Education minister move ahead with these new recommendations?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the home education regulation review, as I recall, started back in January of 2003, and there has been some significant movement forward in addressing them. In fact, my predecessor had done a fairly yeoman job of moving them forward, but there were some issues and concerns that needed some further debate, hon. member, and that debate has taken place. A little more will still take place.

The important thing to remember is that home education exists in this province for about 6,700 young students, and it exists as a matter of choice, as do public schools and francophone schools and separate schools and charter schools, and so on. So there's a lot to

this. Some progress has been made, and I expect it'll be moving forward very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is also for the Minister of Education. You mentioned some changes. What are the improvements that such changes would make for home-educated students?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, let me answer that this way. During the consultation process a number of ideas were put forward by home educating parents. Some very compelling reasons to address some areas, however, also surfaced. For example, there is a need to improve some of the linkages to student learner outcomes, to educational plans as derived by parents in consultation with the school board or a private board, with respect to making some of the wording more user friendly, with respect to some of the achievement tests and/or equivalency tests, and the reporting of results regarding numeracy and literacy levels. There was quite a bit on the table, and all of them were seen to be not only important but also important improvements to what is there now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that home educators do take their jobs very seriously, have home educators had any inputs or consultations on these new regulations?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Yes, Mr. Speaker, home educators had considerable input into the new home education regulation proposals, and that goes back to at least January of 2003. I think there were a number of meetings that were held with my predecessor, and in follow up to that, Mr. Speaker, I went to Red Deer a couple of weeks ago and attended the Alberta Home Education Association conference and annual general meeting. I spoke there. I answered questions for quite a long time. So there was an exchange of ideas and information even then and also during the hour, hour and a half of walking around that I did with some of the executive members. So I would answer shortly by saying that home educators have had considerable input into all of the proposed amendments, and then we'll just see how they wind up here.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Crime Prevention

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Automobile theft, youth violence, and drug abuse are issues of great concern to many of my constituents in Edmonton-Rutherford. In one recent case a stolen vehicle was recovered by the Edmonton Police Service with three suspects inside. However, because none of the three was behind the wheel at the time and, therefore, not in control of the vehicle, theft charges apparently could not be laid. My question is for the Solicitor General. Given that we average 25 to 30 stolen vehicles in Edmonton alone every single day, does this government have a plan to address the alarming increase in the number of automobile thefts?

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The short answer is yes, we do. In fact, there is an Alberta Vehicle Theft Committee in place right now and has been for two and a half years.

It's under the Ministry of Government Services. It has stakeholders at the table that are from the Calgary Police Service, the Edmonton Police Service, and the RCMP as well as five government ministries that are working along with them as well as members from the industry, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the registries association, and a number of other areas that are looking at vehicle theft in this province.

The hon. member is very right, in fact, in saying that a vehicle is stolen – I'm not sure about 25 a day in Edmonton, but it is at least one every half an hour throughout the day in the province of Alberta. So those numbers are very high. That's about \$60 million a year of vehicle thefts in this province. A lot of that is organized crime, but a lot of that is joyriders as well.

We definitely are looking at all of those issues, whether it's a vehicle off the street or whether it's organized crime and vehicles moving out of the country in containers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question, actually, is in regard to organized crime. What is the government doing to deal with the increase in vehicle chop shops, a major driver behind automobile thefts?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the organized crime units and the auto theft units of the police services, all of them – all of the five major police services have auto theft units and are working with those. Obviously, the serial numbers of those vehicles are being looked at. They're being matched.

This is one of the areas within organized crime that is on the agenda. Again, the Vehicle Theft Committee, that is being chaired by Staff Sergeant Derek Curtis of the Calgary Police Service, is looking at all of these issues and looking at 19 recommendations that I believe will be coming forward to the Standing Policy Committee on Justice and Government Services here in the next few weeks. So we are moving forward with the recommendations in that direction.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the obvious and documented connection between property crime and illegal drug use, will the minister commit to expanding Harry Ainlay's drug dog program in order to provide similar drug education in all junior and senior high schools across the province?

Mr. Cenaiko: That's a very good question that the hon. member asked. I'm not aware of the program, and I'd ask that he send some information to me with regard to it.

I can tell you, though, Mr. Speaker, that we are very interested in utilizing drug dogs in the schools. We do want to work with the Minister of Education but, as well, with the school boards and the parent associations to ensure that if there is an opportunity to utilize a drug-sniffing dog, we definitely will do that as long as we get co-operation from the school board and the parent associations.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call upon the first of several members to participate, the historical vignette of the day. On May 4, 1910, the Royal Canadian Navy was formed. Shortly thereafter Albertans began to play important roles in this honourable institution. One example of our contribution to the Canadian naval tradition can be found right here in the capital city of Edmonton. In

1923 the White Ensign was run up the flagpole for the first time in Edmonton when a naval half-company was formed in this city.

The group quickly established a reputation for excellence, and in June of 1939 they were honoured to be posted along the driveway of the Legislature Building during the royal procession of Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. In 1960 they were the first naval division in Canada to win both the naval division's efficiency trophy and the Barry German trophy for the most improved naval reserve division in the same year.

This naval reserve division remains active in Edmonton and continues to contribute to Alberta's proud military tradition.

head: 2:40

Members' Statements

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Louheed: Mr. Speaker, May is MS Awareness Month in Alberta. That is why the hon. members of this Legislature have received a gift of a red carnation and an information piece informing them about multiple sclerosis. Multiple sclerosis is an unpredictable, at times disabling disease of the central nervous system, the brain and spinal chord. The disease attacks the protective myelin covering of the central nervous system, causing inflammation and often destroying the myelin in patches. This can result in weakness, fatigue, muscle stiffness, numbness, speech problems, memory problems, and double vision.

Canada has one of the highest incidences of MS in the world. In Alberta there are an estimated 10,000 people living with MS. We do not yet know the cause of MS, nor do we have a cure for it.

During the first week of May the MS Society will be conducting its annual MS carnation campaign. Funds raised will go to support MS research and to provide services to Canadians with multiple sclerosis. Buying a carnation can help the MS Society get one step closer to discovering a cure.

We look forward to the day when researchers, hopefully here in Alberta, discover the cause and cure for multiple sclerosis. Until then, Mr. Speaker, let's all wear a carnation in support of the MS Society.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Town of High River

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are lucky to be alive in a province which has two world-class cities. Calgary and Edmonton have both played host to international events, and with their populations both approaching the million-person mark, the concerns of these two great cities are often front-page news. Given these circumstances smaller communities and rural areas, which are home to roughly a third of our population, can often be overlooked.

That is why it is my pleasure to rise today and to recognize a vibrant community which is not unlike many scattered throughout the province. The town of High River has just reached the 10,000 mark for population. While this makes it a fairly sizable town, this community still retains its small-town feel and agricultural roots. The town acts as a hub for the agricultural community in the area, and some of the residents commute to Calgary. This diverse mix of residents has created a vibrant and diverse local economy, which serves not only the needs of the town but also those of the surrounding communities. High River has a history of pioneers and entrepreneurship, and this remains true to this day as many of the businesses are locally owned and operated.

In addition to celebrating a milestone for population growth,

residents of this town have another reason to celebrate. Mr. Speaker, High River's centennial coincides with that of our province, and the town has a variety of celebrations planned for both of these occasions. These include a variety of fairs, concerts, and other programs which display the real culture and the heritage of the area. One great example is the 47th annual Little Britches Rodeo and parade, held on the May long weekend. This event is open to ages two to 16, and because of this it gives many budding cowboys in the area their first taste of rodeo.

Rural Alberta and the communities you find there have a wealth of opportunity for those who wish to seek it. High River is a great example of the rural opportunity that exists in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

National Forest Week

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is an important time for forestry in Alberta as we join the nation in celebrating National Forest Week. This year National Forest Week highlights Canada's boreal forest as an incredible national asset and as a sustainable forest management success story, providing benefits to Canadians and to the world.

Forestry is a major economic contributor in at least 50 of our communities, Mr. Speaker. It employs about 48,000 people and generates more than \$12 billion in revenues each year. That's quite an achievement for an industry that didn't even exist in our province a hundred years ago.

Mr. Speaker, our forests provide much more than just the economic benefits of the wood fibre that we harvest from them. They provide clean air. They provide clean water. They sustain a diversity of wildlife, and they provide recreation and tourism opportunities that make us the envy of the world. Forests are a crucial part of our history and our cultural identity, Mr. Speaker, and it is fitting that we recognize their importance through the observance of National Forest Week.

The best part of this story, Mr. Speaker, is that forest use and forest enjoyment are sustainable and renewable. One hundred years from now forests will continue to be loved, enjoyed, and used by our children and grandchildren. In this our centennial year Alberta renews its commitment to wise stewardship of our forests for our benefit and for the benefit of generations to come.

As a registered professional forester, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join in the recognition of our forests, and I invite all to pause and reflect upon the role of forests in our communities and our lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Alberta Scene Festival

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Until May 10 the Alberta arts community has taken over Ottawa for the Alberta Scene festival. The festival has brought together over 600 Alberta artists from all disciplines including theatre, music, dance, literature, comedy, film and video, culinary and visual arts. The venues for these performances range from the National Arts Centre, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the National Gallery of Canada, to theatres, music halls, and bistros.

Alberta artists will make connections that will take their art around the world. Promoters from across Canada and a dozen other countries are in Ottawa as well, providing opportunities for festival and concert bookings and recordings and distribution deals. These artists at Alberta Scene are ambassadors who will introduce new

audiences and presenters to Alberta talent, encouraging them to see what else we have to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate and thank all of our artists who are in Ottawa as well as all their colleagues here in the province for bringing such a high standard of excellence to Alberta's arts scene. I also acknowledge and thank Alberta Scene's corporate and media donors for making this celebration a reality. Alberta Scene is an exciting way to share our centennial celebrations with the nation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Cattle Rustling

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safety, security, and the ability to do business are intertwined with the need for simple trust. The police cannot watch out for everything we do. Lawyers and the courts cannot sort out our day-to-day living. We must rely on trust. Trust is especially important in the country. You trust the community when you leave your equipment in the fields. You trust visitors to close your gates so your cattle won't get out. You trust your neighbours to help you out when you need a hand, just as they trust you.

You trust your cattle to be around tomorrow when they're out to pasture. One of the worst violations of trust is the theft of animals. Feedlots are big, but cattle still graze free in unwatched pastures. These cattle might not be seen for days or weeks or even months, but when a beef producer finds that his stock has disappeared, the sense of violation, the sense of loss, the sense of breakdown in the community can be overwhelming.

It is like someone going in and stealing apples from your yard, but they take the tree with them. You can't grow the apples no more. It's like someone taking your paycheque if you work for wages, but they also take the store, and you can't go to work again. The livelihood is lost for the beef producer. How do you explain bad people to your four year old? How do you justify the lost 4-H calf to your 12 year old? It is heartbreaking to start again.

Sometimes the theft of cattle is laughed at because it sounds like something out of an old movie or cattle rustling in the Old West. Cattle theft remains a Criminal Code violation with a penalty of up to 10 years. It is a serious violation that strikes at the heart of one's trust in the community. These criminals are not drug addicts. They need equipment to haul the animals. They need to be undetected. They need to have a plan to avoid brand inspection. These criminals are organized and sophisticated. Cattle rustlers have no respect for their community. These thieves have no respect for basic human trust or the effect of their actions.

It is important for the government to properly support the investigation of animal theft and the apprehension of cattle thieves. It is crucial to provide funding for prosecutors and give them proper resources to deal with this thievery. Rustlers should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Please protect trust.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

2:50 Ottewell Community Patrol

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ottewell community patrol has operated successfully for 12 years fighting crime in southeast Edmonton. It was formed by the Edmonton Police Service. Volunteer patrol members 18 years and over assist the police in community-based policing by providing extra eyes and ears for crime reporting and prevention. Patrol members donate their own time, their own vehicles, and pay for their own gas to patrol 16

communities and 14 industrial areas in southeast Edmonton. The patrol uses radios to report unusual or suspicious activities to the police officer assigned to work with the patrol.

The Ottewell community patrol, co-ordinated by Constable Joe Spear, really makes a difference. Statistics recorded since 1993 prove the importance of community policing. The patrol in Ottewell can take credit for 1,982 suspicious persons reported, 1,636 suspicious vehicles reported, 36 warrants executed, 97 arrests caused, 40 stolen vehicles found, 89 drunk drivers taken off the road, 190 open garage doors reported, 35 fights and disturbances reported, 22 fire property damages reported, 16 break and enters stopped, 184 other incidents, including two handguns taken off the road.

I would like to at this time on behalf of the grateful citizens of southeast Edmonton thank Constable Joe Spear, the Edmonton Police Service, and the many volunteer patrol members. The patrol has also received financial support from the Alberta Solicitor General, the Edmonton Police Foundation, and other generous supporters including many community leagues. Our neighbourhoods are safe and secure because of the time and attention donated by so many unselfish people and organizations. Their contributions do not go unnoticed and unappreciated.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I'm going to introduce the hon. Deputy Speaker at this time for a special moment.

Leah Halliday

Mr. Marz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members of the Assembly, I know that we usually wait until the last day of session before we recognize the great work that our legislative pages do, but for Leah Halliday, after three years of dedicated service to the members of this Assembly, today is her last day. However, our loss is Medicine Hat's gain as Leah will be moving to Medicine Hat, where she will be taking up a position with Travel Alberta, where she will be working at the Walsh information centre. Leah, although we're not prepared to provide the usual token of our appreciation at this particular time, it will be forthcoming soon. I would ask the members of the Assembly to please join me in showing our appreciation to Leah for her three years of dedicated service and wish her all the very best in her new endeavours. [applause]

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by 684 Albertans who are eager to see potentially life-saving improvements to highways in northern Alberta, particularly highway 63. With today's tabling the total signatures on this petition so far are 3,481.

Speaker's Ruling

Tabling Notes to Oneself

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call upon the first member to participate, I have a ruling. Yesterday, on May 3, 2005, the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar purported to table a handwritten note that he wrote to himself which seemed to be a comment on a petition presented by the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

When members reviewed the Votes and Proceedings for yesterday, they may have noticed that the purported tabling was not entered. The fact that the member did not provide five copies of the document as required by Standing Order 37(3) is enough reason not to include the tabling in the records to the Assembly.

However, while this Assembly is very permissible in what is allowed to be tabled, the chair does not want to condone the tabling of messages to oneself about something said, done, or said by another member as a legitimate tabling. The Standing Orders were just amended in April to allow six members up to two minutes each and every day in this Assembly to make members' statements. This is one avenue that could be pursued by members who have a point to make. Notes to oneself about what another member did or said are not going to be allowed as legitimate tablings even if the correct number of copies are provided.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View to table the appropriate numbers of a report prepared by the University of Calgary's office of external affairs. The report summarizes the many learning innovations and research achievements at the U of C over the past several years. It demonstrates that despite a decade of financial hardship, the University of Calgary has successfully pursued innovation and excellence.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter I received yesterday, and it's dated April 26. It is from the hon. Minister of Education, and it is an acknowledgement that one of the latest amendments to the closure of schools regulation was not on one of the department's websites.

My second tabling this afternoon is the appropriate number of copies of a document that I received from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It's entitled Number of Days with Evidence of Enron Schemes by Quarter, and it includes Project Stanley, Silver Peak, Wheel Out, Non-Firm Export, Load Shift, Death Star, Ricochet, Get Shorty, among other elaborate schemes to dupe electricity consumers. It should be noted that the running tab now for all of Enron's activities for unjust and unreasonable profits is at least \$1.6 billion.

The third and last tabling I have, Mr. Speaker, is another transcript of testimony from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and it asks the questions "Was Jeff Skilling involved in Project Stanley?" and "Who was the primary actor in Project Stanley?" in regard to price manipulation here in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today. First, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of an open letter to the Minister of Education from the Greater Black Gold teachers' local 8. The letter implores the minister to "maintain local bargaining as the mode for determining collective agreements between school trustees and their teachers."

Secondly, I would like to table a letter from Mr. Norman Greenfield of Calgary, Alberta. He raises serious concerns about the ability of private nursing homes to provide excellent care in the face of government interference and unpredictable funding.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of excerpts from the final report of the integration of midwifery services evaluation project. The report provides evidence that the costs associated with a midwife-supported birth are between \$700 and \$1,100 lower than a hospital-based birth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a news release issued by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. The release warns of the dangers to livestock, endangered species, and the environment if the number of fish and wildlife officers is not increased dramatically.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call Orders of the Day, I'll just give you advance notice with a request. Tomorrow will be a very special day in the history of this Assembly. For only the fourth time in the nearly 100-year history of this Assembly there will be individuals permitted on the floor of the Assembly who are not elected members of the Assembly. There will be representatives from the air, land, and sea forces of the Canadian Forces to participate with us in a special ceremony on the conclusion of World War II.

3:00

I've also invited upwards of 90 veterans from around the province of Alberta. What I did was ask the three forces to provide a list of names that they wanted to have invited, and that was the protocol used. I will do a blanket introduction of them tomorrow, and I have said, all members, that if you have a constituent coming, you've got a copy of the letter from me to them. I would ask you not to individually stand tomorrow under the provision of guests to introduce these individuals. I'll do a blanket introduction for everyone so as to make sure that we're not here beyond 5 o'clock with respect to this particular thing.

I need to know, as well, from the three caucuses the spokespersons who will be participating tomorrow, and as long as I know by noon tomorrow, that's good enough for me. Remember, there's also going to be a Holocaust ceremony on the grounds of the Legislature at noon and then the reception for these veterans in the Assembly starting at 12:30 p.m., to which all members are invited. So I'd really appreciate your co-operation.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Education

The Deputy Chair: As per our standing order the first hour will be allocated between the minister and members of the opposition, following which any other member who wishes to participate will be able to do so.

The hon. Minister of Education. [some applause]

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and to my colleagues for that thunderous applause, most of which has to be

shared with some members of my staff who are attending this afternoon. I'd like to just quickly introduce and thank my deputy minister, Keray Henke; the assistant deputy minister for corporate services, Mat Hanrahan; his staff members Jeff Olson, the executive director for budget, school finance and reporting sector, and also Mr. Gene Williams, director of budget and fiscal analysis branch; as well as a number of other staff who are either listening and/or will be reading this later, including our other ADMs – Jim Dueck, Rick Morrow, and Lois Hawkins – as well as my own EA, Pam Boutillier, and, of course, our communications director, Kathy Telfer.

These are outstanding individuals, and I would ask the House to please join me in a round of thanks to them, especially to Mat Hanrahan and his crew, who have worked very hard through the Christmas period and on other occasions through weekends and Saturdays and Sundays and whatever. Thank you very much to all of you, Mat, to you and your staff for doing 14 drafts of this budget that we're going to be I hope approving today.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to just quickly mention that I have in mind to do some of my comments in French, and I've distributed those comments in a translated form to all members of the House. They should have them by now.

With that, I'd like to start. I want to stress how very pleased and honoured I am today to present my ministry's budget estimates and our business plan, and I want to put it in the context of our government's 20-year strategic plan. As members here will know, that plan is supported by four pillars, and education is the central component or a key contributor to each and every one of them. In fact, the first pillar is called Learning, and that pillar carries with it the long-term commitment of our government to education. Alberta's education system, of course, must provide quality programs that meet students' needs and ensure that students have the best chance for success. As a result, the majority of Alberta Education's 2005-2008 business plan and our 2005-2006 budget continue the implementation of the recommendations from Alberta's Commission on Learning.

Now, because we continue to review certain Commission on Learning recommendations, such as number 2 regarding junior kindergarten, such as number 3 regarding possible full-day kindergarten, and number 81, which recommends that we "create a new approach to collective bargaining," those particular items will not be seen in this budget today because decisions have not yet been taken on them.

However, other strategic priorities that we are addressing in this budget include: readiness to learn, which helps children before they start school; curriculum revitalization, such as the new social studies curriculum; facilitating transitions for young people who are completing high school; investing in technology to yield the greatest benefits for our students; and, of course, balancing our fiscal, human resource, and policy priorities with rising costs and ever-increasing public demands for choice, flexibility, and adaptability.

Albertans expect our education system to improve continuously, to respond to diverse learner needs, to be fiscally responsible, and to be accountable for results. This budget before us today, Mr. Chair, does exactly that because it focuses on our students and on our classrooms where our students go.

This budget provides a 7.1 per cent, or \$287 million, increase in program support for the basic education system for a grand total of \$4.3 billion. This budget also responds to many, albeit not all, of the items that were brought to my personal attention during the meetings that I held earlier this year with every single school board in our province. That, Mr. Chair, was a record, as most members of my staff will attest, but what a tremendous record it was because it gave us some unique opportunities. In fact, as a result of some of those

meetings, this budget also addresses their concerns as well as many of the recommendations coming out of Alberta's Commission on Learning, areas such as class size, daily physical activity, technology, special needs, and so on.

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of the budget, I just want to explain that the Ministry of Education budget has two primary funding streams, the first of which is what we call voted government and lottery fund estimates, which total \$2.85 billion, or about two-thirds of our budget, and which we will be voting on today; secondly, education property taxes, which total about \$1.45 billion and comprise the remaining one-third of our budget.

I wish to further explain that about \$1.28 billion of that \$1.45 billion resides in the Alberta school foundation fund, which is governed by statute, and the remainder, about \$177 million, goes directly from the local municipality to the local separate school board where we have so-called opted-out school boards. In any case, the \$2.85 billion in voted estimates coupled with the \$1.45 billion in education property taxes that I just alluded to brings the total support for basic education, K to 12, to \$4.3 billion.

Now, our voted estimates begin on page 113 of the 2005-06 government and lottery fund estimates book. Program 1, ministry support services, is the corporate function of the department. As you can see, support to this area will increase by \$4 million. The majority of this increase, almost \$3 million of it, in fact, is in support of new technology for the school system. It includes items such as provincial Microsoft licensing, supplying student transcripts, and providing other resources to advance classroom learning opportunities. The balance is for the restructuring of the former ministry of learning into two separate ministries, Education and Advanced Education, and also for staff salary supports and for meeting government's shared service agreement with the Alberta Corporate Service Centre.

Program 2, support for basic education, is very extensive and will likely consume most of our time here today. Support in this area will increase by \$234 million, or 9.5 per cent, and goes almost entirely to increased grant funding for 62 school jurisdictions, 13 charter schools, and 267 accredited private schools and private ECS operators. Together, Mr. Chair, all of these entities help educate more than 590,000 children and youth across our great province.

3:10

Support for basic allocations includes grant dollars for our renewed funding framework, which will be going into its second school year of implementation this September and will provide boards with increased funding and more flexibility to spend those funds on local priorities; grant dollars for our class size reduction initiative; grant dollars for professional development for teachers; and millions of dollars for items such as technology initiatives, teachers' pensions, accredited private school support, Alberta initiative for school improvement, or what we call AISI projects, student health services, high-speed networking to connect schools to SuperNet, learning resources centres, and amortization of capital assets, and so on.

The renewed funding framework bears some additional comment because the renewed funding framework gives our school boards greater flexibility in determining how to spend these funds to meet their local needs. Under this particular framework, Mr. Chair, support to public and separate school boards will increase by \$180 million, which is about 5.4 per cent, to \$3.5 billion in '05-06.

Highlights of the renewed funding framework include an increase of 2.5 per cent to base instruction grants for public and separate school boards, which is in response to Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 90; an increase of 4 per cent to the rates

for severe disabilities, in response to Commission on Learning recommendation 42; and an additional 4 per cent increase that is being set aside to accommodate rising numbers of severely disabled students, in other words, volume, and this is in response to Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 42; an increase of 3 per cent for transportation rates, which is in response to Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 90; an increase of 2 per cent for all other grants under the framework, which also responds to Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 90; and an 11.4 per cent increase for assistance to ECS children and for grades 1 to 12 students with severe special needs, which increases funding in this area to \$323 million, and that is in response to Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 42; furthermore, a grant rate increase of 2 per cent for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners in the K to 12 system, which is an increase of \$2.5 million from \$32 million last year, and that would bring the total support in this area to \$33.5 million; an increase of 32.7 per cent for ESL, English as a Second Language, which takes funding in this area up to \$40.5 million for domestic-born and for foreign-born students living in Alberta and responds to Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 42.

Mr. Chairman, there is also a brand new allocation of \$1.2 million in support of our daily physical activity initiative, that starts this fall. In fact, this amount will come to about \$1,000 per school to help get them started, and it commences our response to Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 7.

My final point, Mr. Chairman, is one I really want to highlight because it's an increase of approximately \$2 million to compensate for increased costs incurred by francophone authorities to provide English equivalent programming to their students, which is referenced in Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 90.

Et maintenant en français. Le cadre de financement comprend une augmentation d'environ 2 millions de dollars afin d'aider les autorités scolaires francophones à assumer l'augmentation des coûts occasionnés par la mise en place d'une programmation équivalente à la programmation anglaise pour leurs élèves et ce afin de se conformer aux exigences de l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés.

[Translation] And now in French. The funding framework also includes an increase of approximately \$2 million to compensate for increased costs incurred by francophone authorities to provide English equivalent programming to their students in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. [As submitted]

As a result, Mr. Chair, I will ensure that our five regional francophone authorities will receive a funding increase to address these specific costs. [some applause] Merci bien.

Les cinq autorités régionales francophones recevront un financement accru pour assumer les coûts reliés à l'offre de services éducatifs en français déjà dispensés par ces autorités.

[Translation] The five regional authorities will receive a funding increase to address the costs of offering the educational services provided in French already provided by the boards. [As submitted]

I should also emphasize that the renewed funding framework was developed by, with, and for our education partners, which includes the Alberta School Boards Association. In fact, our renewed funding framework is a living, breathing model subject to improvements. It's not a static grant formula for all time, and during my meetings with school boards it was referenced on many occasions.

In fact, there were a few school boards who felt somewhat shortchanged by the renewed funding framework, and I said that I would address that with my officials, and I'm happy that we were able to do that. The fact remains, however, that not one single school board experienced reduced funding under this framework. As

a matter of fact, within the guideline there is a component, Mr. Chair, called stabilization, and its purpose is to ensure that no school jurisdiction gets less funding under the new funding framework than it would have received under the old funding framework. That's one reason why I was happy that we increased this amount by a further 2 per cent for 2005-2006.

Now I would like to speak about some other provincial initiatives that are within the renewed funding framework but have targeted, or labelled, funding dollars attached to them; in other words, initiatives that require certain monies in specified amounts to be spent on them under program 2. I'll start with the additional \$6 million in new one-time funding that will be provided to augment the \$110 million in this budget for our class size reduction initiative. This additional \$6 million will assist with the second year of the class size reduction initiative to address factors such as improving transportation services, purchasing classroom furniture, or adjusting school attendance boundaries. In fact, these funds will be distributed to school jurisdictions on a per-student basis for grades 1 through 12. That, too, is in response to the Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 14.

Secondly, there is a \$319 million budget item for the Alberta teachers' pensions, of which \$174 million is for current service, as you will see on page 116, and \$144.6 million is for the unfunded liability as identified under statutory programs on page 119. Now, this represents an increase of 16 per cent, or \$44 million, so it is obviously very significant, and I know that teachers will appreciate having it supported today. I should add that this is due to the additional costs associated with hiring 1,250 brand new teachers in September of 2004 as well as annual salary increases for teachers and an increase of 1.53 per cent in the contribution rate to the pension plan by both its members in general and the government, which is in response to the Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 90. In the case of the teachers' pensions, it is the Teachers' Pension Plans Act which mandates funding responsibility by government for teachers' pensions, so it's a statutory-type provision.

Thirdly, we have a 5.4 per cent increase, which amounts to \$4.8 million, for accredited private school support to offset rising enrolment costs and increased severe special-needs funding for grades 1 to 12. This funding includes a 2.5 per cent increase in the base instruction grant and a 4 per cent increase in the severe special-needs grant. All other grant increases are going up by 2 per cent as well, and this is in response to the Alberta Commission on Learning recommendations 42 and 90.

Fourthly, we have a funding increase of 9.5 per cent, or \$3 million, for accredited private ECS operators for a total of \$35.35 million, and this is again to address rising enrolments of special-needs youngsters. It includes a 2.5 per cent grant rate increase, a 4 per cent severe special-needs increase, and a 3 per cent transportation increase. All other grants increase by 2 per cent, as recommended in the Alberta Commission on Learning recommendations 42 and 90.

Fifthly, I have allocated \$6 million in new one-time funding for professional development for teachers. A professional development plan is currently being worked on to determine the best course of action, including working with regional professional development consortia. This is in response to the Alberta Commission on Learning recommendation 9.

Sixthly, we have the 2 per cent increase for our Alberta initiative for school improvements, which is going up by \$1.3 million to \$69.76 million.

Seventh is a 2 per cent increase for student health services, which maybe I'll comment on a little later because that's going up by \$698,000 to \$37.66 million.

Eighth is a funding increase of 47 per cent for high-speed networking, or SuperNet. Funding here will increase by \$1.9 million to \$6 million total as more school sites come on stream.

3:20

Quickly, ninth is our very popular class size reduction initiative, which will receive \$110 million through this budget in order to sustain our promise to reduce class sizes and to honour our commitment to the class size guidelines as recommended in recommendation 14 of the Alberta Commission on Learning. With these additional and/or new monies school boards will be able to hire 435 new teachers this September. They will also be able to retain the 1,250 new teachers that were hired last September.

There are a number of other items that I'd like to get to. Perhaps I will during the question-and-answer period because there are a number of other program initiatives in technology that I want to comment on, in video conferencing, which I hope some members might be interested in, and in our Learning Resources Centre, and so on.

Let me just conclude now by simply saying, Mr. Chairman, that this is an extremely vibrant education system that we have here. I'm so pleased that we have \$4.3 billion to work with to help ensure that our students are provided with consistent, good programming, with outstanding if not excellent teachers, with the best, highest quality curriculum available, with parent involvement where it's necessary, with government support wherever we can provide it so that they can consistently perform and/or outperform their counterparts in international testing and in other benchmarks that we see before us.

Thank you for your anticipated support, hon. members. This is a very significant budget for our K to 12 education system. With that, I'll look forward to any questions that might arise or comments that you might wish to make. I would just ask that if members are referencing something specific in the estimates, could they please give me the specific page number at the top of the question so that I can flip to it and be on the same page as they are. That will help speed things along and will allow more questions to be answered.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe my time has just about run out, so we'll look forward to questions. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. minister, it is an honour to be able to comment on your budget. Hopefully, we can have a little discussion about some of the items. First of all, I'd like to just quote from a source before we get into some of the specifics a little later on more in a philosophical view. My colleagues will go into some of the in-depth matters of the budget, but I'll see how much time I have for that.

First of all, I thought it was important, and I have a great deal of faith in the particular author, who is a retired educator in St. Albert and very, very accomplished at writing and expressing his views. I'm sure the good minister knows about him.

Some of you will well remember the outcry in the early 1990s that Canadian students were not performing well by international standards. The response from government was to set standards even higher and to concentrate almost exclusively on academic subjects. According to the *National Post* of February 3, 2005, the push to improve standards in schools to satisfy critics "may be having an unintended consequence: increasing drop-out rates in most provinces."

So why do approximately one-third of Alberta high school students fail to graduate? Now, I'm sure that we'd get many different reasons from across the floor, and I know that I've

discussed it with my colleagues here. Here are some reasons I'd like to put forth through this article. The focus through Alberta Education is on high academic standards in core subjects. The focus fails to address the learning needs of students not headed towards postsecondary studies.

I can comment on that from being a superintendent of schools in Fort McMurray, where about 35 to 40 per cent of our population was aboriginal. I think that it was significant that when we worked through the classrooms of the two elementary schools, we found over a period of time that bringing in a learning disabled program and special-resource teachers helped to improve that situation.

The focus ignores the particular needs – and this is the testing focus – of students with special needs, English as a Second Language students, and the many First Nations and Métis students. A strong provincial economy also draws young people into the workplace before completing high school, and for nonacademically oriented students the material attractions of money and a car are incentives for pupils to leave school.

I think the important point here, to the minister – and I'm sorry that I can't go in depth about this. In 2000, according to the study produced for the ATA, \$12 million was spent on provincial achievement testing, but only \$4 million was spent on curriculum development. I think that's very significant in light of my earlier comments. I don't think, in terms of laying the foundation in elementary education, that we are doing enough work in that area. I will ask the question now: how much is being spent on achievement testing in '05-06, and how much is being spent on curriculum development in '05-06?

From my limited travels, because I don't have the luxury of a large budget – I have spent time and I have also worked as a trustee and a school superintendent and an associate school superintendent when the public system was decentralizing their budgets to schools in Edmonton. My feeling from talking to many of my colleagues, people at the University of Alberta, parents, my daughters in Calgary and Okotoks, Alberta, there is a basic need that we should be looking at in elementary education, and that's what I call a solid foundation, one in which all children have a chance for a good educational journey. I believe strongly that unless this is done, unless the foundation at the early elementary school is laid clear, it leads to poor school performance, which affects our self-concept, believe it or not, affects the dropout rate, leads to delinquency, and it leads to bullying. If you'll check with Dr. Carter's doctorate thesis at the U of A, I think you'll find what he suggests are some of the issues with that.

One of the things that I thought was interesting in regard to this and in trying to make my point – again, I have great regard for the minister, and I want him to know that. I just feel, Mr. Minister, that we must look at the elementary part of our program, that you are in charge of, sir.

I look at the quote again. The statistics can be stated that among the provinces the lowest graduation rate occurred in Alberta, where only two-thirds, 66.5 per cent, of youth graduated from high school in 2002-2003. According to the release, the graduation rate had increased; it was 63.2 per cent in '97-98. So there is an improvement going on, which is very gratifying.

So I'm really suggesting to the minister that we must look at the whole business of achievement testing, moving from achievement testing to a power diagnostic assessment process at the elementary school. I'm going to suggest some reasons and give some rationale for my statement. I think it would give us a meaningful accountability to be provided through the mandatory diagnostic testing with results reported to students, parents, and the school system. I think the research will show, if you talk to people like Dr. John Paterson,

the former associate dean of education at the University of Alberta, that a start in school is very, very crucial.

One of the things that's very, very important in the elementary grades is that we find out that a lot of kids do not succeed because they don't know what the problems are, and they need parent help. What I think would be very helpful here is a mandatory diagnostic testing where the information could be working from the school to the home, and they could reinforce where the child needs remediation and help.

3:30

The other thing I'd like to bring out. Diagnostic testing at the elementary level provides a picture of what students know and don't know and helps teachers to prescribe instruction to meet student learning needs. I think that's very, very important. Diagnostic testing helps to support new programs like early literacy and can cover more of the provincial curriculum than multiple-choice tests. Only Ontario and New Brunswick require eight year olds to complete high-stake provincial testing. Alberta students are the most highly tested in Canada. Last year Manitoba found the light and cancelled the grade 3 testing program in favour of diagnostic testing. Now, we understand that they're in the NDP government – and God forgive them for that – but I think it's important that we recognize that they've seen the light in that. Again, that to me is significant.

Now, the other thing I'd like to mention before I get into the specifics – and I hope my colleagues are getting geared up and fired up. That was my job, they said, to get them fired up, and I'm trying to do that just by talking a little longer here. [interjection] Excuse me. I shouldn't have said that. It doesn't look good, does it?

I think it's important, Mr. Chairman, that we look at what happened to me the other night in an elementary school in St. Albert, and I want to pat the government and thank them for this. I was at a DARE program. It seems to me that with this wonderful amount of money they quoted – \$4.3 billion. What a powerful amount of money. You see, I think what's wrong sometimes is that you can't always win by throwing money where there's a problem. [interjections] I think that's very, very important. I really do believe that. It takes good management. [interjections] That's the best cheer I've had since I was elected. Thanks very much. I'll stop now.

What I think was significant about this DARE program, and it was very, very good, was the amount in that school – and I want the minister to know the very high accolades he got that night – for the DARE program. I think what is intriguing about that was the involvement of police, was the involvement of FCSS people, and was the involvement of parents and how they initiated. What I would like to see is that DARE program, if I dare ask, reinforced again and brought back with a new innovation with crystal meth involved in that. I think that's wonderful.

It was also very rewarding for me when the principal of the day stood up and said: "You know, Mr. Flaherty, tell the government we're so pleased with what they're doing with this program, but we don't need more money. We need prevention." He said this: "Junior high school kids will be successful if their parents and significant others are there for them." That's number one.

The second thing the principal said is that we have to work on the area of passion with junior high schools: passion for a program, passion for a dance, passion for hunting. My granddaughter, who is going to dance for the Queen in Calgary, has a passion for dancing. Amara has a passion for dancing. He said that that will enable kids to get through junior high successfully.

Then he said a significant thing. I was told by the aboriginal affairs minister once that when you're meeting with aboriginal

people, get them to bring a buddy that they can trust. They're not going to trust you, so let them bring a buddy. Here we have the junior high school principal saying: "Get kids to have buddies that are reliable. Get kids to buddy up and like one another." They need support just like I need support from my colleagues today to do a good job on this presentation, and I think it's important. He said, "Give those junior high kids also a good sense of what you're doing with the DARE program with a sense of prevention."

I thought that principal had a wonderful message for me. You know, it didn't cost me anything to go there. I just was so taken with what happened.

Now, Mr. Minister, I know I might sound like a preacher here when I talk to you. I just want to go into one other thing, and I may be taking a little too long at this. This is the question of framework of funding that the good Minister of Advanced Education talked about. I'm wondering – and I may be bold in asking you to look at this – why we can't do something on speech therapy, to go back to my question on diagnosis work. What I would like to see, if I may be so bold as to suggest: the framework of funding that this government sets out is so important that you do that for the postsecondary students. Why can't we stipulate a specific kind of grant?

I have a background in counselling and guidance. I was lucky to take that program, sponsored by the federal government. Why can't this government do something in speech therapy by suggesting that this special grant program, because I'm asking you to look at and to consider school-based elementary speech therapy, will launch kids on a good start in that foundation in elementary school? Most superintendents and trustees, if they're honest, will tell you that that is what's lacking in our elementary schools.

So I plead with you. There's a way to deal with this problem. I agreed with the minister when he said: hard to get these people, difficult to find them. The hospital model for this – no disrespect – doesn't work in the school. That might be professional jealousies. I don't know. I just think it's a problem, and I just would ask you if we could have that considered.

The other thing that may be sensitive to the government is the question of closures, and I'm just going to quickly talk about that in the sense of school closures. We've had several editorials, and I don't know the state of some of these people, but I thought it was interesting in the ATA. Until 1984 school boards had a means of raising money for purposes that were not directly related to the program of studies and the curriculum but were nevertheless valid and valued by the local community. For example, if the people of Empress wanted to keep the local school open, they could let the trustees know, and trustees could bear the community's desires in mind and raise money to make a continued operation of the community school, having school permission to continue with government learning. But they would fund it through a requisition.

Now, the government took that, eliminated that in '94. One unanticipated outcome was that the school boards lost the means of funding decisions that used the school to represent the community development, recreational development, economic development, or social development. Alberta Learning had no mandate to provide funds for anything other than fulfilling its own mandate. Alberta Learning did not understand the other issues, and it didn't care to get involved.

I'm not going to continue reading this, but I think the message is clear. I think, and even the *Edmonton Journal* is saying to the good minister across the way: "nobody claims that job." Now she's saying: we need a white charger with the minister on top of the horse leading the charge to look at this whole idea of community schools.

I suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that we should revisit the community school concept. I was even brave enough to look at your good

colleague – and I won't mention his name and embarrass you in the House – who today suggested that there may be a supplemental budget to Education in the fall. Maybe that's a disruptive point to make, but I do believe that we should go back and look at the community school concept. I hope you can look at it.

What does it do? You had a bill here. It's called Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, sir, and it talks about revitalization of the inner core of the cities. I can't think of anything more basic and revitalizing than the school and turning it around and using it as a community centre with all kinds of programs. I think that's essential. I think some of these schools that may be closed could be looked at. I think also there's an issue there of funding again because many school boards do not want to keep this on the books. So those are some of the issues.

Just another comment to you. I'm getting old, and I'm not just using the Learning Commission anymore as a reference. There are several other people out there talking to me. I don't have the expense account to go out and talk to all school boards, which I'm sorry I can't do. I do believe that there are a lot of people that are very supportive of your ministry, sir, but I think that we have to be open to changes. The good Minister of Advanced Education talked about changes, being open, and I hope you take this in the right spirit.

I don't know, Mr. Chairman, how much more time I've got. Have I got time to get into some of the nitty-gritty? No. Two minutes. Well, I know the rest of my gang here – some of them have left. I thought the Legion closed at 3.

Anyway, Mr. Minister, I'll just sit down, and I'll turn it over to them. I've got about 10, 15 more good questions, but I want you to know I sure hope you'll have a look at that diagnostic. I'd work hard with you on that, sir. Thank you very much.

3:40

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Chairman, I'll try to provide some brief answers. Those that I didn't get down or don't get to because I couldn't write that fast: we'll try and respond in writing.

First of all, I want to thank the hon. Member for St. Albert for his passion for education. It almost rivals mine. In fact, on a given day I might not want to live between the difference. It's nice to know that there are people who are former educators or were involved in the education system – and there are many in this House from all over the province who are involved in one capacity or another. I'd say most of us are parents, so we come at this from a very, very straightforward and honest position.

The comments about what occurred in the early 1990s intrigued me. How Alberta students were or were not performing in terms of international tests or in reference to the standards that were set at that time and how that may have impacted dropout rates is also interesting. I think that's one of the reasons why the department of education at that time, which subsequently became learning and is now again Education, had looked at ways of addressing that particular difficulty.

As all members here would now know, on the program for international student achievement, or the PISA test, as we call them, our students have consistently done well. Very briefly, we know that in the latest reported results in December of '04, which reflected the test written, I think, in '03, our students were number one in math or sciences – I can't recall which one it was – and number three and number four in the other, be it math or science, and in problem solving and reading and so on. The results are very, very encouraging in terms of the international picture, and that was a

repeat of the results from 2000. So I think there have been some tremendous improvements made there, and we can assert that to a lot of positives in the system that have occurred in the last 10 years in particular, I would say.

Things like a standardized curriculum across the province are very important. Things like encouraging more professional development with and by and for our teachers, who are absolutely excellent teachers in this province, things like online and other methods of learning, our improvements in technology, the AISI projects, the student health initiative projects, the ESL funding. I could go and on, hon. member. All of those things, properly done and properly balanced in the Rubik's cube, can and will impact our high school completion rates.

In fact, we know that we have some work to do on helping increase the three-year high school completion rate. We're not doing too badly, hon. members, in the five-year picture, which is up in the mid-70s. Then when we take a look at a different statistic, which is the age range of 25 to 34 year olds living in Alberta, we have an 89 per cent high school completion rate in that particular age range. So we're doing very, very well. However, we can and we will do better. It is a priority for me, I want the hon. member to know, to address high school completion rates. That's one reason why I immediately struck a task force to look into that, and we are working on that together.

The other point about the percentage of aboriginal population, which the hon. member mentioned, particularly in the north of Alberta, is something I'm very sensitive to. In fact, I didn't have time in my opening comments to get into this in any great detail, but I'd like the members here to know that a new initiative that was created just a few years ago, the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, or FNMI initiative, is an extremely well-run initiative. It's extremely popular, and it provides an additional – what is it now? – \$33.5 million in the current budget to specifically help children of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit background, to help them achieve, to help bring their inspirations and hopes up to a higher and higher level. [some applause] I thank the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake for those kudos, that endorsement, because when I was in Community Development and she was with aboriginal and northern affairs, we worked a lot on these initiatives.

It's nice to see them come to be because in this current budget we will help provide support for aboriginal language courses in Blackfoot and Cree, for example, and we will help with the development and implementation of aboriginal 10, 20, and 30 curricula and with the infusion of aboriginal perspectives into other areas such as physical education, such as health, math, science, language arts, all of which are being looked at, hon. member, to reflect to the best extent possible aboriginal traditions and aboriginal values, which are very central and very important, as you will know.

I also grew up not far from a reserve, and I'm very, very tuned in, as the questioner is as well, with aboriginal issues. In fact, it's something that I referenced time and time again with other ministers of education at the national level when we met with them just – what? – two months ago or so. I can't recall the exact date. But I'm very sensitive to that.

The other point, very quickly, was a question with respect to how much money gets spent on achievement testing versus curriculum development, I think it was. I want the hon. member to know that in the current budget – and I'm going by memory a little bit here – I think we have about \$21 million allocated for curriculum development plus a further \$6 million, hon. member, for professional development, which, as you know, has to do with in-servicing and all kinds of other related issues for teachers.

I haven't got the exact thing broken out for you, hon. member, but

I know that we spent or will spend about \$12 million on achievement testing in grades 3, 6, and 9 and a few more million on top of that, probably, for grade 12 diploma testing. Or is it included in that same amount? Okay. So it's about \$12 million total for grades 3, 6, 9, and 12.

The other point was with respect to bullying. You know, bullying is something that we've taken a very serious stance against along with our violence prevention piece, and there are a number of ministries involved in this particular issue as well as with our safe schools initiative. We know that creating safe and caring school environments is critical for our students and for the families who send their kids to our schools. That's why in May of 2004 the bullying prevention strategy and the family violence and bullying conference was held, and a lot of research and initiatives were presented.

Alberta Education is part of that. We provide some funding for it. I think last year we provided about a quarter of a million dollars, if my memory serves, somewhere in that neighbourhood anyway, \$200,000 to \$300,000, and we've got more work to do, but we are undertaking that with great vigour as we speak.

Your plea, hon. member, about looking at the elementary part. I'm very cognizant of that. Yes, I will do that, and we have been doing it. I don't want to make it sound like we weren't. But specific to your questions about provincial achievement testing, you know, I have to just indicate – and I think the hon. member knows this, in any event, but perhaps for the benefit of some others. Our provincial achievement tests are not done only for the purpose of trying to assess, if you will, how our students are doing in terms of literacy, numeracy, and so on, at the grades 3, 6, 9 levels. They're done for many other reasons as well, and some of them are selfish to the government of Alberta. We want to know how well our curriculum is doing. How well is it being administered, received, taught, interpreted? Where might there be weaknesses, and so on?

So these provincial achievement tests help us with our standards setting. They help parents understand how their children are doing, and they help others monitor that progress. In the end, I'm of the opinion still that they do help motivate, perhaps, and they help to improve student learning, and in a perhaps vicarious way – and maybe the connection is vicarious – it helps prepare our students for the real world that they are going to be stepping into. So that's one thing.

But never would I expect or want a child to be put under stress or feel like this is the end of the world for them if they pass or fail this test, because we don't fail children anymore, as you know. We allow them to move on. But we have to do a better job in preparing those children who are not doing so well and who we know are not doing so well in these tests such as the grade 3 test and design a program, which I've labelled in this House as diagnostic assessment. I want to get away from the word testing, hon. member, and I hope you will, too, when we're talking diagnostic, just to draw a distinction.

We can have provincial achievement testing, and we can agree or disagree on that, but I want to talk about diagnostic assessment because to me an assessment has a much longer period of time or capability attached to it. Anyway, we'll talk more about that perhaps: why we have these provincial achievement tests and how we use them.

3:50

A number of teachers have spoken to me about some of the value to them. Others have spoken on the other side, obviously, against them. But overall they seem to be achieving what they set out.

I'll just wrap up with two final quick comments. One of them is

with respect to the DARE program that was referenced. You know, during my meetings with all the school boards and meetings with many parent groups, the home and school council groups, and superintendents, CASS, the Council of Alberta School Superintendents, guidance counsellors and work counsellors, and so on, the issue of drugs came up in almost every one of those meetings. If it didn't come up, I raised it because I'm very, very alarmed at crystal meth, in particular.

I read somewhere not long ago about some strip tests for smell that are coming in. I can't remember which hon. member in the House sent me a note on it, but someone from our side sent me a note on this. It looks like there is a relatively inexpensive way that we might look at actually determining by smell if students have been in contact with crystal meth. It's quite phenomenal – it's quite phenomenal – and we're looking at that very seriously now.

An Hon. Member: There is some technology coming.

Mr. Zwodzdesky: There is some technology coming, I know. I think somewhere it has already been pilot-tested, and it seems to work.

I certainly appreciate the comment that the hon. Member for St. Albert made: you can't win every argument, or whatever, by simply throwing money at a problem. That's absolutely true, and all members on all sides of the House – I don't care what party they're with – would all agree with that because we all know what you mean, and I know that you mean it quite sincerely. Money can help in some cases, but sometimes you have to go beyond money and get highly, highly creative and motivated and check all of the research and get passionate, as you said, and as your granddaughter is going to be for the Queen.

Why can't we do something about speech therapy is the other point, Mr. Chairman, very briefly. I've answered this question in the House before. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to go out there and hire more speech therapists, more audio linguists, more individuals who could help. The simple fact is that they're not available to be hired. We have tried. I spoke about this at the CMEC national conference, as well, with Canadian ministers of education. It's a problem. You know, hon. member, it's not a problem just in Alberta or just in Canada. It's a problem around the whole world, we found out. I've got school boards asking me. So I'm going to be working with the Minister of Advanced Education and with the postsecondary because we have to graduate more people.

Just before your time I was Minister of Community Development, and we had a similar problem in the area of caregivers for persons with developmental disabilities. We went straight to the Grant MacEwans of the world, and we started to say: "What can we do? Can we give you more money? Can we do something to design a program with you and get more people interested?" Recruitment is a problem. Retention is a problem. Then we increased the hourly wage rates, which helped.

Closures are something we can get to perhaps at another time, Mr. Chair. I just want to say this. Something was eliminated back in 1984, and I'll have to read in *Hansard* what that was because it's before my time, obviously. The part that I found most interesting was the community school concept. This is something that I'm working on with the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation in terms of the types of schools that Infrastructure will be building in the future, as soon as they get the money to do that, I should say.

Those new schools will perhaps be designed more on a modular basis, not portables but modulars, so that they don't necessarily look

like glom-ons the way sometimes portables can look. I don't mean to demean portables because I've taught in them, and so have you, and we all know that they're necessary. But new ways of designing and new ways of drawing the architecture for schools that will have a use beyond their school use is critical. However, at the same time, there might be some community applications. We should not be afraid to look at that, and I like your ideas in that regard, hon. member.

I don't know about any supplementary education budget coming in the fall. That would be a lovely thing. I don't know where that rumour got started. I'm not aware of it for Education. But there is a process in government called supplementary estimates, which we experienced about six weeks ago, which some members here would know about. Sometimes additional monies are required, and they do come forward in that form, but we don't have any contemplated at this time for Education.

So with that, I'll take my seat, just noting the member's passion about being open to change. That we have to be open to changes is something I certainly agree with. That's one reason why we have to look at things like the recommendations from the Learning Commission when they talk about possibly – I say this as potentially – looking at another way for the collective bargaining model to be done. I'm not saying that it's right or it's wrong. The fact is that I haven't seen the model yet, hon. member, but I'm open to looking at it. Under the guise of democracy, if the school boards have voted that way, I do have an obligation in following up because it was undertaken by government to do that.

Similarly, with principals. Should they be in the ATA, part of the union, or should they not? I don't have the correct answer for that yet. We'll be addressing that as well. But it's important to have the discussion because we can learn something. Whether we actually implement it or not is another question, but you can always learn something about hearing other opinions, and I hope that's what you mean by being open to considering other changes. I see you nodding, so that's a good thing.

Mr. Chair, let me take my seat here because I'm sure there are others who have other questions. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be able to speak on I believe one of the most important ministries of this government because, in fact, you hold the key to the future, not only for today but for tomorrow, because you have education's best at heart.

When we talk about your budget, it's \$4.33 billion, and that in itself is an enormous number. I won't deny that whatsoever. That is huge. If we break it down with regard to the amount of students out there, which is approximately 600,000 students within the province, on a daily basis it comes out to about \$23 million.

An Hon. Member: Per school day.

Mr. Bonko: Exactly; per school day. If we further break down that \$23 million on 600,000 kids, it comes out to roughly about \$46 per day, then, if I'm correct on that math there. Out of that \$46 comes the debt servicing, comes the schools' fees as well as the servicing of the teachers' salaries, supplies, and equipment. You can see how the number shrinks as it gets closer to the classroom. That's all I'm going to say on that point. I think that we still have a great bargain on our hands when we talk about \$4.33 billion to be able to educate the future of Alberta.

We're just coming out of the last hundred years, and we've got to

make sure that in the next hundred years these students are prepared to be able to carry on with the necessary means. We talk about other areas that we have shortages in, and those are some of the areas that I want to speak on.

I think the minister would recall perhaps in his days, way back when, when W.P. Wagner was a school that was able to capture some of the kids in the area that weren't going to be stellar students. I've got to recognize that not everybody is going to go on to postsecondary, and that's just a fact. There are some that are going to go right to the trades. I think there was a disservice when, in fact, the school of W.P. Wagner's type was taken off and eliminated. Unfortunately, we don't have that type of model. Nowadays we have something which is known as RAP, or the registered apprenticeship program. I think that's a good start. I don't think it goes far enough.

The reason I say that is that, in fact, we have trade shortages, skilled worker shortages. The temporary foreign workers initiative speaks directly to that. After we've recognized our mishap in eliminating W.P. Wagner, would it not be more prudent, maybe as a pilot, to create again a model such as that? I hear time and time again adults now saying: "You know what? If it wasn't for that school, I don't know where I'd be. That school, in fact, saved me, and it gave me direction. It gave me a career. It gave me a life." So that's just one thing to think about when we're talking about schools and innovative approaches to education. The W.P. Wagner model certainly was one that resonates in my mind as well as with a lot of other people who do recall that.

I'll talk about the utilization and the school closure policy. We met with trustees, and as a trustee I, in fact, was a little concerned with this. This would be an innovative approach, and it would I think meet all the needs as well as be able to fit the current model, but it needs some provision. It needs some tweaking there. In fact, if the minister would allow – currently, when the school boards are in fact closing a school, they have to close it to get it off their books so it no longer reads as part of the utilized space. They're being penalized for having that unutilized space. If they, in fact, were going to close a school, if they could turn it to the community and take it off their books, it would be taken out of the utilization rate, so it no longer counts against them. It still would remain in the community to be able to have community access.

4:00

When time does allow for the community to revitalize, they would have that school there in the future because it wouldn't have been sold off or dismantled in some way and taken completely out of the neighbourhood. It would still remain part of the school's inventory, and it would remain in the community. The thing is that if the community revitalized, the school boards, in fact, would be lobbying: we need this school back. They could close some of the programs or some of the community uses in the school and reopen that school again.

This speaks with regard to the Municipal Government Act that was coming from this government, when they spoke about revitalizing depressed areas. Again, we all have to work not only as municipal but school boards and government to ensure that we don't have that type of piece coming on a day-to-day basis when we talk about closing schools.

I think if you wanted that model, the community would be accepting of that if they thought that, you know: "We only have a utilization rate, perhaps, of 36 per cent. I can see the population growing. In 10 years we'll have enough to support it." If we closed it right now and, in fact, put programs to support within the community and then 10 years later opened it up, I think that would be a

palatable model by school boards, by the community, and certainly by this government. I think that would certainly be looked at.

I talked to trustees last night, and they certainly would be appreciative of something like that. Speaking as a community member whose school in the neighbourhood is being closed, I would be appreciative of that, knowing that one day that school could potentially reopen. Under the current model it completely disappears, and the community is punished not only for today but for the long term, for tomorrow, because chances of a school being rebuilt are nil.

If we talk about concerns with the ASBA, the Alberta School Boards Association, and their hand within provincial bargaining, we didn't have, when the vote was taken, 100 per cent acceptance, so that still tells me that there are boards who, in fact, still recognize the benefits of local bargaining and a local solution made right there by the locally elected officials. I think that taking that away from them further erodes that particular piece of governance, which is concerning because, again, we asked this question in the House: at what point do you find that the trustees are no longer valid because they don't have any real powers of legislation? Do you just appoint them in such a way as the health authorities?

I'm very concerned with the continuing erosion of the powers of the trustees with regard to local bargaining. Again, when you have big urban centres such as Edmonton, Calgary, and Fort McMurray or perhaps Red Deer who are able to find solutions right within their own ability, with their own bargaining and their own mediators, why would you go to provincial bargaining? That in itself is concerning.

We talk about funds. I think more funds could be directed, if we are going to find ways. We certainly did with front-line staff when we talked about teacher-librarians. A lot of schools don't have teacher-librarians or librarians, in fact, trade. Counsellors: again, we lack bodies in those areas extremely. When we had to do the cutbacks, it usually was within the front line that they deemed as maybe nonessential, such as custodians. I would argue that every individual regardless of their task at hand is essential to the overall operating and success of a school, right from the custodian to the secretary to the librarian to the counsellors to the teachers as well as the parent involvement. As we say, it takes a whole village to raise a child and make that child successful. Eliminating any key parts of it certainly weakens it.

We talk about being able to read and write, but when you don't have the people there to be able to encourage these people to take out those books, to give them the direction to what they're learning or what they're wanting to see, again, you fail in that one particular piece of that puzzle. So if we had to have tied money with regard to support staff, I would certainly encourage the minister to put it in with regard to those particular areas that I just mentioned.

I touched on the trade schools. I touched on the concern with the ASBA and with regard to the utilization. I know that there are a number of speakers, but those are specifics that I thought I should mention, just to get those off the plate so that others could get up there, that you'd take into consideration with regard to the school closure policy as well as the trades and technology school, working with perhaps NAIT and SAIT and other technology or trade schools as well.

Thank you for that, then, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. I am aware of his background as a former trustee. I don't know how many years.

Mr. Bonko: Nine years.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Nine years. So, you know, when he speaks, I have to listen because, of course, he's got so much wisdom and experience, as has the Member for St. Albert and elsewhere.

There are many teachers, many people who are passionate about education, and I appreciate that. I agree with your opening comment, hon. member, and that is that education is truly the key to the future. We all know that, and that's one reason why we have said over and over again that education is the top priority for our government now and for many years to come. It is; it has to be; and as long as I'm here, it will be. Other members feel the same.

It's true: \$4.3 billion is an enormous amount of money. I don't know how the math works out to the per-day thing, but what I can tell you is that when we take a look at the general average, we know that we spend just under \$9,000 per student per year throughout the whole system. That is the highest per capita rate in all of Canada, and it's the highest per-student rate. Now, I am aware that Ontario just did some things, and maybe those numbers will change here soon. I'm going off the information that I had to the end of December 31, at least. Again, it doesn't mean that more improvements can't be made.

Your comment about W.P. Wagner is one I'm particularly sensitive to because I was a teacher at Victoria composite high school in the late '60s and throughout the '70s, when, in fact, students were bused from W.P. Wagner over to Victoria composite, as it was then called. They came there primarily because of our vocational wings, but while they were there, they also learned other courses. I happened to teach languages and fine arts at that time, so they were in a variety of my classes. I do remember the students going to W.P. Wagner being highly motivated in the trades area. I honestly don't know why the W.P. Wagner program was cancelled. I can tell you that today W.P. Wagner is an outstanding academically inclined high school in my constituency, by the way.

I like the idea of having some trade school opportunities for our students. I suspect, however – I'm just guessing here, and I'll say this to you privately, hon. member – that it might have had something to do with the fact that other areas might have been looking for similar opportunities for their students. When you take a look at the kind of equipment you need to run a trade school, the kind of materials you need, the kind of shop supplies you need, I mean, we're talking everything from automotives to electricity to carpentry to plumbing to whatever. It's a huge array of opportunities that we used to provide. Some of my very close friends were trades teachers, and we spent a lot of time in their shops getting things repaired around the school, for example, or work projects that were brought in from the community so that the kids could learn.

I think the RAP and the YAP programs work, the registered apprenticeship program and the youth apprenticeship program. I think they need some tweaking; I honestly do. I've spoken with the Minister of Advanced Ed. I won't get into all the details right now, but I think that there are some improvements that we could make there because that will help us not only help the students with completion rates, but it'll help us fill skilled labour shortages, and it'll help our completion rates overall, our big-picture items. So we're on that.

As I indicated to the previous speaker, I also struck a task force to look into the high school completion rates, and the trades are a central part of that because we know, those of us who have been involved as educators especially, that not every child is destined to wind up in Academia Land. Some are destined for Tradesville and some are destined for Artsville, but the fact is that they have to stay in the education system longer, I think, to benefit themselves and their chances.

Now, your point about closure procedures and the fact that some school boards or some schools feel that they are being penalized, I think you said, for underutilized space and why not have that school remain in the community somehow. That's an excellent point, and this is part of the discussions that we are going to be having. We've had a few preliminary ones, myself and the minister of infrastructure and so on.

4:10

I would agree with you, that if we can figure out a way – and I mean this as a community, not necessarily just as government or opposition members or whatever – to give more community use to schools in general and at least provide some hope that there would be a potential for a school to be reopened as whatever. I think that's the point you're trying to make. Once a school closure takes place, and there are specific guidelines as to how that happens, and it results in a closure, it's the worst decision a school board probably ever has to make. I sympathize with those you may have gone through, and I've lived through a few, obviously, as well. Knowing that there's some potential use for it surely would encourage the community to somehow rally behind it or understand: yes, this is a closure for now, but it's not going away forever. Communities do revitalize. They do rejuvenate and so on.

However, we have to move on here quickly. The point you made about the Alberta School Boards Association provincial bargaining and the fact that the model, such as it was, was not 100 per cent accepted. I'm going to be briefed on this by ASBA themselves in a few days, or the representatives, at least. I'm interested to know, for example, how the weighted ballot worked and which questions the weighted ballot applied to. I know the report was that there was a 59 per cent approval rate for the new model, so by sheer numbers of majority it succeeded. That's excellent news for ASBA and for the people who worked so hard on it, but perhaps it's not so excellent news for the 41 per cent that felt otherwise.

Still, there was one major board, as you know, I think it was Calgary public, who did not vote. I think that's very significant because if it's a weighted ballot, that per cent could go from 59 up to 67, I think. If it's a weighted ballot going the other way, it could drop closer to the 50 per cent, which would, I guess, support your point, not necessarily ASBA's, obviously, but it's something to be considered.

I heard during my meetings about the benefits of local bargaining, but I also heard what the Learning Commission said. I'll just read to you very briefly, if I might, Mr. Chairman. On page 130 of this excellent report, item 81, Establish a New Collective Bargaining Model, this is what it says:

Under the current arrangements, the Alberta Teachers' Association has a mandate to act as the bargaining agent for teachers employed by public, separate and francophone school jurisdictions. Traditionally, negotiations have taken place at the local level between ATA local organizations and individual school boards. The provincial organization has acted as the bargaining agent when local negotiations have broken down . . .

And it goes on.

In contrast, school boards do not have an effective mechanism for providing a unified bargaining approach. While efforts are made through the [ASBA] to develop common strategies, provide negotiating advice, and take a consistent approach, there is no ability to bind locally elected school boards to a single, common bargaining strategy. In fact, the Commission heard that some school boards take pride in "going their own way" when it comes to bargaining with their local teachers.

The result is an imbalance in bargaining power between a strong and effective ATA on the one hand and a loose collection of school boards on the other.

Now, I only read that for purposes of putting into context what it is that the Learning Commission researched. Earlier this week in the House somebody asked a question about research on some of this kind of stuff. There's research we can find on both sides of every equation, as we all know. What encourages me is that at least we're having these open, frank discussions with it. After I've met with ASBA and I understand that model more perfectly, I will also meet with the ATA, who have called, and they want to chat. I expect I'll be meeting with a number of others because I want to understand better what that model can or cannot accomplish.

The final comment, quickly, Mr. Chair, is with respect to teacher-librarians. This is something that I feel very passionately about because during my years as a teacher, aside from my own home teaching room, I always told children that the most important room in the school is the library. I mean that. That's not to say that there aren't other important ones, but the library at that time – now we're into computers and all kinds of other things today – was the known place of knowledge and information and peace and quiet, too, for that matter. They've changed, but their importance remains the same.

During the 62 meetings I had with all the school boards, I did an informal survey of my own because I sincerely wanted to get a snapshot of where we stand with respect to qualified teacher-librarians. I was quite surprised at how few we actually have in the system. I don't have a number tabulated for you because they weren't prepared for the question as I was asking them, but I'm going to get a little bit more information on that.

On the other hand, we have a very large number of library technicians. As we know, Mr. Chair, those aren't the same thing. They fulfill an important service, and they're equally important to the system. It's just that in my view I think we need more teacher-librarians, but I was not successful in getting that into this year's budget. I'll try again for next year because I am passionate about it, as I am also about guidance counsellors.

You know, we have guidance counsellors, Mr. Chair, and we have career counsellors, I believe. Now, to have accredited, professionally trained counsellors would be my goal. That might mean that they have to be ATA approved or whatever, and that's okay. I know that when you have a counsellor on site all day long, children feel able to come to you, especially if you as the counsellor have established a presence, at any time when their problem exists.

This is kind of like the parent who wishes that he or she had spent more time with their child and coming home and saying: "I'm here. Where are you, child?" Well, the fact is that it's midnight, and the child has gone to bed, but I the parent am there. You have to be there when the children are there, when they're ready.

It's the same thing with guidance counsellors. You have to be there and be available when that child is having a problem, not necessarily two or four or six hours later or a week later. Now, I'm talking in an ideal, perfect sense, but the point I'm trying to make is that I'm very aware of this, and I'm working on this and toward it because these items were also referenced by the Learning Commission. I don't want to build too tall a mountain that none of us will be able to climb, so we're going at it slowly, trying to chip away at this to increase exactly what has been referenced. I hope that we can get that done.

I'll close by just saying, Mr. Chair, that within the renewed funding framework and the additional dollars that we've put there, school boards do have that flexibility now to hire more school librarians if they want and to hire more guidance counsellors, ATA accredited and so on, if they want. But they would probably come back and tell you that their dollars are being used and used well in other areas and that they don't have enough in these other areas yet.

With that in mind, I'll take my chair, knowing full well that this is an issue that will come back again. I agree with your comments about getting SAIT and NAIT more involved with the trades that you closed with, and that's why I'm working with the Minister of Advanced Ed to get some of those things done.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me start. This is a big portfolio, and in 20 minutes you sort of have to pick areas that you want to go into. I'm not saying that a lot of the other areas that are being discussed aren't important, but I'd like to take a general look first, if I may.

The \$4.3 billion was alluded to. You know, when it gets into billions, people's heads spin because it sounds like a lot of money. I think the minister has said – and we probably agree – that it's still the best single investment you'll ever make. We can argue whether it should be \$5 billion or whatever the case may be, but it's most important. The key that I think the minister would agree with is that this is not an expense, that we have to use the word "investment" because that's what it is. It's an investment. It's an economic investment, well-documented. It's a social investment, you know, for the high-needs kids. If they don't get an education, we know where they're going to end up, and we'll end up paying in a different way. We certainly know that it's an economic investment. So I think the term is more important. I'd maybe suggest to the minister that rather than using "expense," we say that it's a \$4.3 billion investment.

I want to just talk in a very general sense about what I see happening, and I admit that this is not very scientific. It's a discussion I've had with three high school principals in Edmonton, and I think that the minister would be interested in this. I agree with the focus of getting the class sizes down at the K to 3 level. That's absolutely crucial. The bang for the buck we know is greater – and I'll come to that – but we can't forget the high schools. We've been talking about RAP and that, but in talking to three high schools, while there has been an increase in funding, three big high schools in Edmonton are probably going to lose staff. Now, in one case the population projections may be down slightly, and AISI money is not coming. You know, there are a lot of those programs, and maybe that's another thing the minister might think about. There are maybe too many tied-in programs.

4:20

The big thing is that a lot of the high school teachers are at the maximum on the grid, and the salary increases from the collective agreement have basically taken up the bulk of the money. So I think there is some concern. I mean, they're not complaining particularly. They understand, you know, the money being shifted to K to 3, but these three schools – I'm not saying that this is scientific across, but in all three of these cases, the principals I know do expect that their class sizes might be a little higher than they were last year. So I pass that on to the minister. He might want to see if that's generally the case in the high schools throughout the province or not. I don't know.

Because we do have limited time, I want to just come very quickly to one of my favourite topics, as the minister knows. The minister quoted the Learning Commission, and I'd like to come back to junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten, not quote it, because I don't have it here, but I want to come at it from the perspective, Mr. Minister, of the high-needs students because I think that's where

it's crucial. The minister will correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is that they said: start there; you don't need to go to a universal program right away, but you have to start with the high-needs schools.

Having also been a former trustee, as the minister is well aware, one of the groups that I represented in my ward was the city centre project. I know that the minister is aware of that because one of the co-ordinators, Sandra Woitas, is working in his department right now. It's interesting. They've done excellent jobs. The minister is aware that the Edmonton public school board at least – and I'm not saying that we're the only ones – saw full-day kindergarten as so crucial that we took money out of our budget to put into the 18 high-needs schools, the 18 highest rated schools because we thought it was crucial. That's money, of course, I guess you could say that comes out from other places, but it was just a priority that the school board I was a member of decided we should do.

It was interesting that after the arbitration, all of the fights that we had and the rest of it, when we had to cut back, it was said to those people – they were doing extra things in the city centre project, and in a couple of schools there's junior kindergarten, and we could talk about that. There's full-day kindergarten in all those schools and reading recovery. They were asked: "Well, we're going to have to do some cutbacks. Where should we do it?" This was back, you know, after the audit and the rest of it. In all cases the schools in the city centre project said: we'd rather have class sizes slightly higher than give up full-day kindergarten and junior kindergarten. I mean, it wasn't a pleasant choice. It's, you know, like: do you want to get shot or hung? But that's what they said. That's how crucial they think full-day kindergarten is, and they're all high-needs schools.

The junior kindergarten. There are studies. I mean, to the minister: the research is all over. I know people can argue: do we need it? Okay. In the suburban areas and that, I don't know. In Massachusetts – I think I mentioned this when I was on the board – the business community is pushing for full-day kindergarten for everybody there because they think it's an investment again. I know how crucial it is with the high-needs schools, with the high-needs students.

We have a fast-growing aboriginal population. We have in those schools a lot of kids, recent immigrants coming in from some really tough backgrounds and places around the world that are in rough shape, to say the least, so they need that extra help. The sooner we can do that, the better. I mean, there are problems later on in junior high, but I'm concentrating on this.

I would really strongly suggest to the minister that, in particular, those are, I think, two very important recommendations from the Learning Commission that should be looked at. If we can't do it universally, I understand that, but I really would suggest that it's a crucial thing in the high-needs population. If we don't get that, it's like I said, you know, the old advertisement: you can pay me now or pay me later. If they don't get that sort of background then, their chances of success I believe get very diminished down the way. I mean, we know the research about junior kindergarten and kindergarten is pretty universal, that especially with high-needs kids it's important.

The minister is aware, I'm sure, of Dr. da Costa's studies on the city centre project and the junior kindergarten. Here's one copy of it here. He's done some excellent work there, and I'm sure the minister is aware of that. If he isn't, he can let me know. We'd certainly get it to him. We have our own local research to show how important these programs are. I have a feeling that the minister agrees with me, but he may have some convincing to do in caucus. I would hope that we would move on that very quickly because I think it is extremely important.

Mr. Speaker, going along, before I run out of time, I know it's been discussed, but it's a bugbear of mine, as the minister is well aware: the school closure process. One of the reasons, the major reason, I ran for the school board was that I tried to put an end to school closures. I think that along with my colleague here we had some success. I'm not sure the Minister of Education liked it at the time. We were told in the audit that they didn't. It is absolutely divisive, and we see it now that this has ended up in the courts. No matter how that works out, it tears the communities apart. In the cluster groups at the school board, of course, it pits one principal against another. It's just a very bad process, and I think the minister understands that. But there are things that we have to do. The minister has already alluded that there's discussion going on – and I'm glad – with the minister of infrastructure.

I want to review a question period that we had about Ontario. They were going through the same processes, and they found that the process was not working. The communities were up in the air, the rural and all the rest of it. So they said: we have to find a better way, part of the closure process, beyond, you know, what we do with the schools. They came to a different perspective. I said to the minister – and I believe it's true – that the process we have now is a how-to guide to close schools down because of the utilization. It hits, and it's quick, and it just doesn't work.

In Ontario – and this is a source I mentioned from Ontario Education: Excellence for All. I believe it was back in 2003 they developed guidelines. These guidelines require boards to develop their own school evaluation tools that weigh each of four sets of considerations about the school. I'm talking about the school closure part of it here. One, its value to the student – they're talking about the school – its value to the community; its value to the school system; and its value to the local economy. This is where I feel we're at right now provincially in terms of our closure process. They say that in the past

there have been “rewards” in capital funding for closing schools which has distorted facility considerations. Some boards felt compelled to close schools in one area to be eligible for new schools in another, even if the sites were far apart. Some boards closed schools prematurely to become eligible for new replacement schools. The ministry will no longer recognize closed schools as creating eligibility for new school grants.

That's precisely, if I may say, what's been happening in Alberta.

It plays off, again, the inner city against the suburbs, and it creates a mess. The demographics, the minister himself said: how many people are going to keep being able to afford homes out in the suburbs? There is movement back to the inner city, and I think it will continue, but if you close the school down, it's not a big reason for people with small children to move there. So the closure process we have to look at. Then the minister said that the two ministers will be looking at the whole utilization. The minister knows I've talked before about the old schools. I know it's in the other ministry, but if you're working together, I just want to stress it.

4:30

One of the schools being closed or potentially being closed, North Edmonton school, is in my constituency. The provincial utilization has a rate that says a capacity of 448, but that includes the corridors. It includes everything else. It doesn't include instruction areas. If they included just the instruction areas, the board's figures say 350. But I've been in that school when there's 200. I don't know where they'd put them all because all the classrooms are being used. So the utilization rate punishes old schools dramatically. I'm glad that they're looking at that.

I agree with the previous minister of infrastructure across the way: we did the right thing with George Nicholson school. In other

words, we are bringing the community in. Capital health and the Y are there, and that makes absolute good sense to me. The school is part of it. I guess I would say: if that works well in new schools, then surely there is some consideration that it should be used in old schools.

Other people have alluded to it, but I really want to stress that we should move back. It was very prominent at one time that the school was the community centre. Because all of us are the same taxpayers. If it's seniors using it or daycare or whatever the case may be, that should be part of the school utilization rate, it seems to me, if we think again of the school as a community centre, especially elementary schools.

We've talked about it before, Mr. Minister. If you're looking at it, my understanding is that in British Columbia they actually count community uses of the school in their utilization formula. They acknowledge that schools are the heart of a community, and they try to maximize that community use. In fact, they even have school co-ordinators trying to bring community groups in. I think that's very healthy for the community. I think it's healthy for the kids. I think it's healthy for everybody. It would require some co-operation from various ministries here, but surely that's doable.

So, Mr. Chairman, I hope that this is an important issue because it is divisive. I've gone through it as a school board trustee, and I've gone through it now as an MLA. I think we really do need some drastic changes there.

Centralized bargaining. I won't say much about this. Within ASBA there are the urban boards and the rural boards. It's a catchphrase for all of them. I believe in local bargaining, but I think local bargaining was made harder when the school boards lost their right to taxation back in '94 and '95. I still think it provides the best way. It certainly has – and I don't want to say that for all of rural Alberta it worked well. I was on the negotiating committee at the local level in Edmonton, and I know that the Edmonton public does not agree with this.

It seems to me that there's a problem here, though. If we're going to move to provincial bargaining – if we are, and I'm not saying that we should – it seems to me that the government has to be at the table. It cannot be a group like ASBA in between. The people that are negotiating have to be the people that have access to the purse strings, it seems to me. Wherever I'm aware of, there are mechanisms. Wherever they have provincial bargaining, the government is at the table. Now, there are mechanisms for local bargaining in some areas. I won't get into that. It doesn't make sense to me to have sort of a provincial group trying to negotiate for Edmonton and Calgary and rural Alberta and not have access to the purse strings. I think you would find in almost all cases where they've gone to provincial bargaining, the government is at the table.

I leave that sort of rushing quickly here, Mr. Chairman. I'd just say quickly that there's one thing in the Learning Commission that I would not touch. The minister alluded to it. I think principals have to be part of the bargaining unit. I think in our model in Alberta it's worked very well. There's a collegiality model between principals and their staff. Almost anybody that I've talked to, principals, at least in Edmonton, believe that it works well the way it is. I think the point that I'd make: in British Columbia, a former deputy minister, Mr. Dosedell, whom you would know, I think told the Learning Commission – and they didn't take his advice – don't go there because we have the principals outside the bargaining unit in B.C., and it's a mess. It's an absolute mess. So that's one I might bury. That's my advice, for whatever it's worth.

The only other thing I have to mention very quickly is that we had a good motion, Motion 505.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider the benefits of requiring five credits in fine arts as a condition for high school graduation in the province.

It was by the Member for Calgary-Egmont. It was agreed to.

I think it's a good motion. I think you as a former teacher at Vic comp would probably think that's good. But the problem – and I think the minister is well aware of this – is that there's such a limited time in high schools right now. Where do you put all these things? It's problematic. There are some very good ideas out there, but maybe that means that we have to take a look at – and it comes back to testing and that – what education is all about. Certainly, testing is part of it, but I'm wondering if the provincial testing is testing a relatively narrow aspect of what education should be. How does it test things like citizenship and our fluency in the arts and second languages and these sorts of things? I think we have to take a look at that.

I know that I'm almost out of time, so I will close there, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I have a long list of members who wish to speak or ask questions. At this stage I recognize the minister for his response.

Mr. Zwozdesky: I'll be very brief. I just want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who has also spent several years, I believe, at the school trustee level with Edmonton public, wasn't it? Yeah, three years. He has some insightful comments that he's put on record, and I'm sure he has many more.

I agree with him: the best decisions that we can make are for our children, and I certainly consider that to be an investment. I was reminded of a phrase, which I can't quote verbatim, but it was something like: if you think education is expensive, you should cost out the alternative. I think we all know what it means. So we're with you on that one.

I will look into what you said about the three high schools and the class size monies. Let me just say in a general sense that the class size monies are for the most part enveloped, but they're enveloped with great flexibility. School boards and individual schools, as they look at their class size numbers – you know, a class of 21 in, let's just say, grade 6 might sound like a large number to some people. If those 21 students are all more or less at the same level of learning capability, it's a lot different than having a class of 21 with children that have enormously varied and diverse and multilevel needs. So that point has been left to the local schools to deal with. We have said: spend these monies at whichever levels you think you need them.

The Learning Commission encouraged us to look first and foremost at the preliminary grades: kindergarten to grade 3. So that's where the first envelopes of dollars were targeted, and I would say that they almost all were used at that level. There might have been a few cases where they were used at 4, 5, and 6, and they will be distributed along the way.

The AISI comment you made is a very good one, and it's been increased a little bit. In fact, innovative programming, which we all know is a school jurisdiction's responsibility, we talked about a great deal. The fact is that our experience tells us that there is more innovation in our school system now than ever before. So we now have about \$70 million going into that one project alone, and we fought very hard at our treasury tables, shall I say, to ensure that it stayed there because we needed to encourage other innovative projects.

4:40

The junior kindergarten program. You know that that recommendation is still under review, but recommendation 2 is the one you

were looking for, hon. member, and it did say to make this “available for all children from the age of four, but given limitations on resources and space, the first priority should be on providing junior kindergarten for at-risk children.” Now, if that particular recommendation succeeds, then fine; that's what will happen. If, on the other hand, it doesn't succeed and government doesn't embrace it, then we will look at other ways of trying to still get to the root of the recommendation, and that is to help those children.

The fact is that by the time we get to kindergarten – and the member would know this, Mr. Chair – 95 per cent of all age five children in this province are in a kindergarten program. Those who are in the prekindergarten year – and we do have several prekindergarten programs. Junior kindergarten is here, and we fund it, but it's up to the local school boards to provide it and make that decision. The fact is that we would get a significant backlash if we were to make it mandatory, so I have to weigh that out in this equation as we consider this one. It's a tough situation to tell a parent that they must give up their children to the school system at age four, but the fact is that if there is a child with a special need or an at-risk child that we know could benefit from it, we provide that kind of funding through PUF, program unit funding, as you're well aware, and that's been increased.

At any rate, the issue, quickly, about other points of support for junior K or whatever. I value what the member said when he indicated something like, “If we can't do it universally, I understand,” or words to that effect. We have to still solve the difficulty, though, of identifying those children whom we know we can help.

The school closure process. You know, this is one that is obviously garnering a lot of attention and a lot of press. I do have that example you gave from the Ontario model, and we are looking at that, but this is going to take some time to address if we're going to do it and get it right. I don't like a lot of the current utilization formula, frankly. The way it sits right now, I don't like it either. That's one reason why we're revisiting it.

At the time that formula was brought in, it was what was thought to be just and correct, and it has served its purpose, so to speak. But I have been reminded through these meetings with school board trustees and their officials, superintendents and so on, that areas like stage areas in schools or storage rooms or other areas that sometimes might be used for instruction but not always: is it fair to consider them? Similarly if some schools have wider hallways than do others. There are simple things like that. I think you mentioned corridors being the same sort of point and the value that these schools have to community.

So we'll definitely be looking at all of that because I would agree that having to close schools shouldn't become an incentive to have new ones built. There's got to be a way that we can work in and with that but still leave those decisions at the local level. I still like to believe that the trustees, who are elected just like all of us in this House are, are just like we are in that they have a job to do, and we have entrusted them – hence the word “trustee” – to make those decisions. So we have to work that one through. I will look at the B.C. example that you gave. In fact, I'll ask my staff, who are here listening, how it is that they use community use as part of the utilization calculation.

I won't comment on local bargaining because I already did, but there is a section called 119, as you know, in the School Act that allows school boards to band together should they wish to do so. I don't know if that's been exercised lately, but I think it was at one point.

The issue of principals we've talked about.

Finally, on Motion 505, which was brought forward by Calgary-Egmont. It passed unanimously. I did speak in favour of it, but I'm

well aware of how crowded the curriculum day is already, I'm well aware of the need for additional teachers were it to come forward and be acted upon too quickly, and I am well aware of what it is that our provincial testing does or doesn't do in terms of testing for citizenship, I think he mentioned, or arts, fluency, or whatever it was. So we're looking at all those issues as we speak.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, it's been a very open and good discussion so far this afternoon. One nice thing about being fourth or fifth: you can cross a lot of things off. So I, like the minister, will not bring up some of the good points that have been very well related today already.

I do want to comment on the \$4.3 billion and to recognize what a tremendous investment we are making into the future. It's 17 per cent of our budget approximately, and we are putting our money where our mouth is. I am proud to be an Albertan and to be able to say that we are looking to the future of our youth.

I just want to touch briefly on the school closure utilization formula as well because it's very critical in my area in rural Alberta, with shrinking numbers, that they go after that. I would urge you also to continue looking at community use and other ways in which we can keep those areas open and not be penalized because they're not using it. The letter of the law cutteth, and the spirit of the law can add light, and I hope that we can add some light on this school utilization and benefit the rural areas especially. It sounds like it's a major problem even in the cities here. On turning the space over: I know that there are communities that have asked in my area to use that space, so that would be a great movement forward.

I want to talk a little bit about extracurricular activities if I could. It hasn't really been touched on today. Right now – and I'll use the minister's words – we have Artsville and we have Sportsville. I think that it would be nice to open up and have Tradesville and perhaps some other areas for extracurricular activities. It kind of goes, I guess, to the area that I wanted to focus on the most, and we've talked quite a bit about it today, about RAP and YAP. I think it's really important that there is a high percentage of students that don't go on to further education and feel that they're done at grade 12, and I think most of us would agree that it's very much to their detriment.

What I wanted to talk about is the fact – and the minister has mentioned this – of the expense of vocational classes and to be able to get the teachers there. One of the ideas that I've seen in rural Alberta is work experience and the fact that in the evening time or whatever perhaps some ticketed journeyman could be employed to help keep kids off the street and have activities that they enjoy, whether it's mechanics, electrical, carpentry. All of the trades are there in our local communities, and in the apprenticeship program 80 per cent of the time is spent with those journeymen apprenticing.

We seem to be focusing all the time on the classroom at NAIT and SAIT, and that has to be there, but if we could somehow start to include kids at a younger age and more of them and not at a high expense to the school boards by using journeymen in their local areas, I think that would be a huge asset that we haven't tapped into that would be of great benefit to the youth. I'm a very big believer in what I guess you'd call a liberal education or a broad education.

An Hon. Member: Small "1."

Mr. Hinman: Yes. I hope that's on the record. Small "1."

Too often in society we're getting to where people are becoming

so highly specialized that perhaps the only thing they can do is brain surgery, that they can't even come and fix something on their own car. We need to be able to have those opportunities, and it's very engaging for the youth if there are those opportunities there and, like I say, even if it has to be extracurricular ones, where we can involve the community and have those kids doing more things. So I hope that we'll really continue trying to be innovative and thinking of ways to engage our youth in more areas than just Artsville, Sportsville, or Academiaville. We need Tradesville.

It's something that people can do in their own home, to do their own repairs, and it's an advantage to everybody to have those. I also think it's exciting that a lot of those kids when they're 18 and they're just so happy to get out of high school and go to work, if they've had three years of different opportunities, it's one more area when we talk about trying to let kids have an idea of what they want to do in life. If, in fact, they can come out, perhaps be an electrician, a welder, or something else, they can go and work for four or five years and realize: you know, now I do know what I want to take at school. But they were earning a decent income instead of one where they have no benefit to be able to go on.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the DARE program and the problem of drugs in the schools. I'll open this up; I'm very intrigued. Are dogs not able to pick up crystal meth? Another area I'd like to have the answer on. I've gone and I've witnessed the DARE program. I'm just curious about the answer. I would think they could be trained. They're very good at it.

4:50

The program I wanted to go to or refer to is on the positive side, like DARE is. How would it be in our schools if we were to indeed have a mascot dog that was a drug sniffer in every school and that perhaps some of the special-needs kids and things are looking after? If everybody in the school knew that there were one or two or three of these mascots in there, what effect would that possibly have on the drugs in our schools and not at a great expense? I think there are some new areas that we could look at and really benefit our schools if, in fact, we could reduce the amount of drugs that are in there.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the level of chatter and noise is on the rise. We have a Confederation Room behind the Assembly. If any member wishes to converse loudly, we invite you to leave the Assembly.

Hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, sorry for the interruption. You may proceed.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Anyway, I just think that drugs in our schools is a major problem. In my small rural communities we have volunteer policing, and they do a great deal of work. I think that we could work something in on a volunteer basis with animals that would really be a benefit to our schools.

I want to sidetrack here just for a minute about bullying. Perhaps many of you are aware that Taber is in my constituency. There was a problem, and they've worked very hard there. They've got some good programs on it.

I want to go back, and I've forgotten now which member it was the other day that referred to bullying and a comment that, I guess, I want to refer to. I'm almost embarrassed at times during question period with some of the comments that are made back and forth across the floor. I had students here, and I know that if that behaviour went on in their classroom, they'd have made a trip down to the principal's office and had to be held accountable for it. I think that we need to up our standards here, especially with the number of youth that come into this building and with question period being

televised. Perhaps we should have that education in here so that when we make comments that aren't appropriate, we're held accountable for it. Bullying is a problem. I'm grateful that we're working on that area, and I hope we'll continue to focus on it and remove it from our schools.

I guess I want to comment a little bit about value-added in Alberta. There is a Harvard graduate – and I think maybe I've referred to this before – who in the late '50s went back to Singapore. Singapore was destitute. They couldn't afford their police force or anything. They asked the places around: "Who would adopt us? We need to get absorbed in somewhere." Nobody wanted them. A Harvard graduate went there and said, "Look at our assets." Everybody said: "What? What do you mean?" He educated them. Look at what Singapore is today.

In Alberta we have the assets here in the youth. We have the money, and I'm excited about that. I think that we can put not necessarily more money but continue to focus, to really give our youth the opportunity for the next generation. I'm grateful for the Internet that's has gone out and all of those things that we are doing to give them the benefit of the future.

Referring to that, I guess, and going back again to rural schools, for many of my communities the two core things that have kept them there are the schools and the hospitals. We've cut back on the hospitals. They've closed them down, and they're looking at closing the schools down. With the Internet and those things that are available now, there are many businessmen, I guess, if you want to call them that, and entrepreneurs that are looking at going out to some of these rural towns. When they see what's happening to the schools and the opportunities that are there, they say: "Well, no. I don't want to go there."

One of my motions that I have, that won't make it in there though, is that as MLAs we've addressed it, and we realize that the rural areas have some difficulties to deal with. We've put the MLAs on a matrix, and there's a wide variance in the amount of money going to the different areas, depending on how they fit in that matrix. I would very much like to see a matrix for curriculum for rural Alberta. Many of the small schools really struggle in offering the curriculum that the larger schools do. Somehow I feel that we've got to give that opportunity to rural Alberta by some matrix program and not saying, "\$9,000 per student, and here it is" but really looking at and benefiting those rural areas. If we do that, we will have people moving into those communities because of the special things that are offered there.

The little town of Warner is one that's just awesome. That school was going to be closed down. They put their heads together, a very small community: what can we do? Years ago the Alberta government allowed them to build that arena, and they've done a great job. They've raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. We need to be innovative with these small towns. What other ideas can we have going so that people will want to move there or actually people will send their kids? We have kids from all over the world that come into the little town of Warner. I think there are 89 homes there, but because of that work, they still have a high school.

I've brought it up several times – I'll bring it up again – that it would be a tremendous investment for a centennial project to look down the road to having a world-class hockey school for girls in Warner, that right now is struggling to stay alive. I really would ask that the ministers put their heads together again and look at that. It is an opportunity, a centennial opportunity, and the people there have put their effort into it. Over 10,000 volunteer hours have gone into that community to try and make that hockey school float, and they're really putting their effort into it.

There are so many innovative and good ideas out there, though, in

our education system that we can and we should continue to explore, and it's exciting that we have the money that we can invest into it. So let's make sure those dollars are going into the very best areas possible.

I want to refer just for a few minutes to the bargaining also. In our area the teachers and the school boards have gotten along very well, but it was disheartening a couple of years ago when the ATA told them that, no, they weren't allowed to settle. I think there has to be an opting out, that when a group is happy, whether it's a school board, the teachers, or whatever, they can make a settlement. I think they should be allowed to. Why stir the pot and divide and conquer when, in fact, a group is working well? The principals there want to be part of their union, and things are working well in my area. I would just encourage that somehow choice is there. Once they've settled, let's not say: "No. You know, you're part of this. We've got to be collective," that the rest can go on. There's a huge difference in the needs of rural communities and their teachers and those in the cities, and one size doesn't always fit everybody. So I'm concerned about that.

I guess I'll quote a new quote that I got last week from the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. He says: let's not think outside the box; let's throw the box out. When it comes to collective bargaining, when it comes to ideas, let's throw the box out and put all the ideas on the table, like we are today, and pick the best ones and go forward because Albertans will benefit from that.

I'll see if there's something else here on the list. I guess that in closing, what I want to do is to give my thanks and appreciation to the government on their budget and the money they're putting in there.

I really want to comment on and thank the teachers. They're hard working, they're innovative, and they're deserving more recognition for the dedication towards our youth. To me it would be very fitting. We have rewarded excellence for our students, and I would like to see more rewards of excellence for our teachers. We have outstanding teachers, and whether that's all of the different areas – academics, extracurricular activities, and those areas – I would like to see them somehow rewarded and have that desire to become the best of the best. There's nothing more exciting, as I think back in my education, than those teachers that were passionate and got you engaged in things.

I had a biology teacher that was phenomenal. Everybody in my small, little town came to biology, and they were engaged in there, and we need to have more teachers like that. We need to have them come to their full potential and be exciting. We can and we should do it. So I'd urge this government to somehow give more rewards of excellence to our teachers, who are looking after the future of our youth.

With that, I'll sit down. I know there are lots of other good ideas out there. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Briefly to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, thank you for your comments.

I agree that \$4.3 billion is a huge amount of money, and it's a significant investment. A significant amount of that does go to rural Alberta, and we're very sensitive to the points that you made about rural Alberta. In fact, I don't have it just handy here, but we have a program called small schools by necessity, which is another way that we channel monies out to those areas where, in the case of rural areas, a school may not exist for a span of 25 kilometres. In the case of more populated areas I think it's down to 6 kilometres. Whatever the exact numbers are, we do provide extra monies for that. I'm

quite certain that in the current budget there are increased monies for that. Is it 2 per cent or thereabouts? Yeah, it's about 2 per cent. We could all use more, but when you have a lot of children to feed, you've got to give them all a little bit. But it's there.

5:00

So, too, is there a transportation rates increase of about 3 per cent. So, too, is there more flexibility, in other words more money, in many other different envelopes through the renewed funding framework, which I alluded to. There's quite a bit more there overall.

You know, the member who spoke before you made an interesting point, and that was that there are so many teachers who are now in that upper echelon of the grid. Whenever we get new monies, sometimes so much of it goes – I'm not saying that they're not worth it. I'm just saying that it's a fact that we have teachers who are in their 50s, perhaps, or 60s who are at the maximum of the grid both in terms of education and years of experience, so there's a large consumption of dollars for salaries still, even when these increases come.

Your points about work experience and using tradesmen and journeymen in the community are very valid ones. We are talking about that right now and the ratios – 3 to 1, 1 to 3, 1 on 1, whatever it's going to be – to help make more opportunities available to engage our youth, I think you said.

The point about drugs in the schools. The DARE program and its success have been covered many times. We will be coming back with some more information on that. I hope to do it reasonably soon. I just don't have it all together yet. You'll have to wish me some luck in succeeding with it.

Volunteer policing, bullying, and antibullying initiatives are also on our drawing boards.

Your points about comments in the House during question period are very valid. I've sat in this House for 12 years, and there are comments that come from both sides of the House that sometimes many people regret having said. I won't go any further with those.

The value-added, however, is an interesting point. You know, we have four pillars for our government's business plan: leading in learning, unleashing innovation, competing in a global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit and so on. So when I talk about or you talk about giving youth more opportunities, I think we're very much on the same page. Obviously, it starts with having the best education available for them.

In that vein, your point about school closures seems to be a popular subject today. I grew up in a small rural community of about 200 or 300 people. I know exactly what you're talking about. Schools and hospitals are very important attractions, but they're not only important in rural Alberta. They're also important in our cities and our towns and other locations. Keeping rural communities open or viable, I think is the word you said: I'm well aware of the role those schools can play in doing that.

I think schools more than hospitals are probably a larger attraction for getting the next generation to move there or for the current generation to stay there. Why would you move into a small town if that school is closing? You might as well move to the place where the school is staying open. That's part of the dilemma in Sangudo and Mayerthorpe and I think Valhalla, Beaverlodge, Hythe, Sunset House, Bruderheim. There are a number of these, which are very difficult, difficult decisions. So we're studying this. I don't know what the answers are going to be yet.

On the rural thing I'll just close out here quickly, Mr. Chair, by saying that we also provided a brand new initiative here called video conferencing. Now that we have dozens and dozens of sites already

set to go and hooked up – and we'll have them all, I hope, done by the end of September – you will see many, many more opportunities for a lot more course selection, a broader range of courses to be selected, and a step up, I think, for certain of those courses to have improved quality of education provided for kids through video conferencing. I can't remember how much it is. Is it \$6 million for video conferencing that we just put in? That's over and above some monies that I announced a couple of months ago, wasn't it? Yeah, about the same amount, coincidentally, or thereabouts. A huge amount of money to help these schools.

Not only that, hon. member, but we're also going to be providing up to \$500 per month per site to help schools cover the costs of the monthly hookups, so that will help a great deal to use that. I think rural Alberta will light up – literally light up – because not only will the schools use these, but a lot of the community groups will perhaps rent them for a couple bucks an hour or whatever it's going to be. [interjections] It's very good. Yeah. It's very good stuff. So we're increasing the monies there, and that's ongoing money, by the way, to help out.

I'm sorry. You did mention the Warner example. I can't remember, but I think I actually sent a letter of support for that one because it sounded like a good project, and I heard a lot about it from your local school board down there. You talk about it being a good idea. We have so many good ideas here that we are really leading not only the nation, but we're leading the world in many ways.

I was quite surprised to hear this, but let me share it with you. When I took over the portfolio, one of the things I wanted to do was exactly what is happening today by way of a symposium on health. I wanted to do a symposium on education, so I said to our team leaders: why don't we do that and bring in some experts from around the world and really learn what's going on in education that maybe is, you know, the next best mousetrap and the next best bread-slicing equipment and so on? The room went dead silent, and they looked at me and said: "Well, that would be a good idea, Mr. Minister, except you need to know that we are the best in almost all of these areas, and those people come here. Those people come to Alberta." I didn't know that, hon. member, and I suspect a lot of people here don't know that.

I don't say it to brag or to complain. I say it only because there is tremendous respect for what we're doing and for some of the calculated and researched risks that we sometimes take. Charter schools: we're the only jurisdiction in the whole of the country that I'm aware of, that offers charter schools. Unarguably, in my opinion, they're a great thing. That's where you were coming from with the Warner thing.

Your point about the ATA not allowing local settlements, I guess, makes the point that the Learning Commission was trying to make; that is, you know, there has to be some degree of parity that the Learning Commission had in mind when they crafted that recommendation. If a local ATA makes a deal with a local school board, you would think that the ATA at the provincial level would be honour bound to see it through. They have their reasons why they don't always agree with that because they as an ATA have the broader picture in mind, and it's a different game, as we all know. Similarly, ASBA wants to have that kind of impact as well. So it'll be an interesting discussion we're going to have.

My last comment, Mr. Chair, and I'll take my seat, is that I certainly agree with his comment about the outstanding teachers that we have. We are recognizing some of them here within the next week or two. There are more things that we could do. In fact, if you check *Hansard* over the years, you'll find a few places where I've talked about some things they do in Germany to show the kind of

value that you talked about, to show the kind of reward, if you will. I'll give you one quick example, and I'll take my chair because there are teachers here.

When I was a teacher, I did a lot of marking in my home. In fact, I had a study. Well, it was not quite that fancy, but it was a little part of the house that I called my study. That's where I did my marking, I kept the students' stuff, I did instrument repair when I was teaching music, I had my collection of books, and so on and so on. In Germany – and I don't know if they still do this because this was a few years ago – they actually allowed that part of the house to be written off on your income tax. Now, it's a small thing, but I'll tell you: that's a few hundred bucks that a teacher can save. There's another part, too, where teachers are spending money occasionally out of their own pocket on materials, which we've all done. We buy little stars or little stickies or whatever it was.

Let me take my seat and allow other members to ask some questions, but I'll go to the wall to make some of these discussions happen to show some of that value.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, we only have about three minutes.

Mrs. Mather: I know. I respect the hon. minister for many of his skills. I wish I could have some of the skill that he has in speaking so quickly.

I have some points to make. I wanted to talk about the importance of education, but I'm obviously speaking to disciples, and that's great. I have a passion for education, and I'm proud to say that I've had the opportunity, the honour of learning and working as a teacher, counsellor, and administrator.

There are many facets to consider. I want to say that I support what's been said ahead of me, in most cases very strongly. This is an important budget. What we do affects everyone in this province, and I'm proud of the commitment to the investment in education. I want to thank the minister and his department for the hard work that's gone into this. I've got about seven points. I'll go as fast as I can.

5:10

Number one, they need to provide adequate funding for education infrastructure. I know this is another department, but I want to take this opportunity to say that schools, especially the aging ones, are not getting enough funds to meet the school maintenance needs. The maintenance allocations are based on the size of the building and enrolment and not on the school age or individual needs. Using this formula, new schools are left with surpluses and maintenance allocations, and older schools can hardly keep up with maintenance like plumbing, electrical, and so on.

The other very important issue I'd like to talk about is from the senior high school perspective, and that's the methods used to allocate funds. High schools have to set up completion targets every year. The funds then are allocated based on projected credits as of September 30. If at the end of the school year the targets are not met due to dropouts, the school is hit with huge funds being taken out in August. As such, it's almost impossible for high schools to plan budget spending, and many high schools end up in deficits. This practice is leaving our most needy high schools with the least funds. High schools in poor neighbourhoods or with significant immigrant populations are the ones affected most because of the lack of school attendance and so forth. In irony, they are the ones that need the funds the most to provide these students with extra help. In other words, poor schools are getting poorer and rich are getting richer.

On that same point I wanted to say too: is there a way we could push for a funding formula where there's a base figure for each student that is realized on September 30 and then give us money based on completion? You know how many resources are put into place, I'm sure, and the student doesn't finish the courses. But the work has been there: the counsellor time, the administrator time, and certainly the teacher time. It's hard to expect schools to plan and provide good programming when there's no stability in the enrolment.

The other thing I wanted to touch on – and I said there are seven, but I'll go to this one right now because nobody has.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(5), which provides for the Committee of Supply to rise and report no later than 5:15 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, I must now put the question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$2,726,068,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements	\$1,000,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates of the Department of Education and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases,	\$2,726,068,000;
nonbudgetary disbursements,	\$1,000,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 8 p.m., at which time we return in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:15 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, May 4, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 05/05/04
 head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order. May we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly this evening a fine group of youth and young men from the 170th Sherwood Park LDS Scout group. Their leaders are Garth Fitzner and Sheldon Fisk, and the five boys are Nathan, Matthew, James, Adam, and Theo. I'd ask that they would arise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you tonight to all of the members of the Assembly a fine group of young women. They comprise the 185th Brownie group from the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They're led tonight by group leaders Sharon Jones, Amy Thomas, and Kristiana Beaudry and parent helpers Tami MacGregor, Chantel Savard, and Mike Houston. I indicated to them that all of my colleagues in the Assembly tonight are going to be most disappointed when they learn that, unfortunately, this particular group is sold out of cookies tonight. I told them that we all came with our wallets full and expecting to be able to load up our offices with cookies, and unfortunately that's not going to happen. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warmest welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me I have two groups of individuals. One consists of three constituents: Ms Denise Brunner and Cathy and Keith Michael, who are with us in the members' gallery.

Also, I'm pleased to have members of the Lithuanian-Canadian community, who actually have some really interesting connections to this particular building. Ms Emilia Karosas, the grandmother of our page Mr. Taddes Korris, over here. We also have Kostas Zolpis, president of the Canadian Lithuanian Society, and Maryanne Kelemen. We have Titas and Eugenia Uogintas – Mr. Uogintas actually is the individual who built this dais over here for our Mr. Speaker's chair, behind you, that entire structure that surrounds the Speaker's chair – and Mr. Jean Luke, David Luke, and Mary Ann Garbencius. Mary Ann's father, John Garbencius, recently was awarded a medal for being 103 years old on our centennial. We also have Al and Andrea Schmidtas and Joseph Popikaitis and Nejolla Korris, the president of the Edmonton-Castle Downs Conservative Association. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**
Gaming

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the committee has before it the estimates for the Department of Gaming, and as per our Standing Orders the first hour will be allocated between the minister and members of the opposition, following which any other member may participate.

I notice a very colourful tie on the Minister of Gaming, so I recognize the Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the Provincial Treasurer can get a new pair of shoes for her budget, I can get a new tie for mine. That is my feeling.

I'm happy to be here this evening to discuss the Ministry of Gaming's 2005-2006 budget. I would move that we adjourn to the Casino Yellowhead, but I know that would be ruled out of order, so we'll stay and deal with it right here in the Assembly. Over the last couple of months it's been busy and exciting. I look forward to providing estimates for our activities over the next year.

First, I'd like to introduce some members of the staff who are here this evening, up top there, looking down and hopefully going to give me some advice over the evening. I would like to welcome Norm Peterson, the Deputy Minister of Gaming and chief executive officer of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission; Ann Hammond, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Gaming; Ron Crosby, executive director of finance and administration with the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission; Marilyn Carlyle-Helms, communications director of Gaming. My executive assistant, Chris Brookes, is up there as well. Thanks.

In order to put our estimates into perspective, I'd like to take a moment to give the committee some context regarding the Ministry of Gaming and its responsibilities. The Ministry of Gaming is responsible for several entities including the Department of Gaming. The department's areas of responsibility include the strategic direction for the province's gaming and liquor policies and communications. The department's responsibilities also include the administration of certain lottery-funded programs including the community facility enhancement program and the community initiatives program.

The Ministry of Gaming also includes the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, or AGLC, as I will refer to it throughout this evening. The AGLC regulates all gaming and liquor activities and establishes operational policy for these activities within a provincially approved framework.

Other entities within the Ministry of Gaming include the Alberta Gaming Research Council and the Alberta lottery fund. The Alberta Gaming Research Council is a broad-based advisory group that helps direct the research activities of the Alberta Gaming Research Institute, and the Alberta lottery fund is used to support thousands of volunteer, public, and community-based initiatives annually.

Gaming is also responsible for the Horse Racing Alberta Act, the Gaming and Liquor Act, and the Racing Appeal Tribunal.

Tonight I'll be focusing on the Department of Gaming and its key areas of responsibility. The Department of Gaming's estimates total \$169 million for the fiscal year 2005-2006. Two per cent of this budget will go towards costs necessary to administer the department and its lottery-funded programs. Two per cent for administration, Mr. Chairman. The lion's share, 98 per cent, or just over \$165 million, will go directly into lottery-funded grant programs. Our goal is to ensure that Albertans continue to see the maximum benefit from the province's well-managed gaming and liquor industries. I'll show you how we intend to ensure that this happens as I highlight

some key areas for Gaming in the upcoming year, 2005-2006.

The first and perhaps most important item is the Alberta lottery fund. This year we continued to listen carefully to Albertans and direct lottery revenues towards priority areas. Revenues from the Alberta lottery fund have made and continue to make a real difference in the lives of all Albertans: first, through allocations to a number of ministries in support of public initiatives – for example, Infrastructure and Transportation, Environment, Innovation and Science, and the list goes on and on – secondly, through a variety of other ministries to foundations and grant-based programs such as the community facility enhancement program, CFEP, and for volunteer and community-based initiatives.

This means that lottery funds allocated to individual ministries are the responsibility of my cabinet colleagues to disburse according to the plans that they present to the House in their estimates, that come before us as we move through the estimates this session. My job as Gaming minister is to discuss my ministry's lottery fund allocations, which total \$165 million, and highlight significant areas within Gaming.

Two of these significant areas that we deal with are the community initiatives program, CIP, and the community facility enhancement program, CFEP. I'd like to point out that in this budget we've requested continued funding for these very important grant programs. In the past these two programs have put millions of dollars of lottery revenue to good work in hundreds of communities throughout our great province.

I'd like to share a few examples from last year on these programs. A public library received \$125,000 to renovate a special area to promote the importance of learning amongst teens between the ages of 13 and 19. A kindergarten society received just over \$47,000 to develop an early childhood literacy program. A gymnastics club got \$40,000 to improve their training facility and to buy new equipment. We need to be able to continue funding projects of this nature and many others, Mr. Chairman. We plan to put \$38.5 million into the community facility enhancement program and \$30 million into the community initiatives program to do just that again this year. The importance of these programs speaks for itself through the benefits they provide to Albertans every day in every community.

8:10

Another area we deal with is major fairs and exhibitions. Another significant highlight this year is the funding for major fairs and exhibitions throughout Alberta. This year Edmonton Northlands and the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede will each receive a \$3 million increase for facility improvements. This initiative will help support the various programs offered by both the Edmonton and Calgary facilities, including exhibitions, fairs, trade shows, and numerous other community events that they hold at their facilities. Most importantly, this money provides the opportunity for Albertans across the province to showcase their agricultural and other related trade products.

As well, Northlands will receive \$250,000 to support the Canadian Finals Rodeo, and the Calgary Stampede will receive a similar amount to promote the Calgary Stampede. I believe it's called the greatest outdoor show on Earth. Overall, funding for each of these important volunteer organizations will increase to \$10.35 million in 2005-2006.

As you will recall, Mr. Chairman, this House recently approved \$40 million from the Alberta lottery fund in 2004-2005 for the province's other seven major fairs and exhibitions. These funds will be used to upgrade buildings, grounds, and other capital projects which support the many community activities in and around these seven municipalities. In 2005-2006 the funding to the regional fairs

and exhibitions will be \$2.66 million.

Continuing with the agricultural theme, I'll move on to the racing industry renewal initiative. This initiative is aimed at revitalizing the horse-racing and breeding industries by returning a portion of the net proceeds from slot machines at racetracks to the industry. We call this a flow-through arrangement. As in all our flow-through arrangements the amount of the grant is determined by actual revenues. The other portion of net proceeds is directed back into the Alberta lottery fund.

Approximately \$15 million went to support thousands of community initiatives around the province from the lottery fund and from the racing initiative. It's an arrangement that benefits the agricultural community and strengthens our urban communities. The budget for this initiative is \$45 million in 2005-2006. The majority of this funding will be used toward the operation and capital costs associated with racetrack facilities and racing purses. This is very important if we want to continue to both preserve and revitalize an important part of Alberta's history and culture.

Now on to bingo. It's another flow-through arrangement. The budget estimate indicates that \$8 million will go to charities from bingo association halls that conduct electronic bingo, or digi bingo. As you see in this year's estimates, the budget for this initiative is set to increase by \$1 million from last year's budget. Proceeds are generated through the commitment by the charities to fund raise, and the proceeds flow through the Alberta lottery fund and go directly back to those groups. All benefiting charities have been properly registered, and their use of proceeds is thoroughly scrutinized to ensure that these funds are going to eligible causes. Last year 2,300 charities earned \$44 million from bingo events held across this province.

Mr. Zwozdesky: How many was that?

Mr. Graydon: Forty-four million dollars.

This initiative is also a part of a broader strategy aimed at helping the bingo industry compete in today's entertainment marketplace and continues to assist charities to fund raise for their many worthwhile initiatives throughout the province.

The third and final flow-through initiative in Gaming's estimates is the First Nations development fund grant program. First Nations casinos are expected to provide economic and social benefits for First Nations people. Under the First Nations gaming policy an amount equivalent to 40 per cent of the slot machine proceeds from First Nation casinos will be allocated toward social, economic, and community development projects identified by those First Nations. This may apply to education, health, infrastructure, and addiction programs within First Nation communities. These funds cannot be used for capital, operations, or financing costs of gaming activities or gaming facilities.

The \$4 million included in Gaming's 2005-06 estimate is directly linked to the operation of one or more First Nation casinos if they're up and running in this time period. To date two First Nation casinos have received approval to begin construction. Just like the other flow-through arrangements the revenue has to be generated before the flow-through grants can be provided.

Before I conclude, I'd like to briefly mention a couple of other items including our estimate for gaming research. In prior years the budget for gaming research has been allocated between the Alberta Gaming Research Institute and the Alberta Gaming Research Council. However, this year we are reviewing our relationship with these organizations and the allocation of funding. However, we can assure the House that \$1.6 million will be used for gaming research

this year.

Finally, net gaming and lottery revenues are projected to be \$10 million lower in 2005-06 than in the '04-05 forecast. This may seem odd when you think about the new casinos being built in the province, but when you consider that some municipalities have enhanced their smoking bylaws, some of which have already come into effect and some which will come into effect this summer, the decline may not seem so unusual. In fact, we are projecting a \$50 million decline in gaming revenue in 2005-06 because of these enhanced smoking bylaws. As you're aware, Mr. Chairman, the smoking legislation that has been under debate in the House this session has no bearing on these enhanced municipal bylaws, which take precedence.

As you've heard, the Department of Gaming's funding request of \$169 million is reasonable. We're continuing to operate in a straightforward, transparent, and fiscally prudent fashion. Albertans expect and deserve well-managed gaming and liquor industries that give back to them and their communities every single day. It's a responsible budget, Mr. Chairman. I would encourage support for it. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to lead off the debate on the estimates for the Gaming department. I'd like to go a little bit more wide ranging than the minister has mentioned here. I think we have to look a little bit further than just the estimates on how much your department is spending and look at the big picture of gaming as it exists in Alberta today.

I think that in this province right now we have to look at gaming not just as a pastime; it's actually an industry. It's an industry that was created by the government, it's regulated by the government, and the government is its major beneficiary. But now that the government has created this Frankenstein monster of income, it doesn't really seem to know what to do with it.

Now, the very name of the department indicates that the government has two minds of how to approach gaming right now. You call it gaming and not gambling, which I think is kind of interesting. I mean, gaming has the connotation that it's fun. You know, kids play baseball. It's all a game. It's all in fun. Gambling has a little bit different name to it, and I think the department should more rightly be called the department of gambling because that's really what it is.

The government likes to talk about how it's based on a charity model of gambling, which indicates that charities are perhaps the big winners, but if you actually look at the numbers, the real big winner in gambling is the province of Alberta. The government is far and away the biggest winner in the gambling bonanza. In 2002-2003 the government took in 66 per cent of gambling revenue. Private operators got 21 per cent and charities got 12 per cent. In fact, it's not just a charity model, but it's actually a government revenue model if you look at it in its entirety. So I contend that right now the government doesn't really know what to do with the gaming industry.

Now, you didn't mention that your business plan is made up predominately of platitudes and buzzwords and that kind of thing. What we don't see is any real idea, any grand plans on where gaming or gambling is going in Alberta. My concern – and this is something I'd like the minister to address when I'm done here – is to address how he sees gambling in the next five, the next 10 years in Alberta. At the Alberta Gaming Research Institute luncheon, you gave a speech, and then you had an open forum and asked questions. I was in the audience, and I asked you this very same question. Where is gambling going in Alberta in five years, in 10 years?

Maybe that wasn't a fair question to ask you at a nice friendly luncheon, but I felt I obliged to ask it anyway. I don't recall that you really gave me that specific an answer, but I'll tell you that after I asked you that question, I had a lot of people come up to me in the gambling industry, experts on it, and they thanked me for asking that question because they want to know what the government plans on doing with gambling in the next five years, the next 10 years.

8:20

Now, the five-year plan outlined in the budget doesn't address the single most important question about gaming: how big does the government want gambling to become? You've created this industry that went from zero dollars roughly 20 years ago to one of over a billion dollars in about 20 years. I don't know if the government was even prepared for the tremendous amount of money that would be pouring into the coffers in such a short time. So let's put gambling revenue in perspective for a moment here.

Under the listing of Profit from Commercial Operations on page 198 of the budget we see net gaming and lottery revenue of \$1.2 billion. To put this into some sort of perspective, it's roughly the same as the revenue this province brings in from crude oil royalties. Gambling revenue – and that's predominantly VLTs and slots – brings in as much money to the Alberta coffers as crude oil royalties. That's an astonishing figure.

My major question is simply this. It's a big question that I would like the minister to address, and I'd be happy to sit down when I'm done with this, and you can rattle on for five, 10 minutes about it if you like. Where is gambling going in Alberta? Now, I know that a few years ago you had a gaming summit, but I believe that addressed mostly the nuts and bolts, a few technicalities, and basically how it's going to operate. It didn't really answer the question of why it's operating.

The big questions about gaming have not been asked or answered. If you can develop an industry around something like nanotechnology, everybody's happy. If you promote agriculture, everybody's happy. But there are moral and ethical questions in the gaming industry that a lot of people are not happy with. I suggest that if you did a little poll of the members in this room right now, there would be a lot of humming and hawing about whether this is a good thing for Alberta or not. The revenue is a wonderful thing. Everybody's happy to have the billion dollars coming in, but is this the right way to raise a billion dollars? Is \$1.2 billion just the start? In five years from now are you looking at raising it to \$2 billion? Do you want to make it \$3 billion, \$4 billion, or \$5 billion? Is there an upper limit? Is the sky the limit for the amount of money you want to bring in from gambling?

It's interesting that when the first native casino opens in Alberta, we will have every form of legal gambling that is available in any North American jurisdiction. Even the state of Nevada won't have every type of gambling available, but the province of Alberta will. When Alberta adds five new casinos in the next year or so, we will have the highest number of casinos in North America after the state of Nevada. Is this the route we want to take as a province, and is this something the government has long-range plans for? More casinos? More income? What are we looking at here?

Now, I contend that gambling has moral and legal implications that sooner or later will be a major issue that the government will have to face. If you look at other provinces, this process has started already. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty late last year said, and I quote: there's no doubt about it; we have come to rely on gambling revenues; perhaps in a better world we wouldn't, but the fact of the matter is it's here, and it's here to stay. I would love to hear the Premier or the Gaming minister say something along those lines just to clarify their actual position on gambling revenue.

Take the province of British Columbia. British Columbia has vowed to increase its net income from gambling by 21 per cent over the next three years. Now, I don't know if this is right or wrong. That's a matter for the people of British Columbia to decide. But at least it's out there. It's a statement saying: we do want to raise more money through gambling; we want to increase our net income from gambling. Does the government want to do that? Is it something that they don't really know? It's time we started to clear up these matters.

Nova Scotia has taken the most interesting steps. It has produced – and I have it here – *A Better Balance: Nova Scotia's First Gaming Strategy*. Among other things it calls for reduced accessibility to VLTs by removing a thousand of the machines, reducing VLT hours by eliminating the midnight to close time frame, which would wipe out about three hours in Alberta, I think, and they want to reduce the speed of play by about 30 per cent.

I'd like to read just one short passage from the gaming strategy, which is something I think the government should give some serious consideration to. The report is called *A Better Balance*. It's a

five-year strategy designed to set a new course for gaming in the province. It is intended to be a comprehensive, cohesive, integrated strategy which will be the first step in building a better, more balanced gaming environment in Nova Scotia . . .

Nova Scotia has been actively involved in gaming for almost 30 years, without having a provincial strategy or policy. This is not to say that individual departments and agencies do not have strategic plans and policies that relate to gaming – in fact, they do. And in many instances these groups consult and co-operate on specific initiatives. However, there is a need to have a provincial strategy to guide these various functions.

I propose that this is exactly what Alberta needs. We need a strategy that is going to look at the long-term impact of gambling, whether it's something that you want to increase. Do you want to grow it? Do you want to shrink it? What are we looking at here?

Now, the ministry says that it doesn't really promote gambling by going out and advertising it, which is almost like saying: well, it's here, and we're making whacks of dough on it, but we're not really that proud of it. So what is it? Is it an industry worth promoting and developing, or is it something that we're just going to reap the benefits of without giving any real thoughts to the implications of it?

In an interview with the *Calgary Herald* I believe the minister himself said that Alberta wouldn't grow the industry just to raise revenues. But, on the other hand, you know, why would you grow the industry, which is exactly what you're doing right now? By adding more casinos, you're growing the industry. When you take a VLT out of a bar where it's not performing well and put it in one where it's going to get more money, you're growing the industry on a very small measure, but you are growing the industry.

Basically, what I'm asking the minister is this, and I'll gladly sit down and give him 20 minutes if he wants or however long it takes. I have specific questions. What is the government's long-term vision for gambling in Alberta? Why does the government support a gambling industry in this province? Does the government have any targets for revenue collection for gambling dollars for either two years from now, five years from now, whatever? Is there any upper limit on the number of casinos in Alberta? In short, where does the government see the gambling industry in five years? Now, I know that's a lot to chew on, and it's maybe a little bit more than you might have expected today, but I welcome the minister's comments. The floor is yours.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you. I'm not sure that all the comments relate to the estimates that we're dealing with tonight, but I'm happy to reply to some of the comments that have been made and perhaps help the member understand what's happening.

He mentioned: if we polled the members in the Assembly, how many of them would be in favour of us being involved in the gaming industry? That might be a mixed vote, but I suggest that if I polled the members and asked for a poll on how many people think that prohibition works, I would have a unanimous decision, Mr. Chairman, that prohibition doesn't work. It didn't work for alcohol. It would not work for gaming.

If we weren't in the business, I guarantee you that someone else would be, someone far less desirable than the government, and the proceeds from that illegal gambling, gaming, whatever you want to call it, would not be going to charities. It would not be going to your neighbourhood community club or to Northlands, if you want to use them as examples, or to the playground. It would be going into the underworld and to organized crime. That's where it would be going. So I make no apologies for the government being involved in gaming with the charity model that is unique and that we're quite proud of.

When we talk about growth, we're very responsible about growth in this province. We monitor what's happening very closely. The member knows that we have a very complex and detailed process if you wish to be involved in the industry.

8:30

It's interesting to note that when we opened up the Edmonton market for expressions of interest for a new casino, there were 6 applications, and only one was approved. If we didn't care about growing the industry, if our only intent was to saturate the market as much as we can, I would suggest that the AGLC would have approved more than the one application.

If we only wanted to grow the industry, we would have removed the 6,000 cap on VLTs that's been in place for 10 years. For 10 years that cap has been in place as the province's population has grown – gosh, how much over 10 years? – a big percentage. But have we changed that cap? No, we haven't. In fact, what we have done is reduced the number of locations where you can go and be entertained on a VLT. There are 13 per cent less locations in Alberta right now where VLTs are accessible than there were a couple of years ago.

A few comments about some other provinces. It's interesting and quite a bit of media lately about what's happening in Nova Scotia, and I'll tell you that I for one am delighted that they're finally trying to catch up to Alberta. You know, they took out a thousand machines. Well, that's good. I'm glad they did that. Their ratio of machines per thousand population is still almost double what it is in Alberta. So, you know, I'm glad they're making the moves that they are.

They talk about responsible gaming, additions, if you will, features on their machines. That's something that we initiated at least a year ago if not two years ago. When you're playing a machine, a display scrolls across the screen that basically says: you've been on this machine for 15 minutes; don't you think you should take a little break here? It reminds people how long they've been playing and just alerts them to how long they've been there.

We've changed the displays so that they no longer display credits. They now display actual dollars, so it registers better in your mind: my gosh, if I cash out right now, I'm going to take a hundred dollar slip up to the cashier, as opposed to however many credits. I suppose that if they're 25 cents, that would be 400 credits. A hundred dollars means a lot more than credits to me.

We also have messages scrolling across the screen giving them the 1-800 number that they may wish to call if they think they have a problem with gaming. We keep very close track of that, Mr. Chairman. In all the surveys that we've done – and the percentages aren't changing very much – over 80 per cent of Albertans use gaming in a responsible way and feel that it's good entertainment. Whether that's buying a 6/49 ticket, going and betting on the horses, going to a casino, whatever the case may be, a high percentage of Albertans – as I said, over 80 per cent – partake in that in one form or the other and really have absolutely no issue with it.

We do have a low percentage of people with serious problems. We admit that. We know that about 1.5 per cent of the people involved have a serious problem, and we work on that. Obviously, we fund a lot of dollars – it's in the estimates – to AADAC for their programs. As mentioned earlier, we give \$1.5 million to the researchers to research problem gambling; in particular, what we can do to help those people that have a problem, help them to not become addicted, if that is the problem, or help them, once they are addicted, to break the habit and return to a more normal life.

Do we have a goal in mind of how much money we want to take in from gaming? Specifically: no. We very carefully look at the market, and the AGLC determines through the eight-step process that they use when you apply for a new casino – it takes into account the demographics of the area, the population. It takes into account municipal input from the municipal councils, whether they feel that they want that facility in their city or not. It's not just a matter of walking in and filling out a form and walking out with a casino licence. Absolutely not. So, yes, there are several casinos that have gone through the process and are in the queue right now to be constructed or have the permission to go ahead. They don't get their real licence until they have constructed what they said they were going to build. But there are several – I believe six is the right number – that have gone through the eight steps and can start construction if they want.

But at the moment there's no intention of opening up – I haven't heard AGLC mention that they're going to open it up for any more in the province. We want to wait and see how those new ones do, how it affects the market. We have absolutely no intention of saturating the market. There's not much point in having a charity work twice as many casinos and make half as much money. There's no point in that. So we're very conscious of how much a charity can earn by working a casino, and that has a bearing on whether we allow expansion or not.

Those are lots of general comments, but it was kind of a general question, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you. I still haven't heard about the long-range plans for gambling in Alberta. I suspect it's because you don't really have a long-range plan, but we'll go on to other things then.

You mentioned slot machines, or VLTs, actually. And I know that the government likes to brag that it has put a cap on VLTs, which is true. I believe the number was 6,000, I think you said. But slot machine revenue, though, has doubled from '01 to '05, and it's now the equivalent of VLT revenue. These machines are virtually the same, a slot machine and a VLT. The difference is in how they pay out. It's the same machine. You put a cap on one machine; there's no cap on the other machine. So can the minister tell me how many slot machines there are in Alberta right now? How many slot machines, not VLTs? And is there any upper limit on the number of those? Are you going to just keep adding with the new casinos? You're going to have another four or five casinos. Are they going to have a limitless number of slot machines? Or is there

an actual limit on these things?

I also understand that I believe the government commissioned a study some while ago to investigate the impact of the so-called responsible gaming features on VLTs. I wondered if this study has been completed. If so, when will it be released?

Mr. Graydon: Well, there is one notable difference between a slot machine and a VLT, and that is the location where you might find these machines. You will not find a slot machine in your neighbourhood tavern or licensee. As someone said, neither one of them pays very good. The slot machines are restricted to casinos. The capped VLTs are in other licensed establishments, what you might think of as your neighbourhood bar or lounge.

The method of payout is different as well. With a VLT in a lounge, if you decide you've had enough and you want to cash out what you've got in the machine, you print off a ticket, take that up to the person working at the bar, and they will scan it in the machine, and they will exchange that ticket for cash. With a slot machine up to a certain amount you put a loonie in, and it spits a loonie out if you win a loonie. So one pays out cash; one pays out a piece of paper. But in my mind the biggest difference is in the location where you can access these machines.

One thing that we found. You know, you're right: people object more to VLTs than they do slot machines. No doubt about that. What they object to is the location of the VLTs. The public, when we survey them, say that they don't mind slot machines because they're in casinos. When you go to a casino, you know why you're going there. You're going there to play roulette, to play cards, to play slot machines, the other games that you have at a casino. There's no doubt why you go. You're going to be entertained, and you're going there to gamble.

There is a difference. You may be going to your neighbourhood bar or lounge just to have a friendly visit with your neighbour and to tip a brew or two, and there's a VLT there, and on your way out you put a \$20 bill in or whatever the case may be. So there is a difference in how accessible they are, if you will, or why they're there.

The responsible gaming features have been in, but I don't think they've been in long enough that any study would be able to tell us whether they're effective or not. Other jurisdictions have tried them and have them in place, and they're finding them to be of limited value but of some value. I would suggest that we will study that and see if those responsible features are making a difference, but at this point in time they just haven't been displayed on the machines long enough to get any accurate reading on their effect.

8:40

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you again. My main question, though, was not answered there: the number of slot machines in Alberta casinos and is there going to be an upper limit on it? How many do you plan on allowing into the province?

Mr. Graydon: Okay. The number I don't have in my estimates, and I guess we can probably get you that in writing. As far as a limit: no, we haven't set a limit on that like we have VLTs. The VLT limit is a hard, fast number. Slot machines – when you build a new casino, obviously you stock it with slot machines, and as the market grows in that location, they may get more machines. No, there is no hard limit on the number of slot machines in the province. There's not much point in building a casino and not having it adequately stocked with the product that people want to use.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, were you drawing my attention to speak?

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this interesting department. I've learned a lot just recently on how this is operating and what its purpose is. I guess like many Albertans I struggle with the notion of this government's involvement in private industry, and I would appreciate understanding more about how you feel it necessary to support horse racing. I understand what you're saying about flow-through funds and the fact that they have to earn a certain amount of funds. Why would you pick and choose certain industries to subsidize?

A couple of other questions. Whenever we're talking about such a big amount of money – and you raised the question yourself – if this were not regulated, clearly we would have serious questions about corruption and underworld activity. Well, whether it's underworld or not, people have questions about where the money goes and who makes the decisions about where the money goes and how political ties have to do with the direction that money goes. How do you ensure transparency of decision-making all the way down the chain in terms of how you select your boards and what kinds of party links they have and what kind of transparency you have in terms of the boards and councils that further deal with the decision-making around the allocation of the funds? How can citizens be sure that these funds are actually finding their way not in favoured ways but into objectively reviewed and transparent processes, I guess, down at the community level?

Have you had any complaints from the community regarding the enforcement of any of the files, for example, from the liquor commission? Those are the kinds of questions, dealing with this large amount of money, that people begin to ask. I don't know enough about the workings and how you select your boards and your councils to be able to answer those questions and whether there are specific strings attached. I'm particularly interested in how the government has chosen the horse-racing industry.

I obviously wonder, too, about the engagement in First Nations issues with all the problems that already exist in First Nations and how you rationalize the notion of supporting and, indeed, subsidizing this industry again there and what that is going to lead to in terms of health implications and social problems, which are already well documented and legion in terms of the addiction problems there. Those are the key questions that I would appreciate just knowing a bit more about in terms of this large industry.

Mr. Graydon: Well, sure. As far as the allocation of the revenue, it's audited to the extreme, if I will, maybe to the frustration of some people who think we have far too many rules and regulations when it comes to the allocation of the money. Basically, the two programs that you would probably be the most familiar with would be CFEP, community facility, and CIP, community initiatives, two different programs. But they're fair and equitable programs. There are criteria that you need to fulfill before you can apply. First of all, you need to be a not-for-profit or a society, with all those registrations in place. Occasionally we get people applying, and one of the first things the staff does is check and make sure that this is a registered society, and if they find out they're not, it doesn't take long for that application to make a U-turn and go back to the applicant.

If they are a registered society, there's a long check-off list that the staff would go through, but at the end of the day it is the minister who signs off that grant and says yes. Many various playground societies are worthy of getting this grant to build a new playground. In giving that approval we look for community support. We look for MLA support from all sides of the House, if it's an application coming from your constituency. People can apply and get all the forms right online. That part of the process is relatively easy. You print the form off, make sure that all the blanks are filled in, and if

they're filled in properly and they pass all the due diligence tests that are done – and in lots of cases there is a supporting letter from the MLA, and if that's the case, then the vast majority of them do get approved.

There are limits, of course. Some of them are matching grants; some aren't. CIP, in particular, is designed for smaller groups. You can get up to \$10,000 not matching, and it's put to very good use by a lot of small groups. Individuals, basically, can't apply for these grants. You know, we have situations where people maybe have won a provincial competition of some sort and want to go and compete nationally. In that event, as an individual, I'm sorry but individuals don't get grant money. If they can go to their association or their sports council or whatever and get an application in that fits the criteria, they might get help that way, but individuals certainly don't get helped.

The First Nations: I guess we're probably following an initiative that's certainly North America-wide. I think that if you looked stateside, you'd find that the first people in the casino business in the U.S. in most cases were First Nations, certainly in a lot of states. There are some states where, I believe, they are the only group, if you will, who are allowed to operate a casino.

There again, the proceeds from a First Nations' casino in Alberta will be very strictly audited and controlled by the provincial government. The money has to go into – we have the Alberta lottery fund, they will have the First Nations development fund. Very strict fences around what that money can be used for. It can't be used to go back into gaming. It can be used for economic development on the First Nation. The other benefit, I suppose: there's a criteria on the staffing of those places. It needs to be staffed and will be staffed predominantly by people from that First Nation, giving them good paying jobs that are transportable. If they decide they want to go and work at a different casino, they'll have those skills, but it is training that they'll be able to get. As I said, there are very rigid fences around what the money can be used for.

8:50

The horse-racing initiative is one that obviously comes up every year at budget time, and the same question is asked, if you will: why do they get a special deal? I would suggest that it's because it is a traditional agricultural business. We may think of it: oh, no, it's just the racetrack and a guy going and making his \$2 win bet. But if you trace it back, there are 6,000 to 7,000 employees involved in that industry. A lot of them are employees who, to be very honest, would have a hard time getting a job somewhere else, but they're very gainfully employed at the backstretch at the racetracks, so we do create a lot of jobs for those kinds of people.

It's an industry that was in a tremendous amount of trouble a few years ago because of competition from other types of entertainment. There used to be a day when horse racing was the only game in town, the only legal game in town anyway. If you wanted to make a legal bet, that's where you had to go. Then, as this industry has grown, not only in Alberta but world-wide, we have all this competition from VLTs, slots, scratch-and-wins – you name it – 6/49s, all these other forms of legal gambling. The industry was in dire straits to be quite blunt about it.

We saw a lot of people contemplating selling their farms, getting out of the horse breeding business. They were no longer going and buying the top brood mares or studs that they like to go and buy in order to improve the quality of the stock. We saw that some of the facilities, Northlands and Stampede, were having more and more troubles with their bottom line because people just weren't showing up at the racetrack. It kind of fed on itself. The poorer quality of horse you have, the less people are interested in betting on it, so it just was a never-ending spiral going down.

I'm happy to report that through the horse-racing initiative that

spiral has been reduced. People are going back to the racetrack now. The handle, as we call it, the amount of money bet, is going up. I believe – and I stand to be corrected – this is one of the only jurisdictions in North America where the handle went up last year as opposed to going down. That is because through bigger purses, which come from this money that they earn, more and more people are into the raising, breeding, training of racehorses.

The facilities are getting better. You know, you can go to Northlands and have a real good night's entertainment. The food is reasonable. The service is good. You know, you only have to bet \$2, and there's a race every 20 minutes. Your two bucks will last you a long time if you go to the horse races.

The government a few years ago made the conscientious decision that they would establish racing entertainment centres. To qualify for that designation, you have to offer live racing. So you can't have an off-track location in Whitecourt or Red Deer, for example, and have racing on the TV screen and qualify to be a racing entertainment centre. You have to offer live racing, which, again, is to promote the agricultural part of the industry.

We talk a lot about the \$45 million that's in this budget. That is a number that's a real guesstimate, if anything else, because it's based on what's played at the facility. You know, it can be less, it can be more, but that's what we feel is a reasonable number. I believe that's the same number as last year. I don't think that was achieved last year, so the same number is back in there again this year.

I think that if we looked a couple of years down the road in the estimates, we might see that that number is projected to go up a little bit. That would be based on the construction of a new facility outside of Calgary. There will no longer be racing at Stampede Park, but there will be racing at this new facility. We feel that that will encourage people to go to that new facility, bet more on the horses, support the industry in that traditional way. There also will be a racing entertainment centre, and they will have slot machines at that new racetrack, so that will flow through into this fund. That's why it's projected – if I was on the right page I could look that up, but it's projected to grow over the next couple of years.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of other clarifying questions for me. In relation to the Gaming and Liquor Commission and the Gaming Research Council, how are the board members selected? What are their qualifications? What are their connections to the party? How can Albertans know that this is not simply another way of building the Conservative constituency? These are all issues that we're very sensitive to in the political sphere, and that needs to be transparent. I don't know if that's stated in their annual reports, but it's clearly something that we need to be able to account for to our public.

In relation to the files that the liquor commission deals with, how does one know? Do you deal with complaints? How do you deal with appeals?

Those are the kinds of questions that I just wanted clarification on.

Mr. Graydon: Okay. I can speak with a little more security about the AGLC board because we've just had a vacancy on that board in my tenure here, so I've been working on that process. I can tell you that it was conducted very openly. It was advertised in the newspapers: Calgary, Edmonton, and the major dailies around the province. We had approximately 200 applications for that position, and nowhere on the form did it say: which political card do you happen to carry in your wallet? We're close to making a decision on that,

and political stripe hasn't been a factor in the decision that's going to be made for that commission.

They're from a broad background and from across the province. There's a rancher from the far south of the province, I know, that's on there; a couple of ladies from the Edmonton-St. Albert area; a couple people from Calgary, an accountant and a businessperson. I haven't been there long enough to really know them that well. They are appointed for a term, and sometimes the terms are renewed, and sometimes they aren't. There is a vacancy at the moment that we're advertising and are filling. That vacancy was created by someone who'd been on the commission for a long time and felt that he had contributed enough and asked to step down. So we advertise to fill it.

The Gaming Research Council is a smaller group. To this point there've been no vacancies, so I haven't been involved in any recruiting in that regard. The research institute that actually does the research is obviously based at the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, and the University of Lethbridge. We would have no say in who does the research at those universities.

The AGLC operates very much at arm's length. They are a quasi-judicial board, no question about it. They conduct lots of hearings on licensees where an inspector has gone in and found someone underage, maybe found overserving, serving someone that's had enough. So the employee that works for the AGLC would lay a charge. It's a delegated authority, and they can lay a fine or suspension up to a certain level. The licensee then has the ability to appeal that to the board. I don't know who's appealing. I don't know what charges are out there. I've had absolutely no involvement, nor does anyone in my office have any involvement with any of the appeals or any of the licensing issues with AGLC.

It's the same with applications for a new casino. As I said, we opened up the Edmonton market. Actually, a couple of years ago they opened up the market in the Grande Prairie area, and there were I think three or four applications, none of which were approved.

9:00

I know that in the case of the Edmonton one, certainly, no one got a letter of support from me, nor would I have given one. There were some appeals filed; I know that. The appeals are in the process at the moment. I know that one has been heard, one is still going on, but I don't even know the principals in those appeals. If anybody starts to talk to me about that, I run the other way as fast as I possibly can.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we have now just passed the one-hour mark. If there are any other members who wish to participate in this debate, I'd be happy to recognize them. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll start off with a sermon, and if time allows, I'll go to the questions. It'll be hard for me tonight not to appear to be delivering a holier-than-thou sermon. However, it concerns me greatly that next to the bounty we draw from our natural resources of gas and oil comes revenue from gambling and liquor.

I have no trouble with lotteries and appreciate that revenue generated from them funds a variety of worthwhile programs. It was unfortunate that this government did away with the community lottery boards, which shared the responsibility for project funding, with the decisions made at the local level, which helped to depoliticize the process.

Where I have great difficulty is with what I see as government-sponsored addiction. It isn't simply the stereotypical glazed, crazed

Hollywood portrayal of an addict. This government, by not adequately funding a variety of programs from education to health care to recreational programs and community associations, has driven groups including school councils to depend on casinos and slots to cover basic programming in schools rather than receiving the appropriate grants. If this industry is the government's idea of Alberta diversity, then it's a pretty sad commentary on ingenuity. Al Capone would have looked enviously at the profits made by this government.

It is unbelievable to me that over the last few years the government spent over \$104 million to spruce up VLTs. The government has spent more on rewarding racetracks than it has spent on renovating public schools. AADAC receives an incredibly small percentage of the profits, which it can then apply to attempting to restore addicts' and their families' lives.

I know that gambling has been a problem before and after Jesus drove the moneylenders out of the temple. I would like to see another referendum which would allow communities to decide whether or not it was time to pull the plug on VLTs. I cannot share this ministry's enthusiasm for being a more responsible pocket picker or one-armed bandit than organized criminals.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, would you like to respond?

Mr. Graydon: Just one comment about the VLT referendums. That option is open to any community that wants to do it every three years on municipal election day. In a couple of communities this last October there were a couple of referendums, and I believe those actually were referendums from communities that had previously banned VLTs. There were referendums on: did they want to bring them in? They reaffirmed their decision to leave them out.

A few years ago there were several communities that asked them to be removed. There was a long, drawn-out court battle going on. I believe the licensees who had them didn't want them taken out, and of course the community had voted to take them out, but at the end of the day the courts ruled that, no, the referendum prevailed. Those machines were taken out in I think Rocky Mountain House, Lacombe, Fort McMurray, Spruce Grove or Stony Plain, one of those two. There were several communities in the province who voted to have them taken out, and that option is open to any community that wants to put the question to the ballot.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just going back to my previous question. Now, I hate to harp on this, but I still haven't heard the number of slot machines in Alberta. Perhaps you don't have that number at your disposal right now, and if you don't, I'd be very happy to accept a guarantee of a written answer, if that's good.

On to other, more specific items: page 189, line 3.0.10, other initiatives, forecast at \$14,673,000. Now, can the minister explain exactly what "other initiatives" means? Every other line item is quite straightforward, but "other initiatives" is somewhat vague. According to the Alberta Gaming annual report, every year the government votes on the disbursement of funds from the lottery board. I wonder how we're supposed on vote on disbursement of funds when we don't know where the money is going.

So if the minister could address those two issues, please.

Mr. Graydon: Okay. The first one, the number of machines. I don't have that in my binder, but I did say earlier that I would get it to you, and I will.

The "other initiatives" category. From time to time there are big

projects that come up during the year which are, if you will, unidentified. You know, this past year we had the tsunami incident. I believe that was \$5 million. While that specific one didn't come out of other initiatives, it's the kind of thing that could have come out of that fund. It's generally reserved for bigger projects that wouldn't normally fall under CFEP and CIP. We don't get involved in the multimillion-dollar projects under CFEP and CIP in the constituency allocations, if you will, the amount that MLAs would get involved with.

For example, here in Edmonton the YMCA is getting a tremendous amount of money, and it would be coming from the "other initiatives" portfolio, if you will. In Calgary we're awarding some money to I believe it's called the Jack Singer Concert Hall for repairs to the roof, something that comes up during the year that is just too large an amount to handle in a normal – it would drain our CFEP account that we have for the small projects throughout the province if we had to fund those big projects from that account. So it's really another I suppose CFEP pot of money. It's just more directed at maybe emergent issues but, basically, the larger projects that are too large to be handled on a smaller scale.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was listening to the minister and his answers to the questions that have been put to him, the interesting areas in which to engage the minister in debate.

The Ministry of Gaming, really, is a ministry that generates huge revenues, close to \$2 billion a year. When you put it against the oil sands royalties, you come to realize that gaming revenues, revenues from gambling, that is – gaming sort of neutralizes the actual activity of gambling. Gambling certainly has very serious negative consequences for individuals, their families, and socially as well it has negative consequences. Nevertheless, it seems that it's an entrenched practice in this province. It certainly has the blessings of this department and of this government, so it's expanding activity.

It is activity that has a downside to it. I remember that last night we were debating the estimates for the Department of Justice and Attorney General. There was reference in the business plans there to an increasing incidence of crime in the province, an increasing incidence of people driving when drunk, increasing problems with family violence, increasing incarceration of a very large number of First Nations people. The First Nations population as part of the overall Alberta population is about 7 per cent, yet more than 33 per cent of people who are incarcerated come from those communities, the First Nations communities.

9:10

So a huge number of problems draw attention to the challenges that we face in this province, and some of those problems can directly be linked to either alcohol use and abuse or to stress and strain that's created at the family level by members of the family who become addicted, are problem gamblers. Gambling does lead to loss of income, loss of family resources, and that in turn, then, leads to violence in the family. The divorce rate in Alberta is the highest in the country.

I think the benefits of the dollars coming in and how the dollars are used then to support certain programs is one side of the story, but the ripple effect, on the negative side, is also something that needs to be addressed and addressed quite openly in this Assembly and by this ministry in particular because it is this ministry that has taken on the responsibility of regulating and licensing and in some ways promoting and expanding this activity. The minister seems to be quite pleased that his department was able to generate a very large

volume of revenues which then, he says, we use here and we use there. I know that that happens, but can we put a dollar value on the negative side, the consequences that result either directly or indirectly from the activities that are regulated or monitored or controlled or run by the Minister of Gaming and the Ministry of Gaming? I don't see that. I think we need some sort of a social accounting, not just dollar accounting, not just fiscal accounting but social accounting.

I see reference in the business plan again and again to social responsibility, yet there is no accounting on the social side that's given by this except in terms of so much money goes into health, so much money goes into helping AADAC, and on and on. I think the negative side is simply not addressed. I think it's time that we paid attention to the negative side and focused on social accounting as much as we've been focusing on the bottom line or being a bean counter; you know, counting dollars that come into the public treasury. Sure, public dollars come into the treasury, and jobs are created by all kinds of activities.

I'm reminded, just as I'm thinking about it, that in California there are more people incarcerated in jail than spend time in postsecondary institutions. So that creates jobs. Jails have to be run, but then we worry about crime and crime increasing. Last night we were talking about that, the increase in crime. Well, the increase in crime does create jobs, but do we want those kinds of jobs? Do we want lower levels of crime or higher levels of crime if they create more jobs at the same time? We need more policemen, we need more people who look after jails, we need more people who make clothing for our prisoners, and whatever have you. Just because activities create more jobs is not, I think, a justification for expanding certain activities. We need to focus on what I call social accounting, the negative consequences of some of the activities that the government undertakes and sponsors and invests its authority and power and resources to expand.

I want the minister to perhaps share some of his reflections on this. I know he was in his other life the mayor of a small town, and the small towns in this province face problems like big towns and some more serious ones, too, in terms of community cohesion, in terms of crime, in terms of poverty, in terms of family dysfunction. I can go on naming these things. How do communities get impacted by some of the activities that we call gambling or gaming? So that's, sort of, on the larger questions.

In terms of some of the specifics, I was looking at the money that AADAC, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission – and I would not dispute that we need it, you know, given the problems that individuals and families face – and the work that the commission does. It certainly receives the majority of its funding, close to \$62 million, from the lottery fund. The question that comes to my mind is: given that AADAC has a mandate for treating and preventing problem gambling, should its funds, in fact, be coming from the very activities that create those problems? There are some moral dilemmas here. There are some paradoxes here. What side are we on? We want to generate funds in order to prevent things from happening, and then we encourage the very activities that create those problems. We've got to sometimes stop in a nonpartisan way and ask some of these questions. Is it good for our society regardless of what side of the political line we're on?

Then I notice that the Camrose Regional Exhibition and Agricultural Society has received \$5.6 million in grants from the lottery fund this month, I guess, earlier this month, last month. It is announced that the Camrose Regional Exhibition will have a 25 per cent stake in a new casino. Since when, you know, has the government developed a policy of encouraging these fair associations and exhibition associations to become partners in casinos and in running

gambling businesses? Is this, I ask, sort of some high-stakes pyramid scheme, Mr. Minister? Gaming revenues go to the Camrose fair and exhibition association. That, in turn, invests in another casino. That, in turn, creates more gaming revenues. Gaming dollars used to buy stakes in casinos to generate yet more gaming dollars. So it's a catch-22 that I find in operation here.

Another thing that I noticed, Mr. Chairman, was in the Gaming Licensing Policy Review, volume 1, page 6-11. There's an interesting statement there. It says that Alberta lottery fund disbursements must be "used to support specific charitable, not-for-profit, public and community-based initiatives and projects." Now, if that is the case, then how does the minister justify spending \$45 million on the horse-racing industry initiative? It would seem to me that that runs straight into the face of what I've just read as the policy, the guiding principle which is used to allocate monies; that is, for nonprofits, public, and community-based initiatives and projects. I fail to understand how the horse-racing industry initiative is nonprofit, is community-based, and is public. So I'd like the minister to square this circle, if he would, for me.

9:20

The other questions here. On the slot machines in casinos, clearly, it seems that as the number of casinos expands, or the capacity of existing casinos expands, I assume that the number of slot machines is likely to go up, so you can't give us an exact count. You have undertaken to give us some estimated numbers, I guess, later on, but could you, Mr. Minister, please give us sort of a trend line over the last four years? We may not know the exact number of slot machines this year, but we would have numbers, I guess, from the previous three or four years. If we could get those, we could then develop some sort of a trend line. We could find at what speed, at what rate the number of slot machines is growing. If not the absolute number, then the rate at which their presence might be growing. It would be very nice to have those kinds of numbers and that kind of information right here in the business plan so that I don't have to bother you, standing up here asking those questions.

Albertans would like to know this: how the number of these things is growing and growing over a period of time. One year's numbers could be just a fluke, you know. There could be not a trend. But if you know that something's happening over a period of years, then you know how to respond to it. You can say: this is good; this is what I want. Or you could start sort of blowing the whistle and saying: well, we need to stop and ask if we want to keep going in that direction, or we need to change direction. So we need some sort of longitudinal map of this, and that's something I would appreciate getting some information from you on.

The cap on VLTs – and I want to come to VLTs in a moment – is 6,000, I understand. Is that the maximum that will be allowed this year, or is that the number that we've already reached? I was listening to your answers to the questions here. I wasn't sure whether you were saying that today there exist 6,000 VLTs in operation or that 6,000 is the number that will be allowed if the numbers have not reached there yet. Where are we at in terms of the actual number of machines in place in relation to the cap of 6,000? That, I suppose, is the max that will be allowed. So I'd appreciate getting some information on that.

Talking about VLTs, I was looking at some of the studies with respect to VLTs and how they are likely to create more problem gamblers and also encourage or result in more addictive gambling behaviour. Figures seem to show that 39 per cent of all gambling revenues in Alberta in the year just past, 2003-2004, came from moderate or severe problem gamblers. So about \$2 out of every \$5 comes from problem gamblers. VLTs are the most problematic

gambling format in terms of being associated with addictive gambling behaviour.

The addiction is something that AADAC deals with, I suppose, because when people are really addicted and become problem gamblers, then there's a problem at both the level of the individual person and the impact that it has on the family, on children, and the wife and others in the family. So it's an important issue that needs to be kept in mind.

There's a growing body of evidence that shows that VLTs are not an innocuous form of entertainment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the time allocated for you to speak has run out.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll stop.

Mr. Graydon: You were just getting started, right?

A couple of the easy questions first. The VLT cap of 6,000 machines has been in place for 10 years, and I would say that we've been within a stone's throw of that number all those 10 years. Obviously, it's never gone over 6,000, but today there are probably 5,998 of them out there in the market. We're at the cap.

If there wasn't a cap, there's a long list of people waiting to get machines, a long list of licensees who would like to have machines in their premises because the percentage that they get goes a long way to covering their overhead. Someone opens a new bar or a new lounge or a new restaurant, and about the second thing they do after they get the licence from the municipality is send a letter to AGLC and ask for some VLTs. They go on the list, and it takes a long time for them to move up the list because of the cap. Certainly, there are no plans from me or from this government to change that cap. There's no interest in pursuing that at this point in time.

The exact number of slot machines in casinos, you know, we could tell you today for sure. Someone would know exactly how many there are in Alberta tonight less the ones that are broken down for the night. But, no, we would know that number, and we do know it for the past number of years. That progression is easy to develop and to circulate to the two caucuses, so that's not an issue.

You talked about Camrose and the fact that they just recently received close to \$6 million as one of the seven major fairs, but rest assured that not one nickel of that money can be invested in gambling at the Camrose exhibition. The lottery fund agreement with the exhibition specifies that lottery funding cannot – cannot – be used for any gaming development. It's our understanding that the exhibition in this case is providing land for the casino, so that's how they're getting their share in it. They're providing land and not money. But at any rate, the agreement with them very specifically says – they filed a capital plan, if you will, and said: if we get the money, here's what we're going to build with it. It certainly didn't include any gambling facilities.

Once the casino is up and operating, AGLC will very strictly audit what happens at that casino and look at all the financial reviews and make sure that all the money is properly used and really pay attention to the fact that lottery funds are not being used for gaming activities or for the development of more gaming activities. I think you can rest assured that the money that they were allocated will be used on the exhibition grounds. I know one of their projects. They run that big country music festival. They're going to improve their campground, and I think they're going to improve the area where they have the performers, the staging area and that sort of stuff. That's one of the capital projects that they will be using that money for.

You talked a little bit about social responsibility, and you're right: we talk about it a lot in our business plan. I think we backed up our words with actions within the last couple of years by developing and starting a specific division in the department which is called the social responsibility division. That division has an employee and some support staff, and their sole job is to work on some of the things that you're talking about. A lot of what the gentleman in that division will be doing is trying to co-ordinate research activities between AADAC, who does some research into addictions, and the Gaming Research Institute, that we give the \$1.5 million to.

Interesting that you hit on a topic that we keep pursuing, and I do think we're going to make some progress. We continue to ask the research institute to do a research study on the social costs and benefits of the gaming industry. You're right. There are costs, and, yes, there are benefits. But how do you get a handle on that? It is a project that we have given the institute to do. I asked them to spend some of the \$1.5 million that we give them doing research on that. I believe some of it is being done across the country, particularly, I think, in Ontario at the moment. So we can use some of their research. It is a research paper that we're encouraging them to take on, and we'll be very interested in the results of that.

9:30

Yes, AADAC gets \$62 million this year from lottery funds. That's up \$8 million from last year. I was happy to get that question because that's one of the first questions that's come out of the estimates tonight. It's not dealing with policy; it's actually dealing with the estimates. It is a sizable chunk of money, and yes you wonder: you're taking money that's derived from people gambling and giving it to AADAC to research people who have a problem with gambling, I suppose. Alcohol is the same thing. I mean, we take liquor revenues, and I'm sure AADAC accesses some of that as well.

I guess, you know, we try and be open and accountable. If we wanted to hide it somewhere, we could say: well, no, that \$62 million came from general revenue or something. But no. The truth of the matter is that Treasury Board said to Health and Wellness: you can have \$62 million from the lottery fund for support of AADAC. Treasury Board made that allocation, and I'm pleased they did, actually.

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

We talk quite a bit about the amount of gambling in Alberta and the fact that it's high. The per capita number is high in comparison to other provinces, possibly, in Canada. I think you have to take into account that Alberta does have the highest disposable income in Canada. I would hazard a guess that if you look at the number of people who go to movie theatres in Alberta, it is probably the highest per capita in Canada because we have the highest disposable income. Some people decide to use their entertainment dollar going to movies, some people go to the casino, some people go to the opera, whatever the case may be. We probably lead the country in most of those categories because of the high disposable income that we enjoy in Alberta.

We haven't talked much about the liquor side of the portfolio and that part of the revenues that we generate from alcohol sales and from the licensees' permits and that sort of stuff. I think the reason we don't hear much about that is Albertans by and large – there again, it's well over 80 per cent – think that we're doing a very good job of managing the consumption of alcohol in this province, that we're not overrestrictive, that we're very responsible in the rules and

regulations that we have with the licensees, that we continue to initiate programs to deal with problem areas.

One problem area that we've had in the past and always has been an issue is underage people, people under the age of 18 trying to get in to have a drink or to buy alcohol in a liquor store. Through the industry and through the AGLC we initiated the under-25 program, it's called, where licensees, if they think someone is under 25, are required to ask for identification, for photo ID. It's been in place two or three years.

When we first started out, we'd go out and do spot audits, send out inspectors that looked really young and say: okay, go into that liquor store. They'd be over 18, mind you, but, you know, you get some pretty young-looking 18 year olds. So we'd send them in and see if they were ID'd or not. The compliance rate three years ago wasn't that great. Last year it was better. The last one we did, I believe it was between 70 and 80 per cent of the licensees did ask for ID. Someone said: "You know, you look like you're under 25. Maybe you're 24. I'm sorry; we have to ask. We know the age is 18, but we have to ask." So the compliance is really going up, and I congratulate the industry for that.

Another program just initiated recently is the Alberta server intervention program. It's mandatory training for people who are engaged in the sale of alcohol, whether it be a clerk at a liquor store, a bartender, or someone even at a community hall who's serving alcohol at a wedding or something like that.

It's phased in. This first year one person on the premises needs to have taken the training, and over a period of I think it's at least five years, if not more, everyone on staff will have to have taken this training. It's not an onerous thing. You can take it online. You can go to a session. One person on the staff can take the course and then train the trainer, sort of thing, and train the rest of the staff and write a small test online or whatever the case may be.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The subjects covered are things like identifying underage patrons, identifying people who have had enough so that you don't overserve. We're developing a module in that program that will be mandatory as well for the security people so that the bouncers, if you want to call them that, will have training in how to talk people out of getting into trouble, if you will. It has been disturbing, the level of violence that we're seeing. Usually it's outside the licensee as opposed to inside. Usually they get thrown out for being unruly, and then they go at it in the parking lot. It used to be, when I say they go at it, that it would end up with a black eye and a bloody nose, but now it seems to be that it's a knife wound or a gunshot. So it is a concern, and we think that this server intervention program will help people on the premise identify gang members, identify those people who are in there itching for trouble.

Some licensees have gone so far as to issue an ID card. They scan that card, and if you've been in trouble at another bar down the road last week and got thrown out, it comes up on the screen, and they say: "No, no. You're a troublemaker. You're not coming in tonight." So it's a good program. It's not mandatory, but some of them are doing that voluntarily because they don't want trouble in their establishments any more than we do. If they have trouble, they're going to end up in front of the board, and they're going to either be fined or be shut down for a few days, and they don't want that. So they're quite conscientious about these programs, and actually we find very strong support amongst the licensees for those kinds of regulations because, as I said, they don't want trouble any more than we do.

You talked about crime. Does crime go up when there's a casino in the neighbourhood? The studies to date haven't really shown that. I can speak for my own community. We have a very active casino. It's about number six on the list of 16 as far as being busy. It's packed to the rafters, and it's well run. I can't remember a case of violence or crime that they've tied back to the casino. There was one issue where a lady left a child in a car outside, but the casino staff found that child, got the appropriate authorities. The lady was barred from the casino for a year or whatever the case may be.

As far as car thefts outside the casino, that certainly hasn't been reported if there has been any. It hasn't been a big enough issue that it's made the papers. Family violence, suicides, those kinds of things: they haven't tied those to the casino in the community. So a lot of it depends on how well it's run and, you know, the kind of patrons you're attracting. There hasn't been a huge jump in crime around casinos that I'm aware of.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

9:40

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a short question. I have a lot of difficulty with this issue given the fact that I was a United Church minister, and the United Church of Canada is on record as being against lotteries and gambling and VLTs and so on. So out of that context I want to raise the issue of applying for funding from the community facility enhancement program because years ago churches – Baptist churches, Presbyterian, Anglican, whatever – could apply for money to have the roof of their church fixed and so on knowing that the monies were coming from general revenue and not from lotteries. Of course, that's no longer true now because it's all mixed up together.

So there's a real moral issue facing a lot of people in terms of really struggling around whether they should apply for this particular fund or not, and a lot of anguish goes on in church boards throughout this province. I just want to alert the minister to this fact because I think there's a huge gap in terms of values between what the government is doing and churches all across the province. It would be great if one day there would be a sorting out of the funds so that churches could apply in good conscience to have their own facilities supported and improved.

Mr. Graydon: I would say that I appreciate your position. I really do. One thing that does come up: actually, we do have churches apply, but they cannot apply and are not eligible for funding from CFEP or CIP for the church sanctuary itself. You can't get a CFEP grant to buy new pews or a new pulpit for the pastor to speak from. If the basement of your church is used for Boy Scout meetings, Girl Guide meetings or the local sewing club or something and you need new flooring in the basement, you can apply for a lottery grant, CFEP or CIP, for that purpose, or if you have a church hall next door to the church, you can qualify for money from the lottery fund. But there is a distinction there, that churches are not allowed money for the actual sanctuary itself. I do appreciate the dilemma that some churches are in. You know, part of my portfolio also deals with bingo, and we wouldn't want to go too far back in history to see who the big bingo players were in the country.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you. I have a few questions regarding transparency of the department. I'm curious why the disciplinary board hearings of the AGLC are not held in public. I understand that they're all held in camera. The results of some of them are posted

on the website, but the information on them is quite skimpy. It would probably be in the best interests of the public if this information was a lot more readily available or if the hearings were not held in camera.

This also brings up the question of casino licences. Now, I understand that this is a process that's all done behind closed doors as well. I think that in a major gambling centre like Las Vegas it's a public hearing that everyone gets to listen to. It's very transparent. You can see who is behind it. Here it's all done by the AGLC. Then we have a case like I believe it's called the Celebrations casino on Fort Road. They've been given a licence, but I think there are two groups who are disputing the licence. Why don't we get to know why this is being disputed and who's behind it? I think this is the kind of information that the public should probably know along with the information regarding liquor violations. I think we need a little bit more information in that regard.

I'd like to ask a couple of questions that I suspect will probably need written answers. Northlands and the Stampede, as you mentioned, are both on tap to get an additional \$3 million, which will give them \$10.3 million in lottery money this year. Interestingly enough, these two organizations alone get more money than the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation. I don't know if the priorities are quite right there. I know you've had a lot of statements about the good that Northlands and the Stampede do, and I don't think anybody disputes that they do a lot of good work. They do seem to be getting a disproportionate share of lottery money. On top of that there's, of course, the money from the horse-racing renewal. So I would like, if possible, to get a written total of how much Northlands and the Stampede will be getting last year and this year from all government lottery sources, please.

I would like to also ask you about the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. Now, I know that the funding is in place again for this year, but it seemed to be rather difficult to get the funding from the government for last year's work. As I understand, if I remember it correctly, they were under a contract for a certain amount of time, and you're negotiating whether to renew that contract, but there are some provisions being put on. I know that you want to ask specific questions, and that's fine, but that does eat into this rather small amount of money that the Alberta Gaming Research Institute is given. I'm wondering why the government doesn't increase the money to the Gaming Research Institute so that they can do the work that they see as right and that you can have the questions answered that you'd like answered as well.

I think it's also time that perhaps we had permanent funding for this organization. They're doing some excellent work. I know that the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre gets continuous funding, and it's also tied to inflation or an increase in the gaming research money. I think it's time that this organization, which is doing world-class work, doesn't have to worry about going cap in hand to the government every year and should have sustained funding and regular increases.

So if you'd care to answer a few of those questions, particularly the first few. I'd like to see some written answers later on on the other ones. Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Okay. The question of hearings and liquor violations, et cetera. I know that posted on the website is what information we can publish. I would suspect that there are a lot of FOIP considerations dealing with third parties and that as to what information can be publicly released. I'm not sure. Certainly, when it comes to applications, a lot of financial information is disclosed. As far as I know – and, as I said, I don't really get involved in AGLC's

business of licensing casinos, et cetera – they do a lot of due diligence on the partners and who's putting up the money and where the money is coming from and that sort of stuff, trying to be extremely cautious as to where and to whom these licences are being awarded. So I suspect that anything that can be released to the public is put on the Internet and is accessible there.

No problem getting the numbers for Northlands and the Stampede, and we'll do that.

The Gaming Research Institute. Yes, they have a contract, and last year's contract has been paid, so that's not an issue. Whether they need more money or not is an interesting question. They didn't spend last year's money. They have money in the bank, so I don't know if we should be increasing that amount. They were getting money for capacity building. That is what they were calling it, you know, getting staff on board and getting their systems in place to do research. That's what they have been using the money for, or a lot of it, up to this point. Certainly, our feeling is that the capacity is built, and now that leaves available money from the contract, the 1 and a half million dollars, to do actual research and to maybe tackle some of the bigger ones, like the hon. member asked me about awhile ago, the big issues about the cost-benefit analysis of gaming.

I would hope that they have enough money in this year's contract. Yes, it is being renegotiated. As you know, the points that are being negotiated are things that we talked about. We want to be able to ask them: would you please do some research on the cost-benefit analysis of gaming? We would like to, I guess, not order them to do that, but we would like to give them a list and say: "Here are some things we want research on. Here are some things that would help us develop good social policy around gaming." To this point in time that just hasn't happened. They've done research, but it's been at their initiative and what was of interest to them and hasn't really been of a benefit to us in developing policy. That's what we want good research for, to develop good, socially responsible policy.

9:50

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister, I suspect, forgot to answer one of the questions. I want to repeat that, and then I have one new question. The question that I asked which didn't get answered was with respect to this quote that I used from the Gaming Licensing Policy Review, that Alberta lottery fund disbursements must be used to support specific charitable, not-for-profit public and community-based initiatives and projects. If that is the policy, then the \$45 million or whatever amount is being used for the horse-racing industry would seem to contravene that policy. I didn't get that question addressed, so I hope the minister will do that.

The associated question with that is: why is the slot machine revenue split more generous for the horse-racing industry than it is for charity casinos? That's the associated question.

The last one. The minister I think in his introductory remarks did talk about the fact that for the Gaming Research Institute and the gaming council, I guess, the revenues that go to each are under consideration. They'll be divided up differently. Is there any specific information that you can share with us? What's under consideration with respect to where that money is going to go, and what changes do you contemplate bringing in?

Mr. Graydon: Okay. The rules around the lottery fund. I would suggest that the money that goes to the racing entertainment centres is flow-through money. It's generated at the track, flows through to the track, so it's not like we're taking someone else's money and

giving it to Horse Racing Alberta. It's money generated at a racing entertainment centre, generated out of, as you talked about, the split. The split at a racing entertainment centre is 33 per cent to the Alberta lottery fund, 15 per cent to the operator, which would be Northlands Park or Evergreen Park or whatever involved, and the balance, which is 52 per cent I believe, goes to Horse Racing Alberta.

Yes, they do get, as you say, a good split, but the charity that's working the casino at the Yellowhead tonight has no investment in that building or in the machines or anything else. They're just showing up, providing some labour for a certain number of hours, and for that, they get a percentage of the machine play, which is pooled over a few months. I think there's a huge difference in the investment involved. There again the people in Horse Racing Alberta have an investment in farms, they have an investment in livestock, they have an investment in employees, so there's quite an investment there. Again, Northlands Park or Evergreen Park have an investment in the grounds, in the facilities, in the grandstands, in the track, in the machinery that keeps the track in order. So there's a big difference in the investment involved between a charity working a casino and the people involved in a racing entertainment centre.

That's about all I can say about those things, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if it's possible to get a breakdown for the amount of grants that are going to be provided by the Department of Gaming or gambling this year. How much will be going to the Alberta Racing Corporation? How much will be going to the Olds Agricultural Society? How much will be going to the Rocky Mountain Turf Club Inc. and, also, to Edmonton Northlands?

An Hon. Member: Turn on your computer.

Mr. MacDonald: Someone has stated that I should turn on my computer, but since this budget is still being debated and still being discussed . . .

Mr. Ouellette: That was last year's budget.

Mr. MacDonald: That's exactly true. It's last year's budget, but I want to know what's going to be allocated in this year's budget in grants. Certainly, I'm surprised that the hon. Minister of RAGE would be trying to provide duplication in the debate this evening. If I could have those numbers, I would be very grateful.

Now, in the past we have provided grants from Gaming to not only the Edmonton Oilers, the Canadian hockey association, but the Calgary Flames as well. With respect to the Flames and the Oilers there was over a million dollars in grants. Is there anything going to be given this year in light of no hockey, or is it going to be turned over to minor hockey? Certainly, I see where the Alberta Junior A Hockey League gets one-tenth of what the pros get in grants for the last fiscal year. That is available through the blue book, the public accounts.

Certainly, I would also like to know how much in grants the University of Alberta is going to get and how much the University of Calgary is going to get in light of the fact that the University of Calgary got almost a million dollars less in the last public accounts documents that I have access to than what the U of A got. Now, I wonder if that practice is going to continue, or is it going to be

stopped? If the hon. minister could provide that information, I would be very grateful.

Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: I can get at it right away. First, I want to assure you, hon. member, that Enron is not on the list for any grants this year.

CFEP, community facility enhancement, is \$38.5 million; community initiatives, \$30 million; Edmonton Northlands, \$10.35 million; the Calgary exhibition, \$10.35 million. Major fairs and exhibitions, which includes the seven that got the \$40 million last year, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Camrose, Grande Prairie, Lloydminster, Olds – have I hit seven? At any rate, the budgeted amount for that group is \$2.66 million. It's split up. They get a base amount, and then they get so much per day for usage. So the more days usage that they have at those facilities, the more money they would get.

As well, there is an amount in Agriculture's budget, which can be talked about in their estimates. They fund the 288 other small-fair boards through a grant through Agriculture. Again, all the small-fair boards get a base grant plus so much per day for usage. Until we know how many days that facility is being used, we couldn't give an exact breakdown of the amount they're getting other than the gross amount that's here in the budget.

The Edmonton Oilers and the Calgary Flames will be getting absolutely nothing this year, obviously. It was a contract tied to hockey, and there's no hockey, so no tickets. No, there's no money in the budget for either of those groups. Basically, that contract is finished. If they wanted to start up another ticket program with some proceeds going to those clubs, it would have to be a whole new application and a whole new decision by government to do so. They haven't made that application, and there's no money anticipated in this budget for either of those groups.

10:00

The amount of money that would be going to the universities I suspect is money that's in Advanced Education's budget. They must have submitted a request to Treasury for money for the universities in their budget. Treasury Board would have set that amount of money. I would have nothing to do with those allocations.

Every department sends a request into Gaming and says: this year out of the lottery funds we would like X million dollars to fund this program or that program or whatever the case may be. We get those requests from basically every department. Most ask for some lottery funds for a special program. All those requests, while they come to Gaming, ultimately go to Treasury Board. They determine the allocation, and the amount they allocate shows up in the estimates of that specific department. Then that is debated here in the House when it's their turn. I believe Agriculture was up this afternoon. They would have had lottery money in their budget, which I'm sure you debated.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. I really appreciate those answers. Now, specific to the grants as they are listed in the public accounts that went to the professional hockey teams, Edmonton Oilers and Calgary Flames, that money was granted through the ticket initiative, was it?

Mr. Graydon: That money was from Gaming. It was in Gaming's budget. It was a ticket that you could buy at the ticket booth and scratch and win an Oilers jersey or a Flames jersey. I guess you

could win money, too, but the supplementary prizes were, kind of, merchandise. It was a ticket you purchased at a ticket booth specifically. You could ask for a Flames ticket or an Oilers ticket as far as I know. At any rate, those tickets are no longer available and no intention of starting them up again at this point in time. But it was in the budget of Gaming.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In light of that, certainly there are many families that rely on SFI for their income, and they have not seen an increase in their benefits. This is money that seems to have been found. I don't want to use the word "found," but it is not going to be used for the purposes it was intended for in the last fiscal year. I guess that I may be dreaming to think that we could use some of that money to relieve child poverty in this province. If it couldn't be used for that, could it be at least used to possibly support minor hockey in a way that would allow more children from low-income families to participate in minor hockey programs?

Mr. Graydon: It becomes a question of allocation, I guess. Yes. I see that in '04-05 under Edmonton Oilers it lists \$350,000 that they would have gotten from that ticket program and the Calgary Flames the same amount, so you add that up. On the other side of the equation, I guess, I just mentioned that AADAC got \$8 million more this year, so there's no shortage of places to find to reallocate the money.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Gaming, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates, I must now put the following question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Gaming for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:	
Expense	\$169,187,000
Lottery Fund Payments	\$1,207,533,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported. Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates of the Department of Gaming and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her

Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Gaming: expense, \$169,187,000; lottery fund payments, \$1,207,533,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 31
Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: Are you ready for the question?
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: I believe it has to be moved first. Has it been moved?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services did move the bill the last time it was before us.*
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I believe we've looked this bill over, up one end and down the other. It's in general a pretty good piece of legislation. We have a few minor quibbles with it but, otherwise, nothing outstanding. We're prepared to let it rest for now and go to the vote.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a third time]

Bill 12
Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Bill 12, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005, simply updates the language that's used in the procedures for victims of crime.

I would stand and move third reading.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to speak on third reading just to reiterate our support for this bill. There are lots of other kinds of documents like this throughout North America. The United Nations has a declaration of principles of justice for victims of crime, and the House of Commons has a statement of basic principles of justice for victims of crime. Actually, when you look at these various documents and compare them together, the one we have before us is of a similar nature.

10:10

Again, as I have mentioned before, it's one thing to have these kinds of principles of justice; it's another thing to put them into practice. It's my hope that the effect of this bill will be to alert various agencies and departments of the government to be sensitive to the needs of victims. There has been in the past more emphasis on the offender and the offender's rights, and now let's have a balance, and let's make sure that the victim's rights are attended to.

*See p. 1291, left col., para. 4

So, Mr. Speaker, the opposition agrees to pass this bill in third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

Speaker's Ruling
Third Reading of Bill 31

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the chair in looking at some references here when we dealt with Bill 31 misread the hon. Minister of Government Services, having understood that he had already moved. I believe he had not moved that bill, so given that I had misread this, I hope that we can have unanimous consent to accept the move made by the hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Government Services for Bill 31, Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005. The records will reflect accordingly.*

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
Bill 39
Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 19: Mr. Magnus]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 39, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005. These amendments to the act will make Alberta roads safer for all users. It increases penalties for people who drive without insurance and clarifies rules for governing commercial carriers, among quite a few other amendments. I'd like to just talk about a few of them tonight in second reading.

Most importantly, Bill 39 will protect the safety of those people who work on our roadways when we most need them. Our province's police officers, firefighters, emergency medical people as well as tow truck operators have major concerns about their safety on our roadways from speeding drivers. They point out that a number of their colleagues have been needlessly injured or experienced close calls while attending to incidents on the side of the highway. A number of these valiant people have died while a number of them have sustained such severe injuries that their health and well-being are forever compromised.

I've talked to many members about numerous examples of that, and I'll just bring up one tonight. I have his permission. His name is Brian Baker, and he's a volunteer firefighter from Crossfield who a number of years ago in a snowstorm, pushing a lady out of the way of a speeding vehicle, took the full brunt of the vehicle himself. His injuries were so sustained and so numerous it takes him six or seven minutes to read through a list of the surgeries that he's had over the years. To suggest that it has altered his life in many, many ways both physically and mentally would be something that, frankly, I have his permission to say, has happened to such a degree that it's just mind-blowing.

It is fair to say that due to the nature of their work it is simply impossible to guarantee the safety of our emergency workers at all times. There are inherent dangers associated with these professions, and despite our best efforts we can't hope to eliminate these dangers completely. However, while we cannot eradicate all possible hazards, we can certainly try to mitigate some of the more preventable risks and dangers that these people encounter daily in the line of duty. One of these preventable risks is caused by motorists who

choose – who choose, Mr. Speaker – not to slow down when they encounter an emergency situation, a police vehicle, a fire engine, or a tow truck stopped on the highway with their flashing lights in operation.

Bill 39 will make it mandatory for drivers to slow down to 60 kilometres per hour or the speed limit, whichever is less, when they see an emergency vehicle pulled over on the side of the road or highway with flashing lights in operation. The exception would be if a driver can move into an adjacent lane, ensuring that there's at least one traffic lane between the driver's vehicle and the emergency vehicles or tow truck.

The intent of Bill 39 is to raise awareness and provide our emergency and roadside assistance personnel with a workplace environment that is as safe as we can possibly make it. It is important that we also consider other ways that we can influence Albertans and change their behaviour such as appropriate advisory and awareness campaigns to educate drivers on the dangers that these folks face every day to protect and save the lives of our fellow Albertans.

With regard to the construction zones and with record amounts of infrastructure projects in the next few years over the entire province – and I believe the number somewhere in the capital budget is \$9 billion – this timely legislation will also make the workplace safer for these workers so that they can focus more on their jobs and worry less about traffic speeding by them. In a nutshell the legislation will work in a similar fashion to B.C.'s laws regarding construction sites: slow down to the posted speed limit or face, say, doubling of the fines. Mr. Speaker, as someone who has travelled many summers in B.C. in these construction zones, I've never seen anything more effective than doubling the fines. It is effective, and it will reduce collisions and near misses for these construction crews.

In consultation with our minister of infrastructure we will be more diligent in the future about the road signs at a construction site being current, and we've actually put words to the effect that the construction zone must be active – the key word being “active” – for these rules to apply. The offences created in this bill don't apply to inactive zones, where the area is barricaded off but no workers are on site. The onus, however, does lie with the drivers of vehicles to make that determination. In other words, if the driver incorrectly believes that the site is inactive and decides to speed by, the driver still can be fined if he's wrong.

These changes that I've talked about regarding emergency workers, construction, and tow truck operators are, in my opinion, the most important aspects within this bill, but there are other amendments to consider. The seizure of vehicles in prostitution-related offences deals with times where the release of a seized vehicle might be warranted. This is related to Bill 206, which passed in this Legislature, I believe in 2003, with unanimous approval by all members and all parties in the House.

This amendment would allow a peace officer the right to confiscate a vehicle but would allow a police officer to release the vehicle as well. It has amendments within it that would allow a vehicle to be released if the registered owner did not reasonably know that the vehicle was to be used for this type of offence. The registrar is removed from this process, which simply makes sense, Mr. Speaker, because leaving it in the hands of a police officer – they already have that right, they're closest to the problem, and it's not like you have to go to Edmonton and figure out, if you live in Cardston or Wainwright or somewhere else in the province, how to get your vehicle back.

Another amendment is increasing the penalty for driving without insurance. There are too many drivers who believe that driving without insurance is worth it. Some estimates say as many as 5 per

*See p. 1290, right col., para. 11

cent of all drivers on our highways these days have no insurance. High fines are the only way to change these attitudes, and it's my hope that by changing this law, we will encourage uninsured drivers to buy their insurance, reducing the number of uninsured drivers and thereby protecting all Albertans.

Bill 39 allows the minister to make regulations to promote the safe operation of commercial vehicles and enhance road safety by monitoring carriers for compliance in improved carrier safety management practices. It will also help the government get unsafe commercial vehicles from other provinces and countries off our roads.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the hour and the fabulous co-operation that we got, frankly, from all the other parties and particularly the critic on the Liberal side of things, I have one more amendment that I promised a friend that I would talk about and mention tonight. In Alberta today the law says that if you're on a snowmobile and have to cross a roadway, you take the shortest distance to cross the roadway even if it's unsafe because of, say, a curve on the road. With this amendment we have changed that to suggest that you can now go down a ditch or any kind of right-of-way to pass over that road in the safest possible spot and make this legal. Snowmobile operators are very thankful for that.

Mr. Speaker, there are many more amendments to this act. As I say, we've had fabulous co-operation from the critics on the other side from all parties. I believe that all parties in the House find this a timely bill in the sense that they want to protect the working people on our highways.

With that, I'll sit down and take my place. It's already been moved, I believe, and we'll wait and see what questions we have from other members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

10:20

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the Liberal critic for Infrastructure and Transportation I and my party support both the mover and the intention of Bill 39, which is to save lives. As previously noted by the Minister of Finance, good ideas reside within all parties represented in this House. It is not surprising, given the Member for Calgary-North Hill's prepolitical history as an air traffic controller, that safety would continue to be his primary concern.

Bill 39 will increase the possibility of protection to police officers, firefighters, ambulance attendants, tow truck drivers as well as construction workers and, hopefully by extension, community volunteers such as members of 4-H clubs, who as part of local pride clean up their community's ditches along the highways. Besides doubling fines, I believe that the large radar-controlled speed indicator signs are very effective, although the most effective method is on-the-spot law enforcement, which the increased budget will help.

The Liberal opposition has only one reservation that hopefully can be addressed, which has to do with the seizure of a john's vehicle. Seizing a john's vehicle is a two-edged sword, which needs to be considered. The family of the john is punished twice: once by the john's activity and, secondly, by the seizure of the vehicle. A second concern is the possibility of driving prostitution further underground, where the potential of violence and abuse towards prostitutes could be increased.

It is my sincere hope that members of the government caucus will not water down the intention of this bill by only being willing to save certain lives under limited, prescribed conditions as was the case with Bill 201, which proposed a complete smoking ban in

workplaces. With only three dissident government voices, Bill 201, having been addressed eloquently by several members opposite, passed easily through second reading. However, when the crunch came, government members folded, fell into line, and marched to their parade marshal's unhealthy tune.

Mr. Hancock: Point of order.

Mr. Chase: Constituents' wishes, Conservative convention delegates' demands, and sound health care principles were tossed out the window.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, there is a point of order being raised by the hon. Government House Leader.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Items Previously Decided

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 23(h),(i), and (j) and the other rules which preclude discussion of previous debates in the House, but most importantly imputing motives. The objection I have to what the hon. member has said: while we're debating the bill on traffic safety, he's going back to a private member's bill that was discussed in the House during private members' time, and suggesting that members in the House had their ability to make decisions as members of the House independently on the floor of the House on a private member's bill somehow constrained. That's inappropriate. As every member knows, when they come onto the floor of this House, regardless of whether they're part of a government caucus or an opposition caucus, they have a duty to make up their mind. To use abusive or insulting language or suggesting that they had motives other than to do the best for their constituents is inappropriate and certainly out of place in discussion of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: I thank you for clarification that hon. members weren't required by the caucus to vote in a certain manner. As a result, if you'll permit me, I'll withdraw that suggestion.

May I continue, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. member for withdrawing the statement. However, I just want to draw the attention to the citation that the hon. Government House Leader used. It was 23(h),(i), and (j). Standing Order 23(h) refers to "makes allegations against another member," and (i) is "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member," not a group of people but to another member, and (j) is "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I'm not so sure if that occurred here today. However, the hon. member has withdrawn the statement; therefore, there is no need to rule on this point of order.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, you may proceed.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I guess I'll try and draw together my reasons for bringing these other health-related bills into discussion tonight.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: To continue, constituents' wishes, conservative convention delegates' demands, and sound health care principles were tossed out the window as members, with a very few notable exceptions including the current and former ministers of health and wellness, voted against a total smoking ban.

Similarly, despite the government's professed urgency in passing another of their private member's bills designed to deal with the ravages of crystal meth, the Conservative caucus amended the outcome of the hon. mover's intent of a proposed 90-day compulsory treatment plan although it should be noted that no new funding for either facilities, treatment, staffing, or policy was referenced in this bill. By the time the hon. member's bill had been passed through her caucus' process of amendment, 90 days of treatment had been reduced to five days of detox.

Similarly, collective Conservative concerns were addressed when our Liberal health critic, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, proposed wellness Motion 501, which would have seen \$200 million from the \$650 million of tobacco tax revenue set aside annually to support a clearly defined number of preventative, proactive health care initiatives. It is of great concern to me that the members opposite saw fit to simply throw out the motion without even considering the possibility of amendments.

Although the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation's musings on the potential of a government-sponsored cellphone ban following the August conclusion of a University of Calgary researcher's findings were frequently reported in last week's news, there was almost no recognition of the introduction of Liberal Motion 506, proposing that the government consider banning handheld cellphones by drivers, which I introduced into the House a week ago Monday night.

What I had great difficulty with that night, and what I would not want to be accused of doing myself, is the hyperbole that I saw a disconnect with. A member opposite suggested that the only way to avoid car accidents was to stay at home. This suggestion was later followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, who had so passionately previously proposed the crystal meth bill. The member suggested that if cellphones were banned . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, are you rising on a point of order?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Point of Order Items Previously Decided

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, subject to Standing Order 23(f) the member definitely "debates any previous vote of the Assembly." Unless the member is intending to rescind a previous vote, I can't find any relevance between debating a previous vote and the matter that is currently before the House.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: I'm not debating; I'm summarizing what has taken place in this House. It is a statement of historical *Hansard* fact, not a discussion or debate.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, do you want to participate in the point of order?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time for the benefit of the House and certainly for the benefit of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs I would like to refer him to *Beauchesne* section 659. It simply reads that

the second reading is the most important stage through which the bill is required to pass; for its whole principle is then at issue and is

affirmed or denied by a vote of the House. It is not regular on this occasion, however, to discuss in detail the clauses of the bill.

So I think we have to give the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity a little bit of expanse, a little bit of rope, and let him proceed with his comments and allow him some time to make his point.

I would say that I don't believe there is a point of order here, and I think the hon. member should be allowed to continue with his discussion of the bill. Thank you.

10:30

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to participate in the point of order?

Hon. members, I think this should be a learning experience for everybody. I know that it's late in the evening, but I'd refer you to *Beauchesne's* 479 and 480. Hopefully, that clarifies the matter before us.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, you were straying somewhat into this arena of a matter that we have already dealt with here in the past. However, I am convinced that you were probably leading toward some conclusion on the argument that you had before us. So I hope that this is a learning experience and that everyone learns from this point of order.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, you may proceed.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Thirty-four years in the learning experience, and I continue to learn even more, in particular tonight.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: To summarize – and I will do so very quickly – should the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation reintroduce a similar cellphone ban concept during this fall's sitting of the Legislature, as he has suggested in the media, I would certainly support such legislation, regardless of which side of the House it originated.

I have not completely become disillusioned by the democratic process of this House as it relates to legislating well-being and safety. Although the New Democratic Party's motion of greater government accountability for the health and safety of persons in long-term care was battered and bombarded by amendments, it remained afloat at least through second reading. Hopefully, it will not be later sunk as seniors' contributions and quality of life must be given more than simply talk.

In conclusion, I and my caucus members support the intent of the majority of the clauses of Bill 39 and wish to see the bill passed quickly through the spring session so that lives can be protected while the badly needed road repairs continue this summer. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 39, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005. I want to commend the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill for making an extraordinary effort to bring the bill forward to see if it can be put through the session and brought into effect, receive royal assent and be proclaimed. The bill, in general, certainly deserves the support of the House. The NDP opposition is happy to support it.

The bill will create some new offences for speeding past construction workers in construction zones and sets speed limits for motorists passing emergency vehicles. Under the proposed amendments motorists passing stopped emergency vehicles or tow trucks must drive at 60 kilometres per hour or at the posted speed limit, whichever is slower. These provisions will certainly enhance safety and

reduce the possibility of loss of life or serious injury. So that part is quite straightforward and is worthy of support.

[Mr. Goudreau in the chair]

It also amends the existing piece of legislation, the private member's Bill 206, the Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003, by striking the provision that allows first-time offenders to be dealt with by alternative measures. We had some concerns there, but on that matter we have had some discussions with the member who is the sponsor of the bill. I would like to just note, Mr. Speaker, with respect to that issue – let me for a moment go back to Bill 206 and the part of the bill that's being struck here.

I think it's the Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003. It's section (3)(c) that's being struck. Yeah. Bill 39 repeals section 2 and adds everything back in again except subsection (3)(c), which deals with the provision for first-time offenders. Now, I know that it's being done, perhaps, to address the concerns that are related to whether or not the existing piece of legislation, Bill 206, has some constitutional weaknesses or could be exposed to a constitutional challenge and that that constitutional challenge is due to the division of powers between the criminal law and the Traffic Safety Act.

However, as we all know, both Saskatchewan and Manitoba do have laws that allow for alternative measures, and neither province has had a court challenge in respect to this. In fact, Manitoba laws are very, very close to the private member's bill that was introduced in this Legislature in 2003 and then passed but never proclaimed. So I don't think that that's a serious concern because the Manitoba and Saskatchewan legislations have not been challenged on that ground. Even here in this House I think in the past we have not been all that overly concerned about the division of powers. So why the section is being struck out remains a question. I'm sure the hon. member will try to address that.

The only other issue here that we have is some concern about the personal information and privacy act. The bill allows, I think, for the manufacturer- or owner-installed recording devices to be used at any prosecution under this act or bylaw. That raises questions about whether or not the legislation will sort of run at cross purposes with the personal information and privacy act if they're not aware that these things are in their vehicle in the first place. So there's some concern about the violation of the personal information and privacy act provisions if the legislation before us allows for manufacturer- or owner-installed recording devices and the information gathered there to be used in any prosecution.

With those two comments, which express a bit of our concern, we are happy to support the bill because I think it will save lives. It will make highway travel safer and certainly will provide enhanced safety for emergency vehicles or tow trucks when they are providing their services around the vehicles and also on construction sites along highways or whatever have you.

So with those brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, I close my comments. Thank you.

10:40

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and discuss Bill 39, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005, this evening. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill for bringing this legislation forward.

Certainly, I appreciate from the hon. member the updates that he

has provided in regard to this legislation, but it's a lot more comprehensive than I had first thought. When we think of all the infrastructure construction that is going on and is going to be going on in this province, this legislation is ideal for construction crews and emergency workers, and I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing it forward. If we could improve the safety at construction sites that are adjacent to our busy highways, I would urge all hon. members to support this bill. If we could also improve the safety of emergency workers, who unfortunately are called far too often to the site of an accident, this is worthy of support on those grounds alone.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

But whenever we look at other measures here that allow for the seizure of vehicles used for prostitution-related activities, I don't know if this is going to help or not, but certainly if it would even in a small way help, I would again urge all hon. members to consider supporting this bill. When we think of, first, Vancouver – and it took the police a long time to solve those murders. There were, of course, prostitutes from central areas of the city of Vancouver being transported to what essentially at that time was a farm and murdered. We find the same pattern of behaviour happening, unfortunately, in this city.

When we decide as a Legislative Assembly or as a province or as a society who exactly is the criminal in prostitution and prostitution-related activities – is it the prostitute, or is it the buyer of the sexual services? In my view, it is the buyer of the sexual services. That's just my personal view. This bill would allow for the vehicle of the buyer of those services – there's a chance that their vehicle will be seized. Not only would I like to see the vehicle seized, but I think there should be a public notice somewhere, maybe on the Solicitor General's website. Maybe it will be on Infrastructure and Transportation's website. But the persons involved in the purchase of sexual services: if the public wish, they can have access to that information. I don't know how we control this sort of behaviour, but this bill may be a good start, and hopefully it would stop the horrific crimes that are going on, the murders that are going on, Mr. Speaker, in this city at this time.

Now, also, we're talking about increasing penalties for driving without insurance. I was having a look at this, and at first glance I thought there was going to be a significant increase in the amount of the fines, but there is not. There is the potential imprisonment for a term of 45 days instead of 30 days, a two-week sentence in the Crowbar Hotel, essentially, for driving without insurance. Insurance rates have not gone down, as was promised, for a lot of drivers with the insurance reforms. A lot of people find it cheaper to drive without insurance because the fine is so low than it is, actually, to go out and buy the insurance. I've been told that if we were at a stop sign, for instance, and 10 cars stop and then proceed through the stop sign, one of those 10 cars, or 10 per cent of all vehicles on the road, is without insurance. So it is a major problem.

We look at the amendment here in section 54, and hopefully we can have a little discussion on this or get more information from the hon. member during committee. Section 54 is amended (a) by adding the following after subsection (1).

(1.1) If a person drives or has a motor vehicle on a highway without the expressed or implied consent of the registered owner of the vehicle, that person is deemed for the purposes of subsection (1)(a) or (b) to drive or have on a highway a motor vehicle that is not an insured motor vehicle.

Now, this whole notion of implied consent: I think it won't be long before that's in the court. I would like to know exactly how that is going to work, and hopefully we'll get an answer to this in

committee. If not, I think we should have a look at perhaps changing this. Maybe with clarification from the hon. member my cautions on this will be satisfied.

Now, we were talking about the increase in the amount of time one would spend in jail here on the first offence or the first contravention, and then we have here subsequent contraventions. I don't know how many chronic repeat offenders the law enforcement officials are getting these days or catching or apprehending, but are there any plans with the money that we are going to get from the increase in the fine? That pool of money has specific purposes, and if the hon. member could tell us how that money is to be pooled and used in the future, I would be grateful. That's the money that's collected from those who are fined for driving without insurance. I would appreciate that at committee.

That is it for my comments at second reading, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity at this hour of the night to have a chance to get some concerns on the record in regard to this bill. Hopefully, during committee or later on in debate my concerns could be addressed. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 39 read a second time]

head: 10:50 **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

Bill 22
Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure for me to rise this evening in committee regarding Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005, on behalf of the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Before I begin, however, I'd like to introduce two guests that are in the gallery this evening who have had a great deal invested in this piece of legislation. The first one is Cheryl Ryder, and Cheryl works with the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The second is Morris Seiferling, and he is the director of the technical services division of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Both of these individuals have worked tirelessly on Bill 22, and I'm certain that they've put a lot of time and effort over the last many months here to ensure the passing of this particular bill.

As stated previously in this House, Alberta is a leader in animal protection, and these amendments will help ensure that both the welfare of animals and those who take proper care of their animals are protected in our province. These amendments will update and strengthen the legislation to apply to anyone causing distress to an animal. They will help prevent animals from becoming distressed and will provide protection for those who legitimately report an animal in distress. They will require persons who are responsible for an animal to take care of them and will also protect people that follow reasonable and generally accepted practices of animal care.

Mr. Chairman, Albertans' expectations for animal care have changed over the past decade, and those industries, institutions, and persons who are responsible for the care of animals will applaud the strong support this House has given to Bill 22.

I would like to now address the comments and questions that a number of hon. members raised during second reading of this bill. To begin, I would like to thank the hon. members for Edmonton-Gold Bar, Edmonton-Calder, and Calgary-Varsity for their support of Bill 22. The vast majority of persons that are responsible for animals in this province, including livestock producers, take very good care of their animals. Even with significant issues like BSE and past droughts affecting their bottom lines, there are very few producers that won't or can't take care of their animals.

The Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the ASPCA, and the livestock industry have worked co-operatively to help producers that can no longer care for their animals. Through the Alberta Farm Animal Care Association peer and vet support is provided to producers to proactively prevent potential animal welfare situations. Both of these agencies have toll-free numbers that anyone can use to report potential animal welfare cases. Producers have been helped to voluntarily deal with their particular situation, and as a result charges have been laid in very few instances over the past few years.

The hon. members are correct in that the proposed amendments will allow a peace officer to act before an animal becomes distressed and that anyone causing distress to an animal can now be held responsible for their actions. Protection for people that follow the law and use reasonable and generally accepted practices, whether they are livestock producers, hunters, fishermen, trappers, or those controlling pests, is a fundamental component of this particular bill. These people need not fear that an animal rights group will use this legislation against law-abiding Albertans.

I would also like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore for his support for the bill. In response to his questions regarding the removal of antler velvet in elk, currently the Animal Protection Act allows the removal of antler velvet as long as it is done consistently, with reasonable and generally accepted practices. Bill 22 would add an important component to further clarify what these reasonable and generally accepted practices are and are not.

The bill will give the minister of agriculture the authority to reference guides or codes of practice and regulations to further clarify what these practices are or are not. This would allow the elk industry, for example, to work with other stakeholders, like the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, to develop standards for things like the removal of antler velvet. The minister could then reference the standards and the regulations, and they would then be enforceable under the act.

This provision will also address the hon. member's concerns regarding roadside zoos. I understand that the Department of Sustainable Resource Development is in the process of developing zoo standards for Alberta. Once completed, these standards could also be referenced in the Animal Protection Act and be enforceable. I believe this provision will be welcomed as it will help clarify for both zoo operators and all Albertans the expectations for the welfare of animals in these facilities.

I would also like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie for his support of Bill 22. This bill equally applies to all animals in Alberta, whether they are livestock, pets, wildlife, animals being used in research or for educational purposes. On the hon. member's concern and those of the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity related to the need for more SPCA officers, I would like to remind the members that all Royal Canadian Mounted Police and members of

a municipal police service have and will continue to have full authority to enforce the Animal Protection Act. This is in addition to the two special constables also appointed under the act. Therefore, there are many more than two enforcement officers, in the city of Calgary for instance, that can deal with animal welfare cases.

Mr. Chairman, as far as the hon. member's concerns on the need for additional facilities to care for animals in Calgary, that debate lies outside the provisions of this particular bill.

I certainly agree with the hon. member's comments about the difficulty, in some cases, of proving animal abuse. To help address this concern, two important concepts have been included in the bill. First, it states that no one can abuse an animal. Currently only the owner or person ordinarily in charge of the animal are prevented from causing distress to the animal. Second, a person who is responsible for an animal must provide adequate food, shelter, care, protection from injurious heat or cold, and adequate space and ventilation. A peace officer will no longer be restricted to only dealing with animals that they have cause to believe are being abused but will be able to act before the abuse actually takes place.

As the hon. member mentioned, Bill 22 will place the onus on the owner of the animal to pay any costs associated with their animals if they were seized and under the care of a caretaker. This is an important principle in that it should be the owner's responsibility to pay these costs, not all Albertans. Under the act if an owner refuses to pay these costs, the caretaker can then give the animal to another person and try to recover some of their costs in doing so. If the animal can be sold, which is usually the case with livestock, the proceeds from the sale can be used to pay the caretaker's expenses.

Regarding the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner's question about further defining animals in distress, the input that stakeholders provided through the consultation process indicated that more certainty around the definition of distress was needed. The hon. member is correct in that adding clarity to this definition also limits what can be considered when determining if an animal is in distress. This was done intentionally, Mr. Chairman, based on the feedback we received through the consultation process. Both animal owners and the people who enforce the act asked for this further clarification to help them determine whether an animal is considered in distress or not.

In response to the question from the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, the Alberta Fish and Game Association, the Trappers Association, and aboriginal or Métis communities were not included in the consultation related to Bill 22. As the hon. member mentioned, reasonable and generally accepted practices of hunting, fishing, trapping, and pest control are exempt from this particular act. If Albertans follow these practices, regardless of whether they hunt, fish, or trap in northern or southern Alberta, they are protected.

11:00

In response to the hon. member's question regarding whether certain arrow tips will be required for hunters under the act, the short answer is no. However, again, if an organization like the Alberta Fish and Game Association wanted to limit the use of certain arrowheads, they could develop standards that the minister could reference in the regulation and make those standards enforceable.

As I mentioned earlier, the bill does apply to all animals in the province, including wildlife. Wildlife in zoos and rehabilitation centres will be protected under this act. Again, animals in the wild that are lawfully hunted, trapped, fished, or controlled as pests through reasonable and generally accepted practices are exempt from the act.

I would like to thank all the hon. members for their support and excellent questions related to this bill. As the hon. members

committed to it during second reading of the bill, I believe I have responded to all the questions raised. I would again urge all members to give Bill 22 their full support.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In regard to Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005, I would like to thank the hon. member for his thorough response to our questions on this side of the Assembly. As a result of those responses and the thoroughness and the diligence of the hon. member I'm pleased to say that we will continue to support this legislation.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 22 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 36 **Police Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief in responding to questions that were raised during second reading. I'm pleased to stand before the committee and respond to some of the questions that were mentioned earlier in the Assembly. There are many proposed amendments to the Police Act concerning First Nations, police officers, police funding, and other issues that have garnered little or no debate, so I'll focus my presentation on the sections that have been raised.

It's important to keep in mind that these proposed amendments build on an existing police oversight mechanism, and many areas have been clarified or strengthened. The amendments ensure that every community has either a civilian police commission or a police committee to whom the chief of police is accountable for the handling of complaints.

In the amendments, however, the role of the commission is strengthened considerably. These additional responsibilities are over and above their responsibility for establishing policies and budgets for the police. The chair of the commission under the amendments can, at his or her discretion, request another police agency anywhere in the country to investigate any complaint against a police officer. The MLA Policing Review Committee recommendations state that "it is most appropriate that the chief of police be responsible for the investigation of routine complaints." While this recommendation may be adequate, Bill 36 goes much further and allows for the chair of the commission to request an outside police agency to investigate what might be considered a routine complaint if it would be in the public interest to do so.

As well, Mr. Chairman, in the amendments the responsibilities of the director of law enforcement have been significantly increased.

The director of law enforcement will ensure that commissions and committees have the training that will provide them with the knowledge and skills to perform their duties more effectively. The director of law enforcement will also monitor complaints, establish standards, and audit practices to ensure that the standards are met.

Finally, at the provincial level we have enhanced the role of the Solicitor General to allow the minister to request an external investigation even if the commission chair has decided against such a course of action. The minister can also appoint a civilian monitor or a review team or a person to oversee an investigation in cases where provincial intervention is needed.

Mr. Chairman, it's critically important to point out that several people have held up the Ontario Special Investigations Unit, or SIU, as the prime model for civilian oversight of complaints against police. Advocates for the Ontario model give the impression that Ontario SIU is a completely independent civilian body that investigates all complaints against the police. This could not be further from the truth. In fact, their role is far more limited than the public has been led to believe.

First, the Ontario SIU does not investigate any complaints that do not involve sexual assault, serious injury, or death. The Ontario SIU is responsible for investigating only a mere fraction of the complaints made against the police. The thousands of other complaints that are not related to serious injury, sexual assault, or death are investigated in precisely the same way they are here in Alberta: by the respective police agency. Every other province has fundamentally the same system as Alberta and Ontario in that internal affairs officers within the police service from which the complaint arises investigate the majority of complaints against police.

Any person who suggests that Alberta should develop a fully civilian investigative agency must turn their minds to the logistics of such a suggestion. I offer the following for the sake of comparison. While the SIU may serve the province of Ontario well, where there are 23,000 police officers and thousands of complaints, the system, as stated in the MLA Policing Review Committee report, would be unnecessarily bureaucratic and expensive, especially in light of the small number of serious cases in Alberta, approximately 10 a year, compared to 190 in Ontario just last year.

It's also critical to point out that an agency such as the SIU would not investigate incidents like the Overtime case here in Edmonton. In addition, most of the investigators in the Ontario SIU models are retired police officers, which may not remove the perception of police investigating the police.

Regarding a proposed time limit for people to submit complaints about the conduct of a police officer, Alberta is one of the last provinces to include a time limit. Ontario has a time limit of six months, and other provinces have a time limit of three months.

Finally, in Alberta when any complaint has been dealt with and the complainant is not satisfied, a person can appeal to the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board, which is a civilian body with considerable powers. We do not need to enhance the powers of the Law Enforcement Review Board, but we can enhance their role through policy and increased resources. In addition to its most common role as an appeal body the board also has the power on its own to conduct inquiries respecting complaints. Further, at the request of the minister the LERB can inquire into any matter concerning the police, and that is as it should be.

Mr. Chairman, we have done our due diligence to consult, research, and develop amendments to the Police Act that will serve Albertans well in the years to come. Police accountability is without question a fundamental requirement in order to gain and maintain public confidence. I feel that we have achieved a balance with Bill 36 that will serve the public well.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a very important bill, and I thank the Solicitor General for his remarks in introducing the Committee of the Whole discussion of this bill. I think it's going to take us quite some time to work through the bill. My understanding of Committee of the Whole is that it's proper to go through the bill section by section, and I think that's what we should do to discuss the merits of various parts.

I would like to bring some amendments in the course of our discussion in Committee of the Whole. I have three amendments, just to give a warning of what's coming. The first one is very simple and wouldn't take much debate. The second one is a little more controversial. The third one is very controversial because it tries to amend the real heart of the bill; namely, the oversight process, civilian review process of dealing with complaints, in which I believe that there should be more emphasis on civilian oversight.

Starting at the beginning of the bill, the bill asks for some housekeeping issues, and I'm not going to dwell on that. Section 4 suggests a change in wording from "an adequate and effective level" to "adequate and effective." That probably is important because we don't want to give the impression that there are different levels of policing throughout Alberta. The important thing is to say that the government of Alberta is responsible for adequate and effective policing throughout Alberta. So that is a good statement.

11:10

Section 5 is interesting. I hope the Solicitor General is prepared to take up this heavy responsibility outlined in section 5 that the minister may, subject to the regulations, "establish standards for policing, and . . . ensure that standards are met."

Then the next section is one that municipalities are looking at because it's changing the population level under which municipalities get policing from the province. The change is from 2,500 to 5,000. With this, every municipality under 5,000 will receive policing fully funded by the province, and that is undoubtedly a good move and appreciated by municipalities throughout Alberta.

Turning over to page 4, section 8, I especially appreciate the inclusion of the phrase "and restorative justice" in the revision of the bill because I'm a great supporter of the impetus, the move towards more emphasis on restorative justice. I think that's very important.

Now, section 8 – and this is where I'm going to bring my first amendment – is on the issue of the name of the director of law enforcement. I want to come back to that in a few minutes. The director of law enforcement is given a great deal of broad powers mentioned in (b)(iii)(c): "developing and promoting programs to enhance professional practices, standards and training for police services, commissions and policing committees." So this person, who in this bill is called the director of law enforcement, will oversee and encourage and carry out the training of all the police commission members and the police committees and so on throughout the province. This is a very important role, and I will come back to that in a few minutes.

The bill goes on to discuss and establish the rules for policing committees and also for police commissions. I just wanted to bring our attention to a couple of matters here. I notice that under Policing Committees – and this is directed towards municipalities which have policing, not large cities – the municipal councils "may establish a policing committee," whereas when it refers to commissions in regard to large cities, where there's a municipal police service, it's required to have a police commission. I found that a bit curious. That leaves a lot of responsibility to the local mayor or municipal manager to be responsible for the oversight of policing. So it's

optional whether there's a police committee or not. I wondered about that, whether that is really in the interests of the oversight of policing in Alberta.

Now, on police commissions I mentioned the requirement of the establishment of a police commission. I don't find any reference to funding in either the description of the police committee or the police commission, and that seems to be contrary to the MLA review of policing, of which the Solicitor General was a member. They suggested that police commissions in Alberta have their own budget and that the expenses for budgeting come from the city council and not out of the police service's budget.

Many commissions cannot afford more than the most basic staffing. So in order to achieve its mandate, the commission must be able to exercise its governance authority in a manner that's not hampered by a lack of appropriate resources. I think that's a very important point. It's nice to set up these police committees and police commissions, but if they don't have adequate funding through the municipality, then I think their effectiveness is undermined. There's a reference in each case to the police committee and also the police commission "for the payment of reasonable remuneration," but no mention of how the police committee or the police commission is actually funded.

Just in terms of the makeup I notice that under the police commission there's a reference to who is able to be a member of a police commission. In respect to whether a member of the city council or an employee of the municipality should be on the commission, the bill says that one of them may be a member of the council. There's no requirement that they should be a member of the council. In terms of the recent experience with the Overtime investigation and the Police Commission in Edmonton, I think it's really necessary that a member of the city council or even two members of the city council be members of the police commission as it is the case with the Edmonton Police Commission. Leaving it open I think is not good enough. It should be a requirement.

In fact, that was the recommendation of the MLA committee that reviewed policing. Number 26 of their recommendations is that "the Police Act require that at least one council member be appointed to the police commission, with an option of a second council member where the commission has five or more members." So I think that the bill is weak on this point.

Now, I would like to take a lot of time to go into the whole issue of public complaints and the process of handling public complaints of policing and so on, but I want to go back to the beginning and try out my first amendment if I could, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, we need to have the amendment circulated.

Dr. B. Miller: Yes. I have it here.

The Deputy Chair: Do you have it with you?

Dr. B. Miller: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Just wait for a few moments while they circulate the amendment.

Hon. members, the amendment being circulated will be referred to as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, you may proceed.

Dr. B. Miller: Yes. I would like to make a motion to amend the Police Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 36, that section 8(a) be struck out and the following substituted. This is basically a change of the name of the director of law enforcement. So instead of "Director of

Law Enforcement," it would read "Director of Policing Services."

Now, the term "law enforcement" is an American term, and in the U.S. the term includes, really, all levels of the criminal justice system, not just the police. So for our province to use this term to describe the title of a person who will oversee policing services and the commissions and committees – I think it's misleading and inaccurate to call this person the director of law enforcement.

11:20

The use of this term is diametrically opposed to the original and continuing mandate of consent that defines policing and is embodied in the second of Peel's principles. Now, in second reading I referred to the Peel's principles because the roots of policing are traced back to England and to the importance of public support for policing. The police actually represent the public. The second of Peel's principles is that

police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to the duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.

I think that it's important that policing needs to distance itself from terms such as "enforcement" and "force" and become a true service to the public, for the public, and with the public. That's the phrase: service to the public, for the public, and with the public. So I think it's important to change this name from "Law Enforcement" to "Policing Services."

It's not just a symbolic change. It may seem like it's a symbolic change, but actually the name is very important. Often when a title is used over and over again, it communicates something that's really important. This individual is going to train people on police committees and police commissions to carry out and to enable the province to experience the very best kind of policing. That's what it's about.

So, Mr. Chair, I would recommend that we support this amendment, and I'd like to hear what others think.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Briefly, in response to some of the issues raised with regard to policing committees and police commissions, the issue there is the fact that there is a difference between two different acts. One is, of course, the federal government act with regard to the RCMP, and one is the Police Act, which is obviously responsible for municipal policing in Alberta. The difference, therefore, has to be a difference with regard to civilian oversight, but the issues behind it are the same in the fact that those committees are responsible for really overseeing the policing that's provided in their communities and ensuring, whether it's an RCMP detachment or it's a chief of police, that the community has the ability through a police commission to discuss the issues with the detachment commander or the chief to ensure that their voice is represented in the community.

The issue with regard to budgets for commissions. Those were issues that were discussed both through consultation and additional consultation this fall. Some of those issues were brought up, and it was determined that instead of having their own budget or requesting their own budget, the budget that they do have remain within the overall policing budget. So, for example, in Edmonton the budget that the Edmonton Police Commission has is actually in the overall police budget, and a portion of that budget, or a percentage of the Edmonton Police Service's budget, is provided to the Edmonton Police Commission for expenses that they may incur.

When we talk about members of council being on the police commission, it has been with some history now that two members of council may be members on the Police Commission. One of those members could be the mayor if they so wish. So those opportunities are still there for them. If the mayor wishes to be on the Police Commission, he's more than happy to if he so chooses.

The position that there be provincial government appointees to police commissions was also brought up during consultation, but obviously we hesitated with that, in fact, because we felt that this being a municipal responsibility, obviously the majority of the police service's budget is paid by municipalities, and therefore it wouldn't be the province's position to have a provincially appointed member on a local or municipal police commission.

With regard to the amendment, Mr. Chairman, a few issues were raised with regard to the name "Law Enforcement" and substituting "Policing Services." The name "Law Enforcement" encompasses not just policing in the province, so I have to disagree with the hon. member's notice of amendment in the fact that the community of law enforcement not only includes police officers, but it also includes special constables. We have 3,000 special constables in this province, and there is some relationship between the director of law enforcement and some of those officers.

It also includes his responsibility to Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta, which is an intelligence component, not strictly law enforcement but intelligence-based, as well as IROC, the integrated response to organized crime. It also has a responsibility for police commission training. So, again, it's not just a policing role; it's a role to ensure that there are standards and that there's training available. Standards with regard to policing, but also standards with regard to training police commission members regarding the governance role that they have as members of a civilian oversight body.

The other issue is, as I mentioned, that the director of law enforcement does have some say with regard to special constables' duties in the province. As we have the special constables review going on right now, that may change as the review and report will be brought to government later in the year.

The issue that also arises is: would this mean that there would be a required name change to the Law Enforcement Review Board, which, of course, is the appeal mechanism and appeal body for citizens in their complaints against police officers? As well, they have a component with the Law Enforcement Review Board to listen to appeals from special constables. So there I have to disagree with the hon. member's amendment and stress that the director of law enforcement, although there is history to it, does provide all-encompassing factors with regard to its name. It's not just police services. It's beyond policing as well.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I believe the intention of substituting "policing services" for "law enforcement" is partly to provide the police with not just the sort of force attitude but to see police individuals as serving the public. That's why "service" is there. I think it's an American concept, but the idea of to serve and protect is out there. In terms of the RCMP motto, *Maintiens le droit*, it just means to maintain the right.

To me, the whole point of this is to provide the police with sort of a friendlier, serving role as opposed to strictly enforcement. The whole idea to me is just to make it more publicly acceptable and put the police in a similar service role as teachers and the words public servants and civil service. The police have a very special role, but the role is to serve the public, and that's their primary purpose. Changing the names of the various committees to police services act

or whatever: I think the point is to make a friendly suggestion that the police offer a variety of services and support for the public, not strictly law enforcement. They provide a whole variety of other services that the public benefits from.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

Dr. B. Miller: Can I speak again?

The Deputy Chair: Yes, you can.

11:30

Dr. B. Miller: I just wanted to conclude the discussion and debate just by pointing out the fact that if you look at the job description of this director of law enforcement, there really isn't any reference to enforcing anything. His job is to develop and promote crime prevention – and you've added the words "restorative justice" – and then develop and promote "programs to enhance professional practices, standards and training for police services." So it makes sense to be consistent with the job description and call him director of policing services. That's my final argument.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In light of the hour I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that we rise and report Bill 22 and report progress on Bill 36.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 22. The committee also reports progress on the following bill: Bill 36. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:32 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, May 5, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/05

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly and Commodore Doug Learoyd, Squadron Leader Mr. Justice Sam Lieberman, and Captain Stu Lindop, entered the Chamber and took his place in the chair]

[Commodore Learoyd, Squadron Leader Mr. Justice Lieberman, and Captain Lindop took their places at the bar]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. On this day we give thanks for those who on land, at sea, or in the air served sovereign, country, province, and the cause of freedom 60 and more years ago. We ask for blessings on all here present. Especially we remember our war dead: those for whom there is no known grave, those who lie in fields world-wide, and those whose bodies were committed to oceans deep. We give praise and glory to all who served and for all that they did both in our name and for generations yet unborn. For service and sacrifice, we are eternally grateful. We will never forget. For those who served and did not return, would you please remember them in a minute of silence. Amen.

Please be seated.

60th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day Address to the Assembly on Behalf of Armed Forces

The Speaker: Hon. members, 60 years ago yesterday at 11 p.m. a signal from Canadian Army main headquarters in Europe was dispatched. It read: "All operations cancelled forthwith. Cease fire 0800, 5 May 1945. All units stand fast until further orders."

After five long and bloody years the war in Europe was effectively over. The peace was signed three days later, and victory in Europe was officially declared. Unfortunately, the conflict in the Far East was to continue until August 1945.

In the members' and the public galleries today is a representative group of Alberta veterans of the Second World War. The flags above the Speaker's dias – the Red Ensign, the Royal Canadian naval ensign, and the ensign of the Royal Canadian Air Force – are those under which they served.

In the Speaker's gallery are Honorary Colonel Stanley A. Milner of the South Alberta Light Horse Regiment; Honorary Colonel Sandy Mactaggart, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment; Mr. Robert Whitley, president, 700 (Edmonton) Wing of the Air Force Association of Canada; Mrs. Lenore Schwabe, vice-president, Alberta-Northwest Territories Command of the Royal Canadian Legion; Mr. Darryl MacLeod, president, Naval Officers Association; Honorary Colonel Bart West, 408 Helicopter Squadron; Reverend Canon Tom McKnight, past president of the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans Association. May I ask all of these great Canadians to rise. [standing ovation] Thank you. You may be seated.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, at the Bar in the Chamber are three very distinguished Albertans and Canadians. Each represents their former service. I'll ask them to rise. At my left is Commodore Doug Learoyd of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve, who saw service in His Majesty's Canadian ship *Poundmaker* on convoy duties in the North Atlantic in 1944 and 1945. In the centre is Captain Stu Lindop, South Alberta Regiment, Canadian Army, who was wounded by a sniper on October 12, 1944, at Bergen op Zoom in the Netherlands. On my right is Squadron

Leader the Honourable Mr. Justice Sam Lieberman, who at age 18, in 1940, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. He gained his wings in 1941. Subsequently he completed two operational tours, one in England and Gibraltar and the other in Aden in the Middle East with Number 8 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

In inviting these three distinguished gentlemen onto the floor of this Assembly, this House confers its heartfelt gratitude, admiration, and its deepest respect to all who served.

It is the pleasure of this Assembly to now invite Squadron Leader Lieberman, on behalf of all this province's veterans of the Second World War, to give his remarks. Justice Lieberman.

Mr. Justice Lieberman: Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta, Commodore Learoyd, Captain Lindop, fellow veterans. Thank you for granting me the privilege of addressing you on the occasion of your commemoration of the 60th anniversary of VE Day. It is indeed fitting that the year 2005, a year that has been designated and declared as the Year of the Veteran, be recognized in this manner.

I come before you as a proud veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force who today is beset with the mixed emotions of pride, humility, and sorrow combined with a sense of satisfaction in our hard-won victory: pride in having been given the privilege of addressing you on the eve of the 60th anniversary of VE Day on behalf of all those courageous Canadians who voluntarily and unselfishly volunteered to serve in the Allied Forces in World War II, humility in the knowledge of my minuscule contribution to that great victory, and sorrow that so many paid the ultimate sacrifice in achieving that victory.

1:40

Great Britain's declaration of war on September 3, 1939, brought into sharp focus the threat to our way of life posed by the oppressive and tyrannical policies of the fascist European powers. Our freedom-loving nation recognized that threat and, although not obligated by Commonwealth membership to do so, independently declared war on Nazi Germany on September 10, 1939.

We were then a nation of only 11 million, perhaps 12 million people, but in the ensuing five years over 1 million of our citizens, including 45,000 women and 3,000 members of our aboriginal people, volunteered to serve in our armed forces. Tragically, 45,000 of those volunteers were killed and 55,000 were maimed or seriously injured.

Although the majority of the volunteers served in the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Army, or the Royal Canadian Air Force, the navies, armies, and air forces of our allies were replete with members of the Canadian armed services. Our citizen volunteers served in all theatres of the European and Pacific war and following VE Day continued to serve in the Pacific theatre, where victory was achieved on August 14, 1945, VJ Day. I must also mention the Merchant Marine, that often ignored but highly important arm of the Allied Forces in which many Canadians gallantly served.

Those of our citizens who were not in the armed services kept the engines of industry producing those materials necessary to support our war effort. In the broad sense of the term they, too, are veterans and deserving of our thanks.

Mr. Speaker, in my opening remarks I referred to the emotion of sorrow. I shall always have a deep sense of sorrow and regret that so many lives were lost or maimed in achieving victory. I leave you with this sobering thought. It is the Allied victory in World War II, to which our veterans contributed so much, that has made it possible for us to live in freedom under the rule of law in a country governed

by the principles of democracy. Your assembly here today in this magnificent Chamber is proof that our veterans' sacrifices were not in vain. It is this fact that gives me satisfaction in so costly a victory.

Please join with me in paying tribute to all veterans who through the years have served our nation in two world wars, in Korea, and in peacekeeping missions throughout the world. How sad it is that so many of them did not live to see this day. [applause]

The Speaker: Squadron Leader Lieberman, thank you very much. Please know that on behalf of all of the men and women of this Assembly and all of the men and women of this province, we are indeed truly eternally grateful for you and your comrades for what you did for us.

Mr. Hancock: Victory in Europe. What joy those cries must have raised for the men and women at arms, for the people of Holland and the rest of Europe, and for the families at home: the mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, those waiting and hoping for the safe return of loved ones.

Victory in Europe. I don't believe any of us on the floor as members were there, but we represent over 3 million Albertans who owe their freedom and liberty to those who were. Each and every one of us has our own family chronicle, our own connection, and each and every one of us was affected, touched in some way by the long march to that day. Victory in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the hon. the Premier, the government, and all members to commemorate one of the most glorious and most solemn events in Canadian history. On Sunday people around the world will join together to remember and celebrate victory in Europe. Victory in Europe came on May 8, 1945, when Allied forces, many of them from Alberta, liberated the Netherlands and helped bring the horrors of the Second World War to an end. It is particularly fitting that we stand today on this day of Yom ha-Shoah to celebrate the defeat of tyranny and genocide. On that day 60 years ago the people of Europe shed tears of joy, hope, and relief as these soldiers did their grim work. They thank these soldiers for their bravery and their sacrifices on their behalf.

Today, six decades later, all of humanity thanks those soldiers, those armed forces, once again. We thank them for their dedication to a cause that stirs us today as much as it stirred them 60 years ago, we thank the spirits of the soldiers who died on that day and on all the other horrible days that the war raged throughout Europe, and we remember the many veterans who returned home from the war but have since passed on.

My father, Richard Hancock, just newly married, left our home in Fort Vermilion in northern Alberta and volunteered for service. He went on to become a navigator in the Canadian armed forces as well as being an instructor before being posted to England. As an instructor he never was required to fly into battle over Europe, but like so many Albertans he stepped forward to answer the call of duty and was one of the truly fortunate who were able to return home, unlike so many young men, and then begin to build a family and a life.

Victory in Europe Day marks the end of a conflict the size and violence of which has no match in history. In World War II approximately 78,000 Albertans served the Allied cause. Of those, over 3,300 did not return from the battlefield. All of these brave soldiers, along with many, many others from Canada, risked everything for the most noble of causes: the right of people to live in peace, dignity, and freedom. I was reminded by Captain Stu Lindop just before coming in that the South Alberta Regiment won the only Victoria Cross won by any of the Canadian armed regi-

ments during the Second World War. Thankfully, there are over 22,500 World War II veterans from Alberta who are still with us. We are truly honoured by those of you who could join us as guests today.

In Canada 2005 is being marked as the Year of the Veteran. It is a year during which Canadians remember the contributions of the country's veterans and extend a hand of friendship and gratitude to veterans in their communities. One opportunity to learn more about the contributions of Albertans is the upcoming Alberta Centennial Tattoo. That tattoo is being held at Rexall Place from July 21 to 24. Members of the Legislature and veterans invited by members will be attending on the afternoon of the 24th. It's a unique production that tells the stories of Alberta's soldiers and veterans as well as police officers. That tattoo, Mr. Speaker, will be a stunning tribute to those who have protected Albertans over the last 100 years and is a most appropriate event in the Year of the Veteran and the 60th anniversary of VE Day.

In Alberta we all owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to our province's veterans. Though 60 years have passed since the end of the Second World War, the drama, the horror, the sacrifice of that global conflict continues to inspire generations of Albertans. In that war and on Victory in Europe Day in 1945 Albertan forces did us proud. They proved with their hearts that freedom is worth fighting for, and many of them proved with their lives that the fight can often only be won at great cost.

Today the fruits of those sacrifices continue to bless us. The freedom that we enjoy to assemble in this House and the freedom our families enjoy to pursue their dreams stem directly from what those soldiers did 60 years ago on the battlefields of Europe. We as members of this Assembly have the privilege to serve, a privilege we are reminded of each day as we enter the rotunda with its memorials, because our fathers and mothers answered that call. To those soldiers, to those armed forces, and to their families we say thank you. Their courage reminds us all that we must never take our freedoms for granted. Those veterans certainly did not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

May I now call on the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition I am honoured to be part of this very special ceremony in the Assembly today to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. We are proud to remember those Canadians both past and present who were part of the long fight and struggle that finally resulted in the surrender and defeat of the Nazi military forces in Europe.

It was May 8, 1945, when Winston Churchill declared Victory in Europe Day, soon shortened to VE Day. Instrumental in accomplishing this victory was the liberation of the Netherlands, which was completed on May 5, 1945, exactly 60 years ago today, when German forces surrendered to the First Canadian Corps in Holland. More than 7,600 Canadians gave their lives for the liberation of the Netherlands, most of whom are buried in Canadian war cemeteries in Holland.

In 1939, when Canada joined the Allied Forces, our population was about 11 million people. By the end of the war 1.1 million Canadians, a full 10 per cent of our population at the time, enlisted to serve in World War II. Over 42,000 Canadians were killed in World War II, 55,000 were wounded, 9,000 suffered as prisoners of war in conditions that deteriorated as the war dragged on, and

countless thousands, tens of thousands of others, were emotionally and psychologically scarred for life.

Like many of us here, my parents threw themselves into the war effort. My father served in the RCAF, and my mother did civilian service, so I grew up hearing the stories about the war first-hand. For people of my generation, so many of us who grew up with a shadow of the war from our parents' generation, it is our responsibility to pass on these stories and memories. It's very important that subsequent generations know about and remember the sacrifices that were made by so many Canadian men and women during World War II.

So please join me in thanking Justice Sam Lieberman, representing the air force, Captain Stu Lindop, representing the army, and Commodore Douglas Learoyd, representing the navy, for being here today. Also, please join me in honouring all of the veterans here today to represent and commemorate the energy, effort, and sacrifices made by Canadians to achieve the end of the war.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

May I now call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great humility that I rise today on behalf of the New Democrat caucus to pay tribute to the men and women who contributed to the liberation of Europe from Nazi occupation 60 years ago. Canada was there to stand and fight in Europe right from the beginning. By the time peace was finally won, over 1 million Canadians had served in the armed forces or the merchant navy; 47,000 of these brave men and women gave their lives.

As Canadians we can be truly proud of those who put their lives on the line to defend their own country and to liberate others. The wartime efforts of such people, including the honoured guests that are here today, should act as a benchmark for the greatness we seek to achieve in our own lives. I'm constantly amazed at the accomplishments that can be achieved by people placed in extraordinary circumstances. These Canadian men and women who helped to liberate Europe volunteered to give up their regular lives to fight for freedom, for justice, for security, and ultimately for peace. Their efforts are etched as one of the most proud moments in Canadian history.

When the First World War ended, that war to end all wars, the world looked at the devastation that had been wrought and etched the solemn vow of "never again" on cenotaphs across the world. But a firestorm of hatred and greed rose again in Europe and in the Far East, and humanity was compelled to stand and fight again. It is the duty of all of us who live today to ensure that the world will not descend into the chaos and destruction of global conflict. If we could fight half as hard as those who liberated Holland but for peace, equality, and compassion for others, then we might do these veterans proud.

We honour the men and women who stepped forward to liberate Europe from those dark years of World War II. We celebrate their victories, mourn their losses, and express above all our thanks.

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

May I now call on the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, honoured guests, and visitors. It is a humbling honour to be present and to pay tribute to such a heroic group of individuals. With my heart full of gratitude to each of those who sacrificed so much and to those who have sacrificed their lives, we truly owe our remembrance of them. May

we make sure that we always do remember them and those who did give their lives for our freedom and that we may guard it with all our heart, might, mind, and body that we might pass it on to future generations. They gave their lives for us, and may we guard it and always remember them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: To all of our honourable guests today, our veterans, it's customary in this Assembly when we want to give recognition for the members to remain at their desks and to pound those desks. I will now invite my colleagues to do it one more time. [standing ovation]

I'd invite my colleagues in the Assembly to remain standing, and all of you, ladies and gentlemen, if we would all rise, now I'm going to invite a young lady who is one of our tour guides, Colleen Vogel, to lead us all together in the singing of our national anthem. Please join in in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

To our honoured guests, we thank you very, very much for participating with us today.

We are now going to begin our daily Routine, which will go until 5:30 this afternoon. That may be more punishment than any of you would want to endure, but please feel free to stay as long as you wish to see the fruits of your efforts some 60 years ago now translated into democracy in this Assembly.

Thank you very much.

head: 2:00

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you two very special guests in the members' gallery. Sam Farberman is a grade 3 student from Onoway. He is 8 years old, and he's a tremendous worker and a great student. His father, Frank Farberman, is a long-time, very close friend of mine who owns and operates Direct Work Wear, a business in my constituency. They are proud members of a great team. I would ask now if they would please rise in the members' gallery and receive the warm applause from all the members here. They're just behind the line up there. Welcome.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in addition to the honoured guests that we have here today we do have groups of students from Jean Vanier elementary school, Glenwood school, the Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council, Bow Valley College, and representatives from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. I'd ask them all to rise so that the hon. members can recognize them all.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely honoured to

rise today and introduce to you and through you three guests seated in the public gallery: Claudia Villeneuve, her son, Nicholas Villeneuve, and their friend Denise Iskiw.

The two ladies represent two great pregnancy and childbirth support organizations based in our capital city. The first one is the Edmonton VBAC, or Vaginal Birth after Caesarean Support Association, a chapter of the International Cesarean Awareness Network. This organization supports mothers who wish to avoid a Caesarean, mothers who are recovering from a Caesarean, and mothers who wish to now give vaginal birth after their initial Caesarean delivery or deliveries. The second organization is ASAC, the Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth. They support informed consent during birth: home birth, water birth, midwifery care, doula care, and breastfeeding. They're both volunteer-run organizations. They work very hard to increase awareness and to offer real choice for expectant mothers.

I want to thank them for helping organize the rally outside by the Legislature steps today, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to stand today and to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a very special lady in my life: my mother, Marlys Hinman. She has been a pillar of strength and determination for me throughout my life. She has taught me to always believe you can achieve your dreams, and the only way you fail is to give up. Her Canada centennial project, she always claimed, was MS, when she was diagnosed with it. There is nothing that would make her happier today than to be able to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly, but I'll ask her just to wave from her wheelchair in the gallery.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly three distinguished women who are part of the integration of midwifery services evaluation project. They are Susan Beischel, an assistant professor at Mount Royal College in Calgary; Beverley O'Brien, who is currently a professor of nursing at the University of Alberta; and Susan Sommerfeldt, who is a member of the sessional faculty at the University of Alberta. Their report provides extensive evidence for why midwifery services should be funded in this province. I believe my guests are seated in the public gallery. I would now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly four members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees political action committee: Ron Whan, AUPE vice-president; Bonnie Nahornick, committee member from Calgary; Don Westman, city councillor from Fort Saskatchewan; and Brad Smith, who's a member from Edmonton. Could they please all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to acknowledge four members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees.

The Speaker: I've already introduced them, hon. member. Sorry. I did a global introduction and included them all.

Proceed.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. With us today, hon. Speaker, are Carol Carbol of Edmonton, Jason Heistad, who is from Olds College and also an Innisfail town councillor; Cherelyn Stefaniszyn, who comes from Blackfalds and is also a town councillor; and David Climenhaga, who is the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees communications director, and he hails from St. Albert.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, right now, this government is sitting idly by as the Auditor General and the authority of this Legislature are being bullied by the Alberta Securities Commission. My first question is to the Acting Premier. Can this minister explain what actions the government will be taking to support the Auditor General's legislative authority to investigate fully the enforcement complaints threatening the confidence of Alberta's capital markets?

The Speaker: The hon. Acting Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General is an officer of the Legislature and operates under the legislative authority granted to him by the Legislature. The Securities Commission is granted authority under its act under the Legislature. The two have differences of viewpoint about the interrelationship between their two acts and their authorities and have applied to the courts to have that difference of viewpoint resolved. That's where people go when they have differences of viewpoint. That's where people go when they need interpretations of law.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the Acting Premier: given that the longer the delay in getting to the roots of the ASC allegations the more the confidence in the Alberta market suffers, what steps are being taken by this government to ensure that the process is not delayed by long court procedures and petty bickering with ASC commissioners?

The Speaker: The hon. Acting Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We anticipate that an interim chairman of the commission will be appointed as early as this afternoon or perhaps tomorrow morning. That interim chair will be fair, will be independent, will be someone who is new to the commission but strong, and will work out with the commissioners and the Auditor General the terms of audit if it's at all possible to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Again to the Acting Premier: given that the Finance minister seems to have no interest in getting to the bottom of this investigation, will this minister please inform us as to which minister we should be asking to take the lead on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. Acting Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance has been firm and strong on this issue from the very day that it's been brought up in this House. She's been keen to get to the bottom of the issue. She's asked the Auditor General to expedite the audit, and we're going to do everything possible to support the process, including the appointment of an interim chair of the commission to deal with the issues quickly and thoroughly.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has a lot to say about bullying in schools. Unfortunately, it has absolutely nothing to say about the bullying being done by the Alberta Securities Commission. First, they're accused of bullying their employees, and now they are bullying the Auditor General all the way to court. My questions are again to the Acting Premier. Given that the part-time commissioners and the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission are government appointed, why is the government allowing these individuals to bully them by taking an officer of the Legislature to court?

2:10

Mr. Hancock: A strange question coming from the very member who questioned the credibility of the officer of the Legislature only two weeks ago and failed to apologize for that, as he should have.

Mr. Speaker, there are two independent groups involved here. The Auditor General, who operates under the authority granted by the Legislature as an officer of the Legislature, and the Securities Commission, which operates under an act under authority granted by the Legislature.

There are issues with respect to the control of information and documentation. Those issues have to be resolved. It's appropriate to have those issues resolved. It would have been better if they were resolved by negotiation between the parties and understanding between the parties, but it's also appropriate, where there are disputes, where there are questions that need to be resolved, to go to the courts, another independent party, to determine what the right procedure is. That's not bullying. That's a process, and it's a process which can happen expeditiously and appropriately.

Dr. Taft: Again to the Acting Premier: given the bullying by the Alberta Securities Commission of the Auditor General, will this Conservative government now admit that the Mack report, which has outlined concerns of enforcement problems, may well in fact be true?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is engaged to do an audit and do an audit under the appropriate circumstances. Those circumstances, the scope of the audit, will be refined, and if there are concerns about how that's refined, the courts will assist with refining the scope of the audit under the law, determining the appropriate processes, and the new interim chair of the commission will ensure that an independent thorough review is done of what has happened there. It's well in hand, it's proceeding, and it will happen in the interests of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the executive director of the ASC oversees enforcement cases at the commission and has the authority to see which enforcement cases are pursued, why does this same person have the power to decide if the Auditor General can investigate enforcement cases?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the issues that are before the court are exactly that: what the authority of the Auditor General is with respect to the files and information, confidentiality, and other issues. It's appropriately before the court where there are issues of the determination of law, determination of scope of authority, and determination of scope of the audit.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Municipal Grants to Crowsnest Pass

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The municipality of Crowsnest Pass is being shortchanged by this government. This government made a commitment specifically to this region: if they amalgamated, any funding, whether that is for policing or infrastructure, would be delivered in the most cost-advantageous way to the municipality. Now this government is threatening to withhold funding unless a new agreement is signed. My first question is to the Solicitor General. Given that the minister stated in his letter to the mayor of Crowsnest Pass that no policing grant funding will be provided until a grant agreement has been signed, can the minister explain why he is taking this intimidating tactic instead of working with officials from Crowsnest Pass to honour a previous agreement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned yesterday to the hon. member, the Crowsnest Pass regulation deals only with the calculation of grants and is not applicable to the Police Act, which requires the province to pay for policing costs for certain municipalities. The letter that Crowsnest Pass got is exactly the same letter that the town of Ponoka, the town of Rocky Mountain House, the town of Peace River got. The exact same letter. The amounts are different in the fact that the municipal policing grants are based on a \$200,000 grant and \$8 per capita above 5,000 up to their population. This is an opportunity for the town of Crowsnest Pass to look at the responsibility they have regarding providing policing to their community because of the fact that their population is over 5,000.

Dr. B. Miller: To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: with respect to infrastructure grants, will the minister inform us if he will honour the agreement in place to provide infrastructure grants based upon the most cost-advantageous way to the region, or will he follow the Solicitor General's tactic and threaten to withhold funding unless a new agreement is signed?

Dr. Oberg: Yes.

Dr. B. Miller: Okay. I'll try somebody else. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given what has happened with the Solicitor General, will the minister inform the people of Crowsnest Pass and this House if the tactic of forcing a municipality to sign new grant agreements that are absolutely not in the best interest of the people

is the preferred method of negotiation with municipalities by this government?

The Speaker: Well, in about an hour from now we may get to the estimates of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Very briefly now.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I'll try and be brief. Without reiterating what the Solicitor General has already said, I want to explain to the member that the Municipal Government Act and the regulations refer to grants that are provided to municipalities and do not refer to the situation with respect to policing, which is a partnership between the Solicitor General and municipalities. So there are two separate identities.

Where the confusion is coming in is that policing used to be part of unconditional grants that were provided to municipalities that may or may not have been used for policing. A couple of years ago some of the funds were transferred from Municipal Affairs to the Solicitor General, which were then topped up by the Solicitor General to provide conditional grants in the form of offsetting costs for policing, and that's the difference, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker.

Electricity Exports

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, this government is quietly moving ahead with power exports to the American market even though it appears to have no plan to protect residential, farm, and small business consumers back here at home. Electricity exports threaten to deplete our supply of natural gas, contribute to more coal-generated plants, and could have serious implications under the North American free trade agreement for our own energy reserves. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that there are so many outstanding questions on electricity exports, why is the project going forward without public consultation, which the Alberta Advisory Council on Electricity recommended to do a year and a half ago?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first state that the project at this stage is nowhere near the stage of going forward. There are lots of discussions about that. It's a proposal by a company. They've got a lot of work to do before it ever gets to the stage of coming forward for regulatory approvals. Those are just the what-ifs. The people continue to plan and assess as to projects that truly could benefit consumers here in Alberta also. I do want to state, though, that the export policy does say and clearly has been that Albertans won't pay for export lines in that capacity, so they won't be harmed in any way. It truly would just add another opportunity, potentially, to import power as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. To the same minister: given that Canada is bound by NAFTA to guarantee the Americans an ongoing supply of energy regardless of the state of our own surplus or reserves, how will the minister guarantee that Alberta will have enough surplus to keep prices at home down first and to make sure that we meet our own needs first?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, those assertions about NAFTA are completely wrong. We're under no obligation. We're under no obligation to export when you don't have the capacity to export. Those are things that, if you are offering and want to trade goods, would be offered on the same basis that we would to Albertans. But, clearly, all jurisdictions, all countries see to the needs of their own citizens, and in this case Albertans would also be protected.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. To the same minister: will the minister, then, commit to Albertans here and now that we will have a stable and affordable supply of power for our own needs and that he will not sell it all away to the Americans, like they did with the gas?

Mr. Melchin: Thanks for outlining our energy policy, our electricity policy. That's exactly what we are doing. In that sense we are very fortunate, and I'm glad that he raised how well consumers are actually benefiting from the deregulation. We actually have prices today for our consumers that are below what you would have on a regulated model in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

2:20 Postsecondary Education Federal Funding

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a political move against a potential defeat, the minority federal Liberal government in Ottawa made a deal with the NDP to increase the spending of our tax dollars in different areas. For postsecondary education their political promise is to increase federal spending of our tax dollars by \$1.5 billion, but there are conflicting reports about where the money will go and whether there are strings attached to it. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Can the hon. minister tell the House how much of this federal taxpayers' money for postsecondary education is expected to trickle back to Alberta?

Speaker's Ruling Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, to my knowledge and my understanding these are proposals before the Canadian House of Commons that have not been approved or passed yet. I have no idea how an hon. minister in Alberta could possibly speculate about something that hasn't happened yet. But if the minister wants to take a shot.

Postsecondary Education Federal Funding (continued)

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reports that we have indicate that the proposal encompasses about \$1.5 billion. As you quite accurately indicate, we have no idea whether it'll be passed or whether the federal government will be defeated before it even gets to that, so we can't plan in any way, shape, or form to spend any of that money. We don't know what strings might be attached, but if we were to get the portion that we would normally be allocated of that sort of thing, we'd get about \$150 million.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this money could be back in Alberta, could the minister tell us if Alberta needs to commit to using it to reduce the tuition for our students?

The Speaker: Well, once again, with due respect, the question period is not to deal with questions about speculation.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what I can advise the House is that there have been some discussions between officials to try and anticipate how this might trickle forward because it's necessary to be prepared. While we wouldn't want to speculate on whether or not

the budget is passed, we do have to be prepared in the event that the resources come forward. There are reports that it will be tied to tuition. However, there are also conflicting ideas as to how the federal government might implement it, through the tax system or otherwise.

Mr. Cao: My question to the same minister: regarding the promise to pay for the tuition increase in Alberta this coming September, could the minister commit to using this money to help in that?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it should be very clear in this House that we have budgeted – in fact, Committee of Supply has voted on it – \$43 million to pay for the promise that we made to pay the increased cost in tuition at public institutions for students in the province of Alberta. Any federal monies would be used for other purposes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Electricity Consultant

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about this government's own deals on electricity deregulation. We all know that electricity deregulation has been a rip-off and has cost Alberta consumers billions of dollars. What many Alberta consumers don't know is that the man now responsible for seeing through this policy nightmare is being paid over a million taxpayer dollars for only three years' work. This man, Mr. Kellan Fluckiger, is a former energy adviser to the defeated Governor of California, Gray Davis. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that the Ministry of Energy has over 1,400 public service employees, why is this government giving away at least \$1.1 million to a private consultant, Mr. Kellan Fluckiger, whose only job is to further entrench the \$8 billion electricity deregulation disaster?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it is very true that we do employ the individual that he said under a contract basis, and the terms are approximately correct as to what he said. We do make sure that we want to have the best expertise that we can in an industry that requires such expertise. He has been brought under a three-year contract. We are very fortunate. There are very few people with the expertise in the kinds of things that we're dealing with, in the very integrated deregulation of the market, and he has offered tremendous value for this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Minister of Energy again. It's certain that there are no PC members with expertise in electricity deregulation, or consumers wouldn't be faced with these enormous bills. How many other employees of Alberta Energy are private consultants, which cost taxpayers more than three times as much as a well-paid public service employee?

The Speaker: I figure there are a couple of questions there. Take your choice.

Mr. Melchin: Take my choice? Well, maybe I'll emphasize the great things that have happened from deregulation that have saved Albertans millions if not potentially what could add up into billions of dollars all the time. We now get power, as a result, from a tremendous amount of new supply that's been brought on, many of

them green related, very clean coal technology. Some of the best technologies have come forward, that have opened up the field to bring on generation. It's also opened up that Albertans are getting today prices below the replacement cost, really, of that power that's being brought on. As a result of the good things of competition, Albertans benefit.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Energy: why does the government of Alberta have a contractor represent the province's interests at national and international meetings on electricity deregulation? Why not have a member of the province's fine civil service do that? Why hire out when you have good help at home?

Mr. Melchin: The individual referenced, again, is under contract to actually work with the government on government policy. He does represent the government in implementing those policies that are determined by this body right here in the Chamber.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Graduated Drivers' Licences

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I received an inquiry from a constituent regarding the implementation and success of the graduated licensing system. The graduated licensing system was created to help new drivers develop their driving skills over a period of time while they are under regulations that endeavour to protect them. This constituent felt that there is very little enforcement of the licence rules for new drivers and that some new drivers, hearing and seeing little about enforcement of the rules, are not motivated to follow them. My question is to the Solicitor General. Are there random checks to ensure that graduated licensing is being observed by new drivers, especially in rural areas?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The graduated driver's licence came into this Assembly in the year 2001. In fact, I brought that legislation through, the graduated driver's licence program. The idea behind the legislation was, in fact, to help cut down on traffic collisions and deaths among Albertans but mainly among younger Albertans because of the issues related to the driver training.

Mr. Speaker, the enforcement programs that go on within the law enforcement community throughout Alberta are there. They don't go specifically out after individuals regarding their drivers' licences, but in any normal procedure in stopping a vehicle regarding an infraction, they do check those drivers' licences. Again, the provisions are within the act to in fact penalize them if they don't respond to the proper legislation.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: will the minister consider implementing random roadside checks such as checkstop?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, roadside checkstops are part of the law enforcement community's STEP program, the selective traffic enforcement program, which they change on a monthly basis

throughout the province. That could be one of the areas that our law enforcement agencies look at in the future.

As well, with any checkstop program, whether it's for drunken driving, whether it's for equipment violations, whether it's for overloads on trucks, or any other issues . . .

An Hon. Member: Purple gas.

Mr. Cernaiko: . . . purple gas, as my colleague mentioned, obviously a driver's licence is going to be one of the pieces of identification that's going to be required at that check. The police officer will check at the time to determine whether the individual does have a proper driver's licence.

Mrs. Jablonski: My final question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. What are the penalties for a new driver that is found to be driving outside the designated time frames, and how are these penalties enforced?

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, now is about the seventh time I've said that the question period is not the time for interpretation of statutes. Respond to the latter part of the question.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it's extremely important to note that the fine is actually \$100 with two demerits. The key to this, though, that people have to remember is that there's a diminished threshold for demerits with graduated drivers' licences. If you receive eight demerits, your licence is actually gone, so that has severe repercussions when it comes to insurance as well as future licences down the road. We attempt to monitor this as closely as we can, and I believe that the Solicitor General has answered very explicitly the things that are being done. It's an excellent program, Mr. Speaker, and working very well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

2:30 Health Care Privatization

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the first ministers' meeting this past fall Premiers agreed upon an action plan for public health care that included as one of the guiding principles access to medically necessary health services based on need, not ability to pay. Along with \$41 billion in provincial health funding the federal health minister extended an invitation to this government to discuss contentious issues around the Canada Health Act but has been rebuffed. Albertans are more than tired of this self-serving and dysfunctional relationship between provincial and federal governments. To the Acting Premier: given that the violation of the Canada Health Act may have serious repercussions for Albertans, why did the government refuse a meeting with the federal Health minister to discuss the consequences of privatization?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I would take under advisement the question for the minister of health as to what circumstances took place with respect to such a meeting, but I guess it's fair to also ask why the federal minister wouldn't have attended to listen to the international experts at the symposium which was recently held to find out what the best practices around the world might be.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Acting Premier:

how do private MRI clinics meet the equal access criterion of the Canada Health Act?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what kind of interpretation I'm being asked for there, but it's very evident that in this province we have expanded the number of MRIs available through the public system to the point where it's the highest number of scans that happen across this country on a per capita basis and that public access to MRIs is better in this province than anywhere probably in North America, but certainly in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal transfer payments account for about 16 per cent of Alberta's health revenue, is this government willing to risk \$5 billion in federal transfers in order to promote the third way?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, one thing that should be very clear is that we need to have a thorough, unemotional discussion based on facts about the best practices around the world. That's what the minister of health has been conducting in an international symposium this past week, bringing in experts, bringing in people to talk knowledgeably about health care delivery so that Albertans can have access to the best practices in the world delivered in the best way.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Truck Driver Certification

Mr. McFarland: Thank you. On behalf of all the constituents in the Little Bow riding I extend a simple and sincere thank you and appreciation to all our Canadian veterans and their families on this special day and to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing this special ceremony to take place in this Assembly.

My question today is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. The government has proposed a new college-based truck drivers' certification program for Alberta truck drivers. My question to you, Minister, is this: does this program apply to current class 1 licence holders, or is it specifically for new drivers?

Dr. Oberg: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's for neither. First of all, if you have a class 1 licence, you certainly are under no obligation at all to take this particular course. Secondly, you still can go out and take a class 1 course if you like.

What we're proposing in this potential course that could be offered in a pilot project at Red Deer College is a way to get enhanced training. It could be things like bills of lading. It could be how to secure your loads. It will be all of the above. What we hope to do is to be able to put out a truck driver that is a true professional that will very easily and very quickly become employed by the trucking industry.

There is one other detail that we're looking at. There's certainly an element of possibility, I guess is the best way I could describe it, and that is that we would like to see a decrease in insurance rates for those kids from 19 to 25. As you know, Mr. Speaker, for a 19 to 25 year old it is almost impossible for them to become a commercial driver due to the high insurance rates. We're presently looking at working with IBC, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, to ensure that these rates come down for these kids.

The short answer to the question is: if you have a class 1, you can continue on and be a commercial driver; you do not need this course to become a commercial driver.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the large carriers probably support this move. I am wondering, through the minister, if this has an adverse effect on the cost for independent and smaller trucking operations in Alberta?

Dr. Oberg: No, it doesn't, Mr. Speaker. Again, what we're hoping to put out is a qualified driver, and that qualified driver hopefully will get a preferential treatment from the employers and, indeed, will actually make the employers money because he will be a more skilled driver when it comes to time of employment. So, again, the answer is no. This is purely a voluntary program and hopefully will lead to a better level of education and expertise in Alberta's commercial drivers.

Mr. McFarland: Last question, Mr. Speaker. If this came about because of the problems associated with Delta Driving School, why wouldn't you have just pulled their licensing authority rather than perhaps imposing a program on all drivers?

Dr. Oberg: Again, Mr. Speaker, we're not imposing this on all drivers. The key thing to note in this is that certainly the Delta Driving School incident was a very unfortunate incident, and we have taken considerable action on that.

This proposal has actually been under way since 2001, so it's been in the works for four years. It's been championed by the driving industry, by the employers, and it's something that we're moving forward on a pilot basis. I hope, and I think there's good evidence to show that it will put out a better class of drivers. It'll put out a class of drivers that the employers are looking for when it comes to driving these huge trucks, that are now going down the road at in excess of a hundred kilometres per hour. Very important program, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Calgary Hospitals

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we have discussed here in question period before, the city of Calgary faces a shortage of acute-care hospital beds that even under the best-case scenario will not be eliminated until 2010. Building the new southeast hospital alone will not solve the bed shortage. Calgary also needs significant expansions or modernizations at its existing hospitals and a new, larger, urgent-care centre in the city core. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: beyond the government's commitment to fully fund construction of the new southeast hospital, what is the minister doing to address the Calgary health region's other capital needs this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Included in this last budget, as the hon. member was alluding to, there's very close to \$500 million for a new hospital in southeast Calgary. This is a huge amount of money. That adds on top of approximately \$350 million for the new children's hospital, which is about to open. Those two particular institutions are going to vastly increase the number of beds in hospitals.

The hon. member is right. There still is a potential bed shortage. I think that the health authority has to come up with different ways

to look at it. We're working extremely closely with the health authority at this point in time. Does that mean that they're automatically going to get another \$500 million tomorrow because they've asked for it? The answer is no.

Mr. Taylor: To the same minister: could the minister offer a little further clarity, please, on whether there is additional funding to allow the expansion of the Rockyview and Lougheed hospitals and redevelopment of part of the Foothills to go forward to completion, or is this last year's dollars to do the preliminary work?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, this is last year's dollars that they're looking at doing the preliminary work with. They're scouting out exactly what is needed. There has been no official commitment on the \$500 million project that has been proposed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One more question for the minister. Is there any money in the budget this year for the Sheldon M. Chumir health centre in Calgary's central core?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the budget was tabled roughly two and a half or three weeks ago, and all of the projects that were in the budget are going to be funded. Off the top of my head, through to the hon. member, I do believe that there was, but I certainly will take a look closely at my budget and get back to you with exactly whether or not the Sheldon Chumir was funded with this particular budget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

2:40

National Child Care Initiative

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canadians are about to get a meaningful commitment to high-quality early child care and development services after 13 years of broken federal Liberal promises. It obviously takes NDP MPs to keep the Liberals honest. Provincial and federal governments have already agreed that these services will be based on four principles of quality, universality, accessibility, and child development, known as QUAD. Albertan families, however, are waiting with concern to see whether this government is willing to sign an agreement with the federal government so that Alberta's children can enjoy these high-quality services. My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Given that Saskatchewan and Manitoba have already signed child care deals that put the QUAD principles of quality, universality, accessibility, and child development at the centre of their child care policies, why hasn't Alberta made a similar commitment to families here in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have, actually. We do have a verbal agreement with Minister Dryden that we reached several weeks ago. I'd like to reiterate that it's a verbal agreement. I have written Minister Dryden on two separate occasions, asking him for a written confirmation on our verbal agreement. He still has not replied. In fact, the last letter I got from one of his bureaucrats really, actually, didn't give us an answer at all. I had a good conversation again with Mr. Dryden last Thursday, I believe, asking him one more time if he would please respond in

writing to our verbal agreement, and we would be prepared to sign the bilateral agreement.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister share with this House what conditions she has put on signing on to this agreement that are keeping the federal minister from replying to her letter? Albertans are wanting to know this.

Mrs. Forsyth: That's a good question because there have been no restrictions on the letter to Minister Dryden whatsoever. We had a verbal agreement. Mr. Dryden agreed with what Alberta wanted, and Albertans have clearly said that they want choice in how they raise their children.

I will tell the hon. member that when I brought up to Minister Dryden in the federal/provincial/territorial meeting in February that Albertans would like to see a child tax credit for stay-at-home parents, he said: absolutely not; it's not part of the discussion. All of the issues that we wanted addressed by the minister he agreed to a few weeks ago by verbal confirmation. We're just waiting for a written confirmation, and we'd be pleased, then, to take it to my cabinet to sign on to the bilateral agreement.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary to the same minister: given that it's well within this province's fiscal capacity to both invest in nonprofit child care services with money coming from the national child care plan and provide more support for families who choose to have one caregiver stay at home, like tax incentives, eliminating health care premiums, and the like, will the minister stop dithering and make sure that we get the agreement as soon as possible?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear: this minister isn't dithering. The minister that is dithering is the federal minister. If it's so important for him to have a national child care program across this country, then maybe I can encourage the member of the opposition and members of the Liberal Party to pick up the phone, call the federal minister, and say: please, will you respond to the Minister of Children's Services in this province and commit to their written confirmation?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

United States Energy Legislation

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy recently returned from Washington, DC, after attending sessions where he spoke to two key organizations and met with key members of Congress and senior officials of the U.S. government. My questions are to the Minister of Energy. Given that the minister's trip took place during a time when there is renewed debate on the U.S. energy bill, can the minister please tell this Assembly: in what way can Alberta influence these discussions?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, our good friends and neighbours to the south, the United States, have been in discussions for some years, actually, on an energy bill that would really look at their energy security. Alberta figures prominently in that role, given that we are the largest source of both oil and gas to the United States. Some of

the things that have been very important is that they have listened to Alberta and, I would say, other delegations as well. When the gas from the north was coming and those pipelines were proposed from Alaska, there was at one stage a proposal to put a floor price in. It would have been very punitive to Alberta to have had a different marketplace in Alaska, gas coming, which would tie into the Alberta hub, versus the rest of the gas that flows down to those same marketplaces. So those are things that have been very helpful to see from our own involvement, and that's part of why we'll need to continue to be there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Thank you. Again to the Minister of Energy: could the minister please tell the House how Alberta will benefit from these discussions?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it's very important with our largest exports going to the United States, with our industries very much intertwined, many of the companies that are investing billions of dollars in the expansion of our projects here coming from the United States, that we do look towards how we ensure that the policies on both sides of the border help facilitate those things that would be also in the best interest of Alberta. Rather than just being hewers of wood – shipping raw bitumen south, for example – we want to see if we have the opportunity in the formation of that policy to do the upgrading here. We would also look at the refining capabilities of sending finished products to the United States versus just the synthetic crudes.

Another level that's showing great interest is in the oil shales in the United States, a very substantial size of resource in the western states. They're looking toward some of the technology and working with us on sharing technology that we use in the oil sands in Alberta and how that could also benefit them in their research in the south and how that could benefit us both in developing the oils.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

School Construction Estimates

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for allowing me to introduce the guests today.

This government's funding program for new schools is as flawed as its space utilization formula, which forces the school boards to prematurely close inner-city schools before receiving funding for new suburban school construction. My first question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation comes from urban school board trustees. Why is this ministry continuing to use 2001 construction costs when providing grants for 2005 school building projects?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The estimates on the 2001 costs are a constant that we use. When the tenders come in, we then pick up the extra costs on the tenders.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. To the same minister: when will this government address its multimillion renovation downloaded deficits forced on school boards throughout this province?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing about that question is that our budget was just debated last week. Included in my budget this year are 109 school projects around the province, including 45 new schools. The interesting point about that is that the number of students in the schools in Alberta is actually on a decline. So we have built 45 new schools for fewer students than we had the year before.

Mr. Speaker, I think this government is doing a good job. Can we do better? Yeah, we can. There are some areas where we have seen growth in the school numbers, we have seen an expansion, and the schools are not there because they may be two or three miles away. We are looking at addressing the situation when it comes to the location of the schools, but we must remember that the number of students in Alberta is going down, and we're building 45 new schools, 109 new schools projects.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: given that the minister has publicly admitted that his new space utilization formula will do nothing to prevent further urban school closures, what hope can he provide for parents that they'll be able to keep their children's community schools open?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the thing about closing schools or keeping schools open is that it is a school board decision, and I believe that probably the biggest controversy has been around Edmonton at this particular time. The Edmonton public school board has made some decisions based on learning opportunities. They've looked at putting schools together. To keep schools open when there's a 10 or 15 or 20 per cent occupancy, pay the lights, pay the power, quite simply is a waste of taxpayers' dollars. I think the Edmonton public school board has been a good citizen when it comes to saving taxpayers' dollars.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Private Security Legislation Review

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act currently involves the regulation of private investigators and security guards and has not been amended since 1965, when the legislation was initially developed. Most security guards were simply watchmen, and today they provide a wide variety of services under a broad range of levels in training and licensing. Today the Solicitor General announced a review of this legislation. My questions are to the Solicitor General. What do you hope to accomplish by initiating a review of the private investigators and security guards legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The objective of this review was to ensure that the legislation, which is more than 50 years old, is modernized and outlines clear standards for the public security industry. We need to ensure that the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that they're properly trained and held accountable for the work that they provide in the community. The existing legislation no longer meets the needs of the government or the public. With rapid growth in the private security industry, there's a greater need for co-ordination between our police services and, as well, the private security firms.

Private investigators and security guards outnumber the police in Alberta, and security guards and private investigators are paid by private interests to protect private interests. The review will include international as well as interprovincial research during the public consultation.

Mr. Johnston: Is the Solicitor General planning to address the inconsistencies in licensing in the private security industry?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, the inconsistency in licensing is an important issue, and I thank my hon. colleague for bringing it up. The review will be comprehensive and include a number of areas such as parameters for licensing, minimum qualification and training standards, and legal authority duties and responsibilities for those individuals.

Mr. Johnston: My final question is again to the Solicitor General. You mentioned training. How will you address the inconsistency and lack of training standards in the industry?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, under the current legislation there are no minimum provincial educational or training requirements for private investigators and security guards in Alberta. I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, who is going to be chairing the review and, obviously, will be looking at some of these major issues, training being one, which is key to providing the necessary skills and knowledge required by security practitioners, especially when they're interacting with the public. Training will also help security personnel maintain their own safety, and the proper training of personnel is an essential ingredient to improve the quality and professionalism of the security industry in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Sustainable Resource Management

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is blessed with remarkable natural diversity. Our public lands, a vast array of natural resources such as timber, water, and rangeland, are the home to many species and animals. These are places that deserve protection to ensure their sustainability for future generations. However, the actions of this government do place the natural heritage in jeopardy. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: given that in British Columbia there is widespread support from public, scientists, and from the government to declare a moratorium on the sport hunting of the grizzly bears, which have a population of around 7,000, why is this government still allowing sport hunting and ignoring the scientists and not calling for a moratorium?

Mr. Coumts: Well, Mr. Speaker, the whole basis of our policy is that of conservation, and when it comes to grizzly bear, part of the conservation is making sure that you know exactly how many grizzly bear there are out there. You put the science behind the monitoring. The science behind the monitoring is being done through our foothills model forest grizzly bear initiative. We put millions of dollars into making sure that the grizzly bear population is sustainable in this province, and we do that through DNA testing. We have the science behind us.

We took a number of initiatives to have a recovery team look at shortening the hunting season as well. We also restricted areas in the province where grizzly bear can be hunted, mainly from highway

3 down to the Montana border, over to the British Columbia border. We put a number of initiatives in place to make sure that the grizzly bear are protected in this province.

Mr. Bonko: To the same minister: given that pine beetles have infested some of our most pristine and protected areas, will this government finally commit more resources to controlling this pest or rely on the cut and burns and the possibility of divine intervention by the weather gods?

Mr. Coutts: I've answered this question many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, so I will be brief. Prior to the third quarter of last year we put a million dollars into pine beetle prevention in this province. We have also partnered with the British Columbia government to match dollar for dollar what they're putting into helping stop the pine beetle at the British Columbia-Alberta border. We have a strategy in place in this new budget for 2005-2006 to make sure that the kinds of resources that are needed to stop the pine beetle – and it's strange. I'm going to say it one more time for this hon. member. In getting rid of the pine beetle, you do have to identify the trees that the pine beetle is in, and that's done by aerial surveys. It's done by on-the-ground surveys. It's most important that when you have identified the pine beetle in the tree on the ground, you get rid of that tree and you burn it so that you protect the other trees, the healthy trees that are next to it. It is absolutely necessary to clear-cut and burn those trees.

The Speaker: That was the shortest one minute and 30 seconds I've ever heard.

Mr. Coutts: Well, it's important.

Mr. Bonko: To the same minister: given that the department has stated that it is working on strategies to deal with the demands on our forests from both forestry and the oil and gas sector, will the integrated land management strategy be based on conservation or economic maximization?

Mr. Coutts: Oh, no, Mr. Speaker. Quite the opposite. It is a balance between economic, social, and environmental concerns. Our department of Sustainable Resource Development has a long history of making sure that that balance is put in place on everything that we handle, right from forestry through to our fish and wildlife and through to land management, and we will continue to do that in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six to participate.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Canadian Contribution to Victory in Europe

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At 8 o'clock on the morning of May 5, 1945, exactly 60 years ago today, enemy forces surrendered to the Canadian front in Europe. This Sunday, May 8, will mark the 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe, or VE, Day, the celebration of the end of the terrible conflict in Europe. It was a conflict which affected nearly every nation on earth and which brought about an unprecedented number of casualties.

War is truly an awful thing, but the conduct of war is sometimes both necessary and morally imperative, and World War II was

certainly one of those times. It was a war that was fought by the Allies against an enemy which Churchill called "a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime." Our nation answered the call of that just war from the outset, and we were there in the dark months and years when Britain and its Commonwealth stood virtually alone against an evil enemy. It was a time which Churchill would call our finest hour.

Between 1939 and 1945 more than a million Canadian men and women, or one adult in 12, would don a uniform, and 41 per cent of men aged 18 to 45 served in the Canadian armed forces. Included in the Canadian casualties were 55,000 wounded and maimed and over 45,000 who paid the ultimate price in the service of their country.

Today, 60 years on, the ranks of our Canadian heroes who waged this great war against tyranny and evil are thinning. But today and this Sunday may we pause on the anniversary of what was for many a time of happiness and gratitude but also of sober reflection to remember the deeds of our veterans and those who have gone on, to salute them and to give thanks for what they have done for Canada, for freedom, and for the cause of humanity.

We shall never forget.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne has consulted with me, and I am going to allow him to refer to an exhibit.

The hon. member.

Liberation of the Netherlands

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to commemorate not only the end of fighting in Europe but also the end of foreign occupation and oppression for a nation. Today marks the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands by Allied Forces. More than 7,600 Canadians died during the nine-month campaign waged to liberate the country. Canadian and other allied troops fought a difficult battle across the Netherlands, and the winter conditions made their task even more difficult.

However, it was not only the soldiers who experienced hardship during this winter. The winter of '44-45 was known as the Hunger Winter in western Holland. Food supplies in the cities had been exhausted, fuel supplies were virtually extinct, and transportation was practically nonexistent. Under these conditions thousands of men and women and children perished. My mom told me many stories of when she would sneak under the dark skies into the tulip gardens to gather bulbs to make tulip soup. She spent her complete teenage years under Nazi control.

On April 28, 1944, a truce was arranged, stopping fighting in western Holland. This allowed food supplies to be brought in for the starving population. Mr. Speaker, I have a sample today with me of those rations passed to my family from the Red Cross and the Canadian soldiers. The relief of the hardship experienced by those in west Netherlands came at a vital time, and the Canadian soldiers who were a part of the liberation were greeted with cheers of joy. Again, my mom told me of this day in Rotterdam and how the memory remains clear in her mind today. Not only did it mark the end of German occupation; it marked the day that members of my family were released from Nazi work camps in Germany.

The victory on May 5, 1945, served to cement the ties between Canada and the Netherlands which had been first formed in 1942, when Crown Princess Juliana sought refuge in Canada after being forced to flee both her homeland and Great Britain. These ties were further strengthened on January 19, 1943. On this day in an Ottawa

hospital room decreed to be Dutch territory, Princess Juliana's third daughter, Princess Margriet, was born. This tiny infant was a bright light during a dark time, and Canadians claimed her as their own.

The strength and continuity of the ties between our two countries continues to this day and is best evidenced by the tulips which bloom in Ottawa each spring. These flowers are a bright and vibrant gift from the Dutch, which reminds us of the lives which were freely given and the friendship which was formed during this chapter in history.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I understand the exhibit correctly, this is a real tin box that was dropped via the air by Canadian air service people over Holland in 1945. The contents I do not believe are original, but the box is. If the hon. member wants to circulate it as a World War II memento, that would be wonderful.

Mr. VanderBurg: Yes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Strathcona Cadet Tattoo

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday evening it was my privilege to attend the third annual Strathcona Cadet Tattoo held in Sherwood Park. This year's theme was Bridging the Gap, with the focus on 2005 being the year of the veteran.

In keeping with the tradition of a military tattoo, the event included pipes and drums, military band, precision teams, a variety of dancing, and the finale, which combined the sights and sounds of it all. The unique blend of music, ceremony, and theatre showcased the talents of cadets from all across Alberta.

I would like to recognize the corps who attended and performed for the crowd. They included 238 RCSCC Campbelltown Sea Cadet Corps, 12 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Cadets, NLCC E.W. Cormack Navy League Corps, 2733 Army Cadets, 4 Wing Cold Lake Pipes and Drums, and the pipes, drums, reeds, and dancers of Vimy Ridge Academy.

In addition to recognizing these gifted young people, I would also wish to commend and bring special recognition to those individuals involved in organizing and contributing to this spectacular performance. They're Lieutenant Jason Finkbeiner, Mr. George Arndt, Mr. Michael Chute, Mr. Reid Morris, Mr. Dave Wright, Pipe Major Chris Yeo, Mr. Alistair Briggs, and Mr. Mike Luce.

Congratulations to all of the participants, who successfully bridged the gap. It was an excellent event and celebration of tradition. May the tradition long continue.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Midwifery Services

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in recognition of the 15th annual International Day of the Midwife, held every May 5. In celebration of this special day this year the Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth, ASAC, collected invoices for midwifery care that Albertans have paid for from their own pockets since 1991. ASAC asked me and my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona if we could submit these to the attention of the minister of health. I quote: we are giving a large stack of invoices to the Alberta health care insurance plan for midwifery care that has been paid for out of pocket by Albertans since the Alberta govern-

ment pledged its support of midwifery and funding in 1991. End of quote.

Similar invoicing in Manitoba helped get midwifery services funded in that province. This profession is relied upon by many families to bring their children into this world. If midwifery services are not publicly funded soon, then Alberta women may have one less option available to them when they deliver their babies.

A decade ago the Alberta Association of Midwives had 150 members, who were hoping that midwifery would become publicly funded. The profession lost some members when official registration of midwives began in 1998 and additional government fees were added to their costs. More midwives have been driven away by the continuing lack of coverage under Alberta health care while some other provinces publicly fund midwifery under their health care plans. Alberta must consider going that way, especially in light of a severe shortage of obstetrical doctors in this province.

The idea of having a day to honour midwives was born in 1987 at the International Confederation of Midwives conference in the Netherlands. The first International Midwives Day was celebrated on May 5, 1991, and now it's observed in more than 50 countries throughout the world. On this International Day of the Midwife many Alberta families hope that this government will support midwifery as the safe childbirth alternative it is.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Fly for a Cure Charity Fundraiser

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. Member for Strathcona shared with this House his thoughts on May being Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. I would like to echo his statements as it gives me the opportunity to speak about a sport for which I have a passion and a unique and exciting fundraising initiative about to take place near Rosalind in the constituency of Battle River-Wainwright.

Beginning May 14 and going right through to May 22, hang gliding and paragliding enthusiasts from across western Canada will gather to participate in the second annual Fly for a Cure fundraiser, which will run in conjunction with the Western Canadian Hang Gliding Championships. Pilots collect sponsorship dollars for each mile they fly during the cross-country competitions, with proceeds going to the United Way campaign. Twenty-five per cent of the proceeds are then designated to an MS charity while a further 25 per cent are designated to breast cancer research. In its inaugural year last May this thoughtful combination of sport aviation and community caring raised over \$14,500.

Mr. Speaker, my family has known a number of fine individuals brought down by the ravages of MS, and both my wife and mother-in-law are breast cancer survivors, while the United Way has long been my first choice when choosing a charity to donate to.

I would like to thank the organizers, Rob Clarkson and Ralph Herten, for their efforts, major sponsor PCL Construction Management for their involvement, and Vincene Muller for generously forwarding all donations in honour of the world-renowned hang gliding pilot, Chris Muller, to the Fly for a Cure fundraiser.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Midwifery Services

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the International Day of the Midwife, and young mothers with their babies and baby

carriages, their families, accompanied by their supporters and midwives, gathered on the steps of the Legislature to demand the full integration of midwifery services into Alberta's public health care system.

We know that doing so will save our health care system needed dollars. It's a cheaper and more popular choice for many women. It's a common-sense solution that addresses cost sustainability for public health care.

3:10

A report just released by Dr. Beverley O'Brien and her colleagues at the University of Alberta faculty of nursing shows that women who use the services of a midwife save the health care system as much as \$1,100 or more per childbirth. According to the Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth, the total savings to the province if integration were done would be as much as \$50 million.

But midwifery, Mr. Speaker, is so much more than dollars and cents. Midwife-attended births have been proven to yield better health outcomes for both mothers and babies. Better birth weights are one outcome. Also there are lower risks for postpartum depression, better education on nutrition and breast-feeding. All of these things are crucial for women's health, and it's time we had a health care system that recognized all of these benefits.

Given all of these positive health outcomes, the fees that women who exercise their choice to use midwifery services in Alberta are forced to pay are an outrage. They amount to a user fee for an important health service. Fees in excess of \$2,000 create uneven access to midwifery services because only women who can afford these services receive them. Fees create uncertainty for service providers. Fees also marginalize the service, when it's clearly a way of doing things that should be brought to the centre of the public health care system.

Mr. Speaker, it's time that we integrated midwifery into the mainstream health care services. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you to all members of the House a group of 25 visitors. They are members of the Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council. They are led by Elaine Ho, the newly elected executive director. All of these young guests are gathered in our city to hold an annual meeting. They are sitting in the public gallery, and I would now ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Annemarie van Oploo and her two children. Annemarie is the political action co-ordinator for the Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth. ASAC is a midwifery consumer association that acts as a resource to parents and parents-to-be on birthing issues as well as lobbying for safe childbirth alternatives. Annemarie organized today's rally for the International Day of the Midwife. At this time I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition signed by 285 Albertans who are eager to see potentially life-saving improvements to highways in northern Alberta, particularly highway 63. With today's tabling the total number of signatures on this petition so far is 3,766.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition from the good Alberta citizens from the fine communities of Spruce Grove, Pickardville, Onoway, the beautiful Stampede city of Calgary, and the city of Lethbridge, the home of the world-famous Japanese gardens.

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are 103 there.

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to make the following motion under Standing Order 30:

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the dangerous precedent set by the Alberta Securities Commission, an agent of the Crown, challenging the legitimate authority of the Auditor General, an officer of this Assembly charged to conduct an investigation vital to the public interest.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of Written Question 32.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I'll move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In honour of the International Day of the Midwife, which is today, I would like to table a package of information prepared by the Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth. The document provides evidence that midwifery is a safe and cost-effective choice for women to make and makes an excellent argument for covering midwifery services in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this chance to also table five copies of a statement released today outlining the NDP opposition's support for midwifery services and the important choices that such services make available to women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a booklet produced by the Maternity Center Association entitled *What Every Pregnant Woman Needs to Know About Cesarean Section, 2004*. The Maternity Center Association is the oldest national U.S. organization advocating on behalf of mothers and babies. This booklet is available online at no cost at the web address www.maternitywise.org and is a good source of information on the pros and cons of both Cesarean sections and natural vaginal births.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the letter that I referred to during question period from the Solicitor General to the mayor of Crownsnest Pass stating that “no police grant funding will be provided . . . until a grant agreement has been signed.”

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings here today and the requisite five copies of each. One is a study from the Alberta Federation of Labour which comes from Alberta Workers’ Compensation Board statistics about the workplace fatalities in the last century, a total of 9,219 in Alberta.

The other is another quick fact sheet which outlines some of the facts regarding worker injury and the fact that deaths from workplace injuries really haven’t fallen in the last 15 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(5) I would ask the Government House Leader if he would please share with the House the projected government business for the upcoming week of May 9 to May 12.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, May 9, at 9 p.m. in Committee of Supply, day 20 of 24, Innovation and Science estimates; second reading of bills 40, 38; third reading of bills 24, 25; and in Committee of the Whole Bill 36; and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, May 10, in the afternoon under Committee of Supply the estimates for the Department of the Solicitor General, day 21 of 24. On Tuesday, May 10, at 8 p.m. under Committee of Supply Government Services; at 10 p.m. or as soon as we’re finished, under Committee of the Whole bills 36, 38, 15, 26, 35, 40, and 39; and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, May 11, in the afternoon in Committee of Supply the estimates of the Department of Health and Wellness; at 8 p.m. in Committee of Supply the estimates of the Department of Community Development. At that time we would anticipate asking for unanimous consent of the House to revert to Introduction of Bills to introduce the appropriation supply act, main estimates, and thereafter deal in Committee of the Whole with such of the following bills

as remain in committee: bills 36, 38, 15, 35, 26, 40, 39; and as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, May 12, in the afternoon introduction of miscellaneous statutes for first reading; second reading of bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, Pr. 3; Committee of the Whole on Pr. 1, Pr. 2, Pr. 3; and third reading of bills 8, 10, 17, 26, 29, 31, 34; and as per the Order Paper.

head: **3:20 Request for Emergency Debate**

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a Standing Order 30 application. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to make the following motion:

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the dangerous precedent set by the Alberta Securities Commission, an agent of the Crown, challenging the legitimate authority of the Auditor General, an officer of this Assembly charged to conduct an investigation vital to the public interest.

I have several points I’d like to make. I understand they need to address issues of urgency at this point, and I will do my best to do that.

The case for setting aside today’s ordinary business of the day contains some of the same elements as the Standing Order 30 we’ve called before, but as you indicated, Mr. Speaker, at that time, this is a fluid situation that bears watching and may warrant reconsideration. There have been a number of dramatic events since that last Standing Order 30, events that make a debate of this Assembly more imperative and urgent than ever.

The Alberta Securities Commission has not only continued its active resistance to an unfettered investigation of it by the Auditor General but has ended the supposed negotiations over something that should not in fact be negotiable and has forced the Auditor General, an officer of this Assembly, to go to court to have the office and authority of the Auditor General respected. We need immediate information from this government on how they are dealing with not only this issue but also with the potential threat to other ongoing or future investigations by the Auditor General.

This issue continues to garner the attention of the nation, as evidenced by recent and increasing media coverage. I take full note of the comment by the Speaker last week, but I’m not requiring any minister to comment on the truth or falsity of the reports. I’m referencing the coverage of the media to suggest that many of the leading newspapers of this country, read avidly by the business and investment communities, continue to cover the controversy at the Alberta Securities Commission. The continuing coverage about both lingering and fresh issues raises serious questions about whether this issue really is being dealt with adequately.

It is urgent – it is urgent – that we restore the confidence of the public in the Alberta Securities Commission. There is no other opportunity to debate this. The debate on the estimates for the Ministry of Finance has concluded. The debate on the estimates for Executive Council has also concluded. There are no bills on the Order Paper that would provide an opportunity to raise these issues. Written questions and motions for returns are not adequate nor are they timely for this. Given the legislative schedules at this time, there is simply no other mechanism or procedure to enable discussion. There are no other reasonable opportunities to have the necessary debate, and I believe that this, therefore, satisfies the requirements of *Beauchesne* 387 as well as *Beauchesne* 392.

Further, question period itself is not an appropriate forum to

debate complex issues such as this. The hon. Finance minister previously claimed that the issue had been discussed in question period and therefore, in her view, needed no further discussion. But question period does not provide for the kind of substantive discussion we need on this complex issue; 45-second exchanges simply don't do it.

The Minister of Finance and the hon. Government House Leader claim that there is no problem on the regulatory side and that there is no evidence of a loss of investor confidence. Here we have something particularly, dramatically new. Yet many of the very staff responsible for investor confidence have publicly stated that they cannot do their jobs effectively, that this, quote: will negatively impact the future of the organization and the health of the Alberta capital markets. End quote.

Furthermore, just today – just today – the outgoing chair of the commission said the following, quote: the continual onslaught of anonymous complaints is really beginning to take its toll. End quote. He went on to describe the tarnishing of the reputation of the Vancouver Stock Exchange some years ago by an article in the U.S. business journal *Forbes*. Then he noted, and I quote: the same sort of thing could happen here; I'm becoming very concerned – this is the chairman of the Securities Commission today – that the attacks on the integrity of the Alberta Securities Commission will weaken investor confidence in the Alberta capital market and Alberta-based issuers. This in turn, he said, could have very serious consequences for the Alberta economy. End quote. The Alberta Securities Commission's chairman is substantiating the fact that a genuine crisis in investor confidence exists.

It remains true that every day that passes with questions, uncertainty, and controversy shakes the public's confidence further and makes a speedy, satisfactory resolution more difficult. I have already made points, and I think they all satisfy the requirement of *Beauchesne* 389; namely, that the public interest will suffer if the issue is not given immediate attention.

I would remind the House, all members of this Assembly, that the Auditor General, whose authority is being challenged by the commissioners, is an officer of this Assembly and reports to us. I would also remind the Assembly that where crises continue or fester because of alleged conflicts in legislation passed by this House, we have a special obligation to pay particular and immediate attention.

Mr. Speaker, the motion requesting this debate also satisfies the requirements of *Montpetit* 587, 588 with respect to the matter falling within the administrative competence of the government and within the scope of ministerial action. The Lieutenant Governor in Council appoints the commission, the chairman, and the part-time commissioners, and the statutes in dispute next Wednesday are under the auspices of the Minister of Finance. I believe it also meets all of the other conditions of these sections, both proscriptive and prescriptive.

The Minister of Finance indicated on April 27 that this Assembly should be assured by the fact that the office of the Auditor General will begin its audit "almost immediately." The hon. Government House Leader claimed that the Auditor General's report was ongoing. Those assurances can no longer be made. This Assembly needs additional clarification, additional information immediately.

The so-called negotiations have broken down, and the Alberta Securities Commission has stepped up its stonewalling by going to court. This should undermine any faith the government or this Assembly has in the ability or willingness of the commission, an agent of the Crown, or its employee, the executive director of the commission, to get to the bottom of this. The minister has in the past assured this House of that, but we can no longer have such faith.

The Auditor General, an officer of this Assembly and an official of high official station, is being stonewalled by an agent of the

Crown and its employee. This is an affront to the authority of this Assembly. This kind of affront to an officer of this Assembly requires immediate discussion, immediate attention. We cannot afford to have it appear – and I think this is very important – that other organizations which are currently or which might in the future be subject to audits or investigations by the Auditor General think that they also can stonewall the Auditor General. We cannot allow the crisis of confidence to spread from an agent of the Crown, the Alberta Securities Commission, to an officer of this Assembly.

The commission has requested a court ruling on May 10. We have today and only one additional sitting day before then. The Auditor General is an officer of this Assembly. It is entirely appropriate and indeed, I argue, pressing that this Assembly discuss this matter prior to the Auditor General's office making his representations to the judge. Clearly, if this Assembly is to have any substantial opportunity to discuss this issue before this hearing, we must do so now. It is my submission that this clearly meets the standards for urgency under *Beauchesne* 390.

The Government House Leader also indicated during debate on April 27 that "there will be a new chair appointed to the Securities Commission imminently." This provides additional reasons to have an immediate debate in this Assembly. The commissioner's term, in fact, ends the day after tomorrow, May 7. The hon. Minister of Finance is already receiving recommendations from the Securities Commission board to appoint an existing member, one who is defending the current obstruction, as acting chair. Today is the last day before the vacancy occurs for this Assembly to discuss this matter.

Given the toxic work environment as well as the allegations of enforcement irregularities and the concerns raised today by the outgoing chair about investor confidence, it's absolutely vital that the next step is taken very carefully and with the full knowledge and input of this Assembly.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, in summary, I believe this motion satisfies all of the requirements of the Standing Orders of this Assembly. I also submit that it meets all of the criteria set out in the other authorities of this House. I would note in closing that the ability of this Assembly to promote and defend the public interest by means of a free, open, substantive debate on pressing matters should be our guiding principle.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Astounding. Two weeks ago the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was challenging the credibility of the Auditor General, and now he's bringing a Standing Order 30 motion to so-called assist him. He has yet to apologize for the affront to the integrity of the Auditor General, and I would hope that before the end of the day today he would have the good grace to get up and do that. This notice of motion ought not even to go forward pursuant to Standing Order 23(g), which indicates that we should not refer to "any matter pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination," and it goes on to outline the circumstances.

The fact of the matter is that there are two independent organizations: the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislative Assembly, and the Securities Commission, which operates under the authority of this Legislative Assembly through an act that's been passed. There is a question between the two of them as to the respective authorities under each of their acts. Both of those authorities

originate with us, as do virtually all other authorities under acts, and when there are determinations to be made with respect to differences of viewpoint as to how the acts interrelate, then the court, another independent authority, is the appropriate place to resolve that kind of a determination.

This matter is before the court to be heard, as I understand it and as the hon. Leader of the Opposition indicated, next Wednesday. It would be inappropriate for us, and, in fact, it would violate rule 23(g) under sub judice to actually have a debate on whose authority is stronger or any of those issues that are quite properly before the court.

Now, the hon. Leader of the Opposition goes further, though, than actually is outlined in the notice of motion because the notice of motion is about challenging the authority of the Auditor General. As I say, Mr. Speaker, it's not about challenging the legitimate authority of the Auditor General but defining the rules and the guidance provided by both the Auditor General Act and the Securities Act with respect to defining the scope of the audit. In fact, as I understand it, the application to the court is a reference to assist in defining the scope of the audit. So it's quite appropriately before an independent party.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would go on, though, to say, as I've indicated in the House this afternoon in question period, that an interim chair for the Securities Commission will be appointed as early as tomorrow. I can make this commitment to the House: that independent chair is expected to be independent and fair and will not be a current member of the commission. The person who is very soon to be appointed will provide leadership and direction to the Securities Commission during the transitional period and will be able to work with the Securities Commission and the Auditor General to determine whether the issues with respect to the scope of the audit can be resolved without the necessity of the court application.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, the very question in this notice of motion, although badly worded, is the precedent set by the Securities Commission, an agent of the Crown, challenging the legitimate authority of the Auditor General. Obviously, that refers to a matter which is before the court because that's the challenge that they're referring to. In fact, the hon. Leader of the Opposition specifically mentioned the reference being heard next Wednesday.

The only other thing I would add to this issue, Mr. Speaker – these are important issues and subjudice but not urgent, not urgent. In fact, the only effect that will be had by adjourning the ordinary course of business of this House this afternoon, declaring this emergent and necessitating a debate this afternoon, will be to cause the exact result that the hon. leader opposite is trying to avoid: to create fear in the public. If something is so urgent and important that this Legislature determines it to be so and gets the debate on, it's basically saying that there is an issue that needs to be dealt with that the public and the investment community should fear.

In fact, we're not hearing that from the investment community. I think the investment community and others in the community, although it's an issue certainly in the public – it's an issue that certainly needs to be dealt with and resolved, that the Minister of Finance has indicated she is dealing with and resolving. The Auditor General is in place. The scope of the audit is to be determined. That's before the courts. The issue between what authorities and what confidentialities and how that does will be determined by an independent court, as appropriately so.

We ought not to fear monger, Mr. Speaker. We ought not to raise the specter of fear in the community. We ought to let this process work. The interim chair will be an independent chair appointed from outside the commission to carry out the process, to work with the Auditor General, to get to the bottom of things, not to raise fear and scare investor confidence in this province.

It's not urgent because it's being dealt with, because the appropriate processes are in place, and because the very issue that's being raised in the notice of motion is sub judice.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's attitude and the House Leader's seems to be: see no evil, hear no evil, therefore, there's no evil. To say that to have an emergency debate, we'd lose confidence in the Securities Commission is absolutely ridiculous. That confidence has been long gone, if I may say so, for many years if he's been paying any attention at all.

Speaking to the urgency. I mean, I saw the House leader the other day, and he alluded to going after the Leader of the Opposition. He was very exercised when he thought that an officer of this Legislature was being attacked. I remember the debate. Now we're saying that it's okay for this same officer. This is why I think it's urgent. I believe that the Securities Commission is thumbing their nose at an officer of the Legislature, and I think that should be very serious by all matters here. Certainly, the Minister of Finance should take it seriously. I would suggest that all Members of the Legislative Assembly should take that very seriously.

If we allow this to go on and we say that one of our officers cannot be given the documents that he needs – every Auditor General, right across Canada, has access to everything the government does. For them now to say, "Well, no, you can't have that," and, then, when he says, "No, that's not acceptable," then they say "Well, the heck with you; we're going to court," to me that is just absolutely wrong.

If our Securities Act allows them to do that, the first thing we probably should be doing is changing our Securities Act right away. For the minister to say that there are not problems, that all investors are happy, I don't know who he's listening to because that's certainly not the impression I'm getting. To say that having an emergency debate here would hurt the Securities Commission, come on. The Bre-Xs and the Boyle brothers and the whole works of them down through the years have done that already.

We have some serious problems here. We've got to clean it up. I said yesterday that I think we should get rid of the whole group of them and bring in an interim trustee. That would probably give more confidence to investors right across Canada and Alberta than what we're doing here.

The other reason this is an emergency. He talks about sub judice; it's not in the courts yet. The problem is with the reputation of the Securities Commission. If it gets wrapped up in courts, this could go on forever. One of the things the Minister of Finance said at the time was that she wanted the Auditor General to move on this quickly, and I think he said that at the latest he'd have a report in July. Well, we may still be in court in July while this thing goes on.

So I think we have to send a very serious message here. The urgency to me is how many other boards are there in government that are going to do the same thing to the Auditor General and say to you: well, we don't need to bother with this because we have our own little act here, we have our own little act there, and we're not going to give you the information. I think that the House Leader should be as mad about this as he was at the Leader of the Opposition the other day. They're thumbing their nose at him, and they're thumbing their noses at all of us, Mr. Speaker.

If one of the top officers of this Legislature cannot do his job, we're all in serious difficulty. I think we need that discussion, Mr. Speaker. As it now stands, I mean, to try to hide and say that there hasn't been publicity about this and how, you know, this is going to bring it down and that there will be all sorts of terrible things if this

Legislature has a debate about it, well, it's been in all the national papers. It's been in the American papers. We've had calls from American investors. It's all over now. The biggest way we could deal with it – as I say, I think we should have done it a long time ago – is to have an interim trustee and get rid of it and start again. At the very minimum, we can send a message that this Legislature takes it very seriously when one of our officers cannot do their job. I think the Government House Leader should be the first one up saying that and not opposing this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 30(2) states the following:

The member may briefly state the arguments in favour of the request for leave and the Speaker may allow such debate as he considers relevant to the question of urgency of debate and shall then rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order.

So now we've heard three speakers. Are there additional members who would like to participate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar would. Any others? I suspect that would be conditional upon what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar might say, so I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and then be prepared to recognize one additional speaker from the government caucus, and then we'll have to bring this to an end.

The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate an opportunity to participate in this urgent debate this afternoon. I've been listening with interest to the three speakers. I would like to briefly remind the entire House, and in particular the Government House Leader, of *Beauchesne* 505 through to 510.

First, 505 indicates that this is a voluntary restriction, sub judice, imposed by the House itself to protect the interest of parties to a case "in the interest of justice and fair play." Sure, we have the potential of an issue before the courts, but justice and fair play appear to be compromised, and a debate in the House may be of some use in re-establishing these and other public interests here. Also with 506 and 507 it indicates in *Beauchesne* that the convention is consistently invoked only in criminal matters, presumably for reasons that are cited above in *Beauchesne* 505.

Now, it's most important with *Beauchesne* 510, and 510 indicates that "the House has never allowed the sub judice convention to stand in the way of its consideration of a matter vital to the public interest or to the effective operation of the House." It would be my view that both apply here as a result of the arguments that have been made earlier by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hanging on every word from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar because I want to just point out to the House first and foremost that this is not an urgent debate at this time. This is a debate on Standing Order 30 as to whether or not there should be an urgent debate. I would say, Mr. Speaker, in reviewing Standing Order 30 and in particular Standing Order 30(7), where it says: "A motion under this Standing Order is subject to the following conditions: (a) the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency," and it goes on.

I would argue that there isn't a genuine emergency at this time. We see no impact on the markets so far. The markets are working and responding well. Investments are happening. All systems are functioning. There's no evidence of any lack of consumer confi-

dence going on out there. Yes, there's a lot of interest in what's happening, but there certainly isn't any erosion of consumer confidence or consumer participation, so I don't see any sense of urgency in that respect.

The Government House Leader has quite accurately indicated already that the issue stands before the court – we all know what sub judice is – in order to help define the scope of the audit. That particular point has been covered. An interim chair will be appointed I believe he indicated as early as tomorrow or not later than tomorrow or whatever the words were. It would be a very independent choice and so on. So there is no real emergency other than what might exist in the minds of certain members here.

I would just also remind the hon. members of Standing Order 30(6), where it says, "An emergency debate does not entail any decision of the Assembly." That's so correct because this decision will be rendered for the most part right there in the court, where it belongs.

With that, I would argue strongly that this is not a matter of genuine emergency, which is the first requirement, in fact, of Standing Order 30. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair is prepared to rule on whether the request for leave for this motion to proceed is in order under Standing Order 30(2). The chair did let the debate continue on the question of urgency because of what the chair considers to be a serious matter.

First, the chair confirms that the Leader of the Official Opposition has given proper notice of his intention to seek permission to present this motion under Standing Order 30. Notice was received by the Speaker's office today at 11:25, and the requirements under Standing Order 30(1) have been met.

Secondly, before the question as to whether this motion should proceed can be put to the Assembly, the chair must rule whether the motion meets the requirements of Standing Order 30(7), which requires that "the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration."

The Leader of the Official Opposition's motion reads as follows, and I think it's important, again.

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the dangerous precedent set by the Alberta Securities Commission, an agent of the Crown, challenging the legitimate authority of the Auditor General, an officer of this Assembly charged to conduct an investigation vital to the public interest.

The relevant parliamentary authorities: *Beauchesne*'s paragraphs 387 and 390 and the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 587 to 589.

Now, there has been great attention provided from the chair to this, and the chair has been studying this matter since 10:25 or 10:35 this morning along with a number of the table officers. There's one thing that also is an unavoidable fact related to this whole matter. The chair has also received from the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, the judicial district of Calgary, the originating notice between the Alberta Securities Commission and Fred Dunn, the Auditor General of Alberta. The document does raise a series of questions, and it asks the Court of Queen's Bench to make certain determinations. That is a fact, and that does exist.

The chair's major concern is that by finding the request to be in order, the chair might be taken to imply that proceeding to court for an interpretation of someone's or some entity's jurisdiction constitutes a genuine emergency. The chair wants it to be very, very clear that the chair is not in any way commenting on the merits of the

arguments that have been raised in this matter. The chair is simply noting that it is difficult to find that an application to court for a determination about jurisdiction can constitute a genuine emergency so as to justify an urgent debate.

It is this Speaker's understanding that reviewing the jurisdiction of a person or a tribunal to whom the Legislature has delegated certain responsibility is the primary basis for administrative law. In other words, what we have here is the Alberta Securities Commission, created by an act of this Legislature, and the Auditor General of Alberta, created by an act of this Legislature, going to another tribunal in the province of Alberta, albeit Court of Queen's Bench, asking for an interpretation between the two of them.

At first I thought, by 10:40 this morning, that this was very unique, and this didn't happen very often in the province of Alberta. I've subsequently been advised that this happens quite frequently in the province of Alberta, where the Ethics Commissioner and the FOIP, freedom of information, commissioner have been challenged in the courts for interpretation of what their mandate has been as well.

3:50

There's also something else that is extremely important that all members have to be apprised of. The Canadian House of Commons does not have a specific standing order on sub judice, so when citations are used from *Marleau and Montpetit* or *Beauchesne* in the Canadian House of Commons dealing with civil law and the interpretation of the Canadian House of Commons, one has to remember that they do not have a standing order with respect to a sub judice rule. We do in this Assembly, and Standing Order 23(g)(ii) deals specifically with matters of a civil nature and reads as follows:

A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member . . .

(g) refers to any matter pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination . . .

(ii) of a civil nature that has been set down for a trial or notice of motion filed, as in an injunction proceeding, until judgment or from the date of filing a notice of appeal until judgment by an appellate court . . .

It's also very true within our Standing Orders.

. . . where there is probability of prejudice to any party but where there is any doubt as to prejudice, the rule should be in favour of the debate.

There's nothing in this that I can see would be prejudicial to anyone else, but there is something in here that basically says that this matter has been basically set down, and in fact in the document that I have, the originating notice, there's even a time frame on it, Tuesday the 10th day of May at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, to hear certain arguments.

So I'm bothered most of all by this, hon. members: if I were to rule in favour of this particular application, it would cause great difficulty, I believe, into the future for subsequent Speakers to somehow rule anything out under the cause of sub judice, and I would not want to set that precedent with respect to this matter. That's a very serious one, considering that this Assembly has a sub judice Standing Order rule, and this matter has already been delegated to appear before a court. That's one of the purposes of administrative law: to find a ruling if two pieces of legislation may be in conflict with one another.

At the same time, the sub judice rule should not stifle the Assembly's consideration of a bill should there be one before us, but that isn't the case. This is not what the Assembly is considering at this time. It's considering another matter.

This is one of the most interesting questions that we've had before

our Assembly, certainly since I've had the privilege of sitting in this chair, and it certainly has brought in a lot of thought and debate since 10:25 this morning by the esteemed members that sit at the table along with the Speaker. But the conclusion will be that the chair finds that the request is not in order, and the question will not be put by the chair for the reasons given. [interjections] There's no need. There's no winner or loser in this.

Now, before I call Orders of the Day, we have a Standing Order that we have to deal with, and that's 58(5). Standing Order 58(5) is very, very clear that

on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday afternoon, during the consideration of the main estimates, the Committee of Supply shall be called not later than 3:10 p.m. provided that Orders of the Day have already been called and shall rise and report no later than 5:15 p.m.

We need unanimous consent to proceed with the estimates at this point in time.

I'm going to ask two questions. The first one will be the positive one. Will the Assembly agree to unanimous consent to provide, and obviously it's a redundant question, but I'll ask it anyway. The second one: is anybody opposed to proceeding to estimates? If the answer is no, then I'll call Orders of the Day, and we'll see what happens. Some confusion? It's very clear. We had this application last week.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: Hon. members, again, I don't want any challenges. The chair will leave the chair now, but the House leaders must have a discussion over the interpretation of the two-hour rule now for estimates. It's five minutes to 4, so with co-operation the Assembly can choose to go to 5:25 and find that there are no more speakers and can make its decision on the estimates, and that would fulfill everything we wanted to do today.

If it arrives at 5:30 and if there's a challenge under the rule – remember that the Deputy Chair of Committees will be in the chair, so this would have to come back to the Assembly – then the advice from the chair would be the following to fulfill the two-hour requirement. There's one hour and 35 minutes available. It means there would be a shortfall of 25 minutes. Then at 9:05 Monday night next there would still be 25 minutes available to conclude these estimates, but that would be still part of the same day.

Please co-operate. Thank you very much.

head:

Committee of Supply

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head:

Main Estimates 2005-06

Municipal Affairs

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I begin my brief comments regarding the estimates for the Department of Municipal Affairs, let me just acknowledge my appreciation to the members of the opposition for their co-operation in granting unanimous consent prior to dissolving ourselves into committee. I really do appreciate it. I'll do my best to answer all of the questions that we have. Should we run up into a bit of a time constraint, we certainly can

have the relationship that we've developed continue even informally. So thank you to the opposition, and thank you, Mr. Chair, for facilitating.

I'm pleased to present the estimates for Alberta Municipal Affairs. Before I begin, I'd like to introduce the staff from my department who are seated in the gallery. We've been sending notes back and forth, and I'm particularly pleased that they're still there. We're on, so with my thanks for hanging in there, let me introduce to you, Mr. Chairman, and to members of the House the outstanding executive staff that I have working in Municipal Affairs. I've been the minister now since November, and I have to say that I continue to be impressed with the professionalism and quality of not only the executive but all of the public service within this outstanding department.

I'd like to introduce to all members Mr. Dan Bader, deputy minister; Mr. Brian Quickfall, assistant deputy minister, local government services; Mr. Denis St. Arnaud, assistant deputy minister, public safety division; Tara Trelford, acting senior financial officer; Jay O'Neill, communications director; and Richard Westlund, my executive assistant. I'd ask all members to recognize them. They're doing great work on behalf of municipalities in Alberta.

4:00

Mr. Chairman, our ministry works with a variety of stakeholders to ensure that Albertans live in safe, sustainable communities and are served by open, effective, and accountable governments. In the coming year we will pursue six goals: an effective, responsive, cooperative, and well-managed local government sector; financially sustainable and accountable municipalities; a well-managed and efficient assessment and property tax system in which stakeholders have confidence; a comprehensive safety system that provides an appropriate level of public safety; an emergency management program that enables effective preparation for, response to, and recovery from major emergencies and disasters at provincial and local levels; and an independent system that administers appeals and issues timely and impartial decisions of high quality.

As of January 1 of this year the department supports 356 municipalities and 1,931 elected officials in Alberta. Mr. Chairman, just for the information of members, this represents 15 cities, 110 towns, 102 villages, 64 rural municipalities, 51 summer villages, seven improvement districts, four specialized municipalities, and three special areas. I might add, Mr. Chairman, just on a personal note that while I've only been minister for five months, it seems that I've had an opportunity to meet just about every one of those 1,931 municipal officials, and I'm here to tell you that all of those locally elected officials are dedicated to serving their communities and to working as partners with this government. It's the role of Municipal Affairs to ensure that that partnership blossoms and succeeds.

For 2005-06 the expenses and equipment/inventory purchases to be voted for Municipal Affairs total \$128.4 million. This is an increase of \$4.1 million, about 3 per cent, from the 2004-05 budget of \$124.3 million. Revenues for '05-06 are expected to be approximately \$26.2 million.

I'm going to go through each of the various divisions of the ministry and quickly provide a little bit of background information, the first being the local government services. This division is responsible for \$99.2 million of the ministry's expenses: \$78.1 million is for grants to municipalities and other local government entities, and \$21.1 million is for nongrant initiatives such as programs that promote municipal excellence, linear property assessments, and regular assessment audits. The expense total for this division is increasing from \$95.2 million to \$99.2 million, an

increase of \$4 million, primarily due to the inclusion of the Banff/Jasper special infrastructure program in the amount of \$2.5 million.

Funding for local government services supports such activities as the municipal excellence program and other initiatives to improve the knowledge of municipal administrators and elected officials, providing improved linear property assessment, utilizing the Alberta linear property assessment system, conducting detailed assessment audits of municipalities to help ensure that properties are being assessed fairly and consistently, supporting municipalities through facilitation and encouragement of intermunicipal co-operation and self-directed dispute resolution, administering the municipal internship program to work with Alberta's municipalities and train additional future municipal administrators, and also the Minister's Provincial/Municipal Council on Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century. Local government services also administers the department's major grants to municipalities, accounting for \$78.1 million.

The major grant programs are the unconditional municipal grant program, the grants in place of tax program, the financial support to local authorities program, the municipal sponsorship program, and the municipal debenture interest rebate program. Unconditional grants are provided to municipalities for their general use and to help offset some of the cost of restructuring. This program also provides funding for the regional partnerships initiative. Estimates for '05-06 are \$19.7 million.

The grants in lieu of taxes program provides grants to municipalities on certain property owned by the government of Alberta, and the estimates for this are \$31.6 million.

Financial support to local authorities funds a number of initiatives in support of municipal associations: mediation, internships, and, most importantly, the ME First energy savings program. The estimates in this area, Mr. Chairman, this year are \$9.7 million.

The very popular municipal sponsorship program supports municipal innovation and co-operation as well as projects that improve municipal government practices. Estimates for '05-06 are \$13.5 million.

Finally, the municipal debenture interest rebate program subsidizes the interest paid by municipalities on certain high-interest debentures that were borrowed during the times of high interest. This is a program that will remain in place until the retirement of those debentures in about 2010. The estimates for this year are \$3.6 million.

Now on to the specifics of the public safety division, which accounts for approximately \$14 million of the ministry's estimates. Key initiatives in this division include the implementation of an action plan approved in January of this year at the federal/provincial/territorial meeting of ministers responsible for emergency management. This includes plans to establish a national emergency response system to deliver alternate disaster financial assistance options, including improvement of the disaster financial assistance arrangements, and establish a national critical infrastructure protection strategy.

We partner with fire departments to enhance the fire services training initiative. This initiative gives firefighters from across Alberta access to high-quality, certified training at regional centres located throughout the province. Mr. Chairman, just on Tuesday of this week I had the pleasure of attending the fire chiefs annual convention in Jasper, and I spoke to them after their wrap-up banquet. I can tell you that this particular initiative is extremely well supported and appreciated by the fire chiefs and, more importantly, by the many hundreds of individuals who are either professional, full-time firefighters or, in the case of many of our municipalities,

volunteer firefighters, who are expected to step up to the plate and can only be expected to do so with adequate training, which this program provides.

We provide emergency management training to municipal officials and ground search and rescue training to emergency response personnel to enhance their ability to prepare for and respond to emergency situations.

Support for the MLA Review Committee on Secondary Suites, with the publication of the final report on proposed standards expected later on this year.

We appoint an administrator to act as liaison between the Safety Codes Council and Municipal Affairs on barrier-free design and accessibility issues and initiatives. That comes out of a bill, actually, that was passed by this Assembly last year to create an enhanced awareness of issues related to barrier-free design and accessibility. We also continue to monitor the Safety Codes Council's administration of underground petroleum storage tank remediation program. This \$60 million one-time program was created to help municipalities and small retail operators clean up their contaminated sites.

Before I conclude, there are just two other areas I'd like to touch on briefly. First of all, the Municipal Government Board. This board decides property linear and equalized assessment appeals, limited subdivision appeals, annexations, intermunicipal disputes, and other matters referred to me as minister or by cabinet. It continues to provide an independent appeal system that issues timely and high-quality decisions and is committed to hearing and issuing decisions within the legislated time frames despite increasing volumes and greater complexity in appeals. The MGB estimates for '05-06 are about \$2.8 million.

Finally, ministry support services. Ministry support services provides the local government services and public safety divisions with legal, financial, and information technology, communications, human resources, and business and administrative support. This area's estimates for '05-06 are about \$11.2 million.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, I believe Municipal Affairs has a strong business plan and a solid budget to achieve our goals and objectives. I look forward to addressing any questions members may have for me at this time, and at this point I will resume my seat and invite members to participate with questions.

4:10

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the comments from the minister, and I appreciate the opportunity to discuss a range of issues back and forth. I think he's off to a very constructive start as the minister in this department.

My first questions are three or four points that are, I think, related generally, and they tend to be big issues rather than going line by line and why so many dollars here and not there and that kind of thing. We all recognize the growing importance of municipalities and the municipal level of government to our province and to our society and, I think, to the future of the province. There are, in fact, people who put forward the argument that we will eventually evolve into city states, in which you get regions dominated by cities and municipalities, and some people suspect that the powers of the provinces may shift gradually to the municipalities.

I've no idea, of course, what the future has, but my first general question to the minister would be this. Are there initiatives under way or staff in his department or projects afoot – in fact, I believe there are – that are looking way down the road at the future role of municipalities? Decisions we make this year and next year have implications in some cases for decades or centuries. I think of this

city and the decision made a hundred years ago to keep development out of the river valley. What an amazing impact that has had on this city, as one example, or the city of Medicine Hat, how the river valley development there, the way it's proceeding, is quite lovely in some areas and has tremendous long-term consequence. So I am wondering what resources, what thinking is going on in the minister's department and perhaps through other agencies, looking at the long-term future role of municipalities: what their mandates ought to be and what powers, perhaps, should be being enhanced by municipalities so that they can proceed.

My second question to the minister – I think he's taking notes, so that's great – relates to the first. Is there any consideration at all being given to an amendment to the Alberta act to recognize and solidify legislative authority of municipalities? The Municipal Government Act is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation that we have in this province, but it's constantly being changed, and there are times – and I know this first-hand from municipal councillors – when local municipalities feel like the ground they're standing on legislatively is not as firm as they would like.

An example from the last session of the Legislature had to do with removing the authority of municipalities to determine the location of intensive livestock operations. That unnerved a lot of municipalities. They wanted to have a direct say and, frankly, direct control over locations of intensive livestock operations. They wanted to be able to address issues of water supply and noise and smell and wear and tear on the roads and property values, and their power to make those decisions was removed by this Legislature. There is a feeling in some circles that if there was a more solid legislative and jurisdictional basis for municipalities in the Alberta act, municipalities would feel more secure in their authority.

So those are linked issues around: is there any consideration, has there been any study given to amending the Alberta act and to solidifying the jurisdictional authority of municipalities?

Finally, a question around regional planning issues, again reflecting on experience in the capital city and the capital region and the loss of the regional planning commissions 10 years ago or so, which in the view of many has aggravated the difficulties of many municipalities in one economic zone working together. I'm sure that the minister is very well aware of the issues. So I am really asking: are there any plans afoot in the business plans to relaunch some equivalent to the regional planning commissions or else to address those issues of regional co-ordination among competing or co-operating municipalities through some other means?

I'll look forward to the minister's comments on those issues, and then I've got some more specific ones. Is that okay? Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think that that is pretty much a good summarization of the biggest issues that we spend our time thinking about, and I'm pleased to provide some insight. As the member indicated even at the outset, these were not necessarily specific to line items in the budget but a little bit more philosophical. I think that they probably deserve some consideration, and this is as good a time as any to deal with them.

First of all, with respect to the governance issues and the reference to city states, I think that we do have to give it some consideration. In fact, we have begun probably a prolonged process of deciding on how this evolution should proceed. Prior to '95, when the last substantive amendments were made, in fact when the rewrite of the MGA, the Municipal Government Act, was done, the relationship between the province and the municipalities was much more restrictive.

When the changes were made to the Municipal Government Act in '95, I, like many others in the House, was here at the time. I remember the discussion that went on, and the issue was that municipalities have to have the ability to determine many more of their own priorities at the local level. One of the biggest changes that was made in that rewrite was that municipalities were given person powers, so municipalities were then recognized as an entity. Believe it or not, prior to that, they were not. They were simply extensions of the provincial government.

So we made a significant change to the way municipalities are recognized in law in those amendments in '95. We've lived with those now for approximately 10 years, and I think it's probably sufficient time for us now to sit back and analyze exactly how well that rewrite has worked. Is it appropriate? Is that the appropriate level of independence? Do we need to take it one step further? I think it comes as no surprise to anyone that in particular the big-city mayors, Calgary and Edmonton, but to some extent other leaders within the municipal community are now beginning to have that look forward and are saying: maybe it's time that we start to think about what is the next step forward.

I'm not in a position to make commitments today, and I've said the same thing when I've met with the mayors, but I am prepared to commit to engaging in some serious discussion. I think the first step is for all of us to get our collective heads around what the vision for that next evolution would look like. In that regard, I have committed to sitting down with the municipal leadership over the next short period of time to do just a little bit of that blue-sky visioning on an informal basis. Where do we see this next evolution of the Municipal Government Act? How would it operate, and what would it look like? Until we can get those big-picture ideas around it and have everyone understand what everyone else is thinking, it's probably premature to start to get into a lot of detail. Needless to say, we do have resources within Municipal Affairs that can and will be allocated to that detail when we get to that point.

4:20

The other issue, I think, on that whole area that constantly has to be impacted is that governance issues can't be determined independent of funding and resources. That's why my predecessor established the three Rs committee: roles, responsibilities, and resources. Much of the work of that committee up to this point has concentrated on the resources side. What we have been contemplating in having discussions within Municipal Affairs is: where should we be taking that? What's the next logical progression? We've even contemplated whether or not it should almost evolve into the four Rs, add a fourth R, and that would be relationships – roles, responsibilities, resources, and relationships – because that is becoming critical to the long-term sustainability of municipalities as well. It's how they interact and how they work among themselves and how the relationship with each other and with the provincial government should evolve. So I see that as being the next progression.

I think that we have to clearly identify whether or not there is a long-term future in municipalities being primarily dependent on property taxes as the sole source of revenue. There are ongoing discussions there. Now, there's some opportunity for the province to hand over a whole lot of tax room if this Assembly and the government can determine what to do with the education property tax. There have been motions passed by this House, there have been motions passed by the municipal organizations requesting that the government move away from its dependence on municipal property tax for the funding of education. I think that there are really two sides to that.

On one side of the equation, there's no doubt that that would

enhance the ability of municipalities to conduct their business and to provide services to their municipalities, but at the same time we have to recognize that that's about \$1.4 billion that the provincial government is going to have to reallocate and find the money somewhere else. I've suggested to municipalities that it would be in everyone's best interest, both the province and the municipalities, if we could have some discussion over the next period of time about whether the roles and responsibilities side of this three-R equation can be adjusted. There may be some things now that municipalities are sharing responsibility for with the province, or there may even be some areas where the province has responsibility at this point in time that would more properly be delivered at the municipal level.

So when the day comes to have some serious discussion on this changeover or the progressive rollover, however it happens to be, if we could have some agreement on how that shifting, if necessary or if reasonable or if responsible, would take place, it maybe doesn't have to be a \$1.4 billion discussion. Maybe it could be a discussion of a smaller magnitude, which would be much easier for me to convince my colleagues is a step forward. So we've had those kinds of discussions.

Regarding the changes to the MGA, I think I've sort of covered that somewhat. There isn't at this point a plan in place to make changes to the MGA, but as I've discussed, I am prepared to sit down with municipalities. I think that we've had now 10 years under the existing legislation. There have been from time to time changes that were made, usually at the request of municipalities, quite frankly, where there is fine-tuning that comes up and needs to be done.

But the member points out that municipalities are looking for, in addition to the long-term sustainable funding, a greater role in the legislative side of things and how they're governed. Again, without making commitments, I have indicated to them that I am prepared to have that discussion as well. I think that 10 years is enough for us, both sides, to have a good feel for where we're going, and it may be time for us to think about that next generation.

The whole issue of regional planning and land planning is something that I've become much attuned to in the short time that I've been minister. When regional planning commissions were in place, things were not all rosy. There were disputes; there were conflicts. The difference was that there was a conflict resolution process that made a decision. Notwithstanding the fact that many people didn't like the decision, at least a decision was made. The substitute, what has replaced regional planning commissions, is an emphasis on mediation, on working together, on consensus building and having municipalities come to agreements on annexations, for example, on land planning, to do it on a voluntary basis, on regional plans that are done, that are negotiated rather than imposed, and for the most part they've worked quite well.

We are now running into some areas where the mediated, negotiated approach is running into some brick walls, so I think that we are going to have to in a relatively short period of time in the future revisit the idea, again not necessarily by reverting to regional planning commissions and all of the inherent problems that were there, but maybe there is something in between where we can continue to have the emphasis on co-operation, consensus building but at the same time have an ultimate dispute resolution process that all parties can agree to that won't be seen to be creating such winners and losers that were inherent in the regional planning commission.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Very good comments from the

minister. Good luck in those considerations. I hope many people have the opportunity to be involved, including the opposition.

My next set of questions are somewhat more specific, and they cover three different areas. The first is around public transit. I represent a constituency which has an intense network of public transit systems in it. In Edmonton-Riverview, which has the University of Alberta in it and a huge transit hub, there's LRT expansion under way. That's an area that I've lived in almost my whole life, and when my family first moved there, when I was a little boy, it was actually the edge of the city. The end of my neighbourhood was countryside, and now it's considered an inner-city neighbourhood.

In the '70s there was great excitement because the LRT was being built in Edmonton, and then, you know, by the early '90s I think it was going to extend for miles and miles to the south. It is only now, I think later this year – I think it might be this December or something like that – that the LRT is going to finally reach the surface at the university, and maybe in some number of years in the future we'll actually begin to realize the dream that was at one time intended to be achieved 20 years ago.

The reason that the citizens have had to wait so long for the LRT extension is, of course, that it's very expensive, especially the way it has been managed in Edmonton, and funding has not been predictable or reliable. Clearly, the federal government has a role in financing this kind of effort, but also the provincial government has a role. So my question, really, to the minister is around plans for predictable, reliable, multiyear financing to the municipalities, especially the really large ones, on public transit, including rail transit.

4:30

My second question is a different kind of question. I can't remember the program name – I think the minister actually alluded to it in his comments – the petroleum tank remediation program. I think that's the right name. I spent a fair bit of time last summer driving around the province, and I was struck by the number of times I'd pull into a small-town gas station and go in and introduce myself and get a real conversation going in a moment with the gas station owner who owned a station where the tank was decades and decades old, and there was concern about leakage, and there were no resources available to clean up the site.

The value of the gas station in terms of reselling it was nil because nobody was going to buy it. I can think of two different cases off the top of my head where the family, who had built this business up and wanted to retire on the sale of the business, couldn't sell it because of the contamination.

I also think of the large site on Whyte Avenue, 105th Street, an old Imperial Oil station, a prime, prime piece of property on one of the province's more famous streets, Whyte Avenue, sitting there. It has sat empty for years, unused because of petroleum contamination. I must say that it makes me very unhappy to look at the record profits being made by Imperial Oil, and then I go by an old Imperial Oil gas station site which is contaminated beyond usage in a prime area of Edmonton, and they are not held accountable to clean that up. I think we're missing out on holding the right people accountable.

My question to the minister really is: what resources are in the budget and what plans are in the business plan to aggressively pursue rehabilitation of these sites?

My third question has to do with the ambulance transfer, which was a very contentious issue, as the minister well knows, earlier this year. It had a real impact on municipalities and on the provincial taxpayer. If he can give us some indication of what's going to

proceed, from his perspective, through this next budget year to sort out the ambulance transfer issue and the role of the municipalities in delivering that service to their citizens.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to try and shorten my answers. I've been advised by the House leaders that there are discussions ongoing. I will try and shorten my answers, but if I'm not able to answer all of the questions this afternoon, I will make a commitment that we'll have answers in writing that will be provided. But these questions, I think, are relatively straightforward.

The issue of long-term funding, I think, is something that is unquestionably a concern for municipalities. We have in place a couple of things in this area, neither of which, unfortunately or fortunately – I'm not sure which – are within Municipal Affairs' budget. The kind of funding that the member is referring to is infrastructure funding and so actually comes through infrastructure's budget. Nevertheless, there's usually a great deal of input from Municipal Affairs and the minister of infrastructure and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. For example, on this latest round the \$3 billion had a great deal of discussion, and Municipal Affairs was very much part of the decision-making process.

There is a commitment by the province to five years at this point in time. There's also a commitment in place with respect to the larger cities and the gasoline tax, an agreement that we have in place with municipalities. The member also made reference to the federal government, and I have to say that it really is good that the federal government has finally stepped up to the plate, has recognized that there is a role for the federal government.

At lunch today I was just visiting with AUMA, who were holding an excellent mayors' conference in Edmonton for professional development for elected officials at the municipal level. I talked to them about the new deal and the commitment that the province has made that every penny that flows through on the new deal from the federal government will flow through entirely to the municipalities. The province has made a commitment that should the federal government come through with their promise for funding for municipalities, there will be a complete and utter flow through directly to municipalities from the province. There are a couple of things that we can do to assist municipalities, but, as I mentioned, in the long term I think we have to have a look at funding sources and taxation areas, and those are bigger questions than we're going to resolve here this afternoon.

The underground storage tank situation. I mentioned that that was funded out of a one-time expenditure of \$60 million. Unfortunately, there is nothing in this budget to extend that program. There are still some dollars that were left in that fund to finish off some of the projects that were started. That \$60 million was actually in the hands of the Safety Codes Council, so that has been expended over a number of years, and there are some existing files that are being finished off out of the dollars.

It is my hope that we can extend that program at some point in the future with another, perhaps, one-time investment, keeping in mind that the government has committed to review one-time and capital expenditures once the surplus situation becomes much clearer throughout the year. I may just end up back at Treasury Board at some point along the line, but at this point there are no additional dollars for the program.

The program was designed to deal with individual property owners and municipalities that were dealing with contaminated sites. The program never was intended to deal with issues such as the member pointed out with respect to major oil companies, and that is

a concern of mine because it's not just Whyte Avenue in Edmonton. There are towns throughout Alberta that have two or three or sometimes four corners of their major downtown intersections that are dealing with the same situation. I think that's something that, hopefully, we can work with in conjunction with Environment, on dealing with enforcement of standards. The issue is like many other things in that as long as you don't change the use of the land, there isn't a requirement to decontaminate.

So that is a concern, and a number of municipalities have brought it to my attention, and that's something that I would hope that we can work with Environment on to step up the enforcement and perhaps even consider whether there should be some time frames put in place. There are two sides every time you consider something like that because if you're going to affect the large oil companies, you're also going to affect the little guy, that may not have financial resources. It is a good concern, and it's something that we haven't been unaware of.

Finally, on the issue of ambulance transfer. Again, this is something that's not in my budget. We assist the health minister with population figures and those kinds of things. I think it would probably be inappropriate for me to comment on what the future of ambulance service is. I will comment, though, that municipalities certainly made it clear to me that there were inconveniences, to say the least, imposed upon them, and I will be making it as clear to the health minister that before we proceed with another ambulance plan, municipalities have got to be sure that the plan is done right and it is sustainable on a long-term basis. So you have my commitment to work with the minister on that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, as a former municipal councillor I'm delighted to hear some of the remarks from the minister, particularly in the area of the blue-sky visioning, because really I do believe that we've hit the point where we have to start seriously looking at what you called the fourth R, the relationships. I think it's very important that municipalities do retain an autonomy because they are, after all, the politicians that are closest to the people and are responsible in certainly a far closer fashion than we that sit in this House.

4:40

I will be brief with my comments and my questions if I might. In the annual report of the Auditor General under the heading of Scope it stated that there was a follow-up on the prior-year recommendation that the ministry "not advance funds to other organizations to acquire its own assets." I wonder if you could clarify for me which part of the budget those funds would come from and what, in fact, organizations were being referenced? Are we still doing that practice?

Also, what form of accounting does this ministry use? Is it the Canadian generally accepted accounting principles form?

I've noted that the ministry has contracted out to a private-sector service provider for the operation and maintenance of their IT system. Who is this private firm? If it's not wholly Canadian, would the information shared by municipalities with the ministry be subject to the Home Protection Act of the United States, which in fact would allow FBI and CIA access to this particular information? What other changes have been made since the Auditor General made the recommendations from last year?

Further, one last thing. We spoke about an expanded tax base to give municipalities greater potential to serve the unique needs of their residents. I'm glad that you said that there would be consulta-

tion because I feel that it could be a slippery slope. I'm not sure that it's exactly fair that municipalities would be – and I'm not going to use the word "forced" because it would be collaborative if what you're saying would occur – to raise the taxes for infrastructure or services that are rightly the province's responsibility and that have been downloaded in part over the past number of years.

For instance, the mandate for the municipalities to collect off-site levies for infrastructure from developers, who of course only pass those costs on to the new homeowners, is really just another name for an infrastructure tax. I would suspect that municipalities would entertain the idea of the ability to be able to expand that tax base and certainly increase their revenues if there was an assurance that by collecting those taxes, there would also be a decrease of what the province would take from those taxes when we collected them and that they wouldn't all end up in the provincial coffers.

You've already spoken of consultations with the municipalities. I guess that another question would be: if the tax structure did change and the municipalities were allowed to collect in different fashions, who actually would pay for the extra administration costs to implement that idea? How would this idea really contribute to stable, equitable, and predictable funding for municipalities, who at this point are all struggling to try to stay ahead of their budgets that have gone south on them?

Mr. Renner: Well, the first three questions were technical in nature, and I think that they're probably appropriately addressed in writing, so I will commit to get those answers.

The final question was: who would pay for administration? I think that's getting down the technical road a long ways from the theoretical discussion that I was suggesting we have with municipalities. Obviously, the whole issue of costs related to taxation are the responsibility of the authority that collects the taxes. I don't think we want to go down that road until we've had a lot more discussion. I didn't suggest for a moment that I was supporting additional avenues of taxation for municipalities. What I said and what I've consistently said was that I'm prepared to have the discussion, but until I hear what is being proposed, I don't want to make any kinds of commitments, nor do I want to infer that there is any kind of commitment on our part.

The issue of off-site levies and property tax. The discussions that I've had with municipalities and with developers on off-site levies indicate that there is some need for some further clarification on exactly what was intended and what can and cannot be or, more importantly, what should and should not be included under off-site levies. That discussion is ongoing, and hopefully we will come to some kind of a consensus on that soon because there is some confusion on both sides of the issue, quite frankly.

Finally, the area of property tax. When I suggested that municipalities could have a higher share of property tax, that was based on the premise that the province would give tax room, would walk away from the education property tax and then provide some tax room to municipalities. So, again, purely speculative. Food for thought. But there certainly would not be any intent – in fact, I think the taxpayers would make it pretty clear: this was not an idea that the cities would simply pay for infrastructure by raising taxes. The idea was that if the province could find alternate sources for education, there may be some tax room there for municipalities.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have just a general comment, and then I have a number of very specific questions that

I don't expect the minister to necessarily have time to deal with today, but in writing, because they're perhaps too specific.

The only general comment I'd like to make at the start: I'm not sure how you do it, but it seems to me that as long as I've been involved in the political world, there has always been a discussion, for lack of a better term, of revenue sharing; in other words, how best to get money from the provincial government to the municipal governments. I remember a statement by one former, long before this minister's time, where he called the municipal governments the children of the province. That didn't go over very well at the time. You can appreciate that.

I think that it's still a concern. The municipal governments would like to have some way, in terms of revenue sharing, that they know what's coming: less tied-in grants, less yearly fluctuations in terms of how much money is coming in provincially, and the rest of it. I guess the point I'm making is that it's all the same taxpayers, and they as a government are in some ways closer to the public than we are. I think it would be helpful if we could do that.

Now, I know that when you talk about revenue sharing, there are probably a hundred different models of being able to do that. As a general comment, I think if we can move in that direction, everybody's better served. I think those at that level have never believed that because we're elected to the provincial level, somehow we're smarter than the people who are elected at that level. The people at the local level, whether they be in rural Alberta or the city of Edmonton, city of Calgary, Lethbridge, wherever the case may be, are the ones, I think, that can best make those decisions.

I would encourage the minister, and I'm not sure if they're looking at various funding models in terms of the discussions he's having with the municipalities, but as a general concept – and I don't, as I say, have a magic wand here to figure out how to do it – I really do believe that revenue sharing of some sort would be a way to go.

Very quickly, the questions I have, and again the minister can go to whatever he wants, but perhaps in writing.

Page 294 of the government estimates for Municipal Affairs indicates an increase, I believe, of 15 full-time equivalent employment positions. I'm sort of interested in what new positions are being created and which unit they will be employed in and, of that, how many are management and nonmanagement positions. I don't know if this is correct or not, but it's been brought to our attention that this department is experiencing difficulties in filling vacant positions that they currently have. I wonder if that's the case, and if so, how is the minister addressing this issue?

4:50

The AUMA and AAMD and C participated in a preliminary consultation on the restructuring of the Municipal Government Act over the past few years. I think the key point is that other key stakeholders at this time or before were not consulted. I guess questions flowing from that. Are the continuation of restructuring of the Municipal Government Act project costs included in the estimates provided, and if so, is the minister considering a full consultation with all the affected stakeholders, municipalities, and professional associations referenced in the Municipal Government Act? Is it the agenda of this minister to continue to move references currently contained in the act to regulations? We've seen some direction there. What assurances can the minister provide to municipalities and associations that regulatory changes will not be made without their input? Will the minister continue to use the excuse of the restructuring project to hold up other requests for changes in the Municipal Government Act?

Moving along, do the estimates include funding to work on other

legislative and regulatory amendments this year? If so, what acts and regulations are affected, and what commitment will the minister make that all affected stakeholders will be consulted?

Another area. The budget for the Municipal Government Board and the assessment services unit are included in these estimates. Now, Telus has appealed its linear assessment, as the minister is well aware, to the Municipal Government Board for several years, and it's cost taxpayers in this province I believe at a minimum several hundred thousands of dollars to defend the linear assessments prepared by this province. Taxpayers in the province pay for the operation of the Municipal Government Board, who are ruling against the assessments prepared by the same ministry that their operating costs are funding. The question is: is the Municipal Government Board making poor decisions, or is the province preparing inaccurate assessments? What amount has this minister included in these estimates to defend the linear appeals of Telus and other companies appealing their linear assessments? Any information we can get in that whole area of linear assessments.

Next question: how much funding is included in these estimates to research and to update regulated assessment rates? Can farmers who are already affected by BSE and extremely low rates for grain expect increases in their property assessed with regulated rates provided by the province?

I want to just quickly cover the database that was created over the past few years to collect and analyze asset information collected by all the municipalities in this province. How much funding for the continuation of this project is included in these estimates, and how is the confidential information on assets of businesses and individuals who own land and property in this province protected from entering the hands of criminals? Of course, we're coming from what happened in Health, and we're just asking if there are any concerns there, what the protections are. The grant funds to municipalities and private companies were distributed over the past three years in reference to the asset project. How much funding is included in this year's estimates for additional grants?

Finally, funds included on page 288 under Expense, Unconditional Municipal Grants, include funding for more grant funds to be distributed without conditions. How can this government be held accountable when they continually give out grants with no conditions?

Are funds included in these estimates to provide education to the public on how to understand their assessment and education taxes? That, as the minister knows, has become a major issue. We wonder if that information is being communicated to the public, and if so, how?

Are funds included in these estimates for municipalities to cover off the cost of calculating, collecting, and including the education property tax and assessment notices? If not, is it the intention of this minister to force municipalities to perform these duties through legislative requirements when they're already short of resources to adequately maintain their municipalities?

Those are very specific questions to the minister. I don't expect answers now because I know that they're fairly detailed, but I would like to get these sorts of questions, if I could, written when the minister has time because I think there are some very important issues in there.

In conclusion, because I know that there are other members who want to get in, I do want to thank the minister for his commitment from the bill that went through the Legislature on the community revitalization levy. He knows that we have some concerns about that. As I said in the past, I think that can be a good thing or a bad thing depending how it goes forward. The minister has given his commitment, and I thank him for that. At that time we'll bring our

concerns, at the regulations, so I won't bore him here with that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Chairman, there were about three questions there that I would like to answer. I'm also cognizant of the fact that others want to speak. What I would suggest that we do is I'll take notes, we'll let others speak, and then if there's time for me to answer questions, I'll do it at the end. Then anybody who wants to get their questions on the record will have an opportunity to do so.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to participate in this budget debate on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Frankly, when I went through the budget and through the business plan, I felt that this is a ministry whose budget has the potential to receive very little debate in this Chamber if certain easy and simple criteria are met. If this ministry runs as the people want it to and if its decisions are reached only after full consultation with the stakeholders – the cities, towns, villages, and communities of this province – then we as the opposition members will only have to give it the nod of approval. I would be the first member in line to congratulate this minister on a job well done. There are two simple rules – consultation and listening to the people – and if met would make this budget pretty undebatable.

I would remind the minister that when we were discussing Bill 28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005, we as the Official Opposition indicated our support for it. We threw our weight behind it, and rightly so. The ministry consulted with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and they, too, agreed with what was proposed. However, I heard from people on boards or the city councils in Edmonton and Calgary, at least, that they were not fully integrated in this consultation process. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association was involved quite heavily. These individual boards or councils have to be more informed and more involved in the decision-making process. They agreed with the law, by the way. They agreed with the amendment, but they just wanted to be involved at an earlier stage.

I would urge the minister that maybe in the future at least the largest six cities, maybe not every single town and every single village but the largest cities in the province, like Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Fort McMurray, could be involved parallel to and in conjunction with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

My questions today are really simple and straightforward. Number one: why is spending for public safety estimated at only \$14 million for this fiscal year, 2005-06, compared to the actual spending of \$21 million in 2003-04 or the \$37 million or \$38 million in the 2004-05 government forecast? Public safety is definitely a top priority and should be on this government's front burner. I'm talking about things like safety services, fire protection, emergency response training, emergency management, et cetera. It would make sense to allocate the funds initially and then hope that we never have to use it. It's like buying insurance. You buy insurance, you pay the premiums, and you hope that you never have to use the insurance or never have to collect on it.

Again, we want to invest fully and adequately in things like emergency services and training and hope that we never face an emergency or a disaster instead of this government's preferred practice where it underestimates the expenditures to make the budget look cosmetically good and prudent. Then almost all the ministries and the departments would turn around and come back to this Assembly 10 or 11 months later, and they're asking for supplementary supply, which adds up to thousands of millions of dollars every year.

My take on this is: there is one taxpayer, there is one client, and all three levels of government are in place to serve that client. So we have the federal, the provincial, and the municipal bodies. They all have one purpose in existence and that is to serve the voter and the taxpayer.

5:00

So my question is: what is the point, then, of having a budget, approving a budget, if we inject money into it after the fact year in and year out? So I would rather see them budget more, and if we don't have to use it, fine. We can say that the budget was more than what we needed, which is a good thing, rather than lowballing it and using a smaller or a lesser estimate and then having to inject more money into it in supplementary supply.

Furthermore, we as the Official Opposition encourage the government to implement a plan, again in consultation with the municipalities, which would set out what expenditures are needed and when – so it's more of a planning approach – the future cost of maintenance and maintaining capital assets, things that we have to build and things that we have to fix, how the assets will be financed, and how much the municipality needs to spend to meet its ongoing financial obligations.

Delegation of authority is good. Allowing autonomy and flexibility is really good in decision-making, and that's one thing. But the other thing is downloading debt onto municipalities. I would make the comparison to what happened with the school boards, for example, when the government said, "You guys are responsible," but then we don't empower them. We don't furnish them with the tools that they need to carry on their duties, and they look bad. They're the bad guy, when, in fact, the government is undermining them by making them stand there and look responsible, but they're not being empowered enough.

So downloading debt onto the municipalities is definitely unacceptable. This is a province that claims to be debt free, and this is a province and this is a government which made it illegal to be in the red, made it illegal to accumulate any type of debt. However, having said that, why are we asking the municipalities to be responsible for picking up the tab for the \$8 billion infrastructure debt? Maybe the hon. minister would say, "Well, this is a question for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation," which is fine, but I think this government is one body. It's one caucus. So I don't think it's fair to the municipalities to say, "Here you go. You are responsible. You are autonomous. You are fully elected and duly elected. Carry on your duties," but then, "You know what? We'll only fund you this much."

Recently we heard about the \$3 billion announcement over a few years, but, for example, Edmonton is going to only get \$670-some million dollars, when, in fact, they need double that. And this is only one city. So I can extrapolate and talk about the other cities as well and then also the smaller communities, which are in dire need of help.

If we're enjoying the benefits of surpluses and enjoying the benefits of huge oil revenues, I think the Alberta Liberal idea to invest 25 per cent of the surplus in a capital account makes sense, and it's really something that I would urge the hon. minister to consider to empower the municipalities to eliminate their \$8 billion infrastructure debt, you know, within eight or 10 or 12 years, which is a reasonable expectation, rather than spending the surplus money on, you know, the heritage fund, which the government doesn't like too much. So I think a capital account investment would be a superior and a more acceptable approach.

Again, we want to invest fully and adequately in things like emergency services and training and hope that we never face an emergency or a disaster instead of this government's preferred practice where it underestimates the expenditures to make the budget look cosmetically good and prudent. Then almost all the ministries and the departments would turn around and come back to this Assembly 10 or 11 months later, and they're asking for supplementary supply, which adds up to thousands of millions of dollars every year.

With that, I would cede the floor and encourage further debate or listen to the hon. minister. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the Municipal Affairs budget. As the elected member for Edmonton-Ellerslie a large part of my riding encompasses Mill Woods. It's no secret that my constituents are concerned about safety, not only my constituents but all Albertans, of course. They want their government to ensure their safety.

Mr. Chairman, today marks VE Day. I'm grateful for the sacrifices made by the veterans. They gave so that we all could enjoy a life of freedom and security. It is security that many people do not enjoy because of the criminal elements that exist. People want guarantees that when they lock their doors at night, families will be safe. Families also want to know that when they go for a walk, they will be safe, and so there needs to be more investment in the form of front-line men and women police officers. Our community at large desires nothing less. With the spending reduction of \$23.7 million for public safety, what will this ministry do to ensure the safety of our community at large and all Albertans?

Women or ladies who may be extra aware of or embarrassed about their shape have low self-esteem and no motivation. Certainly, there are spas or exercise clubs, et cetera, but what can the government do to encourage them to pursue a more active and more integrated lifestyle? There is also the angle with respect to immigrant women who come here, and they are not even made aware of what's available to them, which programs are there for them to lose weight or keep fit or simply to interact with other female members of the community at large, to make them more comfortable, make them feel welcome, and allow them to get fit and be happier and more satisfied.

Mr. Chairman, I have some general questions I want to ask the hon. minister. When you make long-term plans, how do you identify, investigate, or facilitate all options to improve the quality of the projects, any project?

Number two, in my riding there's the Ellerslie Rugby Club. That site is already sold. They are searching for a new suitable site that would have long-term sustainability. Can the minister tell us the latest situation of this rugby club?

Mr. Chairman, municipalities currently have a municipal infrastructure debt estimated at between \$7 billion and \$9 billion. This is a result of decreased provincial transfers to municipalities as well as a downloading of provincial responsibilities onto municipalities. Municipalities need a stable plan that will assess their needs in advance and ensure that there are no funding shortfalls that will lead to massive infrastructure debt. Will this government provide Alberta's municipalities with the tools to raise revenue to deal with their changing and increasing needs?

I want to ask some financial questions. What is the reasoning behind the spending reduction of \$23.7 million for public safety? With continued devastating structural fires throughout Alberta that destroy the homes and businesses of Albertans, why is the budget being reduced by \$116,000 for the fire commissioner? Prevention, advance awareness, and rapid responses to disasters are necessary to protect Albertans throughout the province when disaster occurs. However, there has been a \$395,000 reduction in the budget for branch management under the emergency management.

Mr. Chairman, this budget provides a spending increase of \$364,000 for unconditional municipal grants. How will these grants benefit municipalities, and how will accountability of these grants be monitored? How will the spending increase of \$229,000 in

financial support to local authorities assist municipalities? The budget increased by 50 per cent, an amount of half a million dollars, for municipal sponsorship expenses. What is the reason for such a drastic budgetary increase, and how will this money be allocated?

Thank you.

5:10

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wasn't sure if the minister was going to answer now or later. I have a number of comments and some questions as well for the minister. First of all, I'd like to speak briefly about the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford and the fact that it encompasses the interchange at 23rd Avenue and Calgary Trail, which has obviously been in the news a lot over the last year. Certainly, I recognize that with the \$1 billion infrastructure grant that has finally come forward, Edmonton is benefiting to the tune of about \$670 million, I think, and having spoken to Edmonton's councillors, they're actually quite appreciative of that.

However, I will remind this House that during last year's campaigning, it was certainly an issue at that time that the \$1 billion that had been expected by the city of Edmonton had suddenly morphed into \$750 million, and now that we have the actual formula defined, it's been reduced again to \$670 million. It was certainly a concern for residents of Edmonton-Rutherford and, quite frankly, anybody who drives through the south end of the city that proceeding with that particular project might be delayed if, in fact, the original \$1 billion ended up being somewhat less than that. Thanks to the foresight of city council, they've decided to proceed with that particular project even though the money is somewhat less than most of us had been expecting at some point.

Likewise I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview spoke of the LRT and the fact that it's now finally emerging from underground at the University hospital, and again city council is using the money that has come forward from Municipal Affairs to begin the next phase of bringing the LRT down to the old Heritage Mall site, where the current Century Park development is going to take place. Again, there had been some concern when that development was being contemplated at city council that anything less than the \$1 billion might cause that to be set back, and city council has in their wisdom decided to proceed with that.

Unfortunately, what it means is that a number of other smaller projects, smaller than the interchange at 23rd Avenue and Calgary Trail and smaller than the planned expansion of the LRT, are going to have to now take a back seat. Certainly, when we met with city council recently as an opposition caucus, as I said, they were very appreciative of the money they are getting, but it does mean that other areas are going to have to be held back, and I think that is unfortunate.

Of course, the minister well knows that the city of Edmonton is undertaking a census, I think, as we speak to come up with more current numbers, and I imagine that the minister will be hearing from the city once they have those numbers showing that Edmonton has grown substantially compared to some other centres in recent years and perhaps we should even have received more funding.

I'd like to ask a couple of questions specific to the core business goals on page 367. Goal 1.4 talks about acting as "an advocate for municipalities within the provincial government to improve provincial responsiveness to municipal issues and concerns." I know that when my colleague from Edmonton-McClung spoke a few minutes ago, he complimented you, the ministry that is, on the job that you had done in terms of consultation with the AUMA on Bill

28, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005. I know, having spoken to a number of members of AUMA myself, in fact, that there was good consultation.

But I was surprised – and I know we’ve relayed this information to you previously, I think – to learn upon speaking to a number of councillors themselves and a number of mayors themselves that they weren’t aware of the fact that that bill was before the House. I’m sure that it could be argued that that’s a breakdown in communications within the AUMA, but I would hope that the ministry would take that to note that, perhaps, we as a government could have done a better job of making sure that all of the various councils knew that there were amendments coming to the MGA, not just simply communicating that to the AUMA and trusting that they would then disseminate that information to everybody who might be affected. If we could have actually communicated directly with the various municipalities, I would think that that might have served us well.

Goal 1.5 under the core business goals talks about “an enhanced review of the Local Authorities Election Act [to] ensure that it is achieving desired results.” Of course, this is a timely goal, and I’m sure that’s why it’s in here, given some of the things that took place in Calgary during the most recent municipal election. But let’s be mindful that there were some serious concerns about irregularities in the Edmonton municipal election as well. I’d ask the minister if he could clarify for us just exactly what that review will entail, what it will look like, and what the timelines are on it so that we would have that information. I know of several people that have been involved in working on municipal elections, and they’re quite anxious to see the results of this particular review. So if you could share with us exactly what that would look like, I would appreciate it.

Now to a few more specific questions. At page 292 of the ministry estimates under Revenue – and you may have answered this already. I’ve been popping in and out a few times this afternoon, and I might have missed it. Transfers from the federal government are down \$12 million. I’m not sure what that is, if it was a specific one-time transfer last year or what. Obviously, that’s a big chunk of money, and if you wouldn’t mind, if you haven’t already, sharing with us the reason for that transfer being down \$12 million.

I notice that the revenue from premiums, fees, and licences is down \$96,000. I would have thought, given that costs seem to go up on everything these days and given that most of the municipalities are booming in this province right now – we talk about that daily in the House and the need for infrastructure in Fort McMurray as an example. So I was surprised, quite frankly, to see that the total revenue from premiums, fees, and licences is going down. Maybe you could provide an explanation for why that is the case.

Then there is a line item, other revenue, and it shows \$1.781 million. That’s an awful lot of money just to classify it as “other.” I’m wondering if you could share with us what makes up \$1.781 million because it’s, as I say, a lot of money. I think I’ve said in the House before that given that we’re supposedly out of the business of being in business, here we’re making almost \$2 million from something, and it just says “other.” I’d like to know what that is coming from.

I guess my last question, if I can just jump back to the business plans for a second. Performance measure 1(a) in the business plan – let’s just see if I can find it here. I’d actually like to read it if I can refer to it again. It talks about the performance measure “level of satisfaction with the Local Government Services Division’s activities.” I won’t read it all. Under that one the last actual number was 88 per cent, and I note that for this year the target is 80 per cent. It just jumped out at me. Eighty-eight per cent is a wonderful figure. I would think that most ministries would be happy to see numbers

like that coming back in terms of satisfaction with work that they’re doing. I’m a little curious why in this particular case it seems like we’re setting our standard or our expectations a little lower, and if the minister might be able to provide for me some explanation as to why it appears as if we’ve dropped our expectation in that particular regard.

So I would hope that the minister might be able to answer some of those questions today, and I will take my seat and wait. Thank you.

5:20

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’ve got a couple of comments with regard to this Ministry of Municipal Affairs. We talk about transportation. Edmonton-Decore is, in fact, a constituency which has spread out. It borders the Yellowhead Trail right to the perimeter of the city, so you can anticipate some of the problems that people would have being able to make their way back with regard to transportation. I think that if we talked about investing in a little bit more public transportation, we would certainly be within our scope with being able to achieve some of the realistic goals that are set out by the Kyoto as well.

We talk about transportation, not only public. I’m not sure if your ministry covers DATS, which in Edmonton is the disabled adult transportation service or system. There is an increasing number of people who are not as mobile as they once were, and that finite number just doesn’t seem to be able to take into account the time that these people have to wait. You have to make an appointment, in fact, for the disabled adult transportation system or service, DATS, to ensure that you do have them be able to come.

I think that’s extremely concerning for people. They may not be able to just pick up and call when they have an emergency or an appointment. They have to make a call well in advance. Well, as you know, our lives just don’t dictate around sometimes predetermined appointments. We need to be able to have that service available to us. I’m wondering if the ministry would be able to address that concern. As I said, there are a number of adults within my constituency who are not as mobile as they once were, given the age that they are now.

Again, it’s a spread-out constituency with new communities developing on an ongoing basis, and I’m not sure how the transportation system is going to be able to address all the needs. Certainly, I realize that it’s one that’s not only debatable within Edmonton but in all the outlying areas such as Fort McMurray, Calgary, Red Deer, and other municipalities.

We talked about a reduction, at least my good Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie did, a spending reduction of \$23.779 million in public safety. Now, you talked about fire, ambulance, and police, that I’m assuming come under that public safety. I’ll talk about fire just for a minute here. We’ve had a number of high-profile fires within Edmonton that have taken out not only apartment buildings but businesses.

It’s no fault of the department itself. I think it’s just a matter of some of the things and the circumstances that they’ve had to deal with. Some have been in the dead of winter, when the temperatures get quite cold and the lines freeze. Unfortunately, lives are at risk. The buildings are lost. Because we are in a winter climate as far as I know, I’m sure that we could come up with some new technologies to be able to equip the men and women who do in fact fight the fires with the ability to be able to fight them year-round.

The ones I’m concerned with: we had ones out in Clareview, we had the chicken plant down on the south side, we had the Chinese

market on 97th Street, all within the dead of winter and all faced the same circumstances. It was almost certain and total loss. That's because of the fact that the lines were freezing during the time that they were needed. So I'm not sure if this ministry is looking into alternative ways to be able to find some sort of, maybe, glycol in the line that wouldn't freeze when the weather gets below the minus 20, minus 30.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, but pursuant to unanimous consent granted by the Assembly earlier this afternoon to waive Standing Order 58(5), I would invite the Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report progress on the estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Chair, would it be appropriate just to go to a vote at the moment and then rise?

The Deputy Chair: If there are no further speakers. Okay.

Are you ready for the vote, then, after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Municipal Affairs for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$128,417,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report the estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Municipal Affairs: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$128,417,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

[Motion carried; at 5:27 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 9, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/09

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. Renew us with Your strength. Focus us in our deliberations. Challenge us in our service to the people of this great province. Amen.

Hon. members, in the Speaker's gallery is Mr. Paul Lorieau. He will now lead us in the singing of our national anthem, and I invite all, including the members of the galleries, to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 20 very special guests from the Fort Saskatchewan pioneer club. They are accompanied today and led by their president, Mr. Al McNeil. These 20 guests are very active in the community of Fort Saskatchewan and do just a huge amount of volunteer work on behalf of many other citizens. I would ask them to rise in the gallery and receive the traditional warm support of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a constituent and volunteer in the Calgary-Buffalo constituency, Mr. Wayne Ellis. Wayne is in his fourth year of commerce at the U of C, and he's here to observe the inner workings of the Assembly. I'd like to ask Wayne to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, my guests are not in the Assembly yet. If I could wait and introduce them later. Thank you.

The Speaker: Indeed.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of grade 6 students from the Rimbey elementary school. They are

accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Jim Moore; parent helpers Mr. Jim Reiser, Judith Woolsey, Emily Breton, Mrs. Brenda Kramer, and Mrs. Gwen Olsen; and another accompanying person, Mr. Jim Therrien. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would like to ask them now to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce today two fine gentlemen who are responsible for assisting our citizens of Alberta not only when there is a fire and training Albertans on how to prevent fires from showing up but in environmental disasters, train derailments, and when bioterrorism could perhaps occur. Mr. Gord Colwell, the president of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association, and Mr. Brent Shelton, the treasurer of the very same association, are with us. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today that I introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly Mrs. Cheryl Bissell. She's a councillor for Yellowhead county. She's got her chaperone today, her granddaughter, Ryley Huber. I'd ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, I could stand here and say that my guests have just arrived, but I have to say that my eyes are failing me as I get up in age. I'm privileged to say that this is the second group of students I've had to introduce in this session, which is rather rare for a southern Alberta MLA. This is a special group of students. They are from the Webber Academy in Calgary-West. The Webber Academy was started eight years ago by a former member of this Assembly, Dr. Neil Webber, and is also a special place for my colleague from Calgary-Foothills. We have 45 grade 5 students in both galleries today. They are accompanied not only by Dr. Webber but by teachers Janet Adamson, Janice Chan, and Daniel Mondaca. I would ask them to rise and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present to you today four of Alberta's outstanding innovation leaders. They're here representing the Alberta Science and Technology Leadership Foundation, best known for its ASTech awards. With us today is Guy Mallabone, who is the chair of the ASTech Foundation and the vice-president of external relations for SAIT. Along with Guy is Dr. Michael Brett, who was the winner of the 2003 outstanding leadership in Alberta technology award for his work in nanomaterials technology. He's also the director of engineering physics at the U of A and a Canada research chair. Dr. Jed Harrison, a professor of chemistry at the U of A, was the winner of the 2002 outstanding leadership in Alberta technology award for his lab-on-a-chip. Dr. Talib Rajwani was a corecipient of the 2002 Leaders of Tomorrow award for his work in looking for the cause of scoliosis, a spinal disorder in adolescents. I would note that Dr. Rajwani's parents and sister are also in the gallery. They would want you to put October 14 on your calendar because that is the date of the ASTech awards this year in Calgary. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions to make today. The first is to introduce the parents of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, Art and Barbara Miller. They have lived in Pleasantview since 1965, 40 years if my math is right. Speaking of math, they have five grown children and, very impressively, there were 17 foster children who went through the Miller household. Rick is the eldest. His parents have recently returned from a holiday in Arizona. This is their first chance to see their son in action. I don't think they're surprised to see him here because they say that when he was 12 years old, every sentence that he uttered began with, "When I'm Prime Minister . . ." I would ask Art and Barbara Miller to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the STEP student for Edmonton-Riverview, who will be there for several months. His name is Ben Taylor, and he will be spending the summer trying to keep my life organized and help out in the constituency. Ben has just completed his second year at the U of A, majoring in political science with a minor in English. He's been a recipient of the Canadian millennium excellence scholarship award, an advanced placement national scholar, and also a Jason Lang and Alexander Rutherford scholar. He's very active in the soccer scene and is also in the Edmonton Youth Choir. I'd ask Ben to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a group of 38 individuals I would like to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly. This group is comprised of 34 students and four adults. They are from Terrace Heights school. The group is led by teachers Mr. Jaques and Mrs. Stead, and they are accompanied this afternoon by parent volunteers Mrs. Miller and Mr. St. Dennis. The group from Terrace Heights is in the public gallery, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Jung-Suk Ryu. He is the STEP student for the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. Jung is 20 years old. He has completed his second year of studies, majoring in political science at the University of Alberta. He currently holds an associate of music degree, runs a music school, and is a member of the Alberta music teachers' association. He has a passion for local politics, wrote opinion columns on various topics in the *Edmonton Journal* for two years, and founded Speak Out!, a network for high school and university students to communicate with local and national leaders, involving over 15 Members of the Legislative Assembly. He also ran as the youngest candidate in the 2004 municipal election and came through with close to 4,000 votes. We're happy to have him assisting us to meet the constituency needs. I'll ask Jung to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure about my guests, so maybe later on.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Sheila McKeage and Wilena Waechter. Sheila is an environmental biologist and is currently employed by a business known as Fiera. Wilena is a nurse in the community of Banff and volunteers her time with new immigrants. Both are here to watch the proceedings. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm greeting of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the executive of the Hanna Youth Council. The Hanna Youth Council has been extraordinarily successful in increasing youth involvement and participation in their community, with involvement from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the town of Hanna. They're currently working on a pool fundraiser to build a new swimming pool in their town and planning a 1st of July barbecue. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise as I call their names: Shawna Wallace, who is the economic development community services co-ordinator for the town of Hanna, and youth council members Riley Georgsen, Kali Taylor, Dawson Kennedy, and Kaila Lewis. I would ask that the members of this Assembly give these fine young people a very, very warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you one of my favourite constituents today and the best present the Member for Calgary-Shaw received for Mother's Day this year; that is, the return of her second son, Jeff Ady, from serving a two-year mission in the New York South Mission. He's here today examining postsecondary options. I'd like to welcome him back to Alberta and ask if my son, Jeff, would rise and receive the warm welcome of the House today.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP's integrated market enforcement team facilitates co-operation between the RCMP and provincial securities commissions. Its goal is to have the RCMP work closely with securities regulators, federal and provincial authorities, and police of local jurisdiction. IMET, as it is called, is just one of many examples where the ASC co-operates with the RCMP and other provincial securities commissions regarding specific enforcement cases. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Could she inform this House: why will the ASC waive its confidentiality exemption for the RCMP and other provincial securities commissions but not for this province's Auditor General?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Securities Commission is now in the process of reviewing what they may release under their legislation. I don't believe the concern is at all in reviewing the information; it's in the reporting of it and ensuring that the confidentiality remains then.

Dr. Taft: The Auditor General Act covers that.

My second question to the same minister: what steps has the Finance minister taken to ensure that enforcement files at the ASC are not being destroyed or tampered with?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think that's a preposterous suggestion.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the same minister: why hasn't the Finance minister brought in a truly independent, out-of-province interim chair instead of yet another Tory friend?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to respond on behalf of the Deputy Premier. The hon. member alludes to Mr. Valentine, of course. The opposition has a long history of smearing good Albertans, and Mr. Valentine is, indeed, a good Albertan who is eminently qualified. He was the Auditor General of Alberta from 1995 to 2002, he previously served as chair of the Financial Advisory Committee of ASC, he's an adjunct professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary, and he recently completed a six-month term as interim vice-president, finance and services, for the University of Calgary.

He is also currently a member of the board of trustees and the audit committee of Fording Canadian Coal Trust, Superior Plus Incorporated, PrimeWest Energy, and Resmore Trust Company. He graduated with a bachelor of commerce degree with distinction from UBC and is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. Mr. Speaker, most importantly, Mr. Valentine's integrity – this is from the opposition.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Governments and organizations across Canada are implementing whistle-blower protection for their employees, but this government refuses to follow the lead. When serious allegations of wrongdoing at the Alberta Securities Commission were raised by employees, those employees were publicly insulted as cowardly and depraved. They were intimidated, bullied, and one was even fired. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Given that by July 1 of this year all companies regulated by the Alberta Securities Commission are to have whistle-blower protection in place in those companies, why does this government continue to deny its own employees equivalent protection?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have said consistently that employees can feel very confident in bringing forward any of their concerns to me, and they have brought forward some concerns. They've done it under the basis of anonymity and confidentiality. I've said in this House before and I'll repeat it one more time: if an employee is fired from that organization or any organization that's under, certainly, my purview, they have every opportunity and every avenue to proceed, to ensure that this release was done in the proper way.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. To the same minister: given the serious repercussions ASC employees face for voicing concerns about irregularities at the ASC, does this minister see the hypocrisy in companies at the ASC being required to protect whistle-blowers while the ASC itself does not provide that protection?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Valentine assumed his chairmanship of the ASC today. This morning he met with senior management. He had an opportunity to go around and be introduced

to the staff. I think the staff were very pleased with that opportunity to meet Mr. Valentine. I have every confidence in Mr. Valentine's interim chairmanship and that these issues will be resolved.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier would like to supplement my answer.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I would love to supplement. I would like to table a press release from the Alberta Liberal opposition. It's dated October 11, 2001. The leader at that time was Kevin Taft according to this printout. It says:

Mr. Valentine's integrity and desire to improve the way government conducts business has increased the credibility of the Office of the Auditor General. My colleagues in the Official Opposition and I extend our best wishes to Mr. Valentine.

The Speaker: Okay. We now have two points of order: the Leader of the Official Opposition, the official House leader. We'll deal with those at the conclusion.

Hon. leader, you have one more question in this set.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will this minister immediately do the right thing and implement whistle-blower protection rules at the Alberta Securities Commission to protect the commission's own staff?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the new chair, the interim chair has had an opportunity to meet staff. I've said consistently that staff can feel very confident in bringing any of their concerns forward to me. I think that we'd all be best served if we let the interim chair do his job.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Calgary Ward 10 Election

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the Calgary ward 10 voting scandal this Tory government launched an inspection whose terms of reference limited the investigator's ability to get to the bottom of the fiasco. Yet even the police were surprised when the inspection was terminated last week. Legal experts note that a full independent public inquiry as requested by the Liberal opposition, Calgary city council, Calgary Court of Queen's Bench would have been able to legally proceed alongside the police investigation. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given that the federal government had the courage to call the Gomery inquiry, which is getting to the bottom of Adscam, why won't the Alberta government be equally transparent and accountable and courageous and call a full public inquiry into ward 10?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, apart from the heightened level of rhetoric in the preamble the question is essentially the same as the question that was asked by the Leader of the Opposition last week, and the answer is exactly the same. The legal advice that I had as Minister of Municipal Affairs was that the inspection process could go on concurrently with the police investigation. The recommendation was that we proceed with an inspection as opposed to a full-blown inquiry because of the fact that anything done at the inquiry level could possibly affect the outcome of a police investigation and criminal charges and the ensuing court case that could come out of that. So that's the very simple explanation.

Mr. Taylor: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: if that's the case, then why was the inspection terminated? Was it fear of another Conservative public embarrassment?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the inspection has not been terminated. The inspection is very much still on course. Mr. Clark is in the process of completing his report. In fact, Mr. Clark will be hearing arguments from the significant players in the case and then will be forwarding the report.

At the appropriate time I am more than prepared to table documentation. Two documents here: one is dated December 14, and the other one is dated December 30, and these are the news releases that were issued by my office at the time that the inspection was put in place. I just want to read the first line of the inspection release. It says, "A provincial inspection will be held into Calgary's October 18, 2004 Ward 10 election to determine whether any irregularities occurred during the voting process." A short time later another press release was issued with the terms of reference, and the terms of reference very clearly say, "the municipal inspection is to deal with matters not dealt with by police authorities."

Mr. Speaker, the process is very clear. The process is proceeding exactly as it was intended to proceed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister, then, instruct the inspector, the investigator, to resume his inspection and talk to all the witnesses before he writes his report?

Mr. Renner: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the inspector has done exactly that. I expect the inspector to provide me with a full report, to report to me what were any irregularities in the election process and what his recommendations are to ensure that these same kinds of irregularities do not come into future elections. The purpose of this process is to restore confidence to the electoral system in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Health Facilities Review Committee

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The crisis in long-term care is due in part to inadequate inspections of our nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Instead of professional, well-trained investigators doing surprise inspections, we have a Tory-friendly committee headed up by a government MLA that likes to visit these centres and talk informally with residents, staff, and management. Long-term care facilities receive such visits at best every two to three years. My question is to the Premier. When will the government take action to replace a Tory-friendly citizens' committee headed up by a government MLA with trained professional inspectors who have the authority to issue orders to correct deficiencies in Alberta's long-term care facilities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the term "Tory-friendly committee." The Auditor General, of course, has looked into this matter. While I haven't read the Auditor General's report, I am told he has made some good recommendations, which are being acted upon immediately so that care in long-term care centres can be improved. Our first priority is to ensure that people living in long-term care facilities are safe and that they are treated with dignity and respect. Now, I'm told that the minister of health and the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports are already addressing many of the Auditor General's recommendations and will continue to do so.

The Speaker: I do not believe this report has been shared with the hon. members yet, and it won't be tabled till later this afternoon, so

many members in this Assembly have no idea what's transpiring here.

Mr. Mason: Nor do I, Mr. Speaker, but we still need to get to the bottom of it. I haven't seen the report because it hasn't been released to me.

Instead of dodging the question, will the Premier commit to immediate implementation of adequate standards, including frequent, professional, and unannounced inspections?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, my apologies. The report will be released, I understand it, in exactly one-half an hour from now. Obviously, the two ministers have the report, have reported generally the results of the report to cabinet, and have indicated that many of the recommendations have already been implemented, are in the process of being implemented, or will be implemented.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, why has the government refused to follow the lead of provinces like Ontario, who make the results of long-term care facility inspections public and even post them on the Internet?

2:00

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that's one of the recommendations, but if it is, we'll accept the recommendation. We tend to accept 98, 99 per cent of all recommendations that are put forward by the Auditor General.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Kyoto Climate Change Agreement

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As cited in the rural development strategy and known to virtually every member in this Assembly, Alberta's agricultural producers are excellent stewards of the land; however, they often bear the cost of maintaining the land that all Albertans get to enjoy. This land also serves another purpose. It acts as a carbon sink, reducing the overall effect of greenhouse gas emission. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Given that agricultural land is an excellent carbon sink and given that the federal government has recently approved the Kyoto agreement, is there a way that Alberta producers can benefit from the continued stewardship of that land?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government really has been dragging their feet on this. You know, what they came out with early on was they were telling producers how much the Kyoto agreement might benefit them in terms of their environmental stewardship; however, to the detriment of a lot of forward-thinking producers they haven't really shown us anything besides the broad statements and the comments that they've made. They have no concrete plans about how we might be able to do this.

You know, there is a cost to environmental stewardship that is being borne by the producers right now in rural Alberta. We think there should be a reward that goes along with that. We haven't really seen anything yet from the federal government on that, which is very, very unfortunate, but we hope that perhaps in the future that something might come of it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental is to the same minister. Since the federal government has approved the Kyoto agreement without any implementation plan or one even apparently forthcoming, can the minister tell this Assembly if the Alberta government is working on a plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, thank you. We are looking at some various solutions that might meet the needs of our producers in addition to working on some of the protocols of definitions in conjunction with the federal government. We're trying to push the federal government to speed up as quickly as they can in terms of coming up with a carbon credit plan. We've been asking the federal government to show some leadership on it as it is really a federal issue in terms of the definition of those credits.

In reality, they should have figured this out before they signed the agreement. It would have been much more helpful and more beneficial to the producers because then instead of our industries here buying credits in foreign lands, they could have been transferring that wealth to the producers in Alberta and in Canada. We hope that we can help them move toward something closer to that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Applewood Park Community Association

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Community Development sent me a letter last month stating that Wild Rose Foundation grants are given to organizations for specific programs of that organization, and funds may not be transferred to another organization. But financial statements from Calgary Applewood Community Association show that they broke the rules and transferred the grants to another organization. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Why did the minister allow Applewood to break the rules and transfer grant funds to another organization?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty speaking specifically to Applewood Park Community Association. You can appreciate that there are many, many grants that are given by the Wild Rose Foundation. But in general terms what I understood is that Applewood was a community association that was looking to do some work overseas and that in 2004 there were grants which they were eligible to apply for for the purposes of building some clean drinking water projects in Vietnam. Now, the way the Wild Rose Foundation works is that partners from Alberta may wish to oversee a project that is taking place in another jurisdiction, in this case Vietnam, and that the Applewood Park Community Association has accounted for the money as it was spent on the project in Vietnam.

I can take a look at this in some greater detail at some juncture, but I can say in general terms that there is a process by which Applewood would provide the financial statements to the Wild Rose Foundation, and if the Wild Rose Foundation is not satisfied or there's some discrepancy with respect to the accounting for the money being spent on the project that was being applied for, then the Wild Rose Foundation can initiate a process by which that money is returned.

Mr. Agnihotri: Does the minister know the name of the organization that ultimately received the funding?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the answer to that is, and I expect that it is part of Applewood's submission to the Wild Rose Foundation for the accounting, which I think came toward the end of last month. It will probably disclose the entity that the money was spent with for the purposes of building these clean drinking water facilities in Vietnam.

Mr. Agnihotri: How does the minister know that the funding was spent according to the Wild Rose standards?

Mr. Mar: I don't know that, Mr. Speaker. That's the whole purpose of the Wild Rose Foundation having an ability to audit so that they can be assured that the money, every dollar, was spent in accordance with the rules that were established at the time that Applewood, or any other agency, may have been applying for that money. So there is a procedure by which Wild Rose will look at that dollar for dollar. I can assure the hon. member that the Wild Rose Foundation has a very, very long track record of supporting excellent projects in developing nations throughout the world.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Custom Environmental Services Ltd. Fire

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents of east Edmonton and Strathcona county are concerned following the fire at Custom Environmental Services on Thursday, the 5th of May. My question is to the Minister of Environment. What is being done by his department to determine what toxic chemicals were being stored at the site and what was in the smoke cloud?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure this Assembly and members in the direct area where the fire took place that number one is to ensure the public health safety of our citizens and, of course, restoring the environment to its original form. I want to say to the members of the Assembly that our air monitoring lab from environmental protection was on-site within literally minutes of when we were contacted by the emergency management area. As well, our immediate investigation has determined that based on the records of the company at this time, there were no PCBs being stored on-site. However, there were fluorescent light ballasts being stored, which may have contained, in actual fact, small quantities of PCB.

Our investigation is ongoing, Mr. Speaker, but I want to assure the citizens in that area that everything, of course, has been done to protect the interest of their clean air and with the co-operation of the many emergency agencies that were involved on-site.

Mr. Lougheed: To the same minister: what role does his ministry play in assisting the fire departments on-site?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all congratulate specifically the city of Edmonton fire emergency services and also Strathcona county emergency service units and other emergency agencies that were there, as I'm sure all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating them. Ultimately, what we want to do first and foremost is work on the command centre with the fire officials in providing them with the necessary data so they can make the proper decisions when it comes to if, in fact, an evacuation should take place or not, which, of course, did happen in this particular instance.

Also, I want to say about our air monitoring vehicle: we're working right now with the city of Edmonton, where, in fact, we're going to be having some more emergency unit vehicles on-site because, as you realize, as we collect the data, it's an extremely dangerous situation, so we work in close partnership with the emergency officials, in this case with the city of Edmonton and Strathcona county emergency officials.

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the department has some new initiatives with respect to ongoing monitoring to assist those departments.

Mr. Boutilier: Absolutely so, Mr. Speaker. I can assure all members of this House and all Albertans that we will do the utmost, working in collaboration with emergency officials. Remember, the first objective when the fire took place was working in collaboration to put the fire out. Then at the same time our investigation is ongoing. We have lab samples that are coming forward, and we'll be reporting also back to the citizens in the area, and I can assure this House that we'll report back to this House on the findings of our very comprehensive investigations that are being carried out.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

2:10 Highway Construction

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to the government Transportation website, almost half, 44 per cent to be exact, of Alberta highways will be in fair to poor condition by 2008. The cost of the Anthony Henday Drive P3 has more than doubled from its original \$241 million estimate to its current \$493 million taxpayer bill. The twinning of highway 63 to Fort McMurray will be spread out over 10 years while it's been 40 years and still waiting in Calgary for a southern ring road bridge to cross the Elbow River to eliminate Glenmore gridlock. My questions are all to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Does the minister consider a score of 56 per cent good enough for Alberta's highways?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much. The simple answer to that is no. Mr. Speaker, we do have a considerable amount of work that needs to be done on Alberta highways. We need to keep Alberta on the move. We need to keep the transportation of goods and services rolling in Alberta. So the simple answer is no.

Part of my job as Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is to ensure that the roads are in good shape, to improve the amount of roads out there that are able to be travelled upon. That's something I take very seriously, and it's something we're attempting to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How can the minister justify the multimillion dollar cost overruns of road projects such as the Anthony Henday, highway 11, and highway 725, to name just a few?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much. First of all, Mr. Speaker, on highway 11 we added an extra truck-haul route to the twinning part, which added approximately \$82,000 to the road construction.

On highway 725, unfortunately, we were \$3 million over a \$7 million project simply because there were some landslides that

actually delayed construction and caused us to do a considerable amount of work so that there would not be any landslides again.

Mr. Speaker, on the Anthony Henday we actually expanded the scope of the project. We added many more interchanges to allow the Anthony Henday to be completely free flowing. It's roughly 120-lane kilometres of road, and there are now 24 interchanges and bridges on that particular route. That's what accounted for the \$493 million, and that's what accounted for the increase from the initial cost as well as cost overages that have occurred in the last three years.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why should the residents, workers, and oil sands developers of Fort McMurray be forced by this government to play highway 63 road-risk roulette for another decade?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, last week in conjunction with the Minister of Environment we made a very important announcement for Fort McMurray. The announcement was \$530 million dollars to be spent over the next 10 years to upgrade highway 881; to upgrade highway 63, adding in passing lanes, adding in staging areas as well as four-laning the route from Suncor to Syncrude. Included in that are four interchanges in the city of Fort McMurray as well as numerous other issues.

I made it very plain when I went up there that I would like to see that time frame accelerated. I would like to see that time frame accelerated down to four or five years, and certainly that's what we're working toward. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, it does depend on the amount of money that we have in the upcoming budgets. I am hopeful that there will be more money in there and that we can accelerate that to the four- or five-year time frame, which is very important for the people of Fort McMurray.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Health Symposium Webcast

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like many of my colleagues I was unable to attend the health care symposium due to scheduling conflicts. Luckily, our government created a webcast, which was available live to all the world. On that webcast I was able to listen to the speeches, actually watch the speakers, and I was also able to clearly see the overheads. It truly was just like having a front-row seat. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can you provide the members with access to those same speeches so that we can refer them to our constituents?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, over the next 30 days those will be available over the web through Health and Wellness, and if there's any difficulty in accessing any of those PowerPoint presentations, we'll be pleased to follow through for any member of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. My only supplemental is for the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Such a webcast requires the use of high-speed Internet, one of the capabilities of the SuperNet. Would the minister please give us an update on the availability of the SuperNet across Alberta?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make one point very clear right off the bat. The Alberta SuperNet is much more than an application or a service. It's a giant highway over which you can run any number of applications. The Internet is just one service. The health symposium was delivered via webcast, which is simply broadcasting over the Internet. Depending on the event you're holding, webcasting is a good option. The quality of a webcast depends on the quality and speed of your Internet connection.

SuperNet can have many participant sites interacting with each other. For example, you could have experts in different SuperNet sites interacting with one another in a virtual panel session. We have meetings in our department using SuperNet video conferencing with people in Calgary on a regular basis. You could hook up a Smart board and have multimedia presentations live. You could invite rural Albertans to their local school or library, where they can participate, ask questions, and add their own perspective. This is all video conferencing, and you could easily add webcasting over the Internet so Albertans in rural SuperNet communities could view the session from home or work over a high-speed Internet connections. SuperNet thinks big, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government knew that the Competition Bureau was in the middle of investigating Enron for market manipulation when they let Enron participate in the power purchase arrangement auction in the summer of 2000. Court evidence shows an Enron trader stating in regard to that auction:

. . . the only unit that's been bid on is Sundance B, and I'm just wondering when these three or four other people move around a bit and everybody's got a unit, is just – that the best thing would be to slow down, but . . . some of . . . these other clowns are on these units, so they're mispriced.

My first question is to the Minister of Energy. In what way were the power purchase arrangement auctions mispriced?

Mr. Melchin: I'm not certain of the preamble, what all that meant. If you would forward that preamble to us, we'll take a look at that.

In respect to the power purchase arrangements, they were put out on an open bid and tender and were appropriately priced by the market.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I'll be glad to table that at the appropriate time.

The Speaker: Well, it's in *Hansard* anyway. It doesn't have to be tabled.

Mr. MacDonald: Now, my next question: why did this government allow Enron to buy power generation in Alberta when they knew that Enron was being investigated at the same time for market manipulation and price fixing?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, fortunately in this country we do go under the presumption of innocence. That issue still has been investigated, as he said. The federal Competition Bureau did come back, back then, and found nothing that they could pursue.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that Enron had control over power generation in Alberta while they were being investigated, did the government put extra surveillance on Enron to ensure that they didn't withhold the generation that they had purchased to drive up electricity prices in this province?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there's no one party, Enron or any other, that had control over the marketplace. The great thing that did happen is that numerous entrants came through and provided generation. Today as a result of that – I've got to re-emphasize, as a great result of that – the consumers in Alberta continue to have the lowest nonhydro rates in this country.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

2:20 Custom Environmental Services Ltd. Fire (continued)

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday a witches' brew of toxic chemicals, including PCBs, exploded, leading to a fire in southeast Edmonton that burned out of control for eight hours. I think many Edmontonians, including myself, were surprised that these sorts of toxic, dangerous chemicals are allowed to be stored and treated in quonset huts with fabric roofs in the middle of town. The owner of the facility says that he plans to reopen his business as early as tomorrow. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Why do we spend tens of millions of dollars every year subsidizing the money-losing Swan Hills toxic waste plant and then turn around and allow operators like Custom Environmental Services to store and treat toxic chemicals, including PCBs, in the middle of a major metropolitan area?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all thank the hon. member for commenting on the province of Alberta's leadership pertaining to Swan Hills because that type of facility is ultimately an incredible leader across this country, if not North America. So I thank the hon. member for that.

Pertaining specifically to the fire that the hon. member mentions, it's a concern of ours. We're doing investigation. No opening will take place pertaining to the facility until, in fact, all environmental regulations are followed to the letter and spirit of the law, I can assure all members of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. To the same minister: you know, given that it took hours for air quality monitoring equipment to be operational at the site of the fire, how can nearby residents take any comfort from the ministry saying that human health was not compromised during this fire?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, perhaps allow me to provide a quote – and I will table this at the appropriate time – from the medical officer of Capital health, who stated, and I quote: there shouldn't be any long-term impact based on what took place because of the excellent work by the fire officials in that area.

We're all in this together: the fire department, the air monitoring people from Alberta Environment, disaster services people. We all work together to protect the interests of Albertans and the environment, and that's exactly what we've done today, tomorrow, and well into the future, I can assure all Albertans.

Mr. Eggen: But how could the hon. minister know that human health was not negatively affected by the explosion of this toxic brew of chemicals unless follow-up testing is done on emergency personnel, workers, and nearby residents? I think they owe that to them.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, once again, our investigation is ongoing. Once again, our air monitoring from Alberta protection were on the command site within minutes of the event taking place. Once again, our investigation is ongoing. We're investigating all of the air monitoring that we've done as well as the preliminary air monitoring we did on the day of the accident.

Mr. Speaker, our first objective is working with emergency officials to put out the darn fire and, at the same time, continue to work in terms of protecting the environment well into the future. Our investigation is ongoing, and I can assure this hon. member that we'll continue to do the utmost to protect our citizens.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Workers' Compensation

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the last few years there were two important government-commissioned reviews of WCB administrative actions to ensure fairness and accountability towards injured workers. Reflecting questions from my constituents, my question is to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. What has the government done with the recommendations from these reviews?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. The two committees made a total of 59 recommendations, of which 49 were accepted or accepted in principle. Of course, extensive public feedback was held, including a symposium on the workers' compensation system and also round-table discussions on accountability.

As no doubt you're aware, the government passed Bill 26 in 2002, Mr. Speaker, which saw a number of changes in the whole compensation system. Some include annual reports by Workers' Compensation, performance reports to the Auditor General and also the minister; annual WCB general meetings, open to the public of course, a streamlined WCB decision review body, and a new medical panel process for resolving differences that required medical opinion. There's also the Appeals Commission, separated from the Workers' Compensation Board, and of course the Workers' Compensation Board now implements the appeals program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there is a resolution that was passed at the recent PC Association of Alberta convention to ask the government to monitor and report on the implementation of those recommendations, my question is to the same minister. Hon. minister, what action, process, and time frame are you going to take for this important monitoring?

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can do that very quickly. The committee has met 12 times since they were put in place, and they'll be reporting to me on the implementation of the recommendations very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that injured workers still have serious issues with the WCB, will the minister provide opportunities for interested parties such as injured workers to send submissions to the monitoring authority?

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker, they can do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Sex Trade Workers

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend marked the continuation of tragic events as yet another sex trade worker was found dead outside of Edmonton. Not only are Edmonton-area prostitutes living in fear, but they feel vulnerable and unprotected and are ready to take advantage of any program that may offer them the opportunity to get off the streets. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: given that transitional housing would allow sex trade workers a chance to escape from the drugs and the pimps who are controlling their lives, will this government establish programs to enable sex trade workers to make the transition from short-term emergency shelters into permanent housing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious issue that the member has brought forward, and I do appreciate the opportunity to respond because I am just as concerned as the member is. I understand that this is the 12th victim, depending on the autopsy results, hon. member, that we could've had here in the Edmonton area over the past 16 years. I would encourage women who are seeking refuge from life on the street to access the facilities and services that are available at the Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre here in Edmonton. We do provide \$1.3 million to that centre in funding for 99 beds. I think that at the flatiron building there are 75 beds and at Elizabeth House 24 beds.

What is provided there for women when they do access the centre, of course, is room and board. More importantly, there are counselling services, and there are services available for them to make that transition back to the community. There are programs available there, hon. member, and that does assist the women. So, hopefully, they'll access it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Will the minister commit to providing more funding to ensure that the transitional housing and services are available to help women with their involvement in prostitution?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, that too is an important question, and we are meeting with the minister responsible for Children's Services and also with the Solicitor General about how we can provide a comprehensive, co-ordinated approach to this issue with program options, and that would include the transitional housing, hon. member, that you are looking for. That would include that even further than what we do have today. I don't know what the outcome of that will be because we're currently meeting.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the Solicitor General: have additional funds been added to Project Kare to aid in the swift arrests of the individuals who are committing these heinous crimes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the hon. member. Yes, additional funds were provided to Project Kare and to the RCMP. Regarding that project alone, over \$800,000 was provided in addition to last year's \$2.9 million budget. So in total they received \$3.7 million, which includes 43 investigators, which includes analysts, intelligence officers, and the ability to investigate. It also includes four Edmonton Police Service detectives that are working on the case, so they're working on the case together. They're utilizing experts from across Canada and, as well, utilizing the skills of their investigators throughout northern Alberta, central Alberta, in Calgary, and through the EPS.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

2:30

Health Services in the North

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has committed over \$9 billion on health spending in 2005-2006. Northern Alberta experiences a lower funding ratio for capital infrastructure dollars compared to the rest of the province. The northern residents are required to travel greater distances for health care services as well. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. What steps is the ministry taking to make better use of the rural and regional health care facilities in the north to reduce the travel costs of patients by providing medical care in northern communities, that would also reduce the cost to larger southern centres?

Ms Evans: Three quick things. Mr. Speaker, when the electronic record is in place, it will help us co-ordinate patient services. Part of that is integral to the proper delivery in northern and regional areas. The telehealth program has made sure that specialists can be accessed through the northern areas. Beyond that, for some of the more particular needs of regions, we work with them and their global funding model and through the province-wide services to see if there are ways that we can co-ordinate service delivery to accommodate the residents.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental, again to the same minister: what funding will be allocated to purchase specialized equipment such as dialysis machines?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of different things I should report. For the last three years, concluding this year, there will be about \$148.9 million total that has been spent out of federal funding through the trust fund that was established to improve this opportunity for diagnostic imaging. The machines for dialysis can be funded through the province-wide service delivery should they choose to take advantage of that account beyond their global funding.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is also to the same minister. How does the minister plan to address the ongoing need in recruiting and retaining health care professionals in rural Alberta?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I know that a number of members have been really concerned about this. Through the rural physician action plan we hope to make significant differences. I should report that through the rural family medicine network we have provided 60 rural residency positions: 30 of them are entry and 30 of them are second year. Also, since April 2002 we've had 190 foreign-trained physicians that have had direct placements and opportunities in rural Alberta. Finally, starting this fall, in conjunction with the Ministry of Advanced Ed, we are providing a medical school bursary program for at least 10 students that we expect to work in rural Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Automobile Insurance Reforms

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only this Conservative government could fumble auto insurance reforms so badly. To this date they've managed to enrage the insurance companies, alienate the auto insurance brokers, and Alberta drivers are still only seeing minimal premium reductions after they were frozen at their highest rates ever. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Other than for a Tory caucus committee reporting in September, does this government have any kind of a long-term plan to reform the auto insurance mess, which they have created?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member opposite is the person that has indicated to me that they think it's a mess. Auto insurance reform, in fact, is working. We have about six months of auto insurance reform under our belt, if you wish. It came in on October 1. There is a mandatory 6 per cent reduction unless a company can show reason that they shouldn't be charged with that reduction.

As has been indicated in this House, there is a process under way now to review the rates, and there is a process in that time for public input. Mr. Speaker, that will occur in the next weeks, and we will have a complete assessment by fall. It was intended to have that by the 1st of October, but because of the lateness of getting off on this, it'll probably be the 1st of November.

Mr. R. Miller: Only privately owned vehicles, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister instruct the Automobile Insurance Rate Board to conduct a full review of questionable insurance industry practices, such as block transfers, like the review that has just been released in Quebec?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the automobile insurance review will occur. The Auto Insurance Rate Board has put out the terms of reference for the review. I haven't found – I must comment on this – that the auto insurance companies are enraged. In fact, I would say that we have a cordial relationship. They may not like the fact that we have imposed reductions on them, but I would not say that they have indicated to me that they're enraged with this government. Again, the auto insurance reforms that were put in place in this province were put in on the compulsory portion of your insurance on private vehicles, and that, essentially, will be what the Auto Insurance Rate Board reviews this summer. I am sure, though, that they will receive some thoughtful opinions on other parts of insurance during that review.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell us: why is this government the only one in the entire country that needs to pass a law to immune itself from lawsuits as a result of their bungled auto insurance reforms?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're maybe the only government in Canada that's really done true auto insurance reform.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six hon. members to participate today.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, it may be of interest to you to know that historically on May 9, 1906, the very first session of Alberta's First Legislature was prorogued after 38 sitting days. Prior to prorogation Lieutenant Governor George Bulyea gave royal assent to 76 bills, including a bill that would incorporate the city of Wetaskiwin and the city of Lethbridge and an act to establish and incorporate a university for the province of Alberta. At the very same time, a very major constitutional issue was brewing in the province of Alberta, and the then Premier of the day, Premier Rutherford, was not to survive the ensuing two weeks of antagonism that was occurring at this very same time.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Battle River Community Foundation

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize the Battle River Community Foundation. Founded in 1994, this organization serves communities throughout the Battle River basin area including Camrose, Tofield, Viking, Galahad, Alliance, and Hughenden. It is one of 11 community foundations in Alberta.

Community foundations provide individuals and businesses the opportunity to create an endowment fund which will be used to fund projects for the betterment of the community. Some examples of the projects funded by the Battle River Community Foundation include scholarships and assistance for villages in purchasing equipment for their fire departments. Recently the foundation gave \$15,000 to the counties of Camrose, Paintearth, and Flagstaff to study environmental issues. Over \$350,000 has been distributed since the beginning of the fund.

In addition, the Battle River Community Foundation honours community leaders at an annual banquet. Last year the Joe Voytechek family was honoured, and an endowment worth \$25,000 was established in their name as a lasting legacy to their many contributions in the Camrose community.

2:40

To improve the returns from the endowment, the Battle River Community Foundation struck an agreement with the Edmonton Community Foundation which allows them to pool their resources for investment purposes. In this way, donations can be pooled to provide sustainable funding for programs and projects for years to come. While this arrangement is beneficial for the investment of Battle River's capital, it is the strong and continued support of the community which allows this organization to thrive. This includes the community-minded direction from the foundation's board of directors, led by chair Blain Fowler and executive director Dave Stolee.

This support has ensured the development of an endowment fund valued at \$1.5 million. As such, the Battle River Community Foundation will be able to meet the emerging needs of the community on a sustainable basis in perpetuity. This is an amazing achievement, and I applaud the efforts of the members of this organization for the achievements they have made, the programs they support, and their commitment to making the Battle River area an even better place to be.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Ritske and Immigje Veenstra

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the darkness of the Holocaust shone the luminous examples of the Righteous among the Nations, a title derived from the Talmud to describe those who risked their own lives to save the lives of others. In 1963 Yad Vashem embarked upon a world-wide project to honour non-Jews who saved Jews during the Holocaust. A commission headed by an Israeli Supreme Court justice, following specific criteria, has been charged with the duty of awarding the title Righteous among the Nations, the only project of its kind in the world.

There are over 8,000 authenticated rescue stories in which the lives of Jews were saved. Yad Vashem's policy is to pursue the program for as long as petitions for this title are received. If the Righteous are deceased, the honour will be bestowed on their next of kin. The honouree is awarded a specially minted medal bearing their name, a certificate of honour, and the privilege of their name being added to the Wall of Honour in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. In addition, the recipients are honoured with a tree planted along the Avenue of the Righteous. The tree, symbolic of the renewal of life, is a living testimony to remarkable heroism. With courage and compassion, risking torture and death, the Righteous among the Nations saved many individual lives and, as the Talmud says, "the entire universe."

The late Ritske and Immigje Veenstra are among those honoured at Yad Vashem. This brave Dutch couple saved many Jews' lives. Last Thursday night in Calgary Vicky Penner from Carstairs and her brother Ted Veenstra from Brazil received the Righteous among the Nations award on behalf of their deceased parents, Ritske and Immigje Veenstra.

Of all the people that the Veenstras harboured during the war, all survived the war. Vicky now corresponds regularly with two survivors, Ruth Lavie-Jourgrau and Julia Izaks-van der Velde, who were both present at the ceremony and who now reside in Israel and enjoy the company of children and grandchildren, all made possible by the selfless act and the courage of Ritske and Immigje Veenstra.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

A Tribute to Mothers

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the very distinct pleasure of rising to pay tribute to an amazing group of people who more than any other group of individuals can truly be credited with changing the world. This group of people didn't just affect the world once but change it in significant ways every single day. That group of people is mothers.

I know the impact my own mom, Maureen Griffiths, had on my life, and I like to think she raised a pretty good son, but along with that she also raised my younger sister and my younger brother, who are both very successful. She was an amazing homemaker, which we know is the equivalent of having two full-time jobs in and of

itself, had a part-time job off the farm, acted as cook, cleaner, truck driver, grain dryer, cattle feeder, and nurse to a bunch of sick, hungry, tired, and occasionally grumpy men on the farm. Still, amazingly, she is the most caring, strong, and beautiful woman I've ever met.

Mr. Speaker, these women, mothers, are also leaders, volunteers, businesswomen, teachers, doctors, nurses, and other professionals. Whether they are like the Famous Five fighting for human rights or volunteers fighting social injustice or world-famous athletes or curing diseases or creating jobs, they do this all while raising not just children but raising the future of our communities, our province, our country, and the world.

No words can ever say thank you enough. No gift of flowers can ever say thank you enough for the band-aids when we bled, the hugs when we hurt, the support when we were scared, and the swift kicks in the backside when we needed it. You helped make each of us what we are today, and still you help us get better every single day. We know that no love is stronger than a mother's love.

To all of the angels out there like my mom, on behalf of the members of this House, we say thank you, moms. We love you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Hank Williams First Nation

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to highlight a northern success story, the story of filmmaking in northern Alberta. One of the first films to be shot in northern Alberta was in 1919. It was called *Back to God's Country*. What else would you call it, really? There were many aboriginal actors in that film, but unfortunately none of them were credited for their work.

Today aboriginal and northern people are involved in almost every aspect of film production, and they are receiving credit for it. Last Friday there was a red carpet ceremony in Edmonton for the Alberta premiere of the movie *Hank Williams First Nation*. The film is about a 75-year-old Cree man and his 17-year-old nephew who set out on an ambitious adventure from northern Alberta to visit the gravesite of Hank Williams in Nashville.

This film was produced in northern Alberta with northern investors and has opened to critical acclaim. From the north are producers and investors who believed in the movie and committed dollars to see this realized. Credits go to a number of people, Mr. Speaker, too many to mention here, but I must mention Aaron Sorensen, a 38-year-old former teacher who brought this First Nation story to life and is to be commended for his artistic abilities.

To Aaron Sorensen and to the investors, congratulations on your involvement in what I call the best little movie made in northern Alberta. The arts are alive and well in northern Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and that's just great because we have many more stories to tell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Conflict in Sudan

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently on these grounds we gathered to commemorate the unparalleled tragedy of the Jewish Holocaust and pledged ourselves as Albertans and Canadians to stand unshakably against such violations of humanity.

Eleven years ago the world watched in horror but failed to act as 8,000 Tutsis were massacred by Hutus despite desperate pleas from all around the world, including from our own General Roméo Dallaire.

Again the African continent is facing genocide in western Sudan, the Darfur region, described by some as Rwanda in slow motion. According to UN information 300,000 people have been killed and more than 2 million displaced since 2002. A friend, Val Laforce from Medicine Hat, has just returned from three months in the refugee camps of Darfur, and she along with other committed individuals of Care International is calling on all citizens to raise their voices yet again for the protection of children and adults in this ongoing disaster.

A number of high-level meetings with the government of Sudan resulted in some humanitarian aid, but the recent UN resolution to refer the issue to the international court is woefully inadequate to address the ongoing starvation, abandonment of agriculture, and violence by government forces and arab militia against citizens. Many observers, including Canadian Stephen Lewis and former Major-General Lewis MacKenzie, are calling on the international community to intervene along with the African Union.

As citizens of a wealthy country and province it's easy to diminish our role in this conflict except for two fundamental truths. Number one, violations of international law and humanity anywhere are assaults on us all. We are either complicit in silence and inaction or we stand with human rights and peace everywhere. Number two, our country and Alberta are host to an increasing number of Sudanese and others from unstable and resource-poor regions. Greater commitment to foreign aid and development is essential to reduce such lawlessness. As members of the Legislature we cannot limit our focus to this province. We are world citizens. We need to speak out with others, including NGOs, in favour of the rule of law and human rights.

On behalf of the many here in the Assembly and citizens across this great and caring province I express my outrage that our federal government and governments of the free world continue to fail us and the world in taking decisive and meaningful action to protect the lives of innocent men, women, and children by confronting abusive and lawless powers. I call on the national government and all parties to focus attention and necessary resources with others in the international community to immediately confront yet another emerging genocide, including humanitarian, political, and military aid through appropriate bodies. Mr. Speaker, to betray these people is to betray ourselves, our children, and our future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, because of the serious note the chair did not intervene, but you were one minute and five seconds over.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

2:50 Events Attended by Member for Calgary-Varsity

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past Friday and Saturday were busy volunteer recognition days in both Calgary and Edmonton. On Friday afternoon I met Pat Nixon, the founder and director of the Mustard Seed Street Ministry, who gave me a guided tour of the amazing Calgary facility, which could just as easily be referred to as Miracle on 1st Street SE. Pat has fought demons in his own Daniel's den of provincial penitentiaries. He has also wrestled and worked with angels in the form of hundreds of volunteers who have positively impacted the lives of thousands of downtrodden souls.

The Mustard Seed program is more than just feeding an empty belly and providing an overnight bed. A variety of health, education, guidance, employment, and related second and third life chances are provided. As a Baptist minister Pat Nixon can't officially be considered for Catholic sainthood, but he sure qualifies amongst the people for whom and with whom he serves as Saint Pat.

On Friday evening in Calgary the members for Calgary-Currie, Calgary-McCall, and myself had the pleasure of attending the 40th annual celebration of Meals on Wheels, entitled Feast for Your Ears. Among the many individuals who contributed both to the success of the event as well as to the program as a whole were Sandra Walker, who has recently become the president of the board of directors; Lou Winthers, a recent director, who has an incredible history of service with both the Calgary health region and Calgary hospices; and Dana McLaren, who has volunteered in a variety of roles over the years. Two of the award recipients were Hattie Boothman, who has volunteered for the entire 40 years of the Meals on Wheels program, and Kay Conacher, another great Calgary-Varsity constituent, who delivered the first meal back in 1965 and has continued to literally serve for over 37 years.

Saturday morning I along with the Member for Calgary-Currie, local MPs, and provincial and municipal dignitaries including the Hon. Peter Lougheed witnessed and in many cases judged amazing school projects at the Calgary Heritage Fair, held in the city hall atrium. Amongst the outstanding projects was that of Carlos Garcia, a grade 4 student at St. Gregory elementary/junior high school. Carlos's project on the Halifax explosion demonstrated the high quality of projects exhibited at the fair.

In conclusion, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the tremendous work and results of the Minister and Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation, who put on a fabulous Centennial Legacy Ball at Edmonton Shaw centre on Saturday night. It was a great recognition and fundraising event, which was attended by a variety of individuals and organizations throughout Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. That came with a surplus of 25 seconds.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to present a petition signed by 910 Albertans urging the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to "introduce legislation that will (a) allow parents the authority to place their children into mandatory drug treatment and (b) fund urgently required drug use treatment centres" for youth.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition prepared by the McKenzie Towne public school committee, 422 names, to address the need for a public school in McKenzie Towne and to address the need throughout Calgary, in all communities.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the Premier.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Premier I wish to table a copy of the Alberta Official Opposition news release from October 11, 2001, entitled Official Opposition Extends Best Wishes to Auditor General Peter Valentine, to which I believe the Premier referred during question period earlier.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of the two documents that I referred to in question period today, one being the terms of reference set for the provincial inspection into Calgary's ward 10 election process and the second being the announcement of the provincial inspection to proceed into Calgary's ward 10 election.

The Speaker: The hon. chair of the Legislative Offices Committee.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the report of the Auditor General on seniors care and programs, dated May 2005. Copies of this report are being distributed to all members today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. I would like to table a letter by Joan Ingoldsby and Cheryl Weiler. The letter details concerns about the quality of care in the long-term facility where their mother is staying. These concerns appear to stem from a chronic problem of staff shortages.

I'd also like to table a letter from the Elder Advocates of Alberta Society. The letter argues that the Health Facilities Review Committee has been used to field, diffuse, and dismiss complaints, thereby misleading the public into believing that nursing homes and other eldercare facilities are being monitored.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today. The first is a letter addressed to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development from Melissa Tkachyk of the World Society for the Protection of Animals. The letter expresses WSPA's disappointment that they were not consulted as stakeholders for the review of Alberta's zoo licensing.

The second is a press release issued by the Sierra Club of Canada last Thursday. The Sierra Club has built a database to evaluate the progress of provincial commitments to the national forest strategy, and they found that Alberta has no management framework for maintaining old-growth forests.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is a transcript of a tape between Enron traders Tim and John. It is listed as exhibit SNO-221, and it's in regard to the power purchase arrangement auction that Enron participated in in the summer of 2000.

My second tabling is a pamphlet from the Ottewell community patrol program, Helping to Keep our Neighbourhoods Safe, and it's produced by the Ottewell community patrol program from the Ottewell police station.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of each of four letters calling on the government to not have temporary foreign workers and to look at the deskilling of the workplace that's going on in the industry.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, with thanks again to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, the other day when I introduced one of the gentlemen who was with us from the Canadian armed forces, I indicated that he had been wounded in Belgium. The town that I gave was Bergen op Zoom. It is actually in the Netherlands, and it was corrected, and *Hansard* recalls that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from a constituent by the name of Rudolph Klingbeil. Mr. Klingbeil is a retired public service employee who wrote expressing his concern about his public service pension, which has recently been reduced from \$1,620 a month to \$950 a month and now down to \$841 a month.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, we had two points of order that came basically at the same time. The leader of third party interjected with a point of order, and I understand that he's delegated his spokespersonship to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. The Official Opposition House Leader rose almost at the same time, and I gather she's delegated her speaking responsibility to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. So let us proceed.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Point of Order

Referring to a Member by Name

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our point of order refers to *Beauchesne* 484: "It is the custom in the House that no Member should refer to another by name." I believe that during question period this afternoon the Premier, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, did refer to the Leader of the Opposition by name.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Same point of order, hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford? A different point of order.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Just with respect to this particular point of order I think it was the Premier's intention to simply point out the fact that the person who was raising the issue now on behalf of the Liberal opposition happens to have been, we thought, the leader at the time, which we'll get to in the second point of order.

However, I think the member from the third party has pointed out very correctly that we ought not refer to any sitting member of the Assembly by personal, or private, name. So we would ask that that reference be withdrawn, and we apologize for that having occurred.

3:00

The Speaker: Well, thank you very much. That definitely concludes that point of order. It is absolutely correct: the Premier did refer to an existing member in this House, and that was a violation. So we've dealt with that one.

Now, hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, a different point of order?

Point of Order

Factual Accuracy

Mr. R. Miller: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I rise to raise a point of order under Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j). This afternoon, as was mentioned, in question period the hon. Premier in response to a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition not only referred to him by name, which has already been dealt with by yourself, but

also he made comments which I believe were specifically designed to create disorder in this House.

When he quoted the Leader of our Official Opposition as having made certain comments about the former Auditor General, he attributed those words specifically to the current Leader of the Official Opposition. Mr. Speaker, that is blatantly false. It's totally inaccurate given that the hon. Premier was reading from a press release that was dated 11 October 2001, and it very clearly says in that press release, "Alberta Official Opposition Leader Ken Nicol." Given that he was reading directly from the piece of paper, I have no other conclusion to draw than that he was deliberately trying to create disorder in the House.

Also, *Beauchesne* 486 says that "much depends upon the tone and manner, and intention, of the person speaking." Again, I think that if one were to consider the tone in which it was said and, in my opinion at least, the obvious glee with which the hon. Premier was saying it, I again can come to no other conclusion than that, in fact, he was intending to create a certain amount of disorder in this House.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would await your ruling on that point of order. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to this particular point of order I don't believe that the comment made by our Premier was at all intended or designed to create disorder. Specific to the tone and the manner that's been referred to, I think that the point here – and likely this is exactly the case – was that the Premier was simply trying to demonstrate and point up some of the hypocrisy that seems to have engulfed the Liberal Official Opposition in regard to the appointment of Mr. Peter Valentine, who, as we would all know, or most of us in this House at least would know, is and was an enviable, outstanding Albertan with a great track record of service to this province and, in particular, to this Legislative Assembly for a number of years.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just to refresh people's memories here, Mr. Peter Valentine served as the Auditor General of Alberta from 1995 to 2002. Prior to that, he served as a senior partner in the accounting firm of KPMG, a very respectable accounting firm in our parts, from 1958 to 1995. I might also point out that during that time Mr. Peter Valentine served as partner in charge of professional practice of the Calgary office, also as chairman of the KPMG International Energy Practice Group, and also as senior audit partner responsible for a variety of medium- to large-sized organizations, with expertise in the petroleum industry and Canadian securities practice. Finally, Peter Valentine also previously served as chair of the Financial Advisory Committee of the Alberta Securities Commission, and I believe the Premier indicated some additional points in that respect.

I believe the point here is that in October of 2004 the Liberal opposition, in its news release entitled Official Opposition Extends Best Wishes to Auditor General Peter Valentine, went on to say at the bottom of the press release:

Mr. Valentine's integrity and desire to improve the way government conducts business has increased the credibility of the Office of the Auditor General. My colleagues in the Official Opposition and I extend our best wishes to Mr. Valentine.

And it also states briefly:

Albertans have been well served by Mr. Valentine's dedication and commitment. He has helped to hold the government responsible for its plans and actions through critical and thoughtful recommendations in his annual reports.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, if you look immediately to the left-hand side of this press release, there you will see on the

masthead or on the letterhead the personal name of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview shown as the leader of that particular team.

However, now that I've had a chance to review this news release in greater detail myself – and I believe the Premier and others have gone through it more carefully – we have to note that, in fact, the quote that was used and the two quotes I've just read were attributed to Ken Nicol, the former Leader of the Alberta Liberal Party. So those quotes were attributed to him in the news release. However, one would assume that since the current Liberal leader was simply allowing his name to stand on the letterhead and on the masthead immediately attached to that, perhaps there was some form of endorsement – who knows? – of that same press release as made. Otherwise, one would have thought that perhaps it could've been handled in some other way.

I will say this to the House and to you with due respect, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that this was an honest oversight or slip, if you will, on the part of our Premier, and I know that he would want it recorded in *Hansard* that a correction of this inadvertent reference is hereby made. So whichever form of explanation the House would accept: if you wish it withdrawn, we can withdraw it; otherwise, we'll just have it stand as corrected. That would be the conclusion of my remarks.

The Speaker: In *Hansard* today the document in question that was referred to by the Premier is dated October 11, 2004. Now, I understand that the hon. Deputy Government House Leader referred to a document dated October 4, 2001. So are we talking about one and the same document, do you think?

Mr. Zwozdesky: My apologies. I thought I said October '04, meaning October 2004, and I left out October 11. But it's clear that it's October 11 that I was referring to, of 2004.

The Speaker: Okay. That's the first clarification.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you.

The Speaker: Now I'll deal with the second part.

Mr. R. Miller: On the order of clarification, Mr. Speaker, the document that I have, and I'm assuming that we're talking about the same document . . .

The Speaker: Oh, don't ever do that.

Mr. R. Miller: . . . very clearly says 11 October 2001.

The Speaker: The Premier referred to a document dated October 11, 2001.

Mr. Zwozdesky: I'm sorry. That's my mistake. I just noticed it myself. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is quite correct. I just misspoke a minute or two ago. I meant to say October 11, 2001, to be clear. My sincere apologies to him.

The Speaker: Now that we have that matter cleared up, we'll deal with the second one. If my memory is correct, the Leader of the Official Opposition on October 11, 2001, was not the current Leader of the Official Opposition. The Leader of the Official Opposition then was Dr. Ken Nicol. So it's true that what the Premier said today was not that particular individual's name but another name.

I believe that there was an explanation given. I think there's even a withdrawal, on the verge of an apology. Everything else, as far as

I can see, in all of this – have we now dealt with this matter, hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford?

Mr. R. Miller: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. I love harmony. Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, May 5, it is my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of Written Question 32.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Q32. Mr. Eggen moved on behalf of Mr. Martin that the following question be accepted.

For each of the fiscal years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 how many Albertans received benefits from the AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, program, and for each of those years how many received the maximum benefit rate?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to put forward Question 32 in reference to getting the information on Albertans receiving benefits from AISH. Our specific focus here is to get the percentage of individuals who are receiving the maximum benefit rate. Of course, this has a lot to do with how people perceive how many people, first of all, are receiving AISH and then also taking that maximum rate, which is otherwise not very much money per month.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports I would like to indicate acceptance of the written question if it is amended. This amendment was shared earlier this afternoon with all members of the House and is in accordance with the protocol for written questions. I'd like to move that Written Question 32 be amended by deleting "and for each of those years how many received the maximum benefit rate." The amended question would then read: "For each of the fiscal years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 how many Albertans received benefits from the AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, program?"

3:10

I'd like to share the following rationale for this change. AISH clients may receive full benefits one month and partial benefits the next, depending on their financial situation. Sometimes an AISH client or their spouse may earn more or have more employment earnings for one particular month; therefore, the AISH client wouldn't receive the maximum benefit for that month. The needs of our clients change from month to month, and within a given year the number of clients and the amount they receive fluctuates.

Also, the original question would require AISH staff to review approximately 32,000 files to determine the types of benefits each client would receive each month over the years in question. This would take away from their ability to support AISH clients. By clarifying the question, we can in a timely manner respond with the number of Albertans who received AISH benefits for the years in question.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I appreciate the explanation as to why it might be difficult or problematic to put together all of the information on who is receiving the maximum AISH benefits during any given fiscal year, I think that it would not be impossible. Certainly, it would still be, I think, very useful for all Albertans to see who does manage to receive the maximum allowable benefit rate for the whole year in each given fiscal year, if you understand my distinction. Perhaps if the amendment was going forward in that way, that we could have the individuals who are receiving the maximum allowable AISH benefit rates for the entire fiscal year, moving through each of those years that we had asked for it, then I would find it acceptable. Otherwise, it loses the essence of the question almost entirely.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to conclude the debate.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, at least I've learned that if you do in fact have an amendment, then you are getting some information. So it might forward our illumination on this issue that I think a lot of Albertans, not just those who are affected by the AISH rates but all Albertans, have a vested interest to make sure that people are receiving a just and fair living wage or monies so that they can in fact live a decent and reasonable lifestyle. I guess that as amended, something is better than nothing.

Thank you.

[Written Question 32 as amended carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, May 5, I would just move that motions appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 203
Report on Alberta's Legacy Act**

[Debate adjourned April 4: Mr. Eggen speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been some time. I think this bill has been moved forward to different places for a number of weeks, but I am very happy to resume the debate on Bill 203.

I think, just to remind ourselves about it, that we're looking at how we can build a postsecondary education system that is sustainable but also meets the changing needs of our province. While we have a very wealthy province, I would suggest that we have been excluding a larger and larger percentage of our population who would otherwise want to and deserve to and, really, need to go to postsecondary education by, in fact, making it unaffordable for those individuals to go to a postsecondary institution.

We've heard a lot these past couple of months on ways by which we can in fact improve that situation. I have said it before, and I'll say it again, that even the very most conservative analysis of how we might run our postsecondary education system would suggest that you must make the most efficient use of your population. The people who are most able to in fact be successful at a postsecondary institution do need to go there and graduate from there so that we can build a system of not only education but a workforce based on meritocracy and ability rather than, perhaps, just how much money one's family has in the bank.

Now, specifically with Bill 203, I must say that I do oppose this bill. I know that it was the Liberal opposition flagship bill for the last election, but I would suggest that it gives permission to the Conservatives to continue a decade-long policy of systematically and deliberately lowballing government revenues and, thereby, also budget surpluses.

I'd like to remind all Albertans of how the Liberals sort of moved this way and then that on the question of unbudgeted surpluses. After years of criticizing the lowballing of revenues here in this House and thereby underestimating surpluses under the former leader of the Liberal Party – I'm not sure if we mention those names or not – in the first months of the current leadership I think suddenly using unbudgeted surpluses to fund endowments now becomes the foundation of Liberal fiscal policy. I find this confusing at best, and it certainly goes against our own caucus and my own personal view of how public education must be funded.

Over the last 12 years or so the Conservative government has underestimated budget surpluses by a cumulative total of \$27.3 billion, or an average underestimation of \$2.25 billion per annum. This systematic underestimation of budget surpluses has been mainly accomplished by lowballing revenues, mostly oil and gas revenues but also other revenue sources like gambling and corporate taxation. Over the past 12 years the Conservatives have also underestimated revenues by a total cumulation of \$33 billion, or an average lowball of \$2.75 billion per year.

During this 12-year period these unbudgeted surpluses were applied to the provincial debt, allowing the rapid paydown of a \$23 billion accumulated debt, rung up during the years of another Conservative government. In addition, this lowballing of revenue policy has allowed an average of \$500 million per year to be applied to extra in-year spending for different political hot potatoes as they might pop up.

At one time the Liberal opposition, particularly under the previous leader, opposed such budgeting, which I would consider to be deceptive at best, Mr. Speaker. Now the NDP opposition stands alone in doing so, it seems. Today the Liberal opposition is making unbudgeted surpluses to build the heritage fund, to fund extra in-year capital spending, and to fund endowments for advanced education and for the arts, a centrepiece of this budget policy. Instead of urging the government to accurately forecast budgetary revenues and to accurately provide for needed expenditures in the budget, the

Liberal opposition is giving the government permission to continue to lowball revenues in order to generate large unbudgeted surpluses.

3:20

Sound budgeting requires expenditure provisions up front to inflation-proof the heritage fund, Mr. Speaker, to fund infrastructure, and to provide stable, predictable funding for postsecondary education and the arts, humanities, and social sciences. This ensures that expenditures are properly scrutinized before the money is actually expended.

Budget forecasting is not an exact science. A sustainability fund is a good idea so long as it is properly used. In years where there is an unbudgeted yearly surplus, money should be paid into the sustainability fund. In years where there is an unbudgeted yearly deficit, monies should be paid from the sustainability fund to keep the budget in balance. Disingenuous it is to hear the Liberals criticize the Conservatives for only budgeting \$250 million in 2005-06 for the postsecondary endowments when under the Liberal plan zero dollars would have been budgeted, and the endowments would have been entirely dependent on unbudgeted surpluses.

With this analysis I would suggest that there are better ways to fund postsecondary education. The most fundamental thing is to make sure that you are making that commitment to long-term funding for nuts and bolts that make the universities and colleges work regardless of what sort of unbudgeted surplus situation we might find ourselves in. So with both Bill 203 and Bill 1 we have serious concerns, Mr. Speaker, that I think need to be addressed and the public should know about.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising on the privilege of 29 to ask a question with regard to what I've just heard. The Member for Edmonton-Calder criticized the Liberals for believing what they said and actually putting it in print, but he offers no solutions with regard to the surpluses. Perhaps he would enlighten us as to the NDP's position with regard to surpluses, budgeted or otherwise.

Mr. Eggen: Well, certainly. I think that it's very clear that our policy in regard to surpluses is, number one, to be paying into a sustainability fund to maintain a reasonable base budgeting . . .

The Speaker: Actually, we have no provision for such a standing order under this matter and subject in the Routine.

Now, when I recognized the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, did he also want to participate?

Mr. Bonko: No. It was just with respect to a question.

The Speaker: Okay, which we don't have.

Then the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to participate.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that Bill 203 is a very good bill. I think it's very clear, and it's easily understood by all Albertans. Thirty-five per cent of the budget goes to the heritage fund; 35 per cent goes into postsecondary education for an endowment fund, also to be noted that there is no cap on that; 25 per cent of the annual budget goes toward paying the infrastructure debt – which is noted to be \$8 billion; however, as we stand here and speak, it is growing every day – and then 5 per cent into the humanities, social sciences, and arts. I also believe that this would help prevent

all of the different ministries from dipping into the surplus through supplemental estimates and insist on better budgeting practices right from the outset.

The 5 per cent would go, as I mentioned, to the humanities, social sciences, and arts to supplement existing funding and encourage development in these fields. Even that, at this point, is a pittance to try and catch up to the deep cuts that have been forced onto the arts, especially within the educational system – the U of C, Grant MacEwan, U of A, U of L, and, more importantly, in the high school programs – when often this is where latent talents and creativity are noticed and encouraged.

Our theatre companies are stretched to the limit to write, produce, and perform live theatre. Why must all of our talented citizens, be they artists in any of the mediums – the writers and the musicians, the actors, set designers, and on and on – go to other jurisdictions for the experience necessary to strive for excellence in their craft? How much more shallow our society is by being deprived of exposure to other dimensions of which our minds are capable. All work and no play makes Jack a very dull boy indeed. We want, we can afford, and we must increase the dollars to our arts community.

This part of Bill 203 would indeed invest in Alberta's future and in the arts community. They would have sustainable and predictable funds coming to them. They would know that the surplus is announced every year, and it's quite easy to establish what 5 per cent of that amount would be. Our movie industry, although it has some fantastic successes, is really operating on a shoestring and, therefore, should even be more highly commended. They're in an exceedingly competitive environment. With our geographic location and highly trained staff – technicians, actors, et cetera – we should be shooting movies in at least two locations every month in this province, but in order to do that, this arts community that we speak of simply has to have sustainable funding and, certainly, more of it.

I believe that this bill is a very comprehensive bill. I think it covers all of the many areas that have been hit very hard by the cuts over the last 10 years. I also believe that it would encourage – as I've said before, which I think is very important – better budgeting practices by this government. You can't just lowball it and then later on think, "Oh, well, we've got extra money" and be dipping into it.

I think it's a very comprehensive bill. Certainly, it covers our future, and I would ask support for this bill.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first opportunity I've had to rise and debate Bill 203, and I'm grateful for the opportunity. I believe that there is much in this bill. Some dissenting opinions across the way and down the aisle from us notwithstanding, I think there is a great deal to recommend in this bill. It was created in an odd sort of way because, of course, private members' bills cannot be money bills, so the bill was crafted in such a way that we are asking essentially for an annual report from government as to what the government's financial picture would look like if the Liberal plan for investing surplus monies was followed year in, year out. It's the closest we can come to actually putting a private member's bill on the floor that would in fact ask this House to vote on dividing up the surplus in the way that we campaigned during the 2004 election, which is very much still part of our platform.

Before I go on, I want to address briefly, if I can, some of the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. You know, he would be right in his criticism of our surplus investment policy if, in doing this, we were also to cancel all budgeted spending on postsecondary education and public education – I don't know how

far he might want to take it – health, social services, community development, whatever. There's no intention to do that. This deals with the surplus, with the disbursement of surplus monies, or at least deals with, agreeably, a somewhat hypothetical scenario asking the government to produce an annual report on what would have happened in the past 12 months, in the past fiscal year, if this plan had been followed. The surplus, by its very definition, involves monies that are left over after the revenue has been counted up for the fiscal year and the expenses have been counted up for the fiscal year, and we take expenses away from revenue, and we see what's left over.

We go even further, of course, Mr. Speaker, because there's a very clear definition of surplus set out in Bill 203. Under Bill 203 a surplus is defined as the net assets of the sustainability fund in excess of \$2.5 billion at the end of the fiscal year.

3:30

We're not shortchanging the sustainability fund. Far from it. We are guaranteeing that there will be funds available in the sustainability fund on an ongoing basis for future emergencies. So the surplus that we're talking about investing – 35 per cent in the heritage savings trust fund, 35 per cent in the postsecondary education endowment fund, 25 per cent in our capital account, and the additional 5 per cent, up to a \$500 million cap, into our arts, humanities, and social sciences endowment fund – is from the money left over after all of that.

Now, aha, that's the unbudgeted surplus. The big, unbudgeted-surplus bugaboo. Well, I don't think it's as much of a bugaboo as my colleague from the third party would see it because, trust me, Mr. Speaker, we are not part of a dark side conspiracy here to pull the wool over the eyes of Albertans. We are dealing with the reality of an economy based in large part on a nonrenewable resource, which some years is in fantastic demand and some years is not in that much demand at all, some years is in great supply and some years is in short supply. The laws of supply and demand coupled with some good, healthy, free-market speculation in the futures markets, I guess, determine in large part what a barrel of oil is going to sell for on any given day any given year.

So there is volatility built into that. That's why we have a sustainability fund, a sustainability fund which was, by the way – and I'd be delighted to accept the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder's praise for the sustainability fund – originally an idea of a past Liberal caucus. It was adopted, ultimately, by this House, and that's good. The sustainability fund is there to get us over the bumpy parts when we're in a bust year as opposed to a boom year. I know I'm using the B words here, and nobody in this province likes to do that, but for lack of a better description, I'll use boom and bust as a shorthand there.

The member himself admits that budgeting is not an exact science. It is an exercise in prognostication, after all, in predicting the future. While it's not an exact science, you can be pretty certain that you can predict that in some years, perhaps in many years, no matter how much you try to be exact in your budgeting, you're going to end up with, as the member calls it, an unbudgeted surplus.

I've spent a good deal of time talking about the unbudgeted surplus, and I want to get off of that because I don't want us to get too bogged down in that concept, just to say that this bill would seek an annual report from government on what the government's finances would look like if we were to take the surplus, the pie of extra money left over after the expenses have been taken away from the revenues and the sustainability fund's needs have been met in any given fiscal year, and then looking on that amount of money as a pie, cutting it up in very predictable ways: 35 per cent to

postsecondary education, 35 per cent to grow the heritage savings trust fund, which I will remind this House was the original concept behind that fund when it was created over 30 years ago by the Lougheed government.

It's been a long time since that heritage fund has had regular investment in itself. There's one investment in the last I'm not sure how many years, something like 18 years. One investment – I think I exaggerate there – in the last several years in any event to inflation-proof the fund. That's been it, and the fund in real terms is, in fact, worth less today than it was in 1987. That was not the intention of the people who created, who set up the heritage savings trust fund back in the '70s. So 35 per cent into that to make it grow the way it was supposed to, another 35 per cent into an endowment for postsecondary education, 25 per cent into the capital account, and 5 per cent into the endowment fund to support the humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

My colleague from Lethbridge-East, I thought, spoke quite eloquently on the need to invest in the arts, social sciences, and humanities in this province, so I'll leave her remarks to stand without elaborating on them.

The 25 per cent into the capital account. You know, on the campaign trail after spelling out the 35 per cent in the heritage fund, the 35 per cent in postsecondary education, and 5 per cent into the arts and culture fund, as I sometimes refer to it in shorthand, I would say: "And the other 25 per cent? Well, after all, we are Liberals. We would spend it." That's essentially what we would do ultimately with that capital account. Yes, it would go in there first to grow somewhat, to produce some income. But, after all, the idea of the capital account is to raise money in a predictable, sustainable way, to continue to address and pay down, if you will, the infrastructure deficit that this province has that is in the billions of dollars.

The 35 per cent into an endowment for postsecondary education. This I will speak on briefly, Mr. Speaker, because I am, after all, the Advanced Education critic for the Official Opposition, and we've spent quite some time in this House debating Bill 1. The 35 per cent into an endowment for postsecondary education is above and beyond in our concept: above and beyond predictable, sustainable, reasonable funding for advanced education in the province of Alberta. The trouble with Bill 1 – and I think my colleague from Edmonton-Calder will agree with me on this – one of the problems with Bill 1 because there's more than one, is that it does not deal with the issue of base operating grants. It does not deal with the need first and foremost to address the systemic flaws, the fundamental flaws in the advanced education system in the province of Alberta, by boosting the basic funding for the system. There's just not enough money in the pot to do the job required.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 was not intended to address that by the government's own admission. Our postsecondary education endowment fund was not intended to address that. We're very clear, as I think the third party is although our numbers may vary slightly – I'm not sure – on the notion that in order to make the postsecondary education system work the way it needs to work for the young people of Alberta and for all people of Alberta who need to engage in lifelong learning, it needs a boost of 8 per cent, or a hundred million dollars, per year in each of the next three years at least. This government in its budget committed to far less than that. This government in its budget also . . . [Mr. Taylor's speaking time expired] I'm done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to address the Assembly today regarding Bill 203, the Report on Alberta's Legacy

Act. When I received my copy of this bill upon first reading, I found it very interesting that the hon. member is bringing forward a bill that proposes a yearly report which would look at what would have happened had the government taken the Liberals' advice. I have to say that I think this is a great idea. In fact, I don't think that this bill goes far enough, limiting the report to only how the Liberals think we should deal with surpluses. I would actually be very interested in reading a report that looked back over the past decade at what Alberta might look like now had the government taken all of the Liberal opposition's advice or, even better, if there had been a Liberal government here in Alberta, God forbid.

Now, just a quick look at some of their election promises over the past couple of elections and some of the debates in this Assembly tell us quite a bit. I think I might even be able to figure out right here, right now what a report of that depth would look like. Mr. Speaker, if I had to guess, I would say that the first section of a report on what would have happened under a Liberal government in Alberta would be called The Liberals IU Program. That is insurance unemployment.

In this last election the Liberals suggested that we should have a socialistic government monopoly style of auto insurance, one that would undoubtedly drive insurance businesses out of Alberta, increase unemployment, provide Albertans with roughly the same insurance rates we already have, and cost the taxpayers millions of dollars to set up. So, basically, had we adopted that program, many Albertans would be out looking for work while still paying the same rate for insurance as they did so.

The second section of the report would likely be titled Albertans Get Lit Up. Under a Liberal government in Alberta, we probably would not have deregulated electricity, which would in turn have cost taxpayers billions of dollars to purchase and build the power plants and transmission lines that we were in desperate need of prior to deregulation. We're still seeing some of those same needs today, Mr. Speaker, but thankfully these will be built by industry rather than by taxpayers.

3:40

Furthermore, London Economics International reports that Alberta's power rates are competitive with other provinces while we have no debt on our power infrastructure. Although I'm sure that the report on what would have happened to Alberta under a Liberal government would say that power prices would also have been competitive, we continue stating that blackouts would have been commonplace due to lack of generation capacity under the Liberal regime.

Further to that, whereas provinces like Ontario and Quebec have tens of billions of dollars of debt carried by their state-run electricity provider, which taxpayers in those provinces will be paying back for years, Alberta has no debt fiscally or through government-owned power companies. My guess is that the report would say that the taxpayer-supported debt to build power plants would be continuing to mount.

I believe a fitting title for the third section of the report would be Nothing Left to Lowball. The Liberal opposition often complains that the government lowballs resource revenue estimates, so needless to say, under a Liberal government they would be taking the highest possible estimates they could find for volatile commodities like oil and gas. Probably also needless to say, the Liberal government would have spent much more than they received. Rather than seeing surpluses, we would be looking at deficits. Instead of having no debt, Albertans would be crushed under mounting debt. We've already seen in Ontario how under a Conservative government they had balanced budgets, and now under a Liberal government they are running billion-dollar deficits each and every year.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth section of this report would prove to be quite interesting. I think it would be titled Dethroning the Royalties. No, I don't think that Queen Elizabeth would be getting scrubbed off our centennial quarter. What I refer to is that the Liberal opposition has often been heard musing for years that they think that royalty rates need to be drastically raised. Peter Lougheed raised royalty rates in the 1970s to ensure that Albertans were getting their fair share while making sure that the oil and gas sector would still want to explore and extract the oil and gas from our land. This balance provides Albertans with billions of dollars in revenue annually as well as jobs for hundreds of thousands of Albertans. I imagine that under a Liberal government there would have been drastically higher royalty rates, drastically less oil and gas development, little or no royalty revenue, high unemployment, a greatly reduced oil sands venture, and most likely a much smaller population. I didn't even factor in their love for the Kyoto protocol in the picture.

Mr. Speaker, this final section, at least in this volume, would probably be titled Tax to the Max. A quick look back through *Hansard* shows that no matter what amount of money we are spending, no matter what we are spending it on, the standard response from the Liberal opposition is that we should be spending more. We just heard it. I would suggest that members watch the Liberal opposition during the upcoming budget debates where they will most likely be saying that we should be spending more on health care, more on education, more on municipalities, more on policing, more on the arts, more on universities, more on libraries, more on teachers, more on doctors, more on seniors, more on children, more on the environment, and more on agriculture.

If you can think of something that the government spends money on, the Liberals will tell you that we're not spending enough. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if they have their budget response speeches written even before they've seen a copy of the budget. I'm certain that this report would list all of the extra spending that would have occurred under a Liberal government, and I'm also certain that the NDs over there would have said that even that was still not enough.

So I, too, am sure that the report would have enlightened us as to how the Liberal government would have been able to afford all this extra spending, certainly through higher taxes and more debt. We would see increases to our personal income taxes, corporate taxes, royalty rates, health care premiums, and I would even venture to say that Albertans might have a provincial sales tax under a Liberal government. We also would probably have a much larger debt than we've ever had before.

For anyone who is tuning in late, Mr. Speaker, here's what I figure the executive summary would look like in a report on what Alberta would have looked like had the Liberals been in charge: high unemployment, high taxes, high debt, high spending, and we would all be sitting here in the dark.

I would also like to say that I find it very ironic that the hon. member has brought forward suggestions on how to spend our surpluses when, had we listened to their suggestions in the first place, there wouldn't have been any surpluses.

Mr. Speaker, I've always likened it to the story of the little red hen. Nobody wanted to help the little red hen make the bread. They didn't want to help pick the wheat, and they didn't want to help bake the bread. They didn't want to do any of the hard work. But once the bread was baked, they all wanted a share. That's how the Liberals want to spend our surpluses. They all seem to have great ideas. Now that we've done the hard work of balancing the books and paying off the debt, they all have grand schemes as to how to spend our surpluses.

That being said, I don't think that the suggestions for putting funding into a postsecondary education endowment fund, the

heritage fund, the capital account, and into the arts are poor ideas. In fact, before this very House today already is Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, which will create the access to the future fund to expand and enhance opportunities for Albertans to attend high-quality postsecondary education.

Furthermore, this government has long had a standing policy that once our debt was paid off, we would begin to inject dollars into the heritage fund to inflation-proof it. Thanks to the perseverance and vision of this Conservative government that is now the case, and I look forward to that happening in the near future.

Furthermore, with the announcement of \$3 billion for municipalities to deal with their infrastructure debt, this government is once again already doing much of what the hon. member would like to see done.

So, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I obviously will not be able to support this bill. You may have guessed that. I don't want to set a precedent that the Alberta government will spend taxpayers' dollars to create a report to look at any and every policy an opposition member might pull out of their head. It's a waste of money. It's a waste of paper. Quite frankly, if the Liberal opposition wants feedback on their policies, there are 67 other MLAs that I am sure would be more than happy to give it to them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm supporting this bill because it creates a surplus investment policy. I have to ask myself how we in the 21st century in the richest place on Earth can talk about an 18th century Scrooge philosophy based on economics and profits, where support for businesses is desired while help to individuals in need is considered a drain. I believe we can do better, and this bill is a step towards that. As I see the allocation of surplus funds, it would be as follows: 35 per cent of any surplus would go into the heritage fund, 35 per cent into an endowment fund for postsecondary education, 25 per cent into a capital account for infrastructure, 5 per cent into an endowment fund to support the humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Most importantly, I believe that at the end of each fiscal year, starting with this fiscal year, March 31, 2005, the bill would require that the Minister of Finance prepare a report on how the financial affairs of the government would have been affected if the surplus investment policy was implemented. It requires that this report from the minister would be made public. We were suggesting also an automatic review of the act at the end of five years from it coming into force. So this would give us an opportunity for a review process, and I think that this would be a wise, judicious suggestion that would result in transparency and accountability.

It demonstrates a vision, a vision that moves beyond today and moves beyond some of the attitudes that we've just heard. We have enormous revenues available to us right now and for the short distant future coming from our natural resources, and what we most want to know is: how are we going to do something to ensure that this will have a lasting effect to the benefit of our children, our grandchildren, or even our great-grandchildren?

My constituents really support the idea of allocating these various surplus funds. Everyone liked the idea of the postsecondary endowment fund. People want to see this happen. They want to see that fund grow. They're willing to give this government, of course, credit for paying down the deficit that was owed by the province, but

they're also very much aware that in doing so, other deficits were created. So the idea of the infrastructure, supporting that wisely and having a plan for it, was supported by everyone.

I realize that the budget surpluses that Alberta has enjoyed in the recent past are directly related to energy prices. Past experiences have proven that these can be very volatile and maybe not sustainable for long periods of time. While recently we've had the good fortune of wonderful surpluses, they cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty, but this bill is talking about per cents of whatever surplus we do realize. This is an effort to have a plan, direction, and vision to ensure wise use of surpluses in the future. It is a savings, a trust, just like the heritage trust fund was meant to be.

When I look back at what Premier Lougheed created with the heritage trust fund, it was a vision, a vision that I think had some ingenuity with it. It was, I guess, a great benefit to this province. We've seen lots of benefits over the years. I can talk about the benefits to students in high schools receiving the scholarships year after year. We would also like to take a look, though, at what we can do to have this fund grow. It has not grown in the last number of years, and we do need a guaranteed revenue source beyond just the general revenue.

3:50

I'd like to look at the ingenuity and the vision and, I think, the possibilities of this bill that we're talking about today, a vision that takes us into the future by first dealing with the past. Repair the mistakes. Repair the neglect. Build the various areas back to the state that they were prior to us dumping all of our money into paying off the deficit and debt.

I think that as representatives of the people of this province we need to bring forward and pass laws that will make a real difference to Albertans and where we can see the benefits in the years to come. Albertans expect the government to be responsible and sensible with the funds they endow us with. It is, in turn, the responsibility of the government to give back to Albertans as much as possible through promoting the economy, job creation, effective public services, and lower taxes and supporting the things that in the end are truly an investment. Those are our people, our education, and our health.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to maybe set the record straight. As much fanfare as this government wants to create over paying off the debt, we have to set the record straight. It is their debt that they, in fact, did pay off. They created it, and the whole province paid a heavy price to pay that off. To congratulate them is like praising your child for cleaning up their room. It's something that they're expected to do. They don't need to be congratulated on that.

The debt's not really officially paid off. As the government has set-aside to pay off the debt and to put those funds down early, they're going to face a financial penalty according to the press release of July 12. They can't pay it off just yet, until it becomes due.

However, the point remains about what to do with the large surplus that, in fact, remains year after year with regard to the amounts unbudgeted, re the royalties. There is no plan for future surpluses. The government refused to talk about it during the campaign, and they're still refusing to talk about it. But one party has put out a plan for sustainability and long-term thinking, and that is the Liberal Party. I've said this in the past and I'll say it again

now: it's unfortunate that just because it comes from one side of the House and has good merit, it shouldn't be in fact evaluated and considered then.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, why I think it's more fun in here in private members' bills is because what really happens is that you get really ill-thought-out ideas sometimes that come forward, but they deserve the consideration of this Legislature for a certain amount of time.

The planning that went into the bill I have to think is somewhat suspect. I would suggest that if we have surpluses like that, there is one place it should go. It should go back to the people of Alberta in tax relief. It should probably be set aside for emergencies or emergent needs that may not all be to do with health and education.

That said, there is some merit in the coulda, woulda, shoulda attitude of the opposition. I would love to have a Finance minister go back into the Liberal government gun control bill, and let's see how many lives could have been saved with that \$2 billion. I mean, it would be great if we could look back and then think what would have happened. It would be great to look back into the Liberal ad sponsorship scams and find out what we could have done with that \$200 million or \$300 million and the \$200 million or \$300 million we're going to spend finding out how they all covered their rear ends to make sure they're not the one that gets left holding the bag. Those would be great things for a Finance minister to do, but they'd be kind of counterproductive.

General Motors kind of taught us a lesson when they built a car. They put a big windshield on it, and they put a little rearview mirror. Mr. Speaker, that means that you govern looking forward. You keep an eye on the mirror, on what happened. You learn from the past, but you don't live in it. You only have one place for one driver in a car, and when you get a whole bunch of back-seat drivers trying to tell the driver where to go, if they listened, they'd probably crash. Thank goodness we've got a leader and a government that are able to pick their plan on a highway, and they're heading down it full speed ahead.

We've got rid of a lot of the baggage that many other governments aren't able to in debt and deficit, and now the road that we go on for Albertans is our choice. I just hope the people in this Assembly don't listen to the back-seat drivers looking out the back window wondering where we could have gone, what we might have done but look forward to all the possibilities we've got in Alberta. It's our destiny. So I just hope we get rid of this bill in second reading and maybe get on to something reasonably intelligent.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Boy, it's quite an afternoon, isn't it? You know, but for the grace of God and really, really good fortune this government would have broken their own law last year. I'd like to remind the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar that we approved \$1.9 billion in unbudgeted spending for the year 2004-2005, \$1.9 billion that this government spent that wasn't in the budget. It's only through good fortune and high natural resource prices that they managed to turn a surplus this year. So for him to talk about the tax-and-spend Liberals and read his fancy little report there – quite frankly, he's very, very lucky that the tables aren't turned on him. I really find that quite interesting, that the government that blew their budget within six weeks of it being passed last year should now stand up and talk about what a great job of budgeting they do.

In fact, we've already seen a number of budgetary announcements in the last few weeks that have caused me to question whether or not that's perhaps unbudgeted spending again being announced in the month of May. We haven't even passed the budget yet, and there are announcements coming out that I'm not even sure are included in the budget. So it's really just quite interesting to hear the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar talk about what a great job of budgeting this government does when it would be my submission that they're doing a rather dismal job of budgeting, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if ever there was a time for a surplus investment policy, it is now. We're experiencing unbelievable resource revenues. We're seeing money come in that, obviously, even this government didn't expect would come in. We're seeing oil prices at the highest price they've ever been at, and the sky is apparently the limit. I am one of those that the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar referred to that says that this government always lowballs energy prices. Quite frankly, all you have to do is look at the record. You go back the 12 years that this government has been in place, and that's pretty consistent year after year after year. This is not just the Liberal opposition standing up and saying: oh, you guys always lowball prices. It's right there in black and white for anybody to go look at.

I'm really, quite frankly, looking forward to a year from now when we're at this stage again. We can go back and look at what the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford predicted the mean oil price would be over the year. I'll say it right now in case hon. members across haven't heard it: \$48. Having said that, I'm impressed that the Finance minister based her budget on \$42. I expected that they might use a number even somewhat lower than that. My personal prediction is \$48, and I'm on record for having said that several times.

The other thing that the government does, and they've done it again this year: they tend to overestimate the value of the American dollar. Again, this adds greatly to the bottom line at the end of the year. This year they're basing their numbers on an 85-cent dollar. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that recently the dollar did reach 83 cents, and now it's back down around 80 cents. If it stays down around 80 cents, what it means, of course, is more money in the bank at the end of the year. I've always said that I'd rather see money in the bank at the end of the year than to go the other way, but to lowball the estimates, as this government has done year after year for some 12 years now, and then pat themselves on the back for their great budgeting at the end of the year, well, quite frankly, it's a shell game. If you were to look at several of the comments that come from the other side, often they accuse the federal government of doing the same thing. So it's a bad thing if the federal government does it, yet somehow it's perfectly acceptable if it's done here.

4:00

An Hon. Member: You're not suggesting that they're hypocrites?

Mr. R. Miller: Now, I would never suggest that they were hypocrites. I'm just simply suggesting that, on the one hand, it's not a good thing, and on the other hand, it seems to be okay.

Now, Mr. Speaker, very clearly during the election I heard from many, many constituents that, as I said, if there was ever going to be a surplus investment policy, now is the time. The idea of asking for a report as to what things might have looked like if, in fact, the Liberals' plan for surplus investment was adopted I don't think is a bad thing at all. I think that, certainly, in the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford there are many, many people who would like to know that, and I heard this time and time again.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to outline quickly what would happen, I guess, knowing that, quite frankly, we're up against a majority government, and there have already been several rather vitriolic comments indicating that this bill is not going to pass today. Certainly, that is up to the government. With their majority they have the power to do that. I'd like to read in my own little report very quickly as to what would happen if this government were to continue the next three years with a surplus averaging \$2.4 billion, what that might have meant to Albertans.

It would mean an extra \$2.5 billion in the heritage fund, an extra \$2.5 billion in the postsecondary endowment fund. If I can just take a second and point out, the government made a commitment this year to put what I consider to be a paltry \$250 million into that postsecondary endowment fund. Then, you'll recall, they instituted a \$3 billion cap. At the current rate of investment it would actually take 12 years for this government to reach that \$3 billion cap. Under the Alberta Liberal plan after only three years we would be at \$2.5 billion, and we'd be wondering why we had set that cap so low, as I indicated when we discussed Bill 1 in the House previously.

There would after three years be \$1.8 billion set aside in the capital account to look at the infrastructure debt.

Mr. Speaker, a full \$360 million after three years would have flowed into the endowment for the humanities, social sciences, and arts. You'll recall that earlier this session we actually passed a motion – I believe it was Motion 505 – that would mandate humanities and arts to be included in the high school curriculum. I know that that was a motion brought forward by a government member, and it was passed with an overwhelming majority and I think perhaps even a unanimous vote in this House. So, certainly, there was some recognition on the part of the government that arts and humanities are important, yet we're not seeing any action on their part to ensure that there's money going into some sort of an endowment fund that would fund that.

Now, our bill that we're debating this afternoon, Bill 203, would cap that amount at \$500 million, and I think I mentioned already that after three years that would have been at \$360 million. So it's not hard to see how we could, you know, fund initiatives like this quite easily with modest surpluses, Mr. Speaker, that are likely to continue for the next couple of years at least. I think it's spelled out fairly clearly in the bill, but for the information of those members who perhaps haven't read it yet, if and when we were to reach that \$500 million mark in the arts and humanities endowment fund, then that 5 per cent that had been dedicated to there would go into the heritage savings trust fund.

Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate enough to have my parents here this afternoon, and over lunch we were discussing the heritage savings trust fund. My father reminded me of a conversation we had around the family dinner table when I was but a young, young man where he indicated at that time that he would never see a penny of that heritage savings trust fund. I'm sorry to say that it looks, at least to this point, that he's probably right.

In 1986 that fund was worth \$12.7 billion. Today, nearly 20 years later, it's dropped down to \$12.1 billion. Now, I don't have to tell you what chunk inflation itself would have taken out of that, let alone the fact that it really should have grown.

Alaska's permanent fund, which began in the same year as our heritage fund, is almost triple our fund at \$36 billion, and of course everybody will know that they actually provide a cheque to Alaskan residents every year. Even given that they give money back to the taxpayers, they're still able to build their fund to \$36 billion.

The one that always blows me away, Mr. Speaker. Norway's petroleum fund started 16 years after our fund was started, and you're looking at a jurisdiction that is about the same size: \$120

billion in Norway's fund. It really has to make every Albertan stop for a second and ponder what our fund could have looked like if we hadn't been stripping away billions of dollars over the last 20 years and dumping that money into general revenue. It's just so unfortunate.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and join the debate on Bill 203, brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, which calls for the Minister of Finance to "prepare a report on how the financial affairs of the Government would have been affected" if entire budget surpluses were allocated towards four funds or accounts. These four funds that were suggested were the postsecondary education endowment fund, the heritage savings trust fund, the capital account, and the endowment fund for the humanities, social sciences, and arts.

We don't need to visit a fortune teller to know that the report would be clear on one thing and one thing only: there would be no surplus due to the hypothetical on top of hypothetical that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is proposing here today. It would appear that the members from across the way have temporarily jumped from the gloom-and-doom bandwagon onto the what-if bandwagon for a short time only, I am sure.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very concerned with this bill because it deals with hypothetical situations, calls on numerous resources to be used in the preparation of an extensive report which is to be based on a number of hypothetical statements. As I see it, Bill 203 is asking for a report to be funded with taxpayer dollars which would hypothetically predict what would have happened to Alberta's financial situation if all budget surpluses were allocated towards education, postsecondary education, infrastructure, and the heritage savings trust fund.

While I'm unable to comment on the numerous hypothetical spending situations requested by the Member for Edmonton Gold-Bar, I can comment on what is being done with Alberta's surplus today in the real world. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar should be happy to know that through Bill 1, the Access to the Future Act, the government is setting up the access to the future fund. This is a real fund that will contain real dollars for real students. This is not fantasy, Mr. Speaker; this is real.

The access to the future fund will be set up to receive the income from an endowment within the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. A portion . . .

Mr. R. Miller: Sixteen cents per student per day.

Mr. Prins: Yeah, I heard that, and it's not true.

A portion of the future unbudgeted surpluses will go into this new endowment for Alberta students until it grows to a healthy \$3 billion. It is at this time that the Alberta heritage savings trust fund will pay the access to the future fund 4 and a half per cent of what is in the endowment. This real money will be allocated through grants from the access to the future fund. The fund is intended to provide base money to drive innovation in Alberta's postsecondary system. This real money will also be used to match grants designed to stimulate private industry, corporate, and other public contributions into Alberta's universities, colleges, and technical institutes.

The access to the future fund will establish and support improved learner outcomes; faculty, staff, and graduate student development, attraction, and retention; knowledge and technology transfer; as well

as affordability. An example of what the access to the future fund will provide is the matching contributions it will make to help create the new centre for Chinese studies at the University of Alberta. This innovative project will promote greater understanding of the cultural language and history of one of the world's largest economies in a country with which Alberta has enjoyed a special, long relationship.

This is just one example, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of other real financial supports that government provides for Alberta's education system and the individuals that participate in it now and in the future. These, too, are real. These are not hypothetical programs, and there is no hypothetical spending.

4:10

I would like to take the opportunity to discuss a few of these programs. The Lois Hole Campus Alberta digital library is another of Alberta's groundbreaking and innovative projects. This initiative is centred on the work already under way at the University of Calgary. The digital library, which is a province-wide initiative, when fully implemented will allow all postsecondary students and faculty, wherever they are located in Alberta, to access the resources and knowledge currently held in the individual libraries of Alberta's technical institutes, colleges, or universities.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative can be looked at as a digital neighbourhood for students, faculty, and the community to access a wealth of knowledge. Building on the opportunities created by the SuperNet and the postsecondary collaborations already in place, the digital library will be part of a province-wide system that will give Albertans unprecedented access to e-learning, e-health, and e-commerce opportunities across this province.

By embracing this real access to the vast array of information made available through the digital library, we will make Alberta one of the most information-rich provinces in North America. Through the technologically advanced learning facilities of Alberta's universities, the digital library will support satellite points to connect people with life-long learning. For generations to come, Albertans will be linked to knowledge and information that could only be imagined 20 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, this is real. There are no what ifs involved. There are no gloom-and-doom scenarios other than those brought forward by members across the way. This is real innovation at work in Alberta.

Another example of Alberta's real commitment to students across the province is the Alberta heritage scholarship fund. This fund will contain a billion dollars to provide estimated additional revenues of at least \$35 million annually. Originally endowed at a hundred million dollars, the Alberta heritage scholarship fund was designed to encourage excellence by recognizing outstanding achievement. The scholarship fund currently administers over 40 different scholarships and will award \$23 million in scholarships in '04-05. Since 1981 the Alberta heritage scholarship fund has awarded in excess of \$280 million to over 180,000 Albertans. That's a lot of money for students. That is real money supporting real students in a real way.

Mr. Speaker, there's also a \$500 million expansion to the Alberta ingenuity fund, which will build on the fund's activities in accelerating innovation in Alberta. The Alberta ingenuity fund was established in 2000 with an endowment of \$500 million. The fund was created to promote the discovery of new knowledge and encourage its application to benefit Albertans. This support of world-class research also advances science and engineering internationally. The fund provides various grants and awards in areas of both basic and applied research. Programs are developed in consultation with the international Science and Engineering Advisory Council, made up

of scholars and experts recognized worldwide for their achievements in the Alberta research community.

My final example, Mr. Speaker, is the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. For 28 years this fund has been providing real benefits for Albertans. The investment income from the fund has been allocated to Albertans' priorities, including health care, education, and debt elimination. As of December 31 of last year the fund's value was \$12.2 billion. Since its creation in 1976 the heritage fund has provided \$27 billion in direct benefits to this province. The current mission of the fund is to provide practical investment for the savings from Alberta's nonrenewable resources by providing the greatest financial returns on those savings for current and future generations of Albertans.

We could continue for hours discussing the numerous real programs which would provide real dollars for Albertans, but unfortunately we only have a limited amount of time. I'm confident, however, that my colleagues will carry this torch and enlighten the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar about what Alberta does and what is real. I encourage the member from across the way to put down his prophecy book, put away the doom-and-gloom scenario that they use for their platform. It's time to encourage what works and what is real.

Unfortunately, for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I'm unable to support Bill 203, and I call on all my colleagues to refrain from supporting this legislation as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to close debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the debate this afternoon on Bill 203, the Report on Alberta's Legacy Act. I have listened with a great deal of interest to the previous speakers and have read in *Hansard* the debate from past Mondays.

However, before I get started on why I think the hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly should support the bill, I would like to note, particularly to many of the previous speakers, that in a private member's bill we are not allowed to introduce money bills. An example of that would be bills that expend government funds. Only a minister of the Crown may introduce a money bill; therefore, we are compelled to introduce a bill requiring a report. That is why it is necessary for us to have a report with Bill 203.

But, really, when you look at this bill, it is about a party that has a vision. Contrary to what previous speakers may think, this party, the Alberta Liberal Party, and our current leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview – he's no different than past leaders of this party.

There was an hon. member who talked about suggestions earlier and how this government listens to suggestions. Well, certainly, they listen to good ideas and good suggestions from this side of the Assembly, and I would ask you to listen to this one as well, Bill 203.

We were talking about the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. Our former leader, Mr. Laurence Decore, was the first political leader in this province to point out how the Conservatives were spending money like it was water. If we go back, perhaps, to 1988-89, this government's spending was out of control, and I'm not so sure it's not out of control now, Mr. Speaker, because we're spending lots and lots and lots of money, and we still have all kinds of problems. In fact, we have the same problems.

So it is unfair to say that this is the party that created the debt. We certainly did not. But we came up with sound ideas on how to eliminate the debt over a long period of time without sacrificing our infrastructure, without sacrificing our delivery of public health care,

public education, without failing to look after those who, unfortunately, cannot look after themselves.

It was quite clear in the election campaign last fall, Mr. Speaker, which party had a heart. We were standing up for the people, and it was evident throughout the campaign. This government in reality has forgotten about many of the people in this province who cannot look after themselves, whether it's the AISH report or the latest Auditor General's report, this one on seniors' care and programs. I think all of us on both sides of the House should be ashamed about this report.

Getting back to the report – that is, Bill 203 – we have to be looking at what other leaders of this party have done and what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview had suggested during the election. Not only have we taken good Liberal ideas and turned them into government policies with Mr. Decore but also with Ken Nicol and the sustainability fund. That was a good idea, and it was adopted. So there's no reason why you can't adopt this idea.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster should know, if any hon. member of this House should know, Mr. Speaker, being that close to Saskatchewan, what happened to the Progressive Conservative Party after they were defeated. One of the big growth industries there was in jail cells because there was more than one or two of them that had to go to jail. In fact, their public image was blemished to the point where they had to fade into history. [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired]

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has moved second reading of Bill 203, Report on Alberta's Legacy Act. Does the Assembly agree with the motion for second reading?

Mr. MacDonald: Clarification, please.

Speaker's Ruling

Closing Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, your colleague spoke on your behalf to introduce this bill; therefore, when you speak or she speaks on your behalf, that closes debate. It's deemed that you have spoken before. So the second time you speak or whoever spoke on your behalf speaks, that closes debate. For closing the debate you only have five minutes. Did you want to comment on that?

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, could I have clarification, please. On the Order Paper today I believe there were 83 minutes left in debate, and I would just like to have it clarified that all 83 minutes have expired.

The Deputy Speaker: Not every speaker used all of their full 10 minutes, but once they sit down, that time has elapsed. According to *Beauchesne* 466(2), "should a Member propose a motion on behalf of another Member, a later speech by either will close the debate." So when I recognized you, I asked you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, to close debate, which gave you your five minutes to close the debate, so now we're proceeding with the vote. Is that clear?

Mr. MacDonald: Sure.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:24 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Backs	Mather	Taft
Bonko	Miller, B.	Taylor
Elsalhy	Miller, R.	Tougas
MacDonald	Swann	

Against the motion:

Abbott	Horner	Oberle
Ady	Jablonski	Ouellette
Amery	Johnson	Pham
Cao	Knight	Prins
Eggen	Liepert	Rogers
Evans	Lougheed	Snelgrove
Forsyth	Lukaszuk	Stelmach
Fritz	Lund	Stevens
Goudreau	Magnus	Strang
Graydon	Marz	VanderBurg
Griffiths	Melchin	Webber
Groeneveld	Morton	Zwozdesky
Herard		

Totals: For – 11 Against – 37

[Motion lost]

Bill 204

Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to move second reading of Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The bill is not a complex bill. It is simply to reclassify ephedrine and pseudoephedrine as schedule 2 drugs. What does this reclassification as schedule 2 drugs mean? Schedule 1 drugs are sold only in pharmacies, stored behind the pharmacy's counter, and are available only by prescription. Schedule 2 drugs are available only in pharmacies and are stored behind the counter. Schedule 3 drugs are just available in pharmacies. So by reclassifying ephedrine and pseudoephedrine as schedule 2 drugs, products containing these drugs would only be available from behind the counters at pharmacies. The products affected by this move would be many cold medications and nasal decongestants.

The purpose of Bill 204 is to restrict the access to ephedrine and pseudoephedrine by individuals who are seeking these drugs for illegal purposes. Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are two main ingredients used in the production of crystal meth and other methamphetamines. The use of crystal meth is a growing concern across all of North America, as I'm sure all members here can attest. Crystal meth is a growing concern in all of our communities and is affecting individuals, families, and innocent bystanders throughout Alberta. Crystal meth is highly addictive, is made from common household products, and is relatively cheap to obtain.

I applaud the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing forward Bill 202, which will help address the drug addiction issue for Alberta's children. With Bill 202 to help provide a very useful tool in helping to treat the drug addicted, Bill 204 will help to make it more difficult for those manufacturing illicit drugs to easily obtain the ingredients they need to manufacture a relatively low-cost product.

This bill isn't going to stop the manufacture of crystal meth in Alberta. I think we need to acknowledge this fact during this debate. Without Canada-wide action by the federal government differing legislation amongst the provinces will continue to allow for precursor drugs like ephedrine and pseudoephedrine to flow from jurisdictions with weaker controls and legislation in regard to these drugs. With hundreds of instructions available on the Internet on how to create small portions of meth with a few household products and little effort, many youths are beginning to experiment with these products of crystal meth.

This is an opportunity for Alberta to lead the way in Canada in regard to beginning to put stronger controls on the products that lead to drugs which are causing great devastation to a great number of Albertans and their families. Crystal meth is a problem that isn't going to go away. We need to decrease the number of people beginning to use crystal meth and slow the supply to those who are currently using.

4:40

While Canada and Alberta do not participate greatly, they do great jobs in routinely collecting data on substance abuse. The Edmonton Police Service report increases in drug seizure and charges in relationship to crystal meth from the period of 1999 to 2003. AADAC has reported that amongst youth clients, 25 per cent reported that they have abused some of the amphetamines; 19 per cent of the adult clients have claimed that they have also used some form of this too. Usually when we discuss or debate a certain drug or addiction, the discourse revolves around the individual user, their family, and innocent people who have been directly affected by the drug abuser through physical assault, robbery, or some other crime.

An incident involved an Edmonton man who was high on crystal meth and stole a truck and rammed the vehicle into a police cruiser after a long chase. Both officers in the police cruiser were badly injured. This is the type of recklessness and lethal behaviour that we need to rid our streets of, but this type of behaviour can be associated with a great number of street drugs.

One of the dangers that separates crystal meth from some of the other drugs is the manufacturing process. Setting up a marijuana operation in a home at the worst of times leads to moisture damage and mould spores. While mould can be dangerous to one's health, this pales in comparison to the danger that exists around a crystal meth cook lab. The manufacturing of crystal meth involves common products that can be obtained legally by any individual, but the ingredients can be extremely toxic and explosive. Individuals operating these labs have no training in chemistry or in the safe storage of toxic chemicals. They criminally look to make as much money as quickly as possible. The safety of the children living in these cook labs is at risk. The safety of the neighbourhood is at risk, and the safety of the law enforcement officials and emergency crews who arrive at these locations is also at risk.

According to a study conducted by the University of Washington, 52 per cent of Washington law enforcement officers who attended training seminars related to crystal meth laboratory investigations reported experiencing symptoms of ammonia, hydroxide, chloride, or acid exposure. These manufacturing processes are very dangerous and produce a number of hazardous by-products.

Albertans and the people who serve our community shouldn't have to worry about these types of risks. As a government we need to take steps to reduce the amount of crystal meth available, reduce the number of people who are trying to manufacture this drug. Bill 204 is a step in the right direction.

In July 2003 the College of Pharmacists announced that pharmacies across Alberta were going to voluntarily restrict access of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine by moving these products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine as small therapeutic ingredients behind the prescription counters. This move has been applauded by other provincial pharmacy colleges, and those other colleges have been discussing whether a similar move should be made in their jurisdictions. This voluntary move by colleges has essentially already put pharmacies across Alberta into compliance with Bill 204 with regard to single-ingredient products, but multi-ingredient products will also need to be put behind the counter.

Consulting with the College of Pharmacists will be leading to an amendment being put forward by myself to move multi-ingredient products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine into pharmacies but not behind the counter. What this does is provide an opportunity for Alberta's pharmacists to play a larger role in assisting Albertans in choosing the most appropriate drug therapy. Some may come into the pharmacy looking for a specific cold remedy, but with the help of the pharmacist this person might be directed towards an alternate treatment that will more effectively for what's ailing them. I would see an excellent opportunity to improve the care of Albertans.

Those who would be immediately affected by Bill 204 would be the nonpharmaceutical retail outlets. It is a possibility that Bill 204 would adversely affect the revenue stream that these stores now have. However, a great number of American states have had legislation similar to Bill 204 in effect for some time, and they haven't seen any significant backlash. I am confident that we'll see the same results here in Alberta.

The use of crystal meth is a growing concern in Alberta. It is a growing concern in all our communities and is affecting individuals, families, and innocent bystanders. Bill 204 is a step forward in reducing access to the main ingredients of this product of crystal meth.

I'd ask you all to support this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to contribute to the debate in second reading on Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. I have to start out by saying that there is no clear consensus with regard to this bill amongst the stakeholders, the pharmacists, and even in my own Official Opposition caucus. So we have two opposing points of view, one that might support this bill and one that opposes it.

Some people may be supportive of this bill as it tries to restrict access to ephedrine- and pseudoephedrine-containing drugs. These two chemicals are the precursors used to produce crystal meth. Myself, personally, I am leaning towards this point of view, supporting this bill, but with reservations, with qualifiers.

Why would I consider taking this direction and supporting this bill? First, as a community pharmacist who has practised for 11 years, I have seen people who expressed serious concern with the ease with which these medications are available and, further to that, the ease with which crystal meth is produced and the way it's manufactured.

Also, I am leaning towards supporting this bill because of my care for our young and our youth. Crystal meth is truly devastating. It is extremely dangerous. I'm not sure if some of the hon. members

know this, but initially a person who is addicted to crystal meth looks brighter and probably even achieves better in school. So this adds to the latency of the risk with crystal meth because a parent or a teacher might not notice that a person is addicted to a substance because they look brighter and they look more energetic. Then the downward spiral starts: they lose their appetite, they lose sleep, they lose their motivation, and then they get into the criminal activities, and so on.

Further, I might consider supporting this bill because other jurisdictions, places like Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, and Arkansas, have either passed or are studying similar legislation, legislation that is very similar to what we're proposing here in Bill 204. There is evidence that passing such a law or such a statute helps address this problem even at least partially.

Also, as a representative of the public and as an elected official I can see the merits of this proposal. Personally, many of my constituents have approached me expressing support for such an idea. I think their approach was one that fits with the crystal meth bill that we passed in this Legislature a couple of weeks ago, Bill 202, because they see this as a threat and they see it as something that needs to be addressed radically and forcefully.

4:50

I would argue, again as a pharmacist and from my own experience, that a legitimate cold or flu sufferer will not really mind much going to the back of the drugstore to talk to a pharmacist and request his sinus or flu medication. In fact, as the hon. sponsor of the bill indicated, this might be a better scenario because this person, he or she, will have to talk to the pharmacist and in the process receive some counselling and education.

So if I support this bill in principle, I have some concerns that I would like clarification on or an explanation from the hon. member, particularly that again we seem to be off-loading this tremendous responsibility on the pharmacist's shoulder. Why is it always the pharmacist who has to police the industry?

Actually, this may even open an area of questioning that is really big and contentious. The pharmacists previously have asked for typed or computer-generated prescriptions, for example, to avoid prescription mistakes. We all know that to some extent physicians' writing is not the most readable. Some physicians complied; some didn't.

Pharmacists have asked for reimbursement for cognitive services, but we were met with resistance and delays from this government. I would quote an example. For example, if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford comes to my store and he presents me with a prescription that was written for two grams of poison – take as directed – I don't get reimbursed if I refuse to fill that prescription. I would say: my friend, this is dangerous, and this can kill you. Then he would leave the store, and I have not earned a red penny; however, if I ignore my professional judgment and if I ignore my ethics and my moral obligations and I say, "Yes. Go ahead. Take it. Two grams of poison. Take it as directed. See you in a week, if you're still alive," then I made the money. I made the professional fee, the dispensing fee.

So this is an example of where a pharmacist is asked to exercise his professional judgment and not getting reimbursed for it. So the natural question will be: will the pharmacist be compensated for this extra duty with respect to pseudoephedrine and ephedrine-containing products? Will we have the recognition and the compensation for it?

As I mentioned previously, there is also division on this matter, and some people feel that they cannot support it. I know for sure that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre, who also happens to be the Official Opposition health critic, is totally against it and cannot support it.

Further to this, I want to put on the record that we as the Official Opposition have received letters of objection from both the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores and also from the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors. Obviously and understandably, these are organizations which are concerned that passing this bill will negatively impact their sales. I can understand and maybe even sympathize with them to some extent.

Further, our Official Opposition health critic is concerned that this bill attempts to go the easy way rather than tackle the real issues with respect to education, law enforcement, the inadequate treatment funding, and the lack of treatment and rehabilitation spaces and facilities.

So, really, at this stage of debate, it will be interesting and useful to listen to more discussion from our side and from the government side as well and possibly also from the third party and see what people have to say on this subject.

On the one hand, we have the idea that limiting access to the precursor would reduce the manufacturing of crystal meth. We have examples in some U.S. jurisdictions. There is also the angle that: no; supporting it at the wholesale level might be better and might be a more realistic approach than supporting it at the retail level. So these are considerations we have to all think about.

I think I can even expand on this and challenge the conventional thinking and say that there is also the angle with respect to sales of the precursor drugs, the ephedrine and the pseudoephedrine, in herbal or holistic medicine stores. These are stores or shops which are not rigorously controlled or regulated. It might be easier for them to stock it, and then a genuine drugstore or a grocery store might not be able to. Or you can actually even expand further and talk about oriental grocery and specialty stores, where in some cases these products are not even labelled in English, or they only list the botanical origin of what's inside, but they don't identify the chemical ingredients. So you have a product that says some type of bark or some type of leaf, but you don't know that it really contains ephedrine or pseudoephedrine.

These are questions which require answers, Mr. Speaker, and I would encourage other members to participate and possibly also the hon. sponsor of this so that when I support this bill, I would be comfortable supporting it, and I would take it back to my college and my professional association and say as one member, as one person, as one pharmacist that I supported it because of these reasons. Or if I go the other way and oppose it, I want to make a comfortable decision one way or the other.

I will retake my seat, and I will listen with interest to what other members have to say. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 204, Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. It has become clear, especially after the Western Premiers' Conference in Lloydminster last week, that there is a massive increase in concern in the abuse of methamphetamine in all of western Canada. The discussion of crystal meth was one of the highest priorities of the western Premiers, and Premier Calvert of Saskatchewan is now chairing a committee to research the use of crystal meth in western Canada. Bill 204 will give Alberta another weapon in the battle against this vicious addiction.

To start, I believe a word of recognition is in order for the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for bringing forward Bill 204 and for recognizing the need for such legislation. I'd also like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung for his words and his wisdom as a pharmacist on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, the fight against drugs is a two-front battle. On one front we attempt to educate parents, children, and teachers on the dangers associated with drug abuse and drug addiction. On the other front we react to the circumstances presented to us by drug addicts and drug dealers. Bill 204 is a reaction to the methamphetamine problem. One of the worst aspects of the meth problem is the ease of obtaining the ingredients needed to produce it. Methamphetamine is mass-produced using household products, including ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, as we've heard this afternoon.

The Alberta College of Pharmacists have volunteered themselves as the foot soldiers in the battle against methamphetamine. The College of Pharmacists have engaged themselves by voluntarily moving single-entity ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products, which are products where ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are the only ingredient, behind the pharmacists' counters. But this measure is only voluntary and does not apply to nonpharmacy retail outlets.

Bill 204 will extend this voluntary measure by making it mandatory. It also calls for placing products containing any amount of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine behind the counter as well. Mr. Speaker, Bill 204 is not a panacea that will solve the methamphetamine problem in this province. It will, however, be another deterrent that will make the production of the drug more difficult.

According to the College of Pharmacists the standards of practice for schedule 2 drugs include activities that must be undertaken by the pharmacists interacting with a patient desiring to self-medicate with one of these products. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that pharmacists are in a very good position to determine whether a person is interested in obtaining drugs for the purpose of self-medication or if they are interested in purchasing drugs to assist in the production of methamphetamine. By putting ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in the schedule 2 category, the pharmacists will have the power to reject the sale of the drugs in circumstances that are suspicious.

I would like to spend a few minutes talking about another drug that has been used inappropriately in the past because this drug was changed from schedule 3 to a schedule 2 drug as a measure to stop its misuse. The trade name for the drug is dimenhydrinate, and the common name is Gravol. Gravol is supposed to be used to treat nausea and vomiting, but when taken in large doses, it can produce a high and hallucinations. Until 1998 Gravol was a schedule 3 drug and was easily obtained by anyone looking for a cheap high. When Gravol was changed from a schedule 3 drug to a schedule 2 drug, this was done by the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

5:00

In the case of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine some would argue that the change from a schedule 3 drug to a schedule 2 drug should also be executed in the same manner. I warn, however, that the case for Gravol is not the same as the case for ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. One of the main differences between Gravol and ephedrine is that at the time when Gravol was being abused, not many people were aware of this problem, nor was this problem as serious as the one we're facing with meth. Another difference is that Alberta was the only jurisdiction in the country that had Gravol as a schedule 3 drug. The federal standard as well as all other provinces had Gravol as a schedule 2 drug. The case for Gravol was, therefore, quite different than the case for ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Making the change from a schedule 3 to a schedule 2 drug by the Lieutenant Governor in Council was practical for Gravol. It's less desirable for ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

Mr. Speaker, methamphetamine is a drug that has hit this province and other provinces like a plague. I doubt that there is an MLA in this room who has not heard a horror story from a constituent about

the devastating effect of this drug. The meth problem is simply this serious. A problem as serious as the one I am describing warrants extensive debate and discussion. Where Gravol was changed behind closed doors, changing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine requires more attention.

By passing Bill 204, Alberta will be the only jurisdiction in the country to have ephedrine and pseudoephedrine as schedule 2 drugs. This change in Alberta and the debate surrounding the change will cause the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities to also consider putting these drugs into schedule 2. If this change in Alberta prompts a change nationally, the battle against the spread of methamphetamine will gain considerable momentum, with Alberta at the forefront. Mr. Speaker, like Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, Bill 204 is clearly a step in the right direction.

I spoke earlier about the two-front battle against drugs: the education and prevention battle and the reaction battle. The Alberta College of Pharmacists has proposed opening another front in this battle, and Bill 204 may provide them with an opportunity to do so. When drugs are categorized, suggestions are made by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, but the ultimate decisions are left up to the authorities in each jurisdiction. These scheduling recommendations embody a cascading principle approach in which a drug is first assessed using the factors for schedule 1. Should sufficient factors pertain, the drug remains in that schedule. If not, the drug is assessed against the factors for schedule 2, and if warranted, it is subsequently assessed against the factors for schedule 3. Finally, should a drug not meet the factors of any schedule, it becomes unscheduled or nonrestricted and available for sale from any retail outlet.

Bill 204 supports the college in bringing issues regarding this process to the forefront because politicians are reacting to the insufficient process by bringing forward legislation. Mr. Speaker, this process promotes the listing of drugs in schedules corresponding to the conditions of sale, providing for proper drug use and patient safety. The problem according to the College of Pharmacists is that this process does not speak to medications used as precursors to other drugs, nor does it consider the misuse of drugs.

Another issue with the cascading principle model for drug assessment is that it does not provide for any judgment calls. The Alberta College of Pharmacists would like the process to address these issues. If the Alberta College of Pharmacists can change the process of drug categorization to include the use of judgment on a drug-by-drug basis in terms of potential misuse and in terms of using the medication as precursors to other drugs, this will open a third front in the battle against drug abuse: the proactive front.

Mr. Speaker, pharmacists have been expanding their role in health care and have been trying to extend their services to better serve in the primary health system. In fact, in looking for ways to be more efficient, various health professionals have looked at changes to their roles to make better use of their time and their expertise. In these changes pharmacists have been singled out as professionals who may have a larger role in prescribing and dealing with what they know about schedule 2 medications.

Bill 204 gives pharmacists an opportunity to become more involved in primary health. By putting medications that are primarily made of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine behind the counter, they are able to offer advice for treating symptoms associated with the common cold, the flu, and other associated illnesses. By speaking to their clients, they are in a better position to recommend the appropriate medication for treating these illnesses. Although some may argue that putting these medications behind the counter will simply inconvenience people, I suggest that with an

aging demographic Bill 204 will actually better serve many of Alberta's citizens. By placing medications for more common illnesses behind the counter, these people must consult a pharmacist, who, by asking appropriate questions, may be able to assess more serious conditions.

Alternatively, people who are on other medications may be better served because pharmacists will be able to suggest medications for treating common illnesses that do not cause complications when they are mixed with their normal medications. As the population ages, Mr. Speaker, these situations will become more common. Although the purpose of Bill 204 is not to protect people from these scenarios, it does provide the medical field an opportunity to do so, perhaps relieving some of the strain on other areas of the health care system.

As legislators it is our duty to protect the rights of the child. Article 33 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child states that children have the right to be protected from dangerous drugs. By being proactive and making it less than convenient to purchase the ingredients that make up dangerous drugs, we are taking proactive steps to protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude by reiterating that Bill 204 will not eliminate the crystal meth problem in this province, but I do believe it's another step in the right direction. I would encourage everybody to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to discuss Bill 204 and, in general, with a strong sense of support. We are in a culture and a society where we're facing increasingly the mixed blessing of our pharmacological plethora of opportunities and the double-edged sword that they represent in terms of helping and harming people. With this new scourge almost an epidemic in some areas it's clear that drugs that we have found very helpful in benign conditions of the respiratory system are now being abused. While Bill 204 cannot possibly address the broad range of underlying causes, which is so often the problem in our system, that we're dealing with symptoms, it at least is addressing at a secondary level an intervention that to me holds some promise, just as the approach to cigarettes and tobacco in our society has been somewhat aided and abetted in its control by restricting access to tobacco and alcohol similarly.

There needs to be a short-term and a long-term approach to these problems. In the short term it does seem eminently sensible to me to restrict access and to reduce the ability, especially of young people, to these drugs. In the longer term it's clearly only a very partial solution, and we need the other dimensions of a full approach that include education, addressing social and economic and even spiritual roots of the addictive society that we have today. We need to have early identification and management of these problems in schools, in communities, and the resources to do this. We need public policies such as this to help us to address and support the broader aspects of challenging the roots of the addictive tendencies that we confront every day in the medical field, the health field, the social, criminal, and legal aspects of it.

I won't belabour the issue, but I did want to stand in support of this and recommend it as a secondary intervention that will help to stem the tide. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug

(Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. Methamphetamines are part of a family of drugs known as amphetamines that were originally developed over 50 years ago. However, the widespread use and abuse of this drug is a relatively new phenomenon in our province.

Methamphetamine, also known as meth or crystal meth, among a variety of street names, is an exceptionally harmful and addictive drug. It is a stimulant that acts on the central nervous system. These effects can include feelings of euphoria, a decreased need for sleep, suppression of appetite and thirst, an increased sense of alertness, increased energy, and an increase in ambition. Additionally, at higher doses there is an increased chance of aggressive behaviour. The drug is very versatile in the sense that users are able to ingest it nasally, orally, intravenously, or through smoking. As with any drug, users develop a tolerance to methamphetamine, which necessitates the use of stronger doses in order to experience the same sensations from the drug.

5:10

The negative side effects of the drug include alteration of sleep patterns, psychosis, and mood swings. Prolonged abuse of the drug can lead to permanent nerve damage due to the way the amphetamines interact with the body's neurological pathways. Due to the fact that the drug may be injected, intravenous users of meth expose themselves to the risk of contracting HIV, hepatitis, and other blood-borne diseases if they are sharing needles. While all of these risks and the potential uncontrollable side effects are abhorrent, they do not set this drug apart from other illicit substances such as cocaine or heroine.

What makes methamphetamine different and, in my opinion, more dangerous is that they are easily produced using common household items. According to various law enforcement offices such as the drug enforcement agency, or the DEA, of the United States, a simple search of the Internet will reveal detailed plans of the necessary ingredients and tools used in the production of meth. All of these items are attainable by stopping at the grocery store and at the hardware store.

Also, several of these recipes provide alternatives to several ingredients that can be used if certain items are not readily available. In fact, only one of the ingredients used in making this drug cannot be substituted, and this is ephedra, ephedrine, or pseudoephedrine. One of these three drugs is crucial to the manufacture of methamphetamine. These drugs are commonly found in over-the-counter medications such as cold remedies. The availability of these ingredients makes it very easy for individuals to set up and operate small laboratories to produce methamphetamine. This is exactly what happened in the United States when methamphetamine appeared there.

While methamphetamine use in Alberta is a problem – it is a growing problem – we have the opportunity to learn from the experience of other jurisdictions to make a fairly accurate prediction of what may come. I would like to briefly discuss the experience in the U.S. to show how quickly the use and production of this drug can grow.

Meth started out in California, and that state remains the major producer of the drug in the country as well as a major trafficking hub for bringing the narcotic in from foreign countries. The DEA estimates that the rise of methamphetamine began in the early 1990s in California and grew very rapidly. From California use and production of the drug radiated outward through the rest of the country at an amazing speed. Data has shown that once the drug gained a toehold in certain states, its use and domestic production

literally exploded. In 1999, for example, the DEA reported seizing 57 meth labs in Mississippi, a state with a population that's comparable to Alberta, having 2.86 million people. In 2002 the DEA reported seizing 285 meth labs. This is an increase of 500 per cent. Likewise, Wyoming experienced an increase from 10 labs seized in 2000 to 54 seized in 2002.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of the risks that are associated with using methamphetamine have been outlined. However, the manufacture of this drug creates an entirely new set of risks, dangers, and hazards not only to those that are manufacturing the drugs but also to the community and to the environment. This is because of the ingredients that are used, the processes that are undergone, and the by-products that are created when methamphetamine is manufactured. Many of the ingredients used in manufacturing meth are highly volatile, including paint thinner and propane. The combination of these and other chemicals means that there exists a high chance of an explosion occurring, especially considering that the drug must be cooked in order to be produced. The second risk that comes from the manufacture of meth is that a variety of toxic fumes are produced during the reaction. These fumes can have a very harmful and long-lasting effect on anyone that comes in contact with it. The final side effect of the production of this drug is that the residue is toxic and ends up in the sewage systems of cities and towns.

The case in which the drug is produced, coupled with its highly addictive properties, means that addicts can begin producing their own narcotics. In the United States this has led to several tragedies involving people getting injured because of a meth lab explosion. This poses a risk not only to the individuals operating the lab but also to the police and to the fire personnel and in at least one case in the United States to the children of an individual that was operating a meth lab. In 1998 three children in California died when a meth lab their mother was operating exploded.

Thankfully, the U.S. is now witnessing a decrease in the number of clandestine meth labs. This can be attributed to the new legislation that has been brought in, designed to limit the precursor substances that are used in meth production. Mr. Speaker, Bill 204 seeks to do the same by narrowing the window of opportunity individuals have to purchase the necessary ingredients for manufacturing methamphetamine. By controlling the access to ephedra, ephedrine, and pseudoephedrine drug products, we are able to put controls on the volume of these drugs purchased, thereby curbing their potential use. The over-the-counter cold remedies that ephedra, ephedrine, and pseudoephedrine are found in will still be readily available for consumers to purchase as an over-the-counter item.

Mr. Speaker, we have a chance to learn from the experience of the United States and work to head off the explosion of methamphetamine use that our neighbours to the south are experiencing. By limiting the sales of the precursor drugs, we'll be able to limit the amount of meth made in home labs, thereby reducing the amount of this drug circulating in our province.

I support Bill 204 and would ask all my colleagues to do the same. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest to speak on Bill 204. I think that the intention of this bill is admirable. Certainly, no one can dispute the fact that the problem that we have with methamphetamines in our province, across the country, across North America is reaching epidemic proportions. It's a drug that can destroy lives very quickly and change personalities very quickly.

Thus, it's expedient and responsible for this Legislative Assembly to do something about it.

I guess that the only reservations that I do have are in regard to putting the responsibility too squarely or with too much emphasis upon the pharmacists to deal with this problem. If we did manage to have this bill pass, I would certainly like to see it in concert with other measures to ensure that we are in fact dealing with the enforcement and educative and social issues that surround the abuse of this drug and, indeed, other drugs as well. We've already been speaking about crystal meth in regard to treatment programs for youth, and I would like to humbly suggest that we should certainly extend this expanded treatment capacity to all individuals who meet the misfortune of drug abuse or addiction in their lives.

I think that we might be able to see some amendments to Bill 204. Our research would suggest that there are more than 200 products that, in fact, contain the active ingredient ephedrine or pseudoephedrine. You know, I think that if we could limit perhaps the products that are kept behind the counter to products that contain a hundred per cent of either of these products, that would perhaps simplify the execution of this bill if it became law and simplify the responsibility of the pharmacists to be controlling otherwise, as I say, more than 200 different products.

5:20

I think we're seeing, as I said before, the issue of this drug epidemic sweeping across the country. I know that the Premiers in Lloydminster were speaking about this, and so it would suggest that whatever we do decide to do in this Legislature, we should act quickly and in consort with other jurisdictions so that we don't have that discrepancy in law or in enforcement between different provincial jurisdictions. So we must watch carefully what happens elsewhere as well.

We have seen a federal private member's bill addressing this issue. In fact, I think that some aspects of the bill that the Yellowhead MP brought forward, Bill C-349, are interesting and are worth considering. That's looking at not just ephedrine but instead looking at some of the ingredients that are used to change the chemical nature of ephedrine to make crystal meth, which include acetone and hydriodic acid and red phosphorus, in fact to place some controlling restrictions on those substances which are specifically used to convert ephedrine into crystal meth. So I would like to just introduce that possibility of looking at controlling or tracking the sale of those substances as being an alternative to retail cold remedy – somehow controlling those substances which are more retail-oriented.

As people have spoken to some great extent, different states in the United States have had laws on the books already concerning the control of cold remedies such as Sudafed and Claritin-D. In fact, Oklahoma has placed those pills behind counters and given the pharmacists the responsibility of looking for photo identification and for signing a registry as well, which, you know, back to my original point about placing too much responsibility on the backs of pharmacists, might indeed be an example of how that could become too onerous and extreme to execute.

Again, looking through various pieces of research, the discrepancy between states in the United States creates people moving from state to state to look for cold medication, not to treat their colds but, in fact, to manufacture crystal meth. So, as I said before, if we can work quickly in consort with some of our other provincial counterparts, I think we would be more effective.

I should say that I would support this bill but only if we are in fact working with other measures to limit the destructive potential of this

drug on our population and not just limiting it to the restriction of this one ingredient.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to address the Assembly today regarding Bill 204, the methamphetamine limiting act. I would like to congratulate the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for bringing this important legislation forward. It is great timing.

I would like to start by admitting that I was under the impression that it was already a law in Alberta. I had heard that ephedrine was only being sold behind the counter in my constituency and assumed that our regulations had been changed. However, it was only after some research that I learned that the Alberta College of Pharmacists had voluntarily moved ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products behind the pharmacists' counter. I applaud the move and feel that we as a Legislature shouldn't be dragging our feet on making this mandatory in Alberta. Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are being used every day in bathtubs, basements, and kitchen sinks throughout Alberta to manufacture crystal meth.

Meth is one of the cheapest, most accessible, and harmful drugs circulating in Alberta right now. Part of this is because the ingredients are so easily obtained. If you came across a list of the precursors of this crystal meth lying on the street, the average Albertan would probably think that someone had accidentally dropped their grocery list on the way to the supermarket. I don't know the details of meth or how it's created, but I was told that if someone with illegal intentions had purchased some Sudafed, a bottle of iodine, a pack of matches, some Drano, and a bottle of Coleman fuel, they would be well on their way to having all the precursors to create a batch of crystal meth.

So the question we need to be asking ourselves as legislators is: how do we stop this? We can't outlaw all the precursors. We can't make it illegal to purchase Drano. We can't make it illegal to purchase a pack of matches. We can't make it illegal to purchase Sudafed. We can't even make it illegal to possess a combination of those precursors. If we did, we would be making criminals out of most Albertans. I would be willing to bet that many of us here in

this Assembly today has a box of Sudafed in our medicine cabinet at home, a pack of matches in a desk drawer somewhere, or a Drano container under our kitchen sink.

What we can do is make it harder to obtain the precursors. One thing I believe we need to keep in mind is that many of these products can be substituted in the crystal meth recipe. If we, for example, decide that Drano can only be sold in small quantities or only by licensed plumbers, then the meth producer will start to use a different drain cleaner or another cleaning product. It would also create a huge inconvenience for the average Albertan. I don't want to have to track down a plumber just to buy some drain cleaner. It would also unfairly hurt the manufacturers of Drano, only because some people have found a way to use their product in a way other than what it is supposed to be.

The same goes for many other precursors in this crystal meth. All of them are legal products. It's just that they are being used in a way other than that for which they are intended. And most can be substituted with other products; that is, with the exception of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are the only precursors in crystal meth that cannot be substituted. Furthermore, it's the easiest and cheapest method for meth makers to obtain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine from common cold and asthma medications.

Many of these products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine can be currently obtained off the shelves at a drugstore, grocery store, or even convenience store; that is, with the exception of those drugstores or supermarkets containing pharmacies who have voluntarily put them behind the counter. But is that fair? Is it even working?

If convenience stores can sell them to anyone, any time, in any quantity while those pharmacies who have voluntarily put them behind the counter question anyone who wants to buy ephedrine, it's fairly simple to figure out where the meth makers are going to buy their precursors.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the Assembly stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 9, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/05/09

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Recruitment of Health Care Professionals

508. Mr. Danyluk moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to institute an aggressive program aimed at hiring and retaining health care professionals throughout the province while targeting areas of need, such as rural Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise this evening to move debate on Motion 508. As we are all aware, health care is one of the most important issues to Albertans and, indeed, to all Canadians. An accessible, high quality, and sustainable health care system are the goals of many health care providers, and I feel that here in Alberta our health care system provides a high level of care for those who need it. Motion 508 deals with the issue of accessibility to health care in Alberta. Having an adequate number of health professionals in an area is key to ensuring that accessibility is retained.

While Alberta has some of the best health care professionals and medical centres world-wide, there are some areas of the province which have difficulty attracting and retaining health care staff. Smaller communities in our province often face this difficulty. While there exists a strong demand, professionals choose to locate to larger centres. There are a variety of reasons for this decision. Living in a smaller community can make it more difficult for an individual to continue their professional development. Also, while there may be employment for an X-ray technician, a physiotherapist, or a nurse, there may not be job opportunities for the spouse. All of these factors can add up to a health care professional choosing to find employment in another region. This leaves some rural communities wanting for access to primary health care.

Mr. Speaker, in the north there are many small communities where the physician comes in to see patients once a week. This is because the community is unable to attract or retain their own physician. During one period this physician cancelled his trip – and I have two different examples – once, three times in a row and, once, six weeks in a row. I am not imputing the actions of this physician, but I use this case to highlight the situation that some of these communities find themselves in.

The challenge of attracting and retaining health care providers to areas that are in need is one that we need to examine and address now due to the nature of the problem. Training health care workers or designing and implementing a recruitment and retention strategy takes time. The longer we wait, the longer it will be before we witness results.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to give the impression that the government has not addressed this issue, because that would be widely inaccurate. The government has programs in place, some for many years, to address this issue, such as Rural Physician Action Plan. The Rural Physician Action Plan's focus is on bringing more physicians to rural Alberta. They work towards this goal through a variety of means, including scholarships, bursaries, education

programs, and working with government to increase the number of rural residency programs available for medical students.

Since 1999 the government has increased the number of funded seats across all years of health programs by 4,300. This allows for many more Albertans to receive the training necessary to pursue a career in health sciences. Actions such as this work to ensure that shortages in the health care workforce are not due to a lack of trained personnel.

Mr. Speaker, I have brought this motion forward because I believe we need to do more to address this issue. We need to take the programs that are already in place, broaden their scope, and be more creative with them. Many of the current programs specifically target physicians, and this is good because we need doctors in this province. However, I would advocate that we widen the net so that the successes experienced with these programs can be expanded to include other health care professionals. There is no doubt that having enough doctors is the key, giving a high standard of care in our hospitals; however, without enough nurses, speech and physiotherapists, radiologists, and lab technicians our health care system will not function effectively or efficiently.

We need to create stronger incentives for medical professionals to locate to areas of need in our province. This can come in the shape of a variety of programs and a number of solutions to the challenges that are faced. Some of the solutions should include exposing more students in the health-related programs to learning experiences outside of our big cities or offering financial initiatives for students and practitioners in the health sciences to locate in areas of need.

Mr. Speaker, multiple jurisdictions world-wide are currently dealing with the same challenge. Many provinces have instituted programs designated to attract nurses and doctors to their jurisdiction. All of these programs have merit; however, for the sake of time I would like to highlight one which has caught my interest. It is interesting to me because of the flexibility of the program and the emphasis which it places on ensuring that areas in need of medical personnel are assisted in their recruiting efforts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I realize that most of the time saying the United States with reference to health care is regarded as a dirty word in Canada. However, under the United States Department of Health and Human Services exists an organization which is dedicated to recruiting health care workers to areas which are unserved in terms of health care professionals. The National Health Service Corps offers loan repayment for individuals who work in areas of need that have been identified by the Health Service Corps. These areas are given a score which reflects the level of need. The higher the score, the greater the need. Health professionals who apply to work in these areas of need are eligible to apply for the loan repayment. Loan repayment goes to individuals who have chosen employment in areas with the greatest needs.

The NHSC includes a wide range of professionals which it will offer loan payments to. They include but are not limited to physicians, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists, psychiatrists, and dental hygienists. Mr. Speaker, as I previously stated, this program is but one of the many which other jurisdictions have in place. I'm not suggesting that this program is one which the provincial government should pursue. I am only illustrating the fact that there exist many ways to overcome the challenges of recruiting and retaining health professionals.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a great health care system, and the Department of Health and Wellness has proven to be successful at addressing new challenges as they present themselves. By passing this motion, the House will urge the government to address greater attention to the issue of hiring and retaining medical staff in areas of need in this province.

I would ask all the members to support Motion 508. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, might we revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour tonight to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly Dale and Liz Leuken from the Dunvegan-Central Peace area. Dale is the regional president of the Alberta Alliance, and he wanted to come and see what happens here in the House. He got so close to being in here last time, he thought he'd better check before he tries it again. I'd like the Assembly to give them a warm welcome as we traditionally do.

head: **8: Motions Other than Government Motions**

Recruitment of Health Care Professionals
(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand and on behalf of the Official Opposition speak in response to Motion 508, "to institute an aggressive program aimed at hiring and retaining health care professionals," especially in rural Alberta. I have to say that the member has indeed identified one of the major issues around good service delivery of health care in Alberta today, and that's the issue of health workforce planning. We are behind on this fairly significantly for a couple of reasons.

The government did not do a good job of anticipating workforce flow in the '90s and laid off a significant number of our nurses and health professionals and all but gave them bus tickets to go somewhere else, and many of them did and went to the States and never came back. Others went to the States and were wooed back here with bonus payments to come back when we realized that we now had a workforce shortage. So that was not what I would give a blue ribbon for by way of either workforce planning or good use of funds, seeing as we gave them severances and then we had to give them resigning bonuses. But, you know, if they felt well-appreciated at that point and stayed in the workforce, perhaps that's okay then.

Part of the issue that we have right now, Mr. Speaker, is that we have both the population aging – now, that doesn't mean that they'll be a huge burden on the health care system. That's just simply not true. With the population that we have now, they are much fitter, they are better educated about health, they have access to clean water and good food and lots of it. We're trying to get people to understand that they need to be fit. So, yes, we have the baby boomer generation aging. True. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they are going to be an increased burden on the health care system. Nonetheless, there are a lot of them, so it will have an impact one way or the other, even if it's just in delivering prevention and wellness programs and annual check-ups and tests and things like that.

The second part of it is that the very workforce that provides those health services is also aging and is looking at retiring. There are all

kinds of statistics about how much of our workforce – the last one that I think I looked at was 20 per cent of our rural nursing workforce were looking to or planning to retire in 2007. Well, that's a significant outcome for us.

So I think that there are a couple of things that we need to consider. One is around the concept of the team of health professionals. Part of that, I think, is getting at the idea of doctors as gatekeepers, that everything's got to go through a doctor. You've got to go to a doctor first to get the test. You go off and get the test; you go back to the doctor. The doctor sends you to the specialist; you go from the specialist back to your GP. Always the doctor is the gatekeeper, and it's a lot of coming and going. The idea was that somehow the doctor would be able to manage and send you to the best care.

At this point my question is: shouldn't we be approaching this and saying, "Let the doctor do what only the doctor can do"? We would understand that as politicians, recently having come out of an election, Mr. Speaker, because there are certain things that only the candidate can do. There's a lot of other stuff to do in a campaign that other people can do, but there are certain things that only the candidate can do. If we think about the doctors in the same sort of way, maybe that'll allow us to, that terrible cliché, think outside of the box, take a different approach to this and not be so married to the idea of, oh, it always has to flow through the doctor.

I think we also have to look at how we pay the doctor. Paying by a fee for service, I think, has its place but not nearly the amount of place that we give it currently. We should be definitely looking at a salary model or a per-patient model.

I think that if we move away from doctor-as-gatekeeper and encourage doctors to work as part of a health professional team – this is partly what the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul was suggesting, that we widen that scope and bring in nurse-practitioners and dentists and pharmacists and LPNs and dietitians and occupational therapists and recreational therapists and speech therapists. There are a lot of other health professionals that could be working as a team here and not always just the doctor and the doctor does everything. So that's a second suggestion that I have.

On the plus side, Mr. Speaker, one of the encouraging things is that currently 65 per cent of the students registered as medical students are women. I think that that's going to help us change this workforce probably more than anything else because I believe that women are approaching the medical profession with a different point of view. They may well be more willing to go to rural areas, especially if they have families, for quality of life. They are much more willing to work in a team effort with other health care professionals rather than always being sort of the one gatekeeper standing there letting people go by or not go by. I have some faith that that will also have an effect on what we're trying to do here.

So we've got a recruitment issue; we've got a retention issue. I think what's important is that we start with evidence and evidence-based decision-making. Right now we don't even have that evidence. We haven't tracked our health care workforce. We don't know where doctors and nurses and other health care professionals are being used in the system right now. Therefore, how can we possibly plan for the future when we don't know where we are today? I think the first thing we've got to do is identify what we do know and what we don't, and where we don't, fill in the gaps because you're not going to make good decisions if you don't actually know what you're trying to do here.

I think I can rightly accuse the government of having done that in the past. For example, with a number of the suggestions that the member raised, I have to say to him: "Okay, is this provable? Is what you're saying absolutely provable? What are the probable

outcomes of what you're proposing here? What do you expect to get, and are you going to get it? Can you prove to me that this has happened in some other case or that it's likely to work?" [interjections] Well, there are lots of people heckling tonight, and I'm looking forward to their contribution. Particularly, the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmr always has a lot to say, and I'm looking forward to his participation in the debate.

Rev. Abbott: Just have a seat, and I'll stand up.

Ms Blakeman: Good. We'll be looking forward to that then.

So we want to see what are the specific outcomes that are being planned.

The member was particularly interested in something coming out of the U.S. with the health corps loan repayment program. Again, if he's able to bring forward some provable outcomes of a change from before this system was instituted and what they're doing now: have there been improvements over five years? What are the specific outcomes that he can show us for that?

In many ways having as much money as Alberta has is actually a disadvantage in our health care system because we can throw money at whatever, and it doesn't require us to be very careful about the allocation of funds. I don't think that for a very strong health care system we actually need that much more money in our system. Maybe we don't need any more money in the system we've got. What we have to do is try and make acute-care delivery more sustainable. A big part of that is working on wellness and on prevention, and that we can show outcomes on where it's been done in other places, Mr. Speaker.

I guess part of what I'm interested in is that we've had a rural physicians plan for a while. What have been the outcomes of that specifically? The member was saying that it was a good idea, and I'm just wondering if he or perhaps through one of his colleagues can tell us how that's a good idea, or what exactly they've been able to shift, or how many more rural doctors they've been able to get in place since the system was brought online.

A big part of this, again, is identifying the information, closing the gaps where you don't have it so that you can make evidence-based decisions, looking at what you want your outcomes to be, being careful about your recruitment and retention, and going to a system where we don't have the doctor as the gatekeeper but working more as a team.

The last thing we must integrate is e-health. That I think is the most likely possibility for improved health care service delivery in the rural areas: making use of the technology that's available. Supposedly, we're going to have SuperNet in place at some point in time, I hope, and that should be another way of tapping into possibilities with electronic health, or telehealth, delivery for rural areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the motion. I'm interested in what the member has proposed, but I'm certainly looking for a bit more fact than what we had from him. Thank you very much.

8:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise this evening and offer my thoughts and comments regarding Motion 508. As a representative of a rural riding I echo some of the comments previously made regarding the challenges that our rural communities face in attracting and retaining qualified health care professionals.

While it is true that the shortage of medical staff is an issue facing the entire province, it is fair to say that the rural communities have had more problems attracting and retaining doctors and nurses than our urban counterparts. Many have pointed out that the lack of social and physical infrastructure, including schools, parks, and hospitals, has discouraged skilled professionals and their families from moving to rural Alberta. While this is true for various rural communities, I would like to point out that in the town of Lacombe and most central Alberta towns and villages we have much of this infrastructure already in place, including schools and a hospital centre. However, despite this we still experience a shortage of qualified medical personnel. We have an O.R. available, but it's currently underused due to a shortage of staff that are qualified.

What I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the availability of social services and physical infrastructure is not the only explanation as to why rural Alberta is having more problems attracting medical personnel than urban communities. Some individuals simply prefer the city life as many of them are born and raised here. However, I would argue that the same cannot be said for those who grew up in rural communities as many of them look to remain or move back to their towns and villages as long as opportunities are available. It is this particular group of individuals that we should be focusing on.

In the case of Motion 508 I'm referring to young students who are thinking of pursuing a career in the medical field. I believe we need to not only educate them about the merits of becoming a medical practitioner, but we also need to make it attractive for them to pursue careers in rural medicine. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. We just heard questions about RPAP, or rural physician action plan, and I'd like to talk about that for a minute.

One way that we can encourage enrolment is by going to rural schools and talking to students about the merits of becoming a physician or a nurse or LPN or other specialist. Mr. Speaker, my son Mark, who is a medical student at the University of Calgary, is a member of an organization called rural physician action plan, also known as RPAP, which works with communities to attract and retain doctors. Over the last while he's been involved in a pilot project which involves visiting high schools throughout rural Alberta in order to provide students with information regarding what they need to do in order to become medical practitioners. Mark and his colleagues felt that the project was necessary as in the past many rural students chose not to pursue studies in the field of medicine due to the lack of information and advice available. So far their efforts have produced very positive results as Mark and his colleagues have been pleasantly surprised with the number of rural students who have shown an interest in studying medicine.

Seeing the potential of this type of approach, I think the province should consider launching a wide-scale program designed to raise awareness among all students, not only those living in rural areas, of the advantages of pursuing a career in medicine. I feel this strategy holds much merit and could go a long way in helping us attract and retain the much-needed health care professionals to rural Alberta.

Apart from recruiting students, we also need to make it more attractive for doctors to remain in rural communities by making sure that they can continue their professional development in a rural setting. I realize that working outside of major medical centres like Edmonton or Calgary can make it hard for some doctors to further develop their skills and knowledge. However, with the technology available – and I'm thinking about the SuperNet, Mr. Speaker – some of these concerns can be remedied. We can ensure that they remain aware of the latest medical developments and breakthroughs by providing them with reliable and affordable access to Internet service and academic and medical journals. We can also make sure that they have the opportunity to attend medical conventions and

symposiums, which is an extremely effective means of exchanging ideas and developments in the field of medical science.

From the recruitment point of view, Mr. Speaker, we can also encourage more rural physicians to take on students who can study and work under their direction and supervision. Such training not only provides these students with invaluable insight into how medicine is practised in rural areas, but it also helps encourage them to consider moving back to their rural communities upon completion of their studies.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, many rural doctors aren't too keen about taking on and supervising medical students because this means that they have less time to spend with their patients and tend to their other responsibilities. Literature shows that you would experience about a 10 per cent decrease in patient loads for doctors having students present in their practices. Although this is a financial concern for doctors as they have to forfeit part of their income, the care has proven to be as good or better with students present.

One way our government can help alleviate this problem is by reimbursing rural physicians for the lost time and income and encouraging them to take on more medical students in these areas. This will not only allow our students to learn more about the specific nature of rural health care delivery but will also help them consider the possibilities of working in a rural setting.

Before I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly touch upon an issue that for some reason continues to be overlooked within government circles. As I mentioned earlier, there are many medical facilities in rural Alberta, like the O.R. in Lacombe, that are being underused due to staff shortages. I think that if we can address some of our staffing concerns and allow these facilities to operate at their full potential, we will have a real opportunity to alleviate some of our health care woes, especially those relating to waiting lists. Also, rural students are more likely to return to rural areas, and that is why it is important to recruit rural students in the first place.

I believe that if a rural O.R. can specialize in one specific procedure, like hip replacement surgery or possibly doing hernia surgeries, this facility could take on patients from all other parts of the province and in turn help alleviate the pressure on other medical facilities. Allowing rural facilities to focus on different procedures would undoubtedly shorten our waiting lists and help ensure that our rural communities enjoy the necessary medical services they need.

With this in mind, I would like to conclude by saying that our ability to address our health care problems, especially those in rural Alberta, depends upon our ability to be imaginative and to think outside the box. In my remarks tonight I have outlined a few ways we can attract and retain health care professionals to rural areas. It is my hope that our government will keep an open mind to all suggestions that arise out of the current health care debate so that when we do agree upon a solution, we'll have a system that will remain sustainable for generations to come.

With this in mind, I plan to vote in favour of Motion 508, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in doing so. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Health care is an extremely important topic for me as well. I find it a bit difficult, though – and I support your motion, hon. member. I should state that right off the top. What I find very difficult, though, is member after member standing up and saying: it's not the government's fault that these problems exist; we've got to fix them. Let's face it. This government has been in power for the last 34 years, and it has created the problem that the hon. member opposite is attempting to address with this motion, which again I will say that I support.

Basically, you go back to 1992 and adopting the Sir Roger Douglas model of cut, cut, cut in order to pay down the debt. This is a wonderful example of what happens when the chickens come home to roost. It isn't just the urban centres that have suffered. The rural centres have received the same cutbacks, and given their population base, probably their cuts have been as significant, if not more significant, than what we faced in urban municipalities.

Hospital wings have been shut down. Acute-care delivery has been eliminated in a number of the smaller towns. During the bright years of the Lougheed regime a terrific number of hospitals were built, and then in the years that followed, particularly the last 13, many of these facilities have been mothballed. This mothballing has resulted in an exodus not only of city doctors, lab technicians, physiotherapists, and so on, but it's resulted in rural communities not having the staffing that they need. Closing down the local hospital or a wing of that hospital has had the same effect as closing down the grain terminal. It causes rural shrinkage.

8:30

When the infrastructure support, as other hon. government members indicated, is no longer there, neither is there an attraction for a doctor, a nurse, whether it be a registered nurse or an LPN, dental hygienist, dentist, whatever. There is no motivation or incentive left in those rural communities to bring a person out knowing full well that there's no backup. Quite often, I would suggest, the first physicians to burn out are those with rural practices because they don't have, frequently, anyone to back them up.

Obviously, this member's bill approaches part of that solution. We need not only to incent doctors to come out to rural areas, but we have to come up with some kind of a level playing field whereby rural communities don't try and outdo each other or poach doctors. We need to have a government-supported program that will encourage doctors to come to rural areas throughout the province.

Also, one of the problems besides closing facilities, which forced the evacuation of health care professionals, was the lack of seats at universities for health care professional training. This was a conscious decision made in 1992 and thereafter to decrease funding and put that funding towards paying down the debt, which this government created. It wasn't just Don Getty, who was frequently used by this government as the scapegoat; it was government policy. Some of the members who are currently sitting here were a part of that decision-making that caused the current experiences that we're having in rural shortages for health care. One of the solutions is to make those postsecondary seats available. In order to do that, obviously, we have to have the infrastructure. The government has promised 15,000 new seats for 2008. Hopefully, a number of those seats will be designated for health care professional training.

The other problem that exists is the length of time it takes to approve the accreditation of foreign doctors. We have a number of doctors, not just in Third World countries but from the British Isles, from throughout Europe, who would welcome the opportunity to come to Canada to practice. Unfortunately, it takes so long for them to receive accreditation that by the time that accreditation comes, chances are they'll have been picked off by an urban situation because of all the other infrastructure: the schools, entertainment, arts and culture, et cetera. What we need to be doing is almost the equivalent of what we did in the late 1800s, and that is launching an aggressive recruiting campaign, not for temporary foreign workers but for permanent health care professionals.

We need to be providing those health care professionals with rural incentives. We've spent, I think, \$42 million on tourism this year. Possibly some of that money could be directed to recruiting these professionals who have already had the training. We don't,

therefore, have to go through the expense of training these individuals. We need to not only be training our own young people to take on the health care professions; we also need to be incenting the people who've already done their training in vocations throughout the world to come to Alberta.

I've stood up time and time again to say what a wonderful province we have. We have the wealth. We have the resources. We have the opportunities. What we need to have is the vision. The opposite member's Motion 508 is the beginning of that vision, and I thoroughly support his intent and wish him well in his pursuits.

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise tonight to join debate on Motion 508, as proposed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. I look at this issue not only as a rural MLA but as chair of the rural development strategy implementation task force.

We recognized through the report on rural Alberta, *A Place to Grow*, that certain objectives must be accomplished to improve health care delivery in rural Alberta. Namely, there were four objectives, Mr. Speaker. One, "ensure that people living in rural Alberta have access to quality health services as close as possible" to the communities in which they live. Two, "establish and implement access standards for critically important health services particularly emergency care." Three, "expand the availability of health care providers in rural communities through a variety of actions including expanding training opportunities for health care providers in rural communities." Four, "make the best use of . . . capacity in health facilities in rural communities."

Mr. Speaker, of course, only objective 3 seems to really coincide with this particular motion, but I'd suggest that appearances are deceiving. In reality attracting and retaining health care professionals in rural Alberta is the first step necessary to address rural health issues. In order to ensure that rural Albertans have access to quality health services, objective 1 of the rural development strategy, there must be health professionals in rural Alberta. The shortage must be addressed.

In order to fulfill objective 2, Mr. Speaker, establishing and implementing access standards, you must have health professionals to provide the resources necessary to meet those standards. To use the capacity in rural health facilities, whether it's to ensure that services are provided or it is to relieve strain on urban centres by repatriating smaller services back to rural Alberta to ensure that rural Albertans have proper care, either way, ultimately, it will require adequate health professional staff in rural Alberta.

There are ways to address the shortage of health care staff while improving the delivery of health care services to all Albertans. Considerable work is under way across the province, including in health regions that serve rural communities, to change and improve the way health care services are delivered. New primary health care approaches are being implemented to provide access to teams of health care providers. Technology is being used to improve access to health services. For example, Health Link provides province-wide telephone access to health information and advice. Telehealth is being used to link people and physicians in rural communities with diagnosis and treatment from specialists in urban centres.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, rural communities face many challenges in improving access to health providers and health services. Many communities struggle to attract and keep physicians, nurses, pharmacists, technicians, and other essential health care providers. This has a double impact. Not only does it make access to services more difficult, but it also means rural communities are not able to benefit from the economic potential that a strong health sector can provide.

As plans for health renewal proceed, special attention needs to be

paid to the unique circumstances and opportunities in rural communities. That should include making the maximum use of new and innovative approaches to delivering care, making better use of existing hospital facilities in rural communities, developing centres of expertise in rural communities, and stepping up efforts to attract and retain a variety of health care providers. Regional health authorities, the provincial government, postsecondary institutions, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, health professional organizations, health care providers working in rural communities, and community members should all be actively involved in developing comprehensive plans for rural health care.

Three priority actions recommended in the rural development strategy deal specifically with health professionals. The first was to "adjust current education and training programs for health care providers to ensure that they have experience in rural communities and more is done to encourage them to stay in rural communities." The second suggests that we "continue to work with the Rural Physician Action Plan and expand on that model to attract and retain other health care providers [not just physicians] in rural communities, including nurses, rehabilitation therapists, technicians" and so on. Of course, the third, Mr. Speaker, is to "speed up the process for reviewing credentials of foreign trained health care [professionals] so they are able to work in rural communities" to fulfill their capacity.

We also must consider the economic development potential of health care. It's a critical feature in rural communities. I suggest that all members in this Assembly imagine for one moment when we have challenges in health care: if those challenges in rural communities were expanded to urban centres, and in an urban centre like Edmonton we shut down every single health care facility, every hospital, every clinic, all of it, and laid off every single person associated with the health care system, it would have huge devastating economic consequences to this city. The same happens in a small community. Unless we can find some way to retain and attract services back to rural Alberta in order to expand services to rural communities, in order to relieve strain on urban centres, we're facing greater challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my hon. colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul for his wisdom, his insight, and his understanding. He's brought forward a motion that doesn't just need approval in this Assembly, it needs action, and it needs it now. I encourage all members to support this motion because it is the first step to solving the health care challenges that all Albertans face.

Thank you.

8:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in support of Motion 508 and its visionary qualities, I must add, I suppose. If a visionary is to be able to see into the future, then we must remember that as an Assembly here we are still in the business of not just managing the economy of this fine province, but also we are engaged in the development of this province. Sometimes development requires some planning and special circumstances, and nothing is more crucial to balanced and adequate human development than a proper health care system which is accessible to everyone in this province, particularly to people in the rural areas.

I think that as we look to the future of this province, we would like to see a diversification of the population not just in the major metropolitan areas but also having people choose the charms and advantages of living in smaller communities. It's good for the long-term economic development of the province. Certainly, the question

of having doctors in smaller centres is crucial to attracting people to choose to move to smaller areas. I think that the challenges we face in regard to attracting health care professionals to rural areas is not unlike the challenges we face to attract other sectors of the population to smaller centres; although with doctors and nurses and health care professionals there are, I guess, special challenges. The main thing that I would suggest is that we look at not just one way by which to do this but a diversity of approaches. This is always the most intelligent way to go.

I think that we had some degree of success in attracting physicians to rural areas with a special immigration policy some years ago. I know that we managed to have South African doctors in a number of smaller centres across Alberta and Saskatchewan. You know, this was simply a question of making a contract with these individuals so that they could immigrate and then stay for quite a number of years in the place that they were chosen to go to. I mean, certainly this does work. Maybe people aren't staying there forever, but I know at least two or three different South African families that did choose to stay in their small centres when their term of contract was completed. So, certainly, this is one way of attracting the people.

Making special student loan arrangements for professionals in exchange for their service in rural areas I think is something that has been successfully executed in places around the world, and certainly we could follow that same example. You know, once a professional does move to a small centre and he or she settles in for a number of years, then the attractions and charms of that place, perhaps getting married to one of the local people, helps to keep people in one spot. I don't know if we can legislate something like that, but having young people move to a place in exchange for preferential student loan payments or with bursaries or scholarships certainly is an intelligent idea. I think it's very important, whatever choices we're making in regard to health care or any planning – and this involves and requires some money to be spent and some attention to be paid to it – for us to keep careful evidence as to tracking the successes or failures of various attempts to attract doctors to rural areas. You know, if we're not making intelligent decisions based on evidence, the best we can gather it, then really we're just sort of hitting and missing or shooting in the dark. Sometimes I think that with this health care ball that we hit back and forth here in this House and across the country, we have certain ideologies or certain preferences when at the end of the day we should make our decisions based on solid evidence as to the best factual information that we can possibly gather.

I'm certainly willing to bow down to that sort of reasonable approach, and I certainly hope that when we make a full-scale effort to attract health care professionals to the rural areas, I would suggest that we head down that same path and base our decisions and our choices on the very best evidence possible. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much. What a pleasure to get up and confirm with colleagues both on the government side of the House and also from the opposition and the third party support for this motion. One of the things I'm struck with, particularly after the international symposium, is the kind of universal drive there is to try and provide more health care professionals for the populations.

It was noted at the symposium that where other countries may have difficulty in retaining physicians to provide service for health care delivery, if in fact Canada tries to attract these physicians, we will leave them in more of a dearth and difficulty than they had been previously. I remember at the time of the tsunami the president of the Alberta Medical Association going on a mission to Mexico to try

and help out there and worrying whether or not she should in fact choose to go to Indonesia or Sri Lanka because of the greater difficulty surrounding their medical needs.

Ever since I've been in this ministry, I've been struck by a couple of things; number one, the difficulty in retaining and placing attractive circumstances in places where one would hope that physicians would locate. Rural Members of the Legislative Assembly tell me about the difficulty in getting rural physicians. In Calgary, when I was first made health minister, I was told that there were 300 family practitioners that were needed for that city. So I want to just make a couple of observations here about what I think is really important.

I believe this motion is important, but I believe that Albertans, in fact Canadians, in fact people worldwide have to take responsibility first and foremost for their own health, and that means that they have to determine that they are going to look after themselves, practise wellness, and instruct their families to do the same thing. My vision is that at six years of age every child will come to school, and they will know what it means to eat a balanced meal, know what it means to sleep the right amount of time, whether they do it or not, and know that they shouldn't take drugs or bad things offered by someone else. They will know the rules of crossing the street, and they will, in short, have that little cocoon of protection around themselves so that they will know how to behave. In school we're already offering programs – Do Bugs Need Drugs? – and encouraging children to do the right thing so they can maintain their health.

Part of what the problem is that I see, where everyone is looking for a family physician, is that today family physicians earn considerably less than fee-for-service specialists, who can, after slightly more education, whether it's two years, four years, or whatever period of time, in fact earn considerably more dollars. On a fee-for-service basis, when that's how we pay physicians, the opportunity to work in rural Alberta, unless there are some other ways of compensating the physician, means that that person will have to be satisfied with a reduced income for the longer period of time. So we have to be imaginative.

8:50

The other thing is that we have to accept that telehealth or calling a health line may be as good as a visit to a health practitioner. My shock in getting this ministry was that 88 per cent of Albertans accessed the ministry last year. If some of you weren't one of those people that went for a preventive thing but actually went for some kind of health diagnosis, I have to ask this question: did you really have to go to a physician? Could you have spent some time staying home, having the proper rest, drinking the right amount of fluids, and looking after yourself? Was it the easier route?

In some countries, one in particular that spoke at the international symposium, they charged people who had a home visitation by a doctor if they really didn't need that home visitation, and as such they reduced their costs by 25 per cent for home visits. It's an important element to think about. Could we go to a primary care facility, visit a nurse practitioner, have a dressing done, have something else done, and thereby save the time or the effort of a family physician, which could be expended perhaps to the greater advantage of the population's health in some other domain?

There are a few things that we have to remember. Number one, when I spoke to Dominique Polton, who is a French economist, about how we can do better in Alberta's health, she said after considerable thought: you shouldn't waste it. In Alberta we have so much. We were perceived by some of the international speakers to have so much that why didn't we spend? Why do we have a problem? It's like my former job as reeve of Strathcona with all the

refineries. We have so much, but does that mean that we have to spend and waste it? Don't we want to save something for the next generation? Saving something for the next generation, in my view, will be a prudent and wise use of the health care resources that we have. It will involve providing health care resources and services in rural communities that presently don't have them, and it will involve trying to network effective strategies so that there is an incentive for people to locate to rural Alberta.

One of the intriguing things that I've noticed is that in Quebec the ministry of health is also in charge of the social determinants of health. As we know, the dollars for Water for Life or some of the strategies that ensure that Albertans are healthier and better taken care of are spent in other ministries. As we consume the dollars for health, for acute care, frequently we siphon off those dollars, where if they were spent in Community Development, Learning, Advanced Education, Justice, Solicitor General, Children's Services, any myriad of the ministries, we might actually make people healthier and, in making them healthy, put less of a strain on the system.

My view is that we have to be imaginative. We have to look at those social determinants. We have to compare with other systems; for example, systems who've organized themselves to integrate service networks, systems who organize themselves to have people that are in places like our primary care facilities who will I hope ultimately provide for Albertans an integrated approach so that if it's not possible to have a family physician, there will be support for that type of family care that you hope your family can have, and when you do need a specialist or a family physician that can help with more clinical and technical issues surrounding health, it will be there as well.

So I am – and I thank my colleagues – very much challenged to continue to accelerate the progress towards making the rural physician action plan more of a reality tonight, signing my correspondence to the universities, encouraging yet more support for rural physicians, supporting how we provide after-degree nursing programs to rural Alberta, looking at targeting some of the other health science professionals to do better.

Mr. Speaker, in the very work that's being done at the university today, by relocating their department so that nurses and doctors and occupational therapists and nutritionists are all educated in the same physical space, by the very connection of their faculties I think we will start urging and educating people in health care delivery teams. Ultimately my grandchildren might not say: I need a family doctor to go and visit with my children. They will say: I'm looking for that health centre, that community health facility, that primary care centre so that we get the right amount of care when we need it.

Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, we will re-educate ourselves to waste not, want not; help generously distribute our supports for family physicians throughout this province so that there's no place without support; find creative, innovative ways to challenge people to work in rural Alberta, which I consider one of the best places to work and absolute heaven if you can live there and sustain your lifestyle there – I really believe that – and find ways of looking at those social determinants of health as critically important to the whole of the budget so that people in the future don't say, "Yes, Alberta spends 37 per cent, 40 per cent, up to 45 per cent on health; it spends in a way that ensures positive outcomes for all Albertans."

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and debate Motion 508, which I'm very much in favour of. How many minutes do we have left?

An Hon. Member: Three.

Mr. Hinman: Yeah, well, I'll start striking a few things off. Thank you.

I appreciate the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul bringing this forward, and I want to speak in favour of it. I want to bring out a point that he made the other night. I think it's important that we not think outside the box, that we throw the box out and re-evaluate everything.

A few areas that I'm very much in favour of. Possibly looking at giving scholarships, not just loan reductions but scholarships, in different areas where we need students to come in, whichever the health area is, especially linking those scholarships to rural areas and bringing people in there. The shortage of pay for GPs in rural areas and the idea of opening up specialized areas has been brought up and spoken about. If we were to have the funding follow the service, there are other areas in the rural area that could open up, and we could get the doctors in there.

Another area that I'm concerned with and that has been talked a little bit about is the brain drain. Perhaps not only giving scholarships but much like the army, where you sign up for five years' service or 10 years' service and you get your education. We could really attract people in that area.

Perhaps we need to look at the amount of money we're spending on educating a lot of the health care professions and kind of have a debt load there. If they were to leave the country, they would owe a lot more than just walking away and only paying for 20 per cent of their education. That would keep more here, and that would push more people out to the rural areas.

By allowing the services to follow and open up specialized services in the rural area – the cities seem to think there's nothing wrong with rural people coming and being treated here and staying in hotels. What would that do to the rural economy, to have people travelling to a place like Lacombe, Cardston, or Milk River and staying in their hotels and eating in their restaurants and being a real boon to their economy? It works the other way around too, but they don't seem to realize that. So I'd urge them to consider something like that.

It's disappointing, though, that it seems like the best bills and the best motions seem to come up on the private side and come from caucus instead of from cabinet. I hope that those things will move forward and the government will get behind some of these innovative ideas so that we can act now rather than waiting two or three or four years.

For the comments on solid evidence, I mean, let's have common sense. How much more solid evidence do we need? When we close the schools and we close the health care services in these small areas, they die. We need the schools, we need the health care services out there, and it's very possible to have those.

The accountability. Like I say about the education, I think that we need to really seriously look at the amount of people that we are educating and allowing to leave and put some sort of penalty on their increased fee if, in fact, they were to leave the country.

In closing, I just would like to thank the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul for this motion. I hope that it'll go forward and that it will have the desire to revitalize rural Alberta. I know that there are many people on that committee trying to do it, but we need to throw the box out and look at what we can do to build those areas because what we're doing to suck it in; we can turn it around and the economy can go back out. We need to revitalize those areas, and we need those essential services.

9:00

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the time for debate on this

motion has elapsed, and under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul to close debate on Motion 508.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the support from the members across. I want to address a couple of the comments that were made by some of the members opposite. I want to say that in our research of the different directions that different municipalities and different jurisdictions were trying to find, this is not an isolated problem to Alberta. It is a world-wide problem. I mean, we found it in Australia. We found it in all of the Americas. We found all over that what happens is that health care professionals are attracted to larger centres and for a number of reasons. I mean, in Alberta we're fortunate enough to be able to be in a situation where we're able to spend more, and that does provide some of the best health care service in the world.

I know that we talked with some individuals from Mexico, and we found some interesting findings in Mexico. Mexico handles their problems in a way that – and it's legislated. They legislate that an individual who goes to university gets their university paid, and depending on what faculty you go into, you may get two years or three years or four years of service that you have to provide to the rural part of the country. What happens is they give them a little bit of subsistence, but that is part of the repayment of the education. I had made, you know, a couple of other examples.

I think that it's very important, and I think that we as a province have provided some initiatives. I believe it's not enough. The job is not coming to fruition as we all would wish could happen. I found it very interesting when the Member for Edmonton-Calder mentioned that we need to legislate a solution of maybe keeping somebody in the rural area. Well, you know, what happens is that some of our bursary programs are two-year programs, so we have people come out for one or two years, and those individuals, you know – in one or two years there's enough travelling time in there. They're able to travel back and forth. I think that maybe we should extend it to four years, and then there's more chance of them finding a mate because they'll get tired of travelling after two years.

The Member for Battle River-Wainwright made an excellent, excellent observation, and I want to say an excellent observation because, you know, we do look at rural Alberta, and we do close down facilities. Schools are closed down, and hospitals are closed down, and they basically follow each other. We just don't realize the economic impact. We look at the economic impact, but we don't look at the services that we truly lose. If that were to happen in a larger centre, it is just as devastating. So I thank the Member for Battle River-Wainwright for those comments.

I would just like to close if I can, Mr. Speaker, in a couple of words, and that is that we are not alone in this challenge. I believe that in Alberta we have the opportunity to provide the initiative to do something different to try to address the concerns of rural Alberta and the health professionals going to rural Alberta.

Again, I would like to thank everyone that spoke in favour of the motion, and I appreciate the time and the tolerance. Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll now call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Innovation and Science

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The first thing I'd like to do to members of the Assembly is introduce some members of our staff. I assure you that I told them earlier today that they could stay home and not come, but the fact that a number of them actually decided to come shows you the great support that they give to the minister, the ministry, and, more importantly, to the people of Alberta. They are Ron Dyck, Ray Bassett, Brian Fischer, Anne Douglas, Ian Thomas, and Silvana Cartagena. I hope I got that close to being right. I'd ask them to rise. Since you are intimately acquainted with the business plan, at any time that you wish to leave and actually go home and see your families, you're welcome to do that.

Mr. Chairman, the department's core business is innovation, and our business and financial plans are designed to help us to achieve the government's vision of long-term prosperity for Albertans by unleashing innovation. Innovation and Science provides leadership and makes strategic investments in research, science, and technology initiatives in three priority areas: energy, information and communications technology, and the life sciences, which, of course, include agriculture, biotechnology, forestry, sustainable resource management, and water research. These investments build on Alberta's strengths, and they are helping the province to develop a more globally competitive, knowledge-based economy.

We gather information on jurisdictions where innovation flourishes, and we find that the common elements are highly qualified people, solid infrastructure for facilities and services, access to funding, and, of course, vision. With the strategic advice of the Alberta Science and Research Authority we are working to build this kind of culture to ensure that Alberta remains prosperous for generations to come.

Mr. Chairman, I forgot to do one thing earlier on, just to remind colleagues in the Assembly that are listening to this scintillating description of Innovation and Science that they can actually log on to www.innovation.gov.ab.ca, which is a comprehensive website which describes all of the programs that I'm going to talk about tonight in much more detail than even I can do. So while you're sitting there, please look this up, spend some time, search it. There are some interesting things for you to learn on that website.

An Hon. Member: Which website?

Mr. Doerksen: That would be www.innovation.gov.ab.ca.

Government endowment funds, support for students, universities, and research institutes are helping to ensure that the province develops the right skills in Albertans and also attracts and retains others with the necessary skills to keep us moving forward. This year the government added \$500 million to the endowment fund for the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, and there are plans to expand the ingenuity fund to \$1 billion as future surpluses allow.

Alberta's investments in biomedical and health research through AHFMR have yielded life-changing breakthroughs such as the islet transplants for type 1 diabetes, known around the world as the Edmonton protocol. In the area of engineering and science research the Alberta ingenuity fund has created four important centres of research, in machine learning, water, carbohydrate science, and in situ energy. Now a new ingenuity centre is being established to facilitate research on prions and misfolded proteins that cause BSE.

I'm very pleased to report that since we made this announcement in February, the ingenuity fund has already been contacted by several researchers, including scientists in France, who are eager to collaborate to find scientific solutions to BSE.

9:10

Our commitment to expanding Alberta's research capacity in strategic research and priority areas is significant. Almost \$72 million to be voted is needed to meet our business goals for research capacity and science awareness. This investment will help to ensure that Alberta will always have access to long-term supplies of sustainable energy and clean water, factors that contribute to our superb quality of life. This funding acts as a magnet to attract matching and supplementary funding from the private sector, research organizations, and agencies in other governments.

A good example of this is the EnergyINet, the energy innovation network, which was officially launched from Ottawa and Calgary this past March. The Alberta Energy Research Institute is a catalyst behind this national network of industry partners, researchers, provincial governments, and the federal government. EnergyINet takes an integrated approach to research and innovation in six key areas: oil sands upgrading, clean coal technology, CO₂ management, enhanced oil recovery, water management, and alternative energy development. Alberta's position is that climate change issues are best addressed by investments in technology and innovation in this province and in Canada. Nearly \$17 million is allocated to expanding our research capacity in energy and in climate change.

The board of the Alberta Science and Research Authority has identified development of Alberta's ICT sector as a top priority for our province. Bill 4, which is awaiting royal assent, will allow the establishment of an ICT institute to guide research in this sector. Significant accomplishments are already being realized through the efforts of the Informatics Circle of Research Excellence, commonly known as iCORE. Over the past five years iCORE has invested \$40 million in the creation of 20 research teams, which have attracted over \$144 million in additional research funding from government and industry. These strategic research investments have attracted globally acclaimed scientists to work in Alberta. Equally important, we have been able to keep many of our talented young Albertans here, working in knowledge-intensive fields as diverse as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and wireless communications.

For example, pioneering work at the University of Calgary by iCORE chair of wireless location Dr. Gerard Lachapelle has helped make Alberta a world-class centre of excellence in global positioning systems and related geomatics technologies. Many of his innovative technologies have become must-haves for research institutions and commercial GPS developers around the world. His research contributes to commercial applications in a wide range of areas, from natural resource management, agriculture, transportation, and recreation to defence and national security. His innovative advanced signal tracking software will be used in the European Union's Galileo satellite-based navigation system now under development.

iCORE has committed \$500,000 per year for five years to develop this research group. This is about one third of his total \$1.5 million per year budget. Leading researchers like Dr. Lachapelle attract and build world-class teams, and we expect significant breakthroughs from the research. The ability to attract scientists of the highest calibre is a tribute to the Alberta advantage and to the solid reputation that our province has built in the international arena, and we are building our reputation and expertise through collaborations on national and international levels.

Bill 4 also paves the way for the establishment of the life sciences

institute to fulfill the life sciences strategy which was approved by the government in March 2003. More than \$11.6 million is to be voted to continue to build our capacity and expertise in critical areas such as agriculture, forestry, health, biotechnology, and water. The life sciences institute will focus on areas such as bioproducts, health innovations, including BSE and prion science, sustainable production, agrifood and health, and environmental technologies and platform technologies, which include genomics, nanotechnology, and bioinformatics. We have already seen results from the existing institutes, and the new life sciences institute will mirror the operating structure of those organizations and facilitate more collaboration on shared research initiatives like bioenergy and blended fibre R and D that cuts across sectors and engages multiple disciplinary teams in innovative solutions.

The Alberta Research Council has been contributing to research and development in Alberta for 84 years. Like many exemplary Albertans, ARC continues lifelong learning and is making valuable contributions to the province's economy. ARC has been involved in the development of EnergyINet through its work on advanced materials, flow sensors and controls, risk assessment, process integration, systems engineering and modelling, and technology commercialization, and it has refocused some of its technology activities around EnergyINet's six core programs.

ARC is focused on another of our priorities, which is technology commercialization. A current example in the life sciences sector is the expansion of ARC's forest products development plan to fully integrated bioproducts capability. ARC is acting as a catalyst to generate a strong regional bioproducts cluster in the greater Edmonton region by providing a gateway for bioproducts development in Alberta.

The agricultural fibre pilot processing facility will support the growth and development of an agricultural bioproducts industry in Alberta. This new facility has been funded by Alberta and the federal government and by an industry partner. It will be operational by early 2006 with laboratories and pilot scale processing capabilities to support collaborative bioproduct-based research and product development on agrifibre-based products such as paper, fibreboard, and plastic composite materials. The facility is a critical building block in the infrastructure to add value to Alberta's agricultural crops and establish new industrial products in innovative enterprises related to the use and application of industrial fibres. We will support existing and emerging industries as well as the training of new graduate students from the universities and other educational institutions.

Mr. Chairman, a common thread you will note with the Innovation and Science business plan and our fiscal plan is a collaboration with industry, other governments, and research institutions. We provide funding prudently, and because these investments are strategic and worthwhile, other stakeholders are prepared to work with us and join in funding these initiatives.

The agreement we signed with Microsoft during the 2005 California mission is another good example of this. It will establish new centres of excellence at NAIT and SAIT to accelerate efficiency and global competitiveness for small and mid-sized Alberta manufacturers. The educational institutions win, Microsoft wins, Alberta businesses win, and that means that our province wins. All of this works to help us realize the goals of the government's 20-year plan and Alberta's value-added strategy: securing tomorrow's prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, Alberta prospers through innovation. This is the vision of the Department of Innovation and Science, and the estimates before you tonight provide some of the resources that will be necessary to bring this vision to reality. I'll be pleased to respond to questions at this time.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to participate in the budget debate tonight on the Ministry of Innovation and Science, and I thank the hon. minister for his presentation at the beginning. I just wrote down, actually, something that wasn't in my speaking notes.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Elsalhy: Yeah. I'm getting a little creative here now.

The Alberta Research Council. I just wanted to comment on the fact that I actually visited the ARC, and I have to say that I was impressed by what I saw. This is clearly a world-class research facility, and I'm proud to be living in a province that has such a facility.

9:20

Having said that, I also have to comment on what I perceived to be a little hesitation on their part to accept my inviting myself to visit it. I explained to them that I was the Official Opposition critic for Innovation and Science, and they still hesitated, but then after I persevered and I pressured them, they accepted my invitation to invite myself. The first thing they set out to say was how happy they were with the ministry and that they're not interested in picking any fights with the minister, and I said: I'm not here to pick fights; I'm here to learn. I think they warmed up after a bit, and they started to feel more comfortable with my being there.

They also offered me a digital tour, which apparently is available on CD, and after the presentation was over, I requested one of those copies. They were happy that I requested it, and they said that they were going to forward it to me, but it never came. I'm not sure why. Maybe they thought that I would use it for question period. Anyway, I requested it again I think six weeks after, and again it never came. So maybe the minister can send me one.

Now on to my general questions with respect to the estimates we're discussing. I've made this comment before, and I think I'm going to repeat it tonight. It really appears that this government intentionally underestimates, or lowballs, its budget estimates and then injects money into each department through supplementary supply. We discussed this during supplementary supply, and I commented on the record that Innovation and Science was not as bad as some of the other departments when we okayed \$38 million for prion research, which I indicated was needed and warranted. But what else are we not anticipating today?

Back then, when we okayed the \$38 million, it was for emergency research, and I argued that BSE existed for a few years before we had to react and conduct emergency research. So today I would ask: what about pine beetle research? What about chronic wasting disease research? What about the West Nile virus, avian flu, et cetera?

This time around the ministry is asking only for \$134 million for its 2005-06 estimates. Can the minister guarantee that he will not request a supplement next February or March? I would rather see a slightly more realistic budget and then, hopefully, return the unused funds rather than one that is made to look prudent and fiscally responsible yet we all know is useless as it will inevitably be increased and fattened next spring through supplementary supply.

Off-budget spending in general makes a mockery of the budget process. It makes a mockery of this Assembly if we okay a budget and then six weeks later or two months later we start spending off budget. I think this is a practice that has to be stopped. Occasionally and for emergencies spending off budget is one thing, but matter-of-factly and every year is another matter.

My second question is with regard to the move of the SuperNet file from this ministry to the newly founded Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. During question period the hon. minister indicated that the corporate information officer was relocated to Restructuring and Government Efficiency, and he also indicated that with him went his staff members, and they now became the responsibility of the new ministry. One would naturally assume, then, that the full-time equivalent staff levels would have gone down in this ministry. Instead, I was really surprised that the staffing level stayed at 696 full-time equivalent employment. So there was no change there.

This is opposite to the feeling I received or the perception I was given when the minister said that this entire file and this entire department with its employees went to the new ministry. So a clarification here is needed because this definitely does not look efficient. In fact, if I may be so bold as to say that I think this is suspicious in nature because we're increasing the budget for ministry support services by \$122,000 when, in fact, one would think that it would shrink.

I guess that my third point would be that there's a document that this ministry is relying on and basing some of its planning on. It's called Accelerating Innovation in Alberta, and it appears in your Link to Medium-Term Strategies. This is one thing in that some of the information mentioned in your business plan or otherwise is sometimes hard to find. Your ministry website is sure colourful, as you indicated. You gave us the URL web address, I think, twice. It's lively and a good place to browse, but some of the information is a little hard to locate.

Further, during the debate on Bill 4 I asked the hon. minister why the energy research, the forestry research, and the agricultural research institutes have failed to consistently provide publicly accessible annual reports, and the hon. minister indicated that at least one of them was available online. I went and checked that same day, and it's not there. Maybe I'm looking in the wrong place. I would appreciate and I think most of my colleagues in the House would also appreciate receiving the URL links to those records, if possible, for all three of those institutes.

Next, on page 332 of the business plan under Performance Measures there is no specific target set for 2005-06, but there is a hopeful target of 5 per cent by the year 2015, and it also comes back and says: only if affordable. So, first of all, this is a percentage of the budget, not actual dollars, which makes it really hard to interpret. We don't know what the budget will be a year from now, so we definitely don't know what it will look like in 2015, 10 years from now. The jump from 1.31 per cent to 5 per cent represents what I think to be the largest percentage increase in expenditure in any government department.

So while this might be commendable because, yes, innovation is the way of the future, and we all have to support such endeavours, how will the government measure what's going to innovation and what's not? Do you have a way of determining what percentage of this money goes directly or indirectly to private firms?

Also, while as the Official Opposition we may encourage innovation growth and innovative growth, wouldn't the minister agree that it looks like this government is slowly getting back into the business of being in business? How would the minister assure Albertans, average Marthas and Henrys, that these initiatives will actually benefit them in their everyday lives and in their pocket-books?

I think it was also during budget debate previously that we commented on the comparison of the trickle-down plan with the direct-benefit plan. Sometimes the government advocates a model which says: what's good for business is surely good for people. But

I think I would disagree sometimes, and most people in the public would disagree because sometimes what's good for business is not necessarily good for them. When this ministry or this government conducts or finances research in a certain area or discipline, it is in essence the people in my constituency, Edmonton-McClung, and the people in the other 82 constituencies of this province who are ultimately paying for this support. So what can we show them, and what are they getting back in return?

Furthermore, in this plan under the strategies listed, most of these strategies are really not objectionable. We agree with them. I think maybe the rider or the qualifier that they put on it sometimes could potentially have unintended consequences. For example, when it comes to supporting the ability of our public postsecondary institutions to build research capacity, this has to be done in a co-ordinated way. To date it has not. We hear that the Ministry of Innovation and Science has its own ideas, and then we hear that the Ministry of Advanced Education has its own ideas, and then the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment has his own ideas, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation has his own.

For example, last fall it became very apparent that the University of Calgary, which is an institution in the riding of my colleague from Calgary-Varsity, was in a rather desperate financial situation. Yet there were certain areas of the university, certain priority areas, that were doing okay. Certain other areas were not as lucky. Labs were out of date and crumbling, and, you know, you get the picture.

9:30

You can't have a shiny new ICT building, for example, or a health science centre, but then next to it or maybe half a block away there is a crumbling biology lab and a crumbling chemistry lab. Support staff were being cut so that professors had to come in on weekends to clean the labs, and I think this is not only unheard of, but it's just shameful. It makes absolutely no sense. It's happening not only at the University of Calgary, but it's happening at almost all of our postsecondary institutions. There are certainly examples of recruiting people to our institutions, but then the fact is that the morale of many of our faculties is terribly low. We need to take a more integrated approach to building this research capacity in our institutions by boosting morale and boosting funding.

Also, in talking to one of my other colleagues, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, who also happens to be the Advanced Education critic, he indicated that part of the problem is the way the province provides only part of the money in those priority areas and chooses to ignore or set aside or put aside the other, less important areas in their opinion. Institutions, of course, want the dollar, the funds, and they want to be innovative, but the funding rules or the budgetary realities are restrictive.

I also heard of the new nanotechnology centre that was being built right here in Edmonton at the University of Alberta, and I have personally heard of situations where those professors were fighting amongst themselves as to who gets a bigger room because the building was built in haste, and they were . . .

An Hon. Member: A new building?

Mr. Elsalhy: Yeah, it's a new building.

They were competing for who gets a better room and who brings down a partition wall so his room appears bigger, so they're sort of annexing the next room and fighting over it. Again, this shouldn't be happening in a province that is, in my opinion, maybe one of the richest pieces of land on earth.

Our public institutions also need support in many other areas. It's important to prioritize, but we also have to accept the fact that these

institutions are probably almost like an insurance policy for the future. Myself, as a person I am really interested in seeing our youth and our young people succeed in college and university and in trades because that's probably the only guarantee I have in thinking that maybe I have a chance of securing some CPP for my retirement. Otherwise, if we're cutting them now and if we're underfunding them now, I think we might as well say: "Okay. Forget that. You're on your own." And we're on our own when we reach retirement age.

There's also the desire to get the most bang for the taxpayer buck. That's why the minister would want to use the money to leverage additional money from other partners – and I understand this, you know – like matching grants or situations where you say, "Okay, here is the carrot, but you have to go and fund raise on your own," and you have to match that. In the case of private or industry partners it is vital that the institutions retain independence and integrity, and especially, I think, when we're reporting the results of research.

I was listening to a report on CBC Radio, I think, and they mentioned that some professors and researchers, because of the pressures they were facing, were faced with some pressure to produce, to deliver. They were faking their own research results to secure those grants for the year after. I think it shouldn't be like this. Performance measurement should be based on actual achievement, and maybe we should have some safeguards in place so that these guys are not pressured as much to forge their own results to continue to receive those grants. It shouldn't be done like this.

Next I would like to talk about the fact that although spending for R and D seems to be increasing – and this is, again, a commendable move – Alberta as a province lags behind most other provinces when it comes to research and development expenditures as a percentage of the GDP. I don't think we can take the R and D expenditure in the abstract. You have to actually compare it to something tangible like the GDP. A StatsCan report, which I have briefly reviewed, released last year indicates that Alberta is ahead of only New Brunswick and roughly sits at about half of the national average in terms of R and D spending.

Given the focus on innovation at the federal level, does the minister believe his department and this government is doing enough or devoting enough resources in order to ensure that this province catches up? I think second from the bottom is not acceptable, especially, again, given our wealth and given our resources, and I think we have to do some more in increasing our R and D expenditure. I understand that energy research is the number one priority because this is an oil- and gas-rich province and we want to maintain our production levels, but could this be the reason, maybe, that not enough attention is being paid to the other areas of research?

Next, maybe by this same angle Alberta is far behind when it comes to scientific activities in the social sciences and humanities area, and we have actually spoken about this briefly before. Given the importance of innovation in the design and delivery of social services and in solving social problems, both acute and chronic, does the minister believe the time has come for his department to invest more in research and development in these areas, the social sciences and humanities? Again, you know, whether this is a priority or not, we have discussed this. This was also part of our Liberal plan that we would hope the minister would maybe consider.

Lastly, under the strategies listed on page 337, in goal 5 with regard to the water research strategy in support of Water for Life – that's section 5.2. We debated Bill 11 earlier in this session, and I know that my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View expressed a real hope that the government would begin to plan so that bulk transfers of water between water basins was not part of an ongoing

water management strategy. Does the minister support this issue being part of the water research strategy? It might be a question for the Minister of Environment, but you know everything is linked, and this is one government, and this is one caucus, and there is one taxpayer and one voter who deserves to get that answer. So I'm really interested in finding out where the minister stands on this.

Also, what other areas of water research does the minister anticipate would be top priorities? Maybe a full inventory of water resources. This could also lead to a bigger discussion on water exports and water sales to other jurisdictions, particularly to the United States. I think it's obvious that water is becoming an important issue on everybody's mind. We've heard of water wars, where countries and nations go to war over water, and I think we have to start planning for conservation and careful assessment of our water resources and water levels so as to avoid troubles in the future.

With that, I know I've asked a few things, and I hope the minister would be kind enough to share his thoughts with us. I know that some other members are eager to participate. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Doerksen: Yeah. Thank you. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-McClung for his comments. Obviously, I'm not going to be able to respond to everything that you mentioned. Some of them are comments; some are questions. I will pick up a couple and respond to the rest in writing.

Thank you for your comments on ARC.

You made some comments about the supplementary estimates of \$38 million for prion research. That came out of, of course, an emergency situation with respect to our beef industry, something that we thought was very important not only from a marketing and solving the border problem but also to begin to look at the science of BSE, find out where our niche was in terms of all the research happening in the world, and contribute because it is an important industry. So that essentially was the decision we made, to go with the supplementary estimates.

The member has asked for a guarantee that I will not request additional funds, and I will not provide that guarantee because, in fact, if there's an opportunity for us particularly to add money into the Alberta ingenuity fund, I will be asking for it. I think it's a very important initiative, one that we have indicated support for if the money was there. So, yes, hon. member, I will be asking for more money as it becomes available. As an endowment fund, Mr. Chairman, it provides ongoing support forever into our future. That is one of the strengths of endowment funds. It's not just there for one year; it's there forever.

9:40

Just to clarify on the move of the CIO's office into the department of restructuring and why the numbers didn't go down. If you actually go to last year's budget and look at our numbers, you will notice that the FTEs we had last year were 808. What happens when we present the figures is that we restate everything as it is right now, so you will actually see in, I believe, the department of restructuring for their budget for last year that the numbers have been transferred. In fact, 112 FTEs did get transferred over to the department of restructuring, so hopefully that explains that. In fact, it's all been transferred. These numbers have been restated. We went from 808 FTEs to 696, and of course you'll notice that we have not asked for any additional FTEs to manage the department.

Performance measures: you raised a question about us moving toward the 5 per cent target. Essentially, what we're trying to do is set a vision for this province. It was based on some international

reviews that we have done. For instance, in South Korea they have a legislated requirement that they have to spend 5 per cent of their budget on R and D. It cannot be touched by other programs. Regardless of what happens in other programs and pressures, they are committed to that 5 per cent because they see that as their way to prosperity and the way of the future. The European Union, for instance, has a 3 per cent target, and other countries have similar-type targets.

We really said that on the innovation file we need to look at incentives we provide, work that we do in the innovations. It's not just research and development. It can also count on incentives we provide toward that target. We clearly need to look into the future for providing more investment in this area.

Frankly, these goals survive political cycles, and they should. This is about my grandkids – and I have two and a half of them – and yours that haven't arrived yet, but someday you'll have them. This is about the future. That's how we established the 5 per cent target.

You talked about the accountability of research, and I agree with your comments on that. It's very important to provide an accountability mechanism. Of course, in this area it's not as easy to measure performance in a short time period because often in the research field, of course, your time horizons are much longer. Just an example: go back to the work we did in AOSTRA in terms of the oil sands research, the 10 years and the \$700 million, \$800 million it took before we actually unlocked the potential of the oil sands. I remember quite clearly – it was before I was even in government – some of the criticisms that were levied at AOSTRA. Nobody is going to criticize it now because of the economic returns that it generates for our province. When you're measuring performance, you have to look at a longer term window, and that does make it hard in terms of showing that performance in an annual report. But I agree with your comment: the accountability is critical.

You made some comments about the R and D spending in Alberta. We've indicated very clearly in our business plan that we do lag behind other jurisdictions. In one sense it's a hard argument. Because we do so well economically, one might argue that, in fact, we get a much bigger bang for our research buck than everybody else, so in effect we're producing much greater. But I tend to agree with your observation, and that also goes back to the 5 per cent target and says that, clearly, we think there's a desire to move ahead.

More importantly, I think, if you look at the measurements on government support, we're actually pretty good. Where we seem to lag is in the business investment in R and D. That could just be a matter of how they report R and D because we don't have R and D tax credits like other provinces do, so the incentive to actually report those is different too. So there might be some of that issue behind the reporting. Again, clearly, I think that it's important.

You made some comments about energy research being number one. Obviously, right now energy does provide our biggest economic gain, and energy research is very important. Whether it's number one or not, I don't know whether I could even make that case. Clearly, we recognize that there are opportunities in ICT. There are opportunities in life sciences that we have to invest some money in. Our business in Alberta understands the energy industry the best because that's what they're invested in, but we have some tremendous success stories in our province in some of these other areas.

Cold-fx, for instance, is one. The Edmonton-based company that sells that product does very well. I think of Smart board technologies out of Calgary in terms of the ICT area and the global market that they project. Most people in Alberta don't even know that this is an Alberta-based company. So we have some tremendous success.

The other thing I would underscore is that there is a lot of platform technology that actually cuts across all of these areas, that actually supports ICT, energy, and life sciences. It's technology that you just can't put into a stovepipe and say that it only applies to this area. In fact, it doesn't. I mean, you look at the impact of global positioning systems, wireless technology, and its application in the energy industry. Here is ICT expertise that actually helps us solve problems in other areas, so that just illustrates what I mean by platform technologies. The National Institute for Nanotechnology is one of those platform technologies which will actually apply to every area.

I noted your comments about social sciences and humanities, and it's something to consider. Clearly, at this point we haven't made it a priority, but it's been discussed, so I appreciate your comments on it. What we've tried to do out of ASRA, because I'm guided by ASRA, is to realize that we're only 3 million plus people in a population in a global environment which is well over 6 billion people. We can't do everything, but we want to have a disproportionate impact on what we choose to do. So we choose to really try to support those areas that we think we're good at.

Lastly, on your comments for Water for Life research, that would be a good question for question period. You can bring that one up tomorrow, and I'll give you more details about it. Clearly, we, in connection with the Water Council, are kind of charged with the responsibility of the research side of Water for Life. Some of the areas, of course, don't fall under our jurisdiction, but questions around the watersheds and the research and inventory are questions that we should be looking at and answering. The Alberta ingenuity fund, of course, has a water research centre of excellence that is starting to look at those areas. Clearly, that's an important priority, so I appreciate your comments on that.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'll invite other questions, and we'll get back other answers.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, as well, to the hon. Minister of Innovation and Science for presenting a very straightforward and easy-to-understand budget. I think that we cannot overemphasize the importance of investing with some aggressive sort of moves to ensure that we maintain our place as a province and as a culture here in western Canada, showing leadership in many areas of science and innovation technology that have served us so well thus far in this first century of our province's existence.

9:50

You know, right from 1905 we see the government was showing great foresight in setting up experimental agricultural institutions across this province. Many of those experimental and innovation centres have either remained or have evolved into larger places of learning or have served the various generations of pioneers coming to a new land to learn to make this place the most productive place that it could be.

Now, in 2005 I believe we're doing similar things, and the various areas of research and investment that this government has chosen to pursue, I think, have certainly been relevant and appropriate, from the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute, the Alberta Energy Research Institute, the Alberta science and research investment program, ingenuity fund, iCORE, the Alberta Research Council. The list goes on and on. I certainly salute each of these initiatives in their own way. I think that our key here is to make them better, and it's a moving target. So my job, of course, is to make some critique of this budget to ensure that we are in fact spending our money in

the most appropriate way possible and looking at the targets as they change over time.

In regard to the money, I realize that with the switch of the SuperNet over to a different area or ministry it's difficult to compare the numbers over the past year even, not the past five years. So I certainly have not a great difficulty in the current expenditure, down 8 per cent from the previous year. I, in fact, would encourage some flexibility in this budget so that we are able to, as the minister suggested, pursue certain areas of innovation or of research as the opportunity warrants itself or as developments might come to our knowledge.

My focus in terms of criticism centres around choices that we make in regard to where we would fund research. I realize that we have a strong tradition of energy-based innovation and scientific development in this province. Indeed, in many areas we are world leaders, and certainly you go with your strong hand if you're playing cards. I would suggest that at this juncture we might be able to pursue other areas of research, and I know that the minister is spearheading a number of life science initiatives, and I would like to suggest some too.

It's interesting, you know, because last night I was watching television on a rare opportunity to do so, and the Deputy Minister of Innovation and Science was on. He was describing what the ministry's concept of innovation was according to Innovation and Science, and Dr. Fessenden said that innovation is taking an existing product and adding something to it to make it more valuable or more desirable. I won't dispute that in a certain way, but I do find it a little bit narrow in terms of, I suppose, academic integrity and the spirit of pure research.

The vast majority, of course, of marketable or lucrative scientific advances throughout history have come from environments that encouraged knowledge for knowledge's sake. So sometimes, you know, when we pursue a certain product and we want to bring a product on stream to make money, certainly that is a useful thing, and lots of good inventions come from that but also from a larger, let's say, environment of innovation and the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake, as I said. Dr. Fessenden's comments bring to mind to me somehow a little bit these ideas of public/private partnership style of financing for certain projects, that the government puts out public dollars given to private companies to do what, sometimes, I think we can perhaps do ourselves at the same price or even cheaper.

This issue seems to be more relevant to some research institutes over others, certainly. The Alberta Energy Research Institute, for example, is entirely a public/private partnership arrangement, as far as I understand, which, you know, has some merit, but I think we need to always be vigilant. Our Auditor General does give some tentative support to P3s, but he said that we must be ever vigilant, I suppose, to ensure that we're getting the best bang for our buck. On the other hand, the university research and strategic investment program directs public dollars to research in public institutions. So I guess that I'm just pointing out in a general way that we have these two things working together, and sometimes we have to choose where we get the best return.

Who benefits from these grants? Well, of course, many students and researchers do indeed benefit over private companies, but there are issues of academic integrity that I believe should be addressed. From the 2003-2004 Innovation and Science annual report sponsored research reached the number of \$434 million in 2003, which is considerably higher than the '98-99 baseline, some 88 per cent higher, in fact. So although in some respects any funding for research is good funding, I just would like to point out, you know, a sense of measuredness, I suppose, between public funding for research and private.

There is anecdotal evidence that sponsored research affects the outcome of the research in question. For example, Dr. Nancy Oliveri, formerly from the University of Toronto, has noted that over 90 per cent of published drug research shows that drugs, in fact, do well. A 90 per cent success rate in research is just simply not possible or logical, for that matter. So, you know, you do see that when you're looking for a certain solution, you end up getting it. Sometimes, let's say with Cold-fX it's a very highly successful product, which I like to take – not sure if it works or not, but I think it does. But, you know, I think that when we're looking for broader research information, perhaps pursuing without a solution in mind in the first place is a little more reasonable and perhaps a little bit more honest as well.

So just something to keep in mind. You know, these are larger questions rather than specific budget questions, but it does affect how the dollar is directed, so to speak. Our public researchers are very good, and we must not pass them by.

Bill 4 establishes this life sciences institute. According to the ministry's website, fine thing that it is, it says: "involves the science, technology, products and processes related to human health, agriculture, forestry and the environment. Simply put, it is the science of living things." I guess that I'm looking for some specific focus where this life sciences institute is going. When will the funding for the institute be available? To what degree are we going to focus on an environmental research endowment fund specifically?

I think that at this juncture, as the hon. minister pointed out, you know, we look for technology that branches across ministries, information technology, for example, that supports agriculture and, say, life sciences and energy and medical sciences as well. I would suggest that, you know, environmental endowment research would be in this category. It branches across different areas of interest for us, and I think that amongst all things we need it more now than ever.

10:00

Dr. David Schindler, who is the esteemed biological science professor, Killam professor, a fellow of the University of Alberta, has been pushing very, very adamantly for specific environmental research endowments targeting this area. If I may, I can just give you a few words that Dr. David Schindler has said recently on this topic. I think it's worthwhile.

In my view, such institutes can be good, but they should be totally arm's length from the government. They should disseminate reports directly to the taxpayers who sponsor them, not through a political filter. This does not mean that Ministers have to follow the institutes' recommendations but that when they do not, they must have reasons. I think that this sort of transparency is necessary for a democracy to work.

He goes on to say that

one such independent institute that is desperately needed is one on environment and wildlife. This province is starting to look like Dresden after the bombing of the Second World War.

Strong words from a very well-respected scientist and some interesting ideas to reflect on when we are building this life sciences institute and how we might construct it.

The other bill that I'm interested just to make comment on is Bill 37. This talks about placing money into a number of different areas that would overlap into Innovation and Science, including a \$3 billion access to the future fund. Two hundred and fifty million dollars has been placed into this fund already. It's about 8 per cent of the total that's been pledged. I'd just like to ask the minister: when can Alberta students and scientists expect the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research endowment fund and the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research endow-

ment fund to be topped up so that we can see long-term sustainable funding for these areas?

My last comment has to do with Kyoto and carbon dioxide controls. We're having difficulty meeting our commitments to CO₂ in the atmosphere in Alberta, and it's simply a question, I think, of addressing these questions in a fundamental way. Science and technology is one tool by which we can address this issue, this challenge, and I'm hoping that the Innovation and Science budget will reflect specific research and development in regard to reducing our CO₂ output here in this province. For example, a lot of interest has been expressed in pumping CO₂ into existing wells or into coal-bed methane seams under the ground. I would be curious to know if the Ministry of Innovation and Science is pursuing this particular path to reducing our carbon dioxide emissions or to be somehow containing them. I have some grave reservations in regard to pumping CO₂ underground, and I'd like to know, specifically, if we are chasing this path.

Finally, is this ministry funding any specific research that would enable Albertans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet the targets of the Kyoto accord, and how is the Ministry of Innovation and Science working with that?

With those comments, Mr. Chairman and hon. minister, I invite your reply either as we are this evening or in writing. That would be great. Thank you.

The Chair: Before I recognize the hon. minister, could I ask your co-operation in keeping the background noise down. Those who feel the need to carry on loud conversations, please do so in the committee room out back.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Chairman, I'm sure the buzz in the room has to do with the great things that we're doing in Alberta Innovation and Science. People are just absolutely astounded, and it's hard to keep the enthusiasm at a low level, but I'm sure they will try, based on your comments.

I just want to maybe start with your last point and move the other way. Again, I'm not going to hit everything, but I'll try and hit some of your points. On the CO₂, just to reinforce the six strategic thrusts that we have in the innovation INet, one of those is CO₂ management, which speaks, I think, to the issue you raised, as well as the alternative energy development, which I think is important from the perspective that you brought.

Quite clearly, the emphasis that we have placed in terms of the Canadian approach to the management of CO₂ is that we ought to let our companies use investment and technology as a credit towards their contribution towards Kyoto. Frankly, we have an industry, we have people and ability that a lot of the world doesn't have, and we can provide solutions to the rest of the world. I would rather we spent the money investing in technology in our province and our country that we could then take to the rest of the world. To me that makes a whole lot more sense than just having to buy credit from some other country.

[Mr. Lougheed in the chair]

CO₂ – we had a lot of discussions about it – is currently being used in research projects engaged in the use of CO₂ to displace or to provide a better recovery of oil and gas. In one of your comments you had some reservations about that, and I appreciate that, but we are investing in that. That is an initiative, and there are a number of other initiatives using CO₂ as a resource that are currently under way and being contemplated. So I appreciate that.

You would also be interested – and I'm not sure if you picked this up or not – in an announcement from one of our innovation programs that we actually had supported a residential solar district heating demonstration project at the town of Okotoks. It was well covered in the media, and I hope that you managed to see that. That's one of the initiatives that has come out of our innovation program that actually also helps speak to this area of looking for alternative sources, and even the research on that is how you store energy. So those are all important things. I knew you were interested in the solar thing because that's something you raised in my office, and I thought you'd be interested in that and probably knew that more than I did.

For some reason I wrote this down, and I can't remember what point it related to. Earlier today I announced some winners from our ASTech awards, which is our leadership in science and technology. There was a very interesting award winner. I think it was last year or the year before; I can't remember. It was a company out of Calgary called Light Up the World Foundation, which actually provides a lighting solution to people around the world, particularly in Third World countries, that don't have access to power, can't read when the sun goes down because they haven't got lights. They provided a very simple, effective solution in a compassionate, caring way that addresses problems in the Third World. I'm very proud of that group, and we recognized them with an award. That's just, again, an example of some of the things that are occurring in our own province that help our world.

The definition of innovation. I didn't listen to the show, so I don't know what was said, but quite clearly innovation is more than just research and development. Research, pure research, basic research is an important element of that, but it's also more than just that. It's also looking for ways to do things better. It also has to speak to the economics. We can do a lot of things, but it costs too much to do them, so part of research and innovation is finding processes that can speak to the economics of what they're working on.

10:10

Your comments with respect to industry participation in research. We alluded to this earlier with the previous question from the Member for Edmonton-McClung on the BIRS and trying to actually increase our business investment side. That's one area where we think we have an opportunity. Many of the research activities that we fund, for instance, come from federal granting councils like the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, which actually requires at least a 20 per cent investment by industry in every research project. So when researchers apply to that, they have to have industry support. It's generally considered 40 per cent from the federal granting council, 40 per cent from the province or the institution itself, and 20 per cent from industry.

On the EnergyINet initiative that we've begun working on, quite clearly, the direction that we gave to industry was that we're not going to do this alone as government. The energy issue is an issue across Canada whether it's in hydro, whether it's in fossil fuel, whether it's in nuclear, whatever. There's a Canadian issue around it. We need industry at the table to provide solutions. Government needs to be at the table both federally and provincially. That's really the thrust behind EnergyINet.

You made some comments about the growth in sponsored research, and I commend you for that. I actually pulled out a chart which goes back to 1995, where the sponsored research out of our universities in Alberta was under \$200 million. This year it's well over \$600 million, which shows the growth in research activities we've had in the province of Alberta, and we're very proud of that particular growth.

Basic comments about environmental endowment. I've made note of those comments and appreciate that. A lot of the work we do in the institutes does speak to the environmental issues although not necessarily characterized as an environmental endowment. I know that your wish and probably the wish of the gentleman you quoted would be to make it more specific to that, and I've made note of that. Some of the life sciences – just to show you how some of this cuts across, I think of the approach to fibre and how that impacts on forestry and agriculture because they both really deal with fibre. The research we're doing on that is: how do we take this fibre and use it in an effective way?

Bill 1, Access to the Future Act. You raised that. Quite clearly, the budget this year and the next two years is committed to bringing the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research up by \$500 million. That's accounted for in the budget. Bill 1 talks about topping up the Alberta ingenuity fund by another \$500 million, but it is clearly as funds are available. I can't give you a specific timeline, although also in reference to the question from Edmonton-McClung I indicated that I will certainly be seeking support for that as the year unfolds and if our revenue base continues to be strong.

For the rest of the questions we'll get you answers in writing, and I appreciate your comments.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Innovation spending is clearly an investment in the future. At this point I'd like to thank the minister and his department for honouring my nephew in their ministerial calendar. He was the grade 8 winner of the national science award in his area for his science project on phosphorus indicators on BSE prions, you know, which shows how our next generation that's coming forward is really interested in some of the things that could bring solutions to certain great problems in agriculture and how they have an interest in these areas. I thank the minister and his department for including him and honouring him in their calendar.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The importance of innovation is clear. It is the next generation that we're looking to. After we have our oil sands gone or our oil industry not so important or if something does happen that all of a sudden that industry doesn't count any more – it happened in other industries. It happened in this province with coal in the 1940s. You know, if we're not looking to innovation, if we're not looking to creating new ways of doing things, new methods and new ideas to enhance and ensure our prosperity for the future, we're looking to lose our track in the world.

I had hoped the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar would speak to this particular debate. It's not just a Liberal idea that we would be looking to spend monies on innovation as an investment in the future. I think it's an important initiative from this government, and I think the member should speak to that and ensure that the spending in this area is indeed a viable and a proper thing.

If, for example, we didn't have the development in wheat in the middle parts of the 19th century that allowed for the development of farming in Manitoba, in western Canada, we wouldn't actually have had settlement because the wheats that were developed at that time were quite innovative and a new way to farm in what became our home. You know, we look at corn. It was just a generation ago that you couldn't get corn much higher than Taber in terms of how far north it could be, and now we're seeing corn farmed in Athabasca. It's innovation. It's development. It's continuously bringing these things forward, and the investments in these things pay off in spades.

I look at some of the applied technology that we're seeing in the oil sands. Not too long ago I was with some people from a geomatics company, which includes what used to be the trade of surveying, but it's become far more technical. They were showing me a program which, with the use of GPS technology, allowed them to survey an entire oil sands pit and determine volumes, determine the various areas, the description of the pit in a 3-D image. They were able to rotate that image, look at it from the bottom, look at it from the side, look at how they could be using it for the access of heavy equipment, heavy haulers, using it for volume determinations and these types of things. It shows very clearly that some of these things can be very, very well used in terms of how we apply it to our economy, how we apply it to efficiencies, how we apply it to the way that we can improve our Alberta.

There are many other areas. Crime detection. You know, some of the early DNA developments actually came out of Alberta, and some of our people in Alberta actually spoke in Asia and Europe on the development of DNA. It was really quite something. Some of the new developments in the tar sands, using different types of heat instead of just steam, which is a great draw on our water resource. Some of these ways are huge in terms of an investment for our future.

The strategies that the government is looking at to support recruitment of scientific personnel at public research institutions. I'd like to see the minister comment on what we could do to encourage new chairs, to encourage new endowments, to encourage new involvement from the private sector in that area to support the infrastructure at research institutions – my colleague from Edmonton-McClung spoke quite a bit on that – to look at how we explore the niches that we want to concentrate on. Certainly we're only 3 million in billions of people, but the niches that we look at must have the right infrastructure in order to expand. Some of that infrastructure is their equipment, and it's constantly changing, constantly needing updating, and sometimes quite expensive.

10:20

The way that we interact with some of the projects in our area; for example, the cyclotron in Saskatoon. I think there are some synergies that can be developed in terms of how we look at some more pure research perhaps but some things that can be applied and have great value in terms of developing our own scientific abilities.

The three priority areas of energy, ICT, and life sciences. Energy, obviously, is a crucial area to look at how we are going. It's so many-faceted. You know, some aspects were talked about by the Member for Edmonton-Calder. Sequestration of CO₂. The use of SO₂ as a potential resource as opposed to a pollutant should be looked at. The use of our sulphur piles and finding ways to get rid of these massive, massive piles of sulphur that we have accumulating in the province I think is important.

The nanotechnology centre surely has been, you know, proving its value and increasingly has shown that research in this sector and using this as an important niche can be of great value to Alberta. If we look at how that developed, it developed basically out of some research, which some people would call pure, for the purpose of exploration in space. Much of the miniaturization that developed into computers and ICT originally started from the space program, what some people would call pure research, which would become very much applied to many areas of our economy.

That gets to pure research. What is innovation? Do we really always have to tie it to something that we haven't seen yet? Innovation in itself and by its definition does not necessarily mean something can be seen to develop from something because you are in fact innovating. You're discovering. You're finding. You're

seeking new ways, and sometimes little bits of brilliance can bring a huge return even though that was not seen in the initial beginnings of the project.

The promotion of science and technology awareness I think is still very important, you know, especially with youth. I appreciate the ministry's work with the teachers, with the science fairs. I think it's crucial to promote that. It does encourage kids. It brings it forward. These are the innovators. These are the people that will discover in the future, and to let them interact nationally, as in some of these fairs and such, and to help them with that I think is crucial and important.

Some specific questions. You know, the performance measures kind of struck me. To have "total sponsored research revenue attracted by Alberta universities" as a performance measure I think is odd. While the total dollars perhaps are a useful measure, it doesn't really speak to Alberta's competitive situation in Canada or around the world, and it doesn't speak to what they are in fact doing. Raw numbers in these areas can be misleading, and I think that some other more effective performance measure should be somehow found. I would ask the minister to comment on that.

To "accelerate innovation in the energy sector," which is goal 3, I think is a very worthwhile endeavour, particularly those that add value to energy-related projects. You know, we have to encourage that any ends and any extra byproducts in gas, anything that we can use to promote, perhaps, cheaper diluents, to find ways to provide work in our many areas of the province, to look at how, say, better ways of using diluent could begin the construction of an upgrader in Medicine Hat or other parts of the province because the use of the pipeline as part of the refining process can actually bring economic value to many parts of the province. Some parts sometimes may think that they are actually getting too much of this, and it affects their environment. Perhaps that can be spread around, and people would be happier. There are ways where innovation can do that, I believe, and the performance measures and the ratio of private and public investments seem to be decreasing. I find that odd.

I've mentioned in some of the debates on the other bills that have been before this House that R and D in Canada has been historically quite low in relation to the economy. The R and D in Alberta and especially in the private sector has often been the lowest in Canada. There are reasons for that. It's the type of industries. It's the types of actions in the economy and perhaps a great deal of foreign control from centres like Houston and New York and Amsterdam and other areas where some of these types of R and D are in fact done. I think that where we could encourage these pools of capital, these multinationals to encourage more research and development in our area, somehow it would only be a great benefit for them and also a great benefit for the people of Alberta. I support any increase in the funding for this department. I think it is something that will only pay off.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to speak.

Mr. Doerksen: I'm just going to make a few quick comments in response, and again we'll respond. You mentioned young people, and I have to tell you a couple stories about young people. It is important for our young people.

At our ASTech awards we've generally had students have their science fair projects there, and these are some of the best science fair projects in Alberta. The people that come to the awards are just blown away by what these young people can do. We had one guy there, Warren Fenton, in grade 10 who did some work using an – I can't even say it – interferometer to determine how the speed of light is changed in the various gases, and he built his own equipment. At that ASTech awards I gave a challenge to the audience to let this

young fellow have some access to some university labs so he could continue his research, and they accommodated him. It was a great response.

We had another fellow by the name of Scott Pedrick, who in a grade 8 project had an artificial wetlands cleansing waste water. Again it was at the ASTech awards. Again I threw out the challenge to the group there to help this young man out, and as a matter of fact I understand that in June of this year they're going to take him to the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre as a special guest, along with some of our people from the U of A and NOVA.

Those are just two examples of young people that are doing outstanding work in our province, and we want to continue to encourage them. You said as much, and I appreciate that.

10:30

The Member for Edmonton-Calder talked about the past hundred years. Well, if you look on the website, there's a little section that talks about Alberta inventors over the past hundred years. I would invite you to go there and look and see all the great people that we have in Alberta.

I've taken your comments about performance measures, and I would invite your input into this because every year we struggle with this. The performance measures we have are largely input based, and we struggle to find out what the output measures are. If you just look at a strict output measure being our economic success in Alberta, clearly we're at the head of the class, but I think we're trying to find performance measures that relate more to the areas that we're investing in. I admit that it's been a difficult struggle to find out what the output measures are. Quite clearly, the performance measures we have are primarily based on input.

You talked about encouraging new chairs, new endowments. Just so you know, the Alberta Science and Research Authority doesn't just give us advice in terms of strategic research; they also provided a great deal of support to the Minister of Advanced Education and our government with respect to saying that we needed to invest in postsecondary institutions, in the postgraduate level, and in scholarships. You've seen the outcome of some of that in Bill 1, in our throne speech in terms of the support we've given to that segment of advanced education and clearly supporting people. You raised that point, and we agree with it. Building research capacity is building good teams of people who are best in class, best in the world, and that is clearly a focus that we have in our department.

Thank you for your comments, and I'll sit down.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I have prepared a short Albertan wish list for the Department of Innovation and Science.

One, recognize the importance of postsecondary education and ongoing research endowments; invest our resource royalties in addition to general revenue to fund and incent innovative solutions.

Two, recognize that our most precious resources are healthy, supported, and stimulated Alberta minds.

Three, recognize, encourage, fund, and when the investment produces obvious economic returns, subsidize made-in-Alberta diversification projects to replace the government's current addictive dependency on gambling, alcohol, and tobacco taxes.

Four, fund research on renewable energy alternatives, in particular a method of storing solar, wind, and thermal energy in an economic fashion to reduce our current dependency on nonrenewable, polluting fossil fuels.

Five, through research grant funding improve our current system

of scrubbers to eliminate coal-fired emissions so that we can replace our dependency on gas, whether sweet, sour, or in combination from coal-bed methane extraction. We have hundreds of years of cheap coal supply if we can solve this pollution problem.

Six, develop and enforce an alternative to the use and irretrievable loss of potable water in oil well extraction.

Seven, in concert with the Department of Environment research and develop an inexpensive method of desalinating water to the point that it can at least be economically used for irrigational and other agricultural projects.

Eight, stop depleting our gas reserves by using expensive gas to fuel the extraction of expensive oil from the tar sands.

Nine, continue to fund scientific research to eliminate infectious diseases and cancer, diabetes, heart and stroke.

Ten, encourage natural solutions to natural problems; for example, natural fertilizers, supportive insects to fight pests, sound agricultural and wetland conservation practices.

In conclusion, invest our rapidly depleting nonrenewable resource royalties to solve today's problems and tomorrow's challenges. The innovative co-operation demonstrated in this House tonight bodes well for Alberta's future.

Mr. Doerksen: Very briefly, just to thank the member for those comments and those points. We will respond and let you know what we're doing in each one of those areas.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question in an area that concerns me very much, and that is the area of the ethics of technology, ethics of science. It's well known that because of the tremendous innovation and the drive towards innovation and technology, ethics lag behind quite often. For example, the new reproductive technologies led to the establishment of a royal commission to look at that or, for example, with the AIDS epidemic a federal centre for AIDS was created or, for example, the whole problem of euthanasia and so on that led to the federal Senate developing a committee to look at that.

That seems to be the way we approach issues around decisions with respect to research and science and technology. If it gets enough press and if there's enough concern, we establish some sort of a commission. It's a kind of ad hoc approach. I know that lots of other countries are moving in the direction of establishing national ethics committees to look at the ethics of science and technology.

I'm particularly impressed here in Alberta with the John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre, which I think is a tremendous, successful venture at the University of Alberta hospital. I have tremendous respect for John Dossetor. What I'm looking for is not that government should do the ethics for scientists and for technologists. Not at all. Scientists can do their own ethics, and that's what the John Dossetor centre illustrates. John Dossetor himself was a surgeon, a highly respected physician who began to raise ethical questions for the work that he was doing. He has been teaching so many people in that field how to do ethics. I think that's extremely important, that somehow there is a disconnect between our values and our going full speed ahead in terms of science and technology.

When I look at your budget and the department, I'm wondering what limits there are in terms of the kind of decisions that are made. I know there are references, for example, to the expression "quality of life." I appreciate that because we're all interested that science and technology would contribute to a great quality of life for us in Alberta. That's one kind of limiting reference. I would like to see

some more funding for ethics committees and more of a universal approach to dealing with ethics in science and technology, not just an ad hoc kind of approach.

So I wonder if you have any comments about that.

Mr. Doerksen: Well, I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Glenora because he raises some very important questions around those issues, and some of them are very dear to my heart. I have thought about them a lot. I'm glad you raised the John Dossetor because I was going to bring that up. When you first got going and you were talking about the ethics of technology and science, I thought, "Well, here's the centre," and you raised it. Obviously, you know about it, which is good.

The regulatory framework is largely set by the federal government in terms of the kind of research that is done, but we'll examine your questions in more detail and provide you some more answers in terms of what we do in Alberta.

Thank you for raising those comments.

10:40

The Chair: After considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of Innovation and Science for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$135,267,000
---	---------------

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's been an invigorating night of great debate on a great department, Innovation and Science. I want to thank the minister and all the people who participated and enriched our lives with their excellent comments.

That being said, I would move that the Committee of Supply now rise and report the Ministry and Department of Innovation and Science and beg leave to sit again at another time.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Innovation and Science: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$135,267,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head:

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 24

Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Bill 24, the Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading.

We've had a good debate on this bill, and I appreciate the hon. members' input and thank them for their support. The bill addresses a number of areas that were identified during public consultation.

Among other things, it enhances the fatality inquiry process by providing for pre-inquiry conferences to identify in advance the issues to be addressed in the course of the inquiry. This minimizes the possibility of lengthy adjournments after the inquiry has begun. It also clarifies who may participate in public fatality inquiries while continuing the traditional openness of the process in the past. In fact, it gives the Minister of Justice the formal authorization to release the judge's report to the public. It clarifies the role of inquiry counsel as it addresses the collection and disclosure of information by inquiry counsel to balance privacy with access. It will allow the Fatality Review Board to use their considered judgment to determine if the public would be served by a fatality inquiry in cases where there is no meaningful connection between the death and the fact that the deceased was in the custody, care, or guardianship of the government or police.

In summary, the bill will clarify and improve the fatality inquiry process to inspire confidence that public authorities are taking appropriate measures to protect human life.

I would ask the members of the Assembly to support Bill 24, and thank you for your support to date.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The main issue that received the most attention concerning this bill was the role of the media at a fatality inquiry. This is relevant to the issue of the effect of the bill. Will this legislation rationalize the whole process, enabling judges to define the scope and expeditiously deal with the relevant issues, or will this legislation restrict access on the part of concerned parties such as the media?

I appreciate the hon. minister's explanations and the distinctions he has made; namely, that it was never the intention of the bill to exclude the media. They have the right to attend fatality inquiries, but rarely would they be a party with a direct and substantial interest in the subject matter of the inquiry. His words that having the right to attend an inquiry is very different from having the right to participate at an inquiry are, I think, well taken. The bill does not restrict the media's ability to report on the inquiry. The media still has an important role to play, and they can play it.

However, the hon. minister's explanations are one thing, and I appreciate those explanations. The bill and its effects may be quite different. I hope that the minister is right in his explanations. I hope that the bill will ensure that fatality inquiries are efficient – I never objected to that word in my remarks – open, public, transparent, and, of course, helpful to the wider community to ensure greater safety and health and well-being. There are just too many unnecessary deaths to innocent people in Alberta, so let us hope that this bill enables the judicial process, the fatality inquiries to be carried out in such a way that they will instill public confidence, that the public

will be confident that we're making progress in dealing with the issues of safety and the issues of health in our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a third time]

Bill 25
Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move for third reading Bill 25, Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005.

We've had a good discussion with respect to this matter, and I appreciate the support from the opposition parties that has been provided to this bill to date and hope that it will continue. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 36
Police Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I offered an amendment before, a first amendment. I have a second amendment that I would like to distribute on Bill 36.

Now, this amendment has to do with the time allotted for complaints. In section 18, referring to section 43(11), the period of time that's allowed for complaints reads: "shall dismiss any complaint that is made more than one year after the events on which it is based occurred." I just don't understand. I think the Solicitor General could explain to us why it's one year and why there's a kind of sudden ending after one year without any kind of discretion on the part of the chief of police. It doesn't say "may dismiss" but "shall dismiss any complaint that is made more than one year." My amendment would allow for two years but also give the chief of police more discretion by striking out "shall" and substituting "may."

10:50

It seems to me that there could be lots of factors that take the situation beyond one year. There could be a court case, and at the end of a court case that may last longer than a year, somebody might think: well, I have the grounds for a complaint. I don't understand why we would have just one year.

For example, in terms of the constitutionality of such legislation, it seems to me that there's no limitation for bringing a prosecution against a citizen of Canada in relation to an indictable offence. If a complaint against a police officer constitutes an offence, why does the police officer have this one-year limitation when that's not offered to anybody else? I'm not sure that that's really in line with section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which argues that every citizen is equal before the law. I don't know why we would

favour a police officer more than any other citizen. So I have difficulties with this. I think that by saying that the chief of police "may" hear complaints in terms of the two years, that gives them a lot more flexibility.

The Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, the amendment as circulated by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora will be referred to as amendment A2. I recognize the hon. Solicitor General on the amendment A2.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's an interesting amendment that the hon. member brings forward, but I do have a response with regard to the legislation we're bringing forward. Concerns expressed about complainants being intimidated by having to complain to the police, the very people they are complaining about, have been fully dealt with under the proposed amendments. Under Bill 36 the complainants may file their complaint with the civilian police commission's public complaint director.

Alberta is the last province to include a time limit on complaints about the conduct of a police officer. To be clear, this proposed time frame does not apply to complaints of alleged criminal conduct. In either case, though, people are encouraged to lodge their complaint as quickly as possible to avoid the possibility of potential evidence being lost with the passage of time.

Time limits on complaints of police officer conduct in other provinces are this: Quebec, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and B.C. all have a one-year time frame, which is what we're proposing, Ontario has a six-month time frame, Newfoundland and Labrador have a three-month time frame, and Manitoba and Nova Scotia have 30-day time frames. Prince Edward Island doesn't have any legislation governing complaints against the police at all. So, clearly, Alberta's proposed limit is in line with the majority of the other provinces.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on amendment A2.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. While I understand, if I were a police officer and I was waiting for the potential of a complaint to be brought against me, I would probably be rather anxious to have that complaint drawn out sooner than later. However, with court cases going on and on and class action complications, the notion that things can be resolved within a year may be somewhat premature.

The other concern that the hon. member brought up was maintaining the security of the evidence. I think that's partly a court and police responsibility to make sure that the evidence is protected and relevant. We don't want to go through what happened in the States with the glove and the knife and the pursuit in the white Bronco. We want to have a more secure system.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one more amendment to try, and this is much more substantial than the first two. It deals with, on page 16, the heart of this Bill 36, and that is the proposal on how to handle serious incidents and complaints, under 23 but referring to 46.1, serious complaints. The model suggested by this bill does not in my estimation fulfill the requirement of providing a public oversight mechanism.

The Chair: Could we just interrupt you, hon. member, until we get the . . .

Dr. B. Miller: I haven't introduced the amendment yet, but I have it here.

The Chair: Okay.

Dr. B. Miller: I'm using up probably one minute of my five minutes left, but anyway.

This amendment is going to be directed to changing 46.2.

An Hon. Member: You killed another tree.

Dr. B. Miller: Another tree, right. It's one of the birch trees that already died.

The Chair: We'll refer to this amendment as amendment A3.

Dr. B. Miller: If I may proceed.

The Chair: Please do.

Dr. B. Miller: This amendment says that it strikes out the words "may do any one or more of the following" in the middle of page 16 under (2). Instead of "may do," we're suggesting "shall do." In other words, it shouldn't be left up to the discretion of the minister whether or not there is an investigation. But there ought to be an investigation if there is a serious offence.

Then instead of the outline in the bill, the "request . . . that another police service provide a police officer to assist," this amendment is suggesting that the investigation be carried out by a committee. So (a) to (c) is struck out and substituted with the following:

- (a) request or direct another police service to conduct an investigation into the incident or complaint, and
- (b) to ensure the integrity of the process of the investigation, appoint an oversight committee comprised of
 - (i) a retired judge,
 - (ii) a retired or former Crown prosecutor,
 - (iii) a retired or former police officer, and
 - (iv) not less than 2 members of the public.

11:00

Now, the rest of the amendment is housekeeping matters to comply with the idea of this committee. Actually, this suggestion should be familiar because this comes right out of the MLA committee on policing, which the Solicitor General was a member of, so he should recognize this proposal as quite a valid proposal.

It fulfills, in my estimation, the need to have public/civilian oversight. Instead of just having one person oversee the process as suggested by the bill, here you would have "not less than 2 members of the public." It's very important to ensure that there's actual independence and impartiality on the part of such a committee and also that there be the appearance of impartiality. Public perception is really important. When investigation of a serious offence is carried out, the public has to be assured that there is the appearance and the actual fact of impartiality and independence. This kind of committee would provide that.

It also provides the possibility of a committee that is able to perform its own investigation. The Solicitor General in question period, in response to a question of mine, suggested that the public doesn't have the ability or the skills to engage in investigations. I thought that was a statement that kind of has disrespect for the ability of the public. Of course, if you have someone who is a

retired judge or a retired Crown prosecutor or a retired or former police officer, then the ability to carry out an investigation is there on the committee.

I think this kind of proposal would go much, much further in satisfying the public in the need for civilian/public oversight of our police services. I think this would instill confidence in our police services, if we had this kind of investigative committee. So this is the amendment that we would like to propose.

The Chair: The hon. Solicitor General on A3.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. With regard to the amendment that's brought forward, I want to thank the hon. member for bringing up the fact that a part of his amendment comes from the MLA Policing Review that was chaired by Her Worship Judy Gordon of the town of Lacombe.

What we looked at then was the fact that could these individuals – a retired judge, possibly a retired prosecutor, and a retired investigator – in fact be members of a committee that could oversee and investigate? The overwhelming stakeholder input with regard to that was that they are too close to the police, that they all work with police officers: as a retired investigator, obviously contacts within the police service; as a retired prosecutor, possibly contacts with those same police officers; and as a retired judge, as well those contacts would be there.

What we did then, what we're bringing forward, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that our legislation is stating that we would be appointing members of the public which could include a retired judge, a retired prosecutor or police officer. We're not stating that that's all. We're going to open the realm of individuals from the public in a true public oversight forum so that any member of the public could in fact be selected. So it's not listed as one of the individuals listed in (i), (ii), (iii), and (iv).

The other thing I wanted to mention, Mr. Chairman, was when we talk about the police investigating the police. I think we want to make it clear, though, that there are numerous, numerous professions out there that investigate themselves. Doctors investigate themselves. You know, church pastors and church ministers investigate themselves. Teachers investigate themselves. Lawyers investigate themselves. Judges investigate themselves. The list goes on and on and on.

Again, obviously, in a policing profession they have to investigate themselves because of the fact that they also have those investigative skills with regard to criminal allegations. Now, if it's a breach of conduct, those are simpler to deal with because, in fact, the regulations are very specific with regard to what offence did they in fact breach under the regulations.

I would advise the hon. member that, as well, we're going to be looking at the regulations and a review of the regulations once this act goes through. We can possibly look at a part of his suggestion here in the regulations, but of course that time will come down the road.

No, I can't accept any of the amendment as put forward, Mr. Chairman, as I believe our legislation deals with this issue regarding public oversight. Civilian oversight, the ability to monitor the process of investigation, to ensure that the integrity of the investigation is there, to ensure a clear and transparent process I think is what we want to ensure is in the process. Leaving it open to any member of the public to have the ability and/or the opportunity to oversee an investigation I think would be more critical than listing individual professions.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I would appreciate clarification from the hon. member that there would be at least two members of the public appointed – and again I hate the word “appointed,” but I can’t think of a better word; I love the word “elected,” but I’m not sure how well it works here – independent members of the public appointed, selected, elected to this oversight committee. Hopefully, you can provide me with clarification.

I was a teacher, as everyone has heard several times, for 34 years. While the Alberta Teachers’ Association did have internal professional policing – and you mentioned doctors and lawyers – there’s still a public kind of incredulity about members being able to police themselves. It always comes into question as to what extent. When it’s police, it’s the highest level of sort of professional activity or public safety that comes into account. Unless there is an impartial third party to oversee the investigation, then there’s always the possibility of personal interest or partisanship and a tainted process.

We’ve seen inquiries of late and we’ve brought them up: the ongoing battle with the Alberta Securities Commission and the ward 10 business, where people have been appointed and they appear to have the potential of partisanship. Unless we free ourselves from that perceived if not real notion of partisanship through having independent members of the public, this stigma that we’re basically guarding our own treasure comes into play.

I believe that a retired judge, a retired or former Crown prosecutor, any of these individuals are that far removed from the police officer or the police department themselves doing their own investigation that with every further removal from sort of the police being the judge and potential executioner – I don’t think all those roles can be sufficiently summed up by one person. It’s kind of like we have a system where people can elect to be tried by judge or jury. In most circumstances I would rather trust the wisdom of a number of individuals than any one individual.

Lastly, if the hon. member could clarify that there will be at least two nonpartisan members of the public as a part of that committee, I’d be more understanding of the intent.

11:10

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’m pleased to speak to this amendment, and I speak in favour of this amendment very clearly. The wording in the act needs this amendment because an overseer, as seen by the wording in the legislation, without investigative power does not actually, I think, you know, speak to the real need that this act really is looking for.

The respect for the rule of law, the respect for the police, and respect for our system of justice and law enforcement is key to the operation of our society. Policing has a very special role in our society and a special place. It’s important that it be beyond reproach. Investigating any allegations against particular police officers and all the foofaraw that goes around this sort of thing makes it necessary that there be a real independence by those who are dealing with this. Independence does not mean that they can’t be former police officers, that they can’t be investigators of another sort. They might be somebody from the corrections branch, somebody from any of a number of areas in law enforcement, or somebody from another province or whatever, but the key is independence.

This sort of system works very well in Ontario. It works very well in other jurisdictions. It need not have a high staffing component. The training and staffing component for this type of thing need not be – in fact, it probably in the long run could be a saving, as it takes away the need for spending in these areas by all of the very different police organizations and departments in our province.

I believe that this amendment is a very beneficial addition and should be passed by this Legislature and would lead to a better support in the long run for our police. I’ve talked to a number of individual people in the law enforcement community. Although they would not support this publicly, they say that, you know, in reality this type of independence would give greater strength to any decision that comes from any inquiry of these matters because it creates suspicion in the public if the police are judging themselves.

I would urge this Assembly to vote for this amendment.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Yes. Strictly a clarification, and possibly my question was lost: is it the hon. member’s and mover’s intention that there will be two members of the public on the oversight committee in addition to the police officer doing the judgment?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Chairman, as per the legislation it’s “appoint one or more members of the public.”

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on amendment A3?

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, have some interest in Bill 36. While I think the intention of the bill shows some promise, I think that we’re hearing from quite a number of people across the city and across the province that have some concerns as to the strength of this bill, whether or not it’s going far enough to restore the public’s confidence in the ability for us to have independent oversight over the police force under certain circumstances.

So I have an amendment to section 20 of this bill. It’s on page 13, and I would like to distribute it now, please.

The Chair: We’ll refer to this amendment as amendment A4.

Hon. member, would you like to proceed?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you. So as my amendment is being distributed, this amendment has proposed to set a timeline for police to investigate complaints. After six months if the matter has not been, quote, unquote, disposed of, then it is referred to the police commission for a committee to review. Now, this is designed specifically to deal with complaints in a timely manner. Again, with that question of confidence, if something is serious enough to warrant a complaint – and we don’t usually see these things taken lightly – then, in fact, the public will know that the complaint will be dealt with within a reasonable timeline, and if not, it’s going to the police commission for review.

I think that on a number of occasions people have at least the perception – and perception has a lot to do, Mr. Chairman, with the integrity of any public body that we have. Sometimes there is the perception that people are having their complaint sort of swept away and lost in the mists of time. So we’re hoping that this amendment might address that concern and give Bill 36 some more of the teeth that it requires.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe this is going to be A4.

Mr. Chairman, the police commission through the public complaint director will have the authority to review any complaint under investigation at any time. In the event that the length of an investigation becomes a concern, the mechanism I just mentioned is already in place to review the reasons for the delay. The police commission has that ability now to investigate any matter that may come before them, so we're not in agreement with the amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. We seem to be at odds here. In one sense we want speedy justice for police officers who have potentially been accused of some nonprofessional act, yet on the other side we don't seem to want to provide that same speed and efficiency for a person who has lodged the accusation. I don't see one individual's worth or desire for speedy justice being higher than the other's. I respect the role of police officers, but I don't believe that they are above the law or above a timely process any more so than any member of the public. If we want to have any kind of public faith in the system, we need to know that within a certain time limit these complaints will be dealt with and not at the discretion, again, of the police force but within a regulated and expected six-month period. You can't have it both ways and say that the police deserve speedy justice but the public doesn't.

I speak in favour of the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

11:20

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Sorry; I was just being diverted there for a moment.

I have another amendment to Bill 36, and I will distribute it now. It's in reference to section 18, page 11 of the bill. If I might distribute those for you.

The Chair: We'll refer to this amendment as amendment A5.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. As you might see, this amendment is referring to section 18 of Bill 36. It's focusing on: will the extension of the length of time that a complaint . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, if I may interject, the wording of your amendment is already part of a previous amendment. Therefore, it would be ruled out of order.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Well, I think that amendments are a bit like fishing. If you just keep your hook in long enough, eventually you'll catch something.

I do in fact have another one. This third amendment has to do with section 23 on pages 15 and 16 of the proposed bill in front of us. I will distribute that to you.

The Chair: We'll call this one A6.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. The last amendment that I have for you is to strengthen the clause in the act in general to force the minister to take action on complaints rather than just empowering the minister to do so. Again, this is in the spirit of strengthening this overall act to provide the public with the confidence to know that there is a degree of independence in oversight with the various police departments around the province and that the minister, in fact, carries a fair amount of clout to allow intervention when necessary.

I think that, you know, in looking back, all of the calls for a reform of the Police Act were looking to fundamentally redirect the way by which we investigate our police departments when necessary.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hate to interject again, but your amendment A6 is the same wording as the previous amendment A2, so I have to rule it out of order as well.

Mr. Eggen: I'm sorry. Are you referring to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora's amendment? Okay. So it's out of order as well?

The Chair: That's correct. It's out of order.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Thank you. Those are all of the amendments I have for this Bill 36.

Mr. Cenaiko: I think, Mr. Chairman, there's some issue with the handing out of the amendments because A6 actually came on this side of the House as A5. I think there was maybe a mix-up in handing them out. A6 is actually this last amendment: Dr. Pannu to move that Bill 36, Police Amendment Act, 2005, be amended in section 23 in the proposed section 46.1(2) by striking out "may do" and substituting "shall do." That should be A6.

The Chair: By striking out "one year" and substituting "two years" is amendment A6.

Mr. Cenaiko: That was A5. That was the same as A2.

The Chair: They're both out of order. The table received both amendments at the same time, so there could be a mix-up in the ones you received. Nevertheless, both of them are ruled out of order because the wording is the same as other subsequent amendments.

Are there any other amendments?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Just a parting remark for the sake of *Hansard* if I may. The intention of the amendments from this side of the House was just to have equal treatment for both the police and the public, and the cliché that best expresses that is: what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 36 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 36.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Webber: The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 36. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 11:29 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 10, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/10

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Grant that we the members of our province's Legislature fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all of our people. Let us be guided by our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Bryan and Susan Huygen from my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They are, of course, the proud parents of Jennifer Huygen, one of our very talented, dedicated, and hard-working pages. Bryan is the director of business services in the Department of Children's Services, and Susan is a research assistant at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Alberta. More specifically, she works with the northern Alberta renal program at the U of A hospital. Bryan and Susan are seated in your gallery, and I'd ask that they please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 105 visitors from the city of Spruce Grove and the school of Brookwood elementary, which has a well-deserved high reputation as an inclusive school, turning out great results through great kids. They are accompanied by teachers/group leaders Mr. Jeff MacKay, Mrs. Nancy St. Amand, Mrs. Evelyn Nixey, along with parent helpers Mrs. Judy Rackel, Mrs. Diane McKay, Mrs. Denise Mandin, Mrs. Donna Johnson, Mrs. Corinna Nelson, Mrs. Dorothy McGinn, Mrs. Tracy Megaw, Mrs. Alison McConnell, Mrs. Sharon Whalen, Mrs. Lorraine Harrison, Mrs. Karina Beaudoin, Mrs. Christine Blomquist, Mrs. Daphne MacDonald, Mrs. Sharon Nickerson, Mr. Rick Dechaux, and Mrs. Kim Dewan. I believe they're in both galleries, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some five visitors from Japan, here in our province with the Rotary group study exchange program. This program is a unique cultural and vocational exchange opportunity for young professional men and women between the ages of 25 and 40 who are in the initial stages of their professional life. For four to six weeks these team members are studying our country's institutions and our ways of life, observing their own vocations as practised abroad, developing personal and professional leadership and relationships, and exchanging ideas. We trust that their perspectives and the fresh ideas

gathered from this experience with our nation's culture, commerce, and government will prove invaluable as they are applied in fostering growth in their companies and their country.

Now, I'd ask each of our guests to rise as I call out their name and remain standing until we can welcome them. Kimiko Inoue, an opera singer, is learning much about music and culture. Akiko Matsubara, a sales promoter with Panasonic, is learning about sales promotion and the industrial products. Akika Kawamura works at Nanzan University and is learning about college education management and the postsecondary system. Akira Hirai works in the Grand Hotel in Japan and is learning about banquet facility promotion and hotel business. Of course, the team leader, Nobuo Hazama, is retired from the Toyota Motor Company and is busier than ever with his volunteer activities. The Rotary hosts for our Japanese visitors are Katherine Olson, legislative manager with my department, and her fellow Rotarian Mike Colson. I would ask now that the Assembly give them the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very special guests seated in the public gallery. Aaron Sorensen, if he would please rise, is a musician turned screenwriter and director originally from the Peace River region. You may have heard of his film *Hank Williams First Nation*.

After writing the script, Aaron turned to his community in Peace River to finance this film, and in fact it was the local IGA store and then the Woodland Cree Nation who supported the film and invested in it. The movie is playing in theatres across the country and has received wonderful reviews. It's an example of the amazing talent waiting to be tapped in Alberta. In fact, out of over 3,200 submissions this movie was chosen as one of only 12 films to compete in the Los Angeles International Film Festival.

With Aaron today is another example of Alberta talent, Edmonton actor Jimmy Herman. Jimmy plays the role of Uncle Martin in *Hank Williams First Nation*. He's also appeared in *Dances With Wolves* and *North of 60*.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of enjoying this film on its opening showing on Friday night, and I will recommend it to everybody. It is truly wonderful. Please, will all MLAs join me in giving the traditional warm welcome to these fine men?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two individuals who are instrumental in helping to bring to the province of Alberta the greatest show on earth. My first introduction is Steve Allan, who is the vice-president of RSM Richter Inc., which is one of the largest independent accounting, business advisory, and consulting firms in Canada. In his spare time he has spent 30 years volunteering and is currently serving as the chairman of the board and president of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. As well, we have with us today Vern Kimball, who is the chief operating officer for the Stampede. Vern has spent over 18 years with the Calgary Stampede and has been instrumental in helping the board carry out its vision for redevelopment. They're here today to thank the province for its support of the Stampede. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleasantly surprised today as I walked up the steps of the Legislature and met a number of seniors from the Golden Age Centre in the village of Breton. They were very complimentary on your visitor services, saying how well they were treated and looked after, even though their visit was set up on fairly short notice. They're in the public gallery today. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of this Assembly Mr. Harold Wilson, the executive director of the Economic Development Alliance of Southeast Alberta. Harold brings a wealth of knowledge on regional economic development, having been a director for many years for all of northwest Ontario. Southern Alberta is fortunate to have an individual like Harold, who is an exciting, vibrant, energetic man. I'd ask him to rise – he's in the members' gallery – and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a small class that is joining us from one of the high schools in my constituency of Edmonton-Centre, and that's St. Joseph high school. There are nine members of the class that are here today, and they're accompanied by their instructors, Ms Dawson and Ms Costigan. I would ask them all to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two wonderful people. They are Dr. Raj Shorey, PhD, literature, and Mrs. Chander Shorey, MA, international law, my family friends. They are here this afternoon to tour the Legislature. They are seated in the public gallery. I request them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms Calahasen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 15 visitors from Northern Lakes College, High Prairie campus. They're actually brought here by Chris Neidig, who is the instructor. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly a man who needs no introduction, the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. President of AUPE, Dan MacLennan, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Health Facilities Review Committee

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again this government drops the ball on accountability. For years people have been raising serious concerns about long-term care facilities, but this government turned its back, ignoring the plight of some of our most vulnerable citizens. Yesterday the Auditor General added yet another voice to the chorus of people calling for change with a series of shocking revelations. My questions are to the Premier. Given the bland utterances from this government's Health Facilities Review Committee, how did that committee miss the boat so badly on the quality of care problems in long-term care facilities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the Health Facilities Review Committee does a marvellous job. They drop in unannounced to many long-term care centres and report to the appropriate minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's review of 25 long-term care centres found that one-third of those care centres are inadequate or there are some problems associated with them. Having said that, we are taking action. Both the Minister of Health and Wellness and the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports are working on this particular situation and are paying a great deal of attention to the recommendations of the Auditor General. In that regard, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that the government spends over \$500,000 a year on the Health Facilities Review Committee, yet it only completed two investigations into complaints last year, will the Premier move to disband this committee and create a long-term care ombudsman's office, staffed with qualified professionals? [some applause]

Mr. Klein: Well, I hear a lot of thumping over there. I don't know what for.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness – and the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was there yesterday to hear the answer to a question relative to inspections and complaints received – indicated that there were something like 400 complaints investigated. She mentioned also that there are some 5 million hours of long-term care services offered to about 18,000 residents. We have said quite openly that if there are problems – and obviously there are – identified by the Auditor General, we will address those problems. We will look at the recommendations of the Auditor General and give them very serious consideration.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the Premier: will the Premier call an end to the practice of government MLAs serving on and chairing the Health Facilities Review Committee so that true accountability can be re-established instead of Tories just talking to Tories?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, Tories are not talking to Tories. I don't know who the patients and the residents of long-term care centres are. They could be Liberals. They could be members of the NDs. They could be Conservatives. They could be members of the Alliance Party. I don't know who they are. So these are not Tories

talking to Tories. These are Tories talking – well, some Tories. I don't know all the members of the Health Facilities Review Committee. I know that there are some Conservatives. But they're talking to people of all political stripes. They're talking to people with concerns about long-term care.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

User Fees in Long-Term Care Facilities

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It took the release of a report by the Auditor General to make this government finally acknowledge what the Official Opposition, advocacy groups, staff, families, and residents have been saying for years. The report says that over 50 per cent of basic administrative standards were not met. For example, residents were charged fees for bed alarms, for delivering specimens to the lab, and for the very restraint systems that restrict their movements. My questions are to the Premier. Why is the government allowing these facilities to charge user fees for what most people believe is already covered?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we are reviewing the recommendations of the Auditor General. Relative to action that has already been taken and relative to action that might be taken, I defer to the hon. minister.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier mentioned, we are reviewing the recommendations of the Auditor General. This hon. member that asked this question regarding user fees is very aware that people, as they go into a facility and access a facility – it depends on the facility, but they know that there are issues and there are areas of care that they do pay a fee for. That can include, you know, having your hair done. That can include laundry facilities. It depends on the facility.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: why does the government believe it is appropriate to charge patients for restraints?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the details relative to the operations of long-term care centres generally in this province. But I can repeat what the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness said yesterday, with the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition in attendance. She said, and I quote, that in the future she will revoke government funding to facilities that are not performing as required.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: will the government put an immediate stop to user fees being charged for medical services and safety equipment in long-term care facilities? Stop it now.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I have in front of me the report of the Auditor General. I don't know what it says relative to user fees.

An Hon. Member: You haven't read it?

Mr. Klein: No, I haven't read it. In response to some of the yipping and yapping from across the way, I have not read the report, but I will. I will read the report, and it's a very thick report, well, comparatively thick. I'm sure that they haven't read it either, verbatim, word for word. Tell me, what's on page 57? They give us a bunch of malarkey about having read the report. They haven't read the report any more than I've read the report. At least I'm honest enough to admit it.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

1:50 Seniors' Benefits Program

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because I have a sincere desire for answers to my questions, I'd like to direct them to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. The Auditor General exposed the Alberta seniors' benefits program. The annual cost of the program is \$178 million. The objective is to provide support to seniors in need, but there are no criteria in place to determine whether the objective is being met. The department has not defined need and has no process to measure whether the program is sufficient to meet the needs of the seniors. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: how was such a substantial amount of money put into a program when there were no evaluation criteria that existed at the time?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is an evaluation criterion, and it can be improved upon. What I learned as I was doing the business plan is that the criterion is based on threshold levels. It's based on the income of the senior. I can tell you this: approximately half of our seniors do receive income support through this program, and it is working very well. Can it be improved upon? Yes, it can be. Can we do as the Auditor said? Can we define needs in a much more concrete way? Yes, we can, and we will be.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you for that answer without the theatrics. I appreciate that.

It appears that the Department of Seniors and Community Supports only adjusted the Alberta seniors' benefits program based on changes to provincial and federal dollars. Why were the needs of seniors not considered as a deciding factor, as opposed to just dollars?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The needs of seniors were considered, and yes, we do receive funding. We have put in place the threshold levels. We have put in place the amount of money that seniors would receive based on their own income level, and that, of course, is through the federal benefit program. Whether it's the old age security income, whether it's the GIS, whether it's rebates on the GST, that comes into context, and also when we talk about needs, what's in place for people with shelter. With special-needs assistance, for example, we also give seniors a \$5,000 program in that area. So we do consider the seniors' needs, we do consider the income threshold, and we do consider the amount of money that the seniors themselves have through the federal benefit program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Will the minister consider consulting with advocacy groups, families, staff, and professional associations in an effort to develop evaluation criteria?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will enhance what we already do in that area. We already meet with advocacy groups such as the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association, the Long Term Care Association, other seniors that we've had introduced here in the Assembly with Seniors United Now, with the Kerby Centre, seniors in Edmonton. We consult on an ongoing basis, and we will continue to do that type of consultation, as I indicated, as we define needs in another way.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Long-term Care Facility Standards

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General confirmed what families, advocates, and the NDP opposition have been saying for years: long-term care under this government is in crisis and a disgrace in the richest province in Canada. It's long past time that this government accepted responsibility for its neglect of seniors. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier stand in his place today and apologize to residents and their families for the government's neglect of seniors in government care?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the question as it was framed is a ridiculous question, to say the least. We're talking about one-third of 25 long-term care centres that were examined by the Auditor General. Now, I don't know how many long-term care centres there are in the province.

Mrs. McClellan: A hundred and ninety-seven.

Mr. Klein: There are 197 in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I have indicated in the past that if problems have been identified, they will be addressed. The minister has committed to addressing those problems. The Minister of Health and Wellness has committed to addressing those problems in a very positive way because we are concerned about our seniors, and we want to make sure that they live their lives with respect and dignity.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Why is the Premier trying to duck personal responsibility for the crisis in long-term care, a crisis that has grown unchecked under his watch, and why is he now dragging his feet on implementing the necessary reforms?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where he gets the notion that we're dragging our feet. Both the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports and the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness indicated in a news scrum yesterday that they were going to take immediate action to address the recommendations of the Auditor General. Immediate action.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that yesterday the minister said that the implementation plan wouldn't be available till the fall, why is the

government delaying implementation when this will leave thousands of vulnerable seniors with woefully inadequate care months longer than is necessary? People are suffering, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General himself said that it's going to take some time to implement some of the recommendations. You simply don't snap your fingers and things happen overnight.

Relative to steps that are already being taken, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've said this in the Assembly as well before, that the Minister of Health and Wellness and my ministry are working together in the development of standards for long-term care, and that's to enhance and to clarify standards that are already in place.

You know, hon. member, when I became minister and we were doing the business plan, that was the number one issue for the business plan, and that was about the standards that are in place. Do you know why? Mr. Speaker, do you know why? It's because we know that long-term care has changed. It's long-term care into the community with designated assisted living, assisted living, wellness, and we know that the issue of standards is extremely important. We gave to the Long Term Care Association and the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association over \$200,000 last year to assist with this very issue of the development of standards, and the regional health authorities as well are working on it. As our Premier indicated, this takes time. It needs to be thoughtful, and we are working hard, and it will be in place soon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

National Child Care Initiative

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Minister of Children's Services has reached a verbal agreement with the federal minister, Ken Dryden, on Alberta's participation in a national child care program. My first question is to the Minister of Children's Services. Can you confirm this and indicate progress to date?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will indicate that back in March I reached a verbal agreement with Mr. Dryden, and at that time he agreed to Alberta's position. In fact, we have written Mr. Dryden three times asking him for confirmation in writing of our verbal agreement. I've got staff going to Ottawa this week – I believe it's on Thursday and Friday – and we're encouraging the feds to put their pen on the agreement. Alberta is ready to sign on an agreement that we had.

Mrs. Ady: My second question is to the same minister. Does the minister see any stumbling blocks to this deal being made?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, it's important for us. We had a verbal agreement with Mr. Dryden in March, and we have written him on three separate occasions to get a written agreement. Our position in Alberta has been very consistent and clear right from the beginning. We want an agreement that gives our parents in this province the flexibility to choose from a number of child care options. In Alberta, still, we need to be able to spend the money on

a wide range of programs and services. It's a parental choice in our province. We want a share of the federal money on the per capita. We want flexibility for the parents in our province. It's important for our parents to be able to have a choice in this province for their own children.

2:00

Mrs. Ady: My final supplemental is to the same minister. Given the shaky state of the federal government and the lack of national agreement on child care, what does the minister hope to achieve with consultation on child care being done by her ministry at this time?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important is listening to what Alberta parents want. Given the state of what's happening with the federal government, we still believe that it's important to listen to what parents want in this province. We feel that consultation is a worthwhile investment, to hear what parents in this province want for their children in Alberta. We will continue doing what's right for the people in this province whether the federal Liberals are in government or not.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Edmonton Remand Centre Assault Incident

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April 2003 a young man housed in the Edmonton Remand Centre was forced to double-bunk with a violent gang member. Soon after, this young man was verbally and physically abused, threatened, and finally one night was pulled out of his bunk, had a sharpened pencil held to his throat, and was brutally and viciously raped not once but three times. All this happened while this man was supposed to be under the protection of this government. My question is to the Solicitor General. Can the Solicitor General tell us if the safety of this man was the government's responsibility?

The Speaker: The hon. minister, recognizing estimates for this afternoon.

Mr. Cenaiko: That's correct. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is correct that the first incident did happen in 2003. The safety of inmates is a top priority for this government and for the corrections officials that work in our corrections facilities throughout the province. It's our policy to segregate known sexual predators. The second incident happened as a result of human error, and disciplinary action was taken at that time.

Now, this type of situation is rare. In the last 10 years there have been three other such incidents across the province, and in that same period more than a quarter of a million people, 250,000 inmates, have gone through our corrections system.

Dr. B. Miller: Given the severe emotional and physical trauma inflicted on this man, and in fact he has not been able to have full-time work, can the minister explain to him how a one-time payment of \$11,000 – that's it: \$11,000 – can pay for all of the long-term counselling he needs and all of the medication? The money was used up long ago.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, the individual did apply to the victims of crime fund and did receive a cheque for \$11,000, as the member does state. That money was to be used for his assistance regarding psychological counselling if that's what he, indeed,

needed. He accepted the conditions of accepting the cheque from the victims of crime fund and, as well, accepted the responsibility of cashing it.

Dr. B. Miller: Given that this government has never offered an apology, will this minister commit here and now to meeting with this young man and explaining to him why he was not protected and why this government has failed him?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have a problem meeting with the young man. We can discuss, in fact, why he was sent to prison as well and look at those issues regarding his sentence and why he went there, what he was charged with. We can talk about it. I don't have a problem meeting with him. This is one of the issues that we deal with. Double-bunking is a normal course throughout North America and throughout Europe as well. Facilities provide double-bunking, and it's a safe measure for inmates and/or those in remand to provide them with a safe environment to live in while they're waiting for court.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Agricultural Research Initiatives

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Friday I attended the official opening of an integrated manure utilization system out in Vegreville. This pilot plant will transform manure into energy, biobased fertilizers, and reusable water. It is a prime example of Alberta innovation to develop sustainable solutions for our industry. My first question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. What does this project mean for Alberta's agriculture industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. This is a new and exciting technology that we see, taking a vision and turning it into reality. Highland Feeders, one of the partners, along with the Alberta Research Council are to be commended for seeing this project through, starting with an idea some four or five years ago and, certainly, turning the focus of perhaps BSE and our value-added industry into something that is a vision for the future.

We have not only economic benefits that we can see out of this but also environmental benefits as well. If you envision a feedlot, there are a number of animals on a feedlot. They create a certain amount of waste, which is becoming somewhat of a concern in some areas. This solves that issue, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to some future with it.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: what is your department doing to support other agricultural research initiatives?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, research and development is something that's key to not only our six-point recovery and restructuring strategy with BSE. We've talked a lot about becoming the centre of excellence for research in agriculture and certainly in BSE research. We've also talked about the SRM, the \$7 million that we're putting towards the risk materials that we're going to need to find a home for. Agriculture is certainly

working with other entities in the province to try to figure out what we can do with those products. Certainly, our key focus at this point in time is on new products and environmentally friendly products.

Mr. Johnson: My final question is to the Minister of Innovation and Science. Given your department's mandate, what are you doing to support agricultural research?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, last evening we gave a lengthy explanation of the activities of the Department of Innovation and Science. If I could capture it in one sentence, it would be that we provide strategic advice and impetus to encourage innovation in priority areas. In particular, the example that the member raised today, the integrated manure utilization system, shows the work that we are doing in alternative energy research: how we can sell that power onto the grid in our deregulated marketplace, how we can effectively manage water, and provide value to the agriculture industry. All of these initiatives come out of innovation, which is something that we support.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Nina Louise Courtepatte

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The horrific story of Nina Louise Courtepatte is an example of the dangers when Alberta Children's Services fails at its job. Despite numerous calls by child intervention services regarding claims of abuse and even a full investigation into the family, Nina stayed in an unsupportive home and barely attended school, and the calls kept coming. To the Minister of Children's Services: why did the system let this girl fall through the cracks when there were so many reports of problems to Children's Services?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear, first of all, that this matter is before the courts, and it's in respect to a criminal investigation. I will say, though, that the death of Nina was very, very tragic, and my heart goes out to her family.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that the social workers in this province do an unbelievable job in very, very difficult situations. The families that we're dealing with on a daily basis come to us with horrific problems, and the number one priority for the social workers in this province is always the best interest of the child.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the history of this case until it was closed involved many investigations and calls to Children's Services alleging horrific levels of abuse and neglect, what were the criteria for closing this case last year?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about an individual case that's before the courts, and I certainly don't want to jeopardize that particular investigation.

I can tell the hon. member that when our social workers are dealing with families, they always try to make a decision in the best interest of the child. Believe it or not, most children want to be with their parents no matter how difficult the situation is at the home. What we do is continually investigate what we're hearing about. We will try and make a decision. We'll provide supports for the family, whether it's alcohol or drug counselling, whether it's any sort of

family support we can. When that isn't working, we will apprehend the child, put them in foster care, and if need be, go right into a permanent guardianship.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. To the same minister: will the minister give Albertans peace of mind and perhaps some confidence in the child welfare system by having a fatality inquiry review into Nina's death to find out where and why things went wrong?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, it's a criminal investigation.

I can tell the hon. member, though, the commitment from this minister: any time a child dies in our care or is injured in our care, we do an internal review. We will be doing an internal review on this case and others. One of the things that bothers me as Minister of Children's Services is the amount of screenings that we have to do, the amount of apprehensions. I think it's important to find out what is in the best interest of a child. The fatality inquiry is something that is decided by the Justice minister, and he may want to supplement the answer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Airport Rental Costs

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the 1980s Canada's airports were rundown relics that were costing the federal government millions of dollars to operate and had a book value of one and a half billion dollars. These airports have since been turned over to community-run authorities such as Edmonton and Calgary on a lease basis. Rents paid to date have exceeded over \$2 billion. These airports have been transformed into world-class facilities at no cost to the federal government, yet the rents have escalated drastically over the past 10 years and were forecast to go even higher. A recent announcement by the Minister of Transport suggests that he'll be reducing the rents to the authorities like Edmonton and Calgary. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What effect will these rent reductions have on the viability of airports in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd say at the outset that this is one of the most horrific spins I've ever seen put on a story from Ottawa. They're putting it across as a rent reduction when, in actual fact, they're just not increasing the rent. The rent was destined to go up at the Edmonton airport from \$4.3 million to \$22 million. In Calgary it was from \$25 million to \$50 million. Then they had the audacity to come out and say that they were actually reducing rent when they were just leaving it at the same level. First of all, it's great they're leaving it at the same level, but on the other hand the spin that was put on this story was absolutely horrific.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Mr. Minister, what are you doing to get airport rents reduced or even eliminated, as they should be?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes an excellent point. In his preamble to his first question he stated that the \$1.5 billion book value was what the airports were actually worth when they were transferred. They have paid to this date \$2 billion in rent. So I think there's a very good case to be made that these airports should be turned over to the airport authorities free of charge. The federal government has gone from it costing them \$225 million per year to making close to \$200 million per year, a swing of \$400 million. They're using our airports as a cash cow.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the minister: what is his department doing to support the aviation sector in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I may have been strong in my statements that I made in my first two answers, those were actually the words that I used in the Standing Committee on Aviation, which I presented to approximately a month ago. I feel very strongly about this. Those \$25 million and \$4.3 million are fees that are going to be transferred to you and I as the people who use the airports. I think that they should do the right thing. They should turn them fully over to the airport authorities in exactly the same way as this government did to the other 72 airport authorities without collecting a cent of rent. I think the time is here.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Environmental Protection

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Energy and Utilities Board will soon rule on Compton Petroleum's application to drill six critical sour gas wells near southeast Calgary based on a reduced emergency planning zone of four kilometres. Many Calgarians are understandably upset about this development. Compton has assured everyone, however, that it can ignite the well within 15 minutes of any blowout to burn off deadly hydrogen sulphide, but even the most sophisticated system can fail, as it did this year in Pincher Creek. To the Minister of Energy: with the reduced emergency planning zone can the minister be certain that 250,000 Calgarians would be protected from a sour gas release in the event of a blowout?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to point out that the Energy and Utilities Board's first priority is the public safety of Albertans. No applications go forward before them without having been vetted. That's why there are hearings. That's why the issue of whether they can safely manage a substance like sour gas is paramount to the decision. That's before the Energy and Utilities Board at this stage. We have full confidence in them. They have set some of the most stringent regulations, really, in the world for managing sour gas.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Energy minister: when will the government begin to do cumulative impact assessments before approvals to enable more appropriate decisions in the public interest?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the body of information before the Energy and Utilities Board is quite cumulative in the sense that we've had over 50 years of safely managing sour gas in this province. There is a tremendous amount of literature, both science and research, that has been compiled on managing sour gas, and it's upon those standards that the regulations have been based so that we can ensure that we can manage it safely going forward.

One of their recommendations also out of a study that they did earlier in the year 2000 came up with 87 recommendations, and at the forefront of that was an area on health effects and sour gas research. It still continues to be one of the main focuses of the Energy and Utilities Board.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the agriculture minister: in relation to coal-bed methane will the minister agree to meet with landowners, farmers, and concerned citizens about the agricultural impacts of coal-bed methane, the water impacts, the land evaluation issues associated with the planned 50,000 new coal-bed methane wells in south-central Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development may choose to, but the tradition basically is one question, two supplementals on the same subject. This is totally unrelated.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of questions in there that I suppose I could answer, but I guess the general one is whether I would be prepared to meet with industry groups, farm groups, producer groups to discuss integrated land management or issues around the environment. I do that every week and would be more than pleased to do that with any of those interested groups at any time that we can mutually arrange a schedule.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar. [some applause]

Long-term Care Facility Standards (continued)

Mr. Martin: Don't make me stand too long. That's the only time I've ever had that reaction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's findings show that basic standards for long-term care are badly out of date. Less than 1 out of 3 facilities even meets the outdated standards, and the so-called inspections to monitor compliance are frankly a joke. There are 14,000 beds across the province, and it's estimated that 4,000 people are not even having their basic needs met, all this in a province that has posted multibillion dollar surpluses year after year. My question is to the Premier. Given that the Department of Health and Wellness has known about the Auditor General's devastating findings for months, what is the government's lame excuse for not having already taken decisive action to fix the crisis in long-term care?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, there is no such thing as a lame excuse. The only lame excuse is sitting over there. Well, standing now.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, both the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports are taking action and have been taking action. It's always been the intention of this government to ensure that those who reside in long-

term care centres receive the respect and dignity that they deserve, and we plan to make sure that that continues to happen.

2:20

Mr. Martin: Well, we've had lame excuses, and now we've had lame answers, Mr. Speaker.

Given that seniors' advocates and seniors' families have for years told this government that long-term care was in turmoil, why did the government fail to provide the necessary resources in last month's provincial budget to enhance staffing standards and keep the frail and the elderly and the chronically ill safe and well cared for?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know exactly what the budget was before, but I know that 15 million additional dollars were added to that budget in targeted areas to increase long-term care staff numbers. That's \$15 million for that project alone.

Mr. Speaker, relative to the overall program I will have the hon. minister respond.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the hon. member has mentioned years and years of what has happened in long-term care, but I can tell you this: we're moving forward from today. You know, we've been moving forward with the business plan, with the allocation, as the Premier mentioned, of \$15 million in the budget through Treasury and also \$2 million into the seniors' budget for the implementation of standards. As I mentioned before, we've met with the organizations that are involved in long-term care, and I mean involved at the industry level. There are industry standards in place, the regional health authorities have standards, and the Minister of Health and Wellness and myself are working together on those standards.

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's frankly outrageous that they're saying that they're moving forward from today when almost everybody in Alberta knew the problems.

My question again to the minister then. They're saying that they're going to talk and deal with it in September. Why is the government taking its own sweet time coming up with an action plan to fix long-term care? I mentioned that there are probably 4,000 people . . .

The Speaker: Okay. The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier as well, it does take time. [interjections]

The Speaker: I wish everybody would talk through the chair. It'd be much more civil.

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, it does take time to put standards in place. The reason why this is so important is because in the community we have a continuum of care that has developed over the past five years for designated assisted living, and that's in the whole supportive living component of long-term care. That's why standards are critical, that they will also arch to cover those as well.

When I say "from today," I mean with the Auditor General's report. I also indicated to you, hon. member, that it's been in the business plan since January.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Federal Financial Support

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of international and intergovernmental affairs. It seems that Christmas has come early for some provinces. Over the weekend the federal and Ontario governments concluded a hastily crafted deal to transfer \$5.7 billion to Ontario over the next five years in an attempt to address what Ontario calls the growing gap between what they contribute to Canada and what they receive in services. Given that Albertans contribute more to Canada on a per capita basis than residents of Ontario, could the minister say whether Alberta is being treated fairly by this Kris Kringle federal Liberal government, or should we just expect another lump of coal in our stockings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year Albertans contributed more than \$9.3 billion more to Ottawa than what they got back, which is about \$2,900 per Albertan, far more than any other province in Canada.

With respect to closing the gap and Ontario pursuing that with the Prime Minister, who happens to be in a very giving mood at this particular time, we can't give judgment on the agreement until we have a good look at it and assess it, but we will pursue with Ontario those areas where they seem to be gaining on some of the long-standing issues.

We have some success, Mr. Speaker. We recently did sign a labour development agreement with Ottawa, and we're going to get back about \$110 million of our money.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: given that Albertans would rather just keep their own money, can Alberta use this opportunity to negotiate a federal tax reduction instead of more provincial handouts?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, that's not within provincial jurisdiction. However, our position is that taxation in this country should be fair, it should be consistent, and it should be equitable and represent all Canadians no matter what part of Canada they live in.

Rev. Abbott: My final supplemental, Mr. Speaker: how can Albertans know if we are being treated fairly when every week the federal government announces a new bilateral agreement to spend on programs in a vote-rich region when those that pay the freight are not even at the table?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we are at the table at every opportunity, and when we're at the table, we make sure that the values and the interests of Albertans are represented.

With respect to the agreements that we were talking about this afternoon – one, for instance, the child care agreement – our Minister of Children's Services will not sign an agreement that will put provincial jurisdiction at risk or question the value and the interests of Alberta parents making choice into how to raise their children. We're not going to give that up for a few pennies that Ottawa may offer us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Bison Grazing on Agricultural Public Land

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year this government pays out millions of dollars in compensation to the holders of leases on Crown lands, even though the government is entrusted to manage all the public lands on behalf of all Albertans. Recently they announced that they will allow bison ranchers to lease Crown land for grazing, meaning more of the public's money will be dished out to the holders of these leases. My question to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: are the surface rights to oil and gas exploration and other developments that apply to farmers who lease public lands also going to apply to bison ranchers who lease Crown lands?

An Hon. Member: I bet you saw that one coming.

Mr. Coutts: I think it was in the paper yesterday.

Well, Mr. Speaker, legislation to allow bison ranching on agricultural public land – and it's agricultural public land we're talking about, and that's different than what the question was – was passed in this House in December of 2003. Since then, we've had two years of consultation, and in addition to that we've had scientific input and a multistakeholder group put together to show that bison grazing on the land is no different than cows grazing on the land as well. The same kinds of fees that apply to grass under an agricultural disposition apply to a bison disposition.

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: why was the public consultation limited to industry with all other interested parties excluded to determine the extended grazing leases to the bison ranches on Crown land? Is it in the public's best interest? Remember that this is public land and not the government's land.

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, what we've done in the consultation is made sure that bison on agricultural land will be treated the same way as agricultural products such as cows, et cetera. When we have an opportunity where there might be an ongoing risk, say, from cattle and bison on any pasture mixed in with people, mixed in with elk or something like that, we have agricultural and public land inspectors that go out there to make sure that everything works well. In addition to that, we also have put into place permeable fencing to make sure that the wildlife can get back and forth. So there's nothing wrong with bison being on public land.

2:30

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, given that millions of dollars are given out to the holders of leases on Crown land every year, can this minister explain why this money is not held in public trust and reinvested in Alberta?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, we would have to make sure that the hon. member understands that exactly the same dispositions that handle agricultural dispositions are also handled on leases that would hold bison. It was a two-year consultation. I'm really not quite sure where he's coming from, but exactly the same rules apply to both species on the same landscape. We make sure that wildlife have the protection of going back and forth. For us it makes a good fit to have the bison back on the land that they occupied 50,000 years ago.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Forest Fires

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last several years Alberta has been severely impacted by forest fires. In the forested regions of the province people are concerned, first, for the safety of

their communities and, secondly, for the economic loss of harvestable timber. My first question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Can the minister inform us what the outlook is for the coming forest fire season?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Despite wet conditions that were there last year, the Department of Sustainable Resource Development fought 1,600 fires that destroyed over 230,000 hectares of forest. This year we've had good precipitation over the winter and through this early spring, and we're thankful that this year it's been a slow start to the season. But conditions can change very quickly in this province, and sometimes in five days we can go from a low risk to a high hazard in the forest. We're constantly monitoring the fire hazard conditions in our 122 lookout towers throughout the province, and we do that on a daily basis when we're at high-risk season.

Through fire science and continual improvement to detection monitoring, so far this year, Mr. Speaker, we have 304 fires that have only consumed 1,300 hectares. The only thing we can do is pray for rain and wet conditions this year to help us.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. To the same minister. Can he inform this House as to how prepared Alberta is for the coming wildfire season, especially if this season turns out to be as severe as those we've seen in recent years?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, it's a good question. Not knowing whether or not we're going to have a severe or warm summer, our resources are strategically positioned so that they can be moved to wherever the hazard is the highest. Our Hinton Training Centre provides state-of-the-art programs for training our firefighters. In addition, we have a fire protection centre with minute-to-minute weather reporting. What it does is track weather systems with the potential of lightning strikes as they come across the Rockies so we have an idea of where it's going to strike. In addition, Albertans can call our fire line at 310-FIRE 24 hours a day to report forest fires. As well, communities also work with our forestry industry and our department to do forest protection in their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final question to the same minister: what are we doing to ensure that the economic loss from forest fires is kept to a minimum?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a very good system in place to make sure that all wood from forest fires that is salvageable can be salvaged and can be used efficiently. We also work with companies to make sure that we're looking at new technology and new ways within their harvesting plans to make sure that the wood is harvested and kept. In addition, we also contribute to ongoing research to find new ways to use fire-killed timber in value-added products that may come from that and find new markets for that.

All in all, in many forests in Alberta because of the fire, even though they can naturally regenerate themselves, we find that we're looking at other approaches through the burnt areas to maybe look at calling them disaster areas so that we can reforest them in the future and make them sustainable for future generations.

The Clerk: Members' Statements.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six hon. members to participate. Might we, however, revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Ireen Slater. Ireen is currently the vice-president of the Seniors United Now central chapter. Ireen is the recipient of many awards for her tireless work in the community, including the United Nations International Women's Day award for exemplary service. I would ask that she rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has one as well, but he's not as fast on his feet as me.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly members of the Elder Advocates of Alberta Society. This organization is comprised of advocates on behalf of the frail, dependent, and elderly in our society. The Elder Advocates of Alberta Society is here today to show their concern for seniors in long-term care facilities. I would ask that each member rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly as I call out their names: Irene Stein, Anne Pavelich, Eva Makowichuk, Elaine Fleming, Louis Adria, and Ruth Maria Adria. Please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms Calahasen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I introduced my people earlier, they weren't in the building; however, they are now. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 12 members who are sitting in the members' gallery. They are students from Northern Lakes College, the High Prairie campus, and they're seated over there, as you can see. They're here with their bus driver, Jim Meldrum, as well as Chris Neidig, their teacher. I'd ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Bow.

A Tribute to Fathers

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps one of the oldest and most enduring symbols of ancient Chinese philosophy is the yin and the yang, which represents the Chinese understanding of how things work. According to the Yellow Emperor, the yin-yang underlies everything in creation, and it brings about the development of parenthood. According to this philosophy, children are most complete when raised by the love of both mother and father. Many centuries later Sigmund Freud said: "I cannot think of

any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection."

Now, this past weekend we had the opportunity to pay tribute to mothers, and since we most likely will not be sitting during Father's Day, I have risen today to say happy Father's Day to the fathers in the province.

In Alberta we place the utmost importance on the family as a pillar of our society, and I believe we can attribute much of our collective success on this. I, myself, have been twice blessed, first with an actively involved father and then blessed again with a husband actively involved in the raising of our children. Both mother and father play a critical role in the proper development of a child as each can offer different strengths and a different approach to the world. By putting together the teachings of mom and the teachings of dad, we raise children who are well rounded and who are whole.

Today study after study shows that the best thing for the proper development of children is access to both parents. The love and attention of a father is just as important as that of a mother. Science tells us now what Freud told us at the beginning of the century and what ancient Chinese philosophy told us centuries ago: children grow up whole with the love of a mother, yin, and a father, yang. Happy Father's Day.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

U of A and Northern Lakes College Partnership

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the fall of this year as Alberta's postsecondary students head back to the classroom, there will be a new program available which is significant to Alberta's aboriginal students attending Northern Lakes College, based out of Slave Lake. It's really appropriate to see guests in the members' gallery as I say this.

I am proud to acknowledge that on May 3 in Slave Lake as part of the Campus Alberta initiative, Northern Lakes College and the University of Alberta signed a memorandum of understanding. This was witnessed by our hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

2:40

The spirit of this partnership is to increase quality postsecondary education access for Alberta's aboriginal students through a two-year transition program from Northern Lakes College campuses to the University of Alberta. This transition program celebrates aboriginal values and culture while empowering students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to succeed in a University of Alberta undergrad program. Northern Lakes College students participating in the transition program will also gain the necessary academic requirements and transfer courses for admission to the University of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, this is another example of Alberta's passion to offer innovative education solutions to all Albertans, ensuring that each and every student is given the tools necessary to accomplish their life's goals and achieve the success they deserve.

I think it is important for all hon. members to recognize the commitment government has to postsecondary education, this province, and the people who wish to benefit from the advantage that being an Albertan offers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

U of A and Keyano College Partnership

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of an agreement signed today by the University of Alberta

and Keyano College. I had the honour of attending the ceremony in Fort McMurray this morning along with the hon. ministers of Advanced Education, Environment, and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and a large group of University of Alberta and Keyano College officials. It was a great opportunity to see firsthand the enthusiasm and excitement from all those involved in the partnership.

The agreement signed today will form the basis of a long-term working relationship between the University of Alberta and Keyano College, a partnership that will be of great benefit to the people of Fort McMurray and all of northern Alberta. The agreement will help open doors for students in Fort McMurray and the surrounding area by helping aboriginals gain the skills and academic knowledge they need to qualify for university admission, and the agreement will also allow Keyano College students to continue studying towards University of Alberta degrees longer without having to leave Fort McMurray.

Skilled workers are also needed more and more in the north to take advantage of the massive investments pouring into the oil sands and other areas. It will also help students get postsecondary education right where they live, which is so important to the continued health and strength of northern communities.

The University of Alberta has shown impressive leadership in recent months in supporting education for Albertans in rural and remote areas by signing agreements with postsecondary institutions such as the Northern Lakes College in Slave Lake, NorQuest College in Edmonton, and Olds College. Keyano College has equally demonstrated a real spirit of innovation and readiness to help address the challenges facing northern Alberta, and the college deserves to be commended.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts of both Keyano College and the University of Alberta will go a long way towards ensuring that Alberta's postsecondary system remains second to none. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Long-term Care in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of discussion lately in the House has been focused on seniors' care and the conditions in our seniors' facilities. Last week in Mayerthorpe I talked to the director of the Mayerthorpe extended care facility. This facility was just part of an unannounced inspection by the Health Facilities Review Committee, chaired by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. The director explained to me that the facility rated very high and that little concern was raised by the inspectors. I know many staff members that work in the various facilities in my constituency. They love their work, they're dedicated, they're caring, and the atmosphere in which they work shows all of that.

A few weeks previous to this I was in another health care facility in Mayerthorpe to present to Mrs. Dubois a centennial medal to recognize her 101st birthday. This party was attended by staff and residents as well as many family members. Again, Mr. Speaker, I noticed a very well-maintained facility staffed, once again, by caring, loving, and hard-working individuals.

I know we can always improve the care and the quality of seniors' facilities in our great province, and I, for one, do not accept the status quo in anything. I feel that it is very important to let the citizens of Alberta know that we do have some of the finest seniors' facilities that I have ever seen.

Mr. Speaker, I have complete confidence in our facilities in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne. The residents are safe and well cared for. I'll

continue to strive for dollars that may be required to make improvements and expansions to the facilities in my constituency.

I want to thank the staff and the residents for always welcoming me and treating me so well during my visits. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Nursing Week

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nurses across the province are celebrating National Nursing Week from May 9 to 15. This year's theme is Nursing: Patients First, Safety Always. I would like to take this opportunity to honour the contribution nurses make to the Alberta health system.

More than 27,000 registered nurses are currently employed in Alberta, providing quality care to patients across our province. Every minute of every day these nurses help those who cannot help themselves as well as promoting the health and wellness of those who can.

However, workloads for nurses are steadily increasing due to the new challenges they face as the population ages. Workplace injury is comparatively high in nursing professions, yet research shows that with more nurses per patient there are lower rates of mortality, decreased instances of hospital readmission, and fewer complications reported. Despite the new challenges faced by these health professionals today, every nurse in this province upholds his or her commitment to patients and ensures that each and every patient receives the quality care he or she needs.

This commitment to putting patients ahead of all else requires a health system that focuses not just on costs of the care provided but on the quality of care provided. Nurses across this province are intent on fostering a sustainable health system which invests more energy to helping people stay well. This can be achieved if the government will begin working together with the health professionals to ensure that their needs are met.

The purpose of National Nursing Week is to increase awareness of the importance nursing holds to the well-being of all Canadians. Mr. Speaker, I know that I'm not alone in stating that nursing is one of our province's most valuable professions. We should all be proud of the 27,000 registered nurses along with the many licensed practical nurses at their side who provide the best possible care to their patients. I ask all members of this Legislature to celebrate National Nursing Week with me.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Boreal Forest

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada's boreal forest covers nearly 11 per cent of our planet's total surface and is the largest terrestrial ecosystem on Earth. Every day it filters tens of millions of litres of water, rebuilds soils, stores carbon, and provides food and shelter. Our boreal forest is one of the largest tracts of wilderness in the world.

However, there are major disruptions in this ecosystem here in the province of Alberta. Eighty nine per cent of Alberta's boreal forest is unprotected from exploitation. A 2003 study of the Alberta-Pacific forestry management area showed that old-growth forest of spruce and pine will disappear within 20 years in this province. Old-growth aspen will disappear within 65 years. Habitat for woodland caribou, a threatened species, will shrink from 43 per cent of its area to a mere 6 per cent over these coming decades.

This year the Sierra Club found that Alberta was rated as poor on 10 indicators of good forestry management practices including habitat protection and old-growth forest preservation. Renowned water scientist David Schindler describes Alberta's northern wilderness as starting to, quote, look like Dresden after the bombing of the Second World War, unquote. When one looks at the time-lapse aerial photographs of the Swan Hills region or looks at satellite imagery of areas around Grande Cache or Hinton, one can see that Schindler is not exaggerating. The disruptions are enormous. This rate of destruction cannot continue. It is simply unsustainable.

I implore this government to look at the potential of ecotourism in an effort to preserve the boreal forest. No tourist wants their wilderness experience interrupted by clear-cuts and seismic lines. No one wants to navigate a patchwork of fragmented forests. Science, economics, and common sense are on the side of immediate action. Future generations deserve nothing less.

Thank you.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I could take you back to May 10, 1988, on this day Bill 1, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act, passed through Committee of the Whole. The bill would eventually create a council that would work on behalf of Alberta's disabled, and today the council remains active in the province. It is currently served by 15 volunteer board members who represent various regions of the province and pursue the goal of full citizenship for all Albertans regardless of their age or type of disability.

head: 2:50

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have 103 signatures on here that urge the Alberta Legislature and the government to "declare the Grizzly bear an endangered species in accordance with the recommendations made by the Endangered Species Conservation Committee, scientists and other wild life experts."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition from the good Alberta residents of Leduc, Devon, Millet, Ardrossan, Hinton, Fort Saskatchewan, and the cultural capital of western Canada, the river city of Edmonton. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 103 on this particular petition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from many residents in Edmonton, including my constituency, who are urging the government to

prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or

trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30 and after having provided your office with the appropriate notice, I wish to inform you that upon the completion of the daily Routine I will move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to hold an emergency debate on a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the ongoing suffering of residents of long-term care facilities in Alberta as identified by the May 2005 report from the Auditor General.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling today the required number of copies of responses to questions raised during the Committee of Supply in consideration of the estimates of the Department of Advanced Education.

The Speaker: Others? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling five copies of a petition signed by 62 Albertans urging the Alberta government to "provide adequate funding for our local ambulance services."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies of four letters from some good Albertans speaking to the apprenticeship ratios in the province and the deskilling of the workplace as well as foreign replacement workers.

head:

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mr. Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Special Areas Act: the special areas trust account financial statements, December 31, 2004.

head:

Emergency Debate

Long-term Care Facility Standards

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on a Standing Order 30 application.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I would move that the ordinary business of the Assembly be adjourned in order to hold an emergency debate on a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the ongoing suffering of residents of long-term care facilities in Alberta as identified by the May 2005 report of the Auditor General.

If I may speak to the urgency on that, Mr. Speaker, the Assembly only received the Auditor General's report yesterday, but we have heard from the government that it may be some months, in fact in the fall, before they are finally able to present an action plan to address the Auditor General's concerns. The most compelling

reason for immediately debating long-term care is the indisputable fact that Albertans are suffering and are even in life-endangering situations. The report found that only seven of 25 facilities visited fully met even the basic standards; that is, about 30 per cent of facilities. With 14,000 beds across the province more than 4,000 residents are likely to be in facilities where their basic needs are not currently being met. For residents who are not having their basic needs met, the urgency of this debate is obvious.

Of utmost and immediate concern is the staffing shortages and the problems that flow from these shortages. Most urgent is the Auditor General's finding of improper provision of medication, something that was brought up frequently in our health care hearings. The implication, of course, is that right now, as we speak, seniors may in fact be receiving overdoses of medication or the wrong medication. The very fact that they are in long-term care facilities implies that their health is not at its best, and they are therefore more vulnerable to the ill effects of improper medical interventions.

The NDP opposition is calling on the ministers responsible to develop an action plan to address these concerns, and we are proposing that such a plan be tabled before the end of this sitting. The Assembly cannot however be content to simply delegate this task. Conditions in long-term care facilities have been Alberta's secret for too long. It's time for the Assembly to own up to its responsibilities and seriously consider options for resolving the crisis.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of family members wondering whether their loved ones are in fact receiving proper care. However, basic standards are not readily available to the public, authorities are not required to undertake annual inspection, and we are talking about an extremely vulnerable portion of our population, who quite often depend on others for financial and physical support. Family members deserve to know what standards are in place and should be empowered to hold facilities accountable for the care received by their loved ones.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that it's of utmost urgency that the Assembly debate this matter and provide direction to the government to develop an action plan which will deal immediately with this crisis, before the end of this sitting. We now have proof of what has long been suggested with respect to health care. We don't believe there could be anything more urgent than the well-being of Alberta's frail, elderly, and chronically ill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be more important than the care of seniors in long-term care, than making sure that the elderly in this province, particularly those that are vulnerable, have appropriate care. Nothing could be more important than that, and no one would dispute that, I don't believe. In fact, the report of the Auditor General tabled yesterday is an important report.

The question for Standing Order 30 is whether or not it's urgent to adjourn the normal course of business for this afternoon and discuss the motion being put forward, and that is "to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the ongoing suffering of residents in long-term care facilities in Alberta as identified by the May 2005 report."

Mr. Speaker, even on the face of the notice of motion I would say that the issue of urgency is improperly framed. First of all, I will indicate that I haven't had the opportunity to read through the report in detail, but I have skimmed the report. I have looked at reviews of the report. I don't believe that the report indicates that there's ongoing suffering of residents in long-term care facilities in Alberta,

nor do I think that the report says that the long-term care system is in crisis.

What the report basically says is that there are basic standards that in some cases haven't been met, that there is work to be done in developing policy, that there are processes that need to be undertaken. That's, in fact, what Auditor General's reports do. They examine processes. They determine whether policies have been complied with. It looks to see whether or not the things that were supposed to have been done have been done and whether there are processes in place to ensure that that happens.

The Auditor General has found some areas that need some improvement. In fact, as we look through the Auditor General's report, it clearly indicates that the Department of Health and Wellness, the Minister of Health and Wellness, and the Department of Seniors and Community Supports through the minister of that department have agreed with virtually all of the recommendations and agreed in principle with a couple of the other recommendations. In fact, we heard in the House today and I'm sure yesterday indications that there is work ongoing on all of the areas that have been recommended.

In fact, when the Auditor General indicates that some of the institutions in the province aren't meeting the basic guidelines, that does not equate to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's statement that basic needs of seniors are not currently being met. That is not the same statement, Mr. Speaker. To raise the level of what we're talking about here to crisis proportions or to make statements that the basic needs of seniors are not being met is entirely inappropriate.

3:00

The Auditor General's report is an important report. The care of seniors is a very important topic. The fact is that we must make sure that both the Department of Health and Wellness and the Department of Seniors and Community Supports take a look at the recommendations in those reports, work through the MLA committee that's been established on healthy aging in continuing care in Alberta, the Implementation Advisory Committee, make sure that the long-term care committee – and the chair of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee is a member of this Legislature and, in fact, is having meetings this very afternoon on the topic.

There are ongoing matters taking place, Mr. Speaker, but the question we have to deal with today as a result of this notice of motion is: is it urgent to suspend the normal business of the House, in this case the examination of the estimates in the Department of the Solicitor General, to debate what has been characterized as "the ongoing suffering of residents in long-term care facilities . . . as identified by the May 2005 report of the Auditor General"?

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the Auditor General's report doesn't identify the suffering as the hon. member has said. It doesn't indicate that there's a crisis in long-term care. It does indicate that there are a number of very important issues that have to be dealt with. Those issues do have to be dealt with, and the ministers responsible have indicated that they will. For example, the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports this afternoon indicated that \$200,000 – I believe I heard that from her this afternoon – was provided to the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association and Long Term Care Association to help update the accommodation standards and accountability mechanisms, to help update the very standards that the Auditor General was talking about.

The work is in progress. It's not a new thing. It's something that's ongoing. It's work that's being done. It's work that's being done in public. It's work that every member of the public, every stakeholder, every family member who has a concern can be

involved with, ought to be involved with because there's no more important work.

Is it urgent today that we adjourn the normal business of the House, not review the estimates of the Department of the Solicitor General but, instead, debate "the ongoing suffering of residents in long-term care . . . as identified by the May 2005 report"? No, Mr. Speaker. That's not an appropriate thing for us to be doing this afternoon.

We need to look at the report in detail. We need to have the ministers deal with the issues and the recommendations, as they've agreed to accept those recommendations, to implement the reviews that they've indicated they are proceeding with. The framework is already under development in which government is responsible for establishing and monitoring compliance with basic standards. Industry organizations are responsible for promoting quality improvements in excellence. The role of Seniors and Community Supports is to ensure compliance with basic standards and promote resident safety. So work is being done. The work is ongoing.

The issues that have been identified by the Auditor General are important. They're not new, but they are important. That work has to be undertaken, but it's not urgent, in the words that have been put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood in terms of there being a crisis. The Auditor General didn't say that there was a crisis. In terms of basic needs not being met, the Auditor General didn't say that basic needs are not being met. He did say that there were important systems that needed to be put in place, important processes that hadn't been reviewed on a timely basis that needed to be reviewed. That work is undertaken and ongoing.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in support of the Standing Order 30 that's moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I would echo the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood in underlining how important the health and safety of our seniors is and noting that, indeed, many of the veterans that we honoured just the other day are among those who are experiencing some risk to their health and safety. What the Auditor General talks about is, in fact, risk, and he very clearly outlines that.

Now, that may not be happening in every case, but the entire argument about risk is that it could be happening, and it may well be happening. It may not happen in every instance, but it certainly can be happening, indeed, and that's what he is pointing out to us. So there is an argument about the health and safety of the seniors on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I would argue that day by day is a very long measurement of time for someone that is subjected to physical restraint that has not been prescribed for them by a physician or a chemical restraint that's being used. I would argue that a day or two days, but in this case a day, is a very long time if a special diet is not being adhered to. Time is of the essence if we are to be giving an opportunity for an airing of the issues and for some advocacy for some faster resolutions of these problems than what has been offered by the government, who are giving us, according to what we heard today, some vague reassurances of "well, in the fall" and "maybe another committee." That is not of any assistance to those who are experiencing some of the difficulties that I have outlined: health, safety, restraints, medication, diet, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, the staff of at least one care centre in Alberta has been without a contract for years, and the staff are considering strike action over budgets, staffing, and working conditions, exactly what

we're talking about. They are delaying such action on the hopes that government may provide leadership and the resources required. This care centre is not alone in being in a strike position. An emergency debate today would send a strong signal to those very staff across the province that help might be on the way. Being unable to fulfill that will send them a different signal.

Mr. Speaker, I would argue that Oral Question Period, with a 45-second exchange, is not the proper forum to discuss an issue of such breadth and severity. In particular, hearing the Premier's as well as the minister of seniors' answers to the questions that were asked today, I would argue that their answers were not sufficient to allay the concerns and to address the risks that have been outlined in the Auditor General's report.

This Legislative Assembly is expected to rise within a few days, likely next week. That doesn't give us very much time to be able to give a full airing to the concerns here and to hear the government's plans for addressing those risks. I would argue that that brings some urgency to the matter as well.

The hon. House leader had raised some issues about: well, nothing was specifically detailed that was a health or a safety risk. If I may point out, in fact, in the same report he was referring to, on page 74, it's noted that some facilities had problems meeting therapeutic and special diets: "the required consistency of some diets, and physician orders for special diets were not sufficiently documented" in some cases. For people that are requiring a special diet – diabetics come to mind very quickly, or those with swallowing problems, for example – I would argue that a day's delay is pretty urgent for them, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, on page 75 I note the section under Medication to Residents, and he does specifically outline significant safety risks. That appears on page 75 of the Auditor General's report, Mr. Speaker. He's outlining "inconsistent documentation of the effectiveness and . . . affects of medication therapies, particularly relative to pain control and chemical restraint." I would argue that chemical restraint should be rarely used, from everything that I've read, and continued use of chemical restraint, given that we're not able to resolve these, is of some urgency indeed and does in fact constitute significant safety risks to the patients that are involved. I would also argue that poor pain control or inconsistent pain control would also bring some urgency to this debate.

In addition, there is "inconsistent control over phone orders signed off by physicians" and "insufficient or untimely notification of physicians or pharmacists following medication errors." Again, I would argue that there is an urgency to this. Those are a few examples of the safety risks that have been raised specifically by the Auditor General which I argue require immediate attention by the members of this Assembly.

3:10

I note with interest that the fatality inquiry for the family of Jennie Nelson is occurring sometime this week. I believe that a discussion and some specific plans coming out of this Assembly would be of great interest to that family and perhaps resolve some of the difficulties that they have faced around their mother's demise.

So we have a number of situations that are constituting this mix today, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that lives are at stake. At the very least they are at risk of inadequate or improper medication, use of chemical or physical restraints that are not appropriate, and additionally some concerns around proper diet being administered. We have workers that are in a strike position. That gives us some urgency. We have patients going on hunger strikes in the province. Again, that gives us some impetus. One woman, in particular, who was 86 felt strongly enough that she went on a hunger strike. I

would add that the rest of the families of Albertans are looking to the Assembly for immediate answers. I don't think they see a six-month wait time when these risks are proposed as being adequate.

With those arguments I will support the Standing Order 30 as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and urge all members of the Assembly to support the Standing Order 30 should the case for urgency be ruled favourably by the Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, under Standing Order 30 the rules permit the Speaker to allow such debate as he considers relevant to the question of urgency, so just give me some idea as to how many additional members would like to participate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview would. Are there other members who would like to? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity. So if I heard three additional arguments, would you all consider that to be fair?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't take long, but I want to refer basically to a couple of matters and specifically to comments from the Government House Leader. What was amazing to me when we raised these questions before – we raised it with the Premier and others. They said that there was no problem. It's like they didn't even realize that the Auditor General was going to come out with this, and this problem has been going on for years and years and years.

Mr. Speaker, the worry that people have, the elder advocates, is that they've seen this come to the front and get some publicity. They think things are going to happen, and the problems are going to be solved. Then we're back in the same position again.

But, Mr. Speaker, the minister said, I believe, that it's not a crisis. Now, maybe the Auditor General didn't say the word "crisis." The minister said that he didn't read it, and I believe that to be the case because if you look on pages 70 to 72, there are 10 highlights of the findings. If those don't constitute what I would consider a crisis, I don't know what would.

I won't read them all but just a couple of quotes. Number 1, they saw "instances where the number of RNs employed or present at a facility failed to meet the . . . Basic Standard."

Number 2, "approximately half of the facilities we visited did not ensure that residents received complete annual medical assessments from physicians." These are people whose average age is 85. That seems to me to be a bit of a crisis, Mr. Speaker.

Then number 3 – it's already been alluded to – is about the chemical and physical restraints. That seems to me to be a crisis if that's going on with people at the tail end of their lives, Mr. Speaker.

Then number 6, just to highlight, is the one where "staff were instructed by facility management to wash and dress residents who were awake as early as 3:00 AM even though breakfast was not served till 8:00 AM," and "75% of the residents were in bed by 7:00 PM." That seems to be pretty urgent for these people. As I say, it goes right to number 10. That seems to me to be urgent.

What will happen here is that the government says – and they've known about this for months because they've replied to it – yes, we're looking into it at some point six months down the way. For many of these people that are an average age of 85, six months is a lifetime, Mr. Speaker. Surely in the last part of one's life one should at least have the right to live in basic dignity, and the Auditor General's report says that that's not going on in a significant number

of our facilities. That to me is pretty urgent and pretty serious.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also make a few comments about the Standing Order 30 motion. It says in the motion that they want to talk about "a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the ongoing suffering of residents in long-term care facilities." Now, I'm not going to deny that there could be some suffering happening there, but I don't think it's a huge, huge problem. Although, if even one person suffers, that is a problem. We want to deal with it. I don't think it's a serious enough issue at this point in time to hold up the normal activities of the House.

I want to speak to this because I've been part of the process. I'm the chairman of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and I've been travelling around the province looking at different care facilities. I think I have somewhat of an idea of what's going on in some of these facilities. Many of them are not new. Many of them are some years old. But it's not about the paint on the walls or how fancy the carpet is; it's about the care that the seniors are getting in these places.

The care that the seniors are getting is very good. I would say that in 100 per cent of the homes that I have visited, the people are being well looked after. I would say that not in all cases is there adequate staff because adequate staffing is always a problem. It is a problem in hospitals, it's a problem in seniors' facilities, and it's a problem in long-term care facilities. So this is something that we want to look at.

As the Seniors Advisory Council we travel around the province to listen and work with Albertans to improve the quality of life of seniors in our communities. We take this very seriously. The council highlights issues that are important to seniors in our communities and brings them forward to the government. So we're working along with the ministries of both health and seniors. I would say that ensuring our seniors receive high quality care and accommodations in our long-term care facilities is a concern to both seniors and their families.

I know about this from a very personal point of view too, Mr. Speaker. My own mother lives in a Red Deer nursing home. She's been there now for some seven months since she broke her hip, and she's not able to walk and to be at home with my father. So I go there quite often. Probably every time I get home for a weekend, I go down and see her, and she's very happy in this place. This place is about 40 years old. It's the oldest nursing home in Red Deer that's still operational. It's crowded. She's in a room with three other people, but basically she's very happy. She has good care. When she goes home to her actual home with my father for a day and visits, she's always looking forward to going back to the nursing home because she knows that she's going to be well looked after. The nurses are there to help her with all her physical tasks, and she's happy to go back and live in that facility.

I'm pleased that the minister of seniors has taken immediate action. That's why I'm thinking we don't have to have this discussion today because the ministers of both health and seniors have taken immediate action in appointing a continuing care review committee. The Member for Calgary-Foothills and myself will be co-chairing or leading this committee. We'll be travelling around and having these discussions with various groups. These groups will be the public, facility operators, seniors organizations, staff in these facilities, families and the operators of these care facilities. So we will be having these discussions, travelling around the province hearing what the issues are, and we will be making some kind of a recommendation as soon as possible.

If there are things that we find that need immediate attention, of course we will report that to the minister as soon as we find out, and the ministers can take action if they see fit. This will build upon the recommendations outlined in the Auditor General's report. We have been aware for some time that this report was coming. We've been gearing up our operations. We've put together an operational plan already for the Seniors Advisory Council. It's in a draft stage now, but we have taken immediate steps to respond to some of these issues.

We feel that the continuum of care that we provide in these homes throughout the province is very important. It's not only our duty but our mandate and what we want to do because we love these people, to ensure that the standards are monitored and enforced and that they get the absolute very best care that they can get in our province. Our seniors have contributed so much to our province over the years, and they are still a vital part of our population, and we want to look after them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would speak against this motion under Standing Order 30 and would ask my colleagues to support me in that.

3:20

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I want to make it very clear that this is about more than who wins or loses a Standing Order 30; it's about the quality of life of seniors. If I can use the imagery of a scale of justice and you imagine the balance, on one side of the balance you've got the Solicitor General's budget; on the other side of the balance you have the lives, the well-being, the dignity of seniors. We know the outcome of the Solicitor General's budget. This is a majority government, and the Solicitor General's budget will go through. It's a foregone conclusion. Nothing we could do, no matter how much we had concerns about budget items and so on, would prevent that budget from being passed. It's going to happen. When you contrast that with the well-being of seniors, I would suggest that there is an urgency.

Had the election not been called in the fall, it was my understanding that the Auditor General's report was going to be released at that time. What has happened now is that we've had another five, six months go by, and we've now recognized that, yes, there is a problem. Keep in mind that that recognition was just in a very small sample. One-third of the small sample indicated a number of problems. One of the problems that hasn't been previously brought up and to me is extremely scary is the open medication trays, where any senior suffering from dementia could walk by the trays, scoop it up, put in a handful, and then we've got the ambulance pulling up to the door of the seniors' residence to deal with an emergency situation.

Two weeks ago on Friday I hadn't been in a seniors' residence or long-term care residence for a number of years, since my grandmother died. When I went in there, while I was visiting a gentleman who was on a feeding tube lying in bed, he had previously been medicated because when he was able to be mobile, it appeared that there was the possibility of a threat. In this particular facility he had been egged on by nursing attendants, witnessed by the fellow's wife and other staff, to the point where he would get upset, and he would want to lash out because of the provocation that he was experiencing. So he was given the pills and basically put into bed.

We celebrated VE victories last week. Now a number of these wonderful seniors who gave their all for us to have the quality of life that we're currently experiencing are lying in beds, and there aren't sufficient staff to take them and put them on the toilet. As a result,

they have to wear Depends or diapers whether or not their systems are functional. It's a matter of basically managing the situation rather than dealing with their quality of life.

The long-term care rent went up by 50 per cent, but there were no accompanying benefits to seniors.

I would suggest that the faster we can start moving on correcting a problem that has been identified by the Auditor General – and basically I would suggest that in that short sample that he did, he has, as far as I'm concerned, just begun to scratch the surface of greater underlying difficulties.

Again, I'll conclude by saying: Solicitor General's budget, automatic rubber-stamp pass; quality of seniors' life, let's get started right now and address their issues, please. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, under Standing Order 30 the chair can provide as many as he deems appropriate to participate, and we've had six participants with respect to this matter.

I would like to make a comment with respect to the participation of the last three speakers. The subject matter is urgency. There was absolutely nothing in there that convinced the chair to do with urgency in the last three speakers. There was a good overview of certain issues in the province of Alberta, but it did not contribute to the decision that the Speaker will now have to make with this particular matter.

First of all, proper notice was given yesterday. This Standing Order 30 arrived in my office at 3:55 p.m. yesterday, so it afforded ample opportunity for the chair to review the report itself. All members should know that the chair has read the report two times word by word, underlining, so there was very attentive attention given to the Auditor General's report. Should there be a test as to what was said on page 52 or 54, perhaps we'd give the right answer.

Secondly, before the question as to whether this motion should proceed to be put to the Assembly, the chair must rule whether the motion meets the requirements of Standing Order 30(7), which requires that the matter proposed for discussion relate to a "genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration."

As the chair had indicated last week in relation to another Standing Order 30 request, at page 1318 of *Alberta Hansard* from May 5, 2005, the relevant parliamentary authorities on this topic are "*Beauchesne's* paragraphs 387 and 390 and the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 587 to 589." The chair has reviewed these references closely in considering this request for leave, and there are two key points that the chair would like to emphasize to all members.

First, to meet the requirements of urgency, there must not be another opportunity for the members of this Assembly to discuss the matter. One could look at *Beauchesne's* paragraph 390 and the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 589. There must not be another opportunity for members of this Assembly to discuss this matter. When the chair reviews the Order Paper and looks at the motions on the Order Paper and the bills on the Order Paper, clearly there is not another opportunity afforded to the members.

Secondly, the matter must relate to a genuine emergency. What we have before us is the wording of a member's proposed motion, and it's as follows:

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the ongoing suffering of residents in long-term care facilities in Alberta as identified by the May 2005 report of the Auditor General.

I did listen attentively to all six participants and the arguments from all sides of the House. I repeat again that I've closely reviewed

today's Order Paper to determine whether or not there's another opportunity afforded to members to discuss this very serious matter. It is a fact – it is a fact – that the estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness are scheduled for consideration tomorrow afternoon. The chair is cognizant of the fact that the Committee of Supply process may be somewhat limiting in terms of the number of members that may be entitled to speak. Additionally, I repeat that when looking at the bills or motions on the Order Paper, such are silent on anything dealing with this question.

I would like to point out, however, that I have very serious concerns with respect to the wording of the hon. member's motion; in fact, quite uncomfortable by the actual wording of the request. Instead of a straightforward request to adjourn the business of the Assembly to discuss the Auditor General's report on the conditions in long-term care facilities, the request refers to the "ongoing suffering of residents." I repeat: I have read this report twice word for word in search of such a phrase. It is not to be found anywhere in the report.

3:30

I am also concerned that by putting the question "Shall the debate on the urgent matter proceed?" the chair could be viewed as agreeing with the provocative wording of the hon. member's request. Under Standing Order 30 there is no opportunity to amend the request as an emergency debate does not entail a decision of the House. Furthermore, the chair does not want to set a precedent whereby politically motivated sentiments or rhetorical flourishes are viewed as legitimate ways of wording requests under Standing Order 30. In short, the wording of the request itself cannot be overshadowed by and overshadow the actual issue, which is so serious for so many Albertans.

Although the chair has concerns with the wording of the hon. member's motion, the chair is hard-pressed to find that this matter is not a genuine emergency. The very fact that almost one-third of the long-term care facilities under review did not meet basic standards of those Albertans who have undoubtedly played an important role in the first century of this province is of a very grave nature. I particularly draw all hon. members' attention to those items that are highlighted on pages 70, 71, and 72, and I just quote several.

Although we saw ample evidence of frequent and regular physician contact with residents, approximately half of the facilities we visited did not ensure that residents received complete annual medical assessments from physicians.

The next item:

In over half of the facilities, we saw inconsistencies in decision making, evaluation of outcomes, policy, procedure, practice and charting methodology in the use of chemical and physical restraints. Some facilities use a "no restraint" policy, while others use chemical or physical restraints, often without adequate documentation, and in a few isolated cases, without apparent medical authorization required by the Basic Standards.

Accordingly, the chair finds that the request for leave is in order, and now puts the following question. Shall the debate on the urgent matter proceed? Those in favour, say yes.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

The Speaker: Those opposed, say no.

Some Hon. Members: No.

[Several members rose]

The Speaker: Under our Standing Orders, hon. members, if 15 or more members do advise the Speaker of their intent to support it – and I do count 15; that's the number – the debate shall now proceed. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the ruling, and I also appreciate the admonition about the wording of the motion. I think it probably a better phrase would have been: to debate the Auditor General's report. In fact, however, I do sincerely believe that there is ongoing suffering which is currently taking place in long-term care facilities in Alberta.

I think that the strong feeling which I have, which has grown as I've dealt increasingly with people who are advocates for people in long-term care, either people who had members of their family in a nursing home, for example, and they passed away or who are currently trying to provide supplementary care for members of the family – I just have a tremendous sense, from talking to the people, of their frustration and their anguish, in fact, for the conditions that they find the members of their family in.

Now, other members opposite have talked about, you know, the fine care that people receive, and I have no doubt that there are many facilities in our province that do provide a good standard of care. I also believe that the vast majority of people who work in these facilities are doing their very best, and I don't cast any aspersions on the work of people who provide this care. Very often they are extremely short-staffed and unable to do the work.

So, for example, we could talk about one of the issues, Mr. Speaker, on the same pages that you referenced, where residents are awakened and got out of bed at 3 in the morning when they don't get their breakfast until 8 o'clock. Why does that actually happen? It says, for example:

Staff were instructed by facility management to wash and dress residents who were awake as early as 3:00 AM even though breakfast was not served until 8:00 AM. In another facility, 75% of the residents were in bed by 7:00 PM.

Now, why do the staff do that? Is it because they don't get it or they're being mean? Of course not, but in order to get every resident up and dressed in time for breakfast with the short staff that they have, they have to start at 3 a.m., and in order to get everybody to bed by a reasonable time with the short staff, they have to start at 7 o'clock at night. That is what is producing the difficulty.

Now, this issue has come up before on the Members' Services Committee, and I and other members of that committee from the opposition have raised this matter in the past with the Auditor General. In fact, the Auditor General prior to his news conference yesterday did indicate that it was the work of people on the committee and the advocates for seniors and the opposition that had brought this issue forward and had led to his investigation. I congratulated the Auditor General on an outstanding report because this report, I believe, is actually going to make a difference.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, is that we're continuing to get mixed messages from the government. On the one hand, the ministers say: we've been working on this for a long time; we take it seriously; we are going to work very hard to try and correct it. Then we have the Premier, who's still in the old message box, who's saying: if there's a problem, bring it forward, and we'll look into it. Well, the Auditor General has looked into it and has delivered what I consider to be a devastating report, and it's a devastating condemnation of government inaction and neglect over many years. How could it have gotten this bad in the richest province of this entire Confederation?

I want to bring up, as well, the question of the funding levels. The Auditor General does address this in his report. It was about two or

two and a half years ago that the government allowed private facility operators to raise the rates in long-term care facilities by 50 per cent, and the government at the time said that this was to enable these facilities to provide better quality of care. Well, Mr. Speaker, it was not six months later, then, that the NDP opposition research went through the Extencicare annual report, which talked about increases in the profitability of that corporation due to the government's decision to increase long-term care rates.

So the money, of course, Mr. Speaker, didn't necessarily find its way into better patient care or higher standards. It, in fact, found its way into the bottom line of the investors of these private health care companies, and that in itself is a good, strong argument against increasing private participation in our health care system generally. It's an example of what's wrong with that approach.

I want to deal a little bit with the committee that's been set up that does the inspections. Of course, we know that these facilities are not inspected by this committee except every two to three years; in some cases, three years between inspections. We know that last year the committee only did two inspections. The Auditor General deals with this in his report. He talks about people not being properly trained to do the work, not checking on all the standards. Basically, he's saying that, at risk of putting words into the Auditor General's mouth – well, I won't do that, Mr. Speaker. What I'll say on my own is that the conclusion I reached upon reading that section is that this is a committee of well-meaning amateurs who don't really have the qualifications to do the job.

3:40

The government has failed to ensure that these facilities are properly inspected. The result is that basic standards are not enforced. The basic standards have not been updated since 1995. Basic standards are "out of date or unclear." The basic standard for nursing hours is "out of date." There are "no Basic Standards" for personal care attendants. Care "may differ among the regions." There is "no process to review the Basic Standards." The basic standards are "not readily available to the public," and residents "may not receive appropriate care." There are "no adequate systems in place to monitor compliance with Basic Standards." Thirty-one per cent of basic standards relating to care "were not met by facilities" visited by the Auditor General. "Most Authorities do not inspect facilities for compliance with all the Basic Standards." The accreditation is "not sufficient."

The Health Facilities Review Committee, which I've already mentioned, doesn't have medical training. It has no authority to enforce compliance.

- The provisions of the . . . Act specifically prohibit the review by committee members of medical records without the resident's consent, and financial records. Their reviews are primarily qualitative based assessments concerned with the dignity and satisfaction of residents and families.
- The Committee does not check for compliance with all Basic Standards. Its processes do not contemplate areas covered by Basic Standards, such as provision of minimum care hours, frequency of physician assessments, therapeutic diets, maintenance of health records and care plans, user fees and trust accounts.

So, Mr. Speaker, the wonderful assurances we've received from the Premier and others about the great work this committee is doing are contradicted by the Auditor General's report.

Now, some of the findings that the Auditor General made are that most facilities do maintain staff levels in accordance with basic standards, but the Auditor General found "instances where the number of RNs employed or present at a facility failed to meet the required Basic Standards, or where LPNs were inappropriately

substituted for RNs." They found cases where housekeeping and payroll duties were reported as nursing hours.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, the government owes the people of this province . . .

The Speaker: I think that's where we conclude, hon. member. The chair is prepared to recognize an additional member. The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to get involved in this debate, but I believe it's a very important debate, and I believe there are some very important issues that need to be brought up. The first issue that I will bring up is the whole idea of an accountant going out and auditing a nursing home, a long-term care facility and making comments about what medically is being done. I do have some significant issues with that. I do have significant issues when comments are made after this.

I'll attempt to go through the 23 recommendations. Mr. Speaker, first of all, in the provision of nursing and personal services in essence what the comments are saying is not that there were problems with the patients; it is saying that the standards were not met. It is not saying that there were problems with the patients. It also says that in some localities and on some occasions they had difficulty getting RNs and attempted to fill these positions with LPNs. It does not say if this was a permanent practice or if this was a temporary situation. Unfortunately, by the reading – again, purely reading what is in this document – it states that they could not do it all the time. Certainly, I think that's a standard that does have to be met. I think that the standards do have to be updated. But, Mr. Speaker, as a case for being a critical emergency, I do not believe so.

Provision of physician services. I think that this is one that has been identified by several people in this Assembly. As a physician, Mr. Speaker, I implore to say that a person does not have to have a physical exam if they are being seen once a week or once every two weeks by a physician. I think that's a gross issue that is out there. It does not have to be, and to say that because there has not been a physical exam structured and put in by the particular facility when indeed the rest of the evidence is not there, when indeed it may be that this particular patient is being seen by the physician every week, every month, every three months, I think does a great disservice to the whole facility questions.

The maintenance of health records. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I will be the first one to admit that as a physician I was not the best person when it came to health records, but health records do not patient care make. I think that there's a significant issue that if we're talking about patient care, which is what this motion defines and it's what this motion is concerned about, is it concerned because there are not records written down on a piece of paper? I don't believe so.

Therapeutic and special diets. Again I will quote from the Auditor General's report. "Most facilities met this Basic Standard. Some facilities had problems meeting the required consistency of some diets, and physician orders for special diets were not sufficiently documented in a small number of cases." So some facilities had problems. They recognized it when it came to consistency, and I would hope that they are doing something about it. "Physician orders for special diets were not sufficiently documented." Again, Mr. Speaker, I have a problem when we talk about patient care and, instead, we're actually talking about documentation. This is about the patient, not documentation.

The next one is medications to residents. Again, I'll go through exactly what the Auditor General has stated: "inconsistent documentation of the effectiveness and adverse effects of medication therapies, particularly relative to pain control and chemical restraint." Absolutely these things have to be documented, Mr.

Speaker, but because it is not written down, does that guarantee that the patient is getting poor care? I don't think so.

"Inadequate security and storage." These are very serious questions. I think the anecdote about a patient going in and grabbing handfuls of drugs is extremely, extremely insulting to those people who work in these facilities, Mr. Speaker. Could they be better? Absolutely they could be better. Absolutely they can do things. It's human nature to get complacent and not do entirely everything all of the time.

"Inconsistent control over phone orders signed off by physicians." Think about that, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General put that in the report because a phone order was on the document and the physician did not sign it. Is that a reason why there's poor patient care? I find this quite insulting.

The admission processes: again, documentation.

Developing, implementing, and monitoring resident care plans: again, just because there are not necessarily time frames or outcomes or goals does not mean that they are not getting care.

I will reiterate something that has been brought up and has been kind of a focal point in this discussion, which is about waking. I believe the direct quote was: waking up patients at 3 a.m. for breakfast at 8 a.m. That's not what it says.

An Hon. Member: Yes, it is.

Dr. Oberg: That's not what it says.

I will read what it says. "One facility with a policy to dress awake residents starting at 3:00 AM for 8:00 AM breakfast." Mr. Speaker, if the patient is awake, what do they want them to do? Do they want them to stay in bed in their pajamas for five hours when they're awake? Is that what they're talking about here? The point that I'm making on this is that there are a lot of questionable calls in this particular document. As someone who has worked in a nursing home, in a long-term care facility, and as someone who respects those people who work there, I think there are significant issues here.

I think that, obviously, we have to look very, very seriously at the care that is given to our seniors at any particular time. I think care given to our seniors is incredibly important, but for an accountant to go and adequately look at that care and then have an emergency debate in the Legislature, I think it's very, very difficult.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to meals, co-ordination of temporary residences, handling of resident deaths, the handling of resident deaths is an interesting one. This is an emergency because one of the facilities, instead of getting a death certificate within 24 hours, gets it within 48 hours. This is, therefore, an emergency.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, I've got a huge amount of problems with this. There are a lot of people in this industry that do a wonderful, wonderful job. Does that mean that our standard should not be updated? No, it doesn't. But it does mean that the minister is updating them and is setting a very good tone as the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mr. Speaker, this is the danger. A report like this is the danger. When people go in, take a snapshot of what is occurring, take a look at the regulations and the documentation, and assume that patient care isn't there, that's the problem. That's why I have a huge problem with this report.

The Speaker: Okay. I've got some interest shown here, so I will deal with the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace as he has not participated yet.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General initiated a value-for-money audit of programs for seniors delivered by Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Seniors and Community Supports. In conducting this audit, the Auditor General's office met with different branches of Alberta Health and Wellness, all regional health authorities, and 25 long-term care facilities. Multidisciplinary teams including health professionals conducted facility audits. The Auditor General did not indicate how these facilities were selected, and I'm just left to wonder if he was not directed to certain facilities over others.

It is important to note that the Auditor General's report is not about care but about the systems that are in place. The government has already taken steps to improve those systems. Currently there are 14,300 long-term care beds in the province. Employees include 3,500 nurses and 10,000 health care aides. It is worth noting that every day in this province these hard-working health care providers deliver quality care to residents of long-term care. It's also worth noting that the Auditor General himself said that he would feel very comfortable placing a member of his family in any of the facilities he reviewed.

The Auditor General's review shows that standards for the provision of health care services and continuing care need to be updated. He found that long-term care facilities met 69 per cent of care standards, partially met another 27 per cent, and did not meet 4 per cent. Mr. Speaker, I also get calls from my constituents expressing some concerns in certain long-term care facilities, and often those calls are responded to very adequately. It is clear from the results that systems to monitor compliance with standards need to be improved. Both Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Seniors and Community Supports require further information to assess the effectiveness of services and programs.

The Auditor General's report makes seven key recommendations to improve services in long-term care facilities. A key recommendation is to upgrade Alberta's long-term care standards. Alberta Health and Wellness recognized some time ago the growing pressure on long-term care from an aging population and had already been developing these new standards. These upgraded standards for publicly funded long-term care health services have been drafted and will be the subject of public consultations during this particular summer. The new standards require the development of a care plan for each client and focusing, measuring, and reporting on the effectiveness of care provided to each individual. These new standards clearly spell out the responsibilities of clients and their families, health care providers, operators, regional health authorities, and the department, and they also provide for regular reviews and upgrading of standards to meet professional best practices.

New tools are being implemented to better assess the needs of long-term care residents. These new tools will also measure the effectiveness of care provided, and we expect the implementation of these new tools to be completed shortly. Alberta Health and Wellness is also working with regional health authorities on better measures of cost effectiveness. Health authorities have been asked to include longer term planning for continuing care services in their three-year business plan.

A measure of the quality of care delivered in Alberta's long-term care system is the number of complaints received each year. On that point it is worth noting that the long-term care system provides over 5 million long-term care service days per year, and only around 400 complaints are received each year. The Member for Calgary-Foothills, the chair of the Healthy Aging and Continuing Care in Alberta Implementation Advisory Committee, and the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka as chair of the Seniors Advisory Council will conduct a stakeholder review of the care and accommodation service standards, which will be completed by the end of August.

In closing, let me say again that the government of Alberta expects long-term care to be safe, high quality, and respectful of the needs and dignity of residents, their families, and staff. Most residents of long-term care facilities receive excellent health care thanks to the hard work and compassion of staff.

The Auditor General's report showed that 90 per cent of the basic care standards were fully or partially met. He did identify areas where we need to improve, and we will take his recommendations very seriously. As a government we are committed to acting on the Auditor General's report. It highlights the importance of providing quality care to Albertans.

We are already working with regional health authorities to focus our publicly funded continuing care system on quality of care and quality of life for each person. We are updating health service and accommodation standards and are working with regional health authorities to improve staff training, increase nursing care hours, and measure and monitor the effectiveness of care. Ultimately, we want to ensure that long-term care residents have choice and are treated with dignity and respect. Our goal remains the same: to work with residents and their families to ensure that Alberta's long-term care services put their needs first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I know that I didn't call Orders of the Day today, which precluded anybody from having coffee, but we will waive that so that you may participate with that.

Then just to make sure that there's some orderliness with respect to the debate this afternoon, as there are 83 members in the House, 82 without myself, there will be three government participants for each one of the opposition participants.

We'll now call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of contextual statements I'd like to make at the beginning of my remarks on this special debate under Standing Order 30, proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

One, I want to make it clear that I do not believe and I think that most members of the Assembly do not believe that fault lies with the staff of long-term care centres. I have to say that from what I have seen with my own eyes and in most cases heard from people that contacted me on issues for long-term care, what they're saying overwhelmingly is that (a) there are not enough staff to do the work that has to be done; (b) the staff that are there are sometimes pulled in so many directions that they can't even get done everything that's on their shift.

In the past in the House I've raised questions talking about LPNs being given the duty of distributing medication, which was not on their list of duties to be completed before the end of their shift, and then taking over the medication duties. That then meant that they weren't able to fulfill the rest of the duties that were prescribed for them. Certainly, it's been my experience that staff want to do a good job. They're trying to do a good job, but there aren't enough of them, and they simply don't have enough time to get done everything that needs to be done. I think that concept is reflected in many of the areas that the Auditor General has identified as risks.

Mr. Speaker, I know that many businesspeople would tell you that a risk is an opportunity, so we do have an opportunity here to make things better. I would argue that the reason for the debate this afternoon is to make them better in a hurry.

I'll just give you one brief description of some of the things that I've experienced in long-term care centres that bring urgency to the debate for me. I've spoken to seniors who end up in long-term care who say: "Laurie, I don't want to be wearing a diaper; I'm not

incontinent. I can do this. I just need some help." And there are reasons for that: they've had a stroke; they're paralyzed; they may not be completely functioning with their arms and legs. For whatever reason they can't take themselves to the bathroom, and they need assistance with it.

4:00

Then I see them a couple of months later, and they're going: "Well, yeah, I've had some accidents. I rang and rang and rang the bell." I've even been there, Mr. Speaker, when the person said to me: "I really need to go to the bathroom, and I've been ringing the bell, and nobody's coming. Can you go down to the nursing station and let them know?" I went down and said: "This person needs assistance, and they've requested it, and the bell has been ringing for, whatever, 20 minutes now." I go back. I talk to them for another 20 minutes. This is 40 minutes now. Finally, I leave, and still no one has had the time to be able to assist this person to toilet themselves. Then we end up with what are euphemistically called "accidents."

The next time I see them three months further down the road, guess what, Mr. Speaker? They're wearing a diaper. Why? Well, there have been too many accidents. Now, to a large extent that was self-fulfilling, wasn't it? If there isn't enough staff and they don't have enough time in their shifts to be able to help people toilet, there are going to be a lot of accidents, and then we end up with people essentially warehoused in diapers. This is not dignified. I don't care how you cut it; that is not dignified. When someone is functionally able to go to the toilet and all they need is physical assistance to get themselves on it, they should be able to have that little vestige of dignity accorded to them.

That is what I see happening in our long-term care centres. It's not that staff don't want to help people to do this. They do want to help them to do it. They don't have enough staff to get there. I have yet to be in a long-term care facilities – and this is no word of a lie, Mr. Speaker – where the bells have not been going off with somebody asking for assistance, and they go off the entire time I'm in that facility. That's what's wrong here.

If we're going to seriously consider risk, which I think we should be considering, I would argue that we also seriously consider dignity. We said that we were going to offer a dignified end-of-life care for people, and they are not receiving that at this point in time. We are the people that are able to make that right for them, through our guidance and our decision-making and our funding. So this is a very timely debate, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow is the budget debate for Health and Wellness, and I will be very interested to see whether there are strong arguments for adequate funding for the medical portion of long-term care in tomorrow's Health and Wellness budget debate.

What I've seen, Mr. Speaker, is that the Auditor General's report was a validation for all of those people that have worked on it. For the Official Opposition, the third party opposition, the advocacy groups, like FAIRE and Elder Advocates and the Alberta Council on Aging and Retired and Semi-Retired and SALT and all those groups that have spoken to me over the years, it's a validation of their experiences and, particularly, the experiences of the family members and the residents themselves that have contacted me and, I'm sure, many others in this Assembly because they found a real schism, a real gap in logic between what they were experiencing and what the government was saying.

We've got all kinds of quotes from *Hansard* in response to previous questions asked by the opposition where the government said: There's no problem, and we're caring for people very well. Well, that wasn't what was happening in people's lives, and this report is a validation of that.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: why did it take so long to get to this point? If we hadn't had that Auditor General's report released yesterday, we would have had the same response from the government members today that everything was fine. That's what's truly troubling to me. The system that is in place to actually monitor what's going on, the government-supported system, the Health Facilities Review Committee and the Tory backbenchers that are appointed to this committee – what happened? They are paid to go out and look at these facilities and report back and make recommendations on what's supposed to happen.

Why did they not catch any of this? Why? They were doing it. They've been doing it for years. I mean, prior to whomever is appointed on that committee now, last time it was the Member for Calgary-Shaw. Or she was social facilities. There are two committees that are out there looking at these facilities. Why aren't they catching this stuff? Why did it take that kind of work from the Auditor General for it to come out? If it hadn't been released yesterday, we'd be getting the same responses today, Mr. Speaker, and that's a problem. That needs to be addressed, and I hope I can hear from government that it's addressed today.

I think there's a huge problem with accountability. I've already mentioned the lack of accountability and, in fact, what appears to be a lack of work from the Health Facilities Review Committee. Also, Mr. Speaker, where is the accountability on the increases that were approved by the government, an increase in fees on the accommodation and meal side to residents of long-term care facilities? Where's the accountability on that increase? We have not been able to find where service, where hours of care, where quality of food improved after those rates were increased.

They were – I'll remind you – an increase of 42 to 48 per cent for people in long-term care facilities. So they paid almost 50 per cent more, and what did they get? No discernable difference in their care. The minister of health at that time promised fresh fruit and vegetables and whatever for everybody, but when we went back and looked and said, "Did we actually get this outcome?" it was not there, and the minister had to agree that it wasn't there. So we made those individuals and their families pay that additional money for no discernable change in outcome. That's an accountability problem, Mr. Speaker.

We've had little accountability from changes monitored by health authorities around the patient care as well.

Now, another issue that's come up repeatedly: the Liberals had advocated a year ago, actually – I asked a question of the then minister of health why they weren't considering unannounced spot checks with a professional team, who could understand what they were seeing, to go in and spend as much time as they needed to, and if there was noncompliance, the licence would be suspended. What I got was a smart remark back from the minister. He didn't take the question seriously, and he did not respond to it. I welcome anyone to look that up in *Hansard*. It happened in early April of 2004. But no actual response to my question of considering this reasonable proposal.

Well, I guess they finally heard it because now that's exactly what the minister is proposing: unannounced spot checks by a team of professionals. So I guess I should be happy that I was finally listened to, but, Mr. Speaker, that was a year. That was a year that it took.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Is there another government member who would like to participate as well? I indicated the rotation a few minutes ago.

Some Hon. Members: The minister.

The Speaker: There's more than just the minister.

We'll go with the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills and then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore and then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and then the hon. minister.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the present chair of the Health Facilities Review Committee, I'd like to say a few words about the committee and its work. The makeup of the committee is myself as chair and 10 other individuals, who include retired nurses, retired accountants, and retired people with medical backgrounds.

The mission of the Health Facilities Review Committee is to ensure that quality of care, treatment, and standards of accommodation are maintained in health facilities throughout Alberta. The committee is responsible for conducting regular unannounced routine visits at hospitals and nursing homes for the purpose of reviewing and inspecting them and for investigating complaints about care, treatment, and standards of accommodation made by or on behalf of individual patients and residents in these facilities.

The committee is currently responsible for approximately 216 facilities in this province. The committee conducts its routine reviews approximately every 18 months to three years given current financial committee and staffing resources. The reviews are always conducted unannounced. A specific time frame is not announced to enable the committee to vary its visiting schedule, so members are not expected when they visit. The number of reviews per year can vary depending on the number and complexity of complaint investigations being carried out in any fiscal year. For instance, from the stats I have from 1999 to 2005, anywhere from 83 to 107 routine reviews are handled per year.

Significant efforts have been made in the last four years to improve the quality of the committee's routine review and complaint investigation process and to improve the content and quality of the committee's reports. Readers of the committee's reports can now get a better overall picture of the facility than what was available in the past. Facility owners, administrators, and regional health authorities have noted an improvement and have expressed a satisfaction to the committee, particularly in the last two years.

4:10

With regard to complaint investigations the Health Facilities Review Committee receives complaints in a variety of ways: through telephone calls to the office, through letters to the office and e-mail, or by referral by other agencies such as the protection for persons in care or the minister's office.

When a caller phones or a written complaint is received by the Health Facilities Review Committee, the concerns are reviewed to determine whether they fall within the committee's legislated mandate. If they do, a complaint investigation is initiated once the proper authorization forms have been completed and signed by the patient or residence or their legal representative so that the committee may have access to the patient or resident's health information records. If the complainant's concerns relate to abuse, they are immediately referred to the protection for persons in care office. Sometimes the concerns relate to both abuse in care and treatment issues. Therefore, both organizations may conduct their own investigations to address both sides of the issues involved.

When complainants complete the Health Facilities Review Committee complaint forms, they are asked whether they have reported their concerns to another agency. Often the complainants have indicated that they have already communicated with the

protection for persons in care. In those situations the Health Facilities Review Committee does not take any further action to refer the situation to protection for persons in care and will look at the complainant's concerns to determine whether an investigation should be initiated by the Health Facilities Review Committee.

Protection for persons in care and Community Development also receive complaints in the same fashion but mostly through their own reporting line. If the concerns presented to protection for persons in care relate to care, treatment, or standards of accommodation and not to abuse, the complainant is referred to the Health Facilities Review Committee. Both organizations receive the complaints and proceed with their own investigation processes accordingly and independently of each other.

I do have some complaint statistics also. Between the years of 1999 and 2005 on the average between 34 and 37 complaints were received, and that's per year. Of those, between 12 and 24 were not filled out. Of all of those, between one and three per year were withdrawn. Of the 34 to 37, between two and three were not within the committee's mandate.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that in addition, efforts have been made to make better use of technology through the development of our own HFRC database, which will eventually enable the committee and its staff to track trends and recommendations and responses on a facility-by-facility basis as well as on a regional basis.

We all know that improvements can be made, and I would hope that this information is of some assistance to this House. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very humbled to be assigned this important task of leading the government consultation efforts on continuing care health service standards. I'm looking forward to combining my efforts with the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and to consulting on accommodation standards to create a body of work that will benefit Alberta seniors.

The consultation on the new continuing care standards will involve several stakeholders, including advocacy groups, accredited professional bodies, and industry associations. I'll be dedicating my summer to seeking opportunities to speak with long-term care residents, their families, and home-care clients to hear the perspective of the people who matter most in our discussions, the Albertans who receive care. I will be embarking on meaningful consultations with stakeholders that have expert, first-hand knowledge of continuing care to help ensure that these standards meet the needs of Albertans receiving continuing care.

Mr. Speaker, in my past life I've spent many hours, many days, many months working in health care facilities as both a consultant and a volunteer. I've seen first-hand quality care in these homes in the Calgary area. The people who work in these facilities are absolutely dedicated to what they do. The Auditor's report was a bit of a surprise to me, and I am committed this summer to going out and seeking these areas, these places, these facilities where the Auditor General notes these problems. I will hopefully be able to recommend necessary changes to these facilities.

Mr. Speaker, again short and sweet. I just want you to know that I'm committed to this, and I'm looking forward to a summer of visiting these facilities. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased to speak to this Standing Order 30. I think it's an important motion that was made today, and it gives us an opportunity to address even further the issues in long-term care, especially as it relates to the Auditor General's report. Like you, Mr. Speaker, I've read the report a number of times, and I go through my notes each time and compare them to each recommendation that's made, go through it line by line. It does challenge us in a number of ways.

As was mentioned earlier, it is an opportunity for us to make change, but also, importantly – and that's just what this standing order does – it creates awareness. It lets people know about our long-term care facilities that are in the province, about our seniors' needs in the facilities and how those needs have changed over the years. This is about the long-term needs of seniors, not just the future needs of seniors that are currently in place in facilities.

Many of us here in this Assembly know individuals, families who have had a variety of experiences in the area of being in an institution providing long-term care. You know, Mr. Speaker, we've heard this as well before. Our seniors have changed as far as age in the long-term care facilities, and I'm including lodges as a part of that when I say long-term care. Even 15, 20 years ago the average age of a senior in a lodge was about 65, 68 years old, whereas today we know that in a lodge a senior's average age is about 84. Yet seniors in a lodge facility can be independent. They can require some assistance in care from the community, for example home care. Having said that, we also know, though, that seniors with intermediate needs are now having their needs met in the community through designated assisted living, or assisted living, and what we seem to be terming as supportive living in the community.

The Auditor's report just lightly addresses that issue of supportive living and designated assisted living. I've had a conversation with the Auditor about that, you know, a couple of times over the past few months because I think that this is one of the most important areas. We know that we don't have standards that are currently in place for this new concept of supportive living.

I had an opportunity, as I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, to go with the Minister of Health and Wellness throughout the province, in the Lethbridge area, Camrose, Wetaskiwin, Calgary, Edmonton, and view a number of facilities. The Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose is looking at me here. We did have a good day viewing those facilities. We truly know how those facilities are offering great care. This report is about the third that the Auditor looked at where we know there are some genuine issues.

Mr. Speaker, the unbundling of health and wellness and the care provided in long-term care and the accommodations have taken some time. People seem to think that things like this can happen overnight. Well, there are a variety of acts that govern the care. There are a number of regulations, and even with the separation of the two there is some overlap. In developing standards together, we need to also take into consideration this overlap.

4:20

A mention was made earlier about meals. That does fall under the area of Seniors, and in looking at the standards, for example, for meals – this is actually one of the most important activities that people in long-term care can participate in, and that's the sharing of a meal. It's a social gathering. It's a social setting within the care centre. That is under my portfolio and the standards that would be set in that area. I still, though, would need to take into consideration that there are complex health care needs.

That means that somebody could be diabetic and require a special diet, or they could be on renal dialysis and require a therapeutic diet in that way. It also means that some people may require assistance

with feeding from a personal care attendant. It means that we should have dietitians who are responsible for assisting with that meal plan. We should have more than one choice for meals for people. We should have snacks available. We should have meals that are nutritious, that are easily digestible. I guess why I'm telling you about this, Mr. Speaker, is that it's important when we look at the standards that they relate to one another.

We have been working with the regional health authorities, the Alberta Long Term Care Association, the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association, and we've been working with them since January to modify and update the existing standards.

For people to believe that there hasn't been any work done in this at all or that we can deal with the whole complexity of this issue within a couple of days is really not the case, Mr. Speaker. This does take time. It does take careful thought, and it is important that we have the inclusion of not just the ministries or government but of people in the community. That's very much about why, too, we have appointed – this is immediate as well – two MLAs. We have the chair of our Seniors Advisory Council, who spoke earlier. As well, we have the chair of the healthy aging and continuing care – I think that's the name of the committee – who just spoke earlier as well. They are going to go out and meet with families, meet with individuals, caregivers, administration, tour facilities. You heard very much earlier what they would be doing and that they will look at what we're anticipating with standards and enforcement of those standards and how that should be done.

I know that the minister of health mentioned yesterday that health is moving forward with personalized assessments. My understanding is that those assessments are to ensure that the needs of individuals are being met, but it's also clear that we've provided in the province through vocational colleges and just through colleges programs for our personal care assistants in order for them to give the care that's needed within a facility. I also understand, too, that they're not mandatory. So the Health and Wellness ministry has developed a training program for the health care aides, and it is being implemented, Mr. Speaker, and these are immediate initiatives.

The average number of care hours was spoken about earlier. The basic standard may call for 1.9 care hours per resident, but that had been increased to 3.1, and my understanding is that there's been funding in the budget to increase those hours to 3.4.

Although these are important changes, Mr. Speaker, and they will have a direct impact on people in facilities, it's still not enough, and we recognize that. This is something that we, with that recognition, knowing that it's not enough, are going to continue to move forward on. We do care about the people that are in the facilities for our elderly.

Already I'm thinking of the Auditor's report in another step, meaning our group homes, our persons with developmental disabilities, looking at monitoring and compliance, looking at accreditation, that we're not just accrediting, in this example, the regional health authority but that we're accrediting the actual facility and that we're reviewing the whole issue of the Alberta seniors benefits program and the fees that we provide for our long-term care centres as well as for our other centres, Mr. Speaker – by that, I mean lodges and self-contained apartments, rent supplements, et cetera – and that we create even in that, as we heard earlier from the Member for Lethbridge-East during question period, standards that really do meet the needs of seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, too, that we recognize that we had \$15 million added to the health budget, but to the seniors budget we had \$2 million dollars that were added to put in these important standards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Minister of Innovation and Science, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I can just go back to a previous conversation that was given by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. He cited from the book here. I'll just briefly cite from it as well so I can give some history on this as it relates to my concerns here. When we talk about the basic standards of care, they were talking about 31 per cent that were not met; basic standards of housing, 11 per cent were not met; basic standards of administration, almost 50 per cent of the standards were not met; and the contractual requirements, approximately 28 per cent were not met.

My understanding of the Auditor General is to have an independent, nonpartisan body review specifics with regard to anything that was raised, and I think that the Auditor General has done that. For the minister over there to talk about cherry-picking when he went through the report is quite, in fact, offensive.

I looked on page 76 here, and the fact is documented despite what the minister said. It says: "One facility with a policy to dress awake residents starting at 3:00 AM." That's not a misprint. It says, "3:00 AM for an 8:00 AM breakfast. We confirmed with facility management" that this policy was currently being followed regularly.

Another facility has "the majority of residents in bed by 7:00 PM." Well, I mean, if you're in bed at 7, I'm sure you're going to be up awfully early as well.

One facility also sedated "restless residents between midnight and 2:00 AM" and then placed them in wheelchairs "by the nurses' station until they were asleep." It didn't mention anything about restraining them, but I'm sure that they had to restrain them there as well.

He also mentioned the handling of resident deaths. In this particular case 24 of the outlined recommendations were met. There was only one that wasn't partially met. That doesn't concern me so much.

Another one about the co-ordination of temporary resident absences. It was all met on there.

If I go to page 78, we talk about the collection of user fees. I think that I can speak for my family. I mean, I've had elderly parents in long-term residential care for a long time. I volunteered with them for many, many years. It's no fault of the staff, but any time you go by the nurses' station, you have to find and search for a nurse because they are being run off their feet.

For one facility here it says that the "residents were charged between \$5 and \$10 to deliver physician ordered specimens to the laboratory for testing. In another facility, a resident was [charged] \$200 when he/she requested [a] . . . room change." Again, I find it offensive that these people at this stage of their lives would be nickle-and-dimed. I think they've paid their debt to society, yet we still find ways to take that last bit of dime out of these people.

On page 79 it's recommendation 18, the provision of ambulance and transportation services. Only two cases here that were not met. It said:

Most facilities met the Basic Standard of providing ambulance service and transportation for medically necessary procedures . . . In two facilities, residents paid for all their transportation from the facility, regardless of medical necessity, and in one case [the resident was] charged for staff time to arrange transportation for them.

I would question that. Why are the staff there? If they are there in that particular instance, is it that big a deal to in fact make a phone

call or arrange for transportation for a person to go from one facility to another? I don't think that's outrageous, but to be charged for that staff member's time, again I find that sad.

4:30

Recommendation 21, on page 81, says, "Inventory of resident personal property." This is of particular concern. Seventeen of them were "not met." It says here, "Although all facilities permitted residents to provide and maintain personal furnishings, most facilities did not meet this Basic Standard by not taking or maintaining inventories of resident property." We've heard a number of times, again, that there is high theft. Perhaps the people, as mentioned, that have dementia and go into the wrong room, thinking this article is theirs.

It says: "Most facilities took the view that resident property was not their responsibility. Several facilities advised residents and families to maintain adequate insurance and minimize valuable items on site." Some might say that's being prudent; some might say, in fact, that's being negligent. They're here. They came in with certain things. You've grown up with, say, a wedding ring or a pendant or a brooch, for 40 to 75 years for some of these people. It's hard to give that up. They want that. This is their comfort, and to tell them that they can't have it because "We can't guarantee its safety; it's not my problem; it's not my responsibility" I think is sad. I think it almost should be a basic requirement that when some of these people, in fact, do take up the call to work in the long-term facilities, they would at least come with a bit of compassion and understanding.

I know, in fact, and I've said this before: we all are going to be here one day. If this is the state of care right now, what is it going to be like 20 years from now or even 40 years when I'm going to be there? I shudder to think. In fact, I don't look forward to getting old because of the concerns that are being raised in an ongoing . . . [interjection] Yes, I'm concerned about you, too, there, hon. member. But it still raises a concern.

I'm glad that, in fact, the facilities weren't named. It would have alarmed more people. They're already alarmed. When we have a number of facilities that were visited and they weren't named, that just continues to raise the call of concern for all Albertans because you don't know whether that was the facility down the block from you, if that was the facility that your grandparents or your parents are in.

Again, I think we had this urgency raised, and in fact it is very timely that we do speak about this today. Mr. Speaker, I realize that there are a number of people that do want to speak, but I, in fact, raised some of the concerns with regard to the outlined brief here.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, this is, in fact, a rare occasion that we have taken this afternoon to suspend the ordinary business of the House. In my time here I don't recall another time, although there may have been one other time when this actually happened. In that regard, I think the discussion we have is a serious debate and one that we should treat so. So I will do that. If we don't in fact use this time to debate what the Auditor General has said, then we are wasting our air time, and that would be a disgrace to the public, that would be a disgrace to those people that we represent.

I don't believe that there's a person in this Assembly that doesn't believe in the importance of providing proper care and attention to our seniors, in particular those in the long-term care facilities or assisted-living facilities or lodges. It's important to all of us, and we need to collectively find an approach or approaches that will in fact help that.

I do want to draw attention to something, actually, Mr. Speaker, that you pointed out in the notice of motion, which I think bears repeating. The motion says, "urgent public importance; namely, the ongoing suffering of residents in long-term care facilities . . . as identified by the May 2005 report of the Auditor General."

In my own quick reading of the report, it does not make that statement. I think that needs to be very clear when we debate this, that that has not been the focus, that is not the attention of the Auditor General's report. That being said, the Auditor General has made a review of nursing homes. He has in fact visited 25 facilities in all regions across the province and come up with a number of inconsistencies in those facilities, and we ought to pay attention to them.

The one difference that I would make is that in financial auditing, the process you normally use is to pick a sample size in order to check the processes of whether a financial transaction was properly recorded and been accounted for. They will never ever do a hundred per cent audit. My observation would be that this is a small sample size, but again because it was carried out in all the regions, I think that it bears attention.

He makes reference to the Health Facilities Review Committee. Again, he does not criticize the Health Facilities Review Committee for the actions that it has undertaken. I would encourage the minister to look at the operations of the Health Facilities Review Committee and see whether we should beef up that particular committee and use it in a more aggressive approach, especially in the short term, to check out the other facilities that were not visited by the Auditor General as a step to start the process.

I apologize if my comments will be somewhat disjointed. I tried to put my notes together in fairly quick order here.

The one thing that we experience as politicians dealing with this is that often our personal experiences come into play. For myself, I have family members who have been resident in facilities, facilities that have not been in this province, as a matter of fact. I have family members who work in these facilities. That's why it is very critical for us to try to not let the anecdotal experiences that we are used to colour the objectivity that we should otherwise have.

Hence, Mr. Speaker, I have tried very carefully to look at the actual recommendations of the Auditor General in terms of what he is saying. I would draw your attention, first of all, to his introduction in the report, whereby he says:

This is a report about how the government can improve its systems to deliver care and programs to Alberta's seniors . . . We also visited a sufficient number of long-term care facilities to assess, against provincial standards, the quality of care and services . . . across the province.

Then, of course, in the report he makes a number of recommendations and highlights a few of the ones that need to be addressed more urgently than other ones.

The response of the two ministers to his report has been that they will certainly take those under consideration and move on them, and I have every confidence in our ministers that they will in fact take these recommendations seriously and begin to implement them.

There are, of course, some recommendations in here that could be problematic for politicians. In recommendation 4 it talks about "accommodation rate and funding decisions." Of course, the experience that we had a couple of years ago when we in fact raised

the accommodation rate to be more reflective of other rates across the country, it created some issues with those residents and with their families, Mr. Speaker. But here's a recommendation, again, to look at that one more time, and in fact we should.

The other thing that I will point out in terms of my reading of the Auditor General and the reason why we should be careful about the report is that this is not a report about public versus nonprofit versus private. There's nothing that I can see in the report that makes any inference one way or another with respect to who operates the facility. So we shouldn't let that get in our way, but we should be careful as we look through all of the facilities.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, I would point out a couple of things that I think are important, at least from my assessment. On page 20 it talks about the waiting lists for long-term care facilities. I'm actually pleased to see that the trend there has been a positive trend, whereby the waiting lists are not as long as they used to be. Clearly, there are still some issues there, but with an aging population we need to look at that to see: are the trends right? Are there places being made available for the people that want them and that desire them? So that's an important issue.

At pages 22 and 23 is the case-mix index, whereby the case-mix index is in fact increasing as residents in the facilities are of higher critical need. Again, Mr. Speaker, that would imply that with the higher case-mix index in a facility the level of care should reflect that particular case-mix index.

The report also talks at length on page 25 about the workforce. Mr. Speaker, as has been noted many times in this Assembly, there are many people who work in these facilities that do their utmost to provide the care. But I think we need to look again at the systems and ask ourselves questions, even questions about contracts. Do contracts prohibit the flow of people to actually work in these facilities? I think, if we're going to do an examination of the system, let's examine everything in the system and find out if, in fact, there are barriers to the workforce. Again, with the aging population it's incumbent upon all of us to look at the issues around health care because that's where the growth is, and for people working in that, we need to find ways to encourage younger people to enter the field and to stay in the field and look at that.

Mr. Speaker, that was a quick synopsis of some of the things that I read through in the Auditor's report. The Auditor is appointed by this Assembly as an independent person and deserves the respect and the consideration of the recommendations that he makes to make sure that we are looking at some of these issues. Again, I am confident that the ministers responsible are going to respond appropriately and that all members of this Assembly will in fact assist them in the work that they need to do to work in this very important area.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, and there's a vacancy for government members should one choose to participate.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this report. I'd like to make a couple of points in particular. I think what happened is there were a number of members opposite that really made reference to the report as if the sky was falling. I think what is very important to acknowledge is that we are in a situation of always trying to make the lodges, the seniors' housing, a better situation, better for seniors, more accommodating for their needs.

The main issue that I would like to talk about is the management aspect. I have to admit that I'm not as familiar with how the management is run in urban centres or in the larger centres, but I was previously a member of the foundation before becoming elected to this Assembly and have had an extended, I would suggest, duration of time spent on the board. I need to say that in rural Alberta – and I would suggest rural because I would reaffirm that that is what I'm familiar with – we had a foundation, a board that managed all of these different seniors' facilities and met in those facilities once a month. I would like to suggest that we were not alone as far as the management body was concerned. I mean, we had the auxiliary of these health facilities that were involved. We had community members. We had volunteers. There was family. There were the health units. Everybody had the same goal in mind: making the facility not an institution but a home. Everyone had the same goals.

When we talk about the operation of the facility, the operation of the foundation, let me assure you that on our visitations if the food just wasn't right or if things weren't working right, the seniors were very quick to inform us and enlighten us on what direction we should be going.

I want to say that I appreciate the Auditor General's report. I appreciate it from the aspect that I think it is an independent study, and it does look at different facilities. It should make us aware that maybe there are aspects, maybe there are directions that we need to spend more attention on.

We in rural Alberta are faced with some major, major challenges when we talk about seniors' housing and availability. I use the example of the lodge, and I'll use the example in St. Paul. We had a lodge that had 38 units. We had a waiting list of about 20 people, so we modernized the lodge. We added on about 12 units, thinking that this would be a great idea; we'd minimize the list or at least bring the list down. After modernization what ended up taking place is that we added 12 units, and the list went up to 30. So then we again modernized, and we put an addition on of 40 extra units. At that time what happened is that those units were filled up, and the waiting list went up to 70.

When I go to the seniors' housing facilities and the lodges and speak to the seniors, they are very happy with the facilities. This is discussions with the seniors. In fact, the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's mother lives in my constituency, and every time I go into the lodge, she tells me and reiterates over and over again how she very much appreciates the service that she's getting.

These are some of the realities of it. I know that there are problems, and I know that there are issues that developed that we need to address. We need to look at the future needs, and when we talk about management – and I know that the report mentions medication. One of the challenges, as I did mention in my motion last night, Motion 508, is that we are in a crunch for receiving any physiotherapy or having any physiotherapists in rural areas. Seniors need some physiotherapists. There is no doubt about that. We cannot get them in our hospitals. We can't get them in our seniors' homes. I don't know what the solution is. We try to boost the emphasis on trying to get more physiotherapists into our regions.

An Hon. Member: It's been cut.

Mr. Danyluk: Physiotherapists have not been cut. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. They have not been cut. What happens is that the physiotherapists aren't there to be cut. They are moving to urban areas, and that is the problem we have in rural Alberta.

4:50

Mr. Speaker, I want to re-emphasize that I think we need to work together as a government, as an opposition, as municipalities, as

communities. We say that the future is in our youth. Well, you know, there is a lot of future in seniors. They have so much to contribute, and they are very much a part of our society. We have worked very closely with them, I know, in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do so.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill. We do have vacancies for government members.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and join this debate under Standing Order 30. I've been an MLA now for just over four years, but prior to that time I spent a lot of time in auxiliary hospitals, seniors' lodges, seniors' apartment complexes, long-term care facilities, and various other housing and supportive areas for seniors. Of course, I'm talking about my pastoral visitation and also the church services that we ran on a regular basis in many of these seniors' care facilities all around the area.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I have to tell you as a pastor that when you go into these facilities, the residents, of course, are very, very happy to see you. The other thing that you find out is that as a pastor the seniors tell you everything. Yes, I mean everything. They do not hold anything back. There are no secrets when you're in there on a pastoral visitation. They will tell you about some of their personal issues. They will tell you about the way they're cared for. They'll tell you about the food. They'll tell you about the staff. They'll tell you literally everything that is on their mind.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that for 12 years I visited a number, I would say probably close to 10 different facilities on a regular basis, and very, very seldom did I hear negative complaints, did I hear negative response. Very, very seldom did I hear of any chronic problems, certainly of no abuse or neglect or anything like that. Every now and then, yes, there would be the odd thing that was quite serious, so we would have to address that. I'm happy to say that the staff and people in charge were very, very good at addressing those situations and correcting any problems that might come up.

For 12 years I heard the good and the bad, but again I'm happy to say that the majority of what I heard was good. The vast, vast, vast majority was good. It was positive. Seniors are well cared for. There are very, very caring staff in these facilities. At least, in the Drayton Valley-Calmar area there are. In fact, I could name some of the staff. They're absolutely outstanding. The care that they provide to the seniors, the love. Literally, they provide love to these seniors like you've never seen. It's as if they're their own relatives.

As I was travelling around and visiting these facilities, I often shared meals with the residents. Again, I have to say that the food was very good. I looked forward to it. I looked forward especially to the Christmas meals and whatnot. Of course, they go a little bit extra during that time, but any time when I would stay, the staff would say: "Pastor, please stay. Join us for supper. Join us for lunch." They had nothing to hide. They wanted the community to be in there, to be visiting, to see what was going on because they were very, very proud of their facilities.

In fact, I was kind of amazed at the cleanliness, Mr. Speaker, the upkeep. You know, as a pastor I kind of wondered where all the dollars were coming from for what seemed like their constant renovations. It seemed like every time I went into a seniors' lodge or a senior's apartment or into some kind of a long-term care facility, there was something new being built or something new going on or some kind of renovation happening. I can remember thinking to

myself: "Wow. They really do keep these buildings up." In fact, the grounds surrounding the buildings are like gardens. People would go to them to get their wedding pictures. They would go there just for the serenity of the beautiful landscaping and the gardens.

In fact, speaking of gardens, some of the facilities in my area, Mr. Speaker, even have community gardens that the residents can go out and plant in. Of course, in the rural areas a lot of the farm ladies were used to going out and planting a garden every year. They made opportunities for them to be able to do this at the seniors' lodges and the long-term care facilities in my area so that the residents could go out and plant some carrots, or they could plant some lettuce. Then they could have the enjoyment of going back later and harvesting their work.

Mr. Speaker, as an MLA now I still visit regularly. Just recently, in fact in the last two weeks, I've had the great opportunity to present two centennial medallions. One was in an auxiliary hospital; the other was in a seniors' lodge. These were residents that were, obviously, over 100 years old, and I'll tell you: they were both happy as could be. In fact, the lady who was 104 that I presented a medallion to last week said that she just loved where she was. The family was all there when I presented the medallion. They praised the care that she was getting and, in fact, credited her longevity to that good care that she was receiving.

I was actually amazed to hear that we had 680 Albertans or more that were 100 years old or older. I thought: boy, there are some people who are being well cared for, whether it's by family or whether it's by the lodges that they're in. In many cases a lot of those people are in some form of government lodge or government-run facility.

So, again, very, very happy people, very, very well cared for. Of course, I visited them all during the election recently, Mr. Speaker. Again, during the election is a time when if the residents are going to complain, trust me: they have free license to do that. Honestly, I heard nothing but good, nothing but positive.

Now, I know what you're thinking. The Auditor General's report certainly points out some of the bad. Well, the fact of the matter is that for the most part all the facilities get virtually the same funding. They have roughly the same dollars to work with. Sure, some have more. Some have less. But if the ones in my area can be well cared for, if they can be well looked after, if the residents can be happy, well, that should be a benchmark. That should be sort of an incentive or some form of a challenge, then, to the other facilities to meet the same standards. They can all do a good job.

I know that some are run by community boards. Some of them have voluntary boards. Some of them have municipal councillors sitting on the boards. Again, those boards are, generally speaking, very good people. A lot of them, I know, have COOs, chief operating officers: well-trained, good people who are definitely willing to listen.

The other point I have to make, Mr. Speaker, is the one that the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul mentioned, and that is waiting lists. I don't know. They think sometimes that we have a magic wand and that they can just come in and, you know, get moved up on the waiting list if they visit their MLA. People are literally trying anything to get into these facilities. There are long waiting lists to get in because people want to live there. Trust me: in rural communities people talk. If things were bad, if the facilities were not good, if the care was not adequate, then there would not be any waiting lists. In fact, there would be vacancies because the word would be out. That's certainly not the case. They have great recreation facilities, as I've mentioned, beautiful landscapes.

Mr. Speaker, as I read the Auditor General's report yesterday, I wished the Auditor General would have come out to my area. We

would be standing here today saying: "Here's the benchmark. Here's the thing we're going to use to praise these facilities." But what did the Auditor General say? Well, he made some recommendations. Look at the first recommendation there. He talks about developing and maintaining standards. Well, what is management's response to that? It says: "Alberta Health and Wellness: Agreed . . . Alberta Seniors and Community Supports: Agreed."

In the second recommendation we look at the management response. "Alberta Health and Wellness: Agreed . . . Alberta Seniors and Community Supports: Agreed."

In the third recommendation, effectiveness of services and long-term care facilities, what was the management response? "Alberta Health and Wellness: Agreed . . . Alberta Seniors and Community Support: Agreed."

Recommendation 4, and on and on and on. Every single one. I looked through this report, Mr. Speaker, and every place where there's a recommendation by the Auditor General, it says: "Alberta Health and Wellness: Agreed . . . Alberta Seniors and Community Supports: Agreed." So what this is telling me is that the government is responding, that the appropriate departments are doing exactly what the Auditor General has asked them to do. They are looking at these facilities and improving the service, improving the care, improving whatever areas need to be improved.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I just want to say in conclusion that I am very, very pleased and happy with the facilities in my area. In fact, I challenge all of the facilities in Alberta to come out and use Drayton Valley-Calmor as a benchmark to see how to run a facility well on a reasonable budget. In fact, I challenge the other facilities that need some help to come out and borrow ideas. I know that there are facilities who would be more than happy to lend their ideas on how to make the residents happy and how to offer good care and how to do more with less.

With that, I will take my seat and let other members participate.

5:00

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, and the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's been proven by the speeches we've had here today why we needed this emergency debate. It's because many of the speakers on the government side, I would say, are in denial. In fact, we had the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation saying that an accountant shouldn't be allowed to go out and investigate because he doesn't know what he's investigating. I found that ironic in view of the fact that there was so much hullabaloo when we were criticizing the Auditor General before. I thought the Government House Leader would rise and defend the Auditor General, and I was surprised that he didn't.

The fact remains that nobody is saying – you can't take one individual institution and say: well, it's bad or it's good. Of course there are some good things going on in some of the long-term care centres. Nobody's saying anything different than that. What the Auditor General has done – and I would say that the Minister of Innovation and Science was correct – is take a representative sample right across the province, and he's saying that there are some serious problems. It should not surprise Members of the Legislative Assembly that he came out with this report. I would think that you would be sleeping or missing what's going on because time and time again seniors' advocates, children of parents in long-term care have been getting ahold of MLAs at least on this side and saying: we have some very serious problems.

That's not to say, again, Mr. Speaker, that we're saying that every institution in the province has problems. Some of them are doing very good work. Generally, the staff are doing very good work across the province. That's precisely the problem, and I think the Auditor General alludes to it: it's patchwork. There are no standards that we can talk about. It varies from one institution to another, and that's what the problem is.

What some of the advocates are worried about is that they've seen this sort of report come forward, and there's some publicity. Everybody's going to do certain things. The ministers are there; they're going to do certain things. And then it goes away, and the people near the end of their life are forgotten. That's a very big concern of theirs. That's why I really appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that we have allowed this debate to occur. I think it's extremely important.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd point out that even the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation said: well, the Auditor General's an accountant; he couldn't possibly know what was going on. I wonder how many institutions the minister has been to check and see what's going on. If he doesn't believe the Auditor General, let's look at Lynda Jonson, who presented a petition here. Because she has parents and she thought something was wrong, she visited 100 long-term care facilities.

The Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order False Allegations

Mr. Hancock: Yes. Mr. Speaker, a point of order on 23(h) and (i): "makes allegations against another member," and "imputes false or unwarranted motives to another member." The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview indicated that the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation – the concern that was raised is that the hon. member said that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation said that the Auditor General was wrong. That's not at all what I heard or what other members of the House heard from the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Basically, what he was saying was that – and I'll try and interpret what was being said and paraphrase it – this is a policy issue with respect to the provision of services and that the Auditor General's review was essentially one of process.

So he wasn't calling into account the Auditor General's veracity or ability or any of those things, the things that were being yelled across the floor even when he was making the remarks, but rather commenting on the issue of the report as an auditive process versus an auditive policy.

The Speaker: On this point of order, the hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that this is not, in fact, a violation of those Standing Orders 23(h) and (i) at all. In fact, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was well within his rights to comment on the minister's comments and to interpret them properly, and he did not in any way attempt to misrepresent the position that the minister took.

The minister, in fact, repeatedly said that he had great problems with the Auditor General's report and specific aspects of the Auditor General's report and gave the very, very strong impression that he thought the Auditor General was not qualified to make some of the recommendations that he did. So the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is entirely within his rights in pointing that out in his speech.

Mr. Speaker, we'll await your ruling, but I would ask that, of course, this time not be taken from the time of the hon. member's speech.

The Speaker: It's time taken from the Standing Order 30 provision, which the hon. member wanted to have this afternoon, but I'm not letting it stop there. Allegations are going back and forth. I'm going to hear from the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, and I'm going to hear from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on this point of order.

The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As became very apparently clear in the comments that I made in the House today, I questioned the process, and I questioned the Auditor General making comments on process. The Auditor General would have been exactly right when he talked about documentation, when he talked about process, when he talked about not necessarily following all the rules and regulations that are out there. What I brought into question was the issue as to whether or not patient care was compromised.

I felt that in this report one of two things occurred. First of all, there was not a comment on patient care in this report and whether patient care had in fact been compromised. Instead, what is explicitly outlined here is that policies and procedures were not followed. Policies and procedures not being followed does not necessarily equate to patient care being compromised, Mr. Speaker. I think that when people make that judgment, when they make that assessment, they are taking a huge leap of faith. Were there policies that were not? Yeah, there probably were some in some of these institutions. But you should not fault the person and the hard work that is involved in working in a long-term care institution.

Mr. Speaker, in direct reference to the point of order, never once did I say that the Auditor General was wrong in what he said. What I did say, though, is that the connection between patient care and the policy involved is not there and that, therefore, the allegations that were being made in this House were not entirely true.

Mr. Martin: Well, the government gets all sensitive. I was . . .

The Speaker: No, we're not talking about the government. [interjection] Sit down. Sit down. We're talking about an individual point of order and allegations under 23(h) and (i), nothing to do with government. This is a simple little debate. All members this afternoon. There's no government. There's no opposition. The members have 10 minutes each to participate on a motion that the hon. member wanted.

Now we've got a point of order. Let's clarify it, please.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, what I was referring to, and it was very clear, is that the minister insinuated, I thought, about the process that an accountant – and he used that term – was not able to follow through on these processes. What he was basically saying, as I understood it, was that an accountant should not be able to do this. That's what I was referring to.

5:10

The Speaker: Well, it only goes to point out again and again and again and again that if hon. members stuck with policy and did not mention any other member's name or made comment about them personally, it's amazing how easily this place would just run right along like a well-oiled machine. So let's deal with policy.

I think we clarified this point of order. I did not hear once the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation criticize the Auditor General. That's the conclusion of that point.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, we have now eliminated one additional member from being able to participate this afternoon. Now continue, please. You've got six minutes and 20 seconds.

Debate Continued

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was continuing to say, other people have been bringing this forward long before the Auditor General. As I was pointing out, Lynda Jonson, who visited 100 long-term care facilities in this province and collected signatures from 4,800 people, talked about this and said that this is a problem throughout. Elder advocate groups are saying the same thing, and they've been saying it for many years. So it was not a surprise to most people that the Auditor General came out with what we think is a very tough, hard-hitting report saying that they were right. As I said, it doesn't say every institution.

Mr. Speaker, she talked about it at a news conference this morning, about seniors who are sitting, waiting for a bath right now as we speak. They'll get one bath this week. She talked about seniors who were woken up, that she's aware of, at 3 or 4 in the morning so that staff would have time to get them up and all dressed for breakfast at 8. She also talked about thousands of seniors who will be put to bed at 7 o'clock tonight, many of them who won't be gotten out of bed until 11 o'clock in the morning, again because hard-working staff just can't get to all the residents. That was at a news conference today from somebody that has visited a hundred places.

The point that we're trying to make is that, you know, as well-meaning as some of the MLAs may be – and I have no doubt of that, Mr. Speaker. But the Auditor General on page 33 says that the Health Facilities Review Committee is basically a waste of time, and he goes ahead: they do not "check for compliance with all Basic Standards," they have "no authority," and they have no medical training.

So the idea that we're going to somehow staff through this particular way, through the MLAs, the Auditor General has already said: no, that does not work. We should be looking for a different way to do it. We should be beefing up. I think the Minister of Innovation and Science alluded to that, and I think he's right, Mr. Speaker. It has to be beefed up. It doesn't have to be MLAs on that particular committee.

We have to have inspections. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that last year, as I recollect, something like only 56 of the 176 long-term facilities, or 32 per cent, received an inspection, as inadequate as the inspection process is. So how can the government say that they are absolutely sure that this problem is not occurring?

Now, I know the ministers have said that they will follow the Auditor General's report, but the point is: when do we deal with this issue again? When do we deal with it again, Mr. Speaker?

I would like to make some suggestions on the staffing. There are no standards for staffing, Mr. Speaker. The numbers aren't there. There are absolutely no rules; that's why we have a patchwork from one institution to another. What we would suggest is that there has to be at least four hours of nursing care per day. Alberta's requirement of 1.9 hours of nursing care per resident per day ranks well below the recommended four hours of nursing care. We have to have standard qualifications for staff, and we have to legislate minimum requirements for the number of people on the staff. Now, some have suggested – maybe the minister can tell us different. Some are calling for 1 to 5 during the day, 1 to 8 at night.

Some other suggestions, if I may – and I'm not sure how much time I have left – some other things that they could look at. A

suggestion has been that each facility have a family council like a parent council at schools because I think one of the things that the Auditor General did say was that people with parents in long-term care have to be concerned. That's what he said when asked: if he were put in, would he not have concerns? Would he put his parents in? That was the question. He said yes, he would, but he would also check that particular institution on a very rigorous basis. So a facility having a family council like a parent council in schools would make an excellent idea, I think.

The other thing that I would suggest is that it's time we had an independent seniors' advocate. Surely, after the Auditor General's report it should be clear to even the government that some sort of advocate for the seniors has to be there. The government can say that they're going to follow up with these recommendations, but as I've said in the past, some of the advocates show that there were investigations and headlines – I remember one going back to '79 with my former colleague Grant Notley involved at that particular time and others in the '80s, '90s. Here we are with another Auditor General's report. The biggest concern that people have after the Auditor General's work and all the work of elder advocates and the rest of it is that the government will accept this – they will say that everything's okay – and then we'll all go back to sleep, and the problems will be the same, you know, three or four years down the way.

I would suggest that there are some things that should happen, and it's not good enough to wait till the fall, Mr. Speaker. I'd say to the minister that we need action plus. This report has come out. The chances are we won't be in the Assembly beyond next week. I don't know why there couldn't be an action plan there . . . [Mr. Martin's speaking time expired]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ensuring that seniors are well cared for and valued members of our society is a very high priority for all of us in this Chamber and not just the members of the opposition. Certainly, best practices in health and personal care and housing are matters that we should strive for as a government, one of the most important priorities, in fact, as a government.

In my riding there is quite a high proportion of seniors. I can certainly say that as I ran for election and came to this Assembly, I expressed my concern for seniors' issues, and I undertook to be a strong voice for seniors' issues in my riding. I want to say that the Alberta government certainly has shown by its record that it holds those priorities of seniors to be very high on its agenda.

Our commitment in Alberta to seniors is second to none in this country. We have the Alberta seniors' benefits, which has the lowest thresholds and the most generous income supports of any program in Canada. Since 2004 there have been a number of enhancements to the programs given to seniors here in Alberta. Hon. members will recall that in 2004 17,000 more seniors were made eligible for the Alberta seniors' benefits, bringing the total to about 117,000. That constituted an increase in budget of about \$50 million for the Alberta seniors' benefits. We also have a unique Alberta Aids to Daily Living program, which is an outstanding program for seniors. Our seniors also receive, of course, free basic Blue Cross coverage, and recently, during the budget process, it was announced that dental assistance for seniors up to \$5,000 coverage every five years and optical coverage up to \$230 every three years would be added to this basket of seniors' benefits. In addition, there

have been improvements to the tax regime such that the education component of property taxes has now been shielded from any further increases for seniors here in Alberta.

I've visited a number of long-term care and seniors' lodges in my riding and in the riding of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and I can say that without exception my visits to those facilities have shown that they have a caring and compassionate staff. The quality of accommodation and care is very high, and not only that, Mr. Speaker, but there is a feeling of community in those establishments, a real feeling of belonging, that this is a home for those people. I know that that feeling of community and caring and compassion that is shared amongst the staff and the residents of those particular facilities is an extremely important factor to making those places a quality environment for the seniors.

5:20

I don't want to minimize the fact that there are certain problems in the care of seniors in the long-term care facilities and in the lodges; however, the sky is not falling. By a long shot it's not falling. There are problems, but I know that the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports both come to this Assembly with strong backgrounds in the health care professions. They are both extremely qualified and dedicated individuals. They're both extremely capable individuals, and I am very confident that they will act expeditiously upon the recommendations made in the Auditor General's report.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and talk about this subject. I look in my riding and I sort of review the different aspects, especially with the level of care that we've got in our riding. As I look at Edson, which is going to be 94 this year, they were the first ones to have long-term care. Then, of course, with Jasper being close to their hundred years, they have very good care there.

With some of the other younger communities – I can remember that with Grande Cache we had a situation where there was a gentleman that needed extensive long-term care. They were going to send him off to Hythe, which is in the region of Peace Country health, but then he had no support. We were able to make a deal with the regional health authority to designate a room within the hospital to have him stay there so his family could be looking after him as well as the staff.

Then to go on to the care with the seniors, I mean, Grande Cache is a younger community, one of the most modern, picturesque communities I think in the whole of Alberta. What happened there? They got together because there was more need for a lodge, so now they're going to have a lodge in partnership with Peace Country health, and we're going to work together there. So there's another area that is good. We're working on that.

If you go back to Edson, we've got long-term care. We've got a lodge. As the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports said, a lot of the people are aging a lot more, and they're in lodges when they should be in long-term care, but what do we do? We work with the Minister of Health and Wellness. We bring in the people there to help them so that they're able to stay in the surroundings. I believe we need to have aspects where people are aging in place. That's the biggest thing. When you disrupt their surroundings and move them to another place because they've aged a little bit more, you upset them. They don't like change at that age, so you want to work with them.

Sure, I've had a few complaints about the aspect of seniors in my region, especially when they want to go into the long-term care and there's no room. They'll move to my fellow colleague's riding, in Whitecourt-St. Anne. It makes it a little tougher for the people to go and visit them, but still they're being looked after. In this case that I'm talking about, I worked with the people in the area, and sure they were able to move him back once they got a time, a space for him.

I think the other thing is that the Evergreen Foundation in our region has worked very hard with the seniors. I think the positive thing there is that we have elected officials on there, and the elected officials are the town councillors that come from all the different towns and the municipalities in the West Yellowhead riding. They're there. They're the ground people that talk to them.

I've been into the lodges and into the long-term care. My colleague from Drayton Valley-Calmar just spoke about having a 100th birthday anniversary. Well, I had one gentleman there, and we had the community come out. We had the young people come out and visit him. It was very interesting when we presented him with a medal. I proceeded to give him a scroll. Then the newspaper lady asked me if we could take a picture with his medallion, so I asked the co-ordinator of the unit: where did the medallion go? It was interesting to see. You know, we always say about the older people that they're not really thinking well. Well, as soon as I gave this gentleman the medallion and told him that it was gold, he shoved it in his pocket, and I didn't even realize that. When the co-ordinator asked him where his medallion was, the first thing he said to her was: are they going to give it back to me?

When you look at something like that, the gentleman was very happy. They had a beautiful big cake for him. He loved to fish, so they had a fishing scene on there. I mean, the young people talked with him. He was very happy in there, and then all the other people in the long-term care were with him. You know, I'm not standing to say that we don't have certain issues. Sure, we have issues.

I've got another lady that's in Jasper, and it's interesting to know that she's 103. She's the one that plays the piano for the rest of the group there, and she looks after the older people, as she calls them. So, sure, there are different areas.

With the aspect of Grande Cache looking at bringing a lodge there, we went to a lot of different areas within the riding of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to look at some different facilities there. Also, when we developed Hinton for long-term care, we looked at an area for dementia. I just talked to a lady and her husband from Jasper. They had a relation that was in another region. Now they've brought him back to Hinton in that facility, and they're very happy because what happens is that's a unit where everybody works together. They do their own cooking under the supervision of the staff there. If anybody wants to go and look at the Mountain View Centre in Hinton, it's a multimillion dollar view. They've got the best view in the world. I know that when I was there, when we first were looking at it, I had sort of picked out my room where I'd like to be.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member. I'd like to advise all members that there were 20 participations this afternoon. Some of them were duplicates.

Now, I want to draw all members' attention to Standing Order 58(1) and 58(2). When the House leaves us in about 40 seconds from now, it will reconvene in Committee of the Whole tonight for the estimates. Standing Order 58(1) and 58(2), should there be a procedural question in anticipation of such a thing arriving, would be interpreted that there would be absolutely no violation of any of our Standing Orders if two estimates went back to back.

The House stands adjourned until 8 o'clock.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 10, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/05/10

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Government Services

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to have this opportunity to present the business plan and the estimates for '05-06.

Before I start, though, I want to introduce the staff that's with us tonight. To start off, we have my deputy minister, Robert Bhatia; Laurie Beveridge, assistant deputy minister of consumer services and land titles; Wilma Haas, assistant deputy minister of Service Alberta and registries; Sue Bohaichuk, senior financial officer; Tom Thackeray, assistant deputy minister of government and program support services; and my executive assistant, Dawn McKay.

In developing our business and financial plan, we prioritized our programs and services to focus resources on the most critical areas. To do so, we considered the following factors: the impacts on Albertans, the legislative mandate, the financial benefits realized, and the partnership supported by the service. Another key influence is our continued commitment to service excellence, as demonstrated through our vision statement: "Albertans served with excellence through innovative leadership."

Goal 1. We are in the business of serving Albertans, and our first goal, "efficient licensing and registration services" demonstrates how we touch the lives of all Albertans. We allocate some \$70.8 million in resources to provide services to support Albertans' life events from the time that they are born to when they purchase and drive their motor vehicle, they get married, acquire property and land, and eventually pass away, not necessarily in that order. The robust Alberta economy continues to drive demand for our services, and the ministry's registry system now supports close to 15 million transactions on behalf of Albertans each year. In addition, millions more transactions are completed for law enforcement and other government entities. Funding priorities under the goal of efficient licensing and registry services include responding to the 17 per cent increase in transaction volumes since 2000 and 2001 as well as improving client access and convenience.

Another top priority under goal 1 will be protecting Albertans' personal information held by the ministry. For example, we need to be proactive in addressing the fastest growing crime in North America, identity theft. Our facial recognition technology for drivers' licences is a critical tool for detecting and addressing fraudulent identities. I'd like to point out that this use of facial recognition technology is another example of how Alberta is leading the way for the rest of the country, if not for all of North America. By using this technology, we are able to search the motor vehicle database of images captured since July 2003 for duplicate images of the same person to ensure that individuals do not have more than one driver's licence issued to them or that another individual has not used their name and address. This makes it virtually impossible for anyone to assume, through a counterfeit driver's licence, the identity

of an individual who currently holds an Alberta driver's licence or identification card. It's interesting to note that the federal public safety minister, Anne McLellan, has singled out an Alberta driver's licence as being a good substitute for a passport when entering the U.S. because of its highly regarded security standards.

We will also implement fraud awareness programs for our registry agents and for Albertans so we can further mitigate the risk of identity theft. In addition, we will evaluate our current processes and systems to ensure that we are doing our utmost to protect Albertans' personal information.

These measures of our success for licensing and registration include client satisfaction with accessibility, accuracy, affordability, and security of our services. Our commitment to client satisfaction is evidenced by the fact that we have improved turnaround times with land title services and realized a 12 per cent increase in satisfaction over the prior year. This improvement was largely due to process changes that increased efficiencies and the provision of extra staff to address the 30 per cent increase in land title transactions. In 2004 our land titles folks completed a record high million-plus transactions.

We aim to further increase client satisfaction ratings in 2005 and '06 to 80 per cent from the previous rating of 77 per cent. As well, we will continue to ensure that our fees for services are very fair and reasonable. We provide tangible, everyday examples of the Alberta advantage through such things as the low cost of registering a home, which is currently 81 per cent below the national average, or our car registration fee, which is 18 per cent below the average, or our driver's licence fee, which is 31 per cent below the national average.

Registry agents are key components of our service-delivery model, and we want to ensure that their high client satisfaction ratings continue. We have set a satisfaction rate target of 85 per cent. In total, our registry and licence services are estimated to generate revenue in excess of some \$350 million.

Our second goal is "informed customers and businesses, and a high standard of marketplace conduct." We allocate about \$10.1 million to this important service. Our customer programs contribute to a prosperous economy by promoting ethical business practices and well-informed consumers. An effective and up-to-date legislative framework is key to supporting Alberta's ever-evolving and growing marketplace, and the cornerstone of that framework is the ministry's Fair Trading Act.

The Fair Trading Act allows us to investigate unfair business practices in any market sector if the transaction includes the sale of goods or services to consumers. While traditionally the focus has been on home renovators, collection agencies, door-to-door salesmen, loan brokers, and unlicensed businesses, we have also laid charges against home moving companies, funeral homes, and travel agencies under the act. The Fair Trading Act allows us to impose penalties that can include fines up to \$100,000 or three times the amount obtained as a result of the offence or up to two years imprisonment or a combination of both fines and imprisonment.

There are a number of things that we do to ensure that our legislation continues to address the needs of consumers. These activities include monitoring marketplace complaints and assessing the number of consumers affected, dollars at risk, and the ability of consumers to seek remedies through existing processes; distributing discussion papers to stakeholders and seeking input through external panels, advisory committees, and focus groups; working with other jurisdictions and reviewing their legislation to ensure that best practices are adopted in Alberta. We also monitor news events and industry publications to identify emerging trends and issues. In addition, we conduct compliance audits to ensure that legislative requirements are being met. Over the business plan period we will

develop amendments to tighten up the Fair Trading Act and address emergent marketplace issues such as credit and collection practices to ensure that customers are dealt with as fairly as possible.

8:10

Mortgage fraud is another emerging marketplace issue that we will be addressing under our second goal. Our Real Estate Council of Alberta, which reports to our ministry, administers the Real Estate Act and is leading the country in tracking, investigating, and raising awareness of mortgage fraud. The council provides education programs and a checklist to assist real estate and mortgage brokers in identifying mortgage fraud; for example, by September 2005 all mortgage brokers and agents must complete a mortgage fraud awareness course in order to be eligible for licensing. As well, the council administers an insurance fund to compensate consumers for losses. In addition, a government advisory committee on mortgage fraud was recently established to help deal with this important issue. The committee includes members from the Alberta government, the banking finance industry, the real estate community, and the law enforcement agencies.

Another important issue that we are looking at, in partnership with Alberta Justice, is the establishment of an alternate dispute resolution process to provide an option for handling landlord and tenant disputes without burdening the justice system. Specifically, it will provide landlords and tenants with a faster, less expensive, and more informal resolution of tenancy disputes through a quasi-judicial process. This type of model is already used in other provinces with considerable success. Where possible, best practices from other provinces have been adopted into Alberta's model.

As many consumer issues transcend borders, we will continue to work with our national and international consumer protection initiative and focus on the most serious marketplace violations. To give you an idea of volumes, nearly 77,000 customer inquiries and over 1,500 marketplace investigations were processed last year, with nearly \$300,000 being returned to Albertans. The success of our consumers program is measured according to our client satisfaction, for which we have stretched targets from 75 per cent to 80 per cent.

Another important marketplace issue pertains to the growth in the evolving utility market, which is addressed under goal 3. This goal focuses on protecting the interests of Alberta's 1 million residential, farm, and small commercial consumers in this changing market. The office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, or UCA, has a resource base of some \$4.7 million and works with other consumer groups to reduce overall consumer costs by streamlining the regulatory process and influencing improvements in the utility marketplace. In their first 18 months of operation UCA staff, working with other organizations, achieved \$85 million in utility rate reductions for consumers. The UCA will also continue to respond to consumer questions and concerns and advocate on their behalf to ensure that they are fairly treated.

We are drawing upon the expertise of a number of government departments, including Alberta Energy and the EUB, Seniors and Community Supports, and Economic Development. In collaboration with other consumer groups and their representatives we are actively involved in the EUB hearings on issues pertaining to rates for small retail customers. Government Services and Alberta Energy staff also meet regularly to discuss a range of issues affecting small consumer issues.

UCA projects under way include a plain language contract initiative, billing practice review, a tariff bill code, and the reviews of wholesale and retail market design. In addition, the UCA will continue to increase its efforts to ensure that customers are informed about the restructured marketplace, their opinions and obligations, and where they can turn to for advice and information.

We recognize that awareness is one of the best forms of consumer protection. We have ways to do it in our efforts regarding the restructured marketplace. We do have a number of activities currently under way. These include distribution of information materials such as our pamphlet on what you should know before you sign a retail energy contract, communications through our website and consumer information contact centre, speaking engagements by the advocate and staff, and public meetings of the Utilities Consumer Advisory Council.

We are also in the process of developing a more comprehensive communications and marketing strategy on consumer awareness, which we plan to begin implementing over the coming months. As of March 31, 2005, the UCA had responded to nearly 3,000 inquiries from Albertans and taken appropriate action on their behalf. Success will be measured by stretch targets for Albertans' awareness of the UCA's services and satisfaction with actual service received.

Our fourth goal is advancing the Service Alberta initiative to provide Albertans with accessible, integrated, and quality government services. Resources of approximately \$800,000 are allocated to this initiative with further support received from other champion ministries such as the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Key next steps include encouraging ministries to make more of their services available online and enhancing the functionality and content of the Service Alberta website, which receives over 60,000 hits per month. This is an important initiative since 35 per cent of Albertans' contact with the government of Alberta has been through this Internet.

Website information is also a key resource for staff to use behind the scenes in providing consistent and accurate services regardless of which service delivery channel is used. Currently there are more than 1,200 information-based services and over 70 transactional services available online. Our ongoing objective is to provide more online service transactions so that Albertans can submit applications and forms, track their status, and receive notification of the results. As well, we will develop a long-term plan to enhance access to over-the-counter services, which will build on our existing province-wide network of registry agencies.

Implementing cross-government service standards will be another priority under goal 4. In addition to measuring Albertans' satisfaction with their access to government services and information, which has a 78 per cent target, we will also begin reporting on satisfaction with the timelines of those services. Our target for this is 72 per cent.

Our fifth goal is to provide "effective management of, and access to information, and protection of privacy." These services account for about \$3.4 million of our resource base. Our efforts are directed to ensuring that information access and privacy legislation is effective and that the stakeholders who administer the legislation receive support. A major initiative under this goal is preparing for the review of Alberta's private-sector privacy legislation, scheduled to begin in 2006. We will also work with other jurisdictions to harmonize private-sector privacy rules as other corresponding legislation is reviewed and updated.

Albertans' response to the private-sector privacy legislation has been very positive. Both the business community and the public have been making good use of our information resources. For example, we have had 23,000 hits per month on our website and about 140 calls per month to our telephone information line.

Another key responsibility under goal 5 is to promote effective management of the government's information by providing all ministries with advice on standards and best practices as well as delivering specialized training. In addition, we will continue to administer the FOIP program. Our success will be measured by a

target of 90 per cent of FOIP requests handled within 60 days and without complaint.

I believe we have put forward before you a fiscally responsible business plan that reflects our continued commitment to excellence in providing services that touch the lives of virtually all Albertans.

With that, I thank you for your attention, and now we'll engage in discussion. Thank you.

8:20

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start by thanking the hon. minister for his introduction. I, too, welcome the staff, if they're still with us.

I will start by asking a question with regard to the full-time equivalent employment staff. I asked this yesterday during the budget debate concerning the Ministry of Innovation and Science, and I'm going to repeat the same question to the hon. Minister of Government Services. In fact, the department of the Alberta Corporate Service Centre and its staff were transferred over to the newly founded Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, and one would assume that a corresponding reduction in the full-time equivalent staff would ensue. We noticed that instead of that happening, we have an increase from 466 in the previous year's budget to 482 full-time equivalent staff in this year's estimate. That's a change of plus 16, or an increase of 16, and I would appreciate an explanation from the hon. minister as to why this did happen.

Parallel to that, I look at the ministry support services expense in the budget for this department. Again, I'm comparing the previous year's forecast of \$5.4 million, which is apparently increasing in this estimate to \$5.7 million, which is a \$300,000 increase. You know, I'm not really arguing against it, but I just need clarification as to why it's warranted and why it's needed.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the hon. member if he could give me the program numbers? I'll never follow him if we start jumping all over.

Mr. Elsalhy: Sure. The full-time equivalent staff appears in the fiscal plan on page 57, and then the ministry support services budget appears on page 202.

Mr. Lund: Give me the program numbers.

Mr. Elsalhy: Oh, this is just the budget. There is no program number yet. I'm not at that stage yet. So it's on page 202.

The Chair: Please proceed. It might be helpful if you referred to the page you're on or something like that.

Mr. Elsalhy: So just a point of clarification there.

Also, I have just a general question with regard to the registries and the privatization of registries. I just would like to get some explanation briefly from the hon. minister as to how this has proven to be beneficial for Albertans.

With that, I also have a question with regard to what appears to be an expense under program 5 on page 207. That talks about registries renewal, which is program 5.0.3. It looks like we're injecting \$1.3 million from last year's forecast into this year's estimate. I guess my question would be: if registries are private-sector companies or private-sector providers, why are we worried about spending more on registries renewal? To me these are private-sector people, and

they should look after their own existence and maintenance and upgrading. So, again, a point of clarification there, please.

The ministry explains in I think the introduction to the fiscal plan that its primary external client is the public and the consumer of this province. In keeping with the spirit that, you know, we do everything in consultation and we ask everybody who's involved what they think, is the minister considering surveying or polling the public with regard to issues that affect everybody, like registries? Are they happy with the registries being privatized? Are they happy with the drivers' education and licensing being privatized? Are they happy with, to use the minister's words, the restructured utility marketplace environment, or would they rather stay on the regulated rate option? I would be really interested if the minister is agreeable on this and if he might actually go ahead and start surveying the public on these issues.

I know that his department is efficient in informing and educating the public about the merits of the different programs and why they're wonderful or why they make sense, but I think it's really a two-way highway, where the information goes back and forth. It should not be unidirectional, the government telling the people what's good for them and why deregulation is great and why private-sector registries are wonderful. So like we discuss the pros and cons, I think just open it up to feedback and input. This is basically what the ministry states: the primary external client is the public and the consumer.

On my own, very simplistically, I conducted a survey, and I asked people a yes or no question with regard to driver education, examination, and licensing. I said in my simple survey: "Should the province resume control over driver examination and licensing? Yes or no." Of the people who responded to my simple survey, which is not scientific in any way – you know, it's a yes or no question – 87 and a half per cent said that, yes, the province should resume control over driver examination and licensing. So that's just an example.

Moving on, the ministry states that it is committed to service excellence and can achieve this by keeping an "ongoing dialogue with Albertans about their current and evolving service needs." How will this feedback be solicited? How will they ask for input, and how will this input be used to implement policy or improve current procedures?

Next on my list – and, again, these are general questions – Albertans expect their government to protect their personal and private information, of course. We understand that protection of privacy is one of the main goals of this ministry, but lately we have witnessed many incidents where information was either stolen or misplaced, lost. These are incidents which are alarming and causing us in the opposition and I think even the layman on the street some concern. Computer tapes were lost, microfiche containing pension information were lost, electronic health records were lost, and we also remember that some information on senior government bureaucrats was misplaced as well and then ended up in the hands of potential crooks. Again, how is the ministry planning on improving this practically? You know, having the intention is one thing, but then having the policies is the other thing.

Moving on, the ministry's fiscal plan also states that it must be proactive in responding to emerging marketplace issues. I know that the hon. minister touched on the issue with the mortgage fraud, for example, and I think we also discussed that during question period. Yes, it is good in responding, but then I think we have to also about things before they happen, like thwart would-be crooks and would-be mortgage defrauders from committing the crime. How will the ministry review its practices and implement strategies aimed at prevention, not reaction?

The hon. minister indicated that this ministry will continue to streamline services and, again, will seek input from clients on

service delivery. Are there any particular innovative things that this ministry is looking at or considering to streamline services?

8:30

After that, I would move to a question with regard to the Utilities Consumer Advocate, which is goal 3, as the hon. minister indicated. Having a Utilities Consumer Advocate is really not a bad idea. It's a good, sound idea, but I think, like I said during question period and in a previous exchange, this department has to have teeth. It has to be at arm's length from government. It has to have the power to do what it's supposed to do. Educating the public, again, is one component of its role, but I think it's mostly there to protect the consumers and the small commercial users like the residential, farm, and small commercial consumers.

We know that recently the honourable person who was occupying this position resigned, and I'm just going to ask the hon. minister whether a successor, or replacement, has been found and also whether it would be separate from the position of deputy minister so the two are not one and the same. I think it would make sense that we empower this person and allow him to be at arm's length from government to operate independently.

The hon. minister also indicated that the Utilities Consumer Advocate since March 31, if I remember correctly, handled or received 3,000 requests from Albertans, and action has been taken on their behalf. How many of these requests resulted in refunds, for example, from utility companies? Do we have a percentage, or do we have a trend or a pattern that we can say, you know, statistically over the years, this is happening, and this is the percentage that we are able to return every time, which really indicates that this is the percentage by which consumers are overcharged? Can we have a statistic that actually looks at this and studies this? How many of those 3,000 claims were dismissed right off the bat, and why were they dismissed? Were they not realistic in nature? Were they asking too much? We need to know how many of those 3,000 were resolved one way or the other.

In the Auditor General's findings when he reviewed this ministry, I think pretty much they said that not a lot is out of order, and I think they gave it a passing grade. However, the Auditor General noted that several irregularities have been identified, and I can probably point to page 179 of the Auditor General's report. Without really going into great detail, I would notice that it's mostly with contracting practices.

For example, two contracts were found not to be in accordance with the centre, which is the corporate centre that left and went to the ministry of restructuring, but it was under this ministry before. They were not in accordance with the agreements or policies. He also commented that reasons for sole sourcing are not always documented. "No alternatives considered to sole sourcing . . . Contracts signed after work started or after existing contract expired . . . Contract approvals not in accordance with the policies," and so on.

I think if we're really hoping to set the example and show us in the opposition and show the people of Alberta that this ministry is transparent and is doing everything above board and clearly and cleanly, I would urge the hon. minister to really consider rectifying these shortcomings and looking at these recommendations seriously.

Back to the Utilities Consumer Advocate, actually, there is something I would like to ask with respect to its budget, and this appears on page 270 of the business plan, expense by core business. The Utilities Consumer Advocate in the budget for 2004-05 was going to receive \$4.5 million and in this estimate is going to apparently receive \$4.7 million. My question is: why are we really spending as much when, in fact, the hon. minister indicated during

question period that they get their financing from the Balancing Pool? So if they're getting it from the Balancing Pool, what are we spending on under that heading? You know, when it says Utilities Consumer Advocate, is there something I'm missing? Or maybe it's misrepresented. They're getting their finances recovered from the Balancing Pool, so why are we injecting money into it now?

Back to the registries, another point that I forgot was the angle that these registries should be self-sufficient. I heard a lot of talk about registries not only being there for, you know, automobile registries or drivers' licences – you know, take a picture, and we'll mail you your driver's licence – but they are doing other things as well. Then I also remember that when we discussed mortgage fraud and the land titles office, it was described as being merely a registry. So is the word "registry" that large or all-encompassing that it really involves not just the registries? My question is: if they're private sector, why are we spending money on them? Maybe there's something I'm missing, but I would appreciate any clarification I get from the hon. minister.

Lastly, with regard to the departments which report to the hon. minister, I have recently heard of a department called the access and privacy branch, and I had difficulty finding what they do and their mandate. The access and privacy branch, APB: apparently it reports to Government Services. I would be grateful if the hon. minister shared with me even in writing – it doesn't have to be now – their mandate, their structure. You know, why do they exist, and what do they do?

With that, I will retake my seat and encourage other members to participate, or if the hon. minister would like to reply. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I can give you a list of exactly where the FTEs were added. You're right: there were 16 added. We put one in the business and financial services part under Ministry Support Services. There were two under Service Alberta and Registries. There were 2.5 added in program support. We reduced 1.5 in the Service Alberta section, and we added 10 into the registry services area, for a net of 11 under Service Alberta and Registries. Then under government and program support services, under access and privacy we added two people, and under information management we added two people, for a total of four. So that's where the sixteen were added.

Now, under program 1 you were asking about the budget moving from \$5.4 million to \$5.7 million. The most significant change in the ministry support services arises from an anticipated government of Alberta salary settlement of \$200,000, and the budget also incorporates increases to the ministry service agreement from ACSC. We were expecting changes there. Other factors include increases in WCB learning accounts to government-wide standards of \$500 per employee. In addition to the leadership provided by the ministry to the deputy minister – oh, those don't give the exact numbers that you're looking for. An increase is largely due to the salaries. There was some \$283,000 under human resources. Once again, that was the increase to ACSC. Then, under legal services we had to add \$3,000. I guess that covers all the increases in that program from \$5.4 million to \$5.7 million.

8:40

Then if we go to your questions on the registry, you were looking at registries renewal, 5.0.3. Under that program we had an increase of some \$5.048 million, and that's to do primarily with a transaction that occurred the year before. Really, two things happened. We transferred to capital in the year before some \$3.4 million, which

will be reflected in a higher investment in the capital phase of the registry renewal project. This increase was offset by a higher amortization cost of some \$2.1 million. New funding to address inflation transaction volume increases, some \$0.9 million. The equipment/inventory budget increase also includes new funding, \$1.6 million, to meet growing demand transaction volumes as well as a \$3.4 million transfer from operating expenses to reflect the progression of registry renewal projects into the capital phase.

Now, you asked some questions later on about the registry system. This expenditure has to do with the central system here in Edmonton. All of the registries feed into it, and we're redoing the whole structure. You have to understand that a simple thing like changing the driver's licence, going to the graduated driver's licence, increases our costs considerably because every time we make a little change anywhere in any of those things, you have to make a major change in the central system here. So all of this renewal is not with the equipment out in the field. That's primarily the responsibility of the registry agent. This has to do with the information here.

Now, you talked about polling or how we get information. Well, with the satisfaction of registries – and, of course, you'll see that in our performance measures – we do surveys; we do phone calls; we ask people to actually fill out forms about satisfaction. We continually do this because we're trying to monitor and make sure that all of the registries are operating as we would like to see them.

The registries also deliver services other than just registration. You asked about some new initiatives. Well, one of the things that we're looking at: do other ministries have some connection with the public that could be handled through the registries? One that comes to mind right off the bat under Sustainable Resource Development: the WIN cards, the licence for hunting, those kinds of things. There are a whole host of things that are in other ministries that might be able to be moved closer to the public through the registry system.

You have to recognize that if you compare when registries used to be under government versus under the private sector, with government you're open from 8:30 to 4:30. As soon as you move it out to the private sector, they're open in the evenings, they're open on Saturdays, and they're providing all those kinds of services. So the public in our surveys is very happy with that private sector there.

You questioned about whether the public is in favour of the RRO, for example. Well, I can tell you that we have an advisory committee to the UCA, and that committee – as a matter of fact, I think it's tonight or the 12th. It's this week, anyway, that they're in Bonnyville. They're holding a public meeting out there to gather input about the whole electrical restructuring and what they're doing.

Driving training. That's not in my department. That's in Transportation. We're not responsible for the driving testers. The satisfaction: I'm not sure because that's not in our department.

You mentioned about the loss of private information. This department has a lot of private information. Fortunately, we haven't lost any, but we are, through the Privacy Commissioner – he's investigated those various problems and has made a number of comments about how they can tighten them up to make sure that these things don't happen. We're working with all of the ministries on the security of private information because it is critical. It is something that we have to make sure that we're doing everything we can to make sure that it's protected. As it pertains to, like, registries, because they often collect a lot of this, we're doing some training. We're putting some new measures out in the field to make sure that there isn't access available to people that shouldn't be getting it.

You mentioned about being proactive. Well, we are being very proactive in all of these areas, with mortgage fraud, with vehicle theft. As a matter of fact, tomorrow with the Solicitor General and

the Attorney General – we've had a committee set up looking at vehicle theft. As a matter of fact, the current Solicitor General chaired that committee, and we've continued it, and tomorrow we're making a report of all the proactive things. Some of it is to do with dealers, but the big part is what you as a private individual can do to protect yourself from theft.

You talked about other things we can do, and I think I just touched on it briefly, but you know just think across the government a number of services that we can move out. UCA. My current deputy is the new UCA advocate. You talked about the funding. Yes, that comes from the Balancing Pool, the \$3.7 million. It's not coming out of general revenue.

We'll have to get back to you. Of those 3,000 complaints that were handled, I don't know how many – you asked a number of questions about those. I just don't have that information here, so we'll get back to you. You talked about the trends in complaints. We'll get you that specifically, but I can tell you here now that the complaints have dropped off dramatically – dramatically. They're really coming down.

The Auditor General. As you said, those comments were aimed at what actually has been transferred over to RAGE, so the things that were left for us are very, very small, and he was happy with what we're doing.

The access to information. Once again, I think I covered that pretty much as we were talking earlier about the protection of privacy. It's a big issue, and we're going to make sure that we do everything we can to protect it.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It gives me pleasure to stand and discuss further the estimates briefing for Government Services. I appreciate the introductory comments and some of the discussion around each of the roles and responsibilities. A lot of this is new for me, and I hope it won't be redundant, but I would appreciate some further clarification about your role, for example, in the electricity deregulation and what role you would play with constituents who feel that this has not served their interests and how you would address some of the government side at the same time as trying to understand the small consumer, small business and the huge increases they've faced in the last while. I didn't realize that you had any role in that until tonight, so it's interesting to hear more about what you see your role to be there.

8:50

In relation to some of the guidelines in the Auditor's report on conflict of interest I don't know if you commented on some of the recommendations there in relation to how you're evaluating your conflict of interest guidelines year to year and seeing the extent to which your staff both understand and renew or communicate further new conflicts of interest as they emerge.

I didn't hear you comment as fully as I would like on the Auditor's comments or recommendations, I should say, about disaster recovery programs and the capacity to deal within a day or two of the collapse of business systems both in the community and, perhaps, in the government. Perhaps I missed that in some of your comments, but I'd appreciate knowing just a bit more about how you are addressing that question.

Relating back a little bit to the conflict-of-interest policy, have you considered whistle-blower legislation in the same context that we've discussed it at other times in the House, the question from a public perception point of view, perhaps even with other agencies that are dealing with you on a regular basis, licensing registry

authorities? How comfortable can they be in raising concerns about either what's going on in your department or in their own business without whistle-blower legislation? It just seems to me a logical thing for all governments to look at in protecting their due diligence and their public perception of how they deal with dissent and, in a democracy, the free access to speaking about those issues.

So I would appreciate some comments on those specific issues, if you would.

Mr. Lund: Well, the role of the UCA in the electricity restructuring: as you know, the office was set up in 2003, and the role was to assist people in understanding and to give them assistance when it came to doing things like contracts and to assist in the presentations to the EUB because it's only a small portion of the electrical industry that has been deregulated, the generation and the retail. So there are things now that all of the transmission is still a regulated market. As a matter of fact, I know in my own case by the total cost of our bill that it's those areas that are regulated that are costing us much more money than the unregulated side. But, as you know, under the RRO, which is a regulated rate option, there were a number of hearings, and with the help of the advocate and others, like the REAs, there was some \$85 million trimmed off what would possibly have been approved. That's what the utilities were asking, and the EUB shaved some \$85 million off it. So that was a big win for the advocate.

I guess the big area originally – when the restructuring occurred, there were so many billing errors. It was just unreal the number of billing errors there were out there. I can give you a horror story in my own case because we happen to have four taps, and it was unreal the sloppiness. I know that they were changing their systems, but that transition was a real trying time. That's when the advocate came in and was acting and still does. Through that office we get some big mistakes, so the advocate goes to the utility company and works with them to get a resolution to those problems.

I'm not sure whereabouts you found the conflict of interest because I thought that the Auditor General's comments were more to do with the issues around the government services that were transferred over to RAGE. I know there was a lot of controversy about contracts that were not retendered and this sort of thing, but that's in the section that moved over. That wasn't in our section. We're only left with just a minimal amount of comments.

In the information that I had before me – I can read it to you – there were three things. The department made satisfactory progress on our prior recommendation to have recovery facilities and equipment available to resume business operations. That was one. That was one that all ministries went through. The department made satisfactory progress on a prior recommendation to complete a project management plan for the registry renewal initiative. That one is still with us, and we're still working on it. The department implemented a prior recommendation to implement access standards for the use and disclosure of personal information in the motor vehicle registry. Those were the three that were out of the Auditor General's report that were left with us. The rest were part of the identity that moved over to RAGE.

Well, I'm the same as the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance, who has said many times in the House: staff know that they can come to me if they have a problem. There is no penalty. We have an open door. We don't need to have so-called whistle-blower legislation. They have access. The 11 years that I have been a minister, that's been the policy all the time. Any employee of my department can phone me confidentially. Anybody in the department. It's an open door.

Dr. Swann: This is to protect people into the future, any department, any leader.

Mr. Lund: Well, I believe that it's an open door, and we have no problem with staff contacting us. That's something that I make very clear with our staff.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few comments that are going to be very directed in one area. I would say that it makes some sense what the minister has been talking about in terms of the program spending of \$90 million, which is an increase of over \$12 million. As I understand it, it's to address the sustained increases in transaction volumes and rising demand for various registries. The minister has alluded to it. Part of that money, I believe, is going to the privacy and security of information, which becomes a very important issue, especially in view of what's happened in some other government areas. So I think that under those circumstances the \$12 million increase probably makes good sense.

I'd like to just focus in on the Utilities Consumer Advocate. I probably won't take my full time today, Mr. Chairman. My understanding of the Utilities Consumer Advocate is to help consumers help themselves, to inform and empower them in Alberta's restructured energy markets, and to facilitate the representation of regulatory hearings and other proceedings.

9:00

Mr. Speaker, I go back to some of the discussions that we held in the House earlier on. As the minister is well aware, the Utilities Consumer Advocate discussion paper was leaked to the media. This discussion paper stressed that all five options suggested by Alberta Energy for the future residential electrical sales will penalize bill payers and benefit sellers, and then they added: "we are surprised and disappointed . . . Albertans expect and deserve that their Government will protect their interests in this policy, where the individual has little influence or option."

Now, I recollect the question period, Mr. Chairman. I think the minister said at the time – correct me if I'm wrong – that it was just a discussion paper and was not the final paper, but then, oddly, the Utilities Consumer Advocate issued a response to the discussion paper on wholesale and retail market designs. I guess the one question I would ask flowing from that – and I'd be interested in the minister's comments – is: why does the utility market advocate need to respond to its own work? That's what seems to have happened: a response to this paper. You've got the advocate responding to its own work.

The response, if I may so, Mr. Chairman, to its own discussion paper I don't think paints the government deregulation plans in much better light because they say here:

Government's transition to a competitive retail market has the potential . . .

I'll admit that it says "has the potential."

. . . to impose additional costs and risks on small consumers who could face 40% to 45% higher prices based on the current offerings by competitive retailers.

Well, the minister and the government can talk about new energy and electricity coming on and the rest of it, but the reality is that this is what the small producers, the farmers, the small businesspeople, and ordinary individuals are facing.

Both of these discussion papers, the draft, if you like, and the other one, seem to be saying the same thing, and I think that this is where this department and certainly the Utilities Consumer Advocate should be taking a much stronger role. I know that probably the minister will say that it's just a coincidence, but Mr. Jackson resigned after these two reports. He said, as I recollect, that it was probably just coincidence or something along that manner. But the

minister and the release from the Premier's office did not mention Mr. Jackson's position; he was both the deputy minister and the Utilities Consumer Advocate.

Now, I noticed that the minister has sent out a release and has a new deputy minister, and I was going to ask the question. I think I heard the minister say in regard to some other questions that the new person is both again, the consumer advocate and the deputy minister. I guess I might say to the minister that I wish they would perhaps rethink this policy. Why? I think that the consumer advocate should not be part of government. He should have some more independent role, at least be at arm's length, if he's going to be the advocate for the consumer because it's not always going to be the case. A government deputy minister has a certain role to play within government that may be somewhat different than an advocate, Mr. Chairman. I think this leaves it suspect.

I'll come to why I think it's a mistake by the minister's own department's business plan. The business plan of this ministry is quite clear. It says that it is the job of this ministry to "use consumer feedback and business intelligence to influence changes to retail utility policy and business practices to protect consumers." It says, too, to "ensure the accountability of utility companies in addressing consumer questions and concerns in a timely, accurate, and fair manner." In short, this ministry is responsible for protecting consumers' interest in the restructured utilities market.

Well, Mr. Chairman, by this minister's own business plan it's not doing very well. I'm looking at the performance measures that the minister I'm sure is aware of. I'm looking at 3.a, 3.b, and 3.c, and the percentages. I'll just do it quickly. I know that there are targets down the way but in 3.a the "percentage of Albertans aware of the role/services provided by the Utilities Consumer Advocate" is 31 per cent. Only 31 per cent of the people are even aware that this person exists. Well, I guess what I'm saying is that it's understandable if he's the deputy minister too. That's who they're going to know this person as. Then there's a slight passing grade for "percentage of contact centre customers 'satisfied overall' with services received," but a very failing figure is the "percentage of interveners expressing satisfaction with the cooperative protocol used in regulatory hearings." Only 20 per cent – only 20 per cent – are satisfied.

I guess I'll come back to the point that I was trying to make, that when you tie in the person that's supposed to protect the consumers and you make them the deputy minister, they're really serving two masters, I believe. I think that if that person was more independent – and I wish the minister would think about this – in speaking out, their performance measures would go up dramatically, perhaps perform more the role that I take it the government intends this person to have. I think that most people would feel that as a deputy minister he's not able to do the job advocating for the consumer that he should.

That would be my major suggestion. These performance ratings, I think the minister would agree, are pretty dismal. If he's not prepared to split that apart and make that consumer advocate more independent, what is the ministry doing, then, to improve these dismal performance ratings?

The only other comment, Mr. Chairman, I might make is in the same area. There's another service that the Utilities Consumer Advocate provides. I have them here, a couple of handouts about door-to-door salespeople and the like. On one of these handouts it says, "Electrical Marketing: What Consumers Should Know." On the door-to-door electricity marketing, it tells consumers – and I suppose it's not a bad thing to say – to "take the time to compare prices of electricity and other services offered by each company." The sad reality, though, is that in the two major cities there are really only two big energy providers. In Edmonton and Calgary there isn't that great a selection to sort of sit back and take the time with.

Under the guise of offering consumers a choice, this is what deregulation has given us: two major providers in the two cities, and they're not that different. There isn't that much choice. While it's probably good advice if you're in a deregulated market, what it's saying, you know – when you've only got two, it's not a monopoly but an oligopoly at best. I guess that when that happens, if you're going to argue deregulation and that there has to be a market there and there has to be competition, and that's not occurring, then I think we have to really think about it.

I guess that I'm saying to the minister – and it's probably not going to change; I've been around this long enough – that if the marketplace cannot be counted on to provide the essential services that people need to survive, then the government has to step in and regulate it. I don't consider deregulation of two, sort of, major players fighting each other in the cities real choice.

Mr. Chairman, I know there are other areas, and I appreciate the minister. As I said, I think the budget increase makes sense in view of what they're attempting to do, especially with the management of government records. With all the registry services, I certainly know why you need that extra money.

Those would be my comments.

9:10

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just make a few more comments on the UCA. I was disappointed to see Roger Jackson go. I want to make sure that you understand that.

The report, of course, came from the advisory committee who are holding hearings around the province. They're just ordinary people, but they've got a very good understanding of the electrical system, and quite frankly some of the comments that you made about the lack of competition: that's what they are saying. That's what they've been saying to us, the advisory committee. Of course, the response to the discussion paper was just that: it was a response. The situation that you commented about, that the small consumer could, if we just opened up the flood gates, be subject to a fairly large increase: that's not going to happen immediately. That would be over time.

I was very, very pleased that the advisory committee was honest and frank. This is what they heard. This is what they believe. They put it in writing and they sent it to us. I admire committees that we set up that come back and report exactly as they see it. As a matter of fact, I phoned the chair and thanked him for being very frank, very honest, and telling us what to look for.

There has been no decision made. We will be working with the Department of Energy and my colleagues. We will be coming to a decision before the end of June on what's going to happen to the RRO. As you saw in that last report, the advisory committee were talking about three- and five-year contracts or a rolling three. I hope to meet with the chair and, hopefully, the whole committee because I just don't totally understand exactly who the entity is that's going to buy this block of power that would be available for the small consumer. That's all evolving, it's coming out, and we'll see where it goes.

Your comments about a deputy versus a stand-alone and which would have the most impact. There are two schools of thought. One you described. The other is that a deputy within government probably has more impact and more authority and more ability to sway government policy than does someone totally outside. I mean, there are two schools.

Actually, when this was set up, I was pleased to see that it was a deputy position that had that office. I can tell you that because this

department is under the Fair Trading Act and other pieces of legislation, we're looked at to protect the consumer not just in utilities. What I'm looking at is even expanding that role so that we wouldn't have just a Utilities Consumer Advocate but, in fact, have a consumers' advocate and have the same advisory committee. I mean, there are other issues that are coming up, these fraudulent situations. Those are very important consumer issues. Automobile theft: another very important consumer issue.

We are expected to be the protector of the consumer, this branch of government, and I take that role very seriously and believe that we need to maybe even expand it and go beyond where we currently are with our advisory committee and our consumer advocate. So that's what we're looking at: even expanding the role. I believe that there is a real function for it.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to mention to the minister the goal of the efficient licensing and registration services, which is set out in the strategic plan. I believe that the department is doing an excellent job, and I've noticed that the quality and the efficiency of the registration of motor vehicles is exemplary. I know that there are different ways of achieving that registration, both by mail-in cheque and by appearing at a registry.

I had occasion to appear at a registry very recently in the north part of the city of Edmonton. I was able to present my registration renewal, my pink card, and my credit card to pay the registration on a couple of vehicles, and I was in and out within two minutes. So I compliment the minister on the efficiency of that registry.

I notice also that there's an 86 per cent satisfaction for the registries, and I would compliment the minister on achieving that goal.

I have a question for the minister, however, and that is that I note that there is \$280 million in revenue that's forecast from motor vehicle registrations. A casual and anecdotal observation. In the city of Calgary, at least, there seems to be a lot of people that are taking advantage of the Alberta advantage and coming to our province, and they seem to be driving around with licence plates from Saskatchewan and British Columbia and whatnot. It seems to be in all disproportion to those people that may be here for vacations or whatever. They're here in the middle of winter, not the best time for vacations.

It seems to me that we're losing out on a substantial amount of potential revenue there that could be put into servicing our infrastructure and our highways and streets and roads. I wonder whether or not the minister could just perhaps observe whether or not there are any indices or measurements where we could assess what proportion of vehicles would fail to comply with the proper time periods to get their Alberta registrations.

Finally, I just want to finish up with a compliment to the minister and his department with respect to the amendments that are being brought forward to the Business Corporations Act, which I had the pleasure of being involved with as the sponsor. I think that there are some very positive contributions to the economic position of Alberta in that Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005, particularly with respect to the provisions that provide for unlimited liability corporations. I know that I've been contacted by several law firms and accounting firms that are anxious to put that legislation into use, and there are deals and transactions that are waiting upon the implementation of that.

I just would also ask the minister perhaps if he could comment and tell the Assembly a little bit about where that process is at, whether or not there are some regulations and implementations that

need to be completed before users can use the Business Corporations Act for the purposes of incorporating those unlimited liability corporations; in other words, when it will be accessible to the people that are waiting for that legislation to go into force.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Thank you. Thank you very much for those comments. It's always good to hear those experiences about the registries. You know, you think about the way it used to be, when you had to take half a day off, go and take a number, and then go and sit down for however long. I remember hearing one individual talk about going to a government registry here in the city. This is just when the thing was being privatized. There was a private one at Leduc. He saw the big lineup, so he drove out to Leduc and then came back here. He had his licence. Had he stayed here, he still would have been sitting waiting for his number to be called. Yes, we know the service is good, and that's why you see that 86 per cent, good and improving.

9:20

Relative to the unlimited liability, a portion of the corporations act, the regulations, are being drawn up as we speak. It should be out very shortly. We will move it just as quickly as we can once the drafters have completed it. So that will be up and running, and we're very, very pleased. I'm very pleased with the staff and how they're very much in tune with the market and what we need to change to keep our legislation very current.

And thanks for carrying that bill. That was very important.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like to thank the minister for his introductory remarks and his attempts to answer our questions.

With what I have to consider tonight, I'd like to first of all focus on the ministry support activities, specifically "providing expertise and leadership in . . . risk and information/records management, as well as FOIP support to the Ministry."

For years we have used the phrase "information highway" to describe the electronic flow of knowledge and expertise. Let us pause to reflect how much that means. In the last century governments have encouraged economic and social development in the form of railways, then highways, airlines, and pipelines. Today it is an investment in information services that draws in those who are prepared to invest in and contribute to our society in other ways.

Consumer protection and other types of client services are an indispensable part of this equation. Only when people can be assured that their money is well spent will they be prepared to make their homes here. I am pleased to note that it is this sector of freedom of information and privacy protection in which Alberta is among the leaders in the western world. We led in the introduction of FOIP legislation and in the extent of the powers we were prepared to give our Information and Privacy Commissioner.

We lead in the delivery of a course online from the University of Alberta that is developing and deepening the skills of information access and privacy protection professionals across Canada. The U of A's information access and privacy protection program has been successful in attracting as its new manager one of the top figures in the country, Marc-Aurèle Racicot, who wrote the book on access and privacy protection in Canada and who oversees courses in English and French and workshops for governments across this country. This is very commendable.

Albertans expect their government to protect their personal and

privacy information. Why have we witnessed several incidents of the failure to protect information by the government, including the loss of computer tapes and microfiches containing pension information and the loss of electronic health records? How will this government increase the protection of private information?

I have some other financial questions I'd like to ask. I notice that there's been a budget increase of \$907,000 for strategic information technology services. Why such a drastic increase in budget, and can you explain, please, how the purchases are planned or what purchases are planned? Also, the expense for program support is forecast to rise by 42 per cent, from \$456,000 to \$650,000. I'm wondering why this increase is needed and what you hope it will accomplish. Another one: how is the increased spending on access and privacy management and compliance, accountability, and risk management going to benefit Albertans?

In conclusion, I'm wondering if you would consider supporting a motion from my colleague from Edmonton-McClung, which hasn't been discussed yet, to turn the Utilities Consumer Advocate into a utilities consumer ombudsman. I'm wondering: would you be able to support that direction?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Chairman, the loss of that information that the hon. member mentions was investigated by the commissioner. What he found was that there was a problem with information being shipped, as I understand it, from Calgary to Edmonton, and then after some process it was supposed to be shipped back for storage. Somewhere along the way in transit the information was lost. He made some recommendations as to how to make sure that those things didn't happen again. It was terribly unfortunate the way the businesses handled it, but with the things that the commissioner has said need to be done and with our department working with the commissioner, we hope that we can eliminate those kinds of things from ever happening.

I appreciate your comments on the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I don't know if you're aware, but I happen to have taken that act through the Legislature, so I'm very, very familiar with it. It was quite a piece of legislation.

On the specific questions that you asked, I'll get back to you in writing. You asked them so fast that I lost track of where you were at. We can easily get that back to you in writing.

As far as the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung's private member's bill – or is it a motion? I don't know which it is. I haven't had a chance to look at it, so I wouldn't want to comment on it until I've had a chance to look at what's being proposed.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thanks, Mr. Chair. One of the, perhaps, advantages of being one of the last speakers is that there's very little to talk about because they've all said my questions. However, I'll take a different tack on a couple of them if you don't mind.

A personal soapbox of mine, I guess, for lack of a better word, is this business of the lack of protection of personal information. The personal health records I think are a good example of things that can go awry. Actually, in my mind, the Americans certainly have access to all of our personal health information through the fact that they supply the IT support systems and, in fact, created the system to begin with.

I'm not sure exactly if this is your department, but it's under privacy. One of the things about actually creating these health files is that it is assumed that if you use the health system, you are allowing the health system to then put that information, your lab results or whatever, into a database. Nowhere has anyone asked me

if I would be willing to share my health records with a database. No one has asked me for that in writing. It is just assumed, and I think that that is a very bold assumption by whoever set this system up. Please correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is that the last vestige of personal records that I would possibly have control over are the actual ones that are between me and my doctor because it's doctor-client privilege. I'm not sure that even that's protected or that, in fact, I would be able to say: Give it to me, and I will look after it. That is, obviously, a personal little soapbox, but I think it's important. Certainly, other people have talked to me about it.

This is based on a personal experience that I had in Russia. I'm just wondering how much your department actually knows about chop shops. I was in an apartment in Russia just shortly after perestroika – well, it is still fairly lawless, but it was even more lawless at that point – when I actually saw a Mercedes that was painted a different paint job, the serial plates were totally changed, and it was all done within an hour. It went in one door, and it was out the other. Because they weren't afraid of being caught, it was very easy for me to simply walk into that chop shop and watch them. I can't believe that there aren't people in this country capable of doing that. They had high-speed dryers and great big vats of spray paint, et cetera. Needless to say, it was very sophisticated, but six guys were running it. They had a Volkswagen taken apart, boxed up into different parts, in a half an hour. They had a Mercedes sports car crated and onto a truck bound for New York in five minutes.

9:30

So I don't know. I know that there are chop shops around here, and rather than me having to buy those things that you put on your steering wheel – you know what I mean – and locking up my garage and being very fearful, I really would like the government to give me better protection and, you know, really go after the bad guys. Don't say that the onus is on me to always be looking after my things. I would hope that as a citizen of Canada and certainly of Alberta I am free to have some kinds of personal freedoms, that I'm not always looking over my shoulder, and that my government is looking after me from that point of view.

Just one more thing: the Utilities Consumer Advocate. I have a lot of complaints from seniors who are totally in the dark about: regulated, not regulated; yes, I can talk to the guy at the door, no, I can't talk to the guy at the door. I have now come to the point where I'll actually physically help them or my office staff will because they get 800 numbers or they get Internet that they can't handle. Anyone over 75 usually has problems with those sorts of things. They'll get the phone, and they'll get 800 numbers. They'll press a bunch of buttons, and if they're lucky enough and patient enough because they hate doing it, they'll actually get a real-live voice. But it's someone that is just repeating something off of a computer screen – there isn't any sort of human touch – and then they'll hang up in frustration.

These are the people that are living in their homes, trying to hang on, to stay in their homes, and their utility bills are just totally discombobulating them, I guess, for lack of a better word. They really don't know what to make out of it. They just keep paying it, and it keeps going up, and I'm sure that you can appreciate the level of frustration.

And one other thing. I believe that the Auditor General's report has already been alluded to, but just bear with me. Again, this may have been transferred to the other department, so please correct me if I'm wrong. It was on page 179 about government contracts and what measures have been implemented to ensure a fair and accountable system. I'm not sure if that's referring to the accounting system, and if it is, I would like to know what accounting system

you use. Do you use the Canadian generally accepted accounting principles system?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your comments about the health records. First of all, that's in the health records. The Minister of Health and Wellness, I believe that was within her department, so you might want to have that discussion with her tomorrow.

You talked about the U.S. having access to some of our information. The B.C. Privacy Commissioner did a study on the PATRIOT Act and how that can affect us and what the possibilities are there. Our commissioner is currently working with them. We will be getting advice as to what steps are going to be necessary because, yes, we don't want and won't accept that information that we gather from people here somehow finds its way into the U.S. and is accessible to U.S. agencies down there. We don't accept that, so we're looking at how we can fix that problem.

You talked about auto theft. As I mentioned in my comments earlier, tomorrow in conjunction with the Solicitor General and the Attorney General we're going to have the folks that did the report for us – Staff Sergeant Derek Curtis from the Calgary city police. He's chairing it now, and he's going to come, and then we'll be having a talk on it. There are a number of things that you can do to protect yourself. Government can't do everything, but we're also going to be doing some things proposed in the report that I think will go quite a long way to helping prevent this movement of stolen vehicles and curbers and other folks that have a way of assembling a vehicle. There's another issue that's out there that's a real big problem, and that's to do with vehicles that have been written off by insurance companies and then finding their way back into the marketplace. We have to put a stop to it.

I think you were probably on a lower level, the smaller stuff, the pawnshops. We're going to have to probably take a closer look at some of that activity. For example, in Quebec they don't allow your money shops, your payday-loan type institutions. They don't allow them, but they do allow pawnshops. Well, probably there's more problem in that area than there is in the payday loan. So we're looking at the activity of pawnshops. Now, there's a place for them. That's the thing that we have to recognize. There's a place for all of these, but we've got to be able to make sure that illegal activity is not occurring in those places.

The power situation and seniors. You just made the argument for maintaining the regulated rate option, and that's a reality. That's what the advisory committee is saying, so that will be part of our discussion when we make a decision on exactly how that's going to be handled. I urge you: if you have seniors that are having a lot of problems, they can certainly contact our office. We can send them information. If there are enough of them and they have enough problems, I would be prepared to ask one of my staff to go and talk to them because there are some basic things. We're trying to get any contract that might be out there in plain language so people can understand it. But I think that if there are a number of seniors in the community that are having the same problem, contact us and we'll see about sending somebody to talk to them.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to add to what the hon. member has just said about vehicle theft. I think I understand that there's something called the Alberta Vehicle Theft Committee that's funded by Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Yes.

Dr. B. Miller: Not in conjunction with the Solicitor General? It's Government Services. Okay. It's a serious issue because statistics seem to indicate that vehicle thefts in Alberta are up 15 per cent in 2003, including, interestingly enough, a 22 per cent increase in Edmonton alone. The person who is coming to give a report tomorrow is from Calgary, and I hope that he will take into consideration the Edmonton situation. I have no way of explaining why the increase should be greater in Edmonton than in Calgary, but certainly new strategies ought to be in place to deal with this, a great concern to the public. So that's my first issue, but others have mentioned it.

Now, land titles. I saw a very frightening program on television not too long ago – I think it was the CTV network – about horrendous stories from across Canada about families suddenly seeing a for sale sign go up on their front lawn because someone had managed to get into the land titles office and just changed the land title from one name to another. I was wondering if the minister could explain the process in Alberta. I haven't heard any stories about Alberta. Hopefully, there's a lot of security in place in terms of the land titles office, that and real estate agents or whoever is dealing in the sale of property have to show identification. Hopefully, it's not an easy thing for people to do. That's a horrendous kind of story, that a person's savings in their home could all of a sudden be put in jeopardy because of some security issue with land titles. I guess mortgage fraud fits in there, but I was especially concerned about what happens at the land titles office.

9:40

Vital statistics comes under Government Services. As a former minister in a church I've dealt with marriage licences for some 30 years, and to me I think it was a step backwards when marriage licences moved from vital statistics to private registry offices. Vital statistics still deals with marriage licences, of course, but now we send couples to private registry offices, where you can get a fishing licence and whatever. It seemed to me at the time a kind of dumbing down of the importance of marriage licences. I think that the public had a kind of attachment to vital statistics. That's where they went to get their licence.

I applaud, though, that in that process a lot of the functions that ministers had to perform were taken over by those private registry offices; for example, the receiving of all the information for the forms and the filling out of the forms. That happens in the registry office, and now clergy don't have to engage in that, and that's probably a good thing.

I guess that the only question that lurks in my mind, and maybe I'm just suspicious, although we have perhaps – I hope I'm not wandering into something that's completely hypothetical here. There is legislation before the House of Commons about same-sex marriage. Is the department considering getting out of the marriage business and leaving it to churches and synagogues to register marriages and to exercise their faith, whether they should marry a same-sex couple or heterosexual couples? Then the government would not have to deal with that issue. Is that being considered?

I hope not because the permission to perform civil marriages is laid down in the British North America Act, and it's a federal issue. Provinces are just supposed to carry out the licensing process, but they have to follow what the federal government, what the House of Commons, decides in terms of who should get married. Anyway, I have that question.

Now, to move from marriage to death – and for some people that's a distinction without a difference – I notice that the Cemeteries Act

and the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board are under Government Services. It's interesting that in a reference to the Cemeteries Act – of course, I've had some experience with this as a minister in a church over the years. There's a reference to the modernization of the Cemeteries Act, or one of the strategies of the business plan is to "develop and/or modernize consumer legislation (e.g. . . . the Cemeteries Act) to address marketplace issues." I just wondered what that is about.

Does that have something to do with changing trends in terms of moving away from the burial of bodies in the cemetery to cremation? Cremation seems to be more popular now, so maybe funeral homes are not making as much profit in terms of the option of cremation because you don't even need an urn. You don't even need to use cemeteries because you can spread ashes anywhere. In fact, a lot of churches have developed memorial gardens right next to the church, where they place the ashes, not a receptacle – that would be against the Cemeteries Act – but the ashes. I am assuming that the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board oversees the regulations in respect to funeral homes and sets standards for funeral homes and the costs that are associated with funerals.

My last point is just about Service Alberta, and here I'm asking the question as a new MLA. I notice that your goal 4 in the business plan deals with all the different departments and trying to work with ministries to promote their service. I was just wondering how this relates to our constituency offices. As a new MLA I'm conscious of the fact that we have to answer all kinds of questions and enable people to get access to government services. It would be a great idea, I think – and I don't know; maybe this is already happening – if our constituency managers could have some sort of orientation, especially if they're new, in how to access government services. I know, for example, that in WCB there are government liaison people that we can access, that we can call up, but what about all the other departments? I think our role as an MLA is to promote government services and to enable the ordinary person to get in touch with what they really need, whether it's AISH or whether it has to do with WCB or whatever. That would be great if we could have some direction in that respect.

Thank you.

Mr. Lund: You touched on a number of different things, so I'll go over them briefly. The auto theft issue. Yes, the city of Edmonton police are going to be present tomorrow along with the committee. Apparently, they're having some demonstrations. I don't know the full program, but this is an issue that's across the province. While it's currently this ministry that has championed this issue, it will be broken out into sectors and different departments. We won't be handling the legal stuff; that will be handled through different departments.

You talked about somebody breaking into land titles. No, that's not what happened. It isn't what happens. Nobody has broken into land titles, but there are some issues out there. In order for these schemes to work, there have to be a number of things happen. Often what happens in an identity theft is carelessness on the part of a landowner with private information and somebody is able to access that, a different individual, and then through different means – you heard just a couple of months ago about that driving school in Calgary where there were drivers' licences given out that were fraudulent, those kinds of things. Well, you had a number of people that you would consider to be trustworthy, professional people, and it turns out that they weren't.

So in all of this – with mortgage fraud, with identity theft – you get a team working together, and they find ways of doing some of this activity. Through the Real Estate Council, the Insurance Bureau

of Canada, and others, we've now got a committee currently working on this whole issue of mortgage fraud and what we need to do to make sure that they can't do it here in Alberta.

Yes, the vital statistics are in this department. You talked about marriage. The fact is that we don't marry people; we just simply register their marriage. Currently, of course, it's between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, and they can get a licence from us. You talked about lowering the importance of it by allowing it to be issued through a registry. Well, quite frankly, I think that changing that definition of who can get a licence is degrading it much more than moving it to the private sector ever even came close to doing.

9:50

The issue with cemeteries and bringing in that legislation. It has a lot to do with things like salespeople with prearranged funerals and a number of things that are happening there to make sure that our legislation can deal with those kinds of activities because that, once again, is a very active field that is changing almost monthly. What we need to do is make sure that we have enabling legislation that allows us to pass regulations and be able to get at it when we find that there is something going on that is dangerous to the consumer.

Service Alberta, to be able to call. That's exactly what I was talking about earlier, about having more services out. Registries would be one great place to deliver some of those services. Filling out forms, for example, to apply for various programs: well, maybe one of the efficient ways to do it would be through the registries.

Now, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East commented about elderly people not being able to use things like the Internet because a lot of this is available through the Internet. Well, yes, that's absolutely true. It's not only seniors. There are a lot of others that also don't have access. Maybe through registries would be a place. That's the kind of thing. Now, I urge you to get ahold of our office. We have a call centre that covers a whole host of the issues that you likely are facing, like landlord/tenant issues. Those seem to be pretty prevalent. There are a lot of those conflicts. They can get very good information through a phone call to our call centre.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate being able to just take a few minutes this evening to discuss Government Services. I guess I want to talk first a little bit about goal 2, "informed consumers and businesses, and a high standard of marketplace conduct," and the Fair Trading Act. "Marketplace awareness initiatives are targeted to both buyers and sellers, with a focus on educating them on their rights and obligations and empowering them to help themselves."

From there I want to move to deregulated electricity and the problems that it's causing Albertans. In goal 3 you talk about the Utilities Consumer Advocate. It's set up for the interests of residents, farmers, and small commercial businesses. That makes up a very small percentage of the actual electricity used here in the province, I believe between 15 and 20 per cent. Yet we've come up with a shortage of electricity, and as we all understand here, there's a . . . [interjection] Well, that's what there was, Luke. That's what there was and why we had to deregulate, we said, because we needed to spur some activity in the production.

So what we've done here, and the fear that we've heard this ever since NAFTA was signed is that if we start selling water to the States, if we sell electricity – we've opened up our natural gas – we have to compete with those individuals. It has driven up the price, which has been good for big business and for the government and the income that's come in here.

The area that I want to discuss, though, with electricity is that it really is an essential service here in the province, and it seems that for such a small group on the user side, the 15 to 20 per cent of the consumption, there has been a shortage that has come forward because of the demand from industry. There needs to be some way for the advocate to help the small producers, the small businesses, and the residents here in Alberta.

One of the things that has crossed my desk, that people have brought forward and that I'd like to share with you tonight, is to protect those small areas, perhaps, by having a two-tier system where the consumer, as in the residents, doesn't have to compete with big industry, who needs the electricity. It's been a regulated market. There should be some way of going back to regulate and say that this first 15 or 20 per cent needs to look after with the needs of Albertans. Then if industry wants to compete and have that free market after that, it would allow for free-market development, and they could use the electricity that they need.

The other area that I wanted to talk on is the rules and regulations. Ontario tried for a little while having what they call zero-base metering. It would be a market-driven area where producers could get and produce electricity. By setting up two meters – and the technology is there – they could run the meters back and, therefore, feed into the system and not have to pay the extra charges. The purpose of that is to spur more electrical production, especially from such things as we've talked about today and in the last few days: biomass reactors, windmill generation, and other areas that are coming forward with the new technology. The way it's set up now, they can't tie into the grid. It's very prohibitive. We need to open that up. I'd hope that it would be an area that Government Services would look at in being more innovative.

Also – and I've referred to it before – we give huge tax incentives and royalty breaks to those who are producing and working in the tar sands. If we were to give that same break and if people could put capital money into windmills or thermobiomass reactors and the likes of that and be able to write that capital off, that would be a huge incentive for small business to get in and produce. In my area there are school divisions, hospitals, and towns that are wanting to put up windmills, and it would be a great incentive if we would take the same attitude that we have in the oil and gas and mineral exploration and allow those writeoffs in the production of electricity.

I guess that's all I really wanted to share this evening. I appreciate Government Services and what we're trying to do for Albertans, and I hope we'll continue to be mindful that it's the Albertans that we're serving and not big business. Thank you.

Mr. Lund: Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member is right. The small consumer, or identities that consume less than 250,000 kilowatt hours a year, amounts to about 17 per cent of the total load, so that's true.

As far as water export to the U.S., we currently have a Water Act that prohibits any bulk export of water to the U.S. There would have to be a change in that legislation before that can happen, so I'm really not too worried about that one.

Your other comments about zero-base metering and the windmills. Those are interesting comments, and they could be fed into the Department of Energy. I can just tell you some of the work that I've done so far. I know that the idea of zero metering is an interesting one. The problem is that it's very expensive to implement, so unless you're producing quite a lot of energy, the cost of doing it is more than you're going to get out of it. So that's why that just isn't taking place.

Windmills. That's an interesting comment, but one of the things that we have to remember – and you may not be aware of it. When

I was Minister of Infrastructure, we purchased – 90 per cent of the government's power is now green. Half of that is windmills. The thing that you have to be aware of when it comes to windmills is that they only generate power about 35 to 40 per cent of the time. So you have to have all of the infrastructure backup for when the wind is not producing power, and that increases the cost. When you do the full life cycle cost, it's quite a bit higher. It's nice to have green, and it looks like it's cheap, but quite frankly it isn't that cheap. As a matter of fact, it turns out to be in the higher end.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to ask yet one more question of the hon. minister. It's in response to your comments to the questions asked by my colleague from Lethbridge-East with regard to the PATRIOT Act. I appreciate your comments. I, too, would share your concerns that we're totally against information being accessible by agents and authorities in the United States or any other jurisdiction, for that matter. What about data and information that is handled by American private service providers or contractors? I would just quote people like IBM or Microsoft, for example. This government relies heavily on partnerships with people like IBM and Microsoft. So what safeguards do we have in place that would prevent these companies or these private-sector partners from accessing this information whether we approve or disapprove? Also, should a leak happen or should a breach happen or should some of the information get funnelled to the U.S. . . .

10:00

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates, I must now put the question after considering the business plan and the proposed estimates for the Department of Government Services for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$99,046,000
---	--------------

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Pursuant to Standing Order 57(2) I move that the committee rise and report the estimates of the Department of Government Services and beg leave to sit again immediately to deal with the estimates of the Solicitor General.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Government Services: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$99,046,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Committee of Supply**
(continued)

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**
Solicitor General

The Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to present an overview of the Alberta Solicitor General's estimates and the 2005 to 2008 business plan. With me this evening from my department are Eric McGhan, the Deputy Solicitor General; Brian Skeet, the assistant deputy minister and director of law enforcement; Arnold Galet, the assistant deputy minister of correctional services; Jim Bauer, our new senior financial officer; Annette Bidniak, our new director of communications; and Peter Davis, my executive assistant. Thank you very much for coming this evening. They usually work till 11 o'clock, so we'll try to be done by then, but we'll see.

Mr. Chairman, over the next 15 minutes or so I'll present to you highlights of the services and support the Solicitor General provides Albertans for their hard-earned tax dollars. Following my presentation I'd be happy to answer questions that remain, but should we run out of time, I'd be pleased to provide responses in writing to the hon. members.

The vision of the Solicitor General's department is to "ensure Albertans have safe and secure communities in which to live, work and raise their families." Each and every day we strive to achieve this vision by providing Albertans with a variety of supports and services.

The five goals that lead the programs laid out in the business plan are: one, to "ensure safe communities in Alberta;" two, to "ensure secure and efficient custody, community supervision and transportation of offenders;" three, to "facilitate the rehabilitation of offenders;" four, to "ensure the safety of Albertans by providing government security services and crisis management planning;" and five, to "provide services to victims and ensure they have a more meaningful role in the criminal justice system."

To help achieve these important goals, Mr. Chairman, the Alberta Solicitor General's budget for this year is more than \$405 million, an increase of more than \$46 million over last year's comparable forecast. Of the total budget \$207 million goes to policing services, organized and serious crime response, and crime prevention; \$146 million is spent on remand and correctional centres, offender supervision in the community, and rehabilitative opportunities for offenders; \$22 million covers courtroom security, prisoner transport, counterterrorism crisis management, and Executive Council security; \$15 million goes to victims' programs and services, and \$15 million also goes to the ministry support services. All told, this is a significant investment to improve the quality of life in our communities.

When you examine the services we provide the citizens of this province, it's clear that this ministry is inextricably linked to the overarching goal of the Alberta government, which is to make Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. A safe and secure community is where people want to live and, of course, visit. I'm pleased and proud to tell you that Alberta continues to have the lowest crime rate among the four western provinces, and we intend to keep it that way.

To help maintain this enviable position, with the additional \$46 million in the budget this year we will add nearly 200 police officers to Alberta communities. This is the single largest increase of police officers in this province in 20 years. More than 100 of these officers will be new RCMP officers hired for rural Alberta. Up to 30 more RCMP officers will be redeployed from court security and prisoner transport duties to front-line policing duties. Sixty new police officer positions will be created to enhance Alberta's response to organized crime, and these officers will immediately tackle the priority problems of meth production and distribution and marijuana grow operations, which spark other serious crimes or provide seed money for other crime ventures.

The Solicitor General's department is also chairing a cross-ministry working group on the challenges and impacts associated with methamphetamine. The illegal drug business does serious damage to our society, and it also sucks young people into gangs with the lure of excitement and fast money. Gangs do the dirty work for those at the top of the criminal food chain, and organized crime is now extending its reach into smaller centres. It's not just a big-city problem anymore. Young people everywhere are at risk. The only way to disrupt these activities that degrade our communities is to build a plan that targets all levels of the organized crime business. We must go after the roots of the poisoned tree too, not just clip the branches.

10:10

The extra 60 positions in this budget more than double the number of police officers already funded by the province who are dedicated to investigating organized crime. The work of these organized crime investigators is supported by the Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta, that is also funded by the province. The role of CISA is to collect, analyze, and distribute criminal intelligence to law enforcement agencies, conduct threat assessments of organized crime in the province, support joint force operations, and provide specialized police training.

Over and above the 200 extra police positions we will dedicate resources to establish an integrated child exploitation investigation team that will focus on Internet-based crimes that target children.

This year we modified the policing grant formula to significantly decrease the financial burden on smaller towns and cities, especially those with populations between 5,000 and 20,000.

To replace the RCMP officers who will be redeployed to the front lines, dozens of provincial protection officers will be hired to provide courtroom security and courthouse perimeter security as well as prisoner transfers, of which there were 47,000 in the province last year.

We will be putting more staff into correction centres and making investments in safety equipment for correctional officers. Correctional officers in this province will be the first in Canada to be equipped with stab-resistant protective vests.

In addition, with equal investment from Infrastructure and Transportation the Solicitor General will implement court video conferencing across the province. This will reduce the potential for security breaches by enabling offenders to make routine court appearances from remand centres rather than being transported to and from courtrooms.

The Solicitor General will continue to ensure that victims are treated with dignity and respect and that they promptly receive information, assistance, and financial benefits. The report of the Alberta victims of crime consultation laid out a 10-year vision and makes a number of recommendations to achieve this vision.

Our department has already initiated several of the recommendations. Among them, the victims' grant program budget has been increased and has more than doubled in the past two years. Plans have been submitted to implement a revised organizational structure within the victim services branch, including the addition of positions for a training officer and aboriginal programs co-ordinator. A proposal will be developed this year to provide funding to pay travel expenses for victims to attend trials and observe sentencing.

Amendments to the Victims of Crime Act have been submitted to the Legislature, and we expect they'll be passed this spring. Once this occurs, victim services providers will be provided with the revised principles and expectations.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to the budget and resource increases there are other key initiatives that our department has undertaken. They include but are not limited to a number of significant changes which have been proposed under Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005. The key issues centre on more accountability by police through stronger oversight from civilian police commissions and the Solicitor General's director of law enforcement.

Where the decision to request an outside investigation currently rests with a chief of police, an amendment allows the police commission to initiate an external investigation. In addition, the amendment allows an external investigation or monitoring of any complaint or incident where it would be in the public interest to do so. The amendment contains a clause that ensures that police commissions are trained in their roles and responsibilities.

Our department accepted the MLA Policing Review Committee recommendation calling for the establishment of a police training college for recruit training and ongoing professional skills development. This single-site training facility will help ensure consistent recruiting standards and the highest standards of training for all police officers and other law enforcement related personnel.

Mr. Chairman, we are also conducting a special constable review, where Art Johnston, MLA for Calgary-Hays, is leading a review into the province's special constable program, which provides limited peace officer appointment to those who provide a supplementary level of service to our 5,000 sworn police officers. While they provide a variety of important services, they should not be seen as potential replacements for sworn police officers. Once the review is complete, we will have a clearer vision of the roles and responsibilities of special constables in the province and how they best fit into the law enforcement matrix in Alberta.

Aboriginal policing initiatives are another priority for our ministry. We are working with First Nations communities to provide adequate, effective, and culturally sensitive policing throughout the province. Currently there are five tripartite First Nations police services operating in Alberta. First Nations police officers now receive a salary and benefits package comparable to other municipal police services of a similar size. Their patrol equipment has been improved and is either ahead of or similar to other police services. Their uniforms are new and up to date, and soon their patrol units will be equipped with new in-vehicle records management technology. All First Nations police services must now meet the same selection and recruitment standards as all municipal police services.

Other First Nations initiatives include a police officer secondment program, a forensic identification program, and an aboriginal police studies program. The Solicitor General also funds First Nations

crime prevention co-ordinator positions through several contract agreements. We also have a number of programs in place for the benefit of First Nations people that support the cross-ministry aboriginal policy initiative.

Mr. Chairman, Alberta is renewing its crime prevention strategy and community justice policy to encourage communities to develop initiatives that deter crime, as well to address the root causes of criminal behaviour, and through the co-ordination of youth justice committees to strengthen community bonds that have been broken by criminal acts.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the mission of the Solicitor General is to serve Albertans by ensuring safe and secure communities through effective policing, security, and correctional services, and when crime is committed, to assist victims of crime. The overview I have presented of our programs and services clearly shows that we have met this expectation.

This concludes my presentation. I'd be happy to answer questions at this time, but should we run out of time, I'd be pleased to provide my responses in writing.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I have to say at the outset: why are we always talking about policing so late at night? It seemed to be 11:30 when the Police Act came up for discussion – 11:30, quarter to 12, whatever it was – and again tonight. Is this some sort of revenge on the opposition?

An Hon. Member: It's the night shift.

Dr. B. Miller: It's the night shift.

Mr. Stevens: We're here too.

Dr. B. Miller: I know you're here too. Right.

Mr. Mason: Well, that makes it better.

Dr. B. Miller: Right. That makes it better.

I would like to commend the Solicitor General and his departmental staff for their work in producing the 2005-06 estimates and the business plan.

At the very beginning of our legislative session we were faced with the tragedy of four young RCMP officers who were killed, and I know that the Solicitor General felt this loss very deeply. I wrote him a letter conveying my sympathy. It was not easy to just go on and continue with work in a normal manner given that tragedy. It was important for us to set aside partisan politics for a while and unite together to mourn and to remember those fallen officers.

The Solicitor General's department has a huge responsibility, as the Solicitor General has pointed out, in carrying out the vision of ensuring that Albertans have safe and secure communities in which to live, work, and raise their families. Most of us take this safety and security for granted until our lives are interrupted by a break-in or a child who has a drug problem or an identity that has been stolen.

10:20

I notice in the performance measures under goal 1 that the public perception of safety is quite high, that the percentage of Albertans who feel not at all worried about their safety from crime is about 71 per cent, and that's quite high. On the other hand, one-quarter, 25 per cent, report that they have been the victim of crime in the past year, and I think that is quite high. That is startling. I think that

maybe when you look at statistics like this, it's sort of an averaging out over the whole province. The problem with crime is that there are communities and neighbourhoods where there's a much higher percentage of crime than other places.

This came home to me in a study that I was a part of for the Quality of Life Commission here in Edmonton. We commissioned a person to go into the inner city and interview children about their feelings about their community. The study was quite startling because we thought that the children, especially in poor neighbourhoods, would talk about food and lack of recreation and so on, but the top issue that they talked about was safety, not feeling safe in the community. Children in all of the interviews routinely described experiences with guns and knives, domestic violence, police, theft, fire, drugs, alcohol use. It was clear to us that we have to start looking at particular communities, especially where our youth and our children do not feel safe; in other words, we have to focus on communities and community policing.

I'm encouraged by the fact that the mission statement, the vision of the Solicitor General's department, does mention – I think this is a long-term strategy – that “it will focus on the continued reduction of violent crime by improving its commitment to policing, and community policing programs.” I guess in a few minutes I would like to raise the question whether the additional police that are being added to the department will be focusing on community policing. It seems to me that that is one of the greatest needs.

In line with this, it is encouraging to note that there is an increase in the overall budget of 12.9 per cent and that \$24 million in new funding will go to increase provincial policing programs.

The Solicitor General mentioned the adding of police, and I wasn't quite sure about the numbers. At the end of the estimates there's a mention of the FTEs, that there is an increase of 200, to 2,290, which is up from 2,090. I wasn't clear about what these new police are going to do; for example, what the ratio is – I think you stated it – between rural policing and urban, and also how IROC fits into that. I think you mentioned that there are going to be 60 additional positions in IROC, integrated response to organized crime. Are those 60 additional positions a part of the 200, or are they taken from other areas? I think we just need a little bit of clarity on the new policing, how that is in place.

You know, I think that the department has a big challenge. It's different from other departments. There's a tremendous amount of public interest in policing, and it's increasing. Even though, as you mentioned, crime rates are relatively stable – and you expressed some pride in the fact that Alberta's crime rates comparatively with other provinces seem to be quite good – the interest on the part of the public in the functioning of the police and in the performance of the police is increasing. There may be a number of reasons for that. I think that the scientific development in investigative practices like the use of DNA has led to a lot more sophistication, and that is intriguing for the public. The popular TV programs, of course, like *CSI* and movies and so on that focus on policing lead the public to think that it knows something about policing, but probably in most cases the public is wrong.

The public is more interested, I think, in helping out and getting involved. I found that there was a lot of interest in the Police Amendment Act, 2005, even in my own constituency, where people asked to come and see me because they were concerned about the complaint process.

I think this interest of the public also dovetails with the whole notion of community policing. Community policing involves a partnership between the community and the police. I think that there is a great deal of interest, that there should be more integration of the police with the public, being responsive to the public's wish to be

involved. I don't know. Throughout the business plan community policing doesn't get I think the attention that it deserves.

Let me point out a few things here in the business plan that I have questions around. The first one is 1.1 on page 404, where the strategy in terms of ensuring safe communities in Alberta is to “implement changes to the Police Act to ensure accountability and public confidence in law enforcement through citizen and government oversight.” That's a reference to Bill 36, which is making its way through the Legislature.

There are a lot of questions about this whole issue of proper public civilian oversight, and we keep having to deal with issues that occur, events that occur. For example, the recent event – and I think that I can talk about this because it's not before the courts anymore – the Edmonton police officer who used a taser in respect to an individual who was sleeping in a car. I think he used it some five different times. The judge who handled the case of the person being dealt with found the use of the taser to be excessive. What was the expression? Cruel and unusual punishment. Then this was turned over to the Calgary Crown prosecutor's office. In order to not appear that there be any bias, it was turned over to the Calgary office, and then it was sent back to the Edmonton Police Service, to the acting chief of police of the Edmonton Police Service, where there's an internal investigation.

There's where the problem is. How can an internal investigation by the acting chief of police satisfy the public in terms of public, transparent, open accountability? It's still a case of police investigating police. I think that as long as we're going to have all those kinds of incidents occur, then the public will continue to ask questions about the complaint process and about accountability to the public in terms of oversight.

Now, the next point, 1.2: “Develop a model for police funding to ensure that adequate and effective policing is maintained throughout Alberta.” We've already asked questions in the Legislature about, for example, Crowsnest Pass feeling shortchanged by the Solicitor General's department in terms of their policing needs. We've raised questions about: what is the process? What is this model for police funding if it's always a question of, “Well, you have to sign on the dotted line, or you won't get any money”? There's the failure to honour previous agreements in the case of the Crowsnest Pass, the amalgamation of municipalities to form the Crowsnest Pass. They thought that they were going to get the funding that they needed. So are the rules being changed in mid-course?

10:30

Also, in terms of the model for police funding I've heard the Solicitor General mention the importance of policing for rural municipalities as extremely important, but what about Edmonton and Calgary? It still is the case that funding for police in urban Alberta at \$16 per capita is the lowest in Canada. So it's nice to see the increase in the budget, but still we have to ask the question of whether the funding for policing, especially in a city like Edmonton, is adequate.

Just to mention another point, 1.7, on that same page. This is the issue of the exploitation of children via the Internet, and I think this is extremely important. No one would disagree with the importance of this issue. I'm also wondering about the funding for a provincial ICE team similar to what we have in other provinces, like the Toronto police's child exploitation section or the Ontario project P unit. Manitoba has a program, integrated child exploitation unit. What is Alberta planning to do in terms of fighting child exploitation through the Internet? What kind of strategies are in place, and what kind of funding should be put in place?

Well, there are so many issues here. Let me quickly go on to a

couple of other points through this business plan. Under goal 2, the need for training, ensuring that training opportunities are provided to staff raises the whole issue about the staff in respect to courtrooms and so on. The Kyle Young incident I think brought to our attention the whole issue of whether courtroom guards are properly trained. There were two guards involved, and one only had a couple months' training, and here he was working in the courthouse. Is that adequate? So I think the issue of level of training is really important.

Goal 3. I just mention that I think that this is a really important area. We don't have time to go into it fully in terms of the rehabilitation of offenders and all the different programs that are involved and the funding that's necessary for all of those programs. I know that it's so important to enable offenders who have served their time to find their way back into the community, and societies like the John Howard Society, of course, have been working on that for years.

I did have the opportunity recently to sit down with a number of ex-cons who have served their time and who are now in various kinds of programs, and they brought to my attention how difficult it is to find their way back into the community after serving time; for example, coming out of a correctional institute without any ID and not able to even go to a bank and open an account because they have no ID. Some of them it took weeks, months to be able to find an ID. I think that there's so much that needs to be put in place in terms of enabling people to find their way back into the community.

[Dr. Brown in the chair]

Another question I have is about the victims of crime fund. According to the estimates there actually will be a surplus in the victims of crime fund. On page 340, where the victims of crime fund is outlined, in fact, in 2004-05 there was a \$6 million surplus, and in the 2005-06 estimates it appears that they're almost at a \$4 million surplus. So I was wondering what happens to these surpluses. Do they stay in the fund? Do they disappear into general revenue? Are these surpluses going to be used to help fund various programs for victims, fund various organizations that can assist victims of crime, fund sexual assault centres, for example? What happens to that money?

Also, I think the idea of a one-time payment to victims based on the injuries they receive is, as far as I'm concerned, quite problematic; for example, the example that we dealt with today in question period where a young man was raped in the remand centre and received one-time payment. But the payment only went so far. It didn't enable him to actually have the kind of long-term counselling that he needed. Also, it only provided medication for a short time, and then the money disappeared.

It seems to me that we have to do more. We just passed legislation looking at the basic principles of justice and respect for victims. Certainly, we need more work and more money channelled in the direction of caring for the victims of crime, especially those who are under the care of the government in their remand centre.

If I can make this comment, I didn't appreciate the reference to this young man as being some sort of criminal who deserved somehow not to be treated as a real human being. The remand centre is where people who are awaiting trial go, and they're presumed innocent until they're proven guilty. It's not a correctional institute like some of the others.

Mr. Magnus: How much should he have got for that?

Dr. B. Miller: \$11,000.

Mr. Magnus: Yeah, how much?

Dr. B. Miller: That's all he got. Well, that's another issue.

What criteria are used to determine how much money a victim of crime gets?

I think that my time is up, right? Okay.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora raises a number of very good questions and some very good issues that I want to respond to.

He did mention the issue that occurred on March 3 of this year in Mayerthorpe, where four young RCMP officers lost their lives in protecting and serving this country as well as this province as well as the residents of Mayerthorpe-Whitecourt. It was a tremendous loss to all of us but, as well, obviously, a learning experience for all of us as we look at some of the issues that police officers have to deal with on a daily basis, the criticism they receive from both the public and the media on a daily basis, but as well their outpouring of service to the community and the fact that they will put their lives on the line to protect citizens.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to start off with the issue regarding IROC that the hon. member brought forward. I just wanted to provide him with some information regarding IROC. In fact, in 2004 there were significant increases in the amount of marijuana seized by the northern and southern Alberta marijuana investigative teams, known as NAMIT and SAMIT respectively. In 2004 these teams seized marijuana with an estimated street value of \$131 million. These large-scale well-organized grow operations are almost exclusively the product of organized crime, and of course other criminal activity associated with marijuana grow problems, such as mortgage frauds, home invasion robberies, health issues from contaminated homes, underscore the increasing collateral damage associated with marijuana grow operations.

10:40

The RCMP report on the growth and the number of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories discovered in Alberta over the past several years. Of 23 labs discovered, 11 of these labs were known to have organized crime affiliation. This is a growing and a disturbing trend.

When we talk about organized crime and gang activity, look at the recent statistics that indicate that over 50 per cent of homicides in Calgary and Edmonton can be linked to organized crime and gang activity. Once thought to be a problem associated with major urban centres, organized crime and gangs are now spreading their tentacles to all corners of Alberta.

The Hells Angels have recently doubled their ranks and have begun a high-profile strategy of intimidation in an effort to re-establish their criminal influence throughout Alberta, as was seen in the province of B.C. just recently. Other organized crime groups, in particular Asian, aboriginal, Jamaican-based networks, have also begun to establish themselves in all parts of the province. The growth of aboriginal street gangs, including the Redd Alert, the Indian Posse, Alberta Warriors, has been realized most notably in northern Alberta. Traditional Italian organized crime links have been expanded in the Calgary region.

When we talk about the integrated response to organized crime, Mr. Chairman, that began just two years ago, the response and the work that has been done so far has been tremendous, needless to say, and the funding that is provided to them does provide for 51 officers that work both in Edmonton and in Calgary and with the RCMP in

an integrated model. They work together sharing information, sharing resources, sharing intelligence so that intelligence-lead investigation provides the information they need to in fact work together to target major organized crime in the province.

When the hon. member speaks about the 200 officers that were included in this year's budget – some say it was the largest increase of police officers in Alberta since the March West. I don't believe that's so, but it would be close. Budget 2005 included \$24 million for the deployment of nearly 200 police officers into Alberta's communities. Over 100 new RCMP provincial police service members will be hired for rural Alberta, and these officers will be in those communities that the province pays for, so they'll be in those communities that are all under 5,000.

The equivalent of an additional 30 RCMP provincial police service members will also be redeployed from the court security prisoner transport duties that they presently have throughout Alberta. Whether it's in northern Alberta transporting prisoners or whether they're sitting in the courts in Grande Prairie, Peace River, or Drumheller, Mr. Chairman, these officers will be redeployed with provincial protection officers that will be replacing them and their duties in the courts to ensure the protection of the judges, the prosecutors, defence counsel, the public in the courtroom as well as the court premise and the security of the court building or provincial building.

The 60 new positions that the hon. member mentioned, Mr. Chairman, will be created to enhance Alberta's response to organized crime. These 60 new positions will be in a combination of provincial and municipal police positions: 20 of them will be allocated to the RCMP, and 40 will be allocated to municipal services; namely, Edmonton and Calgary as well as Medicine Hat and Lethbridge.

An additional \$6 million for municipal policing grants should also result in an increase in municipal police resources, although it will be up to the affected municipality to determine exact numbers. These new officers will be brought on stream as soon as possible, recognizing that police services will have to recruit and train individuals to fill the newly created positions. When we talk about these 60 new officer positions, we don't want to take 20 from Edmonton and take them off the street, Mr. Chairman, or from Calgary or from the RCMP. What we want to do is ensure that for the 18 that we're going to be funding here in Edmonton, they're also going to be hiring 18 so that they're not going to lose any manpower on the street.

The hon. member mentioned as well the Police Amendment Act, 2005, that is before this Legislature in third reading, and the need for amendments to the act. The act is almost 20 years old. It was probably drafted in 1985 and proclaimed in 1988, Mr. Chairman, so obviously there's a need. I think many, many of us on this side of the House firmly believe that legislation should be evolving, that it shouldn't remain static. We should always be looking at legislation in the future to see that as society and trends change, we ensure that we're staying on top of how the legislation should be affecting every Albertan.

The draft changes that the hon. member mentioned with regard to the new act will enhance the role of the local police commission in overseeing the complaint process by ensuring that each commission has a public complaint director, allowing the commission to initiate an external investigation, ensuring that commissions are trained in their roles and responsibilities, requiring the chief of police to provide the commission with 45-day progress reports. As well, it will enhance the oversight of complaints at the provincial level by making the director of law enforcement responsible for monitoring the process of complaints, requiring that serious incidents that may

require an external investigation or process monitoring system be reported, and allowing for external investigations or monitoring of any complaint or incident where it is in the public's interest.

Obviously, Mr. Chairman, these are extremely important amendments to this Police Act here in Alberta. We are taking the lead with regard to civilian oversight. No other province has four arms of civilian oversight, so obviously we are making changes forward in ensuring that civilian oversight has the ability to ensure transparent investigations with regard to internal investigations.

I want to assure and advise the hon. member, though, as well, that there are two clear and distinct investigations. One is a criminal investigation, and one obviously is a conduct investigation, which is governed by the regulations, which clearly lists all the offences that an officer could be charged with and could be reprimanded for. Again, it provides for discipline from a reprimand to dismissal from the police service. So all of those issues with regard to discipline, with regard to misconduct are all listed in the present regulations.

The act will provide for increased public oversight to ensure that investigations are timely, that they're done appropriately. Our time limit ties in with five of the 10 provinces. We have a one-year time limit. Ontario has six months, and Newfoundland and Labrador has a three-month time period for the laying of complaints, which we feel, obviously, is extremely short.

10:50

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member talked a little bit about the issue with regard to the taser situation and the investigation that took place originally back, I believe, in 2002-2003. An incident occurred, and a criminal investigation by the Edmonton Police Service took place. The file went to the Crown prosecutor's office in Calgary. It was reviewed by two senior Crown prosecutors independently of each other as well as an additional review by the chief Crown prosecutor before the file was sent back to the chief of police here in Edmonton, Chief daCosta, who was advised, obviously, through the chief Crown in Calgary that there was not a reasonable likelihood of conviction; therefore, no charges should be considered laid. That, of course, was released this afternoon to the public.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

I should mention, though, as well, that now that the criminal charge has been dealt with, Mr. Chairman, the process of the internal investigation will just begin. Therefore, that internal investigation will look at the regulations to determine: was there excessive use of force? If there was excessive use of force, obviously the process will have to undertake itself to determine, in fact, what that was. Of course, there is a process in place under the act to provide an internal hearing for the individual.

When we talk about the use of taser or we talk about the use of enforcement where they talk about the use-of-force policy, all police services throughout Alberta have a use-of-force policy. The hon. member mentioned that with regard to use of force, and I just want to bring that up, Mr. Chairman, because there are use-of-force policies throughout the province. Are they consistent? That, in fact, we're going to be working on. First of all is the arrest control techniques; second is the use of a baton; third would be pepper spray; fourth, possibly the taser – I don't know where that fits in, but we are working on that – and fifth, of course, is lethal force, which would be your sidearm. But provincial standards regarding policing initiatives are critical in where we want to go, and standards have been created and forwarded to all police services in Alberta for implementation.

We've begun the process of staffing and auditing, that will be able

to assist our police services in addressing the needs outlined by the standards and ensure that the standards have been implemented and are adhered to. These, of course, Mr. Chairman, come in alliance with our Auditor General's recommendation regarding policing standards. So we are responding to those issues. The police services were amongst those calling for provincial leadership in this area and were also key stakeholders in the development of the standards, so we anticipate no issues with compliance by various police services as we move forward this year and into the future with regard to other areas of policing standards to ensure that policies and procedures fall in line with each other and that they are similar throughout our various police services.

The hon. member brought up the issue regarding the new model of policing, and I want to touch on that and the fact that it's a very, very important issue. The town of Crownsnest Pass was mentioned. But I do want to just let the hon. member know that prior to budget 2004 the department consulted with the AUMA and the AAMD and C on a prospective policing funding formula. At that time they agreed to a formula that would come about, but obviously with concerns in the budget last year the numbers weren't the same as what they had hoped for.

This year, last fall, we met with stakeholders regarding our legislation but, as well, regarding funding. We met with the AUMA and the AAMD and C and looked at what we could do with the funding that we had in place but, as well, what Treasury Board was going to be providing to us. We also received numerous letters from towns and cities with populations between 5,000 and 20,000 because of the significant costs of providing funding for policing and the minimal tax base that some of those smaller towns have. That's the issue that we wanted to address. We wanted to address the fact that those smaller communities needed the additional funding. Those smaller communities don't have the tax base that the larger communities do. In total there are eight municipalities between 20,000 and 100,000.

So what we did, obviously, is that we came down with a formula that would determine that those communities between 5,000 and 20,000 each receive a base payment of \$200,000 with a per capita of \$8 on their population over 5,000. Those communities between 20,000 and 100,000 were given a base rate of \$100,000 and a per capita of \$14 on their population over 20,000. Calgary and Edmonton continue to receive the same per capita grant as they had the prior year, with a little extra funding going to Calgary with a population increase and the same amount going to Edmonton as their census hasn't come into play yet.

Mr. Chairman, those are some of the issues with relation to the budget.

The Crownsnest Pass issue is a very interesting one that we've had to deal with and work with. Four communities have amalgamated into one with a total population of, I believe, 6,700 people. The Police Act clearly states that municipalities under 5,000 will receive policing provided by the province of Alberta. It doesn't talk about a policing grant. It doesn't talk about a municipal policing grant. There is no mention of a grant in the Police Act. What it does say is that municipalities with a population under 5,000 will receive their policing paid for by the province of Alberta.

So the policing grant program provides for funding to communities over 5,000, and that's where the issue is. I know that the hon. Minister of . . . [Mr. Cenaiko's speaking time expired.]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the hon. minister for his explanations. The only other issue that I think was not dealt with is the victims of crime fund.

I wanted to focus for a few minutes on correctional services. I notice in the budget on page 335, vote 3.2.1, in relation to adult remand and correctional centres there is an increase in the budget of \$6 million. I'm not objecting to the amount. I think that in time as the critic for the Solicitor General I'd like to investigate correctional institutes throughout Alberta and find out what kind of conditions they have and what kind of improvements are being made, but maybe you could help us understand how that increase in money is going to be used.

Of course, the Remand Centre in Edmonton comes up for discussion, it seems, every year. If you're looking back at previous reviews of the budget, there seem to be lengthy discussions about the Remand Centre and often references that it's a kind of Third World situation. Even today we had a discussion in question period about it.

11:00

Double-bunking. I know there are statistics about doubling-bunking across Canada, but that doesn't give us the excuse in a very rich province to have overcrowding at the remand centre. The remand centre isn't even a place for people who are sentenced to periods of incarceration. Inmates are sent elsewhere for that. In the remand centre you're waiting for trial, innocent until proven guilty, so why are we putting people into those kinds of situations?

In the past it's been the case where people actually asked for longer sentences so that they could get to go to Fort Saskatchewan or some other correctional centre and not stay in the remand centre. All kinds of studies have proven how detrimental overcrowding is to people in those kinds of situations. So how much of this money, this increase, is going toward the Edmonton Remand Centre? What kind of plans are there in the future to deal with the remand centre? How about building something different, something that is more humanitarian than what we have now?

The other issue, if I could switch completely to another issue, is the reference on page 404 under 1.10 to the youth justice committee program and especially the relationship between youth justice committees and probation officers. Can the minister tell us under what authority, specifically, probation officers have to review decisions of youth justice committees? What is the process of appeal if a young person is unhappy with the decision of a youth justice committee? Can probation officers, then, just reverse what the youth justice committee suggests? There was an example in Stony Plain just recently where a youth justice committee resigned because of a difference of opinion with the probation officer. I was wondering if you could shed some light on the role of youth justice committees in relationship to probation officers.

Two further questions.

The Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much. I'll finish up answering the hon. member's questions as well. The hon. member mentioned with regard to project ICE, the exploitation of children, and obviously how important this project is going to be for us in Alberta. Although it's not mentioned in the report or the term isn't mentioned in the budget, we do address it in the plan that we're working on presently with the police services throughout the province, having just met with, in fact, the chiefs of the RCMP in Edmonton and Calgary yesterday.

The accessibility and anonymity of the Internet has dramatically increased the dangers of child exploitation. The Internet allows pedophiles to make contact with children and youth and exchange illegal pictures of abuse, all under the guise of secrecy. This makes

addressing these forms of technological crime very challenging, and it's important that police and other stakeholders are educated about new technologies and methods of interception. RCMP and municipal services are proposing establishing in conjunction with the Solicitor General an integrated child exploitation, or ICE, unit in Alberta to better address these serious crimes by supporting law enforcement and exposing and prosecuting those who use the Internet to sexually exploit children.

Mr. Chairman, we are currently addressing this problem through collaborative partnerships between key players such as government ministries, law enforcement agencies, Internet service providers, and the public. A recently developed strategic plan known as the prevention of child and youth sexual exploitation under the Alberta children and youth initiative outlines five key areas of action: education, awareness, prevention/protection/enforcement, research, and training. Several ministries are involved, and the Alberta Solicitor General is involved in implementing specific strategies for each key area of action. Alberta will effectively investigate and enforce laws specific to the exploitation of children through the use of increased funding provided in Budget 2005.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. member spoke briefly about issues related to the training of officers within our corrections system regarding various issues that have happened in the past. It's a very good question, the fact that training is a tremendous issue. Training will ensure that practices are done properly, but as well it ensures that officers don't forget what their role and their responsibility are and what their purpose and what their duties are on a day-to-day basis. As one knows, one can become complacent at times, and therefore ongoing training and lifelong learning are critical in any occupation, whether it's in corrections or whether it's in the provincial protection officer category. So while ensuring that new staff receive training required to successfully perform their basic employment responsibilities, the department also remains focused on ensuring that ongoing training initiatives are available to better prepare staff to meet new priorities and new challenges.

Mr. Chairman, the Solicitor General is committed to ensuring that its staff are provided the skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities to protect the community and to provide appropriate rehabilitative opportunities to offenders under their supervision. When issues occur, as the hon. member mentioned, this department takes it very seriously, through an internal investigative process, whether or not discipline is required. It takes it very seriously. On the incident that occurred, was it a lack of training, or has a new program come into place where possibly training wasn't provided? These are some things that we're looking at. As I mentioned, lifelong learning is one of the areas that I'm stressing within our department and all the way through all of our various branches for individuals, that ongoing training is essential to providing effective service levels within this ministry.

The hon. member mentioned and spoke briefly about offender rehabilitation, and obviously it's a very important area. As he mentioned, he didn't want to go through a whole bunch of different programs, and I'm not going to either for the sake of time, but I will mention, Mr. Chairman, a few points. The Solicitor General is committed to working with partners to ensure the safety of the community by addressing the mental health and addiction needs of young offenders. We have those programs in our young offender centres now, and we'll continue to provide those services to them, whether they're through nurses, whether they're through psychologists, whether they're through trained personnel that can provide the program needs that these young kids have.

As well, partnerships with other youth services ministries are key to providing youth with the skills, programs, and supports that they

need. As cross-ministry initiatives we need to be working together with Children's Services with regard to ensuring that those kids that are in government care that end up in one of our young offender centres are provided with the programs and, as well, with the continuing education that they require to build to their full potential.

11:10

Transition support for offenders remains a priority, which includes both successful transition back home to their community from custody and successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. Mr. Chairman, I can mention this as being extremely important as well in the fact that in reviewing the Child Welfare Act and the proclamation of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, we in fact did build into that act the transition funding provided to kids between the ages of 18 to 22 that provides them with funding so that at age 18 they don't stop being a ward of the government just because they're an adult but can continue on in a program funded by the province to ensure that they can continue on in education. As in that program, we also want to ensure that we are providing those supports for our offenders that are transitioning out of a facility back into a community.

Just a couple of other areas here. With regard to the rehabilitation of offenders, Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to bring up the pilot project in Calgary. The Calgary domestic violence court began operation in May 2000, and its outcomes are being evaluated. Although this domestic violence initiative is shared between partnering ministries, specialized courts fall under the jurisdiction of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

The Alberta government is committed to providing safe communities for all Albertans, and that includes freedom from violence within our homes. Victims of domestic violence do not have to stop the violence on their own. The criminal justice system can and will take the lead role. As I mentioned, the Solicitor General will continue to work with its partners to develop family violence initiatives throughout the province.

The hon. member mentioned the victims of crime fund on page 340. I couldn't turn to it quickly enough, but I believe he was talking about the Victims of Crime Act grant program funds. I can tell you that the surpluses that occurred – well, first of all, the program funds eligible groups and organizations that apply for funding to provide programs and services that benefit victims of crime, and the act establishes the Victims of Crime Programs Committee, appointed by the Solicitor General, to evaluate applications for grants and make funding recommendations. The Victims of Crime Programs Committee meets twice per year to evaluate the grant applications, and the program initiatives that are approved for funding are required to enter into agreements to ensure that the funding they do receive is properly expended.

I'm just looking at the \$3.879 million. Is that it, hon. member? That's one area from the previous year to this year. The increase of \$3.3 million includes the new funding approved, or \$2.9 million, plus an internal transfer. The funding increase will be directed towards consultation implementation, as recommended by the MLA review committee. So the overexpenditure of \$3 million in the year 2004-05 represents primarily the \$2.9 million funding increase for consultation implementation, which was approved by Treasury Board.

The hon. member mentioned 3.2.1, the adult remand and correctional centres, looking at the increase there. The adult remand and correctional centres provide funding to operate the eight remand and correctional facilities throughout the province. Of the \$93 million in 2005-06 approximately \$79 million, or 85 per cent, is allocated for manpower costs – that's 85 per cent for manpower costs – and

\$14 million, or 15 per cent, is allocated for various supplies and services.

I believe this also will include the funding for the new vests that all of our corrections officers will be receiving, which will be the first corrections officers in the country to be provided with the option of having one or not having one versus sharing a vest, which we felt was inappropriate.

As well, under that section, 3.2.1, the adult remand centres include the Edmonton Remand Centre, Calgary Remand Centre, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, primarily centres housing offenders that are awaiting trial. We currently service approximately 1,320 offenders on a daily basis. The adult correctional centres, which are included in this area as well, include Fort Saskatchewan, Calgary, Peace River, and Lethbridge. These centres provide custody and rehabilitative program services for approximately 900 offenders, with programs including counselling and addictions programs, education, and work programs.

Now, the hon. member also mentioned the Edmonton Remand Centre. In reviewing last year's *Hansard* – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was the critic at that time. Obviously, similar questions arise probably every year, but I did read the hon. member's concerns that were raised a year ago. Some are very similar to the questions that you raised today with regard to the centre.

The Edmonton Remand Centre continues to function adequately for its designed purpose. Recent increases in the staffing complement have been made in response to higher inmate populations, and the drug testing programs have also been enhanced to further ensure inmate and staff safety.

A request to replace the aging Edmonton Remand Centre with a new and larger facility is currently under consideration for capital project funding. Once approved, it's expected it'll take some time to design and construct, but in the meantime all the necessary steps will be taken to ensure that this facility remains appropriate to the demands placed upon it.

Now, the hon. member also mentioned with regard to double-bunking in this facility as well as in our corrections facilities. This is basically an issue of population pressures throughout North America, throughout Europe. Population pressures are currently being experienced in remand centres and correctional centres throughout Canada and the United States. This segment of the inmate population is growing beyond forecasted expectations both, as I mentioned, provincially and nationally. In 2003 the corrections services division developed a series of contingencies for managing remand offenders, including plans to relocate remand offenders as population pressures in existing facilities dictate the need to do so. While the current remand facilities are being operated at more than their original designed capacity, they remain viable in providing safe and secure custody for our offenders.

11:20

Now, the final question that I have from the hon. member is with regard to youth justice committees, and he wanted a little bit of information regarding the program and the appeal process. Currently we have 116 youth justice committees in Alberta, which have been established under section 69 of the Young Offenders Act and section 18 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. The committees work with Alberta's justice system to deal with young offenders in their communities. They provide a forum for citizens to work out differences between young offenders, victims, and the community. They also offer an alternative to the formal court process and the possibility of time in custody for offenders. The committees are also concerned about victims and their rights, and the victim's input is encouraged whenever possible.

Some youth justice committees provide sentencing advice to local youth court judges. In 2004 the Alberta Solicitor General provided \$325,000 in funding to help the communities recruit volunteers, conduct training, assist co-ordination, and provide administrative supplies. I've signed hundreds of certificates of recognition, which have been presented at annual meetings and volunteer recognition events to recognize the dedication and commitment of the volunteers. Of a special note, Alberta hosted the first national youth justice committee workshop in February of 2002.

The Alberta Solicitor General has utilized the youth justice committees as a tremendous partnership between the community and young offenders, with the ability for the young offender to assimilate back into the community having known that he made a mistake, having known that he may have made two mistakes but that the community itself is not giving up on him. The community itself will deem a punishment, minor though it may be, a punishment that may be suitable for the individual to ensure that he continues, hopefully, on the right track and not on the wrong track.

As I mentioned, Alberta has 116 youth justice committees, and they work with Alberta's justice system to hold young offenders properly accountable for their crimes, and they do offer an alternative to the formal court process.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've got a few questions here for the minister, and I know that some other members are anxious to get questions requested too in the time limit. I'm not sure if the minister had an opportunity to finish his comments on the youth justice committees, but if he didn't, he could certainly fill us in some more.

I thought I would focus on just a couple of areas. Traffic safety is one I'm particularly interested in. It's in the business plans in various places. I choose to focus on this because I think traffic safety affects the lives of a huge number of Albertans. The department's own business plans mentioned that there were 113,000 traffic collisions in Alberta in 2003, and that works out to basically one every five minutes, every hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. So in the amount of time that we will debate this budget, two hours, there will have been about 25 traffic collisions, and that's far too high. That really doesn't indicate the seriousness of this problem because it makes no mention of the fatalities and the injuries that result, the cost to the health care system.

I know that families are shattered by traffic fatalities. I've seen that too often in my own family and in my extended family, where a number of relatives have died in car accidents with just devastating effects. There's no sense here of the cost of traffic collisions to the health care system either or to the entire economy when productive, healthy, contributing individuals are suddenly injured or paralyzed or killed. It's a terrible cost to our society. If anything, I think it should be a higher priority here because it seems to me that it's one of those areas where prevention would pay off so well.

I wonder, when I look here and see maybe four sentences mentioned in a couple of places, why there isn't greater priority, and I know that other departments are involved: Infrastructure and Transportation, Justice, and maybe some others. But I'm looking for some real leadership on this issue from this government, and I would like to know from this minister what progress is being made, what measures are being used to assess that progress. Are we looking at a comprehensive set of measures that includes the cost to the health care system, injuries, fatalities, the financial cost to society? What kinds of measures are we seeing? Some kind of cost-benefit analysis would be helpful. My guess is that investments in reducing traffic

collisions have a tremendous benefit financially and emotionally and otherwise for society. So I'm really left wondering why we aren't seeing more aggressive efforts at traffic safety education, and I'm wondering what leadership role this minister is intending to play on issues around traffic safety.

I noticed that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the critic for this department asked some questions on the youth justice committees, and we do have some concerns around those committees and their independence and their legitimacy and authority to act in the way sometimes that they act.

I will just limit my other comment this time, so that others have a chance to get up, to some specific questions on the communications unit of the department. In particular, I am looking at the ministry organizational chart on page 400 of the business plan. There is one whole box here called Communications. Interestingly – and this is typical of departments of this government – the communications branch comes between the deputy minister and everything else in the department. So it seems, at least in the presentation here, to have a certain mediating role and, undoubtedly, substantial influence on the correctional services, the public security, the aboriginal justice initiatives, and presumably strategic services and strategic human resource services. All of those are at one level, and above them is communications, spin.

I would be interested to know from the minister how much is spent on communications, how much is spent by the Public Affairs Bureau in addition to the Solicitor General's own budget on communications, what mandate and role they have, how many staff. What are the categories of staff? Is there a director? Are there communications officers? Ultimately, who does the director of communications there report to? Does that person report to the Deputy Solicitor General, or in reality does that person report to the Public Affairs Bureau and from there through to the chief of staff of the Premier's office?

11:30

With those questions, bearing in mind that others have questions to ask, I'll take my seat. But I do look forward to some comments on traffic safety, any completing comments on youth justice committees, and some details on the communications function and unit of this department.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Hon. minister, did you want to take another?

Mr. Cenaiko: No. I'll be happy to answer these, please.

Just regarding the youth justice item that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview brings up as well, as I mentioned earlier, the ministry continues to support and assist all communities that have expressed an interest in establishing a youth justice committee because there are a number of communities out there that aren't involved and haven't been involved yet. We do have individuals, obviously, within our department that have a vast experience and a vast knowledge in working with young people as well as working with communities and the fact that they're developing a committee. The majority of the committees are involved in administering these extrajudicial sanctions programs for first- and second-time offenders who have committed minor offences. The youth justice committees provide sentencing advice to the local youth court judge on occasion.

The department supports the youth justice committees through annual grants, as I mentioned earlier, provincial, regional, and local training opportunities, ongoing case management liaison, office space and supplies, and volunteer recognition, which is extremely important as there are approximately 1,500 volunteers involved in

addressing youth crime in our communities throughout the province. Each community is assigned a liaison probation officer, who provides training and ongoing case management advice. Those are provided throughout the province and, of course, vary in degree as to how busy they are, obviously, from community to community.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview as well mentioned and discussed at length issues within our strategy 1.16 and traffic safety. I just wanted to mention that – and, in fact, I have it here, the strategy. This is good reading material for the Legislative Assembly on those nights that it can't get along. The Alberta traffic safety plan, which was provided by the retired assistant commissioner, Don McDermid, provided a very detailed and lengthy report, *Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads: Report and Recommendations for Traffic Collision Fatality and Injury Reduction Strategy* report.

The traffic safety review is a multiministerial initiative, which is co-chaired by the Solicitor General, Infrastructure and Transportation, and the Minister of Justice, and involves 35 government and nongovernment stakeholder organizations for a made-in-Alberta solution. Now, the recommendations from the McDermid report have been examined by a number of stakeholder committees, strategies have been identified and prioritized, and we expect the final report to be completed very soon, actually; the end of this month, I'm hoping, and that's as the co-chair. I'm hoping it's the end of the month, but it will be very soon.

From an enforcement perspective, though, we've identified a need to increase traffic safety resources and to review existing legislation to determine efficiencies and alternative service delivery methods. The work on this project is moving forward as quickly as we can effectively manage it, and I anticipate we will be able to address the goals of the vision 2010 traffic safety program. Funding requirements associated with these strategies will be identified, and we hope to move forward to Treasury Board with our funding needs as soon as possible.

There are some major funding requirements in this that I have to look at as the Solicitor General, in fact, because of course one of the issues that was identified during the review was the fact of the number of RCMP officers we have in rural Alberta. So part of that strategy has changed because of the fact that we needed to get, now, an additional 200 officers, approximately 130 new RCMP officers in rural Alberta.

The issue is: how do we deploy those officers? We can't deploy all of them to work on highways and look after selective traffic enforcement programs, so not just myself but obviously the assistant commissioner of the RCMP will have to look at those major issues in rural Alberta regarding the high number of collisions. The high number of collisions in rural Alberta leads to a higher number of fatalities as well.

Those are some of the issues that we are going to be discussing, the manpower requirements that may be required. Again, traffic safety is a priority, but so is protecting our communities in rural Alberta, so we'll have to balance the needs of the community versus the needs of traffic enforcement. I'm hopeful that we're going to find a solution or a medium in the middle there that will be able to provide the biggest bang for our buck, so to speak. So we are going to be addressing those issues regarding traffic safety.

The hon. member also spoke somewhat regarding communications and the communications chart, talked about the director of communications. Really, a director of communications is hired by the Public Affairs branch but is the director for the Solicitor General's office.

Dr. Taft: Who pays the bill?

Mr. Cenaiko: The Public Affairs Bureau, I believe, pays the bill. If I'm wrong, I apologize, but to my knowledge the Public Affairs Bureau pays the fees for her salary.

Mr. Stevens: He gave you a thumbs-up.

Mr. Cenaiko: Oh, okay. Good. She does report directly to me. She doesn't report to the deputy Solicitor General; she reports directly to me. We do have communications staff within our office, though, that obviously have to look at incoming mail, letters that are coming in, and, of course, drafting some responses to some of that mail. So there are employees within the department that provide communication support within the ministry, but the staff for, I guess, the strategic portion of the Solicitor General's office is provided by the Public Affairs branch.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Just a couple of points that I wanted to raise with the Solicitor General. First of all, could I get a more thorough breakdown on the plan for deputy constables? In his opening remarks the minister spoke on the special constables and solidifying their role in the process.

The idea of deputy constables was first floated in the draft MLA review of the Police Act in 2000, I'm thinking maybe 2002. It stayed in the final draft, which is one of the few things that survived. The unmanned aerial drone disappeared between version 1 and version 2. I thought that was very entertaining; we could spy on all those anarchist cows out there in rural Alberta. That didn't make the cut to the second one, but the deputy constables did. I'd like the minister to outline very clearly: what exactly will be the role that the deputy constables play? What will be their pay scales, particularly in comparison to what I would call full-fledged police officers?

11:40

What will be the policy around arming deputy constables? What level do they have? I know that with police officers they're trained that you one-up the response. If someone's coming at you with fists, the officer is to use something one up from that, a club. If they come at you with a knife, you use a gun, et cetera, et cetera. So where are these deputy constables going to fit, and how are they armed? What role exactly do they see them playing, and how does the department see this fitting if they, for example, do checkstops? Okay. Yes. But when we look at the evidence, Mr. Chairman, that shows us that a number of firearms infractions and, in fact, drug busts are actually discovered during checkstops. So to say, "Oh, checkstops are pretty innocent," well, no, they're not actually, and it escalates very quickly.

I do not understand this government's ongoing desire to put lesser trained people into jobs doing most of the same work but not all of it and pay them a lot less. That's what I see happening with these deputy constables. It's just a way to not have to pay police constables for all of their training. I'm very concerned about this, so I want this outlined in detail. What are the expectations? How much are they going to get paid? How are they going to be armed? Exactly what jobs they're going to do, and evidence-based decision-making on whether that's appropriate for them to be involved in.

Ms Pastoor: Same as LPNs.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. It's exactly the same as the LPN structure. That's what my concern is, that they just get them to do most of the

work for a lot less pay. I really hope that's not the case, but I suspect, knowing this government, it is. So I will wait, if necessary, for a detailed response in writing on that one.

I'd like to go on to the next subject now, and that's the definition of victim. I have been campaigning for some time to get full funding for sexual assault centres in Alberta, and nobody's picking up the tab here. It bounces around between the Solicitor General, who sort of picks it up, kind of, sort of, under victims services and under domestic violence. Except sexual assault isn't domestic violence; it's sexual assault and shouldn't be lumped in with that. The way you treat it is different, and the way you detect it is different, and the way it goes to court is different. They keep lumping it in there, but they don't pay for very much of it.

A big part of the problem in being able to get funding for the sexual assault centres was the definition of victim. Now, this came up in the review that was done and stickhandled through by the Member for Calgary-Shaw, and I know that there was a series of recommendations that came out of that review. I know that there's enough in the surplus that that department has been stockpiling to pay for the implementation of the recommendations that came out of the review, but a snagging point was the definition of victim. So has the definition of victim been revisited? Has it been expanded to move forward into the new millennium and be able to deal with some of the issues that have been identified around the old definition of victim?

Next subject. I was listening carefully, and I thought I heard, but I'm not sure. Could the minister please outline exactly what treatment options are available to people who have been convicted of offences and are serving time? What is the array of programs and particularly the treatments that are now available to people that are serving time in provincial jails? Particularly, I'm interested in what kinds of treatment programs are available for drug and alcohol addictions. Do they get a three-day program, a one-month program, no program at all? What exactly is available if you are incarcerated under provincial sentencing for drug and alcohol treatment? Additionally, what programs for work enhancement or education are available to people that are serving time?

The minister didn't seem to quite understand what we were asking about when we talked about the surplus that was last year \$13 million. That's the surplus we're talking about, that has been accumulated through the victims of crime fund. The surcharges are collected by the courts and directed back to the victims of crime fund, and that money is to then be flowed through to victims of crime programs.

What the ministry and the previous minister, anyway, had been doing was that if they took in \$6.5 million, they only spent \$3.5 million or \$4 million. Each year they'd been accumulating, oh, \$2 million, \$3 million, \$4 million, and over several years, while I've been watching it – last year we were at a \$13 million surplus. This is the money that I was saying could be used to implement the recommendations that came out of the victims of crime fund review led by the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

So that's the surplus we're talking about. How much is it today? How much do you expect it to be by the end of the year and why? If there's still a surplus, why? That money is supposed to be spent on victims' services. Why is the department hoarding it?

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to go back again around the youth justice committees. Can the minister tell us under what authority or what act specifically empowers probation officers to not only review but to arbitrarily change the decision of youth justice committees? Can the minister inform us of what the process of appeal is if a youth is unhappy with the decision of a youth justice committee? Are probation officers trained to render sentences to young offenders, or

is their role to ensure that they comply with the conditions of their sentences?

Additionally, can the minister explain how a youth justice committee is supported if any decision that they make can be arbitrarily overturned by a probation officer with no consultation with the committee and without informing that committee? This is obviously a very real case I'm referring to, that happened in Stony Plain. I'd like the minister to explain how the legislation allowed that situation to happen and all of the various questions I've asked specifically around it. Under what authority – what act empowers this to happen? How do the monitoring and compliance take place?

Those were the issues that I wanted to raise specifically with the minister. I appreciate the opportunity to do that. Any questions he's not able to answer fully at this time, I'm happy to receive the answers in writing. Although this places some pressure upon him, I would ask to receive the answers before we're expected to vote on the final budget of the appropriation bill. Difficult for me to know whether to support the budget if I don't have the answers to my questions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to get up and say a few things about the Solicitor General's department and the budget. I want to just start out by acknowledging the tremendous loss that was suffered with the loss of the four officers at Mayerthorpe and the tremendous respect in which all of the peace officers in this province are held.

I do want to say that from our point of view the increase in police as contained in the budget is a positive one. We certainly had tried to make an issue of policing levels in the province and think that 200 additional police is a good start, but it's confined to those municipalities that have RCMP policing. There's a need to increase funding for larger municipalities that have their own police services. In particular, there's a need to provide support for community policing initiatives within the large municipal areas. I think that that is something that I've seen firsthand, in my work as a city councillor, as a tremendous success story. I regret that the police services in Edmonton and Calgary, in particular, have backed off a little bit from that direction. I would like to see that initiative renewed.

I'd certainly like to know from the minister generally what the strategy is around gangs in the province. I know that he's talked about it a little bit already, but I'm particularly interested in the initiatives that are being taken to combat organized crime at the highest level, not talking necessarily about small-scale operations but the very sophisticated and well-organized gang.

11:50

I want to talk just briefly, Mr. Chairman, about the need for police to have some civilian oversight. I think we need to strengthen our police commissions, and we need to have some means of making sure that the police are not investigating the police. There are a number of recent examples, including the tasing incident, where police investigating the police have failed to deal adequately, and it's taken a judge to actually point out how serious that situation is. The Randy Fryingpan issue I think was not dealt with appropriately by the police. It did take a judge to point out just how serious that case is. I do believe that there are, in fact, methods that complaints can be dealt with by others other than the police. There can be trained investigators who are not police. I would like to know the minister's reasons for shying away from that.

I think, given the lateness of the hour, Mr. Chairman, I'm just going to leave it there just very briefly. I have a number of other major comments, but I'll have an opportunity, I'm sure, to talk to the minister about some of this stuff later.

The Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre raised a very good question with regard to the special constable program. The recommendation that came out of the MLA policing review did mention the term "deputy constable." As she's aware, I'm sure, the review of the roles and responsibilities of special constables, the MLA review, is being chaired by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, who is a former sergeant with the Calgary Police Service so obviously has a background regarding working with law enforcement officials. The whole idea behind the review is to do just exactly all the questions that she asked.

Ms Blakeman: But you did it twice.

Mr. Cenaiko: No, the special constables were never reviewed. The special constable review is going to be looking at special constables. The police review looked at police. There's a huge difference between – a special constable is not a police officer. They are peace officers under the Police Act. This one is a police officer who has this authority, and a special constable has this authority. That's the issue.

If you're confused by it, I would think that 99 per cent of Albertans are. There are a lot of people confused regarding what roles and responsibilities these individuals have in a community when they're working right next to the RCMP officer or they're working for the city of Edmonton as bylaw officers, or whatever you want to call it. This is the issue, and this is the study that is going to be implemented.

Actually, the first public meeting is going to be held on Friday in Calgary. The whole role and responsibility of these individuals is going to be reviewed to determine: what role can they play? In what area within law enforcement can they actually provide services to the community? Does it need to be very expensive – the RCMP's numbers are \$144,000 per officer; Edmonton's are approximately \$130,000 per officer – to respond to, possibly, a three-day old garage break-in where there's no evidence? What about a stolen bike? Do you need an emergency responder to attend a call like that?

This is what the questions are that we're going to be asking the public. We're going to be asking municipalities, municipal districts and counties, towns and cities throughout the province to find out what, in fact, these officers provide for them now and what, in fact, they could be providing in the future.

Now, there are two pilots that are going on right now, Mr. Chairman, that are very exciting. In fact, one is in the hon. member's riding, Edmonton-Centre, that the Edmonton Police Service is going to be announcing here, I believe, very shortly. I am actually going to be providing funding for the pilot for four additional officers that are going to be I believe called community support officers or something of that nature, that are actually special constables. They have the special constable designation, but they are actually peace officers that will be providing services within the inner city, within the hon. member's riding. So that's going to be announced here very shortly, and I'm very proud to be able to fund four of those positions.

We have the same program in Calgary, that was announced just two weeks ago with Mayor Bronconnier with regard to providing nine officers in the inner city, regarding the Beltline and the East Village areas, to have peace officers walk the beat in the community.

They'll be problem solving. They'll be meeting with the residents. They'll be meeting with the business owners. They're going to look at: what are the issues in the area? Is there graffiti? Can they work on the graffiti and use the community supports to remove graffiti, use the community supports in the neighbourhood to remove the needles? Issues in some of these areas that have been lacking in some of those resources.

So these are two pilots that are going on, both I believe for six to eight months in length. I'm very proud to say that we're looking at these two pilots, which will help us in our review of the roles and responsibilities of special constables.

Having travelled the province just recently in various areas of the province, I can tell you this, Mr. Chairman, that there are some very good areas in the province that are utilizing special constables or peace officers in their role in the community, hired by, for example, the city of Grande Prairie. It has a tremendous program there. I think it's one that we want to look at as a future template or a future model.

I just use Grande Prairie because I haven't been to all of them, but Grande Prairie's was tremendous in the fact that they work hand-in-hand with the RCMP. They have a clear authority and role of what they can do in the community. They are in radio communication with each other. They provide non-urgent calls in the community, which frees up those police officers to respond to emergencies, to respond to those calls which police officers have been trained for. So, therefore, this program is very good. Obviously, that will be coming out in time, and I'll get the hon. members from Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Centre – the booklet or the questionnaire will be coming out, I believe, within about two weeks. So I'll ensure that I get copies to them because they can definitely, as well, participate in the review.

The hon. member mentioned the issue regarding the definition of victim. She didn't mention the area of victims of a sexual assault. She's aware, I think, that on other occasions I've mentioned that I've investigated over 600 sexual and physical assaults on women, young girls, and children. So this is a very large issue. I'm very supportive of the Alberta sexual assault association and very supportive of the Calgary Sexual Assault Centre because I worked with them hand-in-hand when I worked with the police service. As well, I continue to meet with the staff there on occasion. So we don't have a listed definition of what a victim is, but I'm sure *Webster's* dictionary does.

As well, though, the victims can apply for funding under the victims of crime fund. There also is an appeal mechanism for them if they feel that the funding that they're receiving isn't appropriate. But there is funding that is available to them. Obviously, there's a need for ongoing assistance regarding psychological assistance for them, but again that funding is made available to them and should be there.

12:00

The programs with regard to drugs in jails. Mr. Chairman, I don't have a listing of all the programs that we provide in the prisons, but I can tell you that there are programs, obviously varying from the young offender centres to the corrections centres. There are projects regarding dealing with FAS offenders to ensure that the appropriate treatment is provided. I can tell you that education is provided. In our young offender centres we ensure that kids remain in school, that they're taking their core courses in school, ensuring that when they do leave, they can leave as if they hadn't missed school.

The issues relating to mental health and substance abuse. Programs are available looking at disrupted school experiences,

inappropriate sexual behaviour, and involvement in the criminal justice system. Programs regarding these natures are all provided to these young individuals in our young offender centres. At this point in time, right now, even though our young offender centres are approximately 65 per cent full, the programs are extremely important because these offenders are leaning more towards the hard-core offenders versus the softer core with assimilating programs in the community.

In the correctional facilities, Mr. Chairman, we do provide programs with staff that are obviously well trained and through psychologists and through nursing and community support staff. They're there to provide them with programs with regard to sexual behaviour as well as alcohol and drug abuse. That's provided to them as well as education. In some of our correctional facilities we do provide them with an ability to work in the community and train for various functions, whether it's with their hands and/or some of their skills.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood brought up the fact of civilian oversight. I can mention again, Mr. Chairman, that the legislation, Bill 36, is before the Assembly now in third reading. It's there to ensure accountability in law enforcement and to restore public confidence in the police. The drafted changes will enhance the role of the local police commission in overseeing the complaint process by ensuring that each commission has a public complaint director. It allows the commission to initiate an external investigation, it ensures that the commissions are trained in their roles and responsibilities, and it requires the chief of police to provide the commission with 45-day progress reports with the status regarding the investigation of a complaint.

It also enhances the oversight of complaints at the provincial level by making the director of law enforcement responsible for monitoring the process of complaints and requiring that serious incidents that may require an internal investigation or process monitoring system be reported. It also allows for external investigations or monitoring of any complaint or incident where it is in the public interest. As I mentioned earlier: where it is in the public interest. That's why these changes are being made, to ensure that transparency is provided regarding the new legislation in our Police Amendment Act.

The Chair: After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of the Solicitor General for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$390,556,000
---	---------------

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report the estimates of the Department of the Solicitor General.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Solicitor General: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$390,556,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 12:07 a.m. on Wednesday the Assembly adjourned to 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, May 11, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/05/11
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome.

Let us pray. Grant us daily awareness of the precious gift of life which has been given to us. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have great pleasure in introducing to you and through you to members of this Assembly our colleague the former Deputy Speaker and hon. Member for Highwood, Mr. Don Tannas. Mr. Tannas was first elected to this august Chamber in 1989 and chose to retire in 2004. He served as our Deputy Speaker for three consecutive terms. Among his many contributions to Alberta is the dedication of the rough fescue grass as Alberta's emblem. Mr. Tannas and his wife, Chris, have just returned from a four-month cruise, which took them around the world. Mr. Tannas is seated in your gallery, and I request him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly four students from the Destiny school located in Red Deer-South constituency. They are accompanied by Rita O'Connor and Mr. Glenn Mullen, and I would ask if they would rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to this Assembly through you a group of 16 students from the Ridgevalley school. They are accompanied by a teacher, Mrs. Penny Rose, parents and helpers Mr. Darrell Willier, Mrs. Marcie Hein, Mrs. Sharlene Zenner, Mrs. Julie Zenner, and Mr. Ben Peters. I would ask them, please, to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It would be my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature my constituency assistant Kathy Holdaway from our lovely constituency of Calgary-Buffalo, right in the heart of the city. As well, Taryn Day is my summer student, that will be helping Kathy throughout the next three and a half months, working in the office and working with constituents. I'd ask that they please rise and receive a warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce two guests that I have visiting in the public gallery.

Heather Holmen is studying at the Mount Royal College in Calgary and Jessica Hawkins is a student at Grant MacEwan. These two ladies will be helping out at the Ministry of Gaming during the summer, and we're very appreciative of their help. I would ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 30 bright, energetic students from the Sparling elementary school in Camrose. They are accompanied by teachers Pat Findlay and Helen White and parents Karen Vasseberg and Michael Latour. They are sitting in the public gallery, so I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House the members of St. Andrew's quilting group. This group produces their quilts at St. Andrew's United Church. Their group leader is Lillian Jones, and the group members consist of Molly Jenkins, Shirley Davidson, Margaret Chase, Ciss Lukach, Carol Gray, Doreen Cheetham, Bernice Cowan, Mary Johnston, Suzanne Stein. Now, this group has been making quilts for about 50 years and donating them to the Bissell Centre. In fact, they make from 100 to 150 quilts every year for the inner-city Bissell Centre. I invite them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour to be able to introduce to you and through you this afternoon to all members of the Assembly 36 bright and inquisitive young minds from the Richard Secord elementary school in my constituency. They are accompanied this afternoon by teacher Mrs. Laurie Johnson and teacher Miss Jody Brenzan and parent helpers Mrs. Tammy Brown and Mrs. Carmen Friesen. I would ask that they please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's once again my very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly another fine Alberta artist, who, of course, lives in Edmonton-Centre. Bill Bourne is a multiple Juno award winner. He has either 10 or 20 albums out, and I'm sorry; I'm not sure which one it is. He is one of the artists that has been chosen to perform at the special concert on May 23 at the Coliseum for the Queen. I'm very proud of the contributions he's made to the Alberta music scene. I would ask him to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my greatest pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Miss Christel Hyshka, the summer STEP student at the constituency of Edmonton-McClung. Christel is a fourth-year political sciences student at the U of A, and she enjoys many extracurricular activities. One of the most recent ones she partici-

pated in was the model UN conference, and she's also an active volunteer in different political groups. She has many plans and aspirations for the future, one of which is to pursue graduate studies and perhaps even be involved in politics herself. She is my youth outreach co-ordinator, and so far she's doing a wonderful job. She's here on a job-shadowing mission. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Gary Hirtz and Gloria Lloyd. Gary and Gloria are both persons living on AISH and are advocates for other AISH recipients. Gloria is also a team captain with the MS association while Gary is an avid volunteer and participant in a number of organizations. I'd ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Little Bow, I'm not sure if your guests are here yet. Would you like to introduce them now or wait until they arrive?

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rather than revert to Introduction of Guests, I would like to acknowledge to the Assembly here special guests who have come for the first time from Providence Christian school down at Monarch. They're 15 students and two of their teachers, Mr. Chris Heikoop and Mr. Joe Kikkert. I know that I'll be meeting with them after very briefly for a picture downstairs, but so that their moms and dads know that they're up here, I wanted you to acknowledge that they're here in the Assembly and give them a warm welcome.

head: 1:40 **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Applewood Park Community Association

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wild Rose Foundation plays an important role in Alberta, and we must protect its integrity. A confidential e-mail from the auditor of Applewood community association in northeast Calgary states that Wild Rose grants were transferred to the Vietnamese Cao Daist Cultural Society, a group struck from the corporate registry, disqualifying it from Wild Rose funding. Applewood's vice-president is a key supporter of the Member for Calgary-Montrose, who may also have ties with the Vietnamese Cao Daist Cultural Society.

Mr. Pham: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Taft: My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Why was Applewood allowed to transfer Wild Rose funds to an organization struck from the corporate registry? It clearly breaks the rules.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, we don't know what has been done until after we've had an audit of the procedures, and I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we do have an audit procedure. Most particularly, in Vietnam, where some of these projects relating to water were done, we partner up with CIDA, which, of course, is a Canadian federal government agency, to ensure that the work that was purported to be done was in fact done in the jurisdiction that was to be assisted.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what role, if any, did the Member for Calgary-Montrose have in the prohibited transfer of grant funds?

Mr. Pham: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mar: None that I'm aware of, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We've got a second point of order there as well. The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the irregularities in this case and that this information is largely publicly available, how, in fact, does this minister know what the Wild Rose money was really spent for?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated in my response to his first question that we do have an auditing procedure. In answering the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie the other day, I indicated to him at that time that this procedure is taken forth for every grant that's given by Wild Rose, that we do in fact ask for an accounting for every dollar that is granted by Wild Rose to agencies that may be doing work in a foreign jurisdiction, and that we do have a way of asking them to account for how that money is spent so that we are satisfied that the money is spent for the purposes for which it was applied. If we are not satisfied that the money is spent in a manner that was appropriate, then we have a procedure for asking for that money back.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Continuing Care Review

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ministers of the departments of Health and Wellness and Seniors and Community Supports have appointed a continuing care review committee to conduct consultations across the province and develop recommendations. If this committee is going to be truly effective, accountable, and credible, the government must include members from each of the parties. My question would be to the Premier. Will this government commit to making the continuing care review committee an all-party committee and, in fact, appoint me, with my expertise, to this committee?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been on and on about lobbying, and I've never been lobbied this directly before. I'm not making the appointments, but certainly the comments raised by the hon. member will be taken into consideration by the two ministers involved.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, sir. Will the focus of the committee be directed toward improving how the ministries of health, seniors, and infrastructure collaborate and co-operate on the issue of long-term care? Again, it is to the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure of the answer, so I'll defer to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the focus of the committee is to improve continuing care for people who are resident and who require continuing care. That is the primary focus. There will be other focus, no doubt, but it is on the person that's receiving the care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. How is the continuing care review committee going to be any different or more effective than the Health Facilities Review Committee, that appears to have failed so badly? Again to the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Health Facilities Review Committee, notwithstanding the assertions of the Leader of the Official Opposition, has done a good job of inspecting facilities, including long-term care facilities and other health facilities. I understand that over the past five years they conducted over 400 unannounced visits to health care facilities, including long-term care facilities. They received over that same period of time 226 complaints. Now, many of these complaints were either withdrawn or contained incomplete information, but those that were complete were acted upon.

I can tell the hon. member that where serious problems are found at a facility, the health care review committee will immediately advise the Minister of Health and Wellness – immediately – and all allegations of mistreatment, abuse, neglect are reported directly to the protection of persons in care. There are mechanisms in place to address problems of neglect and abuse.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Capital Region Petrochemical Workers

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The capital region petrochemical industry employs tens of thousands of Edmonton workers in dozens of major plants. The Edmonton Celanese plant is the first closing of one of these plants, throwing 450 skilled petrochemical employees out of work. It is mothballing as we speak. Meanwhile, two companies in Fort McMurray have applied for over a thousand temporary foreign workers for next year. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Why is this government allowing applications for temporary foreign workers to go forward and not intervening while there is an obvious pool of skilled petrochemical workers available in Edmonton?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I've addressed this issue the last three weeks or so. First of all, I'd like to clarify one thing: it's not this government that approves the foreign workers to come work in Alberta and take jobs in Alberta. It's the federal government that does that.

An Hon. Member: Liberal government.

Mr. Cardinal: It's the federal Liberal government, your cousins in Ottawa, that does the approving. We don't do the approving.

Like I've said before, Mr. Speaker, our first priority in Alberta is to hire Albertans first, Canadians, aboriginal people, and of course persons with developmental disabilities and other Albertans that are interested in working here in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the same minister: what specific assistance has been supplied to the Edmonton Celanese workers to get them employment that utilizes their petrochemical skills not just for minimum wage work?

Mr. Cardinal: Of course, Mr. Speaker, like I've said earlier, Alberta is probably the only jurisdiction in North America that doesn't have a welfare office, but we have 56 employment and training offices out there. We are already working with a group that are involved in this process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the Minister of Energy: how and when will the minister assure industry and Edmonton petro workers that there will be an affordable and ready supply of ethane so that the crucial capital region petro industry can continue?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, that's a very important objective of our department, to ensure that gas as it's coming now is available for the petrochemical industry, that they can utilize the liquids. We're also actively working with Alaska and the Western Energy Alliance to ensure that when the gas comes down from the Mackenzie, it ties into the Alberta hub, which is a tremendous economic advantage, to tie it into the infrastructure in the Alberta hub, that that gas would come with the expectation and, surely, by policy that liquids and the petrochemical industry would be very much a part of that value-added, that opportunity for all those that are here in that industry.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

1:50 Long-term Care Facility Standards

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have known for years about serious problems in this province's long-term care centres, including staff shortages, failure to meet basic standards, and inadequate inspections. For years these problems were repeatedly brought to the attention of the government by family members, seniors' advocates, and the NDP opposition, yet not only did the government ignore these warnings, but when I raised them in the Assembly as recently as April 18, the Premier called them totally false. My question is to the Premier. Why does the Premier refuse to apologize to Albertans for allowing the situation in long-term care to deteriorate to the state outlined in the Auditor General's report?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't mean to be facetious, but if the hon. member has a specific case of abuse, as I indicated, it will be investigated. I mentioned the care that my mother received in long-term care, and she had no complaints. Now, some people do have complaints, and some people don't have complaints. For those people that have complaints, we will deal with them either through the Department of Health and Wellness or the Department of Seniors and Community Supports. When there are problems, we will deal with those problems. Where there are no problems, there is no need to deal with them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is not a personal question to the Premier; it's a question about his government's performance. What's so hard about saying sorry and apologizing for years of neglect and foot-dragging on the serious problems that the Auditor General identified?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I will not apologize for a statement that is absolutely wrong, inflammatory. The statement "years of neglect" is wrong. It is wrong, and this member should be apologizing for making such an outrageous statement.

Mr. Mason: I hope the Premier has read the report by now, Mr. Speaker. Is he saying that he has nothing to apologize for when the serious concerns identified by this Auditor General were allowed to fester and build during his watch?

The Speaker: Methinks this is part of the debate that started yesterday. This is nothing to do with government policy.
The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Martin: Oh, come on. What are you talking about?

Mr. Mason: Yeah, protect the Premier. [interjections]

The Speaker: What was that? I'm sorry. Was there a statement in there accusing the chair of something? [interjections] Who made the statement? You would retract them?

Mr. Martin: No.

The Speaker: Then you study your Standing Orders . . .

Mr. Martin: Do you know what I said?

The Speaker: No. You stand up when I recognize you, and you be prepared for a point of order. You study the Standing Orders and get prepared, sir.

Now the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Martin: Can I sit down now, sir?

The Speaker: Yes, you can sit down, and you'll stay sitting down.
The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Federal/Provincial Relations

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Albertans are tired of Ottawa dictating their policies in our province. Our Premier said that one of the most important reasons for our election last fall was that he wanted a mandate to deal with Ottawa. The MLA committee report on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation discussed Kyoto, gun registry, transfer payments, pension plans, Canadian Wheat Board, health care, and tax collection, just to name a few. Recently, we received farm income aid and are currently dealing with gas tax rebates to our cities and federal daycare programs. My question is to the Premier. Given your mandate, how are you seeking autonomy for Albertans on these critical issues?

Mr. Klein: I don't know if it's a matter of seeking autonomy on these particular issues. It's a matter of expressing our concerns politically to the federal authorities that are involved.

Gun registry: certainly, we have registered our concerns relative to the usefulness of the gun registry.

We have taken action relative to Kyoto by passing our own legislation and have constantly referred to the Kyoto protocol, as it's now written, as not really addressing the problem of reducing greenhouse gases but, rather, rewards those nations that are not signatory to the protocol yet produce many greenhouse gases.

Relative to the issue of Senate reform, well, there is no stronger government in the country relative to taking the proper initiatives relative to bringing about elected Senators, anyway.

The other issues, the mad cow disease, we've been extremely aggressive on this particular file, and we've worked hand in glove with members of the cattle industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we're representing the interests of this province very well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Again, to the Premier: will the Premier stand for the autonomy of Alberta, like the Premier of Quebec does for his province, by insisting that all agreements and funds from Ottawa are distributed to Albertans where we know and want them to go and better serve Albertans, not where Ottawa wants them?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are doing precisely that. Probably the most recent case in point is the ongoing situation that the hon. Minister of Children's Services is having with her federal counterpart, and that is to make sure that if federal government dollars flow to Alberta for Children's Services, people in this province have choice. The hon. minister is not going to sign the agreement until she receives assurances – well, assurances again – from the federal minister that, indeed, the conditions put forward by Alberta are met.

Mr. Hinman: Excellent. Please don't sign the agreement.

Again to the Premier: will this government protect Alberta's economy from Ottawa by collecting the taxes here in Alberta?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to defer to the hon. Minister of Finance. Certainly, this is a legitimate question, and it has been a question that has been pondered by this government and others. There are some administrative problems related to collecting our own taxes, and I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance speak to it.

The Speaker: Briefly, Minister.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, if we were to collect our own taxes in this province, Albertans would have to file two tax returns. I want to make sure that people understand that collecting our own taxes does not mean that we don't have to file tax returns and the amount of money that the federal government requires in taxation. Under the Constitution the federal government does have the power of taxation, and I would say exercises it far too well.

First Nations Participation in Royal Visit

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest legacies of this government and its leader, the Premier, is harmonious and respectful integration and relations with the First Nation people. I have been disturbed by reports that some of the First Nation people feel that they have been relegated to token Indian status for the upcoming visit by Her Majesty to Alberta. Some have felt that they should be awarded a face-to-face meeting with Her Majesty as part of the centennial visit. My first question is to the Minister of Community Development. Could the minister explain to this Assembly the

involvement and role accorded to the First Nation people during Her Majesty's visit to Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mar: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me say at the outset that aboriginal Albertans have made a significant contribution to the life of this province and that they are being respectfully represented in Alberta's celebration for the royal couple.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to face-to-face meetings, the Duke of Edinburgh himself is meeting with First Nations and Métis leaders in Fort McMurray. Throughout the entire royal visit there will be aboriginal groups and individuals who will perform traditional and modern dance and music for the royal couple at several venues, including the events that will be taking place at Commonwealth Stadium as well as the Provincial Museum. Of the guests that will be invited to this Assembly, 1 in 10 guests attending the events here in this Assembly are aboriginal Albertans. They are also being invited to the official dinner that is being hosted by the government of Alberta as well as the luncheon that is being hosted in the city of Calgary at the Roundup Centre.

2:00

What I can say about the protocol, Mr. Speaker, is that the protocol for the royal visit is established by Buckingham Palace working with the federal government and the government of Alberta, and performers and guests were invited based on the preferences expressed by Her Majesty.

Some Hon. Members: Two minutes.

The Speaker: Absolutely correct. Way overboard.

Mr. Shariff: My first supplementary is to the minister of aboriginal affairs. What role did you as a minister and your department play in participation of First Nation people during this historic visit?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I have to say that the aboriginal people certainly have an important part in this province, its history and its future. As a matter of fact, they feel that they have a special connection to Her Royal Highness and the Crown. As a result, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development established an aboriginal festivities committee to be able to celebrate 2005 in representing aboriginal people.

What we did there, Mr. Speaker, was ensure that we would talk to Community Development and Alberta protocol to identify ways for us to be involved in the Queen's visit so that it wouldn't just be tokenism, that we would be looking at ways for us to be able to showcase the cultural activities of the aboriginal community and also showcase individual talent that we do have in the aboriginal community. As a matter of fact . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Child Protection

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The closing of the Nina Courtepatte case by Children's Services was a mistake that may have cost the life of a child. We need to learn from this situation with an inquiry that is thorough, independent, and available to all

parties. When the department has closed a case, there is no intake from concerned parties like schools on absenteeism or other community members bringing forward concerns. To the Minister of Children's Services: who was responsible for gathering information and taking action on the status of this child?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, we had a question like this yesterday. Let's be very, very clear first. This is a very, very tragic situation of a death of a child, and our heart goes out to her parents. It's a criminal investigation, so I'm not going to make comments on a specific case. I will say that this is a murder, and sadly it could have happened to any child in this province, just not because it was a child in care. What I will say is that we have unbelievable social workers in this province that do an unbelievable job with very, very difficult challenges coming.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the children's advocate is under Children's Services, with no independent way of investigating this case, will the minister now request that the children's advocate become an officer of the Legislature so that independent reports can be provided to all parties?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Again I'm not going to talk specifically about the case of the young child that was murdered. I can tell you that I've met with the children's advocate. He does a fantastic job. His number one priority is to be an advocate for the children and youth in this province, and I imagine he'll continue to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister, instead of waiting for the internal review to be completed, call for a fatality inquiry now so that a review of the causes that led to her death can be studied and tragedies can be prevented in the future and the children remaining in the home are protected?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I'm not going to comment specifically on this case because we have a criminal investigation going on. I can tell you, though, that any time we have a child in our care in this province that is seriously hurt or killed, we do a special case review, and we will be doing that, and we were doing that prior. The fatality inquiry comes under the Justice minister, and maybe he would like to comment in regard to the process of that.

Mr. Stevens: Just briefly, Mr. Speaker, the medical examiner has not yet finished his investigation into this case. Of course, once the investigation is complete, we will have better information. At this time there are no factors in this case which would make a fatality inquiry mandatory. Under section 32 of the Fatality Inquiries Act, in any case that has been investigated by the medical examiner, if the family wishes to, they may write to the medical examiner's office and ask to have the file forwarded to the board for review.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Grade Level Achievement Reporting

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some teachers in my constituency are concerned about the implementation of something

called grade level achievement reporting. There seems to be a lot of confusion about grade level achievement reporting when it's implemented. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Can the minister explain what that is and why schools across the province are going to be asked to report it?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, simply put, grade level achievement reporting is simply a mechanism via which parents can be informed as to whether or not their child or children is or are performing at grade level expectation. Its purpose is really twofold: first of all, to replace the former management information reporting schedules, or MIRS, as it was called, and secondly, to cater to the recommendation that was included in the Alberta Commission on Learning which, as I recall, talked about parents wanting to be more frequently and better informed as to the progress their children are making in any particular grade in any particular subject.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you. My first supplemental to the same minister: can the minister explain the process and timelines for implementing this initiative?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, replacing the MIRS reporting schedules started, actually, as a pilot back in 2003-04. It was continued in '04-05, and last year we had about seven school boards, including Red Deer and Golden Hills, Edmonton public, Edmonton Catholic, Calgary public, Calgary Catholic, Chinook's Edge, as I recall. All were part of that pilot. We hope by 2006 to have more school boards reporting in this fashion, and by the time 2007-2008 comes in, we hope to have it being accomplished right across the entire province.

Mr. Griffiths: My second supplemental is to the same minister. As a former teacher I have to ask: will reporting this not add more work to an already crowded schedule for hard-working teachers?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, let me respond as a former teacher: no. There will certainly be a little bit of work. But, Mr. Speaker, you would know this and so would others in the Assembly who are former teachers. The people who know student performance or achievement best are really the teachers. We could tell in a matter of seconds at the end of the year in a simple form whether or not the child is performing at grade level expectation. So the question simply would be something like: is this child who is registered in grade 5 performing at the grade 5 level in subject X, Y, or Z? The teacher would probably just put a check mark, yes or no. That's the kind of information that parents would appreciate having.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

School Closures

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening at a very emotional meeting the Edmonton public school board rushed through a vote to close Terrace Heights school. Fortunately, parents and other community residents, along with members of the opposition on this side of the House, worked together to stop the closure of valued public schools in established neighbourhoods in central Edmonton. Thankfully, a court granted an injunction to stop the flawed closure process for Strathearn, North Edmonton, and Wellington schools. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure

and Transportation: given that the minister has admitted that the school utilization formula is broken and is supposedly being fixed, will the minister finally take responsibility and use this court reprieve to find a long-term, community-based solution to keep these public schools open?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Ultimately, it is up to the school boards as to which schools stay open and which schools stay closed. Yesterday there was a court decision that allowed three schools a reprieve in closing. I have not talked to the Edmonton public school board since that time, but again through the media they're saying that they are going to be sending both the Minister of Education and myself a letter requesting something. I don't know what that request is, so it is much too preliminary to talk about it at this point in time.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Minister of Education: will the minister now do the right thing and deny the school board's demand for a special extension of the flawed closure process so parents and teachers can plan for the coming year? Will you do something about it, sir?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to respond to that question once a request such as has been referred to possibly arrives. As at this particular time I have not seen such a request, so I think it's a bit hypothetical and speculative for the member to even be asking it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister guarantee that these parents will not have to go through this closure process for at least five years so they can implement their creative ideas for maintaining schools that are so essential to the communities in which they live?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I won't try to usurp the authority of a local school board to make a local decision. The simple fact is that we have elected trustees, and the key word in that statement is "trust" because that's what we do: we trust them to make the right decisions, and we also trust them to make the right decisions based on a lot of research, a lot of community consultation and contact. In this particular case we have a judge who has said that an injunction will be granted, perhaps to allow more information to flow out. I should conclude by saying that the school year as it applies to this regulation runs through to the end of August of this year. So there is still some time for more meaningful consultations and perhaps some follow-up meetings to be held. We'll just let the process unfold and see where it goes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Electrical Transmission System

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I understand that some regions in North America, including Alberta, have electrical transmission systems that need upgrading, and that's to meet the

present demands and future demands. In fact, perhaps billions of dollars will be required to meet those upgrades. My question to the Minister of Energy: who is responsible for ensuring that Alberta's electrical transmission system is adequate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta independent system operator is first charged with looking at the transmission. They do that. They've put together a 10-year plan and are looking at a 20-year plan. Specific applications are then submitted to the Energy and Utilities Board for approval.

Mr. Lougheed: My second question to the same minister: who pays for the transmission system?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the consumer has always and will continue to pay for the transmission system. That is under the regulator rate. They see that specifically on their bill.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: if consumers will be paying for new transmission lines which may be built to export electricity in the future, how do the consumers benefit?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the last one that was approved was the transmission line between Edmonton and Calgary. That will see a greater reliability in the system. It will see a reduction of line loss, in power loss on the system. That would translate immediately into savings of power that's consumed. In addition, import of electricity will add more generation, more supply, and will certainly dampen pressures on upward prices.

School Closures (continued)

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's deeply flawed utilization formula is to blame for a rash of school closures, including four public schools here in Edmonton. Instead of listening to messages being sent by parents who yesterday won a major victory in court, Edmonton public schools still wants to knuckle under the pressure being exerted by this government and close four schools by September. To the Minister of Education: will the minister assure the parents and children attending Wellington, North Edmonton, and Strathearn schools that the government will not agree to do an end run around the closure process and that Edmonton public will either have to abandon the closures or start the process over again next year?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will ensure those parents is that their children will be provided the best education in this country regardless of which school it's going to be given at. This is the history of our education system for the past several years, and that is also the future of education here. With respect to the closure procedures, those closure procedures are very articulately described in the School Act and in the regulations that accompany it. So long as the school board has done its due diligence, then they are well within their right to make those local decisions. That's the story.

Mr. Eggen: Given that this minister has admitted in this House that current utilization formula rates forcing these closures are in fact

flawed and, therefore, under review, why doesn't the minister urge Edmonton public to put any further closures on hold pending the completion of this review?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, what I indicated in this House I believe a week ago during estimates for Alberta Education is that I did not like some parts of the current utilization rate formula – and I believe that echoes the sentiments of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation and our predecessors as well – and that, as a result, there's a need to review those utilization rates. The primary reason is that when they were brought in, they sufficed a particular purpose and a particular set of circumstances that were at play at that time. Today things are a little bit different. It will take probably the better part of a year before we see those kinds of changes thoroughly discussed and agreed to and contact with stakeholders having been made in the appropriate fashion. That's the plan.

Mr. Eggen: As the Minister of Education and as an Edmonton MLA will this minister then stand up for these students and parents and ensure that these school closures do not go ahead?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I want to explain this one more time just a little bit more slowly, and I'll use up the full 44 seconds I have left. Any discussions or decisions about possible or rumoured school closures are entirely at the behest of the local school board within whose jurisdiction that school happens to be situated. Those are not provincially based or provincially driven decisions.

Now, if a school board has done all of its lead-up work in the proper way in accordance with the regulation and are satisfied that they've communicated with the parents and the students and all the other requirements have been met, then they are within their rights to make those local decisions. I don't think the hon. member sitting just down below the questioner, who is a former trustee, would have appreciated the provincial government interfering when he was on the board, and I don't see any reason why we should be interfering now just because he's not on the board any longer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Canadian Natural Resources Limited Pipeline Leak

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday a Canadian Natural Resources employee discovered a pipeline leaking oil and gas into the Waskahigan and Little Smoky rivers. An EUB spokesman admitted that no one knew how long the pipeline had been leaking before it was discovered upstream of the community of Valleyview. My question is to the Minister of Energy. With thousands of miles of pipelines across this province what monitoring exists in Alberta?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the Energy and Utilities Board does actually, as he mentioned, take responsibility for these matters of pipelines and any leaks, and this one in particular is being investigated at the present time. Clearly, it will be the responsibility of the companies to ensure any cleanup.

The companies also have very sophisticated techniques of monitoring pipeline integrity and quality as to leaks, a variety of sophisticated electronic methods to determining that, and those kinds of techniques are improving all the time to ensure that Albertans can be protected on all the environmental consequences.

Dr. Swann: Again to the Minister of Energy: what improvements are planned to try and avoid this and prevent future pipeline leaks?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, inspections do occur regularly by companies on their pipelines. It also happens by electronic methods that are continually being approved. Technology is bringing some great answers to these issues. The integrity of those pipelines is very important to the ongoing sustainable development of these resources.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you. To the Minister of Environment: what do we know of the extent and the effects of this leak?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say that we were notified by the Energy and Utilities Board immediately after the leak was identified, and I want to say that we were on-site immediately, working closely with the EUB. We're continuing to monitor the situation. Also, pertaining to the first objective, being the containment of what has taken place, the ideal situation is that there will never ever be a leak in our province, so containment is not necessary. We're working closely with the EUB, and our investigation is ongoing, but certainly right now we're monitoring the situation and doing samples relative to if, in fact, there was any damage, particularly in the area that was mentioned.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

2:20

Highway 13

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 13 in Camrose and just east of the city limits underwent improvements last summer. However, many of my constituents and other users of the highway say that the work was substandard. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What will his department do to correct this substandard work?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to say that the constituents were absolutely correct. There have been some severe issues with this particular job that was done in conjunction with the city of Camrose and the department of transportation. It was an unacceptable standard, and the contractor has actually been fined.

The other issue, which is probably more important to the hon. member's constituents, is that the work is still under warranty, and the contractor will have to go back and fix everything that is wrong with the road that was done. It was done to a substandard basis, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you. My first and only supplemental is to the same minister. What is being done to improve highway 13 further east of Camrose?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly looking at highway 13 as it goes east. I will give you my

bias, and I fully understand that as minister of transportation you are not supposed to have a bias, but this is a road that I've travelled on all of my life. It's a road that, realistically, has had very little care to it and is a very narrow road that is very well travelled. We are certainly taking a very serious look at ensuring that this road gets done to the east of where it is at the moment. I can assure the hon. member that it will receive a very high priority in jobs as we look at them down the road.

The Speaker: Hon. member, is that fine?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Teachers' Retirement Fund

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of Alberta's most valuable resources is the people we entrust to educate our children. The government's treatment of Alberta teachers in respect to their pensions, however, is deplorable. In 1992 this government agreed to pay two-thirds of the unfunded liability portion of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund, which currently stands at \$6 billion and continues to grow. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Since the financial status of this government is now different than it was in 1992, what plans does the government have to reduce this financial burden on Alberta's taxpayers?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about what was discussed in 1992 and subsequently, we pay two-thirds of the cost of that unfunded liability and the teachers pay the remaining one-third. That doesn't seem like a terribly unfair proportion, but I would expect that in the supplementary question I'll understand a little bit more about where the hon. member is coming from.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that Alberta teachers now contribute more than teachers in any other jurisdiction in Canada, when will the government increase its required contribution to the Alberta teachers' retirement fund?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we equally share the cost of pensions since the 1992 agreement. This is current. I'm not sure. Maybe the hon. member would like to tell us what he would think a more fair sharing of those costs is. Fifty-fifty is what it is today: the government, 50; the teachers, 50. So I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the government's share of the unfunded teachers' pension liability is scheduled to grow to \$30 billion by the year 2045, why is this government continuing to tell Albertans that they are debt free?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we do not in any way hide our liability on pensions. It's very clearly laid out in our financial statements. It is not considered in our operation. In fact, we make every effort to reduce that. We had a very detailed and intense negotiation with teachers to deal with this issue. We're working with the teachers to try and come to terms with this. We do have a

workout plan. It is long term, but it is a liability that is not the government's alone. It's important that when that liability is addressed, it's addressed fairly and by those who share that liability.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

West Nile Virus

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we move into spring and into the summer, our thoughts turn to, well, mosquitoes and the public's fear of the dreaded West Nile virus. Funding has been allocated to municipalities to assist in combatting this menace, but it seems that the bulk of this funding has been allocated to areas in the southeast of the province and away from the major population centres along the highway 2 corridor. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What criteria were used for allocating this funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first, I would like to point out to the member and all members that the role of Municipal Affairs with respect to funding for West Nile virus is more of an administrative role. I can share with the member that the criteria that were used were provided to Municipal Affairs through Health and Environment. It's based upon an examination of the records of the previous experience with respect to West Nile virus and the mosquitoes that carry the virus. The determination was made that there were geographic regions within the province that had various degrees of risk associated with them, from low to medium to high. The funding flows through to geographic regions where the risk is determined to be either of medium or high risk.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplemental to the minister: can he assure this House that these measures will be adequate to protect the major population centres?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't assure the hon. member that no one in Alberta is going to contract West Nile virus this season. I can't ensure that they will not be in major population centres, nor I can ensure that they will not be in the areas that are covered by this funding. It's the nature of risk that you do the best that you can to be able to allocate resources where they will do the most good. What I can assure the member is that all care has been taken and will be taken to ensure that the risk analysis is appropriate and that funding flows through based on appropriate risk analysis mechanisms.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister work with his colleague the minister of health to provide funding to other areas not currently funded should the conditions change that may suggest that this funding is warranted?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, it's a subject that is somewhat hypothetical. Obviously, the government is going to be monitoring the situation. The dollars this year were based upon experience from previous years. Should something catastrophic happen and all of a sudden the numbers appear to be in jeopardy, I would certainly be

prepared to sit down with the appropriate ministers and discuss them, but frankly the risk analysis, the science seem to be relatively sound. Unless circumstances arise to see otherwise, the funding will proceed as planned.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Leaseholders on Agricultural Public Land

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government seems to have missed the fact that public lands in Alberta belong to Albertans and our lands are not there for the government to do as they please. They are also spending more of our tax dollars to compensate holders of Crown land leases instead of Albertans receiving a benefit from the use of the public lands. My question to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: why does this government insist on compensating leaseholders on Crown land for surface rights instead of Albertans receiving the benefits?

Mr. Coumts: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about this and make sure that this hon. member understands that the government does not pay compensation to agricultural leaseholders on public lands. Absolutely we do not. Agricultural leaseholders do not have surface rights for oil and gas developments. Where they may get compensation is from the oil and gas industry who wants to have access to their agricultural lease, in which case they are entitled under the Surface Rights Act. They are entitled to forage compensation, compensation for roads that may disturb their grassland, and compensation for the four-acre plot that a well happens to sit on. But those dollars do not come from government. They come from the oil and gas industry themselves to that stakeholder.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next two questions are for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development then. Can the minister explain why this government is promoting a third competitor to our beef industry when our beef industry is already suffering from the border closure? Referring to the buffalo then.

The Speaker: Hon. member, the last question had to do with leases for surface rights. This one has to do with buffalo. I've got to find a connection here. There's got to be a connection. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, if you've got one, you can answer the question.

Mr. Horner: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I can't make that connection.

Mr. Bonko: Can the minister explain, if it's agriculture and rural development, if gas companies are providing these people with compensation that's on Crown land, why does that money not come back to Albertans then?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, on many of these leases the gas companies are those companies that are disturbing the natural agricultural practices on that lease: the fencelines, the roads that come through there. They should be compensated for the loss of forage that they may encounter, the inconvenience of simply having the oil and gas operate on those leases. I don't see anything really wrong to compensate our producers for the inconvenience of what's going on on their lease.

The Clerk: Members' Statements.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will have six participating today, but prior to that, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

Even before that, I just want to advise that we're going to have at least two points of order, and then there's going to be an issue that the chair is going to have to deal with with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. So let's be prepared.

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and introduce some special guests. Up in the public gallery today we have three people from the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association, or ASCHA, as it is known in this House. First of all, from the village of Breton in my constituency, the president of ASCHA, Darren Aldous; secondly, the vice-president of ASCHA, Dennis King; and finally, the executive director of ASCHA, Irene Martin. I would ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Motorcycle Exhibition at Reynolds-Alberta Museum

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, May 14, the grand opening of a unique and exciting exhibition will take place at the Reynolds-Alberta Museum in Wetaskiwin. The Life and Times of the Motorcycle documents 100 years of motorcycle history from 1905 to the present day. Along with the Minister of Community Development I will have the honour of attending the grand opening.

This display chronicles not only the development of the motorbike but also the social impact that this mode of transportation has had on our society. There are 14 topics which are covered by this exhibit, ranging from the fashion associated with motorcycling to the use of motorbikes in work environments. The exhibit will include more than 150 motorbikes displaying the changes motorcycles have gone through from their beginnings to the present day.

This display has been made possible by the staff of the Reynolds-Alberta Museum and by various members of the community and beyond who have agreed to lend their motorcycles, prized possessions, to the RAM for two years. In addition to this, Honda Canada has greatly supported the display in financial terms and in-kind donations.

This exhibit will run in the museum for 16 months, giving Albertans ample opportunity to visit this comprehensive history of the motorbike.

Located in Wetaskiwin, this museum opened in September of 1992 and is owned and operated by the provincial government. The RAM houses more than 8,000 pieces in its collection, which traces the development of and advances made in machines associated with transportation, agriculture, aviation, and industry.

As the summer tourism season approaches, this will be a wonderful opportunity for families across Alberta to view a spectacular display exploring the development of the motorcycle and its impact on our society. I invite all members to visit the Reynolds-Alberta Museum and learn more about motorbikes, the history of mechanization, and the impact that machines have had on our province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mark Heinrichs

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to recognize an outstanding individual from Cypress-Medicine Hat. Mr. Mark Heinrichs, a math teacher at Eagle Butte high school in Dunmore, was one of 52 teachers across Canada to receive the Prime Minister's certificate of achievement for teaching excellence.

Mr. Heinrichs was nominated by the school's parent council because of his successful teaching approach. He makes himself available to his students by arriving at school early in the morning, spending his lunch break in class, and giving his home phone number should students require help in the evenings. He initiated a math club for students who were dropping by his classroom and doing fun math activities on their own. He also initiated Math Night to prepare students for the departmental exam.

Mr. Heinrichs has his students set realistic but challenging goals at the beginning of each semester, and they discuss what it will take to achieve these goals. Each student signs their goals, and Mr. Heinrichs follows up during the semester. His students consistently score above the provincial average for the Math 30 diploma exams.

The purpose of the Prime Minister's award program is to recognize the innovative teaching practices of teachers of all disciplines. The award included \$1,000 to the Eagle Butte high school in Mr. Heinrichs' name.

My congratulations to Mr. Heinrichs for winning this prestigious award.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to bring your attention to a partnership agreement to develop policies and practices to recruit and retain aboriginal faculty and staff at Grande Prairie Regional College. It is known as the aboriginal workforce participation initiative. This agreement between the federal government, the province of Alberta, and the college is aimed at providing more information about employment opportunities to aboriginal communities and organizations by changing how programs and services are delivered.

As the first deal of its kind in Alberta, the parties will create professional development opportunities, facilitate aboriginal community liaison and feedback, identify employment and career development opportunities, and create links between the labour force and educational opportunities.

The aboriginal workforce participation initiative is part of the government's commitment to help aboriginal people build stronger, healthier, and more self-reliant communities by increasing the participation of aboriginal people in the labour market. The end result is effective long-term employment that benefits the workers, the employer, and the entire community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Alberta Venture Most-respected Corporations

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Alberta Venture* magazine conducts an annual survey to find Alberta's most respected corporations. The responses are in, and they reflect some of Alberta's best-known corporations and highlight leaders who are trailblazers in our province.

For corporate leadership, recognizing a CEO or board director who is acknowledged as providing visionary leadership inside his or her organization and/or within the industry as providing a purposeful voice for the industry: Mr. Hal Kvisle, Don Lowry, and John Ferguson.

For corporate performance, recognizing a company that demonstrates sustainable fiscal success, maintains or builds market share, and performs well on the public markets: EnCana, Brick Warehouse Corporation, Canadian Western Bank, and Canadian Natural Resources.

For culture of innovation, recognizing a company that actively positions itself as a market leader, invests in R and D, has built a program of initiatives to ensure its products, services, or processes are leading edge in quality and has developed an internal environment which fosters creativity: Telus, Stantec, EPCOR, WestJet, and Dow Canada.

2:40

For focus on customer relationships, recognizing a company that has placed the customer at the centre of its business strategy: Fairmont Hotels, Bell, ATB Financial, Calgary Co-operative Association, and Shaw Communications.

For human resources practices, recognizing a company that fosters the healthy commitment of its workforce through innovative reward and the implementation of policies that provide for an enlightened, progressive work environment: Suncor, ATB, WestJet, ATCO, and PCL.

For environmental stewardship, recognizing a company that demonstrates an awareness of its impact upon the environment with an active effort to preserve, protect, or enhance the environment: Enmax, Shell, TransCanada Corporation, Suncor, and Syncrude.

On behalf of this House, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate them all.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Kindred House

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pride that I talk about the Boyle McCauley health centre, created in response to a grassroots movement which identified the lack of physician and health services in the inner-city area. It is a unique model in Edmonton in that it is community owned and governed.

The needs of the population that is served by this agency are very complex because there is a high incidence of poverty, homelessness, mental health and addiction issues, and unemployment. Comprehensive, accessible, integrated services are delivered by interdisciplinary teams on-site and throughout the community as the agency responds to the needs of Edmonton's inner-city residents.

Kindred House is a harm-reduction program of the Boyle McCauley health centre and was established 10 years ago. This program is a drop-in and resource centre for women and transgendered people who are working in the sex trade. As an organization that is delivering a harm-reduction program, it is accepted that some people are not ready to give up high-risk behaviour. Making connection by helping them in other ways can reduce harm and open the door to further intervention.

It is hoped that clients at Kindred will ultimately come to eliminate high-risk behaviour completely, but the only way to get many people moving in that direction, of course, is to connect with them where they're at. This is the work done at Kindred House. They ensure that over 3,000 visitors per year are provided with nutritious food, have access to medical attention, and are given opportunities to access free legal services and other community resources as needed. Kindred House is a place that is nonjudgmental and free from the violence these individuals often face daily.

Congratulations to the staff, volunteers, and board of directors who make this help possible. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

All-party Committees

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the recently established continuing care review committee, I would like to again today take the opportunity to draw attention to the importance of all-party committees to the democratic process.

A democratic deficit exists when parties do not have the opportunity to share diverse views and work together. The best governing process is the one with the strongest opposition, but in Alberta it seems that the voice of the opposition is feared and that the possibility of establishing all-party committees simply does not exist. This is not a healthy situation for effective governance or for the citizens who are being governed.

During the last campaign I had many discussions with my constituents and with citizens throughout the province. It became apparent that I wasn't alone in my opinion on this issue. Co-operation among parties is lacking, and it would be a refreshing experience in the politics of this province if all-party committees were re-established. A mantra that I am fond of from my days as a municipal politician is that when everybody plays nicely in the sandbox, everybody wins.

All-party committees not only bring a variety of experiences and perspectives to the table, but they also lend credibility to the entire process. Reports or recommendations by all-party committees wouldn't have a chance to sit on a shelf. They would be supported and promoted by all the members involved. The co-operation and openness that all-party committees demand make the process more open, transparent, and accountable.

The Speaker: Hon. members should also be aware that today is an anniversary, albeit a rather high-numbered anniversary, of the arrival on this planet Earth of the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: By way of a historical memento for the day, on May 11, 1870, the area known as Rupert's Land was purchased by Sir John Rose acting as a Canadian agent in London, England. The purchase price of £300,000, or the equivalent of \$11 million, included much of what is now the Canadian prairies and northern territories and, in particular, what is now the province of Alberta.

The purchase of Rupert's Land was motivated historically by both the British desire to secure the area in the face of American interests in the Canadian west and by Confederation, which had occurred three years earlier. In fact, on June 23, 1870, the Rupert's Land and North-West Territories order brought Rupert's Land, mostly Alberta, into the dominion of Canada.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition of 106 good Albertans from the fine Alberta communities of High Level, Breton, Carvel, Calahoo, Wabamun, and the wonderful City of Champions, Edmonton. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construc-

tion and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I am presenting the first 54 names of a series of signatures to follow with concerns about highway 63: "We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to increase infrastructure development for funding Highway 63."

Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today supplementary responses to questions raised during the Finance main estimates on April 21, 2005. These responses have already been sent to the hon. leader of the ND opposition, to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and to the Member for Edmonton-Centre. As I indicated during estimates, I'm pleased to provide those responses.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter I sent this morning to the chair of the Legislative Offices Committee. The letter requests an emergency meeting of the committee to discuss the Auditor General's power to investigate the Alberta Securities Commission.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table here today five copies each of four letters from concerned Albertans requesting action on the use of foreign replacement workers, apprenticeship ratios, and deskilling of the workplace.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose advised the chair twice today about two points of order. First of all, for clarification, would the hon. member like to deal with these points separately?

Mr. Pham: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Very good.

The second question, now, is to the Official Opposition House Leader. I have a note from your leader indicating that he would ask that you deal with the matter. You have full authority to deal with this matter?

Ms Blakeman: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do. It's been delegated to me.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, on the first point of order.

Point of Order

Reflections on Nonmembers

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with grave concern that I rise today to speak to this point of order. This point of order arises

from the first question from the Leader of the Official Opposition. In his first question he clearly violated *Beauchesne* 409(7): "A question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it." In this case the question has obviously cast aspersion on the Applewood Park Community Association board members and the members of the Cao Dai association in Calgary. Furthermore, that question also violates *Beauchesne* 493(4) on page 151: ". . . Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply."

2:50

The reason that this question caused me great concern is because on Monday a similar question was raised in this House, and then today the same question is being raised again except that this time the attack became even more vicious. This calls into question the integrity of people who are community leaders whose integrity and honesty are unquestionable. On Monday night I got a phone call from my volunteers, the people of Applewood Park Community Association. They advised me that as far as this project is concerned, they are volunteers working on humanitarian projects providing clean water for poor people and education and shelter for homeless and handicapped people in Vietnam.

For the benefit of the opposition members and for the House, Cao Dai is the fourth largest religion in Vietnam, and it has more or less the same teachings as Buddhism. It encourages people to look out for the people who are less fortunate than themselves, and the standard practice for Cao Dai followers for many, many years is that they try to do as many humanitarian projects as possible to help the poor and underprivileged people.

The members of the board of Applewood Park Community Association – Applewood Park is one community in my riding. Ninety-nine per cent of the board members are second- or third-generation Canadians. They have absolutely no financial benefit or any benefit from helping the poor and less fortunate people in Vietnam. They're just, you know, doing the right thing to help those people. Many of the Cao Dai followers are also living within the Applewood community, and that's why they work together. It is just a co-operative effort from these two groups trying to do the right thing.

For any people to stand in the House and attack them in a vicious way and point to the political aspirations of those people or political connections of these people is wrong, Mr. Speaker. If we have to exclude PC supporters from volunteer positions, we have to exclude 70 per cent of Albertans from serving on any of these boards. If these people were in the House, they would have been able to reply to the attack coming from the other side, but they are not here, and that's why I'll do the standing up anyway. If we attack people who are not in the House, we have to be very, very careful because they don't have the privilege and the right to respond to the attack.

I would like to ask the hon. member from the opposition side to withdraw and make an apology to those people because they absolutely do not deserve this kind of attack.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll respond in the order that the member laid out the citations. So the first citation that he brought forward was 409(7). Now, he does not clarify what wording in particular has most offended him, but I have the Leader of the Official Opposition's questions in front of me, and I will have

to make some assumptions here because the member has not laid that out. He did feel, in quoting 409(7), that a motive was imputed here or that aspersions were cast upon persons within the House or out of it. I have to refute this because it's simply not true.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where government sets criteria for a program. We have closely questioned the government in the past on the criteria for this particular program to make sure that we understood what the rules were, and they have been laid out in this House in response to us by the appropriate minister. So we have a situation where the government set criteria; the criteria were not followed. That is a matter of fact and can be checked in corporate registries and other documents that are publicly available.

So I'm not sure what motive the member felt was imputed because he doesn't lay it out. What the Official Opposition leader did say to the minister was to question why this particular community agency was allowed to transfer Wild Rose funds to an organization that had not met the criteria, in fact had been officially struck from a registry, and this was against the criteria that had been outlined by the minister and criteria that are available elsewhere.

So the question has to be asked, Mr. Speaker. We have the government setting criteria; we find out that criteria have not been followed. It's our job to stand up and ask the government: did they know that this was the situation and that criteria were not met? Were they aware of this situation? What exactly went wrong? The government is in possession of the facts. What exactly went wrong? What will the government do to follow up?

So it's our responsibility as the Official Opposition to ask the questions when we see a situation where a government process has been contravened. It's not imputing a motive to ask the government what happened when criteria were breached. There are no aspersions cast there. The factual statements are supported, as I said, in corporate documents.

"Casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it." There's no specific person mentioned in any of the questions that were asked, save the Member for Calgary-Montrose, and the appropriate honorifics were used when that member's title was brought forward in the House. No other specific individuals were named, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about an organization. We don't know who the members of those organizations are. We're talking about the facts on the face of the case.

The second issue that was raised was the issue under 493(4): "to exercise [caution] in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply." Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the information that we had in here was factual; it's available on the public record. So there's no imputing of motives there, and there's no casting of aspersions. It's factual.

The questions must be asked by the Official Opposition when there's been a contravention of the rules. That is an appropriate role for the opposition to take. The opposition did not name any individuals, save the individual that serves in the House, and the appropriate titles were used. It's incumbent upon the opposition to ask these questions of government when we identify that such a situation exists. No situation is prohibited except those that are already listed in *Beauchesne* and Standing Orders, and those are things like anticipation and hypothetical situations, and that's not what we're addressing here.

It's our job, when we're trying to state an issue, to avoid insinuation, but, Mr. Speaker, we have to describe enough of the situation for the minister that we're questioning to understand what we're talking about. If we take all identifiers out of the question, the minister won't know what we're trying to get, and it becomes an overly generic question that's not helpful to the minister and does

not gather the information that the opposition is seeking nor does it hold the government to account.

3:00

So we're trying to do our job and trying to be conscious of not calling down any people that are outside of the House, and I think we were successful in doing that in this particular case, Mr. Speaker. I think it was appropriate to ask the questions to get the answers, and I would argue that there is no point of order here. The criteria that are expressed in both 409(7) and 493(4) were not met in this particular situation. I would ask the Speaker to find that there is no point of order here. [Mr. Pham rose]

The Speaker: This is not a debate back and forth, hon. member.

I'm prepared to hear other speakers on this point of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very briefly, I hope that on the second point of order the hon. member will raise the personless version.

The Speaker: We're dealing with the first one now.

Mr. Hancock: We're dealing with the first one, so I'll leave that argument to that time.

Clearly, here, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose has raised, rule 409(7) talks about "casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it." If the only purpose of the question raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition was with respect to the giving of a grant from the Wild Rose Foundation to an association which had been deregistered as a society, was not registered as a society or a not-for-profit corporation, that would have been an appropriate question. But going on to raise the association with a Vietnamese group and to cast aspersions around the reasons behind it, without there being further factual context laid, clearly casts doubt on an association and a group of individuals with that association which cannot defend themselves.

Clearly, the question could have been limited, and would appropriately have been limited, to giving a grant to an unregistered corporation and holding the Minister of Community Development responsible for checking into that type of an affair. But the question went further than that, and I would submit, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose has rightly raised, that it did cast aspersions on the groups associated and around it without properly linking them into it. While we normally talk about casting aspersions in the context of the House with respect to an individual member as opposed to, say, the government or a group of members, when you're talking about a not-for-profit organization outside of the House, I think you have to be a lot more careful.

In this case the hon. member has clearly given an implication of some wrongdoing when there might be a very simple explanation to the fact of an association being deregistered. We don't know that. Therefore, I would submit that it is appropriate to raise the point of order and to ask the hon. member once again to be a little bit more careful with the way in which he phrases things so that he doesn't cast aspersions on people either inside or outside the House.

The Speaker: Others?

I will wait in anticipation of the second point of order. I'm not so sure that it's going to be that much dramatically different from the first, but I will await.

In the case of the first question today which motivated the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose to rise, this is what was stated. This is the record. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wild Rose Foundation plays an important role in Alberta, and we must protect its integrity. A confidential e-mail from the auditor of Applewood community association in northeast Calgary states that Wild Rose grants were transferred to the Vietnamese Cao Daist Cultural Society, a group struck from the corporate registry, disqualifying it from Wild Rose funding. Applewood's vice-president is a key supporter of the Member for Calgary-Montrose, who may also have ties with the Vietnamese Cao Daist Cultural Society. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Why was Applewood allowed to transfer Wild Rose funds to an organization struck from the corporate registry? It clearly breaks the rules.

This question could just as easily have had this version. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wild Rose Foundation plays an important role in Alberta, and we must protect its integrity. A confidential e-mail from the auditor of Applewood community association in northeast Calgary states that Wild Rose grants were transferred to the Vietnamese Cao Daist Cultural Society, a group struck from the corporate registry, disqualifying it from Wild Rose funding . . . My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Why was Applewood allowed to transfer Wild Rose funds to an organization struck from the corporate registry? It clearly breaks the rules.

What a difference of questions, what a difference of interpretation, and what a difference of response. The chair was in the chair the other day when I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie raised similar questions. It led to no interventions, as I recall.

Then this whole business has to be dealt with with the second question, which we're not going to deal with right now. We will. But the second question is a clear tie to somebody else.

The clause which, if I understand the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, caused him to intervene was the following, which was inserted in all of this: "Applewood's vice-president is a key supporter of the Member for Calgary-Montrose" – okay, could be factually correct; I don't know – "who may also have ties with the Vietnamese Cao Daist Cultural Society." I'm sorry. I don't understand what that has to do with the whole question other than to deal with the casting of aspersions, as has, in my view, correctly been pointed out by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose under *Beauchesne* 409(7). I do believe that this is a very legitimate point of order.

I asked the hon. Opposition House Leader if she had the authority to speak on behalf of her leader. She assured me she did have. I would ask, then, the hon. Opposition House Leader to do the honourable thing.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We did believe that we were acting in all good faith and were trying to be factual. I hear the ruling from the Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please. The hon. member is participating here. She has the floor.

Ms Blakeman: I respect and honour the ruling of the Speaker. As instructed, I will sincerely withdraw the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition. On his behalf, as delegated by the Leader of the Official Opposition, I will offer an apology to the Member for Calgary-Montrose and hope that it is accepted with the good faith in which it is offered.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That deals with my first question of order.

The Speaker: Yes. Will you accept the apology?

Mr. Pham: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for doing that.

The Speaker: So then we will have dealt with the first point amicably, honourably, sincerely, as good parliamentarians. Thank you very much.

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose on point of order number two.

Point of Order Reflections on a Member

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason that I separated the two points of order is because I want to make sure that the one issue is dealing with the volunteers and a member of the board of a community association in my riding. The second issue deals with me personally.

The second question from the Leader of the Opposition I believe violated many points of order. The first one is Standing Orders 23(h) and (i): "makes allegations against another member" and "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member." Also, that question violated *Beauchesne* 409(7) that I cited earlier, "casting aspersions" on myself, and also it violated *Beauchesne* 411(5), that the question may not "reflect on the character or conduct" of members. In this case it reflected on my character, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, I am neither a member of the Applewood Park Community Association nor a member of the Cao Daist group. However, I do support what they are doing, and I think there is nothing wrong with it. From what I have heard, they have submitted the full report to the Minister of Community Development with receipts and with pictures, and if there is anything wrong with that, the ministry will deal with them.

3:10

In this case the Leader of the Official Opposition has absolutely no reason to cast aspersions on me, to give the impression as if I have something to do with this thing. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of what I did. But the way the question was presented: as if there was something wrong and somehow I was tied into it. The only reason that it was made in that way was because somehow this project was there in Vietnam and maybe because I am of Vietnamese origin. I have always been proud of my heritage. I have always been proud of the fact that all Canadians are equal.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very tough profession. In this House every one of us – the only thing that we have is our name. The minute that we don't respect each other, the minute that we don't have a good name, we lose the confidence of the public, and it looks badly on all of us. I would respectfully ask the Leader of the Official Opposition to consider these facts very seriously before standing up to make allegations against any member of this House because it will reflect poorly on all of us. The people of Alberta expect a lot more, you know, in their elected people. There is no excuse for that type of language, for that kind of tactic to be used in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. House leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in the previous point of order the member specifically referenced the first question that the leader asked, and I responded to that. In the ruling the Speaker brought into it the preamble and requested the apology, which I was happy to give.

I am going to respond to what he has identified as what he is calling his point of order on, which is the second question. If I am incorrect that this is the part that is offending the member, I would ask him to please stand and clarify that. I tried to respond to exactly what he brought up last time, and other things were brought into the mix. If I'm not correct in responding to exactly what he's referencing, please indicate that.

Okay. So we are responding to the second question that has been asked. The member feels that aspersions were cast under 23(h) and under 409(7). Mr. Speaker, I have to flat-out disagree. It's a question seeking information: what role? That is not casting aspersions. It is asking: what role?

An Hon. Member: The preamble.

Ms Blakeman: No. We are talking about the second question. That is exactly what the member referenced, and that is what I'm responding to. You want to talk about the preamble? That's already been dealt with. Don't call it in again.

So we're talking about the second question: "what role . . ." I don't think there's anything wrong in questioning what role a member had in a particular incident. It goes on to say, "if any." Perhaps the member had no role in this particular question, and that possibility is left open for the minister to respond to. Then the member is noted by the appropriate name: "did the Member for Calgary-Montrose have in the prohibited transfer of grant funds?" "In the prohibited transfer of grant funds." Clearly, we've already shown that the transfer of grant funds was prohibited, so what is inaccurate in that? What is casting the aspersions in that? That's a factual statement. "The prohibited transfer of grant funds." It was prohibited. The grant funds happened. They were transferred, and it was not to have happened, according to the very rules that were outlined previously by the Minister of Community Development.

Where are the aspersions being cast? It's asking: what did the member have to do with this? Perhaps he had nothing to do with it. That's what the clause "if any" is in there for. So there are no aspersions cast here.

The Speaker obviously felt that aspersions were cast in the preamble. He requested an apology, and he got it. We're talking about the second question, and I clarified that with the member here that it was the second question that is the subject of this second point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I would argue that there is no aspersion being cast here. It doesn't say: was the member personally responsible for this? Was the member's own money involved? Did the member benefit from it? None of those questions are in there. It says: what role did they play in this? So there is no aspersion being cast here. It's a straightforward question, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's the role of the opposition to hold the government accountable. There has been a problem that has been identified in this particular episode with a particular group here. Funds were transferred that were not to have been. Criteria were established that were not followed. There is a problem here. The opposition has identified and asked the minister how the government is going to respond and who was involved in this, what went wrong, what happened. That's our job. We're here to ask those questions when something like this is identified, and ask the questions we did. So I argue that there were no aspersions cast in this second question as it appears.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to this, Mr. Speaker, and I await your ruling.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more reprehensible than calling into account the character of an individual member in

this House unless it's delegating the authority to defend it. Clearly, both in the preamble and in the second question the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview raised a question. The second question clearly raised the question: what role did the Member for Calgary-Montrose have?

Now, if the hon. member has any indication that there is wrongdoing by a member of this House, the appropriate way to deal with it is to call the Ethics Commissioner and give any evidence of that to the Ethics Commissioner and ask for an investigation. That's the appropriate way of dealing with issues of character, issues of conflict with respect to members of this House, not to raise a question and throw it out on the floor of the House for the public to hear and cast aspersions on a person's character. That's the most offensive thing you can do.

Mr. Speaker, I think you should call this into account. I'm surprised that the hon. member didn't raise a point of privilege on this matter.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, you want to participate on this point of order?

Mr. Lukaszuk: That's correct.

The Speaker: Then proceed.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, for my comments I'm relying on Standing Orders 23(h) and (i). What's also overlooked here – and I listened carefully to the question and then to you having read the questions again – is the profiling that took place. There was no substantive connection whatsoever between the alleged wrongdoing of the said society in Calgary and the Member for Calgary-Montrose other than the fact that he simply happens to be of the same ethnic background as the society in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that you must make a ruling on because if ever any society that happens to be of Polish descent does something that may be conceived to be unbecoming, will the Leader of the Opposition then accuse me and you that somehow we have been accomplices to it simply because of our ethnic background? The only connection between the Member for Calgary-Montrose and the alleged incident is his ethnicity. How reprehensible can we get?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there additional members who would like to participate?

Well, the statement that was given in the House that led to the second intervention was the following, again from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview. The question was very, very short. "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what role, if any, did the Member for Calgary-Montrose have in the prohibited transfer of grant funds?" Very straightforward. "What role, if any, did the Member for Calgary-Montrose have in the prohibited transfer of grant funds?" Well, first of all, how would the minister know if the hon. member had any role? This has nothing to do with government policy, and the purpose of the question period is to deal with government policy.

Secondly, there are some kinds of questions we can give in life. This is a question period, and skill is always entailed in it. I guess if one wants to make a point, one can make a point. If I were to ask a question, and I were to say to you "Answer yes or no," you would be dead either way with this question. I'm going to give you a question. You have only one choice. You answer yes or you answer no. You know what? I know you're dead either way. Do you still beat your wife? There's an implication involved in this. It has an

innuendo involved in it, and all the text on politics will use examples such as this. There are hundreds of books in the libraries dealing with the skill to be used in terms of what it is you want to get.

3:20

It's absolutely correct. It's absolutely correct what the Opposition House Leader said, that the purpose of question period and the purpose of questions in question period is to hold the government accountable. The Member for Calgary-Montrose is not a member of the government. The Member for Calgary-Montrose is a Member of the Legislative Assembly. The only members in the government in this Assembly are the Members of Executive Council. So what was the purpose to tie in prohibited transfer of grant funds as well?

I want to point out one other thing. We have an officer of the Legislative Assembly that this Assembly spent a great deal of time finding and appointing. We have a statute in the province of Alberta called the Conflicts of Interest Act, and in the Conflicts of Interest Act there's a preamble. I want to read the preamble.

Whereas the ethical conduct of elected officials is expected in democracies;

Whereas Members of the Legislative Assembly are expected to perform their duties of office and arrange their private affairs in a manner that promotes public confidence and trust in the integrity of each Member, that maintains the Assembly's dignity and that justifies the respect in which society holds the Assembly and its Members; and

Whereas Members of the Legislative Assembly, in reconciling their duties of office and their private interests, are expected to act with integrity and impartiality;

Therefore Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, enacts [an act].

There are actually a lot of pages in the act. But the key thing in the act is that if a Member of the Legislative Assembly believes that a member has breached something in the statutes of the province of Alberta, it is the duty of that member to contact the Ethics Commissioner under the Conflicts of Interest Act and ask for such a review, and such a review would be undertaken. That's the honourable, parliamentary way in which we as Members of this Legislative Assembly deemed in days gone by, in debates gone by: first reading, second reading, committee with amendments, third reading, royal proclamation, and everything else. We even publish this act. All members have a copy of it, were given a copy of it by the Speaker as part of the orientation.

So there is a process. Wiser members than us years ago determined that that was the appropriate way to deal with these things. Should there be a question, and one member has some thoughts about another member, well, you do the honourable thing. You just phone him up, ask him for a cup of coffee, and say, "Hey, did you do that?" That's probably the quickest way. If the answer is no, okay. That's it. The other way, we have this officer of the Legislative Assembly. But, okay, I guess the other option is to come to the Legislative Assembly and raise questions.

I'm pretty sensitive, hon. members. I'm pretty sensitive because of what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has said. I'm not going to play that card in this Assembly, but I'm not going to let it go either without a caution. We're expected to perform our duties in here with integrity, and we're not expected to provide aspersions and other types of things, whatever it is under 23 (h) or (i) or 409(7) or 411(5).

To the same minister the question again, "What role, if any" – and how would the minister know if there was a role, if he even doubts that there was a role – "did the Member for Calgary-Montrose have" and then "prohibited transfer of grants funds?"

Well. I'm sorry, but I'm concluding again that this is another legitimate point of order, and I'm going to ask the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to do the honourable thing.

Ms Blakeman: I thank the Speaker for his advice, and on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition I withdraw the question and offer an apology to the Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, has the matter been dealt with?

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because this issue is very important to my name and to my reputation and to my ability to perform my duty in this House, I would ask the Leader of the Official Opposition to stand up tomorrow in the House and make the retraction and apology. If he refuses to do that in person, I would like to consider to move this thing over to become a point of privilege because I don't think that the practice of attacking and running away is good enough.

On the first point of order I accepted it because it doesn't cast a motive on my ability to perform my work, Mr. Speaker. But in the second instance the people at home who read *Hansard* or who hear the question in QP need to have the remark withdrawn personally by the Leader of the Official Opposition and a full apology made at that time.

The Speaker: I heard the hon member. There's no reconsidering of that?

Then the hon. Opposition House Leader has heard the hon. member too. It will be printed in *Hansard*, and the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition will be able to get a copy of it later in the day. We'll deal with this matter, then, tomorrow.

The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Under 13(2), for the Speaker to explain. Mr. Speaker, as with the Premier and as with the Executive Council, the Leader of the Official Opposition and indeed the leader of the third party have legitimate reasons to be absent from the House, and we recognize that there is business that calls them from the House. In this case I believe that the leader made every attempt to follow every possible contingency involved here, did send a note to the Speaker. The Speaker on the record confirmed that there was a delegation that had happened and, in fact, brought that up again. I have acted in good faith here as the person to whom this was delegated. If delegation is not accepted, I'm assuming the Speaker, with the powers that he has in this House, would've set that forth at the beginning of this particular episode.

I'm questioning now if the Speaker could provide an explanation for why he appears to me to now be withdrawing his acceptance of that delegation, which seemed to have been set in place. What we're getting now are accusations coming from that side, which I can't argue on a point of order, accusations coming back toward the Leader of the Official Opposition that he's made discriminatory remarks. I'm not allowed to defend that because we're inside a point of order. I'm entirely at the mercy of the Speaker, in fact. So I would ask the Speaker to explain why he is allowing this to go forward when he accepted the delegation previously.

The Speaker: Actually, if the hon. member had listened and heard what the Speaker heard, the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, if I understand this, basically said that he wanted now to take this to a point of privilege, not a point of order. That clearly is a right.

Certainly, it's the chair's hope that this matter would've been dealt with by way of a point of order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, as I understood it, accepted the apology, which

was a very sincere apology. It was a legitimate apology, and I accept that. That's why I asked the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, after he made that comment, if he would reconsider it. His response to me was no, which is the right of a member.

However, I want to bring this matter to a conclusion today. I'm going to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose if he would consider that we've now dealt with this matter because there was a clear delegation of authority that was given by the Leader of the Official Opposition to the hon. member, who is the House leader of the Official Opposition. This happens all the time with the leader of the government, delegating this authority to one of the House leaders. They deal with the matter, and it's dealt with. No member of the opposition has come forward and said: "Look, that's not good enough. We want the other person in." This concept of delegation is something in there.

3:30

So I'm going to ask with a great deal of humility on behalf of the chair for the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose to accept the apology extended by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader so that we can close this matter and go forward.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Above all people in the House I respect this House a lot, I don't believe in wasting time, I don't raise a point of order if it is not important, and I am readily willing to accept the apology from the opposition member. The reason that I refused to accept the delegated apology is because I have noticed a pattern of behaviour from the Leader of the Official Opposition. Day in and day out he keeps attacking people one after another, people in this House and people outside of this House. I, for one, would like to have him come in here to apologize personally to me so that at least he can understand that it is a serious issue, and he wouldn't do it again to another member.

But given what you say today, Mr. Speaker, and given the fact that we have spent enough valuable time of this House on this matter, I will accept your recommendation and accept the apology with the hope that somehow members of his caucus will relate to him that this is the last straw on the back of the camel. One more step, and we are not going to tolerate this kind of behaviour in this House.

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, okay. I'm going to conclude this case with everything but the last comment. I'm going to extend a caution to the hon. member. The hon. member in his concluding remark extended a threat, which is prohibited. Now I'm going to ask him to withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Pham: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that comment.

Point of Order Challenging the Chair

The Speaker: Okay. Now we have to deal with a whole bunch of notes here that I got about what people heard and everything else, notes including from this person and up and down in the exercise program for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. So, okay.

Sometime in here during this time the Speaker is in the chair. The Assembly is live. We're into the fourth question. The hon. leader of the third party is raising some questions, which I guess – well, we'll see where we go with this. After I had an exchange with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, then I received a note from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood saying: I did it. Well, I got about 25 notes from other members saying: they both did it. So who should I deal with?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I have all the text that I need. I have all the citations that I need. We can come to this very quickly if the hon. member wants to be recognized.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When I was asking my second supplemental of the Premier, I asked the question: "Is [the Premier] saying that he has nothing to apologize for when the serious concerns identified by this Auditor General were allowed to fester and build during [the Premier's] watch?" At which point, Mr. Speaker, you got up and ruled that out and said that it really didn't deal with policy. At least, that's the part of the ruling that I recollect.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I take my responsibility of holding the government accountable very seriously. They make it very difficult from time to time, and I certainly was frustrated.

I did take this opportunity to look up the role of the Speaker in the House of Commons in *Beauchesne*. If I can just read sections 167 and 168.

167. The essential ingredient of the speakership is found in the status of the Speaker as a servant of the House. The Presiding Officer, while but a servant of the House, is entitled on all occasions to be treated with the greatest attention and respect by the individual Members because the office embodies the power, dignity, and honour of the House itself.

168. (1) The chief characteristics attached to the office of Speaker in the House of Commons are authority and impartiality. . . Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition of the successful working of procedure, and many conventions exist which have as their object, not only to ensure the impartiality of the Speaker but also, to ensure that there is a general recognition of the Speaker's impartiality. The Speaker takes no part in debate in the House, and votes only when the Voices are equal, and then only in accordance with rules which preclude an expression of opinion on the merits of a question.

(2) In order to ensure complete impartiality the Speaker has usually relinquished all affiliation with any parliamentary party. The Speaker does not attend any party caucus nor take part in any outside partisan political activity.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that the comments that I made clearly violate those rules, and for that, I apologize to you and to the House.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Before accepting the apology, I'd also draw to the attention of the hon. leader of the third party page 523, *House of Commons Procedure & Practice*, where it says: the Speaker may sentence hon. members to the gaol. I made that up. Okay? I made that up. It's okay. You're not going to jail.

Okay, hon. members, I take it there's approval of the members, then, to proceed to Orders of the Day, and when we get out of Orders of the Day, we're into the estimates. No difficulty with any of that with anybody?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**
head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Health and Wellness

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister for Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to introduce first of all members of staff that are in the gallery. They are here to make sure that we take down all the questions and that we provide written responses and clear responses to members of the Assembly: Deputy Minister Paddy Meade; assistant deputy ministers Annette Trimbee, Janet Skinner, and Bruce Perry; CEO of AADAC, Murray Finnerty; Peter Hegholz, the director of finance; Christine Shandro; and then, obviously, from my staff Mark Kastner, Michael DeBolt, and Alyssa Haunholter. Christine Powell is here to observe.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a few general messages on the 2005-06 budget, and I'd like to condense some of my remarks, respectful of the fact that the hon. members opposite would obviously like to have an opportunity, a chance, or ask questions.

The budget this year for health is \$8.9 billion, an increase of \$707 million, or 8.6 per cent, over last year. Our nine regional health authorities and the Cancer Board and Mental Health Board will directly receive over 60 per cent of the total budget increase for enhanced base operating funding to provide accessible care to all Albertans. This will bring funding to the health authorities to over \$5.6 billion this year, up \$572 million so that they can continue providing health services and expand access. Within this amount is \$10 million to increase the number of nursing hours for patients in long-term care facilities.

Over \$1.7 billion will be spent on physician services, an increase of \$173 million. Of this physician services budget, \$30 million has been earmarked for hiring up to 150 new physicians, bringing the total number of physicians in Albertans to 5,775.

Almost \$60 million has been assigned to primary care initiatives throughout the province, with a 25 per cent increase in funding for the Cancer Board, which is an increase of almost \$48 million, to accommodate the high cost of many cancer drugs and high-quality patient care.

3:40

Over the next three years we'll spend \$25 million on a mental health innovation fund targeting particularly mental health issues for children and youth. The Mental Health Board will also receive almost \$2 million over last year's budget for province-wide services, including forensic psychiatry and tele-mental health.

Five hundred and sixty million dollars in capital financing has been allocated for the first year of a three-year \$1.6 billion capital plan for health facilities and equipment. This includes funding for the completion of the Alberta Children's hospital in Calgary and the Alberta Heart Institute in Edmonton.

The government has also committed support for two new capital projects, the Calgary south hospital project and the health sciences ambulatory learning centre project in Edmonton, a joint project with Alberta Advanced Education. The Calgary south hospital project and the health sciences ambulatory learning centre project will each exceed \$500 million.

There's an increase of \$72 million for ministry-sponsored nongroup health benefits, ensuring that Albertans not covered under a group plan, primarily seniors, continue to have access to supplementary health services, including prescription drug costs.

AADAC will receive \$74 million under this year's budget, an increase of \$8 million from last year. Four point two million dollars will be used to establish two new youth residential detoxification and treatment programs to help young Albertans break addictions to drugs and alcohol.

While the Health and Wellness budget itself is \$8.9 billion, when you include health-related spending by other ministries, the government's total spending on health will exceed \$9.5 billion this year.

Mr. Speaker, just an interesting fact is that while we spend over \$500 million for drugs in Health and Wellness, the total bill for drugs in the province of Alberta paid for by government exceeds \$1 billion, so it's certainly a very significant expense.

Altogether, Health and Wellness spends 37 per cent of the government's total expenses this year.

Recent accomplishments. I'd like to just highlight, Mr. Speaker, that the Health Symposium provided opportunities for all of the health providers throughout the province to attend and to learn together about the fact that there are no single solutions on health care. Improvements must be patient focused, evidence based. Solutions must meet our own society's expectations and values. An attitude of openness is necessary for new possibilities. Change in health care systems should be evolutionary and entrepreneurial. Collaboration among professionals is vital. Quality care is achieved when health teams learn together and act accordingly, and change must be focused on what will work and what will make a positive difference to the health of the population.

Other recent accomplishments which will signal the way for the work that we'll do this year include the Alberta hip and knee replacement pilot project, officially launched April 8. Systems improvements for 2004-05 funding will include a reduction in the time it takes to see an orthopedic specialist and an increased number of hip and knee surgeries.

Funding from last year's budget for the provincial stroke strategy was announced at the beginning of last month and will mean that in all parts of the province Albertans will receive leading-edge stroke mitigation clinical services. It also means that the number of strokes will hopefully be reduced in our province.

We've established an Ambulance Governance Advisory Council to determine a conclusive cost for transfer of services to health regions and to provide recommendations on any future governance or ambulance issues.

The ministry is also developing new continuing care health standards. As we have discussed over the last few days, these standards in draft form were redrafted last December and continue to be amended. We will consider input from all Members of the Legislative Assembly as we evolve and look forward to what the Albertans across Alberta will say in the review. The MLAs from Calgary-Foothills and Lacombe-Ponoka will be conducting that review to end at the end of August.

The priority this year, the target, will be to make sure that Albertans are healthy and that they have the best health and wellness records of anybody in the country. To provide support for this, we'll provide leadership and collaborate with partners on a number of fronts. The ministry will dedicate its efforts towards the three core businesses: advocating and providing education for healthy living, providing quality health and wellness services, and leading and participating in continuous improvement in the health system. In addition to our ongoing activities, we will be looking ahead to strengthening the public health risk management capacities as well as health system innovation.

As we develop Alberta's third way in health, which means improving the care system and making a good system even better, I want to reassure colleagues that publicly funded, basic medicare services will continue to be provided according to all the principles of the Canada Health Act, and no Albertan will be denied services in the province of Alberta based on need.

Our immediate government priorities, reinforced by the symposium, will continue to be: promoting wellness, particularly for

children and youth; advancing new standards in long-term care; advancing primary care supports; realizing improvements in mental health service delivery; and making electronic health records a robust reality by 2008. With other ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, the curriculum for physical activity will be introduced over this next year so that we will learn and the learner will learn at the very early stages of life how to maintain good health.

Our primary care initiatives will be established. At least 12 will be operational by this summer, and throughout Alberta where those are located, there will be 24/7 access for people who need health care at any time of the day. I believe, Mr. Chairman, that that will reduce the heavy imposition on emergency departments, who have at times been clogged with many important issues but definitely not always urgent.

Our priorities include promotion and prevention, expanding our community care, improving access, and watching and working on how we manage the growing cost of emerging technologies and pharmaceuticals. We'll work on health workforce recruitment and retention and continue to strengthen cross-ministry initiatives. We will be mindful of growth and the changing demographics and note, Mr. Chairman, that currently 10 per cent of Albertans are 65 years of age or over, and this percentage is expected to increase to 13 per cent by 2016 and 20 per cent by 2030.

Other challenges include the cost of emerging technologies and pharmaceuticals, workforce shortages, expectations for health service quality and increased health spending, public health risks, aboriginal health needs, mental health challenges, and addiction issues.

Mr. Chairman, according to the 2004 Alberta Health survey, 89 per cent of Albertans were satisfied with the way health services are provided; 74 per cent of Albertans indicated satisfaction with the health system in Alberta. While our system continues to receive high marks, we know that we must continue to improve and renew our system. The priorities in the months ahead will include the initiatives that have not been accomplished yet in the Mazankowski report, and we will work to emphasize wellness and strength in our collaboration.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to answering the questions from the members opposite and from any Member of the Legislative Assembly and look forward, as well, to sending written responses to those that we're not able to answer entirely today.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I think it's been a very opportune time for both the Minister of Health and Wellness and for me as the Official Opposition critic to have the advantage of having not one but two wide-reaching, thoughtful, and sometimes provocative health information symposiums made available to us in the last week. First, the Friends of Medicare alternative conference, the weekend of April 30 and May 1, followed by the minister's own international Health Symposium.

3:50

So I just want to make a couple of contextual comments first, Mr. Chairman. I think that, essentially, our health care system is a good system. It has served us very well. By any measurement you choose to look at, we still come out looking very good in comparison to other countries, if that's important to you. I think what's important to most Albertans is that there is health service available to them when they need it and it's based on need, not on ability to pay. That's something very important to Albertans. So it's a system that does work for the most part.

I believe that it is sustainable, but I do believe that it needs updating. We have a number of systems that were put in place in the 1950s and '60s, very good programs, hard-fought-for, lots of debate at the time. Medicare is one of them. Our social safety net is another example, or welfare, or however you want to call it. They were put in place for very specific reasons at the time. We're 50 and 60 years beyond that, and we need to go back and re-examine and update that system.

I would suggest to you that the system that was set up for medicare in the late '50s or early '60s was a system that was directed at the catastrophic costs that they were trying to protect people from at the time. Those were directed towards the doctors' fees, not that doctors charged too much, but still for many people that was a hardship. It was also directed specifically at hospital costs, at acute-care costs. So we have the doctor as gatekeeper to the system and, also, how we pay the doctors and the hospitals, and that's really what medicare was set up for. I think what we have to do now is look at how we can make the acute-care system sustainable, because that's where our biggest costs still are: the hospital and delivery of acute health care.

So how do we make that more sustainable, and how do we deal with the larger context that we know is important today? When we bring in things like opening that funding model to capture and include things like wellness measures, prevention measures, and I'll also add reduction measures in there – if we can reduce the number of motor vehicle accidents, that would save us money in the acute-care wings, if you're following my reasoning here. So wellness, prevention, the social determinants of health: we are coming to see that those increasingly are important parts of how we deliver health care services. We must take into consideration the social determinants of health.

Also, two other things we need to include in that are management of chronic disease and end of life. That's where I will be looking to steer the minister and influence her if I can. That's where I think we need to go, and that's my vision of an updated Alberta health delivery model. So I'm looking to shift the emphasis, in other words.

[Ms Haley in the chair]

I think and I argue very strongly that all innovation that we need can be done inside the public health system. I'll be careful and strictly technical here, Madam Chairman, in that actually a lot of our delivery is, strictly speaking, in what we call the private system because it's not delivered directly by government any more. So in Alberta we have a system where everything, in fact, is delegated to the regional health authorities, and they now own the hospitals and deliver the health care system. So, strictly speaking, yeah, but we know that that's not the case. We view the regional health authorities as creatures of Health and Wellness, of the government itself.

So I continue to talk about public delivery of services. In that I include not-for-profit agencies many times because the purpose of their being is to deliver the service, not to make a profit. I make a very clear distinction between that public service delivery and a private venture, that is to raise money for stakeholders and for owners.

My argument around that is that the for-profit delivery does not make any of our situations better. It does not create or give us any more of the resources that we are finding limited. Having a private system in place does not give us more doctors. It doesn't. What happens is that doctors are taken out of the public system and go and work in the for-profit system. That doesn't give us more doctors, though. A for-profit system does not magically create doctors,

unless we're going to go into robotics in a heavy way here, and I haven't seen any sign of that. So it does not give us any more of what we need to actually run the system. It does not increase our capacity, our ability to deliver health care services at all. The arguments about reduced waiting lists are specious. They do not hold water.

I think one of the things that's important for us is to start making decisions based on evidence, and I heard the speaker say that. It's something both of us heard a lot: get the information and make your decisions based on the actual evidence, not on what we think is going on, or ideas, zombies that keep arising and walking around on the earth and really have no validity to them.

I also argue that the private, for-profit delivery of the system has a higher cost, in fact, and, if anything, creates a longer waiting list because it in many cases creates an artificial demand. It does use up the resources that are here, and in using those resources – you know, supply and demand – it drives the costs up. In the end it creates a higher cost system and doesn't contribute anything to make the system more accessible or, in fact, easier to do. You know, there are other things like cherry-picking and creaming and all of those things that we've heard about.

So I would argue for the minister that there are two things to do now. One is long-term care. Actually, since I wrote my notes, we've now had the Auditor General's report come out. I believe that there are a couple of things to do there. I believe the Auditor General has laid out very clearly where the problems are and what we need to address.

What I'm looking to the minister for is decisions and leadership about how we're going to fund this system because I think this system should be funded inside of the public system, and it's not right now. It's mostly outside. People are mostly on their own, and there actually are very definitive moves from the government to make it more on the outside, to reclassify people from a care situation, which has a medical model attached to it, to a housing situation, which has no medical model attached to it. It's a housing situation. Many people would believe that you are still under some kind of care. In fact, you're not. You're in a housing situation.

So we need to decide how we're going to pay for that, and it's possible that we want to look at things like: should we have a voucher system where the money follows the person no matter what kind of facility they're in? Or do we say: "You only get the money if you're in this kind of facility," or "You only get it if you're this kind of person"? That is one of the decisions that has to be made for us to move forward in this particular debate. So we need the information on how we're going to pay, and we need the information to make decisions on how we're going to plan for the future.

One of the zombies that keeps walking around is that the baby boomers, as they age, are going to crash the health care system. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Put that zombie back in the ground and drive a stake through its heart. It is wrong. What we know is that these baby boomers are healthier than every generation before them. They're stronger. They've got bigger bones. They've had a better diet their whole lives. They should at this point, given the amount of public knowledge, be able to know that they should lead a healthy lifestyle, they should avoid injury, et cetera, et cetera. So they are going to live longer, and they're going to be healthier as they age.

My grandfather was sick, sick, sick by the time he was 65. A 65 year old today, well, please. They're golfing. They're doing this. They're doing that. They're still working, most of them. I mean, 65 is not old anymore. They are very fit. Seventy-five: well, you're thinking of slowing down a bit more. Eighty-five: okay, now we're talking old. So our whole thought process about what's old and what's infirm and what's elderly has shifted by 20 years already. That's not crashing the system.

So as we get baby boomers that start to move into that retirement age – and I think it's 2011 or 2012 where they really start to hit that boom, that the bump on the screen moves into that age range – they're not going to be using health care resources at an enormous rate. Actually, the people that cost the health care system the most money are people that are so-called middle-aged who have catastrophic diseases that need extreme treatment in acute care. It's people who have cancer. It's people who need high intervention for life-ending diseases. That's what's expensive. It's not expensive to be old. It's expensive to be sick and middle-aged because we're going to get you better, but it's going to cost a lot of money to get you there.

4:00

I think one of the other things we need to look at immediately is staffing levels, particularly the long-term care. Now, I heard the minister talk about money going to that, but really the situation we've got right now is that staffing levels are at 1.9 hours per individual, almost two hours per person per day, but not quite. The government has made a commitment to move to 3.1 and then incrementally to move to 3.4, and I keep arguing that the long-term care sector has told us 3.6 to really get the job done. So I keep questioning: why the gap? What's the evidence behind the ministry's decision to go to 3.4 rather than 3.6? I want to know this. Because if that's what everybody in this sector is telling us, that's what the front-line workers are telling us, okay, where's the evidence that says we shouldn't do that? What's the evidence to tell us not to do the extra .2 an hour? I want to know that.

I think that the long-term care sector is a small sector, but it has a much bigger impact on all of our lives. I mean, really, we're not dealing with that many people that are sick and in care. Long-term care right now is 14,000 people, and there's an additional 4,000 and some odd people that are in some sort of associated care, whether we're calling it assisted living or supportive living, and those are some of the categories that are being redefined away from care and towards housing. So we're talking 18,000 people in the province, 18,000 and change, a significant population but not a huge population.

I think we have to be very clear about the standards, which we know are problematic right now. Work has to be done on that very quickly. We have to look at the appropriate medical and nonmedical accommodation. That's my conversation about medical care versus housing. We have to be careful about that because I don't think this should be about off-loading onto individuals, which this government has been very keen on doing: individual responsibility and people really want to look after themselves, so we're going to let them do that. I think that if the public really understood that that was the outcome of the government decision-making process, they would not be in favour of it. But, you know, let's find out. Let's get the decision. Let's get the evidence.

I think we have to be very, very careful. First of all, I think the province should be building the long-term care facilities. I do not think they should be built by private providers, period. End of discussion. If it's long-term care, I think it should be in the public system. I think we have to be very careful with our regulations – and, again, I would prefer to see it in the public system – on what I would call the old-style lodge accommodation, where people actually didn't need medical help. They just didn't want to do the dishes and the cooking and the shoveling and everything. They were happy to live in a room in a communal setting with other people, with meals provided and laundry done, but they had the freedom to come and go as they wished. That is a housing kind of situation.

We have to be very careful to regulate that because when things go wrong, the public looks at us and goes: "You were the only ones

that were in a position to look after us here, to make sure we were protected. Why didn't you do that? Why did you abdicate your responsibility?" We have to put those regulations in place, we have to monitor them, and we have to enforce them. We are the only ones that can do that. Expecting the private sector to police themselves or monitor or whatever you want to call it does not happen. That is evidence, and we've got lots of it to show us that it does not happen. So that's another place we fall down. Evidence-based planning and decision-making: gather the information where we don't have it.

Workforce planning, I think, is really important, not only around, you know, how are we going to provide – we're behind on capacity right now for health workforce. Even with the plans that are announced by the minister, that will not get us anywhere close to the number of people that we need.

One of the specific questions I have here is: what is the number of physicians per thousand that we will now be at by what date? The minister announced, "Well, we're going to hire new physicians, and that gets us to 5,000 in the province," I think I heard her say, or something like that. Well, how many is that per thousand, because that's the rate that the rest of the countries go on, and there's a variation there between, like, seven and nine, I think, per thousand. So give us a benchmark where we can compare ourselves to other places and, indeed, look at ourselves and figure out if that's what we want.

So workforce planning, I think, is very important, not only the doctors but also the team profession. This is where I go back to arguing about the way we pay doctors and the idea of doctor as gatekeeper. That's part of the 1950s model that we need to move away from and must move away from if we are going to open that system up and add in things like wellness and prevention and chronic care management and social determinants of health and end-of-life care. We're trying to do it now, and we still have that bottleneck – and that's not the word I want to use, but it's the only one on my tongue right now – of going through the doctor as gatekeeper as to who gets services.

We have to open that model up to include nurses, nurse practitioners, LPNs, dietitians, therapists, pharmacists – a much underused health professional resource – technicians, radiologists, counsellors. There's a whole host of people that are trained and trained well to contribute to the health care system, and we don't let them do very much. We spend a lot of money training them, and we have one person where everything sort of has to funnel through them. My argument is: have the doctors do what only doctors can do because you've got all the rest of these people to pull from to do everything else.

We don't have to have doctors doing triage, for example. Nurse practitioners can do it. Why do we have a doctor doing it? Counsellors, for example. There are a lot of possibilities there. So workforce management is very important. I'll come back to that. I'm going to have to get up and speak again. I want to talk about midwifery and its place in this.

I know that we're looking at the local primary care initiatives, and that is the beginning of the idea. Those are the pilot projects that are going to lead us into the future. But that program in itself is still set up with doctor as gatekeeper, and we've got to move away from that. Part of it is the way we pay doctors, and we have to acknowledge that they do more training, they need to be able to pay off their debts, and they need to be paid for their position and their knowledge and their responsibility. Absolutely. We need to acknowledge that. I don't want to take anything away from the doctors on that. But we also need to move to a new model. This is where the old model bottlenecks for us. That's what we've got to work at changing, and it isn't going to be easy. You've got my sympathy, Madam Minister.

I think we need to vigorously pursue pharmacare policies because pharmacare and new technology are the two burgeoning new costs to the health care system. Acute care was our old big cost. It's still there, and we can reduce that or make it sustainable, but pharmaceuticals and technology are the big new costs. We have to work hard at not controlling and not rationing but managing what's happening there. We could be doing things we're not, like we could be negotiating for large bulk buys on pharmaceuticals and negotiating hard.

When you look at the purchase of Cipro, for example, by the federal government a few years back when we were worried about SARS, they managed to work that from, you know, several dollars a pill down to less than a buck. Well, yeah. Because they were buying that much medication, they could argue to negotiate that price down. We're not doing that, and we should be. So it's one area that we've totally left alone that we need to look at.

We need to look very carefully at: how much does it cost really? What are the outcomes that we expect to get? We've been all over the board. I've said before – and it sounds a little odd, but it's true – we have too much money in this province for good health care. We're able to throw a little money here, throw a little money there, and whoever was arguing for whatever is happy, and on we go tootling along. If we were strapped for money, we would make much better decisions based on much better evidence about where we needed to take our health care system, but because we're not strapped for money, we're not forced into the situation where we have to make those calls.

I'll look for another opportunity to speak immediately following the minister's response. Thank you.

Ms Evans: Well, I'll be brief. I am, I think, very privileged to have a critic that spends as much time as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre does both in pursuit of finding out information and doing an analysis of it. We did share a table together in Calgary and shared many of the same experiences and the same perspectives, and I think that's entirely positive.

I will provide in writing the number of positions per thousand, just citing that our current workforce statistics are not broken down that way. Over the past three years a net gain of 600 doctors. We've gained more than 2,000 registered nurses between 2000 and 2003 and, obviously, need to do more there. We also expect to grow by a hundred pharmacists per year. We have currently 3,200 pharmacists practising in Alberta. Our postsecondary seats dedicated to health care are up 20 per cent since 1998-99, and the Alberta provincial nominee program has helped regional health authorities recruit 223 foreign-trained physicians.

4:10

Now, I am just given notice that there will be two doctors per thousand people in 2005-06, and I think that along with our primary care centres, hopefully, and the better use of nurse practitioners – and I noted that the hon. Minister of Finance was enthusiastic about that and initiated that program, so we're going to continue to work on that.

I'll just make one other observation. Relative to the high cost of drugs and some of the issues surrounding the drugs, I believe that what we're currently doing to analyze the clinical trials and to keep pace with the common drug review extensions will enable us to be more quality- and consistency-focused on what is proper. I'd also comment that we're looking at implementing a new generic price policy so that generics must be 70 per cent or less than the brand price, and subsequent generics must offer a 63 per cent discount from brand price. These kinds of innovative things, including large volume purchasing, may help us in fact curb some of our drug costs.

I look forward to the member's additional questions, and we'll take that from there.

The Acting Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll just finish off my last sort of overall discussion. The last part of that updating of the health care system is the social determinants of health. The example that I use is, you know, that I can take any woman off the street with a good education and a great job and good health and a wonderful family and supportive community involvement. If I take away her job, if I take away her home – put her on the street and make her homeless – if I diminish the value of her education, if I take away her family or her social supports, that woman will be in need of health care intervention within a year because you cannot keep your health under those circumstances. You cannot stay healthy being homeless. You cannot stay healthy. For example, if you end up with a mental health problem, a mental health disease, you're not healthy, and that causes another series of problems.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

We have to stop looking at health care as a supply challenge but also look at the demand side for health care and reducing demand. A big part of reducing demand on the health care system is looking at those affiliated social determinants of health, and that is about housing, that is about transitional housing, that is about treatment centres for people who have alcohol and drug addictions or who are coming out of a domestic battering situation. That is about looking at education and accessibility. It is about the minimum wage because that drives a lot of other wage functions. It is about your social benefit programs.

So we need to look at that, you know, and I think ultimately it's going to be women that change this system because we're more interested in matrix systems. Oh, look at that. It's even in the name. We understand that those things are connected, and if you want to change a bunch of them, you're going to have to look at that whole system.

In particular, one of the things that we know – and let's talk evidence again – is that a dollar invested in early childhood, before the age of six, which is why you have programs like Success by Six, will save you \$7 down the road in your health care system, and some of it is saved in corrections and policing. That's a lot of money, Mr. Chairman.

Now, if we want to reduce having to supply so much, reduce the demand, and that's one of the places that you can do it. It's difficult the way this government is structured right now because increasingly the modern problems we look at are multidisciplinary. You're working with a structure right now that works against the new age, the new day because your departments are siloed, are compartmentalized in a way that does not allow you to work back and forth on this stuff. So if you really want to contain health care, you've got to work with kids, you've got to work with education, you've got to work with housing. You know, I've been trying to get funding for sexual assault centres. It's totally all over the place. It's in four different ministries. No wonder I can't get something happening there, but we'll get that.

Okay. I want to move on and look at midwifery. I know that the minister is interested in this. Again, I think a lot of this has to do with recognizing the midwives as an integral part of the health care delivery team, and that has to do with taking the docs away from being the gatekeeper quite so specifically. I have talked with members of the midwifery promotion sector, if I can call it that, advocates. That's a better way to put it. Their point is – and it's an

old point, and it's worth making again – childbirth is not a disease. It's not bad health. It actually is a natural process. And you know what? Women can do it on their own if they really have to.

We tend to medicalize it, and we shouldn't. I've used costs in the House before where it's \$2,800 for a midwife-assisted – and you get lots more services in that bundle – and \$4,100 for a hospital delivery, and you don't get post- and pre-support with that. That's strictly the hospital and the operating room and the doctor and the scrub nurses and the rest that go along with that. So, again, can we do something? It's not about more supply; it's about decreasing the demand on the system, and there's a way to do it.

A point that I want to raise under this is the local primary care initiatives and full funding. What they're suggesting now is that maybe we shouldn't be paying all of the costs under health care for midwifery. That's something I've advocated for years: I want to see the full costs of midwifery covered under health care. These groups are now going: you know, maybe people will be more willing to move this forward if not all the costs are under that. Well, I'm not buying that argument so much, but I know that it's a consideration this group wants the minister to make. They state that consumers are prepared to have a partial funding model, and maybe this could be incremental. I guess I'd be willing to go there if it was incremental.

I would like to argue that midwives should be the gatekeepers of the maternity care services in order for the government to reap the biggest cost savings, and again this could work into the LPCI model. I do; I think midwives should be the gatekeepers of that particular section. It's not medical; it's not bad; it's not a disease. The system, the process of assistance that's available that thinks that way is the midwifery system. Our health care system regards it as a disease. So let's go to the people that are thinking along a track we want to move.

I think that consumers and midwives should be consulted regarding funding models. One of the other issues we need to look at – and again it ties in with education – is the establishment of the education and training programs necessary to sustain the profession. We had midwives that came into it. They've taken us through until today. Some of them are getting ready to retire. The new ones aren't going into it because they look at where we are in Alberta and go: "Why? For that amount of grief? Forget it." They're out of here, or they never go into it. So we need some kind of program that's available and developed through the universities that people can be accessing. If it's, you know, a nursing degree in midwifery, fine. But we need to set that up as quickly as possible to get that flowing through because, again, it's about capacity and we don't have enough of them.

The IMSEP results should be publicly released, and I had asked the minister that in a question a couple of Thursdays ago. Also, I think I was arguing to have a consumer representative put back on that committee.

4:20

The Midwifery Health Discipline Committee is the regulatory body. The position of a consumer representative representing – oh, that would be the women. That position was cut in 2002. You know, Madam Minister, I think that should go back. That should be restored. Come on. It just seems bizarre to me to have a committee that's deciding on midwifery disciplines and not have a woman, a consumer representative, on the committee. So I'll ask that that go back on.

An Hon. Member: Are you going to want an opposition member?

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Well, we have an opposition member that is a nurse, so if you want to keep it in the Assembly, there's a sugges-

Availability of GPs. Again, this is a capacity problem. I'll just make a note. You know, my father phoned me up because I sent him to the Capital Health Link. Excellent program. Excellent innovation. Guess what, Mr. Chairman? It's come out of the public system. It's come out of the Capital health authority. So, again, a good example of innovation, something that works, evidence-based innovations coming out of the public system.

I sent him there because I noticed a pamphlet about finding a family physician accepting new patients by going to the website. He did and then phoned me and said: well, you were allowed to put in how many kilometres you were willing to travel in order to find a GP for yourself. They kept getting their search wider and wider and wider, and finally he had said unlimited, which was up to 99 kilometres away from where he lived, and there was still no one accepting new patients. So we have a huge capacity problem.

There are three ways to address that. Get more doctors through the training system and out and working, better foreign qualifications and getting people that are already trained as doctors in other countries up and working here. There are a number of not too difficult ways to be doing that, including the foreign qualifications, but also some local things that we require specifically here, like the Bar Association says that you have to know our rules and our way of doing things and our equipment, and then we'll test you for here and you're good to practise law in Alberta. We need this same kind of situation for foreign qualification. The last thing is reducing the need for doctors. I keep saying that we're making doctors do stuff that somebody else could be doing. So, again, we do want more supply in that case but less demand on the doctors where they could be doing other things.

Home care. This is another area, and I would be very interested in what information we have on that and where the gaps are. Identify where the gaps are and get the evidence we can make good decisions on. I have always believed in the idea that good home care delivered will help people stay healthy in their homes, and that's where they really want to be. We're delivering home-care services, and they don't seem to be working to keep people at home, and there are a lot of complaints about the system. I think there's confusion sometimes between home care and housekeeping, and we need to understand that and understand what people really need to stay at home and stay healthy.

Frankly, I can tell you that if my grandmother was in her own home but there was a dirty floor, that woman was not going to stay healthy and stay off her hip the way she'd been told by her doctor. She's going to get on her hands and knees and clean the g-d floor. So why are we saying to her, "I'm sorry, ma'am, but you can't get housekeeping services; no one will come and clean your floor?" Well, think. You know, we've got to start tracking this through in a logical manner rather than just saying: no, we've decided that as long as you've got two legs, you don't get housekeeping services unless you pay for it. We need to start looking at what's actually affecting people's lives. Again I'm talking about evidence-based decision-making.

You know, I had an e-mail from someone – and I know that she's contacted both the minister and the minister of seniors – talking about a neighbour who ended up with a fractured wrist and went into the hospital, was sent home even though she wasn't feeling well. Nobody to help her, and home care wasn't even suggested to her. I think that was just an anomaly and they didn't question her enough to establish home-care needs, but I've found out a lot of time that home care has been rationed. We need to be careful about the allocation of this. If we want to cut acute-care demand, then we're going to have to reallocate for home care, which is a lot cheaper than acute care. There's an example from Nellie Samek.

The issue around the ambulances. I'm wondering if we can get an update on that and find out where we are and how that's all going to be resolved. It frightens people. It's an integral part of what most people consider delivery of health service. I mean, honestly, if you're in a car accident on the side of the road, what are you going to do? You know, teletransport to get to the hospital? No. You expect that there will be ambulance service available to you, and people do regard it as part of our health service delivery. So I'd like to hear what the specific plans are and what the timelines are on that.

One e-mail I've got here – and it looks like it was sent to every single member in the House – is that, you know, we were told clearly how much ambulance services would cost. With the amount of the surplus that we've got, why are we not funding this? He points out: it's a mere 3.587 per cent of the surplus; keep your promise.

Just a couple of questions around long-term care again. The Broda report is coming back into our consciousness now that we're relooking at long-term care, and that Broda report was in '99. I'd like to know since the Broda report in '99 how many spaces have been created in long-term care in general, and can I get specifics from the minister on if they're privately built and owned and then how they're managed, which is a separate question. Are they managed by a private, for-profit management organization, or are they operated by not-for-profit agencies?

I've talked about this move away from medical care to a housing model, towards supportive housing and assisted living. How many additional spaces were added in facilities that are not governed by the Nursing Homes Act? How many more, basically housing, do we have? I'm sorry; the minister is going to have to talk to her colleague on this one I think, but I imagine that they were probably applied for or may have had money under the umbrella of the Nursing Homes Act. We just need to know where we are with that.

I had a specific question about podiatry. I keep wondering, Madam Minister, if you can help me to understand why that was privatized. To me, if there is a medical reason why someone needs either prosthetics or assistance there or, in fact, operations or adjustments physically, why is that not covered? Now, it might be as simple as it's not in the Canada Health Act, and therefore we're not required to do it, but we can make choices here about what kind of service delivery we give.

Part of my concern about this is that I'm hearing from people, podiatrists in fact. We particularly end up with foot problems in people with diabetes. I guess this is falling under the heading I laid out in the beginning about chronic disease management. I'm wondering how we get further ahead by not making sure that diabetics are managed in such a way that their feet stay healthy. If we get to the point where there are operations and then those operations may or may not be covered – you know, the doctors that specialize in this area seem to be, from some of the things I've heard, delivering the service anyway and they're not being paid for it, and I think we need to be a bit more careful about what's happening here. I'd like the minister to have a look at that area and be able to report back to us on whether that's being considered in the future. What is being done especially around the diabetes chronic management?

Physiotherapy is another area that gets captured under that, I think, because again it's something that reduces the demand on the system if we can address it there rather than increasing the supply of the more expensive care further down the road.

4:30

Okay. Pharmacare: I raised it earlier, and the minister had responded to it somewhat about what was being considered. I know that there are a couple of agreements that the FPT ministers are

working on for a sort of national program. If we could get some details on how that's all going to work out and what the timeline is.

I also have some questions about mental health. The mental health innovation fund is receiving \$25 million a year for each of the three years. How will this money be used to ensure that appropriate supports and mechanisms are in place to allow the transfers of patients from hospitals into the community? What's the specific plan there? What are the outcomes that are being sought? What steps are involved in integrating mental health services into the overall health care system? Of course, for me: what reports, standards, or best practices are the regional health authorities using to develop local initiatives with funding from this particular innovation fund?

Dr. Swann: Early intervention for prevention of mental health conditions.

Ms Blakeman: For mental health, early intervention? Ah, child mental health.

The minister and I both heard that children have mental health, and if it's not treated and they're not assisted, they just end up as adults with mental health problems. If we're talking early intervention, there's an excellent way to do it. I know that the minister heard that one loud and clear, so I'm interested in her outlining those specifics as well.

This is an oddball one. Can the minister explain why the nongroup health benefits are increasing by such a substantial amount this year?

That's my time. I know that there are others that are anxious to add questions. Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, I want to just make a very few comments. I usually do not comment or get too involved in the health debate, but I did want to. I've listened to the debate with interest. It's hard to keep your mind away from this debate because it's paramount to all of us, even though some of us have been more closely connected. I'm also very encouraged by the quality of the debate this afternoon. Interestingly enough, we agree on many things.

We agree on the need to ensure that practitioners and medical personnel can practise to the level of their education and expertise, and of course a lot of work has been done in that area. Nurse practitioners were mentioned, and I think that is a proud moment in our health history, where nurses who were called upon to deliver services in difficult situations now have not only the training and education but the necessary protection from liability for performing those services.

Because there's been a lot of discussion on long-term care and supportive living, I wanted to just share with members a couple of perspectives. I've had the opportunity in the last two weeks, Mr. Chairman, to visit a number of those facilities because we have a number of people who have reached the wonderful age of 100, and what an experience. I have to say that the first one that I visited . . .

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McClellan: Yes. It's okay.

The Deputy Chair: No, it's not okay. The "not okay" part is that we are considering estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness, and the debate that occurs at this stage is between the minister and members of the Assembly but does not include members of Executive Council as per the Standing Orders.

Mrs. McClellan: Oh, I didn't know that.

The Deputy Chair: Yes. That correction has been made for me, and therefore I'm sorry. I regret to interrupt. However, if you were speaking on behalf of the Minister for Health and Wellness, that would have been different. But that's not the case, so I have to revert to the minister of health.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, I stand corrected, Mr. Chairman. I apologize. It's not the first time I've spoken in estimates, but it probably will be the last.

The Deputy Chair: Well, there have been very eager people reading the Standing Orders and coming back to me.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you very much for that. I'll have the opportunity to share those comments with people during appropriations debate because I think they'll be most interested.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Ms Evans: Mr. Chairman, I think the enthusiasm of my predecessor here was that there were so many common areas of agreement that could continue.

Could I just briefly say a couple of things? I'm going to get more written comments provided on the issue of midwives. I should indicate to the hon. members that two of my five grandchildren were born with the use of midwives, and after hearing the hon. member opposite discuss that, my son reminded me of their valued service. So we have to say more.

I'm also engaged in a review of eldercare in Canada from my own private literature review. On home care there are not always the same statistics of success. For example, in Saskatchewan they found that many families were not able to assume the responsibility of home care. What I really like is when people use a navigator in the system to find out what people's needs are and we integrate that service delivery not only, for example in Calgary, with family and community support services or community development services at the municipal level, but we really work hard to make sure that home care services delivered by Health and Wellness are filling the gaps.

I think that the issues we've had, for example with congestive heart failure, where many return to the hospital because they haven't had that extra support, and the issue that the hon. member has described with her grandmother, who would work hard and should have that extra support, are issues that I, too, share. So we're going to have to do better. I'm hoping in this review of the continuing care standards that we assess what those needs are in home care as well as those care options in long-term care because it's got to be in some respects one and the same thing. You can't separate the two.

On ambulance: just a brief update. The governance review is going along very well, but my suggestion is that we will hear from them by the end of August about what they are recommending for governance. I would suspect that we will be continuing to maintain the same supports this year, looking forward to their recommendations next year given the results of the pilots. I've had no formal notification since their last meeting, but I will provide that to this Assembly very soon.

We'll also provide the number of new spaces that have been either provided through the private sector or in any capacity in terms of housing, those that are covered under the Nursing Homes Act.

Relative to podiatrists and the allied services that are provided and funded in Alberta Health, from time to time people remind me that

we spend almost \$2 billion in terms of serving people that are not strictly mandated under the Canada Health Act, and we do that because we know that in many respects we improve their health so that they are less likely to need the system. So I will endeavour to provide a little bit more relative to physiotherapy.

Mr. Speaker, I could wax on about mental health, but I'll just say that my own reason for putting in this innovative fund was exactly so that people like Fraser Mustard who have some wonderful ideas about how the ministries of learning and Children's Services, those that are engaged in the social determinants of health, should be putting things forward.

One of the reasons it wasn't left with the integrated service delivery at the regional health authorities is that I wanted to keep a grip on it, take a look at what was being done, see if we're getting the outcomes because my frustrations when I was in the previous ministry were that frequently we couldn't connect the people that needed the service. Only the wealthy were able to get service delivery. Those that were really floundering either in schools or in community agencies were never able to access the service. Unless they came in as child welfare, little ones, sometimes then they would get them, but they wouldn't always. We've got to improve that, and that's the very reason for having it still monitored through the ministry.

The nongroup health benefits. I could talk about that, but I'd really rather get your questions, so we will send you those answers. I promise.

4:40

Chair's Ruling Speaking Order

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, just for clarification purposes, on the previous interruption that I had with the Deputy Premier, Standing Order 58(3)(a) allows the first hour of debate to occur between the minister and members of the opposition or if somebody else is acting on behalf of the minister; 58(3)(b) says that in the next hour "any member may speak thereafter." So if there were no other private members wishing to participate, the chair would be willing to recognize the Deputy Premier, should she choose to speak.

We have now just passed that one-hour timeline, so I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, following which, after the minister, if the Deputy Premier wishes to participate, I will recognize her.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Debate Continued

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that, and I'm pleased to rise to speak to the estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness.

I guess I want to start with the Health Symposium that took place in Calgary last weekend. I have to say that I was pleasantly surprised that there was a mix of views and experts at the symposium. I have to admit that I thought the government would stack it with a bunch of privatizers, but they didn't. It was interesting, and I learned a great deal, and I think the minister probably did too.

There were a number of assumptions that, I think, were refuted by different speakers there. One of them was that health care costs are driven by the behaviour of health consumers. One of the people there made quite a compelling case that, in fact, it's the behaviour of the people in the health care system itself and their consumers' response to them that really is driving a lot of the increase in health care costs. That would seem to undermine the argument that we need to try and restrict health care consumer behaviour, access to

services, or to provide some sort of a charge to them in one way or another that would deter them from using it.

It's really things like the pharmaceutical companies advertising to doctors and doctors, you know, prescribing or recommending medication where it's not necessarily needed or more expensive kinds, and so on. I thought that was very interesting. I came away with a clear conclusion that the general consensus, not the universal but the general consensus of the people there was that increased privatization, increased private delivery in the health care system will drive your costs up. I was also quite gratified that the minister in her closing news conference reflected that view and confirmed that that was what she heard as well.

Which sort of brings me to the government's plans for the third way. You know, I am very curious if the government is taking into account the actual experience with private versus public delivery within Alberta. The government has already been playing with this, particularly in Calgary. The health authority in Calgary has provided a lot more in the way of private delivery. I'd like to know the minister's observations on the results that we've seen.

We've seen, for example, longer waiting lists in private delivery in Calgary for things like hip replacements. We've seen higher costs in private delivery for things like eye surgery, and so on. I think this information – I'm sure the minister is familiar with it. We're using government information on some of these things. Is the government then going to say, you know, that based on the experience we have here in this province with higher costs and longer waiting times with private delivery, it's not the way forward for Alberta?

Certainly, I'm very interested in how that can be reconciled with the Deputy Premier's speech at the beginning of the conference that the Mazankowski report still represented the best blueprint for health care reform in the future. There are many positive things in the Mazankowski report, but there are certain elements that are core to the Mazankowski report, including increased health care premiums, delisting of services, and increased private delivery. Those are things that are clearly in the Mazankowski report, and I would like to hear the minister's views on whether that is actually the way forward for Alberta or whether that represents, in her view, the best way forward for Alberta in health care reform.

I want to ask a little bit about drug costs. One of the biggest drivers of costs in health care in all systems is drug costs. One of the proposals that we have made and I think has been fairly well received – and we heard a little bit about it at the symposium as well – is not necessarily a big expensive pharmacare program where all drugs are covered under medicare but, as a first step, trying to get control of the high cost of drugs. You know, the pharmaceutical corporations are the most profitable corporations on earth. They're more profitable than arms manufacturers; they're more profitable than any other kind of corporation. They spend more on marketing and advertising than they do on research, so there are huge overhead costs.

In New Zealand they introduced a program where they bulk buy all of the drugs, and they use generics wherever possible. We already do that in some cases – I'm aware of that – but, also, if the government could use their marketing power to get deals for lower prices by bulk buying as well as using generic. In New Zealand I think they've been able to shave 7 or 8 per cent off their total health care costs by doing this. I know there are some proposals for doing that nationally, and maybe the minister can update us on that. Certainly, if there's not enough progress nationally, it's something that Alberta could do and really get control of costs.

Another thing that I heard has to do with the social determinants of health, and there was quite a bit of discussion about that. We started off by saying, you know, if we all quit smoking, if we all go

to clubs, and then maybe the government would subsidize people going to clubs – that's going to affect a certain strata of society that already has fairly good health. The real question and the real determinant of health is being poor, and I think there's general knowledge about that. So some social approaches to improving health overall has to involve the kinds of social programs and building some equity in the province. Basically, fighting for good health also involves a fight against poverty. I wonder if the minister could comment on some of those things.

Before I sit down I want to at least do a commercial for the NDP opposition's public hearings on health care. We held public health care hearings in Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, and Grande Prairie, and we heard from a large number of people, including organizations, but many people who were just ordinary citizens. We had over 150 people. We heard from native health organizations, people doing drug education, and so on. Certainly, what we heard is that the public wants to be more involved in health care, and they want it to be properly funded, but they're very, very leery of things like increases in health care premiums, more private delivery, and so on. So maybe we're just talking to the converted – and that's been a criticism – but we did hear from many people we had never seen before, and they came and talked about it.

They also talked about changes to physiotherapy – that was a big theme – and the cuts to physiotherapy being a very, very difficult change. It's certainly a preventative type of therapy, and if we invested in that, we could bring down our costs and ensure greater health.

4:50

I guess, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I've come to the conclusion that there's a great convergence between building a public health care system with a strong emphasis on prevention and social determinants and saving costs. To try and save costs in the health care system by increasing the amount of private delivery is a bit like, you know, going on a diet of ice cream. You're not going to get the results you want. I'd like to know if the minister agrees with that, quite frankly, because the direction under the third way is still fairly obscure, and certainly inquiring minds want to know what the minister and the government have in mind.

Thank you.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Member for Calgary-Varsity perhaps might want to table his questions, and then I can take them all together if you wish.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Did you wish to respond first or respond later? It doesn't matter to me.

The Deputy Chair: The minister is indicating that she wouldn't mind having all the questions on record, and if time permits, she'll deal with them at the end.

Mr. Chase: Oh. My understanding is that there's still time within the discussion, and therefore I'd like to use whatever time remains for me to do that.

The Deputy Chair: You've got your 20 minutes.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. To clarify: what time do I have?

The Deputy Chair: You'll have the full 20 minutes, sir.

Mr. Chase: Oh. Okay. Thank you very much.

I want to begin by basically recognizing that the hon. minister not only has a good heart, but she's a person of demonstrated conviction. I very much applaud and appreciate your stance on the smoking ban bill. To me, it was a brave action that you took along with the hon. former minister of health, and that gives me hope that you're taking on this role in a very strong manner.

Very quickly. History, 1994. This government decided that the ultimate thing that had to be done was to pay down the debt. As a result, the government unfortunately took on Sir Roger Douglas's recommendations to cut quick, cut dirty, and basically damn the consequences. Calgary was particularly badly hit, but it wasn't Calgary alone. As the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul mentioned yesterday, rural areas were affected by decisions that were made back in 1994.

What happened then and by 1996 – well, 1994 to start with. We had Minister Dinning and Minister West at that time. They were in charge of the cuts, and 10,000 people were cut out of the civil service or the provincial employees service. Among those employees were a number that were in regulatory positions: people who were in charge of meat inspections, who were in charge of construction, monitoring job sites, and so on. And I would suggest that partly because we got into this mode of self-regulation rather than external government regulation, the regulation was not being handled satisfactorily. I do believe that a lot of the accidents that have happened on construction sites are because there hasn't been sufficient external government monitoring. So we've had an increase in injuries.

By 1996 in Calgary we saw half of our hospitals taken off-line. The General was blown up, the Holy Cross was sold for a fraction of its worth, and following the Holy Cross sale, we also, unfortunately, sold off the Grace hospital. In the Grace hospital's place, in the same facility, we now have private hip operations taking place at a premium of 10 per cent. [interjections] I'm not sure why we're cheering an increase of 10 per cent in a private facility that we're paying for publicly.

An Hon. Member: Reduce the waiting list.

Mr. Chase: Well, actually, it doesn't decrease the waiting list. It has had no effect on the reduction of the waiting list.

What has happened, unfortunately, is that waiting lists have increased because we lost the operating facilities in three of our hospitals. Not only did we lose that space, but in so doing, we lost the professionals that operated in those spaces. No operating room, no doctor. That was the result. We lost pharmacists; we lost lab technicians. We lost a number of health providers.

Another problem that we faced with these closures of the hospitals was ambulance delivery times. The ambulance response times were basically doubled because we had only one-half as many places to bring patients to. It slowed down the system.

We have attempted to address the problem through funding. What happened was that we increased health care premiums/taxes by 35 per cent. There was no proportional increase in efficiency. Up until this last breakdown of allowing seniors off the hook, we were basically collecting almost a billion dollars' worth of health care premiums. We're one of the very few provinces that charge citizens for these premiums. Given our wealth of resources, I'm not sure why we have that need. We seem to think that simply by charging people, we're going to make them more accountable and responsible. I think there are better ways of initiating responsibility.

Not only did we increase premiums for the regular crowd, but as mentioned in yesterday's discussions, we upped the cost of long-term care facilities for seniors by 50 per cent, and again there was no appreciable improvement in services. In fact, what we're seeing in that delivery of health care for seniors is RNs being laid off in a desperate attempt to maintain a financial balance and LPNs taking their place. What we don't have is the right combination.

We heard yesterday about how we're having trouble attracting physicians rurally. We're still facing a physician shortage in the urban areas as well. An example most important to me is trying to find a pediatrician for my grandson. That was very difficult to do.

One of the areas where the government has experimented, that again has its shortcomings, is P3s. I am very relieved that the Sheldon Chumir health centre, or the Health on 12th, is no longer being considered as a P3. I very much appreciate that fact. A question for the minister would be: could she please let us know if money has been allotted for that facility and if there's been a time commitment for that facility? I would very much appreciate knowing that.

One of the areas that I had a chance to tour with the CHR was the SouthLink health centre, and I want to say that it's an amazing centre. The unfortunate part is that we don't own it. We're just simply leasing space. The provincial government gave the Calgary health region \$20 million and said, "Build an urgent care centre in the north and the south," and the CHR replied, "That's not enough." So they made the decision to have a single facility built. They purchased the land for just slightly under 3 and a half million dollars, but then they made an arrangement with Bentall Real Estate to build the facility in a P3 format. Bentall Real Estate, basically, turned over about 3 and a half million dollars to the health region for the purchase of that land. The reason I keep mentioning this 3 and a half million dollars: Bentall's requirement was that they would just build a generic building because they were thinking about what do they do 10 years from now. Does it have to be strictly a health care delivery building?

5:00

So what happened was in order for the Calgary health region to use that private space and deliver the needed health care services, they put in 3 and a half million dollars of renovations. In other words, they gave Bentall back the money that Bentall had given them to buy the building to renovate this private space so that it could serve the purpose. So we use public money to renovate a private space.

That SouthLink health centre is top of the line. It's wonderful. It's a great facility. For the money we are spending in terms of \$10 million to lease it for the next 10 years and that 3 and a half million dollars to convert it to a health care facility from a generic office building, we could have owned that building, and we could have continued to use it in partnership with the southeast hospital. Again, I credit this government for finally coming to the realization that that southeast hospital was crucial, and I credit the government for doing it in a publicly transparent fashion rather than a P3.

So let's get to some of the good stories. Some of the good stories that we're seeing are electronic health records. Another good story that we're seeing is the initiative – I think it's health care for the 21st century – that's happening in the Foothills hospital. We have learned a lot from some of the misfortunes that Ontario experienced. We are starting to build rooms that are single rooms. We're building windows into those rooms. We're bringing the nursing stations closer to the patients. These are good news stories. We can seal off rooms and keep the potential of contamination either coming in or coming out of the rooms. So these are some of the good things that we're starting to realize.

One of the things we haven't seemed to have funded to the greatest extent we could or should be doing is the notion of preventative health care. As has been brought up by previous speakers, we know that it's a whole lot cheaper to keep a person in a seniors home or, better still, in their own home than it is to put them into a hospital. In fact, the term that's used for seniors in hospitals – it's kind of a disparaging term, but it's a reality – is bed blockers. When we put a senior into an acute care bed, we're just backing up the whole lineup in emergency. If we could keep that senior or any other person in their home or in their seniors' home, we're going to save the system a tremendous amount of money.

We talked about the idea of preventative health care, the \$200 million from the \$650 million tax. Unfortunately, that didn't go very far, but we got the idea out there. Hopefully, it's something that the government members will consider.

Another positive step is that we're slowly moving back to our bed-per-patient ratio. In 1996, prior to the closures, we had a ratio of 2.2 beds per thousand patients. Right now in Calgary our ratio is 1.7, and the Calgary health region is appealing to the province for funding to bring it to the 1.9 level, which is basically the average level throughout Canada.

Another good news story is dial-a-health. Instead of having to race to emergency, which you may have to do, you get to have that calming experience of talking to a health care expert over the phone. You describe the symptoms, and then they give you advice as to whether you need to follow up and go to the hospital. That is a very good system.

Another good system that's happening is the idea that we're hiring more paramedics, so we're eliminating some of the tie-ups with the ambulances. Now, basically what's happening is when the ambulance arrives, the paramedics discharge the patient to waiting paramedics who are there in the hospital. The ambulance gets back out on the road. That is a major improvement in efficiency.

Something else that is positive – it wasn't a government initiative, but it is helping the health system – are philanthropists like Dr. Allan Markin. He donated \$18 million to the University of Calgary's Markin Institute for Public Health. That is helping tremendously.

One of the things I hope the government will continue to do and maybe up is provide the seats for the various medical professionals – I brought this up yesterday when we were talking about rural – and also bring in, to whatever extent we can, foreign-trained individuals, increase their accreditation.

The last thing I would like to bring up started out as a controversy. It still has controversy in terms of its placement. But last Friday I had the great pleasure of joining Lynn Redford of the Calgary health region and touring the Children's hospital. The project manager for the Children's hospital, Mr. Art Froese, is an unbelievable man. How he was chosen, I do not know, but a wonderful choice.

What Art told me about was how the Children's hospital came to be constructed, how shareholders, interests groups, and so on, parents of sick children, said: "Do this. Whatever you do, don't do that." First Nations people were contacted: "How can we make this environment better for children?" That's why you see in that wonderful facility that I'm grateful to have in my Calgary-Varsity constituency the colours. We have the colours of the medicine wheel. We have these large windows. It's like a large dollhouse. The whole point of it is to make it a child-friendly environment.

Within the hospital are these amazing systems whereby we can bring fresh air into operating rooms in literally seconds, and we can exhaust foul air.

In those hospital rooms, instead of the old children's hospital where we had three children to a room, there is now the possibility of each child having a room. Not only does each child have a room,

but there is room for parents. So it's a child-friendly place. It's a parent-friendly place. These are the types of initiatives that we have the wealth and the intelligence within this province to move toward.

In summation, if we can get a handle on the drug part of things, possibly get a system going with the federal government, not one that they totally have to pay for because we know that's not going to happen, but maybe partner with the other western provinces, maybe do some deal with our local southern states, but buy in bulk, save us some money there, and if we can deal with the preventative health care that keeps people in their homes longer where it's cheaper, I think we'll have gone a long way.

We're into a new hundred years. We're all facing a challenge. Let's work collaboratively together to bring our system to the best point it can be.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to stand and give my comments on this important ministry, and I will be brief. I think there's much good news that needs to be expressed about our health care system, the privilege that we have in this province, in this country, and the tremendous things that are going on, exemplary, excellent services.

I want to say that I appreciate the minister and have a sense of a vision for health rather than an obsession with treatment and service. I think that has to be maintained if we're going to get through to a sustainable health system. As long as we keep focusing on demand – and there are lots of professionals that want us to focus on demand – we will not be a sustainable health care system. So I'm encouraged by your commitment to prevention and health promotion and some of the social determinants of health.

5:10

I'm also encouraged by your evidence-based approach. I saw that evidenced in both conferences, both the Friends of Medicare conference and in the government-sponsored conference, with the important research evidence that was brought to bear and the very appropriate responses to that evidence that I heard from the minister in the public interest. Again, distinguishing the public interest from the business interest and the professional interest, that's often a very tough call. I saw it evidenced, too, in the smoking bill and your willingness to stand up in the interests of public health as opposed to other interests.

I continue to ask the question: how are we in this particular area reducing demand? Every professional group, every institution needs to be asked the question: how are you going to put yourself out of business? If you're really committed to health, that is really what they need to be doing, looking at ways to reduce the demand on their services. In that context, I believe your primary care initiatives are starting to explore some of that with team approaches, with shared responsibility, not totally focused on the medical model and on the physician. And in that area, the community health centre: we already have three in the province; we could expand that, I think, with great benefit.

Also, I am encouraged by your desire to expand the scope of other practitioners. Some things that physicians are doing now could be done by other practitioners. Some things nurses are doing could be done by other practitioners. We need to look at what is the best efficient use of all these and try and cut through the turf protection that goes at all levels if we're going to get to a sustainable health system.

I would have one caution, and that is the area of mental health, mental illness particularly, the growing distress I have perceived in the mental health system and the growing stress in our population. I looked at the mental health statistics last year. There has been a 5 per cent increase every year in the last five years for counselling and mental health services by physicians. Where is that coming from? We need to get a handle on why there is increased distress in our young populations, increasing threats of suicide, increasing anxiety and depression in the young people. We need to get a handle on that and address it before it ends up, again, adding more demand on the system.

Looking at the conditions for health, early intervention and community support. Again, I am encouraged by your leadership – I want to say that – and I believe that your caring and your commitment to health and to the social determinants of health will see us move towards a sustainable health system.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In order to save time I won't reiterate many of the good points that have been brought up, and I appreciate the moves that we are making here in the province of Alberta.

I want to address a few problems, though, with the Chinook health region in the fact that heart patients are one of the biggest problems that we have here in the province, and the facility down there would be very pleased if the province was to take on, I guess, the desire to have the funding follow the service. They'd like to have a chest pain unit down there, an angioplasty. There's a physician in the States that would be happy to move back and would head that up, but because the funding only goes to the two big regions, they're basically out of luck.

I'd sure appreciate it if the province would look at it because I think it would really up the health care in southern Alberta. I believe the number is that they have is about 600 patients a year that get flown up to Calgary. It's a two-hour time frame with angioplasty, so often many people don't get the service. It would reduce the waiting time in Calgary if, in fact, that service was available in Lethbridge.

The other point that I guess that southern Alberta would like to look at is to have a STARS base out of Lethbridge. You've closed places like Milk River, and it's an hour and a half from the furthest area to Lethbridge. If there was an actual base there, they'd be able to get out and really service those distant rural areas that now are outside the STARS reach. I know that with the new helicopters coming on that will improve, but to have a helicopter based out of Lethbridge would be a huge asset and would help revitalize, I guess, the rural areas because now it's too far to get to the regional hospital.

Maybe it's no longer a concern because of the downsizing of the hospitals, but general physicians have had an onerous task of being on call and no doctors coming in to give them time off, to cover for them. That would be a real help in those areas.

Also, cancer treatment is a concern for many people in Lethbridge that have to travel up to Calgary for radiation. My understanding is that there's already a bunker in place in Medicine Hat. It's fairly costly, but there are a lot of cancer patients in southern Alberta, and I wonder if we couldn't get a third treatment unit down there in southern Alberta.

Those are my main concerns that I hope the ministry will look at. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. Since I've got the opportunity, I'd just like to put a few more pointed questions on the record for the minister to be able to follow up with, and at this point I understand that she will do it in writing.

Under what category does funding for long-term care fall? How will the new funding that's been put in there be directed toward improving long-term care standards and facilities? I'd like to see that in connection with where the money is going now. I think that's not clear, how much money goes in and where it's going: what's facilities, what's staff, what's food? It's very difficult to get that kind of information based on the way the government presents figures now, so I'd like a breakdown of where the funding that's going into long-term care gets spent and where the new money is going to be specifically directed.

Again, I've asked the minister to explain why they have chosen not to go to the 3.6 hours of care, and I just want to make sure that that's still a question that the minister will be answering for the staffing levels. That's direct care. That's not including charting and things like that. That's just hands-on care, interaction between either an RN, a LPN, or a PCA directly in contact with someone in a long-term care facility.

I'd like to know what additional plans or programs are in place to improve facility quality and ensure that standards are met. We have a number of older buildings that in some cases used to be something else and were renovated to become a long-term care facility, so they weren't built for that. They were built sometime ago, and I have real concerns that we don't know what we actually have there. The big bogey person or big bogey item that's always raised is asbestos, insulation for example. We don't know. Has the minister done a scan or done an inventory of exactly how old the buildings are in the long-term care delivery system? Were they renovated from something else? Has someone gone through there and looked for environmental testing? I'll bring a series of questions forward on this. We had some buildings where work has been done, but because of what the building was, you know, and the old plumbing pipes and how the building is actually constructed, there actually are unsafe things that are there, but they're behind walls and we can't see them. I'm really concerned that we've got people in buildings where we should be looking to update them, and we don't even know we need to do that. So, again, what's the scan? Let's check that out and get the information that we need to make good concrete decisions.

I'm wondering if the frequency of facility inspections will be increased to ensure that the facilities that were built decades ago measure up to the same standards as the new facilities. That's a cleaner way of putting that same issue.

What are the government's plans for licensing and regulating long-term care facilities?

Can the minister table a list of any reports and studies that were used as backup for that decision about the 3.4 hours of care? Can I also get the details, please, of when that's going to kick in? We're at 1.9. We're going to 3.1. When exactly? Then we're going to 3.4. When exactly? We don't have that information right now.

5:20

Under primary care or acute care I notice that the primary care line item received an increase of \$59.5 million. Other than the LPCIs is the ministry considering any other options for primary care reform; for example, increasing the number of community health centres? I know that we've got three health centres right now. I believe there was one being talked about for sort of north-central, around the coliseum, to deal specifically with a very high-needs population there. I'm wondering what the horizon is on some of this planning and exactly what's being contemplated there.

I'm wondering if the ministry is in fact considering alternatives to paying physicians on a fee-for-service.

Could I get the location, please, of the 12 LPCIs that are in operation or expected to be in operation this year? What criteria were used in evaluating the applications for each of these LPCIs? Were any applications or declarations of intent declined, or did you only get 12 applications and you took all 12 of them? I'm wondering if any of them were declined or whether they were sent back for changes or revisions, et cetera.

What performance measures are being used specifically to measure the effectiveness of the LPCIs? What are the outcomes that are expected in a short-, medium-, and long-term? What are you looking for this year, two years from now, five years from now? How are you going to measure those outcomes? Could we get some idea of when or if a report detailing the progress of LPCI projects will be available?

How does the \$50 per patient cover the cost of administration, staff, and equipment? What's the breakdown on that? Were there criteria provided on how they would use that or if it was left up to them? How do the LPCIs work in the rural areas where the doctors are more isolated? Or maybe none of the 12 are in rural areas.

What has been done around e-health? That was the last thing that came up at the conference, and to me there seemed to be a real possibility there for a provision of rural health delivery. Hard for me to grasp because I'm at an age where I didn't grow up with computers. The people that we're dealing with, telehealth or e-health, as they call it, were very comfortable and seemed to be very happy with the health provision. So I guess it's something that we should look at.

That seems very weird to me, and I'm struggling to accept it, but I need to look at the evidence, and I need to look at the outcomes that they're getting from other places. Maybe part of our solution is that people stay in their rural communities, and we can deliver good e-health or telehealth to them. If they need acute care, then we transport them to the major centres and treat them in the hospitals, but we try and reduce the demand for that acute-care hospitalization. I'd like to know what plans or what's being considered there.

The other possibility is: are we looking at e-health as part of the LPCIs? What is the cost of maintaining the LPCIs on an annual basis, and for both physicians and patients participating in the LPCI, who's responsible for what?

I'm moving into the health workforce here, so I'm going back on my original list and running through it again with specific questions. What programs are in place for recruitment of health professionals? What targets has the minister developed in conjunction with her colleague the Minister of Advanced Education to produce specific outcomes of how many more doctors and how many more nurses and how many more health care professionals in a variety of areas we would get for investment of dollars? We keep hearing the same numbers over and over again from the Minister of Advanced Education, but he's using it in conjunction with every ministry we've debated. So how much of it's health care? How much of it is targeted toward doctors? How much toward nurses? How much toward other health care professionals, pharmacists, dentists? Sorry; that's the one I've been forgetting.

Why was the decision made not to increase the rural physician action plan? It may be because we don't actually know that we're getting outcomes from that, but I'm interested to hear why that decision. [interjection] Okay. The Minister of Finance is saying that there are outcomes, but I'm wondering why the decision not to increase it. Is it so successful that it's becoming sustainable or that it's decreasing demand? What specifically is happening there?

What program specifically is the government pursuing to retain their health care workforce and to ensure that they remain in the public sector is the second thing?

Wait times. I'm not terribly keen on the focus on that, but it's one that the public grabs onto, and it certainly gets a lot of money directed toward it. I wish we could move away from that, but it is one of the ways that people measure success at this point in time. So I'd like to get very detailed plans about how the money that has been put into the system – I'm referencing page 288 of the business plan, \$125 million dedicated to reducing waiting times. Exactly what sector is it going to? Which hospitals is it going to end up at? How exactly does the minister plan to see an increase here? Because, again, we can collect evidence all the way along on this one, and we may find out that that's not the way to do it. I think we also all know that if we reduce waiting times to zero, we are not running an efficient health care system because it means that there is lag in the system and that there are people standing around with nothing to do if you can walk in, basically.

I'm wondering why the increase was not more substantial for the promotion and prevention line on page 216 of the estimates. There's an increase from \$103 million to \$117 million, not a lot considering the work that needs to be done there. I notice that promotion and prevention is listed in the business plan as one of the ministry's strategic priorities, and that seems to be a fairly minor increase. So what was expected to be achieved by that level of increase? Would you have achieved more if you put in more or this was the amount you could afford or why was that choice made, more specifically?

Under pharmaceuticals I'm wondering if the government is co-operating with the federal government and other provinces and the medical profession and universities to test and evaluate new drugs. We always hear that argument about R and D, and that's why we have to support the brand name drugs, but that's for private production of those pharmaceuticals. So what are we doing in the public system, in the universities to develop these new drugs? That's a

different way for us to be approaching that rather than leaving it to the private sector to do it, so I'm interested in whether the government has done anything on that area.

I think we're nearing the end of our time, so I will thank the minister in advance for her co-operation in providing us written responses to the questions that myself and my colleagues have asked today. I do look forward to a new approach to health service delivery. I think we've solved the problem of who funds, and that should be public funding. The issue we are struggling with currently is: who delivers? I would argue that public delivery and nonprofit delivery, or not-for-profit delivery, of health care has been proven to be the best way to contain costs in the health care system. I think the most innovation is coming out of the public system, and I would encourage the minister to continue in that direction.

Thank you.

Mr. Chase: I will be very quick. Just for the *Hansard* record I wanted to recognize that as a portion of GDP we are still spending less than 10 per cent on health care.

I would like as a question to know about the timeline and the funding for the additional beds for the Foothills, Rockyview, and Lougheed.

The other question is: is the ambulance system governance now being decided at the local level but provincially funded?

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but we have arrived at that hour of 5:30. I will adjourn the committee shortly. When we reconvene at 8 p.m., we will have the balance of nine minutes that are left allocated for the estimates on Health and Wellness, and we'll proceed with the other matters that are before us.

The House stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, May 11, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**

Date: 05/05/11

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order. When we adjourned, there were eight minutes left for Health and Wellness. Just for your information we will finish those eight minutes and then rise and report and then reconvene in committee for the next business.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Health and Wellness

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Finance is representing the Minister of Health and Wellness tonight. The hon. minister.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm tempted to go on with my story about the long-term care and assisted-living facility where there is a couple that is over 100 residing, but I will do that during our debate in the appropriations and leave the eight minutes that are left for some more questions to be put on the table.

I did want to answer, on behalf of the minister of health, just two questions. It was asked why the '05-06 budget for the rural physician action plan was not increased, and indeed it wasn't increased. It is currently meeting demands, and it will be assessed again this year, and if necessary, a request for more funding will be there.

On telehealth the minister advised that she will advise you in writing. There were two pilots done on telehealth. The first one was actually in Drumheller with Calgary, and the second one was in the Two Hills area, but she felt it would be most helpful to you if she were to give you that information in a more complete form, in writing.

With that, I have given the minister the assurance that I will write down your questions, and she'll review *Hansard* and give the information in writing.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much for the responses from the minister of health through the Minister of Finance.

There were a couple of other issues that I wanted to raise. Earlier I kept looking for an e-mail on podiatry that I couldn't find, which I did locate. It's from Dr. Ken Unger, who is the head of the hospital section, Peter Lougheed centre, and a clinical lecturer in the department of surgery at the University of Calgary Faculty of Medicine. We had a conversation, in fact, at the innovations Health Symposium about podiatry and the coverage of services. As I put it to him: are you medically necessary, and if you are, why are you not covered?

He sent me an e-mail, and I'm just going to quote a paragraph from the centre of it. He was

called to the emergency room of a Calgary hospital . . . to see a diabetic with a foot ulcer with exposed bone and infection requiring admission and surgical treatment [in particular] (amputation). This patient has already had a below knee amputation of the other limb, amputation of two toes on the remaining infected foot and is known to have peripheral vascular disease and neuropathy. His diabetic control is questionable.

He goes on to describe how he was treated and in fact that the individual was not charged for the services that he received and that he felt that was demonstrating podiatry's commitment to hospital and emergency patients.

He raises the issue that coming out of this "symposium discussions were [on] prevention, appropriate care performed by appropriate providers [for] (efficiency) and quality." He raises the questions, you know: were any of these achieved for this at-risk diabetic patient, and is the above scenario preventable? I think he raises a good point there. Would we be better off investing in those kinds of prevention in tandem with chronic disease management to save us from having that kind of an individual, who for whatever reason will not manage his own disease, turning up in acute care. So that was the issue I was trying to locate and raise, and I'm glad I was able to do that.

Just to finish on e-health again, I'm glad to hear that there is information available from the two pilots, one in Drumheller and one in Two Hills, I think I heard the minister saying. The issue that came up was around being very careful that we have the suitable technology and programming for electronic health delivery and that it is compatible. What we were warned about at this symposium was developing a system helter-skelter that, in fact, was not capable of talking to one another. We need to have a larger plan coming, laying that plan and everybody fitting into it.

I think that point is well made, and it's a point that's been raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition in the past. Are we spending an awful lot of money and ending up with a system that doesn't work and doesn't do what we want it to do? It cannot work on both of those levels. It doesn't give us what we were expecting it to give us by way of health service delivery, and it's incompatible. The system itself doesn't work. So two things to watch for there.

The final issue is around electronic health records. This is both an incredible opportunity and a real place of caution. Incredible opportunity because it should be allowing us to get rid of some of the duplication and inefficiency and flat-out frustration that we experience as health providers try and figure out how to help a patient who presents in front of them – to not be able to access all the information that's available on this person's medical condition can prevent appropriate timely treatment of the individual – and, I would hope, be able to save us some money around moving test results back and forth, for example, and that sort of thing.

The balancing side of that is around people's personal privacy, and part of what is not quite in the loop on this – and I think we need to be particularly careful – is around the electronic medical records. Think of them as the file that's in the doctor's office, which actually has, you know, a lot of personal notes and a lot of personal information on you. What's supposed to come out of that is that the strictly diagnostic and laboratory testing information is supposed to be lifted off the electronic medical records up into the electronic health record. That's the information that's available to those who are allowed access to that system.

We had stage 1 of the Health Information Act review. We started on it at this time last year, and it reported by the fall – in a rush, I must say – prior to the election being called. The committee did not complete most of what it was charged to do. A lot of it was put off to a second committee, which has yet to be called, and I think we need to get on that as quickly as possible. There are a lot of questions that are undecided and in some cases undefined around both of those areas, and we need to proceed carefully and with a plan on those electronic health records. Again, great opportunity for both exciting changes in delivery of health but also great opportunity for breaching people's personal privacy.

With those closing words, I look forward to the information from the minister. In particular I'm looking for compatibility and suitability of the technology as well. Thank you very much.

Mrs. McClellan: Certainly, on the suitable technology I actually

have witnessed this technology, and it's quite amazing. But you're absolutely right: you want to make sure that the providers are educated or well versed in it.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Finance, who is speaking on behalf of the Minister for Health and Wellness, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates, I must now put the question after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$8,973,425,000
Capital Investment	\$33,500,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report the estimates of the Department of Health and Wellness and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

8:10

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Health and Wellness: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$8,973,425,000; capital investment, \$33,500,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Committee of Supply**
(continued)

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**
Community Development

The Deputy Chair: As per our standing order the first hour is dedicated between the minister and members of the opposition, following which any other member, including members of the executive, if they so choose to participate, will be allowed to do so.

The hon. Minister for Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Chairman, I have learned from my friend and colleague the Minister of Health and Wellness, who presented her estimates this afternoon and has provided a good precedent, I believe. I will make my comments reasonably short and give ample opportunity for members of the Assembly to ask questions; after which, my undertaking will be to review *Hansard* and provide a written response to those questions.

I'm pleased, Mr. Chairman, to present the estimates for Community Development for the year 2005-2006. The operating budget of \$247 million is \$41 million or 20 per cent higher than the previous year, but with Alberta celebrating our centennial this year, much of this increase, \$23 million, is one-time funding for the centennial legacy projects and celebrations.

Community Development has three core businesses: support community development, protect and include all Albertans, and protect our human and natural history and culture. These three core businesses add up to one purpose: achieving a high quality of life in the province of Alberta.

Within our annual budget this ministry leverages billions of dollars for our economy through tourism, the arts, volunteerism, sports, recreation, and more. It supports lifelong learning through our public libraries, museums, and historic sites; manages our park areas that help keep people healthy and rural economies strong; protects human rights through education and adjudication; provides community volunteers with support that make the most of every donated hour. All of these factors, Mr. Chairman, add up to a quality of life environment that builds pride in our province and its people and that makes Alberta a better place to live, work, and visit.

Our foundations and agencies support 260 community-based museums, more than 600 arts groups, and 107 provincial sport and recreation organizations that have a total of 1.2 million members and tens of thousands of volunteers, who donate 449 million hours a year to their communities. We provide support to 310 library service points in the province that loan over 30 million items a year to Albertans, and we pay for their monthly SuperNet fees that connect Albertans to a world of information.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, to this ministry's operating needs this budget also details a capital investment of \$45 million this year alone, four times more than the forecast, primarily to improve facilities in our parks.

This budget supports the celebrations and legacy projects that celebrate our centennial year. However, our centennial commitments are in addition to and not at the cost of the quality of life programs that Albertans rely upon. Those quality of life programs are maintained, and some services are even improved.

In short, maintain, improve, and celebrate sums up the focus for this Community Development budget.

With this year's increase we are maintaining the ministry's core programs to ensure access to quality of life resources, improve park facilities and museum exhibits for better visitor experiences, and celebrate Alberta's centennial with legacy construction and provincial festivities.

The first theme in my ministry's budget this year is maintain. An \$8 million increase in core funding maintains the ministry's essential core services: supporting the arts and our heritage, sport and recreation, human rights and citizenship, libraries and volunteerism, and parks and our protected areas.

Within this budget more than \$1 million of that increase goes to our libraries to match population growth and pay for monthly SuperNet connection costs. Libraries will receive a total just under \$20 million this year, the exact sum being some \$19.9 million.

Provincial museums and historic sites get \$3 million more to support operations and exhibit redevelopment.

Parks receive an increase of \$4 million for ongoing maintenance, educational and outdoor recreation programs.

We are maintaining the \$2.5 million in one-time funding to the Alberta film development program last year by annualizing this amount. However, despite the \$2.5 million increase over last year's budget, this amount does not appear as an increase compared to the forecast.

In this budget my ministry assumes responsibility for reporting on the operations of the Jubilee auditoria in Calgary and Edmonton as recommended by the Auditor General. This may result in the province recording additional revenues and expenses of \$3 million.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, \$3 million is added to the final year of the Alberta NHL teams initiative. The funding to support the two Alberta-based franchises comes from taxes on NHL players' salaries for games played in the province of Alberta. This budget anticipates that there will be an NHL season this year.

Funding for the arts and for sport and recreation remains stable, which means that they did not get a direct budget increase this year. That does not mean that these important quality of life sectors are forgotten because both benefit significantly from spending in other areas.

Centennial initiatives like Alberta Scene in Ottawa, the Queen's visit and the celebration performance at Commonwealth Stadium, the cultural celebrations around the province's birthday party in September, and especially the renewed Jubilee auditoria are all major boosts to the arts. Sport and recreation benefit directly from investment in the Canmore Nordic Centre, centennial legacy funding for community recreation centres, and increases for parks. This is where Albertans work, live, and play. This is our evenings, our weekends, our family times, and our sporting events. Centennial sporting events like the World Masters Games and the centennial World Cup in cross-country skiing put Alberta and Alberta talent on the world sporting stage.

Sport and recreation brings me to the second theme of this budget, which is to improve. The Alberta government and my ministry are determined to improve the infrastructure for our parks, museums, and historic sites. Alberta's parks are in the backyard of every constituency in this province. There is a provincial park or protected area within 100 kilometres of every Alberta resident, and Albertans use them, making 7.5 million visits to their provincial parks. Another 1 million visits come from outside of the province.

This budget quadruples our capital investment in parks from about \$11 million to \$45 million. Of this, \$25 million pays for previous commitments: \$13 million continues the upgrades to the Canmore Nordic Centre for the centennial World Cup in cross-country skiing and as a legacy resource for future winter athletics, \$10 million continues the upgrading of water and sewage treatment facilities as part of the government's Water for Life strategy, and \$2 million is in the existing budget for ongoing parks maintenance.

Twenty million dollars in new funding will be used to build four new parks interpretive centres as centennial legacy projects in Writing-on-Stone, Lesser Slave Lake, Dinosaur provincial park, Cypress Hills interprovincial park, and for ongoing and deferred parks maintenance. Included in that money is almost \$8 million as the first instalment in a three-year plan worth \$47 million to repair and rebuild aging parks facilities. In addition to enhancing the parks experience, this investment protects facilities with an estimated replacement value of \$437 million.

8:20

Another area for improvement is updating exhibits in our museum and heritage attractions. These exhibits keep us in touch with who

we are and what we are as a people and as a province. They celebrate our past and contribute to our future by supporting education and tourism. Renewing what will soon be the Royal Alberta Museum is a flagship project to honour our centennial. The Alberta government's \$150 million commitment will be funded through Infrastructure and Transportation over the next five years.

The four park interpretive centres and the Royal Alberta Museum bring me to the third budget theme: celebrate. The province's inauguration in 1905 was a one-day event. However, we are marking our centennial with seven years of legacy construction and a year of celebration. Recognition programs, like the centennial medal and the sport and recreation centennial scroll, honour our past. Special centennial birth and marriage certificates, a centennial medallion, a royal visit, and special festivities will mark our present. The centennial education savings plan and legacy construction will build for our future.

To the end of the current 2005-2008 business plan the Alberta government's total commitment to centennial legacy projects and celebrations is \$343 million since 2000-2001. This year the commitment is \$40 million in legacy and celebratory initiatives. That is an increase of \$23 million over forecast. Thirty million dollars will honour approved grants for community-owned and -operated legacy projects like halls, recreation centres, libraries, and parks. Ten million dollars is for provincial festivities like the Queen's visit, the spectacular Commonwealth Stadium show to kick off the 100-day countdown to the province's birthday, and the official birthday celebrations actually on September 1.

The September 1 party is expected to include gala concerts, a re-enactment of the province's inauguration, and the grandest fireworks display in 100 years. Government is leading provincial events and recognition programs, while communities, municipalities, and institutions are leading local and special-interest celebration events.

Among the last centennial celebrations of the year, this December Alberta welcomes international athletes and fans to the centennial World Cup in cross-country skiing at the rebuilt Canmore Nordic Centre.

Mr. Chairman, rural Alberta is a major beneficiary in this budget. More than half of the province's public libraries are in communities with fewer than 1,200 people. Parks tourism adds \$1.3 billion a year to our economy, much of it spent in rural centres on gas, food, and lodging, not counting secondary spending on camping, fishing, and outdoor recreation goods and services. Rural communities like Lac La Biche actively promote themselves as gateways to Alberta's parks.

Centennial legacy funding is building libraries, recreation centres, community halls, and parks in small municipalities across the province. Support for our quality of life is inclusive across municipal and county boundaries.

Members of the Legislature, I ask you to approve the estimates for Community Development for 2005-2006. I ask for your support for this budget and its vision to maintain our core businesses, improve our parks and museum infrastructure, and celebrate our centennial. This budget helps us end our first century with a strong foundation for quality of life and a celebration of the past. It also lets us start our second century with confidence and from a position of strength.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It gives me great pleasure tonight to be able to introduce to you and through you a gentleman and a good friend of this Legislature, a nonpartisan good friend of this Legislature. He is, indeed, the Clerk of the Legislature. It was a little bit of a surprise tonight to see him in the members' gallery, but I would ask that David McNeil and his two friends stand so that we can give them the warm recognition that we honour our guests with.

Thank you so much.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

head: **Main Estimates 2005-06**

Community Development (*continued*)

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my great pleasure to rise and participate in the budget estimates this evening for the Ministry of Community Development and to discuss a range of issues. I want to thank the hon. minister for presenting a good overview of Budget 2005 in regard to the Ministry of Community Development, and I also thank all your staff for their great effort and hard work.

Mr. Minister, you already answered some of my questions which I had written, but there are still some more to go. I know that it's not easy to answer all of them and address them all in 20 minutes or so, but I would really appreciate it if you'd provide me with details in writing as soon as possible, as you always do. I commend you for that.

Allow me to start with the business plan. Under Core Business One on page 165 it states that the department will work "with organizations and communities to strengthen their capacity to enhance and further develop the areas of arts and culture, sport and recreation . . . by providing financial support." Why, then, has the Liberal opposition heard from many stakeholders in the arts, the film community, and from organizations like the Edmonton Sport Council that they are in dire need of increased funding in order to stay afloat? If the minister is working with these organizations, then why are so many of them begging this government for more support, like the film industry and the artistic community?

For years and years these organizations have been asking for a substantial increase in funding to support them. In fact, it has been estimated that the arts contribute approximately \$150 million annually to the economy of this province. These contributions are not in question, but they are still massively underfunded by this government. When will this government place a priority on increasing funding for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts much more substantially?

The next is under Core Business One on page 165. The government states that it is "participating in the Active Living Strategy and affirming the actions of the Alberta Sport Plan." Also, strategy 1.7 of the business plan on the same page, 165, states that the ministry will "collaborate with communities to promote healthy recreational and active living activities and to encourage the preservation and public use of . . . community recreation areas." Why, then, are stakeholders involved in sports and recreation saying that they are waiting in vain for the implementation and funding of the Alberta sport plan?

Questions from a major stakeholder group. The Edmonton Sport Council's spring newsletter 2005 states:

Are the Minister and the government of Alberta willing to go further

and make active living a priority for the province? . . . Will they make it a priority by recognizing that we must go beyond social marketing campaigns to significantly . . . expand the grant programs for [community recreational programs and] community recreational facility (re)development across the province?

These are direct questions from the affected stakeholders. How will the minister implement strategy 1.7?

The next one that I'm looking at in the business plan is on page 165 again. Strategy 1.9 speaks to showcasing Alberta talent and recognizing "the contribution of Albertans at special events held to mark Alberta's Centennial." Can the minister inform us if there are any plans to hold an Alberta celebration of the arts similar to the Alberta Scene celebration currently being held in Ottawa? If not, why?

8:30

What other major events are being planned to showcase the contributions of Alberta artists this year? Can the minister tell us how much funding is being directed at showcasing Alberta's artists in this centennial year?

Next, on page 166 of the business plan strategy 2.1 states very clearly that the ministry will "continue protecting human rights by resolving and adjudicating complaints of alleged discrimination." There are some serious questions concerning this. The opposition has talked to many individuals who have had to endure four to five years' wait to have their complaints dealt with. One particular individual stated that he was extremely concerned that it took nearly four years to resolve his case. He stated to us that there are long waiting times for each stage of the complaint process, which is assumed to be because of underfunding at the commission, and long delays as the respondents failed time and again to meet deadlines set by the commission's staff, who were apparently powerless to force action by respondents.

Will the minister explain if he's planning to take action to reduce waiting times and increase the ability of the Human Rights Commission to quickly resolve complaints? Are there any plans to increase the number of staff at the Human Rights Commission to achieve the objectives of a quicker and more efficient resolution of complaints? Will the minister be looking at a way of empowering the Human Rights Commission, perhaps in consultation with the Ministry of Justice, to compel respondents to meet deadlines set by the commission?

I'm sure the hon. minister would agree that making this system more efficient would provide an important signal that human rights complaints are indeed serious and that stronger human rights protection against discrimination is in the best interest of all Albertans.

My next question. Page 168 speaks to providing "financial support to community owned and operated Centennial Legacy Projects across Alberta" to leave a legacy for future generations. As well, strategy 3.9 speaks to the centennial legacy projects providing educational opportunities and increasing tourism. Reference is made specifically to the Provincial Museum of Alberta and renovation of the Jubilee auditoria in Edmonton and Calgary.

There need to be some questions asked around these projects. Many concerns have been raised that most of the funding for the centennial year has gone into building projects and rehabilitating existing facilities and not enough into actual celebration events like the Alberta Scene in Ottawa. Can the minister inform us if most of the funding has gone into bricks-and-mortar projects such as building recreational facilities and providing funding for already needed infrastructure projects? Can the minister provide us with a breakdown of how much of the funding has gone into infrastructure projects and how much has been spent on activities, festivals, and celebrations of Alberta's centennial?

I have a financial question. I start from page 94. It's about the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Page 94 of the estimates for 2005-2006 states that the budget for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts has increased to \$32.5 million, an increase of \$2.5 million from last year. Stakeholders have indicated that funding for the arts from government is lacking and fails to provide the support for the arts that is truly needed to have a flourishing community. Other stakeholders, the Works, have indicated that funding from the provincial government through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts is one-third less than funding received from the city of Edmonton and the federal government. The point here – and it's agreed upon by so many stakeholders – is: why does the Alberta provincial government consistently fail to support the arts when municipal and federal governments recognize the importance of the arts? Can the minister explain to these artists why they are always underfunded?

Page 94 of the expenses shows an increase in expenditure for the film development of \$2.5 million. While the increase is welcomed by the producers and stakeholders, Blue Sky Communication Inc. are wondering why there can't be more of an increase. The Alberta producers have indicated that unless there is a serious infusion of cash, such as \$10 million, producers will be leaving the province and taking their experience and other jobs with them. Does the minister have any plans to increase the funding for film development in the near future?

Page 94 of the estimates shows that funding for arts promotion has stayed the same as last year, as the minister indicated just now, at \$12.7 million. Can the minister tell us why there was not an increase here similar to the increase that film developers received?

The next question is on human rights and citizenship. On page 85 of the estimates reference line 3.0.1 shows a slight increase of just over \$200,000 to the budget for human rights and citizenship. Can the minister explain why more of a priority was not given to increasing funding here given the importance of protecting human rights in Alberta? Can the minister tell us if he plans on increasing the budget or the staff of the Human Rights Commission in the near future? Can the minister explain how this mechanism can be effective in resolving disputes if more money is not allocated to this important resource?

Next comes library funding. Line 2.2.2 of the estimates on page 84 shows an increase in library funding grants to \$19.9 million, up \$1.2 million from last year. Stakeholders for the library funding have some serious concerns about the grants received from the government. Library grants are calculated at a rate of \$4.29 per capita right now. Stakeholders want to see this figure doubled. This funding formula is insufficient to meet the increased demands on the library services and budgets that exist in 2005.

Municipalities tend to shoulder the increased cost of library services. For example, Edmonton contributed \$20.9 million last year, while the province contributed \$2.8 million. There should be a more equitable distribution of funding for library services that does not place such an undue burden on municipalities. Mr. Chairman, what will this minister do to take the financial burden of libraries from municipalities? Will there be more of a commitment from the ministry to provide additional funding for library services? Remember, these are the questions that stakeholders are asking and want answers to.

A question on the Wild Rose Foundation. Line 2.2.7 indicates \$7.7 million to the Wild Rose Foundation. This is the same as last year. Can the minister provide a breakdown of where this money is being distributed? Can he provide us with a detailed financial audit? Can the minister explain what the process is to receive funding through the Wild Rose Foundation? Also, please tell us if there were any investigations or irregularities in the distribution of funds through the Wild Rose Foundation.

8:40

A question on full-time employment, page 101 of the estimates. Under full-time employment it indicates that there will be an increase of 36 people, from 881 last year to 917 this year. Can the minister explain what these new employees are assigned to? Are any of them going to be working for the Human Rights Commission?

I have a few questions on the Auditor General's report, which points out that the

reports on the financial statements of the Ministry and the Historic Resources Fund contain a reservation of opinion because the financial statements depart from Canadian generally accepted accounting principles.

The Ministry has not included the net revenues and surpluses for the cultural facilities that are operated with the assistance of volunteer societies in its financial statements.

The AG estimates that

for the year ended March 31, 2004, the Ministry's net revenues and net assets are understated by \$0.9 and \$10.0 million respectively . . .

At present, the Ministry does not include revenues, expenses, and surpluses for the operation of the [two Jubilee auditoria].

The Auditor General reports that the ministry is developing an action plan to deal with this. Where is the ministry at in implementing this action plan?

The Historic Resources Fund has not properly recorded the revenues, expenses and surpluses generated by the operation of government-owned facilities in its financial statements. As a result, [the Auditor General estimates] that for 2004, the Fund's liabilities are overstated by \$216,000, assets are understated by \$109,000 and fund balance is understated by \$325,000.

What is the ministry doing to correct these accounting problems as indicated by the Auditor General's report? Why is the ministry not following Canadian generally accepted accounting principles?

These are the questions. I would request the hon. minister to answer today, or maybe he can give them to me in writing when it's convenient for him. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will, as I indicated at the outset, review *Hansard* and provide a more detailed set of answers to all the questions asked by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, which I listened to very carefully.

First of all, let me say thank you for giving credit to the staff of the department, some of whom are in the gallery with us this evening. They do fine work. I've had the benefit now of being the Minister of Community Development twice. There are many, many fine people that worked with me some 12 years ago who are working with me again, and I can tell you that this is a group of people that are very committed to their jobs, very committed to all the elements of the programs that are set out in the business plan and the budget of the Department of Community Development.

Let me say as an overall response to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie that I appreciated the passion with which he spoke on the subject of things like support for the arts, for culture, for recreation – he mentioned the provincial sport plan – libraries. He also mentioned funding for the Wild Rose Foundation and Human Rights Commission.

I will answer in a very broad way by saying first of all that there has been a significant increase in the budget to the Department of Community Development, and we could have allocated money to each and every one of those areas, but that would be like saying that we don't have any priorities. The reality is, Mr. Chairman, that to have 50 priorities is to have none at all. In looking at many of the

things that this department is responsible for, we need to be able to allocate our resources to those areas that have the greatest needs.

Mr. Chairman, we did, for example, put significant monies into the areas of parks, and when the hon. member asked about the active living strategy, part and parcel with the active living strategy is that you actually do have parks and recreational facilities in communities throughout this province that are up to code and up to date and are funded in such a way that allows them to be restored to the kind of condition that they need to be in. I did indicate that over a significant number of years we have allocated some almost \$350 million in monies to upgrade facilities and libraries and parks and recreational facilities throughout Alberta, and this is all part and parcel with making an active living strategy work.

I acknowledge that there are people from the arts community or perhaps the film community who would suggest that we should be doing more, and I can assure this House and this hon. member that there would be nothing that would make me feel more joyous than to be able to say to all of them, "All of you are an important part of the province of Alberta whether you represent the communities of human rights, or the sports community, the recreation community, the library community, the arts community," all of which were mentioned by the hon. member. Nothing would make me more joyous than to be able to say, "We will double all of your funding."

But that is not our reality. Our reality is that we do pick priorities and that we support them as best we can. That's not to say that this government doesn't acknowledge the importance of, for example, the arts. The hon. member himself cited numbers about the kind of economic development and economic activity that comes to this province as a result of a fantastic arts community that we have in this province, one that we should be very, very proud of.

So I'm well aware of those issues. They've certainly been brought to my attention, and perhaps all I can say to the hon. member and members of this Assembly is that I will continue to be an advocate for these groups and that now that we've dealt with much of the concern established in the parks area, we're able to restore these important signatures of our province back to the kind of condition that they should be in, that in future budget cycles we might be able to deal more specifically with some of the priorities that the hon. member mentioned.

Mr. Chairman, I'll just conclude with two last comments that were much more specific questions asked by the hon. member, and that is with respect to the increase of 36 FTEs to the department. I can advise the hon. member that they are all direct service delivery positions that will be noticed by the public. Twelve of them deal specifically with positions as it relates to centennial festivities that will be going on in the province, and the balance will be to the best of my recollection employed in areas of parks and historical resources. So these will provide direct services to the public, that they should notice.

We have, as I indicated, Mr. Chairman, in the outset of my comments, taken the Auditor General's comments and acted upon them as it relates to the Jubilee auditoria, and they will be a part of the consolidated financial statements of the Department of Community Development.

8:50

Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, I'll finish with this last piece, and that is Alberta Scene. For those who have been in Ottawa in the last two weeks and for those that have seen the media reports coming back from that city, you will all know that Alberta Scene was a tremendous success in Ottawa, with some 600 Alberta artists participating in about 20 different venues and participating in almost 100 different performances in Ottawa. This is a great credit to the strength of the arts community in the province of Alberta.

I can advise the hon. member that a number of the artists who were part of Alberta Scene will be participating in the celebration events at Commonwealth Stadium later on in the month of May in celebration of the arrival and the visit of Her Majesty the Queen. So there are elements of Alberta Scene that will be brought back to Alberta at that venue, and there are ongoing discussions with the National Arts Centre as to whether or not we might be able to tour some of the Alberta Scene artists throughout the province of Alberta at some later juncture in the centennial year.

Mr. Chairman, again, any omissions or errors that I've made I will correct by way of a written response to the hon. member, and I thank him for his thoughtful questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. A couple of topics that I'd like to cover here, but the first is to ask the minister if it's possible that in the – how's it being titled now? – off-budget spending . . . It's like off-track betting. It's already happening. The budget isn't passed, and we're already getting announcements from various ministers saying: just wait until we've got some extra money there, and we'll throw it your way. All kinds of nice promises are coming.

So I'm hoping that we're going to get a nice promise out of this minister around the Edmonton Art Gallery. The minister is no doubt aware that there has now been a commitment from the federal government. There has been a significant commitment from a private donor – that is, the local philanthropists John and Barbara Poole – to launch the individual fundraising campaign in support of a new Edmonton Art Gallery. I was at the art gallery last night, and I looked at the poster. There we're talking about the competition to choose the new architects, and it's listing, you know, who's on board for the money. Nothing from the province. Totally blank where it says: provincial government.

You know, this is really our Alberta art gallery because the Glenbow art gallery is a very, very fine facility, but it has not chosen to collect work in the same way. Actually, in my head it's more of a museum, and that may not be fair. But, really, when we're looking at developing a collection and displaying a collection, the largest institution that we have in Alberta is the Edmonton Art Gallery. I think it could easily be renamed the Alberta art gallery, actually, for the work that it does to showcase to Albertans work of quality and interest both from across the world but also our own Alberta artists.

I would really like to see the province do something befitting our centennial in supporting the Edmonton Art Gallery, and I'm encouraging the minister to engage in – I can't believe I'm saying this. It's not in the budget, or if it is, it's not detailed in the budget, so the minister will have to tell me. If it's in the budget, then where is it, and how much money is being committed? I'm assuming that there would have been a big showy announcement about it, so I suspect it's not in there. What plans, exactly, does the province have to support the Edmonton Art Gallery? You know, I think that's really important, and I would like to see a sincere commitment from the provincial government.

You know, we hear a lot of fine talk from the government and, frankly, a lot of credit taken on behalf of the arts community, and I'm just not seeing the reality of it. I'm kind of choking back my outrage, to be honest with you, Mr. Chairman, when I hear things like the minister touting Alberta Scene. What happened there is that 600 of our best artists and really interesting work and a variety of work from emerging artists to experienced artists – this government didn't even put up enough money for return airfare to Ottawa. Our artists went off to Ottawa, and we hardly even paid for their return

airfare. Yet all kinds of credit has been taken. To listen to the minister and the previous minister, they were responsible for the whole idea. That's not true at all. The National Arts Centre: it was their idea. They'd done one featuring the Maritimes the previous year. Alberta's number came up. It was, happily, in conjunction with our anniversary.

I just have a hard time buying this. We're now hearing from this minister, "Well, you know, we had to prioritize where we're giving increases," and we keep hearing from this government, "Yeah, we believe in the arts." I even get it quoted back at me, the amount of money that can be leveraged for investment in the arts, and we are still sitting at more or less the same budget as when I was elected here nine years ago. That was a \$16.1 million budget. We've had a whole \$5 million more go into that fund.

Now, overall, bottom line on this budget: absolutely, we've had more money come in; we've had more money go out. But you know what? We've had more programs come in and more programs go out, and with that the overall bottom line on this ministry has gone up and down. But how much money is going to the arts? Wow: \$20.21 million. We need that budget to go to \$40 million without delay. This province is awash in money, and choices are made, and priorities are made. Absolutely right, Mr. Minister. But I don't see them being made in support of this particular sector. I see the government taking a lot of credit for it, but I don't see the actual support coming.

So, yeah, I'm choking it back right now, and especially when I hear that kind of thing happen. I mean, at the 75th anniversary of this province we had an investment in fun for people and engagement of activity that has given us 25 years later all of those things that turn up on the big murals at the airports and in the kiosks for Alberta tourism that everybody likes to look at. That's things like the folk festival and the Fringe festival and the street performers' festival and the heritage days festival, even Jazz City, poor thing. From that, we've also had festivals that came as a result of and flowed from the investment 25 years ago. Things like the Works and the comedy festival, which also came and went, and some of the other great opportunities that we see in this city.

That's why we're looking at 25-year anniversaries of those festivals, because there was actually incentive. There was actually attention paid and money put into that sector 25 years ago, and, boy, did it pay off. It pays off so much that this provincial government likes to splash it all over billboards and use it in their advertising without actually supporting the sector from whence it came.

So, yes, I'm frustrated. You know, I look at the list of centennial projects that the minister was kind enough to supply me with, and I say: are you honestly telling me that those projects would not have happened? You would not have put money into the Jubilee Auditorium, when it needed this fixing, had it not been – you know, you had to wait for the centennial to do it. Is the minister actually telling me that the Londonderry Fitness and Leisure Centre would not have received the necessary funds?

So, I mean, this whole thing about, "Oh, haven't we done a wonderful thing here with the centennial projects?" I'm finding it kind of hard to choke down. I mean, you used money from the centennial as a way of doing regular, scheduled maintenance here. You know, yes, the Louise McKinney riverfront . . . [some applause] Oh, I got support here.

9:00

A few new things have happened, and I'll give you credit for that. The Louise McKinney riverfront park: there's money going into that. But upgrading the programming space and reconfiguring the main entrance and reception area of the Muttart Conservatory: that's

a centennial project? Public multi-use facilities at the Northgate Lions Senior Citizens' Recreation Centre: that's much needed. I'm in that centre on a regular basis, and I can tell you that it's much needed. But a centennial project? This is regular maintenance. So, you know, dressing it up with a feather boa and a few sparkles and calling it a centennial project is insulting, frankly. You've got to come through with this money at some point.

You know, I've heard every minister here for nine years get up and go: "Oh, yes. Boy, do we ever love the arts. We support the arts, absolutely." Well, where's the support? Where's the money? When is the priority going to be the arts and cultural sector? When? Nine years I've listened to this, and I've listened to the same story. When is it going to be a priority?

Let me just ask a question to the minister. Is the government paying better than scale for the performers and the artist participants who are coming to the Queen's visit? I'm just interested in that. I'm assuming that they're paying them because they're respecting the fact that they're artists, and the artists are actually doing what they make a living doing. I'd be interested in knowing from the minister if they're paying better than scale for the performers and the artists. That's an official question on the record that I would like to get an answer from the minister on.

I'm just so frustrated by this. I guess what I really want to know from the minister is: why is this government unable to fund the arts? Is there an ideological block that you stub your toe on every year that you just cannot bring yourself to fund the arts? Or do you really not believe all the examples that are brought to you of leveraging the money and how much it leverages into that sector and into other sectors, how much that investment pays off? What is the stumbling block that year after year I hear the same speech and I don't see the money. So, why? Just let us know. Just tell us what it is. If you really don't mean to do this, just tell us, and tell us why. If it's ideology – I'm interested to know at this point why you won't increase this.

This government had a \$6 billion – with a "b" – surplus last year. Now, some of it they have already invested, and there were laws that it would get cut off, and it ends up coming out in the books at \$4.7 billion – \$4.7 billion – and we can't get \$19 million – with an "m" – for arts funding in this province. So tell me why. Help me understand why year after year after year we get the same platitudes and no movement.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, did you want to respond?

Mr. Mar: I'll review *Hansard*, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise with some interest to speak on the Community Development budget here this evening. It's a very wide-ranging ministry. Sometimes I find sort of difficulty in seeing how things are tied together. I think it's a place where perhaps several services that the government does indeed need to provide somehow are thrown into a rather loose basket. However, certainly there are a number of very interesting and hot-button issues here that I would like to speak on this evening. You know, I've done a number of these budget estimates now, and I must say that . . . [interjection] Yeah, I know what I'm doing, right? I'm earning my money.

What I find is a discrepancy between what the intention is, I think, and what actually happens. I think that this ministry is by far the most confusing or oblique and a little bit bizarre, perhaps. I'm just going to pass through sort of a passel of questions, and the minister

can respond as he sees fit. You know, I do find it a bit disturbing that we don't have active responses here in the House, though. I mean, I hope that this isn't a trend where we just exchange e-mails and get written responses because, of course, part of the integrity of this House is that we do interact with each other in some small way across this green broadloom.

Talking about the arts, I think a couple of members have already spoken about the arts celebration in regard to the centennial. You know, myself, personally, I was surprised that there wasn't an organized means by which the National Arts Centre program was being moved en masse back here to the province of Alberta where we could see it. I'm glad to hear that there is some ad hoc movement in that way, but I find it a little bit disturbing that we didn't have that as an organized plan ahead of time.

You know, we're a number of months into our centennial, and for planning arts gigs, you need to have time. You need to sell tickets. Even if you're going to give them away, the time is running out. So I hope that some of those very interesting productions that the people in Ottawa got to see come back so that the people in Alberta can see them too and that they are affordable so that the average person can go and see them.

I remember vividly the 75th anniversary celebrations that we had in this province and a number of very lovely legacies that came from the 75th anniversary. You know, a lot of those things, or some of them anyway, are no longer with us. Jazz City is a very good example of that here in Edmonton. I think that without hesitation I can say that Jazz City died a slow death because of underfunding from this provincial government. When we started Jazz City in 1980 and through the first 10 or 15 years, it was just a remarkable jewel in the cultural crown of this province. Without any increases to meet inflation, in time some of these arts festivals have been slowly starved to death.

I know that the Edmonton Folk Festival, say, for example, is a very successful festival here in the city, but they are still receiving the same money from this province that they received 15 years ago. I don't know how much it cost per kilometre to pave a road in 1990 or so, but certainly it's a lot more today. It's the same thing with the Folk Festival. It's successful because people work very hard on it with legions of volunteers, but we're underfunding these festivals, and we do so at our peril. I know that the managing director of the Folk Festival said that it's not written in stone, that what we have here today can easily be gone tomorrow. He said that this provincial government giving him a very paltry sum makes it much more difficult for him to continue to put on a world-class festival here in this city. I find that very disturbing, and I think that we could do a lot better as a provincial culture supporter.

Just going through the budget, one that sort of stuck out for me here because, of course, we don't have it this year at all is the NHL team initiative. This initiative is a subsidy that apparently is paid through lottery sales, the Sport Select tickets. As far as I know – and maybe it's a special provision written in. Perhaps it's not entirely with the spirit of Gaming revenues going to private sports teams. I think that the lottery fund disbursements are meant to be, and I quote, used to support specific charitable, not-for-profit, public and community-based initiatives and projects. I don't think that professional hockey teams fit into that category. We don't have professional hockey this year, and I've seen plenty of good hockey from the University of Alberta and the junior teams. I don't know. This government likes to talk about getting out of the business of being in business, but my question is: how does that fit into the overall strategy of this department?

9:10

Now the centennial celebration. Certainly, I'm looking forward to a number of things that are going to happen. I just would like to

see a real focus on getting a maximum bang for the buck here with the centennial celebrations, and that means having the maximum contact with the most people getting some benefit from the money. You know, some of the initiatives that I've seen thus far are sort of sputtering along in that regard. We're only spending about five bucks per head, right? Certainly, there must have been more spent on the 75th anniversary. Really, I think that people are waiting with bated breath for what big events are going to happen, but at five bucks per pop I don't know if we're going to be able to meet those expectations or not.

Now, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts is the same as it was last year, at about \$32 million and change. The money is coming from lottery funding, I believe, almost entirely. When we make these distinctions, when we talk about how we're supporting the arts and whatnot, you know, tying so closely to lottery funding, I think that it's a bit of a dispersement of the responsibility towards arts funding. Lottery funding is not the same as tax funding, and as well some people don't like that, the fact that the money is coming from gambling revenues.

A report from Statistics Canada in January showed that Alberta ranks last of the provinces and the territories when it comes to per capita public funding for the arts. This is ironic because in Alberta people spend more on cultural goods and services per capita than anyone else. So it's like, you know, we're sort of out of sync with the strong public support that we have for the arts in this province, and indeed we do have a vibrant arts community. But, you know, everywhere else in North America, I hate to tell you, and certainly in Europe the arts are subsidized because it's a cultural institution which is vital to the integrity and to the quality of life of the people. Really, you get the best bang for your buck by putting money into arts funding. I find it to be somewhat embarrassing that our province is last in this per capita funding. Certainly, with the overall economy that we're enjoying here now in this province, we could create a great cultural renaissance in Alberta and do much better than we are doing now, in fact.

In regard to parks I guess we're seeing quite a substantial boost in the operating budgets. But let's try to remember what we saw happen to our provincial parks infrastructure and development over the last few years. Quite frankly, I think it's generally agreed upon that, you know, a lot of these things have been falling apart for so long that it's a good thing that we are in fact putting a couple of bucks back into these places, right? A number of the provincial parks that are around Edmonton are heavily used. People love to recreate through camping and by taking the kids out to the beach or whatever. So many of these places have deteriorated over the years that I think this money is going to perhaps just bring things back to some level instead of expanding the facilities themselves.

Just in regard to the parks, as well, of the \$247 million Community Development budget, the parks and protected areas only get \$36 million in operating money for refurbishing and maintenance, 35 per cent more than they did receive last year. So I do give some credit to that change in the funding, but as I say, it's long overdue, and we could certainly do better.

So my overall conclusion, then, as I said before, is that I think there's a lack of focus in Community Development, and the lack of focus comes from, I guess, a discrepancy between what appears to be happening and what is actually needed. You know, so often I see the Community Development department announcing their new things for this and that and putting a great deal of effort into that, announcing what new things are coming, but a lot of those things are things you need anyway. They're things that, actually, are just part of the core of what this ministry should be funding in the first place, so really it's confusing at best.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mar: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder can express himself passionately without frustration. I can answer a couple of questions for him, but first let me say thank you for the credit that was given to reinvestment in the area of parks. This was a significant priority for the department and one that we're very proud of.

I appreciate the comments that he made with respect to the arts in general and the passion with which he spoke on that subject. Let me make one correction on the issue that he said struck him in reviewing this. That was the \$3 million that went to supporting the NHL franchises. This portion of the budget is not related to lottery dollars; this is a tax on the players, for those players that play in the province of Alberta, that goes back to supporting Alberta's two NHL teams.

He did ask: how can Albertans see the artists that performed in Ottawa at the Alberta Scene? Of course, they're from Alberta, so he can certainly watch the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, or he can watch Decidedly Jazz Danceworks in Calgary. Ian Tyson performs in many different venues throughout the province. So these, of course, are things that Albertans have enjoyed for many, many years that now we can say that many Canadians have had the opportunity to see that they would not otherwise have seen.

I can also tell the hon. member that a number of booking agents or impresarios were in attendance, almost 100 of them. They each got a description of all of the artists that were performing at Alberta Scene. I'm advised that a number of them are planning on booking Alberta artists in jurisdictions that will be outside of the country, in Europe and in North America and in other places. So this has been a tremendous success.

With respect to centennial celebrations, I agree with his perspective that we should get the most bang for the buck. I think that when he attends the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's visit and the September 1 centennial celebration that will be throughout the entire province – I think that people will be very impressed with what we've done. Of course, there will be local and municipal and community events throughout the entire year. I would invite him to go to the centennial website to see a list of several hundred events that are happening all over the province of Alberta that all are related to the centennial. If I've made any errors or omissions, I will review *Hansard* and reply in writing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a few comments, particularly in a couple of areas. I want to express appreciation on behalf of my constituents to the minister for a number of the programs that are in place for the arts in this province, and I'll speak from a rural perspective, where we don't have the symphony or the philharmonic or many things. I want to express appreciation that the Foundation for the Arts provides for the travelling program that's enjoyed in Consort, Alberta, where they show at least five performances in a year, in Stettler, in others.

I want to express appreciation for our theatre groups. I can tell you that there's a theatre group in my community that almost annually for the last 25 or 26 years has put on a musical production. My community has a residency of about 10 people in the immediate town of New Brigid, where this is shown, but the talent comes from far around. They've produced *Oliver*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Fantasticks*. I could name them. In fact, I did the makeup for this group in my earlier years. I couldn't find enough talent to perform.

9:20

They put on seven productions about a month ago. Each one sold out in the community hall, each one having a brunch or a dinner

which allowed a fundraising opportunity for community groups like the drama club, like the curling club, like the community club, like the early childhood services. If you had gone to each one of those, you'd have seen the same workers because everybody belongs to all of those organizations. It's an amazing opportunity.

I could mention the play that the Consort players put on each year or the Hanna players and so on. That's only allowed by the support that we get, one, in bringing directors out to help with the direction and management of these plays, where expertise comes from Calgary or Edmonton, supported by the foundation to assist these communities to put on these outstanding productions.

I want to also mention that from a student point of view, Mr. Minister, I can't tell you how many letters I get from students thanking us for our support for the writers' workshops. I think it's writers in residence. I know that most of the students in my area go to Red Deer to the college for a week program. These students enjoy that. It develops their opportunity to develop talent.

I have attended a number of music festivals in the last few weeks, mainly because my granddaughters were performing in them. I look at the Coronation music festival, which is in the constituency of the Member for Battle River-Wainwright, and that music festival has gone on for years and years and years. It is a weeklong festival that celebrates voice, drama, dance, all forms, and it's an amazing festival. The Hanna music festival, the Stettler music festival, just to name a few in my constituency: if you want to talk about the opportunities for young people to develop culturally and develop their talent, those are some opportunities. I was asked specifically to, and I do try to, pass on to you the letters from these students of their appreciation.

I want to express appreciation for another program that I think is absolutely amazing. It's where a group of usually two people come into the school and spend three or four days, and the school puts on an entire production. It might be a takeoff on one of the nursery rhymes or something. There's a couple from Tilley that have been doing it recently. Missoula theatre was another that came in. It involves the whole school, and they do an amazing production. Talk about an opportunity for young people to develop their talent, where we don't have it at our doorstep here. What it does is really encourage these young people to have an appreciation for the arts. When they come to the city, they like to go to productions at the Winspear or at our Jubilee auditoria or Catalyst Theatre or many of the others that we have. That appreciation I really wanted to express.

Our parks. I have some of the parks in my area. I'm always pleased that we can further improve them. Mr. Minister, our parks are much appreciated. They're not rundown. They're not an embarrassment in the area that I live in. We were very supportive of seeing some dollars go to help keep that quality up.

I wanted to just mention one other thing. I'm very proud of what we're doing in our centennial celebrations this year. There's been some talk that we don't have enough cake, we don't have enough streamers, and we don't have enough parties. I've said: you know, when the last piece of icing is licked off the fingers, when the last balloon has popped, and when the last streamer has gone away, Alberta will have legacies that will be here for us to celebrate for many years. Many of the projects in my community, indeed, began as 75th anniversary projects, and we've been able to enhance those projects and keep them viable in our communities on into the future with dollars from the legacy projects.

I want to speak in particular about the ATCO learning centre at the Royal Tyrrell Museum, which was one of the first public legacy projects that was open and, in fact, where ATCO gave \$1 million. I think it was the highest amount for a single project that was ever

donated by a corporation. What an amazing addition to something that nobody else has in the world, the Royal Tyrrell Museum, and it is used extensively. I've actually – I think I've said this in the Legislature before – participated in a sleepover at the Royal Tyrrell Museum. If you haven't done it, you should, and you should go with a group of grade 1s, 2s, and 3s because they're really the most fun. You sleep under the dinosaurs. Your classroom is the new learning centre. Those young people know more about science through that, and it's an amazing thing. That's the kind of legacy I want to see for our province.

Yes, we're going to have the community parties and occasions. Our communities are very supportive of the dollars that have been given to them to help with those celebrations. More importantly, I am excited, and I am looking forward to the refurbished Jubilee auditoria. I haven't seen them – everybody that has tells me they'll knock your socks off – but I love the Jubilee auditoria. What a legacy, and what a worthwhile legacy for a hundredth anniversary.

Alberta is celebrating a hundred years, and we will build a foundation for the next 100 years by wisely investing in legacy projects the width and breadth of this province. For that, Mr. Minister, I thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. We have some great discussions in the Chase family with regard to support for the environment and parks. Hon. minister, my father was one of your biggest fans when you were Minister of Environment. My father has received awards from this government and other conservation groups like the Order of the Bighorn for restoration and habitat work that he's done. He's a past president of the Sarcee Fish & Game, worked with Ducks Unlimited, and he was very appreciative of the work you did as an Environment minister. As I say, he's one of your biggest fans. I'm hoping to be your second biggest when it comes to parks and protected areas.

I want to do a little bit of a historical look at my particular reason for having this parks and protected areas critique portfolio. In 2002 I started working with my wife as a campground attendant – maintenance, basically jack and jill of all trades – in Cataract Creek wilderness protected area. We started on the May long weekend in 2002, and the difference between 2002 and 2004 was just unbelievable. In 2002, thanks to the federal government and the G-8 and the fact that a lot of the G-8 activities were happening in the Kananaskis, we had, I'd say, almost hot and cold running conservation officers. We could count on at least one daily visit from conservation officers. There were a number of seasonal officers that summer, and it was great.

We had a system whereby, especially on weekends, we were responsible for doing our last rounds between 11 o'clock and 12 o'clock. At that point we would record in a book for the conservation officers, who we knew would be coming through at night, any particular campers who were causing difficulties, any things that we wanted the conservation officers to potentially check out to support the program.

After the G-8 ended, fortunately the contract of the seasonals continued throughout the summer; 2002 was a very good year. It was a learning year for both my wife and I, trying to carry out all the duties to spruce up the campground and try and keep it at the level that it once was when it was under provincial jurisdiction, and we did our best to do that.

9:30

When we came out in 2002 in the spring, in May, there was still

a powdering of snow on the forestry road, and obviously we had to drive very carefully. When we got to I would say kilometre 9, we looked ahead down the road and saw this magnificent view of a tree-clad mountain, three peaks, and as we got to about kilometre 12 and we were just going down the bend by Cataract Creek, we looked out on to this meadow and again because of the newness of the spring and the high level of the water – the creek was full. It was rushing.

We got to our camp spot, set up. Incidentally, at that point, there were banks of 10 feet of snow where the area had been graded out so we could get our fifth wheel in. We looked back, we looked to the north and to the west, and we saw this beautiful three-peak panoramic mountain view. Absolutely breathtaking.

As the snow melted, we had our first taste of the wildflowers and the whole atmosphere. On one side we'd look at the three peaks. On the other side we'd look up at Mount Burke majestically commanding the area. We could see over to Strawberry Ridge, which was a very popular hiking destination: Mount Burke and Strawberry Ridge. Then the other big attraction was the number of fishermen and hikers that would go along Cataract Creek to the falls. This was a major hiking destination, extremely popular, as I say, with both fishermen and hikers. Daily picnickers would enjoy the day-use area at Cataract Creek.

When we came back in the spring of 2003, we could not believe what had taken place over the winter. When we hit that kilometre 9, all of a sudden we're looking at what would be almost Sudbury-like devastation. The area that we used to look at with the three mountains was now that much easier to see because it had been clear-cut.

That clear-cutting continued unabated throughout the summer of 2003, and when the Lost Creek fire was raging down in the Crowsnest area and a fire ban was put throughout the areas, we still had the clear-cutting taking place throughout the night. It was amazing to me that campers weren't allowed to even have mosquito coils for fear of starting a potential forest fire, yet heavy-duty machinery was allowed to go through the forest and clear-cut at random, throughout the night I might add. So our campers were confined to the campground. They couldn't leave the campground. They couldn't go out into the backcountry because of the ban, but for the commercial operators, the foresters there were no restrictions with the exception of one week in August.

Also, one of the things that made communication very difficult for about two weeks was the water bombers that were fighting the Lost Creek fire. We're on the same radio frequency as the conservation officers, so when we had an emergency – and we had a variety of emergencies – we couldn't get through because of being on the same radio channel. After a week and a half and several complaints later we finally got our channels working so that we had access.

One of the problems in terms of communication that we experienced was the repeater stations. Fortunately, in most cases we could be heard, but we never knew when we called for backup if there was going to be anybody coming. Because we were over 80 kilometres away from the nearest RCMP and about 60 kilometres away from the Sheep station, we weren't sure if we were going to get the support.

In the summer of 2003 I think there was one seasonal, and the frequency of visits was considerably reduced, particularly on weekends because we were that much farther into the areas. My wife and I did our best to maintain the discipline, welcome the campers, and so on, but there just was not enough conservation officer support.

In 2002 Highwood House was still a conservation office. Some of the wonderful people like Pat Ronald worked out of that conservation office. He was there, and we could contact him, and 13

kilometres away we could get some support. In 2003 the office is completely shut down. In 2004 the office is not only shut down; it's closed and all the tourist information, all the maps, all the support for visitors is gone. It wasn't just Highwood House that was closed; it was a whole series of conservation offices that were closed. My hope for the minister is that now that there's more money, we can see people getting beyond that seasonal situation in conservation officers and have more full-time people hired. I hope that is within the budget.

The other area that was frequently discussed – I would talk to people, Ray Andrews for example, from Canmore and Community Development, and I'd talk with conservation officers, forestry officials, sustainable resources – was the multi-use aspects. It concerned me that not only did they clear-cut on the outside edges right up to the park boundaries, within 30 metres of Cataract Creek, which had a reputation of being a wonderful trout stream – and it drew visitors all the way from Europe – but then in the summer of 2004 we had a group basically cutting what was left after the outside areas had been cleaned.

Now, the latest effort was using the park's road itself, punching out the most scenic camping spot in the campground, which was site 71-72, which no longer exists, so they could make a road, use the camp road to pull out the trees. Those are the trees that are on the side of Mount Burke. They're the trees that go down to the second falls. This area, as I say, was cut. So in terms of multi-use you start wondering: who's going to come to see this campground? Who's going to go to the top of Mount Burke or the top of Strawberry Ridge? Why are they going to want to go to these destinations when they look out and all around them they see what used to be forest?

I question the jeopardizing of the creek. I personally don't believe that 30 metres is sufficient, especially when we're talking about lodgepole pine to keep the silt from going into the rivers. Of course, in each succeeding year whenever there was any melt or runoff, those creeks were a whole lot muddier than they had been in previous years, when the trees were there to serve as almost like a toothbrush and strain. Now, I'm hoping, as I say, that some of these errors will be corrected.

The other error that I want to talk about in multi-use – I'm assuming that it falls under Community Development to maintain the fences. Not only did we have to listen to the wonderful chimes of clear-cutting in the evening, but we also had free-range cattle. Because the fences weren't maintained or because they were knocked down by the forest companies and there was nobody to put them back up, the cattle would come into the campgrounds. They would rub against the trailers. They would run into the tents. Try dealing with – I don't know – a half-ton Angus bull first thing in the morning. You know, campers sort of racing for their trailers and this big bull marching down the campground roadway. Well, I got out my golf pencil, and I threatened it. It didn't have much effect, but I did my best.

9:40

I'm hoping that part of this will be the restoration of the fences so at least we can keep the cattle out of the parks. It worries me greatly when we talk about now turning loose buffalo. In Sustainable Resources this morning they said: well, if the buffalo are going to be on leased grazing land, then there have to be appropriate fences built. Thank heavens for that. It's bad enough greeting a black Angus bull. I wouldn't want to be greeting a buffalo in that same circumstance.

Now, I'll move on to the arts programming. What I see with this government is a little bit of what I would call doublespeak. The Member for Calgary-Egmont proposed a bill that would make some

type of arts course compulsory at the high school level. That's great. However, in turn, what's happening is the first programs to be shut down by lack of funding are the fine arts programs at the junior high schools. In 2002 we lost our drama program at my junior high school, F.E. Osborne. In 2003 the band program was basically cut in half. Bring it to 2005: Simon Fraser junior high in Calgary-Varsity constituency won't be having a band program next year because of lack of funding and lack of support.

If we're going to talk about supporting arts and culture, let's start at the school level, as the Member for Calgary-Egmont suggested, but don't just make the course compulsory. Provide the support so that arts and culture can be a viable, ongoing entity. Encourage children, junior high and senior high, to appreciate the arts, and then once they graduate, support the arts so that they can go and enjoy the programming.

I would like to know from the minister if what I've heard is true, that the Department of Community Development has only paid for half of the bills for the two Jubilees. My understanding is – correct me if I'm wrong; that's why I'm asking the question – that the government paid half the bill and arts groups were left for the other half, trying to find matching funds.

Mrs. McClellan: What?

Mr. Chase: I hope that's not the case. I said: correct me if I'm wrong. That's the question I'm asking. I stand ready and willing to be corrected. I hope they received the whole funding.

With regard to centennial celebrations we've got ambassadors who have jackets and very little funding to go to events where those jackets could be worn. I've heard from a number of centennial ambassadors that they don't have the money necessary to carry out the celebrations.

It's great to hear about some of the arts activities that are happening in the rural areas. I'm glad to hear that there is a degree of support from the government. That's necessary, but I have a feeling that the majority of the money that is raised is as a result of local initiatives as opposed to government support.

I also wonder – and it has been brought out before – why Alberta's 75th anniversary had more pizzazz and celebration than our 100th anniversary. It concerns me – and this was an article that was brought out in the *Edmonton Journal* – that it seems our poor eastern 100th celebratory sister is spending more money celebrating and recognizing their province than we are. Again, if either the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Community Development wishes to correct my assumption, I would welcome it.

I'm proud to be an Albertan, even though it's only been since 1966. I think we have lots to celebrate. My background is in the arts. I had classical training in Latin for five years. I majored in art at university, a double major in art and French. I want to see the arts celebrated, preserved, and sustained, and I would like to see more funding evidence that that's going to happen. We have a number of talented musicians who I thoroughly enjoy at a variety of jams. I mentioned going to the East Coulee Spring Festival. We have some wonderful events happening like the Canmore music festival, but they're basically sponsored by communities. I'd ask the Community Development minister: does Canmore receive any funding for putting on that festival? Or does Edmonton receive arts support funding for the Fringe or Calgary for the folk festival? To what extent does the government fund and recognize these wonderful events? I'd like to hear that the government funded these to a great extent, and I'll sit down and listen for those answers.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to congratulate the minister on his budget and in particular on the dedication of \$150 million to the Provincial Museum, soon to be the Royal Alberta Museum.

I find it a little bit hard to fathom the outrage, feigned or otherwise, of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre when she said: there's no special funding for the arts in this centennial year. A hundred and fifty million dollars is certainly a considerable amount of money, even in Liberal opposition terms. Compared to the sum of \$30 million, which the federal Liberals are pumping into the project, it certainly is a considerable . . .

Ms Blakeman: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. I would ask under 23(i), for imputing false or unavowed motives to myself. The statement that the member is attributing to me was not in fact uttered, and he needs to be able to check the Blues and be a bit more accurate when he quotes me. I'd appreciate it if he did that because he has misquoted me and taken me out of context. My comments were very carefully made, and what he's quoted me as saying is not accurate.

Dr. Brown: I believe the comments were to the effect that the member could hardly contain herself. It seemed to me that she was expressing some sentiment of outrage at the funding, and certainly her disposition displayed that demeanour. So I don't think that the fact there was some sort of outrage displayed is in any way demeaning to the member. I think that's what was expressed.

The Deputy Chair: Anybody else on the point of order?

Hon. members, the point of order is being raised under Standing Order 23(h), which says that "A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member makes allegations against another member." The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre stood up and indicated that she had not uttered those words that are being attributed to her. The chair does not have the copy of *Hansard* at his disposal, so the chair is going to use the words that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has just indicated to be factual, unless the records indicate otherwise. We will accept that no such comments were made by the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

I hope that the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill will consider this as a clarification from her and hopefully will do the honourable thing.

Dr. Brown: If I mistook the sense of outrage, then I certainly withdraw those remarks with respect to the outrage that I seemed to detect coming from the member.

Debate Continued

Dr. Brown: As I was saying, the sum of \$150 million being allocated to the Provincial Museum is certainly far in excess of what the federal government has allocated to that project. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre did give a compliment to the Glenbow Museum, stating that it was deserving of some recognition,

but she also implied that the Edmonton Art Gallery was also deserving of some sort of special recognition and was the pre-eminent art museum in the province.

9:50

I would like to say that the Glenbow Museum in Calgary is certainly an outstanding institution and is an outstanding asset to southern Alberta. Under the leadership of Michael Robinson it has displayed an admirable job of being entrepreneurial. Unlike the Provincial Museum it is an independent institution, and as such it faces special challenges. They've done a tremendous job of being entrepreneurial, as I've said, in attracting outside money, outside philanthropy. They are now undergoing an extensive project to modernize the institution and to make it more user friendly and more informative and educational. I'm sure that the Glenbow Museum would love to have the type of funding that's been allocated to the Provincial Museum.

I would like to just ask the minister if he could perhaps share with us what plans he might have with respect to the Glenbow Museum as the major artistic and cultural institution in the city of Calgary with respect to static arts and, also, whether or not he might share with us some of the possible solutions to the special challenges that the Glenbow faces with respect to its status as an independent institution. I'm thinking particularly of the challenges that they face with respect to benefits for the employees and the pensions, which are nowhere comparable to those that are allocated to their counterparts here at the Provincial Museum.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to take this opportunity to put a few comments on the record in regard to thanks from the residents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake for the Ministry of Community Development's grants when it pertains to the centennial legacy. The town of Bonnyville was the beneficiary of \$1.7 million for their centennial project, as was the city of Cold Lake, which received the same amount.

I'd like to share a little bit about how this money makes a big difference in a rural community. The project in Bonnyville was pegged at \$13.5 million. It's going to be the addition of a second arena, indoor soccer field, an education centre, a fitness centre for seniors and youth alike. We had the official sod-turning ceremony last Friday, and it was attended – I didn't have the official count, but I would say that there were probably 1,500 people that turned out for this event. Seniors, people of middle age, lots of youth were there to recognize how instrumental this project was going to be in making their quality of life that much better in a small rural community.

But the part that's inspiring, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that the local groups got together – of course, the two municipalities got together, and they pledged to put in \$5 million towards this project – but the rest of it had to be raised. We received \$1 million from Canadian Natural Resources Limited; half a million dollars from EnCana resources; a local company, Denmar Energy Services, pledged \$300,000. They would go to the local shoe store, that would donate \$5,000, and on and on. The committee had set a target of \$1 million. They are close to reaching \$1.5 million from the local community. It's a feat, I'm sure, that is the envy of many other communities across Alberta because the people there – with the driving force that the municipality had and the \$1.7 million that came from the province, it gave them the desire to be able to say: hey, it is attainable.

In Cold Lake they're going to be starting their fundraising campaign. They're building themselves a new ice arena. They have

two older ice arenas that have basically done their time. They've had a junior B hockey team that have just finished off their second year there. The community is behind them, and they know that they need a new ice rink. I'm sure that they will be as successful as they go forward.

So on behalf of my constituents I just want to say: thank you for those \$1.7 million because we are grateful. We appreciate what it's going to do. It's going to change our quality of life and provide entertainment for our youth for many years to come.

I'd also like to thank my centennial ambassador, Mr. Vic Sadlowski. He's been involved with the various schools. He's been involved with the seniors. He's a retired schoolteacher, but he's always had a great knack in terms of being a great master of ceremonies, so as we go through with any special events in our community, he's there with his coat that describes him as a centennial ambassador. He's working with the schools. They're planting trees. They're having all types of events. He attends all the different functions that I attend, where I go and give the gold medallions to our centenarians.

So it's great to show that we are celebrating. We're showing that Alberta, basically, over the past hundred years has been about building community, and we're continuing on with that type of legacy as we work together and continue to build community as we go into our second century.

Going to the Francophone Secretariat, if I may, Mr. Minister, I'd just like to ask a couple of questions. In the past budget there used to be a separate line item for the budget for the Francophone Secretariat, and I haven't been able to find it, so I'd really appreciate to see if you could tell me what the budget is for this year. As you are aware, we met with the francophone community a few months back, where they were asking to have an expanded mandate of the secretariat. The secretariat's been in place since 1999, and they've asked in terms of being able to see the mandate expanded. I would certainly like to hear your comments on that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to add a few more. There's a confusion. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Community Development both are saying that the ministry is doing really well, but I have some documents showing – I mean, somebody, I remember, wrote a letter from Calgary, and he's from the hon. minister's riding, and I want to mention what he thinks about libraries in this province after the motion was defeated. He said that we are a province without deficit, and we are a province that calculates its surpluses not in the hundreds of thousands nor in the millions but in the billions, and we cannot afford the \$4 million that it would take to eliminate library fees. The motion was defeated, but he was really frustrated.

The hon. minister, if he remembers, knows what I'm talking about. He said he was a Conservative all his life, but in the end he said keep up the good work, and the Liberal Party may have just found a new supporter.

So the people are saying different than what I hear in this Assembly. I don't know whom I should trust.

Another thing I want to add is that I think no other speaker has spoken so far on per capita public funding for arts on an annual basis. I was reading one article that Alberta is the lowest. Alberta pays \$160 per person and Manitoba \$210, Saskatchewan \$199, British Columbia \$183. Nationally it's \$236. I mean, Alberta is the richest province, and we . . .

Mr. Bonko: Are the cheapest.

Mr. Agnihotri: I don't say that we are the cheapest, but we can afford. I know the hon. minister says that he is trying his best. I can request him to please do something for the arts in this province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of quick points that I would like to make in regard to the budget for Community Development.

10:00

As I was leafing through the Order Paper this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, I noticed a couple of private members' motions that are way down the list and not likely to be debated this sitting. I think that's unfortunate because I notice, as an example, one that's proposed by the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar that talks about urging the government to "consider increasing the per capita grant given to Alberta libraries by 50 per cent in recognition of the late the Honourable Dr. Lois E. Hole to encourage library enhancement and increased participation in our public libraries." I just think it's really unfortunate that we're not going to have the opportunity to debate that motion.

Hon. members will recall that earlier this session, unfortunately, a motion from this side of the House was defeated that would have seen free library cards distributed to all Albertans in honour of the late the Honourable Lois E. Hole. I think, as well, that that's unfortunate. So I'd just like to I suppose remind the hon. minister that certainly there are members of his own government caucus that feel strongly about supplying an awful lot more funding to public libraries.

In fact, two weeks ago now, I guess it might have been, I was at an AUMA seminar – I believe the hon. minister was in attendance as well – and at least twice I heard members, councillors or reeves from various communities across the province, get up and refer to the fact that library funding was a concern for them, and they really felt as if they had been shortchanged somewhat. I would certainly like to echo the sentiments expressed in this private member's motion and hope that at some point the minister might take that into consideration. If it can't be accommodated through this year's budget, then hopefully during next year's budgetary considerations we could take a serious look at providing much stronger support for libraries in this province.

Another one, Mr. Chairman, that caught my eye was a motion that was on the list to be debated at some point by the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. It, again, is not likely to see debate during this sitting, but it would have asked the Legislative Assembly to encourage the government to "provide assistance for youth cultural sports exchange programs to increase awareness of and interaction with other cultures around the world."

I think that this is a wonderful initiative that would have likely received a tremendous amount of support from all sides of the House, and I'm sorry to see that it's not going to be debated in the Legislature this time around. Again, I would hope that the minister would have a close look at that resolution and understand that there are members of his own caucus that feel passionately about this, that perhaps we're not providing enough funding to these groups and that we could certainly be doing more.

It's been pointed out several times tonight that we are a very

fortunate province at this point in time, with an unbelievable excess of revenues coming in thanks to the good grace of God and the fact that we have oil and gas in the ground and record high prices that are providing us with revenues beyond most of our wildest dreams. Given that that is the case, I think certainly one way that we could be sharing that wealth with the citizens of Alberta and making sure that there is a greater legacy for all would be to be investing in libraries and also in youth cultural sports exchange programs. I think those are two excellent initiatives, and I wanted to have the opportunity to be on the record as supporting those since the minister will be aware of the fact that we will most likely not have the opportunity to debate them at any other point in this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Any others?

Hon. minister, did you want to have any concluding remarks?

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Many questions have been asked, and as I have said many times this evening, I will review *Hansard* and reply in writing.

There were a couple of things that I did want to comment on. I appreciated the comments by the Member for Calgary-Varsity. I don't think there's ever been a vacation slide show presented in this Assembly, but that was pretty close to it, and I appreciated the description of what he saw in 2002 in Cataract Creek versus 2003. Notwithstanding the lack of vacation slides I have a pretty good picture in my own head of what he was describing. While I cannot answer questions about what may have happened in that year or why the cutting was taking place, the germane point that I take from all of what he said was: if there were errors, can we learn from them and correct them in the future? I'm committed to doing that.

I appreciated his comments about supporting the arts right at the school level. That, of course, does not fall directly within my portfolio responsibilities, but I know that as a former Minister of Community Development the current Minister of Education takes this quite seriously. He understands the need to not only mandate programs but for funding to follow accordingly.

With respect to the Jubilee auditoria, I can correct the member. There is no truth to the idea that we would ask arts groups to find matching money for the province's contribution. There was, however, a foundation that was set up. Friends of the Jubilee both in Calgary and in Edmonton created a foundation where they were trying to raise some money. They have expressed some success in being able to do that but certainly not to the magnitude of going half-way on the capital costs, which to my recollection are in the magnitude of some \$60 million. They might have raised a few hundred thousand or perhaps a million dollars, as an example, to put new pianos in the facilities, but it's certainly not something that we are mandating that they do. The province, to be clear, will pick up the tab for the construction work that's being done at the Jubilee auditoria.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity talked about some of the centennial events that are happening on a local scale. It's true that many are being organized locally. We are trying our best through our centennial ambassadors to become aware of them so that we might co-ordinate them provincially and bring attention to what a local community might be doing and, of course, invite other Albertans or perhaps even people from outside of Alberta to participate in that.

I can't comment specifically on how much is being spent by Saskatchewan on centennial celebrations, but I give them much credit. They have worked on a very, very sublime program for

celebrating that province's centennial. They have spent money in some areas that exceeds, perhaps, what we're spending here, but one must appreciate that their objectives may be completely different.

For example, some of the money that is not within the budget of Community Development but, in fact, resides in the Department of Economic Development in tourism is being spent on a program in Alberta Tourism to market the centennial through Alberta Tourism. So while that doesn't appear in the budget of Community Development, certainly money is being spent in this area.

I can't tell you how Saskatchewan is doing it, but I might suggest that some of the money that they're spending on their marketing of tourism is actually being spent under the rubric of the centennial. So I can say that overall it's quite likely, if you include the centennial legacy projects that we've funded, that we're spending significantly more than the provincial government of Saskatchewan, but we may be spending it in different areas with different priorities than they may have established themselves.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill asked me about the Glenbow Museum. It is a tremendous treasure. I agree that Mike Robinson has done a remarkable job of running that facility. The nature of the relationship between the provincial government and Glenbow is an interesting one. Some number of years ago there was a constating statute that created the Glenbow Foundation. This is unusual in the nature of museums, I believe. That relationship, which was a statutory one between the province and the Glenbow, ended, and a contractual one was created whereby materials that are the province's but are looked after by the Glenbow – in fact, their care is paid for by the province through a contract to the Glenbow, and certainly Mike Robinson has provided me with much information about the nature of the cost of the care of this collection. So this is an ongoing discussion with the Glenbow, but I again say that the Glenbow is a tremendous resource to the province of Alberta.

10:10

I see that my time is drawing close to an end, so I will just say thank you to the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I will respond to his questions on the Francophone Secretariat and its budget. My expectation is that the mandate will be expanded for the secretariat by the end of the month.

I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for his second round of questions. I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and will review his comments on library funding and sport and recreation.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will draw my comments to a close. Thank you, sir.

The Deputy Chair: After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Community Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$235,249,000
Capital Investment	\$41,192,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report the estimates of the Department of Community Development. I will not be asking for leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mr. Groeneveld: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, for the following department.

Community Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$235,249,000; capital investment, \$41,192,000.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As is the tradition, I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to revert to Introduction of Bills for the purpose of introducing the Appropriation Act.

[Unanimous consent denied]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 40
Alberta Personal Income Tax
Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate May 3: Mr. Ducharme]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise tonight and open debate on behalf of the Official Opposition on Bill 40, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). I understand that this is actually the second amendment we've had to the Personal Income Tax Act in this session. I have to admit that on first blush that was a surprise to me, but I understand that it's not necessarily unusual. I can say at the outset that I will be recommending to my caucus colleagues that we support this bill. I really can't find anything terribly wrong about it. A couple of little comments that I will make, however.

Certainly, the idea that we're changing the amount of the credit for the first dependant and going up for all dependants up to four, the fact that it sort of levels the playing field for larger families compared to small families, these are things that I would speak in support of. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I've been on record for some time as suggesting that we have to help out lower income families in this province. The fact that we have a flat tax, which the Official Opposition is well on record as having opposed because it definitely disadvantages lower income families, is something that, as I say, we're on the record as having opposed in the past, certainly not in favour of.

Given that we do have a flat tax – again, Mr. Speaker, I'll refer to a motion that is not likely to see the light of day in this sitting, but a

motion that I had hoped to have the opportunity to bring forward that would have urged the government to improve the quality of life for Alberta families earning less than \$29,000 annually by reducing the personal income tax from 10 per cent down to 9 per cent. At least, if we're going to have a flat tax, I think there should be greater consideration given to individuals and families that are in the lower income brackets.

Nevertheless, this bill, as I say, does go some way towards doing that. Section 3 of the bill would lower the limit from \$6,500 – this is the threshold at which the credit kicks in – down to \$2,760. I'm certainly not going to oppose that, but I would wonder at some point: if we're going to lower the limit to \$2,760, why even bother having a threshold at all at that point, especially since we're going to index this credit against inflation. Presumably, the upper threshold is going to grow. At some point the \$2,760 lower entry level threshold is basically meaningless. I would suggest that we might just as well drop it to zero and allow anybody and everybody to benefit from the credit as opposed to stipulating that they have to make that minimum amount of money before they benefit from the provisions of this act.

One other comment that I would like to make. The member who introduced the bill in second reading for the government, Mr. Speaker, was the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and in his comments he referred to the fact that the tax credit aims to support low- and middle-income families and to encourage work effort. While I'm not suggesting that we don't like to see work effort, I have to admit that whenever this government talks about encouraging work effort, it always causes me to think that there is a second meaning or a hidden meaning behind that.

We've seen examples of this over the years, Mr. Speaker, when in fact what it really means is that we're trying to lessen the government's load in terms of the assistance that they might provide to those people that are most in need. I'm not suggesting that that's necessarily what the member meant in this particular case because I really can't see necessarily that that's what this bill does. But the choosing of those particular words does cause me some concern because it just seems to have been a pattern, unfortunately, with this government over the years, where we say one thing, and in fact there's a hidden meaning or a double meaning. As I say, I can't see that in this bill. I don't believe it's the case in this bill. I would certainly hope that it isn't the case in this bill.

10:20

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, as I suggested, I am going to suggest that my caucus colleagues support Bill 40. I do believe that it is a good thing for Alberta families and, in particular, Alberta families that are in what we would consider to be a low-income bracket. Certainly, anything we can do to help those families is something that I would support and I would hope that all members of this House would be supporting as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a second time]

Bill 38
Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate April 12: Mr. Elsalhy]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, would you like to close debate on behalf of the minister?

[Motion carried; Bill 38 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 8
Personal Information Protection
Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005, is mostly a housekeeping bill, as you may recall. It's been a while since we did the Committee of the Whole, but there were a couple of questions that the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods brought up, and I would like to answer those questions so that she has them for her record.

In response to her questions that were raised in Committee of the Whole, let me clarify that the amendment to the powers of the Alberta commissioner expressly states that the commissioner may exercise the powers set out in this section "where the Commissioner considers it appropriate to do so." This means the commissioner must make a determination as to whether the person with whom he proposes to co-ordinate his activities has duties, powers, and functions under a federal/provincial statute similar to the Personal Information Protection Act. If a person believes that the commissioner has either made an error in law or has not exercised his discretion properly, that person can request a judicial review.

In regard to the second question, the powers that the Alberta commissioner and the commissioners outside the province exercise are narrowly defined in the privacy legislation under which they operate. Under this amendment the Alberta commissioner will be able to disclose information only for the purpose of co-ordinating activities with other commissioners. The intent of this amendment is to allow a small arena in which commissioners can exchange information for the effective exercise of their clearly defined powers.

I would hope that that clarifies the questions that were raised by the hon. member, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to get the opportunity to speak to Bill 8. I wasn't able to speak to it in second reading or in Committee of the Whole. In third reading we're essentially speaking to the anticipated effect of the bill once passed.

There is something that is causing me some concern in this bill. Maybe we'll be able to get the hon. member to speak to this in closing of debate for Bill 8 and give me some answers.

Here's the issue that I see. What appears to be happening here is that section 2 of the bill, which is amending section 4(3) of the Personal Information Protection Act itself, is changing health services and accessed information about that in the private sector and in the public sector. It's creating a difference. I think what in effect is going to happen here is that PIPA will be the act that comes into play if the information is generated from a private source or is privately held, and it would come under HIA, the Health Information Act, if it is generated in the public sector or held by the public sector. I would argue that when we're talking health information for individuals, the same rules should apply.

In essence, what we have happening here is that the old section 4(3) states that PIPA "does not apply to the following" and then goes on:

Health information as defined in the Health Information Act where that information is collected, used or disclosed by an organization for health care purposes including health research and management

of the health care system, but for the purposes of this clause health information does not include personal employee information, which is dealt with elsewhere in the Health Information Act.

What we're going to get instead and what's being proposed here is that the Personal Information Protection Act does not apply to health information as defined in the Health Information Act to which that act applies. I think what we're doing is in essence expanding the scope of PIPA and separating it from the scope of the Health Information Act, and I think that's where the problem is.

If we go back and look at exactly what is in the Health Information Act – bear with me. I'm sorry. This ends up going back and forth through a lot of details, but we're looking specifically for health information.

On page 8 of the Health Information Act, health information is defined as meaning

any or all of the following:

(i) diagnostic, treatment and care information.

Okay. So we look up the definition for that, and we get:

(i) the physical and mental health of an individual;

(ii) a health service provided to an individual;

(iii) the donation by an individual of a body part or bodily substance, including information derived from the testing or examination of a body part or bodily substance;

(iv) a drug as defined in the Pharmaceutical Profession Act provided to an individual;

(v) a health care aid, device, product, equipment or other item provided to an individual pursuant to a prescription or other authorization;

(vi) the amount of any benefit paid or payable under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act or any other amount paid or payable in respect of a health service provided to an individual, and includes any other information about an individual that is collected when a health service is provided to the individual, but does not include information that is not written, photographed, recorded or stored in some manner in a record.

So that's the first piece that's covered as health information. That's the diagnostic, treatment, and care information.

The second piece is health service provider information. Okay. The definition of that is "an individual who provides health services." This was of some contention when the Health Information Act Review Committee met. Essentially, that's giving a lot of information about the health care provider. That includes things like their name, their business and home mailing addresses and electronic addresses, business and home telephone numbers and fax numbers, gender, date of birth, unique identification number, the licensing, the date on which the provider became authorized to provide health services, education completed, continuing competencies, skills and accreditations, restrictions that are applying to the health services provider's right to provide health services.

There's a very long list. It actually goes over three pages in the Health Information Act. I'll just refer the member to it but not read all of that into the record. That's the second piece, which is the health service provider information, and all of this is falling under health information.

The last piece is registration information. Registration information is another list. It's information relating to an individual that falls within the following general categories:

(i) demographic information, including the . . . personal health number;

(ii) location information;

(iii) telecommunications information;

(iv) residency information;

(v) health service eligibility information;

(vi) billing information,

but does not include information that is not written, photographed, recorded or stored in some manner in a record.

So that is what health information is, and therefore this bill does not cover that. That is all talking about delivery, I would say, through the public system for the most part.

10:30

I'd like commentary back or perhaps a legal opinion, if it's possible to deliver that. That's my concern, that we would be creating two different sets of rules based on health information: PIPA if it's private; HIA if it's public. Essentially, what I see is that PIPA is being expanded to cover information held on the private sector, and I don't think we should be in a situation where we've got different rules applying. For one, now you get into long, involved debates about: how was the information generated and who holds it and who is ultimately responsible if something goes wrong? I hope this has happened inadvertently. But this is a government bill, and the government has quite a bit of legal resource at their disposal to be able to double-check this kind of thing. I guess what I'm left with is that the government intended to separate the way this works, and if that's the case, I would like to hear why the government was intending this to have that effect.

I'm sorry; that was a very technical go-round. I know that it's late at night, and people are wondering why we should care. But the truth of the matter is that I think we have to be very careful when we're talking about personal health information, and that is what we're talking about here. I've raised this issue a number of times in the Assembly, that we are trying to seek that balance. There's great resistance from the public to giving information that they believe will be available as personal health information to other sources. If we can't get buy-in from the public, we are never going to get those electronic health records to work.

Right now in Alberta we're already behind. We were the leaders in this. We were out ahead of the pack in starting to develop processes and systems for it, and we have bogged down and snagged badly on this one. Actually, that's not fair to say that we snagged badly. We are definitely not out ahead and leading, and we seem to be developing some problems in implementing that. I think that's cause for concern, especially in light of the discussion between myself and the minister of health this afternoon about the possibilities for e-health. If we can't get the electronic health records working, we've got a problem. That's part of the realm that is being captured by this legislation.

That's why I'm trying to determine exactly what the government thought they were doing. If they did want separate rules applying here, why did they want that to happen? They have created a situation that I don't think we had in place before, and I'd like to know why the government did that.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise this issue in third reading. I know I'm interested, and I know that others are watching this. In fact, this issue was raised to me during the health innovation symposium in Calgary by someone approaching me and asking if I was aware that this is what was happening in this act and asking me to raise it, and I'm happy to do so because I share their concerns. I look forward to the response. If the member is not able to give it to me before it passes third reading, I would appreciate receiving a written response if there needs to be consultation with counsel to give a legal response for this.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood to close debate.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre said that she was not here for

Committee of the Whole. We did try and address the part of what she was asking about on the health act, and I would just like to run this little bit past her and see if this would suffice. If not, we certainly will get back to you on the rest.

The answer at that time was that in Alberta we have a comprehensive framework of privacy protection that applies to personal information in both the public and private sectors. Because of the special character of health information Alberta also has a separate Health Information Act that applies to health information in both the public sector, for example hospitals, and the private sector, for example physicians. What this amendment does is carve out a body of information, health information that is covered by the Health Information Act, and make it clear that PIPA does not apply to that information.

At the same time, the amendment makes it clear that PIPA does apply to any health-related information that is not covered by the Health Information Act. For example, PIPA covers health-related information in an organization's personnel files, medical information requested by an insurance company in Alberta to issue a policy, and records of a psychologist providing privately paid services. The Minister of Health and Wellness agrees with this amendment, and the amendment ensures that there are no gaps in privacy protection and that there are clear rules to which the act applies. I hope that answers the questions.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move passage of this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Bill 39
Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would it be appropriate to start the circulation of the amendment at this time?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the amendment that is being circulated to you will be referred to as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, you may proceed.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The original amendment is on the table as we speak, and I'll just give a very quick preamble. The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill has most certainly done his homework. I am very pleased that he has pretty much everyone onside with this bill. His government members have seen its importance as have members of the opposition.

This bill is wide ranging, but it's primarily about saving lives. I would love to include a cellphone ban while driving within its clauses, but that debate will have to come at some later date, possibly during the fall sitting. I support the majority of the intent of this bill. The key to the bill's success will be strict enforcement.

I mentioned a concern earlier, which needs to be addressed, on the double-whammy effect on the family of having a john's vehicle seized and the potential of driving prostitution underground, where there is the threat of increased violence.

I have a second concern again, which I've previously discussed with the member, but I would look forward to his answer. That has to do with implied consent and the nature of liability when a vehicle is lent by its owner to another driver. What I don't want to see happen or what needs to be addressed is when the owner says, "Okay; you can have my vehicle," and for whatever reason the person gets a speeding ticket, gets involved in an accident, gets pulled over for dangerous driving. Then there's a degree of question of who's responsible in that event. In the case of an accident and somebody's injured, does the driver who lent the vehicle – is it their insurance that covers it? I would hate to think that somebody would get away simply by saying, "You gave consent to me," and they say, "No, I didn't." It's to avoid that argument. So I'm going to sit down and if the hon. member could address that.

10:40

The Deputy Chair: You have to move the amendment for us to even consider it.

Mr. Chase: Sorry. The amendment is on the second portion. That was a question. But I will move the amendment so that we can get it there and it can be part of the ongoing discussion.

I move that Bill 39, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005, be amended in section 15(b) in the proposed section 54(4)(a) by striking out "\$2500" and substituting "\$5000."

Now, should I then speak to the amendment, as to the reasoning behind it?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, we are at committee stage. You can rise as many times as you want to speak. It's your choice.

Mr. Chase: Okay. Would you like to address my two questions, and then I'll deal with the amendment?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Chairman. I understand what the amendment is talking about, and I have had conversation with the Member for Calgary-Varsity about this. I find myself in a bit of a strange position as a Conservative wanting to not raise a fine, because I frankly feel that the fines are related to all the other fines within the Traffic Safety Act. When we set these fine amounts, they're set in conjunction with other parallel, if you like, offences that are of a similar nature or similar gravity.

To increase this from \$2,500 to \$5,000 is not a big step, but on the other hand I'm not sure where you'd go with the second offence. Right now the way the bill actually reads is that for a first offence the fine would be between \$2,500 and \$10,000. That's a minimum to a maximum. The second offence would be \$5,000 to \$20,000. So, again, we'd have to not only move the one; we'd have to move the second part of that.

It's my belief, with the increase in the timetable, that is allowed now to be multiple offences being moved to three years; in other words, if you have two offences within three years as opposed to two offences within a longer period of time, an undisclosed period of time, it would just confuse the issue. So I guess where I am on this one is I would suggest that we not in fact raise this because it's already very steep.

The thought occurs to me that most people who drive without insurance – and that's estimated between 5 and 10 per cent of all drivers on the road. The reason that they're driving without insurance is very straightforward. They can't afford it. Because of that, when you start looking at these fines and the gravity and the

amounts of fines, up to \$20,000 depending on the discretion of the judge, it is indeed a very, very serious fine.

I appreciate what the hon. member is trying to do here. As I say, it's a little incongruous when a Liberal is trying to raise a penalty on a fine as opposed to a Conservative trying to keep it down, but I simply feel, looking at all the other fines that are similar in nature to this, that it's going a bit too far because, again, we're dealing with people who can't afford insurance; ergo, they can't afford a fine, and we're going to throw a lot of people in jail over this.

As far as the implied consent, now, I'm not sure where you were in the bill on the implied consent. Was that in event of a prostitution-related offence or otherwise? I'll take my place and let him clarify that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Just with regard to the amendment the point of the amendment was to send a very clear message. While I do have concerns about poverty and homelessness and so on, and in the case of a John and their family carless, I feel that there has to be an important message sent. By raising the fine from \$2,500 to \$5,000, we discourage people from playing that game where they think, poverty or otherwise, it's worth the risk.

For young people who are just beginning to drive and all the other requirements, they might be tempted to gamble and say: "Well, it's worth my while, knowing that the fine starts at \$2,500. I'm poor. I'm young. I'll throw myself on the mercy of the court," whereas I believe that if you put it at \$5,000, it's cheaper for a person to seek out that insurance than to potentially play the road roulette game.

With regard to – what was I talking about? – implied consent, it was about lending your vehicle. Not the John circumstance, but you lend your vehicle to somebody. They drive down the highway. They get into trouble. Where's the liability? Who's responsible?

Mr. Magnus: The second part first. If you lend your vehicle to somebody, and they drive down the highway and get into an accident, then the insurance that was on that vehicle still applies.

As far as the amount of the offences, I will add that we're now going from 30 days to 45 days for a first offence and on a second offence from 60 days to six months. That's pretty severe for what is a noncriminal offence.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I appreciate the explanation.

I gather, Mr. Chairman, that the next step in this stage is to vote on the amendment, and if we're prepared to do that, I am prepared as well.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

[The clauses of Bill 39 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 26

Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amend-

ments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. During second reading several questions were asked. The comment was made that the penalties for not complying with the requirement to file a notice of objection seem particularly harsh. Some form of penalty was needed to encourage compliance with this new requirement. The interest penalty for failure to file a notice of objection is 5 per cent of the interest otherwise payable. The interest penalty is capped at \$10,000, but for that amount to apply, the interest otherwise owing by Alberta would have to be at least \$200,000. In some cases we have paid interest in excess of a million dollars, in which case the \$10,000 penalty would represent only 1 per cent of the interest amount. As was noted earlier, the penalty will not apply if the corporation takes the simple step of filing the notice of objection with Alberta.

There was also a question as to what exactly constitutes an arm's-length corporation versus a non arm's-length corporation. The determination of an arm's-length relationship is a question of fact and is governed by provisions of the federal Income Tax Act, which Alberta parallels. The provision in Alberta's act already parallels the corresponding federal provision.

Regarding the question of what is fair market value and how that is determined, assessments of fair market value are based on comparable assets recently transferred on open markets. If a piece of property is transferred, for example, other comparable property transactions would be used to help determine if the transfer was indeed at fair market value.

Questions were also raised, Mr. Chairman, by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview about item 5 – and I see he's not here tonight – with respect to this amendment.

Ms Blakeman: Point of order.

The Deputy Chair: Is somebody rising on a point of order?

Ms Blakeman: Yes. I did rise on a point of order.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

10:50

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of Members

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's the tradition of the House that we do not mention whether someone is present or absent in the Chamber.

The Deputy Chair: There was no citation, but you are correct. By convention we do not mention a person's presence or absence.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: My apologies for my ignorance, Mr. Chairman, and I do apologize to the House and for any mention that was inappropriate.

Debate Continued

Mr. Rogers: With respect to the amendment, we require corporations to inform us when they are reassessed by another jurisdiction if this reassessment means a change to taxable income or taxes payable in Alberta. However, when it is the Canada Revenue Agency that does the reassessment, that agency also sends us a

notice of the change. Many companies are aware of this and do not send the information on their reassessment that they are technically required to send in. With this amendment there would be no penalty for not sending in this information when we get the notice from Canada Revenue and reassess within our one-year window of opportunity for making such a reassessment.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that this addresses the questions that hon. members have raised up to this point, and I would encourage all hon. members to support the bill.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon for answering the questions that I raised during second reading. I believe that he managed to capture them all, and I do appreciate that very much.

The one thing that he referred to is the income tax refunds. I had asked the Finance minister during the budget debate on Finance about the fact that last year we spent about \$30 million in interest on income tax refunds, and this year it's going to be \$20 million, or at least that's what's forecast in the budget. Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to say that I did receive a written response back from the Finance minister in regard to that particular question. The Finance minister has always been very prompt in getting back with written responses as she promises to, and I appreciate that.

Her response left me a little puzzled because it talked about the fact that these refunds are unpredictable and that in the past number of years they have totalled as much as \$80 million. It really does cause me to question whether or not we're missing the boat here in some way, that we're allowing ourselves to be in a situation where these refunds on income tax prepayments end up being so terribly high. I know that there are an awful lot of companies in Alberta, and I know that when you spread it out across the companies – in the letter from the minister she refers to the fact that often it's very large corporations involved in the oil and gas industry, and the hon. member a few minutes ago mentioned the fact that in some cases these refunds are very big. I can appreciate that, but it just really causes me to question whether or not there isn't a better way.

I guess the other thing that it does cause me to question as well is: if we're holding, you know, many millions, sometimes up to \$80 million according to the Finance minister – if we're holding that much money that doesn't actually belong to us and has to be refunded at some point, then I am curious as to how that income from that money gets reported and where that goes to. Obviously, we're making income on the money that we're holding while it's in our hands, and we're paying out some interest on that money, you know, when it becomes apparent that the money was overpaid or owed back to the corporation or the taxpayer in some form. So, certainly, I would be interested to hear some response to that, and I'm not sure that I can get it tonight but perhaps when we get to third reading. I'm just curious, as I say, to know where that goes.

As I said in my opening remarks, I do appreciate the efforts on behalf of the hon. member to address the concerns that I raised in second reading. I had indicated back then that I would be supporting this bill. Our stakeholder group was certainly quite in favour of it, and I think I had applauded the ministry back in second reading for the fact that they had done their due diligence in terms of consulting with stakeholders as well.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I will recommend to my caucus colleagues that we support this bill. I appreciate again the efforts of both the ministry and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon to provide that information tonight. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 26 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 35

Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, did you want to rise?

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just stand to make a couple of brief remarks with respect to Bill 35. I understand that the Clerk has a set of amendments. There are two amendments that I would like to move with respect to Bill 35, and these changes address two quite minor drafting errors. I'll just wait a moment until the amendments are circulated.

The Deputy Chair: The amendment that is being circulated before you shall be referred to as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, you may proceed.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I was mentioning, these changes address two drafting errors. The first of them is an unintentional duplication of two definitions. The definitions were moved from part 4 of the act to part 1, which contains most of the act's definitions. But inadvertently they were not deleted from part 4, and therefore they appear in both parts. So there's a mere duplication.

The second amendment contains a reference error in the proposed section 77.1. It simply refers to the incorrect subsection.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. My only comment would be that I appreciate the fact that the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill actually brought these amendments to my attention last week sometime. So we have had plenty of opportunity to verify that, in fact, the amendments do as he has suggested tonight, and I have no problem with the amendments going forward.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: Any further debate on the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Chairman, I have a few brief remarks with respect to Bill 35. As I stated during the introduction of the legislation, this bill and the amendments contained therein will allow the private-sector pension plan members better access to information and more transparency of the plan's financial status. The legislation also gives the superintendent of pensions more effective ways of ensuring that the pension plans are properly funded. The legislation will provide the superintendent of pensions with more effective ways of monitoring the funding of the private pension plans and strengthen the enforcement powers if problems do arise.

As I said, it focuses on giving plan members better information so that they can see for themselves that the plan is being run properly. It will therefore put them in a better position to monitor their pensions long before any problems may arise. So, Mr. Chairman, these amendments update the act to reflect the changes that are in the pension community.

11:00

I would like to address several questions that were raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford in the April 25 evening sitting. He had questioned why some of the legislation appeared to be moving to regulations. As a matter of fact, I can verify that there were no provisions that are in the current act that are being moved to regulation. In fact, there are certain items, namely some definitions, which are actually being moved from the regulations into the act itself. There are, of course, some details that are to be found in regulation, and this is being done in order to allow better flexibility and also to allow for amendments more frequently than could be expected to be handled in terms of amendments to the act itself. I can assure the hon. member, however, that when the regulations are drafted, the stakeholders are going to be consulted.

The hon. member had also questioned how the superintendent would enforce the requirements that documents would comply with the legislation. The superintendent does require that documents that establish the plan and its arrangements – for example, with the fundholder – are filed with the office of the superintendent. The office of the superintendent reviews these documents and can issue directions for compliance or can obtain a court order if the administrator refuses to amend the documents to comply with the provisions of the act, and it is an offence to contravene the act.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford also had asked why it was important to have the documents comply with the act, what sort of documentation it was, how would it not comply with the act, and who might have access to particular documents. Besides the documents that are set out in the terms of the pension plan, there are a number of documents, such as the trust agreement, that assign the responsibility of administration of the plan to a trustee or some company or person or an insurance contract in some cases. In a multi-employer plan there may be a participation agreement that sets out employers' rights and responsibilities, and these documents can deal with the issues for which the Employment Pension Plans Act has standards. They should all be written so as not to cause conflicts.

Of course, there is a statutory provision in the act which would override any term of a trust agreement or any other contract, but the plan administrators and the fundholders and the employers usually use their own plan documents to guide their administrative practices. An example of an illegal provision of a document would be if a trust agreement purported to limit the fundholder's responsibilities and expressly excluded or assigned to someone else the requirement for the fundholder to inform the superintendent if the contributions were not being remitted as required due to the new provisions under section 50. Those documents are filed with the superintendent's office.

The fourth question that the hon. member had asked was: what assurance is there that the employees will be given access to documents, and what remedies might be available to employees? Most administrators do comply with the legislation without any requirement for enforcement, but the superintendent can issue directions for compliance or, alternatively, in an extreme case could apply for a court order. They can also charge a person with an offence under the act if they don't comply with the disclosure provisions, and the superintendent's office produces materials to

educate plan administrators about their responsibilities in that regard.

Another question that was asked: with the requirement that employers have access to pension documents held by a plan administrator, what protection is there against personal information being disclosed? I can answer that the only documents listed in section 15(8.1) are accessible to the employers, and those documents do not include any personal information about plan members.

The hon. member had asked: if there are additional tests, such as stress tests, which were prescribed by the superintendent, would those be applied to all pension plans, and who would decide? The clause is an enabling feature in nature, and the actuarial community has suggested stress tests recently as appropriate measures of pension plan stability. But they're only one example of a type of test that could be done.

Finally, the hon. member had asked how privacy is protected when the superintendent investigates a plan and interviews personnel. If the issue is personal information, the superintendent's office would be subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I hope that responds to some of the questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much again, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill for managing to make his voice heard over some of the heckling from his own members, quite frankly, that was taking place from across the floor. I have to say on the record that I'm quite frankly appalled that in a Legislature where debate is not only expected but, in fact, mandated some members opposite just seem to be in so much of a hurry to get out of here this evening that they won't even allow their own members to speak. In fact, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill was answering questions that were reasonably asked in debate during second reading, and it was very kind of him to come forward in committee with those questions in an effort to limit the amount of debate that might have to take place tonight.

Mr. Chairman, if the hon. members across the way would like to extend debate tonight, I've been fond of saying since this session began that I'm quite willing to stand here and debate Bill 35 tonight for as long as it takes. If it means bringing in my pyjamas and a pillow and calling some of my hon. colleagues to come back, I'm more than willing to do that. So I would ask for some consideration from the members opposite while both their member responds to my questions and I bring forward my one remaining question on this bill. If we can have that co-operation, perhaps we can all go home a little earlier tonight.

Mr. Chairman, there must not have been an awful lot of heckling on the evening of April 25 because I managed to lose my train of thought when I was asking questions during second reading. Given the fact that we've had approximately three weeks in the interim, I have managed to regain my train of thought, and I'm finding myself with one more question that I would like to ask during the committee stage of this bill.

In section 33 . . .

Mr. Bonko: It's getting late.

Mr. R. Miller: It is getting late, and I might have to get that whip out yet, which was the other thing that we were talking about on the night of April 25, and that's kind of what set me off. Somebody did talk about focusing that night too.

Mr. Chairman, section 33 talks about: if a pension fund is not receiving the appropriate amount of funding, then the trustee must

inform the superintendent. As I had mentioned that evening during second reading, in many cases the reason for a fund not receiving appropriate funding might well be justified. Perhaps there's been a layoff of employees, so there's less money going into the pension plan.

The question that I would have is that while the law is supposed to make the pension more transparent for employees, as near as I understand when I read the bill, the superintendent would not have to notify employees that the pension fund is not being contributed to by the employer. I would look for some clarification on that because if, in fact, that were the case, that would cause me great concern. If the bill does say that the superintendent does have to notify the employee, then I'm comfortable with it.

Really, that was the one question, Mr. Chairman, that I did not have a chance to ask during second reading and I would like addressed now. Beyond that, I'm comfortable to take my seat.

Thank you.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Chairman, section 33 amends section 50 in the act. It might in fact be argued by some that we're putting too much of a burden on fundholders to be whistle-blowers if the employers don't pay their contributions. The fact is that the superintendent really has no other way of finding out if the employer is being delinquent in making the proper contributions to the fund. Fundholders are already used to performing that particular function of monitoring. I note that in Ontario, which has a greater number of pension funds than we have registered here in Alberta, they already require those types of monitoring functions to be carried out by the fundholders.

11:10

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I haven't had the opportunity to speak to this bill before. It is a very dense and complicated bill about something that is tremendously meaningful to a lot of people; that is, their pension plan. I have to say that our feedback from interested stakeholder groups has overall been quite positive for what is anticipated in the bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill has really made an effort to answer the questions that my colleague had put on the record. I was going to sort of go through clause by clause and outline what was happening in the bill, but I'm satisfied enough that the objectives are being met, and I believe that it is to enhance what is happening in private-sector pension plans.

We have a ways to go in public-sector pension plans, but I think this has been a good effort to try and do a lot of tidying up and alignment and updating. From what I've seen, I'm particularly happy with the stronger monitoring and the stronger enforcement provisions that are provided here because, again, ultimately, that's what the public expects of us. We are the only ones that are in a position to be able to protect them and to make sure that there are regulations in place, that their best interests are being put forward and that everything possible to protect them is in fact available to them.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The only section that does not sit quite right with me is the one that's allowing a spouse to claim the pension if someone dies with pension left over, section 26. The act provides a waiver if the dead person wants the money to go to a child from a previous marriage. The spouse must seek independent advice to demonstrate they understand what they're doing. I know that the previous member

representing Calgary-Lougheed had brought in an amendment – I think it was the Member for Calgary-Lougheed – very similar to this, and I'm always uneasy when we allow this sort of thing to happen.

I mean, we spent a lot of time trying to make sure that these provisions were in there to protect spouses, usually women and usually women that hadn't worked for an entire career outside of the home, so they had less pension contributions. That's why we contemplated and worked into law that they would be and are in fact entitled to a share of the working spouse's pension. I'm always uneasy when I see that being dismantled or an out clause being given.

I know that there's been an attempt here to try and make sure that no coercion has taken place, but this is a section that I want to put on record we need to be particularly vigilant about. It's an area that took us a long time to recognize and to get in place, and I'm very uneasy when I see an easing of the requirements being allowed to take place.

As I said, we have consulted with our stakeholders, and they are for the most part supportive of what is in the bill. At this point under the guidance of the critic for the Official Opposition, I am willing to support this bill in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

Dr. Brown: I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for her comments. The pension, obviously, is a huge asset. It's often the largest asset that a family has, and giving up the survivor's pension would certainly have serious consequences. That's why it's absolutely necessary to make sure that there's some sort of independent legal advice given there before waiving that pension right, recognizing that there is a small price to pay for that service and that it does add a little bit to the complexity. It certainly protects people, especially women, given the fact that they more often than not would outlive their spouses.

I thank you for your comments.

[The clauses of Bill 35 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? It's carried.

Bill 40
Alberta Personal Income Tax
Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Acting Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just wondering if the minister might like to comment on the question that I raised in second reading regarding the lowering of the threshold to \$2,760 and what the rationale might have been for having any entry threshold at all once it becomes that low.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, I'm assuming, then, from the hon. member's comments that he doesn't disagree with lowering the threshold. I think it was a good move. Should we have a threshold at all? Worthy of thought. We'll certainly look at that. We have consid-

ered it important to have some threshold because it really is an employment benefit. It's to assist people that seek employment, encourage them to seek employment, and I would think that would be a helpful thing.

It was done to add more working families. I think, if I remember correctly, it has the ability to increase the numbers by some 15,000, and when we look at this in the future, because I wholeheartedly support the intent of this – I think it's worked well. It's been a great benefit to our low- and middle-income working families, and if we have another look at it, we would look at it. But I think we would always keep some threshold because it is an employment tax credit. As I said, it's to encourage employment to be meaningful to people who can gain employment albeit maybe at a lower level. [A beeper sounded]

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: That little buzzer didn't mean that you had to sit down, hon. minister. Nevertheless, you sat down.

Mr. Chairman, thank you. One other comment, I guess, I would like to make. I agree with the hon. minister. I am pretty much in wholehearted agreement with the intention of this act and what it does. The one comment I would like to make. The government press release or in the act – I can't remember which – trumpets the fact that Alberta families do not have to apply for the credit; rather, it's done automatically through their federal tax returns.

11:20

I would like to point out that we just debated Bill 26, where we mandated that Alberta companies have to take an act in terms of notifying the Alberta government of something instead of that information coming back from the federal government. Here, in this case, we're relying on the federal government to get us information back. I like it this way. I said that when we debated Bill 26.

I would just encourage us in the future to co-operate however we can with the federal government to take the onus off, in this case, Alberta families but also small Alberta businesses rather than us, being the Alberta taxpayer, having to do that work, to rely on the federal government and some of the hard-earned tax dollars that we give them, to get them to do some of the work and get that information back to us.

I'm appreciative of the fact that we're not asking families to do it in this case, and I certainly would hope that in future instances we don't ask Alberta businesses to have that responsibility either.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 40 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

I recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Given the excellent work that's been accomplished this evening and today and given the record-breaking motion moved by yourself earlier as we approved the estimates of the Department of Health and Wellness this evening, the largest motion ever moved for supply I think in the history of this House, I would move that we rise and report bills 39, 26, 35, and 40.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 39, Bill 26, Bill 40. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 35. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:24 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, May 12, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/12

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. From our forests and parklands to our prairies and mountains comes the call of our land. From our farmsteads, towns, and cities comes the call of our people that as legislators of this province we act with responsibility and sensitivity. Grant us the wisdom to meet such challenges. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not certain if my group are in the Legislature at this point, but I will introduce them. I have a very large grade 6 class attending the Legislature today from Greentree school. Greentree school is in Drumheller, the home of the world-famous Royal Tyrrell Museum. There are a number of parents, helpers, and teachers accompanying these students, too many to individually name. I would say that I've had a visit with the students, very brief because they had a little bus trouble getting here, and had a chance to tour them very quickly through my office. I've made a commitment that when their photographs arrive, I will come to Greentree school and spend a couple of hours with them in their class and talk about local government. If the students and parents, helpers, and teachers from Greentree school are in the gallery, I'd ask that they now rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I think, hon. minister, that they haven't quite arrived yet. They're out there because I passed them in the hall. We'll do it again later.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the pleasures that members of this Assembly have is introducing school groups. Unfortunately, when you live as far away from the Legislature as the Deputy Premier and I, that's a rare occasion. So I'm doubly pleased, actually triply pleased to introduce today three classes of grade 6 students from Crestwood school in Medicine Hat. Members may or may not recollect that I have this opportunity to introduce this school each and every year. Every year since I've been elected, this school has brought their grade 6 students up. I think they probably hold the record for the most consecutive visits by a school to the Legislature. The tour guides today were telling me that they know they've been here at least 16 times because that's how long one of the tour guides has had the opportunity to provide the tour.

I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the grade 6 students from Crestwood school in Medicine Hat. They are accompanied by principal David George; vice-principal Al Tisnic; teachers Karen Irwin, Maria Thompson, Wade Lawson, Gary Ziel, and Kathy Western; also parents/helpers Tracy Klein, Janice Bonogofski, Cheryl Noble, Tracy Lawson, and Evelyn Walter. I would ask that they rise – they're in both galleries, I understand – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group of human resource interns who recently began their term with the government of Alberta. They will be working in Justice, Health, Sustainable Resource Development, Restructuring and Government Efficiency, and the personnel administration of my department. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my great privilege and honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly five young Albertans who are recipients of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Citizenship Medals. These medals and the scholarships that come with them recognize the recipients' outstanding contributions to their communities. They are Mallory Becker of Spruce Grove, Maria Chen of Edmonton, Bethan Jeffreys of Sangudo, Rae Varughese of Edmonton, Charles Voon of Edmonton. Each of these young Albertans exemplifies qualities that are synonymous with Alberta's strong heritage. I also recognize the parents and family members and friends who have been an inspiration and support for each of these recipients and who are with us today. I'd like to invite these young leaders of tomorrow and their parents to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you today and to members of the Assembly four wise women. They are here representing WISEST, women in scholarship, engineering, science, and technology, which is an organization that encourages young women to consider careers in science and technology through workshops, conferences, support groups, and research programs. One of their key activities is a six-week summer program for grade 11 students, providing them an opportunity to work with a research group at the U of A. They have an enviable success rate as 85 per cent of their alumni go on to pursue studies in the faculties of science and engineering.

With us today is Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour, the WISEST vice-chair and assistant chair of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Alberta; Grace Ennis, who is a WISEST co-ordinator; and two summer research program alumni, Cleo Espiritu from the summer of 1999 – and Cleo is currently pursuing a master's of computing science at the University of Alberta – and Eva Cheung, who is from the summer of 1998. Eva graduated last year with a degree in civil engineering, currently working as a transport engineer for the city of Edmonton while pursuing a master's in construction engineering and management.

These women are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a gentleman by the name of Adrian Bohach. Adrian is the CEO of the Ability Society of Alberta. They have offices in Calgary and Edmonton and soon to be in Red Deer.

The Ability Society provides province-wide services for children, adults, and seniors with special needs in the area of assistive technology for employment, education, and quality of life. I invite Adrian to please stand – he's in the members' gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's also my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the chair for the Grande Prairie Catholic school board. My constituency is a very large area, but this person also is responsible for a very large area, including Peace-Wapiti, Grande Prairie-Smoky, and my area, Dunvegan-Central Peace. It's my pleasure to have her rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. It's Morag Mochan.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the very good fortune to attend the Premier's prayer breakfast this morning. The wonderful and uplifting event was made even more memorable by the presence of the two lovely ladies I was fortunate to be seated with. They have joined us this afternoon to observe the proceedings in the House and are seated in the public gallery. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature Mayor Judy Dahl from the town of Olds and Lorna Gresham from Innisfail. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

1:40

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House the parents of one of our pages. I'm speaking of our page Leslie Day, who is seated to your right. She has been with us for two years, and, unfortunately for us, she will be leaving after this session. She will in the fall enter the University of British Columbia, where she will major in physical education and minor in business. We congratulate her on her new venture and wish her all the best. Today her parents are here in the House. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. I'd like to introduce her parents, Joan Copps and Sean Day, and I invite them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a school introduction of my own, as it were, this afternoon. It is my pleasure, in fact my very extreme pleasure, to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House today some very, very good family friends, Jeff and Patty Marler and their four children, Justin, Bailey, Brianna, and Qiu. Qiu is the latest addition. She's almost three years old, and she joined the family two years ago from China. The Marlers are home-schooled. They're here today to educate the children about the good works of this Assembly, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the warmest, traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two women from Lethbridge,

Dorothy McKenna and Lisa Lambert. Dorothy is the long-serving heart and soul of Womanspace, a place for women to meet and work for social justice. Lisa, who is studying for her master's, has taken that concept to the Internet and has founded an unbelievably fast-growing and successful Internet site newsletter. This newsletter has now gone national. The name has been borrowed from the Premier. It's called Martha's Monthly. Lisa researches timely issues that affect women's and children's lives, shares that information, and encourages letter-writing campaigns to the politicians who make the decisions that do affect their lives. I would ask them now to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Georgina Szoke. Georgina is a cow-calf producer in Little Smoky. She is concerned with the government's position on BSE and other agricultural issues. She is here today to watch the proceedings of the Legislature, and I'd now ask that Georgina rise and receive the very traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. East/west relations play a very strong role in our national unity. East/west relations also play a strong role in our family clan unity. Today to you and through you I would like to introduce our cousin Thai Pham and her husband, Hai Huynh. Montrealers for a long time, this is the first time that they have ever visited the western part of Canada. I would like them to stand up and receive the warm welcome from the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a constituent of mine David Kolbuc. David is currently a guidance counsellor at Hilltop high school in Whitecourt and has been an educator and an active member of our community for almost 30 years. David and his wife, Sandra, raised four children in Whitecourt, and he is joined today in the members' gallery by his daughter Zoë. Zoë is another one of those bright Whitecourt-Ste. Anne homegrown residents that have such a positive impact on this province. She is presently serving as the executive assistant to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. I would ask them to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly Charan Khehra, director of special projects for the NDP opposition caucus. Charan received his education in India, England, and Scotland. He joined the NDP caucus in 1997 as a research and outreach associate and then served as leader Dr. Raj Pannu's executive assistant. He is retiring after eight years of outstanding service to our caucus. Charan is seated in the public gallery, and I now would ask him to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly a constituent of mine from the Strathmore-Brooks constituency. It's nice to see him here. The last time I saw him he was in full kilt regalia. I don't believe he is wearing that today, but I would ask Martin Shields to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Applewood Park Community Association

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in response to a question I raised regarding the prohibited transfer of Wild Rose grant funds from the Applewood Park Community Association, the Minister of Community Development stated, "We don't know what has been done until after we've had an audit of the procedures." But this transfer of funds has slipped through the audit procedures of the Wild Rose Foundation, the Department of Community Development, and the Auditor General's office itself not once but two years in a row. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Can the minister explain why his department's accountability functions failed to catch this transfer of funds?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition has any evidence to suggest that what I am about to say is incorrect, then he should table it and provide it. What we have found in the documentation that we have reviewed is that the Vietnamese Cao Daist Cultural Society in fact raised \$20,000 and gave it to Applewood. Applewood was then a properly constated entity that was eligible for funds from the Wild Rose Foundation's international development fund. We have evidence of the bank transfers, that the money was then transferred from Applewood to the entities that were working in Vietnam to do these development projects.*

So, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has got the evidence all backwards. Applewood did not transfer the money to an unregistered corporation or society. The unregistered corporation or society in fact raised money, gave it to Applewood, which then was sent to Vietnam. If the Leader of the Opposition, as an example, wished to raise money for a good project in Vietnam, he would not have to be an incorporated society registered in this province. He could go out and raise the money and then transfer the money to an entity that was eligible for Wild Rose funding, and then that money could be sent to the place that he wished for those development projects to take place.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not so simple. The money was transferred back to the struck organization.

Again to the same minister: has this minister confirmed that the Canadian International Development Agency was actually involved in this project as he indicated yesterday?

Mr. Mar: In the past, Mr. Speaker, we have used CIDA as a third-party entity to in fact confirm that work which was to be done in another jurisdiction has in fact been done. In this particular case that has not yet been done. We do however have, in the submission of documents by Applewood, a complete accounting for how all the money has been spent. We believe that it was done in complete order.

Again I challenge the Leader of the Opposition: if he has evidence to the contrary, then he should table it rather than leave insinuations in the minds of those who may be listening.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister then request the Canadian International Development Agency to go ahead and confirm how this money was spent?

1:50

Mr. Mar: I would be pleased to do that, Mr. Speaker. But again I remind the hon. member that if he has evidence to the contrary, he should be tabling it.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Long-term Care Facility Standards

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of appropriate use of medication for seniors is one that I brought to the attention of this House as recently as March. The Auditor General revealed that most facilities inspected did not meet the basic standards for medication administration, indicating specifically that there is inconsistent documentation surrounding the use of chemical restraints, and a gross lack of staffing may be the cause. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: I would like to know specifically what systems the government would put in place to guarantee complete documentation of the use of chemical or physical restraints.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've indicated before in the Assembly, the area of the Auditor General's report that refers to my ministry of seniors is through accommodation, which would include laundry, meals, utilities, et cetera. One of the areas, though, is not the issuance of medication, so I would refer that to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Then my questions will be to the minister of health. Perhaps it's a good argument for getting this stuff together.

Given that medications are used as a chemical restraint, will the minister immediately increase the number of staff in long-term care facilities?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports and the Ministry of Health and Wellness are working together and are quite clear on what they should do. Moreover, the report itself does delineate the responses and how we partner in some areas. In terms of actual care given to residents in the facilities – nursing care, the human service, the medication delivery – that is the responsibility of Health.

One of things that we have done is review our continuing care standards. Those standards in draft form will be released to Albertans through the members that I announced, Calgary-Lougheed and Lacombe-Ponoka. We will be moving through the province to the regional authorities, speaking to the providers of service. It will address everything from how medication is stored, how medication

*See p. 1526, left col., para. 1

is administered. Over and above that, if we need more efforts relative to the clinical management of psychotropics, that will come under a different form and standard.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. When that report is released in September or thereabouts, would the minister adjust staffing to achieve a proper ratio?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we will be looking at staffing among the many other issues. Although the regulation today says 1.9 hours per person within long-term care, we had moved from last year's 3.1 to 3.4 hours on average for every resident in a long-term care facility. I recognize that the hon. member has been asking about increasing over and above that average. We have to get a clearer picture on what some of the issues are, and we will be not only talking and listening to Albertans on this subject; we will be listening to all of the MLAs in this Assembly to hear what their particular issues and comments might be. It's gratifying to know that many of the responses we've received from the community have been positive about the level of care in their place. So we need to do more work to find out what it is.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Often standards in care facilities are not treated as minimums but as ceilings. For example, in some cases, like baths, residents are limited to having one bath per week. Long-term care facilities working their staff at maximum capacity are only able to provide baths based on facility resources rather than resident dignity and need. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will the minister immediately establish a standard for personal hygiene of a minimum of two baths per week provided to residents?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the hon. member's question because it gives me a chance to respond this way: if somebody is incontinent, a standard of two baths per week would not be sufficient. The absolute must be that the patient's care plan must be deliberately structured to make sure that they have adequate and appropriate care to their needs. Particularly where they are incapacitated, there well may be a standard that would say that we would improve or increase from one to two baths a week, but there may be even more necessity to increase beyond that. I think it has to be a care plan focused on the patient and then delivered in a manner which is in their best interest.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that advocates tell us that in some long-term facilities when a resident can't supply shampoo, they don't get their hair washed, will the minister include hygiene supplies as a basic standard of care?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Auditor General's report has illuminated a number of things about the systems and administration of long-term care centres. Some of the issues that are being raised by the hon. member opposite relate exactly to quality of care, how care is actually delivered from a nursing capacity. I am not familiar with whether or not it is a standard in some facilities not to provide supplies and in others that supplies are provided. It is not

clear in this report whether or not we're talking about private, nonprofit, public facilities, and there's no differentiation there. One of my obligations will be to do the evaluation about what is appropriate and determine clearly that if people are not being provided with resources that they need, they are provided with those resources to ensure their basic hygiene. I totally agree.

Ms Blakeman: To the same minister: why did the government choose to relinquish its responsibility to ensure that people in care have at least the dignity of personal hygiene? We need minimum standards that are reasonable for personal hygiene.

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me phrase it a different way. I'm not sure that I would ever want to place my mother in a long-term care that had just a minimum standard. I want a standard of care that is particular to the needs that that person has, and every standard shall be modelled on that basis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Beef Marketing

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Auditor General found that while Alberta cattle producers faced financial disaster, the profit margins of American packing companies had nearly quadrupled. Unfortunately, history seems to be repeating itself. Since early March when a Montana judge ruled that the border had to stay closed, packer margins have jumped to levels in some cases even higher than those found by the Auditor General in his report. My questions are to the minister of agriculture: what actions will the minister take to address the excessive profiteering of the two big American packing companies?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that a report was recently released by the federal investigators into whether or not unreasonable profits have been taken, and the findings were quite clear that that was not the case.

Certainly, the packing industry and the feeding industry and the primary production industry are an integrated industry in our province. Today they are working together to work our way through this situation until that border opens. We're of course waiting on the court case and working with the Alberta Beef Producers and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association on the amicus briefs that are being prepared for those court cases as we speak. We are also working very, very closely with the industry on the set-aside program, and that includes the processing industry, Mr. Speaker. Based on the regulated environment in which we live today, because of that set-aside program we are in fact controlling the market.

Mr. Mason: Producers are suffering, Mr. Speaker. When will the minister take action – take action – to protect Alberta producers from the dysfunctional market which is caused by the near monopoly of two large packing companies?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the hon. member is a little bit behind the times here. The set-aside program that we are operating right now is doing exactly what he's asking us to do. The industry had requested us to extend that set-aside program and to work together with the producers on alternate plans.

We are doing that. We'll continue to do that. We're asking for the other provinces to actually join in our particular part of the plan, and that's the national basis program. We've requested that from the other provinces. We're very hopeful that they will join with us because the packers, the processors, and the producers agree that this is how we've been able to stabilize the price above what anyone would have thought it would be.

2:00

Mr. Mason: Given the extremely low prices that cattle producers are receiving for their beef, can the minister explain why beef at the supermarket remains at traditionally high levels?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, we seem to be going over questions that I recall being in this House some time ago with regard to how the carcass of an animal is distributed and distributed by way of what used to have value in a carcass and what no longer has value in that carcass. We have also, as I said, talked about the set-aside program. We've talked about stabilizing the prices. Today they're in the 80- to 82-cent range. Those price ranges are fairly stable at this point in time, and we're going to continue to work with the industry because they know what is good for their industry.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been numerous reports in the media about a meeting between Canada's International Trade minister and the new U.S. Trade Representative. One of the items discussed, apparently, was the U.S. administration's opposition to the Byrd amendment, which allows U.S. companies to profit from penalties levied on Canadian imports. My questions are for the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Can the minister confirm that this is the government of Alberta's understanding?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the U.S. administration continues to work opposing the Byrd amendment. Notwithstanding the fact that all evidence, even from the World Trade Organization, indicates that the Byrd amendment violates all international trade rules, the U.S. administration still has some difficulty convincing Congress to change its position.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Can the minister inform the House: has the federal government consulted with the government of Alberta on this issue?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the one federal minister that calls on a regular basis, Mr. Peterson, has contacted Alberta on a number of occasions, and we are working toward a pan-Canadian approach to this issue. We are working with the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development and the Alberta industry in trying to reach consensus on a position paper that was presented to the Americans about a week and a half to two weeks ago.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. To the same minister: can he inform this House as to Alberta's position on the Byrd amendment and the resolution of the softwood lumber dispute?

Mr. Stelmach: Alberta's position, Mr. Speaker, is simply that we oppose it. It violates trade rules, and it is grossly unfair that the money we deposited in terms of a tariff can then be spent by the industry on the other side of the border working in direct conflict and in opposition to the industry north of the border. One of the reasons we're also opposing it is that the industry has told us that if we don't get back any of the \$4.3 billion that is rested with the American industry, then there's no basis for an agreement, and again we'll be back to the same position we were for the last 12, 14 years.

The Speaker: Now the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Allen Gray Continuing Care Centre

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received an overwhelming amount of complaints regarding the care received at the Allen Gray long-term care facility. I personally witnessed the grief and tears from the residents and their families at a recent meeting, and these complaints are too numerous to state. The facility has even taken the extreme measure of banning the daughter of a resident since she had encouraged others to come forward with their complaints. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. What is this minister prepared to do to address the ongoing deficit of proper care received by the residents of this facility?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'll state it again in this House. If our Members of the Legislative Assembly or any other Albertan for that matter have a complaint about the level of care in any publicly funded facility in this province, then I believe they have a duty to let our office know so that we can do a proper follow-up. I can assure the hon. member that if there is some concern that a follow-up or inspection that's been done in the past has not been adequate, then all they have to do is provide that for the ministry of health, either to the deputy's office or to the regional health authority, clearly to my office. I would be very pleased, in fact privileged, to follow up in full detail on the issues that are raised.

Mr. Agnihotri: In that the CEO of Capital health has indicated to me in a letter that a detailed review of the facility is under way, can the minister tell this House when we can expect the results of this review?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that the hon. member has had some response to his question from the regional health authority. I have a great deal of confidence in the regional health authority and the CEO. I look forward to hearing the response. I don't know, obviously, as much about the background on this issue, but if there has been some investigation done, perhaps the hon. member would like to table the letter so that we can regard it as well and take a look at it. I can only assume that if a timeline wasn't suggested by the CEO, we could ask for that timeline and it would be provided.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Minister. In that the daughter of one of the residents has been banned from the facility for voicing her concerns, will the minister intervene to restore her access to her own father?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, at this point in this Legislative Assembly there are allegations being tabled about a family matter within one of our facilities. I will do the necessary inquiries to determine

whether or not there is accuracy in the report that's being provided here in this very public Assembly.

I would also state this from my own experience in looking after people who are critically ill. Frequently the care plan that is provided for that resident might not make sense to other family members, but it is the duty of that person that signs that care plan along with the member that is housed in a long-term care facility to be fully prepared to meet the commitments of that care plan.

I would welcome the opportunity to do further follow-up or even speak to the member in private about these matters that seem to be of a personal family nature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Trade Mission to United States

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. At the end of April the minister announced that he was going to Texas and Colorado. According to a news release the trip focus was on Alberta's oil industry: its capacity, its investment opportunities, and its abilities to develop new technologies for use in extreme environments. The cost of the minister's trip was about \$5,900. What value did Alberta taxpayers get out of this expenditure?

Mr. Dunford: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that travel is a cost of doing business. I might say to the members of the House that ministers travel I think primarily to achieve three objectives. The first one, of course, would be to gather information that can help us with the policy concerns that we have as a government here in Alberta, certainly to raise awareness of the world-class goods and services that Albertans can provide to the world, and also, of course, then to attract investment to create jobs.

Now, the focus of the trip to Texas, of course, was the Houston Offshore Technology Conference, about 50,000 delegates, if I remember that correctly. While I was there, a news conference. The Premier of Newfoundland, the Minister of Energy from Nova Scotia, and myself talked about the tremendous opportunities that were available to us. I was also able to speak to investors at a lunch.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. To the same minister: when you're meeting with American investors, what do you tell them about our province?

The Speaker: We have approximately 45 seconds.

Mr. Dunford: Okay. Great place to live. Great place to work. Great place to do business. Great place to visit. We've got the technology. We've got the product. We've got the people. A debt-free province gives us a whole new reason for investing in this province. People can be assured of low tax levels. So there we have it: security of supply, security of energy, security of the people. What a great place to represent.

2:10

Ms DeLong: I'm not done yet. Attracting investment will create opportunities for new companies. What about your responsibility for ensuring that Albertans and Alberta businesses are the main beneficiaries of the Alberta advantage?

Mr. Dunford: Well, there we have it. We get both ends of the tunnel on this situation. We're out there doing good things to bring

investment to this province, and we're out there doing great things to take Alberta out to the rest of the world. There were components of the mission that dealt with Alberta suppliers. Why are you yawning? This is Alberta. This is the western tiger – the western tiger – and they are yawning. Mr. Speaker, a little more respect, please, for the business environment in Alberta.

Speaker's Ruling Clarification

The Speaker: Methinks the hon. minister would want to correct something. As it is the tradition for the hon. member, when acknowledged, to speak through the chair, the suggestion might be that it was the chair that was yawning and, secondly, that the chair would have no respect. So let's clarify that. Okay?

Mr. Dunford: I'll be glad to clarify for all of the TV listeners and radio listeners, if that still happens, that it was not the Speaker of this House that was yawning. The Speaker of this House is a previous Minister of Economic Development. He knows the importance of Alberta.

The Speaker: So I take it now that it's my fault.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Children's Services Special Case Review

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals have the highest regard for social workers who deal with very tough situations trying to aid Alberta's children. What makes their work even more difficult are huge caseloads, blocking opportunity to build relationships with the families they are serving. This problem was illustrated by the Nina Courtepatte case, where there have been suggestions that the case would have been better handled if just one worker was in charge of the whole case. To the Minister of Children's Services: is there any plan in place to improve the continuity social workers have in their work to allow them to maintain the same file as long as possible?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, three days in a row and three days of very similar questions. Again I'm not going to comment specifically on the tragic death of the 13-year-old that was murdered other than to say that our hearts go out to her family.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition member has indicated the hard work that the social workers do in this province. I think it's important that the Assembly understands the difficult cases that these social workers face on a daily basis. I can tell the opposition member that the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, that was brought forward in November of last year, was exciting to all of the social workers in this province and well received. We're excited about the act and what it's doing for the families and children in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the inconsistent qualifications across the province, will the minister commit to creating one set of qualifications for family enhancement workers in all regions so that all families receive the same standard of help and all workers are qualified to do that job?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, the social workers in this province do an unbelievable job. I think, again, what is important for the opposition member to understand is that after we proclaimed

the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, those social workers are doing what they should be doing, and that's providing compassionate care to all the families in this province, and they all do an unbelievable, fantastic job.

Mrs. Mather: Well, to the same minister: will the results and recommendations of the internal investigation into the Nina Courtepatte case be revealed to the public?

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, I can say yes to that. After all of the things that have gone through the criminal case, and if need be, if it goes to a fatality inquiry, we'd be pleased to provide our special case review recommendations on this particular file. Let's be honest here: what comes out of the special case will only make our department better and provide better care to all the families in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Calgary Catholic School Board Funding

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents and teachers in my constituency are getting nervous after hearing reports that the Calgary Catholic board is anticipating a budget shortfall of about \$4 million. They fear that if a shortfall is imminent for the '05-06 school year, teachers or other employees may be let go. My questions are for the Minister of Education. Is it true that you are underfunding the Calgary Catholic school board?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope not because all school boards have been given some significant increases not only this year but for the past couple of years. I think one of the key points here is that budget discussions that are going on right now are very much of a preliminary nature. Final budgets, as we all know here, come in to us around the last week of June. So any proposed numbers that are being talked about now or any proposed budget shortfalls are just that: they're speculative in nature. I would hope that money can be found from within the existing budget to cover any of those anticipated troubles.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you. To the same minister: how much of an increase was provided to the Calgary Catholic school board, and why does it appear to not be enough?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, funding for general and basic instruction went up by about 9.5 per cent overall, and that includes everything from the per-student grant rate to the health rates to our ESL rates to the severe special-needs rate and so on. That accounted for about \$234 million new dollars.

Now, specific to Calgary Catholic, which I believe is the question, their grant rate would have gone up probably from about \$260 million to about \$270 million this year alone, and that's a pretty significant increase. Those deliberations will take that increase into account, I'm sure.

Mrs. Ady: My final supplementary to the same minister: what are you prepared to do to help the Calgary Catholic school board with their anticipated budget difficulties?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, if in fact the final budget that comes in at the end of June or thereabouts shows that there are some

difficulties, obviously we would need to have my officials meet with their officials and find out where the miscalculations, perhaps, occurred or if there were some other anomalies such as a sudden jump in student population. I know that Calgary Catholic has experienced something like a jump in the rate of 5 to 10 per cent or whatever it was. I met with them in June, and I can't recall the exact number. If anomalies like that were to be there and were to be presented, then surely we would be able to take a look and see what could be done about them, and I would undertake to do that. But right now we're talking about a preliminary set of numbers, so let's wait and see what happens.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Technology Funding

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In today's competitive, fast-paced economy timing can be everything. It's vital that emerging technologies and companies get the support they need to flourish, particularly when they're part of strategically important industrial clusters like biomedicine and biotechnology. Timely support from this government is too often lacking. My questions are all to the Minister of Innovation and Science. Given that this area has been identified as an emerging industrial cluster for the city of Edmonton, when will this government commit its share of the necessary funding for the proposed wet lab so desperately needed by these emerging companies?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, part of Innovation and Science is clearly focused on key strategic thrusts for innovation and science in the province of Alberta. We have picked the area of energy, life sciences, and ICT. The wet lab the hon. member is referring to fits in the category, I think, of the life sciences area and is one that we are currently considering.

2:20

Mr. Elsalhy: Given that the feasibility study was completed almost two years ago and the funding from the city and the federal government has been in place for months, can the hon. minister explain the delay in the approval process, please?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, there are many factors involved in a decision of this nature. Now, one is to develop partnerships and support from industry, to develop support and partnerships with municipalities, with the federal government as we're all interested in developing these kinds of vital industries in our province. As I've indicated, we are seriously looking at this matter right at the moment.

Mr. Elsalhy: Mr. Speaker, given that further delays could lead to the redirection or removal of funding previously committed by our federal and municipal partners, will this minister commit to releasing the necessary provincial funding share now?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to is the fact that we are taking a very serious look at this particular proposal and many others. It will get the consideration and the examination that it requires, and if it fits our strategic priorities and fits within the framework of getting the best development of innovation and technology in this province, we will follow through with the funding.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Sale of Social Housing Corporation Land

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The sale last fall by the Alberta Social Housing Corporation of two lots of land totalling 927 acres in the Timberlea area of Fort McMurray seems irregular, to say the least. Instead of a public tender, open-bid process that treats all developers equally, the two parcels were apparently sold in a private deal to a company called Timberlea Consortium Incorporated. A caveat referencing the agreement for sale was filed with land titles on December 15, 2004. I've alerted the minister of seniors that these questions were coming, so my question is to the minister of seniors. Is it true that the two parcels were sold through an agreement for sale without a public tender or open-bid process, and if so, why?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that the member did let me know that this question would be in the House today because I want to clarify that under legislation through the Alberta Housing Act, section 18(b) states that we do have the authority to transfer land to the Alberta Social Housing Corporation and that that transfer of lands can be done in a number of ways. It's very clear in the legislation. That is through a nominal sum process or through direct sale or through tender. As the member did mention, this was through a direct sale. In the case that the member is referring to, my understanding is that that land was a direct sale, and the appraised value of the land was what was taken into consideration. It was through consultation with the municipality of Wood Buffalo as well as house builders in the area.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it seems that that has assisted in meeting the needs of Fort McMurray for housing as there is construction occurring on the land currently, and there will be more lots brought on in the fall.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, there could be a debate about the market value of this, but my question, then, to go at it in a different way: why would these properties have been sold by way of an agreement for sale rather than by requiring Timberlea Consortium Incorporated to arrange its own financing and pay the entire purchase price in cash for the two lots, as seems to be the case in all the other properties?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't comment on the full sale and the way in which it occurred except to say that it was a direct sale; it was at the appraised value; it did meet the legislation requirements that are in the Alberta Housing Act. Also, it did ensure that the needs of Fort McMurray, through the municipality and as well through the Home Builders' Association, are being met.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, to clear the air, then, will the minister commit to tabling in this Assembly the agreement for sale with Timberlea Consortium Incorporated for these properties, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if that's the usual practice, to table agreements for the sale of land. We, you know, sell land through – I know in the communities of Banff,

Canmore, high-needs communities, we do it in the ways that have the legal process in place through legislation, which as I indicated, hon. member, is through a nominal sum process or through direct sale or through tender.

Mr. Speaker, it should be known as well that we have assisted Fort McMurray in other ways through this legislation process. For example, with the nominal sum that's in place, the transfer of lands, we've put in place with the Wood Buffalo municipality a site for a school, a site for a fire hall, a police site. There are processes, and this is one that the member has mentioned.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Interpretation Services in Courts

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The service of language interpreters in Alberta's courts has become very important not only as a provision of equal access to fair trial but, more importantly, as a deterrent and prevention factor through understanding the laws of our land. A group of court interpreters presented to me their concern about the very low rate of pay for the important work and special qualifications, particularly compared with other jurisdictions such as the RCMP or the WCB. So reflecting their concerns, my question is to the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Can the minister advise the members of the Assembly what the current fee structure is for the court interpreters?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This hon. member should be congratulated for tenacity. I believe for the last several years he has pursued this matter in question period, and I'm very pleased to say that in this particular budget year we were able to increase the hourly rate threefold for the interpreter fees in our courts, from \$15 to \$45 per hour.

Under the Constitution the province is responsible for the administration of justice, and in this particular case what we're talking about are interpreter fees with respect to criminal matters prosecuted by the province. It is important that people who have difficulty with language or, basically, impairment of language have the interpretive skills available in court so that the court can understand and so that they can understand what is going on. It's all part of fairness of justice, and I'm pleased to say that the increase in the hourly rate will allow us to ensure that we have appropriate interpreters in our courts going forward.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. That answer clears all the matters. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

First Nations Land Claims

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's obligation and ability to manage the affairs of the province is compromised when outstanding land claims issues like those of the Lubicon are not dealt with. The issues surrounding outstanding land claims need to be resolved, so that orderly development of Alberta's economic potential can take place. Until outstanding land claims are resolved, Alberta will continue to have upheaval in northern aboriginal

communities. These questions are for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Given that development on disputed territory is occurring without proper approval from the EUB, will the minister now commit to stopping all unapproved developments on disputed land?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, that's the reason why we've been working on a consultation policy, to be able to look at how we can begin to work with the First Nations and how they can also benefit from what's happening on an economic basis with anything to do with resource development. That policy will be able to outline how they can be involved not only from an economic side but also how the resource development may impact their treaty and aboriginal rights. That's the reason why we have to be able to place that policy and look at the guidelines that will be able to address those very issues that you're bringing to the table.

Mr. Tougas: Well, with \$6.8 million set aside for the consultation process, is this government any closer to settling those land claim disputes for the benefit of First Nations, industry, and the province in general?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, on the land claim issue we have been very successful. Since 1986 I think we've done about 11 different land claims, and those land claims have been very helpful for First Nations. What it does is that we have now provided dollars not only from the federal government but also the provincial government to be able to pay for some of the areas of concern that they have as if no one has ever been on that land. So what we've done are the negotiations with 11, actually, of the different First Nations. With those land claims what we've been able to do is encourage a lot of economic development to happen.

We continue to work on the land claims so that we can also deal with the issue of land claims that are outstanding but also be able to look at the economic side for the First Nations.

2:30

Mr. Tougas: Well, given that the province holds all disputed lands in trust, will the minister commit to ensuring that the millions of dollars in royalties from oil and gas extracted from disputed territory is also held in trust?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me, first of all, talk about the land claim process. The First Nations have to first of all be recognized by the federal government that they do have a land claim. When that land claim has been recognized by the federal government, the province then gets invited into the negotiations. At that point, then, we begin to look at everything that's brought forward, whether it's any kind of activity that could happen and impact the First Nations. We'd then deal with that in a negotiated process. With that comes the information as to how, then, we address the very concerns from an economic base with the First Nations but also with Canada so that we're all together in this negotiation so that we can begin to address those very concerns that have been outstanding for a long time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Federal Transfer Payments

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations informed

this Assembly that Albertans contribute nearly \$9 billion more in taxes to Ottawa than we receive in services, pensions, and transfers. This is much more than the residents of Ontario contribute on a per capita basis. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. My constituents want to know what the Alberta government is doing to narrow the gap with these sudden Santos in Ottawa.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the rush by the Prime Minister to make these special deals indicates that we do have a federal government that's in crisis. Just looking at the latest agreement with Ontario, and not having all of the specifics as yet, we know that in one area – that is, the settlement with respect to immigrants – Ontario got a substantial increase to about \$3,400 per immigrant. Presently Alberta receives about \$918 per immigrant. We're going to be asking Ottawa for the difference, which to Alberta will be about \$40 million.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister indicate if there are specific programs where Alberta is not treated fairly that contribute to the Alberta gap?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that Albertans are proud to contribute to and help other Canadians through the equalization program. That's a given. But there are a couple of programs where we are not treated fairly. One of them is the CST/CHT transfer, and that in itself is somewhere in the area of \$300 million to \$400 million more that should come to Alberta given this last agreement with Ontario.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: are there any good reasons that Alberta would refuse federal transfers even if it perpetuates the gap?

Mr. Stelmach: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the agreement does not respect the values and priorities of Albertans, we won't sign it. One example is the current negotiations going on between the Minister of Children's Services and the federal minister with respect to the child care agreement. Again, I assume that if at the end of the day Albertans don't see value in the agreement and don't receive parental choice, why would we sign an agreement just for a few pennies to come to Alberta? We want to see benefit and also parental choice in that particular agreement. That's just one example.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Edmonton Police Service Investigation

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 5, 2002, Randy Fryingpan was tasered six times in the back seat of a car by a member of the Edmonton Police Service. Judge Easton commented on these police actions that, quote, they were an abuse of force and cruel and unusual treatment. However, the Calgary prosecutors' office has now decided not to proceed with charges and has sent the matter back to the Edmonton Police Service to deal with. Justice has been denied for Randy Fryingpan. My question is to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Can the minister explain to the public

and to this House how, despite clear physical evidence of Randy Fryingpan being tasered six times in 66 seconds, the Crown decided there was insufficient evidence to proceed with charges?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset this matter became public two days ago in the sense that it was at that point in time that the Crown's advice to the Edmonton Police Service with respect to potential charges regarding the incident that the hon. member has referred to was made public. At that point in time an information bulletin from Alberta Justice was provided. It was put on the website. One hour following that a media availability and press conference was held with the chief Crown prosecutor from Calgary, who was the individual responsible for rendering this opinion. So the material with respect to this matter is on the website. It was produced two days ago. For those who wish to follow up and obtain the full particulars, that is how they can do it.

Now, with respect to this matter, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the Crown takes their obligation of providing opinions with respect to potential charges very seriously, and when it involves a situation of charges against the police, it is understood that the public will be providing additional scrutiny with respect to the matter.

There were in this particular case three Crown prosecutors, all senior, including the chief Crown in Calgary who reviewed this particular matter. They reviewed it independently, and each of them came up with the same conclusion based on a standard test which is applied to proceeding with charges, that test being a reasonable likelihood of conviction. In other words, there must be a reasonable likelihood of conviction. Each of them came up with the conclusion in this particular case that there was no reasonable likelihood of conviction. That is a fundamental test that must be applied. As a result, the recommendation to the Edmonton Police Service was that charges should not be laid.

Dr. B. Miller: Given the dissatisfaction of Randy Fryingpan's family and his lawyer and the public with this decision, will the minister initiate a review of the inconsistencies in the Crown's interpretation of the evidence?

Mr. Stevens: I'm very surprised that the Justice critic with the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker, would decide that justice should be determined on the basis of the dissatisfaction of someone. The fact of the matter is that we have fundamental tests; we have rule of law. Those are the things that ensure that there is not rough justice in this province, in this country. This particular member ought to understand that.

In this particular case, once again, Mr. Speaker, it was a fundamental test, that being the reasonable likelihood of conviction, that was applied. It was applied to the particular case by three senior Crown prosecutors in Calgary, and in each case they came to the same conclusion, that there could not be a reasonable likelihood of conviction and that charges should not be laid.

Dr. B. Miller: My final supplemental is to the Solicitor General. This file has gone back to the Edmonton Police Service. How can the Solicitor General satisfy the public's desire for a credible, independent, and impartial review of the evidence when the police are just going to continue to have internal investigations of police?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, as there are no charges laid, the internal investigation regarding the actions or the allegations of actions under the Police Act regulations, if they were contravened,

will be going ahead and moving forward by the internal affairs section of the Edmonton Police Service. That's why we have Bill 36 before this Assembly in third reading. In fact, we will be providing new opportunities, new civilian oversight, regarding serious incidents related to police issues or police complaints regarding more serious issues than what we can afford right now in the present Police Act. So the amendments have come forward, the bill is in third reading, and I would hope that the hon. members from the opposition support it in third reading.

2:40

The Clerk: Members' Statements.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call on one of six to participate, but might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my first introduction I neglected to introduce to you and through you another gentleman who came with Martin Shields. This gentleman is George Berg. They have driven a bus up full of students who will be attending the Legislature tomorrow. I would ask George Berg to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, parliamentary junkies may find today's historical vignette rather interesting. It takes us back to Alberta's golden jubilee year. On May 12, 1955, the Third Session of the 12th Legislature was prorogued. At that point in time, meaning in the first 50 years of the service of this Assembly, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta had seen itself sit for 1,873 sitting days for a total of 402,673 minutes, and it passed 3,874 bills.

We are now here, 50 years later to the day, sitting in the First Session of Alberta's 26th Legislature. Over the past 50 years, current as of 11:34 last night, this Assembly had passed 4,220 bills during 2,833 sitting days, with a total of 722,946 sitting minutes.

Hon. members, in the last 100 years, the first 100 years of this Assembly in the province, this Assembly has sat for 4,706 days. Now, in the 100 years there were 36,500 days, and this Assembly sat for 4,706 days for a total of 1,125,619 minutes and has passed 8,094 bills.

Please, don't anybody say that I must be really bored to have time to figure this out. This is pure historical science.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Positive Influence of Teachers

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to rise today and speak about the excellence in teaching awards. As these awards are meant to recognize the best teachers in this province, I thought it might be a nice opportunity to recognize some of the teachers who had a profound impact on my life. Please consider these my excellence in teaching awards.

As a child I had both the opportunity and the challenge of moving frequently around the province. Growing up in the oil patch meant that there were many times when we would move to a new well site every six weeks. I was very fortunate over the years to meet many dedicated teachers who would take the time to find out what my brother and I had learned in our last three or four schools that year. This allowed them to adjust their programs to our specific needs.

I had three favourite teachers, Mr. Speaker. The first of them was Mrs. Dench in Crossfield. The second was Mrs. Hahn in Blackfalds, who single-handedly made it possible for me to add numbers quickly and accurately. Her trick was that every student that finished first Monday through Thursday and got the answers right would win a dime. Thus, my profit motivation appeared to me right in grade 5. The third teacher was Mr. Woodard in Slave Lake, just a great guy, who was my homeroom teacher. He also took the time to coach basketball, curling, and volleyball as well as drive the team bus all over northern Alberta and let us sing on all of the trips.

These individuals and many more had a profound impact on my life, Mr. Speaker. Notable mentions on my list of teacher excellence, because every child has a bad day from time to time – I know that I did – were two very special ladies, Mother Mary and Sister Etienne, both of the Daughters of Wisdom convent in Slave Lake. These two wonderful women always had time for me when I just needed a place to hang out. Sister Etienne taught French, and Mother Mary was the home ec teacher. While she was never successful in teaching me how to measure ingredients, she would always encourage us to just try new things.

Just like today teachers all over our province are helping, guiding, and educating our children.

I would like to congratulate the winners of the excellence awards as well as acknowledge the nominees and all of those unsung heroes in our schools who make a difference in the lives of our children yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Grant MacEwan College Learning Centre

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning Grant MacEwan College unveiled plans for its new health care learning centre. I had the pleasure of joining the hon. ministers of Infrastructure and Transportation, Advanced Education, Health and Wellness, and Education and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon at the college's city centre campus to announce that the Alberta government will contribute \$46.1 million towards the \$58 million project.

Grant MacEwan College should be commended and congratulated for their vision and perseverance in bringing this project to life and for working closely with the Alberta government to make this centre the place to go for innovative health care learning. MacEwan's health care learning centre will reinforce Alberta as a leader in health care learning and delivery, and it's exciting to see the innovation take flight.

Mr. Speaker, the centre will provide expanded classroom and laboratory space for the college's nursing and health sciences programs. Construction of the facility will soon commence, and once it is up and running, the new 240,000 square foot facility will be able to accommodate an additional 2,000 full- and part-time students. These students will have access to the latest technology, including state-of-the-art simulation tools and Alberta's SuperNet, which will help provide enhanced distance delivery programs. These students will benefit from learning technologies that will

foster innovative teaching and curriculum that will help them become talented and skilled professionals ready to join Alberta's booming workforce.

Mr. Speaker, the demand for health care providers in Alberta is growing, a trend that is not expected to slow down any time soon. The centre will help the province meet the demand of health care providers and ensure that Albertans continue to receive outstanding care from outstanding professionals.

I applaud both Grant MacEwan College and the government for forming a partnership that will benefit not only the postsecondary and health care systems but all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Royal Alberta Museum

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Museum of Alberta will become the Royal Alberta Museum when Her Majesty visits later this month. I rise today to recognize that the renewal accompanying the royal designation is moving forward from a vision to reality. This week our government committed \$150 million to the project. I cannot think of a more fitting centennial legacy gift to all Albertans that honours our first 100 years as a province.

The museum will be renewed in its current location. It is a beautiful site that has served the museum well for almost 40 years and has more than enough room for it to become an architectural icon. The renewal will be a huge step forward in the museum's ability to tell the story of Alberta. The plans will double the space available for exhibits, create an interactive children's museum, allow Alberta's story to go outside the capital city through travelling exhibits and outreach programs, include a feature exhibit hall that will draw the best travelling exhibits in the world, and move parking underground and replace existing parking with an urban park.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Museum of Alberta belongs to each and every Albertan. The renewal and redesignation of it to the Royal Alberta Museum will make us all proud.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Canada Health Day

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, May 12, is Canada Health Day. This is a very special and important day, which is celebrated each year on the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, a pioneer of nursing and a reformer of hospital sanitation methods.

We all know how many people spend their health for wealth and are then forced to spend their wealth for health. People do live longer nowadays, but morbidity is a growing concern. Obesity, smoking, sedentary lifestyles, chronic disease, and infectious outbreaks like SARS and avian flu are issues which we all think about.

This year's theme, The Public's Health, reflects a focus on communities and individuals to prevent disease and promote healthier living. While this day is dedicated to recognizing new developments in public health care fields, showing our appreciation for the wonderful people who deliver public health services, and reflecting upon ways we can improve our health care system, it is also an opportunity to evaluate our role in shaping the type of health care system we want and that best serves the needs of all Albertans.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, may I suggest today a different P3 model for this government to consider? I am proposing a philosophy or direction

which emphasizes preparation, prevention, and protection. It is important that while we look for ways to reform our health care system, we must also recognize that it is an essential service that cannot and must not be commoditized. To implement any kind of change to our health care system without an adequate plan undermines the public support that is required if we're going to achieve any lasting improvement to our health care system. Public input and support is needed at every stage of the decision-making process to ensure that our health care system remains sustainable, universally accessible, and affordable.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all Albertans to celebrate Canada Health Day by thinking about their own health as well as that of their neighbours, communities, and the environment. I also invite my hon. colleagues in the Legislature to join me in recognizing this important day.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Public Education Stressors

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Despite the government's gradual implementation of the Learning Commission's recommendations, May and June continue to be highly stressful months for parents, teachers, pupils, school secretaries, support staff, and school trustees.

Parents have a variety of concerns. Will they finally get their kids off the bus with a new school built in their no longer outlying suburban community, or will their now-considered inner-city school be spared closure? Parents of English as a Second Language and special-needs children wonder whether the program support their children received, no matter how small, due to the ever-present budget cuts will continue next year. Parents of students in grades 3, 6, and 9, especially if their children fall into the previously mentioned needs categories, are concerned about how their children will do on the government-forced achievement tests, knowing that their school's results will be plastered in the press with Fraser Institute rankings the following year.

Teacher administrators along with their staffs, despite glowing government budget announcements to the contrary, are forced to play the school survivor game of eliminating people and programs. The people and programs that are the most vulnerable to cutbacks, especially at the junior high level, are guidance, teacher-librarians, resource teachers, second language and fine arts programs. Despite the government's claim to support arts and culture, it is these programs together with the learning-support provisions that are the first to go.

In 2002 the drama program was cut at my previous junior high school, F.E. Osborne, in Calgary-Varsity. The following year the music program was severely cut. This year at another junior high school in Calgary-Varsity, Simon Fraser, the band program has been cut completely. At the junior high level, especially for students at risk, it is the option programs and the extracurricular staff support that keep the students coming to school.

Given this province's resource wealth, public education must become a higher priority for this government. The continuing cycle of government-imposed year-end education stress needs to be eliminated through long-term vision and funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Charan Khehra

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to recognize Charan Khehra for his contributions to the Alberta NDP opposition caucus as executive assistant to Dr. Pannu and the director of special projects.

Charan came to us with considerable experience as an educator, public administrator, researcher, and community builder. He was an assistant professor of political science in India, an executive officer with the British civil service, and then for 13 years was with the Alberta department of labour as a senior economist, providing research support to the department of labour, the Alberta Human Rights Commission, and the Alberta Labour Relations Board.

Charan has deep-rooted interests in labour management relations and human rights. He held various elected positions in the Whitley Council and civil service unions in England and community relations organizations. He was actively involved with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and was elected a life member.

As an NDP caucus staff member Charan has shared his enthusiasm and passion for public service, considering politics to be the highest calling and privilege of a person. He was our provincial candidate in 1997. He is a founding member of the Sahaara, a community service organization in Edmonton, and was the chair of the Mill Woods Community Health Council.

Charan has a lovely family, Mr. Speaker. He's married to Surender and has two daughters, Mona Bhullar and Nina Khehra. He's also a proud grandfather to Jordan and Alex.

Charan Khehra is a person of vision and compassion and supports various nonprofit organizations and other causes promoting multiculturalism, human rights, social justice, and peace. He is our making-it-happen person. Although Charan Khehra is retiring shortly, I'm sure Charan will continue to make things happen wherever he goes.

On behalf of the caucus I wish Charan and his family the best of everything. We are indeed grateful for his outstanding contribution to our caucus, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to Members by Name

The Speaker: Now I have to ask the leader of the third party a question.

Mr. Mason: What did I do now, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Twice today you violated the rule about naming members. You did it twice today. Now, was it because the hon. leader doesn't know the rule, has forgotten the rule, or has been lazy with the rule?

Mr. Mason: Or just reading, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, because we know it's a no-no.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a petition with 612 signatures. The petition calls for increased funding for improvements to highway 63. The total number of signatures on this petition so far is 3,409.

I would also like to table a petition signed by 339 individuals who would like to see immediate tuition relief for students attending postsecondary institutions in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise with a petition from 104 good Albertans from the communities of Stony Plain, Gibbons, Lamont, Sylvan Lake, Redwater, Spruce Grove, and the host of the Canadian Finals Rodeo, the vibrant city of Edmonton. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition that is in order to present to the Legislative Assembly, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

This petition is signed by 100 citizens of the province, and they come from all over, including Edmonton and Stony Plain, to mention just but a couple.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition prepared by the McKenzie Towne public school committee, and it states: "We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to support the building of schools in new communities in the City of Calgary."

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I'm also giving notice that on that same day, Monday, I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do also stand and retain their places.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bill 41 Appropriation Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having

been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the contents of this bill are self-explanatory as we have debated them for the last 24 budget days.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 41 read a first time]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. Deputy Premier, do you have a tabling?

Mrs. McClellan: I do, sir. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today supplementary responses to questions raised during third reading of Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. I have faxed those responses to the respective members' offices earlier today. I wanted to have them in so members could peruse the answers.

Thank you.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table today five copies of the supplementary responses to questions raised during the Seniors and Community Supports estimates on April 19, 2005. These responses have already been sent to the appropriate members of the Liberal opposition and the ND opposition. As I indicated during estimates, I am pleased to provide these responses.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter to the offices of the mayor and councillors of the city of Edmonton. It is from the South East Community Leagues Association. This letter is dated March 30, 2005, and it is in regard to the proposed Wal-Mart relocation to 49th Street and 90th Avenue in Lambton industrial park in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The second tabling I have, Mr. Speaker, is the memorandum of decision by the honourable justice that was heard in the Court of Queen's Bench on May 10 in regard to parents from Strathearn, North Edmonton, Wellington, and the Edmonton public school board district No. 7.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the first of five letters I wish to table today from dismayed Calgary-Varsity constituency parents Kathy White, Tamea and Andrew Arthur, Paula Emery, Evelyn Cone, and Shelley and Robert Ferguson regarding the cancellation of the highly attended and well-respected Simon Fraser junior high school band program due to the financial shortfalls that Alberta schools are faced with as a result of inadequate provincial education funding.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As indicated in the private member's statement I delivered last Thursday, I am tabling today the appropriate number of copies of some 65 mock invoices which the

Official Opposition received from attendance at and organizers of the midwifery rally on May 5. These invoices are being presented to the attention of the Legislative Assembly and the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness in hopes that they may convince the government to follow Manitoba's example and fully fund midwifery.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling the appropriate number of copies of four letters and one report. The four letters are from good Albertans speaking to the issues of foreign replacement workers, apprenticeship ratios, and the deskilling of the trades. The report is the monitoring report on Canadian College International, Edmonton of August 2004.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table copies of a land titles certificate showing the sale of 927 acres from the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to Timberlea Consortium Inc. in the Fort McMurray area.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment: the Alberta Association of Architects 2004 annual report; APEGGA, Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta, annual report 2004; Alberta Land Surveyors' Association report of proceedings of the 95th annual general meeting; College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists 2004 annual report; the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, radiation protection program, 2003 annual report; the Alberta Dental Association and College, radiation health and safety program annual report 2003; University of Calgary Radiation Health Administration Organization annual report for the period April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004; University of Alberta Authorized Radiation Health Administrative Organization annual report 2003-2004; the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta Radiation Health Administrative Organization annual report for the period April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs, responses to questions raised by several Members of the Legislative Assembly on May 5, 2005, Department of Municipal Affairs 2005-06 Committee of Supply debate.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(5) I'm asking the Deputy Government House Leader to please share with us the projected government business for the week of May 16 to 19.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, May 16, in the afternoon we hope to introduce Bill 42, the Miscellaneous

Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, and then we'll proceed with private members' business. In the evening at 8 o'clock, of course, will be Motions Other than Government Motions. At 9 p.m. we'll deal with Government Bills and Orders. I anticipate it'll be second reading of Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005; third reading of Bill Pr. 1, Bill Pr. 2, and Bill Pr. 3; then Committee of the Whole for Bill 38, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 14, the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005; and Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005; and otherwise as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, May 17, in the afternoon we should be able to do second reading of Bill 42, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, and third reading on any and all remaining third readings that might be required at the time. In the evening Committee of the Whole should be able to deal with Bill 41; Bill 42, which is the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 14; and Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005; and any remaining Committee of the Whole bills as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, May 19, in the afternoon third reading on Bill 41 and Bill 42 and any and all remaining third readings. On Wednesday evening third reading for Bill 41 is repeated on my script, just in case it should become necessary to do that, and Committee of the Whole and third reading on any and all remaining Committee of the Whole or third reading bills.

Thursday afternoon would be otherwise as scheduled per the Order Paper.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Private Bills
Second Reading**

**Bill Pr. 1
Bow Valley Community Foundation Act**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill Pr. 1, the Bow Valley Community Foundation Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill incorporates the Bow Valley Community Foundation and empowers it to receive and administer donations in trust for charitable purposes. I would encourage all members to support it.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr.1 read a second time]

**Bill Pr. 2
Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on behalf of the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased on behalf of the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose to move second reading of Bill Pr. 2, Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is being proposed as a result of the merger of Augustana University College with the University of Alberta. The Camrose Lutheran College Corporation no longer owns and operates the college. The new role of the corporation would be to provide support to the Augustana Faculty within the University of Alberta. This could be mainly to preserve the Lutheran and

Scandinavian history and traditions of Augustana within the faculty. So I would encourage all members to support this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a second time]

**Bill Pr. 3
Medicine Hat Community Foundation
Amendment Act, 2005**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River on behalf of the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to move second reading of Bill Pr. 3, Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of this bill would allow this organization to expand its reach and good works beyond the boundaries of Medicine Hat. It would include the surrounding towns and rural municipalities in a regional foundation. This bill has been recommended by the Standing Committee on Private Bills, and it has received the approval of the existing foundation board.

On behalf of the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat I respectfully urge the support of all members of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 3 read a second time]

head: 3:10
**Private Bills
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Bill Pr. 1
Bow Valley Community Foundation Act**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

**Bill Pr. 2
Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose I'd move that Bill Pr. 2 be amended as follows. I think the amendment has been passed around. The main purpose of the amendment is to change the word "nominating" to "search" and "City of Camrose" to "Faculty," a couple of simple amendments.

I don't have too much more to comment on it, but if there are questions, I can answer them. Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 2 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

**Bill Pr. 3
Medicine Hat Community Foundation
Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that the Committee of the Whole now rise and report bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, and Pr. 3.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill Pr. 1 and Bill Pr. 3. The committee reports the following bill with some amendment, and that is Bill Pr. 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

**head: Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 29
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
Amendment Act, 2005**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a member of the MLA AISH Review Committee it's an honour and a privilege for me to

move third reading of Bill 29, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005.

We've had a good discussion on this bill, and I believe that I'm correct in saying that thus far all members of the House have agreed that this amendment is needed and advisable and that this amendment will make a significant difference to AISH recipients.

This amendment will provide supplementary benefits for AISH recipients. Those supplementary benefits will renew the AISH program by making the program more flexible. It will provide the ability to help AISH recipients with extra benefits for things like school supplies for children, special transportation, replacement wheelchair batteries, diabetic and special diets for specific health conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and respect the debate and discussion we've had and would ask all members of the House to support Bill 29, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through discussions with one of my constituents who has an issue relative to spina bifida – this particular person has an 18-month-old child and a three-year-old child. She has spina bifida, and the bill seems to lack the scope to cover her needs. I'm standing in terms of asking if the bill could be enlarged to encompass what they call the nurturing assistance program for persons who have this particular disability.

In light of that, I'm hoping that the bill or the committee can maybe address that. The good member from I believe Calgary mentioned that maybe they can have some kind of investigation to include the nurturing assistance program so people with the handicap of spina bifida, with the problems that this particular person has, can receive some assistance.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to mention that in discussion regarding the bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

3:20

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased to get an opportunity to speak in regard to Bill 29, the AISH Amendment Act, 2005. Certainly, this bill provides the government, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill has indicated, with the authority to develop regulations to allow for the provision of supplemental benefits. The hon. member outlined that. It certainly is needed. It certainly is welcomed by those in the AISH community. When we look at this, it is a step certainly in the right direction. It has been a long time in coming. We have to recognize that there are many people in this province who cannot, through no fault of their own, participate in this unprecedented economic boom, and we have a duty, we have an obligation to provide for their basic essential needs. This is, as I said, a step in the right direction, but there is still much work to be done.

If you look at the annual report of Human Resources and Employment from 2003-04 and you look at the number of caseloads for AISH clients, there has been a modest increase between 2001-02 and 2003-04. There has been roughly an increase of 2,400 caseloads. When we look at the focus that this group of caseloads has had on government policy, we can't forget the supports for independence, or the SFI, caseloads. Now, Mr. Speaker, they're roughly the same. For instance, in the last fiscal year that I have the annual report for, there were roughly 30,862 files or caseloads for AISH and about 29,200 for supports for independence.

Now, if we look, Mr. Speaker, at this year's budget in Human Resources and Employment – and we know that all the AISH files

have been moved over to another department. AISH is gone, but the SFI caseloads are still with Human Resources and Employment. I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly to do the same thing for those Albertans as we have done for our AISH caseloads.

I would even go one step further. I would never dare hold up this bill in third reading, Mr. Speaker, but we should consider an annual review of all these support programs. I don't see that in this bill, but what I do see is a real need in the community of Edmonton-Gold Bar for adequate support programs for SFI clients.

If you look at the budget, you see last year that there was a line item for \$290 million. This year it's \$295 million. If we look at the number of caseloads in regard to these people – and I'm referring to this year's budget – people expected to work, about half of them are expected to find work of one sort or another. For people not expected to work, there are over 9,000 caseloads, Mr. Speaker, and that's going to go up. The government's forecast is that this is going to at least increase by another 2,000 caseloads. These are people who are not expected to work.

I don't know what percentage of these caseloads would have children in those households. I do know that in some cases with AISH clients there are children living in those homes, and we have to, Mr. Speaker, think of the children as well, not only the adults but the dependent children. It is quite unsettling, to say the least, with our economic prosperity to visit a temporary shelter in the community of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

It is unsettling, but at the same time when one enters the shelter, you have to admire the many volunteers who are there, Mr. Speaker, doing their very, very best to volunteer their time and their resources to provide warm shelter and a healthy meal for many people who cannot provide one for themselves or their children. This is what's shocking about this, to see children coming in routinely to shelters and soup kitchens and different organizations that provide meals for those who have no money or no means to make a meal for themselves.

I think we can do better, and that's why I would urge, as we conclude at this time third reading on this bill, that we don't forget about the other group. This is a much-needed advancement, and it's not the end of this for AISH clients because certainly an annual review I think is needed, but we cannot forget the 30,000 files that to date have not seen any increase in their monthly benefits.

Some people can have the attitude, "Well, let them look after themselves," but I would refer all hon. members to the fact that in Human Resources and Employment's business plan for 2005-06 better than 9,000 of these people are not expected to work. I wish, Mr. Speaker, I knew how many children would be involved in that number, but for the sake of the children let's look at improving their lives through increased and better benefits. If we have to cut other programs, so be it. Certainly, the first program that I would urge the government to cut is in the department of gambling, and that's this horse-racing renewal. No child in this province should be going to a temporary shelter to get a bite to eat while we are giving in excess of \$40 million to horse-racing renewal. It just doesn't make sense.

I would welcome all hon. members of this Assembly, when the recess does occur, to visit Edmonton-Gold Bar, the north end of our constituency, and they can see first-hand what I mean when I say that children are going to shelters for breakfast before they go to school. This is not an Alberta advantage, and I think we have an opportunity now, a real opportunity, to improve that.

In conclusion, let's not rest with Bill 29 with some improvements to the AISH program. Let's look at improving our SFI benefits and our delivery programs as well. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bill, as mentioned, we'll certainly support because it's obviously a step in the right direction. But there are some concerns with the announcement, and they're not new. We've had a number of reviews, and finally there is going to be an increase for recipients that I guess is long overdue. We think it's still not enough because if you look back to '93, if you use inflated dollars, AISH recipients are still not back to where they were even at that particular time. In other words, their standard of living has gone down, Mr. Speaker.

3:30

I appreciate the fact that with this bill there are some new medical benefits, and that is an important step forward. No doubt about that, Mr. Speaker. I would be interested in how the government is going to make the recipients aware of it because sometimes we're dealing with some severely handicapped people. I think there has to be a special effort to make sure they know exactly and precisely what they're eligible for. I expect that all our constituency assistants will have to be on top of this too.

The other important thing that the government did – again, another step in the right direction – is double the amount to \$400 that recipients are allowed to earn before getting AISH clawed back.

Mr. Speaker, the written questions that I asked were trying to figure out precisely – it was amended, and we didn't get it – how many people do get the maximum amount. Through word of mouth in the AISH community many people are saying that it's not that many, but we were unable to go that way, so we don't know.

Mr. Speaker, to come back specifically to the bill in terms of the new medical benefits, I mentioned that there has to be a special effort, I think, to get out what people are eligible for. The problem that I have to some degree with this is that according to the minister, they will be dispensed on a case-by-case basis. Again, as I said, I think it should have to be a lot more universal than that. Depending on how good a lobbyist you are or how many people you have lobbying for you, you're going to know more about these programs, and you're going to be able to lobby. What about if you don't have that same ability?

The case-by-case basis, it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, could create problems. Some people who deserve it might not get it, and others who are able to lobby may. I don't understand why the program isn't made more universal so it's clear who should get it. If you do it on a case-by-case basis, it could depend, for example, on who your social worker is whether you get that particular amount get that medical benefit or not. It may be just luck of the draw is what I'm saying.

So when we bring in a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we should be making it clear and not having it sort of the luck of the draw or the luck of the social worker or whatever. I stress that we have to bear in mind that in some cases this is the severely handicapped people, who may not be able to advocate for themselves. I really suggest that on this case-by-case basis we're giving people more bureaucracy to navigate, and I really don't think that that's the answer.

As I said, we're happy about the increases that they're getting, and I alluded to this. But just to give you some figures, Mr. Speaker, since 1993 AISH recipients have lost 23 per cent of their income to inflation. These increases mean a 15 per cent increase, and that's after the final payment comes due. In other words, to put it in figures, your purchasing power is 8 per cent less than it was in 1993. In a rich province like this, hardly the Alberta advantage, if I can put it that way.

Mr. Speaker, our position was to raise, whether this is enough or not, AISH to \$1,050 immediately. That would've at least put them back to the 1993 levels, which was lost to inflation over the last 12 years. Then we strongly suggested – and I'm disappointed that the

government didn't do this – that it be indexed to the cost of living using a market-basket measure. That would ensure that the severely handicapped would be able to meet their needs with this program.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that MLAs' salaries are indexed to . . .

Dr. Brown: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Dr. Brown: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, but I'm calling the hon. member on a point of relevance. This bill is a very simple bill. It's one clause which enables a supplemental benefit to be paid in addition to the monthly benefit. The hon. member is telling us about what his party would propose to do with the monthly benefit, which is not even part of this bill. So it's clearly not relevant to the issue and the bill that we have before us this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: No citation has been provided.

Mr. MacDonald: Exactly. Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask for your guidance on this. Hon. member, there was no citation. There's no point of order.

The Acting Speaker: There was no citation provided, so we'll proceed with the debate.

Mr. Martin: I didn't think I'd get the hon. member so exercised over this. It seems that every time I stand up, I get a point of order, you know. Mind you, I was glad the other day when Minister Hancock pointed out that it made . . . [interjections] I love this, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, it was just after question period that the Speaker admonished the leader of the third party about naming an individual in this Assembly. You know that that's not the practice.

Mr. Martin: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Please.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take your guidance on that matter.

Debate Continued

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the point that I'm trying to make is that this is part of the bill. It's part of the budget. The bill has to do with the medical benefits, but along with the medical benefits came the amount of money that was increased with AISH. What I'm saying is that it was inadequate. It did not even live up to the inflation level. They're not better off than they were in '93. I would think all hon. members would be interested in that when we're dealing with the most vulnerable people in society. I think that's pretty relevant to those people.

Mr. Speaker, just to conclude, the government has committed to reviewing AISH every two years, and it seems to me that this is not enough. We've had AISH reviews over a number of years – I don't know how many times: eight or nine – and generally it has not worked out well for those people. I think we need the inflation. We need to work on increasing these medical benefits. We need to certainly move away from the case-by-case basis.

At least this bill, Mr. Speaker, is a step in the right direction, and for that reason we will support it. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, are you rising on a point of order again?

**Point of Order
Clarification**

Dr. Brown: Yes. Simply, the hon. member had requested the citation. It's *Beauchesne* 459. Again, the relevance of whether or not the benefit is indexed or whether or not the monthly benefit should be a different number is not related to the content of the bill in any way.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill had risen first on a point of order without having provided a citation, so we did not proceed with that. I don't know whether it's in order to rise a second time on the same subject. If it is, we will call on the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview if he wants to participate in this point of order as being cited.

Mr. Martin: I'm sorry. I had more important things to look at. I didn't hear him. So that's fine. Whatever he wants to do.

An Hon. Member: It's a moot point.

Mr. Martin: It's a moot point.

I've said what I wanted to say anyhow. The member helped me out, and I greatly appreciate it. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I hope that the explanation provided by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview lends clarification to what has transpired. We will put this matter to rest.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

3:40

Debate Continued

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill. I think it's been a long time in coming. It certainly speaks to what the Liberal opposition has been asking for for quite some time as well as the government committee that has looked into the AISH benefit question.

You know, in speaking in third reading to the effect of this bill, just a little bit of explanatory notes about how it affects some people I know in Alberta and some members of my riding. Martha and Henry are often put out to be a description of somebody who is an average Albertan. Martha, to me, is an AISH recipient in my riding of Edmonton-Manning who would love to work, who is a dear person who likes to volunteer but cannot work because of medical conditions, and her physician has indeed endorsed that. She and her husband, who is also usually on AISH and does try to work whenever he can, try to make do on the meagre sums that are available in AISH.

In talking to her, quite often she says that she's very pleased to be on AISH. Compared to what some people might be able to get on other benefits from the human resources department for those who cannot work, AISH is often better and at least assured. It's kind of sad in our society that these meagre benefits, which are something that pretty much these folks are destined to have for their entire lives, are what they are. I'm disappointed that, in the effect of this bill, it did not take the committee's recommendation to raise it to \$1,000 and to the minimum amount of \$1,025 in April 2006. Only raising it to \$950, a hundred dollars a month, I don't think is quite enough for Martha and the other AISH recipients in my riding.

A lot of people who are on AISH are not necessarily only in certain communities. You find them all through the communities in my riding, which has quite a range of demographics. The importance of it to all communities I think must be recognized and the importance of it to our general society in the way that we treat those that are disadvantaged, those that have things happen to them that, but for the sake of God, might happen to any of us.

In terms of the increases to the exemptions I think they're very well taken, very well put forward. I think, you know, they could even be a little higher. Sometimes those people on AISH, if they could somehow find some ways to make some more money – many of them are still quite vibrant, and if there was some way that they could find a way out of their predicament, they would certainly like to do so.

I talked about Martha and Henry. My cousin Henry is actually from Rimbey. Now, he's not on AISH. He's a pipe fitter, as a matter of fact. He's been quite affected by the operation of Alberta's labour laws, and it's restricted the amount of work and the amount of income he could make. But I won't go on about Martha and Henry because this is about Martha on AISH, which to me is that Martha. Henry is my cousin from Rimbey, who is affected by the labour laws in this province.

The importance of AISH is clear as a way to deal with the disadvantaged in our province, and I'm pleased to speak in favour of this, Mr. Speaker. The increased benefits in terms of some of the medical benefits are also very timely, and the fact that these benefits are insured does bring some peace of mind to these people that are AISH.

You know, in talking to a number of AISH recipients, the fact that they are on this lifelong sentence, almost, one thing is the lack of security in their old age. Somehow, you know, they have no hope of gaining a pension. They have no hope of gaining an RRSP because they cannot save. Martha tells me that sometimes they skip certain months for the bus pass because they cannot afford it. This is their transportation. They do not have the ability to buy a computer and access and get into some of the modern-day communications, modern-day information, modern ways of learning that we, in fact most families, I think, take for granted. Those are things that I think are crucial. Somehow in this society we must be looking at ways to enrich the lives of those on AISH, and not just leave them to a meagre existence.

I support this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I ask, of course, that everybody support it in third reading, as they will, but with the clear reservations that I think it could have been improved. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else?

Hon. Member for Calgary Nose-Hill, would you like to close on behalf of the minister of seniors.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now rise to move third reading of the bill, that it be now read a third time and passed.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a third time]

Bill 10

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 10, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005, which was amended in the spring of 2004.

Further amendments were requested to clarify the process that tenants must take to move out of their unhealthy or unsafe housing,

to prohibit tenants from objections if they're being evicted for not paying the rent, to permit landlords to return security deposits by regular mail. The Alberta Advisory Committee on Residential Tenancies supports those proposed amendments. The amendments will ensure that Alberta residential tenancy legislation works effectively for both landlords and tenants and remains balanced.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for West Yellowhead, I presume that you were moving this bill. Right?

Mr. Strang: Moving it. Yes. I moved it.

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak in favour of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. I did speak to this, however, in second reading or Committee of the Whole and did say that there are, you know, a number of effects of the Residential Tenancies Act. It's one of the areas that really comes through my constituency office doors on quite a number of occasions. There are difficulties yet from both sides, and there are still some things that I think could have been addressed in this bill. In any case, I do speak in favour of it, and the Official Opposition supports this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else?

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate.

Mr. Strang: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

3:50

Bill 17

Agrology Profession Act

Mr. Knight: On behalf of the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul I would like to move Bill 17, Agrology Profession Act.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise in support of this act. To quote the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, Alberta's 1,500 professional agrologists "provide professional services in agriculture and in the environmental sector, which are vital to our Alberta's economy." They are vital to the Alberta economy. This is an important piece of legislation that recognizes and updates the operation of the profession within Alberta, and the Official Opposition supports this.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a third time]

Bill 26

Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I move Bill 26, Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else?

Hon. Minister of Finance, would you like to close debate?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I would just thank all hon. members for their input into this bill. I would thank my colleague from

Leduc-Beaumont-Devon for his participation in this debate and his quickness in getting answers to the questions that our various members have raised. If we have missed any, we will ensure that all those are dealt with. I did review *Hansard* and couldn't see anything that we had not brought forward in committee. Again, thanking the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, I move third reading of Bill 26.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a third time]

Bill 34

Insurance Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today and move third reading of Bill 34, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2005.

As I've stated throughout the legislative process, this government is standing by its commitment to allow public auto insurers to operate in this province, allowing that they must follow the same rules and regulations that private insurers abide by. During the other steps in the process there have been a lot of questions regarding the section that outlines that insurance companies are not entitled to compensation for lost revenue. This aspect of the reforms was part of the ongoing negotiations the government had with the insurance companies, Mr. Speaker.

The bill also clearly indicates that the all-comers rule, which doesn't allow an insurance company to refuse insurance for an individual or cancel a policy, covers insurance on private passenger vehicles only. The bill also allows for a three-step resolution process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Official Opposition I'd like to rise and speak against this bill. Certainly, I think this could be improved in many ways. You know, we've had representation from a number of members of the legal community, quite a few, even the Alberta Civil Trial Lawyers Association on a number of issues. It really does not speak to the flaws inherent in the government's auto legislation and auto insurance reforms. It does not address the problems that we have in terms of—you know, there should not be, really, the subrogation of some of the insurance claims that may be made. The accountability is diminished by removing responsibility to the superintendent and not having these changes actually debated in the Legislature.

There were a number of issues raised in the earlier parts of this debate by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, and on behalf of the Official Opposition we find that we cannot support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I certainly hope that Bill 34 will result in greater competition in the Alberta auto insurance marketplace. I suspect that if Saskatchewan Government Insurance, for instance, decided to set up shop in Alberta, a lot of Albertans might well sign up with SGI just to spite their home insurance company, so some of the money will go to the Saskatchewan government rather than to the already obscenely, profitable private insurance companies. We should caution Albertans, though,

to be aware that they can't expect to pay Saskatchewan rates just because they've signed up with Saskatchewan Government Insurance. To do that you have to move to Saskatchewan, which is simply too high a price to pay to save on insurance.

As we've mentioned many times, though – and I'll be brief – our concern is with the Crown immunity in this bill. Protecting the government from potential liability arising from auto insurance reforms is somewhat of a draconian measure. By including this provision in Bill 34, the government has basically set itself up as judge, jury, and executioner. While the provision has been written to make it appear to include all insurance companies, the only apparent reason has been to quash one single solitary lawsuit.

This sends a chilling message to the business community in Alberta. It says: "Don't mess with us. We hold all the cards. We set the rules, and if you don't like the way the game is being played, we'll change the rules in mid-game." So I find this part of the bill quite disturbing. Therefore, we really can't support this bill at this time.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's ironic to say the least when this government, that refuses to look at public insurance for the people in Alberta, goes ahead and under the guise of so-called competition invites public insurers from other provinces into the province. Now, that makes not a lot of sense to me at all.

If they think public insurance works and works well, Mr. Speaker, then it seems to me that we'd be looking at it here if there's a way of driving down the rates for ordinary drivers. This idea that somehow because we don't have enough competition and insurance profits are skyrocketing, the government is feeling the political pressure – gee, what do we do? Oh well, maybe we'd better look like we're having more competition, so we'll invite in the public insurers from other provinces.

Well, Mr. Speaker, even if they come in, as a member previously talked about, they're not going to offer the same rates there. If they're public insurers coming in, they're going to try to make money here in Alberta. They're going to compete with the private-sector people. So that's not going to have much to do – in fact, if I were a Saskatchewan taxpayer or a B.C. taxpayer, I'd be demanding they do that. The reality is that this is not going to impact the price of insurance down the way, I don't believe, at all.

It seems to me that we have this sort of triumph of ideology over common sense. We sort of know that maybe we should be moving towards public insurance, but, gee, we can't do that because supposedly, you know, we're great free enterprisers. We'd rather have monopolies in the insurance industry than public insurance, Mr. Speaker, even if we know that public insurance is cheaper, works better. So we come in, if I may say, with a silly bill like this.

4:00

An Hon. Member: Give it to us, Ray.

Mr. Martin: I thought you were great today, by the way.

Mr. Speaker, for that reason, as I say, I don't think this is going to have a major impact at all in terms of lowering rates, which I suppose is the purpose of Bill 34.

You know, I have no great love for the insurance industry because I think that as consumers we've been ripped off dramatically. I always worry when we take away, whether it's an individual's rights, as with the bill on workers' compensation, or anybody else's

rights, access to the courts. I think that is quite draconian, and I'm not sure that it works over the long haul. I guess if you can do that for one group that's relatively unpopular, it's easy to take away other people's rights. I think the point that the previous member made is an important one.

Mr. Speaker, I said this before. The fact that government insurance is compulsory – you know, we talk about the market. The market works well when there's legitimate competition, but when it's a monopoly situation and people need it, then that's when it runs out of control. Clearly, public enterprise does the job much better.

I find this so ironic that in the guise of competition we're trying to bring in, whether that'll come or not, public insurance from other provinces. I think it's, quite frankly, the height of hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. As I say, the bill I don't think is going to have that much of a major impact on consumers at all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, did you want to participate in the debate?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill 34 at this time. Certainly, we have talked a lot in the last three years in this Legislative Assembly about insurance and insurance reforms in this province, and I'm disappointed to rise and say that the government still has not gotten it right. This was yet another opportunity to do the right thing, but I am not convinced that this is in the best interests of consumers.

It's certainly not going to provide, as previous speakers have stated, better protection for consumers. We need a consumer dispute resolution system that consumers can have confidence in, but I am not convinced that this is going to make any difference at all. Consumers have been in the past very, very frustrated. Maybe this is a step in the right direction. Who's to say? I guess time may prove me wrong, but certainly in the past consumers have been very, very frustrated.

We have made suggestions on this side of the Legislative Assembly – I think they were thoughtful suggestions – on how to improve the system, but the government has difficulty with the whole notion of consumer protection. It doesn't matter whether it's insurance or natural gas or even electricity or pine shakes. Consumer protection is a simple second thought. It doesn't really show up on this government's radar screen. This is, unfortunately, yet another example of this in Bill 34.

Consumers have been frustrated. It doesn't matter which insurance district they're in. Whether they're in Calgary or whether they're in the rural area or whether they're in Edmonton or whether they're in the northern district, consumers are frustrated. Their relationship with their insurance broker is sometimes difficult. Disputes go on and on and on, and nothing seems to work.

We have the opportunity to implement public auto insurance. I actually thought from what I had heard that if these insurance reforms didn't work, this government was going to implement public auto insurance similar to what they do for crop insurance. But this public auto insurance policy would be self-sustaining, certainly similar to the one that the B.C. government has. We know the different models in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but the B.C. government has a very, very good model.

In fact, I was in the library downstairs the other day reading how the profits from ICBC – the profits – were being invested, and

invested wisely, in improved safety programs for motorists in that province. Nothing of that nature seems to happen here. We see the amount of money that we are collecting on insurance premiums in this province. Perhaps all hon. members of this Assembly would be better served if we were to take a wee bit of that money, not all, and use it for consumer education and consumer protection programs.

We could have programs, for instance, to change our habits in regard to headrests so that we all would have our headrests adjusted properly. For the life of me I can't see how the insurance industry makes such a fuss about soft tissue injuries and how much they drive up claims costs, yet nothing seems to be done to educate motorists on the importance of having a headrest that is adjusted properly to prevent whiplash in case of a car crash or a rear-end accident. I don't understand this. That would be real consumer protection.

If we were contemplating other changes to the Insurance Act and we were going to have these protections where we're going to improve the lot of consumers, well, we could also look at a program to have younger drivers operating their vehicles in a more safe manner. We could look at seat belt use. We could look at the difference between rural and urban settings and the use of seat belts and why there is such a high number of fatalities in rural areas and the reverse applies in urban areas, where there are a high number of car crashes but a significantly reduced number of fatalities. In fact, Mr. Speaker, 80 per cent of the crashes are occurring in urban areas, but 80 per cent of the fatalities are occurring in rural areas, where there's significantly less population. There are matters of density and driving habits and whatnot. There's a lot of work to be done, and I certainly don't think this bill is addressing that.

Now, with this idea of allowing public auto insurers into the province, in the height of the debate two years ago auto insurers from the provinces where we have public insurance indicated that they would come into Alberta, but they would operate under the same rules as the private operators. So until we have the single model of delivery for third-party liability insurance, we are not going to see a significant reduction in premium rates. If we were to adopt public auto insurance, I don't think there would be one job lost in the industry. There are those that say that there would be job losses, but I'm not convinced there would be. We would need those people to help deliver the public auto insurance system.

4:10

I think we should be very cautious about moving forward with this bill at this time. Maybe time will prove me wrong, Mr. Speaker. Maybe Bill 34 is the answer, but I'm not convinced, and I cannot support this bill in this form at this time. I would caution all hon. members of this Assembly that these are not the insurance amendments that we need or want.

The majority of motorists, whether they're polled by a newspaper or whether they're polled by a national outfit, have indicated that they want public auto insurance. They want public auto insurance because they know that it is more efficient and it is more economical than the current system that we have, where we have over 70 different companies supposedly competing – but I'm not so sure that they do compete – for our insurance policies. There are a shocking number of them that control a significant amount of the auto insurance market, and that market share seems to be growing, so I don't think that is very competitive.

Sometimes I think the hon. Member for Peace River would be better served by taking the revolutionary step – if we're not going to

have public auto insurance and if this government is not going to allow the real deal with public auto insurance, perhaps the hon. member would be serving consumers better, Mr. Speaker, if we were to allow the banks, yes, the chartered banks, to sell auto insurance. If we're going to have a competitive market – and hon. members on the government side are always talking about competition – well, perhaps we should allow the banks to sell auto insurance.

So let's say that the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky buys another car and decides he's going to go to the bank and arrange insurance. He wouldn't have to go to a broker. Just go to the friendly CIBC or the Bank of Nova Scotia. Or let's say that a consumer from Edmonton-Gold Bar . . .

Mr. Martin: What about the credit union?

Mr. MacDonald: They could go to the credit union too. The credit union could perhaps sell insurance. As well as arranging financing for their new vehicle, they could arrange insurance.

I know that the banks are involved in the insurance industry, and they certainly are aggressively pursuing companies. But if we're not going to allow public insurance – and I'm not convinced this system is working – why do we not then allow the banks? They're selling everything else these days. Why not allow them to sell car insurance directly? If we're going to believe in competition and free enterprise, let's try that and see what happens. That would be an insurance reform that I would certainly have to study and contemplate.

At this time I can't support this bill because I don't think it's adequate. It doesn't do anything for consumers. It doesn't do anything to help the legal profession with their concerns over previous reforms, and I don't think it helps the public auto insurance providers in other provinces. So, with that, I will take my seat.

Mr. Speaker, if I did in error misquote the bank, I will retract that. For the record it was the CIBC. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Peace River to close debate.

Mr. Oberle: I'll call the question, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been just an extremely productive week, as all members here would agree, and we're very delighted with the co-operation that we've received. The spirit was truly remarkable. The day had a good start with the Premier's breakfast, which, I might add, was attended by members from all sides of the House. That was much appreciated. We heard the song *Alberta*. The song talks about how lovely this province is, and I think it's time that we all got out there and had a look for ourselves and just remind ourselves of the privileges we have.

With that, I would move that this House now stand adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 4:17 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 16, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/16

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. At the beginning of this week we ask for renewed strength in the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of the Legislature. We ask for the protection of this Assembly and also the province we are elected to serve. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now participate in the singing of our national anthem. I'm going to call on Mr. Paul Lorieau, who is in the Speaker's gallery. Please participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce four of my friends from the Lacombe-Ponoka constituency. They are members of the Wolf Creek school division. In the members' gallery we have Karin Engen, the chairman of the board; Kelly Lowry, the vice-chairman of the board; Dr. Larry Jacobs, superintendent of schools; and Joe Henderson, secretary-treasurer of Wolf Creek school division. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's a pleasure and an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature a group of 53 curious and clever students from Gateway Christian school in Red Deer. They're very excited to be here, and they will be watching us during question period. They're accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Carolyn Stolte and Mr. Jim Driedger. They are also accompanied by parents Mrs. Tracey Numrich, Mrs. Donna Strome, Mr. Clary Michael, Mrs. Sherry Glebe, Mrs. Cathy Nicolay, Mrs. Jackie Southwell, Mrs. Michelle Rance, and Mrs. Christine Schick. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two people who are very important in my life and the lives of my colleagues; that is, two of our staff members.

We have with us Lori DeLuca. I'll ask Lori to stand while I say

nice things about her. She is from Edmonton, graduated from the University of Alberta with a bachelor of arts degree in political science. She was working for Health and Wellness as a research assistant, and she has now joined our staff as a research analyst. Lori is also involved with co-ordinating the annual World Partnership Walk in Edmonton to raise money for social development projects in Africa and Asia.

I would now ask Mark Leigh to also stand and join Lori. Mark was born and raised in Edmonton and received his degree in psychology from the University of Manitoba. Before joining our team as an administrative assistant, Mark worked with nonprofit agencies, group home shelters, and won the Alberta Fitness Leadership Certification Association leader of the year award for 2000.

So just two of our staff but ones that are very important to me. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature the STEP grant student who is working in the Edmonton-Glenora constituency office for the summer, Peter Marriott. He is an expert on computers and an excellent writer. I would invite him to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly three very active persons from my constituency office in Edmonton-Manning. One is Jane Walker, who does much of the casework and is an active constituency assistant. Please rise, Jane.

Also, Martha Wong, a volunteer who was very active in my campaign, who is an incredibly active volunteer in the community in many social issues and at church. Also Cecily Poohkay, who is the STEP student for the summer, a very accomplished individual who's worked in many volunteer activities, from raising money for the CNIB, working in Urban Manor, and many other activities. We look forward to your being with us in the summer.

I'd ask the Assembly to please welcome them and give their usual warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly three bright young students who have been working with us in our constituency offices. Roland Schmidt has joined us in Edmonton-Strathcona as the STEP student, and he's also active as the co-chair of the New Democratic Youth of Alberta.

Suzanne MacLeod is my new STEP student in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. She is graduating with a bachelor of arts in anthropology from the University of Alberta and is going to study law in the fall at Aberdeen university in Scotland.

Our final introduction is Erica Woolley, who has been working in Edmonton-Strathcona as a social work student caseworker since January. We greatly appreciate her hard work for those needing assistance and wish her the best of luck in all her future endeavours.

I'd ask all three guests to now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and the Assembly Dorothy and Harold Hall. Dorothy and Harold have been active members in the CCF/NDP for more than 40 years. They both attended the founding meeting of the Alberta NDP in 1962 and have worked on every single campaign since then. Dorothy and Harry lead an active lifestyle by participating in a number of sports, including golf, baseball, and curling. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Eric Musekamp. Eric is the founder and president of the farm workers union of Alberta, based out of Bow Island. This organization was established in 1999 and was created to raise awareness about the deaths and injuries that occur on farms throughout Alberta. Eric is in the public gallery, and I would ask him now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and privilege to be able to introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly some guests that I have here today. They're the Golden Hills school board: Wilf Golbeck, Christene Howard, Dianne McBeth, who is the superintendent, Joyce Bazant, Paul Crown, Corey Fisher, Karen Harries, Sylvia Holsworth, Larry Maerz, and Christine Painter. I would ask them all to rise and receive the wonderful welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd direct your eyes, please, to those present in the Speaker's gallery. I'm pleased to introduce visitor services staff and Legislature tour guides who are here today. You will have noticed that they have traded in their regular dapper duds for frocks of a more traditional time. They are wearing 1905 period costumes and will continue to wear them during our centennial celebrations. The period costumes were done by two groups in commemoration of Alberta's 2005 centennial. Rhonda Coates, theatre studies department of Red Deer College, made the costumes for the visitor services staff. Anne Hill, textile, clothing and culture, department of human ecology, University of Alberta, made the costumes for the tour guides.

I'd now ask Brent Francis, Karen Muhlbach, Keltie Troock, Janet Baker, and Meredith Shaw to rise. These are the costumes you'll see in our building for much of this year.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Legislature Environs

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Legislature Building and Grounds are of defining importance to Edmonton and to the entire province, but for years now they've been left to decline. In the winter the skating rink facilities amount to a trailer and a couple of porta-potties. Year-round this area is scarred with parking lots and vacant buildings. This province and this city deserve better. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Given that the Legislature precinct is of profound importance to the city of Edmonton and the entire province of Alberta, what plans does this government have to revamp the lands and buildings surrounding the Legislature?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's an absolutely great question. We have taken the first steps already in that we have put out an RFP to take a look at three buildings which are presently housed on the Legislature Grounds: the federal building, which has been vacant for approximately 12 to 15 years, the Legislature Annex, as well as the Terrace Building. I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Legislature Grounds have to be a showcase for Edmonton, have to be a showcase for Alberta. They have come under a state of disrepair. When we take a look at the exposed aggregate that is presently out in front of the Legislature, I do feel that that needs to be looked at. We're currently examining how best we can do that, but we have to do it in context of those three buildings as well.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the minister tell us what stage the request for proposals has reached for overhauling the Legislature precinct?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The request for proposals went out approximately a month to six weeks ago, and we should expect the answer by the end of June or the first part of July, with some things starting to happen in July, August, in that particular time frame. If you're wondering why the rush, one of the issues that we're looking at with the federal building is that there's a potential bill for \$250,000 on the roof if we choose to keep the federal building and work on it. So it's very timely that we look at the Legislature Grounds as a whole right now, and that's what we're doing as opposed to just doing some one-offs.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Specific to the power plant on the south edge of the grounds by the greenhouse, what plans are being considered for that site, that very old power plant?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the things we're taking a very close look at. There are some questions as to whether or not there are some archeological issues in that particular area. We're taking a look at the power plant to see if it could potentially be relocated, exactly what can happen. Part of this RFP is to take a look at the Terrace Building, the Annex, and the federal building and to ensure that we come up with a solution for Edmontonians and all of Albertans so that we truly have something magnificent here at the Legislature.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Government Aircraft Flight Logs

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Association of Journalists at its fifth annual code of silence awards, recognizing the

most secretive government agency in Canada, last Saturday night awarded this Alberta government first prize for denying access to public documents on the use of government planes to journalists and opposition parties until after the 2004 provincial election. My questions are all to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Will the minister tell this House and Alberta Justice lawyer Bill Olthuis which of his department's two flight log e-mails, the one prior to the election or the altered one after, is accurate?

Dr. Oberg: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. This was brought to light in a public inquiry last week. What we saw in going back and asking the person who sent the actual e-mail was that there was a grammatical error. What the document said was, first of all, on or after, which really didn't make a lot of sense. She changed that to on or before November 25, which I believe was the date in question. The documents were received I believe on November 23 or November 24. This is very serious. If there was a document altered after it had been sent, it's a very serious charge. We went to the specific individual and asked her, and she said that she had made a grammatical error and subsequently changed it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As evidence of his ministry's pursuit of transparency and accountability will the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation now release or post all flight logs from May 2004 to May 2005?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, consistent with the FOIP legislation we'd be more than happy to.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I said flight logs, not manifests.

Again to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: why did this government deliberately sit on the FOIP flight log request for six months before releasing it after the fall election? What else is this government trying to hide?

Dr. Oberg: Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Energy and Utilities Board

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals have learned that this Conservative government through the Energy and Utilities Board is proposing changes that would prohibit disclosure of information through freedom of information and privacy on large facility liability management programs. The EUB proposal would prevent any consideration of the public interest by the FOIP commissioner and would also prevent the public from any opportunity to examine information that may directly and adversely affect the public. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Why would the Energy and Utilities Board withhold important information from the public and weaken the FOIP process?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there may be some discussions at the present time. The Energy and Utilities Board is continually looking at their processes both with respect to what should be accessible to the public, intervenor status, and a whole host of things in the process. If there's a specific instance though, I'd surely be happy to look into that one.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why would the minister change FOIP regulations which will mask the extent and liability for costs of reclamation and remediation concerns at oil and gas sites?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there certainly is no intent on the part of the government to see that the public wouldn't have information that they should be aware of. In respect of FOIP none of those changes have yet been made. At this stage it's just still consultation that's being held.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given the EUB mission to base all decisions on the public interest, how will this barrier to information serve the public interest?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the EUB does have a policy, and that was continuing to take part. Those that would be directly or indirectly adversely impacted by any development would have a say. They would be able to bring those issues before the Energy and Utilities Board, and that will continue to be the policy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Sale of Social Housing Corporation Land

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the minister of seniors confirmed that 927 acres of prime real estate in Fort McMurray were sold by the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to a private developer without a public tender. The purchaser of this untendered real estate is Timberlea Consortium Incorporated. Fort McMurray's booming economy makes this extremely valuable real estate, making its sale at below market value and without a public tender most unusual. My question is to the minister. Given that Timberlea Consortium paid only \$35,000 per acre whereas nearby comparable parcels were being sold for over \$60,000 per acre, why did the government sell this prime real estate in a cozy private deal rather than opening the sale to bids from other interested developers?

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, this question, as the member said, was before the House on Thursday. I did not say, hon. member, that there were 900 and whatever acres of land, that you've mentioned here. That's not accurate.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I also mentioned that under the Alberta Housing Act we do through the Alberta Social Housing Corporation have the ability to sell land through a number of processes. Those do include a direct sale, a nominal fee sale, or through the tendering process. This land that this individual is talking about – I know that my predecessor in his wisdom when he did offer that land as a direct sale also first hired an independent appraiser to assess the value of the land. The value of the land was appraised at between \$15,000 and \$40,000, and that was depending on how soon housing could be developed in the area. Given that, the accusation about this being a private, cozy deal is completely untrue.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that Timberlea Consortium paid less than the going rate for this parcel of prime real estate, will the minister now clear the air by immediately tabling both the agreement for sale and the appraisal reports, and if not, what is she hiding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not hiding anything. This was a legal sale, and there was an appraised value by an independent appraiser outside of government. I'd be more than pleased to table the legislation that would let you see that this is legal, and that might be helpful to you.

Mr. Mason: There's absolutely no reason to table legislation in this House, Mr. Speaker. We need to get to the bottom of this.

In addition to being untendered, why was Timberlea Consortium also given a preferential financing arrangement whereby the land was sold via an agreement for sale rather than the usual practice of the developer paying the total purchase price for the land up front?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, I go back to my original point that this is a legal sale. It was done in the best faith and with the best intent for Fort McMurray to develop housing, and that is what is occurring on this land. There hasn't been any unusual agreement made. That seems to be the innuendo here from the member opposite. Perhaps, if you don't want the legislation tabled, you'll re-read it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Food Regulations Review

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents through their volunteer groups have expressed grave concern about the apparent new health regulations or their enforcement. These regulations threaten to close down community halls, through their potluck suppers or through their fundraising activities. It certainly has made them uneconomical. Many of these have been operating for generations or decades for sure. My questions today are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Is it simply overzealous enforcement, or is the Department of Health and Wellness doing something different that categorizes these community halls or community groups as now unsafe or a risk to health?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, throughout this session there have been questions and references to the manner in which we administer the regulations relative to food services under the Alberta Public Health Act. The only regulation that has changed changed the 1st of April. When there are six or more food handlers present in a facility, there must be somebody certified in sanitation and correct food delivery. When there are fewer than six, then, in fact, the person has to be not necessarily present but aware of the serving and looking after the service from that supervisory perspective.

Mr. Speaker, because of the issues that have been raised by many members about the consistency of the application of the rules, we have been working feverishly, I might add, on guidelines so that we can come out and ensure that there will be some consistency, which will hopefully rid us of some of the complaints that we've had of perhaps a too rigorous or unnecessarily harsh treatment of any of the

groups that have been providing adequate and healthy food service delivery.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: could the minister tell us specifically what changes to the regulations she's contemplating that might make these not-for-profit organizations operate as they were before, and does it have any effect on farmers' markets?

Ms Evans: There are four categories of permitting that are done under this regulation: permitting of the facility itself, its operations, the farmers' markets as well as the construction of the facility. All I can advise is that we will be releasing to stakeholders a redraft of the regulations dealing with farmers' markets and dealing with the other areas of the regulations that have been problematic. My first hope is that the guidelines, once released, hopefully within the next two weeks, to all Albertans, will make a considerable difference in the way that the administration is conducted. Secondly, we will undertake a further regulatory review.

Just one more comment, Mr. Speaker. Our goal is to have some equity in the manner in which safe food, healthy food is delivered throughout Alberta, and we will still pursue that goal.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Whistle-blower Protection

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month, within hours of the Finance minister saying that Alberta Securities Commission employees had nothing to fear, the director of administrative services was let go, allegedly because he was a whistle-blower. Now the minister is named in a \$1.3 million lawsuit filed last week. We have long called for whistle-blower legislation in this province, but never has the need been greater. My question is for the Deputy Premier. What is the government's reason for refusing to give all government employees real protection by implementing whistle-blower legislation?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'll answer the question in this way. It was raised that an employee of the Alberta Securities Commission was terminated, suggested that it was because he came forward with information. I said at the time and I repeat again that any employee that is terminated from their position has an opportunity to bring that forward. Indeed, that employee can and will do that.

Mr. Speaker, I have not experienced in 18 years here a concern from our employees in this government that they cannot come forward with their concerns. We hear from our employees at all times. We welcome hearing from our employees. I think the hon. member is out, way out, if he believes that the employees of this government don't believe they can bring their concerns forward.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, they keep coming to us.

Mr. Speaker, without whistle-blower legislation will the Minister of Finance admit that employees are not safe to come forward with the truth about human resource and enforcement irregularities at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: No, Mr. Speaker, I certainly will not. As I indicated in my previous answer, employees can feel quite comfortable in coming forward if they have concerns in the workplace and,

in fact, do that, and they are dealt with. I would suggest that if employees come forward to the hon. member opposite, he would do that employee a service by making sure that the respective minister is aware of it. They can sit down together and deal with the issue. I'm quite happy to have the hon. member present when we discuss the issue if that makes him feel better.

Mr. R. Miller: I'm not so sure I want to be a party to that.

Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that the federal government has whistle-blower legislation and that now, as of July 1, public corporations regulated by the ASC must also have whistle-blower legislation, why is this government dragging its feet and not protecting its own employees who want to speak the truth?

2:00

Mrs. McClellan: I think that one of the issues, Mr. Speaker, is the aside: "I'm not so sure I want to be a party to that." The fact is that if you had a genuine interest in the employees and their well-being, you would do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Species at Risk

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The attention that Alberta gives to species at risk is extremely important to all Albertans and a key part of our provincial commitment to care for our wild species. My first question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What are the provincial wildlife managers doing to ensure the recovery of species at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been working really hard over the last 30 years at protecting species at risk, and particularly over the last four years we have established a comprehensive recovery planning program that encompasses 15 recovery teams working on 18 particular conservation actions. Not only are those comprehensive actions handled in offices, but they are actual on-the-ground work as well. A key part to the made-in-Alberta approach, we feel, is having that on-the-ground planning process involve stakeholders and landowners because that's key to finding out the results. As well, as the hon. member knows very well, the Endangered Species Conservation Committee is a good example of Alberta's co-operative approach.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Do Alberta's practices give due consideration to the protection of plant species?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that our policy of conserving species at risk does include and extends to plants as well. Even though it's under the provincial Wildlife Act, there are provisions in the act that allow the capability of lists going to species at risk for plants that are either threatened or endangered. One of the plants that's been identified is the western blue flag, which is a wild iris that grows in southern Alberta. We're into our fourth year of implementing an action plan on that, and credit for that action plan goes to the people that are actually working on the ground as well as the landowners that get us in to see where the plant exists. We are also in the process of developing more specific regulations to protect plants under species at risk.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the same minister. How committed is your department to providing adequate resources to protect species at risk in the province?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, species at risk are a top priority for myself, and as a result of that the department treats it as their top priority as well. We want to make sure that they can fulfill their role. Our recent budget allocations include a dedicated management specialist that will help focus on things like caribou, and we will also consider a number of new biologists that will help us with our species-at-risk management as part of their day-to-day job.

For the next hundred years we will make sure that Albertans are well served in terms of dealing with species at risk.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Government Aircraft Flight Logs

(continued)

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up with questions pertaining to the same issues surrounding the *Edmonton Journal's* FOIP request for Tory Air flight logs, I will ask the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation the same question posed by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Varsity. Why did this government deliberately sit on the FOIP request for six months, only to release the information after the election was called?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the FOIP inquiry that is presently going on is looking at all of these potential questions. They're looking at, for example, why it took so long to get the flight logs out. It's also looking at why exactly it took so long to get all of the information. It's presently before the inquiry, so I do not want to bias the inquiry and what is being said. There have been some irregularities, and the inquiry is taking a very close look at these irregularities.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that on October 27, 2004, only two days after the writ was dropped, the ministry granted itself a 30-day extension, what was the reason given to delay the release of that information? Again, why wait until after the election?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will give the same answer to the question. The public inquiry is looking into all of these, and I expect that they will come up with some answers very shortly.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question, then, goes to the Minister of Government Services. Access to information fees at the federal government level are an initial symbolic fee of \$5 and only 20 cents per page for photocopying. The recent *Edmonton Journal* request was at a cost of over \$900. Why does this government use the high FOIP request costs to limit access to information?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe that it's very important that we spend taxpayers' dollars wisely. The fact is that since FOIP was put in place, we have actually spent about \$52 million on it. On

the recovery from the costs that we have for the information – \$52 million cost, slightly over \$500,000 return.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Hantavirus

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday Alberta's provincial health office issued a warning to Albertans about the danger of contracting hantavirus after three cases were confirmed in central Alberta, including the tragic death of a single mother. The three cases of hantavirus involved members from the same family who were working together to clean out their garage, an activity that many Albertans do this time of year. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister tell us what level of risk hantavirus poses to Albertans?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Karen Grimsrud, the Alberta deputy provincial health officer, advises that although the risk is relatively low, there are a number of factors. Since 1989, in fact, we've had 31 cases, nine of which have died. It's a sad tragedy. This year because apparently there are mice that have weathered the winter better, there is considerably more danger to be assumed. So at this time of year when people are cleaning out sheds and barns and sweeping things out, we're issuing some health warnings. Certainly, it's been tragic to note the deaths that have taken place in David Thompson.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, my last question to the same minister: can the minister tell us if she plans to have an information campaign or post information on the department's website on how Albertans can protect themselves from contracting hantavirus?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly on the health website, health.gov.ab.ca, we provide advice. We are through the medical officers of health throughout the regions distributing more advice. We are providing additional public service messaging to advise people if they are going to clean out these kinds of places, not to use vacuums, not to sweep – they can spread it because it's an airborne virus – advising them to handle any mouse droppings, urine, or any other kind of evidence of mice, presumed to be deer mice, extremely carefully and to secure them in a way that doesn't further antagonize or spread the disease.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of thing that we are making mention of in children's authorities as well as through the schools and the regions.

The Speaker: The hon. member? Fine.

The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

School Funding Formula

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Russ Wiebe's analysis of the funding and costs of plant operations and maintenance in Alberta's schools report states: the funding formula has not kept pace with the real costs; in the year 2004-05 school boards collectively faced a \$21.3 million shortfall in their electricity and gas bills. School boards rely almost entirely on the provincial government for school facility operations and maintenance funding. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: is the minister's \$9.6 billion

investment in school buildings at risk because dollars are being shifted from the infrastructure maintenance to utility costs and to keep schools clean? Are school boards losing out?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the question about whether or not it is at risk is: no, it is not at risk. We are in the process of taking a look at the operation and maintenance for the school boards, and hopefully we will be doing something very, very soon on this.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:10

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why are school boards in Alberta, specifically St. Albert, being penalized by the current funding formula?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the current funding formula, in essence, plays a lot on utilization, and the key behind this is that if you have two facilities that are 20 per cent full, perhaps you should combine them and have one facility and pay less for operation and maintenance. These are some of the concepts that are out there. I think they're very standard concepts.

We are looking, though, at a better way, potentially, for the dollars to be distributed. We're looking at a way that is not going to solve all of the problems for all of the schools and keep every school in the province open because there are some schools that have seen a significant decline in enrolment. However, we are looking at a way that will make it fairer for all school boards in this province, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the current funding formula did not work in '02-03, '03-04, will the minister now commit to reviewing the present formula and adding \$21.3 million for electricity and gas bills, which will be required in 2004-05?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, in reviewing the gas bills and reviewing the needs, we find that there are some significant needs in the operation and maintenance formula. It is something that we are reviewing, and it is something that we will be taking a very close look at.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

School Closures

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education keeps trying to pin the blame for school closures on school boards. But at a board retreat in November an October 14, 2004, letter to Chairman Hansen from then ministers of learning and infrastructure indicates very clearly that funding for new schools would not be provided unless older schools in established neighbourhoods were closed down first. My question to the minister is simply this. Why does the minister keep wanting to shift the blame for school closures onto local boards, when they were given clear direction by this government to close schools in the older parts of the city to build new schools?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I have never shifted any blame for anything onto any school board in this House or anywhere else, and

those members know it. To play that kind of politics is cheap and absolutely silly.

I think the average taxpayer out there knows that there comes a period in a school's lifetime when it is no longer practical to perhaps keep it open for whatever those local reasons are. That's why we have elected school trustees out in the communities to look at those situations and make those difficult decisions.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the point that I'm making – and the minister did not answer the question. It was a direction from this government to close schools down. Does he think that it's fair and equitable to do that? How are the local boards making that decision?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with that particular correspondence. If the member opposite wants to send it over to me, I'd like to just have a read through and see exactly what that correspondence did read.

I think it's absolutely unfair for someone to sit in this House and make that kind of an allegation or accusation.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure he can get it from the previous minister of learning if he wants to.

My question to the minister is this. Would the minister – and we've had this discussion – rather than getting exercised and excited, agree to doing what they do in Ontario, where they make it clear that it is illegal to close down old schools to bring in new ones? Would he look at that at least?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, during the estimates debate, I think it was, I indicated to this member and perhaps to others that I would welcome looking at any suggestions that they might have. Now, there were a number of items that were referenced. When the summer break here, as it's referred to, comes up very soon, I'll be happy to take a look at that Ontario model and other models that have come to my attention: the Oregon model, the B.C. model, the Paris model, and a number of others. There are a lot of ideas out there that bear some consideration, and I'm willing to do exactly that.

I know this is an exciting topic right now because we're doing our best to follow up on so many recommendations of the Alberta Commission on Learning, and this is certainly one of them, and I think the members opposite know that. Certainly, the school boards do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Project Kare

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The body of another woman was recently discovered in a remote area east of Edmonton. Police have identified her as having worked in the sex trade. Now the victim is added to the list of the many other women whose murdered bodies have been discovered in or around the Edmonton area. We hear about Project Kare almost daily in the news. My questions are to the Solicitor General. What is the function of Project Kare?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Project Kare was named to reflect the philosophy of care and concern and compassion that goes on in the investigations of missing and

murdered women. The initial "K" in Kare provides the initial for the lead agency, that being the RCMP in Alberta, which is K Division. Therefore, Project Kare, starting with a K, in conjunction with the Solicitor General's office provides the support with regard to the 43 highly trained investigators including crime analysts and behavioural and forensic experts regarding this investigation. They are investigating 42 murders and approximately 31 persons that are still missing in the province, most recently, obviously, the 12 murders in and around the Edmonton vicinity over the past 16 years.

Mr. Johnston: My final question: what is the province doing to assist Project Kare as they conduct their investigations into these brutal murders?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, again, as I mentioned, Project Kare began about two years ago with provincial funding from the Solicitor General's office. Last year we provided \$2.9 million to fund the program and the investigation, and this past budget year we've provided them with an additional \$800,000 for support staff and investigators to increase that to \$3.7 million.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Federal Financial Support

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations reported that Alberta was being shortchanged by the federal government and that he was seeking a new deal that would pay more than \$2 billion over five years. The next day the Premier refuted this by stating: there's not a perceived shortfall. End of quote. There appears to be a disconnect within the government. To the minister of international and intergovernmental affairs: is there a federal funding shortfall in Alberta or not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there is no disconnect. Secondly, Albertans are proud to contribute to Canada through the equalization program. The dollars that we had referred to in question period are those relative to these one-off deals that have been made with provinces over the last couple of weeks in the country of Canada and, quite frankly, that many are finding to be rather distasteful at this particular junction in our history.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that you've partially answered my second question, which will be directed to you. Given that the Premier has stated that a funding shortfall does not exist, has the minister withdrawn his request with the federal Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for increased funding for Alberta?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to clarify. There are two issues that we're talking about. One is the equalization, and the Premier and government agree that that is fair unless the federal government decides to tinker with it in the future. The others are these transfers of funds from the feds to other provinces. With respect to the Ontario deal, we don't know if it's \$2 billion, a billion and a half, \$500 million. We need time to examine that agreement with the Minister of Finance, and once we examine the agreement

and we find the full context of that, we will bring that forward to government for a decision.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. I would like to direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Given that the Premier stated that the International and Intergovernmental Relations ministry, quote, can do what they want – and that's the end of the quote – who really is in charge here?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague said: there is no disconnect. There are two issues. You know, if you do all your research in the newspapers and on the talk shows, as good and thorough as those happen to be, you're bound to miss a part of the story, especially when the conversations happen in two or three venues over two or three days.

The fact is that Alberta is a proud supporter of equalization. There is a formula that provides fairness across Canada. We have never debated, argued, or disputed that we should be a contributor in that area. We're thankful that we are in a financial position to do that.

2:20

However, Mr. Speaker, the next part of the question: are we doing all right? Well, you know what? The province of Alberta is doing all right. We're in a sound financial position, and that's exactly what the Premier said.

As my colleague pointed out, what is distasteful are these one-off deals that are happening with rapidity across the country in the last days. Mr. Speaker, that is where we need to have some information. We do not know the details of the Ontario deal. We want to know and we will know and we will determine whether there's anything further we should do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Aid for Disabled Persons

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government has been doing a good job in its mission of developing, implementing, and evaluating programs for the delivery of supports to adults with developmental disabilities. From my past visit to the CNIB office in Calgary and reflecting the concern from my constituents about the bridge to employment program, my question today is to the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. What is the bridge to employment program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bridge to employment program is offered by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind in Calgary. It's a program that assists people with that disability to find a job. They do it in ways which would include computer classes, training through group workshops, resumé writing, job search, individual interviews, and whatnot. It's a good program.

Although the program is offered by the CNIB, it had been funded by the federal government through their opportunities fund. That, I understand, is the hon. member's concern because that funding has ended through the federal government. Although the CNIB continues to offer the program and is carrying it through right now, hopefully when the new budget comes forward, the hon. member can assist the CNIB with accessing the funding through the federal government once again.

The Speaker: Hon. member, do I understand this correctly? You're talking about a federal program totally unrelated to this Legislature and this budget?

Mr. Cao: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: My supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that this program has been discontinued, what are you going to do to help the clients of this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, though, the program hasn't been discontinued. It's offered by the CNIB, but the funding for this program is through the federal government, and that is what has ended. There are other programs that we assist. It would be with the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. They have programs available in Calgary as well, and I will take that under advisement for that minister.

Mr. Cao: My last supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that many disabled Albertans know in advance of the deterioration of their abilities, what is the government's policy to help people in their transition to permanent disability so that they maintain productive lives?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, through my department we do have a couple of programs that would come to mind that have been in the Legislature here during session. That would be the AISH program, the assured income for the severely handicapped program, where we offer assistance with a living allowance, a medical benefit, and more recently we're developing legislation for personal income support. As well, we offer assistance to persons with developmental disabilities through a number of assistance-type programs that are unique to the individual, depending on their disability. So, hopefully, that will help the member as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Use of School Instructional Funding

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government promised that the starvation diet for education would be over. That has not happened. In fact, the government continues to practise the sugar daddy politics which they're famous for with other levels of government in this province, including the public school boards. My first question is to the minister of infrastructure. Why has the government ordered – ordered – the Edmonton public school board to use \$300,000 that was approved for the Victoria school project on the design work for three new schools in the city of Edmonton?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will get back to the hon. member with the specifics, but I do believe that that was the interest that was accumulated from the dollars being given to the school board.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education: given

that the Edmonton public school board is forced to use over \$7 million in instructional dollars to subsidize the plant operation and maintenance grants, why is this government forcing the schools to take money from the classroom to pay the bill in the boiler room?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, this provincial government isn't forcing that particular board to do anything of the kind. Under the renewed flexible funding framework, which was worked out with, by, and for those school boards, they have the ability to shift around a significant amount of the monies that we provide to them, monies which, I might add, went up by \$287 million in this current budget to the largest amount ever for K to 12, \$4.3 billion. It's a 7.1 per cent increase, and I think education fared very well in those terms.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: if that response was true, can the minister please explain why the provincial government's position now is that this practice of transferring instructional dollars to facilities or vice versa must end by the 2005-06 school year?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think that he might have a question here for the hon. minister of infrastructure. Insofar as instructional dollars are concerned, for which I have responsibility, we have increased every single part of the budget. We've increased money for special needs by 4 per cent, by another 4 per cent, and a total of about 11 per cent for severe, mild, and moderate. We've increased the English as a Second Language learning by 30 per cent to over \$40 million. We've increased every part of that budget, and we've increased the flexibility that the school boards have as well.

It would behoove all members, I think, in the opposition parties to have a close look at the Education budget. For a short read of it, have a look at estimates because a lot of the good news is rolled out there. I understand that they're trying to put a shadow over top of education, but we're very proud of education in this province, and we're going to remain to fund it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

School Fees

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents and students in my constituency are concerned about some of the additional costs that they've had to cover for education purposes. As the end of the school year approaches, stress levels increase with respect to costs for graduation, field trips, and other fees. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Why are school boards allowed to charge school fees?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, that's a very good question. I think the short answer is because it's allowed under the School Act. I think we also have to understand that there's a dichotomy, if you will, of costs, some of which are prescribed and some of which are retained and others of which are refunded. For example, fees are charged for school book rentals, but if the books are returned in good usable condition, those fees can be refunded. For other fees such as school busing – that's a consumable service – those fees are not returned. The short answer is that school boards are allowed to charge certain fees. In fact, those collections probably amount to over \$30 million, if memory serves, per annum.

Mrs. Ady: My first supplemental is to the same minister. What

does the minister suggest that I tell those families who cannot afford to pay these additional school fees?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, if we take the example of school busing fees, which was in the news not that long ago, there's a certain prescribed amount that gets charged on a monthly or an annual basis, but families who have perhaps three or four children in the school system can take advantage of a group rate which is significantly less, obviously, than if it were charged out on a per person basis. So there is that.

2:30

Secondly, any school board does have the ability to waive any particular fees. Superintendents in most cases have those abilities to waive certain fees so as to not prevent a child from accessing the same kinds of education services that other children in that area receive.

Mrs. Ady: My final supplemental to the same minister: given that parents often fund raise to help cover these added costs, will the minister please explain what is eligible to be fund raised by parent advisory councils?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish I had a short, simple answer to that; I don't yet. But, as you may recall, Alberta's Commission on Learning has a section where it requires us as a government to more clearly define what are basics in education that we should cover as taxpayers and what are extras, things that can either be fund raised for or certain school field trips or school uniforms or band uniforms or things of that nature, which a local school board may feel are enhancements to education. So I do hope that we'll have more progress on that answer more definitively very soon. It'll certainly take us at least through the end of the summer to arrive at it, but we are working hard to provide a very specific answer to that very specific question. I'm just sorry that we don't have it yet.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Minister of Community Development would like to supplement a response from last week's QP. Now, remember that once this is provided for, the hon. member to whom the original set of questions were dealt with has a chance to raise a question. At this point in time I do not know which answer the minister is responding to, so we will proceed that way.

Applewood Park Community Association

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I'm responding to a series of questions last week in this Assembly, predominantly by the Leader of the Opposition, wherein I was asked questions about a Wild Rose international development program grant that was given to Applewood Park Community Association. At the time – and this would've been Thursday of last week – I indicated that the money had been properly disbursed in an appropriate way. I did this on the basis of three pieces of information. First of all, we had a signed declaration by two of the principals of Applewood Park Community Association; secondly, based on the verbal assurances of another principal of Applewood community; and thirdly the Auditor General had in fact conducted a random audit of Applewood and found nothing out of the ordinary for the year 2004.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, the individual who made the verbal assurance to us that the money had been sent from Applewood to Vietnam has changed his statement, which leads us to concerns as to whether or not the declaration that was provided for us and that we relied on was, in fact, accurate. To this point Applewood has not

provided all of the documents necessary to establish how and to whom the funds were transferred. In light of this new information I've asked the Auditor General to determine how Applewood Park Community Association has disbursed and used its grants from the Wild Rose Foundation.* The Auditor General's review of that will determine if there has been a violation of the regulations under which the Wild Rose Foundation operates, and the Auditor General's findings will determine our next steps in this matter, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition if you wish.

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say that I respect and appreciate the minister's comments and forthrightness here. There were some very unpleasant exchanges and points of order brought last week that I hope we all regret because I don't believe they were justified.

I do look forward to the Auditor General's report, and I hope it's made public as much as is possible. There are inconsistencies around whether CIDA was involved or wasn't. Our information is that they don't have any records of being involved. There are inconsistencies from the Applewood position.

So I thank the minister, in fact, for his comments here. This is a serious issue. We all know that Wild Rose is an important asset to this province, and we need to maintain its integrity. To help the minister, I, too, will have some information tabled in just a few minutes that may be of relevance to him.

Thank you.

The Clerk: Members' Statements.

The Speaker: I think, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, your guests have departed, so there's no need, then, to revert that way.

Then, in just a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six members to participate in Members' Statements.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call upon the first, just the historical vignette of the day. I want to announce that starting today the Alberta Legislature is home to the Famous Five maquette for our centennial year. All Albertans are familiar with the Famous Five, whose portraits hang on the fifth floor of the Legislature Building.

Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Irene Parlby, and Louise McKinney gained their Famous Five status due to their efforts to ensure that women are recognized as persons in Canadian law. Their October 18, 1929, victory in the highest court of appeal at the time, the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, is recognized in many places throughout the Commonwealth.

In 1996 an Edmonton artist, Barbara Patterson, was commissioned by the Famous Five Foundation to create a larger-than-life monument to these five women. The miniature version of this sculpture, the maquette, tours the country in hopes of educating Canadians about these five Alberta women. This year, starting today, it will be on display in our Carillon Room, and it will become part of our tours of the Legislature Building. In front and on the desks of all members are brochures that highlight the many accomplishments of the Famous Five. It's another addition to the history of our province.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Angela Lemire Caroline Giguere

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize two individuals in my constituency of West Yellowhead who each recently received a very important award. Last Saturday the recipients of the 2005 excellence in teaching awards were announced. The two winners from my constituency were Angela Lemire and Caroline Giguere.

Angela Lemire is a teacher at the Jasper junior/senior high school. She has been teaching senior high school for 32 years, and her passion for teaching and learning has never ceased. Her students consistently score very high on the diploma exams, and many of her students achieve the standard of excellence each year. She is a dedicated teacher who spends her days ensuring that her students are given every opportunity to be successful.

Caroline Giguere teaches at Gerard Redmond community Catholic school in Hinton. Throughout her teaching career she taught kindergarten, junior and senior high school students. She is also heavily involved in the learning for life program, which targets high-needs students at risk of dropping out. Caroline is respected by all of those who have worked with her over the years, and many of her students love the fact that the word "detention" is not in her vocabulary. Instead of punishing mischievous students through detentions, she lovingly gives them learning opportunities, a chance for students to catch up on their studies in a supervised environment.

Mr. Speaker, these two teachers from my constituency are very deserving of this honour that has been bestowed upon them. I can't say how proud I am of these teachers, and I would ask all members to recognize these wonderful Albertans.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

2:40 Petroleum Industry

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to our petroleum industry Canada is now the third largest natural gas producer and the seventh largest crude oil producer in the world. Canada is a net exporter of petroleum resources, and Canada has reported 178 billion barrels of proven oil reserves in 2005, second only to Saudi Arabia. The bulk of these reserves are oil sand deposits in Alberta, the largest deposit in the world.

Our oil and gas industry provides 56 per cent of Canada's trade surplus and a share of 12.6 per cent of Canada's total exports. Our oil and gas industry employs almost half a million people and contributed \$18 billion in royalties and taxes in 2004. Mr. Speaker, Alberta contributes a very large percentage of this Canadian economy. All in all, Alberta's petroleum industry contributes 23.4 per cent of our GDP. By any standard Alberta, and Canada for that matter, is a world energy leader. We need to celebrate and capitalize on this success.

Mr. Speaker, the whole world knows about the importance of OPEC, and I quote an official document from the OPEC organization:

The OPEC . . . [members] co-ordinate their oil production policies in order to help stabilize the oil market and to help oil producers achieve a reasonable rate of return on their investments. This policy is also designed to ensure that oil consumers continue to receive stable supplies of oil.

What it means is that they use supply management for the benefit of the people. The actions of these smaller nations affect the whole world economy. They use their petroleum supply as leverage for economic relations and trade negotiations in the world.

*See p. 1497, left col., para. 6

Mr. Speaker, thinking outside the box, I venture an idea that the governments of Canada and Alberta, as a net exporter of petroleum resources, should explore the possibility of joining OPEC. As a developed nation, Canada and Alberta and our petroleum industry could share our expertise and reap benefits from the relationship.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Women's Global Charter for Humanity

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. From May 1 to May 7 the Canadian Women's March Committee celebrated a young woman named Tonika Morgan, who carried the Global Charter for Humanity from Vancouver to Quebec City. The Women's Global Charter for Humanity is a proposal to build a world where exploitation, oppression, intolerance, and exclusion no longer exist and where integrity, diversity, and the rights and freedoms of all are respected. These women hope to build a world based on five core values: equality, freedom, solidarity, justice, and peace.

Tonika, like myself and many women in Alberta, has a commitment to the improved status of women. Far too many women have lived the nightmare of poverty and homelessness. Women want and need a place as leaders and decision-makers.

The passing of the Global Charter for Humanity through our province is an opportunity for all Albertans to mobilize against poverty and violence. It is time for this government to fully commit toward universal equality for all residents of Alberta. We need to provide adequate resources for women such as Tonika to bring about positive change in our society. Only when women are treated as complete equals to their male counterparts, face no exclusion from the workforce, and suffer no oppression or exploitation from society will our society succeed to its fullest potential.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Student Leadership Conference

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday students from all over our great province gathered in Olds for their three-day 16th annual Alberta Provincial Student Leadership Conference. The goals of the conference are to provide a forum for students to reflect and learn from the past, to connect with student leaders and help them become more aware of what's happening in our world today, and to motivate participants to return to their home schools and communities to make a positive difference now and for the future.

The conference was kicked off by our own Minister of Community Development, followed by one of the best productions of *Grease* that I have ever seen, which was performed by the Olds high school drama class and a band made up of the Olds high school students. They received a well-deserved standing ovation. The next two days promise to be fun-filled, exciting, and also a tremendous learning experience. The title of the conference, Back to the Future: Celebrating and Connecting Centennials, is certainly an appropriate theme for this year's conference, as both the town of Olds and the province of Alberta are celebrating their centennials this year.

As I pointed out last night, Alberta's first century belongs to the pioneers, our grandparents, our parents, and us. The next century belongs to our students, their children, and their grandchildren, who will be the leaders of tomorrow. If the students at this year's conference are any indication of the quality of leaders who will take our province into the next century, then our future is certainly in good hands. I know that we all wish them the greatest success in this year's conference.

Thank you.

Discovery of Oil in Turner Valley

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important anniversary in Alberta's history. On May 14, 1914, the landscape of Alberta was forever altered. It was on this day 91 years ago that Alberta's first commercially viable oil well struck pay dirt.

After several failed wells Archibald Wayne Dingman and his company, Calgary Petroleum Products, struck oil, sending a geyser of light-grade crude 60 feet into the air. When this well, Dingman No. 1, blew for the first time 91 years ago, it launched Alberta's first major oil boom and transformed a small farm town 25 miles south of Calgary into the economic hub of this province. It was reported at the time that within two hours of the strike 200 automobiles were headed toward Turner Valley. Twelve years later Royalite No. 4, another new well located in Turner Valley, was producing more oil than all of the 4,500 wells located in Ontario together.

The discovery of oil gave birth to the community of Turner Valley. Evolving from a small group of houses to a thriving community, the town of Turner Valley was officially incorporated in 1930.

Mr. Speaker, while all Albertans celebrate our province's centennial this year, the citizens of Turner Valley are celebrating their 75th anniversary. Anniversary celebrations are being held on June 4 in conjunction with the town's Discovery Days, and I would invite all members to come to Turner Valley to discover its rich history and the natural beauty that Turner Valley has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the people of Turner Valley and to acknowledge their important contribution to the history of this province and to the development of our economy. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Edmonton City Centre Airport

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will discuss a grave concern to the people, most particularly the business and government community, of southern Alberta. The date of the closure of the municipal airport to traffic from the south is fast approaching. Closed to aircrafts carrying more than 10 paying seats, I find this most peculiar as Edmonton is the capital of this province. In fact, it is discriminatory when other areas of this province can continue to use our capital city's airport.

The southern business community in addition to the personnel of health regions, education and advanced education, research stations, and municipally elected leaders of their communities will be placed at a complete disadvantage to being able to conduct business with their government due to the lack of convenience and timeliness.

The business airline industry is going through dramatic change. City airports are for destination traffic. Commuter airlines are proliferating and are very successful. People come for meetings and leave immediately afterward. Time is money, and having high-salaried administrators cooling their heels in lineups is not the way business is done any more. Just this morning I read in the paper of smaller jets for four to five people being designed for this very type of air travel.

Relocating businesses or new businesses looking to hire first look for easy access for their executives, good schools for their children, and quality of life. I can't understand why such an advantage would be lost. Most North American cities would love to have the airport that our capital city has. Denver, Colorado, has four small airports to choose from. All, I may add, are in the city proper.

People cut off from the south will certainly drive because it's quicker, so I fail to see how, if the objective is to make the International more viable, this will help. I can't see that Calgary will not

always be the hub for this province as had been understood from the start.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand in the House to present a petition signed by 306 Albertans who urge the government of Alberta to introduce legislation that allows parents the authority to place drug-addicted children into mandatory drug treatment and to fund urgently required youth drug treatment centres.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition of 101 good Albertans from the fine Alberta communities of Devon, Duffield, Wabamun, Camrose, Sherwood Park, and Alberta's summer festival city of Edmonton, which reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: 2:50 **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Bill 42
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005**

Mr. Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, it is a matter of tradition that a miscellaneous statutes amendment act relates only to matters which are agreed to by all parties represented in the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 42 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of responses to questions raised during the Gaming estimates on May 4, 2005. These responses have already been sent to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition I'd like to table an e-mail from the auditor of Applewood Park Community Association, which does state, "The name of the Vietnamese group that we got the Wild Rose grant for was: The Calgary Vietnamese Caoadaist Cultural Society."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an e-mail I'd like to table with appropriate copies from southern Alberta, urging an inquiry into the child welfare system due to the "serious lack of resources and lack of support for child welfare workers to practice competently in a very demanding and challenging job."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of tablings today. The first consists of several e-mails from distressed parents whose children attend elementary, junior, and senior high schools in the Calgary-Varsity constituency. Norma Armstrong states that she finds it "hard to believe that in a province as 'wealthy' as Alberta . . . we are still losing programs that enhance our children's education." Other authors, including Jane Lee, Louise Ladouceur, Karin Kaarsoo, Aidan Hollis, Tina Wiley, and Peter and Eleonore Aukes, similarly outline their concerns regarding the elimination of the Simon Fraser junior high school band program.

My second tabling is a news release from the Canadian Association of Journalists. CAJ president, Paul Schneiderei in presenting the code . . .

The Speaker: How about just tabling it?

Mr. Chase: Am I not allowed to express the contents?

The Speaker: No.

Mr. Chase: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that direction.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to table five copies each of six letters dealing with good Albertans speaking to the deskilling of the workplace apprenticeship ratios and foreign replacement workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter dated May 16, 2005, to the Auditor General, requesting a review regarding Wild Rose Foundation pursuant to section 29 of the Auditor General Act, sir.

Thank you.

The Speaker: To the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, just for clarification. A short description is okay, but not a long one, and usually we're dealing with official documents rather than just correspondence from one to the other.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much for the clarification.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish today to table the required five copies of a document prepared by the Elder Advocates of Alberta Society, in which they outline the rights of vulnerable persons in care and give specific definitions of what and how that

care should be delivered. I trust that those who will be setting new standards will give this document careful consideration.

Thank you.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, College of Chiropractors of Alberta radiation health administrative organization annual report for the year ended June 30, 2004.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, May 12, I move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice again having been given on Thursday, May 12, I will now move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

The Speaker: Before I call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, just a bit of an update to the hon. members. I received a number of notes from hon. members saying: "Whoa, what's happened? There's been some renovation here on the Speaker's dais." There has been, and it's in preparation and anticipation of the presence of Her Majesty the Queen here next Tuesday. This is temporary. But if you walk by at any time thinking that it is the same as the way it was before, you will run into a wall. So, please, be careful.

**Bill 204
Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting)
Amendment Act, 2005**

[Debated adjourned May 9: Mr. Cao speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, I applaud the Alberta College of Pharmacists for taking the initiative to voluntarily put the products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine behind the counter, knowing full well that they might lose some business. It shows a lot of integrity in the profession to do this.

Frankly, I'm embarrassed that we haven't acted on this sooner. We need to move on Bill 204 quickly to ensure that meth makers aren't just moving the business out of the pharmacies and into the corner stores. By making products containing ephedrine and

pseudoephedrine schedule 2 drugs, it would take those products and put them behind the counter of pharmacies only. This will ensure that the meth makers will have a lot tougher time purchasing the main precursor than they have today.

On the occasions that I have had to purchase a medication over the counter, the pharmacist is always asking questions to ensure that I am purchasing the correct products for my ailment. I have also purchased cold medication at convenience stores, not 100 per cent sure if it is exactly what I needed. I certainly never considered asking the clerk at the convenience store for advice. When your job is to dispense medication, it is expected that you are going to be knowledgeable on the proper usage and effects of those medications. I don't think that we can expect the same from employees at the convenience store, nor should we.

This bill is also going to help law enforcement activities. Pharmacists are much more likely than a clerk at a convenience store to take note of a large, bulk purchase of products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine and notify the authorities. A cynical person might suggest that all we are doing is forcing meth producers to purchase the precursor in another province or through mail orders, and because of this, the amount of meth on our streets will not be reduced.

While, obviously, I would like to see all production of crystal meth stopped, I know that this bill isn't a silver bullet, but a lot of this comes down to simple supply-and-demand economics. By forcing meth makers to look elsewhere for the precursor, the precursor will inevitably be more expensive due to transportation and shipping costs. This increased input cost should lead to higher prices on the street, and it might also cause some producers to quit making meth. After all, some of the reason why crystal meth is so prevalent in Alberta is that it is relatively inexpensive to produce and the precursors are easily obtainable.

If we pass Bill 204 and make it harder for the producers, some might quit making it, and the lack of supply generally drives prices up. The reason why crystal meth's use is so widespread in Alberta is that it is inexpensive to buy and so readily available. If it were more expensive and harder to find, perhaps we could stop some of our children from experimenting and inevitably becoming addicted.

3:00

Not to dwell on the economic impacts, but crystal meth users need to pay for their habit somehow, and, as many of us have seen in our communities, break-in and theft charges are on the rise. If we can reduce the number of people who are addicted to crystal meth, logically we can reduce the associated crime costs.

So I urge all members to support Bill 204.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to get the opportunity to speak in second reading to Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. It's very interesting to see the level of concern in this Legislative Assembly in this sitting alone for the devastation that is being wrought in our communities and particularly upon and among our youth with crystal meth addiction.

I am particularly concerned about how this is playing out in the rural areas where there are less resources to identify and assist youth that are in trouble with this, less resources for the family, perhaps less awareness of what's going on. But this is not an issue or a problem that just affects the rural areas. It affects everywhere in Alberta. It's not just youth, but it is primarily youth. Why? Well, because of the cost. It's cheap. It's a cheap high, and it is increas-

ingly readily available. I'm pleased to see the understanding, the acknowledgement of a serious problem for our youth.

Where my issue comes in is the way this government seems to want to deal with things. They tend, if I look back over my years in the Assembly, to want to do something that shows that they're doing something, but I often have to go back and really look to see if what the bill is proposing addresses the problem. Does it get at the root of the problem, or does it cut a little piece off the side and isn't incredibly effective overall?

I think what's being proposed with this bill in that any drugs that contain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, which is the active ingredient that is then used in the manufacture of crystal meth – if you can cut off the supply of that, cut off the access to that ingredient, this will diminish the amount that is being produced. Well, possibly, but not for long.

When I look at the areas in the United States that have enacted similar legislation, yeah, they have seen a drop in the number of meth labs that they have been busting, but they've only been able to track this over a period of about a year to 18 months. Again, I will wait to see the actual evidence so that we could make a decision based on evidence instead of on what we think might happen, but I suspect that what we will see is that there is a downturn in the production of crystal meth in the short term in those locations as people who are cooking or making meth search for an alternative way to get the active ingredients, but in the long run it is doing nothing to address the demand for it.

As long as that demand is there for that cheap high, that universe-altering drug, there will be people who will be happy to continue to make it in whatever form and with whatever junk is in it to be able to sell it to people and make money. So until we address the demand for this drug, we're going to continue to have problems with it.

The biggest issue is: you can cook it yourself. Anybody in here could. I know well that nobody in here would, but they could. It's very easy to make. The recipes are all on the Internet. The ingredients for it are readily available without going to any kind of great lengths to acquire them. Having the drugs go behind the counter I think might slow it down, but I suspect that what we will see are thefts of larger shipments of it now or swarms of people going in and, you know, saying, "It's cold season, and everybody here's got a cold," and just buy up 30 boxes that way.

It's addressing a small part of this, but it's not addressing why we have such a demand for this. It does nothing to reduce that demand. It does nothing to address activities for youth to get involved with. I see that in the cities. You know, if you don't have money and your family is not willing to go and ask for a reduction in fees or a waiver of fees, you may not have anything to do as a youth.

I understand what a privileged upbringing I had, where I could pick whatever activity I wanted to be involved in, and my parents had enough money that they could let me participate in that. I think I got to do two things, and so did my brother. We could pick whatever those two activities were, and off we went and did them. There were volunteer opportunities we were encouraged to participate in. Bus passes were given to us. Lots of things were done to facilitate our being involved in that. We were always allowed and encouraged to go to classes.

But there are a lot of youth today that don't have anything to do, and that's why they hang out. They have nothing to do. There is no activity for them to get involved with in a way that is readily accessible and easy to get at and doesn't cost them too much money. So they hang out, as youth have hung out for centuries when they've got nothing else to do.

If they had a basketball and a hoop and a bit of concrete, they'd tend to get involved in a pickup basketball game. If they had a

baseball bat and a couple of mitts and a ball and a field, they could get out in the field and play baseball. Most people would rather be engaged in something and do something. But if we don't allow them those opportunities, they're not going to be able to take advantage of that, and they've got nothing else to distract them away from it. You end up with boredom and apathy, and you've got the perfect mix for drug use right there.

The second thing that's not addressed in this bill is any kind of treatment, and that's the second way to reduce demand. Once you've got somebody addicted to crystal meth, they are driven, absolutely driven, to the exclusion of all other things, including sleep and food, to get another fix, to get another high. So by reducing their addiction or eliminating their addiction with treatment, you reduce that demand. I think that's much more effective with those two approaches than trying to address a bit more of the supply side of it.

I keep seeing this government make those choices. I notice that my colleague talked about: why is it always the pharmacist who has to police the industry? Again, that's exactly what's happening here. The government takes no responsibility for this. They're not assisting in any way. They haven't determined a fee structure that will be used to compensate pharmacists. The pharmacists are just directed that they now have to move their product off the shelf, build shelves somewhere else, rearrange their store to be able to accommodate the ephedrine-based cold medications. They have to cope with all of that cost. They don't get any reimbursement for that or any fee structure put in place, and they now have to police it.

Well, you heard the pharmacist in the Liberal caucus say that, yes, he was pretty much willing to go there and do that because he believed in it, but he does note that he's not paid for that. So once again we have the government downloading the responsibility onto someone else totally disconnected and to whom it costs money to put this in place.

The final issue that I want to talk about is a sunset clause. I think that if this effort and other efforts like I've described of reducing the demand are successful, we should be able to return to a point where it's not necessary to be doing this and it's not necessary to be requiring the pharmacist to be doing this. So I would like to see a sunset clause built into this act, whether that anticipates a three-year change, were it possible to do that, or possibly five. I would prefer to see a review of the legislation and the need for it three years down the road.

In principle, I'm supportive of what's being recommended and being proposed in this bill, but once again I just see the government, first of all, not making decisions based on evidence, not taking an overall plan of management to attack this. It's another piecemeal bit that's being tacked on the side of something. We don't know how it fits into the whole. It doesn't include any kind of treatment. It doesn't deal with the demand side of things. It doesn't do anything to address activities for youth and, if it passes, will now be locked in forever. So I think it needs the sunset clause added to it. Additionally, it totally downloads the responsibility for the entire initiative onto a third-party sector, who doesn't even get compensated for it.

3:10

So nice idea, but there are a number of flaws and a number of other pieces missing from a total plan and approach to addictions. This government has a problem with addictions, whether it be alcohol addictions, drug addictions, or gambling addictions. I would prefer to see an approach that had a better management plan to it than this constant piecemeal. Again, I think this is another example of the government in some ways having too much money because

they can sort of keep coming up with these ideas without really having to implement them themselves.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that methamphetamine is a powerfully addictive stimulant that dramatically affects the central nervous system, and we also know that it is prepared in secretive laboratories using ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, which are contained in over-the-counter cold medications amongst many other products. Now, these two factors combine to make methamphetamine, a drug with high potential for widespread abuse.

Meth is a white, odourless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder that easily dissolves in water and alcohol. It increases activity, decreases appetite. A general sense of well-being and the effects of meth can last six to eight hours or much longer, but after the initial rush there is typically a state of high agitation in some individuals that often leads to extremely violent behaviour.

Now, whether we call meth by one of its names – speed, meth, chalk, or in its smoked form, ice, crystal, crank, or glass – whatever the case, Mr. Speaker, whatever we call it, the harms that hit those associated with the use and production of crystal meth destroy families, leave individuals and communities and others in desperate situations.

Bill 204 is an important part of the overall approach in that it makes products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine less readily available to those individuals looking to purchase them for the illegal manufacture of methamphetamine. There is no comprehensive research data available yet on methamphetamine use, abuse, and dependence in Alberta, but the proportion of AADAC clients, for instance, reporting using amphetamines and stimulants in 2003 was charted at 11.9 per cent. The year before, in 2002, AADAC's Alberta youth experience survey found that 5.3 per cent of Alberta youth in grades 7 to 12 had tried club drugs, including ecstasy and crystal meth, at least once in the previous year. In contrast – and this is worthy of note – 56.3 per cent of youth had abused alcohol, and 27.6 had used cannabis.

Now, Bill 204 gives Alberta an opportunity to deal with the diversion of methamphetamine precursor drugs that are found in some over-the-counter cold remedies. In other words, if we take away the ingredients of this lethal concoction, we can remove one of the avenues that this drug finds its way to Albertans. In the case of crystal meth the harms associated with its use and production can potentially be reduced. Bill 204 is not offering a simple answer to these problems. Bill 204 is providing additional momentum to ease the choke hold that this horrific drug has on so many of our youth and older folks.

I am told that methamphetamine use is on the rise in various parts of Alberta, where it is said to be taking over from cocaine as the third most common drug abuse after alcohol and cannabis. There seem to be a number of factors that are driving this change. First of all, it became widely available because it's made from substances that are openly purchased, as we've discussed; secondly, it's much cheaper than cocaine, which must be smuggled into Canada; and thirdly, the effects are very similar to those of cocaine, but they do last longer. However, this drug has high liability for addiction and very serious physical harm. Lastly, the availability of crystal meth has increased the drug's popularity because smoking it gives the quick effects of injected meth without the inconvenience and dangers of intravenous use.

Mr. Speaker, trends in illicit drug use show a generational cycle of increase and decline in popularity, and meth is one example of this. It was popular as a recreational drug in the '60s and '70s, fell out of favour in the '80s, and re-emerged in the '90s.

The arrival of a new threat to the health and well-being of Albertans is always a great concern to AADAC, and at the same time we know that meth is not now, nor is it likely to be, the biggest addiction threat to face Albertans. I'd argue that alcohol has and will continue to have this dubious distinction.

Meth is not a new drug. This is its third wave of popularity in North America, and each wave has faded with the assistance of public education and legislation. There is no question that in addition to being highly addictive, this drug is physically harmful to its abusers. The fact that it's readily available and relatively inexpensive makes meth appealing to young people who are willing to experiment and may partially account for its popularity.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that there's no single simple solution to putting an end to illicit drug use. We all share a common concern for the harm meth and other drugs cause in our communities, and we each have something to contribute in reducing those harms. We have to work together to form strategies.

The problems linked with substance abuse, including meth, affect all of us directly, or indirectly at least, and the challenge, then, is in identifying effective actions to prevent the harms associated with the use and production of meth. How do we do this? Well, one part of the overall approach is to reduce the supply through enforcement and regulation such as restricting access to precursors used in making methamphetamine, as Bill 204 suggests.

However, determining what needs to be in place in our society to prevent drug use and abuse overall is much more complex, and it requires a collaborative approach. AADAC has a particular contribution to make in communities across the province; that is, their knowledge and expertise and the best practices to prevent and treat addictions as well as the range of services they provide.

The problems related to drug and alcohol use are wide-ranging in scope, complex in nature, and costly in personal and economic terms to Albertans. I know that we can succeed with the involvement of partners in the community, including individuals, municipal leaders, government and nongovernment agencies, law enforcement, educational and health professionals, and others. Momentum is obviously growing across this province as people work together to tackle these and other drug issues in an effort to build safer communities where we can raise healthier children.

It's worthy of note that drug use and abuse patterns continually evolve, and even as we conquer meth, new designer drugs will emerge or old drugs will regain popularity. So we need to maintain the momentum we are seeing now and apply what we're learning from this experience to prevent the harmful consequences of the next drug trend.

Addiction is complex and difficult, but Bill 204 will give it much-needed support. We need to extend the reach of the existing services we offer and provide and invest where the likelihood of success is the greatest.

AADAC continues to offer a comprehensive range of substance abuse treatment facilities and services for meth users and their families, but meth and old and new drugs remind us that there is an inexhaustible supply of these addictive substances. So we need to continue to prevent and treat addiction. We have to acknowledge that all aspects of drug use and abuse maintain collaboration and a balanced, informed response no matter what the specific drug of concern is. Bill 204 will undoubtedly help us achieve these goals.

I encourage our hon. colleagues to join me in supporting the author of this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the debate on Bill 204 this afternoon. I would like to thank the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for bringing this forward.

3:20

Many people have expressed many different views on this bill and on this issue of crystal meth and crystal meth addiction, but any step in the right direction is a step that everyone should endorse. I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly to give this bill very careful consideration. Hopefully, they will support this legislation, and it will be implemented immediately. Sometimes in the past we have seen private members' bills in this Assembly that have received favourable treatment, and they have yet to become law. So, hopefully, this bill will come into force as soon as possible.

Is it needed? Yes, it certainly is. Is it going to be cumbersome for some people, particularly some merchants? Yes, it will be, but it is necessary. It is absolutely necessary. When we look at the whole view of crystal meth and the problems that it has created, I think back to a documentary I saw on the CBC. There are many small towns in Alberta that are affected by this very negatively.

Rev. Abbott: Well, you know that's got to be in Alberta if it's on the CBC. That's a powerhouse station right there.

Mr. MacDonald: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar is saying that the CBC is a powerhouse station. Certainly, there is a role in our society for public broadcasting, and I hope that the CBC continues to provide excellent programming and excellent documentaries like the one on crystal meth and how it's affected communities like Drayton Valley, Hinton, Edson.

It's a problem in the oil patch. It's a problem as far as occupational health and safety view it in the oil patch. This is becoming a significant problem in injury rates, whether it is on construction sites or whether it is oil field truck drivers that are working 20 and 24 hours straight and using crystal meth as a stimulant. It might work for them for one shift, but certainly this is a very dangerous practice. This bill will help that.

We look here in the city. Yesterday I had the privilege, Mr. Speaker, of attending the Greater Edmonton Alliance initial assembly. There were many speakers, and they spoke on many issues, but the first speaker spoke about the problems around drug addiction and crystal meth specifically. It's a problem in both rural and urban areas. It's a problem in the workplace. It's a problem in junior highs. It's a problem in high schools.

When we look at this bill, Mr. Speaker, why I would say that it is a good first step is that we have to look at exactly where we are going now as a province. Through all this prosperity and the fast pace of our lives, sometimes we may be forgetting just how much we have changed. I was sitting listening to the speaker yesterday at the Greater Edmonton Alliance talk about the problems with crystal meth and how crystal meth is affecting junior high students.

We are looking in this city at adopting a public policy where the larger the junior high, the better it is. One of my hon. colleagues said to me earlier in discussion on this matter: well, the larger the junior high, the easier it makes for the drug dealers because there are fewer stops to be made and more customers. Unfortunately, that is true. In smaller schools administration and staff can keep an eye on things a lot better than at a junior high where there are 600 or 700 students. That size of student body can become a problem.

We look not only at that, but we look at, you know, the growth in VLTs in this province, and we see the growth in the number of instant loan places and cheque cashing places. On the way to work this morning, Mr. Speaker, I saw another one, almost like it sprang up overnight. Is this progress? Is this progress whenever we look at everything and we look at the fast pace of our lives? Perhaps we're not noticing some of the negative social conditions, I might call them. One of them is crystal meth and our unfortunate group that quickly becomes addicted, and there's almost no hope.

Hopefully, this bill will reduce access. We can increase hope by increasing the number of facilities we're going to set aside for drug treatment and rehab and also counselling. Hopefully, we are going to be able to provide counselling for those who become addicted. Take, for instance, a program like the DARE program. This hon. member would not for one minute criticize this government if they were to take money and ensure that every junior high student or every student in grades 5/6, before they even enter junior high, had access to a DARE program so that they could know first-hand the chronic problems, which have been outlined by previous speakers, that happen as a result of crystal meth addiction.

We can do a lot more than this bill. This bill is a first step. Certainly, it follows in line with what the hon. Member for Red Deer-North did earlier in this session, but let's look at some education as well. Let's fund the DARE program so that every child in this province, before they enter junior high, knows full well the consequences of this horrible, addictive drug. I'm confident that if that were to happen, we would be hearing a lot less about gangs that form in junior high and then, as they get older, have confrontations in places like Groat Road. There are teenage parties that wind up in shootouts. There is youth violence that almost seems to be – well, it is out of control. Not almost; it is out of control. These are the first warning signs that perhaps we're not paying as much attention to as we should.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank this hon. member for bringing this forward. I would be very pleased to offer my support to this legislative initiative, this private member's bill, but there's a lot more to be done. I think if we work collectively, we can have a better province. We will be watching the news and there will be a lot less crime on there and a lot more stories about Alberta such as this: not many hon. members in this Assembly would know that the under-18 Alberta men's team won the Canadian national handball championships yesterday evening at the University of Alberta gym. That's a story we need to see on the news, not the shootouts up on Groat Road.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to be able to stand and speak to a bill that is looking to make our communities safer places to live, and I commend the member for West Yellowhead for bringing this piece of legislation forward. As a former chair of AADAC I am especially supportive of initiatives that reduce or, indeed, eliminate chemical addictions, especially amongst our youth. Although we have made some great strides forward in regard to crime and drug addiction in this province, we have not moved forward quickly enough to address all problems as they have emerged.

3:30

One such problem is that of methamphetamine use. I would like

to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek in her past role as Solicitor General for hosting the Alberta workshop on methamphetamine back in September of 2004. This workshop did an exceptional job of bringing much-needed attention to methamphetamine use in Alberta and of drawing our attention to the fact that these drugs are dangerous to use and dangerous to manufacture.

Drugs and crime have been and are often associated with big cities. We often have a false sense of security that our rural communities are immune to drugs. Some feel that the only drug we have to worry about is alcohol. While alcohol abuse can be devastating to individuals and their families, the problems that accompany drugs like crystal meth are far worse. It is not an uncommon occurrence for our local papers to be reporting on drug seizures and crime relating to those trying to get money to buy drugs or for those individuals who are high on methamphetamine to be committing random acts of violence.

Alberta is the best place in the world to live, work, and raise a family, but we need to be vigilant to make sure that this remains the case. We cannot let drugs engulf the lives of our neighbours or even our children or other youth. Crystal meth is a growing concern, and we need to aggressively address this issue before it gets any worse.

I am pleased that Bill 202, introduced by the Member for Red Deer-North, and this bill are taking steps forward to help combat drug addiction in this province. Moving products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine into pharmacies and behind the counter is an excellent idea, and restricting access to these drugs to just pharmacies will help twofold. First, pharmacists are much better suited to monitor the distribution of drugs and have a much better grasp of noticing when a person might be purchasing more drugs than an average person should be. They have the training to be able to raise a red flag when an irregular pattern of purchases begins to take place at the pharmacy that they work at. While most Albertans are willing to try and help fight against crime, the employees at most nonpharmacy retail outlets most likely don't have the training to be able to spot potential purchasing patterns that indicate that an individual or a group of individuals are trying to cover up mass purchases of precursor drugs for the production of crystal meth or a variety of other methamphetamines.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The second advantage is in regard to the health care of Albertans. Bill 204 creates more opportunities for Albertans to interact with their pharmacists. Only positive results will occur through this increased interaction. Methamphetamine abuse is a growing problem in communities across this province and all of Canada. I'm glad to see that it's Alberta taking the lead in this country to help stem the production of meth.

We need the federal government and other provinces to move forward with more consistent legislation in regard to the retail sales of precursor drugs. I hope that this bill and subsequent debate will urge our other partners in Confederation to also move forward with similar types of legislation to help stem the manufacturing, distribution, and use of methamphetamine in our communities.

Bill 204 is a good first step in reducing the prevalence of methamphetamine. There is more that can be done, and as members of this Legislature and members of our communities we should examine options that will help to create a more comprehensive plan to reduce the production and use of meth in Alberta.

I will be supporting the second reading of Bill 204 and urge my fellow members to do the same. I look forward to hearing and possibly debating any amendments during Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 204, Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. The whole purpose of this is basically to ban the sale of products, often cold medicines, which are sold anywhere besides behind the counter in a pharmacy and are part of the producing of methamphetamine. Behind the counter, I guess, it's called a schedule 2 drug. This whole idea of this limiting act came from Oklahoma, where they had, I guess, a successful opportunity to reduce the sale and limit the number of meth labs that are continuing to pop up there.

The drugs that we're talking about here are simple ones, such as cold and sinus, children's allergies, children's cold pieces, Claritin for allergies; you know, the real simple things that are found on everyday shelves. Now, some people might in fact go to the pharmacy or their local Safeway or a Superstore whenever they're in need of trying to pick up a simple piece like this, and all of a sudden they're not able to do it because of the fact that this bill would prohibit there being a convenience in purchasing it. I can see that the reason for trying to limit the convenience is to deter people from even being able to come up with this concoction which is known as meth or crystal meth. I think it does have some merit.

One of the things that we could put into place, which hon. members have mentioned, is better education. We have a program out there, which is DARE, the drug resistance education piece, which is normally done at the elementary level, but because of the limited amount of officers and civilians trained to be able to administer this program – there are a lot of kids that could in fact benefit from that program of DARE. I think it's sad that more schools aren't able to have the officers in place. There are, I know, numbers on the waiting list to be able to have that, but they're not able to, again, maybe because of funding or it's not enough officers to be able to put this into practice.

Certainly, some of the schools in my community or in the inner city, which is predominantly where you'd find some of the drugs or these seedy characters operating, would the beneficiaries of this. It's often where you find the people who are in fact on the street selling themselves to take up and buy this drug. So it would only make sense that you would have some of these programs right in the heart of where these are being sold and are being recognized as some of the worse cases on the street.

If we talk about why this has come into effect, I think of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act. It started off to be a great bill, and when it was passed, it was watered down profusely. In fact, I think it missed its mark. I had the opportunity to be able to hold a forum involving some 250 kids, and I did put the question: would you be in favour of the treatment centre almost essentially locking you up? I did take a secret vote, and out of the 100 per cent that did vote, 90 per cent were in favour of it. So I'm not sure why this government was scared to put a tougher law in to seek treatment for these kids. There was only 10 per cent that were not favour of it.

Again, it comes out with good bills, but we get a little bit scared because we have to get tough. Well, I think what people elect governments and their legislators to do is to be tough. We're talking about a tough bill. We're talking about a tough drug. That's that methamphetamine, crystal meth. It's destroying families, it's destroying lives, and it's destroying communities, yet we're coming in with weak legislation. That's not what people want. They're wanting tough legislation against tough drugs. If we're going to talk about being leaders, then we've got to step up and do the right thing.

This, again, is a first step, but I don't think it's strong enough because even Bill 202 was weak. We need to have more influence

within the schools with regard to education. We have pilot projects with training in walking around the drug dogs in the schools. That, again, is a first step, to be able to put the presence there of the police and the deterrent for bringing this drug into the schools. But it needs to be expanded, not only just on pilot projects but to the community schools out there, the high schools and the junior highs. Perhaps we'd even go that far.

I'm hoping to God it hasn't even gone to the elementary level, but again – you know what? – you can't take anything for granted nowadays, as we're seeing. We could expand that to the junior high level and, certainly, right within the rural communities as well, where some of these methamphetamine or meth labs are able to set up undetected amongst their neighbours in the community because of the lack of policing out there. Now, we have in fact put out more police officers to be able to handle the concerns with regard to the drug labs and/or the grow ops, and I commend the government for doing it.

3:40

Unfortunately, it was on a reactive basis and not on a proactive basis. The community right now has said more than once that we need proactive government. We have shootings going on in communities, and they're drug related. We have murders going on, and they're drug related. We have children going to school, and we have them coming back different because of that one time they were talked into taking one of these drugs. They have parties. They have these all-night raves where they do ecstasy and meth. I mean, it's all over the place, and some communities don't want to admit, in fact, that it's in their backyard because heaven forbid: it doesn't happen in ours. But you know what? That's being naive, and that's the pitfalls of parenthood or that even communities get into because they don't want to admit that this sort of thing would happen in their community. They're in denial is what they're in.

I think that if we all realize, in fact, that it's everywhere and no one is immune to it – it doesn't matter what socioeconomic status you come from, everyone has the opportunity to be involved. It's critical that we recognize that and make sure that the laws are place and the education as well as the police officers and the detectives, whatever, the supports to be able to deal with it.

We need more treatment centres to deal with the addictiveness that we have out there. We talked about the addictiveness being gambling. We talked about the addictiveness with regard to AADAC and drinking. Those addiction centres were developed years ago. In fact, I don't think some of the things that they're treating are that different, but I think it needs to be revisited as to what sort of treatment and how it's administered. Comparing 20 years ago, comparing today, we have a whole different group of individuals. There's a different mindset, and that's in fact what's come up with trying to introduce the new heroin of the day, which is now, you know, ecstasy or crack or crystal meth.

We need something that's going to be able to give these kids an advantage in the detox centres and not just a five-day stay-over which is like a Holiday Inn. We need something that's going to keep them in there. Take away the rights of freedom, if that need be, to clean these kids up. Perhaps even part of their treatment would be to go out and lecture some of the other kids as to: "You know what? I look normal like you, but in fact I was one of these kids that was enticed and fell into the pitfalls of it." Give their testimonial. Nothing is stronger than for kids to hear from one of their own peers talking about this, testimonial, what's happened to them and how it affected not only them but their potential livelihood and their family and friends. This is devastating to not just their family, their friends, relatives but to the community. As soon as one person suffers, the whole community suffers.

We talk about the piece about: it takes a whole village to educate a child. Well, this takes a whole village also to protect that child. In protecting that child, we're talking about the proper laws in place and the proper facilities in place. We need to have more money, unfortunately, and build more facilities. Maybe they'll not be within a city but on the outskirts or in the outlying areas, so they don't have the opportunity to be just locked up. They can wander that 200 acres out in the middle of nowhere and, kind of, really contemplate why they're there, get to their heads with some fresh air instead of the city smog and the drugs that are filling them.

I gave you just a little bit of insight as to why I'm concerned with the drugs and the lack of real meat and teeth with regard to some of these bills that are passing. Again, they're good, well-meaning and -intended bills, but when they get down to the voting stage, they've been watered down so much that it's unfortunate that the real intent and the real beneficiaries, the public, don't really see the whole thing of it. Compared at the beginning to where it comes out at the end, it is completely lacking where it should be then.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to add my thoughts to the discussion surrounding Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. I sincerely thank the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for introducing this bill, as it represents a creative approach to a growing problem in this province, especially in the area of Drayton Valley-Calmar, where crystal meth is dwarfing our future potential as a community. I would like to express my support for this idea but would also like to comment on issues that may be created by Bill 204.

Mr. Speaker, although Bill 204 seems like a simple bill, it actually evokes some interesting questions and valid concerns. In the overall context of what this bill is trying to achieve, we must look for a balance. Balance is the hallmark of any good government.

I would like to begin by discussing a trend that is occurring in this country because I believe it has implications not only for Bill 204 but also for the problem of rising health care costs and approaches to dealing with those problems.

Mr. Speaker, modern-day Canadians are more likely today than in past generations to think of themselves as partners in a collaborative health care system than as recipients of care provided by experts in a hierarchical system. They tend to view themselves as well-informed individuals shopping for the best treatments available instead of patients who must act on the opinions of others. They feel empowered to make more of their own decisions about treatment, and they base these decisions on information from various sources.

Bill 204 proposes to change drugs that contain ephedrine and pseudoephedrine from unscheduled, where Albertans are able to research the effects of the drugs and to make decisions on their own as to whether to take them, to schedule 2, where they will have to consult a pharmacist before being allowed to purchase them. The problem with putting these drugs behind the counter of pharmacies is that they become more difficult to obtain.

Now, many people will argue that this will cause an inconvenience. According to a study called *The Role of Self-Care in the Treatment of Illness*, approximately one-third of adults will have a sore throat, cold, or flu in any given month, and 63 per cent of those adults will initially react by using some type of self-treatment. Mr. Speaker, the form of self-help they will choose is the very type of medications that we are discussing today. It seems that Bill 204 is moving Albertans away from the trend of counting more on

themselves and their ability to obtain information toward having to rely on other sources, like pharmacists, about drug options for treating minor ailments.

Mr. Speaker, I would agree that Bill 204 will make it less convenient for people to obtain these drugs. This is especially true for people who have taken the time to research their conditions and ailments and who know which medications will help them. The purpose of Bill 204, however, is not to make it less convenient for people who want to buy medication to treat a valid ailment but, rather, to make it less convenient for people who want to use the medications to produce a dangerous drug that is devastating many people in our society, increasing our crime rates, and overworking our police forces.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, what we are looking for is a balance, and I believe that Bill 204 does give us the ability to strike a balance between slowing the methamphetamine problem and providing sick people with access to the medications they need. Although Bill 204 will make it less convenient for people who have minor illnesses to obtain the medications they need, this bill may actually have a positive consequence that could outweigh this noted inconvenience.

According to studies, at the onset of a new medical condition or ailment just over half of Canadians will likely just tough it out and wait and see if it gets worse. Unfortunately, 1 in 5 will immediately run to their family doctor, and thankfully 1 in 10 will self-medicate with a self-care health product. Now, this statistic tells me that more Canadians will go to a doctor than will look to other sources of information for treating their medical problem.

The point I'm trying to make is further illustrated by the fact that of Canadians with ailments 57 per cent use a medical doctor as a source of information about their treatment options while only 37 per cent consult a pharmacist to gather information about medications. Mr. Speaker, by changing medications that are used for relieving symptoms for colds and other minor ailments from unrestricted drugs to category 2 drugs, people may begin changing their tendencies toward seeing doctors for advice to seeing pharmacists. That would be good, good for Alberta. The reason for this is because Bill 204 will cause people to interact more with their pharmacist than previously. This, in turn, may create a level of trust and appreciation toward pharmacists that previously did not exist.

Now, I personally don't think of going to a pharmacist when I'm feeling a bit down, yet pharmacists are highly trained professionals that are capable of more than simply counting and bottling pills. Mr. Speaker, the Alberta College of Pharmacists has recently put forward proposals to make their profession more prominent in the area of primary health care. As you can see, Bill 204 may indirectly help them in achieving this important goal.

Having a population that tends to research their ailments and possible treatments on their own along with a growing tendency and trust toward pharmacists can lead to decreased costs on our health care system. A visit to the family doctor is, of course, quite high when compared to a stop at the local pharmacy. Furthermore, since it's much easier to consult a pharmacist, this may cause people who usually choose the wait-and-see approach toward their ailments to see a pharmacist before the condition gets too bad. This, in turn, may also lead to reductions in long-term health care costs since pharmacists can advise these individuals to go see their doctor about ailments that do not seem major to the uninformed eye but can actually be quite serious, such as bumps that could be cancerous or internal pains that are foreign. Mr. Speaker, Bill 204 may actually lead toward a larger role for pharmacists and less costs on the health care system, especially if people are educated about the potential roles of pharmacists.

3:50

Now, while I'm on the topic of cost implications of Bill 204, I'd like to comment on the real cost of methamphetamine use in this province. Methamphetamine causes strains on the health care system because of the dangerous effects it has on the body and because of the high costs associated with addiction treatment. Methamphetamine causes strains on the police forces because of the increased crime rates due to addicts stealing to support their habits. Methamphetamine causes strains on the justice system as a larger proportion of crime inevitably relates to higher levels of prosecution and incarceration.

Mr. Speaker, I support any bill that attempts to reduce the ease of making meth and any bill that attempts to address this growing problem in our province. Earlier I mentioned how much methamphetamine production and use costs our society. By limiting the amount of methamphetamine produced in Alberta, Bill 204 will also reduce the costs of meth use on our society. These cost savings can be used to educate Albertans about the new process for obtaining these drugs or for much-needed tax cuts. By explaining the new process as well as why this measure needs to be taken, Albertans will likely be sympathetic. The slight inconvenience they might have to go through will seem insignificant in comparison to the spread of addiction that is occurring in their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, I'm gravely concerned about the growing methamphetamine problem in Drayton Valley-Calmor and in this province, and I will support any reasonable measure that is taken to help fight against it. For this reason, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Bill 204. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate on Bill 204, the methamphetamine limiting act. I want you to know that I agree with my colleague from West Yellowhead that the use of methamphetamine, meth, is a serious problem, one that our society cannot and must not take lightly. What makes this matter even more concerning is the fact that all the necessary ingredients, including ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, are so readily available that illegal meth producers can cook up this product so easily. From a prevention standpoint I feel that Bill 204 holds much merit. It's important for us to take concrete steps to not only try to make it harder for meth labs to obtain the necessary ingredients to produce the product but to ensure that the public is aware of the existence of this potentially epidemic problem.

I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, that at this point the public is fully cognizant of what meth really is and what it can do to a person if used in large quantities and how inexpensive it is to produce and purchase this illicit product. As a matter of fact, so little is known about the drug that there have virtually been no comprehensive studies done on meth use here in Alberta or Canada-wide. One figure that is available to us comes from the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, or AADAC, and it reveals that in 2003 approximately 12 per cent of AADAC's clients were reported to have used stimulants.

In the United States over the past decade the problem of meth production and meth consumption has taken that nation by surprise as more states have only recently become aware of the dangers and prevalence of meth use. More alarming is the discovery of a growing use of the drug, especially among minors and youth in their early to mid-20s. An interesting aspect that many states are finding is that the problem is sometimes more prevalent in rural than urban communities. According to law enforcement authorities across the U.S. the production and the use of meth has hit the rural communi-

ties particularly hard as many of them simply lack the necessary policing resources to combat the problem. Unlike their urban counterparts these communities lack the necessary resources to raise the awareness of this increasingly concerning problem.

In order to illustrate this point, Mr. Speaker, according to U.S. news reports the crisis has become so prevalent in some counties in central Tennessee that the rural communities are not only becoming flooded with the drug itself but also with the labs used to produce it. In some cases the labs consist simply of mom-and-pop operations used by amateurs to produce the drug primarily for their personal use but sometimes also for sale and distribution. Law enforcement authorities have found labs in homes, apartments, trailers, motel rooms, vehicles, and even a chicken coop.

As a testament to how prevalent the problem is in Tennessee, the Cumberland county local jail has become so overcrowded with inmates, many of whom are held on meth-related charges, it may require a new extension, which could prevent the county from building a new high school. In the meantime, authorities are dealing with the overcrowding problem by expanding inmate spaces into the prison's gym and library. As well, it has been found that the hospitals in the county have also experienced a rise in emergency room admissions and have had to train doctors and staff members on how to handle violent meth abusers.

One of the most appalling social consequences related to meth use is what happens to the children of those individuals who succumb to the influence of this devastating drug. According to the news reports there are hundreds of cases in Tennessee where children have been taken from their parents and placed in foster care due to parental neglect. Sadly, these kids are known as meth orphans. Law enforcement officials say that many children have to be taken away simply because they were found neglected and living in deplorable living conditions because their parents were too consumed by their own addiction to care for them properly. Many of these orphans face physical, developmental, and emotional problems resulting from long-term neglect.

As you can clearly see, Mr. Speaker, the picture is pretty bleak in some parts of the U.S. Having said that, I'm not implying that the problem is or will be similar here in Alberta, but it will be if we don't address the problem of the unregulated access to these things that make up meth within the province. However, I would argue that this is what could take place if we don't start analyzing and addressing the issues associated with the use and illegal production of methamphetamine.

Aside from what Bill 204 is proposing, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we still have a long way to go in educating the general public, particularly young Albertans who are most at risk, of the potential dangers of meth abuse.

An interesting fact about meth is that many users who purchase the drug on the streets aren't even aware of what the ingredients are that are used to make the drug. In a story from Colorado a juvenile probation officer who dealt routinely with minors who use meth was very surprised to discover that most youths aren't aware that meth is made from products that use ammonia or a variety of other dangerous chemicals. In one of the instances when she asked some youths whether they would sit down and drink a bottle of Drano, most of the juveniles reacted surprised at such a question. Many were simply unaware of the fact that Drano or other products that contain ammonia are used to make the drug.

When asked what constitutes the main reasons why youth were turning to meth, she cited the lack of knowledge about the drug and its effect, the ease with which it can be produced, and the fact that it is cheaper than other illegal drugs and substances. It would appear that she is correct. According to the reports coming out of the U.S.,

meth is starting to compete with marijuana as the drug of choice among youth. This is particularly dangerous as meth is far more dangerous than marijuana. With this in mind we as a province and a nation need to step up our awareness strategies and efforts because if we don't address this problem now, later on, as we have seen, it may be too late.

Having said that, I believe that Bill 204 represents only one of the many strategies we can use in order to limit the illegal production and use of meth within our province. Reclassifying medicinal remedies that contain ephedrine and pseudoephedrine as schedule 2 drugs and permitting them to be sold only behind the counter in licensed pharmacies represents a step in the right direction. We could perhaps even further strengthen Bill 204 by following Montana's example and examine the possibility of limiting the sale of behind counter cold remedies that contain ephedrine and pseudoephedrine to only two packages at a time, which could further dissuade any potential misuse of the product.

While such measures may dissuade some illegal meth producers from purchasing these drugs, they will not solve the problem as a whole. The reason why I say this, Mr. Speaker, is no matter how diligent we are at making it harder for the producers to acquire these medicines in Alberta, it does not mean they can't purchase them from other jurisdictions within Canada. Our efforts to limit methamphetamine use are bound to fail unless all provinces abide by the same rules and pass similar legislation to what is being proposed in Bill 204. However, we don't want to be the number one province for this problem. We'd like to solve it here.

I believe that one of these strategies we should be looking at is collaborating with other provinces and the federal government in order to push for national legislation or policy that would in essence follow the provisions outlined in Bill 204. Only this way would we be able to genuinely challenge the meth producers and shut down their supply routes. With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I will vote in favour of Bill 204 and look forward to further debate and development on the matter.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a second time]

4:00

Bill 205

Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to move second reading of Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005.

In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, Bill 205, if passed, will give Albertans back their dinnertime. From my door-knocking during this past election I heard from many constituents that they were generally happy with our government, but there were some small annoyances that they wanted us to correct, one of which is the telemarketing phone calls we all receive just as we are sitting down for a family dinner. I heard this complaint at many doors. Albertans are fed up with having their family time interrupted by telemarketers. In fact, all Canadians are fed up. In the December 2003 survey conducted for the federal government, 97 per cent of respondents indicated a negative response to receiving unsolicited phone calls.

Much of this frustration has been created by the telemarketers themselves. Often they call between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., when the

vast majority of Alberta families are eating or enjoying family time together. To make it even worse, telemarketers often use computer dialers which ring at both ends, on your phone and on the telemarketer's. If the customer picks up but the telemarketer doesn't, they are only greeted with silence. This can cause frustration and in some cases fear.

One evening last year I had an extremely frustrating experience with a telemarketer. Our phone rang right at our dinnertime. I answered, but no one was there. I hung up immediately, and immediately my phone rang again. Still no one was there. This happened repeatedly for the next two minutes. Finally, I called the operator and asked what was going on. She informed me that some telemarketing companies have automatic dialers that will call you back unless you listened to their message. She further informed me that I could pay a monthly fee to have all undisplayed calls blocked to my line. Blocking undisplayed calls is not the answer, nor should Albertans be subject to paying a fee to keep telemarketers from annoying them.

I know from my own experience from my door-knocking and from the survey done that Albertans are becoming quite annoyed. With 97 per cent of Canadians reacting negatively to telemarketers, some have suggested that we should make all unsolicited phone calls illegal. It is my belief that we must be fair and balanced in our own law-making. Because of that, Bill 205 will still allow companies to solicit their products over the telephone.

Bill 205 has two major components. The first is the licensing requirement. This bill will require any company wishing to market goods or services over the phone to apply for and obtain a telemarketing licence. The reasoning behind this is so that the government will first of all know who is making the phone calls and, secondly, be able to fine or refuse a licence to a company who is not following the provincial and federal rules. It would be pretty tough to fine a company for breaking the rules if you don't know who they are, where they originate, and who owns them.

The second major component is the calling hours restriction. Currently the CRTC does not regulate when telemarketers may make phone calls. If they wish to call you in the middle of the night, there's nothing other than their own good sense to stop them. Bill 205 proposes to only allow telemarketing to occur between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and again from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. No telemarketing would be allowed on holidays. By allowing nine hours each day for telemarketing, I believe that we are striking the right balance between Albertans' right to eat their suppers in peace and a telemarketer's right to solicit potential customers.

Furthermore, Bill 205 defines telemarketing strictly as phone calls made for commercial purposes. That will automatically exempt groups that are not selling goods or services such as local Neighbourhood Watch groups, nonprofit organizations, charities, polling companies, and any other group that may not be selling goods or services.

This bill also exempts those calls coming from companies who have already established a business relationship with a customer. What that means is that if you do business or have done business in the past with a company, they can still call you. For example, if you have a Visa credit card, Visa will still be allowed to call you. If you previously had subscribed to the *Calgary Sun*, they would be able to call you to see if you are interested in subscribing again. But under Bill 205 those companies would have to apply for a licence and respect the calling hour restrictions if they wish to randomly take numbers out of the phone book to solicit.

As I have mentioned before, governing is all about finding the right balance. When it comes to telemarketing, we must balance the

privacy and intrusion concerns of Albertans with the needs of charities, polling companies, and business. Bill 205 doesn't arbitrarily make telemarketing illegal. What it will do is give Albertans back their dinnertime and allow them to spend some family time together without the interruption of a telemarketer trying to sell them goods or services.

Some of my colleagues have expressed to me some concern that this legislation is going to be hard to enforce. I agree that there are going to be some challenges with enforcement, but does that mean that we should just forget about this legislation? No, of course it doesn't.

Telemarketing is much like the Internet; it's not restricted by geographical boundaries. Some have suggested that because of this, telemarketing might be better handled by the federal government. I don't necessarily disagree, but just as we may have some problems enforcing this legislation outside of our borders, our federal government is going to have just as tough a time enforcing their rules on companies calling from Asia or India or even the United States. I also find it doubtful that our current federal government will be able to pass meaningful telemarketing legislation before they are defeated. Furthermore, I find it hard to believe that reputable businesses will knowingly and intentionally break the laws in other jurisdictions.

In addition, the licensing requirement that we establish in Bill 205 will be much cheaper and easier to maintain than some of these do-not-call lists in other jurisdictions. When the U.S. government created their do-not-call list, their registry received 635,000 requests in their first 14 hours of operation and had registered over 64 million phone numbers by this past September. I believe that those numbers indicate two things for us here in Alberta, the first being that there is obvious support for this type of consumer protection in North America; the second is that the manpower required to set up a do-not-call list is unnecessary and wasteful. If our federal government does somehow pass national do-not-call lists, Bill 205 will not clash with that list or that legislation. It will merely enhance its protection.

People often comment that if you want to find a harder way to do something, just call the government. Well, Mr. Speaker, Bill 205 bucks that trend and is a very efficient way of dealing with a problem that has been nagging Albertans for many years.

4:10

It is also very obvious that telemarketing companies are not as effective as they could be in dealing with this problem. They are already required to maintain their own do-not-call lists, but this obviously isn't working primarily because most people aren't aware of this requirement. Instead of requesting that they be added to the do-not-call list, they just slam down the phone. Secondly, even if they're added to the telemarketer's do-not-call list, it may only be for that particular client for whom they may be calling and not for the telemarketing company as a whole. Lastly, no government agency is actively checking to ensure that the people who ask that their numbers be added to the list are actually being added. The industry had their chance to regulate themselves, and they have failed.

Albertans continue to grow frustrated with unsolicited phone calls. We must act now to give them back their dinnertime. If we pass Bill 205, we will be taking a large step in the direction to ensure that Alberta families will be able to eat their dinner in peace. I don't think that I need to give the members here a hard sell on the merits of Bill 205. If any member here today is unsure as to whether they intend on voting in favour of this bill, I have a suggestion. I suggest that you go back to your constituency this summer . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon member, the 10 minutes allocated has run out.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to respond to Bill 205, and I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose for sponsoring it. I think that most people in this House would agree that this is a useful piece of legislation, and I think that the majority in this Chamber would support it. I for one would definitely support any measure that would decrease the inconvenience that Albertans incur from telemarketers and telemarketing schemes.

Of note is that this bill is trying to make the distinction between what is a telemarketing approach and a phone call or a fax that a person would receive from a charity or a benevolent organization. I think that this is an important distinction to make because charities do rely, for the most part, on making those phone calls and sending those faxes to try to solicit support for their causes, and most of these causes are definitely worth supporting.

I think it also attempts to increase the capability of Albertans and the citizens of this province to raise concerns and approach these companies when there is a complaint. It really tries to offer them some recourse and some way out. You know, we've heard of cases where a telemarketer has been persistent in phoning and phoning again and phoning a third time, and they don't take no for an answer. I don't like to use the word harassment, but it is harassing the person on the other end, exerting pressure. They just don't get it. They don't take no for an answer. So I think it's useful to try to limit this harassment.

We are talking about telemarketing, and this bill is trying to define that. It talks about telephone calls and fax transmission, which is good because, you know, long gone are the days when it was only done by phone. Now we have even e-mail marketing, telemarketing through the Internet and by e-mail. I have received a few of those. They appear credible, and they appear to be trustworthy, but the frequency with which one is bombarded and the volume of these messages keeps increasing.

I have a certain question with regard to whether this amendment applies to calls or faxes originating from outside Alberta. I think it's a legal clarification. You know, does this law and the amendment for this law apply to the point of initiation, or origination, or the point of termination? I know this is only second reading, so maybe this is something that I might be waiting for an answer for in committee. Do we apply this law to where the call originated? So this telemarketer from Toronto who's trying to phone people in Alberta: would that apply to him? Or would it only apply to companies and agencies which are registered in this province? It says in this new amendment that "no person may engage in telemarketing unless the person is the holder of a subsisting licence." Are we talking licensing in this province, or is it Canada-wide?

I think it also was notable and commendable that the definition of telemarketing doesn't apply to campaigning for political parties or candidates. I think this is commendable. We should really add this definition in section 5 of the amendment because section 5 told us which agencies and which people and which groups and organizations were not covered by the purposes of this law and amendment, so maybe we should clarify it further and indicate that it doesn't apply to political parties and candidates. Mind you, it doesn't happen too frequently. We only have an election, be it provincial or municipal or even federal, you know, every so often, but I think that clarification needs to be made.

Having said that, the opposite would apply. I would definitely

like to see collection agencies and debt-recovery companies added to the definition of telemarketing because the harassment and the pressure exerted by agencies like those is tremendous and should not be overlooked. So in that restriction as to what is telemarketing and what isn't, I would definitely like to see collection agencies and debt-recovery companies included in that definition.

The provision for which times are appropriate and acceptable and which times are not I think is an important provision. These are good guidelines. Like the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose said, it's really annoying when a person phones around supertime and you're trying to get some time with your family. You tell them that you're busy or you ask them to call again, and then the next day they call at the same time. They don't get it. So I think restricting this is a good move.

As a citizen, as a person I generally tolerate telemarketing calls, but I ask myself whether the person was polite or courteous, whether they were brief, and whether they accepted my decision. When I tell them no, it is a no, and it's a final no. Some do, and for that I am thankful. Some don't. I think many people like myself would not like pressure. They don't like to be pressured into buying something or paying for a product or a service, and some indicate that they don't like to be called again. I know that with the registry now, with the do not call or do not fax, these companies and these agencies are forced to honour that request, but some don't, Mr. Speaker.

I myself once told a particular company that I wanted my drugstore to be taken off their fax list, and after four weeks and me phoning three times they eventually removed me from their fax list. But let me tell you; I actually retaliated when I noticed that they were very slow in implementing my request. I started faxing them back junk faxes to tell them that if I am going to receive 10 faxes from your side, I'm going to send you 12. If they send 15, I send them 20. They listened eventually. But, you know, it wasted some of my time, and it wasted some of my staff's time because we get those junk faxes and we have to sift through them to see which ones are really important for the druggist or for the staff of that drugstore and which were just garbage, selling you vacations or selling you tickets to comedy shows and stuff like that.

When they remove you from the list and put you on a do-not-call or do-not-fax list, there is nothing to stop them from passing your information on to a different agency. That's what I noticed. After I stopped receiving this from this particular fax broadcaster, I started receiving similar faxes from a different broadcaster, so I think we should strengthen the regulations to prevent them from sharing the information. I think maybe we can be as bold as to say that when I say do not call and do not fax, I am telling everybody do not call or do not fax, not just this one particular agency. They stop today, and then a different agency would pick it up and start harassing me. So the request to be added or included on a do-not-call, do-not-fax list has to be honoured, and it has to be implemented with the strictest adherence to that request.

Moving on, I think that requesting the person or the organization to identify themselves and giving me the name of the person calling and what the business is and what they're trying to do and also including their phone number or fax number for follow-up is the responsible thing to do. It is not an unfair request to make. I have to have some recourse, and I have to have some exit way to sever that connection. If I say that I don't want you to phone me again and they continue, then there is a higher authority or a person higher up in that hierarchy that I can take it up with to say, "Please. Your employees don't get it." So I think it's fair and it's a commendable thing to do.

4:20

Now, I briefly commented on charities needing to solicit support from individuals and companies. I think that for the most part they

are responsible and they are honourable in their conduct. Still, some are very forceful and some are very pressuring. We allow them to be exempt from the telemarketing definition. I think we should also maybe look at a minor amendment that says: while you have that access and while you have that privilege, you have to also be responsible and you have to act honourably. Maybe the exclusion should not be as generous, you know. Some charities are desperate, if you like, or they're more forceful than others, and I think people have complained that it shouldn't go like this.

With that, my point is that we generally support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon and thank you. I'm pleased to rise and join the debate on Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose. The purpose of Bill 205 is to prevent unwanted solicitation from telemarketers.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of a single person who has not been interrupted in their daily routine by a salesperson offering them the latest gadget or gizmo or requesting a donation for some worthy cause. It always seems, at least at my house, that they call in the middle of the supper hour, interrupting a special family time and leaving me with a cold meal.

Now, I firmly believe that unsolicited phone calls from telemarketers are a clear invasion of privacy. A person has the right, especially in their own home, to be free from unwanted intrusions. In my view, unsolicited telemarketing is a form of trespass, and it is certainly not something that we as a society should endorse. The best feature of this bill is that it only allows telemarketing to occur during specified time periods. The restrictions in this bill prevent telemarketers from calling people's homes during the supper hour. Furthermore, telemarketers would not be allowed to solicit on general holidays. Now, Mr. Speaker, holidays and a family's dinnertime are important private times that should be free from unwanted interruptions.

This bill does not limit the ability of companies to contact customers that they already have a relationship with. For example, if you're a current subscriber to a magazine, this legislation will not prevent the magazine from calling you to inform you that your subscription is about to expire, such as the *Western Standard* recently did for me in my home. Now, Mr. Speaker, your right to privacy is protected because you are not receiving unsolicited calls. Most companies, when you sign up for their services, give you the option as to whether or not you wish to be contacted. If you say no, then they usually do not bother you again.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that this bill proposes to require telemarketers to acquire a licence within the province of Alberta. By having telemarketers obtain a licence, we are able to better enforce the provisions of this bill. Should a telemarketer call you unsolicited or outside of the regulated call period, they run the risk of losing the ability to operate within Alberta.

Additionally, the CRTC has some strict rules to which all telemarketers must adhere. Callers must identify themselves and their organization and display a number at which they can be contacted. Furthermore, should you ask not to be called again, then the company must comply with your request within 30 days. Each company is currently required to maintain its own do-not-call list. Now, my wife and I use that option quite often, Mr. Speaker.

If this bill is to become law, then Alberta would be able to revoke the licence of businesses not conforming to the CRTC regulations on telemarketing. This bill works to ensure that those who wish to be

contacted by telemarketers are still able to be contacted over the phone. However, this bill protects Albertans' right to privacy. You have an inherent right to privacy, Mr. Speaker, and to not have unwanted intrusions into your blessed household.

Mr. Speaker, other jurisdictions such as the U.S., when considering the problem of unsolicited telemarketing, have chosen to create a do-not-call list. These lists require an individual to call and have their name and number listed on the registry. Once your number is on the list, then it is prohibited for you to be called by unsolicited telemarketers. The government of Canada has also introduced legislation that would allow the CRTC to create a national do-not-call list. Industry Canada has promised to conduct extensive public consultations on a national do-not-call list before it would come into effect. Given the experience of the U.S., it is likely that Canadians and Albertans would be extremely responsive to a reduction in unsolicited commercial calls.

Mr. Speaker, no other jurisdiction in Canada has attempted to regulate telemarketers in the manner proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose. Alberta has the opportunity to be a leader in Canada on the issue of privacy protection. Albertans have always prided themselves on their ability to live their lives free from unwanted intrusions from either the government or private interests. Albertans believe in more freedom and less government.

Some may argue that a do-not-call list is not necessary because of the technological advances in recent years. It's now possible to display the name and number of callers who are calling your house. This allows you to screen your calls and only answer those from people you wish to talk to. Of course, it's also possible to block certain numbers from calling your house.

The problem with these technologies is that they place the onus on the individual, and they can be very expensive, Mr. Speaker. In order to receive these services, you have to pay, which again is contrary to the principle of an inherent right to privacy in your home. The sound of the phone ringing is an interruption. Society has conditioned us to stop whatever we are doing whenever the phone rings. Answering the phone has become an almost conditioned response. You know, it bothers me when I see someone drop everything to answer a phone call when I'm in the middle of talking to them. It seems to create a sense of false urgency. Therefore, in spite of the advances in technology it is still necessary for prohibitions on calling.

Mr. Speaker, seniors and those who have been victims of telemarketing fraud will also benefit from the creation of a licensed telemarketing list. By limiting telemarketers' ability to conduct unsolicited solicitations, we are helping to reduce the instances of telephone marketing schemes that are successful at defrauding people, especially seniors, of their limited income and their hard-earned money.

Mr. Speaker, another important aspect of the legislation is that it exempts charities. You know, many charities are facing difficulties in raising much-needed funds. Bill 205 proposes to only limit commercial calls and not charitable calls. Now, although allowing charities to continue to make unsolicited phone calls is still somewhat of a violation of your right to privacy, I feel that this is a justifiable infringement. Why? Because charities are not soliciting you to increase their profit. They are not trying to sell you goods and services. Charities are attempting to raise money, often in order to help cure a disease or to help those in need. While some people may find calls from charities intrusive, the good work accomplished by charities more than compensates for any inconvenience their unsolicited calls may cause you.

The intent of this legislation, as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, is to limit unwanted calls from people with a commercial purpose. In

fact, with restrictions placed on Alberta-based telemarketer calls, I'm sure that calls from charities will become less bothersome within the context of an overall reduction in call volume. Maybe you'll now take the time to listen to these charitable requests instead of just lumping them in with commercial solicitation.

Mr. Speaker, in today's society we're consistently inundated with advertising. It's important in our free and open society that businesses are able to advertise and freely sell their products. I agree with that. Equally as important, though, is the ability of citizens to not be forced to listen to or be party to advertising. Within the privacy of a person's home they should be free from unwanted advertising. Business will still be able to contact and reach their customers in many, many different ways.

Any interaction in a free society must be based on consent. The same is true for interactions between business and their customers. Businesses have the right to air commercials on TV, and by watching programs that they sponsor, I'm giving my implied consent to that advertising. However, when I answer my telephone, I am giving no such consent. By answering my phone, I've not agreed to listen to any form of advertisement. Unsolicited marketing calls are an unwanted interaction that is forced upon us. In a world where advertisements are on buses, radios, TVs, and the Internet, our homes should be a place free from unwanted interaction.

I urge all members to support this important legislation. Albertans are clear on this issue. They do not want uninvited intrusions into their home. It is our duty in this House to respond to the desires of Albertans. Bill 205 does that, and that is why I'm supporting it and urging all members to support it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

4:30

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 205. The object of this bill is to implement rules regarding the definition and functions of telemarketing not already covered by CRTC regulations.

Telemarketing is one way that businesses can advertise their products and offer their services. They will often use professional telemarketers or call centres to make telephone calls and send faxes to potential customers on their behalf.

To generate funds, charitable organizations will sometimes contact potential donors directly or through a telemarketing firm using unsolicited telephone calls or faxes. Charitable organizations will not be considered as telemarketers for the purposes of this bill.

Some telemarketing organizations use automatic dialers to place telephone calls or send faxes. Dead air or a hang-up call will occur if a telemarketing representative is not available when the call is answered. Generally, companies allow sufficient time between calls for a representative to be available; however, if the telemarketing representative is on another line longer than expected, the result is dead air.

Do any rules or restrictions apply to telemarketers? Yes. Restrictions apply to all telemarketers although they may differ depending on whether they use a fax or a telephone. As a minimum telemarketers must maintain do-not-call or fax lists and provide customers with a fax or telephone number where a responsible person can be reached. Specific rules are needed, Mr. Speaker.

Telemarketing rules refer to the rules of telecommunications facilities to make unsolicited calls for the purpose of solicitation, where solicitation is defined as the selling or promoting of a product or service or the soliciting of money or monies, whether directly or indirectly and whether on behalf of another party. This includes

solicitation of donations by or on behalf of charitable organizations. These rules apply to all unsolicited calls for the purpose of solicitation. They apply to business-to-business telephone solicitation and calls from businesses to existing customers.

These rules do not extend to calls where there is no attempt to advertise a product or offer a service; for example, calls for emergency purposes, calls to collect overdue accounts, calls for market or survey research, and calls to schedule appointments.

Mr. Speaker, the fax calling hours are restricted to weekdays between 9 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and weekends between 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Restrictions refer to the time zone of the called party and must identify the person or organization on behalf of whom the fax or call is made, including the telephone number, fax number, and name and address of the responsible person to whom the called party can write.

This rule also applies to organizations sending unsolicited fax calls on behalf of another organization: must display the originating calling number or an alternate number where the call originator can be reached, except where number display is unavailable for technical reasons. Sequential dialing is not permitted. Fax calls are not permitted to emergency lines or health care facilities. Names and numbers must be removed within seven days of the called party's request. Do-not-call lists are to be maintained by the calling party and remain active for three years.

Telephone callers must identify the person or organization they represent. Upon request, callers must provide the telephone number, name, and address of a responsible person a called party can write to. Callers must display the originating calling number or an alternate number where the caller can be reached except where the number display is unavailable for technical reasons. Names and numbers of called parties must be removed within 30 days of the called party request. Do-not-call lists are to be maintained by the calling party and remain active for three years. There are no calling-hour restrictions on live voice calls. Sequential dialing is not permitted. Calls are not permitted to emergency lines or health care facilities. Random dialing and calls to nonpublished numbers are allowed.

Mr. Speaker, it's really a good bill, and I will support this bill because this is absolutely imperative and very useful. This bill will decrease the harassment or inconvenience that for all of us is incurred by telemarketers. This bill differentiates between the role of telemarketers and those raising funds for charitable or voluntary organizations. Bill 205 also increases the accountability to the telemarketing firms for the conduct of their interaction with clients. This will also increase the capability for Albertans to contact the telemarketing firms if they have concerns, complaints, or if they wish to be removed from the calling list. It's about time to decrease the inconvenience that all of us are facing every day.

I really commend the sponsor of this bill for his great efforts. Thank you.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, and then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest in speaking this afternoon in regard to Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act. Now, while I think that the spirit of Bill 205 should be widely applauded by most Albertans, I do have a number of concerns with it in regard to both its scope and perhaps some omissions that are built into the bill itself. I think we all have spoken quite extensively on the annoyance factor of telemarketers

and how this should be somehow constrained, but how we go about doing that in the most effective way and the most expeditious way is the concern that we should be bringing forward for debate at this time.

We can look across North America and see a number of different jurisdictions trying to come to terms with this problem. I think the two areas that I find the most interesting and that we should view with the most interest are the national do-not-call registries that we see in the United States and the do-not-call registry legislation which has been put forward through our federal government. Let's remember that telemarketing is something that can cross borders very, very easily. In fact, we've created a largish industry here in our own city, where people are working in call centres, fulfilling various services for individuals across North America and sometimes even around the world. So our choice of how we restrict telemarketing has to reflect that reality as well as the fact that, you know, telephone marketing is used by not just retail commercial operations but charitable operations, and it's used extensively by political parties as well.

4:40

This is perhaps the first place that I need to draw my fellow members' attention to. There seems to be a loophole, in my mind, in this Bill 205. This is in the provision that allows for people to conduct polls and surveys. If this Bill 205 must be robust, then we must make a clear differentiation between a telemarketer and pollster. You know, I think that that is a problem because there are different ways by which a telemarketer could disguise themselves as a pollster, and Lord knows that there are lots of polls flying about these days for all sorts of things. You know, it's easy enough just with a simple script to do both, sell something and conduct a poll at the same time. So this seems to be the most obvious loophole that I find in this Bill 205, and I would suggest an amendment to the bill if we did in fact have the opportunity to go ahead with it. We need, as I say, then, to have clear provisions to define the surveyors and pollsters as opposed to telemarketers.

You have, I think, this phenomenon – we've all experienced it – where someone phones up and asks you some survey questions but, in fact, built into that is an advertisement. You know, when we look at telemarketing, sometimes we have this idea that it's simply somebody calling you up and saying, "We'll give you a free or a discounted vacuum service" or what have you. But, you know, advertisements using the telephone are also a way by which telemarketers forward their cause. So I think that there's definitely a grey area as this bill is worded currently, and that would need to be fixed.

Another area that is of concern, I think, is the absence of any mention of political phone polling and, otherwise, the various forms of solicitation that go on during elections and between elections. Now, the reality of how most political parties conduct themselves is that, you know, we do use the telephone quite extensively, and by simply not including some provision for that in this bill, I think that we've run into a serious problem. It's important that we keep all forms of communication and avenues of communication open for political candidates during elections and between elections. So the absence of dealing with that reality in Bill 205 I think causes serious concern and needs to be amended as well.

The specific constraints that Bill 205 seeks to place on telemarketers between, sort of, these no-call hours: although there are telemarketers that go outside of these boundaries, I think that, you know, telemarketers will move away from those certain hours regardless if you legislate it or not because, of course, if you are annoying your customer, then, in fact, you're less likely to be able

to sell them something. This is a basic principle that I think telemarketers do operate on. You know, it opens the door to, in my mind, the more logical way to control telemarketing, and that's through using a do-not-call registry, so then people are making that choice. We're seeing it quite successfully solicited and used across the United States. People can choose to not be interrupted by telemarketers at all if they do in fact find that to be a problem.

You know, something that occurs to me – and I guess this is outside of this bill as well – but personally, my own self, I don't receive a lot of telemarket calls. That's because the one line that we use for our family line at home is not in the phone book. Although we have a number of other lines by which people can reach us in the phone book, the one that we use personally for home is excluded. It opens the door, I think, for us to consider perhaps limiting or restricting how telemarketers pass lists around, and really the biggest list and the fattest list of all is the phone book. So, you know, this is how these people are making intrusions into our lives. I don't know. It just occurred to me that there are other ways to perhaps limit lists that are passed around and whatnot because, as I say, on the phone that we use at home, I don't get many calls at all in regard to telemarketers.

Mr. Lukaszuk: What's your number?

Mr. Eggen: Yeah, give me a ring sometime. I'm kind of lonely, so you can give me a call, right?

Anyway, those are the main concerns that I do have. I think that, as I said before, the spirit of this bill, in fact, I think would be welcomed by most Albertans. But always when we are creating legislation, I think it's important that we are absolutely crystal clear as to our intentions and as simple as possible. It's a moving target, being able to make calls to people's homes. It's a very effective way to sell things, so we have to make sure that we build the best edifice possible to limit the abilities of telemarketers to annoy people who don't want to be phoned. I mean, let's not forget that, you know, not everybody is in that situation. As I say, I would suggest an amendment to make a clearer definition between telemarketers and pollsters and, number two, to add political polling phoning and telemarketing as an exemption to Bill 205.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill, to me, has a good intention, but if any one of us has business experience, we'll see it from a different view. I just want to voice some concern about the practicality of this bill and the concern from small-business owners. I see this bill creating obstacles for small-business opening and operation, and small businesses are very, very important to our economy and employment.

Talking about the do-not-call registry or creating a registry that anybody can put their name on to be called: first of all, nobody will put their name on the registry to be called, so that is not very effective. If we want to create a registry for companies who want to make a call, that will incur a cost to the small businesses, particularly the ones that are just starting out and want to connect with potential markets and customers. To me, in a free-enterprise society we should know that our society prospers because of businesses, of innovation, of new ways of opening up business, of creating new products. This sort of control gives me concern on that aspect given that we are at times inconvenienced by some calls. The other side

of that inconvenience also gives freedom to enterprises to prosper. When I see that we create legislation to govern the inconveniences, to me it's not a very good way to make the law in that aspect.

4:50

Also, if we create a registry where you can call, there are a lot of call centre companies doing services to make calls on behalf of the companies. They already created the call centre, they have a code of ethics, and they have created many, many best practices. When a business practice becomes obsolete or ineffective, it will die naturally, by natural business causes. So I don't feel that we need to make legislation that creates obstacles for small businesses to start out by controlling them in this fashion.

I'm also concerned about the enforcement of this legislation. First of all, the enforcement is tough because the call could be coming from anywhere in the world. It's not just particularly in a province. So if we penalize a call from our province, then we will have competition from other provinces getting in and taking advantage or even having the upper hand on that.

Also, recently in Edmonton we just attracted a big call centre, a huge industry here in Alberta. My concern is that this piece of legislation will create an image of: hey, we don't want any call centre business here in Alberta. Basically, I see that as a concern from the small-business community that I talked to about this issue.

I also want to emphasize the point that the inconvenience of a telephone call – to me, it's worth it to pay for the free-enterprise society, with the prosperity that it brings to Alberta.

We should not forget the costs of enforcing this legislation, the registry. We all know the gun registry, as an example. When you create a registry, then you own the support of it, the creation of it, the maintenance of it. Let's say it generates some fines from the ones who violate this law. Immediately this becomes a cash cow or a revenue for the government. I don't want that kind of approach, when government starts taking money out of the economy. To me, if a manufacturer or a service provider can go direct to a customer in the least-cost way, then the end product or service will cost less to the consumer.

With that aspect, I just want to raise the concern for small businesses for a piece of legislation that may create a cost of enforcing.

To those who are concerned about the inconvenience of telephone calls, I say that bad practices will die out. It's just a matter of business effectiveness. When you phone and people don't have any response, or you do call and you don't sell anything, that service will die out.

With that, I just want to suggest that the hon. members consider those factors. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not often that I find myself agreeing with members from the other side. Perhaps there is something in the water today, but I wholeheartedly agree with the Member for Calgary-Fort that we have to look at this objectively, on both sides.

He did admit to the fact that in Edmonton we are attracting business opportunities, economic diversity. Regardless of how you describe a person's job, telemarketing is still an honourable way to make a living, and here we're saying that we're trying to get rid of it with the fair trading. That, in itself, is kind of a pun. Regardless of how you look at it, again, it's still an opportunity for those people to be able to have some livelihood.

Not everyone may agree with it, as I've heard from a number of speakers here. If we're going to shut the door on telemarketing here, we may in fact just increase the amount of spam through our e-mail. So, you know, one reaction may cause another equally concerning reaction.

Some of the points raised, you know, I do agree with. They, in fact, can be concerning, especially depending on the time, the hour that you receive the call. I think it's interesting that maybe a lot of the constituents have concerns with regard to the methodology. When you say no, is it no, or are they going to continue to berate you on that?

Speaking with my constituents of Edmonton-Decore, I know that I have a number of seniors, and a lot of them may not in fact be up to date with the technology which is call display. That's one way that you can in fact eliminate even answering the phone. When they do describe their number there, you're not obligated to pick it up. It's not an intrusion in your livelihood or in your household, as the member said, until you actually pick up that phone. Nothing makes you pick up that phone. For those that don't have call display, you know, they do pick it up regularly, and in fact they are given the opportunity to speak. Maybe these are the only people that even call these people.

Regardless, I can see how some people might find it to be one after another. I've noticed that, in fact, telemarketing over the last few months has increased. It's not just local people that are calling us. This is from other provinces and, in fact, from the States.

I'm not sure how this bill will be able to connect with those people that are breaking the traditional times and guidelines set forth by this bill, such as the times between the 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. calls, because I know that we've received calls later than that and through all those faxes outside the parameters set forth. So I'm not sure how this bill would include and, in fact, capture some of those people that we're going to charge or revoke their licence with the CRTC. Well, those operating in the States certainly are above the CRTC. They get numbers passed around frequently on disks, and they're allowed to use those numbers as they wish.

A lot of the times, like I said, you may be taking a phone call that might be a positive one, reducing your credit card amount from the 20 per cent or 19 per cent to 5.9 per cent, so they aren't all bad calls, you know. There might be the 5 or 10 per cent that are actually reasonable. But most times it's something or it's a product or it's a contact that you can make on your own. They're just making that extra effort to make sure that you're aware of it, which most people don't really want to know about.

You know, there are some positives with this, but again I think it speaks negatively to some people or some person's job or job description. Some people, in fact, have been employed with telemarketing for years and do consider it to be an honourable piece of work or a way to earn their wages. They're on commission. I do sympathize with them if they've taken up this calling. Some do sympathize with us with our calling here as well. Nonetheless, it's still an honourable job, which I think needs to be considered with regard to when we do vote for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I'd like to thank my hon. colleague from Calgary-Montrose for bringing forward this piece of legislation and for allowing the House the opportunity to consider this matter.

Without a doubt, most Albertans are perturbed many times about

the present state of affairs with regard to telemarketing and the annoyance of companies and individuals trying to sell them products over the telephone. Most of the time the products and services which they are trying to sell us are things that we don't want or have any need for, in fact, and they seem to have a knack of calling whenever we're in the middle of our favourite television program or reading our favourite magazine or newspaper. In other words, the phone calls are likely to be a complete waste of our time.

I would agree with a number of the speakers that have been speaking on this motion. As the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar mentioned, telemarketing is certainly an invasion of privacy as well. Over the past decade or so it seems to have gotten a lot worse. The telephone has become one of the favourite tools of communication for many companies.

5:00

Bill 205, now before us, calls for the creation of a government-maintained telemarketing licence registry that would issue licences to companies wishing to solicit Albertans over the phone. In addition, it also proposes to incorporate more stringent rules and regulations concerning telemarketing so that Albertans are not overly inconvenienced by telephone solicitors. Under these restrictions telemarketers would be restricted to placing their calls between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. on weekdays and between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. during the weekends, and they would not be allowed to solicit on general holidays.

The advantage of those measures, of course, is that it would not only forbid telemarketers from contacting customers during those times, but it would also establish a set of consistent rules and limitations regarding those practices within the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while I agree in principle with the concept that telemarketing must be controlled, I do see some issues with respect to this particular bill, Bill 205. The first is that it would necessitate a bureaucracy to be created, some sort of a registry bureaucracy, and that's one more piece of red tape that our businesses and people would have to deal with.

Secondly, I feel that Bill 205, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort and the Member for Edmonton-Decore have mentioned, also could be viewed as unfair to our business community here in Alberta. So to some extent it might create an unlevel playing field and give advantages to other people in other provinces.

Thirdly, when I first saw this legislation, the first thing that came to my mind was the issue of jurisdiction over these matters. In light of the federal jurisdiction over telecommunications and the fact that telecommunications which cross provincial boundaries are interprovincial undertakings, there are serious questions about the constitutionality of trying to control these telephone calls that may originate outside of our province. Many of the telemarketing businesses presently operating and calling people in Alberta operate out of other provinces, particularly the Maritimes, where they do not have the benefit of the Alberta advantage. So we would be creating an unlevel playing field should we choose to control those companies that are telemarketing here in Alberta without the same restrictions applying outside of the province.

I also think it's important to clarify that the current federal legislation does not adequately produce the necessary controls that are required to properly influence telemarketers to respect the rights of individuals. However, as I mentioned, the best way to address this is very likely through a national approach. I think that there's little argument against enforcing those stringent regulations, but the federal government is the body which ought to be passing legislation to control this. So I think it's something that the individual provinces can work on together with the federal government. The federal

government has laid out a list of actions that could be taken to control telemarketing, and although those aren't presently effective, they could be made effective by approaching this through some sort of national legislation.

Presently individuals can contact telemarketers directly and ask to be removed from their lists. They can also contact the CRTC, in which case they would pursue the matter on behalf of the individual. Another possible solution is for the individual to have their contact information removed from directories, although that's not always possible where you don't want to hide from people that may want to get in contact with you and may in fact have a legitimate interest in contacting you.

The current rules in place apply to all unsolicited calls for the purpose of solicitation and apply to business-to-business telephone solicitation. However, the rules don't apply to calls where there's no attempt to advertise a product or offer a service; for example, calls for emergencies purposes, calls to collect overdue accounts, calls for market survey research, and calls to schedule appointments.

The specific guidelines that are presently used for automatic dialing and announcing devices, or ADADs – these devices used for the purpose of solicitation are sometimes controlled and sometimes not. A lot of those calls can be made by referring the called party to a 900 or a 976 service number. So, in addition to the legislative difficulty with this from a constitutional standpoint, I also think, Mr. Speaker, that we have a problem with respect to practicality. I'm not convinced, given the fact that many of these calls originate outside the province, that this legislation would be effective in accomplishing what it seeks to do.

In summary, I believe that the desired results would be better accomplished by working with the other provinces and working with the federal government with respect to this issue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have listened with interest to the discussion this afternoon on Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005. It's certainly something that I think is a good idea. I don't want to deny anyone their means of livelihood, but I think telephone solicitation has gotten out of hand, particularly at the hours which are identified in Bill 205 as being particularly vexing.

Now, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar was talking about his evening meal with his family and how sometimes his dinner got cold. Someone was trying to sell him new carpet or hardwood floor or a vacuum cleaner or who knows what. I would certainly agree with the hon. member that this form of sales can be quite annoying and can be very, very intrusive. I don't care whether it is the bank that's phoning at suppertime to try to sell me a new account or a new form of account or whether it's someone who doesn't even give me time to respond whether I've got carpets or hardwood floors, but they certainly want to sell me some new wax or a means of waxing my hardwood floor.

This seems to definitely indicate that some people are concerned about consumers and the rights of consumers. I'm not saying that this is a form of consumer protection, but at least it's a recognition by an hon. member of this Assembly that, hey, consumers need a break even if it is only on a weekday between 5 and 8 and at various times during the weekend.

I do have some concerns. I guess, Mr. Speaker, it would be best if I described my concerns as a question. I could say that there's no interest like self-interest, but what does this mean for election campaigns? Certainly, I see here that "telemarketing" means the marketing of goods or services by telephone or fax for commercial

purposes whether done by a personal call, fax, computer or an automated recorded message device.” Now, perhaps the hon. member or another hon. member of the Assembly can answer that. Exactly where does election campaigning fall into this? Would election campaigning be exempt because it is not considered commercial? I have no idea.

5:10

I for one run very modest election campaigns, and we don't have megabucks to hire those demon dialers, those direct dialers. Is that practice going to be eliminated? Perhaps we should seek guidance on this matter from the Chief Electoral Officer. Just where would we fit into this as hon. members of this Assembly who may be considering running in the next election and planning election strategies? Certainly, we cannot afford these demon dialers, or automatic dialing systems. Others may. There are many members from different sides of the House that have dozens of volunteers that may phone a poll list. How do they fit into this? Are they considered telemarketers?

I would really appreciate some advice from the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose on this issue or from any other hon. member that may be able to clarify this for me before we proceed much further with Bill 205.

There are certainly habits of the telemarketing industry that need to be broken, and one habit is the constant, annoying intrusion into one's home at any hour of the day or night. If we could restrict or limit that, I don't think it would harm the industry. It would certainly improve, in my view, our quality of life, and I would urge all hon. members to have a close look at this legislation.

I don't think we should wait and see what other jurisdictions are doing. Some jurisdictions have more stringent controls on telemarketers and their actions. I don't think it's progress. I don't think that there will be an increase in market share for many of these agencies that are promoting products or services in this manner.

I again have to urge members to please have a close look at this bill and consider supporting it. I think it's a step in the right direction for consumers in this province. Again, I can't see how we can be faulted for regulating an industry. In most cases it's not even based in this province. I know that there are call centres in this province that service products and companies from all over North America, and there are calls that one can make here and the service provider or the agent can be in New Brunswick or New Jersey or New Mexico. It doesn't matter.

Enough is enough. I think this bill is a good idea. It has been discussed by hon. members of this Assembly in the past, and to see this Bill 205 at this time I think is a good step, and I would urge all hon. members to consider it. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and join the debate on Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005, sponsored by the Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Bill 205 is a bill whose, some may say, time has come. We live in a world where technologies are changing at an ever-increasing pace. It seems that on almost a daily basis someone somewhere has found a better, more efficient way to do things. The fast-paced advancement of technology over the years has allowed for companies and individuals to advertise easily and quickly through mediums such as telephones, fax machines, and e-mails. I'm certain that every member in this Assembly has experienced at one time or another the inconvenience that arises as a result of impersonal,

random advertising. If a member is unable to recall a personal experience, their constituents would likely provide one or two of their own.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 205 would create a licence registry for private companies engaged in telemarketing to Albertans. From my understanding this would affect telephone and facsimile marketers, thus preventing unsolicited telemarketers from annoying Albertans and their businesses both financially and personally. This is an issue that I feel needs to be addressed if not now, then later. But sooner or later something needs to be done to put an end to the economic and personal annoyances that come along with these attempts at marketing.

Mr. Speaker, to get a better insight to what Bill 205 may lead to do, it is appropriate to look at another jurisdiction that is knee-deep in similar types of legislation. Last June the United States starting accepting names for its do-not-call registry through the Federal Trade Commission, the FTC. In addition, approximately 37 states maintain their own do-not-call registries. For instance, the fine state of Kentucky has legislation similar to what is being proposed today, not a mirror image but something to look at nonetheless. The state of Kentucky requires that all telemarketing companies register 10 days in advance with the state as well as provide information regarding their company, products, and salespeople. Telemarketing companies are also required to provide a \$50,000 surety bond and an annual registration fee of \$300.

This is just one example, Mr. Speaker. In giving examples, I find it useful to ensure that we discuss all aspects, including the problem that arose as the federal legislation in the United States was brought forward. Although the number of registrants for the do-not-call list is quite substantial at 64 million, there were still some bumps in the road involved with activating the list. Early in the process a court in Oklahoma City said that the FTC overstepped its authority, stating that although Congress gave the agency funding for the list, it did not give the FTC the power to implement it. The next day the House of Representatives voted 412 to 8 in favour of giving the FTC the authority to run the national registry of phone numbers that telemarketers would be prohibited from calling. This is an example of the overwhelming support such legislation may have, not only in the United States but here in Canada as well.

Although not well known to many Canadians, Canada has had a do-not-call list administered by the Canadian Marketing Association for over a decade. People can sign up and be on their list by going to the Canadian Marketing Association's website. However, Mr. Speaker, the list does not hold users to any substantial legal repercussions, such as fines of up to \$11,000 like our neighbours to the south have implemented with this strategy. Nothing says "leave me alone and let me eat my dinner" like an \$11,000 fine. After its 15th year in existence not many Canadians even know about the list, where almost 500,000 numbers are currently registered. In fact, it is estimated that the list is only adhered to by 80 per cent of telemarketers.

The one side effect of any list that should be looked at is the fact that as long as the consumer has purchased a product from a company, they have theoretically entered a business relationship and can therefore be called and faxed at the company's or charity's discretion. Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about putting an end to these annoying phone calls and wasteful faxes, then individuals who wish to be placed on the Canadian Marketing Association's do-not-call list should be protected not only from those entities that they have not entered into a business relationship with but also those that they have entered into one with.

To be honest, when a constituent goes to a store to buy a jacket or performs any other financial transaction, they are not interested in entering a business relationship. They want to purchase the goods

and services they have worked hard for and to enjoy them. Mr. Speaker, if a constituent wants to enter a business relationship, it should be their choice not an assumption from a sale or application for a credit card. A question posed to a customer may be as simple as: Can I call you, fax you, e-mail you? The consumer's answer should be respected.

5:20

One thing I would like to see in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is the inclusion of e-mail spam along with telephone calls and faxes. As technology becomes available, it is becoming increasingly easier for someone to sit at their computer, run a program, and have a sometimes inappropriate advertisement sent to an extremely random, extremely large number of e-mail addresses. Some of those addresses belong to children, who don't necessarily need to be aware of what the advertisement is selling. These same technologies allow companies to make random calls and send out random faxes. There are a number of programs out there that help parents and individuals lessen the amount of e-mail spam that is pushed upon unsuspecting Internet users. But these are only a band-aid, and ultimately we have to find a way to eliminate the unsolicited advertising that takes place through e-mail.

The problem we are dealing with today may be telemarketing and the annoying, unwanted phone calls and faxes that Albertans receive. I am certain that the problem we will be dealing with tomorrow is the annoying, unwanted e-mail that Albertans receive. Mr. Speaker, by not targeting telemarketers, we are only sweeping this problem under the rug. Should this legislation pass as the number of telemarketers decreases? I don't think it is much of a stretch to assume that these individuals, determined to make big bucks off taking advantage of the vulnerability of some and annoying others, will find another way to do so. Their next move will be e-mail spam, and they will find a way to bypass current software programs, and the e-mails will still get through. Consumers will need to purchase more software programs to counteract the advanced attacks.

There is a trend here, Mr. Speaker, and the consumer is always at the losing end. The government of Alberta has in the past protected the rights of Alberta consumers. The government continues to do so today. It is necessary to take this step and ensure that Albertans are protected from the annoyance and exploitive factors of these practices. Be it through e-mail, telephone, the mail, or faxes, Albertans are tired of this annoyance.

While Bill 205 does not address e-mail spam or junk mail, it does speak to telemarketing and facsimile marketing. This is a step in the right direction, and I encourage government and all members to work towards a more extensive list that includes e-mail and even junk mail, which only clutters mailboxes, both digital and post office versions.

Beyond moving the protection of Albertan consumers and businesses forward, Bill 205 also provides the government an opportunity to properly enforce the CRTC regulations by ensuring that such companies are properly licensed and comply with the regulations that are in place. Mr. Speaker, it is time that these regulations get some teeth and hold those individuals responsible for these actions accountable to all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: The hon. member moves an adjournment of the debate?

Mr. Webber: I would like to adjourn the debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we now call it 5:30 and reconvene tonight at 8.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:23 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 16, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/05/16

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Postsecondary Education System Review

509. Mr. Mason moved on behalf of Dr. Pannu:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a commission on advanced education to thoroughly review Alberta's public postsecondary education system and recommend changes to enhance accessibility and affordability while ensuring excellence in areas of research and instruction.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just speaking to that, I want to indicate that the NDP opposition has made this a priority. It formed part of our party's platform in the last provincial election. It is based primarily upon the success of the commission on education, the so-called Learning Commission, that I think has been an excellent example of this type of approach. We believe that this approach should be extended to postsecondary education in this province.

The government has committed to spend a great deal of money on postsecondary education, and that by itself is a good thing, Mr. Speaker, but the question is whether or not we should be pursuing a significant increase in funding without taking a good look at where we are, where we have been, and where we want to go.

If I can just talk a little bit about some of the issues facing postsecondary education at the present time, I'd like to start with the question of cost to students and accessibility to education. A student at the University of Alberta now pays \$4,537.20 in tuition fees plus another \$500 in mandatory fees. The average tuition, according to Advanced Education, is \$4,487 a year at a university, \$2,866 at a college, and \$2,971 at a technical institution. The average student debt after education is \$20,000.

Between 1992 and 2004 support for postsecondary institutions in Alberta dropped by 28 per cent when counted in 1992 dollars. One of the consequences of provincial underfunding is an increase in the amount of deferred maintenance at universities, colleges, and technical institutions, something the Auditor General has repeatedly pointed out in his reports. Buildings on university and college campuses are aging, and we need to make sure that the dollars are there on a consistent basis to do maintenance, repairs, and renovations. While there have been significant dollars put into the construction of new buildings at some public postsecondary campuses, many of these buildings are for research purposes and do not relieve the crowded lecture halls and labs that students are facing.

Mr. Speaker, barely half of Albertans today view the education system as affordable. This number has dropped by 24 per cent in the last three years alone. Meanwhile, universities, colleges, and technical institutions see operating grants that don't keep pace with inflation let alone accommodate rising utility costs, enrolment increases, deferred maintenance, and infrastructure needs or allow them to expand programs for the continuing demands of a growing economy.

Getting back to accessibility, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the second-lowest postsecondary participation rate in Canada. Only British Columbia is worse. According to Missing Pieces, an annual report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Alberta is ranked seventh among Canadian provinces for its commitment to funding postsecondary education and ensuring its accessibility, this despite Alberta being the wealthiest province in the country. The minister has promised a review of the affordability of postsecondary education, but such a review would be far too narrow. A commission on advanced education would broadly examine the system in its entirety.

I'd like to speak briefly on the role of the private sector in postsecondary education. Certainly, the underfunding has resulted in universities placing greater reliance on private funding for research, scholarships, and so on. There is considerable evidence showing that biases appear in corporate-funded research. In particular, results tend to be positive more often when studies are funded privately. That's a very interesting observation, Mr. Speaker.

For-profit postsecondary education models pose a threat to important functions of universities, which are to investigate, debate, and propose things whether or not they are popular. A course may not be profitable. That does not mean it lacks social or scientific value. As Gordon Laxer has noted: "Bringing in private education institutions undermines the idea of equal public education access. Education becomes a commodity and those who have more money can have access to it." There are also important concerns about whether knowledge and research that comes from a university is public or whether it should be allowed to be privatized, commodified, or sold.

Mr. Speaker, just to conclude, the NDP opposition recommends the following terms of reference for an advanced education commission. It should have set out the timelines, composition of the commission. It should deal with accessibility to postsecondary institutions, affordability, quality, teaching and research: finding the appropriate balance at our public universities. It should deal with university governance. It should deal with the role of the private sector. It should deal in an overall way with the financing of the system. It should debate and discuss the future of the social sciences, arts, and the humanities.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would recommend passage of this motion of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I believe that now is the time to take a good, in-depth look at our postsecondary institutions and provide the public with an opportunity to have their say as well. This process has proved very successful with respect to the K to 12 system through the Learning Commission. We believe that before we launch into a major expansion of funding for the postsecondary system, as the government has promised, we ought to take a good look at that system and determine exactly where it is that we want to go.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise tonight to join the debate on Motion 509, proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. First of all, I'd like to thank the hon. member for putting forward this motion. I know that I personally appreciate the opportunity to discuss Alberta's postsecondary education system. As the mother of four boys between the ages of 18 and 25 I'm riveted at this time by Alberta's postsecondary system. It's something we spend a lot of time in our household discussing and looking at as we try to help our sons prepare for their future.

As I look at the motion that the hon. member brings forward, he talks about establishing “a commission on advanced education to thoroughly review Alberta’s public postsecondary education system and recommend changes to enhance accessibility and affordability while ensuring excellence in areas of research and instruction.” I think those are all very, very plausible things to talk about. But, Mr. Speaker, as I think about where my boys are today and how long a commission actually takes to put together and to really do a very, very thorough job, I’m wondering if we can just wait that long. Part of my problem is that those issues are in front of us today, and I think we have on some levels a pretty good understanding of some of those issues.

Some of it has to do with access. I know that I’ve been in this House before and I’ve talked about a bubble that was moving. People go: what is a bubble? I just remember when my boys were all kind of clustered around the elementary years, and there was this bubble or this surge of population, and we didn’t fit in our elementary schools. We were struggling to get everybody into elementary in the city of Calgary, then that moved to junior high, and then it moved to high school. I would say to you today that it has hit our postsecondary system. Added to that, many learners and many people out there are returning to postsecondary education in order to upgrade. In a sense, you have this bubble moving through with this rise and people returning. So I think that the hon. member is right: one of the big issues is accessibility, and can kids access a postsecondary education?

8:10

I was very, very disturbed last week to read in the *Herald* the grade point averages that you have to have to get into things that are basic. You know, to me, when it comes to choosing education like engineering, teaching, nursing, things that we know in this province we’re going to need a lot more of in the future – we know that. I don’t really think that we need a major review in order to tell us those things. I think we understand that issue. As I was looking at those grade point averages, they reminded me of the kind of grade point averages kids used to have to have to get into, say, medical school. I thought: my word, we have an access issue in this province.

I think, though, when I start to look at what those issues are in postsecondary, that we as government are really focused on this issue. Bill 1 I think proved that in this session. We have spent a considerable amount of time as government focusing on the postsecondary issue. So while I support the general intent of the motion that’s before us today, there’s no question that the goals that this hon. member raises with his motion are some of the same goals that government also has in their aim.

I think the commitment to these goals was very clearly displayed in the 2005-2006 provincial budget. Funding to address accessibility, affordability, and to improve the overall quality of our postsecondary education system was laid out in the budget. The government increased the advanced education budget by nearly 30 per cent, \$433 million over the next three years with an immediate injection of \$196 million. The Alberta government has targeted these dollars to ensure that they are used to deal with the major areas of concern: affordability and accessibility.

Ninety million of those dollars have been specifically targeted for the access growth fund to achieve the goal of adding 15,000 postsecondary spaces over the next three years. I think that’s a really ambitious goal and one that government is prepared to back up and commit to. Additional dollars will follow to bring that number up to 30,000 and then eventually to 60,000. Undoubtedly, it’s a lofty goal, but with focus and an unwavering perseverance I have no doubt that we’ll see these projected spaces come to fruition.

In fact, another \$111 million has been budgeted in postsecondary capital projects alone this year. I look at the University of Alberta and the cranes that we see now emerging. I was at a groundbreaking ceremony just this last week at Mount Royal College as they broke ground again. I know that we are working on physically building the spaces as well.

Also included in this year’s budget is \$105 million for student loans, \$72 million in scholarships, bursaries, and grants. This is an increase of 11.7 per cent in those scholarship programs. Part of this increase will be used to fund the new Lois Hole humanities and social science scholarships. We spoke about all of these things in Bill 1, so I won’t go back into them tonight.

The two things that I did want to just put a little bit, you know, finer point on is that this year’s tuition fee gives government the time and the opportunity to create a tuition policy for Alberta. I quote the Premier. He laid out the reasons for this new tuition policy when he said in his annual televised address:

By the time post-secondary students head back in September 2006, Alberta will define a new tuition policy for the 21st century. It will be the most innovative, entrepreneurial, and affordable tuition policy in the country – one that reflects the shared responsibility of students, parents, educators, and administrators. We will do whatever it takes to make sure money isn’t a barrier to attending Alberta’s post-secondary institutions.

As this House has already heard, the Minister of Advanced Education has committed to follow up on the Premier’s statement. The hon. minister will be instituting a review of the postsecondary system in Alberta. While the exact framework has not yet been released, I know that affordability will be one of the main areas of focus.

That’s the main reason I don’t feel that I can support this motion. I support the aims, I support the ultimate goals that the hon. member has laid out, yet there has already been a commitment made by the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education to undertake a review of our postsecondary system. I worry that if we were to pass this motion tonight, we might be hamstringing any upcoming review. I’m not prepared to limit the government’s review by a strict scope of this motion.

Once again, I appreciate the hon. member’s intention and his commitment to postsecondary education, but until I know exactly what shape the government review is going to take, I feel that this motion would be premature. I will be unable to support it tonight.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure that I rise tonight to speak to Motion 509, moved by my colleague for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and to perhaps respond to some of the comments of my colleague across the way as well.

I had the great honour of attending the graduation ceremony of the Alberta College of Art and Design yesterday, where some 200 students received their degrees, mostly bachelor of fine arts, some bachelor of design. Of course, most of them were young and fresh-faced and eager to get out there with their degrees and change the world. Many of them had friends and family in the audience, and as they came up to receive their degree, they got cheers and whoops and whistles and all sorts of things and applause from their supporters and their friends in the audience. I couldn’t help but notice that the two students who got the loudest, biggest cheers were both mature students, very mature students, well into their 50s or perhaps beyond, I would guess. I think that point needs to be made to counteract this bubble myth that has just been presented from across the House.

Yes, there's a bubble; it's called the echo generation. We baby boomers hatched out in record numbers, of course, between 1946 and about 1964. Although the birth rate in Canada right now is perhaps lower than it has ever been, by sheer force of our numbers we baby boomers have hatched out another bumper crop of young'uns, young'uns who are of the age of majority, of the age of maturity, of the age of entrance into colleges and universities and technical institutes right now. I have an 18 year old, so I know a little whereof I speak, as does my colleague from across the aisle.

We talk a lot about access and affordability and excellence and questions of grade point averages and admission requirements to, you know, what used to be pretty basic four-year liberal arts, humanities, social sciences, and general science courses that didn't require the kind of grade 12 average that a medical school entrance did to get in, and now they do. That's an access problem, no question about it. Some of that access problem may in fact go away, lessen a little bit when the bubble, when the echo generation, moves through its baccalaureate years, but it won't all go away because we live in this culture of life-long learning, as we are told.

Many of us will go back to school and get second and third degrees and diplomas and certificates and whatever else is required. Someday when perhaps the Minister of Advanced Education has more than just a little grey around the temples, he'll go back. You know, after the voters have thrown him out or he's retired from politics or whatever, he'll go back, get a degree, and he'll get the biggest cheer at graduation ceremony. I don't know.

The point is that postsecondary education is phenomenally important to every person in the province of Alberta. It is important to Alberta society, and it is too important to simply approach as though you were a mechanic fixing an old car with a lot of problems: well, this week we need to throw some money at the brakes, and next week we're going to have to get new tires on the beast and get the wheel alignment redone, and a couple of weeks down the road we'll have to replace the windshield and then, you know, do some major engine repair, and on and on like that. What this system needs is for somebody to step back and take the long view, take a holistic approach, and do a comprehensive review of the whole thing.

So I would speak to the motion put forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood with support with reservations, I guess. The reason why I say that I have some reservations about it is because I think this motion perhaps doesn't go quite far enough. The motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a commission on advanced education to thoroughly review Alberta's public postsecondary education system and recommend changes to enhance accessibility and affordability while ensuring excellence in areas of research and instruction.

If my colleague were the student and I were the instructor here, I would give my colleague a very high mark, but I wouldn't give him a perfect score because one of the things that's missing from the motion, I think, is a specific recommendation to make this a commission that is independent of the government.

8:20

I suspect that we can take it that that's implied, that that's what my colleagues had in mind when they crafted this motion, but the motion does not specify that the commission be independent of the government even to the extent that the K to 12 Commission on Learning was. We all know that even after accepting the idea of the K to 12 Learning Commission, the ministry of learning went to some lengths, I think, to make sure that the members that were appointed to the commission were seen as more or less relatively safe in most cases by the government.

After selection the commission had to struggle to maintain some of its independence. It succeeded in that, Mr. Speaker, and produced a fine report, and many of the recommendations of the K to 12 Commission on Learning were adopted by this government, although certainly not all of them have been acted upon yet, but many of them are still in progress.

One recommendation that wasn't accepted that was initially under review but then just seems to have dropped off the government's agenda was recommendation 12: "Undertake a comprehensive, independent review of Alberta's post-secondary education system." That is what we need in this province going forward. We need to make sure that the advanced education system that we have today – and by advanced education, by postsecondary education I mean college, technical institute, university, and apprenticeship programs. We need to make sure that they're going to meet the needs not just of the bubble, not just of the echo generation, not just of our kids but of our children and our children's children and the adult learners of the province of Alberta for the next 50 years. What's required here is some vision.

We've seen over the past five years, just to give an example, all sorts of ministry-driven reviews that haven't generated any significant improvement or even any significant action on key priorities such as funding increases or tuition controls. There was the MLA Committee on Lifelong Learning in 1999, the 2000 MLA Funding Review Committee, the Campus Alberta Symposium in 2000, the Alberta learning accessibility study in 2001, the strategic framework review in 2002, the Post-secondary Learning Act in 2003-04, tuition fee policy consultations. I mean, this tuition review, this funding review or affordability review or whatever you want to call it that the government is about to undertake will be, I think, the fourth creation of the ultimate be-all and end-all tuition policy in the last 14 years in this province, and none of them have stuck for more than a season or two.

I would suggest that given this government's record in health care reform or lack thereof, if we wait for this government to do its own internal review to create the ultimate affordability policy, well, my children, both of them, will be through university. They'll be through any postgraduate work that they do. They'll be through their career, and they'll be retired and living off their pensions by the time you guys come up with the ultimate tuition policy. By then it'll be the 22nd century. But I quibble.

I think what's missing from this motion – and I wish that it had been put in and specified – is the word "independent." But in other respects I feel that this is worthy of this House's support: a comprehensive review done by outsiders of the postsecondary system in the province of Alberta, comprehensively, holistically so that out of that comes a series of recommendations that may not do anything for my colleague across the way's 18 to 25-year-old sons and may not do anything for my 18-year-old son and my 16-year-old daughter immediately but will produce a blueprint for a great, a world-class, a world-beating advanced education system in the province of Alberta that will do wonders for everybody in this province going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, appreciate the opportunity to speak to Motion 509, calling for a commission on advanced education. I'll say right at the outset that I don't support the motion, but I want to make it clear that the reason I don't support the motion is because much of what is being asked for in the motion is already well under way. It's not that I don't agree with the

concept or the content. In fact, we do need a thorough review of Alberta's postsecondary system. We need to do that review, much as the member across the way has just said, to ensure that there is a clear vision for Alberta as a learning society, how we develop a system that is world-leading in postsecondary education so that every Albertan has the opportunity to obtain the education and skills that they need to be able to compete in a global economy.

Mr. Speaker, we have in this province a 20-year strategic plan. Actually, I think we're quite unique among governments, certainly in Canada, having had that kind of a vision and planning framework. I'm very proud of that. One of the things that's very clear when you have a 20-year strategic plan that talks about unleashing innovation, leading in learning, competing in a global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit is that the underpinning of that strategic plan is advancing our knowledge and advancing our education.

There are a number of things ongoing, a number of things that have been happening. In 2000, for example, there was a review of the postsecondary funding system. One of the things that the review committee at that time indicated was that a review should be conducted every five years to ensure that the principles of equity, adaptability, and stability continue to be reflected in the postsecondary funding framework. So this year we've promised and we've indicated that we will conduct a review of the funding framework. We've also indicated that there would be an affordability review, a review of the cost of going to school and how those costs are paid so that finances are not a barrier to any Albertan getting an education.

In looking at those two commitments and having had the opportunity and the privilege to lead the newly formed Ministry of Advanced Education, it quickly becomes apparent that in the context of our 20-year strategic plan, in the context of the new ministry going forward, in the context of our centennial year looking to our 21st century, now is an excellent time, an excellent opportunity to do more than just review funding and review affordability. So in January I met with representatives of all postsecondary stakeholders. We brought in some other members of the public to be, as I called them, agents provocateurs in the discussion, to actually have a robust discussion about what we needed to do going forward to fulfill the promise that the Premier made that postsecondary education should be our number one priority, to be able to provide some input and advice as to what should go into the Premier's speech at the beginning of February to Albertans about what might contextualize postsecondary being our number one priority, and in terms of what content might be available for a Bill 1, to really show that we were serious about putting the wheels on, so to speak.

During those discussions stakeholders indicated also a need for a full review, a full policy development on postsecondary in Alberta so that we could ensure that our postsecondary system was leading-edge in the world and to identify what needed to be done to articulate a clearer vision. Alberta's vision as stated by the Alberta government and, therefore, my ministry's vision, is to have "a vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children."

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker, in terms of a vision for the postsecondary education system in Alberta? Well, it's a vision for higher learning where the postsecondary system has a place for every Albertan who wants to advance their education. That means that we must inspire Albertans to want one of those places, to want to advance their education, to become a part of that vision of the future of Alberta. It's a vision where cost is not a barrier to a person receiving a postsecondary education, and it's a vision where people

have all of the opportunity they want to explore their passions and their talents in a quality postsecondary system that provides an opportunity for an education in a way that's accessible and affordable and of a high quality.

Specifically, we will only succeed when we have a world-class postsecondary system based on access for all learners so that Albertans have access to the opportunities to achieve their expectations, affordability for all learners to ensure that cost is not a barrier to higher learning, and quality and innovation. To be a leader in learning, Alberta must continue to move ahead towards excellence.

More can always be done. Now, does that mean more dollars? Does it mean better use of existing resources? Does it mean new types of programs? Those are just some of the questions that a comprehensive review of the entire postsecondary system will answer.

Mr. Speaker, we've planned that full and comprehensive review of Alberta's postsecondary system. That's what the motion is calling for, but it's calling for it in the context of a learning commission. As we heard earlier, a learning commission puts a structure around it that may not be the best structure for that review in this year. We want to do it thoroughly, but we also want to do it quickly. We want to move ahead to make whatever changes are necessary, certainly on the urgent priority of access, on the very, very important priority of affordability, and of course on the always essential priority of quality. Our system must be dynamic, it must continue to change and adapt to meet current and future needs, and it must reflect the perspectives of all Albertans. So the review that we're talking about will not only review affordability, access, and quality but also roles and responsibilities.

8:30

Once we look at the system and say, "What do we need to be a world leader in education?" then we can look at our existing system and say: "What do we have? What are the gaps? What do we need to do to get there? What holes must be filled?" Our system must be dynamic. It must continue to change and adapt to meet current and future needs. So we must take that look, develop that policy, that strategy which says, "This is Alberta as a learning society" and identifies what we need to put into effect to get there.

One of our most valuable assets in our ability to create that postsecondary system that meets the demands of a changing world is the willingness of government and stakeholders to periodically sit down and assess where our postsecondary education system is. The success is in constantly looking at where we're at, figuring out where we need to be. Where do we need to be? Well, we need to have that first-class world-leading education system. If we aim any lower, we're aiming too low.

Do we need a learning commission? No, Mr. Speaker, because we have already moved forward to set up. In fact, the invitations have gone out to people to sit on a steering committee for a committee which will drive the process, which will ensure that there's research done on every aspect as identified by the conference that we had in mid-January, followed up with subconferences in early February with both the learning community and the aboriginal community to fill out the breadth of our scope and discussion.

We'll establish a learning steering committee that will have representatives from across the province bringing forward perspectives from students, from people who are dealing with literacy programs, people who are dealing with the learning communities in various methods across the province as well as people who know and understand the college system, know and understand the university system, know and understand the urban and rural issues and concerns, bringing in the aboriginal perspective; in short, a

comprehensive review which will culminate in a public discussion which will happen throughout the review but in a conference in late October so that people can reflect on the issues that we've talked about, the research that's been discussed, and find the best way forward, make recommendations on the best way forward.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the interest of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in putting the motion on the table and the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood in moving the motion. I certainly appreciate the comments from the other speakers tonight with respect to the need for this review. It's absolutely essential that we have a very strong vision of Alberta as a learning society: how we move forward with that, how we make sure that access is there when students will want to do it, but more importantly that we inspire every Albertan to want to advance their education so they can take advantage of the opportunities which present themselves in this province, not just the economic opportunities but the social responsibilities that are available for us all to maximize our own human potential, contribute back to our communities in the strongest way possible so that we continue to make Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Part of the argument, as I see it, across the way by the Member for Calgary-Shaw and the minister seems to be that time is of the essence, that we have to move ahead. Well, it doesn't mean that if you have a commission, the whole advanced education system shuts down. There are things that will continue to go on as they did with the Learning Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat dubious as a school board member when the Learning Commission was set up, I have to admit. I thought, well, you know, there would be some good Tories on there, and probably they'd do what the government said. But I was pleasantly surprised. I think that the Learning Commission came back with a very comprehensive report. Not that all of us would agree with every single item on there; there are obviously some things that we don't. But I think that above all it captured what needed to happen in public education.

I think, more importantly, what it's done is set a mark that we can all judge the government by. In other words, we can go through the points. I'll use one that's important to me. Is the government going to move on early childhood education, full-day kindergarten in high-needs areas? That was a recommendation, and we can look at that, Mr. Speaker, so we know exactly what the government is doing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if that worked well in public education, I can't for the life of me see why a similar process would not work well in advanced education to make it broader, to make it more independent. That's certainly one of the key recommendations of the Commission on Learning, as has already been pointed out by the Member for Calgary-Currie. They could see that there were problems there when they looked into public education. They said that we should undertake a comprehensive, independent review of Alberta's postsecondary education. That's precisely what we're trying to do with this motion.

Now, if I may, Mr. Speaker – time is of the essence – there are a couple of things the government can do about two major things. They don't need to wait for a commission. We know that we have a problem with tuition fees. The temporary measure announced this year is creating uncertainty. We look at this. There are over

230,000 postsecondary students in Alberta. In exchange for receiving education, students sacrifice an average of nearly \$5,000 per year in tuition and other mandatory fees. They sacrifice income opportunities from jobs now so that they can get better jobs in the future. At the end of this most of them on average – and it goes higher – will have a \$20,000 debt. That's a considerable amount of money for people who are just starting out in the workforce if they don't have wealthy parents. Clearly, we could have done something about that. We could have put on a permanent freeze as other provinces have done.

The other thing that was alluded to, Mr. Speaker, was the accessibility, and that is a major issue. As my colleague has already talked about, we have the second-lowest participation rate in the country. That's a very serious matter. I think the Member for Calgary-Shaw is correct. I mean, a lot of us probably wouldn't have got into university with the marks that they need to get into university or NAIT or SAIT or Mount Royal. We have a serious problem with accessibility. We didn't have to wait for any review to know that, if we have the second-lowest participation rate in a rich province like this. We could have moved ahead. So time is of the essence, as I said. It's not that everything stops. We could have moved on those two major things.

We're moving ahead with some items. The minister has promised to undertake a review of the affordability of postsecondary education in Alberta. We're glad, Mr. Speaker, but what we're saying is: why don't we take a broad look as we did with public education? The government, I believe, says that it worked well there. I don't understand for the life of me why it won't work well in postsecondary education, especially with the recommendation that came from this group. It's a broad sense, and it would be independent. [interjection] To the minister, I'm glad that you're consulting and doing those sorts of things. That's an important role for the minister to participate in. But this commission, if it was set up like the learning commission on public education, would be independent of the government, would set some standards, would look at it broadly, right across. It wouldn't be sort of behind closed doors with smaller meetings, although some good things could come out of that. It sets a goal. It sets standards for into the future of what we might expect for our postsecondary education.

Just as with the Learning Commission now we can watch from year to year to year what's happening with class sizes, what's happening with some of the other recommendations that the government hasn't got around to yet. We have some way to judge, then, if the government is going in the right direction. We have sort of piecemeal things that occur, maybe some very good things for the minister with his consultations, but how do we have a measuring stick to know later on whether the government is following what they were told?

8:40

It seems to me that this review, rather than just a review of the affordability of postsecondary education and a lot of the other consultation, is behind closed doors. Tell us how broad it's going to be, Mr. Minister. We haven't seen what's going to happen laid down like when the commission was announced. That's the problem. If you're going to do something that we're advocating, I would have thought that we would know about it by now and that it would be laid out: here are the parameters of what we're looking at, this is what we're going to do, this is how we're going to be judged, and here's where the public hearings are going to be, as they did with the Learning Commission. I don't see that, Mr. Speaker. I don't see that at all.

The reality is that we need it, I believe, because we are spending a lot of money, and so we should, perhaps more or less. We have

private universities, private schools proliferating in the province. Is that the right way to go? Well, I have my doubts about it, but if a commission looked at it, maybe they could take a look at this and see if this is good or bad.

We've had discussions in here. I believe it was a member across the way that talked about wanting more fine arts in the schools. Well, that has implications for postsecondary education also. What is the role of arts and science at the universities? A lot of people say that they've been downgraded. We haven't had that discussion.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we're talking about. We lay it out like the Learning Commission. This is what we're going to do: we're going to have public hearings, we're going to do the work, we're going to come back and make a report, and then the government has the right and can respond to it. But at least we have a measuring stick.

The point that I want to make in a broad sense, Mr. Speaker, just to conclude, is that we deserve a true commitment to postsecondary education starting with a review. I just want to enlarge on this. It should examine a wide range of issues – this is a point to the minister – including accessibility, affordability, quality, balance between teaching and research, the role of the private sector, how to finance the system, and the future of the arts, sciences, and humanities.

If the minister could stand up and say: well, we're going to lay this out in a public way – I don't care if you call it a commission. [interjection] Well, you're saying it behind closed doors. [interjection] Well, we don't know exactly what's coming. It has not been laid out, Mr. Speaker. It has not been laid out the same way the Learning Commission was. That's all I'm saying.

I'm not saying to the minister that there aren't going to be some good things coming out of it. We're saying: let's put it in a broader way and set some measuring sticks so we can do as the Learning Commission. That's all we're saying. Let's do it right. Let's do it in a broad way. That doesn't mean that in the short term we don't deal with things like accessibility and affordability. Of course we do, Mr. Speaker. The whole system isn't going to shut down while we do this, just as the public education and Catholic education systems didn't shut down. Let's do it right. If we're going to spend this money and we want to look into it, let's do it right. Do it independently. Set it up and do the hearings, and then come back with a report that, hopefully, would be as good as the other one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to add my comments to the debate concerning this Motion 509. I'm especially pleased to speak to the motion since I've been involved in the postsecondary education system for some years in a number of capacities.

I believe first of all that we have a system that is an excellent postsecondary system and one which is very responsive to the majority of Alberta students. It's a system that endows our students with not only facts and knowledge, but more importantly it endows them with the ability to think creatively and critically.

I don't think I'm overstating it when I say that one of the reasons that our province has done so well over the past hundred years is that we have had an excellent postsecondary education system here in the province of Alberta. Albertans by nature, Mr. Speaker, are creative and imaginative, hard-working, entrepreneurial, and these are the characteristics which one needs to be successful in postsecondary education.

With this in mind, I certainly agree with the sentiments of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in bringing this motion. I would

agree that we need to continually work to improve and enhance our advanced education system. We certainly need to make sure that it is accessible, affordable, well funded, and effective when it comes to the areas of research. Certainly, our present and future realities would demand that we continue to hold the postsecondary education system high in our priorities. Indeed, the future growth and prosperity of our economy here in Alberta are dependent on our ability to invest in human capital and to train and attract skilled and enhanced and educated individuals that will be able to meet the needs of the future economy.

So by reviewing and investing in the advanced learning system, we certainly ensure that future generations of Albertans will be provided with the knowledge that they need to realize their goals and aspirations. In support of this vision I'm very pleased that the Minister of Advanced Education has announced that a review of our postsecondary education system will be taking place later this year. I'm certainly heartened to hear that the review will be comprehensive and inclusive and that it will involve stakeholders and partners from both within and outside the education system. In addition, I'm sure that that review will help to raise the awareness of some of the challenges that the system is presently facing and that it will hopefully generate a dialogue out of which a lot of insights and ideas and solutions and innovations could arise.

So while I applaud my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona for his concern in bringing this motion and seeing that Alberta students receive the best higher learning that is possible, I certainly have some concerns, which I share with the hon. Government House Leader, that the motion calls for measures which are substantially the same as what the government is already in the process of doing.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but as the hon. minister has already mentioned, the government has been doing much more than planning a review. Aside from the review, the province has been looking at ways to improve accessibility, affordability, and the excellence of all of our advanced education institutions and by working with our partners and stakeholders in the field has made considerable gains in that regard. The recently announced budget allotments; legislation, including Bill 1, as has been mentioned; and other initiatives introduced by the government are a direct result of the collaborative approach.

Given my concerns, Mr. Speaker, I guess that in summary I would say that I do have concerns about the overlap between the commission that is requested in this motion and the comprehensive review that has already been announced by the Minister of Advanced Education. With that in mind, I will end my comments and will not be supporting the motion as presented.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, support Motion 509. I believe it's a starting point. I also prefer the idea of an independent commission due to the greater transparency afforded, as suggested by my fellow member from Calgary-Currie.

While I understand the Member for Calgary-Shaw's reluctance because of how commissions tend to drag out, it's up to the government to adopt the measures that commissions have put forward and quickly implement them so that we can start to benefit.

8:50

One of the most revolutionary reports of its time happened with the Kratzmann report in 1980, and if we had put in place the recommendation of that time, the major recommendation that Kratzmann put forward of 20 students per teacher in a classroom, just think how dramatically our education system would have advanced in the 25 years that followed. We're just starting through

the Learning Commission to approach some of those pupil-teacher ratios that were recommended way back in 1980.

Another recommendation that was made in 1980 and was one of the underlying reasons for the Calgary public teachers' strike that lasted the better part of three and a half months was the fact that at that time elementary teachers were given no preparation time. What happened immediately – while the Learning Commission was taking place and prior to it being set up, the government, basically, went into the contract, stripped out preparation time, and the idea of a pupil-teacher ratio was basically suspended.

Now, the Learning Commission – granted it's a slow process, but it is a process – and its independent nature I think added to its own credibility. The government accepted 86 of the independent Learning Commission's 100 recommendations. As a result, slowly but surely it seems that these recommendations are being acted upon. We still haven't got to the point where we're not closing inner-city schools and dealing with the larger issues, but it is a starting point.

The problems are acute at the postsecondary system. Bill 1 does not begin to address them. Bill 1 is not going to change the fact that at the U of C they're going to continue for the next four years to have a 5 per cent clawback on programming. That will not be addressed in Bill 1. Bill 1 cannot magically with the wave of a wand create 15,000 new spaces by 2008. It's great to hear that ground has been broken at Mount Royal. That ground, as I understand it from last week's release, will account for 10 new classrooms. I'm not sure how big those classrooms are, but it's certainly a small portion of the 15,000 seats that have been promised for 2008 and the 60,000 by 2020. These are wonderful goals, but unless we have some kind of a measuring stick, such as Motion 509 suggests, our chances of getting there are very much limited.

The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View questioned the validity of the *MacLean's* review, so let's just rewrite history. Say that *MacLean's* hasn't written these reviews over the years, which have unfortunately put my University of Calgary further down on its list. Let's look at the internal reviews by the students themselves, which recognized the University of Calgary as 47th out of 48 in terms of student satisfaction with the institution. Now, there have been good professors at the university. There continue to be good professors, and there are some very good programs in research, undergraduate, and postgraduate, but the institution itself has been forced to cannibalize, and as a result, the quality of education has been reduced. Class sizes are getting larger. Temporary, portable solutions are being sought rather than permanent infrastructure. These have to be addressed.

We currently have the lowest per capita postsecondary graduation level from this province, and again Bill 1, while it basically throws 3 and a half billion dollars of one-time funding at the problem, doesn't have a sequential solution to it. Twenty-five per cent of students were eligible students who had these high grade-point averages, as the hon. member alluded to, that would have kept at least myself and himself out of the institution at that time – or if current averages were being applied, we wouldn't have made it in – and students who have the money to afford these inflated tuitions, with this one-year exception of basically what amounts to a freeze and then it increases as usual.

Bill 1 does not in itself even approach the problem. Bill 1 is a one-shot, one-time postsecondary band-aid, as opposed to our opposition legacy fund, which would top up funds on an ongoing annual basis as a percentage of future surpluses, 35 per cent to be exact, with another support of 25 per cent to be set aside for infrastructure needs. So that's the type of long-term solution that we need, long-term funding.

What Motion 509 does is say that we've got to start somewhere, and let's start with Motion 509. The Learning Commission served as an independent measuring stick for public education. We desperately need such a device for postsecondary. You've got to start somewhere. I would suggest: the sooner the better. Let's start with Motion 509. We can always fine-tune it as the process gets under way. I thank the hon. members of the NDP opposition for putting it forward.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to express some ideas about the need for a review of our postsecondary education. I'm very pleased to hear the minister today talking about the action he's going to take. If I can think back to what I read, some 2,500 years ago Confucius taught the rulers of the kingdoms in ancient China: to make society prosperous, provide them with education. This has been true for thousands of years. Even the recent study from Stanford University indicates that among nations in the world now the most prosperous, with the highest quality of life are the nations with high education participation.

It just happened that last February I had an opportunity to be in Toronto, and I visited the Ontario Assembly and had an opportunity there to meet with the hon. David Zimmer. He's a parliamentarian, assistant to the Attorney General. The coincidence is that at that time the government of Ontario released a report on postsecondary education. I had the privilege to receive a copy hot off the press. To my surprise when I read through that, there was a quotation about the things that we have done in Alberta. The outstanding part is that the hon. Bob Rae was commissioned to do the study on that. He was the former NDP Premier in Ontario. In his report to the government of Ontario he quoted the great things that Alberta did. I felt so proud, so great. We looked at that.

Anyway, I took that report and gave it to our Minister of Advanced Education. So from that perspective, I don't think we need to again have a study here, a study there. We should probably just look at the report from Ontario. It has been done quite extensively. There are a lot of good ideas in there as input for the minister to have the review.

Now, I'm for the review, to look at the funding of the institutions, particularly Calgary postsecondary education, the need for infrastructure funding, for equity funding, and on the other matters. But I am very glad that the minister already said a few minutes ago about that approach. I also want to emphasize that students are the target of any review and make sure that accessibility and affordability are addressed. I only want to say that I differ in the method of the review. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is saying to organize a commission to study. I am quite concerned whenever we organize a commission to study. There are two things. If the government is doing it, hon. opposition, then you have a chance to criticize. But if an independent commission is to study it, you have to . . .

9:00

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, but under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to close debate on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to close debate on this motion. I think this is an important motion to

come before this House since it represents one of the recommendations of the Learning Commission, one of the recommendations that has not been adopted by the government. The government has chosen instead to proceed with an ad hoc approach, a variety of approaches, but without a comprehensive plan, without a systematic look at our postsecondary system in this province with all of the pieces fitting together. Certainly, they'll deal with some things. They'll deal with tuition policy, for example, yet we don't know the direction, and we haven't had a degree of public input into that discussion.

When the Premier announced the freeze, there were some very serious weaknesses with that, Mr. Speaker, not the least of which was that it was simply the government paying an increase, not preventing an increase, which means that next year students may well be hit with a double increase as well. The use of the term "entrepreneurial" by the government when it comes to things like tuition fees sends shivers up my spine because it sounds like they're prepared to experiment with market forces where those are inappropriate once again.

Certainly, things like private education and the proliferation of public funding for private postsecondary institutions is not something the government seems to want to have public discussion on. The role of institutions. For example, there's been a bit of a debate within the government caucus, obviously disagreements on the question of Mount Royal College. All of these things need to be placed in context with one another. The whole system in its relationship to itself needs to be considered, and there needs to be a degree of public discussion in a comprehensive way before the government establishes long-term policy.

In conclusion, I'd urge all members to support this motion because what it does is it encapsulates the Learning Commission's recommendation. It avoids what the government is, I'm afraid, making the mistake of doing, and that is to take an ad hoc approach towards our postsecondary institutions and our system in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 509 lost]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
Bill 41
Appropriation Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to move for second reading Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005.

The Appropriation Act is the culmination of the month of discussion we've had in Committee of Supply, in which we've had a day for each department to discuss the estimates that have been brought forward. Particularly valuable in that discussion were the estimates, in my view, if you'll give me leave to say so, of Advanced Education, in which there's been a great leap forward in putting the wheels, if I can say, on our strategic plan. When we have a strategic plan in this province of unleashing innovation, leading in learning, competing in a global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit, certainly the underpinning of that strategic plan, that 20-year vision forward, is advancing our knowledge and advancing education.

So I am very pleased to move Bill 41 and move for the approval of the appropriation for the operation of the government in this year for many, many reasons, not the least of which, Mr. Speaker, is the important step that it's taking towards investing in the advancing of education, the advancing of knowledge in this province not only

through the Department of Advanced Education but also in terms of the estimates of Innovation and Science, the commitment that's been made to that direction; the major commitment that's been made in the Education portfolio; the acknowledgement through the Health portfolio of the need to continue to have a sustainable health system and invest in wellness, invest in the health status of our community; the important steps forward in Justice and so many other areas. We've had the opportunity to debate that at length, so I won't continue to do that now but would ask the House to approve second reading of Bill 41.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to lead off debate on behalf of the Official Opposition on Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, as the hon. minister indicates, has been debated at some length now over I believe the past 23 sitting days. I think we managed to squeeze two in in one night there. The bill includes a total of almost \$26 billion in spending. I think I've indicated it before, but I'm not afraid to say it again: \$26 billion is an awfully, awfully big number, a bigger number than I can really get my head around. The spending is up nearly 6 per cent from last year's budget, and unfortunately no substantial tax relief for the Alberta taxpayers. In fact, it's been suggested in some quarters that we should be calling this government the tax and spend Conservatives. I'm not so sure that that would be entirely inaccurate given the fact that, as I indicated, there's no real tax relief and, in fact, an awful, awful lot of money being spent.

Mr. Speaker, more than 1,000 full-time employment equivalents are being added to the government, so in fact the government is getting bigger, not smaller. For a government that has long touted the fact that they don't believe in big government, they seem to be going the opposite direction from what their ideology would indicate.

Probably the most ironic thing is that we now have one extra ministry, and the extra ministry is Restructuring and Government Efficiency, if you can imagine, a ministry designed to make government more efficient, and presumably that would mean smaller. In fact, we're going in the opposite direction and getting bigger. I find that quite ironic, and I know that several of my colleagues do as well. In fact, several of the people that I've spoken to in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford are quite amused at that, and I don't doubt that people across the province are making the same comments, Mr. Speaker. So I do appreciate the humour in that.

Mr. Speaker, early on in my term as an MLA we had a third-quarter update from the Finance minister as regards last year's budget, and at that time there were a number of very fancy documents produced and circulated. I can't recall the exact catchphrase on the cover of those documents, but it was something to the effect of: on track and on schedule. Boy, you talk about government spin. This was amazing to me because only a couple of months later we found out that, in fact, this government had spent nearly \$2 billion in excess of last year's original budget. How anybody could interpret that as meaning that they were on track and on schedule I'm not sure. Nevertheless, that's what we were told.

9:10

I've said this in the House before, but I do believe it bears repeating. Only by the grace of God and incredibly good fortune, the fact that natural gas and oil revenues were higher than anybody, even this member, had anticipated they might be last year, only by virtue of those facts did this government not break its own law last

year by going into a deficit situation, quite clearly, with \$2 billion in excess spending. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a lot of that spending was announced within weeks of the budget being approved last year. At that point in time, there was no certainty at all that oil and natural gas revenues would stay as high as they ultimately did. So, really, I think that quite clearly this government could very well have ended up in a deficit situation last year. I'm certainly not advocating that. I wouldn't want to see it happen, and I wouldn't want to see it happen this year either. But, boy, we have to be awfully careful with the way that we spend money without it being budgeted and planned for.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, again this year, literally within days of the Finance minister making the Budget Address in this Assembly, we had ministers going around talking about unbudgeted spending and the fact that if revenues stay high, there are all sorts of goodies that might be in store for Albertans. Again, I'm not suggesting that I have a problem necessarily with sharing the wealth, as it were, but the fact that within two days of a Budget Address we had ministers going around talking about unbudgeted spending really does, I believe, bring into question the entire budget process, especially in conjunction with the fact that we know that we were \$2 billion over budgeted spending last year.

Mr. Elsalhy: It's a mock budget.

Mr. R. Miller: A mock budget, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung calls it, and perhaps that's what it is.

You know, we came into this House later this year than is normal, ostensibly because ministers were struggling to put their budgets together. I've gone on record before as saying that I think it might well have had something to do with the fact, Mr. Speaker, that there was a certain amount of—I'm not sure if I would call it squabbling, but I think the words I used before were that everybody and his dog were scrambling to get their piece of the pie, knowing that the revenues were high and there was going to be this incredible amount of spending taking place this year, 6 per cent more than was done last year. I think everybody wanted to get in on that action and probably justifiably so.

Nevertheless, we came into the House at least a couple of weeks later than would normally be the case. We never even had a budget to debate prior to the end of last year's fiscal year. I'm not so sure that that's necessarily prudent planning on behalf of the government, that not only did we have to spend \$2 billion in supplementary supply to make up for the money that wasn't budgeted for last year but then 5 billion and some dollars in interim supply to get us through to the point where the budget could be approved by this House and money available to run the business of government. Really, I think the entire budget process is called into question by the actions of this government.

I know I mentioned earlier that the province of Saskatchewan last year, for the first time ever in history, Mr. Speaker, had to ask for some supplementary supply money. Really, considering that this government says that this is standard procedure, I would suggest that we should have an awfully careful look at what our neighbours to the east do in terms of . . .

Mr. Martin: NDs.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, it's not always been ND. The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview seems to think that the NDs deserve an awful lot of credit, but I said: the first time in a hundred-year history.

Mr. Speaker, quite clearly, there is with good planning and good budgeting a way to present a budget document that actually has some meaning and, if I can use the phrase, be worth the paper that it's written on.

Having complained about that a little bit, I would like to thank the various ministers. At least, certainly on every occasion that I had opportunity to be part of a budget debate, there was a real willingness, I think, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the ministers to provide reasonable answers to questions that were reasonably asked by the opposition and by some of the government backbenchers in terms of the budget that was presented before us for the various departments. Where the answers couldn't be given the night of the budget debate or the afternoon of the budget debate, certainly for the questions that I asked, most ministers were very timely in getting a written response back to us in advance of having to debate this bill this evening. I do appreciate that.

In fact, I would suggest that as one of the crop of rookie MLAs I found that perhaps to be one of the most productive parts of everything that we've done in the Assembly this spring: the budget debates. It was very informative. It was civil, and, as I say, provided good information, not only to members of this Assembly but ultimately to Albertans, and that really is what it's all about.

Mr. Speaker, I've commented before on the fact that this particular budget and this appropriation bill are based on a price of west Texas intermediate of \$42 a barrel for the coming year. While I have indicated that that is actually a little bit higher than I had thought the government might use, it is nevertheless, I believe, likely to be a bit on the low side. When we look back at the end of the year, of course, we'll know whether or not the Finance minister or the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had better prognosticating skills, but certainly at this point I'm quite willing to suggest that I believe \$42 a barrel will likely end up having been on the low side. Having said that, I think our budget surplus at the end of the year is most likely going to be somewhat more than what the government has indicated. That would be consistent with the pattern that we've seen over the last several years.

Perhaps even a bigger factor, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this budget is based on a dollar at 83 and a half cents. When I came into the office this morning, I heard that for the first time in some period of time now our dollar had actually sunk below 79 cents. So at this point it's a difference of 4 and a half cents, and that will have a big impact on the amount of the surplus if the dollar were to stay below 80 cents. Of course, again, nobody knows for sure, but I'd be very surprised if the dollar ends up at 83 and a half cents, averaged over the year, and certainly I don't expect that it will be higher than that.

In fact, the government's own budget material indicates that most of the stock houses and financial institutions are indicating somewhere below 82 cents as what the average prediction is for the coming year. Even the industry experts are indicating about a penny and a half or more less than what the government is using in their own budget figures. So, Mr. Speaker, again, based on the fact that we're using an unrealistically low price for the barrel of oil and, in my mind, an unrealistically high estimate for the Canadian dollar, I have no doubt that we're going to be looking at a very healthy surplus again at the end of this coming year.

That really probably begs the question: how much will the supplementary supply estimates be when we come to March next year? We were \$2 billion over budget this year, and I'll be surprised, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if a year from now we're not debating supplementary supply estimates that are at least as high, if not higher. Again, given some of the comments from ministers and

others shortly after the budget was released, I have every reason to expect that we're going to be looking at some pretty big numbers.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to quickly touch on a couple of other points, and then I would like to speak specifically to the Solicitor General's department since I didn't have an opportunity to take part in that budget debate.

There's \$667 million in this budget this year for the Alberta heritage savings trust fund to begin inflation-proofing the fund, and that's something that the Alberta Liberals have long been calling for. All I can say is: it's about time. It's certainly better than not inflation-proofing. I would really, really like to have seen us make more of an effort there, but at least it is a step, albeit a small one, in the right direction.

There's \$250 million for the advanced education endowment fund, a small part of the money that the hon. Minister of Advanced Education referenced a few minutes ago. I know that I'm on record as saying this, but I'd like the opportunity to say it again. At that rate, Mr. Speaker, if we were to continue that, it would take 12 years for us to reach the magical \$3 billion cap. Under an Alberta Liberal plan, if I remember right, within three years we would virtually have made the cap. Although it's an effort, I think we could have done more.

9:20

Now, specific to the Department of Solicitor General, I've made an awful lot of comments in this House, Mr. Speaker, about Constable Green at Harry Ainlay high school and his black lab, Ebony, and the work they do in educating students about the dangers of particularly crystal meth but also drugs in general. Following some of my comments, the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner sort of took up the cause and started talking about having drug-sniffing dogs in every school, and even the Solicitor General seemed to pick up on that, and there was an awful lot of talk about having these dogs doing enforcement duties in the schools.

I just wanted to be on record, Mr. Speaker, as saying that that's not what this program is about at all. This program is an educational program designed to educate students about the dangers of drug use and, by bringing a dog in and showing them the capabilities of the dog, create awareness of the fact that this tool is there should it be needed. Never was it intended to sniff drugs out specifically and be used as an enforcement tool.

In fact, in the dogs for drug-free schools program outline, it outlines that the primary component is to provide education to youth using a passive-trained narcotic detection dog as the catalyst. In other words, this dog, when it does smell drugs, Mr. Speaker, will actually sit there and wait for the police member to come over as opposed to scratching or barking or whatever. It's a very well-behaved dog, and it's meant not to create any anxiety or animosity in the schools but, rather, to educate.

The secondary component of the program is visibility. Just simply by having the dogs in the school, Mr. Speaker, they provide a constant reminder to students that the ability is in fact available to locate drugs should that be required or desired by the school.

A member of the Medicine Hat police force, a school resource officer who's involved with the program in Medicine Hat, Mr. Speaker, was quoted as saying: "The purpose is not to search students and their lockers. It's to educate them about the use and misuse of illegal drugs." He also goes on to say, as I indicated, that "as opposed to scratching or barking, the dogs will be trained to search on command and sit when they detect the smell of narcotics." As I said, this is really meant to be an educational tool.

I'm just going to share with you some statistics about the program and how well it works and how inexpensive it is and really, I think,

something that if it's too late to squeeze into this year's budget, I sincerely hope that next year the Solicitor General will have a careful look at this. I do know that Constable Green has made these documents available to the Solicitor General, so he may well have had a chance to review them already, Mr. Speaker.

The cost sharing. I mentioned this before. This particular dog that's in the Harry Ainlay high school is a dog that belonged to Constable Green already. Constable Green was already the school resource officer at Harry Ainlay anyway, so the costs are really minimal. In fact, the Edmonton public school board and the Catholic school board in Edmonton are sharing: \$2,500 expense each so a total of \$5,000 to cover the cost of dog food, veterinary fees, equipment, and other incidentals. So for a very, very minimal price they've been able to bring Ebony into the schools.

Constable Green has provided a list of all of the presentations that they've made in this past school year, and it's far too exhaustive to run through right now, but I will say that from September of last year through to the Christmas break, there were a total 25 presentations made by Ebony and his handler or her handler. I can't recall if Ebony is male or female. Five hundred and twenty administration and staff and parents were able to view the presentation, and a total of 3,835 students were presented with this particular program. From January of this year, 2005, through to the end of the school year a further 21 presentations will take place, including at least 165 administrators and parents; 6,795 students will see the presentation this term.

It's unbelievable to me that for the small sum of \$5,000 and an incredible effort made by Constable Green he is able to take this presentation in the Edmonton area alone to well over 10,000 students. That is just a tremendous effort, Mr. Speaker, and I really believe that if the education component of this works, as it is hoped that it will, students will not only be educated in terms of the dangers of crystal meth in particular but drugs in general, certainly will have a better understanding of the capabilities of the dogs. My hope and the hope of Constable Green is that students will hence be reluctant to become involved in drugs and will be reluctant to bring drugs into the school.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move adjournment on Bill 41.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head:

Private Bills Third Reading

Bill Pr. 1

Bow Valley Community Foundation Act

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill Pr. 1, Bow Valley Community Foundation Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a third time]

Bill Pr. 2

Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill Pr. 2, Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act.

This bill makes necessary changes as a consequence of the merger of Augustana University College with the University of Alberta to form the Augustana Faculty of the University of Alberta.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Bill Pr. 3
Medicine Hat Community Foundation
Amendment Act, 2005**

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move third reading of Bill Pr. 3, Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005.

This act was discussed in Private Bills Committee, and the amendment addresses and better reflects the mandate and the focus of this foundation.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 3 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 40
Alberta Personal Income Tax
Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the bill that I thought I was getting up to speak to before.

I'm pleased to move on behalf of the Minister of Finance Bill 40, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), which has been carried throughout in debate by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

So I will relinquish my spot now and allow him to speak to the bill and its contents.

9:30

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak at third reading of Bill 40, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). This bill proposes amendments to the Alberta family employment tax credit that will enhance the credit available to low- and middle-income working families. This tax credit has two goals. The first is to provide some additional financial support for children in lower and middle-income families. The second objective is to support parents as they work.

One amendment in this bill would reduce the entry threshold to \$2,760 from \$6,500. This change will make low-income working families eligible for the program. Because the credit is phased in, lowering the threshold will also increase the amount many low-income working families receive.

As a further improvement to many Alberta families, amendments in this act will extend the credit to more children in the family. Under the new rules the third child will qualify for up to \$300 and the fourth for up to \$100. Currently only the first and second children qualify for the credit. We also propose to increase the maximum credit for the first child from \$500 to \$550. Overall, these changes will increase the benefits available to qualified working families.

Finally, to make sure these changes are protected over time, the Alberta family employment tax credit will be indexed to inflation.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the changes proposed to the Alberta family employment tax credit will serve to expand the credit to more families, increase the amount available to many qualifying families, and index credits to inflation.

I urge all members to support Bill 40.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated when we were in committee stage on this bill, I really don't have any problems with it. I'm recommending to my caucus colleagues that we support it.

I did raise a couple of questions as to: why bother having an entry-level threshold of \$2,760 at all given that there may well be some workers who make less than that amount? If we're lowering it to that level, perhaps we should just dispense with an entry-level threshold at all and allow anybody who works and has any employment income to benefit to some extent from this tax credit.

Nevertheless, as the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake has described, it does certainly provide some further tax credit to families, recognizing those that have more than two children, and that is a good thing. I'm certainly going to, as I suggested, recommend to my caucus colleagues that we support this. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very brief. We'll support this bill. It's a good step in the right direction. However, we must point out that it is only a partial solution.

It's hard to fathom the government's direction with support for families when they move in this direction on the one hand and on the other hand they retain the health care premiums, which hit families, especially low- and middle-income families, very hard. We see a real contradiction in the direction here and certainly would recommend to the government that if they really want to get serious about helping families financially in this province, they ought to get rid of the health care premium.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to commend the government for the indexing aspect. I hope that this represents a new trend and that we can see the indexing idea attached to other programs, like AISH and SFI and so on, so that programs wouldn't be so arbitrary but would gradually adjust as inflation increases through the years. So this is great. I'm glad this indexing aspect is here.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Finance to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed with the next item before us, the chair is a little confused in looking at his watch and the clock before us. My time indicates 9:35. Is that correct?

An Hon. Member: Correct.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. We'll follow my watch. It seems like that clock has gone one hour ahead of time for some reason. There is an important vote that should happen at 10:45.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**Bill 38
Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to address some of the issues that were raised in second reading of Bill 38. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre asked about future legislation regarding an expanded role for pharmacists in order to free up more doctors' time to care for patients. The scope of practice for pharmacists is dealt with separately under the health professions legislation for pharmacists in the Health Professions Act. On the other hand, the Pharmacy and Drug Act amendment removes the requirement for a specific amount of drugs to be stated on a prescription. This change allows more flexibility in the quantity the individual receives when the prescription is filled as long as it does not exceed the maximum amount stated on the prescription.

The member asked why institution pharmacies are not required to be licensed. This is a timely question. Institution pharmacies have not required a licence because of the limited scope of their operation. An institution pharmacy is only providing services to patients of the institution. An institution pharmacy that operates beyond the limited scope allowed under the act must be licensed.

It's important to note that while the act addresses the licensing and operation of pharmacies, individual pharmacists are regulated under separate legislation. The pharmacist in the institution pharmacy must be a licensed pharmacist and must adhere to the regulations, standards of practice, and code of ethics that apply to the members of the College of Pharmacists. Health and Wellness is working closely with the College of Pharmacists to ensure that the provisions for institution pharmacies maintain the requisite limitations.

In a few moments I will be introducing a House amendment to Bill 38 to more narrowly limit the definition of institution pharmacy.

Regarding self-regulated professions, it should be noted that none of the regulated health professions governed under the Health Professions Act exempt their members from regulation by their respective colleges. Bill 38 deals with the licensing of the pharmacy, not the individual pharmacist. The legislation provides the ability to set out the physical and operational requirements for a pharmacy. Mr. Chairman, when we look across Canada, the government is not aware of jurisdictions that allow licensed pharmacists to practise outside of their regulatory structures. Alberta is no different in this respect. All health professions in Alberta that are or will be governed under the Health Professions Act require their members to adhere to the regulation, including pharmacists.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview suggested regulating bulk shippers of crystal meth ingredients as an effective way to combat the use of crystal meth. Bulk shipments of products such as pseudoephedrine and ephedrine are being addressed at the federal level.

Another suggestion involved bulk purchasing of prescription medications used by health authorities in order to lower costs. In September 2004 first ministers announced the 10-year plan to strengthen health care. A key component was a desire to develop and implement a national pharmaceutical strategy. First ministers specifically identified a need to pursue purchasing strategies to obtain best prices for Canadians for drugs and vaccines. Bulk

purchasing is one strategy under consideration. In regard to a reference-based pricing strategy, again the 10-year plan to strengthen health care applies.

9:40

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview indicated that pharmaceutical education needs to be enhanced, especially in senior care. Mr. Chairman, the Alberta Management Committee on Drug Utilization is a multistakeholder committee that oversees the Alberta drug utilization program. The program includes activities that encourage optimal drug prescribing and use. These activities include drug utilization reviews to analyze drug use and behavioural change intervention to educate physicians/pharmacists on drug use options. Some of the behavioural change strategies include academic detailing, where a trained professional, often a pharmacist, will visit physicians to talk about specific drugs.

Another education piece is the recently implemented community patient safety initiative. The initiative involves pharmacists going over checklists as a type of risk assessment with certain patients who are receiving a new medication. By educating patients about all their medications and engaging them in discussions about their medication, the patients' health and safety through drug therapy will be enhanced.

I trust that this clarifies the points raised during second reading. I would now like to introduce a House amendment to Bill 38, and I believe that that has already been circulated. I previously noted that the questions on the scope of institutional pharmacies are timely. This is because I am proposing a related House amendment which will impact three sections of the Pharmacy and Drug Act.

First, subsection (1)(j)(v.i) will be repealed to exclude the possibility of the facility listed there operating an institutional pharmacy. This is appropriate as the amended definition of institution pharmacy allows for compounding, dispensing, and selling of all types of scheduled drugs. This change will not prevent these facilities from assisting their clients who are taking prescribed medication. The definition of "dispense" in the Government Organization Act does not include the administration of a drug. Therefore, this House amendment maintains the integrity of institution pharmacies.

The second change will repeal subsection (1)(j)(vii), which was designed to allow for any other facility "operated by or approved by the Minister of Health and Wellness" that may not otherwise be listed to have an institutional pharmacy. This clause is being removed to avoid the possibility that a private surgical facility that has been approved as such by the minister could operate an institutional pharmacy. This was clearly not the intent of the legislation as institution pharmacies are intended to be pharmacies operated and regulated by a regional health authority or other government agency. Also, the definition in section 4(4) of a patient of an institution pharmacy is more clearly defined to ensure that institution pharmacies only serve patients of the institution. Services to the general public will require the pharmacy to be licensed.

Finally, section 23.1(2) will be amended by striking out "giving a copy to" and substituting "serving a copy on." This change was recommended by the Legislative Review Committee of the Canadian Bar Association.

The Alberta College of Pharmacists has been consulted and supports this House amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I now move the amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the amendment that's being moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw shall be referred to as amendment A1.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to initially talk to amendment A1. I think that in general we are in agreement with this amendment, and I understand that there has been some communication between the hon. member and the Official Opposition health critic, so I'm going to be in favour of this amendment.

Maybe now is the time, or maybe when we go back to regular committee business would be the time, for a comment on licensing of institutional pharmacies because there is division on this issue and there is no consensus whether we should require institutional pharmacies to be licensed like regular community pharmacies, for example, and make them fall under the purview of the Alberta College of Pharmacists or whether this exemption should continue. Like I say, there is division in the profession, and there is division even in my own caucus. It's a subject for more discussion, I think. There is definitely a strong call for standardization and offering uniform standards of care. I think any reduction of the standard of the service offered is totally unacceptable.

So I'm going to talk a bit more about this in regular committee. I just wanted to highlight what I see as a very positive component of this amendment with respect to subsection (B)(viii), stipulating what is an institutional pharmacy. I commend the hon. sponsor of this amendment because this really offers clarity in that this facility or this institution has to be operated by the Crown and not a private provider. So pharmacies in private institutions will not be treated as institutional pharmacies, which is commendable.

To make it brief, I support this amendment, and I would encourage the other hon. members to do the same. Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. It is, of course, with extreme pride and pleasure that I rise today to participate in the regular debate on Bill 38, Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005. As was previously expressed by my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Centre, the Official Opposition critic for Health and Wellness, our caucus is generally in favour of this bill because it was drafted in consultation with both the regulatory pharmacy body, the Alberta College of Pharmacists, or ACP, and the advocacy group, the Pharmacists Association of Alberta, or R_xA. Very seldom does this government consult with the stakeholders, so this is definitely a welcome change.

I'm also in support of this bill because it really flows in tandem with Alberta Liberal policies that we shared with the people of this province during last November's election; namely, policy point 10, where we called for the restructuring of the health care workforce to free up physicians' time and take some stuff off the doctors' plates and let them focus only on what they can and should do. Pharmacists are trained and capable professionals, and now we're empowering them to perform more duties and accept more responsibility.

Further to that a bit was our policy point 22, calling for an enhanced pharmacare approach, and perhaps this will be coming our way soon too.

Pharmacists go through rigorous training in school. Our education is one of the most demanding out there. University of Alberta pharmacy graduates usually score the highest grades on the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada, PEBC, exams, and our professors and instructors are highly respected. Our graduates choose to practise in the community pharmacy setting, hospital or institutional pharmacy, the drug industry, or the military.

Pharmacists always rate as the number one professional that people feel comfortable talking to. Canadians say that the person they trust the most is their pharmacist – this is a survey conducted every year, Mr. Chairman – not their clergy, not their physician, and obviously not their lawyer. Their pharmacist is the number one trusted professional, and they feel he or she is the most approachable. I was an okay pharmacist. Actually, I still am, and I suspect that me being a good community pharmacist had a little something to do with my election success last November.

Pharmacists are required to abide by professional legislation and strict regulations. We also swear an oath and adhere to a comprehensive and strong code of ethics.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, a pharmacist never stops learning. After we graduate, we are required to keep up with current and new developments and protocols, check out new treatment modalities, and constantly improve our professional skills. We take courses by correspondence or on the Internet, and we attend seminars, lectures, and professional development conferences. We call that continuing education.

Pharmacists also subscribe to a large malpractice insurance policy. However, let me tell you, Mr. Chairman and all hon. colleagues in this Chamber, that very few lawsuits and claims were ever filed against Alberta pharmacists. This is mostly a self-policing sector, whose members take enormous pride in the work they do and the services they provide to their patients and their families. We perform our duties carefully and diligently out of a concern for public safety and adherence to the highest standards, not for fear of litigation or disciplinary action.

When I graduated in 1994, Mr. Chairman, I had a T-shirt that said on its back, "Pharmacists, pillars of society," spelled with an "e." Now, obviously this was meant to be a funny grad joke, but in reality pharmacists are pillars of society, spelled with an "a." I truly believe that.

9:50

Pharmacists are team players. We are sometimes the first line of defence and sometimes the last line. We get along very well with other health care providers and, obviously, with the patient and his or her family. Pharmacists have approached the government on numerous occasions urging it to recognize their role as essential, front-line health care providers and to allow them to exercise what they were trained to do. Pharmacists are not there to count pills, Mr. Chairman, or to simply lick and stick.

There is, unfortunately, a shortage of pharmacists in Alberta specifically but all over Canada in general. Older pharmacists are retiring, fewer are graduating, and a good percentage of the new grads go to the United States. At one point, Mr. Chairman, we may have a crisis on our hands.

Many issues are important when we're talking about pharmacy services. I'm cognizant of the time and the constraints, and I will try to briefly touch on just a few.

This bill appears to broaden the licence categories to include facilities such as compounding and repackaging centres, and I think it's high time we did. Although those establishments existed a few years ago, their numbers and roles have significantly grown over the years. They're increasingly becoming a factor in the distribution and supply of pharmaceuticals and medications, and there is definitely a need to align them more closely with the rest of the industry.

Also, this bill attempts to create an avenue of appeal and review if for some reason the registrar of the college will not issue a licence to a pharmacy. I think this is a healthy move. Registering the drug wholesalers is also a positive move.

Now, briefly, previously I talked about the two pharmacy organizations we have in this province, one being the licensing and discipline arm and the other being the advocacy, or representative, arm. In my humble opinion, as I expressed in my response to the amendment, I think institutional pharmacies ought to be included in the requirement to get licensed just exactly as a community pharmacy would. They're currently outside the purview of the College of Pharmacists, and this has to change. My approach is one of standardization. The same standard of care has to be offered, and the same expectations have to be met. Anything less would be unacceptable. This is a point of view that I am particularly passionate about, and I know many people out there share this sentiment.

Expanding the scope of pharmacy practice should not be seen in any way as stepping on other people's or other professionals' turf or potentially disrupting the delivery of health care services. In fact, allowing pharmacists to recognize their full potential would be a healthy move. They're definitely underutilized.

Pharmacists have advocated for so long that the province allow them some prescribing authority, with proper training and evaluation. It's no secret that pharmacists are drug experts and are well versed in disease management. The profession wants to work with other front-line professionals to streamline and facilitate patient care as it pertains to drug therapy. Safeguards will be in place, and proper training and follow-up will be offered to those pharmacists whose names are going to appear on the clinical register.

Pharmacists have also requested the capacity to administer drugs by injection, which in my view is not an unreasonable move. Things like insulin or vaccines, for example, are given by injection. Again, I believe qualified pharmacists will have no problem administering such drugs in such a format.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I think we support this bill. In the future – and I hope in the not too distant future – we could come back to the Legislature and talk about issues like reimbursement for cognitive services, the practice of Internet and cross-border pharmacy, immediately making printed prescriptions mandatory, and possibly even the relationship between Alberta Health and Wellness and an agency like Alberta Blue Cross. These are questions that are on my mind, and I would hope to discuss them later.

But for the purposes of Bill 38 we are in support. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I would appreciate clarification as to who is permitted to administer medication, particularly in the case of long-term care facilities. It is my perception that the level of recognized health care professional permitted to give out medications has been reduced from registered nurses with a four-year degree to a certified licensed practical nurse, who has received considerably less medical training. I would like assurance from this government that life-and-death responsibility for patient well-being in the form of administering medication will not be reduced or further downloaded in the interest of cutting costs, warehousing rather than care-housing seniors in long-term care.

We are very aware of the pharmaceutical mix-ups that have led to deaths in considerably more closely controlled hospital environments, as was the case with the Calgary Foothills. If deaths and mix-ups can occur in those considerably more highly regulated environments, my concern is for seniors in long-term care.

The Auditor General pointed out the access to the medicinal carts and felt that that should be more closely monitored. To me this is a very scary circumstance. I'm hoping members from the government

who have proposed this pharmaceutical clarification bill would respond to these concerns.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just very quickly on this bill. I don't know how it fits in, but it may well. We've had a lot of discussion about the problems with crystal meth – I think it's Bill 204 – where there was some debate about how to stop it before it gets into the hands of people.

It's been suggested to us and I think to the government, and I wondered if as part of this – I think the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors is recommending striking at the source; that is, regulating bulk shippers of crystal meth inputs as an effective way of combatting the crystal meth epidemic. It may be. I don't know. I mean, I don't know enough about it, but that's a suggestion that they feel may be a better way to control crystal meth than trying to do it through the retail way, which could be quite messy. I know it's not specifically part of this bill, but I would hope from this bill, then – whether it would work or not, I don't know, but at least if that suggestion could get back to the government to take a look at it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The clauses of Bill 38 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 14

Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be able to get up and speak, I think relatively briefly, in committee to Bill 14, the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005. It is, as the Minister of Advanced Education mentioned when he introduced the bill in first reading, really just housekeeping with respect to items that have been left over from the past, so there is not a great deal to talk about in this bill.

As we go through it clause by clause, on this side of the House we have essentially the same problems with it that we did in second reading. That is that the minister wishes to remove a referral to categories of students, purportedly to provide additional flexibility for the minister to adjust or set limits to respond to individual cases or extenuating circumstances. He also wants to change the lifetime loan limit definition, to move it from what he has described as a sort of revolving line of credit or outstanding principal amount of loans owed to a simple cap on lifetime loans.

I want to speak to the second part first. That really references part of section 17, which would delete subsection (2): "A student is not eligible for a loan if that loan would cause the outstanding principal amount of loans owed by the student to exceed the amount estab-

lished under subsection (1)(b) for the category in which that student falls." Now, I know that the minister wants to remove reference to categories in the bill, and it may seem that I'm putting the cart before the horse in speaking to this one first, but I think this is an important issue that we do need to discuss in this House.

10:00

We've touched – and we've done it, in fact, here tonight in discussion of Motion 509 – on the concept of lifelong learning and how that has become an integral part of our society and will be going forward. That means for many people, Mr. Chair, that they will be returning to resume their postsecondary education at some point in their future, perhaps at a number of points in their future, and in order for them to do that and take full advantage of it, we feel that they need the most flexible access possible to the system. That access becomes less flexible the moment that you change the regulation and change the rule, change the definition of a lifetime loan limit from an essentially outstanding principal amount of loans owed to a cap on lifetime loans.

In essence, one might almost go so far as to say that it encourages students to default on their loans now because they're only going to be punished for paying them back later if they want to return to school. Why should we penalize someone who has taken out student loans, paid them back or substantially paid them back, and now wants to go back and ask for another student loan to continue their studies or to resume their studies? I mean, certainly out there in the real world, that we ultimately want them to take their part in at some point, we would not prevent them, if they had good credit and had paid off their past loans, from going back to the bank and getting another loan. This is not a situation where the government is giving money away, Mr. Chair. This is a situation where the government is loaning it and expecting it to be paid back. So why would you not allow a student who has been diligent in paying back their loans to go back to the bank of the people, as it were, and borrow more?

What the current law does is technically allow students to do exactly that because it's based on the outstanding principal model of lifetime loan limits, but the ministry for some time now has been practising the more restrictive practice of modelling it on lifetime loan limits and so technically has been breaking its own law. So the purpose, as we see it, of this amendment is to bring the law in line with the ministry's current illegal practice. We think that's putting the cart before the horse. We think that's getting it backwards, and we think we're moving in the wrong direction.

On the issue of categories and deleting references to categories of students as the basis for establishing loan limits or as the basis of something which the Lieutenant Governor in Council can make regulations on, we're told that this is purportedly designed to provide additional flexibility for the minister to go above and beyond if the case allows it and grant in special cases higher awards, that sort of thing. It seems to us that there's no need to do this. So again we would ask why it's being proposed to be done. There's no need to remove the categories of students.

Under student loan limits part 1, section 2(4) this ministerial discretion exists. It exists now, so there's no reason to make the choice. It says:

In the case of a student enrolled in a masters, doctorate or other professional program, the annual loan limits set out in subsections (1) to (3) are subject to any increase the Minister makes on a case-by-case basis where, in the opinion of the Minister, there are extenuating circumstances that warrant higher annual loan limits.

It seems, really, as though the underlying reason for these proposed amendments that would delete references to categories of student are simply to provide the minister with more ministerial control without any specified guidelines. Ministerial discretion: this government likes to use it as though it was a royal prerogative.

Specific rules and regulations, Mr. Chairman, help establish accountability. We've made that point repeatedly during this session of the Legislature when we have been talking about agenda items on the Minister of Advanced Education's file. Specific rules and regulations, specific guidelines, specific how-to manuals help establish accountability and transparency, yet every time we bring it up, the minister responds that they're too restrictive, too proscriptive, that they tie his hands too much, and the implication is that they get in the way of progress.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we see things differently on this side of the House, as you well know, and we think that when progress, even if it moves a little more slowly, can be done in a way that the people in a democracy can track and view and witness and hold their government members accountable for, that's better progress. That's real progress. That's progress in the interests of the people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll take my seat at that point.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. A problem we face every Wednesday in Public Accounts is that this government changes ministers as rapidly as the Pony Express changed horses. Therefore, at about the time when a minister is starting to potentially get a handle on their responsibilities, they are changed. Whether this makes it easier for the new minister to duck previous historical guilt and plead either ignorance or innocence remains to be seen.

I don't believe that the sole responsibility for loan approval in any one year or, worse, during a student's lifetime should be in the hands of a transient, supposedly omniscient minister. The image I see is that of a Roman emperor seated on his throne high above the amphitheatre deciding whether or not to grant the student a loan, thumbs-up, or sending him to the lions, thumbs-down. This is a place where a committee rather than an individual should have responsibility in the same manner as we need a citizens committee in the case of law enforcement.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very briefly, just on the one aspect of it. I'm trying to get a handle on why the bill clarifies that a student has a maximum student loan amount for their entire lifetime. I understand that in the previous bill the wording was inexact and could imply that the maximum loan amount was not over a student's lifetime but at any one time. The Member for Calgary-Currie alluded to this. I don't quite understand this. I can understand if there's a person that is taking out the loan and runs a huge amount over and doesn't pay it back. My understanding of this is that if the student has reached their lifetime loan limit and pay off their debt and wait to take out more loans, they may not do that with this legislation. I don't understand why we would do that if their credit is good.

One of the things that we know about lifetime learning – and we know that people don't go into jobs now for 30, 35 years. They have to be retrained constantly. Many people have families, and it seems to me that if their credit rating is good and they've paid off loans in the past, why should that be held against them in the future? Maybe there's a reason for it. It's not evident to me, Mr. Chairman, why that would be. I hope that perhaps the minister would indicate if I'm wrong about this or, if I'm not, why they see the necessity to do this.

I really want to stress, as we talk about education, that people are going to have to keep going back more to the institutions. They're

going to have to be retrained a number of times. Many of these people will not be young people; they'll be people later on in life. It would be nice, if we need them in the economy, to at least give them that access to the loans. If they don't need the money, well, perhaps there's a way to come at it that way, but I'm sort of interested why we would penalize people who pay off their loan and then may need some help later on if their credit rating is good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10:10

[The clauses of Bill 14 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report Bill 38 and Bill 14.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Mrs. Mather: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 14. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 38. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 41
Appropriation Act, 2005
(continued)

[Adjourned debate May 16: Mr. Ducharme]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005, at second reading. This is an interesting budget from this government, I must say. It is a little different than the ones we've been used to since the beginning of the current regime in 1993.

I would start with a quotation from a columnist at one of the local newspapers in our city. He says: Alberta's new fiscal plan is not what you'd expect from a supposedly right-wing Conservative government that froths at the mouth over same-sex marriage and smoking bans; it is not a rootin' tootin', knee-jerkin', tax-cutting, dividend-giving budget; it is a spending budget; this year the Alberta

government expects to spend almost \$26 billion; that's \$3 billion more than the budget estimate from 2004 and a record for Alberta; drunken sailors must be on the Finance department payroll, or Liberals; welcome aboard. [interjection] Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford says tax-and-spend Conservatives. I find it odd that they're doing a lot of the things that the Liberals have been proposing for some time, and when they do it, they get called tax and spend.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

If I can say something positive about the budget just for starters, it is beginning to address some spending priorities that have been woefully underfunded over the past 10 or so years. I think that without the excuse of the debt anymore the government is very hard-pressed not to do that given the enormous wealth that's flowing into the provincial coffers from oil and gas revenues.

Now, the minister has continued the unfortunate practice of understating, although not as much as her predecessor, to be sure, the projections for oil and gas prices and the impact on the budget. But the fact remains that given realistic energy projections, the government is still lowballing those, and the result is that we're continuing with the practice of large, unbudgeted surpluses. I think this is not a good way to deal with it. I know that certain programs, most notably the postsecondary endowment fund, depend on unbudgeted surpluses, but I think it would be far better and more prudent to accurately project revenues and then budget certain funds for that program and all the rest of the programs. I think that it is far more honest and straightforward, and the public knows clearly where they stand.

The government has again failed to keep its promise on property taxes. That promise was made when Dr. West was the finance minister, and his proposal at that time was to cap the total amount of revenue that the province received for property tax and allow it to decline over time relative to the rest of the provincial resources. That promise has not been kept. There's been all kinds of double-talk about, you know, capping mill rates and so on, but we all know that the property base has gone up. There's new property, and existing real property, of course, is worth more than it was. That trend is going to continue, so the province is going to continue to cash in. We believe that that area of property taxes should be vacated for municipal governments in this province.

Again, the government has failed to eliminate health care premiums. It's taken a positive step in the sense of eliminating them for seniors. But we don't understand why that's the kind of taxation that the government seems to be committed to, given that it's the same amount for families regardless of their income unless they meet the low income cut-off. It's flatter than a flat tax, Mr. Speaker. Rich or poor, you pay the same amount, and that's not fair taxation. Of course, we've said repeatedly that this has got nothing to do with health care; it flows directly into general revenues. So it shouldn't even be called health care premiums, in our view.

Now, there has been more spending on education, but as we learned today, the government is not interested in doing a comprehensive plan for postsecondary education, so we don't really know where that spending is going to go. We certainly don't know what the government is going to do with respect to its tuition policy. The one year so-called freeze is less than adequate and may force students to face a double increase next year. When the Premier talks about an entrepreneurial tuition policy, Mr. Speaker, I get very, very concerned indeed.

Infrastructure. There is additional infrastructure spending, but of course, as we repeatedly pointed out in the election, the formula

disadvantages the city of Edmonton relative to other parts of the province. Certainly, an increase in municipal infrastructure is welcome. Nevertheless, it comes at the expense of infrastructure for hospitals and schools, both of whose capital budgets are actually reduced in this budget, and that is a great concern, especially given the state of many of our inner-city schools. We think that the government should invest in those schools rather than forcing school boards to close them.

10:20

There are some issues that I want to raise relative to priorities. I notice, Mr. Speaker, that other provincial governments are in the process of wrapping up negotiations with the federal government over child care. Those provinces are going to receive significant amounts of money. Where is Alberta on this? Alberta is dragging its feet. Time is running out on this government in Ottawa, and the chance for the province to make a deal with this government is running out. As bad as this federal government is, I can only imagine the lack of generosity of a Harper-led Conservative government should the country be unfortunate enough to elect them as a federal government.

AISH has been increased, but people are still receiving less than they did in 1993 on an inflation basis.

The government is still spending, in one of the most glaring of misplaced priorities, \$45 million a year to subsidize the horse-racing industry. The government comes up with all kinds of reasons for this: you know, all the people that work in the industry that wouldn't otherwise have jobs and so on. Well, you could say that about a dozen other industries, Mr. Speaker. You could say that about the fast-food industry. You could talk about that in terms of the industry of cleaning homes. You could talk about it when it comes to agricultural workers in general. There are all kinds of areas where people receive poor pay. I don't think that much of this money finds its way down to the people that work as grooms and so on. This is a direct subsidy to wealthy agricultural producers that produce racing horses. It's a subsidy for an industry that stands in sharp contrast to the government's avowed aim of eliminating subsidies to business, and it really needs to go.

The government, Mr. Speaker, continues to get huge revenues from gambling, and very few of those revenues are returned, in fact, to addiction and helping people who have a problem with gambling. A small percentage of problem gamblers have been shown to produce a very significant percentage of that revenue, and the government, not to put too fine a point on it, is directly benefiting from the addictions of people in our society who may be losing jobs or their family as a result of their addiction and not doing much about it.

It's good to see that the government is increasing spending for police. The NDP made this an issue in the election, and we campaigned for 500 additional police officers. The government has come up with funding for 200 but all in rural areas served by the RCMP. I want to stress again that we believe that municipal police forces need support; they need direction to deal with the issues. The number of murders that have taken place in Edmonton, the gang fighting that's going on that we read about almost every day in the newspaper are unacceptable. The Edmonton police, the Calgary police, and other municipal police services need more support, and we need direction from the government with respect to community policing.

I think about the shooting that took place at a house in Edmonton. Apparently, the police had been back and back and back. That's a textbook definition of what's wrong with traditional policing. I heard Doug McNally, the former chief of police, on this subject

many times. He talked about the fact that 80 per cent of the calls for service went to about 10 per cent of the places, and they were repeat calls and repeat calls. They'd come in, and they'd arrest, and they'd prosecute. Maybe they'd convict and maybe they wouldn't, but they'd keep going back to the same place instead of solving the problem and asking, "What's the problem, and how can we make this problem go away once and for all?" so that they don't have to keep going back to that location.

Community policing is the correct approach, in my view. We need stronger leadership from this government with respect to promoting community policing as a way to solve problems rather than just reacting to them over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, we haven't had an increase in arts spending in this province for years and years, and I think that this is probably one of the most glaring deficiencies of this budget. There needs to be a greater commitment to the arts. I think we've seen in centres around the province that the business community has gotten involved in a big way with the arts. Municipal councils have gotten involved in a big way with the arts. The one that's not on board is the provincial government. They need to pay more attention to arts spending. Arts is more than just a cultural activity; it's one of the most effective economic development tools and job creation tools that is available to a community. This provincial government needs to do quite a bit more in that respect.

I just want to talk a little bit about some ideas that the NDP opposition are proposing that we would like to see the government deal with. One would be a revolving green fund. The idea here is that by an initial investment of, say, a billion dollars different individuals, homeowners, or municipalities, hospitals, school boards, postsecondary institutions, and so on would be able to borrow from the fund and invest in energy-saving technology and bring down their costs. The drop in their costs, the reduction in their costs, could be used to fund the repayment of the loan. When the loan is fully repaid, the fund is whole again and can be used for more projects, and any ongoing savings that accrue to the institution or the homeowner or the business just come off their bottom line. So it's a good idea, one that requires an initial investment but not large-scale, ongoing expenditures by the government.

Bringing down the cost of health care is an important priority for all, Mr. Speaker. Instead of experimenting with privatization, which has been proven to drive up costs, it might make more sense to set up a pharmaceutical savings agency, as has been done in New Zealand, and use the negotiating power of the entire health care system in this province to negotiate arrangements through bulk purchasing of pharmaceuticals and, of course, use generic drugs wherever that can be accommodated. This approach has made New Zealand alone among the major industrialized countries to have declining expenditures on pharmaceuticals, and I recommend it very much to the government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure and interest that I rise tonight to speak to the appropriations bill in second reading. It's an opportunity to touch on a number of points, I guess, in one session, that you couldn't do as we went through the estimates department by department.

I want to start it off by reminding you of an old bumper sticker from the mid '80s that said: "Please, God, let there be another oil boom, and I promise not to bleep it all away again." There was another word in there for "bleep," but I think *Hansard* would prefer bleep, so I'll use bleep. My colleague from Edmonton-Glenora in

his past life as a clergyman might have said something along the lines of: God answers prayer; it's just not that God always gives you the answer that you want. God may have answered the prayer on that bumper sticker. We have a boom. We have another oil boom. But it seems that we haven't learned the lesson that we thought we had back in 1985. We're bleeping it all away again, and there's plenty of evidence of that right in here.

We have, I think, half a dozen, or close to, multibillion dollar ministries: Advanced Education, \$1.582 billion; Education, \$2.726 billion; Health and Wellness, \$8.973 billion; Infrastructure and Transportation, \$3.463 billion; Seniors and Community Supports, \$1.582 billion; and then under Gaming, of course, we have lottery fund payments of \$1.2 billion. In total we have spending of \$26 billion, \$3 billion more than last year.

10:30

I want to be fair about this, and I want to give the government the benefit of the doubt in terms of saying: lookit, there certainly is plenty to spend the taxpayers' money on in this province. There's plenty that has been neglected over the last dozen years of this government's blinders-on, single-minded obsession with paying off the debt, with paying down the mortgage to zero while the pipes were leaking and the roof was leaking and the handle on the toilet was broken so that you had to jiggle it to get the stupid thing to flush, and so on and so forth.

I guess that if a house were a province, those would mostly be infrastructure items. In an ordinary house you'd call it renovation. Here we call it the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation. That explains their budget for expense and equipment/inventory purchases of \$3.463 billion and another \$699 million on capital investment. Infrastructure and Transportation is not a bad place to start, I guess, in looking at this budget as sort of representative of some of the things that are problematic here.

I quote from the business plan for Infrastructure and Transportation: "Much of Alberta's infrastructure is aging, resulting in maintenance and rehabilitation needs for the provincial highway network, water/wastewater management and facility infrastructure managed or supported by this Ministry," and so on and so forth. You know, when you read that, the first thing that comes to mind is: yeah, and I wonder why that is.

I'll refer to another quote in here: "Working with municipalities and stakeholders to improve traffic safety and build a modern infrastructure in support of Alberta's social, environmental and economic goals is part of Making Alberta the Best Place to Live, Work and Visit." Now, parenthetically, I find that a strange pillar: "Making Alberta the Best Place to Live, Work and Visit." I mean, what happened to play? Aren't you ever allowed to play in Alberta? You can visit, but you can't have any fun.

You know, why that caught my eye is because the first time I came to Alberta was as a visitor crossing the border from Saskatchewan, and the first thing I noticed was how good the roads are here, were here in 1985, compared to Saskatchewan and Manitoba and northern Ontario. You know what? We're still driving on 1985 roads. Yes, the Trans-Canada has been twinned all the way, and it wasn't in 1985; I'll grant you that. So there has been highway construction in this province, but the point is that we have not – we have not – kept up our infrastructure.

We have not kept the roof from leaking because we've been so darned obsessed with paying down the mortgage. We've been so darned obsessed with paying down the mortgage that our kids don't have schools to go to. We've been so darned obsessed with paying down the mortgage – and I'll clarify that for a skeptical Minister of Education – that our kids do not have schools to go to in the

neighbourhoods and the communities where they live: 28 communities in the city of Calgary do not have public elementary schools because this government wouldn't fund them. The minister needs to know that denial ain't only a river, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

We're short of hospitals and health care facilities, we're short of long-term care facilities, and, far worse than that, as we learned from the Auditor General's report last week, we are short of the people to staff those long-term care facilities to make sure that the seniors, who this government boasted in the throne speech built this province, you know, actually have decent care in their twilight years, actually are entitled to more than one bath a week or even less than that if their caregiver happens to be out with the flu that week.

Mr. R. Miller: How many a week?

Mr. Taylor: One. One bath a week.

I wonder how many government members – this is a rhetorical question. They don't have to answer this because I don't really need that much personal detail. How many government members could get by on one bath a week? Well, if you stay the course that this government has been on, they'll find out soon enough.

You know, there's a great deal of money being spent in this budget, but the question is: is it being spent wisely? Some of it is being spent on a near-emergency basis to take care of the problems that have developed on this government's watch while they've been so darned obsessed with paying down the debt. When I look at this \$26 billion worth of spending – and no, I'm not going to say anything about tax-and-spend Conservatives because that would only prompt the leader of the third party to make some comment about Liberal finances. Then I'd have to retaliate that, well, New Democrats aren't really off the hook when it comes to taxing and spending either. Of course, they're proud of it.

An Hon. Member: Your horse is already out of the barn.

Mr. Taylor: Yeah, but I didn't get \$45 million for that race horse.

The question is whether this money is being spent wisely, and that goes to, I think, a fundamental problem here that is exhibited by the fact that we have here a government that will spend \$45 million on race horses but doesn't increase funding for the arts. In the context of a \$9 billion Department of Health and Wellness, in the context of a nearly \$3 billion Ministry of Education, in the context of an over \$3 billion Infrastructure and Transportation department, this is not big money. All the arts community in the province of Alberta wants is \$45 million, the same amount of money they're giving race horses.

The question is this. When you look at Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005, where's the leadership? We need stronger leadership. The leader of the third party, if I'm quoting him correctly, said that we need stronger leadership in policing issues. Well, I'd go further than that, and I'd submit that we need stronger leadership, period. We need somebody on the government side of this House to show some leadership, to show some vision, to show some ability to plan beyond next Wednesday, even to show up, even to consider the possibility that we live in an era of unparalleled opportunity if you would just take it off autopilot and come up with a plan to invest the surpluses.

I'll cut the government this much slack. In an economy based on volatile commodity prices for a nonrenewable resource, I don't believe that you can always adequately project what your revenues

are going to be versus your expenses, and I don't believe that you can ever get to the point where you don't have some unbudgeted, unplanned surpluses. Commodity prices are like that. Sometimes they'll spike. Sometimes you will pull in a lot more money than you intended when you sat down and wrote the budget, although I'll grant you that this government routinely lowballs its estimates for resource revenue. But I'll cut them some wiggle room. I'll cut them some slack. I'll say that there can be some unbudgeted surpluses.

I don't have nearly as much of a problem with them lowballing their revenue estimates and, therefore, the surplus we'll end up with at the end of the fiscal year as I do with the fact that they don't have a plan for that money. They could take it and invest it: 35 per cent into the heritage savings trust fund each and every year. It's not enough to inflation-proof the heritage savings trust fund; you have to grow the thing. You have to grow it so that it produces the kind of income that sustains our prosperity after the oil and gas is gone or, in my opinion more likely, after the rest of the world loses interest in our oil and gas because they've passed it by for alternative energy sources.

Another 35 per cent year in and year out – not \$250 million producing \$11 million a year in investable income and a promise of \$5 billion; you know, I'm from Missouri on that one, so show me – into a postsecondary education endowment fund; another 25 per cent into a capital account, a predictable, sustainable fund for rebuilding the infrastructure we've neglected in this province; and a further 5 per cent into arts, culture, the humanities, the social sciences, an endowment fund for that, up to half a billion dollars.

10:40

You know, Mr. Speaker, that's the Liberal plan, and of course I'd be naive to expect the Conservatives to adopt a Liberal plan. Oh, wait a minute. No, they've stolen other of our ideas in the past, so there might be hope for this one yet. It is a plan. It is a vision, and it envisions a long-term future in which prosperity and quality of life and quality of the environment can be sustained and maintained in this province. It envisions life beyond next Tuesday or next Wednesday or next quarter or next election.

It's a plan, and that's what this province needs now more than ever because we have the wherewithal, we have the means to execute the plan for the good of all Albertans far into the future. In order to execute the plan, first we need the plan. They talk about the 20-year strategic plan. They talk it; they don't walk the talk. Not yet. Not in this budget. This is just throwing money at stuff, Mr. Speaker, and it's not good enough.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. My intention is to in some cases highlight, in other cases lowlight some of the portions of this budget. I know right off the bat that I'm going to get in trouble with the hon. member of the New Democratic Party for suggesting that in certain budgets the spending is not sufficient.

I'll begin with the Infrastructure and Transportation budget: \$9.2 billion over three years isn't enough. It doesn't bring us back to the pre-cut, 1994 level. It doesn't repair the public schools. It builds few new schools. It doesn't replace the hospitals that were closed in Calgary or in the rural areas. Fort McMurray is still \$1 billion short

even after the \$500 million and change announced last week. Forty-four per cent of roads are projected to be in poor to fair condition by 2008.

This budget doesn't begin to cover the 15,000 newly promised postsecondary seats, again for 2008. In public education schools continue to be closed on a 4 to 1 ratio as opposed to being opened. Temporary, portable, interim solutions have become permanent with this government.

When it comes to parks and protected areas, trails and recreational support infrastructure will not be restored to their pre-1994 cutback level. The needed number of conservation officers won't be hired, nor will conservation offices be opened. Public land continues to be sold rather than preserved.

In the case of the environment, by comparison to the Energy ministry the Environment ministry has a minuscule budget. It cannot protect or even enact it's Water for Life strategy. Oil and gas exploration, in particular methane, has been ratcheted up to a point where water conservation and quality are jeopardized. The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board does not have the staff to adequately and accurately approve new exploration, hold public hearings, or see that orphan wells are properly retired and maintained.

The ministries of seniors and Health and Wellness don't have sufficient staff to inspect all of their facilities on a yearly basis, as was pointed out by the Auditor General's report on long-term care facilities.

The Ministry of Finance continues to permit the annual raiding of the heritage trust fund rather than allowing it to accumulate, as is the case with Norway.

As has been previously pointed out, AISH recipients receive basically a minimal thumb rather than a hand up.

Since 1994 the government ministries have bloated from 17 to 24. In order to save money, we need to put some of the ministries on a crash diet, beginning with the elimination of the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. This ministry could lead the way in efficiency and accountability as well as allowing millions to be transferred to other ministries by simply dissolving itself while reverting its responsibilities to Government Services rather than duplicating them.

I also believe money could be saved and efficiencies realized by doing away with the ministry of infrastructure and placing infrastructure responsibility within the other ministries . . .

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, but in accordance with Standing Order 61(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 41 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:46 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, May 17, 2005

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/05/17

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome.

Let us pray. Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask for guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all our judgments. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to introduce a very special and distinguished group seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are called the CCAF fellows and are participants in a nine-month international fellowship program based in Ottawa. Today they are visiting us as part of a tour to western Canada.

The fellowship program is a collaboration between the office of the Auditor General of Canada, the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation, and the Auditor General of Quebec. The program is sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency and is designed to expand knowledge and understanding of public-sector accounting and auditing as practised in Canada to help participants address auditing issues in their home environments.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Mr. Sebastian Gil from Argentina, Mr. Carlos Modena from Brazil, Ms Claireann James from Guyana, Mr. Imran Iqbal from Pakistan, and Ms Reahla Balroop from Trinidad and Tobago. They are accompanied today by their hosts Mrs. Donna Bigelow, program co-ordinator, international affairs, office of the Auditor General of Canada in Ottawa; Mrs. Caroline Jorgensen, project and financial officer for international business at the CCAF in Ottawa; and Lori Trudgeon, communications co-ordinator with the office of the Auditor General of Alberta. Again, they are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the recipients of the first human service worker awards. The human service worker awards recognize Alberta Children's Services employees whose dedication to their work has improved the lives of Alberta children, youth, and families.

Scott Haggins is a caseworker with the southeast child and family services authority in Medicine Hat. Cory Jacob works for the northwest child and family services authority as a family support for children with disabilities worker. I'm extremely proud of these two individuals. With them today are Scott's colleague Samantha Kilford; Cory's wife, Vicki Jacob; and Irene Milton from Children's Services human resources. It is my pleasure to have them, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the entire House a

group of 15 students from Vincent Massey junior high. They are accompanied by three teachers: Andy Heaton, Leanne Jackson, and Erika Smith. I would ask them to please rise and receive the kind welcome from the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly my boss at the Legislature office. She's the one who tells me what to do and when to do it. She's my assistant, Marie Martin, and her husband, Bryce Martin. With them today are their many-year childhood friends, Robert and Fay Mearns, who reside in the city of North Vancouver, also employees of the city there. I would like them to stand and receive the warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two of my children: my daughter Julia Prins Vanderveen and my son Lorne. Julia just arrived from Vancouver, where she graduated with her master of divinity from Regent College. Lorne has just finished his first year of business at NAIT, and he'll be working in the oil patch this summer. He'll be capitalizing on the Alberta advantage and adding to the prosperity of our province. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I'd like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very fine young man I've known for some 13 years, since he was in grade 1 with my daughter. He's planning to attend NAIT this fall to study a program of bilingual business. He's a true Albertan, being of Ukrainian and French-Canadian descent. I would ask Mr. Dominic Mishio to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you two members of the Alberta Liberal caucus. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize them.

The first person is Mr. Ryan Bissonnette. Ryan started his career as a paramedic in the province of Ontario and worked night shifts through political science studies at the University of Toronto. He began his political career as a legislative assistant in the Ontario Legislature and then moved into federal politics, where he most recently worked as a special assistant to the Minister of International Trade. Ryan relocated to Alberta in April of this year to join the Alberta Liberal caucus as a research analyst. He's currently responsible for files of Municipal Affairs, Government Services, and Environment. Lastly, he also dared me to mention that he is single.

Second, I would like to introduce Gerri Kleim, who has joined our staff as an administrative assistant. Gerri was born in Whitehorse, Yukon, and she's a first-generation Canadian. She has worked with federal, provincial, and municipal governments and enjoys spending time with her husband and singing in their band. She has recently also picked up a hobby. She's trying to learn how to play the electric guitar.

I would ask both of them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly an organization known as Together We Can community initiative. These youth workers run a youth crime prevention patrol, participate in community enrichment activities as well as lead information sessions for students and seniors on safety-related issues. I'd now ask that each of them rise as I call their name to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Jasmine Tolhurst, Miranda Tanfara, Lorelei Hamilton, Dean Reid, Corey Bourque, Daniel Klasson, Tammy Burns, Amanda Gilliland, Corenda Steinhauer, Elias Dudley, Bambi Greenall, Jaylene Hamilton, and Agnes Kamela.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly today Elizabeth Sumamo. Elizabeth is joining the NDP caucus office staff this summer as a STEP assistant. Elizabeth is a recent graduate of the University of Alberta with a major in biological sciences and a minor in physical sciences. She's planning to attend graduate school in the fall in the program of health sciences at the U of A. I would now ask Elizabeth to please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very delighted to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Olga Chirka. Olga is a constituent of Edmonton-Calder for the past 38 years. She is an avid gardener and active community member in our constituency. This is her first visit to the Alberta Legislature. I would ask that she now rise and receive the very warm traditional welcome of the House.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to join with the Member for Strathcona and also the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, who have advised us that we see a former flame, I believe, of the Deputy Premier in the gallery. I just couldn't resist doing this. He also was a councillor in Strathcona county. He's here at a recreation board meeting, I'm understanding, and his name is Bob Weller. I know that's way too much information. If I may also introduce a very strong director of recreation and parks and a stalwart in Strathcona county, Cliff Lacey, who accompanies him to keep him protected. If they would both stand, please, and receive the warm welcome.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The controversies surrounding the Alberta Securities Commission continue. The perception is widespread and growing that the ASC is operated by a cosy group of insiders with close ties to this government. This perception needs to be addressed if the ASC is to regain the credibility it needs to flourish in the future and maintain its position as an Alberta-based regulator. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Will the

minister tell the Assembly whether any candidates for chairman of the ASC have been recommended by the recruiting team, and if so, have they been accepted or rejected?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, first, I'd like to set the record straight. I met with the part-time members of the commission as well as the past chairman about three weeks ago. There was really only one person of those people that I knew. So let's make that very clear and very straight. It would have been nice to have known any of these fine people, but frankly I did not.

Secondly, the search is continuing well. We have some interviews concluded, and it is our hope that in the next very short time, perhaps another two or three weeks, we will have a final decision on a full-time chairman.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: to eliminate any perception or reality of political interference in the selection of the ASC chairman or commissioners, will the minister end the practice of government MLAs participating in nominating part-time commissioners to the ASC?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, if I recall correctly, I think the procedures for nominating part-time commissioners are that they are nominated externally and certainly can be nominated from within this House, from any party in this House.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we had quite a large number of very well-qualified persons that put their name forward to act as chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission. A difficult choice to come up with a final person because they were all very well qualified and submitted their requests for consideration quite independently.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: can the minister tell this Assembly how many of the current part-time commissioners were endorsed or nominated by government MLAs?

Mrs. McClellan: I cannot. Most of the part-time commissioners – well, in fact, all were appointed before I assumed this ministry, and it would not have occurred to me to look at that. What you do look at are the credentials of the persons who sit on that commission, and I can tell you that all of them come very highly credentialed.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. leader for Lethbridge-East.

Sale of Social Housing Corporation Land

Ms Pastoor: The hon. leader for Lethbridge-East? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I am the only person from Lethbridge-East, I guess I am a leader.

The Alberta Social Housing Corporation sold over 900 acres of land to a private developer in Fort McMurray. The government had previously sold land based on bad appraisal advice indicating that land was not fit for development, but, in fact, it was developed. The government continues to base land sale decisions on miscalculated appraisals. My question is to the minister of Seniors and Community Supports. What was the appraisal date used for this sale, and was there more than one appraisal submitted?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have responded to this

question previously. The preamble was inaccurate in regard to the amount of land that was for sale and some of the process that was referred to. In response to the question, there was one appraisal for this property, and that was in the fall of 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister table a copy of the agreement for the sale so that we know the terms and conditions placed on the use of the land?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did respond to that question in the Legislature yesterday. I do have my staff looking into whether or not that is appropriate, given that there is a third party involved and also that the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act comes into play with this particular sale.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Again to the same minister: can the minister guarantee that the land earmarked for social housing will in fact be used to develop low-cost housing?

Mrs. Fritz: That is an excellent question. That's a very good question, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can guarantee that land that is earmarked through the Alberta Social Housing Corporation is definitely for low-cost housing. Especially in the Fort McMurray Area, for the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to know, what we may refer to as low-cost housing in the rest of the province in Fort McMurray they may call affordable housing for people that are in service positions such as the nurses, policemen, firemen, teachers. Those are the people that we are hearing back from that would like to see properties available.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

For-profit Health Care

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A study comparing private, for-profit and not-for-profit hospitals in the United States revealed that for-profit ownership of hospitals results in a higher risk of death for patients. There is overwhelming evidence that contradicts the notion that the private sector is cheaper and more efficient than government. The truth is that for-profit health delivery results in higher costs, poorer outcomes, and more lawsuits. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given all the evidence of adverse effects in for-profit health care delivery, why does the government allow private, for-profit facilities to exist at all in Alberta?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to quarrel with studies that have been published on both sides of this issue. Let me give the example of HRC in Calgary and the specialized facility, which is part of the arthroplasty project where we are doing hip and knee replacements, and Health First in Strathcona on behalf of Capital health, in Red Deer in a clinic there. What we find, at least in this contractual arrangement with Calgary health and HRC, is that we are able to reduce the waiting times, reduce the waiting lists, and address the issue of capacity as quickly as possible. It's not so much a matter of money that we're discussing here but a matter of getting better access to patients in a timely fashion.

Ms Blakeman: Again to the same minister: why does the province

allow any private operators to receive taxpayer money to deliver long-term care?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, in excess of 30 per cent of the health budget is privately delivered, and I know that the hon. member is well aware of that. The long-term care projects have not only been delivered by private entrepreneurs but by nonprofit organizations, and communities have arranged those, sometimes, totally beyond the capacity of government's involvement. So why do we allow it, Mr. Speaker? It's been part of how we have evolved in long-term care in this province.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that the private, for-profit long-term care provider Extencare employs political figures to lobby for its interests in America, what is the government doing to guarantee that business is conducted in a transparent and accountable manner as Extencare expands business within Alberta? How about a lobbyist registry?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the item of a lobbyist registry is not under the domain of this minister.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Sale of Social Housing Corporation Land (continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The seniors minister's refusal to be transparent about a shady multimillion dollar land deal in Fort McMurray is just the latest example of why this government is a worthy recipient of the top secrecy award from the Canadian Association of Journalists. It's pretty clear, based on the minister's nonanswers, that this government has plenty to hide about a deal involving the sale of hundreds of acres of prime real estate to a Tory-friendly developer. My question is to the minister of seniors. How can the minister claim that this isn't a private, cozy deal when there were no fewer than 22 developer groups interested in bidding on this prime real estate had the government decided, as it should have, to sell the land through an open-bid process?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, I have responded to this question in the Legislature over the past two days, and my answers haven't changed. I'd invite the member to reread *Hansard*.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister quoted property values based on a series of appraisal reports in the House yesterday, will she do the correct thing and table the reports from which she was quoting?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was actually one appraisal – and I did mention that to the member opposite – that was completed on this land. Also, as I indicated, I asked the appropriate people involved about tabling such a document in the House, and my understanding is that because there is a third party involved, due to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act it cannot be tabled. [interjections] Yes, actually, that does include the appraisal, according to my information.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I don't know what's being hidden here.

What role, if any, did the Minister of Environment play in this private land sale in Fort McMurray?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any other role that any other minister in this Assembly has been a part of with this land sale. It is through the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, and my ministry has full responsibility for the sale of properties through this corporation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace, followed by the Member for St. Albert.

Crop Insurance

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that Alberta's agricultural producers are in a tight situation this year with low commodity prices and high costs for everything from fertilizer to fuel. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Now that the production insurance sign-up deadline has passed, could the minister tell us whether these factors appear to have had any impact on participation in the production insurance program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member indicated, producers have completed electing their coverage levels for the production insurance for 2005 crops. Overall, I can tell the hon. member that the number of producers purchasing crop insurance this year, or production insurance, was consistent with the last couple of years. There was a slight decrease of the number of producers, about 3 per cent, but in actual fact we've seen a notable increase in the average number of acres being insured. So producers are trying to protect their remaining equity after a number of very difficult years.

For 2005 the majority of producers elected the higher levels of coverage. Where previously they tended to purchase 60 to 70 per cent coverage, this year they're now choosing the 70 or 80 per cent coverage. I feel very confident, Mr. Speaker, in saying that producers recognize that peace of mind comes from transferring some of the risk they face to the government's risk management system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental is again to the same minister. A month ago our government reduced premiums on the spring price endorsement, or SPE, available through the production insurance program and increased benefits on revenue insurance coverage. Could the minister tell us if these initiatives had the intended effect of encouraging producers to take advantage of this market price protection coverage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct: we did reduce the premiums. Until we had reduced the premiums for the spring price endorsement, there was actually very little interest in the feature for the 2005 crop year. Once the announcement was made, about two weeks prior to the April 30 deadline it did become a main discussion point on the telephone lines with AFSC, where the office staff were helping producers considering their production insurance options.

I can say that the premium reduction has proved highly successful. With 40 per cent of the insured producers purchasing the spring price endorsement, it's a 50 per cent increase over 2003, the previous best year for that particular part of the plan. When you compare this year's spring price endorsement uptake to last year, it's over a 387 per cent increase in that uptake. Producers who purchase that are automatically eligible under the revenue insurance. As well, the variable price benefit and the spring price endorsement have all been calculated into that, and we'll see what the results are at the end of the year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

School Closures

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Students and parents deserve some straight answers from this government on school closures. Yesterday the Minister of Education said that the public school board's practice of transferring \$7 million from classrooms to maintain crumbling infrastructure and keep the lights on is simply part of the flexible funding framework. Flexibility is fine, but we need certainty here, sir, and we need to get clear on the impact of these policies. My first question to the Minister of Education: given that the documents obtained from the school board indicate that the government is putting a stop to this practice next year, is this transfer of instructional dollars away from the classroom allowed or not? Which is it, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to review that question a little later. I want to just make it clear what I did say yesterday in the House because I think the hon. member has taken some liberties in the wrong direction. What I did say was:

Under the renewed flexible funding framework, which was worked out with, by, and for those school boards, they have the ability to shift around a significant amount of the monies that we provide to them, monies which, I might add, went up by \$287 million in this current budget to the largest amount ever for K to 12, \$4.3 billion.

I think the hon. member might wish to review what he just said and perhaps offer me an apology, which I would be happy to accept.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Well, thanks for the lesson, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: given that the class size reduction initiative is requiring schools to put more space into use, can the minister explain how school boards can operate and maintain that space when the operation and maintenance funding doesn't recognize this usage?

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The answer is quite simple. Edmonton public has roughly 160,000 square metres too much space.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the operation and maintenance funding is tied to utilization rates and not the needs of the facility, essentially guaranteeing that older schools fall into disrepair, how can the minister maintain that he has no responsibility for school closures?

Dr. Oberg: Because it is the Edmonton public school board. It is the responsibility of the public school boards to close schools and go through a school closure process, Mr. Speaker.

Quite simply, the hon. member has answered his own question when he was talking about why \$7 million had to be transferred over. It's because they have 160,000 square metres too much space that they are paying to heat and take care of.

The Speaker: Before I call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, do you want to raise a point of order at the conclusion of the Routine today with respect to an exchange between yourself and the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports? Is this correct?

Mr. Mason: Yes, please.

The Speaker: I'll advise then.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

2:00 Postsecondary Education Review

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education. The budget and throne speech set out a plan for increasing postsecondary access by 60,000 places by 2020. The minister stated in the House that the Department of Advanced Education is conducting a comprehensive review of the system. Meanwhile, there have been recent announcements about significant capital expenditures at Grant MacEwan College and Mount Royal College. Can the minister advise the House what the scope of the review which is being conducted will be?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, in our 20-year strategic plan we've indicated the four pillars under the strategic plan: unleashing innovation, leading in learning, competing in a global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. Of course, underpinning that is making sure that Albertans have the opportunity to advance their knowledge, skills, and education so that they can take advantage of the opportunities and trade in the world. So it is necessary to take a look at our postsecondary system to ensure that it's world leading, that Albertans have the best in-class opportunity to get the education they need to take advantage of those opportunities.

Based on that, we had a conference in January. We brought stakeholders together, and we talked about what was necessary. From that came the promise to create 60,000 new spaces over 20 years. The scope of the review will be to set out a policy framework for Alberta as a learning society and determine what we need to have in our system to be the world-leading postsecondary system and what we have now and what the gap analysis is.

Dr. Brown: Can the minister advise the Assembly whether or not the review will focus on the priority areas of access and affordability?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, access, affordability, and quality are, of course, the three key ingredients to a world-leading postsecondary institution. So, yes, we'll be focused on those as well as on the affordability equation, as we've talked about funding, what the cost of going to school is as well as how students finance that cost. Innovation and roles and responsibilities: we need to look at the institutions that we have and the roles they play both in their communities and in their geographic areas as well as in the context of the whole system. So the review will look at funding, it will look at access, it will look at quality, and it will look at how we fill the gaps that are necessary to ensure that we have opportunities for every Albertan to advance their education.

Dr. Brown: Can the minister assure the House that the review will be independent and geographically representative of all parts of the province?

Mr. Hancock: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. Our goal is to have a well-constructed steering committee that represents both the geographic nature of the province as well as the stakeholders in the province. The steering committee will have people who are familiar with the college role in rural colleges, the rural development issues, university issues, student perspective, faculty perspective. We need to make sure that it's a full, broad-based, varied look at the whole system and, as well, of course, have the opportunity to hear from Albertans. So it will be a full, complete, comprehensive review, which will culminate, hopefully, in an opportunity for the public to watch and participate in a conference which will have an informed discussion and lead to an informed conclusion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Arts Funding

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently many stakeholders in the arts community have come forward with serious concerns about the fate of the Visual Arts Alberta Association. Their concern is that this highly effective organization will suffer the same fate as Music Alberta and be eliminated without any consultation or accountability to affected members. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Why is the Visual Arts Alberta Association being subjected to a review by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts into areas that the AFA has no jurisdiction over?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the AFA has much jurisdiction over the discretion to grant monies to various arts groups throughout the province of Alberta. It is appropriate that groups like the agency referred to by the hon. member be reviewed from time to time to determine whether or not there are any problems, to determine whether or not there are things that can be improved. Visual arts should be subject to the same kind of scrutiny and accountability that all other areas of government enterprise are subject to.

Mr. Agnihotri: Will this minister assure the 360 individual artists and the 26 groups that the VAAA represents that there is no hidden agenda to disband this organization? It happened to Music Alberta.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I don't have time for all the things in our public agenda let alone a hidden agenda.

Mr. Agnihotri: Given that Music Alberta was subjected to a similar review and then disbanded with no consultation with the stakeholders, will this minister commit to an open, inclusive, and transparent review of the VAAA before any decisions are made?

Mr. Mar: This has always been my practice, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

English as a Second Language Programs

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ESL Council of the ATA reported in January of this year that a survey of teachers conducted in the fall of 2003 found that over half of the teachers

providing explicit ESL training and instructions do not have ESL training. The report also stated that the ratio of ESL students to certificated teachers is 121 to 1, and the ratio of ESL students to certificated teachers with ESL training is 248 to 1. This is of very great concern to students, parents, and educators. Would the Minister of Education tell the House and the people concerned if he's planning to make any further funding improvement to ESL programs?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with the report of 2003, but I'd be grateful if the hon. member would send me a copy of it so I can freshen up on it.

The fact is that teachers, once they receive their certification, are eligible to teach throughout the K to 12 system. Now, there are some who have the benefit of having some enhanced training, in this case in ESL.

I think the short answer to the question about the improvements is that we've made a number of improvements to ESL programming. We have four different programs now for ESL. You have the general program, you have the enhanced program, you have the ECS program and another program which ECS-eligible children can qualify for. So we've made a number of improvements, and we'll continue to make them where they are necessary.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: would the minister consider removing the five-year funding cap given that the five-year cap on ESL funding is disadvantaging the disadvantaged?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the normal expectation is that children who are receiving ESL programming would gain sufficient proficiency in the English language within a three-year period. However, we extended that to a five-year period. I should tell you that last year the overall programming for ESL was added to through the introduction of a new program called enhanced ESL programming, and that particular program would be possibly for students who have exceptional circumstances, and it, in fact, has no cap. But, in general, there's a three-year expectation. If that doesn't work, then five years, and if it's really critical, there is an opportunity to enhance even further.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister of Education consider giving the Calgary board of education an additional 2 and a half million dollars, that it is spending of its own money, to support 2,300 students who have exceeded the five-year limit and are assessed as still being in need of ESL supports?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that when I met with the Calgary board of education, this issue was raised, and I believe they indicated to me that they were going to be experiencing an inordinately high number of foreign-born ESL students who are in need of language proficiency upgrading. That having been said, it prompted me to look into this matter a little more deeply, so we are now undertaking a complete review of ESL programming from kindergarten right through to grade 12 because what we want to ensure is that our students, regardless of their circumstance, regardless of the literacy level of their families or their siblings, have every opportunity to succeed, and language must not be a barrier to that success.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

School Construction in Calgary

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgary's Western Canada high school is one of the oldest and most respected public senior high schools in Alberta, with a long-standing reputation for academic excellence. It is also a mishmash of buildings and additions dating back to 1928, and the physical plant is so worn out that the school has had to undergo major emergency repairs at least three times in the last three years. This government's own audit ranked Western Canada high school at 953 out of a possible 1,000 points in terms of the pressing need for restoration or replacement of the school building. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: will the minister commit to providing the Calgary board of education with the funds to restore or build a new Western Canada high school in the coming fiscal year?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is absolutely correct when it comes to Western Canada high school. His description of it is probably fairly aptly put. It is the number one priority for the Calgary public school board to redo the Western Canada high school along with the Bowness school, which is another one which is high on the list. It's something that we are currently working on with Calgary public to find a way that this refurbishment of that school can be expedited. It is quite a situation in Calgary when it comes to that. Quite simply, I'm working very closely with Calgary public to ensure that this can be done.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, then, to the same minister if I may suggest a way: will he address the current inadequacies in the funding framework for new school construction and ongoing school operations and maintenance by providing school districts with a separate capital envelope for restoration or replacement of aging schools?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, we're looking at a lot of different ways that capital dollars can be given out to school boards. There certainly is some merit in having a different process to put out capital dollars.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why does the Calgary board of education seem to find that the department of infrastructure keeps changing the rules during the life of a school board's funding applications?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, actually, they don't. What the hon. member is alluding to, I'm sure, is the Calgary public and why they have not started some of the schools that approval has been given to. Everything has been completely consistent from my department's point of view.

There have been some issues about tenders not being received. As soon as a request to go out to tender is received, it is looked at in my department, and subsequently it is provided to the particular school board to go out to tender. There are presently 16 new schools being built, or under construction, in Calgary right now – 16 under construction now in Calgary – and that's absolutely huge.

I will certainly give the hon. member this. There is a need of Western Canada high school that has been identified as their number one priority, and we are looking at how we can accommodate these requests.

First Nations Participation in Royal Visit

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, leaders of Alberta's First Nations have complained that they've been relegated to a token status when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visit the province next week. First Nations leaders have complained that their participation has been limited to a ceremonial nature only. While happy to participate in cultural events, Alberta's First Nations leaders have been denied an audience with the Queen to discuss treaty concerns. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. What has the government done to address the concerns of native leaders who claim that they've been relegated to only a ceremonial role during the royal visit?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I should indicate that I am not the person responsible for accepting Her Majesty's itinerary nor setting it. However, I can advise the hon. member that Prince Philip, when he attends the city of Fort McMurray, has meetings set with First Nations and Métis leaders in that jurisdiction. I don't control Her Majesty's itinerary outside.

I know that Her Majesty did make requests, for example, to be welcomed in a very aboriginal First Nations ceremony when she arrives later on today, I believe in roughly one hour and 15 minutes, in the city of Regina. So, Mr. Speaker, there is ample opportunity for the aboriginal community to participate in the events both ceremonially but also as guests of various dinners such as the Prime Minister's dinner and the dinner hosted by the government of Alberta and, certainly, at Commonwealth Stadium as well as the event at the Roundup Centre in the city of Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the government, then, conveyed to Buckingham Palace the desire of First Nations leaders to have an audience with Her Majesty, whom they see as a guarantor of their treaty rights?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, there is, again, an itinerary that has been set by Her Majesty the Queen, that has been set many months in advance, and it would be very difficult to change that itinerary now, sir.

Mr. Eggen: So did you in fact convey the desire at least for the First Nations to have an audience with the Queen?

Mr. Mar: That would not be my responsibility, sir.

Public Land Management

Mr. Groeneveld: Mr. Speaker, there are few places considered more valued by Albertans than the magnificent eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. In fact, to some it seems that we are loving it to death. Recently a task force of four rural municipalities presented a report to the Standing Policy Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development. This task force prepared 21 recommendations for actions to implement on public land and resource management, issues such as increased and inappropriate public use and the lack of provincial management. My first question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Because the focus of the report

is on public land, what support can these municipalities expect in dealing with what's happening on our eastern slopes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had the distinct opportunity to participate in that meeting, as well, along with a lot of my colleagues, and we were impressed with the task force commitment over the last two and a half years to try to find solutions to access management in the backcountry and some of the other issues that are important to the municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, Sustainable Resource Development has had the task force document for a few months, and after the meeting last night we've thoroughly gone over the report and now will make it available to other departments of government. What's interesting is that many of the recommendations in the task force report fit initiatives that we are already doing in Sustainable Resource Development and trying hard to address. Some examples of that are . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Because a major portion of the problem stated by the task force referred to a rapid increase of off-highway vehicle use and abuse on the public land, how is the minister's department dealing with this issue?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, in addition to co-ordinated weed management and access management as well as monitoring and enforcement and a major respect the land public awareness and education, we believe that we have to have all stakeholders involved in those consultations. That's why we involve a broad sector of stakeholders, to make sure that access management like what happened in the Bighorn – many of the people that were involved in the stakeholder meetings are now involved in the enforcement as well. That particular access management plan is working very, very well.

We also want to take that initiative and provide the same thing to the Ghost-Waiparous area, among other areas in the province. While we have good co-operation solutions to high-use or environmentally sensitive areas, we're also working with stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, on a province-wide basis.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplement, again for the same minister: what steps is the minister's department taking to ensure public safety and protection of the environment during the upcoming long weekend in busy off-highway vehicle recreation areas like Ghost-Waiparous, which is a real hot issue at this time?

Mr. Coutts: And a very important question it is, Mr. Speaker. For 75 years we've had government staff active in monitoring and enforcement on our public lands in the Rocky Mountain areas, and we continue to do that today. I must add that today we also focus on engaging the public because we feel that they're responsible for being good stewards of the land as well. So it's an education component that we're looking for.

This year's budget reflects some of the focus of that education and that stewardship. Among other areas Ghost-Waiparous will be a hotbed of activity on this long weekend, but more importantly we

plan to have at least an additional 30 enforcement officers and personnel out there in Ghost-Waiparous helping people to have a safe, enjoyable weekend.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Métis Hunting Rights

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During question period throughout this session the Official Opposition has asked the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development a number of questions about the process involved in the creation of the final agreement that will replace the interim Métis harvesting agreement. However, the minister has repeatedly dodged questions about the timeline for completion of this agreement, leaving many groups wondering and worrying about the next step in the process. My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Given that the minister stated in question period on April 28, "If there is going to be, a final agreement or a series of agreements," is the minister suggesting that the agreement may stay in place for months or years to come?

2:20

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, in terms of the date and the time that we would be able to look at the agreement, we did sign the interim agreement so that we have until I think about this fall to look at what the outcomes will be. We would like to see what the results will be because we want to be able to bring out more information, to be able to find out the number of cases that we do have, how many possible hunting licences that we do have. We would be able to get all that information in order for us to be able to come together to determine, as I indicated in the last question I was asked, whether or not it will be a final agreement or a series of final agreements that we would look at.

Mr. Tougas: To the same minister: what did the minister mean when she said that there could be a "series of agreements"? Can you expand on that, please?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't have that information. We need to be able to get all the information in order for us to be able to determine what it is that we will have as the final result. We don't have that information. When we have that information, we will then come forward, and our caucus colleagues will be involved to determine what will happen in terms of if there is a final agreement or a series of final agreements.

Mr. Tougas: Well, given that the minister has never set a firm deadline for the new agreement to be in place, is the minister attempting to shut out conservation groups, hunting groups, and her own caucus from the negotiation process?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, not at all. I think that's just ludicrous. First of all, we have a process in this government. That process identifies that a standing policy committee will make those decisions in terms of a policy. Secondly, we will then take that through the regular process. We have been working with our colleagues on this side of the House to be able to determine what the concerns will be, and they've been hearing as well from their organizations. We also have information that will be coming from Sustainable Resource Development that we have to monitor what's going on in order for us to be able to determine what it is that we have to do. The Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has

been working with the various organizations that fall within his jurisdiction.

Lakeland College

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, the 2000-2003 business plan for Lakeland College addressed the requirements of the college to reverse a five-year enrolment drop of about 20 per cent. The college decided to invest its own resources in the growth of the college, and over the past few years Strathcona county has been working with Lakeland College to develop a Sherwood Park campus. Recently there were rumours that the Sherwood Park initiative has drained the college's reserves and that Lakeland College would not move forward by offering courses or creating a campus in Sherwood Park. Could the Minister of Advanced Education advise the Assembly if he's looking into the operations of Lakeland College?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, the Minister of Advanced Education is not looking into the operations of Lakeland College, but I can tell you what has happened. In fact, there are a number of rumours and innuendos in the communities from Sherwood Park east to the border with respect to what's happening with Lakeland College, a lot of concern that's come out of the communities, many concerns, even those expressed by the MLA for the Lloydminster area. In fact, people are very concerned that the college continue to provide educational opportunities in the communities of Vermilion, in the communities of Lloydminster, and throughout the whole area east of the city. So we took a careful approach to appointing a new board chair, appointed a new board chair recently, asked that board chair to work with the board to determine the financial situation of the college, to make sure that they were on firm ground financially, and then to pursue the mandate of the college prior to any large expansion plans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister advise us about the status of course offerings in Sherwood Park for the next year and if a Sherwood Park campus would fit into the ministry's plans for increasing seats for students in Alberta?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the long-term plan for the college, of course, will be developed by the board of the college but, hopefully, in the context of the system review that we're talking about in terms of what the component parts of a postsecondary education system in the province are. As we look to extending educational opportunities out past the corridor and into other parts of Alberta, we will have to be conscious of the role that's played by colleges like Lakeland College, Portage College, Northern Lakes, those colleges, but we also have to be very interested in the educational opportunities for, for example, the county of Strathcona and Sherwood Park.

The mandate in terms of where Lakeland provides courses will be determined by the board of Lakeland after it's done its review and looked at its mandate, and of course we will be looking to work with them to determine how far and how fast they expand into the Sherwood Park area and whether a Sherwood Park campus fits into that context.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: has he had the opportunity to consider the P3 proposal by Lakeland College for a Sherwood Park campus?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Approximately three or four years ago the county of Strathcona gave, in essence, 67 acres to Lakeland College for the siting of a college. Subsequently what has occurred is Elk Island Catholic has become very excited about this particular project.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at it. As the hon. Minister of Advanced Education stated, there are mandate issues that have to be dealt with with regard to this college. We're just in the business of building buildings, and if indeed there is a will to have a college there, we will build it. It is a good proposal that has been put forward.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Reforestation

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of the last decade over 13,000 hectares of forest north of Slave Lake have fallen to wildfires, including over 1,000 hectares of replanted cut blocks. However, the reclamation of the reforested cut blocks destroyed or damaged by the forest fires have been ignored by this government, forcing industry to bear the cost of this devastation alone. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Given that the forest industry spends millions of dollars in reforestation efforts, which can be compromised by wildfires, when will this government take responsibility for reclaiming burnt plantations on Crown land instead of passing the buck to small operators?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, we take responsibility of that through our delegated authority called FRIAA. In addition to that, in this year's budget, which was discussed in this Assembly for a matter of two hours here Wednesday night, I believe the 4th of May, we discussed the \$1.5 million that goes into reforestation to make sure that these cut blocks on the forest fire side and on the small producer side – that \$1.5 million goes to reforestation of those areas. So that's already been looked after.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why has this ministry allowed huge swaths of burnt, replanted land north of Slave Lake to revert to grasslands, which are hostile to the coniferous seedlings and detrimental to the area's future abilities to maintain the vibrant forest industry?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you have a number of forest fires and you have a number of hectares that are burnt, you can't keep up with the reforestation with the dollars that are available. Sometimes there are areas where other species will take over where the forest was. FRIAA takes those into account. They do an assessment on the ground of exactly where the forest is and the kinds of species that could be reforested in those areas that are available. That assessment is done on a year-by-year basis by the delegated authority, and they do a very good job of it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question to the same minister: given that the forest protection core business plan does not specify the government's roles and responsibilities in reclamation of burnt areas, when will this government take action and put the required strategy into place?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do have a strategy. Under forest management agreements the companies do have a responsibility to reforest the areas. They want to make sure that reforestation in their area is sustainable for years to come. In areas where a forest fire is outside their forest management, we look at FRIAA to help us make sure that reforestation is done there as well. So it's a very responsible policy that is put forward by this government and the industry and the dollars that are committed by the industry to make sure that they reforest.

Mr. Speaker, 73 million trees are planted in this province every single solitary year. This year I believe we are up to 150 million trees being planted, and the anniversaries of that are within the next couple of weeks here. So our forest companies do a very responsible job of making sure that it's sustainable for years to come.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

2:30

Domestic Violence

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Domestic violence is a very serious problem in Alberta. In 2003 5,921 spousal abuse incidents were reported to police – that's an average of 16 per day – 3,666 charges were laid, and six people died as a result of spousal abuse. During the May 2005 fatality inquiry into the deaths of the Fekete family the RCMP was criticized for the way its members responded to information that the estranged husband was dangerous and threatening. My questions are to the Solicitor General. In the wake of the Fekete fatality inquiry what is the Solicitor General doing to ensure that the RCMP are adequately trained to address domestic violence cases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP have been very proactive regarding this issue since the tragic incident happened two years ago. In fact, a senior executive officer of the RCMP took the lead in doing an internal review, where 91 recommendations were brought forward to the assistant commissioner of K Division, where, in fact, 30 of those recommendations have come into being already.

Mr. Speaker, following this tragic incident the ability to ensure that domestic violence training is taught to RCMP officers throughout this province has assisted the Solicitor General's office, with the office of the Minister of Children's Services as well as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, where courses are provided throughout the various detachments throughout the province. In fact, one of those courses is going to be held in Fort McMurray later this month. To date 1,800 RCMP officers have been provided domestic violence training since the passing of the Protection against Family Violence Act of 1999.

Mrs. Jablonski: To the same minister: what's the Solicitor General doing to ensure that municipal police services are adequately trained to address domestic violence cases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The larger municipalities such as Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat have units that are specifically dedicated to investigating domestic violence cases. In Calgary they have the domestic violence conflict unit. In Edmonton they have the family violence conflict unit. Those investigators work alongside Children's Services officers that are human service workers, who are sort of the old social service workers. They work together in going to a home. They investigate the complaint and, as well, investigate the issues regarding the family. So on one side they can investigate the criminal allegation; on the other side they can investigate and provide the support services that the family may require regarding the incident that may have happened in the home.

Mrs. Jablonski: My final question is to the Attorney General. Given that it's statistically unlikely that a person convicted of domestic violence assault will change their behaviour patterns without help and that they are likely to reoffend, are judges who convict domestic violence offenders required to sentence these offenders to treatment programs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of sentencing options which are available to the courts – peace bonds, suspended sentence, conditional sentence – all of which have conditions, which can include that the offender be sent to a mandatory treatment centre dealing with the elimination of violent behaviour. So that is the method in which that can be available.

We do have a limited number of programs in Alberta directed at this particular issue. They are located in a number of locations – Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, and so on – but they are limited. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that it is available, and the courts are in fact addressing this issue by requesting offenders to embark upon these particular programs through conditional sentencing of one form or another.

The Clerk: Members' Statements.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six hon. members to participate, but in the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This October Alberta will host a national conference and four national symposia on sport and recreation. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Bob Weller, chair of the Canadian national parks and recreation conference; Heather Cowie, chair of the Youth Development Through Recreation Services 2005 National Symposium; Hugh Hoyles, chair of the True Sport in the Community National Symposium; Cliff Lacey, chair of the Pathways and Trails National Symposium; Valerie Nicoll, chair of the conference facilities committee; and Vern Colley, vice-chair of the International Symposium on Active Leisure for Citizens with Disabilities. With Vern are members of his steering committee who are in the building today in meetings: Glenda Heale, Bev Matthiessen, Norbert Frank, and Katie Burley-Wood.

I'm also pleased to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, from the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, providing support for the symposia, Mr. Steve Allan and Todd Reade, and here from Chrysalis, an Alberta society for people with disabilities, are Lorie Fischer and Isabelita Wheeler.

All of these individuals are steering or supporting the conference and symposia to improve the quality of life of all Albertans through recreation and parks. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, the historical vignette today refers to an event that occurred on the grounds of the Alberta Legislative Assembly five years ago today. On that day a statue of Lord Strathcona was unveiled on the Legislature Grounds in honour of the 100th anniversary of Lord Strathcona's Horse, the Royal Canadian regiment. This is an important part of our proud military tradition.

This regiment was founded in 1900 by Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, to serve in the South African Boer War. Since its creation this regiment has served in both world wars, the Korean War, and various peacekeeping missions. Three members of the regiment have been awarded the Victoria Cross, and the regiment has 22 battle honours approved for emblazonment. This regiment, with its western origins, has touched upon many of the people and places that have figured prominently in Alberta's development.

Hon. members, for those of you interested in learning more about this fascinating part of our history, I'd like to note that the Provincial Museum is currently showing an exhibit entitled Hoof Prints to Tank Tracks: 100 Years of the South Alberta Light Horse, and that will be on display until September 18.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Benefits of Immigration to Alberta

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that the prosperity of a province or a nation is dependent on its human resources, both as producers and consumers. Our Alberta is blessed with natural resources. Those natural resources have been sitting there for millions of years. They only become Alberta's advantage when our human resources realize them. Human resources make our province prosper through innovation and creativity. To sustain such prosperity and develop it further, we need more human resources.

Indeed, every year, Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of new Canadians make Alberta their home. They departed from their homelands to leave behind bad practices. They came here to build better lives for themselves and their families and to build a society better than where they departed from. Most of them are professionals in their lands of birth. They need a better society and system, and Alberta needs their human resources. It's a perfect partnership in building a great society.

Mr. Speaker, I have had many occasions to visit several immigrant-assisting agencies. One of their outstanding services is to help immigrant professionals to integrate quickly into the Alberta workforce. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the service providers and the companies that sponsored the new Canadians into their workplaces by providing their first work experience in Canada. Indeed, the first work experience in Canada is vital to new immigrants.

I urge our government to create additional short-term internship

positions within the government for qualified immigrants who seek work experience for the first time in Canada. This will encourage and challenge private corporations and the federal government to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

2:40

Marie Geddes

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to acknowledge a woman who took a small political action which had large consequences. Marie Geddes died yesterday in Camrose. To me she represented all the residents and family members of residents in long-term care who took steps to focus attention on what was really happening. Marie talked in a matter-of-fact way about wanting more than one bath a week, about the quality of food, about the staff just not having the time to get everything done.

Together with the Auditor General's report Marie's story delivered a knockout punch to any idea that everything was great in long-term care. Marie Geddes made it personal and political, and a lot of people had a better understanding of what is wrong in long-term care because of her courage. What she did to get herself into a position where she could get media attention and could get people to listen to her was to go on a hunger strike. Eighty-six years old, a diabetic, and she went on a hunger strike. Pretty courageous and pretty scary.

If we get any action from the government in long-term care, we need to credit Marie Geddes and all the Marie Geddeses who speak out, all the residents and their families and the advocacy groups and even people totally unconnected. I have a constituent who heard Marie's story on the radio, and this constituent went out and organized a petition and within a few weeks had over 400 signatures on it. I'll table that petition later today.

So thanks again, Marie. Thanks for your courageous advocacy, for your simple but powerful descriptions on what is going on in long-term care. You helped a lot.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

World No Tobacco Day

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission I am pleased to inform the hon. members that AADAC will be hosting a provincial celebration to mark World No Tobacco Day, and that's on May 30 at the Coast Terrace Inn in Edmonton.

It's a very significant date, Mr. Speaker. Since 1988 the World Health Organization has designated World No Tobacco Day as an annual global event to call world-wide attention to the impact of tobacco use on public health. Here in Alberta the World No Tobacco Day provincial celebration recognizes the efforts of our community partners and salutes their commitment to tobacco reduction in our province. This year AADAC is pleased to sponsor the event with partners Health Canada, the Alberta Lung Association, and the Canadian Cancer Society.

The event features presentations of the Barb Tarbox awards of excellence and youth scholarship fund. As my colleagues may be aware, Mr. Speaker, after being diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, Barb Tarbox dedicated the remainder of her life to talking to young people about the dangers of smoking. After her death two years ago at the age of 42 AADAC established the awards in Barb's honour to recognize Alberta businesses, nonprofit groups, and individuals who have made significant impacts in the area of tobacco prevention,

cessation, and reduction as well as protection from second-hand smoke. In addition, a \$2,500 youth scholarship fund is awarded to a young person under the age of 18 who has made a positive contribution to tobacco reduction in their community.

As the leader of the Alberta tobacco reduction strategy AADAC could not have achieved the results it has without the community involvement of concerned individuals, agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. I'm proud to inform our hon. members that the Alberta tobacco reduction strategy is helping to significantly reduce tobacco use in the province, and the results are impressive, Mr. Speaker. The number of Albertans over the age of 15 who smoke has dropped from 25 per cent in 2001-2002 to 20 per cent in 2003-2004. That's a hundred thousand fewer smokers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your support of World No Tobacco Day.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Camrose Kodiaks Hockey Team

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to congratulate the Camrose Kodiaks upon winning the silver medal at the Royal Bank Cup, the Canadian junior A hockey championship. The home team Weyburn Red Wings won the gold in a close 3 to 2 victory in the final game. The game was nationally televised on TSN following the world championship final game where Canada also won a silver medal in Vienna.

All season long the Kodiaks have performed excellently. In reaching the Royal Bank championship, they not only won the Alberta junior A championship but went on to win the Alberta/B.C. junior A championship, the Doyle Cup. This accomplishment was possible thanks to the excellent leadership from coaches Boris Rybalka, Doug Fleck, and Miles Walsh, who provided the guidance and support needed throughout the season to reach these accomplishments in postseason play. Captain Travis Friedley was named MVP and best defenceman in the Canadian championships, and Mason Raymond was named best forward and was the tournament's leading scorer. Forward Jason Roberts was named player of the final game for the Kodiaks.

The Kodiaks have won the Alberta junior championship three years of the eight that they have been part of the Alberta junior league. This is their second silver medal win at the Royal Bank Cup, and although they came close to winning the gold medal this year, the Kodiaks won the gold at the Royal Bank Cup in 2001.

Since their inception in 1997 the Kodiaks have been embraced by the community as indicated by the sellout crowds in the playoffs. The players have had a positive influence on younger minor hockey players of the area, and they have demonstrated that hard work and a high level of skill and discipline pay off in a young player's dream to succeed and excel.

Tonight I will be attending a city of Camrose welcome-home rally. This event will reflect the intense community support for the Kodiaks and demonstrate the importance of this level of hockey in the Camrose area.

In a year without NHL hockey the Kodiaks and other amateur teams have shown that the pure sport of hockey is alive and well and enjoyed by fans across Alberta and Canada. Thank you.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this month you advised the Assembly that May is Cystic Fibrosis Month. Cystic fibrosis, or CF, is the most common fatal genetic disease affecting young people in Alberta. It affects mainly the lungs and the

digestive system, and lung disease represents the biggest single threat to the lives of children and adults who have CF.

Thanks to advances in research and treatment, young persons with CF are living longer and healthier lives. In the 1960s most children with CF were not expected to live long enough to reach kindergarten. Today half of all Canadians with CF are expected to live to 37 years and beyond.

Recently the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation held its annual general meeting and conference in Edmonton. The foundation, with more than 50 volunteer chapters, is a Canada-wide health charity which funds care and cystic fibrosis research. I had the pleasure of attending the foundation's gala awards dinner on Friday, April 29, 2005, and met some of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation award winners.

In keeping with the conference theme, Volunteers: Our Most Precious Resource, the delegates from across Canada honoured a number of outstanding volunteers for their selfless dedication to the CF cause. Many of those honoured were residents of Alberta. The Breath of Life award was received by Lorraine Johnson, of Edmonton; Jordan Milne, a Calgary law student; and the McWhirter family, of Calgary. Chris Small, of Edmonton, received the Céline award. The Earl Grey Golf Club from Calgary, Gloria Both of Red Deer, and Rob Sokil from Edmonton received the Julia award.

Ron Moore, of Edmonton, received the Summerhayes award. Very sadly, Ron Moore has now succumbed to the deadly disease. He was 48 years old and a truly remarkable individual, extremely dedicated to the CF cause, and an accomplished athlete.

Researchers funded by the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation discovered the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis in 1989. Canadians are marking CF Awareness Month. Let's congratulate the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation for their good work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Prevention of Youth Violence

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Alberta is supposed to be one of the safest places in one of the safest countries on earth. Many people come to Canada to enjoy its safety and freedom from the violence they may have feared in their first country. But just look at the news. Every day we get news of more violence: more stabbings, more car theft, and more murders. So often it is our young people. What is happening on our streets, and why?

Crystal meth and other drugs are a big part of the problem. This government is moving slowly, but I'm glad that this Legislature has begun to address crystal meth. Government must focus on drug abuse and find real ways to get kids off drugs and, therefore, to stop the crime and violence we see.

One of the best ways to keep kids out of trouble is to keep them busy. Kids learn teamwork, learn how to set and reach goals, stay fit, gain recognition and confidence by being involved in sports or dance or kung fu or whatever. Cost is a problem for many, many families. I hear the cost complaint often. But the cost of the violence and the loss of the sense of safety and security is much, much worse. Another solution is to increase the number of police officers.

We must provide whatever support we can so that kids can get into good things. We want them off the streets and out of trouble. We must work to win the fight, and we must provide tax credits for kids' recreation or whatever to attack this.

Thank you very much.

head: 2:50

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition signed by 321 Albertans who are eager to see potentially life-saving improvements to highways in northern Alberta, particularly highway 63. With today's tabling the total signatures on this petition so far is 4,699.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to present a petition from a number of good Albertans, almost all from the city of Edmonton, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling today the required number of copies of responses to written questions and motions for returns raised during the First Session of the 26th Legislature involving the Department of Advanced Education. This would be written questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 20, 21, 25, 26, and 27 and motions for returns 2, 3, and 31. Should members have additional concerns or observations or questions relating to any of the matters out of those written questions or other matters, I would invite them to attend at my office or raise them with me.

I've tabled the copies of the binder with the Clerk's office rather than bringing them all in today, the copies of that. Just out of interest's sake, Mr. Speaker, providing answers to these questions: particularly, Motion for a Return 3 took 64 hours of government staff work and in total to answer all these questions, 96 hours of government staff work.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and table the appropriate number of copies of the 2002-2003 children's advocate annual report. The work of the advocate is extremely important to make sure that children and youth receiving services have an advocate to assist them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to table copies of a document outlining the action Children's Services has already taken to address the issues in this report. All of the issues have been addressed through various ministry programs, services, or legislation.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table requisite copies of supplementary information to questions that were asked during the April 20 Committee of Supply review of the Ministry of Energy's business plan and estimates.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the

required number of copies of the 2003-2004 Alberta Economic Development Authority activity report entitled Strategies for a New Era.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter from the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation dated May 5, 2005, to myself. This letter indicates that the Edmonton public school board has requested "15 portables at 15 schools, including one for Kenilworth school."

My second tabling is a document that was provided through an access to information request from the Edmonton public school board. It indicates the constituencies where the cluster studies would be conducted to close Edmonton public schools. Cluster study A is in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, cluster B is in Edmonton-Calder, and cluster C is in Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The third tabling I have this afternoon is also a document that was received through access to information. It indicates, contrary to what the public board had stated, that there was a lease signed at Terrace Heights school between Edmonton school district No. 7 and Alberta Online Consortium Association, and this lease is dated March 24, 2005.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a petition that was put together by my constituent, Norma Nozick. The 418 people signing were asking to urge the government of Alberta to

increase staff to our nursing homes. Their residents, citizens of our wealthy province should not be punished for their crime of being fragile, infirm and dependent. They have earned the right to receive adequate, respectful care, which an increase in support would give them.

We strongly implore the government to act immediately.

The petition was not in order to be presented as a petition, so I am presenting it as a tabling.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. I am tabling an additional nine e-mails regarding the fate of the Simon Fraser junior high band program that I received from Calgary-Varsity constituents who argue that the loss of an implicit music program within our school system affects the wider circle of appreciation, exposure, and involvement in fine arts within our province.

The second set of tablings is as follows. I am tabling the required copies of last Sunday's Alberta College of Art and Design's 2005 convocation ceremony, at which artist, author, journalist, and keynote speaker Richard Rhodes reinforced the value of an arts degree, stating: no one else on the job will recognize as many shades of blue or see as far or recognize when the process has gone flat and there is a need to start over again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present five copies each of five letters from a pile of about a couple of thousand, one of the piles of letters I've got, from good Albertans decrying the use of temporary foreign workers and on the need to train young people in our own province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from Jacques Blanchard, from Calgary, who would like to ask the Premier to define the Alberta advantage and explain how the so-called advantage applies to overworked nurses, university students, who pay outrageous tuition fees, everyone who has felt the crunch due to bungled deregulation, and all the other groups who have fallen behind under the Premier's watch.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before the Clerk proceeds, I'd just like to advise hon. members that this afternoon all hon. members will be receiving correspondence from me which will partially outline the procedure for events in this Assembly next Tuesday with the arrival of Her Majesty the Queen, plus there's also a document which deals with some protocol questions. A fairly large number of members has contacted my office in recent days wanting to know some of the protocol things, particularly for the spouses of the members.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, responses to questions raised by Members of the Legislative Assembly on April 28, 2005, the Department of Human Resources and Employment 2005-06 Committee of Supply debate. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Stevens, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, responses to questions raised by Members of the Legislative Assembly on May 3, 2005, the Department of Justice and Attorney General 2005-06 Committee of Supply debate.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on a purported point of order.

Point of Order Citing Documents

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on a point of order, and I will indicate that the citation is *Beauchesne's 495*: documents cited. Today the minister of seniors referred to an appraisal that was done on a parcel of land that has involved us in some questions in the last few days in this Assembly. She also referred to it yesterday, and I do have the *Hansard* for that. She said that an independent appraiser was hired to assess the value of the land. "The value of the land was appraised at between \$15,000 and \$40,000, and that was depending on how soon housing could be developed in the area." She went on to say, "Given that, the accusation about this being a private, cozy deal is completely untrue."

3:00

Now, Mr. Speaker, in *Beauchesne's 495* it says:

- (1) A Minister is not at liberty to read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House without being prepared to lay it on the Table.

(2) It has been admitted that a document which has been cited ought to be laid upon the Table of the House, if it can be done without injury to the public interest.

(7) When a letter, even though it may have been written originally as a private letter, becomes part of a record of a department, it becomes a public document, and if quoted by a Minister in debate, must be tabled on request.

Mr. Speaker, I am requesting that the minister be asked to table the documents which she cited, which includes specifically the appraisal on this parcel of land. Also, the agreement for sale was referenced.

I just want to indicate that there is an exception allowed if there would be an “injury to the public interest,” and I would argue most strongly that there’s no way that an appraisal can fit that description since an appraisal is done independently by a professional and is used as a document to establish the value of land and does not comprise in itself the argument or the arrangement or agreement or contract in any way between the government or the seniors’ housing and any private developer but is actually something that is quite objective, or should be objective, and independent.

I would also argue that the public interest would be best served if the agreement for sale was also tabled by the minister since there are many questions about this land deal, and there’s widespread concern in the development and real estate communities in Fort McMurray about what happened with this deal. So I think it makes a good argument that the public interest would be served by the tabling of the agreement for sale as well.

Mr. Speaker, given that the last day of the session may well be tomorrow, I think this issue has some urgency, and I would request, on a point of order, a ruling to the effect that the minister should table both the agreement for sale and the appraisal of this parcel of land prior to this session adjourning tomorrow.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is mixing up a number of different things here. He’s mixing up the provisions of our rules which allow for motions for returns to ask the House to require the return of a document. He’s mixing up Standing Order 30 for an emergency debate on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity, and he’s doing it under the guise of asking for a document to be tabled because it was cited.

Well, Mr. Speaker, 495 says that the “Minister is not at liberty to read or quote from.” I read the *Hansard* from yesterday. I certainly listened to the answers from the questions today. There was no reading or quoting from any document. The minister simply referred to the fact that there was an appraisal and, as I recall it – and I can refresh my memory – indicated that the value of the land was appraised between \$15,000 and \$40,000, and that was depending on how soon . . .

Mr. Martin: That’s quoting.

Mr. Hancock: That’s not quoting at all. That’s simply indicating a piece of information in response to a question. If that is quoting or if that is citing a document, then virtually every answer in this House would have to be followed up by the tabling of a myriad of documents from which that information might have been taken or concluded.

All that’s really happened here under this point of order, Mr. Speaker, is that the hon. member wanted one more chance to get his point on the table with respect to the questions raised. This is not a document that’s cited under 495. It doesn’t follow under either

495(1) or 495(5), which says, “To be cited, a document must be quoted or specifically used to influence debate.” Question period, as you’ve said from time to time, is not debate.

Clearly, what’s happened is that the minister has indicated in answer to the question that the sale was done under the law in place, which allowed it to be done based on appraisal. She’s indicated that there was an appraisal done, and she’s indicated that that’s where the evaluation was taken from. But there’s no citing of the appraisal, quoting of the appraisal, or in any way reading from the appraisal or in any way referring to a document which would require the tabling of the document in the Legislature under that standing order.

Certainly, the hon. member could ask for the document under Written Questions or Motions for Returns or could simply write a letter asking for the document, in which case the normal process of review would be done to ensure that there were no issues with respect to freedom of information and protection of privacy concerns or other concerns.

One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that we have to be more and more careful about in this House, unfortunately – and I say “unfortunately” because I think sometimes it’s all too constraining. The rules with respect to the protection of privacy are very clear. Codification . . . [interjection] Members of the opposition often want codification. Well, under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act there is codification.

So, yes, an appraisal; yes, any other document. Before it can be released publicly, absolutely any document that somebody asks for we have an obligation to review to see whether by releasing the document there would be any FOIP issues or any violation of law. That’s certainly true in this case, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others who wish to participate on this point?

Well, this was certainly not the point of order that the chair anticipated. He prepared himself to do all kinds of research for the last hour with respect to 14 different other variations of that but is quite sidelined with respect to that one. Quite clearly, *Beauchesne* 495(3), “A public document referred to but not cited or quoted by a Minister need not be tabled.” The chair did review the *Hansard* of yesterday and today and could not concur that this is a point of order.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 42

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to move for second reading Bill 42, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

As a matter of the tradition of this Assembly a miscellaneous statutes amendment act is a piece of legislation that is noncontentious. It is something that has been reviewed with all opposition parties so goes forward with the understanding that the matters that are contained within are not contentious.

I thought I might just mention the various pieces of legislation that are in fact impacted in some fashion by the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. They are the Alberta Housing Act, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, the Civil Enforcement

Act, the Employment Standards Code, the Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2003, the Government Organization Act, the Land Titles Act, the Mines and Minerals Act, the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Recognition Act, the School Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 42 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
 Third Reading
 Bill 14
 Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill 14, the Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading.

We had it in committee last night, and there was a query from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview concerning the issue of a lifetime maximum. So I'll just briefly repeat what I said, I think, when I introduced this for second reading, and that is: this act is being brought forward simply to make sure that there's clarity in terms of the existing application of the rules. This is the way the rules have been applied, but there has been some question through the audit process, as I understand it, as to whether the act is clear enough in those areas. So this act simply does that.

I would indicate to the House that we are, as I said in question period earlier today, doing a complete review. I expect that the issues that were raised – and, quite frankly, I agree with you, hon. member, with respect to the concern about lifetime limits and the ability of lifelong learning and people coming back into the system. I raised that query, actually, when this came forward as a proposed act, but I was satisfied that we should make those changes in the context of the review, and for now it is entirely appropriate to make sure that the language of the act is clear and the application of the policy that's currently in place conforms with the act.

So that's the purpose for this bill. I hope that we will be back in the not too distant future debating the broader question of student loan assistance and financial aid and affordability for students.

3:10

Mr. Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I wish to finish the debate for the purpose of clarifying amending aspects of the bill. Thus, I move closing of the debate.

Ms Blakeman: Question.

The Speaker: The question has been called.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]

Bill 22
Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton-Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to move third reading of Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

This is an important bill that updates the existing legislation to reflect the expectations of Albertans when it comes to animal care and protection. I just want to once again thank the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and his staff for allowing

me to carry this bill, and I appreciate the support and excellent questions from members of the House.

With that, I'd now move third reading of Bill 22. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Essentially, Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, was to give more power to peace officers to take animals into custody before they become distressed and also to provide more clarity on the care of animals and more responsibility to the owner. As the sponsoring member did indicate, there were a number of questions raised and answers supplied. The Official Opposition did consult with stakeholders, particularly the Alberta SPCA, and they were in support of what was being proposed here. We also listened to others that contacted us about this bill and raised their issues during debate.

The final point I wanted to make was that in many ways this act was too long in coming. We needed this protection for animals a long time ago. The Official Opposition is pleased to see that it is now in place and has been strengthened, and we are happy to support this bill in third reading.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. My only concern is that we extend to wild animals the same kind of protected rights that we've extended in this wonderful bill to domesticated animals. I would like to see the same sort of protection extended to grizzly bears, for example, and woodland caribou.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

Bill 35
Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and move third reading of Bill 35, the Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005.

I would also like to thank the hon. members of the opposition parties for their support of this legislation throughout the process.

As I stated when I was introducing this bill, this is a very important piece of legislation. I'm pleased to sponsor this bill because, as the Member for Edmonton-Centre stated in Committee of the Whole debate, it addresses something that is tremendously meaningful to a lot of people: their pension plan.

The superintendent of pensions under these amendments will have more effective means of ensuring that private-sector pension plans are being properly funded. Bill 35 also strengthens his enforcement powers if problems arise. Bill 35 also provides plan members with better access to information and provides more transparency so that they can see for themselves the financial status of their plan. They will have access to the audited financial statements, any management report that the superintendent of pensions has delivered following a plan examination, and they will have advance notification

tion of any proposed amendment to a plan that would adversely affect them. Mr. Speaker, these changes put plan members in a better position to monitor their pensions before they actually need them.

Again I thank all members for supporting this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I do now move that the bill be read a third time and does pass.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to lead off debate for the Official Opposition on Bill 35, the pension amendment act. As I've indicated previously, this bill appears to accomplish a lot of good things for Albertans who have investments in pensions.

I think it's been mentioned several times that, in fact, for many Albertans the pension that they hold may well be one of their single largest investments, so anything that we can do to protect that investment on behalf of those Albertans, anything we can do to ensure that they have access to better information and are aware of what changes might be taking place in those pensions is a good thing and something I support, and I have recommended to my colleagues that we support it as well.

Certainly, I would like to once again thank the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill for the tremendous effort he made in terms of answering the questions that I had raised personally during second reading of this bill. It was very much appreciated to have that information come back in the fashion that it did.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would recommend to my colleagues and all members of this House that we support this bill. Thank you.

The Speaker: Shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a third time]

Bill 38

Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move third reading of Bill 38.

Bill 38 will update the Pharmacy and Drug Act to reflect current pharmacy practice and to clarify regulations requirements for pharmacies and drugs in Alberta. As well, changes proposed in this bill will allow the Alberta College of Pharmacists to set standards and regulations for categories of pharmacy services.

I just wanted to add that I would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. I thought his comments in committee were very good and want him to know how much I also value pharmacists and how important I think the work that they do is.

At this time I'd like to move third reading of Bill 38.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in third reading to Bill 38, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005. The sponsoring member briefly touched on the purposes of the bill. I'll expand on that a bit.

The bill does change the definition of prescription in order to

allow pharmacists to work with doctors and patients to tailor drug therapy. It broadens the licence categories to include facilities such as compounding and what are called repackaging centres. It creates an appeal or review process if a pharmacy is refused a licence. It does register drug wholesalers. It clarifies the definitions and other minor revisions or additions to definitions to ensure consistency with the Health Professions Act.

Mr. Speaker, there was nothing that troubled the Official Opposition greatly in this bill. Essentially, it's a number of needed and, in fact, recommended changes that will better acknowledge the place that pharmacists and pharmacies have in our health system.

There was an amendment brought forward yesterday that further clarified concerns that I had put on the record around institutional pharmacies and that it be clear that these are to be only pharmacies operating in what we would call Crown institutions. I was concerned that there be a chance that privately run facilities with a pharmacy would then be captured under that definition. That's now been clarified, so thank you to the government for recognizing that gap and for, in fact, closing it.

3:20

We have checked with all of the stakeholders, and they are happy to support this bill in the state that it is now in. We also support this because it does adhere with our policy position 10 that came out in our health policy, and that is around recognizing how we manage our health care workforce, reducing doctors' roles in care provision where someone else can actually do it, in this case pharmacists, so reducing that role as gatekeeper, and gathering better data to plan for the future.

This was I think a step forward, and at this point I am happy to support third reading. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Question.

The Speaker: Should I call the question?

[Motion carried; Bill 38 read a third time]

Bill 39

Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead on behalf of.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to move Bill 39 for third reading, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-North Hill.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. The intention of this bill is to save lives. As the critic for Infrastructure and Transportation and representative of the Alberta Liberal opposition I fully support this bill. Hopefully, this fall members of the government will reconsider their opposition to banning the use of hand-held cellphones while driving, which if enacted would also save lives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Question.

The Speaker: The question's been called.

[Motion carried; Bill 39 read a third time]

Bill 36
Police Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading.

These proposed amendments build on an existing police oversight mechanism with many areas being clarified and strengthened. The amendments ensure that every community has either a civilian police commission or police committee to whom the chief of police is accountable for the handling of complaints.

The amendments strengthen the role of the commission considerably. The chair of the commission under the amendments can at their discretion request another police agency anywhere in the country to investigate any complaint against a police officer. The MLA Policing Review Committee recommendations state that "it is most appropriate that the chief of police be responsible for the investigation of routine complaints." While this may be true, these amendments go farther and allow for the chair of the commission to request an outside police agency to investigate what might be considered a routine complaint if it would be in the public interest.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the amendments of the responsibilities of the director of law enforcement have been significantly increased. The director of law enforcement will ensure that commissions and committees have the training that will provide them with the knowledge and skills to perform their duties more effectively. The director of law enforcement will also monitor complaints, establish standards and audit practices to ensure that standards are met.

Finally, at the provincial level we are enhancing the role of the Solicitor General to allow the minister to require an external investigation even if the commission chair had decided against such a course of action. The minister can also appoint a civilian monitor or review person or team to oversee an investigation in cases where provincial intervention is needed.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when any complaint has been dealt with and the complainant is not satisfied, they can appeal to the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board, which is a civilian body with considerable powers. We do not need to enhance the powers of the Law Enforcement Review Board, but we can enhance their role through policy and increased resources. In addition to its most common role of an appeal body, the board also has the power on its own to conduct inquiries respecting complaints. Further, at the request of the minister the LERB can inquire into any matter respecting policing, and that is as it should be.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I've highlighted the key points of this bill. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the hon. members from the Liberal opposition for the debate that we've had as well as thank our department staff for their hard work in drafting this bill as well as the stakeholders for their invaluable input over the last few years on this very important issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to speak on third reading of Bill 36. I congratulate the Solicitor General on presenting this bill because I think it is a substantive bill. The Solicitor General has mentioned I think previously that all legislation is in process of evolving, and certainly this is a step in the right direction, beyond where we've been before. Our only reservation is that it hasn't evolved enough to where we want it to be.

Bill 36 provides guidelines for the establishment of policing

committees and police commissions, and that's all very important. It also ensures a high level of competence in terms of the training of members of police commissions and police committees through a director of law enforcement whose responsibility it is to develop crime prevention and restorative justice programs and to train personnel and to ensure high standards for police committees and commissions, and that's really important.

It also provides guidelines for the designation of a public complaints director to receive routine complaints against police officers, who would refer them to the chief of police, and then the chief of police may request the commission chair to bring in another police service to investigate, and all that's really important.

The one area where we have reservations is in the way that this amendment act suggests how serious incidents and complaints should be handled. When the minister is notified by a chief of police about a serious complaint, the minister may – it doesn't say that he must – do one or more of the following. He may request "another police service to provide a police officer" to investigate or he may request "another police service to conduct an investigation" or he may "appoint one or more members of the public as overseers to observe" and to monitor the process of the investigation carried out by a police service.

Now, in our view this does not go far enough, and during committee we suggested an amendment to the section, which was defeated. We think that this part of the act does not satisfy it. We're talking about the effect of this bill on the public. This bill does not go far enough in dealing with the public desire for actual independence and impartiality on the part of investigation.

We've got a lot of cases where the public is expressing its lack of confidence in the abilities of police to investigate themselves, so there's a desire for something more. There's a desire to have an independent and impartial investigative process and also a process that has the appearance of impartiality and objectivity. That's very, very important.

Of course, there are lots of models in other jurisdictions across Canada and the United States, and we made reference to the Ontario model of the Special Investigations Unit, which was established some years ago to deal with serious cases. It's interesting. Their motto, as I mentioned in our previous debate, is Independent Investigations, Community Confidence, and that's exactly why we in the Liberal opposition are opposing this bill, because we don't think in its effect it's ensuring public confidence. Independent Investigations, Community Confidence: that's what we need.

In the different models of civilian oversight of the police, of course, there are two extremes. There's the in-house model where police officers receive a complaint and they investigate it themselves, so it's police investigating police. That's the in-house model. The other extreme is the Ontario example, the fully independent model, where civilians both investigate and adjudicate the complaint. What we brought as an amendment was a model in between. We don't think that what is suggested by the bill goes much beyond the in-house model. Sure, you have a couple of people from the public who maybe could be appointed to ensure the integrity of the process. So they oversee the process, but they are not engaged in the investigation itself, even though a person could be a retired judge, retired policeman, and so on, and have the abilities to carry out investigations.

3:30

So this is just a variation, I think, of the in-house model, and what we need is a fully independent model. I'm looking forward to the day when we can evolve a little further down the road to have an amendment to the Police Act so that we can have a fully independ-

ent, impartial, objective, civilian oversight process to hear serious complaints about the police service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. I've made comments before on this, but it seems that there was a change from the minister. I notice that three years ago, when the minister was a backbencher, I think he advocated for an independent police secretariat as part of the MLA Policing Review Committee's proposal for better civilian oversight of police. Now that he's the minister in charge of policing and the Solicitor General, although, admittedly, I suppose it's a step in the right direction, the minister is proposing much more modest measures to deal with the problems of police investigating themselves.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that it serves the police well if there is the cynicism that police are investigating themselves, especially in the Edmonton area after the infamous Overtime bar symptom of the problems created when police operate without accountability to the community. I think that brought it front and centre. As a result of that, I believe that we need at least a more transparent process, that it's not the police investigating the police.

Now, this bill takes us in some direction to cover this, but it doesn't go the way I think it would have if what the minister was proposing as a backbench MLA – I think it can be best described as minor tinkering rather than significant change. Admittedly, Mr. Speaker, it does open the door slightly to an independent investigation of serious police wrongdoing, but again, as mentioned by the previous speaker, this would be entirely at the discretion of the Solicitor General. There's no agency being established to conduct such investigations. It seems to me, then, that as a result of that, even though the minister theoretically has a right, the status quo of the police investigating the police will continue to prevail in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, I don't think that serves the public well, and I don't think it serves the police well when that perception is out there. Whether they come back with the right decision, if it's the police investigating themselves and they come back and say that there was nothing wrong, maybe they're right – probably in most cases they were – but there's always that perception out there that if it had been an independent investigation, there might have been a different result.

That's why I say, Mr. Speaker, that I don't think police investigating police – there at least should probably be police on it but an independent commission looking into it. The previous member mentioned Ontario. Whether you have to go, as he said, that far or not, I don't know. But it seems, in the discussions that we've had, to be working relatively well there, and I think the police would argue that they're perhaps being well served.

So I don't understand why we can't take the final step here, Mr. Speaker, as when the minister was an MLA advocating an independent commission. Now that he's the Solicitor General, we're going to have more power in the Solicitor General's department. The only other point I would like to make – and I know that at this stage in third reading this is probably not going to change, but I would hope that the minister would reconsider and go back to his MLA days and look at what he was advocating at that particular time. I think that made the most sense.

The other point – and I've heard the minister talk about this in the media – that I think is a bit of a problem is the one-year time limit being imposed on making complaints against the police. I know that the minister has said that in a couple other provinces – he can correct

me if I'm wrong: I think he mentioned New Brunswick, and I'm not sure of the other province – they had six months or three months or something and that by comparison Alberta was better off with a year. Well, I don't think we should be comparing ourselves in that regard, Mr. Speaker. I think limiting periods are problematic because people have intimidated their victims so much sometimes that they don't report the crime for many years. Certainly, a one-year time limit I don't think is adequate.

So the best I can say about the bill, Mr. Speaker, is that it's better than what was there before, but certainly I don't think that as an MLA on the MLA review committee the member would have accepted this. As I say, this is tinkering rather than really doing something about the problem, and I think the minister could do better. Hopefully, next year he will come back with a different bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anyone wish to participate.

If not, then I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm glad of the opportunity to speak in third reading to Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005. Frankly, I'm glad that my colleague who is the Official Opposition critic for the Solicitor General spoke before me because he's kinder than I am, and it was probably nice to start out that way. To me, this bill has utterly failed in what we needed it to do. I find it meek, I find it tentative, and I find that it polishes up the status quo. It did not do what we the people needed it to do.

We allow policing by consent. We agree as a population that we will allow police officers to move among us and uphold the laws that we want, and we agree that these people will be given the special powers to do that. When we as the public start to develop suspicions or have concerns about the police, it's very, very important that we are reassured that there are strong and vigorous processes in place.

There have been a number of examples in Calgary and Edmonton and elsewhere that are causing a credibility crisis, an integrity crisis here. I was hoping that we would see the leadership from the government that stepped forward and said: "We understand that, and we're going to deal with this. We will do what needs to be done to reassure the public." What that really was about, Mr. Speaker, was making sure that that transparency, that civilian oversight, that accountability was put into place and everybody could see it so that, if I may paraphrase, not only was justice done but seen to be done. It's what some of the others have commented on, that not only is there actual transparency but that there's the appearance of that.

It has to do with who gets to make those decisions and whether they are making those decisions in public or behind closed doors. That's why I say that all we got here was the status quo polished up a bit because, ultimately, the big changes that we needed are not in this act and are not provided for us. Could the Overtime incident happen again, and would the outcome be any different with what we have in this legislation? The answer is no.

Where they had the opportunity to turn shalls into mays, they didn't do it. My colleague brought forward amendments that gave them a second chance to do that. They wouldn't do it. So it is weak, it is tentative, it is meek. It did not provide what we needed it to do.

Neither does it give police officers a fair shake, Mr. Speaker. I think all of us in here appreciate the work that police officers do. We have comments from some of my colleagues with their concerns over rising crime in their communities and how valued officers are. All of us mourned the deaths of the four RCMP officers that happened a few months ago. I don't think there's any question that everyone here values what police officers do.

3:40

From my point of view as a previous critic in this particular area, what I saw happening was that even when an officer was involved in something and they did get cleared, nobody ever believed them. They didn't get credit for that because they had been cleared by a process that the public didn't trust. So even if that officer should have walked away with his/her head up high and absolutely any blemish taken right off their record, they couldn't do that because there was always a sneaking suspicion, there was always a wonder about what really happened and who really was there and what really was said.

Because it was a behind-closed-doors, secretive, by-appointment-only kind of process and officers investigating themselves so there was always a question of whether the brotherhood was assisting or aiding or abetting each other, it did not help those officers to be able to have the cleared record that they deserved, and that was very frustrating for me. I have a number of police officers that are constituents, and that was my concern, that when they were cleared, they were really cleared, and there was no question. There would be no lingering doubt here. They would be absolved as was appropriate. On the other hand, if they weren't, if they had done something, then that would be clear too, and it would be out there and above board.

This legislation did not give us any of what we the public, we the people, needed to be reassured of those decisions. It's not independent. There's fiddling around, well, maybe they could do this, and they could bring in someone else, and they could send it to an outside source but none of the strong actions and leadership that I was really hoping to see, especially since we've spent so much darn time on this, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, that first Police Act review was in 2000, I think. Yeah, October 2000; there you go. Then they reported with that really awful draft in 2002. Then the final report was released in July of 2002. Then there was a second version of it in 2003.

I mean, there were all kinds of wild and wacky things that were being thought of in there. I think the committee was genuinely trying to envision a future and to really see what all kinds of possibilities were out there, so maybe that's what gave it that sort of air of the sublime. But in the end the final report that came through had gotten rid of some of the things like the aerial space drones to spy on the sheep in the pasture and that sort of thing.

One of the areas that continues to cause me some questions – and I'm not having those satisfied by the minister – is around the deputy constables and around the special constables. Who does what role, and how much do they do, and are they going to be armed and with what? How much training do they get for using that weaponry? All of those things have yet to be sorted out, Mr. Speaker.

As I say, this is 2005. We started down this road in 2000. I would have expected that over those five years some of those questions should have been answered. So I'm also noting that failure in my discussion over the anticipated effects of this bill.

So I will not support this bill, and I didn't at any stage that I was able to vote on it. It will be a long time before we get another shot at this. If I knew that it was going to come back next year and we could take this a step further or the many steps further that I was hoping to see, I'd maybe be a bit more willing to go: well, incrementally, okay. But my experience has been that once legislation like this goes by, it'll be five or 10 years before we see it back in here because it's sort of off the burner now, and nobody's too excited about it, and well, you know, just give it some time to settle in and shake down and we'll see what happens with it. It takes a long time before the rumblings from the population bring it back up onto the stovetop, if you want to put it that way, so that it gets another chance at an amendment. So we're stuck with this.

I think that in this day and age, especially when we look at issues around the databases that the police have access to and the information that they hold on us – you know, most officers are very conscientious individuals. They're working very hard to uphold the law that they're given. It's frustrating to them when people take advantage of situations that are presented to them, and it's frustrating to us as a public. I think many, many more people are becoming aware of how carefully we all have to tread around those issues of access to personal information and who has it and what they use it for.

Certainly, there were great concerns, again, around the Overtime, and there were some equivalent episodes in Calgary around how that information was used and, I would say, abused and inappropriately. When people look to see, "Okay, then, what happens when that's the case?" we're not seeing any really positive forward movement on that, and this act is not giving us anything to reassure us that that leadership is in place and that, in fact, we have major changes in the way this is all dealt with.

So I'm very disappointed in this act. I'm very disappointed in the five years that it's taken us to get to this. It is very weak, Mr. Speaker, so I will not be supporting this in third reading.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, it's to participate in the debate; correct? Anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Then I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The only way to combat the perception or charges of secrecy, cover-up, or partisanship is to be transparent and accountable. It is for this reason that an external civilian oversight committee must be established in order to ensure public confidence in Alberta's law enforcers and enforcement. It is unfortunate that the government did not incorporate our Liberal opposition amendments, which would have gone a long way to improving accountability. To quote a line from a well-known country song which summarizes Bill 36's inadequacy: "No-one knows what goes on behind closed doors."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question has been called. Any other participants?

Hon. Solicitor General, did you want to close the debate, or is everything fine?

Mr. Cenaiko: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the Committee of the Whole to order.

**Bill 42
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005**

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 42 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

3:50

Bill 41
Appropriation Act, 2005

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be able to join in the debate in Committee of the Whole for Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005. There were a couple of things I wanted to talk about at this stage. I do want to talk about some of the health provisions around smoking that would appear under Health and Wellness. I'd like to talk about some of the off-budget spending that is happening and what's being planned there. I also was very interested in the information that came to me from the Winspear fund, which I think is applicable to both the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports and the Ministry of Human Resources and Employment.

Let me start with the off-budget spending. Mr. Chairman, I've joked in the House that off-budget spending is sort of akin to off-track betting, but I really am concerned about what we're seeing here. Last year the budget was passed in the middle of May, and by the end of June there were huge amounts of money that were being rolled out that had not been contemplated in the budget. We thought: "Just a minute here. What the heck happened in the last six weeks that all of sudden they have these additional sums of money to be announcing? Why wasn't it in the budget a mere five weeks ago?" No answer from the government.

This time I don't even think we got the budget – well, we haven't completed debating the budget. We're talking about Committee of the Whole budget debate on the appropriation bill today. But for weeks we've been hearing the government muse out loud about all the possibilities for what they call off-budget spending, and I'm presuming what's happening there is that they're anticipating record surpluses rolling in and how they are going to divvy up the extra surplus that they get above and beyond the surpluses that are actually planned for in the budget. There are a number of problems around this. I have continued to express my concerns around management and planning processes that this government has.

Now, to be fair, they do have some good ones, and we are regarded across Canada and even in the U.S. as being ahead of the game on doing things like instituting performance measurements and tying business plans to that and to targets. We should be rightly proud of that. I maintain that we had a lot of good ideas that we never followed through on, and that whole accountability section is one of them in that we got the performance measurements, and then we really never went back and made sure that they were the right performance measurements, that they do what we need them to do, that they're outcome based, that they're measuring the information that truly is useful for us to make management decisions about, whether we keep doing what we're doing or change it.

So when I look at a budget that anticipates from the beginning and builds in that it's going to have a surplus, I have to ask questions because you say, "Shouldn't you be budgeting for a zero-based budget where all the money that you reasonably expect to come in,

you reasonably expect to spend or to put in a savings account of some kind if you want to be saving for something particularly special in the future, which is perfectly reasonable, a good idea in many cases?" But what we're getting here is a dependence on that surplus now and an inability to allow people to really deal with the amount of money that they have.

Here's what happens. The department is asked how much they need. The department says, "We need X amount of money." Then they come back, and the government says: "Well, you can't have X amount. We'll give you T amount, which is less than you wanted, and you'll have to make do with that and just figure out how to make do with it." What gets lost, usually, is the monitoring and enforcement of whatever that particular ministry is doing.

Then towards the end of the year they get that special phone call that says: gee, it looks like oil is at \$100 a barrel now, and you're going to get some more money to spend. Well, at that point, a couple of months from the end of the year, there's not much that department can do. They needed to know that they could have had another full-time staff person on for 12 months, not the last two or three months. They can't bring that person on now. Have them do what? Put in a year's worth of work in three months? It's impossible. So they just didn't get that project happening as they should have.

But now they've got the money. What are they going to do with it? That kind of budgeting and monetary planning, all it does is encourage that – what did someone call it? – March madness, where everybody goes: "We've got this money; we've got to spend it now. Okay. Let's go and spend it on promotional material, on this, that, and the next thing, and buy computers." Everybody does it, trying to spend it on sort of hard versions of things, computers and equipment and things, so that they can save that money and not spend it in next year's budget and could supposedly transfer the money over to do what they really want to do. It's frankly just a dumb way to budget stuff.

I wouldn't believe that this government could take this one step further, but in fact they have. So now we have this off-budget spending. Before we've even passed the budget, ministers are out there discussing with people how much money might be forthcoming off-budget. Well, why are we bothering to do the budget at all, then, if that's what this is really about? How do you have any kind of control over everybody out there now promising that they're going to try and get this extra money directed into whatever their project is? It's a ridiculous way to do things, but a lot of people over there are doing it. I don't think it's acceptable; it wouldn't work if I were in government.

An Hon. Member: That's why you're not.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Well, next time, my friends.

So that's the remarks on the off-budget spending. I find it ridiculous. More to that, you know: how much more is this government knowing right now it's going to spend that is not in that budget, is not being reviewed by the people of the province, and there's been no opportunity for them to comment on it? And what kind of announcements are we going to get in a month or five weeks from now? Really, that's about transparency and accountability. Let's not call it anything else, Mr. Chairman.

I had wanted to note under the Health and Wellness budget around the initiatives to decrease smoking in public places – and we had quite a good private member's bill that came forward earlier in this spring sitting, which was then watered down by a government amendment, which basically neutered it. Very disappointing because it was actually quite a strong bill about no smoking in public places and in workplaces.

The reason we got into this was to protect workers where they work so that they were not exposed to a known health hazard, which was second-hand smoke. That all got watered down. Now we'll only protect a certain kind of workers that work in certain kinds of places, and we won't protect other kinds of workers. No one has been able to justify for me why it's okay to discriminate against certain kinds of workers and expose them to health hazards. Nobody over there has been able to give me a good argument as to why they're doing that, but they're doing it.

I did want to acknowledge that there are some people that are trying. There's a fellow that has a tavern in Cold Lake, and he is volunteering to go nonsmoking in his tavern, which is in fact one of the special designated groups that got protected by the government in order to continue to expose their workers to health hazards. Those were drinking establishments, casinos, and bingo halls. So this fellow is taking the courageous step of saying: no, I want to protect my workers, and I want all my workers to be protected. He is going to take his tavern nonsmoking. Now, I wish I could remember his last name. It is in Cold Lake. His first name is Mark, I believe. I'd seen I think a newspaper article from maybe up in the local newspaper. I think he deserves credit and recognition in this Assembly for taking the step that the government was too scared to take themselves. I don't know who they thought they were protecting. It certainly wasn't the workers. This fellow, Mark, is protecting people, and he deserves the credit for doing that.

4:00

I'd like to go on and look at some of the issues that have been raised by the Winspear Foundation special fund. They did a report, which was released on October 25, 2004, *An Analysis of the Winspear Foundation Special Fund: 1997-2003*, prepared by Ann Goldblatt. The project team was Ann Goldblatt and Leanne MacMillan. Of course, everyone in here is no doubt familiar with the Winspears of Edmonton and all that they have brought to our city and, in fact, our province. Mrs. Harriet Winspear still lives in my constituency, I'm pleased to say.

There is a family foundation, and one of the programs inside of that foundation is this emergency fund. It is really set up for small grants of money to people that need it for emergency purposes. They wanted to look at who it was that was accessing this money. There had been some demand for it. The fund is to provide one-time gifts "for people who [are] working hard to help themselves, but whose social circumstances [result in] a need for financial assistance." These are often very immediate needs that government programs used to respond to or could respond to but aren't responding to right now. Either they're not responding, they can't respond fast enough, or they can't meet the requirements of what the person needs exactly. So people can apply to this Winspear fund, and indeed some of the social service agencies will refer people directly there for assistance.

Now, the analysis that was done was very interesting. It's indicating that 58 per cent of the fund allocations went to households with children, 48 per cent to single-parent family households, and 44 per cent to homes that were female led. They note that single-parent families led by women appear to be particularly vulnerable. Often there are children at risk here or children whose needs can't be met and not through the fault of a parent not trying really hard.

Information, in fact, was provided to the previous Minister of Human Resources and Employment in 2001 and in 2002, but this report that was, again, released in the fall of 2004 notes that even though Alberta's economy is prospering, emergency needs continue to grow. And what do they look at? They look at the rise in rents, in utility costs, increasing populations, increasing single-parent

families, and lack of affordable housing. One of the issues that the analysis raises in particular – and I know this will be of interest to the Minister of Health and Wellness and I hope to the Minister of Children's Services – is the very, very limited resources that are available to women and children that are leaving situations of violence and abuse. As we all know, they often have to leave on very short notice.

I remember that a woman in the States used to do a seminar. It had a pretty immediate effect on helping people to understand what it was like because she would have everyone in the seminar take off their shoes and leave them underneath the table and take out all their wallets and credit cards, even ID, and leave it all on the table. Then she would make everybody in the room get up and go to another room. So now they were in there without their shoes and without any identity, without any credit cards, without any money, without any car keys, without any house keys. They had nothing.

She would then say to them that, okay, this is what it's like for women and their children leaving abusive situations. You could be out on the street without your shoes, no house keys, no car keys, no ID, no nothing except for, if you're lucky, the clothes on your back, and you may be out there in your nightie. That's when you go, and you take off from there. So you don't have your toothbrush, you don't have the kids' toys, you don't have their favourite blankie, you don't have the book or the magazine that you were reading, and you don't have your clothes, as a woman. So a very tough situation to be in.

Many people know how frustrating it is when you lose your wallet or your wallet is stolen. Trying to get that ID back is darn difficult. Just imagine trying to do that as you are there with no shoes on, you know, literally, and trying to convince people that you now should be able to get ID to be able to carry on when you have no other way of proving who you are or where you've come from. You don't really want anybody to start going back to that old address and asking questions because, in fact, you're trying to hide from that person. You don't have your car to get around with anymore, so you're trying to do all this on a bus and go from office to office to office on the bus to get new ID.

This is one of the points I've raised in this House, others have raised in this House, and here is this special emergency fund, the Winspear fund, raising these issues as well. They're noting that they are seeing increasing numbers of requests for assistance from women who are fleeing domestic abuse situations.

We know how much this costs the system. We have finally figured out that abuse against women and children costs the system money. It does. It shows up in the department of health. It shows up in education. It shows up in human resources. It shows up in employment. It can show up in the corrections facilities. It can show up in the courts. It shows up in community services. It costs us a lot of money.

They are encouraging governments on all three levels to expand the relevant programs and to actively seek additional ways to work closely with the nonprofit sector to address these important needs. I just thought that was really interesting, that we would now end up with a philanthropic foundation coming back to the government and going: "Ah, excuse me. This is what we're seeing. We're noting something. We're out there on the front lines, and this is who is coming to us, decent hard-working people who shouldn't need to come to us for that kind of assistance." That programming really should be available through the government, and for reasons of narrow definitions and lack of funding and whatever other reasons the government has put in place, it's not available to them.

I've often talked about the social determinants of health, and I think one of the areas that most needs the government's immediate

attention is housing and housing on a number of different levels. We still need more shelter spaces. We live in a country where people die when they fall asleep outside in the winter. It's cruel. We need to be able to provide some kind of emergency shelter to everyone that needs it. So that's the, sort of, mat program, m-a-t, which is emergency shelters.

But mostly what we need is the transitional housing. There's short-term transitional, which is, you know, the three weeks to the three months, and then we need longer term transitional, which is the three months to the one year. If we're really trying to move people from one situation and get them into a life where they won't ever come back here again, then we need to give them that longer term support. It's cheaper for us to do that than to keep recycling them back into the system.

Who would be in that kind of situation? Well, you've just heard me talk about women and children leaving abusive situations, but it's also about people recovering from addictions. We've had so much discussion of crystal meth in here this spring session, mostly around youth. That was good, and I'm glad we did talk about it. But we also have older people that are addicted to it. Now, if you had someone that genuinely wanted to get off of that and get out of that addiction and create a new life for themselves, well, they too have also gotten rid of all of their ID, figuratively, and they're going to have to start over. How do they bridge from that unhealthy lifestyle that they've been in for who knows how many years? If it wasn't a drug addiction, maybe it was alcohol or gambling. How do they bridge from that unhealthy, bad lifestyle into the positive, new lifestyle that they need to get out of the system and stay out of the system forever? A big part of that is transitional housing.

4:10

Beyond that, we need what's called social housing or affordable housing, social housing being when the government is subsidizing part of it, affordable housing being when they're not. Basically, it's lower cost housing that people with lower and middle incomes can afford.

I hope that I get another opportunity to speak to this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Last year this government spent almost \$2 billion of Alberta taxpayers' money beyond what it had originally budgeted, which set a dangerous lack of fiscal planning and responsibility precedent. Having had 34 years of practice, Albertans expect more from this government's ability to do its mathematical homework. The ad hoc, snip and dip, autopilot approach of this government is no longer acceptable to the majority of Alberta voters. Albertans are looking for visionary, sustainable policies that protect and advance their well-being, both physical and economic.

Last fall's election demonstrated that 53 per cent of Albertans who voted were looking elsewhere for leadership. That's the leadership we're prepared to provide.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's interesting, this particular budget of \$26 billion and the government touting all the wonderful things that they're doing. It seems to me that what there's an attempt to do is to undo the mistakes of the past.

Clearly, in the balance of things, when we're talking about

deficits, we're talking about three deficits. There was a preoccupation in the mid-90s with the economic deficit. Yes, you have to worry about that. At the same time, you have to worry about the human deficit. At the same time, you have to worry about the infrastructure deficit and to try to find a balance between these things.

Now the government comes back after the election and says: "Aren't we wonderful? We're putting all this extra money into things like education, into human resources, into health care." The point that one should make, Mr. Chairman, is that we had to. There was no option because they'd fallen behind so far before then.

Mr. Chairman, the idea that everybody in Alberta – sure, we have a boom economy. We're fortunate to have oil and gas revenues here. Contrary to the feeling that runs around here, it wasn't even the minister of infrastructure that put the oil and gas in the ground.

Dr. Oberg: Yes, it was. Yes, it was.

Mr. Martin: Oh, I'm sorry. I've lost my head. It was him.

Anyhow, Mr. Chairman, the point is that even in a wealthy province we have people falling below and our education falling below the poverty line.

I just want to speak very briefly, Mr. Chairman, about a meeting that was held on Sunday here in Edmonton. The Greater Edmonton Alliance met. There were over a thousand people at the Shaw centre, and they met because they're finding problems in the greater Edmonton area. The so-called Alberta advantage: they're finding more and more people that aren't sharing in that Alberta advantage.

It's an organization of churches, both the Catholic church and the Protestant church, a number of unions, a number of other groups that represent various people that perhaps are not sharing in the Alberta advantage. If you listen to them – and these are church people and others that see what's going on – they have a lot of compelling stories about more and more people falling beneath the cracks.

Now, one of them had to do with housing, Mr. Chairman. We had people talk about that. Others had to do with fair labour laws. Another was a very compelling story that people would hear about a child that was on crystal meth, that we've had this discussion in the media. What they've done is form this Greater Edmonton Alliance so they can speak with a stronger voice for those people that sometimes can't speak for themselves. Their goal is to lobby all governments – civic, provincial, and federal – and I'm sure we're going to hear a lot more of them. The point that I make is that even with the budget that we talked about that needed to flow into education and health care and others, there are a lot of people, a growing number at least in the greater Edmonton area, that are not sharing in that Alberta advantage. We still have a lot of work to do, so we can't sit around and clap ourselves on the back and say that everything's wonderful here – the greatest economy in the world, the greatest this in the world, the greatest that in the world – because it's not relevant to a number of people.

The other part of the deficit. We've had to put some money into the human deficit. Not enough. Even AISH, if we look at the increases there – and we're glad that they're coming – we find out that even there, though, people aren't as well off as they were in 1993 in this rich province, the most vulnerable people. The seniors, many of them are not back to where they were in '93 even though there is some improvement. I guess we should be thankful whenever there's improvement. The point I want to make very clearly before this government congratulates itself on the extra money that they put in is that there are still a lot of people falling through the cracks in this so-called rich province, Mr. Chairman.

The other problem that we have and they're touting now is an

infrastructure budget that's finally coming forward. Well, again, we're glad that there is some money coming for Infrastructure and Transportation, Mr. Chairman, but in the meantime we're preoccupied with the economic deficit, and more and more people are falling through the cracks, and our educational system is in desperate need of money. We were told that it wasn't until just before the election and after the teachers' strike. Finally some money is coming back in. We've had crumbling buildings and bridges and roads throughout this province. We've stopped investing in our infrastructure deficit. Now we're playing catch-up a bit, but we've got a long way to go, especially in the school area, something that I know something about.

If you look at the schools in Edmonton – and I expect it's somewhat true in Calgary; I can't say – almost 50 per cent of our schools are 50 years of age or older now. There's a lot of maintenance that we haven't kept up with in those schools. So we have the case where structural money is going into maintenance, as the member was talking about. So we have a lot of problems to catch up with our deficit in terms of our infrastructure, Mr. Chairman.

For those people looking for the quick fix, the P3s, everywhere that it's been tried, the government may try to shift and say that this P3 is just wonderful, works so well. It's not a quick fix. It doesn't matter whether you owe them money and you do it in Henday for 30 years where you're going to pay \$32 million to these private developers. That still is a debt; you still have to pay for it. To think that that's a quick fix, that that's going to solve our infrastructure problems is ludicrous. That's the point that I'm trying to make.

Now, this budget is not the worst one I've seen come through this Assembly because they have reinvested at least to some degree in infrastructure, to some degree in education and health care and the things that people need. But we're playing catch-up, Mr. Chairman. That's a problem. So is this hit-and-miss idea of budgeting. You know, before an election or just after we'll put money in, and then all of a sudden we have a fiscal crisis, and away we go, and then we have to cut back. This yin-yang sort of budgeting doesn't work. It has to be sustainable, and it has to be over a period of years.

The only other thing I'd like to comment on, Mr. Chairman, is that looking into the future, yes, we are fortunate with our oil and gas revenues and the high price of oil and gas as a world commodity. We don't know what the future holds. One of the things that I believe Premier Lougheed did was have a vision that when that happened, we'd have a heritage trust fund that could be used – I think the term was “for a rainy day.”

Well, Mr. Chairman, it's just been sitting there. It's just been sitting there while all this wealth is coming in. It seems to me that we have to reinvent the dream of Premier Lougheed and start to put some money back in that trust fund for the future. We don't know how long this ride is going to go. I think that many people opposite think that this will go on forever. We should learn from the past that it's not going to go on forever.

4:20

Mr. Chairman, it's a balance, as I say. I've seen worse budgets come through this Legislature. This is catch up, but if the government, before they tire themselves patting themselves on the back, recognize that they created these problems – the fact is that there was not enough money for education in the past, there was not enough money in health care, and certainly our infrastructure has been allowed to fall apart in the last number of years. This to me is unacceptable in a wealthy society.

So we have to find that balance again. We don't have the economic deficit now, but we have to find that balance between what we should put in the trust fund, what should go into our people

services, and how we upgrade our infrastructure. This year's budget is interesting. It'll be interesting to see where this government goes in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, the background noise is getting a little higher, and I would ask that we keep it down to a minimum, please.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to speak about a number of decisions made during the session. First of all, I would like to talk about Bill 29, the AISH amendment. Since 1993 AISH recipients have lost 23 per cent of their income to inflation. This amendment means a 15 per cent increase, and recipients are going to have to wait till next year to get that whole amount. This still falls far short of inflation.

Our election position was to raise AISH to \$1,050 immediately. This would make up for the losses due to inflation over the past 12 years, and then AISH should be indexed to the cost of living using a market-basket measure. That would ensure that the severally handicapped would be able to meet their needs on this program. The AISH amendment is a positive step but a small step. There should be annual reviews and adjustments as needed to help these individuals live a quality life.

Secondly, I have questions related to Children's Services. First, looking at child care, why are we delaying signing an agreement that would bring \$70 million to Alberta? What are the choices this government keeps saying we must have? How does the federal program oppose those choices? We need money to support child care workers through higher wages, benefits, and help with training so that we can attract and keep workers. Seventy million dollars will help, and our children deserve this.

Looking at youth shelters, we need predictable, sustainable funding so that staff can put energy into offering programs and services. We have to get beyond the tyranny of one-year funding decisions.

Finally, we need to take a serious look at our Children's Services structure and the workloads of our front-line workers and the lack of the support that they need.

I'm pleased to see the additional funding for police in Alberta, but urban areas need more attention. Community policing is essential as a tool to prevent problems. We need to put money in planning and to response and prevention, not just reaction.

I would like to see a commitment to arts by this government. The provincial government contribution is shamefully low. The fine arts do two important things, both of which are hard to measure. They feed the soul, which we desperately need in an increasingly secular world, and they make us more creative. Even with all our advances in technology, we still and will always need creative minds.

Long-term care deserves a review, as indicated by the Auditor General. We need standards that are provincial and are regulated to remove the fears of so many in this province and give them some peace of mind in terms of the care of their loved ones.

I would like to take the opportunity now to add some concerns regarding the Education budget. I spoke earlier about the need to provide adequate funding for education infrastructure. I also talked about the need to change the methods used to allocate funds to senior high schools. My colleagues have talked about the unfunded liability of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund as a growing, intergenerational, unproductive debt. This is another issue that needs to be addressed seriously because it is the right thing to do.

Mr. R. Miller: It's going to be \$45 billion by the year 2025.

Mrs. Mather: Forty-five billion? Well, it's outrageous, and it's just unacceptable.

I'd like to look at some other areas, and the first is special needs. To ensure adequate programming for special-needs students, we need more funds. Amounts now allocated do not cover the cost of a full-time aide that some need. They do meet the school's cost to provide the programming ratios necessary to ensure that those with learning deficits can be brought up to speed, and they do not allow for the collaboration time and preparation time necessary to ensure teachers' ability to provide the highest level of assessment practices or to prepare material that will challenge students on higher order thinking skills. The special needs area includes the most disadvantaged, and it is not adequately funded.

Head Start early childhood programs should be strongly encouraged for families who need support to ensure that the next generation has an equal starting place when they hit kindergarten. We have seen six year olds in grade 1 who are already two years behind their peers before they even get out of the blocks. This can be prevented through participation in quality programs and result in ultimately saving dollars that are required now for remediation.

Another area that I'd like to mention is counsellors. We have lost trained counsellors along with librarians and speech therapists because the jobs were cut. University students who might have gone into these fields chose other careers in the hope that they'd have a job. Now we're saying that we need to find more counsellors, we need to find social workers, and we need to find speech therapists.

There needs to be a formula for student-counsellor ratio in place. With the limited resources of child welfare, or Children's Services, there are a lot of families and students that are falling through the cracks and who are not able to meet the demands in the school properly. I think something really tragic will have to happen before we look at this, which will be sad because it will mean that somebody is going to be hurt. The child welfare restructuring of programs is now making things harder for families to access health, and schools do not have the resources to help.

Thirdly, I'd like to just mention the role of the principal. Principals are teachers first. The relationship between teacher and principal is built upon trust, integrity, and moral purpose. The goals and outcomes are the same for teachers and principals: to improve student achievement. If you wish for collaboration, continued growth of professional learning communities, and positive interaction between teachers and unions and principals, then leave principals in the same bargaining unit.

In conclusion, I'd like to say that we need a plan for our surplus revenues. A plan with vision, a vision that embraces every Albertan and recognizes all the potentials that each one has.

Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: I'm glad to get this second opportunity to speak. I just wanted to finish off some of the points that were raised by this Winspear Foundation special fund report and analysis. Specifically, they were pointing out that social assistance and AISH rates and even minimum wage are not and have not kept pace with cost increases, and that really affects people's ability to pay their rent, their utilities, transportation, medication, food, child care, school supplies and fees, and adult learning, training, and fees.

So we have seen an increase in the AISH rates. We did not see an accompanying increase in the Alberta Works rates. At some point in time we're eventually going to see the promised increase in the minimum wage, but I'm not sure when that is. So even though we recognize and the government seems to have recognized that this

increase is needed, there's now very slow implementation of it. Even the AISH increase is implemented over time, and certainly the inclination has been that the minimum wage will be incremental as well.

4:30

A second point that this group is making is around rent and damage deposits, and we've heard that one before in connection with women fleeing abusive situations. It's just such a huge amount of money that you need to have up front because most places ask for the first month's rent plus an equivalent amount often for the damage deposit. So, you know, a \$600 rent, which isn't going to get you much, plus \$600 damage deposit: you're looking at \$1,200 up front. That's a lot of money to produce out of nowhere if you don't have any money or you're on social assistance in some way. There was special dispensation through social assistance at one point in recognition of women fleeing abusive situations, but you had to know about it and go through it and ask for it. Frankly, at this point I'm not sure if the program still exists.

What's being noted in this report is that when people can't pay their rent, of course, they get evicted, and often because they can't get that amount of money up front, they are homeless. That's particularly difficult if there are children with them. So they're suggesting that "people need access to a payment structure that could be spread over time," potentially some kind of a "rent bank," they term it, from which they could borrow money at a minimal interest and then repay it over a period of time. At least it would help them get into another accommodation.

I've already talked about access to affordable housing. We seem to have gone through the worst of what happened when both the electricity and the gas utilities increased at such a phenomenal rate and the huge effect that that had on people who are vulnerable and struggling and working low income. That problem is still out there although it's not being experienced anew now. They just have to deal with these quite large utility payments that weren't there before.

We find that particularly vulnerable are seniors and children, mostly because they're less able to cope with cold living accommodations. It's just a pretty miserable existence, and adults seem to be able to cope a bit better with it. But for kids and seniors it makes their lives quite miserable if they're in a place that isn't heated very well or they can't afford to keep the temperature up.

I'll make the argument again, as they do make it in this study, that telephones are not a frill. Especially for those families that have children, telephones are necessary for emergency services. They are absolutely tied to employment. So there you've got health and employment; it's necessary for those two things. Also for any seniors that are on those medic alerts, those work through the telephone line. You have to have a telephone to get it. Again that's related to health, but it's certainly not a frill for any of those. So we need to stop thinking of telephones as being an extra and start to look in all of the social programs at incorporating that cost and understanding that it's a necessity.

This analysis talks about bridge funding between programs. They talk about training fees for people, medical expenses and coverage, caring for children with disabilities and chronic illnesses. They single out the importance of child care as a need for single parents faced with a medical situation; for example, if we have a mom giving birth and she already has other kids, she needs child care for those other children. Or if she's receiving some kind of medical treatment, chemotherapy or dialysis or anything else in which you regularly need to be going into the hospital or going into a clinic for some kind of treatment, you've got to have your kids looked after. If you don't, then we call you an unfit mother and we take your children away and make them wards of the state.

Most people really want to keep their families together, and we supposedly want them to keep their families together, but we create situations that make it very difficult for them. This is an area where the government is not filling the gap here.

Another area which I've noticed for a long time is sponsorship breakdown, and those are absolutely heartbreaking. We need to strike a more fair balance because I don't think I'd find many people passing by on the street that would happily say: "Absolutely. Move here and bring all your relatives, and we'll put all of them on social assistance and pay for all of them." That's not what we expect. But where you do have a sponsorship breakdown – and it's not that frequent. I mean, for many people sponsoring their family is a point of great honour and even prestige. They take those commitments seriously, and they fulfill them. But sponsorships do breakdown, and when they do, we've got very hard and fast rules here.

I've had elderly couples whose children have walked away from sponsorships of them, and they could not get any assistance. They were specifically prohibited from getting any assistance. It was a very tough time because all I could do was send them back to friends and try and embarrass the adult children to try and come through with some kind of support for them. It was sickening that we would have people in our country that were in that kind of shape, and they didn't even have the wherewithal and resources to go back. They were just stuck here with no means of support and no access to programs. So we have a gap there as well.

The school fee situation. I often hear members of the government go: oh, well, if they just go and explain it to the principal, you know, that'll all be dealt with. That may not be possible. They might be from a community that doesn't easily interact with authority figures, which they would see a principal of a school as being, or there is a prohibition against asking for assistance. There are lots of reasons why people would be very reluctant to go and admit that. Aside from that, why are we charging school fees to people anyway, that we would be expecting people in strained financial situations to be coming up with that kind of money? And means testing is really unacceptable, I think.

I found this a very interesting report. I highly recommend it. A number of ministries need to be taking a look here. This is a respected foundation with very thoughtful people giving advice to it. They, in turn, have offered very thoughtful advice to the government. I was very interested to see that their advice is reflecting the advice that's coming out of the Social Planning Council. My experiences are reflecting what they're talking about. It's reflected in the social determinates of health. You're hearing it over and over and over again, yet I'm finding the government very resistant to moving on any of this.

I still feel it's worthwhile bringing it up and trying again. There are new ministers in different departments. Maybe they will hear me. Working on the Member for Edmonton-Centre's theory of 500 times and I get something out of the government, I'm willing to raise it again in the hopes of influencing them that way.

This is a very wealthy province, and we have money to invest. I think that if we want to look at the evidence – for example, ensuring that children are successful before they get into school – a dollar invested in a program that gets a kid into a successful position ready to start school on an even par with any of their colleagues saves us \$7 down the line.

I've never had enough money ahead to be able to invest in anything, but I'm sure others in this Assembly do. Boy, if you were told there's an investment opportunity where you gave your broker a thousand dollars and they would come back to you with \$7,000, you'd all be in there like flint. Why are we not doing that same thing when that investment is around children? A dollar invested in

a child, getting them up to speed and equivalent to their colleagues by age six, pays off with \$7 for us further down the line, either \$7 worth of productivity in tax paying or it costs us \$7 in corrections and health and education and social assistance programs and all of those other things.

I think sometimes the government's ideology trips them up as far as offering efficient programs and wise investments. Sometimes I feel that it's my job to get up and give you a bit of a shake and say: look at the evidence, and make the decisions based on that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4:40

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Before I launch into a number of comments on Bill 41, I would just like to acknowledge the loss and the trauma suffered by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul and his family and all the other families in the condominium fire the other day. A number of members of this Legislature were treated to a media day at the Edmonton firefighters' Poundmaker training centre on Friday. It certainly gave myself and those of us that were present a tremendous appreciation for the work done by not only the firefighters in Edmonton but across North America and around the world, I would imagine. I just wanted to acknowledge the fact that there has been a loss suffered by a member of this Assembly, and we're thinking of that member and hope that all is going well.

Mr. Chairman, having the opportunity to speak to Bill 41 in committee gives me a chance to raise a couple of ideas that I wasn't able to raise last night, when we spoke to this bill in second reading. They're not major issues. They're little things that wouldn't necessarily have involved an awful lot of expenditure on behalf of the various departments yet at the same time might well have had a very positive impact on the citizens of this province. They're coming to me through motions other than government motions. We're all cognizant of the fact that the spring sitting is very quickly winding down, and these motions are far down the list, and they're not likely to be debated. In fact, almost for sure they're not going to be debated. So it gave me pause to reflect on those motions and how they might have impacted all citizens of this province.

The first one that I'm going to address, Mr. Chairman, would have come under the education budget. Motion 544, which would have been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, would have urged the government to "consider strategies to increase the number of students who successfully complete the requirements for high school graduation." Certainly, throughout this spring sitting of the Legislature and throughout the budget debates there was an awful lot of discussion by the opposition as to the fact that in Alberta we have one of the lowest, or perhaps even the lowest, three-year graduation rate in the country. Given the tremendous wealth in this province and the fact that we trumpet the Alberta advantage, it's disturbing, indeed, to see that so many students are choosing for one reason or another not to finish their high school education.

I know that the hon. Education minister has added some funding to that department, and we're appreciative of that. I'm not aware of any particular strategy or any particular program that's designed to increase that three-year graduation rate. I really think that we're missing the boat if we don't particularly zero in on that issue and really concentrate an awful lot of effort and energy into improving the three-year graduation rate. In English as a Second Language, for example, 75 per cent drop out of high school, so only a 25 per cent completion rate. Again, those numbers are appalling, given the wealth in this province.

Another one that I'd like to highlight, Mr. Chairman, would have been Motion 560, which would have been brought forward by the Member for Red Deer-North. This one would have asked the government to "consider the advisability of implementing a \$6,000 annual tax exemption per child in a family as a means of lowering the tax burden for parents." Again, I've indicated in previous debate that, unfortunately, the budget really does not do an awful lot in the way of providing meaningful tax relief for Albertans, especially lower income Albertans. Obviously, just based on looking at that motion, I really don't know what the financial impact on the government would have been, but I suspect it wouldn't have been a major hit, as it were, and at the same time certainly would have provided some very much-needed relief for families with children and particularly, again, low-income families.

Now, here's one that I'm really passionate about. I see that the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky would have brought this one forward. It's Motion 570, which would have asked the government – and I believe this would have been under Community Development – "to review the feasibility and practicality of reinstating roadside provincial campsites in an effort to promote Alberta's natural landscapes as well as attract Canadian and international motoring travellers."

Well, Mr. Chairman, in my youth, growing up in a family that very much appreciated and enjoyed the outdoors and particularly Alberta's outdoors, I was fortunate enough to have parents who made it their mission to have the family out of Edmonton, out of the city and into the countryside, every weekend from the Easter weekend all the way through to the Thanksgiving weekend. We had one of the very first motorhomes on the road in Alberta. In fact, we still have pictures of it. It looked more like an apple crate. It was pretty square with only a few windows, but it had all of the amenities. My parents made a point of making sure that we travelled across the province every single weekend, as I said, between somewhere around the end of March right through to the middle of October.

Now, several years ago, of course, those roadside campgrounds were discontinued. Ostensibly it was, I think, both a budgetary consideration – there was, obviously, some nominal cost in terms of having roadside campgrounds – but also, Mr. Chairman, there was discussion of the fact that we wanted to promote the private campground industry and it was felt that the public roadside campgrounds were taking away from that. Unfortunately, it's been my observation over the years as someone who has tried to carry on the traditions that my family had developed – and I try to get my family out of the city and around the province to enjoy this wealth of nature that we have – that even the provincial parks are pretty much priced out of the range of most families. You're talking quite often in the area of \$25 to \$30 a night for a basic campground.

This has really made it almost unaffordable for many families again, especially the lower income families who at one time would have looked at camping opportunities and particularly the roadside campgrounds as a very reasonable and feasible alternative to an expensive holiday. The fact that that option is no longer there, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest is a shame because it really is taking away from the opportunity for parents and children to take full advantage of the opportunities that we have in this province in terms of tourism, getting around and seeing the various sights and enjoying nature at its best.

Certainly, there's been a lot of talk this afternoon about drugs and about police and about youth, and crystal meth has come up again in the debates this afternoon.

Ms Blakeman: Alcohol, gambling.

Mr. R. Miller: Alcohol and gambling.

Mr. Chairman, I often credit the fact that myself and my siblings turned out reasonably well to the fact that we had parents that made an effort to not only get us out of the city but to share with us the bounty of this province and expand our opportunities to recreate in this province. I think anything we can do to encourage other families to do the same and make it more likely that they will do the same is something that we should be looking at. So I would applaud the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for that motion. Unfortunately, we won't have the chance to debate it in this spring sitting, but hopefully it will come back at another point.

4:50

Mr. Chairman, going back to the Finance department, with Motion 584, which happens to have been a motion that is under the name of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, we would have asked the Legislature to consider improving "the quality of life for Albertans earning less than \$29,000 annually by reducing personal income tax rates from 10 per cent to 9 per cent." Again I think this would just simply have been a recognition of the fact that the flat tax is a regressive tax. It punishes low-income earners and low-income families unnecessarily, unduly, and unfairly, and I think it very much would have gone a long way toward improving the quality of life for some of those lower income earners if we had had a chance to debate that.

Another one that I'm quite passionate about and that I think would have been a very interesting debate because there are good arguments on both sides – I'm not sure if it would have been Finance or Community Development. Motion 588, a motion that was proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Manning, would have seen us debate the merits of providing "a tax credit to parents or guardians for out-of-pocket costs related to their children's organized, extra-curricular, physical, or cultural activities."

Mr. Chairman, again there's been a fair amount of discussion in the spring sitting about youth and the dangers that society presents to them and particularly crystal meth but certainly drugs in general and gambling and smoking. Here is what I would have thought would have been a great way to encourage more children to be kept busy. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie this afternoon in his member's statement referred to youth crime and the fact that we have to keep our children busy. Here would have been one way that we could have encouraged families to have their children more involved in extracurricular activities.

I remember that several years ago now I had a superintendent from the Edmonton Police Service speak to my Rotary club about youth crime in south Edmonton. He had two things to say, and they're both worth repeating. The first was that he said he could step inside any home in Edmonton that has children and within only a matter of seconds tell you whether or not those kids are going to be in trouble. His methodology was that if there were books present, that was a very good sign, and it was most likely that those kids would not be led astray. Just the simple fact that a family that reads leads to a healthy family situation.

His second point was: don't let the kids hang at the mall. Keep them busy, whether it be swimming or baseball or hockey or piano lessons or art lessons or a drama class or a debate club. You name it, Mr. Chairman. The idea was to do everything possible to keep the children busy and not allow them to hang at the mall, not give them time to fall into the wrong crowd. It certainly requires a little more effort and participation on behalf of the parents to do that, and

it's not always possible for parents and certainly not always financially possible for parents to have their children involved in these extracurricular activities.

I think that would have been an interesting debate. Some people have suggested that by doing so you're really only giving an advantage to those parents that can already afford to put their children in extracurricular activities. So there is some argument on the other side of that debate, but again I think anything we can do to provide our children with opportunities to help them grow into well-rounded adults and thereby provide the community with contributing members and keep crime rates down and all of those things, Mr. Chairman, would have been a good thing, and I'm sorry to see that we're not going to have the opportunity to debate that particular motion.

I guess the last thing I would like to mention is the health care premium tax. I didn't mention it in my comments last night, and it would be wrong for me not to since it was obviously a big part of the Liberal opposition's campaign during the last election in the fall of 2004. This is something that would not really have cost an awful lot of money. In fact, it really wouldn't have cost any money at all because we all know, Mr. Chairman, that we have to pay for health care one way or the other, and the majority of that money right now is coming out of general revenue, out of our taxes anyway.

But the health care premium tax as it's now levied is definitely a burden on families, some \$1,000, \$1,200 – I can't remember what the number is – \$68 times 12, so it's well over \$1,000 per family per year. In some cases small business picks up that cost on behalf of the family. So it's not only a cost of some note to families but to small businesses as well. I think we could have given serious consideration to removing that tax and allowing the money to come entirely out of our taxes the way that many other provinces do. It would've ultimately, I think, been fairer, as I suggested, to both lower income families, lower income individual wage earners, and also small businesses.

So those would be my comments for this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, on Bill 41, and I look forward to further debate. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to get up and make some comments on this particular section of the debate. First of all, I'd like to comment on the hospital care in St. Albert, especially for people dying under duress. I've had occasion in the last two weeks to be in the hospital in St. Albert quite a bit. I must compliment the nursing staff and doctors at our hospital in St. Albert and clearly say to the House, being a member of that constituency, how proud I am to have that hospital and how proud I am to know the dedicated staff of nurses, support staff, and doctors in that particular hospital.

I stand up also, Mr. Chair, with a concern. This morning I was called to have breakfast with a reporter. One of the ladies that I met during the campaign in St. Albert, her daughter was found in a drug house over the weekend. She has taken a downhill slide in her problem with drugs.

I leave this session somewhat – afraid would be the word because I'm not sure what we are going to do about this very serious crystal meth problem we have in my constituency. I'm concerned in the sense of the adequacy of AADAC to deliver a program. In my particular constituency we have very good prevention programs under the FCSS banner and also intervention programs. But I am concerned that we don't have an action plan for the treatment of our kids or people that come across this deadly drug, and that concerns

me greatly. By an action plan I mean adequate treatment, lodging, and support for these kinds of situations.

Also, I just realized today that the advocate's report came out. I didn't get a chance to look at it, but I would hope that the children's advocate is looking at this particular problem for delivery of service to children on drugs. I think this is very, very important.

I hope also that there is some movement to enhance, again, the DARE program at the elementary grade 6 level. I hope that people like Constable Moulds in St. Albert are recognized for their good work, and I hope the program is looked at in terms of looking at a new innovation in the curriculum to look at this particular plague that we have right now.

5:00

The other thing I'd like to talk about just before I sit down is our seniors in St. Albert. We have a tax base there that's very high and very difficult on seniors, and seniors are having difficulty with the whole business of utility rates. Lack of affordable housing for them is a major concern.

When I was out visiting at a constituency in the rural parts of Alberta last night, it was brought to me about the need for seniors' accommodation, where people in these accommodations and significant others that support them have access to an ombudsman type of function, where they can bring their concerns and have them addressed.

Ms Blakeman: Like the Liberals proposed.

Mr. Flaherty: Well, exactly. I think this is a big problem. I think this is very, very important, that we have that access to an ombudsman type of function.

I couldn't believe what I heard last night. In the home that we were talking about, one of the doors had fallen on one of the clients in the home and damaged the person, so as a result of that all the doors in this particular new institution were removed. Now people are having to utilize facilities, to go to the washroom, and their dignity is not respected. I am having a difficult time believing this, but I was told this is going on. So I would hope that there is some measure to accommodate an ongoing, 24-hour type of inspection.

Also, I believe that we've talked about whistle-blower legislation in the House, and I think it would behoove us to look at this because I think there are staff that have concerns about this kind of thing, would like to come forth and be able to talk about it. I think we have to make some accommodation for that.

Mr. Chairman, I'll sit down with that and close off. Thank you very much.

[The clauses of Bill 41 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report Bill 42, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, and Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 42 and Bill 41.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour and in light of the state of the Order Paper I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 5:03 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, May 18, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/05/18
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome.

Let us pray. Let us keep ever mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province, and in that work let us find strength and wisdom. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a special group of Alberta's postsecondary students touring the Legislature today. The members of the group are students from NAIT, Mount Royal College, and Grant MacEwan College. They are currently getting some short-term work experience in the Alberta public service in order to complete the practicum portion of their studies. I would ask them to stand as I introduce them: Sherri Bishop, Robin Boschman, Leung Lee, Jody Lucius, Marlene Moreira, Darcy Whiteside, Lisa Nisbet, Trevor Gemmell, and Jenna Stuckey. I would ask all of the members of the Assembly to give these students a very warm welcome to our Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a true artist, Mr. Jeremy Chugg. Mr. Chugg along with his co-writers at Brainstorm, a Calgary-based company, have just won a prestigious award for creating an awareness video for Alberta SuperNet. The *Supernet* video was recognized by the Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association with a 2005 Alberta film and television award for best scriptwriter. The video was also nominated for best motivational video and for best host. Mr. Chugg co-wrote the script with Barry Chugg and Kerrie Penney. Congratulations, Jeremy, for winning the recognition of your industry peers and of this House. I would ask you now to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if my guests have made it here yet, but if they have – and they have indeed. I'd very much like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Roger Pullishy and Mrs. Sonia Pullishy, very good friends of mine for many years. Along with them are Mrs. Rika Bok, Mrs. Murkje Davidson, Mrs. Heather Gordon, Jordan Labossiere, age nine, Joshua Labossiere, age six, as well as their special guest from Meppel, Holland, Mrs. Ellen Ijben. I would ask them to please rise and receive the very, very warm welcome of this House. Thank you so much for joining us today.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't see my guests in the gallery that's visible to me, so I'm assuming that they're in the members' gallery: two constituents, Tom and Carrie Courtney, from

Linden, Alberta. They are accompanied today by their grandson Richard Westlund, who is the executive assistant of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, and he's also accompanied by his wife, Jamie, and their latest addition to the family, Aaron Westlund. So if they're available, would they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of very experienced teenagers. They are, in fact, a seniors group from the Devon Alliance Church. Although the Alliance Church is located in my constituency, a lot of these members are also representatives of the members for Drayton Valley-Calmar as well as Stony Plain. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a good friend and colleague of mine from the department of political science at the University of Calgary, Dr. Keith Archer. Dr. Archer is one of Canada's leading experts on political parties and elections and has written on Alberta political parties as well as national political parties. He's accompanied by his son Justin, who once had the misfortune to take a course from me. I'd like them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two new additions to the caucus staff. They've been with us a couple of weeks to a couple of months.

First, I'd like to introduce Carmen Remenda. She has joined our team as an administrative assistant. It's her voice you hear when you first call in to the Liberal caucus office. She moved to Alberta – making the right choice, of course – in 1997 from Saskatchewan and now lives in Sherwood Park. Before joining our team, Carmen worked closely assisting academics and students in an administrative capacity at the University of Regina and more recently at the University of Alberta. We are most honoured to have her join the Liberal caucus. I would ask her to rise.

I would also ask Thomas Lore to rise. Thomas is a lifelong Edmontonian who has an English degree from the University of Alberta and is about to receive his public relations diploma from Grant MacEwan College. He has joined the Liberal caucus as a communications intern and is with us until the end of June.

Would you please both rise and accept the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a single introduction today. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two women who have taken a strong position on the need for healing and reconciliation in Canada between families and communities. These two women, Maggie Hodgson and Yi Yi Datar, have pioneered in Canada the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation, in Edmonton as the first location – this is the

second annual – on May 26 at Winston Churchill Square between 11:30 and 1:00 p.m. This will happen each year in Edmonton and, hopefully, spread across the country. They're here to highlight the need to reach across the divide of race, colour, religion, and ethnicity. I would ask them both to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature two classes from NorQuest College west, which is in my constituency of Edmonton-Glenora. These two classes are studying English as a Second Language. Their teachers are Thu Vu and Debbie Weimann. Just to give you an idea of the variety of people in this class, they're from countries like China, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kurdistan, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Colombia. We welcome them to Canada and to this great province of Alberta. I'd invite them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly five guests seated in the public gallery. They are Joan and Doug Miller, Samantha Stasiuk, Katie Hayes, and Lenora Murphy, all of whom reside in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Lenora Murphy and Katie Hayes will be representing Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood at the Royal dinner and reception. Ms Murphy has retired from her job as secretary at Glenrose hospital and now enjoys spending time with her two grandchildren. Katie Hayes is the graduating class president at Eastglen high school.

1:40

I'm honoured that Doug Miller and Samantha Stasiuk will be my guests for the Royal Address to the Chamber. Doug, who is accompanied by his wife, Joan, is retired from the navy. On May 26 the Millers will be celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary. They're active members of the Highlands United Church and are extremely proud of their six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Samantha Stasiuk also attends Eastglen high school, where she is the valedictorian for her graduating class.

I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've got two introductions today. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly Karen Stone and Faye L'Hirondelle. Karen and Faye have been here since this morning to meet with the press to express their serious concerns about private vocational colleges. Faye currently works for Planet Organic, and Karen is employed by Stencil Systems, a decorative concrete company. Karen is also a proud mother of three children and is visiting the Legislature for the first time. These guests are seated in the public gallery. I will now ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my second introduction. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the House Samantha Leung, an honours student at Concordia high school.

Samantha will be applying for the page program in this Assembly next year. Samantha is seated in the public gallery, right in the front row. I'll ask her to please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very delighted today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two young people seated in the public gallery. They are Teresa Voss and Stephen Taylor. They're here today to express their concerns about private vocational colleges. Stephen is studying to complete his general education diploma, and Teresa will begin her mechanics apprenticeship in the next two weeks. Both Stephen and Teresa are visiting for the very first time. I would ask that they now rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. My first is with reference to Special Olympics Edmonton. Special Olympics Edmonton is a local nonprofit organization that provides sport and recreation opportunities to Albertans with intellectual disabilities. Currently there are more than 300 volunteers supporting 500 local athletes participating in a variety of sports such as bowling, track and field, floor hockey, figure skating, and skiing, to mention a few. On April 23 this organization with the support of the good folks at Capital City Savings held its annual Bowl for Special Olympics fundraiser at the Bonnie Doon Bowling Lanes. More than 400 bowlers threw strikes, including our very own Education minister. The event was successful, raising over \$85,000.

Mr. Speaker, these events don't just happen. They require organizers. We have with us today four very hard-working, dedicated volunteers and organizers with this very special project. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the four individuals who were instrumental in the success of this year's Capital City Savings Bowl for Special Olympics.

Mr. David Armstrong, president of River City Financial Services, has been involved with Special Olympics Edmonton for many years, has served virtually in every capacity they have. This year he served as a member of the organizing committee, and his company was a silver sponsor for the event.

Ms Jacqueline Broverman, community investment manager for Capital City Savings, also served as a member of the organizing committee and was instrumental in ensuring that the event had everything it needed to succeed, including promotional material, a call centre, and 24 bowling teams from Capital City Savings outlets.

Ms Louise Suru, general manager for Special Olympics Edmonton, has been with the organization for 25 years now, mostly serving in a volunteer capacity, and she's truly the heart and soul of this wonderful organization.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lenny Andrichuk, who was both the chairman and the driving force behind this year's highly successful event. He's a dedicated and committed individual who, in addition to his role as chair, finds time to volunteer in a number of other capacities, including as a full-time track and field coach with Special Olympics.

I'd ask these four to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome and special thanks of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two very important people in my life this

summer from my Edmonton-Whitemud constituency office: Cindy Ho, who runs the constituency office year-round and has been doing so since 1997, and Bryan Lo, who is working in the office this summer as a STEP student. Bryan has just completed his second year at The King's University College. Together Cindy and Bryan look after the many wonderful constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud. They're here today in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister has now been sent a host of information from a wide range of credible sources raising concerns about enforcement irregularities at the Alberta Securities Commission. Two companies have filed legal action that ASC enforcement practices were biased, and more are almost certain to come. My questions are to the Finance minister. Given all the evidence, can the minister explain her position that there is no evidence of enforcement problems at the ASC?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we've discussed this issue a number of times over the last weeks in this Legislature, but I will recount again for the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that, indeed, when this was raised with me initially, I took immediate action. I wrote to the commission on January 12 and told them that I'd had some concerns raised and asked them to investigate.

They promptly set that in motion and, in fact, had an outside person by the name of Perry Mack do a thorough investigation, which included two reports: one, a report from the people who had complaints, and the second report, the response from the people who had some allegations made. Mr. Speaker, that is the basis on which I have said in this Legislature that the finding of that report was that the enforcement and regulatory portion of ASC was being handled consistently, even-handedly, and fairly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that government MLAs can nominate candidates to be ASC commissioners and at the same time can be officers in companies trading under the ASC, will the minister admit that this puts government MLAs in a conflict of interest?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, let me make one thing very clear. Nominations can be received, yes, from MLAs of this Legislature.

Mr. MacDonald: What about me?

Mrs. McClellan: Absolutely, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. If you have a person that you wish to nominate, at an appropriate time we would most welcome that nomination.

Secondly, we receive nominations, Mr. Speaker, from the commission themselves. Thirdly, we receive nominations from the financial community and interested parties. If there is any concern on conflict of interest, the Ethics Commissioner will promptly review that and make his determination.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've actually consulted the Ethics Commissioner's office.

To the same minister: will the minister do the right thing and immediately and decisively end the practice of government MLAs nominating candidates to serve as ASC commissioners?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there are 83 persons in this Legislature that are elected by the citizens of this province. I have the deepest respect for their knowledge of people and possible applicants for many areas. I will not do that. I will not refuse a nomination from any opposition party in this Legislature or from the government. What the hon. member should really be more interested in is how all of those nominations are vetted and approved by external and internal persons. What we want is the best people with the best credentials. I believe that we are achieving that.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

1:50

Wild Rose Foundation Grants

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've stated before in this House, the Wild Rose Foundation is an important asset to Alberta, and we need to safeguard its integrity. The Auditor General's investigation into the Applewood community association and how it used its Wild Rose grant is, in fact, a good first start, but it may not answer all the questions that this issue has raised. My questions are to the Minister of Community Development. Can that minister tell us if any other international projects supported by the Wild Rose Foundation operate without CIDA's assurance of accountability?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, on previous occasions the Leader of the Opposition has suggested that there has been some disconnect or somehow an inconsistency with respect to what I've said as it relates to the involvement of CIDA, the national foreign aid agency. I've indicated to him and for the record that there have been occasions where we've asked CIDA, but as a matter of policy we do not ask CIDA to review every single project that we do in foreign jurisdictions. They are involved from time to time but not invariably so, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. My questions are to the same minister. In the case of the Applewood community association will the minister ask the Auditor General to examine whether political interference played any role in this case?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I've requested that the Auditor General examine these matters for two occasions. One is a grant that was given to Applewood in the year 2001 and, secondly, with respect to a grant that was given in 2004. I further asked CIDA to look into the project in Vietnam to be assured that, in fact, the work was done. The Auditor General has not indicated to me exactly what the scope of his review is, but I'm certain that, as is his practice, it will be complete. So I've not given him directions specifically on this point, but as we know, the Auditor General does complete his work in a complete manner.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the same minister: in order to end any questions of political interference and to protect the integrity of the Wild Rose Foundation, will the minister take steps to establish

a genuinely arm's-length relationship between MLAs and the Wild Rose Foundation?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is asking for something that seems to be somewhat unreasonable because, of course, he acknowledges himself that there is good work that is being done by the Wild Rose Foundation and that it is a valuable asset to the province of Alberta. In fact, members of the opposition have from time to time come forward and said: look, we think that there is a project that is meritorious of consideration by Wild Rose. There is nothing wrong with this, whether members of the government side or the opposition side suggest that there are meritorious projects that should be considered. I think the important part is that there be a transparent process for decision-making after those meritorious projects have been brought to the attention of Wild Rose by members of the opposition or members of government.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Child and Youth Advocate

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Receiving reports from this Legislature in a timely fashion is important not only to the opposition so they can hold the government to account but to all Albertans so they can be informed of the actions of government. It is not acceptable that Children's Services delivered the report from the children's advocate two years late. To the Minister of Children's Services. Given that staff and funding to the children's advocate's office have been cut, is this the reason the report was so late?

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you very much for that question. I can tell you that, yes, I received the advocate's report late, and the reason from the advocate is a number of factors. One of the contributing factors is the advocate's priorities. The advocate's priorities were the youth and children in this province and not so much writing a report. I can tell you that though I tabled the report yesterday, which is two years old, we have moved on every recommendation through that report.

In regard to the budget I think the hon. member should go to the budget this year. We've increased the budget from \$3.8 million to \$5.3 million this year, and over the next two years it will be increased by \$7.7 million, which is a hundred per cent increase in his budget.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the children's advocate admits, "We are not able to undertake the work that would be necessary to say conclusively that all young people receiving services have the same experience," will this ministry fund the children's advocate for the protection of Alberta's children now so that it can ensure that all children under child welfare services are receiving the same level of care?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the previous question I just said that the budget was \$3.8 million, that now it's \$5.3 million and over the next two years an increase of a hundred per cent to the advocate's budget.

I can tell the hon. member from across the way, though, that what we have done in this particular ministry under youth in transition is phenomenal. The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, who is the chair of the Youth Secretariat, and I have spent the last two days at

the Children's Forum. I think we have to be exceptionally proud of the children and youth in this province that we are helping under that program. It is incredible what they have been doing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it has been 15 years since the children's advocate first recommended better plans for permanency planning and we still have children falling through the system cracks, when will the ministry get the people and funding needed to protect and give a future to Alberta's most needy children?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, in a real world everything would be perfect. The unfortunate thing is that we are going to have children in this province that fall through the cracks. I can tell you, though, that the number one priority of the social workers that work in this province is the children and youth in this province. This government has worked very hard on trying to deal with the children that, as the hon. member says, have been falling through the cracks.

We have the Children's Forum still going on at Edmonton Northlands. I would love for her to take a hike over there and meet some of the children that we have helped. We were at a function last night, the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul and I, with probably about 200 high-needs youth that have come into the youth in transition program. These children have done wonderful things in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Government Accountability

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Following the last provincial election and the loss of a dozen seats this Tory government tried to appear humble, promising to be more accountable and more transparent. Instead, the government has quickly reverted to its old ways, refusing to be accountable for the long-term care mess or even answering legitimate questions about a questionable land deal. It's the same old arrogant and secretive government we saw before the election. My first question is to the Deputy Premier. Why is the government failing to be accountable by its refusal to release any details of a real estate deal involving hundreds of acres of prime real estate in Fort McMurray sold in a cozy, private deal to a Tory-friendly developer?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, this government has put into process under the Premier's leadership the most open and accountable governing body that you will find in this country, whether it's through completely transparent, consolidated financial accounts or through providing information. However, the minister very clearly said yesterday that upon reviewing this matter, under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act there are certain things that she cannot release.

I know that the hon. member opposite believes very much in that act, and I believe his caucus supported having a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. An act that was passed in this Legislature is not an act of convenience. It is an act that protects the privacy of every person in every situation under that legislation.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, why is the government failing to be accountable to whistle-blowers like the former director of administrative services at the Alberta Securities Commission, who got fired when he came forward and exposed wrongdoing and corruption?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I cannot discuss the particular incident that the member is talking about, but as I have said consistently in this Legislature and believe wholeheartedly, if any employee has a concern on a dismissal, there are steps that that employee has available to them. It's most appropriate that any employee, whether it is of the public service or the Alberta Securities Commission in this case, has the opportunity to take those steps.

2:00

Mr. Mason: There's a pattern emerging, Mr. Speaker.

Why is the government failing to be accountable to citizens like Marie Geddes, who was forced to go on a hunger strike to draw attention to the government's appalling neglect of seniors in long-term care?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I think, first of all, I find the question a bit distasteful in using an unfortunate passing of a person in this manner.

The budget that we have just concluded debate on in this Legislature included increased staffing for long-term care. The ministers that are responsible for long-term care, both the minister of health and the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, have indicated that they take all of the Auditor General's recommendations very seriously and intend to act on them. I don't think that that's lack of accountability. In fact, I would say quite the opposite.

I do want to make this point, Mr. Speaker, though. We want to ensure that everybody understands that when we have this discussion, it is about caring about long-term care members and not a criticism of the wonderful staff who do work in those facilities. I've had the opportunity to visit five of those in the last two weeks. Without question and without exception every family member that was there when I presented centenarian medals talked about the wonderful care and caring that exists in our long-term care facilities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Government Efficiency

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are independent, fiscal conservatives who know that the best government is local government and that smaller government is more efficient. In 1992 our Premier said: this government is going to live within its means; that means streamlining our operations, rationalizing and consolidating our government services. Given this government's budget plan to hire 1,023 more bureaucrats this year alone, we have to ask what has happened to this government's fiscal prudence of streamlining and amalgamation of government operations. To the deputy minister: will this government put a freeze on the expansion of hiring 1,023 more bureaucrats and, if it is compelled to hire anyone, hire 1,023 seniors' caregivers?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that was addressed to me. As I just indicated, we had 24 days of budget debate, I think very good debate, some of the best budget debate that I have experienced in this House. The questions were good. I think the attempts to answer were as complete and clear as they could be. I do know that in the estimates of the Ministry of Finance questions were asked on the additional human resource people that we had hired, and I think that the member opposite had that opportunity in every debate.

The province of Alberta is a growing, vibrant province. The population is growing. The services required by that population are growing. Mr. Speaker, we do have a streamlined government

offering services. It's a matter of pride to us that when persons do require government services, they don't stand in a long waiting line.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Deputy Premier: are the hon. ministers and their deputies incapable of streamlining and restructuring their own departments?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we have an incredible talent pool in this caucus and certainly in the ministers that lead these departments. I can assure the hon. member that they are very capable. The most thorough review of all government programs has occurred in this government, and a number of changes have been made. However, I've also said that in the next business planning process, ministers will again be examining all of their departments. If there are things they are doing that they feel could be better done by someone else, that will be raised. If there are areas of their portfolio that they feel would better respond to Albertans by being in another ministry, they will make that recommendation, and indeed the Minister of Restructuring and Government Services will review that.

Mr. Hinman: Albertans will thank you for doing that.

To the Deputy Premier again: will this government act now, as it did with the botched ambulance service, and save millions of Albertans' tax dollars by scrapping the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, an odd line of questioning. It must be late in the session. The first two questions were about streamlining government, efficiency in government, and examining government departments to ensure that they are most efficient. Then to ask to have the very ministry that has charge of doing that job to be scrapped is a bit odd.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Tracking and Tracing System for Alberta Beef

Ms. Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many members in the Assembly know, this Friday will mark the second anniversary of the discovery of BSE in North America, an event that has caused unparalleled and unforeseen changes to our cattle industry. Alberta led the country in developing innovative solutions to that crisis, solutions developed in conjunction with industry that have meant we still have a viable cattle industry. However, we still have a ways to go. Markets that were once very lucrative, such as Japan, remain closed. I continue to hear from my constituents that there is an easy answer to this problem: if we test everything for BSE, previously closed markets will open immediately. All my questions are to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. If the solutions are so simple, Minister, why haven't we begun to test everything for BSE to regain market access?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the solution isn't that simple. I have yet to see any foreign trade agreements that would tell me that if we tested all of our beef for BSE, we would be allowed to export products into that country. The reason for that is very, very straightforward. Testing for BSE isn't about food safety, and it never has been.

The safety of our beef is really determined by the removal of the specified risk materials, which we are doing, not by testing all slaughter cattle. In fact, other jurisdictions, like Japan, as the hon. member mentioned, are moving away from testing all of their slaughter cattle, even within their own countries. The Japanese are moving towards allowing beef from cattle of an age less than 21 months without testing. In the end, Mr. Speaker, testing every steer or heifer slaughtered in Alberta does little to reassure our international trading partners that our beef is safe, but perhaps it does provide good coffee shop talk.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we don't support testing all animals, could the minister inform the Assembly what we are doing to help our industry access other markets?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to work with our industry on a number of fronts, all with the aim of re-establishing our presence in those international marketplaces. In fact, today we are announcing that Alberta will be moving forward with age verification of all young cattle slaughtered in Alberta.

With the Speaker's leniency, I'd like to table a press release which I'll be quoting from. The move will mean that Alberta producers will have a definitive competitive advantage over other jurisdictions. By improving our traceability and having a slaughter herd with a verifiable age, we can have the possibility of re-establishing a presence in some very exciting markets, Mr. Speaker, like Japan. We'll be working with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, and we are "targeting mandatory age verification for all young cattle slaughtered in Alberta . . . as of April 1, 2007." That is going to have significant benefits to our producers because we will be the first.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Producers will be spending a considerable amount of time to compile this information, Minister. Are they going to get anything in return for that?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a very good question because we don't want to add more costs to our producers without adding value. This program is going to have some significant benefits to our producers no matter what happens with the U.S. border. Not only will they have the potential for re-entry into those markets which I talked about, but we're also working with the industry to develop a potential carcass quality feedback program. That would allow the feedlot owners, backgrounders, cow-calf producers to gain a better understanding of what kind of production methods are going to be beneficial to them, which results in the best quality of beef. That improves the bottom lines of those producers and the cattle industry as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

We're also going to be working alongside the industry on an information and awareness campaign so that producers will know exactly what will be required of them and what they will be getting in return.

The Speaker: And the hon. minister will table the appropriate document at the appropriate time.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

2:10 Lubicon Band Land Claim

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unresolved land claims affect all Albertans. Companies can't rely on leases and permits issued by the provincial government as disputed territory is not owned by the province. Blockades, unrest, and the loss of important cultures are unavoidable due to this government's unwillingness to tackle tough issues, particularly the continuing tragedy of the Lubicon nation. My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Given that this government has had over 50 years to help negotiate a land claim settlement with the Lubicons and that the government's own consultation process is little more than window dressing, why has this government not been more vocal in publicly urging the federal government to negotiate a settlement with the Lubicon nation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The matter of the Lubicon is within my ministry, so I will address this question. As you know, the federal government is principally responsible for the negotiations with respect to First Nation land claims, and in this particular case that is true also. The federal government last had negotiations in this matter some 18 months ago. The provincial government has always indicated that we are prepared to be at the table if asked. We were at the table at that time. The fact of the matter is that the negotiations reached an impasse, and that is why there has not been any negotiation for some time.

Mr. Tougas: Well, back to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: given that once Lubicon land is transferred back to the federal government at the resolution of the outstanding land claim, what is being done to ensure that royalties collected by this government from subsurface extraction are available to the Lubicon nation?

Mr. Stevens: What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this matter is that there have been certain parameters with respect to the negotiations that have been established subject to confirmation; for example, the claim of the Lubicon is for a band of some 400 and some odd persons, and as such a potential land claim based on the claim of the Lubicon has been tentatively set aside. That land has been identified. With respect to that particular land, as I understand it, there have been no transactions of any nature whatsoever for some period of time. That particular land that is potentially part of a settlement, based on discussions to this point in time, has been set aside and has been recognized as the potential land for the purposes.

Mr. Tougas: My final supplementary is definitely to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Will the minister explain to the Lubicon nation why her department failed to consult the band about development occurring at Sawm Lake?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I think that the opposition have to understand that I will be standing and addressing Lubicon matters because of a very clear potential conflict. That very clear potential conflict, as I understand it, is that the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is a potential claimant

in this claim; in other words, she may well be qualified as a Lubicon claimant. Now, whether that is true or not, I don't know, but I know it is a potential. As such, I am going to be addressing this matter because she cannot.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Cornea Transplants

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A Whitecourt constituent contacted me last weekend, and he's very frustrated by Alberta's procedure for cornea donations, and you can't blame him. The Mayerthorpe man is awaiting his fourth cornea transplant. The wait for cornea transplants seems to be long and growing in this province. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Could the minister please tell us what this government is doing to address this issue of long wait times?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you. In the first instance, Mr. Speaker, sometimes it's particularly difficult to get the right match, so there always is a dependency by the ophthalmologist on the right match. There's a particularly concentrated effort in Calgary and Edmonton because these are the places where some six ophthalmologists perform about 250 cornea transplants every year. So while we're working with all authorities, we primarily urge organ donors to make sure that they inform their family physicians, that they inform their family, that they sign their cards, and that we get the network out through the physicians' offices, through the regional health authorities at this time.

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister. The minister just talked about the registry process. Can she tell us if other provinces have a registry for transplants?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the only province to this date that's had a registry is British Columbia. Interestingly enough, they found that when they put this registry in place for organ donations, the numbers of people that offered their organs for transplant actually decreased because they were concerned about having, I gather, the paperwork or the bureaucracy of a registry. At this time the most efficient way is to make sure that everybody signs their donor card and lets people in their family as well as their physician know that that's what their preference is.

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: will the electronic health record help reduce wait times, and will this electronic system work as a new registry for donors?

Ms Evans: We believe it will on both counts. We believe it will help us streamline the capacity of people to receive transplants as well as to alert people that there is an organ available for transplant. Sometimes those organ donors are not caught. The electronic record, once every person in Alberta has that record, will help. For those people out there who are seeking transplants, I think we just have to step up our efforts to make sure that those transplants and those organ donation opportunities are given every opportunity to make that happen.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Parks and Protected Areas

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This long weekend thousands of Alberta families will be heading out on substandard highways in search of safe recreational opportunities. This government has stated that it wants to keep our provincial parks and protected areas, which account for only 4 per cent of Alberta's land usage, safe and enjoyable for visitors. However, recently the Ghost-Waiparous access management plan was released, which offers little protection for families but almost unlimited access for high-intensity off-highway vehicles. My questions are all to the Minister of Community Development. When will more conservation officers be hired and offices reopened to enforce rules in our provincial parks and protected areas?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that we have significantly increased our budget for parks in the province of Alberta and that we are restoring these areas to the kind of condition that they ought to be in.

With respect to enforcement, Mr. Speaker, by and large in our provincial parks and recreational areas – and there are some 500 of them throughout the province of Alberta – there is an outstanding family experience for people who travel to those areas.

Now, there are issues with respect to Ghost-Waiparous, Mr. Speaker. We've taken measures in the past to ensure that there are appropriate usages because these parks belong to all Albertans, not just those that would choose to use the areas, really, in an inappropriate way. We are stepping up on enforcement. We are enforcing, in some examples, liquor bans for use, and this has dramatically reduced the number of offences that have taken place in some areas, but Ghost-Waiparous continues to be an issue.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second follow-up: given that high-intensity recreational activities and noisy parties have the effect of driving families from our parks, how will this minister make these areas safer for everyone's benefit throughout the year?

Mr. Mar: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the hon. member, there are great family memories that are grown in our provincial parks, and that's just the reality. The people who use our parks, by and large, are law-abiding people looking for family recreation, looking to get away from the city environment and enjoy nature as it was intended to be enjoyed. I wouldn't want the hon. member to suggest to Albertans that all of our parks throughout the province are places where families can't go. The reality is that there need to be places for people to use off-highway vehicles, as an example. What we need to do is continue to work with local law enforcement officials like the RCMP, like our own conservation officers to ensure that people are staying on trails and not cutting new trails and that there is respect for the park and the other people who are using it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit to stronger protection of the environmental integrity of our provincial parks and protected areas from the incursion of oil and gas development, timber clear-cutting, and high-intensity recreational activities? Protect our 4 per cent wilderness heritage, please.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize that you could speak while seated.

Those are the values that the Department of Community Development stands for. There can be good reasons why there may be clear-cutting activities in certain areas. For example, with respect to things like mountain pine beetle, we work very, very closely with the department of sustainable resources to ensure that we try and stop mountain pine beetle where we can. So the result may be that within a park or other protected area we may in fact take a clear-cut in order to stop that kind of incursion of mountain pine beetles from occurring.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Police Recruitment and Training Centre

Mr. McFarland: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Lethbridge Community College and the criminal justice program in my opinion are two shining examples of a good educational program in Alberta. One of the recommendations of the government MLA policing committee was to call for a centre of excellence for police and peace officer training. I understand that the Solicitor General will soon be seeking proposals for, among other things, siting for this particular training facility. My question is to the Solicitor General. Will Lethbridge be considered for the provincial single-site police and peace officer training facility?

The Speaker: The Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are moving forward on the policing review's recommendation to establish a centralized police and peace officer training facility in the province of Alberta. Yes, Lethbridge will be considered as a possible site along with all other communities that have an interest and the capacity to provide the services that will be needed to support such a facility. This centre will provide training and professional development for police and peace officers as well as civilian members of police commissions as well as provide professional development and leadership, management, and executive development. In June our department will be releasing a public call for expressions of interest, or EOIs, and I encourage Lethbridge to come forward with a formal indication of their interest at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then considering the answer, are you, Minister, considering a single-site training college model that anticipates the elimination of, for instance, the RCMP, thereby going to a single police service in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No. We already have a provincial police service for Alberta. The RCMP provide that service to us under an agreement until the year 2012. As any responsible government would do, we are preparing a cost and service benefit review for 2007 to see that we are indeed getting the best value for our money. This review is built in to the present agreement.

We support our contract with the RCMP. The RCMP has a long and proud history in Alberta. However, we do support the concept of regional policing and, as well, looking at other models. So we do support and encourage a model of integrated services in which all police agencies share the resources and services with one another

throughout the province, especially those of a critical and specialized nature that services provide.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

Mr. McFarland: Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Private Vocational Schools

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today four courageous former students of a government-licensed, private, for-profit vocational school here in Edmonton met with the press to express their concerns based on their personal experiences in that institution. One hundred and forty-seven such government-licensed private vocational schools operate in Alberta and indirectly receive tens of millions of public dollars every year, yet the government allows these schools to operate even if they don't meet performance standards. No wonder default rates and student loans at these institutions exceed 30 per cent, six times higher than those for students in the university sector. My questions are to the Minister of Advanced Education. Given that these institutions are allowed to stay open whether they have a class A or class B licence, whether they have performance standards which are satisfactory or not, why does the government not pull the licences of private vocational schools that fail to achieve satisfactory instructional standards and satisfactory graduation rates? Why not?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that when I was a member of the Students Finance Board in this province, we actually initiated a policy which indicated that we would delist institutions that had high default rates and particularly private institutions. In fact, I recall one particular institution that was closed as a result of that. It wasn't closed as a result of that, but their ability for their students to get student loans was removed, and as a result the institution closed. That policy is still in place as far as I know. I'd be happy to look into the specific default rates in the institutions that were raised in the hon. member's press release, but we're very concerned about default rates and about students being attracted to institutions to get certifications or types of certification for which there is no market and no ability to earn enough money to pay it back, so that's a very high degree of concern.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I'll just add one other thing. Companies can do business in this province and every other place, and it is very incumbent on students, when they make a choice, that they look into the choice that they're making, that they understand what they're getting into. That's very important. Not all vocational schools are registered, and not all those that are registered are appropriate.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Charter rights are contravened when government-licensed, private, for-profit vocational institutions in this province expel students accused of trying to form student associations, what action will the minister take to safeguard the rights of students to free assembly and free speech?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding with respect to private institutions that we don't actually license private institutions. What we do is look at programs that are offering certification and we review the programs to ensure that the programs are appropriate.

Now, again, I'm very concerned about students in this province getting a good education and getting value for their money in terms of moving forward with an education, particularly through the private process. Ninety-five per cent of students in Alberta go into public institutions, but there is a place and an appropriate place for the private delivery of education models in this province. Students need to be careful when they're going forward that they're getting the program they want and that the program they're going into has been appropriately certified. We do not tell businesses whether they can or cannot do business in this province. What we do is take a look at programs for which they're offering certification and make sure that those programs are of a quality level.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This model does not work.

Given that the private institutions branch does next to nothing when students make legitimate complaints about these institutions, when will the government set up an effective student complaints resolution process?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it's always unfortunate when members of this House denigrate the good work that's done by civil servants in this province. We have a very strong civil service in this province, and I can tell you that the people who work in the private institutions branch do a good job. The public service in this province does an excellent job. The people in the private institutions branch do an excellent job.

2:30

When there are complaints, we look into those complaints, but there's also an appropriate role for individuals in this province because we do believe in self-reliance in this province. Individuals making choices need to do their homework and make appropriate choices. I will commit to you, Mr. Speaker, that we also will do our homework, and where appropriate, we will check into the institutions. If there are allegations that they haven't done their work appropriately or that somehow they are not meeting the certification standards that we set, we will shut down those that don't meet the standards.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Government Appointments

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government, and the Premier in particular, have repeatedly criticized the federal government's Senate appointments, saying that they're a slap in the face of Albertans and that they occur contrary to democratic process. Well, this very government continues to deliver Albertans one slap after another in the form of patronage appointments. When it comes to top government jobs, board memberships, and committee positions, this Tory government appoints party loyalists and their own friends rather than the best candidates for these jobs. My questions are all to the Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Given that following the last election, Albertans were promised that top government jobs would only be filled after fair and open competitions – and this obviously did not happen – will the minister tell this House if sole sourcing for jobs to Tory friends is the most efficient way to recruit staff?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I've never ever believed this govern-

ment to go out sole sourcing for jobs strictly for their government friends or whatever he was talking about. I will have the hon. Deputy Premier actually get up and speak on this one.

Thank you.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the generalization that was made by this hon. member is, one, quite impossible to answer. If the hon. member has a specific concern about how appointments were made – and it was raised in a question earlier – I think one should raise those directly. For various boards, commissions, and agencies there are processes that are followed. I explained the processes followed in one of those commissions today. For jobs there is a very good publication called *The Bulletin*. Jobs that are government, civil service jobs are advertised in that *Bulletin*. There is a vetting process, and they are hired through that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that for a brief democratic moment regional health authorities were elected rather than appointed, will the hon. minister please justify his government's practice for hand-picking RHA board members?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, that would be a very good question if it was going to the proper minister that looks after our health regions.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I am so delighted to answer this because I take huge offence to what you're saying, absolutely huge. The entire time that I've been in this government I've made it a practice to appoint people to supervise the processes of adjudication so that this government cannot be accused of just what you're saying. I take offence to that because with health authorities or any other authority in Children's Services – if the Children's Services minister were here right now, she would stand up and complain about this kind of damnation.

Mr. Elsalhy: So given that the chief internal auditor's resignation is not effective until June 1, will the Minister of RAGE advise the Premier and the Executive Council that this position should now be filled through a transparent and fully accountable job competition rather than being appointed? We have to start somewhere.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the position that the member refers to will be filled appropriately, and when the time is appropriate, the hon. member will know who was appointed and how he or she was recruited.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Second-language Instruction

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the many recommendations from the Alberta Commission on Learning that is still awaiting implementation is the second-language initiative. The commission strongly advocated in support of second-language learning because of the obvious benefits this would provide for Alberta students. My first question is for the Minister of Education. Since the minister undertook a readiness survey concerning this initiative two months ago, could he now tell us the results of that survey?

Mr. Zwodzdesky: Mr. Speaker, when I met with all 62 school boards

and a number of teachers, it became very clear very quickly that the second-languages initiative, if it were to be mandated, would not have been successful for an implementation date of September 2006, so we're going to be phasing it in. Prior to that, I had to do this readiness survey. I want to tell you that we had about a 92, 93 per cent response rate to that survey, and overwhelmingly we heard many concerns. However, on the positive side I'd say that about 60 per cent plus of the grade 4 classes would be ready to go with this initiative. When we do it, we're going to phase it in, and we'll phase it in right across the system. So the results of the survey are really quite encouraging, but they also tell us that we aren't quite there yet.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we move to the next part of the Routine, I just want to give you an update with respect to Oral Question Period. As we began this session, I indicated that one of the things that the chair would try to do is basically encourage . . .

Mr. Goudreau: I just had the one question.

The Speaker: You still wanted to go with another one? Okay. Sorry. I'll sit down.

Mr. Goudreau: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You're probably as anxious as we are to get out of here.

Mr. Speaker, I have two extra questions. The first of my two questions is again to the same minister. I've heard that many school boards may have to hire additional second- and third-language teachers. What is being done to encourage more teachers into this area of instruction?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, second-language learning is extremely important, and obviously it can't happen without second-language teachers. So we're doing a lot to generate a lot more interest and awareness around second-language importance and around the need to encourage more teachers into the field. Secondly, we're enhancing some projects, such as video conferencing, to make more second-language learning available throughout the province. Thirdly, we're also handing out bursaries and scholarships to second-language teachers. In fact, yesterday I announced 10 more, \$5,000 each, that will help encourage people, teachers specifically, who are already in the second-language field to continue and upgrade their studies in that area, should they wish. So those \$5,000 scholarships times 10 teachers will help a great deal in that respect.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. What is your ministry doing to support postsecondary students who are studying to become second-language teachers?

Mr. Martin: Everything.

Mr. Hancock: Absolutely everything, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question because under our strategic plan, of course, one of the pillars is competing in a global marketplace. Competing in a global marketplace means that we must develop on the rich heritage that we have of different cultures, languages, and traditions. It's increasingly important to enhance that and to pass on to young people knowledge of a second language, and that does require teachers. So in addition to the 10 bursaries to enhance the abilities of teachers in the system, there were also 12 postsecondary students with a second-language scholarship of

\$2,500 studying to teach, and of course postsecondary students can also apply for many other scholarships that are available.

The idea that we need to enhance, as the Minister of Education indicated, second-language learning in this province so that we can enhance our ability to compete out into a global marketplace: our postsecondary system has got to enhance that with adding value to bringing in international students, making sure that we have international education opportunities, and absolutely making sure that there are educational opportunities available for second-language instruction and instructors in this province.

The Speaker: Hon. members will note the acute attention to decorum that the Speaker presented to himself when he found that he was out of order and quickly sat down. This is a model for all members.

head: 2:40

Statement by the Speaker

Brevity in Oral Question Period

The Speaker: At the beginning of this session I had requested members to deal with the question of brevity with respect to questions and answers so as to afford an opportunity for an increased number of members to participate in the question period. This is now day 41, and these are the results and comparison this year to last year.

Last session, the session of 2004, we had approximately 11 to 11 and a half questions per day on average. Our average this year is well above 15. Now, last year in only one Oral Question Period were there over 14 sets of questions. Only one, same number of days. This year on 14 days we had 15 or more sets of questions, on 10 days we had 16 or more sets of questions, on another eight we had 17 or more sets of questions, and on one we had 18 sets of questions. So by comparison we had 33 days out of the 41 this year when we had 15 or more sets of questions whereas compared to last year we had only one. So there was a dramatic improvement with respect to members' participation, and I appreciate that.

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, did you count the number of answers that were given?

The Speaker: Unfortunately, hon. member, this is one of the truisms of the democratic system that we have and that we follow here: this is not answer period; it's question period.

The Clerk: Members' Statements.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before calling on the first of six to participate, I'm going to call upon the Deputy Speaker for a very special presentation.

Page Recognition

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Chair and myself would like to draw to the attention of all hon. members that we're going to lose five of our wonderful pages when this spring session ends: Vanessa Pillay, Leslie Day, Whitney Haynes, Christina Molzan, and Justin Laverty-Harrigan. These fine young people will be leaving their duties in this Assembly following the close of the spring session.

I would ask you to join me in recognizing the great efforts of our pages, who daily show patience and understanding of our many demands. They carry out their tasks with attention to duty and in good humour.

On behalf of all members I ask our head page, Vanessa Pillay, to give each retiring page our gift and, with it, our best wishes to each and every one. We are honoured to have had all of you work with us in Alberta's Legislature. [applause]

The Speaker: Hon. members, these are exceptional young people. I received this letter from them, addressed to me but to all the Members of the Legislative Assembly, and I would like to put it in the record. The subject is Retiring Pages.

[Dear] Mr. Speaker,

We are truly privileged to have had the opportunity to serve this house and we take great pride in being able to say, without it sounding cliché, that we have held one of the 'best' jobs. We have never come to work thinking of it as 'work' and for that we thank you, Mr. Speaker, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the current and former members, the officers, the Legislative Assembly Security Staff, and the many others who have made our experience more enjoyable.

Before working here, we were, admittedly, prey to the public's stereotypical view of a politician, but we learned nothing could be further from the truth. The members of the assembly were revealed to be real people trying to do their best in a very difficult position. And indeed, to our surprise, many had managed to retain a great sense of humor while doing so. In addition to recognizing the members as real people, we have also been privileged to be on the floor to hear many inspiring speeches, intense debates, and even a couple of limericks and songs. Despite the excitement, however, we could still tell you that there are 620 light bulbs up there; a little known fact that we are sure every page before us could verify.

We started this job as teenagers and have grown to become young adults. We have gained not only new perspectives on politics and the legislative process, but a sense of maturity and confidence that we would not have otherwise gained. We promise to forever remember our experiences here and to defend the inner workings of our parliamentary system that we have become so familiar with.

With the great honour of serving the province of Alberta, in this centennial year, we would simply like to say, thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Vanessa Pillay, Leslie Day, Leah Halliday, Whitney Haynes,
Justin Laverty-Harrigan, and Christina Molzan.

Some of them are going to meet Her Majesty on Tuesday next, so that will be another great honour for them. [standing ovation]

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Endangered Species Conservation Committee

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to call the members' attention to the efforts of a committee that exemplifies Alberta's commitment to protecting wild species throughout the province. The Endangered Species Conservation Committee works to identify vulnerable species and makes recommendations on their recovery and conservation to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. It has been my pleasure to chair the committee since it was established in 1997.

Members represent 19 stakeholder organizations and include scientists, conservationists, landowners, aboriginal groups, and resource managers. Committee members are dedicated volunteers who know about the land and who are committed to helping conserve Alberta's wild species. They have put in a lot of work and time and energy over the years.

I also want to mention a separate scientific subcommittee working closely with the committee, and its members provide us with expert advice. Working together we have made recommendations on the status of 46 wild species.

I think it is important for all hon. members to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Endangered Species Conservation Committee and its scientific subcommittee and the benefits they provide to Albertans.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Alberta Centennial

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the occasion of Alberta's centenary anniversary I can't help but project my imagination back into the history of this great land, our province of Alberta and our country of Canada. As I have said before, Canada and Alberta are blessed with an abundance of natural resources and splendours, but it's our human resources that realize these natural resources into prosperity and a high quality of life for our residents.

Prior to the 1400s this vast land was populated by only the people of the First Nations. They lived on the provisions of the land and enjoyed a unique culture. In the early 1500s people from Europe came to this land. This first wave of people arrived with the intention to find wealth and take it back to where they came from. As the first wave died down, a new wave of people came who wanted to build a new nation for themselves and a social system different and better than the one they departed from. They are known as the founders, as pioneers, and homesteaders. Like many of us today and our ancestors in the near past they belong to the waves of immigrants who share this land with the people who were here before them.

For the recent 100 years Alberta has been blessed with waves of immigrants who departed from their lands of birth. They left behind bad practices and learned new, good ones from others. They came here to build a better way of life for themselves and their family. Most importantly, they wanted to continue building and protecting a better society, better than where they departed from.

Mr. Speaker, my family and myself are proud to be among them. We want to express our sincere appreciation for this land and the people who have come here before us. We are what we can be today because they let us stand on their strong shoulders. As we are celebrating Alberta's hundred years of history, I'm thankful that my family shares 30 of those hundred. "Alberta is calling me. Home sweet home, it's where I'm proud to be."

Thank you.

2:50 First Session of the First Alberta Legislature

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, my statement today reflects upon a moment in time in our history: the day when our first session of the Alberta Legislature met. The content of this statement is summarized from Frank Dolphin's book *The Alberta Legislature*. It was a cold, windy day on March 15, 1906, and Albertans from every corner of the province converged along 102nd Street at the Thistle Curling Rink north of Jasper Avenue. All the hotels and boarding houses were booked in and around Edmonton. In a horse-driven carriage our first Lieutenant Governor, George Bulyea, arrived to deliver the province's first Speech from the Throne.

Tremendous effort had gone into converting the rink into a meeting place. Flags and banners hung around the rink, and the curling ice was covered with sawdust, and pews were borrowed from churches for sitting. There were 4,000 seats available to Albertans to witness that historic day.

Our first Premier, Alexander Rutherford, apart from being the Premier, took on portfolios of Provincial Treasurer and Minister of Education. Mr. Charles Fisher, MLA for Cochrane, was elected as our first Speaker of this Assembly.

The most important piece of business, that of capital city location, was on everyone's mind but wasn't mentioned in the throne speech. The House of Commons had designated Edmonton to be the capital, and while the Alberta Legislature could have revised or reversed the decision, it did not do so.

Frank Dolphin notes that the members of our Legislative Assembly were relatively young, with an average age of 45. "Although a few were pioneers, none of them were born in Alberta. Most had headed west from Ontario." It is noted that "one of the real characters was Arlie Brick," the MLA for Peace River, who "travelled to one session by sleigh with a small cabin on the back, pulled by two moose."

Mr. Speaker, every day in this Chamber we make history. My hope is that in a hundred years when people read what we have accomplished, they'll look upon it with awe, perhaps with a little bit of humour, and of course they'll see how proud we were to be a part of history in this great place called Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Governing in the Public Interest

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to reflect in this message on the meaning of the public interest. It's a truism to say that elected officials have a formal obligation to speak and act in the public interest. The problem in Alberta is a government that believes it knows the public interest and after 33 years has stopped listening and stopped asking. The public interest is not served solely through economic development and jobs, yet this is the mantra communicated by this government when asked on a decision, especially in the area of resource development in the province.

The public interest is fundamentally about balance, and there are at least four elements. First, public interest has to do with long-term thinking and planning that considers, as First Nations have said, the next seven generations. Second, the public interest is served by honest discussion about resource limits, options, sustainable management, fairness, and trust in our society. Third, public interest places the economy at the service of people and the environment rather than the reverse. Fourth, the public interest is served by transparent decision-making that encourages citizen involvement and vitality in our democracy.

People know, even if they cannot express it, when governments are not acting in the public interest and not connecting with their deeper values. In my experience and in my constituency the result has been increasing fear-based reactions: cynicism, anxiety, anger, or, alternatively, silence and withdrawal from duties as citizens. Citizens of Alberta are hungry for transparent leadership decisions, especially affecting their future, and participation in those decisions. If we care to listen, there are different ways Albertans are telling us that we as politicians are failing to act in the public interest to balance economics and social values with the environment, the long-term view, transparency, and accountability. The test of an authentic government is its willingness to listen and to change in the public interest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards

Mrs. Tarchuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the recipients of the inaugural Lieutenant Governor of Alberta arts awards presented recently at a very exciting gala hosted at the Banff Centre. These awards were established in 2002 under the patronage of the late Lois Hole to celebrate excellence in and underline the importance of the arts in Alberta. The government of Alberta contributed

\$1 million towards a \$3 million endowment fund to help generate the funding for up to three awards of \$30,000 to be given every other year.

This year 85 nominations were received from around the province in the areas of performing arts, visual arts, cinematic arts, design, architecture, and literary arts. The many achievements are impressive and clearly indicate the strength and depth of artistic talent in this province. This year the adjudication panel selected two individuals as winners, Mr. Douglas Cardinal and Mr. John Murrell.

Douglas Cardinal has been designing buildings for decades. His unique style of organic architecture marked by curvilinear lines has made him internationally renowned. He is probably best known locally for his architectural design at the Edmonton Space and Science Centre, the Grande Prairie Regional College, and the St. Albert cultural centre and internationally for his design of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec.

John Murrell is an internationally renowned playwright and artistic director whose plays have been translated into 15 different languages and performed in more than 30 countries around the world. His play *Waiting for the Parade* earned John his first Chalmers best Canadian play award, and he has earned that honour twice again since then. He also created the lyrics for the very popular, very well received opera *Filumena*, which I know some of our members recently had the opportunity to see performed at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, which was showcasing Alberta talent.

Please join me in congratulating all those who were nominated for the Lieutenant Governor arts awards and particularly Mr. Douglas Cardinal and Mr. John Murrell for being selected as this year's winners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Respect for Women in Politics

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have commented several times in this House about the great work that the Alberta Legislature does in educating today's young people about politics and the very important work that we do in this building. The School at the Legislature program is one I particularly appreciate, and it seems that not a day goes by where we do not have at least one school group in the galleries watching the proceedings. Whenever I have the opportunity to speak to schools and children, I always stress the need for young people, particularly young women, to become involved in or at least more aware of the political process and how they can help to create their own futures.

Mr. Speaker, with this in mind, yesterday's comments from a member of this Legislature in the national media regarding the new federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development are especially disappointing. It seems that when a man decides he can no longer reconcile his conscience with a political party and chooses to cross the floor, he is described as principled and wise, yet when a woman makes a similar decision, the comments become personal, belittling, and in this case sexual in nature.

As I drove to work today, Mr. Speaker, I thought about those young ladies that I've spoken to. I also thought about all of the bright women that I've met over the years in my business career, women who would make absolutely excellent legislators. I regret to say that I lamented for all those promising women this morning. I'm not sure what I will say to them now when they suggest to me that politics really is an old boys' club after all.

I can attest, Mr. Speaker, that there is no greater calling than to be

elected by your fellow citizens to represent them. When a member of this House publicly degrades, humiliates, and demoralizes female politicians in such a manner, I can only imagine the impact that this has in discouraging women from pursuing such a noble calling. The sexual nature of the remarks is even more distasteful in light of the fact that local sex trade workers appear to be the target of one or more serial murderers.

Mr. Speaker, I can only hope that the women of this country, young and old, will believe me when I sincerely say that we are in desperate need of more female representation in our Legislatures and our parliaments, and I hope that these comments will not further dissuade them from joining their male counterparts in seeking to make our communities, our province, and our country the best that they can be.

Thank you.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar on a point of order.

Rev. Abbott: Yes. Mr. Speaker, if it's possible, I'd like to call a point of order on that member's statement. Is that allowed within our rules?

Speaker's Ruling Members' Statements

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, here's the dilemma and the difficulty. When we brought in this whole concept of statements in 1993, there was a definitive negotiation between the then Government House Leader, which happened to me, and the then Official Opposition House Leader. One of the agreed principles we had was that we would ask all members in the Assembly to deal with the highest degree of civility with respect to these statements, to not bring into question any other member, and to deal essentially with thoughts that they had. Now, in replacement or evenness for that, no member would rise on a point of order or on a point of privilege.

In this case, hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, it's pretty apparent to the chair who the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was talking about, but he didn't mention it specifically.

To me there's a greater principle involved in this. This Assembly is one of the unique ones that you're going to find anywhere. As an example, in this session we've just now had 169 members' statements. It's an opportunity for members to stand up and air something. The previous recognitions were one minute. In negotiations among the House leaders we said that we'd now go to two minutes per day for these statements, but there had to be some understanding principles.

The member in question is also the Official Opposition whip. I'm going to ask him to just really rethink and try to understand the principles and the rules of this House. I'm not going to censor anybody because that was the agreed principle that we had in here, that we would not, but over the years, then, one also has to have some element of civility because if we don't, then we will definitely go to points of order and points of privilege, and that will just throw out the whole reason for having this whole concept known as statements. That was the principle agreed to, and only on about three occasions in the last 12 years has there ever had to be an intervention. That's a pretty good record, but three are too many. Period.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition signed by 213 Albertans who are seeking potentially life-saving improvements to highways in northern Alberta, particularly highway 63. With today's tabling the total of signatures on this petition so far is 4,912.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise with a petition from some hard-working Albertans from the great Alberta communities of Alberta Beach, New Sarepta, Lamont, Gibbons, and the mining capital of Canada, Fort McMurray, as well as various camps in that area. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? That was the 82nd petition presented during this session.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table today the appropriate number of copies of a press release that I alluded to earlier today on this the eve of the second anniversary of BSE being discovered in our province and also some background information on that press release as well as what the government of Alberta is doing with regard to the six-point BSE recovery program.

Just a note, Mr. Speaker. We are extremely proud of the partnership we have with the cattle industry, which has enabled it to survive when many thought in May of 2003 that we would not have a cattle industry today.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling today the appropriate number of copies of answers to the questions raised during Committee of Supply on May 10, 2005.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to table the appropriate number of copies of replies to questions that were raised in Committee of Supply, and the originals have gone out to the respective members today as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two tablings today. One of them is answers to Written Question 29, which was posed by members opposite regarding full-day kindergarten.

The other one is responses to Written Question 14, regarding school-raised fees for book rentals, transportation, and other such items.

Thank you.

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to table copies of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development's answers to Committee of Supply questions.

I'm also pleased to table the appropriate number of copies of the 2003-2004 annual report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today: one, a report from the *St. Albert Gazette* discussing parents' struggle with addiction treatment, and the other a recognition of the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies each of five letters from hard-working Albertans asking the government to deal with the issue of temporary foreign workers, apprenticeship ratios, and deskilling of the workplace.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling this afternoon, and it is a copy of a petition from the Strathearn neighbourhood. There are over 700 signatures on this petition. This petition is vigorously opposed to the forced closure of Strathearn elementary and junior high school by this government's utilization and education policies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of the Alberta Registries land title certificate relating to the sale of land in the Fort McMurray area. Included in the tabling is a map of the relevant land.

I would also like to table a petition signed by 200 Albertans who "demand and require that Alberta forthwith grant equal status to Farmworkers" in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today. It's five copies of a letter that was sent to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview from the St. Arnaud, McAllister, and Bowie law firm, who are solicitors for Alberta Career Computer Center in Edmonton. The language of the letter is anticipatory in that it advises the hon. member's office that it shouldn't help publicize unfounded allegations and offered us a briefing. We contacted the office and are still waiting for word to be briefed. So I'm tabling this so that it's on record and is available for members to look at.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I'm going to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. He will become tabling number 510 in this session, and he's asked me for permission to just speak a little longer than normal, just a little though.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It won't really be much longer than normal. It's my pleasure to table a document recognizing the dedication and talent of Marilyn Hooper. Marilyn is our director of outreach and is leaving us after eight years of excellent service. Marilyn has many friends among the people that work in the Legislature Building and the Annex. She will be greatly missed by our caucus and by all those who have come to know her in the past few years. On behalf of the NDP opposition I would like to offer Marilyn our heartfelt thanks and best wishes in her future endeavours.

head: 3:10

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Dr. Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation return to order of the Assembly MR 32, asked for by Mr. MacDonald on behalf of Mr. Chase on May 2, 2005; return to order of the Assembly MR 33, requested by Mr. MacDonald on behalf of Mr. Chase on May 2, 2005; return to order of the Assembly MR 39, requested by Mr. Martin on May 2, 2005; return to order of the Assembly MR 41, requested by Mr. Martin on May 2, 2005.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Ouellette, Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency return to order of the Assembly MR 29, requested by Mr. Elsalhy on May 2, 2005.

On behalf of Ms Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness responses to questions raised by Ms Blakeman, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, on March 16, 2005, during the 2004-2005 supplementary estimates debate.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, a historical vignette today. On this day in 1905 the northern Alberta town of Athabasca was established as the village of Athabasca Landing. Athabasca derives from the Cree word meaning where there are reeds. Athabasca Landing developed as an important shipping centre. It was incorporated as a village in 1905, as a town in 1911, and in 1913 the town's name was officially shortened to Athabasca.

House leaders might appreciate the following bits of information with respect to this session as well. When the House rises on Tuesday next, it will have sat for 42 days, including 28 evening sittings. In the spring of 2004 the House sat for 43 days, with 29 evening sittings, essentially the same length of time. However, there are some differences. By the time this House rises on Tuesday, it will have sat for approximately 13,450 minutes in 2005. In the spring sitting of 2004 it sat for 12,246 minutes. There are almost 1,200 more minutes this year, in 2005, than one year ago, and that translated into the number of hours – this year we will have sat so far for about 224 hours, compared to 204 hours in the spring sitting of 2004.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 42

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move for third reading Bill 42, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried; Bill 42 read a third time]

Bill 41
Appropriation Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance it's my pleasure to move for third reading Bill 41, Appropriation Act, 2005.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak on Bill 41. I'll just make a few brief comments about the entire budgeting process, if I may. I think one of the most interesting and challenging aspects of being a rookie MLA has been this entire process. In fact, as I recall, one of the first things we did as MLAs was approve the supplementary estimates, going back to March I think it was, which was like two and a half lifetimes ago.

As I found out, supplementary means exactly what it says. It was money over and above what was budgeted in the previous year's budget. So one of the very first things we did as MLAs here was to approve the spending of money that already had been spent. So it was an interesting start to the session.

Regarding the budgeting process this time around, I wonder if next March we're going to be looking at more supplementary figures, Mr. Speaker. How many millions or perhaps billions of unbudgeted spending can we expect to supposedly vote on next year? The government's track record in this regard indicates that there is no doubt that we'll be going through this process again. I sometimes wonder if the government thinks its budgets are written on Etch A Sketches. When they get tired of it, they just flip it over, shake it clear, and start all over again.

There were times during the budget debate – I sat through more than my share, I'm afraid – when the debate was excellent. It was genuine, civil, intelligent give-and-take between the minister and the questioners on this side and on the other side. Good questions were asked, and sometimes very good answers were supplied. I guess when you have a total of nearly two full days of debate, something useful has to come of it. There were other times when the minister used what I would call the talking tactic, where you would answer a one-minute question with a 20-minute diatribe regarding nothing in particular.

My biggest concern about the entire process, Mr. Speaker, was the lack of information in some of the budgeting documents, particularly in Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. There was one line in particular which was simply Aboriginal Affairs, and I believe it was somewhere in the budget of \$17 million. A one-line mention doesn't give you much to go on, nothing to chew on. You can't debate a mention of \$17 million unless you know what they're for.

The minister was kind enough, after I asked, to send a detailed outline of what that \$17 million was for. If I could, I'd just like to go over it very briefly so that it is, at least, on the record. We have aboriginal initiatives, \$5.7 million; strategic services, \$1.7 million; aboriginal land and legal issues, \$2.5 million; aboriginal consultation, \$6.8 million; Métis settlements ombudsman, \$450,000; Métis settlements land registry, \$222,000.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know why this information wouldn't have been included in the budget in the first place. There are quite a few instances where there just wasn't adequate information for us to properly debate the budget. I appreciate getting the information afterward, but it's much more important to get it during the actual debate.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, it's been a very interesting experience. I can't say that I look forward to doing it again next year, but I guess that's our job.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly about the appropriations bill. This is the first budget that I actually had the opportunity to see being made. I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for the inclusive way that she made the budget possible this year. As she kept reminding us, this was not her budget, rather it was a budget for Albertans, reflecting the debt paydown and dealing with what Albertans told us they wanted when the debt was paid off.

I have been an MLA for almost 12 years now, and this is only the second time that I have been able to feel like a participant in the planning process for the budget. The first time was in 1993 when we started down the road to the 20 per cent cutbacks. Many of the Conservative MLAs were on subcommittees, looking at various departments, with the goal of cutting overall government spending by 20 per cent while at the same time trying to refocus government back onto its core business.

This time we were able to create a budget after having paid off the debt that we were struggling so hard with in 1993. This year instead of dealing with cutbacks as we were then, we were dealing with an ask list that was simply too big to handle.

I'm not sure which way is more difficult, Mr. Speaker: cutting spending or increasing spending. One thing I can tell you for sure is that in either scenario there are people who are happy and there are people who aren't.

I have really appreciated the opportunity to be on Treasury Board this year and to be able to see first-hand the ministers making their requests for increases in their respective department budgets. I have great respect for the ministers and what they try to achieve. None of them wants an increase just to say that they got one. They all came in and fought very hard on behalf of their departments, the people, and the programs that they serve. I would like to congratulate them on basically never backing down but in the end accepting their increases or not and going back over again to write and rewrite and find new ways to make things work.

It's a real honour for me to be able to work with the Minister of Finance on this committee. The last time I had an opportunity to work closely with her was when she was minister of health and I was the SPC chair. I believe she's an incredible asset not only to my government, Mr. Speaker, but also to our province as a whole.

Creating a budget like this with this kind of an increase is not something that comes easily to a fiscal conservative, but on the other hand the budget reflects what Albertans have been telling us are their priorities. The growth in our economy and the surplus created by high oil and gas prices have allowed us this year to increase funding to health and education, advanced education, and seniors as well as to AISH, parks, infrastructure, and transportation, all things that Albertans told us were their priorities.

Years ago, Mr. Speaker, when I was taking economics at the postsecondary level, the very first graph that we were asked to work with was entitled the guns or butter scenario. The point of the exercise was to assume that you were a government and that you had to make a decision on whether to arm your people to help protect them from a coming invasion or to feed them. You could do one or the other or a combination of the two, but there was limited supply, lots of demand, and limited money. I never thought at the time that it would prove to be a useful graph until I was faced with making choices about where to put resources this year.

3:20

While I know it is not about guns or butter, the truth is that the lesson holds true for the choices that you have to make. There was money for health care, and even with a sizable increase in their budget it is nowhere near what the demand was calling for. Money for education, trying to fulfill the recommendations from the Learning Commission, which is hugely expensive and is not just about smaller classroom numbers; it is also about building enough schools to supply those classrooms. It was about money for hospitals or overpasses, roads and schools, portables, seniors' housing, social housing, and municipalities. It is about setting aside future surpluses, if we are lucky enough to have them, for inflation-proofing the heritage savings trust fund, topping up the sustainability fund, putting money into the scholarship fund or access to the future fund, not to mention the medical foundation or the ingenuity fund or billions for municipalities. It seems that there is never a shortage of good ideas or places where money can go.

The common theme in the media and from the special interest groups is that in a province with so much money there is no reason to not do pretty much anything anyone wants you to do. But we all know better. In the late '70s and early '80s it was a common theme as well: we will have the very best of everything for everyone all the time. While oil went up, it was easy to create expensive programs for pretty much everyone. I can tell you from first-hand experience that it was not so much fun cutting 20 per cent out of overall government spending. It was not so much fun when there were protesters out in front of the building day in and out all through '93, '94, '95, '96, and pretty much on from there.

So I want to throw a note of caution into the discussion about the budget. I'm glad that we were able to do these things this year, but I also hope that we will be able to tailor our budget growth to more accurately reflect the growth in our gross domestic product so that we do not find ourselves in a position where we once again have to cut programs.

I am not unlike other Albertans. I want the best health care I can get, I want the best education for our children, and I don't want to be sitting still on Deerfoot Trail because of gridlock. But at the same time, the more we build, the higher the inflationary rate comes in on construction costs. The more we spend on health care, the less there is for other departments. So caution and careful analysis are required even in a province as fortunate as Alberta.

From an MLA perspective I want many things for my constituency. I want, first and foremost, portables for the high-growth needs of my school divisions. I want 24-hour urgent care for the health needs of a city of almost 30,000 people whose patience has run out waiting for the Calgary regional health authority to notice us or listen to our needs. I want the interchange at the south end of Airdrie to be included in the planning so that people can get into and out of Airdrie during rush hour. I want the overpass built on highway 1 where it meets highway 9. It is dangerous, and it is getting worse. I want to address the problems with water and waste water that Rocky View municipal district is facing on a daily basis as growth is overtaking their ability to cope with demand.

My whole constituency is facing between 10 and 20 per cent growth annually. We don't have old infrastructure for anyone to use. We need roads, we need water, we need sewage services, and we need schools just to try and cope with the growth that we have. I need more schools than I even want to talk about anymore. I swear that people think I make it up when I tell them that I need two more schools this year – well, every year. The Premier was right when he said that it was great that people move here. We want them to come here, we need them to come here, but they don't bring their own schools, and they don't bring their own roads. We have to plan

better, if not to try to get ahead of the demand, at least to try to keep up with it.

This is just my riding, Mr. Speaker, and many of the MLAs in this room are dealing with exactly the same issues. It is a challenge, but it's also an opportunity. Of all the places in the world where we could be living, we are so lucky to live here. The issues we are dealing with are about what to build and where and how to improve the quality of life for all Albertans. It is not about war or genocide. It's not about starvation or huge refugee camps, where just getting a glass of water is the most pressing issue of the day. We are truly blessed to live here.

I look forward to the future with hope and optimism. I look forward to a year of our centennial celebrations, and I'm even looking forward to starting work on the next budget. But mostly, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to session ending so that we can once again find out what daylight looks like at the end of the workday.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Then I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest to perhaps sum up the weeks of budget estimates that I've been sitting through. It's been a very educational process and illuminating as well. I was watching with interest previously the machinations of government, and indeed the budget strikes at the very heart of how things function around here.

I believe that there are some signs of hope from this budget that we have been working through these past weeks. Those signs of hope, in my mind, stem from, you know, some good interaction in regard to ministers and critics looking at various ways to solve problems for Albertans because, really, at the end of the day we are spending this money to best serve the most people, most of the time. I think that all members do recognize that, and we do see some positive movement with this current budget.

However, I still have a number of issues that I would like to bring forward, perhaps for further illumination or edification, whatever the case may be, both on the spending and the revenue side of this budget in general. I would just like to point out a number of these specific issues that have come to my mind, and perhaps they have come to others as well.

On the spending side of this budget it appears as if the government is getting used to yearly surpluses, certainly, fuelled by the province's rich natural resource revenues. Total spending will jump to \$25.8 billion, \$3.2 billion more than last year's budget and \$1.4 billion more than the most recent third-quarter update. Budget 2005 shows a surplus of \$1.52 billion compared to the so-called \$300 million budget surplus of 2004, which of course was entirely superseded by a much larger number. The 2005 budget was based on a \$42 U.S. barrel of oil, and of course the current price is at \$48 and has reached even higher than that. With Bill 37, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, the government has raised the ceiling to \$4.75 billion from \$4 billion in terms of nonrenewable resource revenue that can be used for program spending.

The government went way over budget last year by spending nearly \$2 billion over and above the last year's approved budget. It's, I think, rather sad and ironic that last year's budget was entitled *On Route, On Course*. With the government breaking its own budget by nearly \$2 billion, I would have to question just how on course this action really has been. Half a billion going toward BSE relief. The rest of the spending, I don't know. That certainly was a justified circumstance, but otherwise my question is mainly just

underestimating how much it takes to run these various ministries that we are responsible for. The Children's Services ministry went nearly \$27 million over budget last year; Ministry of Education, \$64 million; Gaming, \$40 million; Health, \$363 million over budget, just to name a few.

This budget certainly will pass this year, but I'm just wondering if we will be asked to rubber stamp another supplementary budget in the range of billions of dollars ahead. Excuse my perhaps ignorance in this matter, but, you know, it would seem more logical that we would budget more realistically before and avoid this requirement to add such massive supplementary injections of money.

On the revenue side the government has consistently underestimated its expected revenue. Albertans may be forgiven if they're sort of tuning out when the government trumpets each quarterly update because we're so used to this process by now, and we know that the resource revenues are underestimated. It's a bad habit that I would like to see broken.

Revenues are estimated at \$27.3 billion, \$4.3 billion more than the \$23 billion from 2004 but still \$1.5 billion less than the revenues estimated in the third-quarter update for 2004-2005. The government is still lowballing revenues but not as low as in previous years. Perhaps this is part of the encouraging trend that I had suggested in my introduction. Budget 2005 is based on \$42 a barrel, and certainly we know that it will stay much higher than that.

3:30

Given the trend towards high energy prices, the Alberta health premium payment, I believe, is an issue that time has come to eliminate. Health care premiums hit the average family for \$1,056 a year but pay less than \$1 billion of the now nearly \$9 billion health department tab. I would suggest that this is not only an unfair tax, but it's also an extremely inefficient tax that we could afford to rescind immediately here in Alberta.

Furthermore, school property taxes. While there will be a 5 per cent reduction in the mill rate, this will be more than offset by the growth in the assessment base. Therefore, school property tax revenues will increase, in fact, by at least 3 per cent. The government school property tax will increase to \$1.45 billion, or 20 per cent above the \$1.2 billion tax freeze promised in Budget 2001.

There are some concerns about this. I'm looking to make the most efficient use of our money but also provide the most efficient advantage to the majority of our working families here in Alberta. Both of these, the mill rate and the Alberta health care tax premium, I think would be a wonderful place to start to put money back into the pockets of working people here in this province in the most direct way.

In regard to the various ministries, just quickly. Advanced Education: my biggest concern is that there is a 40 per cent dropout rate for university students in this province. While this may not appear to be a budgeting issue at first glance, the high dropout rate does cost this province dearly. Every student that doesn't finish their education represents a loss of future potential in both economics and in overall developmental growth for this province. Furthermore, the taxpayers invest in students through public funding of their institutions. In every real way the province loses out on this investment. I think, quite frankly, that a 40 per cent dropout rate is unacceptable. We believe as the New Democrat caucus that a postsecondary learning commission is desperately needed in this province to address this dropout rate problem and other issues as well. I think that we are moving forward in a positive way towards advanced education, but we must look at this bottom line of a success rate as a primary indicator of how functional our advanced education system really is.

In regard to Agriculture, Food and Rural Development the budget trimmed \$622 million from last year. That's mostly the BSE relief issue. You know, this crisis has not abated, yet we considered it a one-time disaster funding. Many farmers received very little money for relief in regard to BSE, or the amounts that they received were completely out of keeping with the losses that they sustained. This government's plans to solve this issue seem confusing at best. I think that many of our rural colleagues and I know that my own family in the rural area are finding this to be more than frustrating. In fact, it could lead to both financial and political crisis in this province.

Last week the Premier said that it might be two years before the border reopens to live cattle exports. You know, this doesn't mesh with other reports that we've been getting. There's confusion. Placing false hopes on what the Americans might do is not good public policy, Mr. Speaker. We need to solve this issue right here in Alberta. As many people here in this House like to say, a made-in-Alberta solution. Thank you very much.

In regard to Children's Services, the hon. Minister of Children's Services has told the House repeatedly that they're waiting on this federal government to get them back this transfer of funds to a national daycare program. Other provinces seem to be lining up for these funds already, but, you know, I'm just wondering what and where this money is for Alberta families. More to the point, the people who need this service now in this province are wondering and waiting for it as well.

As anybody who's brought up a family in this province knows, you need to have two income earners to make ends meet in this province, so this whole question of choice has been spurious at best as an argument. People can make the choice, yes, if they can afford to do so. I would respectfully suggest that most families do not have that capacity and have to have two family members working. I think it's our responsibility in conjunction with the federal government to put in a program that's affordable, reliable, and secure for all working families to look after our most precious resource, which is our children.

In regard to health, the health care symposiums that we have seen over the last few weeks – in fact, the one run by the provincial government here in Calgary was a pleasant surprise. It was nice to hear a mixed group of presenters and not just the privatization lobby. However, after the symposium the hon. minister said that there were no immediate plans to pursue more privatization in Alberta's health care system. That should be applauded, certainly, but it begs the question: what are the plans for the Alberta health care system in the future? What are we going to do not just next week but over the next 20 years? The people need to know. This uncertainty hanging over our heads in regard to our public health care system is not necessary. The public doesn't have to endure that. We deserve better.

We've been hearing for years about the government's intention to privatize and for the last four months this so-called third way, but Albertans are starting to question if there is even a plan at all. Given that the budget for the ministry of health is in the range of \$9 billion, one could hope that the government has a plan how to spend those vast sums of money.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

In regard to Sustainable Resource Development, I find that the ministry consistently underestimates the funds that are required to fight wildfires in this province. From 2003-2004 the ministry was almost 90 per cent over budget in fighting wildfires; 2004, 65 per cent over. The budget devotes \$14.6 million to wildfire operations,

while last year the actual cost was \$185 million. I know that this is a difficult thing to predict. Certainly, fire seasons come and go with the relative dryness of the northern boreal forest, particularly, but I think that more prudent budgeting could be employed in regard to this because, you know, going from 90 per cent more than you might have budgeted for would suggest confusion as to what the realistic expectations and needs are for fighting wildfires here in this province.

In regard to the Solicitor General, the government claims that the budget is going to deliver 200 more police officers, a \$6 million increase for municipal policing grants, with Edmonton and Calgary really getting nothing more and medium-sized communities down to 5,000 people getting the increases. We certainly applaud this change for the smaller centres around the province, but I think that most Edmontonians and Calgarians and other larger centres are perceiving an increase in crime. We don't have to go any further than our television sets and the newspapers to see the litany of quite outrageous criminal activity going on on our streets. I think that the people in Edmonton and Calgary certainly deserve an appropriate increase to their police budgets as well.

We know for a fact – and I know that our own Solicitor General understands – the importance and the effectiveness of community policing in our urban areas. Quite frankly, the only way to effectively have this community policing functioning is to have more police per capita than what we have now. It's simply impossible to get to know your neighbourhoods and to have people in each individual neighbourhood without increasing the bodies on the streets.

I'm very happy to have provided some outline and analysis of what our own New Democrat caucus feels about this budget. I can say that I've quite enjoyed the interaction that has gone along with this budget debate, and I expect better and bigger things for the future.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

3:40

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In any government fiscal responsibility and fiscal prudence require proper budgets that governments stick to. It is essential to be comprehensive about the priorities of government and not to govern on an ad hoc, day-by-day basis.

In rising to speak to the effect of this bill, I will first note that in its fiscal plan, in its budget, this government has essentially said that it has no comprehensive plan. This Progressive Conservative government has said that it will not be held to its own budget. The government has said that anything goes in a month or two. It will buy into anything if the government feels like it maybe is necessary then. This government has essentially said that it will govern, as usual, by the seat of its pants and as the whim of any particular day strikes it. That said, there remain many people areas that urgently do still require funding, and given this government's day-by-day attitude, it is incumbent on members of the opposition to continue to seek change, to seek proper funding for the disadvantaged and those who through no fault of their own cannot access the fruits of living in Alberta.

You know, I think it's important to look at the government's vision. If we look to some of the budget documents and look to Alberta in 2025 and see what the government would like to see then and how this budget and how the appropriations that we're looking at today will realize those things, I wonder. One of the first is: "Its people are free to realize their full potential, and personal choice is

the only limit to opportunity." But so many things are, in reality, outside of the limits of choice for many, many individuals in Alberta. The prosperity is not there for everyone.

As I've said earlier, the problems of people on AISH looking for security in their retirement. It's not there in any way. The needs of our citizenry to have access and opportunity to learning to do teamwork, to many of the recreational opportunities that kids want to get into. Minor hockey is getting harder and harder for many families. I've been to many, many schools here in this short while I've been an MLA, and whenever I'm there, I ask them what's important to them. They say: my mom won't let me into hockey because she can't afford it. Well, there are places that families can go to, but often they're not able to.

I look at this budget, and I see nothing really that will address those needs, that will address those things that could help our problems with gang violence, that could help our problems with vandalism, that could help our problems with the idleness of hands of many of our youth, that I think is leading to great difficulties on our streets and also to the reality that these children just are not able to do those things that would keep them busy, to learn teamwork and, in fact, learn how to work better in the workplace.

An issue in the same group of vision statements is that the government would be "a responsible steward of the province's abundance of natural resources." I look to this budget, and I wonder if it's just to get as much as we can as quick as we can as opposed to really trying to steward these resources over the long term and to ensure that there is indeed a future for our children.

The next point: the issue of safety "in their homes, on their streets, at work, and in their communities." Safety in people's homes is so crucial to many of our seniors, yet they're having trouble being confident to go into the streets, especially with all the many acts of violence we're seeing. There is not, I think, a real sense in this budget to look to providing facilities for rehabilitating, for really giving the proper emphasis on doing this quickly and providing the proper amount of facilities for rehabilitating people on types of drugs like crystal meth and even other drugs that are very, very serious. The need to look to safety is crucial in our society if we are to move forward. People must feel safe in their homes if they're 10 or 12 or 15 or 60 or 70 or 80 or 90. Many people really don't feel that anymore in Alberta, and I think we have to look to stronger policing. That is not looked at in this budget. The policing budget seems to look to minimizing and still not bringing the level of the per capita numbers of police to at least – you know, it should be the highest in the country, I believe.

I think it's important. We have so many challenges in a booming economy, so many new people coming in, so much happening that we must and should have that proper funding for that incredibly important task in our society. In reality, by not doing so, we do put our officers and people in the police forces at a higher level of risk.

Another point: "The economic fundamentals of the province are strong, and the tax system is designed to promote individual entrepreneurship and the transformation to a knowledge-based economy." There have been some moves, certainly, in this, but I wonder if, really, we seem to be moving more to a branch plant economy, to an economy that's willing to be exploited in its resources, bringing in people from lands unbeknownst for temporary periods of time and taking the true fruit of our land quickly away in the form of temporary foreign workers. Many, many people in this province have expressed to me . . .

Mr. MacDonald: How many of these temporary foreign workers are we talking about?

Mr. Backs: I know of over a thousand in Fort McMurray alone from two companies only, and there are many, many others that many people are looking to bring in.

We've seen, of course, some of this division 8 application, and there's an agreement I've seen for a so-called union which has numerous provisions in it to bring in temporary foreign workers. I really, really am surprised and even disgusted at that, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, through the chair, please.

Mr. Backs: The need to deal with investment in our economy, the need to deal with venture capital, the need to deal with R and D I don't think is in any way adequately dealt with in this budget. For many, many years other provinces in this land have looked at providing venture capital through labour-sponsored venture capital funds, and for some reason this government is afraid to provide a tax break and provide venture capital in a way that works so well.

I was speaking the other day with an investor who had a very, very successful product. He's a product developer. He came out of Alberta, came out of Edmonton. He had to go outside of Alberta, outside of this province to find investors, and because of that, he had to site his production outside of this province.

We seem to be looking all the time to just working on energy production and doing everything we can to suck up to the great, huge companies in agriculture, for example, like Tyson and Cargill and other of the huge investor outfits while not really dealing with the important priorities of Albertans to ensure that there is something in the future for our Alberta and our Alberta children and grandchildren, for all that will follow.

The leading in learning. You know, I again see the lowest R and D of any province, and I find that incredible in a province with so many resources and such an ability to probably have the freest budgeting process in the land.

These are a number of, I think, important issues to look at in this budget. I mean, there are many, many, many specifics that I find very difficult. You know, some of the things in education where we're looking actually – in our greatest arts high school in Edmonton, indeed in northern Alberta, Victoria comp, not restoring the promises of this government to actually expand that facility that has been in place for a number of years. We spoke at length in this House, for a whole night, about increasing the hours of instruction for fine arts, yet we're not looking to improve this incredibly excellent facility in Edmonton. That's not in the budget.

3:50

The responsible stewarding of our environment. You know, when I look to places like our pristine eastern slopes, we see that, for example, near Rocky Mountain House you have a worse air quality than in downtown Vancouver because of flaring and not dealing with that issue. We have some problems here that really, really must be dealt with in Alberta and are not dealt with by this budget.

I think, though, clearly one of the great problems is that this is not a budget; it's just a snapshot of a particular place and time. We will not have a comprehensive plan until this government says that it will some time in the future ensure that it will not be dealing with most of its spending through supplementaries and whatever on an ad hoc basis, on a day-to-day basis, and to truly plan so that there can be fiscal prudence and fiscal responsibility by putting everything on the table.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon on Bill 41, the Appropriation Act, 2005. We have been basically going through the budget process for this entire session. We now have our 2005-06 budget ready to go, and it has been quite a process, to say the least. I appreciate the time to get to discuss the budget even further because the whole process, in my view, is inadequate.

I am surprised. Regardless of which department we look at, the amounts we are voting are staggering. They're huge. Yet we spend so little time examining these expenditures, and in reality this budget is so large that I think we should spend considerable time. Even before the budget comes to the House, there should be a form of all-party committees to examine these budgets department by department.

Last night we had one of the first steps – mind you, it was a baby step, but it was a very good step – in British Columbia toward significant legislative reform, and I would like to think that this province is also going to initiate some electoral reforms. I'm sure the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View would share my views on parliamentary reform. I don't think change is necessarily a bad thing. I think we need to look at changing our budget process here.

I look at Bill 41, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we start with the Legislative Assembly, and we look at the total budget of over \$70 million for the Legislative Assembly Office and the support to the Legislative Assembly. I'm curious. What are the plans, if any, for the Legislative Assembly grounds in this budget? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, the Leader of the Official Opposition, was compelled to ask a question in the Assembly the other day in regard to these initiatives. What exactly are the redevelopment plans, if any, for this Legislative Assembly and the grounds? Is it included in this \$70 million figure?

I think it's a very important gesture towards this city by the government. There are those that say that this city has been neglected by this government, and I would certainly agree with them on certain matters that they present. This centennial year would be an ideal time for the government to make a commitment to the capital city. What is in this budget for the Legislature Grounds? I would be very curious to know.

Now, when we look at Bill 41 and we go through it department by department, certainly education comes to mind, and public education. We see the amounts here of \$2.7 billion, and we've got another nonbudgetary disbursement of \$1 million. But we look at the size of the budget, we look at the size of government, even the RAGE minister, the increase in the size of government – and it was noted in this Assembly that the SuperNet was being hooked up to schools that were on the hit list to be closed.

Now, hon. members are going to wonder: well, what's he talking about, the hit list? Well, on October 14, 2004, the ministry of learning and the ministry of infrastructure sent a letter to the Edmonton public school board, and stated: you have a lot of unutilized space; you have to get rid of it; you have to close schools before we're going to give you any construction dollars to build new schools. I think that is just bad public policy. These community schools have been an investment by previous governments.

When we look at these schools and the importance they are to their respective communities, we've got to look at it this way. The parents in those respective communities where the forced closures are occurring felt strong enough about their community schools that they were willing to take the Edmonton public school board to court. It's unusual for parents in the public school system to take the board officials to court, but this occurred. The parents are very passionate about seeing that their schools continue to operate.

Now, when we look at this massive budget and the money that we're spending in education and the amount that we would save by closing these schools, it doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense that we are hooking them up to the SuperNet unless we have some sort of other motive, if there is a tenant-in-waiting that's going to find that SuperNet connection already installed and already paid for to their financial advantage.

When a school board is forced by this government to implement this closure process – and they implemented the closure process, I must say, in a great hurry, to the point where they forgot to talk about some of the latest changes that this government made to the school closures regulation. In fact, 4(2)(b.1) of the school closure regulation indicates that the long-term capital plan of the respective school division must be made available to the parents when there is a notice of a meeting to close a school. That, in my view, certainly was not done by the school board.

When we look at the money that the school board is spending to close these schools and the money that is estimated to be saved – it's in the range of \$90,000 for one school and \$140,000 for another school – it's not that much money that we are saving. Mr. Speaker, when we're looking at Bill 41 and we're going through this bill line by line and we see the money that is being spent, perhaps we can spare those community schools.

4:00

Perhaps we should look at less money being spent, for instance, on the horse-racing renewal. Maybe we should really put children and community schools first. We could spend a lot less on travel and on communications and spend more on schools.

Now, there are those that say to me at the Capilano Mall, at the coffee shop: "What is this government doing? Where is their vision? They're so anxious to force the closure of public schools, yet they want to open more casinos. They want to facilitate more liquor stores that are open until midnight. Why are we so anxious to close schools, yet we seem to be so anxious to open more casinos?" It just doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense to this hon. member, Mr. Speaker, and it doesn't make sense to people at the Capilano coffee shop. They're scratching their heads on this one.

I think we can afford to invest in schools in other parts of the city, in other parts of the province without having to sacrifice central Edmonton neighbourhoods and their schools that were a public investment sometimes as much as a half a century ago. I don't think, again, it is good public policy. I think we have the money for this.

Certainly, in the past in other school districts this government has seen fit to invest millions of dollars in funding for schools that have very low enrolments, and there is a very small number of schools in a selected area. Going back six years, the government has made this commitment to other districts, so I'm asking now: why can't they do it for the city of Edmonton? Why can't they do it for central Edmonton neighbourhoods? We don't want to have this doughnut effect for the city, where there are no children in the centre of the city because there are not enough schools.

Now, getting to another point about the importance of schools, I had the opportunity of having a quick look at the children's advocate report, the one that was late in coming. I was surprised that that annual report was so long in the making before it got to this Assembly, but I did notice in there that there were many children who rely on community schools, smaller schools, because it's the only stability they have in their lives. That is why it is so important to have small community schools. I thought that was very interesting. How interesting is that? While this government is forcing the closure of public schools within this city, those children, some of whom are in need, rely on that school, that small school, to deliver

specific programs for them because it's the only stable factor in their lives.

I'm disappointed that we are contemplating closing even more public schools. The dropout rate among those children is significant. I was disappointed again, and I'm disappointed to say that in the city of Edmonton and the Edmonton public school district if we average three years, the completion rate for high school is 57 per cent.

Now, when we look at that high dropout rate . . . [interjection] Hon. Minister of Advanced Education, I'm sorry?

Mr. Hancock: It's trending up rapidly. There have been significant improvements.

Mr. MacDonald: There's a lot of work to be done there. If it is trending up rapidly, I'm very pleased to hear that, but the statistics at the moment don't back that up.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the high dropout rate and we look at the high utilization rate of our city of Edmonton high schools, some of whom have utilization rates well in excess of a hundred per cent, that tells me there are high school students who are falling through the cracks. With the closure of some elementary and junior highs we're now looking at similar utilization rates in some junior highs across the city. I'm afraid that for some junior high students, because of the lack of attention and the overcrowded classrooms and the huge student bodies, in some cases 400 students, in some cases 500 students, in some cases 600 students, these schools are too big. Some students who need individual help will not get it, and as a result they will become alienated and they will quit school, and then we will run into a lot more problems. I would ask the hon. members across the way to have a good look at the children's advocate report and think about the consequences of larger junior highs. I don't think, again, it is good public policy.

Now, when we look at the education budget here and we look at the money that is proposed to be spent here in Bill 41, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at some of the funding that is supposedly coming from Infrastructure for the Victoria school project, as it's called, the Victoria school of arts. I don't know what the government's policy is on this, but I'm told Strathearn school can't have a K through 9 because we don't want any more of these schools. We can't have a combination of an elementary and a junior high, but it seems to fit the model at Victoria school.

I'm sorry; I've run out of time. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Notice of Privilege

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give notice of a possible question of privilege. Under Standing Order 15(5) on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford I'd like to be able to advise the House of the possibility that I would bring forward the privilege motion on the next regular sitting day of this Assembly.

There needs to be additional information sought and additional research done, but at this point I can advise the Speaker that this is being considered because of an altercation that took place immediately outside of the Assembly between the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar and the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. Although it is outside of the Chamber, I believe that there are sufficient citations to address a matter that takes place within the precincts of the Assembly and under the purview and control of the Speaker, particularly where the action which occurred involves a physical assault or molestation.

So, with those words, I will hope that that acts as sufficient notice,

and when I have been able to do sufficient research to be confident that I would not be abusing the time of the Assembly, as I say, I've given notice and that allows me to bring forward the point of privilege motion on the next regular sitting day of the Assembly. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has given notice that she will bring forward a motion of privilege. As you know, the next sitting that we will have will not be a regular one. That will be the one at which the Queen will visit the Assembly. So probably this matter may not be dealt with until the fall when we reconvene. So it shall be dealt with at that point in time. Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Debate Continued

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and discuss briefly some of the issues raised by the Appropriation Act, 2005, and like the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark want to both commend and encourage some reformation of the budgeting discussions and process and encourage more open disclosure of the facts relating to each budget from each department so that it's more constructive discussion, more constructive debate. It's clear that the role of government is to provide a budget that honestly reflects their commitment to the people of Alberta in how they will distribute and invest in the resources and people of the province. I, too, would like to see a more in-depth capacity to do this, less adversarial and more honest, working together for the benefit of all. So I wasn't entirely satisfied with the process, and I, too, would like to see some reform there.

4:10

I wanted to talk briefly, then, about some of the issues relating to what we mean by developing the province and how this budget reflects our commitment to sustainable development and the policy that has been explicated in the government on sustainable development, which fundamentally means using nonrenewable and renewable resources without compromising the future. Those are great words, but what we need to see, in my estimation, and reflected in the budget is a stronger commitment to the future and to the capacity to measure what it is we have in order to decide how much we use each year and allow some confidence for all of us that there will be resources there for our children and, indeed, seven generations, as the First Nations have challenged us to think about.

Without that vision and without the measurements of what we are dealing with, I don't see the commitment to sustainability translated into a meaningful plan for the future. So it strikes me that with this commitment the government has made, each department needs to look at what sustainable development might look like in the context particularly of our resources, both renewable and nonrenewable, but also as that would relate to the human services and the protection of the environment.

The Alberta advantage is for many Albertans increasingly becoming an Alberta liability, both economically and environmentally, and there is an increasing call that I'm hearing for a reflection of these concerns about our future and the way we are measuring our capacity to continue with a growing population and depleting resources, how we are going to guarantee that our children will have some quality of life and some capacity to continue to work and play and to recreate in our communities.

We need them to do at least three things to move this budget and planning to a different level. We need, one, to establish the value of natural capital as it exists without developing it and perhaps postponing development to a certain point of time so that we're actually looking into the future and not only looking at what the market is driving us to do today. The second thing it seems to me that we need to do to think about more sustainable development is to measure the inventory we have so that we know how much we can afford to develop in a given year. The third thing is to take the proper role in setting limits on growth, which is the fundamental trust given to us by the people of Alberta. I would add a fourth, that the public needs to be more actively involved in that planning and that decision-making in order to in an ongoing way reflect the interests of the public and to indeed stimulate, encourage, and revitalize the democracy that we say we believe in here.

All the bills, committees, policies, and regulations will not be translated into genuine progress – that is, healthy people, a good quality of life, social cohesion, and vital democracy – if we do not include these parameters in our planning and in our budgeting.

In relation to the Environment budget, then, it was disturbing for me and disappointing for many Albertans that we remain at less than 0.5 per cent of the budget for something as vital as environmental protection. For many of us there is a need for recommitting ourselves to environmental protection and redressing the drastic reductions that occurred in our capacity to monitor and enforce our good environmental laws with more staff since the early '90s, when approximately 25 per cent of the staff in Alberta Environment were cut.

Water protection is clearly a vital interest to all Albertans, and fair allocation of water is an increasing concern across the province, particularly in southern Alberta. Water for Life is a tremendous vision, but without adequate resources allocated in the budget, it's impossible to think that this will become a reality in the very near future, which is needed. We're estimating that more like \$100 million, almost the entire Alberta Environment budget, would be needed to adequately implement the Water for Life strategy for the next three years.

Deregulation in this province and self-monitoring by industry have also raised levels of anxiety, and the public interest is not necessarily being served for many in these approvals and decommissioning and remediation of particularly oil and gas sites. There is increasing anxiety that we're not capable of monitoring and certifying that these sites are properly decommissioned and remediated, especially with the fivefold increase in this activity in the last decade and without commensurate staffing increases.

We also need to develop the capacity to measure cumulative impacts. New measures are needed for that. It's clear that we need to invest in both some of the science and some of the staffing that would be needed to look at the tremendous demands that are now on the landscape, not only oil and gas but forestry, agriculture, and other industries. How are they all going to fit together, and how do they link with the plan for that particular region?

People have to have some input into how their region is being developed. It cannot simply be determined by industry and the free market and expect that Albertans will be happy with development as it goes in that direction. People have to have a more meaningful involvement in how their region is being developed, and that, again, reflects back on how well we contribute to a stronger democracy and how well we actually plan for the values that Albertans have articulated as in their interest.

I just want to say before closing a few more comments about energy as it reflects so strongly in this province on our priorities, what our income will be, and what our future environmental and

social costs might look like. It's not clear how we will meet the needs of Albertans with declining royalties from conventional oil and gas. As we look to the oil sands to sustain our fossil fuel dependency in Alberta, Albertans are anxious to know whether they're receiving a fair return for their resource, and I think, rightly, that this needs to be addressed clearly and publicly. For example, how long can industry postpone full royalty payments in the oil sands in terms of capital cost recovery? Secondly, should the royalties relate in some way to the price of oil? Since the agreements on royalties were set almost a decade ago, how do they relate now to \$55 U.S. a barrel of oil, and are they fairly representing what Albertans deserve?

The Energy and Utilities Board is the gatekeeper for approval, monitoring, and enforcement, and it has essentially lost public confidence. The Energy and Utilities Board does not appear to be serving the public interest, and there's increasing anxiety in the stakeholders that I talk to and the public in many jurisdictions in Alberta, that is going to be expressed in increasing contention and conflict.

I would hope that the budget would reflect a greater commitment to communicating with the public and including the public in some of the decision-making. I've indicated three areas where I think this would be important: one, a vision and a plan for the different regions of the province; that is, priority zoning needs to happen which would identify one or more compatible industries that could be conceived in that area. Number two, substantial public involvement has to be

involved in this process. Number three, the capacity to address cumulative impacts of the various activities existing and planned is essential.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will thank you for the opportunity to discuss this vital matter that needs also to be reassessed in terms of how we deal with these issues next year. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 41 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Acting Government House Leader.
4:20

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government House Leader I'd like to move to adjourn pursuant to Government Motion 16, agreed to on April 6, 2005.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 16, agreed to on April 6, 2005, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 24, at noon. Members are expected to be seated in this Assembly before that.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a very safe long weekend.

[Pursuant to Government Motion 16 the Assembly adjourned at 4:21 p.m. to Tuesday, May 24, at 12 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 24, 2005**

12:15 p.m.

Date: 05/05/24

[The Mace was draped]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada.

[A fanfare sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Speaker entered the Chamber. Her Majesty took Her place upon the throne]

The Speaker: I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of the Royal Anthem, *God Save The Queen*.

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen!
Send Her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen!

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Your Majesty, it is an honour on behalf of all Members of Alberta's Legislative Assembly to welcome You to this Chamber.

The men and women who sit in this parliament and all who have served remain earnest in their desire to express their loyalty and devotion to the people of this great province, their beloved country, and to their Queen.

Alberta is a land of peace. Freedom, tolerance, prosperity, and unbounded opportunity are words that reflect much of our history.

We are fortunate in God's grace to have been blessed with a beautiful landscape, with abundant natural resources, and with a population drawn from all corners of the globe. Our citizens have created a province known for its vision, its energy, and its spirit.

Our public policies, the laws of Alberta, have been the product of passion, fairness, reason, and debate.

Our Assembly is and has always been in a partnership with the Crown. Safeguarding the rights of all of our citizens, Your Majesty's representatives, our Lieutenant Governors, have well reflected the values that have been the personal hallmarks of Your reign: devotion to duty, an abiding concern for all, courage, stability, a sense of continuity, and above all grace and dignity.

It is with humility and pride that we welcome Your Majesty.

It's now my honour to invite the Premier of Alberta, the Hon. Ralph Klein, to address Your Majesty and all here present.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Majesty, members of the Royal household, hon. members of the judiciary, former Lieutenant Governor, former Premiers, Mr. Speaker, hon. ministers, Leader of the Official Opposition, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and distinguished guests all:

On behalf of the government of Alberta it is my very great privilege to welcome Her Majesty the Queen to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Albertans have long looked forward to this Royal visit as a highlight of our province's centennial celebrations. Her Majesty's

presence during this special year is an honour graciously bestowed upon all people of this province, one that is deeply felt and appreciated by all Albertans. It is truly a centennial gift to be treasured.

Albertans take great pride in this country's ties to the monarchy and its membership in the Commonwealth and all it stands for. This is as true for the young Albertans who are preparing to continue the work of building this province as it is for those who began that great work 100 years ago.

Today students from Granum school – and Her Majesty had the opportunity of meeting them – and from St. Matthew Lutheran school, which are also celebrating their centennials this year, are here to greet the Queen and to hear Her address to the Legislative Assembly. It will be the first time ever that a reigning monarch has addressed this Legislature, and it gives me great joy that some of Alberta's young people, who represent the very best of this province, will have the opportunity to hear Her Majesty's inspiring message.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Your Majesty, it's my great honour to invite You to address our Assembly.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Address to the Legislative Assembly

Her Majesty the Queen: Mr. Speaker, Premier, ladies and gentlemen, Prince Philip and I are very pleased to be back in Alberta in this centennial year as you celebrate not only your historic past but also the dynamism of your community today as well as the great opportunities that lie ahead.

When looking back on the story of Alberta, we see it extend well before 1905. It is, indeed, the story of Canada. Your First Nations peoples inhabited the prairies over 10,000 years ago, living in harmony with nature then as they do now. By the 1800s these first citizens along with the Métis were joined by explorers, homesteaders, and railway workers from all over the world. They had a dream: to build homes in a land where freedom reigned. They created a spirit of belonging to a bountiful country under the principles of peace, order, and good government and the unifying influence of the Crown. It is a fitting homage to these ancestors that your motto is *Fortis et Liber, strong and free*.

Je suis heureuse d'apprendre que le gouvernement de la province souligne cette année charnière en instituant un programme du centenaire laissé en héritage. Il investit dans les parcs, les lieux historiques et les installations récréatives de l'Alberta. Ces projets prometteurs illustrent l'importance que les Albertains accordent à une excellente qualité de vie, aux perspectives économiques encourageantes et aux réussites dans les domaines de l'agriculture, de l'énergie et de l'industrie. Il témoigne aussi de votre gratitude envers les générations d'aînés et d'ancêtres, dont le travail acharné a permis d'édifier l'Alberta d'aujourd'hui.

Among the early settlers who came here so many decades ago to build a new life, there were thousands of families with children who were themselves destined to become the nation builders of the future. Today I'm speaking on air across the province, including schools in communities from Lethbridge to Fort Vermilion, from Wainwright to Grande Cache.

Just half an hour ago at the Provincial Museum, now called the Royal Alberta Museum, I enjoyed the opportunity to meet some of the young people of Alberta who were touring that showcase of living heritage. I hope that all young people in the province will take the opportunity of the centennial to learn of the way in which their own communities have flourished over the last hundred years.

Alors que les Albertains et tous les Canadiens voient leur histoire comme un récit coloré du passé, nous estimons qu'elle est aussi le fondement du présent et de l'avenir. Au cours de cette visite, puisque nous rendons hommage au dynamisme de ceux qui ont bâti ce grand pays, il convient de se rappeler que nous pouvons effectivement faire une différence pour ceux qui viendront après nous. Si nous nous efforçons dans notre vie et à notre manière d'améliorer le monde qui nous entoure, alors nous pourrions à bon droit être fière de notre contribution.

During a previous visit 32 years ago I said: "I want the Crown in Canada to represent everything that is best and most admired in the Canadian ideal. I will continue to do my best to make it so during my lifetime, and I hope you will all continue to give me your help in this task." I would like to repeat those words today as together we continue to build a country that remains the envy of the world.

May God bless you on this happy hundredth birthday, and I send to you all my warmest good wishes for the years to come.

The Speaker: Your Majesty, through Your actions and through Your words Your Majesty has conferred a signal recognition on Alberta's Legislative Assembly. Since 1905 its members have sought to serve their sovereign, this province, and the dominion of Canada faithfully and well. We face our future ever mindful of our heritage and our history and especially of our duty to future generations as yet unborn. We thank You for Your belief in us as a people.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen. [applause]

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, if we could all rise now and join in the singing of our national anthem. We'll be led by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Please feel free to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members and Guests:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Speaker, Ms White, Premier Klein, Dr. Klein, and members of the Royal party left the Chamber to the applause of members and guests]

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Government Motion 7, agreed to on March 7, 2005, I move that the House stand adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 7, agreed to on March 7, 2005, the House stands adjourned.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a very pleasant and wonderful summer, and when you're driving our freeways or our fairways, drive carefully.

[Pursuant to Government Motion 7 the Assembly adjourned at 12:31 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, November 15, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/11/15
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon. I'd ask the members to remain standing after prayers so that we may pay tribute to our former colleagues who have passed away since we were last in the House.

As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, we ask for divine guidance so that our words and deeds may bring to all people of this great province hope, prosperity, and a vision for the future. Amen.

With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of their families who shared the burdens of public office. Members of John Batiuk's and Sheila Embury's family are with us today in the Speaker's gallery.

Mr. George Ho Lem
June 15, 1918, to July 9, 2005

The Speaker: Mr. George Ho Lem passed away on July 9, 2005. Mr. Ho Lem was first elected in the election held August 30, 1971, and served until March 26, 1975. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Calgary-McCall for the Social Credit Party. During his term of office Mr. Ho Lem served on the select standing committees on Law and Regulations; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; and Public Affairs. He also served on the Select Special Committee on Foreign Investment.

Mr. John Batiuk
March 20, 1923, to August 1, 2005

The Speaker: Mr. John S. Batiuk passed away on August 1, 2005. Mr. Batiuk was first elected in the election held August 30, 1971, and served until May 8, 1986. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Vegreville for the Progressive Conservative Party. During his term of office Mr. Batiuk served on the select standing committees on Law and Regulations; Private Bills; Public Accounts; Public Affairs; and the Select Special Committee on Chief Electoral Officer Appointment or Search.

Mrs. Sheila Embury
June 6, 1931, to August 1, 2005

The Speaker: Mrs. Sheila Embury passed away on August 1, 2005, at the age of 74 years. Mrs. Embury was first elected in the election held March 14, 1979, and served until May 8, 1986. During her years of service she represented the constituency of Calgary-North West for the Progressive Conservative Party. During her term of office Mrs. Embury served on the select standing committees on Members' Services; Private Bills; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; Public Accounts; and Public Affairs. She also served on the Select Special Committee to Examine the Role of Upper House in Canadian Federal System.

Our prayers are with them.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember hon. members George Ho Lem, John Batiuk, and Sheila Embury as you have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members I would now invite Mr. Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
 True patriot love in all thy sons command.
 With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
 The True North strong and free!
 From far and wide, O Canada,
 We stand on guard for thee.
 God keep our land glorious and free!
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Statement by the Speaker**
Sound System Renovations

The Speaker: Hon. members, many of you will have already noted that your desk console is different from when we last sat in the Chamber in the spring. Upgrading of the Chamber sound system has resulted in changes to the console which will facilitate both better sound production in the Chamber and the use of member laptops. You will find on your desks a brief description for the purpose of the varied aspects of the new console.

Experience tells me that during the first week when a new sound system comes into play, minor adjustments may be necessitated or required concerning the operation of the system at its optimum level, so if there are momentary lapses in the next number of days, please bear with us as we work out the bugs. If you have any concerns at all with respect to the system, please advise the Sergeant-at-Arms as we proceed during the Routine.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's an honour for me to rise today to introduce to you guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. These guests are family members of our former colleagues, and I would ask them to rise as I introduce them. The family of Mr. John Batiuk, former MLA for the constituency of Vegreville, is represented by John's widow, Mrs. Rose Batiuk, who is here with her daughters Mrs. Marlene Solowan and Mrs. Eleanor Cowan and Mrs. Sylvia Zacharkiw and son-in-law Mr. Harold Zacharkiw and John's brother Mr. Ed Batiuk.

Mr. David Embury, widower of Mrs. Sheila Embury, former MLA for the constituency of Calgary-North West, is here with family friend and former MLA the hon. Tom Chambers.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce two very active representatives of postsecondary students in our province. Ms Elaine Ho is the provincial director of the Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council, ACTISEC, and Mr. Duncan Wojtaszek is executive director of the Council of Alberta University Students, CAUS. Both of these individuals have played an integral role in the recent review of our province's advanced learning system. They represented their associations at regional meetings and at the A Learning Alberta minister's forum, which was held earlier this month. Their perspective and input has been invaluable as we develop a new vision and overarching policy framework for advancing learning in this province.

The government has always welcomed feedback from student groups and will continue to do so. I look forward to working with them in the near future so that we can create a system which is even more accessible, affordable, and high quality for Alberta learners in the 21st century. Mr. Speaker, I thank Duncan and Elaine for

joining us today, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests who are involved in programs dedicated to the prevention of family violence. My guests are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and it's my honour to introduce Sister Lucinda May Patterson, the executive director of Lurana Shelter, and Deb Thomlinson, provincial co-ordinator of the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres. Both of these women work tirelessly to give victims of family violence the support and help they need at a difficult time. I would ask Sister Lucinda and Deb to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly some special visitors from Qingdao, a city in China. Qingdao is situated on the eastern coast of China about 600 kilometres south of Harbin, which of course many of us are familiar with. They're here to look at waste-water treatment, how to generate energy from that and also to produce clean water. I would ask them to rise as I introduce them: Zhong Wei, the director of the Qingdao municipal overseas investment bureau; Guobang Li, the general manager, Qingdao e-tech development zone; Hong Kun Chu, project manager, Qingdao municipal overseas investment bureau; their translator; and they're hosted by Ken Weenink and Brian Grossen. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you a very special constituent of mine. He holds many titles, and he's been introduced here several times, but currently he is the mayor of Breton, the president of ASCHA, and the vice-president of AUMA. I'd ask that Darren Aldous would stand along with his daughters and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of sets of introductions today. The first is to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Bill and Margaret Kurtze, who I believe are seated in the public gallery, and they've travelled from Calgary to be with us today. Bill was originally born and bred in Saskatchewan but moved to Calgary in 1970. It was there that he and his wife, Margaret, raised three daughters. Bill worked for most of his life in the petroleum industry, on the nonprofit and regulatory side, and through his work he took a particular interest in safety regulations for sour gas wells. Bill and Margaret, a retired school-teacher, are looking for a government that realizes the need for greater community development and support. Please join me in giving our guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

My other introductions, Mr. Speaker, are of new staff who have joined us since the last time this Assembly sat. I'd like to introduce to you our new chief of staff, Jacqueline Foord, who has a long career in executive administration in the nonprofit sector; Mr. Chris

McLeod, our director of communications, who's got many years of experience as a communications professional; and one of our new researchers, Paul Way. Would they please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly fabulous students from Lago Lindo school up in the north side. They are accompanied by teachers Mr. Peters, Miss Goodall, principal John Eshenko, and parent volunteers Mrs. Salha El Hakim, Ms Mullet, Mr. Lapierre, Mrs. Rodrigues, and Mrs. Bye. If they would please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly Mrs. Sandi James, a grade 6 teacher from one of Edmonton's finest public schools, Clara Tyner, located in the Edmonton-Gold Bar constituency. Mrs. James is accompanied by 26 of her grade 6 students not only today, but they're here in the Legislative Assembly for the entire week to participate in that very good program that the Speaker has developed over the years for public school students. Mrs. James is accompanied by Mrs. Carmen Koble, Mr. Robert Proudfoot, and Mrs. Damaris Crawford. They have taken time from their busy schedules to participate today with the students. It is interesting to note that yesterday, in order to recognize Alberta's centennial, the students and their teacher dressed up as students and teacher from 1905 in period costumes. They are in the members' gallery, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a honour to introduce to you and through you two individuals. The first is Stewart Mawdsley. Stewart is currently enrolled at the U of A, pursuing a degree in pharmacy. He is an academic all-Canadian, maintaining a 3.9 GPA as well as competing as a decathlete for the Alberta Golden Bears.

The second person, Mr. Speaker, is well known to all of us. His name is Kyle Franz. Kyle has recently returned to Alberta after graduating with first-class honours from Simon Fraser University to complete his graduate research in labour history at the University of Lethbridge. Some day Kyle is going to be known for his research work in the mining communities in the Crownsnest Pass, but to all of us he is known as a former president of the PC Youth.

I would ask both of them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Darlene Friesen. Darlene previously worked in the field of accounting but has since retired. She is advocating for a fair society where seniors receive the benefits and recognition for their worthy contributions. I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have a second introduction. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Bertha Nohr. Bertha is a long-time constituent of Glenora who is also part of the newly formed group called Election Oriented Seniors. Bertha has worked as a deputy returning officer in a number of federal, provincial, and municipal elections but has recently decided to retire from this work to allow the next generation the opportunity to be involved in our electoral system. I ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Mason: I'm pleased this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mr. Albert Opstad. Albert has been a tireless advocate for seniors' equality for a number of years. His involvement includes being the first president of Seniors United Now, playing an active role with the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and forming the group Election Oriented Seniors. This morning his group met with my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I would ask that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Ms Diane Zinyk, who is seated in the public gallery. Diane has been a strong supporter of mine since I first ran in 1997. In the past Diane has worked for HRDC and then subsequently for Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Diane has also been very active with a number of community organizations, including Catholic Social Services, Strathcona Baptist Church, and many arts organizations across the city. I would now ask that Diane rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: 1:50 **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Budget Surplus Expenditures

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta needs a government that makes a budget and sticks to it. If spending on a project is justified, it should be in the budget. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: can this minister tell us how far over budget his department is so far this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is an honour to take the first question. My department is absolutely right on budget. We have received another \$400 million since the budget was passed, and I want to guarantee that those dollars are being spent in the absolute best interests of Albertans for Albertans' future.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Fiscal hawks turning into fiscal turkeys. My next question to the Minister of Advanced Education: can the minister tell us how much in unbudgeted spending his department has committed so far this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question really is not

one of how much in unbudgeted spending but how, because of the physical realities of the province and the good management in the province, we've been able to take additional revenues and apply them to the planned strategies and the planned projects that were already in place.

We've been able to announce projects across the province such as the water building at the University of Lethbridge, which is an integral piece of the water strategy for the province. We've been able to announce money for planning at SAIT so that we can renew the platform at SAIT to train and accredit workers in this province that are sorely needed to keep our economy alive. We've been able to announce money at the University of Alberta for the ambulatory learning centre. There have been a number of projects: at Red Deer for an expansion to their trade centre and at Lakeland College. These are all projects that have been in the strategic plan that each of these institutions has put forward in their 10-year plans, and because of the fiscal realities in the province we're able to allocate the resources to do it.

Dr. Taft: Well, Mr. Speaker, that minister doesn't have a clue either.

To the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations: can this minister tell the Assembly if his department is on target to finish the year on budget?

Mr. Stelmach: Yes, we are. We completed the opening of the Washington office. We're currently working feverishly with the federal government on a number of initiatives. One of them is the world trade talks, trying to build consensus across Canada. The second task is to find some common ground with respect to the softwood lumber dispute. That's just part and parcel of what we're doing on behalf of Albertans.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's be brutally honest. This government's budget is barely six months old and has already been blown to smithereens. The government seems to have abandoned all pretense of control of the public purse. It feels like there are more holes in the budget than in a mad cow's brain. To the Premier: does the Premier accept the principle that if an expenditure is well thought out and properly justified, it should be in the budget?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm not a leadership candidate, but I'll be glad to answer the question. If the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was listening during the budget speech, he would've heard these words delivered by our Provincial Treasurer.

It's the responsible course to take. And yes, it means there will be years when resource revenues are higher than expected. That is the nature of oil and gas revenue. When that happens, there are choices we can make about how surplus funds can be used, strategically and deliberately, to invest in Alberta's future.

Obviously, that member was not listening.

We could increase the Sustainability Fund, add to our current endowment funds, or increase funding for capital to meet emerging needs for infrastructure. All of these choices are possible because of our strong financial position. And they will be made throughout the year . . .

They will be made throughout the year.

. . . as our financial forecasts are updated.

Dr. Taft: To the Minister of Health and Wellness: can this minister tell us, say to the nearest million dollars, the total unbudgeted spending she has announced so far this fiscal year?

Ms Evans: Well, yes. Mr. Speaker, the first thing is that I'm not a leadership candidate, and I'll make that very clear.

I would identify that this government announced \$1.4 billion worth of health expenditures. For those expenditures that were identified last year in June and again in October, that would give, in fact, the city of Edmonton, the capital region, some \$647 million worth of needed bed reclamation on four sites and would also provide us with some support for Eastwood and Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona county. So, in fact, we have followed through on commitments we made last year, planning that was done last year, and I think Albertans welcome that. Mr. Speaker, there would be none of my constituents in the entire capital region that would say that this is a bad idea.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If they're such good ideas, why weren't they in the budget that was presented here a mere six months ago? Why is your budget process so full of holes?

Ms Evans: Was that for me?

Dr. Taft: Yes, to the same minister.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to talk about the budget process, maybe I should get into the discussion, and I won't make any comments on candidates or anything.

Clearly, this government laid out a budget in April, and what the hon. member has to try hard to understand is that there is a budget process and that we base our program spending on our best information from the best analysts in revenue of all types. It's incredibly important that that program spending is there and is sustainable. We recognized, as the Premier correctly read from our budget speech, which was presented in this House in April of this year, not that long ago – one could remember it – that there would be a very distinct possibility of in-year spending if there were unanticipated increased revenues in oil and gas. Now, Mr. Speaker, everyone is a good predictor of oil and gas revenues and prices after the fact. I didn't hear anyone saying that we would have \$60 or \$65 oil or \$12 or \$13 gas in April of this year.

So we base our budget on good information, good planning, and Albertans are very happy that we are able to follow through on commitments to capital and savings, and they consider it smart spending.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Private Health Services

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health minister has repeatedly promised that this government will not violate federal health legislation, yet in documents obtained by the opposition, this government clearly plans on violating the Canada Health Act by allowing doctors to be paid from both the private and the public systems. My questions are to the Premier. Given that a violation of the Canada Health Act in 1996 caused the federal government to stop all health transfer payments to the province, will the minister explain why the government is pursuing privatization at any cost?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Oh. I'm sorry. I thought it was to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, first of all, everything that was in the documents is on the website for Alberta Health. You can look at those documents and see exactly what's there.

What we have suggested as a discussion point, which has yet to be ratified, is whether or not doctors can opt in or opt out and work in the private system or, in fact, work in both systems. It is not a contravention of the Canada Health Act. It is, in fact, Mr. Speaker, something that several provinces currently have as an arrangement with their physicians. It's one of the things that we believe we should talk about in terms of how we commit ourselves to long-term sustainability in health.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is this government planning on introducing a policy that would encourage Albertans to buy private insurance for a wide range of medical services when they admit in their own documents that "Albertans may not qualify because of illness or predetermined condition"?

2:00

Mr. Klein: We haven't adopted anything, Mr. Speaker, other than the policy to pursue the investigation into making our system consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada ruling. Now, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the case of a Quebec patient that that person was entitled to alleviate his pain and his suffering if he wanted to buy private insurance or pay for it out of his own pocket.

Mr. Mason: Because the province left him waiting for over a year.

Mr. Klein: That could have been the case, Mr. Speaker, that the province left him waiting for over a year. That could have been the case and legitimately so because his doctor probably said: we can treat you, but you're going to have to wait a year or two or three.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDs and the Liberals, this government is not ignoring the elephant in the room. We are dealing with it. The worst thing is to be afraid of change and to do nothing. That's exactly what the Liberals and the NDs want. They want us to do absolutely nothing other than to throw more money at the situation. I've said before that the health system is like a Pac-Man: it gobbles up the money. We don't see a healthier Liberal, we don't see a healthier ND, we don't see a healthier Conservative, and we don't see a healthier Albertan because of it.

The Speaker: I'll now call on the hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is this government ignoring evidence presented at their own Health Symposium last spring that indicated that privatization does not improve access to health care and has a negative impact on the public system?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, that was an opinion. The word "privatization" is a forbidden word to the opposition. It's a forbidden word and not open for democratic discussion, not open for discussion in this Legislature. Well, for us, no option is forbidden for discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind this hon. member that right now, as we speak, people in British Columbia, Quebec, and elsewhere – and the federal Liberals, their cousins, turn a blind eye to it – are in fact paying out of their pockets for some surgical services. Yet they get all flustered and beet red and stamp their feet when Alberta even talks about it. How hypocritical of them. In those provinces the health system has not collapsed.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Premier's Travel

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Between the spring and fall sittings this Legislative Assembly will likely end up sitting for a total of only 50 days out of 365, yet the Premier has once again organized his schedule to avoid being in the Assembly to account for the government's policies and its spending. Billions of dollars are being spent without a financial plan, health care is being privatized, and the Premier is hiding from the elected representatives of the people. To the Premier: why is the Premier deliberately avoiding being accountable for his massive and unplanned spending spree?

Mr. Klein: Well, I don't think it's massive, and I don't think it's a spending spree. It's a tour that was planned some months ago, I think about last May, to be exact. It hasn't exactly been a secret that I would be away next week, touring the rest of Canada, explaining, really, that this is a caring and a sharing province. It is our centennial year, and there will be some interesting announcements along the way. As a matter of fact, we'll be visiting their Liberal cousins in Ontario and some Liberals in Quebec and some Conservatives in Atlantic Canada, so they shouldn't be all that mad about it.

Relative to the question, there are 23 ministers, and in this very, very short time they've proven themselves very capable of answering any question that you may have.

Mr. Mason: So the Premier is superfluous, then, I suppose, Mr. Speaker.

Why is the Premier deliberately avoiding being accountable for the government's policies of pushing more costs for health care onto individuals through the privatization of Alberta's health care system?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the fundamental question is: what do we do as a Legislature to make our legislation consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada ruling? I can understand the individual in Quebec, the patient who is suffering extreme pain but is told by his doctor that he might have to wait a year or two years or whatever it is – the opposition NDs say that it's a year – that he has to wait a year, and he says: "I don't want to wait. I am suffering pain. I am hurting, and although it's a nonemergency procedure, I want to have it done. I'm hurting." The Supreme Court has ruled that he's entitled to get that service to alleviate the pain. The NDs would rather have him exist in pain and suffering. That's what they're all about.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier was around here a little more, he'd know that that's not true.

Why does this Premier, alone among all the first ministers in Canada, feel that he has the right to govern without being accountable to the Legislature for his actions?

Mr. Klein: I really don't understand that statement, Mr. Speaker, because we are accountable to the Legislature. Indeed, all of the information relative to health care, for instance, will be coming back to the Legislature in the spring. There will be ample time for debate, ample time for the NDs to make their point and the Liberals to make their point and the Conservatives to make their point. There will be an SPC process. There will be a caucus, cabinet process.

An Hon. Member: SPC: what's that?

Mr. Klein: A standing policy committee of government. SPC, standing policy committee; OG, of government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Continuing Care Review

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, this past summer myself along with the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East were members of an MLA Task Force on Continuing Care Health Service and Accommodation Standards. Our mandate was to hold consultation meetings with a variety of continuing care stakeholders, to hold public forums, to tour many long-term care facilities, and to ask many questions in order to gain insight into the quality of continuing care services being offered here in Alberta. A final report was developed and submitted to the government, indicating what we heard during our consultations, and 45 recommendations were suggested in order to improve the quality of services for Albertans and their families who require continuing care services. My question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Now that the report is in your hands, when will your ministry implement the immediate actions recommended in order to ensure that residents receive quality health and personal care services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, along with members of this Assembly I think that we should thank every member of that task force for the incredible work that they did throughout the summer.

Mr. Speaker, continuing care is a very difficult and emotional issue. We have received the report. I'm very pleased to work with my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports to examine what we can do immediately and in the upcoming years to answer the recommendations and to have a thorough discussion of the report and to make sure that we follow through on the recommendations.

2:10

Mr. Webber: Again to the Minister of Health and Wellness. During the consultation period the task force heard day in, day out how there is a shortage of health care professionals. What new strategy does the minister plan to develop regarding the recruitment and retention of these health care professionals?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we will come out with more information on that in a very short period of time, but may I say that after the Auditor General's report we immediately increased the staffing level requirement in all regional health authorities from 3.1 to 3.4. In concert with the regional health authorities we're examining the training component that's recommended in the report, the workforce requirements, the workforce needs, the predominant recommendations about medications. I know that the minister of seniors is also looking at the accommodation needs and may wish to address that as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Given that the needs of seniors living in our lodges have grown more complex in recent

years, can the minister advise how she is working to ensure that lodge operators can provide appropriate services to our seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, we have 144 lodges in Alberta, and those lodges, as the hon. member indicated, are providing care for seniors that are more frail. It is one of the first points of entry in the continuum of care that was addressed in the report for our seniors, and being more frail, they have higher needs, especially related to mobility and personal care needs. We do provide a per diem to lodge operators through our lodge assistance program.

I can tell you, hon. member, that based on this excellent report from your committee, I will ensure that lodge operators have the resources that are needed to ensure that their clients have high-quality services, but more importantly I also will ensure that it not affect the lower income and moderate-income seniors.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Postsecondary Education Review

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Advanced Education committed months ago to doing a tuition and affordability review of postsecondary education, but after watching it morph into a huge exercise in blue skying a policy framework for A Learning Alberta, students still don't know how much it's going to cost them to go to college or university next fall. They've heard the minister warn them to prepare for a tuition increase and the Premier say that he's fundamentally opposed to raising fees. To the minister: will students have to pay higher tuition fees in September 2006 or not?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it would appear perfectly clear that they will not.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister has said that he sees equal merit, on one extreme, in two years of free tuition and, on the other, in letting institutions charge students as much as the market will bear, will he advise us as to which way the wind is blowing on this issue today?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I'd like to thank the hon. member for being a participant in the forum, in which we talked about the vision for advancing education in Alberta and about a policy framework for ensuring that that can happen. We will from that forum be developing game plans relative to access, affordability, and quality in the postsecondary institutions and also foundational learning and literacy issues in our communities and ensuring that aboriginal people in this province have access to and participate in advanced learning in this province. So it was a very important forum. I thank the hon. member and all members of the public who participated because it was a very, very useful exercise in helping us get further down the road.

In the context of that exercise, I was asked what sort of ideas were coming forward, so I put two ideas that basically bookended the tuition question that was on the table. One was that if education is a public good and if you need more than a postsecondary education, then perhaps we should be paying as a public for K to 14 instead of K to 12. That comes with benefits for students, and it also comes with problems. The other end of the extreme was that perhaps you shouldn't regulate tuition at all, but then you have to make sure that

there's affordability in place, student finance in place so that everybody can afford to go. Those were two extremes of the discussion.

As the Premier said earlier, we're a party and we're a government that believes that all ideas should be allowed to be on the table and be aired. When we come through the process, we will have in place next spring a tuition policy and an affordability policy for students in this province.

Mr. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, while the government decides which way it's leaning on that tuition issue, will the minister commit now to freezing tuition at public institutions until the new tuition policy is ready, however long it takes?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that's what I indicated our policy was, that the tuition will stay the same for students in Alberta through the next year, and we will put in place in the next year the tuition and affordability policy so that students will know what to expect for the fall of 2007.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The grain producers in my riding are in dire straits. The crops started out well, but Mother Nature and other forces united against the agriculture sector. Many crops are only feed grain quality, and the prices of good-quality wheat are poor. The cost of fertilizer and fuel is taking a huge bite out of the producers' margins. My questions are to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Your department addressed the challenges of the beef industry when it was in a crisis. What are your plans to help the grain sector, which is in the same desperate situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a very, very good question because our producers in the cereals sector are hurting right now. This spring we did do some support levels on the spring price endorsement. We had hoped that the CAIS program and some of the changes that we might be able to put forward in the summertime with our federal and provincial counterparts would also take it up.

We heard over and over again, Mr. Speaker, that the reference margin on the CAIS program was not working, that the CAIS program was difficult to administer for the producers, so we have taken steps to make the difficulty level a lot less. We have also initiated a pilot project which will recalculate those reference margins from 2003-2004 and, when 2005 is done, recalculate them as well retroactively. This will put this fall close to a quarter billion dollars into producers' hands in Alberta. We're taking the lead to try to fix the problem.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Many of the producers don't believe that CAIS is working for them. How will these changes make CAIS work better?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, what we heard during our round-tables, during our discussions with producer groups across the province was that the Olympic averaging method of calculating a reference margin, which directly leads to their entitlement, in an era of back-to-back disasters was not working for them. In fact, we were averaging the reference margin down. By taking the approach in this pilot project of actually giving an option of calculating the reference margin based on the last three years or the Olympic average, we believe that that will deal with back-to-back disasters and bring their reference margins up, which will bring their entitlement levels up. By doing it retroactively, we get the dollars in producers' hands right away.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. CAIS is a national program. To the same minister: why isn't it a national solution? Why does Alberta have to go it alone one more time?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very, very good question. We presented our proposals in the summertime, we've had discussions with our federal counterparts, we've had somewhat of a lukewarm response, and quite honestly I can't tell you why they're not stepping up to the plate. We decided to put our money where our mouth was in terms of proving out this pilot project. We're going to share the information and the impact that this has on our producers with our provincial and federal counterparts. We would hope that they will come to the table and help us with this program rather than doing some sort of ad hoc program which doesn't work for governments or for producers. But we will continue to support a national program because we believe in the national program. We just want to make it better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Lakeside Packers Labour Dispute

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The weakness of Alberta labour law was starkly clear in the strike at Lakeside Packers. The strikers settled for a \$20 a week increase and a coffee break. More importantly, they now have a contract which gives them protection against assaults on their human dignity. It's a shame that the brutal strike at Lakeside Packers had to happen. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Why has the minister said that he will delay first-contract law in Alberta until 2007 even though the Premier and the MLA from Brooks support the law as necessary?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is, of course, very unfortunate when there is a dispute or a disagreement between a company and the union. You know, it's not something we want to see either. But as you are aware, the labour relations issue in Alberta is really good. To start with, 99 per cent of all the collective agreements last year and the year before were approved without any disputes. There are over 1,300 agreements. Seven hundred and fifty or so are private-industry agreements, and they have been generally settled.

As far as the first-contract binding arbitration legislation, Mr. Speaker, what I indicated to the press and to the opposition was that definitely we will be looking at that particular issue. There are some jurisdictions in Canada that have that particular legislation. I've

asked my department to pull that information together within three months, and I'll assess it. If it requires more work, then of course the process will continue, but at this time that is what we are doing.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier to supplement.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, just for clarification since the hon. member mentioned my name and said that I support first-contract legislation. What I did say is that we will consider it. I also said that for every action there is an opposite and often negative reaction, and the opposition well knows that because they react negatively to just about everything we do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier. We do need first-contract legislation.

To the same minister: will the minister release the many thousands of pages documenting occupational health and safety complaints at Lakeside Packers to the Official Opposition so that at least this side of the House can examine them?

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, in relation to that particular issue, you know, I did check to see how many complaints there were in relation to working conditions at Lakeside Packers, and there have been very few calls from the employees at that particular plant to complain about working conditions. In fact, I also promise that mid-December I will be touring the plant.

Mr. Backs: It's 2,600 pages.

To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will the minister make a move to respect basic human dignity and enact bathroom and coffee breaks into Alberta employment standards law?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, of course, that was a concern where I believe one individual had some difficulties healthwise in relation to washroom breaks. What I indicated was that, yes, we'll have a look at that. But if one individual has a medical problem out of, say, 2,000 employees, then maybe that individual should get a medical certificate from the doctor. Instead of changing company policy entirely, maybe that person should get a medical certificate from the doctor to say that this person needs longer bathroom breaks.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I understand that attempts to resolve the softwood lumber dispute are stalled, with no decision currently under way or no immediate plans for a resumption of talks. Can the minister advise the Legislature on the status of the softwood discussions between Canada and the United States?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, just before question period today I learned that the World Trade Organization had released a decision finding that the U.S. was in compliance with its WTO obligations in the softwood lumber case. Once we heard that, we're certainly urging the federal minister to appeal that decision.

We are of the position that we expect the United States to live up to their NAFTA obligations. We expect them to refund the money that they have collected, and once they assure us that they will live up to these obligations under NAFTA, then we will be prepared to get back to the table and negotiate.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Can the minister tell the House when a resolution of this dispute can be expected?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I don't have a crystal ball. Just to work back a bit, the current softwood lumber dispute started in April of 2001. It's the fourth consecutive dispute. The first one dates back to 1982, and of course it's been a long-standing irritant with Canada and the U.S. I'm not sure how long it'll take for the federal government to appeal the WTO decision. Obviously, that's going to take time because that will be used as a stall tactic, I'm sure, by the Americans in this particular situation. We'll find out soon. I'll be meeting with the federal minister early next week to get a further update on what their plans are and will report back to the House at that date.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Can he advise the Legislature on the impact this dispute is having on the Alberta forest industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As national leaders in forest sustainability our companies in Alberta are working hard to maintain their competitive advantage given the softwood crisis. A hundred and eighty million dollars a year goes into a deposit in order for Alberta companies to continue to export into the U.S. In addition to that pressure, we are very, very aware of current market downturns and conditions that might affect the Alberta economy as well as the communities where our forest-based companies exist. So as a government we continue to work with that industry to make sure that they can maintain that competitive advantage that we're so proud of in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Budget Surplus Expenditures (continued)

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the Premier stated that he had pretty much spent all of the projected surplus and that, in fact, there would be no more major spending announcements, yet just yesterday a further \$224 million was announced by the agriculture minister for the CAIS program. The Premier says that he has a surplus plan but it's none of the opposition's business. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Is it not true that the only surplus plan this government has is to spend every single penny as it comes in?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it just depends on how you look at things. I consider the spending that has occurred

mid-year, which we clearly outlined would happen in our budget speech, as an investment in the province of Alberta. So I, of course, come from a little bit different tack on this: it's positive; it's dealing with things that are required to be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, rather than dither like the federal government does on agriculture programs when our producers are in desperate straits, we act. Not six months from now or when we study it; we act today. If these members across the House left the city and went out and visited some of the farms that are facing some of the costs, that are looking at snowed-under crops, deteriorating conditions, they might understand why there was a desperate need for an adjustment to a farm income stabilization program that the federal government assumed a full partnership in not two years ago. Alberta acts; we don't apologize.

Mr. R. Miller: Not even drunken sailors can spend money this fast.

My next question is for the same minister. Given that the minister recently stated her preference for tax cuts over rebates, what changed her mind?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've said that there are ways of giving back, and there are two ways. One is in rebates, and one is in tax reductions. I stand on the record of my statements. My preference and I think the preference of every member in this Conservative caucus is tax reductions. Not only is it our preference; we've acted on it. Because we've acted on it, Albertans today enjoy the lowest overall tax burden in Canada. However, when you have one-time surpluses which are caused by a spike, an unnatural spike, I might add, in oil and gas revenues, and you already have the lowest overall tax burden in Canada – this government trusts Albertans with some of their own money, and we're giving it back to them.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: instead of rebates, why didn't the minister extend the funding for the furnace replacement program, as an example, or fund a hot lunch program for every child in Alberta or, for God's sake, at least fund the recommendations of the long-term care review committee?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, we're going to have an opportunity to debate the expenditures in this House – we always have that opportunity – and I look forward to the opportunity for each minister to have a debate on the expenditures in their particular departments. It would never have occurred to me that this member opposite would not have supported \$1.4 billion in health facility improvements, particularly when there are over 600 million of those dollars in needed programs to provide access to services in this particular region here. It would never have occurred to me that this hon. member would not have supported the investment that has been made in postsecondary education facilities, particularly at the University of Alberta, in the ambulatory care. It would never have occurred to me that this member would not have supported new-schools building. I'm shocked.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Aon Consulting Inc.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is hell-bent on a massive privatization of Alberta's health care system. It just doesn't want to make public the details of a third way privatization

scheme until after the federal election is safely out of the way. A key plan in this privatization scheme is a \$1.5 million study on private health insurance being done by Chicago-based insurance giant Aon Corporation. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Why is the government stubbornly refusing to cancel this contract given Aon's well-known track record of corporate wrongdoing on both sides of the Canada/U.S. border?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you for the question. The Aon contract is with Aon Consulting in Alberta, and the contract is essential in order to get an actuarial review and costing of anything that we would do or contemplate relative to how we pay for Alberta health. The Aon Consulting contract is one that I believe is being awarded to the group that had the best presentation, the most credible references. In fact, from the security checks the actuaries that are involved with this particular project have done an exemplary job of presenting themselves.

One final point, Mr. Speaker. Aon Consulting is, yes, a part of an international group that employs 47,000 people in 120 countries, 800 of whom work in Canada, and only one charge in Ontario relates to a different part of the company relative to a different part of the service. So to make the link that doing this particular contract with this company is the wrong thing I believe is not correct.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does Aon's contract contain a provision that would bar Aon's insurance division from participating in any future private insurance scheme that Aon Consulting helps this government design, and if not, why not?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, our expectation is that Aon Consulting is not doing a contract to open the door for insurance; it's doing consulting on actuarial expenses. However, the very fact that they have an understanding of insurance in their corporate body is helpful to us in terms of how we model this, and it does not preclude anybody at Aon in future from bidding on it, but that has not been the experience. I suggest that of all the contracts that have been released this year, this one will be under the greatest scrutiny and will be just one piece of what we look at when we look at how we advance our third way.

Dr. Pannu: Will the minister do a favour to this House and make public in their entirety both Aon's detailed proposal in reply to the request for proposals plus the Aon contract and related documents, and if not, what's she got to hide?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, there was a confidentiality agreement relative to all of the participants in this contract, and relative to the terms of the contract I will follow through as our policy dictates. I'm not sure, in the signing of that final document, whether or not that confidentiality was to be maintained, but we will make very transparent both the results of the contract and how they met their obligations.

Mr. Speaker, one more point. The RFP had been published. All of the terms of that had been on the web and had been published since the summer. I think we're going to get a very credible result from the work that this group will do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Veterinary Profession Legislation

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, and they are regarding proposed changes to the Veterinary Profession Act. The rationale for changing the VPA document, put forward by the minister's office, states that the Court of Appeal ruling indicates that a change is required. After reading the court ruling several times, it is apparent that no such statement is made by the court. Can the minister please clarify what the real motivation is behind the proposed changes to the VPA?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me state that this matter will not be presented to the Legislature this fall. The court states that presently dentistry is not specifically referred to in the act. The proposed change is to simply clarify the definition of veterinary medicine to include dentistry as part of the definition.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the minister's office indicated that the draft was written after consulting with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and associations representing beef, pork, chicken, turkey, and egg producers, will the minister please name the horse industry groups or individuals who were contacted to help write the draft of proposed changes to the VPA?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Feedback was requested from two of the leading practitioners of horse dentistry in Alberta in drafting the proposed changes. We are also reviewing initial input from beef, pork, chicken, turkey, and egg producers, and these associations will be consulted further over the next year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister, my final supplemental: given that Alberta is already critically short of large-animal veterinarians, can the minister please explain how possibly granting a larger monopoly to veterinarians will improve the care of animals, reduce costs to producers and owners, and improve the level of service?

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, there is no monopoly being granted. Government's goal is to simply clarify the definition of veterinary medicine included in the act.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Fort McMurray Infrastructure Needs

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past spring a delegation from Fort McMurray, led by Mayor Melissa Blake, put forth a compelling argument for \$1.2 billion of provincial support to allow the municipality's infrastructure to catch up with the rapid pace of tar sands project expansion. The unfettered development speed is not only affecting the quality of life of Fort McMurray residents but is leading to labour shortages and development delays throughout

the rest of the province. My first question is to the Deputy Premier. When will this government balance its role of promoting sustainable growth in the tar sands with protecting Fort McMurray residents?

2:40

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is entirely accurate. We had a very good submission from a number of people representing the Fort McMurray area, and we did have a discussion about their total needs in that area. What the hon. member might not understand is that there is already a very large amount committed to that area and to its development, something over \$600 million, and the minister of infrastructure may want to supplement to give you a closer figure. In addition to that, we responded with an immediate \$200 million, which again the minister of infrastructure could speak to. And in addition to that, our Minister of Municipal Affairs has sat down with them to talk about ways to proceed on their municipal infrastructure such as water treatment and so on. So there is a combined plan including, I might add, the Minister of Energy, who will add input to it because of the importance of the development in that area.

In the interest of accuracy on some of the activities that are occurring, I would invite the minister of infrastructure to respond.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. My second question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Will you commit to providing the necessary infrastructure support grants to Fort McMurray rather than forcing the municipality further into debt through loans?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the municipality of Fort McMurray is in a relatively unique situation in that they're growing extremely rapidly, and for the population base today to invest in the necessary infrastructure for issues such as water and waste-water treatment, solid waste management, the cost and the scale of those developments would exceed the ability of today's citizenry and today's tax base and ratepayers to reasonably pay for those costs. At the same time, the growth that is expected and, frankly, has been predicted as a virtual certainty means that in a relatively short time they will be in a position to be in the same position as any other municipality in the province to deal with this kind of infrastructure on a rate-based formula.

So what the government has done is provide bridge financing to the municipality whereby we provide \$136 million interest free for the next four years. In addition to that, we do not require any principal payments over that same period of time, so that much-needed infrastructure can get in the ground today, the work begins, and the facilities are complete by the time the population has reached the point that they're needed. At that point, the municipality will be well able to deal with any additional debt that would be associated with these municipal projects.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. My third question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. How much longer will the thousands of permanent residents and commuting workers in Fort McMurray have to wait until both highways 28 and 63 have been twinned from Edmonton to Fort McMurray?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find this line of

questioning especially ironic after the first question that was posed to me. The hon. member knows full well that \$200 million of the unbudgeted surplus was spent specifically – specifically – on the Fort McMurray area for their infrastructure concerns. So on one hand they're questioning why we have these surpluses, why we are spending them. On the other hand, they're asking us to spend more on Fort McMurray. This is very, very ironic. There has been \$530 million that has been committed to Fort McMurray over the next five years. There has also been another \$70 million in the Alberta municipal infrastructure program that has been given to Fort McMurray. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs just alluded to a \$136 million interest-free loan.

Does Fort McMurray have demands? Absolutely. Do they have needs? You bet. This government is working very hard to meet those demands in a very timely fashion, which we are able to do because we have unbudgeted surpluses.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six members to participate today. Before I call on that first hon. member, the historical vignette for the day.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: On this day in 1918 RCAF Flying Officer L.W. Powell was born in Pickardville, Alberta. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on March 6, 1940, and headed overseas a year later to serve as a World War II pilot. Unfortunately, Flying Officer Powell was reported missing and presumed dead after air operations on June 17, 1943. In 1947 Powell Lake, located 65 kilometres northwest of Grande Prairie, was named after Flying Officer Powell.

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Dorothy McDonald

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 13 our province lost a very special Albertan after the passing of former Fort MacKay First Nations Chief Dorothy McDonald, whose funeral was held this morning.

Ms McDonald was born in Fort MacKay, which is 90 kilometres northeast of Fort McMurray. Ms McDonald began her apprenticeship as an hereditary chief at the age of 16. When she worked with her father, the late Chief Philip McDonald, she watched her dad fight for her people's rights and followed in his footsteps. As she worked on his correspondence, he talked with her about the decisions, duties, and responsibilities of being the chief, which she took to heart. She followed in the footsteps of her father, and when he passed away as chief in 1980, she was elected as the first female chief in Alberta.

She championed environment and economic initiatives, which included being a key mover in dealing with oil sands development. She took on the oil sands companies so that the people of Fort MacKay would have a fighting chance for employment and contract opportunities. She was successful, although it took its toll on her health. Despite that, her spirit was strong. Recently, the Fort MacKay First Nations honoured her for her contributions to her community with the dedication of a new learning centre.

On behalf of the government of Alberta we wish to express our condolences to Dorothy's family and to the residents of Fort MacKay, who benefited from her unwavering dedication, in the loss of a great leader.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Bow Valley College
Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology**

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 18 in Three Hills, Alberta, an historic memorandum of understanding was signed between Bow Valley College and Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology. This unique partnership, a first of its kind in Canada between public and private postsecondary institutions, will allow Bow Valley College to offer health and child care programs to Prairie College students.

Starting in September 2006, Prairie College of Applied Arts will become the first college to offer two-year vocational programs in conjunction with a Christian education. Graduates of these programs will receive a two-year associate of arts degree that includes Bible theology courses. Within the same two years the students will also have earned a provincially recognized diploma in the vocation of their choice. Those choices may include hospital unit clerk, nursing assistant, lab assistant, or child care worker. Students completing one of Prairie's vocational programs will earn a two-year diploma plus a full-year certificate in Bible; in other words, three years of training in two years for the price of two years. What a bargain that is.

I invite members of this Assembly to congratulate Prairie College of Applied Arts and Bow Valley College for their vision of expanding postsecondary educational opportunities for Alberta students in rural Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Veterans Memorial Highway

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few years ago, when I was in the Netherlands, I paid a visit to the Canadian Memorial Park near Arnhem. It was late in the afternoon. My wife, Kim, and I stood in silence looking at the long rows and rows of grave markers. Our emotions rose inside us when we read the names and the ages of these many brave young Canadians.

Standing in front of the cenotaph against the light of the setting sun we bowed our heads, and I whispered my saying of deep gratitude: thanks to your ultimate sacrifices myself, my wife, and our family all have the quality of life we have today. Indeed, in Canada it's thanks to our veterans and our active members of the Canadian armed forces that we can live in peace, safety, and security and the freedom of our nation. It is of the utmost importance to remember the sacrifices those men and those women have made and continue to make for the rest of us.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that I share the oriental culture, that has been through thousands of years of practice. Yes, in this long tradition of culture I carry in myself an ancient proverb: when eating fruit, remember its planter; when drinking water, remember its source.

Indeed, from this background of feelings I decided to take on an initiative when a friend, Mr. Bob Gray, Dominion VP of the Royal Canadian Legion of Canada, came to talk to me about the Year of the Veteran. I proposed to our Premier and to our Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation that Alberta should designate a highway to commemorate the Canada Year of the Veteran and the centennial anniversary of Alberta. I want to thank the Premier, the minister, and my government MLA colleagues for making the idea come true. I also want to thank Mr. Harvey Shevalier, Mr. Bob Gray, and Mr. Don Ethell of the Royal Canadian Legion for working with me on this idea.

I'm told that Alberta's Veterans Memorial Highway is the longest in Canada, over 600 kilometres. Its stretching length symbolizes the

depth of our gratitude to members of the armed forces of the past, the present, and the future. We will remember them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Remembrance Day

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Remembrance Day, on November 11, is a day of great importance. We remember and honour those many heroes that have given their lives in the service of our country. An incredible number of Canadians, many, many of them Albertans, made the ultimate sacrifice in the bloody conflicts of the last century. We remember all who died or were injured. We also remember the huge effect that these sacrifices had on so many of the families at home.

Last summer a military centennial tattoo was staged in Edmonton, and thanks is due to the Speaker and to Edmonton Councillor Gibbons for their role in that fine event. Included was a re-enactment of many touching moments in the lives of servicemen and their families. One of the most moving was when the actors recreated the euphoric feeling and celebrations that marked the end of World War II. There was dancing in the streets. Almost everyone was hugging and kissing in the relief and happiness that the great struggle, the great conflict, was finally over. But in the background were the families of those who didn't come home. A tearful and endearing moment ensued as an officer presented the families with a memorial of their loved one in honour of their loss and sacrifice as well as that of the soldier who had been their father, husband, son, daughter, brother, or sister.

These heroes died to maintain our Canadian way of life. We have the freedom to live and to love, the freedom to work where we choose, the freedom to move where we want, the freedom to be entrepreneurs and start a business, and the freedom to join a trade union if we desire: many freedoms. We have the freedom of democracy, which many in this world still die to achieve. It is something we too often take for granted.

There always must be those who bravely put themselves forward to protect our way of life. We must remember those that have come before us, and we must also ensure that those who are presently in our armed forces are properly paid and equipped and deployed in the best interests of our country.

The year 2005 is the Year of the Veteran. Please always remember on Remembrance Day.

Prevention of Family Violence

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an issue that affects us all: family violence. It's an issue that is often ignored by many people who feel that what happens in someone else's private life is none of their business, but preventing family violence is everyone's business.

It is estimated that almost 7 per cent of Canadians have experienced spousal violence in the last five years. Approximately one-quarter of all violent crime victims are also family violence victims. These statistics are alarming. We must break the wall of silence that surrounds this issue and allows it to continue. Family violence impacts everyone, from children who witness the abuse to families who are trying to cope with a horrific situation. It's a global issue that deserves our attention as individuals and as government.

A few weeks ago our government hosted the first ever World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence. Over 1,000 people from 31 different countries met in Banff to talk about their experiences and share ways in which we can eliminate family violence. This conference showed us what is possible if we work together.

But it is only the beginning. We must continue to address this issue on a daily basis and be the voice for those who don't have the strength to speak up for themselves.

Today, a message of hope and remembrance hangs in the Legislature pedway. The Quilting in Learning and Tribute project is an initiative of the Eagle Women's Emergency Shelter in Black Diamond, the Nanton family and community support services, and the Okotoks family and community support services. The squares for this beautiful quilt came from victims, survivors, and people connected or concerned with family violence. It serves as a memorial and educational tool for rural communities in the Alberta foothills.

We are also wearing purple ribbons today to spread the message that we will not tolerate family violence in this province.

Even though November officially marks Family Violence Prevention Month, we know that family violence happens all year-round. We must talk about this issue with the people in our lives and be part of the solution to ending family violence in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the youth at the world conference committed to taking a stand against family violence. We, too, must take a stand. In the words of those youth: "Together we can make a choice. Together we can use our voice. Put violence in the past."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Lakeside Packers Labour Dispute

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate the workers of the UFCW local 401 at Lakeside Packers in Brooks. When anti-union employers like Arkansas-based Tyson Foods choose to thwart the democratic right of their employees to join a union, Alberta's labour laws let them get away with it. But this time Tyson Foods underestimated Albertans' sense of fair play. Tyson also underestimated the resolve of the UFCW workers.

A fair deal and a respectful workplace was achieved not because of but in spite of Alberta's unfair labour laws. The strike was only settled because it was turning into a public relations disaster for both the provincial government and Tyson Foods. The Lakeside Packers strike, like so many before it – A-Channel, Shaw Conference Centre, the *Calgary Herald* – was completely avoidable if Alberta had fair labour laws.

We did not need to launch our beef industry into another economic crisis. We did not need to risk worker safety or divide the town of Brooks. All we needed was a simple stroke of the pen. Alberta could easily join eight other Canadian governments and enact first-contract arbitration if a first collective agreement could not be achieved within a year of a certification vote. It's easy. It makes sense. It's fair. I call on this government again today to pass such a law during this fall sitting of the Legislature.

The workers at Brooks deserve our highest praise. They stood up to an American multinational corporation, one of the biggest food companies in the world, and they won.

We will continue to press this government for first-contract legislation in order to avoid bitter disputes, divided communities, unnecessary economic hardship, and risk to safety and security. We saw all of this at Lakeside. If this government acts now, we do not have to see it again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from 103

tradesmen and women from Fort McMurray, Calgary, Edmonton, Vegreville, Leduc, and Gibbons. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two notices of motions today. This is pursuant to Standing Order 15(2). I'm providing formal notice of my intention to continue with the point of order that I gave oral notice on on May 18. This being the next sitting day of the fall session, I'm now giving the required written notice concerning the words and/or actions of the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar in his dealings with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on May 18, 2005. I have copies for everyone in the Assembly.

3:00

The second notice of motion that I would like to do at this time, again pursuant to Standing Order 15(2), is to provide formal notice of my intention to raise a question of privilege and contempt of the Assembly regarding the unauthorized release to the media of information contained in the October 2005 Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission's Enforcement System.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to rise on a point of privilege in accordance with Standing Order 15. Notice was given to your office in writing yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I am proposing to raise the matter at the earliest possible time as per Standing Order 15(2).

Would you like me to proceed now with the point of privilege or just give the notice?

The Speaker: We're just in the notice portion now.

Mr. Mason: Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 43

Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will create amendments to three pieces of legislation, which are needed to allow the government to provide Albertans with a \$400 per person resource rebate. Bill 43 will make amendments to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act so that the

rebate can be delivered as a refundable tax credit to avoid federal and provincial taxes; secondly, the Fiscal Responsibility Act primarily so that payments can be made to Albertans without a change in the contingency allowance; and thirdly, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act so that the rebate can be provided to children in care of the province.

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a first time]

Bill 44

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act in 2004 allowed for the creation of an alternate dispute resolution service for landlords and tenants. This service will be known as the residential tenancies dispute resolution service, or RTDRS. Before RTDRS can begin operating, the legislation needs to clarify the role of the new service in relation to the court. Once the legislation is in place, the RTDRS will begin operations as a one-year pilot project in the city of Edmonton.

The RTDRS will provide a more appropriate forum for RTA disputes, many of which are not well suited for resolution through the much more formal court process. It will also help the court system dedicate its resources to more complicated matters.

[Motion carried; Bill 44 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Bill 45

Maternal Tort Liability Act

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act.

The proposed legislation is designed to provide a measure of compensation for a child who sustains prenatal injuries as a result of the negligent driving of his or her mother. This proposed provision relates only to motor vehicle accidents, and it's a very narrow exception to the law. The current common law already allows a child to sue anyone else, including family members. This is just about adding the mother in a very specific situation. The change to the common law would provide protection for mothers by prohibiting claims against them beyond the limits of their insurance policies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 45 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Bill 46

Criminal Notoriety Act

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is aimed at preventing criminals from

making money from recounting their crimes either through books, movies, on television, or the Internet. As government we have a responsibility to protect victims, and it is unacceptable that criminals benefit from the pain and suffering they have caused others. The legislation will apply to people convicted of serious crimes such as sexual assault and sexual offences against children and youth or those that involve violence against another person or endanger others.

[Motion carried; Bill 46 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 46 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Bill 47

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act.

This bill will create a nonpartisan association of former Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Membership would be open to all individuals who have been but are not currently a member of this Assembly. This association would be able to use its knowledge and experience to promote the ideals of parliamentary democracy in Alberta.

I'd like to thank the Speaker of the House for his support and encouragement of this initiative as part of the upcoming centennial anniversary in March 2006 of the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 47 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Bill 48

Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 48, the Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005.

The justice of the peace system was reformed in '99. Reforms included a provision to require existing qualified JPs to be appointed in the reformed system. The amendment clarifies that there are no continuing legal requirements mandating the automatic appointment of a justice of the peace who subsequently becomes qualified. The existing provision was intended to be transitional so is being updated with this amendment.

The regulation-making power under the act is also being broadened. With the amendment the constitutional notice regulation can be issued under this act as well as under the Provincial Court Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 48 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the Victims Programs Status Report for 2004-2005. This annual report shows a 61 per cent increase in grants for community organizations that provide assistance to victims of crime; \$3.2 million was provided to 88 organizations in '04-05, these programs reportedly handling more than 33,000 new cases, over half of which involved assisting victims of violent crime.

I'd also like to highlight the incredible amount of time put into the program by volunteers. Over 1,600 volunteer advocates and board members contributed more than 200,000 volunteer hours in '04-05, the equivalent of about 124 full-time employees.

These are important programs that serve our communities, and we will continue to support them.

3:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane and chair of the Legislative Offices Committee.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the annual report of the Auditor General of Alberta 2004-05, which was distributed to all members on October 3, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to table five copies of the Report of the Auditor General on Alberta Social Housing Corporation – Land Sales Systems, dated October 2005. Copies of this report were distributed to all members on October 20, 2005.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table five copies of the Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission's Enforcement System, dated October 2005. Copies of this report were distributed to all members on October 27, 2005.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of documents to table today. First, I have two stories from the *Edmonton Journal*, to which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood will be talking about in privilege. They are dated October 13 and 25.

I'd also like to table a news release issued by the Auditor General on October 25. In the release Mr. Dunn says that the premature disclosure of his work interferes with "the integrity of the audit process thereby treating the Legislative Assembly with disrespect."

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two quick tablings today: five copies of information from the Edmonton Community Loan Fund Society, which has recently changed its mandate – it is to facilitate economic self-reliance for people living with low income through asset building, financial education, community partnership; so these are brochures on that – and additional information on the Stars of Literacy, International Literacy Day, that was held back in September, with a good deal of information on the projects that are sponsored by the participating organization, of which there is a long list included in the documents I'm tabling.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the required number of copies of the address by the Hon. Stephen Harper, PC, MP, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and Leader of the Official Opposition in Parliament, delivered on November 4, 2005, in Ottawa. I urge all the government members across the floor to read it carefully and to consider its implications on the state of democratic affairs in this province, mainly with issues like transparency and accountability, being accountable to the public.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter from my constituent for tabling. She's on social assistance, a single parent of one and two teens part-time. She's urging the government to increase funding not just for her but for all Albertans. She's not getting the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, I have a number of tablings today. Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act I table with the Assembly copies of the following Members' Services orders: first of all, Members' Services Committee Order 07/05, dealing with members' allowances, which came into force on July 1, 2005; Members' Services Committee Order 08/05, which dealt with members' allowances, which is deemed to have come into force on November 22, 2004; and Members' Services Committee Order 09/05, which is the transportation amendment order, which came into force on July 1, 2005.

As well, pursuant to section 46(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act of the Revised Statutes of Alberta, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner. The report covers the period April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005. A copy of this report was distributed to members on September 8, 2005.

I'm also tabling with the Assembly the report by the Ethics Commissioner into allegations involving the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, dated October 20, 2005. This report was previously distributed to members.

I'm doing something which I would not normally do. I'm tabling an internal Legislative Assembly security report relating to an incident in the Legislature's south members' lounge on May 18, 2005. I'm tabling it, which will not be my normal practice in the future, simply because of the interest expressed to me by a number of members who requested such a copy, and if several members are going to get it, then all members should get it.

Hon. members, there was a situation that occurred in the Legislative Assembly on the last day of the last session, and one of the hon. members involved has contacted me with a request to make a statement about that. I'm now going to call on the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor.

Member's Apology

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the conversation that took place in the foyer on May 18, I would like to apologize for raising my voice at the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I did try to contact the member immediately after it happened to set up an opportunity to apologize, but that didn't happen, so I'd like to do it here. I'd like to make it clear, though, that I'm not apologizing for physical assault or molestation as the record states or for uttering profanities as was reported in the media by the hon. member because those clearly did not happen. But what did happen was inappropriate, and I apologize sincerely.

The Speaker: Notice was given earlier in the afternoon by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre dealing with a point of order. It may deal with this matter or not. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar has now apologized to the House. Normally that terminates matters. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has a point of order she wishes to proceed with that's different than that, please proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I find myself in an interesting situation, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar has apologized. My dilemma is that he's apologized selectively.

I believe that there was a point of privilege here in that the ability of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to enjoy free speech in the House and for there to be no accompanying intimidation or threats that would carry through, obviously not preceding this act but following it, that was clearly – I think that the threat was intended, and it was certainly perceived. That is a difficult situation for me because I have heard the member apologize sincerely for raising his voice, but then I'm not sure what to take of the second part of the member's statement, in which he refused to apologize for anything else.

I would prefer not to proceed with the point of privilege. It's a serious business, and it does take up this Assembly's time and the Speaker's patience. Could I ask the member if he understands that the effect and consequences of his actions that day were intimidation? Is he willing to understand that and apologize for that?

The Speaker: Hon. member, please. Just a second. When the hon. member gave notice a little earlier, the hon. member – and I wrote this down – said that she was rising on a point of order. She then tabled on a matter dealing with a point of privilege. So this is not a matter of debate, I think, internally in here.

If an hon. member chooses to stand in the Assembly, as was afforded to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, the hon. member apologizes to the House. That's who the hon. member apologizes to. So it's not really a question of one member saying: I agree or I don't agree. The hon. member has apologized to the House.

Now, if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has a point of privilege that the hon. member wants to deal with, the hon. member can proceed. She has been recognized, and I'm giving her the opportunity if she chooses to proceed.

3:20

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did give oral notice of a point of privilege on May 18. I did send written notice of a point of privilege to the Speaker on November 10. This morning I also sent over a notification of my intention to raise a point of privilege. If I misspoke myself earlier and said "a point of order," I'm sure the Speaker would accept that slight misstatement.

The Speaker: Agreed. That's not the issue.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you.

At this point I have conferred with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. He has instructed me not to proceed, and therefore I will not at this time. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I am now going to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, the Official Opposition House Leader. She's given proper notice to rise on a point of privilege: contempt.

Please proceed.

Privilege

Contempt of the Assembly

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This particular matter is the second point of privilege. Again there was written notice sent over to the Speaker on Thursday, the 10th of November. I did rise under the Routine of the day under Notices of Motion and gave an additional written notice that was circulated to all of the House.

This is regarding the unauthorized release to the media of information contained in the October 2005 report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission enforcement system. This matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity. The report was released in October 2005. The House was not sitting. This is the first opportunity that I have had as House leader to raise the point of privilege.

The issue at hand, Mr. Speaker, is that in the wake of the problems that were alleged at the Alberta Securities Commission, the Auditor General announced that he would be submitting a special separate report on the Alberta Securities Commission. This report and one other were leaked to a member of the *Edmonton Journal* staff and was reported on prior to being delivered to the Assembly or the appropriate committees. The particular reporter in question did report in his column that "the interim draft of Dunn's report" – that is, the Auditor General – "has been circulating in government circles for more than a week." I believe that this unauthorized release of this information prior to it being made available to all members of this Assembly does constitute a contempt of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, what happened and what were the consequences that affected individual members' privilege and, generally, contempt for the Assembly? We had an Auditor General's report that was leaked. We had a situation where media and possibly others had it, and people who should have had it, those being the members of this Assembly, did not. So members of this Assembly were not able to comment to the media as they had not seen the report. The members' ability to fulfill their job was prevented, and I believe their privilege was breached.

The Auditor General's report does make several stops. It is mandated to go through the internal audit committee and a courtesy copy to the branch affected before going to the select standing committee to be laid before the Assembly. But, Mr. Speaker, each of those stops carries with it an expectation of embargoed activity, and the ultimate end is to be distributed to the Assembly before it goes to the public. I would argue that given the sensitivity of the material this leak is on the same level as a leak of the budget; that is, being privy to this information can give an advantage to some and not to others.

This report was concerning the Alberta Securities Commission, which regulates our stock market and which must be credible and trustworthy for all to survive. Therefore, the information that was in that Auditor General's report, depending on what it had said, could have been of tremendous advantage to some and disadvantage to others, and not having the MLAs being privy to it before the public is serious.

I believe that all members of the Assembly and particularly the Leader of the Official Opposition had their privileges breached by this release. We were not able to specifically comment to the media on the important issues.

Mr. Speaker, did this leak constitute under the precedents and authorities of the Assembly a breach of privilege or contempt of the Assembly? I say yes. There are two precedents I'd like to refer to. They are both Speaker's rulings. One is from Speaker Milliken ruling around the Toews bill briefing from March of 2001 – that

would be federal – and, Mr. Speaker, your ruling from March 2003 in response to a point of privilege brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

My final issue on this is: if there is no identifiable culprit or perpetrator, can a contempt still be found? I argue that it can be.

So I've gone over the specifics of the case where the Auditor General did release the report. His act does allow under section 20.1(1) that when the Assembly is not sitting, which it was not at the time, Mr. Speaker, it be made available to the Speaker of the Assembly, and copies would be delivered to each member of the Assembly. Under section 24 of the Auditor General Act the annual report shall be made available to an internal audit committee as well before it is presented to the select standing committee. "After the Speaker has distributed copies of the report under subsection (1)," just mentioned, "the Auditor General may make the report public." The other relevant section here is section 28 because the Auditor General "as soon as practicable" shall advise the appropriate bodies that are involved with it. So a courtesy copy goes to those that are mentioned in the report.

That was what was supposed to have happened, Mr. Speaker, with the Alberta Securities Commission report, but somebody somewhere released this document or released substantial information on it to the media, and according to the media it had been circulating in government circles for a week prior to its public release.

We have the relevant citations and cases, Mr. Speaker. The Legislative Assembly Act, section 10, talks about breaches of privilege and contempts. Our own Standing Order 15(1) talks about: "the rights of the Assembly or of the parliamentary rights of any member constitutes a question of privilege." *Beauchesne* 25 talks about two key rights: the freedom of speech in the House and the right of a member to discharge their duties. In *Maingot*, pages 224 to 226, they say that if it's not a violation of a specific defined individual or corporate right, it is more properly a matter of contempt.

So does the Leader of the Official Opposition have a right as an individual MLA to have had access to that report prior to it being made public, and does the leak restrict his ability to discharge his parliamentary duties? I argue yes on both counts.

Does the Assembly as a corporate body have a right to the report prior to it being made public? Well, Mr. Speaker, that's obviously what's intended by the Auditor General Act, but was a specific identifiable right violated here by the leak? Now, *Erskine May* – the 22nd edition is what I'm quoting throughout – on page 108 says, "generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member" should "be treated as a contempt." I'm paraphrasing here rather than trying the Speaker's patience by quoting unduly.

Marleau and Montpetit, page 52, also notes that "contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a Member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results," which I argue has happened.

Also, *Marleau and Montpetit*, page 58, notes that it "is causing, or is liable to cause, substantial interference with the performance of their respective" duties, that being the members. I argue that in this case the ability of the Leader of the Official Opposition to respond knowledgeable to the media on this issue, on an issue he originally raised, was impeded. He didn't have the information to be able to do it prior to the media having it.

In *Marleau and Montpetit*, on pages 66 to 67, "any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members . . . is referred to as a 'breach of privilege' and is punishable by the House."

Maingot, page 226, also finds that contempt has no codification and no limit.

When we look at the precedents, Mr. Speaker, we have the Toews incident in the federal media briefing on the bill from March 2001. That is the Speaker Milliken ruling that I referred to earlier. More specifically to this Assembly was the Edmonton-Strathcona precedent around a Bill 19 briefing in March of 2003. In this case, the Minister of Energy held a technical briefing for the media on what appeared to be the final version of Bill 19 after it had been placed on the Order Paper but before it was introduced in the House. As part of his argument it was noted that Speaker Milliken affirmed the confidentiality of a bill on notice so that members could be well informed and to protect the pre-eminent role of the House in legislative affairs.

3:30

You, Mr. Speaker, took note of this recent federal precedent and concurred that the House's claim on the bill arises when the bill goes on notice for introduction. In other words, the Assembly should get the bill before the public. That's what that is all saying.

While we have the Auditor General's office as an officer of the Assembly rather than a committee, I think that where it concerns the rights and privileges of the Assembly, the same principles should be applied. More narrowly, the Auditor General's reporting structure does require the report to be laid before the chair of the select Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, who then, in turn, tables it in the Assembly unless we are not sitting. It's also allowed to be given to the audit committee, as I mentioned, and they may possibly have advised the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the results, which appears in section 23.

There are arguments to support that committee reports – and I believe that the Auditor General report qualifies the same – be treated the same as bills, therefore making disclosure of the same an act of contempt. Under that, we have *Erskine May*, on page 118, talking about premature publication or disclosure of committee proceedings. There's a long dissertation that talks about: "As early as the mid-seventeenth century it was declared to be against the custom of Parliament for any act done at a committee to be divulged before being reported to the House," and it goes on at some length. *Erskine May*, page 670, says: "Any publication of a draft report which has been submitted to a committee, before such report has been agreed to by the committee and presented to the House, may be treated as a contempt." I'll note that *Beauchesne* 31(10) does specifically exclude technical briefings. So the Assembly should see the committee reports before the public, and the Auditor General's report is substantively the same as a committee report and, indeed, would be viewed as a committee report had the chair been able to present it were we in session.

Erskine May, pages 118 to 119, demonstrates that there need not be an identifiable person against whom the charge of contempt is leveled. Since there was no identification of the individuals originally responsible, the successful charges of contempt also demonstrate that it does not have to be a member.

That is the situation we have here, Mr. Speaker. We don't know who released that information. Was it a contempt against this Assembly? I argue that, in fact, it was.

Although successive Committees of Privileges have concluded that such interference with the work of select committees . . . are a contempt of the House and damaging to the work of Parliament, in none of the modern cases involving draft [or other] reports has it been possible to identify those responsible for the original disclosure. In the absence of such information, Committees of Privileges have usually not been willing to recommend exercise of the House's penal powers against those who gave wider publicity to the

disclosure, and when they have done so the House has not been prepared to agree.

That would have been trying to bring the contempt upon the reporter, and we don't know where he got the information, so that may well be the same case here. I think it also demonstrates that the action in question does not necessarily have to take place within the Chamber or the precincts of the Assembly since we do not know precisely where or when the actual act took place, but certainly in the case of the Speaker's ruling in March of 2003 regarding Edmonton-Strathcona, that action took place in the media briefing room, well out of the precincts of the Assembly, and the Speaker certainly held sway there.

Mr. Speaker, this is not to attempt to stop appropriate public consultation but, rather, to protect the pre-eminent role which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation. I think that in respect of the legitimate privileges of individual legislators, this Speaker indicated he could not condone the practice of providing information to the media that is about to come before the House. So, again, even if it wasn't the bill itself, the actual text, that was leaked, you yourself, Mr. Speaker, have already given a ruling that you include the provision of information to the media about something that is to come before the House in the same category as the actual document. There are both collective and individual privileges at stake here, and ensuring that the members of the Legislature have access to the information that they need in order to respond to media questions regarding legislative business is such a right, and indeed the Speaker also commented on that.

I raise the excellent example of Speaker Milliken, at the same time noting that this Assembly is not bound by the federal rulings, to ensure that the privileges of this Assembly and our members are accorded equal protection to that of the federal parliament. We have a situation here that is analogous in every important respect to that situation in March of 2003 that was raised by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. The Auditor General is an officer of the Assembly, and the preparation and presentation of reports is most certainly something which this Assembly has an important stake in protecting. It is our vital business, and the Assembly's rights respecting reports prepared by its officers I would argue is every bit as important as legislation on notice. In both cases the documents ultimately belong to the Assembly.

The Auditor General Act makes it very clear how the report should go, and it is to come to the Assembly before being made available to the public. This leak did interfere with the work of the officer of the Assembly and, further, with the members. It may in fact have been worse since the report of the Auditor General was to bring forth recommendations that would restore the integrity of a provincial agency vital to Alberta's economy. The leak predictably undermined the integrity of the provincial audit process itself, and thus will have the effect of undermining the remedial effects of the report and the subsequent reforms.

I ask the Speaker to find that a prima facie case of contempt took place, whether it was the release of the information or a copy of the actual Auditor General's report or a draft report on the Alberta Securities Commission, in that all members' privileges were breached and that that is seen and held in the same light as contempt overall for the Assembly.

I hope that I've covered all of the relevant points. Thank you for the opportunity to raise this very important issue before the Speaker in the House today.

The Speaker: Other members? The hon. leader of the third party on this point of privilege.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I just would request some guidance. Since my question of privilege also relates in part to the one raised by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader but also covers two similar leaks of reports being prepared by officers of the Assembly, is it appropriate for me to deal with my points now, or should we deal with it separately?

The Speaker: The dilemma I have, hon. member, is that I have no idea where your arguments will lead or what they are based on. I simply do not know what you'll be saying, so I don't know how I can advise, and that would be quite wrong on my part.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, just to provide you with a little bit of information, my point of privilege with respect to the report that was leaked that was referenced by my hon. friend here is very similar, but there were also two other leaks of reports done by the Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General in a similar fashion that we're treating as a group. My points are similar to those raised by the hon. member.

The Speaker: Okay. We're not going to have a debate here, hon. member, but you can see my dilemma, of course. I may rule one way with respect to the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre and rule a different way with the points put forward by the hon. leader of the third party and then be questioned as to why or what. So I don't know. Again, if you simply say, "The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has given all my arguments, and I want her to be my spokesman for this," then I'll understand exactly the position of the hon. leader. So there's the dilemma. Let's deal with one, and then we'll deal with the second one, okay?

Are there additional comments? The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, I believe in this capacity as hon. Acting Government House Leader though.

3:40

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My comments will be very brief indeed. The Auditor General on October 25 issued a news release in which he indicated that on a second occasion there was a premature disclosure of the work of the Auditor General. In the two disclosures referred to in the news release, the one that is being referred to in this particular motion was included.

I think what's important is that the Auditor General, who is well suited to investigation relative to this type of thing, indicated that he was going to seek to find out who it was that had leaked the reports. I think it's fair to say, his comments, that "until the source of the leaks is identified, many groups of people, including our staff and senior management of the audited organizations, remain under a cloud of suspicion."

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the argument being put forward by the hon. member with respect to this contempt application is very much a situation of seeking an order in the dark. We do not have the facts before us. The Auditor General, who was the author of the report, who had control of the report, and who is certainly qualified in all respects to investigate the matter, has indicated that he will be doing that. He is an officer of this Legislative Assembly, and I would suggest that it's quite appropriate that we wait until the report of the Auditor General is available before considering anything.

The fact is that as long as I've been here, any contempt application in front of this Assembly has had a source. There have been some consequences associated with it. There have been circumstances that have been understood and that we could debate. In this particular case we do not know the circumstances. We do not have

a source. We do not know anything, for that matter, other than the fact that the Auditor General has clearly indicated that there have been unauthorized disclosures.

Mr. Speaker, it would be my view that the Auditor General is doing the right thing, that it is the right thing for this Assembly to wait until the Auditor General's report is available, and that it's inappropriate at this point in time to consider in the abstract an application of this nature.

The Speaker: Others?

I would like to point out to all hon. members that on October 25, 2005, a very senior official from the office of the Auditor General visited with me with respect to this matter, the matter of the so-called leak, whatever that meant, and advised me directly that he had absolutely no knowledge of the source of such but that they would be undertaking one review, and in terms of something that had happened, they would be undertaking a second one, and subsequently shared with me this draft of the press release that was issued October 25, 2005, when he quoted in the thing:

We will do our best to find out who it is who seeks to gain an advantage by leaking audit results. Until the source of the leaks is identified, many groups of people, including our staff and senior management of the audited organizations, remain under a cloud of suspicion. As a last resort, we may have to change how and to whom we provide draft reports.

Then he advised and we had a discussion about when they would be delivering these reports to me, and they were delivered to me at about one or two minutes before 11 a.m., and then they were released immediately from my office, which is the normal practice, the practice that we've had before.

On this first point, hon. member, I'm going to review the Blues for tomorrow. It's a very serious matter. The difficulty I have as to the point of privilege is that I believe there is a contempt, absolutely, but to whom? Who is the person? Who is the entity we have to deal with? Where can justice come? This is a matter that causes grave concern to me. I'll come back and say something further – well, it may not even be tomorrow. If we're advised that there will be a response from the investigators with respect to seeing if they can find the source of this, we may have to wait, but it will be as quickly as possible.

The hon. leader of the third party on your point, please.

Privilege Contempt of the Assembly

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize if we go over some of the ground that's been covered. I'll try and bridge it if I can, as I go.

I'm rising on a point of privilege in accordance with Standing Order 15. Yesterday notice was given to your office in writing, and we are raising the matter at the earliest possible time.

I believe that the dignity and authority of the Assembly has been breached on three occasions and that these breaches constitute a prima facie case of contempt for this Assembly. Upon your finding of a prima facie case of a breach of this Assembly's privilege, I would intend to move that the standing committee on privileges and elections investigate the matter and recommend a resolution.

In making this argument, I cite *Beauchesne's* section 33; *Maingot*, second edition, on page 14 and on page 239; and *Erskine May* on page 148 of the 23rd edition. I also have reference to the Auditor General Act and section 25 of the Conflicts of Interest Act.

The facts of the breach are as follows, Mr. Speaker. Three reports were prepared by officers of this Legislature and have been leaked

to the media prior to their distribution to members of this Assembly and prior to their proper publication. The reports in question are, one, the Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission's Enforcement System, October 2005, Auditor General Alberta; second, the Report of the Auditor General on Alberta Social Housing Corporation – Land Sales Systems, October 2005, Auditor General Alberta; and three, allegations involving the Minister of Environment and Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, October 2005, the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta.

On April 13 of this year the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance asked the Auditor General to answer questions regarding the enforcement processes at the Alberta Securities Commission.

On May 31 I and the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview asked the Auditor General to investigate the sale of certain land parcels by the Alberta Social Housing Corporation. On June 7 the Auditor General indicated that he would be looking into the Fort McMurray land deals and that his findings would be included in his annual report in the fall. On June 22 of this year the Minister of Environment wrote to the Ethics Commissioner and requested an investigation into whether that member had breached the Conflicts of Interest Act, which the commissioner agreed to undertake. On September 13 senior Auditor General staff informed the NDP opposition that the Auditor General intended to report on the Fort McMurray land sales in a separate report not included in his annual report.

At the beginning of October we were therefore expecting the release of three reports, two by the Auditor General and a third by the Ethics Commissioner.

The procedure to be followed by officers of the Legislature when tabling reports is very clearly laid out in the relevant legislation. Section 20.1(1) of the Auditor General Act states that

when the Assembly is not sitting and the Auditor General considers it important that a report presented to the chair of the Select Standing Committee under section 17(3), 19(5) or 20(2) be made available to the Members of the Assembly and to the public, the Auditor General may, on 3 days' notice to the Speaker of the Assembly, deliver copies of the report to the Speaker, who shall forthwith distribute the copies to the office of each Member of the Assembly.

Section 20.1(2) of the act specifies that only "after the Speaker has distributed copies of the report" may the Auditor General make the report public. The spirit of these sections was clearly contravened when these reports were made public both prior to the Speaker distributing copies of the report to all MLAs and prior to the official release by the Auditor General.

Similarly, section 25(7) of the Conflicts of Interest Act requires that the Ethics Commissioner report his findings to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Section 28(2) then requires that the Speaker make copies of the report available to the general public. Section 25(8) allows the commissioner to provide a copy of the report to the member against whom an allegation has been made and to the leader of his party, in this case the Premier, prior to the report going to the Speaker.

On October 13 the *Edmonton Journal* printed a story entitled "Fort Mac land deals handled poorly, report says." The story included an overview of the contents of the Auditor General's report on land sales in the Fort McMurray area based on information provided by "sources familiar with the report." The article acknowledges that the report was not due to be released until the end of October.

On October 18, two days before the scheduled public release of the report by the Ethics Commissioner, our office received a number

of phone calls from the media, who had detailed information respecting the contents of the report.

3:50

About 9 o'clock on Thursday morning, October 20, two hours to the report's public release, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Minister of Environment appeared personally on the 630 CHED QR77 Rutherford Show referencing the report, claiming exoneration, and also demanding an apology from my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The same morning a column in the *Calgary Herald* by columnist Tom Olsen also referenced the report. Clearly, members of the media had either been provided with copies of the report prior to its release or had been given detailed briefings on its content.

On October 27 the *Edmonton Journal* printed a story entitled "Ill regulator passes Dr. Dunn's checkup. No big trouble at Securities Commission: Auditor General." The story provided an overview of the contents of the Auditor General's report on the Alberta Securities Commission based on information again provided by sources "familiar with the report." The report was not scheduled to be released until October 27.

Mr. Speaker, in each of the instances that I have outlined, it is clear that members of the media had been provided copies of the reports in question or had been thoroughly briefed on their contents. I would note that the Auditor General has undertaken to investigate the source of these releases. Notwithstanding the results of the Auditor General's investigation into the leaked reports, I believe that this House has suffered an affront to its dignity and certainly to its authority. The Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General are officers of this Legislature. Their investigations are fundamentally important tools that the Legislature uses to evaluate the financial activities of the government and the activities of its own members as they relate to ethics and conflict of interest.

In a press release dated October 25, 2005, the Auditor General stated that

these unauthorized disclosures to the media interfere with the integrity of the audit process thereby treating the Legislative Assembly with disrespect. The long-established legislative requirement that reports of the Auditor General be made available to all MLAs simultaneously and before any public release is designed to protect the integrity of the parliamentary process, including the independence of the legislative auditor.

Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms, sixth edition, in section 33 states:

The most fundamental privilege of the House as a whole is to establish rules of procedure for itself and to enforce them. A few rules are laid down in the Constitution Act, but the vast majority are resolutions of the House which may be added to, amended, or repealed at the discretion of the House.

The Auditor General Act and the Conflicts of Interest Act are literally resolutions of this House. The acts carry no statutory consequences for breaching the provisions regarding tabling, so the ultimate weight they carry is the authority of this Assembly and the respect held for its resolutions.

Maingot says in *Parliamentary Privilege*, second edition:

As in the case of a Superior Court, when by some act or word a person disobeys or is openly disrespectful of the authority of the House of Commons or Senate or of their lawful commands, that person is subject to being held in contempt of the House . . . or Senate as the case may be; therefore it will be seen that the Senate and House of Commons have the power or right to punish actions that, while not appearing to be breaches of any specific privilege, are offences against their authority or dignity. These may include disobedience to their legitimate commands or libels upon them, their

officers, or their Members. Such actions, though often called "breaches of privilege," should more properly be considered "contempts."

I'll skip over some of the other things, Mr. Speaker, but I've referenced them.

I think that there can be no doubt that the leak of these reports was intentional and for political purpose. Not only does this undermine the ability of our officers to provide objective and dispassionate reports; it also undermines our abilities as members of this Assembly to deal with these reports in a proper and constructive way. Given the seriousness of the implications of the breaches that have occurred and the citations noted here, I would urge that you find that a prima facie case exists for breach of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I think you have already indicated that you believe that there was a breach, but the question was whether or not anyone had been identified, either by the Auditor General or anyone else, to hold to account for the breach. It is my submission that the Minister of Environment, whether or not he released the reports to the media directly, certainly was on the media discussing the contents of the reports prior to their release, and I would submit to you that that is a contempt of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My comments with respect to this are similar as to the previous motion as it relates to the Auditor General's reports. They are identical. It seems to me that the situation is that he is investigating them, and we should await that report.

With respect to the second matter, my understanding there is that once again we do not have a source. We don't know. The circumstances surrounding it are unknown. I think it is very difficult for this Assembly to deal with a contempt application where the source is not known. The member opposite has, you know, indicated his opinion of the matter. They expressed their opinion of a matter, which gave rise to the Ethics Commissioner reviewing the matter in the first place.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo in his review with the Ethics Commissioner asked him to conduct an investigation into allegations made against him by members of the New Democratic opposition, and the Ethics Commissioner did that. He said, "As I have not found any breach of the Conflicts of Interest Act, I recommend no sanctions." That was the conclusion of that particular report. They're back at it today indicating that their opinion with respect to the matter falls short of the mark. Once again, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me difficult to deal with a contempt application where there is no one that can be addressed specifically.

I'd also make this observation with respect to findings. It seems to me that this particular Assembly needs circumstances put before it in order to deal with the issue of a prima facie case of contempt, not a matter of contempt per se, and in the end those circumstances may come out if we give an investigation.

With respect to the Ethics Commissioner my understanding is that there is no investigation being conducted at this time, and I'm not aware that there is any intention of an investigation to be done.

Thank you.

The Speaker: It's my common practice on the day of the opening of a session to consult with the Ethics Commissioner and ask a question: is any Member of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta under review? The answer as of 1 o'clock today was: no,

there is no Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta under review by the office of the Ethics Commissioner. That's common practice. I do this all the time just to make sure, in the event that certain things happen in this Assembly, that there's protection provided for all hon. members.

Hon. leader of the third party, the first part of your argument dealt with the reports of the Auditor General. I have reported in the previous point that I did have a consultation with the office of the Auditor General on the same day that the news release was put out, and the quotation in it was shared with me. I was advised as the Speaker that one investigation had started, that there would be another one, and the report would be released as has been outlined on that particular news release.

With respect to the Ethics Commissioner it's my understanding in consultation that I've had as well that late in the afternoon of the previous day – and I shouldn't be speaking on behalf of the Minister of Environment, but I think it's important for complete transparency – the Minister of Environment was provided a draft copy of the Ethics Commissioner's report by the Ethics Commissioner. By the Ethics Commissioner. It's further my understanding that the following morning the Minister of Environment did go on a certain radio show and did reference the report, which he believed was his report to do with as he wanted to do. It was later in the day that the Ethics Commissioner report was provided to my office, and it was released at a certain time.

So I have undertaken some investigation of this matter, and I'm being very, very transparent and open with the House with respect to this.

4:00

I'll provide further comment with respect to this matter. There is one underlying thing. Whatever we find and whether or not it's a prima facie case, the fact of the matter is that this is really a very terrible situation. You've got a situation where you have two officers of the Assembly. They do not report to the government. They don't report to any particular minister. They don't report to the Speaker. They report to the Assembly. They're officers. We have passed legislation in this Assembly to declare these people independent. We have to respect them, and we have to provide them with the resources to do the job that we have passed legislation to provide them for, and we have to provide them with the opportunity to function in an environment without intimidation, without any kinds of pressure points from members, the media, or anyone else.

There's a process, a time-honoured process that has been set up that these people will consult with affected, impacted people when they prepare their reports. That's a time-honoured one, and it's based on trust. So if someone is leaking information, whether or not it's in the office of one of the officers of the Legislative Assembly, which is a possibility, or another office, either way that's not very good, and in some jurisdictions it's very much punishable.

The difficulty standing here today is that I can't do anything more than agree with the tone put forward by the two members that basically say that the only honourable way for all of this is that Members of the Legislative Assembly must all have access to this information. These are officers of the Legislative Assembly, and we have to all deal with trust, and there shouldn't be any of this other stuff happening. I think this is very contemptuous without any doubt at all, and maybe that sums up what both members really wanted to say in a different way. What I fear is that now these officers are going to go off by themselves, never to come back here until the final report, with no consultation with anybody because there will be questions, and the whole process will become less effective and less efficient, and that is the downside of what may have happened.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

Committee Membership Change

24. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the following change to the following committee be approved by the Assembly: on the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee that Mr. Elsalhy replace Ms Pastoor.

Mr. Hancock: We are bringing forward this motion to accommodate the wishes of the Liberal opposition, and any explanation for the change I presume would come from them, but I would ask the Assembly to agree to the wishes of the Liberal opposition in this regard.

The Speaker: Opposition House Leader, any comments?

Ms Blakeman: Just my thanks to the Government House Leader for acquiescing to our desire. For various reasons and time constraints we require the switch in membership. We wanted to have as much full participation as possible by the opposition in various committees, and we believe that this will facilitate that.

Thank you.

[Government Motion 24 carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Does anyone wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I rise today to discuss Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005. The minister of human resources, the WCB, and I thoroughly considered the various public comments made by the opposition caucuses and by stakeholders. We now have amendments to the bill, and they're being circulated. It is my pleasure to move these amendments.

The Chair: We will refer to this amendment as amendment A1. Would the Member for Calgary-Foothills like to proceed?

Mr. Webber: Again, Mr. Chairman, the members will have received their package of amendments very soon, I hope.

Vesting of these actions with the WCB remains. Subrogation is the wrong legal term given the degree of control the courts say the WCB has. The word "subrogation" has prompted a small segment of the legal profession to challenge the WCB's position in order that those lawyers can charge higher legal fees. The word "vesting" clarifies the intent of section 22 of the Workers' Compensation Act when taken as a whole, even in its preamended form. It removes ambiguity and stops the injured worker from being a pawn when a lawyer wants to charge higher fees than the WCB allows. So vesting remains, Mr. Chairman; however, there have been considerable efforts to reinforce the rights of the worker and to reinforce the

checks and balances that the WCB will be obliged to follow within such a framework.

Firstly, any semblance of even perceived retroactive application of this bill has been removed by significant amendment to section 22(2) of the act. These changes will apply only to accidents that occur after proclamation of this bill.

Also, Mr. Chairman, there was concern that even though the Alberta Court of Appeal upheld the ultimate control and legitimate interest that the WCB has in these third-party actions in the current act, measures needed to be taken to ensure that the WCB treated the injured worker like a partner that would be consulted throughout the process and prior to any settlement. As such, the strong language of “solely” and “sole” have been removed in subsections (3) and (5) respectively.

Additionally, consequences for non co-operation, although an element of that must be retained, have been relaxed and clarified. First, co-operation with the required litigation is standard practice in any sort of insurance law. The employers who fund this system should not bear additional cost when there is money on the table or one party is not co-operative. Bill 15 makes the duty to co-operate clear. It balances the rights of workers and employers. So while the necessity to co-operate does need to be protected, it is now made clear that any suspension of income replacement benefits is temporary and lasts only as long as the period of non co-operation.

What will not be suspended regardless of co-operation is any of the medically related services offered, co-ordinated, or reimbursed by the WCB, such as scheduled surgeries, therapy, or prescription medications. Also, the clause suggesting overpayment recovery has been completely deleted.

4:10

Mr. Chairman, we have introduced a new clause to this bill that sets out in law that the employer of an injured worker cannot put pressure on that worker not to sue. In reality non co-operation is extremely rare. Most workers have wanted to co-operate because it is in their clear financial interest to do so. Under this practice I understand that approximately \$13 million is paid annually to injured workers and their dependants over and above the compensation benefits that they have received.

Also, Mr. Chairman, a clause has been added to the bill – it’ll be 22.1 – that allows for the reverse of vesting. WCB will now have the ability to divest a third-party action. In such an instance the injured worker would own the claim completely but, of course, would also own all the risk that WCB would have otherwise taken.

For example, a young working Albertan was recently injured in an explosion while operating an ice resurfacing machine. He sustained third-degree burns over 85 per cent of his body. The WCB continues to provide him with full benefits in amounts already upwards of \$2 million. With the counsel of his choice legal action was brought against the manufacturer of the ice resurfer. After a month-long trial the judge awarded the worker zero. The worker was found to be at fault, so he gets nothing from the court. The court also ordered this worker to pay the defendant’s costs, some \$750,000. The WCB paid those costs. The WCB also supported this worker in an appeal of that ruling with success, as a new trial has been granted.

While subsection (5) of section 22 of the act sets out the process for the relationship between the injured worker, the WCB, and private legal counsel if there is any, it was decided to have these rules set out in the regulation rather than just in WCB policy.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, this bill ensures that workers get a minimum of 25 per cent of any settlement or court award. It caps the amount that private injury lawyers can charge at 25 per cent. It ensures that employers do not subsidize private insurers, in most

cases automobile insurance companies, through the employer-funded WCB system. It has no element of retroactivity whatsoever. It clarifies and enhances a fundamental principle of insurance law that says that in exchange for us insuring you, you need to help us recover any of our costs if you can. It gives workers on temporary partial disability benefit the same benefit of cost-of-living increases that workers on other WCB benefit streams get. Finally, it gives members of the WCB board of directors the same immunity that virtually all government-mandated board members enjoy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I’d like at this point to adjourn the debate to give us time to have a look at some of the amendments, and I would ask that the committee rise and report at this point.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 15. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that this is the first day of session and we have little available for discussion, I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to allow us to proceed to second reading of Bill 47 on the same day as first reading.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
Bill 47
Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and move second reading to Bill 47 and to open debate on Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act.

This bill aims to create an Alberta association of former MLAs which would be nonpartisan in nature and would be open to all former MLAs regardless of party allegiance. The creation of the Alberta association of former MLAs can be an important part of the celebration of the centennial of the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature, coming up next March. I’d like to once again recognize the Speaker of the House for his encouragement and support of the concept of an association of former members as an initiative to be

part of the Legislative Assembly's centennial celebrations.

In 2003 the members of this Chamber debated and passed a private member's motion which I had brought forward concerning this association. At that time I stated my intention to bring this idea forward as legislation, which is now Bill 47 before us.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by giving some background information. The impetus for establishing a former members' association comes from a conference I had the opportunity to attend in the fall of 2002. This conference was hosted by the association of former members in Quebec, and it gave me the opportunity to see the activities and initiatives which are being undertaken by other former members' associations which are currently active. At present, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and the Parliament in Ottawa have former members' associations. All of these organizations work to strengthen parliamentary democracy, and this is a goal which is worth pursuing here in Alberta I believe.

Mr. Speaker, to that end, the primary goal of this association would be to tap into the knowledge and experience that former members of this Chamber have gained while representing their constituents as MLAs. This experience can be used to help strengthen the system of parliamentary democracy in Alberta and across Canada. In other former members' associations this is being achieved through speaking programs targeted primarily at schools and universities, enabling students to become more aware of the functions and processes of government, which serves all Albertans.

Albertans who have sat and debated issues in this Chamber on behalf of their constituents have a great understanding and knowledge of democracy in the parliamentary system in the province. That knowledge is a resource which can be used to strengthen parliamentary democracy in our province. In addition, the association would be able to serve as a vehicle through which relations with other former members' associations could be strengthened. This could be accomplished through meetings with other former members' associations on both a national and international level.

The United States Association of Former Members of Congress has had a great deal of success with one of their programs, that pairs former Congress members, one from each political party, to speak to university students. The Congress to campus program has been operating since 1976 and has visited over 200 campuses throughout the United States. Attempts to measure the effects of the speaking tour have shown that students react very positively to this program. In their annual report to Congress, May 15, 2003, they presented the following findings:

Those students who have contact with former Members during their Congress to Campus visits have a measurably more favourable view of public servants and of public service as a career option than similar students who do not have the opportunity to interact with the visiting former Members.

Closer to home the House of Commons in Ottawa also has a former members' association. Some of you may remember – I think it was last year or perhaps two years ago – that they had a meeting here in Edmonton, and many of them here visited the Legislature at that time. They, too, are active in educational programs such as sponsoring several academic scholarship programs through their charity, the educational foundation. These scholarships are focused on increasing students' interest in parliamentary democracy.

4:20

In addition to serving the interests of the public and parliamentary democracy, the association would act to foster a spirit of community amongst former MLAs as well as create a means for dialogue between former and current MLAs.

Mr. Speaker, last year I sent out a letter to gauge the receptiveness of former MLAs to a former members' association such as this one.

The majority of replies by far were either positive or very positive. So the support for a former members' association from former members is strong, and it would be appropriate and fitting to initiate the association on the 100th anniversary of the Legislature.

There have been some questions raised regarding this bill which I would like to address. One question is that of funding. Who will fund the association? This association would be funded, similar to other associations, through three avenues: membership fees, probably a subscription fee to a newsletter as is the case in all of the other associations, and finally donations.

Another question which has been asked is: why use legislation to create this association? Why don't former members get together on their own? Well, the truth is that this approach has been tried in other jurisdictions, and it has not worked. Involving government legislation adds a sense of legitimacy to the organization, and it is this legitimacy that has allowed associations in other jurisdictions to be as successful as they have been. Further, it is an expression by the members of this Legislature that a former members' association can be a valuable resource to the people of Alberta in promoting our parliamentary system. It is my belief that the creation of the Alberta association of former MLAs would be a great benefit to Albertans on the whole by heightening understanding of our system of parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Speaker, there is one final point I would like to make regarding the formation of this association, and that is regarding timing. This past year Albertans have been celebrating the centennial anniversary of the formation of our province. In a short few months we will be passing another milestone in our province. March 15, 2006, will mark the centennial of the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature. I feel that having a former members' association in place for that anniversary would be a fitting way of recognizing the contributions of legislators who came before us and who had a hand in making Alberta the great province which it is today. A former members' association is a very fitting centennial project for this Legislature to support.

Once again I would like to thank the Speaker of the House for his continued support and encouragement of this initiative. His help has made it possible for this legislation to be debated before the centennial anniversary of the first sitting of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that by forming this association, we have the opportunity to create an organization which will help to strengthen parliamentary democracy in our province. We have the opportunity to work with former members' associations in other provinces and other countries to strengthen the parliamentary system in Canada. I would ask that all members on both sides of the Chamber please stand with me in support of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak in second reading to Bill 47, which I think was formerly known as private member's Bill 207 as sponsored by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. I have to admit that my initial reaction was – well, I guess if you looked at this as different times. Given some of the days that I've had in here and the experiences I've had serving in the Assembly, the idea of socializing with other members of this Assembly frankly puzzles me. I can make fun of it now, but I have to make the serious point as well that I think times are different. Times have changed. Certainly, the tone that's in the House today, the level of respect that the two sides have for each other, the extremely adversarial nature of both this process but also our response to it, has not been conducive to friendly repartee. Let me put it that way.

You know, I talked to some members that served in the '80s and early '90s, and they talked about going for coffee with people on the other side. I can't imagine that, frankly. I'll accept that we're dealing with different times here, and this is, I know, a genuine desire and proposal from the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose to put this together. I guess I sort of say: well, I can see how it would be of use, and certainly there would probably be fairly heavy subscription from people who are already retired, but I'm struggling to see where my place in this organization would be by the time I retire. [interjections] And there we go. There's the typical reaction, with a good deal of heckling: will I please leave now, and, no, they wouldn't want me to be a member of that club.

That's exactly what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. I'm being asked to support an association which is essentially an old boys' club, and I'm not old, nor am I a boy. So do I really want to support this? Well, frankly, I'm not sure.

I think to myself: "All right. Well, what are they going to do?" I know with the Retired Teachers' Association they mostly get together for social occasions. They mark special days. They host a tea, I think, for retiring teachers as a sort of special occasion for their comrades and colleagues. Well, there's nothing wrong with that. I don't know why we need to sanction it in this Assembly, but there's certainly nothing wrong with the idea of it.

I know that there's long been a golf tournament that's been organized by retired members. That has existed for some time, so I guess part of this could be golf tournaments.

I'm interested to hear what the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose is saying that some of the other associations have been involved with. I mean, certainly the idea of a mentorship program: excellent. Or a scholarship program is fine. I mean, this is one of these bills that comes forward in the House and you think: gee, when we only get to sit for 50 days max – I think we're at day 42 or 43 today. If we make it through to day 50, I'll celebrate. Of all the issues that there are out there, good and bad, in Alberta today, I have to admit that I do look at this bill and think: hmm, there are other things that we could be spending our time on here. Then again, why can't this Assembly do some nice things every now and then?

There is a real question. The member has acknowledged that people are saying to him: why on earth does this bill have to go through this Assembly? As best as I can ascertain, what's being sought here is the equivalent of the little gold seal that goes on the jam jars that says, you know: by appointment to the Queen. It indicates that there is some affiliation with a higher power, if you will, or a larger entity that gives it that sort of gold seal, that special bit that connects this organization to this particular Legislative Assembly. [interjections] Given the heckling that I'm hearing from the minister for aboriginal affairs and the minister for infrastructure, I'm sure they'll be commenting later in a full debate, and I look forward to it.

4:30

There's nothing wrong with seeking that gold seal of approval, but it is a little curious because we don't do it for other organizations. Perhaps the member would be able to do the research and come back and say: yes, in fact the Alberta Teachers' Association does have it in their charter that there would be a Retired Teachers' Association that's affiliated. Maybe that's a bit more commonplace, and if that's the case, well, I'm not going to refute it.

I was looking at some of the bios of members who have served in this Assembly, and I'm reminded again, as the Speaker gave brief eulogies and descriptions of former members who've passed away since we were last sitting, that we often hear of the names of the legislative committees that the members were sitting on. In fact, I

managed to get a little bit of information about what those committees are or have been from 1986 to 2005. Mr. Speaker, I'm really struck that at that time there were many more, first of all, legislative committees, which would be all-party committees, and more participation from members of the Official Opposition. So a different time.

I'm mindful of the sponsoring Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose talking about possible activities for this organization being consideration of democratic renewal. Perhaps one of the first things I could suggest to be on their agenda would be encouraging their colleagues on the government side to go back and have another look at the purpose of legislative committees. I believe that in my time we've had – I know, actually, that we've had legislative committees simply struck from the record. The Law and Regulations Committee, to my mind, was always very useful and certainly could play a very useful role in what we do here and cut down on some of the misunderstandings and the miscues and, frankly, some of that adversarial nature that happens here when the two sides simply come to loggerheads without understanding what each is trying to say. Those kinds of issues get worked out in the committee structure.

The Committee on Law and Regulations, for example, was a particular favourite of my former colleague for Calgary-Buffalo. He often talked about referring amendments, for example, to an all-party Committee on Law and Regulations, which would have allowed us to meet in that sort of a setting and go through both regulations and amendments before they came back to the floor, a very useful process, I feel. Interestingly enough, that committee has been completely struck. It doesn't exist anymore. So I guess that when our time comes and others are looking at our bios, they will see how few legislative committees in fact meet and, more to the point, how few times we have members of the opposition involved in these committees.

This government is very fond of finding work for its backbenchers by coming up with road shows for them to do over the summer. Sometimes those are prompted by real need; for example, the response to the Auditor General's report on long-term care facilities. The Minister of Health and Wellness's answer to that was to strike an MLA committee to tour the province. I have to give credit to my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-East for immediately saying: "Excuse me, but I'm a member of the opposition. I have a great deal of expertise in this area, and you should put me on the committee." To give credit to the Minister of Health and Wellness, she did. I think that having a member of the Official Opposition but also someone with a great deal of expertise in that area on the committee really helped that whole process and, I think, gave it credibility. She was also able to get public consultations involved in that where it wouldn't have been before. So there's a very, you know, quick example of the benefits of involving members of the Official Opposition in these committees.

But this government tends to strike – and frankly, I've lost track. There are probably half a dozen of them out there right now that are out and running, with somebody being paid extra money to run them, that report back at some point to the government, and occasionally there are reports from them which rarely get released to the public. I think that that's an issue for democratic renewal and, again, maybe one that we can have this organization look at.

But back to where I was starting with this. As I looked at some of the past members, their bios, and which of the committees they sat on, you know, one of the ones that's most interesting is the Public Affairs Committee, which has never been called in my nine years here, ever. As a matter of fact, I think that it might have been one of the ones that was struck along with the Law and Regulations Committee.

As I looked through this, I noticed that a certain member for Barrhead-Westlock, who is now the Speaker of our Assembly, when he was House leader was instrumental in commencing a number of select special committees on parliamentary reform and, again, involved members of the Official Opposition on that.

So going back to what's being proposed here, do I have a particular problem with a committee being created by an act of legislation? Not particularly. It's a little curious that it's getting such special attention, which I don't think is accorded to retired members of other professions. I'm willing to be corrected on that one if someone can show me or bring up the other charters in which this is commonly done. If that's the case, then you would need an act of the Legislature to create a retired members' society for this particular job, if you want to put it that way.

I'm glad the member answered the question about funding because that's one that we hear as well. There's always a suspicion that somehow this organization is going to have access to grant money or some kind of government funding or operational money that other organizations don't get access to. There's a concept of fairness here that I think sometimes eludes this particular government. It's one that's important, and it's important in this context. The member has made it clear that the funding for the organization is to come from membership fees, newsletter advertising and, I'm assuming, fees to get the newsletter – subscription fees is a better way of putting that – and donations.

I would be interested in hearing from the sponsoring member or others if there are any plans to apply for any other kind of grant program that is currently available either municipally, provincially, or federally. I think that since it's of such interest to people, I'd like to know if that's contemplated or perhaps if it would be specifically prohibited in the charter of the organization.

The last thing that the member talked about was why under the Legislative Assembly, and I've already dealt with that one.

Again, I have no particular problem with this. I just question why we're spending time on it and also wonder how it's actually going to apply in the future. I can see where it may have worked in the past, but I am at a bit of a loss to see how it's going to work for us, given our relationship in this Assembly now, because I think times are different. I don't think that's a good thing, and I have certainly been vocal about my disapproval of the way things operate in here. I think that it is discouraging for some people to even contemplate being elected to this Assembly because of that tone of rough and ready and roll up your sleeves and get ready to slug it out. You know, I'll be interested to see how this all plays out.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the bill in second reading. I'll look forward to maybe getting some responses to my questions. Thank you.

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and join the debate on Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act. Having heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I hope my remarks will help clarify a few more points for her and earn her support for this bill as well.

When I initially saw this bill idea, the first thought that flashed through my mind was: how much is it going to cost the Alberta taxpayers to institute and fund this association on an annual basis? I was very encouraged to see that there would be no direct funding from the province and that the proposed association's budget will be derived from yearly membership fees.

In my remarks today I will discuss the positive outcomes I

perceive coming from this piece of legislation. As a representative of the constituency of Calgary-McCall one of the regretful aspects of my job is that I have to decline attending functions in my riding simply because of time constraints. Often these time constraints happen when I am in Edmonton attending the business of the Legislative Assembly while a school requests my participation in a mock parliament debate.

Mr. Speaker, there is undoubtedly a thirst for knowledge of parliamentary process in all corners of this great province and around the world. My experiences have led me to believe that Albertans want to learn more about the system that governs them. They are engaged in the issues that affect not only their own lives but the lives of their fellow citizens. Considering our current resources and time restrictions, it is difficult and, quite frankly, impossible to meet the demands placed upon our current MLAs regarding visiting with and explaining to Albertans and other Canadians the intricacies of our parliamentary system. What can happen and what this bill proposes is to have former members of its Legislative Assembly combine their efforts, knowledge, and experiences through the proposed association and have them tour the province and the country in order to bring a broader perspective of how our government operates in a legislative setting.

Spreading the word and promoting the ideals of parliamentary democracy would be something that I am sure many of us would look forward to pursuing once our time in this Legislative Assembly comes to an end. While the majority of former MLAs are involved in a great number of organizations and projects that are continually improving our province and our communities, the main benefit of this type of association is that it will allow former members to pursue these projects with the help of their other former colleagues, thus allowing them to engage in these efforts through a more collaborative approach.

One of the most successful former members' associations, the United States Association of Former Members of Congress, has been able to accomplish a number of amazing feats. A hundred and fifty thousand students have been spoken to across 207 different campuses. The association leads workshops in emerging democracies, and it continually sends congressional study groups abroad to raise awareness and foster the ideals of representative democracy.

Other jurisdictions in Canada have followed the lead by the United States' former members' association and generated similar results. While not as large as the American counterparts, Canadian associations are continually growing and engaging a large number of individuals in democratic discussions through conferences and guest lecture series.

One of the most important aspects of these associations is that they are nonpartisan, which helps create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, one that isn't compromised by party politics. With this in mind, there will be no hidden agenda for Alberta's former members' association.

Mr. Speaker, the focus of our Alberta former members' association would be based on the parliamentary system that we practise and not on the issues which bring about disengagement and political differences. I believe that all of us can agree that we have a very good system of governance here in Alberta, and I believe that our experiences and our successes should be shared with the rest of our province and the world.

I feel that it's very important Albertans are educated on the system that governs them. I feel strongly that people in communities across the globe who are striving to gain the same freedoms that we sometimes take for granted are able to learn more about how our system operates through the experiences of those who helped it function in a practical setting.

We have an opportunity here to help form an association that will bring together some of the great minds of this province. I sincerely hope that the intentions of this bill are not misconstrued and falsely interpreted as forming some sort of a leisure club for former members. Promoting the ideals of parliamentary democracy is not a partisan process, and the already established former members' associations in other jurisdictions have risen above any party or partisan arguments. Former parliamentary, congressional, and Senate members have already produced great accomplishments by working together to break down barriers between citizens and their elected officials, and I hope that former Alberta legislators will be able to take part in these admirable tasks.

With this in mind, I will be supporting this bill, and I encourage all other members to join me in doing the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, up to the next five minutes is available for questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a) if anyone wishes to participate in that part. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question I would have for the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall is simply this. He indicated in his remarks that no direct funding would be sought from the Alberta government. I'm just wondering whether or not he might be then leaving the door open for indirect funding to be sought from the Alberta government.

Mr. Shariff: In my personal opinion, once the act is proclaimed, it will establish the Alberta association of former MLAs as a nonprofit body corporate. Once that's the case – it's a nonprofit body – then that nonprofit body should be able to access any funding that's available to other nonprofit organizations. So let's say, for example, the election that happened in Ukraine required people to go and observe. Former MLAs could access CIDA funding to go and do that work. There's nothing wrong with that. So I would support that form of indirect funding.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else wish to participate under Standing Order 29(2)(a) in the debate?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and speak to Bill 47, formerly Bill 207, Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act. The object of this bill is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association of former MLAs. The primary functions of this association are to promote parliamentary democracy and the interests of former MLAs.

This bill intends to represent a more formal public status or acknowledgement kind of association. It is good to have an association like this one in Alberta. We have one in Ontario and B.C. and the Parliament of Canada, as I heard. But it must be nonpartisan and nonpolitical and nonprofit. We should compare similar associations and check with the other associations' bylaws as well.

I would support this bill with some reservations. I basically commend the idea, but do we really need this bill? Why can't we establish a registered society or association without the interference of the Legislature? Would it fulfill or stick to its mandate? Mr. Speaker, we have unequal distribution of former MLAs in Alberta. The group may have difficulty in engaging in activities or framing their messages in ways that didn't support the status quo. It is unfortunate but not surprising that the government members are

more interested in forming this association. The group's mandate should be changed to expressly include looking at needed reforms. Is its mandate appropriate? No. It certainly needs some further reforms. It must be a politically neutral body. There is mounting evidence that such a forum is required and supported by the public.

4:50

Public educational efforts around parliamentary traditions are the importance of public service. I think it should be added to their mandate. There is very little reason to believe that former MLAs have a unique set of interests that need not be promoted through this group. What other interests they may have could revolve around pay, pension, et cetera. This association should not be entitled to become a lobby group. There is no provision for it being supported by public funds. So if it were to lobby for these interests, at least it would not be doing so with public funds. If they were able to apply, such as nonprofit organizations, for funding from the Alberta government, from an institution like the Wild Rose or the lottery, would this not be considered conflict of interest?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? If not, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join debate on Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for bringing forward this idea. This is an issue that should be important to all Albertans who value the efficient and democratic function of this House.

The purpose of Bill 47 is to create an alumni association for former members of this Assembly. First and foremost, I believe that the most important aspect of this bill is that it would not require any public money. The association will be entirely self-sufficient and not dependent on taxpayers. No start-up fees, no seed money, nothing, not one thin dime, Mr. Speaker. I think that this point cannot be ignored. The Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians is a model that this proposed action could be based upon. Although they are supported partially by the House of Commons, the bulk of their revenue comes from membership fees.

In the proposed bill there is no requirement that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta provide finances to this organization. If members choose to join the association, then they are free to do so. This alumni association would be nonpartisan and open to all former members of this House. Being a nonpartisan body is important as it will allow the opportunity for members to continue to work for the betterment of parliamentary democracy after they have retired from official public service. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to someday sitting down with the Liberals and the NDs and the member from the Alberta Alliance Party to discuss possible reforms in a friendly, nonpartisan manner.

Now, knowing the ins and outs of a parliamentary system can be a difficult thing to learn. I would argue that both current and former Members of the Legislative Assembly would qualify as experts. The knowledge that MLAs gather during their tenure is valuable to future generations, and creating this association would give a venue for this knowledge to be shared.

The Alberta association of former MLAs could share their knowledge of parliamentary systems not only with Albertans, but they could share this knowledge with Canadians and others around the world. Just because a member ceases to be an MLA does not mean that they no longer have a contribution to make to the betterment of Alberta and our parliamentary democracy. Establish-

ing such an occasion would give former members another meaningful way of continuing their public service, to give back in a voluntary capacity.

Now, as I know most of you can attest to, being a member of this House is a demanding and rewarding job. It takes a lot out of a person to be a member. In exchange for all that being a member takes, there are many benefits that come with the job. Creating an alumni association is a small way that members can pay back Albertans for the opportunities presented to them because they've been members of this House.

Now, often we hear how people have become apathetic about politics. This general belief has been widely supported by the large reductions in voter turnout during elections at all levels. The story goes that a political candidate knocked on the door of a house and asked the occupant what the biggest reason was for low voter turnout. Was it ignorance, or was it apathy? The occupant replied: "I don't know, and I don't care," and they slammed the door shut.

The alumni association is a body that has the potential to re-engage Albertans with our political process. Freed from partisan ties, former members can travel around the province and provide first-hand accounts of what parliamentary democracy is all about. Without partisan ties people's cynicism toward politicians is diminished. I would ask this House: who would be better at rekindling political participation than former members of this House? You see, current members are likely too busy dealing with urgent matters and constituent concerns to undertake comprehensive examinations of the political process. Also, current members may be viewed as being biased towards one position or the other because of their partisan ties. As a nonpartisan body the alumni association would be able to take the time and engage Albertans without worrying about re-election. Former members will have more time to properly discuss democratic renewal initiatives as they have the expertise to conduct such investigations.

Albertans would value having the opportunity to speak to former MLAs about their experiences and learn their thoughts on the functioning of our parliamentary system. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that former members of this House would welcome the opportunity to educate people on politics with the goal of increasing participation in our system.

Now, there's also the opportunity for former members to share their expertise with emerging democracies around the world. Members of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians plan to engage in activities such as these, and there's certainly a role for former members of this House in a similar capacity.

Mr. Speaker, the creation of a former members' association is in line with initiatives that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta currently undertakes. Currently this House is part of a number of interparliamentary associations. We work with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to promote parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth and have formed numerous bilateral relations with American Legislatures.

Mr. Speaker, apart from undertaking work to enhance our system, students and charities are also likely to benefit from the creation of this association. This association will contain many influential people and should have no trouble launching a speakers' series that could raise significant amounts of money. These fundraising endeavours could be used to create scholarship funds to promote opportunities for university and high school students to study Parliament both at home and abroad. Such exchanges are currently supported by the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians and would be a natural task for an association of former MLAs to undertake.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure most members know, the Legislative

Assembly of Alberta currently runs the School at the Legislature program. Now, an alumni of this House could possibly speak to students involved in this program and share their knowledge directly with students. Additionally, the presence of such an association could allow Alberta schools a significant distance from Edmonton to experience the program with former local members instructing the students. Who better to be a guest speaker to an eager group of students than a person with first-hand knowledge? Furthermore, students involved in the Forum for Young Albertans pay a visit to the Legislature each year. A former members' association could partner with programs such as these to enhance the educational experience students receive in these programs.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 47 is not proposing an idea that is unheard of. In 1970 the United States Association of Former Members of Congress was formed. This association works to enhance the awareness of the role of Congress both domestically and internationally. An association of former Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta could also fulfill a similar function and help to educate the people of Alberta about the role that the Legislative Assembly plays.

Other Canadian provinces have also developed similar organizations. B.C., Ontario, and Quebec have all created such associations. Each of these provinces' associations plays a similar role to the vision for an Alberta alumni association laid out in Bill 47.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to support this legislation and remember that there is no cost to taxpayers associated with this legislation. The people of Alberta will not be funding this endeavour, which is an important fact that all members must keep in mind. We have the potential to do great service to the cause of enhancing parliamentary democracy without imposing costs on Albertans.

After a member's term as an elected official expires, there's still much that they can contribute to society. For a person who cares as much about Alberta as an MLA does, their life of public service never really ends. The creation of an association of former Alberta legislators will allow Alberta to create an arena where former MLAs can effectively contribute to the development of parliamentary democracy in this province.

So I would urge all members to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this Bill 47, formerly Bill 207, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. While I'm not necessarily opposed to the idea, recognizing that maybe I myself many years from now might be a member of this organization . . .

Mr. R. Miller: Not for a long, long time.

Mr. Elsalhy: I'm talking 12, 15 years maybe.

I may repeat or may clarify some of the concerns that were voiced by some of my colleagues. Again, we're not necessarily against it, but we just need to clarify certain things. Is this just a club, or is it more? Is it a social gathering, or is it the launching pad for a lobbying group?

Mr. R. Miller: It could be the Alberta Senate.

Mr. Elsalhy: It could be the Alberta Senate, absolutely. Are we thinking of the establishment of an upper House?

Really the question is: what will this group's mandate be? Will its work include studying ways to rectify or address the democratic deficit that is identified in this province? Will it promote more access to information? Will it advocate more all-party representation on committees, more dialogue?

I am also concerned that when we're talking about the centennial celebrations and how this is fitting to include former MLAs in an organization that they belong to and they become a member of, I'm aware of the fact that it is the centennial year, but it's also the two years leading up to a leadership race within the governing party. One is noticing certain leadership manoeuvres, and people are trying to align themselves with one candidate or another. My question would be: are we establishing this to impress somebody, or are we trying to curry favour?

People are aware of the exercise that's happening across the floor here. We have three leadership candidates who are cabinet ministers, but then we also have three outside who are no longer members of this government. So what's happening?

I listened with keen interest to the comments made by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, and I, too, would welcome the day when that hon. member and the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would engage in a friendly game of fencing or kick-boxing perhaps. Who said that it has to stop with golf or chess?

Seriously, though, my question would be: who is going to fund this organization? If we ask questions about its mandate and the scope of its work and the membership, who's going to fund it? Are we talking government grants? Are we talking about, like the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall mentioned, them being a nonprofit organization, and it would raise funds on its own? Would they charge membership fees for people to enter? How is it going to work?

Also, I'm concerned with section 3(1)(e), which talks about protecting and preserving and promoting the interests of former MLAs. Why is this needed, and what are those interests exactly? Again, that leads up to my prior question on them becoming or morphing into a lobbying group.

I was officially appointed today as a member of the Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, but I sat at most of the meetings. During a discussion with the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow she mentioned that once cabinet ministers leave cabinet, they become nobodies, and I'm quoting her. I disagreed with her because they still have a lot of clout. So let me extend this same discussion and this same rationale to the hon. Premier when he retires in a year or two. He would become a member of this former MLA club, and then he might apply to receive some funding for a project.

I would find it very hard to believe that a former Premier, still fresh in people's minds, would be denied his application or that he would find difficulty in getting his approval. We could extend this to former cabinet ministers, and then, by the same token, to everybody in this House, be it government backbenchers or opposition MLAs or private members. We need a cooling-off period like we have discussed in the Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, and maybe we should extend it to this bill as well and to this organization. On that note, I am hoping to deliver an amendment to this act, hopefully tomorrow, and it will speak to that effect. We need a cooling-off period that would prevent people from joining this organization till after one year has elapsed.

Mr. R. Miller: And a lobbyist registry. Register as a lobbyist.

Mr. Elsalhy: And a lobbyist registry because they should register as

a lobbying group, and if they fail to or if they actually have the government's ear and they're not on the books, then we're subject to penalties and we're subject to disciplinary action.

Mr. R. Miller: That means that the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs wouldn't have been a member last year because he would have had to wait a year to join, right?

Mr. Elsalhy: Speaking to that point raised by Edmonton-Rutherford, the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs would have to send back his membership card.

Anyways, my next question is talking about meetings of the board, and maybe I'm early because it's not in committee yet. Section 12(4) talks about "the affirmative votes of the majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present" and that being "sufficient to pass a resolution or bylaw of the Association." We know that for the past 34 years the majority of governments in this province were all Conservative, and although we're working to change that, till then the numbers speak for themselves.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre talked about her discomfort because she doesn't think she would be welcomed in that organization, although she's entitled to join it. I am also wary that when we're conducting the affairs of the organization and carrying out the duties of those who choose to join, then maybe the same argument should apply, and we need an extraordinary majority provision that would be useful here in the interest of fairness and in the interest of having all former MLAs from all the different stripes and all the different ideologies represented fairly and equally. With that, tomorrow I am hoping to table that amendment to this Bill 47, and I will invite discussion.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise for the first time in the fall sitting to speak on Bill 47. I find it interesting in some small ways that we are debating this here in the Legislature. Certainly, our caucus doesn't have a great deal of a problem with the proposal to have an Alberta association for former MLAs. I think that ambivalence might characterize our discussions on this particular bill thus far.

There are certain, I think, educational opportunities here with this association to spread the knowledge and understanding of legislative procedure throughout the province, and I would suggest that if this bill does indeed pass and the association is enacted that the focus of such a group would be towards schools and schoolchildren, to teach parliamentary procedure and the various machinations of government and democracy to our young people because, of course, the dearth of sort of interest in voting is perhaps the most pointed amongst young people in this province. You know, it is our duty to ensure that these young people turn out to be productive voting members of our society at some later time. So I think that if this act does in fact get into place, this should perhaps be moved more prominently to the purpose and the reason for this association to exist in the first place.

5:10

I think that the ideology of having some nonpartisan group for ex-MLAs to meet looks good on paper. I guess there is some obvious reservation and limitation there, but we can look past those things, I think, if we are looking at specific goals for this association to be focusing on, and as I said, education certainly is amongst the most

paramount benefits that this association could work on. As well, the act itself does discuss specifically raising money for scholarships and bursaries, and certainly, again, this would be a great philanthropic sort of endeavour for us to do once we become former MLAs. I mean, I don't think I'll ever be in that position for a long, long time, but I'm certain that many people in here at various times will be retiring or will be defeated and be joining this group, so that's great.

I do have some reservation – and I'm not exactly sure, but I did want to express it during this reading – about former members representing the province of Alberta or even the government of Alberta at certain functions. The influence of past MLAs can loom large in certain situations and potentially compromise the authority of sitting MLAs. I've been at a number of events during the course of the summer where very recently defeated MLAs were in fact taking representative roles for sitting MLAs, and I found that to be okay because, of course, I have a sense of largesse and good nature, but there is some potential for misusing this element of the association of former MLAs to perhaps create an imbalance, a democratic imbalance. [interjection] Yes. Well, that's what my fear is indeed.

As I said, if we can focus the association to work on various philanthropic pursuits, including raising money and educating the public, particularly our children, I think that they could do only a benefit and a service to the province, but if we have this sort of thing that's kind of morphing and changing over time, then the potential for abuse is definitely there.

I heard some member stealing my very clever idea that I hoped that this is not forming the nucleus of perhaps a second Chamber of Senators in the province of Alberta, where this former MLA group in fact becomes a place where appointed Senators come from, in some second Chamber. I would certainly not appreciate that, even if I was appointed myself. Our party does not condone that sort of thing. You know, at the end of the day I suppose former NDP MLAs, a growing group, very slowly of course, present company excepted, do want to have a place to perhaps associate with each other. We know that the Conservatives have a defacto ex-MLA place to meet in a club, which is often something that resembles the Petroleum Club in Calgary, or on boards of directorships for various junior oil companies in our province.

The Liberals as well do have some places to go with the various appointments and Senatorial appointments, particularly that their federal counterparts might give them, but the poor NDP doesn't have such an association to go to. We go back to doing charitable work, I suppose, so we would be happy to be participating in some way with the Alberta association of former MLAs. As I said, my caucus has some small reservations, but otherwise we certainly do support the basic idea.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to have a question or comment under Standing Orders?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise and speak on the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act. This bill is not about money. It's not about funding health care or rebating money to Albertans. It is to create an organization of former MLAs. Many would ask: why do we need to debate and spend time on such an organization? I would argue that this bill is about more than just making a club for former MLAs. This bill is about strengthening democracy and promoting the public's involvement in the political process, something that seems to be happening less these days.

We hear people talking about apathy of voters, grassroots democracy, democracy deficit, and so on. Mr. Speaker, the association of former MLAs could help increase the interest in politics because members could help to teach about political processes. They can offer their personal experiences, and they could assist the public by showing them how the government could work for them. More importantly, however, an association of former MLAs could work to increase the interest in the democratic process in our province, right here. By going into schools, by speaking to our youth, and by organizing educational events, they will be able to bring democratic involvement to the forefront.

Mr. Speaker, as MLAs we try our best to visit as many events as possible. We connect with our constituents, and we promote democracy, but we all are very busy, and we can only do so much. An association of former MLAs will be able to assist and do more for us. In this regard the association can work well as a complement to the Legislative Assembly or to the government. It can, however, do even more for the province in general because it can work to promote and restore democracy generally, instead of from a certain perspective of a certain party.

To explain exactly what an association like this is able to do for democracy, I have looked at the United States Association of Former Members of Congress, which is essentially the same type of organization this bill is proposing to form. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress is involved with numerous programs, has written several books, and has contributed greatly to democracy in America and other countries, such as Cameroon and Ukraine.

One of their most famous and most successful programs is the Congress to campus program. This program was founded by the association in 1976 and reaches a wide audience of students, faculties, and college communities with its unique story about representative democracy and its special call for public service. The members of the association were worried about the poor state of civic literacy among America's youth and the breadth and depth of the electorate in decline. What worried them even more, however, was that with this reduced interest in the democratic process, the source of informed leaders for the future was in some jeopardy. These were the association's motives behind creating the Congress to campus program.

They designed the program to address several aspects of civic learning and engagement deficit among the country's college-age people. The program sends bipartisan pairs of former members of Congress, one Democrat and the other Republican, to visit campuses around the U.S.A. These former members spend two and a half days conducting classes, holding community forums, meeting informally with students and faculty, visiting high schools and civic organizations, and doing interviews and talk-show appearances with local press and media.

This program provides a distinctive and powerful means to educate the next generation about American government, politics, and public affairs. The members provide solid content, discussing how Congress and government really work and relating their experiences as candidates and politicians, all combined with an appeal to public service and an important message about bipartisan co-operation.

5:20

Mr. Speaker, the voter turnout in this past provincial election shows the need for such a program. We need to do more to engage our electorate, and an association of former MLAs could be another way to do this. Former MLAs understand how the Legislature works, understand how policy formation works, and understand the

processes involved in both. Their unique experiences are a truly invaluable resource that we should be utilizing.

Mr. Speaker, the United States Association of Former Members of Congress is also involved in other programs. I would like to explain some of these programs as an association of Alberta MLAs would be able to create programs similar to these if the bill is passed. One program, called the international legislative and democracy training program, is a collaborative effort of the association, U.S. government agencies, private foundations, and other organizations. Together this group focuses on legislative training and democracy-building activities around the world. To achieve this with more efficiency and accuracy, the association created a data bank of members' interests and areas of expertise to facilitate matching members with specific requests for assistance. This program has been very, very successful. The association also has arranged 49 foreign policy seminars in nine countries involving more than 1,500 participants to discuss critical issues affecting their nations and the world.

Although the provincial legislators may not be experienced with foreign policy, such seminars could prove to be extremely helpful on the interprovincial level. Such seminars could also be set up between Alberta and the United States to discuss important trading issues that affect both jurisdictions. Although these efforts would not necessarily lead to new policy, ideas would come out as a result of the magnitude of experience within the association that would be very useful to the government. Furthermore, by creating an association through legislation, this will create a higher level of legitimacy for the association.

The purpose of this bill is not to create a feel-good organization for former MLAs to get together to overcome their boredom. The purpose is to create an association of people who have invaluable experience and specific knowledge of the unique world of provincial politics. The purpose for these people is to be able to spread this knowledge and spread the democratic message.

I trust that our elected members have the higher calling of improving our local and global society beyond our low-level political partisan manoeuvring and positioning. When they retire from politics, I trust that their higher calling continues. I believe that these are the members who would join the association and help to promote a higher calling locally and globally.

For the reasons I have provided above and for the purpose of promoting democracy, I urge all of you to join me in voting in favour of this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will be very brief. Obviously, the time will ensure that I am very brief. I probably will

speak to this again because I do believe there are a number of points.

Certainly, I'm at sixes and sevens with this whole proposition. It really does sort of smack of the old boys' club, and I think that using the word "boys" is in everyone's fantasy as they will obviously go into this group at an older age. Having said that, I don't want to be referred to as the old girl, so I'm sort of putting the House on notice that I would prefer to be referred to as the grand old lady of the Leg. should this pass.

One of the things that does concern me – I'm going to save that for the second time I talk to it, but I will speak to something that actually is in the bill as it's presented that I truly have a problem with, and that is number 10. It says that the honorary president is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. That would be the honorary president of the association. As I turn the page to 16(1), it also says that "within 3 months of the coming into force of this Act, the Speaker must appoint 7 former MLAs, who [will] constitute the Board." My main problem with this is that I honestly believe that should this pass and you do form this association, it should not have that tight an association with this House. That is a problem that I've picked up through this bill. I believe that it should be, should it pass, a stand-alone organization and not be connected.

The other thing that sort of made me have to think twice was when I heard it was suggested that old MLAs would substitute for sitting members in the particular riding. I could see where that could well be a problem when we actually have ridings change hands. Now, granted that is not a huge thing that happens in this province, but it has been known to happen, and I would suspect that it may happen in the future . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the background noise is getting too loud to hear the speaker. I know you're very enthusiastic to get back together here and enjoy each other's company, but we have business to conduct.

So, Member, if you would like to continue.

Ms Pastoor: Okay. I'll close debate, and I'll add my further comments in committee.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose wish to close?

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we heard a good debate, and I would move that we call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a second time]

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, November 15, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/11/15

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order. The committee has under consideration amendment A1. Are there any comments, questions offered on A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I must compliment the mover of the bill for seeking amendments to deal with the deficiencies found by many when the bill was introduced in the spring. To bring forth two pages of amendments to the amending bill are significant changes, and they do improve the bill substantially, but I still do not think they go far enough on certain issues and do not fully speak to some of the problems raised concerning this legislation in the spring.

First, I will take note of the process here. I did meet with WCB representatives and interest groups concerning this legislation during the summer. Many of the concerns spoken to in this Legislature in the spring were raised again as well as other deficiencies in the present WCB legislation that have either been problematic for a long, long time or have never been acted upon. Chief among those not acted upon is the problem of long-standing contentious claims.

Getting to look at the final form of this amending legislation has been a challenge. I asked the minister to meet and go over it quite some time ago, and a meeting was never granted. We did, however, get a meeting or a short briefing by a WCB representative last week, but the first time we have actually seen the proposed amendments was after, I believe, 3:30 this afternoon. Some of the amendments we expected to see and supported are not in this amendment package. I am told that the amendments providing presumptive coverage for firefighters for heart attacks within 24 hours of an emergency response will come forward as stand-alone legislation in a few days. If that does not happen, the message that it has been withdrawn or will not be going forward will, I'm sure, go out to every firefighter in this province. That provision is properly included in the act and must go forward.

Other clauses, such as section (10), that I was led to believe would be included are not. I had hoped that the legislation would not allow the WCB to withhold necessary medical prescriptions or medically necessary treatments, and I do not see that here in these amendments.

Worst of all today, I find, is the process. To get something like 15 amendments on an amending bill, that's already seven pages long as it was presented in the spring, to amend a very complicated piece of legislation that is 90 pages long and to have an hour or two to dissect that prior to debate is bizarre at best. This can be done much better.

One of the real problems that we do see, I think, is the problem, although it's an advance and although it's an improvement, of the change from subrogation to divested action in section 22.1.

Although it's significant, it still does not go far enough. The proposed amending provision in 3.1 has the wording:

If the Board determines that it is not in the best interests of the Accident Fund or the workers' compensation system to bring an action under section 22, the Board may divest itself of the action and assign it in writing to the claimant, in which event the claimant may bring the action.

This wording continues to give the hammer, so to speak, to the board. The board chooses; the board retains the power to choose. This is not a true choice factor here unless I'm somehow reading this wrong. So this is one question. If I am reading this wrong, I will ask the mover: is it the will of the government and the understanding of the mover that this section does in fact give the power of choice to someone who is dealing with a compensable WCB claim that can be dealt with as an automobile insurance claim to choose which way he or she wants to go? That was one of the key factors: choice.

The interests of workers and the interests of employers, I see, are still not being dealt with fully by the proposed amendments and by the proposed changes. I can't see that the real issues affecting subrogation, for example, have been dealt with. Some of the issues are important and must be dealt with. The immunity from lawsuits to the WCB boards of directors is a good and proper thing. The changing of subrogation to vesting in civil actions against third parties as it does stand is a good way to move although it does not go far enough. The change in the reporting relationship of the medical panels office of the WCB is a major improvement.

The many matters that are dealt with in this bill I think needed much further consultation, and that in itself was one of the great issues that was raised in the spring: the fact that we did not have the time to get it out to interested parties, to interested workers, to interested businesses, to interested Albertans. That we have not done that, again, I think weakens the potential legislation that could have come forward.

The importance of the Workers' Compensation act cannot be understated in the operation of our economy. What it does is it provides the protection for businesses from the hundreds of thousands of claims. I believe the WCB had something like a hundred and some thousand claims last year. To have those potentially go before the courts or some other process would stifle our economy and would hurt the way that our economy works and that in fact our businesses and corporations are run. It would not work very well at all. It does, however, in that operation take away the right of those workers to sue, and it does take away that clear opportunity that we have in every other financial and contractual dealing that we have in our society. It is very, very different.

In so doing, it gives the WCB, the Workers' Compensation Board, which is actually not very accountable because it is removed from government, great power over the lives of many individuals in our society. We have thousands, indeed perhaps tens of thousands of long-standing contentious claims that still do need to be dealt with. We do have a problem, even though I think it's improved quite a bit, and I think there should be some kudos given to the present management over at the WCB for improving the situation that we, in fact, do see at the WCB in terms of its dealing with many of the problems of confidence that it has in general society. But I believe that that general confidence has still not been gained perfectly and correctly in that there are a lot of people who are very, very skeptical about what the WCB is and how it works and how it operates in our province. The skepticism is not good for the operation of our economy.

8:10

The particular issue of subrogation or vesting or the transfer of

those particular rights when somebody gets in an auto accident, although it doesn't affect a huge, huge number of cases, affects a significant number of people and their lives and the families of those around them.

I believe this legislation can be improved still. I do commend the mover for bringing forth these amendments and that this was delayed to the fall to improve it, but I do think that, in fact, it can be improved more still.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Hon. members, before we recognize the next speaker, could I have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am extremely pleased to rise and welcome five of my young constituents who are sitting in the public gallery. They're here to observe democracy in action, and they're members of a team that I call the Young McClung. I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

**Bill 15
Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005
(continued)**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to commend the member. While I would agree that this is certainly not perfect, it's much better than what came to the Legislature. I think he was probably a little surprised at the reaction on the opposite side because I know he was told that it was a housekeeping bill, and I know that it wasn't just the member that was told that. I have an article from the *Journal* back at that time where the WCB spokeswoman, Lorraine Lynch-Geisler, said that Bill 15 is a housekeeping matter. So I'm sure that was the message. I hope you sent the message back to them strongly and clearly that they'd put you in a very difficult spot, I believe, by telling you it was housekeeping when you're a new member coming in. To the member's credit he stopped the process and at least got some changes, I think, that are desirable.

I would like to first of all, Mr. Chairman, talk about the consultation again. Many of the changes are good, but the consultation still has not occurred to the degree that it should. We talked to the Alberta Federation of Labour. They weren't aware of the amendments. As the Member for Edmonton-Manning said: you know, we just got them here today. In our quick perusal and in some conversation we had with your office, we had some idea ahead, but I think that with a major bill with the WCB, probably the WCB should have sat down with a lot more of the people ahead of time.

In saying that, Mr. Chairman, the problem is – and I think I'd say it to the member – that the WCB is not held in high regard in this province among workers. Every time we raise something about the WCB, you can expect to get a number of phone calls to your office. There's a great deal of, I would say, distrust of anything that the WCB brings about, and that makes it harder in the Legislature to

bring in legislation, whether it's good or bad, because people just don't believe what the WCB is telling them. I think the point I'd make is that the member has had some experience in dealing with the WCB and was told it was a housekeeping bill. I think the member would agree that it was not a housekeeping bill; it was a fairly major bill.

It just is true that the WCB is not held in high regard by many workers. In fact, I've never had a worker come up to me and say: gee, we really appreciate the work the WCB is doing. On the contrary. I think we're still into the culture of denial that was identified by retired Judge Samuel Friedman in his review committee of the Workers' Compensation Board appeal system. What he meant is that most workers, in particular a majority of injured workers, do not trust the Workers' Compensation Board. That makes it, as I say, difficult when we're dealing with legislation here. It is clear, that if there's any story about – in fact, I can't think of a story that brings in more phone calls to our office than one about the WCB. I think it's true of other members. Immediately there is a phone call.

Appeals. I know it's a different part of it, the Appeals Commission. We were told that we're going to try to get it down to 90 days. I've had clients that on the Appeals Commission have been there 14 months. So there's just this, as I say, utter lack of trust in the WCB, and I think it's reflected when we try to bring a bill here in the Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, in saying that, trying to look at the legislation, I think that, generally, there are some positive changes from what we were dealing with to begin with. I'm not a lawyer. Subjugation, divesting – you know, I think that divesting, according to the legal people we've talked to, is better in terms that at least it does allow the WCB to divest the right of action to a worker. The way it was before, they had no choice. Now, I know that there are a lot of people that believe their case is going ahead and that they've got all the right ingredients to make it in the court case. The board is at least allowing them to do that, I guess, with their own resources, and that, I believe, is a step in the right direction. It's not preventing them from independent actions.

Similarly, there are proposed amendments to sections 22(4) and 22(5), which will hopefully make the legal process more co-operative and allow the worker to have some say in selecting legal counsel, both of which are, I believe, a step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman, we're also happy to see new provisions to protect employees from intimidation or coercion on the part of the employer when action against a third party is being pursued. Now, this is still a very difficult thing to do because you almost have to show an impediment, and a lot of workers would be afraid to deal with an angry employer. Now, in saying that, I'm not sure how you can change that legislation. That's just human nature.

The changes to the medical panels also appear to be improvements, and we're particularly happy to see the explicit removal of retroactivity in section 22(2). When we saw this bill, it appeared to be an attempt to do an end run around the Gutierrez court decision. By removing any possibility of retroactivity, we know that workers can have an idea of what to expect without having that worry that settled cases may be reopened. That was probably the most odious and offensive part of the previous bill.

In saying all this, Mr. Chairman, as I say, the changes that have been brought in are certainly – certainly – an improvement from the original bill, but there are still some problems. The major ones that I see – and I have a couple of questions here, particularly on 22(9) and 22(10). These are the sections where workers could be effectively forced to participate in an action that they do not support. Now, I do understand that the language has been softened, but the fact remains that workers can be forced to participate in this action.

8:20

I'm happy to see that overpayments will not be created, but the difference – I think the changes are between withholding payments and suspending them – is a moot point because you're just not getting the payments until the worker complies. So that seems to be marginal at best.

Now, my understanding about the prescriptions and that is that that would continue under this new bill's prescriptions and surgery. I'd like to ask the member just to clarify that that's the case.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that this whole section should be removed. I do not believe that a worker, against their own will, should be forced into an action against their employer if they don't want to be there. I think that's contrary to, you know, even civil society: you're going to do this regardless because Big Brother is going to do it for you. I don't understand why we need to proceed with that. I really would like to have the member, as he's done before, take this particular section back.

Being the ever helpful person that I am, I have a subamendment to the amendment that I would like to bring in. All I'm doing is "striking out subsection (10)." I think if we could look at that and say that that's unacceptable in a democratic society, that a person be forced into something that they don't want to do, then this bill could probably be one that could be supported. So, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to pass out this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. We're going to wait until this is distributed. Then you'll speak on the subamendment. We will be referring to the subamendment as SA1.

Would the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview like to proceed on subamendment 1?

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's pretty self-explanatory. Section (10) is the one that I was just talking about. It says that "if a claimant does not comply with subsection (9)," the board can literally force him to do it by withholding compensation. Admittedly, it is an improvement from the past, as I said, where they could actually backspace and try to collect what they call overpayments. My understanding is that they can still continue with prescriptions and surgery, but I find it unacceptable where we say that we will suspend payments of compensation if a worker does not participate in an action that they don't want to participate in against their employer for whatever reason. It may be fear. It may be that they think that their employer is a good guy or whatever. It seems to me that that's a little overkill, that we'd force a person to do something they don't want to do. I'm asking that they take a look at that and just remove, as I said, that whole subsection (10).

Thank you.

The Chair: Does anyone else wish to participate in the debate on subamendment 1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Actually, we were working on a similar amendment and having some difficulty getting it forward. Finally, I'm pleased to see this amendment here. There's a lot to say for striking out subsection (10) because that is one of the more offensive areas of this legislation. Although it has been improved, to strike it out would be a good move, and I think that that's worthy of support.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I, too, support this amendment. When a person is forced to go on WCB, they're at the most vulnerable time. They've been injured either mentally or physically, and the suggestion that the WCB is going to hold their arm behind their back and twist it by denying them the medications that they require as part of their recovery seems inhumane and intolerable. We have processes that should not involve this type of arm-twisting. How down-and-out do you have to be before you're going to be beaten into further submission?

I would suggest that this is a very good amendment. We should be supporting the workers, not twisting them further.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, would support this amendment because initially I had difficulty understanding that vague reference made to an injured worker failing to co-operate with the board.

The definition of "failure to co-operate." What constitutes failure to co-operate? Who decides what failure is, the parameters, the criteria, and whether, in fact, this decision might be changing from one person to the next or from one adjudicator to the next? We want to have the assurance that all decisions are based on objective and solid criteria and that they don't change with the person adjudicating the case or the person sitting across pleading their case.

So I, too, would support this amendment to strike subsection (10). Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I don't support striking out subsection (10). I think it's a bit unfortunate that we're dealing with this particular amendment in this particular form because I'm sure that the members opposite are probably aware that there was another package of intended amendments to the bill that were deemed to be outside the scope of the bill and therefore have to come back as a separate bill, which we fully intend to do. Part of that was dealing with the question of medication, for example, that the hon. member mentioned. Part of it was dealing, of course, with the heart attacks and so on with firemen, and the other part was an important part, to move the medical panels away from the WCB and give them independence.

I think one has to remember that when you receive compensation from the Workers' Compensation Board in a case where a third party may in fact be liable, you have to be able to proceed to recover those costs. In the event that an employee was not co-operative in that effort, it means that the process probably becomes a lot more costly because, as you know, issues that go to court, first of all, take a long time, but if there's an issue of co-operation and things have to be rescheduled and so on, it becomes even more costly.

So while I agree that items such as medications and so on should not be withheld, I think that there needs to be a way of making sure that these actions that are intended to recover costs from a third party, not from the injured worker but from a third party – there has to be a mechanism to allow those things to proceed in an orderly way.

8:30

The WCB has indicated that it's quite prepared to let the Lieutenant Governor in Council make regulations with respect to that because it was an issue that this side of the House was also concerned with in terms of making sure that we do not just simply accept the fact that they say: well, it's our policy; therefore, trust us.

So one of the things that we were talking about was to ensure that the Lieutenant Governor in Council can actually create regulations to make sure that the policy does in fact get applied. For that reason, I think that we ought to leave section (10) as it is, and when the second bill by necessity comes through, then I think the hon. members will be happy with what is proposed.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Just to speak on SA1. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who is bringing forward the amendment, talked earlier in his comments before presenting the amendment about the lack of trust that workers have in the WCB. I believe that the bringing forward of this amendment and from what I've heard on the part of the opposition members in support of the subamendment tells me that there's a lot of work to be done in this House in getting people to recognize the tremendous changes and reforms that have been made in the workers' compensation system in Alberta.

There is no question that 10 years ago, in the early and mid-90s, there was a crisis of confidence in the Workers' Compensation Board system. It seemed like there wasn't a day that went by when it wouldn't come up in question period. It didn't matter whether it was opposition MLAs or government MLAs. No one trusted the workers' compensation system. It had been allowed to get into an unfunded liability system the way that others have across this country.

A lot of work was done. Reference was made to Judge Friedman, and there were other subcommittees. Task forces that were put together came forward with recommendations, and a tremendous regeneration, I'll call it, of workers' compensation happened then in this province, but it takes a while for the culture to actually change. It's a lot like coffee shop talk where you sit and you listen time after time after time to old and outdated stories that no longer apply to the new situation.

I think that at some point in time members of this Assembly are going to have to understand that it is going to be incumbent on them as political leaders in this province, as leaders within their own constituency to actually start looking at what is there, promoting what is good, but continue, of course, then, to advocate for and to change what needs to be changed. But this crisis of confidence that we are seeing displayed in the House tonight really is not warranted.

The system has evolved now to I believe a genuine concern of getting a worker back to work as soon as possible, and what that means primarily is that the medical protocol is determined as soon as possible and that medical protocol is actually followed. You would be surprised – and it's been my experience – at how many individuals simply refuse to follow the medical protocols.

There has to be in a workers' compensation system a genuine commitment on the part of the medical profession, on the part of the employer, and on the part of the worker. With the Workers' Compensation Board overlooking all of this, there has to be a genuine commitment to get back to work as quickly as possible, and this should be a nonpartisan issue. The simple fact of the matter is that the longer a worker is separated from their employment, whether it be through unemployment or whether it be through workers' comp or some other kind of situation, the harder it is for them to ever get back.

It seems to me that when we have to weigh a balance here of getting the person back to work or, you know, continuing to collect money from a system based on some individual right, I think we have to take what is in my view the interest of the worker, and that

is the medical opinion. At some point we have to put our faith, or at least recognize the decision-making, in the hands of the medical profession. If we don't do that, we go back to the system we had 10 years ago where we have nonexperts with coffee shop attitudes trying to determine what is a workers' compensation system.

This situation in Alberta has been turned around by any measure that you want to make in terms of our system in Alberta versus any other jurisdiction. This system in the last 10 years has turned itself around, and now is the time I think for us to not only recognize that but to give a stamp of approval to that. With that situation, I would urge all members, despite the well-meaning intentions of the mover of SA1 and the supporters of SA1, to actually defeat SA1 and approve the amendment that's here in front of us tonight.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, do not support this amendment. In section 22(10) the remedy provision, where a claimant refuses to co-operate in the pursuit of a third-party action, is now restricted to temporary suspension of wage replacement benefits during the period of noncompliance. Suspension does not affect WCB-provided health care benefits. It does not include benefits such as prescription drugs or surgery. The ability of the WCB to declare an overpayment for benefits paid has been removed. Co-operation is important so that the WCB can successfully recover funds for the accident fund. It does not subsidize private insurers for failing to seek recovery.

Again, the WCB has invested money into this injured worker through benefits paid and wages paid. They must recover their money somehow, and they need the co-operation of the injured worker in order to pursue the third party. This amendment that the hon. member has put forward will eliminate that. So, Mr. Chairman, I do not support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

8:40

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I must thank the Member for Lethbridge-West for his comments and say that our thoughts from this side of the House are with you, sir, that your health will have no difficulties in the future, and I hope that that will go well for you.

The issue of the WCB and that it is something that is solved, something that is fully fixed, something that the public should be fully supportive of, and that it's the perfect system is not, in my view, the view of many workers who are dealing with it, and those workers are the customers. Although customer service has improved, it is not there yet.

The WCB is not a social program. It's not something to be cut or to put more funds into, do all those types of things. It's not a corporation to be run at a profit, although it certainly has increased its surplus to incredible proportions in the last year. It should be run well. It should not be run at a loss. That's absolutely for sure. We should be clear that it is an insurance program that gives workers the confidence that when they go to work in many of the difficult jobs that we have in the oil fields, in industrial construction, on the pipelines, and many of the things that are being done to build Alberta, they have that protection to fall back on, some support for themselves and their families when they in fact do get a debilitating injury or something that will put them out of work for their lives.

Many of them that do come to my office and many other MLAs' offices are really put off time and again by being told that even though they might have been a railroad engineer or a journeyman

crane operator or any of a number of highly skilled, highly trained jobs – and many of them had been at the top of their trades, their careers, or whatever. They were in something that demanded some physical capacity, and when they were hurt, they ran into difficulty and were told that they had to go back to work as – a common one is a greeter at Wal-Mart or working at McDonald's, something that did not in any way deal with retraining them to do something that was at their former status in society or making them in any way to their former skills, contributing to society to the degree that they thought that they were in the past, and that has brought disrepute in itself to the workmen's compensation insurance system. Very clearly the reality is that it's not there yet.

The moves in this bill to deal with the medical panels I think are a great improvement. There still is a strong feeling that a lot of the actual hiring or whatever you want to call the contracting of those medical doctors that are involved with the WCB should be with a totally independent group that looks to the welfare of the workers. I accept that the minister has strong views on this, but I do not accept that the system is there yet.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of remarks again about, first of all, the subamendment. The point that I'm trying to make about this particular subamendment – and I don't think it would happen very often – is that there may be a legitimate reason why a worker does not want to be involved in a court case against their employer. There's no appeal mechanism. There's nothing. It's either do it or not, and I think that that's just too dictatorial. It gives too much power to the WCB. As I say, it's probably not going to happen all that many times, but I don't see why we need to have a sledgehammer to knock in a tack, and that's really what I see this doing. At least if there's some other way to do it, some appeal mechanism or whatever – but that's a lot of power. You have to go to court against your employer. We're telling you that. Period. Point blank. It seems to me that that doesn't give that particular worker much option. As I said, I doubt that it would happen that much. Most often the court case is going to go ahead. I don't see why we can't remove that section and move on with it, but I understand the results of the vote here. I think it's pretty clear.

I also would like to say that I know that the previous Minister of Economic Development did some good work, and I know that there is an attempt to fix WCB. But I would say to the Minister of Economic Development – and we talked to people that have been involved, some of whom he would know – that if there was an improvement, it's going the other way now. It has to do not so much, I don't think, with what was put in it; it's a culture that they're talking about there. I know that we can't fix the culture here, but that is happening.

Immediately after, you know, the recommendations that were made in the past, there was, I think, some improvement. At least, people that were around that know more about it than me said that there was. But those same people now – and I know that the minister would know some of them – are saying: it's sliding. They're talking about a culture over there that's a culture of denial again, as it was. I'm not sure that you can fix that always by legislation. When you're dealing with a culture, as the minister said, that happens, but I think he would be surprised at the dissatisfaction that is creeping back, dealing with WCB.

I've always said that a lot of the legislation this member has brought forward – and I gave him credit – is good. It's certainly an improvement from the previous act. I appreciate the fact that this

member did listen and came back and made a lot of recommendations. I was just trying to say that I still don't understand why it seems to me to be punitive. Maybe I'm missing something. I know that it's cost and all the rest of it. I honestly don't think it would happen, but if you had a legitimate reason that you didn't want to proceed in a court action – I guess any reason that a person feels is legitimate, at least for them. Maybe they'd lose their job down the way. Maybe they're afraid. There may be all sorts of reasons why they don't want to do it. But we're basically saying: "You have to. You have to no matter what happens to you down the way with your employer."

I think there's got to be a better way to deal with this. As I said, I doubt that it would happen that often where that would be the case, but I think it's a serious enough matter that we should look at it. If we're not prepared to take out section (10), then maybe there's an appeal procedure or something that could make this a little more palatable for a worker that didn't want to involve themselves in this regard. I'll leave that with the member.

That was my understanding, too, that they could still collect prescription drugs and surgery and that. That's why I wanted that confirmation. That certainly is a step in the right direction. I'm glad you got rid of the so-called overpayments. That was a step in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to start by paying tribute to the former minister of labour, now the Minister of Economic Development. I can understand why he feels strongly about this because he was the guy who had the intestinal fortitude to take on a couple of reviews of the WCB. I know that he believes very strongly in the recommendations that were made.

Let me share with you information that you probably don't know, and that is that since the last election I've been chairing a committee that is looking at how the WCB is implementing those 59 recommendations. I have to agree with the member opposite when he says that it's not perfect. It isn't. In fact, there are a couple of areas that are still seriously flawed. But I can also tell you that the WCB, in the last 11 months or 10 months that we've been working on this, has in fact agreed to take certain actions and certain steps, which they're currently piloting, from what I understand, with quite good success.

8:50

There were two main areas. One was that the first level of review was supposed to be an alternate disputes resolution process. Instead, the WCB implemented an alternate decision review process. Well, if the decision is made, you know, you're into an appeal. That's not mediation. We had intended a mediation step in the recommendations originally. So the WCB has agreed that maybe they missed the boat there and, in fact, are now implementing an alternate disputes resolution process instead of a decision review process. They've been doing it now for a couple of months, and the early reports I'm getting are that the satisfaction level amongst injured workers is quite phenomenal with respect to that.

The second major problem area was that only 25 per cent of the medical facts were ever being agreed to by the treating physician, so in 75 per cent of the cases there may have been some disputes with respect to the medical facts. Now, in policy the WCB says: well, we want to ensure that we agree with the treating physician on the extent of the injury and the course of treatment, the treatment plan. But if you could only contact 25 per cent of them, you're going to have an awful lot of cases that have problems.

Consequently, what has been done – and that will be the subject of a report that I will be releasing early in the new year – is that there's now a fee that's been approved by the Alberta Medical Association for a doctor to return the WCB's call. What was happening was that the doctors weren't returning their calls, so now there's a fee associated with that. Is that going to solve all the problems? Probably not. But chances are that if you get paid, say, \$30 for 15 minutes, and if it goes longer than 15 minutes, there's another \$30, that's as much as seeing another patient. So I would think it's going to help.

I just wanted to share that with you because things are getting better, and they're going to get a lot better. Thank you.

The Chair: Before I recognize the Member for Calgary-Varsity, I'd just like to remind all members that we are debating subamendment 1, not the bill. It's a very short amendment. So on SA1, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I do very much appreciate the clarification by the Member for Calgary-Foothills indicating that medications would not be suspended during this process, and I do appreciate the Member for Calgary-Egmont clarifying where the progress is being made with the WCB. I thank the minister from Lethbridge-West for having taken the WCB to the point where it now is because I agree with him that progress has been made. He has been a large part of that process, and I very much appreciate that.

The problem still exists with section (10) in that it presupposes that the worker is doing some form of malingering, that they have to be used in almost a guinea pig fashion to get back at the employer who through some neglect caused this accident to occur and therefore should be liable for the compensation rather than through the Workers' Compensation Board. I believe that you can seek the truth through the employer by investigating the circumstance without putting that unnecessary pressure on the injured employee, sort of putting them between, you know, a rock and a hard place. I don't think this is the way to go about accomplishing getting that money returned.

The Member for Calgary-Egmont suggested that the whole point of this was to try and get restitution from the third party, but as I've pointed out, I don't think you have to use the worker as a lever to get back this third-party compensation.

Mr. Herard: On this amendment because I think there's a fundamental misunderstanding unless I'm totally out of it. We keep hearing that this puts pressure on a worker to sue his employer. The employer is never the third party. This only happens when you have a car accident, for example, where one driver isn't covered by WCB and the other one is. It's the third party you're seeking, so you're trying to get the cost of the action out of that driver's insurance company. It's got nothing to do with the employer. You know, the WCB act prohibits suing an employer, so what are we talking about? Unless I'm totally out of it, the employer is not involved here. It's a third party, and it's usually an insurance company to which an insured party paid a premium for coverage, and now the WCB is trying to recover from that. So this has got nothing to do with putting pressure on an employee.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on this?

Mr. Martin: Well, the fact remains: if that was the case, why do we need it in the act? If an employee is not being affected, why would we put it in then? Obviously, the employee is being affected. They're being coerced to involved themselves. This would only

come in if the employee didn't want to go forward, right? If that's the case, why do we need it? Clearly, it's to coerce an employee to become involved in a process that they may not want to. That's what it says in section (10), and that's the reality. If that wasn't the reality, we wouldn't need it, seems to me, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

The Chair: Now we are back to debating amendment A1. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I want to state right from the very beginning that through our office, experience with WCB case managers has been very pleasant and productive. The unfortunate part about it is that we have had to intervene, and our intervention itself shows that there is a problem within the WCB claimant process.

It was mentioned earlier by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and echoed by other members that WCB claims and the casework associated with them is one of the most time-consuming parts of our constituency office duties. My area is basically a middle-class area, and it would not necessarily have the same number of injuries as potentially a blue-collar factory type of area. Having said that, the people that come to my office have been basically, through the WCB process, presumed guilty until they can prove themselves innocent.

I want to refer without mentioning names to specific circumstances. By the time that constituents turn to us for assistance, they are at the end of their rope and feel that they have nowhere else to turn and no one else to assist them. We're the gatekeeper. We had a constituent who came to us as one last effort recently, who had attempted suicide the previous week because he felt his situation was hopeless. This may seem extreme, but if it were just that one individual and just that one contemplation or attempted suicide, then this would sound like extremism. The process identified in here is one of a variation of occurrences that happened to citizens that we have encountered who were trying to navigate the WCB system, perhaps at the most vulnerable time of their life.

9:00

It was mentioned in earlier discussions that the longer we keep people from getting back to work, the less likelihood we have of getting them back to a productive situation. But quite often there is a combination of both physical and mental injuries that does require that kind of time and that kind of healing, and that support must be there while that healing is taking place. There are very few people who would prefer to sit at home and collect WCB premiums rather than lead active and productive lives and get back to where they were before that loss of livelihood occurred.

What we need to do, and hopefully within amendments such as have been proposed, is to make this a user-friendly, easily accessible circumstance. The WCB needs to take on a stronger role as an advocate for the worker and allow a process whereby they don't have to go through hurdle after hurdle to demonstrate their need for support.

Injured workers are often not physically and/or mentally able to be strong advocates for themselves and often are in fear of repercussions to themselves in the event that they can engage in strong advocacy for themselves. In other words, they're afraid to fight the system for fear that they're going to be cut off or have their payments suspended or that they're going to be worse off by speaking up than having the small amount of compensation that they're receiving. Until the worker has gone through the various levels of appeal within the WCB, the MLA's office is not easily available directly to assist the worker.

A particular concern involves the mental and psychological injuries. The emotional stress of having to wade through the bureaucratic hoops in trying to prove a disability has had severe negative consequences for constituents that we have been involved with. While acknowledging the importance of verifying disabilities, there should be some sort of process that prevents undue and unreasonable repeated requests for medical interviews and reports. In cases where the WCB has requested the worker to attend and receive a report from specified medical practitioners, there should be a strict limit as to the number of times the WCB can request reports from different physicians, medical experts of their choosing.

In one particular case a worker with a well-documented case of posttraumatic stress syndrome who had been seeing the same treating psychologist on a weekly basis for three years attended for an examination for the WCB with a psychologist. The psychologist's report was reviewed by another psychologist some three months later, who concurred with the latest assessment. Three months further on the file was reviewed by yet another professional, a psychiatrist who had never met the worker and who concluded that based on the information he had available, the worker should have yet another consultation with yet another psychiatrist because he did not indicate clear confirmation of the posttraumatic syndrome symptoms and the reasons for his inability to work. He then advised that a social history should be also considered within the context of work-related difficulties. So what we're doing is just beating up people, and we're not recognizing the stress that they're undergoing as they try to get back to where they once were.

I look forward to the discussions that we'll be having, that the Member for Calgary-North Hill brought out, with regard to the firemen. It's these front-line workers who give their all, who constantly put themselves in the face of danger for the benefit of others, that are the most likely to sustain the injuries, that are most likely to be susceptible to posttraumatic syndrome. Whether it's the policeman who responds to a call only to find out that there's a domestic dispute history but that they weren't apprised of that situation, or whether it's an EMS worker going out on a call not knowing exactly what it is that they're going to face: there is a tremendous amount of stress on these individuals.

In the case of the discussions that will be coming up, we're talking about a 24-hour limit to the potential cause of heart attacks. I hope that through a government member or maybe through a private member's bill or something that we'll bring forth, that we'll deal with the effects of posttraumatic stress syndrome because at this point we're still hearing comments like, "It's just in their head," and that devalues the individual who has served us so valiantly up until the point of them no longer being able to conduct their business.

I do thank every member for participating in this Committee of the Whole experience, which is to refine the procedures to get them to the point where we can hand it off to the WCB knowing that we're going to be one step closer to having achieved resolution. Again I thank the Member for Lethbridge-West, who has brought us so far into this process. I thank the Member for Calgary-North Hill, who has allowed firefighters to be recognized for their cancer and the various cancers which have been directly work related. I look forward to the further discussion of the 24-hour heart effect on emergency workers, in this case being represented by firemen.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Hon. members, might we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed an honour to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly some guests from the county of St. Paul that are attending the AAMDC convention. They have joined us this evening to watch the proceedings of their government at work. I'd like to first of all introduce the deputy reeve, Mr. Glen Ockerman, councillors Alphonse Corbiere, Maxine Fodness, Tom Kurek, and Cliff Martin. I would also like to introduce Kim Heyman, who is the CEO for the county of St. Paul. If I could ask you to stand.

Thank you very much.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

Bill 15
Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005
(continued)

The Chair: Back to the debate on amendment A1. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to participate in the discussion on the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 15. Let me start by saying that although I personally found this piece of legislation and its amendments not easy to read and interpret, to say the least, I have confidence in the abilities and wisdom of my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, who indicated that in general and overall things don't look as bad as when these amendments were introduced initially in the spring of 2005.

Why is this whole business with the WCB important? Why do people worry whenever the Workers' Compensation Board is mentioned? Do some people have issues or concerns with the WCB? I think the answer here is that, yes, people do, possibly because there is a lack of communication with injured workers or those who represent them or act on their behalf, or there could be a bit of mistrust as well.

At this point I need to be clear and emphasize that by far most workers and employees at the WCB are caring and empathetic. We experience this first-hand at the Edmonton-McClung constituency office and second-hand through recounting by constituents and acquaintances. Maybe very few of these employees are bad or incompetent, or possibly their hands are tied by restrictive legislation. The overarching argument that I would then make is that the motivation behind any attempt to amend the WCB Act should stem from the need, desire, and direction to make life easier for our injured workers and to expedite claim resolution and favourable settlement.

9:10

With the huge number of outstanding long-term contentious claims, which I understand are in excess of 50,000, and the lack of clarity, where people don't know how long the process takes or what are the time limits involved, we have to realize, of course – and here I am remembering the words of one of my constituents – that an injury affects not only the injured worker himself or herself but also his or her family, the employer, whether directly or indirectly, the insurance company or companies, the health care system, and may have workplace health and safety or legal implications, implications that may extend beyond the immediate parties.

The Workers' Compensation Board plays a very important role,

a societal safety valve if I can describe it as such, because if we don't look after our injured workers, if we abandon them, just as if we would abandon our responsibility to the disadvantaged, the handicapped, or the working poor, this would signal a threatening and detrimental shift in policy. Society is built on the care it affords those who need that care. It is a pillar of society that should not only be preserved but, in fact, should be strengthened and empowered. While we cannot mandate empathy or legislate care, we can at least raise the bar and offer our injured all the support they deserve.

There have been various consultative processes to reach these amendments, but in my humble opinion a full, independent public inquiry would not be a bad idea to examine ways to improve the Workers' Compensation Board's performance and improve the relationship between the board and the injured. The injured are not only partners in their own decisions; they are actually directors of how things should unfold as it is their lives we're affecting and the lives of their families and their communities.

As I said on the subamendment, I have difficulty understanding the vague reference made to an injured worker's failing to cooperate with the board. I still have the same concern now after we've discussed the subamendment. What constitutes failure to cooperate, and who decides? How can we make sure that the determination is objective and follows solid criteria and parameters?

Also, I have this other concern, with regard to the Appeals Commission. The Appeals Commission should be at arm's length, and it should be independent and not funded by the Workers' Compensation Board. We are trying to alleviate any suspicion or any worry of conflict of interest, so to keep them at arm's length would be advisable.

However, again to summarize, I don't disagree with the amendments. I think they do improve upon what was introduced in the spring sitting, and I would support any measure intended to make life easier for the injured workers. I'm also aware of further amendments that are in the works by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Manning, the Official Opposition critic for Human Resources and Employment, which will further make this bill worker friendly and add to the efficiency and timeliness of favourable claim resolution.

I may also go as far as advocating for the inclusion of an injured workers bill of rights or a summary of entitlements, that he or she should be considered to be telling the truth until proven otherwise, that we must afford these injured workers every bit of respect and co-operation to rehabilitate them, reintegrate them into the workforce, or at least allow them to lead their lives with dignity and the assurance that society is looking after them and caring for them.

We appreciate what the Workers' Compensation Board is doing, and we hope it could be improved. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to respond to this important bill, Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005. I want to also commend both the minister, Lethbridge-West, and the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill for doing the work on this important legislation. Clearly, we're all here because we care about workers and their rights. This act is supposed to be protecting workers, not only their workplace health-and-safety issues that get addressed through this process but actually the compensation that goes along with unexpected and, hopefully, preventable injuries.

Let me say that as a physician and now as an MLA I bring a certain bias to this, and it's been reflected in some of the comments and recommendations for further amendments. While I see some

serious improvements to the WCB, what again I tend to see in my office both as a practitioner before and as an MLA now are the weaknesses and the failures of the system to really, I guess, in a respectful way, in an honourable way deal with the individual and his disability, which may include, as has been said, both physical and mental dimensions.

Many of these are complex cases, and what often happens is a disagreement between the community physician and the WCB physician, and the immediate concern arises: who is acting in the interests of the worker? Of course, the perception from the outside and often by the worker is that the WCB physician is paid by the WCB and carries a bias that is difficult to argue, especially if it's at odds with the community physician. So we certainly have some distance to go in trying to create a more equitable system and a perception of no conflict of interest, and I think that that does need to be addressed.

The issue of having to prove degree of pain and degree of disability is always a difficult one. I don't say that there's an easy solution to that, but I do think that we have to have an independent appeal process if this is ever going to be anything credible within the public medical community and within the workers' community themselves.

Again, I'm pleased to see the amendments that have been made. These were some that were recommended in discussions by the Alberta Liberal Party in the spring session. I think they represent real progress.

As has been mentioned, I really wonder, again, about the objectivity of defining noncompliance. Who's doing it and under what circumstances, and what is a fair appeal process when there is a difference between what the worker defines as compliance and what the board defines as noncompliance? I think we need to do some work there. We're dealing with very emotional and serious financial issues here, and there's a lot at stake for everyone in the process. If it's not seen to be objective and experienced to be respectful by the worker, we end up with very prolonged and difficult issues.

I do support very much the inclusion of the 24-hour postmyocardial infarction support for all emergency workers, and I see that that's being included in these amendments.

Ms Blakeman: That's a separate one, right? It's coming.

Dr. Swann: That's going to be coming. Thank you. Yeah.

I think that definitely should be there along with the provision for firefighters to be included in terms of their cancer concerns.

Ms Blakeman: Also separate.

Dr. Swann: That's also separate.

I like the change from subrogation to vested interest. I think it's much more clear, much less onerous in terms of the power shift that appears to be happening when we talk about subrogation. I think it's more clear and honest about where the vested interest actually lies and why there may be a difference between the way the worker perceives an action and the way the compensation board perceives an action.

I would again like to emphasize the importance of this work and to encourage this process to go further and to address some of the outstanding concerns that I continue to see in the office, where there is considerable bitterness, considerable failure to address mental as well as physical issues, and therefore we are all paying the price for that. I think it is possible to develop a system that has more objectivity, more of a sense of a distant appeal process that can be

respected by both the medical community and by the workers themselves.

I think that this is a significant improvement, and I personally will support the changes that have been suggested. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9:20

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I mentioned before, certainly this is a vast, vast improvement, and I again give credit to the member for stopping the process and bringing it back. This is much more palatable for everybody. I thought we could make it better, but certainly this is an improvement.

I want to say that I'm not sure how you deal with this in a general sense. The bill, I think, is worthy of support compared to where it was, but I think we're hiding our head in the sand if we don't think that there are still some serious problems there. Again, you're dealing with culture. I'm not always sure that you can have legislation that can control all of this, but there is that culture of denial that is creeping back, that somehow workers are trying to take advantage. That's how we start operating there.

I think it's especially true in the Appeals Commission. I think that the Member for Lethbridge-West would remember that one of things that was recommended was a tribunal to review longstanding contentious claims. The Assembly passed this legislation, and it's still not really there. At the time, the Appeals Commission were talking about having these things solved within 90 days. We're seeing case after case – as I said, a recent one, for a constituent of mine it was 14 months before it went through the Appeals Commission. You know the old saying: justice delayed is justice denied. So there are major problems within the WCB, especially in that part of it. Now, I know that that's not part of this member's having to deal with that, particularly in this bill.

I think we learned one thing, again from that culture of denial, when the WCB said that this original bill was just minor housekeeping. Well, it was much more than that, as the member realized very quickly in terms of the debate. That was the message that they were giving to the public. Well, again, that sets a tone from the WCB that they were trying to slide something through here quickly that gave them more power than they needed. That's sort of what I'm talking about, this culture of denial on what's happening there at the WCB.

It's a serious matter, and I'm not sure that all the legislation in the world can change all of that. There are probably some changes we have to make, but I really think that we have to look at what the culture is in the WCB. I think it's a serious matter, and I think it's getting worse. The people that operate and have to deal with the WCB on an ongoing basis tell me that it is getting worse, Mr. Chairman. So that's a separate problem.

Again, the bill is much more palatable than it was back in the spring. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Chair, I've presented an amendment to the Chair, to the table. It is an amendment to Bill 15, Workers' Compensation act, 2005: to be amended in section 3 in the proposed section 22 by "striking out subsection (6)." I've given the required signed copy – it's gone to Parliamentary Counsel – and I've given the 90 copies. I'd ask if those could be distributed.

Thank you.

The Chair: We'll refer to this amendment as amendment A2. We'll just wait a moment while they're being distributed.

Hon. member, do you wish to proceed?

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This section is essentially – I'll just read it. It's on page 3 of the Bill 15 amendment.

No decision made or required to be made by the Board under this section shall be construed as placing the Board in a conflict of interest in respect of a decision made or required to be made by the Board under any other section of this Act, nor shall the pursuit of an action under this section by the Board be construed as placing the Board in a fiduciary relationship with the claimant.

I think that that should be struck from the amending act, Bill 15.

The section is essentially a notwithstanding clause for the WCB. It allows them to not be found in a conflict of interest in any action or decision that they are in fact required to make. This subsection allows for the WCB to never be found that they are in conflict of interest, regardless of the decisions that they have made. Further, they are not perceived to have any fiduciary relationship with the claimant in the pursuit of an action under this section. Generally, this subsection absolves the WCB of any wrongdoing in regard to any action they take in relation to their actions.

The amendment proposed here would see this section struck as it is absolutely beneficial to the WCB and not balanced, not in the interest of the claimant. There is no balance between the rights of both parties, and that is unacceptable. This gives the WCB blanket immunity from any actions taken under this section, while the claimant is placed under numerous conditions that they must abide by in order to have their claim settled. It should be struck. It's a kind of a have-your cake-and-eat-it-too sort of thing, and I'm surprised that this would come out of the WCB. To have this sort of section in there, again, is power tripping. It's giving a huge degree of control to the Workers' Compensation Board to take care of conflicts of interest.

For example, if a worker was to get into a car accident and he was paid and going to work and then found to have an injury, and he made a claim to the WCB, and the WCB found that he was, in fact, not eligible for compensation, the WCB still could take that forward and deal with it with insurance, especially with some of the ways that the vesting clauses still work, and not be deemed to be in a conflict of interest if they took a different position than they originally took when they denied the claim.

For this type of conflict of interest to be in the laws of our province is questionable, and I would urge that this Assembly strike it from this bill and accept this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Anyone else wish to participate in A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Yeah, this one flagged for me when I was reading through the bill because it did strike me as a get-out-of-jail-free card here. It does read to me as, essentially, a notwithstanding clause. It's trying to say that anything that the board does exempts them from being viewed as being in a conflict of interest situation. Well, that tells me right away that there's an expectation they are in a conflict of interest situation. If that's the case, in my opinion it shouldn't be allowed to proceed. You shouldn't have a situation where a body or an agency with power over anything should be involved in decision-making from which they can benefit. That's the point of conflict of interest.

9:30

I was pleased to see my colleague bring forward an amendment to delete this section. I didn't see anyone from the government side get

up in response to this, but I hope we do hear from someone because I'd like to hear the justification for why it's in there in the first place. To my reading of it, this does seem a little heavy handed. It does read as a notwithstanding clause to exempt the WCB from responsibility, and I just disagree with that. I think if there's a conflict of interest that's happening, that should be acknowledged, and every effort should be made to reduce the conflict, not to inoculate the organization from having the charges brought against them or the conflict raised and a correction asked for.

I'm glad to see that my colleague from Edmonton-Manning has brought forward amendment A2, and I hope others will follow his guidance and support this amendment. I think it's a worthy amendment.

I'm always a little suspicious when we see large organizations and powerful organizations exempting themselves from things like conflict of interest or lawsuits. But, I mean, there is a standard clause that you see – and I'm pretty sure it's in this bill, actually – that, you know, you can't be sued for doing something that is your job to do. For example, MLAs are protected and ministers are protected from being sued when they're making choices and policies that are their job to do. Just because somebody doesn't like it shouldn't put you up for a lawsuit. They're supposed to be genuinely doing their job.

This is talking about a conflict of interest situation where it's two sides of the street. You get to play both sides of the street here, and that always sets up an unlevel playing field. When the WCB has so much on its side and the worker has so little, I don't want to see the WCB being able to protect itself in that manner. I just think it weights it too far.

So I'm in support of this amendment, and I urge everyone else to do the same. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sorry to say that I do not support this amendment that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has put forth. This suggested conflict of interest does not exist for a number of reasons.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Let's hear 'em.

Mr. Webber: All right. There are two different systems. The damages awarded in the civil action will never be the same as benefits paid under the WCB claim. There are two different systems of recognizing injuries that operate on different principles. For example, the tort system pays general damages for pain and suffering and calculates wage loss based on future earnings. Workers' compensation by law cannot pay general damages and must base its wage loss on retrospective earnings only.

Also, no fault for WCB: application of fault under the tort system. The WCB pays its benefits on a no-fault basis, and the tort system must apply fault to determine the amount payable. In some cases the WCB benefits exceed tort damages because of the application of fault. For example, if fault is assigned as 50 per cent for each party, the damages owed to the worker would be reduced by 50 per cent and may be lower than the costs already paid by WCB on their behalf.

It is also important to note that all settlements and judgments in third-party actions are final, but WCB claims can always be reopened or reconsidered, resulting in additional ongoing costs to the system. Also, the WCB has always pursued third-party actions without limitation to the decisions it has made on the workers' compensation claim. This is because the WCB and the tort systems

operate side by side but independently of one another. Each system has separate jurisdictions. The decisions of the WCB and claims adjudication do not bind the court nor do decisions of the court in personal injury actions bind the WCB.

Recently, the Court of Appeal of Alberta expressly declined to find that the WCB is in a conflict of interest in these situations. In fact, the 1996 court case in Lund versus Lauzon, Justice Veit of the Court of Queen's Bench commented on the impact of WCB claims decisions on personal injury lawsuits. She noted that the comments of the WCB's officials on entitlement to Workers' Compensation benefits were of no interest or relevance to the court.

Mr. Chair, I again have to say that I cannot support the hon. member's amendment to the bill. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Well, thanks. That didn't actually persuade me, so let's try this again. Round two. That court finding that you mentioned is really just the court's decline to find. That's not the same as making a determination one way or another. They just basically said: we won't comment on it. Now, that's usually because it's a jurisdictional issue, so I'm not persuaded by your argument that there is no conflict of interest in this situation. If you've got any other notes there that would help to persuade me or anybody else – gee, you've got an expert over there who might have been listening to this and could help with this one.

If Calgary-Egmont is aware of how this comes into play, I'd be interested in hearing from him or the current Minister of Economic Development, who I'll also recognize is expert, but I'm not persuaded by a court declining to comment on whether there is or is not a conflict of interest as being a good enough reason to see why this is in this bill or why it couldn't be taken out of the bill. It's just not a very good explanation, and it doesn't really cover the grounds of conflict of interest and the purposes behind it and why it would be attempting to inoculate itself or exempt itself from having the conflict of interest laid bare in an attempt to remediate it. Anybody? Oh, good.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Albeit for me to even consider myself remotely expert, but as I see this section (6), it says:

No decision made or required to be made by the Board under this section shall be construed as placing the Board in a conflict of interest in respect of a decision made or required to be made by the Board under any other section of this Act.

The WCB act essentially outlines exactly what it has to do with respect to fulfilling its mandate. The WCB system also has an appeal system that is quasi-judicial, which essentially is almost like saying that it's a level of court. When it gets involved in third-party actions – let's say, for example, that as part of a lawsuit going on, there was an injury that perhaps might have been an old ski injury that got aggravated as a result of this accident. The WCB is under no obligation, as I understand it, to accept the old ski injury, so whatever it does with respect to paying benefits to the injured worker does not create a fiduciary responsibility in this other court case to accept an old ski injury. I think that what this is trying to do is that it's trying to say that the WCB act in and of itself creates all of the responsibilities that the board has with respect to injured workers.

9:40

Now, when you get into third-party liability situations, if it didn't accept a certain part of an injury, for example, as part of the benefits

that it paid to the injured worker, it doesn't mean that it has to now accept them in front of the lawsuit, so it doesn't create fiduciary responsibilities. I think that, really, what the WCB is trying to do is clarify and comply with the judgment in 1996 that my hon. friend mentioned, where the court indicated that it was not really interested in hearing that because in one case you have a tort system and in the other case you have a no-fault system.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The nature of the differences between the WCB system and tort I think in and of themselves make it necessary to not have this section (6) because of the conflict that we see there. The two different systems, as the mover of the bill quite aptly said, are quite different. By the WCB giving themselves this ability to make a determination through whatever rules – from my experience, and I haven't seen exact statistics on it, more often than not the WCB will reduce or deny claims down the road once they've found reasons to do so and do not too often increase those claims for reasons. Indeed, the one-year rule very much mitigates against that.

The problem with them being able to argue two different ways, to argue through two different sides of their mouth on the same issue, on the same injury case and to argue differently and to speak to it in a different way when they actually get into a tort case, into an insurance claim, into a third-party liability claim is something that is arrogant. It goes beyond, I think, anything that we'd accept in almost any of our other laws in this province and in this country. I don't think we should give that power to the WCB.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm not Catholic. I don't believe in infallibility of either individuals or organizations. I believe section 2 provides the employees of the WCB and members of the board of directors with the same type of protection, basically, that we have as members of parliament within the realms of the Legislature.

To provide further infallibility support, as is the case in subsection (6), takes away any kind of leveling of the playing field. It makes the assumption that under the majority of circumstances the WCB in its wisdom and in good faith will always make the right decision. There's no such support within this bill to give the other side of support or the balance for the worker. Therefore, in order to balance the rights of the worker and of the WCB, either add comparable support for legislation for the worker or, as my colleague has suggested in amendment A2, pull out subsection (6). It's not a level playing field. It has to be made that way.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

Mr. Backs: I have a further amendment, Mr. Chairman – I guess we'd call that A3 – and that is to amend in section 3 in the proposed section 22(1)(c) by striking out “if the claimant has complied with subsection (9).” The requisite number of copies have been given to the table, and it has been to Parliamentary Counsel and approved. I ask that it be distributed.

Thank you.

The Chair: We'll refer to this amendment as amendment A3, and we'll just pause a moment while the pages are distributing it to the members.

Hon. member, if you're ready to proceed.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I proposed this amendment, and what it does is it takes out the words “if the claimant has complied with subsection (9),” and that deals with (c) on page 5 of the bill and refers back to section (9) on page 4.

By having the claimant have to go through what for some of them is quite onerous and having a legislated onerous number of conditions that the WCB can pull out of a hat to deny that settlement or that amount – and I won't get into arguing the 25 per cent – just to have them say:

- (b) attending at any or all meetings, mediations, arbitrations, examinations for discovery, medical examinations, including independent medical examinations, and the trial of the action,
- (c) providing and executing any or all documents required by the Board to bring the action, including endorsing an assignment or release of the action and providing consents to secure information, in the form and manner prescribed by the Board, in favour of the Board,

and (a) “securing and providing any or all information or evidence” – my gosh.

I've talked to a number of these WCB recipients, and they're brain injured. They can't even write their name much less comply with all of these. You know, many of them are workers who have been labourers, and they're not really cognizant, not very much into all of these incredible numbers of systems that are put under section (9). It's an unreasonable burden that is placed on a worker. You know, are we to say that they must all be giving huge amounts of their claims to lawyers or to other individuals to satisfy all these many and onerous and complicated types of processes, that are difficult for them to understand, that I think many of the actual legal experts in the area have to look at twice in order to try and ascertain?

I think that that way of giving this greater power is again something which reflects a certain arrogance and should be struck from the bill because it does not equal the playing field. It makes it much more difficult for the worker to actually make their proper claim.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Anyone else on amendment A3?

9:50

Mr. Chase: When I was discussing some of the problems that workers experienced with the WCB, that we're trying to work on removing with A3, it just adds one more in a series of hoops for the injured worker to go through. At some point and, again, in a sense of balance we need to provide the injured worker with the same kind of support that the WCB has in arguing against their case. A worker shouldn't have to go and search out legal counsel on their meagre reduced earnings, depending on what the WCB claims to be an acceptable payment. It's just completely inhumane to put obstacle after obstacle in front of an injured worker and expect them to be able to navigate all the ins and outs and hoops and steps and stages.

We do our best as MLAs in representing the worker, to try and navigate them through what is basically a maze that Skinner would have contrived for his rats. Until we balance the needs of the worker with the restrictions and hoops put forward in front of them by the Workers' Compensation act, we're not providing any type of balance. The system is skewed in favour of the Workers' Compensation Board to deny workers fair compensation, and until we remedy that imbalance, we're doing the workers a disservice.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member for Edmonton-Manning is correct. I think a lot of people dealing with the WCB, knowing the hoops you have to go through, are under a fair amount

of stress to begin with. If subsection (9) was there, it would say, "shall not adversely affect the conduct of an action and shall co-operate fully with the Board." If a person that's under stress starts to look at this, they figure: "Well, I've got to do this, that, everything. It takes a fair length of time." It just becomes a way where they could actually cut them back, just something else to be stressed out about: boy, maybe I didn't go to that meeting or maybe I missed that examination or whatever. It seems to me that putting all this in is not necessary.

I think that if they'd left it at they just "not adversely affect the conduct" and realize that you're dealing with injured workers, realize that you're dealing with people under a lot of stress, and as long as they're trying to do the right thing, then they should get the money that's owed them, because this could be a very convenient excuse. I'm not saying that they would do it, necessarily, but it could be a very convenient excuse to say: "Well, you didn't co-operate. You didn't go to this meeting back on May 16 or that meeting or whatever. Therefore, you're only going to get, you know – what? – 18 per cent or 16 per cent. We're going to charge you 9 per cent because we didn't feel that you were co-operative enough."

There are people on the board that are sort of acting this way. I know of cases where if the person just rubs them wrong, they're really getting a bad time from some of the WCB people.

I'm not sure that all the MLAs could get through all this and get our full wage if we had to do everything that's put down here in this little (a), (b), and (c). I just find that that's not appropriate. If the person has tried to co-operate, that should be good enough, and they should get their 25 per cent that's owed them, Mr. Chairman. So I would certainly support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know that it's useful to talk about the difficulties encountered under claims management and link it to this because what we have here in section (11) is now proceeds of a settlement. In other words, you've been through the whole rigamarole, and now there's a settlement. What this does is it sets out the priority under which the proceeds of a settlement will be disbursed.

When we get to section (c), which is the one that is being sought to be removed by this amendment, it says, "If the claimant has complied with subsection (9), payment of 25% of the remaining amount to the claimant." Now, let's just assume for a minute that the claimant was not helpful and, in fact, by not being helpful, caused the action to become a lot more expensive. Would that claimant still be entitled to 25 per cent? I would guess that probably not. So by virtue of the fact that there are already under section (9) remedies that the WCB can avail itself of in terms of non co-operation, then I think that when you get to section (c), you have to be able to limit what the claimant can recover in the event that the claimant caused a whole lot of extra expense. Now, as it sits right now, this is a guarantee that the claimant will receive a payment of 25 per cent of the remaining amounts to the claimant. This is before the board has even looked at its own costs with respect to dealing with that claim.

Quite frankly, I think that trying to link this to other difficulties that we've talked about, that are being worked on and improved every day, is not all that useful.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Very briefly. I hear the arguments on both sides of the floor, and I have this novel idea in

my mind that I felt a burning urge to lay in front of you. I'm advocating the acceptance of this A3 amendment. However, if the government sees that they are not in support, that they would reject it, that they still want subsection (9) to be there, and that they would still require the injured worker to go through all these hoops to fulfill their criteria to become helpful, as the hon. member said, or to comply, maybe we should also look at providing them with a facilitator, somebody who can navigate the maze and help them with, you know, what's required and what's needed and all the paper work and all the compliance with these tests and these psychiatric assessments and all that stuff.

If the person has been injured or the person is having difficulty emotionally or financially or cannot be at a certain meeting at one point or another, then maybe that facilitator can act on their behalf. If the board is willing to withhold payment, then maybe they can put the suspended funds to good use by having that facilitator act on behalf of that injured worker. This is an idea that maybe should be considered and should be entertained.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Calgary-Egmont seems to imply that there must be this punitive system in place, as outlined in section (9), that would apply to the area I'd like struck here in (c). The problem that we have to look at here is that there is so much there. There are so many different things, that I think the real cost would be on the worker and certainly on the worker's time rather than on the board to deal with this very onerous list of many, many things that could just essentially give them the power to deal with many, many claims as they saw fit because they could find almost anything in this list or in the requirements that would come under this list to have power over that claimant and to make them do what they wanted, to be able to snap their fingers just so that he could get any sort of a claim. I think that that is far, far too much and far, far too much power for the board to have in this instance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. This whole business of punitive power makes me think of a court where a person speaks out in their defence and they're held in contempt of court, or a mistake is made and you're ruled out of order. I liken it to a school situation where every kid comes in with a guaranteed 25 per cent, and the first time they appear to be out of line, they're down to 24, and "You're creaking your chair; well, you're now down to 23." So every time something goes against the WCB review board, the person continues to have their percentage of compensation reduced, to the point where the person throws up their hands and says: well, if I don't shut up, I won't get out of here with 17 per cent. This punitive way of dealing with people is not acceptable. There is no support for the person. The board can simply continue to reduce their percentages until the person either gives up in disgust or accepts their reduced claim, and that's not fair.

10:00

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I just can't let that go by because really the bottom line here is that we're dealing with a third-party action. Okay? We're dealing with all of what has to be done

on both sides in a third-party action. We're not dealing with someone's compensation and "if you don't do this, you get 24 per cent of it or 23 per cent of it." We're talking about a third-party action where the WCB is trying to recover its costs from an insurer. Okay? That has no effect at all on the benefits currently being paid. There may even be a settlement as part of this for future benefits because the condition of the injured worker is such that it's not expected that they will return to work.

So all of those things have to be specified, and all we're dealing with here is third-party actions. That's what section 22 deals with. You know, to do a little of the fearmongering that I was just hearing I don't think is appropriate at all.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you. Well, Mr. Chair, of course we're dealing with third-party reimbursement; that's irrelevant. What is wrong about it is laying out in (a), (b), and (c) specific little things that anybody could slip on: meetings, mediations, arbitrations, examinations for discovery, medical examinations, independent medicals, the trial of the action. If a person wanted to take that and you miss one little thing in there and all documents and the rest of it, I'm saying that anybody might run into a maze there. That's all we're saying.

They didn't have to put all that in, Mr. Chair. That makes it, you know, almost impossible for anybody to follow through. You may have missed a discovery. You might have made a mistake: you didn't bring this particular document. Then with that amount of power, when you can pick anything there and say, "Well, you're not going to get the 25 per cent" – I'm not saying that it's always going to happen – that's the problem: laying out all these onerous little things that people have to do. That's the punitive part about it.

All they had to do is say, as I understand it, that they would not adversely affect the conduct of an action if you co-operate fully. Leave it at that because the minute you put this in, then there's an excuse not to do it. That's the point; the legislation makes it. It's very onerous for anybody to follow all those things at any given time, Mr. Chairman. That's the point.

Mr. Chase: At the risk of being further implicated as a fearmongerer, I would ask the Member for Calgary-Egmont to explain to me: with this 25 per cent and the third-party effect, in your understanding is there any likelihood that the worker's compensation would be reduced by going after the third party? Are you suggesting that there's no effect to this 25 per cent and that the reduction has no effect on the worker's compensation, that it only has an effect on getting money back from the third party, that it's not going to adversely affect the worker? Can you maybe clarify, please?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you. If you're dealing with section 22, which is really the process under which the WCB currently has subrogation rights and is now changing that over to vested rights, all of those things are probably normal in a lawsuit. In other words, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I believe, indicated all of these things that might happen with respect to a lawsuit, but the bottom line is that this is all in the recovery of what the WCB has probably for many years now been paying to an injured worker. You know, these third-party actions may take years to bring before the courts, so the WCB does not concern itself with fault. It pays the benefits. Right? But at some point if there was a third party who

was at fault, they have to try and recover that, and that's what section 22 deals with. So there is no link whatsoever between what is recovered here and the injured person's benefits.

The Chair: Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. Sorry, but I'm going to have to argue with the hon. member because, in fact, the government amendment that just passed, which is amending section (10), is talking about compliance with subsection (9): "The Board may suspend the payment of periodic compensation to the claimant during the period of non-compliance." So, yeah, they can.

You're talking specifically about the amount of the award that the courts may award in this third-party action, and out of that total amount – let's say that it's a thousand bucks – they start hiving it off as is laid out in the bill here. But to say that the behaviour of the worker or of the claimant and whether or not they comply with section (9) doesn't affect their benefits – yes, it does. You just amended the act to make sure that the WCB has the ability to suspend their payments as a retribution for their co-operation or lack of it under section (9). So it is relevant there, not specific to the 25 per cent, but the WCB still has the ability to take punitive action if they wish to or to withhold the regular payment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I don't know how we got onto that subject again because what we're dealing with under section (11) is now proceeds of a settlement. The proceeds of the settlement are at a different stage.

Mr. Dunford: It means they complied with it in the first place.

Mr. Herard: Well, they may or they may not have. The hon. minister says that that means they complied. Well, maybe they didn't. But at the same time, the settlement now is being made in a court of law.

What I said – and I didn't want the hon. member to misinterpret that – was that what is awarded at that stage, which is now a settlement, does not have any direct link to the person's benefit.

Section (9). We're not going to debate it again because I think the rules of the House say that we've already voted on that, so I'm not going to go back there. That particular section is long before a settlement occurs, it's long before the court case is in process, so I don't think the two are related at all.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not to belabour the case, I think it is clear, and I wish the Member for Calgary-Egmont would take a look at the word "if" in that section and try not to just take a partisan viewpoint in this matter and to look at this and really see how onerous applying section (9) to that is. That's all I have to say.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

[The clauses of Bill 15 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

10:10

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 15.

I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the House now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:12 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Wednesday, November 16, 2005 **1:30 p.m.**

Date: 05/11/16

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Guide us all in our deliberations and debate that we may determine courses of action which will be to the enduring benefit of our province of Alberta. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some representatives from Alberta's postsecondary institutions that engage in international education initiatives. Joining them are staffers from Alberta Advanced Education's international education division. These people are here today in support of the ministry's initiatives to promote International Education Week. The celebrations this week demonstrate the significant contribution that international education makes in preparing Albertans for the global world. As all members will know, the third pillar in our 20-year strategic plan is: competing in a global marketplace. International education and global education is very important to that.

Here today representing the postsecondary institutions are Rae McDonald, director of international relations at the University of Alberta, and Pat Bidart, associate vice-president, academic services, Olds College. I might say that Pat recently joined us on our mission to Mexico. Staff from the ministry are Dan Rizzoli, director of the international education division; Ken Ohashi, director of international relations for apprenticeship and industry training; Christine Savage; Sandra Zarate; Karin Oxtoby; and Angela Balec. Mr. Speaker, they're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome and thank you from members of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a privilege today to introduce 79 visitors from Lakeland Ridge school in Sherwood Park. This public school has the unique designation of being a partner with Holy Spirit school. It's our newest school, and it combines Children's Services and Human Resources and Employment with Alberta Works. So the whole school complex is a brand new example of working together.

Today the teachers that are accompanying the group are Lindy Mair, Sonya Bushell, and Jay Robertson with parent helpers Kerry Van Camp, Sue King, Connie Bishop, Kim Schultz, Melody Schaufle, Lorna Rae, and Wanda Marchand. They're seated in the members' gallery with a wonderful group of students. Please join me in a warm welcome for Lakeland Ridge public school.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an individual who has recently filled a vacancy in the communica-

tions branch of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. I'd like to introduce Tracey Welsh, who has joined our team, from Fort McMurray, where she worked for the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo as their public information officer and most recently filled a similar position for Sturgeon county. Would you please rise, Tracey, and accept the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a very impressive young man from Calgary visiting our Legislature today, Ravinder Minhas. Ravinder has been recognized as one of Alberta's Top 40 under 40, the youngest of the group at the age of 23. I might add that he's the president of Alberta-based Mountain Crest Brewing company, with the logo of Damn Good Beer!, and he's also been nominated for the Canadian Top 40 under 40. He's spending the day shadowing me to learn more about politics and government, so I've had him running since very early this morning. I would ask Ravinder to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Dianne Pachal. Dianne is a long-standing conservationist in Alberta and has been a resident of Calgary-Fort for 15 years. She was awarded a 125th anniversary commemorative medal by the government of Canada in 1992 in recognition of significant contribution to compatriot, to community, and to Canada. I would like to ask Dianne to stand and receive a warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a fine group of students from Winterburn elementary and junior high school. These students are all enrolled in the Logos Christian education program. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Jacqueline Baker, and a parent, Mrs. Wendy Werstiuk. If they would rise and please accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce 45 students from Dr. Elliott school, which is located in Linden, Alberta. Accompanying them today are teachers Ms Lenz and Mrs. Hughes along with parents Mr. Huff, Mrs. Ratzlaff, Mr. Heyblom, Mrs. Megli, Mrs. Penner, Mr. Leinweber, Mr. Vigna, Mrs. Klassen, Mrs. Christiansen, Mrs. Kung, Mr. Ratzlaff, and Mr. Reimer. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly our new director of outreach in the Alberta Liberal caucus. She comes with a great background in education and theatre and organization and promotion. I would ask her to rise. Her name is Jill Roszell, and she's in the public gallery. Please, everyone, give her a warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a resident of Edmonton-Rutherford who has become a true friend over the past several years and who I like to think is one of the best darned election sign erectors anywhere. Could I please ask Larry Rowan to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Pat Spady. Pat is a physical therapist who lives near Lamont, Alberta. She has organized a series of vigils here at the Alberta Legislature to help protect public medicare. She's here today to urge the government to halt any privatization plans for a public health care system. I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Ms Shirley Barg. Shirley is a former chair of the Council of Alberta University Students as well as a former vice-president external of the Athabasca University Students' Union. She is currently working in continuing care with the Capital Care Group. Shirley is helping to establish an Alberta branch of the national organization Equal Voice, whose aim is to include more women in electoral politics. I'd now ask that Shirley rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me very special pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Neal Gray, who I hope will be one of the Alberta MPs in the next House of Commons. Neal is the NDP candidate in the upcoming federal election in the riding of Edmonton-Mill Woods-Beaumont. Neal currently works in computer support for the Alberta government. He is here today to observe the proceedings of the Legislature. I would now ask that Neal rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Jeff Sloychuk. Jeff has recently taken a position with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. He is the former vice-president academic for the Students' Association of Red Deer College. Last year Jeff received Red Deer College's highest academic and citizenship award. He organized an association at Red Deer College called Community Coalition for Accessible Education and recently completed another campaign to support the striking workers at Brooks. I would now ask that Jeff rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Public Security and Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly five Albertans who are dedicated to reducing the incidence of family violence in our province. They are here today in recognition of Family Violence Prevention Month and in support of the White Ribbon campaign. The campaign is aimed at men, and wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge never to commit, condone, nor remain silent about family violence. With us today are Inspector Tonia Enger of the RCMP, Staff Sergeant Eric McDonald of the Calgary Police Service, Staff Sergeant Dave Zukiwsky of the Edmonton Police Service, and Jan Reimer and Patricia Poohachoff from the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a good friend and colleague, Eleanor Maroes, from the Alberta Alliance Party. She is currently serving as our interim leader, and she has been involved with the democratic process since 1989, trying to make our province and country better. I would like her to rise at this time as our honoured guest and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask Val Campbell to rise and be recognized. Val is Alberta Justice's face to the public on the issue of family violence. Val is a prosecutor who over the past year has trained over 5,000 people in the crime and issues regarding family violence in this province and is doing a fabulous job on behalf of all Albertans. Please acknowledge her.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite indications in the Auditor General's report on the Alberta Securities Commission of mismanagement, breaches of policy, and a lack of documentation within the commission the Minister of Finance continues to downplay and deny the serious problems within that organization. Now even the Auditor General has said that he does not know how this report could be seen as a clean bill of health by anyone and that changes need to be made to protect the integrity of Alberta's capital markets. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Given the major problems of the Alberta Securities Commission over the last year and the troubling report released this month by the Auditor General, why hasn't the minister taken the time to meet with the Auditor General to fully discuss what he sees as serious inadequacies of the Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite should have sent me a note and asked me if I'd met with the Auditor General because indeed I have had a discussion over the report of the Auditor General. What is most important is the management response to the Auditor General's report and, indeed, this minister's response, which says very clearly that we take all of the Auditor General's recommendations very seriously. We intend to implement

all of the recommendations in that report. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that the Auditor General will be meeting with the commission on progress sometime in the future.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear in this report that the Auditor General has made recommendations to strengthen documentation. It's clear in this report that the Auditor General had an opportunity to review every case file that he asked to see and that he did not find one file, one case, where he found sufficient information that would have him consider reopening any of the files. He did however make many recommendations that will improve the processes at the Alberta Securities Commission, and the chairman and members intend to implement them fully.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As recently as 10:30 this morning the Auditor General said that he had not met with the minister to discuss the report.

My second question to the same minister: given that the Auditor General has found that the Alberta Securities Commission's enforcement practices were handled poorly, has the minister been given any explanation as to why the executive director continues to remain at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I don't know in what context and what timing the Auditor General said that he hadn't met with me. I have not met with him since the official release of the report, but I have met with him and discussed the report with him. The Auditor General was away for a period of time and is just back, and when the Auditor General would like to have a meeting with me, I would be most happy to have that discussion with him. However, I have not been in the practice nor will I be in the practice of phoning the Auditor General and asking for a meeting to discuss a report that he has provided to this Assembly and to Albertans.

On the issue of conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker, the commission has implemented processes to ensure as much as possible that this type of inadvertent conflict will not occur again and still protect the integrity and confidentiality of the investigations that the Securities Commission undertakes.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given what the Auditor General today called a serious breach of the code of ethics by the director of enforcement at the Alberta Securities Commission, can the minister explain why that person is still in his job?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I recall that in the spring there was a lot of criticism of some people that weren't in their jobs for breaches.

I can tell the hon. member that the Securities Commission has had a complete review of this situation, believes that it was totally inadvertent, that there was no intention, and, as I indicated, has put in place processes to ensure as much as possible that this could not happen in the future.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Health Care Insurance Privatization

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The inevitable effect of allowing doctors to broadly practise in both the public and private systems is

a ratcheting up of health care costs as one system plays against the other to provide medical services. The plan by this government to increase the role of private insurance corporations is absolutely guaranteed to raise health care costs, yet documents that the Alberta Liberal caucus has obtained detail the government's plan to allow, indeed facilitate, exactly this. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that government documents repeatedly speak about the need for better access to hip and knee replacements, why doesn't the minister spend the million and a half dollars she's giving to Aon Consulting on providing more hip and knee replacements instead?

1:50

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. I cited yesterday that on the web for all Albertans the documents exist for Alberta Health, defining the steps that were being considered. Let me address first of all the opting in/opting out. Alberta still, regrettably, has lower physicians per 1,000 than many other places. Opting in/opting out could provide what exists in several other provinces; that is, an opportunity for physicians in regulated and controlled situations to work in both systems, thereby enhancing both opportunities.

It was a discussion point without a fait accompli. We have scheduled, Mr. Speaker, a discussion with both the AMA and the CMA to talk about what the physician's best role is, reminding the member opposite that on August 15 the Canadian Medical Association said that they rejected a proposal that would eliminate the opportunity to look at a parallel private system. All we're talking about is giving doctors an opportunity to do more work in Alberta under certain controlled conditions.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister's own documents, which she has made public after our pressure, admit that the very people on waiting lists, the very people who need hip and knee replacements won't qualify for private insurance, how does she think this scheme is going to help them?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, let's not take an extremist view of a discussion document. We have three pilot projects to enhance the opportunity for people to get hip and knee replacements. Indeed, 1,200 more Albertans will receive those hip and knee replacements as a result of an injection of funds that we have made. Now, we could add more money for hip and knee replacements, but then they obviously have to have a bed to go in. Many of the places are at 100 per cent capacity.

Let's get back to the point that he first addressed, which is, "Why would we do this study?" Isn't it responsible? Wouldn't Martha and Henry out there want to know what it costs before we make any moves? We've asked for an actuarial review of costs and how we're currently paying for Alberta Health and how we might pay in future to enhance Albertans' opportunities for choice and options to gain the health care that they need.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On page 3 of the documents, which the minister has, it says, "Introduce notwithstanding provision to Alberta Health Care Insurance Act." Could she explain, please?

Ms Evans: It means, simply – and this is a summary on step 2, amending the opting-in rule – that we currently have a rule that prevents people from opting out, and it would enable them to opt in

under certain conditions. It says, "providing exceptions." It goes further to say, "Any range of exceptions could be made to relieve various system pressure points." In other words, you might not allow all physicians to opt in and opt out. You might allow those in certain disciplines.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's a discussion document, which I think Albertans will have ample opportunity to review when we bring forward any legislative amendments or intent next spring. It's not part of this fall agenda, but I'd be pleased to discuss it with the hon. members at any time.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Health Care Privatization

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to lurch toward its goal of privatizing Alberta's valued public health care system, known these days as the third way. As with the first wave of privatization, known as Bill 11, the government is planning to mount a PR campaign to convince Albertans that they aren't entitled to their public health care system. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How will spending tax dollars to shift Albertans' expectations from health entitlement for all to a lower expectation result in better health care?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, let me cite a few facts. I think these are things that Albertans want to know. If you went in for a hip replacement today, just a standard would be \$12,000. If you had a stroke, it would be \$25,000 if you spent four days in bed. If you had a child that was born premature and spent 42 days in an ICU, it would be \$42,000. If you had a kidney transplant, it would be \$37,200. Quite simply put, it's up to this government to look at ways to make our health care system affordable and sustainable so that my grandchildren and yours can have help when they need it.

Ms Blakeman: Telling people how much it costs doesn't make it better.

My next question to the minister is: given that the government has assured Albertans that these unpopular reforms would be carried out only after full and open consultation with Albertans, where is the public consultation that was promised?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, right now we're not bringing any reforms before this Legislative Assembly. I've been out talking to every region, listening to community leaders in every part of this province and every health authority about third way initiatives. We're gathering information from Albertans. We're defining what could be a plan.

Mr. Speaker, what I think is remarkable is that people understand today that we can't have things the way we always did. In 1966 the average Canadian spent \$34 a year of public money on health. About three years ago that average was \$2,685. If you adjust 13 and a half times for inflation, it would mean today, if you took those same indices and applied them to other things and other commodities we buy, that the minimum wage for Albertans would be \$80 and a family car would cost \$270,000.

Ms Blakeman: Total red herrings.

My final question today to the Minister of Health and Wellness: given that the minister claimed that the plan for privatization released last week was simply working documents and does not represent government policy and that the Premier very clearly stated

that paying for private insurance is the policy, who is actually in charge?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's really clear to me that we have the best leader in Alberta, and he is in charge.

Mr. Klein: I would like to supplement, Mr. Speaker, since my name was mentioned in vain. A clarification. The hon. member made an accusation that the health care system would not look after the sick and injured, something to that effect. I don't know her exact words; I'd have to read the Blues. I want to say to this Legislative Assembly that anyone at any time who is sick or injured will get treatment under the public health system as we know it today.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a little counterproductive because the government's answers are making us sick.

Mr. Speaker, on his travelling road show next week in eastern Canada the Premier has promised to tell the truth about his government's plans to privatize our health care system. Now, I'm sure that Stephen Harper is thrilled to hear that, given the result of the last election. It will be quite a contrast to the Premier's performance in the last provincial election, where he denied plans to privatize our health care system and promised to consult with Albertans before any changes were made. To the Premier: when he goes on his grand tour of eastern Canada, will he tell eastern Canadians that his government has hired one of the largest private insurance companies in North America to recommend ways to privatize Alberta health insurance?

Mr. Klein: If I'm asked, I will say that Aon has been retained by the government to do an evaluation of the insurance component of what might or might not be legislation. If I'm asked.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. When the Premier goes on his travelling road show in eastern Canada, will he tell eastern Canadians that his government has developed a communication strategy designed to convince Albertans to lower their expectations for public health care in this province?

2:00

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I have not heard that. It has never been discussed. It is a figment of the hon. leader's imagination. So if I'm asked the question, I will say that this is a figment of Mr. Mason's imagination.

The Speaker: Hon. member, we can't use names in the House.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, for the Premier's information that report was tabled by my colleagues just yesterday in the House, I believe, so it's available to him.

Will the Premier, when he goes on his junket in eastern Canada, tell eastern Canadians that his government is hell-bent on destroying our single-payer public health care system, something that most Canadians, including Albertans, depend on and cherish?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I will tell people in eastern Canada and I'll tell the Prime Minister following that tour when we meet on

aboriginal issues in Kelowna at a first ministers' meeting that we're spending nearly \$10 billion annually on health care, that the system as we know it today is not sustainable, and every Premier and every health minister in the country, including the ND health ministers, agree with that. They agree that throwing more money at the system is not the answer. Perhaps it's part of the answer; I don't know. But I can't see a healthier, as I said before, ND and a healthier Liberal for the \$10 billion or nearly \$10 billion that we're spending on health care. What I will tell them is that we're looking at options to make sure that health care is sustainable for future generations.

But I will tell them and I'll tell this hon. member right now that if he is as sick as he says he is, he will get treatment. We will call an ambulance for him, and he will get treatment in the hospital under the public system. Mr. Speaker, I suspect that he is feigning sickness – he is feigning sickness – and that is precisely what puts pressure on the health care system.

Resource Revenues

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, with all the talk about spending the unbudgeted surplus and the release of the second-quarter fiscal update, some Albertans and many Canadians seem to think that there is no end to Alberta's resource wealth. This view is not only false but dangerous. Resource revenues are volatile. It wasn't long ago that oil prices were only \$12 a barrel, and Alberta's reserves of both conventional oil and gas are already in decline. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. How are we ensuring that Albertans understand the volatility of these resource revenues?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, we update Albertans annually on our budget. Secondly, we provide quarterly reports, which we did today of the second quarter, informing Albertans of the current prices, as current as you can be in a second-quarter update. Of course, the second quarter certainly did demonstrate the volatility of oil and gas. I don't think that any energy analyst predicted what would happen with oil and gas prices in the world this summer.

The second thing we have done, Mr. Speaker, to try and explain this to Albertans was to send them a brochure that outlined how we manage surplus dollars. The feedback that I have had has been very positive. People want to have that information, want to understand it, and in fact have asked some very good questions from that. The brochure points out very clearly that oil and gas revenues or natural resource revenues are the most volatile and difficult to predict. We try to ensure that Albertans understand that and understand that our budget is based on what we believe are predictable revenues.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you. Next week economists at the University of Calgary will release a report predicting that by 2010, in only five years, Alberta's energy resource revenues will be only about half of what they are today. My question is again to the same minister. Is the government using these revenues responsibly to build the foundation for future sustained prosperity, or is it giving in to short-term spending projects?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the response that I've heard from Albertans is that they do believe the expenditures that have been made are an investment in the future, whether they're the \$1.4 billion in health care facilities, which will enable us to better look after people in our public health system, or they're education facilities at the primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels,

understanding that the success of this province in the future is a well-educated, well-trained workforce. People have responded very well to that.

In the area of roads and transportation, Albertans understand that we are an export province, that we are a landlocked province, and we require good transportation, good economic routes to move our goods and services. Mr. Speaker, in this very capital region we have some 170 companies that process just food and beverage products that are shipped to 100 countries in the world, and that brings home to us how important a good transportation system is. So I think we are investing in the future and the future prosperity of this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Morton: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, since 1961 Alberta has sent \$243 billion to the rest of Canada in equalization and transfer payments, over \$2,500 for every man, woman, and child in Alberta. My final supplemental to the minister is: how is the government explaining to our friends in central Canada that Alberta's economic success benefits all Canadians?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we understand each province's contribution to Canada. I most recently had an opportunity to meet with finance ministers and some other ministers when we were dealing with securities regulation, and we talked about the economy. More recently than that, in a meeting with the federal Finance minister we talked about this very thing: Alberta's contribution to Canada. One might have listened to the federal Finance minister yesterday when he talked about what they were able to do with surplus dollars that they had garnered and mentioned oil and gas revenues as a prime driver in that. Most recently the Canadian Energy Research Institute put out a report that everyone should read, and it indicates that the federal government is the largest recipient of the tax revenue that will be generated by the oil and gas industry. Ottawa will see \$51 billion, or about 41 per cent, of the anticipated \$123 billion.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that everyone recognizes that a strong Alberta is good for Canada, that a strong British Columbia is good for Canada. For every province in this country, if they have strength and contribute to Canada, that is a good thing, and we want to be a part of that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Hazardous Material Spill at Wabamun Lake

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On August 3 a CN train derailment near Wabamun Lake caused a massive environmental disaster. This will affect the local ecosystem and the people of Lake Wabamun for decades. Perhaps the most shocking part of this tragic incident was that it was entirely preventable if the government had ensured that it had the capability entrusted to it for on-the-ground intervention. To the Minister of Environment: can the minister explain why this government was so inexcusably unprepared for a hazardous release like Wabamun?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, on that day, as the hon. member has mentioned, for Lake Wabamun and its residents it truly was an ecological disaster. But let me share with this House and the hon. member that the Alberta law that we have

under Alberta protection as well as under the Water Act is one of the strongest laws in this entire Confederation of Canada. We hold responsible industries and those who, in fact, contaminate a rich resource that we have, such as water and land. I also want to say that the enforcement orders that the government and the Ministry of Environment, in fact, issued in the first two days of this event were something that was unprecedented as well.

2:10

We are working very closely with the residents. It is without question an investigation that is continuing into all of the circumstances, and it's my hope within the weeks to come to report on the investigation to this Assembly. As well, there is an environmental commission that is looking at how we can do better. I will never apologize for saying that Albertans have an attitude, that we represent, that we can always do better.

I want to thank all those who were involved directly on that day, the day after, and the day after that as the cleanup continues, and we are making progress in that cleanup to restore it for not only this generation but future generations as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is your role in such disasters?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, on that day as Minister of Environment, in fact, my wife and I were scheduled for a week to be at our own cottage on a lake. I've now come to realize that if there ever is going to be an ecological disaster, I know when it's going to be. It's going to be on the day that I schedule to be away for a week.

On that day we left to attend Wabamun and spent the next many weeks there with, of course, the hon. Member for Stony Plain working closely with officials. This Assembly may not be aware that in the first 24 hours we hired a leading expert worldwide, right here from the University of Alberta, Dr. David Schindler, to advise me directly. As well, we hired Dr. Ron Goodman, who in fact was the expert who was dealing with the cleanup of the *Exxon Valdez*, another ecological disaster, who also was advising me directly as Minister of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure all members of this House and all Albertans that we are doing our very best in terms of this cleanup and restoring this lake again to the proper order it deserves for its residents.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That wasn't the question, but it was four days before there was any action on the ground.

Since the government has admitted that it failed the people of Alberta, to the Deputy Premier: what funds have been dedicated this year to ensure on-the-ground response to such emergencies in the future?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment has a budget that he can deal with these things within. We have emergency measures funding so that we can deal with this, and because of the foresight of this government we have disaster funding available for this. When it is required and the Minister of Environment comes forward requiring dollars for this, this government is prepared and in sound fiscal position to respond.

I'd ask him to supplement.

The Speaker: The hon. minister to supplement.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member – and a very good question again – essentially, as you know, the Alberta Environmental Protection Commission, which is headed by the chancellor, Dr. Eric Newell, and the very worldwide members of that panel are bringing, in fact, recommendations back to me as minister by the end of this very month. In fact, they provided an interim report to Albertans at the end of September. It is on the website, and I can assure you that we will be taking quick and concise action based on whatever those recommendations are, that the Minister of Finance has referenced too. This government will act in terms of what those recommendations are in restoring that lake to its proper order.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also regarding the CN spill and the 700,000 litres of bunker C crude oil that spilled into the lake and the 60,000 litres of utility pole penetrating lubricant. My first question is to the Minister of Environment. How long will it be before this cleanup is completed?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you of this: it will not be quick enough for any of us in Alberta. I know I want to formally thank the hon. member and his wife, who during those days of the original cleanup, in fact, offered their home and, actually, facilities to many of the environmental protection people that were there and dealing with this ecological disaster.

The cleanup work on the enforcement orders that were issued was completed this fall, but well water testing will continue throughout the entire winter months. Of course, I want to also say to this Assembly today that officials from my ministry will be in fact meeting once again tonight with residents of Wabamun Lake in dealing with many of the important issues that have been brought up by members here today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. When is it anticipated that the bans on boating, water usage, and fishing and hunting will be lifted?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that this upcoming spring, after winter passes, based on the work we have done, we'll be in a better position to answer that. That's a very common question for those recreational users and fishermen and Albertans who enjoy this incredible environment that we have. At this point in time we need to ensure that we do a thorough review to ensure that the quality and the safety of the water is protected for Albertans now and well into the future.

Mr. Lindsay: My second supplemental, to the same minister: when does the minister expect the commission that is reviewing this incident to make their final report or recommendations to ensure that this type of catastrophe never happens again?

Mr. Boutilier: As I mentioned earlier to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, the actual report is scheduled to come back by the end of November. The commissioners and chairman of the commission, Dr. Newell, indicated that they are on track and on schedule to be reporting back to me by the end of November. I intend to in fact be sharing with all members of this Assembly its recommendations.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Automobile Insurance

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of July the government trumpeted in one of their famous news releases that “good Alberta drivers will see another four per cent . . . reduction in mandatory auto insurance this November.” Many companies objected, not surprisingly, and now we learn that most will not have to honour the reduction. Some have even been allowed to increase their rates. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Will the minister please tell good Alberta drivers why they are not receiving a reduction and, in fact, why some are paying more for the auto insurance than they did before?

Mrs. McClellan: You know, Mr. Speaker, this is a bit frustrating because I am quite accustomed to having questions from the hon. member, and they’re usually pretty well researched and documented, but where the hon. member would’ve got the impression that most Alberta drivers would not see a reduction . . . [interjection] Obviously, a misreading of the website because 90-some per cent will see a reduction.

Mr. Speaker, what actually happens is this. All companies are subjected to a reduction. [interjection] Patience. All companies have the opportunity to make a case for an exemption to the Automobile Insurance Rate Board. They make the case, and they have to provide actuarial information that would show that it would not be reasonable for them to provide a reduction. Now, there are a number of reasons why that might occur. One might be that they had previously put in a reduction that was more than was asked for later on. I can assure the hon. member that the majority of Alberta drivers are not in that position. There are 11 companies, I believe, that have applied for an exemption, and some have applied the reduction to a portion of their insurance, but every company in this province is subjected to the reduction unless they can show with actuarial information that they should be exempted.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that insurance companies use their own actuarial information when applying for an exemption, how can Albertans be assured that the data provided to the Automobile Insurance Rate Board is accurate and complete?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we don’t have to be worried about that because the Automobile Insurance Rate Board will check their actuarial information, I can assure you.

Eighty-four per cent of the market is applying the reduction. That’s what I take exception to in the first question. Eighty-four per cent. When you stand and say that most Alberta drivers will not see a reduction, I have trouble with the credibility of the question. So I will explain to you that exemptions to five insurers, comprising about 11 per cent of the market, were granted on the condition that they reduce their rate for optional coverage, not fully but for optional. The policyholders of them will see a reduction.

Mr. Speaker, 95 per cent – 95, one more time – of the market will see a decrease in their rates. I cannot have this Legislature believe that the majority of Alberta drivers will not see a reduction when the facts are 95 per cent.

2:20

Mr. R. Miller: Well, Mr. Speaker, I’d like to know how many members of this Assembly have received a rebate.

To the same minister: when can we expect the Public Affairs

Bureau to issue a further press release explaining to those good drivers why the flawed insurance reforms have not worked for them and not provided any relief to those good Alberta drivers?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I would recommend to people that do believe that they have been treated unfairly or that did not receive a reduction when they should have is that they would contact me or the Automobile Insurance Rate Board because clearly this member does not have his information correct, cannot read the website correctly. This information is open and available on the Automobile Insurance Rate Board website. It clearly shows that 95 per cent of drivers will see a reduction, not that the majority won’t.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the drivers out there who feel that they should have had a reduction, had good driving records – I don’t want to know how many people in this Assembly got a reduction because I don’t want to know that much about their driving. I want to ensure that people understand that they can write to me and/or to the insurance rate board and ask the question. I’d be happy to respond.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Crystal Methamphetamine

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I spoke to the superintendent of police in Red Deer and asked him what would be the one issue of most concern for the police in Red Deer. He answered with two words: crystal meth. He then went on to say that what really concerned him is the fact that he didn’t know of one 10-year-old child that couldn’t get their hands on \$10, the cost of a packet of crystal meth. A child that uses crystal meth will have their undeveloped brain altered forever. Brain damage is permanent for anyone who uses crystal meth. My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will the minister outline what we are doing in Alberta to address crystal meth?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think it’s well known in this Assembly that the Member for Red Deer-North has already done a great deal herself to bring this issue forward to this Assembly. I would also say that most of the ministers on the front bench particularly involved with the soft side of the agenda and the Solicitor General involved with the policing are involved in a collaborative cross-ministry effort, working to make sure we bring forward all of the issues within the context of our own area of authority so we can follow through. With the chair of AADAC, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, we’ve been working to fill gaps in programs, namely detoxification and residential treatment for youth, building on our existing foundation. Opening this month the last few beds in Calgary, just on Thursday, we’ll have 24 new youth detoxification and residential treatment beds. Now, while they were not specifically built originally for crystal meth, they will become part of our support network for crystal meth. Our new youth residential treatment programs have initiated a special treatment protocol for meth users.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I’d say that we’re pleased to have a committee of outside assistance with Colleen Klein and Dr. Bob Westbury, who will help address the gaps and link us with the business community and corporate community, who share the concerns of the police in Red Deer and the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, will help with concerns about kids addicted to crystal meth, could the minister give us a brief update on what we're doing to implement Bill 202?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we know that by July 2006 this bill is to be ready for implementation. We're working on costing the initiatives of adding yet more treatment beds and now also adding a program that extends from the five-day detoxification, working with counselors, day treatment programs, family programs for support for parents, support groups, and mobile teen services. Mr. Speaker, there is virtually an army of people working in this government, including those from AADAC, that are ready and willing to make sure that we follow up on that legislative framework.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: do we have any plans to expand youth treatment facilities in central, southern, and northern Alberta?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope so, although final determination of other sites for residential treatment beds has not been made. You know about the ones that have been opened in Calgary and Edmonton. We know that there's a significant concern in central Alberta. I think what we have to define is a standard for how far people should live from their nearest treatment bed so that we have some standard of availability to take care of the needs. We won't be able to address them all in the first year, but I do know that there are strong representations from the Lethbridge-Medicine Hat area, from the Drayton Valley area, and from Red Deer itself for active treatment beds.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Natural Gas Prices

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this House the Premier announced that next week he will be touring the rest of Canada. This tour confirms that a political lame duck can still fly. One of the Premier's stops is Ontario, where consumers pay less for natural gas produced in Alberta than we do here. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Why are Alberta consumers paying on average 30 per cent more than Torontonians for natural gas that is produced here in Alberta and is used in both places for residential heating?

Mr. Melchin: Actually, Ontario on average does not pay less than Alberta for natural gas. It is true that some of the jurisdictions in many places, Ontario and other places in the world, will take different positions as to when they hedge or not. Usually when you hedge, that involves a premium, an insurance of sorts, so they will spread that over a longer time. While they might pay less during the winter months, they're going to pay more on average. So Alberta continues to pay less than even that marketplace.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: why are Alberta consumers paying on average 60 per cent more than the people of Saskatchewan for natural gas for residential use?

Mr. Melchin: Actually, once again, you know, you don't give all the information, all the facts. You might select an individual month with an individual bill. It's true that in any one month they may pay less, but on average Albertans continue to pay the least.

The other thing that we have done for Albertans is that there's no other jurisdiction that actually also provides a natural gas rebate. That program likely this year will return upwards of \$600 million directly to the consumers as a shield against the high prices of natural gas.

Mr. MacDonald: Even with the rebate, Mr. Speaker, we pay more.

Given that former Progressive Conservative Premier Peter Lougheed, who was never a political lame duck Premier, had a real plan to allow Alberta consumers to have the lowest home heating costs on the continent – the lowest home heating costs on the continent – how come we can't in this province now have a lower domestic price for natural gas that's used for residential heating, like the former Progressive Conservative government used to have?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have benefited tremendously by even the deregulation of natural gas. If they would take a look, just look what's happened to this industry as a result of the exploration. I might remind them that natural gas brought in royalties to this province of \$6 billion to \$7 billion last year, substantially more this year. It has allowed the capacity to likewise provide the consumers the natural gas rebate program. There's no other jurisdiction across Canada that has \$600 million that comes to them, where they do actually pay the least cost anywhere in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Aon Consulting Inc.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Aon Consulting Inc., a company with a clear vested interest in seeing expansion of private health insurance, has been hired by this government to study the wholesale privatization of public health insurance in this province. The medical services being considered for private insurance or out-of-pocket payments include primary care, nonemergency surgery and diagnostic procedures, nonemergency hospitalization, and specialist medical services. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How can the minister expect to get a credible, objective, and untainted report from its \$1.5 million health care funding study when the contractor hired has a clear vested interest in expanding private insurance into health services now covered by public insurance in this province?

2:30

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that it's fair for the hon. member opposite to impugn motives to Aon Consulting, who have been hired to do nothing involved in providing insurance products for Albertans, in actual fact to do costing on the health system. They will gain no advantage from any decision that this government ultimately makes relative to the analysis they do. They will be providing a piece of financial information on how we would be able to pay for health services if we move under any different model; for example, anything to deal with pharmacare, continuous care, or supplementary health services.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very clear that they were hired through a competitive process. They illustrated their capacity to do actuarial work. Finance officials and Health officials and officials from Government Services looked over all of the criteria of this company,

and they found them to be very competent in the areas in which they have been secured to do the job.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised that the minister is unable to see the vested interest this company has in private health insurance.

My second question to her: why did the government not include in its request for proposals a public-sector comparator that would have compared the total cost, regardless of payer, of providing these health services under a private insurance scheme with the cost of providing these health services through single-payer public insurance. Why did she not include that?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I will have to check the Blues, but I think the hon. member persists in impugning motives or, in fact, deliberately distorting the picture of what Aon has been hired to do through the process of the RFP. They have been hired to do an actuarial model.

There is no Aon insurance company involved with Aon Consulting. There is no Aon insurance company north of the 49th parallel. This is Aon Consulting. This company has 47,000 employees in 120 countries, 800 in Canada. The ones that have been hired from Aon Consulting here have been members of the Reed Stenhouse corporation that were incorporated, and they're eminently qualified to do the job of financial analysis, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary to the same minister: why does the minister refuse to admit that the government's real agenda has nothing to do with making health services less costly for Martha and Henry and everything to do with shifting more of the costs of paying for health care onto average Alberta families by forcing them to buy more expensive private health insurance?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the trend of these questions seems to lead Martha and Henry to believe that we are going to destroy the public health system. Would a government that put a \$1.4 billion investment in the public health system for capital facilities across this province contemplate weakening a public health system because they are looking for alternatives to make sure that we have a sustainable health system for the future? We can be terrorized by the opposition, but we will finally be judged on whether or not we have the foresight to do the right thing in health care.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Crime Rate Reduction

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton this year has witnessed an unusual number of homicides, and the year is not over yet. Several of these tragic incidents appear to be organized crime related. Evidently our police are dealing with much more sophisticated and much more violent criminals. To the Solicitor General: since one of the allegations is that the capital city does not have the sufficient number of police officers to address the issues of escalating crime in our city, what is the minister doing to assist our police department in dealing with this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The homicide rate is indeed, of course, an issue for all of us, for every Albertan, not just in the city of Edmonton but in Calgary and in other areas of the province as well. The province showed a commitment this past spring by adding an additional \$24 million to policing, with the largest increase of police officers that we've seen in almost 20 years. Some of those officers were added as a provincial component to the Edmonton Police Service that are working on organized crime, that are working on integrated child exploitation as well as looking at the investigations in and around the city of Edmonton regarding Project Kare.

Yes, there are a number of initiatives the province is working on and working with. We're meeting with the chiefs of police on a regular basis to look at new strategies in policing and new opportunities for the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental, to the same minister: what is the minister doing to get law enforcement agencies across the province on the same page when it comes to reducing crime in this province and in this city?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This shows a good example. When IROC was started three years ago or two and a half years ago, that was the first integrated model of policing that we had in this province. We've built on that. Now IROC has approximately 61 officers and analysts working in that office.

The organized crime strategy that was started this past year, Mr. Speaker, has shown a definite asset in a number of arrests in both Edmonton and Calgary as well as in rural Alberta. We've seen some renewed spirit and renewed evidence regarding our dismantling of and our fight against organized crime.

We're also continuing to look this year at other areas, Mr. Speaker, continuing to look at new strategies of how we could be policing. We have, in fact, nine officers from Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Edmonton, and Calgary. They began meeting yesterday for the next few days regarding building an intelligence model that will be providing that ability to have a centralized, analytical location for all officers in Alberta. That's coming. That's going to be starting soon. They're developing that program this week, and then the plans will come out over the next little while.

The last point I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, is that as we move forward, as the minister of health mentioned earlier, the task force on crystal meth is going to be huge for this province. We're going to be looking at stakeholders from a number of different areas right across the province to look at how we can combat that issue, obviously, under the tremendous leadership of Dr. Colleen Klein and Dr. Bob Westbury.

The Speaker: Hon. members, today six members will participate in statements, and before I call on the first of such, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this House I would like to introduce the following guests who have travelled from across the province and the nation to support the Castle-Crown wilderness park initiative. I would ask the guests to please stand after their names have been called so that we can recognize them with the traditional greeting of this House: James Tweedie, conservation director, Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition; Judith Huntley, executive director; Joe Obad, conservation director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Calgary-Banff chapter; Jill Sturdy, national outreach co-ordinator for CPAWS; Harvey Locke, national senior conservation adviser for CPAWS; Meredith James of the Sierra Club of Canada; Selena Smith, a post-graduate student at the University of Alberta; Rebecca Reeves, parks watch co-ordinator for CPAWS, Edmonton chapter; George Newton of CPAWS and Federation of Alberta Naturalists. Please, can we give them a round of applause?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of an historical vignette today on this day in 1966 the voice of the New Democratic Party was heard for the first time in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta when the New Democratic member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, Garth Turcott, spoke during the debate on the Speech from the Throne. Mr. Turcott was elected in a by-election as the result of the death of a Social Credit member, William Kovach. Mr. Turcott was defeated in the next provincial general election on May 23, 1967, by Social Credit member Charles Drain, and there was not to be another New Democratic member elected until the general election of August 30, 1971, when Grant Notley was elected to represent the constituents of Spirit River-Fairview.

head: 2:40 **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Edson Trail

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred years ago the frontier of agricultural settlement in Alberta extended as far north as Athabasca Landing. By 1910 the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway opened up more country west of Edmonton, and all the best farmland in central Alberta was soon pre-empted.

Accounts from explorers suggested that there were a series of prairies in northwestern Alberta. These had names such as La Grande Prairie, Spirit River Prairie, and Pouce Coupe Prairie. Early accounts suggested that the land was very fertile. Unfortunately, these northern prairies were separated from the south by a nearly impenetrable expanse of muskeg and boreal forest. This area was called the last best west, and pressure to find a route from the south to La Grande Prairie was formidable.

Responding to these pressures in 1911, the provincial government sent a survey team to cut a trail from Edson to Grande Prairie. The trail was noted for its mud and poor conditions, and at times it was impassable. However, for five years it brought thousands of homesteaders to the northern prairies. It was the last land rush to the last best west. The trail fell into disuse in 1916, when the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia Railway reached Grande Prairie. Since the days of the Red River settlement this is the only example of settlers preceding the railway into an agricultural area.

The Edson to Grande Prairie trail opened up northwestern Alberta to settlement. The original pioneers built a regional economy to include forestry and energy. Hard work and commitment have now

provided a significant regional prosperity. The Edson Trail Historical Society has commemorated the achievement of our pioneers by creating a historical documentary film about this famous trail. This valuable resource, Mr. Speaker, has been aired on public television, receiving very positive reviews.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Métis Week

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure on behalf of the government of the Alberta, and having two settlements in my constituency, to recognize November 13 to 19 as Métis Week in Alberta. Métis people are known as vibrant, resilient, and adaptable. They are a proud nation whose history and traditions date back to the early 1700s. Métis Week not only celebrates a unique culture; it is a chance to reflect on how the Métis have helped shape our great province. Métis culture is vibrant and alive in our province, and you can experience the living history and culture of Métis by visiting Métis Crossing near Smoky Lake in northern Alberta.

Alberta is the only province in Canada to provide a land base of 1.5 million acres for Métis and the only province to provide a governance structure to eight Métis settlements. A framework agreement is also in place with the Métis Nation of Alberta that provides an opportunity for Métis people out of settlements to develop and influence policy and programs that impact their lives. Just last year Alberta signed interim harvesting agreements with the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Settlements General Council to ensure that all rules of the land will be followed.

This morning there was a Louis Riel commemoration ceremony at the Legislature. This ceremony has occurred for at least 20 years and helps to kick off Métis Week. It was our opportunity to enjoy Métis history, culture, and traditions and to recognize a nation that has and continues to make a difference to our province. Many activities will be held across the province, and I encourage you to join in as many as you can.

The Métis are unique aboriginal people, and the government of Alberta is pleased to acknowledge Métis Week.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Vietnamese Cao Daist Society

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute and honour to those of us in society who without fanfare or personal benefit reach out to the less fortunate in our world and brighten up their lives. While most of us never know hunger, disease, or unsanitary conditions, there are many people on this Earth who do not share our bounty. In a province such as ours with staggering budgetary surpluses and boundless opportunities we are blessed with the ability to directly affect the lives of the less fortunate, especially the abandoned and destitute.

I am very proud and honoured to inform this honourable place that two groups in my working-class riding have recently played a significant role in the betterment of the lives of the poorest and defenceless among us. The Vietnamese Cao Daist society of Calgary teamed up with the Applewood Park Community Association to deliver many humanitarian projects in Vietnam.

As a proud Albertan of Vietnamese descent I am humbled by their combined generosity to raise money from their hard-working members and reach out thousands of miles away through the drilling of many wells to bring potable, clean water to many poor villages in

southern Vietnam. They supplied many other basics of human life to these villages. Their contributions provided food and shelter to homeless seniors and children, job training for the infirm and handicapped so that they can lead productive lives. Finally, they provided critical medicines to many charitable doctors who teamed up with these organizations to alleviate suffering and help heal the sick.

I'm very proud to say that they are from my riding of Calgary-Montrose. I'm also honoured to be able to publicly acknowledge their very generous actions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Castle Wilderness

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On June 1, 2005, an Alberta legend passed on, and I rise today to urge the government to designate the Castle wilderness as a wildland provincial park in the legacy of Andy Russell. This wilderness area just north of Waterton Lakes national park is a sublime landscape of virtually unparalleled natural diversity, home to nearly half of Alberta's plant species and a full complement of large carnivores.

Protecting the area's three underrepresented ecoregions – the montane, the foothills fescue grasslands, and the foothills aspen parkland – will help make this the corner piece completing the province's conservation puzzle. It will contribute to the Yellowstone to Yukon initiative, an international compendium of over 800 conservation groups committed to creating a 3,200 kilometre long protected area network from Yellowstone national park to the Peel River in the Yukon Territory. The opportunities for outdoor recreation and sustainable tourism make this area a Kananaskis south, an economic and social asset to the region.

I can think of no better centennial tribute than to designate the Castle wilderness as Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wildland park. I'tai Sah Kòp references the name used for the area by the Piikani First Nation, who first called this wilderness area home.

Andy Russell was an outstanding Albertan who embodies the spirit of Alberta's heritage. Just some of Andy's accomplishments include being an Order of Canada recipient, the author of 13 books and dozens of magazine articles, and receiving three honorary doctorate of law degrees. Andy travelled extensively on horseback throughout the Rocky Mountains and the foothills, becoming a wilderness advocate as he watched these special places begin to disappear through shortsighted industrial development. Our Premier spoke fondly of Andy's contributions to Alberta at the memorial service for Andy this summer.

Alberta would benefit from remembering people like Andy Russell, respecting the original First Nations inhabitants, and protecting more places like the Castle wilderness. I urge all members of the House to support the creation of the Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wildland provincial park as a legacy for future Albertans to enjoy.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

International Day for Tolerance

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, November 16, is International Day for Tolerance, a day to embrace our differences and to celebrate our diversity. It's a time for promoting understanding between people and for renewing our commitment to be proactive in combating intolerance, bigotry, and hatred. Together

we live in a wonderful province filled with cultural, religious, and racial diversity.

Today we should celebrate our diversity by denouncing racism, discrimination, hatred, and ignorance. By promoting tolerance, our society can successfully reach a new milestone on the path towards social peace and harmony. Together we are capable of creating a society in which our children and grandchildren will be free from the injustices that are rooted in ignorance and fear.

I urge each and every Albertan to take on this challenge, beginning at home. Teach your children to embrace diversity, to denounce ignorance, and to seek understanding. Even at work we can explore ways to promote tolerance: be courageous and vocally object to racial jokes, comments, and insults. In doing so, we will tear down the walls of intolerance brick by brick. It is my firm belief that tolerance is the virtue that makes peace possible.

May this international day inspire each of us to open the channels of communication with the understanding that the future of our society, the future of all of humanity is at stake.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

2:50

International Education Week

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. International education makes a significant contribution in preparing Albertans for participating in the global economy. This week, November 14 to 18, is recognized as International Education Week by the province of Alberta and over 85 countries around the globe.

The Alberta government set a course for the province through the 20-year strategic plan, that focused on unleashing innovation, leading in learning, competing in the global marketplace, and making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit. International education directly supports all four of these pillars, which are the keys to the province's bright future.

Increasingly, jurisdictions like Alberta and others around the world are recognizing the importance of international education and are developing and implementing a comprehensive series of plans, policies, and programs. Recently Alberta Advanced Education revisited the province's strategy for international education in the postsecondary sector, and as a result a new plan has been developed in consultation with the province's postsecondary institutions. The ministry has identified a broad range of potential programs to achieve the outlined objectives and will implement these based on the availability of resources.

Mr. Speaker, the province's action plan demonstrates the province's awareness and commitment to ensuring that Alberta will be internationally recognized as a leading provider of education and learning experiences. It ensures that Albertans will be well prepared for their role in the global marketplace and as global citizens. More than ever before it is valuable to provide Albertans with international learning experiences, linking them to the world. Alberta companies are increasingly investing abroad, expanding their business activities, increasing the employment of Albertans, and generating more benefits for our province now and in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am submitting a petition which was initiated by a constituent from Edmonton-McClung and signed by a group of concerned Alberta parents from all over the

province asking the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate school fees charged for textbooks, locker rentals, field trips, physical fitness programs, and music classes.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition that says:

The undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation declaring a moratorium on . . . future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from a hundred Albertans from the Alberta communities of Conklin, Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Alberta Beach, and Stony Plain, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Bill 49 Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to provide first reading of Bill 49. The main purpose of the proposed legislation is to streamline and enhance the Law Enforcement Review Board's effectiveness in how complaints are handled by police and how the police disciplinary process works. The proposed amendments also clarify the role and powers of the board to assess costs and pay expenses.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 49 read a first time]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have two tablings. I'm pleased to table today five copies of a document showing the cost breakdown of the government brochure on the surplus.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I am pleased to table the required number of copies of the response to Written Question 6 on the Order Paper.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader it's my pleasure to file the requisite number of copies of a memorandum to the Official Opposition House Leader and to the third party opposition House leader dealing with the subject of the supplementary supply schedule for the fall of 2005. That, of course, is filed with the Assembly this afternoon in the

event that motions 22 and 23 receive favourable reply from the members.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education to table the appropriate number of copies of an updated provincial action plan for international education initiatives. This action plan demonstrates the province's awareness and commitment to ensuring that Alberta will be internationally recognized as a leading provider of education and learning experiences and ensuring that Albertans will be well prepared for their role in the global marketplace and as global citizens.

In addition, I am tabling copies of a new brochure to assist international students in choosing Alberta as an educational destination of choice.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today, all concerned with health care in Alberta. The first is from Tena Wiebe, who writes with her concern about "building more hospitals and increasing bed capacity." She has not heard of a commitment to staff and maintain these new facilities and is concerned that after having the buildings built, the government will say that we don't have money to operate them and will sell them to private companies.

The second tabling is from Donald Sexauer, who writes of an experience he had with a relative in ER and wondering if the slashing that occurred to health care in the early '90s "is now showing its ugly head" and is concerned as well about building more hospitals but without operational expenses.

The final two are related to each other: a very thorough letter from Verna Pollack, writing to the Minister of Health and Wellness regarding the plea to expedite funding for Herceptin. She qualifies for the program but is waiting in line to get funding for it. This is an important program for women with breast cancer, Mr. Speaker.

The final tabling is a letter of support from Robert Pollack, who is the son of Verna Pollack, again with his concern that "it is alarming that a significant medicine such as Herceptin has been apparently placed on the other side of the two tiered Health Care fence."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am tabling the Federal Accountability Act, dubbed Stephen Harper's commitment to Canadians to clean up government. It contains wonderful ideas like ending the influence of money on politics, strengthening the Lobbyists Registration Act, making government appointments an all-party exercise, and whistle-blower protection. I urge all government members to study what their federal Tory cousins are trying to do so that one day they, too, can portray themselves as being pro transparency and standing for openness and accountability.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received numerous calls and letters in the past concerned about long waiting times for services at the Grey Nuns hospital in Edmonton. Another letter from

my constituent for tabling. She's also concerned about long waiting times for emergency services in the Grey Nuns hospital. She had to wait four and a half hours when she was in severe pain in the stomach. She's urging the government to give health care a top priority.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society I want to table five copies of a proposed EnCana development in the Suffield national wildlife area that could set a precedent in disrupting a federally protected area.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today. It is a document that I acquired on Saturday, November 5, when I was visiting the Artspace Housing Co-operative Ltd. at 9330 – 101A Avenue here in Edmonton. This brochure is an introduction to co-operative housing. It explains how it works and who can qualify for membership in the co-op support system.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five letters and the appropriate number of copies from five persons in my constituency. They're all members of a group called Falun Gong. They are protesting that there is not prosecution for hate literature that was disseminated against their group.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is a brochure titled *The Third Way or the Third Hoax?* It's a comment on the Premier's proposal for reform on medicare in Alberta, published and distributed by SALT, the Seniors' Action and Liaison Team, a self-financed group of Edmonton seniors concerned about social justice issues in Alberta and Canada.

The second one, Mr. Speaker, is appropriate copies of a letter sent to all MLAs from Mrs. Irene Payne. Mrs. Payne is urging the minister of health to cancel their contract with Aon Consulting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mrs. McClellan, Minister of Finance, and pursuant to the Government Accountability Act the government of Alberta 2004-05 annual report; Budget 2005 2005-06 quarterly budget report, Q1 fiscal update; and Budget 2005 2005-06 quarterly budget report, Q1 activity report.

Pursuant to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Act Members of the Legislative Assembly pension plan annual report for the year ended March 31, 2005.

Pursuant to the Insurance Act the Alberta Automobile Insurance Rate Board annual report for the year ending December 31, 2004.

Pursuant to the Securities Act the Alberta Securities Commission 2005 annual report and the ATB, Alberta Treasury Branches Financial, annual report 2005.

Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Government

Accountability Act and by the related ministers the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development annual report 2004-2005; Alberta Advanced Education annual report 2004-2005; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development annual report 2004-2005; Alberta Children's Services annual report 2004-2005; annual report of Alberta Community Development for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2005; Alberta Economic Development 2004-05 annual report; Alberta Education annual report 2004-05; Alberta Ministry of Energy 2004-05 annual report; Ministry of Environment 2004-05 annual report; Executive Council annual report 2004-05; Alberta Finance annual report 2005; Alberta Gaming 2004-05 annual report; annual report of Alberta Government Services 2004-05; Alberta Ministry of Health and Wellness annual report 2004-05, sections 1 and 2; Human Resources and Employment ministry annual report 2004-05; Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation annual report 2004-05, Alberta Innovation and Science annual report 2004-05; Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations annual report 2004-05; Alberta Justice annual report 2004-05; Alberta Municipal Affairs 2004-05 annual report; Restructuring and Government Efficiency annual report 2004-05; Alberta Seniors and Community Supports annual report 2004-05; Alberta Solicitor General annual report 2004-05; Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development annual report 2004-05.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horner, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and pursuant to the Agriculture Financial Services Act the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation annual report 2004-2005.

On behalf of Mr. Liepert, chair of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee, Alberta heritage savings trust fund 2005 annual report and the Alberta heritage savings trust fund 2005-2006 first quarter update.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Klein, Premier, and pursuant to the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act the Alberta's Promise partners report 2004.

And on behalf of the hon. Mr. Stevens, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and pursuant to the Legal Profession Act the Alberta Law Foundation 32nd annual report 2005 and the Alberta Law Foundation audited financial statements and other financial information for the year ended March 31, 2005.

Privilege

Contempt of the Assembly

The Speaker: Hon. members, yesterday in the Assembly we dealt with a point of privilege and contempt raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. I offered an opportunity for hon. members to deal with that matter. We did then conclude that submission by hon. members at that point.

Then I recognized the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who proceeded on a question of privilege of the Legislative Assembly, and at the same time I offered an opportunity for hon. members to participate should they wish. In the latter point there was made mention in the oral presentation of the Minister of Environment. The Minister of Environment was attending a funeral yesterday afternoon, so today I will offer him an opportunity to make comments with respect to this purported point.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to members of the House. Yesterday, as you rightly mentioned, I was attending a funeral, a First Nations funeral, in my constituency and was not here. However, I have since learned that in this Assembly yesterday members from the NDP have linked my name again to accusations about leaking the Auditor General's report and the Ethics Commissioner's reports.

First, on the matter of the Auditor General's report, Mr. Speaker, I did not have a copy of this report, contrary to what was being alleged. I therefore did not, could not, and would not release it. I read about it and its contents in the *Edmonton Journal* on Thursday, October 13, and as a member of this Assembly I received the Auditor General's finding when it was sent to all MLAs on October 17.

When it was released, this report cleared my name and my family name of any inappropriate action or behaviour in response to the accusations that were made by the New Democratic Party. It proved that they were both false and clearly irresponsible. I was pleased but not surprised by the Auditor General's report findings. I have no knowledge of or any connection to its release. Let me be very perfectly clear here today. Contrary to the NDP allegations, Mr. Speaker, I fully support the respect and the need for high standards when it comes to the handling of these types of reports, and I have always respected these standards in this House.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, after June, when allegations were made against me and my family, I requested the Ethics Commissioner to investigate the allegations that were made by the NDP. I made this request as a member of this Assembly in order to answer in an open, fair, and independent manner any final questions that could arise as a result of the entirely false accusations made against me and my family by the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that I had requested this independent review by the Ethics Commissioner, I was given an advance copy of this report and made reference to it on a radio program the day before. I had no reason to believe it was inappropriate to reference it as I had requested the report myself to clear my reputation and my family name, and it had been delivered to me in response to that request.

3:10

I'm afraid that this is just one more example of the NDP refusing to accept and acknowledge that their initial attacks on me and my family back in June were irresponsible, unfounded, and untrue. They don't like the fact that these two independent reports cleared my family name and me on the false charges that they made, so they now are attacking me on another front. Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost respect for this House and its members and its family members, who the members represent here. I will respect today the ruling that is made relative to this very, very important situation.

I want it to be very clear, though, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, that I would not act in any way that would undermine the rules of this Legislative Assembly. I still await the members of the NDP to do the honourable thing: to apologize to my family.

The Speaker: I take it that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview wants to participate on this purported point of privilege?

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish he'd stay on the privilege motion instead of what he was talking about. If he wants a debate about this, let's deal with the privilege. That's not what he's talking about.

The Speaker: Any additional members want to make a presentation with respect to this purported point? Then I will take this information that's been stated in the House. I understand as well that the Auditor General appeared before the Public Accounts Committee this morning, and I haven't had a chance to review the Blues with respect to that. We will review what has been stated in the House with respect to these two matters and report back to the House. I'm not so sure that we'll be able to do it tomorrow, but Monday at the latest.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Transmittal of Estimates**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have received a certain message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, prior to moving a number of motions relevant to the supply estimates, I wish to advise that I provided the government's 2005-06 quarterly budget report for the second quarter to all MLAs this morning. At the same time I also made this report public as required by section 9 of the Government Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the 2005-06 supplementary estimates. These supplementary estimates will provide additional spending authority to 13 departments of government. When passed, these estimates will authorize increases of \$1,531,247,000 in voted expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$234,150,000 in voted capital investment, and \$5 million in lottery fund payments.

Mr. Speaker, I will now table the quarterly budget report for the second quarter pursuant to section 9 of the Government Accountability Act. This amended fiscal plan is also required by section 8 of the Government Accountability Act when a second set of estimates is tabled.

I'm also tabling the second-quarter activity report describing the major achievements of our government during that period.

Likewise, I am tabling the second-quarter update for the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

head: **Government Motions**

22. **Mrs. McClellan moved:**

Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2005-06 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

Mr. Mason: This is a debatable motion, is it, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, it is.

Mr. Mason: And the time allotment is 10 minutes per member?

The Speaker: Twenty.

Mr. Mason: Twenty? Well, I don't think I'll need all of that, Mr. Speaker, but I will address this question because I think that there has been a very important question that has been raised by the government's actions and certain comments that have been made by the Premier with respect to the role of this Legislative Assembly in overseeing government expenditures.

The role of parliaments and Legislatures in controlling the public purse and holding governments accountable for their expenditures goes back hundreds of years in the British parliamentary tradition, and it forms part of the democratic nature of our society for which

our veterans fought in the Second World War. It's not the entire democratic system, but it's an important part of the democratic system. For the Premier to be unaware of the Legislature's primary role in overseeing government expenditures, whether they come from taxes or whether they come from royalties or whether they come from gambling or cigarettes or wherever they may come from, is appalling to me. That the Premier would make statements to the effect that the surpluses are not within the purview of the Legislature, or not within the purview of the opposition, I think he said, by extension means not within the purview of the Legislature and by further extension means not within the purview of public discussion at all.

This government's imperial approach to spending and budgeting is getting more and more troublesome, Mr. Speaker, so much so that I said today, and I'll say again, that when it comes to spending taxpayers' money in this province, democracy is on life support, and it's all the opposition can do to keep the Premier from pulling the plug altogether.

I think the tremendous financial resources that are now flowing to the province require very, very strong and systematic debate. I heard the Deputy Premier and Provincial Treasurer say today that of course everything is going to be debated in the Legislature. It was clear that she was doing damage control, ably so, I think, on the Premier's comments, but the fact of the matter is that it is just damage control. Why would the government, after a brief caucus meeting and a cabinet retreat, promise each Albertan a \$400 rebate without any reference to this Legislature if they really believed in legislative authority?

3:20

They may say: well, it's all got to be approved before the cheques are cut. Mr. Speaker, they have already spent a great deal of money preparing glossy brochures that advise Albertans that they're entitled to this money. They have done a great deal to communicate a decision that has not yet officially been taken by the Legislature, and that shows, in my view, contempt for the role of this Legislature and an arrogance in their spending that I find unacceptable altogether.

Now, democracy is one thing. Another thing, Mr. Speaker, is vision. There's no vision here. If we look back over the history of governments in this province, we see that previous governments, even Progressive Conservative governments, have had more vision and more sense about what needs to happen in the province economically and financially than this government has. Under the Lougheed government the attitude was that the resource revenues that we have are a windfall on a nonrenewable, declining natural resource and that the value that came from them, the money that flowed from them was just as much the right of a future generation as this generation. That is lost on this government.

It seems to me, fundamentally, that the government has to have a vision for this province's prosperity once the conventional oil and gas revenues are gone and once even the tar sands resources or the nonconventional natural gas is gone. I know that many people opposite don't even think that we'll ever get to the point where we'll be out of nonconventional resources, but I can assure them that that day will come.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

It's very important, in our view, that the extra windfall bonus that the government is now receiving from oil and gas revenues because of high prices be invested to ensure that Alberta remains an energy leader into the future once the oil and gas is gone. We've put forward a proposal to create an entity that would essentially be a

new energy company and would invest in conservation and in alternative forms of energy and maintain Alberta's position as the energy leader in Canada even when the petroleum and the carbon-based energy resources are more or less depleted. This money could be used to invest not just in Alberta but right across Canada in order to create energy security going into the future for the post hydrocarbon energy economy, and that way we would retain control and ownership of the resources and the wealth that comes from them. We would insulate ourselves from any attempts by other places in Canada to take our wealth, and we would also invest it for the future of Albertans and for the future of Canadians as well.

The government doesn't have a vision, Mr. Speaker, and what is going to happen is that when the oil and gas is gone, all that is going to be left for people in this province are cutlines, empty holes, dried up farms, and ghost towns because the government is not preparing this province for the time when the oil and gas is, in fact, gone. I think it's clear that we need a bigger vision, a broader vision of the economic prosperity. The money that the government is spending now doesn't just belong to this generation; it belongs to the next generation and the generation after. It needs to be invested in a way so as to preserve the quality of life and the economy that we enjoy in Alberta today.

The other point that I want to make is that the government has no long-term financial plan. Again, the Provincial Treasurer goes to great lengths to deny that and to argue that they do have a long-term plan, but it's interesting that this long-term plan changes dramatically from month to month. It wasn't long ago that the Provincial Treasurer was saying that she didn't support rebates to Albertans, but, after a caucus retreat, all of a sudden that was the government's policy. The government had said that tax reduction was low on Albertans' priorities, and that wasn't very long ago. Now they're saying that tax reduction is on the agenda. So it's clear, Mr. Speaker, that this government is in fact changing its so-called long-term economic plan, or long-term financial plan, almost from week to week. That says to me, in fact, that there is no plan.

The Treasurer also spoke this morning a little bit about smart spending. That is a code word, but what does it really mean? My hon. colleague says: jumbo shrimp. Some spending could be smart, but I know that one of the mistakes of the Lougheed era was investment in capital, in bricks and mortar, without ensuring the long-term financial capacity to operate all of the facilities that were built. I've travelled the province, and I've seen hospitals that were built in the Lougheed era, the dark brick that was characteristic of that time, and these hospitals in little towns in Alberta are boarded up – they actually have plywood on the windows in places like Empress, Alberta – because they've been closed because they were ill-advised capital projects or the government was unable to sustain the operating costs that were necessary to keep them going.

Politicians really like to invest in new buildings and things that are under construction, but if it was to be smart spending, Mr. Speaker, then the government would have to put in place a plan that would show that the operating budgets to sustain those things into the long-term future were in place and would also have to show that, in fact, they have training programs and educational programs in order to make sure that there is an adequate supply of professionals and other workers to operate them going forward instead of having shortages of nurses, when 10 or 15 years ago we were sending nurses to the United States because we were laying them off in droves. It's that kind of yo-yo economic planning that makes it very difficult to ensure sustainability. Without an adequate operational plan for new capital expenditures, it's not smart spending – it's dumb spending – and we haven't seen that yet from the Provincial Treasurer.

So in respect of those three points, Mr. Speaker – the govern-

ment's contempt of democracy and contempt of the Legislature when it comes to expenditures and the Legislature's oversight of government expenditures, the lack of a long-term economic vision for this province that ensures that future generations have the same standard of living that we enjoy today, and the lack of a long-term financial plan that doesn't change from week to week and from caucus to caucus – I cannot support the motion that's been made by the government, and I would ask all hon. members to join me in voting against it.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to participate in the debate this afternoon on Government Motion 22 as presented by the hon. Minister of Finance. Certainly, when we look at the 13 departments that are eventually going to get more money, this is a substantial increase from the budget that it seems like we passed just last week. Incredibly, an entire summer and most of the fall have gone by since we finalized the provincial budget, but this habitual amount that we are now going to debate – and I am grateful for the opportunity to debate this motion and also have a good discussion on further government expenditures.

3:30

There are conflicting messages with the government. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood certainly has every right to question some of the spending habits of this government. Without a doubt. We hear all the time the comment: where is the money going? We heard in question period today, Mr. Speaker, that public health care expenditures are unsustainable, that they're going up and up and up, and they're going to be as high as \$10 billion. Well, maybe we should look at how we're managing this money.

An Hon. Member: We're trying to.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, people say that we're trying to, but we don't have an opportunity in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, to see where the money that we previously spent has gone. It is amazing to think that in the last two fiscal years the Public Accounts Committee has not had an opportunity to scrutinize the spending of many different government departments that have spent billions and billions of dollars.

So there is the entire issue of the government and its accountability. Money is quite easy to acquire in Alberta at this time because of high North American prices for natural gas and high prices for crude oil on the international markets. These prices are determined by matters that are totally outside the control of this government, and that is something that we must recognize. I would encourage this government to further increase our savings. There have been some very modest efforts being made here.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, how fast is this budget process for this government? Well, in this piece of information that was put out we're looking at a photograph here, and it's the steady hands on the reins. We should have confidence in the stewardship; that's the image that's trying to be portrayed here. That indicates to me that we're going nowhere because if we were really riding that horse and directing that horse, the hands wouldn't be resting on the saddle horn and the reins wouldn't be as loose as they are. This brochure is a lot like the government's budgeting practices; it's about public relations. This may look fine from the public relations perspective, but one only has to go inside this brochure, or this propaganda.

We hear all the time about the smart spending, saving, and giving back. Well, I would certainly encourage you to save a good portion

of this extra funding that we have, whether it's in the heritage savings trust fund or any of your endowments. Some of those funds actually were ideas that originated on this side of the House and were gradually adopted by this government.

I think I have to encourage the government even more to spend their money. Don't spend it all at once. To say that this plan is smart – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was talking about smart spending – well, it certainly is not smart spending to in one decade blow up a good, sound public hospital and then 10 years later think that everyone should just be so grateful because you're going to construct some new hospitals where, granted, they are needed.

An Hon. Member: Two in Sherwood Park.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, there is a hospital going to be built in Sherwood Park, and there's going to be one built in Fort Saskatchewan, but I would remind all hon. members of this Assembly that there's going to be significant population growth in both those centres. At some point in the future, if I was working out in Fort Saskatchewan or near Fort Saskatchewan and I was injured at work, I would be grateful that there's a hospital handy.

An Hon. Member: And a choice.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I don't want a choice. I just want a good, sound public hospital, and I want to know that there are going to be trained professionals there in the event that I do get injured or someone else gets injured.

So I'm not necessarily opposed to the construction of these hospitals in needed places, but I find it quite ironic that they can describe themselves as smart spenders when in one decade you want to blow up a perfectly good public hospital and then: ho, hey, we're heroes because we are now going to construct hospitals.

Now, another item in this document that caught my eye was the government's pledge. I'm going to call it a pledge, and I'm going to keep them to it. Hopefully, they're going to increase it even further. I'm pleased to see that they've done this, but the government is putting \$226 million from the surplus into the fund – and this is the heritage savings trust fund – to ensure that the fund grows at least as fast as the rate of inflation. Well, I'm pleased to see that this has caught the attention of the Minister of Finance because to date it has not been done.

If we had been inflation-proofing the heritage savings trust fund, today's value would be in excess of \$19 billion – \$19 billion – not \$12 billion. I see in the quarterly budget report that there has been an increase in the amount that's being set aside to inflation-proof the heritage savings trust fund. My information indicates that to date this year in Canada the consumer price index is in the range of 3.3 to 3.5 per cent, but that amount that is indicated here, Mr. Speaker, I don't think even brings that up to cover the consumer price index for this respective year.

I would like to see the government recognize that we are in a unique and unusual position in this jurisdiction in North America in that we can build a society and we can build a province that's the envy not only of the entire North American continent but of the world. When we have this sort of budgeting process that, to say the least, does not in this member's view provide very good stewardship of the tax dollars, it does not increase my confidence in this government's ability to manage.

Now, I know that we went through many different budget debates in this Assembly in the spring, but I had no idea, Mr. Speaker – the debt had supposedly been paid off. There were estimates that the

infrastructure debt was 3 and a half billion dollars. That was to improve our roads and our bridges, fix up our existing hospitals, fix up the existing schools, not arbitrarily forcing public school boards to close good, sound schools before they could get money to build new ones. We had no idea that the infrastructure debt was over \$7 billion until – and I don't know; I could be in all kinds of trouble here with some sort of point of privilege against me – the leaked document that came from the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, that became public knowledge here in I think it was June, in regard to the possibility of having to borrow money to pay for this infrastructure debt. None of this information came up during public debate over the budget this spring.

Mr. Mason: It's called smart borrowing.

Mr. MacDonald: This idea of smart borrowing: I believe the interest rate was going to be 4 and three-quarters per cent. There was talk that maybe we'd even have to change the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act to allow this leadership hopeful to borrow money to build roads and bridges and fix the province up really nice, but that plan apparently is no longer needed. The fact remains that the total infrastructure debt that we are going to have to deal with in this province has doubled.

3:40

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation confirmed that in that report. I was just glad it was made public. I don't have the opportunity to attend a lot of those standing policy committee meetings except behind that braided rope, and the only thing I can say about that braided rope in room 512 is that at least it's red, you know. I'm not allowed to participate in the proceedings of that committee. But it is a good thing, and I am grateful, no matter how we get that information, to receive it.

When you receive that information and you look at what was proposed by the hon. minister, we really need to improve our budgeting process. The fact that we were going to have this complete 180-degree reversal of public policy by this government and borrow money was certainly, to say the least, astonishing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are significant increases in the amounts of money that have been collected in this fiscal update. We're certainly spending significant amounts additionally, but one thing that I would like to note for all hon. members of this Assembly is something that I find quite interesting. Perhaps the minister could clarify this for all members of the Assembly. In the second-quarter fiscal update the nonrenewable resource revenue that we're looking at here – the budget for the second quarter had indicated that for synthetic crude oil and bitumen royalty there would be roughly about \$400 million collected. But so far the forecast is for in excess of \$1 billion. The main reason for the change from the budget, as indicated, is higher oil prices, which is significant. Hopefully, in the debate we're going to get a clarification on whether this is revenue from synthetic crude oil or from bitumen.

We all know the problem that a lot of bitumen producers are having and this notion that everyone is getting close to \$60 American a barrel for their product, when I'm sure the hon. minister knows that not to be true. Can we get a breakdown on that? How much of that is from synthetic crude, and how much is from bitumen? Have there been any major developments in the north that have now gone from paying 1 per cent royalty to 25 per cent royalty for their synthetic crude oil production? If there have been any major producers, who are they? I think the public would be very interested to know that, and if the hon. minister or some other member of Executive Council could provide that information during the course of debate, I would be very grateful.

Now, we're taking in a lot of money here. There's no doubt about that. Some of the expenses here – and the hon. member earlier was talking about the Second World War and . . . [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired] Oh, dear, my time is up.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. I'd also like to speak to the motion. As mentioned by the two previous speakers: very concerned that so quickly we're having this motion come before the House because of the income.

I guess I'd like to refer to a few things. We continue to hear from the government that we have one of the lowest tax regimes, so that's good enough. They always talk about value added, and they've given lots of incentives in the Fort McMurray area, but they failed to carry those on. One of the big concerns of the people of Alberta that I've spoken to this last summer is that it doesn't seem like there's a possibility of getting the money to where they need it. It's who you know. The programs are very difficult for people to make application, and it's frustrating to them.

A few of the comments I'd like to address with the motion are that earlier this summer when I was up in Grande Prairie, they talked about the fair share program in British Columbia and how those revenues are being distributed to the municipal governments there in order to do their own infrastructure work and not be micromanaged on every aspect, whether it's potholes, tertiary water treatment, or what have you. They're very concerned with the conditional funding that is going out and the struggle that the different areas are having in addressing that.

I would very much hope that as we get to debate these supplies, we can change the stability of the programs that become long term. I've had the opportunity of being in Olongapo, Philippines, when an anti-aircraft ship comes in with 6,000 sailors that hit the beach and think that they've only got three days to spend their money. It seems that that's very much the attitude here, that we've only got six months. Let's get it spent quickly before someone else tries to get it. It doesn't matter about value for our dollar; it's the speed at which we can spend it because it's going to be gone anyway. I'd very much like to see those things going into a savings program and then a five-year plan, or possibly longer, on infrastructure spending being presented.

One particular area in my riding has had a bid of \$1.1 million for some infrastructure work that they want to do and are not able to get the funding. Now that's jumped up to \$2.1 million because of the huge demand and the short span that these builders are looking at. Many of them seem like they're putting in bids realizing that this is a one-shot program. We've got six months, one year, and we've got to pay for everything in that time. So I'm very concerned that they don't really have a five-year program saying that this much money is going to go out. Construction workers and other ones can look at it realizing that we don't have to get it all in six months, that this is coming over a longer time.

I also very much like the fact that Albertans for years have said: yes, we want the deficit paid off. We've done that, but the second thing they've always said was that we deserve a tax break when we got that. This is the ideal time, when the economy is booming, to give tax breaks. They say that they want to be more efficient and downsize. They had a great opportunity here to eliminate the health care premiums for every working Albertan and to have moved the bureaucracy involved in trying to do that collection and the paper-

work there over for their thousand extra people that they needed.

It would be very beneficial, I feel, to the province on a long-term plan if they were to have a formula where they would say that a certain percentage of the surplus every year would go back to taxpayers in the form of property assessment rebates. Those taxes are paid for, the rolls are there, we know the numbers, and it would be a very simple formula. It wouldn't take a lot of bureaucracy to set it up and spend \$10 million in order to redistribute the money. Plus that would actually be a tax refund, and there would be no question federally on whether or not it was a rebate.

An Hon. Member: What about the renters?

Mr. Hinman: They'll have the opportunity. It goes into the market.

Anyway, tax deductions are what we need in the province. We need to raise the basic tax exemption to at least \$20,000 or \$24,000. We have the ability here in the province, and that would help them.

Mrs. McClellan: The federal government is \$8,000.

Mr. Hinman: So we want to follow their example? How appalling. They're hypocrites to say that they're worrying about low-income people and taxing them at \$8,000. We have the ability here, and it would be of great benefit to those low-income people, more so than raising the minimum wage.

An Hon. Member: A leadership speech.

Mr. Hinman: Leadership. That's already over. It's in the mail.

An Hon. Member: Do you have your caucus' support?

Mr. Hinman: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner has the floor.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. The point is that we need to take those good programs that we have and the incentives that we've brought in – industry to develop the bitumen and the capital investment that's coming here. We could do it in many other areas. We could be doing it in health care. We could be doing it in research in our universities. It would just be very pleasing to the people of Alberta to see investment incentives come into this province, anywhere from a small family business to the huge tar sands in Fort McMurray.

Anyway, I look forward to the debate on this surplus, and I hope that we'll have prudence and not think that we have to have it all spent in the next six months. It's very worrisome that we're going to be like a lottery winner, and in a year we'll be back wondering how we make ends meet.

3:50

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions for the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you. The hon. member just indicated that he would refund the dollars to Albertans by way of a property tax refund. How would he address those who don't own property and rent? Does the member not think that all Albertans deserve the benefit of the revenue that the province is realizing? What about those who can't afford to buy a property and have to rent?

Mr. Hinman: Excellent question. I appreciate the opportunity to get up and answer the question. The thing that we need to look at first in order for things to go forward, to make an economy boom is the tax level. It's critical. It's the barnacles on the ship or the ball and chain. There are many programs that we could have for incentives to help out Albertans in property ownership, but if, in fact, they knew that incentive was there, that would be the benefit. It's an open market for renting, and if people are getting their rebate back as property owners, it only makes sense that they can then compete and that it would adjust the rental accordingly.

The important thing is that it's the people who have paid the tax that should get the refund first, and that would help to boost the economy. To just give out money randomly doesn't make sense when you've taxed so heavily in so many areas. In order to help people buy a house, what we could do with the surplus is set up a deposit in the Alberta Treasury Branch or the credit unions and put it in for a 10- or 15- or, ideally, 20-year deposit. Then those institutions could turn around, using good loan policies, and loan that out, and we could have 20-year mortgages on property instead of one- and two-year open-ended mortgages, which is going to be a disaster for our economy when interest rates rise and people are caught without locked-in mortgages. It was standard practice back in the '60s and '70s to have 20-year mortgages that were locked in.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, this session is supposed to be brief questions, brief answers. We only have five minutes for this portion.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed the hon. member's speech and so on. I'd like to ask him, as a representative of another conservative party in this Legislature, whether or not he believes that the current spending habits of this government represent true-blue, small "c" conservatism?

Mr. Hinman: A brief answer. No, this isn't conservative spending. This is drunken sailors, only they're not spending their own money; they're spending someone else's.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions? Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Minister of Finance to close debate.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, really the debate was to be around the motion for consideration of the supplementary estimates, so I'm not going to get into a lot of the discussions. I did make very good notes, and there'll be great opportunity through the debate of the supplementary estimates and again under Bill 43 to answer some of them.

I want to wish the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner the best of luck this weekend. I think it would be great.

Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I am curious as to whether ring roads in this city are important, whether hospital beds for the public health system are important, whether the investments at the University of Alberta are important for the future, whether those are investments or whether they are drunken sailor spending or whoever's comment that was. I will be interested in supplying him, through the Minister of Energy, with the true information on the life expectancy of the oil sands, where there are centuries of supply in fact.

I had a question about whether or not I supported rebates. It wasn't my first choice, but certainly when we were able to do the things that were important, such as investments in roads, hospitals,

schools, and academic institutions plus keep the lowest overall tax burden for Albertans in Canada, I certainly support giving Albertans back their own money and believe that they're well able to decide how to spend it.

I want to remind hon. members that are trying to say that we are not interested in tax reduction – I don't know where that came from. If we taxed at the next closest jurisdiction to us, we would collect \$7 billion more in tax revenue. That's how much we have reduced taxes in this province and have reduced them in every budget, not only reduced them but in a way that is sustainable into the future. That's what's important there.

Smart spending is listening to your partners, our partners in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, the Capital health authority, the Calgary health authority, all of our rural health authorities. Our municipal partners have told us that ring roads were important, that overpasses were important, that roads to export product are important, that schools are important, our classrooms. If we're going to implement fully the Learning Commission's report, which we've been begged to do, you actually have to have classrooms to put those students in if you're moving them out of their present one.

You know, it's an interesting subject. I just had a meeting with the mayor of Edmonton. I just spent a period of time at AUMA, as some of you did. I've been in discussions at AAMD and C and will be back there again, as you will, and what I have to ask you is: do you hear anything that they say? They are considering these as priorities. This is their list. This is the Capital health authority's list that said: we need these beds. It's the Calgary health authority's list that said: we need these beds.

On the other subject of operational every minister that brings forward a capital project has to show that they can operate that project into the future. Just an additional bit of information for the hon. member because I would agree with him. I do not want to have buildings that you can't operate. That has been done.

Sixty thousand new spaces in our postsecondary institutions. We do indeed hope that we have the workforce that's required, and we know we have to work on that.

I will give the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar the formula that we use for inflation-proofing the heritage fund. There is a formula. That's why you'll see a change in it from the first quarter to the second quarter. As the indexes change, so does the amount that's in there.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we vote on the motion. I look forward to the debate, and I look forward to providing information that members have asked for during the ensuing debate.

[Government Motion 22 carried]

23. Mrs. McClellan moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(9) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 2005-06 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund shall be three days.

[Government Motion 23 carried]

head: 4:00 **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 45
Maternal Tort Liability Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise

today to open debate in second reading on Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act.

As many members will know, this bill addresses an issue that's rather near and dear to my heart in that I have a family in my constituency that finds itself in the very situation envisioned and covered by this act. Although this act is not retroactive and will not address that particular family's situation, nonetheless I believe it's a prudent and proper move for the government to address this area, a loophole, as it were, in the common law.

Under the current common law, Mr. Speaker, a child born alive with injuries arising from a motor vehicle accident which occurred prior to the birth has a right of action. That child can sue the negligent third party driver. When and if the child is born alive with injuries, the cause of action can be commenced, and the claim for damages can be made. There is an exception to this common law rule in the cases of injuries to children caused by the negligent acts of the mother prior to birth. Currently a child does not have a cause of action against its mother for injuries caused by the mother's negligence while the child is still a fetus. That restriction was set out in 1999 by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of Dobson versus Dobson. A child can also sue anyone, including both parents, who negligently causes injuries to that child after birth, whether it's in the car accident or by any other manner.

By way of Bill 45 this government wishes to provide an exception to this common law rule. The proposed legislation is designed to provide a measure of compensation for a child who sustains prenatal injuries as the result of the negligent driving of his or her mother. The proposed provision relates only to motor vehicle accidents and does not change tort law in any way other than to provide for a narrow statutory exception to the common law concept of maternal tort immunity. The change to the common law would provide protection for mothers by prohibiting claims against them beyond the limits of their insurance policies. As these situations arise infrequently, the impact on the insurance industry of this exception would be minimal, Mr. Speaker. The financial compensation will benefit the injured child, the mother, and the rest of the family.

Alberta is the first Canadian province to propose this change, Mr. Speaker. However, other jurisdictions have put this legislation in place. For instance, the United Kingdom provides that a child cannot under any circumstances bring an action against its mother for injuries sustained prenatally unless the injuries result from a motor vehicle accident where there is insurance.

I referred to the Supreme Court ruling on the Dobson case, Dobson versus Dobson, which ruled that a child does not have a right of action in the event of a car accident. They overturned an appeal on that basis, but they invited the Legislatures of the country to invade this space, if you will, to rule in this regard. In relation to the United Kingdom law the Supreme Court said, and I quote from paragraph 65:

Thus, it must be emphasized that the general rule for mothers in the United Kingdom is one of immunity for prenatal negligence with the limited exception of injuries caused by negligent driving. The Act provides that a mother cannot be held liable for any amount of damages which exceeds the limit fixed by statute. This will benefit both the mother and the rest of the family.

The Supreme Court was reluctant on its own to carve out this exception from the common law by judicial ruling because of the fear of precedent and the potential for the precedent to be widened into other areas of women's rights or any other areas beyond the strict limitation of car accidents, in which they determined that in the case of driving a car, the standard of care for a mother is very clear. If she does not exercise that standard of care while driving, she's guilty of negligence.

The Supreme Court suggested that any such exception to the common law rule of maternal tort immunity would best be performed by the Legislatures so that it is clear and limited. I quote again from the Dobson case, paragraph 36.

Although the law of torts has traditionally been the province of the courts, to impose tort liability on mothers for prenatal negligence would have consequences which are impossible for the courts to assess adequately. This development would involve extensive intrusions and frequently unpredictable effects on the rights of bodily integrity, privacy and autonomous decision-making of pregnant women. The resolution of such fundamental policy issues is a matter best left to the legislature. In the United Kingdom, it was Parliament that provided a carefully tailored and minimally intrusive legislative scheme of motor vehicle insurance coverage. It was designed to provide a measure of compensation for a child who sustains prenatal injuries as a result of the negligent driving of his or her mother. Yet, it provides protection for mothers by prohibiting claims against them beyond the limits of their insurance policies.

The court was clear that any such legislation would have to be restricted to the instance of car accidents, and the amount payable would be limited to the amount of the mother's insurance. That's what the government has done in this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

The Dobson case was clear that the law would have to be restricted to those instances, and I quote again, the second half of paragraph 65, referring again to the United Kingdom legislation.

The legislation renders it impossible to argue by analogy that the duty of care should be extended to other tortious situations. A judicial finding of liability in this appeal would not necessarily place pregnant women in Canada in the same legal position,

which is why the Supreme Court did not venture into the area and invited the Legislatures to do so.

If such an action were allowed, as in the Supreme Court's action,

even in the narrow context of negligent driving, it would have to recognize a duty and articulate a standard of care for the conduct of pregnant women. As a matter of tort law, this carries the risk that the duty would be applied in other contexts where it would impose unreasonable obligations upon pregnant women.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the Supreme Court refused to venture into this area and invited the Legislatures to do so.

That is exactly what this legislation does, Mr. Speaker. It restricts the exception to the case of car accidents, and it restricts the award to the amount of insurance that the mother carries.

I'd like to point out also, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation doesn't assign any blame, determine any negligence or any liability. It only creates a cause of action, which would subsequently be determined by the courts. That cause of action is already available to children that were injured prenatally against other third parties and against other family members. The only exception is with the mother. The Supreme Court has invited, in fact encouraged the Legislatures to venture into this area provided that it's restricted to car accidents and to the level of the mother's insurance, and that's what this legislation does.

Thank you for the time, and I look forward to the debate on the issue.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond on second reading to the hon. Member for Peace River, who presented this Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act. This bill is very brief and concise and carefully worded. Of course, we can deal with the careful wording later in committee, but the issue itself is very complex, extremely complex. There are many different questions to raise. Just looking externally at the Supreme Court case of Dobson

versus Dobson, which the hon. member referred to, it's a very complex case with different opinions. Not everyone on the Supreme Court agreed. There was a majority and then there was a minority position. Some were more inclined to focus on the pregnant mother and her right to autonomy and freedom and some on the issue of the liability which applies to anyone getting behind the wheel of a car. So we'll have to look at the different arguments in that case as it applies to the bill that's being presented.

4:10

Of course, all the members of the Supreme Court agreed that provincial Legislatures could pass legislation to cover the one particular situation which is not now covered. As the hon. member mentioned, if a pregnant woman is in a car accident and somebody else is driving, if there's a third party involved, then the child that is born later can bring a suit against that third party. That's acceptable. So the insurance company has to pay the compensation but not if the pregnant mother is herself driving and she is negligent. So there is a loophole there that's not covered. The Supreme Court stated that "a carefully tailored solution could benefit both the injured child and his or her family, without unduly restricting the privacy and autonomy rights of women." In effect, the Supreme Court threw it back to Legislatures to develop a carefully tailored solution, in other words a carefully worded bill, which will deal with this situation, this unique example.

But this is a very difficult issue, I find, because what the Supreme Court was unwilling to do was to go in the direction of allowing tort law and a legal duty of care to be imposed upon a pregnant woman in respect to her fetus and in respect to her subsequently born child. I agree with that reluctance, that the courts should not go in that direction. Now, this is quite a challenging issue for me: to get into issues of tort law. Tort has to be spelt t-o-r-t. If you add an e, then you're talking about a piece of cake. So I have gone back to school. I thought that maybe so many years of studying theology was enough, but suddenly I've gone back to school to take law classes and learn something about tort law.

My understanding of tort law is that it deals with persons and their legal rights and legal duties. So tort means a civil wrong, a conduct that the law says is wrong as between persons who are in relationship to each other. Negligence is a tort, so when a person owes a duty to another person, if there's negligence, then that person should be subject to the implications of tort law.

There's a classic statement from an English House of Lords decision of 1932 which says:

The rule that you are to love your neighbour becomes in law: You must not injure your neighbour, and the lawyers' question: Who is my neighbour? receives a restricted reply.

Now, that's interesting. I know what that's a reference to: the parable of the good Samaritan; right? Where the lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbour?" it receives a restricted reply in terms of tort law:

You must take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which you can reasonably foresee would be likely to injure your neighbour.

So what we're talking about here is the extent of liability, and there are different viewpoints on that.

Now, just a reference to the parable of the good Samaritan. It's a very important parable, and as all good interpreters know, the way you interpret that depends on looking at what point of view. Do you look at it from the point of view of the priest who passed by or the Levite who passed by or the Samaritan or the victim who is lying in the ditch, the victim of crime? So I think it's very important to look at this bill from the points of view of those involved.

I begin with the point of view of the child because I think this is a crucial issue and why in principle I am inclined to support this bill.

I think the point of view of the child is of utmost importance here. I mean, it's a tremendous tragedy when a child is born with physical and mental disabilities because of injuries suffered before he or she was born. It's like someone being sentenced before they're born, so it's a tremendous tragedy. I think also of so many children who suffer from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a result, you know, of negligence of the pregnant mother. That's a kind of sentencing before you're born too, and it's a very serious issue.

It's quite unfair, I think, to have a situation where it's possible for a child who was injured while a fetus be able through a representative to sue a third party because of an accident but who is not able to sue his mother if indeed she was negligent and was responsible for the accident. The child's needs are incredible, and I think that we need to dwell on that. I'm convinced that just going the insurance route is never going to satisfy the situation of need because the child needs incredible assistance, perhaps over a whole lifetime. So even the insurance money that might be coming to the child, surely in terms of the insurance rates and the kind of liability that's covered now, would never be enough to support a child with severe brain injuries, for example, severe physical and mental problems over a lifetime.

Nevertheless, the bill seems to fill a loophole. It enables the child to receive money from the insurance company where the mother is found liable although the bill restricts that that liability can't go any further than just the compensation from the insurance company. I want to come back to that point at the end of my remarks.

You know, from the point of view of the child this is really necessary. I mean, we've had very tragic situations, one in Alberta but throughout the country. We're not talking about something that happens very often, but certainly from the point of view of the child there must be some way of providing compensation.

Now, from the point of view of the mother, though, there are lots of issues to raise, and we probably will raise them in our debate here. The majority in the Dobson Supreme Court case argued that although a born-alive child has a claim against a person who caused a prenatal injury, the mother is not liable for a breach of duty of care to her unborn child or her born-alive child. They were very reluctant to extend tort law and impose it on a pregnant woman given all sorts of things, given the biological uniqueness of a woman and her fetus. There are a number of fine statements in the Dobson versus Dobson case about that. Also, such an imposition would be an intrusion on a pregnant woman's autonomy, on her privacy, and on her freedom. It was especially Justice McLachlin of the Supreme Court that was most forceful in arguing that imposing liability on the mother would interfere with the Charter rights of women to liberty and equality.

Here in this bill what we should worry about is whether there is indeed a slippery slope here. By making this an exception to the imposition of tort law, are we opening up the possibility of other kinds of lawsuits? Are we opening up all kinds of matters? For example, the Supreme Court in section 27 says:

Although the imposition of tort liability on a third party . . . advances the interests of both mother and child, it does not significantly impair the right of third parties to control their own lives.

So in terms of third parties there's no issue there. There's no imposition on them.

In contrast to the third-party defendant, a pregnant woman's every waking and sleeping moment, in essence, her entire existence, is connected to the foetus she may potentially harm. If a mother were to be held liable for prenatal negligence, this could render the most mundane decision taken in the course of her daily life as a pregnant woman subject to the scrutiny of the courts.

4:20

We don't want to open up the whole thing where courts would

pursue pregnant women for negligence for all kinds of things. We might sympathize with going after the liability of a woman who drinks so much and has a child with fetal alcohol syndrome, but what about a woman who simply doesn't look after herself, who has a wrong diet? What about a woman who carelessly falls down the stairs and so on? I think that we are opening up a huge area that we don't want to pursue. That's why the Supreme Court said: no, we can't allow tort law to be applied to a pregnant woman and her fetus. So that's from the point of view of the mother, and we have to be, I think, very careful.

Now from the point of view of society. I think that's the third interest group, if you like, involved in looking at these situations, not just the child and not just the mother but society. As the Supreme Court states,

the pressing societal issue at the heart of this appeal is the lack of financial support currently available for the care of children with special needs.

I mean, that's so obvious in this case. There's not enough financial support.

The imposition of a legal duty of care on a pregnant woman towards her foetus or subsequently born child will not solve this problem.

So they ruled out that. Trying to deal with a social problem through the courts only adds to the pain and the trauma of a tragic situation.

It may well be that carefully considered legislation could create a fund to compensate children with prenatally inflicted injuries.

Now, that's an interesting comment. They didn't leap into the issue of auto insurance but threw it towards Legislatures to look at this as a social problem. It's a social problem which needs a social solution.

So I go back to my statement earlier that auto insurance coverage is not enough – it's not going to cover the injuries of a child like this for a lifetime – that we have a responsibility. We have a responsibility as a society. It's a social problem. We have the responsibility as a society to provide a solution. I like the idea that they're suggesting, that there be some sort of a fund to cover these kinds of situations. It's not the child's fault that he was injured before he was born. Surely, out of our interest in the common good we can set up some kind of social program that deals with this kind of situation.

This is my last remark. We'll have a chance in committee to go through line by line. It's not a long bill, so we can do that and perhaps make some changes. You could call this bill a legislative charade. Let me just point out why I think that. This legislative charade purports to do one thing – namely, impose liability on the mother – while actually doing something quite different, namely, imposing liability on the mother's insurer while protecting the mother against personal liability. Now, I'm not suggesting that this charade doesn't have a worthy purpose – it certainly has a worthy purpose – but surely legislation should say what it means and mean what it says. It shouldn't purport to do one thing by doing another. So it's a very difficult issue.

That's all I want to say in second reading. I hope that the debate will bring up some very interesting issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest to speak in second reading on Bill 45 here this afternoon. As a member of the Private Bills Committee we, in fact, heard quite a lot of information concerning an individual case that I think precipitated the creation of Bill 45, that we're looking at, so I have had quite a lot of opportunity to reflect on a number of issues that both the Private Bills case and now Bill 45 bring forward to this Legislature.

Certainly, I won't preclude the possibility of our caucus supporting this bill, but we do have some serious concerns. I don't often

compliment other parties, the Liberals even, but I think the previous speaker did have an interesting metaphor in the sense that, you know, there is more than what meets the eye immediately with Bill 45. It brings up a range of issues that we must be very careful about indeed concerning individuals' rights and the responsibility of the state to look after people in need, particularly people who are disabled by car accidents or for whatever reason. We do have some serious concerns about this bill, and I think my previous colleague who was on the Private Bills Committee, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, also had some reservations.

The first positive issue I would like to speak on is the fact that this does in fact fill an insurance gap that currently exists in Alberta, which has to be a good thing in a way. Certainly, the one case that, as I said, precipitated this public bill was very heartbreaking. Really, the circumstances of any car accident and particularly a car accident involving a fetus and a mother and then subsequent difficulties in caring for that child – it's certainly something that deserves our utmost attention.

However, I question the overall value of just using one's auto insurance to deal with this issue as it comes up. Certainly, you can have damages or injuries from a car accident that far exceed one's car insurance ability to deal with the problem. So I think that one of my first concerns is that Bill 45 does not preclude the responsibility of the province of Alberta to look after a disabled person under these circumstances as described in this bill. If we are going to move and download all of these problems associated with perhaps this very specific sort of accident but maybe disabled persons in general from the responsibilities of the state to the responsibilities of private insurance, well, as you can imagine, this is a very serious departure from what this Legislature is mandated to do, and we would oppose that most strenuously, as I suppose most Albertans would as well.

I think that adequate supports for families with children or dependants with disabilities, some sort of first alternative policy measure in this regard, would go a long ways to helping. I think that if we would increase the benefits for children born with disabilities as a result of car accidents – because this is so rare, it's not a question of fiscal pressure on the government. Indeed, the costing of this Bill 45 would back that up, that in fact this would not be a serious impediment onto the insurance industry, nor would it be a serious impediment for us to ensure alternative measures to look after the needs of a child injured and look after those needs through the state.

4:30

As legislators we need to balance the competing claims that are being brought forward here. Let's make no mistake about it: the women's right of access is very much a political issue. Because there are still people who would limit women's right to control their own bodies in terms of pregnancy, I think that we have to keep that very much in mind when we are making decisions on these or other issues. Women around the world, quite frankly, are still vulnerable to restrictions on their right to autonomy over their own bodies, particularly during pregnancy.

This legislation that we see before us here today certainly could create – but I would hope not – a new raft of lawsuits, perhaps spurious lawsuits, in regard to what might be perceived as an expansion of fetal rights here in this province. Because of that, we need to decide whether we are going to potentially compromise the constitutional rights of women when there are other public policy measures at our disposal to address the problem of children born with disabilities.

I would suggest another alternative. If Alberta had no-fault insurance, I think that this whole issue that Bill 45 deals with would

be much less of an issue because the person who caused the accident gets some benefits in a no-fault scenario.

There are also a number of important considerations that have been expressed to us by some members of the insurance industry which I would like to bring forward. I'm not usually a great defender of the insurance industry, but certainly it's worth while bringing forward.

When are drivers ever responsible for their actions behind the wheel? In the case that we saw before us in the Private Bills Committee, the mother was not wearing a seatbelt. What if the mother had deliberately – you know, we don't know, but the circumstances could be anything possible. I mean, what if someone was trying to be self-injurious towards themselves and then crashed and failed? How could you sue that person? How would that Bill 45 function in that regard?

People that we have also spoken to in the insurance industry have pointed out that there is something fundamentally unfair about the coverage being limited by the amount of the liability coverage. Right? If people have different levels of insurance, you know, is this the way by which we're going to determine the care of someone who needs care as a disabled person? I think that there's not just a number problem there but also a moral issue as well. I would suggest, based on that alone, that our Bill 45 would be subject to challenges in the near future when one of these rare cases does come forward.

Perhaps Bill 45 would be easier to accept if it contained some sort of a schedule of payment for injuries – for example, so much compensation for brain injury, so much compensation for damage to life and limb, as the insurance industry does – rather than basing it on the limits of the liability coverage of an individual. Therein you can see perhaps some inherent absurdity in the construction of Bill 45 because, really, are we going to be in this Legislature determining individual injuries to different parts of the body and such things as that? I mean, that perhaps brings forward a fundamental problem unto itself.

I would suggest that lawyers would have a field day on this question of whether fetal injury was in fact caused by motor vehicle accidents versus some other injurious activity of a pregnant woman, such as skiing or drinking or using drugs or something like that. You know, you have the development of a fetus over periods of days and weeks where serious changes take place. There is a whole range of things that could go wrong that would limit the development, cognitive or physical, of a fetus. You know, it just leaves us open to a range of challenge, I suppose.

Now, we've been contacting and consulting with different groups and lawyers to give us a broader perspective on this bill. Certainly, there's a lot of apprehension, I suppose, in certain quarters in regard to this bill just asking: why is it necessary to have such a very, very, very specific bill coming up in the Legislature when there are other means by which we could perhaps deal with these individual cases? Some of the arguments that I have heard brought forward include that, you know, this is perhaps limiting the rights of pregnant women and even perhaps looking at other injurious behaviour that pregnant women could be getting up to – right? – such as women who are pregnant and addicted to drugs at the same time, and perhaps limiting or imprisoning those people so that they don't further injure themselves or their fetus.

You know, another legal problem is that some people believe that this might be allowing the fetus to start to look like a person under the law. Again, this is something that we just have to be aware of, that people have that perception in the public, and Bill 45 could be subject to increased scrutiny in that regard. Let's perhaps go

through a very careful due process here to make sure that we are clear in our intentions.

Finally, just to sum up very briefly, I think that, you know, a lot of work seems to have gone into making this bill very, very specific, and I'm very happy to see how specific it really is. Certainly, as I say, I do not preclude the possibility of our caucus supporting this bill. However, there are some serious concerns that we would like to have out here in the course of the Legislature.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions?

There being none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I normally enjoy very much the debate on the bills. I have to tell you that this is one that I think all of us can be somewhat troubled about for some different reasons, many expanded upon by the opposition.

I know, Mr. Speaker, without question that the Member for Peace River has brought this bill before us with the best of intentions, and I respect that. But I also think that when we're in front of the Law Courts Building or other buildings, they have the balance of justice with a blindfold on. I think it makes it much easier to deal with issues like this when you don't have to look at a little girl in a wheelchair or a little boy on a table hooked up to life support. It tears everyone's heart out not only that that child is sentenced to that life but that someone may be responsible. I'm also concerned that we're confusing a little bit of responsibility with liability, and I don't think you can have it one day and not the next.

The hon. member has said, presented that if the father or anyone else were driving, they could be sued, but we wouldn't limit how much they could be sued for. They might only have a hundred thousand dollars' worth of insurance. They could be sued for a million. They could be sued for 10 million. That would be up to the courts. In this case we're saying that you can only sue for what she's insured for to keep the context that the mother shouldn't be held in jeopardy. But, Mr. Speaker, I can't weigh that as fair. If someone puts liability on a case or says that that's what would be the result of this, then I think it has to be treated fairly, and in our current system I don't think we can, so I'm concerned that we are creating a separate class.

I'm also concerned that you're saying in there that if the woman had \$2 million worth of liability as opposed to a hundred thousand or whatever minimums are required, that would be the most of the award. I don't think that we would want to get into a system where we look at what you've got or what you're insured for as the limiting factor in the courts. In a situation in Vermilion that I'm aware of, a prosecutor suggested to the judge: "They're a pretty wealthy family. They should pay more of a fine." Everyone would think that's not fair. The insurance is a creature of our making where we collectively spread the cost around. I don't want insurance amounts to be the determining factor in a judgment. I think that throws the balance of fairness off.

4:40

Without getting into more of the bill, the issue around the parental responsibility for the child you're carrying is really difficult. That goes on many of the roads that the other hon. members talked about. I think that we need to deal with those issues in the broader context of your responsibility, your duty as a parent, so that we can address the fetal alcohol problems in this country as much as we have the second-hand smoke, the other issues that people can put themselves

in jeopardy for. Those children cost society as much if not more because their numbers are so much greater.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, there are not a lot of these children. From this very specific incident that's described in this bill, there are not a lot, and thank God for that. I think that the greater awareness of the effect on the unborn child needs to be dealt with in the total context of who will be looking after that child after it's born. I just can't in my own mind justify that we can pick one incident because you have the opportunity to sue, be it the bad old insurance company that we don't like. I just don't think that's the defining factor in how we assess liability from a specific incident that is very rare.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how you address this specific incident any better than the hon. Member for Peace River is trying to. I can't pick one unborn child over another one. The courts, I think, have very wisely strayed away from this and said: if you legislators want to go there, be it at your peril. I would like the Leg. or the federal government or someone to have a real discussion around fetal rights, parental responsibility, and when that's done, you include this thing in that.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of concerns about it, about the unfairness of limiting awards, of limiting judgments if there's insurance or not. I know the hon. member will address these and has. I just appreciate the opportunity to bring some of those concerns today.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? Hon. member, are you rising to ask a question?

Mr. Flaherty: No. To speak to it, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, hon. member. I do have you on my list, but I have the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore before you.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to ask a question at this time?

Okay. The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act, which is designed to provide compensation for a child born with injuries arising from a motor vehicle accident occurring prior to birth as a result of negligent driving of his or her mother. As well, when and if the child is born with injuries, the cause of the action can be commenced and the claim for the damages can be made. Liability would be limited to the extent of the insurance coverage with narrow sphere of the motor vehicle accident.

This government is assuring all parties that this bill is carefully worded so as not to allow for the door to be opened to further lawsuits. But this Legislature must remember that this is where the bills are introduced. This is a Legislature, where laws are modified or amended, and these laws in some cases are revisited and further amended. So to say that this bill is carefully worded and is against the ability to have any sort of further lawsuits I think is a little bit premature.

If this bill's intent is to protect the unborn and allow for the unborn to sue later on for injuries sustained while in the womb, then why not expand the bill today and allow for children whose mothers are negligent during their pregnancy; for example, mothers that drink and mothers that do drugs?

We all know that fetal alcohol syndrome and drug-addicted

children when born, you know, cause all Albertans to pay a heavy price through health care and just overall with our ability to maintain and look after these children from birth to the end of their lives. It's unfortunate, but it does cost all Albertans through health care and education, through health care because of, again, the long-term needed care to help an individual exist in society, depending on the severity of course, and through education with the increasing cost of education, with the small classrooms needed to be able to take care of the individual, which would be in need from the early years right through to the dependent years. That's just a small component, but not all special needs fall into this category. There are two examples that cost Albertans as to the negligence of parents.

Now, the question that comes to the floor is: what is the government doing to protect these children and provide these children with a voice? Why not allow them to sue as well? This goes on each and every day with no charges being laid.

Does the consumers' advocate – who has the choice with utilities? They also have a voice but not on behalf of children, who are being punished as a result of this. I think there are, you know, legitimate concerns being raised through this. Is this government trying to download the duty of care to insurance companies for children born alive with defects? What about other children who are born with defects? What are they entitled to or not entitled to?

The government has a responsibility to ensure that all children born with birth defects are cared for, that there are no undue hardships placed on them and their families. The families should have access to services that enable them to provide for the care of their children no matter what the degree of disability. If the government had an adequate system in place to support children and families who have to deal with these disabilities and had the funds available for these children in care, then there would be no need to sue insurance companies. This government should be providing for these children who are born with any birth defects, not relying on tort law or insurance companies to pay the bills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Hon. Member for St. Albert, you're recognized.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to compliment the Member for Peace River on the work and explanation of this bill. It really helped me quite a bit. I'm kind of in the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's camp because I think one of the things here that we're looking for is fairness and equity for a parent and the mother of this child.

The reluctance that I have in terms of fully supporting the bill is because it's turned over to the insurance companies. I have some real problem with that in terms of the legal aspects of it. Will the settlement that is awarded to the particular person, the lady, the mother, be sufficient to look after the child for the period of time in which they are living? That was brought out very clearly in this article from your area of the province, Peace River.

The other aspect I'd like to have commented on. If the Minister of Justice and Attorney General would comment on section 15 of the Charter, on how this would impinge on this particular bill, I'd be very interested in hearing your comments on that, sir, if I could.

So those are very short comments, and with this I would move adjournment of the bill discussion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 46 Criminal Notoriety Act

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to speak about Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act. Our government wants to make it absolutely clear that crime stories won't pay in Alberta. It is a long-standing legal principle that criminals should not be allowed to profit directly from their crimes. Someone who robs a bank does not get to keep that money. Bill 46 extends this principle to criminals who would profit indirectly by recounting their crimes, like the bank robber who writes a book about the details of his heist. It is our responsibility to protect victims, and it's unacceptable that criminals benefit from the pain and suffering they have caused others.

Currently Alberta does not have legislation that regulates the ability of persons convicted of serious crimes to profit from selling their story. Ontario and Manitoba have this legislation in place, and to make it most effective, we need such legislation in each jurisdiction in Canada to prevent criminals from moving between jurisdictions to make these deals.

4:50

Bill 46 applies only to those who have been convicted of a serious crime. A serious crime is defined as a Criminal Code offence with a maximum penalty of five years or more, such as murder, charges that involve violence against another person or that endangers others, serious drug charges, and charges under the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act. It also includes sexual assault and sexual offences against children and youth. Crime prevention organizations such as Crime Stoppers and the John Howard Society and victims' programs use crime re-enactments and other similar tools in their work. Bill 46 provides for an exception for law enforcement purposes so that these important programs can continue.

Bill 46 applies to criminals who tell the stories of their crimes through books, movies, television, or the Internet. All of the parties who have signed a contract for the purpose of recounting a crime have an obligation to report those contracts to the Crown. Convicted criminals who commit serious crimes are prohibited from receiving money for recounting these crimes. The other parties, such as the publisher, are prohibited from paying these criminals for the story of their crimes. Anyone who contravenes the act would be liable for up to a \$50,000 fine. The bill gives the Crown the ability to take civil action to recover money paid for recounting serious crime.

Bill 46 recognizes that there are some circumstances when there may be some value to society in recounting crimes. This value may justify some money being paid. Under Bill 46 the parties may apply to have a judge determine whether the criminal who is providing the information should receive compensation for the story.

Bill 46 will also apply to convicted criminals who sell criminal memorabilia and receive an inflated price because of the notoriety of the crime. If someone sells memorabilia on eBay, for example, and gets more than the market value for it, the government can apply to receive the portion of the cost that is above market value for the item. All money received under both parts of this legislation can be used to benefit victims of crime and their families.

We have taken care to ensure that this proposed legislation is carefully drafted to be as defensible as possible if it is ever challenged under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. For example, the act only applies to serious crimes. It will only apply to people who have been convicted. It will not apply to people who are charged but not convicted, and people who have been convicted of a serious crime will be able to apply to the court for payment in accordance with the contract.

Alberta strongly supports the right of freedom of expression. This bill is not intended to violate that right. Anyone has the right to tell their story. Bill 46 is intended to prevent convicted criminals from making a profit by recounting their crime. Bill 46 strikes an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and the protection of victims of crime and their families.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is another very challenging bill, Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act. I lament that so many heavy bills dealing with legal matters have come at us so soon after resuming the fall session. It takes time to get into the details and understand what's really at stake.

On the surface, of course, there will be lots of sympathy. A lot of people will want to support this because it's obvious that a criminal should not profit from writing a book about his life or her life. Criminals should not profit from their crimes. That's sort of a given in dealing with crime over the years.

Ontario and Manitoba have passed such legislation, so I think that there's probably some pressure to have all provinces get on board with this. After all, if there's one province that doesn't get on board, then I guess all the criminals would be welcome in that province to publish books about their life. I don't know what is happening with B.C. because B.C. does have the notorious example of Clifford Olson. I don't know whether B.C. is pursuing this kind of legislation.

I'm not sure about and I have nervousness about a bill that tries to cover with one law all examples. Everyone who commits a serious crime and receives a sentence is different. It's the same issue around the use of conditional sentencing. I think conditional sentencing can be a useful tool for judges to use for particular cases because not all cases are the same. I know it's restricted to serious offenders, offenders that have been sentenced to more than five years, and I know the worry is about people like Carla Homolka and Clifford Olson who will take advantage of publishing books, whatever, and profiting from their crime.

Of course, there are other examples. We could mention David Milgaard. I suppose that the bill wouldn't apply to him because he was found not guilty of the crime that he was originally charged with, so because he didn't commit a crime, then I suppose that he could write a book about his life.

I'm thinking about the example right here in Alberta of the book written by one of Canada's well-known novelists, Rudy Wiebe, in conjunction with Yvonne Johnson, who was incarcerated for a major violent crime, and they wrote a book together. The book is called *Stolen Life* and is a very fine book which recounts her life, and I think the community has profited from that kind of publication.

What about Susan Musgrave? She's a B.C. poet married to someone who has committed serious crimes, and she has published material about her husband.

I think that I'm nervous about passing legislation that just sort of flatly denies all possibilities of serious offenders publishing anything. I know there are exceptions mentioned in section 2(3), which says that "this Act does not apply to a contract for the recounting of a crime entered into for law enforcement purposes or in support of crime prevention programs or victims programs." Someone who has been incarcerated and has served time can provide valuable input for the government and for agencies like the John Howard Society. So there's an attempt to have exceptions here, but I don't know whether it goes far enough.

Would this mean that somebody who is wrongfully convicted and

wrote a book defending their innocence would be able to do that? Or a journalist writing as a co-author with a prisoner on prison conditions: would that be allowed? Or would writing about an unjust law and trying to reform the justice system be allowed? If the motivation is to write an autobiography in order to prevent people from falling into the same life of crime as the person writing the book, why would that not be important? And who decides? Is the Justice department going to have a kind of censor board here to rule on each individual case? Now, we're not probably talking about a lot of cases, but I do have a problem with how this would be carried out.

5:00

Of course, this is not something new because in the United States you have that notorious case in 1977 of David Berkowitz, and his retelling the story of his crimes led to the son of Sam law, which was passed by the New York State Legislature, prohibiting criminals from profiting from their crime. It provided that if the criminal offender entered into a contract to receive profits from the recounting of the crime, such as a book or movie or television show, then there was an offence against the law. It's true that almost all states have a similar son of Sam law.

There have been constitutional challenges, and the hon. member mentioned the issue of constitutional challenges and Charter challenges, and I think that's important for us to consider, to talk about whether or not this bill might be considered unconstitutional. Is it enough that an offender has been punished by incarceration? Isn't this bill suggesting that there should be added to that penalty another sanction, an additional sanction? Doesn't it go too far? I mean, if we're not happy with the Criminal Code and the kinds of sentences that are given by judges for serious crimes, we should change the Criminal Code. That's the role of the Parliament of Canada; that's not the role of a provincial legislature.

I'm wondering about the Charter issue because in the Charter of Rights and Freedom, 2(b), it's stated that there should be "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication." In the explanation of this particular part of the Charter the Charter enshrines certain fundamental freedoms for everyone in Canada. For everyone in Canada. They are freedoms that custom and law over the years have made almost universal in our country. So these freedoms are protected by our Constitution.

I am concerned about the whole area of prisoners' rights. Human rights do apply to prisoners. While I think that in principle this bill is moving in the right direction, I still need to go on record as being concerned about the basic human rights that all Canadians are deemed to have.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments now in second reading, and I look forward to further debate.

I would like to move adjournment of this debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 48

Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 48, the Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005. The bill has two purposes. The first clarifies that there are no continuing legal requirements to automatically appoint a justice of the peace who has been qualified by the

Judicial Council subsequent to the 1999 reform of the justice of the peace system, and the second broadens the regulation-making powers so that the constitutional notice regulation can be issued under the Justice of the Peace Act.

To explain what the proposed amendments will do, it's necessary to provide the hon. members with some historical information about the justice of the peace system in Alberta. The office of the justice of the peace in Alberta was in existence when the province was created in 1905. By the 1950s the higher volumes of cases were creating pressures for a more specialized system of inferior courts, including the justice of the peace system. By the 1970s these pressures had become severe, and in 1975 the first of numerous reports was written on the justice of the peace system recommending changes. Over the years a few minor changes were made, and eventually in 1991 a number of significant legislative changes were made to reflect the recommendations of these reports.

In 1997, as a result of a Supreme Court decision on judicial independence, Alberta Justice re-examined its legislation regarding all of its judicial officers, including justices of the peace. There was a need to ensure that their judicial independence was adequately protected. In 1999 significant reforms to the justice of the peace system were introduced. At that time things like the process for appointments were changed, the complaint process was reformed, and the qualifications for justices of the peace were modified. Also, the categories of JPs were changed. Under the old system there were sitting and nonsitting JPs. Under the new system there are sitting, presiding, and nonpresiding JPs.

Under the old system there were sitting JPs called traffic commissioners. They were legally trained judicial officers who primarily sat trials on most provincial and municipal offences. The nonsitting JPs dealt primarily with intake procedures, including bail applications and search warrants. They also had administrative duties.

At that time there were 23 sitting JPs, four who were full-time in Edmonton and Calgary and 19 who were part-time, and there were 450 nonsitting JPs who were located throughout the province. A few of the nonsitting JPs were legally trained, but most were either employees of the Attorney General's department, called staff JPs, and the rest were fee JPs, who were paid on a fee-for-service basis. There were 15 legally trained nonsitting JPs, 245 staff JPs, including three full-time hearing officers, and 190 fee JPs.

Under the reformed system the category of nonsitting JPs was replaced with two new categories: presiding JPs and nonpresiding JPs. The presiding JPs had the authority to conduct judicial functions such as bail applications and search warrants. Nonpresiding JPs were limited to primarily administrative functions.

The transition from the old system to the new system involved the Judicial Council. The Judicial Council is made up of representatives of the three courts, the Law Society, and the minister. Under the legislation the Judicial Council was required to determine which of the incumbent nonsitting JPs qualified for appointment as either a presiding or a nonpresiding JP.

At that time the Judicial Council decided that for an incumbent nonsitting JP to be qualified as a presiding JP, the incumbent must be a lawyer with five years' experience at the bar. The Judicial Council identified the incumbent JPs found to be qualified and provided a list to the government. As a result of the decision on qualifications by the Judicial Council, the following appointments were made under the reformed system. All sitting JPs under the old system were appointed as sitting JPs in the new system. The 15 legally trained nonsitting JPs were appointed as presiding JPs under the new system. The rest of the nonsitting JPs, including the 242 staff JPs and the 190 fee JPs, were appointed as nonpresiding JPs. The three hearing officers were not appointed at this time.

Included in the 1999 amendments to the Justice of the Peace Act

was the requirement that JPs who had been in their positions prior to the reform, that is incumbent JPs, would be appointed in the reformed system as either sitting or presiding JPs if they were found to be qualified by the Judicial Council. These provisions were not intended to be long term. They were transitional provisions intended to ensure a smooth transition from the old system to the new. The transitional provisions were not intended to require the appointment of incumbent JPs under the new system if they were not found to be qualified at the time of the 1999 reforms. If an incumbent JP is deemed qualified by the Judicial Council after 1999, there is no obligation to automatically appoint that person as a sitting or presiding JP.

5:10

Let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, that since the 1999 reforms if a JP is found to be qualified by the Judicial Council, he or she may certainly apply for a new appointment at the sitting or presiding JP level. What we are clarifying is when the requirement to mandatorily appoint these JPs applies and when it does not. We are saying that now, six years after the stricter qualifications were brought in, those who now qualify can apply for an appointment along with other qualified candidates, but there is no legal obligation for them to be automatically appointed as sitting or presiding JPs.

The other section of the bill, the second purpose, clarifies the authority to allow the constitutional notice regulation to be issued under this Justice of the Peace Act. Currently the constitutional notice regulation has only been issued under the Provincial Court Act. The constitutional notice regulation provides that justices of the peace are not assigned to determine matters related to aboriginal, constitutional, or Charter rights. The validity of the regulation has been challenged on the basis that such a regulation, to be effective, must be issued under the Justice of the Peace Act. The amendment we are proposing clarifies the authority of the government to do this.

As members have heard, the purpose of this bill is to clarify two provisions: specifically, that the two provisions are transitional only and that the other provision authorizes the issuance of the constitutional notice regulation under the Justice of the Peace Act.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in second reading to respond to this bill, Bill 48, Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005. I appreciate the hon. minister providing historical background to try to understand what is being done in this bill. I look forward to reading it in *Hansard* to be able to grasp the details of this.

I don't have any real disagreement with this particular bill. Of course, if the changes that are suggested, that section 7(4) and (5) be amended in terms of the words "as of that date," if that makes it possible, then, for the emphasis to be directed to the qualifications of justices of the peace, that those who are qualified now can apply but that they're not automatically appointed – if the whole intention is to ensure that we have qualified justices of the peace, then I think that's very important.

In reviewing this and trying to prepare myself for understanding this bill, I looked at the Justice of the Peace Act, which was passed by this House in the year 2000. Where it outlines the powers and duties of justices of the peace, it mentions that they deal with such issues as

- (a) receiving an information or complaint or receiving an information or complaint from another justice of the peace and granting a summons or warrant on it;
- (b) issuing a subpoena . . . [and so on];
- (c) doing all other acts and matters necessary preliminary to a hearing.

It's very important for the speeding up of the process of justice in our province to have highly qualified justices of the peace, who indeed should have some sort of law degree, and not just because they had experience in other areas of life. I have no more comments to make about that part of this bill.

The second part, I think, is all right, too, in terms of strengthening the jurisdiction and the powers over these justices of the peace. The amendment is to amend section 15(1) of the act and add after "the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations . . . prescribing duties that shall not be assigned to justices of the peace" the words "governing and restricting the jurisdiction and powers of justices of the peace." So it's strengthening the oversight of justices of the peace, and I think that is in the interest of the process of justice in this province.

So in conclusion, we are prepared to support Bill 48. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly. I'm trying to go through all the numbers and the history – it's a little confusing – but make sure that I understand. I think it makes sense, but it seems to me that there are too many people being justices of the peace. That's part of the problem because I think the numbers are being cut down, and probably it's leading to a sort of patchwork of justice, if I might put it that way, because of people having different credentials. I take it that that's the purpose of the bill, and I want to make sure that I understand it when the minister replies to it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions, comments?

If none, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to close debate.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member: the one amendment basically establishes that the provision regarding qualification to become a new justice of the peace was transitional in nature. So those who were qualified in 1999 by virtue of having a law degree and five years' experience, as determined by the Judicial Council at that time, were appointed justices of the peace of a certain kind. The rest were justices of the peace of another kind. So everybody kept their jobs, if you will, but there were a limited number who had the positions with the greatest amount of responsibility. The idea at the time was to ensure that appropriately trained people would be doing those jobs, and that remains the case today.

The provision in the legislation was always intended to be transitional, but we are now in a position where the people who get qualified by the Judicial Council today might argue that they're entitled to a job by virtue of being qualified. What we wish to do is to make it abundantly clear that people who are qualified today may apply, like all qualified applicants, for positions as they become available, and they will be determined in accordance with merit and the person who is best able to fulfill those positions but that they are not automatically entitled to a job by virtue of having been a previous JP, an old JP, and now qualified six years later.

It was always intended to be transitional, in other words something that got us from January 29, 1999, to February 1, 1999, and we just wish to ensure that everybody understands that. The number of people who are JPs today will be the same number of people who are JPs next month, assuming that this legislation passes and becomes law, but the process, if you will, of qualification will be clearer.

[Motion carried; Bill 48 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn until 8 o'clock this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:20 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, November 16, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 05/11/16
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

Bill 9

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At this time I'd like to move an amendment to Bill 9. I understand that you have the necessary copies for distribution.

The amendment would be that section 2 is amended (a) by striking out clause (a)(ii) and substituting the following:

- (ii) by repealing clause (c) and substituting the following:
 - (c) 10 persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, one of whom shall be designated as chair;
 - (c.1) additional persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister;

and (b) by striking out clause (b)(ii) and substituting the following:

- (ii) by repealing clause (c) and substituting the following:
 - (c) 7 persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, one of whom shall be designated as chair;
 - (c.1) additional persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister.

Mr. Chairman, these amendments just fix up a couple of sections of the bill that we had before us previously. That bill that's before committee now has a number of amendments to the Post-secondary Learning Act which are basically minor in nature, but we're trying to deal with issues. We discussed that thoroughly at second reading.

The two pieces that needed to be corrected were with respect to the makeup of the boards. The wording which was put into the amending act unfortunately did not have the clarifying effect that was intended but rather made it more confusing. So what we're doing now is taking out the two sections that previously had said "at least 12" members. What we're indicating in the amendment that's now being put in front of the House is that there would be 10 persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, one of whom would be chair in the case of technical institutes.

Then the (c.1) provision, Mr. Chair, simply provides some flexibility so that if a board wished to expand beyond the 11 members for some reason – those are the 10 persons that are appointed and then the one person who's ex officio – if you wanted more than the 10 appointed members for some good reason, you would have the flexibility to do that. Now, that good reason might be that the board in an area decided that it needed to have a larger board for the operation of its business. It can make a case on that, and then perhaps a permanent addition to the board could be made. Or it might need to recruit some specific talent to the board. Perhaps they're engaging in a major capital campaign and want to have a person from the community that can help deal with that major capital campaign on the board. So that would be the reason why an additional person would be appointed under (c.1). The same thing would be true on a college board, for example, in the next section.

So these two sections are really just trying, again, to clarify the

standard number of board members to be appointed as public members to the board for a technical institute and then for a college, and then the provision allowing for expansion if the board wished to be expanded for some particular reason.

I would ask members to consider this amendment for us that would improve the bill which is before the House now. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we shall refer to this amendment as amendment A1.

Before I recognize the next speaker, hon. members, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Maple Leaf AA Bantam Brickmen hockey team from north Edmonton. The 19 plus their parents are accompanied today by assistant coaches and constituents of the MLA for Castle Downs, Mr. Frank Dienes and Clint Marcotte, trainer Jules Grandfield, and manager Lanny Westersund, who is also the legislative assistant to the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs. The head coach, my son Jason, could not be here tonight as he's studying for a major exam tomorrow morning, but he did want the team to have a tremendous opportunity to see the Legislature, see an office in the Legislature as well, and obviously see us hard at work here in the Assembly. So I ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

Bill 9

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005

(continued)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaking to the amendment, then, amendment A1, I don't have a huge problem with this. I just want to get on the record the fact that I think that what you see here is a basic philosophical difference between the government side of the House and the opposition side of the House in that I know that the minister is arguing for flexibility, adaptability, the ability to move quickly to do what he feels is the right thing at the right time whether or not all members on this side of the House agree with that.

The overall effect of it, of course, is to create the possibility for additional government appointees onto college and technical institute boards. It waters down the representation on those boards by institutional stakeholders such as students and faculty. It therefore has the potential to undermine institutional autonomy. It has the potential to extend and exert more ministerial control over those institutions.

We don't fundamentally believe that that's the right way to go. We also don't fundamentally believe that we're going to change the government's mind on that tonight. We don't believe that this is the proverbial hill worth dying on. I simply wanted to put it on the record that we think that it could be done a better way simply by not in a sort of open-ended fashion allowing for the appointment of as many or as few additional board members as the minister or the Lieutenant Governor in Council would see fit.

That said, it's not a hill worth dying on. While we don't really agree with this change and this additional ministerial power, we don't think that it's going to utterly and totally upset the apple cart. So it's unlikely that I would go so far as to oppose the bill.

8:10

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief as well on this amendment, which on the surface looks very minor. I think, like my colleague who just finished commenting on the possible implications of these changes, that I also want to put my concerns on record with respect to the change that is being sought here. That is reducing the total number of persons from 10 to seven, and then any additional persons to be appointed is left to the minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister.

As we move to allowing our postsecondary institutions, particularly institutions with college status, to move towards offering an increasing number of degrees at the college level, what we need to do is to bring in changes to the legislation which will make the governance of colleges similar to the governance model that universities use, where faculty and student representation on the board of governors is more significant than has been in the case of colleges and technical institutes.

To me enabling or giving powers to colleges to offer academic degrees requires these colleges to model themselves on the way the best universities, even in this province, have functioned and governed themselves. What's happening here, it appears to me, is a move in the opposite direction. The more you expect colleges to act like universities, the more commitment the government needs to show to encouraging these colleges or allowing these colleges to govern themselves and allow their academic councils, which are not mentioned here, by the way, to have powers which are similar to the general faculties councils at the universities of Alberta.

So this amendment causes concern to me in that it could lead to diluting the presence and therefore the influence of students as a corporate group on the campuses of our colleges as well as the role of faculties in the determination of the policies, the programs, and the . . .

Mr. Mason: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Decorum

Mr. Mason: Mr. Chairman, even though I'm sitting directly behind the hon. member who is speaking, I am finding it difficult to hear him. Perhaps we could have a little more order in the Chamber.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the noise level in the Assembly is affecting other members listening to the debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has the floor.

Debate Continued

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly appreciate your intervention. It allows me time to say what I want to say. I hope my colleagues can hear what I have to say. That's the point of standing up and saying what I'm saying: so that at least one hon. member on that side can hear what I'm saying.

Anyway, I think the concern here is that the changes really are heading in the opposite direction than what they should be attempt-

ing to do. We need to increase the role and the significance of student bodies and faculties onto the board of governors on academic councils. This bill and the amendment will do the opposite.

I would certainly ask the minister, unless it's too late at this stage, to consider the concern that I have, which is that reducing the number of people from 10 to 7 and then allowing the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister to add additional members will not serve the best academic purposes of these colleges and institutions. If anything, it will in fact dilute and reduce the role and ability to influence the decisions of these boards by two important constituencies in these colleges: the students and the faculty. That's why I would urge the minister to rethink this, unless he thinks that we should put all our faith in his ability to make those judgments.

I think that if you are going to make changes in the legislation, then we should put these things in the legislation, not leave it up to the minister to use his good judgment to interpret these changes, as they're proposing, and to enhance the influence of students and faculty on the board of governors rather than taking measures that will, in my view, reduce that influence.

So with that I will sit down and let the minister respond.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand the concern that's being raised by both members opposite. If you look at section 44 as it currently stands with respect to the boards of technical institutes, it provides under 44(1)(a) for a chair to be appointed and then in 44(1)(c), "not more than 11 persons appointed . . . in addition to the chair," which makes for 12 people.

What we're proposing is 10 people, with the ability to expand. You know, you're not talking about expanding by five or 10 people. You're talking about where a board wants to have an extra person for a reason. What's happened with respect to some of the boards and what we're finding, of course, is that some of the boards in urban areas are a little bit larger. The board of, I believe, NorQuest, for example, asked for two additional members a year ago to expand their board size because they have a broader mandate, if you will, a broader area to serve and the need to have different talents on the board, different representation on the board. So they wanted to have additional members on their board, and they asked for them, whereas some of the other boards remain at a smaller level. They can do that, and it is quite an effective governance model for them.

What we're suggesting here is, really, to take the section in the act which right now is 12 persons for a technical institute and make it 10, which includes the chair – so 10 instead of 12 – but with the ability to add. So you could go back to the 12 if you wanted to.

The same way with the colleges. Under section 44(2) as it currently reads, the college board is a chair plus the individuals from the college that you mentioned – the staff, students, nonacademic staff – and then "not more than 9 persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." So that's, in essence, 10 people appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, including the chair, and the proposal is that the act provide for seven people, with the ability, again, to expand. Now, you're not going to expand it in every circumstance or without valid reason. You would expand it because the board wants additional capacity for a specific reason.

I can understand that you might not have as much faith in me as I have in me, but from where I'm sitting, it's looking good. The reality is that you do have to have a little bit of capacity for variation. The act as it is set up now talks about "not more than 11."

I can appreciate your concern about taking a cap off, but let's be reasonable in what we're talking about. These are board-governed

institutions. The government doesn't come in and sort of massively drop people onto boards. This isn't the Senate of Canada, with a new Liberal government trying to overcome an old Conservative majority. These are board-governed institutions with representatives from the community on the boards.

You would expand a board only in two circumstances: one, if the board believed it needed a larger board to do its job – and we have had that circumstance in urban college boards – or, secondly, if you were looking for a particular type of ability to add to your board. I guess the example I used before, and I think it's still the best one, is if a board was embarking on a major capital campaign or some campaign of that nature and wanted to bring in somebody who had particular connections to the community or recruit someone of that nature.

8:20

There seems to be this theory that these boards are somehow places where government is going to put people for some reason. Well, the reality is that we have 21 solid public institutions in this province with great board governance, a good board governance model, and community volunteers who come forward to bring their expertise and to serve on the boards. They work very, very well, and nobody is going to play with that for the sake of playing with that. What we're talking about here is putting in some flexibility, setting a standard number on the size of the board but allowing some flexibility so you can differentiate between needs of different boards in different locations.

Now, I did hear the hon. member mention a general faculty council, which is a term I used in the university context, but in the context of colleges and technical institutes, of course, we do have academic councils under section 46. So the role of students and faculty and nonacademic staff is not only governed in the context of the appointments to the board itself, but they also have a role to play in academic councils.

As the hon. member knows, I was hoping to bring forward an amendment which would have dealt with academic councils and allowed some flexibility. We do have a provision in the act now, section 46, which sets out academic councils and provides for each of the college and technical institutes to have an academic council which consists of

- (a) the president . . .
- (b) not more than 4 senior officials, appointed as members of the council by the board;
- (c) subject to subsection (2), not more than 10 academic staff members, elected by the academic staff . . .
- (d) not more than 10 students, elected by the students . . .
- (e) not more than 5 additional members, appointed by the board.

Then there are some provisions with respect to what the academic council does, but obviously they are recommendations with respect to standards and policy with respect to admissions, courses and programs, and academic awards.

So section 46, the academic council section, really provides a lot of the strength that the member is talking about in terms of input by students and academic staff to the operations of a technical institute or college. That is really where the students and academic staff have a great deal of their concern.

I understand where you're coming from about having an ability to expand without a cap, but I would suggest that you're not putting anyone in any danger here. Nobody's going to expand the board just on a whim. It would be done in consultation with the board because they wanted to expand their board size, because they wanted to add a particular talent or ability that they didn't have at the time. So that's the nature of these amendments.

Now, I do hope that we can deal with the academic council side

as well because section 46 of the act specifically sets out how an academic council is structured and what it can do. What I would hope is that we would also be able to in some form, perhaps in this Legislature, amend the act by bringing in a provision which would also allow for some flexibility. Instead of the one-size-fits-all academic council structure that is currently in the act, we could have a provision for a board of a college or technical institute, which wanted to have a different form of academic council or needed a flexible structure in some other way than is in the act, which would give it more flexibility, which would perhaps allow it to have a membership, for example, in the AUCC. They could work co-operatively with the minister and say: "Here's the academic council that would work for us. This would work for our college, for our purposes, in the direction we want to go." By doing so, we would be able to bring that in.

So my hope is that we would be able to make, again, some provision in the act under section 47 by adding a section 47.1 to the act, which would allow us that opportunity. What it would do, then, is give us the ability to set up some regulations which would say that colleges and technical institutes have the standard academic council. But in the same way as we're suggesting in this section, if they wanted to have a different composition of the board for some reason, if they wanted to have a different academic council for some reason, they could work with us, and then we would be prepared to if we could come to an agreement that the academic council worked and it didn't abuse any of the needs of the system fit for their purposes and fit for the purposes of the system. We could have that specific academic council for that specific college or technical institute.

In addressing what you're talking about with respect to the board and your concerns about the flexibility, what I guess I'm trying to say is that there is sometimes a need for flexibility. I don't think that the opposition needs to be unduly concerned about that. Certainly, I don't think that this minister or any minister would abuse that flexibility. There's no good reason to add members to the board willy-nilly. It obviously would have to be done for a purpose and would be done with the concurrence and, normally, almost exclusively at the request of the board of a college or a technical institute.

I hope that clarifies it for the member. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to rise and specifically say that I am encouraged and delighted to hear the minister talking about the need to build in some flexibility to college academic councils. There is the need to do this. From the way the minister is talking, my understanding is that this flexibility would be open to any public college in the province of Alberta if they wished to take advantage of it and work with the minister and cabinet in sort of custom building an academic council that suited their purposes best.

As one example the minister referenced the AUCC, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Let me give some credit again to the minister. Despite the minister's best efforts to create a made-in-Alberta national accrediting council here that will actually be an accrediting body for degree-granting institutions recognized across the country, we're not there yet, as I'm sure the minister would agree. In the absence of that specific national accrediting body, the closest thing we have to that is the AUCC right now. A number of us have spoken in this House a number of times about Mount Royal College's desire to some day, presumably some day soon is their hope, become a university, and I know that Mount

Royal College views AUCC accreditation as a key step along the road to achieving that.

That's not necessarily to say that that's the only route that a college in this province could go or would choose to go, but it's nice to have that option. It's nice to have that flexibility. I commend the minister for thinking along those lines and for looking to move ahead with some further amendments, further legislation of some sort that would allow this kind of flexibility in academic councils.

8:30

I guess the only thing I would say beyond that is to encourage the minister, if and when he does so, to design this in such a way that whatever regulations involving the Lieutenant Governor in Council would be necessary to build into this amending legislation would be created in such a way that the minister and cabinet would work collaboratively, concurrently with institutions or set themselves up as an instrument of ratification, if you will, so that the institutions can take the lead role, with consultation from the minister obviously, in designing and custom-building the academic councils that they feel that they need. Obviously, if they come forward with an idea that stinks, I don't think the minister is going to approve it. The minister knows what works.

So as long as the regulations work in order to allow the minister and cabinet to work collaboratively, concurrently in conjunction with colleges or to come along afterwards and ratify what the colleges have done rather than constricting the colleges in setting too many rules ahead of time, I think that would be a fine piece of legislation, and I would be pleased to support that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Lethbridge-East.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased that the minister has recognized that one of my concerns is with the lack of a cap on the number of people on the board. He may be right that any increase has to be justified and has to be reasonable and whatever have you, but I want him to put himself in the position of students.

Boards of governors are responsible for making decisions on tuition fee increases every year, and tuition fee increase is something that's the experience of students in postsecondary institutions in this province for the last 12, 13 years or more. You know, consistently year after year after year there have been tuition fee increases. So any increase, any addition to the board of governors, in my view, should be so designed as to enhance the presence of students on boards of governors so that their position with respect to, say, tuition fee increases can be heard by the hand-picked members on the board, that are hand-picked by the minister or by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

While I recognize the argument that there will be no unreasonable increase in the overall number of board members as a result of this amendment, whatever increase there is, there's no assurance here that that increase will be done in a way which will enhance the presence of students on these boards and the ability of the student representatives to make their point with respect to the tuition fee issue, for example.

The tuition fee is a very major concern. Tuition fees have tripled in this province over the last 12 years, and students ought to have by legislation the ability to have a strong voice on those bodies in our academic institutions that make those final decisions on tuition fees, and boards of governors are those institutions. This change doesn't assure me that student representation will be the one that'll be

strengthened and increased if this amendment is passed. That's the point I wanted to make.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Part of this is comment, and part of it would be a question to the minister. I, too, have a concern, as my colleague to my left here. I guess my question to the minister would be: in essence, it doesn't matter in my mind if the number of board members goes up or if it goes down. Would the percentage not change? If you've got so many students, so many publics, however they got on there, would that percentage change? If it stayed the same, it probably doesn't matter how the numbers go up or down. If I've made myself clear on that.

The other thing is that if all of the colleges and the universities are going to have different ways of setting up their academic councils and their boards, then their governances will be different and then have to apply to the particular institution that they have. But with this change, I would hope that governance and the way that it's structured would be taken into effect when students read *Maclean's* magazine, for instance, when they find out how a particular institution is run and if it's really what they're looking for and would fit in with their academic plans. I would like an answer to: regardless of the numbers, would the percentage of whatever the representation is stay the same?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, do you want to respond?

Mr. Hancock: If I may, Mr. Chairman. Clearly, the bill itself or the amendment to the bill doesn't provide for percentage representation; it provides for fixed representation. So if the board numbers went up in either the existing amendment that's in the bill or in the one that's proposed tonight, there wouldn't be an up and down based on the numbers of the student and faculty and nonacademic staff.

But, clearly, the concept here in 44(1) and 44(2) is that students, staff, and nonacademic staff ought to be represented on the board. In the course of the technical institutes it says: two, two, and one. In the course of the public college board it's one, one, and one. The concept is that they're represented on the board. They're never going to have a sufficient voting capacity to run the board. It's representation, and there's clearly representation on the board provided for. So if the board goes up by one or two members, the fact that the percentage interest is diluted isn't going to affect the fact that they have representation on the board and that representation is as strong as the people they recommend for appointment to the board.

I don't see a real concern from that side either from your comments or the comments from Edmonton-Strathcona because clearly the concept is for representation. The proportion of representation isn't sufficient to give them control of the board or an ability to significantly change the way decision-making is on the board, but clearly their interests have to be represented to the board and represented on the board. So I don't think that that concept is damaged at all. In fact, it's clearly in place, clearly understood that there's a role for students, a role for faculty, a role for nonacademic staff on the board governance of a college or technical institute, and that should continue.

Now, I would be concerned, however, if students in this province got their information about which college or technical institute to go to from *Maclean's* magazine. That would be a problem.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to participate in the debate this evening and specifically discuss amendment A1 to Bill 9. Certainly, I have listened with interest to all the hon. members who have participated in debate this evening and with disinterest to the chatter that is constant in this Assembly. This chatter seems to be a regular Wednesday evening occurrence, this loud chatter in the Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, for the hon. Minister of Advanced Education I have the following question, and this is regarding the Auditor General's report for 2004-2005. I'm sure the hon. minister has had time since the second week in September to have a good look at two of the recommendations. Actually, they're recommendation 1 and recommendation 2 in the cross-ministry section of the Auditor General's report, and they're dealing specifically with appointments to boards.

Now, certainly, there are many boards appointed by the government in this province. One has to keep track of them through the *Alberta Gazette* or through one of the very good newsletters that come out on a weekly basis reporting on the activities of this Legislative Assembly. As I understand it, there is no formal list. Would the minister – and I'm just going to be specific for his department – be willing to list publicly, downstairs in the library and on the Advanced Education website, all the individuals who are appointed through this ministry to various boards, how long they're going to be there, how much, if anything, they are to be compensated, and list the vacancies as well? Perhaps if there's a student in the city or one in Calgary or maybe one attending Mount Royal that would be interested in applying for one of these directorships or seats on the board, well, then they would certainly have that information present, a comprehensive list of who is serving, for how long, for how much, and if there are any vacancies.

8:40

Now, I would be a lot more comfortable with this amendment if the hon. minister was agreeable to that. Certainly, we have to be cautious about allowing – and I don't want to use the term “willy-nilly appointments” – additional persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council upon the recommendation of the minister. It concerns me when the Auditor General states the following, and this is recommendation 1, Mr. Chairman.

We recommend that the Deputy Minister of Executive Council update Alberta public sector governance principles and guidance so that they are consistent with current good practices for recruiting, evaluating and training directors.

Now, recommendation 2 is this, Mr. Chairman. “We recommend that the guidance include a statement that governing boards evaluate and report publicly their own performance against both Alberta public sector principles and their own board governance policies.” I could discuss these two recommendations at length, but I don't think that at this time it is necessary. It certainly does concern me that the hon. member is proposing to have additional persons appointed upon the recommendation of the department, or himself in this case, and these are red flags by the Auditor General in regard to the whole process.

In conclusion, I would like to note for all members of this Assembly whenever they consider this amendment A1 that the Auditor General also had this to say, and this is in regard to guidance for director recruitment and the need to have a better system. Now, in the audit sample, it is noted here in the report, half of the organizations did not have a memorandum of understanding. The Auditor

General also saw that the directive for recruitment should be enhanced and that the commitment made to its guidance should be reinforced since it was not consistently being followed. It goes on to say here in the Auditor General's report that about half of the organizations had deficiencies in their processes for evaluating boards and directors. Through this amendment we want to have this sort of credit card for directors with an unlimited amount.

Now, it also goes on to state here: “Orientation training for directors was provided,” and I think this is a good thing. “However, the establishment of continuous training programs was inconsistent.”

The Auditor General's staff in this audit go on to state here:

In our literature search, we noted that the amount of guidance on good governance has grown substantially in the last few years.

That is good to find out. However,

this was largely in response to governance failures in the private sector which is why the guidance is expressed in private sector terms. Nevertheless, this new guidance provides important and relevant insight to opportunities to improve governance in the Alberta public sector.

There are also other recommendations here, Mr. Chairman, but certainly I would urge the hon. minister to have a second look at recommendations 1 and 2 in the cross-ministry report before appointing any additional persons in the manner that is being suggested with this amendment A1.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Chairman, I hesitate even to respond to those comments only insofar as the hon. member has taken what is clearly a discussion of the Post-secondary Learning Act and board governance into an opportunity to draw in the Auditor General's report on appointment to boards. I do want to speak to it for the purpose of indicating that we have 21 public institutions in this province, board-governed institutions, ranging from the University of Alberta, which would be the largest both in size and in budget, three other universities, two technical institutes, the rest colleges, and, of course, the Banff Centre, which is a public college as well but governed by its own governance structure outside this act.

I want to assure the hon. member and every member of the House that appointing members to public governance boards for colleges and technical institutes and universities in this province is not something that's taken lightly. The positions are made known. The boards themselves normally have a committee of the board which is concerned with board governance and with board membership. When there's a vacancy, they tend to look at the competencies that are available to them on the board, the skills, knowledge, and abilities that are available to them on the board. Most often I will get a letter from the board indicating the type of individual, whether it's someone with an accounting background or someone with a legal background or someone that represents a particular geographic area that they don't have on the board. So I can assure the hon. member that his concerns are entirely without basis in this circumstance.

When it comes to our publicly governed educational institutions in this province, governance is very thoughtfully considered. It's very thoughtfully considered by the boards themselves in terms of the capacities that they need, the people that they need to represent the communities that they represent, both geographic and demographic communities that they move into, and they take a very active role in board member search. In many circumstances the positions are advertised within the local community. Certainly, when it comes to a chair position, they're advertised in the local community. When recommendations come forward, they go through a screening

process, so an assessment is done as to whether they meet the qualifications for the board, and then, of course, it comes forward to the minister for a recommendation to be made.

So the process is a good one. The quality of board members has been exemplary. The individuals that serve their communities on our public institution boards are a stellar group of people, and they do good service. I don't think it would serve us well to undermine them in any way by indicating that there was not a proper process in place for appointment, because there is.

With respect to your suggestion that they be listed on the website, I'll take that under advisement. There's certainly no secret as to who's on the boards. If you go to the website of any of the public colleges, you'll find listed the names of the people who are on the boards. Their financial statements every year, which are compiled and filed in the House here, I believe – I don't know this for sure; I haven't looked specifically – would indicate how much is paid on board governance. I can tell you that it's a pittance. I can tell you that it's a mere honorarium that in many cases, I know for a fact, the board members sign back to the college.

You don't have to worry about members volunteering to serve on boards for our public institutions in this province being overpaid. In fact, the Member for Lethbridge-East, behind you, served with me for seven years on the Students Finance Board, and she can tell you that the compensation, if any, that was received for that service did not in any way make one able to forgo whatever prosperity bonus might come her way.

The Deputy Chair: Anybody else?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

8:50

The Deputy Chair: On the bill, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to participate today in the debate on the amendment. One area of interest that I have, obviously, having worked and taught at the university, is a tuition policy. To quote the Auditor General's report from 2002-2003, a number of concerns were raised, but the most urgent, I guess, that I wanted to hear in relation to the new amendment was whether the requirement for postsecondary institutions to comply with a tuition fee policy will now have new teeth. The criteria identified were:

1. Data collected by the Department should be reliable, timely and calculated in accordance with the requirements of the Policy.
2. The Department should ensure public post secondary institutions comply with the Policy.

Some of the findings were that there needs to be more clarification about how that calculation is carried out, that there needs to be perhaps a little more ease in administration of the policy, that there needs to be a more timely calculation instead of up to 18 months after the institutional year-end that the calculation is completed and the recommendation then addressed, and, finally, repeating that in one instance a college exceeded the limit for three years in spite of the policy.

So what kind of enforcement capacity is there to address the policy itself? Could you discuss that, hon. minister, in relation to the amendment and how some of those concerns will be addressed?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Chairman, it's hard to see how the issues that were raised by the member actually relate to the amendment other than there is an amendment to clarify section 61(2)(b), so I presume

that's where he's coming in with the Auditor General's report. But this isn't Public Accounts. This isn't the budget. This isn't really the place to do that.

However, I can assure the member that we take the Auditor General's comments seriously. The Auditor General's comments have been provided not only to the minister and to the department but also to the institutions involved. We always indicate that we make every effort to accept and to implement the Auditor General's recommendations where it's possible to do so. So outside the context of the bill that we're debating, I can say with some assurance to the hon. member that when the Auditor General raises concerns about an issue relative to how things are calculated or done, we take it very seriously, we follow up on it, and we make every effort to comply.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have dealt with the amendment that the minister has brought forward, so we are now back to the discussion of the various clauses in the bill itself, Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act. With that in mind, I'd like to make a few comments.

This is overwhelmingly a piece of housekeeping legislation. Most of the changes proposed in Bill 9 are not overly problematic to us, although they do raise some concerns. I think I've indicated already that perhaps we're giving too much control to the minister through orders in council, upsetting the balance of membership on institutional boards of governors and a number of other minor issues.

One of the changes that is proposed is a repeal of section 49, listing four nonprofit private colleges receiving funding from the government. In fact, we have a number of nonprofit private institutions operating in this province now, exceeding four. I believe the intent of the minister, primarily, was to address that reality, address the eventuality that there could be more nonprofit private colleges coming down the pike later on. The ministry is seeking flexibility again as more institutions are granted authority to offer degree programs and will receive funding according to regulations. Historically the ministry has given assurances that for-profit institutions will not receive public funding, and I would certainly like to hold the minister to that going forward. It is, again, I think primarily housekeeping, but we will be watching the implications play out from this in the years to come.

I want to make a very quick comment about this tuition fee policy. It's good on one level. It's good that the minister is modifying the tuition fee policy to provide an additional academic year before the newly calculated limit applies because, as my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View pointed out, according to the annual report of the Auditor General there have been colleges that have been out of compliance and one college that exceeded the limit for three years, et cetera, et cetera. It's good that he is doing something about that, but I can't help but note, because we were talking about this in the House in question period yesterday, that there is a new tuition policy in development for colleges and universities across the province. The minister committed yesterday to holding the line on freezing tuitions in this province until that new policy is developed. I asked him whether he would do that no matter how long it took to develop the policy, and in his answer he assured us that the policy would be developed within a year, if I recall.

So we're left with a situation here where, well, good on the minister for doing what he's doing, but you almost have to wonder if this couldn't have waited. If we've had a problem with this for two or three or four years, even though it's been identified now by the Auditor General – and, yes, the minister likes to take the

recommendations of the AG very seriously, likes to be in compliance and all the rest of that, likes to do the right thing, and loves his mother too, I'm sure, as we all do. But you kind of wonder: couldn't this have waited? I've never met your mother, but I'm sure she's a lovely woman. Couldn't this have waited until the new tuition policy came down the pike?

It's rather like the horse having bolted the barn, coming along closing the barn door after the horse bolted, but knowing that you're just going to tear that barn down anyway in a few weeks, and good thing that you are because the barn is falling apart, otherwise the horse probably wouldn't have gotten out in the first place.

I'm in a bit of a conundrum, I suppose, about this. Yes, you're doing the right thing by making these changes, by modifying the tuition fee policy, but, you know, it hardly seems to make much difference in practical terms given that you're going to change the policy anyway and we're going to have to go through this all over again before too much longer.

One other thing that I want to talk about – let's see – is sections 4 and 9 in the bill, I believe. They repeal section 53(a) in the Postsecondary Learning Act, regarding the Private Colleges Accreditation Board. Again, that's fairly obvious because the Campus Alberta Quality Council is designed to replace it. However, what this does is highlight the fact that there are still no serious reporting requirements for the Campus Alberta Quality Council. One has to wonder when those are going to be coming through. Soon, I hope, because that's important.

In sections 110 to 115, also sections governing the Private Colleges Accreditation Board that are being repealed, we note that the PCAB had an explicit budget, records, and reports section that, among other things, mandated establishing a budget and providing annual reports. No similar sections are included for the Campus Alberta Quality Council. They should be. Accountability and transparency require publicly available annual reports. Now, I said publicly available annual reports. We all know in this business how many annual reports land with a great thud on our desk on a fairly regular basis, and I dare say that we don't all read every single page of every annual report, but it's important that they be available. So I would urge the minister to address that issue where the Campus Alberta Quality Council is to make it accountable and transparent.

9:00

The only other real concern that I have – I don't know the degree to which I have a concern. I suspect that like many other sections in this bill, it's something where the intentions are good; there's unlikely to be abuse. But because of the inclusion of this section or the way that section is worded, there is, however unlikely, the possibility of abuse, the potential of abuse. That is in section 10 of the bill, the additional powers to collect information for applicants and alumni in addition to students. I think that's section 10. Yes, it is. It's primarily so that the minister can conduct surveys, I think in accordance with Bill 1, really, around accessibility, affordability, quality issues in postsecondary education.

I can well understand the need and the desirability of being able to conduct those surveys. I'm pleased to support good data collection and good analysis to support system policy, to identify areas where system policy needs change and improvement and then to act on that. But in my view this government does not have the best possible record when it comes to the protection of personal information. As a rule, the less personal information that is collected and stored – and, yes, under section 10 we don't really have any time limits on the amount of time that the information can be kept. We have time limits governing how much time the minister has to request information about a particular applicant. I'd like to see some

time limits or some limits on the kind of personal information that can be kept, how long it can be kept for, and what purposes it can be used for.

I'm not accusing anybody of anything here, but I do note with interest, and I've certainly heard this from a number of my constituents, that students in postsecondary institutions, especially as they near and pass graduation, have this funny way of being inundated with credit card come-ons from various banks. Now, where do the banks get that information from? Where do the banks get the list of college and university graduates from? I can't provide that answer myself, but I certainly have my suspicions. It brings up the question of whether there are sufficient safeguards on that information.

You know, I think that anybody who's bright enough, qualified enough to get into a postsecondary institution in the province of Alberta, especially at the university level considering how stringent the entrance requirements are now as a result of the access problem that the minister and I have talked about both in this House and at the minister's forum early this month and in various other venues together and separately, who is bright enough to get into the system and succeed in the system and graduate from the system is also bright enough to decide for him or herself when or if he or she wants to apply for a credit card and what institution they want to go see. You know, once they've decided whether they'd really like a Visa card or a MasterCard or an American Express card, they don't need all this junk mail coming from every bank and credit card company in the free world saying: "Hey, you graduated. You're a great prospect. We know we can get our hooks into you for years. Why don't you sign up for one of our credit cards?"

It's but an example of what I consider, and certainly what some of my constituents who have talked to me about it consider an abuse of privacy, an invasion of privacy, an abuse of personal information that's collected and stored at some level in some location on them. I would urge the minister to put some time limits and other limits on the collection, storage, and use of that information so that it's used specifically for the purpose intended, which is so that the minister can survey people like students who have applied to a particular institution, been accepted by that institution or not, but for whatever reason have then decided not to go ahead and enrol in that institution, so that the minister can find out why Johnny or Janie chose to go to university A versus college B or something like that. That's the purpose for which the minister wants this information.

Let's tighten up the regulations around this. I suspect that this is something that perhaps you could do in regulations. It would be nice to see it in actual legislation, in some kind of overarching, governing legislation around privacy at some point in the future, to tighten up the rules around the collection, storage, and use of personal information so that it's used for the purpose for which it was intended and only that purpose.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, starting from the last point, I believe that the privacy laws in this province, particularly as it relates to public information but also even now to information in the private sector governed by the two acts that we have, clearly make it an offence to use information other than for the purpose for which it was collected and under the exceptions provided in the act. Obviously, the information that we're talking about here under section 10 is needed for some very, very good reason. For example, we often have discussions about student debt in this province, and when I talk about student debt as minister, I talk about the student debt owed to the public because that's what we

have information on, but there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that a considerable number of students are going out to some of the nefarious banks that the hon. member was talking about and taking out a line of credit, which boggles my mind. For the life of me I don't understand why anybody would go to a bank to get a student line of credit when we have a student finance system. [interjection] The hon. member was making some comments which are not on the record.

The bottom line is that in order to get a good handle on information like how much student debt there actually is out there in all areas and to find the people who are not taking out student debt from the Student Finance Board but taking out student debt elsewhere and to find out the real reasons why they're not doing it, what their barriers to success were – in many cases when I talk to students who anecdotally tell me about their student debt and the reason they couldn't get it, I find out they didn't avail themselves of the appeal processes so they actually could have potentially had student finance debt, but they didn't go that direction. Now, that's a useful piece of information because what it tells us is that we're not letting people know of the appeal process well enough, or we're not doing something to make it as accessible as it should be. But unless you have that kind of information, you can't make the changes necessary to make the process work.

So you do need to be able to collect information from students. You need to know who's applying where, and if they're not getting in, are they getting in somewhere else? We have, for example, in Calgary in the last couple of years reported student numbers of people who applied but didn't get into institutions. Now, I know from research data that most of those students did get in someplace. In some cases there were duplicate applications: they were applying to two or three or four programs and they got into one program, or they applied in Calgary and they also applied elsewhere and they got into one of their other programs. I don't have solid data on that because I can't go to the individual students. We do have a student identifier number, so we're able to do that better.

This particular section just allows us to have access to the information necessary to get that management-type data and follow-up data to improve the system for the benefit of students. I can assure the hon. member that we will protect that data. We're not in the business of selling data to credit card companies. I'm not sure what that allusion was, but I don't believe any of our public institutions would be in the business of selling their data. It would be against the law to sell the data to a credit card company or anyone else unless the students had specifically said that they could. The data isn't collected for that purpose. Under our privacy laws, both public privacy laws and private-sector privacy laws, you're not allowed to use information that's collected except for the purpose for which it was collected. So I, too, am sometimes very interested in how companies get hold of the names.

This section will not make that type of data publicly available in any way. This section will simply make it easier for us to get the information that we need to make the system better for learners in Alberta. Certainly all of my efforts will be towards that. If there needs to be some guidance in regulation or something more strict put in place to ensure the protection of the data, I would be the first to want to do that.

9:10

With respect to tuition policy I certainly have to agree with the hon. member that it seems rather unnecessary to amend this section at this point in time. This came forward through a process. Most often legislation is done very carefully, so the policy goes through a process. The recommendation comes forward. There's consulta-

tion. It's a one or two or sometimes three-year process. This happens to be the end of a long process, and if we were to start it now, we wouldn't start it now. It's here, and it's not that it doesn't make sense to do it; it makes the existing law more understandable. But the hon. member is right: we didn't use the existing law this year, we're not planning to use the existing law next year, and by the time we use the existing law again, it won't be the existing law. So I'm not sure if the horse and barn analogy is correct, but I do agree with the hon. member.

With respect to reporting requirements for the Campus Alberta Quality Council, I think that that's a very interesting comment and one that I do need to follow up on. The quality council has been up and running for a little over a year now. It has met, it has done its first business in terms of reviewing programs and approving programs, and now we do need to take a look and see: okay, how do we make it accountable and reportable and deal with those issues?

I hope to be meeting with the quality council soon on those very sorts of issues, and maybe we'll be able to advise the hon. member at some time in the near future what might come forward in that regard. It's not in this particular bill, but I do take his comments. I believe it's valid for the public. Not everybody in the public is going to know or care what the quality council is, but those that do ought to be able to have access to understand its workings and to understand what it's doing.

With respect to section 3, the repeal of section 49, section 49 is a bit of an anomaly. No other public institution is actually named in the act. Section 49 names four institutions that are defined as not-for-profit colleges and then goes on to provide for mechanisms for public payments to be made to private not-for-profit colleges. This amendment is simply to delete the list of names because we have an ability to add to that list by regulation and, in fact, have added to that list by regulation.

We no longer define not-for-profit colleges in the way the act defines them in terms of those four particular colleges. In fact, one of them is now part of the University of Alberta. The other three are still in existence and still fit the bill and still actually get public funding. So repealing this section doesn't take away their public funding.

In fact, we also have Taylor University College, St. Mary's University College, and at least two others that now have some, not all but some, of their programs funded publicly, so they should either be added into the act or these should be taken out so that there's a consistency. We felt it more appropriate that these be taken out so that there can be some flexibility as new colleges come along as there may be private not-for-profit colleges that offer programs that we do fund publicly that we could add by regulation. We've added Taylor. We've added St. Mary's. We've added a couple of other colleges this year, in fact in this budget year, and fund some of their programs. So this just cleans up the section and makes it clear that not-for-profit private colleges are not limited to those four.

I think that addresses the concerns that were raised.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been listening to the debate carefully, and the minister has addressed some of the concerns that have been raised with respect to section 5 on tuition fees.

While he has conceded that we are discussing something that perhaps is already out of date because his new policies are in the process of being considered, I suppose, the minister had his forum a couple of weeks ago, and he had some time to think about what kind of amendments that he wanted to bring to this bill to perhaps

assure students with respect to their concerns. We should have seen, in place of the minister maintaining the provisions here that speak to tuition fee policy, in fact amending these by bringing in a tuition freeze at least to indicate, to show, to make a statement that the minister has listened and that he's willing to take action, and the minimum action he's going to take is to amend the existing piece of legislation to commit the government to freezing tuition fees at the present level.

I wonder why the minister hasn't chosen that option rather than leaving what he now clearly recognizes as an obsolete provision in the act because it may be overtaken by events by the time these changes become legislation and are ready to be translated into policy. So I wonder if the minister would like to comment on that.

His explanation with respect to all the information that he thinks the department would like to have on students' personal information. This is in section 10. Some of the comments that he made about what use that information may be put to do have a ring of plausibility, but I'm not convinced that this sort of very broad mandate that he is seeking by way of legislation to have access to information collected by colleges or universities is going to be of much use.

Secondly, if there are identifiable uses to which the information will be put by the department, then maybe those are the ones that should be identified before this broad mandate is sought to have access to information that students in good faith provide to colleges and universities in order to seek admission and for no other use. What the minister is asking here is for the institutions to in fact act in what might be considered by students bad faith because students give that information, fill in the applications on the assumption that that information will be used strictly for the purposes of selection and admission.

What this piece of legislation does is to redefine the uses of that information and oblige institutions to allow the minister to have access to the information that wasn't collected explicitly for purposes other than admissions and selection. So I think there's a problem here as I see it. The institutions will or could be accused by students of acting in bad faith. The information was collected by institutions for a certain purpose and now, since the minister has legislated for the institutions to provide that information to the minister, the information is being used for a purpose for which it wasn't surrendered by the student, there is a concern that I have there.

It's an ethical issue here. There's a matter of institutions being put in a very difficult situation where they will have to perhaps address students' complaints. I don't know if this matter is justiciable or not. Students could take institutions to the court in a worst-case scenario because it is really about the use of information that students give to institutions based on certain assumptions, what the information is going to be used for. They don't give a *carte blanche* to institutions to use the information to do whatever they want with it unless my understanding needs to be corrected. If so, the minister will perhaps do that.

9:20

One other provision here has to do with going back three years. The information not only that is current but "information is requested by the Minister no more than 3 years after the date that the applicant applied." Oh, I see. It is that after three years the minister will not be seeking the information, if the information is more than three years old.

I think the principle issue that I take with this part of this section is this piece of legislation calling on the institutions to create another use post facto for the information that they collected only for reasons of selection and admission. So that is a concern. It does deal with

the issues of privacy. That matter has been raised, but in addition to that, the concern that I've raised I think needs to be addressed, and perhaps the minister would like to put himself on record on that one.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the information issue I'm just going to have to agree to disagree, I guess, in that, I mean, we can discuss the value of information and the right of individuals to have an understanding of the protection of their privacy. I think the hon. member and I would agree that people are entitled, unless there's good reason, to expect that their information will only be used for the purposes for which they've disclosed it. Most people making application to a university or college believe that the reason they're disclosing their information is to grant admission to a college. But there are also supplementary reasons for which information might be used, whether it's – well, I won't go into that. I was going to say whether it's health information or other information, but let me not stray into that area. That could be dangerous.

There are valid public policy reasons for which you need to be able to access personal information. As long as that information is protected, as long as it's used for an appropriate public policy purpose – and in the case of the act here we're talking about a public institution system of advanced education for which the public pays a very, very significant cost, investment so that we can have a system which will increase opportunity for Albertans to advance their education, and that's a good thing. In order to do it properly, we need to know who's going to school and who's not going to school. In the case of those who are not going to school, why, so that we can find ways to encourage them to go to school; for those who are concerned about finances, for example, what their concerns are. Those are valid things for public policy reasons to have information on.

Nobody is going to take student information and sell it on the street. That's not the purpose of this. That's not allowed by this. I think most if not all students would understand that there's a public policy reason why information that they might give on an application might be accessed to determine not only their admission but for what reason they might not have been admitted to one or two or three of the places they applied to or whether, in fact, they didn't get admitted to any of the places they applied to, and therefore there's a hole in our system because there needs to be a place for them. Those are valid reasons to gather information. I think most reasonable people understand that, even though they want to make sure that their personal information isn't used for invalid reasons.

I don't believe that it is an ethical issue at all. In fact, I stand to be corrected, but I believe that the provision of this would have been run by the Privacy Commissioner before it was brought in. It was brought in last spring, and I don't remember specifically, but I'm sure that we did that because that would be our normal practice. So I don't think there's an ethical concern at all in this.

I do understand the issue being raised, but I think most reasonable people understand that there is a need to gather information of this nature. This is a public investment. It needs to have the benefit of good information. Sometimes that information has to come from the people involved, and therefore you have to be able to find them and ask them. So I think section 10 is well founded and has a good basis, and I would ask the Legislature to support it.

With respect to the tuition policy, quite frankly, I do not believe that you make legislation rashly. The Premier indicated in February of this year that by the fall of 2006 there would be a new tuition policy, and there will be. I've indicated that we hope to have that

available for public review by as early as March of next year. That doesn't put it in place for the budget discussions that postsecondary institutions are having right now for their fall 2006 tuition fee policy. They have an obligation to consult with students. They have an obligation to bring in their budgets. Putting a new tuition policy in place and having it available by fall 2006 doesn't assist in that process.

The Premier has made the commitment publicly that tuition fees would not go up. There was the \$43 million that was put into the system this year to pay the increase this year. The Premier has indicated that that will be sustained until the new tuition fee policy comes in, and I've indicated that that will be early next year. So you may well be right: this section may never have efficacy again. But rather than eliminate it and put in a freeze provision, which we then have to come back and tinker with – I'm not a believer in doing legislation rashly. I think that we will go through the process of developing the policy, there will be a good public discussion of the policy, and then the policy will be brought forward to the Legislature, presumably for necessary amendments to the Post-Secondary Learning Act at that time. In the meantime we can give effect in the same manner as we have this year to the intention, which is to keep tuition fees affordable for another year while the discussion is going on.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for responding specifically to some of the concerns that I raised here. With respect to the personal information on students and the ability of the minister to access that information, for public policy purposes I agree that that information is needed, but that should be in an aggregated form. If the minister wants information, he should ask for it in aggregated form. If he wants to know whether low-income students are walking away from universities – they're not completing their programs more so than students coming from high-income families – then that information can be had in that form: low-income versus high-income family background of students. Aggregated information does protect the personal nature of that information yet provides useful information for public policy purposes.

This kind of information I think would be sought by creditors, people who are trying to chase, I suppose, some debt defaulters. If that is one of the intentions of collecting this information, then I think that's a matter that should be left – when banks are the creditors, banks are lending money to students, then it is the responsibility of banks, not of this government, to collect that information. Students are going to banks to seek loans, not going to the government. Insofar as the public dollars are concerned in the form of student loans, the Students Finance Board should have that information, and I'm sure it does. Why would the minister want that kind of information collected or have access to that kind of information? As I said, the minister's claims for why he wants information sound plausible, but they're not terribly persuasive.

The fact that the government is a sort of benign big brother and therefore any information that it seeks is safe I think is a perilous assumption. I think governments make mistakes. Governments don't necessarily always use the information in the right way. Therefore, it is appropriate to put safeguards in the legislation so that the purposes for which the information is being sought are clearly outlined, the kind of information that's required is appropriately outlined, and proper safeguards for the use of that information are also there. I don't find them here. I think there's a bit of a *carte blanche*: give us all the information, and then we'll know what to do

with it, and that will be decided later on after we've got the information in hand. So I continue to have concerns on it.

Thank you.

9:30

[The clauses of Bill 9 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 9. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 43

**Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes
Amendment Act, 2005**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the introduction of this bill, this bill will create amendments to three pieces of legislation: first, the Fiscal Responsibility Act; secondly, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act; and thirdly, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. These amendments will give the authority to provide the rebate, a one-time program that provides \$400 to each and every Albertan.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act will be amended primarily so that the cost of the resource rebates is not a charge to the contingency allowance. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act will be amended to ensure that children in care of the province will also receive the \$400. The Personal Income Tax Act is being amended so that the rebate will be treated as a refundable tax credit, and that makes it exempt from provincial or federal taxation.

A highlight of the rebate program, if anybody needs reminding, is that Albertans 18 years and over will receive a cheque, including students attending school in other jurisdictions who still consider

Alberta home for tax purposes. Recipients will have to file a 2004 Canadian tax return and be resident in the province of Alberta as of September 1, 2005.

Rebates for children who are under 18 as of December 31 of this year will be paid to their primary caregiver, which in most cases is the mother. All babies born in 2005 will be eligible for the rebate. Parents of children born late in the year will receive a delayed payment. We expect that that payment could be delivered in March.

The province will administer benefits to the 7,300 children in provincial care. Children's Services will have the discretion to use the \$400 for the benefit of the child where appropriate. Otherwise, children in care are eligible for \$400 plus interest when they reach the age of 18. This will not affect benefits for other provincial programs. Deductions on the rebates will be made for money owing under maintenance enforcement only.

I want to certainly thank the agencies and individuals who have volunteered their time to ensure that all that are eligible for this rebate have the opportunity to receive it, particularly those who have no fixed address or who may have difficulty in filing or filling out a tax return. Many people have worked hard to figure out the logistics of this program, including the legislative amendments needed, and we appreciate their help. We have a dedicated staff, who have been so helpful in answering queries from Albertans about the details of this initiative.

I know that this rebate has come under some criticism, and I may hear some further on that here tonight. There are some who say that the money should be invested. I would say that this money is being invested. By giving it back to Albertans, this is a huge investment in them. Each Albertan is free to spend, save, or invest their portion as they see fit, and I have the utmost confidence that Albertans know what's best for them and will make wise choices. What's best for each Albertan will be good for us as a province as a whole. There is an economic spinoff, of course, in so many people having an additional \$400 to invest or spend, and there are economic benefits down the road for those who choose to put the money away.

Many have told me that they intend to use these dollars for their children's education fund, and that's just great. Many have said that they are going to use it for something special for their family, and that's just great. Many have told me they're going to give it to a favourite group or charity in their community, be it their library, their food bank, the local Lions Club, whatever is most important to them, and I say that that's just great as well.

Some critics have said that rebates are not what people wanted, and certainly I've had letters from people who have said that this was not necessarily what they would have done with the money. However, nobody disagreed that it is their money, and they have the choice to do what they want with it. Interestingly enough, I had a conversation with a gentleman who happened to be from Calgary and was in my constituency, and he said: "You know, Shirley, I don't need this money. You don't need to send it to me." His wife spoke up and said, "You may not want it, but I'll tell you that our daughter and her three kids are most happy to be getting it, so watch it, Dad." That's just the way of the world. To some people it's very important, to some it may be less, but the fact remains that it is their money, and it is their right to use it in any way they wish. It's your future: yes, it wasn't number one in the survey, but it definitely was there.

The number one choice was to make long-term investments, and we're going to have the opportunity over the next days to talk about some of those investments in schools, hospitals, other health facilities, academic institutions, and of course roads, which are always important to all of us in this province. Less than one-quarter of the anticipated surplus this year is dedicated to rebates. Of

course, a significant portion of this is going into savings through the heritage fund and various endowment funds.

I would close by saying to those critics who dismiss \$400 per person as an insignificant amount that it may not be significant to you and I, but to a lot of Alberta families it is very significant. To families who earn a modest income, \$400 per family member is a tremendous benefit. These rebates will do a lot of good for individuals, for families, and I believe for our province as a whole.

I look forward to the debate. I look forward to being able to answer any questions that any members have on this bill. Thank you.

9:40

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to open the debate on behalf of Her Majesty's Official Opposition tonight on Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This bill, as the minister has just outlined, will provide \$400 in the form of a prosperity bonus, as they're calling it, to all Albertans over the age of 18 who resided in Alberta on or before September 1 of this year.

I want to say right up front that I will be recommending to my colleagues that we support this bill with some serious qualifications. I'm not so naive as to think that I want to be the Grinch who steals the \$400 – I can't say Christmas cheque because I gather that it won't be a Christmas cheque – New Year's cheque. However, having said that, it's clear from the response of many, many Albertans, many that the minister and the Premier have heard from, that for many Albertans this rebate idea is not necessarily the first thing that they would have done with the money. It's clear that if it's going to be done, it could have been done so much better, and that's going to be the thrust of my comments tonight.

Certainly, as the minister has outlined and I've acknowledged several times over the last few months, once the Premier announced that this was his choice, not necessarily the choice of his caucus colleagues but his choice, that this is something he wanted to do, many Albertans need the extra \$400. I've heard from many constituents in Edmonton-Rutherford who have serious concerns about how they're going to address their utility costs this winter, largely due to the deregulation of natural gas. I have had constituents coming to me with serious concerns about their electricity rates doubling in the last few months, again thanks largely to the deregulation that this government has undertaken.

Certainly, there are students who have suggested to me that the \$400 will go a long way towards helping their tuition costs. Many people are saying that they will invest the money in their children's education or in an RSP or put it towards home ownership, perhaps auto repairs – I had one fellow telling me that he needs a new engine in his vehicle, and this is a good start towards that – household needs, and it goes on and on. There's no question that in this land of plenty, when we're experiencing some of the most prosperous times ever, there are more people than ever being left behind. Seventy-five food banks, if you can believe it, are operating in Alberta today despite the prosperity that we're experiencing. So I'm not going to stand here tonight and say that we should not be giving Albertans that \$400.

However, as I said, there are many concerns as well. I think that there is a very real concern about how to make it fair and equitable, and that is one of the problems, quite frankly, with a rebate cheque or a rebate program. How do you decide who gets it and who doesn't get it? I was at a function last Saturday evening, and I happened to be sitting at a table with some very bright young people

working for a software company in Edmonton, one of whom has moved here this summer from Toronto and another who moved here this summer from New York City. I think it's wonderful that we're able to attract people from across the country and, in fact, from across the continent and even, in the case of that particular company, a number of people from around the world that have come here to work. That's a tremendous credit to the spirit of Albertans and the spirit of entrepreneurship that we have here.

These people were thrilled. In fact, they asked me about the rebate cheque when they heard that I was the Finance critic, and they shared their thoughts with me about it. They said: it really doesn't matter to us because we won't be getting it, but these are thoughts we'd like to share with you. Then I was able to inform them that in the case of the young lady from Toronto she would in fact be receiving the cheque, and certainly the fellow from New York. As long as he has permanent residency status, he'll be getting it too. He said to me: well, what about the couple that I worked with when I first came here in August, who lived and worked in Alberta for 35 years and moved to Kelowna to the retirement home in August? So, quite clearly, it illustrates the problem with a program like this. There will always be those who fall through the cracks, and it's one of the concerns I have.

Now, the minister referred to the homeless. There's no question that there are a lot of people that even with the tremendous assistance of the social agencies in this city may still fall through the cracks. If anybody's unsure about that, I'm happy to take them to a business lot that I own in south Edmonton where there are a number of people every night that literally sleep underneath a trailer on our lot. We've gone out there and talked to them and tried to make sure that they're aware of this and so forth. Obviously, we can't touch all of those people, and I have no doubt in my mind that there will be many who are missed. I think that it's a tragedy that there are going to be some in this province who need this more than any of us can imagine, and they're not going to benefit from it. That's unfortunate.

There will be frivolous spending. I know that the minister and the Premier and others have talked about the fact that they trust Albertans to know how to spend this money wisely, but the simple reality is that not everybody is capable of making those wise decisions. We've all, I'm sure, spent time working for various organizations in the casinos and bingo halls and have seen people who, quite frankly, are not capable of making those wise decisions. At the same time, I've watched, particularly in the bingos where I work for the various charities that I'm involved with, the workers in those bingo halls, who are suffering right now due to a downturn in the number of players, rubbing their hands together at the thought of those \$400 cheques coming out because they know that they're going to see a tremendous increase in the month of January or February, when these cheques come out, in the amount of business that they see in the bingo hall.

So despite the fact that I certainly agree with the minister that the majority of Albertans are quite capable of making very wise decisions in terms of how to spend this money, I do have concerns that there will be a lot of people who, unfortunately, are not going to make those wise decisions and in some cases simply are not capable of making the wise decisions.

The minister spoke about the fact that this rebate program will spur the economy. I agree: it will spur the economy. That in itself causes me a little bit of a concern. I think that everybody understands that right now Alberta is experiencing unprecedented growth, and the economy is roaring along at break-neck speed. In fact, we're probably riding the top of that crest, and I'm hoping that it doesn't crash any time soon. Things are going as well as any of us can

remember, I'm sure. I'm not going to say adding fuel to the fire, but certainly I don't think that there are too many people who would reasonably argue that this economy needs to be spurred on any more than it already is at the moment. So if that's an argument that's being used for rebate cheques at this time, it doesn't wash with me.

The minister has said, and I would concur: rebate cheques would not have been my first choice. I know that they were not her first choice. She's been quite forthcoming with that. However, as I said earlier, right from day one, right from the time this first came out and even before that, back in the summer when the minister was being asked about rebates and she was saying that she was no fan of rebates and would rather see something else done, my argument has always been that if you're going to give a rebate, do it wisely. If you're going to give money back to Albertans, do it in a way that is sustainable.

All of us watched with a certain amount of pride, I believe, when the oilfield workers from the Sedgewick and Killam and Wainwright area won the lottery. The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright may even know some of those gentlemen and ladies. As much as we watched with pride, I'm sure we all had just a twinge of envy as well, but there isn't one of us in here who would wish to see them just go on a spending spree and blow all of that money. We're all hopeful, I'm sure, that they will invest some of that money wisely and live off the interest. My argument has always been with the rebate cheques that you could do exactly the same thing.

9:50

I'm going to point to the heritage savings trust fund as an example of that. In the second-quarter update, which the minister made public today, it was announced that again the heritage savings trust fund is currently sitting at a book value of \$12.3 billion, which is just about exactly where it sat in 1989, when we stopped making contributions to it. Now, I'm not going to suggest that we haven't benefited from the fact that money was taken out of it because we all understand that the government has paid down Alberta's debt. I think all Albertans have benefited from that. However, having said that, we continue to take money out of the heritage savings trust fund to this day.

The minister announced today a \$5.8 billion surplus. When you add in the rebate cheques and you add in the extra spending that's already been announced, we're up to about an \$8.7 billion surplus this year. Despite that incredible surplus we're still taking nearly a billion dollars out of the heritage savings trust fund and putting it into general revenue. I've yet to hear a reasonable explanation of why we're doing that, why we continue to raid the heritage savings trust fund when there is so much money coming into this province unexpectedly.

When you look at that heritage savings trust fund, even though we haven't protected it against inflation, it would be almost \$20 billion today if we had at least protected it against inflation. Even though we've not done that, that fund is generating almost enough money today to fund a \$400 rebate cheque year after year if that's what you decide to do.

The Finance minister and the Premier have referred to this as a one-time event, a special occasion, a one-off, indicating that this isn't likely to happen again. Yet the simple reality is that over the last six years, not counting this year, which admittedly is exceptional, Alberta has experienced \$22.2 billion in surpluses, and more than \$15 billion of that has been in unbudgeted surpluses. So we're averaging nearly \$3 billion a year for several years now in unbudgeted surpluses. Even in the year 2001, which was, admittedly, a tough year with 9/11, and I know that there were some capital projects that had to be scaled back, we still came in with a \$1.2 billion surplus.

So it's clear to me that as the opposition has been saying for years, the government likes to lowball and come in with a bigger surplus than expected. That's not just us saying that. It's not just politicking. This is a pattern that's been going on for many years, year after year. Quite frankly, there's no particular reason why we should expect that to change any time soon.

I think perhaps this is the point that I've been trying to make, and clearly I haven't managed to convince the minister of it yet, so I'll try again tonight; that is, while I have no particular beef, and I may have in some instances, in general I'm not going to say that we shouldn't be spending money on hospitals or on new schools or investing in the heritage savings trust fund or any of the other things that have been announced. As I say, there are certainly instances that I disagree with, but the concept of spending money in those areas I don't have a problem with. In fact, as the minister pointed out, those were the results of the It's Your Future survey. That's what Albertans want, and I'm not going to disagree with what Albertans want. My argument has and will continue to be the way in which we're doing that.

I just outlined the fact that we've experienced surpluses year after year for many years. I'm confident that that will likely continue for a number of years. My argument is: let's have a plan now, today, not for just the \$7 billion, \$8 billion, \$10 billion that we're going to realize by the end of this year but for the \$3 billion or \$4 billion or \$5 billion or \$6 billion or \$8 billion or \$10 billion surplus that we may have next year and the year after that and the year after that and the year after that. I think Albertans deserve some planning and some forethought for how those future surpluses are going to be spent. I'm not going to say forget about this year. I'm not going to say forget about the \$8 billion or \$10 billion surplus this year. But let's be cognizant of the fact that there's a very real possibility that this might happen again next year and the year after and the year after.

If that's that case, let's be planning now, today, for how we're going to invest that money so that, in fact, not only will Albertans have their concerns addressed about the immediate infrastructure needs, which we all recognize and which are being addressed right now, but let's have a plan for what to do when that's done. Quite frankly, the way that spending is taking place right now, there may not be any need for further spending of that magnitude a year or two years down the road.

That's what I've been trying to say all along: let's make a plan not just for today, not just for this surplus but for the ones that are almost sure to come.

An Hon. Member: How many speakers to come?

Mr. R. Miller: Lots. Twenty or 30 speakers. I'll adjourn debate in three minutes if the members would like, but I'm going to take my full 20 minutes.

The Alberta Liberal policy – it's kind of funny – is a surplus policy. I didn't mention it at the press conference after the minister gave her second-quarter update today because I thought I had mentioned it enough times already, and the media was well aware of what it was. In fact, the minister even said: the opposition has a

plan, and I'm sure he'll tell you about it in a few minutes. I chose not to because I've talked about it and talked about it and talked about it. Sure enough, afterwards one of the media said to me: "Well, I thought you guys had a plan. How come you didn't talk about it?" So I guess I'll take a minute to talk about it.

Our surplus plan would allocate 35 per cent of any budget surplus to the heritage savings trust fund. This year alone under our plan that would be \$3 billion that would have gone into the heritage savings trust fund. Three billion dollars would have gone into a postsecondary endowment fund. I'll give the government credit: they've decided to add another \$500 million to their fund. It started off at \$250 million. You might recall during the budget debate in the spring and during debate on Bill 1 in the spring that I actually said that I thought that the floor, the base level of that fund should be set at \$3 billion as opposed to capping it at \$3 billion. In fact, surprisingly enough, under our policy that's where it turns out it would be today.

Twenty-five per cent of all surplus would go to address the infrastructure deficit, which this year would have been \$2.2 billion. Interestingly enough, last year during the election we talked about that total value being somewhere in the order of \$7 billion, and earlier in the year the infrastructure minister conceded that, in fact, it was \$7.2 billion. More recently I was at a function where he spoke, and the minister of infrastructure said that in reality that infrastructure debt is more likely \$10 billion and perhaps even \$12 billion and that if we don't address it quickly, it could be \$14 billion or even bigger. So, clearly, there's a need to be addressing that, and under our plan it would have been addressed.

The remaining 5 per cent of any surplus would have been allocated to an endowment fund that would address the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts. This year alone that would have been nearly \$500 million, or half a billion dollars.

So, in fact, the Alberta Liberal opposition does have a concrete plan that's been well spelled out for some time now as to how these surplus dollars would be addressed. I'm not going to say that it's the perfect plan. It's a very good plan, I believe. There are other plans out there. Certainly, you can look at Norway and their petroleum fund. You can look at Alaska and their permanent fund. You can look at some of the very, very good work that's been done by the Canada West Foundation this year, where they also espouse the idea of resource revenue plans, and their particular plan is 50-50.

I'm so disappointed that I've run out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I look forward to continuing debate in committee. At this time I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that the House adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, November 17, 2005 **1:30 p.m.**
Date: 05/11/17
[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Let us keep ever mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province, and in that work let us find strength and wisdom. Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in your Speaker's gallery today are two very special guests, Mr. Rocky Hanson and his wife, Cathy Hanson, from Edmonton-Mill Creek. They are both very well known for their enormous volunteer contributions at Jackson Heights school, on the Burnewood community league executive, and for their work with several other benevolent groups.

Today, however, I'm particularly proud to salute Mr. Rocky Hanson for his very heroic efforts in assisting several seniors to escape to safety as a life-threatening fire ripped through the Veterans Villa seniors complex only a few days ago. Mr. Speaker, one person died in that fire. Many others were injured. But I shudder to think what might have happened if Rocky Hanson and fellow hero, Brad Smith, hadn't been there to rescue so many vulnerable seniors.

In this international Year of the Veteran, as we look back at the many sacrifices of all of our veterans, I'm humbled to salute a contemporary hero, Mr. Rocky Hanson. Rocky and Cathy and their family have since gone so far as to even open up their home for the victims of the fire. Please join me as I ask them to rise, and let's salute Rocky Hanson and his wife, Cathy.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a number of visitors from the CFB Edmonton official language group. I believe they are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to introduce two incredibly vibrant and intelligent classes from Woodbridge Farms school. The 50 students are accompanied today by two teachers, a teacher assistant, and seven parent helpers. I am going to welcome on your behalf teachers Sheila Busch and Sheryl Ackerman, teacher aide Sushila Nakhwa, parent helpers Wanda Westwood, Pat Turner, Sarah Gaymer, Julie Porter-Anderson, Vanore Voaklander, Mr. Fraser Gerrie, Tara Barnes, and all the students. If they would please rise, we would give them a thunderous welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to introduce to you and to the members assembled a grade 6 class from Fultonvale school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Karin Bittner, and also parents and helpers Ms Sylvia Flannigan, Mrs. Shelley Chalifoux, Mr. Bruce Paterson, Mrs. Carolyn Levey, Mrs. Georgina Dreger, and Mrs. Sue Perry. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly the new executive director of the Northern Alberta Development Council, Mr. Dan Dibbelt. Dan has a long and varied background in municipal and provincial governments as well as economic development that includes work with cities, towns, and rural municipalities throughout the Peace region. His experience in marketing, communities, and freelance journalism will be greatly beneficial to the valuable work that the NADC undertakes. As chair of the NADC I look forward to the energy that Mr. Dibbelt brings with him to his new office. Dan Dibbelt is seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly nine students from the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta who are enrolled in a course on legislative process and legislative planning taught by Mr. Rob Reynolds, our Senior Parliamentary Counsel, and Mr. Peter Pagano, our Chief Legislative Counsel. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly visitors from the Paul Band First Nation school, a school in a very progressive aboriginal community. I believe they are in the members' gallery. There are eight students, two teachers, Mr. Paul Jespersen and Mr. Reg Kastelan, and their bus driver, Mr. Billy Adams. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a special guest in the public gallery. He's a young man who just graduated from Strathcona high school, a high school I attended just a few years ago. He's recently returned from a Rotary exchange in Finland. He's a good athlete, an all-round great kid. He also happens to be the son of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. His name is Chris Miller, and I'd ask him to stand and receive our warm welcome.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and members of the Assembly Ireen Slater, the acting president of

SUN, very active in helping the constituency of St. Albert in a recent Visions workshop on seniors and health. She's just arrived, and I wish her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the newly minted president of my constituency association, Jennifer Krauskopf. Jennifer is one of the thousands of Albertans who volunteer their time to advance the political process, and it's safe to say that none of us would be here today without their help. I would ask Jennifer to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My introduction today is Ron and Lynda Jonson, and I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly both of them. Lynda and Ron are tireless advocates for seniors' issues and improving conditions in Alberta's long-term care facilities. Lynda is a former registered nurse and Ron a retired engineer, both living in Hinton. Together they helped form the group Seniors I Care. Last year they visited over 100 long-term care facilities in this province and collected nearly 5,000 signatures from Albertans seeking better long-term care. I would now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House eight student leaders from the University of Alberta Students' Union. They are here today to remind the government of its commitment to an affordable and quality postsecondary education system that's accessible to all Albertans.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, some of the guests are seated in the public gallery and some may be on the other side in the members' gallery. I would now ask them to rise as I call their names and ask members to hold their applause until all of them are on their feet: Sam Power, vice-president external; Graham Lettner, president; Mat Johnson, vice-president academic; Jason Tobias, vice-president operations and finance; Justin Kehoe, vice-president student life; Catrin Berghoff, arts councillor; Kyle Kawanami, law councillor; and Prem Erubetina, engineering councillor. Please give them a warm welcome.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is Richard Hopkinson. Richard is a first-year student in the social work program at Grant MacEwan College. He has been assisting with casework in our Edmonton-Strathcona constituency since September. He has been of great assistance to us, and we appreciate his hard work for my constituents in Edmonton-Strathcona. I now ask Richard to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Health Care Utilization

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Premier drew the ire of Albertans when he claimed that there was a major problem with undeserving recipients getting AISH payments. Now, just yesterday in this Assembly the Premier stated to the leader of the third party that he was feigning sickness and then said, "That is precisely what puts pressure on the health care system." To the Premier: can the Premier tell this Assembly the basis for his position that Albertans feigning sickness are putting pressure on the health care system? Does he have examples?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I find it strange, to say the least, that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition would allude to what the leader of the third party said to try to make a point. This is like Pinocchio. The point is being stretched beyond all reasonable limits.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the Premier: does the Premier hold the position that Albertans feigning sickness are putting pressure on Alberta's health care system?

Mr. Klein: No. Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the Blues in front of me because what I said was that, first of all, the hon. leader of the third party opposition said that he is sick.

Mr. Mason: Of your answers.

Mr. Klein: He is sick of our answers.

I said that if he is really sick, then we'll call an ambulance for him, and he will be treated under the public health system, but if he is feigning sickness, then that is one of the problems that we face with our health care system, people who are not sick attending emergency wards. If he is truly sick, we'll call an ambulance for him.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Well, given that the Premier just said that he thinks one of the problems in Alberta's health care system is people feigning sickness, does he have examples? Can he tell us the basis for that position?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, again he is stretching, stretching, stretching, and it indicates to me that they have nothing else to criticize.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Continuing Care Funding

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again my question is to the Premier. Given that people across this province are sitting right now in short-staffed, substandard long-term care facilities, how did this government decide that everything from a zoo to a movie is worth funding this fall but not extra staff in long-term care facilities?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, it's too bad that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition didn't stay around at the AAMD and C conference today, where we made an announcement relative to \$140 million, that hopefully they'll support, being spent for seniors and affordable housing around the province, primarily in the rural areas.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Premier can tell us how much of that \$140 million is going to extra staff now to support people in long-term care facilities.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the question is specific to the departments of health and seniors, so I'll have the appropriate ministers respond.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the recommendations from the task force came forward, were collaborated on, and they did in fact identify staffing as an issue. Presently through the standing policy committee the report that's been finalized by our members for Lacombe-Ponoka and Calgary-Foothills – we also had input from the Member for Lethbridge-East, who served on the committee. We have taken that report and taken a very serious look at what any interim implementation costs would be for staff. I think, if the hon. member listens for a few more days, in a very few weeks, hopefully before Christmas, we'll have some very good news about the staffing and some of the other recommendations that were, in fact, part of that report.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are urgent, urgent human issues.

To the Minister of Health and Wellness: why did this government choose in its recent spending spree not to allocate funding for front-line staff in continuing care given that the Auditor General and the MLA task force and friends and family and staff and industry all recommended it? Why are they waiting?

Ms Evans: Relative to the unbudgeted surplus, as the hon. member opposite knows, there are definite rules surrounding how we expend that. In terms of getting this report . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, maybe they're not interested in the answer. Maybe they're not interested. The answer, in fact, is that we have to take a look at it. It's very responsible to come forward. We asked for what the regional health authorities currently have in staffing. We upped the staffing from 3.1 hourly support for long-term care to 3.4 hourly support for long-term care this year. In many facilities where that was not available, we have been looking at accelerating our training for staffing. If the hon. members opposite will be patient for a few more days, I'm sure that we'll be able to illustrate to Albertans that our number one priority is looking after the long-term care and following through with the great work that was done in assessing needs.

One more point, Mr. Speaker. The Broda report talked about the shift to keeping people in their homes. We also are looking very seriously at how we support home care to make sure that that is compliant with the more recent trend to keeping people in their homes.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly along the same lines. As has been mentioned, I was a member of that task force. This summer I heard from the people in continuing care and their families about the loss of care, dignity, and respect in our continuing care facilities. The Auditor General pointed out those same deficiencies. As has been mentioned by the Minister of Health and Wellness, there were hours changed. Since last spring I think it's

been 1.9 to 3.4, which were being put forward in stages. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness would be: what stage are we at right now, and has there been an evaluation on those hours?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, in most of the regional health authorities they have been able to comply with a move to 3.4 hours per patient. There are, however, some places where that staffing was not available or some other reason that the organization of the facility, in the view of the regional health authority, had not met that requirement. They've all assured me that by January 1, 2006, they will in the current budget year with the current budget dollars meet and comply with that.

Relative to further additions for staffing that might be implicit with the long-term continuing care report done by the MLAs, as I say: more news to come.

1:50

Ms Pastoor: Thank you for that answer. It pretty much covers my second question. I really do need to know when we are going to get those dollars because we need them now.

I'll jump to my third question. What is the timeline for that short-term strategy and the long-term strategy given the division between housing and care?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I think the questions are very good because it does profile what has to be done and it does profile the work that we have been doing in government. When a report was done by the MLAs, when it went out for more consultation in September, we had yet to put it through the process of standing policy committee, also to cabinet, caucus, and Treasury Board. Recognizing the need to improve on the hourly supports for staff and also to try and work to make sure that we've got the proper staff trained, when we make an announcement, I think it will be very clear that we have an interim strategy, and the new budget year will see yet more progress being made to fulfill the obligations of all 45 recommendations.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Securities Commission

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On March 10, 2004, the Alberta Securities Commission's director of enforcement signed an order directing his staff to investigate insider trading allegations against an unnamed public company. On the same day the director of enforcement bought shares in the very same company. Three and a half months later, on June 21, 2004, the director of enforcement sold all of his shares, realizing a significant gain. Martha Stewart went to jail for less. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Given the Auditor General's finding that the director of enforcement was in a conflict of interest in transacting shares in a company that he was responsible for investigating, why is the Minister of Finance allowing the ASC to cover up this corruption?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, to suggest that there is a cover-up is quite a stretch because the Auditor General on pages 29, 30, and 31 covers all of this issue and lays it out very clearly. That's why, probably, the hon. member knows about it.

What I can tell you is that the Alberta Securities Commission, upon learning of this, had a complete investigation of it. It was determined that it was inadvertent, that the shares were bought through a broker. What the Auditor General has done in his report is put in recommendations that will ensure as much as possible that this doesn't happen again.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you have to understand that under investigations of this type you don't put a list on the wall and say: these companies are under investigation. You rely on a process, that when the case comes in, these are handled very confidentially because they are investigations, and you don't harm a company through an investigative process. You deal with it if you find that there is an issue with that company. So I ask the hon. member to understand that.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the minister: what did the director of enforcement know about this company when he bought shares in it, and has she bothered to ask that question?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, frankly, it's outlined here very clearly what happened. The director of enforcement through his broker bought and sold shares in a company. It was found that this company was under investigation. The Auditor General clearly lays out in the report all of the process that happened. What the Auditor General is saying is: improve that process to ensure that when any person in ASC purchases shares, there is a methodology that as much as possible ensures that the shares purchased, which must be disclosed within 10 days of purchase, are not in a company that is under investigation. You cannot expect a person to know that unless you have that process tightened up. That's what the Auditor General recommended, and that's what the Alberta Securities Commission is doing.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In refusing to take action to enforce the Auditor General's recommendations to take action against the ASC and force them to deal with the director of enforcement in this matter, what is the minister covering up, and who is she protecting?

Mrs. McClellan: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'm protecting no one. Let me point out to you that the Auditor General found this breach because it was well documented in the Alberta Security Commission's files, which he had complete access to. That does not suggest to me any cover-up. Then the chairman of the commission met with the Auditor General. They discussed timelines and how to put processes in place as recommended by the Auditor General, and it was agreed on what those would be. I asked if the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission had requested a meeting with the Auditor General. The answer to that was no. The chairman of the commission phoned the Auditor General and asked him if he had an issue, and he said that he was simply responding to calls that he was getting, because he was away when the report was released.

You know, I'm struggling with this. The Auditor General put out a report, in three pages clearly outlined all of this, outlined the procedure. The Alberta Securities Commission have agreed with the recommendations of the Auditor General, have investigated it thoroughly. Mr. Speaker, this is the way this should be dealt with.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Flood Disaster Relief

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across the province and in

my constituency people are still drying out after the worst flooding in recent memory. People's lives and homes were severely affected by this flooding, and some are still trying to recover from the damage that their homes and businesses suffered in June. My question is to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. How much longer will these people have to wait to receive some badly needed dollars for their badly needed repairs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset let me say that nothing that I could possibly say would diminish in any way the tremendous loss, both financial and personal, that literally thousands of Albertans experienced during the flooding that we had this spring.

That being said, I have to note that this disaster recovery program is the largest such program that this province has ever experienced. In fact, at 11,000 applications, it exceeds the total sum of all previous programs in the last 10 years, so it has been a huge undertaking to administer and deal with all of the claims from this program.

Mr. Speaker, at this point nearly 90 per cent of all files have been completed and cheques issued. There are some 10 per cent that have not been completed, most of those due to a need for some further information, either information from insurance companies or invoices. I can assure the hon. member that for anyone who has all of the necessary paperwork in place on those files, we will be doing the very, very best that we can to have those cheques issued immediately.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what am I supposed to tell the person who calls me up and tells me that they only received a few thousand dollars from the program when their damage totals in the tens of thousands of dollars? Is it just a case of tough luck?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, it's very important that Albertans and members of this House understand that the disaster recovery program is not an insurance program. It's a program that is designed to assist Albertans who have suffered significant loss to restore their lives as best as possible to pre-flood conditions. The program, however, is a regulated program that deals with compensation to individuals based upon what is deemed to be reasonable. It doesn't cover losses for items that would be deemed either unnecessary for day-to-day living or considered luxury items.

What I can tell members, Mr. Speaker, is that our staff is working diligently to ensure that every applicant to this program receives 100 per cent of the compensation that they're entitled to under this program.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this flooding has occurred twice in the last 10 years, what is the government doing to help Albertans avoid this type of flooding damage in the future?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that's the key to this entire situation. We have programs in place both provincially and federally to deal with floods and such events after the fact. We don't have programs in place to deal with the mitigation to prevent them from happening in the first place. I'm very pleased to say that

Municipal Affairs is participating in a Flood Risk Management Committee, which is examining ways of preventing future large-scale flood damage in the province. I understand the committee will be looking at a number of things such as flood forecasting and adopting measures that curtail development in flood-prone areas. The Member for Highwood is leading the committee, and we look forward to seeing his report early next year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Legal Aid

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Access to justice is a fundamental right for all people, including the poor. It is the province's responsibility to properly administer and fund a legal aid system for poor defendants. This involves allowing a person with low income or no income to choose a lawyer who they feel would best represent their interests, not who the government chooses for them. My question is for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Would the minister explain why the government is moving toward an in-house system in which the government has complete and full control over both sides, the prosecution and the defence, thus undermining the independence of the legal profession?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I became Minister of Justice and Attorney General about a year ago, I had occasion to meet with the chair of the Legal Aid Society, and the first words out of his mouth were: Mr. Minister, I want to tell you how excellent things are. The legal aid system in Alberta, if not the best in Canada, is certainly among the best. It is, admittedly, like all legal aid systems across Canada in the last year of funding relating to the federal government, and we're working with them to ensure that it is ongoing and that the term is for five years and that the amount of coverage is expanded.

Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to be ashamed about. In fact, we should be very proud of the legal aid system that we have because it provides the best access for the people in need to legal services in Canada.

Dr. B. Miller: To the same minister: is this government changing the rules to exclude lawyers in private practice, even those who would serve pro bono for poor people?

Mr. Stevens: The concept of pro bono, Mr. Speaker, is an individual obligation on the part of any lawyer. It simply means that what you do is provide services to people who have need of legal services without charging for them, and of course that's an individual obligation. It has nothing to do with the government. It's something that lawyers do. It is something that the Law Society of Alberta encourages their members to do, and it is something that this minister encourages lawyers to do.

Dr. B. Miller: Given that an in-house public defender system, that we see elsewhere, especially south of the border, limits access to justice for the poor, what assurances do we have that difficult, hard-to-handle cases will not be simply just swept aside?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, there are in-house legal aid systems in Canada, particularly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, two of our sister prairie provinces. I can tell this hon. member that if you go to

those particular provinces and ask the justice minister, as I have, in those particular provinces, "Do those particular programs work well?" the answer will be, "Yes, they work very well."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Contaminated Sites Cleanup in Calgary

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our Calgary-Fort constituency covers the largest industrial area in Calgary and that our living environment – the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the ground we live on – is of critical importance to our daily living, my questions today are to the Minister of Environment. Given that the cleanup in Lynnview Ridge in my constituency has not been started, dragging on too long, missing too many construction seasons, can the minister update us on his action for this speedy cleanup?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, as the hon. member has mentioned on behalf of his citizens, this has been quite a long process, but I am very pleased to report to this Assembly that there has been an agreement that has been reached, in place in terms of the cleanup for Lynnview Ridge and all of its residents, who are going to benefit from this.

Since day one our primary concern as Ministry of Environment is, of course, the safety and protection of residents but also with the protection of the environment because it is the resident's home that we have to assure based on laws that we approved in this very Assembly, that members have approved.

I want to say that the work is going on, and I also want to say that the work is commencing, and I will report back to the House on the good work that is being done to restore the communities back to the way it should be based on what it was before this terrible event took place.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Given that another situation in the southeast corner of the community of Ogden, where a seepage of cleaning fluid from the big rail yard shop flowed into underground water, can the minister update us on the cleanup there?

Mr. Boutilier: The hon. member lives in an area where, of course, environmental protection has clearly impacted many of the constituents that he represents. My ministry is working closely with the Calgary health region and also ensuring that CP Rail protects the health of its residents.

We are taking concrete action, to the hon. member, relative to this cleanup. They are upgrading a barrier to prevent any further contamination, Mr. Speaker. Also, the indoor air quality of all the homes and other potentially affected buildings is continuously being tested by the ministry officials. I can assure the members of this Assembly that those responsible are being held to account for a complete and full cleanup of the contamination that took place and due to the very strong laws that this very Assembly and its members have approved in the past in protecting the environment here and the citizens we represent.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is also to the same minister. Given that yet another situation in the northeast corner of my riding, where an oil recycling plant was completely demolished by a tragic and devastating fire, can the minister update us on this site cleanup?

Mr. Boutilier: Once again to the member, I can assure him and members of this Assembly that Hub Oil, under the strong laws that we have in place, has been required in terms of a plan and executing that plan to the standards that we have of course set up in this very Assembly – that is being carried out. I can assure the member and the members of this Assembly that we will, again, hold to account to remediate and get back to the full order of what citizens enjoyed well before this, again, ecological disaster took place as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Little Bow.

Restructuring and Government Efficiency

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Order in Council 506, dated November 2, 2005, and referencing the Government Organization Act, removed the cross-ministry responsibility for the human resources services program from the Ministry of Restructuring and Government Efficiency and transferred it back to 19 out of the other 22 ministries. So it would appear that RAGE has even less work to do now. My questions are all to the hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency. Can the minister explain why this particular responsibility was taken away from his department?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, we have human resource people right across government within all the ministries. We had done a review of how they were all looked after. There were managers in each one of those ministries, and we also had people in those ministries that were answering to us, and we felt that it was just a lot more efficient to leave those people in the ministries answering to the managers that were there.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So can the minister tell us, then, if RAGE is still responsible for these same services in the three remaining ministries: Aboriginal Affairs, Gaming, and International and Intergovernmental Relations?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, we do still have some HR people, and we still do help any ministries we need and allow these people to work in any ministries.

Mr. Elsalhy: Okay. Given that even the Auditor General is unsure of what RAGE actually does anymore, can the minister explain to this House and to all Albertans exactly what programs or deliverables RAGE is engaged in right now to make this government more efficient? I'm assuming that this is his mandate.

Mr. R. Miller: SuperNet is gone.

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing things about SuperNet, and whenever I hear that word, I have to say: that's one of the best initiatives this government ever brought in to help in rural development.

We have 1,300 employees in our ministry, and we do a number of cross-government initiatives throughout this government. It's not a flashy, sexy, fancy ministry. We do everything behind the scenes to make sure that all the mail is delivered, that all the computers are working. We have 27,000 desktop computers that we have to look after, and that's just one of a number of things. We do have initiatives that we're working very hard on today. We've got an ICT initiative that's coming out that will form one system right across government, that will save this government all kinds of efficiencies, and we also have a regulatory review process that's going to be coming forward shortly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Waste Management Strategy

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many years, over 20 to be precise, Vulcan county council has looked at, investigated, and continues to explore the concept of incinerating our garbage to cogenerate power, and I have a couple of questions that I'd like to ask the Minister of Environment. The first one to the minister is this. After a recent trip by our colleague from Whitecourt-Ste. Anne to investigate different methods of disposing garbage, would the minister be able to inform us how your provincial waste management strategy is progressing after this recent tour?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say to the members of this Assembly that I look forward, with the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, to reporting back to this House.

Alberta has been and remains a leader when it comes to recycling programs, be it in terms of recycling tires, regarding bottles, used oil, and electronic waste, but we can do better because I believe that's an attitude that all Albertans and members of this Assembly have when it comes to protecting the environment. I was very pleased, though, that the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne and a delegation of officials travelled to Scandinavia and to parts of Europe to learn what things are working well that we can incorporate into our strategy here pertaining to incineration as well as other things.

Let me conclude by simply saying this. Relative to the issue of garbage and waste, I believe that Albertans clearly have a view regarding this important resource, that it's simply too good to waste.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A semipuffball to the minister: will our progressive county councils who wish to consider alternate methods possibly be able to incinerate our garbage in the future rather than burying it under prime real estate and good, agriculturally productive land?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I believe that North Americans, if you look at the issue of incinerating garbage – first of all, it is a terrible admission in terms of North Americans that North Americans I believe are the most wasteful people on this planet. Part of that, if you examine the situation, is this: what is being done regarding landfill is that it's simply buried. That's not good enough for Albertans. We, of course, are formulating regional landfills in terms of less landfills. It is my hope and prayer that someday there will no longer be any landfills in this province.

I want to say that incineration is just one of a variety of efforts that we need to seriously look at from a technological perspective for ensuring and protecting our environment today and well into the future. Let me assure you, to many of us in here whose our garbage ends up in a landfill, hold onto your hat because ultimately each and every one of us is going to have to have a greater responsibility in terms of having less waste, number one, recycling more, and at the end of the day no landfills because of the fact that other options will be available for protecting Alberta's environment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From a rural development point of view, Mr. Minister, is it feasible that smaller, more numerous cogeneration incineration sites will be more advantageous than large central ones?

Mr. Boutilier: As the technology continues to develop, I think that is so critical. The opportunities both economic and environmental, I think, are absolutely at the cusp in terms of what we will be able to achieve. Not only will this province be the energy capital of Canada. I am convinced that with the initiatives this government is taking, we can be the environmental capital of this country as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Water Quality in Ellerslie Elementary School

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School water quality is not something parents should have to worry about when they send their children off to school. In my constituency Ellerslie elementary school has had its water trucked in for decades. When the water truck is late, there is no water for the children. My question is to the Minister of Education. Why is the minister allowing some Alberta children to have to wait for water in their school?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I haven't been made aware of this particular issue, but it sounds like the member does have something that is worthy of pursuing. I'd be happy to learn more about it. We do require school boards under section 45(8) to provide a safe and caring environment for their students, and I think this issue would fit right within that. So we should find out from the school board if they're aware of it and what they are doing as well.

Mr. Agnihotri: I think I already discussed that with them.

My question to you again: will this minister investigate the situation in that school to ensure that clean water, clean tap water, is available as a Christmas present for them?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been a long time since I played Santa, but I will tell you this: I will have someone look into this immediately. I can assure the member of that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the government funds water wells for schools overseas, when will this minister get city water to this Edmonton school?

Mr. Zwozdesky: I think the process would require the principal to

inform the superintendent and the superintendent to inform the board, if necessary, and then ensure that some process is put in place. Quite frankly, I'm surprised that this hasn't already happened, but if it hasn't, I will certainly find out why not, and then we'll get some action moving.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

First-contract Labour Arbitration

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This fall Albertans witnessed a bitter and unnecessary strike at Lakeside Packers. The Lakeside strike was settled in spite of – and I stress: in spite of – Alberta's weak labour laws and only because of the resolve of the union and the fact that it was becoming a public relations disaster for Tyson Foods. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. It should be self-evident that first-contract arbitration is a necessity. My question is simply this: why are we not bringing in first-contract arbitration in this fall sitting?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, before I answer the question, I'd like to table five copies of a report on collective agreements settled in Alberta.

The Speaker: There's an appropriate time in the Routine to do that, so just answer the question.

2:20

Mr. Cardinal: Okay. In relation to the question itself, Mr. Speaker, yes.

An Hon. Member: It's his first day.

Mr. Cardinal: Just the other day, in fact, two days . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is one of the more interesting question periods I've had. I'd like to continue because the minister has said in the past that he needs time to study this. It's a lot of time to study first-contract arbitration. I have in front of me copies from eight different jurisdictions about first-contract arbitration. My question to the minister is simply this: why is the minister still claiming that he doesn't have enough information to act on first-contract arbitration? I will table it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to indicate that in relation to labour relations in Alberta – and this is very, very important – with the very hot economy out there, thousands of jobs, labour relations in Alberta are probably the best in North America – the best labour relations – and we have proof of that. Ninety-nine point nine per cent of the last two fiscal years the collective agreements were settled in Alberta without any labour interruption.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, tell that to the people that were on the picket line at Lakeside/Tyson. Tell it to the Finning people and all the other people that are on strike in this province. My question is simply this to the minister: when there are eight jurisdictions that have first-contract arbitration, why is this minister not moving so we

do not have another Tyson? It should be done immediately, in this session.

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, to start with, the labour dispute was not with our government. The labour dispute was with private industry and a union. There are over 1,300 collective agreements; 750 of them are private company/labour agreements, and most of them have been settled.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Teachers' Unfunded Pension Liability

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of collective agreements, many teachers in my constituency continue to raise concerns about the unfunded liability in the teachers' pension plan. While this liability is of concern to all currently active teachers, it is particularly a concern to those teachers who began their careers after '92-93. My question is to the Minister of Education. What are you doing to address the teachers' unfunded pension liability, that has grown to over \$6 billion?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think the short answer is that we as a government are honouring our commitment to an agreement that was signed in 1992 whereby the government of Alberta assumed two-thirds of the unfunded liability and teachers, the other partner, assumed the other third. Prior to 1992 that particular pension fund that's being referred to, unfortunately, was underfunded by both sponsors. It was underfunded by the teachers; it was underfunded by the government. I have heard about this issue, and I hope that within the next several months I'll be able to visit it again and see if there is any room to reopen some chats or negotiations or whatever it might be.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that about a year or two ago we almost had a 10-year contract signed with the ATA if we took over the debt, have there been any new discussions around government assuming responsibility for the entire amount of this unfunded liability?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, it's true that an offer, albeit a verbal one, had been made in 2004 by my predecessor to both the Alberta Teachers' Association, the ATA, and to the Alberta School Boards Association, ASBA. Now, that did call for a 10-year labour peace framework, but unfortunately neither ASBA or ATA or the minister of the day were able to consummate, if you will, that offer into an actual deal. However, it's important also to note that in the '02-03 year, hon. member, this government did pay the entire amount of the teachers' portion, which was about \$60 million. That was done on a one-time basis.

It's unfortunate, I think, that the '04 agreement wasn't offered to all the teachers to actually vote on because what teachers out there are telling me is that they may well have gone for it. Now, I understand that there were some downsides to it – those have been expressed – but, still, overall it was a pretty generous offer by this government because it amounted to about \$1.9 billion.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess, again, given

that Alberta's Commission on Learning has recommended provincial bargaining, will the minister consider either buying down the unfunded portion that the teachers are responsible for or perhaps buying out one of more years to try to keep things moving along here?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are probably three options that would need to be considered should this come back onto the government's radar screen. One would be to do nothing and leave it the way it sits because there is an agreement in place. The second would be to either take over the teachers' portion totally, which would impact us in a very significant way, to the tune of almost \$2 billion dollars, and the third might be to look at some creative option in the middle of that, which might well be a possible – and I stress the word "possible" – consideration of a partial buy-down or a partial buyout or perhaps a one-time buy-in.

It's a very sensitive issue out there, Mr. Speaker, and I want to just say that this is beginning to impact young people wanting to come into the teaching profession, so we have to deal with this sensitively. We will open up some discussions at the appropriate time. Unfortunately, I can't do that right now.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Casino Construction

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the provincial government lifted the moratorium on casinos in 2002, there's been a building boom in casino construction that rivals anything going on in Fort McMurray. Alberta's 17th casino opens in Calgary next week, and if all of the casinos that have been approved or are close to being approved are built, Alberta will shortly have 26 casinos, one of the highest number of any jurisdiction in North America. In keeping with this government's endemic lack of foresight, this explosion of legalized gambling is going ahead without planning or thought to the future. My question is for the Minister of Gaming. Does the minister have any limit in mind on the number of casinos that will be allowed in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true; there is a wonderful new casino opening in Calgary next week and others that are under construction. The board of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission has an eight-step process. It's a very detailed process. When they open up a region for applications, people interested in building a new casino survey the neighbourhood and the region, if you will. They consult with existing casino operators in the area to see that they're not stealing from one casino, basically, to fund another one. They check with the charities. There's no point in having too many casinos and having a charity work twice as hard and make half as much money. So it's a very detailed process, and when approval is given, you can rest assured that the board feels that there is a market there and that it's not going to influence the existing casinos.

Mr. Tougas: I'll ask the same question, Mr. Speaker. Is there any maximum number of casinos that you have in mind for Alberta?

Mr. Graydon: There's no number, Mr. Speaker, but I would anticipate that the board will be moving cautiously along now with any new applications. I'm not sure that there are any in the process

at the moment, but they will wait and see the influence that the ones that are already approved have on the market, if you will. If they deem that there's no room for any more, there won't be any more.

Mr. Tougas: Will the minister consider reinstating the moratorium on casino construction and expansion in Alberta?

Mr. Graydon: No. It's market driven, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we survey the market and the municipality very carefully to make sure that it's market driven. We do maintain our cap of 6,000 video lottery terminals in the province, and we've reduced the number of locations where those VLTs are available by 14 per cent in the last year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Anthony Henday Ring Road

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to see that a new portion of Edmonton's ring road was opened recently on the south side of Edmonton. However, my constituents in northwest Edmonton are wondering when they will be given the same consideration. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Mr. Minister, when will we see the north section of the Anthony Henday ring road?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We recently opened six kilometres of the southwest portion of the Anthony Henday, which is an absolute excellent bonus to the citizens of Edmonton.

2:30

Mr. Speaker, we are also presently working on a very small section of the northwest leg of the ring road, and the rationale behind that is that it will connect up with the St. Albert bypass, which will help the citizens of St. Albert as well as the citizens of Edmonton. We anticipate that this will be done in the fall of 2006.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the whole Edmonton ring road, we're currently on schedule and are anticipating that it will be done by 2011, all things being equal. We are certainly optimistic that we will be able to meet that target.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you. My first supplemental to the same minister: in completing the north section of the Anthony Henday freeway, is the minister considering a P3 modality of financing?

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very short answer to this is yes. When you take a look at the ring road and the extensive amount of dollars that are available for it and that are to be used for the funding of that road, you're probably looking at somewhere in the \$500 million to \$700 million range. For us to essentially sterilize those dollars within one or two years would be very, very difficult.

Mr. Speaker, as a P3 we would be able to extend out the payments over a period of time as we have done on the southeast portion of the Anthony Henday. Obviously, every P3 goes through an extensive business case. It goes through an extensive assessment to ensure that taxpayers are getting the best benefit of the dollars. Each P3, regardless of the project, still has to go through that particular process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you. My last supplemental to the same minister: can Edmontonians, then, be assured that this process will be faster and cheaper?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, one of the great things about a P3 is that we're able to guarantee when it will be done. On the southeast portion of the Anthony Henday, for example, I can tell the Assembly and the people of Edmonton that it will be finished in October of 2007. The reason I can say that is because on November 1 of 2007 the contractors will be fined a million dollars. On December 1 of 2007 it will be another million dollars and will continue on with a million dollar fine per month until it is done. So it's an excellent way to get projects done on time, on budget, and hopefully as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: Hon. members, today in a 50-minute question period we had 84 questions and answers, which was quite good.

I will call on the first member to participate today, but might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly three gentlemen in our members' gallery. The first gentleman is from Winnipeg and is, in fact, the president of the Winnipeg firefighters' association. The second gentleman, from Edmonton, is the president of the Edmonton firefighters' association, and the third gentleman is the VP of the Edmonton firefighters' association. These three gentlemen have been instrumental and tireless advocates on behalf of firefighters' issues not just this year but over the last number of years and not only in Alberta but, in fact, because a representative from Manitoba is here, right across the country.

It's my pleasure to introduce Alex Forrest, Ken Block, and Greg Holubowich, who are in our gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe my guests are here, students from Windsor Park school accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Maureen Irvine, and parents Mrs. Lynn Parish and Ms Cathy McPhalen. Windsor Park is a long-established school in my constituency which routinely achieves remarkable academic results. It's absolutely one of the top schools in the province. If they are here, if that's the school from Windsor Park, please rise and receive the warm welcome from all members.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour on behalf of the Premier to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of grade 10 students who are here from the Clear Water Academy in Calgary. Clear Water Academy

is an independent Catholic school located in the Premier's riding and is one of the province's top private schools. We have students visiting us; we have chaperones and teachers. They're here to learn about our legislative process and to tour our beautiful winter Legislature Grounds. I would like them to stand and would ask all members to give them a very warm welcome to our Legislature.

The Speaker: I mentioned that we had a 50-minute question period in this Assembly. Next year a certain member in this Assembly will surround herself with that number, but it's not at that point. It is her birthday today, and she advises me that she would never, ever reach that number which I can't mention. But happy birthday to the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Centennial Celebrations in Bonnyville

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on an immensely positive note to commend the many volunteers, participants, and particularly the municipal governments in my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Over the summer and indeed throughout this entire year the many activities celebrating Alberta's 100 years were well received. These celebrations culminated on September 1 with the Party of the Century, where Albertans joined together across the province to celebrate our centennial. The town of Bonnyville in my constituency was one of the 10 host locations, and we stopped at no means to truly make this the biggest 100th birthday party ever.

I would like to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to share with you and all others the unparalleled co-operation demonstrated by the hosts of the Bonnyville party, who are the town of Bonnyville, the municipal district of Bonnyville, the city of Cold Lake, and the village of Glendon. This party was such a success because of this outstanding display of regional co-operation.

Constituents and visitors alike enjoyed a celebration that included superb local talent, cultural performers, free food and refreshments, and ended with a dazzling display of fireworks. My thanks also go to the many volunteers and community organizations who willingly became involved in this presentation. I know that many worked tirelessly in preparing the grounds, cooking, serving food, performing, or cleaning up.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend my personal congratulations to the people of my constituency for this most impressive presentation of Alberta pride.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Federal/Provincial Relations

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October we observed the 25th anniversary of the national energy program. Once again in some parts of our country the pressure is on to redistribute our resource revenue and wealth. They are promoting it as protection for our environment, and the acronym is Kyoto, which stands for "keep you oppressed through overtaxation."

Albertans believe it is time for this province to stand up against Ottawa's intrusions in many areas before they strike again. Many say that it is time we put forth a resolution to amend our Constitution to protect many areas from the dictatorship of the federal government. An example of how this should have worked recently is if this

government had the leadership to push for a constitutional amendment tied to a referendum on marriage last fall. Alberta could have set an example for other provinces by forcing it onto the federal agenda. We should have fought the tide, but this government did not take all legal means within its powers, as it indicated it would. This can and should be done.

Albertans can protect all Canadians by stopping federal intrusions, by opting out of federal government social programs which are provincial responsibilities. Just looking at two federally mandated programs, daycare and the CAIS programs, shows just how bad the management of the federal government is when it intrudes in provincial matters.

The time has come for Alberta to take a leadership role – to act, not talk – to protect the family's rights in all the provinces and territories in Confederation. It is time to show Ottawa that we are serious in a democratic process, unlike Paul Martin's talk, and pass a resolution that in conjunction with the next federal election we have a referendum on the definition of marriage here in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

National Child Day

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and recognize that November 20 is National Child Day. November 20 was designated National Child Day by the government of Canada to commemorate Canada's signing of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. This day celebrates children and all things that make them special to us. It's a day to realize how precious youth are and to recognize their importance and contributions. It is a day to celebrate the promise of their future.

2:40

Albertans take the health and safety of children very seriously. It's important that children are given every opportunity to grow up healthy and secure, especially during their developing years from zero to six. This government actively supports families and communities, enabling them to provide nurturing, safe environments for their children. We work with families and communities to break the cycles of family violence, abuse, and poverty. Across this province communities and all levels of government work together to ensure that Alberta's children are safe from harm, are given every opportunity to grow up in safety and to realize their full potential.

I encourage all of you to use National Child Day as an opportunity to make this day special for children in your life.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Minable Oil Sands Strategy

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three weeks ago the government quietly announced a new strategy for northern Alberta. It's called the minable oil sands strategy, and its goal is simple. MOSS, as the government refers to it, places oil sands mining above all other environmental or social considerations in the Wood Buffalo region. It takes 2,600 square kilometres of boreal forest, wildlife habitat, lakes, and rivers and declares them essentially free of environmental regulation. MOSS relieves oil sands companies of the duty to conduct environmental assessments or to protect wildlife. In their own words, they are shifting from considering the environment and development on equal footing to placing a higher priority onto oil sands exploitation.

MOSS is a dangerous precedent. It allows companies to disturb navigable waters and even allows them to reroute tributaries of the Athabasca River. MOSS would sacrifice decades of environmental regulation and responsibilities for the convenience of several oil sands megaprojects. This gold rush mentality that underlies oil sands development should not give us a licence to make poor choices. With this MOSS proposal the provincial government is absolving its responsibility to steward a huge section of northern Alberta. They seem perfectly willing to sacrifice the environment for energy practices that are clearly destructive and unsustainable.

Oil sands are the single most greenhouse gas intensive form of oil extraction in the world. Three barrels of river water are required for every barrel of bitumen in a time when water shortages are a reality in Alberta. Oil sands use massive amounts of natural gas for their extraction and refinement, the same resources that are now in steady decline. As the president and CEO for Dow Canada said earlier this year about our reserves of natural gas, we're lighting the candles at the dinner table with hundred dollar bills.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Prevention of Bullying

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week communities across the province are recognizing Bullying Awareness Week. Bullying happens every seven minutes on the playground and every 25 minutes in the classroom. Bullying leaves scars that last a lifetime, making prevention an important government priority.

Last June the government launched a three-year province-wide bullying prevention program. I encourage children to learn how to handle bullying by playing an interactive game at teamheroes.ca. The game teaches children to find their own hero within by introducing them to the S-Team heroes. These heroes are a team of bully-proofing champions that help kids protect themselves and others from bullying. Parents need to learn about bullying, too, and I encourage them to sit down and play this game with their kids.

Parents can also learn more about bullying prevention through a web resource called bullyfreealberta.ca. This website provides useful tips on what to do if your child is a victim of bullying, if your child is the one being the bully, or if your child is a witness to a bullying situation. Schools play an integral role in bullying prevention and are making a difference. This is one of the many reasons Alberta is recognized internationally for its outstanding and caring education system.

However, making bullying history also requires the combined efforts of government, school boards, teachers, students, and communities. Last June more than 6,000 key community partners including schools, libraries, parent link centres, and sports associations received a starter kit to help eliminate or reduce bullying in their community. These kits contain a series of posters, fact sheets, and a comic book based on the online S-Team heroes game for communities with limited Internet access. These materials are also available online at bullyfreealberta.ca.

Mr. Speaker, everybody has a role to play in bullying prevention, and anybody can make a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Foster Parents

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Foster parents are an

under-recognized treasure. Theirs is one of the longest-standing parts of Alberta social services. Their service is one reason we have more kids that make it and fewer tragedies, failures, and young offenders. They are not highly paid, and they receive less attention and recognition than many newer and smaller sectors of our social infrastructure.

In the past 20 years we have accredited many kinds of mentors and caregivers: midwives, special-needs assistants, many kinds of therapists and counsellors, paramedics, and practitioners. Some, like midwives, are long-standing professions. Others are relative newcomers. All are receiving a higher profile.

Foster parents bring together the skills of a counsellor, private nurse, tutor, massage therapist, mentor, and corrections officer. It is time they be recognized and paid as the homemakers they are. It is significant that a government that talks so much about traditional families and values has not done more to support foster parents.

Foster parents have shared their own homes and provided a long tradition of care for those children who through no fault of their own lack the kind of family experience so many others enjoy or take for granted. Foster parents should be recognized for their contribution to our society and our province. This means fair remuneration and adequate sources for support.

As we hear of tragedy throughout the world and needs around the globe, we understand that we are called to support our global family. I believe this must begin at home, and I salute our foster parents. They are champions of compassion.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am submitting a petition which, again, was initiated by a constituent from Edmonton-McClung and signed by a group of concerned Alberta parents from all over the province, in this one in particular from Edmonton and Camrose, asking the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate school fees charged for textbooks, locker rentals, field trips, physical fitness programs, and music lessons.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition that says:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation declaring a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from 100 Alberta tradesmen and women, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

They're from Fort McMurray, Athabasca, Edmonton, Calgary, Devon, Leduc, and Ardrossan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on a Standing Order 30 application.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise, after having provided your office with the required written notice earlier this morning, to give the full Assembly notice of my intent to move the following motion under Standing Order 30: be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the failure of the government to provide additional resources required to reduce the grave and immediate risks to the health and physical security of seniors living in Alberta's long-term care facilities as identified in the May 2005 Report of the Auditor General on Seniors Care and Programs.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader and Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, and 42.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48 be dealt with that day. There being no additional motions, Mr. Speaker, no motions for returns other than those, there are none to stand and retain.

head: 2:50 **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Bill 50

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

The purpose of Bill 50 is to provide workmen's compensation benefits to firefighters who suffer a myocardial infarction, which in laymen's terms is a heart attack or heart event, within 24 hours after attendance at an emergency response. The myocardial infarction will be presumed to have arisen out of and occurred during the course of employment as a firefighter unless the contrary is proven. The bill also changes the reporting of the medical panel's commissioner, making the panel's independence of the WCB very clear.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 50 read a first time]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'd move that Bill 50 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one that I'd like to table is another letter, this time from Dale and Anne Watson of Westrose, Alberta, that's part of a growing chorus of Albertans who demand that the Minister of Health

and Wellness cancel her ministry's contract with Aon Consulting and stop wasting time and money on dangerous health care privatization.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is another letter, this time from Rod McConnell, which was sent to the Premier and all MLAs. Mr. McConnell expresses frustration that the health minister's office would provide no information on public consultation on health care privatization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling this afternoon, and it's a letter that I received dated November 7, 2005. It's from Shirley R. Howe, the public service commissioner. This letter is in regard to Mr. Murray Smith and his activities at TUSK Energy Corporation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three documents to table today, two fax sheets prepared by PollutionWatch. One highlights national pollution facts. The other provides pollution facts specific to Alberta. PollutionWatch has found that Alberta produces the most air pollution of any province in Canada, including one billion kilograms of pollutants released from industrial facilities in 2003.

I would also like to table copies of a news release from the Pembina Institute dated October 26 of this year. The release warns that the proposed minable oil sands strategy would have serious and negative environmental impacts on 2,800 square kilometres of boreal forest.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from one of my constituents, a teacher with 16 years of experience who is extremely upset about the issue of unfunded liability; also, a letter from one of my constituents about the prosperity cheques. She argues that there should be three other checks before the prosperity cheques come out, namely a democracy check, a societal check, and a human resources check.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today. First, I would like to table a memo from Angus McBeath, a former superintendent of schools for the Edmonton public school board. The memo draws attention to the dramatic reduction in learning resource personnel and counsellors that the school board has suffered over the last 10 years.

I'd also like to table for the hon. minister of human resources copies of labour code provisions from across Canada. These provisions will provide the Minister of Human Resources and Employment a template for developing long-overdue first-contract legislation for Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table this e-mail letter on behalf of my constituent whose son is drug addicted and

needs immediate help. She's concerned about AADAC here in Edmonton. Edmonton treatment centres, according to her, are full and useless and need to look at changing this. We have a huge addiction problem in Alberta. I believe our government must face this issue. We should have a separate ministry for mental health and addictions like B.C. She had to take her son to B.C. for treatment . . .

The Speaker: With all due respect, hon. member, please. This is tablings, not reading of tablings. We'll accept that it's tabled.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: pursuant to the Mental Health Act the Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate office 2003-2004 annual report; pursuant to the Nursing Profession Act Alberta Association of Registered Nurses 2003-2004 annual report with attached financial statements for the year ended September 30, 2004; pursuant to the Opticians Act the Alberta Opticians Association annual report 2004; pursuant to the Dental Disciplines Act Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association 2004 annual report; pursuant to the Pharmaceutical Profession Act the Alberta College of Pharmacists annual report 2004-2005; pursuant to the Health Professions Act College of Alberta Denturists annual report 2004, the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists 2004 annual report, the Alberta College of Optometrists annual report 2004; pursuant to the Regional Health Authorities Act the Alberta Mental Health Board 2004-05 annual report, Aspen regional health 2004-05 annual report, Peace Country health annual report 2004-2005, Calgary health region 2004-05 annual report, Capital health annual report 2004-05, East Central health region annual report 2004-2005, Palliser health region annual report 2004-2005, Northern Lights health region annual report 2004-05, David Thompson health region annual report 2004-05, and the Chinook health region annual report 2004-05; as well, the Alberta Cancer Board annual report 2004-05 and response to Written Question 5 asked by Mr. MacDonald on behalf of Dr. Taft on April 11, 2005, and return to order of the Assembly MR4 asked for by Dr. Pannu on behalf of Mr. Mason on April 4, 2005.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Government House Leader please share with the Assembly the projected government business next week?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's pretty clear from the agenda that next week we will be discussing supply. On Monday, the 21st, in the afternoon we would advise that we anticipate the introduction of Bill 53, the Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005. In the evening at 9 o'clock under Government Bills and Orders for second reading we would proceed on Bill 49, the Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2); Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act; Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; and as per the Order Paper.

On November 22, Tuesday, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders, Committee of Supply, supplementary supply, day 2 of three days: Advanced Education, Gaming, Infrastructure and

Transportation, Seniors and Community Supports, and Municipal Affairs estimates in Committee of Supply. Time permitting, second reading on Bill 44, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2), and third reading on Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005. In the evening at 8 o'clock under Government Bills and Orders for second reading Bill 50, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2), and Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005; for third reading Bill 9 and Bill 15; and in the Committee of the Whole Bill 48, Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, Bill 43, and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, November 23, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders, Committee of Supply, the departments of Health and Wellness, Sustainable Resource Development, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Community Development, and Environment. For second reading, time permitting, bills 46 and 43. In anticipation of completion of Committee of Supply, there may be a request to revert to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of Bill 51, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2). At 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for second reading bills 46 and 43, committee anticipated on bills 50 and 43, third reading on bills 48, 47, and 43, and as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, November 24, under Introduction of Bills, Bill 52, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), Committee of the Whole on bills 49, 45, and 46, and as per the Order Paper.

head: 3:00 **Request for Emergency Debate**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on a Standing Order 30 application.

Continuing Care Funding

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise at this time to move the following motion: be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the failure of the government to provide the additional resources required to reduce the grave and immediate risks to the health and physical security of seniors living in long-term care facilities as identified in the May '05 Report of the Auditor General on Seniors Care and Programs and further explored by the MLA task force this summer.

I understand that the case I am required to make respecting this motion revolves around urgency. I'll do my best in the next few minutes to explain why this matter is so urgent and merits this Assembly taking some time today before we move on to other business. The case for urgency, however, is not, in my view, a strictly technical one since it's hard to imagine an issue requiring urgent attention that doesn't in itself have intrinsic importance. Significant things can wait. The dignity and lives of our seniors cannot.

It is worth recalling that just over six months ago the Auditor General released his report on the state of long-term care in Alberta. It was a damning report and exposed real risks to the health and well-being of Alberta's senior citizens; for example, the inappropriate use of medications, as documented in a study done by both the U of L and the U of C. Shortly thereafter the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood moved a motion for an emergency debate. On this, the Speaker ruled that there was, indeed, a case for urgency. Six months after that report and three months after the report of the task force and my own adjunct report all of the underlying conditions that gave rise to the ruling on that day I believe continue.

Today, however, we face a new challenge: what to do here in this

sitting when the government has failed to solve the problems. The introduction of the government's supplemental estimates yesterday revealed that despite the introduction of previous legislation enabling resource rebates and the creation of associations for former MLAs, this government has not, at least not so far, taken the opportunity of this sitting and the abundance of resources available to devote any additional dollars to respond to the most pressing problems in long-term care. This inaction represents real risks to the lives and dignity of Albertans.

I've seen the crisis first-hand, and it's hard to overestimate my astonishment that there was no response in these estimates. We must have an urgent discussion around how we mitigate these risks in the short term and before this spring. This Assembly does not know when the next opportunity for supply is, but it could well be as late as next March. Seniors in care cannot wait, nor can we wait until these estimates are debated in Committee of Supply next week. This, I submit, is to misunderstand the nature of the crisis and the reason for my motion. The reason to have this debate is not simply to listen to each other talk nor is it merely to be seen talking. It is to ensure that the government is advised by this Assembly of the urgency of this matter so that they can take immediate action.

Further, *Beauchesne*, section 950, for example, sets limits on the ability of these estimates to be increased in Committee of Supply. They can only be reduced. Clearly, there is no opportunity for any kind of effective action stemming from the committee debates themselves. To be sure, not every problem identified and not every piece of the solution involves additional funding. There are important measures to be taken about openness, accountability, monitoring, and other policy issues, yet here, too, there was nothing on the Order Paper to indicate that the government is introducing legislation to deal with these important matters.

The conversations between the minister responsible and myself and my colleagues regarding any other forthcoming legislation has led me to believe that no legislation is planned for this fall. My own private member's bill, 213, seeks to establish some independent oversight and accountability for the system, but this side of the House is not in control of the government's agenda, and we have been led to believe that there are only a few days remaining in this session. Given the meagre opportunities afforded us for private members' business, this bill will almost certainly not be coming up for debate this fall. Given that there are only a few days left in this sitting, it is my contention that the government still has a chance, if they direct their departments to begin working on it today, to introduce an additional supplementary supply bill for long-term care that could begin to mitigate the identified risks to seniors and provide real relief to the overburdened families and health professionals who care for them.

While I certainly respect the importance of the legislative schedule and even respect the prerogative of a duly elected government to govern, surely nothing on the agenda today supercedes the importance of this Assembly discussing this urgent matter. While I'm aware that a motion under this standing order does not entail any action by this Assembly, I am moving this motion with the hope that a renewed consideration of the risks identified to seniors' well-being and the recognition that we are literally running out of time to take meaningful measures in a timely fashion will prompt the government to take some action now. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that this is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I'm going to allow very, very brief comments on this, but the hon. member in pushing this thing has failed to tell me why this does not violate 30(7)(d), which is the most important rule that

we have in the Standing Orders with respect to dealing with this. There's no debate on this matter whatsoever. [interjection] Sorry, but the hon. member has already talked. Somebody's going to have to convince the chair that this does not violate 30(7)(d).

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to attempt to convince you that it doesn't violate that. I think it does violate that.

The nub of the motion is the failure of the government to provide additional resources. This afternoon in Committee of Supply we'll be talking about resources. Tuesday in Committee of Supply we'll be talking about resources. Wednesday in Committee of Supply we'll be talking about resources. In fact, Health and Wellness will be up on Wednesday, Seniors and Community Supports is up on Tuesday, and then we will have on Thursday the introduction of the appropriation bill, where we will be talking about supply of resources. I think that under Projected Government Business I indicated that the bill would be introduced either Wednesday or Thursday. It will be debated the following week in two stages in committee, so the foreseeable future in this House is all about the supply of financial resources.

I don't want to make light of the issue. I think we're all concerned about seniors who need care and the ability of our mothers and fathers to live in dignity. Those are all very important issues, but with respect to the nub of this motion, the failure of the government to provide the additional resources necessary, that is the substance of every discussion in the House every day for the next six days at least. Therefore, the urgency to move off the Orders of the Day to have an urgent debate on the very subject that we're moving into in Committee of Supply is beyond me.

The Speaker: Again, hon. members, we clearly have Standing Order 30(7)(d). On May 10 during this First Session of the 26th Legislature the House provided the opportunity for debate on this same issue. Standing Order 30(7)(d) prohibits this happening twice in the same session, so I don't know what compelling argument there is. We're into a basic filibuster.

Who wants to participate then? I'm sorry, hon. member, you've already made your statement.

Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, you're deferring to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning?

Dr. Taft: Proceed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The requirement of Standing Order 30(7)(d), which precludes reviving discussion "on a matter which has been discussed in the same session" pursuant to this Standing Order, as you've said, could be looked at in this particular matter. But the matter on which my colleague from Lethbridge-East rose today, while touching on the care of Alberta's seniors . . .

3:10

The Speaker: That's not the issue, hon. member, please. This is a question for urgency. Once there is an agenda for the session, the Standing Orders provide that there's an opportunity to have an urgent matter come before the Assembly if it's urgent and there's been no opportunity for members to discuss anything. Then the rules provide that if it has been discussed once and we waive the whole Routine for the afternoon to deal with a particular matter once during a session, we do not do it twice on that subject. That's 30(7)(d). We've already done it once. We've had this. We did this on May 10, which was during the First Session of the 26th Legisla-

ture. So that's the pertinent point for the urgency: how would this not be the same? I haven't heard any additional arguments with respect to this. I'm sorry. I'm not putting the question. We're going to move on.

Privilege Contempt of the Assembly

The Speaker: I'm now prepared to rule on the purported questions of privilege raised on Tuesday by the Official Opposition House Leader and the leader of the New Democrats. Although there are some distinguishing factors between the two matters that have been raised, the general subject of early release of reports of officers of the Legislature is the same. Therefore, the chair will be addressing the matter in one ruling.

To be clear, the matter raised by the Official Opposition House Leader deals with the early release of the Auditor General's report on the Alberta Securities Commission, and the one by the leader of the third party in the House deals with the premature disclosure of the Auditor General's report on the Alberta Social Housing Corporation and the disclosure of the results of the Ethics Commissioner's report on the Minister of Environment. These are the allegations that we'll deal with together.

As a preliminary matter the chair confirms that both parties fulfilled the two hours' notice requirement under Standing Order 15(2). The chair received written notice of the Official Opposition House Leader's purported question of privilege last Thursday, November 10. The leader of the third party provided his written notice this week on Monday, November 14. Given that Tuesday was the first day of the fall sitting, both parties have raised their respective questions of privilege at the earliest possible opportunity. The key argument underlying both purported questions of privilege is that there has been a contempt of the Assembly. As members are well aware, breaches of privilege and contempt of the Assembly are treated in the same manner, and therefore the procedure outlined in Standing Order 15 applies.

At the outset the chair would like to note for all members that the leak of a report from an officer of this Legislature has never before been raised in this Assembly as a matter of privilege. In fact, over the course of the past few days the chair and the table officers have undertaken a broad review, consulting with parliaments from across Canada as well as the United Kingdom. To the best of the chair's knowledge it is unprecedented for this type of matter to come before the Assembly as a purported question of privilege. So we are in uncharted territory.

The chair has listened attentively to the arguments raised, and it appears that the material facts are as follows. The contents of three reports from two officers of the Legislature were disclosed to members of the media prior to the reports being distributed to Members of the Assembly and being made available to the public. The reports in question are: one, the Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission's Enforcement System dated October 2005; two, the Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Social Housing Corporation – Land Sales Systems dated October 2005; three, a report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on the investigation by the Ethics Commissioner into allegations involving the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo dated October 20, 2005.

Although it is clear that the contents of all three reports were disclosed prematurely, it is not clear who is responsible for prematurely disclosing the two reports from the Auditor General. With respect to the third report, the one prepared by the Ethics Commissioner, the Minister of Environment indicated in the House yesterday that he referred to the contents of that report in a radio program prior

to it being made available to other members and the public. As he indicated at page 1676 of yesterday's *Hansard*, he was unaware of anything that prohibited him from doing so.

As the chair indicated on Tuesday when these matters were raised, it is a very serious matter when reports of officers of the Legislature are released or the contents are prematurely disclosed. While these disclosures may be contemptuous behaviour, the chair's view is that they do not amount to contempts of the Assembly.

Accordingly, the chair does not find that there are prima facie questions of privilege. The lack of both parliamentary and statutory authority concerning early disclosure of officers' reports leads the chair to this view. This conclusion does not diminish the fact that the leaks of these reports should be taken very seriously and that this type of conduct shows disrespect to the Assembly and demonstrates a blatant disregard for the statutory provisions that entitle members of the Assembly to view such a report before it is made public.

Because this is a matter that has never been raised before, the chair wants to provide some explanation for this finding. First, it is important to note that the two officers whose reports are in question operate under specific statutory regimes, as do the Chief Electoral Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Ombudsman. Both members raising purported questions of privilege want the chair to find that the statutes do not form complete codes and that certain elements of parliamentary privilege must be, and I quote, read in, end quote, to them.

The chair wants to be very clear that this ruling is on the issue of whether an early or unauthorized release of an officer's report constitutes a prima facie question of privilege. This ruling should not be taken to address the broader issue of whether and to what extent the activities of officers of the Legislature are cloaked in privilege.

As the distribution of the reports is fundamental to the arguments of both members' questions of privilege, the chair wants to address the requirements. As was noted in the arguments, the procedure for distribution of a report from the Auditor General when the House is not sitting is outlined in section 20.1 of the Auditor General Act. This section provides that the report must be made available to the members of the Assembly upon three days' notice being given to the Speaker who shall forthwith distribute copies to the office of each member. The report is available to the public after the distribution has occurred. To the chair's knowledge the only parties that are authorized under the statute to have advanced copies of the reports are members of the Audit Committee, pursuant to section 24.

The Conflicts of Interest Act has a slightly different procedure for the distribution of reports from the Ethics Commissioner as outlined in sections 25 and 28 of that act. These reports are provided directly to the Speaker, who in turn lays the report before the Assembly or if the Assembly is not sitting distributes the report to members and then makes it available to the public. The act authorizes certain persons to receive advanced copies of a report; namely, the member against whom an allegation has been made and the leader of that member's caucus, section 25(8), and it is pursuant to this authority that the hon. Minister of Environment received the Ethics Commissioner's report prior to its release to other members.

There are provisions in the Auditor General Act that require both the Auditor General and his staff to maintain confidentiality in fulfilling their duties. The Conflicts of Interest Act has similar requirements, and this statute also provides for a fine up to \$20,000, section 40, for a commissioner, former commissioner, or person employed or engaged by the office who releases confidential information. However, neither of these acts specifically addresses whether the premature release of a report from the officer or discussion of their contents is an offence or contempt of the

Assembly. The Legislative Assembly Act provides provisions dealing with the Assembly's jurisdiction and expressly deals with the matter of breaches of privilege and contempt. There is nothing in this act that would suggest that a leak of a report from an officer amounts to a contempt.

Finally, in comparing the leak of a report from an officer to the leak of the other types of documents cited in the hon. members' arguments, there are a number of distinguishing factors. Clearly, all three types of documents referred to in the arguments of the Official Opposition House Leader – bills, committee reports, and the budget – are more directly tied to a proceeding of this Assembly. The matter of a budget leak, which has been cited in the arguments, is not typically considered a matter of privilege, and the chair cites *Beauchesne* 31(5) for this point. The premature disclosure of bills has been held by the chair to be a prima facie case of contempt, as was held on March 15, 2003, at pages 57 to 60 of the *Journals*, as belonging properly to members once they appear on the Order Paper.

3:20

On the subject of leaked committee reports the authorities are very clear that questions of privilege will not be considered unless a specific charge has been made. The chair would like to quote from Marleau and Montpetit's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on this point.

Speakers have ruled that questions of privilege concerning leaked reports will not be considered unless a specific charge is made against an individual, organization or group, and that the charge must be levelled not only against those outside the House who have made in camera material public, but must also identify the source of the leak within the House itself.

Found at pages 884 and 885. *Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice* also supports this position in its 23rd edition at pages 140 and 141.

So even if the chair were to treat the leak of an officer's report the same as the leak of a committee report, this still would not meet the test for a prima facie case of contempt with respect to 2 out of the 3 reports because the source of the leak has not been identified.

With respect to the Ethics Commissioner's report the hon. minister indicated that he was not aware of any prohibition on the premature disclosure of the contents of the report on the basis that he not only requested the investigation but was the subject of that investigation. In the absence of a specific statutory provision or a recognized parliamentary precedent the chair cannot find a prima facie question of privilege. Furthermore, if the chair were to find a case of contempt, this could cast a cloud of suspicion on those persons who have legislated right to receive advanced copies of these reports prior to the distribution to members, and that is definitely something that this chair does not want to do. The chair might have a different view if there was a clear indication in the legislation how a premature disclosure of a report was to be treated.

Finally, the chair would like to emphasize that when a report is destined for members of the Assembly, prior to it being made available to the public, the utmost care must be taken in the printing and the preparation for distribution. The Auditor General has undertaken investigation of the office's practices, and the chair is confident that this matter will be given serious attention and that due care and attention will be given prior to the release of subsequent reports from that office.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 2005-06
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

Education

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm indeed pleased to rise to request some supplementary estimates for the extremely important ministry and departments working within Alberta Education. The request is specifically for \$75.1 million. These funds are very necessary in order to support a number of important initiatives that will benefit our students and enhance their learning environments.

Mr. Chairman, of the \$75.1 million some \$42.1 million is needed this fiscal year, '05-06, in order to help facilitate delivery of new modular classrooms and the relocation of portables during this year, which, in turn, will allow us to begin planning for the construction of 21 new or modernized school projects in 14 different communities so far across the province. Those are in keeping with the announcements I made earlier this fall.

The second largest component of this request today is for a \$24 million increase to the plant operation and maintenance funding scenario to school boards for schools in their jurisdictions. The annual school year increase will actually be \$43 million once it is annualized, and that will cover the period of September 1, '05, through to the end of August 31, '06. However, the \$24 million, which was part of the \$43 million that I am requesting today, represents the amount required to take us through to the end of the government's fiscal year, which, as we all know, ends on March 31, 2006, but of course the school year goes on until the end of August.

Mr. Chairman, the increased plant operation and maintenance funding utilizes a new formula now that is based on the number of students, also on the number of students with severe special needs, and, finally, on the need to keep several small schools open because of distance and necessity. It is a formula that has improved the funding scenario for almost every school board, and we are pleased with that. However, during my recent tour of the province when I met with all 62 school boards for the second time this year, I know that there are some issues with this scenario, so I did undertake to look at it more closely in preparation for the next year's budget.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, today's supplementary estimate includes a request for \$9 million in additional funding which school boards need in order to offset the sudden higher costs of transportation that have resulted from very sharp increases in the price of fuel. The current student transportation budget of \$210 million annually includes \$23 million for fuel costs based on an average pump price for diesel fuel, for example, of 60 cents per litre. Now, I cite diesel fuel prices in particular because they are the ones used for this calculation since approximately 80 per cent of Alberta's school buses operate on diesel fuel. That being said, I wish to remind all members that the price for diesel fuel has been as high as \$1 per litre in recent weeks, which is an increase of 67 per cent from the base budget price of 60 cents that I referred to earlier.

Mr. Chairman, almost 45 per cent of our Alberta students, which, by the way, represents about 250,000 children and youth, use school bus transportation to get to and from school every day. They ride over 70 million kilometres every year. So this additional money, \$23 million in this category, will ensure that school boards don't have to dip into money that would otherwise be intended for classrooms in order to pay the extra costs for transporting students to schools throughout Alberta.

The supplementary estimates, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, are required because they are ministry specific, and they give that

particular ministry, in this case Alberta Education, legislative authorization to increase their spending above amounts approved by the Alberta Legislature as part of Budget 2005. I look forward to answering any questions that anyone may have, but mostly I look forward to everyone's support for these very necessary additional supplementary dollars for K to 12 education in the province of Alberta.

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These increases are generally to cover important capital and operating costs, and I think that's significant. Dealing with the actual learning of a student, I was a little disappointed that we didn't see some indication for support services such as counsellors, speech pathologists, educational psychologists, et cetera. The support services for our students are lacking. I think that the issue of the family and schools is becoming very important. I think that when we lack these services, schools are being burdened with trying to deal with them.

Let me be very specific on some of the issues in the estimates that I see. Portable classrooms referred to in the document as modular classrooms. This government continues to spend \$22 million in buying new portables and moving existing portables.

Mr. Zwozdesky: What year is that?

Mr. Flaherty: This year, 2005, I guess. In many cases this shows a lack of planning and avoids a commitment to what we really need, which is stable, sufficient, and predictable funding to meet the school districts' long-term capital plans.

3:30

If there isn't enough money for permanent schools, did the minister create a plan for building schools before providing emergency funding? Were school district capital plans and enrolment projections consulted before paying for the new portables that he's bought? Is enrolment predicted to decline in the areas where portables were built? If not, why aren't actual brick-and-mortar schools planned, e.g. not more emergency portables? Has he got a long-range plan for schools in Alberta with set criteria so that school districts can get an idea of what he's expecting from them?

In many cases emergency portables last well beyond their intent and lifespan. We have an example of that at Alexander Forbes in Grande Prairie, where the portable is 25 years old and suffering from mould and is causing health hazards. This district is still asking for more emergency portables to handle enrolment growth. Also, the question with portables is a lack of proper bathroom facilities, which we have at Father Jan in St. Albert. Very sad.

Plant operation and maintenance: let me just comment on that, Mr. Chair. The plant operation and maintenance plan of this government, specifically the Department of Education, in my opinion is a mess. The Minister of Education moved to per-student funding in '04, and our response to this has been that this has been a recipe for school closures. As such, they regularly need to add supplemental dollars to this program in order to deal with funding shortfalls.

Funding for schools should keep a school in the community, which means paying for the operating costs of the school. Why was budgeted plant maintenance and operation funding not sufficient, Mr. Minister? Is there a special development that justified the additional \$24 million? Is this a sign that the new funding formula is not working? [interjection] Well, answer it, please. Will we evaluate the system in light of providing \$24 million in additional emergency funding?

Let me move to transportation. I'm glad you're smiling, Mr. Minister; it makes me feel good. Transportation: school districts across this province were taking money from other program areas to pay for this, so the government was forced to respond. What was the basis for this increase; e.g., how did they arrive at this figure of \$9 million? Nine million dollars: that is a 67 per cent increase from the budget estimate amount by his own numbers. Why did the press release announce \$15.5 million increased funding? Has something changed? How did the minister decide how to distribute the money to the districts? Can he be sure that extra money for transportation was not a result of a backlog of capital projects? Did the minister evaluate the business case for spending more on the busing of students versus building or maintaining local community schools?

My final comment is on capital facilities. What new capital facilities are there, and how are they being chosen?

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak to this.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Chair, if the hon. critic would just address the issues and take all of that rhetoric and garbage out of it, it might be actually helpful to listen to it. Nonetheless, I've got the gist of what it is that he's trying to say, albeit there are a lot of incorrect comments there that I would take some exception to and I'm sure the school boards will as well.

Nonetheless, here it is. With respect to portable classrooms, the additional monies that are required here are not only for some portables or modulars, actually, which are the new ones that we're putting out there, that are required on a permanent basis, but in many cases, Mr. Chair, several of them are required on a temporary basis. I think where the hon. previous speaker misses the boat completely is not understanding that we have fluctuating enrolments throughout the province, and these are changing. If he had done some homework, which clearly he hasn't, he would have noticed, for example, that some parts of the province are expanding very rapidly, and they need a sudden bit of help. That can be accomplished with some portables. Now, in other parts of the province we have declining enrolments. As those enrolments decline, we will perhaps move some of the portables.

With respect to this fluctuation, generally speaking, let us recognize that the new modulars are being built as fast as they possibly can be, and we're getting them out to the schools as fast as we can possibly get them, Mr. Chair. The new ones have a far longer lifespan, they are built in a more durable fashion, and they are much more easily transported. They can be done virtually overnight once the mechanisms are in place.

What we're asking for here is for some help this year to deal with some of the emergencies that are out there. I would remind the hon. member again that I just came off a tour, the second tour where I've met with every school board in the province now twice, and I think I've got a pretty good feel for what their needs really are. We don't have all the money to address all the needs. I mean, education is becoming just like health care: there will never be enough money. But we must find enough money to accommodate some of the serious situations that we have with respect to some overcrowding, and that's what this money is needed for.

With respect to the other comments that he made, Mr. Chair, and respecting the time of day, I will review them and, if necessary, I'll see if I can find some semblance of sense in some of those questions and try and provide him with some answers where they might be appropriate.

With respect to the transportation questions, please understand that these particular sudden jumps in diesel fuel prices were not understood to be happening back in the time that the budgets were being developed, hon. member. You should know that. These

prices jumped up very suddenly in about June, July, August, September. We responded very quickly. Every single school board I met with thanked us for doing a proactive thing in this regard. I'd ask you to please consider that as you speak for or against these estimates.

I'm frankly surprised that you're not supporting them, because we know that we need these monies out there. This is your opportunity to provide some help in that respect.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's not these particular estimates that I'm particularly worried about, but I'd like to take the opportunity just to perhaps look briefly at the future for these estimates and whatever ones come forward.

The minister, I think, would indicate to the public that with the extra money coming in, all the problems in education are basically solved. But it's just not washing with the public. As the minister is well aware, back in September Ipsos-Reid did a poll and 72 per cent of Albertans still believe the education system is not adequately funded. Now, if that's the perception, it's more important what they say and, especially, what parents say.

I want to just throw out to the minister four different areas that I think require some urgent attention. The first one: nobody is questioning the new schools that were announced, that we need new schools. Obviously we do, Mr. Chairman. I don't think the minister or any of us can decide the priorities of a particular school board. They have to make those decisions about where the new schools should go.

But we do have a serious problem. If I may use my experience of being a trustee with the Edmonton public school board, it's not only the new schools; it's the ones that are there. I think I'd be pretty close saying at this time that almost 50 per cent of the schools in Edmonton public – I expect it's similar throughout the province – are 50 years of age or over. So there are some serious problems there in terms of maintenance and operation. While it's important to get new schools in some of the suburbs, it's also equally important because some of the schools – I'm sure the minister has been aware going through some of the schools. One of his, of course, Victoria comp, he would know a lot about. That's another story. There are some serious problems there, and there's absolutely no doubt that we're going to have to put money in there in the future.

3:40

That ties in again to the process. I honestly believe that this minister does care about education. I know that he has to deal with the caucus, but I don't want him to be caught as a new Mr. Dithers because of some of the problems that are occurring. I'm thinking about the school closure process. The minister, I believe – correct me if I'm wrong – said that they would be looking at the utilization and whether a school closure process was the right way to go in the province. I haven't heard anything about that. I'd be interested to know what's happening because there are two problems.

I've alluded to one school that's been closed down, North Edmonton school. I know the minister is aware of this: the variations of construction just didn't make any sense for old schools. In Edmonton public I'm talking about schools built before 1950. The province's rate of what could be in that class is a lot different than what the school board thought because, you know, the halls and bathrooms and everything else were included. I take it that they'd be looking at that. North Edmonton, for example, they said the current formula generated a capacity of 448 – I'm just using that as an example to add the figures – and the 14 classrooms rated at 25

students would generate only 350. So that's a serious problem dealing with those schools that I'm talking about, and I would like an update on that.

I would also like an update on the school closure process. We went through a very unfortunate situation, Mr. Chair, in the Edmonton public, which ended up in the courts, about the whole school closure process. Last spring I brought forward, and others did, about maybe we should be looking at province-wide how we do school closures. It's a very divisive process, especially the way the Edmonton public did it with the school cluster group. It played off one group against another, one principal against another, parents, and the whole thing. It was ugly, and I think the minister would agree with that. It ended up in court. We don't want that to happen.

Again, he said – I brought it up at the time – that Ontario went through this process and changed their school closure process. I would remind the minister, not that he was the minister at the time, that this was put forward by the government, that they should close schools down to get new schools. Remember, I sent this over to the minister at the time. He asked for it, minutes from a trustee retreat where it was pretty clear. It said:

The Edmonton School District is currently not eligible for new school projects due to sector utilization below 85%. Approval to proceed beyond schematic design on the three projects will require your board to submit a comprehensive plan to address surplus space and utilizations.

It's clear. They're saying: close schools down, or you're not going to get new ones. Then you're again playing off one part of the city against the other. I would remind the minister – and I know that he's probably looked into it – that Ontario went through that process and said: we can't do that. So they've got that you can't close schools to be eligible for new replacement schools. You have to consider a school valuation first of all: its value to the student, its value to the community, its value to the school system, its value to the local economy. I'm interested to know from the minister where that process is in review and when we might look forward to something in that area.

Secondly, counsellors and librarians. The school board, as I'm sure the minister is well aware, saw that the counsellors in Edmonton public – and I expect it's true in other areas – have dramatically decreased over the last 10 years, I think down to in total in Edmonton 48 counsellors and less library techs. That came from a memo from the school board just a month or so ago. That was Angus McBeath's memo.

I know that the minister has alluded to the high dropout rates. I hope I'm not putting words in his mouth that maybe he said that we need more counsellors, for example. He probably meant also library techs. So what's been happening is that it's going the other way in the province, and I wonder what the minister is doing there in the future. I know that it's not going to come as these estimates, but we'll be dealing with some other estimates very quickly, Mr. Chairman.

The third thing is the Learning Commission, and this is an important one for me because I've represented high-needs schools. The two recommendations that we haven't dealt with that we're studying – the Learning Commission is over two years old now and we're still studying, especially in high-needs areas. I'm not saying that we have to do it all across the province, but in high-needs areas it's absolutely crucial that we have full-day kindergarten and we have junior kindergarten. The evidence is clear from the costs of studies, and I know that the minister of health knows something about this, too, from the city centre project. It absolutely works. It's necessary for those kids, and I would hope that the time for studying that would be over and we'd do it. Edmonton public, again because

I know the situation there, actually has 18 high-needs schools where they put in full-day kindergarten and took from other areas of the budget, and I think that's unfair. So I'd like some idea of when we might look forward to progress in that area.

I have the counsellors. I should go back to that. In 1990-91 we had 99 counsellors in Edmonton public; in '96-97, 60; and now there are 43.8, only 3.4 in all the elementary schools in Edmonton. Learning resources FTEs: 81.7 in '91; in '96-97, 38.7 and now 12.1, only 3.5 in elementary schools. Those are significant figures. That's a significant decline. Again, I had those figures and I wanted to give them to the minister.

The final thing that I just wanted to bring up, Mr. Chairman – and I know that the minister has been talking about it. I wonder when there might be some action on school fees. Clearly, when you have a couple of kids in school and you're paying over \$700, that's unacceptable. We can argue whose fault it is or whatever, but having been a trustee, I just think that the school boards need the money, and that's part of the funding. I'm suggesting that we have to maybe start with elementary. I'll just throw this out to the minister. It costs money, yes, but I think we can look at education as an investment rather than as just a cost, and I think the minister would agree with me on that.

We need that stable, predictable funding for boards on a three-year cycle. I think we have to cap class sizes, not average them. I think that with the school fees one of the things we could start with is perhaps eliminate school fees at the elementary level and then conduct a province-wide review of compulsory fees. I think that would give us a better handle. It seems to me that at elementary school we should not be having fees at all. Maybe there's some need for some extracurricular activities, you know, which could be part of a fee – I'm not sure – but we should review that and take a look, especially for junior high and senior high.

I think that if we could move in the next budget year – because that's a lot of money for parents that are struggling to make ends meet. If they have two kids, it could be over \$700. If you have three or four kids, it's almost insurmountable, and some of those schools can't even collect those fees because the parents don't have the money.

Mr. Chairman, I'll conclude there by saying that I have no major problem with the estimates that we're bringing forward here, but I really want the minister to look at those four areas and give us some idea of when we might look forward to dealing with those areas.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you and thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for providing a very good critique. I will read it through more carefully. I had some interruptions, as you probably saw.

I'll make a few brief comments to your observations. First of all, I do agree with the comments in general about aging infrastructure. Having spoken with all the school boards, as I indicated earlier, I know that we have schools that are not only 40, 50, 60 years old, but we also have schools that were never built with computerization in mind or with SuperNet or video conferencing suites in mind. So that's another issue that's very large on my radar screen, and as we see more of the infrastructure piece coming over to Education from the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation, hopefully then when we sit down to chat with school boards, we'll be able to talk about the whole nine yards of education. Right now, as you would know given your former role as a trustee, you'd be speaking with one minister about the K to 12 programming needs for educating the

kids, and you'd be talking with another minister about the facilities that are required and so on.

3:50

I'll just give you one quick example. When we brought in the small class size initiative, a good initiative, recommended by the Learning Commission – and we'll be funding it to the tune of about 160 million new dollars over the three-year span, and we're just finishing the second year now, as you know. But when you talk about class size reduction, and you're talking about hiring 2,250 brand new teachers, you have to talk about the impact on the facilities. There was some discussion, I know, but I think we can have better and more deep discussions on that now moving forward, and that's part of what the \$207 million is in fact starting to do.

The issue about the school closure process. I don't think I'll take up the House's time today, but I am looking at how that is working. It was never intended that the utilization rate of old would wind up being the culprit, if you will, that forced school closures in order to get new school funding monies for new construction projects. That was never intended. In fact, the old formula was based on area of the school space, as you know, the utilization rate, which divides the educational capacity of the school by the number of students taught. Sparsity and distance was part of that for the remote boards especially and travel time.

The new funding formula that we've talked about, the per-pupil funding formula, may not be one hundred per cent exactly bang on just yet either, but it's an improvement to the other one. When I spoke with school boards about this, they clearly indicated something that we had already concluded, and that was that if you have a lot of students, then clearly per-pupil funding helps you, but if you have a dwindling student population, which reflects the majority of locations in Alberta, then per-pupil funding isn't going to help you at all. So we do have the stabilization thing, as you know, the extra money in the renewed funding framework. So that's an interesting point to consider, and I am aware of some other jurisdictions, as you mentioned.

The final couple of things quickly, Mr. Chair. With respect to counsellors and teacher-librarians and the Alberta Commission on Learning recommendations in general, I don't know if the hon. member has had a chance yet to read in great detail the update I provided about a month ago, but there's some information in there, and there will be more, and there will be clarity of our position, perhaps even some final decisions by December 31 of this year insofar as I'm able to make them.

Now, clearly, that's going to be a decision that I will lead one way or the other, be it on the possibility of junior K or not, be it on the possibility of mandated full-day kindergarten or not, some of those kinds of decisions. We will have a clearer position or a final decision by December 31, and if we get pushed back a little bit, then it'll be as soon as possible after that, but I'm anxious to have decisions one way or the other on those remaining ones.

The school fees is my final point that I'll just comment on briefly. That, in fact, hon. member, was the first item that I put on the agenda for this last round of meetings. I had about eight specific items, and then the school boards had some for me. But the first item that I had on there was about school fees. It was about fundraising, the question of basics versus extras, or what we might call essentials for education versus nonessentials – I know that you know this area very well, hon. member – and also on whether or not they thought a provincial policy would be needed with respect to both fundraising and school fees in general.

I'll make this observation, and then I'll take my chair. Almost every single school board said and acknowledged how difficult it

might be to come up with a one-size-fits-all model in either of the school fees applications or the fundraising policy, what can be fundraised for, what cannot be fundraised for, and so on. They also said: if you're going to come forward with a policy like that, then please don't penalize us as a school board by taking away a potential revenue stream unless you as a province are prepared to step in there and make it up. I understand that very well. In fact, I was one of the first to mention it to them because I'm cognizant of that. You can appreciate that that would impact our budget to the tune of millions and millions of dollars, because I asked them all how much they receive from those kinds of revenues.

The last thing is simply this. These are the words of the school boards in a general sense. The parents tell them that they don't mind doing some fundraising. They really don't. Most parents don't mind being involved in the school system that way provided that there's not too much fundraising demanded of them and provided that it's not for so-called basics in education. I know that you know what I mean by that.

I think that we need to try and tighten up the definition of exactly what is now meant by basics. One example is computers. I would think, unarguably, that we can look at computers as becoming more and more an essential in the schools. Then the next question is: if they are essential, well, how many should it be? One computer for every three kids, or should it be one computer for one kid? So there's a lot of that ongoing discussion, and I'm looking at all of those issues right now as we strive to arrive at more stable, more predictable funding for a variety of these purposes. All I can do, hon. member, is try my best to address those issues, and that's what we're doing today.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my great honour to rise again and respond to the supplementary budget estimate for education. I'm really glad that gross amounts have been increased, but these increases were generally to cover important capital and operating costs. I hope the government will keep this promise this time. Hiring new teachers is good news. My question to the hon. minister is: why was this not budgeted for during the budget process? I hope it's not a recipe for school closures in Edmonton and somewhere else.

How this money is going to be allocated is not so clear to me because of the time frame. I mean, I got this budget estimate just a couple of hours ago, and it's not a reasonable amount of time to go through these papers. I'm not prepared to ask you questions. Maybe I will ask you questions some other time. Just to make a note, the time is not enough for us to respond on the budget estimate.

I asked you in question period about one school in my constituency. The infrastructure, the condition of that elementary school, Ellerslie school, is so poor. I visited that school a couple of months ago. I had mentioned to you, I think in the last session, that the carpet inside the library may be 20 years old. At the elementary school – and I don't know what you call the other school – the conditions are really bad. Some students are disabled. They have special needs, and they are spending money from their own pockets. They are always complaining. I am going to see them. They have a parents' meeting tonight. That's the reason why I keep on requesting you to please come there and listen to their complaints. They need help.

That school is a very important part of the riding. It covers a big area. I know that it's already in the plan. I have that capital program. There's a new elementary school coming maybe in three years' time, but I don't know whether that old school should be

demolished or if it needs some renovations. I know that in two years' time the government is planning to spend a million dollars on infrastructure. I think somebody should look at it, whether we should spend a million dollars on repairing that building or they should demolish the whole building and make a new school there.

4:00

City water I have already discussed. The kids have to wait for the truck, and sometimes that truck doesn't come there, and they have to wait for a long time, especially when they are in the school field and they are thirsty and they're waiting for the truck. I mean, this is not a good thing. When we are donating lots of money overseas, when we have some projects outside this country, it is a shame that our own children here in Alberta have to wait for tap water. This is a very serious issue. I discussed this with their parents, and they are not happy, so please consider this as urgency, as I requested of you many times. Please make a note, and somebody should go there and investigate the problem they have.

Another question I wanted to ask you because we are still going through the centennial year. I was surprised that during the centennial year the children from the schools were not bused to, you know, the big celebrations like we had outside the Legislature Building. I think it's a very good idea that whenever we celebrate something, we should involve children because children always remember. You know, when they grow up, they remember that during the centennial time they were there. They really enjoy the parties, especially for the centennial year. That was special. So just to make a note – I mean, I'm not criticizing the centennial. Lots of things were done really well. I appreciate, to you and the Minister of Community Development, that lots of things were done really nicely. I commend both of you because you were the minister before him.

I'm glad and commend your efforts on Punjabi language introduction in the public schools. I urge you once again to make sure that they get enough funding, and I'm really glad. I know you understand that it was badly needed.

Please keep in touch with all schools in Alberta. I'm not asking for one particular school, but you should contact other schools, in the south or maybe in Calgary. They might need some repair, maybe, on the school's condition.

I'm really happy that the government is planning to hire some new teachers, which is good news. We all know that the future of our children is the future of Alberta and the future of us.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are some excellent comments in there that I want to comment on, but first I want to clarify the first question that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie asked, and that's with respect to why these supplementary estimates amounts weren't anticipated and part of the regular budget process back in April. The simple answer is because in the case of the bus fuel costs, for example, nobody expected the bus fuel costs to jump as much as they did and to stay at that level. You know, sometimes you'll get spikes in prices and they come right back down. But as you know from the truckers' strike that was held down there – you remember that – we didn't know back in December, January, February, when we were putting the budget together, that diesel prices would jump and stay there as long as they did. So I hope that satisfies that part.

With respect to the additional monies that I'm looking for for the plant operation and maintenance, the new amount of money that we're asking for, as you know, is going straight out to school boards

to help them, primarily because of the new funding formula that we have. This is money they will appreciate having, but it's precipitated largely by this new funding formula that we have, the per-pupil funding formula, hon. member, and also because we do recognize that there are increased costs for operating and maintaining our schools.

[Mr. Lougheed in the chair]

On that point I should also advise the member that the natural gas rebate program, which we have now as a government extended to cover even the month of October, that particular program will be rolled out for the benefit of schools for their operations budgets, that are impacted by natural gas prices. We'll have that process be similar to what was done in 2003, which is when we provided the last major round of natural gas cost increases to offset their impact at the local level.

With respect to your general point, though, on the final point, which is the school infrastructure money, the construction monies for in this case portables or, as we call them now, modulars, please understand that that amount of money for that sector of the estimates as well as the first two that I've talked about is coming, rather, entirely from unanticipated surplus dollars. So rather than pass up the opportunity to address some of the pressures that I know I have and, in turn, school boards have, I asked Treasury Board and cabinet and caucus and so on for support so that I could get some additional monies out to our school boards for those purposes. They all came out of unanticipated surplus dollars.

Again, back when the budgeting process occurred in January, February, March, and so on, nobody expected oil prices to jump up over 60 bucks a barrel and stay there for as long as they did. They're still hovering in that area. No one expected natural gas prices to jump to \$10, \$11, \$12 a gigajoule, such as they have just done, and to stay there for as long as they have. You can't anticipate those things when you do the normal budgeting process, and that's one of the beautiful things about the system of parliament that we have. We're allowed as a government to bring in these supplementary estimates from time to time and address certain cost pressures.

I want to just indicate quickly, Mr. Chair, with respect to the elementary school that you have alluded to now, that I'm not sure if you're talking about the very same one that you asked about in question period, but I want to say this to the hon. member: I apologize if I didn't recognize that as the same school you talked to me about. I'm sorry; it didn't twig on me just immediately. However, one of the reasons that we have locally elected school boards is so that they can deal with local issues, and that's really where this issue needs to go first and foremost.

Now, I'm sure that some of our staff and friends are listening to this discussion today and that they will immediately find out something for you on this. I don't know if it will be possible before your meeting tonight. I've helped a lot of MLAs, both opposition and government MLAs, over the year that I've been here and addressed as quickly as I could some of the issues that their constituents brought to my attention. We'll try and do the same thing here, but it has to be done through the process established, hon. member, and in this case it's the Edmonton public school board.

I should tell you, regarding specifically the water issue, that I was thinking about that a little bit, and I was in fact chatting with some former mayors and reeves in our caucus just since question period. It was mentioned to me that perhaps there's an issue of annexation that has gone on or is being contemplated. I don't know, but I do know that the school board working with the city of Edmonton, if that's the jurisdiction within which it actually lies – and I suspect

that it is – might have some sort of an issue with the annexation difficulty or where the boundary is drawn. But, again, we'll try and find that out a little more clearly for you.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Should schools that are in disrepair, such as you've described, be repaired or be demolished? That is also a local school board decision. I honestly don't know, hon. member, if they are contemplating something like that for – is it Ellerslie school? Yes? You're nodding your head yes? Okay. I'm sure they'll be reading *Hansard* and looking at your comments.

The last two things, Mr. Chair, quickly. With respect to the centennial year I think you asked something about: why weren't all the children bused to the Legislature or wherever during the day? I want to tell you that some school boards likely did something like that or some individual schools might have done that, but the decision is entirely at the local level. The reason for that, hon. member, is because different parts of the province and the school boards who represent those different parts have different start times for the school year.

4:10

Now, for some it may have been more convenient to do; for others it may not have been. You see, here's the deal though. You know how you need parents to sign slips? Now, a lot of parents may have been away in the last two weeks of August and couldn't get it done, so you couldn't take half the school and not the other half, and those were the reasons that they gave me. It had nothing to do with me, hon. member. It had to do with local school boards. Those who were contemplating it likely got permission slips signed by students back in June just to make sure that when September 1 came around and they only had one or two days – and you know how confusing things can sometimes get around the start-up of school – they wouldn't be caught short footed.

As you may recall, I tried to make September 1 a big holiday, and I had some support for that and so on, but the business community and others thought that if we moved some of those celebrations to the evening, we could accommodate everybody. So most communities had large celebrations after the school adjournment hour of 3:30. In fact, we encouraged them to do that, and they did. Here we ran all day and all night because of the significance of the Legislature Building and the capital city and so on.

The Punjabi language comment that you made: thank you for that. In fact, there is going to be a full language and culture program developed for Punjabi. We have nine of these programs already. This morning I did speak with the curriculum director from one of the school boards, who indicated to me that they are feeling very good and very strong about this, and it will be a very large enrolment that takes up the Punjabi language. As you know [remarks in Punjabi], which translates, hon. *Hansard* folks, as: I am learning Punjabi.

So that having been said, we're very proud of all of the languages in this province. If a school board wishes to undertake the development of a language and culture program course other than one of the nine – or now we'll have the 10th, being Punjabi – they are certainly welcome to do this, and we will help them where we can.

Thank you.

Mrs. Mather: I'm really supportive of this request for supplementary money, but I do have some concerns I'd like to mention, and I'm going to try not to repeat what's already been said.

I think the best legacy we can leave behind is the best trained

workforce in the world, and that only happens with education. We need all kinds of education, and it costs money to tool up to the 21st century. The minister and I heard this morning at a wonderful event that's forward-thinking, a partnership with Edmonton public schools and the Canadian Space Agency, about the need for us to make sure that we are competitive in the future.

Unfortunately, insistence on results has forced an emphasis, I think, on support for students who will not pull the average down, with the result being that more kids are dropping out of high school because we no longer provide a broad range of learning opportunities. I've witnessed wonderful results with students in beauty culture, building construction, and automotives. Where would these people be now without those programs? We seem to have it upside down. We measure the wrong things. How do we measure self-esteem, and how do we measure what it means to be a useful member of society? How do we measure happiness with one's work?

We have to spend money to change the system, I believe, and make Albertans competitive. We live with a global market and economy now, and only the best trained workforce will be able to compete. It costs money to train people, but the benefits far outweigh the cost. Working people pay taxes; they don't get sick as often. The cost of ignorance is higher than what we need to do to prevent it.

Of the concerns that I have, some have been mentioned. Of course, school fees and fundraising are major concerns in my constituency also.

Taking a look at the need for early intervention, where it should be most effective, of course, is in the elementary schools, yet elementary schools get the least amount of money. That's the place where I think we can make the most difference. With the latest recommendations for class sizes it's become even tighter. When you're told to have 17 and 22 students in division 1 and 2, it's tough to give the extras.

The extras I'm talking about are counselling. There was a time when we could be proud about the number of counsellors that we had. Edmonton public school district, actually, had elementary counselling and offered wonderful preventative programs that I know made a difference because I see adults now who were in those programs who tell me that they still remember those sessions.

Reading recovery is a Cadillac reading rescue program. At \$3,000 just to train the teacher, who would be working with eight to 10 students a half-hour a day every day, it is a program that can make a difference for children without the support systems at home. I think that this is a program that in the end can make a huge difference because of the trickle-up effect to high schools. We get students coming in with a better sense of esteem. Because they can read and they understand what they're reading, high school is going to be a much more successful experience.

I also want to mention libraries. Most of the libraries that I'm aware of are in a state where they need money to bring them up to par because of the cuts over the last five years. With curriculum changes going on in all the sciences, for example – and the socials are just starting, I think – the support for these curriculums cost dollars. That money needs to be there for texts and for the library supports that the curriculum demands so that students can do the research and so forth. Science books change almost every three years. It's a huge cost to schools.

Then, of course, there are vandalism costs that have to come out of plant operation and maintenance, and often there just isn't enough money there for the unexpected spray-painting and so forth.

With high school funding it seems like there's been another change in the operations and maintenance grant funding that I don't

really quite understand, but I'd like to learn more. It doesn't seem that it's sufficient to operate schools. Modernization money is desperately needed.

In high schools course completion funding continues to be an issue. We don't get paid for students who have poor attendance, yet many, many hours of hard work by professionals will go into trying to make those students want to be in school.

Another area of concern is the lack of funding for career planning and apprenticeship programming. I think we need to expand those. Those need to be augmented in our schools, going back to the need for more trained workers. There are not enough staff in these areas, and we just need the support there.

Transportation has already been mentioned, so I won't go there.

I am disappointed that there's no apparent plan for dealing with the unfunded liability for teachers' pensions, which I believe is at about \$2 million, the minister mentioned earlier today.

Finally, a personal question in terms of portables. I think the word "portable" is misleading. At least, it was in the past. You know the problems in Mill Woods, where we had tremendous overcrowding. I can recall being at Grace Martin school, where we had 19 portables to cope with the crowding. So this has to do with planning. You know, how can we say that that would have been unexpected, that there would have been that need to accommodate so many students?

Then a few years later at J. Percy Page high school we were in the same situation of overcrowding, but we couldn't get portables because, Mr. Minister, apparently it's too costly to move the portables. You were talking about an improvement in that. That would make a whole bunch of sense to me. The reality is that you talked about fluctuations in population throughout the province. That happens in the cities too. If there was some way whereby we could avoid the unanticipated overcrowding problems by moving portables or by planning better, that would be good.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

4:20

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Clearly some well-spoken and well-researched comments within the hon. member's statements. Having been a former teacher, I know that she speaks from the heart, and I'm delighted that she started by saying how supportive she is of these additional monies because I am too. In fact, we were together this morning at the J. Percy Page high school, where I believe the hon. member once taught, and we witnessed the signing of an agreement between J. Percy Page on behalf of Edmonton public schools and the Canadian Space Agency to bring that form of learning into that classroom and to others. So it was a great, great day.

I agree with you, hon. member, that there are some wonderful results that are coming out from our students and that we need to pay a little more attention to the CTS area, be it beauty culture or be it automotives or be it woodworking or electricity or welding or whatever it is. I think that if we were able to do that – and I don't have the money right now to do it – we would also help address the skilled labour shortage that we have in this province. So there are some tremendous benefits to that.

I also think that if we structured it properly, hon. member, we would also see an increase in high school completion rates, and we would see a decrease in the dropout rates because not everyone as a student is destined for academia land. Some are destined for tradesville and some are destined for other locations, but the point is to keep them at least through to grade 12 so that all of those doors might be open to them later on. So I'll read through your comments more carefully in that respect.

With respect to what we're measuring and if we're measuring the wrong things or not – I was trying to keep up with you and take some notes – suffice it to say that we put a lot of effort into designing our own performance measurements as a government, in this case in education, and we put a lot of thought and emphasis and best practice type of research work into designing performance measurements or benchmarks or targets or whatever you want to call them for school boards to consider in their local jurisdiction. It's true: we are moving into more and more of a global market economy, and we need to be ever cognizant of that, which I think you alluded to.

On the fees and fundraising piece and the comments that you made, I understand that there are difficulties in this area. That's why I engaged all the school boards in a very one-on-one frank discussion about it. I just haven't yet got the final analysis of it all because the final tour day was just last Thursday, but I will be making some comments on that at the appropriate time. I wish I could give you a date, and right now I just can't.

The early intervention comment with respect to elementary schools. I agree and think that if we could do earlier early intervention, we would be benefiting a lot of the children. The comment with respect to elementary students being the lowest funded, I think, or something to that effect, you said: in fact, the new formula under PO and M elevates them to the top of the class. They will be the highest funded. Now, that's just for that one area, PO and M. That's a good thing. In fact, it'll be the highest rate in the K to 12, and perhaps we can take that lead and look at other issues that you've referenced.

On the comment about class sizes still being too large. You know, when the Learning Commission made its recommendations, it said: address class sizes over a five-year period. Now, we in our wisdom as a government said: no, we should try and do it in three years. So we have been trying to do it in the three-year window, and we've got one more year to go. So far, from September of '04 through to the end of September of '05, I believe we have hired about 1,600 brand new full-time equivalent teachers. By this time next year we will have helped school boards hire 2,250 brand new full-time equivalent teachers, and that will at that point make a dramatic difference to class sizes. It's the final shoe to fall or to drop. That will allow us to hire 500 more teachers next year.

That having been said, we're very cognizant of the pressures it's putting here on infrastructure because some parts of this province are just absolutely booming along, and we're having some trouble keeping up, in fact. No one could have planned for what's going on in some parts of the province.

The issue with respect to counselling and librarian teachers and so on I commented on in response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, so I won't repeat other than to say that I am aware of the ever-growing needs for libraries that are needed, which I think was a fresh point you mentioned, and also how curriculum changes and technological changes in our schools are driving some of those needs. So we're looking at a lot of this.

In fact, I appointed a ministerial advisory committee probably two or three weeks ago to review the renewed funding framework. The new one that came in last year was a living model, and the new one that just came out in September is also a living model. It's improved and it's clearer. I just knew before we even went out on the tour with the school boards that there would already be issues because I've received letters from some of the chairs and so on. So I immediately said: look, let's get out in front of this; let's get a ministerial advisory committee going. So we have. My deputy minister is chairing it, and I think there are about 12 Albertans from across the province who are working on that with him. A lot of the issues that you talked about, and some of them that came out of the

ACOL, the Alberta Commission on Learning, report are going to be covered in that review.

The plant operation and maintenance funding changes. I think I've talked to those already, but suffice it to say that the new formula will in fact look at per-pupil funding for the K to 6 group as one level, for the grades 7 to 9 group at another level, and the grades 10 to 12 group at yet another level. The second major component of the new funding formula will deal specifically with the area of severe special needs, recognizing that there are some students who have severe special needs that simply physically require more space. The third part of the new formula will be somewhat of a repeat of the old utilization formula, and that's with respect to sparsity, distance, and travel for school boards, which is still a major concern. Finally, the issue of small schools by necessity will also be factored into the new funding formula.

We've got a lot of work to do there. For example, the 25-kilometre rule, as you're well aware, is one that needs some review. Perhaps the 290-student rule within the small schools by necessity formula needs review. Perhaps even the 2.4 kilometre walk rule needs some review. In rural Alberta in particular, not that urban Alberta is that much different, there are some children who are having to cross some dangerous intersections, and parents made that very clear to me in some of the receptions I hosted for them and for teachers just over the last six weeks. There is a lot in that review, hon. member, and I hope we'll be able to address everything to the satisfaction of the majority, at least.

The final two points, Mr. Chair. One, the vandalism costs. Obviously, those are unexpected costs, and I know that most school boards do carry a contingency to deal with that. But occasionally there are severer things that happen either by deliberate acts of vandalism or sometimes by so-called acts of God, such as the explosion in Redwater just a week or two ago. Maybe it was a little longer than that but nonetheless within the last month. I've just seen the pictures from that recently, and who would ever have anticipated that at 5 in the morning on a certain day that CTS lab would blow up? Well, it just happens that it did, and there was a fire, so how does that get paid for? We're looking at that right now.

The 19 portables at one school site caught my attention. I want to just make this closing comment in that respect, Mr. Chair, for the hon. member. First, thank you for raising the issue. I know exactly the school you're talking about. But I want to indicate to you that one of the reasons we're looking at a new design for schools is so that they would in fact be constructed in what I hope will be a very clever and esthetically pleasing yet efficient and effective way that will accommodate them not only looking good and functioning well, but it would also allow the new style of modular units to be added to or taken away from without impacting the overall functionality of the school. They wouldn't look like an add-on or a take-away. They wouldn't be 14 different colours and all of those practical kinds of things.

The single largest thing about this is the fact that the new modulars, formerly known as portables, will be so strongly built, steel fabricated with improved ventilation and approved attachability to the core of the school, that we're really hoping that they are going to catch on in future designs because I think that is one way that we can deal with the issue that I think you wanted to bring to my attention. Costs of moving them are expensive. Typically we spend probably a quarter of a million dollars on building and moving and site preparation and so on. I don't remember the transportation costs exactly. It's probably in the \$30,000 to \$50,000 range, and it is expensive, but at least the new ones can be moved without danger of them falling apart en route.

Thank you for those comments, and I hope that I've been helpful in addressing some of them with answers.

4:30

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make some brief comments on the supplementary estimates for Education. I, too, would like to express I guess some sense of hope that there is, in fact, a moving in the right direction in terms of education here in this province. There are some promising signs of that. I do thank the minister for probably assisting in that endeavour.

There are a number of issues, though, that have come across my path, both in my constituency and then travelling across the province. I think that categorically you do have some of these on your supplementary budget list, but I just want to emphasize the importance of dealing with some of these things. So in no particular order, but perhaps something you were just speaking about previously is the use of portables as a way to build the schools in the future and incorporating portables from the beginning in the design of a structure. I certainly do applaud the possibility of doing this, but I can't emphasize the importance of changing the essential design and how this goes about.

One school in Grande Prairie that I visited not so long ago comes to my mind. Portables were part of the structure of the school from the beginning, but this was a temporary measure, I think is the way they were looking at it. Now, 25 years later these eight or 10 portables, incorporated into the hallway and the rest of the school, are still there. I would say that the essential problem was one of drainage. The rest of the permanent structure was sloping away, and these other structures I think for 25 years had moisture passing under them. So, you know, being brave enough to stick my head down there was enough to tell me that there has to be a limit on how long portables are in place. If we are in fact going to this new model, as you suggested, which does sound promising, then the management site development has to be very clearly defined.

This particular school in Grande Prairie – and I'll talk to you about it; I'll send you a note on it – certainly is among the sort of, I guess, emergency situations that I've seen for structures in various places, as I say, in my constituency and around the province. I'm very happy to see that Infrastructure dealing with the infrastructure for education has indeed moved back to Education. I think this is where people can make the most intelligent decisions about the needs of individual schools: in school boards, you know, the people who are using these structures every day. So that certainly is something to applaud as well.

Again, speaking about structures, I know that you are reviewing and revisiting the utilization rate. My colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview did mention, I think, the importance of recognizing the different ages of structures. How that does factor into how the utilization rate will affect the school, older schools with larger hallways and different storage spaces and what have you, has really been an unfair disadvantage to these older schools because, of course, the utilization rates would make it so that you could never really appear to be full when you have hallways and unusable space factored into the formula.

As well, we are seeing always a dynamic of population change and different neighbourhoods moving up and down in terms of the amount of children going to school in an area. I think that it's very important for us to be more flexible in how we're using our neighbourhood schools so that we can perhaps incorporate extracurricular activity or, in fact, community activity into the utilization rates for those structures. The city planners and school board people who put

community schools into our older neighbourhoods many years ago did so to meet a need for higher student populations in the past, but that does not preclude the possibility that we will see those utilization rates in the future as well.

In the interim the existence of a school in a neighbourhood, particularly in an established neighbourhood, is absolutely crucial to the viability of that neighbourhood to come back and revitalize itself and attract new young families to continue the cycle of using the school and having a vibrant community and otherwise keeping the community from sliding into less desirable sorts of utilization. So community schools are something we have to fight for, I think, in the most strenuous possible way and be creative and work together on both sides of this House to find ways in which we can use the structures that we already have that were built and are there and use them as centres of communities in the future and not just giving a shelf life to a school of 30 or 40 years. I find it a bit disconcerting to see a school being shut down when it only is, perhaps, as old as myself. You know, I think that we have to have a more permanent sense of what a structure it is and what sort of future are we building for that community much longer past, say, a 40-year period.

I know that the student-teacher ratio initiative is a three-year plan, but I think that it would be nice to review the success of that next year in as extensive a way as possible with input from all levels of schools, each division of schools, as well as input from people on the ground to see how it has in fact affected the teaching quality and the actual student-teacher ratio in classrooms. Sometimes I know that teachers in classrooms fail to see these changes immediately. When we did endeavour to reduce the student-teacher ratio in this province a year and a half ago or almost two years ago, I think that teachers were hopeful and parents were hopeful and administrators and school boards too. But often they're not necessarily seeing that ratio decreasing on an individual basis. So I think that a collaborative review of the success of the student-teacher ratio initiative in this province after next year would be very much appreciated by all of the stakeholders involved.

I would like to put in a plug for full-day kindergarten. I think that we're seeing in general that education is an investment. Early intervention, reading recovery programs, and just a focus on children at their very youngest stages of formal learning in a public school environment are absolutely crucial. We confront those results and the success of those results all of the time from jurisdictions across North America, even right here in Edmonton with our inner-city school initiative. We can see that the results were quite astounding, and I believe that what's good for one area must be good for everywhere in Alberta. I think that with a full-day kindergarten program we would be rewarded with increased results on all levels of schooling. I believe it would be perhaps the most important lasting legacy that we could provide the next generation here at this juncture.

4:40

I just want to make sure that I'm covering all of my bases here. I would like to bring up one last point, and this is something that was brought to my attention from some administrative colleagues that I know. This was a proposal perhaps or it's actually happening now; I'm not sure. It was the provincial government charging a fee for assessment of students when students move from one school to another. Now, I've been approached with this as a concern in regard to it costing a lot of money for school boards. I was given the figure of \$2.5 million to \$3 million for Edmonton public to basically pay back – it's like a clawback – to the provincial government to provide this assessment fee.

Now, the details of it I'm not entirely sure about, but it sounds

problematic. I think we do want to have a clear indication of what a student's level of achievement is at each stage along the way, and we want to have some unification in those numbers to know that, let's say, a student's performance can be equally measured in all parts of the province. That being said, I think that the professionalism of individual schools and teachers to be able to execute something like this and to meet standards that would be applicable across the province certainly is there already, and to have, say, a separate agency doing this or charging an administrative fee might seem onerous or, as I say, something that resembles a clawback from the school boards to the provincial government.

Just in conclusion, I'm very pleased with some indications that our public education system is moving in the right direction. Let's make sure we can work together to ensure that that will continue in the future. Thank you.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. Once again some very insightful and measured comments, and I'm grateful for that. It's actually a pleasure to listen to speakers who aren't here to lecture other members, and I think the last three speakers in particular have done that very well. So thank you. It's just nice to have a pleasant discourse on this. The sky is not totally falling, as you know. In fact, I don't think that it's falling at all in most areas. There might be some improvements we need to make, and I've indicated already that I'm willing to do whatever I can to address those.

There is a sense of hope, which I think was your opening comment here, and it's a greater sense of hope. It's all about our students, and as long as we continue to make decisions surrounding what is best for the education of our children, I think that we will always make the right decision. So thank you for the kudos that you expressed in that regard.

Now, the issue that you raised with respect to portables. You know, it's not the intention to use portables – the new word for them is modulars because they're a different type of portable – to build schools. It's a modular design concept to build a core school around which modulars can be injected. It sort of reminds me of that trivia game, you know, where you have those little wedges. Now, that may not be exactly how they all look. There will be different designs to choose from. If you have that concept in mind of something being added and then being brought together so that it looks like it's still part of the whole or expanded so that it still looks like part of the whole but the core concept around which it's built essentially stays the same, that would be a bit of a mental picture that I hope you can conjure up as to what is being discussed in some circles.

With respect to the comment about changing the essential design and how it might impact future decisions, I want to tell you, hon. member, that in my discussions with the school boards just over the last few weeks one of the issues that was brought up to me in the context of aging infrastructure and the need for rightsizing or modernizing or upgrading or evergreening or whatever term you want to put to it was this: the older schools were built with entrances and exits that didn't necessarily require visitors to go past the central office. So they have concerns about safety and security and monitoring and that kind of thing. That's where we need to put some attention as well, and the new designs do in fact do that far more effectively, hon. member, than some of the older designs did.

The other point you mentioned is something about moisture passing underneath some of the old portables, and I know exactly what you're talking about because I've studied a couple of these issues.

I want to just tell members of the House that one of the things that

I don't think we'll ever do again is what was necessitated to be done perhaps 30, 40, 50, 60 years ago – I'm not sure of the date but long ago – when concrete foundations were poured directly onto the clay ground. That has caused some moving and shifting and slipping and sliding of some of our aging infrastructure, for example. That may not pertain specifically to the portables because they're settled in different ways. Still, some poor schools were built on slabbing, I think they call it, or something along that line.

The Grande Prairie urgency. If there's a way that you can remember the name of the school that you have in mind and let me know about it, chances are that it's the same one I'm looking at. I'm well aware that there are some significant pressures at Alexander Forbes, and we hope to be addressing those very, very quickly and soon.

On the old utilization rate that you referred to, my comment in that respect would be this. The utilization rate, such as it was, which looked at a couple of the factors that I've already put on record, may have worked back when it was first brought in, but it has certainly not functioned as well as one would hope in the modern-day sense, and that's why we brought in this new per-pupil funding rate, but I think I've already indicated, hon. member, that that isn't the total answer yet either. It's an improvement in the right direction, and it's brought in with the right intentions – please, believe me – but I'm acutely aware that there's still a little bit of other relooking that has to be done.

I'll put it this way. Perhaps there's an opportunity for us to look at some per-program funding. Now, we're not quite there yet, and I say that because whether you have five children in a classroom or you have 15, the heating cost is going to be the same, the lighting costs are going to be the same, and the teacher costs are going to be the same. So when you fund on only a per-pupil basis, you're really somewhat penalizing some of the smaller classrooms across the province, and that takes me to your point about community schools.

We have community schools in the cities, and we have them out in the country spots and so on, as we all know. Community schools are a critical concept to remember because community schools tend to work with community agencies and with our student health initiative partnership, for example, where we work with health authorities, with child and family services authorities, and the school board. Now, I shouldn't say we as a government so much as those three entities working amongst themselves. But you get the point, I'm sure.

That takes me to the issue of community schools and community agencies working to tackle the Premier's recent initiative to combat crystal meth, which is another issue that I discussed with virtually every board back in January, when I first met with all 62 of them, and again just now in October and November when I met with all 62 again. So the concept of community schooling is one that I do support, but I do know that in some cases school boards have some very difficult decisions to make when your school is down to a handful of children.

It's particularly acute in two areas: one, some of the smaller areas of our province in the rural sector and, secondly, in some of our cities where the population is aging and staying. The kids have grown up and left, so the community school, which was once bustling and bubbling with bright young minds, virtually has a very small group of young people that are still in the age range that they're able to attend. So the community school has sort of outgrown its use in that area, and closing it is one of the most divisive things, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview pointed out, that a school board has to do.

The final couple of comments are on the class size initiative and the teacher-student ratio that you referred to. I appreciate your

comments on what you were saying. Can we review its success next year? Hon. member, we review this on an ongoing basis, I mean, literally almost every day, and if not, then every week because I'm particularly interested in how the Learning Commission's recommendation to address class size on a jurisdictional basis differs from addressing it on a per-class basis.

4:50

Now, we're not going to go down the path of capping class size, such as I think B.C. did. The reason for that is simply because if you mandate, for example, that the largest class in kindergarten to grade 3 should be not more than 17 children, well, okay. So what do you do when the 18th and the 19th child arrive and you've got a class of 19? See, you have no flexibility to bring in an aide to address the added teaching requirements. You automatically have to hire another teacher and get another classroom for the two students. Now, obviously, they would split into a nine and an eight or whatever, but that's not the answer.

We're trying to work with this jurisdictional average thing. But I know that even in my own constituency I have some challenges and problems. Oddly enough, they seem to be more at the K to 6 level, which baffles me because that was the first area that class size initiative funding, the \$110 million, for example, that's in that portfolio this '05-06 year – it's at that level that we thought we would be addressing the needs first. Yet I'm finding that all the others have been addressed, and in some cases K to 3 in particular has not been yet sufficiently addressed. I do know that the school boards are trying their best with the funds they've been given to do that, and I think you'll see more movement than ever as we complete it with the funding next year. In fact, Edmonton public schools, I think, hired something in the neighbourhood of around 180 new teachers. That's a pretty significant group of new hires.

The full-day kindergarten. I've noted your comments and the assessment fees comment. I'm puzzled by this one a little bit. I think I heard you say that assessment fees are being charged by the government of Alberta whenever children transfer from one jurisdiction to another or something to that effect. Whatever it is, hon. member, I'll look at it; I'll read it more closely. I appreciate your bringing it to my attention because maybe that is one area that we do need to review.

So thank you for those calm and measured comments.

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Chairman, I was hoping that we could move on to Children's Services if that's at all possible.

The Chair: After considering the 2005-2006 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the Department of Education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

Agreed to:
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$75,133,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Children's Services

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to present the 2005-06 supplementary estimates of the Ministry of Children's Services. In total, Alberta Children's Services 2005-06 supplementary estimate is \$38.4 million: \$35.9 million in operating expenses, which included 19 new full-time positions, and \$2.5 million in capital investments.

Part of these supplementary funds will support the implementation of Alberta's new, innovative early childhood development and child care plan. The plan was developed through consultation to ensure that it met the needs of Albertans. Our plan increases child care, family day homes, and kin child care subsidies for low- and middle-income families.

We have also raised income eligibility thresholds, so families can earn up to 25 per cent more and still be eligible for maximum subsidy. We estimate that the number of families receiving this subsidy will increase by 45 per cent. To successfully implement this part of the plan, we require an additional \$13.9 million.

We've created a new subsidy of up to \$100 per month to assist stay-at-home parents with their early childhood development fees. This will support the early childhood development of over 16,000 preschool children across Alberta. We've included an additional \$10.8 million in our supplementary estimates to help with this part of the plan.

We've doubled funding support for children with disabilities. This means more spaces, improved staff training, and enhanced quality care for these children. To achieve this, the supplementary estimate includes an additional \$2.1 million.

We're providing funding to improve the quality of child care services by increasing staff wages and training opportunities. This means that the average salary for child care professionals with two-year early childhood development diplomas who work in an accredited program will increase from \$11.50 to \$14.46 per hour. We've also increased professional development funding for eligible centres to a thousand dollars per staff member to support additional training. To successfully implement this part of the plan, we require an additional \$7.2 million.

We've given families easier access to early childhood development screening and assessment services and supports to ensure that children are reaching their developmental milestones. We've also started a toll-free parent information line. By calling 1-866-714-KIDS, parents now have easy access to the information they need. We'll require an additional \$1.9 million to implement this part of the plan.

In order to effectively implement our new five-point plan, we'll need to improve our information systems. To do this, we require an additional \$1.3 million.

The \$37.2 million we require to successfully implement the early childhood development and child care plan will be fully offset by federal revenue transfers. In addition, we need \$1.2 million for system enhancements to support two important pieces of legislation: the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act. This funding will allow us to continue to provide Alberta families with quality programs and services. It will enable us to implement our plan and continue to lead the way in early childhood and development and child care programs.

Mrs. Mather: I've got a number of comments. I guess I'd like to start with, first of all, the recognition that as we look at the 21st century, we need to revisit the idea of child care. If we really want to succeed, our children must succeed. The science of child development tells us that there are many things that we can do to invest in early childhood learning experiences and developmental

experiences that will pay off many times over by having children do well. When children succeed in school, they become more productive, they become higher income earners, and they become more contributing members of society.

When parents want to go to work and want to choose to send their children to facilities, we must make sure that these facilities are of good quality and of the best quality possible. So I'm really pleased that we've got the good news that we finally have an agreement with the federal government.

As I look at what the \$37,200,000 is going to do in that regard, it's encouraging. We're going to increase the maximum child care subsidy and boost the income threshold to allow more families to be eligible effective November 1. We're introducing a new benefit of up to a hundred dollars per month to help eligible stay-at-home parents pay fees for licensed nursery schools and other approved early childhood development programs. That's effective January 2006. We'll increase funding to improve access to specialized child care for children with disabilities. We're increasing funding for wages and training opportunities for individuals working in accredited daycare and approved family day-home programs. Of course, we're providing parents with more information about parenting and available programs through the new parent information line. These are wonderful things.

It's essential that daycare staff receive financial support and professional development grants. It's good to see that the ministry has provided funding to support programs and staff working together with children. However, income in the child care sector is about half the national average for all occupations and less than half as much as elementary school and kindergarten teachers. We need to recognize that well-paid, trained child care workers are at the heart of building a quality system and a healthy community. The federal funding is a start, but this government needs to do more.

One of my questions is: why aren't any supports provided for out-of-school care services that aren't eligible for accreditation? I'm hearing from out-of-school care services that they can't keep their staff because daycare workers are now making more than out-of-school care workers with the same qualifications, training, and experience. I'm wondering: why wasn't any of the surplus allocated for out-of-school care services to assist centres in recruiting and keeping staff?

5:00

The \$13,900,000 of the Alberta early learning and child care investment plan, put towards supporting "low and middle-income families through increased day care, family day home, and kin child care subsidies," is good, but I'm wondering. As we look back to 2002, the department received a report supporting daycare professionals' issues and options with the exact same recommendation. Why did parents have to wait for funding from the federal government for subsidy supports to increase? What has taken so long? Would parents still be suffering to make ends meet if the federal government hadn't given this money to the province at this time?

There's a request of \$1.2 million for equipment/inventory purchases for information systems enhancements to support program delivery under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act. I'm wondering why this was not budgeted for during the budget process in the spring. More importantly, how is this extra money actually going to be allocated? Can you give us some details there?

I notice also that equipment/inventory purchases for early learning and child care initiatives cost an extra \$1,300,000 on top of the \$68,577,000 for child care already budgeted for. Again, why was this not budgeted for initially? Can you tell us in some detail how

that extra money is going to be allocated? What are those dollars going to do for us?

My other priority concerns. I don't see any increase for youth shelters. This is specifically harmful to the agencies that provide these services because there's no guarantee of funding past one year. The ministry needs to look at better ways of contracting so that we have sustained, predictable, and stable funding for shelters.

Another question: why hasn't any of the surplus been allocated to inspect daycare facilities and family day homes, especially since nothing was allocated during the spring budget?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has asked many, many questions. I think that first of all she needs to understand that the agreement we negotiated with the federal government was for the ages zero to six. So when she starts talking about the support for out-of-school care, that wasn't part of the negotiated agreement or any part of the discussion that the hon. Minister Dryden wanted to even discuss. It was brought up at the negotiation tables about: while we're getting this agreement between zero to six, what about six to 12? We had lengthy discussion with him also on a particular discussion about tax relief for stay-at-home parents. The support for the out-of-school care comes under the auspices of FCSS, and that's delivered by the municipalities. I think we're giving the municipalities about \$62.9 million. They make that decision on how to distribute the money for the out-of-school care.

We talked about the income of child care workers and some of the other things that we brought into the agreement. I think the hon. member has to understand that all of the things that we negotiated in the agreement were all things that Albertans wanted. We took a huge consultation process on this. The parents and daycare workers/providers that responded to our online consultation – their letter writing, their phone calls, accessing our website – all indicated all of the points and the plans that she currently sees, that we negotiated. That would have been some of the things that she's already alluded to, in fact: the raising of the subsidies, the accreditation program, the regulated childcare to low- and middle-income, more support for stay-at-home parents, all of the things.

I must tell her that with the \$100 per month, or the \$1,200 per year, that we're providing for stay-at-home parents, we're the only province that put that, and we were pushing our envelope on that when we were negotiating with the federal government. The access to child care for children with disabilities: all part of the consultation as well as the quality child care and the wages to the workers.

I can only tell her that what I'm receiving in my office are kudos right across the province and from all over. Daycare workers are very excited about the wages, and we're getting e-mails, we're getting faxes, we're getting letters from people within the child care industry that are honestly very, very pleased with what's happening in Alberta.

The \$1.2 million that she talked about: why wasn't it originally in our budget? This was money that we needed because of all of the work that we have to do to put this child care program into place. Youth shelters weren't part of this negotiated agreement. Again I want to emphasize that this was an agreement that we made with the federal government and included only zero to six, so youth shelters weren't part of the negotiations. I can let the hon. member know in regard to youth shelters – I know that it's one of her passions – that we are reviewing youth shelters at this time. I spent the entire summer travelling right across the province meeting with all the regions and visited many, many youth shelters and spoke to the directors at the youth shelters. They were very, very pleased with, one, our taking the time to stop in and, two, that we're looking at a

review about the bed capacities and the dollars and if we can help them at all.

The inspection of the day homes. She also should know that we're reviewing the social care facility act, which is being done by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. It hasn't been reviewed in 26 years. We've determined that the child care inspections and that will stay under the ministry. The seniors part of it will move over to the ministry of seniors, and we will bring in a new act in regard to recognizing this.

I think I have answered most of your questions. If I haven't – and I know we haven't got a lot of time – I will give the commitment to the member, as I have in the past, that for any questions I haven't been able to answer for you, we will, like we have previously, provide it to you in writing. I've got some of my staff taking notes, and we will continue to provide you some information.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm so impressed in recent years by so much research going into the issue of child care in Canada. I assume that the hon. minister was at the November 20, 2004, gathering of ministers from federal, provincial, and territorial governments when you adopted the four principles for a new national system of early learning and child care, important principles known under the acronym QUAD: quality, universally inclusive, accessible, and child care with a developmental focus.

Now, I'm not going to talk about all of those aspects because I want to relate my question to the actual funding that has come from the federal government, \$37.2 million, increasing, I understand, to \$85 million next year and to \$100 million in years to come. My question is around the universality aspect. I know there are differences in viewpoint between the approach to daycare that the government is taking and the approach of the opposition. I realize that, but I am just concerned. For example, statistically in Canada in terms of regulated child care spaces the average is no more than 12 to 15 per cent of children under the age of six, so Canada lags way behind other developed countries. I mean, if you look at other countries, like Belgium and Sweden, it's closer to 100 per cent and 60 per cent in terms of three year olds in Norway and Denmark and so on.

My concern is that child care is, for me, a basic human right, so we ought to be increasing the number of spaces and the amount of money that's providing for spaces in daycare. I want to ask the minister: how many regulated spaces does this amount of money represent? What can we say in Alberta about what percentage of regulated spaces we have for daycare given the \$37.2 million that's coming from the federal government to the province? Will those spaces increase in the future? What kind of development are we on? What kind of route are we on?

5:10

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, I think what's interesting about this province, Mr. Chair, is that Alberta seems to always be uniquely different. It's about parents' choice, and if parents choose to put their child in daycare, they'll make that choice. What is different about this province and a first in Canada is that we're the only province in Canada that has an accredited daycare program. In fact, Minister Dryden came to visit us several months ago and did a tour of the accreditation. We've got 97 per cent of the daycares in this province that have applied to be an accredited daycare, which is an incredible – incredible – amount of daycares applying. That means that with all of the daycares in this province, once they get through the preaccreditation and the accreditation, we will have the top daycares

in the country because of the process that they have to go through to get to that particular process.

I think it's a matter of supply and demand always, and if daycare spaces are needed, then businesses will have to determine if they want to increase. I can tell the hon. member that in the farm areas we're the first province in Canada to provide kin child care. For the farm people that live in this area that are in a financial situation where they have to go back to work and there's no daycare around there, we will pay a caregiver within the family so that their daughter or son can go back to work. That has been accepted within the rural communities. They are quite appreciative of the fact that this government has recognized that sometimes farm people get into a situation where they have to go back to work. We've recognized that, and if grandma and grandpa or an auntie and uncle have to babysit, then we'll recognize that and pay them.

To the member, I think that more important is that this whole agreement was signed on what Albertans asked for, not what the government wanted, not what I wanted. It was truly put together by what Albertans wanted, and they were very, very clear when they were calling us, writing us, and on all those things they chose to get hold of us on. They wanted parents' choice. That's exactly what this agreement was brought forward on.

You referenced the November 20 meeting, I believe. The former minister was at that particular meeting. I can tell you that in the meetings after the election we also accepted the QUAD principle. We think it's important. Alberta's agreement was negotiated in good faith. It was negotiated on behalf of – again, I keep repeating this: it was Albertans and what Albertans wanted. It took us some time to get our points across, obviously, to the federal minister. I can tell you that what we're hearing now is that other provinces are wanting the same agreement as Alberta has. You know, parents in this province are very, very pleased.

When you're negotiating an agreement of \$489 million over five years, there are going to be some bumps and hiccups in the road, but we're going to be listening to what parents have to say and how we can address it. We're in year 1 of the agreement, and we've got four more years to go on that particular agreement. We'll listen to what they want and what they have to say about this agreement.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak on these supplementary estimates for Children's Services. One of the first points that I would like to make – and again it's certainly welcome to see some additional funding for children's services. I think this is an area in which this province has chronically underfunded their obligation to people in need, and particularly children and people with a low income. So it's always welcome to see some extra dollars there.

It does give me some concern to wonder why we are putting \$38 million in new spending in now. I certainly can see some of the things that needed to be done in regard to matching or to complementing the new federal money that has come in regard to affordable daycare services. You know, I'm wondering why we couldn't have tacked this onto the initial budget estimates that we debated and worked with in the spring. It seems like quite a significant amount of money.

You know, this is speaking to a general problem that I think we have in this Legislature where the budgets are changing very significantly in these supplementary additions. I question whether or not we are able to debate those adequately in this House as a result of sort of these add-ons. So, categorically, I find that difficult,

although certainly, as I say, this is an area that was so chronically underfunded that any penny we could certainly use.

First, in regard to child care it was brought to our attention that a forensic accounting firm, KPMG, completed a study on daycare facilities in 2002 entitled *Supporting Day Care Professionals: Issues and Options*. The study found that a subsidy for low-income Albertans paid about a quarter of its own costs directly by offsetting welfare costs, yet the maximum daycare subsidy available for low-income Albertans is \$475 for youngsters ages zero to 18 months, \$380 for children 19 months and older. Given that the daycare costs can be up to \$880, clearly I think this subsidy is not sufficient.

Further, the report said something called a quality gap – and this was a study of nonprofit and then commercial child care centres in Canada. It found that nonprofit child care was significantly higher in all areas, including areas of diapering, use of materials, activities for teaching, and overall interaction between staff and children. My first question in regard to child care is: why is the minister providing more subsidies to for-profit child care services when clearly nonprofit child care services are superior in most areas?

Second of all, a couple of incidents have taken place in Alberta that deserve attention. In May the Road Runner child care program in Calgary was found to have been negligent in their duties regarding the death of an infant in their care. In February, as you probably know, Edmonton's Bear's Paw centre was closed after staff there inadvertently left a child out in the cold. So I would like to ask: what measures are being put into place from child services to reduce the possibility of these sorts of incidents happening in the future?

Third, in regard to child care again I believe that there is a great boom in new child care services being provided with extra funding, mostly from the federal government. But we're hearing word that the accreditation process for new child care facilities in Alberta is causing some difficulties for daycare centres, and they're finding the process somewhat onerous, and it seems to take away from the actual child care that they can do. So I would like to ask, perhaps, what the minister would suggest to streamline, or at least look at the possibility of streamlining or changing, that accreditation process to make it not easier by any means but make it function better.

5:20

In regard to talking about safe houses. Now, this is always a controversial area. These safe houses, of course, were set up to implement the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act of 1999. Police and child welfare officials can apprehend and confine children for up to five days. There are some other amendments to that as well. Protective safe houses are effective in making some changes for some clients as well as providing the opportunity for safety, information, and reflection. Most staff and stakeholders considered the change in this legislation in 2001 to have been positive because of the previous shorter period that was usually only sufficient for client detoxification. Staff and stakeholders especially noticed increased exposure and awareness on the issue of child prostitution in general, decreased availability of children for johns and for pimps, and steering of children into more appropriate resources, keeping children safe, et cetera.

Clients of the PSHs identified positive impacts in many areas. However, this report does, I think, raise some serious concerns about the overall effectiveness of the program. Number one, the safe houses are not functioning with consistently high occupancy rates, although the problem of child prostitution is not widely believed to have been solved or even reduced significantly in the province of Alberta. The report calls for increased awareness of this program on the part of police officers and child welfare officials in order to increase the clients in safe houses. No one is disputing the effective-

ness of this program, but we should perhaps investigate how widespread the problem of child prostitution really is in Alberta and address it in a more specific sort of way. Is the minister investigating just how big a problem child prostitution is in Alberta? How is the ministry improving the awareness of the police and child welfare officials of this legislation and how might we address this problem in a more general way?

Those are my comments in the most general way. Again, I would conclude by suggesting that if we could perhaps have more accurate budget estimates when we are debating the budgets in the first place, it would be easier for us to assess and then evaluate the progress of how monies are being spent and the effectiveness of those programs over a longer period of time.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the first thing that I would like to say to the hon. member about the supplementary estimates of \$37.2 million is that this is going to be fully offset by the federal dollars that we're going to be receiving. So while we're here before it, he needs to understand that all of the money is going to be fully offset by the federal dollars that we're going to be receiving, but time is of the essence.

All daycares will qualify for all of the subsidies and incomes whether they're nonprofit or for profit. Again, the daycares that we're hearing from are all very, very excited about what's happening, and the daycare workers are excited about the salary increases. We've been very, very pleased.

The daycare closures that he alluded to show that the system is working. When we come to a point where we're closing a daycare, they've had some serious infractions. We realize the situation that the parents are in by all of a sudden coming in. A lot of times we've tried to work with the daycares prior to that in regard to some of the infractions that they're doing, or people from our department try to work with them on some of the complaints we're getting. It gets to a point . . .

The Chair: Hon. minister, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to our Standing Order 58(1), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration of estimates, I would invite the Deputy Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report.

Mr. Zwodzdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would now move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows. The following resolutions relating to the 2005-06 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund have been approved.

Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$75,133,000.

The Committee of Supply also reports progress on the Department of Children's Services and requests leave to sit again.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very invigorating day of debate. In fact, it's been a great opening week

of the fall session of the Legislature and a nice conclusion, in a couple of days, to Métis Week. I want to extend special congratulations to all of our Métis friends, and on that note I would move that the House stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

[Motion carried; at 5:26 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Monday, November 21, 2005

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/11/21

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. At the beginning of this week we ask for renewed strength in the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of the Legislature. We ask for the protection of this Assembly and also the province we are elected to serve. Amen.

Hon. members, we'll be led today in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau, who's in the Speaker's gallery. I invite all members and all those in the galleries to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Dr. Lorne Taylor, a former member of the Legislature. Lorne was first elected to the 23rd Legislature on June 15, 1993, and served in the 25th Legislature until his retirement on December 22, 2004. During that time he held various ministries. It surely appears that life as an MLA must have at that time taken its toll because now that he's again a private citizen, people are telling me that he looks better than ever. Would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly six honoured guests from the Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services. This organization administers Alberta's unique daycare and family day home accreditation program. A first of its kind in Canada, this program is helping to ensure that parents and children experience the highest standard of quality child care. My guests are seated in the gallery this afternoon. It's my honour to introduce the executive director, Sandra Beckman, and her team: Natasha Webber, Wendy Reid, Diane Langner, Tracy McFarlane, and Nadine Forsyth. That's no relation. Please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly two hard-working people from southeastern Alberta working on behalf of southern Albertans and the Palliser health region. I'd like to introduce the chair of the Palliser health region, Carol Secondiak, as well as the CEO, Mr. Tom Seaman. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of all the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine from Onoway, Mr. George Jendyk. George is a former mayor of Onoway, a former educator, and now the president of ATA local 43. He's here to visit us. He had a great lunch with the Energy minister and me today. It gives me great pleasure to ask George to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of 19 visitors from the Tomahawk Silver Tops: leaders Mrs. Joyce Goerz and Mr. Wilfred Goerz, Mrs. Margaret Crowhurst, Mrs. Alma Schadeck, Mrs. Dora Millenbacher, Ms Greta Pryor, Mr. Frank Fowler, Mrs. Phyllis Fowler, Mr. Joseph Petrunia, Mrs. Evelyn Thompson, Mr. Ed Thompson, Mrs. Frances Gilbert, Mr. Edward Trautmann, Mr. Oscar Lemke, Mr. James Robb, Mrs. Gwen Petrunia, Mrs. Jacqueline Kuetbach, Mr. Reg Pearce, and Miss Marie Pearce. In our centennial year we have recognized those who have made significant contributions to our province. I would ask that the Tomahawk Silver Tops stand to be recognized and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the great pleasure of introducing to you and through you to members of this Assembly some really interesting people who are always on the cusp of doing things. They're from the Bigstone Cree First Nation. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they all stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an outstanding group of students from my own neighbourhood school, Lymburn elementary school, in Edmonton-McClung. Today we have 57 students, who are joined by their teachers, Mrs. Susan Galloway, Ms Jeanne Commance, and Ms Kim Olmstead, and parent Mr. Don Kolotyuk. They're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 27 bright and shining students from St. Justin Catholic elementary school in Edmonton-Meadowlark. They're participating in the School at the Legislature program, so they'll be with us all week. They're accompanied by Mrs. Doreen

Neuls, Mrs. Sharon Roy, and parent helper Mark Coates. Would they please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to give a proper introduction to the members of the Bigstone Cree nation. They're here talking about the forestry management agreement. There are Chief Francis Gladue, Albert Gladue, Marcel Gladue, Constant Auger, elder, as well as Russell Auger, Darrell Anderson Gerrits, and Gordon Gladue. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Barret Weber. Barret is a first-year master's student in the department of sociology at the University of Alberta, specializing in social theory. Barret was very active at his previous campus, Red Deer College, where he served on the board of governors for two years. He's seated in the public gallery. I would now request that Barret please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature members of the Coralwood academy. They have 22 students here today along with teacher Mr. Colin Forde and parent helpers Mr. Gordon Dykstra and Mrs. Joan Hager. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd like them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly Miss Andrée Morier, who is seated in the members' gallery. I'm pleased to announce that Andrée is currently finishing her degree at the University of Alberta. She is trilingual, in fact, being able to speak French and Spanish, which she learned down at the University of Colima in Mexico. She was also a student of my ministry's chief executive assistant, and despite his teaching, she has been able to do very, very well. I would like to ask her to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission Chairman

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission was a partner in a major law firm that does extensive business with companies regulated by the commission. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Can the minister assure this Assembly that the Securities Commission chairman no longer receives payments from the law firm he left to take this position?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission is under contract to

the Alberta Securities Commission. What arrangements were made with his law firm on the conclusion of his employment there are a matter that he should take up directly with the chairman.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: would the minister agree that it is a conflict of interest for a chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission to accept payments from a law firm whose business depends on dealings with that commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that when a person terminates employment with any employer, there is a determination of whatever funds are owing to that person. I think what the hon. member is questioning is a transaction that would occur between a member of a law firm and that law firm on how they pay out their employees. I think the question that is more appropriately asked and answered here is whether the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission has severed all ties with that law firm on the basis of working for them, and I can tell him that, in fact, is the case.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: as the minister responsible for the Alberta Securities Commission, does she not see it as part of her role to ensure that the new chairman is completely free of any ties to his former employer?

Mrs. McClellan: I think I just answered that, Mr. Speaker. The chairman has severed all ties with his previous law firm. How the final financial arrangements have been determined between the now chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission, who has no working ties with the law firm, and that law firm is private business. If the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is wanting to know that, he should ask the chairman of the Securities Commission and/or the law firm. I am sure that the hon. member is not naive and that he does understand how law practices work and how payments of funds owing to members work. If he has something more that he'd like to put on the record inside this House or outside, I'd welcome him to do it.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister on the same issue: is she not concerned about the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission's possible ongoing financial ties to a major law firm doing business with clients of the Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: I am concerned with this hon. member's question because rather than coming out and asking a direct question, we're going around an issue. I think I've made it clear. The chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission has severed all working ties with the law firm, Mr. Speaker. He is under contract for a certain sum with the Alberta Securities Commission. If he wants to know the private business of that member and his law firm as to how his final salary or partnership arrangements are made, he should direct those to either the honourable chairman of the Securities Commission or the honourable law firm that he was employed with.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that in this particular position as chairman of the Securities Commission the chairman's private business is of public concern, my direct, clear question to the minister: is the chairman still receiving payments from the law firm with which he was employed?

Mrs. McClellan: Again, Mr. Speaker, he is asking me to comment on his private business. Now, you may wish to do that, and there is an avenue for you to do that. Pick up the phone, phone Mr. Rice, and ask him that question. What is my business is whether the chairman of the Securities Commission has severed all working ties with the law firm. The answer is yes. Is the chairman being paid under contract for the job he's doing with the Alberta Securities Commission? The answer is yes. As far as the disbursement of income, whether it's salary or partnership agreements, that is private business and is certainly not something that I believe I should be in any way involved in.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the very public position as chairman of the Securities Commission makes that person's private business of public concern, will the minister ask the chairman of the Securities Commission if he is continuing to receive payments from his former employer?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I've said that my responsibility, as the Alberta Securities Commission reports to me, is to ensure that the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission has severed all working ties with his previous law firm. I hold again that the private business of completing the financial arrangements between that law firm and a partner in that law firm is their business. I invite the hon. member to do the right thing: pick up the phone, phone the chairman, and ask the question.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Children in Care

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spring the Minister of Children's Services announced that she was going to release all reviews conducted when a child who has had contact with Children's Services dies. Six months later the minister still hasn't released any of the information on Nina Courtepatte's death, how her case was handled by the ministry, or any recommendations made. My question is to the Minister of Children's Services. Given that the minister has had almost six months to put this incredibly important process into place, can the minister explain why the public is being forced to wait so long?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, the minister can explain. The individual that the hon. member has mentioned – all of the proceedings are still before the court. We will not be posting anything about that particular individual until the court procedures are finished.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it is possible, will the minister make this information public immediately and post these details on the Children's Services website?

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will. Once everything is done with that particular individual's court case, I will post it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister support a recommendation that the Alberta children's advocate become an independent office with the power to conduct independent investigations and ensure that children receive the care and protection they deserve?

1:50

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, the child advocate in this province is probably one of the biggest advocates in regard to children's issues. We have a wonderful working relationship with the child advocate. In fact, he's part and parcel of the special case reviews.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Securities Commission Investigation

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Securities Commission director of enforcement is the top cop policing the Alberta securities market. It's absolutely unbelievable that he's still in his job after the Auditor General found him in flagrant violation of the ASC's code of ethics by trading in shares in a company under investigation by the ASC and making a tidy profit in the process. The investigation was into an allegation of insider trading. To the Finance minister: has the minister done anything to cause an investigation as to whether or not the ASC's director of enforcement may have engaged in insider trading himself?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again, this whole issue is well documented in the Auditor General's report on pages 6, 7, and possibly going on to 8. The Auditor General obviously learned of this through a review of files. There was nothing hidden in this. It does lay out the chronological set of events that happened. The Auditor General did recommend in recommendations 6 and 7 ways to improve the system to ensure that as much as possible this could not happen. In fact, the Securities Commission themselves changed how they handle conflicts of interest in May of 2005 after this happened.

They are continuing to review how they do this in view of the Auditor General's report because really what they dispensed with was similar to the recommendations the Auditor General has put in. What they put in they thought was a better way of ensuring that this can't happen. It is my understanding – and, in fact, I've asked the Alberta Securities Commission to make a statement on all of the chronological events and the actions that have been taken.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That was a very unrevealing answer.

Given that on the very same day the director of enforcement authorized the investigation into the insider trading allegation he bought stock in the company that was under investigation, will the minister tell us what information was contained in that file that may have led him to purchase those shares?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, I think the hon. member knows very well that I can't tell him what was in those files. That would be a breach of confidentiality of information that the Alberta Securities Commis-

sion holds on behalf of companies. What I can tell him is that I have asked the Alberta Securities Commission, because this continues to be a question, to lay out directly the chronological events, backed up by fact and documentation, and what steps have been taken prior to the Auditor General's report and since the Auditor General's report to ensure that this cannot happen, as much as possible to preclude it from happening again.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that the ASC's top securities cop made a significant financial gain on a short-term speculative investment he was supposedly investigating himself, why does the minister not do her job and admit that there may in fact have been a crime here and that no one else can investigate it unless she's prepared to do so?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General had full access to all of the information. I think that had there been a question of a crime, he would have raised that. What he did say was that it was important that the processes at the Alberta Securities Commission be tightened up to ensure that this cannot happen.

I asked the hon. member to review the statement of the times, dates of activities that occurred there and, perhaps, come back. I'd be happy to discuss it with him further after he reviews that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. [applause]

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. That was very kind.

Constitutional Referendums

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, in the free world the role of government is to protect rights and freedoms, not grant rights and benefits. In Canada our rights are protected by our Constitution and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, after 20-plus years we see that the Charter has not been respected, and its weaknesses are being exploited. My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Has this government considered putting a resolution for an amendment to the Canadian Constitution before Albertans by way of a referendum?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I will take that question under advisement for the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations and have him respond at the earliest possible moment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. I guess I'll try again to the Deputy Premier. Would 50,000 names on a petition for a resolution for a referendum to enshrine property rights in the Canadian Constitution be enough reason to use the Constitutional Referendum Act during the next federal election?

Mrs. McClellan: Again, Mr. Speaker, our Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I'm sure would be pleased to give a full discussion on this item, and we will take it to him and ask him to respond appropriately.

Mr. Hinman: I guess, for the third time, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: instead of misleading Albertans into believing that there is nothing they can do, will this government allow Albertans to vote on a resolution for an amendment to the Canadian Constitution to enshrine the Alberta definition of marriage in conjunction with the next federal election?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again, I'll take his question under advisement. I'll take it seriously, give it serious consideration, and give him a response at a future date.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Centennial Gifts to Canadians

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While in Ottawa this week the Premier announced a new nation-wide postsecondary scholarship program totally funded by the Alberta government. This program is intended as a centennial gift from Alberta to all Canadians. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. As the minister responsible for implementing the program, can you tell us when it will be up and running and what Alberta is hoping to accomplish with this national scholarship program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The concept is to have the first set of scholarships in time for the start of the next academic year in 2006.

In terms of the concept, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has always been a proud member of Confederation, and we've always appreciated the way the rest of Canada has responded – for example, the severe drought conditions and the need for hay, when we needed people to rally around in the beef crisis.

In our centennial year it was felt appropriate to make an indication to the country, a gift to the country, if you will, which indicates how important we think it is to celebrate our centennial and to include the rest of Canada in that celebration. So the Premier made the announcement today, I believe, of the \$20 million endowment to the Alberta heritage scholarship fund, which will allow for 25 scholarships for each provincial and territorial jurisdiction in the amount of \$2,005, hopefully in perpetuity.

Mrs. Ady: Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the same minister. A centennial gift to Canadian students as a thank you may be a generous offer, but why not establish a centennial scholarship program for Albertans instead?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have done that. This year under Bill 1 we made a commitment as a government – and this Legislature passed Bill 1 ensuring that commitment – to add a billion dollars to the Alberta heritage scholarship fund so that we can enhance scholarships to Albertans.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Alberta funds more scholarships than any other province on a per capita basis. This year we'll spend \$48 million more on 50 provincially funded scholarship programs. We have the Rutherford scholarships with a maximum of \$2,500 a year and 9,000 recipients this year; the Jason Lang scholarships with a thousand dollars each, 15,000 recipients this year; the Louise McKinney scholarships with \$2,500 each, 950 this year.

So this scholarship program is a small but enduring way of celebrating the province's centennial with the rest of the country and involving the rest of the country in our celebration on an enduring basis.

2:00

Mrs. Ady: My final question is to the Minister of Community Development. Can the minister please outline for this Assembly the nature of the Alberta artwork that the Premier also announced today

as a gift to Canadians during his visit to the National Gallery? [interjections]

The Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, while in Ottawa earlier this morning our Premier visited the National Gallery of Canada, and he unveiled a painting by an Alberta aboriginal artist named Joane Cardinal-Schubert. Ms Cardinal-Schubert has art that has been displayed both privately and at public galleries and is part of collections around the world. This gift is intended to be a symbol of Alberta's proud history and the heritage of its aboriginal peoples. The National Gallery already has a number of her works of art. Her works of art also appear in galleries in places like Regina, Michigan, Prague, and Vancouver.

Mr. Speaker, this work is, in part, a way of saying thank you to Canadians for their support of Alberta during tough times. It is very much a way for Albertans to express their feelings for being part of Confederation for the last 100 years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

School Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question on the minds of 1.2 million parents is: where will their kids go to school? The problems are diverse, but the solution is simple: create a plan with stable, predictable, and sufficient capital funding so school boards can implement their capital plans and maintain existing schools across the province. To the Minister of Education: how long will the 330 students in mouldy 25-year-old portables at Alexander Forbes elementary in Grande Prairie have to wait for an expansion of their school?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was in Grande Prairie just a few weeks ago, and I did meet with the chair of the parent council there, as I did also with the boards from that area. The issue of Alexander Forbes school did come up. We had a very good discussion on it, and I did undertake to pursue fixing what some of those needs are. As soon as I am able to, I will be commenting further.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that we've just put I think around the \$20 million mark worth of funding into new schools and related matters for school infrastructure in that area. I'd love to read them all to you right now if you wish, but perhaps to save time, I'll just refer people to the website.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Calgary public schools received too little of the unbudgeted spending on this province's students, are these the sorts of mistakes we can expect with hurried, unbudgeted spending?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans across the province are pretty grateful that this government was able to provide \$207 million for infrastructure needs. I haven't heard any complaints about the fact that we provided \$207 million as part of phase 1 funding from unanticipated surplus dollars. However, I have given an undertaking to the 62 school boards, as I met one-on-one with

them for the second time this year, that in the foreseeable future I hope to discuss with them again and with my colleagues the need for some additional funding that would possibly comprise phase 2 out of unanticipated dollars, should some come available, and also to look at longer range planning objectives within the more stable funding envelope, which is coming our way through Alberta Infrastructure.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister set up fair and equitable criteria to prioritize capital school projects across the province?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we have had the so-called utilization formula, which I think most members here are familiar with. At the time that the utilization rate formula was used to determine various infrastructure needs, it seemed to suffice. However, as our province has evolved and as infrastructure projects for schools have evolved, we revisited that formula. So the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation did bring in a funding formula more on a per-pupil basis, one that I supported. Most of the school boards out there who have already tasted that new formula like it, but we do recognize that funding strictly on a per-pupil basis may not be the total answer. So Alberta Education is now reviewing that, and through our Renewed Funding Framework Ministerial Advisory Committee, that I just appointed, we will indeed be doing more detailed work in that regard.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Nutrition Programs for Schools

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Societies are judged by how well they look after and treat their poor, vulnerable, and the underprivileged. Surveys have shown repeatedly that 1 in 10 Calgary school kids goes to school without breakfast in a province as wealthy as ours. It took the efforts of a group of Calgary judges and lawyers to collect \$15,000 and donate it to a northeast Calgary school so the school can provide breakfast for their children. My question is to the hon. Minister of Education. Is the minister aware of this situation, and what is he doing to rectify it?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for feeding children, sheltering them, clothing them, and otherwise rearing them first and foremost lies with the parents or legal guardians. We must never lose sight of that. However, I am aware that it's not a perfect world and that there are a few circumstances, perhaps several circumstances, where some of the children do need some additional nourishment or perhaps nourishment, period, to start their day or to continue it. We have a number of community agencies who partner with the school boards in that respect.

Those parents who are in those unfortunate circumstances of perhaps needing help to feed, nurture, and clothe their children could certainly turn to some of the community agencies for help or perhaps to one of several social programs that exist in the Department of Human Resources and Employment. Perhaps they could talk with Children's Services and try and find some of the help that they need.

Let me just conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that our school boards have shown some tremendous leadership in this area, and a number of them are providing hot lunch programs or breakfast programs as we speak.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the cost of a breakfast program works out to about \$12,000 per year, would the minister commit to a review of this program and provide the money immediately to all needy schools in the province so kids can feel the Alberta advantage? [interjections]

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, it is a good question and a tough question too. I should indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I did hear from a few school boards about some of the nutrition programs that they are providing when I met with them just over the past few weeks. I know that the school boards are in town this week, and that's a good question for them to address as well.

That having been said, I am aware also that through Alberta's Promise, for example, there is a website that talks about the breakfast program. I just forget the exact title of it, but I will provide it to the hon. member, perhaps at the end of the day, because there is good information on that website where community agencies, perhaps other eligible applicants can apply for some assistance if they are eligible to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] Geez, I must be doing something wrong; the Liberals are happy.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister commit at least for now to matching the money raised by private donors?

Mr. Zwozdesky: I'm sorry. I think I got the question: something about matching the funding. Is that what it was, hon. member? There was so much cheering and clapping from all sides of the House for your question that it was distracting.

You might say, Mr. Speaker, that in a way we are already matching some of the programs because we as Alberta Education, with monies provided by the government, provide funds to school boards. School boards in turn provide their monies to the individual schools. The schools, therefore, are recipients already of considerable provincial dollars, about \$4.5 billion in this year alone. Within that envelope I would think that they probably are using some of our funds already to do some of that matching or perhaps to do some creative leadership projects in the nutrition area on their own.

They also work with some community agencies, where they are available, and perhaps even with some private funders, and I want say thank you to those agencies and thank you to those private citizens who have stepped up to become partners with our schools throughout the province to address this socioeconomic issue.

2:10 Natural Resources Conservation Board

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, a closed-door review of the Natural Resources Conservation Board stated that the board's actions were not impartial, not transparent, and not fair. Amazing, considering the board describes itself as providing balanced decision-making in the public interest. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: how will this minister restore faith in an organization that is – and I quote from the report – undermined by a sense of fear and paranoia?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, the Natural Resources Conservation Board came into being in this province in the late 1980s as an initiative of the then Minister of Environment and now our Premier, the Hon. Ralph Klein.

The Speaker: We don't do that, hon. member.

Mr. Coutts: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

That particular board has served the public interest successfully and very, very well on major developments across this province for over 14 years, and it will continue to do that. If the question from the hon. member is about a process that was put in place regarding governance of the board, yes, there was a review regarding governance. It had nothing to do with legislative changes to the board because the board has done everything it possibly can do to make sure that it looks after the public interest, which is the original intention that it was set up to do.

Mr. Bonko: Given that the report criticizes a lack of staffing and training in legislation, will the minister commit to adding more field staff and more professional development?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings up a very good point. What we've done with the Natural Resources Conservation Board as it pertains to AOPA legislation and the application processes and how those applications can be adhered to within the legislation of AOPA is set up a chief operating officer. That chief operating officer will take a look at the process and decide exactly the appropriate levels of staffing that need to be done. That's their responsibility in the operations: to make sure that they're effective not only for the industry but also to make sure that we continue to protect the public interest.

Mr. Bonko: Third question, Mr. Speaker. Given that the report expresses serious flaws in the decision-making process, will the minister commit to reviewing past decisions to ensure that all affected parties were treated fairly?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, the interim board chair and the interim chief operating officer have the governance report that was put out there. They will continue to look at the recommendations within that report, and they themselves will try to implement those recommendations as it pertains to the respective duties of not only the board and its responsibilities but also the chief operating officer and the responsibilities as it pertains to confined feeding operations. I've given them 60 days to do that and bring a report back to me. They're the ones that will make the recommendations. They're also the ones that will make sure that the operations continue, make sure that they're there for the interests of Albertans as well as the industry.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Highway 43

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 43 runs through Whitecourt-St. Anne and is increasingly becoming a very major transportation route to the north. Progress is being made on the twinning of this route, but some sections remain untouched, and some sections remain in dire need of some repairs. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. When will my constituents and all Albertans see more progress on this project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This year we had a very good year on highway 43 in that we finished twinning

approximately 50 kilometres of that road. This leaves about 52 kilometres yet to be finished on highway 43 of the total of 432 kilometres. We are scheduled to finish the rest of the 52 kilometres by the fall of 2007. We've had some issues with weather this year. We have also had some issues on obtaining the land. We feel that these have now been figured out and worked out, and we fully anticipate it to be the fall of 2007 at the latest. I would certainly like to accelerate that though.

Mr. VanderBurg: Again to the same minister, and I thank him for that answer: with around 10 per cent of this project left, why does it take two construction years to do it? Why not just do it next year?

Dr. Oberg: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would love to do it this year. It comes down to a budgeting process. It also comes down to having the land available. We have not yet fully got the land available although we are certainly anticipating that that negotiation will be done very, very soon. If it does get done, if I do get the money, I can assure the hon. member that this is a definite priority on my department's list and that we'll be done sooner as opposed to later. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Social Housing Corporation Land Sales

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his October 2005 report the Auditor General found that the Alberta Social Housing Corporation was involved in a series of sweetheart land deals in the Fort McMurray area. The two biggest land giveaways involved a local developer who is a friend of the PC government. Land was sold below appraised value, sales were untendered, there were sweetheart financing arrangements, and the prime real estate was literally given away. My question is to the minister of seniors. Has the minister found out why these sweetheart deals occurred not only once but twice at the expense of provincial taxpayers and homeowners in Fort McMurray?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister responsible for the Alberta Social Housing Corporation I'm fully aware of the actions of the corporation in 1999, six years ago, that the member opposite is referring to. As the member said to you, this report of the Auditor General was a full report. I support the findings. I support the recommendations of that report.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you and I can tell members of this Assembly and members of the opposition that this issue will not happen again under this ministry. In fact, the land that we have put on the market recently through the Alberta Social Housing Corporation has been placed on the market with a very open process through requests for proposals. It is open. It's transparent. It's accessible. I can tell you this: it is working, and we are going to meet the needs and the mandate not only of the Alberta Social Housing Corporation but, more importantly, of the people living in Fort McMurray. [interjections]

Mr. Martin: The members can pound all they like, but these Fort McMurray land deals make the federal Liberals look clean, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the minister is: why is no one being held account-

able for millions of dollars of public dollars being given away, taxpayers being hosed, and the people in Fort McMurray being hosed? Why is no one accountable?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, I go back to that the Auditor has investigated this fully. He has reported. I support the findings of the Auditor's investigation, and I would expect that the opposition do as well. Also, we are moving forward. We're moving forward with a process through the Alberta Social Housing Corporation so that it is accountable, it's transparent, it's open, and it is working.

Mr. Martin: Well, Mr. Speaker, my question is then to the Deputy Premier. Given that the Premier recently was yammering that an Adscam couldn't happen in Alberta, why is this government doing nothing about finding out why and how these sweetheart deals occurred?

2:20

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate what the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports has stated. The Auditor General had full and unfettered access to all of the information. He has reported in detail. In fact, in his detailed reporting he does give some clarity to why transactions were made as they were in that time period. The very important thing that the hon. minister said is that we fully supported the Auditor General's review, we fully support his report, and we fully intend to implement all of his recommendations and put a process in place that he is recommending that will reduce the opportunity for questions on clarity and transparency.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Sour Gas Leak

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On July 2, 2005, a critical sour gas leak occurred approximately five kilometres outside of Innisfail, Alberta. Nineteen per cent sour gas was released into the atmosphere for approximately 45 minutes, spreading to the nearby communities. Luckily nobody was seriously injured or killed in the incident; however, serious questions remain. My question is for the Minister of Energy. Can the minister confirm or deny if the licensed well operator failed to report the critical sour gas leak to the EUB?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first state that in this instance the public was never in danger of any harm to anyone. He stated a certain percentage, but for it to be critical in that stage, it also has to be measured by the rate of release, in this case very low. So even in the reporting I want to assure all Albertans that there was never any risk at this stage of anybody being harmed.

Dr. Swann: Again to the minister since he didn't answer the question: was the EUB only aware of the leak as a result of residents' complaints?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, as in anything like this matter sometimes investigations come from a variety of sources. I'm not specifically aware of where the original source was. I'd be happy to report that back when I get the information from the EUB.

Dr. Swann: Again to the same minister: what message does this lack of accountability send to residents of southeast Calgary, living in the shadow of Compton's proposed sour gas well?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, once again put out of context. The public was not at any time under any risk of injury at this stage. The Energy and Utilities Board has investigated this incident. Companies are responsible to a very high standard of regulation. They are not left without standards. They are not left without a requirement to report, and they do. The energy industry supports that, and we certainly support a strong regulator, the Energy and Utilities Board, being able to fulfill that mandate.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mountain Pine Beetle Control

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mountain pine beetle continues its onslaught in British Columbia, where more than 7 million hectares of pine forest have been lost, about an eighth of the productive forest land base. The impact of this epidemic will have far-reaching implications and could spell the end of many forest-dependent communities in British Columbia. My first question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Can the minister inform this House as to the current extent of the beetle in Alberta given that another breeding season has passed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We know that the situation in British Columbia is very, very serious, and of course we keep a very close eye on the beetle as it moves east. It continues to move eastward through mountain passes, particularly where there's mature pine forest. We're taking a very proactive approach to making sure that we stop the pine beetle as best we can at the British Columbia border. We continue to use aerial and ground surveys and work with our industry partners to identify trees that may be infected on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. In fact, this summer we found individual trees and a huge infestation in the Willmore wilderness area. It's probably the biggest infestation that we have found on the Alberta side at this point in time, but we're taking a very proactive approach in trying to deal with that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again for the same minister: could the minister share with us what specific control actions were taken in Alberta this past summer?

Mr. Coutts: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker. We're working very closely with our Community Development partners in determining how we can best combat the beetle in the Willmore wilderness area. We've so far cut and burned 5,000 trees in that particular area. If you flew over the area, you would not be able to see any trace. What we're trying to do is minimize the impact on the land. We know that it's a sensitive area. We understand the need to minimize that impact and keep the area a park. We have cut individual trees, but we're preparing to do a prescribed burn in other areas that have been infested, and that's in the Meadowland Creek area. We find that that area is a natural highway for the beetles as they travel eastward into Alberta.

I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we are fortunate in dealing at this point in time with individual trees and not the millions of hectares that they're having to deal with in British Columbia. Because of these actions we're definitely making sure that we're taking this proactive approach in dealing with the pine beetle in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final supplemental to the same minister: can the minister inform us if the government has any contingency plans in the event that these single-tree actions or very localized actions are ineffective in stopping the beetle in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's important that the effort of Parks Canada, the effort of Community Development, the effort of the government of Canada and certainly of the industry that is in Alberta here works together to combat what Mother Nature may bring forward to us in the future. If there is a huge infestation, if we have a mild winter, we know that the beetle is going to make some headway here in Alberta, so what we've done is that we've also looked at having extensive discussions with our industry to look at approved harvesting sequences on mature forests in case the pine beetle targets those particular areas.

We've fought this beetle before, and through all of the partnerships that we're putting together and being proactive, we will beat this beetle again.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Applewood Park Community Association

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wild Rose Foundation is an important organization, and we must protect its integrity. An Auditor General's report has led to the Minister of Community Development demanding that the Applewood Park Community Association repay its \$20,000 grant to Alberta taxpayers. However, the Applewood Park Community Association is now refusing to pay back. The 30-day government deadline is gone. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. What is the minister going to do now?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I agree with the hon. member when he says that it should be our goal to be accountable with the money to protect the integrity of the Wild Rose Foundation but also, specifically, the international development fund that Applewood accessed in obtaining the monies in question here. It is unfortunate that the accountability of one grant has suspended the program and put in question much of the good work that this program is doing. I should note by way of background that for every dollar of foundation funding Albertans themselves donated \$14 to foundation-supported projects in developing countries, which means that while we place a great deal of interest in this area as a government, Albertans themselves also support these same projects.

Now, to bring the member up to date on what's happened most recently, the Applewood community association requested a meeting with the Wild Rose Foundation. That meeting took place within the last couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker. There was new information that was provided by Applewood at that time, and they are intending to forward documents to us, I'm advised, that will arrive some time this week that need to be reviewed with respect to their belief that they've demonstrated that the money that they requested was in fact spent in the areas that they made the application for the grant for.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. Given that the Auditor General's report found that Applewood transferred Wild Rose funds to another organization removed from the corporate registry, how can the minister assure this House that other organizations are not breaking similar rules?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, we have taken into account the Auditor General's recommendations. We will follow them to the letter. It is our intention to ensure, most of all, that the money that was applied for by Applewood has in fact been spent in accordance with the grant that was applied for. That is our endgame with respect to this.

With respect to moving the money through an organization that may have been struck from the registry, we'll continue to look into this matter. Again, Mr. Speaker, the endgame is to ensure that the integrity of the program is maintained by ensuring that the money was in fact spent for what was applied for.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: has the minister looked at other government caucus MLA-assisted grants to see if they were accurate and in compliance with the Wild Rose Foundation guidelines?

Mr. Mar: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we did ask the Auditor General to look at other grants. From his review of the same we found that they have been in compliance with the rules as established.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in just a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of the hon. members to participate, but in the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you constituents that travelled on highway 43 to get here to Edmonton to visit us. We have with us 78 visitors from St. Joseph Catholic school. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of a historical vignette for the day on this day in 1932 Aspen Beach, located on the shores of Gull Lake, west of Lacombe, was designated Alberta's first provincial park. Today we have nearly 500 sites covering roughly 27,500 square kilometres.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

The Speaker's 26th Anniversary As an MLA

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an important anniversary for someone who has made a great contribution to the people of Alberta. For his entire life he has diligently worked to make Alberta a better place. Dedicated to his community he has consistently promoted volunteerism and has been a passionate advocate for francophone Albertans. From his early beginnings as a schoolteacher to his current position within the Legislative

Assembly of Alberta he has never faltered in his commitment to others.

Today this special individual is celebrating 26 years as an MLA. It was 26 years ago today that this member was first elected in a by-election. During the past 26 years the hon. member has served the people of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock admirably. He has served under the leadership of three Premiers and has kept order and decorum in this House since first being elected Speaker in 1997.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all your colleagues it gives me great pleasure to rise today and congratulate you on 26 years of outstanding service as a member of this Assembly. [standing ovation]

The Speaker: That's very, very kind and very, very much appreciated. In fact, I got up this morning and I hadn't recognized or realized it myself, but 26 years goes flash, flash, flash. Somebody said to me the other day: you know, there's nothing wrong with having anniversaries or birthdays because that means you're just living that much longer. So 26 is good. Thank you very, very much.

Order of Canada Awards

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to rise in this House and acknowledge six outstanding Albertans whose accomplishments have earned them this country's highest civilian recognition: investiture into the Order of Canada. The achievements of these Albertans have promoted medicinal treatment and understanding, instilled Olympic pride, set an example of quiet philanthropy, developed our energy industry, and championed human rights.

On behalf of my constituents and colleagues I am pleased to congratulate one of Canada's most distinguished medical physicists and one of the founders of the Canadian College of Physicists in Medicine, Dr. John Robert Cunningham of Camrose.

Congratulations to the fastest woman on ice, Ms Catriona Le May Doan of Calgary, winner of double Olympic gold.

Congratulations to entrepreneur, philanthropist, and founder of the Calgary International Organ Competition and Festival, Mr. Ronald Neil Mannix.

We congratulate cardiologist and researcher, former dean of medicine and professor emeritus at the University of Calgary and member of the Premier's Advisory Council on Health, Dr. Eldon Raymond Smith.

We congratulate the former president, director, and COO of Petro-Canada, president of Stanford Engineering, and long-time philanthropist, Mr. James M. Stanford of Calgary.

We also extend congratulations to a founding member of the Alberta Human Rights Commission and founding president of the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, Ms Muriel Stanley Venne of Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, these Albertans have set an example of achievement and commitment to their communities, to their province, and to their country. Please join me in congratulating these six outstanding citizens of Alberta and Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Edmonton Eskimos

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to introduce a new bill, the get Calgary a new football team amendment act. Sorry, wrong notes. Wrong notes.

Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today to say that the Edmonton Eskimos went to British Columbia last week to take on the B.C. Lions in the western final.

An Hon. Member: Go Eskies.

Mr. Lukaszuk: That's right.

To the satisfaction of their fans here in Edmonton they beat the Lions in their hometown in what was an exciting football game that ended in a score of 28 to 23. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Edmonton Eskimos, their coaches, and all members of their organization for their victory against B.C. this week and for a victory against Calgary the week before.

The residents of British Columbia were forced to watch their team's season come to an end. Now they will have to watch the Edmonton Eskimos and the Montreal Alouettes battle for Canada's oldest professional sports trophy in their city next week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Dr. Brown: It's Calgary-Nose Hill, Mr. Speaker.

University of Calgary Centennial Projects

Dr. Brown: Can you remember, Mr. Speaker, that one special teacher who influenced your life and perhaps your child's life in a memorable way? This is the question that was asked of Albertans earlier this year, and the result culminated in a centennial project entitled *My Most Memorable Teacher: 100 Stories Celebrating 100 Years of Alberta Teaching Excellence*. It was published by the University of Calgary's Faculty of Education with the assistance of Alberta Education.

The book, which was launched in Calgary yesterday, provides stories about special teachers who have made a difference in the lives of Alberta students.

Throughout our history of Alberta we've had thousands of outstanding teachers who have guided and inspired students in our classrooms and beyond. From the old one-room classrooms on the prairies to the wired urban schools of today teaching has evolved and classrooms have gone high tech, but the caring teacher remains at the head of every classroom.

I'd like to acknowledge the hon. Peter Lougheed, our former Premier, who served as honorary chair of the centennial book project and provided inspirational leadership to the members of the project team from the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary, including Dr. Annette LaGrange, dean; Jennifer Diakiw; Maureen Washington; and Robert Stamp.

During our centennial year we are also celebrating 100 years of teaching at the University of Calgary. Heritage Hall at SAIT Polytechnic is the former home of the Calgary Normal School, the first teacher-training institution in Alberta, which later became the Faculty of Education. One hundred years ago it began educating teachers who would go on to prepare young Albertans to reach their full potential and to become leaders of tomorrow. Last year the University of Calgary granted 766 education degrees, including 224 graduate degrees. Today the students of Alberta benefit from one of the best education systems in the world, and they're fortunate to have outstanding teachers preparing them.

2:40

The Speaker: For the benefit of the *Hansard* people that was the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill rather than the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MLA Invitations to Public Events

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 8 the Anthony Henday Drive crossed over the North Saskatchewan River

linking the constituencies of Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Whitemud. A six-kilometre section of Edmonton's southwest ring road connected Lessard Road and Terwillegar Drive. In preparing for that ceremony, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation and/or the Public Affairs Bureau made sure that they invited the minister, the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud, Edmonton's mayor, and the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, who happens to be the head of the capital region government caucus.

I am disappointed that those same people for some reason chose not to extend the same invitation to the MLA for Edmonton-McClung. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, in so doing, the government has sunk to a new low. For them it is only a hollow public relations stunt, a photo op. For me it really meant being prevented from performing one of my constituency duties, one which I take very seriously.

There appears to be an orchestrated effort to exclude opposition members from certain events, and this has grown steadily worse since last fall's provincial election. Those who took that decision did not just exclude an opposition MLA; they spurned the constituents of Edmonton-McClung, who should have been represented at that ceremony.

What they have done is pathetic, pitiful, and preposterous. How's that for a P3? Had I been invited, I would have conveyed my constituents' pleasure with this positive development. It would have allowed me the opportunity to report to my constituents on the progress of this project in a newsletter that goes out to 16,000 homes in Edmonton's southwest. But, alas, this government continues to insult people's intelligence. The public understands this and will remember it.

So to the government. Last year I was elected the MLA for Edmonton-McClung, and you have to accept and respect the people's decision. Also remember that 21 opposition members received between them 15,000 more votes than all 62 of you combined. Listen to what the people told you. Get the message.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Gaming As a Source of Revenue

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's concept of promoting diversification is to allow an unlimited number of casinos to be built. The Alberta government has spent over \$100 million on sprucing up VLTs. It is a sad commentary that the group most addicted to gambling is the provincial government itself. What is equally deplorable is how the government has created a dependency on its casino and slot revenues by underfunding a whole host of programs, from arts to recreation to education. Due to the lack of funding for basic educational essentials school councils have been forced to hold their noses and ethical concerns and apply every 18 months for a casino licence.

This is a win-win situation for the government, which continues to underfund education and is the recipient of an endless stream of frequently coerced volunteers who donate their time to increase the government's gambling greed profits. I say coerced because when a child's education or participation in a recreational activity is dependent upon the thickness of his or her parents' wallet or the required sign-up for a casino shift, a tremendous amount of pressure is placed upon parents to volunteer their time for fear that their child will not be able to participate.

One of my constituents, who with her husband had participated in 45 casinos and bingos over the past five years, including schools, sporting activities, and choir, broke down in my office because she

could not financially or morally continue to support this government's forced gambling addiction. As a result, her children have had to withdraw from enrichment activities.

This conflict of conscience is one of the main factors contributing to volunteer burnout. Without the volunteers this province and country would come to an abrupt halt. Revenue can be positively generated through a highly educated and healthy workforce. Rather than investing in VLTs, casinos, and slots, which proliferate addictions, I urge this government to invest in its most important resource: Albertans.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I table a petition which, again, was initiated by a concerned parent from my constituency and signed by similarly concerned parents, this time from Camrose, Beaumont, Edmonton, Stony Plain, and Sherwood Park, calling on the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to eliminate school fees charged for "textbooks, locker rentals, field trips, physical fitness programs, music classes."

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have 216 signatures petitioning the government of Alberta. These are from residents of Onoway, Thorhild, Pincher Creek, Plamondon, Black Diamond, Millet, Tofield, and other Alberta communities. It says:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aborigines; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition that says:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation declaring a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Bill 53 Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the current situation in Alberta is that if a reclamation certificate for a private company, an energy company operating on private land is rescinded, the company has no rights of entry onto private land to conduct remedial work. This amendment would allow for a right of entry, yet still the landowner is protected in that they have avenues of appeal to the Surface Rights Board for compensation for disturbance, damages, or other costs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 53 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 53 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, on November 16 I tabled the 2005-06 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund. In the preface on page 1 it should have stated that the supplementary estimates "will authorize a \$1,531,247,000 increase in voted Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases." This tabling does not affect the supplementary appropriations being considered by the House, and accordingly I am now tabling five copies of the revised page 1.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with you a copy of a letter of congratulations which I'm sending out to Dr. Annette LaGrange, dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary, congratulating her and her team on the publication of this book, *My Most Memorable Teacher*, which I was pleased to officially unveil in Calgary yesterday with the Hon. Peter Lougheed and several other dignitaries. In short, this is a wonderful book, and I'll be donating a copy to the library downstairs so other members can see it. We'll also be providing copies to all the schools in Alberta because it recounts all 100 excellent stories that celebrate 100 years of teacher education in Alberta this year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to table in the Assembly the requisite number of five copies of the Seniors Advisory Council annual report for 2004-2005, ended March 31, 2005.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is from a constituent, Ronald Rowswell, noting that he finds the government's "stance on exempting civil marriage commissioners from performing same-sex civil marriages to be offensive."

The second tabling is from Yohana Rihana commenting on the \$400 rebate and noting that she felt that a specific amount of that, a hundred dollars, should be invested for the benefit of Albertans and suggesting a high-speed train link between Edmonton and Calgary as an excellent opportunity for that investment. I must say that I agree, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a resolution signed by the Treaty 8 First Nations, with all 23 nations represented. It basically raises a concern with the lack of consultation with First Nations people on forest management agreement renewals.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this tabling two valid points are raised by an instructor in postsecondary education: that if the government is considering free tuition fees, to get the refund, number one, the student must have “completed their last two years of study” and, number two, must have been a resident of Alberta “for a minimum of 5 years.”

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table a document on behalf of the leader of the NDP opposition. It is called the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Agency, and it is a detailed report on our vision for reining in the cost of prescription drugs.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Hon. members, I’d like to table today appropriate copies of a brochure produced by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta titled Page Biographies, First Session, fall sitting, 26th Legislature. There are some really remarkable young people whose biographies are attached, and I hope hon. members will have a chance to review them.

head:

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, a report, undated, entitled Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta, prepared by Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

On behalf of the hon. Mrs. Fritz, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, a response to Written Question 9 asked by Mr. MacDonald on behalf of Ms Pastoor on April 11, 2005; a response to Written Question 32 asked by Mr. Eggen on behalf of Mr. Martin on May 9, 2005; and a return to order of the Assembly MR 23 asked by Ms Pastoor on April 18, 2005.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Government Organization Act the Alberta Boilers Safety Association annual report 2004; the Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association annual report, April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005; the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta annual report 2004; pursuant to the Safety Codes Act the Safety Codes Council 2004 annual report; and the authorized accredited agencies activity summary, April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004.

head:

Orders of the Day

head:

Written Questions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, November 17, it is my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today’s Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, and 42.

[Motion carried]

Information Technology Security Awareness

Q33. Mr. Elsalhy moved that the following question be accepted. What measures has the Ministry of Restructuring and

Government Efficiency taken to improve the information technology security awareness of government employees as recommended in the Auditor General’s 2003-04 annual report?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question from the member opposite is indeed most welcome. I’m pleased to rise and accept this question because security of information is of critical importance to the government and to all Albertans. My ministry has recently undertaken a number of activities to address this matter, of which I’ll be happy to provide a written response.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to close the debate, or should I call the question?

Mr. Elsalhy: Call the question, sir.

[Written Question 33 carried]

Species at Risk

Q34. Mr. Bonko moved that the following question be accepted. What development management plans does the government currently have for protecting species at risk such as the grizzly bear and the peregrine falcon?

The Speaker: Does anyone from the government want to deal with this?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to accept Question 34 on behalf of the government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore to close the debate, or should I call the question?

Mr. Bonko: Question.

[Written Question 34 carried]

SuperNet

Q35. Mr. Bonko moved on behalf of Mr. Flaherty that the following question be accepted. What is the total value of all spending by the Ministry of Education related to the completion and/or operational status of the Alberta SuperNet over each of the fiscal years 2000-01 through 2004-05 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased with the question and pleased to convey that Alberta Education through my ministry will accept this Question 35.

The Speaker: Shall I call the question?

[Written Question 35 carried]

ATB Regulatory Requirements

Q36. Mr. R. Miller moved that the following question be accepted.

What steps has the Department of Finance taken in 2004 since the receipt of the Auditor General's 2003-04 annual report recommending that ATB Investment Services Inc., ATB Investment Management Inc., and ATB Securities Inc. enhance their control processes to ensure that they meet regulatory requirements?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to the most recent Auditor General's report, '04-05, there has been some progress in this regard. However, there appears to still be some work to be done, and I would look forward to the government's response.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance I'm pleased to inform the member that she is prepared to accept Written Question 36.

The Speaker: Hon. member, should I call the question?

[Written Question 36 carried]

Forest Protection Budget

Q37. Mr. Bonko moved that the following question be accepted. Which reports, consultations, and stakeholder reviews have indicated to the government that \$75.6 million was the total amount needed to be allocated to forest protection for the 2003-2004 fiscal year when the actual amount spent was \$204 million?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will also accept Written Question 37 on behalf of the government.

The Speaker: Shall the question be called?

[Written Question 37 carried]

AUMA Convention Open House

Q38. Mr. Taylor moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that the following question be accepted. Who attended the minister's open house for the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association fall 2004 convention on November 17, 2004, in Edmonton that cost \$6,711.11?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move an amendment to the question as follows, and I believe the amendment has been circulated. I will move that Written Question 38 be amended by striking out "Who attended" and substituting "What groups were given invitations to." The amended written question will now read as follows: "What groups were given invitations to the minister's open house for the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association fall 2004 convention on November 17, 2004, in Edmonton that cost \$6,711.11?"

3:00

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason for the amendment is simply that there are not records kept of those that attend these kinds of receptions. Generally speaking, all the participants in the conference are invited, and the amendment is self-evident. We'll be more than happy to supply the information on who was invited. Whether or not they showed up, unfortunately, we're not able to advise.

The Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, that will hardly answer the question that was asked, and one might suggest that the government start keeping records like that. Nevertheless, I suppose that we should accept the amendment.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to close the debate, or should we call the question?

Mr. Taylor: Call the question.

[Written Question 38 as amended carried]

Economic Development Hosting Expenses

Q39. Mr. Bonko moved that the following question be accepted. How much money has been spent by the Ministry and Department of Economic Development on hosting expenses for the fiscal years 1992-93 through 2004-05 inclusive broken down by function and year?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development I would indicate that we will not be accepting this question. The reason for this is that the vast majority of information requested is publicly available through the *Alberta Gazette* currently. I'm advised that information current to June 30, 2004, is available, and the remainder of the information being sought will be available through the *Alberta Gazette* within the next month.

The Speaker: If I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, it will close the debate, so that's why I am waiting just momentarily.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm disappointed with the information and the minister's statement there. Apparently, maybe we could have it in written, then, instead of verbal.

[Written Question 39 lost]

Provincial Achievement Exam Costs

Q40. Mr. Bonko moved on behalf of Mr. Flaherty that the following question be accepted. What is the total cost associated with administering the provincial achievement exams over each of the fiscal years 2000-01 through 2004-05 inclusive?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate to the House that I'm prepared to accept Written Question 40 on behalf of my Ministry of Education.

[Written Question 40 carried]

Department of Energy Service Contracts

- Q41. Mr. Taylor moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that the following question be accepted.
How much money in total did the Ministry and Department of Energy spend on service contracts in the 2003-04 and 2004-05 fiscal years broken down by organization?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I reject Question 41. The service contracts could be broadly or very narrowly interpreted by definition, so I'm not really certain how far or how little or how much information is required. I would be happy to facilitate that if it was more precise. We do list payments to outside parties that are made by the department, and they're identified in the public accounts, and they're certainly available in those documents if the member wishes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to close the debate.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I will just express my disappointment in the answer given and call the question.

[Written Question 41 lost]

Truck Driver Supply

- Q42. Mr. Elsalhy moved on behalf of Mr. Chase that the following question be accepted.
How does the government calculate that there is a shortage of truck drivers in Alberta?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment I'm pleased today to rise and accept Written Question 42.

Thank you.

[Written Question 42 carried]

head:

Motions for Returns

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been served on Thursday, November 17, it is my pleasure to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48.

[Motion carried]

Disaster Recovery Program

- M44. Mr. Taylor moved on behalf of Dr. Taft that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of the distribution of funds from the provincial \$74 million disaster recovery program announced on July 27, 2004.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that the government is prepared to accept Motion for a Return 44.

[Motion for a Return 44 carried]

Economic Development Grants

- M45. Mr. Bonko moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed breakdown of grants distributed by the Ministry and Department of Economic Development in the 2003-04 fiscal year broken down by organization.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development I would indicate that we are not accepting this motion for a return. The reason is that this information is forthcoming and will be tabled in the Assembly in General Revenue Fund: Details of Grants, Supplies and Services, Capital Assets and Other, by Payee.

[Motion for a Return 45 lost]

Seniors' Benefits Program

- M46. Ms Pastoor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of how much money each senior recipient receives through the Alberta seniors' benefits program after the July 1, 2004, changes went into effect compared to before July 1.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to accept the motion for a return if it was amended and also to let you know that this amendment was previously shared with my colleague opposite and circulated to members of the House as the protocol for Motions for Returns requires.

I'd like to move that Motion for a Return 46 be amended by striking out "how much money each senior recipient receives" and substituting "threshold levels and maximum cash benefits available," by striking out "compared to" and substituting "and a comparison to those in place," and by adding "2004" after compared to "before July 1."

3:10

Mr. Speaker, the amended motion would now read as follows: "A breakdown of threshold levels and maximum cash benefits available through the Alberta seniors' benefit program after the July 1, 2004, changes went into effect and a comparison to those in place before July 1, 2004."

I'd like to comment on the rationale for making this change. The original request was to compare how much assistance each client received before and after the income level and benefit amounts changed on July 1, 2004, but it is against the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation to release the personal information of each of the program's 142,000 clients, which would be needed for the comparison. The amendment I've brought forward would allow us to provide similar information and still protect client privacy and comply with FOIP.

Also, this information will still show how seniors benefited from the increased thresholds in cash benefits on July 1, 2004, which made the program one of the most generous seniors' provincial benefits in the country. As well, Mr. Speaker, by adding the year, we can clearly indicate the time frame for when the changes came into effect and how our seniors benefited.

Having said that, I would like to move that Motion for a Return 46 be accepted with these amendments.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The amendment is debatable if anybody wants to participate.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to conclude the debate.

Ms Pastoor: Question.

[Motion for a Return 46 as amended carried]

Correspondence with Enron

M47. Mr. Taylor moved on behalf of Mr. MacDonald that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence between the Ministry and Department of Energy and Enron Corporation, Enron Canada Corp., and/or any affiliated companies regarding electricity deregulation from January 1, 1990, to January 1, 2005.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We reject Motion for a Return 47. This process is not intended to be used to circumvent, I would say, the processes that are there to protect Albertans' access to information and protection of privacy rules. The hon. member is aware of the requirement to ensure the protection of privacy of any potentially affected individuals or entities. For the wide-ranging information being sought through this motion for a return, the hon. member should be using the process as exists under Alberta's freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation. This would allow any potentially affected third party an opportunity to review and respond to the request.

I'd like to mention, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member who placed Motion for a Return 47 has actually also followed that procedure and has received a substantial amount of material on this specific topic already.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to close the debate.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I trust and hope that those who crafted our freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation when they crafted said legislation did not expect it to be put to the purpose that it is repeatedly put to by this government. It is not freedom from information; it is freedom of information, I would remind the minister.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 47 lost]

Traffic Safety Report

M48. Mr. Elsalhy moved on behalf of Mr. Chase that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of the total costs related to the production of the McDermid report, Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads, including the costs of all remuneration, administrative and research support, space rental or leasing, equipment and supplies, travel expenses, document design and printing, and advertising or promotion.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation we will accept Motion for a Return 48.

[Motion for a Return 48 carried]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 205

Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate May 16: Mr. Webber]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to speak to Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005, and to add that I do not need my furnace cleaned, I do not need my carpet cleaned, I do not wish to participate in your survey, and I'm quite capable of making up my own mind, thank you, when I need the services of the firms that hire telemarketers.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is about time that we saw a piece of legislation like this – and I know that I will be pleased to vote in favour of it on second reading – a piece of legislation that does put additional restrictions, above and beyond what the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's telemarketing rules state, to keep us safe and sound in our houses at dinnertime and allow us to have some quality time with our families. Lord knows, it is increasingly difficult to do that these days as both adults in a household in Alberta typically work, the children are engaged in any number of activities, and we all live very, very busy, multitasking lives.

I've long believed and, if I may be boastful for a moment, I think one of the reasons why, in my opinion anyway, the young Taylors have turned out as well as they have as young adults is that family dinner hour is incredibly important, a vital time for family members to reconnect in their busy days and their busy weeks and to remember that, in fact, they are all part of the family. We have a rule in the Taylor house: if the phone rings during dinnertime, the answering machine gets it, period. That's it. We don't pick up the phone. Mr. Speaker, if you call the Taylor house during the Taylors' dinner hour, with respect, you'll get our answering machine. We haven't had to do this to screen out friends or family or neighbours calling. We've had to do this to screen out telemarketers.

The only objection that I would raise to this bill, really, is that it doesn't extend its restrictions on telemarketing to persons conducting polls or surveys. Frankly, I think that in the months and years to come, we are going to have to grapple with this, too, because more and more often when you pick up the phone, it is somebody conducting a survey rather than somebody trying to sell you something or clean your carpet or whatever.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, but is it a real survey?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre asked, "Yeah, but is it a real survey?" Well, in the Taylor household we wouldn't know because as soon as they say the word "survey," we're out of there. "No, thank you. We don't wish to participate." At least, that's the answer they get when we're feeling polite, and we don't always feel polite in the Taylor household, as some of my hon. colleagues might already have surmised, I suppose.

I think the restrictions in hours – and I refer to the bill here – that

(3) no person may engage in telemarketing

(a) on a weekday except between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m.,

restricted hours on weekends, and none of those darn calls at all on

general holidays under the Employment Standards Code will be a welcome relief to an awful lot of Albertans who, frankly, are sick and tired of getting calls from people wanting to sell them stuff.

3:20

You know, we're a fairly highly educated people in this province, and it's long been my belief, Mr. Speaker, that fairly highly educated people, maybe even moderately educated people, maybe even people who didn't finish high school are perfectly capable of deciding for themselves when they need a product or service and going out and acquiring it for themselves when they do, hopping in the car and driving over to Canadian Tire or wherever to get the thing they need. We don't need to be phoned and reminded or solicited or come on to. You know, we'll go buy that stuff when we need it.

Actually, there is one other objection that I have to this bill, not a strong enough objection to make me vote against it, certainly, but one thing that I wish we could change. Perhaps when we get to committee, we can visit this. Another exemption goes to organizations that have "a pre-existing business relationship with the person who is being called or faxed." You know, I can think of one financial institution, which shall remain nameless, and one telephone company, which shall remain nameless, who in both cases I had to tell after the fourth and fifth calls: "Listen, I'm perfectly happy with the service you're providing me the way it is. Trust me; if I need call display or a line of credit, you'll be the first to know. I'll call you."

So when we get to committee stage, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the House will consider removing that exemption. It might be a worthwhile thing because, as I said before, I think intelligent people with pre-existing business arrangements with companies can still make up their own minds when they need added services, added doodads. In the case of the *Globe and Mail*, the *Sunday New York Times*, I don't know how many times I've told the *Globe and Mail* that I don't have time to read a newspaper on Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that covers the basics of what I wanted to say. I will be supporting this bill in second reading. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Overall, I'm actually surprised it's taken this long to get this bill in front of this House, seeing as, I think, the annoyance factor from having telemarketers approaching our residential phones has been going on for some time. But we have it in front of us now, and in principle I'm willing to support it.

Just a couple of questions that I have for the sponsor of the bill, if he'd be so kind as to answer them, maybe when we go into Committee of the Whole. I'm pleased to see that there is an exemption for charitable organizations registered under the Charitable Fundraising Act or the Income Tax Act.

One clarification that I'm seeking. In the past there have been organizations that made their money – they were for-profit businesses – by marketing tickets to events, usually sort of an all-star event, and some portion of the proceeds of the ticket would go to a charity. They were very successful. The one I'm thinking of often dealt with the firefighters' burn unit. They would have some sort of – it was always a bit weird because they would have baseball players playing hockey or hockey players playing baseball or somebody doing something other than they usually do. But they were a big-name sports person, and therefore people would fork out for tickets. This business would phone up and say, "Well, if you bought tickets, then we could send these underprivileged kids to this," or if you

bought tickets, a certain amount off each ticket would go to support X group.

I'm wondering if organizations like that, who, in fact, are a for-profit business but are assisting – and they may well be registered as an agent under the Charitable Fundraising Act – would be captured in the prohibitions underneath this act or if, in fact, they would fit under the exemptions that are offered by the act.

The second question that I have is around section (5)(c), "an organization that has a pre-existing business relationship with the person who is being called or faxed." My question is: how is that pre-existing relationship determined? Does it mean that there's been phone contact of a certain period of time to indicate that there may have been a verbal exchange in the past? So if there's a phone record showing that you'd been on the phone with this group for more than five minutes, you'd now have a pre-existing business relationship? Or does it require that there was actually a financial transaction in the past that would make that relationship happen or that they could prove that you volunteered your information to them?

Part of what I'm thinking of is that you go to those trade shows, and everybody has a free draw. Of course, it's a way to harvest information about people. You put your name and address and telephone number in. Yes, indeed somebody does get a day at the gym, but everybody else gets their information kept for contact purposes. I'm wondering if that slip of paper, that chit, is enough to say that I have a business relationship with them because I gave my information voluntarily to the group. What I'm looking for is: what is the criteria? How does the pre-existing business relationship get determined, under what criteria, and who decides that? Is it just there until it's challenged by the individual and then the business organization has to prove the relationship through whatever means that it can, or is there somebody that keeps track of all of this? I'm just looking for how all of that is determined.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in second reading on Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005. I'm sure that there'll be many people who are pleased to see this pass, and I look forward to getting answers to my questions and to more debate in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Not on Bill 205, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You don't want to participate on this one?

Mr. Mason: No.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and join the debate on Bill 205, brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Montrose, which would create a provincial telemarketing licence registry as well as set up the guidelines for telemarketers in the province of Alberta.

I'll try and speak verbally, Mr. Speaker, because I've not deciphered yet how hand signals show up in *Hansard*.

Anyway, when I first saw this legislation, the first thing that came to mind is the jurisdiction of this issue. However, it has come to my attention that section 42 of the Fair Trading Act does allow for regulations to be created respecting the marketing of goods and services over the telephone. That poses a question: what if a

telemarketing business is operating out of Saskatchewan or, indeed, British Columbia? Would section 42 apply to it, or is it more reasonable to leave the world of telemarketing up to the federal jurisdiction?

Telemarketing is one way for businesses to advertise their products and offer their services. More often than not these businesses use professional telemarketers or call centres to make telephone calls and send faxes to potential customers on their behalf.

Other groups that use this service are charitable organizations. To generate funds, charitable organizations will sometimes contact potential donors directly or through a telemarketing firm using unsolicited telephone calls or faxes. Although this, too, is an unsolicited action performed by an organization, Bill 205 proposes that nonprofit organizations, registered charities, and calls made for the strict purpose of polling or surveying be exempt from this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this draws a line in the sand, so to speak, as to what is an unacceptable unsolicited telephone call or fax and what is an acceptable unsolicited telephone call or fax. Ultimately, however, I believe that any unsolicited communication between any organization or company and an individual needs to fall under a blanket approach to ensure that there are little to no loopholes at all for this type of action.

I also think it is important to clarify that current federal legislation does not adequately produce the necessary control mechanisms that are required to properly influence telemarketers to respect the rights of the individual. However, as I mentioned, the best way to address this issue is through a blanket approach.

One of the most disturbing instances an individual can encounter when dealing with telemarketers is when he or she receives a telephone call where there is no one on the other end of the line. It can be annoying and, at the least, frightening. Some telemarketing organizations use automatic dialers to perform telephone calls or send faxes. A dead air or hang-up call will occur if a telemarketing representative isn't available when the call is answered. Generally, companies allow sufficient time between calls for a representative to be available. However, if the telemarketing representative is on another line longer than expected, the result is dead air. The result of this action is Albertans being disrupted from whatever they are doing for no particular reason. This serves no purpose, and the end result is a disgruntled customer, who would much rather not be bothered by these types of annoyances.

3:30

There is little argument against enforcing more stringent restrictions on telemarketers, and I for one am in favour, but I also think that it is important to look at what is currently being done and build on that. Restrictions are currently in place which apply to all telemarketers, although they may differ depending whether they use a fax or a telephone. As a minimum telemarketers must maintain a do-not-call list or a do-not-fax list. Telemarketers must also provide customers with a fax or a telephone number where the responsible person can be reached.

It is often joked that when a telemarketer calls, an individual should ask for their number so that they can call them back at a more appropriate time. Usually it is hinted that that will be while they are eating their lunch. More often than not a number is not given, and the telemarketer explains that they are unable to provide such a number.

Mr. Speaker, it is options such as do-not-call lists and contact numbers where individuals can be reached that should be more thoroughly enforced through federal legislation, and I think that is something that provinces can work together towards. The federal

government lays out a list of actions one can take to deter telemarketers from calling. Although these may not always prove effective, it is important that we recognize them as mechanisms currently in place and encourage other jurisdictions to work towards a blanket approach which strengthens the current legislation.

As a first step an individual is asked to call a telemarketer directly and ask to be removed from their fax lists or tell them that they want to be placed on their do-not-call list. As well, an individual can contact the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, in which case they will pursue the matter on behalf of an individual. Another possible solution is for the individual to have their contact information removed from any directories made available by their local telephone company to publishers of independent paper and electronic directories.

Mr. Speaker, according to federal legislation, telemarketing refers to

the use of telecommunications facilities to make unsolicited calls for the purpose of solicitation where solicitation is defined as the selling or promoting of a product or service, or the soliciting of money or money's worth, whether directly or indirectly and whether on behalf of another party. This includes solicitation of donations by or on behalf of charitable organizations.

The current rules in place apply to all unsolicited calls for the purpose of solicitation. They apply to business-to-business telephone solicitation and calls from businesses to existing customers. However, these rules do not extend to calls where there is no attempt to advertise a product, offer a service; for example, calls for emergency purposes, calls to collect overdue accounts, calls for market or survey research, and calls to schedule appointments.

The specific guidelines for facsimile solicitation. Calling hours are restricted to weekdays between 9 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. and weekends between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. The faxer must identify the person or organization on behalf of whom the fax or call is made, including a telephone number, fax number, name, and address of a responsible person to whom the called party can write. This rule also applies to organizations sending unsolicited fax calls on behalf of another organization. They must also display the originating calling number or an alternate number where the call originator can be reached. Sequel dialing, or having a computer dial all possible numbers in a sequence, is not permitted. Fax calls are not permitted to emergency lines or health care facilities. Names and numbers must be removed within seven days of the called party's request. Do-not-call lists are to be maintained by the calling party and remain active for at least three years.

The specific guidelines for telephone solicitation. Callers must identify the person or organization they represent. Upon request callers must provide the telephone number, name, and address of a responsible person whom the called party can write to. Callers must display the originating calling number or an alternate number where the caller can be reached. Names and numbers of called parties must be removed within 30 days of the called party's request. Do-not-call lists are to be maintained by the calling party and remain active for three years. There are no calling hour restrictions on live-voice calls. Sequential dialing is not permitted. Calls are not permitted to emergency lines or health care facilities. Random dialing and calls to unpublished numbers are allowed.

The specific guidelines for the use of automatic dialing and announcing devices, or ADAD. These devices used for the purpose of a solicitation are prohibited, including calls on behalf of a charity, radio station promotions, or calls referring the calling party to a 900/976 number. Weekday calling hours for permitted calls are from 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturdays from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. These hours do not apply to emer-

agency situation announcements. Calls are to begin by identification of the person or business on behalf of whom the call is made, including a mailing address and a toll-free telephone number. ADAD calls must display the originating calling number or alternate number where they can be reached.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, but I think we now have to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 205 in second reading. Mr. Speaker, I share the sentiments of my colleague from Edmonton-Centre, who indicated that she was somewhat surprised that a similar bill hadn't come before the Legislature sooner given the amount of concern that I think all of us have heard at one time or another from constituents regarding these unsolicited phone calls, faxes, and in fact, of course, the infamous e-mail spams that we're all subject to.

Certainly I'm supportive of this bill. I do have a couple of questions or concerns that I would just like to get on the record. First of all, I guess I'd like to say that I really believe that we should have extended this to a do-not-call list as well because although the steps taken in this bill will go some of the way towards addressing the concerns that I hear and I'm sure we all hear, I don't believe that anything short of a province-wide do-not-call list will really, truly provide the relief that many of us would be looking for.

Under clause 5 we talk about persons conducting a poll or a survey being exempted. As a small business owner I have been on the receiving end of far, far too many of these calls. I think that it's imperative to point out that while much of the discussion in this Assembly has taken place around residential calls and people's dinners being interrupted and that sort of thing, the reality is that those conducting small businesses in this province are literally bombarded by these calls and impacted at least as much, if not more, during their business hours as residential homeowners are during their private recreational hours. As a result, I think that we have to pay as much attention, at least, to the businesspeople in this province.

As I said, many, many times I would be on the receiving end of these calls and often – often – they're disguised as a poll or a survey, even though the real intent . . .

An Hon. Member: That would be us.

Mr. R. Miller: Oh. Is that you guys? That would be the NDP opposition, apparently, disguising themselves as a poll or a survey. What was it that you were trying to sell then?

An Hon. Member: Liberalism.

Mr. R. Miller: As an example, Mr. Speaker, you'll be asked several questions regarding the type of photocopier that might be used in your business establishment or the type of fax machine that's used in your business establishment. These questions will go on and on, and if you allow yourself to be strung along long enough, eventually it will come to the point where you find out, in fact, that they are selling or attempting to sell.

3:40

Likewise, with the following exemption that talks about "a pre-existing business relationship with the person who is being called or faxed." Again, this is a very common strategy for these telemarketers to represent themselves as having done business with you in the

past. I would like to think that I was a relatively astute businessman and didn't fall for this particular scheme, but certainly I've spoken to many over the years who have when they get a call from a company representing themselves as having done business with you for so many years or "We've sold you this product before." In reality, once again, if you're unfortunate enough to stay on the line long enough, you will eventually find out that, in fact, you have no existing business relationship with these people. Perhaps you may not go into the fact.

Certainly, they, I believe, tend to focus on the medium- to large-size businesses where, perhaps, particularly in the medium-size businesses, there are several people that might be involved in purchasing, and one wouldn't necessarily know whether or not another purchaser has dealt with that company. So they really are in effect preying on an unawareness of the practice that they use.

I mentioned as well, Mr. Speaker, the e-mails and the spams. Unfortunately, most of us, I don't believe, have the resources available to us that the Alberta government has available to it. The government-provided computers that I'm fortunate enough to use in my office and the laptop that I'm provided with by this Assembly are very well protected. There's not a lot of spam that comes through those, but most of us don't have the resources to protect our personal computers to the same extent. I'm sure we've all been bombarded to an unbelievable extent by unsolicited sales of everything from toner supplies to the little blue pill that some members in this Assembly might know more about than I do. As I say, even with the great security that is put in place on the government computers, I know that there is a concern in the constituency offices about a number of spam e-mails that somehow manage to find their way through. So I would have liked to have seen this bill address that as well.

Certainly, as I said, Mr. Speaker, it is a step in the right direction. Hopefully, it will at least begin to address some of those concerns that we have heard, as I said, not only from residences but from small business as well.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to join the debate on Bill 205, the Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005. Before I begin, I would like to thank my colleague for Calgary-Montrose for bringing forward this piece of legislation and for allowing the House the opportunity to consider this important matter.

Without a doubt, most Albertans and most Canadians, for that matter, aren't too keen on having their privacy disturbed by companies or individuals trying to sell them products or services over the phone. I imagine there are very few of us, if any, who jump with excitement at the opportunity to pick up the phone from someone who is trying to sell us something. Even worse, most of the time the products or services that they try to sell us we may already have or don't have a need for. In other words, the phone calls are likely to become a complete waste of our time and, if they occur frequently, can become an unnecessary nuisance.

Over the past decade or so the telephone has become one of the favourite tools of communication for companies trying to market their products or services. Telemarketing has become a large industry generating billions of dollars in revenue. It's an efficient, cheap, and effective mode of marketing that allows companies to reach potential customers world-wide at a very low cost.

One of the major advantages of telemarketing over other modes of direct marketing is that it allows companies to market their

products to a very large number of customers without having to have a large presence at the destination market. For example, if I run a bank and I would like to market my services to customers in the U.K., I don't have to hire staff in the U.K. to advertise and sell my services. I can easily do this from any location in the world where telephones are available and where labour costs are, preferably, cheap. The added benefit of resorting to this type of marketing is that I don't have to provide retail space or have a large presence in the destination market. However, while telemarketing can be business friendly, it definitely is not privacy friendly.

With this in mind, Bill 205 proposes to limit the amount of such calls by making it illegal for telemarketing companies to solicit Albertans unless these companies have obtained a marketing licence and have agreed to abide by the telemarketing rules and regulations. In order to accomplish this, Bill 205 calls for the creation of a government-maintained telemarketing licence registry that would issue provincial telemarketing licences to companies wishing to solicit Albertans over the phone. In addition, Bill 205 proposes to incorporate more stringent rules and regulations concerning telemarketing to ensure that Albertans are not overly inconvenienced by telephone solicitations.

Consequently, the bill introduces restrictions pertaining to when telemarketers would be allowed to solicit the general public. Under such restrictions telemarketers would be restricted to placing their phone calls between the hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. during weekends. No telemarketing phone calls would be allowed on general holidays. The advantage of such measures is that it would not only forbid telemarketers from contacting customers during the proposed times, but it would also establish a set of consistent rules and limitations concerning telemarketing practices within the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while I agree in principle with the concept that Albertans should not have their privacy disrupted by unsolicited calls, I envision some issues concerning the measures proposed in Bill 205. I feel that Bill 205 is perhaps impractical and could also be viewed by our business community as unfair. While Bill 205 would protect Alberta consumers from unwanted phone solicitations from Alberta-based telemarketers, it could potentially send a wrong message to existing and potential investors regarding the openness of Alberta's free-market economy. Many companies world-wide consider telephone sales and advertisements as a commercial right and freedom and, as I mentioned before, a cost-effective medium for retailing their products and services. If we forbid companies within Alberta from utilizing this medium, we could potentially limit their ability to stay competitive and generate revenues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to predict that enacting Bill 205 could have the unintended consequence of driving some of these companies out of Alberta, but it could potentially discourage others from bringing their business and investment to our province. While perhaps I'm being overly cautious in my analysis, I do think this is an issue that we should consider.

From the fairness and precedent perspective I believe that we should examine the acceptability of other mediums of retail advertisement before we start looking at limiting telemarketing. As an example, Mr. Speaker, Alberta currently permits salespeople and sales representatives to come to our front door to market their products and services face to face, which, I would argue, is a far more intrusive mode of solicitation and advertisement than telemarketing. At least, over the phone one has less hesitation to hang up if they do not wish to speak to a salesperson, while at the front door and in person this can be trickier as people tend to be more polite. With this in mind, I would argue that if we are not ready to do something about door-to-door soliciting, then we

shouldn't be looking at limiting telephone marketing, which is by far the lesser of two evils.

From the practical point of view, Mr. Speaker, I am also not convinced that enacting Bill 205 would accomplish the results we desire. The reason is because there are very few telemarketing companies that are based strictly here in Alberta. For instance, if you have call display on your phone, you can avoid pretty well all the telemarketing by simply not picking up telephone calls from outside of the province, which tells me that all of these telemarketing calls that we're getting are already from outside of the province. So if we add these regulations, we end up with no fewer telephone calls during dinner.

3:50

The vast majority of telemarketing companies that contact Albertans tend not to be based in our province, and therefore any potential provincial legislation that imposes a limit on telemarketing would simply not apply to them. This would not only create a situation where the few Alberta-based telemarketers would be placed at a significant disadvantage in relation to their competitors who are based in other provinces but would actually do very little to limit the number of unsolicited calls Albertans receive.

Since we cannot apply our laws to other provinces, I would suggest that the best course of action would be to consider working with the rest of the country in order to create a consistent policy coast to coast that would not only protect Albertans from unwanted telephone solicitation but Canadians as well. We should consider working with the federal government in regard to this issue and urge them to pass legislation similar to Bill 205. This would mean that there would only be one law regulating telemarketing in the country and would also be a far more effective measure than enacting only province-wide legislation.

With the introduction of Bill C-37, An Act to Amend the Telecommunications Act, in December 2004 the federal government has already demonstrated its willingness to tackle the problem of telephone solicitation. While Bill C-37 does not mirror Bill 205 in its approach to resolving the issue, it does offer a viable and effective means to an end. The advantage to a do-not-call list as proposed by Bill C-37 is that it gives Albertans and Canadians the option to contact the CRTC and request to be placed on the do-not-call list. By doing so, these individuals would ensure that no telemarketing company would be allowed to call their residence again.

While the proposed federal legislation seems to be far more restricting than Bill 205 in its approach to addressing the problem of unwanted telephone solicitation, I feel that if we must tread down this path, we should concentrate on finding a Canada-wide solution. I am of the firm conviction that a unified Canadian policy that addresses the matter of unwanted solicitation would be far more successful and fair than an Alberta-only alternative, as proposed by Bill 205. Currently C-37 is before the Senate for second reading, and all indicators are at this time that it will pass and become law. While it's not perfect, Mr. Speaker, I believe that it will be a much more effective tool in the regulation of telemarketing. It offers a Canada-wide solution that's fair and effective for everyone in the country.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 205 today. There's no doubt that telemarketing is a nuisance for many Albertans, and I think everyone in the Chamber can say that they've encountered these particular types of phone calls.

The Speaker: Unfortunately, I must inform the hon. member that the time has now passed us on this one, but there is an opportunity for the sponsor to conclude the debate.

I think we'll call the question then.

[Motion for second reading of Bill 205 lost]

Bill 206

Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to propose Bill 206, the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act, for second reading. This is a bill that we've given some considerable thought to or the concept behind it.

Mr. Speaker, the bill is, of course, a process for the development of a pharmaceutical agency and does not purport to lay out in detail how it would be structured, rather to establish a commission that would be charged with bringing it about. The function of the commission would be to "investigate and report on how the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Agency should be established and how the objectives in subsection (2) can be accomplished."

Subsection (2) indicates that it is responsible to

- (a) co-ordinate purchasing of prescription medications distributed by regional health authorities and pharmacies;
- (b) implement strategies for achieving savings through reference-based pricing and least-cost alternatives;
- (c) implement public education programs aimed at prescription drug users about the appropriate use of pharmaceuticals;
- (d) investigate proven, science-based alternatives to prescription drugs;
- (e) develop strategies to reduce direct marketing to physicians by pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. Speaker, just a little bit of background on this bill. The government, of course, has been proclaiming for some time now that they believe that the costs of our health care system are becoming unsustainable and that something must be done. Of course, the government's approach is to introduce changes or so-called reforms to the health care system that would simply increase the costs of that health care system, and that involves a second tier of privately delivered health care and private health insurance.

We've taken a different look at the situation, Mr. Speaker. We agree that steps need to be taken in order to control costs in the health care system, and we also believe that by innovation within the public health care system we can improve it, change it, modernize it, make it more responsive, and ultimately control the increase of costs. We had a look around the world at different systems and different approaches that might be useful, and we looked at a situation in New Zealand.

Now, prescription drug costs are perhaps the biggest driver of increased health care costs in our system. Alberta's costs increase an average of 15 per cent per year. This is not unlike the cost increases for prescription drugs in other parts of the world. At \$1.6 billion in 2004 drug costs are the second-largest component of health care expenditure, second only to hospitals. It's interesting to note that prescription drugs are the most privatized component of health care, and they are the fastest growing cost. We believe that it is time to take action against drug costs.

Now, this would establish a commission, as I mentioned earlier, called the Alberta pharmaceutical savings commission. Its mandate is to work out the details and the formal mechanisms for a province-wide pharmaceutical savings agency. With minimal upfront

investment an Alberta pharmaceutical savings agency could begin realizing savings within 10 months. With those savings, we can begin to invest in other innovations such as drug coverage for catastrophic illness and eventually a universal pharmacare program. As I mentioned, our program is inspired by the achievements of New Zealand's Pharmaceutical Management Agency, or Pharmac. Since 1993 drug costs have only increased by 3 per cent annually in New Zealand compared to Alberta's 15 per cent. The Conference Board of Canada has found that in one year New Zealand saved \$624 million on drugs.

The Alberta pharmaceutical savings agency would initially consist of the following core businesses: first, co-ordinating purchasing for prescription medications which are distributed by regional health authorities and by pharmacies; second, developing and implementing strategies to reduce demand-side costs; third, developing and maintaining a pharmaceutical formulary to identify those medications that offer comparable therapeutic outcomes for lower costs – in other words, a reference-based pricing or therapeutic substitution strategy – and fourth, it would phase in comprehensive public insurance for prescription medication to gain full advantage from the bulk purchasing and reference-based pricing strategies.

The APSA would work closely with regional health authorities to forecast demand for prescription drugs and then purchase those drugs in bulk. A monthly reporting system would be developed requiring RHAs to report monthly usage of pharmaceuticals to the APSA.

4:00

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Following the lead of Pharmac in New Zealand, the system should not have an onerous requirement for data coding requirements. It would, however, provide invaluable information to aid in purchasing prescriptions on the RHA's behalf. The APSA would use a number of strategies for negotiating the best possible price for prescription medications, including capped expenditure contracts, rebate arrangements, price and volume arrangements, package deals, and tendering for sole and preferred supplies. RHAs would maintain the primary responsibility for identifying quantity of purchase requirements and would pay for the drugs from RHA budgets.

Mr. Speaker, the cheapest pharmaceutical is the one that is never needed. Numerous studies have raised concerns about overprescription patterns and a reliance on brand name medications where generic alternatives exist. Several strategies would be employed to reduce consumer demand for prescription drugs, including education campaigns, prevention, alternative therapy, and a review of pharmaceutical marketing strategies, including direct-to-consumer advertising and physician-oriented marketing. We would seek to better integrate pharmacists into the health care system to make full use of their knowledge and skills.

Now, a third objective is to develop and maintain a pharmaceutical formulary to identify those medications that offer comparable therapeutic outcomes for lower costs. This approach of reference-based pricing has been successfully used by jurisdictions such as New Zealand to reduce costs. The formulary would identify medication that combines optimal therapeutic outcomes with the lowest costs. Therefore, where brand name and generic drugs do not produce comparable results, the higher cost, generally the brand name drug, would still be used. Where results are comparable, however, RHAs would be encouraged to make use of the lowest cost alternative. As the pharmaceutical savings agency expands its co-ordination of pharmaceutical purchasing to those dispensaries outside the RHAs, insurance providers will also be encouraged to

make use of the formulary to cover only the lowest cost alternatives.

Now, one of the most important pieces, Mr. Speaker, is to develop and implement the capacity to become a clearing house for all prescribed medications which are distributed in Alberta. In order to best combat escalating drug costs, all pharmaceuticals purchased in Alberta would make use of the savings negotiated by the pharmaceutical savings agency. The APSA will therefore extend its role from core businesses to non RHA pharmaceutical dispensers. Pharmacists would retain their role as front-line providers of pharmaceutical information and would still be allowed to charge dispensary fees. However, instead of negotiating with pharmaceutical companies directly, pharmacists would make purchases through the APSA. This would require development of important capacity but should be kept in mind as we begin negotiations under core business 1.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta pharmaceutical savings agency's activities would cost approximately \$6.23 million a year, and if Alberta reduced its prescription drug costs to New Zealand levels, it would garner an annual saving of \$113 per capita, for a total annual savings of 346 and a half million dollars on drugs paid for out of the public purse.

Mr. Speaker, the rapidly escalating cost of prescription medication poses a serious threat to the ongoing viability of our health system, but fortunately Alberta has the resources to make an initial investment in an agency such as the Alberta pharmaceutical savings agency. Such an investment would bring benefits within a single fiscal year and free up additional cash in the years that follow. Bulk purchasing, reference-based pricing, and public-insured medication will have the potential to greatly reduce the human and fiscal impacts of high-priced pharmaceutical care.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, the allotted time has run out.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to speak for a long time, but what I would like to say is that I thoroughly respect the fact that the member opposite that's introduced this particular piece to the Legislative Assembly I think is very much on target with a lot of the thinking that we have been applying in Health and Wellness to examine our drug costs. While I responded at the time he first presented this to the public and said that it was likely not appropriate or not necessary because those are all issues that we're taking very seriously and taking action on, I'd like to in this House commit to the hon. member that the elements of what he proposes are very appropriate. Many of the elements I think are design features that we're currently looking at, and I'm absolutely thrilled that he and his colleagues have taken this amount of time to put together something and are very mindful of the drug costs.

The drug costs that we face and the costs of technology are rising at a rapid rate, as has been noted, and becoming more efficient and effective in our management of that sector of our budget would do a great deal to putting the dollars in front of the patient and in patient care as opposed to putting them in areas which have been inflationary and, at best, escalating beyond what seems to be control. So both the New Zealand model and what they've been doing in B.C. are elements that we're looking at. Between the ministries and the government, where support is given for drugs and technology which is affiliated with health care concerns, I would have to say that much of what the hon. member has suggested are things that we're quite mindful of.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my capacity as Health and Wellness critic for the Official Opposition I'm happy to get up and participate in the second reading of Bill 206, the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act. This is interesting because we are getting some agreement in three ways on what's being proposed by the third party. I'm interested because some of the things that are suggested in here exactly reflect the position of the Alberta Liberals. In the document that we created called *Creating a Healthy Future* our policy position 22 is to "institute a more extensive public pharmacare program, based on models in other Canadian provinces, to help curb rapidly rising pharmaceutical costs and to ensure proper access to medications." Our policy 23 is to "work more actively, in co-operation with the federal government and the other provinces, to test and evaluate new drugs and medical technologies."

So I think that we seem to all be agreed that we do need to do something, that there is a need to contain costs and to be reasonable about how much we're paying for pharmaceuticals, but I want to hasten to add here that we also have to be careful to balance that. Yes, pharmaceuticals and technology are the fastest rising areas in health care today. That's where all the money is being spent, and that's where all the new money is being spent.

We also need to balance that. I mean, we now have drugs that enable people with chronic illness, for example, to go out and live a fairly normal life: to work, to pay taxes, to raise a family. Before, they would have been in care for a good part of their life and, certainly, would have likely been in a care facility with all of the accompanying costs both to the individual and to the taxpayer that are ensued therein. So you balance that, and often there is a cost savings that we gain from the pharmaceuticals as well as . . . I'm going to stop here and say that health care shouldn't just be about the money. It should be about the health. If we are able to achieve better health for our citizens through the use of pharmaceuticals, then I would encourage both my colleague in the opposition and the minister of health to seriously pursue that.

Now, one of the interesting things is that of the other programs that are under consideration right now, and I'm thinking specifically of B.C., if I'm right, all of them contain some kind of copayment or advanced deductible with their pharmaceutical programs, yet the National Forum on Health from their 1997 document had recommended that there be – and they have a particular phrase for it – first-dollar coverage; in other words, there would be no deductible or no copayment right from the first penny of a cost on a pharmaceutical. People would have coverage for it.

4:10

I'm interested that we always seem to feel that, well, if people pay for something, then they'll recognize the value of it. But, Mr. Speaker, no study has actually ever shown that. What it shows us is that people with limited means and lower income or who are receiving some kinds of government assistance just don't expend the money in the first place because they don't have very much of it. What we end up with is their conditions becoming worse, more chronic, and more expensive by the time they actually do enter the system. There's nothing that ever shows us that, you know, making people pay something up front for a health service or a pharmaceutical in this case actually saves the system money because if the person doesn't spend the money, they just end up being a far more expensive patient in the long run.

So I'm interested in supporting my colleague from the third party in what he is proposing here. I want to talk about the idea of the reference-based drugs, or the generic-only drugs, which is another thing that's been looked at to try and save money. We would

basically say: "Here's what the system will pay for. Here's the generic drug cost." It becomes the reference. I'll just pick numbers out of the air for the point of this argument. Let's say that pill costs a dollar through the generic one, so the government says: "Okay. That's the reference, so we will pay a dollar for this kind of a drug." Now, if you want to have the name brand drug or a different version of the drug, and it's \$1.25 or \$1.50 or \$10, you pay the difference, but the government or the Blue Cross or the assistance program or the health care insurance or whatever is only going to pay the buck.

I think for a lot of people that does work, but we always have to have an appeal system in place. I have to say that the appeal system can be onerous because we have a system something like this in place in Alberta right now. I've had constituents come forward and say: "I'm being forced to take this generic drug, and it doesn't work for me. It makes me sick." Well, the first couple of people you phone, everybody goes: "No, no, no. They're all exactly the same. That's the point of the generic drug. It's exactly the same. It's not brand name, and they're exactly the same."

Well, you actually start to dig and you say, "What else is in this drug?" Yes, indeed, other things can be in with it. The active drug is the same between that pill and other pills, but they can put other stuff in with the drug that can affect people, and that can differ between the original generic drug and others. Also, the base, for want of a better word, can be different from pill to pill. Where you have people, for example, that are allergic to animal products, they can't have the gelatine pills because that's usually some kind of animal gelatin. It would make them sick, so they wouldn't be able to take that pill. They'd have to find the same drug in a different kind of form, like a tablet. It takes you an awfully long time to work your way through that system, finding out what the differences are and then campaigning on behalf of your constituent to make sure that they can actually get the drug that works for them and doesn't make them sick.

It's important to have the appeal process in place, number one. But, number two, we need to be aware that in fact generic drugs are not all exactly the same. There is a difference, and we need to make sure that that process is not onerous. My office had to spend an awful lot of time on that. I'm thinking of a couple of cases where that happened, and we knew how to do it. If the individuals had been on their own, they may not have been successful at all, or it would have taken them even longer.

The other thing that I think is interesting here in what's proposed in the member's bill is recognizing that all levels of government need to come together and work on this one. I would say that particularly around the issue of bulk buying it becomes really important. There's an opportunity for us to learn on best practices and evidence-based decision-making from other provinces, to work with other provinces, and I would also really encourage looking at a bulk buying process, which is in fact anticipated in this bill.

One hesitation that I have here – not specific to what's in this bill, but I see it repeatedly – is that when you talk about establishing a commission, the question is always: who chooses the people that sit on the commission and by what criteria are they chosen? That is how things get skewed. I'm sitting in this House looking across the way at people who are experts in that and who can basically produce any result they want by the people that they appoint to the commission or encourage to apply or facilitate or however you want to phrase that. You know, when that deck gets stacked, it's going to produce a certain result. So I'm always concerned in getting a very clear criteria of how people are chosen and, frankly, who decides because those two factors make a huge difference.

The other thing, just as a part of this whole idea of going to generic drugs and bulk buying. A long time ago I worked for the

Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada. [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired] I'll have to wait until Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in this House and join the debate on Bill 206, Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has brought forward a bill which he feels would have the effect of containing the rising costs of prescription drugs. Given the current increases in health care spending, this sounds like an initiative worth looking at. However, upon closer examination of the bill it is quickly realized that the only thing this bill will accomplish is to waste taxpayers' money, setting up a committee to examine issues already being addressed by our very capable Minister of Health and Wellness, as we've just heard.

We are only beginning to debate this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and it is already obsolete. The true irony of this situation is that just a few short months ago the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was calling the government caucus a bunch of dinosaurs unable to keep up with the times. While the Gary Larson cartoon that the member referenced attributed the extinction of dinosaurs to smoking, it is very possible that the extinction of the NDP caucus will be due to being chronically out of date.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 206 outlines what the role of the proposed Alberta pharmaceutical savings agency, or APSA, would be. However, if you look at the five primary functions of this proposed organization, it's easy to see that these roles are already being filled by the Department of Health and Wellness. For example, the second function of the APSA would be to achieve savings by implementing reference-based pricing and least-cost alternative methods for drug prescriptions.

Now, the least-cost alternative price is the lowest unit cost for a drug product which is interchangeable with another. For example, it's the difference between purchasing a bottle of Aspirin or the generic brand of acetylsalicylic acid. Both drugs in the bottle are exactly the same; it's just that one is cheaper. Under least-cost alternative the cheapest product would be used to fill a prescription.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has utilized the least-cost alternative system since 1993. For over a decade this method has been in use in this province, yet Bill 206 seeks to implement this measure. I see no reason to create a committee to implement a policy which has been in place for over a decade.

The second part of this function discusses the implementation of reference-based pricing in Alberta. This policy identifies groups of drugs which have a similar effect and then pushes these drugs into a single category. A maximum price is then determined for each category, and only that cost is paid. If the drug prescribed costs more, it falls to the patient or their private insurer to pay the balance.

Now, this policy is currently being used in several other provinces, including British Columbia and Saskatchewan, but not in Alberta. The reason for this is that Alberta Health and Wellness is currently monitoring the impact of this policy in other jurisdictions to see if it's a good idea for Alberta. Again, the actions suggested by Bill 206 do nothing but duplicate work already undertaken by the ministry.

Mr. Speaker, this is only the tip of the iceberg. The rest of this bill is more of the same: creating a committee to duplicate work already being addressed by a ministry. This would not appear to be a way to contain the rising costs of health care.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate this opportunity to speak on private members' bills, and as discussed in a meeting earlier today, it's very, very important. Again, I commend the member for having the courage to bring forward the bill. However, for the reasons which I have cited above, I will not be able to support Bill 206, Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act, and I would urge my colleagues on both sides of this Chamber to stand with me and vote against this bill.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Question.

The Acting Speaker: It doesn't apply at this stage.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am very pleased to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 206, the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act, as sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I would like to start by making the statement that rising prescription drug costs are easily explained or attributed to three factors. One, the fact that we have an aging population and people are growing older. Second, these people are growing older with multiple morbidities, or concurrent diseases. They need attention, and sometimes you try to fix one of those afflictions, and then you end up creating a secondary problem, which has to be looked after as well, and it sometimes is a cascade that we cannot intercept or stop. Third, there is also an argument that some of these individuals have unhealthy lifestyle choices and that it might actually aggravate their existing conditions.

My second statement would circle around the fact that newer drugs are typically more expensive because of the R and D costs, the research and development. Some people may not know that out of 10,000 molecules only 20 or so are considered promising. Only one or two of these 20 advance to the advanced or the premarketing phase for potential marketing. It just costs more to get these few new drugs on the market.

Some people even suspect that the escalating cost of pharmaceuticals may be attributed to pharmacists' greed, but today I'd like to take this opportunity to emphasize that this is not the case. This could not be farther from the truth. As a matter of fact, practising pharmacists in the community more often than not reduce or discount their own professional fees to accommodate those patients who may not be able to afford those expensive treatments on their own.

Also, as a practitioner I would like to see a more extensive or wider pharmacare program in this province and maybe potentially across the nation to cover more Albertans for more treatment modalities. An agency like Alberta Blue Cross, for example, should co-operate with this government on developing new plans for Albertans who are not senior citizens or widowers or those who qualify for their nongroup insurance, often referred to as group 1 insurance. Blue Cross and the government should get together and devise a plan to include more Albertans under their umbrella.

This bill is useful for discussion purposes. I question the rationale. Are we here talking about saving money for the government, or are we talking about saving money for average Albertans? Are we concerned that government is paying more for health services, including things like ambulance transfers, hospitalization, and maybe potentially prescription drugs, or are we concerned that the people cannot afford their medications if they're deemed necessary?

If we are, then why not urge the government to eliminate health care premiums, which are a form of tax. The money that is collected

enters into general revenue, and it is not earmarked or set aside to be spent on disease management or health promotion. The millions of dollars collected through the health care premium tax could be put to good use to extend pharmaceutical coverage to more Albertans by lowering premium rates for insurance or by offering incentives to small and intermediate business owners to offer or extend coverage to their employees and their families. What novel ideas, eh?

There has to be some emphasis as well on greater collaboration with the federal government and the other jurisdictions. If this province is willing to go that way, then maybe we should discuss it with the other provinces and the federal government to see if a nationally accepted standard model is adopted and if it could be implemented with ease. We have to look at the best decisions for these patients, and we have to look at the best practices and the best evidence that is out there. Keep in mind, again, that our goal is to promote health and to alleviate suffering, not to cut the bottom line.

Prescription drugs are already subsidized in Canada, and this is emphasized and exemplified by the fact that the U.S. government and some jurisdictions there are buying prescription drugs from Canada because drugs cost less in Canada. Someone told me that the pharmaceutical companies in Canada or throughout the world operate through a, quote, charge what you can get, end quote, model. Maybe this is where the federal government comes in. They have to come in and say: you only charge what's fair and what's reasonable so that these companies can recuperate their R and D costs and not exaggerate their profit margins.

We also have a 20-year patent protection in this country, which basically means that generic drug companies cannot copy those molecules for 20 years. When I was a student, Mr. Speaker, I remembered the debate. The debate was extended from 10 to 17 to 20 years, and there was a lot of resistance because now people would have to wait longer for those newer drugs to become generic. There was the argument that R and D companies actually get their money back in about 18 months, and then they have 18 and a half years of pure profit.

The idea is useful, the idea is good, but we have to have safeguards to clarify the role of this agency once it's established, if it's established, and also make sure that reference-based pricing doesn't supercede judgment and good calls on the part of physicians and also on the part of pharmacists when they get prescribing rights.

Concerns were raised with reference-based pricing, that it would restrict drug choice and it would limit access to new medications by encouraging the prescription of older medications because they just tend to be cheaper. It's also a disincentive or a deterrent for drug companies to develop new modalities because they don't know when they'll be covered, and they don't know if they'll be covered, so why invest in research. Also, I don't think it would reduce the overall drug expenditure because people are growing old and people are getting sicker anyway. We can probably arrest it temporarily, but you probably cannot look at the same effect over the long term.

I don't question the motive behind this private member's bill, but we just need more clarification. If we can do it with the federal government and the other provinces, then I'd probably have more support for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 206, Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act, sponsored by my hon. colleague the leader of the third party opposition and MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

I've been listening to the debate very carefully. The debate seems

to range far and wide, while the bill is very specific and attempts to address two things: the concern that this government has had over a long period of time about the so-called unsustainability of the health care system unless the costs of the system are controlled, and secondly, the concern that national organizations such as the Conference Board of Canada have expressed and put their finger on, the components of the health care system that seem to be experiencing a very, very rapid escalation of costs. To give you an example, the Conference Board of Canada has identified drug costs in Canada as the fastest growing component of the Canadian health care system during the last 25 years. So it's a problem that's chronic, a problem that has been growing, a problem that needs immediate response to it.

We know that there are solutions. We're not trying to invent a wheel or something absolutely new. We know that some practices have been adopted elsewhere in other parts of the world, and they have indeed worked. New Zealand is a case in point. Many of the questions that have been raised by members in this House, from both sides of the House, have already been addressed quite effectively over the last 10 years by the practices related to how to control the drug costs as they have evolved in New Zealand. It's about time that we learned, paid attention to those practices, those policies that have been developed there and take advantage of them.

4:30

For the benefit of the House and the members of the House I would draw attention to the NDP opposition's document called The Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Agency, a document that we released in October 2005. It's very, very current and is accessible on www.newdemocrats.ab.ca. Not only the members of the House would like to have access to this information, but many Albertans who are going to watch the discussion would like to have access to the facts and detail, and that's where they're to be found.

Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada has drawn attention to the fact that this is not a recent problem. It is a problem that's been growing for the last 25 years. The document to which the Conference Board of Canada draws attention is called Understanding Health Care Cost Drivers and Escalators, and it's March 2004. Payment for prescription medication accounts for approximately 80 per cent of all drug spending in Canada, representing an estimated \$14.6 billion in 2002. In Alberta alone prescription drugs cost us about \$1.6 billion a year, and they're increasing at the rate of 15 per cent every year. Fifteen per cent of \$1.6 billion is a large sum of money, that we could save if we could bring it down to a level which is comparable to the New Zealand level, and I don't see why we can't do it. If it can be done in New Zealand, it certainly can be done here. We can bring it down to about a 3 per cent annual increase as compared to the current rate of increase, which is 15 per cent.

The Alberta health care system has certainly not been immune to this chronic increase. Twenty years ago spending on drugs represented in this province only 8 per cent of the health spending. In 2005 Alberta spent \$1.6 billion, as I said, on prescription drugs, an expenditure that represents 11.5 per cent of total health expenditures for that year. So from 8 per cent to 11.5 per cent, a huge increase over the last 20 years.

This bill is designed specifically to address one particular facet of the health care costs in this province, the ones that have to do with the prescription drug costs. When it comes to eliminating health care premiums, no doubt we should eliminate them. The policy of the NDP opposition in this House has been that that's an unfair tax, and it should be eliminated as soon as possible. But it doesn't address the question of how to contain and reduce the concurrent

costs of health care provision, whether they come from public dollars or from private dollars.

While the Conservative government here has claimed to examine the best practices of jurisdictions from around the world, they have made no progress in incorporating innovative measures being used elsewhere to reduce rapidly escalating costs of drugs. The Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar did talk about, you know, how this government has been already busy trying to cut costs, but if that is the case, the evidence doesn't show up in the rate of increase of the pharmaceutical drug costs that this province experiences from year to year. The latest figures indicate that the cost increase here is close to 15 per cent. So clearly the policies and the practices that the government has in place are ineffective in making a dent on the rate of increase in the costs of pharmaceutical drugs. Both we as government and Alberta citizens as the users of the drugs jointly pay for these increasing costs.

We need to act and act immediately and urgently on this matter. It's not a partisan issue. I was encouraged by what the minister had to say here. She says that she'll pay attention to the provisions of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the facet of the bill which deals with the composition of the commission. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre expressed some concerns about who gets appointed to these commissions. I think it's important that we put on record, as we are discussing this bill, how this commission will be appointed. Will it be charged to do the actual work, hold public hearings, and listen to Albertans and specialists?

- (3) The people appointed to the Commission must consist of
 - (a) a chair who must be
 - (i) a judge or retired judge of any court in Alberta, or
 - (ii) a person whose stature and qualifications are, in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, similar to that of a judge;
 - (b) one person who is not a Member of the Legislative Assembly nominated by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition;
 - (c) one person who is not a Member of the Legislative Assembly nominated by the leader of a second opposition party in the Legislative Assembly;
 - (d) one person nominated by the Alberta College of Pharmacists.

So pharmacists will be represented on this commission. I want to assure the Member for Edmonton-McClung that the experience, the expertise, the opinions of the pharmacist community will not go unrepresented and unheard if this commission is constituted.

- (e) one person nominated by a certified union representing health care workers in Alberta.

A very large number of Albertans work to provide these health care services, and they certainly should find a place on this commission.

- (f) the dean or other faculty member of a Faculty of Medicine [from Alberta universities].

We've got two faculties of medicine in this province. Surely, we should have the faculties of medicine academic community represented on this commission.

- (g) one person nominated by the Consumers' Association of Canada, Alberta chapter;
- (h) one person nominated by the Alberta Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association;
- (i) one person nominated by the ABC Benefits Corporation;
- (j) 3 people nominated by groups representing the interests of seniors, post-secondary students, persons with disabilities, persons with mental illness and recent immigrants to Canada.

Now, this last provision for membership on the commission, Mr. Speaker, is very, very significant. My hon. colleague from

Edmonton-Centre drew attention to the fact that seniors, who are increasingly users of prescription drugs and have to use them on a more regular, ongoing basis than the rest of us, would have concerns about drug choice. Surely, their representation on this commission will alleviate the concern that the member has expressed here.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure, also, this afternoon to rise and join the debate on Bill 206, the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act, sponsored by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood I, too, am concerned about the rising costs of prescription drugs. However, unlike the hon. member I do not believe that Bill 206 will do anything to help stem the rising costs of pharmaceuticals.

The proposed commission would be charged with a duty to implement strategies to reduce costs through reference-based pricing and least-cost alternatives. I agree with the intent, but I have a couple of concerns with this statement. The first is that the commission's hands are clearly tied. The mandate of the commission is not to investigate methods of reducing drug costs but to implement a strategy. No consideration is given to the best way of reducing costs as the commission has already been directed on how to act. Mr. Speaker, that is backwards. It is like beginning your research with an answer and working backwards to find an appropriate question. The proper method of inquiry is to discover what the problem is, then research the best way to solve the problem, and then develop a strategy to implement it. However, the NDP appear to believe that you should put the cart before the horse.

Mr. Speaker, this type of one-sided, ideological approach to health reform is becoming commonplace from the opposition. For example, when the hon. member's party wanted to conduct public consultations – and I use that word loosely – they made sure to go to areas where they would hear what they wanted to hear. Their tour of Alberta never left the urban areas of the province, completely discounting the views of rural Albertans.

Let's contrast that to the approach that the hon. minister of health took in her attempt to initiate health reform. The minister held an international health symposium that featured experts from around the world. [interjections]

4:40

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has the floor. The same courtesy was extended to anybody else who spoke before, that members were quiet and listened to the debate.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health and Wellness held an international health symposium that featured experts from around the world in the field of health policy. The experts came from diverse backgrounds and presented a balanced, nonpartisan approach to health reform. The government was interested in what would actually work and not what was ideologically expedient.

If the hon. member recalls, even he was, and I quote, pleasantly surprised that there was a mix of views and experts at the symposium. The conference did not contain, quote, all right-wing jerks, as the hon. member originally expected. In fact, the conference contained many important messages that provided the government with balanced advice that will actually help improve the health care

system. Albertans prefer honest, thought-out solutions. When you are constructing public policy, Mr. Speaker, it is important that you look at all options and not just those which suit your own short-term political goals.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to my second concern with Bill 206. As I mentioned earlier, the hon. member said that during a symposium he learned a great deal, but perhaps he stepped out of the room for a moment and missed the presentation by Mason Durie. Mr. Durie indicated that one of the biggest benefits of the symposium was the ability to discuss the system as a whole, which was very important. Mr. Durie indicated that the system is only effective if it leads to better health outcomes. Bill 206, however, does not focus on the system as a whole. Bill 206 attempts to segregate pharmaceuticals from the health system.

You cannot take one piece of the system in isolation and attempt to fix the problem. Cheaper drugs mean nothing to a rural farmer in Alberta who is unable to find a doctor in his community or to the transplant patient who is waiting for an organ. Cheap prescription drugs will not help people get hips replaced faster. You cannot take a piecemeal approach to health reform.

Mr. Speaker, in formulating this legislation, the hon. member seems to have ignored the advice given by Janice McKinnon, a former NDP cabinet minister in Saskatchewan. Ms McKinnon indicated that the problem with health reform had been that politicians focus on short-term issues and not long-term improvements in health. With Bill 206 the hon. member has clearly decided to set aside long-term systemic reform, like the Minister of Health and Wellness is proposing with the third way. He is actually going for a quick headline in the paper in shameless self-promotion.

Mr. Speaker, for many reasons but especially because of the two that I've outlined above, I cannot support this inadequate legislation, and I would urge all others to do the same. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have been given the opportunity to speak on the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act, and hopefully I'll get to do more than one line. I feel that the idea is a good one. However, the provincial government is already working to ensure that Albertans are protected from rising pharmaceutical costs.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 206 suggests that the commission be responsible for the development of strategies in order to reduce direct marketing to physicians by pharmaceutical companies. Although this may in fact be an admirable goal, it is something the provincial government is really limited in doing. Currently the federal government regulates direct-to-consumer advertising. It is Health Canada under the authority of the Food and Drugs Act that regulates the advertising of pharmaceuticals.

The role of Health Canada is to set regulations and such on the standards for drug advertising and to inform the Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board what these standards are so that they can put them into their own code. This board looks at advertising by pharmaceutical companies before those in the field of health care are exposed to it. However, manufacturers' submissions of their planned advertising is done voluntarily.

Under the Food and Drugs Act the rule is basically that an ad may not mention both the name and the function of a drug. You can mention one or the other in the ad but not both. There also has to be a break between an ad mentioning the name of the drug and another illustrating its functions. They're also supposed to be reasonably different so that the consumer cannot connect the two. This is how the advertising of pharmaceuticals currently works. It's not perfect.

There are several instances where ads have run that are in violation of the act.

Why, then, bother creating yet another board or in this case a commission to be in charge of advertising to physicians? The Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board obviously does not have a great deal of power when it comes to monitoring the advertising aimed at physicians by pharmaceutical companies. Why create another group like the PAAB on the provincial level?

Of course, we all know that these ads affect people, that they are more likely to ask their doctors for a drug brand that they've seen advertised. There are numerous studies that show this. We also know that physicians are affected by advertising from drug manufacturers. There was a study conducted by a researcher at the University of Toronto that found a link between the amount of money spent advertising antidepressants to doctors in Canada and the number of prescriptions written for them. We know this. However, as much as changing the rules for the advertising done by pharmaceutical companies may save money, the commission as proposed will not be effective. Therefore, I cannot support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise today to contribute to the debate on Bill 206, the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act, sponsored by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

The cost of pharmaceuticals is rising very quickly. Recently we have seen an increase between 13 and 17 per cent annually. Obviously, these increases are not sustainable, and we'll need to address them in the context of health reform. I'm sure that the minister will address the rising costs of drugs as she progresses in the third way evolution.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 206 is problematic because it's repetitive and ineffective. For health reform to be effective, it must be system-wide. You cannot take one component and try to fix it in isolation. The health system is interconnected, and change in one section will affect others.

The international health symposium taught us many valuable lessons about how we should proceed with health reform. One of the most consistent messages that we heard was about the need to focus on quality. I know that the member learned a lot at this symposium. I also am confused about why this bill does not focus on quality. Everything that the member has suggested seemed to focus on cost control. There is more to health reform than curbing rising costs. We have to ensure that the health of Albertans is protected through our processes of health reform. The approach the minister is undertaking, the third way, is not only looking to see that costs are controlled but that quality is enhanced.

I have been worrying that if Alberta were to adopt reference-based pricing, Albertans would actually end up paying more for their prescription drugs. A paper prepared as part of the University of London health policy review in 1995 found that in European countries with reference-based pricing programs it accelerated the growth in prices compared to those countries without reference-based pricing. In 2005 a review of reference-based pricing in the pricing system in British Columbia, cited by a study conducted at McMaster University, found that some of the savings attributed to reference-based pricing was a result of costs being shifted from government to patients.

I am surprised the member would seek to undertake health reform that would result in a system that would cost Albertans more money. If the drugs that Martha and Henry are currently using are not

chosen as reference drugs, then Martha or Henry would have to pay a premium the next time they go to refill their prescription.

The member also suggested in section 3(2)(a) of Bill 206 that the regional health authorities co-ordinate the purchasing of prescription medications that they distribute. I think this idea is fantastic. It's so good, in fact, that the minister has informed me that the regional health authorities are already doing it. The purchasing of prescription medication is co-ordinated by the Capital health region through the use of a group tendering process. In addition to this, the Alberta Cancer Board makes sure of sole-source tendering for cancer drugs.

4:50

In addition to co-operation in the purchasing of pharmaceuticals, patented drugs are already controlled by the federal government. The Patented Medicine Prices Review Board determines a range for patent medication by using a median price for drugs based on seven comparative countries. This means that there are already measures in place to help control costs of patented drug medication.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned above, I cannot support this bill because it is both ineffective and repetitive. Health reforms should not solely be based on cost control, as the member is promoting in this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to close debate.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and conclude debate on Bill 206. I want to respond first of all to some comments that have been made by some other hon. members.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, who began his tour of public input on our long-term care by saying that everything was fine with our long-term care system, has no lessons to give to the Alberta NDP on having an open mind or listening to the public; I can say that.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar made somewhat more substantive criticisms, and I'd like to address them. He basically gave the argument that everything that we're proposing in this bill is already being done by the ministry of health, and that echos the comments of some other members of this Assembly. It certainly echos comments made by the minister herself after we announced this proposal. I do appreciate that the minister took the time to meet with me prior to bringing this forward because the question I had for the minister is exactly that: what is it that you're actually doing in this area compared to what we're proposing to do? I found from that meeting that it's quite different.

The government seems to be working on the area of orphan drugs, or drugs for orphan diseases. Those are diseases that are rare, with very expensive drugs that are not profitable often for pharmaceutical companies. They are looking at that. There seems to be little action on the national front other than doing a little bit of information gathering across the country. In fact, Mr. Speaker, based on my understanding of the discussion I had with the minister, the government is not doing many of the things that are proposed here.

We never claimed in this bill that all of this was new. In fact, some use of generics and lowest price alternatives is already built into the Alberta health care system, and we acknowledge that and have from the beginning. It's the bulk buying, Mr. Speaker, if we want to get down to it, that is going to produce the greatest savings. Using the combined negotiating power of the entire province, and hopefully of the entire country, to negotiate with drug companies to get bulk buying costs for drugs will serve to dramatically decrease the drug bill that we pay.

Now, I don't know about other members opposite, but when I go and buy tomato sauce at the grocery store, I buy big cans, not a bunch of little cans, and that's exactly the principle that that is applying. It's just common sense. The fact that this has not been applied systematically to pharmaceutical purchasing for our health care system speaks to the need for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of members opposite have said: well, you can't deal with just one piece. What we're attempting to do through this bill, I think, is to show two things. One is that there are ways that we can reform the public health care system in order to control costs, and this is being done elsewhere. We can strengthen our public health care system and make it more cost-effective without getting into private health care delivery. The second thing we wanted to show is that the government is not interested in doing so. By the comments that have been made by the members opposite today – some of them, I think, show considerable ignorance – I think we've demonstrated, in fact, that the government is not interested in making the public health care system work in this province.

They are interested in using increasing costs as an excuse to foist a private, two-tier health care system on the people of this province, which ultimately will cost considerably more than the current health care system. The United States, which has the most privatized delivery system in the world, has over double the cost per person under its health care system as we have in Canada. There are over

40 million Americans without coverage, and that is the direction that this government wants to take us whether they say so or not, whether they hide behind the slogan of a third way, which is, of course, really just the same old private two-tiered care way.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to respond to this debate. I urge all members to support Bill 206. Thank you.

[Motion for second reading of Bill 206 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, on the Order Paper the next order of business could likely be Bill 207. However, I think all members here are well aware that there is another bill that has already been confirmed in its principles that is at second reading in the House, and it has the same thrust and spirit and gist as Bill 207. Therefore, Bill 207 would not come available under the normal business of the House. I think all members here understand that.

On that basis, then, and since there is no early consideration that anyone here is aware of to go to committee on Bill 204, I would move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn until 8 this evening.

[Motion carried: the Assembly adjourned at 4:58 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 21, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/11/21

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Net Metering of Electricity

510. Mr. Marz moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to adopt net metering of electricity for producers of all sizes, thereby allowing them the opportunity to sell any excess electricity they produce back to the grid at the same rate as the purchase price.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good evening, colleagues. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce Motion 510, which calls on the government to adopt net metering as an option for small electricity producers, or microelectricity generators, to be more technically specific.

I think it's important that I take this opportunity to describe net metering and highlight some of the advantages it would provide for Albertans. Net metering is an electricity policy for consumers who are capable of generating electricity through smaller renewable energy sources such as biomass, wind, or solar power. Under net metering a system owner receives retail credit for at least a portion of the electricity they generate. Under ideal circumstances the consumer's existing electricity meter would be certified to spin backwards, effectively recording production and usage, resulting in a net meter reading which would be used in the billing process.

Throughout other jurisdictions the rules vary significantly by country, state, and province. Variations include the availability of net metering, if and how long banked credits can be kept and how much credits are worth, retail versus wholesale, and the like. The practice of net metering is increasing rapidly in North America, specifically in the United States, where a large majority of states have some form of net metering in place. In Canada there are a number of provinces instituting net metering policies and moving forward with initiatives which support that policy.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, there are two main roadblocks that are slowing the progression towards the net metering option in Alberta's electricity market. The first obstacle is the certification of residential electricity meters to flow in reverse. Basically, Measurement Canada has not approved the basic residential meter that the majority of Albertans use to measure backwards electricity flows as it does measure forward electricity flows. The solution to this problem is in the hands of the federal government and Measurement Canada. As I'm to understand, there is a current project under way to certify residential electricity meters to measure reverse flows; however, a completion date for that project has not yet been set. There are some optimistic results through preliminary tests which show that meters do measure correctly in the reverse direction with little or no miscalculation.

The second obstacle, Mr. Speaker, is that Alberta's electricity market is designed for large producers. The policies in place are geared towards corporations that have the resources and know-how to successfully participate in Alberta's electricity generation market

on a large scale. The issue is that small producers need to have a set of policies and guidelines that allow them the opportunity to effectively and affordably participate in Alberta's electricity market.

I'm pleased to hear that Alberta Energy is currently conducting a comprehensive consultative review of policy and practices respecting small-scale generation, including net metering. I look forward to the recommendations of the review. I'm confident that the support received for Motion 510 will help to encourage a policy change that is positive for net metering.

Mr. Speaker, once these obstacles are overcome and Albertans are provided with the opportunity to participate in net metering, the province's electricity market will become stronger and more diverse. This will be accomplished through an increase in the supply of electricity and with an increase in the use of renewable energy sources for electricity. Net metering programs serve as an important incentive for consumer investment in renewable energy generation. This incentive is achieved as net metering enables customers to use their own generation to offset their consumption over a billing period.

Mr. Speaker, net metering is a low-cost, easily administered method of encouraging customer investment in renewable energy technologies. Although Alberta is not currently experiencing shortage in the supply of electricity thanks in part to the deregulation of the electricity market – [interjections] I thought you'd like that – providers will also have the opportunity to benefit from net metering. This is because when customers are producing electricity during peak periods, the system load factor would be improved. I also think it's important to note that an increased supply of electricity would allow for an increase in the net export of electricity to other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous examples from jurisdictions in North America and Europe. I'm confident that some of those examples will be discussed this evening. Instead of talking of what has been done in other jurisdictions, I'd like to take the opportunity to discuss an area of limitless potential for net metering in Alberta. Recently the government has been promoting Alberta's rural development strategy. A recommendation of this strategy is to encourage economic growth in rural Alberta. What better way to encourage economic growth than through diversification? A rancher in rural Alberta has a better chance of sustaining a solid economic base if he or she has the opportunity to diversify and expand that base, which they're dependent on for their family's well-being.

Net metering speaks directly to that initiative. Providing the opportunity for rural Albertans to invest in renewable energy sources not only reduces operating costs through electricity bill reductions but increases revenues through the sale of electricity to the provincial grid, and that's precisely the economic growth incentive that the Alberta rural development strategy is alluding to. Imagine for a moment a rancher in southern Alberta with wind turbines or an acreage in central Alberta with a roof lined with solar panels or another ranch in northern Alberta which successfully operates a small-scale biomass facility. These are the types of investments that Albertans want to make. They want to diversify, and they want to take that next step toward a strong, diversified provincial electricity market.

The possibilities of net metering aren't limited to rural Alberta either. For example, there's a house in Edmonton which has a 2,000-watt solar power system mounted on a garden trellis that feeds the house. This system generates 1,850 kilowatts of electricity a year and exports 1,130 kilowatts per year, or 61 per cent. The export value at full retail price would amount to only \$102 per year. The owner of the operation has to pay about \$80 a month in various charges and costs to become a participant in Alberta's Electric

System Operator energy trading system and to have their meter read. These costs are not conducive to an investment in renewable energy. This is the main reason that a net metering policy that is reasonable and fair for microgenerating is needed here in the province of Alberta. The technology is affordable and becoming more affordable each day. The safety standards are already in place and work in numerous other jurisdictions without danger to maintenance personnel or consumers.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate surrounding Motion 510, and I look forward to the recommendations of Alberta Energy's review of policy and practices respecting small-scale generation. I encourage all members of the Assembly to support Motion 510 and, in doing so, support the idea of adopting net metering as a policy option that supports the development of renewable energy and the diversification of electrical generation.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get an opportunity this evening to participate in the debate on Motion 510 on the net metering of electricity, sponsored by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Certainly, that neighbourhood south of Red Deer is on the leading edge of a lot of developing technologies in this province, including east of highway 2, in that part of the constituency, the development of coal-bed methane.

This is certainly an idea that I'm pleased to see that we are again discussing in the Legislative Assembly. Net metering of electricity has been proposed by members on this side of the House on at least two occasions. I'm not going to certainly do an historical review of *Hansard* and cite as to why as short as three years ago it wasn't suitable. The government at that time was not interested, but I'm very pleased that the hon. member has brought this motion forward, and I certainly will be supporting this motion. It's a good idea. We will be joining the western Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and also Ontario, I believe, in initiating legislation that allows small power producers to easily connect to the grid.

8:10

Now, if we review the prices of power and electricity, if we had stayed to the regulated industry, perhaps it wouldn't be necessary for so many people to invest in alternate energy sources, but it is now because of the uncertainty over electricity deregulation. Prices have really gone through the roof, and many people want to invest in their own sources to generate electricity, and if they do have surplus, why not allow them to move it into the grid?

The questions I have always had and will continue to have – and hopefully the hon. member is correct. I know that the cost of the metering devices themselves has gone down, but it was still quite a cost here two years ago. Eventually, if we have a good look at this Motion 510 tonight and it is incorporated at some point in the near future into government policy, hopefully we would see not only in urban areas but certainly in rural areas many locations where there would be net metering used.

I have to say that there is a shortage of supply of electricity in this province. The amount of coal-fired generation has actually decreased. The base load coal-fired generation in this province has actually decreased in the last four years, Mr. Speaker. Coal-fired generation in some cases is less than 2 and a half cents all-in costs for electricity. We need to ensure that we have a steady growth in base load generation, and that hasn't happened because of the

uncertainties of deregulation. The price has gone up, and this is an ideal opportunity for people to come forward, generate their own electricity.

Let's use, for example, farmers. Farmers have three costs these days that they are very concerned about. The first one, of course, is fertilizer, the second one is fuel to run their machines, and the third is the cost of electricity. I'm always hearing concerns and fielding calls from farmers in southern Alberta, particularly irrigation farmers, who are quite upset not only about how the billing for electricity works but about the cost of the electricity itself, and many have expressed an interest, if this continues, in generating their own electricity, whether it's solar or whether it's with some of the turbine technology that's on the go these days. They would benefit from this. They would benefit from this idea presented by the hon. member.

There are other benefits to net metering as well, Mr. Speaker. I think it would have a direct impact on consumers' electricity bills, as I said. By producing a percentage of the energy that they consume, Albertans can decrease their reliance upon larger facilities on the grid, whether it is the hydro power, whether it is coal-fired power, whether it is the natural gas or the cogeneration or even the bit of wind power that we have. When you combine all this electricity, from the cheapest form of generation to the most expensive, unfortunately with the power-by-the-hour system that we now have at the Power Pool, we have very, very high costs for our electricity.

Now, when this power goes through the Power Pool, of course our ISO, or Alberta's Independent System Operator, monitors the electricity grid and is responsible for ensuring that the province's electricity demand is met. We have to be very careful starting out with net metering because demand and supply have to be in constant balance. That's what makes electricity an essential service, not a commodity. It's because suddenly you can't turn on a generating unit and put out 400 megawatts of electricity. It has to have somewhere to go. You can't store it once you produce it. So that's why we have to have this instantaneous balance between supply and demand. Certainly, a farmer or a homeowner or an acreage owner with a modest surplus, particularly at the peak times, whether it's early in the morning or between 5 and 7 o'clock in the evening when many people are returning to their homes from their work and our demand is just about 8,000 megawatts in the province – there would be a need at that time for this electricity.

I'm certain we can work this out, and the hon. member has an excellent idea. Many jurisdictions in America already have one form or another of net metering, and there don't seem to be many complaints. I'm sure that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has some thoughts on reducing our need for base load generation by not only encouraging conservation but encouraging more environmentally friendly ways to generate the power that every one of us consumes and every one of us enjoys because it certainly adds to our quality of life.

Before we get too hard on the coal-fired generators, I think eventually this Assembly and this province will see the use of CO₂ sequestration to enhance oil recovery, and a major source of this CO₂ will come from our coal-fired generators. I think it would be a win for the environment, it would be a win for our mature oil fields, and it would be a win for our electricity consumers as well. Certainly, that discussion is not part of Motion 510, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, I would urge all hon. members of the Assembly to take a good, close look at Motion 510 and please consider supporting it. It had merit before, it does now, and the hon. member is to be commended for bringing this forward. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and join the debate on Motion 510, focusing on the net metering of electricity. Alberta's electricity market is one that provides reliable and affordable energy across the province. Alberta's restructuring of the electricity supply industry in the mid-1990s has led to a number of companies developing new sources of power in our province. Since 1998 there has been an increase in electricity generation of 3,200 megawatts in Alberta. This increase amounts to 40 per cent of all new power capacity in Canada during this period. What this increase means for Alberta is that even though our province has experienced record levels of population growth, thereby increasing demand for electricity, we have experienced none of the power interruptions, brownouts and blackouts, that other jurisdictions have had to cope with.

Electrical generation in our province is provided from a variety of origins. The majority of power generation in Alberta is provided by coal and natural gas, but power is also supplied through renewable resources such as hydro, wind, and biomass. The diversity of generation is a strength of our electrical market and also for Albertans. Motion 510 urges us to consider removing barriers to another source of generation. Small, independent energy producers are what are referred to as microgenerators.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the initiatives which are proposed, but I feel that the wording of the motion can be worded more clearly to clarify the intent of the motion. To that end, I have with me the appropriate number of copies of an amendment I would like to propose to this motion.

8:20

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you may proceed.

Mr. Groeneveld: Okay. Mr. Speaker, these amendments strike out "producers of all sizes" and substitute "microelectricity generators." In addition, they strike out the words "at the same rate as the purchase price."

The first amendment is being brought forward to clarify the intent of this motion to open up the market for microgenerators. At present Alberta's electricity market is very much geared towards large producers. By specifically highlighting microgenerators in the wording of the motion, we can be more specific as to the goals of the motion.

I am introducing the second amendment because I believe that the intent of this motion is to raise awareness of this issue and, hopefully, to show that the Legislative Assembly supports providing the option of net metering to Albertans. With the phrase "at the same rate as the purchase price" included in the original wording, this motion is too definite in how the government should address the issue of net metering. By removing this phrase, we do not restrict government in developing policies surrounding this issue.

Mr. Speaker, net metering is an initiative which has the potential to benefit all Albertans. If Motion 510 is passed by this Assembly, there would be substantial support for greater financial incentives for people to invest in the necessary equipment to generate their own power. They would be able to sell back to the grid energy which they do not use. This changes the cost of setting up a solar panel from being a prohibitive obstacle to a long-term investment. Currently the cost of instituting a system whereby a microgenerator can sell power back to the grid completely negates the revenue they receive from the sale. If we adopt a policy that reduces these financial barriers, more Albertans may choose to become microgenerators. This has the potential to reduce the current impact

on our environment by lowering the fiscal barriers to installing home solar panels, windmills, or other electrical generators which rely on renewable resources. If we reduce the barriers, which we are able to in our own province, we can bring this initiative one step closer to reality.

I fully support Motion 510 as amended, and I hope that my colleagues will support both the amendments and the amended version of 510. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: This is debate on the amendment. I had indicated that I would recognize Edmonton-Calder earlier on. Would you like to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Eggen: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was certainly interested from the beginning to see where Motion 510 was going to go. I was very heartened that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills had the vision to put something such as this forward, and the original motion I was certainly very excited to support.

Now, in regard to the amendments I think that there's some merit to what the hon. member was saying in regard to his amendment. However, let me put forward a couple of ideas here that might alert members to the situation of how we can maximize the use of net metering in this province not just with microelectricity generators but with larger sized generation capability as well.

The means by which individuals or businesses would contribute to this net metering accumulation of power back into the grid, so to speak, would be through solar energy, through wind generation, or through cogeneration techniques. At the end of the day, really, cogeneration might represent the most substantive source of energy that we have yet to tap into in any large way in Alberta. I know that there are many projects that are being put forward as we speak to make better use of our cogeneration capability here in this province.

I'm questioning – and perhaps you can provide some more illumination on this for me – why we would exclude larger producers in regard to net metering because, really, even when we're talking about wind power, people need to have a fairly substantial wind farm or wind operation to make it worth while. While an individual on a farm or a ranch might set up a small windmill – you can buy windmills that aren't much wider than six or eight feet across, and they can provide the needs for your own home. You know, I would venture to say that we should try to encourage small- or medium-sized wind farms on farms and ranches. I'm just hoping that this definition of micro will not exclude those people from producing electricity in that way.

We see cogeneration across the country now and, indeed, across North America, but not a lot of people are signing up for the offer at this juncture. I see that Nova Scotia has a very ambitious plan to try to encourage 10 megawatts of electricity from customers, but the last that I was able to find out is that they've only signed up a few dozen people to in fact participate in the net metering project. Again, in British Columbia, which has a net metering program, there's only a handful of people that have actually signed up to do so.

I would suggest that we could encourage more people to take advantage of this offer, which I think is the key to the future, part of the basket of solutions that we can produce here to meet our energy needs in Alberta, by being more flexible in how and who can actually participate in net metering endeavours. I know that other

countries certainly have more liberal views on this, where the factories or, let's say, the oil sand projects – these people will produce large amounts of cogeneration electricity. You know, I don't want to exclude the possibility of having larger operators participate in such a net metering proposal.

What I would look for is some clarification, particularly in the second amendment: "at the same rate as the purchase price." Are you suggesting some sort of subsidy, then, for people where they are actually getting more back if they do participate in a net metering operation, or is that amendment there for another purpose? I would seek clarification on that. Like I say, I certainly enjoyed the motion as it was originally stated, and I do have a problem with the first amendment for Motion 510.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Highwood for bringing forward the amendment. I believe it's a friendly amendment, and I would agree with it. Basically, the original wording includes all producers and alludes to specific pricing regulations.

8:30

The amended wording allows Motion 510 to speak to and support small producers or microgenerators. The change in the wording also takes out specific regulations, leaving details up to the regulators while supporting the need to look at net metering as a viable option for Albertans. I believe that the current policies that we have are already adequate for large generators in Alberta, and that is pretty much borne out by the increased generation over the past few years that was spoken to by the hon. Member for Highwood and, I believe, by myself.

So Motion 510 is about bringing attention to the issue and showing that there is significant support for the concept of net metering. As I mentioned in my original remarks, Alberta Energy is currently undertaking a comprehensive consultative review of policies and practices respecting small-scale generation, including net metering, which I understand will be completed in 2006. I believe the amendments that are proposed will allow this motion to support that review. I believe that the support for 510 as amended will speak volumes as part of that whole process while at the same time bringing much needed attention to the policy idea, whose time has come.

I encourage all members to support the amendment.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This amendment to Motion 510 as proposed by the hon. Member for Highwood is interesting. I think we are taking a good idea and we are making it worse, significantly worse. But perhaps I would change my opinion if another hon. member of the Assembly could answer these questions for me.

When we are talking about microelectricity generators, what are the limits of electricity that these generators could or would produce and be able to sell into the grid? I'm not satisfied that these limits are necessary. The fact that you are buying power for X number of cents per kilowatt, in some cases 9 cents, 10 cents, in some cases 11 cents and going a lot higher, and you wait – you wait – until we get the full effect of the flow-through pricing. Who knows what the

price is going to be? [interjection] The hon. minister of agriculture is talking about that, but the full effects of flow-through pricing are going to occur for some consumers starting as soon as July 2006, and it's going to be hold on to your hat then, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, specific to this amendment to Motion 510, if we adopt this amendment and get rid of this idea of having the same rate as the purchase price, we are once again allowing the big generators complete dominance, complete control. I don't know how this would work when we have this power-by-the-hour set-up that this government initiated with electricity deregulation. How would this work? Who would determine the price? Certainly, if the market is going to determine the price for one source of electricity, why is it not doing the same thing at the Power Pool. When you have the highest cost electricity generation setting the price for all the electricity that is generated, this amendment simply doesn't make any sense.

I think we're taking a good idea here from the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and we are ruining it. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. members for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and Highwood for bringing forward the motion and the amendment. I believe that the amendments proposed for Motion 510 tighten up the wording and make it even more appropriate for the purpose of a motion other than a government motion. By changing the wording to reflect small producers, or microelectricity generators, the motion speaks more to the process of net metering as the practice of net metering is a utility resource usage and payment scheme in which a customer who generates their own power is compensated monetarily. It is apparent that it pertains to consumers, not to large generators, and the wording change provides that necessary clarification.

Mr. Speaker, net metering originated with electric companies as a way to encourage consumers to invest in renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power. In a net metering program the electric company allows a customer's meter to actually run backwards if the electricity the customer generates is more than they are consuming. At the end of the billing period the customer only pays for their net consumption, the amount of resources consumed minus the amount of resources generated. Again, it is clear that the practice of net metering is based on small consumer production and even small business production but clearly does not pertain to large producers, which currently provide Albertans with electricity. I believe this change is necessary and appropriate.

The removal of the phrase "at the same rate as the purchase price" is just as necessary and appropriate. The purpose of a private member's motion is to bring light to possible policy initiatives that members believe would be beneficial to government. However, I believe that by alluding to specifics of that policy within the motion wording, the motion may be overstepping its boundaries, and debate may therefore be concentrated on the specifics of the policy rather than the proposed idea brought forth, as we are seeing currently. Removing any suggestion toward specifics of a net metering policy other than saying that the government should take a close look at net metering is essential to a productive and supportive debate this evening. Therefore, I believe that the removal of the phrase "at the same rate as the purchase price" is also necessary and appropriate, and I support that amendment as well.

While we are discussing the necessity and appropriateness of all things net metering, I believe it is a good time to bring attention to work presently taking place in other jurisdictions. Mr. Speaker,

ultimately I would prefer a made-in-Alberta approach because that will be the best approach to net metering and believe that that is what we will get. However, I also think it's important to look at what other jurisdictions are doing and see if their policy may complement our work.

For instance, in October the Ontario government passed a regulation that permits net metering, which allows homes, farms, and businesses to generate their own power from renewable sources such as wind and solar power and send any excess electricity back to the grid for credit. According to the Ontario government this regulation will make it more attractive for small generators such as farmers to produce green power by allowing them to receive credit for the excess electricity they produce. The government believes it's time to reward those who want to increase the supply of clean green energy for the province.

With net metering customers use their own renewable generation to offset their consumption over a billing period. When customers generate electricity in excess of their demand, they can send the surplus back to the grid for credit on their next bill. At the end of the billing period the customer gets a credit for the excess power that was put into the grid, and the customer will pay only for the net amount of power consumed.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario government believes that this expanded approach to net metering could provide farmers with the opportunity to substantially cut their power bills while providing Ontario with another valuable sustainable green product. Until now in Ontario net metering had been available only at the discretion of the local energy distribution companies and usually only up to 50 kilowatts. The new regulation eliminates this inconsistency and requires that the distributors permit net metering for all eligible projects that produce up to 500 kilowatts. Projects that produce electricity from clean sources such as water, wind, solar power, and farm biomass are all eligible.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement net metering on this scale. California has used net metering for years to promote the use of solar and wind power. It is time to bring net metering to Alberta and allow consumers the opportunity to become microelectricity generators. I believe the limits could be applied by regulation, and they could vary by jurisdiction. Again, we need a made-in-Alberta approach. Certainly, a review should help us establish the amount of electricity that you would want to generate.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the proposed amendment is both appropriate and necessary to ensure a productive debate on the idea of bringing net metering to Albertans as a general concept. As I feel that this is an important issue that needs to have as much debate time as possible, I think it's necessary that we spend our time debating the main motion rather than these amendments. For this reason I would like to call for the question on the amendment.

Thank you.

8:40

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Motion 510 as presented I didn't really have a lot of issues with, and I thought it was very progressive. We have opportunities across this province, whether they be large or small, to help strengthen our grid and to bring new players into the market.

When I look at Motion 510, part (a) may be limiting, and it may limit some farm operations. I'm concerned about some of the people that might feel left out of this discussion if we want to just talk about

the microelectricity generators. I have absolutely no problem supporting part (b), striking out "the same rate as the purchase price." Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think this should be separated into two parts, and we could vote on (a), and we could vote on (b). I think that might be a good way to make this thing move on.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am also very encouraged by this motion. I would support the recent suggestion by the member across that we separate the two suggested amendments. It's not clear to me where microelectricity stops and starts. If we're going to restrict to one particular type of generator, it's not clear who would define this and how and why you'd restrict people from this. It's an important innovation, the amendment in itself, and I think this would worsen the motion.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that I'm going to echo some of the more recent comments on the amendment to Motion 510. We are on the cusp of bearing the fruit of our deregulation exercise. We are creating energy from a variety of different sources all over the province. Certainly, in agriculture creating value on the farm has a direct relationship to creating energy on the farm or regionally on farms. I feel that by substituting "all sizes" with "microelectricity generators" it may limit us in terms of how big a regional agricultural energy biofuel facility might be that creates electricity: certainly, waste energy, as the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne has mentioned.

I, too, believe that this amendment (a) I cannot agree to, but (b) I would actually support, Mr. Speaker. It would be wonderful if we could separate the two of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this actually speaks to how the grid actually operates. In other words, if you are a small microproducer, you can get onto that grid, and you can sort of use that grid to transmit a small amount of electricity without actually impacting how the grid is operating whereas if you are a large producer, then there is a need for you to be a part of what is called the balancing pool, which is for the large producers and which is part of what is already available to anybody who wants to sell into the grid right now. Generally it just has to do with the technicalities of how the grid operates that it is important that we look in terms of micro versus macro. We've already looked after the macro side, and this is how we would look after the micro side.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I've been advised that because of the desire to vote separately on the two parts, we will entertain that. So we will first vote on the amendment (a) portion, and then we'll vote on the (b) portion.

[Motion on (a) lost]

[Motion on (b) carried]

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else on the motion itself?

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, a point of clarification, please, in regard to the Speaker's ruling.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, go ahead.

**Point of Order
Clarification**

Mr. MacDonald: Could you clarify for this member and all other members the procedure for the splitting of that amendment on a motion into two votes?

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Very well. Hon. member, the chair has been advised that there is precedence; we have done this in the past. It is possible for us to divide the amendments into different portions. Is that okay?

Mr. MacDonald: For now, thank you.

Debate Continued

The Acting Speaker: On the motion itself, the hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to add a few comments to the discussion. I do compliment the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for bringing forward this motion. Certainly he has been working on this for some time.

I concur that this is the right approach as to how we ought to consider the development of our electricity industry. I certainly do support that we would look at allowing all people to bring electricity in whatever form and whatever innovative way onto the grid. It would be beneficial that we constantly look at how to best use, how to best conserve, and how to best incent people into accomplishing just that.

The hon. member did refer to our department conducting a comprehensive review of all the policies that may affect microgeneration, including net metering. On October 4 a stakeholder discussion paper was released, and consultation on the topic covered in this paper is ongoing. We do expect to gather information from that consultation and over the next number of months bring that back for further discussion.

There are very technical aspects of this that have to be considered, so I'm pleased to see that even with things like striking out "at the same rate as the purchase price," we allow some of that detail to be fleshed out when we work through the mechanics of how it would best be accomplished.

In principle we're very supportive of the motion.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to be back on the original motion. I think we're quite clever in looking at some of those amendments but not all of them.

This net metering concept – and I know that this is just a motion – does encourage the development of policy, and I know that there are some plans in the works to expand the capacity for us to net meter and, certainly, to look at different sources of energy to meet the needs of Albertans. So this is an important step as part of a basket of ways by which we can approach our energy challenges in the future. It just makes natural sense that we should encourage

people to produce energy at the source where it's being used as much as possible within the constraints of environmental reasonableness and also, you know, in regard to other laws and statutes and best practices towards your neighbours as well.

Certainly there is a great interest in generating electricity, as I said, from either solar or wind power or making use of cogeneration capacity from other industries that are producing energy. This is just a great way to encourage those individuals and companies, to say that this provincial government is interested in assisting them in any way possible. I'm glad that we took out the larger producers from this motion. Certainly, there has to be regulation in regard to who might be considered to be a producer to do net metering. Certainly, TransAlta might, you know, not be included in that scenario or the people who are traditionally producing electricity because they are the ones who are running the grid in the first place.

8:50

A couple of questions or items that I wanted to just put forward here. One is the question of the cost of the meters themselves. Net meter systems are more expensive, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in British Columbia, probably here in Alberta as well, I think a standard residential meter is running maybe \$40 or \$45, while a net meter, bidirectional meter, is running more like \$250. So B.C. Hydro I know has picked up the cost of this, while the individual or the company has to pay for the application and installation. I think, you know, that we can look for small ways like this to help encourage people to sign onto such a program as this in the future and make it more affordable.

As I said before, in other jurisdictions – Ontario, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia – there is a problem with the number of people who are signing onto these programs. You must have a sustained way by which to encourage and give people the knowledge that they will be part of a program that is here to stay. I know that in Ontario the enthusiasm for net metering was severely curtailed when the market was deregulated, and fewer than 10 people signed up for the program. By contrast, in Washington state a very highly publicized system called Whatcom 1000 solar rooftop project – I love that name – had more than 2,000 people sign up within the first couple of years. California, the state that has the most success and encourages net metering the most, has more than 5,000 net metering installations across the state. But, you know, let's keep everything in perspective. That's producing less than one-half of 1 per cent of the state's peak electrical requirements.

So, as I said before, Mr. Speaker, this is part of a basket of solutions that we must put out there to change the way by which we produce and consume electricity and all forms of power in this province. We simply cannot continue to be so reliant on one single production system. Particularly, coal burning generation is not only limiting us in the way by which we produce electricity, but it also is a very polluting way of producing electricity. I know that it's necessary because of the history of the system that we have built up here, but let's try to break that pattern to some extent. This net metering proposal is probably a step in the right direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, certainly, representing the NDP caucus, I would be in support of this motion, and I look forward to seeing great things in the future in regard to other means by which we use our imagination and sense of ingenuity to produce electricity here in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise enthusiastically supporting the motion on net metering of electricity. This is a long overdue motion, and I hope that we won't wait as long for the bill to follow, that this will help to stimulate significantly the important distributed generation of electricity, decentralization, and renewable clean energy, which Canadians have been waiting so long for. This will promote local innovation, clean renewable energy, and conservation initiatives. This is clearly a win-win-win for the environment, for health, and for the economy, including the climate change challenges that we now face.

I think that the challenge for us as government is to move quickly forward on this and to recognize that two fundamental principles need to operate in the formation of a bill: one, in which the incentives for clean, renewable energy are clearly apparent and, secondly, where we stop incenting the fossil fuel industry, which hasn't been able to produce the same level of win-win-win for health, the environment, and the economy.

The fossil fuel industry has made tremendous contributions to Alberta, and it's time now to begin phasing away from that source of energy. I think that for many Albertans the next steps, where there are incentives for clean renewables and stopping the incentives for the nonrenewable fossil fuel industry, can't come too soon.

So I very much support this initiative and hope to move forward towards a bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else on the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Okay. Could I have a question? I don't know whether I can speak past 9 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: No, you cannot.

Ms DeLong: If I stop before 9 o'clock, will there be a vote?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, what will happen is that at 9 o'clock the Speaker will rise and interrupt you, and then the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills will have five minutes to close debate. So you have a few minutes if you'd like to speak to it.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion as I believe that net metering is a good opportunity to encourage the use of green power, something that will undoubtedly be important to us as a province and as a country.

The technology that allows Albertans to take part in an electricity generation system is here, and it is affordable. I know this, Mr. Speaker, because I have had the opportunity to view net metering at work. I visited a business in my constituency around four years ago. At that time the equipment was installed, and the company was both consuming and producing electricity. Not only was the company able to produce electricity, but they were able to do so safely and easily.

To expand, Mr. Speaker, the argument will be made by the federal government that resident meters won't run backwards as they are not certified to do so. Well, they're wrong. Not only do they run backwards; they do so seamlessly and accurately. I have seen them myself.

Others may argue that having consumers send electricity back to the grid would put electrical repairmen or current electrical infrastructure at risk. This assumption is false as well. I know this for two reasons, Mr. Speaker. The first is because I know of at least one location in Alberta that has successfully been net metering for four

years safely. The second reason is that there are numerous jurisdictions across Europe and North America that actively participate in net metering with no increased danger placed on employees of the electrical grid or of infrastructure.

Net metering is not a new concept. I feel that it's important to stress that there are several cases where it's already working well in jurisdictions that have chosen to put it in place. California is one example where net metering legislation has been passed and where it is working to the benefit of Californians. In this state any residential or small commercial electricity consumer who generates some of their own electricity with solar panels, wind turbines, fuel cells, biomass, or a hybrid system of these and whose system capacity is no greater than one megawatt is eligible for net metering.

Net metering customers can carry excess electricity generated for up to 12 months. At the end of the 12 months the excess generation is granted into the utility. Customers can however sell excess electricity generated back to the system. This means that when a customer consumes power . . .

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, but under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to close debate on Motion 510.

9:00

Mr. Marz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those enthusiastic colleagues who stood up in support of this motion. I've often said that when you think you're ahead, perhaps you should be quiet and sit down, but it's never been my style.

There have been a couple of questions that were asked, and I think they were answered. Edmonton-Calder was wondering why we'd exclude large-scale producers, and I guess that was subsequently answered by the passing of the amended motion. I did make a comment earlier that I think large-scale producers have adequately been addressed in the current policies of the government, but it seems that with the amendment, it will be also included in this motion.

Edmonton-Gold Bar asked about the cost of these different microgenerating systems. I don't have specific costs for each one because they change and vary by type and size, whether it's biomass, whether it's solar, whether it's wind generation, and how much electricity you actually want to generate.

You also asked about the limits that could be allowed to go on the grid. Again, that varies in various jurisdictions across North America from 50 kilowatts up to California, that allows for a thousand kilowatt hours of electricity. I really feel that the review that's being undertaken by the Department of Energy will provide us with information to more adequately address what would be a good fit for Alberta at that time, so I specifically didn't put a limit on in this particular motion.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, again thanks to all that participated in the debate, and I would ask that you all support this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, before I call the question, since the amendment that was before us had two parts to it – the first part was rejected; the second part was accepted – the motion as we will vote on it will read as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to adopt net metering of electricity for producers of all sizes, thereby allowing them the opportunity to sell any excess electricity they produce back to the grid.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 510 as amended carried]

head:

**Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 49
Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 49, the Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

The main purpose of the proposed legislation is to streamline and enhance the Law Enforcement Review Board's effectiveness in how complaints are handled by police and how the police disciplinary process works. Specifically, it's proposed that the chair of the LERB be given the authority to appoint one board member to deal with preliminary or procedural matters. The amendment also gives the board the authority to establish subpanels with the same powers of the full board which would sit simultaneously in different regions of the province.

An amendment of this bill that will directly benefit Albertans concerns the change to the rules of evidence. Currently when Albertans complain to the LERB, they must follow the rules of evidence used in judicial proceedings. These rules are too stringent and unnecessary. The amendment would see the board use the principles of natural justice, which follow an approach based on common sense. This change will help Albertans understand the process without having to obtain legal counsel.

The proposed amendments also clarify the role and powers of the board to assess costs and pay expenses.

Mr. Speaker, the Police Amendment Act also covers the minister's responsibility for policing standards. This amendment is a minor wording change to clarify that standards for policing include police commissions and committees, not just police services.

I encourage all members to support these amendments. With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll now call the question. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond to that brief introduction by the hon. Solicitor General on Bill 49.

Of course, we need standards for policing, and the act begins by amending the Police Act to mention not just policing in general but police services, police commissions, and policing committees. In our open, democratic societies the capacity to arrest, detain, search, and otherwise restrict an individual's freedom represents a formidable expression of power. The police are authorized to intervene but, of course, always within the constraints of the rule of law and in accordance with standards and protocols. This emphasis on standards is extremely important.

For example, on the recent tragic death of a police officer which involved the police deciding to ram the truck of a mentally disturbed man who was backing up in his driveway, I'm not going to judge the rightness or wrongness of the action taken but just point out that there are certain standards and protocols that the police are always involved with. In this particular case the subsequent internal inquiry of the police led to many recommendations which will lead to changes in standards and protocols.

Standards are necessary to guide the actions of police and also to hold the police accountable to society. It is important that such standards be uniform because in the province of Alberta we have different police forces: municipal police forces in Calgary and

Edmonton and, I believe, in Lacombe and Taber but also the RCMP in rural areas. So in order to attain and maintain uniform standards throughout the province, that is where the Solicitor General comes in. It is the province which under the Canadian Constitution is responsible for the administration of justice, which includes providing policing services.

This is a good amendment to the Police Act to emphasize standards. They especially mention the police commissions as well as police services. Having standards for the police commissions obviously is important, especially given recent problems with the police commission in this city, so it's of the utmost importance that we have proper training of people that belong to police commissions.

It's also important to distinguish political influence from the carrying out of the responsibilities of police commissions. It's important that police commissions be free from undue political influence, whether that comes from the municipal government or from provincial government, that they be able to freely carry out their responsibilities with respect to the police force.

Given that importance of their independence, I just want to say that I think it's important that we do not proceed in the direction of having a provincial representative on police commissions and committees, as I think the Solicitor General suggested. Perhaps he's had second thoughts and withdrew that suggestion. To have a representative of the provincial government on the police commission I think would be in the direction of too much political influence.

I'm not going to say anymore about this aspect of this act. I think that it's proper and something that I would support.

Now, as for the Law Enforcement Review Board, that's an elaborate process when a citizen objects, has a complaint about police, or sometimes police have objections and complaints also.

9:10

I'll just take a concrete example. If a citizen is intoxicated and finds himself during arrest lying on the ground handcuffed and while he is being restrained, the police officer tases him a couple of times, then that person may have reason to complain. There is a process. The person can complain about what has happened to him to the police chief, and there is an internal police investigation with a report to the aggrieved citizen, but if the citizen is not satisfied with this report, then he can appeal to the Law Enforcement Review Board. He has 30 days after he gets the report from the police to give written notice that he wants to appeal to the Law Enforcement Review Board, and he has to state his reasons why he is dissatisfied with the police report.

Then the citizen appears before the board and gives evidence, and he is entitled to be represented by a lawyer or have a lawyer or someone else go with him. The police service can also give evidence. As the Police Act says, all testimony offered at hearings is given under oath, is subject to cross examination, and is electronically recorded.

In the carrying out of this process the amendment is suggesting a change. The act up until now required that "the rules of evidence applicable to judicial proceedings apply." I mean, essentially it's creating another court, so I can understand what the Solicitor General is saying, that it may speed up the process if they don't have to follow the rules of evidence but can just follow the principles of natural justice. The principles of natural justice simply require that a person has the right to be heard and that a person has the right to be judged by someone who is unbiased. There are all kinds of procedures involved in terms of natural justice: that the person who is bringing the complaint and the person who is accused should be present at the same time. In other words, justice should be done and be seen to be done.

I have no problems with that, but at the same time I'm a bit concerned that the rules of evidence are there to safeguard certain problems. But I don't see that there's a difficulty here. Other boards have the same statement. For example, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board Act says that the AEUB "is not bound in the conduct of its hearings by the rules of law concerning evidence that are applicable to judicial proceedings." I think the Legal Profession Act has the same kind of statement, that the rules of law concerning evidence do not need to be followed. So I don't think there's any problem with this aspect too.

Now, just one other comment, and that is that towards the end of this amendment act is a reference to frivolous and vexatious matters that are brought before the board. There are some changes, amendments here to deal with such frivolous and vexatious matters that apply to the party involved but also to the counsel of the party. I find that a bit curious, and perhaps the Solicitor General might explain to us, maybe before the Committee of the Whole, what has prompted this change. Is it somehow the attack of criminal trial lawyers? Are they being a nuisance and bringing all kinds of issues before the Law Enforcement Review Board that are trivial and do not need to be dealt with? I'm not sure where this is coming from and why there is the need for this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, those are all my comments. I would be prepared to support this bill, but I would be open to hearing other people comment on it.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 49. My understanding is that much of this bill does seem fairly innocuous, and when we spoke to the original version of this in the spring, I did outline some of my concerns in regard to this bill.

There are still perhaps a couple of questions that I would like to ask the minister, just to explain more about these changes, particularly under section 5. In particular, why are these panels necessary? I would like to hear more elaboration on that.

Subsection (3) appears to give the chair direct decision-making over preliminary and procedural matters. This is a very important set of decisions to be made, in my view. It's more than just making sort of an innocuous change. You're setting up important parameters for an appeal, for an inquiry, or for a review. I would just like to know why those changes or the panels are necessary. As well, is it appropriate, then, to allow the chair to designate himself or herself as a panel of one to make those decisions in the first place? Again, it's just, perhaps, good practice to have other means by which those things are determined.

It's likely good that the board will have a broader capacity to receive evidence that it considers to be important as per section 6, which is amending section 20, and section 9, which I think goes back to section 47 of the original act. The broader capacity to receive evidence certainly seems like a reasonable change.

However, the same criticism can still be made of this bill as I had made in the spring sitting. You know, there seems to be some tinkering about the edges, but the fundamental concerns about policing in this province seem to remain, and I don't see that these changes through Bill 36 are going to address that as directly as I would like to see.

Certainly, I'm not disparaging in any way the hard-working women and men who are in our law enforcement business here in Alberta, but, you know, there are some very real questions being raised at this juncture, particularly in Edmonton, about the police investigating themselves. We are all party to and I believe it's coming up to the one-year anniversary of perhaps the most famous

case of this problem here in Edmonton, and we would like to put it behind us, certainly. This legislation I think does not do much to reassure Albertans that the Law Enforcement Review Board has both the capacity and the will to thoroughly police the police. What I believe and our party as well believes and many Albertans believe is that we need a provincial civilian commission to oversee police activities such as they have in Ontario. They've got the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, and indeed it does have some lasting merit and value.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do put forward these concerns although I wouldn't preclude the possibility of supporting this bill with perhaps some changes. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Any questions or comments for the hon. member?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

Hon. Solicitor General, this is your opportunity to now close debate and call the question.

9:20

Mr. Cernaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I knew the opportunity was going to come.

Actually, I'll be very brief before I close debate on second reading. I did want to just respond to the hon. members' concerns from across the floor. Really, when this legislation was drafted – and, again, additional consultation occurred throughout the summer and the fall – we wanted to ensure that the process was fair to members of the public when they were going before a quasi-judicial board. To ensure that that would take place, we wanted to ensure that the legislation was easy for them to understand but, as well, that the process was easy for them to understand, yet ensure that the rights of both a member of the public and the rights of a police officer remained intact.

The issue of providing that for them was one of the reasons behind it as well as the number of appeals that we have in place right now because the present process has created a backlog of a number of appeals. It's those issues that we wanted to deal with. Some of the backlog issues deal with the fact that our Law Enforcement Review Board contains members from across Alberta. Presently, in order to have a board get together, they have to have two or three members. Dealing with preliminary or procedural matters will allow the opportunity for one board member or chair to look at the procedural issue and possibly set dates for the future versus gathering three members together, which may be difficult to do at times. One member could do that, set the dates up for the future.

The other comment I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, with regard to that was the fact that in section 20 we're striking out "that a party" and substituting "that a party or counsel to a party" could be in fact awarded costs. This really is to ensure that the lawyers for either the city representing the officer or the union representing the officer or a lawyer representing a member of the public is there and doing their due diligence in representing that member and due diligence in the fact that this is a Law Enforcement Review Board hearing – it's a disciplinary hearing, not a court case – ensuring that the process moves along smoothly and in a timely, consistent manner.

So that's why these changes have come in. They will be there to provide less intimidation for a member of the public but, as well, expedite the whole process of the appeals that go before them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call the question on Bill 49.

[Motion carried; Bill 49 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise tonight and introduce to you and through you to all members to this House Ms Rosanna Saccomani, who is the counsel for the Rewega family. Of course, the Rewega family are constituents of mine and were instrumental forces behind the public legislation and, of course, Bill Pr. 4. Many members in this House have their constituents attend on occasion to watch them in the House. Apparently, mine send their lawyers, and I don't know what to make of that. I would ask Ms Saccomani to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
(continued)

Bill 45
Maternal Tort Liability Act

[Adjourned debate November 16: Mr. Flaherty]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for St. Albert, did you want to finish your time?

Mr. Flaherty: To the tort bill here, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: You were speaking the last time, and there is still some time left for you if you need to speak to it.

Mr. Flaherty: Well, there's one matter I'd like to speak to if I could. Basically I support the bill, but I struggle with a bill that deflects the issue of the two insurance companies. That bothers me terribly. It also begs the question: how much are we talking about in this particular bill? I was looking for it today. I think it's around \$250,000.

In light of what has happened today with the \$20 million that the Premier has announced for across Canada, I think it's important, maybe, that we relook at this bill in light that the government of the day should demonstrate a social conscience and provide a special fund for incidents of this nature. I was thinking – and I don't know much about this, Mr. Speaker, but maybe someone could clarify – there could be amendments to the risk management fund to take into consideration in this particular portion the government providing funds of their own for this matter.

The other thing then. I would suggest that maybe there could be amendments made that there be a special fund set up for incidents of this type for people that have this difficulty.

So with that, I support the legislation. I think it's a good move, but I struggle with the particular aspect of it going to insurance, and I would hope that the government would consider looking at an alternative for this particular matter.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions? Comments?

There being none, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by thanking the interest of the hon. members in this legislation. While it is short, only being two pages in length, it has an interesting history, and it

certainly is unique in Canada from a public policy perspective. I appreciate the interest and attention that they've been paying to it.

There have been two private bills with respect to Brooklynn Rewega, one last year, in 2004, which ultimately did not get considered because there was no fall session as a result of the election. Then there is Bill Pr. 4, which was brought into the Private Bills Committee earlier this year and, I believe, has received first reading and is under consideration by the committee or has been under consideration by the committee.

As Justice minister and Attorney General I said earlier this year that I thought it was appropriate that the government consider the policy issue that is raised in that private bill. As a general proposition, Mr. Speaker, private bills are not to affect public policy in a material way, and the reality is that Bill Pr. 4 would, without consideration by the government, affect public policy in a material way.

Essentially, the situation in Canada as we speak, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a maternal tort immunity. Specifically, there is immunity for a mother "at common law from actions in tort by her child for injuries suffered by the child on or after birth as a result of the mother's actions prior to the child's birth." Bill Pr. 4 purports to create an exception to that particular rule, and that is what is addressed in Bill 45. The exception that is created in Bill 45 reflects what is raised in the private bill.

So it is being proposed that

a mother may be liable to her child for injuries suffered by her child on or after birth that were caused by the mother's use or operation of an automobile during her pregnancy if, at the time of that use or operation, the mother was insured under a contract of automobile insurance evidenced by a motor vehicle liability policy.

That is the essence of Bill 45.

Then there is a limitation in the bill so that the mother's liability is limited to the amount of the insurance monies payable under contracts of automobile insurance indemnifying the mother.

9:30

The importance of what we have done here, Mr. Speaker, is this. There was a public policy issue addressed in the private bill. That was, in my view, not an appropriate place to deal with the matter. Rather, it was important for the government to consider whether or not the principle should be reflected as government policy, that is reflected in Bill 45, so that with the support of government caucus and, hopefully, members opposite there will be an exception in the province of Alberta with respect to maternal tort liability, as specifically outlined in the bill. It is very express to a very unique situation. It is a situation that was dealt with by the Supreme Court of Canada in a case called *Dobson* in 1999. I can tell the hon. members that this exception that we are talking about in legislation here is the same exception that has been put into place in the U.K., has been in place for some time and has been operating very well there without incident.

What we are doing here essentially, Mr. Speaker, is this. We are providing an opportunity for an action to be commenced on behalf of Brooklynn Rewega against her mother for alleged injuries arising out of a motor vehicle accident that occurred while Mrs. Rewega was pregnant. If, in fact, this bill becomes law and if, in fact, the private bill comes forward and is passed, that opportunity will occur. But the fact is that if the unfortunate situation of Brooklynn Rewega had occurred as a result of someone else driving, anyone else driving, Brooklynn Rewega would have a cause of action that could be advanced on her behalf, and that claim would allow her to either prove or not prove her case, as the case may be. What we are doing through this legislation is ultimately establishing the principle that a child in that situation will be like all other children in that situation

in being able to advance a case against the person who caused the injury. So all we're doing, really, is providing that opportunity. We are limiting it to the amount of insurance that's available because that was a specific comment and direction by the Supreme Court.

Let me tell you this about motor vehicle accidents, and I have some experience with respect to this because when I was practising law, I did a fair amount of it. Firstly, as a matter of policy, insurance is one of the best things that society has created. What it does is it allows for people to put into a pool and ultimately spread the risk among all of us. So insurance is a social good.

Secondly, in our province and I believe probably in all provinces in Canada automobile insurance is mandatory if you are going to be the owner and operator of a motor vehicle. So we know that if people are obeying the law, there is automobile insurance associated with the use and operation of the automobile.

Thirdly, we have a well-defined duty of care and a well-defined standard of care with respect to the use and operation of automobiles. There are, unfortunately, too many motor vehicle accidents. We have a long history of litigation with respect to automobiles, and establishing the duty of care and the standard of care is a commonplace occurrence in our society. It is not something that is one-off. It is not something that is unique. It is common. So we are familiar with this.

The situation that we are dealing with is a familiar situation where the law is, generally speaking, well known. We can argue about the facts of a particular case, but the law itself is relatively well known. We know that as a general proposition people will have insurance because people are required to have insurance. What we have is a minimum amount of insurance that people must carry, and people may carry more than that.

Now, when an action is commenced against somebody, yes, the action is going to be commenced for the full amount of the claim, and it can be more than the amount of the insurance that is available. So the comments that people have made with respect to an arbitrary cap based on the amount of insurance appearing at first blush unfair have a point. But in practice I may say this: people who have assets typically have automobile coverage that protects their assets. If I actually have something, I buy more than the minimum amount of insurance. In fact, I might even get excess insurance, and you can get excess insurance, and many people have that.

My experience, once again having done a fair amount of this over the years, is that generally speaking claims are settled within the amount of insurance that is available, and if they are not settled within the amount of insurance available, more often than not the claim is settled for the maximum amount of insurance and little or no more because typically the defendant is prepared to take that and not advance a claim against the individual for an amount that would come out of the individual's pocket. But there is that possibility.

In this particular situation, one, it is a comment and direction, if you will, from the Supreme Court that has provided for that cap on the amount of the claim because the Supreme Court said that it is not appropriate that a mother in these circumstances be personally exposed, and I think that that is a reasonable position to take.

Essentially what we are doing is filling a gap which currently exists in the ability of a child in this situation to advance a claim for insurance. There is absolutely no intention to make this as a substitute for whatever public programs are currently available. The fact of the matter is that there are going to be more children like Brooklynn Rewega that can advance claims today, because I imagine statistically there are more situations where that type of claim has arisen as a result of someone other than the pregnant mother driving. These situations occur today, hopefully not too often, but social programs continue to be available. The health care

system continues to be available. So this is in no fashion a substitute for social programs which currently exist.

I found the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to be quite ingenuous to be concerned on behalf of the insurance industry with respect to this particular claim and then suggest that a solution would be no-fault insurance. I think he listened to the insurance industry – they're maybe concerned – but didn't bother running the solution past them. But I may be wrong. Perhaps they've changed their mind as a result of this legislation.

I noticed that the hon. member in his comments said that lawyers would have a field day and would be issuing lots of lawsuits. Well, the fact of the matter is that, as I indicated, lawsuits like this do occur already. The legal issues surrounding this kind of lawsuit are not new. They exist today. All we are doing by this legislation is allowing for a party who is born after the accident to sue the mother where the mother is the one who may well have been responsible for the accident and who may well have caused the injuries. Those are points yet to be proven in a lawsuit. It's not a *fait accompli*. It is simply giving the opportunity to advance the claim.

I don't think that there's anything novel about it other than the fact that we are giving the cause of action in that very situation. This will not be a field day for litigation lawyers. This is a very narrow exception to the rule, and there will not be a flood of lawsuits because the legislation is very express as to what is covered.

9:40

I guess with respect to the issue of whether or not it's the kind of system that we want, where we limit the amount of the claim to the amount of coverage, depends on how you see it. Personally, I would rather give an opportunity to a Brooklynn Rewega to have an opportunity to sue and recover damages if the claim can be established for the amount of the insurance available than not to have a claim at all. So you ask yourself: which is the better situation or which is the worst situation? And I say in fairness, on balance: you have to go with allowing the opportunity for a Brooklynn Rewega to commence a claim and if proven have a right to the amount of insurance that is available. That is better than saying: no, you can't.

So there is judgment involved in this without doubt. There is judgment in what we do. Exercising judgment is what being responsible is all about. But I can tell the hon. members that this particular bill is narrowly crafted. Read the words. It specifically says that there is maternal tort liability immunity and then creates a very narrow exception, and we can discuss the words more expressly during Committee of the Whole. I can tell the hon. members that this is a bill that arose as a result of the private member matter being before us on two subsequent years and the need for this Assembly to establish public policy.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments for the minister? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to your statements I just want to clarify the matter. Tomorrow is a meeting of the committee. If this bill becomes law, is it retroactive to the Rewega matter, or is it something that we have to deal with tomorrow? I'm wondering if you could maybe clarify that for me.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thank you. The public bill, Bill 45, has no retroactivity. The intention of this bill is to bring it forward for discussion in this House and ultimately, hopefully, passage of the bill so it becomes the law, goes forward in Alberta. That allows the

Private Bills Committee and then, hopefully, subsequently this Assembly to review the private bill and say that we have established as a matter of public policy in Alberta that this kind of claim is appropriate, and therefore we can address this one-off situation which has retroactivity now at its heart, which really is the only issue that one has to deal with at that point in time. So we're establishing public policy in Bill 45 going forward, and the issue with respect to Rewega will be the retroactive nature of it.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions or comments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very interesting and challenging bill indeed. It strikes me that – and this may have been discussed before . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, are you rising on questions or comments, or did you want to speak?

Dr. Swann: I wanted to ask a question.

The Acting Speaker: Go ahead.

Dr. Swann: The question I have is whether or not the same capacity to insure oneself could extend beyond automobiles? I mean, are we now going to deal in the next session with a woman who decides to insure herself in case she does something that harms her child? I know that this is very specific to automobile injury, but why would we reject a woman who makes application for similar insurance coverage in relation to, say, some indiscretion that she followed during an early pregnancy?

Mr. Stevens: Let me start out by saying that there's absolutely no intention to go down that particular road. The bill was brought forward in response to the private bill, as I have indicated. There is no intention of changing this. Now, you say: well, you can have that debate. You're quite correct about having that. I would say this. First of all, the situation of motor vehicle accidents is commonplace. There is mandatory insurance. It is a very specific situation. Other insurance is optional. The circumstances surrounding other situations are less well known and less common, and candidly it probably is problematic to find, as you put it, insurance to cover indiscretions that someone might indulge in which might give rise to damage to a fetus and, hence, a child upon birth.

So if you take a look at the Supreme Court decision, they make a distinct point of saying that this is a unique type of situation; that is, the motor vehicle accident and the mandatory insurance. I can tell you that in the UK it's now been in place for many years, and they have maintained the very narrow exception without difficulty. That is the intention with this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Minister for Health and Wellness, are you rising on a question?

Ms Evans: A comment, really. I have never heard such a fine and eloquent dissertation about why we should support a bill, and I thank the hon. member for that. It was exceptional.

I would also ask, because he has presented such a positive view and I intend to support it, if there was anything that he saw as, perhaps, a precedent or a downside to this in the future of insurance and Albertans.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. minister, in less than 40 seconds.

Mr. Stevens: The situation already exists today for every situation but for the mother who was pregnant at the time of the accident. So to the extent that there is a history, it is out there to find. I don't know what it is. The insurance industry indicated that there may be some modest increase in premiums as a result of potential additional claims. Candidly, from where I sit, that is the only so-called downside. But, as I said, insurance is a social good. It spreads the risk and allows for recovery in appropriate circumstances.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and speak to Bill 45, Maternal Tort Liability Act. As the hon. minister mentioned, the purpose of this proposed bill is to provide compensation for a child born with injuries from a motor vehicle accident occurring prior to birth as a result of negligent driving of his or her mother. When and if the child is born with injuries, the cause of action can be commenced, and the claim for damages can be made. Liabilities would be limited to the extent of the insurance coverage within the narrow sphere of motor vehicle accidents. He just mentioned this. How limited insurance coverage is this? I don't know, but I would like to know. How narrow is this?

The bill has its origin from Bill Pr. 4. I'm a member of the Private Bills Committee, and we had a few meetings. We've discussed this case. This Rewega case is a very, very sensitive and touchy one. This arose from the vehicle accident that occurred when a mother of a child was in a single vehicle accident on December 31, 2000, near the town of High Level. Four months following the accident, a girl was born with cerebral palsy. The father and legal guardian of the girl then presented a petition to the government requesting a bill to be passed to allow her through her legal guardian the right to bring or maintain a civil action in the courts against her mother for compensation for the injuries that arose resulting from the accident.

Under the present federal law an unborn child is not a person and, therefore, not the subject of rights and duties. A pregnant woman and her unborn child are considered to be one entity. This has since been called the born alive rule. The fetus has no status; consequently, a pregnant woman cannot owe a duty of care to her fetus any more than she can owe a duty of care to herself. Now the government is trying to open up the debate on the legal standing of a fetus. How can an unborn child have standing to sue in one instance but not in another one?

9:50

It is logical to assume that this bill could easily be challenged under section 15, Equality Rights, of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Even with the specific exceptions to allow this type of duty of care to apply only to motor vehicle accidents, it is still subject to the provisions of the Charter, and the argument can then be made that placing this burden of care upon pregnant women that is not applied to women who are not pregnant or to men infringes upon the equality rights of women.

It is the responsibility of the government to care for the children who are born with disabilities. Is the government shifting responsibilities to the auto insurance industry? The legislation is not clear about who should be responsible for the damages. What about other children who are born with disabilities? Can they turn around and sue their mothers as well in order to get more funding for their own care? The government has a responsibility to ensure that all children born with congenital disabilities are cared for and that there is no undue hardship placed upon the families. These families should have access to services that will enable them to provide for the care of their children no matter what their degree of disability. If the government had an adequate system in place to support children and families who have to care for the children with disabilities, then

there would be no need to sue insurance companies to have the funds available to care for their children. This government should be providing the funding for the care of children who are born with any congenital disability. They should not be relying on tort law and insurance companies to pay the bills.

I'm not supporting this bill because if the legislation is passed, the child will not be suing his or her mother personally but the mother's third party. The views of the general population who will be forced to pay higher premiums must be taken. Some people support this case saying that similar legislation exists in the UK and that similar legislation would also work in our province. They should provide sufficient evidence to prove that. The government fails to recognize that the issue is very complex, and even with clear and precise language the legislation may lead to many, many lawsuits. The government has neglected to pursue women's rights, which may open doors to other forms of litigation against women for lifestyle choices made during pregnancy such as drinking, smoking, or playing sports.

This bill has not taken into consideration the possibility of uninsured women or about some women who are not aware of their pregnancy when they are involved in the accident. Moreover, this legislation is not even clear about how they would monitor such accidents. What about the disabilities that are not visible; that is, ADD? Would children sue their mothers in the event that they discover they have a learning or mental disability?

This legislation is not fair for the general population as one type of negligence is to be open for litigation while others will not. The law should have equal status for all fetuses regardless of the action of the mother.

I think that this legislation is not about children suing their mothers. It is about who is responsible to pay the health care costs when a fetus is injured in its mother's womb. A woman who allows her child to sue her is clearly in desperate need of financial resources to care for her disabled child.

That is all I have to say. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments for the member.

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Peace River to close debate.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise and respond in part to the comments. There are quite a few, and we'll cover some of them in more detail later.

I need to comment immediately on the remarks of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, whose reading of the federal law that an unborn child is not a person is in my understanding correct. He's also correct to say that an unborn child has no right to sue, which is specifically why this legislation is crafted around if and when the child is born. This is a born live child with a handicap not an unborn child, Mr. Speaker.

I'm a little surprised as a member of the Private Bills Committee that the member doesn't appear to have read the Dobson case very thoroughly because it's crystal clear why it's restricted to car accidents and why it's limited to the amount of car insurance: specifically, to avoid infringement on the mother's rights, which is what this bill is all about.

Mr. Speaker, that member and a couple others have spoken about their concern of limiting the child's compensation to the amount of insurance and also spoke of their concern that there are other areas of negligence not addressed by this bill. These concerns were perhaps most forcefully, I suppose, addressed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster forcefully asserted that this wasn't fair, and I suppose

at one level I'd have to agree with him that limiting the amount of compensation to the amount of insurance carried by the mother is in one sense unfair. The expenses for care for a handicapped child might well exceed the amount of insurance available, and the member even spoke of his concern that we are creating classes of citizens based upon how much insurance they carry.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not designed to address all the potential ill effects of how mothers behave during pregnancy. The Supreme Court has been crystal clear. The only shortcoming or loophole that can be addressed without infringing on the mother's rights are those relating to car accidents caused by the negligent driving of the mother. The room available for legislators relates only to car accidents, where the standard of care is clear, and the coverage is limited to the amount of insurance available to prevent infringement upon the mother's rights and to prevent damage to the mother/child relationship. Now, this is indeed a very narrow area of occurrence out of a very wide range of possibilities, and I suppose in that sense it's unfair. But the Supreme Court was clear. This is the only place that the Legislatures could venture.

Now, I would ask my hon. colleague the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster to perhaps view this from the other side, the side of the child. Children in this situation currently receive nothing. They are handicapped as a result of negligence yet cannot receive compensation purely because of who it was that acted negligently. Is that somehow more fair?

This area of law is delicate, Mr. Speaker – I agree with my hon. colleague – because there is a conflict between the woman's rights and the rights of the child. We have an opportunity, however narrow, to strengthen the rights of the born child without infringing upon the rights of the mother. I would suggest that it's prudent for us to do so.

I also believe it was my hon. colleague who referred to the idea that this is law based on emotion. I agree wholeheartedly that law based on emotion is likely bad law, ill considered and hastily crafted. Indeed, we sat on the Private Bills Committee, and we saw a severely handicapped child in an emotion-filled presentation, but that does not mean that this law is based on an emotional reaction. It is based on a very clear Supreme Court ruling, on the 29-year existence of a smoothly functioning law in the United Kingdom, and upon our ability to move to protect the rights of children without infringing upon the rights of the mother.

10:00

I believe we are focusing on the larger societal implications of this law, Mr. Speaker, not on the emotions generated when meeting one particular family. I believe that this well-considered, very carefully crafted bill does exactly what the Supreme Court invited us to do: strengthen the rights of the child without infringing upon the rights of the mother.

Mr. Speaker, just one additional comment. The Member for Edmonton-Calder spoke in tentative support for this bill but expressed his concern that the bill entailed an expansion of fetal rights. Again, same as the comment to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, I would strongly suggest that this bill has no such effect. It contemplates no rights whatsoever save those of a born child.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll call the question and close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:02 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, November 22, 2005

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/11/22

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a gentleman who is no stranger to many of us. He is Mr. Gord Button. He's the seventh Ombudsman of the province of Alberta. He is sitting up in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd ask that he please stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly nine members of the Prairie Land regional school division board of trustees who are in Edmonton for meetings with the Alberta School Boards Association. Seated in the members' gallery are John Neill, chairman of the board; Linda Danielsen; Bill Lee; Bev Lee; Gloria Nelson; Elaine Horner; Duane Roy; Sheila Taylor; and Sharon Orum. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two residents of my constituency, Brent and Craig Korte. Craig is a grade 6 student from St. Marguerite school in Spruce Grove and is currently studying the government. He's very active in his school as a class representative on student council and is currently working on a leadership project in which he's chosen one of our former Premiers, Premier Peter Lougheed. Craig is also active in several sports in the community. He is accompanied today by his father, Brent, who works in government relations for Janssen-Ortho. Brent is also quite involved in sports in the Spruce Grove community as a coach of minor football and minor hockey. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly six members of my department who are here today for a public service orientation tour. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members assembled a group of students from James Mowat school in Fort Saskatchewan. They're accompanied by Mrs. Maureen Kondro and Mr. Ted Fellows and also by parents and helpers Mrs. Jennifer Proctor, Mrs. Donna Bruce, Mr. Brian Pearce, Mr. George Spindler, and Mrs. Frances Mangold. They're in both galleries, and I would ask that they please stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two fantastic and tireless workers from the Alberta Liberal Party office. Justin Archer, who is seated in the public gallery, graduated from his studies in law and society from the University of Calgary last year. He's since relocated to Edmonton to work as an administrative co-ordinator at the party office. He's interested in the Alberta political landscape and is an advocate for the renewal of democracy and good government in Alberta, which is why he fits so well with us.

Our other guest is Mike McLaughlin, who works in the accounting department at the Alberta Liberal Party. Believe it or not, he is busy there. He's originally from Toronto. He spent many years in the banking industry and also a decade in television program distribution. He's a proud father of two daughters. One is a student adviser at Grant MacEwan student resource centre, and another just graduated from the public relations program at Grant MacEwan. Mike is thrilled to be working for a better Alberta.

I'd ask the two to rise and please receive the warm welcome of all MLAs.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzsky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise and welcome 69 of Edmonton-Mill Creek's brightest and best young students. They are here from Velma Baker school, and today they are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Brent Kapicki and Mrs. Kimberly Devereux, and some parent helpers, Dave Eriksson, Vicki Moore, Trina McCloy, Kendra Black, and Marla Phillips. May I ask all of them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my former profession as a teacher, similar to yourself and many others of this Assembly, it is indeed my pleasure today to introduce through you to members of this Assembly two distinct representatives of Fort McMurray who capture our city slogan and spirit of We Have the Energy. They are the chair of the public school board, Jeff Thompson, and also his lieutenant of wisdom, Rhonda Reich. I would like to ask both of them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mariette Sutton of Sherwood Park. Mariette has been a friend of my wife, Angie, since the '70s, when they met at Mount Royal College. Mariette was a very long-time downtown Edmonton

businesswoman and is a recent cancer survivor. She's an energetic person and focused on continually helping, motivating, organizing, and encouraging people around her in an effort to make this world a better place. She's accompanied by my wife, Angie. I would ask both of them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly some very special people. Our visitors are from Suncor Energy and are partners with the Alberta Conservation Association and this government in a newly established boreal habitat conservation initiative. Through this initiative privately owned land in our northern forests will be bought and donated to the province's publicly protected land base for conservation. Already more than 400 acres of shoreline around the Winagami Lake have been purchased and boreal habitat added to Alberta's network of parks and protected areas. In the members' gallery representing the private partner in the boreal habitat conservation initiative are David Byler, the executive vice-president of Suncor Energy, and staff members Pat O'Reilly, Gord Lambert, and Cathy Glover. If I could ask them to rise and I would ask this House to extend its usual warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to introduce to you and members of the Assembly Marty and Linda Rybiak. Marty received his bachelor's in engineering science at the University of Western Ontario. Linda also graduated from Western university with a master's in chemical engineering. Both Marty and Linda are the proud parents of two young boys, Samuel and Andrew. Marty volunteers in a number of organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, and coaches basketball. He and Linda are active members of the Southminster-Steinhauer United Church. Marty is also the NDP candidate in Edmonton-Leduc for the upcoming federal election. I'd now ask that Linda and Marty both rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a group of very enthusiastic, bright young scholars. They are grade 6 students from Garneau elementary school, a very well-known school and one of the oldest ones in my constituency. They're accompanied by their teachers, Ms Susan Kosanovich and Ms Tara Calver, and by parents Ms Karen Dyberg, Lauren Beaupré, Linda Tennesen, and Ms Bev Wilson. I believe they are sitting in one of the two galleries. Wherever they are, I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Children in Poverty

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Alberta the so-called Alberta advantage is not for everyone. In recent conversations with homeless shelters in both Calgary and Edmonton we've been told

that at times shelters must even find space for mothers with newborn babies. It's shocking to think that in this province children and even moms with newborn babies can end up in homeless shelters. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Can the minister explain how it is that in a province as wealthy as Alberta this government tolerates situations where little children and even moms with newborns end up squeezed into homeless shelters for adults?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that this question has come forward, actually, to the Legislature because I have had the opportunity over the past week to two weeks to discuss with my staff the contingency funds that are in place for the homeless shelters, especially in Calgary. Having said that, you're aware that with homeless shelters what we look for are people who are at risk of being homeless, and we add funding to transitional housing.

Now, with the homeless shelter situation, in the Assembly over the past year we've brought forward budgets where we've increased the funding for that, Mr. Speaker, by 42 per cent, which is a very large increase. We provide over \$20 million a year to homeless shelters throughout the province of Alberta. I think that 42 per cent is significant.

I also think that what we've discussed with transitional housing, what we've discussed in the Legislature with affordable housing for low- to moderate-income people, Mr. Speaker – it's important that the opposition recognizes that we are working toward this regard for people at risk.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, the shelters are bursting at the seams.

To the Minister of Children's Services: will the minister admit that this government is failing its responsibility to ensure that children, impoverished and struggling children, are properly supported when children and even babies end up in shelters for homeless adults?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that our ministry takes care of those who are vulnerable. For anybody who comes in seeking help in any of our authorities here, we do the best we can. We provide the services that we can under the ministry, and we'll continue to do that.

Dr. Taft: To the same minister: can the minister explain to the over 100,000 impoverished children in Alberta what the Alberta advantage is and where they can find it?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell this member that any child or family that needs help under our ministry is helped.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Nutrition Programs for Schools

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Poverty in the midst of plenty. Today as we speak here now, 1 in 5 Alberta children is living in poverty and is at risk of poor nutrition, yet when asked yesterday about hot lunch programs in schools, the Minister of Education shrugged off the issue and pointed people needing a meal to a website. This morning while the Minister of Education was having his breakfast, 3,000 children in Edmonton alone were going hungry, stuck on waiting lists for oversubscribed school lunch programs. To

the Minister of Education: why won't this government commit now to a hot lunch program for all Alberta children at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much. I think that as I was having a bit of breakfast, the hon. opposition leader was enjoying a breakfast as well, and I don't recall him having raised this then.

The short answer to this question, Mr. Speaker, is simply that we do see several school boards already who provide hot lunch programs or who provide breakfast programs, and they do it in a very nice way with the community agency partners in some cases and in other cases with parents who are showing up as volunteers to assist. I did indicate in my answers yesterday what it is that we were planning to do by way of looking at this issue, and I would just refer the hon. leader to please refer to yesterday's *Hansard*.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are 3,000 children on waiting lists for school hot lunch programs in this minister's city, is it this government's position that it should stand back and let Alberta children go hungry because their parents can't feed them?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I did indicate as part of the answer yesterday that if there are members in this House who know that there are families in need, we have support programs either through Children's Services or through Human Resources and Employment. For heaven's sake, please let those families know what those programs are, and if you won't, then direct them to us, and we will.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that there are 3,000 kids on waiting lists right now, what ideology is this minister standing on that justifies his openly accepting that thousands of impoverished children are going hungry in Alberta schools today?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue, I'm sure, and I don't appreciate the inflammation that is being given to it, the tone of it. We have locally elected school boards. There are some members of those school boards in our galleries today, and they do have flexibility to address these policies, and many of them do. I'm sure that once the Edmonton public school board or the Edmonton Catholic school board see these issues coming forward, they do their best to help out and address them or direct them to places where help is available, and that program seems to be working relatively well. If there are some improvements needed toward it, then surely there are ways of addressing those particular problems as well.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Employment of Children

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Nations convention on the rights of the child states: "Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child." This government has lowered child employment restrictions to 12 years old for work in restaurants. It has asked in its recent review if this should be extended even further. We're not talking paper routes and farm chores here. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources

and Employment. How far is the minister prepared to go in putting 12-year-old grade 6ers into the workforce?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, of course, part of the review of the minimum wage, for an example, which was increased recently, also dealt with youth employment. We made sure when the program was announced that the youth were well protected, giving the parents the opportunity to determine if it is safe for their children to work at certain places. It also gave the employer the opportunity to assess the situation as far as safety. What will have to happen is that both the parent and the employer have to sign a form, which is a checklist to show that the place is safe and that the parent has agreed that the young person should be working in an environment like that. The responsibility is up to the parent to determine that, and I think that's a good move.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: does the minister expect 12-year-old grade 6ers to be contributing to the upkeep of the family household even if they are foster children?

Mr. Cardinal: That is, of course, not the plan, Mr. Speaker, to force children to work. There are lots of jobs out there. It's only fair to give the opportunity for any youth that wants to work, the opportunity for any employer that wants to hire youth, and the opportunity for the parent to decide – for the parent to decide – if the youth is in a position to work by going through this process that is really complicated to fill out and sign. They take the responsibility.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the same minister: will this minister tell us how many Albertans both in his department's surveys and letters, e-mails, and calls have complained about the initiatives to increase child labour in our province?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that figure in my hands here right now, but I will provide it in writing to the member.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Securities Commission Investigation

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Securities Commission director of enforcement is the top cop policing the Alberta securities market. As such, his conduct needs to be beyond reproach, but he was caught red-handed by the Auditor General making a significant profit trading shares in a company that he was responsible for investigating. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Given that the ASC's top securities enforcer made a significant financial gain on a short-term, speculative investment in a company under ASC investigation, why does the minister refuse to acknowledge possible violation of the rules against insider trading and that this should be investigated?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member infers that this was only noticed because the Auditor General caught it. In fact, the reason that the Auditor General caught it is because it was documented in the files. There was nothing hidden about that.

Mr. Speaker, on the same line of questioning yesterday I informed

the hon. member that there will be a complete statement outlining the events, the chronological occurrence of those events. I did check before I came into the House today because I know how important this matter is, and I know that the hon. member wants the answer. I was informed that it wasn't ready today, but it is their hope that they will have it tomorrow. I made the commitment that when that statement that outlines all of the events surrounding this is available, I'd be happy to discuss it further.

Mr. Speaker, I have never suggested that this was not a breach of the conflict-of-interest policy of the Alberta Securities Commission.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, if the minister has never denied that it was a breach, why is she asking for chronology instead of taking action to ensure that either discipline occurs or, in fact, a criminal investigation into insider trading occurs?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I think that if you have all of the events before you, you would be better able to question what should happen. There has been a full investigation on this matter by the Securities Commission. There is a sequence of events that occurred, and I again invite the hon. member to ask me further questions when he has the opportunity to see that in its fullness.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe we're getting somewhere, but it remains to be seen.

What does the minister think will come about as a result of the chronology? If the chronology shows that, in fact, as she says, there were serious breaches of the internal policies of the ASC or a prima facie case of criminal activity, insider trading, then is she going to commit to this House that she will take prompt and decisive action to make sure that wrongdoers are brought to justice?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I've outlined over and over and over again, the Auditor General in his report clearly lays out this issue, three pages, in fact, on this. The Auditor General in my review of the report – now, he may have read something different, and I'd look forward to his sending me something over – has not suggested criminal activity.

I remind the hon. member and all members of this House that it was I who asked the Auditor General to perform this audit as speedily and efficiently as he possibly could, which in fact he did. What the Auditor General did do in his report is provide two recommendations on processes that would be put in place to ensure as much as possible that this could not happen again. The Securities Commission, prior to the Auditor General's report, had not only put stronger measures in place but have committed to have those measures suggested by the Auditor General reviewed and in place by January 1, 2006, which is about 30-some days from today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Avian Influenza

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency recently announced positive test results for avian influenza in two separate cases: the first regarding the H strain found in wild ducks in Manitoba and Quebec and the second being a duck testing positive on a commercial farm in British Columbia. These announcements will certainly heighten awareness and concerns for avian influenza right across Canada. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Could the minister please explain what kind of plans the province has in place to protect our poultry industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very good question. Alberta's poultry industry and all of our feather industry in the province have learned some valuable lessons from the experiences in B.C. of 2004. I would like to in this forum congratulate the poultry industry for a well-defined plan of action that they have in place.

We've taken a number of steps, and we have a number of protocols and plans in place to mitigate any type of outbreak that we might have in the province. We have a surveillance system ongoing right now on commercial poultry and backyard flocks, where we test dead birds that might be at a higher risk of having avian influenza, or AI. We also work with the veterinarians across the province, Mr. Speaker, under a surveillance network and an early warning system, if you will, to report anything that might have a zoonosis aspect to it or to detect animal diseases. As well, we are part of a new program, a national surveillance program, to detect the prevalence of avian influenza in Canada's wild waterfowl population. Our preparation and planning are ongoing and change as required.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental goes to the same minister. Given that test results on wild birds have been announced for Quebec, Manitoba, and British Columbia, when can we expect the announcement of results for Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned previously, we are participating with the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre as part of a national surveillance program to determine that prevalence. As the hon. member mentioned, there have been some announcements of results in some of the other provinces. We have completed 580 tests of the 800 samples that we have. To date we have not identified H5 or H7 strains. We do expect that the work on the rest of the tests will be done either by the end of this week or very early next week.

It is important to note that the recent positive test results found in Quebec and British Columbia and Manitoba of the wild waterfowl weren't unexpected. There's no increased threat to public health. Various types of avian influenza have been found in healthy waterfowl for well over a hundred years, for as far back as we know.

As the federal and other provincial counterparts have mentioned already, the H5N1 strain that was found in two Manitoba wild ducks is not the same Asian strain that we hear so much about. It is what they would consider low pathogenetic, which means that these viruses would only cause a mild disease, if any, in the waterfowl.

Ms Haley: My last supplemental, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Since wild birds, especially waterfowl, seem to be the source of the virus, is there anything being done to make sure that waterfowl hunters are safe when they handle or consume this meat?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really important to note that there are no new threats to waterfowl or to hunters as a result of the recent reports of the influenza virus in Canadian wild birds. These viruses typically are present in wild birds and have very little effect on the health of wild birds. So that's important to

note. Alberta has good information on the viruses in wild birds, and we certainly are a key partner in the current national survey. To answer the question directly, to protect hunters, it is recommended that careful handling, cleanliness of course, and proper refrigeration as well as proper cooking precautions be taken in handling wild birds. That is definitely our recommendation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

2:00

Aboriginal Issues

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues begins in Kelowna on Thursday, and aboriginal peoples right across the country are looking forward to this event with great anticipation and hope for a better future. My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. The federal government is prepared to spend billions of new dollars on aboriginal issues to help break the cycle of poverty. What is your ministry prepared to bring to this meeting?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank you for that question. I really appreciate it. As you know, the Premier and I are going to be attending the meeting, the FMM, on the 24th and 25th of this month. That's actually Thursday and Friday. To be able to prepare for that, I have met with First Nations across this province and the Métis community and their organizations, and they have certainly provided us with some information that we could utilize as we're dealing with the issues as they come forward from the first ministers.

For your information, the First Nations and the Métis people of this province have indicated that no one speaks on their behalf but themselves. They do have a spokesperson, Grand Chief Sandford Big Plume, whom they've requested to be at the table so that he can also bring the message that the Premier and I will be bringing to the table.

It is very important for us to be able to look at what's coming down. As you know, the money that supposedly is coming down: we have no information as to what amount it will be; we have no information as to how the delivery process will be. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we are making every attempt to make sure that what the First Nations and the Métis people of this province want is going to be at the table.

Mr. Tougas: So the answer is nothing then. Thank you.

Why has not one cent of the government's unbudgeted surplus gone towards addressing the specific needs of Alberta's aboriginal people?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, this is really a fantastic question. I'm going to ask all those ministries that have provided some guidance and some dollars that will be going towards the First Nations and the Métis people of this province. I'll just give you an example. First of all, we have had what we call traditional land-use studies. As a result, we have spent about \$1.5 million for traditional land-use studies, which the First Nations of Alberta have been requesting so that they can map historically where they've been.

We've also looked at economic initiatives, Mr. Speaker. On the economic side we have put I think about another million and a half to see how we can identify where the First Nations can begin to be involved and how we can help them to ensure that business plans can be developed.

Mr. Speaker, on the tourism side we have also had an aboriginal

tourism council established mainly to look at the tourism aspects of what's possible in this province with the help of the First Nations and the Métis community, not the Liberals but the Métis and the First Nations community. I'm going to ask some of my colleagues . . .

The Speaker: Well, may I ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark to proceed with his third question.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So it's nothing then. No new money. Nothing at all.

With the Alberta economy experiencing unprecedented resource-based prosperity, why is the aboriginal community still not enjoying the benefits of the so-called Alberta advantage?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we on this side of the government and that side certainly understand the needs of the aboriginal community, and that's the reason why we believe that working with the aboriginal community is probably the number one priority of this government. As a result, what we have done is work with that community to be able to identify, first of all, the capacity issue within the First Nations and, secondly, the economic possibilities with the First Nations so that they can take advantage of the Alberta advantage, as you have identified, and, thirdly, to make sure that government has the capacity to be able to work with the First Nations and the Métis community so that we can begin to see the economic possibilities that this province has to offer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Calgary Ring Road Southwest Portion

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The province and the Tsuu T'ina nation need to have a land transfer agreement in place in order to start building the desperately needed southwest portion of Calgary's ring road. A draft agreement was to be in place by November 1 of this year, but the deadline was not met. My question for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: why was the deadline missed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through to the hon. member, the extension of the deadline should not be viewed as a setback in this particular negotiation. The Tsuu T'ina nation and my department, the chief and myself, are actually working very closely together to come to this particular agreement.

What happened, Mr. Speaker, is that we had an agreement where we each would pick an appraiser if we had to and then a third appraiser would come and rule on what the two appraisers said. What we did, which is actually quite unprecedented, is agree on the same appraiser. So even though we are seeing a little bit more delay on the initial side of the project, we are hoping, because of this particular feat that was accomplished, that we will see an expedition of the particular project in question, the ring road. It's actually very, very positive.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is a bilateral deal between the province and the Tsuu T'ina nation and because of

the enormous impact on the city of Calgary, have the mayor and council been active in these negotiations?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, the mayor and council have not been active in these particular negotiations. These are negotiations purely between the province and the Tsuu T'ina. However, we have been keeping the mayor and council completely up to date on everything that is occurring. These negotiations are between us and the Tsuu T'ina nation. They truly impact the city of Calgary, and therefore we are keeping them absolutely up to date as to what is occurring.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental to the same minister: when will construction start on the southwest portion of Calgary's ring road?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much. Our prediction is that we should be able to get started by the fall of 2007. There are some wild cards in this, Mr. Speaker. One of the issues, of course, is that they have to go to the federal government to get a decrease in the size of their reservation. What we're looking at doing is actually purchasing some land from the Tsuu T'ina nation, and for any change in the boundaries they have to go and have an OC at the federal government. We anticipate that this could actually take a year, although if there tends to be a different government in place in Ottawa, who knows?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Health Care Costs

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the health minister listed for the Assembly the costs of treatment for certain procedures.

If you had a stroke, it would be \$25,000 if you spent four days in bed. If you had a child that was born premature and spent 42 days in an ICU, it would be \$42,000. If you had a kidney transplant, it would be \$37,200.

This government rationalizes that advertising the price tag of a procedure will affect the use of health care. My questions are all to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Does the minister honestly believe that a patient would look at the price of a kidney transplant and decide to go with a cheaper therapy?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, as has been duly noted, it's about accountability. It's about making people sensitive. On the floor of the AAMD and C just last week I was asked why we don't provide everybody an itemized costing of what they've actually spent. I have always responded in two ways. One of the reasons why we don't usually do that is because of the privacy issues and the legislation we have around privacy and the freedom individuals have to protect their own privacy. If we, for example, sent a notice to a dad, and the mother and the daughter and the son were on that notice, what they had spent on healthcare, it may not protect the privacy of the individuals also on that card.

The second reason, Mr. Speaker, is that in different communities, in different regions it's very hard and it's very elaborate to cost out exactly how you represent that cost, whether it's facility costs and some of the other measures that could be costed.

What I am actually responding to is not only a public request for

information but a request from several people to know what we're spending, how we're spending it so they can judge for themselves if they're getting value for the dollars that are spent. It's nothing more than that.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how does knowing the cost of an operation shorten a wait list or make a procedure more successful?

Ms Evans: Oh, it has nothing to do with procedures being more successful. What it actually does, though, is enable people to understand what value they're getting when they go to the doctor. Many people today, Mr. Speaker, are looking forward to our electronic health record. Why? One of the biggest complaints I get is that if they have a test in Lloydminster and come into the city and have to have another test, they're conscious that it costs money. Many of these people, particularly seniors, want not to waste our system but to use our system in the very best way possible. That's why we're talking about costs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the minister again: how does knowing the cost of a procedure make health care better? It doesn't shorten the wait list. It doesn't make it better.

Ms Evans: You know, there are several things that can make health care better. One is the individual's duty and responsibility to themselves to look after their own health care, and that's important. The second responsibility is for a government to support that person in executing their duty to be well. Mr. Speaker, there wouldn't be billions of dollars spent in North America if people weren't concerned about . . . [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, why should I answer? They're not even interested.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Learning Assessment

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Teachers in my constituency have raised some questions and concerns about two initiatives known as GLA and CAA. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Can he please explain what grade level achievement is and what computer adaptive assessment is, and what's the difference between the two?

The Speaker: Hon. member, we're dealing with questions on government policy here, not interpretation of words.

Now, hon. minister, with a great deal of trepidation, go forth.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, actually, the hon. member has hit on a couple of contentious issues in the communities, and these were raised today in some private discussions with school board members. I'll be very brief. Basically, GLA, or grade level achievement, is simply a method by which a teacher will indicate to a parent whether or not that child is performing at grade level standard or not whereas CAA, a completely different initiative, computer adaptive assessment, will simply be a computerized assessment vehicle that will be available for teachers to use with students on an optional basis if they wish.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: could you explain why your department is pursuing these initiatives?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, GLA is going to be an important way for parents to know whether or not their children are performing to a grade level expectation and, if not, at what grade level they are in fact performing. CAA, on the other hand, is necessary to pursue because this is a method of helping teachers assess students. It's simply another tool in the assessment package, in the tool chest, if you will. It provides immediate results on certain aspects of the curriculum, which will tell a teacher in almost an instant how that student is doing in that particular area. So those are two reasons why we're pursuing those.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: could you explain to us your implementation timeline and what costs we can anticipate?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, GLA is actually an initiative that has been worked on by ministry officials and by the ATA and by the Alberta School Boards Association since about the year 2000. About a year and a half ago or so a couple of schools were identified to pilot it – six or seven schools I believe was the case. This year we hope to have every school board identify only one school where GLA reporting will be done. Then perhaps a year or two after that we should be able to implement it system-wide so that teachers will have it and parents will know what grade level their kids are at. The costs are negligible. They're absorbed in the department.

CAA, on the other hand, will roughly be a million dollars per year over the next three years. It's an advanced state of computer technology used by many entities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Centennial Project Funding

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer the Mill Woods Presidents' Council was denied a centennial grant to help support its centennial and Canada Day celebration. Sixty thousand people attended a real celebration there. I personally spoke to the minister, who informed me that there were no centennial funds available. Very recently this government awarded \$5.5 million for a centennial grant to a prominent filmmaker after a private meeting with the minister and the Premier. My questions are for the Minister of Community Development. How was the deal brokered?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the \$5.5 million that was put towards the project regarding the film *Passchendaele*, which is Paul Gross's film, was an extraordinary opportunity for two reasons. One, it's the centennial year, and *Passchendaele* is a significant element of Canada's history. There's a particular Alberta story with the four regiments from Alberta that participated in the battle of *Passchendaele*, which was part of Vimy Ridge and largely viewed by historians as being a place that was Canada's coming of age. Secondly, it is, of course, the Year of the Veteran.

The combination of these two things made good sense for us through a program that we have where we support film development in the province of Alberta. Currently that program is worth \$13.5

billion. But this was viewed as a particularly valuable addition to the celebration of the centennial and the Year of the Veteran together, to put \$5.5 million over and above our existing budget for the film development program.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: does this mean that only prominent artists deserve provincial support or the ear of the Premier?

Mr. Mar: The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that we've supported artists throughout the entire centennial year, as we often do through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts each and every year. As an example, the member opposite would be well aware of Alberta Scene, where approximately 600 artists went to Ottawa, put on some 95 different presentations in several dozen venues. The reality is that through the annual budget of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts hundreds of artists, thousands, in fact, are supported throughout this province. This is a very important part of the quality of life in the province of Alberta and something that Albertans appreciate greatly.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister: did the minister consult any stakeholders before handing over public dollars for private films, please?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, we're constantly engaged in the consultation with stakeholders not only in the arts but in all areas of government enterprise.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Public Accounts Committee

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of changes needed to improve this Legislative Assembly's oversight of over \$27 billion in public expenditures. These changes include allowing the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to meet outside of session and to question the heads of public bodies like health regions. The federal government and other provinces have already implemented these kinds of changes to improve legislative oversight. My question is to the chair of the Public Accounts Committee. Can the chair outline the difficulties the current restriction on committee meetings poses for the effective oversight of public finances in this province?

Speaker's Ruling

Questions about a Legislative Committee

The Speaker: We have a tradition and methodology for dealing with such questions, and the chair has allowed questions to the chairman of select standing committees dealing with agenda items. That's about it. All other matters should be dealt with in the committee. Failing that, various House leaders might want to come together and review the Standing Orders.

So second question, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

2:20

Mr. Martin: Point of order.

The Speaker: Absolutely. I surely expected that.

Public Accounts Committee

(continued)

Mr. Eggen: I'll ask my second question, directed to the Government

House Leader then, please, Mr. Speaker. Given the interest in the government caucus for improvements in the oversight function of the Public Accounts Committee, does the government support making such changes, and if so, when and how?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader is accountable to the Premier and the government caucus, not to the Legislature. I am accountable to the Legislature in my capacity as Minister of Advanced Education and would be pleased to answer any questions from the hon. member with respect to accountability for public policy in Advanced Education.

Mr. Eggen: To the Government House Leader: would you be interested in supporting, if the opportunity arose, increasing and diversifying the powers of the Public Accounts Committee to help for a financial oversight here in this Assembly?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what I am personally interested in is of absolutely no relevance to the House. I'm here in my capacity as the minister responsible and accountable for public policy of Advanced Education, and it would be inappropriate and improper for me to answer a question with respect to my personal interests.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

English as a Second Language Programs

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently our government announced a long-term and short-term strategy regarding human resource development for Alberta. We encourage people to come from all over Canada and the world, and according to Statistics Canada 17 per cent of our population indicate that English is not their mother tongue. This number is growing to 25 per cent in the next 10 years. The ability of the English language is very important to our economic development and our social harmony. So my question to the Minister of Education: given that our hard-working minister has spent time with 62 school boards across the province, can you tell us what you are going to do to address the ESL issues?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue and a great question because ESL needs are growing in many parts of our province. It's true that we are actively recruiting more immigrants to our province to help fill skilled labour shortages, and others are coming here because of the tremendous economic climate and so on and so on. Of course, many of those children do present with language needs, specifically English as a second language. So as part of my meetings with all 62 school boards over the last few weeks we did talk about the renewed funding framework, and the member will be happy to know that I recently appointed a ministerial advisory committee to study the renewed funding framework and the ESL pieces within that. So it will get a very thorough review, and I expect to have those results I hope by the end of February.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. Given that the Coalition for Equal Access to Education did a comprehensive study and made a specific recommendation on ESL to the government last August, can the minister tell us how he plans to respond to this specific report?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, that was indeed a very passionate presentation by that coalition group on a very important issue to them and to us and I'm sure to all Albertans. As I've just indicated, there will be this review done of the renewed funding framework, but I should also let the member know that there is a review going on as well of the entire K to 12 system with respect to what it might take to help give students that extra hand up, that extra boost if you will. One issue that surfaced is the issue of the cap. At the moment five years of ESL education is being provided, and I think they were advocating for it to be increased to seven, so we will look at that. I should also just conclude by saying that there was an adult review group who did some similar work, and we're looking at those items as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given, as an example, that the Calgary board of education indicates a huge increase in ESL students, from 3,870 in 1995 to 15,493 in 2005, and the parents of these students are working very hard for our economy, what is the minister doing to help in such a situation of increase?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I am very sharply aware of Calgary's need in this area and Fort McMurray's and a few other places that are really bustling with more immigrant workers and so on. In particular, with the Calgary situation, as I recall, their budget would have increased by about 75 per cent over the last year or so. In fact, ESL program funding throughout the province over the last couple of years has increased by about 68 per cent. I will acknowledge that there is some additional work to be done there, and that's why I called for the review.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The criminal justice system in Alberta is becoming a warehouse for mentally ill people. Prisons and the police are not equipped to deal with people suffering from mental illness. Failure to address this problem can have tragic results. My questions are for the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. Given that the fatality inquiry into the death of an RCMP corporal and mentally ill gunman in Spruce Grove has clearly indicated that police feel powerless when dealing with the mentally ill, will the minister immediately implement special training for all police officers to effectively and safely deal with the mentally ill?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a very good question. During recruit training in both Calgary and Edmonton and I believe the RCMP as well they have a number of individuals that come from the community. Some of them come with disabilities to speak to the officers regarding their culture. Some come from the gay and lesbian community. Some come from the seniors' community. As well, we have individuals that do come with a mental health illness or issue. So our officers are trained. They are aware of it.

This member states that additional training should be required. Mr. Speaker, our police officers throughout this province receive continual training in a number of different areas, and from the fatality inquiry obviously this one will be placed on the agenda as well.

Dr. B. Miller: To the same minister: given the fact that at least 12 per cent of inmates across Canada are seriously mentally ill, what steps is the minister taking to implement treatment programs in our prisons?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cernaiko: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We strongly support initiatives within our correction centres that provide for programs for individuals with mental health illnesses. The issue is that one of the reasons why they may be in the justice system is the fact that they may have a mental illness. We have programs throughout the province through the Alberta Mental Health Board, which received funding this year to assist in the diversion services, but these are also addressed when they are going through the court system. The Crown prosecutors are very well aware of what some of these issues are. So, yes, we have facilities that we have to place offenders in within the correction system, but we do provide programs for them because of the fact that they do have mental illness issues.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. It's been reported over and over again that funding is the main obstacle to viable treatment programs for the mentally ill. Can the minister tell us when this government will provide the necessary support to treat the mentally ill in the prison system? The safety of the public and the police is at stake.

Mr. Cernaiko: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to clarify. The average length of stay in our corrections facilities in Alberta is 33 days and 13 days in our remand centres. During that period of time, when they do come in and they are incarcerated in a corrections facility, we assess them through the caseworkers that we have, psychologists that are employed by us, nurses that are employed by us, and we look at the program that they may need. If they do have a mental health illness, obviously they're going to be placed in various programs so that we can try to assist them in that short period of time that they are with us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

2:30 Red Deer River Water Transfer

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Red Deer are very concerned about a project that proposes taking water from the Red Deer River and diverting it south to the special areas. They are concerned about the transfer of raw water from one river basin to another. They are concerned about a report that says that the project is neither an efficient nor effective use of this resource. My questions are for the Minister of Environment. What is the minister doing to ensure that there is enough water available for this project in good times and in bad and that the soil that is to be irrigated will be productive?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, it's such an important issue any time that this Legislature by law under the Water Act considers transferring from one basin to another, as the hon. member has mentioned. Presently the top priority of this ministry is to, number one, ensure that water is provided to the existing, those with licences and users, and second of all to protect the environment but also to meet our

provincial commitments in the water licences that we have already issued.

In fact, at this particular point in time I want to say that we have an approach, what is called first in time, first in right. To the city of Red Deer and its residents, I want you to know, Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, that the current licences would also have a higher priority than any proposed new project that would come forward. So it's very important that this transfer would end up in this Assembly if, in fact, determined.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: I understand that this project has received support from the communities it will serve, but what kind of consultation was done outside those special areas?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct in the fact that this project is well supported in the special areas. In fact, they have held 11 open houses, which impacted over 700 Albertans. I also want to say that citizens from the Red Deer area were part of that consultation. But before this project proceeds, I want to confirm a complete, concise consultation. It will be thorough, it will be complete, and everyone that has an interest will be consulted. Just to give you, finally, an example, presently the Special Areas Board is consulting with our First Nations. Of course, their views are equally important on this issue as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Again to the Minister of Environment: given that this project will cost hundreds of millions of dollars but only benefit hundreds of people, will this minister present a cost-benefit analysis of the project before it proceeds?

Mr. Boutilier: I think, Mr. Speaker, that the suggestion of a cost-benefit analysis is very important. Part of the rural development strategy, as you know, in this area – it's a very dry area. Before any dollars or any type of situation of transferring water from one basin to another is determined, a complete, concise consultation will take place. But I can assure you that if any decision is brought back to this Assembly, clearly a cost-benefit analysis would demonstrate that there is definitely a need and a purpose for it in benefiting Albertans, who require this blue gold resource that we call water.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six hon. members to participate in Members' Statements.

Hon. members, one year ago today, on November 22, 2005, an event occurred in the province of Alberta which saw a member return to this Assembly. We want to congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on his second, I guess, return to this Assembly and to congratulate as well 27 other members who were elected to this Assembly for the first time.

To the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, the Member for Edmonton-Manning, the Member for Edmonton-Decore, the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, the Member for Calgary-Varsity, the Member for Edmonton-Calder, the Member for Edmonton-McClung, the Member for St. Albert, the Member for Highwood, the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, the Member for Calgary-Hays, the Member for Calgary-West, the Member for Stony Plain, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, the Member for Foothills-Rocky View, the

Member for Peace River, the Member for Lethbridge-East, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Member for Calgary-Currie, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, the Member for Calgary-Foothills, it is now your first anniversary. All excuses now end.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

International Students

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whenever the subject of international students is mentioned, most likely we think of college and university studies. Today I rise to speak about international students in our Alberta's school system. I want to use the international student program of the Calgary board of education as a typical example. The Calgary board of education offers to international students from all over the world the Alberta world-class education system, that includes ESL, high school credit courses, academic preparation for university, college, and technical institutions, with their highly trained and experienced staff.

The CBE founded its International Bureau on the belief that international students are appreciated as assets academically, culturally, and financially to CBE students, staff, and the Calgary community. CBE staff and students benefit from the cultural, intellectual, and economic resources international students bring. Currently over a hundred international students study in CBE elementary and secondary schools. Nearly 130 international students who are 18 years and older study at Chinook College, and teachers from Japan, Mexico, Korea, Taiwan have participated in professional development offered by the CBE.

Mr. Speaker, the story of international study can be found in other school systems across our province. International students in our school system help to pay for the cost and more and help to make the space utilization more efficient in some schools, but most importantly they are the future of their countries. They are Alberta's long-term investment for our valuable international relationship in the global network. The Alberta government needs to capitalize on and develop further and faster this international student opportunity as many other jurisdictions are already ahead of us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Edwin Parr Education Awards

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year the government of Alberta will invest \$4.7 billion in support of kindergarten to grade 12 education. It's a huge investment that returns huge dividends. Alberta's kindergarten to grade 12 education system is among the best in the world, and our students are head of the class in national and international tests. Our centrally developed curriculum is acclaimed around the world, and we have outstanding teachers, teachers who help our children and youth to grow as individuals and to acquire the skills and capabilities that they need to make informed choices and become good citizens.

In short, teachers are integral to the excellence in education, and each year the Alberta School Boards Association recognizes six exceptional first-year teachers with the Edwin Parr awards. The award recipients demonstrate excellence in using instructional strategies to reach students who have different needs. Last week the

Edwin Parr recipients were Shane Clark of Roland Michener secondary school in Slave Lake, Kristy Purcell of Father J.A. Turcotte school in Fort McMurray, Fred Wilkes of Parkdale school in Edmonton, Erin Bodnar of St. Francis Assisi middle school in Red Deer, Stephen Kotkas of Tom Baines junior high school in Calgary, and Brandon Fletcher from Lethbridge Collegiate Institute.

Mr. Speaker, let us all thank and congratulate these outstanding new teachers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Centennial Events in Airdrie

Ms Haley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to address the House briefly about the centennial. I have always loved my province. It was ingrained into me by my father. He was the guy who would stop his truck on the border of Alberta and get out and kiss the ground whenever he would return from B.C. or Saskatchewan. He taught me that if you work hard and you look after this province, this province will look after you. He would have been very proud of Alberta this year as we reached our 100th birthday.

A highlight this year was the visit from the Queen. I had a chance to invite my mom to have lunch in the presence of the Queen. It was just a great day for both of us. Amidst the lineup of parades and functions throughout my constituency organized to celebrate the centennial, there were three that stood out the most.

First was being able to present Eva Wagner with a gold medal for her 100th birthday. Truly an amazing lady, still talking about getting married if she can just find the right man. I liked her immediately.

2:40

Another memorable event was the celebration at the Jones Hereford ranch. Their family received the centennial family farm award, a family like many others that have been here since we became a province and have had a huge impact on the economic diversity of Alberta.

The best night of all, Mr. Speaker, was just a few weeks ago, when we had our centennial medal presentation. All of the recipients were nominated by various community organizations in my constituency. Everyone who received an award that night has made a mark on Alberta and mostly because they volunteered for everything from the local 4-H to local community committees to make their province a better place to live. It was an incredible honour to be able to meet with and present medals to this group of outstanding individuals. We had a high tea at the legion in Airdrie, and as part of our evening Staff Sergeant Garth Patterson was there to present medals with me.

The medal nominees that night reflect only a small portion of the worthy Albertans who should have received a centennial medal, Mr. Speaker. There are just so many of them. We have a province built by great entrepreneurs who also understand the importance of giving back to the community and getting involved.

Mr. Speaker, it truly will be a year that I will remember forever. I am very proud to be an Albertan.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll make my comments in the spirit of our esteemed colleague from Airdrie-Chestermere. During this centennial year in this House, in Calgary-

Lougheed, and across this province as chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission I've learned a great deal about what makes this province so great. Later today as an example of this I'll be tabling the AADAC annual report. Right now for the information of our members and their constituents I'll list just a few of AADAC's good works in the recent past with a very quick glimpse to the future.

Last month AADAC partnered with the Lung Association and the Canadian Cancer Society to launch a new online smoking cessation site, albertaquits.ca, and a thousand Albertans have registered since its launch as they access support in their attempts to quit smoking.

Last week AADAC launched the Alberta drug strategy. It's a five-year plan that sets a vision and an action framework for a co-ordinated, collaborative approach to prevent and treat the harms caused by alcohol and other drug abuse. At the same time, AADAC opened new residential addiction treatment programs in Edmonton and Calgary that fit within the framework of the Alberta drug strategy. These programs include 24 beds which serve youth aged 12 to 17.

In addition to services such as these provided by AADAC, government has developed a co-ordinated response to methamphetamine that reflects provincial priorities for health renewal, and the co-ordinated response includes TV commercials targeted at youth and parents, strong support for local drug coalitions, educational materials, and curriculum-aligned school resources.

Yesterday we kicked off National Addictions Awareness Week, the goal of which is to provide information and promote activities that generate awareness of substance abuse and gambling problems and solutions.

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward, it's worthy of note that on Canada Day 2006 Bill 202 will become law. This bill will give provincial authorities and parents the power to place children under the age of 18 into drug detox and assessment programs.

Thank you to all members for your assistance with AADAC and its initiatives.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Vocational Education

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to address vocational education in Alberta's future. As Alberta's economy charges forward in the next hundred years, I pause to reflect on the important role an education system should be playing in preparing future workers. I'm particularly concerned about preparation for careers in the skilled trades. I don't believe we are taking the right steps now to ensure that high school students can assess the rewards of a vocational career.

Our future depends on the contribution of skilled workers, a process that begins in the publicly funded school system. I spent a career in education. I've spoken to many Albertans in my role as the Education critic. I've come to the conclusion that a number of changes are necessary. Vocational education must be seen as equal and not the lesser cousin of academic learning. The current system is focused on students who continue to go to university, but the reality is that only about a third of high school students choose that route and fewer than that graduate.

As I talk to teachers, school boards, parents, and schoolchildren, I hear similar stories everywhere I go. The schools need greater funding for vocational teaching facilities. There need to be more teachers trained in teaching vocational skills.

Lastly, there is a vital shortage of career counsellors in junior high

schools. Grade 9 is vital. Students should be meeting with their counsellor two or three times in this crucial year to discuss their options for the future. The registered apprenticeship program is a start, but it needs to be critically evaluated, it needs to be better funded, and it needs to improve its completion rates. There are rumblings of change, but we need leadership from this government. That is why I rise today, to urge this government into action in the support of vocational education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Resource Revenues

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is currently touring Canada trying to show that Alberta's good fortune is Canada's good fortune. No one doubts that, but there's so much more we could be doing if we had a real vision of our province's place in Canada and the world.

The resource revenue we're now receiving, not to mention all the forgone revenue we should be receiving through fair royalty rates, is merely a down payment on our future. These are windfall, one-time returns on a rapidly depleting capital asset. That's how we should think of it when we invest it. The Alberta NDP's vision for Alberta is that it must become the leader in Canada for renewable energy. In this way we can make sure that this province retains its economic and social advantages long after the oil and gas are gone.

The NDP's plan for a greener, more diversified provincial economy is built on a foundation of fair royalties for oil and gas. Our current royalty regime was established for \$10-a-barrel oil. It's six times that now, and Albertans need to receive a fair return on their resources.

The NDP believes that the resulting additional resource revenues must be invested in a public enterprise that would help transition this province into a world leader in energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy. We should establish partnerships with municipalities, other provinces, the federal government, and the private sector to explore new ways to diversify our economy.

Alberta must invest in an energy strategy that will benefit the entire country while retaining full ownership of its resources and the economic benefits that flow from them. An investment in renewable energy will be a way to use Alberta's energy wealth to benefit the entire country. We can again be leaders and nation builders with a visionary approach to building a renewable energy strategy for the country. Such an opportunity comes but once in a generation. We can leave our children and grandchildren with the same advantages we enjoy today if only we act. Let's seize the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: By way of an historical vignette for the day hon. members might appreciate that a special session of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta wrapped up on this day in 1938. That session was called primarily to deal with legislation regarding oil and gas conservation in the province. The sitting lasted from November 15 to November 22, and eight bills were passed, the most important of which was Bill 1, an Act for the Conservation of the Oil and Gas Resources of the Province of Alberta, which gave the Oil and Gas Conservation Board the power to enforce its regulations. That was in 1938, and that came about after an almost 10-year debate in the province of Alberta, from 1928 to 1938, about oil and gas conservation.

head: **Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Private Bills has had a certain bill under consideration and wishes to report as follows. The committee recommends that the following private bill proceed with amendment: Bill Pr. 4, Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act. As part of this report I will be tabling five copies of the proposed amendment to Bill Pr. 4.

Mr. Speaker, I request the concurrence of the Assembly in this recommendation.

The Speaker: Will those members in the Assembly who concur in the report please say aye?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Opposed, please say no. The report is carried.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table a petition signed by 20 constituents requesting an immediate increase to AISH rates "based on the feedback received during the Government's low-income review."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to present a petition from 106 Alberta tradesmen and women from the communities of Airdrie, Alix, Caroline, Bonnyville, Lethbridge, Fort Saskatchewan, Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and others, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a petition with 509 signatures on it. This petition is calling for "a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years."

Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance I'm pleased to table today the response to Written Question 36.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission it is my pleasure to introduce these five copies of AADAC's 2004-2005 annual report summarizing AADAC's leadership in delivering services that assist Albertans in achieving freedom from the harmful effects of alcohol, other drugs, and gambling.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first one is a letter dated November 15, 2005, that I received at our constituency office in Edmonton-Gold Bar, and it is from Kane Veterinary Supplies Ltd., which is a business that is writing in regard to the proposed amendment to the Veterinary Profession Act. Thank you.

My second tabling is information that I received through access to information from the Department of Energy. This is a series of e-mails going back to November of 2001. They are from Robert.Hemstock@ENRON.com, and they're addressed to Ricardo Shillingford, <Ricardo.Shillingford@gov.ab.ca>@ENRON. This is a dedicated government address to Enron, and it outlines close links between Enron and our provincial government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter tabling from constituent Janice Radloff. She's concerned about family law. She has suggested some very valuable points. She believes that these laws are sexist against fathers' rights, that no one parent should have all the rights and others have none, that this is discrimination against men. She is urging the government to have a full discussion on family law.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two tablings today, which I'd like to table on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The first is a letter from Alice Williamson, who is very concerned that the government's so-called third way on health care will increase costs, particularly for seniors.

The second document is a letter sent to all MLAs from Reverend Lynn Maki on behalf of the Alberta and Northwest Conference of the United Church of Canada. The church recently passed a motion urging the government of Alberta to recognize the social determinants of health and to do a better job of supporting people living on low incomes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to section 28(1) of the Ombudsman Act I am pleased to table with the Assembly the 38th annual report of the office of the Ombudsman for the period April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the Hon. Mrs. McClellan, Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Conflicts of Interest Act and the Legislative Assembly Act the report of selected payments to Members and former Members of the Legislative

Assembly and persons directly associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2005. Also on behalf of hon. Mrs. McClellan a report entitled General Revenue Fund: Details of Grants, Supplies and Services, Capital Assets and Other, by Payee for the Year Ended March 31, 2005.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, the Alberta Dental Association and College 2004 radiation health and safety program annual report January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2004, with attached Alberta Dental Association and College radiation administration program financial statements; the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association radiation protection program 2004 annual report; the College of Chiropractors of Alberta radiation health administrative organization annual report for the year ended June 30, 2005, with attached College of Chiropractors of Alberta financial statements dated June 30, 2005; the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta radiation health administrative organization annual report for the period April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005; the University of Alberta authorized radiation health administrative organization annual report 2004-2005; the University of Calgary radiation health administration organization annual report for the period April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005, with attached University of Calgary authorized radiation health administration organization financial statements for the years ended March 31, 2004, and March 31, 2005.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horner, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, pursuant to the Agriculture Financial Services Act the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation annual report 2004-2005; pursuant to the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council annual report 2002-2003; pursuant to the Brand Act, the Livestock Identification and Brand Inspection Act, the Livestock and Livestock Products Acts, and the Stray Animals Act the Livestock Identification Services Ltd. manager's report April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005, with attached Livestock Identification Services Ltd. financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2005.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Melchin, Minister of Energy, return to order of the Assembly MR 8, asked for by Mr. Eggen on April 11, 2005.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on a purported point of order.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 13(2) I'm curious. As the Speaker has pointed out, I've not been in the House for some time, so I'm probably missing something, but Standing Order 13(2) is just an explanation. I'm really trying to get clarity about question period and who we can direct questions to because I'm thinking of *Beauchesne* 405 and *Erskine May* 345, the 23rd edition.

I think the Speaker would recognize that when I was here up to '93, these questions did go to the chair of Public Accounts at least a couple of times. I've found out – I'd forgotten – that I'd actually directed one to the chairman of Public Accounts on March 26, 1991, to the chairman, who was Mr. Pashak at the time. Obviously, there have been some changes, so I'm trying to get some clarity in terms of the ruling. Can we clarify who can accept questions, then, in the House?

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, nothing has changed, so it may be something else.

If the hon. member wants to quote *Beauchesne*, he can look at

section 411(3). It basically says that a question may not "seek information about proceedings in a committee which has not yet made its report to the House." That perhaps is one. But, more importantly, I think that the hon. member would like to go to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 429, Questions Concerning Matters before Committees.

Questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to chairs of committees. Questions to the Ministry or a committee chair concerning the proceedings or work of a committee may not be raised. Thus, for example, a question would be disallowed if it dealt with a vote in committee, with the attendance of Members at a committee meeting, or with the content of a committee report.

So nothing has changed with respect to that. I did make a ruling in this Assembly on May 1, 1997, with respect to the form and the relationship with respect to committees.

Now, out of interest today was a good example of a report coming from a committee chairman. The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill presented a report to the Assembly coming out of the Standing Committee on Private Bills. That report is debatable, could have been debated. So the question was, as the member moved, that there be concurrence in the report. No debate, but the question was called, and the question was passed.

3:00

Presumably when and if the chair of the Public Accounts Committee were to bring a report of that particular committee to the Assembly and the chair would be reflective of the operation of the committee, then there would have to be concurrence asked of that. There would be a debate. But other than agenda and scheduling, no. That applies to all committee chairmen, by the way.

Speaker's Ruling

Bills Containing Similar Provisions

The Speaker: I do need to just update the Assembly with respect to two bills. One, Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, is now at the Committee of the Whole stage, having passed second reading in the afternoon of November 15, 2005. Members will note that the bill is virtually identical to Bill 207, which has the same title, which has yet to come up for second reading. The authorities are clear that no two bills that are virtually the same can proceed after the House has made a decision on one. The House has already made a decision with respect to second reading of Bill 47, so Bill 207 will not be proceeded with and will come off the Order Paper.

head: **Orders of the Day**
Committee of Supply

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 2005-06**
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

Advanced Education

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Might I start by saying what a wonderful team of people I have the opportunity to work with in the Department of Advanced Education. We are joined by some of them in the gallery today, and I'd just like to briefly introduce them: the deputy minister, Bill Byrne; the assistant deputy minister,

Phil Gougeon; Marg Leathem; Gerry Waisman, who's in charge of the student assistance area; Blake Bartlett; Solomon Quarshie. Rai Batra and Michael Shields were going to be there; I don't see them, but that might just be my eyesight. I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House because they do a fantastic job on behalf of Alberta students.

Mr. Chairman, on April 19 we presented Advanced Education's supply estimates for the year. On that day I presented a new vision for our postsecondary system and the actions that we have taken as a province to achieve new vision. That day we received support to move forward with our vision, mission, goals, and strategies, and I believe we've achieved a significant degree of progress during this fiscal year.

There's still more that can be done always, and as the opportunities present themselves, we listen to partners. We consult with stakeholders. We've consulted with Albertans, and when opportunities come up, we take action. As a result of opportunities having come up, we have now before the House supplementary supply in the total amount of \$99 million, I believe. That \$99 million is made up of a number of component parts; \$8.1 million of that is a grant to Grant MacEwan College.

As a government we've made a commitment to increase access to postsecondary education for Albertans. The commitment is expected to add 15,000 new postsecondary spaces by 2007-08, 60,000 spaces by 2020. We've been encouraging and working closely with institutions to implement changes that will increase opportunities for students.

One of the significant outcomes of these efforts was Grant MacEwan's application for and receipt of degree-granting status starting 2006-2007. We made a commitment to support institutions with initiatives that will increase accessibility. To that end, we have provided Grant MacEwan with a one-time grant of \$8.1 million, which covers the start-up costs for two degree programs. That \$8.1 million is used for curriculum development, for the hiring of additional staff members, and will go towards facilities; for example, library upgrades and facility upgrades which were required in the review of the program.

As members will know, any new program has to go through the Alberta quality council, and the Alberta quality council will indicate if there are areas that they think need to be upgraded. In this case there were, and we were pleased to provide support for that.

Fifteen million dollars for the University of Calgary. We indicated in the spring of this year – in fact, the Legislature passed in Bill 1 the provision to set up the access to the future fund and to endow it with \$3 billion, and then in subsequent years \$135 million would be available in each year when it's fully funded to support or encourage individuals to contribute and the community to contribute to postsecondary education for quality, accessibility, and affordability.

Well, almost immediately upon tabling the bill, I had a phone call from the University of Calgary's president indicating that a donor had come forward who wanted to make a pledge of \$25 million to the University of Calgary engineering school to set up some very significant scholarships and to fund a chair and to fund some programs at the University of Calgary's Faculty of Engineering, which would be of significant benefit to engineering students. In order to assist the University of Calgary in achieving that donation, we agreed to move forward with a \$15 million matching contribution, actually a \$25 million matching contribution, but the \$15 million matches the money that's already received. Mr. Schulich's additional \$10 million will come later and will be eligible for matching later.

Although the access to the future fund was not fully funded as yet

and we didn't have the resources in place out of that fund to do this, we felt that it was a significant gift that ought not to be passed up. So we made the commitment to assist them in being able to deal with that.

Those two initiatives represent the first two items on our supplementary estimate list. The government contributions totalling \$23.1 million will not increase total government spending, Mr. Chairman. These initiatives are funded through a reallocation of \$4.6 million in voted spending as well as a reallocation of \$18.5 million in uncommitted funds from our statutory budgets into voted spending. So we need the supplementary estimate to be voted on to allow that reallocation although it does not increase government spending.

The additional \$80.5 million is for postsecondary facility infrastructure, and I'm sure the House would agree that when the opportunity is there to move ahead with the plans that we have in place for postsecondary infrastructure – and we have 21 public postsecondary institutions, all of whom are putting together their plans, know what their direction is or are looking at their direction for the future and what their infrastructure needs are going to be, and also, of course, have a number of areas in which they need to do some remediation or there needs to be some maintenance done. So we're very pleased that we could move ahead with \$80.5 million in that area.

The original budget for the 2005-2006 projects has remained in Infrastructure, where it was voted, but funding for new projects will reside with Advanced Education. Since April 1 \$185.8 million has been approved for new high-priority capital projects at postsecondary institutions, which is part of our plan to invest the surplus. Now, that money, Mr. Chairman, of course goes into the capital fund. But what we're asking for is for the Legislature today in supply to give approval for 80.5 million of those dollars to be voted for expenditure in this year to increase access to postsecondary education, increase research capacity, strengthen capacity in rural locations, respond to situations where infrastructure conditions and functionality affect program quality or program delivery, and contribute to the success of Campus Alberta initiatives, cross-ministry initiatives, community partnerships, et cetera.

I won't go through the myriad of programs that that involves, but I will indicate to the House that that involves \$15 million to assist the University of Alberta to purchase and renovate the Bay building, which is a partnership that they've created with the city of Edmonton and Edmonton Economic Development and will help them to relocate the learning transition facility that they have on the university campus; \$10 million of the commitment that was announced to Olds community learning campus; \$10 million which was announced to the University of Calgary and which assists them with this year's portion of the work towards the new space for the faculty of veterinary medicine and some other remedial work that they're doing and some planning work that they're doing relative to four major projects that they've talked about publicly; \$4 million to the University of Lethbridge for the Water and Environmental Science Building – the total approved funding for that building is \$12 million but \$4 million in spending this year – and additional projects right across the province, projects which will enhance the capacity and ability of the postsecondary learning institutions to make space available for students and faculty and advanced learning in the province.

I'd be happy to answer any questions or to deal with any of the subjects that have come up.

3:10

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased and intrigued to rise today to discuss supplementary estimates for the Department of Advanced Education. We have much else to do today, so I will attempt to be brief because we have a lot of ground to cover. We've already been informed that there is no opportunity to extend debate on supplementary estimates whatsoever, leaving at least a couple of departments already in some jeopardy of being discussed. We are talking about an awful lot of money here. We're talking just \$99 million for this department alone, the Ministry of Advanced Education, which at my allotted time if I take it all – and I promise I won't – works out to about a debate of \$5 million a minute. So let's get down to business here. I have essentially five questions for the minister.

Regarding the \$8.1 million in one-time funding to support implementation of the new Grant MacEwan College baccalaureate degree programs, many universities across Canada have clearly stated that they will not automatically accept a MacEwan degree as equivalent to a university degree for the purposes of postgraduate study. Would the minister explain how this money, this \$8.1 million, will ensure that MacEwan attains national recognition as a degree-granting institution so that MacEwan grads can enjoy the same access as graduates from the U of A, the U of L, the U of C, or Athabasca to a master's program at the institution of their choice anywhere in this nation? If this money won't, will he explain how he intends to achieve that? A baccalaureate degree, after all, is only worth having if it's the equal of the comparable degree from any other university.

Regarding the \$15 million to match the Schulich donation to the University of Calgary, would the minister confirm that this is off-budget spending from the unanticipated surplus versus dollars from the access to the future fund, one of whose purposes, of course, is to match private donations? When will the minister put the advisory council and other regulations into place regarding the access to the future fund that will transform this fund, absent those regulations, absent the existence of that council right now, from something that could be seen as being akin to the minister's personal piggy bank into an accountable decision-making body with clear rules and regulations?

Question 3. Regarding the \$80.5 million for additional postsecondary facilities infrastructure, would the minister please show the House specifically how this spending links to improving access to postsecondary education in Alberta? I'm looking for some hard numbers of spaces, of students, of FLEs here. Given that the current budget projected access growth or expanded system capacity of just over a thousand spaces, do these dollars merely contribute to that projection, or do they actually increase the projection, and if so, by how many spaces?

Still on access, the Campus Calgary group of institutions indicate that they need an additional 19,700 spaces in Calgary alone within five years, by the year 2010, in order to meet demand and support that city's growth. The government's commitment to Calgary in terms of FLEs as of September of this year is 390 spaces. Is it just me, or are those two figures just a little out of whack?

Finally, does the minister support the University of Calgary having to borrow \$113 million in order to move ahead on its library expansion, which is one of the U of C's access initiatives, in a timely fashion? If debt is bad for the government of Alberta, how can debt be good for a publicly funded institution of higher learning?

Those are my questions, Mr. Chair. I look forward to the answers. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very quickly, on the \$8.1 million for Grant MacEwan and degrees not automatically being accepted, to the best of my knowledge graduate programs don't automatically accept anyone. They look at the credentials to determine whether the credentials are appropriate and whether they're acceptable for the program. The understanding that I have – and I've delved into this quite significantly – is that the rigour of the program that Grant MacEwan will be offering is one which will stand up to scrutiny among universities and colleges across this country for going to the next level if somebody is applying for a master's program. The Alberta quality council is set up as an accreditation process, I think I could say the most rigorous in the country, the only accreditation process of such rigour in the country although there are others in two other provinces that are set up similarly, and other provinces across the country also have ways of doing accreditation. One of the things that Alberta is leading is a process for national accreditation standards, which are extremely important.

Now, some would suggest that membership in AUCC is an accreditation process, but it's actually not. It's membership in AUCC, which is an important thing for those that want to join it, but it's not the be-all and end-all of accreditation. So it's important for Alberta institutions for recognition nationally and internationally and for Canadian institutions for recognition internationally to have an appropriate national accreditation standard. Alberta is leading the way in helping to prepare that, and the Alberta quality council, if I may say so, is at the leading edge of accreditation both in terms of its quality and process. So I'm very confident that graduates of Grant MacEwan's new programs will be seen to be of a quality in nature that any university in this country will want to have their best and brightest.

With respect to the Schulich gift to the University of Calgary, as I indicated in my opening remarks, the revenue is not yet coming out of the access to the future fund, so that \$15 million is being proposed to be matched out of monies that are available by reallocation from within the department's existing funds. It's not the way I'd choose to do it necessarily, but that was a gift which did make and will make a very, very significant difference and was one that we couldn't allow to be passed up. The University of Calgary was very keen on making that arrangement. That's exactly what the access to the future fund was set up to do, so we felt that it was appropriate to move forward with that particular process.

In terms of the \$80.5 million, all of those postsecondary infrastructure dollars are intended to improve access quality for students in this province. Some of them are being used with respect to maintenance projects, which are necessary to keep existing facilities serviceable or to improve them; for example, \$3 million to the Grande Prairie college to replace some portable trailers that they have that they've been using for a significant period of time which are no longer really habitable and ought to be replaced. I can't say that all of those dollars are going to add space, but a significant amount of those dollars are going to add space, and certainly all of those dollars are going to make sure that we have quality spaces available for students to learn in and for professors and teachers to teach in. That's a very important part of making sure that access is there for students.

With respect to Campus Calgary I think the hon. member asked: is he the only one who thinks there's a problem with the numbers? I think he probably is. So going on to the fifth question . . . no. I think what he intended to ask was about how we're going to get to the number of spaces we need for Calgary students to access opportunities for education. We're working very closely with Calgary institutions and all the institutions in the province to make

sure that there is a place for every Albertan who wants to advance their education. We've set some ambitious targets; we're working very quickly towards those targets.

I think the number that the member referenced in terms of the number of additional spaces being 390 is very significantly lowballing the number of additional spaces made available to students. I think he's probably referencing the recent access growth fund announcement which, of course, talks about some specific additional spaces being paid for. He should be aware – I hope he's aware – that there's been a 30 per cent increase proposed in this year's budget and the next two years in the business plan. That money, the increase of 6 per cent to the base grants plus additional grants that bring it up to about 10 per cent on average, is money which institutions are using to expand access for students in programs.

3:20

There's a significant increase in capacity into the system, not the least of which, I might say, are probably close to 4,000 and perhaps as high as 4,500 new apprenticeship spaces, new apprentices recruited into the system, many of which, I am certain, will be studying in Calgary. So lots of additional spaces in the system, lots more work to do in that area. I would certainly appreciate any support that the hon. member and his colleagues in caucus will give in terms of ensuring the additional resources. When we bring Budget 2006 to the floor, I'm sure he'll support additional resources going into accessing more spaces in that area.

We're working very closely with the institutions, as I said, to make sure that the capacity is there. There is right across the system some capacity already in terms of the physical space, and we have to make sure that we make best utilization of that. We're moving ahead with the colleges and universities, leading a design of a single point of entry, for example, so that we can make best use of space.

I think there was a second question with respect to the Schulich donation, a second question with respect to when the rules and regulations might come in with respect to the fund. I can tell the hon. member that we had an interim committee review the issue of how we can best allocate resources and deal with it. They've reported. We've now sent that report out to stakeholders for comment, or it's in the process of going out. It probably hasn't left my office yet, but it will be going out in the next day. I'm anticipating comments back from institutions and other stakeholders and interested parties with respect to that report. When we get those comments back, we will be then bringing forward a form and structure for the application of funds.

There's a basic rule with respect to application of funds which should assuage any concerns the hon. member has. In fact, I think he referenced it as the minister's personal piggy bank, which is really quite an offensive way to talk about public money. I can assure you that I would never treat public money in that way, and no member of this government would consider that. It's very clear that the access to the future fund is there to encourage both the contributions from the community, commitment from the community, stepping up of the community to improve access, quality, or affordability in our public education system and to provide for resources for ingenuity or, as the committee's report calls it, a renaissance, a way of developing projects which would transfer knowledge or develop knowledge.

Those two aspects of the fund, I think, are very clear. It's very clear that any public comment that's been made by this minister about the fund to date about potential projects are all areas where people have stepped forward, making a commitment to a public institution in a manner which the institution has confirmed will be utilized for access, quality, or affordability. Those are the basic

rules and guidelines. Of course, the only payout in the context of the fund so far is the \$15 million that we're proposing here for the Schulich monies.

The last question was with respect to the \$113 million for the University of Calgary's digital library project, an excellent project which I hope will be going ahead very quickly. It will in fact free up other space around the campus for expansion of academic space and other necessary space for the University of Calgary to add access in that area. So that's a project which is a very important project.

We do need to look at how we build postsecondary facilities across the province, and when I say we, I mean the system, not just government. If you take a look out over five years and perhaps as long as 10 years, there's a need of \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion worth of facilities that either have been proposed or are being part of a conceptual plan or are under what I would say might be expected after institutions have studied their go-forward process. Obviously, not all of that is going to be funded in any one year, nor can we commit to funding it. We've moved aggressively and, I think, appropriately on the highest priority areas.

I welcome the opportunity and have taken the opportunity to sit down with institutions to talk about how they might plan their 10-year strategic horizon for providing space, making space available to students, improving quality, making academic space available so they can attract the best and brightest professors and teachers to the province. Certainly, we'll work with them in any appropriate format to see how we can put space in place as quickly as is appropriate to move forward and make that space accessible. So I'm not going to shut the door on a proposal that's legitimately made by a legitimate board-governed institution with respect to how they might legitimately finance postsecondary projects to get them going faster than we might be able to put the resources out.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the record the minister knows that I am eager to work co-operatively and collaboratively in making the system better. He and I and everybody else in this House and in this province have a direct stake in excellence in postsecondary education access, affordability, quality, and sustainability. I think we're all on the same page of the program as far as that's concerned. He's asked for my support, and of course although I cannot ever offer unconditional support, the minister should know – and I think he does know – that he can count on a supportive attitude from me as long as I get straight answers to my questions.

One of the areas in which, of course, I'm looking for straight answers is in hard numbers having to do with how many spaces we are creating. There have been many promises made around that by the minister in terms of 15,000 spaces across the province over three years, 30,000 over six, and 60,000 by the year 2020. By comparison to that, we have a very hard target from Campus Calgary of 19,700 spaces in the city of Calgary alone by 2010.

Those are goals in both cases, and what I'm interested in in terms of access are hard numbers as measures of performance in terms of how many spaces have been created, are being created, and how they relate to the money spent here.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm interested in those very same numbers, but I think the hon. member has to understand and appreciate that the campus of the 21st century is not the campus

of the 19th century. We're not just talking about adding traditional space to traditional universities and counting individual students coming in for the traditional semester. What we have in Alberta today, and very appropriately so, is a wide range of student opportunities, learning opportunities for Albertans. Some of those Albertans, even Calgarian Albertans, are going to be attending at Athabasca University electronically and online. Some of them are going to be attending . . .

Mr. Taylor: They can still be counted?

Mr. Hancock: Yes, they can still be counted, and we need to be able to develop counting mechanisms to do that and to make sure that we're doing it.

The important question is: does every Albertan that wants to have access to a learning opportunity get that access to learning opportunity? That's the common outcome that we're trying to do. I agree with the hon. member that there need to be measurables, and we're going to be developing those measurables. We're going to be finding the ways to best account for the way in which we increase capacity. But it's not quite as simple, and that's the only point I was making in saying: well, we need 19,700 spaces. I appreciate that institutions look forward and strategize and have a strategic plan to achieve numbers like that. I certainly appreciate the work that went into that. Unfortunately, it's not quite as simple as that.

Again, if the hon. member has any advice or ideas with respect to this area, I'd be open to them. I can indicate to the hon. member that we are developing formats to be able to properly assess progress along the process to achieve those 60,000 spaces that we're talking about. As long as he recognizes that those spaces come in many different ways and for many different students and many different Albertans who want to learn and move. Some of them will be moving to literacy, others will be moving to a PhD, and that's a very complex system.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I take this opportunity to join debate on supplementary estimates for 2005-2006 on the Department of Advanced Education. I thank the minister for being quite open to receiving questions and broader comments with respect to the future of the system and how we can get where we want to get over the next 15 to 20 years.

I was listening to the minister with some care when he talked about the expansion of the capacity of the system to have more spaces in it, the accessibility issue. That certainly has been one of the key issues that everyone in this province, including the minister and our sides of the House, has been talking about.

3:30

I just want to give some figures here that will provide the context for the debate. Mr. Chairman, in 1994-95, about 10 years ago, there were 106,000 full-load equivalents at universities, colleges, technical institutes, private universities, et cetera, and at the Banff Centre. There were about 106,000 full-load equivalents available in the system. In '99-2000 – five, six years later – the number went up to 119,574 full-load equivalents. So over five years the number of FLEs in Alberta went up by 13,000. Between '92-93, with 105,000 FLEs, and 2004-05, with about 139,000, the number of Alberta full-load equivalents increased by 34 per cent.

The government is proposing an increase of 60,000 spaces altogether over the next 15 years. My question to the minister is: if the rate of increase and growth over the last 10 years is any guide to

the rate of growth in future years and, in fact, to expedite the rate of growth given that we know that the participation rate in the postsecondary system in Alberta is one of the lowest in the country, how is that commitment that he has made to 60,000 spaces over the next 15 years going to lead to addressing effectively the problem of accessibility for Albertans over the next 10 or 15 years?

That's one key question I think we should never take our eyes off. It's an important issue. When we are debating these issues in the House, I think we should pay attention to the numbers and to the commitments that the government makes in relation to the information that I have on the rates of increase and the demand for spaces in the system.

Similarly, Mr. Chairman, another question that I have. I was hoping that the minister in the supplementary estimates request would pay some attention to addressing the ongoing concerns of the postsecondary students of this province with respect to convincing this government or having this government act on their concerns with the increase in tuition fees.

The government has over the last year made a commitment for the coming year to continue with the so-called tuition rebate program, about which students express a great deal of concern. They would have liked to see, at least, a firm commitment on the part of this minister and this government that it will not remain a rebate but will become a freeze and that, in fact, the government will present a schedule of reduction of the fees, rolling the fees back if we are to induce students, who are presently qualified to take advantage of postsecondary education but don't, to seek admission and participation in the system. If we keep the tuition fee issue the way it is now, that the students continue to worry about the annual increase in tuition fees forever, we will not be able to get the students who are presently staying out of the system to come into the system and become participants in it.

To the minister: why has he not taken this opportunity in bringing forward the supplementary estimates to ask for more money, to at least say that the postsecondary institutions will receive from this government an increase in funding added to their base budgets or whatever so that they don't have to continue to assume that they'll be called upon to increase or they'll be allowed to increase tuition fees two years down the line when this rebate is gone? I think there's a need for the government to make a clear statement to institutions that the base funding will be adjusted in a way that postsecondary institutions can assure their students that there will be no further increase in tuition fees and, on top of that, that there will in fact be systematic, properly scheduled rollbacks in those tuition fees.

The government is proposing in the next budget, if I may use a reference to that, to move forward with \$1.4 billion to \$1.6 billion in corporate tax reduction. If the government reduces the tuition fees by 50 per cent starting next year, it will cost the Alberta Treasury only about \$250 million. Imagine this. This government talks about postsecondary education being its highest priority. It talks a great deal about that. The minister talks about this and certainly conveys the message to students and faculties and management of our postsecondary institutions that he means business on this issue, yet the words which the minister uses and the government uses to put priority on postsecondary education are not followed up in action by making a commitment of, say, reducing tuition fees by 50 per cent, which will cost no more than \$250 million a year, and proceeding with a permanent loss on an annual basis of \$1.6 billion to the public finances of this province if it proceeds with its reduction of corporate taxes come next year.

I would have hoped that the minister would have indicated his intention by way of the supplementary estimates that he's going to

take concrete action that will assure students that the government has been listening, that it is planning to take action that will deliver goods to students that will deliver a reduction in their tuition fee loads as well as other costs.

Having said that, let me ask the minister another question. I notice that there is a \$4.6 million reduction in the student loan relief-benefit program. This money is going to be switched over to some other expenditure as part of the supplementary estimates presented here today. I think this warrants some explanation. What information is the minister able to give to the House with respect to why it is that the student loan relief-benefit will in fact go down by \$4.6 million this year when we know that more and more students are in need of that relief, more and more students are feeling the pressures of unbearable costs of going to a college or a university or an institute and staying there? Many of them are of course dropping out without completing or, rather than four years, taking six years, perhaps, or seven years to complete.

I think we need some explanation as to why this money is being saved and how come this is happening when, in fact, we do know that the need for relief is ever-increasing and is growing every year because of the increasing burden of the costs of going to school in this province, whether you go to university or college or whatever.

The third issue is the minister's response to the question of the quality of four-year degrees being granted at our colleges. Grant MacEwan College, certainly, has been given the go-ahead to do that in certain areas. Mount Royal may be another institution which is proceeding with that. There may be other colleges that are in a similar situation.

Now, it is true that we have the Alberta quality council, which must vet all the applications that come forward from colleges requesting the powers to grant these degrees, so there's some quality assurance in the work that the Alberta quality council does. But let me share an example with the minister on this issue because the Alberta quality council is a mechanism which tries to provide a certain standard, a certain benchmark, a kind of standard that must be met before colleges can begin to offer degrees. A niece of mine, going to one of the well-known two-year arts colleges in Vancouver, decided after finishing a two-year program at one of those colleges in Vancouver to go to Toronto and seek completion of the following two years at Ryerson University in Toronto. She did get the admission, but she has to do all four years. The two years' work that she had done on the assumption that those two years would be treated as the first two years of a degree program, regardless of where in this country she transfers to complete that program, did not prove to be true.

3:40

While the minister is saying that there's no guarantee provided by any university that a four-year degree, whether earned at a university or college, means guaranteed admission to a graduate program, I think the problem is more serious than that. It is a question of whether or not that four-year degree is considered equivalent to a four-year degree earned at a university, not merely a question of the next step, you know, in the student's pursuit of their program at the graduate level.

Employers make those distinctions. Those data are available. That is why the AUCC, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, is an institution that many colleges who want to proceed with granting four-year degrees want to look up to and try to meet the expectations of and the standards set by this national council on the kinds of facilities and faculty qualifications and other infrastructure that must be in place in order for the institution that's aspiring to offer a four-year degree to be able to produce graduates whose

degrees will be respected at other places, not only within the province but across Canada. So there is a problem there, Mr. Minister, and I want you to address that.

Related to the \$8.1 million going to Grant MacEwan College, it's a one-time cost, as the estimates document states. Now, some of this \$8.1 million is supposed to be spent on recruiting faculty. I'm having difficulty understanding how a one-time grant, which will include hiring additional faculty to provide the coursework and supervision and lab work and all of that for a four-year program, can be sustained by a college. Is it going to become part of the line budget and then be funded by the ministry? How is it going to happen? I have some concern about asking a college to go ahead because the ministry is making a one-time grant to hire faculty. What happens the following year to the faculty? How are they retained on the college payroll if this is a one-time grant and a one-time only grant? So that's another question that I have for the minister, that I hope he will try to address.

The fourth question: "\$80,500,000 for additional post-secondary facilities infrastructure." Now, the minister knows and it's public information that postsecondary institutions certainly have huge deferred maintenance costs and deficits that run into hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. For the University of Alberta alone, I understand that those estimates – and you would have, perhaps, more precise figures than I – run to about \$250 million in deferred maintenance costs. We have a large postsecondary system. Of this \$80.5 million, what percentage or how many millions of dollars from this sum are going toward deferred maintenance and what portion is going toward installation of new facilities or setting up new labs or setting up new classrooms? I think that part of your observations on how this money is to be spent had to do with increasing the number of spaces available at some of the receiving institutions. I understand that the U of A's portion of this amount goes to, I suppose, making changes to the Bay building downtown. No? No.

Anyway, so these are some of the questions for the minister to comment on, and then we'll see what happens. Thank you.

Mr. Hancock: I can indicate to the member that \$37 million of the \$80.5 million is directly for infrastructure maintenance although in some of those projects there might be a replacement as opposed to a repair. I would reference in that regard Grande Prairie Regional College. Three million dollars is going to Grande Prairie Regional College, which would replace the portables rather than repairing them. But most of that money, that \$37 million, is going for major projects like redevelopment of a shop or replacement of a roof or those sorts of repairs, the deferred maintenance item that you're talking about. The \$15 million for the Bay building is part of the \$80 million as well but supplemental to the \$37 million, not included in it, so that's not part of what I would consider to be renovation or an infrastructure maintenance program.

About half of the money is going directly to infrastructure maintenance programs although if you took a look at the rest of them, you might find some of the money in the rest of them; for example, the \$10 million that's being allocated this year for the veterinary medicine and project planning. I believe, subject to correction, that part of that veterinary medicine money is remediating some space or changing some space, which might deal with some of the deferred maintenance. Sometimes a new project actually reduces the deferred maintenance because it replaces a building that would otherwise have had to be redeveloped. So I would say approximately 50 per cent of that is going to what you might have included in your deferred maintenance numbers.

Going back to your first question, addressing the issue of accessi-

bility, I appreciate the numbers that you brought to the table. I think those are very informative. You ended up suggesting – and I'm not sure where you got your numbers – that there were 139,000 students in 2004. So if we were to add 60,000 spaces, one might say: well, that's a 50 per cent increase in student spaces. Now, that would be counting traditional student spaces, of course, and I already indicated in the answer to the opposition Advanced Education critic that what we're talking about in Advanced Education is the opportunity for every Albertan to advance their education. It's not just postsecondary in the traditional way that you talk about. It's not just university, college, technical institutes. There need to be opportunities for more adult Albertans to get literacy skills. There need to be opportunities for Albertans to have other learning opportunities. So while I appreciate the numbers, they don't tell the whole story.

Nonetheless, we do need to move to create those spaces, and those spaces are going to be created in a number of different ways. Spaces is probably a bad way to describe it; they're actually learning opportunities. There are a number of ways of doing that: by increasing community learning programs, by increasing the accessibility to trade skills programs. We're increasing apprenticeships by adding spaces in the traditional way. We've committed a lot of resources and will continue to commit resources to building the water building at the University of Lethbridge and redoing the Cousins Building at Lethbridge Community College and those sorts of areas.

So we're addressing the issue of accessibility, but I think the hon. member really in his remarks hit at the real nature of the issue, and that is that as we move to increase the participation rate to have more Alberta students finish high school and transition to postsecondary and more Albertans participate in the postsecondary system, we get those numbers up, and that's the real issue. Then we have to make sure that the learning opportunities are available for them. So we have to be talking about all three aspects of the system – access, quality, and affordability – and it all fits hand in glove. But we are moving very, very strongly to make sure that there are places available right across the spectrum.

Some of those will be electronic learning opportunities: a lot of colleges and universities working together in eCampus Alberta; Athabasca University working very hard to make sure that learning opportunities are available that way; Northern Lakes operating to make sure that in all of the communities they serve, there are learning opportunities. So a number of different ways of making sure that those spaces are available. I think the numbers are very interesting and put an interesting perspective on it. I can assure the hon. member that that's really one of our very important tasks.

3:50

The second question he raised was with respect to why we weren't bringing forward a budget with respect to tuition fees. The hon. member will know that we're in the middle of the year, that the postsecondary grants have gone out to the postsecondaries. Yes, we could, I suppose, give them a supplemental grant in the middle of the year, but it's much more appropriate to budget that sort of process as part of the ongoing budget process. That would be my intention, to deal with the broad-based grants to institutions in that way rather than trying to shoehorn it into the 1 per cent contingency allowance that we have on the operating side of our budget.

What we really have here is an opportunity, because of the surplus revenues that go by law into the sustainability fund unless they're allocated to the capital fund, to allocate some of those surplus revenues into the access to the future fund, into the scholarship fund. We've done that. We've allocated, I think, a billion dollars so far into those two funds and additional revenues as well into the

ingenuity fund and into the AHFMR fund, which enhances educational opportunities for Albertans but also moves on the infrastructure that the hon. member indicated was so important. So I think it is more appropriate at this time, you know, coming forward with supplemental estimates, to deal with the monies that are available, the nonrenewable resource revenues that are available, in terms of allocating those dollars to the capital fund and to the endowment funds rather than to deal with the ongoing operational side, where we're limited to 1 per cent of the contingency allowance.

Now, the hon. member's seatmate yelled out "prosperity bonuses," and I think the hon. member as well alluded to the context of a tax reduction in the amount of about \$1.4 billion. I assume that he's alluding to the prosperity bonus as well. That, indeed, is going to be done in accordance with the act that's before the House as a one-time tax refund because as the hon. member knows, you can't reduce tuition fees on an ongoing, every-year basis with one-time money. It doesn't work. But every student in Alberta will get a \$400 prosperity bonus, so there is some assistance to them with their living costs, their cost of gas and utilities and, perhaps, the cost of tuition. So in some ways we have assisted students by doing the prosperity bonus.

Taking that \$1.4 billion, which is, again, nonrenewable resource revenue, which is not consistent, year-to-year revenue, and talking about it in terms of an operational budget just means that you haven't quite got the picture of how budgeting happens. So I'd say it again. We have nonrenewable resource revenue, which if we don't allocate it – we allocate \$4.75 billion of nonrenewable resource revenue to program spending, that's the limit under the Fiscal Responsibility Act. The rest of it goes into the sustainability fund and can be allocated to the capital fund, which we've done. It can be allocated to savings, and we've put about \$1.4 billion, by my recollection, into savings in terms of the access to the future fund, in terms of the scholarship fund, both very important investments for Alberta students.

I think we are giving a message to students that postsecondary is important. I think he said: why don't we put something behind our words? We have. A 30 per cent increase in the operating budget this year, next year, and the year after is huge, absolutely, fundamentally huge in terms of the process. Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. Words are followed up by commitments. Those words have been followed up very, very strongly by commitments not just to continuing the tuition rebate but to funding appropriately institutions so that they can provide quality learning opportunities for students.

In terms of the numbers that the hon. member used, he suggested that it would cost \$250 million to cut the tuition fees back 50 per cent, I think, and my quick math is slightly different than his. My quick math suggested that it would be more like \$860 million, perhaps even a little higher than that, if you go by the fact that about an average 5 per cent increase, which we rebated last year, cost \$43 million. If you made that 10 per cent, that would be \$86 million. That was about a \$250 rebate. The maximum increase for tuition fees last year was somewhere around \$250. Closer to \$284, actually. So that \$284 increase cost us \$43 million. That was just in the public institutions. That didn't include the private, not-for-profit institutions. Anyway, I don't want to quibble about numbers, but I'd suggest that he's way low on the estimate.

With respect to the \$4.6 million reduction in student relief benefit, that is a puzzle. That is something that we do need to get to the bottom off, and we're doing it in the affordability review and the affordability policy for next spring in accordance with tuition. What that basically means is that we've had to make a smaller allocation for future costs of student loans, which means among other things

that perhaps the default rates have gone down. What this is is a provision for future cost. It's an accounting entry which allows us to book the future costs to government of the loans that have gone out, and those future costs to government come in loans that are not repaid. They're future liabilities for loan relief completion payments and defaults. That's basically what it covers. There are some other areas that fall into that.

The long and short of it is that what that may suggest is that students are not taking up loan funding at the same level we might have otherwise expected them to. Or perhaps it's a more positive thing and says that they're actually paying loans back at a higher, faster rate and that there are fewer losses. There are some interesting things to look into there, and I can assure the hon. member that we are looking through that to find out what's going on there and to find out if we can redeploy those monies in future years, perhaps, into other types of assistance or support or other types of opportunities for students.

Now, just so the hon. member will know, student relief was about \$35.4 million. Student loans and financial assistance was in the nature of \$483 million. So there's a significant amount of money going out to students. This \$4.6 million is basically an accounting. It's in essence what you might in other circumstances call an allowance for doubtful accounts, and we've been able to reduce that allowance and thus free up some of the resources to be able to use in the current year for other important spending opportunities.

Quality of four-year degrees: absolutely an important, important issue. The hon. member touched on the other aspect of that, which is equally important, and that's transferability. First of all, we're very, very comfortable that the quality council of Alberta has been constituted well. It's got some stellar people on it, and it's going to be recognized as being leading edge in terms of quality assurance in terms of the degree programs.

Yes, any institution that's offering a degree is going to have to get degree respectability. They're going to have to earn that degree respectability, but fortunately we have some great platforms to work off. Grant MacEwan has been doing great work and is recognized in the business community and the community at large as having top-notch learning opportunities for students. So their existing programs are well received, the existing quality of their work is well received, and we fully expect that that reception for their programs will be translated into the new programs that they offer, so they will have respectability in our community.

We also expect that they will have acceptability across the country. I know that the president is making it his priority to talk to other institutions across the country and work with them to make sure that they know of the quality of MacEwan degrees. So I am very, very confident that students with those degrees will be accepted, but as you point out, most people are not necessarily transferring to a further degree program. The degree acceptance in the community is extremely important. Luckily, Grant MacEwan, Mount Royal, and our other institutions all have stellar reputations in our community and are well known for the quality of graduates that they have.

Transferability is a very important issue. Alberta is well ahead of the pack in terms of our Council on Admissions and Transfer. But there's always more work to be done to ensure that there's a seamless opportunity for students, that prior learning can be assessed. For example, people going into the trades should know that after they've had a career in the trades, if they've amassed knowledge and experience, that knowledge and experience should count for something if they want to go back into the learning system to pick up another credential or to acquire other knowledge, skills, and abilities. So we work very hard on that area. We've got a

stellar group of people, again, in counselling, admissions, and transfers, headed by Mrs. Lucille Walters, and doing a very good job. Always more to be done in that area.

4:00

Certainly, within the province it works a lot better than it does across the country, so Alberta again will be working across the country to make sure that our transferability, not just on our degree programs but even from one college to another, works a lot better for students. That's very important.

Grant MacEwan. I dealt with the quality issue, but there was a reference to the \$8.1 million. I'm sure the hon. member will understand that when we talk about the one-time costs of recruiting staff, we're not talking about the ongoing salary of staff. There's a difference. But there are costs of recruiting staff: setting up offices, making space available, all those sorts of things. Those are the one-time costs of recruiting staff, and that would be in on this side.

We have indicated to Grant MacEwan that they will receive funding for the student spaces they make available and that that funding is what will go into their ongoing operational funding, which will be used to pay for consumables and for staff salaries and those sorts of things. In setting up a program, there are one-time costs. Because we want to encourage institutions to do this, we agreed to participate in helping to pay some of the one-time costs rather than have them take them out of their normal operating budget.

I dealt with the \$80.5 million in infrastructure, so I'd be pleased to answer any other questions you might have.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you. I want to thank the minister for the detailed response to my observations and questions. The issue of accessibility and the number of spaces that are needed in this province is a critical one, and there are some numbers here that the minister might find helpful, although I'm sure his very competent department staff do have some of those numbers.

Alberta has the lowest university participation rate in Canada. It's about 15.8 per cent. These are from the government's own numbers. Only 43 per cent of high school students move on to postsecondary education in Alberta, the lowest rate in Canada. A major contributing factor, obviously, is the cost of education, not just tuition but the overall cost of education. The minister is quite aware of that. While absolute numbers have been rising with the population increase, on a per capita basis the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in Alberta is 17 per cent below the national average.

Alberta has the highest high school dropout rates in Canada. Only 66.5 per cent of students earn a high school diploma in three years in Alberta compared to a 75.6 per cent national average. Imagine if our high school graduation rate moved up to the national average. There would be even greater demand and pressure on the accessibility side of the equation in this province.

Getting more students who graduate to college, university, some sort of technical program does require financing. Many students do take advantage of the Students Finance Board provisions for loans. To get more of them there, I think that if we moved to grants more than to loans, it would certainly make a difference and would encourage more students to come in.

This decrease by \$4.6 million in the student loan relief benefit program can be interpreted many ways, and I appreciate that the minister has tried to speculate on why it might be that we are projecting a drop in the need for providing relief to the tune of \$4.6 million to the end of this fiscal year. One possibility is that, in fact,

more and more students who find it extremely hard to take advantage of education – some are not turning up to enter the postsecondary system – are dropping out sooner than they need to. But we do need a more firm explanation of why it is that the need for loan relief is going down. It can't be because the costs have become more bearable. We know that the costs have been going up exponentially. We have been hearing that from students. The minister himself has heard about it at his forum and from many other sources. So I think we need some firmer and more clear answers to the question.

To me it's worrisome unless we get clear answers as to why it is that that need seems to have dropped this year. I don't know what happened over the last few years, if this is the first time it's happened, or if there's a pattern over the last few years that we need to look at. The minister has the resources to do that kind of research, and certainly it will be very helpful for us to know why it is that it's happening.

The one last comment that I want to make, Mr. Chairman, has to do with the overall deferred maintenance costs bill. It's close to a billion dollars, according to my numbers here. This comes from a submission of the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations, August 2005, to Alberta Advanced Education as part of the Learning Alberta exercise that the minister has just gone through. Only about 45 per cent of postsecondary education facilities are in good condition; 55 per cent are not in what is rated as good condition.

So these are some of the numbers that I hope the minister will take another look at and see how we need to respond to that.

I'll conclude, Mr. Chairman, my comments.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, of course, I certainly appreciate, again, the homework that the hon. member has done. I'm certainly well aware of the deferred maintenance issues. I understand from the hon. member's comments that he is excited about the fact that we've been provided with more resources, asking the Legislature to confirm that provision of more resources so that we can deal with some of the deferred maintenance issues and ensure the quality of learning spaces and teaching spaces for students and for professors and teachers in our province. We have work to do in that area. We know we have work to do in that area, and I'm sure that the hon. member, then, won't mind one bit if, as a result of the third quarter we find additional revenues available, we make some announcements with respect to additional programs and come back to the Legislature again for approval of those.

There has been some real and implied criticism of the government for moving ahead and governing and providing resources to deal with just those issues that the hon. member has raised. I'm really pleased that he has indicated indirectly, if not directly, his support for our continuing to govern in that way and to make those commitments as the resources are available and to move ahead with those dearly needed projects as and when we can acquire the resources to do so. So thank you for that.

With respect to the drop, I don't think it helps, really, to speculate. I think the hon. member is right. We should do more research and get the detailed information with respect to why the change, but understand, again, that that's an accounting provision equivalent to a loan loss type of provision or an allowance for doubtful accounts. There could be some aspect of that that is as a result of a decrease in the number of students requiring financial assistance, and that could come for a number of reasons. It could even be as a result of a stronger economy, perhaps, that fewer students take up loans.

The interesting thing is that we do need to do more work, and that's why we will be working through the winter, taking some of

the information and certainly the visions and the frameworks that we got out of the summit process that we've just gone through and coming forward with an affordability in tuition policy in the spring. We will be doing the research to see what we need to do to make sure that finances are not a barrier to any student getting an education.

That's the mantra we have. I believe it's in place. We've got a very good group of people in student learner assistance. There's always a glitch on an individual basis, and they work very, very hard to deal with those when they're brought to their attention, but for the most part the system works well for the students that apply and need assistance to get an education. It's a decent system. It's a very, very good system, as a matter of fact, and it works well for most people, but we have to make sure that it works well for all people who need it, and we're working very hard to make sure that that is the case.

I'm not sure that I can accept at face value the member's assertion that the major contributing factor to a 15 per cent university rate or a 43 per cent transition to postsecondary or the highest dropout rate in the country is because the cost of postsecondary is too high. I'm sorry. That's not the reality that anybody is aware of. There's no research to back up that assertion.

4:10

In fact, we do need to work very, very hard. Moving to the national average of high school completion and transition to postsecondary is not acceptable. We need to move to a point where every Albertan or a very significant number graduate from high school. If 70 per cent of the new jobs in a knowledge-based economy in the future are going to require some form of postsecondary, then that's what we need to aspire to, for Albertans to reach those levels. That's going to take considerable resources and considerable work.

So again I thank the hon. member for his support in our getting those resources so that we can continue to do the work both budget to budget and in year, as and when resources are available.

Dr. Pannu: I never made the assumption that the low rate of completion of high school can somehow be explained by the cost of postsecondary education. What I said was: imagine if our high school completion rate went up, if we succeeded, using whatever means, in increasing that rate to the national average, to 70 per cent from 66 per cent, how much more demand there will be for spaces and opportunities at the postsecondary level. That's the point that I made.

The second point that I want to make to the minister – there's some confusion in the minister's mind. When I referred to \$1.4 billion, I wasn't referring to the actions that the government has taken now but to the projected cuts in corporate taxes that the government has already stated its intention to bring back in the new budget. What that means is a minimum of \$1.4 billion annual loss to the public Treasury if those corporate tax cuts are introduced in the coming budget. I juxtaposed the readiness of the government to lose that \$1.4 billion on an annual basis with what it'll cost to roll back the tuition fees by 50 per cent.

My numbers are \$250 million. The minister disputed that. Certainly, we can look at those numbers if they want. But I juxtaposed the government's reluctance to go in the direction of increasing costs of funding postsecondary institutions by \$250 million to achieve the 50 per cent reduction in tuition but, at the same time, its willingness and readiness to lose \$1.4 billion on an annual basis, every year, from the public Treasury if it proceeded, before it does anything about postsecondary education, with tax cuts to corporations.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to discuss next year's budget when next year's budget is presented. If there is indeed a \$1.4 billion corporate tax cut at that time, I will be pleased to discuss that in the context of what, if any, increase there might be for postsecondary education. I think that would be an appropriate discussion for that point in time.

Right now we're talking about supplementary estimates, and I was explaining the difference between our ability to budget out of the contingency allowance and what was available on the surplus side. That's why I assumed that he was on the same page as I was and was talking about that side. I apologize if I misapprehended him. But I will be here, hopefully, to discuss supply next February, March, or April when it comes forward.

With respect to his assertion that we would need more space if we got up to national graduation standards and transition standards, oh happy day that we could get there. I think that's what we ought to aspire to. All of us ought to be working towards encouraging our young people to complete their education and to move to postsecondary in whatever their passion might be, whether it's welding, whether it's art, whether it's political science, economics, building houses, whatever it might be. We need to encourage more of our young people. If we could get not to the national average but to a point where every young person graduates from high school, that would be a great day. I'm sure every member of this House would be more than happy to foot the bill that would be required to provide the spaces for them to move to postsecondary.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Just one very brief note because I'm anxious to move on. I would like to offer a revolutionary suggestion to this minister and the House. Consider discussing the budget in this House before approving projects and spending the money rather than seeking after the fact rubber-stamping approval.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, no provincial Legislature in this country sits every day of the year. If you compare it to other comparable jurisdictions, some states in the United States sit every two years, sit once a spring session every two years. Different budgets are done in different ways.

One of the things the hon. member ought to understand is the difference between the government and the Legislature. Governments are taxed with the opportunity and the responsibility of governing, and they are accountable to the Legislature. We have been governing, and now we're accounting.

The Chair: After considering the 2005-2006 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the Department of Advanced Education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

Agreed to:
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$99,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Gaming

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to answer questions on behalf of the Minister of Finance requesting a supplemental amount of \$75 million for Gaming. The government has announced the uses of this \$75 million, but I'll be happy to recap. It's very brief. It's only three items really.

Seventy million dollars is requested to provide funding assistance for two of our well-known and far-reaching agricultural societies in the province. Northlands Park and Calgary Exhibition and Stampede will each receive \$35 million for capital redevelopment projects. This funding is part of the province's investment in centennial projects.

Northlands plans to build a new exhibition facility to meet the increasing needs of a growing region. They'll continue to host millions of visitors at numerous events for years to come. The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede will use the funding for upgrades to the Roundup Centre as part of their major expansion plans to continue holding world-class events throughout the year.

Northlands and Stampede, both rooted in agriculture, have demonstrated community spirit and continue to enhance the lifestyle of Albertans. Mr. Chairman, we are very fortunate in Alberta to have these facilities and an overall wonderful quality of life, but as we've seen recently, other countries have not been so fortunate. The additional \$10 million is being requested for two disaster assistance payments. The province committed \$5 million each for urgent funding assistance for relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina and the devastating earthquake in Pakistan. Alberta Gaming has provided the disaster funds and now needs to increase our spending authority accordingly to continue with the Gaming ministry's program delivery.

In total, the funding commitment outlined previously amounted to \$80 million. However, Gaming is only asking for \$75 million in supplemental spending as the ministry has identified \$5 million in our budget that will not be spent this year and will be used to partially offset the planned incremental spending.

Those are the few things that I have in my supplementary estimate request before you today. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the minister's brevity here, since we have a limited amount of time and a lot of questions to ask on the following. So thank you very much.

Just a few brief questions about Northlands and the Stampede. These are very large organizations that know well in advance that they need money, so I'm not quite sure why they need supplemental funding. I'm sure they knew years ago – or they've been working on this for some time – that they're going to need this money. Why isn't it in the budget from last year or the next year or something along those lines? These are big organizations. We're not talking about little guys who are just making it up as they go along. These are major organizations. I think they should be required to plan a little bit better rather than just going to the government and saying: can you give us a certain amount of money? This is a very large amount of money that we're talking about here. Yes, they do a lot of good work, but I think they should be held to a standard that the others are held to as well.

As for the money for Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Pakistan, nobody can argue with that. I just wonder if in the future you might want to establish a disaster relief fund using lottery

money. It seems like we're getting more and more disasters all the time. If we could have a chunk of lottery money just held there and the interest used over several years – put in \$20 million, \$50 million, or something like that that can be used instead of putting it into supplemental budgeting all the time because we are seemingly in an endless string of disasters, and we're going to have a lot more requests for money along those lines.

4:20

Briefly, I need a quick explanation: "Offsetting these increases is a \$5,000,000 reduction in lottery funded programs consisting of \$4,000,000 from the First Nations Development Fund grant program and \$1,000,000 in grants for Bingo Associations." I'm not quite sure where this money comes from. Are they losing their funding? Maybe you can just explain that to me because I'm really unclear as to what that's all about.

I'll sit down so you can answer my questions. Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: First off, Mr. Chairman, with Northlands and the Stampede these requests have been in for many years. They were just beyond our capability to fund in the normal course of events. We certainly have helped them out over the last few years. I believe that in this year's budget there was \$10 million to those two organizations, but their requests far exceeded what we were able to do in a normal budget year. However, with the unanticipated surplus and unbudgeted surplus that we're seeing right now and it being centennial year, it was felt appropriate that we could finally step up to the plate, if you will, and fund the requests that they had been making for several years.

The question of disasters. I did have the pleasure of presenting the \$5 million cheque to President Clinton along with the Premier in Calgary, and I have to tell you that he was so grateful and so appreciative that a province of our size would come to the aid of that particular disaster. It happened to be the same day that we'd also announced that we were giving \$5 million to the Pakistan disaster, the earthquake there. I believe he had a tear in his eye, and he said: you know, I can't believe how generous you are. The world is getting disaster burnout. As you've said, there have been three this year, I believe. The first one was the one in the Philippines and now Katrina and Pakistan. He said: you know, the people in Pakistan, a huge disaster, probably more children affected in that one than anything else. People weren't at that point, a month or so ago, really stepping up to the plate the way they had been with the previous ones. He said: for the province of Alberta to make this significant contribution very early on shows the heart of the people of Alberta. He recognized and everyone was recognizing that we are getting disaster burnout.

Since that time we have had some discussions and we will have more discussions about doing something through the Wild Rose fund. It's lottery money, but it deals with international events such as this, and we are looking at and exploring exactly what you've said, that maybe we should establish a disaster relief fund, if you will, under the Wild Rose guidelines so that it could be sitting there and we could access it without doing the process that we're doing now with the supplementary estimates.

The lapsed funds for First Nations and bingo halls. Basically, for the First Nations it was money that we thought we would take in, but obviously we're not going to because their projects aren't along far enough, so we won't be seeing that revenue. Revenue counts as an expense in the lottery fund. It's kind of a different way. Always hard to get that through my head, but it does. So we will not be seeing revenue from the First Nations fund this year. Bingo revenues are down considerably because of the smoking legislation

enacted in Edmonton and the surrounding region, so that's revenue that we don't see coming in this year because of that legislation, which took effect on July 1, I believe.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to discuss with the hon. Minister of Gaming the reasons why some organizations would receive money under these supplementary requests and others would not. Certainly, this member would like to commend the department for their initiatives regardless of whether it's to Louisiana or to the earthquake which unfortunately occurred in Pakistan.

But there are disasters occurring daily not only in this city but across the province. I would consider disastrous our treatment to date of homeless people and the whole issue around homelessness. I would encourage the hon. minister and his department to be much more generous in the future in funding initiatives that will reduce – we will never eliminate, but we certainly can reduce – the amount of homelessness that is unfortunate in both the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary. I would remind not only the minister but all hon. members of this Assembly that charity begins at home, and we have a lot of work to do in this province. If we do have surplus money in the future, I would plead with the hon. minister at this time: let's not forget the people who live in this province, regardless of their age, who are homeless.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister?

After considering the 2005-2006 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the Department of Gaming for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

Agreed to:	
Expense	\$75,000,000
Lottery fund payments	\$5,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Infrastructure and Transportation

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We have a very large sum of money that I am going to be asking the Legislative Assembly for approval of today. There's roughly \$527 million that is there for operating expense and equipment and inventory purchases. There's another \$231 million for the capital investment vote. I'm going to attempt to give you broad outlines as to what those dollars are used for, and where appropriate or where the opposition would like me to delve down into it, I certainly will.

First of all, the allocation of the \$527 million for operating. Thirty and a half million dollars of this is required to address operations and maintenance pressures. It is broken down as follows. Six and a half million dollars for property operations. Mr. Chair, property operations is responsible for day-to-day operations and maintenance

of government-owned facilities. What we're seeing in our own facilities is something that's very similar right around the province; that is, we're seeing costs escalate. To date, up until now, we have kept cutting back and cutting back on these facilities, but there comes a point in time when we do need to increase the costs just to keep them running, and that 6 and a half million dollars is for that.

There's also \$6.2 million for lease of government space. What we've seen is an increased demand around the province for facilities, and I'll give you an example. There's planning and study for the replacement of Henwood, which is an AADAC facility, for a hundred thousand dollars. There are lease positions to AADAC in Cold Lake. There are ARC upgrade ventilation hoods and so on and so on, Mr. Chair. That goes right throughout the massive amount of government buildings and space that we look after.

There's also \$10 million for capital and accommodation projects. This is also for changes that have occurred in government. Again, there are various locations around the province where we are looking at finding new lease space, doing some rental upgrades, basically doing management of the properties, Mr. Chair.

There's also \$500,000 for the Caroline highway maintenance yard, which we have to complete. Remediation is required. There was a spill of some gas and oil over the past 25 or 30 years, as has happened in numerous places. We're looking for \$500,000 to remediate that, which, obviously, is of critical importance to our environment.

4:30

There's also \$5.4 million for the provincial highways system, and this quite simply is for operation and maintenance. The same trucks that are going on the road are seeing the same increase in fuel costs, the same increase in labour costs that everyone in Alberta is, and this is simply to accommodate that.

Lastly, we have \$1.8 million for transportation safety services and the traffic safety initiative. This is involved with the impaired driving and child traffic safety programs, that I'm sure everyone in this House supports.

Mr. Chair, there's also \$50 million in operating for something that we have classified as small infrastructure requirements. I'll give you an example. In Camrose there was a seniors' lodge that has seen a huge amount of inflation. They had the lodge basically about half up, yet they were \$500,000 short in the amount of money that they received, and they couldn't finish it. That \$500,000 went to the Rose City disability society, I believe, or something along that line, so that's operating. We also helped finish off a lodge in Athabasca, and exactly the same thing had occurred. A lot of these volunteer facilities, in essence, have seen huge increases in their costs because of the same inflationary pressures that we've seen right across the province, and we've given grants to these people under operating.

There's also \$54 million for water and waste-water infrastructure projects and Water for Life projects. Mr. Chair, these have not been allocated out. We're requesting permission from the Legislative Assembly to use this \$54 million. There's also \$17.2 million included in this number from the federal government, which is the federal funding for the cities and communities program. Quite simply, it comes in to us and simply flows through. We do have to put it through a supplementary estimate because it does come into my budget, but it is federal dollars that come forward.

Lastly – and I think that this one, certainly, probably does not even deem a question – is \$375 million for the natural gas rebate program. What we've seen is the amount of dollars go up hugely from the original budgeted amount. We initially budgeted for \$1.50 a gigajoule, which is based on a market price of between \$5.50 and \$7.50. With the current prices we're budgeting with this \$375

million for rebates of \$3.51 per gigajoule in October, \$4 per gigajoule in November, and a forecasted rebate of \$3.25 per gigajoule for the months of December to March. Obviously, that's averaged over that time frame.

We also have an estimated \$231 million in the capital side of my department. There's \$3 million for remediation to the Turner Valley gas plant, and I think everyone in this Assembly has heard the issue about the hydrocarbons that are potentially leaking out.

There's \$180 million for provincial highway systems, and \$50 million of this, again, is what we call small projects. I'll give you an example. In Okotoks, when I went to the town of Okotoks, the most critical issue there was a set of traffic lights. It was a turn lane and a set of traffic lights, and the total cost for that was around \$200,000 or \$300,000. So, Mr. Chair, we're looking at doing a lot of these irritants around the province. We've got traffic lights. We've got interchanges. We've got all these different types right around the province that we're doing. We're looking at purchasing an AADAC building in Calgary. So that's where those are.

There's also \$30 million that we have built into this budget purely to accommodate inflation and cost escalations on road projects. We have not spent this money. This money has not been spent yet, but it is there because we all know the cost escalations. We all know the impact of these road projects. If needed, we will be using these dollars. This is a very important and a critical issue when it comes to road building because we are seeing close to a 20 per cent inflation this year.

There's also \$100 million there for provincial highway projects, and this varies right across the province. It's highway projects from one end right to the other, almost dead on, bang on at \$100 million.

There's \$48.2 million that is there for the strategic economic corridor, and this includes \$30 million for the Wood Buffalo resource region. I know the hon. member had asked me about this in a previous question period. The reason for \$30 million when \$200 million has actually been put forward is that this is all that we can spend this year. We have had some issues with weather. We've had some issues with not enough engineering, and obviously on these projects we have to do the engineering before we can follow with the project. We're putting on an extensive push for engineering projects this winter in a hope to really accelerate what is happening in Wood Buffalo and Fort McMurray in particular.

There's also \$18.2 million for cost and scope changes to the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads. And before the opposition jumps and leaps and does all of these other things, this is not the P3 component on the Anthony Henday. This is the part that we did conventional financing on, and we have actually added some interchanges. We added one interchange in particular where the developer put in \$3 million, so we sped that up. We had some increased costs to develop the road in Edmonton, and the combination of that was basically \$18.2 million. It's money that is well spent because it enables it to be more of a free flow on both of these roads.

Mr. Chair, that pretty well summarizes the amount of money that we're asking for. It is a very large amount of money, but I feel that it's money that is extremely well spent and will be well spent in the future. The advantage of my particular department is that we have a lot of projects on tap. There's been a lot of talk about unbudgeted surplus, but when surplus dollars come in, my department is an excellent place to put those dollars because we have projects that are ready to go tomorrow. If we get unbudgeted surplus in July, we can still do road projects up until October, November. If we get unbudgeted surplus in November, we cannot build roads in December, January, February. We have to wait until the next summer. So it makes sense that we get an extra three or four months of road building when that unbudgeted surplus is allocated to us in July after

the first quarter. If we were to wait until this particular time when the Legislature sits, we would not be able to build these roads until next year, hence adding a full year for people to wait on these road building projects.

So, Mr. Chair, that's a summary of how we're spending the money. I know that there's a shortage of time, so I'd be more than happy to take any questions and/or get any information that the opposition is looking for. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I would highly recommend seasonal sittings for this House so that we could approve the budgets so that when spring does arrive, we can have the dump trucks, graders out there doing the road building.

I'm very aware that we are discussing millions of taxpayer dollars every minute. I don't expect the minister to on the floor at this time orally respond to the questions I'll raise. I would very much appreciate a written response following the receipt of *Hansard*.

We have witnessed the interim budget, the spring budget, the napkin ad hoc surplus billions budget, and now the supplementary estimates. With the exception of acts of God, such as two once-in-a-lifetime twice-in-a-week flooding costs this spring, budgets should be predictable. This particular budget in general has gone three-quarters of a billion dollars beyond the spring budget. We sometimes wonder: what was the point of the spring budget? I would like this government to be looking in a more visionary, sustainable manner and, rather than one-time rebates or one-time projects, consider creating capital endowment funds, as it has done with the heritage fund and the medical endowment funds, that would provide for sustainable funding when resource revenues drop, as they will in the future. I would reference our website, where the details of the 35/35/25/5 plan are spelled out.

I would like to thank the minister for recognizing the importance of transferring a degree of the infrastructure control back to the departments of education and health, supporting those two departments in seeing projects dealt with in a speedy, approved fashion. I think that was a very good move, and I thank the minister for that. Would the minister commit to providing my office with a detailed list of the projects regarding the \$54 million for addressing small, emerging capital expense needs?

4:40

Regarding the new deal for cities funding, while this initiative is a step in the right direction, this will not be enough to satisfy the growing stresses on municipalities. We need to continue to look at sustainable funding opportunities such as making room for municipalities by reducing the school property tax. This has been brought forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I would certainly support going that route; however, I don't want it to happen at the expense of education funding. If we're going to give that taxing ability back to the municipalities, then please fund education out of general revenue.

[Mr. Johnson in the chair]

This spring and summer I sent out requests to municipalities, school boards, health regions, and parks and protected areas staff asking them to list their top three infrastructure priorities. I received a large number of responses from cities and towns, health regions, and school boards. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Community Development didn't permit employees to respond.

I will quickly highlight some of the areas that I hope are addressed

in these four pages, but due to the extremely brief, generic, very few municipality name or district references I have no way of telling whether these infrastructure concerns have been addressed in these supplementary estimates. Again, I would refer the minister to *Hansard*. If he could, please, by reading the *Hansard*, respond in writing to these questions.

I want to bring out the problems that were brought out by school districts in terms of their infrastructure needs and the problems of the municipalities. If these have been addressed within the supplementary budget estimates, I'll be very pleased, as will the local municipalities. One of the biggest problems in school districts is portables. In Calgary there are 507 portables, of which 90 per cent were built pre 1997 and do not conform to current building codes. Calgary Catholic, Calgary public, Parkland, and Wild Rose listed them in their number one priorities. I'm not sure whether they have begun to be addressed in the supplementary estimates.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Audit upgrades. Apparently, the government completed facility audits in 1999 and 2000, yet many facilities have yet to complete upgrades. Prairie Rose regional division lists installation of sprinkler systems, replacement of fire alarm systems, lab ventilation systems, installations and upgrades, and electrical system upgrades as still outstanding. Six schools in Northern Lights have not had audit upgrades completed.

With reference to structural, mechanical, and electrical maintenance most divisions that have responded have noted that deferred maintenance costs have contributed to increased overall costs and that current amounts are simply not adequate to address current needs, let alone deferred work. The Calgary boards, public and separate, have a deferred maintenance debt of more than half a billion dollars.

There's the issue of new schools. Calgary public would require 24 in the next three years if we used the provincial utilization rates formula. These are needed. There are 40 communities without schools currently in Calgary. As well as replacement or modernization of four major schools Grande Prairie requires three new schools and modernization and redevelopment of four others. Northern Lights requires four new schools.

Modernization. Almost all districts listed outstanding modernization and redevelopment of existing facilities as a priority. This goes hand in hand with outstanding audit upgrades and also preventing districts from accomplishing best utilization of facilities.

Funding for admin and support facilities. Two districts noted that they did not receive any funding for their facilities.

Utility costs. This is a tremendously large concern, and I'm glad the minister referenced that \$30 million because hopefully this will go toward covering these utility costs. As costs continue to increase over time, this must be addressed in the long term. Costs have climbed from about 7 per cent of total budget in 2000 to about 15 to 16 per cent last year. Rescue funding makes budgeting difficult – this is rescue funding: supplementary estimates – and funds are drawn from other priorities to address utility costs. We need long-term solutions. Address inflation. Build it in.

Municipalities have a number of concerns. I will not take up the House's time with all these concerns. I'd like to highlight a few. Water, sewage, and waste water: Drayton Valley, Grande Prairie, Okotoks, Olds, and Wetaskiwin all require substantial funds for these projects. While funds have decreased, regulations have become more onerous, particularly for potable water.

Funding is also not adequate to address the needs of fast-growing communities. Deferred maintenance for municipalities is a major

concern and a very costly one. This, again, is a common theme. In areas such as Drayton Valley, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray there are comments about more rapid deterioration of existing roadways due to heavy commercial traffic and increased use by same. This requires increased dollars for maintenance, yet funding does not address this issue.

Another common theme is that the lack of funding for maintenance and rehabilitation for aging roads means that the costs of the same roads, et cetera, keep increasing as they deteriorate even further and faster. Funding does not seem to adequately address the growing traffic infrastructure needs of areas associated with or affected by strong economic industrial growth particularly due to the number and size of resource-industry vehicular traffic.

This spring I had the opportunity to drive out to Drayton Valley, and I crossed a large, two-lane, undivided bridge. Local Drayton Valley residents are extremely concerned about using this bridge when it rains or during the winter because of the huge logging trucks that go through the area and the huge gas and oil servicing rigs that pass this area. I would very much for Drayton Valley's sake like to see this bridge twinned. I know that lives could be saved as a result.

New traffic infrastructure. The minister referred to some of the new funding that he is providing, and I am pleased to hear that that is in place in Edmonton and in Calgary. We need funds to upgrade and build new infrastructure to meet new demands because currently that funding is inadequate. Long-term capital planning requires long-term commitments. Grande Prairie, in particular, has detailed the massive funding shortfalls even from what their acceptable capital planning shows is necessary.

Lastly, I'll not go into the health areas. Some of the concerns have been sort of addressed in an ad hoc fashion, but I just want to say to the minister: I will give you my complete support as soon as you wish to bring forward the implementation of the McDermid report. I will cheer for you in the same way as I cheered for the Member for Calgary-North Hill with regard to the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, Bill 39. This will save lives. It's a great initiative. Let's go for it.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much. I'll keep my comments very, very brief as I know that there are other people that probably want answers. Thank you for the support of the McDermid report. We're currently looking at how that can be implemented. Obviously, it is a report that is multifaceted and has a lot of issues with it. It's a very good report, and it's a report that I feel very strongly for. So we are currently looking at how that can be done.

Drayton Valley. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar has made me fully aware of the issues out there on the bridge. Two things I will comment on. First of all, the road down to the bridge is what the main issue is, and we're certainly looking at what we can do to ensure that that road down there is much safer. The hon. member raised a very good point, and this was brought home to me by the logging trucks that are going through there.

The second point is bridge construction. I would ask the hon. member, if he has any connections to the federal Liberals that he will admit to, that we look at some rationality when it comes to building bridges. These people in Drayton Valley need a bridge. The problem we have is that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is so onerous when it comes to building a bridge. It takes such a long time to get the approvals in place for building a bridge that it becomes very, very difficult. Our traffic patterns changed significantly over a very short period of time, and unfortunately we don't have the ability to respond by building a bridge when the DFO takes

two, three, five years to give approval for going across any new waterway. So I quite simply ask the hon. member, if he admits, to talk to his federal counterparts and see if there is some rationality that we can get to that because there are people's lives that are at risk here.

Apart from that, Mr. Chair, I certainly will get back to the hon. member with the other questions that he has. I'll get back to him in writing, as requested.

Thank you.

4:50

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I want to thank the minister for specifically addressing the Drayton Valley bridge. I also want to thank the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation. I think the example that you've put forward in terms of the Stoney Trail bridge in Calgary – I really believe that this type of bridge is what is needed over the Tsuu T'ina area. This would be in the wetlands there by the Glenmore Reservoir. I think this type of bridge would receive quick federal approval. It's the type of infrastructure we need.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will not go on too long, just three or four points. I know that the minister in the past has been a big advocate of P3s. I think the history of P3s – and we've had this discussion – has not been very favourable, whether it be in Nova Scotia or other places it's been tried, Britain and the rest of it, and I know the minister is well aware of the Calgary courthouse. I know he's trumped the Henday project, and even the Auditor General talks about it. It's hard to get a handle on these figures because the minister first announced, I think, \$493 million. I think he stated at the time that traditionally it would be \$497 million and they were saving \$4 million. Then in the memo that we saw that went out, there was a wide range. So it gets very confusing. There was a \$50 million difference there.

The point that we want to make and, I guess, one question is that – and the Auditor General talks about it – we have to have some handle on these figures much better than we do even to evaluate because over the long haul, when you're paying \$30 million over a period of time, whether that's a debt or not, it's still money that comes out of the Treasury. So we have to evaluate these, I think, much clearer. My own assessment is probably that the traditional way works well. I think you just alluded to the fact that with a major project in Calgary you've gone back to what we call traditional financing. So I guess the question just in the very broad sense is: where do we stand with P3s as far as going into the future?

The other areas that I want to get some handle on – the minister used to have full control over schools, hospitals, universities, colleges, these sorts of things. Now it's a partnership, my understanding, but I'm not sure how the partnership works. Who is really in charge? I mean, I'm sure that the minister will say that there's co-operation between the ministers. For instance, to go into school buildings and utilization, I think both ministers of education and the minister of infrastructure in the spring session said that they were looking at the whole utilization, school closure, these sorts of things. So I'm wondering how much clout his department has in that area now. Really, who does call the shots in terms of what's happening in terms of hospitals, colleges, universities, and schools?

The last point I'd try to make, that's fairly clear, is – I'm trying to remember the infrastructure deficit that the minister brought to

cabinet. I think it was something like – correct me if I'm wrong – \$7 billion or \$8 billion. That shouldn't have surprised us. I mean, the point is that if you don't put money into your infrastructure – and we haven't done that for a long time – you're going to have an infrastructure deficit. We worry about the economic deficit. There's a human deficit, that I've talked about, in terms of education and the rest of it. But you cannot catch up all at once. I think that's the problem that the minister is facing. This, again, has to be part of an overall budget over a five- or 10-year period. It's not always great to try to catch up when the economy is booming because then, as we know, you're dealing with inflated numbers, and the costs of government are much more.

I hate to sound like an old Keynesian economist, but we probably should have been putting some of that money in when we started to hit the skids, back in the lower '90s, because we would have had these programs, and they would have been much cheaper. I also recognize that you can't turn the clock back and you can't say: we're not going to do infrastructure now because roads are falling apart, schools, hospitals, the rest of it. So we're going to pay a premium price, but we have to balance that over a period of time.

I'm wondering, if it's a \$7 billion deficit, when we will see sort of a long-range plan of that coming in the provincial budget rather than sort of hit and miss so that we can get some idea over a five- or a 10-year period what we're looking at in terms of dealing with that deficit.

There's a shortage of time, and I know that there are other groups coming up, Mr. Chair. I will sit down and either wait for the answers or get them later.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll make the answers very brief. First of all, the hon. member has some reasonable comments about the P3. The \$493 million public-sector comparator was not a very good figure. It was a figure that was shown in the Auditor General's report. We certainly could have done a better job, and on future P3 projects we'll ensure that the job done is better.

This was the first blush at it, and by all accounts the job that we got done, the deal that we got given to us or that we were involved in is something that is very, very positive now. That doesn't mean that we stop our due diligence on this one. The same process will take place. We will put it through Treasury Board to a committee of independent people to take a look at it and so on and so on, as the hon. member is well aware.

We are going to be looking at other P3s, but again each one is going to be on an individual basis. Quite simply – and I'll allude to the hon. member's last question – we do have an infrastructure debt and/or deficit in this province. There's probably somewhere close to \$7 billion of work that could be done at this particular point in time. There's no way that I can sterilize my budget by simply saying: "Here's \$500 million for the ring road. I'll take it out of my budget this way. Oh, by the way, Fort McMurray, you don't get anything. By the way, Brooks, Cardston, Calgary, you don't get anything because we've done it all this way."

So we do have to look at this type of financing in order to get the economic advantage that infrastructure gives to the province of Alberta. If we want to keep Alberta moving – no pun intended – we have to have the transportation routes to do this. We have to have the transportation available. By far the most important one, although there are lots of other ones such as air and rail, is our roads right now. The road to Fort McMurray, for example, has to be done. We've got to take a look at that. These are new roads; these are not upkeep of existing roads. They have to be done. So we have to find

other ways in order to ensure that our roads are looked at, that our roads are done right around the province. We can't take \$500 million for one large project and say to Edmonton: "Good on you guys in Edmonton. We're doing your roads. By the way, the rest of the province, no thank you."

The schools and hospitals. It's a good question. What the OC stated is that the schools, hospitals, postsecondary facilities are being co-managed between the departments of Education, Advanced Education, and Health and Wellness with the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation. To simplify this, what occurs is that the departments of Education, Advanced Education, and Health bring forward the requests to me, to my department. We then have input into it, and both ministers sign off on it as it goes forward. So the approval is mutual. One cannot go ahead without the approval of the other on either side. Mr. Chair, that's a very critical component of this.

The rationale behind it, I think, is very very sound, especially in health care facilities. When you build new facilities, there are also increased operating costs that go along with it. There has to be a recognition that there are the increased costs when you build a new facility. The best way to do that is to actually have you as a line department put out the money for the capital, and then you have to account for the operating expense as well.

5:00

So again, not being a hypocrite, Mr. Chair, that was one of the things that I put forward when I was minister of learning. I think that is going to work well. It probably has a little bit of growing pains, but I think that ultimately it's the right thing to do.

The hon. member asked about utilization. We essentially took out utilization when we put the operation and maintenance formula into a per-student basis and put it over to the Department of Education.

The infrastructure that needs to be built in the province, whether it's \$7 billion, whether it's \$10 billion, whether it's, you know, more than that – and I think the amounts could be argued depending on how you look at it. The bottom line in this province is that we need to see that number go down. That number can no longer go up; it must go down. It's critical. The infrastructure and transportation in this province are absolutely critical to the economic success, and we have to see and show that the transportation component and the infrastructure component are essential cogs in the wheel of the economic capability of this province. We cannot have an exporting province not have good transportation routes out. As everyone in this Assembly knows, Mr. Chair, we are an exporting province.

So it's my job, quite simply, to ensure that the number that I talked about goes down as opposed to goes up. I will do whatever is needed, whatever I can do to ensure that that happens. That means making deals with municipalities. It means looking at potential oil companies or forestry companies investing in our roads. It means getting the job done, and that's what has to occur in this province.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's with interest that I rise this afternoon to participate in the discussion on the supplementary budget for Infrastructure and Transportation. I realize that time is limited.

The minister did talk earlier about the \$18 million for cost and scope changes to the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads. My question is specific to the Edmonton ring road. I appreciate the hon. minister's willingness to provide any other information in regard to these projects. I would like to ask him through the chair: why is

there a reported \$43 million cost overrun on the ring road on the south side, the Anthony Henday Drive? What's costing this extra amount of money?

I'm astonished to hear that there is actually a shortage of cement powder. The economic activity is so intense that there is a shortage of cement powder, and sometimes the cement companies are on a quota system for the day for residential construction and for some of the road construction, so the cement powder that is going to Fort McMurray is an amount that keeps the activity going around the clock. If I could have some information on this \$43 million cost overrun, I would be very grateful.

Also, the flyway that intersects – I've got to think about this. The Queen Elizabeth highway, the old highway 2, and the underpass that was constructed and opened just before the IAAF games in 2001 – hopefully, that portion of the underpass is temporary. I can't believe that the department would not be going after the contractor for inadequate work. There are at right angles to the traffic flow considerable dips and heaves in the pavement both in the southbound and northbound lanes on the east side of the highway and the west side of the highway.

That road, in my view, Mr. Chairman, is relatively new, and that should not be happening. It's to the point now where it is unsafe. I would like to know what is being done about that because I think it is shoddy work – it's only four years old – unless, of course, it's a temporary road and the compaction was done rather quickly because it was going to be ripped up to facilitate a new interchange or a new surface when everything is connected.

If I could have an answer to those questions, I would be very grateful, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. First of all, with regard to the Q.E. II overpass, I will look into that. I have not been asked that question before, but if there is shoddy work, we certainly will look into that.

With regard to the cement the hon. member is absolutely right. What we saw this year is a huge increase in the cement costs. As he knows, the roadway is made out of cement because in doing the tender, we built in a time limit on it. For example, a cement road lasts 50 per cent longer, so we actually built that into the cost, and we paid for a road that is going to last 50 per cent longer.

One of the things that we didn't anticipate, though, was a lack of cement. That came out of the blue, and we didn't really see that one coming, and it has cost us more dollars. There's \$18 million in this estimate for it. Whether or not the number is \$43 million can be argued, but certainly we did get caught on inflationary prices. Another thing that we got caught on is gravel, and we got caught on cement.

The point that I'm leading to, though, is that the hon. member has just made a wonderful case for P3s. If what has occurred is with a P3, any of those problems that he just alluded to are all the responsibility of the contractors. The contractor has a legal obligation, and we have the legal right to go after them if there is shoddy work. If the price of cement goes up, it is the responsibility of the contractor; it is not our responsibility. The other very key component to the P3 is that we have a timeline, and I've mentioned this in the House before. In October of 2007 if that road is not done, on November 1 the fine is a million dollars, on December 1 the fine is another million dollars, and so on and so on. So, Mr. Chair, the hon. member has made a very good case from not a dollar point of view but from a quality point of view as to why P3s are beneficial to the citizens of Edmonton.

The problem that we have with the Q.E. II, because it's been four years, if it is rolly like that, we have no recourse back to the contractor because typically there's only a one- or two-year guarantee on these roads. On the Anthony Henday P3 we have a 30-year guarantee, so we have the ability to go back to the contractor within the first 30 years, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You've brought some new issues to the table that I guess I'll address first. I don't see any reason why the government can't make the same contract with a private company you've hired as with a P3, why you cannot have a 30-year contract. As far as fines and quality, as you're well aware, they didn't meet the deadlines on the highway going through Magrath at a great cost to the community. Your letter stated that you weren't responsible for reimbursing those areas. I would think that what we should be looking at is that the government then definitely needs to be making better contracts and asking for 30-year ones, not one or two years and letting them off the hook.

Anyways, we definitely have an infrastructure problem here in the province, and one of the frustrations, I guess, in talking to municipal governments in some of those areas is that it seems like we're losing our common sense on some of these approaches, and we've almost monopolized the road maintenance to big corporations that aren't being as efficient as they could, and because so few can bid on it, the costs are going up.

I'll give you one example down in my area where two secondary highways – there's a 10-kilometre stretch between them that isn't secondary and isn't paved, so the municipal government has to go out 20 kilometres to do 10 kilometres because neither of the big contractors will do those. The reeve there has asked to get permission to do the 30 kilometres all the way out there at a substantially lower cost than what the current contractors have it at. It just seems like some common-sense approaches would be better.

Another question that comes up in my area specifically is the takeover of secondary highways with the promise to be paved. I understand from the minister that some answers are coming forward on highway 501 going east of Cardston. I'm looking forward to that.

Going back, it just seems like we need to have a longer term plan and priorities going out to these municipal areas so they know and understand what's there, also, more importantly, so that the contractors can realize that when they're buying equipment this year, they do indeed have a five-year plan that they can be looking at and not just covering the cost on a one-time effort. Perhaps putting some of that money into a trust fund or something to say, "Well, we don't have to spend it all this year because of the shortage of equipment, shortage of contractors," would be to the benefit in the long term even though we might have to tighten our belts for another year or two to get that good benefit.

5:10

Another area I want to address. You mentioned the DFO and the great struggle that we have trying to get bridges with the closing down of the Hines Creek mill. Twice I've been up to the northwest area and the Dunvegan bridge. Both times only one lane of traffic was going through, and it's not a great place to be. I have great concerns there and would like to know what the priorities on doing that are because there's been a huge increase in traffic. The government knew that those mills were closing down and that resources were going to be trucked down to the south. So have you applied to the DFO to look at starting to get a secondary bridge in that area? If you've got long-term planning, perhaps part of the

problem is knowing that the DFO is so slow that we need to be proactive. Maybe we won't put a bridge in, but let's please try and address it.

Another area I've talked to the minister several times on, and I'll bring it up again today. We heard some good ideas here today. I was pleased to hear the Minister of Community Development referring to \$5.5 million for this I'd call a heritage film for the veterans. We just had our Premier throwing out a \$20 million bursary fund to students in other places in Canada. I still think that we have a golden opportunity here in the little town of Warner to have a girls hockey school that not only attracts people from across the province but those from outside our country. I wish that the minister would please look at that. I've read that there have been several small schools set up for francophones in other areas, up to \$6 million for 55 students, but I wish that he'd put that on the priority list again and realize that this is a benefit for Alberta and for Canada and that we can have this value-added school, a unique school, here in the province with the amount of money that seems to be being disbursed around the area.

The one other problem that we have is the grants that you talk about for the inflationary energy costs. It seems like there needs to be a formula. These people shouldn't be held at bay wondering if a grant is going to come when electricity or natural gas shoots through the roof, wondering: oh, do we have to cover and cut other maintenance or infrastructure in order to cover our gas bill? I feel that there should be a formula in there so that they know that we're not going to hold them short when the energy costs go through the roof. The province does receive the benefit of those royalties and could offset those for our public areas, such as our hospitals, our libraries, our education areas. So I would hope that that would be part of the minister's plan as well.

Thank you.

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Chair, I understand that I have until 5:15? Thank you.

Very quickly, the francophone schools that we talked about are constitutional rights ingrained in the Charter under section 23. You cannot compare the small francophone schools to a small school in Warner because of that particular issue.

The Dunvegan bridge will cost roughly \$300 million to replace or to add another one. The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace has been more than cognizant of this and has been working diligently to ensure that his constituents get improved access to that bridge. We're currently in the process of putting lighting on both ends as well as assessing the hill coming down to the Dunvegan bridge to ensure that it is safe for those particular logging trucks.

The other quick point, Mr. Chair. The hon. member alluded to having a fund where you could actually put money aside and sit and wait and then do it later on so that it didn't qualify in the budget year. We have that fund; it's called the capital fund. And that's exactly what we do. I alluded to it in these estimates, where we're only spending \$30 million for Fort McMurray because that's all we could spend. We actually have \$200 million that is being put into the capital fund.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. minister, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(1), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration of estimates, I would invite the Deputy Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows. The following resolutions relating to the 2005-2006 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund have been approved as follows for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

Advanced Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$99,000,000.

Gaming: expense, \$75,000,000; lottery fund payments, \$5,000,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply also reports progress on Infrastructure and Transportation and requests leave to sit again.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we could call Bill 44.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 44

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity this afternoon to move second reading of Bill 44, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

This act is a way of streamlining the whole dispute resolution process between tenants and landlords. Currently there are in excess of 5,000 of these disputes that end up going through the Provincial Court or through the Court of Queen's Bench. This process that we're putting in place through this act will simply streamline the whole process. Basically, the way the process would work is that a hearing officer would hear the cases. If there is a dispute, then either the tenant or the landlord could take the dispute and file to the hearing officer. If, in fact, the tenant is the first to go, then it binds the landlord. If it's the landlord that's the first to go there, then it binds the tenant.

Of course, we could have a situation where one goes to court and one goes to the dispute resolution committee all in the same day. That could happen. If that did happen, then in fact it would proceed through the court. However, the only other way that it could happen to go to court would be if, in fact, the hearing officer, when it comes to him or her, says that it is outside their jurisdiction. Then they could refer it to the court.

5:20

Of course, if the hearing does proceed, and it's determined after the hearing that, in fact, it was outside the scope of the hearing officer, then either one could take it to court. But there is similar to a privy clause, which basically means that the hearing officer is

quasi-judicial. Therefore, the decision at the end of a hearing could not be taken to court. Of course, the reason for that is because if we didn't have that in there, then it would destroy the purpose of this resolution hearing process.

The only other thing that I would want to comment on would be the fact that it's a pilot project. It would be set up here in the city of Edmonton. Currently there are about 2,100 of these disputes annually. So we would have it as a pilot to start with in the city, and if it worked well, then we would expand it to other parts of the province.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, if we could call Bill 9.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
 Third Reading
 Bill 9
 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move Bill 9 for third reading.

We explained the purpose of the act in second reading and discussed it in principle at committee. Really, it's a very short piece of legislation. There's very little more to say. I would ask the House for support at third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is the most brief I have heard the minister in my entire time in the House.

I'll go no further. We've discussed this at second reading and in committee, and I think we've worked through it. I don't think that we need to take it any further. We can call the question, in my opinion.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we adjourn until 8 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, November 22, 2005

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/11/22

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if it would be in order to ask for unanimous consent of the House to allow members to remove their jackets as though we were in committee, it being fairly hot in here this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Apparently, this has been done in the past, and if the Assembly feels that the temperature is warm enough and stuffy enough, I will ask for unanimous consent of the House.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if we could revert to introductions.

The Deputy Speaker: Might we have the unanimous consent to revert to introductions?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the Leader of the Official Opposition I would like to introduce some guests in the public gallery tonight. We have 10 members of the Edmonton Volunteers group, who are joining us in the public gallery. The parent helpers are Jerry and Lenora Penner and Bernie and Bernice Isaac. Please rise as I say your names. Thank you. With them are Miriam, Jamie, Gayla, Melinda, Yolanda, and Carolee. If you would please join me in giving the traditional warm welcome to our guests.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
Bill 44

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 22: Mr. Lund]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to rise and participate in the debate on Bill 44, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), as proposed by the hon. Minister of Government Services.

Let me first convey my appreciation to the hon. minister for agreeing to meet with myself and my researcher ahead of time to go over this bill and to discuss its scope. At first look I must admit that I agree with the direction that it's taking, whereby an alternative conflict or dispute resolution model is established parallel to the courts, where tenant and/or landlord can initiate an arbitration process to resolve issues without having to go to court; thus, saving money and time. This is beneficial for both tenant and landlord and will also free up court time to deal with more serious matters.

The fact that twice in one year we're discussing amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act is in itself a strong statement as to how delicate this relationship is between those two parties and how the decisions we make here affect not only the place where people live but also their lives and the lives of their families. I mentioned before that one has to be extremely careful when venturing into this tenant/landlord arena and that a balance has to be struck between the rights and obligations of both parties.

So again, in general, as the Official Opposition critic responsible and if I speak for my caucus colleagues, we are in support of this bill in principle. Having said that, however, we still have a few questions to put on record, and I would appreciate some clarity from the hon. minister.

Number one, with respect to the dispute resolution service administrator and the dispute resolution officers the Official Opposition strongly suggests an open and transparent appointment process to alleviate concerns stemming from the appearance of patronage or cronyism, as is the case with other boards or agencies, especially with this board's suggested quasi-judicial mandate.

The administrator can be a retired judge, for example, someone who can understand the legalities and technicalities and has the expertise and training to adjudicate or to pass rulings as objectively and as fairly as possible. The dispute resolution officers must also be qualified individuals before they join and must receive professional development and continuing training to further their abilities. Recruiting them must be conducted openly, and the criteria for selection, remuneration, and benefits are to be made public for all to see. To that effect, the Official Opposition will be presenting an amendment to address the issue of minimum qualifications these officers should have.

Tenant/landlord conflicts are rarely simple and frequently involve complex issues relating to things like child welfare, health, disability, language barriers, et cetera. Courts are qualified and usually take these issues into consideration. The same has to be guaranteed for this new structure that we're trying to set up. I must say, however, that I like section 54.7(g), which calls for "the establishment of a code of conduct for tenancy dispute officers," a document by which they understand what is expected from them and which helps guide them in carrying out their duties. The decisions rendered or remedies stipulated by those officers are going to be legally binding, so again these people must have a minimum level of knowledge and training before they take on this critical role, and continued support and upgrading has to be offered to them to ensure that they constantly improve and stay on top of what similar bodies are doing in comparable jurisdictions.

My second point, number two, will focus on how this dispute resolution board will be funded. Would it only rely on the fees collected from those applications it receives, or will the government fund it? What happens if the board only gets 50 or 60 applications in a certain year? How will it sustain itself and its employees? Are we going to pay them on a per claim basis? Will these dispute resolution officers be hired on an on-call basis? That is to say, they're only paid if there's a claim they're working on. I need to know, and I don't think I'm prepared to leave this for the minister's sole discretion to be put in the regulations without debate, as is customary.

I don't want people's rent to go up unnecessarily just to fund this board either. By the same token, I also don't want the application fees to be exaggerated. The whole purpose of this exercise is to offer an affordable and simple mechanism for tenants and landlords to reach agreements and resolve their issues not to add further financial burden to the load they're already carrying. This argument

may appear to be representative only or mostly of tenants, but I strongly feel that it also applies to small- or medium-sized landlords whose profitability and earnings may be so that it won't warrant or support a process which is financially restrictive, so it goes both ways really.

Three. My next question would be: how much will an application to the dispute resolution board cost? It is my understanding, from my initial consultation with the hon. minister, that the fees are going to be reasonable, at least initially, but there is the potential that they could be increased in the future to a level which may not be comfortable for some. Is the fee paid entirely by the party initiating the application, or will it be shared by the two parties involved, and if yes, what will the formula be? If a landlord initiates multiple concurrent applications against a number of tenants at once, will they be treated individually and each assessed a separate fee, or will they be lumped together and the landlord is allowed to pay a reduced fee? Also, will some or all of those fees be recoverable?

Four. Under section 54.6(3) and (4) the dispute resolution service can refer matters to the courts. Which courts are we referencing here? From our own consultation as the Official Opposition we were told by many stakeholders that it would be better if we were talking about the Provincial Courts, not the Court of Queen's Bench, which would be more expensive.

Five. My next question is with respect to information I received from the hon. minister that initially the dispute resolution service is going to be implemented as a one-year pilot project. Is this still the case? Will the minister share the findings from this pilot project with the Legislature?

8:10

Six. I would like to gauge the hon. minister's response or support for a second amendment, which I'm working on, which will empower him and his department to pardon or waive application fees for those people who may not be able to afford them. This essentially allows the minister or his designate to exercise his or her power and judgment to cover the application costs for those people who may not afford them otherwise. I think this is useful and positive. We don't want those fees, however low, to act as a deterrent or an obstacle to access.

So, to summarize, we're ready to support this bill and value its anticipated effect on tenant/landlord relations. It couldn't have come at a better time. Offering answers to our questions would be greatly appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak to this Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). I also spoke to the one that was offered forth in the spring. In the spring I mentioned some cases that had happened in my constituency and were brought to my attention: one where a landlord thought it was in his right to use the bathroom of a tenant and others where tenants were very, very difficult. There are needs to take care of disputes both when you have difficult tenants and you have difficult landlords. To have a process which does not go through the cumbersome and costly process of our law courts I think is a great step forward.

The alternative conflict resolution process put forward here in this bill I think is worthy of merit. I think having it as a pilot project so that we see how it works in a year is wise: the necessity to look at how rights are balanced, to see how we have the ability of both parties in that contract to protect their rights, and to do it in a way that doesn't cause them financial hardship.

You have financial hardship sometimes on the part of small-

apartment owners sometimes as much as you do with tenants. Quite often when you have tenants with big-apartment owners, there is certainly a very difficult time for them to take on the huge-apartment owner, especially when they own thousands of units. Having this process I hope will prove to balance that and to make it so that these rights are more equal.

The flexibility that we see in this residential tenancies act does hold some promise. My colleague that has just spoken, Edmonton-McClung, was very clear that there must be some questions answered, and those will be dealt with when we get into Committee of the Whole. I look forward to the answers to those questions.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to ask some questions in second reading of Bill 44, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

We've had a lot of action on the Residential Tenancies Act this year, which is a good thing. I think it was a bill that needed updating, needs to recognize current realities. Certainly it's an important act for my constituents. Eighty per cent of my constituents live in high-rise apartment buildings or condominiums. Out of that 80 per cent, I think substantially more than half are renters, so this legislation is very important to them because it protects them, but it also confers, as always, responsibilities at the same time as the protection.

A couple of questions that came to mind for me. Could the sponsoring member, the Minister of Government Services, clarify for me what happens? Right now in the city of Edmonton the city funds the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board. It strikes me that what's being anticipated here with the dispute resolution service could be a duplication. Now, I know the city of Edmonton has talked about revoking the funding to landlord and tenant, but I'm wondering where the minister sees this particular agency working along with local ones, municipally-funded ones like the Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board in Edmonton.

I commend the minister for looking for a nonjudicial mechanism for resolving disputes. Very helpful to people. Court is expensive, it's time consuming, and for a lot of people it's intimidating and they just won't even try it. They just give up and walk away and forfeit whatever. That's true on the landlord side, as well, particularly when you talk about small landlords that maybe own a small building or maybe are just renting a suite in their house, for example. They just give up and walk away because going through the system seems daunting. Therefore, a mechanism like this is very helpful to them, and I thank you.

One of the issues I have is around payment to mediators. I'm sorry; let me clarify for the minister first. Who does he anticipate being the officers working for this dispute resolution service? Does he anticipate it being trained and accredited mediators? That's question one. Question two: what is the minister anticipating would be a fee scale for these mediators? I know that this is a group of people that more and more we're relying on because they do save us from the court costs and all of that added expense, but for some reason we impoverish these people because the government in particular, when it uses their services, doesn't pay them very much.

If I can, I'd like to encourage the minister to set the fee structure at something reasonable, where you're attracting a quality, a level of experience, and an accreditation that is of the highest level. I would prefer to see that in this situation. I would encourage the government to go in that direction. I'd be interested in what the minister

anticipates as a fee scale – he’s likely going to set that under regulations if I know this government – if he can give me some indication of what have been the discussions or what he was anticipating there. I think my colleague was talking about whether they should have a legal background. I don’t know that you would need to have that. Certainly, a trained mediator would be able to accomplish all of that.

I also wanted to check with the minister – once again we’re bandying around that incredibly elastic term called “reasonable fee.” What does the minister see as a reasonable fee for this service? Those tenants and landlords who apply to the dispute resolution service are going to pay some sort of a fee. What does the minister see as reasonable? Is it \$5? Is it \$25? Is it \$75?

He’s looking above me for hand signals. Should I look too? No. He’s going to get up and tell me.

I’d be interested in that because I think there can be, again, quite a scale there of what people would consider reasonable. I know that for many of my tenants who are living in the older housing stock and for many of them on assistance, particularly AISH, you know, a \$15 fee starts to look difficult when you’re on a budget of a thousand bucks a month or in some cases less. I’m interested, again, in what the minister feels is reasonable and whether there will be a fund set aside to assist those that find that it’s a barrier, or whether: “Tough beans. If you can’t come up with the amount, well, you’re out. Go to court and have the court pay all your fees.” So I’m trying to figure out where he’s going to come down on that.

8:20

I’m also wondering, in order to keep this on a friendly level, if I could put it that way, if people involved in the disputes would be allowed to bring people in with them, whether that is, in fact, a lawyer or more likely a friend or a moral support or an adviser or a parent perhaps. Can they bring somebody else into this system, or is it the two individuals that are at odds, with a mediator in the middle or an arbitrator in the middle, and that’s it? Just interested in that.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we don’t get into the nitty-gritty and the detail, clause by clause, word by word, until we’re in Committee of the Whole – which we’re not right now; we’re in second – but I did notice that section 54, to my reading of it, actually started to get a little confusing. This is the section where it talks about if somebody goes and applies to the dispute resolution board first, then that’s where it’s all going to get worked out, but that actually starts to sort of contradict itself here. One of them says that if the tenant chooses the dispute resolution board, then that’s where they go, but no application to the dispute resolution service would be accepted if an application has already happened to the provincial courts by either party. Okay. That seems to contradict what was just said.

Once you work your way all the way through this, it looks like if anybody goes to the courts, the courts trump the dispute resolution service. Is that what the minister was intending with the legislation, and why? Or do you have to go with your first choice? So if the first person in the door goes to dispute resolution, that sets the stage, and that’s where everybody has to go. If the first person in the door goes to the courts, then that’s where it’s going to get played out, and you can’t change it. According to what I’m reading here, you are bound to that forum for pursuing a resolution, to quote from 54.3(1), not that I’d be doing that, Mr. Speaker.

I’m wondering, as well, if we could see the regulations that are being anticipated to support this act and if the minister would be willing to table that. It’s getting close to Christmas. Wishes come true every now and then, Mr. Speaker. I just thought I’d put it on the table and see if that might be a possibility. I think particularly with

this act it would be very interesting to see those regs, even understanding that they’re in a draft form, or I in particular would be interested in seeing them. Maybe some of my other colleagues would or would not – I don’t know – but I certainly am.

In the final section it looks to me like some regulatory authority is being transferred to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and I’m wondering why that was necessary. It looks like it was taken away from the minister and given to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and I’m wondering why that choice was made. It strikes me as a bit of an odd one.

As I said and as my colleague the Member for Edmonton-McClung has said, we’re very interested in the bill on the Official Opposition side and at this point are looking to support it, but I’d like to get the answers to my questions, if I could, because this is a bill that so much affects so many of my constituents.

Thank you for the opportunity to put those questions out on the floor, Mr. Speaker. I will give way to others that wish to participate in the debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I’d like to remind everyone that Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comment following every speaker.

I have a request to revert to Introduction of Guests. Could I have unanimous consent for that?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislature five friends of ours, in fact, five friends of all Albertans, for there are, indeed, firefighters in our gallery tonight. I’ve introduced them before, but I’d love to introduce them again. I’d ask them to stand up one at a time as I call their names so that they can receive the warm welcome of this House. They are all members of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association as well as some of our local unions. They are: Ken Block, head of the Edmonton Fire Fighters Association; Greg Holubowich, who is the vice-president of the Edmonton association; Gord Colwell, head of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association; and Bud McCarthy and Dale McLean, also VPs with the Edmonton fire fighters association – again, all of them on the executive.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 44
Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
(*continued*)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My comments will be brief. I believe that my colleagues in the Official Opposition have pretty much covered the points that I wanted to make. I do want to reiterate a concern that we often bring up in this House, and that is the fact that members of these boards are appointed by, in this case, the Lieutenant Governor in Council. We talk a lot about accountability and transparency, and it causes me great concern and,

in fact, causes the Auditor General great concern when these board appointments are made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, sometimes without the proper training.

My colleague from Edmonton-Centre indicated that she's not as worried about the training as some of us might be. Well, she was referring to myself and, in fact, my colleague from Edmonton-McClung, who did indicate that he does have a bit of a concern there as well. So based on the Auditor General's comments regarding board appointments and lack of training and accountability and transparency, that would be a concern that I would like to make the minister aware of, and certainly I know that there are many others who share those concerns with me as well.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 44, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). I want to start by thanking the minister for the invitation and the subsequent briefing that he provided to me and one of our staff members. We went over some of the provisions of the proposed amendments in some detail.

I would like to first of all express my general agreement with the principle that informs this attempt to amend the Residential Tenancies Act; that is, that a more convenient, a cheaper, and a more tenant/landlord friendly procedure perhaps is worth trying to resolve disputes that arise between landlords on one hand and tenants on the other.

I think that historically the local landlord and tenant advisory boards that cities have used in the past are also based on the premise that mediation of these disputes through locally-based arrangements probably limits the sort of orientation to long, stretched-out litigation and brings parties into conciliation with each other and seeing each other's point of view and coming to some sort of agreement. Unfortunately, certainly the city of Edmonton, for reasons of cost, seems to be ready to withdraw from offering that kind of service. In light of that, I think these amendments will certainly create an alternative dispute resolution arrangement which is worth trying.

8:30

The minister I think indicated that this will be a pilot. It will be tried here in Edmonton, I understand, for a year or so. I think my colleague from Edmonton-McClung raised some interesting questions about: how do we learn about the results of the mechanism that we establish in Edmonton as a pilot project? Will the Legislature have the opportunity to receive those results and then study those results before this arrangement goes forward and becomes generalized and used across the province? Clearly, if it's a pilot project – and that's the understanding based on which we all will agree to support these amendments – I think it's only appropriate for us to expect that the results of the pilot project will be brought back to the Legislature for us to look at, and then a more permanent form of the amended act will be put in place. That is something that I would like the minister to perhaps comment on.

There are several other issues that have been raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. The questions of appointment procedures. Who will make the appointments? What will be the qualifications of people who get appointed? Will there be training requirements and opportunities? Will there be some sort of accreditation for people who in fact preside over these dispute resolution exercises?

The matter of fees. Since only one of the two parties has to go and apply to the alternative dispute resolution service, will both

parties be required to pay fees, and would those fees be equal? Or will one of the two parties be assessed their fee based on the outcome of the dispute resolution service decision? I mean, we need to have some idea about this. I know that the minister is proposing to have an extensive set of regulations, and perhaps under those, the provisions of section 54.7, he might have the ability to address some of these questions. These questions are substantial enough that the House would like to know – it's not only I who would like to know – what the minister has in mind so that we can at least have an idea of what might go into the regulations dealing with some of these questions. So the issue of fees, the issue of waiver of fees.

Certainly, in my constituency office we have received over the years that I've been MLA, for more than eight years now, many requests and complaints from tenants. I also have a very large number of low-income people living in the constituency, including, of course, people who are on AISH. They often come to us with some concerns and complaints. Their ability to pay fees is severely limited. I think it's important for me as MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona and for our NDP opposition caucus to know because we as a group do represent a fair number of low-income Edmontonians and Albertans who have similar concerns.

If the minister would be kind enough to address the issue of fees. What's the scale of them? Who is going to be assessed? Whether there will be provision to waive those fees, and if so, how? The questions of who will be the people who'll be appointed and how they'll be appointed, what qualifications and training will be expected and required, and whether or not these will somehow be people who get certified.

One other question that I have for the minister. Given that the alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are intended, in fact, to reduce the amount of litigation, the amount of expenses not only to the courts and through the courts to the government but also to parties in dispute, I think the best alternative dispute resolution mechanism would be one which, of course, reduces the cost for every party involved: for the tenants and for the landlords as well as for the public agency, whether it's the alternative dispute resolution authority or the courts.

The idea I think of reducing litigation and making this whole process less costly for every party involved is a good one, but to require here, as is presently provided for in the proposed amendment, that only one party has to choose to go to the dispute resolution service and the other, therefore, will be compelled, will have no option but to follow, seems to me somewhat taking away the choice from the parties to choose to go to a less expensive, less costly, and perhaps time-saving mechanism, which I hope this alternative dispute resolution service will be, or to go to court if it so desires.

Alternatively, I think I would wonder what the minister thinks about making this option available but only if both parties agree to go through this procedure. It seems to me that it would be only rational for the parties to go through this voluntarily if they see that their interests are better served by going through this route. So rather than coercing one of the two parties to follow because one has already chosen to do so wouldn't seem to serve the purposes for which this alternative dispute resolution system seems to be proposed and be designed.

These are some of the questions that I would hope the minister would also address as he tries to address questions raised by my other colleagues.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others?

The hon. Minister of Government Services to close debate.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the members that commented on this bill. I know that it's not customary to specifically answer all the questions in second reading, so I'll try to phrase my comments around the questions so that we're still talking about the principles of the bill.

Certainly, we want this process to work, so of course the hearing officers are going to have to have training. They're going to have to be people with experience in this type of mediation and this sort of thing. We don't believe that it will be necessary that they have a law degree or for that matter be retired judges. However, if there was one of those individuals available, we're not saying that they wouldn't fit the bill because certainly they probably would, but they must also, of course, be very familiar with the Residential Tenancies Act and be able to interpret what needs to be said.

The funding, of course, Mr. Speaker, for this pilot project will be done through my department. We've budgeted some \$195,000 for it. The fee that will be charged would be, we're proposing, about \$75. I heard the hon. members talking about whether it's affordable to everyone. We would hope that it would be affordable, but one of the things that the hearing officer does have under section 54(7)(j) is the ability is to include "orders providing for costs." So, in fact, if at the end of the hearing it's determined that somebody should be awarded costs, the hearing officer would have the ability to do that. So we would handle it in that area.

8:40

The idea is that whoever files first, if they file with the dispute hearing service, then, in fact, that brings in the other party. The party that files is the party that pays.

Now, what may happen would be that on the same day as one party is applying to the dispute resolution service at the same time somebody is applying to the courts. In that case, the courts will take precedent. If, in fact, the time has elapsed, we will be in the regulations setting out a system where the clerk in the court would refer first to the dispute resolution service to see if the other party has filed with the dispute resolution service. It simply would not work if we were to allow choice all the way through. It simply wouldn't work.

Currently with the court system it's a hundred dollars to file, and then if you go to the Court of Queen's Bench it can be even more. Of course, some of the tenants that the members spoke about likely couldn't afford it. We think that we're making it more accessible. But if you think about if you allowed the people to choose either one and then the courts take priority, in many cases one party is not anxious to have it settled. It's to their advantage that it's not settled. So what we are trying to do is three things: make it affordable, make it accessible, and make it fast so that it doesn't hang out there for a long period of time and so that the issue would be settled quickly.

We propose that, yes, this is quasi-judicial and that it will be in public. Of course, to make it work, if someone feels that they need to bring assistance along to the hearing, they can do that. There's no problem doing that. The findings will be in writing, and those will be made public as well.

The ability to assess whether this is a success or not. I'm sure that if it's not a success, members will be hearing about it, and I'm sure we'll be hearing about it.

In section 54.7, I believe it is, we're having the regulations go to the order in council process simply because it involves the Department of Justice as well, and we didn't think it was right that those regulations would be simply done by the minister.

The relationship between the landlord/tenancy agencies in Calgary and Edmonton. Now, Calgary has disbanded their landlord/tenant agency. In Edmonton there is talk of abandoning it. But those are

not quasi-judicial bodies, and this is a quasi-judicial body that we're proposing to set up. So there is quite a bit of difference there, and that is the reason that we believe that it's not a duplication. In fact, we'll see how it works out with the resolution committee.

As far as the regulations I will make the commitment that I will endeavour to work with my opposition critics as we develop those regulations. If they can offer help that improves them, I'm very open to that.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 44 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset of the session this evening in the steering of the Chamber I was not aware of hearing very well the question put before the Assembly. I understand the question was whether the Assembly concurs with removal of the jackets. Inadvertently I had raised my voice indicative to that of no. I would like to retract that vote and put a motion forward before the Speaker for unanimous consent allowing the members to remove their jackets if appropriate.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, hon. member, the onus is on all members to pay attention in the House at all times. But it is at the pleasure of the House, and I will allow the question to be put again. Do we have unanimous consent in agreement to the hon. member's motion? Those agreed, say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed, say no.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is passed. [interjections]

Hon. members, if there was a no, the chair did not hear it. Let your yeas be yeas, and let your noes be noes, and let them be heard.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Bill 50

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to move second reading of Bill 50, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

This bill separates the medical panel process from the WCB, and it also extends presumptive coverage to one extra health condition commonly experienced by firefighters. Mr. Speaker, I will touch briefly on the separation of medical panels, but hopefully my hon. colleague from Calgary-Egmont will elaborate more on this topic later on in second reading or perhaps in committee stage.

The medical panel process was established in its current form by Bill 26 in 2002, and members of this House may recall that this was the same bill that separated the reporting lines and administration of the Appeals Commission for workers' compensation from the WCB, thereby making the Appeals Commission an entity that reports directly to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, funded out of the general revenue fund of the Alberta government. We'll be doing the same thing with the medical panel process.

Our government feels that it's important that in both actual

function and in perception there are appropriate checks and balances built into the overall framework of workers' compensation in this province, and the move is very consistent with that principle, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 50 will modify the act, which currently says that the WCB "may make rules governing," to be repealed and replaced with language that says that cabinet makes the regulations surrounding the working procedures of medical panels.

Also, a new section will be added which will say that the Minister of HR and E is responsible for medical panels and that the function of these panels be paid for through general revenues, to be reimbursed by the WCB at a later date. As I said, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Egmont is an expert on this particular clause and will elaborate further shortly, I'm sure.

The other part of the bill, Mr. Speaker, the topic especially near and dear to my heart, is that the bill builds on my private member's bill of 2003 and provides additional presumptive coverage for firefighters. Members will recall that presumptive coverage for seven different firefighter cancers was put into law back in 2003. Since 2003 two new cancers have been included and are covered now within that same act – and actually it has been put into regulation – that being lung cancer and colorectal cancer.

The change, however, Mr. Speaker, required for Bill 15 with respect to firefighters' WCB coverage is allowing for presumptive association for a myocardial infarction, also known as a heart event or an MI and commonly referred to in lay terms as a heart attack. When a firefighter regardless of length of service suffers a heart attack within 24 hours of an emergency response, it will be presumed that it was caused by his employ as a firefighter unless the contrary can be shown.

Mr. Speaker, common sense dictates that this is the right thing to do with this bill. Obviously, when a firefighter is in the hall and hears that first fire alarm, his heart rate goes to 100 per cent of the rate of a 25 year old in very good shape, and firemen are the in occupation that is in the best shape of any occupation in the world. When that same fire truck with the firefighter rounds a corner and they see a house on fire or the emergency, their heart rate goes up even further and past 100 per cent, and then when they have to don 70 pounds' worth of equipment and have limited breathing because of their breathing apparatus, it puts that much more risk to their hearts.

Not a lot of firefighters die in this country each year because of heart events or heart attacks; however, any one is too many. I believe the number for 2004 was that two in Canada actually died, but many others have heart events while they're on the job. We think that, frankly, they deserve to be covered the same way that we cover firefighters for the cancers.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down and listen to debate and look forward to committee stage.

8:50

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in support of this bill. The importance of recognizing this I think was clear, and we expected this, actually, to be in Bill 50. I was very disappointed and made my disappointment clear last week that this was not brought forward and perhaps made some threats that would have been forthcoming if it had not been brought forward. You know, I'm very pleased to see the brothers from the various locals of the firefighters' associations here in the province present to see this bill come forward.

I do have some reservations, and I'll state them. On the arbitrary

point in the heart attack provision – to use the language in the bill, the myocardial infarction – to have it within the 24-hour period is good, but there are some arguments that that could be extended even to 48 or 72 hours. You have just one sleep after these intense, intense events that the firefighters go through when they actually are protecting our lives and properties and our families. It is something that, you know, maybe we should be looking at in the future too. We should be checking out how this happens and see if there are, in fact, any cases that might come into that situation. The idea to provide presumptive coverage is to ensure that the onus has shifted, that the firefighter is not dealt the severe burden of trying to provide proof, actually, that in fact this is caused by their work or an event at work.

Some further reservations. I understand there is some sense that this could be extended to volunteer firefighters. There are many, many members in the House tonight who have communities within their constituencies that rely on volunteer firefighters. I personally really don't see much of a difference between some of the events a volunteer firefighter might have to attend at and a professional firefighter's even though they may do it in more serious situations often and also that it happens much more often, of course.

The other area that might be of concern is that maybe it does not go far enough in covering just firefighters. Although there may not be quite the degree of research done, quite the degree of information that is available that we have on the occupation of firefighters in this type of situation, what we do know is that similar events happen with other types of emergency personnel who are also given the responsibility of protecting our hearths and homes and families. I think there should be extension to police. There should be extension to EMTs. There should be extension to paramedics and correctional officers of that same provision. I will be presenting amendments to that effect.

Nonetheless, the existing provision is a good step. It can go farther. I do think that some of the cancer provisions that are going to be extended in regulation are, again, a very positive step and have arisen out of some things, some cases that have come up in the last number of years. In the future I'd hope that somehow we could deal with that, not just out of regulation, because I still don't think regulation has the weight of having them included in the statute.

I congratulate the Member for Calgary-North Hill for bringing this forth, and I congratulate the Member for Calgary-Egmont for also, I understand, having some major input on the medical reporting. The medical reporting, again, is an improvement. I believe the WCB is an area that has been of very, very great contention to many communities, to many people. It's been a great problem, and even though there have been many improvements – and this bill is an improvement – it still has a ways to go.

The importance of having this particular section report to the ministry rather than to the WCB itself certainly allows for some greater independence. One of the greatest types of criticisms that we've seen of the WCB is how they use their medical personnel. I think there could be some even greater extensions of that concept into the operations of other areas and the use of medical personnel in the WCB.

The language sometimes still retains a certain harshness, a certain control type of mentality. You know, we always have to be careful how the WCB is administered in our province because it operates much, much differently than our usual contract and business relationships in a liberal democracy. It is a power unto itself. It is not particularly accountable. It is accountable, really, through what we're doing right now and only on an infrequent basis. The need to ensure that we have some review in a very, very regular way, other

than just occasional bills, I think still remains true. The need for other changes, the need for some of the provisions in the Workers' Compensation Act to be even enforced is clear. The long-standing contentious issues remain, and really there has been very little use of that provision in the act even though that came forward some years ago.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, I commend the mover of the bill. I'm pleased to see it come forward. The Official Opposition supports this bill. We'll be continuing to monitor the workers' compensation system, and we look to further improvements in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill for having introduced this bill. I'm very pleased to stand in support at second reading and to add a few comments, as the hon. member did indicate, with respect to medical panels.

Now, in Bill 26 in 2002, as the hon. member has already stated, we did move the Appeals Commission away from the WCB and at the time probably should have moved the medical panels as well. So this bill does that. It makes sure that not only is there independence in fact but also in perception.

9:00

I recall when this happened in 2002, when the WCB recruited Dr. Ohlhauser, who was the registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I can recall how much difficulty he had initially in getting this off the ground. To be very honest with you, he couldn't find very many doctors who would agree to work on a medical panel because, as most of you probably understand, there had been for some years a culture of denial, and doctors' advice was being denied as frequently as other things. So Dr. Ohlhauser took it upon himself to visit scores of general practitioners and specialists to communicate to them how the WCB process with respect to medical panels was now going to change and that people's training and opinions would be heard. Over time he has in fact recruited some of the top Alberta specialists in virtually all disciplines who now will take on a WCB medical panel.

One of the things that I want to point out is that in the old bill, section 46.1, there were only two methods of establishing a medical panel: either the WCB asked for one or the Appeals Commission asked for one. But in practice Dr. Ohlhauser was able to convince the WCB that a treating physician should also be able to ask for and get an independent medical panel. That improvement is going to be handled in regulation so that we have a lot of flexibility to ensure that all of the conditions under which injured workers currently find themselves are improved.

If a treating physician feels that the WCB medical advisors are in error, then the treating physician can ask for and receive an independent medical panel. Now, it's my understanding that there are approximately 25 or so medical panels per year and that about 50 per cent of them overturn the decisions that were previously made. So that is, in my view, quite a large number of cases that without this process would have absolutely no hope at all.

The process that Dr. Ohlhauser did bring to bear – I would really counsel, I would suggest to the members of the opposition to invite Dr. Ohlhauser to come and speak to them, speak to their caucus to explain to them how this process works. I think that you'll be as convinced as I am that we now have a fair system. By moving this now away from the WCB and under the responsibility of the minister, that will indeed improve it.

A couple of things that the medical panels have to do, as I recall my discussion, is that they must consult the treating physician. So you can't have a medical panel that simply comes in and does a document review of a case and makes a decision. They must consult the treating physician. The other thing is that all three, if it's a three-member panel, must agree on the medical facts or keep working until they do and then render a decision. So it's not good enough that two of them agree. It's not good enough that they have opinions this way or that way. They must agree on the medical facts, or the decision is not accepted.

So I think that what you'll find in this bill is that there are a number of clauses that are required for transitional matters because I understand that it's going to take two or three months to transition the records and all of that from the WCB into new premises and so on. So there are some transitional requirements, and there are also some immunity clauses in here that are identical to the ones that are dealt with by the Appeals Commission.

So I would hope, hon. members, that you will support this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 50, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005. I want to congratulate the initiators of the bill and the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, who's obviously had a lot of commitment to this issue for many years. I particularly was impressed by this latest discussion about the independent medical panel, which has been a source of such contention in the communities and in the medical community itself.

Before I comment on that, I wanted to say, along with my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, that heart attack provision for coverage for the firefighters is an important inclusion that should also be extended to other emergency workers. Clearly, if anyone is under stress – and they are all under similar stresses in the case of an emergency – and place themselves in harm's way to try to save people, under both physical and mental stress, if firefighters should deserve the benefit, then surely all emergency workers should similarly be compensated.

In relation to the shifting of this medical panel outside the WCB, I see a tremendous commitment to the appearance, not only the substance, of independence from the WCB. That has been a source of contention for many years, especially when there's a difference in the perception of pain or disability by a community physician compared to the perception of these issues within the panel of WCB physicians. There needs to be an independent process for dealing with this, and you very appropriately and well dealt with that in this new bill.

I think that constitutes my main comments on this, just to say that I and my colleagues do support this. It's a significant progress in the WCB and will serve all Albertans in the future. I would encourage again some of the extension of these compensation commitments to other emergency workers and leave it there.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to remind all members that Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions or comments.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 50, the Workers' Compensation Amendment

Act, 2005 (No. 2). I, too, would like to express my appreciation for the work that the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill has done over the years on this bill and continues to do to address and make sure that this House redresses some of the concerns that have been long-standing by people who earn their living by working on very, very dangerous jobs. So I'm pleased that this bill is before us.

There are two parts to it, obviously. The first one expands the medical problems that workers may experience as a result of their work. So the inclusion of heart attacks is very important and a good expansion of the presumed workplace injuries that must be covered by the Workers' Compensation Board.

9:10

Certainly, we were very happy to support presumptive coverage for firefighters when it was first introduced and lent our strong support to it. In fact, the proposed amendments, that the Member for Calgary-North Hill at that time drew our attention to, were very much in keeping with what the NDP government in Manitoba had already enacted. So we created here, rightly, a parallel provision and coverage. We're delighted that that's happened. We know that the firefighters put their lives on the line for Albertans every time they respond to an emergency. Supporting this amendment is the least we can do in return.

The second provision of the bill deals with medical panels. Although it's a step forward, there are some concerns and problems with the proposed changes, in our view, to the medical panels; in particular, section 3(b), which amends section 46.1 of the original act. Now, this amendment would make decisions of medical panels final. While we are sensitive to the fact that doctors should be making decisions about medical conditions rather than lawyers, there does appear to be a need to provide an avenue of appeal even for these decisions.

The WCB's history and its relations with injured workers leave a lot to be desired. As has been pointed out by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, there has been a culture of denial in the WCB. This has been identified by retired Judge Samuel Friedman in his review committee of the Workers' Compensation Board appeals system. What that really means is that many workers, most workers, and, in particular, a majority of injured workers do not trust the Workers' Compensation Board because of that history and because of problems that they've experienced over a fairly long period of time.

This mistrust, this kind of relationship that many injured workers have had with the WCB is exacerbated by the fact that this amendment appears to be designed to close one more avenue by which a worker could fight for a decision which is deemed by that worker to be more favourable. In our consultations we have been given examples of individuals who appealed a medical panel decision in court and learned some very important things in the process. Don't forget, Mr. Speaker, that when an appeal goes to court, everyone is under oath. Apparently, according to the consultation that we have had with workers, this has had a tendency to help get to the heart of matters.

There have also been concerns raised about instances where workers have degenerative medical conditions, particularly in their knees or their spine. There needs to be room to revisit decisions in these instances. Where there was only a 15 per cent disability found by a medical panel in one year, two years later there may have been significant further degeneration.

We shouldn't forget that the composition of these panels, though improved recently, are still perceived by workers to be somewhat stacked against them. The panel is created by allowing the employer, the board, and the worker to each name one doctor to sit on

the panel. So we have two panelists named by stakeholders who have an interest in either not awarding benefits or awarding only minimal benefits. Further, the panelists are named from a list of doctors deemed eligible by the board itself. In theory this could be a workable way of establishing panels, but given the board's ongoing culture of denial, it does seem as if some room for appeal should remain.

That said, that reservation expressed, the positive aspects of the bill, namely the addition to presumed medical conditions for firefighters, seem to certainly lead us to support the bill in principle at this stage of the debate on the bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I've listened carefully to the speakers preceding me.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, hon. member, I just want to remind the members that Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, please proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. A number of the issues that I was interested in raising have been raised by the speakers previous to me, so I don't need to go into depth with them.

Just briefly, my concerns were: why can this not be widened for emergency personnel beyond firefighters? I think it should be. Certainly, if my colleague from Edmonton-Manning is going to bring forward an amendment, I encourage him to do so because I think this is an opportunity for us to do this right this time and to expand it to include other emergency personnel.

I also share concerns with Edmonton-Strathcona around the Lieutenant Governor in Council making regulations. I always have concerns about that, Mr. Speaker, because it's done behind closed doors. So once again there's delegating of authority and delegating of regulation-making that happens behind closed doors and away from the scrutiny of this Assembly and from the public. Having put that on the record . . . They also were able to make regulations there around the appointment and removal of members of the medical panel. Actually, if you read through the rest of that list in section 3, which is amending section 46.1, to me it reads shades of the WCB, but I am cognizant of what the Member for Calgary-Egmont has said.

Under that same section that is being amended, section 46.1, there's a subsection (h). This is regarding the regulations being made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council respecting the ownership, custody, control, collection, et cetera, of "reports and information submitted to or created or acquired by a medical panel or the medical panels commissioner." I'm wondering if that comes under the Health Information Act, and the rules and regulations of health information should supercede what's in this act. So which of them is paramount?

I would echo my colleagues who have voiced their concerns about the medical panel not being subject to any appeal.

Those were the concerns. Others have put it better than me previous to my speaking, so I will let their words stand for me. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Again, anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

An Hon. Member: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Orders 29(2)(a)? A question or comment?

Mr. Hinman: Well, a question first.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Go ahead, hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: I'm not totally sure on the question, but twice the hon. members here have made mention of adding more people to this. I guess my question is: those other EMTs and other officers, do they really feel that these are in the same category? It does seem like firefighters are in quite a special category of their own for the risk that they put in place. I guess I'm just wondering why they expound and think that we need to broaden it, when I think that this is specifically for the firefighters in a very unique, life-stressful situation every time they respond to a call.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, do you wish to respond?

Ms Blakeman: Sure. I think it's because we are looking at emergency personnel. I guess if the member has a particular argument as to why others shouldn't be included, I'm interested in hearing it. To my eye, yes, firefighters are carrying 70 pounds of equipment up three flights of stairs in smokey circumstances and all of that, but equally we can have a paramedic going into a building that is unstable or has already come down, and they're crawling over rubble with dust coming up, and they're breathing in the dust. You know, there are different circumstances and emergencies that I think we can draw parallels for.

9:20

I guess my concern is: if we're willing to recognize and protect one group of people in circumstances which arise out of emergencies, why are we not willing to extend that same protection to other personnel also involved in providing protection in emergency circumstances to the public? And if we have an opportunity to do it, then I would think: let's do it. That's not to take anything away from the first group of people. Why wouldn't we include others if we could and are able to offer protection to more than one group?

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to respond to that.

The Deputy Speaker: You can have a question or a comment.

Mr. Backs: I'll ask a question then, you know, in the sense of some of the areas that have been covered by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Clearly, what we see in the many, many new types of materials we have out today, you know, the causes for heart attacks can be increased quite a bit. I find it very difficult that the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner would not like to see an extension to volunteer firefighters, would not like to see an extension to police officers, would not like to see an extension to EMTs. I think that, clearly, the presumptive nature of this . . . [interjections] I'm asking this question of that member, and I can comment briefly.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-Manning has the floor, and he can ask a question or make a comment under Standing Order 29(2)(a). Please proceed.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The presumption that is part of this in extending it to other emergency personnel does not in any way take away from firefighters, and I think that must be made clear. To extend that presumptive coverage for even just 24 hours to other emergency personnel I think only improves this legislation and only improves how the WCB act will work because I think that we must recognize those things.

I guess my question would be to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. Do you not want to see it extended to volunteer firefighters?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, the question would be directed to the original speaker. If you have a question, it should be to Edmonton-Centre. Anyone can make a question or a comment based on the original speaker's comments, not on a previous questioner.

On 29(2)(a), or do you wish to speak on the bill?

Mr. Hinman: I wish to speak on the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. If there's no more on 29(2)(a), I recognize the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner on the bill.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just had a few comments where it says in section 24.1(1)(a) that "firefighter means an employee, including officers and technicians." Being from rural Alberta, the majority of our firefighters there are volunteers. I'm very concerned. I've had discussion on that, and people say, "Oh, well, out in the country they don't risk as much or as often." I don't think it's about the number of times. I can tell you from my own experience in rural Alberta that those volunteer firefighters there put their lives on the line just as much and just as willingly as any employee.

I wonder about changing it from "means an employee" to "means a worker, including officers and technicians." It goes on: works for the municipality. They don't get paid, so they're not an employee. If there's some way of changing that to just being a worker for the municipal area, that would cover the volunteers. I guess that's where my biggest concern is: we're leaving a vast amount of people out there that do their work risking their lives.

I would like to see some amendment in order to include the volunteer firefighters because I believe that they're a very admirable group, and we should definitely be extending it to them.

The Deputy Speaker: Any comments on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Just for clarity, hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) doesn't specifically define brevity. It says that comments and questions should be brief, but as it doesn't define it specifically, I would suggest that under a minute would be considered brief by the chair.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my colleagues on this side of the House have pretty much covered the points that I wanted to make. There's been a lot of discussion about groups that are not included in the bill as it sits before us, and I'd like to add one more if I could. That would be MLAs that are invited to the firefighter training day at the Poundmaker's Centre and might experience a heart attack within 24 hours of the training exercise.

Thanks to Mr. Block and his tremendous team of volunteers several of the MLAs in this House as well as a number of other local and, in fact, national politicians were invited to spend a day at the Poundmaker's Centre, experiencing some of what firefighters in this

province and across this country experience daily. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that it certainly brought a much greater understanding to myself and those that attended as to what the firefighters and other emergency personnel go through.

I, myself, sat through the live-burn exercise with the Deputy Prime Minister on my right-hand side. I remember thinking to myself: "I'll be fine. They're not going to let anything happen to the Deputy Prime Minister. If something goes wrong with this live-burn exercise," which, they were kind enough to share with us, was the first one they had every done with VIPs, "they'll definitely come in to rescue us because the Deputy Prime Minister is sitting right beside me." Then, on second thought, I realized that if anything did go wrong, they were probably going to tramp all over the newly elected Member for Edmonton-Rutherford in order to rescue the Deputy Prime Minister. So I once again considered having a heart attack.

It is certainly an opportunity for me to recognize the work that these fine gentlemen and their colleagues do, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't want to let that go by without doing so. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To close debate on this, I appreciate all the questions I got, in particular from the Member for Edmonton-Manning, very good questions. There were some questions to do with volunteer firefighters and whether they should be covered and, in fact, other professions within emergency procedures, whether we're talking police officers or medical personnel. I want everyone here to remember that while I applaud the way you're thinking because, frankly, I would like to see them all get it, we don't willy-nilly walk out of the House and assign benefits to everybody that we'd like to just because they're nice folks.

You have to remember that when a firefighter goes to a call, not unlike a police officer or an emergency medical technician, they're also hearing a bell. Granted, that will take their heart rate up, but again – and the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford mentioned it – they are wearing 70 pounds worth of equipment. They are running into the fire, not out of the fire. Their breathing is somewhat limited because of the mask that they wear. I'm sure the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would verify that. I didn't have to wait until I got home to think I was having a heart attack. It was happening right there, and I was just happy to get out of there at the end of the day. They thought my big smile was because I was having fun. It was because we were done at that point.

In any event, tomorrow we'll be, I believe, in committee stage on this bill. I'd love to get up and answer these questions, and I will look over the *Hansard* after tonight and make sure that we've got every single one of your questions answered on here.

As I say, the only thing I can say about the volunteers as well as putting police officers and emergency medical technicians in it is: great, except that I can prove it going back to 1920 based on a whole series of studies, Guidotti is one of them and the biggest one, and a number of other studies that say that firefighters get this more than other professions. I believe that they deserve this special coverage. Frankly, as I say, I'm not opposed to the others. I'm just saying that we can prove one and can't prove the other.

I've already moved second. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 50 read a second time]

9:30

Bill 43
Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes
Amendment Act, 2005

[Adjourned debate November 16: Mr. Miller]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to get an opportunity to bring some of the comments of my constituents forward into the debate on this Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that overwhelmingly the reaction from my constituents was not in favour of these rebates, and I've tabled some of the letters in the House. They raised concerns about: why wasn't this money being pooled or put into things like libraries, smaller class sizes? So there are a number of them. [interjections] Well, I can see that people are getting very excited, and I am definitely looking forward to having the Minister of RAGE get up and join the debate, seeing that he's so energetic in his heckling tonight. I'm sure he can manage to join in.

They raised a number of concerns both about the choice of using a rebate as a way of dealing with, essentially, very good resource revenue – part of their concern was where the money was coming from and that that is not an infinite source of money – but also about the choice to give it back individually to Albertans rather than pooling the money, investing it in things, as I've mentioned, like hospitals or child care or smaller class sizes. Libraries was one I remember particularly; that was one of the letters that I tabled in the House. So most of what we heard was overwhelmingly not in favour of these rebates.

I also want to stop and point out that I was invited to speak to a group that meets regularly in my constituency called Pathways. This is run by – I'm not going to get this right; I'm sorry – I think it's the city of Edmonton, but it could be Canadian Mental Health, and my apologies for not remembering the sponsoring organization. It's a kind of meeting and activity opportunity for people in the downtown core who are struggling with mental health issues. I met with them, and they were some very passionate, impassioned speakers on this who said, well, fairly bluntly that I should, you know, give my head a rub because these people are really struggling with finances and they need that 400 bucks and who am I to say that they shouldn't get it?

I agree. I'm not saying that they shouldn't get it, but we talked a lot about the appropriateness of this choice and the fact that having that debate doesn't negate that they need this money at all. They had to make it clear to me that this money is important to them, and with the cost of utilities – thank you so much for electrical deregulation; boy, that was a winner – that's really affected people and their ability to get by on the income they have. They wanted it clearly pointed out that they need that money and that they want that money. I feel obliged to bring their point of view into the Assembly and to put it on the record because I respect what they were saying to me. As always, I'm trying to balance what my constituents are saying.

So here I had most of them going: "Bad idea. Should have been invested elsewhere. Really don't want to see this go forward." And a very distinct group of people are saying: "We need this, and you have to respect that you have created the situation where we are now people in need. Don't take that money away from us. It's going to be groceries." This is not an iPod to them. This is not a colour television to them. This is not a payment on their car or a weekend in Jasper. This is an electricity bill. This is food. This is rent. So very basic needs. There was a series of questions today talking about poverty in the midst of plenty, and that situation is really

underlined for me when I look at the points that were raised by those folks at Pathways. So I wanted to get that on the record.

I think that to me what this discussion has raised more than anything is that we need a natural resource revenue policy more than a surplus policy. This has evolved, and I'll admit that, Mr. Speaker. This started from an initial discussion and particularly, obviously, with the Liberals that we needed a surplus policy. We did in fact have a very good surplus policy in the last election, and we got a lot of points for that. But I think we've evolved beyond that in the last year. What I'm looking into and considering with some of my colleagues is the idea of a natural resource revenue policy. The idea behind that is that, really, those natural resources, those dinosaurs that died that long ago to produce all of this for us . . .

An Hon. Member: Nonrenewable resource revenue.

Ms Blakeman: Nonrenewable resource revenue. Thank you.

It's our ancestors', it's ours, and it's our descendants'. Our ancestors didn't go through it nearly as fast as we are. We're going through it at an amazing rate, and there likely won't be much at all or maybe nothing for our descendants.

To me the idea that is inherent in this bill has really brought forward the need for us to establish a very clear nonrenewable resource revenue policy. We know that those resources are limited. I mean, let's face it: you can't get oil out of the ground at five bucks a barrel anymore. That oil is gone. You can't get it out of the ground for 10 bucks a barrel anymore. That oil is gone. That was the easy stuff. That was where you stuck a stick in, and the oil just shot out of the ground. That stuff was easy, and it's gone. Now we're looking at all kinds of ideas where we're going to inject water down, where we're going to inject CO₂ down there. We're going to inject all kinds of things, which is basically to sort of get underneath the oil or the gas and bring it up so that we can pump it out of the earth. This is not an infinite resource that will flow forever for us.

Inside of, really, two generations we've seen an enormous depletion of that stock. I think we need to deal with that, and we need to understand that we are spending both the money that our ancestors didn't spend – they were more frugal – but more frighteningly we are spending our descendants' share of that. I think it's more important that we take it and set it aside. Now, however much that is – and that's what the debate needs to be – do you take the nonrenewable natural resource revenue and say: okay, we're going to set 50 per cent of it aside or 30 per cent or 80 per cent? I don't know. That's what the discussion should be. Set that aside in endowment funds. Either separate it out for various ideas or one big lump or put it all in the heritage fund or whatever you want to do with it. Then you're able to take the interest that's generated off that and flow it out into other things.

You know, that's when you can start looking at what Norway did and what Alaska has done. Alaska is giving the personal dividends every year, and I think Norway is getting rid of its income tax because they can replace the amount of money with what they're making from the interest on their resource revenue now.

I was very frustrated to see such a simplistic, short-term idea come out of the government on this one. It's purely PR. If you want to go with the argument that, well, you know, we have a surplus, which meant that we overtaxed you and therefore we should rebate some of your taxes back to you – but the Treasurer herself has said: really, we don't now collect enough income tax from people, and we don't have any room to be reducing that any more. Really, this extra money, this surplus money, has come as a result of that nonrenewable resource, and we need to recognize that.

9:40

There's a legacy for the Premier: put in place something like that. That really would last beyond our generation and well into future generations. It really would ensure the prosperity of Alberta for – who knows? – centuries to come. But at the rate we're doing it right now, we're just pulling that resource out, turning it into cash, and spending it. The argument that, well, if you give the resource revenue to people, they'll spend it here and the money will circulate in the economy – oh, really? Okay. But what if we go with the iPod argument? I mean, let's face it. For the people who make the money off those iPods or the televisions, that money is not circulating in this economy. It's going to whoever, to the shareholders of that company in the U.S. or in multinational corporations. That's not staying in Alberta. Yes, some people probably will use it to pay their electricity bills or their rent, and in that case it is going to stay here and circulate in our economy, but those are the very people that I started out talking about to begin with, Mr. Speaker.

So I don't think this is a good idea. I don't think it's showing leadership. I actually think that it's backward thinking. It's old style, old boy thinking, and we need to move forward. I'm very conscious of the students and the younger people that are living in my constituency that challenge that old way of thinking all the time, who are very environmentally alive to repercussions and consequences of choices that we make, especially around those nonrenewable resources. They don't have a lot of patience for us when we make decisions like this because they're going: "We're not going to have the same environment. You guys will have done things to it that will forever change it." They're much more interested in environmental protection and moving forward.

What I want to see is the prosperity of Alberta in the future. I'm really impressed by what the Alberta heritage resource – I'm going to get this wrong; I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker – the medical research body that just made announcements of new scholarships . . .

Mr. Doerkson: The Heritage Foundation for Medical Research.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. That's excellent. Thank you to whoever that came from. We'll put that one into *Hansard*. I think it was the Minister of Innovation and Science.

That had value added to it because what's happened is that people have started to come to Alberta because those scholarships are available, and that organization becomes an economic driver on its own. It starts a cluster of like-minded organizations, businesses, and individuals who come to gather around that because they all start to work with each other.

I start to think: wow. Okay. That's medical research. What if we looked at alternative forms of energy and set up a similar foundation to do that kind of work and set up something to do the same sort of work in the arts? I mean, I know how much work and what a driver and a vitalizer of our culture the arts can be, an excellent opportunity there, and we can't seem to draw any funding money out of them beyond what they've been funding since 1988. So maybe that's another way to go at future possibilities for the arts in the province.

There's enormous possibility there, which gives me great hope. When I look at very narrow thinking, like this rebate, I get extremely frustrated because it is not moving us forward in any of those directions. So I'm looking forward to the debate because I'm hoping I'm going to hear some brilliance from the other side. You know, I'll be honest with you: I'm hoping that. It is getting close to Christmas, and sometimes there are Santa Clauses, but I'm not entirely confident that I'm going to hear that. We've heard a lot of rhetoric. We've already seen the government spend a lot of money

– like, a lot of money – advertising this rebate. I mean, how bad is a rebate when the government has to do an advertising program to convince us that it was a great thing? How bad is that? Like, that's pretty miserable if they have to spend our own money to convince us that this was a good idea. If there's no other indicator than that, I think we could say that the program has failed and is not a great idea, based simply on that.

An Hon. Member: And \$10 million is ridiculous.

Ms Blakeman: Well, the books will show eventually how much money has been spent on this because there are all kinds of numbers that get bandied about. I mean, \$10 million: I think that would have printed the brochures. You know, if we're going to talk television time and production and all the rest, consultants, I bet you the final bill is way higher than that.

An Hon. Member: And you'll have to FOIP it.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Well, we'll likely have to FOIP it because it's always hard to tickle that kind of information out in Public Accounts, but we'll try.

You know, I find it interesting how often this government has to employ communication specialists to convince us of something that they're already doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Before I recognize anyone under that, I would advise that I've been advised by counsel that questions and comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a) would be restricted to about 30 seconds, so I'll be asking us all to strive for that time frame as well.

Anyone under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: I would like to take the opportunity to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre what this investment would do in the arts, social sciences, and culture community in Alberta that this \$400 rebate would not accomplish in individual gifts?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member, briefly.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I can say right now I can't answer that in 30 seconds, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we know that, for example, to create a job – and this is a well-known statistic – in the arts sector is \$30,000. To create it in the manufacturing sector is \$200,000. So if you start to look at the amount of activity that can be generated from an endowment fund or a research foundation, such as I was discussing, it's almost endless. When we look at what we're so proud of in this province right now in our arts and our cultural sector, like Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and a lot of those ideas, they all came at a time when we had a government in place that understood the value of the arts and invested in it heavily. From that we have most of the things that everybody likes to tout as being amazing right now, but we haven't added to that in any significant manner in the last 10 years.

I'm sorry. That's not as lengthy as I would like to get, but I can hear the mutterings from over there on the time.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else under 29(2)(a)?

Anyone on the bill? The hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency.

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I just want to add a little bit to the debate here and say that I believe that this is a very, very good bill. I'm going to try and be brief and go back a little bit. Before I was an MLA, when you'd sit in the coffee shops and were in the coffee circles and listened when people got into conversations about politics, what always came up was: why does the government with all their wisdom believe that they can spend our money better than we can? Everybody always says: if there's extra money there, why wouldn't they give it to us so we can spend it? When you explain it properly to people that way, when you can say: "You know what? You may not need the money. Maybe you believe that your hospital needs a little bit of money or your school or your library or maybe someone down the block that is just on a hard-luck day today. You can walk down there and you can give them your \$400." A lot of people say: "That's right. Maybe I don't need it, but at least I get to spend it the way I want to, not a bunch of other people saying they're way brighter than us, and we're going to put it into this one particular item."

So, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that this is a good bill, and everybody should be supporting this bill because people in Alberta are brighter than a lot of other people give them credit for.

9:50

You know, there was a bunch of rhetoric going on about our using up all of our nonrenewable resources. Today, Mr. Speaker, with the technology we have, we have more reserves and resources than we've ever had, and with one ounce more of technology we will have the most reserves in the world. We talk about our depleting natural gas. With the technology we have today in coal-bed methane, we have larger reserves than ever.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we've just listened to a bunch of rhetoric in some cases. We have a good bill here. That's all I needed to have on the record.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: I guess I just have to ask the hon. member: when he says that this is a good bill and that the people are so wise in Alberta, which I agree with, why don't we give it all back, then, and follow that line of thinking and get rid of so many government programs? We're taking so much so that we can give so much. I don't follow. Either it's good or it isn't. Earlier this spring when the Finance minister was asked about this, there was no way.

I guess I'll go back to Bastiat where he talks about legal plunder, where a government takes the money through legal means as under tax laws and redistributes it. Redistribution of wealth has never worked anywhere in the world. Why does it work here? If we've got overtaxed people, which is what a surplus is, that the government is taking in more than it's spending, it should go back to those who have been taxed. And \$1.4 billion was collected on property taxes, which could have gone back. So is that a good bill, I ask you.

Mr. Ouellette: I would like to say to the hon. member across the way that we do have a surplus, and we're using the surplus very wisely to try and give to all of the people the necessities that they believe they need. I also want to remind my hon. colleague across the way that we do live in a province with the lowest taxes in the country.

Mr. Elsalhy: I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency pursuant to his statement if some of his

constituents, before or after he became an MLA – you know, they're asking them to take the money and spend it as they wish – really mentioned that better they blow the money rather than leave it with the government to blow it themselves.

Mr. Ouellette: They never ever say: give me the money to blow the money. They say: I can make good use of that money.

I also want to say that my constituents aren't all in agreement, but when I sit down and speak to them and explain that they can do whatever they like with this money, they understand it much better.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of RAGE criticized some of the so-called experts that have said that this is basically throwing gasoline on the fire of a very, very active and very, very hot economy, and money that's thrown onto such a fire disappears into the steam of the fire and the burn of that economy that's so hot. My question is: why does it take so much money to try to sell this to Albertans? Why did our government have to spend so, so much money to sell this to Albertans even at the same time when there's no money in supplementary spending being spent in the whole Human Resources and Employment department at all, where we could be alleviating some of the poverty, alleviating some of the difficulties that many families still have in the midst of our plenty, and ensuring that all families have the Alberta advantage?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, there was so much in front there that I was wondering if he was ever going to get to the question, and I'm lost in his question.

I will have to say that I don't think I've criticized or said anything about any fires or smoke or money going anywhere. But I will say that because of all the rhetoric that does come across sometimes, we do have to publicize some of the good things that this government does. It wasn't strictly all the \$1.4 billion that's going to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I followed with keen interest the previous speakers who spoke on Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. To start off, I think this whole idea was probably thought of in a good way, but it came on hasty and rash. However, I am thankful that it created a bit of buzz around the province, that it stimulated discussions by the water coolers and around kitchen tables, discussions that were missed for quite a while and that ended up restoring some level of interest in the Legislature, the political scene, and policy debate.

As I was thinking about some sound bites to put into my speech, which is basically a practice that government members do all the time, and we're learning from the pros – we are going to give a rebate to the people of this province. Why not give them a rebate from the interest of a savings fund? Not the principal itself. How much could we have paid every single Albertan year after year from a dividend fund that we invested \$1.4 billion in over many, many years?

The government gave a rebate, and some people are grateful for it, but it lacks vision. It lacks direction. It lacks clarity and structure. The government doesn't have a strategy for the future. They're thinking to the next fiscal quarter, not to the next quarter century.

During the provincial election in the fall of last year the Alberta Liberals pioneered a plan that would allocate the resource surpluses year after year with a formula. Thirty-five per cent of the surplus would go into the heritage trust fund, which, I should mention, was established in 1976 and did not grow since. It's basically shrinking because today's dollars are weaker than 25 or 30 years ago. Thirty-five per cent of that surplus would go into a postsecondary education endowment fund. I know that the hon. Minister of Advanced Education worked on a plan that mimics that. Again, why stop there?

Twenty-five per cent would go into a capital account to eliminate the infrastructure debt. We all know that there was an idea floated by the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to go back into debt, which the government referred to as good debt. I have to disagree. No debt is good, and they themselves signed a law that prohibits this province from going into debt again.

We are going to invest 5 per cent of the annual budget surplus, up to \$500 million, into an endowment fund for the humanities, social sciences, and arts, which have taken a back seat in any budget debate in this province.

Other surplus ideas that we can investigate would be to eliminate the health care premiums, like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre said, or novel ideas like helping out our municipalities, which are crying for more support and more money. Edmonton's mayor, Calgary's mayor, and many of the mayors and reeves across the province are asking for more support from the government.

Having said that, I have to emphasize that I and my colleagues in the Official Opposition do not begrudge those who are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the \$400 cheques. These people, many of whom are low-income earners or people on assistance, deserve all the support they can get from this province, not just a lousy \$400.

The underlying question I constantly ask myself is: why do we in this province in this day and age have people living from paycheque to paycheque or from one assistance stub to the next? Why is there poverty in the midst of prosperity? The Alberta advantage should extend to all Albertans. It is unacceptable in my opinion to let this type of need go unnoticed or unaddressed. I respect the fact that \$400 can go a long way in paying for electricity and natural gas to light and heat peoples' homes or buy clothes for their children or send them to school with something in their lunch boxes or lessen the impact of escalating school fees on those parents, et cetera.

10:00

In the *Calgary Herald* on the Friday, October 21, editorial page they wrote that by itself, "spending would never work as a strategy" and that it would "greatly inflate the size of government and pour too much fuel on an overheating provincial economy." In other words, they say, \$400 that was not planned is going to be inflationary.

We have to think beyond our current riches. The hon. Minister of RAGE indicated that we're on the verge of having the most natural resource reserves in the world, rivalling places like Saudi Arabia, for example. Fine. But these resources are nonrenewable. Even if we're discovering more today and tomorrow and the day after, they're eventually going to disappear. The resource is finite. It has a limit, and it's going to dwindle.

We have to shift our focus and our thinking from a resource-based economy to an idea-based economy, diversifying for the future, preparing for the day when these resources dwindle to a really low level or become uneconomical to harvest or extract. Take a place like Japan, for example, a country that is really small with very rugged terrain, mountains. It almost doesn't support any form of agriculture, and they don't have resources like we do here. But look

at Japan now. They came out of a world war. They were battered. They were divided. But they grew out of their pain and out of their experience into a superpower. They have the best technology in the world. Most brands and most products that we buy here, even automobiles, are made in Japan. Why is Japan such a superpower, and why can't we be?

The *Calgary Herald* also mentioned on October 13 that people who traditionally support conservative philosophy, like the Canada West Foundation, for example, are surprisingly opposed to this move to spend \$1.4 billion on the prosperity cheques. They conducted a poll of 507 people, and 51 per cent of the people who replied to that poll did not want the money to stay with the government. They wanted it spent on programs and much-needed services or, in fact, wanted some of it in the form of a dividend. So 51 per cent of the people did not want the money to stay with the government. I asked the hon. minister if that meant that they think that they should spend it and shouldn't leave it in the arms of the government, and he declared that, yes, people are smart and they should make their own decisions, and I respect that.

However, why don't we, as I mentioned, invest some of the money in expanding or growing the Alberta heritage savings trust fund? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre mentioned places like Alaska and Norway. These places can pay dividends in the tens of thousands of dollars to every citizen every year if they choose to.

Mr. R. Miller: You know they rake a billion dollars out of that fund every year.

Mr. Elsalhy: Yes. One billion dollars comes out of that fund every year that is shared with the citizens of those jurisdictions.

In Alberta since 1976, 91 per cent of all the revenues from reserves that we received were spent and are unrecoverable. The decision was arbitrary. It was an ad hoc decision that was apparently opposed even in the Conservative caucus itself. When we received our training as opposition MLAs when we first joined, we were clearly cautioned against making policy on the fly without proper and exhaustive research. This decision was driven or led by the Premier himself against advice from his own caucus.

Again quoting the *Calgary Herald* – and I'm intentionally not choosing Edmonton publications because people say that the Alberta Liberals are concentrated in Edmonton, so I'm quoting the *Calgary Herald*: "Premier Ralph Klein's decision abandons [the] most cherished conservative principles, not least of which is fiscal responsibility."

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we don't use proper names in this Assembly.

Mr. Elsalhy: Okay. I apologize.

Also, there is another line that says that the outcry has been fiercest from the very sectors that would normally favour the return of funds to private hands – the business community. The Chamber of Commerce and probusiness think-tanks like the Canada West Foundation are opposed to that idea. I find this really interesting.

Also, now quoting the *Edmonton Journal*, Scott Hennig, the Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, wrote in the *Edmonton Journal* on October 2:

If your government unfairly imposes a regressive \$528 "premium" and then refunds you \$400 of [that money] as a "prosperity rebate," do you thank them?

If it is a tax your government has been imposing for many years and in fact raised by 29 per cent in 2002, never before refunding you one cent, then perhaps you do thank [the government], ignoring the fact that you are still \$128 in the hole.

What the government has done, what the Premier has done is basically refund 80 per cent of the health care premiums that the government collected for 2005, to be released back to the people who paid that health care premium in early 2006. Only 80 per cent of it was refunded. Why not scrap the whole thing? Like the Advanced Education minister is freezing tuition rates, why not cancel health care premiums like they did for the seniors and extend that to everybody in this province?

They are spending a lot of money to distribute these resource rebate cheques. I think this money could have been better spent to cover more operations; for example, people on waiting lists. They could have extended the hot lunch program. They could have waived school fees. We have many better uses. Had we been consulted, we would have offered them to the government gladly, but they chose to arbitrarily decide this and go for it. They didn't realize that most of the people in this province don't like this idea because it was not thought out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll listen for more discussion.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with great interest to speak on Bill 43 here in the second reading. Usually I try to look for some sense of balance in respect to a bill being put forward. I like to be optimistic, to think that most bills have some element of the public's best interest in them, but I really believe that this Bill 43 is overshadowed by the fact that it enacts the very worst kind of politicized spending in this Legislature. I'm quite frankly appalled, from the moment that it came forward to this moment where I have the opportunity to speak on it. Clearly, it demonstrates a lack of vision and a lack of a plan for spending. As I say, it represents the very worst kind of politicization of the spending that goes on in here, and I find it, quite frankly, appalling.

The worst of it is that this money is so desperately needed by many Albertans. Albertans have struggled in the face of higher utility costs, ever-increasing school fees, the health care premium tax, higher fees for long-term care, the highest auto insurance rates in western Canada, and all other ways that this government has put costs and downloaded costs onto regular Albertans. So we're in a bit of a quandary. What are Albertans being offered in return? A one-time payment that would not even probably cover most people's utility bills for more than a couple of months.

10:10

The NDP has put forward a number of solid proposals that would provide real relief from the squeeze that many of us feel on our pocketbooks. I would suggest that these are practical solutions that we should consider in this House. Number one – and this crosses right across political boundaries – scrap health care premiums, a saving of \$528 for every Albertan this year: approximate cost of \$850 million. Please note that effective October 1 all seniors and some low-income Albertans are partially exempt from paying these premiums, but still two and a half million Albertans are paying these full premiums. We don't need this sort of flat tax on everyone, a head tax so to speak, and everybody would be most relieved. I'm sure everyone's constituents on both sides of the House would appreciate this more than anything else on an ongoing basis.

Number two, cut the provincial school property taxes at least by half. Savings for residential property owners would be about 500 bucks per year. Scrapping school property taxes completely nearly doubles those savings.

Number three, increase the basic personal income tax exemption

to \$20,000 from \$14,000. At the current 10 per cent flat tax rate this would represent a saving of about \$550 per individual taxpayer per annum in Alberta personal income taxes and a yearly total revenue loss of about \$750 million to the province.

Mr. Speaker, considering the serious circumstances that many people are in, I realize the importance and necessity of accepting these one-time cheque payouts as proposed by Bill 43. However, there are so many better ways that we could structure our financial future here in this province. I would suggest that we would have the opportunity to give out something like a dividend or a rebate on perhaps even an annual or biannual basis if we collected a reasonable return for the oil and gas revenues that companies are extracting from this province and paying a bargain basement rate for. If we were able to look at those royalty rates in a reasonable way and not give out these fire-sale prices to large companies, who are laughing all the way to the bank – and that money is passing right out of this province; it never even touches the ground – then we would be able to give out rebate cheques and benefits to our citizens on an annual basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of brevity I just wanted to express my absolute disgust with the means by which this is happening. I recognize the necessity of it. Many of my constituents are certainly eagerly anticipating this cheque to meet the extra costs that have been downloaded on them for many years. But let's try to do something that is a little more permanent, a little bit lasting, and something responsible that young individuals can look up to and say that we're doing something for the future and not just for the immediate, political present.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. I just wanted to ask the hon. member: if he's so disgusted with the cheque, I wondered if he had already planned what he was going to do with his.

Mr. Eggen: I don't think I have to necessarily tell you what I'm going to do with my finances, thank you very much. I certainly think that there are a lot of reasonable ways that I can spend that money in a constructive manner, but you can make your own choice. I'm not going to tell you. I don't need to tell you necessarily what I'm going to do with my money. Right?

Ms Blakeman: Give us some examples of how you're going to do it.

Mr. Eggen: There are many things that certainly have passed through my fertile imagination. First of all, I could invest it in change, and I would invest perhaps, you know, in different charities that could use the money. I would look for ways to invest it in certain political parties that could make real, lasting political change in this province. I do have some political parties that I do like to invest in. I was just discussing that with my honourable friend over here. I always like to make investments in the Alberta Alliance Party, who I appreciate very much. Absolutely.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the hon. member for his wise choices and for his fertile imagination. I would just like to ask him why it is that he seems to think he's the only Albertan that's capable of making such wise choices in what to do with the prosperity bonus.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly didn't say anything to that regard whatsoever. I said that this is just a matter of taking some money, that some people wrote on the back of a napkin some kind of plan. "What are we going to do? I don't know. I don't know." Maybe someone lost the napkin in between, and then somehow at the end of the day we end up with this embarrassing politicized way of spending our money. That's what I said. I didn't say anything about people not being responsible. In fact, I think that Albertans are responsible to know exactly what this is all about. It does not pass the smell factor.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the members across the floor was saying that she was looking for some brilliance. Unfortunately, you won't find any brilliance sitting my chair, but I do want to join in the debate and make a couple of comments with respect to things that are said relative to a lack of a resource revenue policy.

Certainly, anybody living in the province of Alberta that's paid any attention whatsoever to what this government has been doing in the last four or five years would at the very least understand that we have in place and are following a 20-year strategic plan. That plan is our policy, and that plan does include a policy to deal with resource revenues. Mr. Speaker, the plan is based on four solid pillars: unleashing innovation, leading in learning, competing in a global marketplace, and being the best place in which to live, work, and visit.

Mr. Speaker, this government went out some time ago. We've consulted with the public in Alberta on all of these major issues. Whether or not other people like to agree with the consultation or if they disagree with what the people of the province of Alberta are asking us to do, then I'm sure that, you know, they can pick all sorts of holes in what it is that we do.

It's Your Money was a circular sent out to Albertans, and it was one of the most subscribed to pieces of information that we had asked people to respond to as a government, to tell us what they thought we should do with their money.

Subsequent to the strategic plan and subsequent to asking Albertans that question, we brought in an additional plan. It is a plan, Mr. Speaker, and it has been activated, and the results today are already noticeable and in 20 years will be spectacular. We had made a commitment to Albertans on a number of different capital expenditures for infrastructure around the province. With some of the surplus money we will fund the commitments already made.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we have a three-point plan. This is a plan that Albertans developed and this government developed with the help of Albertans, and we are moving forward on this plan. First of all, we're going to increase investment. We're going to save. We're going to increase investment in the infrastructure that is required in the province to meet the terms of our 20-year plan. If you have a solid plan with a solid foundation, with the four pillars, it has to have some investment in order to make it work. Albertans have asked us to make those investments, and we're doing that.

10:20

Secondly, what we're going to do is save, save for the future. Albertans asked us to save, and if you would spend even a little bit of time taking a look at what's happened with our surplus money,

you would see that our endowments, Mr. Speaker, in many areas of endowment, have been and will continue to be bolstered and brought up to a level that will truly sustain them in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, after that, what Albertans want was to give back their money, and that's exactly what we're doing. We are giving back to Albertans a portion of the money that was rightfully their money brought into the provincial government through the resource revenue system.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be also cognizant of a fact here that a balance needs to be reached. When you're talking about going out and spending billions of dollars, which we already are, in infrastructure across the province, we would want to be sure. It's been mentioned by members across the aisle that in a heated economy you need to have a balance of how much money you're going to put into capital. Sure, it would be great. Take the \$1.4 billion, build more schools, build more hospitals, build whatever. However, we took a very calculated look and made the determination that the amount of money that this government is investing in capital projects in the province of Alberta now is what is doable and sustainable with the province's ability to absorb that capital investment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that the debate on this particular piece of the bill, of course, as we would understand, has led into a much, much broader arena. However, just looking at what we've done and the last piece of the plan that we laid out to give back to Albertans some of this resource revenue, I believe that this bill deserves support of the House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?
Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 48
Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005**

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I have some relatively brief comments. It seems to me that I outlined in some detail the history with respect to this bill in second and received a concurrence from the people who spoke in the opposition.

I think the clearest way to deal with the amendments in Bill 48, Mr. Chairman, is to discuss each amendment as it relates to the original section. There are only three sections to the act that are to be amended. Two of them are virtually the same, so the same amendments apply to both sitting and nonsitting JPs alike, and I outlined what that is in some detail in second reading.

With respect to section 7(5) currently this section provides that a person who was a nonsitting JP on January 31, 1999, under the old justice of the peace system shall be appointed and designated a

presiding JP under the reformed system. The Judicial Council determines who is qualified to be a presiding JP.

The proposed amendment to this clause would clarify this transitional section. The amendment ensures that there is no continuing mandatory legal obligation to appoint as presiding JPs those persons who have become qualified after January 31, 1999. The amendment to this section will be retroactive to January 31, 1999.

The intention of the legislation when the justice of the peace system was reformed in 1999 was to have the Judicial Council make a determination as to whether the incumbent nonsitting JPs were qualified to be appointed as presiding JPs under the reformed system. Those determined to be qualified would be designated as presiding JPs in the reformed system. Those determined not to be qualified would be appointed as nonpresiding JPs in the reformed system. The Judicial Council made its determination and appointments were made.

As I mentioned in second reading, this provision was not intended to be long term. It was transitional, intended to ensure a smooth transition from the old to the new. The provision was not intended to require the appointment of incumbent JPs under the new system if they were not found to be qualified at the time of the 1999 reforms. If, since the 1999 reforms, a JP is found to be qualified by the Judicial Council, he or she may certainly apply for a new appointment at the presiding JP level. What we are clarifying is when the requirement to mandatorily appoint these JPs applies and when it does not. What we are saying is that now, six years after the stricter qualifications were brought in, those who now qualify can apply for an appointment along with other qualified candidates, but there is no legal obligation for them to be automatically appointed as presiding JPs.

Section 7(4) is being amended exactly as subsection (5), which I've just described. The wording of the amendment is the same and the rationale is the same. It merely applies to sitting JPs instead of presiding JPs. For consistency's sake, sitting and presiding JPs should be treated the same.

Section 15(1) is the only other clause that is being amended. Currently this section, which describes the regulation-making power of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, may not provide sufficient authority to make the regulation that has the affect of restricting the jurisdiction of sitting JPs. The amendment adds a specific regulation-making power to section 15(1), providing clear authority to issue the constitutional notice regulation under the Justice of the Peace Act. Constitutional notice regulation provides that justices of the peace are not assigned to determine matters related to aboriginal, constitutional, or Charter of Rights. The validity of the regulation has been challenged on the basis that such a regulation to be effective must be issued under the Justice of the Peace Act. The amendment merely clarifies the authority of this government to do this.

In conclusion, I would appreciate support for the bill as it currently is structured and look forward to comments from other members. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in Committee of the Whole to Bill 48, the Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005. I have heard from my colleague who is the Official Opposition critic on this bill, that being the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, that he regarded this as a useful bill and did indeed support it. We would obviously have no problem with a bill that's ensuring that JPs are properly qualified for their

responsibilities, ensuring that there is a proper appointment process, and being able to ensure that there is a way of distinguishing between presiding and sitting JPs.

I understand that a briefing was made available from the department to the critic. We have had the opportunity to check with some stakeholders in the community and to my knowledge there have been no issues raised that would be contrary to the passage of this bill, so at this time I'm happy to support Bill 48 in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 48 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

10:30

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report Bill 48.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 48.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:32 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Wednesday, November 23, 2005 **1:30 p.m.**

Date: 05/11/23

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask for guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Brian Rushfeldt, a constituent of mine from Calgary-Mackay. Accompanying him today is an individual who is very familiar to you, Mr. Speaker, and to members of this Assembly, Mr. Julius Yankowsky, who served as a member of this Assembly from 1993 through 2004. I ask them to rise and please receive the usual warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. The first guests are seated in your gallery. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly His Excellency Alan Baker, ambassador of Israel to Canada. His Excellency is accompanied by his wife, Ms Dalia Baker.

The ambassador is on his first official visit to Alberta. His Excellency has a very busy schedule in the next couple of days, building upon a \$100 million trading relationship between Alberta and Israel. With his training in law His Excellency has been an important part of the state of Israel's search for Middle East peace. I'm looking forward to hosting an official luncheon for His Excellency tomorrow. In the meantime I would ask that our honoured visitors please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have seated in the members' gallery two very special guests from the town of Tofield that I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly. Seated are His Worship the mayor of the town of Tofield, Mr. Nabil Chehayeb, and accompanying him is Councillor Laurie Weatherill, tremendous volunteers in the town of Tofield who have served on council for some length of time. I would ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise to introduce to you and through you a gentleman who has 28 years' experience as an education professional in our province and who happens to live in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti constituency, but with that member's indulgence I've been allowed to introduce this gentleman, who is also a journeyman mechanic with a red seal. He's spent a great deal of time advocating for vocational studies and industrial arts courses in our high schools. He's also someone that I referred to in my maiden speech in this House, almost five years

ago, as someone who I'm very, very proud of, and that is my brother Rick Horner, who's seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you a gentleman who has been associated with my office for a considerable length of time. He is a former principal with the Edmonton public school system, and he is married to my assistant Sandy Semeluk. I would ask Len Semeluk to please stand and receive the very warm welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It does give me great pleasure to rise on this glorious Alberta day. In fact, at noon the weatherman said that it would be the warmest on this day since 1890, so it's a great day to be travelling up here from Winfield. For guests to introduce today, I have visitors from Winfield school: 21 students accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Terri Cocke, and the principal, Mr. Elwood Johnson, who was my former teacher when I went to Winfield school, and also parent helpers Mrs. Jeanette Chappell, Mrs. Kathleen Zimmerman, and Mrs. Brenda Hoflan. I'd ask them all to rise in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. S.N. Sinha. Mr. Sinha is a lawyer who is visiting Alberta from Ranchi in Jharkhand state, India. I'd ask Mr. Sinha to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a class who is attending from NorQuest College today. I'm going to introduce them, and if they would please rise when I call their names: Prakash Awasthi, Hamid Chaudhry, Nancy Guan, Asish Kumar, Edgar Mosquera, Adnan Naeem, Shama Naqvi, Myoungbum Park, June Park, and Muhammad Sheikh. With them are their instructors, Allan Carlson and Margarita Cameron. Would you please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

I have a second introduction, if I may, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to welcome and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a student activist and keen follower of politics in Alberta. He's also been active with the Young Liberals. I would ask David Cournoyer to rise, please, and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly. He's accompanied today by my assistant Jane Wisener. Would you please rise.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud and honoured today to rise and introduce to you and through you 57 of my young friends from Ormsby elementary school in the constituency of Edmonton-McClung. They're here on a tour of the Legislature. They're joined by their teachers/group leaders, Ms Cathleen

Gardner, Mrs. Joanne Zuke, Ms Alana Eaton, Mr. Thomas Lock, and parent helper Mrs. Annette Vawter. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 37 bright, energetic, and inquisitive young men and women from Duggan elementary school in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They are accompanied today by three teachers, Mme MacLaren, Ms Eliuk, and Mrs. Rattray, as well as parent helper Mr. Wesenberg. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Laura Lowrie. Laura has been an active member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union local 401 for the past 24 years. She's been an ardent supporter of many NDP candidates, past and present, and is active in her community on a number of fronts. Some of the issues important to Laura include the entrenchment and improvement of worker rights and the preservation of the public, not-for-profit health care system. I'd now ask that Laura rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly Mr. Don Stuike. Don is one of the directors of the Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental Society. He and others from his organization have collected signatures for a petition urging the government to declare a moratorium on any further expansion of confined feeding operations. He is seated in the members' gallery, and I would now ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions this afternoon, and perhaps I could get the three of them to rise at the end when I'm finished with the introductions.

First of all, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mr. Ben Howse. Ben is a lifelong resident of the Kikino Métis settlement. He is a third generation Métis advocate on issues and Métis rights. In particular, he is an advocate for self-governance and is a former board member of the aboriginal rights society.

Second of all, I'm happy to introduce Tracy Harris. Tracy has been assisting us in my constituency since September. She previously worked in the health field, for the last 16 years. Tracy is currently a student in the registered social work program at Grant MacEwan College.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, is Jennifer Binkley. Jennifer was born and raised in Edmonton and did much of her postsecondary studies in B.C. She completed the business management and legal secretary program and was working in banking. Jennifer decided to volunteer in my constituency as an assistant, and she did such excellent work that we recently decided to employ her at my office.

I'd now ask that Jennifer, Tracy, and Ben all rise and receive a warm welcome from this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm truly delighted today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Ms Donna Martyn. Donna and I have known each other since the '60s, when both of us were students at the University of Alberta in the same department. Donna is a schoolteacher and has taught across this province. She is also a passionate advocate for human rights issues in this province. She recently won a case through the Human Rights Commission against the Edmonton Taxi Cab Commission, the city of Edmonton, and two taxi companies who were found to be violating her human rights and the rights of those requiring accessible taxi service. Donna is also the NDP federal candidate in Edmonton Centre. Donna is seated in the members' gallery, in this corner. Please give her a warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a further introduction, three very important individuals that I would like to introduce through you to all members of this Assembly. The first is a long-time supporter of my political career as well as a very active advocate and volunteer in the community. His name is Dr. Harb Sandhar. Dr. Sandhar is a member of the Gateway Rotary Club. In fact, he was a founding member of that club, which coincidentally celebrated its 20th anniversary this morning.

With him today is his daughter, Dr. Kulwinder Sandhar, who is a graduate from Punjabi University with a master of science in zoology and a PhD in immunology. We are fortunate to have her moving to Canada. She is quickly going back to India to be married on the 20th of December and then will be making her residence in Canada early next year.

As well, he has with him today a very special young lady who he refers to as his other daughter. Sophie Krzymien is a Rotary exchange student from Poland who is spending one year in Canada, sponsored by the Gateway Rotary Club. I had the honour, Mr. Speaker, of presenting Sophie with a centennial medallion this morning at the Rotary club. That was on behalf of the government of Alberta in recognition of her stay in Alberta during our centennial year.

They're in the members' gallery. I would ask all three to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a gentleman who means much to many Albertans. His membership is, I believe, around 60,000 now, and he has done a bang-up job for those members for many, many years. I'd ask Dan MacLennan to stand in the members' gallery and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a group of communications interns from various departments of our government: Amy Wolski, Erin Martin, Nick

Kaczmarek, and Trevor Gemmel. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission Investigation

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Securities Commission saga continues to twist. More evidence is being made public this week by an investigative journalist that there exist two sets of enforcement rules at the ASC, one for the well connected and one for everyone else. The situation with Zi Corporation, formerly known as Multi-Corp, a company well connected to top Tories, raises serious questions about the ASC enforcement process. To the Minister of Finance: given that Zi Corporation failed to disclose the name of the buyer of more than 10 per cent of its stock, which is contrary to Canadian securities law, why didn't the ASC intervene?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is referring to an article in a paper, and he's referring to activities that happened some time ago. I suggest that if the hon. member has any – any – substantiated fact, he has a responsibility to bring it forward, and it will be investigated.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Complete dodge.

To the same minister: will the minister clear the air categorically and bring this all to an end by denying that Alberta Securities Commission senior enforcement staff were pressured to drop their investigation into Multi-Corp?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again, if this hon. member has any – any – substantiated, factual information on this allegation that he's bringing forward, I believe he has a responsibility to bring it forward, and it will be investigated.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the minister responsible for the Alberta Securities Commission, the Minister of Finance. Again I repeat: yes or no? Will the minister clear the air and categorically deny that ASC senior enforcement staff were pressured to drop their investigation into Multi-Corp?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have a greater responsibility than reading articles in the paper and making allegations regarding them and accepting them as fact. I will repeat one more time – and this hon. member could or could not answer yes or no – if he has any factual, substantiated information that this is in fact a fact rather than another allegation against a very important regulator in this province, he has the responsibility to bring it forward, and he should do so forthwith.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Nutrition Programs in Schools

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, again, thousands of Alberta children are sitting in schools hungry because there isn't

food at their homes. [interjections] It may be something for the Tories to jeer at, but it's not for those kids.

Thousands of children are mired on waiting lists for school lunch programs because this government refuses to act. If achievement tests were given for caring for hungry children, this government would fail miserably. To the Minister of Education: does this minister at least acknowledge that hunger is a serious issue for thousands of children in Alberta schools?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, food, clothing, and shelter are important to all of us, and clearly the first responsibility does lie with the parents or legal guardians.

I just want to tell the hon. member asking the question the level of assistance that is available to individuals or to families who find themselves in difficult situations. That level of assistance is available, for example, for a single person who's looking for work to receive about \$402 a month to help out. A two-parent family with three children under 12 years of age could receive up to \$1,126 a month. Parents who are looking for work, Mr. Speaker, can get an additional \$324 a month from the federal national child benefit supplement. There are other programs like that, and there are community agencies. There could be a good neighbours fund who are there to help out.

Mr. Speaker, if he knows of some circumstances, perhaps he could let those families know about that or direct them to us, and we will help them.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. To the same minister. Listening to his response, then, is it this minister's position that it is the child's fault when there is no food at home to have a meal on a school day? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, you know, it just amazes me how low some people in this House will go. It just absolutely amazes me. While I'm prepared to tolerate that from certain members, to come from the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition is just simply, absolutely amazing.

There are programs that can help these children. There are school boards who care deeply about these children. There are community agencies who care deeply, and we have a provincial government that helps out when we're asked to do so through our various support programs.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. My last question is to the Deputy Premier: how can this government refuse to provide meals to hungry children in Alberta schools that cost \$2 each when it provides \$45 million a year to prop up the horse-racing industry?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, this government stands on its record of support to children, and I would like to give the Minister of Children's Services an opportunity to just remind this House of the tremendous support that we give to the children in this province.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important. Since we brought in a new act last November, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act – the incredible success that we're having with this act. We're doing early intervention. We're working with the families to provide them the basics for their family, some education

about making sure that their children don't go to school hungry. This act is a first in Canada and is being widely watched right across this country and has been hugely successful.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Sour Gas Well Safety

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recent blowouts involving toxic hydrogen sulphide gas in our province have illustrated that there are some serious flaws in the response procedures of the EUB, industry, municipalities, and even health authorities. The Acheson blowout in late 2004 and, more recently, the leak outside Innisfail illustrated ignorance of the risks, confusion, and serious lack of communications. In these most recent incidents the government quickly reassured Albertans after the panic and emergency actions were taken that they were never in any real danger. My question is to the Minister of Energy. When will this government acknowledge that the province's sour gas response plans are dangerously inadequate?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, they're not, first off. With respect to the Acheson well that you've referenced, there was quite an investigation in response to that. That well itself: levels of emissions were so low that that well never was described as a sour gas well, high critical, or anything like unto it. What that report did say is that they were overly precautionary in evacuating people beyond even the need. Certainly, no one faults anybody at any company at any time in trying to be overly precautionary on evacuation or anything like unto it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how many close calls is this government willing to allow before it insists on having an effective response plan in each setting with all players before approving sour gas developments near populated areas?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, let's place some things into context. The industry as well as the regulators on the standards have had decades of experience in managing this substance very safely. That does not mean that you're not continually trying to upgrade and update with the latest technology and procedures to ensure that all safety issues can be addressed.

The Energy and Utilities Board, being very proactive, a few years ago did an extensive consultation and research on the sour gas itself as to the procedures, approval, and likewise. There were about 87 recommendations. Most of those have already been implemented. The last few are still requiring some further work before implementation can be complete. The Energy and Utilities Board takes safety as the first and paramount issue in regard to approval of any activity in the energy industry.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's not the impression of most Albertans. Given these recent events does the minister support the recent application by Compton in proximity to 150,000 people in southeast Calgary?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, those things are put, appropriately, before the Energy and Utilities Board. It is there as an independent

body having the expertise to judge all of the factors coming forward. They will not approve any wells under any circumstances if it cannot be safely done. That said, the Energy and Utilities Board is best in position to evaluate those and any other future applications that come with things like sour gas.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Corporate Accountability

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Conrad Black, Bernie Ebbers, Martha Stewart, and Ken Lay are among the corporate CEOs who have either done or are facing jail time in the United States for violating corporate laws. Unlike the United States, which has zero tolerance for corporate crime, this province fails to rigorously enforce the few rules that it does have. The result is a growing climate of corruption in this province. My question is to the Minister of Finance. When the former superintendent of Treasury Branches was accused of getting hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash delivered in brown paper bags to bribe him into signing a sweetheart deal for West Edmonton Mall, why did the government cover this up by settling out of court and to this day keep all of the documents safely locked up inside an ATB bank vault?

Mrs. McClellan: I'm looking to the Minister of Justice for some advice on dealing with this, Mr. Speaker, but I'll take this question under advisement. I think I need to review it before I know whether I could appropriately respond.

Mr. Mason: We'll move on then, Mr. Speaker. When there are not one but two sweetheart land deals in Fort McMurray with the same Tory-friendly developer receiving free land and sweetheart financing, why is no one being held accountable for this corruption and wrongdoing?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has delivered a report to this Legislature on this matter. I read that report, and I certainly did not read those words in the Auditor General's report. I would suggest that the hon. member refer back to the Auditor General's report on this matter before he frames another question on it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We'll move on again. When Alberta's top securities cop is caught red-handed by the Auditor General making a significant profit trading shares in a company that he himself is investigating, why is the minister allowing this conduct to go unpunished?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again the hon. member should read the Auditor General's report because I think he's mixing up people that are involved in this. When he says that it was a company that he himself was investigating, I think he is in error. However, what I did say yesterday in the House – and I stand by that, hon. member – is that I will provide for you a sequence of events in this matter as quickly as possible. I had hoped I would be able to give it to you today. I cannot, but my hope is that it will be tomorrow at the latest, and then we'll have a further discussion on it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Aboriginal Issues

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the late 1980s, almost 20 years ago, there was a meeting of the first ministers on aboriginal issues. Tomorrow, after more than 20 years, the first ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues will begin in Kelowna. This is an important historic meeting between the government of Canada, the provinces and territories, and aboriginal organizations throughout the country. My questions are for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Considering the importance of this meeting to the future of aboriginal people in Alberta, what did you hear from aboriginal leaders that you met with in advance of this first ministers' meeting?

2:00

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, it's the first meeting of first ministers that I have ever attended, and I'm very proud to be going to this meeting. As a result, to prepare ourselves, I did meet with the First Nations and the Métis leaders, and we did that a number of times: on October 11, October 12, and again on November 8. Basically, we wanted to make sure that that input would be coming to the table so that we knew, when we were going to the first ministers' meeting, that we'd be well prepared.

The First Nations and the Métis people have told us that they have certain views. One is the need to honour and respect the spirit and the intent of the treaties from the First Nations, the desire to participate fully in the social and economic life of Canada and specifically in Alberta, and of course the need to close the gap between First Nations and other Canadians on a number of fronts. Of course, that would be education, housing, and health.

The one common thread, Mr. Speaker, that I thought was really interesting is that they continually said, whether it was the First Nations or the Métis, that we must improve the quality of life of aboriginal people on and off reserves as well as in Métis communities and urban centres.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. I think the minister has addressed the key issues that will be discussed at this meeting. So my next question, my last question, would then be: how will Alberta move forward, and what steps will you take following the first ministers' meeting?

Ms Calahasen: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my first answer, the areas that we're going to be dealing with, of course, are relationships, education, economic opportunities, housing, and health. All of these are interrelated. If you don't understand the aboriginal community, you can't begin to see how they see everything as interrelated and interconnected. So what we wanted to do was make sure that when we brought the information forward, we would be looking at how we can improve the lives in aboriginal communities. The First Nations and the Métis people were very good in determining what it is that they want us to bring to the table. They wanted us to make sure that whatever it is, it will improve the lives of people at the community level.

The next step, of course, Mr. Speaker, is to see how we can implement the recommendations and concrete actions that will come out as a result of this meeting. I know that on this side of the House we want to see what we can do to improve the lives of aboriginal people in this province.

Minable Oil Sands Strategy

Mr. Bonko: Mr. Speaker, this government recently released the plan

for developing the minable oil sands strategy northeast of Fort McMurray. Basically, this plan will strip bare a 2,500-kilometre zone. We're sacrificing environmental integrity for rapid and uncontrolled development. My first question to the Minister of Environment: given that the MOSS plan clearly indicates that the government policy is to get as much oil out of the ground as possible with no regard for the consequences for the environment, is this a policy that would dictate the future resource extraction for this province?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, if I could put in proper context the purpose of MOSS. The MOSS is to streamline to ensure, number one, that the environment is protected and, number two, that necessary regulation is put in place to prevent unnecessary delays. Clearly, today MOSS and the sole purpose of MOSS is for the greater enhanced protection of the environment.

Mr. Bonko: To the same minister: given that the Auditor General clearly stated that without commitment to sustainable resource and environmental management, and I quote, awareness and interest will diminish, can the minister tell the House and all Albertans if he will regard the recommendations and follow them, or will they be ignored?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, we are following the ruling by the Auditor General, which we believe is very substantive and has very good substance to it. Further to that, though, and most importantly for all Albertans, this member also calls Fort McMurray home, where my family is. We breathe clean air, and the clean water we drink and the land we work will never, never, ever be compromised for development.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that this new strategy clearly indicates that the government is not committed to sustainable development, is the minister telling us that the principles of balancing resource extraction and environmental protection are no longer possible or desirable for this government?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I'll also have my colleague the Minister of Energy respond. The integrity of the oil sands industry and what their work has done over the last 25 years – it's important to note here today that pertaining to CO₂ emission, because of technology they have dropped their emissions by 50 per cent. Nowhere else in this entire country has such a feat been accomplished in protecting the environment. Technology will continue to play a key role in helping enhance the environment. I can assure the member and members of this Assembly that the environment and the sustainability of the environment that we are blessed with in this province will always be protected.

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there were six policy areas that were part of the minable oil sands strategy. They haven't at all focused on – for example, the first one was that it be “managed as a co-ordinated development zone”; that we look at this as a regional approach rather than project specific. I usually hear from the opposition that they would wish that we could take a look at the entire context rather than the project, the cumulative issues. That's what this is about. It talks about “progressive, timely and seamless reclamation” – I thought that's what they supported – “to a self-sustaining boreal forest ecosystem.” Number 5 says that “the environmental liabilities from oil sands mining will not be passed on

to future generations.” I’m not certain what they would oppose in that context. It says that “both existing and new operators will be expected to continuously improve their technology and methods.” All things that I think Albertans would support.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Student Loan Program

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I was approached by a university student who had received a letter from an Ontario company that administers Alberta student loans advising him that his six-month grace period to begin repaying his loan was coming up next month. This letter indicated that he had an Alberta student loan of \$30,000, which could be repaid using two options available to him. He could either repay it using a floating interest rate, which would be prime plus 2 and a half per cent, or he could have his interest rate fixed at prime plus 5 per cent. My first question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Given that the Alberta student loan is usually one-third of Canada’s student loan, which means that the student could have a total student debt of \$90,000, what is the government doing to ensure that Alberta postsecondary students who have to finance their education can graduate and enter the work force without having a crushing amount of debt hanging around their necks?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If that is the debt load that the student has graduated with, if that \$30,000 worth of debt is Alberta student loan debt, then one can only assume that that student has graduated from a professional program. The normal student debt application would be that for a four-year undergraduate program you could graduate with a maximum debt load of \$27,000. That would be this year. It was \$20,000 up to now. All of that would be federal student loan debt. If you used more than \$27,000, all of the provincial debt would have been remitted or forgiven on a student remission completion payment. So I can only assume from the circumstances that are being described that the student involved was a professional student graduating in medicine or dentistry or a faculty like that and, therefore, in a position to carry a greater amount of student debt.

In terms of the description of crushing student debt, one has to look at the context of the student in terms of what they’re graduating in to determine the ability of the student to repay. We do have in this province significant loan relief completion payments, which we apply. For most students, particularly those in undergraduate courses, if they’ve completed with a debt over \$30,000, all of their provincial debt would be relieved, and they would be paying federal student loan debt.

Mr. Shariff: My second question is to the same minister. Can you clarify how the interest rate paid on student loans is structured and if it is the official policy of the government to gouge our students to pay prime plus 5 per cent?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, borrowers have a choice of whether to pay their student loans back with a fixed rate of interest or a variable rate of interest, as the hon. member has indicated. They’re responsible for repaying principal and interest over a period of time. In my experience we had a 10-year time frame to repay. In fact, that’s

what I had to face when I graduated. Payments do begin six months after you cease to be a student.

The two options of interest are, in fact, as outlined: a variable rate of prime plus 2 and a half, or with the prime rate currently at 4.75 per cent the current student rate would be 7.25 per cent. That’s not an unusual rate of interest based on what a consumer would pay at the bank if they were borrowing without collateral, but it is a high rate. The fixed rate, which they could choose, is prime plus 5 per cent. So the rates would appear to be high, but in the context of what’s charged on student loans across the country, I can assure the hon. member that only one jurisdiction is lower than that.

2:10

Mr. Shariff: My final question is also to the same minister: given that a residential mortgage is usually prime or prime plus 1 per cent, would the Minister of Advanced Education consider limiting the mortgage on an Alberta student’s career – by that I mean a student loan repayment plan – to bank prime or prime plus 1 per cent?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, of course, we have been in the process over the course of this year of looking at affordability, and we’re working very hard to come forward with a policy both with respect to tuition rates and affordability. Everything is on the table. So, yes, of course, one of the things that has to be looked at and looked at very clearly is the interest rate.

Now, I would hesitate to relate a student debt to a mortgage because if one doesn’t pay the mortgage, of course, there’s foreclosure. There’s security on that debt. There’s no security on a student debt. So there is a default rate. The interest that’s currently being paid with respect to student finance is based on and reflects the fact that there’s no security involved.

However, this minister knows and this government knows that an education is the best investment that any Albertan can make, and therefore we should be looking at education as being a valuable investment and one which should attract lower interest rates.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor.

Access to Postsecondary Education

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the Conservative propaganda that all you need to do to get ahead in Alberta is work hard and pay off your student debts, this government actively engages in policies designed to keep the poor in their place. University tuition has tripled in the last 12 years while average incomes have been stagnant. You don’t need a math degree to know that that discriminates against low-income Albertans who want to better themselves through higher education. To the Minister of Advanced Education: how does the minister justify a postsecondary system in which the poor are left behind?

Mr. Hancock: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would be wrong in that assertion. The poor Albertan is among the best financed in our student system because we have grants and loan remission, which are best aimed at the lowest income. The people that he really ought to be talking about who have trouble in this system are the middle-income Albertans. They’re the ones that we need to work really hard with to figure out how we ensure that a postsecondary education is affordable, and we’ve been working very hard on that. Now, we won’t leave out the poor in that process by any stretch of the imagination because every Albertan has to be encouraged to get an advanced education, and every Albertan should

know that finances are not a barrier to getting an education. But when he looks at the equation, those at the lower end of the income stretch are well financed by this government to get an education.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that campus food bank usage at the University of Alberta, for example, has increased almost tenfold over this same period, will the minister concede that the student aid system is failing learners from – he can concede whatever he wants – low-income families, moderate-income families? Will he concede that the system is failing?

Mr. Hancock: No, Mr. Speaker, the system is not failing. What I would say to the hon. member and to students across the province is that if anybody gets into a position of crisis, there are opportunities for them. They can go to the student aid office at their institution. They can call student finance. There are emergency relief programs with student finance. There are emergency relief programs at students' unions in each of the institutions. So if students do find themselves in an emergency situation or where they're hungry and they need relief, they need to get some assistance, there is assistance available.

If there is any failure in assistance, perhaps it's that we haven't communicated that as well as we should have, so I thank the hon. member for raising the opportunity so that we can communicate it again. There is relief available for those who need it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the waiting lists for campus daycare spots can be two or three years, will the minister today fund additional daycare spaces at Alberta universities and colleges to ensure that single parents can continue their education?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Children's Services has been working on daycare policy and has just signed a national agreement with respect to daycare policy. I think that when you're talking about daycare, you shouldn't necessarily single out any specific area but work globally to make sure that daycare and child care are available to any Albertan who needs it at an appropriate level.

Now, with respect to each institution, again, in my knowledge and experience most of the institutions do have daycare facilities available and work very hard to make sure that both staff and students have appropriate child care opportunities on campus.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Electricity Line between Edmonton and Calgary

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently many of my constituents received some information regarding a new transmission line that is proposed to run across their land. They've been hearing about this for several months now and have several concerns regarding the transmission lines. My questions are to the Minister of Energy. Why are new transmission lines needed between Edmonton and Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's Electric System Operator has a mandate of looking at the needs of transmission around the province. They have put together a 10-year plan. They're working on a 20-year plan. All of us wanting electricity in our homes need a system that's reliable. We have to make sure that that backbone is there to support any generation that comes forward. We have a huge challenge with the growth coming at us of a need for quite a bit of additional capacity between the Edmonton-Calgary corridor. It's in that light that this will help ensure that there's reliable electricity delivered to each of our homes when needed, as needed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that my constituents and other area residents have expressed their concerns to AltaLink on several occasions, but they are not convinced that their concerns are being taken into consideration during this approval process, what is the government doing to ensure that the residents of these communities are heard in this process?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, the transmission facility owner, AltaLink, was assigned to build the project in their area, and they are conducting consultations with affected people in the areas when they're looking at the siting of these lines. That will be happening to the end of this month and through the beginning of December. These lines and the final approval still have to go through the Energy and Utilities Board, so both consultations will have to be required, and individuals can certainly ensure that their comments are made.

I'd also like to highlight that we put in place a transmission committee, actually chaired by the MLA for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne along with two other members. Their task, working with the regulators, is to ensure that these transmission lines are implemented, that those concerns are heard, and that they can be facilitated to ensure reliable access to electricity.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Energy: given that it sounds like this new line is a go, that the construction is going to be happening, what is the province doing to ensure that Albertans don't experience electricity blackouts and aren't burdened with excessive costs for these necessary investments?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, with respect to these transmission lines, clearly, they do cost money. They are costs that would be borne by all ratepayers across the province. Initial estimates show that residential customers would pay no more than \$1 to \$2 per month, and that's out past 2010. But the likelihood is that there still could be very substantial savings had by having more transmission capacity. The lines that we have now between those areas are heavily congested. You can reduce the line loss by having more capacity, so there could be savings also by having greater capacity.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Impoverished Albertans

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Living in poverty causes

stress and anxiety, which damages health, limits choices, and impacts the ability to participate in society. Improving conditions for children will impact their lifestyle for decades that follow, creating healthier, more successful Albertans. Almost 14 per cent of children in Alberta live in poverty, which is not by choice. To the Minister of Children's Services: when will the minister establish plans, timelines, budgets, and targets for reducing the number of children living in poverty?

2:20

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that goes back to my question earlier. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, that is just celebrating its first birthday, is an act that deals with it at an earlier time instead of what happened before when we were at the protective side. The new act has been highly, highly successful. We're dealing with families at an earlier time, dealing with some of the issues that they're dealing with on an earlier basis, and we're very excited about what we're seeing coming out of that new act.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the number of homeless children in Alberta continues to rise year after year, can the minister tell the House what kind of cross-ministerial approach is being developed to deal with the problems of homelessness in Alberta?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we should be very clear that, first of all, we never turn away a family in need, and we'll provide them with emergency accommodation if necessary. The social workers, or the case workers as they're now called, do a wonderful job trying to meet these family needs. We're in discussions with the minister of seniors and the minister of human resources trying to see how we can further enhance these people's lives.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: given that there is a clear link between low income and poor health and education programs and pamphlets on nutrition don't seem to be making a significant difference, what concrete action will the minister take to address proper nutrition and wellness for Albertans living in poverty?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, one of the initiatives that's part of the third way is the early child development piece, which talks about health supports for families, for parents. We have presently arranged for Fraser Mustard with population health to come and review the wellness opportunities that we have to expand existing programs, making sure that children and families right from the time of birth and before birth, prenatally, are given the proper supports, given the kinds of information they need, given the tutorial to help parents know where to get additional supports so that at least in the early days with the other agencies in the community, with parent link through child and family services, we're able to connect. Frequently it's the lack of co-ordination of effort that enables children to fall through the cracks, which is really most unfortunate. So we hope that with this education we will bridge a portion of it.

I'm sure the Minister of Human Resources and Employment is just dying to talk about the programs for the third quarter.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Climate Change

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's Environment minister has said that he will attend the largest meeting of climate change experts in international history in Montreal next week, but Albertans must question the value of such a journey. The government's policy on regulating large industrial emitters is a national and an international embarrassment as it only allows our emissions to increase, not decrease. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Seeing as Alberta has failed to curb greenhouse gas emissions and has no intention to do so, why doesn't the minister spare Albertans the travel tab, stay home, and get to work on a real climate change plan?

Mr. Boutilier: Well, Mr. Speaker, the alternative would be to let him go, so think about that one.

I might add that Alberta, this province, is a leader across Canada, and I might add that the federal counterpart, the Liberal Minister of the Environment, has acknowledged Alberta's leadership relative to reducing greenhouse gases in this entire country.

Mr. Eggen: Well, we're all in big trouble if we take the Liberal plan for environmental climate change.

Given that the minister's climate change plan continues to increase emissions by 26 per cent over the 1990 levels, why does the minister insist on flying to Montreal with the sole purpose of being a long-winded apologist for environmental destruction?

Mr. Boutilier: These questions are fun, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that, clearly, I'm very pleased that actually the Liberal opposition are going to be attending Montreal as well because they see value in it, and I suggest that he may want to talk to his leader about attending as well. I welcome his involvement.

One thing for sure. As we go there, we will be ambassadors talking about the technology front, talking about the fact of capturing and storing CO₂, talking about agricultural practices and how we're reducing greenhouse gases. We are the only province in Canada with a climate change law. We are the only province in Canada with a private/public partnership such as Climate Change Central.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying that if I had time, I would walk to Montreal, but I'm going to have to take a plane to get there quickly to represent Alberta.

Mr. Eggen: Watch out for Stéphane Dion. He's a very tricky guy, you know. You'd better watch what you're dealing with.

Given that the minister is defending a plan that fails to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, fails to regulate large industrial emitters, and fails to invest in renewable energy, how can the minister insist that he has a serious plan?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, we are the only province in Canada that has a climate change law. Not even the federal government has a law. We will be the first province in Canada to have a regulation that the federal government has assured me it's going to follow. Again, Alberta leadership at its finest.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Services for Immigrants

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's call it a happy coincidence for the province of Ontario on the eve of a federal election. Our federal government has just announced an increase of

funding to Ontario for programs and services for new immigrants. Canada's shortage of skilled workers is well documented and well known to us all. This shortage in particular is evident in Alberta, where employers are unable to compete for their projects and costs of projects are rising. To the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Affairs: what is our government doing to secure the same level of funding consideration for Alberta as Ontario has just received for immigrants from the federal government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the new agreement that the hon. member has raised, the Ontario government will receive approximately \$3,400 per immigrant for services covering language and supplement. Now, that again is over five years. We don't know as yet how that will break down over that period of time. Presently we receive about \$1,020 per immigrant for the same supplement purposes. We are working closely with the federal government. I met with my counterpart, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, plus the Minister for Internal Trade to work towards settling once and for all a fair and equitable treatment to Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: has the minister considered negotiating an agreement with the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration to allow Alberta in co-operation with the feds to process our own applications for visas and, like Quebec, have more control over immigration?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a good question. Currently we have an agreement with the federal government to co-fund settlement services and to fast-track skilled workers to the provincial nominee program. We are encouraging the federal government to live up to its responsibility and try and reduce the processing time for skilled workers. We are not of course considering taking over any federal responsibility. That is a federal role. Our responsibility that we will take a leading role in at the provincial level is marketing Alberta in other jurisdictions outside of Alberta to ensure that people know that Alberta is here. We have a strong economy, the best government in the world, and the best place to live.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Advanced Education: since we are often criticized as having the best educated taxi drivers in the world, what will the Ministry of Advanced Education do to tackle that problem and allow the immigrants who are already here and are underemployed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of elements that go into what Advanced Education does in this area. First and foremost, when bringing in workers to the province, we do have a process where we can certify their education before they come, or we can assist them with certification of their education after they get here. Our international qualification assessment division, for example, will look at qualifications that people bring to

Alberta and certify what standing they might have and provide a certificate so that they can show employers or others what level of education they do have and what it equates to in terms of a Canadian or an Alberta standard. About 3,500 of those certificates will be issued this year. That's a way of helping someone who's got an education through a university in another part of the world: to have someone here understand what that education might equate to. That's a very important part.

2:30

Another important part, of course, is bridging programs, which are shared both by Advanced Education and Human Resources and Employment, to assist people to get the language skills they need for the job or to otherwise get the skills and training they need so that they can get employment in their field in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Education Fundraising

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A key principle of the publicly funded education system is equity. Parents are paying hundreds of dollars a year in school fees and fundraising for educational basics like tables and books: all this work in order to support an educational system where only 69 per cent of the students graduate in three years, hardly an equitable system. My question is to the Minister of Education. Why won't this government commit to abolishing fees and fundraising for basic educational services and remove these barriers to an equitable education system?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member wasn't listening when I answered part of this question last time, but let me just repeat some of that because it is good information. First of all, this was the first item on the agenda of the meetings that I just held right across the province with 62 school boards. I specifically asked them about school fees: how much they were roughly getting in terms of school fees and what specifically they were charging them for. Now, the School Act allows for school fees to be assessed, collected, and otherwise determined by the local school board working with its local school, and as long as those particular school fees apply to nonbasic items, to nonessential items such as consumables or other instructional materials and supplies, then they are conforming to that School Act that I've referenced and also to the ASBA, or Alberta School Boards Association, general policy.

School boards also told me that they don't feel any tremendous amount of discomfort yet with respect to the fact that some of the fundraising that is going on may be creeping over into the basic area. Now, there might be the odd exception to that – I will concede that – but it has not been brought to my attention in that way. Should it be, then I would ensure that something would be looked into to alleviate the problem.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will this government recognize that the dependence of schools on fundraising leads to have and have-not schools and abolish fees and fundraising for educational basics?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me make it perfectly clear that we spend about \$23 million each and every school day to help support education in this province from kindergarten to grade 12.

That's a significant amount of money. We also do it at the request of the school boards, I should say, with a maximum amount of flexibility. If the member would take a look at this renewed funding framework, which all school boards have and several others have as well, he would see just how those monies get distributed.

Furthermore, with respect to the school fees issue and the issue of fundraising there was a reference to this in the Learning Commission report, and I have undertaken to respond to that more fully. That's why I've asked school boards for their input, and I will be doing that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Instead of studying this issue, why doesn't this government solve this problem now by committing to guidelines on fees and fundraising and putting it in the 2006-2007 budget?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, as part of those consultations with the school boards I specifically asked them a very important question in this regard as well. I asked them if parents were complaining to them about school fundraising and so on. Virtually every single board told me that parents don't mind having some level of involvement in the education of their children directly at the schools, and they don't mind doing fundraising per se unless there's too much of it or unless they might be creeping into the area of essentials or basics. Otherwise, parents appreciate having a little bit of involvement.

As I've indicated, we have studied this issue, we have consulted on this issue, and I will be making a further comment on it very soon in response to the Commission on Learning report.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Workers' Compensation Appeals

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Workers' Compensation Board plays an important role in insurance coverage for workers who suffer an accident at work. But for this accident insurance program there are serious issues and hot disputes between the injured workers, who suffer from the real pain of injuries and denial of coverage or are forced to go through many costly and lengthy procedures, and the insurer, WCB, who makes such decisions. My question today is to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment, responsible for WCB legislation. Given that recommendation 15 in the MLA recommendation report on WCB dated January 31, 2001, states that "an injured worker's benefits must not be cut-off until conflict in medical opinion is resolved," can the minister tell the Assembly: what is the policy written by the WCB to deal with this situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My answers won't be too long. The policy that the member asks about sets out, actually, the criteria for when a worker is eligible for disability benefits. If there is a medical-related conflict between WCB and the worker, there are steps to resolve such disputes, including a medical panel review and the Appeals Commission.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you. To the same minister: does this continuation of benefits include the agreement of the WCB chief medical adviser to implement the medical panel on the claim?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be short. A new process for medical panels was implemented, of course, in 2002. A medical panel has a set of criteria for when it is used. The criteria are clearly outlined in the policy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the continuation of benefits be implemented after or before the decision review body or the Appeals Commission decision?

Mr. Cardinal: Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A reinstatement of benefits can occur at any point in the process where new evidence is considered and a decision changed.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds I'll call upon the first of six, but in the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you nine seniors from the constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark who are here to watch the daily pageantry of question period. They are Ruth Mark, Sandra Miller, Earl and Lynn Milner, Beryl and Mike Nahornick, Adrian and Johanna Petoom, and Barbara Wiseman. Would they please rise and accept the traditional warm greeting of the Legislature.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I plan to table later on today and next week proof of Enron's direct influence over the Progressive Conservative government in this province. Enron's influence was to serve their own financial needs. I'm disappointed in this Progressive Conservative government, that readily agreed to accommodate their demands even when they knew of Enron's pending financial collapse and criminal investigation.

In December of 2001 the government found it undesirable and unnecessary to release publicly the details of the cabinet decision to split the Sundance B power purchase arrangement. Enron quickly sold this generation capacity in 10 days to AltaGas Services Inc. for \$220 million. In October of the same year Enron's corporate lawyers demanded and instructed the secret changes to the deal to senior government officials, which facilitated the sale of Sundance B power purchase arrangements. These arrangements provide some of the lowest cost electricity in Alberta with an all-in cost of less than 2 and a half cents per kilowatt hour. The average electricity

price for 2001 in Alberta was 7.15 cents per kilowatt hour. Where was the benefit for consumers in this sweetheart deal?

While the Alberta government was catering to Enron's demands, south of the border American authorities were starting to conduct investigations into the fraudulent activities of Enron. We need a public inquiry into Enron now. The following questions could be asked at that inquiry, and hopefully we would get answers. Why did the Progressive Conservative cabinet have the opinion that the publication of the deal be deemed undesirable and unnecessary to the public? Why was the deal made with Enron here in Alberta while at the same time in America Enron was under investigation for fraud and price-fixing? Why did the Progressive Conservative government allow Enron's legal department to dictate the words of the secret changes to the power purchase arrangements?

More later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

2:40 Memorial to Fallen RCMP Officers

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost nine months ago four young RCMP constables made the ultimate sacrifice and were lost tragically in the line of duty. This devastating loss continues to be felt in my constituency and throughout the province.

People feel a need and an obligation to remember the sacrifice made by these four brave and dedicated men, who were loved and respected members of their families and their communities. The need to remember these four individuals is the motivation behind the desire to build the Fallen Four memorial in Mayerthorpe. This memorial will serve as a way to honour the memory of these four constables forever and help the community and the province to heal.

This past Thursday, November 17, an official launch of the 7-Eleven and Wal-Mart Kids 4 Cops product sales took place at the Elmer Elson elementary school in Mayerthorpe. Seventy-six 7-Eleven and seven Wal-Mart stores have agreed to be an official point of sale for Kids 4 Cops products, which will include vehicle magnets and decals. These products will be available until mid-December, with all proceeds going to the building of the Fallen Four memorial.

The co-operation of these stores and the hard work of many people in my constituency will ensure that these men will not be forgotten.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Community Learning Campus at Olds College

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an outstanding educational innovation within my riding, the community learning campus at Olds College. The CLC is an innovative, groundbreaking approach to learning. Integrated within the Olds College campus, the facilities of the community learning campus – a core high school, e-learning centre, health and wellness facility, and fine arts and multi-media centre – provide a framework upon which opportunities can be built for learners of all ages. These facilities create a system of seamless educational delivery which takes students smoothly from high school into the postsecondary system.

The CLC concept is focused on students, the community, rural growth, and lifelong learning. This project is designed to help inspire a new generation of leaders who want to live and work in the communities in which they were born and raised. I believe that as our province moves forward with the rural development strategy,

other communities could benefit from examining how the community learning campus operates at the Olds College.

Mr. Speaker, the community learning campus as an innovative approach to educational design and community partnership has recently been recognized with a prestigious international award. This award was presented by the Council of Education Facility Planners International at their annual conference in San Antonio, Texas. The CLC project in Olds was selected for this award because it exemplifies the community learning concept, serves as a centre of excellence, and has renewed enthusiasm for this rural community.

Project architect Craig Webber, community learning campus director Rob Mackenzie, and all those involved in the community learning campus are to be congratulated for the fine work that they've done and a job well done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Affordability of Postsecondary Education

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About 400,000 Albertans live below the poverty line, 400,000 individuals each with their own personal life story, their own unique set of circumstances. There is no magic pill to cure poverty, but over a century of research tells us that one of the most effective routes out of poverty is education. I know that the Minister of Advanced Education recognizes this because that message came through strongly in the minister's review of postsecondary education this past summer and fall. The minister's forum and the process leading up to it began as an affordability review of Alberta's postsecondary system.

Many Alberta learners from low-income families are already in or trying to get into postsecondary education, and their efforts are causing them financial problems, huge problems. They're taking up to seven years to complete a four-year degree because they have to keep taking off time to work. If they have to leave home to go to school, they're running up enormous living expenses just trying to pay the rent in places like Grande Prairie, forced to rely on campus food banks in Edmonton. They're graduating with thousands of dollars in debt and entering into their adult working lives with one if not both arms tied behind their backs. They're delaying buying a house, getting married, starting a family. Their debt loads prevent them from being fully participating members of society, and that hurts Alberta's productivity.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's review sought to lay the groundwork for the postsecondary education system of the 21st century. I think that's both commendable and achievable, but while we're working on that, we need to fix the problems in the 20th century model we're using today. To my mind that means that the minister has to re-engineer the student aid system in this province to meet the needs of the students participating in the system today and reduce their debt burdens. It's rather like having an old car that you won't be ready to trade in until next year but which needs brakes right now. You have to replace the brakes if you're going to keep the old car on the road till the new one is ready. The student aid system can be and must be fixed this year in time for this fall.

Mr. Speaker, education is a route out of poverty only if the poor can afford it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Municipal Excellence Awards

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties recently held their annual confer-

ence here in Edmonton. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association held their convention in early October. Each year at these gatherings of municipal leaders the minister's awards for municipal excellence are presented by the Minister of Municipal Affairs to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Alberta's municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge this year's recipients in appreciation of the important role that municipal government plays in delivering service to Albertans. I'm very pleased that the partnership award went to Strathcona, Leduc, Beaver, and Lamont counties, and 15 federal/provincial departments and nongovernmental organizations for their joint work on a land management framework for the Beaver Hills-Cooking Lake moraine.

In addition, the town of Rocky Mountain House took home the innovation award for its vision and commitment in creating an antibullying bylaw. The town of Black Diamond was awarded the smaller municipalities award for a unique program that supports and encourages youth in their community.

Finally, this year's outstanding achievement award was presented to the city of Calgary for its 311 state-of-the-art telephone information line providing a one-window approach to city services.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's municipalities symbolize the collective spirit across this province in continuing to develop creative solutions to keep our province a safe, well-managed place to live, work, and raise a family. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and all members of this Assembly will join me in extending their best wishes and congratulations to all of this year's award recipients.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Historical Preservation in Wetaskiwin

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the past year there have been multiple celebrations throughout our province in honour of Alberta's centennial anniversary. These celebrations have given us an opportunity to look back and reflect on the history of our province. Historical sites and artifacts provide a special insight into past events that cannot compare to a textbook or a photograph. The preservation of Alberta's physical history ensures a greater understanding of how Alberta was developed over the years, changing from a province wholly dependent upon agriculture to the development of other industries and the rise of the oil patch in our province.

For this reason I am proud to rise in the House today to recognize the efforts at historical preservation which are being undertaken in Wetaskiwin. In October, marking the end of 14 months' labour, work was completed on refurbishing one of the most visible landmarks in my constituency, the Wetaskiwin water tower. This tower has stood vigil over Wetaskiwin for close to 100 years. It is the oldest working water tower in western Canada. Instead of demolishing the water tower, the community decided that preservation of the tower was a goal worth reaching, and they threw their support behind it. While the provincial government provided funding, the bulk of the money for the project came from fundraising by the Memorial Fund Society and from the city of Wetaskiwin itself. Because of this support Wetaskiwin and Albertans have a living, working piece of history in our province.

Of course, the water tower is not the only place in Wetaskiwin where history is being preserved. The Reynolds-Alberta Museum is home to over 8,000 artifacts. This museum is unique because it is dedicated to following the history of the machine in our province. A walk through the halls of RAM is a walk in the footsteps of pioneers of agriculture, aviation, and industry.

Alberta's history is one which is rich and diverse, and I would like

to commend the people of Wetaskiwin and all Albertans who work to preserve our heritage.

The Speaker: Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: 2:50

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a great group of students. Time is precious. They ended up having to leave, but I'd like to introduce them. They have two wonderful supervising teachers: the principal, Mr. Roger Baldry, and the vice-principal, Mr. Darryl Christensen, who go to great lengths to make social studies exciting and for them to understand the democratic process and the Legislature. They come from the town of Magrath. They've had a long day, and they're heading back because they've got a tight schedule. I'd just like to give them a warm welcome from this Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: My apologies to the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner for not getting him in a little earlier when his group was still here.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of historical vignette two important events in the history of Alberta on this day. First of all, 18 years ago November 23 was the day of election for the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance and MLA for Drumheller-Stettler.

A lot of few years before that, in 1925, the Hon. Herbert Greenfield resigned as Premier of Alberta. From 1921 to 1925 Herbert Greenfield presided over the province's first United Farmers of Alberta government. He emigrated from England with his family to eastern Canada in 1892. There he married, and then he came west as a farm labourer. In 1906 he moved to the Westlock district to be a homesteader and became a successful farmer and, ultimately, a Premier of the province of Alberta.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to present a petition today from 100 Alberta tradesmen and women from the communities of Barrhead, Bashaw, Didsbury, Glendon, Cereal, Chipman, Millet, Thorhild, and others, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am submitting a petition signed by concerned parents from the communities of Siksika, Cluny, Coaldale, Lethbridge, and Turin, and it reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to take measures that will require school boards and schools to eliminate all fees for instructional supplies and materials and general school services, including textbooks, musical instruments, physical education programs, locker rentals, lunch hour supervision and required field trips, and to ensure that schools are not deprived of the resources necessary to offer these programs and services without additional charges to parents or guardians.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the citizens of Alberta I present a petition for a province-wide moratorium on confined feeding operations.

We, the undersigned . . . petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation declaring a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table two petitions today. The first one has 509 signatures on it. This petition was co-ordinated by the Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental Society and calls for "a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years."

I would also like to table a petition that I've been circulating across Edmonton and northern Alberta. This first instalment has 155 signatures and is calling on the government to "immediately provide funding [for] municipalities and the RCMP to hire 500 additional community police officers" in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance took under advisement three questions directed to her by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. At this time I would like to table responses to those questions.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings, three annual reports, to table today. I'd personally like to table the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission 2004-2005 annual report, the Charitable Gaming in Alberta 2004-2005 annual report, and the Horse Racing Alberta 2004 annual report.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the required number of copies of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy annual report 2004-05. This marks the 10th anniversary of the FOIP Act, and I'm pleased to support legislation

that continues to preserve the balance between access and privacy, as Albertans desire. Since the act took effect, provincial government bodies have handled more than 20,650 requests for information and responded to 93 per cent of them within 60 days. Administering the act will continue to be part of this government's commitment to openness and transparency balanced by our responsibility to guard the personal information entrusted to us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have several tablings today. First, I'm tabling copies of eight motions that I presented to this morning's Public Accounts Committee meeting and in doing so gave them notice of motion asking them to debate this at the meeting next Wednesday. These are amending Standing Order 50 to create a more effective Public Accounts Committee.

My second tabling is from Shirleen Smith, who is writing with an idea for a lasting legacy rather than the \$400 rebate cheque, suggesting the creation of a charitable, nonprofit society to which people could donate their cheques to buy books for schools.

The next one is from Cherylyn Stacey, who is suggesting that "in Alberta there's a whole other area of importance that has long been neglected and appears to have been overlooked now," that "it is not only social justice to take heed of our disadvantaged, it is simple prudence." She would like to see the money "put into people and programs instead of concrete."

Finally, a submission from Mary Anne Jaedicke, who's the executive director of the South East Edmonton Seniors Association, again talking about rather than the need for \$400, the need for funding for daycare facilities, crisis centres, and seniors' centres, urging us to reconsider the delegation of the money and to support FCSS initiatives as we should.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first one is an e-mail dated October 9, 2001, from Robert.Hemstock@enron.com to Joseph.Segatto@gov.ab.ca. These are instructions from Enron to the government's Legislative Counsel in regard to the sale of the power purchase arrangement at Sundance.

The second tabling I have is a letter dated August 14, 2001, to the president and CEO of Enron Canada in Calgary, and it is from the Minister of Energy. It states among other things that "we look forward to working with Enron on the continued development of a competitive electric industry in Alberta."

My third tabling this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is a letter that I received from the hon. Minister of Energy dated October 31, 2005, and it is in regard to the temporary suspension of maximum rate limitation requirements on oil wells and oil production.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling from a constituent, Mrs. Karen Maloney, whose husband has been going through cancer treatments for the last nine years. They have to travel to Calgary for the IVF treatments, and they can't afford a huge amount of money. The clinic fees are about \$6,500 and the medication \$2,500 to \$5,200, plus travel allowance. She is asking the government of Alberta to cover all the expenses.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table the requisite number of copies of an e-mail correspondence from a constituent by the name of Carol Carbol. She is writing today to express her grave concern regarding Capital health's proposed plan to replace the outpatient residence at the University hospital and Stollery children's hospital "with a private full service hotel that will be available to patients and their families at a much higher cost." She's inviting all members of the public to an information picket on November 29 between 11:30 and 12:30 in front of the outpatient residence.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a Showcase Celebration of the Public School Boards Council, held at McKay Avenue school last Friday, November 18, and there are five copies.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness, the Alberta Dental Association and College annual report 2004, the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta 2004 annual report, the College of Dietitians of Alberta annual report 2003-2004, the College of Dietitians of Alberta annual report 2004-2005, the College of Alberta Psychologists annual report 2004-2005, and the Alberta College of Social Workers annual report 2004.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association report of proceedings of the 96th annual general meeting, April 21 to 23, 2005; the College of Alberta Professional Foresters annual report 2004-2005; the Workers' Compensation Board annual report 2004; the Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta annual report 2005; the Consulting Engineers of Alberta 2004-2005 annual report; Workers' Compensation Board Alberta 2004 accountability framework report; and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2004.

head: **Statement by the Speaker**

Microphone System in the Chamber

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call Orders of the Day, just a little note. At the beginning of this session I indicated that the microphone system in the desks had been changed. Today and yesterday there seem to be some members' voices that penetrate quite well in the Assembly; others do not.

Look, we had undertaken a Pavlovian approach with the reorganization of the desks. The tradition is that when members raise questions, they raise them through the chair, which means that they should look at the chair. When members respond to questions, they should give them to the chair, respond to the chair.

The previous microphones in the desks were in the centre of the desks. Members tend to start moving away and start putting their backs to the chair, so the chair cannot protect them. If you look at the desk, the microphones are on the extreme left-hand side of the desk, which is the direction of the chair. When you turn toward the chair, the microphone will activate. If you turn away from the chair, the microphone will not activate to the same degree, so not all

members will be able to hear. Secondly, if you take a piece of paper and block it, because of the sensitivity of the mike, it will tend to blur it a bit. So the best thing to do is just line up with the mike, which lines you up with the chair, and you'll project very, very well.

head: **Orders of the Day**
head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Supplementary Estimates 2005-06**
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

Health and Wellness

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much. Alberta Health and Wellness requested an extra \$64.6 million in the supplementary estimates this year to provide funding for 14 health capital projects. The funding was part of a multiyear, \$1.4 billion announcement that was made for 20 capital projects on October 14. There's an investment here of dollars from the unbudgeted surplus, and it will provide additional bed capacity in the form of new buildings, renovations, and expansion of existing facilities. This historic investment is evidence of our commitment to take concrete action on wait-time reduction.

Mr. Chair, as we look at capital priorities, responsibility for capital planning is shared between the ministries of Health and Wellness and Infrastructure and Transportation as well as the health authorities. The health authorities are responsible for assessing the impact of operational strategies contained in their plans on their capital assets and formulating appropriate capital plans and projects to implement those strategies. As the Minister of Health and Wellness I'm responsible for setting health system priorities, including recommending specific capital priorities. The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation oversees the implementation of approved capital projects and programs. Alberta Health and Wellness consolidates health authority plans and in consultation with Infrastructure prepares the priority list.

For the Calgary region. The Calgary health region will receive \$50.9 million for five projects. The Peter Lougheed centre will be allocated \$18 million this year for phase 2 of its redevelopment. Phase 2 involves construction of a six-storey east addition. Levels 2 and 4 and portions of level 1 will be finished to provide additional beds including intensive care unit beds, coronary care unit beds, and medical surgical beds. Phase 2 also includes expansion of cardiovascular diagnostics and partial emergency department redevelopment.

The new Sheldon M. Chumir health centre has been allocated \$8.1 million this year. This exciting project will involve construction of a new facility on the former site of the Colonel Belcher veterans centre to house a 24/7 urgent care centre, outpatient mental health programs, chronic disease management programs, primary care clinics, and a new aboriginal health centre program.

The Foothills medical centre redevelopment project will receive \$11.3 million this year. The phase 1 expansion will include construction of a new addition to house an expanded intensive care unit and emergency department as well as space for the future expansion of surgical and diagnostic imaging.

The Rockyview general hospital redevelopment project has been given \$10.5 million this year. Phase 2 work includes construction

of a south addition to the Highwood Building to house an expanded emergency department and provide space for a future intensive care unit, coronary care unit, and ambulatory care and clinical support expansion. A new heliport will be constructed, and renovations will be done to provide two additional operating rooms.

The Richmond Road diagnostic and treatment centre will receive \$3 million in 2005-06 for renovations to convert the former Alberta Children's hospital to a diagnostic and treatment centre providing day surgery, day medical, and outpatient programs.

For the Capital region. The Capital health region will receive \$13.4 million for six projects in this fiscal year. The Eastwood primary health care centre replacement project has been allocated \$2 million this year. The funds will go toward constructing a new facility to accommodate relocation and expansion of public health and community mental health clinic programs and to introduce primary care medical services and 24/7 urgent care. The facility will also house region 6 child and family services programs.

The Strathcona county hospital and health centre will receive \$7.4 million in 2005-06 to begin work on a new hospital and health centre. The facility will provide acute-care services and will accommodate a primary care network, family practice, community health services, and children's services programs.

The Fort Saskatchewan health centre replacement project has been allocated \$3.6 million this year. This project involves replacement of the 32-bed hospital with a 38-bed health centre on a new site. It will feature expanded acute-care and community health service capacity.

The Grey Nuns community hospital has been allocated \$100,000 this year for redevelopment. The project involves renovations to expand the intensive care nursery, diagnostic imaging and emergency departments, reopening in-patient units and operating rooms, as well as development of a geriatric assessment unit.

The redevelopment project of the Misericordia community hospital has been allocated \$200,000 this year, and Health and Wellness will be in support of that program.

3:10

Some of the other projects that have been identified on the list, including the Edson health care centre redevelopment, the Lethbridge regional hospital redevelopment, the Barrhead health care centre redevelopment, the Viking health centre renovation and expansion, and the High Prairie health complex replacement, are projects in other health regions. That means that we will have 45 additional acute-care beds in rural Alberta. In total, there will be 162 more acute-care beds in Calgary, 459 more acute-care beds and 100 more long-term care beds in the Capital region, and projects in the other regions will mean 45 additional.

Mr. Chairman, it's my contention that this expenditure this year, which enables all of these projects to be launched, will be a very solid opportunity for the projects to create an estimated 666 additional acute-care beds, 85 long-term care beds, and vastly improve the circumstances for providing better access throughout Alberta for the treatment and support of patients.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak to this. I will note on the record my disappointment with the limitation of three days set aside for supplementary supply. We have not been able to give adequate debate in the previous two days set aside, and I'm hopeful that we'll make it today, but it does mean that we're spending approximately 17 minutes per department, which does not seem adequate for a good exchange of questions and answers.

Going directly to what has just been outlined by the minister and what appears on pages 37 through 40 in the supplementary estimates 2005-2006, general revenue fund and lottery fund, the October 14, 2005, media release announced that \$1.4 billion in funding had been approved. I believe the media release actually talks about this money coming out of – yes, indeed. I'm quoting from the October 14, 2005, media release. The health minister is quoted as saying, "Government is using the unbudgeted surplus to help build Alberta's future." As part of this, in the same press release it talks about \$1.4 billion for health infrastructure.

What I see before me, Madam Minister, is \$64 million and change, and I'm wondering where the rest of the money is. I look forward to a description on that. Essentially, there's a discrepancy here between the \$1.4 billion that was announced in October and what we actually see in this supplementary supply being asked for, which is \$64,630,000. Where's the rest of the money that was announced, or why don't we see what was announced in October? We were told that it was unbudgeted spending; it was from the surplus. Where is the rest of it?

The minister has attempted to go through and list how the \$64 million is being divvied up. I made notes as she spoke. I might have missed something, but she did say that there were six projects being funded in the Capital health region. I got the \$100,000 for Grey Nuns, the \$7.4 million out of \$85 million for Sherwood Park, \$3.6 million out of \$40 million for the Fort Saskatchewan hospital, \$2.2 million for Eastwood. It never gave us a price tag in the original press release. One, two, three, four: that's all she mentioned. I'm wondering what else is happening out of the Capital health region.

The other slight discrepancy I picked up was that at one point she talked about 100 more long-term care beds, but the media release was talking about 85 more long-term care beds. So if she could tell us where the 15 new long-term care beds will be located and how that funding is working, I'd appreciate it. And, of course, where's the rest of the money between \$64 million and \$1.4 billion?

My next question is that the \$1.5 million contract with Aon Consulting is not listed here, so I'm presuming that that means that it was included in the budget that was presented in this Assembly last March. My question is: did the minister know prior to the symposium that she hosted in May that she would be contracting with a private company to create a three-tiered health system or the third way health system or however she wishes to term it? I'm interested in the timing on that one, Mr. Chairman. If that \$1.5 million contract which was let to Aon Consulting was not anticipated when the budget was presented, where is it? It should be in this supplementary supply, and I don't see it. So if the money has been freed up from somewhere else, I'd like to know where it was freed up from.

There has been extensive coverage this summer about long-term care flowing from a great deal of advocacy by the community and members of the Official Opposition and the third party opposition and validated by the Auditor General's report released in early May. As a result of that, there was a long-term care review committee, comprised of two government MLAs and one opposition MLA, that spent the summer holding public consultations and released a report.

We've heard all kinds of price tags on implementing that report. I'm wondering from the minister: where's the money? I take it that there is no money for long-term care or to do anything with long-term care prior to the next fiscal year, as it is not listed in what we are looking at for supplementary supply. So can the minister, then, confirm that there is no money that has been allocated for the implementation of the recommendations from the long-term care review or from the Auditor General's report from May of 2005?

The question that I have been asked the most often around the

announcements of infrastructure funding in the Department of Health and Wellness is: where are the accompanying operating dollars? I've had all kinds of letters from people saying: are we going to have empty buildings with empty beds because there is no one to staff them? So we are contemplating here new buildings being built. I guess what we need to hear from the minister is: what is the timeline that is accompanying these facilities and expansions and renovations, and when will we see the matching money that needs to go along with it to pay for the human resources to actually operate and work in the infrastructure that is being built here?

I'm interested in how this money is being used specifically. Most of it is fairly small amounts from fairly significant price tags. I'd mentioned some of them: you know, \$10.5 million for phase 2 on the Rockyview out of \$92 million which was announced in October. So I would like some detailed information from the minister on exactly what is going to be paid for from this money. She gave us a sort of general overview: it would go toward this and so. I'm interested in seeing what is anticipated here. Particularly, if there are going to be contracts signed to provide architectural drawings, to do initial cost assessments, to dig the foundation, where is the money that is allocated in this fiscal year that we are contemplating before us today from this supplementary supply estimate? How exactly is that money going to be spent? How is it contracted? To whom? Obviously, she is not going to have time to give that to us today, so I would appreciate receiving that from her in written form.

3:20

I'd like to know, because these are partial payments toward much larger price-tag projects, who made the decision. Did the minister approach the regional health authorities and say: I'm going to give you X amount? For example: "Calgary, I'm going to give you 50.9. You figure out how to divvy it up, and get back to me. Capital health region, I'm going to give you 13.4. Figure it out, and get back to me." Did the department go through and decide how to allocate the money specifically to various projects? Did you all have a big party, and everybody pitched, and somehow they figured it out on the spot with a calculator? I'd like to know how these amounts were arrived at for these particular projects.

I would also like to know if other monies were reallocated during the year. I'm suspecting that monies were in fact reallocated inside of the budget year, and we're not seeing that in the supplementary supply because it's moving between line items, and it's not asking for additional supply from the Crown, but I would be interested in where other monies were reallocated during the year. From where did they come, to where did they go, and why?

One of the initiatives that was listed under the minister's third way initiatives was mental health, and I don't see any money allocated for mental health in this supplementary supply. My understanding from talking to someone earlier today was that someone from the department had been saying that there was an expected \$300 million going into infrastructure for mental health facilities. One, is that true? Two, why isn't it in this budget? Three, when do we expect it?

Again looking at the fact that we are getting partial payments, what is the schedule for the rest of the payments? More particularly, do we have to wait for another surplus to get the next instalment on the building or on the renovation? We have a situation here where there's a long wish list and a long need list of capacity building and infrastructure in Health and Wellness, but we don't see it in the original budget that comes forward from the minister. When we ask questions about it, we're always sort of given a catch-all phrase that's it in a business plan and we need to do other things and we know what they are, but we're not telling you.

So now we have unbudgeted spending. What do they call it? Off-budget spending, which always reminds me of off-track betting. They're both done in the dark and away from the real action. I would like to know where the plan is. Does this mean now that the remaining money, the difference between the \$40 million for the construction of a new hospital in Fort Saskatchewan and the \$3.6 million that they were given through this supplementary supply – do they have to wait until there's another surplus? If there's no surplus in the next fiscal year, do they then just halt everything and leave the wires sticking out of the ground until there is a surplus, and then they get another allocation? Or will there now be a concrete plan with timelines, expected outcomes, contracts, dates, amounts, monitoring, and evaluation that goes along with it? I'd really like to see how the minister anticipates laying that out and whether there's a concrete plan to have this roll out over so much money and so many other years or if this is again awaiting surpluses.

Another question I've been asked a lot by people that have written to me is: why did the government make this announcement after the budget was passed? Why not include this money in the budget planning in the first place, where we had a level of detail that would make it clear what the government was anticipating rather than getting a big announcement on the 14th of October with two pages' worth of listings of what's going to be covered?

The other thing I've noticed from serving on Public Accounts for many, many years is that for funding that comes after the budget is passed, particularly late in the year, there's always a sort of rush to spend the money before the end of the fiscal year. In that rush, well, sometimes contracts aren't signed before the work starts, might skip a little bit on some of the monitoring. I mean, maybe all of the performance measurements aren't looked at, or the contract isn't evaluated. The key points in there are kind of skipped over. So how do we get reassurance from the government that these funds will be properly expended, they will be properly contracted, and that the risk will be acknowledged and planned for and hedged against? It's taxpayers' money here that could be wasted if things are not done properly and either have to be redone or done, for example, in an unsafe way.

A slight repeat, which is the question: where are the operating dollars that match the infrastructure that's anticipated here? Is there a budget in place that actually tells the minister how much money she's going to need in order to staff these new hospitals and, in some cases, expanded hospitals? I think the background to that is that we're already experiencing staff shortages and heavy workloads for health professionals. I'm sure we've all heard of that. The United Nurses of Alberta recently warned the province. What was their quote? Something about don't be buying bed sheets because we don't have people to actually staff the beds that they have. The University of Calgary's executive dean of health sciences is quoted as fearing that physician shortages will become a crisis in the next eight to 10 years. They're not even coming close to meeting their needs.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: what is the short-term strategy and the long-term plan to increase the amount of health professionals in Alberta; in other words, to staff these very buildings that are now going to be built? What programs are in place for recruitment of health professionals? Exactly what is being done in conjunction or collaboration with the Ministry of Advanced Education in an effort to recruit and train health professionals? We know that there's a limit on the number of spaces, for example, in med school. There are only so many of them, and that's it. People get in, and those spaces are filled, and you only graduate so many of them. Only so many are funded, more to the point, by the provincial

government. So what collaboration is happening cross-ministry with the Ministry of Advanced Education?

I'd like to know, given the shortage of health professionals, particularly in rural Alberta, why the decision was made to not provide extra supports to the rural physician action plan? It strikes me that if we have a health workforce crisis, and particularly I think we see that manifested in rural Alberta, why was this extra support not provided there?

So the additional questions. I'm wondering if there is any money targeted from off-budget spending? I'm beginning to wonder if there isn't another supplementary supply that's coming that's got the rest of this money in it. Is there any money that's targeted from off-budget spending for the third way initiatives? Additionally, is there any money targeted from the budget money that is specific to third way initiatives?

The minister did go through, for the most part, how much money was targeted to each facility but with a very general description, and I would like much more detail, please. I would also like to know how much has been spent. Given that the original announcement was October and the government – well, certainly the Premier has made it very clear that he regards the debate in the Assembly as a much-after-the-fact, long-after-the-fact rubber stamp, how much of the money that is being detailed here has actually been spent as of the end of this month? Was most of it already spent this summer? By the end of October? Will it be mostly spent by the end of December? Where are we with that?

3:30

I'm also interested in the \$919,852,000 that are listed as credit or recovery for balance of expense. Could we get a breakdown of exactly what that amount of money represents? I'm assuming that this is recovery, so it may well be premiums, health care premiums, but I'm interested in whether that is what it is and what else is included in that. Are there other fees? Were there monies unallocated that have now been transferred? Did they say that they were going to do something that they didn't? Where is that money from?

I'm being very aware of the extremely limited time that we have here and the number of my colleagues that also wish to debate. I note today that as well as Health and Wellness we're trying to get through Sustainable Resource Development, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Community Development, and Environment. Left over from previous days we have Children's Services, Solicitor General, Infrastructure, Seniors, and Municipal Affairs. So I will take my seat and allow the minister an opportunity to briefly respond. I believe that there are others of my colleagues that also wish to direct questions to the minister on this particular supplementary supply.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much for the questions. Let me just say at the outset that the unbudgeted surplus that's been the basic host for the expenditures is to host capital expenditures. Plans that were announced last year, both in June and in October, were the target of these expenditures. These were plans that were in various stages of development, functional studies, planning studies that were announced in 2004 that had not been fully acknowledged in this year's capital budget. Of course, there were many capital projects under way this year. This fulfills the obligation of plans that were announced, projects that were in various stages of development, and provides an accounting for how those projects can be funded in future.

The funds are held in an account, obviously, under the support system of the rules of Finance and through Infrastructure and Transportation, who manage the release of the funds. When the

regions came forward and presented what they would absolutely need in this budget year, 2005-06, to accomplish at least the start-up for those particular projects or the advancement of those projects, these dollars that were given, the \$64 million, were an acknowledgement of what their needs are today. They did not acknowledge next year's expenditures.

Next year's expenditures will be invoiced to those accounts that are identified and properly tracked for those particular projects. Calgary health authority, for example, will receive the money that's allocated for their projects on the basis of when they use it. So if there was a lack of opportunity, if there was some shortage of supplies, then that advancement would not be made. So it's in a very controlled situation. When invoices are received, they are paid through the sign-off in Infrastructure and Transportation. That's part of the service of management that Infrastructure and Transportation gives to approved projects.

Long-term care, because it is predominantly staffing, although there is an accommodation portion of it as well, which the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports has in her department, will be something that we will come forward and talk about at a different time. The approvals were announced in October, and these supplementary estimates focus on those approvals. Later approvals would come from later dollars that would be available. So that would deal with long-term care and any additional funding.

On the subject of the Aon contract there were dollars that were in a consulting budget that were identified in Health and Wellness to enable us to hire people to provide work for either the third way or other projects. It's from those dollars that are available for contracted services that Aon was retained. Right from the time that the RFP was announced in July, I think it was clear that there would be dollars expended on that contract. It is not part of the supplementary estimates.

The operating dollars is a very good question. I could give just as an example a summary in today's dollars of cumulative annual operating cost implications for the new health projects. For example, Edmonton Eastwood primary care over the next three years is not anticipated to have any operating dollar implications because it will take at least that long to build. In 2009-10 it's anticipated to be \$1.751 million, 2010-11 to be \$2.865 million, 2011-12, when it's getting more fully operational, \$5,092,000, and 2012-13 to be \$7.319 million annualized, so that's at a fully operational level. In 2013 it's anticipated that that primary health care replacement, a new project, would cost about \$7 million in operating costs.

The staffing plan both for rural projects and for urban projects is being developed as we speak. Parts of that have been done. For example, Edson in their redevelopment phase 2 is not anticipated to have any additional operating costs. I believe the costs were nominal. About \$146,000 was expected to be the cost. So it depends on staff deployment and each individual project.

The decisions on these projects, as I said previously, were from decisions made, submissions initially by the health regions last year, announcements that were made in support of those health regions. Then at the juncture of making a final determination of the amounts of these particular projects, significant conversation was engaged between the regional health authority with Infrastructure and Transportation and Health and Wellness. So the final determination was a blend of participants in decision-making.

Briefly, on the mental health that has been referenced by the member opposite, some \$300 million for a mental health facility. Although there's been speculation about the mental health facilities in the future, this was not part of this announcement.

I'd like to clarify that while she asked about, quite properly, the long-term care beds, although 100 new beds are being built in the

Capital health region because of a redeployment of patients in the Barrhead health care centre renovation projects, it's a net of 85 because 15 patients in the Barrhead facility are being relocated to other existing facilities, to new supportive living facilities that will serve their needs. So although we build a hundred, it's, in fact, this year a net of 85 new long-term care beds.

In terms of third way initiatives, again, not part of this particular supplementary expenditure.

On the reference to some \$919,852,000 we will provide a written response so that it can be detailed and, quite properly, precise mathematically so that that's available for the hon. member.

I will say this, and I'm sure sitting with her colleague on the benches opposite: the challenge of the health workforce is something that we are all struggling with. One of the things that I think I'm encouraged by is that the Minister of Advanced Education agrees with me, and we are working together on a plan to add to that supply because, obviously, with a buoyant economy and the growing population we need that. A number of initiatives, I think, will take some coalition building. We've talked today with some of our federal counterparts about some things that we can do as strategies Canada-wide to encourage the support of a viable, healthy workforce.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

3:40

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and ask some questions of the hon. minister with respect to her supplementary estimates. I'd like to start, if I can, with the government's approach to private insurance. I understand that this isn't directly under the supplementary estimates, which are capital items, but I'm pleased that she did respond to my colleague from Edmonton-Centre on this question.

One of the great concerns we have is that the terms of the contract for Aon Consulting did not include establishing a comparator for the public sector. In other words, this company is going to be looking at how you would structure private health care insurance in this province and how that might be done, how much it would cost and so on. What's missing, Mr. Chairman, is a comparator in the public sector. We, of course, think that there's lots of evidence to indicate that the public sector will be able to do it more cheaply. So in the absence of one it makes it very, very difficult to actually make a policy decision with respect to public versus private.

Related to this is the whole question of extending private coverage to all nonemergency health care services. I would appreciate it if the minister could give us an idea of the scope of what the government considers to be nonemergency services. As we understand it, nonemergency might include very, very serious surgery that was not instantly required in order to save the patient's life. In other words, if you need some heart surgery at some point or if you're going to have a heart attack but you haven't yet had the heart attack, that would be considered nonemergency.

Ms Blakeman: A kidney transplant.

Mr. Mason: Or a kidney transplant, my hon. colleague said, and so on. Even cancer treatment could be considered to be nonemergency. So, Mr. Chairman, this could extend to almost anything that didn't involve the emergency room or intensive care in a hospital. In other words, the vast majority of the system could be up for privatization. So I think it is very important that we get some clarity from the minister about what exactly is on the table with respect to the potential for private coverage.

I know that the Premier is talking about the potential of violating the Canada Health Act. He has raised this himself in the past, and he's now being asked this question in eastern Canada, and he's really not being very, very crystal clear about what the government has in mind. Under what circumstances would the government agree or decide to violate the Canada Health Act? What is the potential cost to Alberta of doing so? If, in fact, we do lose that funding – and it may be, according to our calculations, up to about \$3 billion a year – how will that be covered and whether or not that will be covered by extending private insurance to Albertans?

The question of wait times is very important. I'd like to know how the government is doing with respect to reducing waiting times, and how successful the national strategy to reduce wait times is, what progress has been made, and what money from the federal government for that has been put towards?

I had a chance to discuss with the minister in her office the whole question of pharmaceutical savings when we talked about our bill, which was just defeated yesterday on second reading, the Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act. I wonder if the minister will just express for the House her comments with respect to what the government has been doing in that area and the status of the national work that's being done on that. In my view, I was somewhat surprised when I did meet with the minister that, in fact, it's considerably less than maybe some people have been led to believe.

I want to ask a little about long-term care; that is, the conversion of long-term beds into assisted-living beds. This is an area of great concern to us right now: what the changes are when a bed is changed from a long-term care bed to an assisted-living bed, what services are no longer covered or are no longer received by the person in that bed, what the cost savings are to the owners of the facility, what the cost savings are to the government and, conversely, what the additional costs may be to access those services outside the system – what is the policy of the government toward controlling the conversion of long-term beds into assisted living, and how much conversion has already taken place? – what the stock of long-term beds is, what the government's plan is, what the government estimates the need for long-term beds to be in the future, and how we relate to that.

This is a very serious concern, Mr. Chairman, and it's been an issue. The government has committed to dealing with the Auditor General's report on long-term care, but they haven't really addressed the whole question of this conversion process that's going on, and it's causing a lot of difficulties for people. It needs to be seriously addressed.

I would also like to ask the minister on the same point what the government's commitment is relative to the Auditor General's report on long-term care. At the time that the Auditor General made his report on long-term care, the Premier stood in this House and said that the government was committing to every single recommendation of the Auditor General. But then the government appointed a committee of MLAs, including a Conservative MLA and a Liberal MLA, and that report came back with a considerably less rigorous set of recommendations than the Auditor General had. In fact, it fell far short of what the Auditor General had said. So if the government is going to adopt those recommendations, does that mean that they are no longer committed to adopting and putting into place all of the recommendations of the Auditor General's report? That's a very important question because it's created a lot of confusion about where the government's commitment actually lies.

I want to ask about the two hospitals in Sherwood Park and in Fort Saskatchewan. The Premier had identified in some of his comments that this was solving a political problem – I assume, a battle between two towns, the hamlet of Sherwood Park and the city of Fort

Saskatchewan – over where the hospital would be located. In a Solomon-like decision they decided to split the baby. I would like to know from the minister and I wonder if she would commit to providing a timeline of the decision-making around this and to also provide cost estimates of building a single hospital as opposed to the two separate stand-alone hospitals, those costs and the comparison. Also, the costs of operation of two smaller hospitals as opposed to the cost of operation of one larger facility would be much appreciated by us.

I'm sure that the government did its homework and actually looked at that whole question because I'm sure that they're committed to providing the very best and most cost-effective use of taxpayers' dollars when it comes to building and operating new facilities. So they must have looked at that, and I'd certainly like the minister to provide that.

I just want to conclude by saying that I have appreciated this minister's openness to discussion and dialogue. Although she doesn't agree with our point of view, nor do we agree with her point of view, it is a bit refreshing to have a minister that is prepared to share information and have a dialogue even if it's sometimes just off the record a little bit, to have some back-channel communication. It's most appreciated, and I think that it would lead ultimately to better government and better opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3:50

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Yes. I'm going to more fully respond to the detail of questions that the hon. members opposite have given at a later date.

I'd like to just indicate that the points that the hon. member has raised relative to the structure of comparators for the models being developed to evaluate the actuarial costs for any change in the insuring of services – supplementary health services, pharmacy and drug-related costs, or continuing care – are points that I will respond to, will take back, in fact, and ask our administration how they view the capacity of the RFP to respond to those models with a comparator. It's my understanding that that in fact is going to take place, but I want to gather that assurance so that I am providing it quite properly.

The hon. member tempts me when he talks about the definitions of emergency, nonemergency, and medically necessary. Something may not be an emergent health issue, but it will be medically necessary, and at some point it may become an emergent issue. Things that are medically necessary are obviously not always emergency related. When you review the comments about the vagueness of the Canada Health Act on this issue, governments generally tend to define what they don't consider to be emergent but may at some point require more immediate care.

So while it is an interesting discussion point not necessarily related to the discussion of this particular supplementary estimate, I take most seriously the evaluation of how we best define this. I am sure that over the months ahead we'll be compelled to provide that so that Albertans know what is nonemergent and what is medically necessary and most things that may not be an emergency but are medically necessary for treatment at some point. I digress, but it is an important element for us to understand so that we aren't in violation of proper care.

The Premiers of Alberta and Quebec have talked about the need to look at options and to debate the issues surrounding the Canada Health Act at this time. Quebec's Jacques Choulli, speaking at a conference I attended in Vancouver, said that by Justice Deschamps' adjudication of section 1 of the Quebec charter as being like section

7 of the Canadian Charter, in his view section 1 and the decision they've made on that subject should also be imposed on section 7 of the Canadian Charter. Ergo, it's his belief and the belief supported by some of the judiciary that were at that conference that in actual fact Alberta and any province that held a prohibition to private insurance would already have a strike against that private insurance prohibition because of the Quebec ruling. I think we're very anxious to see the white paper that Quebec brings forward and examine whether or not this is more significant, in their judgment, because of the similarities between the intent and the design of section 1 of the Quebec charter and section 7 of the Canadian Charter.

We're working on getting a wait-time report available not only for Albertans but for Canadians. This bed capacity that is provided in the supplementary list here I believe will ultimately improve our bed capacity.

The conversation about the operating costs of the two hospitals, both located in Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan, is an interesting one. At full operational costing the Fort Saskatchewan health centre replacement in today's dollars in the year 2013 is estimated to cost an additional \$205,000 and the Sherwood Park facility \$22 million. When I discussed with the capital region, "Why not one hospital instead of two?" they said that, in their view, from the studies between both, yes, there was a political issue, but they felt, I think, that the needs of the population are better served by defining primary care centres in close proximity to the populations.

The building of one stand-alone facility, either between the communities or in one community or another, might well cost more because the pressure would be on that facility to become more of a regional hospital by definition rather than two facilities, health care community centres, that will deliver health care in, hopefully, the new and more advanced way of having health teams to adjudicate the problems and to respond to them.

I do appreciate, as I've said previously, the views of the hon. members opposite, of the third party, because I'm encouraged that they are looking at being creative and innovative about how we reduce our costs.

In terms of the long-term care and moves to assisted living, that is something that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East and the government members on the long-term care review panel looked over very seriously. In the definition of standards that will ultimately come forward – they are in draft form now – we have to have very carefully articulated protocols because my understanding is that two things are in play. The assisted-living definition isn't the same in every community. Also, the long-term care patients that are more appropriately placed in assisted living need to be assured through their assessments that they are suitable for those placements, and ultimately the standards will compel that to happen.

In the short term in Chinook, for example, where many are being located to assisted-living supports, there's careful work being done both with the guardians or the families involved, and hopefully those placements – some will be grandfathered – will be in the best interests of the patient, which is ultimately the responsibility of the health services delivery.

I just want to say this. I see that the Auditor General's report was one piece to be responded to, and yes, we accepted those recommendations. The recommendations from the MLA committee that reviewed long-term care will supplement and add to the strength of those recommendations, gave a more detailed opportunity for us to review the issues, and I would suggest that when we ultimately bring forward the government response and the plan for implementation, the hon. member will be reassured that we are making some gains on that.

I think that the difficulty that I face in reviewing all of those

reports is that it's not having standards on paper that is ultimately going to affect better care for people in long-term care or in home care or in assisted living. It's having the staff understanding and the commitment and the regional health authority commitment to making sure that that implementation takes place that will tell the tale. So we have work to do.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my great honour to rise and speak to the supplementary estimates on Health and Wellness. I want to start with the Grey Nuns hospital, which is in the Mill Woods area. The people there have been experiencing shortages of staff and beds for a long, long time now. I heard that the current budget is only for new beds. In emergency the waiting time is still four to nine hours, and I have seen people suffering and some people crying. You know, it's a big problem there. So I request the hon. minister to look at it as sometimes they are continuously suffering as a result of the shortages of staff and beds. I want to ask the hon. minister: when will this government provide new staff and place all the new beds in the Grey Nuns hospital in Edmonton? Also, I want to know: when will this government solve these problems in this hospital and how?

4:00

My constituents are firmly in favour of a reformed public health care system. They've asked me to let you know that their stand on public health care is firm. What are the short-term and long-term plans for this particular hospital? My constituents are anxious to know the answers from the provincial government. They are anxiously wanting to know the reforms promised by the Tory government. They are totally confused about the government's three-way plan, so they keep on asking me to ask the government. So please, please tell Albertans. If you have any sustainable policies, please let us know.

Thank you.

Ms Evans: Just briefly I'd like to identify that the bed reclamation phase 4 of the Grey Nuns community hospital is anticipated to have a total provincial support of \$49,700,000 and a hundred thousand dollars for the redevelopment this year.

I'd just like to make one observation. The expanded use of the Alberta wait list registry will hopefully enable people to see, when a bed is not available in their local community hospital, where they could possibly get served. We do have to encourage Albertans to look at their health delivery in a different way and, if their local hospital isn't available, find out what the wait times might be like for procedures in other hospitals. Although it would be lovely to be able to just serve one person in those hospital beds, it's not always possible, and I know that the hon. member opposite understands that.

In terms of the public system I would tell anybody that asked, "Are they committed to public health, number one," yes, \$1.4 billion for new public facilities to help us acknowledge the growing Alberta population. So we are working in that vein to improve the capacity in the public health system.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, in light of what the Speaker stated earlier on, I would caution everyone that the noise level is getting very, very high. The microphone system has to have the ability to pick the voice of the speaker. So please reduce the level of noise. The Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Yes. So just briefly in conclusion to the hon. member opposite, the commitment is solid in the public system and the commitment for possible innovations or other things in the future; for example, looking at how we deal with supplementary health care funding or health services funding, how we look at the continuing care funding in the future. Those are chapters that haven't been written yet. We're using our RFP to make examination of the costs, and in due course Albertans, stakeholders, will hear from this government on those issues.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to be able to stand and make a few comments on the supplemental supply for Health and Wellness. The first thing I want to say is that one positive point is that at least our Premier is out there saying that health care is not sustainable in its current situation, and as soon as Canadians realize that, we can start doing some serious changes to our system to actually serve Albertans better. [interjection] We will. Be calm for a minute. Be happy to. That's why we're here.

I'm always amazed at how many people say that there's no way for private facilities. I don't think that too many people back up and realize that most doctors' offices are private facilities here in this province, and they function and serve us very well. [interjection] Absolutely. That's what we need to keep. It's critical that we have single-payer . . .

Mr. Mason: Single-payer, private, two-tiered health care.

Mr. Hinman: No, no. Let's just keep going here, and we'll stop the rhetoric bit.

At this time I'd like to share with the minister some innovative ideas that I've heard from many Albertans because they are not in the new supplemental supply, and I thought that some of them might be. One of the things I wanted to talk about is the pharmaceuticals. We all know and understand the cost of research and development of new drugs and the fact that these corporations have to recoup that, but by not allowing any of those new drugs onto our list of availabilities, they keep those prices very high. I was wondering if the minister has ever talked to those pharmaceutical companies and asked them: would they reduce those drugs if, in fact, we were to put them onto the list that could be utilized by Albertans to improve their health? There are many new ones out there that are a great advantage, but the cost is prohibitive, and perhaps we could strike a deal to show them how many patients would be using those drugs and get a reduced cost and thereby get them onto our list sooner.

Another thing that's often talked about is the actual cost of each, whether it's a hip replacement, kidney. We talk about actuaries, trying to find out the prices. I feel that that's where the free market has always done its best. If, in fact, the minister was to put out and say, for example, "We're doing 5,000 hip surgeries this year" or whatever the numbers are. Due to the lack of funding our research in this caucus isn't always as good as I'd like it to be, so I don't know the numbers on hip surgeries or MRIs or those things. You know those numbers, and if in fact you were to put them out and say, "We're looking at a five-year contract; we have to have this many," facilities would be built by private industry if the funds followed those services. I feel that the fastest, quickest, most efficient way – and I've talked to many rural areas – is by putting those out for an open bid by the doctors here in Alberta. Just like their own private clinics where they treat the average Albertans, we could also have many private clinics that would do perhaps MRIs, CAT scans. We

already have some in the province. Look at that on all types of services that we have such a huge backlog on. The most painful part about our healthcare here is how long many people have to wait.

I know a lady in my area who I consider to be young, in her late 40s, that needs a knee replacement, and it's just terrible that she's going to have to wait possibly another six months and is not able to work. That's something that we can and should be able to facilitate. By allowing the funding to follow the service, we would get more of it coming online.

Another interesting area is the cost and the amount of people that come and utilize our emergency services. It's a struggle to keep those people out, but as those of us who have gone and visited emergency just to observe, we do see that there are a fair amount of people that walk in that could go to more evening clinics if, in fact, we had them open. Again, if those services were being funded by the province, I really believe that the private enterprises would open more facilities at no cost to us and that the money would go to services being provided again. So if the minister would look at that.

Another area of great concern in the south with the Chinook health region and other small regions – currently to my understanding such things as angioplasty are off-limit for smaller regions to offer. Down in the States a little town like Kalispell actually has a surgeon that does angioplasty, and they're able to function in small areas. Once again, if the actual funding followed the service, the Chinook health region I believe would already have an angioplasty surgeon from the States who wants to come back to Canada, but because the funding doesn't follow the service, we have a backlog and a shortage.

Many times at the Lethbridge regional hospital people don't get in in time, and the time for the air ambulance is too late to get to Calgary. It would take a great load off the big regions if, like I say, we'd allow that funding to follow the service and let small regions, if they have someone who can come in willing to do it, take that on.

I guess my last comment that I'd like to make today is that fear at the greatest height is the unknown. Albertans have gone on for a long time through many reports on what this government is proposing, and the fear is still at a very high level with all this talk of this private health care and private insurance. I don't believe we need to go to that length if, in fact, we would just fund the services that are provided here in the province. We have the opportunity. That should be the first step that we take and realize how well that can work.

4:10

By not allowing those funds to follow service, it seems like it's more bureaucratically driven. When a budget is given to the different health regions, they look at every service that comes in as an expense out of their budget. I really believe that by turning that around and by saying, "What services have you provided Albertans, and we will pay you," they'll be driven by service and satisfaction and not try to hoard the money and close down operations for four or six hours a day because they say: well, we don't have the funding. We could have those running 24/7 in many facilities, including MRIs, if in fact they're being paid for the services.

So I'd really encourage this minister to continue with her openness and be more open and let Albertans know what's coming down and the ideas that are there. Let's seriously look at, I ask, funding following the services and let free enterprise step up and help Albertans and reduce our waiting lines.

Thank you for the time.

Ms Evans: Mr. Chair, I'm just going to be very brief. There are many thoughts that have been expressed by the hon. member

opposite, but one of the questions really relates to the fact that the private sector, especially insurance companies, could analyze and give us a pretty good feel for how much the cost would be and engage in help to the system.

I guess the thing that I have always wanted as a consumer is to be able to estimate or at least know what I'm likely to pay for something before I go shopping. I think this Alberta government, if in fact we change – and I stress if in fact we change – any way of supporting people to receive health care in the public system, has to know that if we remove our prohibition to private insurance or if we open the door to more private insurers to take part in Alberta, if they so choose – they may well not choose – we will always have a core of people that require our support, that are either unable to provide that support for themselves, that are unable to plan for their future because of their economic circumstance, or that are already senior and on fixed incomes. No matter what, we have to know the equation so that if we say, "All right; we are going to, for example, look at future generations paying towards supporting their own continuing care if they're financially able to do so," we still have to know what remains in the system.

The other part is the pre-existing conditions. If I'm already a person with multiple sclerosis, what opportunity will I have to gain insurance? So you have to cross that bridge for those people that are medically fragile or have a pre-existing condition. I think that's another part of why we have to look at those kinds of things.

I thank you for the observation that we are open to looking at other things. I would like to indicate that when I listened to Gordon Gibson, who was formerly assistant to the former and late Prime Minister Trudeau, he quoted that today the health care systems – and I'm just going to paraphrase – have a need to introduce a more honest dialogue and transparency about what's happening because we are not sustainable in our current form. We have to look at what's happening with other OECD countries who may be able to do it better and get people in and shorter waiting times and make sure that we have a better functioning system.

Last but not least, the national organization the Canadian council on health care has observed that waiting times may harm patients, and that's their number one principle. We have to pay attention to that regardless of private insurance or private care or anything else. Waiting can harm patients, and if we know that as Members of the Legislative Assembly, for that reason alone it behooves us to find better ways. So thank you for that encouragement.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, there are a number of issues to be discussed this afternoon, and there is so limited time. However, I have some questions in regard to the health care budget and the supplementary estimates that are being discussed.

When one looks at this amount, when one looks at the entire government budget, we hear the arguments from across the floor about how our health care system is not sustainable, that we have to initiate change because it's just not sustainable. But I believe that we have to heed the words of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and consider better management of the system.

We are looking at new facilities. Again, I remind all hon. members of this House that it's the same government that dynamited a perfectly good hospital in Calgary and closed many others. [interjections] It was a perfectly good hospital. The hon. Minister of Advanced Education may disagree with that, but many of the fine citizens of Calgary are still puzzled about why it was blown up.

Here we have a decade later the same government. I'm sure

they're going to give themselves centennial medals for their hospital reconstruction efforts, but that goes back to what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview stated, and that was that we could manage the system better.

The public accounts, that were tabled yesterday, indicate that we had in the Calgary regional health authority an amount in excess of \$2 billion granted. If we compare that to Edmonton, the Edmonton Capital health authority is roughly a little greater than \$2 billion. Edmonton would be \$2.2 billion, and Calgary would be \$2.1 billion. In light of the time, I'm certainly not going to go through all of the regional health authorities that are included in the public accounts, but could the hon. minister provide to me, please, the per capita amount of Alberta Health and Wellness funding for 2004 and 2005 for each of the respective health authorities in the province. I would really appreciate that.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was talking earlier about procedures that are available in Montana. I understand that there are a number of pilot projects going on in both the Capital health authority region and the Calgary health authority region to increase the number of knee and hip replacements through a partnership or an alliance. One specific company here comes to view, and it's numbered company 1157268 Alberta Ltd. I was wondering if we could get an update, please, on how those pilot projects are working out.

Of course, our Premier is travelling and explaining to the rest of the country exactly how health care should be operating in the rest of Canada. I don't think that anybody from this government has the right to tell the rest of Canada how to deliver or to eliminate in this case public health care, particularly with the performance in the last 10 years of this current government. We have to go back to what the Member for Edmonton-Riverview said. We've got to manage what we have better. Privatization is not the answer. I find it quite ironic that on the current speaking tour being conducted by the Premier, the Premier on behalf of this government wants to tell the rest of the country how to manage their health care affairs.

4:20

Now, certainly, the Health Care Protection Act came into effect with a lot of questions by the public in regard to this. How exactly would this work? Mr. Chairman, one only has to go to the Calgary regional health authority to find out how this is working. We've always been promised that this is going to work out and that it's going to reduce wait times.

If we look, for instance, at ophthalmology in Calgary, in that regional health authority the wait list, as I understand it, for cataract surgery has increased 11 per cent when compared to the previous year although the wait time, fair enough, has remained constant. Now, I learned through the annual report from the Calgary regional health authority that in January of this year as a wait-list reduction endeavour the Calgary health region approved 1,000 additional one-time cataract procedures. Also, the Calgary regional health authority approved an increase in the number of cataracts to be completed in 2005-2006, increasing from 7,000 to 8,500. This agreement, as I understand it, is in effect until March 31, 2008.

Now, we were told and promised that this was all going to work out. If this is an experiment, I would like an explanation from the hon. minister as to how this is actually working. Whenever we heard that privatization would reduce waiting lists and reduce waiting times, it's apparent from the annual report that that has not happened. Calgary seems to be leading the charge in this sort of privatization by stealth. If the hon. minister could provide me with the information in regard to that, I would certainly be grateful.

When we look at the contracts in this regional health authority

under the Health Care Protection Act, if we compare last year to this year, we will see that there has been almost a 30 per cent increase in those contracts, and there also has been an increase in contracts to health services operators. If I could have the information provided to me for the other health authorities through the course of our discussion this afternoon at some time – and I can understand if the hon. minister does not have that information available and could provide it in writing, hopefully, before the end of the year – I would be grateful.

With that, Mr. Chairman, that is all I have to say at this time in regard to the supplementary estimates of Health and Wellness. Thank you.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the hon. member's observations, but I'd just like to make one observation, not because of this minister's involvement but because of the involvement of my predecessors who sit in this Chamber and one that doesn't. Alberta is respected across the country as having one of the most advanced health care systems on every front. Alberta is also recognized as a place that has been much more restrictive to the development of private care than either Ontario, Quebec, or British Columbia. So criticisms that our Premier should not shine the light on this issue I think are misplaced. Our Premier is, in fact, I think openly encouraging discussion because of the inequities we find ourselves in in terms of the manner in which we're dealt with as provinces.

Today I listened to the people from New Brunswick who came and identified that it's the first time that the Canada Health Act dispute resolution will be applied in their particular part of the country. Not in Alberta. Alberta has had a track record of being in compliance with the Canada Health Act over the past several years and I think has shown by the number of specialists it has attracted that it is capable of delivering a very sound system.

In terms of the pilot projects and numbered company 1157268, I believe that would be illustrative of one of the partners delivering the hip and joint replacements. That is a project that's going extremely well. I'll clarify that when we look at the Blues and make sure that we table those responses.

The Deputy Chair: After considering the 2005-2006 supplementary estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the vote?

Hon. Members: Question.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$64,630,000
---	--------------

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Sustainable Resource Development

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coumts: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and colleagues all. I'd like to certainly address the Assembly this afternoon on the need for \$80 million in supplementary estimates for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development; \$75.2 million of that request for \$80 million is needed for wildfire-fighting costs, which would actually bring the total operating expenditure for the year to \$151 million.

There were over 1,300 forest fires this last season, mainly as a result of dry weather in the remote northern section of Alberta, and this happened especially early in the season. There weren't a lot of fires in the southern section this year because of climatic conditions. There was a lot of moisture in our forests, and that's a good thing. Totally, the fires that we did have this year, Mr. Chairman, consumed more than 60,000 hectares of land. Because these wildfires were in such remote locations, as I said, access to water supplies was often limited, and they were quite expensive to suppress in this particular year. As a result, a forest fire emergency was declared. Wildfires, that certainly disrupt communities and impact our environment, for example, threaten to destroy sensitive watersheds. When this occurs, these wildfires must be actioned.

Most Albertans aren't even aware that we still have wildfires burning in Alberta. Even though the fire season officially ended on October 31, only yesterday a forest protection crew worked with the Slave Lake and area fire departments on a grass fire 20 kilometres west of Slave Lake, and that's because of the unusually warm weather and yesterday's very strong winds in the area. The local fire department and our crews made sure that the fire was out in very good time and saved some of the houses that were very, very close to the beginnings of this fire.

[Ms Haley in the chair]

So this demonstration of always being ready for a fire, Madam Chairman, is a very good example of our staff's efforts to manage many wildfires not only during the high wildfire season but also throughout the year.

The department also requires an additional \$4.8 million to address mountain pine beetle infestations, which were quite intense this year along Alberta's western border. I've spoken in this House many times about the pine beetle and how it's encroaching into Alberta. In order to stop that, it takes significant expenditures of manpower and dollars to attack the pine beetle at those locations that have been identified by our aerial and our ground surveys as well as by the forestry companies and the national parks that are very, very close to the forest and can recognize fader trees where the pine beetle is starting to infest. So we require an additional \$4.8 million to address the mountain pine beetle infestations, and that would bring the total expenditures in this area to \$7.4 million for 2005 and 2006.

4:30

Madam Chairman, the mountain pine beetle is just what we are starting to term and starting to consider as another smouldering fire developing in the bark of these trees. Certainly, our surveillance discovered large infestations in the Willmore wilderness park as well as the Kakwa wildland park. Along with the co-operation from Community Development, again an emergency was declared. We worked very quickly in cutting and burning more than 5,000 trees in four weeks with minimal impact.

We learned from our neighbours in British Columbia, who are struggling with the mountain pine beetle, that inaction is not an option. British Columbia saw the mountain pine beetle infestation spread from about 165,000 hectares of land in 1999 to an estimated 4.2 million hectares in 2004. We don't want that to happen in Alberta, so quick, decisive, aggressive action is required. That's why we have had to limit the spread of this forest pest in Willmore as well as Kakwa this year. Also, in the last fiscal year in parts of Alberta we identified areas from the Crownsnest Pass right through to K Country and the Bow Valley park.

Our surveillance and our prevention and control measures here in Alberta along with both sides of the border remain a priority. I also

have to commend the B.C. government for assisting us in that project in terms of their memorandum of understanding and co-operation between our two provinces to stop this pine beetle. It's in their best interests to do the same.

I'd like to also just briefly remind the House that it's important that we stop this beetle because there are 2 million hectares of pine forest at risk along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. That has an estimated economic value of more than \$23 billion. That's just in the forest resource itself. That doesn't include any effects that it would have on our tourist industry as well if we had a red forest out there, not a green forest, against the beautiful majestic Rocky Mountains. So it's important that we continue to treat this as a slow fire.

So, Madam Chairman, I request the support of the Assembly for funding to protect Alberta's most valuable forest resources not only from wildfires but also from the pine beetle threat. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I do believe that an opportunity arises right now to be able to speak to this important but underfunded and underutilized ministry. We're to ask you for a supplemental requisition of \$75.2 million for forest fires and then the small amount, unfortunately, for controlling the mountain pine beetle. Perhaps with our combination of requests for this, next time with supplementary requests we can get more monies because we do realize that the mountain pine beetle is, as you pointed out, threatening to destroy a multibillion dollar industry. Oil and gas isn't the only industry that employs people in this province.

The pine beetle is a natural, unfortunate part of the ecosystem. It attacks mature standing lodgepole pine forests. As well, when they're infested, they quickly lose their market value within about four to five years. It's an increasing problem as warmer weather in winters continues to persist. Fire suppression and migration from B.C. have allowed the population numbers to increase. There are no chemical pesticides that we're aware of that can be used, and the only viable treatments on hand so far that I've heard is burning infested trees, called the fall and burn, harvesting the infested wood, or harvesting the prescribed burning and mature pines before they can be infested. That's about the extent of it so far besides releasing woodpeckers, I believe, but they're not into this area. They're usually into their own areas and don't travel too far outside them.

The extra money is good, but I would insist that it does not go far enough. We've been calling for more and more money to be put into this in the past, and we'll continue to call on this government to invest more to resolve this problem before the pine beetle can spread, damaging more trees and affecting this vital industry. The pine beetle's infestation in B.C. is huge, and it covers a larger area than New Brunswick itself. It will remove the timber supplies for the whole forest and dependent communities could fall then.

It's ironic that this ministry is asking for more money for fighting forest fires because it addresses the mountain pine beetle. While fighting forest fires is vital to protecting public safety and private property and structures and buildings and valuable timber, the experts have now concluded and are saying that fires are a normal part of the forest. In B.C. they recognize that the highly successful fire suppression has made the mountain pine beetle infestation worse by allowing it to increase its habitat into the mature pines.

The mountain pine beetle is now considered individually the most expensive piece that we're going to be fighting in the next few years. So I would ask some specific questions then. Is the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development considering the role of forest

fires for controlling the pine beetle for starters? Do they have a fire management plan as part of the larger ecosystem management strategy for this forest? What exactly does the word "control" mean in reference to the \$4.8 million going to control the mountain pine beetle? Is this ministry investing in research, planning, and other proactive efforts to control this beetle or just responding in an ad hoc fashion? How did they decide on this amount? Given the cost of an action seen in B.C., do we feel that \$4.8 million will be sufficient to control the pine beetle for the next year? What role is industry playing in fighting the pine beetle? Have they invested staff to coordinate effective longer term approaches?

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Now going on to the supplementary supply of the forest fires point, which is \$75.2 million. The firefighting costs are familiar from what we've seen in the supplementary supply estimates. The government has asked each year for more and more. In 2002-2003 the suppression costs were overbudgeted by about \$227 million, in 2003-04 they were overbudgeted by \$128 million, in 2004-05 they were overbudgeted by \$124 million, and now we're at about \$75 million for this year as a result of the severe drought conditions. The base budgets always remain relatively stable. It is important to fight forest fires that threaten lives, property, and commercial forest values, but the budget should reflect the actual spending levels.

So some of the questions are: do we have a plan to accurately budget for the fluctuating forest fires and suppression so that the people of Alberta can understand the actual true costs of fighting the fires? What would be some proactive steps that were taken to reduce the piece with regard to the forest fires? I know that's a tough one: you know, huge uncontrollable fires and the property losses. What would some of the steps be to ensure effective forest fire management costs?

If I can maybe deviate a little bit, we've got those two areas basically covered, but I would go off and ask for maybe a supplementary supply that could also include considerations in other areas such as putting in more field officers or conservation officers, fish and wildlife officers. I feel that there is a real need to be able to monitor the activity in the province as the population has grown. The season right now is still the hunting season. It's still alive and kicking, and we need to have enough people to do enforcement.

I do appreciate the piece from the Public Accounts Committee where the minister has provided that there is almost \$3 million spent directly on monitoring the lakes and the fish stocks. I got a call to my constituency office. They're concerned that when the lakes freeze over, the people take on the recreational point of it and ice fishing pops up on the lakes. We do have derbies that happen. There's one derby that's going to be taking place in February on Gull Lake. It's a relatively shallow lake. They're going to be punching about 2,000 holes and charging about \$75 per person. I think that comes out to about \$150,000, and the prize for the biggest fish that day would be about \$50,000. Some individual has invested in this particular tournament, resides, I think, in Winnipeg, and will be taking his windfall of \$100,000 for organizing it back to his province and leaving our lakes depleted as a result. I'm just wondering if the minister would be able comment particularly on that piece, which was brought up as a concern for some of the anglers and the fish and wildlife people in that particular area.

4:40

The other concern I would be able to maybe raise. It's still hibernation season for some animals. Spring would be the awakening for others. With awakening, I'm referring to the grizzly bear.

What would this ministry have as a real plan to protect the grizzly bears? I would like to see, perhaps, a suppression or a temporary moratorium placed on a spring grizzly hunt until actual numbers could be confirmed. It's unfortunate, but overall I think industry and recreation has continued to strangle the amount of territory that not only the grizzly bear but the caribou have to migrate and cohabit. Unfortunately, even this summer there were more bears killed as a result of some traffic fatalities there, which has continued to deplete the stocks.

I've given the minister a number of specifics. I'll sit down here and wait for his response. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Chairman, thank you, and thanks to the hon. member for a number of questions that pertain directly to the supplementary supply but also outside of the supplementary supply. We have other departments that want to get on here this afternoon, so I'll try to be brief. Anything that I do miss I will definitely make sure that you get responses on in writing.

The comments regarding the pine beetle. It is important that we put as many dollars as we possibly can into fighting the pine beetle now because if you have beetle kill as was mentioned in British Columbia, that beetle kill is a fire hazard itself. If that permeates itself into Alberta, we have all that dead forest out there. In future years fire suppression and firefighting are going to take a lot more than presently. What we average per year is about \$195,000 to a million to about \$210 million, depending on the amount of fires that we have every year.

Certainly, the value of the timber and the cutting sequences when there is a tremendous amount of beetle kill has a tremendous effect on the industry. The industry is as concerned about that as we are. They want to be sustainable for the future. They do not want this beetle to take over a healthy forest. The industry also identifies valleys where the pine beetle can actually move up and go into some mature stands of pine forest, so we work with industry to make sure that the cutting sequences that they have in their annual management plans can be looked at and altered to make sure that that food source is taken away. We think that that's being very proactive.

You asked about the role of the firefighters. The 5,000 trees that were cut in the Willmore wilderness area and the Kakwa were done by our fire suppression crews. Well-trained helicopter tactical teams went in once the trees were identified and cut those individual trees. It's a very expensive way of fighting the pine beetle, and that's why the need for more dollars. Is it enough? It's probably enough for this year in terms of the fact that the beetle itself actually flies the latter part of May and June and into early July and then gets into a stand of trees. You really don't know about whether or not they've attacked a tree until later on next spring. Is it enough for this year? Yes. Will it be enough for next year? We don't know. It depends on the amount of beetle infestation. How can you plan for that? You can only plan by doing aerial surveys next spring and keeping industry informed but also making sure that our national parks are well aware of protecting the stands that are in their areas as well.

A big expense that we're going to have is a prescribed burn that we're looking at for the Meadowland Creek area, and we will have our fire suppression teams there to make sure that that doesn't get away on us. So it is about control.

In terms of research, between jurisdictions across this country and into the United States we pretty well know everything there is about the mountain pine beetle, so to put money into research might not give us any more information than we presently have. I'd sooner take the dollars and put them into seeing if we can stop the pesky

little beetle rather than putting money into research. It might I think be good money after bad. I talked about the industry being a big player in this because it's in their best interests to help us as well.

In terms of the firefighting costs, on average we would have firefighting costs of about \$195 million to \$210 million, depending on the amount of fires. Before we actually have a fire, contracts have to be put in place in getting ready for a fire season. Even though we think we have the fire season over by October 31, we have to have contracts in place for all of our fire suppression needs by the 1st of May. So that comes automatically. Without having a fire, that comes to about \$75 million. It's really important that we have that in place to provide the security for communities, as you mentioned.

Another thing that we work on – just outside the estimates and a question that you had regarding more field officers to look at more enforcement and being on the ground. That certainly would be a great asset to Sustainable Resource Development in terms of making sure that if we have some pockets of mountain pine beetle that haven't been detected, if you have more enforcement guys out there, they can tell us and work with the department. So that's a real bonus to us.

The other thing you talked about that is really important in terms of fire suppression and saving dollars is that we have expert staff. Even in the off-season, our department works on FireSmart communities and FireSmart plans for communities so that we can save houses, save people's livelihoods, and those types of things. It's really important for us to make sure that we have the dollars to keep those people on in the planning stages. Certainly, that's part of the great work that forest protection services does in the off-season as well.

Along with that, of course, you talked about wildlife displacement and plans for caribou reclamation, et cetera. We have recovery plans in place, and I would be more than pleased to provide you with details on those recovery plans. We have a plan in place right now particularly on grizzlies, and I've articulated it in the House many times, but I'll be glad to put that in writing. The plan that has come forward from the provincial committee has not reached my desk yet. You know, you're absolutely right. We had 10 bears taken last year during the hunt. We probably had more grizzly bears taken by – I mean, even the unfortunate one of the two orphan cubs that were hit on the highway. Certainly, we'll lose more bears to human contact. We'll lose more bears to cars, trains, and those types of things than we will by the actual hunt. Also, having a bear smart program, an education program, for communities that live in the foothills and close to the mountains is really important too.

Maybe we won't have to worry about the ice fishing because if the weather keeps going the way it is, we won't have any ice. But I will certainly share with you in writing the ice fishing regulations.

With that, Mr. Chairman, maybe you can call the question.

4:50

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

Dr. Swann: I just want to ask a quick question about the sustainable resource and environmental management program. [interjections]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, somebody has just drawn to my attention that you are not in your place. Is that correct?

Dr. Swann: That's true.

The Deputy Chair: You will have to move to your chair to be recognized.

Hon. member, since you're now in your place, you are able to speak. Go ahead.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could you comment on whether any of the supplementary supply is involved in the new sustainable resource and environmental management integrated land use planning process that you've struck?

Mr. Coutts: That's a good question, Mr. Chair. The answer directly to that is no. This is for forest protection. The supplementary supply is for costs incurred for wildfire expenses for this year and also for the mountain pine beetle. It does not include anything on the integrated land management. That will come forward in next year's budget, through our business plan and through our budgeting process in the coming year.

The Deputy Chair: After considering the 2005-2006 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, are you ready for the question?

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$80,000,000
---	--------------

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be here today to discuss Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's supplementary estimate request. I don't need to tell anyone in this Assembly how challenging the past few years have been for our agriculture industry. From disease, border closures, drought, and low commodity prices our producers and processors have faced the gamut of challenges, and as a government we have stood by our industry.

The majority of the supplementary estimate, \$169 million, is to offset disaster assistance that helped with the continued impacts of BSE and the border closures. Of that, \$154 million is directed towards increased payments to our beef, dairy, and other ruminant producers under the pilot program that changes the way CAIS payments are calculated. Changes to the way benefits are calculated has meant that the program responds better to back-to-back disasters. However, it has also meant increased costs, which are outlined here.

Direct assistance is not enough. That's why there is also a request for \$10 million to assist municipalities with infrastructure that they need to support increased agricultural/industrial activities such as slaughter and processing. These would include such things as municipal waste water and environmental infrastructure. We have also allocated an additional \$3 million to continue to build beef product and market development within the province.

Finally, none of these measures would be effective without reopened borders, and that's why we've allocated \$2 million for an enhanced age-verification initiative, allowing us to have the first age-verified herd in Canada. As of last week more than 800,000 cattle have been age verified within the province. Being able to prove the age of cattle gives us one more unique tool to help us reopen those borders.

This year was also hard on our crop producers. Increased demands on programs such as CAIS and crop insurance have meant an increase in payments, and \$118 million of our supplementary estimate is for agriculture insurance and lending assistance costs. Of that, \$47 million is the provincial share of crop insurance premiums, specifically revenue insurance coverage and spring price endorsement, more than budgeted because of higher than expected crop losses, and \$71 million is to help with the retroactive changes to the CAIS program for our other producers. This is the balance of the costs for the CAIS program changes, amounting to a total of \$224 million. Finally, \$109,000 is to offset increased costs for wildlife damage and compensation.

That concludes the explanation of our request, and I'd be happy to take questions. If I am unable to give you an answer this afternoon, I will seek the assistance of my very capable staff and provide you with a written response in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, it's a pleasure to participate in the debate this afternoon regarding Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's supplementary estimates. I heard the minister earlier today in Public Accounts discuss at length the CAIS program and some of the questions put by the members of that committee. However, one question they didn't ask and I would like at this time to discuss before the floor of the Assembly is in regard to the CAIS program. I appreciated the letter that I received from the minister's office some time ago in regard to the 2003 benefit year and the fact that there is over \$80 million outstanding in overpayments in the CAIS year ending in 2003. We're looking at a substantial amount of money here, over \$226 million, in additional funding for the CAIS program, the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program.

Some of this money, I should say, is coming from the sustainability fund. That was the idea of the former Member for Lethbridge-East, Ken Nicol. This government just called it the sustainability fund, but he called it the stabilization fund, the stability fund. He would be pleased, I think, to learn that his sustainability fund is being used in this manner. The minister is absolutely right: there have been some tough years for the farming community and the ranching community. Hopefully, they're behind us.

However, there is an additional amount asked for here, \$71 million, "for retroactive changes to CAIS program benefit calculations that are not related to disaster assistance, and increased provincial administration costs." The first question, Mr. Chairman, would be: for the year ending 2004 and an estimate for 2005, what are the overpayments in the CAIS program? How much of the money that was announced – I don't have the press release with me, but I think it was \$224 million that's going to be allocated for the CAIS program. How much of that money will be used up by the producers to eliminate these overpayments, regardless of when they happened: 2003, 2004, 2005, to date?

Also, Mr. Chairman, I'm quite concerned about these administration costs. Now, we in this province are administering the program. It's a 60-40 split with the federal government. There are other provinces that have the federal government administer this. There are some professors of agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan who have conducted research into the administration costs of this program. I'm led to believe that the administration costs are higher in this province than in others, and I would like to hear the minister's opinion on this. We shouldn't be looking at increased administration costs.

Many hon. members of the Public Accounts Committee expressed disappointment that the local ag offices had been closed going back to 2002. This was at Public Accounts this morning, and those members thought that perhaps there should be a decentralization of Alberta Agriculture, and there should be more employees of the department sort of located at the foot of the farm gate.

5:00

Mr. Oberle: One thought that, anyway.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, there was quite a discussion on this.

However, if we could get an update on why these administration costs are going up. Is it because we have eliminated those offices? I would be very interested in hearing the minister's answer. There are many people who have questions about the administration of this program. They are the producers themselves. They are the academics that are having an overview of this. Whenever those groups have questions, I think that we have to provide an answer.

With those questions, Mr. Chairman, I will take my seat and await the minister's reply. In conclusion, I must say that his answers were concise and of interest and were appreciated this morning at Public Accounts. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the hon. member for the questions.

First of all, I'd like to talk a little bit about the overpayment situation, which the member alluded to, for the year ending '03. With many of the overpayment situations – and I believe it was alluded to in the letter that we sent out; I don't remember when it was sent either, but I know that it was some time ago – effectively what had happened is that there was an advance initiated based on the herd that a producer would have based on what we projected the cattle prices would be given our BSE situation at the end of the claim year.

The advances were sent out based on what the entitlement to that particular producer would be based on our estimate of what the prices would be at the end of the year. Fortunately or unfortunately, dependent upon how you look at it, the price of cattle did rise. It did not rise to the extent that it recovered to 2002 levels or anything of that sort, but it did rise quite a bit higher than what we had forecast those prices would rise. That meant that the inventory that those producers held was higher than what the forecast was, and therefore their entitlement under CAIS would be diminished by that amount. That gave rise to in some cases an overpayment situation, which the producers had been advised of when they received those funds.

When we go back through those applications, which we are doing on every one of those overpayment situations, we're going back through them for a number of reasons. One of the reasons relates to one of the other points the member brought up, and that's the questions on CAIS. The reason that we're going back through these applications is to ensure that if there are errors, there is a catalog of the errors being made on these applications and the information coming into the AFSC office because we want to identify the common errors that are slowing down the process of the CAIS application.

We get this catalog of errors, and then we can go back out to the accounting community and the farming community and say: lookit, here are the common errors that are being made on the input that's coming into the office on these applications. If the applications have errors, that's what slows down the system. We want to reduce the amount of errors. We want to make the system a lot simpler and less complex for both the producer and our office.

The other thing that we're finding is that there are a number of errors in the calculation of the entitlement on these overpayment applications. Some of the initial indications that we're getting upon the review is that upon a detailed review of an overpayment application 40 to 50 per cent of those producers are actually being reduced to a zero overpayment because we've maximized their entitlement. That, hon. member, was even before we announced changing to an optional three-year average calculation.

I believe that once we've gone through this total calculation and this total optional calculation of either the Olympic or the three-year average, a good portion of those overpayments for the '03 year will probably show a higher entitlement because of going back three years as opposed to an Olympic average, not only for the cattle industry but also for the grain industry, which is the intent of doing that three-year averaging. Had we done that at the outset, which is one of the things that Alberta had presented, we probably wouldn't be in that situation that we find ourselves in on those overpayments. So there is a twofold reason for doing that calculation review that we're doing on every one of those.

In terms of the '04-05 situation there was no advance of that nature in '04 or '05. There are advances against the CAIS program, true, but they're based on an estimate of the overall farm operation, not just on cattle prices. So that type of an advance isn't available anymore which caused the overpayments in '03. I can't give you a number off the top, but we will certainly get some information back to you from AFSC if there is an indication of any type of overpayment in '04-05.

As it relates to the administration costs of CAIS, the hon. member is quite right. Alberta and a number of other provinces, three other provinces, do the administration of the CAIS program ourselves. That's very, very beneficial to us, Mr. Chairman, because we have been able to respond much, much quicker. We have been able to make our process that much easier. I know it's hard to believe, but in other provinces the situation is even worse in terms of complexity, delays, and overpayments than it is in Alberta.

In fact, I recently had a very good meeting with one of the largest farm accounting organizations in western Canada. They handle probably 18,000 to 20,000 CAIS applications and farm producers every year across western Canada. They recently made a presentation to the national CAIS committee, and in that presentation they cited the good work that Alberta was doing and asked that the rest of the country follow our lead in calculations, in how we handle the information coming into our office, the processes that we dealt with upon reviews of applications.

I'm very, very comfortable, from this third-party type of compliment of our operation, that we are on the right track to make this system simpler, more effective, more responsive, that we are on the right track to finally get to a position where the CAIS program can become a business management tool just as much as it is a business risk management tool. In other words, I can see a point in time where the producer individually will look at his CAIS application, be able to look at the numbers, and make management decisions based on what's happened either in the past or what he forecasts will happen in the future. That will be a very valuable tool for our producers.

As to the administration costs the studies that I've seen would indicate that we are half – half – the cost per application of what the rest of Canada is. I don't know the professor's due diligence in the University of Saskatchewan, but I can tell you that if they included all of the costs associated with the CAIS application, as we do, my guess is that you would find a different outcome in their analysis. I think that's pretty indicative of a lot of the things that we're doing in CAIS, and I cite the leading accounting firms' analysis of this; it's

not our own. We are the leaders in the advancements and progress being made on the CAIS program.

It's unfortunate that the federal government doesn't seem to have as much faith in that CAIS program and a targeted approach as we do, as evidenced by their recent announcement of, once again, an ad hoc without consultation.

I think I've answered the questions of the hon. member. If there are other things that are out of that, more detail, we will provide those.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this opportunity to go over the supplemental supply for Agriculture.

I guess the first thing that I'd like to comment on is that we seem to constantly be in a struggle with the federal government on numerous programs. Once more, with most of the rural people that have talked with me in the past, CAIS is a very, very complicated filing system, and even the CGAs mess up to a great extent. It's good to hear that someone who files \$18,000 is becoming good at it, but I guess I have to question: why do we always grab onto the coattails of the federal government and their programs?

Perhaps it's time that we stand up, much like Quebec often does, and say: well, you send us the money, and we'll run our own programs. I'm always disappointed in the federal programs. It seems like the complexity of them and the difficulty they cause the producers at large – and CAIS has been no exception, as you are very much aware and have shared with me, with the number of times we have to relook. It's been very discouraging for producers in my area on being told that they have to pay that money back when the ones that I've talked to haven't seen a significant change in their filing, yet it's there.

5:10

One of the major concerns – and I don't see anything in the new supply bill that you've brought forward – is some innovative ways to help the farmers help themselves. Input costs have been going up astronomically with the cost of natural gas and electricity. Is this government looking at anything to rebate? We rebate the housing costs, the fuel heating costs. Farm fertilizer has been a big issue. Farmers are very nervous going into next spring with the price of fertilizer. If we were to reduce the taxes on that, it would be very helpful.

The same with the cost of farm fuel. We're continuing to tax those areas. I consider this very much like basic tax exemption. Why do we tax in areas where we already understand they're under duress? Why would we want to tax, as we don't here in the province, someone making \$12,000? Why do we want to tax the farming industry at this time, when commodity prices are down for the grains, when the weather has not been the most conducive to growing? A lot of the quality of crops was down this fall because of the moisture, yet with those farm input costs many farmers who traditionally have put in the fertilizer in the fall have chosen not to because of the cost. It would be great if we were to eliminate those taxes off those.

Another area that I'd like to address. We seem to have got a good grasp on the tar sands, and we need capital expense in there. We've given them some very good incentives, and I wish those incentives would go over into the agricultural business. We talk very much about value-added. I know that you're a keen believer in that. Perhaps if we were to have capital costs that had the same type of writeoffs. I realize that we don't have royalties, but if in fact, for example, a feedlot decided to put up a biomass reactor to deal with

the manure on the place, instead of paying taxes, you know, perhaps 80 per cent of their taxes could go to paying off those capital funds. We could stimulate a whole new level of industry in agriculture if, in fact, we could have capital cost writeoffs and reduce our taxes. I think there are many areas in which we can do that.

Another area that I would urge the minister to continue dealing with Ottawa on is that we are driven many times by our tax problems. During the drought the stock replacement was given a two-year vacation. They weren't taxed on the inventory that they sold. It just seems like the federal government has many tax laws that are driving our industry. We saw the same thing with the feedlots. They had taken terrible losses, yet they still had to put back their inventory. Otherwise, they were going to be taxed as if they'd made a gain.

There are many areas. It would also be another area that would help farms with energy in the south if they could in fact use windmills as a capital expense and write those off, thereby decreasing our shortage of electricity here in the province.

I would strongly urge the minister to try and put in more incentives where farmers could help themselves and put the capital costs in. There have been many co-ops that have wanted to get up and running – you can give written response, I guess, and there are a lot of farmers that wanted the check-offs and to be able to get some . . .

head: **Vote on Supplementary Estimates 2005-06
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, but pursuant to Standing Order 59(2) and Government Motion 23, agreed to on November 16, 2005, I must now put the following question. Those members in favour of each of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the 2005-2006 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed, please say no.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Chair: The motion is carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report the supplemental estimates as dealt with in committee.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2005-06 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, have been approved.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$288,289,000.

Children's Services: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$38,400,000.

Community Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$24,030,000; capital investment, \$2,970,000.

Environment: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$5,200,000.

Health and Wellness: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$64,630,000.

Infrastructure and Transportation: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$526,836,000; capital investment, \$231,180,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$138,235,000.

Seniors and Community Supports: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$109,000,000.

Solicitor General and Public Security: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$7,494,000.

Sustainable Resource Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$80,000,000.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **5:20 Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 43

**Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes
Amendment Act, 2005**

[Adjourned debate November 22: Mr. Hancock]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. I'm in a very unique position here with respect to this bill in feeling that I must support the bill and, yet, deploring the conditions that gave rise to this bill in the first place. The reason that I'm supporting it is because so many of my constituents and so many Albertans are depending on this bill and are desperate to receive the money that they need. I cannot certainly in good conscience turn my back on those people, although I hasten to add that this government in fact has turned its back on these very same people and are offering them crumbs at a time when they need a loaf of bread to feed their family.

Let's just take a look at it. I represent, Mr. Speaker, one of the poorest constituencies in the entire province. I have a lot of individuals in my constituency that live in poverty, and my office has received many calls from people who are very much desperate to receive these cheques. The fact that in the land of plenty there are so many people that are desperate for \$400 speaks volumes about this government's failures to deal adequately with those issues.

We continue to have in Alberta a very significant percentage of our citizens that live in poverty notwithstanding all of the wealth that's being generated in this province and in particular being generated for the government's friends. More than 14 per cent of the children in this province live in poverty, Mr. Speaker. That's 100,000 children. In 2001 the census found that nearly 400,000 Albertans lived below the poverty line. Alberta has the highest per

capita food bank usage in Canada. The homelessness count in Calgary, according to the most recent data, is that 2,000 people in Calgary are living without homes.

I think that there are some other factors that need to be taken into account when we judge the need for this bill, and that is that the average income of women in Canada is only 62 per cent of men's income, so women are disproportionately in need of assistance. This gap between men's and women's earnings is the greatest in Alberta and the least in Prince Edward Island. In Alberta men's income averaged \$40,297 in 2000. In the same year women averaged only \$22,462 in income, or only 56 per cent of that of men. So a large number of the people calling my office waiting for these cheques, Mr. Speaker, are women that are trying to feed their children.

You know, we have such an enormous wealth, and we've been very critical of the government over the years for underbudgeting on resource revenues by low-balling the prices for natural gas and for crude oil. The result has been a number of surplus budgets that have occurred in almost every year for I think about \$20 billion over the past nine years or so in surplus. The government has dedicated a lot of this to fighting the debt and paying off the debt and prides itself on paying off Alberta's debt. The high price of oil and natural gas made that comparatively easy to do, but I don't want to underestimate the sacrifices that have been made by Albertans in accomplishing that.

To everyone's amazement, when the government reached the point where they had in fact paid off the debt, it became apparent that they had no plan for the surplus revenues that were coming forward, and in fact they still don't. I've heard the hon. Finance Minister talk about: yes, we have a plan; we just adopted it last week at a caucus meeting. Then a few weeks later they change the long-term plan in a substantial way again, and they're trying to find ways to spend the money because they haven't thought ahead, and they haven't planned ahead.

I think it's very important right now that we would have some sort of dialogue with Albertans because I think we're at a crossroads. Where do we want to go now that we're debt free and we have all of this money rolling in? But the government is not doing that, so they go into caucus meetings in different parts of the province, and they cook up ways to deal with the surplus. One of the ways that they cooked up was to give everyone a rebate cheque.

I've indicated already why I think many Albertans are desperate for this money. It's interesting because it's split very much. The polls show that Albertans are very much split on the advisability of this program. Higher income people think the money should be invested in programs and long-term planning, and lower income people, quite understandably, would like to see some sort of rebate program.

What could the government do instead, Mr. Speaker? Well, we put forward some proposals. If they scrapped health care premiums instead of using health care premiums as an incentive or to soften the blow of private insurance, which is what they're planning to do – they're going to say: we're going to scrap health care premiums, but by the way for all these things you're going to have to take out private health insurance. So they're going to use that as a little bit of honey on the bitter pill of private insurance, but if they scrap them

now, they would save \$528 per adult Albertan each year. I think that that would be a very good form of tax reform. They could deal with the question of school property taxes.

Now, it's interesting because I've heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs talk about how, when he talks to the municipalities, he wants to eliminate the provincial education portion of property taxes, and he gets great applause. Then when the Minister of Education speaks to the Alberta School Boards Association, he says something quite different, and he gets a round of applause. So we don't know where the government is going on that, but eliminating school property taxes would be a good way to go.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this \$400, as needed as it is by some Albertans, would be needed less if the government's policies in general were more favourable to low-income people. If they had public auto insurance, we might see substantially lower auto insurance rates. If we hadn't gone down the road of deregulation, we would see lower electricity rates. If we eliminated health care premiums, we would see families getting this kind of savings on an ongoing basis and not just a once-only basis. Ultimately, we need to see the surplus revenue that we're receiving, and we're not receiving nearly enough because of the low royalty rates that we have in this province. If we increase the royalty rates to a reasonable level to get the return on what is a declining capital resource of the people of this province, then that money could be invested to a green energy corporation that would position Alberta as the future in nonrenewable energy to lead the country, to maintain its position as the energy capital of Canada but to do it in a way that takes into account that conventional reserves of oil and gas are very, very limited.

That's the kind of leadership that we should be getting from the government. We should be seeing the government investing the declining oil and gas revenues so that all generations benefit as much as this one. They're not doing that, Mr. Speaker, because they don't have a vision. So they make up policies almost on the back of a napkin and issue these cheques.

I'm forced into the position of voting for the bill because I want my constituents to have the \$400, but I want so much more for my constituents than just \$400. I want low insurance rates for their car. For their home I want lower home heating bills, lower electricity rates. I want a government that cares, that puts in place actual social programs that help people get out of poverty. I want the government to deal fairly with people in long-term care or who are on AISH or on workers' compensation, none of which this government is doing. But they are giving \$400, Mr. Speaker, and I guess for that we have to be grateful.

I just want to indicate that that is why I am supporting the bill. I do believe that there's so much more that the government could be doing to help people's pocketbooks on an ongoing basis, which they're refusing to do. So, as I say, Mr. Speaker, this is crumbs from the table, and the fact is that the feast . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 8 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Wednesday, November 23, 2005 8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/11/23

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

**Bill 43
Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes
Amendment Act, 2005**

[Debate adjourned November 23: Mr. Mason speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wish to participate in the debate? Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think all of us would like to have a chat about this particular bill, better known as the prosperity bill. I think that we look at the fact that the government says, "Well, this is an extra surplus for all the hardship that we created, all the cutbacks, and we're going to give Albertans a reward." Their clever way is to say: "All right. How much money are we going to afford so that we can talk about some of the other things? Do we have a billion, \$1.2 billion, \$1.3 billion, \$1.4 billion? Therefore, we'll stick it out and offer people some money. We hope that we'll buy their votes." Usually they do it just before an election, but they moved ahead very quickly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt – and I want to be clear from the start – that we in the opposition are going to support this because many people can use the \$400. There's no doubt about that. [some applause] I'm glad I finally got some clapping. I'm sure it won't go the rest of the way.

It seems to me – and I know that my colleagues have talked about it – that there is a better way to be able to do it. It seems to me that when we talk about poverty and we talk about the problems that we're facing in this society, it seems to be such a mediocre way to sort of pass money back to the people.

Now, let's say, for instance, that the things you want to do beyond housing, social programs, and the other things – you want to put some money in the pockets of lower income and middle-income people, Mr. Speaker. Let's say that that's what we want to do. Yes, this will do it in the short run, \$400 a person, but in the long run you can't keep doing this every year. Maybe the government thinks they can do it every year, but I tell you: once you start doing these types of bonuses, people are going to expect it in the next year. Maybe the income won't be coming in to the same degree in a couple of years.

That's precisely what's happened with the trust fund in terms of giving money as they do in Alaska. They started off giving a fair amount of money, and now the income is going down, and people still expect that money to come in the dividends. That's the problem with these one-time, quick-fix types of money going back to the people. That's precisely what will happen. Next year what do you do? You're going to have to have \$400 or \$500. Is there going to be another prosperity bonus? How long does this go on? The more you do it, the more that people are going to expect it, Mr. Speaker.

The point that we're making is that I don't believe that everybody needed this \$400. If we wanted to direct it to the people that could most use it – and I know that my colleagues have talked about this – we could have gotten rid of medicare premiums, a very regressive tax, and that would have put money . . . [interjections] Well, you

want tax relief, and people are talking about tax relief. Let's make it on a more permanent basis that we can afford over the long run rather than this ad hoc sort of \$400 here and \$500 next year or whatever. Raise the exemption before people have to pay taxes. Yes, it costs money, but is it sustainable over the long haul? That's what we should be looking for if we want that sort of tax relief, something that would put money in the pockets of the lower income and middle-income people.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, in downtown Calgary an oil executive doesn't need the \$400. Not everybody in Alberta needs this money, but that's the problem with this sort of scattergun approach, where everybody gets \$400, instead of directing it to the people that need it through some permanent sort of tax relief if that's the way they want to go.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we could talk about the way the money could have been spent, over a billion dollars. People talked today in the Legislature about the homeless people. How are they going to get their money? I know the Bissell Centre is trying to make sure that they're registered. That becomes another problem in itself. If we really wanted to direct money, it should have gone into programs that actually help the poor to help themselves. Over the long haul that would do a lot more. As I said, if you want to put money in, do it in a more permanent way through raising the exemption before people pay taxes and, as I said, medicare premiums.

The other aspect, Mr. Speaker. If we really want to break the cycle of poverty in this province, in this country for that matter, if we really want to dig into it, it's a long-range sort of problem. I see that the Minister of Education is here. The only hope that we have and for the people in what we call the high-needs areas – I represent a number of them, and my colleagues do too – is that we have to do it through education.

I know the Education minister has said that he's going to tell us what's going to happen in terms of full-day kindergarten and junior kindergarten. That is absolutely crucial if we're going to give these kids a chance in life. I would much rather have seen that money put into programs like that and, if need be, the hot lunches that many other groups are doing. We can complement them or whatever. Many groups are doing good work. Those types of things would really deal with the problems that we're facing.

We have a growing underclass even in this rich province, Mr. Speaker. You can't ignore it. It's certainly true. It's true in the riding I represent. It's true in rural areas, as I travel through there. Not everybody is getting the Alberta advantage. Not everybody lives in downtown Calgary. That's the hard reality.

As I said, it's a mixed blessing. I would say that it's the only game in town, that the \$400 is going to go to everybody, so we're going to support it for that reason. But it's certainly not the way we would absolutely want to go in terms of being creative and getting money into the hands of the lower income and especially of needed programs, Mr. Speaker, needed programs that will begin to build and to stop the cycle of poverty, if I can put it that way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the questions that I would really like to ask – again, it's a budgeting thing. I mean, surely we should have known back when we passed the spring budget that we were going to have a fairly significant surplus. I don't remember any discussion at that time about the approach that the government is taking; you know, probably over \$4 billion, just snap like that, and then we're debating it here in three days. We've gone through that discussion.

I really want to know: what are we going to do in the future? Is this idea of the prosperity bonuses, \$400 or whatever the number is going to be, going to be a permanent feature? This is what I would ask the minister: what is the planning so that we can begin to understand where you're going in the budget in the spring instead of

having to deal with it now? If this is a permanent feature, I would argue, then, that it's a better way. It's more money than we're talking about in cutting medicare premiums and about the same as if we raised the exemption, you know, \$3,000 or \$4,000. It seems to me that if this is permanent, that's a better way to go. It's going to get money into the hands of the people that need it.

As I said, the people in downtown Calgary, MLAs, and all sorts of other people do not need this prosperity bonus. I guess the question that I would ask at some point along in the debate is for the Finance minister to tell us what the plans are for the future. I guess the future is our next budget in February, March, or whenever that may be. I think that's important as we decide where we're going. If this is a permanent feature, then I have some real problems with it. If it's only one time and they're looking at other tax relief, not cutting medicare premiums to pay for private insurance but cutting to actually help people put more money in their pockets, I'd be very interested in what the government is thinking in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments for the next five minutes if anyone wants to rise on that.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

8:10

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I personally am going to be voting against this motion. I'm voting against it because I believe it is ill-conceived. The 20 per cent of people who most need this money are not going to have their problems lessened to any great degree by a one-time inoculation of \$400, which does not do anything to prevent the poverty disease which is encompassing their lives.

This is not about sharing the wealth. It's about one individual trying to buy a legacy rather than earn it. It concerns me and I think it should concern members of the government caucus that they had a very brief opportunity during their retreat in northern Alberta to discuss the idea of a rebate. No vote was held. It was a singular napkin-type decision.

An Hon. Member: Were you there?

Mr. Chase: No. I've actually talked to people who were and who share my concerns. But the problem is that due to loyalty to the leader they will feel obliged to ignore the majority of their constituents' wishes, gather around the man and, unfortunately, ignore their constituents' wishes and vote for it. I'd be very interested if anybody had the wherewithal to admit whether the whip will be on when it comes to this vote. I would love to think that there are some individuals on the government side who will let their true feelings and those of their constituents, that they are supposedly elected to represent, be heard.

Rather than going on about my particular concerns, I want to address the concerns that my constituents have brought forward to me. I have received more e-mails on this particular topic than on any other issue that this government has brought forward, so I'll let the people be heard. These are the words of my constituents, and I will not read all of them. I will read a sampling so that I'm not repetitious.

In terms of giving out cash I would much rather see the money spent on infrastructure or services. Some things the government could consider are upgrades to public transit in cities, upgrades to bike pathways with the goal of convincing more commuters to use alternate methods to get to work, establishing a commuter rail

network utilizing the existing rail network between Calgary and outlying communities, i.e. Cochrane, Canmore, High River, or investment in health care. To me, giving \$400 to every Albertan seems to be a very short-term investment.

Another constituent writes:

Your government has cut from education, cut from medical care, cut social programmes over the years, and now we are in an enormously privileged position of sitting on lots of oil which is in high demand, and you propose to give each household four hundred dollars. There are hundreds of better ways to use this money. I for one will donate my amount to a charity or school of which there are many who would be pleased to have some support. But I blush to think our government is so incompetent and lazy that it sees this as the only solution to our wealth. We should have a health and education system which is the envy of the world. We should have no poor people, and this is the best you can do? It is a sad day.

Another resident writes:

Many residents, myself included, recently completed a government sponsored survey and ranked our top three government spending priorities. I personally did not include "a rebate to Albertans" as one of my top three choices. In fact, I do not remember rebates being in the overall top three for the rest of the respondents either (correct me if I'm wrong).

If Albertans did not want a rebate, who came up with this idea?

Rebates are not the answer. How is the money going to get to the people who need it the most? I was in downtown Calgary early on Saturday morning and saw at least 100 people sleeping on the street and in parks. How does the government plan on getting them a \$400 cheque? If you were to combine the rebate money and the money that is going to be wasted sorting out the logistics of issuing the cheques, the government could purchase or build a high-rise condominium building and provide each one of these people a place to live for the next year. Wouldn't that be more beneficial and productive?

In my opinion the majority of Albertans do not want a rebate issued directly to them. We all know that the money could be better spent in high priority areas.

Another constituent writes:

How vacuous of you to point out that the citizens of Alberta deserve something back after all the cut backs and services they have put up with! As if 2 or 3 hundred dollars would even touch the financial losses that those cut backs incurred (for example exorbitant extra school fees, increased health premiums etc etc).

Why not do something permanent in this Centennial year such as abolishing health premiums altogether? What a great lasting gift that would be. It is disgusting that a province with Alberta's wealth is still charging for Health Care premiums when the majority of other provinces in much less favourable fiscal circumstances don't charge and your government could easily afford to pick up the 825 million yearly tab. What a long term benefit that would be to young families and indirectly to grandparents who would see their families benefiting from this.

Another constituent gives an example of where money could be used in terms of providing organizations with support.

Dear Mr. Chase:

My handicapped son participates in a therapeutic horseback riding program through an organization called Opening Gaits. Opening Gaits is a non profit organization run entirely by volunteers and provides therapeutic horseback riding to approximately 30 handicapped children. As with most small organizations, Opening Gaits is in need of funding so the parents of these children do not have to bear the full burden of this program.

I was hoping that you could provide me with information on government funding and/or direct me to the appropriate government department.

For the 20 per cent of the population that are in the poverty area and for those who are on fixed incomes, this \$400 will cover a particular bill one time, and that's it. It's not something that you

could invest. These are examples of people who are not going to have their problems solved. I'm in a middle class and in some places would appear to be an upper middle-class constituency, and these are some of the stories that came across my desk with regard to poverty. I'm sure every member here has similar stories, and I would love you to share them.

My constituent who has a debilitating respiratory condition attempted to commit suicide while on assistance because of the obstacles that were placed in his way in trying to get Alberta Works assistance for his required accommodation. He was told that he didn't qualify for AISH even though he is not employable according to his physician, so he didn't apply. Individuals on Alberta Works that are waiting to get onto AISH are not provided with the same benefits that will be available to them under AISH. Four hundred dollars won't help this individual very long or go very far.

Another constituent who has a debilitating heart condition and has applied for AISH is receiving Alberta Works benefits while waiting for his application to be assessed. His physician has ordered oxygen for him because of his low blood-oxygen levels resulting from this cardiac condition, which is exacerbated by stress. Alberta Works has denied him coverage for the oxygen apparently because Alberta Works only pays for O₂ if it's for a respiratory condition. I'm not sure how many bottles of oxygen he could get for \$400.

Another constituent who has a lifelong chronic condition that requires he not be exposed to sunlight has also attempted suicide while on Alberta Works while waiting for approval for AISH. My constituency assistant was trying to get some transportation funds so that he could use a cab. The constituent's Alberta Works worker advised my assistant that the program included \$25 per month for travel in the basic allowance, but additional costs would be considered for medical appointments only with a doctor's note explaining how often the individual would see the doctor in a month before consideration could be given. Apparently if an individual is on Alberta Works benefits for medical reasons, is not able to work and can use public transit and can provide a doctor's note and bus passes for the medical appointment would exceed the monthly \$25, then \$70 would be available to purchase a bus pass. My constituent cannot use public transit due to his medical condition. However, my assistant was advised that he would have to provide the doctor's note, and then he would have to get approval for each and every taxi ride from his worker only for medical appointments prior to each appointment. There would be no consideration for extra transportation costs that did not involve a medical appointment regardless of the constituent's medical condition. I'm not sure how many taxi rides will get this individual to the help that he needs for \$400.

8:20

Another constituent had been on EI disability benefits but went on Alberta Works disability benefits after EI ran out. Under Alberta Works she and her family were eligible for extended health benefits. This constituent was anxious to retrain so that she could get back to work as soon as possible and was okayed by her physician to do a classroom training while at the same time she was not medically able . . .

An Hon. Member: Relevance.

Mr. Chase: I know. You'd like to avoid these. Everything's wonderful.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Chase: How many of you have ever worked at the Mustard Seed? [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. members. Order.

I would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 13(4)(b), which says, "When a member is speaking, no person shall . . . interrupt that member except to raise a point of order." So we will be adhering to these strictly tonight.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This constituent was anxious to retrain so that she could get back to work as soon as possible, and it was okayed by her physician to do classroom training while at the same time she was not medically able to return to her previous work. She was refused the training program and missed the enrolment date. She had to appeal the refusal and was finally accepted for training benefits but was placed on EI training benefits, apparently under a program that both provincial and federal governments work together on. The constituent began the training program and then found that her health benefits had been cut because she was no longer eligible for them under the EI training benefit. Admittedly, the allowance is higher under the EI benefit than under Alberta Works, but here you have an individual with medical . . .

Mr. Zwodzesky: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order Quoting Documents

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I would cite 23(d). I think the member is engaging in a fairly lengthy debate by quoting lengthily and unnecessarily from one or more documents. I appreciate that those are excellent stories for him to be narrating, but we are here debating a particular bill. I wonder if I could just ask the chair to rule on this because I thought we were debating the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. We'd be happy to hear the rest of that debate at another time, I'm sure, but right now I would ask under 23(d) that the member perhaps cease to quote unnecessarily and lengthily from other documents.

The Deputy Speaker: The chair has in the past allowed all members a little levity on that particular point, hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

I will ask the member to stick to the subject matter and proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. As the hon. members have noted, I have several examples. I'll provide them for *Hansard* in a tabling fashion.

Mr. MacDonald: Table them now.

Mr. Chase: Well, there's a thought. *Hansard* had requested it as well. I will do both.

We have a wonderful opportunity. We have the \$1.2 billion to \$1.4 billion worth of rebates. If we had put that money away like we have in terms of other endowment funds, with the heritage trust fund, we could have had that money grow on an annual basis. We could have provided the people most in need with yearly grants. We could have done tremendous work to eliminate the poverty that we've spoken of in terms of the breakfast programs for children. We could increase the level of AISH from \$950 – granted, it will be up

to the whopping sum of a thousand. There is so much good that this money could do on a lasting year-to-year basis.

We've seen examples of countries who have invested in their people: Norway, \$192 billion just in the late '90s in terms of the equivalent of our heritage fund. We've seen the Alaska fund. This idea has, sort of, glimpses or glimmers of the dividend that the Alaska government does on a yearly basis to its members, but that's a yearly basis. It's planned, and it uses the interest not the principal from the royalties that are achieved.

The only thing that prevents us from providing help on an ongoing basis to those who need it whether they be children, whether they be seniors is vision. We've got the money. Please, let's have the vision.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Dunford: We had a reference a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, about ideas. I'm sure that in the history of Alberta and throughout the whole history of mankind probably at various times it's been hard to identify where the actual idea came from. In this particular case of rebating money to the citizens of Alberta, I'm not sure who had the first idea. One of the things that we've noticed about our Premier over the years is that he recognizes a good idea when he sees or hears it. So for the public record I'm not sure whether it was the Premier's idea or it came from somewhere else, but in any event, as he started to talk about it, I think more and more of us came to realize that this in fact might not be a bad idea at all.

I would dare to say that one of the areas of evidence that I would put forward is that if we were to take a survey of all of the members of this Legislature, and if the question was asked, "Do you think, generally speaking, that individuals or families are in a better position to determine how their money should be spent rather than a government?" I think there would be an overwhelming majority that would indicate yes to that question. As a matter of fact, looking at the members of this Legislature, I'm not so sure that it wouldn't be unanimous.

The interesting thing, however, is that people when they get into this place – and we know that over the years more people have talked their way out of here than have talked their way into it, and I suspect that we might be getting an example of that tonight with the previous speaker. I'm not sure that they listen to their heart when they get up on their feet because if, in fact, the hon. member would have answered yes to that question, then what is all of this other rhetoric and the fact that he's edited all of his letters that he received in his constituency office about? I sincerely doubt that every letter that he received was in opposition to this.

Mr. R. Miller: Ninety per cent.

Mr. Dunford: Well, 90 per cent is fine. Ninety per cent is fine, but he didn't read any of the 10 per cent, did he?

So my point is that if an MLA, whether they be in Edmonton or they be in Calgary or in little old Lethbridge, starts receiving mail and everything is a hundred per cent on one side of the agenda, you need to get out on the street and get to work because then a significant number of your constituents are not bothering to deal with you. I think anyone here in this Assembly – if it happens to them, it can happen to any of us. If we find ourselves in that kind of a situation, then we know that we've got to get out to the coffee shops, we've got to get out to the meetings because there's a significant number of people that no longer think that we can represent them as their MLA.

8:30

But I want to get back to the fact that what separates MLAs from being the kind of persons that are here to represent their people and the other kind, that are here to represent their ego, is just what we're hearing. When an MLA stands in this House and starts to indicate how \$400 could be spent better than getting it into the hands of the people, then I think we're in danger of that. We're not going to pick on the Member for Calgary-Varsity tonight because he's just an example of what can happen in this place. I would ask each one of us, as we look at this bill, to ask ourselves if we would have answered yes to the question: do you think that, generally speaking, an individual or a family knows better how to spend their money than a government? I think the answer is yes. We should deal with that, then, in that kind of manner here in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? I'm kind of amazed that nobody would stand up and ask questions under 29(2)(a) when they prefer to interject when speakers are talking on this subject tonight. This is an opportune time for people to get up and make a comment on what the previous speaker said.

Mr. Chase: I just want to be sure that I understand where the member is coming from, whether he is referring to me as a generic MLA or whether he is suggesting that I hold my ego in higher esteem than I hold my constituents' wishes.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the minister wish to respond?

Mr. Dunford: Well, you provided me with the opportunity to make my speech, and now you're providing me with the opportunity to read into the record even more of that.

I would just want to say, Mr. Speaker, through you to the member that when any member – and so in that case maybe it's generic – stands in this House and talks about how the government could have spent the money better than an individual or a family, then I think we have transformed from a feeling of our constituents to a feeling of ego. That is my position, and I think that was the theme of my speech.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford under 29(2)(a).

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask the hon. Minister of Economic Development if he would commit to do the same as my hon. colleague for Calgary-Varsity; that is, table in this Assembly every letter that you've received in your office that was written to you in regard to the rebates.

Mr. Dunford: The answer is no. I wouldn't take up the time of the public record to do that. Of the letters that I've received, I would say that 90 per cent were opposed to the rebate.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Martin: I won't bother about egos and things like that. I think the question that the minister asked the MLAs is if they could better manage the money. I think that was the drift of it. The point I would make is that there are other ways to come at that. Would the minister not admit that this is a one-time bonus, that perhaps more sustained tax relief for the middle/lower income, like medicare premium exemptions, would be better for them over the long run?

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, we were discussing the unbudgeted surplus. When we first looked at it, we entered the tunnel first looking at: "Well, okay. We have an opportunity to do something on infrastructure." So we added more to the capital budget to the point where I would say, based on the current ability and the current capacity of contractors in this province, that we've probably maxed out. We could've looked like heroes to all of these people that have been writing to these MLAs and put another billion dollars in the infrastructure or the capital account. But you know what? We would have been playing with smoke and mirrors because we couldn't have spent the money anyway.

The next place that we looked was: "Okay. Let's look at the endowments that we have." Not only did we add to the endowments we currently have; we've actually created more endowments so that we have more savings. Then, what was left over? "Now what are you going to do with this money?" So we had all kinds of opportunities as to what to do with this money. Somebody said: "You know what? Why don't we just give it back to the people that know how to spend it best?"

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm utilizing your advice and addressing my questions to the minister through the chair as opposed to heckling during his comments.

My question would be this. As opposed to issuing \$400 rebates, which obviously are controversial – and the minister even admits that 90 per cent of the correspondence into his office is against the idea of rebates – I'm wondering if the minister would enlighten me as to how he and his government can justify rapping a billion dollars out of the heritage savings trust fund again this year and putting that money into general revenue when you're looking at a \$10 billion surplus?

Mr. Dunford: Well, our commitment to the heritage savings trust fund was that as soon as we had no debt, we would start to inflation-proof it. Everything that we've said in the last 12 years we've done, and that was another aspect of it.

I'd like to point out again to the hon. member, though, in terms of the 90 per cent of letters that were sent to me, that one of the nice things about age is that you get to express ideas that are based on experience, and you hope that they're wisdom. I would say to the hon. member that to be successful as an MLA, one has to follow and one has to lead and one has to know when the difference is.

The Deputy Speaker: The time has elapsed for 29(2)(a).

The chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner on the bill.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with pleasure to discuss Bill 43 here tonight. It's been an interesting discussion that we're getting into, and I guess that I would like to start off with the fact that's been brought up so many times, which is: what is the plan? They talk about a 20-year plan, and that's great, but if it isn't written down, it's only a wish. We've gotten into a situation here where I feel like what's happened is like a foreign tourist with foreign money who happens to jump on the airplane. Realizing we've got some money left over: quick, where do we spend it? This is the saddest case of money too hot to handle and burning a hole in my pocket that we've seen, in my personal view, to this point.

To go on and to talk a little bit more, the thing, I guess, that is disappointing to me – I agree, though, with the hon. minister. I do have faith in Albertans, and they do definitely know how to spend

the money better than we do. But that isn't what I think we're discussing here with Bill 43. I'm disappointed to see the \$10 million that it takes to disburse and, possibly even more, to basically bribe the people into saying that this is good. Most people that I've also received discussion from are not in favour of this. Why should we be spending money trying to make people excited about it?

Going back to what the hon. member said, though, about money being spent best by the people, that would be the first thing that I would like to see, that this government streamline and reduce the size of government. One of the easiest ways to do that and to benefit long term, that has been brought up by many members now and I think will continue to be brought up, is to eliminate health care premiums and the bureaucracy that it takes to collect and to chase down those Albertans that aren't paying it. It's a major problem. I've met many, many people that owe those health care premiums. I think that it would be a great area where we could eliminate all of that, and we could use those people working in that area for something that is more productive than trying to draw money out of the people that are already hurting.

The other thing that's been mentioned many times is that during times of profit like this, it isn't how much can we spend how quickly. When we don't have a plan, let's put it into savings. There's nothing worse than having a few extra billions of dollars and thinking, "What are we going to do with it," and having to spend it. The heritage trust fund was set up a long time ago. We had a savings account. We should be putting it in there. We don't need four, five, six, or seven new endowment funds. That's what the heritage trust fund was for. We've given out many, many things in the past, and it's worked very well. We should go back to one simple fund and have disbursements out of there rather than playing the politics of so many different funds and so many extra bureaucrats.

8:40

I agree with the hon. minister that it's best in the hands of the individual. What this was: there was a surplus, and much like when we file our federal income tax, at the end if we've overpaid, we would get that back. We have a huge revenue. This is the time to give back to those people who have been taxed, and a refund on our property tax would be an excellent way. I don't say to eliminate property tax. I say a refund because we've got a surplus, and this would go back to the taxpayers of Alberta. Many of them do feel that their taxes are onerous. Much to their dismay they listen all the time in this House that we have the lowest taxes in the country. That isn't good enough if we can do better. Let's lower them and benefit people on a yearly basis.

There are many other programs that we could and should be looking at. I get kind of amused by the fact that our Premier – was it yesterday or today? – announced a \$20 million scholarship for Canadians outside Alberta. He spoke before he left that he was going to distribute the money, and now he's gone out there.

Perhaps what he could do for Albertans is put up a \$20-million lottery where things like the Warner hockey school could put in their ticket for their millions they want. The Magrath golf course could put in their bid for theirs. Taber has a collapse in their water lines; they could put that in there. Perhaps for all of the communities around that are asking for projects that we realize we can't have, have a lottery fund so that there's that little streak of hope here in the province that: oh, maybe we can win our lottery fund from that endowment fund.

It just seems like there's just no plan, and it's very disappointing to lots of Albertans that we come up with something on the spur of the moment like that. Albertans can spend the money better, and we

need to be looking avidly at all programs where we can be reducing taxes. That would truly be a benefit in many areas.

The other one that I've missed speaking to tonight: I think that we need to lead this great country. We've talked about other areas where we've been leading in our thoughts. The \$8,500, whatever the basic tax exemption is of the federal Liberals: it's very, very upsetting to me that they'd sit there and say on one hand, "We're trying to help those that are impoverished or low income." I'm proud here in Alberta that we're at \$14,000 for our basic tax exemption. Let's shame those federal Liberals and raise it to \$20,000 and help those to help themselves. Then we can have something to talk about when we go down there and say: hey, what do you mean you want to help them when you're taxing them at \$9,000? We can and should be leading by example across this country, and I would hope that we'd be fiscally responsible and help in that area.

A few other areas that I referred to earlier because of agriculture. The agricultural industry is not doing well with the water, the flooding, the heat, the adverse weather – it's gone up and down – many problems, but the toughest thing right now is their input costs. We could and should reduce the taxes on those input costs. I've mentioned many times the incentives in the oil industry. Let's put that across to all businesses. Let's lower our business tax. Let's lower our flat tax and balancing that budget. I'd very much like to see a reduction in these things. We have the opportunity.

It should be first in our thoughts on all budgets: how can we help Albertans to help themselves? How can they enjoy the prosperity that we're doing? And that is by streamlining the size of government. It's by reducing the amount of taxes and service charges that we have. We can and we should do better.

I would hope that we would continue to debate these things in this House and that we'll move forward. Let's try and simplify. Let's go back to the heritage trust fund. Let's put our money in there, and then we can come up with programs from there to help like we once did, for example all of the rail cars and many other things that we used to see advertised across this country, and could be proud of, what the heritage trust fund was doing not just for Albertans but many Canadians.

I thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The chair recognizes Red Deer-North, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm in support of Bill 43. I've carefully considered whether this was a good idea or not, and I was finally convinced by one of my constituents who wrote me a letter. This constituent is a single parent with three school-aged children, and unlike the lower income Albertans that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has been talking about, who have access to some of our programs for low-income Albertans, she makes just a little bit too much money to be considered low income. But she said simply: thank you; I intend to catch up on my bills, to buy some new clothes for my kids, to take them to the Tyrrell museum for a day, and to fill the fridge with good and tasty snacks. I think she represents an area of Albertans that we sometimes forget about. I know that people in that group of Albertans are very appreciative of this \$400 resource rebate, and I just thought that I would put her letter on the record and her thanks to us for making that decision for her.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods on the bill.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of Bill 43 is to provide Albertans with a \$400 per-person resource rebate as a result of Alberta's prosperity. After consultation with many constituents and meetings regarding the surplus, my first concern with this bill is the undemocratic process that has been used in the decision-making. Constituents should have been involved through public debate and consultation so that their ideas and concerns could be considered.

Alberta needs a coherent investment strategy because we have the phenomenal opportunity presented with the combination of being debt free and high energy prices. We have a tremendous opportunity to invest wisely. We knew that this was coming. We should have had a plan. Alberta badly needs a long-term investment strategy, a strategy that would be locked in, not like the heritage trust fund, where we abandoned saving.

I believe the \$400 rebate is an example of poor public policy. It is a contentious issue and gives a poor impression even nationally with people thinking: well, we don't even know what to do with all our money.

A positive is that this rebate has become a catalyst for debate and discussion throughout the province about wise use of our surplus. I hear many areas of concern from my constituents, such as the government transferred the debt to everyone else in the province – the municipalities, infrastructure, and social services – and multiple problems were ignored. The minimum wage in Alberta is one of the lowest in the whole country. We have people working full-time who barely make it above the poverty line. Benefit levels like AISH are not sufficient, not near the minimum income based on the market basket. Downloading responsibilities without proper funding has put tremendous pressure on services such as ambulances. With the surplus decision-making it is a shame that too little thought continues to be given to targeted cuts such as eliminating health care premiums or reducing the government's share of property taxes taken for education.

We live in a very wealthy province, and we have a tremendous capacity to do what we want. The only constraints are in our thinking. Our surplus is larger than Saskatchewan's operating budget and about the same as the federal surplus, and we have the capacity to pay for education, seniors, and health from our tax base. Services should be paid through our core tax. If we believe they are important, we should be prepared to pay for them. Dollars in health care and education are investments.

The present government established credentials by saying no with cuts and being fiscally conservative. Now we need to rediscover what government should be in a period of affluence. There is a pressing need for a long-term strategy and for thinking beyond the surplus, thinking about the natural resource wealth, and thinking in the long term. We need a combination of spending and investing and a clearer idea of what the balance between the two should be. We have to look at the increasing gap between rich and poor. It is of significant concern that the gap will increase. We know that what we invest in people in early years has a great payoff. Quality education and social supports are good investments.

Rather than bragging that we are debt free, this province should be bragging that Alberta has no homeless and no children living in poverty. Good stewardship means wise use of resources for the good of the whole household. It means we must look broadly in our decision-making process.

Although I support the intent of the \$400 rebate, I question the decision-making process and the apparent lack of planning. We need a vision that will make Alberta even a better place to live.

8:50

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore on the bill.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is one of these instances where you're caught between a rock and a hard spot. You're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't, unfortunately.

I think that in the last four or five years leading up to the prosperity rebates that we're talking about tonight, Albertans were told to tighten their belts, turn down the heat, put on sweaters, suck it up for a bit because the prosperity will be well worth the wait for the hardship that we're enduring right now. Well, now we're here. We're debating this particular point.

The Alberta government has had four or five years to discuss what to do when that day does come, when the sun shines and the rebate is upon us. I think that most Albertans are a little bit shocked and/or horrified by the fact that the best idea that we could come up with after waiting four or five years is to dole out the money. I think it's an honourable idea because people expect that we've suffered for years and that we're entitled to have a little bit of relief, but on the other end they expect some leadership and some real, I guess, intent and thought put into how the money is to be spent. After all, a lot of people have had cutbacks, have had hardship, and it wasn't their fault. It was the fault of the government who created the debt.

I think there could be no fault laid if, in fact, what they were willing to do on a lot of occasions was put out a survey. Yes, it's tough to get a good proportion of those surveys back, but they can't be faulted if they have made the effort and they made the try. After all, they're willing to put out \$10 million to print it and mail it. This is on top of the \$1.2 billion as well as 60-plus thousand dollars or more for the information pamphlet telling you why it's such a good idea as well as probably countless other paraphernalia and government pieces to say why this is such a good idea.

People are somewhat suspicious if they're continually told the message: this is a great idea; sign up; take it. Myself, you know, if it sounds too good to be true, it must be too good to be true, and this is maybe one of those instances. People in my office who have either dropped in, through e-mail, door to door when I've done door-knocking, or just on the street have said: "You know what? It's money. I'll take it, but I wish they could have done something else with it. There are far better ways to spend this money in the province than dole it out." Quite frankly, they said: "You know what? I don't need the money. My neighbour doesn't need the money. We're living quite comfortably."

That doesn't reflect all people in the province, and I'll admit that there are a number of cases here where there are people who do have some hardships. Not everyone in my constituency is doing well. There are those that are quite hard up, that are having problems meeting the day-to-day bills, that are having problems meeting the utilities and the increased costs over the last couple of weeks. They could certainly benefit from the bill, but even the majority have said: I would like to have seen this go to more deserving individuals or individuals who need this more than myself.

We've already heard about a number of issues such as education, which is always chronically underfunded. We hear it on a day-to-day basis from the school boards. [interjection] You'll have your chance, or should I call section 24, Mr. Speaker? You've already warned all the members to have decorum, and maybe you should pick them and single them out for speaking against what you've already warned. Or can I just continue on then?

An Hon. Member: Are you challenging the chair?

Mr. Bonko: Not at all. I'm just reminding him of Standing Order 24, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has the floor.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you so very much, Mr. Speaker. I will continue.

We've heard about education, how money could be put there. We've had the Alberta School Boards Association in town, on top of the Public School Boards' Association, and they continually tell us, for the last 10 years and my time on the school board, that education is one of those things that is first and foremost, one of the top priorities of this government, yet they continually say that we're underfunded. Another top priority is health care, and they continually say that they're underfunded.

Now, I know that we do have unexpected windfalls, and we are putting some monies back in. That is great. The Minister of Economic Development said: "You know what? Let the people decide." But if we're letting them decide on this surplus, what about the next surplus and the surplus after that? Once you start something, it's hard to stop it. We started the rebates with regard to deregulation, giving people breaks with the amount of gas consumption and utilities, and now I think that we're on a slippery slope. Now that we've given something like this out, how can you say no when you continue to post surpluses year after year? So that's going to be something hard to be able to say, that you can't possibly do it once you've done it once.

There are other social programs out there. AISH received a modest increase. After years and years of asking for it, they've finally been given an increase. There are community groups. We also have groups of shelters, even drug programs and detox centres. The member across the way has already discussed that that would be a great way. He was very passionate about wanting to pass a bill on detoxing for children. This certainly would be another way to have money like that spent on it as well. But then again we're always going to have haves and have-nots.

What is the best way to spend the resources? Again, if we would've sent out a survey perhaps asking, getting maybe 10, 15 per cent back, then it's not the fault of the government. We did the job of asking the people. They didn't send it back. But those that did did have their voice. Like I said, from time to time we do receive. The Minister of Economic Development said that 90 per cent of the constituents in his area are opposed, and I would say that that is probably the number in my constituency that is opposed to the rebate as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering if my colleague from Edmonton-Decore might have any idea as to what percentage of the correspondence into his constituency office was for the rebate cheques and what percentage might have been against the rebate cheques.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

An Hon. Member: He can't read.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't have to read. Some of it was verbal. Thank you, member, for that.

Some of it was through e-mails; some of it was through letters. The majority, in fact all of them, were not in favour of the rebate. I can say that truthfully: none were in favour of the rebate.

An Hon. Member: Only the ones you received.

Mr. Bonko: Well that's exactly it: only the ones I received.

The Deputy Speaker: Through the chair.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. I think it's important for members to consider a very important fact before they go too far down this line of what percentage of people said this or that in the letters. When the Minister of Economic Development concluded his comments a few minutes ago and referred to 90 per cent, I specifically turned to him and asked: how many letters did you get in total? The total was just over 20. So let's keep that in perspective here when we talk about these large numbers like 90 per cent of this or 90 per cent of that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to respond to those comments?

Mr. Bonko: Again, I'm not sure if the Minister of Education was responsible to myself. But when I did put out a newsletter to the constituents of my constituency, I did in fact ask them: since you were not consulted with how to spend the rebate, how would you best direct that? I have been receiving. I directly asked my constituents so that I could better represent them.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, I can appreciate what the hon. member is talking about. I simply wanted to put into perspective what the 90 per cent comment was in terms of relevance to the statements made by the Minister of Economic Development because I can see where this is going. People are going to read into this: wow; 90 per cent of the people were opposed to it. Now, we're talking here about 18 families, and I'm sure those 18 are important, but when you make grandiose statements that seem to question what was said, I thought I would just try and put that in perspective and clear that up for all hon. members.

9:00

The Deputy Speaker: Just for clarification on Standing Order 29(2)(a), a member may make a comment or ask a question.

Anyone else on 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Yes. Hon. member . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Through the chair.

Mr. Chase: Sorry.

Speaker's Ruling Addressing Questions through the Chair

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, to everyone in the Assembly, if you look at the microphone on your desk, you'll see that it is positioned to the Speaker's side of your desk regardless of which side of the House you're on. That's intended so that you speak into the mike, and while doing so, you're speaking through the chair. You're also heard better through the microphone system. So I would ask everyone to address their comments through the chair.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that clarification. I appreciate it. I can no longer claim to be a novice; I'm a seasoned professional.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: My question to my fellow hon. member with regard to percentages and their importance: is the hon. member aware that just over 20 per cent of eligible voters put this government into power?

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I recognize the hon. Member for Stony Plain on the bill.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to speak to Bill 43 and talk about the opportunity that we have now to give back to Albertans, Albertans who contributed to eliminating our provincial debt. Contrary to some comments on this debate, I believe we have excellent programs in place to look after those in need, and this bill will give them an additional bonus. This bill is part of a well-thought-out strategy to manage this year's unbudgeted surplus. This is a bonus for all Albertans that will benefit all Albertans, and I support it wholeheartedly. I believe that the silent majority of my constituents do as well, and with the vocal part of my constituents it was pretty much an even split.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to guess that the hon. Member for Stony Plain is expecting this question. I'm wondering if he would be willing to share with this Assembly by tabling all of the correspondence into his office in reference to the rebate cheques. [interjections] Excuse me; I have the floor.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has the floor.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For some reason Wednesday nights seem to be like this, every Wednesday that I happen to be in this Assembly.

The second part of my question. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, earlier my colleague from Edmonton-Decore referenced 24(1), and I think you have several times tonight cautioned members in this Assembly to keep it down while somebody else is speaking. They don't seem to be responding to your request at all, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 24(1) isn't the relevant standing order, hon. member. It's 13(4)(b).

Mr. R. Miller: If I could finish the question that I was asking the hon. Member for Stony Plain, Mr. Speaker, the second part of the question is: would he be willing to share with this Assembly the percentage of correspondence into his office that is in favour of the rebate cheques and the percentage of correspondence into his office that is against the rebate cheques?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member: if I had received any written correspondence, I would be more than willing to share that. The only response I got was verbal, and as I indicated before, it was pretty much evenly split.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask a quick question to the Member for Stony Plain, who referenced that this bill is as well thought out as programs that are dealt with in other parts of the government. I just wonder. Through you to the Member for

Stony Plain: is this as well thought out as the response from the government to the oil spill by CN at Wabamun in his constituency?

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to respond?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, if I could respond. I don't believe the oil spill in Lake Wabamun has any relevance to Bill 43 or in regard to the unbudgeted surplus. In any event the planning of managing the surplus, in my humble opinion, is very well thought out and very well planned, and so was the initial response by our government to the oil spill out at Lake Wabamun.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if I'm really all that pleased to rise to speak to this bill because I think that what it is is another example of the seat-of-the-pants, almost bumbling type of decision-making we so often see from this government. You know, many of the people who will be getting this \$400 will be people like NHL players who file an income tax return for the year 2005 and are here for just a short time, people who are executives from Hong Kong and Houston who are here for a short time and will get that \$400, people who have some sort of a reason to file an income tax return here in Alberta. I hope it isn't Conrad Black that's going to be getting a \$400 rebate bonus from this program in Alberta.

You know, a lot of my constituents, Mr. Speaker, at first blush, when they first heard of it, when they first saw it, kind of liked the idea of getting \$400 because they're so used to, they're so accustomed to, they're so understanding of the fact that they feel that most often the monies go to the big interests in this province and that this money would not in fact go to those big interests and to those types of things. You know, I look at the supplementary spending, and again there was not a single penny of that extra, supplementary spending going into the Human Resources and Employment budget, which covers some of the old things that we used to call social services and some of the people who cannot work and some of the people who are poor in our province.

You know, in speaking to a lot of the people in my constituency, many of them began to think about this. I'm not saying that all of them don't like it. Some of them do and some of them will. Some of them are quite poor, and some of them quite need it. But they do look at the facts, and they do see that it is not all going to go to the right people and that it was very, very quickly put out. I hope that none goes to some of the scam artists and things that the Secreds saw when they did it back in the '50s. I mean, even in that particular instance the government had a similar program, and certain potted plants were able to get the payout from the government.

The ability of this government to deal out funds, to deal with funds, and to manage things like this is sometimes very much in question. I mean, of course, they did pay down a \$23 billion debt, Mr. Speaker, with \$63 billion in oil revenues from '93 on, but it's not good economics to be throwing this sort of money at this time, in this heated economy onto what I described yesterday night as a fire. It's like throwing gasoline onto a roaring fire. It just flares up real quick, disappears very much into the inflationary air, and is gone in a minute. Now, there are those who say: "Well, some will go back to the government through VLTs and through things like, you know, the revenues from casinos. Some will get to charities through that, and some will go through bingos and things like that." Yeah, well, there'll be that sort of stuff that'll go on.

One of the things that really bothered me about this, that really

bugged me about this whole program, why it really doesn't seem to go over very well with many Albertans is that it wasn't put out before Christmas. Why couldn't it have at least been done so that people could have bought some Christmas presents? You know, I mean, gosh, that just shows very basically and very clearly that it wasn't planned, that it wasn't something that was put into a clear program, and that it was something that is very much seat of the pants, spur of the moment, and something that just came up out of a quick decision that I don't think really is in the long-term or even the short-term interests of Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:10

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wish to rise under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning would care to share with this Assembly the percentage of correspondence into his office that might have been in favour of the rebates and that which might have been against the rebates, and also if he would be willing to table those correspondences in this Assembly.

Thank you.

Mr. Backs: I had a number of letters that were sent to me on this, Mr. Speaker. I'd have to check as to where it was at the last, but as far as I know, it was a hundred per cent against the \$400.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else? The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if all of the hon. members across the way who are so willing to ask for commitments of tabling people's personal correspondence have asked permission of those constituents to table that correspondence because, as far as I know, unless you do that, then you are really dealing with private information. You need permission to do that, and I'm wondering if they've all got permission for all of these multitudes of letters that they want to table.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Well, I wasn't sure, Mr. Speaker, if that was directed to us individually who have gotten up and spoken or if it was to anyone who cares to answer the question from the member. Since I'm standing, I have always asked permission when anyone else gives me correspondence just in case one day I may add that. [interjections] That's right. I carefully cover all the bases and all the places.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to get an opportunity to participate in the debate this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, hon. member. This is under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm afraid someone is ahead of you.

Mr. MacDonald: I apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: If there's no one else under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just quickly mention a couple of points in here. The previous debates have good thoughts, but to me they missed many points of the bill. The point was missed when we heard a lot members talking about how to spend the total unbudgeted surplus, or the windfall. The point of the bill that we should realize is about the \$400. I worked it out with the total estimate of the coming surplus and divided it by the population of Alberta, which is 3 million, so each Albertan would have about \$2,400. The government still keeps and invests \$2,000 of the surplus on behalf of each of us and rebates \$400 to each to meet the cost of living in Alberta due to the fuel costs and natural gas costs.

I personally also received only three e-mails from the frequent e-mailers to me. They expressed their dislike to the government and complained about not enough money in other areas, only adding that the \$400 rebate should not be done. So you can say that I received three e-mails and all of them objected to that, but when I walked in my neighbourhood, I talked to people in different areas. I went to talk to people at the drop-in centre. Everybody said: "Great, Wayne. Great." So those should be considered in the debate as well.

That is my point, that's all I have, and I support this bill wholeheartedly. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I'm just wondering if the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, when he visited the drop-in centre, passed out his cards with his address and indicated his willingness to help out those men and women in a sad plight with filling out their last year's income tax return so that they could qualify for the donation, the rebate.

Mr. Cao: Well, the question is really personal. I did not. The management of the centre has organized those things, so I rely on the volunteers and the management of the centre to do all of that work. Individually I do other things.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to make a brief comment on the answer that the Member for Calgary-Fort just provided. He has very clearly outlined for all Albertans one of the real problems with this rebate program, and that is that as he acknowledged, he is doing nothing to aid those people in getting the rebate cheque. However, he is relying completely on the agency to make sure that those people are aware of it.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for Standing Order 29(2)(a) has elapsed.

I'd recognize the next speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. R. Miller: Mr. Speaker, that was only about 30 seconds.

The Deputy Speaker: There is only five minutes allowed in total for Standing Order 29(2)(a), and that five minutes has elapsed.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again it's a pleasure to have this opportunity to participate in the great debate tonight on the rebate. Certainly, there are many different opinions. It depends on who you talk to. In the travels that I have had throughout the constituency, the vast majority of citizens are feeling that the money could have been much better spent.

Now, this has been from the start all about the legacy of a retiring Premier. It has nothing to do with all of a sudden this notion that we're going to share the wealth in the form of a resource rebate with the citizens who own the resource. It is quite unusual that we would have this sudden turn of events and a completely new direction in public policy by this government after what we have gone through in this province in the last dozen or so years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why would I say that? Well, it was only in June that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation was talking about borrowing money. There wasn't enough money in the treasury to start eliminating the massive infrastructure debt that has occurred in this province over the last decade. I'm surprised that we have this idea that we have to borrow money to build roads, bridges, schools, and fix up our province. If our province is going to grow and develop more economically, we've got to ensure that we've got sound infrastructure. I'm not saying that we don't need to invest in infrastructure, but what I'm saying is that it's ridiculous to be talking about borrowing billions of dollars in June, and all of a sudden now we're going to give back \$1.4 billion in the form of this rebate.

Now, one group that has not been discussed tonight is the many people in this province – and there are anywhere between 22,000 and 25,000 files – who are on SFI, or welfare, or as we call it these days, Alberta Works. This government had to be shamed during the last provincial election to increase modestly the rates for AISH recipients. I was glad to see that come about, a hundred and some-odd dollars, but I don't think that's enough in light of utility costs and other costs that just seem to go up and up and up. This group has received virtually no money, no change in their monthly take-home amount. I don't think that is right. I don't think that they should not be getting a permanent increase in their allowances, their benefits. And they're not.

9:20

Of course, this \$400 is going to seem like a lot of money whenever you're faced with high utility costs, whether it's for electricity or natural gas. Or maybe one of your children wants to try out for a special team at school, and you know you don't have the money to pay the fees, so the \$400 is going to come in real handy. The basic amount that we're providing as a province to those people is not enough. Perhaps many citizens would not be nearly as reluctant to support this legacy payment if they knew that this government was doing their very best to look after the interests of those who, unfortunately, cannot participate in this economic prosperity. We heard in question period earlier today questions about the needs of children. They should be addressed as well before we give this \$400 legacy payment.

Now, when we talk about money, it was only in the spring session when this government forced a school board to close community schools in this city to save close to \$300,000, yet we're going to spend in the blink of an eye \$1.4 billion. Oil executives told me that we should be building roads across the north from Fort McMurray over to the Peace district. That would be a wiser investment of this money than this one-time legacy payment.

Now, the hon. member talked about the drop-in centres. Certainly, we can't forget about the citizens of this province who frequent the drop-in centres. The \$400 will certainly be welcome, but we would be better, I think, making good investments in facilities to house these citizens, many of whom have no home of their own. Secure housing for those citizens I think is vital.

There are also people in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar who have reminded me that this legacy payment is just a diversionary tactic, Mr. Speaker. It's a diversionary tactic by this government to distract citizens from what is really going on in this province, and it's the scandals; the electricity deregulation, for instance. One of the reasons – and the hon. Member for Red Deer-North alluded to it – that the \$400 is going to be welcome is because of outstanding household bills. Many people are complaining about their electricity bills and their natural gas bills regardless of their income because they've gone up, up, and up because of the scandal, which is electricity deregulation. Now, I don't know what we're going to do about this, Mr. Speaker, because electricity is driving up the costs of everything in this province.

One of the most detailed articles – and I would certainly urge all hon. members of the Assembly to have a look at this – is in the *Western Standard*. The *Western Standard* is, in my view, a very good news magazine. It's welcome in the Alberta market. It asks a lot of the tough questions, and it reports on a lot of stories. We're talking about scandals here and how people will appreciate the \$400 because the electricity deregulation, which is a scandal, has forced them to take whatever money they can get. Now, in the June issue the *Western Standard* wrote about electricity deregulation and Enron and Enron's involvement in it, and I would encourage all hon. members to read that.

The fact that we're getting this \$400 in January also distracts attention away from this Assembly and one of the main topics that's been discussed here in this brief fall session, and that's the ASC, the Alberta Securities Commission. That, too, in itself is perceived in some circles as being a scandal.

Now, when we talk about the rebate – and here we are at 9:30 at night talking about the rebate, Mr. Speaker – no one in Alberta is really paying attention to the evening sessions, unfortunately, but they do pay attention to question period. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has been diligent in doing his duty as Leader of the Official Opposition to try to find out what's going on at the Alberta Securities Commission. Not only is he doing that, but the *Western Standard* is doing that as well. They have a news article – and the hon. member opposite was talking about tabling documents. Well, I'll table this one. It is an article from the December issue of the *Western Standard*, and it concerns the goings on at the Alberta Securities Commission. There are all these allegations.

Whenever we talk about this, no one is paying attention, really, because of this resource rebate. Everyone is talking about what they're going to do with their \$400. I go to a junior high and they tell me, Mr. Speaker, that they're going on a spending spree with their \$400. I tell them that their Progressive Conservative government is already on a big spending spree, a big one. The junior high children, whenever they get their \$400, are going to go on a spending spree too because they think that this is how things work out. We all know that not to be true because whenever governments go on a spending spree, there is always a consequence.

The consequence in this province has been a lack of infrastructure spending. Routine maintenance has been ignored, has been put off. Now we've got a minister down there that wants to borrow money. Meanwhile, while all this is going on, we have the scandals, the mismanagement of this government, whether it's with electricity deregulation or anything else. I would certainly, Mr. Speaker, table

this document. There was an issue about tabling documents before. Well, that is the latest article from the *Western Standard*, the December issue, that's on sale. People can read about it themselves. It talks about insider interference, stock prices. It talks about a two-tier regulatory regime in this province. It talks about Zi Corp and their relationship with Multi-Corp. All these are issues that are going on.

People, whenever they get their \$400 cheque, are still going to get a bill in the mail that's higher than it should be because of electricity deregulation. A scandal, if I ever saw one. It is really, really unfortunate that we don't pay more attention to the issues of electricity deregulation in this Assembly and the issues of the Alberta Securities Commission. I mean, these aren't trivial or vexatious complaints. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General put out a special report on the Alberta Securities Commission and the carrying-on of activities down there. Sometimes I think that we would have been better off if we had left at least part of that office in the city of Edmonton, really close to the regulatory body, which is this Legislative Assembly, and the hon. Minister of Finance.

I don't want to be charged with wandering away from the issue of the resource rebate, Mr. Speaker, but I must say in conclusion that I think we could have at some time in the future a permanent resource rebate. At this time in our fiscal model that we enjoy, we have to save a lot of these resource dollars. A lot has to be invested in the heritage savings trust fund. It has to be inflation-proofed.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was talking about some modest tax relief. The first thing I would like to see this government do is take 4 cents a litre off gasoline taxes. Perhaps we could have an increase in the fuel rebate for farmers as well. They would appreciate it. The farmers I talk to, and there are many, are very concerned, Mr. Speaker, about fuel costs, fertilizer costs, and electricity costs. Electricity is a big issue with farmers. I would remind the hon. Minister of Finance that my research indicates that it was 1992 when we last had a good look at the farm fuel allowance. The price of fuel has more than doubled since then, and that fuel allowance has remained the same. It would be my view that this government would be better served if it would consider increasing that amount of fuel allowance. Do that for farmers, and for other motorists reduce the gas tax.

Thank you.

9:30

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments on 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar if he might be willing to share with this Assembly the approximate percentage of correspondence he has had into his constituency office that is in favour of the rebates and that which might have been against the rebates, and if he'd be willing to table that correspondence in this Assembly. If he should happen to have any concerns about not having permission to table those letters, he could always lift a page from the government's protection of information department and black out most of the page, which is the way we receive most of that information when we ask for it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm like the hon. Member for Stony Plain. The comments that we have received have been all verbal. We have not received any e-mails. I received three letters from students from social science class, grade 10, at

W.P. Wagner. Two of them were opposed to the rebate; one was for it. I received those letters.

The Capilano Mall, Mr. Speaker. I could get an empty styrofoam cup there, and I could have written down what the people thought on that. I can tell you and I can tell all Members of the Legislative Assembly that the crowd at the coffee shop in Capilano Mall are not happy about this \$400 rebate. They think the Premier is trying to buy himself a legacy before he retires. That's their view of this.

Many of them are senior citizens, and they would much prefer – they would much prefer – to see our long-term care facilities strengthened through an investment so that more staff could be hired and they could get better wages so that they would stay in the facilities. They want the whole issue of long-term care resolved. They like the ideas that have been presented by the Member for Lethbridge-East. That's what they want to see the money spent on, and these are seniors that are at the Capilano Mall.

The junior high students, Mr. Speaker, I think are going to buy iPods. That's what they're going to do, and that's about it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I would just like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, based on his experience and the high results he's had in the last three elections, a question with regard to political ethics, which I'm afraid is becoming an oxymoron in this province. If it is your belief based on talking to your constituents, based upon e-mails that you've received, based on walk-ins into your office, that the majority of your constituents who have contacted you and who you have contacted are opposed to this rebate, do you not feel honour bound to vote your constituents' wishes and vote against this rebate if that's what they have told you?

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, those citizens have told me that the rebate, the \$400 rebate, is not at this time sound public policy. They remind me – it doesn't matter whether I'm at the Italian Centre or the Capilano Mall. The junior highs are a different story. I must say that the junior highs want the money and they want it now. They'll eat their lunch in a crowded corridor in a junior high. They have no problem with that. There's 30 some-odd kids in the class. They don't see that. They see a new iPod. But the majority of citizens are not in favour of this program at this time, and I could not go against their wishes. They have given me specific directions in regard to this legacy payment, and they just don't see the merit in it. I'm sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Fifteen seconds.

Mr. Backs: Pardon me?

The Deputy Speaker: Ten seconds remaining.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested in the things on this farm crisis, the price on purple fuel that was brought about, and I would like the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to speak on it.

The Deputy Speaker: On the bill the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When people sent back this I think it was called futures survey, it was quite clear that this rebate was not high on their agenda, yet the government spent \$65,000 to try to change that attitude, to try to change that concept of the fact that they were going to give out this \$400 rebate. At that point, I don't think it was the amount; it was just the fact that it was going to happen. I really feel that this has been a knee-jerk reaction. It's been poorly thought out. The first thing that came to my mind when I heard that this was coming out – I went: "Oh, my God, another election. I just got through one." However, there have been other ideas put forward on why this would be happening at this point in time.

One of the reasons that I think that it's very poorly thought out policy is because I compare it to what Norway and Alaska have done and the way they actually can sustain a rebate instead of just having a little tease every now and again. I really don't believe that it's been well thought out. Again, it's probably the what that is perhaps okay, but it's the how it's been done that I would really question.

The other thing is that there's been huge administration cost, \$10 million, to get this out to every person that has filed income tax. Mr. Speaker, \$10 million would instantly wipe out the neglect and the premature deaths that are happening in long-term care in this province. It would provide well-trained front-line workers now. Absolutely now.

Even those who can use these dollars in this one-time windfall have used the word "silly," which I haven't heard people use in a long time. They've said they thought it was silly. Even my gas jockey said that although he's already bought his iPod, he really felt that it was a silly way to spend money and that the cumulative dollars were more powerful. He used the words "cumulative power of the dollars," and I thought: "Wait a minute. This isn't my average gas jockey." So I asked, in fact, what grade he was in, and he was in grade 10. So these kids are really thinking. Despite the fact that he has bought his iPod and, actually, more computer games, deep down he knows that it is really a flawed way to spend these dollars.

As far as the NHL hockey player that's been mentioned, he's probably going to be thrilled. It will be the first 400 bucks he's got that he doesn't have to share with his agent. So he's probably going to be happy, but undoubtedly he certainly doesn't need it.

9:40

There are many struggling people out there, and I'm not just talking about the homeless; I'm talking about the working poor. The two parents who are working for \$3 an hour above the minimum wage. They have two children in grade 1 and grade 2. Both of these parents are shift workers. These dollars, they thought, could be used for something for the kids. Maybe they could go to different activities. The point is that because these parents are working shift work and these kids are in care, it's the time that's important to them, not the dollars. Now they've got the money, but they can't get them to the activities because of the way that they have to spend their time either babysitting or else hiring care for their children. So they said that they were going to use the \$1,200 that their family was going to get and actually put it toward the utilities that they felt would give them a break, which in my mind is a very responsible thing to do. However, they also said: what am I going to do next year?

I'm not sure that there really is a great deal more that could be said on this. I just really believe that it's been poorly thought out in comparison to Norway and Alaska, as I've mentioned, and that that \$10 million would really, really help the people and the families that are coping with the neglect in long-term care.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, you mentioned examples of how the \$10 million could be spent in terms of relieving the situation in long-term care. You talked about the number of individuals who could be hired to be a part of that system. If you go beyond the \$10 million and you go all the way to the \$1.4 billion, have your constituents suggested ways that that money could be invested to help them out in the longer term than this one-shot, one-time funding?

Ms Pastoor: Most of the people that I had conversations with wanted to tell me how they were going to spend the money. They said it was silly, but they wanted to use it, and they were going to spend it. I may be a little bit different, but the majority of the people that I spoke to – now, granted, we have to take into mind that I was at the malls, and I was talking to different people – actually thought that this would help them now, but they said: God help me for later.

Really, the conversations didn't get into the depth of what they could do with it. Long-term care, of course, because people recognize me in my neighbourhood as, you know, sort of being, I suppose, almost obsessive about the fact that this is going on in this wealthy province, people would speak to me about. So I didn't come up with any other than education, other than putting more money into education and helping kids get educations quicker and not having to work their way through university.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just a brief comment on the correspondence issue again. I'm sure most members are dying to know the numbers in my office, and I'm happy to share them with this Assembly. As Finance critic I am in receipt of all of the letters, and they are in the hundreds if not thousands of letters that come into both the Alberta Liberal Party office and the Liberal caucus office in regard to the rebate cheques. I can assure all members that it is well in excess of 90 per cent that are against the idea of the rebates. Most interestingly, I think the majority of those letters are CCs of letters that were sent to the Premier of this province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I would like to do, I guess, is form a bit of an observation or comment. I get letters in my office too. There's always someone who has an issue with the government. I get people that have an issue and are against it. I get none from the people that like it. So if I get two letters, I'm sorry I don't conclude that all my people are a hundred per cent against what's going on.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else?

Mr. Backs: I'd like to address a question to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East regarding the amounts that are paid to temporary foreign workers as there are a lot of temporary foreign workers that work in southern Alberta for very, very short periods of time. Do you believe that those temporary foreign workers . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I believe the intent of 29(2)(a) is a question or a comment on what the previous speaker was

speaking about, not something totally irrelevant. So I would have to rule that out of order on relevance.

Anyone else on the bill?

The hon. Minister of Finance to close debate.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there have been some very interesting comments. I have checked the Blues of previous debate on this and found no questions but a great deal of comment, some of which I'd like to respond to. But in the interests of time and with the concurrence of the Assembly, I would suggest that I might answer those questions or comments in the committee stage of this bill.

I would move second reading of Bill 43.

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a second time]

Bill 46

Criminal Notoriety Act

[Adjourned debate November 16: Dr. Miller]

Mr. Chase: I just wanted to lend my support to this particular act, the Criminal Notoriety Act. The idea of anyone benefiting from the victimization of another individual and getting to celebrate that victimization through writing, through movie rights, through promotion is absolutely intolerable. Therefore, I stand in support of this government bill. I know that in Ontario the example is with Homolka and in B.C. the examples there. I'm glad that Alberta is taking this strong moral stance, and I support the government for taking this stance.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on the bill.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't go on long because I may have to get my letters back from Clifford Olson and Paul Bernardo.

Mr. Speaker, of course, we're going to support this bill. I mean, it's a no-brainer to me that no one should profit from serious crime, and that's what this bill is all about. The point that would make it difficult – and I don't know how this would work – is that I think the member said that there were a couple of provinces that have this type of legislation. It seems to me that until all provinces participate, you sort of have a patchwork solution. If a person was serious about it, they could go to another province. I don't know if B.C., for example, has one and still does. That's not the prerogative of this Legislature, but it seems to me that that would have to be done.

I also want to say – and the Solicitor General is here today – that this is good in the sense that it looks like we're being tough on crime. I'm not sure how many Olsons, Bernardos, and Homolkas have been around Alberta recently, and I don't know if there has been any need to deal with this issue. I think it's good to bring it forward.

9:50

I do think that there is a serious concern certainly in the city I represent and the constituents I represent with growing, serious crime whether people are going to make money from it or not. We've had a couple of recent examples of young people, sort of senseless crimes. We know that we have gang problems developing. It's not just a simple matter of hang 'em all high. The justice system is only part of it. I think that we are going to have to take a look at some initiatives, especially in the major cities and especially in the

city of Edmonton, about how we're dealing with serious crime whether they're going to make money from it or not.

I think that some thought has to be done in terms of gangs and these sorts of things. I'm not sure any of us have the total answer here. There are long-term problems. There's poverty and the rest of it. But in the short term surely there are some things that we can do. There are some initiatives that I know the Solicitor General has talked about, some communication and doing those sorts of things amongst police forces. I understand that there are some initiatives that Toronto and Winnipeg are looking at because they're facing similar problems. I don't know if there's anything we can learn there, but I would certainly be interested, before we get to profiting, that we begin to deal with some of the systemic causes of crime.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I think this bill can move along fairly quickly. It sounds from both sides that we certainly will be supporting it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I'm not going to ask about your letter from Clifford.

Mr. Speaker, it would appear on the surface, as my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has suggested, that this bill should be able to move along fairly quickly. The one situation that I'm not sure is addressed by the bill – and I'm hoping that we can have some clarification provided to us at some point – is the situation where a plea bargain has been entered into, where you have an accomplice or someone who has abetted a crime and agrees to testify against the other individual in exchange for being let off the hook as it were. Is that person who agrees to testify against a co-conspirator and who is thereby excluded from profiting from a crime that he or she might otherwise have been convicted of but in this case was able to relieve themselves from that penalty by testifying against a co-conspirator also included in this bill? As near as I can tell, that situation is not addressed in here, and it probably should be. Perhaps the minister may consider some amendments that would look after that situation.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will just call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 46 read a second time]

Bill 53

Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise tonight and move second reading of Bill 53 and provide some opening comments to the debate.

I bring this bill, this amendment, on behalf of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Basically, it's a very short bill. I seem to have all the short bills this session. This bill provides an amendment for a person operating an industrial facility on private land in the event that they have received a notice that their reclamation certificate has been rescinded and in the event that they require re-entry onto the private land to provide some sort of an environmental remedy to fix a problem and in the event that they cannot

obtain consent from the landowner to re-enter that property, this amendment simply allows the Surface Rights Board to issue an order granting right of entry to that company to provide for prompt environmental cleanup.

Mr. Speaker, this is a rare case. In most cases the oil company, as it were, the energy operator, would achieve an agreement with the landholder. But there is the odd case where there's a dispute, and the intention by way of this amendment is to provide for the Surface Rights Board to issue an order to provide for prompt environmental cleanup, and I think that's in all of our interests.

The rights of the landholder are still protected in that they have access to the Surface Rights Board. They can get compensation for disturbances or damage upon the re-entry and other costs as the Surface Rights Board might see appropriate. Certainly, the landholder at any time has opportunity to discuss that with the board.

So that is the sum total of the purpose of this amendment, Mr. Speaker. I think it's in our best interest to effect prompt and thorough environmental cleanup whenever issues arise, and that's all I have to say about it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The key concern in this process is the reason why a large number of operators need to re-enter the private land to conduct remediation efforts and that proper reclamation has not occurred. That's the reason for this bill to be put in. Remediation efforts are important, and we support the appropriate efforts to ensure that remediation work is complete and that the areas affected by the oil and gas are restored to their pre-existing condition or as close as possible. However, if all operators properly reclaimed their sites, then government and this legislation would not be necessary. So if we got it right the first time, this sort of legislation, even as short as it is, wouldn't be required.

If the government conducted more inspections and audits, there would also be less need for remediation projects. There is also the potential that this bill could reduce the standard of issuing reclamation certificates as a reclamation certificate is no longer to be the final operator because he has to continue to return to the site or the area. It's our expectation that issuing a reclamation certificate means that actually the site or the area has been restored, final. No system – we recognize that – is going to be perfect, and it addresses that reclamation or remediation is sometimes required. The rights of the landowner must be balanced with the need to access and reclaim disturbed areas. Consultation with the stakeholders suggests that there is support from the landowners for this amendment. However, there will be some concerns with increased access to private land, which was already mentioned as well.

The Alberta Surface Rights Federation does support the legislation as they believe that rural landowners will continue to be paid, rather than the current system where the payment ceases after the certificate is issued. The lease payments are likely to be a big concern for the rural landowners, and our response would be that this is a sensitive area. How will the Surface Rights Board handle the payments? It's unclear, but it should cover the cost and the use of the affected areas or the adverse affects. The amendment does not ensure operators will maintain all their duties, presumably including the duty to pay for the loss or use of the affected area.

While we're happy that the government is making it easier for the operators to perform the remediation work, this government is ignoring the real problem: too many reclamation certificates are being issued in error. Again, as I said, we need to get it right the first time, to contact the operators and make sure that the land is returned to its natural state first and foremost, and this isn't always

the case. We'd like to see more staff, more field officers to conduct more audits before issuing reclamation certificates. If this was complete, fewer operators would have to return to the rural properties and disturb the lives of the rural landowners. Industry creates these problems and should be responsible for paying for their costs.

Some questions that I have for the member. Why aren't these areas properly reclaimed before issuing reclamation certificates? What steps will be taken to protect the rights of the private landowners? As well, there are a large number of provincial and regional environmental and landowner advisory groups. What groups have you consulted with, and how are their concerns addressed within this bill? How will these changes affect lease payments to rural landowners?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone else wish to participate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

10:00

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I just have one question for the hon. Member for Peace River.

The Deputy Speaker: Are you rising under Standing Order 29(2)(a), or are you rising to speak on the bill?

Mr. Chase: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Please proceed.

Mr. Chase: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Member for Peace River.

An Hon. Member: He just asked if you were going to speak to the bill or ask a question.

Mr. Chase: I'm speaking to the bill in the form of a question. Sorry. I hope I have it right now.

My concern has to do with section 2(c), where the company doing the reclamation "does not have the consent of the owner or occupant of the surface of the land." I'm just wondering about the owner's rights. They obviously didn't have the mineral rights to their property.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, on second reading we're speaking to the principle of the bill. We get into the detail of the bill in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Chase: Okay. Thank you very much. I'll reserve my comments until that time.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else on the bill?
The hon. Member for Peace River to close.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a very brief closing. I'm pleased, I guess, of apparent support.

Just in response to a couple issues raised by the one member. He asked who was consulted. He himself obviously consulted a number of people who were in favour of it. He was worried about the landholders' rights and how much payment they would get. He indicated that the landholders were in favour of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, certainly we'll have more debate as we get into committee about some details of the bill. Overall we think it's a

very good move. We should all be interested in prompt environmental remediation.

I would just point out, Mr. Speaker, that it's not the case that we've just failed to inspect a site and, lo and behold, somebody decides that we should rescind a reclamation certificate. In many cases these lands are actually back in farming production, and later on there's a subsurface issue that arises, and the farming lands have to be disturbed again. So it's not a matter of just failing to inspect it. It's sound policy that we should go back in and clean environmental spills as fast as we can.

[Motion carried; Bill 53 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 15
Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 15.

I think that most people would probably agree that this bill has had a fair amount of scrutiny and that the bill we have now is significantly improved from the bill that originally was placed on the Order Paper back in the spring session. As you may recall, the bill made it through Committee of the Whole back in May, and we used the summer and the fall to take into account the various points of discussion and disagreement and so on to make this bill better. I think the members from the opposite side would probably agree that we took their considerations into account and that we've done a lot to address the overall spirit of the concerns that were raised with the earlier version of this bill.

The word "vesting" makes clear the intent of section 22 of the Workers' Compensation Act when taken as a whole. However, there has been a great deal of effort to reinforce the rights of the worker and to guarantee the checks and balances that WCB will need to follow with such a framework. I think it's a very reasonable compromise that the processes to be followed in terms of client consultation, selection of legal counsel, and the like will be put into regulation, where the government retains some checks and balances over the process.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we have significantly amended section 22(2) of the act. These changes will apply only to accidents that occur after proclamation of the bill. Therefore, we took the retroactivity out of it.

Similarly, the significance of the strong language of "solely" and "sole" being removed from the bill has also made a significant difference.

The consequences for non co-operation have been significantly relaxed and clarified. Checks and balances work both ways, Mr. Speaker, and there has to be some mechanism for the WCB to have recourse when a worker does not fulfill his obligations under the law. Co-operation with required litigation is standard practice in any sort of insurance law. Bill 15 balances the rights of workers and employers. However, it's now clear that any suspension of income replacement benefits is temporary and lasts only as long as the period of non co-operation. Again, medically-related services related to the WCB claims, such as scheduled surgery, therapy, or prescription medications, will not be the subject of suspension. The clause that suggested that an overpayment could be established that

the WCB would try to recover from an injured worker has been completely deleted.

Mr. Speaker, although it is a rare problem, we also introduced to Bill 15 an element that prohibits the employer of an injured worker from pressuring a worker not to sue.

This bill also gives workers on temporary partial disability benefits the same benefit of cost-of-living increases that workers on other WCB benefit streams get, which, of course, is long overdue and a worker-friendly move. Now they do have COLA clauses.

Finally, it gives members of the WCB board of directors the same immunity that members of virtually all government-mandated boards enjoy.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, various stakeholders and members of our government, including myself and members of the opposition parties, raised some reasonable concerns with this bill as it was originally drafted. The Minister of Human Resources and Employment and the sponsor of the bill and a great number of people went to work and made this bill better. These third-party actions will vest with WCB but with greater controls in place to ensure that injured workers are treated as a partner and not an adversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the effects of Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005. I have said before that the workers' compensation system is a very important pillar in the operation of any liberal, democratic, capitalist economy. With over 200,000 claims a year in Alberta alone our courts and our business system would bog down completely if there was not some type of workers' compensation system in place. There would be too many lawsuits. But there are trade-offs.

I'll touch a bit on the history to speak to the effects of Bill 15. The origins of workers' compensation go back to the medieval guilds and the need to care for workers' families when they were injured or became sick. Many further developments occurred in response to the needs of the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the 1800s. It was the arch-conservative Otto von Bismarck who, in response to workers' movements in the late 1880s, passed a law instituting a compulsory, state-run accident compensation system financed by both employers and workers.

Great Britain passed the first true Workmen's Compensation Act in 1897, which placed full responsibility on individual employers to compensate their own workers for their work-related injuries, but workers were permitted to sue their employers for damages rather than accept compensation under the 1897 act.

Throughout the industrial world at that time lawyers started to get interested in accidents. They worked on contingencies, basically a percentage of what they could collect on a final-award basis. Accident rates and legal heat were being brought to bear. Many companies were feeling bottom-line pressure from lawsuits.

10:10

The response in Canada was legislation proposed by Mr. Justice W.R. Meredith, a former Conservative opposition leader for the province of Ontario. His scheme embodied what he called an historical trade-off in which workers gave up their right to sue their employers, a right that was contingent on their ability to prove negligence, and in return they were guaranteed protection against income loss due to industrial injuries and diseases irrespective of fault. It was to be publicly administered, compulsory, and was to be a collective liability system with payments secured by an accident

fund. There were provisions to promote health and safety in the workplace. Coverage for medical costs, the addition of merit rating, and the introduction of vocational rehabilitation followed very rapidly. This act came into force in Ontario in 1915, and it was followed by similar legislation in other provinces, including Alberta.

Large government bureaucracies grew up, and these have become an important part of the operation of our economy in Alberta and the rest of Canada. Although the Alberta government has attempted to appear distant from the WCB, it remains a creature of provincial law. The WCB is a creation of this Legislature, and that is why we are in fact debating this enabling legislation today. The WCB is responsible to, even if it's not always held accountable to, the government of Alberta.

I've provided this bit of history, Mr. Speaker, in looking at Bill 15 and its effect in order to illustrate a couple of things. First, workers' compensation is paid for by a trade-off between workers and their employers. Workers are not allowed to sue, and the trade-off is that they will get compensation for lost income due to their injuries. I've been distressed by the statement I've heard so often from WCB employees, that the WCB system is paid for by employers. I would very much appreciate it if the WCB would begin to balance the story and begin to put forward that it's also very much paid for by employees. Workers forgo potentially huge compensation by the fact that they are forgoing their right to sue for damages in tort. The WCB is not a social program. It is not owned by employers. It in fact provides insurance to workers for a workplace injury.

By law under the act there is no way a worker can sue. Clearly, the WCB protects its prohibition from lawsuit and its fear of lawsuit. That certainly is the effect of section 2 of the act. Bill 15 protects WCB directors, more specifically, from lawsuit. This is a proper provision, for it would be difficult to find directors if the decisions that the board sometimes makes were open to lawsuit. Nonetheless, I've seen many Albertans being very disappointed by the actions and decisions of the board, and I would hope that in the future they exercise their immunity to lawsuit with the utmost of discretion and ultimately try to define their decisions in the interests of injured workers. I would also hope that they do not try to foist a bill such as Bill 15 on this Legislature again as they did in the spring, posing it as some sort of insignificant piece of housekeeping legislation.

Some sections are sweeping, in the power they give to the WCB over injured claimants' lives. Sections 22(3) and 22(5) give the WCB the power to arbitrarily take over an auto insurance action where a WCB claim is involved. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is not insignificant. Section 22(6) allows the board to throw natural justice to the wind by legislating that the WCB can choose to be in a clear and arbitrary conflict of interest. I'll repeat that. They can choose to be in a clear and arbitrary conflict of interest, according to this act.

With this "have your cake and eat it too" power the WCB can represent a worker, deny his claim, and still pursue legal action where there is alternative insurance involved and then claim that the worker is eligible for benefits that the board itself has denied. Incredible.

Although the board has improved with the reforms of the past few years, the culture of the heavy hand is clear and self-evident in 22(9) and 22(11)(c). These onerous, demanding, and complicated provisions in combination allow the WCB to completely control the payment outcome to any claimant. They allow the WCB to dictate the actions of claimants in a way that would have made any Stalinist state operation proud, and they allow for no recourse. I wish that the government would have accepted the amendments put forward by the Alberta Liberal Opposition yesterday to at least make this part of Bill 15 less onerous.

I'm also pleased that there are improvements from the original so-called insignificant legislation of the spring. I'm also pleased that there are other improvements that have been put forward and over into Bill 50, which had second reading last night: the medical panel provisions. I understand and thank the Member for Calgary-Egmont for putting some of those forward. The firefighters' provisions, which were helped along by the Member for Calgary-North Hill, I think were very welcome additions. Credit is due.

This bill, Bill 15, is still not good enough. It still seeks a heavy hand, a power that goes too far. It reflects a culture of control that the WCB has still not shaken off. It reflects an attitude that the WCB takes on itself that it's somehow supposed to act like a corporation, that its role is to act like a corporation that is designed to make a profit. I suppose that is clearly reflected by the \$850 million 2004 surplus outlined in its last report. There's been no movement on long-standing contentious claims. It still does not have the confidence of many applicants. You hear of problems from both employers and injured workers.

I continue to hear time and again that in the one business sense that I hope it would excel at, customer service, it continues to fail. I hear time and again of those with long-term claims, many of whom have worked as respected members of their trades or professions who are presented with demands to work as greeters at Wal-Mart or they will lose coverage. Those claims are then reduced when these injured workers will not surrender what they consider to be their right to dignity, to a job that fits their training and experience.

We must respect the dignity of injured workers, we must ensure that there is a WCB system that can be viewed with respect, and we must ensure that workers can be confident that they will be adequately compensated if they are injured at work. I cannot honestly advise workers that they can be fully confident of coverage under the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board. I can only honestly advise workers to get extra insurance.

Bill 15 does not make the system better. I urge the Assembly to defeat this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else wish to participate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been a long, arduous road for Bill 15, and make no doubt about it: it's not a perfect piece of legislation. The amendment that bothered me the most is that people can still be forced against their will to be involved in a third-party dispute and a lawsuit, and I think that that is wrong fundamentally. But that amendment was brought forward and lost.

What I want to say about the bill – and I recognize that in this Legislature, after being here a number of years, I can't remember that I ever had a bill passed. I think I have a perfect record, having been in opposition all the time. But there was one, and I gave the members credit that at least there was some attempt to improve this bill when it was draconian to begin with: the retroactivity, not being allowed to divest, going back to the Gutierrez case. At least, now they are talking in the bill about working together and choosing lawyers and that. That's certainly an improvement, Mr. Speaker. So I don't think it's nearly as draconian. It's not perfect by any stretch of the imagination.

What we're dealing with – and I think this is the problem. No matter what legislation we wrote down here, it's the culture that we're dealing with with the WCB. You get it in your constituency office time and time again that the injured workers do not feel that the WCB is there for them. Now, that's probably unfair in some cases, probably not in others. I think the Economic Development

minister, who used to be in this, said that they tried to deal with that culture of denial. Well, the fact is that they have not dealt with it. When I talk to advocates, the people that work with WCB, they say that that culture of denial now is worse than it was a few years ago. So there's no trust at all with the WCB, and that's what you're dealing with.

10:20

It's not the legislation, necessarily, that is going to solve all those problems. Probably I could have taken the old Bill 15, as draconian as it was, if the culture was there that it was set up for injured workers, that it's a partnership with business, as the Member for Edmonton-Manning said. If they believed that that was the case, probably we could have worked through it even with the bad legislation if the culture was different. This legislation, as I said, is better, but we had better start dealing with what is happening over in the WCB. For people to say that those problems that retired Judge Samuel Friedman in his review talked about, the culture of denial, have been solved – that's there. That's there. That's the perception that the workers have: when they go in there, they're dealing with the enemy. Not every injured worker can be wrong. Every time that something comes up in the news, Mr. Speaker, about the WCB, you'll get calls in your constituency office, and they can't all be wrong.

In some ways I'll give credit to the members opposite, especially Mr. Webber, because there was a culture of denial for him. Here this new member walks in and says, "I'm bringing in this housekeeping bill," and people in the opposition . . .

The Deputy Speaker: We don't mention names in the Assembly, hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Sorry. You're absolutely correct. I forgot which riding in Calgary he represents, the member from Calgary that sponsored the bill.

I give him credit. I'm sure he felt abused because here is a new member saying, "Here's a housekeeping bill," and all of a sudden the opposition is all over him. That just says something about the WCB to me, that they would even mislead the person here. He admits that, and that's why he came back and changed this legislation, to his credit. So that should tell us a lesson, a little bit about what's going at the WCB. If they tell somebody here that they're bringing in legislation, that it's a housekeeping bill, and it's a new member and he walks in and that's not the case, that it's a major bill, doesn't that tell you something about the WCB? It certainly does to me.

So I'm saying that with this bill I know that this is what we're going to get. It certainly is an improvement. I'll give some credit, as I say, to the members opposite for that, but I tell you that there are serious, serious problems at the WCB. The Appeals Commission: that's another matter that we'll have some discussions about.

Mr. Speaker, I would just conclude by saying that it's better than it was, but we're not dealing with the real problem yet. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Through the chair, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thanks. Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, do you think the only way to eliminate a lot of this culture or this climate of fear that is at the WCB is through a full, independent public inquiry into how that outfit works? Do you think that would help?

Mr. Martin: I do believe it would. It may be one way to do it. Another way, like with the Securities Commission: we may have to start right at the top and go right through and be a little more aggressive in who's working over there because there is a culture there. But if it takes an independent inquiry, it's worth doing because this is a very important organization, extremely important to workers but extremely important to business too. It can't be seen – and I think the Member for Edmonton-Manning mentioned it – to be a social program. It's a contract. It's a contract, and smart businesses must realize that this is an important contract to them because if you don't have workers' compensation, I can tell you that they're going to be facing some lawsuits that they wouldn't want to deal with. So it's up to them, to both people to make sure that the system works in fairness to everybody. If it takes a public inquiry to do it, I would certainly support it, but something has to be done.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments?

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 45
Maternal Tort Liability Act**

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to be able to participate in discussion tonight in the committee stage on Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act. Let me just say up front that despite the government's assurances so far, this is a very narrowly drafted and crafted bill and will not have serious implications. I wasn't here the other night during second reading, but certainly I did manage to listen to the debate via the Internet at home, and I was quite interested to hear many of the comments on both sides of the issue.

Mr. Chairman, unfortunately, any time you're talking about a fetus in the womb, it raises serious moral issues and doubts and concerns in I think most members' minds, and certainly I'm no different in that. It's one of those areas, unfortunately, that is not black and white, very much like abortion rights, very much like same-sex rights, very much like any number of moral issues that we as legislators find ourselves dealing with. I'll be honest with you: despite the fact that I appreciate what this bill is trying to achieve, I have those concerns with Bill 45 as well.

Specific to section 3 in the bill, Mr. Chairman, it refers to "injuries suffered by the child on or after birth as a result of the mother's actions prior to the child's birth." I've said in this Assembly before – and I have no shame in saying it again – that I'm not a lawyer. I

don't have the resources that the government has to call on lawyers to decipher these things for us. I will say that when I read that sentence and it talks about injuries suffered on birth, I'm not sure that that would necessarily stand up in a court of law because if the accident that we're talking about actually took place several months prior to birth, I have a concern that there may be an opening there for a lawyer to argue that those injuries did not in fact take place on birth but, in fact, several months prior to birth and were pre-existing to the birth taking place. So right there already in my mind I think there's a flaw with the way that this bill is drafted.

10:30

Section 5(1), the limit of liability, refers to the fact that the mother's liability is "limited to the amount of insurance money payable under contracts of automobile insurance." Everybody will know, of course, that automobile insurance and issues surrounding automobile insurance have been a big concern in this province for several years now. In fact, Mr. Chairman, the Insurance Bureau of Canada is on record as saying that if this bill passes, many of those good Alberta drivers that the Minister of Finance is so fond of referring to will actually have an increase in their insurance costs as a result of this bill passing. I'm sure everybody will understand that I'm not here to defend the Insurance Bureau of Canada, but I am concerned about defending Alberta drivers, and if there is reason to believe that Alberta drivers are going to face yet further increases in their insurance costs because of this bill, then I think that that should be a concern for Alberta drivers, and I'm sure it is for many of them.

Again, I'm not a lawyer, but I do find it interesting that this bill, innocuous and narrowly crafted and to the point and all of these words that have been used to describe it, takes up approximately one and a half pages. Given the Pandora's box that I'm fearful and that other members on both sides of the House have expressed fear might well be opened by passing this legislation, I'm surprised and a little dismayed that there's only a page and a half of legislation protecting us from that box being opened.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, we have another bill before the House right now, Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, that is nearly nine pages. If there were to be a bill that would be innocuous and relatively irrelevant in terms of the big picture of the good work this Legislature does, I would think that that would be the bill, and it's nine pages. This one, which I'm very fearful may well open all sorts of other issues to debate both in the Legislature and, of course, in the courts, is only a page and a half. So I'm somewhat concerned about that.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'll end my comments. I would look forward to either the minister responsible or perhaps the mover of the bill responding to those concerns but particularly to my concern about clause 3 and that word "on" as it refers to the birth taking place.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the past speaker, the member, for his considered comments. As the member pointed out, we had considerable discussion about this bill in second reading, and I wholeheartedly agree with him that it's quite a serious issue. Of course, we're considering a bill before the Private Bills Committee as we speak that covers a similar topic area, so there's been much discussion around there. The member allows that he has not been available or not been present at all of the debate. The discussion that we've had so far has focused around many of the same issues that the member brought up.

First of all, the idea of limiting the compensation to the mother's insurance. The Supreme Court in the Dobson ruling was pretty clear that the mother in no way could be personally liable; that would be an infringement on her rights. So there's no legislative room to consider anything else here.

Another point of discussion that a colleague of the hon. member brought up is that the bill perhaps leaves some room for interpretation or invasion into other areas of maternal responsibility. Mr. Chairman, this bill isn't about maternal responsibility. It's about the responsibility of a person driving a car and their responsibility to abide by the laws and drive in a responsible manner according to the traffic laws of our province.

This hon. member brought up his fear of invasion, I guess, into fetal rights. He mentioned the issue of fetal rights. There are no fetal rights whatsoever contemplated in this bill, which is why the wording: at birth. The child has to be born. If and when the child is born, then a cause of action becomes available. There are no fetal rights contemplated here.

Mr. Chairman, this in my mind is a rare opportunity to move to protect the rights of the child without infringing upon the rights of the mother. These rights always existed. There was a time when children could sue their mothers for negligent driving of an automobile while the mother was pregnant. Upon being born, they could sue the mother for negligence. Those rights were extinguished by the Dobson decision of the Supreme Court in 1999.

The Dobson case was actually a car accident. The mother was pregnant and, I understand, negligent. The Dobsons actually won their case in the New Brunswick courts and won an appeal in the New Brunswick Court of Appeal. It was appealed to the Supreme Court, who extinguished those rights for many of the fears that the member has expressed, Mr. Chairman. The court refused to wade into this area because we're talking about tort law and the ability of tort law to ebb and flow, if you will, with precedent. They were adamant that a finding of liability in this area could possibly be interpreted or expanded into findings in other areas of maternal responsibility. They were absolutely adamant that that can't happen.

What they did was invite the Legislatures to invade this area and establish legislation strictly around the issue of car accidents and strictly limited to the level of insurance carried by the mother. This is what this bill does. It does nothing more than that. It is consistent with the Supreme Court ruling and the Supreme Court invitation for us to invade this area, Mr. Chairman.

The Supreme Court, in contemplating this area, spoke extensively of the existence of a law in the United Kingdom that covers the exact same topic area, the Congenital Disabilities Act. That act has been in place for 29 years, and the Supreme Court commented on how the crafting of that act made it impossible to expand the maternal responsibility in the case of a car accident into other tort situations. So they were complimentary of that law and also of the limitation to insurance coverage imposed by that law. They felt that that was a very reasonable balance between the rights of the mother and the rights of the child in that it did not infringe upon the rights of the mother. It did not establish any personal liability on the part of the mother and, therefore, did nothing to harm the mother/child relationship. The United Kingdom, incidentally, has mandatory insurance legislation, which was a very strong foundation for that law, as we do in Alberta and as we do in all provinces in Canada.

The Supreme Court, in overturning the action, was clear that this is a place where the Legislatures can venture, a place where there is room to establish firm legislation that cannot be expanded. That is the intent of this legislation. It's crafted in response to the Supreme Court ruling and in consideration of the Congenital Disabilities Act of the United Kingdom.

The member commented that it's short. Absolutely, it's short, Mr. Chairman. There's no room for anywhere else to go here. It's about the negligent operation of a motor vehicle causing an injury to a child that is subsequently born. It's not about fetal rights.

This is the area the Supreme Court gave us to invade, Mr. Chairman, and that's what we're trying to do with this legislation. Thank you.

10:40

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand what the member is saying, and I understand what the Supreme Court is saying, but lawyers being lawyers, times change and Supreme Court decisions change. I accept what he is saying about the narrow interpretation, and I do understand that it's been in Britain for a long time, but this, I think, has the potential to become a bigger political issue even though it's meant in a narrow way for a very good reason. I understand what the minister is saying.

You know, we talk about fetal rights. I know he says that it's after the child is born, and that's correct, but there would still be groups that will say: well, it happened, you know, before the child was born. We've talked to some lawyers, and there are varying opinions on this. I'm sure the hon. member is aware of that. I think there's a potential for a slippery slope there, maybe not immediately, but as I say, lawyers are divided on this issue. The Supreme Court is lawyers, and they change, and they will make different decisions. We know that. I know that this government in the past has not been sort of raving about the Supreme Court decisions. I think it's more convenient.

So I guess I'm wondering why we didn't look at other policy initiatives to be able to deal with cases like this. It seems like no-fault insurance would be a help, you know, extra help, some measures to help people that face those circumstances rather than going this route because it's rare. I think we would both admit that this is a rare situation. I know that the member is convinced that it's this very narrow interpretation, but I wonder if there's not going to be a lawyer somewhere down the line that's going to say: well, you know, the mother was drinking. Do we draw a parallel here? I know the member will say no, but there are going to be some lawyers that are going to attempt to do it. There's no doubt in my mind about this. I think there's a potential for a slippery slope. I guess I'm wondering if the other measures that I've talked about, if we couldn't have worked on those first.

The other thing. I think there's a potential to go to the Supreme Court even though they've ruled on it. I think some lawyer will say: well, is it fair under the Charter of Rights? Say one parent had \$200,000 liability, and another one had a million? I can just see some lawyer chomping at the bit there: my client is not being treated fairly because of the insurance. I think that that's another potential. I know that on the insurance there's nothing else you can do if you go this route, but I do think that that will be a challenge too, eventually, to the Charter. All I'm saying is that I guess I'm not sure if the risk here is worth it when we could have done some other things in there, and I'm not sure if down the way it will be quite as lawyer-proof as the member is talking about. I do think that there's a potential, as I said, for the slippery slope, and I wish we would have looked at other issues.

I know that the member is bringing it in in good faith, because he cares about what happened here. I just don't think it's necessarily the way to go. I think we're going to get into a lot of legal debates down the way and that certain political groups are going to use this, I believe, the anti-choice groups and the rest of them, saying: "Well,

this is one step in the right direction. Where can we go from here?" I know that the advice that the member has is that this is a very, very narrow interpretation. We will see maybe down the road five or 10 years, but I'm sure that we're going to see some legal challenges on it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much to the member for his very considered comments. This is one of those extremely rare occurrences in legislation. Normally, when you pass legislation that establishes, extinguishes, or changes rights, you would have to wait for a test case to filter its way through to the Supreme Court to find out, in fact, how it's going to turn out. In this case this legislation is crafted in response to a Supreme Court ruling. The Supreme Court actually laid out how it was that we should craft this legislation and what topic areas it should cover.

Mr. Chairman, the member's comment on maybe other programs. It's a rare occurrence. "Maybe the government should be responsible"; that comment came up as well. Nothing in this legislation extinguishes any other government program, infringes upon, or changes any assistance programs. It doesn't have any effect on the health act or anything else. It's not about that. So I'm not concerned about that.

I understand the trepidation, the fear. The member commented: how long will it be before somebody begins talking about, well, the mother's drinking? There is an area of maternal responsibility. I'll repeat what I said in my opening comment that this isn't about maternal responsibility; it's about maternal operation of a motor vehicle. The Supreme Court addressed that exact situation, which is why the bill is crafted the way it is.

In overturning the Dobson case, the Supreme Court said that if the court had allowed that, then that is exactly what would have happened, Mr. Chair. That decision, built on past precedent, would have expanded the law into the area of maternal responsibility, and who knows where it would have gone from there. The Supreme Court specifically cited that in overturning the Dobson case. What they said was that in the event that the Legislatures were to craft such legislation, that would be a hard and fast wall beyond which we could not go. A judicial finding in an area of court law merely adds precedent and moves the area of law a little bit. Their concern was that it expanded it into an area where they did not believe it could go because it could not infringe on the mother's rights.

What the Supreme Court said was that in areas outside of the operation of the motor vehicle, there is no way that you could define a standard of care for a mother towards her unborn child. You could think of many examples. Should she be allowed to stand on a ladder? If so, how high up should she be allowed to stand? Drinking and smoking, improper nutrition. There's no way that you could define a standard of care, and that's why they cut it off. That's why they said that we will not go into the area of maternal responsibility or maternal liability.

However, if the provinces were to craft legislation that allowed for this very narrow area – and that was the consideration of the Dobson case. It was a response to a car accident. If the provinces were to construct legislation that covered that very narrow area, they could move to protect the rights of the child or enhance the rights of the child without infringing upon the rights of the mother. For the hon. member's benefit I quoted I believe it was either paragraph 36 or 65 of the Dobson decision in second reading. They said it would be – and they were describing the U.K. legislation – impossible to argue by analogy that this could be expanded into other tort situations. Legislation would set a hard and fast wall.

As I said in the opening comment here, Mr. Chairman, it's an area that the Supreme Court, as a result of a decision, invited us to invade and described how to invade it. I don't think this is going to be open for interpretation. The existence of the Congenital Disabilities Act in Great Britain for 29 years has been extremely successful and has not caused an invasion into other areas of maternal responsibility. The court pointed that out as well.

One final comment. The member indicated: is this fair? You know, one child has \$200,000 coverage; one child has a million coverage. Is it fair, and is that an area to press this into a Supreme Court appeal? Mr. Chairman, is it fair that a child currently receives nothing when they're injured as the result of a negligent act solely because of who it was that acted negligently? That's not fair.

We do have mandatory insurance legislation. Yes, there are going to be different levels of insurance, and, yes, there are going to be different compensations paid to children. We're arguing that something is better than nothing. The Supreme Court said that it was going to be fair. The courts in Great Britain have found it to be fair. We believe this legislation will pass the test of time, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

10:50

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This has been a very interesting debate. I have listened to the last number of speakers here in committee, and I, too, have questions in regard to this legislation. We hear a great deal about how this has worked in the United Kingdom. There certainly are some significant differences between, in my view, what we are proposing here and what occurred 29 years ago in the United Kingdom. It is my understanding from what I have read on this that the law in the United Kingdom has not led to women's rights being changed or reduced in any way. I do have some reservations about this.

I had the pleasure of hearing retired Justice Peter Cory speak, and I certainly respect his opinion and the fact that he was on our Supreme Court of Canada when this issue was discussed. He states, Mr. Chairman, in that decision that "a carefully tailored solution could benefit both the injured child and his or her family, without unduly restricting the privacy and autonomy rights of . . . women. Now, that's from Justice Peter Cory. Again, the word in there is "could," and that could lead to any number of future legal wranglings. I would caution this Assembly in regard to this legislation because I'm not so sure that this in the future is not going to lead to an erosion of the privacy or autonomy rights of women.

Now, the hon. Member for Peace River certainly has worked very hard on this. I had a discussion about this bill. One of the most pleasant parts of this job is to get to exchange opinions on respective legislation from not only members of your own caucus but other caucuses as well, Mr. Chairman. We were discussing this, and perhaps we should look at the concept of providing compensation to the victims of these motor vehicle accidents in a different way. The hon. Member for Peace River is right when he stated just a few moments ago that this is an extremely rare occurrence.

I'm wondering if it wouldn't be possible or if this has been studied, the idea of allowing victims of motor vehicle accidents of this nature access to a risk management fund in this Legislative Assembly. I have in the past had a good look at our risk management fund.

Of course, when we think of the risk management fund, what immediately comes to mind is the access of the fund by a former member, Mr. Stockwell Day. I through access to information got

some of the documents, not all of them, in regard to his file. One of his lawyers at that time would have been a gentleman who I think practises in Calgary, a Mr. Gerald Chipeur. I learned a lot about the risk management fund from that access to information request. We went to great lengths to get that information. In fact, it was a justice in Calgary that finally ruled, and that information was made public. But the risk management fund covers a lot of different forms of insurance, not only insurance for members of this Assembly whenever they are sued in the course of their duties, but automobile insurance I believe for Executive Council members comes from the risk management fund. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning may be accessing that fund. The CLAC, the Christian Labour Association – I can't believe it, and I don't understand it, but apparently they've got some sort of legal action pending against the hon. member.

So those are some examples of the risk management fund. I'm just wondering if it wouldn't be better to take these extremely rare occurrences, as they have been described in the debate this evening, and contemplate using the risk management fund to protect those individuals that may be victims of accidents of this nature, where a woman who is pregnant is involved in an accident while operating a motor vehicle. I would appreciate in the course of the debate if the hon. member has any suggestions in regard to this. Or have any studies been done in regard to this as an alternative to this legislation as we see it?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for his comments and for pointing out that, in fact, the Congenital Disabilities Act in the United Kingdom, despite its existence for 29 years, has not caused any infringement or weakening upon the privacy and autonomy rights of women.

Three speakers that I can think of, Mr. Chairman – Edmonton-Decore, Edmonton-Gold Bar, and Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview – have expressed their concern that this is going to cause an invasion or an infringement upon the privacy and autonomy rights of women. Given that the Congenital Disabilities Act in its existence has proved to be a sound instrument, I don't think so. Given that the Supreme Court themselves said that, no, it wouldn't, I don't think so.

I agree that we should be deeply concerned about invasions into the privacy and autonomy rights of women, and I agree that we should be vigilant, and I agree that there may in fact be threats to the privacy and autonomy rights of women, but I submit that it's not because of this legislation. The Supreme Court agrees with that opinion. They suggested this. They invited this legislation. So I'm not concerned about that, Mr. Chairman. Again, this is sound public policy. Let's move to protect the rights of children in a very narrow occurrence where we have an opportunity to do so without infringing upon the rights of the mother.

One final comment in my remarks, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar referred to this as a rare occurrence, that maybe the government should consider liability here through the risk management fund, and asked if there were any studies about whether this could be done or how it would be done. No studies that I'm aware of.

We live in a regime of mandatory automobile insurance. Automobile drivers are required to carry third-party liability insurance. I do not understand why we wouldn't utilize that instrument. The Supreme Court said that it was a reasonable instrument to use, and that's what the Congenital Disabilities Act lays out in the United

Kingdom. Mothers are required to carry car insurance; anybody who operates a vehicle is. That instrument is available, and it's a reasonable and fair tool without infringing upon the rights of mothers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

11:00

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I want to state first that I very much appreciate the historical and legal precedents and the reasoning for this bill that the hon. Member for Peace River has pointed out. This bill makes me think of the Biblical phrase of the sins of the father being visited upon the child, in this case the sins of the mother.

I'm a father. I'm a grandfather. I've taught for 34 years. I feel very strongly about the rights of a child being protected, but I'm not sure that this is the way to go. I'm concerned about the repercussions that this bill could potentially have.

By suing the mother, who stands as the guardian that brings forward the suit? Could it not be the case where between the individual who brings forward the suit and the opposing legal professions, just simply the cost rises and rises and rises to the point where the portion that the child actually receives as a result of the suit is diminished by the amount that has been put out in terms of legal representation.

Another concern I have is: if this becomes less than a rare experience when insurance companies offer insurance to women of a child-bearing age, is there a possibility that the risk will be considered to such a point where women, depending on what their background is, may not be considered eligible for insurance or a level of insurance, and therefore if they're driving and have a child in the womb and that child is injured, will their coverage be denied because they were considered a high risk and therefore weren't able to achieve insurance in the first place, or were they given a reduced amount of insurance in terms of the paying out of a claim?

The whole legal profession is an area that is new to me. My concern is that in trying to protect the few pregnant women who have had a history of, say, epileptic seizure or have had a history of potential drug dependency, there is the possibility of causing hardship to the many if they will not receive the coverage. Will we start listing a whole lot of preconditions on women that would prohibit them from receiving the insurance because they're within those child-bearing years? I don't know. I'll look forward to the member's response.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for Calgary-Varsity for his considered comments. I'll just respond briefly, if I can, to a couple of them. He addressed the area of who is the guardian if the child is suing the mother and that what the child gets is going to be diminished because of legal costs. Anybody who sues somebody else for negligence and damages has to pay legal costs, and certainly their award is presumably reduced somewhat because of that. The child in this case would not be any different.

The Dobson case spoke a little bit about the issue because this would be an extremely rare case where in a legal sense the mother and child are in an adversarial position, but in a real sense their interests are aligned in this case. Although it seems like a suit with malice, in fact the interests of the mother and child are aligned here. It's important that the care of the child is addressed for both the child

and the mother, and the relationship between the mother and child is important. So the Supreme Court did look at that.

Mr. Chairman, the member asked about what risks the insurance companies are going to take. Will women, in fact, be covered by insurance? As a father – the member indicated he’s a father – he should know that had he had a car accident as a result of his negligence when his wife was with child, he could have been sued by his child upon birth. That has always existed. And any other member of the family or any other third party driver: there would be a cause of action there. So the addition of mothers to that list to be held responsible for their negligent operation of a motor vehicle is no different than anybody else.

The existence of the act in the U.K. has not caused any such problems. I would remind the member that the existence of a cause of action here requires the child to be born, but it also requires negligence on the part of the mother. It’s not just if she was driving and this accident occurred. It requires negligence on the part of the mother, which is why she carries liability insurance in the first place.

Final comment, Mr. Chairman. In his comments – I’m losing my place because my colleagues are bugging me over here. I may have to start over. Final comment. The member talked about: “Well, what other risks? Are we going to have a long list about whether mothers should be insured or not if they have epilepsy, if they have drug dependency?” Again, this is not about the standard of care that a mother owes her child in the general sense of motherhood. It’s about negligent operation of a motor vehicle. It has nothing to do with drug abuse, nutrition, alcohol abuse, or anything else. It’s about the negligent operation of a motor vehicle only.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of comments that I’d like to make. I have some of the same concerns that have been expressed on this side of the House. One of them is that I could see that all pregnant women, upon knowing that state, would run out and, if they could afford it, would have increased premiums so that the increase of the payment, should this ever occur, would be that much greater. However, those that are poorer would not be able to afford that. I guess my concern, and I’d like the Member for Peace River to address it, is: how does the health care system fit into and around what the insurance payment would be because often these damages are for life?

Then the other thing that would occur to me is that – and again this goes back to women’s rights – should a woman be in an accident, she could easily have an amniocentesis that, in fact, would give an indication that there was damage and then, of course, would have an abortion, at which point there would be father/mother rights that might come into play on how that would go.

The reason that I’m bringing up the health versus the insurance was because I remember years ago when I sat on the tribunal for the Canada pension. Because disability pensions fell under the Canada pension they often would come to our tribunal. What was happening was that the government was actually saying: before we’ll even look at you, I want you to go to your insurance companies first. Then they would pay out. So I just can see perhaps an unfair disconnect between those that could really afford to buy the premiums and those that were perhaps poorer and working at minimal jobs having the actual skills and ability to look after a child that had been hurt and had lifelong chronic disabilities.

Mr. Oberle: Yes. Briefly, Mr. Chairman, so my hon. colleagues don’t start to bug me. On the issue about whether the poor could

afford extra insurance, we have mandatory liability insurance in Alberta, we have had for a very long time, and it’s designed for this purpose. Everybody has to carry it.

11:10

With regard to the health care system, I can’t comment on that. This bill has nothing whatsoever to do with the delivery of health care or any other programs that we have. It’s about the negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

The final comment about whether the woman, having suffered such an accident, might go get amniocentesis, determine an injury, and subsequently get an abortion: well, I guess that’s a choice that the mother could make. That clearly has nothing whatsoever to do with this bill, which relates to when and if a child is born only. It has nothing to do with the bill, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a comment on some of the talk that I’ve already heard with regard to this particular piece. The member is clearly indicating that this is to do with motor vehicles and that everyone must carry a certain liability insurance. Yes, we realize that that is a law. We also realize that there are laws out there that prohibit people from speeding, but that doesn’t in fact ensure that no one does it. There are lots of people that drive without insurance. They just haven’t been caught yet. They may register their vehicle, put the insurance on, and because they can’t afford it, they drop it. If that person does get into an accident, what prevents them being covered and being able to sue because the person driving the vehicle who is pregnant no longer carries insurance? So is that particular piece being covered as well?

We talk about the fact that this is ironclad and that it doesn’t go into our greatest fears being realized. But I’ll say again that in this Legislature we have the power to conduct and assist and make and deliberate on proposed bills. We can also at times at our discretion revisit and amend these bills. So once we’ve allowed this particular piece to come through, there’s nothing to prevent this Legislature from, in fact, revisiting it a little later on in the future, when perhaps our greatest fears are realized: it morphs into something that we are in fact talking about, saying it was never going to happen.

Again, we can’t predict what’s going to happen in the future, but once you allow this bill to continue to go through the stages and be passed, there’s nothing to prevent it from being further deliberated and amended from realizing the future concerns that we’re talking about this evening then.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Two comments there. The first is: what would happen if the mother was driving without insurance? People do break the law and make such choices in life. It’s very clear in this legislation exactly what would happen: there would be no compensation payable. That would be a choice of the mother. That was also the choice of the Supreme Court in that the mother could not be held personally liable. So if she wasn’t carrying insurance, there would be no coverage.

The other issue is that we could at some point in the future amend this bill, again to invade the privacy and autonomy rights of the mother. We should always be vigilant about invading upon the rights of anyone. If at some point an amendment to this bill, or in the absence of this bill any other bill, was tabled in this Legislature that invaded upon the privacy and autonomy rights of women, I

wholeheartedly agree that we should be very careful about such things. This particular bill does not do so, Mr. Chairman. It just simply doesn't.

The Supreme Court invited us to do this. It wouldn't be an amendment to this bill that would invade on the rights; it probably would be some other bill. Yes, at that time we should probably have the debate, and yes at that time it would be a very serious consideration.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. A question about negligent mothers. It would seem that if they're driving without insurance, they're doubly negligent, yet I would wonder what kind of compensation or health benefits or state care would be available to a child whose mother has shown that double negligence.

I do appreciate the fact that the speaker has been very patient in trying to explain to me how pre-existing conditions might limit coverage, but if he could try once more. I understand the negligence while driving. But is it not possible that if a number of these cases came to the front and insurance companies were paying out large amounts of compensation, they would potentially look at restricting the amount of coverage women of child-bearing age might have in the way of pre-existing conditions? Might they not start picking and choosing under what circumstance they would offer insurance? That was my first intent.

Thank you.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chairman, I don't believe that the insurance companies would do that, and they haven't done that in the United Kingdom. The insurance companies offer liability insurance. As I said before, there has always been a cause of action on the part of the child against a negligent driver, be that a family member or a third-party driver.

This isn't talking about general injuries to the born child. It's talking about specific injuries caused as the result of a car accident which was the result of negligent driving. Now, one other speaker yesterday talked about: that's going to be hard to prove. In fact, there's a very large body of litigation around this because children have always had this cause of action against other drivers. How to determine that and where those injuries came from: there's a very large body of litigation and medical evidence around it. I don't think it's a consideration, and I don't think the insurance companies are going to react in any way differently than they have in the United Kingdom.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I said earlier that I'm not a lawyer. Despite that, often people ask me if I am, so I must give that impression at times. The more I think about this particular bill, perhaps I should have been a lawyer. I hope that the hon. Member for Peace River, who sponsored this bill, takes this debate in the spirit in which it's intended because certainly, as I suggested the first time I spoke, it's not that we don't appreciate what's trying to be accomplished here. But I do, again, have serious concerns about what doors may be opened by this.

Now, the Member for Peace River has taken great pains tonight to describe that this bill is intended to deal with the negligent use or operation of an automobile. My guess is going to be, based on all of the debate that I've heard, that what is being contemplated is an automobile accident. The problem that I'm seeing as I listen to the

debate and as I look at clause 4 is that I think all of us will understand that you can be found negligent or illegally responsible for use or operation of an automobile that's not in fact moving. In fact, the member who held my constituency several years ago was found guilty of a nonmoving offence of an automobile. As I'm thinking about this, it opens up all sorts of possibilities.

I know that the hon. member mentioned drinking alcohol, Mr. Chairman, or using drugs, but let's just say, as an example, that the mother were in an automobile and legally operating it. As we know, if the vehicle is running and she's behind the wheel, she's deemed to be operating that vehicle according to the law. If something were to happen to the child as a result of her negligent operation of that vehicle – i.e., doing drugs or drinking – while she is behind the wheel of that vehicle that's running, I don't know how this legislation would prevent that particular situation from being dealt with by the court. So I think that right there it opens up all sorts of issues.

Mr. Chairman, another example, and I'm just thinking out loud here, as it were. Perhaps the mother attempts suicide and runs a hose from the exhaust pipe into the car. She may or may not be successful. The child is born, and as a result of her negligent operation of a motor vehicle, the child has suffered injuries as a result of that negligent operation, and that child then would be eligible to seek sanction under this legislation.

11:20

Again, Mr. Chairman, it's not that I don't appreciate the intent of the bill, but despite the fact that the Member for Peace River is attempting to alleviate our concerns about the narrow scope of the bill, I do not believe that you can narrowly enough define the scope of this bill in a page and a half to address many of these ideas that are coming forward in my mind.

Now, he often cites the Dobson decision by the Supreme Court, and I will acknowledge that I'm not as familiar with that particular decision as I should be, but based on the comments that the member has made tonight, I don't believe that that decision addresses the concerns that I have raised here tonight in terms of a mother being legally, according to the law, in operation of a motor vehicle even though she may not be involved in a motor vehicle accident. Again, I think it opens up all of the issues that many members have mentioned tonight, and that is drinking, drugs, attempted suicide. I'm sure there are many other examples, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Just very quickly, Mr. Chairman. The bill is straightforward. It's what happens when there's a negligent operation of a motor vehicle. The mother is covered by insurance. The child has a cause of action against the mother to the limit in the amount of that insurance.

Many of the situations that the member described wouldn't apply to liability insurance, Mr. Chairman. This bill is crafted the way the Supreme Court invited us to craft it, and it's consistent with the legislation in the U.K., that's operated for 29 years.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I just want to say to the member that I most certainly do take this debate in the spirit in which it's offered, and I take no offence whatsoever, and I hope that he doesn't either. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. It seems that besides the Supreme Court a lot of the support driving this argument, this suggested legislation,

is from the U.K., and I would like to know: does the frequency of successful U.K. suits justify this legislation in Alberta, where we're holding up the United Kingdom as a model that we should potentially follow from a legal point? It's also been used as a model for the third way.

Secondly – and this is along the lines of the first question – do we have any percentages or financial figures from the U.K. that would suggest that the suit route is the way to go, that this is the best way to answer the problem?

Ms DeLong: Mr. Chairman, when this bill first came forward, I did not support it. I did not think that it was a good idea. As a woman, an independent woman, I did not like the whole idea of it. The thing which really opened my eyes was that until 1999, which was six years ago, this was the state of the world. Okay? The Dobson case actually turned things around, and all we're doing is fixing what the Dobson case did. We're not going off into new territory here. All we're doing is going back to 1999, when kids could sue their mom. All we're doing is going back to '99. This is no big deal.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I've asked a couple of questions, which I've asked for legitimate purposes. I'm trying to understand the support that the United Kingdom has demonstrated, that obviously is so key to this bill. Can the hon. member provide me with any kind of assurance that this is the way that the U.K. has gone and that these are the results of it and that it's been so terrifically successful over there, the majority of suits have been won, and that based upon that British experience this is the way we should be going in Alberta?

If the Supreme Court is providing instruction for the Legislatures to correct the problem that the Supreme Court may have made in their earlier decisions – we're always getting after the Supreme Court for making decisions that should be dealt with in the parliament, and then within the parliament we're saying: well, let's leave that decision to the Supreme Court. It's confusing.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chairman, I can't provide any litigation history for the United Kingdom or any financial analysis. The reason I mentioned the U.K. is because the Supreme Court did extensively as an example of how to carefully craft a law that will set some firm

bounds around this and protect the rights of the child without infringing upon the rights of the mother.

[The clauses of Bill 45 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: I would just move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 45.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another very invigorating night of debate. I would move that we stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:28 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, November 24, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/11/24

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We give thanks for our abundant blessings to our province and ourselves. We ask for guidance and the will to follow it. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to all members here in the Assembly some very special guests seated in your gallery. Visiting us from Ukraine is Roman Krutsyk, president of the Kyiv Memorial Association, and Mr. Peter Dackiw, vice-president of the national council of the League of Ukrainian Canadians. They are accompanied by Audrey McConnell from my office.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, visiting us from Ukraine, Mr. Krutsyk is a professional jurist, also a former member of the Ivano-Frankivsk city council, the Ivano-Frankivsk provincial council, and Ukraine's National Parliament. Since 1999 he has been head of the Kyiv chapter of the Ukrainian Memorial Society, working on a special project, a documentary exhibit called Not To Be Forgotten. This very special project reflects the communist-imposed famine in Ukraine during the 1930s during which millions of innocent lives were taken. A copy of that special document will be presented to you for all members to enjoy later this afternoon.

May I ask Mr. Krutsyk and Mr. Dackiw to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 24 students, teachers, parents, and bus drivers from the Thorhild school. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe that my group is in the gallery, but I would like to introduce them for the record as I don't believe I'll have the opportunity a little bit later. They are a group of 83 visitors who are currently touring our building from J.J. Nearing school in St. Albert. The teachers accompanying these 79 grade 6 students are Mrs. Sonia Reid, Mrs. Christine Sowinski, Ms Carmen Berard, who's a student teacher, and Mr. Curt McDougall with parents/helpers Mrs. Liane Jensen, Mr. Carman Mackie, Mrs. Corinne VanDeWalle, Mrs. Nancy Hoffman, Mr. Ambrose Micklich, and Mrs. Maureen Maione. They're all

enjoying the great hospitality of this building and the excellent tour guides that we have in the building, and we hope to see them in the gallery soon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to the Assembly three classes from Wye school. They're accompanied by Ms Carol O'Connell, Mrs. Allison Baker, Mr. Alan Dubyk, and teacher assistants Tia Bartlett and Susan Otway. They're in the public gallery. I would ask them to stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly one of our newest youth members in our PC constituency association for Dunvegan-Central Peace. Jessica Simard was involved in the last election and co-ordinated the activities in one of our three offices during this past election. She's very involved and willing to get involved in the community. She's presently active with the Falher Chamber of Commerce. She attended for the first time ever and certainly took an active role in the PC policy conference in Red Deer. Jessica is accompanied by Mat Stepan, the director of constituency finances and north field director. They're seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them both to stand up and receive the warm, traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one guest and one group of guests to introduce today. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Liesel Hack. Liesel is a first-year social work student who is assisting us in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Liesel was born and raised here in Edmonton and is interested in pursuing a career in international social work and the development of social policy. We're pleased to have her with us, and I'd now ask that she rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a group of long-term care senior advocates. This group is led by Lynda and Ron Jonson of Hinton and is called Seniors I Care. Many members of this group were instrumental in helping raise \$120,000 by collecting money through penny jars and other means in order to build a long-term care facility in Hinton. Seniors I Care are here today to urge the government to reinstate the 25 continuing care beds that have been redesignated as assisted living. I'd ask that as I call out their names, they rise and receive the warm tradition welcome of this Assembly: Lynda Jonson, Ron Jonson, Elaine Koch, Vern Koch, Theron Hindman, Judy Hindman, Rita St. Onge, and George Callihoo.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Ken and Audrey Johnston, who have travelled today from Leslieville near Rocky Mountain House to come here and watch the proceedings of the Assembly. They are here also today to add their voices for the betterment and improvement of long-term care facilities in this province. It was a delight for me in October to visit them at the

community meeting they organized in Alhambra, where they raised concerns around the quality of care of seniors in long-term care in this province. They're seated in the public gallery, I think, and I now request them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Ireen Slater. Ireen is a tireless advocate on seniors' issues. She's currently the acting president of Seniors United Now and the chair of the St. Albert chapter of SUN. She is seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that she rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am privileged today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a man who is involved in a very public and courageous struggle to ensure that no one will suffer neglect, as his mother did, in long-term care in this province. He wants the very best care for all. I would ask that Mr. Robert Warden, who is in the public gallery, rise and accept the traditional welcome of this House.

Thank you.

head:

Statement by the Speaker

Death of Canadian Soldier in Afghanistan

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's with great sadness that I advise all members in the House that there has been a report, now covering the country of Canada, that a Canadian soldier has been killed in Afghanistan, and four others are injured. Now, it appears to have been an accident, but we don't know that. I'm going to ask all hon. members to rise with me, and we're going to have a moment of silence for this member of our Canadian armed forces.

May he rest in peace eternal. Our prayers will go to the family of the deceased. Our prayers will also go for a quick recovery of the other four soldiers who have been injured as well.

Thank you very much.

head: 1:40

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Securities Commission needs to be completely independent from government. Our market's integrity depends on it. However, the ability for government MLAs to directly influence the makeup and enforcement process of the ASC threatens to destroy that independence. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. Given that government MLAs can nominate candidates to be ASC commissioners and even at the same time can be officers in companies trading under the ASC, will the minister admit that this puts government MLAs in a conflict of interest?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, all MLAs can nominate. Not all of their nominations are chosen, but all MLAs can nominate. Members of the public can nominate. Members of the business community can nominate. There is a search process as well

that these would all be added to. Usual practice is a panel that examines the qualifications and expertise of each person that's brought forward, and a member is chosen, perhaps, at times to fill a vacancy of someone who has left with a certain expertise.

Mr. Speaker, to suggest that government MLAs somehow are the only people available to nominate is completely false, and I would have expected the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to know that anyone can nominate to these positions.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a former ASC manager has publicly stated, "Sometimes you would get calls from the minister [of finance] inquiring about certain problems, issues, in which case there would be enforcement taken," can the minister deny that ministers of her government have at times called to pressure ASC enforcement investigators?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I can tell this member unequivocally that I have never called to influence any case. I cannot speak for people who have served in this position in the past, but I would suggest that if this hon. member, rather than casting doubt, raising allegations, an air of suspicion, has any – any – real fact, he should bring that forward. I find this line of questioning quite distasteful because day after day, week after week, including the spring session, it has been allegations, innuendo, a hint of doubt, a bit of suspicion, and no real – no real – information has come from that hon. member to my desk.

Dr. Taft: To this same minister: why should investors believe that the Tory appointments at the ASC don't simply turn a blind eye to their Tory friends?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again – again – I thought we had reached a level of lowness in these questions some point ago, but this member is in a House where we respect members. If he has concrete proof of anything that he is raising, he has a responsibility to provide it rather than cast aspersions on hon. members in this House. This is the way this hon. member has chosen to lead this discussion. The people in this province are not fooled. They do not understand what the hon. member's goal or intentions are. I can tell you, hon. member, that people do not respect what is happening here. They would like proof. They would like these allegations to be founded instead of an attempt to destroy a regulatory institution that is so important to the markets in this province.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems this government will go to great lengths to cover up the problems at the Alberta Securities Commission. The Minister of Finance dodges opposition questions, avoids the Auditor General's report, fails to disclose a chronology of events before today's question period, and now there are published reports that senior Tories even tried to stop a magazine from running a damning story on the ASC and its relationship with Multi-Corp. It's one cover-up after another. To the Minister of Finance: in order to protect the image of the Alberta Securities Commission, can the minister tell us which top Tories attempted to halt the printing of this month's *Western Standard*?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the dodging that is occurring in this Legislature is occurring by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who

has dodged every opportunity to bring factual information here of any substance. All he has done is put allegations in place, again today in this question an allegation that comes out of a newspaper column. Surely you can do better than that. I've read this. The allegations are weak. They're confusing. In places that document is contradictory. Everything that's reported in there has been reported before. They are the same unsubstantiated allegations. The claim is that several persons spoke to the reporter. None are identified, as is the practice of this hon. member: making allegations with nobody identified. You identify them, sir. The ball is in your court.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll give the opportunity to the Minister of Finance to set the record straight. Given that one of the ASC's top investigators admitted that Multi-Corp would have been pursued if it hadn't been for the directive of those above him, will the minister clear the air and categorically deny that ASC senior enforcement staff are pressured from time to time to drop their investigations?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, allegations again. Bring proof. I have said to this hon. member over and over again in this House that if you have any substantiation for any of these things that you're bringing forward, put it on the table. Give it to me. Read an article: somebody says something. That somebody has every avenue and opportunity to have that investigated, and this hon. member knows that.

You do this House and this question period a disservice by continuing a line of questions when you can't substantiate your allegations. You give hints of maybes. Well, you know what? On this side of the House we deal in fact. I have not dodged my responsibilities, and I have backed up my statements, and I will in this House at the appropriate time table the chronological order of fact. I did not hide it from anyone until that point. In fact, the one person who asked me for it has received it.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An opportunity for a yes/no factual answer. I'll repeat: given that a former ASC manager has stated, "Sometimes you would get calls from the minister [of finance] inquiring about certain problems, issues, in which case there would be enforcement taken" can the Minister of Finance deny that ministers of her government have at times called to pressure ASC enforcement investigators? Just say no.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I can speak for this minister and I have said no. I would suggest that if this person, who is not named but a former employee, has a concern, he has an avenue to bring it forward. I don't know that that's happened.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Death of Patient in Long-term Care

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September for-profit, long-term care resident Jean Warden died of dehydration, malnutrition, and an infection. This government bears some responsibility for the failure to take immediate action following the Auditor

General's May 2005 report. Four separate investigations have been launched through the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Capital Health, and two through the protection for persons in care office. Sadly, the results will come as no surprise to anyone. My question is to the minister of seniors. Given that Robert Warden, Jean Warden's son, is committed to an open and accountable process, will the minister guarantee that the results of these investigations will be made public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know that it would be inappropriate for me to comment in the Assembly on the personal health care needs of individuals and especially those that are related to the case that the member has brought forward.

Having said that, I can tell you that the Protection for Persons in Care Act, Mr. Speaker, does allow for investigations that are filed. Reports are taken, and investigators are appointed to the file. The report is given in its entirety to the complainant. The complainant looks at that report and will evaluate the report. If they have any change that they'd like to see to the report, they can give that back to the investigator. There is very much a two-way communication in that process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Would the minister launch a fatality inquiry to ensure a complete and full examination of all the facts, leading to key directives that may prevent a similar situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the question relates to a fatality inquiry, I would like to direct it to the Minister of Justice.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Fatality Inquiries Act is under my responsibility. The circumstances that give rise to an inquiry essentially are as follows. If there is an attending physician, that attending physician can raise the matter with the medical examiner and an inquiry into the cause of death would be done by the medical examiner. A family member can raise the matter with the medical examiner, and the medical examiner would look into the issue. If the medical examiner's office has cause for concern, he can then ask the Fatality Review Board to review the matter. The Fatality Review Board reviews certain deaths investigated by the medical examiner's office in order to determine whether or not a public fatality inquiry should be held. If one of those circumstances arises, Mr. Speaker, then the medical examiner's office becomes involved. If none of those circumstances arise, then he does not.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. I'd redirect my third question to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Given that families, residents, and staff across the province are fearful to launch complaints, will the minister establish an independent office to solve the problems with enforcement and accountability?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member for the opposition is fully aware, there are 45 recommendations in the long-term care task force report. The member has contributed a supplementary report to those recommendations. That does include the inspector general, whom the member is referring to. We will look at that in due course as we go through the recommendations.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Securities Commission Investigation

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier. I'd like to start by thanking the minister for providing me today the chronology that she promised, which is a letter from Mr. Bill Rice to her. I received that at 1:29 today. The chronology shows, as I expected, that the shares in question were purchased by the director of enforcement in the morning, and the investigation order was only signed in the afternoon. This is entirely predictable. There's no written record of an alleged conversation in which the director of enforcement was purported to have reported this breach to the executive director of the ASC, a conversation the executive director cannot recall. To the minister: is this account good enough for the minister, or will she do her job and ensure that the unsubstantiated claims made in this document are properly investigated? Don't give me the Auditor General because he can't do it.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, thank you, hon. member. It was 1:29, but that's when you asked.

Mr. Mason: I asked for it days ago.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, I didn't have it days ago.

The Speaker: Hon. member, would you direct your question to the chair.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is reading the sequence of events that are in here, and he's entirely accurate. It is documented in here that there was no documentation from either party on this issue. It does go on, though, to talk about the actions taken by the Alberta Securities Commission on the matter. The ASC, after careful consideration,

has determined that although there was a breach of ASC policy, there was no use of any confidential information, there was no interference with the conduct of the ASC file and there was no breach of ethical standards. The . . . breach by the Director . . . of the ASC's policy has been dealt with internally by the ASC.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add some more, but I think this line of questioning will continue, and I will wait.

Mr. Mason: Well, who's the Artful Dodger now, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, the letter to the minister goes on to say that the investigation into the insider allegation against this company "continued without the [Director of Enforcement's] active involvement, over the next few months, with the last action being taken on August 3, 2004." Given that, does the minister believe that the staff were adequately able to investigate this company when they knew that their boss had shares in it?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think the hon. member needs to understand how a securities commission works. I've indicated before in this House that you don't post a list. You don't

stick it up with Post-its or put a list up of companies that are being investigated. Investigations are handled confidentially and with a very narrow number of people.

There is no question nor have I denied nor does this letter dodge the fact that the person involved, the director of enforcement, did not document his disclosure of this. Indeed, there is no indication of documentation by the other person involved that this was received. What's important in here, Mr. Speaker, is that "the ASC has acknowledged to the Auditor General that greater discipline should forthwith be introduced" into this. I'm not going to read it all. I will table it.

The Speaker: Good.

The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, given that the minister has highlighted the complete lack of documentation in regard to this, it's no wonder that the matter was only brought to the attention of the ASC management through the Auditor General's review. Does she think that that's good enough for the ASC management?

Mrs. McClellan: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I'm not dodging anything. It's all here, and I'm tabling it.

Mr. Speaker, what is important to me and I believe sincerely to this hon. member is that processes are put in place that this can be prevented and/or detected if it does happen. It says right in the letter that the matter was brought to the attention of the ASC management through the Auditor General's review. He found, obviously, the documents in the file. That's why he reviewed them.

Mr. Speaker, the last paragraph – and I invite members to read this when I table it – is the important one. The last sentence is most important to me: "The Auditor General will be informed of all steps taken in this regard." That is important.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

2:00 Postsecondary Opportunities for Youth

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recently I met with members of the Youth Advisory Panel, a group of Alberta youth who provide advice to the government about initiatives for and issues of challenges to youth. I was concerned to hear that young Albertans who wish to pursue a career in the trades don't know where to turn for help and information. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. What is your ministry doing to ensure that Alberta's tradespeople of tomorrow are not lost to us because of being frustrated and discouraged by the lack of assistance?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, everyone recognizes the need for more tradespeople in Alberta, the need to increase the awareness of trades as a very appropriate career option for young Albertans for whom that's their passion. We do have a number of projects under way which are designed to provide information about the option and to support students who are interested. The youth apprenticeship program, for example, is a pilot program. Grades 7 through 12 can explore career options. More than 200 grade 7 students in five rural schools have participated in this project in 2004. We anticipate taking that pilot project further.

We've developed a strategy to increase an awareness among aboriginal students using promotional materials and presentations by aboriginal youth ambassadors. The promotional materials are being made available to schools and students from K to 9. Advanced Education has been a major contributor to the aboriginal apprenticeship project, with well over 200 registered aboriginal apprentices. Student ambassadors are going out to schools and taking the learning clicks program.

So there are a number of ways in which we're trying to make sure that students right from K to 9, through junior high, and into high school have access to the information, the pathways that they need to get into the trades if that's their passion.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Further to those comments and again to the Minister of Advanced Education: how are you ensuring that the students in rural Alberta have ease of affordable access to the trades training?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, an important question, Mr. Speaker. One of the areas that I would have liked to have touched on in the first one but, in trying to keep brief, didn't, so I'll expand on it here, is that there are areas that we do need to develop. I need to have a discussion with the Minister of Education as well so that we can ensure that our school facilities across the province either have or have access to appropriate facilities and appropriate equipment and teachers so that young students can have, first of all, in what we used to know as industrial arts, an opportunity to try certain trades and learn whether they have a passion or in vocational programs even start their trades while still in high school. There's some work that needs to be done in that area, particularly on the Advanced Education side, some work to be done on the teacher education side so we have vocational and industrial arts teachers available and also to make sure that we have access to the equipment.

The other part of that question, Mr. Speaker, is that we do have distance learning opportunities for rural Alberta. For example, I was talking to the president of NAIT last night, and he was participating in distance learning through the technology of the SuperNet, that is being provided across the province. There are mobile trailers that are going across the province. In Conklin: the first graduating class this year.

In a number of other ways we're making sure that trades training is available in rural Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental is again to the same minister. Could you please tell me if there are any scholarships that are specifically for rural, northern, aboriginal, and youth-in-need students for other kinds of postsecondary education in addition to the trades?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the Northern Alberta Development Council bursary, of course, \$3,000 is provided to about 125 students who are training in areas of high demand in northern Alberta. There's a return service part to the Northern Alberta Development Council bursaries. There are areas of high needs, like medicine, where there's additional support available.

The northern student supplement provides grants of between \$500 and \$1,500 to northern Alberta students needing financial assistance. We have the aboriginal health careers bursary. Children's Services has, as I understand it, the advancing futures bursary.

This is an area where we need to, not just for northern Alberta but for rural Alberta, add to the bursaries and scholarships and the financing opportunities for rural students because we know that the cost of getting to school is sometimes higher than the cost of going to school. A lot of talk about tuition costs, but for those of us who grew up in rural Alberta and had to go to Edmonton or Calgary to get an education, we know that the cost of getting there is way higher than the cost of tuition.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Private/Public Partnerships

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. P3 or not P3: that is the question. Asked by governments, their auditors, and electors throughout the world, the Alberta government claims that it can avoid the huge cost overruns, the inferior quality, and the sweet private/profit deals that come at public expense, which have caused other governments to abandon this faulty financial arrangement. My questions are all to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Can the minister provide this House with any specific completed P3 examples throughout the world that were built cheaper and faster without compromising either quality or safety?

The Speaker: Well, with due respect, this is the parliament of Alberta, so let's restrict it to Alberta.

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, if I was much better at my Shakespeare, I would go on, but unfortunately my Shakespeare has left me.

The answer to the hon. member is that I'd be more than happy to give him information on the Anthony Henday.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There aren't any successful P3 examples in Alberta.

My second question to the minister: when the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation states that a P3 project such as the Anthony Henday will cost taxpayers \$490 million, does that price tag refer only to the principal, or does it also include the interest that will be paid out over the 30-year contract life?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, it refers to the principal.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. When this government, awash in nonrenewable resource riches, has the money now to build projects through conventional, transparent, within the debated budget process financing, why would it add further to Albertans' infrastructure debt by borrowing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've answered in this Assembly numerous, numerous times, this deal is presently at \$23 million over 30 years. It's quite simple to multiply 23 times 30. Included in this is payback on the financing charges that are on the Anthony Henday.

Mr. Speaker, quite simply, if we were to put out \$493 million in one year, there would not be another road built in this province. There are roads right around this province that need to be built. We have taken this money, and we have gotten a good deal. We know exactly when this road is going to be built. We know exactly that 30 years from now this road is going to be returned to us in the same condition as when it was built. That risk assumption by the private sector, that assurance of the actual cost over the next 30 years, the assurance of the actual quality over 30 years is extremely, extremely beneficial to the citizens of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Traffic Safety

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Constituents have been asking questions about the new traffic laws. Now, they certainly believe that speed reduction when passing police and emergency vehicles at the roadside is good legislation. They have some questions about this. Since the emergency personnel and the police officers are busy with either medical or policing activities, I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation if the new law is difficult or impossible to enforce.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:10

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to say that I'm hoping that we never, ever have to enforce this law. I'm hoping that all Albertans slow down when they see emergency vehicles, when they see police, when they see ambulances. But in case there are people that do speed, obviously the emergency personnel, albeit police officers or ambulance attendants, have to first and foremost look after the situation that they are there for in the first place. However, there have been times where there are extra personnel, extra policemen there who are monitoring traffic, and it can be left up to them to do it. To use an example, this law has been in the province of Saskatchewan for a couple of years now, and since 2001 there have actually been 3,000 charges laid. So this law does work, but I really, really must emphasize that I sincerely hope that we never, ever have to enforce this law.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Constituents also have questions about traffic laws related to speeding in construction zones. To the same minister: who's responsible for posting the speed limit signs at those construction sites?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At each construction site we have the construction contractor as well as the construction engineer, and it is their responsibility to post the speed limit on these sites. One of the obvious questions that I think may well be coming is that we're currently looking at putting a sign that says "fines doubled in this particular area" so that we can be consistent with the law that was passed in this House back in the spring.

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, another concern is that sometimes reduced speed limit signs for construction zones are left up even when there's no activity, or some signs are removed and some others

are left standing. Is there any intention to have contractors ensure that the signing is appropriate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Yeah, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member raises a very, very important issue. At too many locations too many times around this province the speed limit signs for construction zones are actually left up when there is no active construction going on. That's for two reasons. First of all, if there is another reason why the speed limit must be lowered; for example, an uneven centre line, no lines painted on the road, things like that. There is presently a decrease in speed limit for that. I really must reiterate that the doubling of the fines only occurs when there's active construction taking place. So the reason for the sign in many cases is that there is some other obstacle, some other obstruction there, and they leave out the construction signs.

Currently I'm experimenting in my particular department with changing the word "construction" to only where there is active construction and actually calling the obstruction something else. We're currently taking a look at how that would work. It probably makes more sense to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Policing Services

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Police Act states that "the Government of Alberta is responsible for ensuring that [an] adequate and effective [level of] policing is maintained throughout Alberta." The reality is that many rural areas are not safe due to inadequate police resources. This was recently confirmed by a report on the RCMP from the Auditor General of Canada. My questions are to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. Given that it is the minister's responsibility to ensure that municipalities with RCMP services have the police resources to ensure safety, can the minister tell us why Alberta consistently ranks nearly last in Canada for the number of police officers per 100,000 population?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, this past year has been an outstanding year for policing in Alberta. The province of Alberta committed \$30 million to policing this past year; \$24 million of it went to municipal policing. Mr. Speaker, we had the largest single increase since 1982. Almost 200 officers were added to the strength for front-line policing in this province. The majority of those officers went to rural Alberta.

We also made a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to look at the serious issues of organized crime, the issues related to meth and crystal meth and crack cocaine and other illegal drugs in this province. We also made a commitment to fund as well positions in the integrated child exploitation unit in the various police services in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, and the RCMP.

We're, as well, preparing our budgets for next year. These are issues that we're looking at and developing as we speak. We're working with all our police agencies to look at areas that we have to continue to move forward on in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that this fine report from the Auditor General of Canada

indicates that there are gaps in the requalification of RCMP officers on the use of their weapons – they're supposed to take retraining every three years – can the minister tell us and assure us that the police in Alberta remain current and up to date in their mandatory training?

Mr. Cenaiko: Yes, they are, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the standard for our RCMP officers in this province is that they qualify with their handgun once per year. We want to continue that. We are in fact looking at other standards. We're working with the assistant commissioner regarding looking at new programs and provincial standards across the province. Our ministry is, in fact, at this very moment hiring four auditors to ensure that policing standards are of the highest in this province. No other province does audits like this. Again, we will be leading the nation regarding ensuring that policing standards are the highest in the country.

Dr. B. Miller: To the same minister: will the minister ask the provincial Auditor General to conduct an examination of policing in Alberta such as the federal Auditor General did with the RCMP to assure us that the government is meeting its responsibilities to our police and to all Albertans to guarantee their safety and security as well as our safety and security?

Mr. Cenaiko: Mr. Speaker, in fact, our ministry is doing that already. We are abiding by the report that came out regarding Alberta's role in Confederation. One of those issues and areas was that we look at the value-for-dollar study on the RCMP policing in this province. We are also going to add on to that the costs and provision of municipal policing in the province as well as First Nations policing. We want to develop a program for the future to provide us with the determinants that we will have to look at: what are our needs in this province, what are our needs throughout Alberta, and what needs do we have regarding policing in rural Alberta, in northern Alberta, in remote Alberta as well as in our major municipalities?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Animal Health Surveillance

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's agricultural sector plays a major role in our provincial economy. Between the \$1.8 billion that our primary producers exported in 2004 and the \$8.2 billion in farm cash receipts, our primary agriculture sector means a great deal to our provincial economy. However, we've seen the devastating effects on the agriculture industry that can come from biological causes such as BSE, and the best weapons we have for combating such biological entities are research and knowledge. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Will the minister please give the House an update on when the province's new level 3 lab will be completed and tell us the type of research that will be taking place there?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the media on animal diseases and zoonosis recently, it's a very good question. Construction on our level 3 lab is progressing very, very well. We believe that construction will be completed by the end of this December. We still have to get Canadian Food Inspection Agency approval of the laboratory and how we're going to be approaching

the tests there. We anticipate that that should be accomplished by late February, so we hope to have the lab up and operational shortly thereafter. I should note that we're doing this in partnership with the Alberta Research Council and with the University of Alberta. In addition to what the lab will be doing, which is the only provincially owned level 3 lab in the country, we will also work with these to provide them with some space to do some further research that they're interested in.

Mr. Johnson: My second question is to the same minister. How prepared is Alberta to address other animal health issues which could have an effect on Alberta's agricultural sector such as John's disease and others?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again a good question. We are very well positioned in Alberta to address these diseases. Certainly, the level 3 lab, that will be in operation, as I said, sometime after February of next year, is going to increase the capacity which we have in that area. We're working with the Alberta veterinary surveillance network in keeping a close eye on the health of our livestock in the province. We announced last year a new veterinary college, which will increase the capacity of veterinary training in the province as well as providing some more valuable research space.

2:20

On the specific question of John's disease, Mr. Speaker, we're currently in the process of working with our federal partners to develop a national control program for John's, a program that I'm quite pleased to say is patterned after the Alberta surveillance program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Innovation and Science. What research will be undertaken with regard to prion diseases through the Alberta ingenuity fund?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, following on the comments of the Minister of Agriculture it's important for us to be able to understand the interface between animal health and human health, particularly as it relates to misfolding proteins. It's toward that end that the Alberta prion research institute is being directed. This is a \$35 million program. It'll be a multiyear program. The members of this Assembly need to know that we put together an international panel which will be chaired by Alberta-born, rural-born Dr. Joe Martin, who's the dean of medicine at Harvard University, along with other international representatives to give us direction so that we can in fact add to the knowledge that the world already has in addressing this important issue. I'd also like to say that we're reviewing project applications now. We expect that some of these will be awarded early in 2006.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Protection of Personal Information

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans value their privacy and rely on this government to protect their personal information from unauthorized disclosure. A report by the B.C.

information and privacy commissioner dated October 2004 argues that the USA PATRIOT Act has created new threats to the privacy of Canadians. The Minister of Government Services indicated during the spring session that he would be collaborating with B.C.'s commissioner to assess this threat in this province. To the hon. Minister of Government Services: has the minister made any attempts to secure assurance from U.S. authorities that they will not utilize the provisions of the PATRIOT Act to access Albertans' information through extraterritorial contractors operating in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lund: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, that is a big concern of ours, that the PATRIOT Act could be used to gain access to information that government has on individuals. But it goes beyond that too. Under PIPA we also have concern expressed in there, which, of course, applies to the private sector, where, in fact, the private sector has a lot of information. Some of the information is housed in data banks in the U.S., or they may even be a company with people that are from the U.S.

So one of the things that we're doing is that we are going to be moving forward on this in conjunction with the B.C. Privacy Commissioner and looking at situations. If, for example, a U.S. court rules that a company must disclose to the intelligence agency the information – and that's the area that it usually applies to – we would pass legislation that would require that the company, if it's about Canadians, could not disclose it even under a court order. The way that we would enforce that would be with a very, very severe fine in Canada on the company if, in fact, they revealed that information to an agency in the United States.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would personally support that.

To the same minister: does this government perform regular audits of foreign-based contracted companies to ensure that they are abiding by Alberta's Personal Information Protection Act, PIPA, and our FOIP legislation?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, particularly in the private sector there is some information that's housed in the U.S. We are looking very closely at any information that government has to make sure that that's not flowing into the U.S. It's not quite as easy as it sounds because it takes a very, very thorough forensic audit in order to track this, but we are doing some of it. So far we're quite satisfied that government information is not flowing into the U.S.

Like I said earlier when we were talking about PIPA, it's so difficult to follow it, so we think that by penalizing it very heavily in Canada, we can maybe stop that information from going into the U.S. in the first place.

Mr. Elsalhy: To the same minister: can this government assure Albertans today that their personal information is not at risk of being disclosed, whether inadvertently or intentionally, by putting regulations in place in these contracts with these contractors, having a clause in that contract, that they should not?

Mr. Lund: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have done that. Where government information is housed, we are following it very closely. I can't

say one hundred per cent but very close to it that there won't be any leaks into the U.S.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Long-term Care

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The horror stories continue with respect to long-term care for our most vulnerable seniors. In May this government committed to action on long-term care within six months. This hasn't happened, and conditions have actually deteriorated for many vulnerable seniors. One of the major reasons things have deteriorated is that many facilities have been downgraded to assisted living, where there are no standards, fewer staff, and higher costs for seniors. My question is to the minister of seniors. How can the minister justify allowing a long-term care facility to change its designation overnight with the very same vulnerable seniors so that it has fewer staff, less care, and higher prices?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to answer this question today. We all know that long-term care has evolved dramatically over the past few years. The community is meeting that need. It has changed from just having lodges that previously, even 15 years ago, were available for people that were approximately the age 65. Yesterday when I was speaking to the association for seniors with housing, the average age is 86 in a lodge. That changes the care needs.

People no longer move just directly from a lodge into long-term care. There has to be a middle component. We know that. We've talked about it. It's been out in the community through that long-term care task force, and that is called supportive living. It's designated assisted living and assisted living, and it is working in the communities. In fact, it's the communities that have come forward with the plans and the fundraising and showed us the need in the community for our seniors.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm interested in the next two questions.

Mr. Martin: I'm absolutely amazed at what they're doing. It's the same people, the very same people, and they're changing the designation to where there are no standards. How can that be better for the people in those facilities?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, if this member had read that task force report, he would see that the standards that were in place in 1995 have been updated through the regional health authorities, through the care operators, through ASCHA, the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association. Those standards have been updated. They were taken out to the community through the long-term care task force, and they are now being worked upon with the Minister of Health and Wellness and myself and will be brought forward here very soon as to what are the current standards meeting the supportive living for seniors.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to ask the minister very simply: when an institution overnight changes its designation to where the Auditor General says that there are no standards, how can that be for the betterment of the people in that facility?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: we have over 330,000

seniors in the province of Alberta over the age of 65; 10 per cent of those seniors are over the age of 85. That is increasing by 40 per cent within the next 10 years. The change that comes about with that is that there are chronic health care needs, there is dementia, and there is Alzheimer's. Those needs are being addressed through designated assisted living and assisted living, where people are in a care setting, where they can bring their own furniture to their rooms. They can have essential cooking. It's just a far better level of care.

The accommodation standards: I do not want you to mislead this House. There are standards. Those accommodation standards are being reviewed with the Minister of Health and Wellness and I, and they are coming forward through the long-term care task force recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

2:30 Climate Change

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is on record as saying that we will address climate change with innovation and technology. Yesterday the Minister of Environment was asked about Alberta's participation at the Montreal conference on climate change, and the minister talked about technology solutions in general terms. My question is to the Minister of Innovation and Science. Are there actual, specific technology solutions that the government of Alberta is working on now?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I will be attending the Montreal conference for part of that conference as well. My interest lies in two areas. One area, of course, is to find out what the other countries are doing on the technology and innovation side as well as to reinforce to our federal government the fact that we see as part of the solution investment in research and technology because we think that that is the answer. Alberta is led very capably in our research strategy through the Alberta Energy Research Institute, which is very capably chaired by the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. We've established six key areas. I won't elaborate, but they're clean coal, CO₂ management, bitumen upgrading, the improved recovery of oil and gas, alternate and renewable energy, and water management.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also to the Minister of Innovation and Science. What part does industry play in energy research and technology development?

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, industry plays a very important role. Let me emphasize that directly the Alberta government invests \$30 million annually into energy research. We invest more than that again through incentives through various programs to encourage industry involvement in areas such as CO₂ management and CO₂ capture and storage and for use in upgrading facilities.

Mr. Speaker, specifically on some of the alternate energy, just to give you two examples, we have invested money through the innovation program into a 52-home subdivision in Okotoks on solar energy and in another project in Vegreville to do with biomass. So we are engaged in these areas. These are important, and we do see innovation and technology as the key.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'll call upon six hon. members in a few seconds from now to participate in Members' Statements, but might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of 40 promising young Albertans from the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. Today we are honoured to have the grade 10 class from the J.A. Williams school in Lac La Biche observe the proceedings along with their teachers and parent helpers. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise again to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly an outstanding young Albertan, Jeeshan Chowdhury. Jeeshan was instrumental in the development of the Youth Advisory Panel, a group of youth who advise government on issues that affect Alberta's youth. He has invested a great deal of time and effort in many initiatives related to children and youth. He was involved in the review of the Child Welfare Act, discussions on alcohol and drug use among youth, and the development of the advancing futures bursary program, just to name a few. Jeeshan also received a Great Kids award in 2000.

Currently he is studying medicine at the University of Alberta, where he is researching medical uses of nanotechnology. He's also this year's recipient of the Alberta Rhodes scholarship. The Rhodes scholarship is the oldest international fellowship. It provides scholarship for two years of study at the University of Oxford.

Mr. Speaker, he is accompanied by his proud parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chowdhury, who are to be commended for their lifetime of influence and support. If I could ask Jeeshan and his parents to please stand. Accompanying them is also Dione Nobrega, the senior manager of youth in transition, Children's Services. Please stand.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I see that the final member of our Ukraine famine project delegation has just arrived. He was unfortunately inadvertently delayed by some airplane-related matters. Nonetheless, I would ask us all to please welcome Mr. Yaroslav Szewczuk, president of the Edmonton branch of the League of Ukrainian Canadians. Would he please rise and would all the members rise once again so that we can thank you for being here.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it's my pleasure to rise to make an introduction to you and through you to members of this Assembly. I'd just like to introduce once again to the members the president of the Edmonton fire association, Ken Block, and the vice-president, Dale McLean, who are in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

head: Members' Statements

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, this Sunday there's going to be a national competition. We have rules in this House about a dress code. We have rules about exhibits. But I'm going to waive all of that for the momentary two minutes to allow the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to give his statement. He can doff his coat; he can put on his cap. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung

wants to take out his flag and wave it and if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs wants to take out his flag and wave it, go ahead. Two minutes, and then we're going forward.

Edmonton Eskimos

Mr. Backs: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Many football fans across Alberta were treated to two incredible football playoff games in the last two weeks. These games produced our western champions, and they are from Edmonton, the City of Champions. Edmonton is one of the best football cities in the world, again producing the best pro squad in Canada, and the team is our soon-to-be Grey Cup champions, the great 2005 Edmonton Eskimos.

With the one-two punch of Ricky Ray or Jason Maas as quarterback, with Troy Davis giving offensive punch along with the whole offence, the Eksks have pulled out sometimes nail-biting but exciting victories. Punter Sean Fleming and special teams have scored continually and held the team in the game. Many have called the rock-hard Edmonton defence the key to our playoff victories and know that they will be there to make the Green and Gold proud on Sunday.

In the hot seat and in only his first season as head coach for the Eskimos is Danny Maciocia. Go get 'em, Danny, and we wish you all well on Sunday.

With two former Premiers and our present Lieutenant Governor having played in the past for Grey Cup champion Edmonton Eskimo teams, I am sure that all Albertans will be cheering for the Green and Gold when they take the field at BC Place on Sunday. I sure will, and I look forward and I'm sure all Alberta looks forward to our Edmonton Eskimos bringing back the Grey Cup on Monday. What better way to cap off our Alberta centennial than with a Grey Cup parade down Jasper Avenue next week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Bryan Hall will not sleep well tonight after that presentation. The only thing missing was that hat with the two beer cans over it.

Hon. member, you should also know that there is a tradition in this House that when an hon. member shows up wearing an exhibit, it is incumbent upon that hon. member to make it available to all other hon. members in this Assembly. So it's a shirt and a hat, to be delivered promptly.

Okay. Anybody on that same theme? Any other speakers? We'll tie it all together. [Mr. Magnus rose] You're not on the list, hon. member. No, no. Sorry. You're not recognized.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

2:40

Food Bank Usage

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during debates in this Assembly the leader of the third party, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, said in his speech, "Alberta has the highest per capita food bank usage in Canada." I hold in my hand a document entitled *Time for Action: HungerCount 2005*, which is published by the Canadian Association of Food Banks and carries the subtitle *Canada's Only Annual Survey of Food Banks & Emergency Food Programs*. I will table copies of this document at the appropriate time.

Mr. Speaker, this document reports that on a per capita basis Alberta, in fact, has the lowest rate of food bank usage in Canada. Furthermore, the statistics show a decline in food bank usage in Alberta from the previous year of 16.6 per cent, which is the largest decline of any jurisdiction in Canada. I do not bring this information forward to make light of the very serious issue of poverty, nor do I

intend in any way to suggest that this fundamental problem has been solved. I bring this information forward because of my respect for this House and the important debates that occur here. I most respectfully suggest that in the interests of open and thorough debate, it would be most useful if we could all operate from a basis of fact.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Centennial World Cup

Mrs. Tarchuk: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a century of sport memories that have left a mark in our history books and in our hearts. In mid-December another chapter will be written in Canmore as our province hosts 200 of the world's best cross-country skiers at the upcoming Alberta Centennial World Cup. These races are another centennial event in a long list that has captured our imaginations and celebrated who we are as proud Albertans. For the first time in 10 years Canadian athletes including Albertans Beckie Scott and Sara Renner will have the home turf advantage as they compete in front of fans waving the maple leaf.

The races are taking place at the renewed Canmore Nordic Centre. This 1988 Olympic legacy is already the home of Canada's cross-country and biathlon national teams, but now thanks to a \$23 million make-over from this government it can once again host international events and will be a focal point for Canada's Nordic training in preparation for Canada's 2010 Winter Olympics.

Residents of the Bow Valley have thrown themselves behind this event wholeheartedly. There is a four-day winter festival accompanying the races, and the Calgary Stampede is putting on its first ever winter rodeo. The event will also generate tremendous exposure. *CBC Sports Saturday* will be hosting its December 17 show from the Canmore Nordic Centre, and internationally an estimated 50 million to 70 million people will be watching the world cup circuit on television.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the people organizing the races and the winter festival have created a package of events that will be one of the highlights of our centennial year. Canmore was on display for the world in 1988, and it is ready to be so again. We welcome Albertans to join us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Problem Gambling

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The third week of November every year marks National Addictions Awareness Week. When we hear the word "addictions," we generally think in terms of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, but there's a less publicized addiction that is of increasing concern in Alberta. Problem gambling is on the rise in this province, and the primary cause is an addiction to VLTs or slots. Data from the Alberta Gaming Research Institute indicates that about 80 per cent of those seeking help with their gambling addiction through AADAC list EGMs as their preferred method of gambling. Sadly, this responsibility for the increase in problem gambling lies solely with the provincial government in the fact that every one of Alberta's 6,000 VLTs and more than 7,000 slot machines are owned and operated by the province of Alberta.

Gambling machines are ingenious and insidious. They are designed to appear friendly and fun on the outside while inside they are complex pieces of equipment designed by experts in computers and psychology to drain the maximum amount of money from a player's pocket. They are so easy to use. No thought processes are needed at all. If you can put a coin in a slot and push a button, you can gamble on a slot machine. A trained chimp could win or lose as

much money at a slot machine as an adult human being.

They are extraordinarily addictive. Studies have found that EGMs are the only form of gambling where the majority of revenue derives from problem gamblers. It is for that reason that these machines are known as the crack cocaine of gambling. The provincial government has exclusive control over how many EGMs are allowed in this province and where they go. With the rampant expansion of casinos, there could quite easily be 10,000 slots in Alberta in a year or two. In a province that already has one of the highest rates of problem gambling as well as the highest per capita losses at gambling, this unchecked expansion of slot machines is the height of irresponsibility. Gambling machines have turned law-abiding citizens into addicts. Lives have been ruined because of gambling machine addiction, and the blame rests solely with the provincial government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Youth Advisory Panel

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and recognize the Alberta Youth Advisory Panel. Premier Klein formed the Youth Advisory Panel in the year 2000.

The Speaker: The hon. member knows better.

Mr. Danyluk: The hon. Premier. Sorry.

It is a group of 15 youth between the ages of 15 and 22 who represent communities across the province. The group provides feedback on current initiatives and proposes improvements and new ideas to enhance the quality of services to youth. Panel members represent a diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, geographic areas, ages, genders, and socioeconomic status. They ensure that Alberta youth are heard in a meaningful and relevant way on issues that impact their lives.

Since its inception the Youth Advisory Panel has played an important role in a number of issues and policies for the Alberta government. Currently the panel is involved with several initiatives including youth justice and postsecondary education. Its key role is to provide government with a solid youth perspective.

The youth involved in this group are exceptional young people with amazing potential, such as the young man that we introduced earlier today who was there at the beginning. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of listening to our youth. They provide us with valuable insight and effective solutions to many issues that affect our youth. I encourage all youth in our province to take an active role in their communities and make their voices heard on issues important to them.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Postsecondary Tuition Fees

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Postsecondary students in Alberta have been asking for a tuition freeze for over a decade and have instead received a flimsy commitment to a so-called rebate. No long-term plan for reducing tuition is on the horizon. With the second-highest university price tag and the highest college price tag in the country this is simply not good enough. Seventy per cent of all jobs either now do or will require a postsecondary education very soon. Education brings better health outcomes, stronger communities, and a more dynamic and innovative economy.

The NDP opposition along with students, faculty, and even business organizations like TD Waterhouse have all told this government that tuition fees in this province are too high and that it keeps many low-income students away from the system. Postsecondary access statistics are stark. Low-income youth are two and a half times less likely to attend university than high-income youth. Half of university students graduate with an average debt of \$20,000, but that is only public debt, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's student finance system has not kept pace with the high cost of living and tuition. Many students now have two or three credit cards and a student line of credit. This is big business for the big banks, a billion dollars a year. Student loans are an excessive burden for the taxpayer as well. For every dollar borrowed by Alberta students, taxpayers shell out 50 cents in administrative costs. A complete waste of precious resources.

A province-wide system of needs-based grants is indeed the way to go. In the next budget cycle the province must commit to doing more than freezing the tuition for the PSE students. We must immediately roll it back by at least 10 per cent, and then we must work with students and other concerned Albertans for a better tuition fee policy, one that will encourage every qualified student to pursue the education of their choice, not their price range. A highly educated population will enable Alberta to weather the storm of Alberta's boom/bust cycles and build the kinds of communities we want. In order to fulfill the vision for the Alberta we want, we must ensure that quality postsecondary education is accessible and affordable for all, whether rural or urban, privileged or underprivileged.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd like you to be aware that November 24 is the anniversary of the miraculous entry into the world of the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: By way of an historical vignette on this day in 1997 Thelma Chalifoux began a term as a Senator from the province of Alberta. Thelma Chalifoux was born in Calgary. She became the first aboriginal woman as well as the first Métis ever appointed to the Senate of Canada. A long-time advocate of Métis culture Senator Chalifoux was the first Métis woman to receive the national aboriginal achievement award in 1995. This respected woman has served on the boards of several organizations as well as the University of Alberta senate. She retired from the Senate of Canada on February 8, 2004, at the age of 75 and now spends time with her family and is very active in the community of Morinville.

head: 2:50

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition with 329 signatures on it. The petition was co-ordinated by the Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental Society and calls for "a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years." This brings the total signatures to this petition for this week to 1,342.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Contrary to what the hon.

Minister of Education indicated yesterday, I am submitting a petition signed by concerned parents from the communities of Taber, Magrath, Cardston, Calgary, Raymond, Coaldale, Lethbridge, and Fort Macleod. It reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to take measures that will require school boards and schools to eliminate all fees for instructional supplies and materials and general school services, including textbooks, musical instruments, physical education programs, locker rentals, lunch hour supervision and required field trips, and to ensure that schools are not deprived of the resources necessary to offer these programs and services without additional charges to parents or guardians.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places and also to give notice that on Monday motions for returns 49 and 50 will be dealt with. There being no additional motions for returns, there are none to stand and retain their places.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice today of a bill I intend to introduce on Monday next, being Bill 58, the Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 51
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act,
2005 (No. 2)

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 51, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2). This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 51 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Bill 54
Alberta Centennial Education
Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 54, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 54 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Bill 55
Post-secondary Learning
Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a

bill being the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), which will be Bill 55.

[Motion carried; Bill 55 read a first time]

Bill 56
Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

These amendments allow minority shareholders who oppose converting a corporation to or from an unlimited liability corporation to dissent and be bought out at fair market value, and it will also clarify the limitation periods for actions against former shareholders.

[Motion carried; Bill 56 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 56 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Bill 57
Apprenticeship and Industry Training
Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 57, a bill being the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005.

[Motion carried; Bill 57 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Bill 210
School (Property Tax Reduction)
Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 210, being the School (Property Tax Reduction) Amendment Act, 2005.

The purpose of Bill 210 is to eliminate the education portion of the property tax, thereby giving Albertans a tax break. This bill would eliminate education property tax over the course of five years.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the fiscal prudence of this government, as a province Alberta is in an unparalleled fiscal position. It's important that we take this opportunity to reward Albertans by returning to them their hard-earned money. If successful, when fully implemented Bill 210 will represent a tax cut of approximately \$1.4 billion.

[Motion carried; Bill 210 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Bill 211
Alberta Commission on Energy Efficiency Act

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 211, the Alberta Commission on Energy Efficiency Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill gives us an opportunity to reinvest in the

infrastructure of our province and realize efficiency goals which are key to energy efficiency and sustainability for our future.

[Motion carried; Bill 211 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have three tablings. I'm pleased to table today five copies of my response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar pertaining to questions raised during the supplementary estimates debate on Wednesday, November 16.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling a letter I received from the chairman of the Alberta Securities Commission pertaining to the chronology of events surrounding the breach of policy by the director of enforcement.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I am tabling my response to the hon. leader of the NDP opposition's question that he raised yesterday regarding corporate accountability.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to table the appropriate number of copies of the Campus Alberta Quality Council's first annual report for the period 1 July 2004 to 31 March 2005. The annual report demonstrates the council's openness, transparency, and public accountability. I will be in the near future making copies available to all members of the Assembly so that they can avail themselves of the appendices which show Campus Alberta Quality Council's key operating principles, publications of the quality council, and the membership of the quality council, in addition to the information contained in the report.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: I made my tablings yesterday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. The hon. minister sent me a note saying that he wanted to table something. [interjection] Okay.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will table something. On behalf of the leader of the NDP opposition I'd like to table a letter from Mary Roberts, who is very concerned that the Chinook health region plans to leave only one continuing care facility in the city of Lethbridge.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I'd like to table chapter 1 of the report of the Auditor General of Canada which pertains to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which points out some gaps in their services to rural areas in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have tablings from my constituent Mr. Holowaychuk, who is directly affected by the development of the ring road, Anthony Henday. He is concerned about the safety and loss of lawful enjoyment of his property due to

the construction design being used, and he has not received any hearings on this so-called development.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the appropriate number of copies of a pamphlet handed out today by the Bigstone Cree nation during their demonstration outside the Legislature and outlining their concerns over the forestry management agreement on their traditional homelands.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter from a constituent, Cliff Haberstock, who is writing with concern about the furnace replacement program which the Alberta government instituted earlier this year. Unfortunately, according to Mr. Haberstock, he was informed that the program was oversubscribed within a matter of weeks. He would like some action on that from the government.

I have a tabling from Kristen Warner regarding her concerns with the government's failed automobile insurance reforms.

I have a tabling from a Mr. Nicholas Janik, who is writing with his concerns about the unfunded teachers' liability. He expresses concern that "the teacher shortage in the future will be significantly impacted by the government's decisions regarding unfunded liability."

A tabling, Mr. Speaker, from Mariola Adamowska, who also is writing about the unfunded teachers' liability. She, being a new immigrant to Canada, says that she realizes today that "the 'significant' financial burden, caused by the errors of prior governments, has been delegated" to her without her consent.

A letter from a Janice Hrdlicka, who also writes about the unfunded liability. She asks, "How can this provincial government profess that it is 'debt free'? The unfunded liability is a debt. Plain and simple."

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a letter from a Mr. Ed. Harasem, also writing about the unfunded teachers' liability, and his only comment is that the unfunded liability is "totally ridiculous."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Yes. I wish to table five copies of a letter to Mr. Campbell, president of the Edmonton Eskimos, thanking him for the successful season and for good luck in the Grey Cup from the Leader of the Opposition.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of a document published by the Canadian Association of Food Banks entitled Time for Action: HungerCount 2005, being Canada's only annual survey of food banks and emergency food programs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Dr. Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, a return to order of the Assembly MR 48, asked for by Mr. Elsalhy on behalf of Mr. Chase on November 21, 2005.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(5) I'm wondering if the Government House Leader would kindly share the projected government business for the week of November 28 to December 1.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, November 28, at 9 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders we would anticipate proceeding with Government Motion 25 with respect to the appointment of the Chief Electoral Officer search committee; second reading of Bill Pr. 4, the Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act; Bill 51, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2); Bill 54, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005; Bill 55, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2); Bill 56, Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2); Bill 57, Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005; time permitting, Committee of the Whole on Bill Pr. 4 and Bill 47 and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, November 29, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders we anticipate the introduction of Bill 52, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), and Bill 58, the Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, which may also be available on Monday for introduction. The Committee of the Whole would proceed on Bill 51, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2), and thereafter all bills remaining at second reading. At 8 p.m. Committee of the Whole on Bill 51, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2), and all bills remaining at second reading or Committee of the Whole and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, November 30, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders for third reading Bill 51, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2), and all bills remaining at Committee of the Whole and third reading. At 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for third reading Bill 51, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2), and all bills remaining at Committee of the Whole and third reading and as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, December 1, in the afternoon all bills remaining in third reading and Royal Assent and as per the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Let me apologize to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Earlier I had recognized him. That was inadvertent.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill may have misunderstood my comment when I invited members to participate in statements with respect to the football game. This is Alberta. The Member for Edmonton-Manning is a supporter of Edmonton, so he was recognized. The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill was not given an opportunity for the obvious reason.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 50

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to get to my feet to talk about Bill 50, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

I'd be remiss if I didn't just take a little liberty here with the Speaker's latest chatter about the football games. I would point out that the Edmonton Eskimos did defeat our much-beloved Calgary Stampeders two weeks ago, or it would be us waving the flags and wearing the sweaters today. I would also point out that one of my two guests in the gallery is Dale McLean, the vice-president of the Edmonton firefighters, also an alumni of the Edmonton Eskimos football team.

3:10

Mr. Chairman, firefighting remains one of our most dangerous occupations. It's known as one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. While we don't have an awful lot of statistics gathered in Canada – the United States is far, far better at doing this – in 2000, the latest year that we've got these statistics for, firefighters continue to suffer job-related injuries in numbers that far exceed other occupations, with nearly 1 in 5 injured in the line of duty each year as opposed to the average profession, which has about 6 per cent, which works out to – what? – 1 in 20. Professional firefighters are more than three times as likely to be injured on the job as the average worker in private industry.

Mr. Chair, heart injury is the number one killer of firefighters on the fire scene. We all know that. Through the various bill stages and the committees prior to getting into the Assembly, we've talked about this. When an alarm goes off in a fire hall, a firefighter's heart rate goes up to about 100 per cent of what a 25 year old's in very good shape would be. At the point he rounds the corner and sees the fire, his heart rate goes up higher. He then dons 70 pounds' worth of equipment, and again the heart rate goes up.

This is exercise at its extreme and at very dangerous levels, which raises their core body temperatures to also very dangerous levels. They work under extreme heat with superheated gases and toxic gases. They have limited breathing with the stress of using an artificial air source. Their movement is often restricted, and they work in total darkness many, many times. Most of all: the stress from being in an environment where your brain is telling you very clearly, "It's time to get the heck out of here," and they have to go in and do their daily work in this kind of an environment. For that reason we've asked for the presumption for the firefighters, the same as we did in the cancer bill in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of questions in second reading that I'd like to address just to hopefully shorten a little bit of the debate that we have today and save some of the members some time. I'll start out with a question that was asked by the Member for Edmonton-Manning specifically about firefighters. While I admire their enthusiasm and, frankly, would like to give a great many professions this benefit, I would like to say that there are some differences here.

One of the things that we did in Bill 202, which is the firemen's cancer bill, was that we asked in the very last line of that bill that the WCB in Alberta would in fact consult with the WCB in Manitoba, who were the leaders on this type of legislation, that they would do the consultation with them and bring back very specifically why we shouldn't cover volunteer firefighters. We're still waiting for that

study. It is not due until the spring of 2006, and we're anticipating that somewhere down the road here, hopefully on time. I might add that the study to be concluded in 2006 will talk about a number of issues.

I'd like to point out some of the differences, if you like, between a volunteer firefighter and a full-time urban firefighter. Quite honestly, Mr. Chairman, the difference is the aggressiveness with which they fight fires. In a full-time urban environment a firefighter goes in and aggressively knocks down that fire. For a volunteer firefighter, because they're volunteers, obviously their conditioning is not quite as good. They take a little bit more of a defensive approach. Now, this is not a hard-and-fast rule by any stretch of the imagination, but it is certainly a difference between the two sides.

One of our other reasonings behind this. As I say, I'd love to give it to them, but again we simply don't have the studies and the science behind it to justify it. We have studies for full-time urban firefighters from all over North America and, indeed, from Europe that go back to 1918 and discuss things like the cancers and the heart issue that we're here today asking for. But there is no study, and until about 10 or 15 years ago even in this province we simply kept no records of who did what. That changed, again, 15 years ago because finally we started giving a very token payment to these same volunteers, who were out there in smaller centres and battling fires, some of them to a very, very great extent. We have a firefighter in Red Deer that fought 170 grass fires a couple of years ago in one summer. Hard to believe, but it's the truth.

We had a number of questions about: why can't we give this same benefit to police officers, probation officers, security officers? How about air traffic controllers? There is nothing anywhere in the rule book that says that any of these people that could participate with workers' compensation, if they have an injury of this sort and it is from their job, can go into workers' compensation and make application for some kind of a benefit, some kind of a payment to compensate them for their work. That is the way that most people are going. I go back to my original statement when I stood up today, which mentions that 1 in 5 firefighters every year suffers a serious injury as opposed to the general population, which I believe is 6.1 per cent on average.

With that in mind, Mr. Chairman, we've got a couple of amendments coming forward, that I'm aware of, and I'll speak a little more to this topic. As I say, I admire the member's enthusiasm for this and certainly agree with it in the context of a common-sense aspect of it.

There's no question in my mind that a police officer is having his heart rate elevated when he hears his siren going off, but again we don't get into things like the exercising at a dangerous level, raising body core temperatures, putting on the 70 pounds of equipment, and running into a building dragging a very, very heavy hose. You've heard the rest of this, members, and a number of you have been on the orientation exercise. You know exactly what I'm talking about. This is extremely physical exercise. For that reason and for all of the statistics and the science behind those statistics, I'm looking forward to the debate here in committee, and we'll get on with it.

Now, there is another portion to this bill. It has to do with the WCB. The Member for Calgary-Egmont is an expert on this particular clause, and I'd ask him to supplement at your discretion, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: I'm sorry, hon. member. It is customary that I recognize

a member of the opposition for the second speaker, so that would be the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do recognize the contribution of the Member for Calgary-Egmont, and I'm sure he'll be up in a second to deal with the medical panels.

Bill 50 is an important piece of legislation, and I am pleased that it is going through. The need for expanding the ability of firefighters to have presumptive coverage within a 24-hour period for a myocardial infarction, a heart attack, Mr. Chairman, after attendance at an emergency response is, as the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill has said, something that's been a matter of great study and is something that, although it doesn't happen very, very often, should not bring about hardship to a firefighter who is seeking coverage when, in fact, he is subject to that condition because of his work. It's an admirable amendment that recognizes the inherent dangers that are unique to the occupation of a firefighter.

Research has shown that firefighters in an emergency response situation involving fire and toxic smoke inhalation at the scene are subject to many, many different types of stresses. The Member for Calgary-North Hill has listed some of the stress factors, some of the things that bring great stress to bear on the human system, their bodies, when they are in the situation of a serious emergency, factors that when combined with an accelerated heart rate can and have caused myocardial infarctions to firefighters.

Extending the presumptive coverage here to cover the situation is completely acceptable. The medical panels I think are an important move forward. I spoke extensively on Bill 15 as to some of the problems with the Workers' Compensation Board, and I won't repeat those here today. I think we went over those quite extensively yesterday and in previous debates on Bill 15. The need for those medical panels to report to something other than the WCB and to now report to the minister I think is a very positive move. At the very least this creates more transparency and does allow for them to be better understood and better supported by those that are subject to the decisions.

3:20

I did indicate to the Member for Calgary-North Hill yesterday that I would be bringing forth amendments, and I did bring forth some of the arguments regarding extending to other occupations. What I was looking to was to really limit that not to air traffic controllers, not to those types, not to certain other fields but to emergency personnel or people who are in fact dealing quite often with emergency situations. There is an argument that presumptive coverage should be extended to include other emergency personnel who face hazards in their terms of employment that could lead to a heart attack – and I'll get this down eventually – a myocardial infarction.

Mr. Rogers: Be careful how you say that.

Mr. Backs: The Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon was very candid in saying that I should be careful how I should say that.

But a heart attack, you know, this type of problem does not happen very often. I think it would be important for this Assembly to consider those emergency personnel such as police officers, EMTs, or emergency medical technicians and technologists, as well as corrections officers, to be truthful, because they deal in many of the same types of difficult situations, especially in a prison riot. I've got many friends and acquaintances who actually do work in corrections, and I've been made aware of many difficult situations that they have. I've also spoken with numerous peace officers and EMTs, as have members of the Liberal opposition and our research staff.

To apply to police officers and paramedics, who not only deal with an amazing amount of stress in their occupations but also respond and are present at the same types of emergency situations that firefighters attend – that is often the case. For example, at a large building fire police and ambulance at the periphery of the scene are there from the initial response to the conclusion and are subject to high levels of toxic smoke and other damaging vapours. These emergency personnel do not always have access to proper oxygen masks, often not, that serve to shield others such as firefighters from some or all of the harmful content of the smoke. So even though these emergency personnel may not directly enter the blaze, they are still in harm's way of ingesting into their lungs smoke from a fire, and they, too, will have elevated heart rates due to the nature of the emergency.

The key point here is that for any emergency of a substantial nature, especially a fire, it is all three components of the emergency response team – fire, police, and ambulance – that respond to those incidents. Thus, the dangers borne by one prong of the emergency response team is in some form borne by others. Over time the same conditions that apply to firefighters may very well have a similar effect on police and paramedics. Due to this, the presumptive coverage specifically relating to myocardial infarctions 24 hours after attendance at an emergency response should be extended in this specific case to police and paramedics.

In addition, the dangers faced by correctional officers, specifically the dangers faced by an accelerated heart rate due to the nature of the job in emergency situations in prison as well as the stress that comes from working in a jail with prisoners on a daily basis, could also be seen as a cause of a myocardial infarction following a period after an emergency situation. This probably does not happen often, but the same presumptive coverage should apply to these officers for the same reasons.

Given these factors, Mr. Chairman, I'm introducing an amendment to section 2 of Bill 50 to the proposed section 24.1(7) by striking it out and extending the presumptive coverage that applies to firefighters to police officers; paramedics; emergency medical technicians, ambulance; and corrections officers. It is specific to a response to emergency situations causing a myocardial infarction and simply extends the provisions of it to apply to other emergency personnel.

I have provided the proper number of copies to the table, and I move that amendment. Should I read that amendment now, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: The amendment that's being distributed we will call amendment A1.

Mr. Backs: Should I read that?

The Chair: You can proceed because it's already distributed.

Mr. Backs: Okay.

I move that Bill 50, Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) be amended in section 2 by striking out the proposed section 24.1(7) and substituting the following:

- (7) If a worker who is a
 - (a) firefighter,
 - (b) police officer appointed under section 36 of the Police Act,
 - (c) emergency medical technician – ambulance as defined in the Emergency Medical Technicians Regulation (AR 48/93),
 - (d) emergency medical technologist – paramedic as defined in the Emergency Medical Technicians Regulation (AR 48/93), or

- (e) corrections officer appointed under the Corrections Act suffers a myocardial infarction within 24 hours after attendance at an emergency response, the myocardial infarction shall be presumed to have arisen out of and occurred during that worker's course of employment unless the contrary is proven.

I move that amendment Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill on the amendment.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said before, while I admire the Member for Edmonton-Manning's enthusiasm and while I believe he's as big a fan of these four departments as I am, I would respectively decline to vote for this for the very simple reason that there is no demand for it and there's no science behind it. I did yesterday, when I got wind of the amendment, phone the head of the Calgary Police Association, a gentleman I've known for some time who's very, very concerned about police issues. It's just not an issue for them, hasn't come up. Again, they still have the right, if a police officer, as an example, has a heart attack while he's on the job, to go to the WCB and say, "Benefits, please," and the decision will be based on the facts of each individual case as opposed to the presumption in this.

So I would respectfully mention to the House that I won't be voting for this.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would support the amendment as suggested and introduced by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Manning. The question I ask myself is: why cover only firefighters when, in fact, other emergency personnel or people who react or respond to emergencies face dangers and threats which are just as pronounced? People like our police officers or correctional officers or paramedics for example. The pressures that they face and the stresses that they are under are every bit as real, and the risk to their hearts is comparable.

Some members across from the government caucus are trying to reject this. They claim that the suggestion pits firefighters against those other emergency response personnel. In their opinion, it dilutes the intent of the bill and implies that we don't want the firefighters to get this benefit. I have to totally disagree. This is entirely incorrect. What we're doing is trying to extend this presumptive coverage to people who are affected by it and that are at comparable risk. They all deserve our support and protection.

Also, using the same argument as was put forth by the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, who says that there is no science and there is no demand for it, I would just say that if so, then there is no risk to include it in this amendment. If there is no demand for it, or if in fact they have one case a year or one case every second year, it's not going to be a big burden for the Workers' Compensation Board or the medical review board. If it's only one case a year or every second year, it's not a big deal. So I would use this argument to say that, yes, in fact we should include these people in this coverage.

Thank you.

3:30

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont on the amendment.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the amendment, while I certainly respect the intent – it's well intended – as the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill has said, there

is no research that indicates that there are similar occurrences with respect to heart attacks in these other occupations, and I certainly respect all of those occupations as well.

I just want to maybe share with the hon. member something about how policy is done, in government caucus at least. If there is to be a change in policy, it has to go through our process: standing policy, cabinet, and caucus. Even if this was the most reasonable of amendments, it would have to have come to us in enough time for us to consider a change in policy. On this side we can't just make policy willy-nilly. We have to do the research, and we have to get approval from members of caucus.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on the amendment.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I support the amendment by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. This is a good amendment as it shifts the burden of proof to the WCB and allows the claimant full benefits immediately.

However, I would like to have all emergency personnel included in the provisions of this amendment. Police officers, EMTs, paramedics, and correctional officers should specifically be included to have the same type of presumptive coverage. As well, there should be an additional provision to allow either the minister by regulation or the Lieutenant Governor in Council to expand the definition of an emergency worker as it arises. In other words, leave the door open for other workers in the emergency sphere, such as volunteer firefighters in rural areas, part-time firefighters, special constables, or emergency medical responders who work on ambulances in the rural areas.

While the existing provision for firefighters is a good step, this act can go further and include all emergency personnel who as a term of their employment put themselves at risk for an MI due to attendance at emergency or critical situations. In other words, a police officer involved in a fatal shooting or a violent arrest or a paramedic in a hazardous situation where they put themselves in harm's way to save a life or a correctional officer forced to quell a riot should also have the same presumptive coverage.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, you indicated that you wished to speak. Was that on the amendment?

Mr. Mason: Not to the amendment, no, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I'd just like to say that we're in complete agreement with Bill 50. This is an excellent piece of legislation, and I'm sure that we will all support it once it gets through.

I would also like to speak in favour, though, of the amendment. A lot of us went through the pretend to be a fireman for a day routine sponsored by the Edmonton Police Service. I see the Member for Calgary-North Hill is nodding his head. As I recall, he loved doing this. I saw that he had a huge smile on his face during the whole thing. It just about killed me. So I have a pretty good idea of what it's all about to be a fireman now.

Mr. Magnus: And I'm older.

Mr. Tougas: Well, we'll see.

I also found out, you know, that when I grow up, I don't want to be a fireman. It's just too hard. It's very difficult work. These guys deserve all the respect and protection that we can give them. At the same time, being a policeman is a very difficult job, very stressful. They can run into a lot of the same things that a fireman runs into. I don't think it's a particularly big stretch to add other emergency personnel to this bill. It's not a willy-nilly piece of legislation or some sort of change. I think it's a gesture of fairness to the other members of, I guess, the civil service who protect us on a daily basis. I don't think it's a huge stretch. I think it's simply a fair thing to do.

I would fully support this amendment, and I hope that the members across the floor do so as well. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I appreciate the comments from the hon. member opposite. Very simply, I'd love to give other professions, including air traffic controllers, of which I was one for 21 years – I understand stress very, very well. But you've got to have some science there. If the hon. members have a profession that they have some science for, I will make a commitment at this point in time that somewhere along the line in the very near future I will bring in another bill for it, but I need the science. So with that in mind, I'd ask the House to defeat this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm somewhat dismayed by the fact that the Member for Calgary-North Hill says that there's no demand because that is not what I heard from quite a number of people from these professions after they became aware of this bill. Although we don't want to get bogged down in years and years of consultation and want to get this thing done quickly and improve what we have in Bill 15, this is an outgrowth of some of the improvements, I guess, that we were looking at for Bill 15 and some of the problems that we had with that particular act. There is demand from what I've seen, and I expect demand will increase, to be truthful, once this is known because there will be simple fairness factors that will come to bear.

As the Member for Calgary-Egmont said, there sometimes is the need for studies, and the Member for Calgary-North Hill convinced me that we shouldn't have volunteer firefighters on this particular amendment because of some clearer studies that will be coming out in the near future on volunteer firefighters. I'm not convinced that volunteer firefighters should not in fact get this in the future. I expect that some of this information will be very valuable in trying to bring that forward.

The understanding that we have of presumptive coverage is, clearly, that if the WCB thinks that somebody is not due the coverage, they can move to find out and work against that coverage. The idea of presumptive coverage is that the guy gets it automatically. Firefighters should get it, and I believe that other emergency personnel will very clearly have the same arguments. That we don't have a particular study that we can point to or dig up or find at the moment does not mean that there will not be some need for this and, I think, that it will not be necessarily fair to bring forward. I would hope that the government would attempt to initiate some sort of study if this amendment, in fact, is not passed to try and bring forward this coverage, which undoubtedly does not affect a great number of individuals in any given year or even over a number of years but does provide some, I guess, peace of mind to those professionals that protect us in many ways from day to day.

I again urge this Assembly to pass this amendment because I think this is important, if only for fairness, to cover these professions and give this rather limited extra coverage to those who protect our hearth and home. Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

3:40

The Chair: On the debate on the bill, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In the interest of moving this through, I'm going to be very brief and indicate only that the NDP caucus is strongly in support of the bill. We think that it is, in fact, necessary. The whole approach that has been pioneered I think by the Manitoba government is an excellent one, the idea that you have these presumptive clauses where people are presumed to have had certain diseases caused by the workplace if they work in certain occupations where the science is there to support it. So we think it's an excellent approach.

If you look at the history of the Workers' Compensation Board and the dealings that many of our constituents have had with it, you'll find that time and time again they go through all kinds of hoops trying to associate some illness that they've got with their occupation. They get bogged down in all kinds of difficult processes and expenses – and it's frustrating – instead of getting on with their lives. This approach is a very, very positive one.

I want to commend the NDP government of Manitoba for pioneering this approach. I also want to commend the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill for his persistent work with respect to these kinds of diseases and adding them to the list of diseases that are presumed to be occupational. He's been very good on this issue. I think, you know, he belongs to a party that's otherwise a little bit wacky sometimes, Mr. Chairman, but in this particular case I think the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill has done a good service, and I'd like to extend my congratulations to him for that. The firefighters do a lot to protect people's lives, and they put their own lives at risk in order to do that. I think that this is the very least that we can do in return.

I would urge all members of the House to support speedy passage of this legislation. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly don't want to delay any speedy passage of the bill. I just want to make a couple comments. I was reading through *Hansard* and the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I have a great deal of respect for that individual, and I think that he was giving us the best of his knowledge on how he thought the system was working. I wanted to perhaps share the best of my knowledge with respect to the fact that maybe he was referring to the system that used to be, not the system that is today.

One of the things that I want to make sure is clear is that if, in fact, an injury is aggravated, part of his concern was, you know, the word "final," if the medical panel's decision is final. I think he knows and he should know that any time there's new medical evidence, it becomes a new case. The injured worker is not precluded from seeking further support and benefits if there's new medical evidence that develops. So if an injury becomes worse over time, just because they had to go to a medical panel to make the first determination doesn't mean that he can't submit the new evidence, and it becomes a new case. I just wanted to clarify that because that's really the practice today.

The second thing was the statement made in *Hansard* at page 1814, which says that "the panel is created by allowing the employer, the board, and the worker to each name one doctor" and "the panelists are named from a list of doctors deemed eligible by the board itself." My understanding of the process now is that the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the AMA provide the medical panel commissioner with lists of doctors and their qualifications. The commissioner chooses doctors based on who is most qualified to deal with the injury that is currently going to be reviewed. So this business of, you know, selecting this doctor or that doctor because this one represents workers or that one represents the board is no longer the practice. My understanding is that the WCB no longer has a list of doctors that they present to the commissioner. He operates from the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the AMA. I just wanted to share that with you because I know that you weren't trying to mislead anybody. You know, most of what you said is the way it was, but it's no longer that way.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a very important piece of legislation that time is somewhat of the essence on because we never know how long this session is going to be. So we want to move it along. I'm a little disappointed. It's an excellent, excellent bill, and I give credit for a lot of hard work to the Member for Calgary-North Hill. He does know how to lobby; whether you want to talk to him or not, he's going to be there. So I give him credit for that.

Clearly, firefighters are in those special circumstances, as the member pointed out very correctly: stress situations with heavy equipment, smoke, all the things that can lead to a heart attack. I think that as the NDP government in Manitoba has done, we're bringing this bill forward. As my leader said, we're happy to support this particular bill.

I wish, though, that we had not stuck in the medical panels as part of this bill. I have an amendment I want to bring in. I know that the Member for Calgary-Egmont told me that you have to do it through the government caucus. Well, we didn't have that bill that long to get amendments to contemplate, but in that spirit – in that spirit – I'm presenting an amendment. I think we need some more thought on these medical panels. I expect that I won't get it here, but perhaps by bringing it up, we will review it.

I agree that there has been a move in the medical panels, that the changes have been in the right direction, Mr. Chairman. This idea that there's no more appeal, that it has to go to the medical panel: probably 99 per cent of the time that makes sense. Doctors should be making medical decisions, not lawyers. I think we can all agree with that. But there are cases where, I think, people should probably have an appeal to the court if there is a difference of opinion. We're under oath, and I think that changes that situation to some degree. I don't think that we need to bring this into this particular act. If the medical panels are working fine, people still should have that right to go to court if they don't agree with it. To say that this is the final arbitrator, that you can't go to court, I think is a bit of overkill.

Now, as I said, as a result of that, I bring this amendment forward – and I don't expect necessarily that people will want to debate it; they can – perhaps in the spirit that they may at least go back to the government caucus to think about this. I think there are some questions about degenerative medical conditions. I think that there is a difference when an appeal goes to court and you're under oath. There are lots of advantages to having that final step to go to court.

So I'm asking that if they can't support this amendment here, they

at least go back to the government caucus and think about it. I'm asking, Mr. Chairman, to move that Bill 50, Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), be amended in section 3 by striking out clause (b). I think I've provided copies to go around.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3:50

The Chair: We'll refer to this amendment that's being circulated as A2.

Do you wish to proceed?

Mr. Magnus: We don't have the amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

Would the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview wish to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Martin: Well, I think I've made the case, Mr. Chairman. I'm just suggesting that that needs further thought, and this amendment would allow that to happen.

The Chair: The Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I understand it, a dispute in the medical findings typically would likely result when new information becomes available. I mean, it's the case with MRIs or CAT scans and things like that. In all of those cases, the file is reopened. In other words, if the condition for which the decision was made changes – that decision is final and binding, but if it changes or if new information comes to light, it becomes a new case. So I don't think there's a need for doing this, for changing this at all.

Besides, in any administrative law tribunal if the concern is that there's no accountability, I think that we still see, with respect to even the Appeals Commission, cases that do go to the courts, and they go to the courts on grounds of law and regulation and things like that. So I think that the protection is still there.

You know, I can't see how any particular case could be concluded if, in fact, the findings of the medical panel were not final. It's just like the decision of the Appeals Commission is final. If you've got one that's final, you need the other to be final as well, with the proviso that if new information is brought forward, it can always be reopened.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be very brief. I'm speaking in support, of course, of the amendment. This provides me with an opportunity to address some of the remarks made by the Member for Calgary-Egmont with respect to what I've said on this bill in its second reading. The intent of my comments was precisely what this amendment focuses on. The amendment takes away from the injured worker the right to appeal, the opportunity to appeal. So the question of natural justice here is at issue.

The fact that there would be three members on the medical panel, one selected by each party to the issue, suggests that panels and medical experts can have differing opinions, and sometimes medical experts err in their opinions. So the point is that the very fact that we are constituting a panel of three experts, not one, allows for the possibility to think that the panel could make a decision that's not right, that's not based on satisfactory evidence. Otherwise, why not have just one member of the panel? If the expert opinion is so irrevocable and it can be always right, then have just one person.

The very fact that we are asking for three, and one of them is to be appointed by the injured worker, allows for making the assumption that panels could go wrong, could make erroneous judgments. It's only in that case that the right to appeal, I think, needs to be provided for in the amended legislation.

That was the whole point of my comments, not to cast any doubts on the importance and the expertise of medical professionals as such.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have absolutely no doubts that that is exactly what the intent of the hon. member is. I'm not sure if he was here when I was explaining that the process today involves total and complete agreement on medical facts. In other words, I can understand what you're saying, and I can understand that sometimes you can get involved in medical opinion where one doctor thinks this and another doctor thinks that and then two out of the three could possibly make a difference. But the process that we now have is that if you can't agree, if all three members can't agree, then don't come back with a decision until you do. So that's a whole lot different than what it used to be.

I would still make the same recommendation I made yesterday, and that is that I would really encourage all opposition caucuses to have Dr. Ohlhauser come in and give them a presentation on the extent to which he has gone to make this a fair process. Then I think you would have the same amount of confidence in the process that I do.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

[The clauses of Bill 50 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Chairman, I'd move that the committee rise and report Bill 50.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 50. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 50
Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly a pleasure for me to move third reading of Bill 50, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say thank you to the Member for Calgary-Egmont, who's done yeoman service on the second part of this bill to do with the medical appeal panel. I'd also just mention that all sides of this House are somewhat guilty every once in a while of maligning, if you like, the WCB. I'd just like to point out that there are 1,600 working people in the WCB: 120 of them are from my fair city of Calgary, and the other 1,500 are from Edmonton, so there are approximately 80 WCB workers in each of the Edmonton ridings.

4:00

Normally speaking, in my experience dealing with the WCB – and I've had quite a few dealings with them, going back to the cancer bill in 2002 – these folks do yeoman service and do great work. When we've been going through these various bills, they've helped me to the nth degree on every single one of them, and I would have to say a very large thank you to a fellow named Jordan Cleland, who's their communications director, and a fellow named Guy Kerr, who is the CEO of the WCB, because they've gone to extraordinary lengths to make these bills happen and to provide a sense of fairness within the bills and within their rulings on these bills. They've made my life quite a bit easier, and I'd just like to say thank you to all of them and ask all members to approve this in third reading.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to speak in support of this bill. I've made clear, I think, in the debates on Bill 15, of which Bill 50 is almost an outgrowth, some of the challenges ahead for the WCB, and I will not be an apologist for them.

This bill is a very important bill. We've made our arguments, I think, in second reading and in committee. I would like to see further research come forward on volunteer firefighters. I would like to see further moves in the future brought out for other emergency personnel that were covered and defeated by the government side. The bill is in essence a good bill. I support it, and I ask the Assembly to support it as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Very briefly. We've made it clear that this is an important bill. We certainly support it. I would just say to the hon. member that criticism of the WCB has to do more with the culture, not the people that work there. I think we have to keep that in consideration. When you criticize an organization, it's not the individuals that work there; it's the culture or the policy disagreements that you may have with them. I think that's an important distinction.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move this bill along. It's a good bill. Good work by the Member for Calgary-North Hill. I think we can move on.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise in support of this bill, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), on third reading. One of the things I learned in my first year as an MLA is that it doesn't matter what the size of the amendment is or what the size of the document is to be important or to be deemed necessary. We've had bills or amendments that are tens of pages thick and have no value, and then this one here is only four pages thick and has tremendous value. So this is a lesson that I learned, and I wanted to put it on the record.

My understanding, in reading all the sayings by the various hon. members and doing my own little research, is that presumptive coverage is not new in this province and certainly came into play in 2003, when seven different cancers were added to the definition for firefighters and then, I think shortly after, two more followed for a total of nine.

Firefighters are honourable and respectable people, and looking after them is only the right thing to do. We're talking about a heart attack. We're talking about the risks that are inherent in a certain job or the stresses that a firefighter is facing. In doing so, I don't think that we should have limited ourselves to the 24-hour interval as stipulated in this amendment. However, I'm still in agreement with the essence and the idea of the bill. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning wanted to extend it to maybe 48 or 72 hours, and he mentioned that in his debate.

I wanted to mention something to the hon. members that maybe they didn't include in their research, something that is called transient ischemic attacks, or TIAs. TIAs are every bit as dangerous, and they can sometimes lead to a full-blown incident of a cardiovascular event later on, maybe not within the first 24 hours after they respond to an emergency call. It could take longer. Transient ischemic attacks are usually harder to detect, and they're usually very insidious. The damage they exert, however, is every bit as real.

Maybe that's why the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning was hoping to extend that interval of presumptive coverage to something that is more reasonable, along the lines of 72 hours or possibly even a week. I can go as far as advocating for a week of presumptive coverage. Cardiac events are serious, and the detrimental effects that follow are in most cases irreparable. Firefighters are facing a real threat.

I, too, Mr. Speaker, participated in the firefighters' drill at the Poundmaker facility in the west end and experienced first-hand the speed at which they have to react to situations, the heavy load that they carry on their arms and their backs. I even took part in the live burn exercise, and I found that to be an eye-opener. I also clearly remember a wonderful visit that I had with the local firefighters in Edmonton-McClung during my campaign when I visited the local fire station and asked them what was on their minds, and here we are today talking about one of those issues.

I am really glad to have participated in accepting and supporting this important amendment. Firefighters are wonderful people, as I mentioned. They are professional, they're disciplined, and they're caring, and they deserve our support fully. [interjection] Thank you.

I also know that because this is third reading, we shouldn't really pick the nitty-gritty of the line by line in that bill. However, I just have to say that although I agree with the direction of 46.1, taking the reporting duties from the Workers' Compensation Board and giving them to the minister, I have similar concerns to what the hon. members from our caucus and the ND caucus have voiced with regard to the medical panel. Again, they mentioned the culture and the protocols in place. So maybe this should be an area of improve-

ment in the future, perhaps, from the government caucus or maybe an amendment from our side.

However, I also have to put on record my strong opposition to the proposed section 46.1(6), making the medical panel findings final. I think this goes against fairness, and it goes against democracy, even, because you have to have an appeal mechanism. So, again, maybe this is something in the future, in keeping with the spirit, the government side can look at restoring: some sort of appeal procedure or appeal provision so people can have some recourse if they disagree with the findings of that medical panel.

In general, again, I will re-emphasize my support and the support of my colleagues. This is a good day. Thank you, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill to close debate.

Mr. Magnus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To close debate I'd just like to thank all the members of the House for their support on this very important bill and just remind them that, I guess in my opinion, this is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 50 read a third time]

4:10

Bill 48

Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General I'm pleased to move Bill 48, Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading.

I won't go into detail with respect to the provisions of the act; it was outlined both in second and in committee. If anyone has any need to refer themselves to the rationale for the act, they can look at page 1822, where the Attorney General outlined it very succinctly on November 22, I believe, Tuesday evening. So a quick reference back to that will put the rationale for the act on the table. I don't think that it bears repeating it into the record, and I would move third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't have any problems with the Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005, Bill 48. I think it gives more power to the minister to raise the standards for justices of the peace and to have more control over their appointments. It's a very important function, and the act that has the authority over justices of the peace outlines all the different ways in which justices of the peace serve the province. I think this act expedites and speeds up the process, and I have no objections to this at all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Bill 48, Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005. I think the bill does provide the clarifications that were needed. It standardizes the whole issue of qualifications and the appointment process. Certainly, justices of the peace increasingly serve important functions, so it is critical that we have in place clear qualification requirements, appointment procedures, and a requirement that people should

expect to be appointed on the basis of merit and not just because they have qualifications. Lots of people have qualifications, but certainly in the selection process the merit criteria must kick in. That's what the bill does in addition to clarifying some of the other issues. So on behalf of the NDP opposition caucus I'm happy to extend our support to this bill in its third reading.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice wish to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 48 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I call the committee to order.

Bill 49

Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to rise this evening on behalf of the hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security to address a couple of concerns raised by the hon. members across the floor during second reading of Bill 49, the Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora raised concerns with the amendments that allowed the Law Enforcement Review Board to dismiss complaints that are frivolous and vexatious. The LERB, Law Enforcement Review Board, deals with disciplinary issues and is not a court of law. Allowing the board discretion on whether or not to hear a complaint will ensure that the process moves along smoothly and in a timely, consistent matter. It is important to point out that the Law Enforcement Review Board has a stellar record for allowing great latitude to complaints in the appeal process. However, the Law Enforcement Review Board should be allowed to use their discretion when they feel the system is being used inappropriately.

The amendments would also allow the board to order costs against those who file frivolous complaints. This will alleviate the backlog of appeals before the board and reduce the potential for a backlog occurring in the future. Specifically, in section 20 of the act we are striking out "that a party" and substituting "that a party or counsel to a party" could be awarded costs. This amendment ensures that legal counsel for all parties are doing their due diligence in representing their clients and are not taking advantage of the hearing process. We want to ensure that the process is fair and that the rights of both members of the public and the rights of police officers remain intact.

A second concern was raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder regarding amendments to section 5. This section speaks to the creation of panels and the chair's role in appointing members to deal with procedural matters. Allowing the board to establish panels is another way to ensure that complaints are heard more quickly. This will allow cases to be heard in different parts of the province at the same time, thereby speeding up the process. Allowing the chair to appoint members to deal with procedural matters such as setting dates and times for gathering simplifies the process even more.

Mr. Chairman, these amendments will streamline and enhance the

LERB, the Law Enforcement Review Board's effectiveness in the police disciplinary process. This is a positive step for all parties. I would like to thank all hon. members for their support and questions related to this bill. I believe I have responded to all the questions raised.

I would again urge all members of the Assembly to give Bill 49 their support.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few comments about this bill. I respect the hon. member's mentioning the point about vexatious and frivolous matters that are brought before the Law Enforcement Review Board and the change to make sure that lawyers who impede the process are not being vexatious and so on in order to get at the backlog of work that the Law Enforcement Review Board has to deal with. I hope that that's on the right track because it gives a lot of power to the board to make that decision. I know that a lot of lawyers have concerns about various matters especially in relation to citizens and the police. There are a lot of issues that come before the Law Enforcement Review Board. I hope that this is going to be a good process with this change. I'm not going to amend it to bring about any further changes.

Now, an issue around the rules of evidence. I guess I do support this because, as I mentioned in second reading, other boards have specific references to the fact that they don't follow the rules of evidence; they follow the rules of natural justice, and I suppose that that would speed up the process. But I think that sometimes these rules of evidence are there to safeguard people who are involved in bringing complaints before these boards, and I would hope that these safeguards are not removed. I guess that a person could still appeal if the person did not think that they were being heard properly by this board. They could still appeal on the basis of natural justice.

To my understanding natural justice just means that a person has a right to be heard, and that's what these boards are all about. They are there to hear complaints from citizens or from police officers and the response. The right to be heard is an important rule of natural justice, so I assume that that's what's being upheld here.

The second rule of natural justice is that the tribunal that is making a judgment is to be not biased but to be impartial. So I presume that a complainant, somebody who brought a complaint and didn't feel satisfied, could appeal on the basis that perhaps the board was biased and could make that argument. So I guess natural justice would prevail here without having to have some sort of statement about the rules of justice. So I'm not going to bring any amendment to change that. I think that's acceptable.

4:20

In general, this Police Amendment Act I think strengthens the role of the Solicitor General. I appreciate that in the sense that it talks about standards for police services, then it adds police commissions and policing committees. I think that's important. I was quite impressed by the Auditor General of Canada's report on the RCMP. In respect to standards the Auditor General of Canada thinks that the RCMP actually is responsible for determining a minimum standard of policing in detachments throughout Canada but fails to do that. So it's important when the Solicitor General enters into contracts with the RCMP to make sure that minimum standards are set by our police services. It's in the interest of law and order. It's in the interest of safety and security of peace officers and safety and security of people in the community.

I find it deplorable that one of our major police services in Canada does not set minimum standards, so I'm happy that it's clear in the

act that it's the Solicitor General's responsibility to establish standards for police services in this province, which includes all municipal police services and, of course, the RCMP and police commissions. That's the addition here, which I thoroughly support because, as we've been following the sad saga of the Edmonton City Police Commission with all the problems around the appointment of a police chief and other issues concerning the Overtime scandal and so on, it's really important that the members of police commissions get the proper training and can really represent the people between the powers of the municipal council, city council, and the police.

So, Mr. Chairman, I have nothing else to say about this. I'm not bringing any amendments. This can go forward out of committee.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just my clarification: when I say across the floor, I don't mean across the floor to here.

Dr. B. Miller: We're on the same side.

Mr. Johnston: Yes. Members to my left, the opposition. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my great honour to rise and speak in support of Bill 49, the Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). Bill 49 is a complement to Bill 36 from the spring session, the Police Amendment Act, 2005, and introduces additional changes to the Police Act. The amendments will clarify the role and powers of the Law Enforcement Review Board in assessing costs, paying expenses, and clarifying the LERB authority and responsibilities. It will clarify the minister's responsibility for policing standards and clarify that policing includes the police commissions and committees, not just police services.

The purpose of this bill is to provide some additional amendments to the Police Act which were not included in Bill 36, the Police Amendment Act, 2005. These amendments include changes to the functionality of the Law Enforcement Review Board, LERB, as well as instituting provincial standards for policing to extend to police commissions and committees. I wonder why we didn't make amendments in the last spring session, but this amendment, it seems to me, is worthwhile to add.

The Law Enforcement Review Board is an independent judicial body established under the Police Act. The main purpose of this board is to hear complaints from citizens who have already lodged a complaint about the conduct of a police officer and are not satisfied with the result of that complaint. As well, the police officers who have been the subject of discipline rising out of a complaint and who feel that the decision was unfair with the decision of the chief of police may also appeal to the LERB. The LERB provides a forum for both citizens and police officers, including special constables, separate and removed from the police service involved. The main objective of this process is an independent and impartial review.

Membership in this board is comprised of a minimum of three members from the public. Current membership is two lawyers, a former MLA, a former member of the police commission, a former councillor, and a former president of the AUMA.

Mr. Chairman, I support this bill because the amendments as proposed in this bill are all generally acceptable and, in fact, are crucial to updating the current Police Act, that has not been updated

for 17 years. The recent problems seen with the Edmonton City Police Commission serve as an example of why there is a need for boards such as this to have the proper training so that they can carry out their duties effectively and without controversy.

This is a good amendment. The police commission has a very important role in ensuring that police services are free from undue political influence. The police commission provides the balance against undue political influence from the elected officials. It is of utmost importance that commissions be independent from direct influence from the municipal councils but at the same time maintain an open and transparent relationship with the council.

To ensure that committee members are aware of their roles and responsibilities, it is crucial that they receive the training necessary to understand their role fully and completely before committing to their duties. Establishing standards that must be followed is a very effective way to do this.

Given the importance of independence from undue political influence, it is critical that the province be responsible for standards but that their involvement in the municipal commissions ends there. There must be no move towards placing a provincial representative onto police commissions and committees. This would be the definition of political influence. Municipal police commissions and committees must be bound by a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, but they must not be subject to provincial meddling in the internal affairs of their police services. This would clearly undermine municipal autonomy. The role of the province and the minister must be only in establishing provincial standards for commissions and committees.

Mr. Chairman, these amendments to the Police Act, Bill 49, are timely and needed for the Police Act, that did not receive any changes for 17 years. These amendments by the Solicitor General are much better than the amendments made in the spring through Bill 36, which utterly failed to provide the open and transparent public oversight of police services that the public was demanding.

However, these amendments are a step in the right direction, especially the establishment of provincial standards for police commissions and committees. It is imperative that the establishment of provincial standards for policing includes an examination of police policies relating to police pursuits, to the use of force, and to cultural diversity training for all police officers to better serve the public. These standards must be made in consultation with the municipal police services and with the RCMP to ensure that police services can better serve the public and to enable them to fight and win the war on crime in Alberta.

Thank you very much.

4:30

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and make some observations on Bill 49, Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) in my capacity as critic for the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security for my caucus.

Before I make some specific comments on the bill, let me iterate very clearly, Mr. Chairman, how important I think the services are that the men and women who serve in the police forces provide to our communities to make them safe, to make them free of threat to other persons or property. I want to be on record as expressing my appreciation for the value of the hard work that the women and men who serve in our police forces provide us. They certainly risk their lives to protect our lives. Anything that I say about the bill should not be construed as casting any negative sort of observations on the members of the police service as such.

The bill is certainly a step, I think, in the right direction. It does address some of the concerns that were expressed in this House in the spring when we engaged in debate on Bill 36. I'm pleased to say that some of the criticisms that were made then were I think received well by the government side. Some of those concerns are being embodied in these amendments.

My colleague from Edmonton-Calder, I think, in his intervention during second reading drew attention to some of our general concerns about the specifics of the bill, so I won't repeat those concerns. I have some questions. For example, I'm looking at an amendment in section 20 which repeals clause (f) in the existing legislation and substitutes the following: "the Board may accept any evidence that the Board considers to be relevant to the determination of the issues and is not bound by the rules of law respecting evidence applicable to judicial proceedings." It's a change which on the surface, I think, looks good. It gives the board the additional power to accept information that is relevant to the determination of issues at stake.

On the other hand, the rules of law respecting evidence applicable to judicial proceedings include rules which require evidence to be adduced, I guess, under oath and the cross-examination that can follow from evidence that's adduced under oath. I wonder: those particular procedures or practices which are relevant to and applicable in judicial proceedings, what is the status of those kinds of rules when it comes to the ability of the board to accept information or evidence? I thought they were good rules. They allow for getting at the root of the issues and the evidence that's required. I wonder if the change that's being made here from the existing law is in the best interests of all parties involved.

The Law Enforcement Review Board does of course deal with highly contentious matters. It is of the utmost importance that the trust of the public in our police forces is maintained, is in fact strengthened. That's the only way that police services can provide the kind of service that communities require and work in co-operation with local communities in providing that service. That mutual trust and respect for the conduct of police officers is of the utmost importance. That helps the police to do their work. It certainly helps the communities to feel safe and also concur with the police when police take certain actions which may be questioned by some.

Any changes that we make should be made not only to streamline the Law Enforcement Review Board activities but also to ensure that they result in strengthening our trust in the police forces, ensuring that the conduct of the police is transparent, that if it comes under question, thorough investigations are done and the complainants receive full satisfaction for the complaints that they make. That's the only way that we can make the work of the police forces more effective and more valuable to our communities.

I'm raising these as questions. In my view, the goal of these amendments should be and perhaps is to improve the ability of the Law Enforcement Review Board not only to provide judgments and decisions in a timely and efficient fashion but also to do it in a way which strengthens and contributes to our trust in our police forces and the valuable work that they do. So that's one question that came to my mind as I was looking at the provisions of the bill before us, Bill 49.

4:40

One other question that arose was whether or not Bill 49 and the amendments that it makes to the Police Act do in fact provide a comprehensive enough review of the existing legislation. During the debate on Bill 36 in the spring I think lots of issues were raised about what needs to be done in order to change the existing legisla-

tion to improve the work that police forces do and make that work more transparent and above board. Police misconduct activities have come to the attention of Albertans over the last several years, particularly last year, and there was a concern, I think, around this House and outside whether or not we can trust the activities that sometimes some members of the police forces engage in. They are questionable. One of those incidents is certainly still out there under investigation, and perhaps judgment will be made sooner or later.

The broader concern that I have about this is that the amendments being proposed here are good insofar as they move us forward, but they may be limited in scope in addressing all the issues and the concerns that I have expressed with respect to the efficacy of the existing statutory piece of legislation dealing with the Police Amendment Act.

I don't have any amendments to propose. I just wanted to put some of these general concerns on record and otherwise indicate the support of our caucus for the amendments, limited though they may be in scope as they stand as part of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The clauses of Bill 49 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 46 Criminal Notoriety Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act, has sort of had an evolution across the country. Ontario has developed a version of this bill and then Manitoba. Interestingly, Manitoba added a section on criminal memorabilia, which is in this bill, and that's really important to add. I'm sure that other provinces will follow suit and have a similar bill.

I'm not going to look at it specifically in terms of the various clauses because it's a bill that's very similar to others adopted throughout Canada. I guess that's why it's as long as it is: it's covering all kinds of eventualities. It's basically the same as the Manitoba legislation, drawn up for Alberta.

In general, the problem I have with it is that it deals with not very many specifics. I don't think many specific cases will ever come up about this. I mean, how many books will be written by criminals who have committed serious crimes? How many books and television programs will they produce or develop in Alberta? Have we ever had any cases like this? It's interesting that one of the most notorious cases, namely Clifford Olson, happened in B.C. and B.C. doesn't have this kind of legislation.

My preference would be that Alberta Justice would bring bills having to do with the prevention of crime rather than dealing with this kind of example of trying to make it impossible for a criminal to take advantage of his crime by producing a book or a television program or whatever. I mean, we need to be in the business of preventing crime, not simply adding more and more sanctions to the punishment of criminals, which I think is what this does. It just adds

another sanction on top of the sentence that has already been meted out to a criminal.

Certainly, it's difficult to actually oppose something like this because I think there's zero tolerance in the public for the idea that a criminal should profit from his or her crime. So this is something that I don't think I would oppose in principle, and I already said that in second reading. I think that there still could be a Charter challenge along the way.

Now, I personally reviewed some of the history of the son of Sam law in the States, which I think was developed in 1977 in New York state, but almost all states in the U.S. have similar legislation to prevent criminals from profiting from their crime. The son of Sam legislation was challenged constitutionally on the basis of the First Amendment. I mentioned this in second reading, and I think that still could be possible. If somebody who actually finishes their sentence, has completed what they owe in terms of debt to society by serving their term, gets out and decides to write a book about their experience, both the crime and their experience in prison, that person I think could challenge the prohibition of being able to write such a book on the basis of the Charter, the freedom of speech and the freedom of expression. It would be interesting to see if such a challenge took place.

Of course, if it was something that was educationally important for society, that person could apply under this act for a contract to recount the crime, and there are many stipulations about that, so it still may be possible for a former convict to write a book about his experience if it has some sort of educational benefit for society. Under this act section 2(3) does allow for contracts that recount crimes if they support various crime prevention programs or victims' programs by a law enforcement agency, et cetera, an agency like the John Howard Society and so on, where it's really important to have people who have served time get out into communities and warn youth about the disadvantages and the terrible experiences that they go through as a result of a life of crime.

I also like in this bill the fact that if people are fined for being in contravention of this bill, the fines would be for the benefit of the victims and their families. I think that's really good.

Well, I think that's all I have to say about this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

4:50

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my great honour to rise again and speak in support of Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act. The purpose of this bill is to prevent criminals from benefiting financially from their crimes. In this sense that's the reason I'm supporting this bill.

Caution is suggested primarily because of potential Charter issues. Specifically, will this bill violate the following sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication . . .

15(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Another area of concern is the potential implication of this bill. Will this bill have an effect on novelists or writers who want to write a true crime story or a biographical account of a criminal's life? This is an area that requires clarification.

Another point of concern. What is the rationale for this bill? Why does this government feel that it is necessary? This government may

be pushing this bill in order to appear tough on crime. Although this is a positive step in protecting victims of crime, it does not act as a deterrent to committing crimes. If the government truly wants to be tougher on crime, it should focus its attention on more urgent and practical measures: increasing the number of police officers, better funding for law enforcement, social programs, targeting young offenders, et cetera. These measures would have a stronger, more immediate impact.

I support the underlying principle of this bill, and I believe that it is a positive measure. We believe that the government should focus its attention more on combating crime on the front line. I believe that it's a positive measure. The details of the bill need to be clarified to ensure that it achieves its purpose without having a negative impact on other individuals such as novelists. We do have some concerns regarding its relation to and potential violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as I mentioned, in section 2(b) and section 15(1).

Alberta would be the third province in Canada to implement legislation of this type. Both Manitoba and Ontario currently have similar legislation in place. When the legislation was passed in Manitoba, questions regarding its infringement on individual rights and freedoms were raised.

Those are a few questionable concerns, but still at this moment I would commend the sponsor of this bill for the good work. Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, am very pleased to rise and participate in the debate on Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act. I agree that the intent of the bill is to tell the whole world, tell all the people that crime doesn't pay.

An Hon. Member: It does sometimes.

Mr. Elsalhy: It does sometimes, but we're trying to tell people that they shouldn't accept that. Nobody should elicit any profit or any benefit from a criminal act.

One of the questions that I had to struggle with is basically balancing the rights of the victim with those of the criminal. I know that my statement can get me in all sorts of trouble by saying that the rights of the victim should really outweigh those of the perpetrator, or the criminal. The criminal has already given away some of his rights by committing a criminal act or an atrocity.

Now, some of the questions that I have are really about thinking of the difference in our use that this bill might apply to, all the different parameters and factors and things that maybe we cannot forecast ahead of time. So one of the people that I would like to think about is a person who committed a crime but then repented or was totally and fully rehabilitated. Another example would be a person who walks or is acquitted based on technical reasons during a trial, and the name O.J. Simpson comes to mind here.

Number three is a question about novelists or writers who want to write a true crime story or a biography about the life of a criminal. Would this piece of legislation apply to them as well?

My fourth example would be about the victim himself or herself. Can we stop the victim from recounting the crime that they had to live through? Will these restrictions extend to them as well?

An Hon. Member: If they're still alive.

Mr. Elsalhy: If they're still alive, absolutely.

Also, what about book, movie, or television series deals that are

entered into in other jurisdictions, whether in Canada or outside? Would this law apply to those agreements or those contracts that might have originated outside this province?

Also, I know that this concern was voiced by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora and my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie, but really why does this government feel that it's necessary? Do we have cases waiting to be pursued, or do we have examples that maybe we're not aware of? Why are they pushing this bill? It's a question on my mind. I don't know if they're really trying to appear tough on crime, as was mentioned before.

It is a positive step in protecting the rights of the victims of crime, but it doesn't really deter or stop crime. It is not an obstacle. People who are having thoughts about committing crime or who are contemplating committing a crime or people who have ill intentions for other people or for society at large will not be stopped because we're telling them that you can't write a book after or you can't be given money for a movie that talks about your crime. I don't think people commit crimes based on a further-down-the-road plan that they would market the story or recount in press or cinematic production or however. I don't think people plan their crimes according to a marketing scheme that they're thinking about after.

As discussed by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, this act is likely not going to survive legal and constitutional challenges. Maybe it's just a statement we're giving. Maybe it's an overarching argument that crime doesn't pay, and we want to put it on paper. Whether, in fact, it survives a constitutional or legal challenge in a court of law remains to be seen.

Finally – and I know that everybody is trying to be brief here – will there be a provision to include an appeals mechanism to minimize the need for the people whom this act covers to take their appeals to court? So can we have an appeals mechanism? You know, not every piece of legislation, not every law applies to all the subjects that are covered under this law equally and with the same effect and the same force. So maybe we should have an appeals mechanism for people who think that they are entitled to write a story. Maybe they want to write a story to educate the citizens about not falling prey to a criminal, or maybe they want to write a story to make us aware of a certain scheme that's happening. It could be identity theft, or it could be fraud or credit card scams. A person might have repented and want to educate other citizens about how they did it and how to avoid it, how not to fall prey. So maybe there should be an appeals mechanism to allow these people to say: "Look, I'm trying to do something good here. I'm not trying to exploit a situation. Let me write a book. Let me put it on TV or on radio so other people can learn from other people's mistakes and move forward."

I think this is a fair recommendation, and I hope that the government side will take it under consideration. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5:00

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There have been a number of issues raised, and I thought it appropriate to address some of them. There's some speculation about who this might apply to. The act is very clear that it applies to convicted criminals who have been convicted of what's defined as a serious crime. There's a definition in here for that purpose. So it's clearly a defined group of people.

It's clearly intended to take away the proceeds – in other words, profiting – from a crime. It doesn't limit the person's freedom of speech. They can write an educational piece of work if they wish.

They can't profit from it. It doesn't suggest that you can't talk about your crime or why you committed it or that you repented from it or that you want to help educate other people to not go into a life of crime. It clearly allows us to take away the ability for somebody to profit from a crime. That's the nature of it.

There's been some speculation that this might be something which offends the Charter. We should I think be very clear about the Charter and how we approach the Charter and those sorts of things. There obviously are some things which are clearly offensive to the Charter, and as legislators we ought not to enact things which are clearly offensive to the Charter.

The Supreme Court of Canada has indicated in rulings that the art of legislating is an iterative process. It's a discussion between the courts and the legislators. This, I think, would lead us to correctly suggest that we ought not to shy away from making good law in areas where we believe it to be appropriate because somebody says that it might offend a particular area. I mean, clearly this is not an area where we're talking about an egregious breach of a person's rights. We're talking about something where some people may raise an argument that may bring the Charter into the discussion. That's clearly something that needs to be defined by the courts. So we shouldn't shy away from that. If we think it's the right thing to do, we ought to do it. If somebody wants to challenge it and if they're successful, then we can learn from that. If we learn from that, we can come back and say: well, is there a way of doing it right, or is it something that has been very clearly indicated to be wrong?

So the question about whether we shouldn't bring in this particular piece of legislation because there may be a possibility that somebody might raise a Charter argument and even perhaps be successful I think is not a good reason not to act. We have mechanisms in place to deal with the fringes, with where the boundaries are, and we ought to know and understand that that's a perfectly appropriate process to bring into place.

What we have before the House is a bill which has some clear intent. It's not taking away from any of the other good activities that the Department of Justice or the Department of the Solicitor General might be doing with respect to crime fighting. It doesn't detract from the resources being applied in those areas. It doesn't take away any of the energy. But it's a clear statement of public policy that people who commit serious and egregious crimes ought not to profit from them.

So we have a mechanism in place where if they attempt to profit from them, we can take that profit away. We can make it an offence to profit from the serious crime as defined in the bill. A narrow area, an important statement of public policy. Let's not be scared of the Charter. Let's not be scared of what might be. Let's welcome the courts' interpretation of it, if they want to in the future, because we're making a very important statement: that there are some nefarious crimes that go on, that books come out about them. If it's a book being written by the person who perpetrated the crime, that's a bad thing from a public policy perspective, ought not to be allowed, and that's what we're trying to stop.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the hon. minister's articulate defence of his bill. It doesn't change my opinion, though, that essentially this is a waste of public time, to be honest with you.

You know, I read a lot of books, and I have yet to encounter a book written about an Alberta criminal by an Alberta criminal. I thought that maybe I might have just missed something, so I thought: okay, I'll check the Edmonton public library database.

They have exactly one book about true crimes of Alberta, not written by the criminal.

To be honest, this appears to me to be a law that's a cure for which there is no known disease. We've taken a step here to prevent something that has never happened and is not going to happen. You've got to think about that one. It's a play on words: a cure for which there is no known disease. You're shaking your head. It's a tough one. You've got to think about it.

I'm just baffled why this government in this ridiculously short fall session has chosen to eat up valuable time with a bill that will in all likelihood never be applied in the province of Alberta and have no impact whatsoever. [interjection] I'm speaking out because you guys put a bill here, so I figure I might as well talk about it for a little bit.

Mr. Dunford: Well, then, don't complain about the time.

Mr. Tougas: Well, I'll tell you that we could be talking about fixed election dates. We could be talking about lobbyist registry. We could be talking about any number of laws that would be beneficial to all of Alberta, but instead we're talking about this showboat piece of legislation. Then, of course, we have the association of former MLAs to deal with too. Boy, that's a hefty agenda we've got going here. I'll tell you: this government has apparently completely run out of ideas, Mr. Chairman. I won't waste any more time talking about it, but if you're going to bring us in here, at least give us something to chew on, a little bit of meat.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Pannu: We have some minutes left, Mr. Chairman, so I may as well take advantage of the clock.

A very interesting discussion. As the member of my caucus who's responsible for dealing with this bill, I listened with a great deal of attention to the arguments made here. You know, to say that a person responsible for a serious crime should not benefit from it is a no-brainer. I mean, there's no disagreement on it. There's absolutely no disagreement on it.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, of course, raised an interesting question: what is the problem? I mean, we obviously deal with issues and create legislation and make laws that deal with problems. We solve them. Does it have a preventive effect? Will it reduce crime? I suppose not. It doesn't have an intention. It's not intended to prevent crime. It's only intended to prevent people from profiting from crime once they've committed it.

So the question does arise: how big is the problem they're dealing with? You know, there are horrible crimes committed in this country by the likes of Clifford Olson and the couple in Ontario. We know that. They're disgusting in the extreme. They're terrible crimes, and surely no one would want to see any of those characters writing a long story after they're out of jail and making millions on it. Agreed. But these are so few exceptions. We have to ask ourselves: what is the problem they're trying to address here? Something that might happen in the future, or what?

I share that concern. I ask that question: what is it that we are trying to address? What is the problem that we are trying to address? Albertans have a right to ask us: "What are you doing here in the Legislature? What problems are you trying to solve?" What problems are you trying to address? Or are you simply trying to just play some sort of games or promote some fears which may or may not be justified? So it does raise a question on the appropriate use of our time here given the nature of the problem, if there's a problem.

5:10

The other question that I have. I was looking through this and found what kind of offences might be covered that this bill is written about. I wonder if any property crimes or any crimes of business fraud and others are also covered under it or not. These are crimes against other persons: murders, rapes, you name it. Surely, the abhorrence of those crimes is there for all of us to acknowledge. But I wonder: what crimes? Property crimes or crimes that are related to business activity? For we all know, because we have become familiar with large-scale criminal acts committed by responsible persons – you know, on boards of directors or CEOs and others – that in recent years they've come to light. What happens to those people once they have served time and come out and want to write? They may have in fact accumulated a huge amount of capital, not all of which may be lost in the process of the trial and conviction and sentencing. They have already profited from it. Does this bill address those issues too? What's the scope of the kind of crimes that this covers? That's yet another question that I have here.

Now, I don't know whether the Criminal Code of Canada covers fraud committed by the likes of Lay and others who are serving time now across the border. There may be people that we know in this country who may be in that situation pretty soon. I'm not sure whether those crimes are covered by the Criminal Code of Canada because that's, I think, the sort of umbrella under which we are considering the crimes committed for which the convicts or ex-convicts should not profit by writing books.

So I have some of these questions. Maybe the Minister of Advanced Education or someone else in this House would like to enlighten me on what crimes are not included here which may be very serious and from which people may benefit both when they have been sentenced and after they come out and write about it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Agnihotri: Can I add something? Suppose somebody says that he cheated the Alberta government for all his life and wanted to write a book on that?

Mr. Dunford: Boy, we'd nail him, I'll tell you.

[The clauses of Bill 46 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 47

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act

The Chair: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise today to begin debate on Bill 47 in committee. In second reading we had a very interesting debate, and some good points were raised. Again, I want to thank the Speaker for his encouragement and support of moving this bill forward so that the work of all former members of the Legislature will be recognized at the 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the Legislature in March of 2006. Passing a bill to create a former members' association is one way of including all former members in our centennial celebration.

Mr. Chairman, to begin, I would like to state that the wording of this act has been based on the acts used in other jurisdictions including British Columbia, Ontario, the act which governs the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, and to a limited extent Quebec. These pieces of legislation were chosen as road maps because their associations have been successful in achieving the objects of their associations. I believe it is important to see to the core of what this association will be doing and what it is intended to do. It's difficult to see or predict what projects and activities that an organization like this might undertake in time.

The very first object of the association is laid out in section 3(1)(a) which states that the object of the association is "to put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in Alberta and elsewhere." This organization is about serving the interests of parliamentary democracy, not about partisan politics, not about lobbying government, and not about being a second Chamber, as was mentioned previously. It is about utilizing the knowledge which MLAs have gained during their time in this Chamber to support our style of democracy.

The second objective of the proposed association is "to serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government." Mr. Chairman, in no way is this organization designed to support government or opposition or third party members. It is designed to serve the public by supporting parliamentary democracy. As was mentioned by previous speakers, this may take many forms, but the one that is most visible is speaking with students and providing for scholarships, as is the case with the federal association and with the Ontario association.

This bill sets up a nonpartisan association and has no role to play relative to the work of sitting MLAs. Members of this association have no authority to speak on behalf of the government or of this Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, earlier in the debate surrounding Bill 47 it was cited that the United States Association of Former Members of Congress had spoken to 150,000 students on 207 campuses across the United States of America. This is a great accomplishment, and while the Alberta association may never reach that level, it may make an impact on our learning centres.

Mr. Chairman, the final point which I would like to raise concerns itself in section 3(2), which states that "the Association must not pursue its objects for any partisan political purpose."

In conclusion, I would like to just mention four points. First of all, this bill, encouraged and supported by the Speaker, leading to a former members' association, is an appropriate initiative marking the 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the Legislature. Secondly, it is an initiative to take advantage of the knowledge and experience of former members to promote and make strong our parliamentary system of democracy. Third, it provides expression by this Legislature that former MLAs over the past 100 years are a valuable resource in promoting our system of government. Finally, the bill provides a mechanism by which former MLAs in Alberta will have communication and an opportunity to liaise with other provincial former members' associations and the former members of the federal Parliament.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to any comments.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the interests of time and because I have two amendments and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has two amendments and the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has one, I would move that we adjourn debate so we can have more time next week.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What the hon. members across don't understand is that, basically, we would still go ahead with the amendments, but we just wanted to save the circulation until next week.

This amendment is sponsored by myself, and it moves that "all former MLAs are eligible to become members of the Association in accordance with any bylaws of the Association not less than one year after they cease to be MLAs." So I would bring it to your attention.

5:20

The Chair: We'll refer to this amendment as amendment A1.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Chairman, we'd hoped to use fully the time of the House in the interest of getting debates going forward and appreciate the hon. member having tabled his motion, but in order to report progress today, we do need to rise and report before 5:30. So I would move that the committee now rise and report bills 49 and 46.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 49, Bill 46. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 47. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, November 28.

[Motion carried; at 5:24 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Monday, November 28, 2005

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/11/28

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibility laid upon them. Give us all a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Amen.

Hon. members, Mr. Paul Lorieau is with us today in the Speaker's gallery. He'll lead us in the singing of our national anthem. I'd invite all members and individuals in the gallery to join in the singing in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my great pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House three very special guests, who are seated in your gallery. I see that they've risen. On my far right is Mr. Bart West, honorary colonel of the 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron and co-chair of the Edmonton Salutes Committee and an ATCO volunteer supreme. Next to him there are Lieutenant Colonel Paul Keddy, commanding officer of the 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron, who took over the command on June 30 of this year, and Squadron Chief Warrant Officer Brian Maudsley.

Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant Colonel Keddy held a senior position as the Canadian commander with NORAD for the four years after the 9/11 tragedy in the United States, for which he received the United States President's meritorious service medal. Beginning in 1974, Chief Warrant Officer Maudsley has had a long and distinguished career in the Canadian armed forces and has been involved overseas in operations in Cyprus and Egypt.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly a unique unit which is reflected through the members in the gallery in that they are the only air force unit in Canada that works on an army brigade base, our base here at the Edmonton Garrison. Approximately 100 helicopter tactical unit members will be leaving Edmonton for Afghanistan in February 2006 on peace support operations. I know that we wish them all well, and I would ask that we now thank them and warmly welcome them with our usual traditional applause. [applause]

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 42 enthusiastic grade 6 students along with their teachers, Natalie Gago-Estevés and Laurie Moreau, and parent helper Sabine Sintenis. The students are from Brander Gardens elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They're here today to observe and learn with keen interest about government, although I can tell you that from the questioning I had shortly after pictures were taken today, many members of the House could go to school with them. I had questions about health care, about waiting lists, about the prosperity bonus, about gas prices, about numerous other very relevant issues. Earlier today they participated in decorating a tree in the pedway and took a tour of the legislative buildings. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they now stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, I have great pleasure in introducing to you and through you to members of the Assembly four individuals formerly from Africa who are present here in the members' gallery today, three of whom have made Edmonton their home and one of whom is visiting from England. Originally from Kampala, Uganda, and presently living in England is Aruna Kara; originally from Kampala, Uganda, is Bena Pattni; from Tanga, Tanzania, is Arvind Pattni; and from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, is Mr. Naren Mehta. I see that they are now standing. Would all members please accord them the warm hospitality of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate groups to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. The first group is a group from Suzuki charter school in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. The group numbers 24 individuals. They are led by Mr. Ian Gray and Mrs. Roberta Stewart. They are accompanied by parents Mrs. Embree and Mrs. Hardy. It is always a pleasure to have Mr. Gray's class from Suzuki school join us here in the Legislative Assembly. Certainly, it is interesting to visit his class as the students are always polite and respectful, and they are very current on issues that happen in this Assembly. They are in the public gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The second group that I would like to introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this Assembly is from Forest Heights elementary school. This is a grade 6 class. There are 32 students, two teachers, and two parents here today. The teachers are Ms Amanda Burnett and Mrs. Judy Wiest. The parent helpers this afternoon are Mr. Keith McKinnon and Mr. Mohammed Kabir. Mr. Kabir and his two daughters, Hasina and Sulima, as well as two other students, Anosha and Tahmina, are new immigrants to Canada, originally from Afghanistan. They are also in the public gallery. I would now ask this group to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of 32 bright-eyed students from Afton school of the arts, which is one of my favourite schools in Edmonton-Meadowlark. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Wendy Reddekopp, and parent helpers Mrs. Lisa Adam, Mrs. Darlene Schmidt, Ms Teresa Hyatt,

and Mr. Brad Larsen. I'd ask that they please stand and accept the traditional warm greeting of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Tracy Minnifée. Tracy is a second-year social work student at Grant MacEwan College. She's the proud single mother of her talented seven-year-old daughter, Akesha. Akesha is a rising swimming star in Alberta, who hopes to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games. We have been privileged and honoured to have had Tracy work in my constituency office since June. I now ask that Tracy rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly someone very special to me: my mother, Marion Eggen. Marion worked for 27 years at the Royal Alexandra hospital here in Edmonton. She is a tireless volunteer and community activist. She is seated in the public gallery. I would like everyone to please give her the traditional warm welcome.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Edmonton Eskimos

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I stand today to recognize a group of outstanding individuals who have made all Albertans proud in this our centennial year. I'm speaking, of course, about the Edmonton Eskimos. [applause] They have brought the Grey Cup home after the most exciting Grey Cup championship in years. The Eskimos' 38 to 35 victory over the Montreal Alouettes in overtime had fans across the country, including me, on the edge of our seats until the very end – I was, really – and it was a very exciting finish. In fact, I understand that it was the first time in over 40 years that the Grey Cup was decided in overtime.

It was a fitting end to a fantastic season for the Eskimos and their fans throughout Alberta and across the country, including the Minister of Finance. In a province where we are blessed – and indeed we are – to have two outstanding CFL teams, we always come together at Grey Cup time to wave the Alberta banner high and loudly cheer our team on to victory. As Premier of this great province I am proud to say that I cheered as loudly as anyone in Vancouver yesterday. I might add: maybe not louder than Lynn Hall in my office. I could hear her all the way to Vancouver. But I was cheering pretty loudly, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that Edmonton's mayor, Stephen Mandel, is just as thrilled to know that his Montreal counterpart will wear the Eskimos' uniform today as a symbol of Edmonton's football supremacy.

Congratulations to coach Danny Maciocia – I had the opportunity of meeting him, and he makes me feel old – also to quarterback and most valuable player, Ricky Ray; our outstanding Canadian, Mike Mauer; all the Eskimo players; Hugh Campbell; Rick LeLacheur; and all those in the Eskimo organization.

I know that the team just arrived home a short time ago to a championship welcome at the airport, and I encourage all Edmonton

Eskimo fans to cheer on the team at their official championship celebration in downtown Edmonton tomorrow.

So congratulations to the Edmonton Eskimos on winning the 93rd Grey Cup championship and showing all of Canada why Edmonton is called the city of champions.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciated the comments from the Premier. Like most Albertans yesterday, I'm sure, I sat with family and friends to watch our Eskimos battle it out for the 93rd annual Grey Cup in Vancouver. The Eskimos were in fine form as they claimed their second Grey Cup title in three years with the overtime win, and I think it's their 13th Grey Cup title in total. I'm sure that everyone here will agree that this was probably the hardest fought Grey Cup victory in history. It was only the second time in the CFL's 93 years that the Grey Cup was awarded in overtime. The last time was in 1961, when Winnipeg defeated the Tiger-Cats from Hamilton.

The Eskimos are great representatives of Edmonton. They remind all Canadians where the City of Champions is, and they work tirelessly in our city with community groups. It's clear that they're committed to serving Edmonton, whether it's raising money for local food banks, participating in Read In week programs in schools, or visiting kids in the hospital. For that we should all be very, very proud.

A big thank you to rookie coach, Danny Maciocia, for a job well done as well as to the Grey Cup MVP, Ricky Ray, for his outstanding performance. I have to mention Jason Maas, who conducted himself with incredible class through the whole season. As well, there was the outstanding Canadian, a good prairie boy, Mike Mauer, and let's not forget the record set by Tony Tompkins for his longest punt return in Grey Cup history.

Vancouver should be commended for its efforts in hosting the event for the sold-out crowd of 60,000 fans. I'm sure that there were many Edmontonians in the audience. Unfortunately, I wasn't among them, but we were all cheering on the Green and Gold.

The Grey Cup is one of the greatest Canadian traditions, one that brings everyone together to celebrate our very best in football. I'd like to congratulate and all MLAs I'm sure would like to congratulate the entire Edmonton Eskimos team, coaches, staff, and families for bringing the Grey Cup back to where it belongs, right here in Edmonton.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I suspect the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview would like to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to allow his leader to participate, and I suspect that that would be given.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that, to all members of the House. On behalf of the NDP opposition I want to add my congratulations to the 2005 Grey Cup winners, the Edmonton Eskimos. When it comes to excellence in professional sports, it's hard to beat the record of excellence of the Edmonton Eskimos CFL franchise. The Eskimos haven't missed the playoffs in well over 30 years, Mr. Speaker. During that time the Eskimos have won 10 Grey Cups, including a record five in a row, and now two Grey Cups in the last three years.

We all know that the CFL game is the most exciting brand of football in North America, Mr. Speaker, and yesterday's Grey Cup ranked right up there as one of the most exciting cups ever. It really did have all of us on the edge of our seats. I'm sure I'm not the only one to have provided my television set with a great deal of coaching advice during the game.

I also want to give recognition to the Montreal Alouettes and congratulate them on being such worthy opponents, thereby making the Eskimos' victory all that much sweeter.

So congratulations to President Hugh Campbell, Head Coach Danny Maciocia, MVP Ricky Ray, and all of the Eskimo players and coaches. You should feel justifiably proud of your accomplishments in going from a third-place finish to sipping champagne from the Grey Cup.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner would like to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to participate as well.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It truly is a great privilege to stand. I was born here in Edmonton. I've been an Eskimo fan all my life. [interjections] Good roots.

It was a true privilege to watch yesterday as they put on a superb team effort under the leadership of Ricky Ray and as they forged ahead many times, not showing any discouragement, knowing that they were true champions.

It's a pleasure to be from Alberta, to be able to stand proud and to say that we put in our 100 per cent effort here. It's my hope that we'll follow the leadership of the championships of the sports teams in this province and continue to forge on and to be a leading province in not only Canada but the world in all the things that we do and the efforts that we make.

Thank you, and congratulations once again to the Eskimos for their superb effort.

The Speaker: Well, thank you all very much. In that spirit of harmony I truly am going to look forward to question period.

I would also like to acknowledge the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, who did carry through in the direction given to him by the chair the other day to provide all members with an Edmonton Eskimos T-shirt. That's the source.

head: 1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to my questions in previous weeks and months regarding enforcement problems at the Alberta Securities Commission, the Minister of Finance has made repeated requests for specific concerns. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Given that Lancer funds purchased 49 per cent of Zi Corporation's equity without the ASC ringing any alarms about insiders, why should investors be confident in the ASC enforcement processes?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, to put it simply, the Auditor General has reviewed the work at the Alberta Securities Commission. He

had full access to all files, and while he did raise concerns about proper documentation, he did not find evidence that any of those files should be reopened.

I have complete confidence in the Auditor General's review of the Alberta Securities Commission. I have complete confidence that the Alberta Securities Commission has stated very clearly in their management response to his report that they will follow up on all of the Auditor General's recommendations immediately, with the exception of one in which they requested a bit more time to review policies across Canada before coming back with a final plan.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that a Zi Corporation shareholder complained to the ASC, seeking action against Zi's violation, why was the ASC in a letter to the shareholder, which I will table, so content to quickly close its file on Zi without a thorough investigation?

Mrs. McClellan: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the hon. member knows very clearly that the Minister of Finance, to whom the Alberta Securities Commission reports, does not involve herself in the day-to-day operations of the Alberta Securities Commission and their handling of files. However, it is my responsibility to ensure that those files are handled appropriately. The Auditor General has made recommendations that will improve the documentation supporting their decisions. The Alberta Securities Commission has agreed that that should happen, and in fact that is in process now.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister wanted specifics, so to the same minister: given that 11 and a half per cent of Zi Corporation's shares were sold with neither the buyer nor the seller filing anything with the ASC, which is a breach of Canadian securities law, why should investors be confident in the ASC's enforcement procedures?

Mrs. McClellan: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has reviewed all of the Alberta Securities Commission's enforcement procedures. They have made recommendations. The Auditor General has made very specific recommendations on how to ensure that proper documentation follows every file. The Alberta Securities Commission has responded in their management response saying clearly that they will put those processes in place, that the Auditor General again will follow up as part of any special audit, meeting with the Alberta Securities Commission at an appropriate time to ensure that that is happening. Surely, the hon. member opposite does not believe that this Legislature is going to take on the job of investigating files.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to my questions last week concerning possible political interference in the Alberta Securities Commission, the minister made it clear that she had never interfered in the commission. She was equally clear that she could not speak for anyone else, for other ministers. My questions are to the Minister of Finance. In the days that have passed since my question, has the minister shown the initiative to ask other current and former members of cabinet if they have ever intervened in the operations of the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, if I could go back to *Hansard* of Thursday, I answered this question by telling the hon. member that I could tell him “unequivocally that I have never called to influence any case.” I don’t think it would be appropriate for me to comment on other members, some of which I may not even know, depending on how far back you want to go. However, I did say that rather than casting aspersions on members of this House, past or present, if the hon. member had any – any – real, factual information on this rather than suggestions and innuendo, then he should bring them forward. I stand by that statement.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Finance. Since she is the minister responsible for the Alberta Securities Commission, can the minister now assure the Assembly that no other cabinet ministers in this government, current or previous, have interfered in the operations of the Alberta Securities Commission? Can she give us that assurance?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again – again – as I said last week, I find this line of questioning quite distasteful because day after day, week after week this hon. member has cast suspicion, hints of doubt, maybes, unnamed sources, and when sources are named, unknown persons who might have done these things.

If you have any – any – factual information, you have a responsibility, I believe, hon. member, to bring it forward. I have no information that would suggest that.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My previous question had plenty of specific information, and she sloughed it off.

An Hon. Member: Where is it?

Dr. Taft: Read the *Hansard*. Read the *Hansard*.

To the same minister: can the minister assure the Assembly that no staff of cabinet ministers have interfered in the operations of the Securities Commission? Give us the assurance.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have stated very clearly in this House that I have not interfered. To the best of my knowledge my staff has not and would not interfere. I can think of no reason why they would.

Again, I find it very distasteful. I find it demeaning to this House that day after day after day there are allegations, suspicions, hints, and maybes that cast, I think, doubtful aspersions on members of this House, past and present.

On the issue of staff, again, Mr. Speaker, I have no reason to believe that any of my staff would have interfered.

The Speaker: Third official opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Teachers’ Unfunded Pension Liability

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 1992 Alberta teachers were stuck with a bad pension deal. While the Conservatives like to boast that the two-thirds/one-third deal is acceptable, frankly, it is not. The \$6 billion unfunded liability is leaving an unreasonable share of the burden on the backs of our children’s teachers. My first question is for the Education minister. Given that the Education minister said in this House on November 17 that he cannot enter into discussions right now and that it’s not even on the

government’s radar, what is it that’s preventing this government from opening new pension negotiations with Alberta’s teachers immediately? What are you waiting for?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, my comment was in reference to that specific moment during the debate. This has been an issue that we’ve talked about very openly, in fact, with teachers and with schools boards. We discussed it with some of the school boards just recently both at the ASBA conference and in some of the 62 school board meetings I had. The simple fact is that there was an agreement that was signed by the teachers through their ATA and by the government through the minister of the day and the Premier of the day to ensure that the unfunded pension liability would be addressed. The government assumed two-thirds of the responsibility; that’s \$4 billion. Teachers agreed to look after the other one-third, or the \$2 billion.

We’re working on trying to open up some of those chats again because we do recognize that there are impacts on this particular issue for the recruitment of new teachers and for sustaining the ones that we have. It’s a very serious issue, and it’s one that I have undertaken to comment on further in the new year. That’s what I plan to do.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Why does this minister think that it’s such a good deal for Alberta taxpayers to pay more than \$30 billion over the next 55 years instead of the \$4 billion it’s owed today?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don’t remember saying that. Again, I don’t remember saying that this is such a good deal. But what I do know is that two parties made an agreement some years ago and signed on to this agreement. I think the Minister of Education has very clearly laid out that this is not a subject that we are averse to speaking about. I think that each one of us in here, in this Assembly, that has ATA representatives has talked about this. I know that I do with mine and talk about possible solutions in the future. But please don’t attribute that I said that this was such a good deal. I don’t remember saying that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister please tell the 30,000 Alberta teachers and their families as well as all of the outstanding students considering a career as a teacher why they should be paying the equivalent of a new car payment every month for the rest of their working lives for an unfunded liability that they did not create?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, when this was discussed and an agreement put together some years ago, there were two parties that assumed responsibility for this. Two parties. So it will be the two parties, and it will be our Minister of Education that engages the other party in this discussion.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Securities Commission (continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Whitewash, snow job, smokescreen, ongoing cover-up are just a few of the words that spring to mind after reading the Alberta Securities Commission

November 23 chronology involving its director of enforcement's speculative trading activities. While the government continues to defend the ASC's handling of the matter, the assistant dean of U of T's Rotman School of Management is asking: "How can they let this guy keep his job? It doesn't make any sense at all." To the Minister of Finance: why is the director of enforcement not being required to step aside while his trading activities are independently investigated?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, there has been a review of that. It is outlined very clearly in the document that I provided to the House, a letter from the Alberta Securities Commission, from the chair. It does outline entirely how this trade occurred. I don't think I'll take the House's time to read this again. I don't see anything that would suggest that there's a cover-up. It's here in black and white, and it's quite lengthy.

So, Mr. Speaker, it has been investigated. It has been reviewed, and it states very clearly in the review that the ASC management had considered the matter thoroughly and had determined that although there was a breach of ASC policy, there was no use of confidential information, that there was no interference with the conduct of the ASC file, and there was no breach of ethical standards. The matter of the breach by the director of enforcement of the ASC's policy has been dealt with internally with the Alberta Securities Commission. No whitewash, no cover-up, but there it is: black and white.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, only this minister would go on the statement.

Why is the minister relying on the statement of the ASC chair in exonerating the director of enforcement when the ASC chair himself is implicated in breaching security regulations, thereby undermining the credibility of his claims?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, you know, to draw the two together is quite ridiculous. Actually, the occasion occurred before he was the chair if you want to split hairs.

However, if you go to the Auditor General's report, Mr. Speaker, he deals quite extensively with the trading activities by employees. He outlines very clearly the events and what happened with that trade, and he did recommend very clearly that there be processes put in place to ensure as much as possible that this could not happen again. The Alberta Securities Commission has agreed with that, has agreed to put those in place, has made some changes to date but has assured the minister and, I'm sure, the Auditor General that further changes will be in place by January 1 of 2006.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the ASC chair provided no documentation or evidence whatsoever to back up his claim that there was no wrongdoing by the director of enforcement in this case, will the minister provide the House with a detailed independent investigation that will show one way or another whether or not these people are telling the truth?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the hon. member, if he thought this through, would expect me to table in the House details of trading information. I don't think that he would expect me to do that. That would be certainly breaching my responsibilities respecting the confidentiality of activities. I am convinced, I am satisfied that the proper information has been provided and that the follow-up of the Auditor General on this matter, who does have the responsibility of respecting the confidentiality of the information, will provide to him all of the information that the Auditor General requires to ensure that this matter has been dealt with appropriately.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Clean Energy Incentives

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The warm feeling all Albertans felt yesterday with the Eskimos' victory will not keep us warm all winter long, and the \$400 energy rebate will quickly be spent on winter heating bills. High energy prices are the result of monopolies and a shortage of energy. To the Premier: what is this government doing to increase the supply of clean electricity and truly drive prices down?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that although the hon. member raises concerns about the rising cost of natural gas energy in particular, we're better off in this province than any other jurisdiction perhaps in North America, perhaps even around the world.

Mr. Martin: The universe.

Mr. Klein: Well, maybe the universe. Who knows? In the terrestrial world. I don't know if there's life beyond. Maybe the hon. member does.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the rebate, the \$400 to every man, woman, and child, of course we were in a position and we are in a position in this province to rebate natural gas prices to a maximum of \$8.75 a gigajoule. That extends through last month I believe, October, November, right through to March, and in the case of some industries that consume more of their gas during the summertime, like irrigators and greenhouse operators, the rebate is extended during the summer months instead of the winter months. So it's very generous.

Mr. Hinman: I was worried time was going to run out.

Will this government take the lead to spur on private research and development that will truly benefit the world into coal gasification and CO₂ sequestration through aggressive tax incentives as it has for the development of the Alberta oil sands?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, we aren't using tax incentives right now, but we have established the Alberta ingenuity fund, which is under the Ministry of Innovation and Science. I don't know what that fund stands at right now, but it certainly is in excess of half a billion dollars, and individuals and companies can draw on that fund to initiate and proceed on defined research relative to coal-bed methane, coal gasification, clean-coal technologies, and perhaps there are others.

I'll have the hon. minister complement my question.

The Speaker: He may have an opportunity in the next question forthcoming from the hon. member.

Mr. Hinman: The question wasn't on government grants; it was on tax incentives.

Will this government allow Alberta's energy companies to forge ahead in the research and development for cleaner and environmentally economical energy sources like wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass reactors through aggressive tax incentives?

2:10

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, outside of the oil sands royalty regime we are basically out of that business. Not only have we had pressure to apply tax incentives to research relative to coal and other energy

sources such as wind and solar, but we've had requests from the movie industry and other industries to get back into the tax credit business. As the hon. member well knows, that would violate our laws. That would violate our laws. The Financial Administration Act simply says that we cannot get back into that business. Now, if the hon. member wants to bring forward an amendment to the Financial Administration Act next spring, he's entitled to do so, but he'll have to remember the words that were spoken by so many Albertans during the early '90s: for God's sake, get out of the business of picking winners and losers. If he wants us to get back into that business, then fine.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Aboriginal Issues

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, last weekend Canadian political and aboriginal leaders, including our Premier and the minister of aboriginal affairs, launched a \$5.1 billion strategy to end aboriginal poverty at the first ministers' meeting in Kelowna. This is a very significant agreement, especially for the 94,000 status Indians and 66,000 Métis and Inuit, who make up 6 per cent of our population in Alberta. I understand that this agreement is directed at areas like education and health care to allow aboriginals to live healthier and happier lives. Could the minister of aboriginal affairs identify what decisions were made in the various sectors of housing, education, health, economic opportunities, and relationships and accountability?

The Speaker: Well, if the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development can do that in 45 seconds, go for it.

Ms Calahasen: Well, this is a very important question. First of all, that was a really great meeting. It was a very productive meeting, and our Premier led us very well, and I want to say thank you for his statesmanship. We were able to come out . . . [interjections] Excuse me. You've got to listen to this. This is important to aboriginal people. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, on the educational side there definitely were commitments made on dollars, and I want to identify these dollars because these are very, very important: first of all, on the education side, \$1.8 billion; on housing and infrastructure, \$1.6 billion; on relationships and accountability, \$170 million; on economic opportunities, \$200 million; on health, \$1.3 billion. Of course, that all totals up to \$5.1 billion. I would love to talk about the outcomes, but I'll leave that for the second question.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. How will the outcomes of the first ministers' meeting impact aboriginal people in Alberta?

Ms Calahasen: Well, let me get to the point. As the hon. member indicated, much of the funding will be directed through federal government programs for education, health, housing, and of course the other areas. We do look at education from K to 12, Mr. Speaker. That's to increase the number of aboriginal high school students. More funds will be available for innovative education and for off-reserve schools.

On the postsecondary side, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to pick some areas that we've been working on: increased number of aboriginal postsecondary graduates, more funding for scholarships

and apprenticeships; on the health side new targets to reduce rates of infant mortality, youth suicide, diabetes, and of course violence against women, to double the number of health professionals; on the housing side, of course, to reduce the housing shortages. There is a housing shortage on reserves here in the province of Alberta in the amount of 20,000 homes. So when we look at that, no one can get anything done or deal with the poverty issues if they don't have adequate homes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many people have suggested that the ownership of their own homes would improve the quality of life and reduce poverty for First Nations people, what has this government committed to to improve the quality of life among aboriginal people in Alberta?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, of course, the housing was a huge issue, as I indicated. There were some 20,000 shortages of homes in the province of Alberta alone. What has happened in that respect is that the federal government is willing to look at options to deal with the shortage and to be able to close the gap. Their approach could result in improving, I would say, market-based approaches to home ownership on First Nations reserves. That's an important part because it'll depend on the First Nations to be able to do that. Funding is also required to ensure that we begin to look at other options to deliver their homes for the First Nations. Therefore, I was very pleased to see that the federal government was willing to look at other options than just the usual, that has been creating some problems on reserves.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Enron has always been a winner with this government. [interjections] In December of 2001 this government – and this is not a laughing matter – found it undesirable and unnecessary to release publicly the details of the cabinet decision to split the Sundance B power purchase arrangement owned by Enron. This sweetheart deal allowed Enron to quickly sell this generation capacity to AltaGas Services Inc. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Why did the Progressive Conservative cabinet have the opinion that the publication of the deal be deemed undesirable and unnecessary to the public?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, I guess what is known is that the policy that came forward at the time was to split that power purchase arrangement into two and that that would be in the best interests of Albertans so that they'd have a greater opportunity for more companies being involved in our marketplace.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the same minister: why was this deal made with Enron here in Alberta when at the same time in America Enron was under investigation for fraud and electricity price fixing?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, this was not a deal done with Enron and the government.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, it was. They wanted you to do it.

The Speaker: The hon. minister has the floor.

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, it was an arrangement which they requested at that stage, wanting to sell their power purchase arrangement, which companies are allowed to do at any time. This is a marketplace that we've accepted. Those who have bought those arrangements are in the marketplace and allowed to resell them. That could happen any time. At this stage they just asked for the ability to split that power purchase arrangement into two smaller amounts, which we also concurred was a very good policy.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: why did the Progressive Conservative government allow Enron's legal department to dictate the wording of the secret changes to the power purchase arrangements? Call it what you want: an arrangement or a contract. Why did you allow Enron to call the shots?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing secret about this at all. As I've just said, any company can submit ideas. The department is always acting independently on behalf of Albertans. The Energy and Utilities Board likewise will act independently on behalf of the benefits of Albertans. We will assess policy as cabinet as we deem in the best interests of Albertans. In this case that was done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Lunchtime Supervision in Schools

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My office is receiving an increasing number of calls from parents who are raising some opposition to the lunchtime supervision fees. To the Minister of Education: why are students or their parents required to pay to eat their own lunches at school?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I would suspect that most students across the province aren't expected to pay a fee. If there are some schools where that type of policy is in place, then that's entirely a decision made by the local school board and by the school in particular. I would further suspect that if they are charging a fee for that lunchtime supervision, they're probably doing it on a straight cost-recovery basis with respect to perhaps labour costs, perhaps cleanup costs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since some parents can't afford to pay what I understand is \$20 per child per month, are there any options for those parents other than paying those fees?

2:20

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are probably some schools, particularly I would think within Edmonton public, whose policies I'm somewhat familiar with, where, in fact, supervision programs are undertaken by volunteers. Some of them are comprised of parents, others of volunteers who just come forward in the system. I think that's probably one option for them to pursue right there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our parents are not only volunteers, but are teachers not involved in supervising our children in schools during lunchtime, which would then alleviate the fees?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that many teachers

are involved in supervisory-type activities, be it at lunchtime or before school starts or after school, but I also think that there are probably in some cases restrictions within contracts, within negotiated settlements where if teachers are teaching only a specified number of minutes in a given week, then perhaps they're not able to supervise during lunchtime. It will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and from school to school. I think the important point is that if any parent feels that they cannot afford fees where, in those few cases, fees are being charged for lunchtime supervision, they can always talk to the principal and have some of those fees waived. That pertains, for example, to people in hardship cases, perhaps, or people with special-needs children or where distance might be a factor and so on.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Minable Oil Sands Strategy

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government has sent a clear message to oil sands companies around the world that we are open for business in our boreal forest area under the minable oil sands strategy before we understand the environmental implications. I quote the University of Alberta's tailings research expert, Dr. Segeo. No one has come up with a technique to deal with the tailings pond, he said, including the toxic metals naphthalene and bitumen. To the Minister of Environment: how can the minister say that we understand the environmental consequences of tripling oil sands output in the next decade?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, through the chair, first of all I have never said that we understand the consequences of the important point that the hon. member has made. In fact, I think that in the proper context of what was described, we are open for business but not in any way, shape, or form at the compromise of environmental principles in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how can the minister be believed when he says, as he did last week in the House, that the industry has reduced greenhouse gases by 50 per cent when the target of this government is 50 per cent reduction by 2020?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, it's important to recognize this: over the past 25 years technology and renewable energies have played an important role in Alberta, and that's why Alberta, this province, is viewed by, actually, the federal government and other governments as a leader in dealing with the issue of reducing greenhouse gases. Let me say without any fear of contradiction that as we go forward, technology will continue to play a key role, and let me repeat for the members and the hon. member that in the past 25 years relative to the economic output per barrel of oil the actual greenhouse gas emissions per barrel have been reduced by 50 per cent.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister of Environment take a stand and slow the development of the oil sands in the interest of people and the environment, particularly the First Nations?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, absolutely yes. We have taken a stand in the past and we will in the future. I want to remind the hon. members that of the six principles of the minable oil sands strategy

number 4 talks about this: "Within the coordinated development zone there will be progressive, timely and seamless reclamation to a self-sustaining boreal forest ecosystem." I think that principle in itself clearly indicates the importance of environmental principles as we go forward. Open for business for development, but at the same time mining will never, ever, ever overshadow the economic but, more importantly, the environmental principles of this government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

School Infrastructure Needs in Calgary

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgary's population is rapidly increasing on the order of 25,000 new residents every year, and so is residential community expansion, and so is our student population. Our school board is under tremendous pressure to accommodate all of these new needs for building new schools, for expanding existing schools, for modernizing aging schools. My question today is to the Minister of Education. Given such a desperate need for more school facilities, what are you going to do, and how will your plan to consolidate the infrastructure of schools within the Ministry of Education help the school boards?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree: Calgary is one of the high-growth areas. We have started on helping to address some of the infrastructure needs there. In particular, the \$10.9 million that went to the Calgary Catholic board for their new school in Tuscany will help, and so, too, will the \$13 million or so to Calgary public for their new school in Shawnessy-Somerset help a lot.

I have met with the board on a few occasions. I am aware of some of their additional needs over and above that. I think it's important to just note that there are about \$59 million worth of projects already under way involving seven different locations with the Calgary board of education right now, on the infrastructure piece, and there are about four new schools that are being added to the Calgary Catholic system that will be opened shortly, I hope, and they total about \$33 million. The consolidation piece is really a recommendation coming out of the Commission on Learning, where they said: please bring all of the infrastructure piece under the guise of Alberta Education. So that's what we're moving toward doing right now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that we have the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation, what are you going to do to clear up any confusion regarding which ministry is responsible for school construction planning and approval?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that there's minimal if not no confusion whatsoever because I've just finished meeting with all 62 school boards, and we talked specifically about this. In a nutshell, there are three pieces to the infrastructure component. One of them is IMR, or infrastructure maintenance renewal programs, formerly the old BQRP program for building quality restoration, the second one is plant operations and maintenance, and the third one is, of course, school construction projects. So I've cleared that up with them. The piece dealing with plant operations and maintenance has formally been transferred to Education, so we're dealing with that now. In fact, there was an augmentation of about 43 million additional dollars over and above the 300 and some million that's already there. The other two pieces will be flowing our way as soon as we can get there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that construction of a school needs a long lead time in planning, architecture, financing, and so on, when will you provide the school boards with a long-term plan to address ongoing school infrastructure needs?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, that is a very good question, Mr. Speaker, and I think most members here would know that we do provide significant dollars, in the hundreds of millions, to address infrastructure needs in a general sense.

I will acknowledge two things quickly. One is that the \$207 million of unanticipated surplus monies that went into the system through an announcement I made in September will certainly help address many of those needs, but we do need stable, predictable funding to help deliver on the capital plans as submitted by the school boards, and we're working on that right now as we start preparing our budgets. Whether or not we will get the full amount of money in comparison with the other ministries such as health care and advanced ed and seniors and roads and transportation and so on remains to be seen. Suffice it to say, hon. member, that I do support the need for stable and predictable planning, and we'll do our best to respond as we can.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, the majority of Albertans and Canadians support the Kyoto protocol, while Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase dramatically. Alberta's policy purports to decrease emission intensity, but the actual result is an alarming increase to the absolute emissions that actually pass into the air. The Alberta plan is based on math only George Bush can love, and in fact the *Globe and Mail* reports today through the United Nations Secretariat that Canada's emissions across the country have gone up by 24 per cent over 1990 levels. My question is to the Minister of Environment. How can the minister go to Montreal insisting that the Alberta government's plan heads down the same path as the Kyoto protocol when the Alberta plan allows our total greenhouse gas emissions to increase up to 37 per cent higher than 1990 levels?

2:30

Mr. Boutilier: Well, I think the hon. member raises an important point, that being that any province in this country if they were blessed with the resource that we have would be taking the prudent, responsible environmental action that we take. I want to remind the hon. member that the resource that we develop in this province with important environmental principles is shared with people in Quebec and in Ontario and other parts because they drive cars and they want their homes fuelled. I want to remind other parts of the province and the hon. member that the resource we actually develop in this province, which, true, has been expanding, the oil sand development, we're providing to markets. So ultimately the consumption is because of the demand by other Canadians in other provinces. We are delivering on that demand, but we are doing it continually in an environmentally sustainable way.

Mr. Eggen: If we produce it, we should be responsible.

Given that the oil sands exploration is the single most greenhouse gas intensive form of oil extraction in the world, can the minister explain how tripling oil sands production without any real govern-

ment commitment to investing in renewable energy can lead to an absolute reduction in greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, in our minable oil sands strategy the six principles are talking about the environmental principles of ensuring that any future development, along with past development, is done where reclamation is done properly, where people are consulted with. The Minister of Innovation and Science may want to complement on the example of the EnergyINet, which is making real results in protecting the environment as well.

Mr. Eggen: To the same minister: if the environment minister is serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, when will he commit in this House to firm dates and policies on the following: net metering, low-impact renewable energy, real . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, sit down. We'll take one at a time. That's what question period is about.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Speaker: You sure as heck can have one.
The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. On the important point of the impact of what Alberta is doing, I spoke with my federal colleague the other day, the Minister of the Environment from the federal government. In a letter to me he makes reference to the fact of the EnergyINet, the first province in Canada with Climate Change Central, the first province with a law, the first province going out in a consultation to ensure that there is no duplication between provincial jurisdictions and federal jurisdictions in regulating final large emitters.

I believe that at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, because in Fort McMurray, in the oil sands – not only am I Minister of Environment, but my family breathes that air and works that land and drinks that water. I can assure you and the hon. member and all members and all Albertans that we're going to make sure that environmental principles are protected and sustained for future generations because it's my family as well that's involved.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Health Care Operating Costs

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again emergency rooms in Alberta are having to divert ambulances because the ERs don't have the beds to put people in. The backlog is created because there is no available space or staff to admit patients to the hospital, and in both Edmonton and Calgary orthopaedic surgeries have been cancelled because the hospitals lack staff and bed space. My questions are all to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How much longer will the minister let this go on? Two weeks? Two months? Indefinitely? How much longer?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, all across Canada the problem of crowding in emergency rooms exists, and in actual fact it's a situation that both the health authorities and the municipalities are addressing. They're looking at ways and means and looking at ways of co-ordinating. One of the reasons why, I believe, over the past several months we've been looking at how we properly co-ordinate a ground ambulance delivery is that it was recognized that it was important for the regional health authority to have a role in that co-ordination with

frequently provided municipal contract or managed services. There are peaks and valleys in various facilities where that occurs. We know it's a problem. We know that frequently there are long waits, but we do our best to prioritize the patients on entry and give those that are most in need of treatment that treatment as required.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: Albertans want to know why surgeries are being cancelled and ERs are diverting patients when the minister has \$1.4 billion to fund bricks and mortar.

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, the \$1.4 billion that was assigned from unbudgeted surplus this year for future construction is a good-news story. This year several million, \$146 million, are being spent on projects throughout Alberta to sustain the growth and development of those projects either at the design stage or in renovation. I think that any time you have, for example, a city, like Calgary, growing by about 25,000 people a year, it's very difficult to keep pace with all of the facilities as you would wish.

One of the most important things we did this year was expand our capacity on the wait-list so that people who aren't able to be served in one community can look at the wait-list and see what capacity exists in other regions or with other medical practitioners because we are linked with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to give that acknowledgement on the registry.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: when will the minister provide existing hospitals with the operating dollars necessary to provide safe and adequate care for their patients? When?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, in this past budget year the overall macrobudget of Health and Wellness was some 8.3 per cent increase. If you factor in operating expense, each regional authority received different amounts of money depending on the menu of services they provide as well as the province-wide services. To say that they haven't got the right amount of money depends on exactly what concern is being raised. For the most part you could look across Canada and find no better funding for health for people in any part of the community than you can in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Labour Force Resources

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Everyone knows that Alberta's economy is hot. Such a thriving economy means there aren't enough skilled workers for jobs that are available. No matter where one goes, employers are looking for help. My question to the minister is: what is the government doing to develop Alberta's labour force?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. Our government is developing a long-term labour force strategy to meet Alberta's current and future labour needs. The strategy will focus on a number of areas including informing

people and organizations about Alberta's labour market opportunities and trends, attracting Albertans to the workforce and workers to Alberta, developing and increasing the skills and knowledge of current workers, and of course trying to retain current workers in the Alberta labour force.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the same minister. Given that 32 of 53 occupational groups are reporting an unemployment rate of less than 3 per cent, a definite skill shortage, what is Human Resources and Employment specifically doing to address skill shortages?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, part of our strategy is that Human Resources and Employment and Advanced Education are co-leading the development of a long-term labour supply strategy to ensure that Alberta remains internationally competitive and productive. Human Resources and Employment alone is spending \$288 million this year to help people get the training and information they need so they can keep meaningful employment.

Mr. Goudreau: My last question is also to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. When you say that we need to increase our labour force's productivity, do you mean that workers will need to do more with less?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker. No. Improving labour productivity means investing in innovation and enhancing employees' training to develop a highly skilled and safe workforce. The future of Alberta's economy depends on the strength of our labour force, and the strength of our labour force depends on the number of workers we have and their skill levels, their health and well-being, and the quality of their workplace.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

2:40

Policing Services

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The safety of Alberta's communities is being threatened by guns, gangs, and senseless acts of violence. Violence among our youth is especially alarming. Police resources are already stretched too much, and the government is not responding. To the Solicitor General: given the alarming increase in violent crimes with guns, especially among our youth, will the Solicitor General take immediate action now to increase police resources and keep our communities safe?

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good question, and yes, we are working as we speak with the chiefs to look at strategies regarding policing, with opportunities in investigating organized crime, opportunities for looking at sharing intelligence information amongst our police agencies in the province. This is extremely important, and it's a very good question because as we move forward, we can't police the same way we were policing 10 years ago or five years ago. Violence in Alberta is important to every Albertan.

In fact, last week we had a number of representatives from all throughout Alberta here in Edmonton with the Minister of Gaming. We met with individuals regarding violence in and around licensed establishments. They're going to be providing us with a number of recommendations in January regarding those issues, but it stems from issues regarding gang activity. It stems from issues regarding the consumption of liquor. So we're going to work with the industry in that area to look at some of those gang violence issues. We have to look at solutions and strategies as we move forward.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our two major urban police services desperately need more resources on the ground to get guns off the street, will the minister finally increase the funding formula for policing in our cities? Why are we the last in Canada?

Mr. Cenaiko: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned last week to a similar question, we this past year added almost \$30 million of new funding for policing in this province. Nearly 200 additional officers were put onto the street in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to look at new programs, new strategies. As I mentioned in my last answer, we want to look at new opportunities of how we are investigating crime, violent crime, organized crime, any type of crime in this province, utilizing all of our police services. We have 5,000 officers, but as well the community has to be involved. We need community support. We want the community to be phoning the police and letting us know where the issues are, what the issues are, and how they can help us. So are we going to be looking at additional officers next year? We're preparing our '06-07 budget, and we'll have to wait until the spring to find out.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Given that other jurisdictions in Canada are expanding their resources to deal with gun violence by hiring specialized Crown prosecutors to work directly with police, will the minister commit to similar action for Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have prosecutors in Alberta who are specialized. In fact, we have prosecutors who work closely with the various police groups that are focused on various areas, including organized crime. I can tell you that we intend to follow what happens in the expanded policing here in Alberta and ensure that additional prosecutor resources are made available as the good work of those expanded police forces are shown in our communities.

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six hon. members to participate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Child Care

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The absence of significant direct public funding for child care centres and licensed day homes combined with part-time kindergarten and the absence of public

funding for pre- and after-school care creates serious distress for working parents, especially women, in Alberta. When we compare Alberta to Quebec, we find far lower average wages for child care workers, less parental leave time, fewer supports for stay-at-home parents, and more expensive child care.

There is a better way, Mr. Speaker. First, Alberta must raise the wages for child care workers by using the new federal money for making direct grants to operating centres. This will bring up standards and bring down parent fees. Currently 86 per cent of Alberta's child care spending goes to parent subsidies rather than operating grants to centres. At the other end of the spectrum, Quebec spends 97 per cent of its child care expenditures on operating grants and achieves more affordability for parents. Further, Alberta's child care investments should be made in the nonprofit sector, a position that the NDP opposition is committed to, the only strong voice in the Assembly on that point.

Alberta must also keep the promise that the province made in the wake of the Learning Commission and implement junior and full-day kindergarten. The early education experiences benefit the children enormously and also strengthen our communities and our economy. Parenting centres and support of the municipal FCSS programs would also improve education outcome for all children but especially low-income and aboriginal children.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Alberta must do more for stay-at-home parents. Despite the rhetoric of parental choice, Alberta has never proposed measures such as fiscal reform, changes to labour legislation, employer requirements, or parental insurance top-ups to support caregivers in the home. Let's use the Quebec child care model as a starting point and make changes to our child care program that will provide real choices for Alberta's parents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Private Braun Scott Woodfield

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Year of the Veteran to recognize another Canadian soldier who has paid the ultimate price in the service of our country and in the interests of peace. I speak, of course, of the death of Private Braun Scott Woodfield of G company, second battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment. Private Woodfield lost his life in Afghanistan when his light armoured vehicle rolled over. It was an accident that also injured four of his fellow servicemen.

As has been the case so often, this life was lost far from family and friends and far from his Canadian home of Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia. Private Woodfield was in Afghanistan because he committed himself to the service of his country in war and in peace. It is a commitment that thousands of Canadians have fulfilled in countless fields of conflict over the years. We stand today in honour of that patriotism and duty and in deep sadness that too often those qualities are paid for with the lives of our brave young men and women.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the thoughts of all hon. members are with the Woodfield family and with Private Woodfield's colleagues in arms. We all honour the price that Canadian troops continue to pay in the cause of peace.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Barrier-free Accessibility

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, persons with disabilities and seniors with mobility challenges often find stores, offices, and public

buildings to be inaccessible. For someone in a wheelchair or scooter a curb that may only be a few centimetres high becomes an obstacle that cannot be overcome. Just a few days ago a young man who uses a wheelchair told me that he often drives by buildings and then just keeps on going because they appear not to be accessible.

This is the same concern expressed a few years ago by Glen Lavold, an Ardrossan resident, who because of MS realized that soon he would be unable to access many buildings in his scooter or wheelchair. Glen and I talked a few times about doing an access survey and making that information freely available. Because of the effects of MS Glen was unable to continue the project, but community volunteers Bob and Deanna Loewen and Bob Simpson offered to do the work. They spent hundreds of hours canvassing more than a thousand businesses and services in Sherwood Park and the rest of Strathcona county. Parking, curbs, washrooms, doors, and other features that affect accessibility to stores, offices, and public buildings were examined. The results of this barrier-free survey, the first of any major municipality, are now online at www.communityaccessibility.ca. Now anyone living in Strathcona county or visiting Sherwood Park can check the website to determine how accessible buildings are.

Mr. Speaker, the website www.communityaccessibility.ca is hosted by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities with the support of the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. The Premier's council will be pleased to offer advice to any other volunteers who would like to do a barrier-free survey of their region and provide this valuable service to persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

2:50 University of Alberta Augustana Campus

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency is home to the Augustana faculty, University of Alberta. Augustana serves as the rural presence for the University of Alberta and as such is a key component of our government's rural development strategy.

When Augustana University College and the University of Alberta came together in 2004, creating the Augustana faculty of the University of Alberta, all parties including Augustana, the U of A, and the government of Alberta promised there would be a number of benefits for Augustana students and for the Camrose region. Two important steps in the growth and development of Augustana were undertaken on November 9.

The first was the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the East Central health region and the University of Alberta. This MOU creates a new partnership to provide rural Albertans with increased opportunities to pursue professional health education and careers. Residents in rural communities will benefit from an increased number of health professionals and from an increased focus on the well-being of rural Albertans. The Minister of Health and Wellness and the Minister of Advanced Education were both in attendance for the signing.

Following the MOU signing was the groundbreaking ceremony for the Camrose regional sport development centre, a partnership between the city and county of Camrose, the University of Alberta, and the government of Alberta. The centre will include a large arena with seating for approximately 3,000 people, a second ice surface, a fitness centre and running track, sport training labs, and classroom facilities. This facility will meet the recreation needs of the people of Camrose area and the needs of the University of Alberta, Camrose campus athletics program. The sport development centre is a major

step forward in the Augustana Viking Cup, which is now celebrating its 25th anniversary. The centre will be completed in time for the 2007 Viking Cup.

Taken together, the MOU signing and the groundbreaking ceremony underline the importance of the University of Alberta, Augustana faculty, to my constituency and rural Alberta. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

A Centennial Summary

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In just under fifty legislative days,
We acknowledged our first hundred years,
Fought for smoke free work places
And against the “Third Way’s” two tiers.

We mourned the tragic loss,
Of our great hugger, Lois Hole.
We congratulated Normie Kwong,
As he assumed his new role.

We paid heartfelt homage
To the Mayerthorpe “Four”
Who passed prematurely
Through Heaven’s open door.

We honored our veterans,
Sixty years after their fight,
Having sacrificed for the peace,
We claim as our birthright.

At Wabamun Lake an oil train
Derailed from the track.
While in northern Alberta,
Our Boreal forests are under attack.

Our gracious Queen survived our rain
As well as . . . an errant umbrella,
Thrust in her direction
By government’s number one fellah.

He disappeared, went AWOL,
During this fall’s short sitting,
Avoiding the questions,
That we thought befitting.

His Conservative cousins cringed,
Wishing his tongue was less sharper,
Especially when protruding at
Their Federal father, Stephen Harper.

For while bestowing his blessing,
The predictions he plucked
Caused Peter McKay to call for
Red Green’s tape à la duct.

Edmonton’s green and gold beat
Montréal’s rouge, blanc et bleu.
Tomorrow, the Eskimos’ Grey Cup
Will be paraded for you.

Our centennial year’s ending,
As Christmas fast approaches.
Let us celebrate together
Without regrets or reproaches.

From under the cupola
Of this Legislature’s dome,
We wish Albertans the season’s best
In this great province we call home.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Domestic Violence Handbook

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 28, 2003, in Red Deer Josif Fekete shot and killed his estranged wife, Blagica, and their three-year-old son, Alex, before turning the gun on himself. The Fekete family had a history of involvement with the Red Deer RCMP, and a fatality inquiry cited a number of factors that may have played a role in their deaths. The judge’s recommendations identified several areas for improvement including the need for police training to understand the dynamics of family violence, the need for a clear protocol for dealing with issues of domestic abuse, and the need for a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to family violence.

On Friday the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security released the Domestic Violence Handbook for Police and Crown Prosecutors. The handbook provides information on investigative procedures, prosecutions, victims and abusers, risk factors, and safety planning. Guidelines for developing a domestic violence protocol for police services in Alberta have also been distributed for use with this handbook. It encourages a co-operative and consistent approach for handling domestic violence cases throughout the criminal justice system. This training tool will go a long way toward preventing future tragedies.

I want to congratulate those involved for getting everyone on the same page when it comes to family violence. Seeing that Alberta has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Canada, I will look forward to seeing the impact that this training and the new protocol will have on reducing the rate of family violence in Alberta.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like table a petition today which has 400 signatures on it. The signatures were collected by Lynda and Ron Jonson of Seniors I Care. The petition calls for either the reinstatement of the 25 continuing care beds “that Hinton had before the Good Samaritans Society and the Aspen Health Region changed it to a Designated Assisted Living Facility” or, failing that, commit to build a “new 25 bed Continuing Care Facility in Hinton.”

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I’m submitting a petition signed by concerned parents from various communities including Taber, Magrath, Fresh Start West in Edmonton, Barnwell, Coaldale, Lethbridge, and Fort McLeod. It reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to take measures that will require school boards and schools to eliminate all fees for instructional supplies and materials and general school services, including textbooks, musical instruments, physical education programs, locker rentals, lunch hour supervision, as was mentioned today,

and required field trips, and to ensure that schools are not deprived of the resources necessary to offer these programs and services without additional charges to parents or guardians.
Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Bill 52
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce for first reading Bill 52, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

[Motion carried; Bill 52 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Bill 58
Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a bill being the Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005, and ask that this bill be read and received a first time.

[Motion carried; Bill 58 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Bill 213
Standing Committee on
Continuing Care Standards Act

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 213.

The purpose of that bill is to establish an all-party standing committee that would review and monitor the legislated standards for continuing care facilities, the compliance of those standards, and in return would report to the Assembly on a yearly basis.

[Motion carried; Bill 213 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

3:00 **Bill 214**
Water Protection and Conservation
Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 214, Water Protection and Conservation Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

This bill is designed to enhance the protection, conservation, and long-term management of our water resources in Alberta.

[Motion carried; Bill 214 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Bill 218
Land Agents Licensing (Licence Requirement)
Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 218, the Land Agents Licensing (Licence Requirement) Amendment Act, 2005.

The bill removes the restrictions on who can negotiate on the landowner's behalf for the acquisition of surface interests.

[Motion carried; Bill 218 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and table responses to Written Question 35, which pertains to costs regarding Alberta's incredible SuperNet project, and also to Motion for a Return 17, which pertains to an hon. member's request for information regarding certain ministry-related expenses.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I wish to table for the House five copies of a letter from Reverend Lynn Maki, who is the executive secretary of the Alberta and Northwest Conference of the United Church of Canada. The letter passes on the United Church's congratulatory wishes on the occasion of Alberta's centennial.

Also, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the House I would like to table five copies of my responses to questions raised during Community Development's appearance before the Committee of Supply on the 11th of May 2005.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. The first I wish to table on behalf of the Official Opposition leader is a letter sent to him on November 7, 2005, from Bradley Nemetz of the Bennett Jones law firm telling him to curtail his comments in regard to the ASC or face possible legal sanction. In light of the RCMP probe now under way into the ASC, the opposition leader wants this letter to be part of the public record.

Secondly, I'm tabling with the permission of the recipient a letter from Alan Currie, investigative counsel for the ASC, to a Zi Corporation investor in response to the investor's request for the ASC to look into Zi Corporation's disclosure violation.

The appropriate number of copies of correspondence directed to me, Mr. Speaker, expressing the person's extreme disappointment about the irresponsibility of the Alberta government with the recent announcement of the \$400 payment. They believe that with proper economic policy it could have been put to much better use and end up benefiting Albertans.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of John Flipsen, a constituent: he asks why he was required to get repeated tests when they knew that an operation would be coming in the future. He also attached information on ResPRate, which is a new blood pressure device to assist people with high blood pressure.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise with two sets of tablings. The first is the correspondence from Calgary-Varsity constituent Dr. Ramesh Joshi to the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation concerning the extension to the Confederation Park Senior Citizens Centre. Dr. Joshi calls into question the manner in which the contract was awarded and is concerned about the lack of transparency, accountability, and the use of taxpayers' money.

My second tabling comes to me in my role as Infrastructure and Transportation critic from Diane Newman of Edmonton. While Diane is aware of the excitement and economic benefits of the West Edmonton Mall Grand Prix racing event, she would like to see greater education and emphasis placed on the differences between professional track racing and the dangers associated with street racing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from the Alberta and Northwest Conference of the United Church of Canada addressed to the people of the province of Alberta, celebrating with us the centennial but also reminding us of the challenges to Alberta concerning homelessness, poverty, threats to public health care, assault on the environment, and the need to respect all persons regardless of age, colour, sex, language, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to officially table one T-shirt from the Edmonton Eskimos and two thunder sticks provided through the Edmonton Eskimos. I thank the Clerk and the pages for distributing them before this House was at work so it didn't disrupt the business of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling from my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Adamson. They have a concern about the cost of Alberta health care premiums. They are urging the government to eliminate "this archaic and punitive levy."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received last Thursday from the Minister of Finance. It was provided to me in reply to an earlier oral question involving the settlement between the ATB and West Edmonton Mall. The minister asserts that the government is not soft on corporate crime.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table a number of letters from Albertans regarding the unfunded teachers' liability, and I'll just list a couple of examples. Warren Marcotte says that "to saddle future taxpayers with many billions in debt is beyond [his] comprehension." Phil Mark, a teacher, says, "Could you please have our provincial government deal with this matter with expedient and proper manner?" Doug Johnson says, "It is my belief that teachers in this province would be willing to make this a strike issue in the near future if this issue remains unaddressed." Deen Khan says, "I do think that in this time of plenty . . . the government of this province stand up and face its responsibility towards its teachers."

I'm in receipt of 100 further letters that have been written by teachers from all across the province asking the government to address this very serious issue of the unfunded teachers' liability.

I'm not going to take the time to read them all into the record, but it could be noted . . .

The Speaker: Well, I would hope, hon. member, that you wouldn't – please sit down – because all 83 of us in this Assembly are getting the same ones. If we get 40,000 teachers times 83, we're looking at roughly 3,200,000 tablings. If we start now, next April 14 we'll still be here tabling them. So let's assume that we've got them tabled now. Okay?

head:

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Hancock, Minister of Advanced Education, public postsecondary institutions' audited financial statements, public colleges and technical institutes, for the year ended June 30, 2004, and universities and Banff Centre for Continuing Education for the year ended March 31, 2005; pursuant to the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board 2004-2005 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Melchin, Minister of Energy, responses to questions raised on April 20, 2005, Department of Energy 2005-06 Committee of Supply debate, and return to order of the Assembly MR 26, asked for by Mr. MacDonald on April 25, 2005.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Coutts, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, returns to orders of the Assembly MR 11, MR 12, and MR 13, asked for by Mr. Bonko on April 11, 2005.

On behalf of Mr. Liepert, chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, pursuant to Standing Order 52 the 2004 report of the Select Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund and the 2005 report of the Select Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

3:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I'm just assuming that the hon. member is rising asking for a response to 13(2) of the Standing Orders?

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker, indeed I am rising on that. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder was involved in asking questions to the Minister of Environment, and in one of his supplemental questions he provided what I would call a bit of a laundry list of things that he'd like the minister to respond to. The chair ruled that out of order. The question I have for the chair is that when the hon. Member for Red Deer-North provided a similar laundry list of questions within a supplemental question to the minister of aboriginal affairs, she was not ruled out of order. I'd like to know why.

The Speaker: Hon. member, there's an assumption there that isn't true. The chair did not rule out the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder on a point of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder was speaking. He was proceeding with a question, and he said to the same minister: "If the Environment minister is serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, when will he commit in this House to firm dates and policies on the following . . ." At that point in time the chair rose, stood up. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder continued to speak. The chair said, "Hon. member." The hon. member caught the chair's eye. I saw him catch my eye. The hon. member continued to speak and did not sit down. The chair was standing. At that point in time the chair said, "Sit down" because the first two interventions and interjections did not count.

For the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to

suggest that the chair was going to rule the member out of order on his question is totally erroneous. The chair raised his voice because the hon. member did not sit down when the chair rose. That's the explanation.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, November 24, it is my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given on Thursday, November 24, it is my pleasure to move that motions for returns 49 and 50 be dealt with today. I would just note that since there are no additional motions for returns, there are none to stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

Diploma Examinations

M49. Mr. Flaherty moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all reports, studies, papers, presentations, memos, correspondence, or other ministry documents pertaining to the plan to phase in a method for equating diploma examinations as referenced on page 28 of the Ministry of Learning's 2003-04 annual report.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have reviewed Motion for a Return 49, submitted by the hon. member, and I would like to indicate that I'm prepared to accept Motion for a Return 49, albeit with some amendments. I'll speak to that in just a second, but I would like to indicate firstly that I did share this amendment with the hon. colleague opposite prior to 11 a.m. today as per our procedures.

Now, specific to the amended motion. If I could be allowed to continue briefly, I would just like to explain, Mr. Speaker, that the original motion as presented by the Member for St. Albert requested a copy of all reports and studies and papers and presentations and memos and correspondence or other ministry documents with respect to the planning and phasing in of our method for equating diploma examinations. I just find that that's just so broad, so generic that it isn't focused enough to allow me to respond because I simply can't guarantee that I would be able to provide all, each and every stitch of paper. Sometimes human error may occur.

What I'm simply suggesting in the friendly amendment, hon. member, is to focus the question in a way that would allow me to accept it. I'm hoping that the hon. member opposite would appreciate and understand that and will also appreciate the fact that I am willing to provide the information as outlined in this friendly amendment, as I call it.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the only thing here is that I will undertake to provide everything that I can under the motion as

amended, and I would ask for his and other members' support of that amendment.

The Speaker: Has the amendment been circulated? [interjections] Well, a number of members tell me they haven't seen the amendment.

Are there any comments on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert to conclude the debate.

Mr. Flaherty: So moved, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 49 as amended carried]

Postsecondary Degree Program Approvals

M50. Mr. Chase moved on behalf of Mr. Taylor that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all documents prepared or received by the Ministry of Advanced Education, formerly Learning, between January 1, 2002, and February 28, 2005, pertaining to the accreditation of postsecondary institutions granting baccalaureate degrees, the approval process for institutions seeking to grant baccalaureate degrees, and the establishment of the Campus Alberta Quality Council, including but not limited to correspondence between the ministry and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada on this issue.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Advanced Education I would have to request that the House reject this motion. I would be prepared to provide comment now if that's the appropriate time.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Hancock: I certainly appreciate the interest being expressed by the hon. member in putting the question forward with respect to the designation of postsecondary institutions to offer baccalaureate degrees and the approval process for such degrees. Under Bill 43 now, the Post-secondary Learning Act, that's clearly the way forward that's been set out, and the Campus Alberta Quality Council's role in approving programs is essential not only to approving our programs but to setting standards of accreditation. In fact, as I've said in this House on many occasions, Alberta is leading the process across Canada to ensure that there are appropriate accreditation standards, and the Campus Alberta Quality Council is leading the way in this regard. So it's a very important question.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the question is so broadly worded that the natural result of that question would be to bring over the filing cabinets with all the information that Alberta quality council has dealt with. What it asks: the accreditation of postsecondary institutions granting baccalaureate degrees, the approval process for institutions seeking to grant baccalaureate degrees, the establishment of the council, and correspondence. So that's every piece of paper that's there. Surely that's not what the hon. member wants, but I cannot discern from the question what the appropriate information to deliver would be. In fact, if we approved this motion for a return, we would have to provide for the files of the Legislature all of the files of the Campus Alberta Quality Council.

3:20

We've had several other motions this session, particularly MR 40, which have required this sort of broad, sweeping type of information, and the Legislature has been good enough to recognize that that's not an appropriate way of framing questions. It's simply too broad, requests a vast array of material, much of which is already part of the public record. The motion doesn't specify public or private degree-granting institutions, so it's thousands of pages, and many, actually several branches, not just Campus Alberta Quality Council secretariat but public institutions, the former PCAB secretariat, et cetera.

Much of the information may well be subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, so it would have to be reviewed first because it involves information with respect to private institutions, et cetera. In order to release that information, a privacy review would have to be conducted on all the information available.

I want to make it perfectly clear that I'm not averse to providing information to the hon. member about the quality council, about the process, about what it does. In fact, we'd be happy to arrange whatever meetings that might be necessary to make sure that whatever information he's looking for is made available. But to answer this question, as broadly as it's posed, would not be a good use of time or resources and would not necessarily give him the information he wants because he would have to then sort through thousands and thousands of documents to achieve it.

The motion for a return specifically asked for correspondence between the department and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada concerning the establishment of the Campus Alberta Quality Council. There is, I can say, Mr. Speaker, no such official correspondence of which I'm aware. With respect to the establishment of the Campus Alberta Quality Council, this information is a matter of public record. The act establishing the council and list of members are available on the council's website. As you and other members will know, I tabled the council's first annual report last week. It's also available on the website, and we'll be providing all members with a copy of that shortly.

The hon. member is inquiring about the process for institutions seeking to offer baccalaureate degrees. This process is clearly laid out on the Campus Alberta Quality Council's website, which members can access at www.caqc.gov.ab.ca. Click on Application Process on the main page and then on Approval Process for New Degree Proposals. So that information is available.

The Campus Alberta Quality Council was specifically established to review proposals from postsecondary institutions that wish to offer new degree programs. Its members are "objective, forward-thinking individuals who are highly respected by the post-secondary system and have demonstrated an understanding and support for lifelong learning," to quote from my predecessor who established the council.

In short, I'm pleased to see the interest that's been taken in the process. I'm happy to work with the hon. member to find out what particular type of information he's seeking or what understanding about the Campus Alberta Quality Council he's seeking to find. Obviously, one of our key goals in our ministry is "to provide increased access to quality advanced education opportunities." We do it "through policy, programming, and funding support to post-secondary institutions and working with industry to facilitate the development of training and certification standards." Obviously, Campus Alberta Quality Council is key to that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very interested in people taking an interest in the role, function, and work of the Campus Alberta Quality Council, very interested in ensuring that there's a clear understanding by the hon. member and all members of the House with respect to the role

and function of the quality council. There's a good, clear starting place by going to their website and getting the information that's published there, looking at the annual report, and getting the information that's published there. No public purpose would be served by bringing over the filing cabinets and having all of the documents in them numbered as documents for the benefit of the legislative records, but I can assure the hon. member that I'd be happy to work with him on any specific questions that he has that I've not been able to answer here.

I'd ask the House to reject MR 50.

The Speaker: If I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, that concludes the debate.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for clarification, is the minister suggesting that the accreditation for Alberta's postsecondary institutions in itself is thousands of documents, or does that narrow the scope of what's being requested? I believe that it is the intent of this motion not to carry over entire file cabinet cases but simply the postsecondary institution information within this province.

Thank you.

[Motion for a Return 50 lost]

The Speaker: Before the Clerk calls the next order of business, I'd just like to let all hon. members know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder and I have had an exchange of information. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder failed to see me rise, and I failed to see the hon. member sit, so all is fine in paradise again.

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Bill 204
Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting)
Amendment Act, 2005**

[Debated adjourned May 9: Mr. Cao speaking]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill 204 is a very important bill, and it has far-reaching effects. That being said, after consultation with stakeholders and further research we have come to the conclusion that a necessary amendment needs to be made to strengthen this piece of legislation. I'd like to table the appropriate amendment to Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. Would the chair like me to continue or wait until the items have been circulated?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I believe the amendments have not been circulated as yet, so we should give the members an opportunity to receive the amendments.

Mr. Strang: Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The pages have the amendments, and I believe they will be circulating momentarily. Hon. members, when we deal with this amendment, we shall deal with it as amendment A1.

Hon. Member for West Yellowhead, you may proceed.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Bill 204 as it currently sits does not exactly accomplish what I hoped it would. My intention for this bill is to eliminate the cause of the problem some of our communities are having with drug abuse. So often we as a society try our very best to handle the effect of poor decisions made by people in our communities.

3:30

This is the same with crystal meth. Most of what we are doing as government to deal with the crystal meth problem is to try and solve the effect of the drug. From increasing penalties to increasing funding for recovering addicts, we do our best to deal with the effect of this naughty drug. What I am trying to do with Bill 204 is address the cause of a lot of those problems that are seen in our communities as a direct result of drug use. I think that if we can get to and try to eliminate the cause, we will be better off. The problem is crystal meth, and if we can get something to eliminate that, we will be better off.

This is where my amendment comes, Mr. Chairman. As the bill is currently written, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products will be removed to schedule 2 drugs. This means that the product containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine will be put behind the counter in pharmacies, and a person would only be able to obtain said products after discussing it with a pharmacist. As we've heard through the debate in second reading, in order to make crystal meth, the makers must have access to ephedra, ephedrine, and pseudoephedrine. These entities and only these entities are required for meth to have its desired effect on the users.

We did research into this drug and its effects. We thought it would be a good idea if we would limit access to all these products that had those entities prevalent in them, which is what this bill does without the amendment tabled. The problem with this bill right now is that by the way it's worded, we would be putting a lot of products behind the pharmacy counter. As I met with the College of Pharmacists and other stakeholders, I learned that if the bill passed, there would be pharmacies that would undergo serious renovations to ensure that all products affected by this bill would be able to be stored behind the counter. Pharmacists have told me that this was too much for them, especially for rural drugstores that do not have the greatest amount of space to work with.

Therefore, something had to change, and the amendment does that by putting single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind the counter. What we think needs to be clarified is the difference between single-entity and multi-entity products as this has caused a bit of confusion while I was going through the process.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, it has been a bit complicated, but I'll try to explain this as best I can. When you have a product that has pseudoephedrine in it as a single entity, this means that this entity is the only active ingredient in the product. Conversely, when you have a product that has multi-entity ingredients, this means that all of those ingredients are active in the product. There is a difference between the two.

So now we have to look at the amendment that I have proposed this afternoon. The research that was done while we prepared this bill seemed to show that the makers of crystal meth were not purchasing multi-entity pseudoephedrine products because it was far too difficult to chemically synthesize the product to get the pseudoephedrine out and separate for the purpose of making meth.

Meth makers are far more likely to find the single-entity pseudoephedrine products to make their drug as it is much easier. Therefore, we should amend what we have before us to reflect this. The amendment, therefore, before the House also removes ephedrine products from the bill.

Now, ephedrine is one of those ingredients that is necessary for the production of meth. However, ephedrine is already a schedule 1 drug when there are over 8 mg doses in the product and can only be accessed by prescription. As well, there are very few, if any, single-entity ephedrine products on the market that have so little ephedrine that they are unclassified. Therefore, there is no real need for us to try and move those products to schedule 2 because that would be counterproductive. That is why the amendment removes amphetamine from the bill.

There is also another reason for this amendment that I would like to touch upon in the remaining time. In June the western ministers of health, justice, and public security met to discuss, among other things, meth use, a strategy to combat it. At the meeting they agreed to come up with a common strategy that all western jurisdictions could follow. The jurisdictions involved are Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Nunavut. All of the ministers went back to their respective provinces or territories, and each one decided that the best approach would be to limit all single-entity amphetamine products.

I think it's fair to say that at this meeting it was considered that all products with pseudoephedrine be behind the counters. The western ministers also agreed that if one province does something by itself, it does not really eliminate the cause of the problem because drug makers could easily hop a province's or a territory's border to pick up the ingredients needed to make meth. It was decided that if all provinces take a common approach, they may have more success in combating the problem each jurisdiction is facing.

Mr. Chairman, this is not just an Alberta problem, nor is it strictly a rural or urban problem. This is turning into a nation-wide issue, and I think it's encouraging that at least the western jurisdictions are working together to try to find a solution to this problem.

Because of all these issues it was important and necessary that we amend this piece of legislation before us. I think this is a good strategy, and I think it will see some more good results by implementing this law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the rest of the speakers on both sides of the House on this issue.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I have a very long list of people who wish to speak. Just to remind hon. members, currently we're dealing with the amendment that's before us, so there will be opportunity for people to speak to the bill itself once we have voted on the amendment.

On the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. The amendment to Bill 204 is definitely more specific and pragmatic in supporting the intent of the original bill to ensure that meth makers will have a more difficult time purchasing the main ingredients for the manufactured crystal meth. I believe this amendment is a wise step and will serve the purpose better.

Much of the concern about crystal meth and other drugs comes down to simple supply and demand. If we pass this amendment and make it harder for the producers, some might quit making it, and the lack of supply generally drives prices up, which we could hope might be a deterrent for purchase. The reason why crystal meth's use is so widespread in Alberta is that it is so inexpensive to buy and is so readily available. If it were more expensive and harder to find,

perhaps we could stop some of our children from experimenting and inevitably becoming addicted.

Many of us know that break-in and theft charges are on the rise in our communities. If we can reduce the number of people who are addicted to crystal meth, logically we may reduce the associated crime costs. There is a great concern in our province about the devastation caused in our communities and among our youth because of crystal meth addiction. This amendment is still not a panacea. It does not get to the root of the problem, but it is a step to help us in a tremendous challenge.

What's being proposed with the bill is that making drugs that are the active ingredients used in the manufacture of crystal meth more difficult to get will diminish the amount that is being produced. However, as long as the demand is there for that cheap high, there will be people who will be happy to continue to make it in whatever form and with whatever chemicals they may need in order to sell it to people and make money. So until we address the demand for this drug, we're going to continue to have problems with it.

3:40

This amended bill is addressing a small part of the problem, but it's not addressing why we have such a demand for this drug or other drugs, especially by teenagers. It does nothing to address that demand. It does nothing to address creating and providing activities for youth to get involved with. Youth who are not engaged in positive activities get bored, and this can result in connecting with other peers who are feeling the same way. Then that group, or gang if you like, gets into activities that may not be helpful, and they do not have moral leadership or guidance although this new group may actually become a family of sorts. Most people would rather be engaged in something and do something, but if we don't allow them positive opportunities, their boredom and apathy may lead to poor choices, including trying drugs. We need to look at existing opportunities and why many choose not to get involved. What are the barriers that prevent involvement, and what do we need to change?

Another thing that's not addressed in this amendment is any kind of treatment, and that's the second way to reduce demand. Somebody addicted to crystal meth is driven to the exclusion of all other factors, including sleep and food, to get the drug, to get another high. So by reducing their addiction or eliminating their addiction with treatment, we would reduce the demand. I think that addressing the demand and treatment is more effective than trying to address a small part of the supply side of this issue.

This government has a problem with addictions, whether it's alcohol addictions, drug addictions, or gambling addictions. I would prefer to see an approach that has a complete management plan to it. Determining what needs to be in place in our society to prevent drug use and abuse overall is much more complex, and it requires a collaborative approach. AADAC and many other agencies can make a difference in communities across the province with their knowledge and expertise and the best practices to prevent and treat addictions as well as the range of services that they can provide. The problems related to drug and alcohol use are wide ranging in scope, complex in nature, and costly in personal and economic terms to Albertans. We can succeed with the involvement of partners in the community, including individuals, municipal leaders, government and nongovernment agencies, law enforcement, educational and health professionals, and others.

Momentum is obviously growing in this province as people work together to tackle these problems and other drug issues in an effort to build safer communities where we can raise healthier children. We need to extend the reach of the existing services we offer and

provide and invest where the likelihood of success is greater. Hopefully, this amendment will help reduce access. We can increase hope by increasing the number of facilities we use for drug treatment and rehab and also counselling. Let's fund the DARE program so that every child in this province before they enter junior high knows full well the consequences of this addictive drug. There are other programs that the police officers offer that are also not reactive but educational and of great value, and they deserve support.

In principle I'm supportive of what's being recommended and being proposed in this amended bill, but this is not looking at an overall plan of management to attack this addiction. It doesn't include any kind of treatment. It doesn't deal with the demand side of things. It doesn't do anything to address activities for youth or to expand educational programs that can make a difference. We need to do better.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, did you want to speak on the amendment or wait until the bill?

Mr. Martin: Yeah, on the amendment.

The Deputy Chair: On the amendment. Okay.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Chair, just very briefly. I understand the reason that we've limited this, and I'm sure that pharmacists won't be too happy about that. But I guess the bottom line to me is that we want something that's going to be effective. I'm sure the member wants that. I guess that if this is what's possible at this time, then we'll certainly support it. The questions I have, though, are flowing from the member's statements. I have a couple questions that I think deal with the amendment, Mr. Chair.

You mentioned – and I remember reading about it – that the western health ministers and premiers were getting together because this is a very serious problem not only here but, of course, in the United States, everywhere. Am I led to believe that the reason that we're limiting pseudoephedrine is that that's what all four have agreed and that's what's possible at this particular time? That's the one question.

The second question I would have, Mr. Chair, is that there are some examples I believe in the States, who are formally ahead. I think this might be worth checking out because I don't see this yet as a government bill. I expect that the hope is that it eventually will be a government bill rather than a private member's bill.

It's my understanding that Oklahoma became the first U.S. state to classify such common cold remedies as Sudafed and Claritin as schedule 5 narcotics, forbidding sales in stores other than pharmacies, ordering the pills placed behind counters, limiting the amount sold per customer, and requiring purchasers to show a photo ID inside to register. It seems to me that they're going much further. I'm wondering if the member – in terms of research maybe he doesn't have it, but if we deal with this bill down the way – can give us an update of how that's working because surely their pharmacists must have been a little exercised, I would say. It would be extra work for them there. I'm wondering how that has worked out and if it has worked out. Perhaps there could be some suggestions about how we might deal with this in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: I'm going to speak on the bill, not on the amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

Does anybody else wish to speak on the amendment? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to speak to the amendments to Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005. This is an important piece of legislation, and these amendments will ensure that the intent of the bill is preserved while the interests of Albertans are maintained.

I believe Bill 204 is complementary to Bill 202, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, that was passed in the spring session. I would like to commend the Member for West Yellowhead for his persistence and dedication in working with various groups to ensure that the bill will produce the intended effects without the unintended consequences. This is always a difficult task when creating legislation.

Mr. Chairman, the fight against crystal meth is difficult since the drug is readily available because of the ingredients used to produce it. It is very cheap to make and, unlike other drugs, can be made anywhere. This is why the drug has spread so rapidly and why it has created such havoc in Alberta as well as most of Canada and the United States. To combat this trend, jurisdictions have created various pieces of legislation. The biggest challenge to our government has been to balance the interests of Albertans with the need to take action against this deadly drug.

With the amendment to Bill 204 these interests will be balanced quite reasonably. The amendments deal with which products should be behind the counters and which should not. The original purpose of the bill was not to put every product that contains ephedrine, ephedra, or pseudoephedrine behind the counter. Rather the purpose was to put those medications which contain substantial amounts of these ingredients in the control of the pharmacists. This is why the bill is being amended to focus on products where pseudoephedrine is the only ingredient. These are the products that are being used by the drug producers, not the products where pseudoephedrine is one ingredient amongst many.

The amendment will mean that approximately 21 products will be behind the counters as opposed to 200 originally thought to be included and that sick Albertans will have access to the medication they need to feel better without being inconvenienced too much. The amendment creates a real win-win situation.

3:50

Mr. Chairman, the problem I had with this bill when it was introduced several months ago was that I thought it would work better as federal legislation. My issue was that if someone could not get these ingredients in Alberta, they would simply drive to Saskatchewan or B.C. However, the other western provinces have been working to create similar legislation to avoid this problem. I'm very happy to hear that the provinces have all stepped up in the absence of federal leadership on this issue.

I want to thank the federal government, however, for taking some action on crystal meth by increasing sentences for the trafficking and possession of this terrible drug. This was a very important move as dealers were simply not deterred by the law. More leadership from the feds would go a long way, like tripling the sentence for a dealer who is selling to a minor, but I think Albertans and Canadians will take what they can get.

The lack of federal leadership on this and many other fronts forces provinces to work closely together to do what is right for Canadians. This lack of leadership is why in recent years provincial premiers have united and have held several summits and meetings to fight tough issues that the federal government does not act on.

On June 10 there was a meeting of western ministers of health, justice, and public safety, which was called Building Partnerships to Address Addictions, Responding to Crystal Meth. During that conference the western leaders decided that each jurisdiction should adopt legislation to restrict the sale of products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. The idea was to follow Alberta's lead and create legislation that is similar to Bill 204. This is the reason for this amendment. Bill 204 was the sample piece of legislation for the western leaders, but it needed to be amended slightly to ensure that it created an appropriate response to the problem without creating unintended consequences.

Mr. Chairman, what I found comforting about this conference was the level of co-operation and participation that was achieved. Aboriginal communities are among the victims of the meth problem, and for this reason the provincial leaders invited Chief Bird of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to express the important perspectives of the First Nations peoples. As we all know, Alberta's aboriginal communities often live in isolated areas. They do not enjoy the same access to pharmacies and medications as the people who live in Edmonton, Calgary, or any other larger communities. Many rural Albertans must also travel to access pharmacies and medications. The amendment we are discussing addresses the concerns of these groups by ensuring that most cold products are available in convenience and grocery stores.

Mr. Chairman, this was the intended purpose of Bill 204. This amendment will ensure that the bill will have maximum effect in reducing the production of crystal meth and will not cause undue hardship on Albertans who are in need of cold medications.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to acknowledge the Member for West Yellowhead for introducing this bill and for working with several stakeholders to ensure that the bill will produce the desired results. I would also like to express my thanks to the ministers and leaders from the western provinces, aboriginal communities, and the federal government for taking action on crystal meth. Working together is the only way we will be able to overcome this devastating problem in our society.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 204 is not meant to be a panacea, a cure-all, for crystal meth addiction. However, it is an important step in the war on this drug. It is my duty to support this amendment, this bill, and any reasonable measure that will help us win the fight against crystal meth. I strongly urge all members to also support this amendment and the legislation.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, did you want to speak on the amendment?

Ms Blakeman: To the bill, please.

The Deputy Chair: To the bill itself. Okay.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to speak on the amendment as it pertains to Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005, which I believe is very important. I'm glad to have this opportunity to rise and speak to it. I would also like to thank the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for bringing it forward so that we can discuss it here today.

[Mr. Prins in the chair]

It would mean that cold, cough, and allergy medicines that are multi-entity pseudoephedrine products rather than single-entity

would be accessible to the general public. This would be a wise decision, Mr. Chairman, since multimedicines containing pseudoephedrine are subject to a complicated procedure in order to be used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine and should, therefore, still be easily available to citizens who require them.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that anything the government can do to prevent individuals from manufacturing crystal meth is a noble goal. Bill 204 will no doubt help to reduce the number of meth labs within the province of Alberta. I don't believe that Bill 204 and our other current laws aimed at reducing the production and sale of methamphetamines will completely halt the production and sale of this highly addictive drug.

Mr. Chairman, I think we need to be aware that there are still methods by which methamphetamine producers are going to be able to obtain the pseudoephedrine products that are required in order to get the ephedrine they need for the production of this illegal drug. Not only will meth producers be able to simply drive to the United States, pick up these drugs, and return to Alberta for manufacturing, but they will also be able to use the Internet in order to obtain them. There are a large number of online pharmacies out there, both Canadian-run and internationally-run, and not much, if anything, can be done in order to regulate the companies and, in some cases, the individuals running these sites and delivering these pharmaceuticals. In other words, there is not much that can be done to prevent a methamphetamine manufacturer from simply ordering a large quantity of pseudoephedrine off the Internet and having it shipped to an Alberta address.

In order to see how simple it would be, Mr. Chairman, to obtain a large quantity of pseudoephedrine, I simply researched the Internet and found that a number of these online pharmacies will sell large amounts of drugs to anyone with a credit card and, in some cases, even a personal cheque. One such example was on the site drugstore.com where for a mere \$178.30 I would have been able to order 500 pseudoephedrine capsules. Another site, canadadrugs.com, which is based in Winnipeg, would allow me to purchase four boxes, or 96 doses, of Tantaferd, tab 60 milligrams, which is a single-ingredient pseudoephedrine product, for a mere \$36.87 including shipping. There are countless online pharmacies, and no doubt it is nearly or equally as easy to obtain these products from them.

Unfortunately, whereas placing these products behind the counters in pharmacies to be monitored by pharmacists according to Bill 204 is a realistic option to curb the production of meth, there is no such procedure available for the sale of a single-entity pseudoephedrine product online. If we are able to place these drugs in schedule 2, there is no way to be sure that those interested in making the drug wouldn't simply order the necessary nonprescription drugs from other provinces, the States, or from other international companies.

Even if it were to be decided that the single-entity pseudoephedrine products would be placed as schedule 1 drugs, which are prescription-only drugs, there are still ways that individuals would be able to obtain the needed drugs for the creation of crystal meth. Although many online pharmacies require a copy of the person's prescription to be faxed to the company, these types of documents can be forged easily enough by determined individuals. As well, Mr. Chairman, there would no doubt continue to be methods of obtaining the drugs whether or not a prescription were required from different Internet groups, just as they are now.

Also, although volume control may be possible by pharmacists in actual pharmacies with physical locations, limiting quantities of the drug does not seem to be something that can be or is enforced by online pharmacies. Again, Mr. Chairman, in looking at these Internet pharmacies online, I found that most sites do not limit the

amount of single-entity pseudoephedrine products that a consumer is able to buy.

Mr. Chairman, the limitations that I have mentioned are not to discourage or to in any way denounce Bill 204. I mentioned the availability of the drugs that are the precursor to methamphetamine over the Internet before. I believe that it is a matter of which we must all be aware. The bill will unfortunately be unable to stop the production of methamphetamine, Mr. Chairman.

4:00

That being said, I must reiterate that I do still support this bill. I believe that Bill 204 will be able to help decrease the number of small-scale, or mom-and-pop, meth labs within the province. Whereas the big-scale methamphetamine producers have access to large quantities of ephedrine, Bill 204 will help to reduce the number of small operations by curbing their access to large quantities of over-the-counter single-entity pseudoephedrine products needed for the creation of crystal meth.

Mr. Chairman, again I would like to take this opportunity to thank the presenter of Bill 204 and to thank the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for bringing this issue forward for discussion. Methamphetamine is very dangerous as an illegal substance and one that I know we would like to get rid of from this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Acting Chair: Well, thank you to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. You did very well with all those pronunciations.

Now, anyone else on the amendment? I believe the Member for Edmonton-McClung maybe was standing up first.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very briefly – and I've expressed my support in the initial phases of debate – on this amendment A1 to Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005, one thought came to mind when I listened to the presenter of the bill, with whom I agree on most of what he said. When he mentioned, you know, the rationale for limiting it to single-entity cough, cold, and flu remedies and not extending it to multiple-ingredient products, I immediately remembered the discussion that we had in this House last week when we were debating the merits of extending presumptive coverage for cardiovascular events to other emergency response personnel in addition to firefighters. The hon. sponsor of that bill stood up, and he said that he disagreed with me and my caucus colleagues because, in his words, there was "no science" backing up our statements. So my question to the hon. sponsor is: what is the science on which you based your thinking?

We may be limiting single-entity products initially, but then those criminals, those crooks who cook up crystal meth in their homes or in their basements, will probably find some other household detergent or some other product that is readily available to extract ephedrine or pseudoephedrine from those multiple-ingredient products. So what we're doing is just delaying it a bit. They're very resourceful, they're very creative, and they would probably find a way around it.

Second would be the thought I had when the discussion centred around how cumbersome it is and how costly for pharmacies and pharmacists to redesign their dispensaries and to bring in more shelves or spend more money on restocking those multiple-ingredient products in their dispensaries. I find this argument not very strong because, for example, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North mentioned that there are 200-plus products that include ephedrine or pseudoephedrine or some derivative thereof, and I would argue that most of these are interchangeable. By that I mean that you don't

have to stock them all to have all the different various combinations of ingredients.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

From my own experience as a practising community pharmacist you can actually have only about 30 or so of those products without risking not having all the different combinations available. You don't have to stock every single brand name and every single make and strength and bar code to have general coverage of all the different afflictions. You can have one for just a runny nose or one for a runny nose and sneezing or for a runny nose, sneezing, and red eyes or runny nose, sneezing, red eyes, and cough or any different permutation of those. So you don't have to stock all 200 products.

Also, my colleagues in the Official Opposition and myself particularly, because of people's knowledge of my prior life, we have not received a lot of communication from concerned pharmacists or pharmacy operators who said that this was going to be very cumbersome. As a matter of fact, the college itself supported this, and they said: yes, that's a good idea. So it's not an argument that I'm willing to accept.

Also, I wanted to mention that if we're really concerned about those drug stores, maybe we should look at a mechanism where they are empowered and compensated to undertake such an initiative. One example comes to mind with the electronic health record. For example, when the Ministry of Health and Wellness was promoting the EHR and trying to have it widespread and have it across the province, they offered an upgrading allowance to all the different participating drugstores, an upgrading allowance that included upgrades to your software to be able to link to the EHR and also to your hardware to be able to secure the information and access the information on a timely basis. So it has been done before. Why not extend it to this scenario as well?

Finally, I think that the concern that was quoted from the chain drugstores or the grocery distributors was overemphasized. These people, yes, have a reason to be concerned because they risk losing some of their sales, but honestly I think these products should belong in a pharmacy to start with. They don't belong in a gas station. They don't belong in a corner grocery store. They belong in pharmacies only, and maybe that's a good decision to have them behind the counter so a pharmacist has to intervene and has to offer professional advice before they're accessed.

Further, the argument that patients in rural Alberta may not have access to a drugstore and that they would have to go to a local grocery store or a gas station to buy their cough, cold, or flu remedy really intrigues me. We should then be thinking about the reasons why most rural communities do not have a medical clinic or why they do not have a local pharmacy or drugstore within them. We're not graduating enough health professionals in this province, and we're not encouraging the ones who do graduate to practise or to set up shop in rural communities. We're not enticing them with any incentives whatsoever, and the bigger centres are more attractive, of course – Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer – and then the smaller communities are suffering. So maybe this is a discussion for another day where we should look at what we can do to attract and retain health professionals, top-notch practitioners, in rural Alberta, be it physicians and/or pharmacists.

Although I don't disagree with the amendment – I understand where they're coming from – I think it's just a statement that they didn't want to displease the grocery association, and I think that in doing so, they have sidetracked from the initial intent, which was basically to protect the public and to limit access to a precursor that is easily available and easily used to make crystal meth in people's

homes or kitchens or basements. I think that we would have been better served if we had kept the initial bill in its original format, which also included the multiple-ingredient preparations.

With that I would invite further debate and thank you for this opportunity.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is with great pleasure that I rise to join the debate surrounding Bill 204 as it moves through Committee of the Whole. There is no doubt that the problem faced by Albertans and Canadians on the whole with respect to crystal meth is a large one. The highly addictive properties of the drug, coupled with the relative ease with which it is made and the low cost to purchase it, make this drug one of the most dangerous narcotics in circulation. It's certainly a problem in Drayton Valley, and I know that it's a problem in the hon. Member for West Yellowhead's riding as well, so I thank him for bringing this important bill forward.

Mr. Chairman, the effects of crystal meth are horrendous, rotting both the mind and the body. Any addiction has a negative effect on that person and on their family, but with this drug the effects seem to be magnified.

The proposed amendment to Bill 204 is one which makes a lot of sense. The changes which are proposed in the amendment to section 2 of the bill ensure that the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005, will achieve the goal which it is intended for; that is, limiting access to ingredients used in the manufacture of crystal meth. As representatives of Albertans we have a responsibility and an obligation to address issues which have an effect on our province. This piece of legislation gives us another avenue to pursue the reduction of drug use in Alberta.

4:10

Also, the measures outlined in the amendments to Bill 204 will be an excellent fit with other programs which are in place to combat this awful drug. Mr. Chairman, at present there are programs in place which pursue other methods of addressing the problem of drug abuse in Alberta. These include addressing issues of education as well as treatment of those addicted to drugs. The government of Alberta, through AADAC, has long been involved in a variety of education programs informing Albertans of the dangers of drug use. I would argue that the function of these programs is very similar to what is being addressed by the amendments to Bill 204, and that is prevention.

Some of these programs specially target young Albertans. Recently AADAC has run a successful ad campaign featuring two different advertisements which highlight the consequences of using crystal meth. Having seen these ads, I can say that they address the issue in a straightforward and frank manner. It is acknowledged that the drug can bring positive feelings, which come with the high, but it then goes on to illustrate the side effects, and there are many and they are extremely negative. Educational tools such as these have a strong effect because they show Albertans what the true consequences of using crystal meth can be. By reducing access to the key ingredient of crystal meth, we can hopefully limit the amount of this drug being manufactured and thereby prevent more Albertans from becoming addicted to it.

On the other end of the spectrum from prevention is treatment, treatment of those who have become addicted to crystal meth and other drugs. This issue is also being addressed by the government through the auspices of AADAC. Earlier this month AADAC announced the opening of 24 new addiction treatment beds in the

province specifically targeted at youths. This expanded space will allow for treatment of higher numbers of youths in the province who have fallen prey to a drug addiction. While these beds are not specific to any one drug, increasing the province's capacity to deal with addiction will certainly help alleviate the impact that crystal meth has on our society.

Mr. Chairman, while the prevalence of this drug has not yet reached levels witnessed by some of the U.S. states, I believe that this means we have an opportunity to act and ensure that Alberta never sees those levels of use. The proposed amendments to Bill 204 take a proactive approach to addressing a part of the crystal meth issue. Any obstacle which can be thrown in front of those looking to produce methamphetamine provides us the opportunity to reduce the chances that another Albertan will become addicted to this drug.

A possible outcome of the increased barrier to the manufacture of crystal meth is a potential rise in the price of the drug. Now, this could happen through two ways, Mr. Chairman. First, in absolute terms the amendments to Bill 204 are designed to make the production of meth more difficult. This means that producers will need to charge more for their product, reducing one of the – and I use this word very loosely – attractive points of meth, which is of course the low cost.

Secondly, by reducing the amount of crystal meth being made, this will cause the price of the available drug to rise because there will be less of it. It's a simple case of supply and demand. Again, the higher price reduces the attractiveness of this drug and will hopefully act as a deterrent to those who are interested in obtaining this drug. By reducing access to the necessary ingredients used in making crystal meth, we can positively affect the amount of this drug in our society.

Mr. Chairman, I fully support the proposed amendments to Bill 204. They provide a common-sense approach to addressing the issue of crystal meth use and production in Alberta. Additionally, I support an amended Bill 204. This piece of legislation as amended will provide another deterrent to drug use in Alberta and is a good fit with current policies and programs addressing drug use in our province.

I would like to congratulate the Member for West Yellowhead on bringing forward this piece of legislation. Mr. Chairman, in closing I would invite all members on both sides of the Chamber to stand and support Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Please, if I could be reminded, are we speaking on the amendment or the bill?

The Deputy Chair: On the amendment.

Mr. Eggen: On the amendment still?

The Deputy Chair: Yes.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. I was wanting to speak on the bill actually.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Great.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's with pleasure that I rise today to continue debate on the amendment proposed to Bill

204, which ensures that it's more difficult to access an important precursor to methamphetamine. To set the record straight right from the start, I'd like to point out that while people commonly refer to crystal meth and methamphetamine synonymously, crystal meth is only one form of the drug. It's the smokable form.

Mr. Chairman, while individuals and society are quickly learning that meth is indeed extremely dangerous, public awareness surrounding it does continue to grow every day. And those are good things. We see it on television. News, specials, movies of the week: they highlight the devastating effect that substance abuse in general has on communities and families. As chair of AADAC I hear first-hand accounts all too regularly of how meth use has become a very serious problem for all kinds of Alberta communities: rural and urban, rich and poor.

I believe that there are two reasons for the rapid rise in meth use and production in Canada and the United States. The first is due to the actual nature of the drug: very highly addictive. The second is the relative ease with which this drug can be produced. It's this aspect of the drug that both the amendment and the bill itself seek to address. Anyone who has access to the Internet and possesses basic chemistry skills can make meth just about anywhere with supplies that are readily available at hardware and grocery stores. Mr. Chairman, the ease with which meth is produced is the reason why it is so important that this amendment proceed.

This amendment would elevate single-entity pseudoephedrine products to schedule 2 from their current unrestricted status. The elevation of pseudoephedrine to schedule 2 would mean that single-entity pseudoephedrine could only be sold by pharmacists and that those products would have to be kept out of public access areas in the pharmacy. In other words, products like Sudafed extra strength decongestant tablets would only be available behind the pharmacist's counter because it is a single-entity pseudoephedrine product. Bill 204 would then have the potential to limit public access to precursors used in the production of meth.

Although federal actions and regulations are making it more difficult to get large quantities of ephedrine, producers may turn to single-entity products like those with pseudoephedrine to make meth. The amendment would allow the Alberta government to act in a pre-emptive fashion and help prevent the production of meth by restricting access to one of its precursors. While the use of cold medication in the production of meth is currently limited, the potential exists for it to be expanded. So for obvious reasons it's extremely important that we not allow methamphetamine production to expand.

Mr. Chairman, the amendments proposed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead strike an important balance between protecting Albertans from the negative impacts of meth use and allowing them access to the medications that they need. However, they limit the availability of only single-entity products. The distinction between multi-entity and single-entity is very important.

The purpose of this bill is not to limit the legitimate use of cold medications. Bill 204 as originally proposed would have moved all products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine behind the pharmacist's counter. At first glance this would not seem to be that great of a restriction. For example, any legitimate user of Sudafed or a similar product would likely not have a problem asking the pharmacist for such a product, while an illegitimate user would be less likely to ask for the product from a pharmacist since any request for a significant quantity of the product would likely draw suspicion. There's no significant difficulty for the legitimate user of cold and allergy medication.

However, this law would have prevented all multi-entity products containing pseudoephedrine from being sold in grocery or conve-

nience stores without pharmacies. While this may not seem like a major issue for the people of Calgary or Edmonton where 24-hour pharmacies are common, I can assure you that it would be a major issue for rural Albertans. I hear about it quite regularly. In rural Alberta during evenings and on weekends there's less access to pharmacy products. Grocery and convenience stores provide a vital link in helping rural Albertans to get relief until they're able to get proper medical attention.

4:20

Under the amendment proposed this afternoon, the medications that would still be available in convenience stores are multi-entity pseudoephedrine products. Mr. Chairman, as I alluded to earlier, the easiest and most common way of making meth, at least at the current time, involves using ephedrine. The second easiest way to produce this drug is through the use of single-entity products. The use of multi-entity products to produce methamphetamine is actually rare and represents the most difficult method of extracting the necessary precursors. These products do however provide Albertans with necessary relief from legitimate medical symptoms and, therefore, should continue to be available at all retailers.

In short, I believe that it would be unreasonable to restrict access to needed medications when that restriction would not likely result in the reduction of methamphetamine production. Albertans should have reasonable access to multi-entity pseudoephedrine products so that if they don't feel well in the evening, they can purchase medications to relieve their symptoms until they have a chance to go to the doctor. From a rural perspective this amendment makes complete sense. It seeks to ensure that Albertans can access medication while limiting the ability of those who seek pseudoephedrine for illicit purposes to gain access to large quantities of this product.

Mr. Chairman, this amendment reflects a commitment that I've seen recently in this House towards ensuring that Albertans and their children are protected from drug abuse, including the use of methamphetamine. If successful, this bill will join with the initiatives proposed in Bill 202 and pave the way for Alberta to be a leader in protecting children from substance abuse.

At a recent ministerial meeting I attended in Regina in June, ministers from western Canada agreed to work together on the meth issue in an attempt to stop the abuse of this drug. The amendment to Bill 204 supports that objective and all of the others that were laid out in the ministerial communiqués produced at that meeting.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 204 as amended will take a significant step forward in limiting the production and use of methamphetamine. By taking a comprehensive approach to this emerging issue, I believe we're making significant progress towards AADAC's goal of an Alberta free from the harmful effects of substance abuse.

I urge all members to support this amendment from the hon. Member for West Yellowhead and to support Bill 204. I believe we owe it to the future generations of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, did you want to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Chase: Yes. Hopefully, it's to the amendment. I would like to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed how many staffed AADAC beds we have in total throughout the province now that the 24 additional beds have been added.

The Deputy Chair: I believe you are wanting to kind of rise like we do under Standing Order 29(2)(a). That doesn't apply, but the hon.

member may be able to participate later on because at committee there's no limit on the number of times you can stand.

Mr. Chase: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: The chair will recognize the hon. member, if he so chooses.

At this time the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Lougheed: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join this debate on the amendment to Bill 204 that's currently before us. The Member for West Yellowhead has sponsored a valid amendment to the original bill that was put forward. As amended, this bill would make it more difficult to obtain single-entity pseudoephedrine products by reclassifying these drugs as schedule 2 drugs under the Pharmacy and Drug Act. As I am sure we have heard, but it's certainly worth repeating, schedule 2 drugs are sold behind the counter in a licensed pharmacy or an institution's pharmacy.

Now, when this legislation came forward, it afforded me the opportunity to question pharmacists and other professionals and discuss their view of the problem. That discussion has also given me insight into what I perceive is their view of this proposed amendment. After all, it's the pharmacists who work on the front lines and would be most affected by this legislation. The amendment is putting single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind their counter and in their control. They would be responsible for releasing them at their discretion to the general public.

Pharmacists have been asked what they thought about the proposed amendment to put single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind the counter, and these pharmacists, most concerned about Albertans and their ability to keep Albertans safe and informed about their health and their medication, have discussed it with me at some length. One of the first points the pharmacists all made was that they have already voluntarily moved single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind the counter. The reason they gave for this is that the Alberta College of Pharmacists, the body to which all Alberta pharmacists both belong and answer to, requested exactly that. I understand also that in June of 2004 pharmacies voluntarily relocated single-entity pseudoephedrine products to behind the counter at the request of the Alberta College of Pharmacists.

One of the pharmacists referred to other jurisdictions as another reason to voluntarily move their products, stating that recently both Manitoba and Saskatchewan have announced legislation requiring pharmacies to relocate single-entity pseudoephedrine products to behind the counter. The pharmacists thought it appropriate that even if there was not similar legislation in Alberta, the practice should be recommended so as to prevent someone, say, from the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster visiting the Alberta side and buying the products off the shelf here in Alberta. That was an example given as quite possible.

Though I understand that Bill 204 is necessary, I was extremely pleased to hear that pharmacies across the province and the Alberta College of Pharmacists are already taking action. In fact, Mr. Chairman, one of the pharmacists mentioned earlier that the national chain that he works for has made the decision to voluntarily move all single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind the counter in all of their pharmacies across all of Canada. This is good news, of course, and I'd hope that all members would support this legislation if for the sole reason to ensure that Alberta regulations fall in line with what happens in other parts of this country. They have already done this voluntarily in large measure.

Mr. Chairman, when an Albertan walks into a pharmacy, they need to feel that they are being provided with accurate and safe

information. I've been reminded by the pharmacists that their first and primary concern is the well-being of their patients, and they agree that if they were to allow the sale of single-entity pseudoephedrine products to customers without ensuring that the customer was informed and the use was safe, then they would not be doing their job. As a matter of fact, one pharmacist stated her concern as follows, and I quote: does the proliferation of crystal meth go against the well-being of my patients? Yes. End of quote. It is apparent that pharmacists are doing what they can to ensure that single-entity pseudoephedrine products stay out of the hands of those interested in abusing them for the purpose of making crystal meth.

Pharmacists did raise some concerns, however. I think their concerns are valid, and they need to be discussed to ensure that we as a Legislature are doing all that we can to stop the proliferation of crystal meth. They felt that although increasing the restriction on single-entity pseudoephedrine products will help to reduce the crystal meth problem, it's a long way from making it go away. They referred to this legislation as a single step in what would be a very long trip. I share that opinion as well. Crystal meth is a monster hazard. It's consuming the lives of our youth, and it's growing worse. We can't solve this issue overnight, but we have to ensure that as members of this Legislature of this great province we do everything we can in our power to limit the access to the chemicals needed to produce crystal meth. As long as we view this amendment as part of a larger solution, then we are headed in the right direction, but we still have quite a long way to go.

4:30

Another concern pharmacists have shared is the fact that the majority of crystal meth is not being made with off-the-shelf pseudoephedrine; rather, it is coming from chemical wholesalers via the Internet and even mail distribution. In fact, the pharmacists I talked to made the observation that since they voluntarily pulled all single-entity pseudoephedrine products off the shelf and put them behind the counter, they have not noticed any increase or any additional inquiries for its sale.

We can't look at this proposed amendment as a solution, and certainly we can't sweep the whole problem under the rug. We as representatives and legislators must find alternative and innovative solutions to win the battle against drugs like crystal meth. The pharmacists I talked to concerning the proposed amendment were guardedly optimistic. They liked that this legislation would bring a standard that's in conjunction with the volunteer efforts currently taking place, and we would in reality be raising the bar to where the Alberta College of Pharmacists have already placed it. However, they were concerned that MLAs would step back, thinking that all that can be done has been done. Mr. Chairman, I assured anyone I talked to that we would not take that approach.

Mr. Chairman, we need to assure Alberta's youth and their parents that we are doing everything we can to protect them from crystal meth and, for that matter, other illicit drugs. So I encourage all members to support this proposed amendment and continue to support the battle against crystal meth.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Ms Blakeman: On the amendment?

The Deputy Chair: On the amendment.

Mr. Johnson: On the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure of mine to rise today and contribute to the discussion on

the amendment for Bill 204, Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act. First, if I could, I wish to thank the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for his leadership in introducing this most important bill. The issue of methamphetamine abuse is a real concern, and this bill is a part of a series of measures targeting that abuse.

Crystal methamphetamine, also known as jib, crank, meth, crystal, ice, or speed, is a synthetically produced drug that directly alters the hormonal regulations of the central nervous system. What is most disturbing regarding crystal methamphetamine is the simplicity of how it is composed. Should you or I, Mr. Chairman, pay a visit to a local drug store, we could easily obtain the most critical ingredients to produce crystal meth. It is this very fact that Bill 204 combats.

Bill 204, coupled with the amendment that I rise to speak to today, is a first attainable step in limiting the availability of pseudoephedrine containing medicinal drugs and its salts by reclassifying the drugs as schedule 2 drugs under the Pharmacy and Drug Act. What this reclassification does is remove these medications from public access, where there is minute purchasing tracking, and places them behind the counter, where the purchase of pseudoephedrine medicines may be observed and regulated by pharmacists.

To understand how important this measure is, Mr. Chairman, we must understand the severity of crystal meth abuse itself. In all frankness, the realities surrounding this specific drug are startling, and its effects on society and individuals are quite simply frightening. Production labs for crystal meth synthesis are so makeshift and simplistic in nature that they have been found in homes, apartments, hotels, vehicles, and warehouses.

Further, the production of crystal methamphetamine is a highly toxic process. Chemicals used in its production are corrosive, explosive, flammable, toxic, and can cause major environmental harm in addition to posing serious health and public safety concerns. In fact, Mr. Chairman, for every one pound of methamphetamine produced, an average of five or six pounds of toxic chemical waste is produced. As startling as this might be, one has yet to even scratch the surface of the horrors that crystal meth evokes.

Posing another great risk to individuals is the ambiguity revolving around the toxicity of the drug. No matter how seasoned a user, it is difficult, in fact impossible, to know the exact strength of the drug or what dangerous chemicals it is being cut with even when buying from a familiar supplier. The resulting effects after one consumes crystal meth are limitless. Even in small amounts one may feel increased wakefulness, increased heart rate and respiration, decreased appetite, excessive talking, and increased body temperature. Users may also experience tremors, mental confusion, hyperthermia, convulsions, insomnia, irritability, aggression, and chest pain, also hypertension, and cardiovascular collapse. The list continues, Mr. Chairman.

Users rapidly develop a strong pattern of psychological dependence in which the next use is typically larger than the last. Psychological effects include memory loss, hallucinations, paranoia, mood disturbance, repetitive behaviours, and formication. Overdosing can cause delusions, seizures, stroke, heart failure, coma, and even death.

Police in rural cities, towns, and villages primarily in the northern area of the province, including right here in Edmonton, have identified the use and manufacturing of methamphetamine as a growing and immediate problem. The abuse of crystal methamphetamine is indiscriminate to the provincial boundary. As a response to this, western ministers responsible for health, justice, and public safety met in Regina on June 10 of this year to discuss a western interprovincial and interterritorial approach. The result of that meeting is the amendment that we are discussing today.

My support for this amendment is in effect two-tiered. The first tier of my support stems from what this move will accomplish in the fight against crystal methamphetamine. This amendment removes pseudoephedrines from the public store shelf and places them behind the counter under the control and supervision of pharmacists. Not only will this move act as a significant deterrent to one wishing to use pseudoephedrines for illegal purposes, but it will also equip drugstore personnel with the ability to more closely monitor the purchasing patterns of patrons. Red flags, Mr. Chairman, will be able to be determined more easily and reported to the proper authorities.

The second tier of my support is based on the effectiveness that this amendment will create. The interprovincial and interterritorial approach represents a powerful tool in reducing the prevalence of crystal meth in our province and is the first real, tangible mechanism that we have had to do so.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps what is most solidifying for me in my support of this amendment is to hear the personal stories of people whose lives have been torn apart by crystal meth abuse. In a documentary originally aired on March 23, 2005, on *The Fifth Estate*, viewers were introduced to a young girl who at the age of 13 became addicted to crystal meth. This young girl, now 16, who is just beginning to free herself from her addiction, described one night in which she overdosed on meth. She said: "I ended up outside in the rain. I had frostbitten feet. I was talking to people I thought were there, but they actually weren't there." Another young individual in this documentary had been addicted to crystal meth for five years. He said: "The dark side is when it takes control of you. You don't choose when you do it. It chooses you and pretty much isolates you. I have so much potential, but I'm slowly drifting further and further away from it."

4:40

Mr. Chairman, as a province and we as its leaders must do everything we can to ensure that this isolation and loss of potential as described is kept at bay. It is in this light that I support this amendment as an important tool in the fight against the resurgence of crystal meth. I not only ask my colleagues, but I also urge them for their support of this amendment. We must seize this opportunity to deliver a solid blow to this stunningly disturbing addiction.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In considering what is proposed in this amendment that has been brought forward by the same member who proposed the bill, what I keep seeing is that the government and this government member keep making choices that are easy but not right. They're ineffective choices. We know that the problem here is not one of supply; it's one of demand. This bill does nothing to deal with what drives that demand. Nothing.

On the other end of it, what are we dealing with here? What's everybody complaining about? What are the effects that people have been now talking about for an hour and a half? They're talking about a need for treatment, and what the effect of this bill is on somebody. There's nothing in this bill that addresses treatment at all.

Let's face it. To actually be able to cook a good batch of meth, you need boxes and boxes and boxes and boxes of this, so changing this to an over-the-counter deal is not going to substantially alter what's going on here. You know, you are not getting people going in and purchasing 30 boxes of Sudafed or NyQuil or something with

this active drug in it in order to cook meth. They might be going to several different pharmacies in an urban area and getting six boxes at each, but frankly, we've got to give the pharmacists a bit of credit here. They know what's going on in their stores. They're already watching. Most of them are already running voluntary programs.

The Pharmacists Association I think has a voluntary code that they're already working with that lays out that they need to be watching for this kind of thing and being involved in public education strategies. So they can already see when you've got a customer coming in and purchasing a number of units of boxes of pills for this and are likely, probably, already communicating with their local police detachment about that if they see it happening.

You know, once again I watch this government see a problem develop. Do they actually take steps that are going to address the problem or make a significant dent in it? No. What I see them doing – and yet again this is a perfect example – is pass off the responsibility to somebody else. Who's responsible for this? It's the pharmacists. The pharmacists are going to be the ones on whose backs this whole scheme rides.

Whether it's just the active ingredients here or whether they're composite drugs that are available, which the amendment is dealing with, that we won't deal with the multi-ingredient products and we will only put pure products behind really doesn't significantly matter because the government, this private member that is a member on the government side have not dealt with anything that is going to reduce the demand for this. Certainly, I've heard it repeated on this side with opposition members saying: "What are you doing? What strategies, what initiatives are out there to reduce the demand?" Without reducing that demand, this is a nod; this is a tip of the hat. This will not be effective in reducing the crystal meth problem that we have.

You know, I look across Canada and say: "Okay. What is everybody else doing here?" Well, we've got Alberta considering it. Manitoba and Saskatchewan have already limited the access and made it a schedule 2 or essentially made it that you have to purchase it over the counter. Therefore, you have to talk to the pharmacist, which frankly is a good thing because when the pharmacist gets involved, there's an opportunity for additional counselling and for the pharmacist to get a better idea of who they're dealing with and to be more alert for problems.

Again, we've got to give the pharmacists as a profession some credit here about being able to do their job. When I look at the crystal meth strategy in B.C., for example, it's working in partnership with the federal government, the College of Pharmacists, and the Pharmacy Association to control access. They're looking for bulk sales. They're looking for theft of cold medications. If there's a pattern, then they're following up on it.

The strategic plan for crystal meth and other amphetamines in Saskatchewan, 2004, is around a comprehensive alcohol and drug strategy developed by Saskatchewan Health. I mean, we've got absolute piecemeal happening, and this amendment is a perfect example of that: let's just throw one or two things at it; let's make it somebody else's problem and hope this all works. Well, it's not going to. The Ontario Pharmacists' Association has launched an awareness campaign at teaching pharmacists and the public about the threat of the drug, and it's meant to alert pharmacy staff to unusual purchases. Now, that's the kind of thing, you know, I'm talking about. They're already doing that in a lot of places. They're catching onto it in other places.

But whether what's being proposed by this member is really going to be effective in what we're trying to do, I have to say no. Am I going to vote against this bill? Probably not because it's harmless in itself, I suppose, except that once again it puts the onus on a group

of people that didn't ask for this. This will have a cost for pharmacists. Will it drive them out of business? No, not likely. But it will be a cost for them. Once again the government, who's responsible for this issue and for developing a strategy and some concrete actions to deal with it, off-loads onto another group of people, who not only have to integrate it and produce something, but they've got the additional cost of building new shelves behind their counters on which to stock this product, maybe additional staff because they're now going to have to deal with everybody that comes forward looking for this.

My colleague rightly talked about rural health strategies and people's access in rural areas to these perfectly legal products. Will this stop someone who is really determined to get hold of it? No, it won't because, as I said, they'll shop around. They'll get three boxes from here and four boxes from there and six boxes from there, and they'll just keep going. Now, harder to do in the rural areas because, as my colleague from Edmonton-McClung pointed out, they're likely having to go and get cold remedies from the local gas station or from the grocery store because they don't have access to pharmacies in every small town anymore.

I'm just really disappointed at how ineffective this strategy is. I know that there have been a lot of government members get up and speak at length to it today, but really if that same political will had been put into a strategy to actually deal with decreasing the demand of it by looking at some activities for people to get involved with so that they aren't looking to drugs as an amusement, as a way to break the monotony of their life and of their existence, that would have been far more productive. Once again, the government member that's proposing this bill is doing the easy thing, not the right thing, and frankly it's ineffective.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to the amendment proposed by the Member for West Yellowhead. I think this amendment is reasonable, and I hope that each member present here today understands the reason for it.

As we've all heard, crystal meth is horrible. It is one of the most brutal drugs that have beset our communities. I know that there are plenty of drugs that we must all be aware of, drugs that are harmful to our children, and I think crystal meth is the most harmful of them all. I believe this is because it is not a drug that is imported from the fields of Colombia or cooked by experts in intricate labs. Rather, this drug can be made and is made by the most innocuous group. It doesn't take much to cook up crystal meth in one's basement, barn, or living room, and it is in these places where the drug is being made. I think that is a point that needs to be hammered home here today. This stuff is easily made, and we as legislators need to do our best to change that. This is where the amendment introduced today comes in.

4:50

As has been mentioned time and time again, the amendment puts single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind the counter in pharmacies across Alberta. This, Mr. Chairman, is important. The reason that we have crystal meth being cooked in basements, barns, and living rooms is because the ingredients are extremely easy to find. We have heard during debate how easy it is to find the recipes to make crystal meth by simply doing a search on the World Wide Web.

What I think has been overlooked a little bit is that not only are the instructions readily available online, but so are the ingredients.

Some may ask: what are the ingredients to make crystal meth? Well, after a quick search on the Internet, it is found that there are only three main ingredients that are needed to make this horrible drug: pseudoephedrine, iodine crystal, and red phosphorus. Now, red phosphorus is a very easily attainable substance because it is found in all strike pads on matchbooks. In my opinion, there is no possible way that we can limit this. It would be much too difficult to outlaw matchbooks without appearing ridiculously heavy-handed, so that part will remain easily obtainable.

Iodine, another ingredient, is watched and regulated by the federal government, and if large quantities are attempted to be bought, it is usually flagged. Iodine crystals can also be found in bottles of iodine tincture, which many farmers use for horses with problems with their hooves. It is easy enough to buy, and our farmers use it quite often, so regulating that more than it already is may also be too difficult to do.

However, the third and most important part of meth-making is the pseudoephedrine, which is found in many cold medications and is currently unregulated. This is the ingredient which is the most important to meth. This is the part of the meth equation that must be regulated more strictly because without this ingredient it is nearly impossible to make crystal meth.

Mr. Chairman, that is what this amendment is trying to accomplish today. The amendment before the Committee of the Whole ensures that all of those single-entity pseudoephedrine products will be put in an area where only those who need it will be able to access it. We are taking this drug and putting at least some restrictions on it.

Pseudoephedrine is only part of the crystal meth formula that is essential. By passing this amendment today, I think that we will be able to limit the access to this key ingredient. I think that it is important to recognize that this law is probably not going to rid our province of crystal meth. However, what it may do is ensure that the labs that are found in the basements, barns, and living rooms are few and far between. That is what we must focus on.

As I outlined some of the key ingredients of meth earlier in my remarks, I hope that members noticed that they weren't highly expensive products. In fact, I've been told that you can make this drug for very little money. This is why it is so attractive, as many different groups of people are able to make and access this drug.

Mr. Chairman, we must hope that this bill will cause some change within our communities. It is my hope that this step we are taking today will make access to crystal meth much more difficult. The more difficult it is to make, the more expensive I think it will become. The more expensive it becomes, the less it will be used. If we can lessen the use, we should be able to combat addictions a little easier. I believe this amendment is going to go a long way in accomplishing what we wish. I think today we will take a step forward in the fight against crystal meth. I urge all hon. members to vote in favour of the amendment here today.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a great pleasure to join the debate on Bill 204, the Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005, sponsored by the Member for West Yellowhead. As amended, Bill 204 would move single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind the pharmacy counter. This amendment and this legislation are long overdue.

The Alberta College of Pharmacists, businesses and pharmacists themselves, have been voluntarily moving single-entity pseudoephedrine products behind the counters. We've heard

examples of this happening in Alberta, but it is also happening in other jurisdictions across North America.

For example, in April of this year the Target chain of stores in the United States announced that they would move all product containing pseudoephedrine behind the pharmacy counter. Additionally, the chain of stores also stated that in stores where there is no pharmacy, products containing pseudoephedrine would not be sold. Although some government jurisdictions had previously enacted legislation concerning the access to pseudoephedrine products, Target referred to itself as the first national retailer to voluntarily decide to place pseudoephedrine-based cough, cold, and allergy products behind the pharmacy counter. Target also stated that consumers who purchase products containing pseudoephedrine would continue to be limited to two packages per transaction or to more stringent restrictions as required by the local law.

In the United States the practice of moving pseudoephedrine products behind the counter began in April 2004. The approximately \$2 billion over-the-counter cold, allergy, and sinus tablet category got a wake-up call when Oklahoma ordered that items containing the ingredient pseudoephedrine be removed from shelves and placed behind the pharmacy counters. Since then, several municipalities and states have passed or are considering legislation regarding the sale of pseudoephedrine products.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, at the same time that Target was announcing its new policy towards pseudoephedrine products, there were a number of other large consumer chain stores doing the same. In the span of one week Longs Drugs, Albertsons, and Wal-Mart each announced plans to move pseudoephedrine products behind the counter. In addition, Safeway has a policy limiting the sale of cold medications containing pseudoephedrine to three packets at a time. In that week alone 1,330 Target stores, 472 Longs Drugs stores, 2,000 Albertsons stores, and 4,000 Wal-Mart stores moved to limit access to pseudoephedrine products.

The trend followed into August, when Walgreens announced it would move all products containing pseudoephedrine, including liquids and gels, behind the pharmacy counter. Prior to that, for more than three years Walgreens had voluntarily placed limits exceeding those imposed by most of the state laws on the purchase of pseudoephedrine and other over-the-counter medication. Mr. Chairman, this was a substantial move as the Walgreens company in the United States is the largest drugstore chain, with fiscal 2004 sales of \$37.5 billion. The company operated 4,859 stores in 45 states and Puerto Rico. When the largest drugstore chain in the United States jumps on board, it is time for the rest of the continent to jump on board as well.

These are examples, and it's quite an accomplishment and proof positive that by accepting the proposed amendment and passing this legislation, we are doing the right thing.

Colorado's attorney general John Suthers commented on the voluntary actions. I would like to share those comments with the House today. He stated:

The scourge of methamphetamine labs in Colorado has reached dangerous levels. In many cases, the labs pose a danger not only to users but also to innocent children and neighbors. I am pleased that Target and Albertsons have volunteered to put certain medicines used to manufacture meth behind the counter in an effort to discourage their purchase by illicit manufacturers.

He continued by mentioning that

state officials in Oklahoma credit a state law, which moved certain non-prescription drugs containing pseudoephedrine behind the counter, with an eighty per cent decrease in meth lab seizures. In light of this evidence, I encourage other retailers in Colorado to consider following the lead of Target and Albertsons.

That was a quote from the Attorney General. An 80 per cent

decrease, Mr. Chairman – 80 per cent – is a substantial step in the right direction. We may see the same type of result here, or we may not, but it is worth a try.

5:00

To ensure that the quoted statistic of 80 per cent was accurate, I found an ABC news report which discussed the history of this policy in the U.S.A. I would like to share that as well. The report stated that Oregon and Oklahoma have been among the most aggressive states in fighting meth production in smaller labs. In Oregon the law enforcement official asked the advice of meth dealers, users, and smurfers about what would work to slow down the production of meth. For clarification, Mr. Chairman, smurfers are the people who go from one store to another buying Sudafed or other pseudoephedrine-based products for cooks. The answer provided to the question is as follows: making pseudoephedrine hard to get would cripple small-time operators. As a result, in 2001 state legislation was drafted that would do just that, but the bill was quashed due in large part to extensive lobbying by the pharmaceutical industry.

Then in 2003 an Oklahoma police officer was shot and killed by a meth addict during a routine traffic stop, and that was impetus for an Oklahoma law passed in 2004 restricting the sale of products containing pseudoephedrine. Those medicines are now sold from behind the pharmacy counter, and people have to show ID to the pharmacist, who also keeps a monthly record of individual purchases.

According to Oklahoma's drug task force, that move has been a major victory on the war on meth. Local law enforcement saw results immediately, including an immediate 50 per cent reduction in meth labs. According to Oklahoma's drug task force, since the law was passed, there has been an 80 per cent to 90 per cent reduction in meth lab seizures plus the state has seen fewer meth-related cases being handled by child welfare and other social service programs.

Mr. Chairman, Oregon and more than 30 other states have adopted laws restricting the sale of pseudoephedrine, but the law enforcement officials readily admit that shutting down domestic labs has not kept anyone from getting meth. What they found is that the demand is being met by trafficking from other states or Mexico, but they still call the restriction successful to the welfare of the state. What they don't have are the deathtrap labs, destruction of property, and danger to children at risk.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the voluntary and legislative examples I have provided show that this kind of legislation works. It is not a complete solution, but it is a long step in the right direction. I urge all members to support the proposed amendment and support the amended version of Bill 204.

I would like to call the question, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Any other speakers on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: On the bill itself, the hon. Member for West-Yellowhead.

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. At this time I'd like to sort of answer a couple of questions from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, the Member for Edmonton-McClung, and the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Pseudoephedrine is the main ingredient. I've talked to a detective with the Edmonton Police Service, and I've talked with the head of the RCMP, and they're

telling me that if we get this precursor handled by the pharmacists, we'll be moving a long step forward because 95 per cent of all crystal meth labs are made by the ma-and-pa scenario. Only 5 per cent is made by the huge organized crime.

Then I guess the other thing is that I've talked with the pharmacists and explained this to them. They understand that it's going to take some time to move this. A majority of them are willing. I've also talked with retail Alberta, retail British Columbia, retail Canada. They're a little concerned, if we move it to a schedule 2, for the simple reason that it'll take it out of some of the smaller retailers.

Let me just explain this one thing. A friend of mine is a pharmacist, and he was in Edson one day at a local store, not a drugstore, and while he was in the store, he watched a young man walk in, grab a handful of pseudoephedrine cold medicine, buy them all from a clerk, and then walk out. The pharmacist went up to the clerk and said: "Why did you sell all those? You know what he's going to use that for." She said: "Well, what do I do? I can't stop him from buying this product that the store sells." She was correct. She has no right not to sell these products to whoever wishes to buy them, even though it was clear to my pharmacist friend that the product was most likely going to be used for crystal meth.

With this bill amended, I hope we'll be able to move on, and we'll never have to have this clerk sort of second-guess. We'll secure the products where our pharmacists can keep tabs on who's buying them. The pharmacists want – and they've stated it through the Health Professions Act – to be involved more with the aspects of helping the total health scenario work with the health programs that we're doing. So here's a chance. I'm sure that they'll be working with all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I've spent most of my teaching career working with junior high students, who are the most vulnerable to drug addictions through peer pressure, through the desire to experiment, the desire to set themselves apart or in many cases just be a member of the group. I've also worked locally in my constituency with police and social workers with a particular young offender who was expelled from two of the schools in my constituency and for a number of months afterwards had an online drug availability, complete with pictures, of the types of drugs that you could get if you simply contacted him. So I'm extremely concerned about limiting access to any of the products that would contribute to the creation of crystal meth. This is part of the solution.

My question that I had hoped to address earlier possibly – I don't see the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I'm trying to get a sense as to how things are improving. I know that we've recently added 24 more AADAC beds, which have been split between Edmonton and Calgary. If anyone can provide me with the answer as to how many beds – oh, I see the Member for Calgary-Lougheed returning. I would like to have a sense as to how many AADAC beds there are in total that can be used to treat currently addicted crystal meth users. Can any member provide me with an answer to this? Has there been any noticeable decline in the number of drug-related apprehensions since the five-day detox meth act was passed or since the commercials have been broadcast? I know it's very early on in the process, but I'd like to get sort of almost an interim report card suggesting: are we making progress? I would hope very much that we are. This is a terrible drug, and various other members have explained how it has affected their constituents.

What I'm basically looking for is: is this watered-down, five-day

detox from the initial Bill 202 having, from the intended 90-day institutionalization, the desired anti drug addiction effect? Limiting the product is a good first step, but treating those who are already under its influence has to be part of the entire program.

If anyone can provide me with those answers or details, I'd very much appreciate it. Thank you.

5:10

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 204 as amended. Although I understand that Bill 204 is necessary, I was extremely pleased to hear from the Member for Strathcona that pharmacists have taken action.

You know, colleagues, crystal meth is a deadly drug. It's consuming the lives of youth all across this country. We can't solve this issue overnight, but we have to ensure that we as legislators do everything in our power to limit access to the chemicals needed to produce crystal meth. As long as we view this bill as part of a larger solution, then we're headed in the right direction, but we have a long way to go.

The fact that the majority of crystal meth is not being made with off-the-shelf pseudoephedrine but, rather, that it's coming from the chemical wholesalers via Internet or mail distribution is another concern which was raised by previous speakers. Again, Mr. Chairman, crystal meth or any other drug will always find a way to terrorize our youth. If it's not crystal meth, it'll be something else, something newer and something more serious. We cannot look at the proposed bill as a solution. We cannot sweep this problem under the rug. We as leaders must find alternative, innovative solutions to win the battle against drugs like crystal meth.

I remember a time when marijuana was the most serious thing out there. Boy, what I'd give to have marijuana as our greatest disadvantage to today's youth. Now we're hearing that the feds want to legalize it. I find it rather disturbing that as we sit here and discuss how we're going to prevent the children of Alberta from falling victim to crystal meth, the federal government is making a move to legalize drugs.

An Hon. Member: We don't have a federal government any more.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, I understand that we don't have a federal government right now, but we will have again.

Mr. Chairman, until we can remind Alberta's youth that they do not need artificial substances to enjoy a state of abstracted musing or daydreaming, we need to ensure that we're doing everything we can to protect them from crystal meth or any other serious illicit drugs.

I encourage all my colleagues and members of this Assembly to support Bill 204. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, it's 5:14. I could recognize you, but I'd have to interrupt at the same time.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2), which provides for the Committee of the Whole to rise and report no later than 5:15 p.m. on Monday afternoons, I must now put the following question: shall progress on the bill be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 204.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration Bill 204. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 204.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

By way of information, hon. members, the federal vote was 171 to 133, and the federal government has fallen.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On that historic notation of yours, I would move that we now call it 5:30, repair to our televisions and see what's going on in Ottawa, and reconvene here at 8 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:17 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 28, 2005**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 05/11/28

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Salaries of Government Employees

512. Mr. Snelgrove moved on behalf of Mr. Griffiths:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to index the salaries of all government employees to the average weekly earnings index and provide salary adjustments based on supply and demand pressures within one year following a provincial election.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster on behalf of the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to introduce a motion on behalf of the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. He is, as many in the Chamber know, expecting to start a family fairly shortly and hopefully, he's hoping, before the new year so that he's eligible for all of the appropriate incentives. But I think we would all agree that although we do some very important work in this Chamber, he's certainly off on some important business of his own. Looking out for the future generations, he's introduced this bill.

Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member is trying to start here is a debate about what's the intent of the negotiating process with the provincial government and its employees. I think all people in the House would agree that it's in our best interest to have a working relationship that is transparent, that the importance of our staff is recognized, and that we're not entering into endless negotiations through salary increases that may just be a small part of the total package that we're dealing with.

What he's suggesting, Mr. Speaker, and what I support is that the public sector could receive an automatic base salary increase, the same as MLAs receive, yet their union or association would still be able to negotiate the other parts of the arrangement, be it whatever particular vocation they are, whether it be class size or teaching hours, whether it be staffing ratios in nursing homes. All of the other issues that make up a collective agreement would still be on the table. All of the major adjustments to this would occur after a provincial election within one year so that politicians are neither blackmailed nor forced into making settlements that are either unfair to the employee or unfair to the taxpayer, and the balance and the confrontational way that we've had negotiations simply don't serve the process very well.

The other thing we want to let our employees know is that we value their work, and many of them would like to continue to provide the good work they do knowing they would be treated fairly. I think there is a fairly common misconception, Mr. Speaker, that somehow – and this comes up many times in our travels – MLAs receive huge increases and that we are just determining all of our own salaries willy-nilly. In fact, most people would be surprised to know that our salaries are increased on a completely independent assessment of the increases in cost of living, and we accept that.

Since 1999, Mr. Speaker, we've actually received an average of 2.2 per cent, from 1999 to 2004. They range from a high of 3.34 in

2001 to a low of 1.36. I think it's fair to say that no one is in this Chamber for the exorbitant salary that we receive, and although I think that we're fairly compensated, it also is appropriate that we don't determine our increases year to year.

I'm looking forward to the debate tonight, Mr. Speaker, because I think that if we take this as an opportunity to improve our relationship with our staff, we can build this on a positive note, that we accept that how we do in this province is how you will be compensated. That directly is related by the salaries that the private sector gives, and that's based on profit. Our government needs to be able to follow and maintain our workforce at the level that is comparable and equal to what they bring to the table.

Mr. Speaker, I think that if we were to implement Motion 512, we would simply see this as fair, that it's predictable and transparent, and it settles all wages in our government sphere as we are settled here.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, that is very troublesome is that we seem to have negotiations go on and on and on, and when they're finally settled, they may be retroactive for a year or a year and a half, and you're right back into the negotiating cycle again. I don't see how that serves anyone.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will take my seat and look forward to the debate on Motion 512. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, this motion appears to be a way for the government to strike at collective bargaining and the ability of a union to negotiate wages with the Crown. By indexing all government employees to the average weekly earnings index, there is no opportunity for any of the public-sector unions to negotiate a fair wage based on other factors, such as real inflation, what the market offers, the changing nature of the particular trades, occupations, professions, and whatever they represent. That free market process, that allows for these things to be brought about in free and fair negotiations, fails to come about.

This motion seriously undermines the process of collective bargaining. I don't see how it could conform to the Alberta labour code, and it would probably make necessary some huge changes in that – and I don't have some of the specifics here with me right now – which we usually only see in jurisdictions that would have been called in the past corporatist. There are other words that are used for that.

The second prong of this motion seems to be very much at odds with the first. Simply speaking, either the government incorporates indexing to the average weekly earnings index, or they rely on supply and demand pressures or market forces to determine salary adjustments. There is an inherent contradiction in these two statements. It is very bad public policy to have two different approaches to salary adjustments for all government employees. In the interests of consistency and transparency one approach should be taken, not two varied approaches.

This method most certainly takes away from unions such as the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees the right under their existing collective agreement to negotiate salary increases under the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. It can be seen as terribly eroding the power of the union to negotiate fairly and equitably and with full input of all of the members of the union the terms of the salary increases. This also can be seen as a way for the government to take some of the power of the union away in this very important area of collective bargaining. It strikes at the heart of the principle of collective bargaining, and I think you will see a firestorm in this

province if this motion and the legislation that would be needed to bring it to effect are brought into effect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Dunford: Yes. I'd like to enter into the debate on the motion and begin by saying that the motion as written looks tantalizingly seductive in terms of agreement of this House, but I think there are other, underlying issues that need to be dealt with here. I would see it as part of any MLA's responsibility in having that kind of knowledge or that kind of concern to rise and at least put onto the record what those concerns would be.

First of all, I want to make sure that we make note of the fact that it does talk about government employees. One assumes, then, that we're talking about everyone from whatever the lowest classification is within the government right up through all of the executive positions. Certainly, I don't know if there are any wage or contract workers left on the payroll of the government of Alberta. I know that there has been a move to try to, you know, remove that category through collective bargaining over time.

8:10

So if we are indeed talking about government employees, I think there are some things that taxpayers should know and understand, and that would be that within the collective bargaining with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees we certainly haven't had a history of runaway wage increases, that sort of thing. As a matter of fact, if I could speak on behalf of the Alberta civil service, I wonder if they've really been paid what they're worth. Certainly, any government knows and understands that in order to achieve the objectives of a political arm of a government, there has to be the civil service, then, in place in order to actually do the day-to-day work and to carry that out.

Even though doctors didn't take the 5 per cent cutbacks, certainly nurses did, and certainly teachers did. If we were to look at a base year, then, to start to compare what's happened in terms of wage and salary increases, I would pick perhaps the year '93 or '94. I don't have information in front of me, so I'm going a bit from memory, but if we were to compare, let's say, the last 10 years of what's actually happened, I think you would find that doctors, nurses, and teachers, who would not be covered by this particular motion, have actually had outstanding wage increases, probably somewhere in the order of a 40 per cent increase in those particular salaries. In those numbers I certainly wouldn't be including the last go-round. So it's likely now that we're approaching 50 per cent, whereas the government of Alberta employees certainly have not had the kind of scale of increases that would be put into place.

It might seem unfair, then, if one was to look at a period of time to try to adjust the Alberta civil service wage rates to what's actually been happening. It would seem perhaps unfair to bring in – I realize that this is a motion, but if this were to carry the government into legislation to actually enact this motion, it would seem that the timing would be a little bit unfair because we're really catching them at a period of catch-up.

On the other hand, there is, I think, amongst taxpayers out there a general belief that we MLAs and civil servants generally are overpaid, so that's the seductiveness of this kind of motion. I think we'd want to be careful in looking at this type of thing, and if it was to proceed much further, we would want to spend I think a fair amount of analysis on the time frame in which this would happen.

Now, I'm trying to be as discreet as I can in my comments because I know that Dan MacLennan, president of the Alberta Union

of Provincial Employees, is an avid reader of *Hansard*, and I would hate the thought that my comments would become part of the next collective bargaining process. You know, I do think that facts speak for themselves and that there is a situation there that I for one believe there was a plan in place to rectify. Certainly, I would want to see that plan go forward.

I think the hon. member that spoke previously – and I'm sorry; I forget the constituency – in fact is correct. We would have to open the labour code. I think that any legislation in this House, of course, is subject to being opened at the bequest of the government. I mean, that's what governments do. But to open the labour code at this particular time I think would be, again, another risky venture. What we've had lately in this House are questions regarding, you know, some emotion that was around the Lakeside Packers dispute. We had Finning Tractor out there, the Telus agreement. We've got now an emotional cry amongst many portions of the labour movement for implementing first agreements. I would think that if anyone is going to argue against this kind of emotion, they would also have to argue against the implementation of first agreements because in any other definition you would have to be starting to infringe, then, upon the interpretation of what free collective bargaining would be all about.

I think that the record of labour relations in Alberta is without peer. It stands far and away as a living code that's been able to deal with situations over time. The record speaks for itself. The overwhelming majority of disputes have been resolved, and it's usually because reasonable people after a period of time of emotion, after a period of time of leveraging and flexing muscles and the rhetoric that all goes with that, ultimately know that eventually they're going to have to live with each other, so they're able to come to types of agreements.

Again, I would caution any supporter of this motion that we, in fact, then would have to dig into the Labour Relations Code. All I'm doing is warning that once opened, there might be other things that would have to be considered that, again, supporters of this motion might not be interested in looking at.

The intent, I think, of the motion is to deal with government employees the way that we're dealt with in terms of attaching the wage increases to the average index. But I'm not sure that it's the wages that are the problem. The benefits have become a real cost. I don't know where our pension plan is, but if we're going to talk about equalizing government employees with MLAs, then maybe it's time to start thinking about MLA pensions again. If we're going to do that, of course, that would be more expensive, Mr. Speaker, to the Alberta taxpayer than the transition allowance. I'm not sure that everybody understands that, but when you do the math, that's what in fact happens.

So this looks good, but it won't be able to stand in isolation. There are other things that will come with it. I think I would encourage a real hesitancy before we support this kind of motion.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Motion 512. To start, I read the motion, and I'm not entirely sure if the motion is clear enough. It's a motion, certainly, that refers to government employees, a very large number of Albertans who provide very valuable and valued services to the government as well as to Albertans through this government.

There's a reference in this motion to "index the salaries" of government employees "to the average weekly earnings index" on the one hand, and then immediately following that it says, "provide salary adjustments based on supply and demand pressures," which is quite different from the average weekly earnings index because

there's a more dynamic aspect to the supply and demand pressures, and "within one year following a provincial election" is yet another thing.

So I'm not sure if the motion is clear. In fact, I think it's rather confusing and unclear. So one wonders what exactly the motion is calling for to allow the supply and demand relationship to determine what wages are agreed to or collectively bargained for. Or is it that we impose some sort of measure to the average weekly earnings index?

8:20

So even at this point I'm not focusing on the issue of what it does to the right of collective bargaining of employees. I'll come to that later. But even if we are not talking about that, still the question remains: what exactly is the motion asking us to do? It seems to me that you are asking for two quite different things, two different things that may be at cross purposes with each other because the average weekly earnings index is the broadest measure of all earnings across all occupations and economic sectors, covering everyone who is drawing a salary or wage. On the other hand, supply and demand pressures vary depending on whether we are talking about skilled tradespeople, nurses, teachers, or someone else.

It is also unclear, Mr. Speaker, who is covered by the term "government employees." Does it include public service managers? The Minister of Economic Development, who formerly had the portfolio of Human Resources and Employment, has raised that question already. Does it include public service managers or other public service employees? Are chairs, chief executive officers, and senior managers of government agencies, boards, commissions, and provincial corporations included? This is an important question that must be answered given that the officials at the most senior level of the public service barely six months ago received a huge, hefty increase of 27 per cent and a benefit hike just last summer on top of all the regular annual pay hikes. So we need to ask this question: who is being called a government employee?

Should we make the comparisons real and fair between those who receive the 25 per cent salary hike and an increase in other benefits and those who didn't before we begin to look for a uniform measure, even if that were desirable, to see how we want to deal with the salary increases for government employees? I raise the question of whether we have provincial corporations like Alberta Treasury Branches and the Workers' Compensation Board restricted to increases in the average weekly earnings index? What about the regional health authorities? The senior managers have seen their pay hike packages more than triple over the last 10 years or so.

So there are different rates at which salaries have increased, different rates by which they have been adjusted over the last 10 years. Some groups of government employees have fallen way behind. Teachers and others have suffered cuts, as the minister just mentioned earlier, 5 per cent cuts, while others have enjoyed very, very significant increases and growth in their take-home pay.

What about bonuses and lump sum payments? Would they be similarly disallowed? If not, senior managers, who routinely receive bonuses with a value of 20 per cent or more of their total pay package, would gain an advantage over rank-and-file employees who are not provided with such bonuses. So a question of fairness arises in a very significant way when you begin to look at the implications of what this motion is trying to accomplish.

The yearly salary increases of the rank-and-file public service employees have in some cases not even kept pace with living costs. That's the other side of the equation. For example, the most recent collective agreement negotiated with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees provides for salary increases averaging about 3 per cent

a year, which is just about at the level of inflation. So there are differences within this group of public employees, great differences that will have to be first reconciled before we really begin to develop a formula that is applied equally, without discrimination, to all of these groups of workers that we call government employees. Some have highly benefited from the way we have offered them increases, and others have really fallen behind.

We talk about all of this in the context of labour shortages and the importance to retain government employees who have worked for the government for years and years and developed the kind of skill sets that are absolutely necessary to do those jobs well. The problem of retention becomes another one. You know, if you begin to impose these kinds of settlements by way of legislative fiat, what happens? What does it do to the stability of the workforce we call the government employees?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this motion also, of course, I think, has perhaps inadvertently forgotten the fact that rights to collective bargaining are one of the most important democratic rights in Canada, in our kind of society. We are a democracy. First and foremost, these collective bargaining rights are a part of that democratic rights package that all of us are proud of having available to all of us as citizens. Two, if this motion were to be passed by this House, this would be a statement against the continuation of a guarantee of those democratic rights, which include collective bargaining rights. So I think the whole issue of democratic rights – we have talked in this House of democratic deficit. Let's not add another element to the democratic deficits that we must address as legislators, democratically elected representatives of our own fellow citizens. Also, the issue of the labour code has been raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning and then by the Minister of Economic Development, who also represents Lethbridge-West.

Critical questions seem to be overlooked in the drafting of the motion in addition to the lack of clarity of what the motion really seeks to establish. When you put the motion against the backdrop of a fairly high level of labour strikes and employee/employer conflict situations that have risen over the last five, six months, one has to ask whether or not giving support to a motion like this would further intensify that conflict, would further fray those relations between employers and employees; in this case, between us as employers, I suppose, representing the government, and government employees, another large group of workers.

For those reasons . . . [Dr. Pannu's speaking time expired]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Good evening. I'm pleased to rise and join the debate on Motion 512, sponsored by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. This is a very interesting motion to address very important concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks this evening by acknowledging the excellent work that is done by the civil servants of this province. Alberta's public service is second to none and has helped to ensure that Alberta is the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Our public officials are well compensated, and they deserve to be.

Motion 512 proposes that the salaries of all government employees be indexed to the average weekly earnings rate for Alberta as prepared by Statistics Canada. This motion would also allow for a labour demand adjustment in the year following an election. Mr. Speaker, as a government it's important that we are able to provide needed services to our citizens. The men and women of the public service help us accomplish this goal, and as I mentioned above, they

do this in an exemplary fashion. We are also responsible for ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent in a responsible fashion. As much as possible the cost of administering a program should be kept to a minimum, ensuring that public dollars are directed toward helping Albertans in need of assistance.

8:30

Mr. Speaker, constant collective bargaining activities eat up important resources that could be better utilized if directed away from administration. Too often public resources are eaten up on annual collective bargaining. For example, the Lethbridge school district reached an agreement with the ATA on September 9, 2004, but the agreement was for less than a year. Both sides will now have to return to the bargaining table, consuming resources that would be better used in the classroom.

By laying a foundation for wage increases, we would be ensuring that all public service employees are treated equitably. Public servants, no matter where they live in the province, could count on a consistent method of salary evaluation. It is not fair for employees in one division to be given a double-digit increase while those in other divisions are given a small cost-of-living adjustment. Indexing salaries will also ensure that government employees' salaries grow at the same rate as their counterparts in the private sector. It is important in recruiting and retaining quality people to make a commitment to them. By indexing salaries, we can ensure that we do not lose employees to a wage gap between the private and public sector. As private sector salaries increase, so will government employees' salaries.

The motion also allows for there to be a salary adjustment every four years in order to keep up with the supply and demand pressures in the labour market. This is an important feature of this motion. It is important in Alberta that we do not lose teachers and nurses to other jurisdictions. Re-evaluating salaries every four years will ensure that our public service remains a competitive employer. Alberta has the highest paid teachers and nurses in this country, and this motion will help Alberta maintain this status.

The government salary structure should reflect the nature of the Alberta economy. The same principle, Mr. Speaker, governs how our salaries are determined. If Albertans on average are making more money, then MLAs' salaries increase. On the other hand, if Albertans' salaries are decreasing, then MLA salaries are adjusted accordingly.

The salaries of government employees should reflect the salaries of the private sector. When private-sector employees are getting 3 to 4 per cent increases annually, it is not fair for public-sector employees to receive a 14 per cent increase. I do not feel comfortable asking a hard-working Albertan who just received a 4 per cent raise to pay more in taxes in order to support a 14 per cent increase for a public servant.

The indexing of salaries will also help to ensure that departments and agencies are properly able to budget for expected salary increases. Every year in the budgeting process departments estimate the expected increase in employees' salaries within their ministries and agencies. Indexing salaries will increase the predictability of the wage increases and ensure that resources are not diverted away from programs to meet salary requirements. For example, let's say that a school board knows that their contract with the ATA expires in the upcoming year. They build into the budget a 6 per cent salary increase. However, the collective bargaining process leads to a 14 per cent increase in salaries. This development forces the school board to alter their budget and cut funding to other areas. Politics are then often brought into the discussion as complaints go out about funding levels and the like. If wages are indexed, these unexpected jumps will be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, this motion allows for across-the-board salary adjustments after every election. Should the government or, for that matter, a member of the opposition feel that it is necessary to increase the salaries of our public servants, then it's important for that belief to be made public during the election. Indexing salaries in the manner outlined in this motion will help to increase the openness and transparency surrounding government salaries. I'm sure that even the members of the opposition will not argue with the idea of further increasing the transparency of government processes.

I would urge all members here this evening to endorse this proposal. The indexing of government employees' salaries will help to reduce administration costs and ensure that employees are fairly rewarded in a manner that is accountable and affordable to taxpayers. Mr. Speaker, when I was in business and whenever my employees would come to me and complain that I wasn't paying them what they were worth, I would agree with them because, you know, I could never pay them what they were worth, and I think that's the case with every valuable employee everywhere. However, we could decide on a salary that would make them happy and that was affordable for me, and the business would continue, and they would be able to support their families, and we would continue to supply parts in the fibreglass industry.

I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing this idea forward. I believe this will create good debate and creative thinking. Perhaps we can find a way of increasing salaries without having disputes every time the issue arises.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great privilege to stand up and speak to Motion 512 this evening. We've had some very good debates, and many of the points I wanted brought up have been brought up. So I'll maybe just speak shortly. It's always difficult with a motion to know what the intent is, so I appreciate the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster sharing his thoughts on that. But I have a few questions in regard to that because I'm not quite clear on the intent still at this point.

One of my biggest concerns – the Member for Red Deer-North just brought it up – is that I'm not sure in the wording and from the different comments that have been made how it's actually linked, whether this is going to be just on government wages or linked with the private sector. So I have that in question. I think that it's something that we need to very cognizant of as elected representatives and government employees, that it really is the private sector that drives the economy. As was being pointed out, if in fact there's a 14 per cent adjustment in the cost of living for some outrageous reason a given year, the private sector doesn't always receive that and has to take the brunt of it. So I am concerned exactly how that average index is going to be, and I think that should be addressed.

Although the intent is very good and we always want to reduce conflict, I worry a great deal that passing legislation to say that this is the way it's going to be often causes the most ire in the worker, being told that you don't have that ability to bargain. That perhaps is my greatest concern, just the fact that we're trying to fit everybody into one box. There have been many different points brought up on the different levels and the type of work and the supply and the demand and all of those things. My greatest concern is the fact that by putting everybody in one box and painting it with the same broad brush, we're going to cause more distress and more, I guess, dysfunction in the market by trying to do that.

So at this time I will reserve my decision on this and continue to

listen to the debate that goes on, but I hope that we can come to a positive resolution on how to deal with the public sector and reward them for their diligent work and good labour.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Evans: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to raise just a few points. I think that studying the issue – and I'm not talking about ad infinitum but at least in a shorter period of time – would be a very valued opportunity for this government. One of the issues that I encountered when we were doing collective bargaining with teacher groups is that frequently collective agreements have a clause included which says that in no subsequent year should any salary be less than the preceding year. That would argue against those times when we were in a period of deflation unless, of course, the entire body covered by the collective agreement was in agreement with that.

There is another point that has been raised, I believe by a member of Her Majesty's third party, and that is the issue where we have the trilateral agreement for doctors that has quite a different parameter: an eight-year agreement with financial openers. A number of these kinds of agreements would perhaps be arguably not necessarily government employees but people who have been paid by the government either through special arrangements or contractual arrangements.

When I was in my previous portfolio, I remember quite clearly we had several people that were under a contract-managed system for delivering supports for children in care. Again, often there were imbalances between what the government workers were paid vis-a-vis the contract workers. I think that's an area that if we're looking at this, we can't look at one piece without looking at the broader scope. The contract workers were frequently not only in Children's Services but in Persons with Developmental Disabilities and other government groups asking for like-minded judgments.

8:40

While I admire the intent of what the hon. member has proposed, I think what would be responsible to do is see this motion considered by the government in the context of the future of not only labour relations but in the future of how we acknowledge contract people who are providing service, to see whether or not we are satisfied. The bottom line is that we are getting fair value for the dollars that are spent and quite specifically so Albertans are getting fair value for the dollars spent.

I'll reflect on one time when I was a school trustee. We had about 50 contractors driving school bus that owned the buses and paid the total expense, and they were given a certain quantity of money to cover their costs as well as deliver the children safely. The other 50 were employed by the school board. There was always a feeling that you could understand and harmonize the costs fairly well if you had both groups arguing for what they believed was fair compensation for the work that was done. There were mileage amounts paid in one circumstance, and in the other circumstances there was a straight salary that they were paid, acknowledging the length of the route and the time of the day. It worked well in that there was some form of tension that set up so that you weren't acknowledging one group exclusive of the other, but you were giving employees of a number of, I suppose, interests and capacities the chance to be employed but be compensated according to the effort they were providing. All in all, it's not a simple thing.

I would not quarrel with the intent of finding what seems to be a

reasonable labour adjustment, but we see what happens when we have wide disparities. For example, this year there was an acknowledgement after several years of the costs that would be appropriately paid to senior executives in government so that we wouldn't continue to lose them to the private sector.

In my municipal experience those swings were more easily adjusted to in the private sector than they are in government. I suspect that the year after the election, while it sounds tempting, was to protect the elected official from having to do that salary adjustment just before they went out and met the electorate. But what more honest time is there to do it and then to defend it rather than to do it the year after the election and hide under the shelter of that glow of joy which might emanate from some of your residents when you first were elected. I would rather see it as an adjustment that was made when those values were appropriately understood.

I think that in the first year, in my reflection, of my embarking on any task, just like the first year as minister of health, there's an incredible learning curve. You're not always prepared to make those decisions and understand those decisions. From my bitter and past experience I can see times when you think you might be acting with the best judgment on behalf of your constituents but might not know well enough just exactly how they feel.

A particular waterline comes to mind. When we decided that we had a better mousetrap for providing water in rural Alberta the year after a particular election, I was in an auditorium, a gymnasium, apologizing to some 750 people, profusely, I might add, so that I took my sorry carcass out of there in one piece. I thought we had a better idea for getting them water, and it was nothing that they had contemplated that we would do at the time of the last election.

All in all, I am encouraged that someone's bringing the issue forward for us to discuss. But I think that if I had my druthers about this motion, it would in fact refer to the whole issue of how we pay Albertans and how this government compensates Albertans, either through salary or contract arrangements or the many arrangements that are represented by almost everybody here in the government, and have a sober second and third look at it and take the motion for that face value rather than agree with any prescriptive formula for what we might do without having all of the rest of the pieces of the puzzle.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Calgary-Bow.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with interest that I want to participate in the debate this evening on Motion 512, which is urging the government "to index the salaries of all government employees to the average weekly earnings index and provide salary adjustments based on supply and demand pressures within one year following a provincial election." Perhaps it would be easier to take this motion more seriously if we had fixed election dates, but to link this just like that to a provincial election is odd, to say the least.

Certainly, when we're talking about all government employees, one would just on the surface think that this is specifically for public servants employed directly by the government. If one looks, Mr. Speaker, at the annual report for 2004-2005 of the Alberta Department of Human Resources and Employment and you look at the distribution of staff by department, you would see that there are 23,197 employees employed in departments from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development right through to Sustainable Resource Development. You know, in Justice we have 2,200 employees. We have over 2,000, also, in Human Resources and Employment. We

have 2,600 in Children's Services. These are some of the larger departments. Infrastructure and Transportation.

If we were just to consider that these employees were to be affected by this motion, that would be different, but hon. members in this Assembly earlier in debate had talked about teachers and nurses. Certainly, the number of people that would be directly impacted by this would be significantly more if we were to take all the teachers across the province and all the nurses across the province and make them subject to this Motion 512.

I, like others, consider this a direct intrusion on collective bargaining. I don't see how this is necessary. We don't have a lot of labour disputes in this province, particularly with the civil service. However, there is a lot of work to be done with the civil service, and I think if we were to pass this motion tonight, it would send the wrong signal to our civil service.

Before I talk about that, I must say that I was surprised when the hon. Member for Red Deer-North talked about how this would make it easy, if we were to have this sort of system, for this government to stick to a budget. This government, we are led to believe if we supported this motion, could stick to a budget now that they would have this system of indexing. I would be surprised at that. One of the most difficult things for this government to do is to stick to any budget. It is my view that this is a government that is out of control with its spending. It is directionless.

Certainly, there are many areas where we need to have spending. There are a lot of things left to be done in this province after the Conservative debt has been paid off, but just to spend money for the sake of spending – and that is what's going on in some quarters today – is wrong. To say that an argument to support this would be, "Well, it would get us back on the right track, and we wouldn't be addicted to all this unbudgeted spending" is a stretch, to say the least.

8:50

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the age distribution of our civil service, the average age of permanent, salaried public service employees remained at 46 in 2004-2005. We're going to have to look at recruiting very quickly some younger people to the civil service. There's 37 per cent of the total staff in the age group between 45 and 54. To suddenly tell them, "Well, whatever limited collective bargaining you do have, we're going to take away" I don't think is going to be beneficial if we want to attract people to the civil service.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the average annual salary of permanent, full-time public service employees in 2004-05 was \$55,269, to be precise. If we look at the salary distribution of our public servants, 25 per cent are between the salary range of \$30,000 and \$39,000, and 22 per cent are between \$40,000 and \$49,000.

I don't think it would be fair to our civil servants to pass this motion tonight and tell them that they can no longer have what limited collective bargaining rights they do have, particularly in light of the fact that earlier this year we gave their bosses a 27 per cent wage increase without any public discussion. If we can be that generous with the top levels of the civil service, I think we have to be fair and generous to the remaining civil service.

I would like to also point out, Mr. Speaker, that it is interesting to note the location of public service employees. Sixty per cent are in and around the city of Edmonton. Maybe I shouldn't make that public. They'll either start laying them off or consolidate back to Coronation or somewhere like that. There's 59 per cent in the city of Edmonton, 13 per cent in Calgary, 6 per cent in Red Deer, Lethbridge has 3 per cent, and Grande Prairie has 1 per cent.

Now, there was an argument made at Public Accounts last week

that perhaps the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should consider moving some of the public service outside the city of Edmonton to some of the rural areas where the ag offices had been closed in 2002. I'm certainly not opposed to that because many of the hon. members who are members of the Public Accounts Committee made very valid arguments when we had a brief discussion last week regarding the closure of those ag offices. It's quite interesting that naturally, Edmonton being the capital, the majority of civil servants are going to be located here.

We have to show confidence, as many people have stated previously, in our civil service. I don't think this motion would do anything to ensure that the public service cannot be suspicious about this government. I don't know if the hon. member has talked to the Alberta union of public employees about this motion, but I certainly would urge the hon. member to do so and recognize that we don't have a lot of disputes in this province as it is. I think we need to show confidence in our public service and respect for the work that they do.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion on indexing public-sector wages. I would like to commend the Member for Battle River-Wainwright for bringing forward this motion, which is a good idea in so many respects.

Creating a fair way for public employees to be paid that eliminates the need for constant collective bargaining would save Albertans a lot of money because collective bargaining is expensive for the government, the union members, and the public in general. Also, if collective bargaining takes place in the year following an election as opposed to constantly, the government would be able to hire negotiators on a more ad hoc basis rather than keeping them as FTEs. These savings in tax dollars could be used for things that are of higher priority to Albertans than paying negotiators.

In addition to saving Albertans tax dollars, this idea would create a climate of stability in the province. This stable environment could then attract more business to the province as business owners always prefer to have operations in jurisdictions that are more predictable and where the government has a good relationship with its public-sector employees. By creating an environment where more businesses come into the province, we will also get the spinoff of the creation of more jobs and a more diverse economy, which is definitely a goal of this government.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the ways such an idea would help the government. I know that the members opposite don't usually support an idea just because it helps the government. In fact, as we all know, this is usually the basis of their disapproval towards an idea. Fortunately, this idea will also help union members and the unions in several ways. In fact, the idea is win-win, which is, coincidentally, the definition of the most successful type of negotiation. Public-sector employees win because their wages are determined using a very equitable and predictable system. Furthermore, if wages do not have to be part of the collective bargaining process, the union could focus on fighting for better working conditions for nurses, smaller class sizes for teachers, and many other important issues that would benefit their members.

Recently there have been some articles in the newspaper about the possibility of paying bonuses to public employees. Just imagine how our health care might improve if, say, all health care employees got a bonus for lower wait lists, if they got a bonus for higher life expectancy, if the teachers got a bonus for every child that learned to read.

Currently an employee pays the union to fight for more money. Would it not be easier just not to pay the union and keep the money? On the other hand, an employee would likely have less of a problem paying union fees if the union fights for his or her rights as an employee, his or her working conditions, or anything else that's important to the job. What I'm saying is that this idea eliminates the need to negotiate the part of the collective agreement that is often most controversial and most political but usually not the most important.

I think that the majority of people who work in the public sector believe that they are paid fairly. This is not to say that wages have not been the issue in strikes in the past, but these issues have largely been eliminated over the years. In fact, for the most part Alberta's public sector is the highest paid in the country, so now would actually be the most beneficial time to introduce such legislation to make sure that these employees continue to be paid fairly.

Another reason why now is a good time to introduce such legislation is because wages are likely going to increase across the board due to anticipated labour shortages for the next decade at least. Also, as our economy expands and as more people retire, this trend should continue for many years to come. With this reality, public-sector employees would likely see a rising trend in their wages using this method, whereas the union is limited as to how much it could negotiate wages as wages are usually only one bargaining chip amongst the many. The way bargaining goes, you have to give up something to gain something because you can't get it all, so choices might have to be made between working conditions and wages. One simply has to be chosen over the other, and this is the reality. It's so much better for all parties involved to eliminate this aspect from the negotiating table.

9:00

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, but under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster on behalf of the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright to close debate on Motion 512.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all the hon. members for participating in tonight's discussion. I'll try and answer some of the questions as best I can from the documents that the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright has produced.

Who does it cover? I would say quite clearly: if you're under the budget that we approve here in the spring, you'd be covered. It wouldn't include the Treasury Branch; it wouldn't include other corporations that are arm's length, but I think his intent was to include teachers, nurses, everyone in this government from top to bottom.

It is somewhat interesting that we talked about collective bargaining in government. It really doesn't exist when you give a union, that we know we have to work with and that has to deal with a department that has a limited budget, collective bargaining. That's not exactly how it was intended to be. Companies that are involved in collective bargaining have options with the employees that they work with. They can move their factory to Mexico if they want. The employee can go work for the neighbour if they want. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, in this country you are going to deal with your unions with a reasonable hand, and that's what's happened, but to call it collective bargaining I think is a little bit of a stretch.

I think that if we had this motion that said, "We would be willing as a government to index the salaries if that's what you wanted," we'd be surprised in here if we went to our employees and said:

would this be something that you would like to see to take the confrontational part of collective bargaining, so to say, out of it? We would like to guarantee you at least the same raises that the MLAs get. The raise you get is what your boss is going to get, is what anyone working maybe below you on the pay scale is going to get. I'd like to ask them: would you like to accept this as a starting point? Every four years we'll sit down with an independent group and have a look at: have we kept up with the demand required? Have we kept pace with the private sector? Are the classroom conditions okay? If it's within that scope, we proceed, and if it's not, you negotiate a settlement that would reflect the current-day conditions. Then you have labour peace for four years hence.

Mr. Speaker, I think we need to look at this not as a way to beat down or to hold back our public-sector friends. It's to say: what would make your job more comfortable? How would you like to approach the next four or five years knowing that you've got an agreement, that you've got a raise that's fair? In this House we receive a raise, and we'll negotiate things outside of that part of the agreement every four years. I think most of our employees would like that stability, I think the public and taxpayers would like that transparency, and I think it gives us another tool to dialogue with our employees.

Once again, I want to thank the speakers and look forward to the vote. Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 512 lost]

head:

Government Motions

Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

25. Mr. Zwozdesky moved on behalf of Mr. Hancock:

Be it resolved that

- (1) A Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be appointed consisting of the following members, namely: Mrs. Tarchuk, chair; Mr. Ducharme, deputy chair; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Flaherty; Mr. Griffiths; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Marz; Dr. Pannu; and Mr. Strang for the purpose of inviting applications for the position of Chief Electoral Officer and to recommend to the Assembly the applicant it considers most suitable to this position.
- (2) The chair and members of the committee shall be paid in accordance with the schedule of category A committees provided in the most current Members' Services Committee allowances order.
- (3) Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair.
- (4) In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department and of the staff employed by the Assembly.
- (5) The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned.
- (6) When its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly if it is sitting. During a period when the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure tonight to move on behalf of our Government House Leader Motion 25. I won't read it all, but it goes on to talk about the schedule of pay for the committee, the reasonable disbursements of the committee, the utilization, with permission, of the services of members of a particular public service. It comments on the sittings of the committee and the reportings of the committee.

I would just point out, Mr. Speaker, that members from all recognized parties in the Assembly – MLAs, that is – will be on this committee, and I would also note that this particular committee would become, effectively, a subset, so to speak, of the Legislative Offices Committee. That Legislative Offices Committee, as we all know, is comprised of 11 MLA members from the House, and nine of those same members will also be on this new Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

So with that, I would move that motion, and I look forward to the support of other members present.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, regarding Motion 25, which is essentially a search committee to find a new Chief Electoral Officer for the province with the retirement of the current officer, this is a very important post, and I think the province has been served well in the past. Committees in the past I think have been very wise in their selections, but we can't overlook just how important this office, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, is. There are 10 employees there. They work not only during the election year but, of course, every year, and they quietly go about their business of preparing for the next general election.

Certainly, the role that the Chief Electoral Officer plays is important. The independence of this office is so important so that each party, each candidate is treated fairly. It would be this member's view that each candidate from each respective party has been treated fairly in the past, and this has to continue. When we look at the whole electoral process and the role the Chief Electoral Officer plays, again this is an important role, but that individual, whether he or she, when they are selected, of course, must follow the electoral map, which is, again, determined by another committee.

With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind all hon. members of this Assembly how the city of Edmonton was shortchanged, shortchanged not by the Chief Electoral Officer but by the commission that was struck to change the electoral boundaries. Hopefully, the city of Edmonton will not be shortchanged in the future, and we won't see a government or a Progressive Conservative dominated committee removing a seat, a voice for the city of Edmonton unnecessarily from this Assembly. That is, unfortunately, what happened with Edmonton-Norwood. Unfortunately, that commission took an eraser to that constituency, and as a result the city has one less representative.

9:10

Under this motion, Motion 25, when they get together, they do a search, and they do select a new Chief Electoral Officer. I wish that person well. This process, as we know it, of course, is going to be dominated by members of the government. I would like to urge them to consider, when they make their selection, not only rural Alberta's needs but the needs of Calgary, the needs of Edmonton, the needs of northern Alberta and southern Alberta. I hope they find a suitable candidate. I wish them well in their deliberations, and hopefully the person that is selected will have a much different

electoral map to work with under the second election, that they hopefully will have the opportunity to administer.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate?

[Government Motion 25 carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading

Bill 51
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act,
2005 (No. 2)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the Minister of Finance to move for second reading the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2).

In doing so, I would just note that this bill is obviously extremely important, I think, to all Albertans because so many – in fact, I would think almost every ministry is referenced within it. In particular, the Ministry of Education, which I'm privileged to represent, has a request here for over \$75 million that is very much needed in the school system at this time. There are other ministries that are also asking for additional monies, all for very important programs and/or services that I think Albertans are waiting on, and I would hope that all members would therefore support second reading of Bill 51.

On that note, I would ensure that it is now moved at second reading.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and speak to Bill 51, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2). I want to ask some general questions on the supplementary estimates of Community Development. I'll start with 2.2.1, community service grants of \$5.5 million. This grant was allocated to a movie based on the First World War battle of Passchendaele. My question is: what were the conditions of this grant? Will the contract of this grant be made public? If not, why not? Is Mr. Gross obligated to ensure that Alberta's artists and actors are hired to take part in this movie production? If not, why not? What percentage of the cast and the crew will be local? Will this film be produced in Alberta?

Will the Premier or the Minister of Community Development be personally credited in the production of this movie? What exactly was the grant process? Did this process violate the guidelines that other Alberta artists must abide by? Has this been a project that the government has known about for some time? If so, why wasn't it budgeted for? How many times did Mr. Gross meet with the minister and the Premier? Did Mr. Gross contact the minister, or did the minister pursue Mr. Gross to offer him this part? Did the minister consult with any stakeholders before granting this money to Mr. Gross? Is the minister or the Premier willing to arrange personal meetings with other Alberta artists to discuss their projects? Is any minister or MLA sitting here or the Premier getting any role in this particular movie? If not, let me know. I'm interested.

I move to 4.1.4, Historic Sites and Cultural Facilities: a grant of \$500,000.

An Hon. Member: You're a star to me already, Bharat.

Mr. Agnihotri: Already? Okay.

**Point of Order
Second Reading Debate**

Mr. Zwozdesky: I wish to rise on a point of order under *Beauchesne* 640(2). Not to interrupt the hon. member unnecessarily, but I just would remind people that we are in second reading, hon. member, and the purpose of this stage in debate “is primarily concerned with the principle of a measure. At this stage, debate is not strictly limited to the contents of a bill as other methods of attaining its proposed objective may be considered.” However, this stage is the point at which we don’t get into any of those details such as you’re asking for. You’re certainly welcome to raise those kinds of questions if you wish and if the chair permits it when we get to the committee stage. Right now I would ask the chair to just remind all members, including the previous speaker, that second reading really deals with the principles contained in the bill and not so much the specific questions that you’re looking for answers to.

The Acting Speaker: I presume you are not rising on a point of order, but just some clarification.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Clarification.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, this chair has given a lot of latitude to a number of members who have spoken in this Assembly over the last number of years that I have been an acting chair. It’s good advice from time to time to read *Beauchesne*, read our Standing Orders, and learn about the procedures of the Assembly.

Hon. member, I hope you’ll have some time somewhere along the line to read a little more about *Beauchesne* and some of the rules of the debate. At this time the chair has recognized you, Edmonton-Ellerslie, and you may proceed.

Mr. Agnihotri: Okay. Now, I move to page . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, just so I can clarify once again, when we are discussing a bill at a second stage, we talk about the general principles of the bill. We do not talk about the clauses of the bill. That’s something we deal with at committee stage. So we talk about the principles of the bill: do we move it forward or not? That’s generally supposed to be the discussion at second reading. However, from time to time members do stray away from it. So it’s just a word of advice to you to stick with the principles of the bill.

Debate Continued

Mr. Agnihotri: Okay. I pass.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, the chair has recognized you. You may finish whatever you had wanted to say. It’s okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Agnihotri: No. I understand, but I will ask a few questions maybe in the next stage.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Good. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

9:20

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to get this opportunity to debate Bill 51. Certainly, we were talking earlier this evening about government spending that many

consider out of control. We have this schedule of amounts to be voted line by line, and there’s a significant amount of money here. Certainly, when we look at Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, we’re looking at \$288 million in additional money there. We’re looking at Children’s Services and, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was talking about, Community Development, including money for a movie on World War I. I think that there are many members of the government caucus who would be suitable characters for a sergeant major in those World War I battles. [interjection] No, I wouldn’t be. I would prefer to have the job as a sniper.

**Speaker’s Ruling
Addressing the Chair**

The Acting Speaker: Just a few minutes ago there was a little advice given that we have to follow procedures that I established in this Assembly. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the floor, and the accepted practice is that he would be speaking through the chair and not to other members in the Assembly. So I think it is fair to allow members who want to speak the opportunity to speak without being interjected.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

Debate Continued

Mr. MacDonald: Now, this bill could be one of those roll-out-the-barrel bills because the good times are here with this government. We’re not going to follow any budgeting logic with this, but we’re certainly going to spend significant amounts of money.

Now Seniors and Community Supports. There’s over \$100 million here, Mr. Speaker, that is being allocated in this bill. I don’t know if this government has taken the time to have a look at the second part of the Auditor General’s report for May of 2004. This report of the Auditor General is on seniors care and programs. There certainly is a need for adequate funding for Seniors and Community Supports. It is inconceivable that some seniors, particularly those in long-term care facilities, are not getting the time and the attention that their medical condition demands. Our system is failing them.

Now, when we look at this amount of money and we look at some of the recommendations that the Auditor General listed in this extra report, the Auditor General makes this recommendation 6.

We recommend that the Department of Health and Wellness and the Department of Seniors and Community Supports establish standards for care and housing services provided in assisted living and other supportive living settings.

Has this been done?

We can go on here a little bit further. Now, we’re talking about spending over \$100 million, Mr. Speaker. In recommendation 7 the Auditor General is recommending that the Department of Seniors and Community Supports

1. update the Seniors Lodge Standards and implement a process to maintain them;
2. improve its systems to monitor management bodies’ compliance with the Seniors Lodge Standards.

It also states in here that there is voluntary compliance with seniors lodge standards, that seniors lodge standards in some cases look like they are “out of date,” and there is “no system to monitor compliance,” again, with seniors lodge standards. There are a lot of other recommendations in here for seniors, but there are certainly discussions on the audit findings and recommendations on the effectiveness of the Alberta seniors’ benefits program.

Now, I know that I didn't have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know if other hon. members of the Assembly had an opportunity before this to discuss this supply budget for the Department of Seniors and Community Supports. Certainly, the Auditor General has got his eye on the Alberta seniors' benefits program and is recommending that "the Department of Seniors and Community Supports improve the measures it uses to assess whether it is meeting the objective of the Alberta Seniors' Benefit Program."

The Auditor General notices that the department's goal for the Alberta seniors' benefits program is: "Seniors in need have access to financial supports that enable them to live in a secure and dignified way." Now, we have to make sure that all our seniors are able to live in a secure and dignified way. There always has been this issue around the Alberta seniors' benefits program, Mr. Speaker, about forcing seniors to go cap in hand to a government that likes themselves to be benevolent but does not necessarily live by the rules that they want others to live by.

This government is the same group that imposed a significant fee hike on residents of long-term care facilities, and that fee hike was to go to improve services and improve the lives of the individuals who were in those facilities. I know that that hasn't happened. It was late May when this report became public, and I don't know how much of this has been heeded by the Department of Seniors and Community Supports. Before this Assembly we're asking for a lot of money, but have the recommendations from the Auditor General been taken seriously?

Now, the Auditor General travelled extensively in the province. He visited all nine regional health authorities. He had quite a look around, and he had a lot to say about what he saw. The government disappoints me because to date they have been silent. They have been completely silent on what they're going to do with these recommendations. We're in a land of plenty; there's no doubt about that. A lot of money can hide a lot of incompetence.

An Hon. Member: Does this mean we should pay you more?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

This government has been throwing a lot of cash at some problems, but the problems, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, are still there. I hope that this money will go a long way towards improving the conditions that have been outlined in the report by the Auditor General. I hope that his advice has been heeded and that this money will be well spent and that it will be well spent where it's needed, not on a computer program, not on a delivery system, but on front-line service.

9:30

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we also look at Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the majority of this money I would assume would be going into the CAIS program, but I notice where there has been a significant increase in the number of BSE tests completed in Alberta under the Canada/Alberta BSE surveillance program. The target that was set for 2004 we were slow to reach, but certainly I think a lot of progress has been made. In 2005 between the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development lab in Edmonton and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency lab in Lethbridge there have been carcasses – or I wouldn't think it's the total carcasses, but the tests for BSE to date have exceeded 24,000. That would be more than double the target that was set. I'm very interested to know if there are any additional amounts in this bill that are needed for those BSE testing programs.

Also, in this amount – and I spoke about this earlier, Mr. Speaker,

and I'm going to bring it up again – is any of this money going to be used for another farm fuel allocation allowance? The minister is shaking his head. I think in light of these high fuel prices and the fact that this program has not been reviewed, as my research indicates, going back into the early '90s, this program should be adjusted to reflect the high cost of diesel. There's still room to work on this program because if you look at the farm fuel allowance of about \$33 million, that hasn't changed. [interjection]

The hon. minister of agriculture wants to blame the feds again. That's something the feds will have to work out, and this is an ideal opportunity during this election campaign for him to voice that opinion. But let's show some leadership. Let's review this because when this fuel distribution allowance was set, a litre of diesel was probably half if not less than half what it costs a producer now. Producers from all across the province are telling me that after fertilizer, electricity and fuel costs are two and three on their lists of, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning likes to say, input costs.

The hon. member was up in the Peace district over the weekend, and he met with hundreds of farmers there, Mr. Speaker. It will be interesting to hear what they told him in regard to the CAIS program and whether it's working or not and what is working in that program and what is not working.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the supplementary supply, we've always got to remember that this bill will add to the government's spending above what was originally planned in the budget. When we look at this total amount of \$1.5 billion that's an increase in voted expense and equipment/inventory purchases, and we also have a \$234 million increase in voted capital investment and a \$5 million increase in voted lottery fund payments, that's a significant amount of money, and we are at this time able to do that because of high resource royalties. [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired] I'm disappointed that my time has expired.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. Because Edmonton-Gold Bar had sat down, the chair forgot to ask. Standing Order 29(2)(a): any questions or comments for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very interested in the comments that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar put forward on the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program and the difficulty that many farmers look at it as some sort of glorified disaster and welfare program that doesn't really meet their needs and is excessively bureaucratic and problematic for the operation of their businesses. I wish the member could comment on that.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. member for the question. Certainly, there is a need for a support program for producers in this province. The CAIS program is split on a 60/40 basis with the feds. It would be certainly within reason in this appropriation Bill 51 that some of the amounts of the \$288 million are going to be used for supporting the additional amounts that the hon. minister announced early last week. I believe it was \$224 million.

However, I was astonished to see in the financial statement from

the Alberta Agriculture Financial Services Corporation where there was a carry-over of \$105 million in overpayments and advances, I believe, in the CAIS program. I was hoping to get that clarified with the hon. minister. I hope that this is a carry-over from the CAIS year of 2003, that this has just come forward with the Alberta Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, and that almost half of that money that we are discussing here would be used to take care of those overpayments in previous CAIS years. This is one way around that problem.

Farmers and other producers tell me that they are really frustrated with the program when they get a notice that they do have an overpayment and they have to pay it back. Their accounts will be credited, but I think we could manage the CAIS program better.

There seem to be some long turnaround times. Some of the accounting community also express frustration with the amount of time before a file is processed. Again, hon. member, this gets back to what we were discussing in Public Accounts last Wednesday. I guess it's easy to point fingers, but many people feel that the regional office . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, brief questions, brief comments.

The hon. Minister of Justice has a question for you.

Mr. Stevens: When the time comes, Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 51, so if there's somebody else who wishes to ask the hon. member a question.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry. Anybody else have a question or comment? The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a comment on some of the quite frankly uninformed, by the sounds of it, comments that have been coming from across the way with regard to not only the CAIS program but also some of the other Ag portfolio items that were brought up. Yes, hon. member, it is a 60/40 cost-shared program with the federal government. Unfortunately, after repeated attempts to have them participate in the pilot with us, they did not. They decided instead to spread the money to the wind in an ad hoc payment, which most producers do not want to see this ag industry go to.

9:40

Secondly, when you talk about the \$105 million advances, I would ask you to check with *Hansard* and my answers to you that evening. I did explain where those came from, and they were from '03. I agree that there is a lot of frustration with the program, hon. members, which is why we are putting so much effort into trying to get a national program. Remember: it's a national program. We don't set all the rules. They're set by consensus amongst all of the provinces. We are, actually, if you check with the largest farm accounting firm in western Canada, at the head of the pack in terms of making good changes to the program.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 51.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head:

Private Bills Second Reading

Bill Pr. 4

Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm most pleased and honoured tonight to move second reading of Bill Pr. 4, the Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act.

This bill has been recommended to us by the Standing Committee on Private Bills, and as members are aware, it covers much of the same topic area as Bill 45, which is currently being contemplated by this House, except that it addresses a specific family that finds itself in a situation as a result of a car accident on December 31, 2000. Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega was born with severe injuries as a result of that car accident, and she has no right of action because of a Supreme Court ruling. This is the only family in Alberta that finds itself in this situation, in the gap between the Supreme Court ruling in 1999 and the current public legislation.

It should be clarified, Mr. Speaker, that the family, through the forwarding of this bill is not asking that we find negligence or determine liability or award damages; they're asking for their right to have a cause of action to seek compensation to address her significant care needs. With changes recommended in the Private Bills Committee, which I will table at the appropriate time, Bill Pr. 4 will be entirely consistent with public Bill 45.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to move second reading on this bill, and I would humbly encourage all members to support it. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and speak to Bill Pr. 4, Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act. The purpose of this private bill is to provide compensation for a child born with injuries from a motor vehicle accident occurring prior to birth as a result of the negligent driving of his or her mother. When and if the child is born with injuries, the cause of action can be commenced and the claim for the damages can be made.

This particular case, famous as the Rewega case, arose from a motor vehicle accident that occurred when the mother of the child was in a single-vehicle accident on December 31, 2000, near the town of High Level. Four months following the accident a girl was born with cerebral palsy. This is a very serious, sensitive, and touching story. The father and legal guardian of the girl then presented application to the government requesting a bill be passed to allow her, through her legal guardian, the right to bring or maintain a civil action in the courts against her mother for compensation for the injuries that arose resulting from the accident.

Under the present federal law an unborn child is not a person and therefore not the subject of rights and duties. A pregnant woman and her unborn child are considered to be one entity. This has since been called the born alive rule. The fetus has no status. Consequently, a pregnant woman cannot owe a duty of care to her fetus anymore than she can owe a duty of care to herself.

It is logical to assume that this bill could easily be challenged under section 15, equality rights, of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Even with the specific exceptions to allow this type of duty of care to apply only to a motor vehicle accident, it is still subject to the provisions of the Charter. The argument can then be made that placing this burden of care upon pregnant women that is

not applied to women who are not pregnant or to men infringes upon the equality rights of women.

In this particular case there are a few things I want to discuss tonight. Section 634 of the Insurance Act clarifies that if Brooklynn Rewega, the girl, was successful and did get a judgment in her favour, the only way she can enforce that judgment is against the insurer. She cannot enforce that judgment against the mother personally. My firm belief is that it is a social problem, and it is the responsibility of the government to take care. The mother is a giver, and she must have respect and trust. History is the record: a mother always does her best to grow her child. Forcing her or stopping her against her wishes is a violation of her fundamental rights. The rights of the woman or any individual must be protected. She must have freedom of choice, and we all trust her decision.

How can we make sure that the passing of this bill doesn't open the door for other cases? For example, after we pass this legislation, lawyers will get examples of this bill and litigation will start coming. The government must recognize that this issue is very complex and contrary to the Supreme Court of Canada. The legislation must be in clear and precise language and may not lead to many lawsuits. The legislation is not clear about women who are not aware of their pregnancy. Passing of this legislation may upset some parents who have children living with a disability.

The sponsor of this bill supported his case without providing sufficient evidence to support those generalizations. We cannot compare England, for example, with Alberta. They have better social programs than this province. Why do we have private and public bills represented in this legislation? Why is the government shifting responsibility to insurance companies? Who will be paying higher premiums? I think it's you and me. We are the taxpayer. We will pay more premiums if we pass this legislation.

The intention of this government is very clear. They are showing their true colours. This is a social problem, and they must deal with this accordingly, not by shifting responsibility to insurance companies, not by opening the door for other similar cases. Who will suffer? It's the taxpayers again: you and me. Think about it. I won't support this bill.

Thank you very much.

9:50

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, do you want to participate in the debate?

Dr. Morton: Please. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise today to continue the debate on Bill Pr. 4, the Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act. This is an important piece of legislation that needs to proceed in order to ensure justice to a young Albertan and correct yet another poor decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

I begin by reminding my colleagues that this bill is about restoring a right that has long existed in Canadian tort law. Two principles have formed the basis for all arguments that have been made in support of allowing children to sue their mother for damages that occurred in utero. In Canada for the past 80 years tort laws held that a child does have the right to sue negligent third parties for injuries that are sustained prior to birth. The leading precedent for this claim was the Supreme Court ruling in *Montreal Tramways vs. Leveille*. In this case the plaintiff successfully sued for prenatal injuries when his mother was propelled from a tram car due to the driver's error.

The second principle is that this first principle also applies to parents. In Canadian tort law parents have not enjoyed immunity from negligence lawsuits brought against them by their children.

For example, children have been allowed to sue their parents for damages caused from parental sexual abuse.

It is these two principles that have formed the basis of the common law surrounding the issue of children being able to sue for damages sustained in utero.

In the 1998 case of *Dobson versus Dobson* the Supreme Court ignored and overruled these precedents. In the *Dobson* case Cynthia Dobson was involved in a motor vehicle accident which seriously and permanently injured her son Ryan, whose premature birth was the result of this accident. In this case the trial judge employed the precedents and line of reasoning that I've just recited and justified his ruling that the infant, Ryan Dobson, could in fact sue his mother for the injuries she caused him before his birth. The New Brunswick Court of Appeal, citing the same precedents, upheld the trial judge ruling.

Mr. Speaker, although both the trial judge and the appeal court judge ruled in favour of Ryan Dobson following 80 years of precedents, the Supreme Court did not. The Supreme Court declared that allowing a child to sue their mother for injuries that occurred prebirth would constitute too much of an intrusion on the lives of pregnant women and would be a violation of their so-called right to privacy, a term that appears nowhere in the text of the Charter and is yet another example of judge-made law.

In sum, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada removed a right that had been clearly identified in common law. Fortunately, however, the Supreme Court did not completely close the door on this issue. In his decision for the Supreme Court Mr. Justice Cory stated:

If, as a society, Canadians believe that children who sustain damages as a result of maternal prenatal negligence should be financially compensated, then the solution should be formulated, after careful study and debate, by the legislature.

That's what we are doing here this evening. Not only did the Supreme Court leave the door open for legislative action on this policy issue but invited us to walk through it and re-establish a proper balance between the interests of mothers and the interests of children. The remedial legislation proposed in Bill Pr. 4 strikes this balance.

It is also an example of what's called Charter dialogue: a dialogue between courts and Legislatures. Canada's leading constitutional scholar, Professor Peter Hogg, of Osgoode Hall Law School, has praised the Charter dialogue as striking a proper balance between courts and Legislatures, between unelected judges and elected representatives, in deciding where one right ends and another begins. Professor Hogg says that this sharing of Charter development is what democratizes the Charter and makes it acceptable to our system of responsible government.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta did not send us to this Chamber to act like beaten dogs and to slink away and do nothing every time the Supreme Court oversteps its mandate. Certainly, Albertans have a right to expect their elected MLAs to exercise this delegated power responsibly, the power to make laws for Alberta. This is what Bill Pr. 4 does.

If we look into the past, we see that Brooklynn Rewega had this right before the *Dobson* case, and thanks to Bill 45, the *Maternal Tort Liability Act*, we see that similarly situated children will have this right in the future. What Bill Pr. 4 does, Mr. Speaker, is simply fill in the gap, fill in the legal loophole and ensures that Brooklynn Rewega will have the same rights, equal rights, as the children that came before her and the children that come after her. Surely, this is simple justice.

I encourage all hon. members to support Bill Pr. 4. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member in his remarks talked, of course, about elected officials to this Legislative Assembly and others. Does he also consider that judges should be elected and not appointed?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, do you want to comment?

Dr. Morton: Well, just to make the obvious point. I made no comment about electing judges. In fact, it's the balance. This Charter dialogue is the sharing of institutional responsibilities: elected Legislature and the unelected and therefore more independent judges. It's the sharing of Charter development that Professor Hogg and other constitutional scholars have described as Charter dialogue and encouraged as a democratic way of developing our rights and freedoms.

The Acting Speaker: Any other questions or comments?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep my comments brief. I think most of what I would have wanted to say in regard to Bill Pr. 4, the Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act, I managed to get on the record when we spoke to Bill 45 the other evening, the Maternal Tort Liability Act.

I would like to just point out how ironic I find it that this government, which prides itself in waving the flag of less government and staying out of people's lives, has now managed in the same session of this Legislature to pass legislation that removed the legal right of an entity to sue. In fact, it was a company that was involved in a lawsuit with the government. I love the terminology. That particular lawsuit was extinguished, as a matter of fact. That's certainly Big Brother, the heavy hand of government stepping into rights, and it raised a lot of concern for a lot of Albertans and a lot of corporations across the country that do business in Alberta. Now we have a situation where we're about to pass a piece of legislation, notwithstanding all of the honourable goals that we're trying to achieve here for the Rewega family, that will allow a lawsuit to take place where currently the legislation would not allow it.

I do find it quite ironic that the heavy hand of government can sort of step in at will when it's deemed appropriate and either extinguish a lawsuit that is currently under way or in this case allow one that would not otherwise have been allowed to take place.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you want to participate in the debate? You are recognized.

10:00

Dr. Pannu: I want to say a few words.

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very brief. I want to speak to Bill Pr. 4, Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act. I was on the Private Bills Committee when this matter came before the committee of this House I think last year sometime. We had some extensive discussions in that committee

with respect to the request that came forward in the form of Pr. 4 before that committee. Many matters were raised, and they remain as a matter of concern to me as we're proceeding with this bill. Not only with this, but then Bill 45, which is the Maternal Tort Liability Act, is before this House too. So both of these bills now in a sense extend the debate that took place in that committee.

While Pr. 4 is a specific case dealing with creating the ability, I guess, of Baby Rewega to proceed with the right of civil action against her mother, it does raise broader questions about the relationship between children and their parents, particularly when they are still in utero. The fetal rights issue was one that importantly figured in that committee debate. Now, this matter, especially Bill 45 in conjunction with this bill, can I think open a whole series of new questions about what happens when a mother smokes when she's pregnant and about the damage that may result to a baby to be born when a mother has been smoking or the mother uses alcohol while she's pregnant and that does damage the baby and results in some disabilities. What happens then? And on and on and on.

You know, we could go on to open this Pandora's box, where we haven't really given thoughtful consideration to all these possibilities that may spring from us having taken this legislative action that we're called on to take. We may find ourselves returning to address these unexamined questions, questions that remain unaddressed today, and say: well, we made a mistake. I think this debate begs so many important questions that in my view we ought not to proceed with this with the haste with which we are proceeding.

There is a remedy, I think, in the Pr. 4 case. I think the right of civil action will allow this baby to sue the mother for the auto insurance coverage, the third-party coverage, I guess, that the mother carries, so there's public liability. There are limited assets that can be subject to this civil action in any case. I'm sure that we as government have the capacity to address the needs of this particular child rather than opening this whole larger issue which raises so many questions which require a more thorough and detailed debate, which this session and this sitting in my view do not allow.

So I am very concerned about us proceeding quickly with this bill and Bill 45. Given those reservations that I've expressed before and have tried to put very briefly before the House today, I would find it very difficult to support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Peace River to close debate.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise with just some brief comments to close.

First of all, in response to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Mr. Speaker, we've covered this ground significantly. While the member's understanding of fetal rights in Canada or the situation of fetal rights in Canada may be correct, his application of it to this situation is not. Evidence of that is that a child that is born with such injuries that were suffered prenatally can currently under Canadian law sue another member of his family or a third party. It's only mothers that are currently immune from this tort liability.

In response to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, again, about the extension of this legislation wandering into other areas of alcohol abuse or anything else, the government is acting upon the direction and the invitation of the Supreme Court of Canada, and this legislation by their direction is strictly limited to incidents of car accidents. The Supreme Court themselves said that it would be impossible to argue by analogy that this exemption could be extended into other tortious situations.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to close and call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 4 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
(continued)

Bill 54
Alberta Centennial Education
Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to move for second reading of the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005.

An amendment is being proposed to the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act, that was passed earlier this year. I might say that since that act was brought forward and passed, we've had a considerable amount of feedback in response from Albertans, mostly good but some critical. I would say that the critical elements related to two parts of the bill. One, it provided for contributions to an education savings plan for a child or children born in 2005 and going forward. Of course, many people were concerned that if their children were born in 2004, they didn't get to participate.

One of the other elements in the bill provided for \$100 to be contributed to an educational savings plan for children at ages eight, 11, and 14. If parents made a contribution of \$100 at those ages, the province would match those contributions but for children born in 2005 and beyond. On reflection and on considering comments made by Albertans, we determined that it would be appropriate to change that particular aspect of the program so that any children as they turned eight, 11, and 14 would be eligible for the program rather than only those born in 2005 and later. There are approximately 40,000 children at each age level, so that would allow every year as we go forward from 2005 for children at the ages of eight, 11, and 14 to have a contribution made to an RESP on their behalf and for the government, then, to match \$100 of that contribution.

Why is it important, Mr. Speaker? It's important because we know that the single biggest indicator of a child going to postsecondary is a parent's expectation that they will do so. That still tracks as the largest single indicator of transition from high school to postsecondary. We also know that a considerable number, certainly more than the norm, 80 per cent of children with RESPs in their name, go on to postsecondary, and that's a significantly higher number than the regular population.

So while the program goes some way towards having money in an account for a child to finance their education, that clearly is not the most significant part of the program. The most significant part of the program, the most significant purpose of the program is to encourage parents to think early about their children getting an education, to think early about that expectation and evidence that expectation by opening an RESP for their children at birth, and to contribute at ages eight, 11, and 14, contribute obviously other times, but to remind them that it's there and to remind them of that expectation that they have for their child.

10:10

The program itself is still, I believe, a very sound one. It's sound not just in providing a vehicle or encouraging a vehicle for parents to open an RESP at their child's birth and to start it with the \$500 grant that the bill provided for but to encourage in every year as we

go forward parents to have that expectation for their children that they will go on to a postsecondary education. We know that in the new knowledge economy it's projected that 70 per cent of the new jobs created in Alberta, in Canada will require some form of postsecondary education. Having this opportunity to encourage parents to think about their child's education, to have aspirations for their children to have an education will increase the probability that their children will go on to get an education. So I would encourage members to support this amendment.

I would say once again, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Calgary-Egmont was instrumental in bringing forward this idea. It was a good idea at the time. Hopefully, this small change to the program will make it an even better idea and that more Albertans, starting in 2005 and moving forward, will have the expectation for their children that they will get a postsecondary education and that this program will help in encouraging more people to have that expectation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Currie to open debate for the Official Opposition on Bill 54, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005. I'm not sure if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and Advanced Education minister came right out and said it or not, but I think what he meant to say was that the Alberta Liberals were bang on in debate on Bill 1. When we opposed Bill 1, one of the comments that we made time and time again was that it was unfair to exclude children that were born prior to the year 2005.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just members of the opposition who raised that concern but Calgary-Egmont, as the minister has acknowledged, and I believe the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was very vociferous in his comments in terms of how inequitable it was to exclude children that were born before the year 2005. I'm pleased to lend my support to the bill on that account, the fact that we are addressing children that through no fault of their own managed to be born prior to the province's centennial beginning.

Mr. Speaker, there are several concerns about this that I would like to mention despite the fact that overall I'm quite confident that I will be supporting the bill. It's been acknowledged by many that registered education savings plans are a significant growth field for student aid and, in fact, a significant growth industry for banks and other financial institutions. That in itself is not necessarily a bad thing. But as the minister acknowledged, those accounts require parental seed money to start them. I believe the minister used the figure that 80 per cent of children who have RESPs in their name go on to postsecondary education, and I'm pleased to hear that the number is so high. The concern is: what about those whose parents can't afford to make that initial contribution and open those accounts?

In fact, several studies that I've been party to have indicated that it's mostly the families that are relatively well off in the first place that open these RESPs for their children, so perhaps the ones who most need that help are not getting it in the first place. Supporters of this bill tend to view the grants as a cost-effective and future-oriented mechanism, Mr. Speaker, to encourage the parents to save for their children's education while critics have complained about it as a way of funneling scarce public dollars to parents whose children are already more likely to attend a postsecondary institution. That is a result of their ability to establish and contribute to the RESPs, as I had already indicated.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would be fair to say that the expectation that parents will contribute to the costs of their children's education according to their assessed ability is built into the current student loan system. In other words, if parents have money, then they are expected by the government to contribute to their children's education, and that contribution level is then essentially clawed out of the student's loan award. We've heard many anecdotal stories from students whose parents, for whatever reason, although they may have money, are not willing to put it towards the student's education. Perhaps there's been a falling-out or the students have left home under trying circumstances, yet they're unable at times to get the loan assistance that they need because of the parents' financial wherewithal.

I would certainly like to ask the minister if he would consider bringing back answers to these questions when we get to the committee stage. Apparently, there are about 120,000 students who would be eligible for this new program, but I'm wondering if he would have an estimate of the actual numbers of families who would subscribe to it. In other words, how many families are they projecting would make the contributions and, therefore, would have to have those contributions matched by the government with this program?

Originally the money for Bill 1 was to have come out of the general revenue fund. I've looked through the supplemental supply requisitions this evening, Mr. Speaker, and I haven't been able to see any place where this money is listed. I'm wondering where it is contemplated that this money would come from, and just exactly how much money is contemplated would be required to now fund the changes that are being brought forward by this amendment to the bill.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my chair and cede to any others who wish to speak to it tonight, and I look forward to further debate on this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak to Bill 54, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005. Bill 54 amends a bill that we very recently approved in this Assembly, in the spring, another example of how hastily prepared bills become so quickly wanting and need amendments. You may recall the debate in which, certainly, one of the points that I made was why this bill would simply permit children born in 2005 and after to qualify for this small amount of grant in their eighth, 11th, and 14th years and why not others. So here we are. This amendment tries to correct that one flaw in that bill. So far, so good. You know, at least it recognizes the most sort of obvious flaw in the piece of legislation that this House debated not so long ago.

Now, I think the minister was right in suggesting there'll be about 120,000 students who will be eligible for the \$100 grant every year, so it'll amount to about \$1.2 million per year at the minimum. As the population of the province grows, I guess this number of 120,000 will grow because this number is certainly a function of the present population base, and if the population base changes, this number will change accordingly.

10:20

The minister also mentioned, and I think he was right in drawing attention to the fact that 80 per cent of children with registered educational savings plans in their names go to postsecondary institutions. Mr. Speaker, it's also true, however, that children who come from families with more than \$75,000 a year in income are much more likely to go to postsecondary institutions whether they have RESPs or not. So going to postsecondary education in this

province seems to be very strongly associated with family income. The well-off families do find their children, daughters and sons, more likely to be going to postsecondary institutions. Low-income families and children born in those families are in a very different situation. In 2001, for example, only 20 per cent of youth from families with incomes below \$75,000 a year went to university. More than double that percentage, 46 per cent, of youth from high-income families did so.

It's clear that this \$300 that will be available to every child in this province at the age of eight, 11, and 14, three times I suppose, before they go into the postsecondary will benefit, certainly, those families who already are able to send their children to postsecondary institutions in much larger proportion than their low-income counterparts. It certainly helps those. People who have RESPs, those families who do in fact register RESPs for their children, are also families in the higher income range. So no wonder, then, that RESPs and putting money into RESPs will in fact help essentially families which are already in a position to send their children to university or school. Income resources is certainly one determinant of whether the children will go to university or college or an institute or not. There are other determinants. We should recognize that.

The families that really need help need some sort of encouragement so that they would then in turn encourage their children to think of going to or plan to go to college, a technical institute, or university are ones in the low-income bracket. Families that have very low savings rates, maybe none, can save very little, may not be able to find money to put into RESPs in any case. For them to take advantage of this \$100 for every child they have when that child turns eight, 11, and 14, they'll have to find money to put into the RESP first, and only then will they become eligible to apply to take advantage of this \$100 for each of the children. So families with three or four children will have to find \$300 or \$400 if they are in that age bracket. Not many low-income families have that kind of money lying around that they can put in the RESPs and then turn around and apply on their children's behalf to take advantage of the money that's being offered by way of this bill.

It would be, I think, far more effective if the government developed a system of grants based on need to help children and families that are unable for financial reasons to encourage and send their sons and daughters to postsecondary institutions. One point two million dollars per year would go some way, I suppose, to providing some grants, but we need to do more.

I think the minister has been engaged in what he calls, you know, a comprehensive review of the postsecondary system including student financing, accessibility, affordability, ensuring that a larger number of students from Alberta participate in postsecondary education. We have one of the lowest participation rates, and that is not just because parents are negligent about thinking long term, saving money, and putting it into RESPs. It must have to do with something else because parents all across other provinces are in the same situation, but certainly conditions are such over there in other provinces that more children go to postsecondary institutions. So I think we need to find a way of addressing this question by asking: why is it that the participation rate in this province is the lowest in the country?

Would this bill – you know, this sort of piecemeal, ad hoc approach to addressing a clearly identified problem in this province, which is the low participation rate in the postsecondary system by our own young people – this \$300 token amount send a real message to parents and families and children that this government is serious about helping them? I'm afraid not. I think we need to put in place policies. I think if the grant system based on need were available and families and children knew that, given their needs, they will

have grants available to take advantage of postsecondary institutions, I think we will encourage more of them to want to go to postsecondary institutions, and we'll see more of them going there ultimately.

We have to make a start along that road. This bill doesn't seem to do very much in terms of putting in place real incentives for young people who presently don't go to postsecondary institutions in this province but have the educational qualifications and grade level achievement at the high school level to enter these institutions if they had the resources, including monetary resources.

It's also a statutory expenditure, Mr. Speaker. You can't control it. It can grow and grow. If there were a clear sort of targeted population in mind that would benefit in the sense that it presently doesn't take advantage of the opportunity to go to postsecondary institutions but will do so if this policy and program were in place, I think we would be further ahead, but I don't see this happening. It seems to me that a much larger proportion of higher income families will be the ones who will be taking advantage of it.

I think the question has been asked of the minister. I'm sure during debate in the committee he will have some information for us with respect to the question, the question being whether he has some information already which indicates that this program, \$100 at years eight, 11, and 14, this being in place already for children born this year, has encouraged, in fact, families who in the past have not thought of putting in place RESPs for their children, that because this program is now there, they have started doing this. We need to have some evidence to show that this, in fact, has stimulated the interest of families who previously weren't thinking of saving money for their children's postsecondary education, that this program has indeed spurred them to do so. I hope the minister has some information on it. Maybe it's too early yet to have that kind of information in hand, but it would be good to have some tentative answers from the minister if any such information is available to him.

10:30

Some other problems with RESPs. When you start talking about, you know, registered education savings plans, focusing on that takes attention away from the real issue, the affordability issue. Are the tuition fees too high, which discourages people? We know that tuition fees in this province are very, very high, the second highest in the country. To what extent does that explain, in fact, the low participation rate in the postsecondary system by our young people rather than the absence of RESPs? RESPs surely put the onus on individual families, true, but I don't think we can simply assume that those families that don't put money into RESPs are not willing to take responsibility for their children's education. It's a question of ability to take that action. So there are some underlying assumptions here that we need to question.

Postsecondary education must be treated as a public good. We talk a lot about how important it is for us to have more and more Albertans take advantage of postsecondary education. Why is that so? Why do we emphasize this as a matter of public policy? Because it is in the public interest to do so. Postsecondary education, in my view, should be treated as a public good and therefore made available to people regardless of their ability – monetary ability, financial ability – to take advantage of it. Focusing on RESPs takes attention away from the way in which we can in fact make this public good available to people who otherwise will not be in a position to purchase it as a private good.

On the other side of the ledger, you know, surely it's a small expenditure. One could argue that it's a gesture worth putting in place. It does provide some help to middle-class, middle-income families who can't access some loan programs due to income levels.

But the larger problem of low participation in the postsecondary system in this province remains. It's a stubborn problem, and it's not amenable to feeble solutions such as the one this bill provides.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona?

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few brief words. I certainly appreciated some of the comments that were made about it. I would indicate that just because one moves on certain things doesn't mean that it's ad hoc. As we move forward to try to encourage more Albertans to get an advanced education, to transition to postsecondary, we need to move on all fronts. This is one way of encouraging that kind of participation. So I would say that it's not an ad hoc measure but one that moves a step forward to ensure that parents consider that expectation that their children get an education, consider it early in life. It's one mechanism. It's not the whole program by any stretch of the imagination.

In terms of having an opportunity with feedback to go back and look at how we can make the program better, I don't think one has to be embarrassed at all about being prepared to make improvements as we move along, and this is one that lent itself well. Unfortunately, the take-up of the program hasn't been as rapid as one might have hoped although we do expect that it will continue to be taken up. But there's money in the budget to handle the expected take-up of this additional element to the program. Therefore, it is not needed to add to the budget at this point in time.

[Motion carried; Bill 54 read a second time]

Bill 55

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Bill 55 for second reading.

Bill 55 proposes an amendment to the Post-secondary Learning Act, and it's a very simple and straightforward amendment. Under the Post-secondary Learning Act there's a form of governance set up for colleges and technical institutes, and that form of governance provides a model for an academic council. This amendment would put in a clause which would allow the creation of a different type of academic council model for those institutions that wanted to do it. It's not something that would be forced upon the system. Rather, it would be an option which could go forward. What we're simply asking for is a change which will make it more possible to tailor an academic council to the specific interests or the specific governance that a college or technical institute might want to engage in.

There may be reasons, Mr. Speaker, why a college might want to do that. In utilizing this section and setting up such academic councils, we would not want to put an inordinate amount of pressure on the system for everybody to design their own academic councils or to have a multiplicity of academic councils. We will want to consult thoroughly with the colleges and technical institutes in the province with respect to the design of the regulations which would be put in place in terms of how and when a college or technical institute could move forward to utilize this particular section and ask for a specific design for an academic council for that college or institution.

It does provide for some needed flexibility in the system, and for

that reason we determined to bring forward this proposed amendment this fall, which would allow us the opportunity to work over the winter with the institutions to design the regulations necessary and have discussions with the colleges and institutions and move forward with those who wanted to make changes to their academic structure.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of debate on Bill 55.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 57
Apprenticeship and Industry Training
Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 57, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005.

This act makes two minor housekeeping amendments to the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. The first one corrects a section reference in the definition of a designated trade. The second amendment corrects an oversight in the original act.

On January 1, 1992, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act repealed and replaced the Manpower Development Act. The trades that were designated under the Manpower Development Act were deemed to be designated under the new act. The Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act, however, did not contain a provision which would allow these trades to be listed in a regulation. At the time it didn't matter because the old regulation under the Manpower Development Act was still widely available. It was easy to find out what trades were designated.

With the passage of time the legislative trail has become somewhat obscure. There is currently no regulation which indicates what trades are designated under section 57. The matter is further complicated by the fact that the names of 16 of these trades have changed since 1992. There's no authority to make a regulation listing the new names for those trades. The proposed amendment will give the Lieutenant Governor in Council that authority.

I'd like to make it clear that the amendment is not about what should or should not be a designated trade. It's about correcting an oversight in the act, providing the ability to list in regulation the designated trades that already exist in Alberta. These amendments are minor changes that do not change the intent or the meaning of the legislation. There are no policy or financial implications arising from the amendment. Again, it's simply something which was brought to light.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, in a court case where an enforcement action was being taken with respect to a designated trade, the defence that was put forward convinced the judge in that case that there was an obscurity in the legislative trail, and as such we now need to move to correct that so that it can be clear which trades in Alberta are designated trades, so that the law can be appropriately applied and enforced.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

10:40

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There obviously was some obscurity in the legislation that gave rise to this bill, and it flowed from a court case. The original transfer that this bill speaks to was obviously flawed, and the court case which led to this amendment proved that. The original legislation, which brought about a

transition between the former Manpower Development Act and the current Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act, was not just flawed in the way that it failed to properly list the designated trades to show which trades were properly covered by the legislation; it was also flawed in the way it changed the way the trades were viewed. That bill enshrined optional certification in certain trades, in fact degraded trades from the equal status that they had formerly held with other trades and, in fact, created what some would term greater and lesser trades.

It may have caused and been motivated by a move to have lesser compensation and benefits for those trades that were made optional. Those people that had earned journeyman status in optional trades were outraged at the time. It would have been like a medical doctor being told his medical degree was being reduced to the equivalent of an undergraduate degree, that it suddenly had lesser importance.

Those who were subject to optional certification as opposed to compulsory certification know that the skill set, the knowledge necessary for the trade, should in no way be deemed of a lesser status than in other trades. Those that know the many skills required of the now optional trades, say, for example, for a master carpenter, know that this is a trade where proper mastery of the many skills involved does not come easily. My dad was a carpenter, in and among his many other skills, and the time and experience he had to have to properly practise his trade were extensive.

Now, the differences in terms of compulsory certification and optional certification basically go to certain criteria that are outlined. For the most part, all the rest of the things are the same except for the designated occupations, but between the compulsory and optional the basic differences are that there is additional criteria for compulsory designation, which is

- (a) the degree of risk of harm to workers from the improper application of the materials and methodology of the proposed trade;
- (b) the degree of risk of harm to . . . the public from
 - (i) the improper application of the materials and methodology of the proposed trade, and
 - (ii) the activity or product produced by the proposed trade;
- (c) the demonstrated need for proven competency to perform the work of the proposed trade due to the presence or use . . . of any or all of the following:
 - (i) dangerous substances;
 - (ii) dangerous or destructive equipment;
 - (iii) dangerous techniques or practices.

Many of the people in what are the so-called deemed optional trades now don't understand why those are different for certain trades because they, in fact, apply to them all.

It's very, very significant in what this does because in terms of an optional trade the necessity to be certified or registered or to be a registered apprentice in the trade does not exist. This designation of optional has had the real effect in those trades designated of reducing those that are attracted to that trade. We'll have some real demographics facing us here in a few years that have given some cause for concern. I don't know if they're exactly here yet. We are presently facing thousands and thousands of tradesmen coming into the union halls, the hiring halls, that are out of work because of the end of projects and at the same time seeing temporary foreign workers flowing into projects that are hiring for the Progressive Contractors Association, the PC Association.

Bill 51
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act,
2005 (No. 2)
(continued)

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, but in accordance with Standing Order 61(5)

the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 51 read a second time]

Bill 57
Apprenticeship and Industry Training
Amendment Act, 2005

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An additional outgrowth of this move has been to push to develop multiskilling, to degrade the trades in general by segmenting the skills, by compartmentalizing certain components of tradesmen's larger skill sets so that the wage rates can be reduced. This indeed has proven to be false economy in the long run for many young people have chosen to leave a job that they'd been apprenticed into because they are not getting proper training or are doing repetitive jobs where they learn little about their prospective trade and have little hope for advancement.

The fact that statistics are not even kept anymore for first-year leavers from their apprenticeship is a sure indication that the system there is in crisis. The fact that the average age of apprentices is more than 25 is an indication that there is something absolutely and totally wrong with this system. Why are young people not being attracted to the trades? Why are so many employers making so little use of things like the RAP program? You know, these things are real difficulties and problems.

I think some of the stuff that already came about because of the original bill and the transition from the Manpower Development Act to the current Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act may have led to this. It is not only a simple listing. I think it's something that has brought forward the flaws in the initial change that was brought about at that time, a number of years ago, and brought forward by that particular change in the legislation.

I think that it is something that we should be looking at to get rid of the whole idea of optional trades, to ensure that there is mobility and proper training for all tradesmen so that we can ensure that there is an increase in the number of the trades when we hit the bomb that's going to be causing such a problem in three to four years. To ensure that all of the trades have that compulsory certification I think would be the proper and right move not only for those tradesmen but for our economy and for all Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When one looks at Bill 57, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005, it certainly looks innocent, but when we look at the trend – and the hon. minister was talking about the old Manpower Development Act and how times have changed since the days of the Manpower Development Act. The hon. minister is certainly right: how times have changed and how times have changed with this Progressive Conservative government. In the past there used to be so much more debate and discussion on legislation in this Assembly. That was in the past. Now, of course, everything seems to be done by regulation.

At first glance this legislation would certainly appear to just be a minor housekeeping detail, but when you look at it, Mr. Speaker, it

does not appear to impact authority respecting newly designated trades. That authority already exists to designate trades under sections 21 and 22.

This government, of course, initially wanted to put this through the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, but this Legislative Assembly meets so seldom, and with the habit of this government to do everything through order in council, a government by regulation, not by statute, this is part of the democratic deficit that exists in this province. This democratic deficit exists because, of course, there has been one party in power since 1971. [interjection] This was the first dynasty of the Progressive Conservative Party. There were three dynasties. There is a question, hon. member, whether there will be a fourth.

10:50

When you look at how things have changed – and you have to realize, Mr. Speaker, that when we see Bill 57, of course, it's just minor housekeeping – we have to be very, very cautious, and we have to be concerned about how this government operates by regulation. We only have to go back to question period today, and we see all these little deals that were made behind closed doors with Enron in 2001. Everything was done by regulation, including even a regulation to suppress the publication of a regulation. So if I and others would much prefer that all these discussions took place in public, you can understand why. It's the Minister of Justice that is the minister in charge of regulation, publication, suppression. I think it's section 3 of the Regulations Act that gives the Minister of Justice that authority, and that is significant authority.

Now, I'm certainly not saying for one minute that if this government was to look at changing the compulsory or the optional designation of a trade, they would use that seldom used section of the Regulations Act, but they certainly used it whenever they were dealing with Enron. The deal to sell off Enron's power purchase arrangement at Sundance was done, and it was certainly hidden from the public. This idea that, "Oh, well, we were just suppressing the publication of this regulation because it was large, and we wanted to reduce the size of the *Alberta Gazette*," well, that argument certainly doesn't hold merit. There are other regulations in there that were quite extensive, and they were published. They were published in the *Alberta Gazette*, but not this one. So you can understand if I am suspicious any time there is a move now by this government to change how we operate and to provide more opportunities to do everything by regulation, behind closed doors, without any public discourse.

As far as the apprenticeship and industry training goes in this province, we have to be very careful because in the past I have been disappointed to find out that this government is not willing to enforce those compulsory and optional trades. They're not willing to do that. [interjection] The hon. Minister of Advanced Education is very keen to get this legislation passed, and I'm sure he's going to have his way.

We have to be very, very careful here. People work very hard to get a trade ticket in this province, and they're quite willing to participate in their good economic fortunes, but let's make sure that we are going to work and work to provide access to education for each and every Albertan that wants to participate in the apprenticeship and industry training programs that are available. They want to get a skilled trade. They want to participate in the workforce. They want to earn a living for themselves and their families. Let's make sure that we're doing this in an open and transparent manner and that we're not watering down our trades. This government I think is right whenever they speak about how we train our workers. We are in most cases doing a very, very good job of training our workers.

But enforcing the regulations that these workers are bound by: we're not doing a very good job of that. We're turning a very blind eye to that.

It is my view that some outfits know that they can get away without having compulsory trade tickets for their workers. I don't understand how the insurance company will allow this, but at the moment they seem to be getting away with it. Now, it's only a matter of time, in my view, before there will be a lawsuit of one sort or another. So we can shrug our shoulders, we can go on with the status quo, or we can ensure that this government is not going to water down our compulsory trade certification process. I for one, Mr. Speaker, would encourage the government to look at making more of our trades compulsory. I would like our government to have a look at this.

Now, I don't know if it's going to happen. I know that the hon. Minister of Advanced Education is very busy. In this term to date there have been significant changes to Advanced Education, but certainly we should be looking at strengthening our Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. We should be ensuring that it is enforced and that all Albertans that are interested have access to training under this act.

This notion that we're going to have this program to allow temporary foreign workers into this province when there are so many other pools of labour that could be accessed to help with our current construction boom – I just am leery of a lot of the efforts being made. I do not want to see our programs watered down. I don't want to see this system weakened. I think we should be enhancing it.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the floor to another colleague. Let's be careful, and let's protect all optional and compulsory trade certification programs in this province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to Bill 57, Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005, in second reading. Let me start by saying that I'm glad that the minister allowed himself to be persuaded to bring these amendments forward in the form of these stand-alone pieces of legislation in the form of bills 56 and 57.

He had engaged me in some discussion on whether it would be acceptable from our side to let these changes proceed as part of the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act. But as we were going through those processes, I guess, the minister thought and was convinced that it would be better to bring these forward as stand-alone bills so that we'll have something on record with respect to how this Legislature and members of it feel about the changes being proposed. So I welcome this opportunity, and I want to I think join with the other colleagues in expressing some concerns about making some important changes in the existing legislation, changes that will in fact put the power to designate trades in the hands of the cabinet with no reference provided in the legislation as such with respect to definitions of what would be designated as a compulsory certification trade and what would be designated as an optional certification trade.

11:00

I think what the minister is asking for here is a sort of blank cheque in terms of allowing the cabinet to make these decisions,

decisions which, in my view, will have a far-reaching impact on people who practise these trades. One wonders why it is necessary for these matters to be taken out of the legislation and put in the hands of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to be able to make these designations through regulations. Regulations are not open to debate. Regulations are not subject to public intervention.

Certainly, the growing number of tradespeople in this province given the booming industry, the attempts to diversify the economy – there are a very large number of people who are in these trades. I think they have reason to worry about the change being proposed because one could fear arbitrary decisions on, you know, what gets downgraded to optional certification and what gets designated as a compulsory certification trade. These designations have consequences for being hired, for how one gets paid, where one can work, what kinds of jobs one can do at a work site, what jobs one cannot do. So these designations do matter for people in the trades areas. As I said, the number of people who work in different trades is growing, and we want to make sure that they have the certified skills that they claim to have and that they acquired through apprenticeships and acquired through going to NAIT and SAIT and technical institutes.

We, I think, cannot be sure that putting all these important matters in the hands of the minister or through him in the cabinet for designating these important trades either as compulsory or optional is a good thing. I think there are serious questions that the change raises. I'm sure we'll have opportunity for the minister to respond to some of these concerns in the debate on this bill in the committee stage, but at this point I think it's important that we put these matters, these concerns on the table, on record, and then we can speak to them in the next round of debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

Mr. Hancock: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 57 read a second time]

Bill 56

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 56, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

The Business Corporations Act was amended earlier this year to harmonize Alberta's legislation with the Canada Business Corporations Act and to allow unlimited liability corporations to be incorporated in Alberta. Further amendments are required now: one, to protect minority shareholders who disagree with the corporation converting to or from an unlimited liability corporation; two, to clarify the time period that former shareholders of unlimited liability corporations remain liable; three, to clarify that only registered shareholders have voting rights; and, finally, for some small housekeeping amendments.

The key amendments are as follows, Mr. Speaker. The first is protection of minority shareholders. We're proposing an amendment to allow minority shareholders who disagree with the corporation converting to or from an unlimited liability corporation the right to dissent. If a shareholder exercises this right, they have the right to have their shares purchased from them at fair market value.

The second key amendment concerns the limitation period of

former shareholders of unlimited liability corporations. The government proposes an amendment to cap the limitation period on shareholder liability for former shareholders of unlimited liability corporations. Under these proposals if the claim arises prior to the shareholders selling their shares, this liability would end two years after the shareholder ceased to be a shareholder. If the claim arises after the shareholder last ceased to be a shareholder, the shareholder would not be liable for any of the obligations of the corporation arising out of the claim. The current uncertainty regarding this limitation period for former shareholders is acting as a deterrent for individuals incorporating an unlimited liability corporation in Alberta.

Finally, the third amendment concerns the right to vote. Here the government proposes an amendment to clarify that registered shareholders have the right to vote at shareholders' meetings but that beneficial owners do not. The wording in the act currently implies that beneficial holders of shares also have the right to vote, and the government wishes to strike that.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-McClung I'm glad to rise on Bill 56, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). I will indicate right up front that we will be supporting this bill with a certain amount of caution as it relates to section 15.2 being amended.

A few minutes ago my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar spoke about openness and transparency, and despite the fact that we're now speaking to Bill 56, I am very concerned that the government is not exhibiting openness and transparency. In fact, this evening they've taken full advantage of Standing Order 61(3) to severely limit debate on the appropriation bill, which is really what we should be discussing tonight as opposed to the rather innocuous Bill 56 or some of the other minor bills that we've been looking at. For whatever reason the government doesn't seem at all interested in discussing the literally millions and millions and, in fact, almost \$2 billion in supplementary supply that they've asked for, and as I've suggested, they've taken full advantage of a standing order to throttle debate on that tonight. I expect, Mr. Speaker, that they will do the same again tomorrow in the afternoon and probably again tomorrow in the evening to ensure that everything is wrapped up for Thursday afternoon, and I find that very frustrating.

It's not that I'm not wanting to speak to Bill 56; in fact, as I suggested, there are some things in Bill 56 that are quite good. I particularly like the idea where Alberta, as an example, is requiring 25 per cent of unlimited liability corporation directors to be resident of Canada. That trumps Nova Scotia, which doesn't have a Canadian residency requirement. But I would much, much rather have had an opportunity to discuss supplementary supply for Municipal Affairs, as an example: \$138,235,000 which to this point has had zero debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, we are dealing with Bill 56 and not supplementary supply, so please direct your remarks to Bill 56.

11:10

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will attempt to focus my remarks on Bill 56.

As I indicated earlier, we have discussed Bill 56 with a number of legal experts and a couple of stakeholder groups. They indicate to us that, primarily, this is a housekeeping bill. However, they do

recommend caution, Mr. Speaker, as it pertains particularly to the changes that are being made to section 15.2. The goal of the amendment as it has been explained to us is to cap the time period for which a former shareholder can be liable for any liability, act, or default of the corporation. As I suggested, stakeholders agree that this was a necessary measure. However, given the complexity of the issue, clarification is being sought as to the potential implications of this two-year limitation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said, the amendments appear to be primarily housekeeping ones. As a result of that, I'm willing to give my support to Bill 56 although it does appear that, as I said, section 15.2 creates some concern. The question, I suppose, that we have really is: will the two-year limitation free the former shareholders who took part in unethical activities perhaps to escape responsibility for their actions? Another question that I have in my mind is whether or not this change to section 15.2 would mean that shareholders of an unlimited liability corporation would then be held accountable for actions of former shareholders of that corporation.

I do also find it ironic – again, there seems to be a lot of irony in here tonight, Mr. Speaker. I find it ironic that this government, with its almost unlimited resources – and I'm not sure how many lawyers they have on staff. I'm sure my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar would be able to tell us how many lawyers they have on staff. I can tell you that the Official Opposition doesn't have the resources for any lawyers on staff, so we rely on the good graces of some volunteer legal experts to occasionally offer up their opinions. But with all of the resources and lawyers that the government has on staff, this bill managed to slip through the first time in the spring with three typographical errors, and I do find that rather ironic.

Now, I guess that in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the point is, as I said before, that although it certainly would get qualified support, the primary concern is really whether or not this amendment would free a former majority shareholder, board member, or an executive from responsibility if he or she had in fact partaken in illegal activity while they were a shareholder. If so, would the remaining shareholders be held accountable for activities that they were unaware of? Who, if anybody, would actually bear responsibility for those actions of the former shareholder if, in fact, they were found to have been responsible for unethical or illegal activities?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this evening to participate in the debate on Bill 56, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). Certainly, as this evening has progressed, like with many other debates in this Assembly, one has to listen with interest to the discussions that occur in here. One only has to, when we're discussing Bill 56, remind ourselves of the advice from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in previous debate in regard to the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act, I believe. The hon. member was talking about the haste with which legislation seems to be drafted, and the hon. member went on to indicate that he has some problems sometimes with some of the legislation that's drafted. I certainly would have to agree whenever I look at this.

It was only this past spring that we had Bill 16, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 – and this I believe came into effect in June – allowing American residents carrying on business activities in Alberta to have a more practical and cost-effective mechanism to structure some of their tax planning. The amendments in Bill 16 allowed for the creation of unlimited liability corporations. Alberta and Nova Scotia are the two Canadian provinces that allow for unlimited liability corporations.

Now we have these sort of innocent amendments. I don't know why they couldn't have been incorporated in the initial legislation, but they certainly seem to be needed. As I understand it, without these amendments some shareholders who disagree with conversion into an unlimited liability corporation could be – and this is very important: it could be without their consent – personally liable for the debt or other obligations of the corporation.

We have to give confidence that businesses can have a level playing field in this province. I would have to question: would someone that is operating under this Business Corporations Amendment Act behave like this government did tonight? Again, I'm disappointed to have to say this, Mr. Speaker: a suppressed debate on the appropriation bill. Under the Business Corporations Act certainly good corporations are going to consult always with their shareholders. This is such a contrast to this government as they do not seem to have any interest in consulting with taxpayers. It's sort of ironic when you compare the obligations of the business community and the obligations as perceived by this government to the taxpayers.

For this legislation, Bill 56, Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations with members of the legal community. It appears as though we can say that, yes, Bill 56 is a housekeeping bill that aims at cleaning up some of the errors and inconsistencies that previously existed in the Business Corporations Act. Again I would urge caution. Caution is recommended due to the changes set out in part 2 of the proposed amendments. Part 2 amends section 15.2 of the Business Corporations Act. This amendment, as I understand it and as our research indicates, establishes a two-year limitation on former shareholder liabilities for unlimited liability corporations. The goal of this amendment is to cap the time period for which a former shareholder can be liable for any liability, act, or default of the corporation. Stakeholders agree that this was a necessary measure. Still, given the complexity of the issue, clarification should be sought as to the potential implications of this two-year limitation.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that the amendments in this bill are fairly minor, again with the exception of changes to section 15.2. Will this two-year limitation free former shareholders who took part in unethical activities to escape responsibility for their actions? How will that work? I would appreciate an answer to this.

11:20

I have another question regarding the amendments in this bill. If we are limiting the liability of former shareholders, who will be held responsible for their actions if they are, in fact, at fault?

Another concern, Mr. Speaker, is again the change to section 15.2. I'm wondering – and I would appreciate an answer in due time in the course of this debate – if this will mean that shareholders of an unlimited liability corporation will be held accountable for the actions of former shareholders?

Again, the amendments that are proposed in this bill appear to be primarily housekeeping issues. The stakeholders that the Official Opposition has consulted believe that these changes are necessary. Therefore, I am willing to certainly support Bill 56 at this time, but I would urge the government in the future to take a little bit more due diligence. Again, this was legislation that was housekeeping.

If we were to compare the miscellaneous statutes act, Mr. Speaker, to a broom, with this government it would be a 36-inch or a 42-inch wide broom that a janitor in a school would use to sweep the corridor, because there are a lot of things that can get caught up in that. It's not a narrow broom. I think that is unfortunate because this government has now become more reliant on the miscellaneous statutes amendments. I think that's really unfortunate, and it's reflective of a government that is tired and drifting. It is unfortunate. It is really, really unfortunate.

Now, there might be a breath of fresh air and new direction and

new leadership there. Who's to say? Certainly, this is an indication that things are not working the way they should. I'm disappointed, again, in this government. Bill 56 is another attempt at correcting some unfortunate errors in the original drafting of this bill in the spring.

Certainly, to provide the business community with confidence in this Legislative Assembly and its ability to provide laws that are fair, I would support this bill at this time, Mr. Speaker. I cede the floor to any other hon. colleague who would like to participate in the debate.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View to close debate on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Morton: I will relay the questions that the hon. member posed to the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill and move the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 56 read a second time]

head:

**Private Bills
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I'll call the committee to order.

**Bill Pr. 4
Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega
Right of Civil Action Act**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to open discussion on Bill Pr. 4 in Committee of the Whole, and in doing so, I wish to table an amendment as recommended by the Private Bills Committee and as agreed to by the Rewega family. The amendment is being circulated right now. I won't bother reading it out other than to say that by the addition of these clauses to Bill Pr. 4 the intent and the wording is to make it entirely consistent with Bill 45. As I said, this was recommended by the Private Bills Committee and agreed to by the Rewega family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be very brief on this. I want to ask the question to the sponsor: if she had the right before Dobson case, why do we need two bills, private and public bills? Let me finish a couple of other questions you can answer maybe.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, we have on the floor an amendment that we shall refer to as amendment A1. Are you wanting to speak on the amendment, hon. member?

Mr. Agnihotri: I haven't got that. I haven't seen it.

The Deputy Chair: The amendment has been circulated. Is it before you now? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, would you like to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Agnihotri: No.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Would anybody like to speak on the amendment? Are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, would you like to speak on the bill?

Mr. Agnihotri: My question is from this amendment, section 2(1): "Any compensation for injuries and losses under section 1 shall be limited to the amount of insurance money." What's the maximum amount for the settlement?

Another question is: how can we make sure the lawyers won't use this case as precedent setting? Legislation should have clear and precise language so that lawyers won't be able to play their games in future lawsuits.

Once the settlement has been paid out, what prevents this person from accessing other programs to supplement their income: disability, pension, or AISH, or any other social program? Those are my questions, please.

Thank you.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to the amount of insurance carried by Mrs. Rewega, and that would be private information anyway. There is a minimum amount of liability insurance that we are required to carry by law. You're allowed to carry more than that. That's all I can say on the matter.

With regard to the bill being precedent setting and the need for concise language, this is exactly what the Supreme Court invited us to do and the language in essence is provided by the Supreme Court, and the Congenital Disabilities Act of the United Kingdom. Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what else to comment to this hon. member.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

11:30

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly at this time in regard to Bill Pr. 4 I have to for the record express my disappointment in the amendment, not necessarily about the contents but the process that was followed here. At this hour in the evening some of the pages have left the Assembly. I certainly wanted to have a look at section 635 of the Insurance Act before we could have discussion on this, but unfortunately I could not. I've been stopped before from going into the cupboards personally to get the statutes, and that's fair enough, but I would just like to express my regret that this is being so quickly . . .

Chair's Ruling

Access to Statutes in the Assembly

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, every member of this Assembly has a right to access statutes that are sitting in the Assembly. We are at the committee stage. The chair will have no problems in you leaving your seat and picking up the statutes. It might take a little while, but we may be able to get to you. But you can easily walk over there, and I'll allow you the few minutes to go and get that.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that because it has

been the past practice of this Assembly that that has not been the case. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Chair: Are you finished?

Mr. MacDonald: The amendment has already been passed, so it's water under the bridge.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chair, I would just like to point out to my hon. colleague that this is the same wording that was in Bill 45 that's been before us for quite some time, and this wording was recommended by the Private Bills Committee last week. So this is not new and not a surprise amendment here.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 4 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that we now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill Pr. 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been a really nice evening of debate tonight, and I just want to thank all members here for their co-operation. On that note, I would move that we stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 11:34 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, November 29, 2005**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/11/29

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We confidently ask for strength and encouragement in our service to others. We ask for wisdom to guide us in making good laws and good decisions for the present and the future of Alberta. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's my pleasure today to introduce three distinguished officers of the Canadian army, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery.

Canada's military contribution to Afghanistan is called Operation Archer, and in early February 2006 the Canadian army will be deploying nearly 2,000 personnel to Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. Our forces there will be part of a multinational brigade composed of British, Australian, Dutch, Romanian, Danish, and Estonian contingents. The officer who has been specially chosen to command this formation is Brigadier-General Dave Fraser of St. Albert.

General Fraser has spent much of his home service in Alberta. Abroad he commanded the second battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Bosnia in 1996. A year prior on attachment to the French army in Sarajevo he was awarded Canada's meritorious service medal for his actions during the Bosnian civil war.

Colonel Tom Putt is a reservist and former commanding officer of the South Alberta Light Horse, the province's senior reserve regiment. He has seen service in Germany and with the United Nations Emergency Force. Colonel Putt has been selected deputy commander, National Command Element, Task Force Afghanistan. While Colonel Putt will be stationed in Kandahar, his responsibilities will take him to Kabul and elsewhere in the theatre.

South Alberta Light Horse Honorary Colonel Stan Milner is an outstanding Alberta business leader and philanthropist. A former chairman of the University of Alberta, he is an officer of the Order of Canada, a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, and an honorary doctor of laws. His regiment will contribute 20 reservists to the Kandahar mission.

All three of our visitors were recently awarded the Alberta centennial medal.

Hon. members, the risks of serving sovereign and country on this mission are well known. We wish the two visitors, who will be deploying early in the new year, and those who they have the privilege to lead well in all that lies ahead. We pray for their safe return.

The majority of personnel for Operation Archer will come from Land Force Western Area, which is Canada's army in western Canada. The majority of the Canadian contingent will be formed from regular and reserve units from Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Morinville, and other cities and towns across Alberta.

I would ask these three great Albertans – General Fraser, Colonel Putt, and Colonel Milner – to remain standing as they receive the traditional welcome of this House. [applause]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 24 enthusiastic grade 6 students along with their teacher, Ms Margo Cahn, and two student teachers, Jill Williams and Shivon Lavallee, from Earl Buxton elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They are here today to observe and learn with keen interest about government. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a very accomplished young woman, Ms Kristen Hedley. Kristen is joined by her parents, Robert and Leona, her sister Kelsey, her brother Kennan as well as one representative from my department's 4-H branch, Mark Muchka. Kristen is the 2005 4-H Premier's award recipient, the highest honour the Alberta 4-H program bestows on a member. The award recognizes young Albertans who demonstrate strong management, leadership, and communication skills as well as a strong dedication to their community.

Nineteen-year-old Kristen is from Consort, Alberta, and has been active in 4-H for more than 11 years. She is an accomplished public speaker, a dancer, has held several executive positions in the Consort Creative Hands 4-H Club, and has represented Alberta 4-H at national and international events. Currently she is a second-year educational psych student at the University of Alberta. I would also note that Kristen's grandfather was the late Hon. Gordon Towers, who was Alberta's Lieutenant Governor from 1991 to 1996. I'm sure he would be very proud of his granddaughter's accomplishments.

Congratulations, Kristen, and it is my personal pleasure to invite you and your family to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting above me today in the public gallery, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a group of 60 students from the Lorelei elementary school in north Edmonton. I had the pleasure of visiting that school just a few days ago, and I must tell you that it's seldom that you see students so well informed not only about what's going on in our Legislative Assembly but also in city hall and in the federal government, which definitely is a tribute to the students but also to the teachers who have prepared them so well. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Mr. George, Mr. Gibson, Ms McCurry, Ms Mockford, and Miss DeGroot, and also two parents, Mr. Poon and Mrs. Webb. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a veteran myself it's an honour in this Year of the Veteran to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 10 men who served our country

and its armed forces with distinction in both war and peace. With us are seven veterans who served in the Second World War. They are George Custance and Bob Storrer of the army. Bob also served in Korea with the decorated Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Serving at home and in Europe during World War II were Canadian army veterans Bill Calder in England and the continent, Tom Hayden in Italy and Holland, and Al Sunley of the Royal Canadian Air Force on duty in Great Britain. In the north Atlantic were Stan Myers and Walter Sobkow with the Royal Canadian Navy. Mr. Sobkow also served in the English Channel, in the Pacific, and with the Fleet Air Arm. With them are three veterans of NATO service and service with the United Nations: Ben Murdock, a former soldier in the Canadian army; Don Pagee of the Royal Canadian Air Force; and Willy Willett, RCAF, who also served in the Sinai desert. I would ask these gentlemen to please rise and receive the gratitude and appreciation of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly visitors who are deeply concerned about the Capital health authority's plans to replace the current outpatient residence at the U of A hospital with a high-cost privately run hotel. They believe the outpatient residence provides a valuable service to over 5,000 Albertans every year, and they don't want to see Albertans who are already facing serious illness struggle to find affordable accommodation while receiving care.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first introduce Tonya Malo, head of the local AUPE chapter, who is seated in the public gallery, and also Carol Carbol, a licensed nurse on the surgical unit at the U of A hospital. Carol has seen many of her patients and their families benefit from the outpatient residence. They both helped organize an information picket today, which I attended.

I'd also like to introduce Patty Moar. She's a current resident at the outpatient residence and has greatly appreciated the opportunity to stay there.

There are several other guests I'll introduce, and I'll ask them to rise as I mention their names. They are Alecia Hinton, Phyllis Patrie, Jim Shelley, Margaret Heil, Terry Nicholson-Knudson, Nancy Rakowski, Cathie Heard, Jeanne Payne, and Joel Byron.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in giving all of these guests the warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly my guests, who are seated in the public gallery and who have a keen interest in the actions of this government. My distinguished guests represent the Alberta Social Credit Party executive and membership, and they are here to see their petition regarding the need for reasonably priced energy for Albertans be presented to this Assembly. I know that they have done a lot of work to collect the thousands of signatures from concerned Albertans. I would ask that my guests Gordon Barrett, Ken Shipka, and Karen Richert please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Capital Health Outpatient Residence

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For 20 years the outpatient residence at the U of A hospital has been providing affordable accommodation for families dealing with illness. Now this affordable, publicly run facility is being replaced by a higher cost private hotel. The facility is outdated, and it does need to be replaced, but this costly change will be a major blow to rural Albertans in particular, many of whom have to travel from outside the region for prolonged treatment for transplants, cancer, kidney problems, and heart disease. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. How does this minister justify this blow to rural Albertans who have to travel to Edmonton from all over rural Alberta to receive medical care given that a quarter of Capital health's patients are from out of the region?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the question is more likely directed to the minister of health, but as it relates to rural development, in the rural development strategy which we're coming forward with there is a need and a desire to move patients from the city centres to the outlying or regional areas of health care so that we can utilize those facilities outside of those major centres and actually have an expertise built in rural Alberta as well as in the city. It's also important – and the hon. member brings up a good point – to have facilities available for parents and for families as they come in. This government is not ignoring that fact. There will be facilities available for those folks.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: does the minister recognize that the increase from \$25 a night to \$100 a night is unaffordable – simply unaffordable – for many patients who need to stay for weeks at a time, patients who may often not even qualify for credit cards?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to answer this question. Subsidized arrangements will be available for low-income people who need that additional support. This last summer 1,800 outpatient folks that had come in that were surveyed were asked if they would like to have some kind of accommodation, and most wanted to have living facilities, parking, and some longer term capacity. Eighty-eight per cent agreed with this new plan. Eighty-eight per cent said that a modestly priced room for a hundred dollars a night was not too much to be expected to pay if, in fact, they were able to maintain a residence.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier would like to supplement.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt about it that Capital health plans to replace its outdated outpatient residence facility with an updated private facility. I need to stress that Capital health is the only health region in North America – and I hear the chitter-chatter over there about two-tier – that has subsidized accommodations for families. The only health region in North America with subsidized accommodations for families.

I'm told that the region surveyed people who use the facilities, not the NDs and not the Liberals but people who use the facilities, and they found that 88 per cent said that they were in favour of a new facility that could accommodate them in a reasonable fashion. Also, as the hon. minister pointed out, there will be subsidies for low-income families that cannot afford the facility.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why are the taxpayers of Alberta putting millions of dollars into building this facility only to turn it over to Ritz-Carlton or Marriott or some other corporation? Why are we in the hotel business?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, Capital health is not building this facility out of public funds. The taxpayers are not on the hook for anything. The only thing that taxpayers will be on the hook for is the subsidization of a private facility. I would remind the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that this region is the only region in North America that offers subsidized accommodations. The only.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Securities Commission is vital to the integrity of our capital markets. However, as the days and weeks and months pass and the spotlight grows brighter on the ASC, information continues to flow forward indicating that our Securities Commission under this government is in disarray. Most of these challenges and controversies could be dealt with by the Minister of Finance, but she is failing to take a leadership role and get to the bottom of this issue. To the Minister of Finance: given that the Ontario Securities Commission enforces strict conflict-of-interest guidelines for its chairman the moment the person takes office, can the minister explain why the new chair of the Securities Commission sat as a director of not one but two publicly traded companies while sitting as the chair of the Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, it was clear right from the outset, when the chairman took over, that this would be permitted in a transitional time frame to allow him to take on his responsibilities and to wind down his participation in this company. It was under very strict guidelines that the chairman would not deal with anything that would involve that company, and it was completely reviewed. No pretense at trying to avoid it; it was well known at the time.

Mr. Speaker, I question why the constant discrediting of the Alberta Securities Commission continues.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that ASC interim chair, Mr. Peter Valentine, sat on the boards of several publicly traded companies while serving as interim chair of the Securities Commission, what was the minister's due diligence process in handling his appointment and conflicts of interest?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Securities Commission has very clear conflict-of-interest guidelines. That has never been in question.

Again, with the interim chair all of his activities and involvements were reviewed. Any concerns around those are put to rest by the conflict-of-interest guidelines, which clearly state that they cannot involve themselves in any matters pertaining to those companies.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the Minister of Finance before her appearance at the Public Accounts

Committee tomorrow take the time to ask her cabinet and caucus colleagues if they have ever interfered with enforcement cases at the Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition, before I appear at the Public Accounts Committee tomorrow, to come forth with some substantiation of any evidence that any member of this Legislature or my staff interfered with files at the Alberta Securities Commission. Day after day we have had allegations. We have no substantiation, and it continues.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, in order to save time at Public Accounts, I will ask any member of this caucus: please stand if you have in any way interfered with the Alberta Securities Commission. Please stand. Please stand. Well, there's no need to ask the question.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Turner Valley Gas Plant Historic Site

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is negligent in relation to reclamation of contaminated sites. Repeatedly this government refuses to prosecute and to hold industry accountable for spills, to require timely cleanup of abandoned sites, and to be open with the public in affected communities. Just ask the residents of Turner Valley, Black Diamond, and Okotoks, whose river is affected by the old refinery site, now a public liability since becoming an historic site under the Department of Community Development. My first question to the Minister of Community Development: why after 18 years has the Turner Valley site not been properly cleaned up?

Mr. Mar: Well, not only is the contamination of grave concern to us; it is something that we are acting upon. Some of the contaminants that are referred to by the hon. member are in fact naturally occurring ones. Some of it does come from the former site that was there. But I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, and people in the Assembly and Albertans that the health and safety of people in Turner Valley is our priority. Results of drinking-water testing show that the water is safe. We are moving forward on infrastructure that will put a containment wall around this area. This has been in consultation with the people who live in the area.

Mr. Speaker, we met with Infrastructure and Environment and the people who live in the Turner Valley area as recently as about a month ago, and I think that, by and large, the people in the community are quite satisfied that we're taking the right steps forward on an infrastructure basis. We have money for this in our budget to place the containment wall to help mitigate the damage to the river.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment: with more mercury and hydrocarbons released from the summer flooding at this site and recently significant radiation found on-site, how can you reassure the public that you are protecting the environment?

Mr. Boutilier: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have been working very closely, as the Minister of Community Development has suggested, with the residents. Furthermore, we are constantly doing water testing, ensuring that, first and foremost, the drinking water for the citizens is safe.

The hon. member does mention the issue of radioactivity. We

actually just in the last 10 days have met with the residents again at a public meeting, and in actual fact we are doing more testing on the point by a professor who has done some radioactive testing. Everything that I have been informed of with my staff – we will ensure that the water is safe, that all Albertans enjoy safe drinking water. As the Minister of Community Development has mentioned, we will and are taking the correct steps of ensuring that this contaminated site is restored to something well before any laws were in place in Alberta, going back many, many years.

Dr. Swann: It's 18 years, actually, that we've been waiting.

Again to the Minister of Environment: how many more contaminated sites are there across the province, and how much will the public have to pay to get these cleaned up?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, this government initiated a plan, and in fact it falls under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. I want to say that it identified contaminated sites across all of Alberta. It was really interesting. The plan was made up of \$60 million. There is no other plan like this in the country in terms of dealing with contaminated sites.

The question was asked: how many more sites? It's my hope for the benefit of future generations that the good work that we are doing within the environment, holding people to account for the contaminated sites, that the money we are investing is restoring the land to its proper order, and ensuring that Albertans who value the environment deeply will continue to appreciate this valuable resource we've been blessed with. Contaminated sites: zero is my ultimate goal as Minister of Environment in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Long-term Care Standards

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fatality inquiry into Jennie Nelson's death is a harsh reminder of why we need better standards for seniors' care in Alberta, including staffing ratios, standards for training, and rigorous inspections. The Premier promised in this House to implement every single recommendation of the Auditor General's report on long-term care, but instead the government is deregulating care, allowing long-term care facilities to be redesignated as assisted living, where there are no standards whatsoever. It's a cruel game of bait and switch. My question is to the Premier. Given that the Nelson fatality inquiry is revealing the extent to which seniors' care must be regulated and standards set, why is the government allowing deregulation of seniors' care by redesignating hundreds of long-term care beds as assisted living?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the assertion is not true, and I'll have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness supplement.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, first of all, because of the medical examiner's inquest I will not discuss any circumstance surrounding the very unfortunate death of the resident that's been referenced.

In fact, there are standards in our long-term care facilities. In assisted-living facilities, where they are yet unregulated, regional health authorities undertake a contractual arrangement identifying standards of care that must be in place so that if people have been reduced from the requirements of a long-term care facility and are placed more appropriately in a facility that is tailoring care to their particular needs, a contractual relationship enforces the standard that must be met in the care of those patients and the people that are resident there.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister has admitted that there is no regulation in assisted living, and given that there are hundreds of beds being converted right now to assisted living, why, when the Premier promised Alberta seniors higher standards of care, is he delivering them no standards at all?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, it's not by regulation and government-wide regulation that designated assisted-living residences have standards. It's by contractual relationship. I've just identified that there are standards in place. There must be standards in place or the government wouldn't provide funding for people in those residences. If people choose a private residence where there are not standards in place, that is not something that the government is involved with.

2:00

But there are standards in place, and through our review – and it's been an intensive review, following the review by the Auditor General – we are looking at a set of standards that would be a framework for Alberta for all of those people that enter care, whether they're coming in at the home-care entry point or whether they're in long-term care, and looking at how we collaborate with a set of standards with regions and all kinds of private or private/public deliveries that we have out there currently, today, and are expanding upon.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the Minister of Health and Wellness is trying to indicate to us that we have standards, can she tell the House if those standards are exactly the same as the standards that the government committed to in the Auditor General's report, and will she provide the House with a side-by-side comparison of the standards that she claims are available to people in extended care through contractual means?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, once we have committed to the Auditor General to undertake to provide standards and have accepted his recommendations, we will fulfill that to the letter of the law. To the particular standards in the various facilities with the regional health authorities, one of the commitments made in the review that was undertaken by the MLA task force is that we would assure that these standards had a common theme throughout Alberta, and we will continue and work in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I stress: for anybody in a government-funded care centre for either designated assisted living, nursing home, long-term care, or any other of the continuums, including lodge care, if there's care being provided and it's publicly funded, there are standards for that care.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Highway 2A

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, there is a need for our highways and secondary roads to keep pace with the huge growth in population and economic development, especially in the fastest growing economic corridor in Canada. I have constituents who have expressed serious concerns about traffic safety issues on highway 2A, particularly from north of the Red Deer city limit to the town of Blackfalds. The area of particular concern is the part that provides access to Blindman industrial park. Due to increased traffic volumes on this stretch of highway and poor lighting at the intersection it has

become very difficult to turn onto this highway. During rush hours and in bad weather this stretch of road is very dangerous. There have been a number of serious accidents on this road. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Are there any improvements scheduled for this area, such as better turning lanes, widening of the highway, or lighting?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This section of the highway certainly has seen increased traffic counts. It's seen increased traffic. There presently is many times a seven- to 10-minute wait to cross the intersection in this particular area. It is scheduled for twinning. We have done the functional plan on it, and we are looking at twinning it as soon as the dollars bear out. I'm hoping that that will be sooner as opposed to later.

The Speaker: The hon. member. One question only.

Mrs. Jablonski: To the same minister: will you consider installing traffic lights at the busiest intersection to allow people to safely turn onto highway 2A?

Dr. Oberg: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we certainly will install the traffic lights. I think they're needed there. One of the issues that we have is that if we get into construction of twinning, then basically we will have put the traffic lights on there for nothing. So what we're looking at doing, quite simply, is that when the twinning is going to occur, if the twinning is not going to occur immediately, within the next year, we will indeed put the lights up to ensure that the intersection is considerably safer than it is at the moment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: in order to make this section of highway safer, is there any consideration to reduce the current speed limit from the current 80 kilometres per hour since this extends to 90 K or more?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, I certainly would hope that when the speed limit is 80 kilometres, people would go 80 kilometres per hour, specifically in the areas where there is a lot of congestion, such as this one. I don't believe that there's any point to decreasing it because, quite simply, those people that are going faster are going to go faster regardless. I certainly would ask, though, that the people of Red Deer and Blackfalds, when they see the 80 kilometres per hour, stay at the 80 kilometres per hour because it is quite a dangerous situation in this particular area.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Wildlife Conservation

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to stand by while all the controlled oil and gas, recreational use, and resorts squeeze Alberta's wildlife to the brink. The reality is that this government sees dollar signs and growth potential while failing its international obligations to protect endangered species. This government stands by and watches extinction in the 21st century. My question to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: when will this minister commit to a moratorium on hunting, establish recovery teams, and create grizzly bear conservation areas, giving the bears a faint hope clause?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, Sustainable Resource Development works very, very closely with the endangered species committee, that is chaired by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead. They have made recommendations to our department regarding recovery plans for caribou, for endangered species like grizzly bear. We have put recovery plans in place, even prior to receiving all of their recommendations, because we are being proactive in managing and making sure that all species are part of the biodiversity of this province regardless of the industrial activity that is being placed on the land.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has a caribou recovery plan, when will the minister defer development in critical areas and preserve the caribou?

Mr. Coutts: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do have a caribou recovery plan put in place, and the caribou recovery plan is done in co-operation with industry as well as with our own biologists as we manage the threat that may happen where habitat is involved. We take a look at opportunities to maintain that caribou on the land and on our landscape, and we do that by providing, definitely, habitat that will keep the caribou and the caribou numbers across this province on the landscape.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister table the latest DNA population results and give Albertans a clear sense of the bear numbers?

Mr. Coutts: In terms of the request for grizzly bear information and DNA, we haven't fully got that information available at this point in time. Our Foothills model forest bear recovery office is working on this, and, Mr. Speaker, you can rest assured that when the details of the DNA are available to me, I will make sure that the hon. member and this House and all Albertans receive that type of information.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Minable Oil Sands Strategy

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent release of a discussion paper termed Mineable Oil Sands Strategy, or MOSS, has caused concern among many northern constituents. To the Minister of Environment. The six key policy components in MOSS are progressive, supportive strategies with the exception of point 2: "Within the coordinated development zone, oil sands mining will have the highest priority." Will the minister assure this House and all Albertans that that strategy will not preclude protection of the environment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Boutillier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that probably in all my years sitting in this Legislature, that is perhaps the finest question I have ever heard, and the reason I say that is because it's about protecting the mother ship. I indicate to my colleagues all the time, as the Premier did, that the mother ship is protecting what Albertans expect us to protect, and that is the environment.

Mr. Speaker, it is grossly misunderstood . . . [interjections] If you

could listen just for a moment. It is grossly misunderstood about this principle. It's not a be-all and end-all in terms of compromising the environment for the sake of mining. Unequivocally not. My family lives there, and I do breathe the air, believe it or not, and we do emit CO₂ when we exhale. We actually drink the water; we do work the land.

Let me assure all Albertans that without any question we are going to do this right. We're going to do it in protecting the principles of environmental protection and sustainability, and at the end of the day we will never compromise the environment for mining. Unequivocally not. That is my backyard, and that is my commitment to every member of this Assembly and every Albertan.

2:10

Mr. Knight: Well, Mr. Speaker, that may be the best answer I've ever heard.

To the Minister of Energy: why is a MOSS policy discussion necessary at this time?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think everybody is aware around the world that this world-class resource has attracted, clearly, the attention and the investment of companies from around the world. It's in that light, especially how fast things have come about with technology and our ways to improve the development, that we wanted to take a co-ordinated approach to managing the development of these resources rather than just a project-specific, one-off at a time, that we do look at it as a co-ordinated approach. Even as my colleague the Minister of Environment just mentioned, these principles are to be in conjunction. The industry is supportive and certainly the Department of Energy is supportive that as we develop, there ought to be a coexistence of the development of these resources and those environmental principles.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: what is your department doing to ensure that the existing resource management plan will be strengthened by the minable oil sands strategy?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, the existing plan for the area was developed after public consultation in 1996, and it was further amended in the year 2002. The plan already recognizes the importance of the oil sands in the area. We use an integrated resource management and planning approach to managing these public lands and the resources. Those plans are developed after making sure that other affected government departments are involved in the planning process plus a public consultation as well. The proposed minable oil sands strategy is requiring an update because we would like to move from a site-specific or a project-by-project management basis to a larger landscape planning, and we're using public consultation to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy's statements yesterday in this House indicated that the secret Enron deal was executed in the best interests of Albertans. However, the government allowed Enron to violate the very conditions

placed by them on the secret deal. In a letter dated August 14, 2001, the government gave their support for the deal so long as Enron did not sell its electricity generation capacity to a company that already owned generation capacity in Alberta. My first question is to the Premier. Given that the government stated in that letter, "We look forward to working with Enron on the continued development of a competitive electric industry in Alberta," why did this government allow Enron to violate the very conditions set forward by this government?

Mr. Klein: I don't know that to be true.

Mr. MacDonald: It certainly is.

Mr. Klein: Oh, well, Mr. Speaker, there are so many things going on in this government. This is a question I'd have to take under advisement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and you can't answer your own question.

Mr. MacDonald: It's the only way to get an answer here, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister of Energy then: can the minister please explain how a deal that included specific terms dictated by Enron's legal department to serve its own tax purposes is an example of this government acting independently on behalf of Albertans?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, we'd have to get the specific dates in mind. He's going back to 2001. But first off, it was in August of that same year, of 2000 actually, that the PPAs were sold, of which some of those were purchased, and later Enron came asking about the resale of that. Through that policy it was determined, actually, that it was in the interest, as mentioned yesterday, that that specific PPA that Enron purchased, the power purchase arrangement, be split into two. So it was under that policy that we agreed as a department that it would be in Albertans' best interest that it be sold and split into two.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the same minister: given that this government secretly facilitated Enron's demands to transfer this electricity generation capacity without any public knowledge, how can the minister now claim that this deal was executed in the public's interest?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, these were contracts between individual companies. They clearly have the ability to sell those. They would have to have that and retain that permission through a regulator. So from that perspective a lot of those documents are not in the secret domain. They are in the sense that when you come forward, there's a lot of correspondence between the department, between regulators, between companies all the time. That's in the normal course of doing business. Some of that would be confidential, specific to their company. It's under that light when the regulators oversee and approve that. Nothing is secret at all. That's the due process that all departments are required to fulfill.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Caribou Conservation

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Much of Alberta's economic success is based on development of our natural

resources, including forestry, oil, and gas. However, this development may have a negative effect on wildlife such as woodland caribou, a threatened species in Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is his department doing to ensure that the caribou population is being adequately protected?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very specific here and relate to you and to people that last June Alberta announced several actions based on a caribou recovery plan, which means greater protection for caribou and their habitat. We are committed to provincial land management that takes into account the importance of habitat for caribou remaining on the land. A caribou committee has been established to co-ordinate the management activities. As well, we look at selective predator management to protect caribou and their populations. We're in the process of hiring four biologists from Grande Prairie right through to Peace River, Fort McMurray, and the Slave Lake-High Prairie area to make sure that they can assist in those management activities as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. How does his department ensure that the industry follows government guidelines to mitigate effects on species such as caribou?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, to be specific we work very, very closely with industry to make sure that we balance the development with the environmental protection. Industry must submit a caribou protection plan each and every year, which we will enforce under our legislation. Over the past 10 years industry has been addressing the width size of seismic lines and co-operating with other companies in terms of the numbers of roads and where the roads would go in certain areas so we don't lose the habitat for the caribou. It's also important to know that forestry companies adjust their harvesting sequences to make sure that habitat is well looked after. It's part of their management plans. The department, in addition to that, has worked with Suncor and ConocoPhillips to make sure that their planning for their pipelines takes into consideration habitat, particularly for the Little Smoky caribou area.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the same minister. Because caribou require good quality habitat to survive, why doesn't Alberta simply put an end to industrial activity in sensitive areas until studies can be conducted to ensure that sufficient caribou habitat is being protected?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, in Alberta we continue to be innovative with the planning processes that we use, and we believe that caribou recovery can be achieved without a moratorium on caribou habitat. We are intensifying our areas to work in the forests with our oil and gas as well as forestry industries. We're promoting industry best practices more widely so that companies can operate on all caribou ranges. Some companies are actually going beyond that practice. In fact, if you look over the past 10 years, between the government and the companies they invest over half a million dollars a year into caribou management and monitoring just to keep caribou on the landscape.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

2:20 Accessibility of Medical Education

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too many Albertans do not have a regular family doctor, yet this government's policies are aggravating rather than solving the problem. Since 1993-94 tuition at the University of Calgary medical school, for example, has increased from just over \$3,600 to over \$15,000. Access is inequitable, and new doctors say that they're moving away from family medicine just to pay their student debts. To the Minister of Advanced Education: given all the evidence, will the minister admit that his government's user-pay ideology for education is in fact making all Albertans pay?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short answer to that is no. Neither would I admit it, nor is it true. The fact of the matter is that there is a lineup of people that want to get into medical school, and we need to find ways to provide more space for Albertans to get into medical school here and abroad. We've worked with the rural physician action plan to make sure that rural students have an opportunity to get medical training. We've worked with all institutions across the province to make sure that spaces are available for the training of other health care professionals. It's not the tuition for medical school that's the problem. It's the fact that we need to gear up to find more space to overcome a decision that was made about 15 or 20 years ago right across this country to cut back on medical training.

Mr. Taylor: Well, I didn't hear anything in there, Mr. Speaker, about family docs.

To the same minister: given that a new national study demonstrates that as medical tuition soared, access for students from low- and moderate-income backgrounds fell, will the minister reverse course and make medical education affordable to all Albertans?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it's the policy of this government and the practice of this government that finances are not a barrier to a student getting an education. We have the best student finance system in the country, and we provide finances for those students who need to access it, particularly poorer Albertans, in terms of grants, loans, and other support.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, good enough is not good enough.

To the same minister: why are medical residents, who are still students, required to begin paying back their student loans? What happened to fairness?

Mr. Hancock: Finally a very good question, Mr. Speaker. That is an issue that we do need to work on. We do need to make sure that the opportunity is there for students, when they graduate, to have the time to get properly into the workforce and into a position where they can start to pay back. I've been talking with residents about this particular issue, and it is an issue that I hope we'll be able to resolve within the next year as we deal with the affordability policy that we're coming forward with in the spring.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Wait Times for Health Care

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to October 2005 stats on the government's wait-list registry, four times as many

Calgarians are waiting for cataract eye surgery compared to the number of Edmontonians waiting. Moreover, those Calgarians are waiting on average three times longer than Edmontonians. In Calgary almost 100 per cent of cataract surgeries are done in private, for-profit clinics while in Edmonton over 80 per cent of the procedures are done in public facilities like the Royal Alex eye clinic. My questions are to the Premier. Given this clear-cut evidence of privatization failing to deliver, why is the Premier indifferent to the pain and suffering of elderly Calgarians that this government forces to wait three times longer than Edmontonians for cataract surgery?

Mr. Klein: I really don't know that to be true, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've talked to people in the private system and people in the public system. Those people in Calgary practising ophthalmology say that services are much quicker in the city of Calgary. I don't know where he gets his figures. Perhaps the Minister of Health and Wellness can shed some light on it.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll send the Premier this information that he needs to look at.

Why does the Premier keep talking about cataract eye surgery being a leading candidate for further privatization when the existing Calgary private eye surgery clinics month after month and year after year fail to deliver timely access to cataract surgery?

Mr. Klein: Again I don't know that to be true, but I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that's happened in Calgary is that when patients take a look at the wait-list registry, they can find alternatives. It's when they choose a preference of a particular private facility, perhaps, that the wait times become more difficult. As we speak, the Calgary regional health authority has been doing extensive consultation not only with patients but with the ophthalmologists and the operators of private clinics as well as the surgery that's available in public facilities, looking at ways to resolve the situation with the excellent people that are providing cataract surgeries in Calgary. There was a cap put on which was restrictive for some of the ophthalmologists to provide the surgery that they were prepared to do. So as we look at it, they're looking at some of the alternatives, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Pannu: My second supplementary to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: why doesn't the government reduce waiting times for all Calgarians needing cataract surgery by adopting the successful model developed in Edmonton instead of letting only those select Calgarians who can buy private insurance jump the queue?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false. As I understand it, all cataract surgeries are covered under the Alberta health care system, whether they're delivered under contract by a private operator or whether they're delivered in a public system. So for this hon. member to intimate that people jump the cue is wrong, and he ought to apologize for making an outrageous statement like that. Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

The Speaker: Well, I think we're probably going to move on to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Widows' Pension

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Some of my

constituents have expressed concerns about the ending of the provincial widows' pension and possible financial hardship that they may face as a result. What is going to happen to the widows and widowers who remain with this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Legislation, of course, has been introduced in this Assembly to allow people who get the widows' pension today to keep getting the same benefits until they're 65 years old and qualify for the seniors' benefit. The program only needs to be extended until the last client turns 65, which is about nine years from now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Why was the decision made to end this program when, clearly, there should be plenty of dollars in this province to support needy people?

Mr. Cardinal: A very good question, Mr. Speaker. There are several good reasons to end the program, and they have nothing to do with money. The decision was made so that we could move to a single program based on income, not marital status, to provide consistent support to all Albertans in need. The MLA low-income review committee recommended a single program. Also, the courts have questioned having an assistance program based on marital status.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is also to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Why, then, is Alberta the only province getting rid of its widows' pension program?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, in fact, there's a good reason. Alberta is the only province in Canada that's ever had a program of this nature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Childhood Obesity

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The World Health Organization stated that government should take responsibility for leadership in responding to the child obesity crisis. Children who eat fruits and vegetables five times a day are substantially less likely to be overweight. This means that we need leadership from the government for a province-wide plan. Waiting will only mean increasing current and future medical costs. To the Minister of Education: will he respond to the child obesity crisis by banning the sale of junk food in Alberta schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful to the member for actually raising this issue because it will give me a chance to tell all members here that we are addressing this very matter. We started with the first part of the strategy just this past September. That was with the daily physical activity aspect, and that

is providing 30 minutes per day for all students in grades 1 through 9. The second part of this will come into place next September. That will be a focus on the nutritional aspects. That will come forward as part of the new health framework which we are developing with the ministry of health.

2:30

Obesity is a problem. We acknowledge that. It's not just a problem in this province, Mr. Speaker, as you well know. It's a problem right across the country, and we ministers of education have been dealing with this during the past few meetings that we've had.

So we are taking some leadership in that regard, and I'd be grateful for the hon. member's continued support.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll get into my second supplemental. I thank the minister for his positive answer. Education in health is a necessity for kids. When will the minister make healthy eating habits part of the education curriculum in all Alberta schools?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, there are numerous references within the existing curriculum that already address that. I want to make it clear that once the new health framework, which I alluded to in the first answer, is fully fleshed out and more complete and provided through to our stakeholders for their final input before we shoot that puck, so to speak, there will be a very comprehensive document available that complements what we have already in the system. Part of that focus will be not only on the nutritional aspects – in other words, the benefits of healthy eating – but also on the healthy habits that must accompany that to sustain it not only within the schools but also, we hope, in the community and in the home life. So we are doing a lot about that, hon. member.

Thank you.

Mr. Flaherty: My last supplemental: will the minister then tell us if he's going to ban junk food in our Alberta schools soon?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no. I'm not planning to ban that, but I don't know what might come out of the review that is going to occur over this next little while. I should say that those kinds of decisions are really being taken very seriously, and they are being developed and looked at at the local level: local school boards and local schools. I can tell you that during the 62 meetings that I just had with the school boards, some of them did mention this issue, and the corollary of it all simply is that many of them have removed so-called junk foods from their rosters already.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Climate Change

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In July the federal government quietly introduced new regulations that classified carbon dioxide as a noxious gas under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Last week the federal Minister of the Environment, Stéphane Dion, declared that the new regulations would allow Ottawa to directly regulate large emitters of carbon dioxide, including Alberta oil sands operations, pipelines, and refineries. My first question, then, is to the Minister of Environment. What is the government doing to protect Albertans against these predatory intrusions into provincial jurisdictions?

Mr. Boutilier: I think, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta is viewed by the rest of the nation as a leader, and as much as we're providing a valuable resource to the rest of Canada, it's very important that we avoid duplication. What I mean by that is that Alberta is in such a better position when it comes to the regulatory regime, that we have done a very good job with over the last 30 years. We want to continue in that leadership. To give you an example, the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose sits on Climate Change Central, which is an important leadership example of what Alberta has been doing.

I think it's really about proactivity. How do we continue to be proactive? Certainly, some of the correspondence I've received from my federal counterpart, the Environment minister, has been very positive. I do believe that we are continuing to move the football down the field in a way that doesn't protect, shall I say, the predatory and intrusive agreements from the federal government but, actually, what is most important, the environment.

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, the minister and some of his spokesmen keep assuring Albertans not to worry about these new federal regulations because Alberta can and will enact our own equivalent regulations that will pre-empt legislation. So my second question to the same minister is: what protection does enacting our own regulations give us if all we're doing is re-enacting the same rules and penalties enacted by the federal government? If the rules are bad, aren't they bad regardless if they're federal or provincial?

Mr. Boutilier: Hon. member, I have to reframe. First of all, the province of Alberta, with the only law in Canada on climate change emission management, will be the first province in Canada with regulations because we've been proactive. We have been leading on the climate change file, and we will continue to protect the environment.

So rather than following something that the federal government is doing in the future, it's important to recognize that I anticipate reporting back to this Assembly that in the next six months we will have completed a regulatory review. I'm eager to report back. I do believe that at the end of the day the federal government will stand down, based on the actual agreements that we had in place in the past and those that will be in the future.

Dr. Morton: Well, the minister seems to be saying that it depends on – the federal government's own data shows that current greenhouse gas emissions are 26 per cent above 1990 levels.

The Speaker: Preambles are not permitted in the second and third questions.

Dr. Morton: My question then is: what has the government done to communicate to the federal government that Albertans will not tolerate the shift of implementation costs of Kyoto onto Alberta oil and gas industries?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Environment my first and foremost principle is the protection of the environment. I believe that our actions have demonstrated that we are committed to that. I also might say that for the first time in the history of Canada the federal minister allowed Alberta to talk about renewable energies, to talk about technology, important initiatives that, again, Alberta is leading on. The minister of science and technology may want to, in fact I'd encourage him to supplement relative to the EnergyINet and the positive initiatives we're doing to help reduce

greenhouse gases in this province through our regulatory consultations that we're taking.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now we'll call upon the first of six to participate in Members' Statements.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of an historical vignette for the day, on this day in 1890 Lethbridge was incorporated as a town by the North-West Territories by way of Ordinance 24. The Lethbridge region was originally the home of the Blackfoot confederacy, but after 1890 European and American traders arrived in the area, and Lethbridge developed as a town and was incorporated as a town. On May 9, 1906, it was incorporated as a city as well. It now boasts a population of some 77,000 people.

head:

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Canadian Finals Rodeo and Farmfair 2005

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to mention the significant and successful events that took place in Edmonton earlier this month: the Canadian Finals Rodeo and Farmfair International. These events give rural Alberta an opportunity to put on a show for the city, and they give our province an opportunity to reach out to the world.

CFR is a sport up close and personal, and Farmfair showcases rural life and the products people have for sale. Our Minister of Economic Development wrote a wonderful article that appeared in the *St. Albert Gazette* on November 23 remarking how CFR and Farmfair are great educational and tourist events, with close to 100,000 people taking in the rodeo and another 50,000 visiting Farmfair exhibits and livestock displays.

The importance of CFR and Farmfair goes far beyond a visit to Northlands Park. They are provincial events that allow all types of businesses to benefit, not just those in Edmonton but throughout Alberta, as visitors travelling to and from the city stop for gas and food in towns along the way. Organizers estimate that \$60 million is spent in Edmonton and points in between as stores, hotels, and restaurants are filled with people in western wear from all over western Canada and the United States.

CFR creates economic waves through the province, but Farmfair and the CFR are far more important than the money generated. These events reflect our rural pride, our western heritage, history, and culture, and create new opportunities for tourism visits. It is imperative that our province continues to reach out to the world with events like these.

Congratulations to everyone that organized and participated in the Canadian Finals Rodeo and Farmfair International 2005. I hope that the CFR and Farmfair encourage Albertans from the city to take a mini country vacation to visit their rural neighbours, to experience the open skies, the friendly people, the great food, western art, and music and crafts of rural Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

2:40

Alberta Film Industry

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the economic significance of the film industry in Alberta. Last Friday I along with several other members of this Assembly had the

opportunity to visit a set being used in the filming of *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. Located roughly 15 kilometres south of Canmore, this set has recreated the town of Creede, Colorado, an 1880s mining town. This impressive townsite, which cost \$1 million to build, was constructed with the expertise Alberta tradespeople have, using Alberta materials. While visiting the set, I had the opportunity to meet a few of the Albertans who make up the cast, crew, and support staff who have been involved in the shooting of this film since August.

It is not only those who work directly on the film whose employment is supplemented by the movie industry. Filming of this movie will result in roughly \$27 million being spent within Alberta on various products and services such as rental cars, hotels, meals, and employment. This is just one example of the many movies which have been filmed in Alberta. In 2003-04 the film industry generated a net economic activity of \$129 million, and this figure is estimated to rise to almost \$200 million in the 2005-06 fiscal year.

In addition to the economic benefits, the exposure Alberta receives through being on film generates a positive effect on other Alberta industries, such as travel and tourism. The benefits of having this industry are undeniable, and because of this, competition for production crews is getting intense. It is important for Alberta to continue to foster an environment which ensures that we remain competitive internationally to grow this labour-intensive industry which gives Alberta international recognition.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Forest Lawn High School Awards Night

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about an annual event in my constituency of Calgary-Fort. It's the Forest Lawn high school awards night. It took place last Saturday night at the school. First of all, I want to express our appreciation to the principal, Mr. Tim Main, teachers, and every staff member for doing a great job in providing excellent education services to our future generation. I also want to thank the chair, Michelle Wagler, and all members of the Forest Lawn High School Parent Council for their volunteering involvement with the school.

The students of Forest Lawn school are excellent. I have met many of its past graduates who are now leading citizens and professionals in Alberta, in Canada, and the world. This year 45 received our provincial Rutherford scholarships, 40 received outstanding subject awards, 100 received honour grade awards, and one the Canadian Governor General's award.

There were 30 bursary and scholarship awards sponsored by organizations and individuals who are sponsors of the school. As I don't have time to mention all of them, I would take the liberty to mention a few big ones: the Owen Hart memorial scholarships, the University of Calgary entrance awards, the government of Alberta Rutherford scholarships, the Alberta government school citizenship awards, the BP Canada Energy award, the city of Calgary scholarship awards, the Gerry Art memorial scholarship by our Calgary-Fort Constituency Association, the international peace bursary, and many, many more.

Mr. Speaker, the Ataturk peace bursary has been recently established by the Turkish Canadian Cultural Association of Calgary. This bursary amounts to \$1,000 for students graduating from high school. They plan to increase the number of bursaries from the current two to five in the coming year.

Mr. Speaker, our thanks go to all the scholarship and award sponsors, including the Member for Calgary-East. My congratulations to all the students.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Reclamation of Contaminated Sites

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Contaminated sites are a shameful legacy that we're leaving to our children. Today in Alberta there are thousands of contaminated sites with the potential public liability of billions of dollars as well as unpredictable health consequences. This government has legislated no deadline to complete surface reclamation and subsurface soil remediation. Companies defer the expense for many years, in some cases until after they go out of business. This leaves the cleanup to the public and to the future, an invisible liability to our children.

In addition, Alberta Environment lacks standards of remediation for many contaminants. With thousands of industrial sites across the province spills occur on a daily basis. Despite this, very few prosecutions occur, while the evidence vanishes over time, especially where a site is left for decades. This, of course, conveniently defers expenses for the company, assuming it is ever identified at all. Clearly, this failure to prosecute rewards rather than punishes polluters and means an invisible incremental risk to adjacent people, to the future, and to the environment. This is not acceptable.

Alberta Environment has a responsibility for issuing reclamation certificates for downstream oil and gas and for all other industrial sites. The capacity of Alberta Environment for monitoring a site reclamation is now so compromised by lack of staffing that only 10 per cent are actually visited and attempts made to establish the extent of remediation of contaminated soil. Unlike the upstream oil and gas sector, Alberta Environment has not established an orphan fund from industry to pay for reclamation costs when a company goes out of business.

Legislation is needed urgently to establish regulations, not guidelines; to require immediate cleanup of spills and prosecution where there is a violation of the act. No soft-peddling on pollution. Thirdly, legislation is required for timely reclamation preceded by a proper environmental assessment and, fourthly, to establish an industry-funded cleanup fund. New funds are needed to provide enough inspectors to actually test sites before reclamation certificates.

I call on the Minister of Environment to give a supreme effort to ensure that we do not leave a huge, shameful legacy to our children.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Enron Activities in Alberta

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Progressive Conservatives' close relationship with Enron during Alberta's deregulation process raises many questions. We in the Official Opposition believe that these questions can only be answered through a full, independent public inquiry.

Enron played a significant role in the deregulation process here in Alberta, a role that included drafting Alberta legislation to suit its own financial needs. Shockingly, the provincial government accommodated Enron every step of the way despite the fact that Enron was on the verge of financial collapse and the subject of a regulatory investigation at that time. Enron was able to secure a sweet deal from the Alberta government, purchasing some of the lowest costing electricity in North America. Meanwhile, Alberta consumers have been gouged by electricity deregulation.

By hiding its dealings with Enron from public knowledge, this government has displayed an utter disregard for open and transparent governance. This government concealed its dealings with Enron

because it deemed their publication undesirable and unnecessary. The only thing that is undesirable and unnecessary is this provincial government's eagerness to keep Albertans in the dark.

When people speak of a democratic deficit in Alberta, this is exactly what they are referring to. We have a provincial government that executes secret deals with a disgraced corporation and then hides these deals from public knowledge. The citizens of this province deserve to know the facts regarding Enron's role in the deregulation process. More importantly, they deserve to know why this government accommodated Enron at the expense of Alberta consumers.

The answers that we deserve will only come to light when a full, independent public inquiry is mandated to investigate this matter. While other jurisdictions investigate, the Progressive Conservative government here procrastinates.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Family Doctor Week

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure that I rise today to recognize Family Doctor Week in Canada, which runs from December 5 to December 11.

Each and every day family doctors diagnose and treat illness and injury and promote disease prevention and good health. They advocate on behalf of their patients and play a key role in co-ordinating care with other medical specialists and health professionals.

Public surveys repeatedly show that Canadians hold family doctors in high regard for the quality of work they provide, working from their offices as well as hospitals, long-term care centres, community clinics, and other community facilities. These doctors are involved in teaching students and residents and in supporting and conducting research to continually improve the practice of family medicine.

2:50

The contribution which family doctors make to Alberta's health care system is one which is appreciated by us all, so I wish to thank the family doctors from my constituency and throughout Alberta and Canada.

Thank you.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions signed by two different groups.

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation declaring a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition on a province-wide moratorium on confined feeding operations.

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation declaring a moratorium on any future expansion of Confined Feeding Operations, with a view to phasing out existing operations within the next three years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition from some tradesmen and -women from the communities of Duffield, Vermilion, Alliance, Elk Point, Okotoks, Barrhead, Westlock, Drayton Valley, and Rimbey, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

There are 210 Albertans on that list.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yeah. I have a couple petitions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition today which has 386 signatures on it, bringing the total number of signatures for this petition to 786. The signatures were collected by Lynda and Ron Jonson of Seniors I Care. The petition calls for either the reinstatement of the 25 continuing care beds "that Hinton had before the Good Samaritans Society and the Aspen Health Region changed it to a Designated Assisted Living Facility" or, failing that, to commit to building a "new 25 bed Continuing Care Facility in Hinton."

Mr. Speaker, for the leader of the NDP opposition I have a further petition. I'd like to table today a petition by 1,584 individuals that urges the Alberta government to "increase infrastructure development funding for Highway 63." To date 6,496 Albertans have signed this petition.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to present a petition to this Assembly with over 8,000 signatures from residents across Alberta who are not feeling the Alberta advantage. They come from Peace River, Medicine Hat, Hanna, Fort Macleod, and Onoway, just to name a few. The petition reads: "We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to introduce legislation to re-regulate Alberta's utilities to restore reasonably-priced energy to Albertans."

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I advised your office of my intent to move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 40 after completion of today's daily routine.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Would you like to read it into the record now?

Dr. Pannu: Yes. The motion, Mr. Speaker, reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly deplores the government for not providing sufficient time to debate billions of dollars in unbudgeted government spending, thereby undermining the democratic process and the integrity of the public finances.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to rise and table the required number of copies of the response to Written Question 17 and motions for returns 20, 21, and 22.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling the required number of copies of the Ontario Securities Commission bylaws relating to the avoidance of conflict and disclosure guidelines as published on the Ontario Securities Commission website.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm submitting the required number of copies of a document listing current practice opportunities for physicians as per the Alberta rural physician action plan, RPAP, website as at November 3, 2005. This document lists in excess of 82 requests for general practitioners, or GPs, alone as well as numerous other specialists and highlights the plight of all nine health regions as they struggle to attract qualified medical practitioners.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling from my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Dickerson. They have a concern about his appeal with respect to the provincial disaster fund and last year's storm damage. They paid \$21,000 from their own pocket and received only \$6,000 back. They're asking the government to consider their case on the grounds of hardship and special circumstances for the funds to cover their loss.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the required number of copies of a Statistics Canada research paper called The Impact of Tuition Fees on University Access: Evidence from a Large-scale Price Deregulation in Professional Programs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter dated June 18, 2001, to the Minister of Energy, the government of Alberta, and this letter is from the Industrial Association of Southern Alberta, and it is in regard to Enron's apparent PPA offer strategy in the competitive market. This letter, among other things, states that consumers are getting fleeced as a result of the flawed Alberta market for electricity.

The second tabling that I have this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is an e-mail from a Mr. Joseph Segatto dated September 11, 2001, to Robert Hemstock at Enron, and this letter is in regard to the statutory authority of minister or cabinet to split Sundance B PPA through enabling regulation.

The third tabling I have today is from Joseph Segatto to Robert.Hemstock@enron.com, and this is dated October 10, 2001, and the subject of this is the final versions of Sundance unit PPAs and Enron's comments on regulation to amend, 175/2000.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As referenced by the hon. leader of the opposition, there was an information picket this afternoon in front of the outpatient residence at the University hospital. I'm pleased to table five copies of the pamphlet that was distributed by the AUPE urging members of this Legislature to say no to private hospital/hotel facilities and no to private health care in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. One, for the leader of the NDP opposition, an appropriate number of copies of a letter from Nita Stein of Edmonton expressing her opposition to the Aon Consulting contract awarded by Alberta Health and Wellness.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter sent to the Minister of Education from the Canadian Council of the Blind, Alberta division, which expresses concerns about teacher aids, rather than certified teachers, teaching Braille to blind students.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. I'm tabling today a letter with the requisite five copies from a constituent who is a senior and expresses her displeasure at the time it takes for her new dental benefits to not only be approved but also paid.

I'm also tabling a letter with the requisite five copies from a constituent, Mark Busch, who objects to the systematic closing of long-term care facilities in the Chinook health region in favour of assisted living, including the facility that he's called home for 14 years. He expresses his concern for those residents like himself, paraplegic. He's not afraid of change; he's afraid of life-threatening change.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling a letter, with the requisite five copies, signed by 117 of my constituents who live in a lodge and realize that after paying for board and room, keeping the \$265 does not allow them enough money to pay for their personal needs in today's market.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter sent to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development by the Alberta Wilderness Association asking for a deferral of industrial activities until public hearings occur for the area known as the Rumsey natural area.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness, pursuant to the Dental Disciplines Act the Alberta Dental Assistants Association 2003 annual report and the Alberta Dental Assistants Association 2004 annual report, pursuant to the Occupational Therapy Profession Act the Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists 2004-2005 annual report, and pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists 2004 annual

report, College of Dental Technologists of Alberta 2004 annual report, and the College of Chiropractors of Alberta annual review 2004-2005.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on an application for Standing Order 40.

Debate on Supplementary Estimates

Dr. Pannu:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly deplores the government for not providing sufficient time to debate billions of dollars in unbudgeted government spending, thereby undermining the democratic process and the integrity of public finances.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 40 I move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to deal with the following motion of urgent and pressing necessity. It's urgent that this request be approved and the motion debated today as the fall sitting of the Legislature will likely come to an end in the next day or two. There is simply no other time on the Order Paper to have this necessary debate unless we have the debate this afternoon.

Speaking to urgency, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly is being asked to approve \$1.8 billion in unbudgeted appropriations involving 13 different ministries. Yesterday evening the government only allowed a few speakers into the debate during second reading on the supplementary appropriations bill before moving adjournment and then only bringing the bill up when it, under our Standing Orders, automatically comes to a vote. It's urgent that the Assembly debate this motion, which expresses its disapproval of this undermining of the democratic process.

I urge all members to approve this Standing Order 40 request. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Unanimous consent denied]

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 52

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move Bill 52, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) for second reading.

The principle behind a miscellaneous statutes amendment act of necessity is that the matters which comprise the bill are matters that have been discussed with opposition members and are matters which either are in policy a matter of agreement or are of a technical nature and are amendments to various statutes to correct oversights. I will briefly describe the contents of the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act so that members are apprised of the particulars of the four separate acts which are the subject of the amendment.

The first one is the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act. That provision provides for a personal income support benefit for AISH clients who require additional support and have \$3,000 or less in assets. Where the \$3,000 asset limit is exceeded and the minister determines that there is financial hardship, an individual may be eligible for personal income support benefits.

The second relates to the Income and Employment Supports Act. That provides for the Widows' Pension Act to be repealed in 2014 instead of 2006.

The next piece of legislation is the Pharmacy and Drug Act. In this case it deletes a regulation-making power as it overlaps with a similar regulation-making power.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, there is a provision dealing with the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005. This adds an offence for exceeding the maximum speed limit established or proscribed for a highway, section 115(2)(e), back into section 86 of the act. That provision was originally included in section 86 but was inadvertently left out when section 86 was amended in the spring of 2005.

Hon. Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question to be called? No need to conclude?

[Motion carried; Bill 52 read a second time]

Bill 55
Post-secondary Learning
Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 28: Mr. Hancock]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise on second reading debate on Bill 55, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). This was a piece of legislation that was alluded to I guess before the fact a couple of weeks ago when we were in Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 9, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005, when the minister referred to a desire that he had to bring forward an amendment that would deal with the academic council composition makeup for colleges and technical institutes. He referred to it at the time as his hope that he could bring forward some legislation or an amendment in some form like that. It did not fit within the confines of Bill 9, so after some discussion, the minister has brought this forward as a separate bill now, Bill 55, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). It offers, therefore, the opportunity for some debate on this particular amendment, this particular piece of legislation that will amend the Post-secondary Learning Act.

The idea behind this, as the minister has spoken to already, is to give some flexibility to colleges and technical institutes similar to the flexibility that our province's universities already have under section 33, I believe it is, of the Post-secondary Learning Act around the composition of their general faculties councils, which are the rough equivalent at the university level of what an academic council is set to do at the college and technical institute level, and to do that at the college level without necessarily compelling an institution, a college or a technical institute, that is perfectly happy with the model that it has now to have to go out and custom build an academic council above and beyond that.

You know, it's a basic philosophy here. This is something that I can certainly commend because we've talked about this and urged the government to do these sorts of things from time to time, not to fix what ain't broken. Where some institutions, some colleges, perhaps the bulk of colleges in this province are concerned, section 46, which governs the formation of the standard-existing academic councils now, does the trick for most of them.

3:10

There are, though, some which do or might like to tinker with that basic model for purposes that seem to suit them. One example of that might be to pursue accreditation by the AUCC – or recognition, I suppose I should say. Accreditation is not exactly, as the minister knows, the correct word to use here because the AUCC is not an

actual accrediting body. It's kind of a de facto accrediting body in the absence of a de facto body that does that. But AUCC recognizes degrees issued by its member institutions, and institutions which are not members of AUCC cannot be assured that their credentials will automatically be accepted by other institutions, particularly for graduate school applications.

This has become more of an issue, Mr. Speaker, in the last few years as more and more undergraduates have decided upon graduation that, in fact, they do want to pursue graduate studies and build on their baccalaureate degree because for one reason or another they find that the baccalaureate degree in and of itself doesn't get them where they want to go, or it doesn't get them where they want to go now that they've been through four years of undergraduate education.

Now, against that context we have the Post-secondary Learning Act, which established the Campus Alberta Quality Council to advise the minister on program and degree approvals so that other institutions that don't call themselves universities could nevertheless offer baccalaureate degrees in this province. At least one institution has taken on that model and has begun to offer baccalaureate degrees which are approved by the Campus Alberta Quality Council, but at least one other college has held back from doing that.

I don't think it's any secret in this House that that college is Mount Royal College in Calgary, and I don't think it's any secret in this House that Mount Royal ultimately wishes to become a full-fledged university. While Mount Royal very much is desirous of being able to grant degrees, Mount Royal feels very strongly that it needs AUCC accreditation in order for those degrees which it confers upon its students to be portable, transportable, to other AUCC-accredited or recognized member institutions so that a graduate from Mount Royal College with a baccalaureate degree can go on to graduate studies at a Queen's University or a UBC or whatever graduate school that does belong to AUCC should that student wish to do that.

This Bill 55, Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), should give the flexibility to Mount Royal College to pursue AUCC accreditation by custom designing its academic council if it wishes, should provide the flexibility to other colleges and technical institutes to custom design their own academic councils for their own purposes of course in consultation with the minister. As I said a couple of weeks ago, of course the minister is not going to let an academic council that's been designed by a college pursue if the model simply doesn't cut the mustard, if the model stinks.

I find myself in an interesting position right now because, of course, we usually on this side of the House take the position that legislation is better than regulation and that less rather than more power to make regulations and make decisions should be concentrated in the hands of the minister, that consistency is better than flexibility. In this case we have a situation where this particular piece of legislation contains a number of things that normally we would not find particularly palatable or particularly commendable, but I think I understand why the minister has gone about doing it in this case.

So I would support with reservations Bill 55. Normally, we don't like legislative changes that provide the minister with too much power or too much discretion or which move the substance from the legislation into regulation, that can be changed by a minister or Lieutenant Governor in Council without debate of this House. This change does do that, but we are willing to support this because of our support for Mount Royal College in Calgary moving ahead with its governance and programming changes. The problem with postsecondary access across this province generally but especially in Calgary is acute, and allowing a change that would then in turn

allow Mount Royal College or any other college which wishes to take advantage of this to move ahead is I think one piece of the solution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education to conclude the debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 55 read a second time]

Bill 58

Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education for the hon. Minister of Community Development.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Bill 58 for second reading.

Bill 58 is a very modest amendment to the Alberta Centennial Medal Act, that was passed earlier this spring. It just allows for a minor amount of flexibility in the awarding of the centennial medals. As I understand it, the purpose for making this amendment was to allow for protocol purposes, really, with respect to interprovincial exchanges and that sort of thing. The bill is very short. It provides a section that says, "the Minister may nominate other individuals the Minister considers deserving," which is indeed a bit of a catch-all but, nonetheless, an appropriate way to make it possible to deal with the final matters coming out of Alberta's centennial year and the Alberta centennial medal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, what did I just say in this House not two minutes ago about the problem that I have and that we have on this side of the House with this kind of flexibility? You read this bill, and it essentially allows this government or a minister to go off and give a centennial medal to any Tom, Dick, or Harry that he or she should choose. I know that we've been told that this is for protocol purposes, but let's remember that the legislation establishing the Alberta centennial medal, which was "established as an official honour of the Crown in right of Alberta," says that "Canadian citizens who are current or former long-term residents of Alberta are eligible to be awarded the Alberta Centennial Medal." Not too many dignitaries from other provinces or other lands, one or two maybe but not too many, fall into the category of being current or former long-time residents of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier of Alberta or the Minister of Community Development or the Minister of Advanced Education or any other minister of the Crown wishes to give his or her counterpart a lasting memento of Alberta's centennial, let them act now, in the next 33 days, and take that person out for a good Alberta beef dinner. That ought to be enough. If it isn't, give them an Alberta centennial medallion to boot. But these are centennial medals created under, you know, very clear, I think very specific, legislation, created to honour 8,000, give or take, hard-working Albertans, most of whom have given generously, beyond generously, of their time and their efforts and their talents to make their communities, their own communities here in this province, a better place to live and honour that.

For one, I don't think we ought to be handing these things out like, you know, candy from the 7-Eleven to anybody who happens to come here because this is a great place to live, work, and visit. It's

a great place to live and work, it's a great place to visit, but if you're a visitor, you don't qualify for one of these medals.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, is bogus.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

3:20

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to rise briefly to speak on Bill 58. It's our understanding that there's not a great deal to be concerned with with Bill 58 in regard to allowing the centennial medals to be awarded to individuals outside the province of Alberta. My understanding is that this was at least partially precipitated by the desire of Saskatchewan and Alberta to give medals across the border, this being both the centennial for our province and for Saskatchewan as well. So I think that in the spirit of that sort of co-operation we certainly would support this bill.

I, too, have some reservations about not having a limit on the minting of centennial medals, but I think that this is something that the government, I hope, can show some restraint towards because, of course, if something is not considered to be rare or it's given out in haste or is anything that's perceived as being frivolous, then perhaps it lessens the value of the medal in general. But, you know, I think that everyone in this House can agree that these medals have been a tremendous success and have perhaps been the very best part of the centennial celebrations, as far as I can tell, the ceremonies associated with giving out these medals. Then, again, to extend that to some degree to some individuals across our provincial borders shouldn't be such a problem.

I believe that Saskatchewan's Legislature is putting together a similar capacity for them to give out the Saskatchewan medals, so I guess this might be in keeping with that. I'm kind of secretly hoping that maybe Saskatchewan will give me one as well. Then, you know, we'll be able to have more than one medal across the blazer, which would look great at special occasions.

So as I said before, the NDP caucus doesn't have a great deal of problems with Bill 58. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Then shall I call on the hon. Minister of Community Development to close the debate? The hon. minister.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can first of all comment in response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder that in fact Saskatchewan pursuant to its legislation already has the capacity to confer a medal upon a nonresident of the province of Saskatchewan, so that is exactly what we seek to do through Bill 58.

If you look at the Saskatchewan legislation and look at Bill 58, they are mirror images of each other. I think that it has been quite well recognized by members of the Assembly, yourself, Mr. Speaker, and all Albertans that these medals have not been frivolously given out to individuals who are not deserving nor will they be in the future. This is not an invitation for simply another round of nominations. There isn't the time to do that between now and the close of the year. But I can say that in the very best interests of celebrating the centennial and the kind of co-operation that has taken place between the province of Saskatchewan and Alberta, in fact we will do what is appropriate with this bill in terms of conferring a medal upon a significant nonresident of Alberta. This particular example has been about Premier Calvert of Saskatchewan, and it is the intention of the province of Saskatchewan to confer a reciprocal medal upon our Premier.

With that, I wish to call the question and ask the Assembly for

support of Bill 58, being the Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 58 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 52

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Traditionally with miscellaneous statutes, which is Bill 52 before us, there is an agreement with the opposition parties that any statute we're not comfortable with will get pulled and brought forward as an individual bill and that the package of the remaining statutes will go forward without debate. Therefore, I am happy to call the question on Bill 52, miscellaneous statutes.

[The clauses of Bill 52 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 55

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to debate further Bill 55, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), at committee. As I indicated in second reading debate, I'm certainly supportive of this legislation, with reservations, the reservations having to do with, you know, our general feeling on this side of the House that we don't like, as a rule, legislative changes that provide the minister or the cabinet with too much power, too much discretion, too much opportunity to change regulations without legislative debate. This change does have the potential to do that, but I think that in this case, provided that this is done right – provided that this is done right – this is a bill where the potential for benefit for the students in the province of Alberta specifically in this case outweighs the problems that we have normally with changes of this nature.

There is in section 47(1), which this bill would add to the Post-secondary Learning Act, an entire section that allows academic councils to be custom- designed, if you will, by a public college or a technical institute with the written approval of the minister, something that a university already has the ability to do, to craft, with its own general faculties council, which is roughly the university equivalent of an academic council. It provides the

opportunity for flexibility that allows colleges or technical institutions, should they wish, to go off in a direction that they believe will benefit their students over the long haul. I think this is a good thing. I think this is something in this case very much to be encouraged. But again I say: if the minister goes about it the right way. As usual, the devil is in the details or the regulations.

A couple of weeks ago the minister indicated his desire to bring forward this amendment, and that was before it existed as a separate piece of legislation. He referenced the one-size-fits-all academic council structure that is currently in the act under section 46, and I know that the minister will correct me if I'm wrong on this, but my understanding is that section 46 will continue to exist and continue to provide the default template, if you will. It's in place unless a college or a technical institute specifically goes to the minister and says: we want to change that.

3:30

So he recognizes that there is a one-size-fits-all component there, and he's willing to allow that to continue, and that, too, is a good thing. But if we want to build in this kind of flexibility that the minister has talked about, you know, a provision for a board of a college or a technical institute which wants to have a different form of academic council or needs a flexible structure in some other way than is in the act, regulations to give it that flexibility, then we have to be very careful about how those regulations work.

Really, my question to the minister is around those regulations. In introducing second reading debate on Bill 55 yesterday afternoon, he talked about wanting to consult thoroughly with colleges and technical institutes across the province with respect to the design of the regulations which would be put in place in terms of how or when a college or technical institute could move forward to utilize this particular section and ask for a specific design for an academic council for that college or institution. I'm taking it from that – and I know the minister will set me straight if I'm reading into his comments things that aren't there – that there are almost two sets of regulations needed here: a kind of governing regulation to which colleges and technical institutes across the province will be consulted that sort of sets the ground rules for an institution designing its own academic council and then regulation to follow to in effect ratify the academic council that has been designed by the college or technical institute in co-operation with the minister and his department.

What I need to know from the minister is whether the minister is committed here to a series of regulations that absolutely gives colleges and technical institutes, each one as an individual case, the opportunity to design in co-operation and concert with the minister and his officials the academic council that it feels works best for them, or are we moving in section 46 from one one-size-fits-all model to now in section 47(1) through the enabling regulation something that may turn out to be another one-size-fits-all option? If the minister could clarify that, I think I'd be prepared to move ahead from that point.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, clearly what we're trying to establish is: we have under section 46 a template which all institutions fall into. What we're offering to do is to set up a more flexible second option for institutions to come forward and say, "We would like to design our academic council in such a way for such a reason," and as long as it meets all the criteria and doesn't offend any of the sensibilities of the act, then there's no good reason why it shouldn't be.

The concept is that it would be at the behest of the particular institution with the approval of the minister in accordance with the regulations. The regulations, then, would set out the criteria, presumably, under which, first of all, the procedures for doing it, the composition, whether there needs to be any criteria – and I don't know whether there need to be any criteria with respect to the composition; that will be the subject of consultation with the institutions – and the powers and duties. I don't know whether there needs to be any prescription on the powers and duties, but I would assume so, that powers would be first of all delegated from the boards of governors.

The short answer to the question about whether this is a second template or an individually designed model is that I don't know the answer to that until I've fully consulted with the players. I am not about to design the system. I am about to work with them. What I am committed to is that we come up with a design that works. The contemplation here is that an institution would be able to come forward and say, "We have a particular need that we'd like to create around our academic institution," and then the test would be that if it makes sense under the act, if it doesn't offend any of the requirements of the act, we would be able to work with them to go ahead and put that model in place; in other words, a flexibility structure which would allow them to move forward.

Now, I have committed to the system that we would not design those regulations without having a thorough consultation with them. So I can't give the absolute assurance, but I can give this assurance: I will consult with the hon. member with respect to the regulations before I bring them through so that he's fully aware of what we're contemplating and can have input into them. What we're really trying to do is provide that flexibility so that an institution can say, "This is the aspiration we have," and as long as that aspiration fits within the system context, makes sense within the system, and doesn't leave holes, we would be prepared to work with them to move forward and put that in place.

That's what we're trying to achieve here. We have one structure that has worked, that is working for most if not all of the colleges and technical institutes, but there's a need for some flexibility to allow an institution or institutions to design their own. I don't know this as yet, but if it's possible, the ideal would be to be able to set up a structure so that each could come forward and say: here's how we want to differ from the template and design our own model. That would be the ideal. The fallback would be the position, as the hon. member outlined, that it may end up being a second template; in other words, an option. You have an option under 46; you have the second option under 47.1. My preference and purpose is the first, not the second.

As I say, we'll be consulting, and I'll be more than happy to give the hon. member assurance that before I bring something forward, we'll have a thorough discussion with him.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Chairman, I want to extend my thanks to the minister both for that answer and for his undertaking to consult with me as the process develops. I think he's been as clear as he probably can be at this time under the circumstances, given his commitment to consult with the other colleges and technical institutes as well. Certainly, for now, that answer satisfies me.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Given what the minister and the critic are saying – and I understand that, and I support what they're saying – I still always have to be cautious when I see the government

granting authority to itself to make regulations behind closed doors, particularly when we're talking about any institution. In this case it's our postsecondary institutions, but it could be any other institution. I must always put on the record my concern about that.

I appreciate hearing that the minister is willing to share that, but I think we always need to be very careful to make sure that this is a democratic process, that it's as accessible as possible. In Alberta I think I need to put on the record that it is not in any way benefiting the private sector over the public sector or disproportionately disadvantaging the public sector, in this case the public postsecondary education sector.

So thanks for the opportunity to get that on the record.

Mr. Hancock: I'll just briefly respond to that. This has no bearing whatsoever on private. This is entirely publicly governed institutions. The clear wording of the section, I believe, makes it clear that it's something that's done because "a public college or technical institute may, with the written approval." In other words, it's at their behest, not something that the minister does. It doesn't say: the minister can. It says: they can with the approval of the minister and in accordance with the regulations.

So the current situation is that under section 46 this one would make some flexibility so that a college could come forward in accordance with the regulations and ask for a change. It's nothing that we would impose on them. It would be providing the flexibility. So I think I can assuage the member's concerns.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I won't take a great deal of time. I understand the purpose of Bill 55, and I know that it's supposedly a work in progress, but I believe it's still somewhat a questionable solution to a very real problem. As I recollect, during the debate on Bill 43, I believe it was, a number of problems were identified including the one that we're attempting to deal with here, the one-size-fits-all approach to the establishment of academic councils.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but the minister seems to be saying that this is sort of a temporary approach, that we're dealing with this problem. I guess that to remove the legislative requirements entirely with only the written consent of the minister required and then give the power to cabinet to determine the composition of academic council seems to me to be part of Bill 55. Correct me if I'm wrong. I'm certainly quite prepared to be wrong if that's the case.

It seems to me that we're taking a provision from legislation where it's publicly debated in an open forum and giving more power than I think we might want to the minister and the cabinet. Ministers change. I know this minister would never do anything inappropriate, but ministers do change. It does show, though, the problem that I think we're trying to deal with with the one size fits all with the many different institutions that we have.

3:40

I note the minister looks a little baffled. Maybe I am wrong. I'm sure he'll straighten me out. The one specific question: has the minister considered adding schedules to the Post-secondary Learning Act with the institutions, sort of specific provisions, as an alternative to taking the composition of academic councils out of legislation and putting them in regulations so that it's a little more, you know, above board and open and transparent? I wondered if that has been considered.

Mr. Speaker, I think that I understand the reason for Bill 55. I guess that our hesitation on the opposite side is that it seems to be,

you know, keeping it under the control of the minister and the government. There seems to me to be, perhaps, better ways to do it. Maybe not. I'd be interested in the minister's comments.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I want to be clear about this. Section 46 is the template which sets what the composition is of academic councils for colleges and technical institutes. So it's clear. The minister can't change that. We can't change it unilaterally. We can't change it in any way. It's in the act. To change that, we would have to come back by legislation.

What 47 does is suggest that we would then have the ability after consultation, yes, to make regulations but not regulations that allow the minister to make individual determinations with respect to colleges or technical institutes but to set up a framework after consultation to say what's permissible in the setting up of an academic council. Then it would be at the behest of an individual college or technical institute to design their academic council within the framework and then come forward and request it.

Under 47.1(1) it puts the onus on the public college or technical institute to initiate the process. So it's not that the minister is going to have additional power to change academic councils in any way. What we would do after consultation with the system is say: okay, here are the parameters under which colleges and technical institutes might design their own if they wanted to. Then if they wanted to, they would bring forward their design within the context of the regulations for approval. If the minister agreed that their design fit the parameters and was in the interest of the system as well as in the interest of the institution, then you could approve it.

In this circumstance it's not creating a regulation that's sort of a *carte blanche* governing authority, as the opposition normally is opposed to, but rather the ability to create a framework within which the colleges and institutions, which are board governed, could come forward and say: we would desire this kind of flexibility. I hope that deals with the member's concerns.

Mr. Martin: Just a follow-up, if I may, Mr. Chair. It comes back to the last question. I understand what the minister is saying, that within the framework of 46 the minister under regulations can take an individual, say it's NAIT or whatever, and if they have a proposal, he can come in and make sure that it does follow the guidelines in 46(1). I believe that's what the minister is saying. I guess the question I'd come back with is: would it not be, again, more transparent if we could lay out schedules to the Post-secondary Learning Act so that there are rough guidelines that all institutions understand so we don't have to go through that process? Has some thought been put into that, or is the minister saying that there are too many permutations and combinations, that that is impossible? It seems to me that if we could do that, it would be a better way to proceed because, you know, everybody can see it. I'd be interested in his comments on that.

Mr. Hancock: The "too many permutations and combinations" comment would prevail.

Mr. Martin: Okay.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 55?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 55 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's carried.

Bill 58

Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. [interjection] I'm looking forward to the Minister of Economic Development's contribution to this.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in Committee of the Whole to Bill 58, the Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005. On the face of this it appears to be a fairly innocent and innocuous expansion to the centennial medal program that was instituted by the Minister of Community Development. My issue with this is that it gives a huge expansion without any reason for it. As we were brought to understand, there was a restricted number of medals and medallions that were made available for very specific purposes during this centennial year. [interjection] I see that Drayton Valley-Calmar is yipping off as usual. I'll be looking for his contribution to this.

An Hon. Member: He has a contribution?

Ms Blakeman: Well, I'm being kind in calling it a contribution, but others disagree with me.

The point to all of this is that what's being asked for here is a wide-open *carte blanche* to mint as many medals as he wants to without giving us any reason for it. Our understanding was that they wanted there to be an opportunity to do reciprocal medal presentations if we found ourselves in a position. For example, Saskatchewan is also celebrating a 100th birthday, and if we had their Premier or cabinet ministers offering a presentation of medals to our cabinet ministers or our Premier, we would like to be in a position to reciprocate. Fine. I don't think we have any problem with that, but the amending legislation should be tight enough to specify that, and that's not what we're seeing in front of us here.

This is essentially allowing the minister to nominate any other individual and then to approve his own nominations. We think that that's just not staying with the spirit of what we were told these medal presentations were supposed to be about. I understood that they were to be for people who were from Alberta and had long-standing contributions to Alberta. So I can see making an exception as a courtesy to other elected officials in other provinces or federally, but to open it wide and say that you can nominate as many people and produce as many medals and give them away I just think puts it open for abuse, and it doesn't put any controls on it. I don't like seeing that, so I'm speaking against the bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Chairman, I can assure you and members of this Assembly that the process by which medals are recognized pursuant to Rideau Hall's order of precedence has quite specific requirements with respect to how medals may be conferred. This is not done as a frivolous matter by anyone, and I should point out to opposition members who choose to speak against this bill that the government placed a great deal of responsibility in the hands of MLAs

themselves to exercise good judgment in the people that they nominated for these medals.

I should say, Mr. Chairman, that there should be the reciprocal kind of respect shown to government when government says that it also, within the spirit and within the parameters under which medals are given, should be conferred the same respect as we have given to private members of this Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, it's my pleasure to move this bill at the committee stage.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you. We'll show great spirit and generosity. I understand that the proposal was because Saskatchewan and Alberta – that was the reason we were told back a while ago – could do a sort of co-operative venture across the way. Again, I have no problems with that.

Then maybe without being cynical about it, I'll ask the minister because it doesn't give us an idea of what sort of numbers we're looking at and what other purpose there would be: are we looking at the end at 500 more medals or what? I could see that maybe Premier Klein wants to give one to Premier Calvert. Maybe the cabinet ministers want to exchange, but there's no idea here. It's our job not to be totally cynical all the time, but with a bill like this it could be: "Gee, we can hand out 10,000 more medals; there are a few PCers that don't have them." I doubt that that's the point of the bill.

At least, give us some idea of what we are looking at here in terms of expense and numbers and that sort of thing. That would help us.

3:50

Mr. Mar: Mr. Chairman, in response to this hon. member's good question, I can say that, to the best of my recollection, in the order of precedence, the honours system in Ottawa, we cannot confer more than 9,000 in total. I can further advise that there simply isn't the time to confer a thousand more medals on anyone.

At this point what's contemplated is one. Mr. Chairman, there may be circumstances where it may be more than one, but this amendment is simply to reciprocate the honour that the province of Saskatchewan wishes to confer upon our Premier. So I can honestly tell the member that what's contemplated now is one. There may be other exceptional circumstances, but at this point the answer to his question is one.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 58, the Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 58 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 43
Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes
Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Yes. I think I'm the last speaker in Committee of the Whole consideration of Bill 43 on the rebate. I'm not going to say very much at all. I just want to make a moral statement. I was in a discussion with a group at a church in the city of Edmonton, and the majority – in fact, I think it was unanimous – of people there were against the rebate for the simple reason that giving \$400 to every person in Alberta does not recognize the inequality that exists in our province. So if the moral issue is one of trying to value equality by giving the same amount of money to every person, that flies in the face of the fact of inequality because \$400, of course, means nothing to someone with wealth. To someone who is poor, of course, it means a great deal.

But as one woman said to me, a woman who is on AISH – she receives about \$950 a month – she would gladly receive the \$400 cheque and the next one and the next one and the next one because, really, what this bill is overlooking is the fact that it's our basic programs that need support, the basic programs that would deal with people who are living in poverty. They need support on a continuous basis.

I came across this quote in an article reviewing the history of the welfare system, and I think it's very important.

There is a difference between the reasonable expectation of receiving a service and a possibly random act of mercy. The certainty of being entitled to the equal distribution of basic services and options is a valuable achievement.

I think that what's really important in our society if we're going to deal with the issues of poverty is that we have basic services that are reliable, that are there on a continuous basis. This \$400 gift is not the granting of a service or a program. It is more like a random act of mercy. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I would say that it's just a random act. It's just an act without rationale. It's an arbitrary act. There's no plan, no ongoing plan. Alaska has had a plan for many, many years of giving out dividend cheques every year. This is just a random act.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that what we need is a rationale, a plan for the long-term future, a plan in which we would take a public good – the surplus is a public good. It belongs to the people of Alberta, to be sure, but we need to use that public good for the common good and to invest it in programs and basic services and invest it in the long-term future. If there is a moral issue here, I think the moral issue is one of intergenerational equity because what we're doing is we're taking the surplus from the resources, from oil and gas, and we're spending it now instead of investing it for the long-term future.

So, Mr. Chairman, those are just a couple of the ethical questions that I wanted to raise. I think the debate has been a good one. Those are my comments. Let's get on with getting it out of Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Martin: Well, it will get out. I won't go on very long. [some applause] Thank you. Thank you. I love it when I get applause in this place.

The point that I want to make – I won't talk about the priorities of where the money should go in terms of social programs and that, but I want to come back to a debate that we had here. I see that the Minister of Economic Development is here. If we believe that part of this money should be given to people, especially people of middle or lower income, that they need some sort of tax break – and that was, I think, the argument that was given – then it seems to me that we have to move in much more of a permanent way in terms of a tax reduction that actually helps the people that we're talking about.

Nobody is going to turn down the \$400. Some of those people need it. As a result, as I said at the time, we're not going to vote

against this particular bill, but I come back and say again that if we want to get money to those people, it can't be on a hit-and-miss basis because once we start this – and I use the example of Alaska with the dividends – people demand sort of the same money every year. They get used to having that. And as their dividend fund keeps going down, people are still demanding. That's the problem you run into.

So I don't know what the plans are in the future. Are we going to have rebate 2 next year, rebate 3 the following year? That's, I think, a serious problem that we have to deal with because, again, I would argue that the oil industry in downtown Calgary doesn't need the \$400. Some people do. If that's the case, then, if we want to give some sort of more permanent taxation room, the easiest way is to raise the exemption at the lower level and, especially, get rid of medicare premiums, which are a regressive tax. Now, I know that costs money over the long haul, but the reality is, I think, that we could afford it. That would be the best taxation relief, and people struggling and middle-income and lower income families could count on that money coming in every year. So here we have \$400 this year. Is it going to be there next year? People will gladly take it. So I think that's the point.

The other debate is: well, this is the best way to spend the money in social programs and the rest of it. It shouldn't be an either/or sort of situation, as far as I'm concerned. That's the point that I want to make because it seems to us that it wasn't well thought out. It came all of a sudden out of the blue. We could have predicted back with the budget a while ago that we were going to have a big surplus because we were told \$2 billion, and then it was \$5 billion and then \$8 billion, you know, within a week or so. I'd like to know where the government is going in the next year. Is it going to be, as I say, rebate 2? Rebate 3? If we get into that, it becomes a very difficult thing to sustain if our oil and gas revenues go down.

I think a much better way, as I said – I just want to say it again – would have been to raise the exemptions a little bit and to get rid of medicare premiums, not for private insurance but to give people a little more money in their pockets, the people that actually need the money. They could look at that in a more permanent way. I wish the government would have gone in that direction. I'll certainly be looking forward to the spring budget to see where we're going with all of this.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The clauses of Bill 43 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

4:00

Bill 44

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions or amendments in regard to this bill? The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, this bill is simply setting up the residential tenancy dispute resolution service. Due to the leniency of the chair in second reading there were a lot of questions asked and I tried to answer them. I did miss a couple, so I will just briefly touch on those.

One was from the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. He commented that tenant/landlord conflicts are rarely simple and frequently involve complex issues relating to things like child welfare, health, disability, language barriers, et cetera. Certainly, that's true. Those do occur. What would happen, then, is that the hearing officer would identify that there are things that are outside the scope of the Residential Tenancies Act and therefore would refer it to the court.

Another question that was asked that I didn't cover. The hon. member asked about whether it was Provincial Court or Court of Queen's Bench. The type that we just referred to would be going to Provincial Court. The only time that it wouldn't be going to Provincial Court would be where there was a claim that amounted to over \$25,000, which therefore would go to Court of Queen's Bench. There could be a claim that maybe was \$30,000 or \$40,000, and one of the things that we would be watching for was to make sure that those weren't split into two claims and therefore avoid going to Court of Queen's Bench. But otherwise they would go to the Provincial Court.

I missed one question as well from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. Question 2: what does the minister anticipate would be the fee for these mediators? The fact is that the mediators would be hired through the public service and therefore would be paid on a salary basis depending on a range that they would qualify for.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that that covers all the questions that were asked in second reading.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Government Services for initially sharing the amendment with us and for trying today to reply to some of the concerns and questions that we raised in earlier debate.

I would thus move that all hon. members of this Assembly accept the amendments, and I'm hoping to co-operate with the government side on future projects. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yeah. Just very quickly, Mr. Chairman. I believe the minister said – and correct me, because it's been a while and I haven't had a chance to look at the bill – that this is a pilot project in Edmonton and that it would run for a year and see where it goes. I certainly support the thrust of this bill. Any time we can keep these disputes out of the courts, I think, everybody is better served.

I know that the city of Edmonton, in particular, has signalled its intention that it wants to shut down its Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board. For a lot of the issues that they deal with, the laws are province-wide. I take it that the purpose of trying this in Edmonton would be to see if we could have a province-wide board that would do some of the same things. Is that the goal ultimately, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Lund: Mr. Chairman, that's absolutely true. The difference between what we're setting up here and the committee that the city has is that they are a mediation whereas we're setting up something that is more formal, quasi-judicial. It's still not a court, but it has more power to enforce the Residential Tenancies Act. That would be the purpose of it. It is for one year, and we will be evaluating it as we go. If, in fact, it turns out that it works – and we think it will – then we would be expanding it to across the province because currently there is in excess of 5,000 of these disputes in the province.

Edmonton happens to have about 2,100 of them, so I thought it was an excellent place to try the pilot.

[The clauses of Bill 44 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 53
Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and open remarks on Bill 53. Just briefly, I'd like to respond to two comments by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore that arose in second reading.

First of all, the Member for Edmonton-Decore was concerned about how the Surface Rights Board would handle payments to landowners. I'm pleased to inform him that the Surface Rights Board would just use the existing process, the same principles of compensation as with any other right-of-entry applications to cover the same loss provisions.

Also, the member asked about consultations. I'm pleased to inform him that the Alberta Environment Oil and Gas Reclamation and Remediation Advisory Committee was consulted. This committee is made up of stakeholder representatives: landowners, the municipal and provincial governments, and nongovernment organizations. In fact, this bill arose out of a recommendation of that committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise today on behalf of my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Decore to conclude debate on Bill 53. In reviewing it, I noticed that it's not a malicious bill. It's useful. It offers a solution for those situations where the agency that was looking after the site has to regain access to that site to offer some cleaning up or to fix or remedy a problem or an environmental situation that needs attention. I don't think we're necessarily opposed to it, as was voiced by my hon. colleague.

I thank the sponsor of the bill, the hon. Member for Peace River, for his answers in this stage of debate. We will continue to look forward to co-operation on surface rights issues because it is on people's minds, in the rural setting particularly, because there is an apparent conflict between the rights of the landowner and the rights of the operator, and we need to achieve a happy medium that recognizes and appreciates and respects the rights and also the duties of both.

In doing so, I thank him again, and I move that we all accept this amendment. Thank you.

4:10

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Yeah. Just a question. This seems to be sort of what we call no-brainer legislation, that if there's reclamation, we have to

do it. It seems to me that it would always be to the benefit of a producer, if they had land that needed to be reclaimed, to have this done. I was sort of curious as to why we needed this legislation. Has this been a serious problem in the past, where the landowner refuses, even though there's environmental damage and the rest of it? Or is this just that we're being proactive, that we need this? I want to understand why we're having this legislation brought forward at this time.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chairman, to the best of my knowledge there are no situations presently where this has occurred. I think it's more of a proactive move recommended by, as I said, the stakeholder advisory committee

[The clauses of Bill 53 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 54
Alberta Centennial Education
Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with regard to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just very briefly, to put on the record. We on this side of the House with the Official Opposition did have problems with the Alberta centennial education savings plan when it first came out specifically because of the restrictions on eligibility, that this amending bill takes care of. Before Bill 54 came through, only children born in or after the centennial year were eligible for the centennial education savings plan. The amendment act enables students born before centennial year 2005 to be eligible for the second element of the grant program, the supplemental grants of \$100 provided to parents with RESPs, provided the parents also match this contribution. This is exactly what should have been done from the get-go. Better late than never. We're pleased to support it.

[The clauses of Bill 54 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 56
Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: Any comments, questions, or amendments in regard to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I know that some of my colleagues have spoken to this during second reading. It appears that what's being contemplated here is primarily

housekeeping, but it does include a two-year limit of liability for the former shareholder of an unlimited liability corporation. It's currently unlimited and joint and several, and this is proposing that it would limit the liability of the former shareholders to two years after the former shareholder ceases to be a shareholder. Boy, nothing is ever simple in business terms, eh?

We're willing to support this although we have some cautions. I believe that we had put our questions on the record during second, but our concerns were around whether this limitation would free the former shareholders who may have been involved in, for example, unethical activities. Does it allow them to escape responsibility for their actions? If that did happen, then who would be responsible or who could be held responsible for it?

As I said, it's primarily housekeeping. We just wanted to make sure that this wasn't allowing any additional wiggle room. Certainly, I think those in the private sector should be held to a very high standard of behaviour, and I would expect that this bill would be upholding that.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I could respond to some of the concerns that have been raised in second reading regarding the issue, primarily, of the obligations of former shareholders of unlimited liability corporations following dissolution of those corporations.

I believe that the concern stems around the possible shortening, as it's perceived, of the liability period for persons who are in breach of some ethics or make some transgressions during the course of their tenure as a shareholder and may no longer be with the corporation. If you read the existing section 15.7, it refers to "the liability of shareholders for obligations of the unlimited liability corporation." There is no exculpation of liability for shareholders for personal wrongdoings, but rather after two years from the period of dissolution there would no longer be liability for the obligations of the corporate entity itself.

I don't think that there's anything there that would remove the present limitations in the Limitations Act of Alberta, which presently provides for two years from the date of discovery of some wrongdoing and a 10-year ultimate limitation period. So I believe that those would continue to apply to someone who had committed a transgression while a shareholder of the unlimited liability corporation. It's only the obligations of the corporation that are being referred to here. I think that was the intention of the legislation as it was originally drafted. Unfortunately, the drafting did not make it clear.

I'd just point out also that the Business Corporations Act presently provides such provisions for a two-year period of limitation after the dissolution of the corporation for liability.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise today to participate at this stage of debate in discussing Bill 56, Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). Of course, this is the second time this year that we revisit this statute, talking about the unlimited liability corporations and so forth. As was voiced by my hon. colleagues from both Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-Centre, we are in support of this bill. We like the idea that it is streamlining this legislation with others like it in Canada and that it clarifies the language and clarifies the clauses of the act to closely follow and mimic other jurisdictions.

I appreciate the opportunity that I had to have met with the hon. minister initially when this bill was part of the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act and the other opportunities I had with the hon. sponsor of the bill from Calgary-Nose Hill because he definitely has a lot of legal experience and he can understand the language and the convolutions of these clauses and subclauses and sections and all the legal mumbo-jumbo, basically.

4:20

However, the question that was answered today was about the two-year limit. When we met, we raised the issue that maybe personal culpability, as it was referred to, and being liable as a shareholder of a corporation for things that are beyond the corporation's actions, being personally liable criminally or financially, was not discussed here. However, it is not a big enough concern for us to stall the progress of this bill, so with that, I would invite all hon. members to support it.

I thank you for this opportunity.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I rise this afternoon in regard to Bill 56 to express my gratitude to the hon. member for his diligence in providing answers to the questions that we had from second reading last evening.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 56 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 57 Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments regarding the bill?

Mr. Hancock: Very briefly, Mr. Chairman. There were a number of issues raised last night in debate on second reading. I just wanted to assure the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning that there's no intention whatsoever to denigrate any trades. In fact, it's been my effort to promote trade training and trade certification. This bill simply is intended to correct an error. If there are other issues that we need to deal with with respect to trade certification, trade training, and valuing trades, I'd invite the hon. member to come and sit with me at some point, and we can discuss those and determine how we can do more to ensure that both compulsory trades and other trades are valued and to allay any fears of compartmentalizing or taking apart the trades into individual skills. I'd be more than happy to have that discussion with him. This bill is not about that, and I encourage support.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to rise to speak on Bill 57, and I'm heartened by the minister's statements. I will take him up on that, and I look forward to speaking about the problems that many tradesmen have related to me about optional

certification, perhaps some of the difficulties of enforcement, and some of the other things.

I understand that we are looking to move quickly through the debates here today. I did touch on a number of things last night in second reading.

That's all I have to say today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[The clauses of Bill 57 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 51
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act,
2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to participate in this discussion on Bill 51, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2), in Committee of the Whole. I would start off by saying that while I realize and appreciate the need to allocate the unbudgeted surplus revenues to programs and services for Albertans, I must repeat my concerns which I voiced back in the spring when we discussed the initial supplementary supply figures for this year.

Many speakers before me in second reading and in committee have asked the same question: why the rush? Why is this government cramming things through when the decisions we reach here today are this significant? Why not slow down a little and examine all our options so the amounts we earmarked or spent are allocated wisely and appropriately?

Mr. Chairman, supplementary supply this time around is roughly \$1.8 billion. A whopping six hours of debate was allocated for this meagre sum of money: \$1.8 billion that was discussed in six hours.

Ms Blakeman: Wow. How much is that a minute?

Mr. Elsalhy: It roughly translates into about \$5 million per minute. I think this is not only ridiculous, it should not be happening.

The Conservative government has basically scheduled 17 minutes per department for this debate. The 17 minutes were not even guaranteed for each department, so some departments received a little longer; some departments received no debate whatsoever. Democracy is not well in this province.

What is happening during the fall sitting of the Legislature is a symptom of a larger problem. Major decisions are being made behind closed doors, and funding is announced after the fact. Things are spent first, and then we bring them to the Legislature to talk about them in retrospect. Things are done without public consultation and without planning. The MLAs are expected and are entrusted to ask questions of the government, especially on financial issues, but their authority and their mandate is undermined.

A few misguided Conservative MLAs say that there is no need for the opposition to question the government decisions and that all is fine. The Premier himself once was quoted as saying that decisions pertaining to how the surplus is spent are none of the opposition's business. This is simply not acceptable.

Their federal Conservative cousins, for example, have suggested that Parliament set up an independent advisory council to advise the federal government and Parliament on how to allocate unbudgeted surplus revenues. What a novel idea. But I don't see the local Conservatives willing to relinquish the power or the control that they hold to an independent, arms-length, impartial, and objective organization. No. They want to keep it all, so they can be Santa when they please or Scrooge when they so decide.

Anyway, today I'm going to focus on things which I was disturbed to find missing from this supplementary supply, particularly as pertains to Health and Wellness. The Alberta Liberal plan for health care includes different initiatives, which can be summarized in the following brief points. One, maintaining and strengthening our public health care system by doing things like establishing an independent health auditor, restoring accountability by going back to having elected regional health authorities, and modifying the fiscal year for those health authorities so that they can plan their business and approve it before the provincial budget comes down.

Two, ensuring better access to care and reducing waiting times for medical treatments and surgeries. A subset of this would be to aggressively recruit and train sufficient numbers of physicians and other health professionals and ensure that there are enough residency training spots. Here an Alberta Liberal government would re-examine the roles and scope of practice of all health care professionals . . .

An Hon. Member: What about pharmacists?

Mr. Elsalhy: And other health care professionals including pharmacists, yes. Evaluating alternative and innovative methods of payment for doctors, including services like palliative care and midwifery as core health services, and offering full recognition and top-notch training to our nurse practitioners.

Three, using tobacco tax revenue to establish a community wellness fund to support wellness and positive lifestyle initiatives and expand family and community support services, FCSS, to build stronger, healthier communities from the ground up.

4:30

None of these ideas were considered when all this money was spent. Roughly \$1.4 billion was allocated to this ministry alone, and perhaps rightly so. We do need investing in our health care system. Health is on everyone's mind. The system needs to be better, to be improved, and to be strengthened and better managed. Pouring in more money is not the solution, of course, especially when done with no plan whatsoever just to please a certain voter group. Take, for example, the two hospitals for Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park. For so long neither community was listened to. Now all of a sudden they both are. Where is the co-ordination and planning here? This is only one example, Mr. Chair.

This government has to shift its thinking framework from simple brick-and-mortar spending to the more comprehensive realm of investing in people to operate and run these empty shells. We do not need any more ghost houses. We do not want history to repeat itself, where in a few years this government will come around and close wards, or entire hospitals for that matter, pretending to be streamlining service or cutting costs.

My point is simply: what is this government doing to address the shortage of practitioners like I mentioned: physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other front-line health care workers? All nine health regions are screaming for more practitioners, but particularly – this is of note – in rural Alberta. There is nothing in this

supplementary supply bill to try to alleviate this problem, which is both chronic and acute.

Earlier today I tabled information showing at least 82 requests for general practitioners from the Alberta rural physician action plan website. The Alberta Medical Association itself, as illustrated in their physician placement directory, opportunities for employment under their general practice list, is listing six requests for family physicians for the Aspen health region, for example, four for the David Thompson health region, nine for the Calgary health region, and nine for the Capital health region, and this is only their latest bulletin.

People all over this province, particularly new arrivals to any particular town or city, are increasingly having difficulty seeing a family physician. The seemingly standard answer that they receive now is: "Sorry. The doctor cannot see you." The poor patient then asks: "Okay. Can you tell me who would? Where should I go?" In turn he or she is told to check a website for who may be seeing or accepting new patients. The patient goes down the list on that website only to find out that these physicians have various restrictions and wait times, et cetera. Some physicians will only see pregnant mothers. Some physicians will only see children. Some physicians will only see you if you have a life-threatening condition. Winning with a scratch-and-win ticket has better odds than turning up an available doctor, as I was once told.

Older physicians are retiring, we're not graduating enough new grads, and even of those who graduate, a considerable number choose to leave for other Canadian jurisdictions or even south of the border.

Medical school tuition is really costly in this province, and it is only going to get worse as time goes, especially if the Minister of Advanced Education gets his way with deregulating postsecondary education.

We're also complaining about restrictions and unnecessary hurdles put in the path of international medical graduates, referred to as IMGs. The hoops they go through are unreal and unnecessary. Instead of practising in their much-needed fields, they drive taxis, clean toilets, or pump gas at gas stations. Why aren't we accelerating their equivalency accreditation? Why is this government stalling? The federal government some years back did establish a task force to examine ways of removing obstacles in the accreditation process. What has this provincial government done to match that?

At a recent meeting in Cold Lake between the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation and the local chamber of commerce the hon. minister explained why Alberta has a shortage of physicians. He indicated that when he graduated from medical school quite a few years back and opened his first practice in Cold Lake in 1983, there were 125 graduating physicians in Edmonton and another 95 in Calgary. He said that part of the problem now is that this number is going down. He also indicated that universities in this province do not have the physical space to accommodate more medical students, and even so, those medical schools do not prepare doctors for rural communities.

Another reason that he quoted was the change in demographics. Now we have more physicians who are females, and some of them might not want to practise full time or might find it less desirable to practise in the rural setting. He also went on to say, and I quote: I'm still of the belief that if you were brought up in rural Alberta, you will return to rural Alberta. But the statistics do not bear that out.

So, again, what are we doing to attract and retain top-notch practitioners in the rural setting? What can we do to alleviate that pressure that is faced by our small towns and cities?

In a recent study conducted by researchers at a western Canadian

university, it was confirmed that far more medical students are choosing specialty medicine over family practice, and the author of this study, a Dr. Fraser Brenneis, indicated that in his opinion there were many factors or reasons, one of which was, again, the rising tuition and debt that the students incur as they're going through their postsecondary education. They graduate – yes, physicians make a decent living – but their hands are tied. They're wearing cement boots, and you're just asking them to service that debt for many years to come.

Another reason that was quoted is the type of relationship students have with their patients. Again, this is an area where some much-needed help and much-needed life support from the province has to come in to allow more physicians to practise in the rural setting and perhaps also nurse practitioners and pharmacists, that are now getting more prescribing rights, and so on.

To summarize, the plight of both urban and rural Alberta, their needs and their desire to have qualified physicians and competent front-line health care workers, is real, and it is here. There is nothing in this supplementary supply that even tried to address this. I don't discredit and I don't disqualify and I don't argue with the need for acute-care beds, and I don't argue with the need for a hospital in Calgary. I don't argue with the need for a hospital in either Fort Saskatchewan or Sherwood Park but not both. Really, we have to look at the people. It's not only bricks and mortar. It's the people who run these services and run these facilities who we should be focusing on.

With this, I just wanted to express my surprise and my frustration that \$1.4 billion did not even try to address the chronic shortage of practitioners that we have in this province, that is now becoming more acute and more real and more scary. With that, I look forward to hearing more debate.

Thank you, sir.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Chairman.

Ms Pastoor: Chairman. I'm sorry. Well, I had two voices. I wasn't sure which was which.

I actually have some really pretty straightforward questions on Seniors and Community Supports. I'm certainly delighted with the dollars that have been put forward, but a lot of this is towards the bricks and mortar, which are more than necessary in this province.

One of the questions I would have is that there appears to be a discrepancy between the two announcements. One came out of the department, and one came out of the Premier's office. What came out of the department was \$109 million, and what came out of the Premier's office was \$140 million. So there's a discrepancy there that I'm not sure that I understand.

Another thing. With the \$50 million that had been previously announced for rural affordable supportive living, they speak of a 50-50 split, with the other 50 being private or the voluntary sector. So my question on that would be: are these going to be P3s, and is there any expectation that the municipalities or that the health regions would be included in that other 50 per cent? What would be the eligibility criteria to build these, either supportive living, the urban affordable housing, and the rural affordable housing? What criteria are you going to use as to who is actually going to provide the building?

4:40

Will the minister require that all of the homes outline in unambiguous terms who is responsible for the cost and delivery of the services? That really has two or three expansions on it. Who would be responsible for the services, the actual delivery of the building, but, then, also the services that could well be divided into that building, which would be the housing part of it; i.e., housecleaning and all those sort of things?

Then we go out, actually, out of this department and into the next one, which of course would be the care. Would the minister create a website where all the facilities are required to fully disclose their staffing, levels of service, programs, and all the related costs and fees? I believe that would be very fair to anyone who is under a crisis. Unfortunately, many people who are moving into these sorts of facilities, particularly the elderly elderly, are usually in a crisis to find some place to live. I think it's only fair that if they move into someplace, they understand fully what they are paying for and what they can expect to get.

The other part about the supportive living is that it does cover many, many different levels, and I'm more than aware that there will be standards and hopefully very, very clear definitions coming down by the end of the year relating to, really, what supportive living means. Is it lodges or enhanced lodges, et cetera, et cetera, in that whole continuum of conversation? What I would like to know is if by expanding what we call supportive living, is it going to be a replacement for long-term care because residents then cover more of their costs? How many supportive living homes currently exist in Alberta? Again, that may be, in fairness, difficult to actually answer because supportive living can be about five different kinds of definitions. So I appreciate that that will probably be difficult to answer.

How many designated assisted living are going to be built? Again the same problem: what is designated living? Does it fall under supportive living, or is it supportive living? But my question on that one would be: how many of those, meaning any kind of a definition for those buildings, are being used to replace long-term care facilities?

In the administration the joint agreement between Canada and Alberta says that the program, the affordable housing program, would be administered by Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, and it says that the department is responsible for the selection of affordable housing projects. My question on those would be: what is the criteria that you'd be using on who would be bringing them forward? Who would be on that committee that would choose the affordable housing projects? How will the public at large be represented on that group? Also, how would families be represented on that selection committee?

Again on the joint Canada/Alberta affordable housing program, they're saying that the federal assistance is 50 per cent of the capital costs to a maximum of \$75,000 a unit, which I believe has been raised. Now, I'm not sure what the definition of a unit is because \$75,000 for a studio apartment seems like a tremendous amount of money. So I'm not sure if that is speaking about a \$75,000 door, which then includes the unit, or just what that unit definition would be. Who would actually determine what that definition is?

I think that, Mr. Chairman, pretty much covers my questions. I just wanted them to be pretty straightforward and direct, and I certainly look forward to the answers. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, along with our hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung want to express my concern

about the lack of time for debate of such a serious amount of money, \$1.8 billion. Six hours of debate is not enough. It equals \$300 million an hour. Every minute \$5 million will be debated.

In my previous job working in a church, we had a budget of about less than half a million, on which we spent hours looking at every line in the budget, being responsible because in a church it's money that people have voluntarily given. Here in the province money that comes from people through taxation – we're considering so much money and not enough debate. One word that I carry over from my previous career is the word "stewardship." You know, our responsibility as members of the Legislature is to act as good stewards of the wonderful resources that we have in this province. It doesn't seem to me to be an act of responsible stewardship to spend such little time debating such serious issues.

I want to make some comments about the Solicitor General and Public Security supplementary estimates. The Solicitor General's department's request for additional money is to the amount of "\$7,392,000 for additional operating costs primarily resulting from staff salary settlements in 2005-06." If there had been time for debate, I could have asked the Solicitor General a number of questions about what these numbers actually mean. Going through the list, there are a number of additional funds being asked for for different areas; for example, an additional \$162,000 for strategic services, another \$20,000 and \$47,000 for the minister's office and the deputy minister's office, \$112,000 for information management, \$143,000 under the security services branch for protection services. Security operations asked for an additional \$688,000. Adult remand and correctional centres asked for an additional \$4,040,000.

It's not clear to me whether this is all having to do with increases in salaries or other items. There's no breakdown, and I don't know how to get an answer to that. The young offender centres, for example: an additional \$868,000. Under community corrections another \$783,000. In terms of community corrections I'm very interested in the support to youth justice committees because I think that they are underfunded, and I don't know whether this money goes at all to youth justice committees. If it's all to salary increases, I don't understand why that couldn't have been in the original budget. What kind of planning is involved here when this has to be added for salary increases? Don't we know when those increases are going to come?

What is not in here is more serious. I have been asking questions in the House about the spending support, financial support for policing in Alberta. I have mentioned a number of times in questions to the Solicitor General that I think the funding for policing in Alberta is too little. We're falling behind other provinces. We're not keeping up with the kind of policing that we need.

Many of us in our constituencies work closely with community groups that are concerned about crime in our community. In my own constituency there's a crime council in one area of the constituency. There's a caring and safe community group in another area. These committees work with the police, and we're very impressed by the willingness of the police to work in our communities with people to discuss how to deal with increasing crime in many neighbourhoods. It becomes clear that many people feel a great deal of insecurity because they're not sure that there are enough police on the streets. Now, when you get outside of our major centres into the rural areas, there's even a greater concern about whether there are enough police in local detachments and whether they'll be there for people when there are crimes.

4:50

Now, in terms of the statistics the province of Alberta falls short of other provinces in Canada when it comes to funding municipal policing. In 2003 the per capita expenditures by the province rated

the lowest of all provinces. Alberta had the lowest per capita provincial contribution of all provinces at \$33.3 per capita in total funding. By comparison, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest provincial contribution at \$130 per capita. Other provinces, like Ontario and B.C., both had substantially higher rates of per capita funding than Alberta. For 2004 the province increased its share to \$42 per capita total funding for municipal funding. However, it is safe to assume that unless other provinces made dramatic cuts to their contributions for policing, the province of Alberta continues to contribute fewer funds for policing than any other jurisdiction.

This is serious, especially for cities like Edmonton and Calgary. I know that in response to the Mayerthorpe tragedy there was an increase in the number of RCMP officers in rural areas, and that is a good thing, but unfortunately for the cities we still remain underfunded. Huge additional money to the budget for the Solicitor General, \$7.392 million, but none of that translates into more policing for our cities.

Now, I think this is a very serious issue. I brought up many times that there's a problem with the formula. In negotiating with municipalities, the formula is too low. When we were in southern Alberta, we had some conversation with the mayor of Taber. Taber has its own municipal police force, and it has to spend over a million dollars a year on its small detachment for municipal policing, but it only gets about \$264,000 from the province. It puts the town of Taber in a great deal of difficulty trying to raise the rest of the money. They get some money from revenues from speeding tickets and so on, but mostly they have to raise the rest from their own municipal revenues. The problem is planning. A town like Taber can't plan ahead in terms of where the money is going to be because it doesn't know what the formula is going to be from one year to the next. This is a very serious issue.

I was hoping there would be more attention to the basic funding of policing in the appropriation supply increases, but nothing here, and I don't know whether I'll ever get any answer to the questions that I'm bringing. Those are my questions, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Supplementary estimates: \$1.8 billion. I remember that there was a time when supplementary estimates were a necessity, but they were there for emergencies. That's what the purpose of them was back then. Now they've become just part of the government. We don't need to take the budget seriously in the spring because we know we can bring billions and billions in later on in supplementary estimates. To me this is abuse of the Legislature, to be looking at these sorts of figures.

I look here at \$1.8 billion. I look at all the departments that seem to have emergencies: Advanced Education, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Children's Services, Community Development, Education, Environment, Gaming, Health and Wellness, Infrastructure and Transportation, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Community Supports, Solicitor General and Public Security, and Sustainable Resource Development. I mean, if we handled our household budgets in this way, Mr. Chairman, we'd all be going broke. This government comes here, and, you know, we're lucky if we get six hours because with these sorts of little procedures, we can shorten that for the \$1.8 billion. I thought that we were going to get six hours from what happened last night. This will be over at 5:15, and we're dealing with \$1.8 billion. Not \$1.8 million; \$1.8 billion. This \$1.8 billion is probably more of a budget than some of the smaller provinces even have, and here we are dealing with it in this way.

I wish this government, who talk about being fiscal conservatives, would realize that this is not the way to budget. We have to make a lot of changes, I believe, in this order. That's why my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona brought in Standing Order 40, just to try to draw back to the members what we're doing here. Of course, the government side says that they didn't want a debate about the budget. No, they don't want to debate about \$1.8 billion, Mr. Chair. They just want to say: let's just pass it and move on. This is: "We're the government. We can do whatever we want." The fact is, I would remind them, that they had fewer votes than the opposition in the last provincial election. Things are changing, and this is partly why things are changing.

I remind you that this is just the beginning of it. After we brought in the budget in the spring, Mr. Chairman, we spent over \$4 billion on things that may have been desirable, some of the things, but surely if they're desirable, you can plan a budget around them. We're looking at probably \$6 billion that were unaccounted for in the budget that we're dealing with here after the fact. I suggest to you that that's just not the way to run a government.

We have to make some changes. Some of the budget estimates should be debated in committee so that we can look into them in a little more detail. We need other democratic changes. The chairman of Public Accounts is here, and I know that he would agree. We need to be able to bring in some democratic changes. We've had one-party rule here too long, and this is why we're dealing with this sort of money, Mr. Chairman, \$1.8 billion in supplementary estimates. We'll be lucky if we get six hours. We'll probably get three or four hours to debate this. I think members that call themselves conservatives fiscally should be ashamed of this sort of performance. They should be ashamed of it.

I say to the members, some of them who need things to do on the backbench over there, that perhaps they could start to tell the Government House Leader sitting across there and others that they find this unacceptable, that they find this approach unacceptable. If we're all elected to look after the taxpayer, we can have a debate about priorities – that's what it's all about – but surely there should be no debate about how we handle the finances of this province. To pass \$1.8 billion in a matter of probably three hours if we're lucky, with all these departments that all of a sudden had emergencies, not even counting the over \$4 billion that was spent on new programs that they couldn't figure out to budget for before, I find unacceptable. Surely the people of Alberta would find that unacceptable. I know that the Minister of Economic Development will – glad to give you some time, Mr. Minister, because we love it when you stand up and speak.

Mr. Chairman, there's no more evidence of the democratic deficit that we have in this province than what we're doing right here: \$1.8 billion, as I say, plus the \$4 billion. As legislators we should all be ashamed of this because we have no idea of where this money is going. We know that all of a sudden a bunch of departments had emergencies, but supplementary estimates should be for what they were intended to be, for emergencies that you couldn't foresee in the budget, not for this type of approach. As I say, this government is going to have to learn some lessons. Maybe they should go back to NAIT or something and take bookkeeping 10 so that they can begin to figure out how to budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

5:00

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise to speak to supplementary estimates, I suppose. The supplementary estimates

that we're looking at will authorize a \$1,531,247,000 increase in voted expense or expense and equipment/inventory purchases, a \$234,150,000 increase in voted capital investment, and a \$5,000,000 increase in voted lottery fund payments. The nature of the problem is in dealing with supplementary estimates in such amounts and all of the ways that this government seems to deal with sort of seat-of-the-pants management, which we see so often. We've seen it in the \$400 short-term gift, or whatever you want to call it, that's being sent out to everybody in the new year.

Mr. MacDonald: Legacy payment.

Mr. Backs: Legacy payment, I'm informed by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The reality here is that there is no budgetary process in Alberta. There's the spring spending and there's the fall spending and then there's the supplementary spending that we get again later on.

Mr. Taylor: Don't forget the drunken spending.

Mr. Backs: Maybe there's the drunken spending, I understand from some of the members here.

The reality is that there is no plan; there is no budget. There's just an ability to say: oh, we need this tomorrow or next month or maybe in two months. To go beyond that, to actually budget for a year is not what happens in Alberta.

With that said, I see that the Department of Human Resources and Employment, for which I am the critic, did not have any supplementary spending in this. Seeing that we have this three-times-a-year see-what-we're-going-to-spend sort of process, I begin to wonder why Human Resources and Employment does not deal with some of the problems of those payments to people who are deemed the poor in our society. They're not getting real increases. They're not getting dealt with. They're not getting ways to get out of those problems that for some areas of our province create gang violence, create problems and difficulties with many areas of societal development and the children and all the rest of it, and the Human Resources and Employment department did not have one penny, one nickel, one quarter of supplementary supply to debate here. That gives rise to some great concern.

You know, if it was deemed to be a regular budgetary process and all departments were acting in this manner and being responsible, if that was what it was – but it's not that way. We seem to just have time and again these decisions to move when it's handy, to spend when it's handy. I mean, this was very obvious in the type of decision we saw for our so-called September 1 holiday that was to celebrate the Alberta centennial. That was thrown out there and it was going to happen, and then it didn't happen and it wasn't planned ahead and thought ahead and all the rest of it. It turned out that the school kids weren't even scheduled so that they could attend here at our Legislature Grounds ceremonies. It was sad because this is a huge thing, this 100th anniversary for Alberta.

Mind you, I was very pleased today to see that we could cap it off with the welcoming back of the Eskimos. I will just note that my colleague from Edmonton-Decore was able to get on his number 15 Ricky Ray jersey a signature from Ricky Ray and, with that signature on his back, hoist it above his head for a great memento picture. By the way, it was a great thing to end our centennial, and I think the Eskimos and the Eskimos organization again should be commended for all of that.

To end, the problem with the supplementary supply is that it is not a budgetary process. It's something that we see that's not acting as emergency spending. It's something that is part of the way that we

seem to be seeing the government spend our monies here in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Being on the football subject, I guess I'd like to maybe start there with this supplemental supply and how we enjoy that, and then go to education.

It's a worry to me that this \$1.5 billion is on expense or expense and equipment/inventory purchases. How can supplemental supply be going to that extreme on expenses? We've got a very little amount, \$234 million, going into capital investment, which might be something for the future.

What I want to go back to on education, to start with, is that the wonderful, booming metropolis of Raymond, Alberta, came up with a tier 1 championship here in Edmonton. I'm very proud of that little area. If you look at the investment that's put in there, they're getting a \$13 million school, which is long overdue.

An Hon. Member: Are you? You're getting a new school?

Mr. Hinman: Yes. My good buddy was down there and announced that. It's in the papers all over. The point is what we can and should do in Alberta, if we allow them to do it. They want to close down rural schools and say: "Well, they're not equitable, you know. It's not a good disbursement of money. We can do it better in the bigger areas." Bigger is not always better. This budget has gotten bigger, and it isn't better. It's become almost a joke when the government says that they don't like picking winners and losers, they don't like being in business, yet here's \$1.8 billion. What are they doing with it? Very much influencing business throughout the province.

The sad part, though, is that there is no plan. They talk about a 20-year plan. You don't have a plan unless it's written on a piece of paper and people can see it, and then you're held accountable to it. Many times when we were doing our budget in our business, we would put out our yearly, two-year, three-year, and five-year plan. In that plan we would have our priorities on what we need to do this year, what we'd like to do next year, and then we'd have a wish list in there. The province has none of these things.

The good Member for Edmonton-Glenora talked about the little town of Taber and their struggle with their police force. To me, one of the most discouraging things in this whole supplemental supply is that we have a backlog and a shortage of services throughout the province in policing and in health care for hip replacements, cataracts, all types of areas. If you have the extra money, this was the time to put an injection to get something for it. We need to give the services to Albertans, not just the money. "Here, my friend; here's \$5 million to do something on expenses," and we don't know what those expenses are. We have to ask the questions. Where is it going? Why aren't the details here for us to go over and to truly debate where we should be putting it?

Like I say, it's amazing to me that they can stand up and continue saying that they have a plan yet not show it. We need to show it, have it out there. Most importantly – and it was referred to a couple of times – what about a formula? How are we going to have these capital disbursements? How are they going to go to the municipal governments, that really are providing the services for the people? They need to be able to plan not just one year in advance but five years and 10 years. We definitely need to have that plan for them to do their planning because there is a deficit in the infrastructure in this province. They're struggling to meet those ends, yet they're all wondering if and when the lottery is going to come to their town and they're going to be able to address their problems.

5:10

The money going to the health regions. Again, I just want to go over that one. We have \$64 million, and once again it's just itemized as expense and equipment. We know the backlog we have on those services in the province. I mentioned earlier this week what I consider a young lady – hasn't reached her 50s yet – who's waiting for a knee replacement.

An Hon. Member: Oh, you're smooth.

Mr. Hinman: Speak up.

An Hon. Member: I said you're smooth: young lady.

Mr. Hinman: She is in my books.

The point is that she's been incapacitated for six months. How much longer is it going to be? That is the type of area. If we were putting this money to services, how many hips could we do? How many policemen could we have? How could we be helping the farmers with some rebates on their high fuel, high fertilizer costs? These are areas where inflation has really hit, yet we don't seem to address any of them, as the good Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview says, on an emergency supply bill. It's very discouraging to be going through all of this stuff like it's an emergency when it isn't. It's more like we're tourists in that foreign country and we've got to jump on a plane, so let's get our money spent before we go back home because the kids are going to have it when we get there.

I guess my final comment on all of this is that it definitely looks like a legacy that they're trying to build. I would not be proud of this legacy of drunken sailor spending. Unfortunately, it's not even the drunken sailor's money; it's the people of Alberta. We need services, not false promises and wondering where and what the money is going to.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. There is a lot to be discussed in this bill, and unfortunately there is so little time. There are things in here that perhaps shouldn't be, and there are things that should be in here that are not. Certainly, when we look at this Legislative Assembly and the priorities that are coming from this government as a result of this appropriation bill, one has to wonder about this government.

I was sitting here, Mr. Chairman, thinking about the Deep Six, the famous group of Progressive Conservative backbenchers in 1993 that were for less government and significantly less government spending. There were six of them obviously.

Mr. Dunford: I wasn't one of them.

Mr. MacDonald: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West indicates that he was not one of them.

I've forgotten who they were. Certainly, some of them are still in the House, and they are senior government ministers now. I've forgotten the membership of the Deep Six, but this government has forgotten what the Deep Six was all about. This government is now spending money, in my view, in some cases in a very wasteful way.

We could look at some of the priorities that have not been covered. We need to remind ourselves of some of the less fortunate in this province. Let's think, for instance, of the homeless people. The Edmonton community plan on homelessness uses the following definition, Mr. Chairman, for homeless.

A . . . family is considered homeless if:

- the individual or family has no residence at all and is living on the streets; or
- the individual or family is living in any premises which is not intended or suitable as a permanent residence; or
- the individual or family is at risk of becoming homeless
 - (a) through losing their residence, or
 - (b) through being discharged from an institution/facility and has nowhere to go, or
 - (c) through loss of income support.

I don't see any amounts in this bill to improve the conditions for homeless people.

Now, the 2004 rental market report from CMHC shows that in spite of the fact that Edmonton has the highest apartment vacancy rate since 1996, at 5.3 per cent, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment rose by 1.5 per cent to \$597. Rents for a two-bedroom rose 1.1 per cent to an average of \$730. These rates are considerably higher than the shelter allowances provided by the province. I was very pleased to get this information from the general manager of a housing association. This general manager is working very hard, as is her organization, to improve the lot of many Albertans. Why isn't there a shelter allowance increase in this budget?

In fact, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning mentioned that Human Resources and Employment does not have any amounts listed in here, but certainly Community Development does and, more specifically, Seniors and Community Supports. We're talking here in excess of \$100 million, but there is no amount for an increase in shelter allowances. I think that at this time this is a very poor reflection on this government, and it indicates that they're not really sincere in their efforts to improve the lives of those Albertans.

Now, the shelter allowances in Alberta are as follows, Mr. Chairman: for a single person, \$168 a month; for a single mother with one child, \$428 a month; for a single mother with two children, \$503 a month; for a single mother with three children, \$524; for a single mother with six children, \$586. These rates include a utility allowance.

We all know, Mr. Chairman, how much the government has increased their travel and communications budgets in the last number of years. They've got no problem with that, no problem at all with hosting budgets, travel budgets, international travel, domestic travel. It doesn't matter. This is a government with itchy feet, but I think they should be staying here in the province and recognizing the problems that exist here and doing something to correct them, and they're not.

Now, we need to deal with this issue. We need to recognize that this is not enough money to get by on. It's not enough money to provide any sort of reasonable shelter that this government is currently providing. I would urge at this time all government members to have a look at these shelter allowances and then change your priorities.

At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that we adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was taken a little bit by surprise by that, but given that we've adjourned debate, I would move that the committee rise and report bills 52, 55, 58, 43, 44, 53, 54, 56, 57, report progress on Bill 51, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

5:20

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 52, Bill 55, Bill 58, Bill 43, Bill 44, Bill 53, Bill 54, Bill 56, and Bill 57. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 51.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn until 8 p.m., at which time we'll return in Committee of the Whole.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:21 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, November 29, 2005 **8:00 p.m.**
Date: 05/11/29
 [Mr. Marz in the chair]

head: **Government Bills and Orders
 Committee of the Whole**

The Chair: Good evening, I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 51 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments?
 The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to finally get an opportunity to speak again to the supplementary supplies that were introduced by the government this year.

I just want to be clear about what's happened here. Three days were designated by the government for consideration of the supplementary supply No. 2 this fall session. In attempting to have a reasonable question and answer period over those three days – by the way, each day, of course, is only 120 minutes long because it's set for two hours – what we were not able to get debated out of the 13 departments were Solicitor General for \$7.4 million, Seniors for \$109 million, Municipal Affairs for \$138.2 million, Environment for \$5.2 million, Community Development for \$27 million for a subtotal of \$286,929,000.

We were able to get some debate, but no vote was taken for Children's Services at \$38.4 million, Infrastructure and Transportation at \$758,016,000, and Agriculture at \$288,289,000 for a subtotal there of \$1,084,705,000. So in total, Mr. Chairman, the Official Opposition did not get an opportunity to debate and get answers to our questions for over \$1.3 billion worth of expenses that had been already allocated by this government.

Certainly, the public reaction to the arrogance that was displayed by the government in this off-budget spending – they've been fairly clear in that they felt that the budgeting should be a better process and that the government should be able to get closer to actually balancing its revenue and its expenses to deliver programs and services to the citizens of Alberta and that we should not have these totally out of whack budgets where the government somehow miraculously always manages to come up with billions and billions in surplus, which it can then divvy up away from the scrutiny of the public. The public is obviously not happy about this. So that was a real flaw in the process, what happened there.

Now we have that same supplementary supply coming before us through an appropriation bill in which, yes, we get an opportunity through second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third reading to comment again on what is in and what is not in that appropriation bill. But we do not have the opportunity for those departments, Mr. Chairman, and for those amounts of money to have an exchange of questions and answers with the ministers that are responsible. For those ministries we have no idea of what is going on. There's a one-line explanation that is provided in the supplementary supply booklet that is made public, and that really gives us very little information at all as to what's happening.

One of the things that the public that has contacted me has been really irritated by is that so much of this spending started within weeks, maybe even within days of the budget being passed last

spring. For all we know, maybe this spending was going on before the budget had even passed but was in fact before the Assembly. So there's a huge flaw in this process and, I would argue, is a huge arrogance on behalf of the government in that they don't feel they need to bring this before the Assembly and before the people of Alberta for scrutiny and for accountability. I think there's a real lack of respect for both elected representatives but also for those Albertans that they represent. That's what's really gone wrong in this system.

I would like to raise some issues both of what is specifically noted in the budget but also – perhaps it's in there, and I don't know because with a one-liner it's real hard to tell. Maybe it's in there, but without being able to have a Q and A with the minister, we really don't have any better explanation of what that money stands for than the one line. Under Children's Services, for example, the one-line explanation divides up \$38,400,000 and talks about \$1.2 million "in equipment/inventory purchases for information systems enhancements to support program delivery" under a couple of acts, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act. Sorry, I just remembered something else that I have a question about. Then there's Alberta's early learning and child care investment plan, which I suspect is actually the money from the federal government, and again some inventory and equipment purchases for information systems enhancements.

What I don't know is in there is the issue of any follow-up on the round-table on bullying and family violence that was held in May of 2004. I'm interested in hearing about what exactly are the firm timelines and budgets flowing from the recommendations from that 2004 round-table. Now, obviously, that international conference that was held in Banff in late October, which I attended, had something to do with what came out of the May 2004 recommendations, but that was never really clearly laid out. I would like to know what those actual timelines are for implementing what came out of that May 2004 round-table. The minister, I think, has claimed in the past that the money is in the business plan. Yes, but what are the actual measurable targets and timelines and outcomes and associated tasks that are affiliated with this particular initiative?

I have a question under Community Development. Ah, yes, the \$5.5 million which has caused both anger and great consternation in the arts community in Alberta. This is a community that exists under great embattlement, no small irony given the project that was approved here, so they do tend to stick together and support each other even when they're not entirely thrilled with what happens. Now, Paul Gross graduated a year after me from the bachelor of fine arts program in acting at the University of Alberta, so I know Paul Gross. Fine fellow; he's done very well for himself in Canada. Congratulations. But it does cause the community some concern when they see someone swan in from out of province, get an appointment with the Minister of Community Development, get an appointment with the Premier, and walk out of the meeting with \$5.5 million.

Let's put this in context, Mr. Chairman. That is one-quarter of the budget that is allocated to all of the arts. All of the arts. Not just the film commission, not just performing arts, not writing, not visual, all of the arts. The entire budget for the AFA that funds all of the arts in Alberta is \$21 million, and this guy walked out of there with 5.5 million bucks. So you can understand that it has caused that community a bit of consternation. Do they line up and start to phone the minister to get individual appointments now, or should they move to Ontario and come back here to get some kind of extra consideration with their grants?

8:10

There was a huge problem with the process here. It may well be appropriate given that it's the Year of the Veteran, and it may well be appropriate given that it's involved Albertan veterans, and it may well be appropriate that we fund it under the centennial act, but boy was there a huge problem both in perception and in reality with this one. It does not smell good. That community is very hard-pressed to come forward and say publicly that they have problems with this but, man, have I heard about this one. So I'll just note that one.

There were some upgrades for exhibit redevelopment in various museums and historical sites. Well, my question is: how long would we have had to wait? Where was it in the business plan that these various exhibits were going to be upgraded? Is it in the business plan, or do we just have to wait once again in arts and culture and historical sites for some bonanza to drop out of the sky so that they can actually get some funding for stuff? Was this just a bonanza, and they're going to have to wait until the next one or the next time the minister smiles upon them? Is there some actual planning about replacement of things, or do they just have to starve and wait? It's very poor planning here and very ineffective use of money, if we're trying to protect our historical sites and our resources this way.

I'm wondering if any of this money got allocated to the Human Rights Commission, which also falls under this department. What I'm interested in is whether there is any review being taken of the Human Rights Commission, whether there's any consideration being given to updating the human rights legislation to include a description of adult bullying under prohibited grounds for discrimination or for treatment.

That seems to be becoming an increasing problem, and at this point the commission can't do anything to help people because adult bullying, you know, harassment that isn't of a sexual nature is not specifically named in the act. Therefore, all the staff and all the resources there can't help people that come forward with a complaint about that. We're missing something in being able to provide service to our citizens in not being able to expand the act to include that. I'd like to know if that consideration is being taken here.

Are there any plans under the Human Rights Commission to change the way it operates? There have been concerns for a long time that there's a huge push on the claimants that come forward to settle, settle, settle, and there's great pressure, and people keep going to meetings with them and saying: "Well, won't you take this? Won't you just settle?" People went there because they wanted some action. They don't just want to have to cave and go, "Oh well; I guess it's okay," or "I guess I'll accept this." They wanted to see some action. They wanted to see some closure, and in some cases they wanted an apology or some kind of retribution, which is perfectly appropriate. So this constant push to clear off the books and just forgive and forget and walk away and accept whatever is being offered is very frustrating to people.

I'm also wondering if it isn't a flaw in the process at this point. There's no incentive for those that are being complained about. There's no incentive for them to follow through with the process, to indeed come forward, come to the table with any kind of apology or compensation in any way or whatever is being asked for. There's nothing that compels them to do that. Therefore, they can just hang back and keep saying, "no, no, no," and you know the person has got to be forced to settle on the other end. So there is a flaw in this system. I urge the minister to look at his colleagues' work across the country to see what amendments are being made to their human rights process and to their legislation.

I note with great interest that there was a ruling last week – I think it might have been Thursday or Friday – on the family law statutes.

Not that I'm going to stand here and say that I told you so, but you know what? I blinking well am. I stood here and debated all one afternoon in 2003 on what was being proposed by the government to amend the family law statutes. In each and every case I said that you were making a mistake and that this was not Charter-proof. I've been proven right because one of those amendments has now been struck down.

It was an amendment where the artificial insemination was set up so that it would – basically the flaw in the whole act and in what the government did was that they tried to exclude same-sex couples, so they kept naming heterosexual couples by being gender specific. They kept saying mother or father rather than saying parent or spouse. That's what I kept pointing out all the way along: you are going to have to go back and redo this. Indeed, you are going to have to go back and redo it because the AI section in particular was struck down. It was either Thursday or Friday, and for exactly what I said.

The way it's written, by naming the father, you basically had a situation where hetero couples would not have to go through an adoption process to make sure that both parents were legal guardians for the child. But you also had gay men because you could name both of them as fathers. They were okay too. What you left out there were the lesbian couples, and now you're in trouble because it's not Charter proof and you are discriminating against someone. We've had laws passed in the country that say that this is perfectly legitimate. Now you're in trouble because you've got legislation that you're going to have to go back and fix, and I told you so.

I wonder if there's any money in the budget or if there'll be any money in any subsequent supplementary supply budget to fix that. You're going to end up having to fix all the sections that I told you you'd have to fix. I refer you back to my debates in the spring – I think it was March 2003 – on the family law statutes because I was right all the way through there.

A couple of other points I'd like to raise with the Justice minister. There's nothing at all in here for supplementary supply, but one of the things that I'm noticing is that in the domestic violence courts the prosecutors are cycling through there at a rate of about six months apiece. I know that there is some great gung-ho idea in there to have prosecutors cycle through on a two-year basis, you know, to give them better experience and broader experience through different sections.

All well and good, but what's happening right now is that you basically have upheaval in that domestic violence court, which was supposed to be about stability. It was supposed to be about building expertise. It was supposed to be about having people in place that actually knew what was going on and could work together and share experience. Because the prosecutors are being shifted every two years and you've got several prosecutors working in there, you basically have a turnover of your prosecuting team every six months. Somebody is on their two-year shift and they're on the way out the door, and somebody new is coming. Six months later the next one's out the door, and the next one's replaced. It's upheaval. I don't think that's what the minister was intending to have happen here, and I ask him to look at that because I think that's flying in the face of what was the intent of that domestic violence court.

I have another question for that minister. Is there any money coming out of his department or is he looking in any way at the whole idea of going to a public defender system? We're hearing more and more rumours out of the legal community that that's what's being considered, and I'd like to get some expansion on that, please. That's quite troubling because it again puts us into following an American model, which arguably works for them – I think it doesn't – but we have a completely different system, and I would argue that it's not going to work well here.

Under Government Services, I think it would be. I've been contacted by Margaret Kocot, who's wondering about the recycling policy on computers, which was launched with great fanfare I think in this budget year. Her issue is that basically the government is paying recycling companies to recycle these computers without any requirement that you actually test the computer and see if it works. If it still worked, it could be going to schools. It could be going to nonprofits. It could even be sent to Third World countries to be used in the state that it's in. But that's not even being tested. It's just immediately being dismantled and the parts recycled. She's asking how together we could change this situation, stop all of the e-waste, she calls it, and get people in government aware of the benefits of these unchecked learning tools.

She's working with the Electronic Recycling Association of Alberta. They're a nonprofit association with a goal of keeping e-waste, electronic waste, out of the landfills. They're very proud to recycle. Their point is well made. This is coming from people whose point is to recycle. They think that more of it should be fixed and re-used than put into the recycling system.

I had a few follow-up questions to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The ministry didn't identify future expenses, so my question is: how does the department know the total amount of money that's needed for either the infrastructure projects that are being planned here or for the operating expenses to run those projects once they're completed if she hasn't identified future expenses? She said in response to a question that they hadn't identified future expenses. Well, then, how do you know how much the whole project is?

I think much more troubling to Albertans and the question they keep asking me is: how do we know that there's going to be money to actually operate the facility once it's built? People are really concerned that, you know, there will be a building, the lights will be on, and nobody will be working there because there's no money that's put into the annual operating budget, just these one-time injections of infrastructure money. How are these projects expected to be achieved when we're only talking about \$64 million in this supplementary supply out of a total of \$1.4 billion that has been announced for infrastructure projects in Health and Wellness?

8:20

Finally, when asked about the contract for Aon, whether they had identified that Aon was going to get this contract, where the money for that was in the budget, and why it wasn't talked about during the budget debates, they said that, well, basically they have a slush fund for consulting. My question is: well, how much is this slush fund or this fund for consulting services that they can basically pull any amount of money out that comes up? I mean, \$1.5 million is not a small consulting budget. What is the total amount of that fund for consulting? What are the contracts that have been identified on an ongoing basis, and what else has come out of that fund for this year?

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I look for an additional opportunity to ask the remainder of my questions.

The Chair: Hon. members, may we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With great pleasure I would

like to introduce to you and through you to all members here this evening my son Jonathan. Jonathan is very interested in politics and would like to know what his dad is doing down here. As well, he's a student at Victoria high school. I would ask you all to please give him the traditional very warm greeting of the House.

Thank you.

head: **Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

**Bill 51
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act,
2005 (No. 2)
(continued)**

The Chair: Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, the background conversations tend to escalate the longer the speaker talks. I would just ask that we restrict them to very low tones or take them into the committee room out back.

The next speaker is the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. For the record I want to express the difficulty I have with the fact that there's \$1.8 billion worth of what I consider overspending that we're expected to rubber-stamp after the fact rather than preapprove. What I see is that this is a case of putting the cart before the horse. I have less trouble with the amount of money than I do with the procedure. If I'm concerned about the \$1.8 billion that I see as overspending, you can imagine how I feel about the government's attitude to what they consider to be their own stomping grounds, the unbudgeted surplus, which is basically double what we're talking about tonight.

I, again, don't have a whole lot of difficulty with the amount of money that is being spent when I can tell where the money is going, but I have a great deal of difficulty, as the former Member for Edmonton-Centre pointed out, in trying to track where this money is going.

Ms Blakeman: I'm still the current member.

Mr. Chase: The current member. Sorry. The former speaker, the current member. As far as I know, there's no assassination plot, and I hope there never would be.

I would actually like to provide more money for a number of the departments. For example, in Community Development I look at the figure of \$2,495,000 to replace firepits, picnic tables, and resurface roads within provincial parks. I would love to be able to grant the Minister of Community Development considerably more millions because this money does not begin to address the deterioration that has happened in these parks over the last 12 years. I'd be interested and wonder if the minister would reply: has any of this money gone to improving pathways? Has it gone to improving stairs that have rotted over the years? Has any of this money gone to fencing to keep the cattle out? We have this multi-use concern, where cattle roam freely among the tents and trailers. It's rather discouraging for the campers to find the overnight special deposits that have been left right beside their firepit, whether it's a new pit or an old pit that's been replaced.

It's great that the Canmore Nordic Centre continues to receive millions of dollars in upgrades, but my feeling is that this is because it's out there. It's in the public. It's on TV in terms of filming because it is a wonderful centre. It's one of those jewels that gets frequently thrown out as "this is what the Alberta government is doing in terms of sports and recreation" whereas when it comes to the wilderness parks that I'm more familiar with, it seems that they're basically abandoned.

The resurfaced roads. The parks that I'm familiar with and that a lot of Albertans prefer are the ones that are out in the wilderness, the ones where you go out on a forestry road and you turn off and you're onto gravel. Rarely have I seen, other than in the very early spring, a grader come down those roads to upgrade them or actually get so adventurous as to go into the park itself and grade the roads. I've spent a lot of time in my past shovelling gravel onto the back of a pickup truck and filling in those holes myself for the benefit of my former campers. So in this particular case I, if given the power, would be giving several million dollars more to upgrade the parks, to bring them back to the standards that they were when they were first conceived.

When it comes to Education, first off, look at the infrastructure of \$42 million, and look at the school facilities operations of 351 and a half million dollars. The Calgary board of education alone has an infrastructure deficit of \$400 million. This money doesn't begin to address it. The money in the spring budget didn't address it. The problem is that it goes unaddressed.

In terms of schools, Calgary got two schools. We've got a million population in Calgary, and we get two new schools. We're supposed to celebrate the fact that we got one new Catholic and one new public school. Again, had I the power, I would like to see a number of those 40 communities that are currently without schools have schools that are the centre of their community. I would also like to see the older schools in the established neighbourhoods being brought up to speed in terms of infrastructure instead of waiting until they get to such a sad state that basically they get closed. This has happened to a number of the sandstone schools in Calgary. This is part of our historic heritage, and we've lost it.

When it comes to Gaming, I have a great deal of difficulty thinking that large organizations such as Edmonton Northlands and Calgary Exhibition and Stampede need the government somehow to prop them up with a total of \$70 million. In Calgary we see great expansion plans, and I've seen the plans for Northlands. Obviously these organizations have a tremendous amount of money generated from the very wonderful agriculturally related fairs and activities that they put on, whether it be the Calgary Stampede, whether it's a series of agricultural AgriCom type of activities. Likewise with Northlands, whether it's Klondike Days or the series of activities that take place in those facilities: there is no doubt that they're popular. They should be self-supporting. This is basically government welfare for very wealthy organizations. Let them do it on their own instead of digging into the taxpayers' pockets.

8:30

When it comes to Infrastructure and Transportation, the minister and I, despite our exchanges, would get along very well because if I had my wish, I would be providing him with considerably more money. For example, instead of using \$3 million to build what could very well be a temporary cement wall along the river's edge to keep back further seeping of the Turner Valley gas plant historic site, I personally would like to see that whole area reclaimed. If we want to have an historic site, so be it, but right now what we have is a leeching, polluting circumstance. Simply building a portion of a concrete wall, that may wash out in the next flood, doesn't address it. I would love to give the minister of infrastructure the money to go ahead, to basically level the site, dig down, and if you want to create a monument, replace some of it. Right now that area has been allowed to rust and basically has gone its own way for the last 20 years. If it wasn't of historical importance then, how is it more important now that we're going to come to its rescue with a \$3 million wall?

The minister provided an explanation with regard to the \$18

million in scope changes to the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads. I accept the explanation. I appreciated it when it was first given. I realize that with the types of overpasses that have been planned and where they've been located, the off ramps and so on, you have to make adjustments. I understand that process.

I like the word "accelerate." It says: "\$100,000,000 to accelerate provincial highway projects in other resource development areas within the province." The idea of acceleration – the minister knows of two of my favourite highways, 28 and 63. I'm all in favour of accelerating. What this doesn't tell me is to what extent they've been accelerated, and possibly the minister can tell me. It's my understanding that originally this highway twinning was going to take 10 years, and then I believe we're trying for five years. I believe that is the case. When we did a bit of research, we found out that we could twin these two highways, 28 and 63, for the equivalent of 21 days of royalties. Our cost that we estimated based on a million a kilometre was \$491 million, so hopefully the money that will take those roads and twin them from Edmonton to Fort McMurray is part of that \$30 million to accelerate provincial highways in the Wood Buffalo resource region.

I'm wondering if any of this \$100 million will provide more than just passing lanes for people travelling from Medicine Hat to the Crownsnest Pass. I know that when I was down there earlier this month and talking to residents in Medicine Hat, they were very disappointed that instead of twinning they were only getting passing lanes. That same concern was expressed by people connected with the municipal government in Lethbridge. They would have liked to have seen that highway twinned the whole way to the pass. They see it as their lifeline, the equivalent of our highway 2, or the Calgary-Edmonton corridor.

Medicine Hat would like to see the same kind of economic advantages to an east-west road as we're seeing in our north-south corridor. They're envious of what's happening and would like to be included in the economic well-being of the entire province. Again, if I could be told how this money has helped to accelerate the timeline, how it's been changed, to know that the process has been speeded up, I would be very supportive of the minister in so doing.

I have trouble with the idea that we're here tonight rushing again through a process. To me what we should be doing is sitting in quarterly legislative sittings. If we're going to deal with these what I consider budget overruns, why don't we just simply have quarterly budgets? Why don't we meet and come up with: what are the needs of the province? Let's discuss those needs. Let's debate them. Let's prioritize them. Notice that I'm using the word "let's." The idea that the government in its omniscient wisdom can make these decisions by themselves, without any input other than after-the-fact stamping, is erroneous.

We all have a role in deciding how the money should be spent, what Alberta's priorities are, and I think there would be greater strength within this process if everyone and all parties were allowed an effective role and participation rather than after-the-fact approval. I would be interested in hearing from any of the ministers as to why they feel that it's acceptable to bring us in for this short period, this less than three weeks, to do this after-the-fact discussion. Why can't we deal with it ahead of time?

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Chair. I will start by looking at the Education portion of the supplementary supply. Let me just say this. Of the \$75 million that we're spending, I believe that what is required – and I think the government deserves some praise here. I

think that to move the school buildings under the Department of Education's control is a very good move, but in building portables and school buildings, I think it's important that the government come up with stable and sufficient and predictable funding for schools. The question that I think is important to look at is: if there isn't enough money for permanent schools, will the government in '06-07 plan for building schools before providing emergency funding? In other words, I think it's important that the government have a plan set out for school buildings, send it out to the school systems, let them react to it, and then submit a plan based on the criteria that the department sets.

Also, I believe that if we look at the plant operations and maintenance of the supplementary, we see that there is \$24 million required. This really makes me wonder: is this a sign that the new funding formula under the plant operations and maintenance aspect of the Education budget is well thought out, and is it providing the right kind of funds for school systems across the province?

May I also say that I would commend the government on their transportation incentive, the extra dollars for fuel, for diesel fuel for transportation. I think that was very, very critical and very necessary.

Let me then look at the supplementary supply in terms of what it may be lacking and what I was surprised was not there. It seems to me that all of the dollars were directed for matters pertaining to infrastructure, transportation, and that kind of thing. I think what is important to note is that in meeting with the two school districts in St. Albert prior to this sitting, one of the biggest problems that schools are having in this province is the matter of support services for the family. I would have been in joy to see if there was an estimate overlap in dollars, if we'd have seen more indication of support services for schools such as guidance counsellors, school psychologists.

Let me just talk a little bit, in light of that, not only in terms of support services, but let me talk about the need for good counselling services in terms of apprenticeship. We were told, in meeting with the chamber of commerce in I believe it was Calgary, that they predict that 90,000 skilled jobs will be required in the next five years. I'm glad my colleague from Edmonton-Manning talked about this last night when he said: why are young people not being attracted to trades? Why are so many employers making so little use of things like the RAP program? You know that these things are difficult. In other words, why do we not have more students going into the trade areas?

8:40

My belief is that the junior high school is lacking a good, solid career education curriculum program and also lacking support with good guidance counsellors. That stems right into the high school. I think we really have to look at this very, very carefully. In other words, I'm suggesting that if you have extra dollars that you require to spend, they need to be more in the service area for the school system.

Let me, then, just talk about kids with special needs and the whole business of early diagnostic and curriculum development for remedial education. I note that in the supplementary supply estimates there was no indication of a move away from the achievement testing at grade 3 and a move to more diagnostic and remedial curriculum activities for schoolchildren who are not making it – not making it – falling through the cracks because they don't have a good start in school. This is costing us a lot. I think this is something that we should ask this government to look at very, very carefully.

The other question that I would like to mention in terms of the

supplementary supply is the business of school fees. I think it's time that the minister looked at this issue, again urging him to look at it in terms of the new budget year, '06-07, that is coming up, not just studying it but making some reference as to how he will set some guidelines for school fees; in other words, what the department will supplement schools to help them and to help parents that have to pay these school fees and what other things parents will be asked to pay for, such as sporting events, extracurricular activities, that type of thing. I think there's some really needed leadership required here on school fees. I think this government should show this in the new budget year, and I hope they do.

Let me move to, if I can, Mr. Chair, the matter of a letter here from the city of St. Albert to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, I believe, where policing comes into effect. One of the things that I note here – this comes from the mayor of St. Albert – is that “the AUMA calls for full provincial funding of policing costs for the first 5000 residents in every Municipality in Alberta, \$35 per capita and for the next 10000 residents (up to 15000), and \$18 per capita thereafter.” I think I'll just read that again. For every municipality in Alberta they're asking \$35 per capita for the next 10,000 residents up to 15,000 and \$18 per capita thereafter. In other words, in St. Albert that would mean \$18 per head for our tax base. I think this is a very, very important thing in terms of security for our citizens.

Also, we have a major problem with some of the young people with crystal meth. Property damage has become intense. I think this would be very helpful if we could have this looked at in this budget area.

So those are some general comments, Mr. Chair. I'll sit down. Thank you for letting me speak.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. [interjections] Still listening. [interjections]

The Chair: Hon. members.

Mr. Taylor: Always pleased to see. Of course, Mr. Chair, I have a long experience, years of experience, in competing with other sources of noise for the attention of the listeners as they're drifting off to sleep, saying something pithy – pithy – from time to time, because sometimes I get into a pithy mood, to pull them back in to the speaker and get them to pay attention again. I hope I can do a little bit of that here tonight. Thank you.

I was reviewing *Hansard* from Tuesday, November 22, with interest here as my colleagues were speaking because there was an interesting back and forth between myself and the Minister of Advanced Education that day as we were discussing supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education. There was some back and forth, as there often is when the minister and I get into an exchange in this House, a few digs, a few shots in there. But if you go back and you read the exchanges between the minister and myself, you do find that we come out of those exchanges with some fairly valuable information.

I feel that that was the case here in our back and forth, and I had to go back over territory a couple of times in a couple of instances to nail the minister down to some specific answers to specific questions, but eventually I got pretty darn close there, in the ballpark anyway. I walked away satisfied that we had in fact made some progress around the debate for supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education. We were talking a fairly significant amount of money there, about \$99 million all told, as I recall.

I wanted to just refer back to that, and I may actually refer back to a couple of very short, specific, one might say pithy comments made during the course of that exchange as we go on here. In general terms, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to refer back to that because I've been listening to my colleagues, and I've been listening to the specific questions that they have had to ask, questions to which they cannot get answers from the ministers because we have moved beyond the supplementary supply debates into the committee debate on Bill 51, questions about departments that weren't debated: Solicitor General – and my colleague from St. Albert referred to that just a moment ago – Seniors, Municipal Affairs, Environment, Community Development. Very little, if any, debate on those particular departments.

There were 13 ministries in all, I believe, that were involved in the supplementary estimates this time. We know the total amount involved: \$1.8 billion. We've done the math over here and entered the results into the debate. We are essentially debating \$5 million a minute with the time that the government allocated for debate of this massive amount of money that they spent above and beyond what was agreed to in the budget that this House debated and voted on just last May.

Now, I want to refer back to a specific comment made in the exchange between the Minister of Advanced Education and myself on November 22. I had asked a series of questions. One of the questions had to do with when the minister was going to

put the advisory council and other regulations into place regarding the access to the future fund that [I said] will transform this fund, absent those regulations, absent the existence of that council right now, from something that could be seen as being akin to the minister's personal piggy bank into an accountable decision-making body with clear rules and regulations.

8:50

Now, I am taking the minister's response out of context because I just want to quote one very short part from that. I don't want to leave the impression that I was dissatisfied with the minister's overall answer there or anything like that. I just need to refer to this specific quote from the minister. It goes like this.

In fact, I think he referenced it as the minister's personal piggy bank, which is really quite an offensive way to talk about public money. I can assure you that I would never treat public money in that way, and no member of this government would consider that.

Well, without meaning to cause the Minister of Advanced Education offence – although one of the things that I learned in a long career in radio is that you can only control your part of the message that goes out over the radio. You cannot control how people are going to interpret what you say. You can't control the spin they're going to put on it. The fact is, Mr. Chairman, that there maybe should be some offence taken there.

There's some offence taken on this side of the House because it looks like – and I don't mean specifically the Minister of Advanced Education here – a whole series of personal piggy banks when you're confronted with \$1.8 billion in unbudgeted spending and supplementary estimates that are presented with the opportunity for six hours of debate and the notion that: well, if we don't get to a scheduled department on the scheduled day for debate, we'll just gloss over that department altogether, and maybe we can sort of pick it up with the trash when we're debating Bill 51.

This is no way to run a railroad or a government or a province or a democracy. I think that that is a concept that the government members opposite are having a really hard time after 12 years in power, 12 years of doing whatever they please, getting their pointed little heads around. I think it's about time that the government members opposite went off for a weekend retreat somewhere or

perhaps four years wandering in the wilderness, reconnecting with the people of Alberta, with the values of the people of Alberta, with the values that got them elected in the first place, which they seem to have lost all connection with, values of thrift and stewardship and fiscal prudence. Mr. Chairman, as far as I can see in this whole sad, sorry, pathetic process, that's all gone out the window to be replaced by featherbedding, arrogance, complacency, and this notion that, you know, when the government decides to engage in off-budget spending, it's nobody's business but the government's.

Mr. Chairman, the government works for the people of Alberta. It doesn't work the other way around. They've forgotten this basic first rule in their job description. You know, even if we had an extra hour or two or six to debate these supplementary estimates, I don't think we could ever have enough time to get these government members' heads reoriented back around to where their heads ought to be if they are going to be true public servants.

This government, Mr. Chairman, needs to go. It's old, it's tired, and it's out of touch. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak on these supplementary estimates with sort of a grab bag of different departments and specific concerns that have come to our attention as a caucus not just over these past few weeks but since the spring sitting, when we initially approved the budget that we're now supplementing to such a high degree.

First, I was curious to look back and see the parting comments that I had made, Mr. Chair, in regard to the spring budget that we approved. I found it interesting to note that one of my big concerns – and it still is today – is this idea of deliberately lowballing the revenues that the government would collect and thus create the structure of how we build the budget. Lo and behold, I guess it was to no one's surprise that, in fact, our budget surplus grew to a tremendous extent. You know, the day that we finished with the spring session, I had made a note that the price of oil was at \$48 a barrel, and now I think we're up to something like \$59.

Now, there are certain problems or perils in perhaps guessing that your price of energy would be moving up in such a dramatic fashion as it has for the past six months, but the budget was based on a much lower price for both oil and natural gas than even the \$48. It made it, I think, a deceptive way to make this initial budget in the first place. We all knew that we were in for a tremendous surplus and that, in fact, many of the departments that had put forward budgets were not fully disclosing what they were intending to do as far as the responsibilities that they had for the coming year. So as previous speakers have mentioned, I think that it is confusing for the public to perhaps know in terms of full disclosure what is going to happen and when it's going to happen. It creates this culture of where the money sort of comes down from on high and individual projects are announced often four or five times just kind of out of the air.

One thing that I find particularly distressing about this very large supplementary budget estimate that we're now speaking on and will inevitably probably pass is that I think it creates a deceptive and confusing way of looking at government. So what I'm seeing to a large extent is that a lot of people who sort of put in their requests over the last couple of years are now calling in their chits, so to speak, to get their little piece of this surplus. It creates a very ad hoc way to plan for the future, Mr. Chairman.

I would suggest that in a number of these specific ministries it's not a question of spending the money. Certainly, we do need to spend money. There's a deficit in infrastructure; there's a deficit in quite a number of areas over the last 12 or 13 years of underfunding

public institutions in this province. At the same time, the helter-skelter way in which these budget surplus estimates are now coming in and the way they're applied to the supplementaries I think does not one any real service at all.

Just to look through various ministries here to give some examples, with SRD, Sustainable Resource Development, one problem I had in the spring – and it still does not seem to be addressed in any real way – is the problem that we have of not funding or taking proper stewardship towards our provincial parks with all of this extra money that's around. Provincial park plans is not something that is renewable in any way. Certainly, it's self-sustaining given the proper stewardship, but it's not something that we can grow on trees.

I think that what's happened in the last dozen years or so is that the amount of workers, either provincial park wardens or people working on the infrastructure for provincial parks, has been very sadly lacking, and still here today now with this budget supplement and the budget from the spring we still don't see any real progress. You know, I'm getting so much information from people in protected zones, provincial parks, who are saying that the parks are in a terrible state of repair and that no one is there to provide security for the parks. Lots of people are using them in inappropriate ways, you know: cutting trees and running ATVs there. Otherwise, there's no one to administer that thing. So I think that money is lacking for our provincial parks and protected areas, and we need to become much more serious about that and, in fact, designate more areas while we still can. Things are changing and growing and developing so quickly, Mr. Chair, in our province that we only have a small window of opportunity to protect special areas.

9:00

Again, in the area of the Solicitor General and Public Security one sore point I'm hearing about a lot from my own constituency is the lack of investment in new positions for police officers. I know that the hon. member has said that he has created some, but my sources tell me that, in fact, this just meets the rate of attrition for police who are retiring in our province and not creating new positions like we do need. Alberta's population is growing, perhaps at a greater rate than any other in the Confederation. We have a lot of movement of people, and there is an increasing crime rate that each member, I'm sure, in every constituency in Alberta would attest to being unacceptable.

So my position is very clear – and I think that I am echoing the concerns of my constituency and probably millions across this province – that we need to create at least 500 new police positions in the province of Alberta as soon as possible. I know that I'm hearing some signals that something like that might happen, but let's remember to create new FTEs and not just replacement positions. A focus on community policing, I think, at this juncture would be very much appreciated, especially in the urban areas.

In regard to Environment, one of the problems that I have is that this department seems to be being swallowed up by the Energy department. A case in point is the new MOSS strategy for northeastern Alberta. Please, don't get me wrong. I do appreciate the difficulties in managing such massive projects up in the Fort McMurray area and the difficulty associated with providing an integrated environmental strategy, but one of the problems is that I think the Department of Environment has lost its teeth to effectively and independently assess new projects as they come on board, and, you know, this is creating a very potentially difficult situation, Mr. Chairman. I would suggest that we need to look at it more honestly than we have been in this past 12 months.

Also, my suggestion – and I think that it's being echoed in some way across the floor, but I think that we need to be much more

serious about it – is to use much more of our energy windfall revenues to create sustainable, alternative energy sources in this province, not just to perhaps hope that industry might bite onto the odd windmill or what have you but, in fact, to take the bull by the horns and take some of our royalty money, a good whack of our royalty money, and invest it in a new sort of energy corporation, an energy corporation that could not only perhaps expand and meet the needs of our energy future here in Alberta but assist the rest of our country as well. There is a tremendous investment potential for alternative energy systems around the world. With our tremendous resource revenue that we're bringing in at this moment, I think we're in a position to take a leadership role in that regard. We're not doing that at this time, and I think it would take a much more focused set of resolutions from this government to do so.

In Seniors and Community Development we see a lot of investment in infrastructure, building new facilities in this province, Mr. Chairman. The problem – and it seems to be a perennial one – is that we're not meeting the staffing levels that would be adequate to provide the services that each of these new facilities might be there for. When we build new hospital expansions and new seniors' centres, long-term care facilities, and whatnot, it seems a bit ironic that if these buildings stand with insufficient staffing, they in fact are not functioning as they were designed to do. You know, a lot of the problems that we're seeing recently in terms of the lack of care or the crisis in long-term care and confusion about this is a lack of vision and direction in terms of the staffing that goes into these public institutions.

You know, we are responsible here in this Legislature to provide these services, these public institutions of health care and education to the public. If we are not meeting those needs, then we are not administering these funds responsibly. I would suggest that, in fact, the latter is the case, Mr. Chair, at this point because of the continuing problems in delivery of health care and in long-term care and housing for seniors in the province of Alberta right now. It's an embarrassment of riches, yet, you know, the money is not going directly to these sore points where we need it to be.

In regard to other ministries, Mr. Chairman, in Education, certainly, we're seeing some hopeful signs, but again, you know, the information that I'm receiving is that the class sizes, especially in division 2, are still not going down. While we might be considering new schools here and there, which is great, and most of the Learning Commission has been accepted on paper, the practice of funding our school systems still seems to be quite uneven at best.

It's a very time-sensitive subject because as each group of students passes through our system, that's the only opportunity we have to educate them. While we might be reflecting on this for a couple or three more years or four more years to reassess whether or not the monies to meet the needs of the Learning Commission are going through, a whole other generation of students has already graduated through the school system in large classrooms, perhaps unacceptably large, and with other resources lacking as well. Speed, I think, is of the essence in regard to secondary education, K to 12, and I would certainly encourage us to move post-haste to meet the needs of the Learning Commission in the best way possible.

In terms of postsecondary education, once again the very best that the Conservative government can do is Bill 1 from the spring, a great focus and a great deal of money on this postsecondary education problem that we have. Still, you know, in so many key areas as I travelled around the province to different colleges and universities, they're just not meeting those needs that people are bringing up. The needs are immediate financing to make it affordable for all persons to go to university. Still, at this juncture, I am seeing a lot of people making the choice not to go to postsecondary because they just can't afford it.

You know, we're losing. The very most conservative way to look at our population in this province, Mr. Chair, these are perhaps the students who would be best suited intellectually to go onto postsecondary but because of their socioeconomic conditions we lose those people. Again, it's a window of opportunity that closes rapidly as students leave high school and get older and move on to jobs. If they're not going to postsecondary because they can't afford it, well, that's just a crying shame.

Also in postsecondary a lot of infrastructure pledges in the budget but a problem of uncertainty in regard to staffing. I hear all the time about these beautiful buildings at the University of Alberta, for example, here in Edmonton that are just using temporary workers, and it's very unstable, and they can't attract the best staff necessarily because they don't feel as though they can put roots down because they don't know what's going to happen next.

Finally, just to close off, Mr. Chair, that's the structural planning problem of underestimating one's revenues in general, be it a government or your own personal revenues. By underestimating them deliberately, I would say that we're doing a disservice to the long-term planning for this province. We're building something for the future that lasts beyond the next budget cycle, that goes on to the next five or more years. That's what each of these departments requires, and that's what each of these departments deserve.

You know, there's been a lot of talk about a dearth of democracy in the province of Alberta, and it's not just from these quarters that this information is coming. I think we owe it to the people of Alberta to demonstrate that we are in fact interested in a proper process and transparency that comes with using this Legislature as it was designed to be used. We can make some moves even in this session. We still have an opportunity, for example, with Public Accounts. We have an opportunity to perhaps amend how Public Accounts is run and how it casts a critical eye on the finances of the province, and we can do that tomorrow.

9:10

So I think, certainly, we do have lots of potential in this province. We have a lot of potential because we have such great citizens who are interested in the future. We have some resources that our coming our way at this moment. Let's make the best use of those things and not build our budgets in an ad hoc, sort of secretive way. Let's put it all out in the open for the people of Alberta to decide in the best possible way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a great privilege to stand and discuss estimates, Bill 51. I want to focus on a couple of departments, primarily Environment and Health, but will have a few comments about some others as well.

Clearly, the environment faces some serious challenges in the 21st century, and the goal of protecting and conserving the environment is a priority for most if not all Albertans. We've heard increasingly through surveys how they place this as a very high priority right next to health and education. The recognition that natural capital – that is, the water resources, forestry, wildlife, natural habitat, clean air – has a value inherent to it and must be balanced with the other resource needs and values is becoming increasingly pressing.

The importance of integrated land-use planning is another issue that highlights why Albertans feel that the future has to be addressed in a much more serious way and, in fact, that priority zones for planning need to be addressed. For example, a serious commitment to the eastern slopes as a recreation area, as a watershed, as a hunting and fishing area, as a tourism area has to be at least as . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has the floor.

Dr. Swann: We have to be thinking about the eastern slopes, in other words, as a vital area for natural capital. The degree to which we exploit natural resources over protecting some of this natural capital will be judged in the future, I think, in a harsh way.

We need stronger legislation rather than guidelines, as I mentioned earlier in the House, in relation to the reclamation of old industrial sites, oil and gas sites. It's a serious question to ask why there are so few prosecutions in the province in relation to the ongoing smaller and larger spills that go on across the province. We must send a clear message that the polluters pay, that they are not asked for and give an apology afterwards. They must be more than encouraged and educated and admonished. They must be fined to get the message that this is not acceptable in Alberta.

Sustainable development has established principles, and this government supported them over the last decade in writing. It's not clear how these are being measured, how these principles are being lived out, and for many Albertans there's a growing lack of confidence that we are balancing appropriately the long-term needs of the surface environment, the subsurface environment, and the people in relation to extraction of resources.

Reclamation, then, is a serious issue and will leave a legacy to our children. We must have an orphan fund similar to the oil industry in this province, a clean-up fund that's industry based, to address some of the public liability in many of the sites that now exist across the province and which will default to the public as a result of them leaving the business, becoming bankrupt, and abandoning their responsibility. We need regulations for more timely reclamation. We need Alberta Environment to have sufficient staff to inspect sites. They need more in the way of resources to do that. At the present time we rely on industry to report its own faults. This is a perilous course to take in terms of protecting the environment. We need Alberta Environment staff to evaluate before and after reclamation to ensure that the job has been done. We cannot rely on a consultant's report to assess and provide reclamation certificates that relieve companies of liability into the future without doing more on-site testing. Ten per cent of sites simply isn't good enough.

In relation to climate change Alberta has been recognized as the number one polluter in the country, and it's a shame that we have not seen a more proactive position and the setting of clear limits on air emissions. We have an international commitment. We simply have to do better. The Kyoto agreement is a baby step towards reducing our impact on the environment. We have to do at least as well as 6 per cent below 1990, and indeed we are increasing and are well above 25 per cent higher than the 1990 standard for greenhouse gas emissions. This cannot continue.

More and more scientists are clamouring for a stronger commitment as we see increasingly unstable weather patterns, increasing infectious diseases moving north, the dramatic changes in our Arctic, the flooding in some of the coastal communities in the south, the poorest countries who have the greatest to lose and the least resources to cope with some of the impacts of climate change. We have to do better than that in terms of our commitment to climate change. The U.S., in fact, is ahead of Canada in spite of not having made the commitment to get lower than the Kyoto accord. Why is that? Why is industry setting the agenda in Alberta for climate change? The government has been elected to be an intermediary between the private interest and the public interest.

I have a question for the Department of Environment around the carbon dioxide pipeline and the CO₂ injection plans. He has indicated, at least in the press, that \$1.5 billion will be committed to

that. We need to see a lot more evidence that the cost benefit is there, that the technology is there, and that the return on the investment will be worth it.

In relation to specific challenges in the environment one of the most pressing this season was Lake Wabamun, and we still don't know what that's going to cost to clean up. I think we need to know what kind of fines are going to be levied against the company and how the First Nations are dealing with that issue, how it's affecting their own lives and their businesses. I don't think we've had enough feedback and enough connections with First Nations around Lake Wabamun to understand that as well as we should.

I understand that the supplemental budgets this session related to increasing waste management contracts, and I'm pleased to see that there is a commitment to recycling and especially the e-cycling program. I understand that there are some real problems, though, around Rimbey and a real question about how much of the electronic waste is actually waste and how much of it could be reused, in fact, if they had the staffing to assess some of these computers and how they could be refurbished and for a very low cost returned to use, especially in some of the nongovernment organizations, some of the poorer areas of the country, and some of the poorer countries of the world. I hope that we can see some cost-benefit in investing in some better assessment of the electronics before they're actually recycled and deconstructed, which they may well need to be but in many cases could be reused with a little bit of technical support.

9:20

In relation to water protection we still see a lot more rhetoric than reality on the ground in terms of the Water for Life strategy. I heard from the minister that something like \$150 million were released to Alberta Environment for water programs. It's still not clear from the budget whether some of that is included in this supplemental budget or what the millions are going to be spent on. It's my understanding – and it's not defined anywhere – that much of this is going into water infrastructure and not into the Water for Life strategy per se but into water quality issues. If that's the case, we still have a long way to go to implementing the Water for Life strategy, which receives only \$5 million per year and is expected somehow to protect the quality and the ecosystems and the quantity of water into the distant future for the major river systems across this province. This is not a commitment to water conservation and protection. We need to do better than that.

We need better science. One of the issues that has increasingly raised its head is how well we're doing on groundwater and how soon we're going to get an accurate inventory of the groundwater in this province. It's clearly an issue across this country. One of the Senators, I believe, has recently asked for a commitment across the country, provincial and federal, to examine more carefully our groundwater resources and the serious implications global warming and climate change have for our water supplies into this coming decade.

We are anticipating a new water bill in the spring for another request for an interbasin transfer – I think that's a very serious proposal – into the special areas. Albeit the Minister of Finance's area, it has serious implications for the long-term sustainability of water in this province and the precedent that it sets about taking water to people instead of expecting people to live within their means, conserve, and commit to adequate in-stream flows and the priority for people to move towards the water instead of awaiting increasing technology and costs and infrastructure to take water to them. I need to see a lot more evidence that that is a cost-effective measure in the special areas.

New technologies in coal-bed methane have raised serious

questions about the long-term impacts on water supply, water quality, including southeastern Alberta. We have called for a moratorium to assess more clearly the longer term impacts on water quality and water quantity. Many, many Albertans have raised concerns and sent petitions around the issue of understanding better the groundwater and the potential for irreparably damaging that through some of the new technologies of the new nonconventional oil and gas development and, specifically, coal-bed methane.

In relation to health I wanted to mention a couple of issues. I was disappointed this year in relation to the negotiations with residents and interns in the hospital sector. For the second term in a row they were denied real meetings and substantive discussions around their contracts. This is very discouraging for the budding physicians in this province and not setting a good tone for attracting physicians to this province.

On the question of privatization and the third way we've seen a flip and a flop and another flip since this first began its discussions. After the May symposium the minister indicated that we were going to move more along the status quo. Then by October there was a clear discussion around increasing the rate of privatization, examining even the medical services that are covered under our present health care insurance plan. This was quickly cut off by the Premier. Now again it appears as if we are supporting and are in some ways aided by the Aon Corporation's assessment despite its clear conflict of interest and corruption charges both in Canada and the U.S. This is disturbing in terms of our future priority for the ministry of health.

People in Alberta are very concerned, as they should be, that this government does not know what it's doing in relation to health care. There's been no serious commitment to reform in the health care system, to looking at ways of improving team functioning in the workplace, to emphasizing primary health care and community health centres, to streamlining the administrative roles and responsibilities, and to critically analyzing the unhealthy workplaces that many of our health care workers are working in, that sap their energy and increase their stress levels.

All of these have to do with improving the health and the quality of care that we can expect from a publicly funded health care system, which most Albertans continue to see as a priority. There's been over the last decade a consistent erosion of public funding and a predictable demand, then, for alternatives, which this government has interpreted as a need for increased privatization, which will neither increase quality nor over the long term improve access but will increase the conflict of interest for physicians who are able to practise in both the public and the private sectors and will unfortunately be in a position of trying to judge what is best for their patient and at the same time judge what is best for their pocketbook. This is clearly untenable.

In relation to physiotherapy it's disappointing, again, that this eminently effective preventive mode has been delisted in terms of its funding by Alberta health care. This is a false economy, to be sure, and leaves seniors particularly vulnerable to less than adequate rehabilitation, less than adequate strength training, and increasingly vulnerable to falls and subsequent increased hospital use and health care costs, not to mention premature death. Physiotherapy is an essential medical service that should be funded through the public purse, and it should be seen as what it is: an investment in people, an investment in health and well-being, an investment in their full functioning and contributing to society.

Just a couple more comments, then, Mr. Chairman. I've had a number of letters from persons who care for persons with developmental disabilities increasingly feeling the pinch in relation to salaries that are well below what they can reasonably live on in a dignified way of life. I hope that this government can look at the

crucial role and the vital caring that persons caring for persons with developmental disabilities are playing in our culture and look at a serious review of funding for salaries for those who care for persons with developmental disabilities, a very special service, a very special population.

In relation to Agriculture, Food and Rural Development I had a couple of questions from their supplemental budget that had to do with continued public money sustaining game ranches that have no viable market and the question of public money increasingly going to game ranchers who clearly cannot maintain a reasonable economic balance, in part due only to chronic wasting disease, which has meant the death knell for elk velvet. It has meant increasingly that even the meat market has been threatened.

But quite apart from that, it has never been successful in this country or beyond. It's not clear and never has been from the budgets I've seen – and I'm not sure whether it's in the supplemental budget for the CAIS support program – whether any of this CAIS support money is going to game ranches. That's a serious question for us as a government since we have on behalf of the people of Alberta financially supported game ranching in this province despite the fact that it's threatening wildlife and, potentially, human health with chronic wasting disease.

That's all I have at this time, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll try to keep my comments brief. I'm going to guess at this point that I could go the full 20 minutes; I'm not sure. I might just be the last speaker before this gets voted this evening.

I just wanted to acknowledge that custom would normally dictate that the Finance critic would lead the debate on behalf of the Official Opposition on Bill 51. Last evening when this bill opened in second reading, I chose not to do that, Mr. Chairman. I had a sense of duty to my colleagues in the opposition caucus who had not had an opportunity to speak to the supplementary supply estimates in committee. There were several of them who were here last night particularly for that reason because they had departments that hadn't been addressed at all.

9:30

Just as an example, we had last night the critic for Community Development here, who was hoping to have an opportunity to speak to the \$27 million in supplementary supply that hadn't been addressed yet. We had someone here hoping to speak to the Municipal Affairs supplementary supply of \$138 million and our critic for Seniors and Community Supports hoping to speak to the \$109 million that was being asked for. Unfortunately, despite my efforts to give them as much time as possible, the government chose last night to take advantage of a standing order, Standing Order 61(3), to throttle debate in second on this bill.

It was unfortunate that they chose to take advantage of that. Nevertheless, they did, and it just lent even more credence to the complaints that a number of opposition members have voiced both within the Official Opposition caucus and the third party, and I believe even the member from the Alliance Party has mentioned it as well. That is the very short amount of time that has been dedicated to debating some awfully large numbers. I'll quickly reiterate: six hours in supplementary estimates for \$1.8 billion; \$300 million an hour, or to break it down even closer, \$5 million a minute. Even at that I don't think most Albertans can quite comprehend the amount of money that was being debated in this Assembly and how quickly we were going through it and, in fact, the number of

departments that were receiving no debate at all, Mr. Chairman. So that is a frustration for us.

I'm still sorry, despite the fact that it looks like we're going to manage to conclude debate this evening within the allotted time. I'm disappointed for my colleagues that were here last night who had hoped to have an opportunity to speak to this bill in second reading and never got that. Unfortunately, now they're going to have some questions that may never get asked, and that is a tragedy, I believe, for the people of Alberta, who certainly have every right and every expectation to have an understanding of how and why their dollars, their very hard-earned tax dollars, are being spent.

Mr. Chairman, as to this particular bill, Bill 51, I think that this speaks to a much larger issue. Already, I've only been here for a year, and I find myself using the same arguments that I used in bill debate back in the spring; that is, it seems to me that year after year this government either intentionally or otherwise underestimates the amount of revenue that they're going to take in. I certainly can't say that they don't spend enough because the budget that was passed in the spring was \$26 billion, substantially more than any budget that this House has ever passed before.

Notwithstanding that, here we are only a scant six months later debating Bill 51, which is going to supply the government with another \$1.8 billion on top of the \$26 billion that we approved in the spring. As I said, we're only six months into the year. Lord knows that when we're back here in March and we look at a further supplementary supply bill, which we all know we will because the Premier has already acknowledged that he has committed more than \$7 billion of the expected \$10 billion surplus – so we know for sure that there will be another supplementary bill in the spring. I don't know how big it's going to be. I'm not sure if anybody on the other side of the House would be willing to share that number with me now. I suspect not. But it's going to be big.

It speaks to the much larger problem. Most economists will say that if you've got surpluses year after year after year, you're either not spending enough money or taxing too much. Clearly, one of those two has to be the case here. It would appear to me as if we're spending enough money, so I have to wonder on behalf of all Albertans if we're not taxing too much.

I know that the \$400 rebate program, which is being discussed under Bill 43, is meant in some way to give something back to Albertans, although it's very, very controversial, and several members on the other side have admitted that at least half of the correspondence that they're getting into their offices is against the idea of the rebates. We had one member, the Member for Lethbridge-West, acknowledge that 90 per cent of the correspondence into his office is against the idea of the rebates. So I think that that's clearly not what Albertans are looking for in the way of getting something back.

The Official Opposition has talked for some time now, going back prior to last fall's election, about the idea of eliminating health care premiums for all Albertans. I think that that is something that would give a significant tax break to everybody, and it would be something that would be ongoing. I think that Albertans have a right to expect that.

It's been suggested by some that we can't afford that, and I take exception to that comment. Eight hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars a year is what it would cost this province to eliminate health care premiums for everybody. Clearly, based on the surplus history in this province, that's quite affordable, quite sustainable.

We have had over the last six years, not counting this year, \$22 billion in surplus in this province, and more than \$15 billion of that, Mr. Chairman, has been unbudgeted surplus. What that means is

that at least \$7 billion in the last six years has been budgeted surplus. Every year we budget for a surplus. Every year, including the year 2001 with the 9/11 tragedies in the States, we have managed to have at least a \$1 billion surplus in this province. So, clearly, if the decision was made, if the political will was there to give all Albertans a tax break by permanently immediately eliminating the health care premium tax, we could do that today, and we could sustain it. I think that most Albertans would very much appreciate that.

Bill 51, again, \$1.8 billion in supplementary supply. I'm just going to once again acknowledge the Municipal Affairs minister for his \$138 million that he's asking for in supplementary supply. Every single penny of that is for disaster relief. Mr. Chairman, I would submit to this House that if we're going to have supplementary supply and if we're going to be spending money outside of the budget, that's the sort of thing that I think Albertans expect supplementary supply to be used for. That's the sort of thing that Albertans can understand. Clearly, you can't predict when there's going to be severe flooding, a 100-year flood for the second time in a short period of years in southern Alberta. You can't predict when there's going to be a major forest fire that causes hundreds of millions of dollars of damage. Those are the sorts of things that Albertans understand that the government may need money for outside of the budget process.

Based on the comments that I've seen in the media, based on the letters that I've received in my office, and based on the comments I've had with members of the community on the street in my constituency, clearly Albertans expect the government to be able to come up with a budget plan and stick to it. If we have things like hospitals and schools that are so desperately needed, those should be in the budget. We shouldn't be literally spending every single extra penny as it comes in. Again, I think history would dictate that, by and large, that's the plan that this government has: to spend every single extra penny as it comes out of the ground.

In my estimation – and many agree with me; in fact, the other night when I mentioned this in this House, I saw many heads nodding on the other side of the House – that is no plan at all. Albertans deserve better than a government that simply spends every extra penny as it becomes available. Again, I'm not necessarily disputing the need for hospitals and schools, although I would question whether or not we really need two new hospitals so close together – Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan – when even the Premier of this province has admitted that that was a political decision and that one hospital would have been sufficient.

In fact, it makes me wonder what the reaction of members opposite might have been if the Prime Minister of this country had made some sort of an announcement, let's say – I don't know – a contract to build airplanes, and he had given one contract to one company in Winnipeg and another one to a company in Saskatoon and suggested that the only reason he let two contracts was because it was a political decision. It's just not a good enough reason for the taxpayers of this province.

9:40

My real concern, I suppose, when it comes to the surplus spending is that, again, history dictates that year after year we go through this same process, and what it illustrates to me, as I said, is that there is no plan, although certainly I've suggested before to the members of this government that if they use the word "plan" often enough, perhaps they'll start to believe that they do have one. If you're going to have surpluses year after year after year, not counting this year when the surplus is expected to be \$10 billion or more, we've been averaging about \$4 billion in surplus a year, Mr. Chairman, and there's no realistic reason to expect that that's not going to continue

for a number of years, based on history. If that's the case, then Albertans deserve to know that there is a plan not just for how to have spent this year's \$10 billion surplus. My God, let's start thinking about how we're going to deal with the surplus next year, if it should happen to be \$8 billion or \$10 billion, and in the year '07-08 and in '08-09.

This is an incredible opportunity for Albertans, and it's not good enough just to simply have the Premier flying around the province in a government jet . . . [interjection] It's not a jet. You're right. It's a turboprop, I guess, but it certainly does allow him to smoke.

It's just not good enough to have him flitting about the province in the government turboprop, announcing hundreds of millions of dollars day after day, and then bringing it to the House after the fact in the form of a supplementary bill, and it's already gone. Albertans had no input into that. There's an argument on the other side that every dollar gets passed in the House, but of course we've already talked about the fact that it gets passed in the House at the rate of \$5 million a minute. That's, again, just not good enough for Albertans.

So I would strongly urge all of the members of this House to start thinking about the future of this province and not just the next quarter and how many millions or in this case – we're fortunate this year – how many billions of dollars might be available to spend on some pet project in the next quarter. Let's start talking about the next quarter century or the next two quarter centuries. Let's look at what this province could be if, rather than coming to this House with an appropriation bill every six months that's worth \$2 billion or more, we actually had a plan for how to invest those dollars wisely, if we had a plan for how to make sure that when the oil is gone or when it's not \$60 a barrel any longer or when there's no market for oil anymore and alternative technologies have been advanced and people aren't knocking down our doors to get our oil. Let's have a plan to make sure that all Albertans will continue to benefit from the great opportunity that we have today, as opposed to simply the bricks and mortar, ad hoc spending that we're doing right now.

Another thing I didn't touch on but that certainly causes me concern is that there's an awful lot of money in here – I believe my colleague from Edmonton-Centre mentioned this the other night – for bricks and mortar when it comes to health care and education, hospitals and schools, but very, very, very little in the way of supplementary spending to address the ongoing operation of those facilities, to address staffing, to address sustainability of those facilities to make sure that, you know, they don't end up as boarded-up brick edifices to this government, as we saw happen in the mid-1990s after the so-called Klein revolution, if I can call it that without contravening House rules. I'm not sure. I'm not meaning to name a member, but certainly the media and I think the public refer to it as that.

We ended up with a lot of the government buildings that were constructed in the late '80s and early '90s being literally boarded up, sold off. I'm not sure if they were sold off for a dollar, but they were certainly sold off, many of them, below market value. As a result, I think Alberta taxpayers took a big hit for that. I would hate to see our legacy from this tremendous opportunity that we have today be boarded-up, brick buildings in towns and communities across this province, and that be all we have left to show for the fact that oil was \$60 or \$80 a barrel and natural gas was \$12 or \$13 a gigajoule. It reminds me again of the bumper sticker that many of us sported on the backs of our vehicles in the mid-1980s: "Please, God, let there be another oil boom. I promise not to piss it all away next time." My fear is, Mr. Chairman, that if we're not careful, we're going to find ourselves with that bumper sticker on our cars again. That would be a travesty for all Albertans, and I would hate to see that.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought that I was seven down the way. I just want to comment a little bit more. I was kind of rushed on a few of the things I wanted to cover before our evening break.

Going back to the plan again, Mr. Chairman, and what we're doing. It seems like this is a classic case where the money is literally burning a hole in our pocket. I'm very concerned that we don't have an actual formula set up for what we will do. It was almost a blessing to have the debt for so many years because we had to be responsible, and we understood that we needed to pay that off.

Mr. R. Miller: That's when they had a plan.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. Now that that's paid off, we need to pass a new bill on the percentage that we're going to put into the heritage trust fund. What I'd really like them to understand – and I'll refer back to the Scouts. I was at a youth conference with Scouts a while back, and one of the speakers got up and talked about the importance of restraint. He handed out a package of candy worth \$5 to each of the young men and told them: "Hold this. You can't open it yet." At that point he said, "I'll give each of you the opportunity: you can have the candy, or I'll give you \$20." We were going to be out there for a week. Out of that group of seven or eight kids there were a couple that wanted the candy although it was only worth \$5 and they could have had \$20 to buy it in a week's time. It seems like that's the case that we've got here. We've got \$1.8 billion that could do a lot for our province, yet we won't be patient enough to sit and think and put a plan out on what really would be the best value for those dollars spent.

I just would really urge the government to slow down. I mean, we've done this already, but we're going to have a surplus in the next quarter and the quarter after that, to start putting it away into the heritage trust fund. We talk about inflation-proofing it. Well, it should be at \$50 billion, a hundred billion dollars, not at the \$12 billion, and there's nothing there.

The one area I also want to talk a little bit on and I referred to just for a few minutes is the superb effort that we get from the young people in rural Alberta. They don't always get the curriculum and the opportunities that the bigger cities have, and it's a concern in my area as they try to balance their education funding. It would be great to see, whether you had it in a scholarship fund or something set up for rural schools, that when they achieve such accomplishments as Raymond did in winning the tier 1 football here in the province, they receive some sort of incentive and reward for their hard work and achievements. It would be very pleasing, I think, to many rural areas if we were to recognize more and to reward them with extra funding for curriculum, extracurricular sports, and other areas where they put a great deal of work.

I just want to refer once again to the little town of Warner and not enough kids there in the school. They worked very hard. They've started that girls' hockey school there. It would be a wonderful addition to our province. It would be the gem of Canada, a growing ground for the women's Olympic hockey team. We seem to be missing some of these ideal opportunities. Whether they put in a \$2 million or \$8 million facility, it would be something that we would have for many, many years into the future and look back on with fond memories, as we have with many different institutes that we've started and seen the benefit of as we go.

9:50

There are just so many opportunities. It's hard to believe with

\$1.8 billion what we really could be doing if we were to sit back and have a long, hard debate and put everything on the table and say, "Well, here's all the projects that we're looking at," whether it's highway 63 twinning or the Warner hockey school, and really evaluate them and see where we can benefit Albertans. You know, is it increased research on brain surgery or helping the autistic? There are so many areas that we could, and I feel that we should, be putting these dollars toward. So I once again would say that I wish we'd take caution. We're going to have billions more coming in in the next months, years to come. It would be great to start building up a war chest and really have a priority list on where we want to spend this money.

With that, I'll turn the time over to someone else to share their ideas on where possibly we could be utilizing this \$1.8 billion and that coming in the future.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd be remiss if I didn't bring out the infrastructure shortcomings of Calgary-Varsity, specifically the University of Calgary. The university has made the decision – basically it's been forced to make the decision – to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars for a series of projects, among them the digital library that's going to serve all postsecondary institutions through the SuperNet and the various linkages. The university shouldn't have to be going into further debt to promote postsecondary education.

It concerns me, and here would be an area where I'd like to help out the Minister of Advanced Education. The 80 and a half million dollar figure for postsecondary facilities infrastructure is not going to realize the 15,000 new seats by 2007, which the department has promised, without more investment in postsecondary infrastructure, whether it be at the University of Calgary, Mount Royal, SAIT, NAIT, throughout the province. Unless we get under way with creating the infrastructure to house these extra students, this goal of 15,000 basically a year from now is not going to happen. So I would like to see more spending in that particular area.

The government has recently acknowledged the University of Alberta's purchase of the former Bay building to have a downtown campus, and that's a very worthwhile expenditure. The ministry has also supplied some money to Bow Valley College for its extension, but it's about half of what is required. I would like to see an expanded downtown campus, kind of one-stop shopping. You could have representation from Mount Royal, from the University of Calgary, from the Alberta College of Art and Design, from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in that expanded central campus so that from a transportation point of view all services could be centrally located and easier transfers from one area to the other.

My concern is also that if by 2020 we're going to have 60,000 spaces, which are very much in need, we have to see that infrastructure under way. Again, I refer to the cranes as being the example of upcoming infrastructure. They're in very short supply in Calgary. I would like to offer to the Minister of Advanced Education my support for increasing the infrastructure budget. Let's get students into those seats. Let's turn out more postsecondary graduates, and let's give opportunities for high school students to a greater degree to access postsecondary opportunities within this province, whether it be in Calgary, Edmonton, or in satellite campuses throughout.

Thank you very much.

[The clauses of Bill 51 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 47

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered on this bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, these are mostly housekeeping issues, I believe. It seems to me that this bill requires a clear statement of its purpose, its mission. That would be one thing I would really like to see done and clearly stated.

One of the objectives I'd like to add to the bill, if I may suggest, is to inform students and the public about how government works in Alberta: the machinery, how it operates. That kind of endeavour would be very helpful.

On the matter of elections, which I believe is item 16(1), it says, "Within 3 months of the coming into force of this Act, the Speaker must appoint 7 former MLAs, who shall constitute the Board." Why don't we just have an election based on all the MLAs available in the province and have a board selected out of all MLAs? Just an ordinary election. I don't understand why this has to be appointed by one person. Who does it? Who does the appointment? Let's have an election.

An Hon. Member: The Speaker.

Mr. Flaherty: Well, the Speaker. Let's clarify that if that's the case, and I still would object to that if that's the case.

In terms of the mission statement, I'd like to see a mission statement because I believe it would clarify the role of this group, the Alberta association of former MLAs, and interface to make sure that there's no conflict with other groups in the province such as Rotary, Chambers of Commerce, Lions Club, et cetera, et cetera.

Those are three or four things I'd like to see addressed in this bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung previously provided to all members an amendment. I don't know that you've assigned a particular number or letter to it, but it's the one that all members have on their desks, which reads: "All former MLAs are eligible to become members of the Association in accordance with any bylaws of the Association not less than one year after they cease to be MLAs." This was a substitution for section 6(1). At this point there has been no discussion. It was introduced, but it's yet to be debated.

The Chair: Hon. member, sorry to interrupt you, but there is an amendment on the floor, amendment A1.

Mr. Chase: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Just to refresh everyone's memory, A1 was introduced just before we rose and reported the last time this was debated. You all have copies of that. They have been distributed.

Did you want to speak on the amendment?

10:00

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. What we're trying to achieve with this amendment is that you don't automatically become a member of the club, that there has to be at least call it a cooling-off period, a period of separation of at least one year before you qualify for this club. The concern is that there needs to be some sort of distance between being in a role of power and being in a club which may have considerably more power to it than what would first appear in Bill 47. The feeling is that there needs to be that period of separation. You don't slide from being an elected member right into what could be a very powerful association. We suggest that there be a year cooling-off period when a person leaves the department before they can seek a position of influence again with the government. That is the basis of this particular amendment.

I would invite any discussion from other members on the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In addressing the amendment, I can understand that there might be merit for a cooling-off period where there might be personal financial gain as a result of a former position held or where there might be political gain. But this bill states very clearly in section 2 that it is a "non-profit body corporate," and section 3(1) states that it is "non-partisan," so I see no need for any cooling-off period. I've never heard of an alumni association that would institute a cooling-off period of six months. It seems to me that once you're an alumnus, you're an alumnus.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just briefly, I'd like to point out that one of the things that this amendment would do, if it were to be adopted by this House, is set a tremendous example not only for this Assembly but for this province, I believe. We in the Official Opposition have spoken many times very vociferously about the need for a cooling-off period in the public service. Perhaps this Assembly could draw a page from the federal Conservative election campaign handbook, which is calling for an extended cooling-off period not only for MPs but also senior officials in the federal government. This, I believe, would perhaps send a really positive message to the government of the day in Alberta as to the value of having a cooling-off period when ones leaves a position of high authority.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've had the privilege of speaking with the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. It appears from speaking with him that it's all in good intention, but I guess, for the record, I'd like to put a few things on there. I, too, agree with a cooling-off period, but if, in fact, the bill was to say that if an alumni member was not going to be running again, I believe that would be different. I'm very concerned, Mr. Chairman, that this is nothing but a possibility for displaced MLAs from the government to stay closer and receive some added help in travelling around. Nonprofit doesn't mean that it doesn't accept or receive any money and I'm – it seems awfully noisy in here. I just wanted to see what people were talking about.

The Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner has the floor.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have great concern that this could possibly be an extension to the government in power in doing work in promoting this government, that the costs to cover expenses in other areas could in fact be covered by taxpayers' money. I would feel much better if, in fact, it was to say that this is at arm's length and that there would be no money received from the government that would entail any tax dollars and that it would only come from actual people that are members of this association. They wouldn't be going to the government saying, "Well, we want to promote this or promote that in this area, this educational program," and say that this is non-profitable.

We have many nonprofit organizations in our country now where 80 per cent of the money raised goes to running those organizations. I think that loses the spirit. I understand that that's not the intent of this, but I have those concerns. I think that it could be amended and covered in there to make sure that this really is a nonprofit organization, that they raise their own money, that there's no appealing to the government or the Speaker's office for funding to promote good government in any way.

I guess, like I say, once again, if they were to say that this was for alumni, that those MLAs aren't going to be coming back – they'd have to have a cooling-off period before they'd want to run again. In my own area I run into this all the time and was confronted by a former MLA asking what I was doing at a function because he thought that I didn't belong there while he was being recognized by the minister. I found that somewhat shocking.

I personally have concerns about, you know, about what will and could happen if, in fact, they have an association now to actually give them . . .

An Hon. Member: Self-promotion.

Mr. Hinman: . . . self-promotion in those areas.

I hope that the intent of this bill is truly what it is and that perhaps we would tighten up a few of the lines to clarify that there will be no money coming from the Speaker's office or any government area. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Yes, hon. Chair. Because we have a number of amendments to discuss, I move that we go to the question at this point.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View on the bill.

Dr. Swann: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to suggest another amendment to Bill 47, Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, that it be amended in section 4(2)(a) by striking out the word "government." I have the appropriate number of copies here.

The Chair: We will refer to the amendment that's being distributed as amendment A2.

Would the Member for Calgary-Mountain View care to proceed?

10:10

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Clearly, one of the key issues for us as members of the Assembly is to build public trust. One of the concerns I and my colleagues have about this bill is that

it may not have gone far enough in building public trust around the formation of this association. Building on the discussions that were earlier expressed, it appears – and it may not be the intent of the bill – that this association can go to government for benefits. I don't think that's an appropriate capacity for this association.

If we want to be seen to be independent and associated amongst ourselves for the purposes of building an understanding and contributing to the public good, to have the appearance that we can then come back to government and be funded again, whether it's for trips or whether it's other activities that we want to undertake, to have the word "government" in there is unfortunate. I think we can accomplish the same goals for what I think are the true purposes of that association without having recourse to government, which may be perceived to be self-interest and not helpful to building the public trust.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose on amendment A2.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can understand the comments from the hon. member, but section 4(2)(a) addresses some of the ways that the association could give benefit, not get benefit, so that they can "initiate, finance and administer programs and activities relevant to its objects," and of course, that means that it must be nonpartisan, "including programs and activities by government" such as scholarships, for example. If they would like to contribute to scholarships for our pages, for example, they would be able to do that. If they wanted to contribute to scholarships for students in universities run by government, they would be able to do that. I see no problem there at all.

It seems to me that this is being interpreted the wrong way. It's not going to government to get; it's going to government to give, to participate in any programs such as scholarship programs or other types of programs for the public good that the association may want to contribute to, so I would vote against the amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on the amendment A2.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just be very brief. I really believe that this association should not be in any way, shape, or form connected to the government. After all, we are talking about former MLAs, which makes them only ordinary citizens after they've left here. I don't believe that they should be connected to the government.

I believe that the concept is excellent, but if it is so good, then it really should not require public dollars to keep it going. If they want to have scholarships, it's a great idea, but I think two or three good golf tournaments would raise those kinds of dollars without being connected to the government. That's why I would support this amendment to remove "government" from this bill.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner on amendment A2.

Mr. Hinman: Yeah. I'm just not sure what the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose means when he says "they." I take it that "they" is the government and not "they" as the MLAs. I, too, would support this amendment. It's critical that this is nonpartisan. If you're at the Rotary or any other club, they don't have connections with the government. I, too, am very worried where this will lead to and am concerned. I think that we really should look at this

amendment and realize that for the good of the association, being a separate identity from the government the association would be bona fide as a more credible association that's out there really trying to do good, not promoting the current government in power, which it seems to me it has the ability of doing.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've tabled another suggested amendment to Bill 47, Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act. In this case in section 8(1) I'm amending it by striking out "appointed or holding office" and in section 16(3) by striking out "appointed or" after "until their successors in office have been."

The intent of this amendment, these two changes, is that again there could be a perception that if the Alberta government, even in the first instance, is appointing the officers to this organization, there could be a conflict of interest. There could be a perceived benefit to accrue from those who are in government and who immediately leaving government are then appointed to a body that potentially could gain benefits from their association with government.

I would ask you to seriously consider this in the context of building public trust. This is not going to change the ultimate purpose of the organization, but both of these amendments are intended to not only protect the public interest and the public trust but to be seen to be addressing concerns that some of us have about the possibility of abusing this organization for self-gain.

The Chair: Did the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose wish to respond?

Mr. Johnson: Well, thank you for the comments from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I guess it depends upon how much we want to legislate what this organization can do. It was not my intent that we would legislate everything, and the bill leaves it up to the association to include in their bylaws just how their directors are to be engaged, whether they're to be elected or appointed. It seems to me that's as far as I would want to go in terms of dictating or giving guidelines to the association. In other words, there is some flexibility, and it's assumed that the association would address the situation in their bylaws.

Dr. Swann: It may be a misinterpretation on my part, but it appears that the government of the day will appoint the first board of this organization. That's where the conflict of interest is. The members themselves should be electing or identifying their own leadership. You're prescribing that in the existing act.

Mr. Johnson: It is not the government of the day; it's the Speaker of the Legislature. There's quite a difference.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner on amendment A3.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it has been said very clearly. The perception here is very much that this is partisan. Perhaps those on the government side don't see that as partisan, but the public and those on the other side – I just have never known of an organization that's a subcommittee from government that would say, whether it's Rotary or something else, that we're going to have our first president appointed from somewhere else. If these people are joining this association, it only makes sense that those who are

there, just as we elect the Speaker, would elect the president or the chairman of that association. I see no reason for outside interference in appointing who is actually going to lead that association.

The perception here truly is the question of what the motive is. This is what brings all of it into a very, well, questionable area. What is the motive of this? I believe that the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose is doing and wanting to do it on that level, but the way the wording is, it's very much dictated by the Speaker of the day. It just doesn't seem clear, and I would hope that all members would look at this and vote against the Speaker appointing those first members. It just isn't necessary. The MLAs that want to join that have the ability within themselves to nominate and elect their board, and that's where it should be. I really would ask that all members seriously look at this and that we accept this amendment.

10:20

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

An Hon. Member: Okay, be brief.

Ms Pastoor: In your dreams.

The last section of this bill is 17, and it says that "this Act comes into force on Proclamation," which to me means almost immediately when this is being passed. Therefore, this Speaker of the House definitely is the Speaker of the government. I have never in my knowledge known any government, either federal or provincial, that actually has a Speaker elected that doesn't come from the government side of the House. So I find that comment perhaps a little discouraging.

I really don't think that if you have a group of former MLAs who are now ordinary citizens, that because they've had the experience of being MLAs, they are totally incapable of sitting down in a room and electing their own presidents and their own vice-presidents and whoever else they want to go on this board. To have someone appoint them I think is an absolute insult to the people that want to join this organization. I'm not saying that I don't want to join it. I think it's a great concept. What I don't like is the way it's being presented.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on amendment A3.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. If the House in general hasn't seen the direction we're going, we're trying to have a very definite separation, instead of between state and church, in this case between the state and the club, between the government and this club concept. What we're concerned about is that the Speaker basically is the key government representative, and we don't want to see the government or the Speaker meddling in the affairs of a private club because there could be undue influence brought to bear. What we're trying to do is basically cut that umbilical cord, remove the intravenous tube which funnels directly from the government to this club. The two entities need to be separated, and hopefully the importance of that separation and being seen to be separated is as important to the government members as it is to us. It needs to be independent and able to make its own decisions, not appointed ones from some outside government source.

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I've been listening to the

members opposite on this particular matter. Clearly, they have a concern with respect to this particular provision. I by no means ascribe to the idea of cutting umbilical cords, but it seems to me appropriate that bylaws can provide for the appointment of the first officers and directors. They can be elected from the people who join if that, in fact, is what the bylaws say. To my knowledge that is what happens with new societies or new companies. Those people who are members of that organization band together, they have an election, and they appoint the first group that are going to manage or direct it.

I think that the point made by the members opposite with respect to this is quite appropriate. It is not necessary that the Speaker appoint the first directors. The bylaws can provide for an election. I must admit that it's not often that I listen to the other side and am convinced by what they have to say, but on this particular matter I do support this amendment.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:24 p.m.]

Ms Blakeman: I'm willing to put forward a motion to shorten the division bells to two minutes, if that's acceptable to the Assembly.

[Unanimous consent granted]

[Two minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

For the motion:

Abbott	Fritz	Oberg
Amery	Haley	Oberle
Blakeman	Hancock	Pastoor
Brown	Hinman	Rogers
Calahasen	Johnston	Stelmach
Chase	Liepert	Stevens
DeLong	Lindsay	Swann
Doerksen	Melchin	Taylor
Flaherty	Miller, R.	VanderBurg

Against the motion:

Danyluk	Knight	Ouellette
Goudreau	Lund	Strang
Griffiths	Magnus	Webber
Johnson		

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 10
---------	----------	--------------

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

10:30

Ms Pastoor: I don't want to think I'm on a roll, but I'd like to move an amendment to Bill 47 which will be known as A4. I'd like to change 5.1: "The Association is not eligible for grants or other funding from the Government of Alberta or from a Committee or Office of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta."

I think that this amendment is fairly clear in what I'm intending here. Again, it's from our former conversation on the fact that we really have to keep this group of now ordinary, unemployed, perhaps, citizens in a group that wants to do something really, really positive with the knowledge that we have been privileged to learn in

this House, for which we were well paid to learn in this House, and disseminate. Now we can go out and disseminate that with even, if I might say, an altruistic view of how we can share this knowledge with whomever. But we have to do it as a solid group, that we stand alone.

So this is just one more step to keep the division very clear from the group of the former MLAs and the government of the day.

The Chair: Anyone else on amendment A4?

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Chairman, section 14(1) says that "the Association is not an agent of the Government and the directors and employees of the Association are not part of the public service of Alberta." Therefore, the government has no obligation or commitment to this organization. It seems to me that to restrict them in such a way that they cannot even have an office or a room here in Edmonton is going a little bit far and is a little bit picky because I suppose that you could say that that is, you know, government contributing something to their cause.

I vote against this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again I have to emphasize that we are under scrutiny as never before in the country as government members. The whole question of self-interest, of benefits from association with very powerful positions and friends and connections in government: this will not fly with most of my constituents in terms of the opportunity that it presents for the organization to gain from previous connections with this government and actually receive money from this government. It is not acceptable.

If we believe that the federal government has not been true in honouring its commitment to the public good at this time, we have to believe that we are setting the stage for very similar criticism, very similar abuse if we include the possibility of getting money from this government for former MLAs. It just doesn't wash.

Mr. Hinman: I also would like to talk in favour of this amendment, that it's the perception. Every time this association does something and receives money from the government, it's going to be looked on with a tainted view. In order to be above reproach, I feel that this is a common-sense thing. Again, let's do the right thing and cut ties with the government in funding so that it is clean and that we're raising the money charitably on our own, out doing good works, and not going to the government and saying: "Oh, we've got connections. We can get you something." That's going to be the perception on this.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. The members of this House collectively demonstrated their intelligence tonight in passing the last amendment, which clearly separated government influence, whether it be the government itself or the Speaker, from this organization, this club. We are all capable as elected individuals of putting forward good ideas without connecting to the government financial pipeline.

If this organization is to achieve any independent benefits and be a spokesperson for a variety of activities throughout this province, a sort of mentorship group, then it cannot rely on the apron strings of the government. It must be not only independent; it must be perceived to be independent. If there is a financial connection, finance equals influence. Let's cut that influence, potential or

otherwise. Let's remain separate. It should not be funded by the taxpayer's dollar. It should be free of government influence, and that's what this amendment is trying to achieve: independence.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: On the bill, the Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Through the appropriate process of notification of amendments I am moving on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung an amendment to section 3(1)(e). Prior to discussing it, if I could have the page give a copy to the desk and copies to all members, and then we'll give the members a chance to discuss it.

Thank you.

The Chair: We will refer to this amendment as amendment A5. Please proceed, hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. The objection that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung brought in in this particular amendment is to find out how absolutely self-serving the idea of "to protect and promote the interests of former MLAs" is. When we are either defeated or we resign, to a large extent I would hope that we're on our own, that we've broken that connection between the government and the gravy train. This business of "protect and promote": what I'm concerned about is basically that we give sort of a government seal to what I would call the equivalent of Mattel's Ken and Barbie inaction figures. In other words, we're allowing people to maintain that handout. We're still connected to the government either through influence or through financial arrangements.

10:40

This notion of "protect and promote the interests of former MLAs": is that at the expense of the taxpayer? To what extent do we protect and promote our own self-interests? If there has to be a connection to the government to stand up as the shield to protect our former interests, then I believe that we have to stop this train. At some point we have to stand on our own. We have to be reliant. We have a very financially sound pension arrangement. Let the members achieve their own independent standing without protecting and promoting our own self-interests within this club, not at the expense of the people.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I was offended about the gravy train, and perhaps Members' Services needs to address something if they're on a gravy train over there. We've got crumbs in other places.

I'd like the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose to explain the phrase "to protect and promote the interests of former MLAs." I believe that what he's trying to say there is that if your interest is in zero or net metering for electricity or something else, you might want to promote those things. But the wording there just seems to be offensive, that it's about us. This whole association should be about trying to make Alberta better.

It just seemed to me like we should be striking that because it's in contrast with the first four points on what we're trying to do and build, you know: good spirit amongst all former MLAs, working

with the community, and promoting other people interested in serving in government. So I think I will vote in favour of this amendment, wishing to have it struck, just again on the perception and what we're trying to accomplish here. It seems counterproductive.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Chairman, I think that I don't interpret this the same way as I'm hearing. It's kind of a motherhood statement really: "to protect and promote the interests of former MLAs." I see the interest, for example, as being interested in good parliamentary democracy, things like that. I don't see that it's such a controversial statement at all. It is the same statement that's in the Quebec bill, the Ontario bill, and the B.C. bill. They all have the same thing. I don't really see that it's derogatory in any way.

I'll vote against the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 47 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report bills 47 and 51.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Ms Haley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 51. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 47. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the House adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:48 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, November 30, 2005** 1:30 p.m.
Date: 20051130
[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Grant that we the members of our province's Legislature fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all of our people. Let us be guided by our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce someone who is very familiar to those who were serving in this Assembly prior to November 22 of last year. Although she now resides in the Premier's constituency, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce my predecessor as the MLA for Calgary-West from 1997 to 2004, Karen Kryczka.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and all members of the Legislative Assembly four guests this afternoon. Sometime ago my guests attended the 12th annual Zep classic golf tournament and silent auction, with the charity being the Zebra society for abused children. They bid on and won a lunch with me, and it has only taken us two years to co-ordinate all our schedules and honour that prize. I'm pleased that my guests, Audrey Poliakiwski, Bill Poliakiwski, Eugene Dmytriw, and Marcia Arnot, were finally able to join me today. It was a very enjoyable lunch, and I certainly hope it was worth the wait. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Legislature.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you a fairly large group, 104 visitors, from the great city of St. Albert, just north of us. There are about 100 bright, capable students from the Muriel Martin school accompanied by dedicated, hard-working teachers and a caring, devoted group of parents. I'll go through the teachers first: Mrs. Rhonda Surmon, Mr. Rick Lof, Mrs. Katie Boyd, Mr. Ryan Mooney. The parent helpers are Mr. Martyn Piper, Mrs. Crystal Karbonik, Mrs. Susan Jackson, Mrs. Heidi Brett, Mr. Ross Newton, Mrs. Brenda Clark, Mrs. Susan Kamminga, Mr. Jack Dunnigan, Mrs. Patti Boucher, Mrs. Tracy MacLeod, Mrs. Cherylyn Thorsley, and Mr. Jeff Hebner. They are in both galleries, I believe, of the Legislature. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, have your guests arrived?

Ms Blakeman: No, they haven't. They're coming in at 2 o'clock, so if I may introduce them following question period.

The Speaker: Sure.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Craig Miller, who is seated in the public gallery. Craig is the author of his first novel, *Against the Strength of Night*, which was just published. Craig was born in Halifax, but he grew up in Edmonton and attended Old Scona high school and the University of Alberta. He's currently working on two works of fiction, one in the fantasy genre. Craig is the oldest son of Rhea Jansen and her husband, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I'd ask Craig to rise and receive the warm welcome of all members of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Pat Spady. Pat is a physical therapist who lives near Lamont, Alberta. She has organized a series of health care vigils here at the Alberta Legislature over the past three weeks to help protect public medicare. We appreciate her dedication and commitment to this issue. I'd now like to ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of hard-working individuals who comprise the staff of government members. We have with us today a group of 28, headed by our director of caucus, Jason Zwarg. He is responsible for making our lives run smoothly, along with our 18 legislative assistants. Mike Simpson is our senior researcher, and his group of researchers provide us with everything from speeches to background information.

The groups today are seated in both the members' and the public galleries. I would ask them to rise as I call their names. The legislative assistants are Jan Aldous, Darlene Beckstrand, Jon Buck, Darla Cowdell, Carmen Frebrowski, Brenda Goebel, Matt Hebert, Phyllis Hennig, Cheryl Koss, Cheryl Lees, Stacey Leighton, Barb Letendre, Brendalee Loveseth, Bethany MacGillivray, Marie Martin, Brock Mulligan, Eric Taylor, Lanny Westersund. The researchers are our senior researcher, Mike Simpson, and Jordon Copping, Dan Hanson, Elizabeth Jeffray, Tyler Lawrason, Emir Mehinagic, Peter Pilarski, David Williams, Jeff Kasbrick, and the director of caucus, Jason Zwarg. Please join me in giving them our traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I spied in the members' gallery Mr. Terry Downey, who is the president of St. Mary's University College in Calgary. St. Mary's is one of the private, not-for-profit institutions, which does exceptional service for students in Alberta. I had the opportunity to meet with Terry and other presidents at noon today. I'd ask Terry to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Walton International Group Inc.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The RRSPs and investments of countless Albertans are influenced by the operation of the Alberta

Securities Commission, but the unanswered questions about the commission are piling up. For example, Walton International is a company that sells undivided interests in land in Alberta. According to a 2002 Alberta Securities Commission ruling, companies that sell undivided interests in land must file a prospectus. However, Walton continues to sell undivided interests without filing a complete prospectus. Like Zi Corporation, Walton is well connected to top Alberta Tories. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Would the minister please share with this Assembly why Walton International, after the 2002 undivided interest ruling by the Alberta Securities Commission, was allowed to operate unregulated from 2002 to 2004?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I do not have any first-hand knowledge of this. However, I did ask the hon. member to bring specific cases forward, and I will certainly endeavour to get a response and provide it to him.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll be tabling all the documents at the appropriate time.

To the same minister: could the minister please explain why the Alberta Securities Commission has taken such a soft approach to Walton when the B.C. Securities Commission has taken a much firmer approach?

1:40

Mrs. McClellan: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in the House prior, I do not get involved in the day-to-day operations of the Alberta Securities Commission. However, I have made the commitment that I will research this particular action after, of course, receiving the tabled documents, which I assume will happen later. I can tell the hon. member that if he wanted an answer to that question, he could have simply given me the information this morning – we saw each other earlier – and I would have probably had the answer for him now.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: given that we don't have a lobbyist registry in the province, could the Premier please advise this Assembly of the steps taken by Walton to have this government's ear?

Mr. Klein: I know Walton International. I've known the company for some time. Pat Doherty, I believe, is the president. Bill Doherty runs their operations. They do extensive work in Asia. I understand that they land bank. My daughter used to work for Walton about four years ago. I've been fishing with Pat Doherty and his son, Bill. I know nothing of their operations other than they own some land in the vicinity of Spruce Meadows. They also own some land, as I understand it, or have assembled some land in the vicinity of the proposed packing house northeast of Calgary. What else do I know about the corporation? That's about it.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Labour Relations Board

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans should expect this government to administer this province's labour laws with fairness and justice. Today's revelation that the vice-chair of the Alberta Labour Relations Board actively participated in drafting a government bill indicates that this supposed impartial judicial body is being

used as a tool of this government. The referees should not be making the rules of the game. To the Premier: given that a minister for his government has denied that the Alberta Labour Relations Board was involved in the drafting of Bill 27 regulations, a statement now completely proven to be false, what does the Premier plan to do to restore public confidence in the Labour Relations Board?

Mr. Klein: Well, it's news to me that a minister was involved. The information I have is that internal e-mails mistakenly released – that is, publicly released – by the Privacy Commissioner suggest that the Alberta Labour Relations Board impartiality has been breached. The e-mails indicated that the board sent draft regulations to the government for Bill 27 – as I said before, I am unaware that any minister was involved – the legislation that consolidated the health care bargaining units. I recall that. The Privacy Commissioner undoubtedly will have to answer any questions about why or how these e-mails were released. I would remind members of the Legislature that the Privacy Commissioner reports to the Legislature, not to me.

I understand also, Mr. Speaker, that there is the matter of ultra vires here. The Court of Appeal has before it arguments about the board's role in Bill 27. I can't comment any further on that case in that it is before the courts.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister involved is the Member for Lethbridge-West. We will table the documents at the appropriate time.

To the Premier again: will the Premier admit that there is a clear and undeniable conflict of interest in allowing the vice-chairman of the Labour Relations Board to draft legislation and then to chair tribunals to interpret it?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry; it's sub judice. That's the word I was looking for. You caught me off guard.

I don't know. I haven't had a chance to talk to the minister in question as to whether or not he elicited help from the Labour Relations Board in the drafting of regulations vis-à-vis Bill 27, but I can say that because the matter is sub judice, I can't comment any further on the case. It is before the courts.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Again to the Premier: given that this newly public information shows that the Labour Relations Board is biased and that many of the decisions in the past are now under a cloud of suspicion, will the Premier initiate a full public inquiry into the operations of the Alberta Labour Relations Board?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I take exception that the Labour Relations Board is biased.

As I indicated, this matter is before the courts. Now, the courts, as I understand it, are very public bodies, and the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition can attend the courtroom and the court proceedings. He can sit there and listen to every word. That, in fact, is a public inquiry.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mission of the Alberta Labour Relations Board is "to administer, interpret and enforce Alberta's collective bargaining laws in an impartial, knowledgeable, efficient, timely and consistent way." Alberta's labour movement has lost confidence in the impartiality of this board. A board vice-chair designed legislation and then sat to judge its interpretation.

My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Will the minister do anything to restore public confidence in the supposedly independent and impartial Alberta Labour Relations Board?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the public has confidence in our government. To start with, the question about the board's role in Bill 27, of course, as the Premier says, is before the courts, and I will not comment specifically on that particular issue.

The Alberta Labour Relations Board itself is an independent and impartial body. The Alberta Labour Relations Board has no involvement in the approval of policy in Alberta. Good advice leads to good legislation, Mr. Speaker. The board is one of several stakeholders that may be – may be – consulted about labour relations issues flowing from policy decisions done by the government.

In addition, as far as confidence, in a recent independent study on transparency and openness of labour boards in North America, Alberta tied for first in that process.

Mr. Backs: Who was the judge of that?

Mr. Speaker, to the same minister, will the minister inquire into the actions of the Alberta Labour Relations Board to see if it has unfairly advanced the so-called Christian Labour Association in the interests of certain employers?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker, I won't.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: did the minister have any knowledge of this flagrant abuse of an independent, semi-judicial board, and if he did, will he accept ministerial responsibility and resign?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mason: Back in March of 2003 a bill that restructured health care bargaining by tearing up dozens of existing collective agreements was rammed through this Legislature. The minister insisted at the time that the Labour Relations Board was not involved in drafting that law, and we can provide that, Mr. Speaker. Documents that the government has fought for two years to keep secret have proven otherwise. I will table these documents at the appropriate time. My question is to the Premier. Given that one of the board's vice-chairmen actually wrote the outline of the draft health care restructuring law, will the Premier come clean and admit that the government was not telling the truth when it claimed back in 2003 that the LRB was not involved in drafting this law?

1:50

Mr. Klein: I don't know what was said or what wasn't said back two or three years ago. All I know, Mr. Speaker, from my briefings is that Bill 27, the act now in question, is being challenged before the Court of Appeal. It is therefore sub judice, and I really can't comment.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll ask the Premier about the LRB then. To restore Albertans' faith in the Labour Relations Board given that it's been seriously compromised by this government, will the government now ask for the immediate resignation of the LRB chair and the two vice-chairmen who

seriously breached their duty of impartiality by siding with health care employers against health care unions, and if not, why not?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that is the question precisely that is before the courts, the question as to whether the unions were compromised by the LRB or, in fact, by any member of the government. So that matter is sub judice in that it is before the courts.

Mr. Mason: It's not sub anything, Mr. Speaker. It's just subclarity.

To clear the air, will the government call for an immediate public inquiry into the incestuous relationship which exists in this province between the government, health care employers, and the top echelon of the Labour Relations Board?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that question was asked by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, and my answer is the same. The Court of Appeal is indeed a public inquiry – very, very public – and I would ask not only the Leader of the Official Opposition but the leader of the third party to attend the court proceedings and see for himself.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Affordable Supportive Living Program

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are issues out in the constituency that people are concerned about, and the recent announcement of \$140 million in capital funding for seniors' supportive living in affordable housing projects was certainly great news for all Albertans. Part of that announcement was \$15 million for lodge upgrades, especially appreciated by housing providers and rural communities like those of Mayerthorpe in my constituency. Those lodges are aged and in need of great repairs. My questions are all to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Given that details are sketchy, my seniors' foundation is asking me many questions. Can the minister advise how this funding for lodge upgrades will be allocated throughout the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is absolutely right. The Premier's funding announcement has been very well received by communities and by groups throughout the province like the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association, which I had an opportunity to meet with last week and speak to 400 members about this funding announcement. This funding, as you know, is to ensure that our provincially supported lodges are going to meet the community needs and the needs of our seniors.

As you know, we have almost 150 lodges in Alberta, and that's for 9,000 residents. The priority that the member has asked about, the priority for this funding, will be for our oldest lodges, especially those that are in need of renovation, and also for urgent repairs in other lodges; for example, boilers or roof repairs or whatever the community brings forward.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how can my foundation operators request this funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we are focusing on lodges that would require urgent repairs and those that

have not been recently upgraded. I'd like to let this member know that that would include the Pleasant View Lodge in Mayerthorpe, which he mentioned in the question. You and those in the community that may be listening to this have to recognize that the Mayerthorpe lodge is over 40 years old and is in urgent need of repair.

As I told you, I did speak to 400 members of ASCHA last week. At that meeting of the annual convention I did let them know that we will be sending a letter. I think the letter went out yesterday or today, but it's this week. That letter will identify the funding and the requirements for the funding and how they can make application for this.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Continuing Care Standards

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The lack of enforced provincial standards in continuing care facilities has resulted in regions and facilities augmenting basic standards by issuing policies of their own, resulting in inconsistencies throughout the province. Families and residents are confused when it comes to identifying the basket of services and levels of care provided in these facilities. Alberta requires one set of provincial standards, administered by one department. My questions will be to the Premier. Mr. Premier, will this government take action to ensure consistency and equity throughout the province?

Mr. Klein: A very interesting question. As a matter of fact, we had a discussion about that very situation just a few days ago, and we're looking into it. If the hon. member has anything to offer, we'd be glad to receive her comments.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for that answer. It does give me hope.

Can we expect this government to legislate province-wide standards of care to apply in both public and private settings by the spring?

Mr. Klein: Relative to legislated requirements relative to the level of care, I'll have the appropriate minister respond, I believe the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the member's question. As we heard earlier in the Assembly, in May of 2005 the Auditor did bring forward in his report on seniors care and programs that the 1995 basic service standards for continuing care centres should be upgraded and enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, as we mentioned earlier as well, the Minister of Health and Wellness and I are working together in that regard, and it's actually a process that's been interesting because the member that has asked the question was on the task force that went out to the community with those standards. Those standards have come back, and they've been reviewed. They've gone back out to the community once again, and we will continue to work with what has come back, hon. member. You know that we will continue to work with that.

As far as legislation, though – and that was what your question asked about, legislation with the standards – that will go through the due process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. My third question would again be to the Premier. Given that the problems with long-term care in Alberta are caused in part by the splitting of the responsibility for seniors between ministries, will this government consolidate all seniors-related care, programs, and services under one ministry, as it has been in the past?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, that pertains to the question that was asked first. As I mentioned, there was a discussion about this a couple of days ago amongst government members, and it is under active consideration.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Oversize/Overweight Trucking Permits

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tremendous growth in my area has not only resulted in bottlenecks in the road systems themselves but in the process to obtain the permits required in many cases move the equipment involved in this construction. Contractors have informed me that it's routinely a two- or three-hour wait on the phone, sometimes as long as four or five hours, to obtain this permit. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Has the department made him aware of this situation, and what steps has he taken to address it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Not just the department has made me aware of this, but I've had numerous complaints from truckers right around the province on this particular issue. Typically what we see around this time of year, when there are a lot of trucks being moved, is an increase in the number of certificates that are needed. In order to alleviate the backlog that the hon. member has asked about, we've done several things. First of all, you can put in for the certificate by fax, you can put in for it on the Internet, or you can simply phone in. The third thing that we have done is we've actually allowed four private registries in Alberta to also issue the certificates.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member as well that we're looking at going one step further, which is actually the outsourcing of this particular part of my department, with the exception of those intricate certificates that require engineering plans. We've got to make this work better. The three- and four- and seven-hour waits just are not acceptable, and I'll give my assurance to the hon. member that this will be looked at and will be rectified very, very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

2:00 Government Accountability

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public trust in the integrity and fairness of government and the entire political process is at an all-time low. An all-party committee of this Assembly has just reviewed the Conflicts of Interest Act and has made numerous

recommendations that will at least begin to create the conditions for more open, transparent, and accountable government. Yet previous reports and recommendations for increased accountability have been rejected or ignored by this government. My questions are all to the Premier. Will the Premier listen to the committee and even his own caucus members and support the creation of a lobbyist registry so that Albertans can see who has the government's ear? Albertans have a right to know who is paying for those limousines on Wednesday evenings.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I know of no limousines on Wednesday nights or any other nights. Maybe the Liberals have been accommodated in limousines, but I'm sure that none of our members have.

The Speaker: Hon. member, to the chair's knowledge the report of the committee has not been filed with the Legislative Assembly yet. The Assembly has no report to deal with. Hon. member, proceed.

Mr. Elsalhy: Okay. Not yet. That was just a draft.

However, my second question is also to the Premier. Can the Premier stop the revolving door between his government and the private-sector lobbying or consulting by supporting a legislated cooling-off period for ministers and senior officials for at least 12 months?

Mr. Klein: You know, first of all, we should wait for the report. But if you'll allow me to respond: 12 months may be okay. It might be okay for some ministers; maybe it won't be okay for some ministers.

You know, it's so easy for the opposition to say, "legislate this" and "legislate that" and "do this" and "do that" without examining the negative side of the issue. For every action there is an equal and opposite and often negative reaction. They would legislate the world, Mr. Speaker, without taking into account what the consequences might be. They're so willing to stand up and say, "legislate this" and "legislate that" and "do this" and "do that." Never, never, never do they stop to think about the consequences.

The Speaker: Hon. member, not only has no report been done yet. My understanding is that the report hasn't been finalized. There is no such thing as a draft report either.

So proceed with your third question.

Mr. Elsalhy: Okay. Discussions that we had in the all-party committee . . . [interjections] Okay.

Mr. Speaker, given that the employees of the Alberta Securities Commission are still too afraid to go public with their concerns about clear conflicts of interest within their organization, will the Premier support legislative protection for public-sector whistleblowers, or does he still believe that the verbal and generic assurances of protection offered by the Minister of Finance are adequate?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, there was a definite comment directly on the Alberta Securities Commission. The hon. member should know that the Alberta Securities Commission has committed to have that policy in place by January 1, 2006, which I think is 31 days plus a few hours from now. To suggest that that isn't happening is wrong.

Deerfoot Trail Median Barriers

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, there have been two fatal collisions on Deerfoot Trail during the past six months in which vehicles crossed the grass median and collided with oncoming traffic. The deaths and injuries associated with these two crashes have taken a terrible toll on a number of families in the Calgary area. My questions are for

the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What is the minister doing to prevent these types of collisions on Deerfoot Trail?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We had this question asked by the families that were involved in the very tragic accidents that occurred along Deerfoot Trail. Quite simply, cars crossed the median, went into the other lane of traffic, and caused deaths on at least two occasions. Subsequently, I ordered a study to be done on that particular part of the road to determine if barriers were applicable. What came back was that, basically, the barriers should be put in place between 16th Avenue and Beddington. After seeing the report, I've actually taken it one step further, and we're putting in barriers from 16th Avenue right up to Country Hills Boulevard, and we're putting in a different type of barrier. This is a type of barrier that has been used in other jurisdictions and, supposedly, has quite superior performance in preventing cars from crossing the median into the oncoming lane of traffic.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is also to the same minister. Why is his department installing an untried barrier system in Alberta rather than concrete barriers?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, this barrier system is a series of collapsible wires that are strung between posts, and the idea behind it is that when a car hits it, it actually envelops the car. Essentially like a spiderweb is probably the best example that I can give it. This particular barrier has been used all across North America, although it has yet to be used in Canada. This is the first time it's going to be used in Canada. What people are saying, though, is that it's much more successful because, quite simply, you don't bang off the barrier and go back into a lane of traffic in an uncontrolled spin. The barrier actually grabs the car, so to speak. So we really feel that this will be very, very effective on Deerfoot Trail, and we're going to be putting it in this spring at a cost of roughly a million dollars.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also to the same minister. If these barrier systems improve safety and work so well, is his department looking at putting them all along Deerfoot Trail and on other highways in Alberta?

Dr. Oberg: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we're looking at is where we can put these. We're trying them, obviously, first of all, between 16th Avenue and Airport Road. In those parts of the road that are much closer together, the issue is that it does have to be a very solid barrier because, as I explained, there's very much a give when a car hits it. We can't be having a car, despite the give, go on into the other lane of traffic.

So for those many other areas of the province, Mr. Speaker, through to the hon. member, where there is a separation of the two lanes of road, we are looking at this. We're trying it here first. Obviously, Deerfoot Trail has the most traffic of any of our highways in Alberta, and we hope that it's going to be very successful. As a matter of fact, we know that it's going to be very successful, and it's just a matter of where we continue to put it on. But I think this is good news for the citizens of Calgary and certainly good news for those people involved in the accident.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Parks and Protected Areas

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The importance this government places on parks and protected areas is evidenced by the fact that it has set aside only 4 per cent of provincial land, key natural regions remain unprotected, and park planning is woefully out of date. Clearly, this government has failed its role as an environmental steward within the 4 per cent of the province referred to as provincial parks. I would like to thank the Premier for agreeing to answer my first question. Mr. Premier: will this government set aside the 640 square kilometres in the Castle-Crown wilderness area for a wildland provincial park as a legacy to Andy Russell and in respect to the Peigan First Nation as a centennial Christmas present to all Albertans?

2:10

Mr. Klein: Well, it's a very interesting question and a very interesting proposition. First of all, I'd like to clarify something. I will answer the question, or maybe I should answer the question first, and I'll have the two ministers responsible reply specifically to the Andy Russell park.

What I want to comment on, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that in 1990 the late Don Sparrow and myself gave an undertaking to the Duke of Edinburgh that we would designate 12 per cent of Alberta land – not 4 per cent, 12 per cent. I understand that we're up to about 15 per cent – one five per cent – for ecological reserve, and that says a lot about this province.

Now, I'll have the hon. ministers of Community Development and Sustainable Resource Development . . .

The Speaker: Unfortunately, we're running along a little slower than I thought.

The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Premier isn't counting the 8 per cent of our national parks.

My second and third questions are to the Minister of Community Development. When will this government complete the protected areas system by setting aside more land for parks through reinvigorating the special places campaign?

Mr. Mar: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first of all address the first area that he referred to, being the Castle region. In 1998 the Castle area was considered for inclusion in our special places initiative. A local committee at that time agreed to make and create the West Castle Wetlands ecological reserve and the Castle special management area forest land use zone.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, that there are many factors that have to be considered before you can create a park. In this area there are numerous energy and forestry resource commitments. We also have to further consider any impact that there may be on the local rural economy and the interests of local municipalities.

Now, by comparison, Mr. Speaker, we did create the Lois Hole centennial provincial park relatively quickly. There was a great deal of municipality support, all the areas that surrounded the park, there were minimal resource commitments, and this created the circumstances that allowed us to move very quickly on this. The number of issues involved in the Castle region would be much more numerous.

I don't foreclose on the possibility that some day we could do this, but in the meantime a great deal of work has to be done at the local level to have support for such a thing to take place.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. My last question to the Minister of Community Development: will this government commit the necessary resources to restoring the decaying infrastructure in our current parks?

Mr. Mar: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member himself knows about our commitment to this. In fact, my recollection is that during the last round of budgets he applauded the fact that we moved our capital budget for parks and their infrastructure from \$11 million to \$45 million. At the time my recollection is that he not only recognized this; he also applauded it. We are moving forward on our plans and how we will use that money to ensure that necessary infrastructure is fixed up. It goes: everything from park benches to roads to signage to making sure that things like washrooms are built and that the parks in fact look in the kind of condition that they ought to look in. We are proceeding on that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Continuing Care Standards

(continued)

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On page 45 of his June 2005 seniors care report Alberta's Auditor General states: "There are no minimum standards for housing, nursing and personal care [assistance] provided in assisted living" facilities. Yet the absence of standards has done nothing to slow down the drive to redesignate hundreds of long-term care beds across the province as so-called assisted living beds. My question is to the minister of seniors. How can the minister put the health and safety of vulnerable seniors at serious risk by continuing to allow redesignation of hundreds of long-term beds as designated assisted living without first having minimum standards of care in place?"

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite knows that designated assisted living is intended for seniors who require a high level of personal care and support services, but those seniors do not have complex health care needs because those seniors, then, would require placement in a long-term care facility. As I said, the decision to convert a facility – and the Minister of Health and Wellness has previously said this in the Assembly – is made by the regional health authority based on their continuing care service plan to address the needs of the people in their region. Having said that, I will take that question under advisement for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the minister of health said yesterday that there were contractual arrangements.

The point that I'm saying is: who should Albertans believe? These ministers, who say that there are contracts and there are standards, or the Auditor General, who says that there are no minimum standards?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in an earlier question from the Member for Lethbridge-East, the Auditor General did say that the standards for continuing care from 1995 should be updated. That's the first step. There are standards from 1995. That's exactly what he said in this report. It's a different one than you're quoting from. Also, the long-term continuing care committee took that to the community. The community reviewed those 1995 standards. That came back to the long-term care committee. They then took it out again to the community saying: did we hear you correctly? The committee is evaluating that. There is a recommendation regarding those standards in their report.

What the Minister of Health and Wellness referred to yesterday in the Assembly is the contractual obligations of standards related to care services. I will continue to take that under advisement for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the point is that the same people who were in long-term continuing care are being shifted into assisted living. The Auditor General says that there are no minimum standards. How can the minister justify this approach in dealing with our most vulnerable seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I will take that under advisement for the Minister of Health and Wellness as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Film Industry

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development. Film in Alberta has had a very high profile this year with a few major stars visiting Alberta to film their movies. Some of my constituents have been thrilled by star sightings, but what benefit to the Alberta economy does a major movie production produce?

Mr. Dunford: None of us enter this House, Mr. Speaker, without some background and some experience. I recall that in the summer of 1989 or 1990 I happened to be working in the High River area at the time when *Unforgiven* moved into town to film in that area. Because it was on a contract with the local chamber of commerce, we were actually working with small businesses. It was just absolutely amazing to see the difference in that community when we had started our project, when *Unforgiven* came to town, and then, of course, as we finished off. It was tremendous.

Now, there are economists around that have more access to the numbers than what I do, but it's basically assumed that the multiplier effect is 1 to 10. So every dollar that is on a movie budget generally creates another \$10 inside that particular community. I can indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, then, that as the person in charge of the operations of the film commission we're taking a serious look at that to see if there's not some way that we could add more movies to the Alberta advantage.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to ask the hon. Minister of Economic Development. These productions have typically gone to urban centres. With a nod to the Member for Battle River-Wainwright, what is the minister doing to encourage film in rural Alberta?

2:20

Mr. Dunford: We're now on to our rural development strategy, and certainly further development of the film industry in Alberta is very, very important to rural development. When you look around at the tremendous scenery that we have in Alberta, you can see why you have situations similar to a recent movie called *Open Range* done in Alberta, filmed in Alberta. I'm not a movie critic, maybe not even an expert on the movies, but, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Alberta scenery could be classed as a character in that particular movie because the scenery was just tremendous. Most of it was done in rural Alberta, and it just created a tremendous amount of economic activity out in the rural areas, where we want it to be.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Child Care Standards

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In mid-October the province announced a plan to invest \$489 million in federal funding in child care programs for children up to six years old. Out-of-school care providers for children over six are not eligible for this federal funding, but this does not explain why the province has refused to take action to ensure that child care workers are on even ground. My first question is to the Minister of Children's Services. Given that out-of-school care staff require the same training and qualifications as those working with younger children, will the minister ensure that salaries and training are equitable for everyone in the child care field?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a good question, and I'm pleased to answer that. Under the national child care plan that Alberta negotiated with federal Minister Dryden at the federal/provincial/territorial meeting, I brought that exact question up to Minister Dryden, that daycare just doesn't stop at the age of six, that it also goes to the age of 12. The answer from Mr. Dryden was: it's not on the table; I don't even want to discuss it. It's unfortunate that we're in a federal election right now, or I would encourage my hon. colleague to write the federal minister and tell him how important it is to continue daycare to the age of 12.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Are there any plans in place to extend the accreditation process to out-of-school care programs?

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, I think there are two points that have to be made. First of all, we have a review going on on the social care facilities, which is done by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. We also have a second review on the FCSS funding that is being done by the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. I'm looking forward to their recommendations on both of them.

The accreditation program that we brought forward in Alberta is the first in Canada, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Minister Dryden came here to look at it. We have had 97 per cent of the daycares and day homes in this province apply to be accredited. So it's very, very successful.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. What is being done to prevent the federal funding from becoming a business subsidy for large commercial, corporate daycare providers?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member should know that this national child care plan that we did for Alberta was based on what Alberta parents wanted, and that's what we lobbied and fought for in our discussions with the federal minister. It's based on what Albertans wanted. They wanted choice. They didn't differentiate between a nonprofit or a for-profit. This plan was done on what Albertans in this province wanted for their children, and they wanted choice.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Private Postsecondary Institutions

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be directed to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education. Earlier this year we passed Bill 1, which was designed in part to increase or improve access to education for students wanting to get a postsecondary education. Later this fall it was announced that there would be a tuition freeze to help students with their financial burden to access education. This loss of tuition funding to universities would be offset by an increase in their base funding. Unfortunately, the private, not-for-profit accredited university colleges were left out of this increased base funding, which was put in place to replace that lost tuition revenue, and put them at a distinct disadvantage. My question to the hon. minister: is our government working on a solution to this inequity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, when we did the tuition rebate last year, it wasn't actually an adjustment to the base funding levels. What we indicated to the public institutions was that if they increased their fees, we would pay the increase for last year. So it was a grant that was made directly to the universities and colleges, essentially paying the tuition increase for the year rather than an adjustment to the base funding. In fact, it was at that time expressed as a one-time support.

Now, the hon. member is absolutely correct. In doing so, we unfortunately left out those students who were at the private, not-for-profit universities and colleges. The reason for that was that they are not under the Post-secondary Learning Act in terms of tuition control and tuition policy. I have indicated to the students and to the institutions as early as this spring, when we were discussing it, that we would consider including them if we could if the program was extended. I met with some of the presidents as recently as today to assure them that as we go forward, we'll look at how we might include them in that process given that it may be extended for an additional year. But it's not in the base funding; it's actually paying the increase. The problem was that the increases are limited under the Post-secondary Learning Act for public institutions but not for the private, not-for-profit.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you. A supplemental question: is the department planning to revisit the whole issue of base funding for all the private, not-for-profit institutions, the base funding which was set in 1989?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we are looking this year at the whole funding formula. As members will recall, we have a five-year review of the funding formula as it relates to the public institutions. For the private institutions that are funded, members will also recall that there were four private institutions that were funded for publicly accredited programs, and this year we added an additional four. One of the original ones became an adjunct to the University of Alberta. So there are seven private, not-for-profit university colleges which are publicly funded in some manner.

The agreement to fund them goes back as far as 1989, and essentially at that time the agreement was to fund them at 75 per cent of the level of the implicit average of an arts and science course. We are reviewing that process, and I've invited the private, not-for-profit university colleges to be involved in that review and provide us with their input as to why and how they should be included.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you. My second supplemental question is also related to private institutions. Will the government also include the private institutions in the common application process for entrance to the public institutions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This again is a topic in which I've had a lot of input from private, not-for-profit university colleges. We promised in Bill 1 that there would be a common application system. We've worked with the public institutions. We've asked them to design it. They have taken on the challenge of designing it and, unfortunately, in doing so have not consulted with the private, not-for-profit university colleges. I have talked to the ACTIA group and the university groups that are involved in putting the design together and asked them to consider the university colleges. It is in the best interest of students and learners across the province that there be a common application that all of them can be involved in. It would be my hope that if it can't be done immediately as the system is designed that it certainly be accommodated as soon as possible in that one-stop application system.

The Speaker: Hon. members, six members today will participate in Members' Statements. Prior to calling on the first one, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I indicated in answering a question that I had met as early as today with some members of the private, not-for-profit university colleges. I introduced Dr. Terry Downey earlier. My eyesight wasn't quite good enough to spot Dr. Harry Fernhout, president of The King's University College. Dr. Fernhout recently arrived from Ontario to take over and be installed as president of King's University College in September. So we welcome him as a new Albertan. I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly one of the truly great schools in my constituency. Today in the public gallery we have joining us 52 students from Victoria school. I must say that these students are very professional looking today. They have taken their visit to the Legislative Assembly very seriously, and they are extremely well turned out for our benefit. I'd like to acknowledge those students. With them today are teachers Ms Jan Antoniuk, Ms Carla Kerr, Mrs. Judy Sills, and parent helpers Mr. Mark Nicoll, Mrs. Karen Grant, and Mrs. Denise Green. I would ask them all to please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

head: 2:30 **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Foothills Country Hospice Society

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to recognize the efforts of the Foothills Country Hospice Society. This society was created several years ago with the goal of

building and operating a free-standing, nonprofit rural hospice near Okotoks. This will be first rural hospice in Alberta; in fact, I believe the first rural hospice in Canada.

Through concerted fundraising efforts and generous donations from individuals, businesses, and service clubs the hospice society has raised \$2.5 million to date. In addition, eight acres of rural land were donated, paving the way for the construction of this country hospice.

Last Saturday I attended the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of this new facility. This home will have eight beds, four providing palliative care to residents and four providing respite services. The respite beds are designed for short-term admission for people who are being cared for at home and require expert symptom management. This will give family members providing care a chance to have a short break and to recharge themselves.

At present it is hoped that the hospice will be ready to provide care services by late next year. This facility will provide services to the towns of Blackie, Turner Valley, Black Diamond, Okotoks, High River, Longview, and Cayley and all the residents of the MD of Foothills and the surrounding areas.

The achievement of the Foothills Country Hospice Society is not only admirable but also remarkable because the money raised has been done solely from the community with no government funding whatsoever. I would like to congratulate all those who have been involved in this project and thank them for their hard work and dedication. I would also like to recognize the community for their generosity and donations and for their support of this most worthy project.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Caritas Health Group School Lunch Program

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is the 13th year that the Caritas Health Group has been cooking lunches for inner-city students in the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation school lunch program. Every school day since 1993 the Caritas Health Group nutrition and food services team has delivered hot lunches prepared in their facilities at the Misericordia and General hospitals to Edmonton schools, and the General is in my riding of Edmonton-Centre.

From an original two the service now provides for 12 schools, feeding nearly 2,300 students in the Edmonton inner city. The hot meals, which include fresh fruit and milk, provide at least one-third of the children's daily nutritional requirements. Any leftovers are distributed to the families. The cost to the parents is \$1 a day, but the meals are delivered to all children regardless of ability to pay. As the actual cost of these meals is \$2 a day, the remainder is made up by a group of donors including the Caritas Health Group.

Teachers find that students who receive the program benefit from improved morale, behaviour, attendance, concentration, and overall ability to learn. Students who eat a filling, nutritional lunch do better in school.

Mr. Speaker, it gives parents a sense of comfort to know that they can send their children to school and be assured that they will receive a nutritious hot meal, especially when those parents can't afford to provide a balanced lunch or sometimes any lunch at all.

Please join me in recognizing the valuable and generous work done by the Caritas Health Group in providing almost 2,300 Edmonton inner-city students with a nutritious hot lunch every day. I'd especially like to mention Gem Catering, who provide the food services at the General and whose fabulous carrot cakes have enhanced all of my centennial medal and medallion presentations this year, including those of the 11 centenarians at the General's long-term care.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

SuperNet Learning Resources

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Completion of the Alberta SuperNet has opened the world to students and teachers in Calgary schools. SuperNet video conferencing and LearnAlberta.ca are opening up the world for our students and our teachers in Calgary and throughout the province. This technology, reach to teach, allows teachers to learn about the world from experts in their field and about the universe from scientists at the Canadian Space Agency, for example. Through unique partnerships LearnAlberta.ca provides students with learning resources unavailable anywhere else.

LearnAlberta.ca is a website that provides engaging and interactive learning resources that are directly tied to Alberta's curriculum. It also includes a number of online resources that are available 24 hours a day to support those students in French programs or in French immersion. Teachers can use these resources in classrooms to illustrate concepts as part of their lesson plans. Students can access the resources to review key concepts, enrich project work, enhance homework sessions, and explore new ways of thinking and learning.

LearnAlberta's online reference centre, a suite of electronic databases and encyclopedias, is particularly helpful with all kinds of project work. Parents with Internet access at home can log on during homework sessions to discover how their child is understanding a particular topic.

Together, SuperNet and LearnAlberta.ca are providing innovative approaches to learning. This is crucial to the future success of Albertans in a knowledge-based economy infused with technology. SuperNet will help all schools to have equal access to the educational treasures of LearnAlberta.ca. My constituents are excited about these resources that enhance learning in the classroom and at home. I encourage all students, teachers, and parents to log on to LearnAlberta.ca and take advantage of this incredible collection of teaching and learning resources provided by Alberta Education.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each year there are nine Governor General's awards presented nationally for excellence in teaching Canadian history. This year four of those nine awards are going to Alberta teachers. After parents, primary and secondary schoolteachers are often the most important people in our children's lives, so I'm pleased today to share with you the stories of these four award-winning educators from Alberta who developed unique methods to encourage our students to uncover pieces of Alberta's rich history.

The first two, Mr. Speaker, Ms Lorretta Stabler and Ms Patti Thorne, teach grades 4 and 5 at the Millarville community school in my constituency of Foothills-Rocky View. This dynamic duo was selected from 190 nominations nation-wide to receive the Governor General's award. They developed a year-long, hands-on archaeology project literally in the school's backyard. Through this project wider cultural connections were fostered as students conducted online research, comparing artifacts found in their own dig with other Canadian archaeological digs. The Millarville community school project has attracted attention from schools in the United States and Great Britain.

The third Alberta teacher to receive this prestigious award is Mr. Jean-François Bélanger, a teacher at école primaire King George in Calgary. Mr. Bélanger has been recognized for helping students to become personally involved and gain first-hand experience in their

historical studies. One such project was the re-creation of the transatlantic voyage to New France. In another, Mr. Bélanger facilitated student involvement with scientists in Canada's Arctic.

Ms Linda-Rae Carson, a teacher at Harry Ainlay high school in Edmonton, is the fourth recipient from Alberta. Ms Carson has developed a grade 10 program called the Canadian Historical Identity.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to honour these four dedicated teachers who have made a difference in their students' lives and who have helped make Alberta's education system the best in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

2:40

Kevin Robins

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, or the AUMA, held their annual conference in Calgary. Each year the AUMA recognizes the accomplishments of one outstanding chief administrative officer in an Alberta community by presenting that individual with the dedicated chief administrative officer award.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge this year's recipient, Mr. Kevin Robins of the city of Leduc, for long-term excellence and commitment to municipal government and administrative management. This award recognizes Mr. Robins for his contributions in the field of municipal administration through dedicated service to the city of Leduc, for his 11 years of leadership. It recognizes exemplary work in several areas. Excellence in leadership, policy development, council relations, human resources and financial management, strategic planning, community relations, professional development, and many other areas are acknowledged through this award. Mr. Robins has been recognized by Leduc city council through their nomination and, in turn, by the AUMA as they honoured him by presenting him with the dedicated chief administrative officer award.

Prior to becoming Leduc's city manager in 1994, Mr. Robins spent 12 years on the city of Leduc fire department. In 1982 he was hired as the city's first full-time fire chief, making him the youngest chief in the province, laying the foundation for one of Alberta's most exceptional volunteer fire departments today. The province is fortunate that he has chosen to continue this tradition of excellence through continued service to the city of Leduc and the residents of his community.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's municipal administrators continuously show unparalleled commitment to building strong and successful communities and, in turn, a strong and successful Alberta. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and all members of this Assembly join me in extending their best wishes and congratulations to Mr. Kevin Robins for his ongoing dedication and for this achievement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Linda-Rae Carson

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin my remarks this afternoon by acknowledging the tremendous contribution of the leadership students at Harry Ainlay high school to the centennial medal presentations made by myself and our Lieutenant Governor a few weeks ago. These incredible young people volunteered their time and talent as hosts and hostesses, sound and lighting crews, ushers, and musicians to make this a truly memorable occasion for 37 outstanding Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that leadership skills in students are a result of tremendous leadership examples by their educators, and Harry Ainlay is blessed to have one of this country's very best. On Tuesday at Rideau Hall in Ottawa Linda-Rae Carson was presented with the Governor General's award for excellence in teaching

Canadian history. Students and teaching colleagues joined together in nominating her for this most prestigious honour.

Ms Carson won the award for developing a learning program based on the theory that her students bring more historical skills to class than previously thought. Students interview their parents and grandparents as they explore their family's histories in the past 100 years, and then they compare their findings to Canada's history over the same time frame. She also includes interactive games and role-playing to make the subject come alive. Ms Carson attributes her love of history to her own family roots, particularly her father, who also taught history.

Mr. Speaker, it is through the remarkable talents of teachers like Linda-Rae Carson that our children are enabled to grow into the fine young leaders we know they are capable of being. I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating her for receiving this distinction.

Thank you.

head:

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a petition today which has 229 signatures on it, bringing the total amount of signatures for this petition to 1,015. Signatures were collected by Lynda and Ron Jonson of Seniors I Care. The petition calls for either the reinstatement of the 25 continuing care beds that Hinton had before the Good Samaritan Society and Aspen health region changed it to a designated assisted living facility or, failing that, to committing to building a new 25-bed continuing care facility in Hinton.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're pleased to present a petition from 318 Alberta tradesmen and -women from the communities of Mundare, Lloydminster, Two Hills, Athabasca, Drumheller, Barrhead, Forestburg, Three Hills, Goodfish Lake, and other communities. It reads,

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Bill 217

Election (Electoral Reform) Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, being private member's Bill 217, the Election (Electoral Reform) Amendment Act, 2005.

The purpose of Bill 217 is to strengthen democracy in Alberta by introducing fixed election dates for provincial elections and establishing a citizens' assembly representative of all Albertans to assess and make recommendations on reforming our electoral system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 217 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, I have three tablings today. First, I'm pleased to table in the Assembly nine copies of amended Motion for a Return 18.

My second tabling is five copies of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research community report, which is in the form of a 2006 calendar, including the program and financial highlights for the triennial reporting period of 2002-2005 and for the past fiscal year of '04-05. These documents have already been forwarded to all MLAs and the Legislature Library directly from the foundation.

Mr. Speaker, my final tabling is five copies of the iCORE, which stands for Informatics Circle of Research Excellence, '04-05 annual report with the financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2005.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, sir. I'm pleased to table nine copies of a response to Written Question 19, which was accepted on April 18, 2005, looking at reforestation timelines, and also a response to Written Question 28, accepted on May 2, 2005, looking at loss due to theft in the Department of Sustainable Resource Development. Original copies have also been sent to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Education I'm very pleased to table letters of congratulations to the four outstanding Alberta teachers who were just awarded the Governor General's award for teaching Canadian history. Nine of these national awards were given out, and four of them came here to Alberta. What a tremendous accolade for our teachers. Very quickly, they are Jean-François Bélanger, King George in Calgary; Linda-Rae Carson, Harry Ainlay high in Edmonton; Patti Thorne, Millarville community school; and Lorretta Stabler from the Millarville community school. I might add that this is Lorretta's second time to win this award. Congratulations.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table five copies of the Alberta Research Council's 2005 annual report. Since its inception in 1921 the ARC has been dedicated to furthering the economic prosperity and quality of life for all Albertans through its numerous innovation and research initiatives.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition I would like to make three tablings today. First is the requisite copies of an *Edmonton Sun* news article from September 3, 2003, quoting the former labour minister as saying that the Alberta Labour Relations Board had no input in drafting of bargaining legislation.

Secondly, I would like to table two e-mails that prove that members of the Alberta Labour Relations Board had input into the Labour Relations Code amendment act.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a copy of the Alberta Federation of Labour news release calling for a public inquiry into the Alberta Labour Relations Board due to the conflict of interest

that occurred when key figures of the ALRB breached their role by actively participating in the drafting of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm going to go through these and then make a comment with respect to that last tabling.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

2:50

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of Walton International Group's leveraged bundle investment scenario.

I have three more tablings, Mr. Speaker: copies of a land deal done by Walton International which affects what is happening here in Alberta, copies of frequently asked questions for purchasers of undivided interests, and, finally, copies of a Land Development complaint that is addressed to Walton International Group.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings, five copies of each: the first lists Walton International's executive management and board of advisors as found on its website in summer 2005, the second is the corporate registry for Walton International Group, and the third is political donations from Walton International to Alberta Conservative members.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table today four tablings: the first, five copies of an Alberta Securities Commission staff notice regarding the sale of undivided land, five copies of the reason for the decision of the Alberta Securities Commission regarding the case between the ASC and the Land Development Company, five copies of a notice of hearing for the matter between the Alberta Securities Commission and the Land Development Company, and five copies of an ASC new release entitled "Securities Can Include Interests in Land, Says ASC."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today, the first of which is from a constituent, Maxine Girard, who due to a medical condition is forced to apply for welfare and is pleading her case in that she doesn't believe anybody can possibly live on \$432 a month; a copy of a letter dated July 9, 2002, from Bennett Jones to Walton International indicating that the Alberta Securities Commission is closing the Walton file and stating that no further action would be warranted; five copies of an invitation to an overview of Walton's land banking business to be held at the Calgary Petroleum Club; and five copies of a letter to the Alberta Securities Commission dated February 24, 2004, from the Land Development Company in which the writer asks, "Does your favourable treatment to Walton's have anything to do with Ralph Klein's daughter working for Walton?"

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table the appropriate number of copies of a petition featuring the names of 4,435 Albertans in opposition to the interim Métis harvesting agreement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today with two tablings. The first is to table the appropriate number of copies of three letters from Lethbridge, from Mr. Peter Williams, Colleen Kullman, and Michelle Draper. All three letters express concerns about the low wages paid to people who work with adults with developmental disabilities and the recent budget cutbacks.

The second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of documents showing the chair of the Alberta Labour Relations Board at a Progressive Contractors Association golf tournament with the lawyer for Finning Canada the day before a Labour Relations Board decision, which is also appended, being tabled in favour of Finning and against the machinists' union, which was made the very next day.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs from the city of St. Albert, requesting that the provincial education property tax be removed and that tax room be left to the municipalities.

The second tabling is a series of correspondence, including letters and e-mails, between the chair and two vice-chairs of the Labour Relations Board and the Department of Human Resources and Employment, indicating that the LRB helped in drafting regulations governing the restructuring of health care unions in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of records taken from the Alberta Health and Wellness website which show that privately delivered contract services in Calgary have much longer wait times than those delivered publicly in Edmonton, directly and completely contradicting the Premier's claim made in response to my questions in the House yesterday.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. First, I have the appropriate number of copies of a request from the Alberta Wilderness Association for an immediate moratorium on the development of the Kakwa-Narraway watershed until the full environmental assessments take place, in particular the impact on endangered woodland caribou.

My second tabling: again, the appropriate number of copies of a letter sent to Toronto's Bay Street corporations inviting them to a \$3,000 a plate fundraiser for the Alberta Liberal Party.

head: **Statement by the Speaker**
Tablings

The Speaker: Hon. members, I indicated when the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie made a tabling that I would make comment with respect to it. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie basically tabled some newspaper articles, and I'll make quick mention of that but then say some other things about tablings, period.

Newspaper articles, as we all know, and the authenticity of newspaper articles, or in fact media reports, are not the subject of

question period in this House nor the subject of debate for authenticity. We all know that that's a special industry unto itself. The authenticity of reports in newspapers or the media are not valid points in this Assembly. So, quite frankly, in the past the Speaker has ruled that newspaper articles are not – not – to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

What's really quite ironic about this is that the hon. member who raised this issue with the chair in this Assembly on March 2, 1999, was a member of the Official Opposition and the former Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who took great exception at that point in time to the then Provincial Treasurer tabling some newspaper articles. After listening attentively to the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo – again, a member of the Official Opposition – the chair indicated that there is no way that we could handle the filing of newspaper articles should members wish to do this.

The chair at that time indicated that there would be an asterisk set in the official record, but the newspaper articles would be shredded and not filed. It seems to me that that policy then, going back to March 2, 1999, should not really be violated today simply because it's a reversal of members on various sides of the House. I'm sure all members would want the chair to be quite consistent with respect to this.

The chair has also noticed and has made comment before about tablings, which is a part of the tradition of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, but it is not part of most parliaments that follow the British form of government. It is not part, as an example, of the Canadian House of Commons, where basically tablings are filed with the Clerk.

There was a situation in this Assembly a number of years ago when nearly two and a half hours were consumed one day in tablings. Two and a half hours. There was a reason for it that day. Members in the House were trying to basically make sure a certain piece of legislation was not to be addressed. So you have the potential, in an indirect way, of a filibuster occurring. We spend nearly 10 minutes a day plus 12 minutes a day on tablings in this Assembly.

Perhaps if there is to be a sojourn starting next week or two weeks from now or whenever it is, perhaps when the three Government House Leaders do meet, as they do meet, I know, on occasion, they might just want to talk about this whole question of tablings. We've got a good system in here with the Clerk. You'll note that all official records, statutory records, are tabled.

Then when members get up and editorialize or selectively take one group of words out of a tabling, you have the potential here of sparking great debate, leading to a whole bunch of other things in here which I know hon. members would not want to see happen because openness and transparency and honesty is what this is all about.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Cardinal, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, response to Written Question 42, asked for by Mr. Elsalhy on behalf of Mr. Chase on November 21, 2005; on behalf of the hon. Mr. Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs, response to Written Question 30, asked for by Mr. Flaherty on behalf of Dr. Taft on May 2, 2005; return to the order of the Assembly MR 19, asked for by Mr. MacDonald on behalf of Dr. Taft on April 18, 2005; on behalf of the hon. Mr. Melchin, Minister of Energy, return to the order of the

Assembly MR 25 asked for by Mr. MacDonald on April 25, 2005; on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Forsyth, Minister of Children's Services, pursuant to the Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act the Social Care Facilities Review Committee annual report 2004-2005; and on behalf of the hon. Mr. Boutilier, Minister of Environment, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act the environmental protection security fund annual report April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005.

3:00 Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we go on, by way of a historical vignette – this is really a neat point today – in 1911, 94 years ago, the Third Session of the Second Legislature began. It was the first time – the first time – that a Legislature convened in this Chamber. So this room is actually 94 years old today.

head: **Orders of the Day**
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading
Bill 43
Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes
Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with pleasure to move Bill 43, Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance.

There's been quite a bit of discussion about the act and the fact that it amends three acts: the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act so that the rebate can be delivered as a refundable tax credit, the Fiscal Responsibility Act so that the cost of the rebate is not a charge to the contingency allowance, and the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act so that the rebate can be provided to children in care of the province.

There's been much talk about tax cuts versus rebates. The reality is that this allows a one-time return of monies to Albertans, a \$400 rebate to Albertans. As the Premier has said, Albertans are very intelligent people who can decide where they want to spend their money.

There has been a lot of discussion about what might have been done or could have been done. The only thing I would add to the debate, Mr. Speaker, is that the beauty of this Chamber and the beauty of this government is that there are a wide variety of opinions expressed. We truly represent the breadth of this province. Those opinions across the province as have been expressed to me and, frankly, opinions from my constituency that have been expressed range from strong support for the rebate to people suggesting that we should be spending the money on endowments, which I personally favour, or spending the money on capital projects not just for today but into the future.

The reality is that the government has struck a balance. We've committed resources to the endowment portfolio. Bill 1 provided for about 4 and a half billion dollars' worth of endowments. We talked about three additional endowment funds being considered, an additional \$500 million for the heritage medical research fund, all of which will do wonderful things to help prepare this province for a very, very phenomenal future.

A similar amount of money, if not more, has been allocated to the capital fund so that infrastructure can be built across this province for postsecondary education, for education, for the roads that support our economic platform, for health, and for many other areas that are

important to Albertans. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, under this bill about \$1.3 billion will be returned to Albertans as a tax rebate. That provides an excellent balance for Albertans so that the views of all Albertans as to how we should deal with natural resource revenue can be fulfilled.

I would ask members of the Assembly to support this bill in third reading.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My one short comment would be that if rebates are to be considered again in the future, could the process please happen within this Legislature before the \$10,065,000 advertising campaign takes place? Can we have full debate before granting this rebate for a second time?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on third reading debate on Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This being third reading debate, we are debating the anticipated effect of this bill once it becomes law, or perhaps the anticipated lack of effect, because \$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion dollars in one or two or possibly even three large chunks can make a significant difference – a significant difference – to life in the province of Alberta. Handed out \$400 at a time, it represents \$1.4 billion in potentially forgone opportunities.

That's not to say that there aren't people in the province of Alberta who need these \$400 cheques. Indeed, they tend to be the people who have been neglected, marginalized, abused, misused, confused, and used by this government over the course of the last 12 years, and now this government believes that one \$400 cheque will make the boo-boo all better.

Well, Mr. speaker, I don't think it will, and I think there's a very good chance that, in fact, what it will do is create the very kind of expectation of entitlement, if I may use that word, that members on the opposite side of the House like to rail against from time to time as people who need that money hope and expect that they will get another \$400 cheque next year and another one after that and another one the year after that and so on and so on in a sort of Alaskan model. This government has indicated that that's not likely to happen, but it hasn't said absolutely that that won't happen.

There will be that hope out there on behalf of people who need the money and, frankly, for whom this government could do so much more should they abolish health care premiums for all Albertans, for instance; should they do away with the provincial portion of education tax and property tax, for instance; or should they do any one of a number of other things directly addressing the problem, in some instances by further increasing payments to people on AISH, for instance. I mean, there are a gazillion things they could do, and we don't have time to list them all off. So if they want to help those people who need the \$400, there are many more creative, more lasting, more beneficial things that they could do than to cut them a cheque for \$400 one time or even two times if they do it.

Had they instead looked after the needs of those people in years gone by and taken this money, in total \$1.3 billion, \$1.4 billion, and decided to do something with a lasting legacy endowment effect with this, then they could have made a difference. The access to the future fund is certainly a start on making a difference. There have been some starts on making a difference and credit to the government for what they've done in those areas as far as they've gone. They haven't gone far enough, but as far as they've gone, credit to the government for that.

For instance, \$1.4 billion could have created 70,000 daycare spaces in this province. It could have replaced the nation's entire fleet of 10,000 taxicabs and limousines with hybrid vehicles, making a long-term difference to the environment. It could have offered thousand dollar rebates to first-time buyers of hybrid automobiles, for instance. I mean, there are so many things that could have been done.

I heard a comment from a member opposite that: oh, that would work for one year, creating the 70,000 daycare spaces. But, you know, the \$400 cheques, for whatever purpose they were intended and for whatever purpose, Mr. Speaker, they will be used – and, yes, that decision will be an individual decision for each and every Albertan who gets the cheque – are only good for one time too. In fact, the Minister of Advanced Education kind of trumpeted this as a one-time opportunity, a one-time benefit. So, you know, you can't have your cake and eat it too.

There is, suffice it to say, so much more of a lasting benefit that we could have gotten out of this money, so many better ways to look after people for whom this \$400 cheque will make a difference. We've wasted a fair amount of money just setting up this program, more money advertising and trying to convince Albertans to go along with the government on this one, and it's been rather a silly waste of time, I think.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

3:10

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. The NDP opposition caucus has been on record with respect to the alternative ways in which this \$1.4 billion could have been invested in the future of Albertans, so I won't go into great details. I just want to underline how simplistic this approach that the government has chosen is. It takes no thought. Just write \$400 cheques to every child, every senior, everyone once and get rid of \$1.4 billion.

Many members have mentioned, including my own caucus members here, health care premiums. About 2,450,000 Albertans, about 90 per cent of all nonseniors, are subject to full health care premiums, and that's \$528 per person per year. This money could have been used to take that burden off Albertans' pocketbooks.

The basic personal income tax exemption, reducing tax by raising the personal income tax exemption to \$20,000 from the current \$14,523, a proposal that we have made in this House. At the current 10 per cent flat tax rate this would represent a saving of about \$550 per individual taxpayer per annum in Alberta personal income taxes and a total yearly revenue loss of about \$750 million to the province. This is another alternative that is available to the government, but it certainly has no vision about how to really assist Albertans on a basis that has staying power, that has some sustainable kind of future.

Regulating electricity and natural gas prices. Each 10 per cent reduction of rates would save Albertans about \$350 million per year, and Albertans have been loudly complaining about the growing and unbearable cost of keeping their homes heated and their furnaces going. There are many, many ways in which this huge amount of money could have been spent to provide real relief to a vast majority of Albertans.

Inner-city agencies such as the Bissell Centre here in this city are working incredibly hard to help people file income tax returns, and people are able to use these centres as a mailing address. These

centres could be helped. Homelessness in this province could have been addressed by using these monies. The tuition fees could have been rolled back by 10 or 20 per cent using this money, and that'll go a long way in sending a real kind of signal to Albertans, young and not so young, that this government is really committed to investing in the future of Alberta through making postsecondary education more affordable and really truly accessible to all Albertans.

So all of these could have been done, but the government chose, as I said, a way of doing it that lacks vision, that lacks a commitment to a systematic, thorough look at how we can ensure that our future is the one that receives the investments. Those investments must be made, Mr. Speaker, in increasing the capacity and ability of Albertans to add to the well-being of every Albertan in this province as well as strengthening the economic future of this province.

Environmental issues come to mind. Some of this money – \$1.4 billion is a huge amount of money – could have been used to encourage Albertans towards conservation in their use of energy whether it's the gas with which we heat our homes or whether it's the automobile that we use on a daily basis to go to work, back and forth. In all of those areas we need to conserve energy, stop waste, and these resources, the \$1.4 billion, could have been used in part to put in place programs that would help Albertans not only this year, this Christmas season, but also over the years by encouraging them to conserve energy and providing them the assistance that they need to move in that direction.

School property taxes is another issue where Albertans have been calling for relief. Our municipal governments have been calling on the government to take action on that side to vacate some tax space for municipal governments so that they could provide services that in all of our local communities residents need, require, and ask for.

All of these clear alternatives were simply not accessible to this government, that seems to have lost the capacity to look at the future and say: what are the best ways in which the resources and the public finances that are available to us can be used and deployed to secure a better future for all?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I neglected to offer hon. members an opportunity under Standing Order 29(2)(a) to question the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. We will not go retroactively in here to this. There is such an opportunity now available for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. None?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do welcome the opportunity to make my first comments about Bill 43, Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. It's certainly created a stir around the province and no less in my constituency of Calgary-Mountain View, where I heard very little support for the decision of this government and needed to get on the record in that respect.

There are a significant number of individuals who are low-income in my community. Only a few of them identified this as a boon and a help to them in their financial distress but felt that there was still real opportunity to do more and do a better thing for Alberta by spending it in a different way.

The bottom line, I think, in brief was that people were looking for leadership on our nonrenewable resource revenue, a one-time bonus for which we could leverage much better opportunities both in terms of resource development and in terms of economic returns for the future. The recurring question was: how is it that we are addressing the Alberta economic situation as being one without debt when so many of us are struggling financially, when there is still significant social disparity, and when we have serious environmental debts?

In that context, then, what could we do with the \$1.4 billion? There were a number of groups that got together in my constituency, meeting in the evenings to talk about alternatives. A host of creative alternatives were suggested, many of which will be followed up by either individuals or groups in the constituency. Certainly, investment in illness and injury prevention came up recurrently, reducing the demand on the health care system, providing a living wage for people on AISH.

In the environment sector the recurring theme in my constituency is water: the Bow River and the threats to its sustainability, the lack of understanding of what groundwater resources we have and how threatened they may be, and how we can manage the various basins more effectively through basin councils, all of which need a tremendous amount of financial support to do the research, to develop the information packages, and to educate their constituents to take a role in water preservation, water conservation, and water management.

Finally, in the energy sector a lot of ideas around incentives for energy efficiency, incentives for renewable technology, clean renewables. These would have lasting savings for all Albertans instead of a one-time benefit and indeed have spinoffs in terms of climate change and our contribution to reducing greenhouse gases.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I'll just close with the statements that this is a short-term fix; it's not sustainable. It's equal, but it's not equitable. It's a feel-good but not a visionary decision. Albertans deserve better wealth management.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a).

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow to participate.

3:20

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe in Albertans. I really do. I believe that they are really smart in terms of how they handle their money. I believe that by them having the money, they can do it the best way possible. I keep hearing about these ways of spending money as if this \$400 is just going to come and come and come.

People of Alberta are perfectly capable of taking their \$400, sticking it in the bank and getting, I don't know, 5 per cent, 10 per cent a year off of it. What does that come to? It seems to me it comes to, let me see, four times five is about \$20 a year, okay? If it's in their pockets, yes, they can have that \$20 a year from now on if that's the way they want to spend their money. They can use that to put against whatever possible tax they might have. What I just don't understand is how people might possibly think that \$400 one year is going to somehow pay out any of these taxes ad infinitum. How did that \$20 turn into I don't know what?

The Speaker: Well, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Mr. Chase: Thank you for the invitation to participate. I would just like to ask the hon. member: are you not aware of the cumulative effect of an endowment fund? In other words, we put the money away, and then we just spend the interest. It's kind of like what you suggested on an individual basis. If you'd care to comment, I'd appreciate it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much. We have put money away in endowments, okay? There is money that we are continuing to put

away in endowments and, yes, that does work. But you can create your own endowment. You can take your \$400 and make your own endowment and get your money just exactly the same way as anybody else. There is no magic to so much more money in an endowment than what any of us can get.

The Speaker: Others?

Others to participate in the debate?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education, then, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance to close the debate.

Mr. Hancock: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a third time]

Bill 44

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Bill 44, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) on behalf of the Minister of Government Services.

The bill has been debated and appropriately explained by the minister in previous stages. It basically provides for an alternative dispute resolution process for residential tenancies which makes dispute resolution more available and more understandable for tenants and landlords in the province. I would commend it to the attention of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to close debate on behalf of my colleagues. I'm happy to say that my colleagues generally are in agreement with this direction of the dispute resolution model. We think it's beneficial to tenants and landlords. There are some issues that we would like addressed. We think the appointments to this board need to be open and transparent.

Administrators and dispute resolution officers need to be qualified individuals and properly paid, have suitable backgrounds to do the job, and supplemented with in-service training to do the job better.

Another question we have is: how will the dispute resolution board be paid or funded? We're asking the question: through fees collected and/or government funding? We'd like some clarification on that.

What fee will a citizen pay for utilizing this service? Will it be \$25, \$50, \$75? As we can appreciate, some of the particular citizens that would use this would lack resources to utilize this service.

We support the general direction of the bill. Hopefully, the minister will study the questions raised by my colleagues prior to implementing Bill 44, which we generally support and I recommend.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to briefly comment in my closing remarks on the debate on Bill 44, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. In my intervention in the debate at the time of second reading of the bill I did lay out some concerns. One that I didn't at the time but that certainly remains at the top of my mind, I think, is one I want to talk about, and that is that while the alternative dispute resolution mechanism looks attractive in that it

will save time for all parties and will hopefully reduce prolonged litigation and the attendant expenses, the inability of either of the two parties going before such a board to be able to appeal the decision is something that concerns me, especially so because this particular alternative dispute resolution board will have quasi-judicial powers, but it will not have the independence that we assume that our courts have.

It will be a board appointed by the minister, so my concern is that while the board has quasi-judicial powers, the lack of judicial independence that it will enjoy may create doubt in the minds of those who are unhappy with the decisions. Not providing people who are not happy with the outcomes of the decisions made by such an alternative dispute mechanism model the ability to go to the court to appeal the decision is something that concerns me.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I think it's something that we should perhaps experiment with. It's a pilot project that's then going to be under way in this city. I said to the minister earlier in this House that I would like to see the ministry report back to the House on the results of that one-year pilot project and seek the approval of this House for the continuation of this model into the future based on a review that, I think, I'm asking for the opportunity for this House to have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My comments are very brief and just to add to my colleague's interest in seeing how this might work. It's an experimental process that I think has some merit, certainly.

What I would like to focus my comments on would be the board and the composition of that board. What we would like to see perhaps is a province-wide board that could do adjudication work, sort of, envisaged by this amendment as well as to provide advice and information to all Alberta landlords and tenants. I think that this Bill 44 goes some distance to streamlining and to making it easier for disputes to be resolved, which is great. I just would like to put forward this idea and then to have a report back, as my colleague suggested, in a year's time or so to see how it's going.

There are many people renting in Alberta and many people moving into the province. It's coming and going. It's very important to expediate any disputes that might arise between landlords and tenants.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. There being none, and the chair seeing no other movement, shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 44 read a third time]

3:30

Bill 45 Maternal Tort Liability Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to move third reading of Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act.

By way of this bill the government seeks to provide an exception to the common-law rule of maternal tort immunity, a very narrow

exception limited to the incidence of the negligent operation of a motor vehicle by a mother where the standard of care is clear. The compensation due to a child who is born as a result of the negligent operation of a motor vehicle by its mother and who is born with injuries resulting from that prenatal car accident is limited to the amount of insurance carried by the mother to prevent an infringement on her rights. This wording is consistent with the Supreme Court case that invited this legislation, and it's consistent with a 29-year law operating in the United Kingdom.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand to respond to Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act, at third reading. When I spoke about this in second reading, I emphasized that it makes a big difference, when you're looking at this bill, whose point of view you're looking at it from. If we approach this bill from the point of view of a child who is injured as a fetus when his or her mother was responsible for a car accident when she was driving, then in principle it seems to be fair that the later born-alive child should be able to sue for the insurance coverage. That's a gap in the present insurance laws, and the Supreme Court in the Dobson versus Dobson case allowed that Legislatures may develop a "carefully tailored" bill which would benefit both the injured child and his or her family without unduly restricting the privacy and autonomy rights of women. So what we have before us is such a carefully tailored bill which is trying to protect the common tort law to go any further.

The intent of the bill is to fill this needed gap, so certainly that's a beneficial step. However, if we look at this from the point of view of the pregnant mother – and these issues have been raised by all the members. I think there was a full debate on the issues of the extension of duty of care to her or the issue of the extension of tort law to a pregnant woman or the invasion of her rights to autonomy and privacy. Many members have addressed those issues. They're important issues, so in terms of the effect of the bill it's important that those issues were raised.

But the intent of the bill is, of course, to restrict tort liability. That's clear. The only question I have is in terms of the effect of the bill. Will it be successful in restricting tort liability?

Now, when insurance claims are made and there are court cases to deal with the complexities of accidents, especially when you have accidents where more than one person was injured – there are injuries in the other car as well as the injuries in the car that the pregnant woman is driving – it could get very complicated. How such situations are handled we'll see as courts deal with such situations. Hopefully, we don't have too many of them. I wonder if the principle that the common law should not impose liability on a pregnant woman isn't here and won't be in such complex cases comprised; in other words, their door will be opened just a little bit, and that might be a problem.

From the point of view of society and the common good many of us raised the question about the effect of this bill because it seems to us that the bill is quite limited. As many members have pointed out, insurance settlements may not be enough to ensure the care of a severely injured child who is injured in utero. Such children who are severely injured need support over the period of a lifetime. So I think that is a real problem. The effect of this bill is quite limited.

The majority judgment of the Supreme Court in Dobson versus Dobson made the important statement that the pressing societal issue is "the lack of financial support currently available for the care of children with special needs." Many of us expressed the view that

going the route of insurance is not enough. I mean, it's something, but it's not enough. Justice Cory in the Supreme Court judgment, speaking for the majority, suggested that "carefully considered legislation could create a fund to compensate children with prenatally inflicted injuries." Many of us addressed that issue, that governments have to do more than just allow for this insurance claim. We have to have some sort of fund to cover such severe injuries. That is not what we have in this bill.

The effect of this bill, I think, is too limited and does not address the real, tragic social problem. As I said in second reading, a social problem needs a social solution, which goes much further than this bill. So we need more legislation, a different kind of legislation, which will take care of this kind of tragic situation. At the same time, given the limited applicability or limited definition of this bill and what it tries to do to help a child who is so tragically injured to receive compensation, at least compensation through the insurance route, I would support it in principle even though I've offered so many caution signs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the third reading on Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act, I'd like to make some brief comments. The very limited scope and the limited ability of this piece of legislation to address the problem that it purports to address has already been noted. The built-in unfairness is another issue that I just want to draw attention to. Because it focuses on insurance coverage and the ability of the child who might have sustained damages when he or she was in the mother's womb, the bill allows such a person to sue the mother to claim some damages from the auto insurance coverage provided.

Now, we all know that the auto insurance coverage varies. Some people have only a \$200,000 liability limit, and others have \$2 million or more. Yet in the latter case a claim for 10 times more compensation could be made by a child who has suffered injuries that are similar to the child who can only make a claim up to \$200,000. So there's a fundamental question of equity here, and the bill does not deal with it.

Having made that point, Mr. Speaker, I just want to very briefly deal with the political implications of this bill. The bill, although limited in scope, focuses on a very limited problem and tries to fill a gap. It does, I think, raise the possibilities that antichoice groups, who have steadfastly opposed the right of pregnant mothers and women to make decisions about abortion – it could fuel that campaign of people who are anti choice, and I don't think we need to sort of open the door to that possibility. Women need protection. They need protection of their rights to make decisions about themselves, about their bodies, about their future.

3:40

Without undertaking the kind of legislative action that this piece of legislation is proposing, the very, very rare problem of children who are presently not covered under auto insurance, children who get injured while they're in a fetal state, could have been addressed by social policy. Social programs are needed to help families – mothers, parents, children – with special needs. That's been said here again and again and again. Simply moving step by step in the direction of transferring responsibility for such very difficult cases onto the shoulders of families or the insurance companies with which they deal is really abandoning a very, very important public responsibility by a government that proposes to take such an action.

So I think this act will not rectify the need, will not address the need that families with children with special needs have. It will create inequities, and it will probably open the doors for a very unpleasant, unnecessary debate on the rights of women to abortion. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly not be able to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I made most of my remarks in regard to this bill in second reading, and I do want to recognize the hon. Member for Peace River for his very steadfast and persistent work on this issue. Certainly, I can commend him for his contribution to this bill, as I would, once again, express my sympathy to the individual case that precipitated bringing this forward to the Legislature in the first place.

However, upon reflection on this bill, quite careful reflection, there is one further point that I did want to bring forward, and that is: you know, this bill is looking at a specific instance of a calamity that befalls human beings or, in this case, a fetal human being. Tort law covers all manner of these things, but just by the very essence of the fact that there are so many things that can befall human beings, so many calamities that can befall human beings, my question – and I think it's a very serious one – is: why would we construct specific legislation to deal with this one specific circumstance?

Now, I know, to answer my own question to a certain extent, that this is an extraordinary and rare occurrence that seems to be falling between the cracks of insurance law. Certainly, we do want to look after individuals that require special attention and special needs in our society, but I think that looking to the insurance industry in an untoward way to cover the needs of people in this circumstance is not really the best way to deal with this, especially to make legislation to deal with it. As I said before, there are so many things that can literally happen to a person, an infinite possibility, and that's what tort law is for. You know, for us to perhaps cross that boundary into the legislative arena to deal with these things has some essential lack of logic to it, I believe.

The second issue that I want to just reiterate I have spoken on before, but covering the financial concerns of people with special needs using private insurance I find to be somewhat, again, structurally unacceptable. We have a social responsibility as the state to look after people with special needs, and perhaps part of what brought on this individual case was not meeting those special needs of the person who, as it happens, was in a very remote area, so it's difficult. Creating a gap in the ability for us to provide special needs to people who require them I think is not, again, in the realm of looking at insurance to take care of that.

Once again, as I've described before, there is some opportunity, I think a very large opportunity, for litigation to push the envelope of this very narrowly prescribed law, which is of course the right of lawyers to do so.

So with those two main arguments, I find that I cannot accept supporting this bill at this time. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Then shall I call on the hon. Member for Peace River to close the debate or call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a third time]

head:

**Private Bills
Third Reading**

**Bill Pr. 4
Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega
Right of Civil Action Act**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and, in fact, honoured to rise today to move third reading of Bill Pr. 4, the Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is very similar in form to Bill 45, which just passed third reading a moment ago, and of course it was purposely structured that way. The key difference in the bill is that it addresses the situation of one family that I'm aware of in Alberta that in the interim period between 1999, when this maternal exception was extinguished, and 2005, when by way of public policy the government is going to re-establish it, finds itself in this situation with a child that's handicapped.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is, of course, a private bill, recommended to us by the Standing Committee on Private Bills. I urge all hon. members to support it, and I thank them for the considered debate we've had to this point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to briefly respond to this bill, Bill Pr. 4, just to say that I really commend the family for their persistence. They've had to wait probably for a long time, and it's commendable that they've had the patience to wait until this kind of legislation goes through the House.

My only problem in terms of the effect of the bill is that I worry that there are still some hurdles for that family to face in terms of court action. Of course, there is a law already in place in terms of insurance law to cover loss or damage for bodily injury to people. I think that an argument probably could be made that there was a law in place when this accident occurred. So insurance policy that was set down by this Legislature when it enacted section 616 of the Insurance Act would cover whatever is going to take place, but when that act was passed, it did not include thinking about hypothetical situations that may have to be dealt with in the future that are not covered by the act.

So I wonder about the status of this act when it goes to court. Would the insurance company then insist that the legislation that was in place when the accident occurred applies and it can't be changed? I don't know what the answer to that is. Maybe there's an easy answer, and I'm missing it.

3:50

Also, section 614 of the Insurance Act provides that every action or proceeding against the insurer under this contract in respect of loss or damage to the automobile shall be commenced within one year next after the happening of the loss and not afterwards, and in respect of loss or damage to persons or property shall be commenced within one year next after the cause of action arose and not afterwards.

So there is a statutory limitation, and that seems to strengthen the argument that the law is a reference to the law in place at the time and that that would prevail. So I'm just concerned about more lengthy court discussion in terms of what the insurance company is supposed to do.

It's interesting – and I hope this is not a problem with this bill; I

didn't have a chance to raise it before – that the bill actually does not refer to insurance liability. It makes a statement that liability can be applied to Mrs. Rewega, but there's no mention of insurance liability. I'm not sure that that is a problem, but I hope not.

So those are my only points in respect of the effect of this bill.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, I'll be very brief in making comments on Bill Pr. 4, Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act. I'm profoundly sympathetic for Baby Rewega and family for the predicament that they have found themselves in given the state of our laws and ability or lack of ability on their part to seek available remedies. That predicament needn't have been there. We still have that capacity to create benefits for children born with a disability as a result of car accidents. We haven't done that. If we'd had that kind of arrangement in place, then Baby Rewega's family would have been able to avoid to a degree, at least, the financial consequences of the predicament that they were thrown into as a result of that unfortunate accident many years ago.

Other than that, I think that my concerns with respect to this bill are very similar to the ones that I've expressed with respect to Bill 45. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

If not, and no further speakers, hon. Member for Peace River, would you like to close the debate, or should we call the question?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I'll call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 4 read a third time]

head:

**Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading
(continued)**

**Bill 46
Criminal Notoriety Act**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act, for third reading.

I appreciate the input and comments we received from all the hon. members. We seem to all agree with the intent of this bill. It's obvious to us that no one should profit from serious crime. There were some concerns regarding the purpose of passing this legislation when we do not have an extensive collection of books at the local library that recount crimes, that perhaps there's no point. There were also concerns raised that there needs to be a consistent approach across the country for this legislation to be most effective.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect us to be proactive whenever we are able. We have the opportunity to make our province inhospitable to those who wish to profit from the inappropriate recounting of their crimes. We do not need to wait until the first book is published in Alberta to know that it is wrong for criminals convicted of serious offences to profit in this way.

Mr. Speaker, there are several questions still outstanding that I would like to address. It's important that Albertans know that we have answers to the concerns raised by members of this House. I would like to emphasize that the overarching purpose of Bill 46 is that persons convicted of serious crimes should not profit from recounting their crimes in a book, movie, on television, or on the Internet. The bill does not eliminate all possibilities that a serious offender may publish a story about their life. Alberta strongly supports the right of freedom of expression. This bill is not intended

to violate that right. Everyone has the right to tell their story, but it is unacceptable that someone convicted of a serious crime should profit from it.

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora noted, there is a great deal of sympathy for victims when a criminal publicizes the details of a crime. Even in a society that seems to be fascinated by graphic detail, the thought of a serial killer making millions selling his or her book is repugnant. On the other end of the spectrum is the success story of a young person who got into trouble but turned their life around as a result of incarceration. This bill also strikes an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and the protection of victims of crime and their families.

There are two parts to consider when we look at the aim of this legislation. The first is that the book, movie, or television show must actually recount the crime. The second is whether the criminal or the agent will profit from recounting it. The hon. member expressed concern about passing legislation that blankets all situations with one law. Section 8 of this bill provides for flexibility. Section 8 says that the court may order payment of consideration in accordance with the contract if the court is satisfied that there is some value in the recounting. The parties to a contract who wish to receive compensation under the terms of the contract may apply to the Court of Queen's Bench. Under this section it is up to a judge to consider the specific circumstances of the story a person wishes to tell. Again, we must bear in mind that the bill does not apply to every story an offender wishes to tell. It applies specifically to the recounting of the crime.

Some of the examples raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora in second reading would not be an issue in relation to this legislation as they do not involve recounting crimes. The bill applies only to contracts for the recounting of crime. It does not apply to contracts for books about prison conditions or unjust laws, so a journalist writing as a co-author with a prisoner on prison conditions or someone writing about an unjust law would be able to publish a book.

If a journalist or some other person writes a story about the details of a crime on his own and not as an agent of the criminal, this does not violate the act. If the wife of a convicted criminal wished to write a book that recounts his crime, she would be deemed to be acting as his agent under section 1 of the act unless she can prove that she is not. If her book does not recount his crimes, it does not come under this bill, and she would be free to write it and be compensated for it. If it does recount his crimes, she must apply to the court regarding compensation.

Occasionally offenders wish to write an autobiography in order to warn others against falling into the same life of crime. If the book recounts the offender's crime, the act applies, and the parties can apply to the court for payments to be made under the contract. If the judge finds value, based on specific criteria listed in section 8, the offender may receive compensation for the story.

The hon. member also suggested that this bill is simply another sanction in addition to the sentence already imposed for the crime. This is not the case. Bill 46 does require that parties to a contract give notice to the Crown of contracts that they have entered into. It also regulates how compensation is paid and received under those contracts. Contraventions of these provisions are offences and are subject to fines upon conviction. This means that a contravention of this legislation would be a new offence. Any penalty is imposed for a new crime, not for the original Criminal Code offences.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford asked about someone who testifies against a co-conspirator, and before we conclude, I'm happy to provide the clarification he requested. Mr. Speaker, if a person is convicted of a crime that falls within the definition of a

serious crime, then the act applies. If not, the act does not apply. If as part of a plea agreement someone is convicted of a crime that is not a serious crime under this bill, the legislation does not apply to them.

I thank the hon. members for their support of this bill and ask for your further support in third reading. Thank you.

4:00

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to respond in third reading to Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act. I thank the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for those explanations. Third reading is not the time to debate back and forth those points that were raised. I think the qualifications and clarifications that the hon. member has made are really helpful. I must respond positively that if one reads this bill very carefully, the hon. member's remarks and interpretations seem to clearly apply.

My question is still: will this bill have any effect? Will it have any effect at all? I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark raised that issue. He consulted with the library and couldn't find any books written by notorious criminals in Alberta. We're wondering whether we're spending a lot of time dealing with an issue that may not have very much applicability at all. Nevertheless, as has been pointed out, people who have committed serious crimes elsewhere in Canada may end up in Alberta sometime and may write a book specifically about their crime, and this bill, of course, would apply to those examples.

In conclusion, I think that if we're going to really make a great effort to prevent crime – and that must be the most important thing for all of us as legislators – we have to bring legislation that applies to that, not something like this. I'm still having questions about constitutional challenges to this bill, especially in regard to a prisoner who has served time and is out. All the freedoms that are ours under the Charter apply to such people. That person might indeed challenge this bill constitutionally under the Charter, section 2(b), especially freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and so on, although as the hon. Minister of Advanced Education argued, when you craft some legislation, you don't worry about Charter challenges down the road. They might happen; they might not.

Those are my remarks. I don't think this bill is going to have tremendous effect on much of anything. It took a lot of time in the House. I would prefer to see legislation really dealing with the prevention of crime in Alberta. Nevertheless, this is something that in principle I would vote in favour of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 46 read a third time]

Bill 47

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and move third reading of Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act.

This bill would create an association which could utilize the knowledge and experience of former MLAs to promote the ideals of

parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has been well debated during both previous stages of debate in this House, and it was amended last night during the committee stage. In light of this extensive discussion, I will simply ask the House for their support of this bill at third reading.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise for the final time on Bill 47 and say that this is an interesting and potentially useful addition to organizations in the province and particularly a role for past MLAs in Alberta. The opposition, however, has made some suggestions to improve it, as was discussed in the House last night, amendments that we feel would strengthen it.

Trust in government is absolutely fundamental to a healthy, just society. Trust is achieved when government acts in ethical ways and is seen to act in ethical ways. The political climate in Canada today is perhaps unprecedented in terms of the lack of trust in elected officials. I think that in that context we in the opposition recommended some amendments that would deal with the profound loss of trust in elected officials, which contributes to a democratic deficit in this country, part of which we're about to face with another election nationally. The danger here is that this new opportunity for former MLAs may be perceived not to be contributing to the well-being of society through this association but to a culture of entitlement, which is precisely the issue that's at stake across the country at this time, and diminished trust in our government.

We recommended several amendments, which I could summarize by indicating that, in the first instance, it would be more appropriate and more supportive of democracy to amend the clause relating to appointment of officials to that of election of an executive. This was supported by the majority of the House last night. The second essentially had to do with prohibiting applications for funding from former MLAs to present MLAs, to government. This clearly could be seen to be an abuse of power that continues after the term of an MLA. The third had to do, essentially, with a cooling-off period such that the influence that former MLAs might still hold within the province with the connections they have could be perceived to be not helpful to the greater cause of this association.

For those reasons and in closing, on behalf of the Official Opposition we cannot support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to be brief and say that I commend the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose in his intent here. I felt that there were some very good amendments that came forward yesterday. We passed one. It still is of great concern to me that there's a connection between the former MLAs and the sitting government, and I'm disappointed that we didn't pass more amendments. For that reason I, too, will be voting against this bill. We had an opportunity to make it nonpartisan, but I don't feel that the way it's structured, it will appear that way to the public.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.
Additional speakers?

Mr. Chase: I just would like to thank all members who participated in the discussion, including the amendments, last night. It was a very positive process, and I'm very thankful to the government members for accepting the amendment that we had.

What hasn't been dealt with is autonomy. For this club to have respect, it must be autonomous from the government, whether it be in funding or whether it be in influence. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Additional speakers?

Shall I call on the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a third time]

Bill 49

Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 49, the Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

The main purpose of the proposed legislation is to streamline and enhance the Law Enforcement Review Board's effectiveness in how complaints are handled by police and how the police disciplinary process works. Specifically, it's proposed that the chair of the LERB be given the authority to appoint one board member to deal with preliminary or procedural matters. The amendment also gives the board the authority to establish subpanels with the same powers as the full board, which would sit simultaneously in different regions of the province.

4:10

An amendment of this bill that will directly benefit Albertans concerns the change to the rules of evidence. Currently when Albertans complain to the LERB, they must follow the rules of evidence used in judicial proceedings. These rules are stringent and unnecessary. The amendment would see the board use the principles of natural justice, which follow an approach based on common sense. This change will help Albertans understand the process without having to obtain legal counsel. The proposed amendments also clarify the role and powers of the board to assess costs and pay expenses.

The Police Amendment Act also covers the minister's responsibility for policing standards. This amendment has a minor wording change to clarify that standards for policing include police commissions and committees, not just police services.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have highlighted the key points of this bill. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our department staff for their hard work in drafting this bill as well as stakeholders for their invaluable input on this very important issue. I'd ask all members to support this bill on third reading.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to address Bill 49, the Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) in third reading. Let me just say something about standards up front. The recognition of the importance of standards: I've talked about that before. I think that's really important, especially as it applies now to police commissions and police committees. I think that's really important given recent events, and I hope that leads to a strengthening of our police committees and police commissions throughout the province.

The intended purpose of the changes to the wording and to the procedures is to make the process of hearing complaints by the Law Enforcement Review Board more efficient and more expedient. Instead of the rules of evidence, the process of natural justice will be

followed. It has been argued that this will help ordinary citizens, who are often intimidated by the legal process.

Mr. Speaker, what has not been mentioned is whether it will help police officers who come before the board. In fact, I've received letters from police officers expressing their dismay that the rules of evidence are set aside, opening the door for what they consider to be the admission of unsubstantiated, unverified, and hearsay evidence. Their expression of dismay raises for me an important question, and that is whether there has been sufficient consultation in the preparation of this bill; namely, consultation with the public and with citizens who might bring complaints but also consultation with the police because it is often police officers who come before the Law Enforcement Review Board.

Now, the legal advice that I have received is that the principles of natural justice should be enough to ensure fairness. I'm inclined to agree with the hon. minister when he suggests that nothing is lost, that this makes the process more expedient because under the principles of natural justice the most important principle is that a person has a right to be heard. All people coming before this board have a right to be heard, and they ought to have the right to be judged impartially. But I think the effect of this bill remains for me ambiguous because if there hasn't been enough consultation with the parties involved, especially the police, then I wonder about the ongoing effect of this bill.

Finally, the effect of changing the clauses on vexatious and frivolous matters. The changes include a reference to lawyers. Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard any evidence presented that there has been a lot of time wasted before the Law Enforcement Review Board especially by lawyers who hold things up, that they should be accused of frivolous and vexatious complaints. I'm not sure where this is coming from. Again, what consultation has been made with organizations like the John Howard Society or the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association? Certainly, they have a stake in how these procedures unfold. I'm wondering what kind of consultation the Solicitor General department has had with the criminal trial lawyers. Is this going to prevent the lawyers from carrying out their responsible duty to defend complainants when they come before the board?

Actually, I'm quite angered by this whole process, Mr. Speaker. In just two weeks of a session we have these bills all coming at us, and some of them at first glance don't appear to be all that serious, but as time goes on, when you begin to consult with stakeholders, it appears that these bills may be more serious than we thought. What we haven't had is enough time to consult with all the different stakeholders so that we can responsibly deal with bills like this.

Mr. Speaker, in light of that lack of consultation and the letters that I've received, I would oppose this bill going forward. I just lament the fact that we haven't had enough time for proper public consultation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to Bill 49, Police Amendment Act, 2005, in its final reading, third reading. I'll be brief. I stated my concerns with respect to the piece of legislation before the House, and those concerns stand at the time of third reading. I don't think they have been properly addressed.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

I also raised my concern at that time about: why rush this kind of important bill when what hangs in the balance is the public's trust in our police services? Police provide such essential, fundamental services and put their own lives on the line, put their lives in danger providing them. Any piece of legislation that has to do with the way

in which the complaints against police officers are heard has to have a strong public consensus behind it. Lack of consultation, the rush with which we are putting this piece of legislation through the Assembly, doesn't give me any satisfaction with respect to the questions that I raised. Are the public behind it? Are the police services behind it? Are all the stakeholders consulted properly? Given that the answer to many of these questions is no, I'm going to have to withhold my support for the bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Anybody else?

The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security to close debate.

Mr. Cenaiko: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 49 read a third time]

Bill 52

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to move Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), for third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 52 read a third time]

4:20

Bill 53

Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and move third reading of Bill 53, Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, it's quite a simple piece of legislation. It simply allows for the Surface Rights Board to issue an operator an order to enter private lands for the purpose of environmental remediation in the event that the operator and the landholder cannot agree on the terms of entry. The landholder remains protected in that they have access to the Surface Rights Board for compensation. I look forward to the debate on third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I hope this bill will achieve what it's intended to do. Given the lack of EUB public hearings resolving the rights of surface holders and mineral holders, a great deal of grief and conflict can result. Whether it's a gas well to be drilled or a hydro tower to be erected, consultation can be deliberately limited.

The landowner may see this drilling or erecting of a tower as encroachment on their land. They may view it as a form of legalized trespassing. The fact that the operator who initially did the drilling or installation left a mess in the first place just rubs salt in the first inflicted wound. Anger at loss of rights, anger at a further mess being made. The landowner may be considerably less than willing to have the same perpetrator come back onto their land for a third time. So I would hope that within this bill there is an extremely fair

dispute resolution process. Sometimes, just simply paying a person to assuage their anger isn't sufficient.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, before I recognize the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister for Human Resources and Employment.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Jodi Newman and her friend. They're attending Concordia College here in Edmonton. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I've just noticed my assistant from the Calgary office, Jeremy Hexham, has just walked in, and I'd ask him to rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading
Bill 53
Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005
(*continued*)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Knight: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise to make a comment or two with respect to Bill 53. This piece of legislation, as my colleague has indicated, is relatively straightforward and simple. However, I would like to point out that along with that it is extremely important. The issue that we're dealing with here – although a member opposite has indicated that perhaps the EUB's shortcomings with respect to public hearings, et cetera, may have alleviated problems like these if, in fact, we were more diligent in that respect, indicating that in some ways these industrial contracts that are made are nothing more than legalized trespass and all these types of things.

We do have at the end of the day a very serious problem. It is this: when an operator moves out of an area that he has occupied for the purposes of an exploration, they would do a reclamation to remediate the area that they worked in. A certificate can be issued with respect to the reclamation, and it may hold and be valid for a number of years. At some point in time some unforeseen circumstance happens with respect to the piece of real estate. It will require then that we would withdraw the reclamation certificate and require that the operator revisit the site in order to make right the environmental damage that may be existing at that time. There has to be a way for us to ensure that the operator can get access to the site in order to do the reclamation. As my colleague has stated, the owner of the real estate has a right to fair compensation for an operator returning to the property and can apply to the Surface Rights Board to be sure that his compensation is fair and equitable to allow the operator to return.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that all members would want to support this bill. It's an important piece of legislation to help us

continue with our diligence with respect to being sure that our environment remains in a good condition.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, are you rising on Standing Order 29(2)(a) to ask questions? Okay.

Well, nobody wishing to ask a question, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very, very brief in my comments on Bill 53, Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005. I think the bill certainly is heading in the right direction. There are some questions I have raised with respect to how they arrive at fair compensation of the owners of the property to which entry is being allowed here, by way of this act, to a company whose reclamation certificate might have been withdrawn and, therefore, asked to go back onto the property to do further remediation. That to me is an issue that needs addressing, perhaps in regulations, so that there is a fair compensation for whatever damages are a result to the property upon entry by a company that is required to go back in to do the remediation work on environmental damage caused during earlier activity or operation.

I would certainly be in support of this piece of legislation except that I would like to see companies being required to put money in some sort of fund which is substantial enough for them to be able to do the remediation that is necessary. That's one of the problems that remains in this province and needs to be addressed. Just requiring landowners to permit companies who have found themselves being called upon to go back in is not enough. I think there have to be enough reserve resources for these companies to have put in place, that they can then call upon or use to do the remediation.

That being said, I think this piece of legislation is going in the right direction, and I will support it.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

The hon. Member for Peace River to close debate.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 53 read a third time]

Bill 54
Alberta Centennial Education
Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading.

I was delighted to hear members from all sides of the House claim credit for this wonderful idea, and I'm sure that they will follow through with the sentiments that were expressed in debate with respect to the need to amend the act so that Alberta children at ages eight, 11, and 14 can be encouraged, or rather their parents and guardians might be encouraged, to open a registered education savings plan, if they have not already, to deposit \$100 at least, to have that matched, and by doing so create a clear expression of interest and intention that their children will get a postsecondary education.

4:30

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on third reading debate of Bill 54, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005. Without claiming credit for anything necessarily, I just want to reiterate our support for this bill and the amendment that it will attach to the original Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act. It opens up opportunities here to many, many more children; children born before January 1, 2005. I think it makes it much fairer and more equitable, and I'll be pleased to support this bill on third reading.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Bill 54, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005, in its third reading I just want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that I made some fairly extensive observations on it when the bill was in second reading. I think it's a feeble gesture of encouragement for parents.

I think this government needs to learn how to really encourage families and young people to want to go to university from the experience of countries like Finland, which has made postsecondary education free. That sends a very strong message of encouragement and support to parents as well as to young students who may be in school or may be returning after having done some work outside for a while and who want to return to postsecondary institutions.

Similarly, I think we need to learn something from Ireland, a country that without the rich resources that we have took a bold step with a very healthy vision for the future and threw open the doors of postsecondary education by removing tuition fees altogether for Irish citizens. That's the kind of, I think, example that we need to use in order to send a real message of encouragement to students and families that postsecondary education in this province is available and that this government wants to encourage everyone to participate in it.

Knowing especially what we know about the low participation rate of Albertans in postsecondary education, there is indeed a need for a very bold step forward, and this bill doesn't provide that. I just wanted to make sure that I'm on record reminding the House, and the minister in particular, that there's a need for bold action along the lines of the countries of Finland and Ireland.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Any questions or comments?

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

Mr. Hancock: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 54 read a third time]

Bill 55
Post-secondary Learning
Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move Bill 55, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2), for third reading. This is a rather modest act, but I think it will have

some significant opportunities for the colleges and technical institutes in our system, and it will allow us to move forward with the system to design appropriate frameworks for alternate models for academic councils. I've committed to working with the system over the course of the winter if the Legislature passes this act, to help design the frameworks that would be appropriate and put in place the regulations which would be necessary to allow an individual institution to propose some alternate form of academic council which helps them to meet their goals and aspirations.

I've also committed to the opposition critic to work with him and to discuss with him the proposed models and frameworks, and I look forward to any advice and direction that he and other members of the House might have in that regard as we move forward to help create the best learning system in the country, in fact in the world, so that Alberta can have the best education and have access to the opportunities which we provide.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, pleased to rise on third reading debate of Bill 55, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). In the perfect world there may have been a better way to go about this, but this is not the perfect world. I do believe that this change to the Post-secondary Learning Act will give colleges and technical institutes that want it the flexibility that they need to design academic councils in their own way, that allow them to move forward with their plans, whether that's to pursue AUCC accreditation or design another model, whatever it might be.

The thing that I especially like about this bill is that it does not necessarily – although the minister acknowledged in committee yesterday that he has committed to consulting with all the colleges and technical institutes about this, and it's possible that what we're creating here is a second model for academic councils at the college and technical institute level. But if it works really well – if things work really well – what we'll come up with is an academic council that follows the general template that's in the act now plus, under this amendment that would create a section 47.1 to the Post-secondary Learning Act, an ability for colleges and technical institutes to have the flexibility to pursue their own paths.

So if one particular college wants to go in one direction and creating its own custom-designed academic council will enable it to do that – for instance, getting itself into a position where it can offer degrees that are recognized by the AUCC – this amendment, this bill, this act would give them that ability whereas another college might wish to go a slightly different route, and the flexibility would be there, we hope, for that to occur as well.

I thank the minister again for committing to consult with me as this consultation process and the development of the regulations go along. I think that will be helpful and informative as well. Hopefully, I will be able to provide some input that the minister will find useful. I will try. I will commit to do that. Hopefully out of this whole process will come good regulation that allows for our colleges and technical institutes in this province to achieve their full potential both over the short term and over time.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very brief on my comments on Bill 55, Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2). I just want to note that during the debate on Bill 43, that umbrella piece of legislation which lumped universities,

colleges, and technical institutes together under one piece of legislation, we drew attention to the limits of the sort of approach that that bill seemed to represent, which is the one-size-fits-all approach to the establishment of academic councils.

Colleges in this province are dynamic entities. They are changing their charters, their roles, their program delivery. The scope of programs is changing. We're moving to a degree-granting status for some of the colleges, and we can't have the same one model of academic councils that was envisaged in Bill 43.

So the minister is responding to some of this dynamic change and, specifically, requests from some of the colleges that are to be given powers which are somewhat similar to those that the universities, which grant degrees, enjoy at the moment. The solution that's being proposed by way of this bill is, I think, perhaps not ideal, not something that some of the colleges really want, but certainly it's accommodative of some of the requests that they have made.

4:40

I think what we need as we move towards allowing colleges to offer degree programs, not in one or two areas but in many areas – it is important to revisit the whole issue of the structure of governance for those colleges, from boards of governors down to academic councils, and ask why not: if these colleges are going to be increasingly doing the work that universities have done in the past, that we bring their governance structures closer to the model that presently prevails across the universities because the universities' model does seem to work. And the core of that model is greater institutional autonomy for degree-granting institutions to make decisions that affect the substance of their academic programs, the delivery models, the standards of performance, and the sort of rights and duties of academic and nonacademic staff in those institutions. These rights and duties have to be commensurate with the kind of work that we expect them to do, and degree-granting work is very different from diploma programs and activities.

So I hope the minister will continue to work on this issue, perhaps bring forward stand-alone legislation which governs degree-granting non-university postsecondary institutions in the near future because that may be the real answer. In the meanwhile, this is a step, I think, in the right direction, and he does have my support. I hope he will continue to consult both with the members of this House and certainly on this side of the House but also with institutions, who will certainly bear the major impact of the changes in legislation that are made in this House based on the initiatives that he takes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

There being none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. As the representative for Calgary-Varsity and the University of Calgary I'd like very much to thank the Minister of Advanced Education for his collaborative efforts and consultation with the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie in terms of drafting and explaining Bill 55.

There is a great deal of co-operation in Calgary amongst the postsecondary institutions. Mount Royal College, the University of Calgary, the Alberta College of Art and Design, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, and the Bow Valley College all work very well together, as do their various students' unions. There has been some discussion about a perceived threat if Mount Royal were given a degree-granting status. But from what I've heard from both students and faculty, this threat is not real. Each institution, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie pointed out, has a unique place,

and the co-operation between the various institutes enables a relatively smooth transition from one institution to another.

Again, thank you very much, Advanced Education minister, for pushing Mount Royal College that much closer to a degree-granting status.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

Mr. Hancock: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 55 read a third time]

Bill 56

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

This act deals very succinctly with some elements with respect to amendments that were made to add the concept of an unlimited liability corporation. It was a new concept for Alberta in the spring of this year, and the amendments were made to the Business Corporations Act this spring in order to allow for the unlimited liability corporation.

That having been done, there was opportunity for a more thorough look and review over the summer and to get some feedback. That feedback resulted in the amendments being brought forward this fall relative to how shareholders in an unlimited liability corporation might end their association with that unlimited liability corporation and, therefore, remove their liability for the actions of that company, among other amendments.

It's an important piece of work because unlimited liability corporations will become a good vehicle for people to do business in the province. It's an opportunity for yet another form of corporate organization, giving choice to companies and to Albertans in terms of how they organize their affairs to maximize their ability to do business, create jobs, create economic opportunity in the province. I'd commend the bill to the House for passage in third reading.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) I believe this bill has been adequately debated. We have a few minor reservations about some of the clauses but nothing too terribly substantial. I'd be happy to move that we adjourn debate and call the question.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that you didn't accede to the request to adjourn debate on the bill.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 56 is really an attempt to make what's called minor amendments to an already existing bill, Bill 16, that was debated in this House I think in the spring. The flaws in that bill were certainly debated in this House at some length, among other things. Just to remind the House of one of the problems with that bill, I'm quoting from a publication from the Fasken Martineau corporation, the article written by Morgan Tingle, in Calgary. I'll

just read the last part of it. Commenting on the unlimited liability act, they said:

The difference in shareholder liabilities notwithstanding, the creation of the AULC [Alberta unlimited liability corporation] provides an excellent opportunity for U.S. companies to benefit from Alberta's corporate-friendly legislative and tax regimes. In particular, there are several key differences between the Nova Scotia Companies Act . . . and the Alberta Business Corporations Act . . . many of which make AULCs a more attractive alternative to the NSULC,

the Nova Scotia counterpart of it, according to the assessment provided by this expert on business legislation.

The amendments, Mr. Speaker, that are proposed here are not enough to address the flaws in the previous legislation which they're trying to amend. They demonstrate that there must be serious failings in the earlier legislation. Whether this bill fixes these failings is highly questionable.

I ask: what's the rush in bringing the unlimited liability corporations act amendments here now? The whole concept is poorly understood. Its implications for tax avoidance have not really been fully explored. Why rush into approving amendments to a bill that seems to have serious flaws? Given the state of Alberta securities enforcement practices here and our rather poor track record in prosecuting corporate misconduct or crime, U.S. companies must think that it's a pretty safe bet for them to incorporate as a ULC in Alberta in exchange for tax advantages.

I continue to have serious reservations about this piece of legislation, Bill 56, Mr. Speaker. I thought I'd very briefly reiterate them for the purpose of the record of this House. Thank you.

4:50

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Does anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close debate on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill?

[Motion carried; Bill 56 read a third time]

Bill 57 Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With great pleasure I move Bill 57, Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005, for third reading.

This, again, is a modest act but one that's important. As I explained to the House on earlier occasions, there was a discrepancy in the legislation or a potential concern or a vagueness in the legislation dealing with the transition from the manpower training act to the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act a number of years ago. That ambiguity was highlighted in a court case recently, and as a result it was deemed appropriate to move forward to clarify so that there was no doubt as to what trades would be listed as designated trades under the legislation.

The purpose of this bill is to create the regulation-making authority so that designated trades can be listed and clearly identified for Albertans. There has been some suggestion that that should be done in the legislation as opposed to by regulation, but that's not really a practical suggestion, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that we don't designate trades lightly, and we certainly don't de-designate trades lightly.

We have a very appropriate but detailed process in the province with the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, which has members from both industry and trades on the board. We take advice from that board. That board takes advice from a series of provincial advisory councils and local advisory councils. When we deal with issues such as apprenticeship-to-journeyman ratios, we ask that series of advisory groups for advice and direction in that area. When it comes to areas where we ought to have appropriate designations for required trades, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board provides advice after consultation through the provincial advisory committees and the local advisory committees. When we're talking about where there needs to be improvement in trades training, again, we get advice through that process.

Mr. Speaker, we have in this province an apprenticeship training system which is the envy not only of the country but of the world. In fact, we had a recent mention, I believe it was in Barbados, in their throne speech, on the apprenticeship and industry training system that they're setting up there, which is modelled on Alberta's. Others have come from around the world to see how it's being done here. I'm not saying this to blow our horn as government but to blow our horn as to the way in which industry and trades have worked together to create a comprehensive system and comprehensive trades training.

This piece of legislation is a modest way of yet evergreening our legislation, continuing our efforts to improve legislation so it's clear for Albertans, understandable for Albertans, so they know where to go to find the information that they need, so it's clear that when we're trying to enforce the legislation, there's a clear line of authority for that enforcement.

The situation that this arose out of was a situation where there was a request for an order directing an individual who owned and operated an autobody repair shop to cease working in the autobody technician trade until he was in compliance with sections 21(3) and 21(4) of the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. That application was not successful because the court found that there wasn't a clear line of authority showing that to be a designated trade.

Of course, since the time that the act came into effect, there have also been a number of name changes. To put it in the act and to outline it in the act, either directly in the act or as a schedule, would be a cumbersome process.

I can assure all members of the House that this is not a method to denigrate the noncompulsory trades, to have an easy way to move from compulsory to noncompulsory, or to fragment the trades. As I indicated to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning when he raised his concerns, I'm more than happy to sit down with him, discuss the concerns that he raised with respect to trades and trades training.

We look forward to a very, very bright future in this province, with many opportunities for young Albertans who want to go into the trades as a valid career choice. I want to assure that hon. member and other members of the House that we take the issue of trades training, trades certification, the designated trades, or compulsory trades very, very seriously. We would ask for the support of the House in making this amendment so that where there is the necessity for compulsory trades and to enforce the regulations around compulsory trades, we have a clear line of authority to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased with such a thorough explanation from the minister. Some of the concerns, comments, or questions that we had, which were raised by the

Member for Edmonton-Manning, have been answered. His consent to go back and discuss some of the concerns that the member has is great. I thank him for that. We did raise a number of concerns, as the minister did, with the compulsory trades and/or the optional trades. As for everything that we have mentioned and had concerns about, I think we can live with what's going on.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, are you rising to speak?

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, there doesn't appear to be much to this particular piece of legislation. Of course, many times we gloss over some of the smaller bits of legislation that appear not to be detailed or important.

I had the very good fortune to come up through the apprenticeship training system in the province of Alberta. In fact, when I initially engaged in the trade of an instrument mechanic, there was at that point in time no regulation with respect to who could or could not practise that trade. What we did was work under the auspices of electricians, so we would have journeymen electricians that would sort of be our mentors, and we worked along with them.

However, what happened to instrument mechanics in that particular period of time was that their opportunities for advancement and also their opportunities with respect to equalizing salaries around that trade were limited simply because there was no recognition of the fact that that enterprise was, indeed, a registered trade.

When it came forward through the system, a very similar situation. It really did add an awful lot for young Albertans who wanted to become involved in the instrumentation and control business to have a licence to practise that trade in the province. It made a huge difference in their ability to have both secure employment and a level playing field with other individuals that worked very closely in the same industry although were certified as qualified electricians.

5:00

The other thing that's important with respect to this, although nothing mentioned in the legislation but is supplemental to this, is that the certified engineering technologists that come along behind the technologists, people that would decide that they want to advance their opportunities another step further, the more certifications that we have that are clear I think the more opportunities it will afford young workers to move along and further themselves in the area of being certified engineering technologists as well.

So I applaud the legislation and hope that all members of the House would support it. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

The hon. minister to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 57 read a third time]

Bill 58

Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, much debate has taken place over this bill at previous stages of its reading, and I appreciate comments made by members on both sides of the House and would move third reading of Bill 58.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Before closing debate on Bill 58, I'd just like to commend the efforts of our respective and respected House leaders in their schedule of collaborations that led to very efficient debates and discussions both last night and this afternoon. I commend their efforts. It shows how we can be a working unit.

With regard to Bill 58 I would like to thank the Minister of Community Development for providing opportunities for us all to recognize the efforts and contributions of our constituents. Both the medallions and the medals were very much appreciated by the recipients. I'm sure each of us could recount specific stories of deserving candidates within our constituencies, but I won't take that time now.

This Sunday, in terms of a collaborative effort, I will be presenting with the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill candidates that he suggested from the Banff Trail Community Association executive, of which he is a member. We have wonderful collaboration in Calgary-Varsity.

With regard to specifically Bill 58 one of the beauties of this whole medallion/ medal is that we each got an equal number. We each had 30; we gave them out. It was a universal kind of equivalency. If we wish to give the Premier of Saskatchewan a medal, I'm all for it. Saskatchewan is our sister province. It just seems to me that this bill is a very complicated way of accomplishing that.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. minister to close debate.

Mr. Mar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to close debate on this. In response to the comments made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, I can assure the House that were it as simple as simply conferring it on the Premier of Saskatchewan, we would have done so. He may think that this is an awkward way of doing it, but as currently constated, our legislation doesn't permit the conferring of a medal upon a non-Alberta resident. So this was the simplest way of addressing it. We've taken the Saskatchewan legislation and mirror imaged it and applied it ourselves. This is the simplest solution to reaching the objective.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 58 read a third time]

Bill 51

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to move Bill 51, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2) for third reading.

Mr. Speaker, I've reviewed *Hansard* for the number of questions, comments – I must say more comments than questions – and reviewed them through the debate on supply on the various departments that were before the House for supply. I found it helpful to review those comments, and I think that there's a great deal that we can take from many of those comments to make our process work better.

What I really understood from the discussion was certainly that there was a firm commitment for the majority of the spending, whether it was health facilities, a conclusion of health facilities, schools, advanced education facilities, but many, many comments about the process. So I certainly take that advice in the manner that

it was provided and will look at that. As I say, I did check for questions. There weren't really any definitive questions in the area.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude my comments in moving third reading and look forward to comments from other members.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to briefly address once more, as it has been several times, that a plan really should have been in place. Just today alone I received three letters from teachers in my constituency that are very concerned about the unfunded liability of the teachers' pension plan. There are many debts in the province that I feel we should be looking at and addressing, yet in this Bill 51 it seems like it was more of an expense and spending spree than it was addressing the problems. I'd just like to make that note again that we should be looking at a plan. We should be looking at debts and other problems that we should be cleaning up at this time and not go on a spending spree and look at where and how fast we can spend this money for political purposes, it seems.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak to Bill 51, the appropriation act. There have been a number of comments made about spending sprees, about unplanned spending. To be perfectly frank, nothing could be further from the truth.

Much of the appropriations and much of the concern about the application of unbudgeted surpluses this year has been that there hasn't been accountability. Well, accountability is happening. We're back to the Legislature asking for approval for the funding, but between sittings of the Legislature it is normal for governments to govern. It is very appropriate to take what is a very well-thought-out, I think, capital program where we know and understand - for example, in my area of responsibility in Advanced Education we have 21 public institutions, most, if not all, of whom have a clear understanding of their way forward in terms of the types of places that they want to provide for students, the type of educational opportunities they want to provide for students, and the capital needs that they have in order to meet those aspirations.

5:10

If we go through the province, we can see that the University of Lethbridge, for example, has become the pre-eminent centre for water research. That is something that is very important to Alberta, very important to our Water for Life strategy, very important to move forward. We've taken the opportunity to indicate to the University of Lethbridge that we will put aside in the capital fund sufficient resources to allow them to move ahead on their water research building. They have other needs that are part of the capital plan that have not been funded as yet in terms of academic spaces and other spaces. So if, indeed, more resources come available, I will be working with and lobbying the Minister of Finance and the Treasury Board and my colleagues to allocate more resources to the capital fund to deal with those issues.

The University of Calgary, for example, as I indicated, has about a \$780 million or \$800 million program that over the next number

of years they would like to embark on with respect to funding. So there have been allocations there.

Supplementary supply is the funds that we're asking to spend in this year, some of which go towards longer term projects and some of which go towards operational funding. Very, very appropriate that we move ahead on our plans, that we come to the Legislature and ask for the spending that we require in this year. The supplementary supply that is being asked for includes for Advanced Education some \$80 million.

Some of those are very important projects and projects which go forward this year: \$15 million, for example, to assist the University of Alberta in its acquisition of the Bay building, which will be not only important for the university in terms of student learning opportunities but very important in terms of the whole process of commercialization of research. So I know that Innovation and Science will be very interested in working with them as they move their commercialization centre from an old building at the university, which will have to be taken down to make way for the new ambulatory learning centre, to relocate it downtown Edmonton, where it will be an engine of commerce and commercialization. Very, very important for that pillar of the 20-year strategic plan where we're talking about unleashing innovation.

So many different things which we can go forward on. It's important that we have the opportunity to move forward, that we have the opportunity to do this strategic planning process, to move ahead with the capital plan, to ask for permission to spend in this year those dollars which need to be expended in this year, some, a modest amount, for program spending because we're limited to a modest amount of in-year spending on programs. One per cent of the budget is in the contingency allowance. There are lots of things that happen in-year in terms of cost pressures for institutions, for example, in terms of rising energy prices and those sorts of areas. Rising energy prices: obviously a very good thing for a province which sells energy as a commodity, but it creates a pressure for Albertans in terms of gas prices, and pressure for Alberta institutions in terms of their heating costs. So those are the types of things that we need to address in-year through supplementary supply, and those are the things that we're asking permission for in this bill. I think they're all very understandable.

I do understand the opposition's concern about having the opportunity to review supplementary supply and debate it, but I certainly don't understand their desire for us to stop the process of government and do nothing while we await their opinions on it when, in fact, the government has been duly elected by the people of Alberta to govern the province and be accountable to the Legislature. That's what we're doing now: asking for permission to move ahead with spending, subjecting government programs based on clear and decisive and important plans to the Legislature for approval.

So I would hope that members would approve the appropriation act today and allow us to move forward with that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I would move that we call it 5:30 and reconvene at 8 o'clock this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:15 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, November 30, 2005** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 05/11/30
 [The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading
Bill 51
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act,
2005 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 30: Mr. Hancock]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to get the opportunity to speak to the appropriation bill again in the third reading. Just a couple of things that I'd like to touch on in third reading. We are trying to speak to the anticipated effect of the bill once it's passed. There are some interesting things happening with this government and their approach to budgeting and supplementary supply. I haven't been able to read the Blues, but I understand that just before we adjourned for the dinner break, the Minister of Advanced Education was speaking.

I want to be clear here. I don't think anyone on the opposition side is saying that there shouldn't be a supplementary supply, but I think that we have a lot of issues, which we've outlined during this debate and during the supplementary supply debate, around the process and around the timing and around the thoroughness of how this government is approaching supplementary supply and, in fact, the whole issue of budgeting and appropriation for the province.

We understand that there has to be supplementary supply occasionally. But even in my day – and I haven't been sitting in this Assembly anywhere near as long as some of the other people in this Assembly – I have seen supplementary supplies go from a few tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands in situations where you'd expect it. You know, there was a higher number of forest fires, or there was some flooding, or there was some other kind of emergency preparedness or disaster relief which you can't anticipate. You can kind of go on a law of averages and give it your best shot, best average for any given year, and then if you need to, you would put supplementary supply into that area after the fact once you knew the full cost. But we've moved from that position to a position where we're looking at literally billions of dollars.

When we on the opposition side see the government members pass a budget in May and within minutes start talking about unbudgeted spending, which is some new wonderful spin phrase coming out of the Public Affairs Bureau, bless their tiny little hearts, you have to think: well, what is the commitment here to a pure form of finance that best serves the province?

This year we looked at I think it was 13 departments for \$1.8 billion. Mr. Speaker, for the three days that were allocated by the government to have supplementary supply, which is meant to be a give-and-take situation in which you're meant to be able to ask questions and have the minister respond to you, we were not able to debate some eight departments, eight out of the 13, representing some \$1.3 billion. So we only ever really got through about \$500 million and some five departments in those three days of supplementary supply.

What I've seen in nine years here is that the budget comes in later

and later and later every spring. It used to come in a week or two weeks exactly after the throne speech. Now it's coming in just before we break for spring break. So somewhere towards the end of March the budget is actually laid before us. Then there's this pell-mell dash to get through the number of allocated days that match the number of ministries and then to do the appropriate readings of the appropriation bill.

At the same time, obviously, even though the budget has been laid before us, the government is already aware that they're off on their estimates. I mean, the budget is supposed to be a plan. There should be a good reason why you would be exceeding it or falling behind on your budget plan. To do it regularly and to be out by as much as this government is out is either appalling mismanagement or quite deliberate.

I'm sure that someone here could make the argument for appalling mismanagement, but I rather think it's deliberate because then you get the Premier saying: it's no business of the Legislative Assembly's to talk about the surplus. [interjection] Well, this is what he was in the press saying. I don't get to follow along, but that's certainly what he's been widely quoted as saying. Now, if the Minister of Finance believes that she was on the spot and has a more precise quote, I of course welcome her to join the debate, and she of most ministers is far more likely to. But there we had a situation where the Premier very clearly was saying: it's none of your business; you don't get to talk about this; it's the government's business, what the surplus is and how we will spend it. I would argue that that's not true at all.

I would also argue that the government has taken a great deal of heat and the individual members have taken a great deal of heat for that attitude. Certainly, we've heard about people's unhappiness with that attitude in our office, and we're representing the opposition. I can just imagine how hot it's been over there, and frankly, I think it's about time.

The effect of this appropriation bill. What I see the effect being is that the government presents a budget later and later and later into the year. They're already working on a plan for their surplus before in fact we've ever passed it. Then they spend all summer out on the barbecue circuit making promises and giving away money. They come in here in the fall session, and we get one day, two days, three days, whatever the government decides we're going to get on supplementary estimates, which as this gets a larger and larger amount of money, it completely passes the ability of the Assembly to deal with it in any meaningful way. So we now have what is bordering on a meaningless supplementary supply debate.

Mr. Speaker, I would argue that when you are looking at about 17 minutes out of a total possible six hours – because that's what we had. Each "day" of supplementary supply is 120 minutes; it's two hours of guaranteed debate. We had three days; that's six hours of debate on supplementary supply for 13 ministries and \$1.8 billion. We were trying to debate one department every 17 minutes. It is not possible for there to be a meaningful exchange between an Official Opposition critic and a minister, never mind adding in the representatives from the third party in this Assembly or from the independent member or, indeed, from any member of the government backbench. Not that that happens very often, but it certainly could. I mean, it is reaching the point of meaningless. Is this a deliberate move? Is the effect of this bill a deliberate move on behalf of government to make this meaningless and to make it – what? – laughable, make it trivial, make it unimportant, to support that claim that it's none of our business how the government decides to spend that money?

Mr. Speaker, we were looking at a surplus this year, I think, of \$8 billion from a total budget of \$24 billion, the budget we passed back last May. We're looking at a surplus of one-third of the total budget

of the year. For that, the Premier says: you've got no right to talk about that. So that's what I'm seeing as the effect of this particular appropriation bill.

More specifically, I look at, for example, the Health and Wellness budget that's being presented in the supplementary supply. The minister was looking for \$64 million but had been out there on that same hotdog/steak barbecue circuit since last May making press releases on \$1.4 billion of spending. We're not seeing that \$1.4 billion here, nor could I get any detailed information out of the minister about how the \$64 million relates to the \$1.4 billion and whether the rest of that money in fact is allocated, whether it's there, or whether we get \$64 million into this and put the brakes on, leave the rebar sticking out of the cement from a hole in the ground and wait. For what? Another increase in a barrel of oil? Another increase in the price of a gigajoule of natural gas?

8:10

I think it is very poor management and very unwise of us to be spending our natural resource money as it comes in. I think that especially for nonrenewable resources we need to look seriously at developing a nonrenewable resource revenue policy and getting that in place so that we're not spending every dime of that money as it comes in. That revenue will start to decrease or deplete, and our ability to rely on that will decrease and deplete, maybe not in five years, maybe not in 10 years, maybe not in 15 years, but it certainly will. Just because we are serving today as legislators in 2005 doesn't mean that we shouldn't be looking 15 or 20 or 30 years down the road.

I would argue that that stuff is coming much faster. We need to be moving faster legislatively and with a clear planning cycle to anticipate that, yet what we're seeing is the budgeting cycle collapsing so that we have a target that is now moved from March because our year-end – and I don't have to remind you of this – is the end of March of a given year. Well, we're now getting the budget presented within days of year-end. So, obviously, there is no hope that we are going to be able to debate that budget and pass it before year-end, to the point where it would be implemented literally the next day. That's not happening anymore. It's actually not happened in so many years that I think some people don't even connect that that's why we try and do a budget process at that time of year.

So we've got a budget planning process that is collapsing. It's imploding upon itself. The budget in the spring is coming in later and later. It has less and less to do with what is the reality of the money that is available to the province. We have unbudgeted spending and again – I'm so sorry; I got that little phrase wrong. Off-budget spending. Just like off-track betting. That off-budget spending goes on all summer long, and then we have an incredibly truncated and almost meaningless supplementary supply debate.

That doesn't mean that I think it should be meaningless, Mr. Speaker. I think it should be very meaningful. It is an opportunity where the hopes and desires and wishes and concerns of Albertans should be represented in this House, and it should be brought forward by every member, not just members of the opposition. Every member should be able to read in *Hansard* what their member, what their representative said about what they needed or wanted and were expecting regarding a financial commitment.

Now we are also in the habit of going into the early spring session with a second supplementary supply. That has also become very common. So the whole idea of a budget as a plan that you do your very best to stick to has completely gone out the window, and with it are all the other controls that you try and put in place to be good managers, good fiscal stewards of the resources and the revenue of Albertans.

What do I see as the effect of the appropriation bill, Bill 51, in passing, likely this evening, Mr. Speaker? I see it as another step down the road to this government taking and breaking a parliamentary process long established where the people, through their representatives, get to have a meaningful discussion about choices in spending money and in how the money comes in. That is being taken away from this Assembly and, therefore, taken away from the people of Alberta. I think that is sad. I think it's dangerous.

We'll see how the people of Alberta react. So far they haven't been too keen on this last go-round, but we'll see whether they keep the fire on all the way through, keeping all those little bums warm over there through the holiday season. We'll wait until the next supplementary supply, in which I hope the government will grant us sufficient time to reasonably debate the amounts of money that are put before us in an expected and anticipated second supplementary supply budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have an opportunity now for 29(2)(a) with the Member for Edmonton-Centre; however, there's one little quirk that developed late this afternoon. The hon. Government House Leader was participating and, I believe, adjourned the debate which precluded the opportunity for 29(2)(a) to kick in. So we're going to go retroactively now to deal with the Minister of Advanced Education. Then we'll come to the Member for Edmonton-Centre. So I'll recognize first the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner just to make sure we have everything copacetic.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to refer back to the end of the discussion when the hon. minister mentioned that they have a plan, that they have a 20-year strategic plan, and that they need to move ahead on that capital plan. I don't think any of the opposition have said that we don't need to move ahead. Our concern is that a plan is only a wish unless it's written down, and it would seem that it's a wish list to most Albertans because we don't get to see this plan and the priorities that you refer to and where they might sit on there.

One of the comments that you made was rising energy prices, obviously a very good thing for the province, which sells energy as a commodity. Perhaps I'm unaware, but for many of the school districts and things that I'm working with, it's very frustrating when the prices go up, and they have to wait retroactively to cover those expenses. Maybe there is a formula – but I'm not aware of one – for when the prices go up where that extra supplemental supply would go to them to cover those expenses due to the high energy costs and heating.

You spoke about us desiring to stop the process of government and do nothing until you wait for our opinions. I don't think that is accurate as well in the fact that we just want to be able to debate, to know what those plans are, and to discuss and be part of that.

You also mentioned at the end there: programs based on a clear and decisive and important plan. Once again I say that I haven't seen any of those written plans. I think it's more of a wish, and if, in fact, it's just a wish, I'd refer back to there be nothing nicer than to have a wish list planned for such places as the Warner-Taber hockey school and the Magrath golf course and to be able to put it in. You would pull out of that wish list a lottery, where there is hope for these communities to be funded on areas that don't seem to be on your strategic 20-year plan. With that, I guess I'll wait for the response.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm really pleased that the hon. member raised the issue of the 20-year strategic plan because I'm particularly proud of the fact that the government is one of the first if not the first government in the country that has a 20-year strategic plan that's clearly enunciated, that was published with the budget, published with the business plans last year and the year before. It's on the website. You can find it there. It talks about unleashing innovation, leading and learning, competing in a global marketplace, making Alberta the best place to live, work, and visit.

Now, the hon. member I know had confused the 20-year strategic plan, which is publicly available, which sets a clear direction for Alberta about the type of Alberta that Albertans want to have. The capital plan that I was speaking of in which we talked about in the case of Advanced Education going to each of the public postsecondary institutions that operate in our system and in our system context and asking them for their goals and aspirations and their long-term plan with respect to the capital to achieve the goals and objectives that they have – they submit those plans. We work with those plans and talk about them in a systems context to set priorities. That's part of the process of governance and governing, and that's clearly what we do, take those plans. I know that the Minister of Education does the same things with the school boards.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood sat on the Edmonton public school board. He knows that every year they submitted a plan with respect to the capital priorities for that particular system. The Minister of Education's role in concert with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is to bring all of the plans together from all the board-governed authorities in the area of education and develop a strategy as to how you go forward, how you prioritize the need because there's need in all sorts of different areas, and you could say the same thing with the Ministry of Health. So, of course, there's a plan with respect to capital. Nobody dreams this stuff up in their head.

You're talking about a lottery where there's hope, and I guess that's one thing, but I find it rather strange because to me there's no such thing as lottery and hope in the same breath. Lottery is pure chance, a voluntary tax paid by people who want to give their money voluntarily.

8:20

When you talked about the concept of prices going up, of course oil and gas are commodities, and they're sold on a world market, and when the world market price goes up, the price goes up locally as well. Now, we have a plan in place where consumers get a bit of a break. We can do a natural gas rebate plan, so there's a break on that side of the equation. Yes, in supplementary supply, I believe in the Ministry of Education's supplemental estimates, there was provision to pay to school boards an additional amount to pay for the cost of gas that went up.

So clear and decisive decisions: that's what we do on an ongoing basis. But the operation of management of government, where you take the priorities that you've looked at, the capital priorities, because that's where most of the unbudgeted surpluses can go . . .

The Speaker: I draw to the attention of the hon. Minister of Advanced Education that that time segment is now expired. Now we have an opportunity under section 29(2)(a), if there are questions to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

There being none, then I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, to be followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just remind the House

leader that I am now from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview rather than Edmonton-Norwood. [interjection] I know that you confuse easily.

Mr. Speaker, I had a few comments to make at Committee of Supply, and I absolutely have to take the opportunity to put not my two cents' but my ten cents' worth in on the supplementary supply. I do remember back when it was a big issue on supplementary estimates when we used to come back in the spring. I can remember one time when there was a hundred million dollars, and we were quite exercised about that. Now if the supplementary estimates came in at a hundred million dollars, I think we'd run over and congratulate the other side. Now we're talking about billions.

The point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that supplementary estimates were always met. Sometimes we cannot control circumstances that can't be foreseen, and we've talked about it before. It could be floods that we faced or BSE and these sorts of things. Nobody questions the need for supplementary estimates. We had supplementary estimates in the spring, and now we have them in the fall. We're talking about \$1.8 billion, and 13 departments had emergencies. I mean, this is just not the way to run our budget. I say with all due respect that supplementary estimates are now just part of the government and, as the Member for Edmonton-Centre said, with limited time to budget. I think we have to change a lot of things around in this Legislature about how we handle the taxpayers' money.

I want to stress that this has gone out of control from where it used to be. We can remember, Mr. Speaker, those wonderful days back when. I know you can. I think you would agree that supplementary estimates meant a different thing, and as opposition we were often critical of that, as I say, when it was a hundred million. But now, \$1.8 billion. You know, C.D. Howe used to say: what's a million? We say, "What's a billion?" in this province.

You can say that the government suggests that somehow this is good management. Well, it's not good management. It's very poor management. I would remind members, Mr. Speaker, that we also spent over \$4 billion in new spending, so we're looking at almost \$6 billion that was not planned in the budget in the spring. So what's the point of having a budget in the spring? Not to say that some of the things that we're spending it on aren't worth while, but if they're worth while, they should be put in the budget at that time and with a plan.

Now, the Minister of Advanced Education said that they have a 20-year plan. Well, they may have a 20-year plan, but they can't keep a five-minute plan going in terms of their budget. It changed almost immediately after the provincial budget that came out in the spring, Mr. Speaker.

I'm suggesting that we are not doing due diligence with taxpayers' money the way we are going in this province. We're fortunate that the money is flowing in, not to the good management of this government. We happen to have the resources. Now, I've said before that 83 monkeys could somehow run this province with the amount of money that's coming in, but I'm saying to this government that we better start to do something about the way we're dealing with the taxpayers' money because it may not always be this easy.

Again, I see this as part of a democratic deficit, and perhaps an economic deficit, Mr. Speaker. If the government wants a legacy, if the Premier wants a legacy – or maybe the new backbenchers would start to say: "Something's wrong here. Something's wrong about the way we're handling finances." People that have been in municipal government would not run their finances in this way. Maybe they should be doing something and getting the government to change.

We should have this going, and we should be sitting longer and

doing more committee work on the budget, delving into a little more detail. Our Public Accounts should be made to work. All these things would help, and we would be doing the taxpayers of Alberta a favour. It doesn't matter. This is not right or left or anything else. This is just good money management, Mr. Speaker.

So I say to this government: surely, they can't suggest to us that coming back in the fall with a \$1.8 billion supplementary estimate is good management. It can't possibly be with 13 departments having emergencies. There's no onus on them to follow the regular budget that we passed in the spring, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't mean anything anymore. There's \$6 billion more floating around than we talked about in the budget. How can this be good budgeting?

As I say, I do not think that we're doing due diligence in terms of taxpayers' money. This supplementary estimate is coming to an end. There's not a lot we can do about that, but I really would say honestly to this government, to the Finance minister, that things have to improve. I'm sure that when she was running the farm, she would not run those finances the way they do here in the Alberta government. I think government members know that, and I think government members know that this is not the proper way to budget. I would hope that they take this back. Sure, we'll get this through this time, but let's make the spring budget much more meaningful. If there's a 20-year plan, at least have a year plan that we can take a look at as part of the 20. The budget certainly was not a plan that we're living with, so how would a 20-year plan be something we're going to live with? That could change overnight. Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important that we start to shape up the way we do the budgeting around this Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate what the hon. member says about the need for emergency spending. As far as I can tell, the Municipal Affairs budget has a number of items like flood relief and so on, which are very important. My understanding of supplementary estimates is that besides the emergency aspect, it is possible for governments to bring a request for grants to existing services. That's what I read in *Beauchesne*. So the point you're making is that it's the huge, huge expenditure, not just millions but \$1.8 billion, that is completely unusual. Is that your point?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's probably classified as emergencies. Clearly, supplementary estimates do perform an important role. I'm not arguing that. They've been there forever, but as I said, they were set up for emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. Something can happen, so you have to have that right. Nobody questions that, and we used to always have it.

The point that I'm making is only that this has gone beyond that approach to where it's just part of government. It doesn't matter what our budget is. You know, here's \$1.8 billion; we'll do that in the fall. So we really don't have a budgeting process is the point I'm making.

I'm not arguing against supplementary estimates. As I said, I can remember when we had them, and it was, as I recollect, a hundred million dollars. We thought that was a lot of money at the time. There's a need for them, but it shouldn't part of the way we govern, and that's how we're budgeting using this now.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Additional questions?

Then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

8:30

Mrs. Mather: Thank you. As we consider Bill 51, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, I would like to comment on the supplementary estimates for Children's Services and the anticipated effects of this bill. I realize that the intent of this request is to impact child care in Alberta in a positive way through the early learning and child care investment plan, specifically through the \$37,200,000 in federal funding. I believe that this money will make a great difference, and it is a positive step. I had hoped that the budget would include a plan to make sure that salaries and training are equitable for everyone in the child care field.

Although out-of-school care staff require the same training and qualifications as those working with younger children, they are not paid the same. Consequently, some of our out-of-school programs are losing staff because they can get better pay by moving to daycares. Competitive wages would help retain staff. Children need that stability. The investment plan has created positives for some child care programs but negative impacts for others.

The other question that I have is about the fact that it is essential that daycare staff receive financial support and professional development grants. I know that the accreditation program is hoping to put an impetus there, but I don't see this being specifically addressed in this supplementary budget.

The other thing is that income in the child sector field is about half the national average for all occupations and less than half as much as elementary school and kindergarten teachers.

We need to recognize that well-paid, trained child care workers are at the heart of building a quality system. The federal funding is a start, but this government needs to do more.

Although the intent is to improve child care with this budget, there is no increase for youth shelters. The impact of this is that it's harmful because agencies that provide these services do not have a guarantee of funding past one year. I had hoped that we would see some movement toward sustained, predictable, stable funding for shelters.

I'm also disappointed that this supplemental request does not include more funding for treatment for addictions, specifically crystal meth. I know that we have had an increase in beds in the last while. I believe that we have \$4.2 million for the youth detox and residential treatment program, which offers a total of 24 beds: 12 in Calgary and 12 in Edmonton. What about using other existing facilities in this province, some of which have outstanding expertise and experience and capacity and could do a great amount of good in treating addictions? The passing of Bill 202 has created an urgent need for treatment. This budget is not looking at this need, and the impact is frustration for many parents and professionals as they deal with and try to help addicted youths.

As the intent of the budget is to improve child care and create more choice, I had hoped that we would see more support for stay-at-home mothers and middle-income earners.

Another concern is the absence of rules to prevent unreasonable hikes of daycare fees. We need checks and balances, or the impact of our efforts will not be positive for families.

Finally, with this particular budget the intent of accreditation is excellent. However, there are major difficulties with the process at present. The expectations are somewhat extreme and need to be reviewed. Daycares have a very important job, often a difficult one, and I do not think we are doing enough to help, and we are making too many demands with accreditation. They're given a year, and they're telling me that to attain this goal, we must first bring the

wages and benefits up to par with other industries to entice sufficient and qualified staff. They need help to entice the young population to the child care field by establishing awareness in colleges and high schools to let them know that child care is a good career. But the word out there on the street is that there is no future in daycare because of poor working conditions and low wages and a highly stressful environment.

So I'm thinking that we are totally in support of measures to provide better daycare for children in terms of their welfare, optimum development, and happiness, but accreditation is too much too soon in a field that's already stretched to the limit. Perhaps we could phase it in more slowly, area by area; for example, programming for children, child development, interactions with children, healthy and safe environment for children, communication with families and community, et cetera. The impact of not reviewing accreditation is serious. I believe we need money committed to the review and consultation with the stakeholders.

We all have a role in deciding how the money should be spent, what Alberta's priorities are. I think that there would be a greater strength with this process if everyone and all parties were allowed an effective role in participation rather than after-the-fact approval.

I'd like to go on and talk also about the education portion of the supplementary supply. I support the requests, but I have concerns. I see that the plant operations and maintenance budget is at \$24 million. This really makes me wonder if the new funding formula is providing the right kind of funds for school systems across the province.

I have a great concern about the lack of counsellors in junior high and high school and the lack of solid career education programs, especially in junior high. There needs to be more in this service area for the school system. I'd like to see some indication of support for proactive programs like DARE, that deal with addiction and drugs, proactive programs on bullying and violence.

The other concern I have is that there's no indication of a move away from the achievement testing at grade 3 and a move to the diagnostic and remedial curriculum activities that children who are not doing well need. They're falling through the cracks because they're not getting a good start, and this is costing us a lot. I think that this is something that we should ask this government to look at very carefully.

I'm also disappointed that there is no plan or indication of concern regarding school fees. We need guidelines for school fees. How will the department supplement schools to help them and help parents that have to pay these school fees? This is a great concern in my constituency.

It seems to me that all of the dollars were directed to matters pertaining to infrastructure and transportation and that kind of thing. I had hoped for more indication of support services for schools, as I mentioned, for counselling and librarians. The formula for utilization needs to be looked at because schools seem to be punished if they don't use all their space, but they're also punished for building a new school in an area that doesn't have a school because new schools get less funding for maintenance, while old schools get punished for being open, and their operational dollars are low because the school is not full. It's a double-edged sword.

There's rumour – and I hope it is only rumour – that special-needs students – that is, adaptation students – are no longer allowed to have accommodations for diploma exams. More research needs to go into a decision like that. It's a very serious one.

The other concern I have is that the province changes the curriculum but does not dedicate in any way funds to add to school budgets to implement the new curriculum. The social studies curriculum is coming, and the schools need a budget of \$30,000 for the new

curriculum. This goes for the mandatory French that is coming as well.

Finally, the government's mismanagement of the teachers' pension dates back to the 1950s or earlier and has meant ever increasing contribution rates for Alberta teachers. Much of the growth in the unfunded liability is a direct result of provincial government policies that in the 1990s cut teachers' salaries and reduced the number of teachers working in this province. Our young people are in need of the best teachers we can provide them, especially in today's troubled times. How can we expect to attract and retain quality teachers when their work seems not to be valued? I have a concern that this unfunded liability is continuing to be a contentious issue, and there is apparently no indication of any action plans by this government.

Thank you.

8:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My ears perked up at the comment that the hon. member was making with respect to the unfunded liability of teachers' pensions. I for one am very sympathetic to the need to deal with the unfunded pension liability issue, but I find it aggravating when we constantly hear the unfunded pension liability characterized as strictly an issue relative to government.

I'm wondering if the hon. member is not aware that the reason that the agreement was made in 1992 the way it was, where the government pays two-thirds and the teachers pay one-third of the unfunded liability portion, is because there were problems on both sides of the equation: one with respect to the amount of money that the government did or did not put away back in the 1960s, and the second because the cost-of-living increases and other adjustments to the pension benefits were not properly funded with increased premiums. It was understood at the time and accepted at the time by both parties that there was liability on both sides; therefore, the two-thirds government and one-third teachers.

When it comes back to the discussion, would she not agree that it's not helpful to go back and try and recharacterize history but, rather, much better to go forward and say: how do we make sure that the burden of the unfunded pension liability doesn't lie with new teachers, who don't get the benefit of the extra payments? We need to deal with it from that perspective.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you for the information. I do agree that we need to be looking forward, but we do have a problem here in this province with the perception by teachers about this unfunded liability.

The Speaker: Additional questions? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East by way of a question or comment?

Ms Pastoor: Yes.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. It's actually a question to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. I wondered if you could elaborate on the business about not being able to accommodate students – I didn't quite get that – a place for them to write exams or something. I'm sorry. I just sort of caught it.

Mrs. Mather: That refers to diploma exams and adaptation students, who often have an average ability, but they have learning difficulties such as reading or other impairments. There's always been accommodation in giving them extra time, for example. They have more hours to write. Sometimes they're allowed to have a scribe, and sometimes they're allowed to have it taped, you know, so that they're listening instead of having to read so much. So there are various accommodations that can be made for learning-disabled students, and they're very important accommodations to give these children a fair chance.

The Speaker: Additional questions?

There being none, then I shall call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to the effect of the supplementary supply act, Bill 51. It is clear that there is a need in government for a budget. This is nonbudgetary spending. It is clear that the budgeting process is a long-standing tradition in parliamentary democracy. It is clear that it is incredibly important for long-term confidence in the ability of a government to manage its role in the economy to have a budget.

It is bizarre, this government's argument since 1993 until just not too long ago that it had to pull draconian cuts in people's services and education and health care and letting our roads rot and many, many other things all in order to battle down a deficit. Maybe that was a ruse. In reality, \$23 billion in debt, accrued, by the way, by a previous Progressive Conservative dynasty of this government, \$23 billion in debt that was paid off with \$63 billion in resource revenue from 1993 on, revenues that many provinces who have had much stronger fiscal management and realistic financial controls did not have yet did not have to make such draconian cuts to those many things to that effect. Alberta seniors, its education, its universities, its health care, and indeed all of its public-sector employees were squeezed, cut, and hurt time and time again. I even hear from some of the staff around the Leg. here, around the LAO and stuff, that they never did get their 5 per cent back in reality. I'd have to check that. I don't know for sure. But many, many public servants didn't feel that they got their due for all the cuts that were coming from those times.

Then the floodgates opened. Spending, spending, spending again: spend, spend, spend till your daddy takes the T-bird away. Because the oil and gas revenues which accrue to this government are so huge that a deficit is not possible, anything goes. Any spending is all right. This supplementary spending, that is in figures that most people can't understand, happens with no plan.

I will add to the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on the huge continuing deficit and growing deficit in the unfunded liability for our educators. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rightly said, there is a degree of joint responsibility for any pension, but the multi-billion-dollar unfunded liability for our educators is clearly something that is part of the provincial deficit, and it's not being dealt with at all by our supplementary spending. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud clearly said, younger teachers will have to pay. Yes, younger teachers will have to pay hundreds of dollars every month for something from which they will not receive one single bit of benefit. Is that right? This can only have the effect of steering away many potential young teachers from the rewarding career of teaching Alberta's children. It will also be a deficit that will pile up and increase if it is not dealt with somehow.

As I said in Committee of the Whole, the nature of the beast that we have in this supplementary spending is that there is just no real budget happening here. We're dealing with just phase 1 and phase

2 of seat-of-the-pants spending by our government. The effect of these huge supplementary estimates is to ensure that Alberta is seen as running a government that romps merrily along, dancing fiscally to its every whim, throwing money here and money there yet smiling nicely when it does just throw it around.

Mr. Speaker, I ask: what sort of example is this setting for our children? What sort of example is it setting for families? What sort of example is this putting forth for the future? I would hope that this government comes forth with a true budget in the spring session and that next fall when we debate these supplementary estimates, in about a year's time, we are debating spending for unforeseen circumstances, for emergency circumstances, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview very clearly put it from his experiences as well as the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I look forward to seeing that we're not spending just because the province has come into a lot of cash.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

That being the case, I'll call on the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

8:50

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. I'd like to address what I think the effect of some of these supplemental estimates will be, particularly the one from Gaming: the First Nations grant program and \$1,000,000 in grants being decreased to the bingo associations. This will actually have a huge effect on the people that depend on the bingo associations. The increase in the VLTs, and in fact there is a rumour that there may be cashless technology – I assume that means that you can use your debit card in the machine – really takes away from the bingo associations that aren't getting these dollars.

The people that suffer from this are the ones who are the small groups. The lottery funds now are distributed only through government members; that is just such a surprise. However, they usually come in huge hunks of dollars, so the people that suffer because they depend on the bingos and they're not getting those large dollar figures from the lottery are the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides, boys and girls hockey teams, small theatre presentations, the Boys and Girls clubs, Big Sisters, Big Brothers, the YMs and the YWs, the Elks clubs, and the Kinsmen. These are the ones that actually have volunteers that go and spend their time in the bingo parlours doing the volunteering, selling the bingo pages, selling the coffee, and whatever. There's a tremendous amount of work that's required to go into these for the small return that they get. Their chances of getting to work a casino are almost nil. They wait sometimes almost a year to get into a bingo to get money. So I think this really is going to have a huge detrimental effect by decreasing dollars to the bingo associations.

I, for one, have worked many bingos. I'm sure that there are many people in this room who have also worked bingos for the small charity of your choice or your kid's hockey team or whatever. I'm sure that we've all stripped down before we went into our houses because our clothes were so full of smoke. You know what? That's the part we play to make sure that our kids can play hockey or whatever or, in fact, to make sure that some kid can play hockey or play soccer that doesn't have the money. A lot of these are groups. I'm sorry; the name escapes me at the moment. There is a group that raises money simply for the kids that don't have money so that they can play sports.

Mr. MacDonald: Sport Central.

Ms Pastoor: Sport Central. Thank you. It's a hugely important organization because, believe it or not, even soccer is expensive these days, which is really a crime because it used to be one of the sports that any kid could play because they could afford it.

I think enough said on that. I'm most, most disappointed that the bingo associations are not being supported more, and I'm also disappointed that the lottery dollars don't come back to the communities through the old-fashioned lottery distribution committee that they used to have.

The other thing that I would like to talk about, the effect that I think the bill will have on Community Development, is the fact that a lot of dollars are going into replacing firepits and picnic tables. A lot of it is going into equipment for our parks, but what we're really missing here is somebody to maintain them. Our parks are a total disgrace. There is no reason that a provincial park should be closed for the winter. There really are people that like to go and camp in the snow, and there's nowhere to go because the gates are closed. I just think that's totally unacceptable, and part of it is because they're scrimping on the staff that would look after it during the winter.

Lots of the trails have been neglected. I'm going to partially blame that on the fact that the people that are delivering these services that used to be done by people that really loved the environment – i.e., conservation officers, fish and wildlife – are being replaced by people who are simply doing a job. They're stacking firewood, and they're cutting a tree, and they're maybe cleaning out the toilets every now and again. Our provincial parks are atrocious, and some of them are almost not even enjoyable to go into. I think that's just most unacceptable. It's fine to increase all of these things, but I think we're missing the boat on the fact that we actually are not looking after these parks with people who love the parks and understand trees and water instead of just learning how to stack wood.

I guess I could probably go on all night, too, but I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Then I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with disappointment that I rise to participate in the budget debate on Bill 51 this evening, our appropriations bill. Again, many members in the course of this brief session have brought up the whole issue of budgeting and the lack of budgeting discipline that is being demonstrated by this government, the fact that in the spring when the budget was tabled in the Assembly by the hon. Minister of Finance, it wasn't three days before ministers were out in the rotunda adding – not subtracting but adding – to the budget.

I think one could safely say, Mr. Speaker, that this government, this Progressive Conservative government, is using limited calculators that one would get at a dollar store, and they are really not focusing on a viable budget plan. To come back here now with this request is amazing.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview talked about a point when there would be a discussion in this House about appropriations of \$100 million, and this was at a time when this very same government was borrowing money and putting the province in debt. In some cases it was necessary, but in other cases it was an industrialization process that was very similar to what would have been attempted by one of the central planners in the old Soviet government.

Mr. Speaker, we had a discussion earlier in regard to Infrastructure and Transportation, which is getting a considerable portion of

this money. We were talking about the \$43 million cost overrun on the Anthony Henday Drive/Queen Elizabeth II intersection and the flyway that's going in there. I got some explanation from the hon. minister as to why this \$43 million cost overrun had occurred. Certainly, concrete has been a problem. There has been a shortage of powder, and the hon. minister recognized that.

The hon. minister also recognized that one of the driving factors in this \$43 million cost overrun was the cost of gravel. I'm puzzled, with all our resources of gravel. We even have more gravel in this province, Mr. Speaker, than we do oil. Surely, with all the Crown land that we have in this province, we should be able to control this cost. The Crown must have large tracts of land where gravel can be extracted and cleaned and sorted in an economical fashion. Gravel should not be driving up the costs at this time of much-needed road construction. If the hon. minister could clarify that for me, I would be very grateful.

Also, while we're in Infrastructure and Transportation – I was hoping to have more of an opportunity to look through the blue book before my time to speak. Certainly, if we look at the public accounts document, it is growing. It is certainly growing in thickness, Mr. Speaker. We're recognizing that this is the detail of grants, supplies, and services from the general revenue fund for the year ending March 31, 2005. We're looking at this fiscal year specifically in Infrastructure and Transportation. My first question would be this: how much of this money is being used to pay out extra for the service contracts that this government initiated when you privatized the road maintenance?

9:00

I had an opportunity to look at an article when this first happened, and there were promises of megasavings to the taxpayers, and a more efficient service, a better service was going to be provided by the contractors on the road maintenance. Now, I'm certainly not convinced that has happened. In fact, it seems to me that snowplows disappear whenever there's a substantial snowfall. That never used to happen. The roads were cleared straightaway, and they were plowed so that motorists could travel around in safety, and I can't say this is happening now.

Mr. Speaker, if we look under Infrastructure and Transportation from last year, Carmacks Enterprises received \$44.9 million. Now, obviously the majority of that money if not all of it is for those contracts, and I'm wondering if they're going to get any extra money in this request that we're debating here tonight. Now, we look at Ledcor. The Ledcor Group of Companies under Infrastructure and Transportation are doing work for \$74 million. Seventy-four million dollars. How much of that is used for providing services to maintain and clear our roads? Another one that has a contract is Volker Stevin Contracting Ltd., and this, Mr. Speaker, is a \$49.2 million amount.

Quickly you can see where these numbers add up. These are not half the contractors that are involved in this, and the minister that initiated this program said that there would be millions and millions and millions of dollars in savings. If the hon. minister could explain this, I would be very grateful. How much of this money is going into this program? Clearly, this program has not worked. The promise was made when it was initiated that there would be millions and millions of dollars saved; it would reduce the costs. The quote from the minister at the time was that \$60 million being used. One of these contracts alone is worth more than that, and when you factor in inflation, sorry.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, this government got it wrong. You're determined to go ahead with privatization of health care. You got that wrong. The promotion of energy deregulation whether it's for

electricity or natural gas: wrong. Now we're discovering that the privatization of our road maintenance is the exact opposite of what was promised. Instead of lower costs and better service, we are getting higher costs and worse service, so the taxpayers are losing twice here. If the hon. minister could clarify that and provide some information, again, I would be very grateful.

Now, the public accounts tell the tale of, certainly, a government that has got a spending problem, a real spending problem. I said at committee when we were discussing this bill that there are certainly some areas that need the government's immediate attention, and unfortunately they're not getting it. That group is families across the province who are considered homeless. I don't know what it's going to take for this government to finally show some initiative and look after these citizens.

I'm going to remind this House once again – and this is according to the Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness – that this is the definition of homelessness that this government must consider: “the individual or family has no residence at all and is living on the streets.” Homeless. The second category: “the individual or family is living in any premises which is not intended or suitable as a permanent residence.” I hope this government doesn't consider a station wagon to be a permanent residence because, unfortunately, I encountered in the line of my constituency work a family, a dad and two children, living in a car. I think this is shameful, and I know that we can do better.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness also indicates that the individual or family is

- at risk of becoming homeless
- (a) through losing their residence, or
- (b) through being discharged from an institution/facility and has nowhere to go, or
- (c) through loss of income support.

We discussed this in here the other day, but it is important to repeat it to a government that has so far failed to listen.

I can go through this public accounts document, and I can find any amount of money that we have to question: was it necessary to spend? I consider it necessary to try to correct the homelessness problem. It's a difficult problem, but you are not working hard enough at it. You are failing in your obligation, in your duty as a government to provide for those who cannot provide for themselves, and we have to recognize that. But, no, we have to have this very Darwinian attitude where it's the survival of the fittest. Again, I am very, very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, with this government's attempts to correct or at least try to correct some of the deplorable conditions that some people in this province live in or call their home. I know we can do better, but you've got to make more effort, please.

Now, in Committee of the Whole we were talking also, Mr. Speaker, about the Deep Six and what the Deep Six would think about this bill. The Deep Six, some of whom are in this cabinet, had attitude about government waste and government spending. I don't know whether the Deep Six, the ones that are in cabinet now, have jet lag and have forgotten about their old ideology or whether they're travelling so far so often that they have completely lost touch with their roots. Before we conclude debate, I would certainly love to hear from the Deep Six, what's left of them: the Deep Four, the Deep Three.

An Hon. Member: Two, you mean.

Mr. MacDonald: Deep Two.

Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to hear their reasons for this

large expenditure. I know that many of them have gone onto other things. I didn't realize that there was only one-third of them left, but I think we need the other four back just to remind this House and this government of their previous commitment to the budget process and what we have now in this bill.

Now, there's a lot, Mr. Speaker, that has not been said, but in the short time that I have left, I would certainly hope that this government looks at a different budget process. Thank you.

9:10

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member in his diatribe this evening made comments that he could find many, many examples of how money was spent that didn't need to be spent and, of course, all of the waste and all the other things that he talked about. It's my understanding that the Provincial Treasurer was before Public Accounts today, and it's my understanding that the hon. member is chair of Public Accounts, so certainly there was an opportunity to question the Minister of Finance. I believe she was there for over an hour and a half. Because she is responsible for, generally, the overall spending, I would have thought that perhaps there would have been a lot of those examples. I would like to ask the hon. member to summarize, in the short period of time that he has left, how many examples – and could he give the examples – he found this morning in Public Accounts that the government wasted.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, I'd be delighted, Mr. Speaker. I would first like to remind the hon. minister that as chair of the committee I don't have the opportunity to ask questions, but certainly all members of the committee ask questions. All Members of this Legislative Assembly under Standing Order 53 are permitted to come to the committee and get on the list and ask questions.

Today I would be pleased to report to the hon. minister that there were over 22 questions and supplementary questions directed to the minister's department. We did that in less than an hour, but we need more time to go through not only the minister's annual report but what the Auditor General had to say. We didn't have time to go through the Government of Alberta's annual report, nor did we have time to thoroughly investigate the Auditor General's other report on the Alberta Securities Commission. We had a lot of issues and very little time, and that's why we have to reform this whole budget process.

I would thank the minister for his question.

The Speaker: Others? Well, we'll provide for other members on an alternate basis.

Mr. Hinman: I was intrigued with the hon. member as he talked about the cost overrun of the overpass. My experience in the past on those projects has been that they go out, they retain their gravel pits, they get a bid on it, and they know exactly what the cost is. I'm wondering if the member can tell me if, in fact, this is a new loophole where the referees are making the rules, and they leave that open so that they can have an automatic overcost by not locking in the price of the gravel for a project. In the past they've always done that to my knowledge, and I find it amazing that you tell me that that's an overrun now because that would be, I would say, very poor management in planning and pricing out the cost of the project and leaving it open for an overrun in cost. Perhaps you could comment on that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you. For the information of the House this was one of the hon. members of the Assembly who was not a member of Public Accounts who was present this morning and wanted to ask questions to the hon. minister.

In direct response to your question, I see in here under W an outfit called Wapiti gravel. It could be corrected to be Wapiti sand and gravel. They supplied over \$13 million worth of gravel under supplies and services, capital assets, and other. That's a lot of gravel, and that's only one outfit. If we were to look in the annual report of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, at least in the old days – I haven't looked this year – we would see that there is an allocated amount for sand and gravel. Now, whether it's for icy roads or whether it's for concrete, who's to say? Certainly, there are many different outfits in here that are supplying, obviously, large amounts of gravel at a good price, in my view, to this government.

In conclusion, I would have to say that we would have to get the rest of the story from the hon. minister as to why gravel costs are so high, and they are driving up the costs of this flyway at Anthony Henday.

The Speaker: Are there others, hon. members, to participate in this debate on third reading?

Then shall I call on the hon. Minister of Finance to close the debate?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all members for their contribution to the debate. There was more comment than question; however, I will very carefully review *Hansard*, and as is the usual practice, follow up very quickly with detail for hon. members on specific items.

I thank members for participating and would encourage support for third reading of this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 51 read a third time]

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we've had a good day of work, and I would move that the Assembly now adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 9:17 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, December 1, 2005

1:30 p.m.

Date: 05/12/01

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Renew us with Your strength. Focus us in our deliberations. Challenge us in our service to the people of this great province. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The Deputy Chair of Committees.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the great pleasure of introducing to you and through you to members of our Assembly Mr. Brent Rathgeber. Mr. Rathgeber served the constituents of Edmonton-Calder in the 25th Legislature. He is currently practising law part-time and is the executive director of the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada. He has now risen in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd like to ask the hon. members of this Assembly to please accord him the traditional warm welcome.

head:

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly today a young lady in your gallery. It's her first visit to question period, and I'm confident that she'll leave at the end of the afternoon impressed with the wonderful decorum in this Assembly. I'd like to ask my wife, Anne Graydon, to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today to rise and to introduce to you and through you to the House members Mr. Austin Mardon. Austin had quite a scholastic career, but I'm recognizing him today as having been a volunteer with the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta for the last 13 years. He was recently awarded the Alberta centennial award by the Lieutenant Governor for his volunteer and scientific contributions to the province. I see that Austin is standing, and I would like all of us to provide him with the traditional warm welcome here in the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two introductions. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly my constituent Mr. Randy Sampert of Fort Saskatchewan. Randy is the chairperson of Living Positive, the society for persons living with HIV. This is a coalition of persons living with HIV that provide support to others living with HIV or stricken with AIDS. Today, December 1, 2005, is the 18th annual World AIDS Day as declared by the World Health Organization. Around the world activities are taking place to raise awareness of HIV and its impact on our communities. Randy is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I have another introduction. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two Edmontonians, two businesspeople, Mr. Bruce Kinisky and Mr. Mike Grau. Of course, the word Kinisky is synonymous with municipal leadership in the city of Edmonton for many, many years. They are seated in the members' gallery. They were here to talk a bit about labour shortage and, of course, to observe question period. I would ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 48 enthusiastic grade 6 students from the George P. Nicholson elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Carrie Grossman and Mrs. Colleen Reeder, and parent helpers Mrs. Edith Delanghe, Mrs. Susan Smelquist, and Mrs. Debbie Chella. They're here today to attend the School at the Legislature and observe with keen interest and learn about our government. I might also mention that Mrs. Carrie Grossman, in particular, headed up a committee for quite a number of years in the Twin Brooks area of the Edmonton-Whitemud constituency to get George P. Nicholson school built. Now she's teaching at the school, and it's a wonderful thing. I'd ask them to all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce Mr. Mike Maynes, who is seated in the members' gallery. He is a councillor with the village of Stirling and a social studies teacher at Raymond high school in the Westwind school division. He's presently here on AUMA business. I would ask that Mike rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege today to introduce to you and through you and to recognize a group of individuals in the galleries today who play a key role in the democratic process in the province of Alberta. These are the men and women who work for the members of this Assembly in their constituency offices. The democratic process starts in the constituency, and as the front line in their constituencies these individuals proudly represent all Albertans.

These employees are here today participating in the winter constituency employee information session, which provides them with an opportunity to network with other LAO staff and obtain an overview of numerous programs and services available through the Legislative Assembly Office. Each year the service and contribution of these individuals are celebrated with an employee recognition dinner, which the Speaker will be hosting later this evening. Today over 60 constituency office employees are with us, and I would ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome and recognition of the members of this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this

Assembly a family that's on a very long journey both literally and figuratively. Many of the members may not have met them yet, but their names are certainly familiar. They've echoed around these halls for the last couple of years, actually. They are of course the reason for and the subject of Bill Pr. 4, which passed third reading in this House yesterday. Seated in the members' gallery behind me are Doug and Lisa Rewega, their daughter, Brooklynn, family friend Bruce Sparrow, and Brooklynn's nanny, Jacqueline Babey. I would ask them to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 66 pupils from the grade 6 class at Leo Nickerson elementary school in St. Albert. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mme Sylvie Desjardins, Mr. Dave Power, and Miss Amanda Saïpe, and volunteer parent James Simmers. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because today is World AIDS Day, I'm particularly pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mr. Michael Daniels, a member of the board of directors of Living Positive, the most important organization housed in my constituency. This organization promotes AIDS awareness, basic human rights, and a positive, dignified, hopeful attitude to HIV-positive individuals in our community. I'd ask Michael to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

head: 1:40 **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The controversy surrounding the Alberta Securities Commission grows and grows. The investments and savings of countless Albertans are at stake. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Given the statements of a former Alberta Securities Commission manager of investigations, which we provided to the minister earlier today, can she still deny that the former Treasurer, Jim Dinning, interfered in enforcement cases at the Alberta Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, no, I can't confirm that. I appreciate the hon. member bringing these documents to my office about 10 to 1 today. I did have a chance to review them. What I read in the documents – and I'll certainly do a closer appraisal of them – is some rather key words: he was unclear; a third party told another party that another party had said that another party had spoken to a particular person; there may be some suggestion, but this is speculation – and I'm paraphrasing – as the witness's information didn't go that far. I'm sure the hon. member is going to table this in the Legislature, but if he doesn't, I will. Again, a document that is unclear, not sure, and speculation.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm going to ask one of you to table this. No other hon. member in this Assembly is aware of what's going on here.

The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will table that, and I will table court documents that back it up. Thank you.

My question to the Premier: given that a lead investigator for the Alberta Securities Commission says that he had daily contact with then Treasurer Jim Dinning concerning a specific enforcement file, was Mr. Dinning acting entirely on his own, or was he acting on behalf of others?

Mr. Klein: I have no idea. Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen the memo. I was briefed very briefly on the memo. I understand that the matter goes back to 1996-1997, so it's obvious that the Liberals are reaching into the archives on this one. I'll have the Minister of Finance respond.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to put this on the record. It's going to be tabled later. I think hon. members have a right to know what it says. I don't think I'm saying anything that would be out of place. It says:

Apparently Mr. Ryckman told Mr. Swerchuk that Blakey had told Mr. Ryckman that Blakey had spoken to Dinning every day.

There is some basis to say that the Chairman of the panel had prior knowledge of certain aspects of the investigation.

“There is some basis”: that's a person's opinion.

There may be some suggestion that the Provincial Treasurer had suggested a result in the investigation, but that is speculation and this witness's information does not go that far.

That's what the document says.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: is the reason the minister is reluctant to ask former Finance ministers about their involvement in enforcement cases at the Securities Commission because she's afraid that she'll actually find something?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question repeatedly in the House. I am not asking former finance ministers either in this House or out of this House such a demeaning question without some actual information that this indeed happened. This document talks about speculation. It talks about: third and fourth parties may have given some information. This is an example – another example – of the tack that has been taken in this House day after day in this session and, I would suggest, in the spring session. Again, if this hon. member thinks that this is solid information with what I just read, then he should reconsider his solid information.

Speaker's Ruling Questions about Previous Ministers

The Speaker: Hon. members, I wish to draw to the attention of all hon. members *Beauchesne 428*. *Beauchesne 428* says “a question . . . must not:” – then I go to (11) – “seek from an ex-Minister information with regard to transactions during that person's term of office.”

Second main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Securities Commission (continued)

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: has the minister discussed the Alberta Securities Commission issues with former Treasurer Jim Dinning since she assumed the role of Finance Minister?

Mrs. McClellan: Absolutely not.

Dr. Taft: Again to the Minister of Finance: now that there is clear written evidence, including court documents, that former Treasurer Dinning meddled in the Securities Commission, can she deny that other former Treasurers, including Steve West or perhaps former chief of staff Rod Love, may also have interfered with enforcement cases at the Securities Commission?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, again, the same line of questioning, obviously supported by his caucus. Well, I can tell you that on this side of the room and in this government caucus we're accountable. We put information on the table that can be backed up with fact. Mr. Speaker, I would yield to your reading of this relevant passage from *Beauchesne*.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you again. To the Minister of Finance: does the government have any policies in place to prohibit cabinet ministers, MLAs, or government staff from contacting ASC officials about ongoing enforcement investigations?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, all of us take an oath, and I have absolutely no information provided to me by the opposition or from any other source that that oath might have been broken.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly an answer no to the last question.

The success and foundation of a securities regulator is built around perception and trust. The investing public needs to be assured that when violations occur at the securities commission, the perpetrators are punished accordingly. My questions are again to the Minister of Finance. Given that the Minister of Finance has admitted that she knows the punishment handed down to the director of enforcement at the Securities Commission for insider trading, will the minister enlighten the House, be accountable, be transparent and inform the House and the investing public as to what that punishment was?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I have been, I think, open on all of these questions. I was asked yesterday in a scrum as to whether I knew what action had been taken. I don't think I used the word "punishment" but what action had been taken. I said that, yes, I did and that I was satisfied that the action was appropriate. But I also said at that time that what we would all concentrate on is ensuring that this could not, as much as possible ensure that it did not, happen again and, if it did happen, that there were checks and balances in place so that it could be dealt with in a much more expedient manner.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister knows the dollar amount made by the director of enforcement through insider trading at the Securities Commission, will the minister enlighten the House and the investing public by telling us just how much he made?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Securities Commission has transmitted this information to the Auditor General. They copied me the information. This is a matter that was under part of the investigation of the Auditor General, and I am responsible for ensuring that the Alberta Securities Commission operates under its legislation and its regulation.

Mr. Speaker, I am assured of that, and where processes can be put in place to better move this forward, I take my responsibility in seeing that that happens. But I will tell you that in the last short time, although this information was sent out some time ago, maybe seven days ago or so, I have been in conversation with the Securities Commission as to whether it would be appropriate for me to release a letter that was sent from the Securities Commission to the Auditor General, and I do not have that answer.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: will the minister do the right thing and put in place policies, indeed legislation, that prohibit cabinet ministers, MLAs, or government staff from contacting Alberta Securities Commission officials about enforcement investigations?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll consider that, and I would include opposition members in that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Boards, Commissions, and Agencies

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's the Alberta Securities Commission, the Labour Relations Board, or the Calgary health authority, the boards and commissions appointed by this government are rife with conflicts of interest, patronage, and political interference. The Auditor General has made numerous recommendations to remedy this appalling situation, but while the Premier promises to adopt them, he fails to act. My question is to the Premier: why has this government let senior officials guilty of flagrant violations of the rules, to use the Auditor General's words, go unpunished?

Mrs. McClellan: There has been action taken.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Finance pointed out, if he's alluding to the director of enforcement, there was action. I don't know what that actions is, but relative to the . . .

An Hon. Member: Well, find out.

Mr. Klein: I'm supposed to find out, Mr. Speaker. I will find out.

The Speaker: Ignore.

Mr. Klein: Okay. As to the preamble, Mr. Speaker, there is a process that is in place relative to an interview procedure that all appointments to various boards, authorities, commissions, agencies have to go through, and that procedure is followed.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Why has this government failed to implement the Auditor General's recommenda-

tions to end patronage in appointments to government boards and commissions? Can the Premier please tell the House what they are and what he's done about them?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I don't know of any patronage involved at all. Most boards, authorities, commissions, agencies are volunteer positions. These people are paid in some cases a per diem to cover expenses, but it comes nowhere near what they would lose or what their earning capabilities would be for one day's work in their own professions.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier commit in this House here and now to establish a truly independent panel headed by a judge or retired judge to investigate, report, and make recommendations to clean up the mess of patronage, conflicts of interest, and political interference that characterize the boards and commissions of this government?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the statement that there is a mess, that there is patronage. These are hard-working, individual, committed Albertans who want to do something for their province and volunteer to serve on various boards, authorities, commissions, and agencies.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Drug Abuse by Children

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents love and nurture their children. They work hard to see that the needs of their children are met. Nothing is more devastating for a parent than to find out that their child is seriously ill. Being told that your child is abusing drugs can be just as devastating. The first instinct of every parent is to do anything and everything they can to help their child. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Are parents able to access drug testing for their child if they suspect he or she is using drugs?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, yes, they are. Physicians in Alberta can order tests for children, particularly if there's a suspicion of or an allegation of or a concern about amphetamines being present. Physicians must inform the child about the type of test that is being made available. If the physician feels that it is a medically necessary test, then that test will be supported by Alberta Health and Wellness. In a situation where a physician may make a nonmedical notation on the file and say that it is not medically necessary, that type of test shall be supported, if the parent so wishes and the child concedes, by the parents themselves.

Mrs. Jablonski: To the same minister: can the minister comment on the merits of using home drug testing kits?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that through the Internet and other means there are number of home testing kits that are available, and I would just provide a caution for parents that there are concerns about the results of those types of tests. The laboratory tests that are certified and are regulated and are monitored through Health and Wellness and through the regional health authorities we would be confident in. But a number of tests may not be accurate. Certain foods, for example, or medications can create false positives in some

tests. So we do caution that drug testing should be left to the health professionals.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: what assistance is available to parents who are concerned that their son or daughter is using drugs?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, clearly there are a number of programs with AADAC that provide supports and counselling supports. I think that parents are, of course, in the best position to know whether their child's behaviour exhibits any differences which would lead them to believe that soliciting such counselling or such outpatient concern would be available. AADAC has recently opened 24 new detox and residential treatment beds for youth. Frankly, in 2006 with the work that we're doing on the follow-up of Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, there will be mandatory treatment available for children that so require.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, there was a point of order raised with respect to your preamble. We'll deal with it at the end of the question period.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Labour Relations Board

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this Legislature the impartiality of the semijudicial Alberta Labour Relations Board was called into question. Labour has lost confidence in the referee, has lost confidence that there is in any sense a level playing field left. It is clear that employer lawyers, Labour Relations Board officers, and the government have colluded in writing anti-union labour law. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Why did this government allow a management lawyer from the firm of McLennan Ross and board vice-chair Les Wallace to join them in drafting Bill 27 amendments to the Labour Relations Code?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate again that the labour relations issue itself in Alberta is one of the best in North America, and let's keep that in mind. Ninety-nine per cent of all collective agreements – 1,300 collective agreements – have been settled the last two years without any disruption in the system. In addition to that, an independent report came out, in fact, just a couple of days ago, that between Canada and the United States the Labour Relations Board in Alberta is the most transparent of all jurisdictions. So it does work.

In relation to the question itself you know I cannot comment on that. That issue is in front of the courts. I will not comment on anything that may influence the court's decision.

2:00

Mr. Backs: A supplementary to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: in what way did the minister use Labour Relations Board officers and employer lawyers to create the division 8 declaration, which had the effect of giving a project to the so-called Christian Labour Association, at the Horizon megaproject?

Mr. Cardinal: There again, Mr. Speaker, it's another issue that I will not comment on.

Going back to the Labour Relations Board, Mr. Speaker, there are five vice-chairs, there's one chair, and there are 33 members that sit

on this. The 33 members represent all sectors of the working area: construction, retail, food, utilities, health care, manufacturing, municipal, engineering, public. I mean, I can go on.

Mr. Backs: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: will the minister fire the chair and vice-chairs of the Alberta Labour Relations Board, or is this government prepared to suffer numerous court challenges? The referees are making the rules. Heads must roll for faith to be restored.

Mr. Cardinal: When you look at the whole labour relations issue in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, we're number one. We have a hot economy. In 10 years we're going to have a hundred thousand extra jobs that we can't fill. There are jobs there for everybody. There is no way we should be fighting over issues like this when we can't even find enough people to fill the jobs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Seniors' Property Taxes

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prior to 1993 seniors did not have to pay the educational portion of their property tax assessment. In many cases it is a yearly cost that's unexpected to many seniors who have long since paid off their homes and many of whom are on fixed incomes or pensions. Now that our fiscal house is back in order, we should look at eliminating this tax for seniors. While many seniors are pleased that we froze that levy at 2004 levels, they are hopeful that we will be able to remove this tax entirely. My question is to the hon. Minister of Finance. When will the government be able to eliminate the educational portion of the seniors' property tax bill?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, certainly with the good advice from our minister responsible for seniors and the concerns that seniors felt over a year ago about rising property taxes, this government moved very quickly to freeze that level of tax for seniors, understanding that many seniors are on a fixed income and need predictable information to meet their obligations. In addition to that, we have a tax review occurring – I've mentioned it before – and we will look at this as part of that review. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has been working with a variety of groups on this issue, and he may want to comment on that process.

The Speaker: We'll proceed with the member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: will the minister consider eliminating the educational portion of the property tax for seniors living below the poverty line?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, understanding the concerns that seniors have that are on a fixed income, that are dependent on GISs and CPP and OAS – some CPP, some not – we moved very quickly to ensure that seniors would not face a burden of a higher property tax, the education portion of it, in this very, very robust market that we're experiencing in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has done a lot of work in this area, and I would like him to supplement on where that work is proceeding or how.

The Speaker: Sorry. We're going to proceed to the hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is to the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Is the minister working with other departments and municipalities to ensure that these property taxes remain affordable for seniors so that they may continue to reside in their own homes as long as it's possible?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has over 1,500 seniors' households in his constituency, and I agree with the sentiment that he has brought forward, that it's very important that we assist seniors with staying in their own homes. That's why this program is so important as we cover the year-to-year increases in the education portion of the property tax for seniors.

Yes, hon. member, we are working closely with municipalities, including Calgary, and in fact one municipality right now – it's the city of Edmonton – has taken the lead. They are following what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, by offering a rebate on the municipal portion of their property tax. I'm hoping other municipalities will follow the same.

I am hoping that the Minister of Municipal Affairs can supplement.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Long-term Care Funding

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are issues around long-term care that this government has failed to address, not to mention the ongoing trials and lawsuits stemming from systemic carelessness and underfunding by this government. Questions need to be asked about how this government cares for Alberta's most frail and vulnerable citizens. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: given that the Jubilee lodge has received over \$1.5 million in grants from Alberta Health over the past four years in addition to the funding that they received from Capital health, can the minister tell us what those grants were used for?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, through the regional health authorities grants are distributed on the basis of contractual relationships with a variety of providers, and what the type of support was for would depend entirely on the mix of the acuity of the patients that were in any particular facility. There's an administrative component, an hours of care component, and there are other features dependent upon the various individual contracts.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member opposite knows from her work on the task force on continuing care, there are different definitions in some of the agreements. It's something that we hope to have a common understanding about. So you would find different things with different lodges. On the very specific arrangements that the health authority has with this particular lodge, I can't give specifics at this time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Can the minister guarantee that this money is being used for resident care and not toward profits?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, for private providers obviously there is a profit motive in the provision of care, so there would be some dollars that would go to the profit. But in terms of work that we've done in expanding hours of care over this past year, there were funds that were very specifically targeted to those hours of care. If there was

a percentage, it might be attributable to an administrative amount, and there may be some more, but the intent of our release of funds to support hours of care is not to increase the profits but, rather, to increase the hours of care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I'm going to totally change what I was going to say. What I would like to ask the minister is: how are we tracking those dollars?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, a good part of those dollars are tracked through the regional health authorities. The audits are available through the regional health authorities. The audit that the Auditor General did on regional health authorities I think was relatively thorough, very thorough in the discussion of particularly 25 facilities. So there's a normal course of events and financial accountability.

For that specific lodge on that specific point I would be very pleased to commit that information to the hon. member following.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Hunting Regulations for Youths

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hunting is a central part of Alberta's aboriginal and settler heritage, and Alberta arguably today still has the best public hunting in the world. I know that all members of the government are committed to preserving this legacy. Prior to 1997 young Albertans 16 and 17 years of age were permitted to hunt without adult supervision. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Why did the government change these rules in 1997?

2:10

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, youth of 16 and 17 years of age prior to 1997 could hunt without direct supervision. Following federal legislation that came into effect in the mid-1990s, licensing became mandatory for firearms possession. It should be recognized that it's firearms possession. That federal licensing requirement actually requires persons under the age of 18 years to be directly supervised by an adult when using the firearm. Therefore, the provincial Wildlife Act was changed to be in compliance with that federal legislation.

Dr. Morton: My first supplemental is to the same minister. Since, surely, it is preferable that our youths spend weekends in the fall in the field and forest rather than in the malls, what does the minister's department do to encourage youth hunters to join the ranks of the hunting community in Alberta?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, youths from the age of 12 to 17 can hunt in Alberta under a residential youth wildlife certificate, and they can hunt a number of different wildlife species with either a firearm or a bow and arrow. As a matter of fact, we have over 5,000 youth registered as hunting in the province, which is up about 184 individuals from last year.

Our staff works very, very closely with educators in schools on hunter education as well as with the WISE foundation, the hunters for tomorrow program, and the Alberta hunter educators association along with conservation education programs. As a matter of fact, they're celebrating their 40th anniversary coming up this spring and they have educated over a million youth. So we have a number of good programs that teach our youth how to hunt responsibly.

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, my second supplemental is to the same minister. Since our youth hunters, Mr. Minister, are already required to pass the provincial hunter education test and pass the federal firearms safety test, would you consider restoring the rights that 16- and 17-year-old Albertans enjoyed prior to 1997?

Mr. Coutts: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my first answer, Alberta amended the Wildlife Act to be consistent with the federal legislation. That was brought on by requests from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to make sure that we were consistent with the legislation so that it could be enforceable. It's also supported by our fish and wildlife officers so it can be enforceable as well. We have received very few complaints from the public about this issue and particularly the requirements for youth. Right at this moment I have no plans to reopen the legislation. If we did, we'd certainly have to look at the legalities of it. We'd have to do some consultation with both the RCMP and other enforcement agencies as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Treasury Branch Loans

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Will the minister please confirm or deny that this government guaranteed a \$50 million loan to Rancher's Beef through the Alberta Treasury Branches?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I can tell this hon. member that I do not get involved with the day-to-day operations or the loan portfolios of the Alberta Treasury Branch. If he has a problem with a loan that the Treasury Branch has given or guaranteed, he should take it to the board of directors.

Mr. R. Miller: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General holds the minister responsible for Alberta Treasury Branches. Is this government back in the business of picking winners and losers?

Mrs. McClellan: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member followed the Public Accounts discussion around the Alberta Treasury Branches yesterday, he would know very much that Alberta Treasury Branch operates as a commercial entity. I've followed a line of questioning over here in the last days of trying to find out if there was political interference. Mr. Speaker, surely you would not expect or that hon. member would not expect that I would know the transactions that the Alberta Treasury Branch carries out.

Mr. R. Miller: Mr. Speaker, I did follow the Public Accounts Committee yesterday.

Given the Auditor General's continuing criticism of Alberta Treasury Branches' questionable lending practices, what assurance can the minister give that the required reforms will actually happen this year?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I invite all hon. members to actually read the Auditor General's report instead of paraphrasing from it. What the Auditor General has indicated is that the Alberta Treasury Branches need to ensure that their corporate lending practices are followed, particularly in their branches. I would point out to this hon. member and all hon. members that if you go to the trouble of reading the Alberta Treasury Branches' latest report, their portfolio is just under \$6 billion and their loan writeoffs are \$23 million. I think even you can do the math.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Wait Times for Ophthalmology Services

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I tabled a document from the government's wait-list registry showing that Calgarians wait significantly longer for cataract surgery in private eye clinics than Edmontonians wait for the same surgery in a public facility. These statistics contradict the Premier's claim two days ago that a cataract surgery is quicker in the city of Calgary. No wonder this government can't be trusted as it moves to privatize more health services. A question to the Premier: will the Premier admit that he was wrong in his claims of two days ago and instead acknowledge that Edmontonians enjoy much more timely access to cataract surgery as a result of this health service being delivered mainly in a public facility?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong. Dr. Pannu asked the question: "According to October 2005 stats on the government's wait-list registry, four times as many Calgarians are waiting for cataract eye surgery compared to the number of Edmontonians waiting," then it goes on. Anyway, in response to the question:

I really don't know that to be true, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've talked to people in the private system and people in the public system. Those people in Calgary practising ophthalmology say that services are much quicker in the city of Calgary.

"Those people in Calgary practising ophthalmology say that services are much quicker." I didn't say it. The people said it. I don't know where he gets his figures.

Mr. Speaker, you can't slay the messenger. I am the messenger. He's trying to slay me, and that is wrong.

The Speaker: Okay. We'll go forward then.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is slayed by the figures prepared by his own government.

How can Albertans trust this government's so-called third way privatization blueprint when the Premier ignores the readily available evidence documenting that Calgarians endure by far the longest wait times in the province because cataract surgery in their city is done in private, for-profit clinics?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I go on to say, "I don't know where he gets his figures," but he's explained that. I've since checked this out. In the case of Calgary, where there is choice, some people say: I want a particular doctor. That doctor says: I can't take you right now; you're going to have to wait six months. That so often is the case.

I'll have the hon. minister respond.

2:20

Ms Evans: Further, Mr. Speaker, there has been recently an ophthalmological review conducted by a private consultant to the Calgary health authority, who is looking at some of the problems associated with it. In order to be fair to the number of providers, there was a cap on the number of services some were delivering, and if you made a choice to go with a particular provider, you may wait longer. Both Calgary and Capital deliver ophthalmological services through a private/public mix.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister doesn't want to trust, I guess, her own figures here.

My final question to the Premier: given the clear evidence documenting significantly shorter wait times when cataract surgery is done in the public facilities, why doesn't the government abandon its failed strategy of using private, for-profit clinics to do cataract surgery in Calgary?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, you can't compare apples and oranges and bananas and grapefruits and so on. We leave it up to the various health regions as to how they wish to deliver and fund ophthalmology services. In Calgary there are third-party operators who contract with the regional health authority to provide ophthalmology services. The Calgary regional health authority believes that that is the most efficient way of doing things, and that is entirely up to them. It's not up to this member. It's up to the Calgary regional health authority.

The Speaker: We're sure excited over there today, aren't we?

The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

School Construction in Southwest Calgary

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Several years ago the minister of infrastructure at the time approved construction of an elementary school in the Calgary-West constituency. The school was to be built on a site known as Battalion park, where a mini-school currently houses children up to grade 3. My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. My constituents would like to know why construction has not yet commenced on that school.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, and that is an excellent question. Mr. Speaker, the project was approved on May 4, 2004. What subsequently occurs is that the Calgary school board puts it into the design process. The interesting part about this particular design is that there was methane gas discovered on the particular site where the school was going to be built. We have been working with them now to determine what exactly is the best way to alleviate that methane gas that is occurring on that site. My people have also been working with them in an attempt to allow them to move sites, but for some reason they actually want to keep the site there.

We presently have gone to tender. The tenders closed last Thursday. We'll see what happens when it comes to price, including the methane gas alleviation project that is going on there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental, then, is to the same minister. Given this new information regarding methane gas at the site, can the minister assure my constituents that this particular site is still safe to build a school?

Dr. Oberg: Well, yes, we can, Mr. Speaker. The methane gas management system that is being put in there will certainly alleviate the gas. The issue comes down to cost. This particular site is costing us \$1.2 million more than if it was at another site. There is another site that is available there. However, this is where the co-ordination between the Department of Education, the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation, and the Calgary public school system has got to be bang on. The unfortunate part is that \$1.2 million could be spent on this site to alleviate the methane when in reality it could have been put on a different site.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Liepert: Thank you. My final supplementary to the minister: can the minister assure my constituents that once a determination is made regarding the methane gas, a decision to begin construction will be made immediately so that children in my constituency can go to school in their own neighbourhood and not ride a bus for up to an hour?

Dr. Oberg: Yeah. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. As I stated, the tenders closed on Thursday. We'll now be opening the tenders and determining what company is going to build the school, what kind of system is going to be there. We will see what the price is. I can certainly give full guarantee to the hon. member that this school will be built absolutely as quickly as possible and, hopefully, will be ready in 2007 for those kids to go there.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Gaming Technology

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past September the Minister of Gaming attended the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. At that event he met with the Association of Casino Operators, who asked the minister to consider the implementation of something called cashless technology. The minister then directed his department to examine the implementation of cashless technology in Alberta's casinos, which was described in the minister's report on his trip as exciting new technology. My question is for the Minister of Gaming. What exactly is this new cashless technology, and why is he so excited about it?

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take too much to get me excited, but there we go. The new technology, I guess, would be new to Alberta, but it's certainly not new in the gaming industry in the world. In fact, I believe about 80 per cent of the world's casinos use what's called cashless technology in slot machines. Basically, as opposed to pushing a button and when you win having the machine spit out 20 loonies into the tray under the machine, it prints a piece of paper. You then take that piece of paper, and if you want to play the machine next door, you put it back in, or if you want to cash out and go home, you take that slip of paper to the cashier, take your money and head for home.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the government considering spending millions of dollars on new equipment that will do little other than serve to fatten the bottom line of casino owners?

Mr. Graydon: Part of the problem with technology, Mr. Speaker, is that as machines age, you can't get parts for the old ones. That is something that we know we're going to run into as it comes time to maintain our network, if you will, of machines in casinos. We won't be able to get the parts for the coin mechanism, and we will be relatively forced to implement this paper technology.

Mr. Tougas: Well, since the only real difference between a slot machine and a VLT is in the method of payment, doesn't that make these slots impact into VLTs?

Mr. Graydon: Well, the difference between slots and VLTs is in the

location. The VLTs tend to be in bars and lounges, whereas slot machines are in casinos. True, a VLT does issue a piece of paper which you take up to the operator of the facility when it's time to cash out, so it will make the machines similar in that regard. Basically, a slot machine is in a destination gambling facility, a casino.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Workers' Compensation

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some workers who sustain injuries on the job are deemed by the WCB to be able to return to a minimum wage job. Even if these workers are unable to find a minimum wage job, the WCB subtracts the current minimum wage from the workers' pre-injury salary to determine the earning loss supplement that is paid to the injured workers. Increasing Alberta's minimum wage for the working poor has inadvertently had a negative impact on many injured workers by substantially reducing the earning loss supplement that they receive. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. What can the minister do to help injured workers who have had their earning loss supplement payment cut as a result of an increase in the minimum wage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. Of course, the Workers' Compensation policy requires Workers' Compensation to determine an injured worker's level of employability once they are physically able to return to work. In some cases, of course, workers are only able to resume employment that pays the minimum wage. Workers' Compensation wage top-up benefits pay the injured worker for the difference between what they can now earn and what their wage was before they were injured. The Workers' Compensation Board adjusted the top-up required to reflect the increase in the minimum wage.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the cases where the WCB uses the minimum wage to calculate the earning loss benefit, can the minister ask the WCB to use the minimum wage at the time that the worker sustained the injury rather than the minimum wage of today?

2:30

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker. Raising the minimum wage is the government's response to regular cost-of-living increases. The workers' compensation benefits also increase through cost-of-living adjustments yearly. Of course, the workers' compensation benefits reflect the potential earnings, and as they change, so do the benefits to top it up.

Mr. Pham: The last question is to the same minister. Will the minister ask WCB to pay back the money that they have collected from injured workers as a result of the increase to the minimum wage?

Mr. Cardinal: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Arts Funding

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September of this year a proud Alberta-based book publisher was forced to sell to an Ontario company due to the lack of provincial arts funding. This was the fifth book publisher forced to leave the province in the past decade. The Book Publishers Association of Alberta has been lobbying this government for the last eight years for sufficient support, with very little success. My questions are to the Deputy Premier. Why does this government continue to bleed the book publishing sector dry?

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, we have some fabulous publishers in this province, and they've accomplished great things: the university press and others that are there.

Actually, this question would be more appropriately posed to the Minister of Community Development, who has the responsibility for arts and culture.

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, in looking at all of our cultural industries in the province of Alberta, we do try our very, very best to do the very best with what we've got. The reality is that we haven't changed our funding for the arts for some number of years. We will be making every effort to try and change that through the budget process. As the hon. member knows, the upcoming budget process is currently under way, and the budget will be tabled in February of next year. He can wait to see then whether or not advocacy in this area has been successful.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the Minister of Community Development: given that Alberta is the wealthiest province in this country, why does our funding for the arts continue to rank among the lowest in the country?

Mr. Mar: Mr. Speaker, the proper operation of government requires many priorities to be looked after. We do have extremely high funding per capita in the area of health. We have extremely high per capita funding in the area of education. These are the areas that Albertans feel are their strongest priorities.

Mr. Agnihotri: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Given that years of lobbying the stakeholders have proven unsuccessful, is it the policy of this government to only provide arts funding after a personal meeting with the Premier?

Mr. Mar: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I will call on six members today to participate in Members' Statements, but prior to that, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

The Speaker: First of all, then, the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a gentleman who is no stranger to most of us here. He is our recently retired Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Brian Fjeldheim. Brian is seated in the Speaker's gallery with his wife, Colleen. If I could ask them to stand, please, and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you today four constituents from the busy village of Linden, Alberta, home of the famous Country Cousins Restaurant. They're here today to visit this wonderful building and tour it as well as see how efficiently and smoothly our democracy runs. They are Bruce and Tina Klassen and Dwayne and Jolene Klassen. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some special guests. Today in the members' gallery is my wife, Pauline, my son Lorne and my daughter and her husband, Julia and Trevor VanderVeen. They have just finished their education, about eight and a half years of university each. They're back in Alberta trying to find a job, so we're trying to repatriate them. With them is a friend of ours from Niger, Africa, Miss Jan Disselkoe. She has worked in Sierra Leone for 13 years, then eight years in Niger doing community development. It's our pleasure to have her here today. Would they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Chair of Committees.

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Jan Marz, the lady who keeps our Deputy Speaker in line. She is seated in the public gallery. I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Family Violence Prevention Month draws to a close, I would like to note that violence is an issue that requires our attention year-round. This coming Tuesday marks the 16th anniversary of the tragic events that took place at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal. In recognition December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. On that day I encourage everyone to pause and consider the devastation that violence has on individuals, families, and our society. I encourage Albertans to think about how their communities can support actions to eliminate all forms of violence.

In Alberta we are working very hard to achieve our goal of eliminating family violence, including working with communities at the grassroots level to develop family violence prevention initiatives, providing specialized treatment services for offenders to break the cycle of abuse, training front-line professionals so that they may better respond to incidents of family violence, developing a provincial strategy to prevent sexual violence, increasing the number of provincially funded beds in women's shelters, expanding community outreach services and supports, establishing specialized domestic violence courts for more timely and effective response to family violence cases, developing safe visitation supports for children and families where family violence is an issue, working with aboriginal communities, and implementing education and awareness activities

that encourage Albertans to speak up about family violence.

As the Year of the Veteran and our centennial year draws to a close, reminding us of the great sacrifices of the past, I would like to say that no one loves you more than your family. On December 6 I ask all Albertans to renew their pledge to never commit, condone, or remain silent about any act of violence.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

International Day of Disabled Persons

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and inform the Assembly that December 3 marks the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons. Events and celebrations will be taking place all over the world, all across this country, and in communities throughout Alberta.

In 1992 the United Nations proclaimed December 3 as International Day of Disabled Persons, and recognition of this day is intended to increase awareness and understanding of persons with disabilities and the issues that impact their lives. Albertans will celebrate International Day of Disabled Persons in a variety of ways including special ceremonies in Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and even the smaller community of Bow Island.

Awards of excellence will be presented by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. These awards will be at events in Calgary, Edmonton, and Bow Island. Because December 3 falls on a Saturday this year, the events in Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer will actually be taking place on Friday, December 2.

This year's theme is Nothing About Us Without Us. It is a reminder that the involvement of persons with disabilities in the decisions being made about them is critical. Together we will bring down the barriers – physical, systemic, and attitudinal – that impede their full participation in all aspects of community life.

I encourage all hon. colleagues and all Albertans to join these festivities and celebrate the achievements and acknowledge the aspirations of persons with disabilities. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

2:40 Centennial Salute for Sport and Recreation

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a long and proud tradition of athletic excellence. The skill and enthusiasm that our athletes, coaches, and athletic promoters exhibit on a daily basis has brought international fame and notoriety to our province. In recognition of this and to commemorate Alberta's centennial, the Alberta government and the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation created jointly an award that would acknowledge the efforts and achievements of 100 exceptional Albertans.

The Alberta centennial salute for sport and recreation gives recognition to those administrators, participants, builders, coaches, leaders, officials, and athletes who have made a lasting positive impact on the development of sports in this province. These individuals come from diverse backgrounds. They represent a multitude of different sports and disciplines. Included in their numbers are rodeo stars, Olympic athletes, politicians, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to promote sports and recreation in their communities. They have one thing in common, an extreme sense of dedication and boundless enthusiasm toward the establishment and promotion of sports and recreational development in Alberta. They have served and continue to serve not only as ambassadors of sport and community but as shining examples of the spirit that has made Alberta great.

Mr. Speaker, these exceptional Albertans will be honoured at the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame & Museum on December 8, where they will receive a centennial salute scroll signed by the Premier and the Minister of Community Development, a centennial pin, and the recognition of the museum. As the government adviser to the ASRPW Foundation I would like to commend all those who will be receiving the award as well as pay tribute to the memory of those who are being recognized posthumously. These 100 exceptional people have touched the lives of all Albertans and are truly the embodiment of the centennial spirit.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Brian Fjeldheim

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to pay tribute to a great Albertan known to most of us in the Assembly. Mr. Brian Fjeldheim, who is seated in the Speaker's gallery with his wife, Colleen, recently retired from his position as Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta, a position he held from 1998 to 2005. As Chief Electoral Officer Brian presided over two general elections, a Senate nominee election, and four by-elections, and he served as senior adviser to Alberta's 2002-2003 Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Brian's achievements included in small part the development of a provincial register of electors and the implementation of Elections Alberta's interactive website. His dedication to the office of Chief Electoral Officer, his professionalism, and his service to the citizens of Alberta were commendable, and this Assembly was well served during his tenure. Brian was always passionate about the electoral process, and he took great pride in his office and the staff at Elections Alberta. I know that he'll be missed by many of his colleagues and friends.

I am pleased as an MLA and as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to recognize the achievements of Brian Fjeldheim as an officer of the Legislature. It was an honour to work with him, and I would ask all the members of the Assembly to join me in wishing the very best to Brian, Colleen, and their family with their future endeavours.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

World AIDS Day

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Hebrew Bible prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah were convinced that lament is the key to open action. Today is World AIDS Day, and for us to think about the AIDS pandemic is to engage in a deep, heart-rending lament for the millions who have died from AIDS. Since 1983, 734 people have died from HIV/AIDS in Alberta. The world statistics are overwhelming: 3 million deaths in the past year; that's 60,000 a week. Half of the 40 million people world-wide who are living with HIV/AIDS are women, and more than 2 million are children. Seventy-five per cent of the AIDS pandemic is happening in sub-Saharan Africa.

Statistics often just numb us and prevent us from experiencing the personal loss and tragedy. As a former pastor I have sat at the bedside of individuals who have succumbed to AIDS. I have tried to say words of comfort and encouragement, but in all cases what I have received is much greater: the gift of their courage and their hope. The Hebrew prophets have taught us that lament leads to hope and action. Gordon Brown, the U.K. minister of finance, said that

when there are 30,000 children dying every day and when there are 100 million children not going to school at all in the poorest countries, the need to act is obvious. Stephen Lewis' new book, *Race Against Time*, is a call to action.

In the last two weeks we have been debating the spending of \$1.8 billion on ourselves in Alberta. One point eight billion is enough to establish whole country-wide health care systems in most African countries, providing enough health care professionals and caregivers and pharmaceuticals to beat this disease. Africa needs at least \$22 billion a year just for HIV/AIDS, all of which leads me to question the morality of our excessive spending in Alberta.

The good news is that the world is gradually awakening to the challenge, and thanks to local organizations like Living Positive a lot of awareness is happening about HIV/AIDS. May the lament of today be turned into hope and action tomorrow.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Raymond Comets Football Team

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today and recognize the achievement of the Raymond Comets football team in winning their tier 1 provincial championship last Saturday against the number one rated Bev Facey, defeating them a decisive 25-nothing. The Comets' accomplishment was achieved because they demonstrated and drew from many of the attributes that make Alberta, our towns and our people, the success we are today.

First, they not only had a vision; they knew that what the mind could conceive, they would achieve. They were willing to work, to work very hard. They had leaders in their communities that were willing to give of their knowledge and their experience freely. These leaders were their coaches and the parents, who also sacrificed their time and efforts enthusiastically to coach and inspire these young men to be all they could be. Average or even above average was not the goal; it was to be the best they could be.

These young men and their coaches did not come with any excuses. They did not claim that they were from a small school or that they weren't as big or as tall as their opponents. They knew as a team that cohesiveness and harmonious execution is more important than powerful, individual strength and size. They knew the rules were the same for both sides, and they were enthused and excited to participate.

We must look to our youth for an example. The Comets are grateful that there were no rules to exclude them from competing at the tier 1 provincial level. Many may have said that they should not have competed, that their school was just too small. This competition teaches us the importance of rules of inclusion and not exclusion, which allows all people to have the opportunity to compete equally whatever the playing field.

I salute the Raymond Comets, the players, their families, coaches, and the communities for their outstanding achievement, once again showing that bigger does not always mean better.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Page Recognition

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, every day and night of the session we're served extremely well by the pages, and on behalf of all the members of the Assembly I get to be Santa Claus today. We want to give each page a small Christmas present to say thank you and wish them, each and every one, a very merry Christmas. I'll ask the Speaker's page, Janiesh Bali, to come and distribute these gifts on our behalf.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two forms of a petition today. I'd like to table a petition by 595 individuals urging the Alberta government to "increase infrastructure development funding for Highway 63."

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

Mr. Martin: You're welcome.

You can thank me again because I'd also like to table on behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood the same petition signed by 570 individuals urging the Alberta government to "increase infrastructure development funding for Highway 63." That brings the total number of signatures to 7,661.

head: 2:50 **Notices of Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions 43, 44, and 45 be dealt with that day. There being no additional written questions or motions for returns, there are none to stand and retain their places.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition I'd like to table copies of a memo from James Eamon to William Code concerning operations of the Alberta Securities Commission and a second tabling, which is copies of court documents indicating involvement of the former Treasurer, Mr. Dinning, in the operation of the Alberta Securities Commission.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, those would be the documents that I asked to be tabled?

Ms Blakeman: Those are the documents you requested. Yes, indeed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition I table the requisite copies of a letter from the leader of the Liberal opposition to the ministers of Children's Services, Health and Wellness, and Education requesting a school meal program for hungry children in Alberta schools.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings, one petitioning the government of Alberta to press the federal government for resumption of talks with the Lubicon Cree in northern Alberta; second, a letter from a constituent calling on the government to give back the provincial education tax exemption to seniors,

raise the annual income maximum to include average seniors, and grandfather property taxes so seniors will not be subjected to market value assessments.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table a letter and the appropriate number of copies from a teacher in Edmonton pointing out that this government needs to move forward with a plan to pay off the unfunded liability of the teachers' pension plan.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. I'm tabling first of all the appropriate number of copies of 13 letters from schoolteachers from across Alberta. Again, they are greatly concerned with the unfunded liability of the teachers' pension fund and are urging the government to act quickly to remedy the situation.

The second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Sylvia Scarfe of Edmonton, who is concerned about a three-month delay in the processing of her seniors' dental benefits.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of an open letter sent to me by a coalition of prominent Albertans, including Ian Tyson and Connie Kaldor, asking the province to proclaim the Castle wilderness area a provincial park in honour of Andy Russell and in recognition of the Piikani First Nation.

As well, I have the appropriate amount of copies of a letter from the Lethbridge Family Services board of directors indicating that their agency receives persons with disability funding, but they did not receive an increase in funding this year.

Finally, I have a tabling. This is a statement from the Non-Smokers' Rights Association from January 27, 2003, alleging that a fundraising and lobbying firm, GCI Canada, set up a fake citizens' group called the Smokers' Freedom Society as a front for the two big tobacco companies here in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Beth Pierog of Grande Prairie expressing deep concerns about the government's plans for health care privatization and the so-called third way for health care.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and table the appropriate five copies of information regarding a partner in the firm of McLennan Ross cited in e-mails from the labour board yesterday.

head:

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Ouellette, Minister of Restructuring and Government Efficiency, response to Written Question 33, asked for by Mr. Elsalhy on November 21, 2005; on behalf of the hon. Mr. Renner, Minister of Municipal Affairs, return to order of the Assembly MR 14, MR 15,

and MR 16, all asked for by Mr. MacDonald on behalf of Dr. Taft on April 18, 2005.

head: **Projected Government Business**

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 7(5) I would like to inquire of the Government House Leader as to what the government business is that's projected for next week.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There appears to be very little if anything on the Order Paper other than two government motions, and I don't anticipate putting any on.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: Hon. members, by way of an historical vignette on this day in 1919 by order in council the town of Peace River was incorporated as a town. Just one little bit of addendum information about the town of Peace River: it is home to Henry Fuller Davis, also known as Twelve Foot Davis. Twelve Foot Davis had a 12-foot land claim in British Columbia during the Caribou Country gold rush, and he was able to mine almost \$30,000 in gold from his land, which he then took to establish a trading post near the town of Peace River. Of course, there is a monument to old Twelve Foot Davis, who made 30,000 bucks at that time mining gold.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill on a purported point of order.

Point of Order

Improper Questions

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order concerning the questions put by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. In so doing, I wish to cite *Beauchesne* paragraphs 409(1) and (3) and *Marleau* pages 426 and 427 and our own Standing Order 23(j).

Mr. Speaker, my shorthand skills are extremely limited, so I will attempt to paraphrase the words that were put by the hon. member. He said words to the effect that whether it is the Alberta Securities Commission, the Labour Relations Board, or the Calgary health authority, the boards are "rife with conflicts of interest, patronage, and political interference." The question and particularly the preamble are not only inflammatory and offensive, but they are perhaps injurious to the reputations of those individuals involved with those boards. Not only that, but they are in the nature of an opinion or a statement or a representation. In my respectful submission those particular words offend the good order of the Assembly.

I would like to quote briefly from those authorities which I cited. Paragraph 23 of our Standing Orders says:

A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member:

(j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

Beauchesne paragraph 409(1) states as follows: the question in question period

must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate.

Citation 409(3) also states that

the question ought to seek information and, therefore, cannot be

based upon a hypothesis, cannot seek an opinion, either legal or otherwise, and must not suggest its own answer, be argumentative or make representations.

Marleau, page 426, states that

a Member should

- ask a question;
- be brief;
- seek information;
- ask a question that is within the . . . responsibility of the government or the individual Minister addressed

and the question should not

- be a statement, representation, argument or an expression of opinion.

Further, on page 427, the question should not

- make a charge by way of a preamble to a question.

It's my respectful submission, Mr. Speaker, that this question, and particularly the preamble, offends the good order of this Assembly, and it's my respectful submission that the Speaker should call the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to order.

3:00

The Speaker: On this point of order, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I relish this opportunity to talk about this point of order. I would suggest that a lot of the quotes that the member – he must have spent the whole question period doing that, and I appreciate it. I know the hon. member. He does good work in committees. I wish he would continue with that.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that in this session he may not like the preamble, but it's not really a point of order. We can talk. He mentions patronage. We believe it to be true that there's patronage. He talks about conflict of interest. We believe that that happened in the Securities Commission. He talks about political interference. We believe that that just happened in the Labour Relations Board.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to us that as part of the debate in this Assembly, this has been going on for years and years and years. So I honestly suggest that it's really not a point of order. It's a fact that the member really doesn't like the preamble. Too bad. It's a democracy. We will continue doing our job.

The Speaker: Well, look, if I understood the Government House Leader, there's probably no business on Monday, so let's do something. Okay? Between now and the next time we reconvene, let's all of us take some of these books, and let's read about what the rules of debate are because I think that in the last 12 days I could have ruled out 95 per cent of the questions from all sides of the Assembly. Nobody is free on this. Let me assure you of that. There would have been very, very few questions permitted if all the rules were applied. So in the spirit of harmony as we go through the next several months, let's just try and find these wonderful things to deal with.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

Adjournment of Session

26. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess the fall sitting of the First Session of the 26th Legislature, it shall stand adjourned until a time and date as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

[Motion carried]

head: **Royal Assent**

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members, while we wait for the arrival of His Honour, you might just be interested in a couple of things here. This year, in 2005, this Assembly dealt with 58 bills. This is only the fourth time since 1971 that the Order Paper has no bills left over on it – only the fourth time – the other times being 1996, 2001, and 2004.

You might also be interested in noting that this year including today we had 53 sitting days including 36 evening sittings.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, and the Premier entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

His Honour: Hon. members, please be seated.

The Speaker: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has at its present sittings passed certain bills to which and in the name of the Legislative Assembly I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

The Clerk: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

- 9 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005
- 15 Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005
- 43 Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
- 44 Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- 45 Maternal Tort Liability Act
- 46 Criminal Notoriety Act
- 47 Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act
- 48 Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005
- 49 Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- 50 Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- 51 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- 52 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- 53 Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005
- 54 Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005
- 55 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- 56 Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- 57 Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005

58 Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005
Pr. 4 Brooklyn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

The Clerk: In Her Majesty's name His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the Premier left the Chamber]

[The Mace was uncovered]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, just to conclude what I was saying a little earlier, as of December 1 – that's today – 53 days including 36 evening sittings occurred this year. Last year, in 2004, we had 43 days of sittings including 29 evening sittings. This year at the end of the sitting day, Wednesday last night, November 30, we'd been here for

16,899 minutes. In 2004 we were here for 12,246 minutes. The number of hours at the end of sitting day, Wednesday, November 30: we'd been here for 281 hours, 39 minutes. In 2004 this was 204 hours, 6 minutes, but please remember that there was no fall session in 2004.

Hon. Government House Leader, do you wish to await the return of the Premier, or do you wish to proceed?

3:10

Mr. Hancock: I think we can proceed, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the information provided. The only piece that you might have added if you'd wanted to was that three of the four times in which the Order Paper had been completely cleared was under the current House leader. But I digress.

Given that the Order Paper is cleared, Mr. Speaker, I would move, pursuant to Government Motion 26 recently passed, that we do recess the fall sitting and adjourn.

The Speaker: Let me wish you all a safe and happy festive season.

[Motion carried; pursuant to Government Motion 26 the Assembly adjourned at 3:11 p.m.]

NOTE: Use the search capabilities of Adobe Acrobat to search the index and find the topic you are interested in; note the page number(s) associated with it. Then click on the page number range in the list below to open the issue.

Alberta Hansard page and issue number information (26th Leg./1st Sess. 2005)

<u>Issue No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Pages</u>
1 (Elect Spk/Throne Sp)	Mar. 1 aft. & Mar. 2 aft.	1-5 & 7-11
2	Mar. 3 aft.	13-38
3	Mar. 7 aft.	39-68
4	Mar. 7 eve. & Mar. 8 aft.	69-80 & 81-103
5	Mar. 8 eve. & Mar. 9 aft.	105-16 & 117-46
6	Mar. 9 eve.	147-58
7	Mar. 14 aft.	159-86
8	Mar. 14 eve. & Mar. 15 aft.	187-98 & 199-228
9 (Interim Est. 2005-06)	Mar. 15 eve. & Mar. 16 aft.	229-41 & 243-69
10 (Suppl. Est. 2004-05)	Mar. 16 eve. & Mar. 17 aft.	271-84 & 285-313
11	Mar. 21 aft.	315-42
12	Mar. 21 eve. & Mar. 22 aft.	343-57 & 359-87
13	Mar. 22 eve. & Mar. 23 aft.	389-407 & 409-37
14 (Easter recess)	Mar. 23 eve. & Mar. 24 aft.	439-51 & 453-80
15	Apr. 4 aft.	481-509
16	Apr. 4 eve. & Apr. 5 aft.	511-25 & 527-52
17	Apr. 5 eve. & Apr. 6 aft.	553-67 & 569-95
18	Apr. 6 eve. & Apr. 7 aft.	597-610 & 611-39
19	Apr. 11 aft.	641-67
20	Apr. 11 eve. & Apr. 12 aft.	669-88 & 689-715
21 (Budget Address)	Apr. 12 eve. & Apr. 13 aft.	717-33 & 735-50
22 (Main estimates start)	Apr. 13 eve. & Apr. 14 aft.	751-64 & 765-93
23	Apr. 18 aft.	795-825
24	Apr. 18 eve. & Apr. 19 aft.	827-46 & 847-75
25	Apr. 19 eve. & Apr. 20 aft.	877-95 & 897-923
26	Apr. 20 eve. & Apr. 21 aft.	925-43 & 945-71
27	Apr. 25 aft.	973-98
28	Apr. 25 eve. & Apr. 26 aft.	999-1021 & 1023-49
29	Apr. 26 eve. & Apr. 27 aft.	1051-70 & 1071-98
30	Apr. 27 eve. & Apr. 28 aft.	1099-1116 & 1117-42
31	May 2 aft.	1143-71
32	May 2 eve. & May 3 aft.	1173-94 & 1195-1223
33	May 3 eve. & May 4 aft.	1225-46 & 1247-75
34	May 4 eve. & May 5 aft.	1277-99 & 1301-29
35	May 9 aft.	1331-59
36	May 9 eve. & May 10 aft.	1361-83 & 1385-1414
37	May 10 eve. & May 11 aft.	1415-39 & 1441-70
38	May 11 eve. & May 12 aft.	1471-93 & 1495-1515
39	May 16 aft.	1517-45
40	May 16 eve. & May 17 aft.	1547-65 & 1567-94
41	May 18 aft.	1595-1616
42 (Queen's Address)	May 24 aft.	1617-18
..... Spring sittings: 42 days; 28 evenings		
43	Nov. 15 aft.	1619-47
44	Nov. 15 eve. & Nov. 16 aft.	1649-62 & 1663-89

... continued

45 (Suppl.Est. 2005-06)	Nov. 16 eve. & Nov. 17 aft.	1691-1703 & 1705-34
46	Nov. 21 aft.	1735-61
47	Nov. 21 eve. & Nov. 22 aft.	1763-75 & 1777-1806
48	Nov. 22 eve. & Nov. 23 aft.	1807-23 & 1825-53
49	Nov. 23 eve. & Nov. 24 aft.	1855-78 & 1879-1906
50	Nov. 28 aft.	1907-35
51	Nov. 28 eve. & Nov. 29 aft.	1937-58 & 1959-87
52	Nov. 29 eve. & Nov. 30 aft.	1989-2005 & 2007-33
53	Nov. 30 eve. & Dec. 1 aft.	2035-2044 & 2045-58

..... **Fall sittings: 11 days; 8 evenings**

..... **TOTAL: 53 days; 36 evenings**

- 3 Star Selection lottery ticket**
See Hockey, Lottery funding for
- 3R committee**
See Provincial/Municipal Council on Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century, Minister's
- 4-H ambassadors**
 Statement re ... *Marz* 1204
- 4-H Premier's award**
 Statement re ... *Griffiths* 1204
- 7-Eleven, Inc.**
 Kids 4 Cops products sale ... *VanderBurg* 1835
- 16th Avenue, Calgary, widening**
See Alberta Children's Hospital, New hospital: Road access
- 20-10 by 2010 (Agricultural research framework)**
See Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework
- 20-year strategic plan**
See Alberta-Economic policy, 20-year strategic plan
- 23rd Avenue/Calgary Trail intersection, Edmonton**
See Roads-Edmonton, 23rd Avenue/Calgary Trail intersection: Upgrading
- 24/7 medical care**
See Medical care, 24-hour service re
- 75th anniversary celebrations, Alberta**
See Alberta 75th anniversary celebrations
- 100th anniversary celebrations, Alberta**
See 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations**
 [See also **Centennial legacies grant program**]
 Airdrie celebrations: Statement re ... *Haley* 1786
 Bonnyville celebrations ... *Ducharme* 1482
 Bonnyville celebrations: Statement re ... *Ducharme* 1714
 Busing of schoolchildren to ... *Agnihotri* 1724;
Zwozdesky 1725
 Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster, April 14, 2005:
 Premiers' wager re (SP331/05: Tabled) ... *Klein* 784;
Zwozdesky 784
 Commonwealth Stadium concert re ... *Mar* 1473
 Commonwealth Stadium concert re, payment of artists at ...
Blakeman 1477
 Communications re ... *Klein* 1100
 Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1474, 1783; *Blakeman* 1477;
Brown 1482; *Chase* 1481; *Ducharme* 1482; *Eggen* 1478;
Mar 1473, 1479, 1783; *Oberg* 1085
 General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 305, 692; *Chase* 264;
Haley 1; *Her Majesty* 1617; *Hinman* 1273; *Klein* 3, 11,
 1099, 1617; *Lindsay* 955; *Mar* 692, 1472-73, 1484;
McClellan 747, 749-50; *Speaker, The* 1; *Speech from the Throne* 8
 Gifts to Canadians nation-wide (scholarships and artwork) ...
Ady 1738-39; *Hancock* 1738; *Mar* 1739
 Legacy of ... *Blakeman* 1477; *McClellan* 1479-80
 Legislature grounds concert re, September 1 ... *Mar* 1473,
 1479
 Replica of Famous Five statuette, to be housed in
 Legislature Building during ... *Speaker, The* 856
 Statement re ... *Cao* 1605
- 2005 resource rebates**
See Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
- 1157268 Alberta Ltd.**
 Hip and knee surgery contract ... *Evans* 1846;
MacDonald 1846
- AAA Cattle Company**
 Feedlot expansion approval ... *Boutilier* 1027; *Coutts* 1027;
Swann 1027
- AACL**
See Alberta Association for Community Living
- AADAC**
See Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
- AAMDC**
See Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
- AARN**
See Alberta Association of Registered Nurses
- Abandoned well sites**
See Well sites, Abandoned
- ABC Benefits Corporation**
See Alberta Blue Cross Benefits Corporation
- ABC Benefits Corporation Act**
 Amendment (Bill 26) ... *McClellan* 210
- Abduction of children-Calgary**
 Police actions re ... *Cenaiko* 486-87; *Lund* 486; *Pham* 486
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Department of**
See Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
- Aboriginal apprenticeship training**
See Apprenticeship training, Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal children, Welfare of**
See Child welfare, Aboriginal children
- Aboriginal children-Education**
 Funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 166, 1261, 1264
 General remarks ... *Calahasen* 839; *Zwozdesky* 123
- Aboriginal continuing education**
See Education, Postsecondary, Aboriginal students
- Aboriginal court workers**
 General remarks ... *Stevens* 1233
- Aboriginal courts**
 Diversion provisions *See Diversion (Aboriginal offenders)*
 General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1228; *Stevens* 1233
- Aboriginal diversion programs**
See Diversion (Aboriginal offenders)
- Aboriginal economic development**
 General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836, 844, 1781; *Dunford* 1008;
Tougas 838
 Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of
 funding for ... *Calahasen* 1829, 1912; *Jablonski* 1912
- Aboriginal employment training**
See Employment training programs, Aboriginal peoples
- Aboriginal gambling**
See Gambling-Aboriginal reserves
- Aboriginal health careers bursary**
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 1883
- Aboriginal high school students**
See High school students, Aboriginal
- Aboriginal issues**
 First ministers' meeting re, Kelowna, November 2005 ...
Calahasen 1781, 1829, 1912; *Jablonski* 1829, 1912;
Tougas 1781

Aboriginal issues (*Continued*)

General remarks ... *Bonko* 843, 845; *Calahasen* 835–42, 844–45, 1781, 1829; *Danyluk* 836–37, 843, 844; *Eggen* 839–40; *Hinman* 841–42; *Jablonski* 1829; *Speech from the Throne* 9; *Swann* 844, 845; *Tougas* 837–38, 844, 1781

Aboriginal land claims

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836, 1502–03; *Tougas* 1502–03
Traditional land-use studies re ... *Calahasen* 615, 836, 844, 1781

Aboriginal offenders

See **Prisoners, Aboriginal**

Aboriginal offenders' diversion programs

See **Diversion (Aboriginal offenders)**

Aboriginal participation in Royal visit

See **Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain, Alberta visit, May 2005: First Nations participation**

Aboriginal people and the judicial system

General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1228; *Pannu* 1231; *Stevens* 1233

Aboriginal peoples

Federal policies re ... *Cardinal* 1133, 1141
General remarks ... *Her Majesty* 1617; *Speech from the Throne* 8

Aboriginal peoples—Education

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 839
Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... *Calahasen* 1829, 1912; *Jablonski* 1912

Aboriginal peoples—Employment

General remarks ... *Backs* 279, 1131; *Blakeman* 1139; *Cardinal* 281, 1131, 1132–33; *Knight* 1450

Aboriginal peoples—Health care

Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... *Calahasen* 1829, 1912; *Jablonski* 1912

Aboriginal peoples—Housing

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 841; *Eggen* 840
Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... *Calahasen* 1829, 1912; *Jablonski* 1912

Aboriginal peoples—Self-government

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836

Aboriginal peoples—Urban areas

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 835, 836, 838–39; *Eggen* 840; *Tougas* 838

Aboriginal peoples—Urban areas—Calgary

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 838

Aboriginal peoples—Urban areas—Edmonton

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 838; *Tougas* 838

Aboriginal peoples—Urban areas—Lethbridge

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 838–39

Aboriginal peoples/energy industry issues

See **Energy industry—Crown lands, Aboriginal issues re**

Aboriginal police services

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 768, 1428; *Ducharme* 768

Aboriginal policy framework

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 835, 836; *Flaherty* 874; *Stevens* 1233

Aboriginal policy initiative

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836, 839, 845; *Cenaiko* 1428

Aboriginal postsecondary graduates

See **Postsecondary graduates, Aboriginal**

Aboriginal prisoners

See **Prisoners, Aboriginal**

Aboriginal self-government

See **Aboriginal peoples—Self-government**

Aboriginal skills development program

See **Employment training programs, Aboriginal peoples**

Aboriginal teachers

See **Teachers, Aboriginal**

Aboriginal traffic accident injuries

See **Traffic accident injuries—Aboriginal communities**

Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, Calgary

See **Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee**

Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee**

Aboriginal Women, Institute for the Advancement of

See **Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women**

Aboriginal women, Violence against

See **Violence against women, Aboriginal women**

Aboriginal workforce participation initiative

General remarks ... *Knight* 1450
Statement re ... *Knight* 294

Abortion—Edmonton

Provision by private clinic only ... *Evans* 853; *Pannu* 853

Abortion—Rural areas

General remarks ... *Evans* 853; *Pannu* 853

ABSA

See **Alberta Boilers Safety Association**

Abuse of children—Prevention

See **Child abuse—Prevention**

Abusers, Spousal

See **Spousal abusers**

Academic council model (Colleges and technical institutes)

See **Technical schools, Governance structure, academic council model, legislation re (Bill 55); Universities and colleges, Governance structure, academic council model, legislation re (Bill 55)**

Academic high school construction

See **High schools—Construction—Edmonton, South Edmonton academic school construction**

ACAT

See **Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer**

Access Advisory Council (Postsecondary educational institutions)

Appointment process re ... *Pannu* 873

Access and privacy branch (Dept. of Government Services)

See **Dept. of Government Services, Access and privacy branch**

Access Growth Fund (Postsecondary education)

[See also **Education, Postsecondary—Finance**]
General remarks ... *Hancock* 277, 278, 859, 860, 862, 981

Access to information law

See **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

Access to postsecondary educational institutions

See under **Education, Postsecondary**

Access to public lands

See **Public lands, Access to**

Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)

First reading ... *Klein* 11

Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 390–91; *Backs* 225–26; *Blakeman* 234–35, 393; *Cao* 396; *Chase* 236–38; *Eggen* 154–55; *Elsalhy* 223–25; *Flaherty* 236; *Hancock* 150–52, 222, 224, 391; *Hinman* 227–228, 396–97; *Johnson* 223; *Lukaszuk* 224; *MacDonald* 226–227; *Mason* 393–95, 396; *Mather* 219–220; *Miller, B.* 221–23; *Miller, R.* 391–93; *Oberle* 224–25; *Pannu* 232–34; *Pastoor* 395–96; *Snelgrove* 222; *Swann* 218–219; *Taft* 389–90; *Taylor* 152–54; *Tougas* 220–221

Committee ... *Abbott* 895; *Blakeman* 728–29, 892–93; *Brown* 1069; *Hancock* 728, 732–33, 1064, 1066–69; *Martin* 893–94; *Mather* 565, 893; *Miller, R.* 565, 729–30; *Pannu* 565–66, 1064–69; *Pastoor* 894, 1064; *Renner* 895; *Taft* 566; *Taylor* 564–65, 730–32, 894–95, 1065–67

Third reading ... *Hancock* 1237, 1242; *Morton* 1238–40; *Pannu* 1240–42; *Taylor* 1237–38

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)

Advisory council appointment process ... *Pannu* 873

Amendment A1 (SP271 & 313/05: Tabled) ... *Abbott* 567; *Deputy Chair* 728; *Hancock* 868, 870–71; *Oberle* 733; *Taylor* 564, 862, 870

Amendment A2 (SP314 & 343/05: Tabled) ... *Abbott* 895; *Chair* 892; *Oberle* 733; *Taylor* 731

Amendment A3 (SP344 & 367/05: Tabled) ... *Abbott* 895; *Brown* 1069; *Hancock* 1064; *Taylor* 894

Amendment A4 (SP368/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1069; *Pannu* 1065

Amendment A5 (withdrawn) (SP369/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1069; *Pannu* 1067

Amendment A6 (SP370/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1069; *Pannu* 1068

Cap on contributions to ... *Hancock* 870–71; *Taylor* 862–63, 870

Four amendments (SP371/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1069; *Taylor* 1065

General remarks ... *Hancock* 864, 868, 871, 1079, 1738, 2014; *Mather* 302; *Pannu* 259; *Prins* 2014; *Speech from the Throne* 9; *Taylor* 767, 1079

Access to the Future Fund

[See also **Education, Postsecondary–Finance; Endowment funds, Public**]

Establishment of ... *Klein* 11; *Speech from the Throne* 9

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 866; *Doerksen* 1375, 1377; *Eggen* 1374; *Hancock* 20, 859, 865, 867–68, 869, 870–71, 1078–79, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1795; *Klein* 767; *Knight* 900–01; *McClellan* 748, 901, 958; *Taylor* 20, 261, 767, 862–63, 870, 1078–79, 1791

Role re centre for Chinese studies ... *Hancock* 946–47

Accessibility of buildings to the disabled

See **Architecture and the disabled**

Accident injuries, Traffic

See **Traffic accident injuries**

Accidents, Traffic–Prevention

See **Traffic accidents–Prevention**

Accidents, Workplace

See **Workplace accidents**

Acclaim Energy Inc.

Acheson gas well failure, Edmonton ... *Eggen* 575; *Melchin* 575, 1828; *Swann* 1828

Accountability, Government

See **Government accountability**

Accountants Association of Alberta, Certified General

See **Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta**

Accreditation Board, Private Colleges

See **Private Colleges Accreditation Board**

Accreditation of daycare centre employees

See **Daycare centres–Employees, Accreditation program for**

Accreditation of universities and colleges

See **Universities and colleges–Accreditation**

Accredited agencies, Authorized

See **Authorized accredited agencies**

ACFA

See **Alberta Capital Finance Authority**

Acheson gas well failure, Edmonton

See **Acclaim Energy Inc., Acheson gas well failure, Edmonton**

Achievement tests

See **Student testing, Achievement tests**

Active living strategy

Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1474; *Mar* 1476

Activity, Physical–Teaching

See **Physical fitness–Teaching**

Adamson, Mr. Seabron (Enron consultant)

See **Enron Canada Corporation, Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Adamson report on**

Addictions Awareness Week, National

See **National Addictions Awareness Week**

Addictions treatment for youth

See **Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth**

Addictive gambling

See **Gambling, Compulsive**

Adjournment of the Legislature

See **Legislative Assembly of Alberta–Adjournment Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)**

First reading ... *Stevens* 170

Second reading ... *Eggen* 679; *Miller, B.* 678–79; *Morton* 679; *Stevens* 354–56

Committee ... *Miller, B.* 718; *Pannu* 719

Third reading ... *Hancock* 942; *MacDonald* 942–43; *Stevens* 942

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1228

Administrative tribunals

General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1228

Administrator of the Province of Alberta

Role in Edmonton–Castle Downs election determination: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 26; *Taft* 26

Role of, authority for: Letter to the Speaker re, response to (SP201/05: Tabled) ... *Stevens* 370

Role of, authority for: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 26; *Taft* 26

Admissions and Transfer, Alberta Council on

See **Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer**

Admissions to postsecondary educational institutions

See **Postsecondary educational institutions–Admissions (enrollment)**

- Adolescent psychiatric care**
See Mental health services—Children
- Adscam**
See Sponsorship scandal (Federal government)
- Adult Health Benefit (Human Resources program)**
See Alberta Adult Health Benefit (Human Resources program)
- Adult learning**
See Education, Postsecondary
- Adult learning councils**
See Community learning centres
- Adults in care—Protection**
See Social services recipients—Protection
- Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation of Canada**
 High school CPR program, Statement re ... *Johnson* 535
- Advanced education**
See Education, Postsecondary
- Advanced education—Finance**
See Education, Postsecondary—Finance
- Advanced Education department**
See Dept. of Advanced Education
- Advanced education review**
See Education, Postsecondary, Access to, affordability review to improve
- Advanced technology**
See Research and development
- Advancing futures bursary program**
 Funding for ... *Forsyth* 1052, 1062
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 1883
- Advisory committee on retail electricity business**
See Utilities Consumer Advocate, Advisory committee re: Report on retail electricity business
- Advisory Council on Health, Premier's**
See Premier's Advisory Council on Health
- Advocate, Children's**
See Children's Advocate
- Advocate, Mental Health Patient**
See Mental Health Patient Advocate
- AEDA**
See Alberta Economic Development Authority
- AEUB**
See Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
- Affordability review of postsecondary education**
See Education, Postsecondary, Access to, affordability review to improve
- Affordable housing**
See Social housing
- Affordable Housing Program, Canada/Alberta**
See Canada/Alberta Affordable Housing Program
- Afghanistan conflict, soldier's death in**
See Canadian armed forces, Service in Afghanistan: Prayer/condolences for death re
- AFSC**
See Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
- After school care**
See Child care after school
- Ag offices, Rural**
See Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Rural offices closure
- Ag policy framework**
See Agricultural policy framework (Federal/provincial)
- Ag service boards**
See Agriculture service boards
- Ag societies**
See Agricultural societies
- Age and employment**
 General remarks ... *Bucks* 1131–32
- Age Care Ltd.**
 Board of directors ... *Blakeman* 460; *Evans* 460
 Partnership with Calgary health region re long-term care facilities ... *Blakeman* 460; *Evans* 460
- Age verification of slaughter cattle**
See Cattle, Age verification system re
- Agencies, boards, and commissions, Government**
See Government agencies, boards, and commissions
- Agencies, Non-profit social services**
See Social services agencies (Non-profit)
- Aging in place housing (Seniors)**
See Seniors' supportive housing incentive program
- Aging in place housing (Seniors)—East Central Health region**
See Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—East Central Health region
- Agribusiness**
 Provincial assistance to ... *Martin* 1212
 Statement re ... *Cao* 1032
- Agricultural bioproducts industry**
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1369
- Agricultural exports**
See Farm produce—Export
- Agricultural land**
 Assessment level of *See* Assessment—Agricultural land, Level of
 Carbon absorption properties *See* Soils, Carbon absorption properties
- Agricultural legacy endowment fund, Walter Paszkowski**
See Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment fund
- Agricultural policy framework (Federal/provincial)**
 General remarks ... *Horner* 488, 1222
- Agricultural Products Marketing Council**
See Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council
- Agricultural programs**
See Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, New assistance programs re (2005); Calf set-aside program; Canadian agriculture income stabilization program; Farm Fuel Distribution Allowance; Farm income disaster program (Alberta); Farm Income Payment Program (Federal); Fed cattle set-aside program; Net income stabilization account (Farm income program)
- Agricultural research**
See Agriculture—Research
- Agricultural research and innovation strategic framework**
See Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework
- Agricultural Research Institute**
See Alberta Agricultural Research Institute
- Agricultural Safety Week, Canadian**
See Canadian Agricultural Safety Week
- Agricultural sinks**
See Carbon dioxide sinks

- Agricultural societies**
 Insurance costs for ... *McClellan* 965, 1031
 Lottery funding ... *Graydon* 124, 534
- Agricultural value-added production**
See Food industry and trade
- Agricultural wastes**
 Conversion to fuel source ... *Horner* 1222
- Agricultural workers**
 Status under Charter of Rights: Petition tabled re (SP508/05) ... *Eggen* 1608
- Agriculture**
 General remarks ... *Horner* 1206–07
 Government assistance programs ... *Danyluk* 1624–25; *Horner* 119–20, 122, 488, 1210, 1214, 1624–25; *Martin* 1212; *Marz* 488; *McClellan* 749; *McFarland* 122; *Mitzel* 119; *Speech from the Throne* 9
 Government assistance programs: Federal involvement ... *Hinman* 1851
 Statement re ... *Cao* 1032; *Goudreau* 1080
- Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Dept. of**
See Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Agriculture–Environmental aspects**
 General remarks ... *Horner* 1222; *Swann* 1221
- Agriculture–Research**
 Funding ... *Horner* 1207
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1390; *Horner* 1389–90; *Johnson* 1389–90
 Strategic framework re *See Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework*
- Agriculture Financial Services Corporation**
 Advertising costs ... *Horner* 1211; *MacDonald* 1208
 Annual report, 2003–04 (SP66/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Horner* 94
 Annual report, 2004–05 (SP587 & 664/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675, 1789; *Horner* 1675, 1789
 CAIS program ... *Horner* 122, 298, 367, 488
 Debt servicing costs ... *MacDonald* 1209
 General remarks ... *Horner* 1220, 1221
 Governance issues ... *MacDonald* 1208, 1209
 Risk management tools ... *Oberle* 698
 Role of ... *Horner* 1210–11; *MacDonald* 1208
- Agriculture income stabilization program, Canadian**
See Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
- Agriculture ministers' meeting (Federal/provincial/territorial), Alberta (July 2005)**
 CAIS program discussions ... *Horner* 1215
 General remarks ... *Horner* 119, 122
- Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework**
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 1218; *Horner* 1207
- Agriculture research institute**
See Alberta Agricultural Research Institute
- Agriculture service boards**
 Funding ... *Horner* 1207
- Agri-fibre-based product development**
See Agricultural bioproducts industry
- Agri-food production**
See Food industry and trade
- Agrology Profession Act (Bill 17)**
 First reading ... *Danyluk* 128
 Second reading ... *Danyluk* 194
 Committee ... *Backs* 557–58; *Bonko* 557–58; *Danyluk* 557–58
- Agrology Profession Act (Bill 17) (Continued)**
 Third reading ... *Backs* 1513; *Danyluk* 1513; *Knight* 1513
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- AHCIP–Premiums**
See Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan–Premiums
- AHFMR**
See Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
- AHFSER**
See Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research
- AHSTF**
See Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
- AHSTF, Standing Committee on**
See Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing
- AIDS Day, World**
See World AIDS Day
- Aids to Daily Living**
See Alberta Aids to Daily Living
- AIMS**
See International trade, Alberta strategy re
- Air Access Network of Alberta, Commuter**
See Commuter Air Access Network of Alberta
- Air ambulance service**
See Ambulance service, Aerial
- Air India**
 Bombing of flight 182, June 23, 1985: Public inquiry into ... *Mason* 462
 Bombing of flight 182, June 23, 1985: Statement re ... *Mason* 462
- Air pollution–Alberta**
 Fact sheet re (SP601/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1716
- Air quality**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1046
- Air quality–Monitoring**
 Toxic waste fires situations ... *Boutilier* 1335–36, 1337–38; *Eggen* 1337–38; *Lougheed* 1335–36
- Air quality–Standards**
 General remarks ... *Eggen* 1041
- Air tankers (Water bombers)**
 Fees for airport use by ... *Coutts* 937; *Oberle* 936
 Upgrading of ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 927
 Upgrading of bases for ... *Coutts* 927
- Aircraft, Government**
See Government aircraft
- Aircraft, Government chartered**
See Government chartered aircraft
- Airline company failures**
 Consumer insurance plan for ... *DeLong* 204; *Lund* 204
- Airline industry**
 Government incentives to ... *Oberg* 1391; *Rogers* 1391
- Airport, Edmonton City Centre**
See Edmonton City Centre Airport
- Airport, Edmonton International**
See Edmonton International Airport
- Airport authorities**
 Independence of ... *Oberg* 362
 Rent paid to federal government ... *Danyluk* 362; *Oberg* 362, 1390–91; *Rogers* 1390–91
- Airport Authority, Calgary**
See Calgary Airport Authority

Airport vicinity protection area discussions

See **Edmonton International Airport, Airport vicinity protection area discussions**

Airports—Northern Alberta

Employment opportunities re ... *Cardinal* 1138
Review of fees at, for water bomber fleet ... *Coutts* 937;
Oberle 936

Airports Authority, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Regional Airports Authority**

AISH

See **Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped**

AISI

See **Alberta initiative for school improvement**

Al-Pac

See **Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc.**

Alaska-Alberta Bilateral Council

See **Alberta-Alaska Bilateral Council**

Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge

Drilling in ... *Brown* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188

Alaska permanent fund

General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 966; *McClellan* 967

Alberta

Statement re ... *Cao* 857; *Speaker, The* 1617

Alberta—Economic conditions

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1141

Alberta—Economic policy

[See also **Budget Address**]

20-year strategic plan ... *Dunford* 1007; *Hancock* 20, 48, 859, 868–69, 1571; *Johnson* 1673; *Klein* 1099; *Knight* 901; *McClellan* 747; *Zwozdesky* 1260
General remarks ... *Speech from the Throne* 8–10

Alberta—Foreign policy

Development of ... *Pannu* 415; *Stelmach* 415

Alberta—History

General remarks ... *Her Majesty* 1617–18; *Speech from the Throne* 8

Alberta 75th anniversary celebrations

Legacy of ... *Blakeman* 1477; *Chase* 1481; *Eggen* 1478

Alberta 2005 resource rebates

See **Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)**

Alberta Act (Federal government)

Amendment of, re municipal government authority ... *Taft* 1321

Alberta Adult Health Benefit (Human Resources program)

General remarks ... *Backs* 278; *Cardinal* 278, 1129

Alberta Advantage

Letter re (SP493/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1579

Alberta Advisory Council on Electricity

Electricity exports recommendation ... *Eggen* 1306; *Melchin* 1306

Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council

Annual report, 2002–03 (SP665/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1789; *Horner* 1789

Alberta agricultural research and innovation strategic framework

See **Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework**

Alberta Agricultural Research Institute

Annual reports ... *Elsalhy* 1370
General remarks ... *Eggen* 1373

Alberta Aids to Daily Living

Breast prosthesis inclusion under: Petition tabled re (SP306/05) ... *Speaker, The* 699; *VanderBurg* 699

Alberta Aids to Daily Living (Continued)

General remarks ... *Fritz* 877, 878, 879, 887, 890
Hearing aid coverage for seniors ... *Fritz* 163
Jurisdiction re long-term care residents' treatment ... *Evans* 613
Staff assistance under ... *Hinman* 888

Alberta-Alaska Bilateral Council

Alberta membership in ... *Calahasen* 836

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission

Addictions treatment programs, funding for ... *Evans* 1458
Annual report, 2003–04 (SP173/05: Tabled) ... *Rodney* 326
Annual report, 2004–05 (SP649/05: Tabled) ... *Rodney* 1788
Chimo Healing Home (youth addictions treatment program) ... *Forsyth* 23
Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder program ... *Evans* 271
Funding ... *Evans* 1458
Gambling addiction programs ... *Chase* 1284; *Graydon* 487, 1281; *Pannu* 1285, 1286; *Rodney* 1787
Gambling research ... *Graydon* 1286
Henwood facility, replacement of ... *Oberg* 1800
Leased facilities costs ... *Oberg* 1800
Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 1286; *Pannu* 1285
Smoking prevention programs ... *Rodney* 1577, 1787
Statement re ... *Rodney* 1787
Youth gambling addiction survey ... *Evans* 741
Youth substance abuse treatment programs ... *Evans* 23, 267, 1669, 1670, 2048; *Flaherty* 266–67; *Forsyth* 799; *Mather* 799; *Rodney* 804, 1787
Youth substance abuse treatment programs, letter re (SP607/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1716–17

Alberta Alliance Party

Caucus research and secretarial funding request ... *Hinman* 262
Member of, participation in Question Period ... *Blakeman* 54; *Hancock* 56, 57; *Hinman* 55–56; *Speaker, The* 16, 90
Payment of senators-in-waiting speaking tour costs ... *Eggen* 695; *Ouellette* 695

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board

Annual report, 2003–04 (SP292/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 623; *Hancock* 623
Annual report, 2004–05 (SP733/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1920; *Hancock* 1920
Ratio of journeymen to apprentices ... *Cardinal* 1138; *Martin* 1136
Ratio of journeymen to apprentices, review of ... *Hancock* 980

Alberta Association for Community Living

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 311

Alberta Association of Architects

Annual report, 2004 (SP447/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508

Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 574

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)

First reading ... *Johnson* 1631
Second reading ... *Abbott* 1643–44; *Agnihotri* 1643; *Blakeman* 1640–42; *Cao* 1646–47; *Eggen* 1645–46; *Elsalhy* 1644–45; *Johnson* 1639–40; *Miller, R.* 1643, 1645; *Pastoor* 1647; *Shariff* 1642–43

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)*(Continued)*

Committee ... *Chase* 2001, 2003–05; *Elsalhy* 1905–06; *Flaherty* 2001; *Hinman* 2001–05; *Johnson* 1905, 2001–05; *Miller, R.* 2001; *Pastoor* 2002–04; *Stevens* 2003–04; *Swann* 2002–04

Third reading ... *Chase* 2026; *Hinman* 2026; *Johnson* 2025–26; *Swann* 2026

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057
Amendment A1 (SP716 & 767/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1906; *Chair* 2001; *Elsalhy* 1906; *Haley* 2005

Amendment A2 (SP768/05: Tabled) ... *Haley* 2005; *Swann* 2002

Amendment A3 (SP769/05: Tabled) ... *Haley* 2005; *Swann* 2003

Amendment A4 (SP770/05: Tabled) ... *Haley* 2005; *Pastoor* 2004

Amendment A5 (SP771/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 2005; *Elsalhy* 2005; *Haley* 2005

Supercedes similar Bill 207 ... *Speaker, The* 1789

Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act (Bill 207)

First reading ... *Johnson* 984

Not proceeded with (withdrawn from Order Paper) ... *Speaker, The* 1789

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties

Federal gasoline tax revenue discussions ... *Oberg* 852

Municipal excellence program *See* **Municipal excellence program**

Municipal Government Act review discussions ... *Martin* 1325

Police funding discussions with provincial government ... *Cenaiko* 1250, 1432

Representation on Rural Development Strategy Task Force ... *Horner* 1221

Alberta Association of Police Governance

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 574

Alberta Association of Registered Nurses

Annual report, 2003–04 (SP609/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717

General remarks ... *Evans* 271

Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists

Annual report, 2004–05 (SP763/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1971; *Evans* 1971

Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres

Core services for survivors ... *Blakeman* 1060

Funding for ... *Forsyth* 1062

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1438

Alberta Automobile Insurance Board

[*See also under new name Automobile Insurance Rate Board*]

Annual report, 2003 (SP69/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94

Alberta Beef Producers

Check-off fees ... *Hinman* 1218; *Horner* 1220

General remarks ... *Horner* 290, 299, 300, 949, 1210, 1215, 1498

Alberta Blue Cross Benefits Corporation

Change in tax-exempt status: Legislation re (Bill 26) ... *McClellan* 210

Alberta Blue Cross Plan

Drug coverage ... *Stelmach* 1189

Nongroup benefits, provincial funding for ... *Blakeman* 1464; *Evans* 1458, 1465

Seniors' drug benefits ... *Evans* 1458; *Fritz* 164, 877, 887

Alberta Boilers Safety Association

Annual report, 2004 (SP642/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Renner* 1746

Alberta/British Columbia accord

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836

Alberta/British Columbia joint cabinet meeting, March 2005

B.C. ports strategy discussion at ... *Dunford* 319; *Knight* 319

Mountain pine bark beetle infestation discussions ... *Coutts* 740

Alberta/British Columbia relations

General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1180, 1183

Alberta Building Trades Council

Reaction to division 8 designation for oil sands projects construction ... *Mason* 209

Alberta/Canada infrastructure program

See **Infrastructure Canada/Alberta Program**

Alberta Cancer Board

Annual report, 2003–04 (SP142/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 252

Annual report, 2004–05 (SP626/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717

Funding ... *Evans* 271, 1458

Funding increase for ... *Blakeman* 1028; *Evans* 1028; *McClellan* 748

Locating of facility at new south Calgary hospital ... *Evans* 274

Alberta Capital Finance Authority

Annual report, 2004 (SP67/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94

Loan interest rate ... *Hinman* 900; *McClellan* 900

Alberta Career Computer Center Inc.

Letter to ND member from solicitors for (SP509/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1608

Alberta centennial celebrations

See **2005 Alberta centennial celebrations**

Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan

Children born before 2005 exclusion from ... *Hancock* 47–48; *Herard* 47–48

General remarks ... *Hancock* 277, 278, 859; *Mar* 1473

Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 54)

First reading ... *Hancock* 1890

Second reading ... *Hancock* 1950, 1952; *Miller, R.* 1950–51; *Pannu* 1951–52

Committee ... *Taylor* 1979

Third reading ... *Hancock* 2028; *Pannu* 2029; *Taylor* 2029

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)

First reading ... *Mar* 51

Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 238–39; *Flaherty* 239; *Mar* 238, 240; *Pannu* 239–40

Committee ... *Eggen* 354; *Mar* 354; *Miller, R.* 354

Third reading ... *Agnihotri* 439; *Hinman* 439; *Mar* 439; *Pannu* 439

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 465

Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)

First reading ... *Mar* 1919

Second reading ... *Eggen* 1973; *Hancock* 1973; *Mar* 1973–74; *Taylor* 1973

Committee ... *Blakeman* 1976; *Mar* 1976–77; *Martin* 1977

- Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)** (*Continued*)
 Third reading ... *Chase* 2032; *Mar* 2032
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2058
- Alberta centennial medallions**
See Centennial medallions
- Alberta Centennial Multicultural Gala Night, Calgary**
 Statement re ... *Chase* 775
- Alberta centennial salute for sport and recreation**
 Statement re ... *Abbott* 2054
- Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program**
 [See also **Scholarships**]
 Nation-wide program ... *Ady* 1738; *Hancock* 1738;
Hinman 1805
- Alberta Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)**
 Funding for ... *Mar* 1473
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 305; *Pannu* 305
 Statement re ... *Tarchuk* 1888
- Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research**
 Funding ... *Forsyth* 1052
- Alberta child health benefits program**
See Child health benefits program
- Alberta Children and Youth Initiative**
 General remarks ... *Backs* 279–80
 Sexual exploitation initiative ... *Cenaiko* 1433
- Alberta Children's Hospital**
 Former hospital: Renovations to ... *Evans* 1839
 New hospital ... *Chase* 1467–68
 New hospital: Funding for ... *Evans* 1458; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg* 1086
 New hospital: Opening of ... *Oberg* 1309
 New hospital: Road access ... *Chase* 364; *Oberg* 364
 New hospital: Road access, letters re (SP127-128, 150, 182-184, 240, 300-301/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 210, 253, 327, 463, 653
- Alberta Cities Transportation Partnership program**
 General remarks ... *Oberg* 1085
- Alberta College of Art and Design**
 2005 convocation ceremony program (SP491/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1579
 Downtown campus site ... *Hancock* 796–97
 Infrastructure needs ... *Chase* 796; *Hancock* 796
- Alberta College of Denturists**
See College of Alberta Denturists
- Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists**
 Annual report, 2003 (SP96/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004 (SP764/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1971; *Evans* 1971
- Alberta College of Optometrists**
 Annual report, 2003 (SP95/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004 (SP615/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
- Alberta College of Pharmacists**
 Annual report, 2003 (SP94/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP612/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Standards for pharmacy services: Legislation re (Bill 38) ... *Ady* 491
- Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons**
See College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
- Alberta College of Social Workers**
 Annual report, 2003 (SP216/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 370; *Evans* 370
 Annual report, 2004 (SP688/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1838; *Evans* 1838
- Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists**
 Annual report, 2003 (SP97/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004 (SP614/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
- Alberta Commission on Energy Efficiency Act (Bill 211)**
 First reading ... *Eggen* 1890–91
- Alberta Connects (Government information initiative)**
 [See also **Government information, Access to**]
 General remarks ... *Klein* 1101
- Alberta Conservation Association**
 Funding for, from fishing licences ... *Coutts* 855; *Jablonski* 855
- Alberta Construction Association**
 Labour supply survey ... *Martin* 1137
- Alberta Corporate Service Centre**
 General remarks ... *Ouellette* 752, 755, 756, 757, 758, 761, 763
 Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ... *Elsalhy* 619; *MacDonald* 760; *Ouellette* 619, 761
 Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... *Elsalhy* 1417; *Lund* 1418, 1420; *Ouellette* 244, 751
- Alberta Council of Women's Shelters**
 Shelter statistics ... *Blakeman* 1061; *Mather* 1055
- Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer**
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 1796
 Mount Royal College issue ... *Hancock* 864; *Taylor* 862
- Alberta Criminal Intelligence Service**
See Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta
- Alberta Dental Assistants Association**
 Annual report, 2003 and 2004 (SP761-762/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1971; *Evans* 1971
- Alberta Dental Association and College**
 Annual report, 2004 (SP211 & 683/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1838; *Evans* 370, 1838
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 951
 Radiation health and safety program annual report, 2003 (SP452/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508
 Radiation health and safety program annual report, 2004 (SP658/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1789; *Clerk, The* 1789
- Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association**
 Annual report, 2003 (SP213/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 370; *Evans* 370
 Annual report, 2004 (SP611/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
- Alberta Disability Strategy**
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 880–81
- Alberta Disaster Services**
See Emergency Management Alberta
- Alberta Drug Strategy**
 General remarks ... *Rodney* 1787
- Alberta Economic Development Authority**
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP280 & 485/05: Tabled) ... *Dunford* 622, 1578
 Report on mega projects *See Mega Project Excellence: Preparing for Alberta's Legacy, An Action Plan (Report)*

Alberta Electric System Operator

- Electric power lines, 10-year plan re ... *Melchin* 1831
- Electricity price manipulation scheme concerns ...
Melchin 360, 796, 899; *Taft* 360, 796, 899
- Electricity supply study ... *MacDonald* 911–12
- Markets & Strategic Initiatives report (SP191/05:
Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 327

Alberta electronic health record

See **Medical records, Electronic**

Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association

- Annual report, 2004-05 (SP643/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Renner* 1746

Alberta Endangered Species Conservation Committee

See **Endangered Species Conservation Committee**

Alberta Energy and Utilities Board

- Canadian Natural Resources pipeline leak ... *Boutilier* 1448; *Melchin* 1447–48; *Swann* 1447–48
- Coal-bed methane extraction impact ... *Melchin* 1201–02; *Swann* 1201
- Coal bed methane well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 664; *Melchin* 664; *Zwozdesky* 664
- Coal bed methane well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 664; *Melchin* 664; *Zwozdesky* 664
- Coal-bed methane well drilling requirements ... *Bonko* 1075; *Horner* 1075
- Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... *Bonko* 843, 951; *Boutilier* 615, 902–03; *Calahasen* 1503; *Eggen* 902–03; *Melchin* 615, 643, 802, 951; *Stevens* 486; *Swann* 615, 643, 802; *Tougas* 838, 1502–03
- Edmonton/Calgary transmission line upgrade application, approval of ... *Lindsay* 903–04; *Melchin* 904, 1447
- Electricity price overcharging advisory ... *MacDonald* 949; *Melchin* 949
- Electricity prices monitoring ... *Lund* 1420; *Melchin* 1913
- Electricity transmission projects applications ... *Melchin* 649, 1447, 1831
- Emergency response plan update for upstream oil industry incidents ... *Renner* 207
- Enforcement policy changes ... *Eggen* 575, 1033; *Melchin* 575
- Enforcement policy changes: EUB bulletin re (SP275/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 579
- Enforcement policy changes: News release re (SP274/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 579
- Engage Energy electricity overcharging: Decision re (SP129/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 211
- Funding for ... *Chase* 1048; *Melchin* 910
- Gas well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M10/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 665–66; *Melchin* 666; *Zwozdesky* 666
- Gas well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M9/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 665; *Melchin* 665; *Zwozdesky* 665
- Grid West membership (SP382/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1154
- Guide 56, well licence application ... *Bonko* 951

Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (Continued)

- Guide 56, well licence application (SP352/05: Tabled) ... *Bonko* 957
- Informational letter IL2001-5 (well site preparation prior to licence issuing) ... *Bonko* 951
- Informational letter IL2001-5 (well site preparation prior to licence issuing) (SP351/05: Tabled) ... *Bonko* 957
- Kidzone website ... *Eggen* 915
- Oil/gas sites reclamation costs, prevention of disclosure re, under FOIP law ... *Melchin* 1519; *Swann* 1519
- Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by Shell chemical plant ... *Boutilier* 162; *Renner* 207
- Role of ... *Boutilier* 1049; *Chase* 1048
- Sour gas recommendations ... *Melchin* 741–42, 910, 1828; *Swann* 1828
- Sour gas well hearings (Compton Petroleum), Calgary area ... *Melchin* 1391, 1828; *Swann* 1391, 1828
- Sour gas well leak, Innisfail area, reported to ... *Melchin* 1741–42, 1828; *Swann* 1741, 1828
- Staff ... *Melchin* 913
- Standards for reclamation of abandoned well sites ... *Boutilier* 166
- TransAlta hydropower pricing strategy ... *MacDonald* 363, 488; *Melchin* 363–64, 488
- TransAlta power pricing activities ... *MacDonald* 455; *Melchin* 455
- Utilities Consumer Advocate's presentations to ... *Lund* 1416

Alberta Energy Research Institute

- Annual reports ... *Elsalhy* 1370
- EnergyINet initiative ... *Doerksen* 292, 1369
- General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1887; *Eggen* 1373
- Public/private research arrangements ... *Eggen* 1373

Alberta Environmental Protection Commission

See **Environmental Protection Commission**

Alberta family employment tax credit

- Improvement of ... *Klein* 768; *McClellan* 749
- Improvement of: Legislation re (Bill 40) ... *McClellan* 1034

Alberta Federation of Labour

- News release re LRB involvement in drafting collective bargaining legislation (SP781/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 2017
- Workplace fatalities, report and factsheet re (SP412-413/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1315

Alberta Federation of Police Associations

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 574

Alberta Film Commission Advisory Council

- General remarks ... *Dunford* 322; *Haley* 322

Alberta film development grant program

See **Film development grant program**

Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office

- Budget reduction ... *Agnihotri* 1327

Alberta Fish and Game Association

- Provincial consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ... *Calahasen* 43; *Tougas* 43

Alberta Forestry Research Institute

- Annual reports ... *Elsalhy* 1370

Alberta Foster Parent Association

- General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1056

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

- Funding ... *Agnihotri* 692, 1474, 1475; *Eggen* 1478; *Mar* 692, 1783; *McClellan* 1479
- Review of Visual Arts Alberta Association ... *Agnihotri* 1571; *Mar* 1571

Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board

General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1425; *Mitzel* 373

Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP144/05: Tabled) ... *Graydon* 252

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP669/05: Tabled) ... *Graydon* 1837

Board members, selection process re ... *Graydon* 1283; *Swann* 1283

Casino application process ... *Graydon* 1281, 1712

Disciplinary board hearings in camera ... *Graydon* 1288; *Tougas* 1287–88

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1277, 1283

Inspections for liquor licence violations ... *Graydon* 1029; *Rodney* 1029

Alberta Gaming Research Council

Board members, selection process re ... *Graydon* 1283; *Swann* 1283

Funding for ... *Pannu* 1288

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1277, 1278

Alberta Gaming Research Institute

Funding for ... *Graydon* 487, 534, 1278, 1288; *Pannu* 1288; *Tougas* 487, 534, 1288

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1277

Research done by ... *Graydon* 1286

Research done by, interference in ... *Graydon* 487, 534; *Tougas* 487, 534

Study on compulsive gambling revenue ... *Graydon* 487; *Tougas* 487, 1888

Alberta Government Offices

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP281/05: Tabled) ... *Dunford* 622

Beijing office ... *Dunford* 1016; *Eggen* 1014

China office ... *Chase* 1185; *Stelmach* 1185

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007, 1008; *Eggen* 1014

India office ... *Chase* 1185

Japan office ... *Chase* 1185; *Stelmach* 1185

Korea office website ... *Dunford* 1016; *Eggen* 1014

Ottawa office ... *Chase* 1185; *Horner* 1211; *Stelmach* 1185

Shanghai office proposal ... *Dunford* 1016; *Eggen* 1014

Washington, D.C. office ... *Bonko* 1187, 1189; *Chase* 1185; *Dunford* 1016; *Eggen* 1014; *Shariff* 289; *Stelmach* 289, 1180, 1184, 1185–86, 1189, 1621; *Taft* 1621

Washington, D.C. office: Accommodation costs of head of (Q6/05: Response tabled as SP540/05) ... *MacDonald* 659; *McClellan* 1674; *Pastoor* 659; *Stelmach* 659, 1674; *Zwozdesky* 659

Washington, D.C. office: Budget breakdown for (M22/05: Response tabled as SP746/05) ... *Pastoor* 822; *Stelmach* 822, 1970; *Stevens* 822

Washington, D.C. office: Cost-benefit analysis re (M21/05: Response tabled as SP745/05) ... *Pastoor* 822; *Stelmach* 822, 1970; *Stevens* 822

Washington, D.C. office: Costs ... *Pastoor* 269; *Stelmach* 415

Washington, D.C. office: Documents re (M20/05: Response tabled as SP744/05) ... *Bonko* 821; *Chase* 821–22; *Elsalhy* 821–22; *Pastoor* 821; *Stelmach* 821, 1970; *Stevens* 821

Washington, D.C. office: Opening of ... *Pannu* 415; *Stelmach* 415

Alberta Government Offices (Continued)

Washington, D.C. office: Reports from director of (M37/05: Defeated) ... *Martin* 1166; *Mason* 1166; *Stelmach* 1166

Washington, D.C. office: Representative's comments re Alaska wildlife refuge drilling ... *Brown* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188

Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... *Chase* 1187; *Hinman* 739; *Horner* 42–43, 291, 740, 1211; *Klein* 739; *MacDonald* 1208; *Martin* 1166; *Mason* 42, 1166; *Snelgrove* 20; *Stelmach* 1166, 1187

Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border trade crossing issue ... *Chase* 1186; *Stelmach* 1186

Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving softwood lumber issue ... *Bonko* 929

Washington, D.C. office: Role re energy trade ... *Eggen* 1014

Washington, D.C. office: Salary of head of ... *Eggen* 1183; *Stelmach* 1184

Alberta Grandparents Association

Letter re access to grandchildren (SP198/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 328

Alberta Guide to Sport Fishing Regulations

See **Fishing, Sport, 2005 Alberta Guide to Sport Fishing Regulations (SP110/05: Tabled)**

Alberta Hansard (Publication)

See **Sessional publications (Legislative Assembly)**

Alberta Health Care Insurance Act

Notwithstanding provision addition to ... *Evans* 1665–66; *Taft* 1665

Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan

CT scans coverage ... *Blakeman* 366; *Evans* 366

Midwifery coverage ... *Blakeman* 1146; *Elsalhy* 1313; *Evans* 1146; *Pannu* 1314

Midwifery coverage: Mock invoices re (SP443/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 1507–08

Personal health cards for, security aspects ... *Hinman* 970

Podiatry coverage ... *Blakeman* 1463, 1471; *Evans* 1464–65

Services covered by: Expert advisory panel re See **Expert Advisory Panel to Review Publically Funded Health Services**

Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums

Elimination of ... *Blakeman* 965; *Elsalhy* 966–67; *Hinman* 971; *Klein* 766, 768; *Mason* 768, 968; *McClellan* 967, 969; *Taft* 766

Elimination of: Email re (SP728/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1920

General remarks ... *Klein* 766; *Mason* 968; *McClellan* 766, 968; *Miller, R.* 959–60; *Taft* 766

Increase in ... *Chase* 1466–67

Reducing of ... *Elsalhy* 954; *Ouellette* 954

Seniors' premiums: Elimination of ... *Fritz* 164, 877, 887; *Klein* 766, 768; *Mason* 968; *McClellan* 749, 766, 961, 968

Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP209/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 370; *Evans* 370

Long-term care facilities inspection ... *Fritz* 1201; *Klein* 1334, 1386–87, 1443; *Mason* 1334; *Pastoor* 1443; *Taft* 1386; *VanderBurg* 1395

Long-term care facilities inspection: Letter re (SP419/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1342

Alberta Health Link

See **Health Link Alberta**

Alberta Heart Institute

See **Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute**

Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research

[See also **Endowment funds, Public**]

2005 calendar (SP107/05: Tabled) ... *Zwozdesky* 171

Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Doerksen* 94

Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Doerksen* 1675

Financial highlights and statements, 2003-04 (SP108-109/05: Tabled) ... *Zwozdesky* 171

Funding for ... *Doerksen* 1368, 1375; *Eggen* 1374; *Hancock* 868, 871, 1795; *McClellan* 901, 958-59; *Melchin* 922

Programs and financial highlights, 2004-05, with attached 2006 calendar (SP773/05: Tabled) ... *Doerksen* 2017

Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Act

Amendment of (Bill 37) ... *McClellan* 775; *Zwozdesky* 775

Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and**Engineering Research**

[See also **Endowment funds, Public**]

Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Doerksen* 94

Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Doerksen* 1675

Funding for ... *Eggen* 1374; *Hancock* 868; *Knight* 901; *McClellan* 901, 959

Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and**Engineering Research Act**

Amendment of (Bill 37) ... *McClellan* 775; *Zwozdesky* 775

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

[See also **Endowment funds, Public**]

Annual report, 2004 (SP68/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Liepert* 94

Annual report, 2005 (SP588/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Liepert* 1675

Ethical investments by ... *Blakeman* 82; *Elsalhy* 966; *Klein* 82; *McClellan* 120, 964, 967; *Miller, R.* 120, 962-63

Ethical investments by: Statement re ... *Miller, R.* 294

First- and second-quarter updates, 2004-05 (SP83-84/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94

First-quarter update, 2005-06 (SP589/05: Tabled) ... *Liepert* 1675; *McClellan* 1675

General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 966, 1326; *Hancock* 871; *Martin* 920; *McClellan* 958; *Melchin* 922

Inflation-proofing of ... *McClellan* 901, 958, 962, 967; *Speech from the Throne* 9

Inflation-proofing of: Response to questions re (SP698/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1891

Investment in tobacco companies ... *Blakeman* 82-83; *Elsalhy* 966; *Klein* 82-83; *McClellan* 82-83, 964; *Miller, R.* 294, 963

Investment in tobacco companies: List of (SP35/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 93

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund (Continued)

Investment income from ... *Miller, R.* 963

Second-quarter update, 2005-06 (SP596/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1676

Surplus revenue deposited into (legacy funding) ... *Miller, R.* 960

Third-quarter update, 2004-05 (SP88/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 94

Use to reduce long-term mortgage interest rates ... *Hinman* 971

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing Committee on

See **Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing**

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act

Amendment of (Bill 37) ... *McClellan* 775; *Zwozdesky* 775

Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act

Amendment of (Bill 37) ... *McClellan* 775; *Zwozdesky* 775

Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund

[See also **Endowment funds, Public; Scholarships**]

General remarks ... *Hancock* 860, 864, 868, 869-70, 871, 1738, 1795; *Knight* 901; *McClellan* 901; *Taylor* 261

Inclusion of nation-wide scholarship endowment under ... *Hancock* 1738

Alberta Historical Resources Foundation

Consultation with, re renaming of provincial parks: Letter re (SP185/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 327

Alberta Home and School Association

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 311

Alberta Home Education Association

Conference, Red Deer, minister's attendance at ... *Zwozdesky* 1256

Alberta Housing Act

Management bodies provisions ... *Fritz* 1253

Sale of public land provisions ... *Fritz* 1502, 1519-20

Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission

Complaints procedure ... *Agnihotri* 1474

Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1475; *Mar* 1475

Investigation of complaints re Bishop Henry's remarks ... *Hinman* 572, 1153; *Klein* 572; *Morton* 698

Investigation of inmate rape case ... *Agnihotri* 855; *Mar* 855

Role in provincial same-sex marriage strategy ... *Mar* 317; *Taft* 317

Alberta Informatics Circle of Research Excellence

See **Informatics Circle of Research Excellence**

Alberta Information and Communications Technology Institute

Establishment of: Legislation re (Bill 4) ... *Doerksen* 51, 1369

Alberta Ingenuity Fund

Funding for ... *Doerksen* 1368, 1372, 1375

Funding for clean energy research projects ... *Klein* 1911

Funding for prion research ... *Doerksen* 1368-69, 1372, 1885; *Johnson* 1885

General remarks ... *Eggen* 1373; *Hancock* 868, 871, 1795; *Melchin* 922; *Taylor* 261

Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... *Backs* 346, 513; *Chase* 512; *Doerksen* 347; *Eggen* 347-48;

Alberta Ingenuity Fund (*Continued*)

Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) (*Continued*)
 ... *Elsalhy* 345; *Goudreau* 348; *Horner* 512–13;
Johnson 345–46; *Knight* 344–45; *Snelgrove* 511
 Water research ... *Doerksen* 1373

Alberta initiative for school improvement

General remarks ... *Martin* 1269; *Zwozdesky* 123, 166,
 1260, 1261, 1269

Alberta Insurance Council

Special projects costs ... *Miller, R.* 963

Alberta international marketing strategy

See **International trade, Alberta strategy re**

Alberta Land Surveyors' Association

95th annual general meeting (SP449/05: Tabled) ...
Cardinal 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508
 96th annual general meeting (SP689/05: Tabled) ...
Cardinal 1838; *Clerk, The* 1838

Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board

See **Law Enforcement Review Board**

Alberta Law Foundation

Annual report, 2004 (SP154/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 253; *Stevens* 253
 Annual report, 2005 (SP51/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 1675; *Stevens* 1675
 Financial statements, 2003-04 (SP155/05: Tabled) ...
Clerk, The 253; *Stevens* 253
 Financial statements, 2004-05 (SP592/05: Tabled) ...
Clerk, The 1675; *Stevens* 1675

Alberta Law Reform Institute

Alberta Rules of Court rewrite ... *Stevens* 1230
 Report on administrative tribunals ... *Miller, B.* 1228

The Alberta Legislature (Book)

General remarks ... *Shariff* 1605–06

Alberta Life Sciences Institute

Establishment of ... *Doerksen* 1369; *Eggen* 1374
 Establishment of: Legislation re (Bill 4) ... *Doerksen* 51

Alberta Long Term Care Association

General remarks ... *Fritz* 614, 1388

Alberta Lotteries and Gaming Summit (1998)

General remarks ... *Tougas* 1279

Alberta Lottery Fund

See **Lottery Fund**

Alberta Medical Association

Letter supporting Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act
 (SP204/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 370
 Provincial discussions with, re public/private health
 systems ... *Evans* 1665

Alberta Mental Health Board

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP143/05: Tabled) ... *Evans*
 252
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP616/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,*
The 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Funding ... *Evans* 1458
 Funding for diversion services for mentally ill offenders
 ... *Cenaiko* 1785

Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate

See **Mental Health Patient Advocate**

Alberta Museum, Royal

See **Royal Alberta Museum**

Alberta-North; Northern Alberta Post-Secondary Institution Society

General remarks ... *Hancock* 981

Alberta-Northwest Territories Branch, Royal Canadian Legion

See **Royal Canadian Legion, Alberta-Northwest Territories Branch**

Alberta/Northwest Territories memorandum of understanding for co-operation and development

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836

Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority

General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1372

Alberta One Window initiative (Government information access)

See **Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)**

Alberta Opportunity Company

General remarks ... *Horner* 1210

Alberta Opticians Association

Annual report, 2003 (SP98/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004 (SP610/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 1717; *Evans* 1717

Alberta Order of Excellence

Display of members of, in Jubilee Auditoria ... *Klein*
 1108

General remarks ... *Johnson* 1107; *Klein* 1107–08

Increase in awards per year (Bill 18) ... *Rogers* 128

Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 18)

First reading ... *Rogers* 128

Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 352–53; *Eggen* 353;

Mather 353; *Rogers* 352, 353

Committee ... *Agnihotri* 446; *Chase* 446; *Rogers* 446

Third reading ... *Agnihotri* 638–39; *Rogers* 638

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
 (Outside of House sitting)

Alberta Order of Excellence Council

Budget for ... *Klein* 1099

General remarks ... *Johnson* 1107

Web site for children ... *Klein* 1108

Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc.

Forest management area study ... *Eggen* 1395

Alberta pension plan (Proposed)

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188

Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation

Appeals received by (M34/05: Defeated) ... *McClellan*
 1164; *Miller, R.* 1164; *Zwozdesky* 1164

Microfiche copies of pension cheques, loss of ... *Elsalhy*
 1026; *Klein* 1026; *McClellan* 1026

Alberta Personal Income Tax Act

Amendment to, re resource rebates (Bill 43) ...

McClellan 1630–31

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 20)

First reading ... *Ducharme* 128

Second reading ... *Chase* 437; *Ducharme* 436;

MacDonald 437; *Martin* 437; *Miller, R.* 436, 437

Committee ... *Blakeman* 479; *Ducharme* 478–79

Third reading ... *Chase* 551; *Ducharme* 551; *Martin*
 551; *Miller, R.* 551

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005

(Outside of House sitting)

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40)

First reading ... *McClellan* 1034

Second reading ... *Ducharme* 1244; *Hancock* 1244;
McClellan 1244; *Miller, R.* 1485

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40) (Continued)

Committee ... *McClellan* 1492; *Miller, R.* 1492
 Third reading ... *Ducharme* 1557; *Hancock* 1557;
Mason 1557; *McClellan* 1557; *Miller, B.* 1557;
Miller, R. 1557
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
 (Outside of House sittings)

**Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Agency (Report)
See New Democrat Opposition, The Alberta
Pharmaceutical Savings Agency (Report)
(SP636/05: Tabled)****Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)**

First reading ... *Mason* 984
 Second reading ... *Abbott* 1756–57; *Ady* 1759–60;
Blakeman 1755–56; *Elsalhy* 1757; *Evans* 1755;
Mason 1754–55, 1760–61; *Pannu* 1757–59; *Prins*
 1759; *Strang* 1760
 General remarks ... *Mason* 1842

Alberta Podiatry Association

General remarks ... *Mitzel* 240

Alberta Politics Uncovered (Publication)

Excerpt from (SP395/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1206

Alberta prion research institute

Funding for ... *Doerksen* 1885

Alberta Psychologists, College of

See **College of Alberta Psychologists**

Alberta Racing Corporation

Gaming revenue to ... *MacDonald* 1289

Alberta Registries

General remarks ... *Lund* 1415

Alberta Regulations

Reform of ... *Morton* 1150; *Ouellette* 1150
 Review of ... *Hinman* 762; *Ouellette* 1710
 Review of, staffing for ... *MacDonald* 760; *Ouellette*
 761
 Secretariat to review ... *Ouellette* 1150

Alberta Regulatory Review Secretariat

See **Regulatory Review Secretariat**

Alberta Research Council Inc.

Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and
 Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 93; *Doerksen* 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and
 Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,*
The 1675; *Doerksen* 1675
 Annual report, 2005 (SP778/05: Tabled) ... *Johnson*
 2017
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1369; *Eggen* 1373;
Elsalhy 1370
 Level 3 lab for animal health, joint project re ... *Horner*
 1885
 Manure utilization system, joint project re ... *Horner*
 1389; *Johnson* 1389

**Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act,
2005 (Bill 43)**

First reading ... *McClellan* 1630–31
 Second reading ... *Backs* 1819, 1862–63, 1866, 1867;
Blakeman 1816–18, 1821; *Bonko* 1861–62, 1863;
Cao 1864; *Chase* 1856–58, 1862, 1864, 1866, 1867;
Doerksen 1817; *Dunford* 1858–59; *Eggen* 1820–21;
Elsalhy 1818–20; *Groeneveld* 1867; *Herard* 1863;

**Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act,
2005 (Bill 43) (Continued)**

Second reading (Continued) ... *Hinman* 1818, 1859–60;
Jablonski 1821, 1860; *Knight* 1821–22; *Lindsay*
 1862–63; *MacDonald* 1864–66; *Martin* 1855–56,
 1858; *Mason* 1852–53; *Mather* 1860; *McClellan*
 1700–01, 1867; *Miller, R.* 1701–03, 1820, 1858, 1859,
 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865; *Oberle* 1821; *Ouellette*
 1818–19; *Pastoor* 1866–67; *Swann* 1818; *Zwozdesky*
 1862
 Committee ... *Martin* 1977–78; *Miller, B.* 1977
 Third reading ... *Chase* 2019, 2021; *DeLong* 2021;
Hancock 2019; *McClellan* 2019; *Pannu* 2020;
Swann 2020–21; *Taylor* 2019–20

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Alberta Response Model (Child welfare)

Evaluation of ... *Mather* 1054

Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Association

General remarks ... *Lougheed* 745

**Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Exposition
(ARFEX), Edmonton (2005)**

Statement re ... *Cao* 744–45

Alberta royalty tax credit

Auditor General's comments re ... *Martin* 921; *Melchin*
 921
 General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 917; *Melchin* 918

Alberta Rules of Court

Rewrite of ... *Stevens* 1230

Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)

Centennial funding for ... *Agnihotri* 305, 324, 692,
 1474; *Eggen* 1478; *Mar* 324, 692, 1473, 1783
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1476–77; *Mar* 1476
 Opening performance of ... *Speaker, The* 1151
 Return of artists at, to Alberta ... *Eggen* 1478; *Mar*
 1476, 1479
 Statement re ... *DeLong* 1257–58

Alberta School Boards Association

Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ...
Bonko 1267; *Lukaszuk* 1147–48; *Martin* 1270;
Zwozdesky 204, 1147–48, 1268, 1274
 Edwin Parr awards, statement re ... *Ady* 1786
 Grade level achievement (GLA) discussions with
 province ... *Zwozdesky* 1783
 Input into provincial renewed funding framework ...
Zwozdesky 1261
 Pension fund liability discussions ... *Abbott* 1712;
Zwozdesky 1712

Alberta School Foundation Fund

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1260

Alberta school of veterinary medicine

See **Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)**

Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority

Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and
 Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 94; *Doerksen* 94
 Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and
 Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,*
The 1675
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1368, 1369, 1373, 1377;
Eggen 1373

Alberta Science and Research Authority

See **Alberta Science, Research and Technology
 Authority**

Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act 2005 (Bill 4)

First reading ... *Doerksen* 51
 Second reading ... *Doerksen* 194–95; *Elsalhy* 195
 Committee ... *Backs* 450; *Doerksen* 449–50
 Third reading ... *Doerksen* 638; *Elsalhy* 638; *Pannu* 638
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
 (Outside of House sitting)
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1369; *Eggen* 1374;
Elsalhy 1370

Alberta Securities Commission

Annual report, 2005 (SP560/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *McClellan* 1675
 Board of, suspension ... *McClellan* 1072; *Taft* 1072
 Chairman, Opposition Leaders comments re, law firm letter re (SP721/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1919
 Chairman/commissioners of, MLA participation in nominating candidates ... *McClellan* 1568, 1597; *Taft* 1568, 1597
 Chairman's ties with former employer ... *McClellan* 1736–37, 1961; *Taft* 1736–37, 1961
 Commissioners of, dismissal ... *Hancock* 1250; *Martin* 1250
 Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading ... *Mason* 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80, 1828, 1882, 1910–11; *McClellan* 1665, 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80, 1828, 1882, 1911; *Taft* 1665
 Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading: Action taken re ... *Klein* 2047; *McClellan* 2047; *Taft* 2047
 Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading: Auditor General's info. re ... *McClellan* 2047; *Taft* 2047
 Executive director's tenure ... *McClellan* 1665; *Taft* 1665
 Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton) ... *Martin* 1148; *Mason* 1598; *McClellan* 974, 1144, 1599; *Taft* 974, 1144
 Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton): Letter re (SP359/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 984
 Human resource issues in ... *McClellan* 528, 570–71, 690, 948, 975, 1024, 1072, 1144, 1520–21; *Miller, R.* 528, 1520; *Taft* 570–71, 975
 Influencing regulatory activity case ... *Elsalhy* 2011; *Klein* 612; *Martin* 487–88; *Mason* 969; *McClellan* 410–11, 453, 487–88, 528, 570–71, 612, 690, 974–75, 1024, 1073, 1119, 1144, 1520–21, 1597, 1880–81; *Melchin* 772; *Miller, R.* 772, 1520; *Taft* 410, 453, 528, 570–71, 612, 690, 974–75, 1024, 1073, 1118–19, 1144, 1597, 1880–81
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Finance minister re ... *McClellan* 410, 487
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Finance minister re (SP221/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 419
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Finance minister re, response to (SP220/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 419
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Diane Urquhart re ... *McClellan* 419, 690; *Taft* 690
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's authority challenged re, emergency debate re ... *Hancock* 1316–17; *MacDonald* 1318; *Martin* 1317–18; *Speaker, The* 1318–19; *Taft* 1315–16; *Zwozdesky* 1318

Alberta Securities Commission (Continued)

Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... *Hancock* 1197, 1250–51, 1304–05; *Klein* 1333; *Martin* 1148–49, 1197, 1250; *Mason* 969; *McClellan* 898–99, 1148–49, 1332–33; *Melchin* 1197; *Taft* 898–99, 1304–05, 1332–33
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, appropriateness of ... *McClellan* 947–48; *Taft* 947–48
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, letter re (SP349/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 908
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, letter to Legislative Offices committee re (SP434/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1452
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, restrictions on ... *Martin* 1148; *McClellan* 1119, 1144; *Taft* 1118–19, 1144
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on (2005) ... *Mason* 1708, 1737–38; *McClellan* 1664–65, 1707–08, 1737–38, 1880–81, 1909, 1911; *Taft* 1664–65, 1880–81, 1909
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on (2005) (SP520/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 1632
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on investigation of, release to media, point of privilege re ... *Blakeman* 1633–35; *Mason* 1635, 1636; *Speaker, The* 1635, 1636, 1637–38, 1719–20; *Stevens* 1635–36, 1637
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Chief Internal Auditor's office investigation of ... *McClellan* 1024; *Taft* 1024
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Chronology of events re ... *Mason* 1780, 1882, 1911; *McClellan* 1737–38, 1780, 1880–81, 1882, 1911; *Taft* 1880
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Chronology of events re, letter re (SP699/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1891
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Emergency debate under SO 30 re ... *Blakeman* 1084; *Hancock* 1084; *Martin* 1083–84; *McClellan* 1082–83; *Speaker, The* 1084–85; *Taft* 1082
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Forensic audit re ... *McClellan* 975, 1144; *Taft* 975, 1144
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's/chief of staff involvement ... *McClellan* 2047; *Taft* 2047
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement ... *Klein* 2046; *McClellan* 2046–47; *Taft* 2046–47
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement: Court documents re (SP812/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 2055; *Taft* 2055
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... *Blakeman* 986; *Martin* 532, 987; *Mason* 1910–11; *McClellan* 532–33, 690, 947–48, 1144, 1911; *Melchin* 772; *Miller, R.* 772; *Taft* 690, 947–48, 1144
 Influencing regulatory activity case: Ministerial involvement ... *Klein* 1961; *McClellan* 1880–81, 1910, 1961, 2047; *Taft* 1880–81, 1909–10, 1961, 2047

Alberta Securities Commission *(Continued)*

Influencing regulatory activity case:
 Ministerial/MLA/senior officials' involvement, legislation re ... *McClellan* 2047; *Taft* 2047

Influencing regulatory activity case: Report on ...
Hancock 1305; *Martin* 488, 532; *McClellan* 410–11, 453, 487–88, 528, 532–33, 690, 898, 948, 1072, 1073, 1119, 1597; *Taft* 410, 528, 898, 1305

Influencing regulatory activity case: Retention of files re ...
McClellan 1333; *Taft* 1332

Interim chairman ... *Hancock* 1250, 1304; *Klein* 1333; *McClellan* 1333, 1961; *Taft* 1333, 1961

KPMG hired for forensic audit of employee e-mails ...
Martin 1148; *Mason* 969; *McClellan* 948, 969, 975; *Taft* 948, 975

Land Development Company case, decision re (SP790/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 2017

Land Development Company case, notice of hearing re (SP791/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 2017

Land interests included in securities, news release re (SP792/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 2017

Land sales (undivided interests), staff notice re (SP789/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 2017

Letter from staff at, to Minister of Finance ... *McClellan* 1072; *Taft* 1072

Members of, appointment process ... *McClellan* 453, 1880; *Taft* 453, 1880

New chairman of, search committee for ... *McClellan* 453, 1568; *Taft* 453, 1568

Operations of, memo to William Code re (SP811/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 2055; *Taft* 2055

RCMP investigation of chairman/exec. director's e-mails ...
McClellan 948; *Taft* 948

Securities violations, review of investigation into ...
McClellan 453; *Taft* 453

Staffing ... *McClellan* 959

Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus ...
Klein 2008; *McClellan* 2008; *Taft* 2007–08

Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus: Decision re (SP794/05: Tabled) ...
Miller, R. 2017

Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus: Letter from Land Development Company re (SP796/05: Tabled) ...
Miller, R. 2017

Zi Corporation equity purchase by Lancer funds, investigation of ...
McClellan 1909; *Taft* 1909

Zi Corporation (formerly Multi-Corp) investigation ...
McClellan 1827, 1881; *Taft* 1827, 1881, 2008

Zi Corporation (formerly Multi-Corp) investigation: Letter re (SP722/05: Tabled) ...
Blakeman 1919; *Taft* 1919

Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association

General remarks ... *Fritz* 614, 1388, 1886, 2009

Alberta seniors benefit program

Benefits comparison, before and after July 1, 2004 changes (M46/05: Accepted) ...
Fritz 1748; *Pastoor* 1748–49

Booklet re, complexity of ...
Fritz 889; *Hinman* 888

Dental benefits ...
Agnihotri 260; *Blakeman* 881; *Fritz* 877–78, 882–83, 884, 951–52; *Mather* 884; *McClellan* 748; *Mitzel* 951; *Prins* 884; *Speech from the Throne* 10; *Taylor* 882

Alberta seniors benefit program *(Continued)*

Dental benefits: Enhancement of ...
Fritz 163–64, 282; *Lukaszuk* 163; *Pannu* 259; *Pastoor* 282

Dental benefits: Letter re (SP757/05: Tabled) ...
Pastoor 1971

Dental benefits: Letter re (SP818/05: Tabled) ...
Martin 2056

Evaluation criteria for ...
Fritz 1387–88; *Pastoor* 1387–88

Federal seniors' benefits relation to ...
Fritz 1387

Forms re, filling out of ...
Ady 889; *Fritz* 889

General remarks ...
Fritz 877, 884; *MacDonald* 255; *Pastoor* 879; *Prins* 884

Income testing of ...
Fritz 164, 1387

Optical benefits ...
Agnihotri 260; *Blakeman* 881; *Fritz* 877–78, 882; *Martin* 886; *McClellan* 748; *Pannu* 259; *Speech from the Throne* 10

Optical benefits: Enhancement of ...
Fritz 282; *Pastoor* 282

Replaces widows' pension ...
Abbott 1966; *Cardinal* 1966

Special-needs assistance component **See Low-income seniors, Special-needs assistance**

Alberta Social Housing Corporation

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray ...
Fritz 87, 1502, 1519–20; *Klein* 201, 485, 528; *Martin* 1502; *Mason* 1519–20, 1598, 1828; *McClellan* 527, 1598, 1828

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Alleged role of Minister of Environment in, Ethics commissioner's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ...
Mason 1636–37; *Speaker, The* 1637–38; *Stevens* 1637

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Alleged role of Minister of Environment in, Ethics commissioner's report on (SP532/05: Tabled) ...
Speaker, The 1632

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Appraisal process re ...
Fritz 1519–20, 1568–70; *Mason* 1569; *Pastoor* 1568–69

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on ...
Fritz 1741; *Mason* 1741; *McClellan* 1741, 1828

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on leaked to media, AG's news release re (SP523/05: Tabled) ...
Martin 1632

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ...
Mason 1636–37; *Speaker, The* 1637–38, 1719–20; *Stevens* 1637

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on (SP519/05: Tabled) ...
Tarchuk 1632

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: *Edmonton Journal* articles re (SP521–522/05: Tabled) ...
Martin 1632

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Land titles certificate re (SP446 & 507/05: Tabled) ...
Eggen 1608; *Martin* 1508, 1608

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Role of Minister of Environment in ...
Fritz 1570; *Mason* 1570

Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Tabling of copy of agreement re ...
Fritz 1520, 1569–70; *Mason* 1520, 1569; *Pastoor* 1569

Alberta Softwood Lumber Trade Council

General remarks ...
Coutts 21, 89

Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation

Centennial salute for sport and recreation award ...

Abbott 2054

General remarks ... *Mar* 1150; *Tougas* 1288

Alberta Sport Plan

See Sports, Plan for

Alberta Strategic Tourism Marketing Council

See Strategic Tourism Marketing Council

Alberta Summit on Justice (1999)

General remarks ... *Pannu* 267; *Stevens* 1229

MLA committee re ... *Pannu* 267–68

Alberta SuperNet

Completion date ... *Elsalhy* 88; *Martin* 756, 757;

Ouellette 88, 757

Court services provision via ... *Stevens* 1225

Distance education delivery via ... *Hancock* 1883;

Lukaszuk 1505

General remarks ... *MacDonald* 255; *Miller, R.* 257;

Oberg 289; *Ouellette* 244, 289, 752–53, 753, 755,

757, 758, 762, 1149; *Pastoor* 289; *Speech from the*

Throne 8; *Taft* 244; *Taylor* 757–58; *Webber* 1149

Health services delivery via ... *Danyluk* 853–54; *Evans*

854; *Ouellette* 854

Hookup fees ... *Elsalhy* 320; *Ouellette* 320; *Webber*

740; *Zwozdesky* 740

Justice dept. applications via ... *Stevens* 1226, 1229

Library access to ... *Danyluk* 843; *Mar* 1472

Monitoring of contracts re ... *Blakeman* 754; *Ouellette*

755

Municipal government offices' connection to ... *Hinman*

761–62

Rural homes access to ... *Danyluk* 843; *Hinman* 841

School access to ... *Blakeman* 760; *Chase* 756;

Danyluk 843; *MacDonald* 759–60; *Oberg* 1095;

Ouellette 756, 758, 760–61; *Webber* 740; *Zwozdesky*

740, 1260, 1262, 1274, 1723

School access to: Statement re ... *DeLong* 2015

School access to: Total amount spent on (Q35/05):

Response tabled as SP717/05) ... *Bonko* 1746;

Flaherty 1746; *Zwozdesky* 1746, 1919

Security features ... *Ouellette* 755

Telus bid on ... *Elsalhy* 320; *Ouellette* 320

Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government

Efficiency ... *Doerksen* 461; *Eggen* 1373; *Elsalhy*

461, 1370; *Klein* 1109; *MacDonald* 255, 759; *Martin*

756; *Mason* 1108

Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government

Efficiency: Documentation re (M29/05: Response

tabled as SP515/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1608; *Elsalhy*

1160; *Ouellette* 1160, 1608

Video conferencing capabilities ... *Ouellette* 757, 1337;

Zwozdesky 1723

Voice over Internet capabilities ... *Ouellette* 757

Webcast of health symposium over ... *DeLong* 1336;

Ouellette 1337

Webcasting capabilities ... *Ouellette* 1337

Alberta Sustainability Fund

Eligibility of softwood lumber dispute situation for ...

McClellan 644; *Strang* 644

General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 966; *McClellan* 747;

Melchin 922

Transfers to education endowment funds ... *Knight* 901;

McClellan 901

Alberta Sustainability Fund (Continued)

Use for CAIS program funding ... *MacDonald* 1850

Use for forest fire control costs ... *Coutts* 930, 934

Alberta Teachers' Association

Annual report, 2003 (SP172/05: Tabled) ... *Zwozdesky* 326

Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ...

Hinman 1273; *Zwozdesky* 204, 1147–48, 1268, 1274

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 311

Grade level achievement (GLA) discussions with

province ... *Zwozdesky* 1783

Inclusion of principals in ... *Martin* 1270; *Zwozdesky*

1266

Pension fund liability discussions ... *Abbott* 1712;

Zwozdesky 1712

Alberta Teachers' Pension Plan

See Teachers' Pension Plan

Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (Administrator)

See Teachers' Pension Plan

Alberta technology venture fund (Proposed)

See Technology venture fund (Proposed)

Alberta Transportation Safety Board

Appeals to, time limit on: Legislation re (Bill 13) ...

Oberg 93

Funding for ... *Oberg* 1085

Operational changes to, including appeals: Legislation re

(Bill 39) ... *Magnus* 746

Alberta Treasury Branch Financial

Annual report, 2004 (SP78/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*

94; *McClellan* 94

Annual report, 2005 (SP561/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*

1675; *McClellan* 1675

Subsidiary companies' control processes, Auditor

General's recommendation re (Q36/05: Response

tabled as SP648/05) ... *Hancock* 1788; *McClellan*

1747, 1788; *Miller, R.* 1746–47; *Zwozdesky* 1747

Alberta Union of Provincial Employees

News release re fish and wildlife officers numbers

(SP406/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1259

Alberta University Students, Council of

See Council of Alberta University Students

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

2004 convention, invitees to (Q38/05: Accepted) ...

Renner 1747; *Taft* 1747; *Taylor* 1747

Ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities

discussions ... *Evans* 17, 483; *Mason* 245

Ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities

discussions: Press release re (SP152/05: Tabled) ...

Mason 253

Chief administrative officer award: Statement re ...

Rogers 2016

Federal gasoline tax revenue discussions ... *Oberg* 852

Municipal excellence program *See Municipal*

excellence program

Municipal Government Act review discussions ...

Elsalhy 1326; *Martin* 1325; *Miller, R.* 1327–28

Police funding discussions with provincial government

... *Cenaiko* 1250, 1432

Alberta Vehicle Theft Committee

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1256; *Miller, B.* 1424

Alberta Venture (Magazine)

Most-respected corporations list: Statement re ... *Rogers*

1450–51

Alberta Veterinary Medical Association

- Consultation with, re changes to Veterinary Profession Act ... *Cardinal* 1627
- Radiation protection program annual report, 2003 (SP451/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508
- Radiation protection program annual report, 2004 (SP659/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1789; *Clerk, The* 1789

Alberta veterinary surveillance network

- General remarks ... *Horner* 1885

Alberta Warriors (Aboriginal street gang)

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1430

Alberta Water Council

- General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1373
- Water conservation planning ... *Boutilier* 530; *Johnson* 1046; *Speech from the Throne* 9

Alberta Wilderness Association

- Big game farming ban, call for ... *Bonko* 250
- Calgary Tower climb ... *Chase* 907
- Letter re industrial activity in Kakwa-Naraway watershed (SP803/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2018
- Letter re industrial activity in Rumsey natural area (SP760/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1971

Alberta Works (Employment training program)

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1139; *Cardinal* 1129
- Learner assistance allowances ... *Backs* 1131; *Blakeman* 1139, 1140

Albertaquits.ca (Web site)

- See **Smoking–Prevention, AADAC program re (Web site)**

Alberta's Commission on Learning

- Aboriginal-specific recommendations ... *Calahasen* 839; *Flaherty* 874; *Zwozdesky* 1261
- Basic education vs extras, definition of ... *Zwozdesky* 1525
- Child progress reporting recommendation ... *Zwozdesky* 1446
- Class size guideline ... *Flaherty* 307; *MacDonald* 311, 369; *McClellan* 748; *Pannu* 308; *Speech from the Throne* 8; *Zwozdesky* 306, 308, 309, 1261, 1262, 1723, 1727, 1730
- Daily physical activity recommendation ... *Ady* 1027–28; *Flaherty* 416; *Zwozdesky* 416, 1028, 1261
- Early childhood funding recommendation ... *Zwozdesky* 1261
- ESL funding recommendation ... *Zwozdesky* 1261
- Feedback on ... *Zwozdesky* 165
- Francophone education funding recommendation ... *Zwozdesky* 1261
- General remarks ... *Chase* 1506
- High school completion rate recommendation ... *Brown* 123; *Zwozdesky* 123
- Kindergarten recommendations ... *Martin* 1269, 1722–23; *Pannu* 1917; *Zwozdesky* 1260, 1271
- Postsecondary system independent review recommendation ... *Hancock* 1254; *Taylor* 1254
- Recommendations ... *Zwozdesky* 1030, 1260–62, 1523, 1723
- School fees/fundraising issue ... *Zwozdesky* 1834
- School funding under Education dept. recommendation ... *Cao* 1914; *Flaherty* 84; *Oberg* 84; *Zwozdesky* 1914

Alberta's Commission on Learning (Continued)

- School transportation funding recommendation ... *Zwozdesky* 1261
- Second-language teaching initiative ... *Goudreau* 1603–04; *Zwozdesky* 1603–04
- Special needs students' programs recommendations ... *Zwozdesky* 1255, 1261
- Teacher bargaining model recommendation ... *Abbott* 1712; *Lukaszuk* 1147; *Martin* 1270; *Zwozdesky* 204, 1147, 1260, 1265, 1268, 1274

Alberta's Environment Conference 2005, Edmonton (April 20–22)

- General remarks ... *Boutilier* 978; *Swann* 978

Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)

- See **Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)**

Alberta's Promise

- General remarks ... *Speech from the Throne* 10
- Partners' report, 2004 (SP590/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Klein* 1675
- Private support re ... *Forsyth* 1052
- Recognition of new members in ... *Liepert* 578
- School nutrition program involvement ... *Zwozdesky* 1740

Alberta's Role in Confederation, MLA Committee on Strengthening

- See **MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation**

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission

- See **Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission**

Alcohol sales

- See **Liquor sales**

Alcoholism–Treatment–Youth

- See **Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth**

Aldersyde interchange

- See **Highway 2–Aldersyde area, Interchange with highways 7 and 547**

Alexander Forbes elementary school, Grande Prairie

- Expansion funding for ... *Flaherty* 1721, 1739; *Zwozdesky* 1729, 1739

Alexander Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement

- [See also **Scholarships**]

- General remarks ... *Hancock* 1738
- Impact of diploma exam grading errors on awarding of ... *Pannu* 164; *Zwozdesky* 164

All-party committees

- See **Committees, All-party**

All-terrain vehicles

- See **Off-highway vehicles**

Allan Gray Continuing Care Centre

- Conditions in ... *Agnihotri* 1499; *Evans* 1499–1500

Alliance Party

- See **Alberta Alliance Party**

Alliance pipeline

- General remarks ... *Mason* 572; *Melchin* 922

AltaGas Services Inc.

- Purchase of Sundance B power purchase arrangements from Enron ... *MacDonald* 1834, 1912–13; *Melchin* 1912–13

AltaLink Management Ltd.

- Public consultations re electric power line siting ... *Melchin* 1831

Alternate energy resources

See **Energy resources, Alternate**

Alternative education programs

See **Education–Curricula–Edmonton, Alternative programs**

Alternative education programs–Edmonton

See **Education–Curricula–Edmonton, Alternative programs**

Alternative payment methods (Physicians)

See **Medical profession–Fees, Alternative payment schemes**

Alternative payment plan (Physicians)

See **Medical profession–Fees, Alternative payment schemes**

AMA

See **Alberta Medical Association**

Ambassadors, Centennial

See **Centennial ambassadors**

Ambulance attendants

See **Emergency medical technicians**

Ambulance Governance Advisory Council

General remarks ... *Evans* 1458

Ambulance service

Co-ordination of ... *Evans* 1915

General remarks ... *Chase* 1467

Review of, 2002 ... *Ouellette* 244

Review of, 2002: Report ... *Evans* 202; *Mason* 202

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: AUMA news release re (SP152/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 253

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Calgary mayor's comments re (SP7/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 27

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:

Cancellation of ... *Blakeman* 482, 754, 1463; *Chase* 1470; *Evans* 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 482, 1464; *Klein* 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202; *Mason* 19, 83–84, 202; *Ouellette* 244; *Renner* 243, 1324; *Taft* 17, 243–44, 1323

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:

Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... *Blakeman* 482; *Evans* 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 245, 482, 1464; *Klein* 17, 83, 202, 245; *Mason* 19, 83, 202, 245; *Renner* 243; *Taft* 17, 243

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:

Cancellation of, provincial assistance re (Q5/05: Response tabled as SP627/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 658, 1717; *MacDonald* 658–59; *Taft* 658

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Costs ...

Evans 19, 202, 245; *Klein* 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202, 245; *Mason* 83–84, 202, 245; *Taft* 17

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Costs, advisory council re See **Ambulance Governance Advisory Council**

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:

Discovery projects re ... *Blakeman* 483; *Evans* 202, 245, 483; *Klein* 83, 202

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:

Documents re (M19/05: Response tabled as SP807) ... *Chase* 821; *Clerk, The* 2018; *MacDonald* 820–21; *Renner* 821, 2018; *Taft* 820

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:

Emergency motion under SO40 re ... *Blakeman* 28

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Impact

of joint ambulance/fire services on ... *Blakeman* 482–83; *Evans* 482–83

Ambulance service (Continued)

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:

Provincial commitment re (SP31/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 93

Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Red

Deer news release re (SP126/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 210

Ambulance service, Aerial

Funding for ... *MacDonald* 255

Ambulance service–Finance

General remarks ... *Evans* 83

Petition tabled re (SP430/05) ... *Jablonski* 1396

Use of surplus funds for ... *Blakeman* 1463

Ambulance service–Medicine Hat

Joint fire/ambulance service ... *Blakeman* 482–83; *Evans* 482–83

Ambulance service–Red Deer

General remarks ... *Evans* 202, 245; *Klein* 202, 245; *Mason* 202, 245

News release re (SP126/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 210

Ambulance service–Rural areas

Costs, provincial assistance re ... *Evans* 243–44; *MacDonald* 1209; *Taft* 243

Ambulatory learning centre, Health sciences

See **Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)**

American Meat Institute (U.S.)

General remarks ... *Horner* 290, 1210, 1215

AMI

See **American Meat Institute (U.S.)**

Amiskwaciy Academy

General remarks ... *Oberg* 738

Amphetamine (Drug)

Restriction of access to: Legislation re (Bill 204) ... *Strang* 171

Amusement Rides Safety Association

See **Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association**

Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park

Redesignation of Castle wilderness as ... *Chase* 1673, 2012; *Klein* 2012

Redesignation of Castle wilderness as: Letter re (SP819/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2012

Animal Health, World Organisation for

See **World Organisation for Animal Health**

Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)

First reading ... *Goudreau* 370

Second reading ... *Chase* 541; *Goudreau* 540; *Hinman* 542; *Horner* 540–41, 543; *MacDonald* 541–42; *Martin* 541; *Miller, R.* 542

Committee ... *Goudreau* 558; *Horner* 558–60; *Miller, R.* 558–60; *Pannu* 559; *Taft* 560; *Taylor* 558

Third reading ... *Goudreau* 943; *MacDonald* 943; *Miller, R.* 943; *Pastoor* 943

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

Animal parts, Wildlife

Sale of See **Wildlife Act, Sale of animal parts regulations**

Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)

First reading ... *Abbott* 170

Second reading ... *Abbott* 424, 427; *Bonko* 425; *Brown* 427; *Chase* 425–26, 427; *Eggen* 424–25; *Hinman* 426–27; *Horner* 425; *MacDonald* 424; *Taylor* 426

Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)*(Continued)*

Committee ... *Abbott* 1295; *Goudreau* 1295–96;
MacDonald 1296
 Third reading ... *Abbott* 1581; *Blakeman* 1581; *Chase*
 1581
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
 (Outside of House sittings)

Animal violence, Legislation re*See Animals, Treatment of, Legislation re (Bill 22)***Animals, Farm***See Livestock***Animals, Treatment of**

Legislation re (Bill 22) ... *Abbott* 170
 Legislation re (Bill 32) ... *Goudreau* 370

Animals, World Society for the Protection of*See World Society for the Protection of Animals***Anne Frank exhibit, Calgary**Statement re ... *Brown* 1079–80**Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton**

Backgrounder re (SP169/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 295;
Pannu 295
 Cost overruns ... *Chase* 1336; *MacDonald* 1803–04;
Oberg 1336
 Funding for ... *Oberg* 1086, 1800
 Impact on highways 14 and 21 ... *Lougheed* 324; *Oberg*
 324
 Impact on resident, letters re (SP704/05: Tabled) ...
Agnihotri 1891
 North portion of, completion date ... *Lukaszuk* 1713;
Oberg 1713
 Public opening of, invitation of Opposition MLAs to,
 statement re ... *Elsalhy* 1744
 Public/private partnership funding model for north
 portion of ... *Lukaszuk* 1713; *Oberg* 1713
 Public/private partnership funding model for southeast
 portion of ... *Chase* 1883; *Martin* 1092, 1802; *Oberg*
 324, 645, 1086, 1093, 1713, 1883–84; *Speech from*
the Throne 9
 Public/private partnership funding model for southeast
 portion of: Contracts re (M39/05: Response tabled as
 SP513/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1608; *Martin* 1167; *Oberg*
 1608; *Stelmach* 1167
 Public/private partnership funding model for southeast
 portion of: Costs ... *Klein* 287; *Martin* 616–17;
Mason 287, 318; *McClellan* 617; *Oberg* 287, 318,
 617
 Public/private partnership funding model for southeast
 portion of: Costs comparison for (M41/05: Response
 tabled as SP514/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1608; *Martin*
 1169; *Oberg* 1169, 1608; *Stelmach* 1169
 Public/private partnership funding model for southeast
 portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05:
 Response tabled as SP511/05) ... *Backs* 1162; *Chase*
 1161; *Clerk, The* 1608; *Hancock* 1161–62;
MacDonald 1161–62; *Oberg* 1162, 1608; *Stelmach*
 1162
 Public/private partnership funding model for southeast
 portion of: MLA questions/answers re (SP170/05:
 Tabled) ... *Mason* 295; *Pannu* 295
 Time frame for completion ... *Lougheed* 324; *Oberg*
 324

Antidumping laws (International trade)General remarks ... *Abbott* 293; *Horner* 293, 614; *Prins*
614; *Stelmach* 614**Antiterrorism***See Terrorist attacks—Prevention***AOC***See Alberta Opportunity Company***Aon Consulting Inc.**

Private health insurance in Alberta, study of [*See also*
Insurance, Health (Private), Alberta plan for];
Blakeman 1839; *Evans* 1627, 1665, 1670–71, 1841,
 1844; *Klein* 1666; *Mason* 1666, 1842; *Pannu*
 1626–27, 1670–71; *Taft* 1665
 Private health insurance in Alberta, study of: Letter re
 (SP755/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1971; *Mason* 1971
 Private health insurance in Alberta, study of: Letters re
 (SP554 & 598/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1675, 1716

Aon Reed StenhouseGeneral remarks ... *Evans* 1671**AOSTRA***See Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research
Authority***APEGGA***See Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists
and Geophysicists of Alberta***APF***See Aboriginal policy framework***API***See Aboriginal policy initiative***Appeals Commission (Workers' compensation)**

Budget increase ... *Bonko* 1134; *Cardinal* 1135
 Funding transfer to minister's budget ... *Backs* 950;
Cardinal 950
 General remarks ... *Backs* 1131; *Cao* 1834; *Cardinal*
 1129, 1130, 1338, 1834
 Waiting times at ... *Backs* 950; *Cardinal* 950

Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary

General remarks ... *Pham* 1672
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to ... *Agnihotri* 1335; *Mar*
 1335, 1442, 1497; *Taft* 1442, 1497
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Association's letter re
 (SP459/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1528; *Taft* 1528
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's
 random audit of, 2004 ... *Mar* 1525
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's
 report on ... *Agnihotri* 1742–43; *Mar* 1742–43
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's
 review of ... *Mar* 1525–26, 1597–98; *Taft* 1526,
 1597–98
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's
 review of, minister's letter re (SP464/05: Tabled) ...
Mar 1528
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Point of order re ...
Blakeman 1452–53, 1454; *Hancock* 1453; *Pham*
 1452, 1454; *Speaker, The* 1453–54
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Political interference re
 ... *Mar* 1597; *Taft* 1597

Appointments, Government*See Government appointments***Apprentice/journeyman ratio***See Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training
Board, Ratio of journeymen to apprentices*

Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 57)

First reading ... *Hancock* 1890
 Second reading ... *Backs* 1953–54; *Hancock* 1953;
MacDonald 1954–55; *Pannu* 1955
 Committee ... *Backs* 1980–81; *Hancock* 1980
 Third reading ... *Bonko* 2031–32; *Hancock* 2031;
Knight 2032
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board

See **Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board**

Apprenticeship program, Registered

See **Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)**

Apprenticeship training

Aboriginal people ... *Backs* 279, 411; *Calahasen* 1912;
Cardinal 411; *Hancock* 982, 1883; *Speech from the Throne* 8
 Automated registration system for ... *Hancock* 277, 861
 General remarks ... *Backs* 279; *Bonko* 1134; *Cardinal* 86, 280–81, 321, 531, 1129, 1135; *Danyluk* 1882–83;
Hancock 201–02, 248, 859, 860, 1792, 1794, 1882–83;
Hinman 1272; *Jablonski* 86; *Martin* 1171; *Mather* 1726;
Oberg 1089; *Taylor* 201–02, 247–48, 862
 Government supports for ... *Cardinal* 1129
 Improvements to ... *Speech from the Throne* 8
 Letters re (SP431, 435, 444, 463/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1396, 1452, 1508, 1528
 Mobile/distance delivery of ... *Hancock* 861
 Safety aspects ... *Cardinal* 980; *Hancock* 980; *Taylor* 979–80

Apprenticeship training—Finance

Equipment funding ... *Hancock* 277; *Taylor* 276
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 860; *McClellan* 748

Apprenticeship training—Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 981; *Hancock* 861, 981–82
 Provincial assistance re ... *Danyluk* 1882–83; *Hancock* 1882–83

Apprenticeship training—Rural areas

Provincial assistance re ... *Danyluk* 1883; *Hancock* 1883

Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)

First reading ... *McClellan* 1507
 Second reading ... *Chase* 1565; *Hancock* 1554; *Mason* 1562–63;
Miller, R. 1554–56; *Taylor* 1563–65
 Committee ... *Blakeman* 1586–88, 1590–91; *Chase* 1588;
Flaherty 1593; *Martin* 1588–89; *Mather* 1589–90;
Miller, R. 1591–93
 Third reading ... *Backs* 1612–13; *Eggen* 1610–12;
Haley 1609–10; *Hancock* 1614; *MacDonald* 1613–14;
McClellan 1609; *Stevens* 1609; *Swann* 1615–16;
Tougas 1609
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
 (Outside of House sittings)
 Unanimous consent to introduce denied ... *Hancock* 1485

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)

First reading ... *Hancock* 295
 Second reading ... *Elsalhy* 349; *McClellan* 348; *Miller, R.* 348–49;
Zwozdesky 348

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)

(Continued)

Committee ... *Blakeman* 400–02, 404–05; *Hancock* 402–03;
Hinman 405; *Mason* 402–03; *Miller, R.* 403–04
 Third reading ... *Deputy Speaker* 451; *MacDonald* 442–44;
McClellan 442
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 465

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)

First reading ... *Hancock* 312–13; *McClellan* 312
 Second reading ... *Bonko* 351–52; *Eggen* 350–51;
Elsalhy 350; *McClellan* 349; *Miller, R.* 349;
Zwozdesky 349, 352
 Committee ... *Miller, B.* 406; *Swann* 406

Third reading ... *Chase* 441–42, 451; *MacDonald* 439–41;
McClellan 439
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 465

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)

First reading ... *McClellan* 1890
 Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 1944–45; *Backs* 1946;
Horner 1947; *MacDonald* 1945–47; *McClellan* 1944;
Shariff 1953–54; *Zwozdesky* 1944
 Committee ... *Backs* 1984–85; *Blakeman* 1989–91;
Chase 1991–92, 2000; *Eggen* 1994–96; *Elsalhy* 1981–82;
Flaherty 1992–93; *Hinman* 1985–86, 2000; *MacDonald* 1986;
Martin 1984; *Miller, B.* 1983–84; *Miller, R.* 1998–99;
Pastoor 1982–83; *Swann* 1996–98; *Taylor* 1993–94

Third reading ... *Backs* 2040; *Blakeman* 2035–36;
Hancock 2033, 2037, 2039; *Hinman* 2033, 2036, 2042;
Lund 2042; *MacDonald* 2041–43; *Martin* 2037–38;
Mather 2038–40; *McClellan* 2032–33, 2043;
Miller, B. 2038; *Pastoor* 2039, 2040–41

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Aquifers—Contamination—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds

See **Groundwater—Contamination—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds**

Arbroath, Declaration of

See **Declaration of Arbroath (Scottish independence, 1320)**

ARC

See **Alberta Research Council Inc.**

Architects, Alberta Association of

See **Alberta Association of Architects**

Architecture and the disabled

Provincial initiative re ... *Renner* 1321

Statement re ... *Lougheed* 1917

Archives of Alberta, Provincial

See **Provincial Archives of Alberta**

ARFEX

See **Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Exposition (ARFEX), Edmonton (2005)**

Armed forces, Canadian

See **Canadian armed forces**

Armenian genocide

Statement re ... *Jablonski* 1031–32

Art Gallery, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Art Gallery**

ARTC

See **Alberta royalty tax credit**

Arts

Impact on tourism ... *Chase* 1012; *Dunford* 1013
 Role in provincial economy ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1010–11

Arts–Finance

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 692, 977, 1474, 1475, 1483, 1571, 1783, 2053; *Blakeman* 866, 1476–77; *Brown* 1482; *Chase* 797, 984, 1481; *Eggen* 1478; *Hancock* 869; *Mar* 692, 977, 1472–73, 1475, 1479, 1571, 1783, 2053; *McClellan* 2053; *Zwozdesky* 797
 Statement re ... *Taylor* 983
 Surplus revenue dedicated to (legacy funding) ... *Miller, R.* 960

Arts Awards, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta

See **Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards**

Arts Centre, Ottawa

See **National Arts Centre, Ottawa**

Arts courses in high school

See **High school education–Curricula, Fine arts courses: Letter re (SP195/05: Tabled)**

Arts courses in junior high school

See **Junior high school education–Curricula, Fine arts courses**

Arts credit in high school

See **High school credits, Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard)**

Arts festival, Ottawa

Alberta participation See **Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)**

Arts foundation

See **Alberta Foundation for the Arts**

Artspace Housing Co-operative Ltd.

Brochure on co-op housing (SP551/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1675

ArtStart program

Recognition of Safeway contribution to ... *Blakeman* 252

Artwork, Alberta

Donation to National Gallery of Canada ... *Ady* 1738–39; *Mar* 1739

ASCHA

See **Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association**

ASFF

See **Alberta School Foundation Fund**

ASHC

See **Alberta Social Housing Corporation**

Asian/Alberta trade

See **International trade–Asian countries**

Aspen exhibition, Japan

Alberta participation ... *Dunford* 644

Aspen Regional Health Authority

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP132/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 211

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP617/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717

Funding ... *Evans* 271

Redesignation of continuing care beds in Hinton: Petition presented re ... *Martin* 1918, 1970

ASRA

See **Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority**

Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (Movie)

General remarks ... *Groeneveld* 1968

Assessment

Appeals system ... *Renner* 1321

General remarks ... *Renner* 1320

Linear assessment process: Appeal process ... *Martin* 1325

Linear assessment process: Legislation re (Bill 28) ... *Renner* 252

Market value as basis for: Impact on seniors ... *Fritz* 889; *Hinman* 888

Market value as basis for: Statement re ... *Taylor* 461–62

Assessment–Agricultural land

Level of ... *Martin* 1325

Assessment of students

See **Student assessment**

Assisted living concept (Seniors' housing)

See under **Senior citizens–Housing, Assisted living concept**

Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth

General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 1313; *Pannu* 1314

Package of information regarding midwifery (SP408/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1314

Association of Municipal Districts and Counties

See **Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties**

Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta

Annual report, 2004 (SP448/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada

Degree-granting accreditation procedure ... *Hancock* 1791; *Pannu* 1794

Degree-granting accreditation procedure, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... *Chase* 1921–22; *Hancock* 1921–22; *Taylor* 1921

Associations, Student

See **Student unions**

Assurance Fund, Real Estate

See **Real Estate Assurance Fund**

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Benefit levels, formula for ... *Blakeman* 880; *Fritz* 880, 885; *Martin* 884–85; *Pastoor* 879

Benefit levels, market-basket measurement formula for ... *Blakeman* 880; *Pastoor* 879

Benefits dollar value (Q9/05: Response tabled as SP639/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Fritz* 661, 1746; *MacDonald* 660–61; *Pastoor* 660

Benefits increase ... *Backs* 889; *Elsalhy* 966–67; *Fritz* 22, 661, 877, 1149–50; *Martin* 884–85; *McClellan* 961, 967–68; *Pastoor* 22, 879, 1149–50; *Speech from the Throne* 10

Benefits increase: Funding for ... *Fritz* 878; *McClellan* 748; *Pannu* 259

Benefits increase: Legislation re (Bill 29) ... *Fritz* 806

Benefits increase: Letter re (SP176/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 327

Benefits increase: Petition presented re ... *Mather* 1788; *Pastoor* 26

Benefits received under (Q32/05: Response tabled as SP640/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Eggen* 1344–45; *Fritz* 1344, 1746; *Martin* 1344; *Stevens* 1344–45

Earned income exemption under, raising of ... *Amery* 1254–55; *Fritz* 878, 890, 1254–55; *Hinman* 888; *Johnston* 890; *McClellan* 967

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped*(Continued)*

- General remarks ... *Fritz* 877, 885, 887, 1524
 Modified AISH program for assisted care facilities residents ... *Fritz* 1149–50; *Pastoor* 1149–50
 Review of (2004) ... *Speech from the Throne* 10
 Review of (2004): Report ... *Fritz* 22, 661, 1150; *Pastoor* 22
 Review of (2004): Submissions received by (M23/05: Response tabled as SP641/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Fritz* 822–23, 1746; *Pastoor* 822–23
 Review of (2005): Report ... *Amery* 1254–55; *Fritz* 878, 1254–55
 Review of (2005): Report (SP389/05: Tabled) ... *Lougheed* 1205
 Supplementary benefits to personal income support ... *Blakeman* 881; *Fritz* 878, 879–80

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped**Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)**

- First reading ... *Fritz* 806
 Second reading ... *Brown* 1070; *Fritz* 939–40; *Pannu* 1069–70; *Pastoor* 1069
 Committee ... *Fritz* 1244–45; *Mather* 1246; *Miller, B.* 1245–46
 Third reading ... *Backs* 1512; *Brown* 1509–10, 1512; *Flaherty* 1510; *MacDonald* 1510; *Martin* 1511–12
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sitting), 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 879

At risk children—Education*See Children at risk—Education***ATA***See Alberta Teachers' Association***ATB Financial***See Alberta Treasury Branch Financial; Treasury Branches***ATCO learning centre, Royal Tyrrell Museum***See Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology, ATCO learning centre at***Athabasca River**Rerouting of tributaries to ... *Eggen* 1715**Athabasca University**General remarks ... *Hancock* 981, 1793, 1795
 Mount Royal College transfer students ... *Hancock* 864**Athletes, Albertan**Support for ... *Agnihotri* 1151; *Mar* 1151**ATOMS project***See Apprenticeship training, Automated registration system for***Attorney General***See Dept. of Justice and Attorney General***ATVs***See Off-highway vehicles***AUCC***See Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada***Auctions, Public***See Public auctions***Audiologists, Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and***See Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists***Audit Committee**Public members on ... *Klein* 1102, 1106; *Taft* 1102**Auditing, Government***See Government auditing***Auditor General**

- Aboriginal Affairs dept. comments ... *Calahasen* 839
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP158/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 295
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP518/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 1632
 Anthony Henday Drive P3 contract, involvement in ... *Oberg* 287, 318
 BSE compensation programs auditing ... *Horner* 299; *MacDonald* 297
 BSE compensation programs auditing: Report on (SP157/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 295
 Charlebois Consulting Ltd. contracts, investigation of ... *Evans* 642–43; *Taft* 642–43
 Conflict of interest comments ... *Lund* 1420; *Swann* 1419
 Diploma exams equating process, recommendation re ... *Zwozdesky* 164
 Disaster recovery programs comments ... *Swann* 1419
 Fort McMurray land sale process, Auditor General's report on (SP518/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 1632
 Fort McMurray land sale process, report on ... *Fritz* 1741; *Mason* 1741; *McClellan* 1741, 1828
 Fort McMurray land sale process, report on leaked to media, AGs news release re (SP523/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1632
 Fort McMurray land sale process, report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... *Boutillier* 1675–76; *Mason* 1636–37; *Speaker, The* 1637–38, 1675, 1676, 1719–20; *Stevens* 1637
 General remarks ... *Ouellette* 754
 Government agencies, boards, and commissions, political appointments to, recommendations re ... *Klein* 2047–48; *Mason* 2047–48
 Government aircraft usage, Review of ... *Klein* 82
 Government contracting process comments ... *Elsalhy* 1418; *Lund* 1419; *Pastoor* 1423–24
 Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation ... *Blakeman* 754; *Ouellette* 755, 758, 759
 Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation (Q18/05: Defeated) ... *Elsalhy* 812–13; *Ouellette* 812
 Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... *Clerk, The* 2056; *Elsalhy* 1746; *Ouellette* 1746, 2056
 Historic Resources Fund accounting comments ... *Agnihotri* 1475
 Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257
 Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Internal audit function centralization, comments re ... *Klein* 1100, 1102, 1106; *Taft* 1102
 Internal auditor, liason with ... *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1103, 1106; *MacDonald* 1103
 Introduction of ... *Speaker, The* 5
 Jubilee auditoria comments ... *Agnihotri* 1475; *Mar* 1473, 1476

Auditor General (Continued)

Long-term care facility grants: Audit of ... *Evans* 2050
 Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs) ... *Evans* 1077; *Fritz* 1201; *Klein* 1334; *Martin* 1077; *Mason* 1334
 Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... *Blakeman* 1387, 1460; *Evans* 1497–98, 1623, 1707, 1843–44, 1962; *Fritz* 1387, 1388, 1392, 1497, 2010, 2012; *Klein* 1386–87, 1388, 1392, 1443–44; *Martin* 1444, 1886, 2010, 2012–13; *Mason* 1388, 1443–44, 1842, 1962; *McClellan* 1599; *Pastoor* 1497, 1707, 1717, 1881; *Taft* 1386, 1707
 Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report (SP417/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 1342
 Main estimates, 2005–06: Passed ... *Abbott* 764; *Chair* 751
 Main estimates 2005–06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... *McClellan* 747
 Management letters re U of A and U of C, release of: Letter re (SP101/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 128
 Municipal Affairs dept. comments ... *Pastoor* 1324
 Official Opposition press release re ... *Klein* 1333
 Official Opposition press release re (SP414/05: Tabled) ... *Klein* 1342; *Zwozdesky* 1342
 Oil sands projects approvals comments ... *Martin* 921; *Melchin* 921
 Pension plans compliance comments ... *McClellan* 962; *Miller, R.* 960
 Performance measures comments ... *Boutilier* 1037; *Eggen* 1041; *Stelmach* 1182
 Policing in Alberta, study of ... *Cenaiko* 1885; *Miller, B.* 1885
 Policing standards comments ... *Cenaiko* 1432
 Public/private partnership contracts, comments on ... *Martin* 616, 1092, 1802; *McClellan* 616; *Oberg* 1095
 Royalty reduction programs evaluation recommendation ... *Eggen* 915; *Elsalhy* 917; *Martin* 921; *Melchin* 921; *Swann* 1155
 Royalty revenues (oil sands) verification ... *Martin* 921; *Melchin* 921
 Securities Commission director of enforcement, information on action taken re ... *McClellan* 2047; *Taft* 2047
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, 2005 report on ... *Mason* 1708; *McClellan* 1664–65, 1707–08, 1828; *Taft* 1664–65, 1880
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... *Hancock* 1197, 1250–51, 1304–05; *Klein* 1333; *Martin* 1148–49, 1197, 1250; *Mason* 969, 1882; *McClellan* 898–99, 1144, 1148–49, 1332–33, 1882; *Melchin* 1197; *Taft* 898–99, 1144, 1304–05, 1332–33
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, appropriateness of ... *McClellan* 947–48; *Taft* 947–48
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, Auditor General's report on ... *McClellan* 1909; *Taft* 1909
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, Auditor General's report on (SP520/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 1632

Auditor General (Continued)

Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, authority to challenged, emergency debate re ... *Hancock* 1316–17; *MacDonald* 1318; *Martin* 1317–18; *Speaker, The* 1318–19; *Taft* 1144, 1315–16; *Zwozdesky* 1318
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, letter to Legislative Offices committee re (SP434/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1452
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of: Minister's letter re ... *McClellan* 898
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of: Minister's letter re (SP349/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 908
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, restrictions on ... *Martin* 1148; *McClellan* 1119, 1144
 Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to news media of report on, point of privilege re ... *Blakeman* 1633–35; *Mason* 1635, 1636; *Speaker, The* 1635, 1636, 1637–38, 1719–20; *Stevens* 1635–36, 1637
 Seniors' benefits program comments ... *Fritz* 1387; *Pastoor* 1387
 Seniors dept. financial statements, reservation of opinion re ... *Fritz* 1253; *Pastoor* 1252–53
 Sole-source contracts comments ... *Elsalhy* 619, 1418; *MacDonald* 760; *Ouellette* 619, 761
 Suggestive references to, in Legislative Assembly ... *Blakeman* 985–86; *Hancock* 984–85; *Martin* 986–87; *Speaker, The* 955, 984, 987–88; *Tarchuk* 987
 Sustainable resource development comments ... *Bonko* 1829; *Boutilier* 1829
 Tax programs recommendations ... *McClellan* 958–59
 Treasury Branches' control processes comments (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... *Hancock* 1788; *McClellan* 1747, 1788; *Miller, R.* 1746–47; *Zwozdesky* 1747
 Treasury Branches lending policies comments ... *McClellan* 2050; *Miller, R.* 960, 2050
 Wild Rose Foundation grants' auditing ... *Agnihotri* 1742–43; *Mar* 1497, 1525–26, 1597–98, 1742–43; *Taft* 1497, 1526, 1597–98
 Wild Rose Foundation grants' auditing: Minister's letter requesting (SP464/05: Tabled) ... *Mar* 1528
 Workers' Compensation Board performance review ... *Cardinal* 1338

Auditor General and Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee, Select Special
 Report, part 1 (Auditor General appointment) concurred in (Motion 23, 2002) ... *Tarchuk* 987

Auditor General of Canada
 RCMP services report ... *Cenaiko* 1884–85; *Miller, B.* 1884–85
 RCMP services report, chapter 1 (SP703/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1891

Auditor's office, Chief Internal
 See **Chief Internal Auditor's office**

Augustana campus
 See **University of Alberta, Augustana campus**

Augustana University College
 Merger with University of Alberta: Legislation re (Bill Pr. 2) ... *Johnson* 622

AUMA

See **Alberta Urban Municipalities Association**

AUPE

See **Alberta Union of Provincial Employees**

Australian Wheat Board

General remarks ... *Horner* 1221, 1222

Authorized accredited agencies

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP646/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Renner* 1746

Automobile accident injuries

See **Traffic accident injuries**

Automobile chop shops

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1256; *Lund* 1424; *Miller, R.* 1256; *Pastoor* 1423

Automobile drivers' licences

Graduated licences, monitoring of ... *Cenaiko* 1307-08; *Jablonski* 1307-08

Resumption of provincial control over issuing of ... *Elsalhy* 1417

Automobile drivers' licences—Security aspects

Facial recognition system ... *Lund* 1415

Automobile drivers' tests

Resumption of provincial control over ... *Elsalhy* 1417

Automobile industry

Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... *Abbott* 772; *Melchin* 772

Automobile insurance—Premiums

See **Insurance, Automobile—Premiums**

Automobile Insurance Board

See **Alberta Automobile Insurance Board**

Automobile Insurance Rate Board

[See also under **old name Alberta Automobile Insurance Board**]

Announcement on rate reductions ... *Ady* 457; *McClellan* 454, 457; *Taft* 454

Annual report, 2004 (SP559/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *McClellan* 1675

General remarks ... *McClellan* 363, 958, 1669

Report on rate reductions ... *Abbott* 412-13; *Mason* 900; *McClellan* 86, 412-13, 900; *Miller, B.* 86; *Miller, R.* 283

Review of questionable practices by insurance companies ... *McClellan* 1339; *Miller, R.* 1339

Review of rates ... *Mason* 969; *McClellan* 454, 455, 457, 461, 900, 904, 969, 1339; *Miller, R.* 904, 1339

Review of rates: Letter requesting copy of (SP36/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 93

Automobile licence plates

Sale of, portion of to Wild Rose Ag. Producers ... *Groeneveld* 953; *Horner* 953

Veterans' stickers for ... *Lougheed* 366; *Lund* 366

Automobile seat belts

Role of, in preventive health care strategy ... *Evans* 205

Automobile telephones

See **Cellular telephones in automobiles**

Automobile theft—Prevention

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1256; *Lund* 1419, 1424, 1425; *Miller, B.* 1424; *Miller, R.* 1256; *Pastoor* 1423

Automobiles, Government

See **Government vehicles**

Automobiles, Written off/rebuilt

Resale of ... *Lund* 1424

Automobiles—Registration

Database of, use in child abduction cases ... *Lund* 486; *Pham* 486

Registrations transferred from other provinces, timeliness of ... *Brown* 1422

Automobiles—Seizure

For prostitution-related offences: Legislation re (Bill 39) ... *Magnus* 746

For prostitution-related offences: Legislation re (Bill 206, 2003) ... *Cenaiko* 456; *Oberg* 456-57; *Taylor* 456-57

Auxiliary hospitals

See **Extended care facilities**

Auxiliary hospitals, Private

See **Extended care facilities, Private**

Auxiliary hospitals—Finance

See **Extended care facilities—Finance**

Auxiliary hospitals—Standards

See **Extended care facilities—Standards**

Avian influenza

Industry protection measures re ... *Haley* 1780; *Horner* 1780

National surveillance program for See **Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre, National surveillance program for avian flu**

Avian influenza vaccine

See **Vaccine, Avian influenza**

Aviation, Standing Committee on

See **Committee on Aviation, Standing**

Aviation industry

See **Airline industry**

AVPA discussions

See **Edmonton International Airport, Airport vicinity protection area discussions**

Awards for Teaching Excellence, Prime Minister's

See **Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence**

AWPI

See **Aboriginal workforce participation initiative**

Axia NetMedia Corporation

Alberta Supernet contract ... *Blakeman* 754; *Ouellette* 755, 762, 854

B. C. Pension Corporation

See **British Columbia Pension Corporation**

B. C. Securities Commission

See **British Columbia Securities Commission**

B & R – Eckel's Transport Ltd.

General remarks ... *Ducharme* 744

Baby boom

General remarks ... *Backs* 1131-32

Babysitting services, Private

See **Daycare in private homes**

Backcountry safety

General remarks ... *Coutts* 769; *Groeneveld* 769

Badlands—Alberta

Tourism development in ... *Dunford* 48

Balancing Pool for Alberta's Electricity Consumers

Contribution to funding for Utilities Consumer Advocate ... *Elsalhy* 975, 1418; *Lund* 975, 1419

Baldwin, Mr. Tom

Recognition of ... *Danyluk* 251

Balzac horse racetrack

See **Horse racetrack—Balzac**

Banff Centre for Continuing Education

Audited financial statements, 2003-04 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 623; *Hancock* 623
 Audited financial statements, 2004-05 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1920; *Hancock* 1920
 Sir Donald Cameron Hall renovations, funding for ... *Oberg* 1086, 1088

Banff/Jasper special infrastructure program

General remarks ... *Renner* 1320

Bank of Montreal

Executive Council account ... *Klein* 1107; *Miller, R.* 1107
 Government procurement card system ... *Ouellette* 757

Barb Tarbox award of excellence and scholarship

See **Smoking-Prevention, AADAC award of excellence and scholarship re (Barb Tarbox award)**

Barley-Marketing

General remarks ... *Martin* 1213; *Morton* 1203; *Speech from the Throne* 9

Barrhead Healthcare Centre

Upgrades to ... *Evans* 1839, 1842

Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (Constituency)

Member for, elected as Speaker ... *Clerk, The* 1; *Haley* 1; *Kowalski* 1

Barrier-free building design

See **Architecture and the disabled**

Bars

See **Licensed premises**

Basement suites, MLA Review Committee on

See **Rental housing, Secondary suites: MLA Review Committee on, report**

Basketball championships

Cardston Lady Cougars 3A provincial champions ... *Hinman* 956-57
 Foremost high school Falcons 1A provincial champions ... *Mitzel* 417-18
 Lord Beaverbrook Lords 4A high school champions ... *Herard* 325
 Raymond Comets 4A provincial champions ... *Hinman* 956-57
 U o A Golden Bears Canada West champions ... *Taft* 620

Batiuk, Mr. John (former MLA)

Memorial tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 1619

Battalion park school proposal, Calgary

See **Schools-Construction-Calgary, Battalion park area**

Battered children-Prevention

See **Child abuse-Prevention**

Battered women

Government programs for ... *Blakeman* 1139

Battered women-Housing

Second-stage housing ... *Forsyth* 743

Batterers

See **Spousal abusers**

Battle River-Water management

See **Water resources development-Battle River**

Battle River Community Foundation

Endowment funds, Statement re ... *Johnson* 1340

Battle River water diversion

See **Water diversion-North Saskatchewan/Battle River basins**

Battle River watershed

Planning re ... *Boutilier* 1047; *Johnson* 1046-47

The Bay building, Edmonton, purchase of

See **University of Alberta, Bay building purchase, to accommodate learning transition facility**

B.C. Information and Privacy Commissioner

See **Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)**

B.C. ports strategy

See **British Columbia ports strategy**

Bear's Paw Day Care Centre, Edmonton

Closure of ... *Eggen* 1733; *Forsyth* 1733

Beef-Export

Age of animal verification system to expedite ... *Horner* 1220, 1600
 BSE-free status to expedite ... *Haley* 1599-1600; *Horner* 296, 1599-1600
 Diversification of markets for ... *Dunford* 1017; *Hinman* 1017, 1217; *Horner* 46, 298, 300, 1207, 1209, 1215-16, 1220; *Martin* 1213; *Taft* 15
 General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1184, 1186

Beef-Marketing

Farm gate sales ... *Hinman* 48; *Horner* 48
 Federal funding for ... *Horner* 258, 296
 Market retention and development fund for ... *Horner* 296, 300; *Pannu* 299
 Provincial funding for ... *Horner* 298, 1849

Beef-Prices

General remarks ... *Horner* 1210, 1499; *MacDonald* 1208; *Mason* 1499
 Minimum floor price ... *Horner* 300-01; *Pannu* 299

Beef export container initiative

See **Stranded beef export container initiative**

Beef Export Federation, Canada

See **Canada Beef Export Federation**

Beef Export Federation, Canadian

See **Canadian Beef Export Federation**

Beef industry

Compensation programs for, re BSE situation See **Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, New assistance programs re (2005)**

Beef processing

Concentration of, in few companies ... *Horner* 1209-10; *MacDonald* 1208
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 48; *Horner* 48, 296, 1211; *Klein* 14-15; *McClellan* 22; *Pastoor* 1181; *Speech from the Throne* 9
 Provincial assistance re ... *Horner* 1214

Beef Producers, Alberta

See **Alberta Beef Producers**

Beef recovery strategy (2004)

See **Cattle-Export-United States, Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure**

Beef slaughter facilities

See **Meat packing plants**

Beer parlours

See **Licensed premises**

Behaviourally disturbed

See **Mentally disabled**

Behaviourally disturbed-Housing

See **Mentally disabled-Housing**

Beijing trade office

See **Alberta Government Offices, Beijing office**

Bell West

Alberta SuperNet contract ... *Blakeman* 754; *Elsalhy* 320; *Ouellette* 320, 755, 759–60, 854

Bellingham, Brendan Thomas

Recognition of ... *Rodney* 325

Benedict XVI, Pope

Statement re ... *Lukaszuk* 857–58

Bennett Jones LLP

ASC action on Walton International, letter re (SP794/05:

Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 2017

Letter to Opposition Leader re comments concerning Chair of Securities Commission (SP721/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1919

Bentall Real Estate

Involvement with SouthLink health centre ... *Chase* 1467

Bercha Group

Sour gas blowout ignition study: Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 664–65; *Melchin* 665; *Zwozdesky* 665

Sour gas blowout ignition study: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1789; *Eggen* 665; *Melchin* 665, 1789; *Zwozdesky* 665

Best practices in health care symposium

See **Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)**

Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose

Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in [See also **Geddes, Marie**]; *Blakeman* 1121, 1577; *Evans* 1074, 1077, 1121; *Johnson* 1074; *Martin* 1077; *Mason* 1599; *McClellan* 1599

A Better Balance: Nova Scotia's First Gaming Strategy (Report)

See **Gaming industry–Nova Scotia, Policy re, report on**

Big game farming

See **Game farming**

Big Lake basin

See **Water resources development–Big Lake basin**

Big Lake natural area

Designation as provincial park ... *Flaherty* 321; *Lukaszuk* 982; *Mar* 321

Renaming of ... *Flaherty* 321; *Lukaszuk* 982; *Mar* 321

Bighorn power plant

Exclusion from power purchase agreements ... *MacDonald* 363; *Melchin* 363–64

Bighorn sheep hunting

Under Métis hunting agreement ... *Brown* 850; *Calahasen* 850; *Coutts* 850

Bighorn wildlife recreation area

Access management plan for ... *Coutts* 648, 1573

Snowmobile trails in ... *Dunford* 744

Bigstone Cree Nation

Pamphlet on concerns re forest management agreement on lands of (SP705/05: Tabled) ... *Tougas* 1891

Biker gang crime–Prevention

See **Gang-related crime–Prevention**

Bill 11 (2000)

See **Health Care Protection Act (Bill 11, 2000)**

Bill 26, 2002

See **Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002 (Bill 26, 2002)**

Bill 27 (2003)

See **Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)**

Bill 28, 2004

See **Feeder Associations Guarantee Amendment Act, 2004 (Bill 28, 2004)**

Bill 37, 2003

See **Climate Change and Emissions Management Act (Bill 37, 2003)**

Bill 202, 2000

See **Marriage Amendment Act, 2000 (Alberta Bill 202, 2000)**

Bill 206, 2003

See **Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 206, 2003)**

Bill C-38

See **Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)**

Bills, Government

Bills containing similar provisions (Bills 47 and 207), ruling on ... *Speaker, The* 1789

Bills, Government (2005)

Information about any of the following Bills may be found by looking under the title of the Bill.

- No. 1 Access to the Future Act
- No. 2 Alberta Centennial Medal Act
- No. 3 City of Lloydminster Act
- No. 4 Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 5 Family Law Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 6 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 7 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 8 Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 9 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 10 Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 11 Stettlert Regional Water Authorization Act
- No. 12 Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 13 Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 14 Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 15 Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 16 Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 17 Agrology Profession Act
- No. 18 Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 19 Securities Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 20 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 21 Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 22 Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 23 Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 24 Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 25 Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 26 Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 27 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005
- No. 28 Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 29 Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 30 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005
- No. 31 Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005

Bills, Government (2005) (Continued)

- No. 32 Animal Keepers Act
- No. 33 Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 34 Insurance Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 35 Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 36 Police Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 37 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 38 Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 39 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 40 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- No. 41 Appropriation Act, 2005
- No. 42 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 43 Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 44 Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2)
- No. 45 Maternal Tort Liability Act
- No. 46 Criminal Notoriety Act
- No. 47 Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act
- No. 48 Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 49 Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2)
- No. 50 Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- No. 51 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2)
- No. 52 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2)
- No. 53 Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 54 Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 55 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
- No. 56 Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2)
- No. 57 Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 58 Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005

Bills, Private (2005)

- Information about any of the following Bills may be found by looking under the title of the Bill.
- Pr. 1 Bow Valley Community Foundation Act
 - Pr. 2 Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act
 - Pr. 3 Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005
 - Pr. 4 Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act

Bills, Private members' public

- Passage of ... *Hancock* 56
- Unanimous consent given for Bill 202 to proceed to Committee and Third readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... *Jablonski* 784, 790; *Speaker, The* 784; *Zwozdesky* 793

Bills, Private members' public (2005)

- Information about any of the following Bills may be found by looking under the title of the Bill.
- No. 201 Smoke-free Places Act
 - No. 202 Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act
 - No. 203 Report on Alberta's Legacy Act
 - No. 204 Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005
 - No. 205 Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005

Bills, Private members' public (2005) (Continued)

- No. 206 Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act
- No. 207 Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act
- No. 210 School (Property Tax Reduction) Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 211 Alberta Commission on Energy Efficiency Act
- No. 213 Standing Committee on Continuing Care Standards Act
- No. 214 Water Protection and Conservation Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 217 Election (Electoral Reform) Amendment Act, 2005
- No. 218 Land Agents Licensing (Licence Requirement) Amendment Act, 2005

Bills (Legislative Assembly publications)

See **Sessional publications (Legislative Assembly)**

Bingo halls

- Amendment to retain smoking in ... *Blakeman* 119; *Klein* 119
- Impact of anti-smoking legislation on ... *Graydon* 1799
- Revenue decrease from ... *Graydon* 1799; *Tougas* 1799

Bingos, Electronic

- Proceeds distribution ... *Graydon* 1278

Biodigesters

- Conversion of agricultural wastes to fuel source ... *Horner* 1222

Biomass as energy source

- [*See also* **Energy resources, Alternate**]
- General remarks ... *Hinman* 1426
- Tax incentives re ... *Hinman* 1426, 1851–52
- Vegreville project ... *Doerksen* 1887

Bioproducts industry, Agricultural

See **Agricultural bioproducts industry**

Biotechnology

- General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007, 1016

Bird flu

See **Avian influenza**

Bird flu vaccine

See **Vaccine, Avian influenza**

Birth to Three Society, Edmonton

- Recognition of ... *Mather* 578–79

Bison grazing on public lands

See **Grazing lands, Public, Bison grazing on**

Bitumen

- [*See also* **Heavy oil**]
- Value-adding re ... *Mason* 571–72; *Melchin* 532, 572, 909, 916, 917, 918

Bitumen–Export

- Impact on oil sands upgrading jobs ... *Mason* 571–72; *Melchin* 572

Black Gold Regional Division #18

- Letter to minister re collective bargaining method (SP403/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1259
- Operation/maintenance funding concerns ... *Abbott* 1030; *Oberg* 1030

Black Gold Teachers' Local #8

See **Greater Black Gold Teachers' Local #8**

Blais court case

See **Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, First Nations hunting/fishing rights under, Blais court case re**

Blind, Canadian Council of the. Alberta division

See **Canadian Council of the Blind. Alberta division**

Blind–Employment

CNIB assistance program re ... *Cao* 1524; *Fritz* 1524

Blind curling championship

See **Curling championships, Western Canadian Blind championship**

Blue Cross Benefits Corporation

See **Alberta Blue Cross Benefits Corporation**

Blue Cross Plan

See **Alberta Blue Cross Plan**

Blue Sky Communication Inc.

Film funding request ... *Agnihotri* 1475

Boards, Government

See **Government agencies, boards, and commissions**

Boilers Safety Association

See **Alberta Boilers Safety Association**

Bon Ton Bakery Ltd.

Healthy Choices pamphlet (SP6/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 27

Book Publishers Association of Alberta

Lobbying for government support ... *Agnihotri* 2053

Book publishing industry

See **Publishing industry**

Border closure to Canadian cattle (2005)

See **Cattle–Export–United States, Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed**

Border crossings–Canada/United States

Additional 24-hour crossing for Alberta (Wild Horse crossing) ... *Dunford* 646; *Mitzel* 646

Boreal forest

Statement re ... *Eggen* 1395–96

Bouncers in licensed premises, training of

See **Licensed premises, Bouncers in, training of**

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

Compensation plans re ... *Horner* 296, 1207, 1210, 1849; *MacDonald* 296–97; *Martin* 1212; *Pannu* 299
Compensation plans re: Auditor General investigation of ... *Horner* 299; *MacDonald* 297

Compensation plans re: Federal funding for ... *Horner* 258, 296, 1210; *Miller, R.* 257

General remarks ... *Klein* 1444; *Stelmach* 1181

Human/animal risk of ... *Evans* 319; *Horner* 250, 288, 319; *Klein* 288; *Swann* 319

Impact on cattle industry ... *Chase* 266; *Danyluk* 46; *Haley* 417, 1599–1600; *Hinman* 48–49, 262, 1217; *Horner* 42–43, 46, 48–49, 119, 289, 296, 298, 417, 1390, 1599–1600, 1607; *Klein* 14–15; *MacDonald* 296–97; *Martin* 22; *Mason* 42–43; *McClellan* 22–23, 749; *Mitzel* 119, 288–89; *Pastoor* 1181, 1182; *Snelgrove* 19–20; *Stelmach* 19–20, 288, 1182, 1184; *Taft* 15; *Tarchuk* 461

Impact on crop production ... *Danyluk* 695; *Horner* 695; *Oberle* 698

Impact on slaughter plants regulations ... *Hinman* 762

Live testing for ... *Horner* 300; *MacDonald* 297

New assistance programs re (2005) ... *Horner* 46, 258, 296; *MacDonald* 296–97; *Miller, R.* 257

Presence on game farms ... *Swann* 1221

Research into ... *Doerksen* 1372; *Horner* 258, 1211; *MacDonald* 1208; *McClellan* 749

Testing re ... *Hinman* 1017, 1218; *Horner* 1207, 1220

Testing re, to expedite exports ... *Chase* 266, 1185; *Haley* 1599–1600; *Horner* 296, 298–99, 300, 1216, 1599–1600; *MacDonald* 297; *Martin* 1213; *Mason* 16; *Stelmach* 1186

Testing standards re, harmonization with U.S. standards ... *Horner* 414, 417; *VanderBurg* 414

U.S. cow infected ... *Hinman* 262, 1217; *Horner* 1220

Bow River fishing

See **Fisheries, Commercial–Bow River**

Bow River Irrigation District

Headworks upgrading ... *Oberg* 1086

Bow River Water Quality Task Force

Water quality recommendations ... *Boutilier* 799

Bow Valley College

Construction projects at ... *Oberg* 1088

Courses offered to Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology students ... *Marz* 1629

Bow Valley Community Foundation Act

Petition presented ... *Brown* 326

Recommendation to proceed ... *Brown* 1033

Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... *Brown* 369

Bow Valley Community Foundation Act (Bill Pr. 1)

First reading ... *Tarchuk* 653

Second reading ... *Tarchuk* 1508

Committee ... *Shariff* 1509

Third reading ... *Lougheed* 1556; *Tarchuk* 1556

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
(Outside of House sittings)

Bowhunters Association, Southern Alberta

See **Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association**

Bowness school, Calgary

Refurbishment of ... *Oberg* 1572

Boyle McCauley Health Centre

Kindred House program: Statement re ... *Mather* 1451

BP Canada

Fire, Fort Saskatchewan facility ... *Lougheed* 207; *Renner* 207

Brabant, Loretta Van

See **Van Brabant, Loretta**

Braille

Teaching of, by teacher aids: Letter re (SP756/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1971

Braille menu

See **La Ronde Restaurant, Edmonton, Braille menu at: Statement re**

Brands, Livestock–Inspection

See **Livestock brands–Inspection**

Brazeau power plant

Exclusion from power purchase agreements ... *MacDonald* 363; *Melchin* 363–64

Breakaway to Win lottery ticket

See **Hockey, Lottery funding for**

Breast cancer–Research

Contributions by hang-gliding fundraiser to ... *Miller, R.* 1313

Breast prostheses

Inclusion under AADL program: Petition tabled re (SP306/05) ... *Speaker, The* 699; *VanderBurg* 699

Bridge to employment program

See **Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Bridge to employment program**

Bridges–Construction

Funding for ... *Abbott* 803; *Oberg* 803, 1086

Over waterways, federal approval process re ... *Oberg* 1802

Bridges–North Saskatchewan River–Drayton Valley area

General remarks ... *Abbott* 803; *Chase* 1802; *Oberg* 803, 1802

Bridges–Stoney Trail, Calgary

General remarks ... *Chase* 1802

Briefs, Court

Electronic distribution of *See Disclosure of evidence (Legal procedure), Computerized system re*

Brier champions, 2005 (Ferbey rink)

See Curling championships, Team Ferbey (2005 Brier champions)

British Columbia/Alberta accord

See Alberta/British Columbia accord

British Columbia/Alberta joint cabinet meeting

See Alberta/British Columbia joint cabinet meeting, March 2005

British Columbia Information and Privacy**Commissioner**

See Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)

British Columbia Pension Corporation

Appeal process: Website re (SP166/05: Tabled) ...
Miller, R. 295

British Columbia ports strategy

Alberta participation in ... *Danyluk* 772; *Dunford* 319;
Knight 319; *Stelmach* 772

British Columbia Power Exchange Corp.

Electricity price manipulation at Power Pool of Alberta ...
MacDonald 286; *Melchin* 286

Electricity price manipulation at Power Pool of Alberta:
Document re (SP164/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 295
Involvement in Enron electricity price manipulation ...
Klein 83; *MacDonald* 83, 650; *Miller, B.* 42;
Stevens 42

Involvement in Enron electricity price manipulation:
Backgrounder re (SP148/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald*
252–53

British Columbia regulations

General remarks ... *Hinman* 762; *Ouellette* 763

British Columbia Securities Commission

Procedures re land sales ... *Taft* 2008

British Columbia tie lines (electric power)

See Electric power lines, Tie lines with B.C. and Montana

British Commonwealth air crew memorial, Calgary

Recognition of ... *Johnson* 126

British Commonwealth of Nations

See Commonwealth of Nations

British monarchy

See Monarchy, British

Broda committee

See Long-Term Care Review Advisory Committee (1999)

Broda report

See Long-Term Care Review Advisory Committee (1999), Final report

Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil**Action Act**

Deferred until fall 2005 sitting ... *Brown* 1033

Petition presented ... *Brown* 326

Recommendation to proceed, with amendment ... *Brown*
1788

Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... *Brown* 369

Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil**Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)**

First reading ... *Oberle* 622

Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 1947–48; *MacDonald*
1949; *Miller, R.* 1949; *Morton* 1948; *Oberle* 1947,
1949–50; *Pannu* 1949

Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil**Action Act (Bill Pr. 4) (Continued)**

Committee ... *Agnihotri* 1957–58; *MacDonald* 1958;
Oberle 1957–58

Third reading ... *Miller, B.* 2024; *Oberle* 2024; *Pannu*
2024

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2058

Amendment (SP647/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1788

Amendment (SP742/05: Tabled) ... *Johnson* 1958;
Oberle 1957

Brooks packing plant

See under Lakeside Packers

Brown, Mr. Allan

Statement re ... *Brown* 535

Bruderheim Elementary School

Closure ... *Flaherty* 693; *Ouellette* 287; *Taylor* 287;
Zwozdesky 693

BSE

See Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

Budget

2002-03 budget, advertising campaign re ... *Elsalhy*
1104; *Klein* 1105

2004-05 first- and second-quarter fiscal updates and
activity reports (SP70-73/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
94; *McClellan* 94

2004-05 third-quarter fiscal update and activity report
(SP86-87/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 94

2005-06 first-quarter activity report (SP557/05: Tabled)
... *Clerk, The* 1675; *McClellan* 1675

2005-06 first-quarter fiscal update (SP556/05: Tabled) ...
Clerk, The 1675; *McClellan* 1675

2005-06 second-quarter activity report (SP595/05:
Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1676

2005-06 second-quarter fiscal update ... *McClellan*
1667; *Morton* 1667

2005-06 second-quarter fiscal update (SP594/05:
Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1676

As reflection of social values ... *Forsyth* 303; *Mather*
302

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 272; *Brown* 1106; *Evans*
273; *Pannu* 259; *Taylor* 261

Process re ... *Evans* 1622; *Hancock* 1621; *Klein* 160,
1621; *McClellan* 160, 1622; *Oberg* 1621; *Ouellette*
160; *Stelmach* 1621; *Taft* 160, 1621–22

Production of, prior to elections ... *Mather* 956

Budget 2005

Business plans 2005-08 (SP322/05: Tabled) ...
McClellan 747

Fiscal plan 2005-08 (SP321/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan*
747

Budget Address

[*See also Alberta—Economic policy*]

Motion 19: *McClellan* ... *McClellan* 747–50

Budget debate

Motion 19: *McClellan* ... *Hinman* 782–83; *Lukaszuk*
783; *Mason* 780–82; *Taft* 776–80

Building Alberta's Labour Supply

See Labour supply, Strategy re

Building design for the disabled

See Architecture and the disabled

Building trades—Collective bargaining

See Collective bargaining—Building trades

Building Trades Council, Alberta

See Alberta Building Trades Council

Bullying

Over the Internet ... *Forsyth* 1062

Bullying, Round-table on Family Violence and (May 2004)

See **Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary (May 2004)**

Bullying–Prevention

General remarks ... *Hinman* 1272–73

Provincial initiatives re ... *Forsyth* 1062; *Zwozdesky* 1274

Provincial initiatives re: For gay/lesbian youth ... *Blakeman* 1060–61; *Forsyth* 1062

Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... *Forsyth* 301, 303, 1051, 1052; *Mather* 303, 1054; *McClellan* 748; *Zwozdesky* 1265

Provincial initiatives re: Involvement of youth in ... *Danyluk* 1062

Statement re ... *Lindsay* 1715

Bullying Awareness Week

General remarks ... *Lindsay* 1715

Bunker C crude oil spill, Lake Wabamum

See **Spills (Pollution)–Lake Wabamum**

Burning of garbage

See **Incineration**

Bursaries

Funding for ... *Hancock* 860, 864

Bursaries for medical school students

See **Medical profession–Education, Bursary program for**

Bursaries for northern students

See **Northern Alberta Development Council, Bursary programs**

Bursaries for youth

See **Advancing futures bursary program**

Business & the Arts, Calgary Mayor's Luncheon for

See **Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts, Calgary**

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)

First reading ... *Brown* 127

Second reading ... *Backs* 677–78; *Brown* 423; *Elsalhy* 675–76; *MacDonald* 423; *Pannu* 676–77

Committee ... *Brown* 1113–15; *Elsalhy* 1113–15

Third reading ... *Bonko* 1194; *Brown* 1194; *Chase* 1194

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

Amendment (SP377/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1113; *Lindsay* 1116

Proclamation of ... *Brown* 1422; *Lund* 1422

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)

First reading ... *Brown* 1890

Second reading ... *Brown* 1955; *MacDonald* 1956–57; *Miller, R.* 1956; *Morton* 1955–56, 1957

Committee ... *Blakeman* 1979–80; *Brown* 1980; *Elsalhy* 1980; *MacDonald* 1980

Third reading ... *Hancock* 2030; *Pannu* 2030–31; *Tougas* 2030

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Business Information Centre, Calgary

See **Calgary Business Information Centre**

The Business Link

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007

Businesses

See **Corporations**

Businesses–Taxation

See **Corporations–Taxation**

Busing of schoolchildren

See **Schoolchildren–Transportation**

Button, Gordon

See **Ombudsman**

Bylaws, Municipal

See **Municipal bylaws**

Byrd amendment

See **Softwoods–Export–United States, Countervail duties re: Byrd amendment re**

CAA

See **Student assessment, Computer adaptive assessment tool re**

CAANA

See **Commuter Air Access Network of Alberta**

Cabinet meeting, British Columbia/Alberta joint

See **Alberta/British Columbia joint cabinet meeting, March 2005**

Cabinet ministers

See **Ministers (Provincial government)**

CAIS program

See **Canadian agriculture income stabilization program**

CAJ

See **Canadian Association of Journalists**

Calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta)

Extension of ... *Danyluk* 46; *Horner* 42, 46, 119–20, 301, 1207, 1208, 1498; *MacDonald* 1208; *Mitzel* 119
General remarks ... *Horner* 301, 1220

Calgary

As financial centre ... *Dunford* 1011

Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 838, 841

Calgary Airport Authority

Rent paid to federal government ... *Oberg* 362

Calgary Board of Education

Co-operation with police service in child abduction cases ... *Cenaiko* 487; *Pham* 486

English as a Second Language programs, funding for ... *Amery* 1572; *Cao* 1784; *Zwozdesky* 1572, 1784

International students ... *Cao* 1786

Portable classrooms ... *Chase* 1801

School construction delays ... *Ady* 1198–99; *Oberg* 1198–99

School maintenance problems ... *Oberg* 459; *Swann* 459

Shawnessy-Somerset school ... *Zwozdesky* 1914

Western Canada high school restoration funding ... *Oberg* 1572; *Taylor* 1572

Calgary Business Information Centre

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007

Calgary Catholic Board of Education

Funding ... *Ady* 1501; *Zwozdesky* 1501

Portable classrooms ... *Chase* 1801

Tuscany school ... *Zwozdesky* 1914

Calgary-Edmonton corridor

Economic growth in ... *Dunford* 531

Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Ltd.

Closure of race track ... *Graydon* 1283

Funding for ... *Graydon* 1798–99; *Tougas* 1798

Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 124, 976, 1278, 1288, 1289; *Tougas* 976, 1288

Statement re ... *Ady* 1204

Calgary Flames Hockey Club

Lottery funding *See* **Hockey, Lottery funding for**

Calgary General Hospital

Destruction of ... *Chase* 1087, 1466; *MacDonald* 1845

Calgary Health Region

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP91/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP619/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717

Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... *Evans* 1966, 2051; *Klein* 1966, 2051; *MacDonald* 1846; *Pannu* 1966, 2051

Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services, review of ... *Evans* 1966

Doctor shortage, northeast Calgary, review of ... *Amery* 533; *Evans* 533

Funding ... *Evans* 271, 977; *MacDonald* 1846; *Snelgrove* 977

Hip and knee surgery project ... *MacDonald* 1846

Hip/knee surgery contract with Health Resource Centre ... *Blakeman* 244-45; *Evans* 244-45, 644, 1145; *Klein* 644, 1145; *Mason* 643-44, 1145

Hospital capital upgrades ... *Evans* 1838; *Oberg* 1309

Partnership with Age Care Ltd. re long-term care facilities ... *Blakeman* 460; *Evans* 460

Partnership with Alberta Cancer Board re new cancer facility ... *Evans* 274

Physical therapy funding ... *Evans* 274

Privatization initiatives ... *MacDonald* 1846; *Mason* 1465

Calgary Heritage Fair

General remarks ... *Chase* 1342

Calgary HomeFront project (Domestic violence)

See **HomeFront (Domestic violence prevention program)**

Calgary Local Council of Women

Minimum wage increase, letter re (SP350/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 957; *Mason* 957

Calgary Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts

See **Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts, Calgary**

Calgary-McCall (Constituency)

Member for, appreciation extended to ... *Speaker, The* 4

Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... *Abbott* 4; *Cao* 4; *Clerk, The* 4, 5; *Danyluk* 4; *Haley* 4; *Johnson* 4; *Shariff* 4, 5; *Speaker, The* 4, 5

Calgary-Montrose (Constituency)

Member for's role in Calgary ward 10 municipal election investigation ... *Renner* 1249; *Taft* 1249

Member for's role re transfer of Wild Rose grants to Vietnamese cultural society ... *Mar* 1442; *Taft* 1442

Calgary-Mountain View (Constituency)

Member for ... *Blakeman* 26

Calgary Police Service

Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre ... *Cenaiko* 1123

Child abduction procedures ... *Cenaiko* 486; *Pham* 486

Child exploitation prevention teams ... *Cenaiko* 206

Domestic violence conflict unit ... *Cenaiko* 1576

Organized crime cases *See* **Integrated Response to Organized Crime**

Peace officers on beat in inner city areas ... *Cenaiko* 1437-38

Provincial funding for ... *Cenaiko* 800-01; *Pannu* 800-01

Calgary Public School Board

See **Calgary Board of Education**

Calgary Remand Centre

Extension to ... *Cenaiko* 696

Calgary Stampede

See **Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Ltd.**

Calgary Sun (Newspaper)

Calgary mayor's comments re ambulance service transfer to municipalities (SP7/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 27

Calgary Tower climb

See **Alberta Wilderness Association, Calgary Tower climb**

Calgary-Varsity (Constituency)

Events in, attended by the Member for ... *Chase* 1152, 1341-42

Calgary Vietnamese Cao daist Cultural Society

Statement re ... *Pham* 1672-73

Wild Rose grants transferred to ... *Mar* 1442, 1497; *Taft* 1442, 1497

Wild Rose grants transferred to: Community association's letter re (SP459/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1528

Wild Rose grants transferred to: Point of order re ... *Blakeman* 1452-53, 1454; *Hancock* 1453; *Pham* 1452, 1454; *Speaker, The* 1453-54

Calgary ward 10 municipal election

See under **Elections, Municipal—Calgary, Ward 10 election process**

Call centres

See **Health Link Alberta; Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)**

Calpine Energy Services

Electricity export application ... *MacDonald* 650; *Melchin* 650

Cambridge Strategies Inc.

Review of risk management fund for Alberta Members of the Legislative Assembly *See under* **Risk management fund**

Camp Firefly (Anti-bullying initiative)

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1061

Campaign funds, Electoral

See **Electoral campaign funds**

Campus Alberta

General remarks ... *Goudreau* 1394

Campus Alberta digital library

See **Lois Hole digital library (Proposed)**

Campus Alberta Quality Council

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP701/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 1891

Degree program approval process ... *Hancock* 851, 1168, 1790, 1791, 1796; *Pannu* 1794

Degree program approval process, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... *Chase* 1921-22; *Hancock* 1921-22; *Taylor* 1921

Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... *Hancock* 1166-67; *Martin* 1166-67; *Pannu* 1166

Campus Calgary

General remarks ... *Hancock* 864, 1791, 1793; *Taylor* 862, 1791, 1792

Campus daycare spaces

See **Daycare centres—Campuses**

Camrose casino

See **Casinos—Camrose**

Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act

- Petition presented ... *Brown* 326
- Recommendation to proceed, with amendment ... *Brown* 1033
- Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... *Brown* 369

Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act (Bill Pr. 2)

- First reading ... *Johnson* 622
- Second reading ... *Johnson* 1508; *Prins* 1508-09
- Committee ... *Johnson* 1509; *Prins* 1509
- Third reading ... *Johnson* 1556
- Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Amendment (SP363/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1033
- Amendment (SP457/05: Tabled) ... *Johnson* 1509; *Prins* 1509

Camrose Regional Exhibition and Agricultural Society

- Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 1286; *Pannu* 1285

Camrose regional sport development centre

- General remarks ... *Johnson* 1917-18

Camrose women's shelter

- See **Womens' shelters—Camrose**

Canada—History

- General remarks ... *Mather* 302

Canada/Alberta Affordable Housing Program

- Funding for Fort McMurray housing ... *Fritz* 87
- Funding for northern Alberta housing ... *Fritz* 1125
- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 881; *Fritz* 878, 882, 888, 1198

Canada/Alberta infrastructure program

- See **Infrastructure Canada/Alberta Program**

Canada/Alberta labour market development program

- General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1392

Canada/Alberta municipal rural infrastructure program

- General remarks ... *Oberg* 1086

Canada/Alberta set-aside program

- See **Calf set-aside program**

Canada Beef Export Federation

- General remarks ... *Horner* 1209

Canada Health Act

- Discussions with federal officials re ... *Hancock* 1308; *Swann* 1308
- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1463; *Evans* 205, 1147, 1465, 1843, 1846; *Mason* 1842
- Physician access to both public and private health systems provisions ... *Blakeman* 1622; *Evans* 1622

Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)

- General remarks ... *McClellan* 1667; *Miller, R.* 1188; *Morton* 1667; *Pastoor* 1181; *Stelmach* 1188
- Impact of Alberta's health care restructuring on ... *Hancock* 1308; *Swann* 1308
- Parity of Ontario and Alberta re ... *Groeneveld* 1503; *McClellan* 1524; *Pastoor* 1523-24; *Stelmach* 1503, 1523-24

Canada Health Day

- Statement re ... *Elsalhy* 1505

Canada Safeway Ltd.

- Oliver, Edmonton, store support for ArtStart program ... *Blakeman* 252

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

- Statement re ... *Prins* 293-94

Canadian agriculture income stabilization program

- Administration costs ... *Horner* 1851; *MacDonald* 1850
- Changes to ... *Danyluk* 1624-25; *Horner* 1624-25, 1849
- Claims under, impacts on ... *Horner* 1207
- Equity loss advance component ... *Horner* 298
- Funding of, with surplus funds ... *McClellan* 1626; *Miller, R.* 1626
- General remarks ... *Hinman* 263, 1217, 1714, 1851; *Horner* 49, 119-20, 122, 296, 297-98, 367, 488, 695, 1211-12, 1219-20, 1850, 1851; *MacDonald* 297, 1208-09; *Martin* 1212; *Marz* 488; *McFarland* 122; *Mitzel* 119; *VanderBurg* 367
- Overpayments ... *Horner* 1850-51; *MacDonald* 1850
- Recalculation of reference margins, pilot project re ... *Horner* 1624-25

Canadian armed forces

- Service in Afghanistan: Prayer/condolences for death re ... *Speaker, The* 1880

Canadian Association of Food Banks

- Time for Action: HungerCount 2005 (Report) (SP712/05: Tabled) ... *Oberle* 1891

Canadian Association of Journalists

- Code of Silence Award given to province of Alberta ... *Mason* 1569
- Code of Silence Award given to province of Alberta: News release re (SP462/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1528

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

- Greenhouse gas emissions reduction, comments on ... *Boutilier* 365, 485; *Eggen* 365

Canadian Beef Export Federation

- Legacy project ... *Dunford* 1017; *Horner* 298, 1220

Canadian Cancer Society

- Research on cancer prevention projects ... *Evans* 271

Canadian Cattle Identification Agency

- Age verification system for slaughter cattle ... *Horner* 1600
- RF ID tag requirement: Letter re (SP267/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 536

Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade

- NAFTA challenge re U.S. border closure to Canadian cattle ... *Horner* 289, 290-91, 301; *Klein* 290; *Martin* 290; *Mitzel* 289; *Pannu* 300

Canadian Cattlemen's Association

- General remarks ... *Horner* 290, 299, 949, 1210, 1215, 1220, 1498

Canadian College International Institute

- Monitoring report on, 2004 (SP445/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1508

Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre

- National surveillance program for avian flu ... *Coutts* 1781; *Horner* 1780

Canadian Council of the Blind, Alberta division

- Letter re using teacher aids to teach braille (SP756/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1971

Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

- Statement re ... *Lougheed* 1577-78

Canadian Environmental Protection Act (Federal)

- Amendments to, in federal budget legislation ... *Abbott* 485; *Boutilier* 485
- Carbon dioxide classified as noxious gas under ... *Boutilier* 1967; *Morton* 1967
- Vehicle for Project Green implementation ... *Melchin* 772

- Canadian Finals Rodeo 2005**
 Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 1278
 Statement re ... *VanderBurg* 1968
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency**
 Alberta level 3 lab approval ... *Horner* 1885
 Avian flu test results announcements ... *Haley* 1780;
Horner 1780
 BSE tests approval ... *Hinman* 1218; *Horner* 414, 417,
 1220
- Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area**
 Encana development in, news release re (SP550/05:
 Tabled) ... *Swann* 1675
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.**
 Hines Creek mill closure, impact of ... *Bonko* 123–24;
Coutts 88; *Dunford* 88–89, 123–24; *Goudreau* 88;
Oberg 88
- Canadian history, Governor General's award for
 excellence in teaching**
*See Governor General's award for excellence in
 teaching Canadian history*
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research**
 Report on workplace injuries in Canada ... *Backs* 1122;
Cardinal 1122; *Martin* 1118
- Canadian International Development Agency**
 Alberta partnership with, for foreign aid projects ... *Mar*
 1442, 1497, 1597; *Taft* 1497, 1526, 1597
- Canadian Legion**
See Royal Canadian Legion
- Canadian Medical Association**
 Provincial discussions with, re public/private health
 systems ... *Evans* 1665
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind**
 Bridge to employment program ... *Cao* 1524; *Fritz*
 1524
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited**
 Donation to Bonnyville recreation centre ... *Ducharme*
 1482
 Horizon oil sands project ... *Melchin* 203
 Horizon oil sands project, airport for ... *Cardinal* 1138
 Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at ... *Backs*
 121–22, 2048; *Cardinal* 121–22, 322, 2048–49;
Jablonski 121; *Klein* 647; *Martin* 647, 920, 1137
 Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at, statement
 re ... *Mason* 209–10
 Pipeline leak ... *Boutillier* 1448; *Melchin* 1447–48;
Swann 1447–48
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society**
 Newsrelease re Encana development in Suffield national
 wildlife area (SP550/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 1675
- Canadian Petroleum Interpretive Centre**
 Expansion to (Project Discovery) ... *Rogers* 774
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service**
 Air India bombing investigation ... *Mason* 462
- Canadian Space Agency**
 Partnership with Edmonton Public School Board ...
Mather 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1726
- Canadian Wheat Board**
 Market choice addition to ... *Hinman* 1217; *Horner*
 1221, 1222; *Martin* 1213; *Speech from the Throne* 9
 Protesters against, Saskatchewan court decision re ...
Morton 1203
 Value-added products removal from ... *Hinman* 1217
- Canamex highway**
See North/south trade corridor
- Cancer–Prevention**
 Pilot projects re ... *Evans* 271
- Cancer–Research**
 Dr. Stuart Kauffman's research ... *Herard* 1151
- Cancer–Treatment**
 Funding increase for ... *Blakeman* 1028; *Evans* 1028
- Cancer–Treatment –Southern Alberta**
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 1468
- Cancer Awareness Month**
 Recognition of ... *Chase* 490–91
- Cancer Board**
See Alberta Cancer Board
- Cancer Society, Canadian**
See Canadian Cancer Society
- Canfor**
See Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
- Canine sniffer program in schools**
See Drugs in schools, Use of dogs to detect
- Canmore Nordic Centre**
 Funding for ... *Mar* 1150
 General remarks ... *Tarchuk* 1888
 Upgrades to: Costs (M36/05: Accepted) ... *Mar* 1165;
Martin 1165; *Pannu* 1165; *Zwozdesky* 1165
 Upgrades to: Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 306; *Graydon*
 305, 306; *Mar* 305, 1473; *Pannu* 306
- Cannabis**
See Marijuana
- Canoe trip, Rocky Mountain House to Edmonton**
*See Centennial canoe trip, Rocky Mountain House to
 Edmonton*
- Canoffer Society**
 25th anniversary: Program from (SP390/05: Tabled) ...
Chase 1205
 25th anniversary: Statement re ... *Chase* 1152
- Canola program**
See Grow with Canola program
- CanWest CanSpell National Spelling Bee**
 Champion (Finola Hackett) ... *Lougheed* 907
- Caodaist Cultural Society, Calgary Vietnamese**
See Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society
- Capital account**
See Centennial Capital Plan
- Capital endowment fund (Proposed)**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1801; *Elsalhy* 1326
- Capital Finance Authority**
See Alberta Capital Finance Authority
- Capital fund**
See Centennial Capital Plan
- Capital Health**
 Abortion services, contracting out of ... *Evans* 853;
Pannu 853
 Allan Gray Continuing Care Centre, review of
 conditions in ... *Agnihotri* 1499; *Evans* 1499
 Ambulatory learning centre joint project *See Health
 sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of
 Alberta)*
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP131/05: Tabled) ... *Evans*
 211
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP620/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,*
The 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... *Evans* 1966,
 2051; *Klein* 1966, 2051; *Pannu* 1966
 Electric power bills to, overcharging re ... *Klein* 161;
Lund 161–62; *Mason* 161

Capital Health (Continued)

Funding ... *Evans* 271, 273, 977; *MacDonald* 1846; *Snelgrove* 977

Hip and knee surgery project ... *MacDonald* 1846

Hospital capital upgrades ... *Blakeman* 1839; *Evans* 1839

Outpatient residence, U of A hospital *See Walter C.*

Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre, Outpatient residence, replacement with private run facility

Physical therapy funding ... *Evans* 274

Physiotherapy service cuts ... *Blakeman* 163; *Evans* 163

Surplus funding for ... *Evans* 1622; *Taft* 1621

Capital investment, Public

See Investment of public funds

Capital Plan

See Centennial Capital Plan

Capital projects

Deficit re ... *Martin* 1802–03; *Oberg* 1803

General remarks ... *Chase* 265; *McClellan* 747, 749; *Speech from the Throne* 9; *Taylor* 261

Provincial funding for (Capital plan) *See Centennial Capital Plan*

Public/private partnerships re ... *Chase* 645, 905, 1467, 1883; *Elsalhy* 88; *Evans* 646; *Martin* 616–17, 1092, 1802; *McClellan* 616–17; *Oberg* 617, 645, 905, 1093, 1095, 1803, 1883–84; *Ouellette* 88

Public/private partnerships re: Auditor General's comments re ... *Martin* 616, 1092; *McClellan* 616; *Oberg* 1095

Public/private partnerships re: List of all potential projects (M33/05: Response tabled as SP512/05) ... *Backs* 1163; *Chase* 1162; *Clerk, The* 1608; *MacDonald* 1162–64; *Oberg* 1163, 1608; *Stelmach* 1163

Small projects funding ... *Chase* 1801; *Oberg* 1800

Surplus spending on ... *Oberg* 1621; *Taft* 1621

Capital projects, Medical

[*See also Health facilities–Construction*]

Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1844; *Blakeman* 272, 1839–41; *Evans* 271–75, 1458, 1838–39, 1841–46; *MacDonald* 1845–46; *Mason* 1842–43

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1841

Operating funds for ... *Blakeman* 1840; *Evans* 1841

Capital projects, Municipal

General remarks ... *Speech from the Throne* 9

Capital projects, Municipal–Finance

Calgary education projects ... *Ady* 1198–99; *Cao* 1026–27; *Oberg* 1026–27, 1198–99

Crowsnest Pass projects ... *Miller, B.* 1305–06; *Oberg* 1305; *Renner* 1306

Edmonton projects ... *Miller, R.* 258, 1327

Federal funding ... *Chase* 1801; *Miller, R.* 1328; *Oberg* 1086, 1800; *Renner* 1323; *Taft* 1323

Fort McMurray projects ... *Boutilier* 485; *Chase* 484–85, 575–76, 1199, 1627–28; *Danyluk* 203; *Klein* 484–85, 527–28; *McClellan* 527, 1628; *Melchin* 203; *Oberg* 200, 576, 1199, 1628; *Renner* 1628; *Taft* 200, 527

Fort McMurray projects: Statement re ... *Taylor* 535

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1327; *Chase* 796–97, 1086, 1199; *Elsalhy* 1326; *Forsyth* 900; *Hancock* 796–97; *Hinman* 900; *Martin* 1091; *McClellan* 749, 900; *McFarland* 1253; *Miller, R.* 1327;

Capital projects, Municipal–Finance (Continued)

General remarks (*Continued*) ... *Oberg* 200–01, 900, 1085, 1093–94, 1096, 1199, 1253; *Renner* 1253, 1323; *Taft* 200; *VanderBurg* 1095–96; *Zwozdesky* 771

Legacy funding for, proposed ... *Chase* 741; *Miller, R.* 960; *Zwozdesky* 741

Regional pooling of ... *Oberg* 1096; *VanderBurg* 1096

Summer villages projects ... *Oberg* 1096; *VanderBurg* 1096

Vetting of projects with provincial government ... *Martin* 1091; *Oberg* 1094, 1253; *Renner* 848; *Taft* 848

Capital projects–Finance

General remarks ... *Martin* 771; *Oberg* 1085, 1803; *Zwozdesky* 771

MLA input into prioritization of ... *Agnihotri* 1089

Statement re ... *Taylor* 535

Use of budget surplus funds for ... *Ady* 797–98; *McClellan* 797–98; *Oberg* 798

Capital projects–Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 804–05

CAPP

See Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

Car accident injuries

See Traffic accident injuries

Car chop shops

See Automobile chop shops

Car insurance–Premiums

See Insurance, Automobile–Premiums

Car phones

See Cellular telephones in automobiles

Car-racing on city streets

See Street car-racing

Car theft–Prevention

See Automobile theft–Prevention

Carbon dioxide

Classification as noxious gas ... *Boutilier* 1967; *Morton* 1967

Carbon dioxide emissions

Reduction in ... *Boutilier* 1829; *Eggen* 1374

Regulations re ... *Boutilier* 1967–68; *Morton* 1967

Research into ... *Doerksen* 1369, 1374; *Eggen* 1374

Carbon dioxide emissions credits trading

See Emission control credits, Trading of

Carbon dioxide projects

General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1887; *Melchin* 743

Joffre project ... *Boutilier* 21

Tax incentives for research into ... *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911–12

Carbon dioxide sequestering in oil recovery: Research

See Oil recovery methods, Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research

Carbon dioxide sinks

General remarks ... *Griffiths* 1334–35; *Horner* 1334–35

Carbon sequestration in soils

See Soils, Carbon absorption properties

Carbon technologies, Clean

See Clean energy technology

Carcass quality feedback program

See Cattle carcass quality feedback program

Cardiac surgery

See Heart–Surgery

Cardinal, Douglas (Architect)

Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Award recipient ... *Tarchuk* 1606

- Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger**
See Benedict XVI, Pope
- Cardinal-Schubert, Joane (Artist)**
See Artwork, Alberta, Donation to National Gallery of Canada
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation–Training**
 As part of school curriculum ... *Lukaszuk* 204–05;
Zwozdesky 205
 Statement re ... *Johnson* 535
- Cardiovascular surgery**
See Heart–Surgery
- Career Computer Center Inc.. Alberta**
See Alberta Career Computer Center Inc.
- Career development department**
See Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
- Career development programs**
See Employment training programs
- Careers: the Next Generation (Youth employment program)**
 General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1135
- Cargill, Incorporated**
 Relation to Ranchers Own ... *Horner* 1210; *MacDonald* 1208
- Caribou–Kakwa–Narraway watershed**
 Impact of industrial development on: Letter re (SP803/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2018
- Caribou management**
 General remarks ... *Bonko* 930, 1963; *Coutts* 926, 955, 1521, 1963, 1965; *Strang* 1964–65
- Caribou (Porcupine herd)–Alaska/Canada**
 Impact of drilling activity on ... *Brown* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188
- Caritas Health Group**
 School lunch program: Statement re ... *Blakeman* 2015
- Caroline highway maintenance yard, environmental issues re**
See Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation, Highway maintenance yard, Caroline, environmental issues re
- Cars, Government**
See Government vehicles
- Cars, Rebuilt**
See Automobiles, Written off/rebuilt
- Cars–Registration**
See Automobiles–Registration
- Cars–Seizure**
See Automobiles–Seizure
- Carseland/Bow River irrigation district**
See Bow River Irrigation District
- Carson, Ms Linda-Rae**
 Statement re ... *Miller, R.* 2016; *Morton* 2016
- CASA**
See Clean Air Strategic Alliance
- Cash register system for traffic fines, Computerized**
See Fines (Traffic violations), Computerized cash register system re
- Cashless technology for slot machines**
See Slot machines in casinos, Cashless technology for
- Casino licences**
 Application for, public hearing re ... *Tougas* 1288
- Casinos**
 Amendment to retain smoking in ... *Blakeman* 119;
Klein 119
 Cashless technology in ... *Graydon* 2052; *Tougas* 2052
- Casinos (Continued)**
 First Nations' casinos *See Gambling–Aboriginal reserves*
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 1281, 1283; *Tougas* 1279, 1889
 Impact on local crime rate ... *Graydon* 1287
 Limit on number of ... *Graydon* 1280, 1712–13; *Tougas* 1280, 1712–13
 Use as provincial revenue generator ... *Chase* 1744–45; *Tougas* 1279
- Casinos–Camrose**
 Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 1286; *Pannu* 1285
 Provincial funding for ... *Forsyth* 1200; *Mather* 1200
- CASS**
See Council of Alberta School Superintendents
- Castle–Crown wilderness area**
 General remarks ... *Mar* 2012
 Redesignation as Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park ... *Chase* 1673, 2012; *Klein* 2012
 Redesignation as Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park: Letter re (SP819/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2056
- Castle Downs high school priority**
See High schools–Construction–Edmonton, Castle Downs area school, change in priority re
- Castle Wetlands ecological reserve, West**
See West Castle Wetlands ecological reserve
- Cataract Creek wilderness protected area**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1480–81; *Mar* 1484
- Cataract surgery, Private–Calgary**
 Waiting times for ... *Evans* 1966, 2051; *Klein* 1966, 2051; *MacDonald* 1846; *Mason* 1465; *Pannu* 1965–66, 2051
 Waiting times for: Health and Wellness website chart re ... *Pannu* 1965–66, 2051
 Waiting times for: Health and Wellness website chart re (SP802/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 2018
- Catholic bishop of Calgary**
See Henry, Frederick B., Roman Catholic Bishop of Calgary
- Cattle**
 Age verification system re ... *Horner* 298–99, 1600, 1849
 Age verification system re: Press release re (SP496/05: Tabled) ... *Horner* 1607
 Tracking system re *See Livestock, Tracking system re*
- Cattle–Export–United States**
 Alternatives to ... *Horner* 46; *Taft* 15
 Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... *Danyluk* 46; *Hinman* 1017; *Horner* 43, 46, 48, 119, 1390; *Klein* 14–15, 290; *Martin* 22; *McClellan* 22–23; *Mitzel* 119
 Contingency plan re continued border closure ... *Pastoor* 1181; *Stelmach* 1182
 Current assistance plans re border reopening ... *Danyluk* 46; *Horner* 46
 Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... *Chase* 1186, 1187; *Haley* 417; *Hinman* 17, 262, 739, 1217; *Horner* 42–43, 289, 290–91, 301, 417, 739–40, 1207, 1210, 1220, 1498, 1849; *Klein* 14–15, 290, 739; *MacDonald* 297, 1208, 1209; *Martin* 22, 290, 1166; *Mason* 15–16, 42–43, 1498; *McClellan* 22–23, 749; *Mitzel* 289; *Pannu* 299; *Pastoor* 1182; *Snelgrove* 19–20; *Stelmach* 19–20, 1182, 1184, 1186–87, 1187; *Taft* 15; *Tarchuk* 461

Cattle–Export–United States (*Continued*)

Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed:
Appeal of ... *Horner* 949; *Mason* 949

Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed:
Appeal of, participation of federal PC party in ...
Horner 949, 1215; *Martin* 1212–13; *Mason* 949

Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed:
Appeal of, under NAFTA ... *Horner* 289, 290–91,
301; *Klein* 290; *Martin* 290; *Mitzel* 290; *Pannu*
299–300

Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed:
Web site re ... *Tarchuk* 461

Promotion of ... *Hinman* 1017

Cattle–Identification

RF ID tags for: Letter re (SP267/05: Tabled) ... *Martin*
536

Cattle–Import–United States

Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed,
impact on ... *Haley* 417; *Horner* 417

Cattle–Marketing

Diversification of markets for ... *Horner* 46; *Taft* 15

Cattle–Prices

General remarks ... *Horner* 1499; *Mason* 1499

Minimum floor price ... *Horner* 42; *Mason* 42

Minimum floor price: Petitions presented re ... *Eggen*
51; *Martin* 26, 252, 294, 326

Cattle brands–Inspection

See **Livestock brands–Inspection**

Cattle carcass quality feedback program

General remarks ... *Horner* 1600

Cattle Identification Agency, Canadian

See **Canadian Cattle Identification Agency**

Cattle risk materials

See **Specified risk material (Cattle parts)**

Cattle rustling

Statement re ... *Backs* 1258

Cattle rustling–Prevention

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1121; *Horner* 1121–22;
Mitzel 1121

Cattle set-aside program

See **Calf set-aside program**

Cattle slaughter facilities

See **Meat packing plants**

Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation

See **Ranchers–Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation**
(U.S.)

Cattlemen for Fair Trade, Canadian

See **Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade**

Cattlemen's Association, Canadian

See **Canadian Cattlemen's Association**

Cattlemen's Beef Association (U.S.)

See **National Cattlemen's Beef Association (U.S.)**

Caucus policy committees (PC party)

General remarks ... *Backs* 737–38, 774; *Blakeman* 54;
Haley 58; *Klein* 737–38

Meetings of tobacco companies with, 2001–2004

(M4/05:Accepted) ... *Evans* 494; *Mason* 494; *Pannu*
494

CAUS

See **Council of Alberta University Students**

CBM development

See **Coal bed methane extraction**

CCIO

See **Corporate Chief Information Officer**

Celanese Canada Inc.

Edmonton plant closure ... *Backs* 1443; *Martin* 920

Celebrations casino, Edmonton

Licence application, public hearing re ... *Tougas* 1288

Cellular telephones

Security concerns ... *Ouellette* 752

Cellular telephones in automobiles

Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... *Agnihotri* 1003;
Bonko 1000–01; *Cao* 1001–02; *Chase* 999, 1006;
Eggen 1002–03; *Hinman* 1005–06; *Jablonski*
1003–04; *Liepert* 999–1000; *Miller, R.* 1004–05;
Mitzel 1005

Cement

Shortage of, impact on road construction costs ...
MacDonald 1804; *Oberg* 1804

Cemeteries Act

Modernization of ... *Lund* 1425; *Miller, B.* 1424–25

Centenarians

Presentation of centennial medallions to ... *Speech from*
the Throne 8

Centennial ambassadors

General remarks ... *Chase* 1481; *Ducharme* 1483; *Mar*
1484

Centennial canoe trip, Rocky Mountain House to Edmonton

Statement re ... *Abbott* 907

Centennial Capital Plan

General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 966; *Hancock* 1795;
McClellan 958; *Oberg* 1805

Centennial celebrations

See **2005 Alberta centennial celebrations**

Centennial celebrations–Saskatchewan

General remarks ... *Chase* 1481; *Mar* 1484

Centennial Education Savings Plan

See **Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan**

Centennial family farm awards

See **Century Farm & Ranch awards**

Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)

General remarks ... *Mar* 645; *Snelgrove* 645
Premiers' wager re (SP331/05: Tabled) ... *Klein* 784;
Zwozdesky 784

Statement re ... *Snelgrove* 805

Centennial legacies grant program

[*See also* **2005 Alberta centennial celebrations**]
General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 324, 1474; *Mar* 324,
1150, 1472

Centennial Legacy Ball, Edmonton

General remarks ... *Chase* 1342

Centennial medallions

General remarks ... *Mar* 1473

Legislation re (Bill 2) ... *Mar* 51

Presentation protocol adjustment: Legislation re (Bill 58)
... *Mar* 1919

Presentation to Airdrie–Chestermere constituents ...
Haley 1786

Presentation to Alberta centenarians ... *Speech from the*
Throne 8

Presentation to Alberta schoolchildren ... *Speech from*
the Throne 8

Presentation to Members of the Legislative Assembly ...
Klein 3; *Taft* 3

Centennial Multicultural Gala Night, Calgary, Alberta

See **Alberta Centennial Multicultural Gala Night,**
Calgary

- Centennial salute for sport and recreation**
See Alberta centennial salute for sport and recreation
- Centennial Scholarship Program, Alberta**
See Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program
- Centennial Summary (Poem)**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1918
- Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)**
See Alberta Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)
- Centralized teacher bargaining**
See Collective bargaining—Teachers, Province-wide bargaining
- Centre for Child, Family and Community Research**
See Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research
- Centre for Chinese studies (Proposed)**
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 1079
 Statement re ... *Hancock* 946–47; *Hinman* 947; *Taft* 947
- Century Farm & Ranch awards**
 Jones Hereford ranch, statement re ... *Haley* 1786
- CEPA**
See Canadian Environmental Protection Act (Federal)
- Cereals—Prices**
See Grain—Prices
- Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta**
 Annual report, 2005 (SP692/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1838; *Clerk, The* 1838
- Certified Management Accountants of Alberta**
 Letter re Mount Royal College's degree-granting request (SP391/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 1206
- Cervid industry**
See Game farming
- Cesarean section booklet**
See Maternity Center Association, Booklet about cesarean section (SP410/05: Tabled)
- CFEP**
See Community facility enhancement program
- CFIA**
See Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- CFOs (Confined feeding operations)—Environmental aspects**
See Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects
- CFSAs**
See Child and family services authorities
- Chair**
 Election of ... *Amery* 2; *Clerk, The* 3; *Klein* 3; *Marz* 2, 4; *McFarland* 2; *Shariff* 2; *Speaker, The* 2, 3
- Chair, Deputy**
See Deputy Chair
- Chairs for research**
See Research and development, Chairs for, establishment of
- Champ Car Race, West Edmonton Mall Grand Prix**
See West Edmonton Mall Grand Prix Champ Car race
- Charitable Gaming in Alberta, 2003–2004 in Review (Report)**
 Copy tabled (SP145/05) ... *Graydon* 252
- Charitable Gaming in Alberta, 2004–2005 in Review (Report)**
 Copy tabled (SP670/05) ... *Graydon* 1837
- Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations**
 Gaming revenue for ... *Graydon* 1282; *Tougas* 1279
 Insurance costs for ... *Blakeman* 964–65; *McClellan* 965, 1031; *Miller, R.* 961
 Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 1278; *Pannu* 1288
 Support for people on social assistance ... *Blakeman* 1139
- Charlebois Consulting Ltd.**
See Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd.
- Charter for Humanity, Women's Global**
See Women's Global Charter for Humanity
- Charter of Rights**
See Constitution Act, 1982, Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Chartered aircraft, Government**
See Government chartered aircraft
- Chartered schools**
 General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1274
- Chartered schools—Finance**
 General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1260
- Chattels**
See Property, Personal
- Check Stop program**
 Use for graduated drivers' licence checks ... *Cenaiko* 1307–08; *Jablonski* 1307
- Cheviot Creek coal mine—Environmental aspects**
 General remarks ... *Eggen* 1041–42
 Road access assessment ... *Eggen* 1042
- Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre**
See Calgary Police Service, Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre
- Chief Electoral Officer**
 [See also **Fjeldheim, Brian (Retired Chief Electoral Officer)**]
 Annual report, 2003 (SP13/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 27
 Interim estimates 2005–06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257
 Interim estimates 2005–06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Introduction of ... *Speaker, The* 5
 Main estimates, 2005–06: Passed ... *Abbott* 764; *Chair* 751
 Main estimates 2005–06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... *McClellan* 747
 Report on candidates who failed to file campaign financial statements (SP256/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 492
 Report on Senate candidates who failed to file campaign financial statements (SP257/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 492
 Supplementary estimates 2004–05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
- Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee, Select Special**
 Motion to appoint (Motion 25: Hancock/Zwozdesky) ... *Hancock* 1943; *MacDonald* 1944; *Zwozdesky* 1943–44
- Chief Information Officer, Corporate**
See Corporate Chief Information Officer

Chief Internal Auditor's office

Budget ... *Klein* 1099, 1103; *MacDonald* 1102–03
 Liason with Auditor General ... *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein*
 1103, 1106; *MacDonald* 1103
 New chief's appointment process ... *Elsalhy* 1603;
McClellan 1603
 Performance measures ... *Klein* 1100
 Public members in, PC party membership ... *Klein*
 1024, 1102; *Taft* 1024, 1102
 Role in Securities Commission investigation ...
McClellan 1024; *Taft* 1024
 Role of ... *Brown* 1106; *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1100,
 1102, 1106; *MacDonald* 1102–03

Chief Justice (Hon. Catherine Fraser)

See Administrator of the Province of Alberta

Chief Medical Examiner's Office

Budget ... *Stevens* 1227

Chiefs of Police, Alberta Association of

See Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police

Child, Family and Community Research, Alberta Centre for

See Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research

Child abduction—Calgary

See Abduction of children—Calgary

Child abuse

Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... *Forsyth* 1390; *Mather*
 1390
 Victims of, services to ... *Blakeman* 1060

Child abuse—Legal aspects

Sentences re, increasing of ... *Miller, B.* 1228

Child abuse—Prevention

Provincial initiatives re ... *Cenaiko* 206, 1433, 1671;
Jablonski 206; *Speech from the Throne* 10
 Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... *Forsyth* 1051,
 1052

Child and family services authorities

Employee health premium costs ... *McClellan* 766; *Taft*
 766
 Funding ... *Forsyth* 301, 1051; *Mather* 302, 303
 Mental health programs ... *Evans* 903

Child and Youth Advocate

[*See also under old name Children's Advocate*]

Funding for ... *Forsyth* 1598; *Mather* 1598
 Role of ... *Forsyth* 1052
 Transfer to legislature officer status ... *Forsyth* 1445,
 1737; *Mather* 1445, 1737

Child benefit, National

See National child benefit

Child care after school

Accreditation ... *Forsyth* 2013; *Mather* 2013
 Provincial support for ... *Forsyth* 1731; *Mather* 1731

Child care after school—Employees

Salaries and training ... *Forsyth* 2013; *Mather* 2013

Child care centres

See Daycare centres

Child care centres—Employees

See Daycare centres—Employees

Child Day, National

See National Child Day

Child drug abuse—Treatment

See Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth

Child health benefits program

General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129

Child-in-need

See Child welfare recipients

Child labour

See Children—Employment

Child pornography

See Pornography, Child

Child poverty

See Children and poverty

Child prostitution

See Prostitution, Juvenile

Child psychiatric care

See Mental health services—Children

Child sex abuse—Prevention

See Child abuse—Prevention

Child support

See Maintenance (Domestic relations)

Child tax credit (In lieu of daycare subsidies)

See Tax incentives, Stay-at-home parents (re daycare)

Child welfare

Aboriginal children ... *Forsyth* 1052
 Early childhood intervention programs ... *Blakeman*
 1462; *Mather* 579; *Pannu* 1058
 Early childhood intervention programs: Funding ...
Forsyth 1052; *Pannu* 1063
 Government programs ... *Forsyth* 301–05; *Mather*
 301–03; *Pannu* 303–04
 Government programs: Cross-ministry initiative re ...
Forsyth 1056; *Mather* 1054
 Inquiry into: E-mail re (SP460/05: Tabled) ... *Mather*
 1528
 Statistics re, interpretation of ... *Forsyth* 1055; *Mather*
 1053–54

Child welfare, Regionalization of

See Child and family services authorities

Child welfare—Finance

General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1051–52; *Mather* 1055;
Pannu 1058

Child Welfare Act

Funding for youth in transition from custody ... *Cenaiko*
 1433

Child welfare recipients

Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... *Forsyth*
 1445, 1500–01; *Mather* 1390, 1445, 1500–01; *Stevens*
 1445
 Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, fatality review
 of ... *Forsyth* 1390, 1445; *Mather* 1390, 1445;
Stevens 1445
 Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, independent
 review of ... *Forsyth* 1445; *Mather* 1445
 Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, internal review
 of ... *Forsyth* 1390
 Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, special case
 review of ... *Forsyth* 1445, 1501, 1737; *Mather* 1501,
 1737
 Deaths of: Special case reviews re, publication of ...
Forsyth 1737; *Mather* 1737

Child welfare workers

E-mail re (SP460/05: Tabled) ... *Mather* 1528
 General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1500–01; *Mather* 1500
 Protective safe houses for child prostitutes, awareness of
 ... *Eggen* 1733

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act

Amendment to, re resource rebates (Bill 43) ...
McClellan 1631

- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act** (*Continued*)
 Assessment procedures ... *Mather* 1053–54
 Funding for implementation of ... *Forsyth* 301, 305, 1051, 1052, 1055, 1730, 1731; *Mather* 1054, 1731; *Pannu* 303–04, 1063; *Stevens* 275, 276, 1234
 Funding for youth in transition from custody ... *Cenaiko* 1433
 General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1500–01, 1827–28, 1832
- Childbirth, Association for Safe Alternatives in**
See Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth
- Childhood obesity**
See Obesity in children
- Children**
 Government programs for ... *Speech from the Throne* 10
- Children–Employment**
 Age restriction re ... *Backs* 1779; *Cardinal* 1779
- Children–Food services**
See School lunch programs; School nutrition programs
- Children and poverty**
 General remarks ... *Evans* 1778, 1832; *Forsyth* 1827–28, 1832; *Fritz* 1778; *Mather* 1831–32; *McClellan* 1827; *Taft* 1778–79, 1827; *Zwozdesky* 1779, 1827
- Children and Youth Initiative**
See Alberta Children and Youth Initiative
- Children at risk, Welfare of**
See Child welfare
- Children at risk–Education**
 General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 648
 Kindergarten programs for ... *Martin* 1028–29, 1269, 1722–23; *Zwozdesky* 1029, 1271
- Children in care**
See Child welfare recipients
- Children Involved in Prostitution Act**
See Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act
- Children's Advocate**
 [See also under new name **Child and Youth Advocate**]
 Annual report, 2002-03 (SP482/05: Tabled) ... *Forsyth* 1578
 Annual report, 2002-03: Responses to (SP483/05: Tabled) ... *Forsyth* 1578
 Annual reports, lateness of reporting of ... *Forsyth* 1598; *Mather* 1598
- Children's hospital, Calgary**
See Alberta Children's Hospital
- Children's mental health services**
See Mental health services–Children
- Children's Services, Dept. of**
See Dept. of Children's Services
- Children's services authorities**
See Child and family services authorities
- Chimo Healing Home (youth addictions treatment program)**
See Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, Chimo Healing Home (youth addictions treatment program)
- China-Alberta Petroleum Centre**
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1016
- Chinese oil sands investment**
See Tar sands development, Chinese investment in
- Chinese studies, Centre for (Proposed)**
See Centre for Chinese studies (Proposed)
- Chinook College**
 General remarks ... *Cao* 1786
- Chinook Regional Health Authority**
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP89/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP625/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Continuing care facilities, Lethbridge, letter re (SP702/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1891; *Mason* 1891
 Conversion of long-term care facilities to assisted living status ... *Evans* 1843
 Conversion of long-term care facilities to assisted living status: Letter re (SP758/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 1971
 Funding ... *Evans* 271
 Specialized medical services in ... *Hinman* 1468, 1845
- Chiropractic services–Fees**
 Set fees for traffic injury cases ... *McClellan* 691–92; *Rodney* 691–92
- Chiropractors of Alberta, College of**
See College of Chiropractors of Alberta
- Chop shops, Automobile**
See Automobile chop shops
- CHR**
See Calgary Health Region
- Christian Labour Association of Canada**
 Actions of Labour Relations Board in advancing interests of ... *Backs* 2009, 2048; *Cardinal* 2009, 2048–49
 General remarks ... *Backs* 1170; *Martin* 1170
 Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... *Backs* 411, 2048; *Cardinal* 321, 411, 458, 2048–49; *Martin* 321, 458, 647, 1136–37; *Mason* 362
- Christian schools–Finance**
See Private schools–Finance
- Chronic disease management pilot projects**
See Institute of Health Economics, Chronic disease management pilot projects
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease initiative**
 Federal funding ... *Evans* 271
- Chronic wasting disease**
 Deer infected with, served for human consumption, news article re (SP290/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 623
 Elk and deer testing for ... *Bonko* 937; *Horner* 250
 Human/animal risk of ... *Bonko* 250; *Coutts* 934; *Eggen* 933; *Evans* 319; *Horner* 250, 288, 319; *Klein* 288; *Swann* 288, 319
 Presence on game farms ... *Bonko* 250; *Coutts* 934; *Eggen* 933; *Horner* 456; *Klein* 288; *Prins* 456; *Swann* 288, 1221
 Research into ... *Horner* 1211
 Roadkill testing for ... *Bonko* 937
 Survey of ... *Coutts* 926
- Chronic wasting disease–United States**
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 1217
- Chrysalis Society**
 10th annual achievement awards: Program from (SP390/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1205
 10th annual achievement awards: Statement re ... *Chase* 1152
- CHST**
See Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)

- Chumir health centre, Calgary**
See Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, Calgary
- Churches' application for CFEP grants**
See Community facility enhancement program, Churches' application to
- CIA office**
See Chief Internal Auditor's office
- CIDA**
See Canadian International Development Agency
- Cigarette smoking—Prevention**
See Smoking—Prevention
- Cigarettes, Discount—Taxation**
 General remarks ... *Evans* 1028
- Cigarettes—Retail sales**
 Positioning re ... *Evans* 1028
- CIO**
See Corporate Chief Information Officer
- CIP**
See Community initiatives program
- CISA**
See Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta
- Cities and communities, federal funding for**
See Capital projects, Municipal—Finance, Federal funding
- Cities Transportation Partnership program**
See Alberta Cities Transportation Partnership program
- Citizens' assembly on electoral reform (Alberta) (Proposed)**
 General remarks ... *Klein* 691; *Pastoor* 691
 Legislation re (Bill 217) ... *Taylor* 2016
- Citizens' initiative referenda**
 Legislation re ... *Hancock* 1251; *Hinman* 1251
- Citizenship Commission**
See Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
- City centre education project (Edmonton)**
See Edmonton Public School Board, City centre education project
- City of Edmonton Archives**
 Historical projects: Statement re ... *Blakeman* 745
- City of Lloydminster**
See Lloydminster, City of
- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)**
 First reading ... *Snelgrove* 51
 Second reading ... *Eggen* 382–83; *Snelgrove* 238, 382–83; *Taft* 382
 Committee ... *Backs* 447; *Chase* 447; *MacDonald* 447–48; *Snelgrove* 447–48
 Third reading ... *Flaherty* 479–80; *Snelgrove* 479; *VanderBurg* 479
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- City transit—Finance**
See Public transit—Finance
- Civil law system**
 General remarks ... *Stevens* 1226–27
- Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)**
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 245–46, 572; *Klein* 245–46, 484, 572; *Mar* 317; *McClellan* 317; *Morton* 698; *Oberle* 484; *Ouellette* 317; *Stevens* 246; *Taft* 317
- Civil marriage commissioners**
 Exemption from performing same-sex marriages, letter re (SP632/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1745
- Civil mediation**
See Mediation (Legal process)
- Civil service—Alberta**
See Public service—Alberta
- Civil service—Alberta—Salaries**
See Wages—Public service employees
- Civil service pension cheques**
 Loss of microfiche copies of, privacy concerns re ...
Elsalhy 1026; *Klein* 1026; *Lund* 1423; *Mather* 1423; *McClellan* 1026
- Civil service pensions**
 Appeal process re ... *McClellan* 291–92; *Miller, R.* 291–92
 Letter re (SP425/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 1343
- Civilian oversight of police services**
See Police Act, Civilian oversight provision enhancement
- CJD**
See Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
- CKUA Radio**
 Statement re ... *Tougas* 907
- CLAC**
See Christian Labour Association of Canada
- Clark, Mr. Bob**
See Elections, Municipal—Calgary, Ward 10 election process: Bob Clark's inspection of
- Class size (Grade school)**
 Capping of ... *Martin* 1723; *Zwozdesky* 1730
 General remarks ... *Mather* 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1727
 Reduction of ... *Eggen* 1728; *Martin* 1269; *Speech from the Throne* 8; *Zwozdesky* 123, 1729–30
 Reduction of: Funding for ... *Ady* 977–78; *Flaherty* 307, 1570; *MacDonald* 311; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg* 1570; *Pannu* 308–09; *Zwozdesky* 166, 306, 308, 309, 311–12, 977–78, 1260, 1261, 1262, 1723
- Class size (High school)**
 Reduction of ... *Martin* 1269
- Classroom space**
 Impact of class size reduction targets on ... *Ady* 978; *Flaherty* 307; *Oberg* 978; *Zwozdesky* 308, 978
- Classrooms, Portable/modular**
See Portable/modular classrooms
- CLC, Olds College**
See Olds College, Community learning campus
- Clean Air Strategic Alliance**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1040; *Eggen* 1041
- Clean coal burning research**
See Electric power, Coal-produced, Research into
- Clean energy technology**
 Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... *Backs* 673–74; *Eggen* 670–71; *Groeneveld* 674–75; *Knight* 674; *Miller, R.* 671–72; *Pannu* 672–73; *Prins* 670; *Snelgrove* 672; *Swann* 669–70, 675
 Provincial tax incentives for research into ... *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911–12
- Clear-cut logging**
See Logging, Clear-cut
- Climate change**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1832; *Eggen* 933, 1042, 1832
 Initiatives re ... *Boutilier* 44–45; *Swann* 44
 International conference on, Montreal, November 2005 ... *Boutilier* 1832, 1914; *DeLong* 1887; *Doerksen* 1887; *Eggen* 1832, 1914

Climate change (Continued)

Kyoto protocol on ... *Abbott* 485; *Boutilier* 485; *Chase* 1047; *Danyluk* 906; *Eggen* 1374, 1914; *Hinman* 1444, 1714; *Horner* 1222; *Klein* 201, 1444; *Martin* 920; *Mason* 571; *Melchin* 532, 918–19; *Stelmach* 1181; *Swann* 44

Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to ... *Boutilier* 365, 1037, 1040, 1043, 1046, 1967–68; *Eggen* 364–65; *Melchin* 743, 771; *Morton* 1967; *VanderBurg* 743

Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to, publicity campaign re ... *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1105

Kyoto protocol on: Carbon credit plan re ... *Griffiths* 1334–35; *Horner* 1334–35

Kyoto protocol on: Federal plan re *See Project Green (Federal Kyoto accord implementation plan)*

Kyoto protocol on: ND opposition proposals for (SP203/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 370

Technological developments re ... *Boutilier* 21, 485, 1832; *Doerksen* 1369; *Johnson* 21; *McClellan* 749; *Melchin* 771–72

Climate Change and Emissions Management Act (Bill 37, 2003)

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 22; *Melchin* 743

Climate Change Central

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 44, 365, 1037, 1039, 1043, 1832, 1915, 1967; *Eggen* 1042; *Swann* 1038

Climate Fund (Federal)

General remarks ... *Abbott* 771; *Melchin* 771–72

Clinical practice guidelines symposium

See Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)

Clinics, 24-hour

See Medical care, 24-hour service re

Clinics, Private medical

See Health facilities, Private

Closure

See Schools–Closure

Closure debate (Parliamentary procedure)

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 54

Clubs

See Licensed premises

Cluster study re utilization levels in schools

See Edmonton Public School Board, Cluster study re utilization levels in schools

CMA

See Canadian Medical Association

CN Rail

Role in Port of Prince Rupert terminal *See Port of Prince Rupert, CN/Illinois Central's role in*

Train derailment, Lake Wabamum ... *Boutilier* 1667–68; *Lindsay* 1668; *McClellan* 1668; *Swann* 1667–68

CNRL

See Canadian Natural Resources Limited

Co-energy electrical production

[*See also Energy resources, Alternate*]

Garbage as energy source ... *Boutilier* 1710–11; *McFarland* 1710–11

Co-generation power plants

See Co-energy electrical production

Co-operative housing brochure

See Artspace Housing Co-operative Ltd., Brochure on co-op housing (SP551/05: Tabled)

CO₂

See Carbon dioxide

CO₂ credits trading

See Emission control credits, Trading of

CO₂ emissions

See Carbon dioxide emissions

Coal–Supply

General remarks ... *Melchin* 910

Coal bed methane extraction

General remarks ... *Eggen* 1033; *Melchin* 910

Impact of ... *Bonko* 1075; *Boutilier* 1202; *Coutts* 1075; *Eggen* 914; *Horner* 1075, 1391; *Melchin* 916, 1075, 1201–02; *Swann* 1201–02, 1391

Reclamation costs re ... *Eggen* 914; *Melchin* 916

Tax incentives for research into ... *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911

Water recovered from (Q7/05: Defeated) ... *Melchin* 659; *Zwozdesky* 659

Water recovery issues ... *Boutilier* 1202; *Eggen* 914; *Melchin* 916; *Swann* 1202

Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 664; *Melchin* 664; *Zwozdesky* 664

Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 664; *Melchin* 664; *Zwozdesky* 664

Coal bed methane extraction–Environmental aspects

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1202; *Eggen* 914; *Martin* 920–21; *Melchin* 1201–02; *Swann* 1201–02

Coal bed methane extraction–Horseshoe Canyon area

Impact of ... *Melchin* 1202; *Swann* 1201

Impact on tourism of ... *Chase* 1012

Coal-fired electric power

See Electric power, Coal-produced

Coal mines and mining–Cheviot Creek area–Environmental aspects

See Cheviot Creek coal mine–Environmental aspects

Coalition for Alberta's Future

Newsrelease re land use and oil/gas industry activity (SP339/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 858

Coalition for Equal Access to Education

English as a second language study ... *Cao* 1784; *Zwozdesky* 1784

Code of ethics

See Political ethics

Code of Silence Award

See Canadian Association of Journalists, Code of Silence Award given to province of Alberta: News release re (SP462/05: Tabled)

Cogeneration power plants

See Co-energy electrical production

COI Act Review Committee, Select Special

See Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special

Cold fX (Cold/flu prevention preparation)

Given to seniors in care facilities ... *Evans* 207

Collecting of accounts

See Debt collection

Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta

See Collective bargaining, Report on: Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta (SP638/05: Tabled)

Collective bargaining

First-contract certification legislation ... *Backs* 1625; *Blakeman* 647; *Cardinal* 1140, 1625, 1711–12; *Klein* 1625; *Martin* 1630, 1711–12

First-contract certification legislation, other provincial legislation re (SP606/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1716

Impact of use of foreign labour on ... *Klein* 647; *Martin* 647

Report on: Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta (SP638/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1746; *Clerk, The* 1746

Collective bargaining—Building trades

Elimination of ... *Martin* 1137

Collective bargaining—Health authorities

Labour Relations Board involvement in ... *Backs* 2008, 2009, 2048–49; *Cardinal* 2009, 2048–49; *Klein* 2008, 2009; *Mason* 2009; *Taft* 2008

Labour Relations Board involvement in: Letters/emails to HRE dept. re (SP801/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 2018

Labour Relations Board involvement in: News reports/emails re (SP799-780/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 2017; *Taylor* 2017

Labour Relations Board involvement in: Public inquiry into ... *Klein* 2008, 2009; *Mason* 2009; *Taft* 2008

Labour Relations Board involvement in: Public inquiry into, news release re (SPSP781/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 2017

Collective bargaining—Teachers

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 203; *Zwozdesky* 203, 1260, 1266

Province-wide bargaining ... *Abbott* 1712; *Bonko* 1267; *Flaherty* 203–04, 1147; *Hinman* 1273; *Lukaszuk* 1147–48; *Martin* 1270; *Zwozdesky* 204, 1147–48, 1268, 1271, 1274

Province-wide bargaining: Letter re (SP403/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1259

Ten year deal in return for teachers' pension plan solvency ... *Abbott* 1712; *Zwozdesky* 1712

Collective bargaining—Teachers—Fort McMurray

Agreement: Northern allowance provision ... *Flaherty* 203; *Zwozdesky* 203

College campuses' daycare spaces

See **Daycare centres—Campuses**

College faculty

See **University teachers**

College of Alberta Denturists

Annual report, 2003 (SP214/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 370; *Evans* 370

Annual report, 2004 (SP613/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717

General remarks ... *Fritz* 951

College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists

Annual report, 2004 (SP450/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508

Financial statements, 2004 (SP695/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1838; *Clerk, The* 1838

College of Alberta Professional Foresters

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP690/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1838; *Clerk, The* 1838

College of Alberta Psychologists

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP687/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1838; *Evans* 1838

College of Chiropractors of Alberta

Annual review, 2004-05 (SP766/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1971; *Evans* 1971

College of Chiropractors of Alberta (Continued)

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP466/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1529; *Clerk, The* 1529

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP660/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1789; *Clerk, The* 1789

College of Dental Technologists of Alberta

Annual report, 2004 (SP765/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1971; *Evans* 1971

College of Dietitians of Alberta

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP215 & 685/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 370, 1838; *Evans* 370, 1838

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP686/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1838; *Evans* 1838

College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta

Annual report, 2004 (SP398/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1206; *Evans* 1206

College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta

Annual report, 2003 (SP212/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 370; *Evans* 370

Annual report, 2004 (SP684/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1838; *Evans* 1838

College of Medical Laboratory Technologists, Alberta

See **Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists**

College of Optometrists

See **Alberta College of Optometrists**

College of Physical Therapists of Alberta

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP210/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 370; *Evans* 370

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta

General remarks ... *Mitzel* 240

Investigation of complaints against physicians: Letter re (SP113/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 171

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP455/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP661/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1789; *Clerk, The* 1789

Special register, section 5 (Foreign doctor recruitment) ... *Evans* 1122

College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, Alberta

See **Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists**

Colleges

See **Universities and colleges**

Colleges, Private—Finance

See **Private colleges—Finance**

Colleges, Private non-profit

See **Private non-profit colleges**

Colleges of Canada, Association of Universities and

See **Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada**

Collision injuries, Traffic

See **Traffic accident injuries**

Columbia College

Letters, memos re (M40/05: Defeated) ... *Hancock* 1167–68; *Martin* 1167–69; *Pannu* 1167

Commercial fisheries

See **Fisheries, Commercial**

Commercial motor vehicles—Inspection—Alberta/B.C. border

See **Trucks—Inspection—Alberta/B.C. border**

Commercial trucking industry

See **Trucking industry**

Commercialization of technology

See **Technology commercialization**

Commission on advanced education (Proposed)

Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... *Ady* 1547–48; *Brown* 1552; *Cao* 1553; *Chase* 1552–53; *Hancock* 1549–51; *Martin* 1551–52; *Mason* 1547, 1553–54; *Pannu* 1547; *Taylor* 1548–49

Commission on Learning, Alberta's

See **Alberta's Commission on Learning**

Commissions, Government

See **Government agencies, boards, and commissions**

Commissions, Police

See **Police commissions**

Committee of Supply

Interim estimates, 2005-06 considered for one day (Motion 14: McClellan) ... *McClellan* 211
Interim estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 13: McClellan) ... *McClellan* 211
Main and Lottery Fund estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 18: McClellan) ... *McClellan* 747
Motion to resolve into (Motion 5: McClellan/Hancock) ... *Hancock* 75; *McClellan* 75
Schedule of debate (SP315/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 746
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 considered for two days (Motion 9: McClellan) ... *McClellan* 94
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 referred to (Motion 8: McClellan) ... *McClellan* 94
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days (Motion 23: McClellan) ... *McClellan* 1681
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 22: McClellan) ... *Hinman* 1679–80; *Lukaszuk* 1680; *MacDonald* 1678–79; *Mason* 1676–78, 1680; *McClellan* 1680–81

Committee of the Whole Assembly

Motion to resolve into (Motion 4: Hancock) ... *Hancock* 75

Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing

Ethical investment deliberations ... *McClellan* 82, 120; *Miller, R.* 294
Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 11
Motion to appoint ... *Hancock* 11
Reports, 2004 & 2005 (SP739-740/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1920; *Liepert* 1920

Committee on Aviation, Standing

Minister's presentation to, re airport rental costs ... *Oberg* 1391

Committee on Continuing Care Standards, Standing

General remarks ... *Evans* 1464
Legislation re (Bill 213) ... *Pastoor* 1919

Committee on Education and Employment, Standing Policy

Home education issues ... *Abbott* 1255

Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy

Eastern Slopes access issues, discussion of rural municipalities report on ... *Coutts* 1573; *Groeneveld* 1573
Municipal infrastructure funding discussion ... *Boutilier* 485; *Danyluk* 531; *Dunford* 531; *Klein* 612; *McClellan* 527, 576; *Taft* 527

Committee on Justice and Government Services, Standing Policy

Vehicle Theft Committee's recommendations to ... *Cenaiko* 1256

Committee on Legislative Offices, Standing

Chair's comments re Auditor General ... *Tarchuk* 987
Discussion of Auditor General's power to investigate the Alberta Securities Commission: Letter re (SP434/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1452
Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 11
Motion to appoint ... *Hancock* 11
Referral of comments in Legislature re Auditor General to ... *Blakeman* 986; *Hancock* 985

Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing

Alberta Alliance member's request at ... *Hinman* 262
Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, referred to ... *Martin* 494
Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, referred to (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... *Hancock* 106; *MacDonald* 106–07; *Pannu* 107–08; *Stevens* 106, 108
Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 11
Members' Services orders no.1/05 to no.6/05 (SP258-63/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 492
Members' Services orders no.7/05 to no.9/05 (SP528-30/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 1632
Motion to appoint ... *Hancock* 11

Committee on Private Bills, Standing

Fees for petitions, recommendation to increase ... *Brown* 1033
Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 11
Motion to appoint ... *Hancock* 11
Report presented ... *Brown* 369, 1033, 1788

Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Standing

Members list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 11
Motion to appoint ... *Hancock* 11
Referral of comments in Legislature re Auditor General to ... *Blakeman* 986; *Hancock* 985; *Speaker, The* 988

Committee on Public Accounts, Standing

Chair of, directing questions to ... *Martin* 1789; *Speaker, The* 1789
Changes to operation of ... *Blakeman* 625; *Eggen* 1783–64; *Hancock* 1784; *Martin* 625; *Mason* 699
Changes to operation of, eight motions to amend SO50 re (SP673/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1837
Charlebois Consulting Ltd. contract, discussion of ... *Evans* 643
Members list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 11
Motion to appoint ... *Hancock* 11
Report, 2004 (SP111/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 625; *MacDonald* 171

Committee on Public Accounts, Standing (Federal government)

Sponsorship program investigation ... *Mason* 699

Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas, Provincial Advisory

See **Provincial Advisory Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas**

Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation, MLA

See **MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation**

Committee to review the Conflicts of Interest Act, Select Special

See **Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special**

Committees, All-party

General remarks ... *Pastoor* 1442

Statement re ... *Pastoor* 1451

Committees, PC caucus policy

See **Caucus policy committees (PC party)**

Committees, Select standing

Statement re ... *Backs* 773–74

Committees of the whole House

Historical background of ... *Speaker, The* 253

Commonwealth of Nations

General remarks ... *Forsyth* 301–02; *Klein* 1617

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Alberta branch

Annual report, 2003 (In Legislative Assembly Office, Annual report, SP16/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 27

Commonwealth Stadium concert re centennial celebrations

See **2005 Alberta centennial celebrations, Commonwealth Stadium concert re**

Communicable diseases—Control

Emergency response plan for ... *Speech from the Throne* 10

Communications Technology Institute, Alberta Information and

See **Alberta Information and Communications Technology Institute**

Community Development, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Community Development**

Community facility enhancement program

Churches' application to ... *Graydon* 1287; *Miller, B.* 1287

General remarks ... *Graydon* 771, 1277, 1278, 1282, 1284; *Tougas* 771

Lottery funds to ... *Graydon* 1289

Community halls—Rural areas

Food safety regulations in ... *Evans* 248, 1520; *Marz* 248; *Snelgrove* 1520

Community health centres

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469; *Swann* 1468

Community incentive grants

General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1062

Community initiatives program

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1277, 1278, 1282, 1284

Lottery funds to ... *Graydon* 1289

Community learning campus, Olds College

See **Olds College, Community learning campus**

Community learning centres

Funding for ... *Hancock* 981

Community Living, Alberta Association for

See **Alberta Association for Community Living**

Community Loan Fund Society, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Community Loan Fund Society**

Community lottery boards

See **Lottery boards, Community**

Community policing

See **Police, Neighbourhood patrols**

Community Research, Alberta Centre for Child, Family and

See **Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research**

Community schools

Funding for: Petition tabled re (SP273/05) ... *Eggen* 579

General remarks ... *Bonko* 1266–67; *Chase* 265; *Eggen* 1728; *Flaherty* 266, 1263–64; *MacDonald* 124, 1209; *Zwozdesky* 1729

Statement re ... *MacDonald* 369

Community support services program

See **Family and community support services program**

Community Supports, Dept. of Seniors and

See **Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports**

Community timber program

General remarks ... *Coutts* 927, 931

Communityaccessibility.ca (Web site)

General remarks ... *Lougheed* 1917

Commuter Air Access Network of Alberta

Edmonton City Centre Airport status ... *Dunford* 125

Competition Bureau (Federal)

Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... *Klein* 18, 83, 247, 286; *Lund* 249; *MacDonald* 533, 911, 949, 1337; *McClellan* 42; *Melchin* 18, 24, 118, 161, 204, 249, 286, 360, 456, 533, 796, 917, 949, 1196, 1337; *Taft* 18, 286

Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation: Backgrounder re (SP148/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 252–53

Enron's takeover of Sundance power plant production, investigation of ... *Melchin* 899

TransAlta electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... *MacDonald* 949; *Melchin* 949

Complainant protection

See **Whistle-blower protection**

Composting

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1040; *Swann* 1038

Compton Petroleum Corporation

Gas well drilling, Calgary area ... *Eggen* 915; *Melchin* 1391, 1742, 1828; *Swann* 1391, 1741, 1828

Compulsive gambling

See **Gambling, Compulsive**

CompuSmart.com

Executive Council contract ... *Klein* 1107; *Miller, R.* 1106

Computed tomography scans

See **CT scans (Medical imaging procedure)**

Computer adaptive assessment tool

See **Student assessment, Computer adaptive assessment tool re**

Computer equipment, Government

See **Government computer equipment**

Computer information systems, Government

See **Government information systems**

- Computer software licences for schools**
See **Microsoft Corporation, School software licences purchase by provincial government**
- Computerized cash register system for traffic fines**
See **Fines (Traffic violations), Computerized cash register system re**
- Computers—Recycling**
See **Electronic waste—Recycling**
- Computers in schools**
 Funding for ... *Bonko* 310; *Zwozdesky* 310
 General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1724
- Conditional sentences (Criminal procedure)**
See **Sentences, Conditional (Criminal procedure)**
- Confederation, MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in**
See **MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation**
- Confederation Park Senior Citizens Centre**
 Extension contract, letter re (SP725/05: Tabled) ...
Chase 1919
- Conference on climate change, Montreal**
See **Climate change, International conference on, Montreal, November 2005**
- Confidentiality of government records**
See **Public records—Confidentiality**
- Confidentiality of medical records**
See **Medical records—Confidentiality**
- Confidentiality of personal information**
See **Privacy, Right of**
- Confined feeding operations—Environmental aspects**
See **Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects**
- Conflict of interest**
 Auditor General's comments re ... *Lund* 1420; *Swann* 1419
 Declaration of, re Children's Services estimates (member withdrew) ... *Liepert* 1051
 Labour Relations Board's involvement in drafting collective bargaining legislation (Bill 27, 2003) ...
Klein 2008; *Taft* 2008
 Market surveillance administrator ... *MacDonald* 161; *Melchin* 161
 Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and Lubicon land claim ... *Stevens* 1600–01
 MLA nomination of candidates for ASC commissioners ... *McClellan* 1597; *Taft* 1597
 Natural Resources Conservation Board advisors' appearance at appeals hearings ... *Bonko* 1252; *Coutts* 1252
 Securities Commission appointments, MLA involvement in ... *McClellan* 1880; *Taft* 1880
 Securities Commission chair/interim chair issue ...
McClellan 1961; *Taft* 1961
 Securities Commission director of enforcement issue ...
Elsalhy 2011; *Mason* 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80; *McClellan* 1665, 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80, 2011
 WCB/Ana Gutierrez case ... *Backs* 1169
- Conflict of interest commissioner**
See **Ethics Commissioner**
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special**
 Appointment of (Motion 11: Stevens) ... *Chase* 105–06; *MacDonald* 105; *Pannu* 106; *Stevens* 105–06
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special (Continued)**
 Membership change for (Motion 24: Hancock) ...
Blakeman 1638; *Hancock* 1638
 Recommendations ... *Elsalhy* 2010–11; *Klein* 2011
- ConocoPhillips**
 Pipeline planning, wildlife consideration ... *Coutts* 1965
- Conservation Association, Alberta**
See **Alberta Conservation Association**
- Conservation of fish**
See **Fish conservation**
- Conservation of forests**
See **Forest conservation**
- Conservation of soil**
See **Soil conservation**
- Conservation of the environment—Finance**
See **Environmental protection—Finance**
- Conservation of water**
See **Water conservation**
- Conservation of wildlife**
See **Wildlife conservation**
- Conservation officers**
See **Fish and wildlife officers**
- Conservative Association of Alberta, Progressive**
See **Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta**
- Conservative Party of Canada**
See **Cattle—Export—United States, Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, participation of federal PC party in; Daycare centres—Finance, National program for: Alberta participation, federal Conservative Party comments re**
- Constables, Deputy**
See **Deputy constables**
- Constables, Special**
See **Special constables**
- Constitution Act, 1982**
 Alberta definition of marriage inclusion in ... *Hinman* 1738; *McClellan* 1738
 Alberta definition of marriage inclusion in, response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... *Stelmach* 1837
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms ... *Hinman* 1738; *McClellan* 1738
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms: 15 top Supreme Court decisions re (SP333/05) ... *Pannu* 806
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Application to farm workers, petition tabled re (SP508/05) ... *Eggen* 1608
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Application to prison inmates ... *Agnihotri* 855; *Cenaiko* 855; *Mar* 855
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... *Stelmach* 1837
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Same-sex marriage issue ... *Hinman* 1153
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Time limit for legislatures/elections ... *Mather* 956
 Opting out provisions (same-sex marriage issue) ...
Hinman 245–46, 1714; *Klein* 245–46; *Stevens* 246
 Property rights inclusion in ... *Hinman* 1738; *McClellan* 1738
 Property rights inclusion in, response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... *Stelmach* 1837
- Constitutional law**
 Question of, in government boards/tribunals, referred to courts (Bill 23) ... *Stevens* 170

Constitutional Referendum Act

- Property rights referendum during federal election ...
Hinman 1738; *McClellan* 1738
- Property rights referendum during federal election,
response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ...
Stelmach 1837

Construction Association, Alberta

See **Alberta Construction Association**

Construction sites on highways—Safety aspects

See **Highway construction sites—Safety aspects**

Construction trades

- Employment levels: Alberta government web site article
on (SP355/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 957
- Employment levels: Dorothy Paquette run for,
Edmonton - Fort McMurray ... *Backs* 652
- Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ...
Agnihotri 1090; *Backs* 121–22, 279, 318, 361, 411,
571, 1132; *Blakeman* 1140; *Bonko* 1266; *Calahasen*
839; *Cao* 802; *Cardinal* 85–86, 121–22, 280, 281,
318, 321–22, 361–62, 411, 458, 571, 802, 1133, 1135;
Danyluk 843; *Hancock* 248; *Jablonski* 85–86, 121;
Klein 647; *Martin* 321–22, 458, 647, 920, 1136–37;
Mason 361–62; *Oberg* 1090–91; *Taylor* 248;
Tougas 838
- Employment levels: Stats Can report on (SP202/05:
Tabled) ... *Martin* 370
- Employment levels: Stats Can report on (SP268 &
286/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 536, 622

Consulting Engineers of Alberta

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP693/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal*
1838; *Clerk, The* 1838

Consumer affairs department

See **Dept. of Government Services**

Consumer Choice (Government web site)

Excerpt from, re long-term retail electricity/natural gas
contracts (SP375/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1081

Consumer protection

- Auto insurance rates ... *Blakeman* 964–65; *Mason*
454–55; *McClellan* 363, 454–55; *Miller, R.* 363,
454; *Taft* 454
- Re electricity/gas contracts ... *Eggen* 1073–74; *Klein*
1073–74; *Lund* 1416, 1420; *MacDonald* 1073;
Martin 1420–21; *Melchin* 1073
- Re electricity/gas prices ... *Elsalhy* 975, 1418; *Hinman*
1074, 1426; *Klein* 161, 1074; *Lund* 161–62, 975,
1025, 1416, 1420; *MacDonald* 286, 455–56, 533,
650; *Martin* 420–21; *Mason* 161, 975–76, 1025;
Melchin 286, 455–56, 488, 533, 650; *Swann* 1419
- General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 1417; *Hinman* 1425; *Lund*
1415, 1416, 1424, 1425; *Mather* 1422; *Miller, B.*
1424; *Pastoor* 1423; *Speech from the Throne* 9
- Legislation re ... *Lund* 326; *Oberle* 326
- Web site for See **Consumer Choice (Government web
site)**

Contagious diseases—Control

See **Communicable diseases—Control**

Container terminals, Railway—Grande Prairie area

See **Railway container terminals—Grande Prairie
area**

Container terminals, Railway—Prince Rupert, B.C.

See **Railway container terminals—Prince Rupert, B.C.**

Contaminated sites

Cleanup of ... *Boutilier* 1961–62; *Mar* 1961; *Renner*
1323–24; *Swann* 1961–62; *Taft* 1323

Contaminated sites (Continued)

Energy industry sites, regulations re: Statement re ...
Swann 1969

Contaminated sites—Calgary

Cleanup efforts ... *Boutilier* 1709–10; *Cao* 1709–10

Contaminated soil—Lynnview Ridge, Calgary

Cleanup of ... *Boutilier* 84, 529–30, 1709; *Cao* 84, 529,
1709

Continental free trade

See **North American free trade agreement**

Continuing care facilities

See **Extended care facilities**

Continuing care facilities, Private

See **Extended care facilities, Private**

**Continuing Care Health Service and Accommodation
Standards, MLA Task Force on**

See **Extended care facilities, MLA committee to
review (2005)**

Continuing Care Standards, Standing Committee on

See **Committee on Continuing Care Standards,
Standing**

Continuing education councils

See **Community learning centres**

Contracted social services agencies (Non-profit)

See **Social services agencies (Non-profit)**

Contracts, Government

See **Public contracts**

Cornea transplants

Registry for ... *Evans* 1601; *VanderBurg* 1601
Waiting list for ... *Evans* 1601; *VanderBurg* 1601

Coronary artery bypass grafting procedure

See under **Heart—Surgery**

Coroner's inquiries

See **Fatality inquiries**

Corporate Chief Information Officer

General remarks ... *Ouellette* 752, 757, 758, 761
Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government
Efficiency ... *Doerksen* 461, 1372; *Elsalhy* 1370;
Ouellette 244, 751, 812

Corporate Corruption of Higher Education (Book)

General remarks ... *Pannu* 873

Corporate identity, Government

See **Government corporate identity**

Corporate income tax

See **Corporations—Taxation**

Corporate Service Centre

See **Alberta Corporate Service Centre**

Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 26)

First reading ... *McClellan* 210
Second reading ... *Chase* 537; *Martin* 537; *McClellan*
475; *Miller, R.* 537; *Rogers* 538
Committee ... *Miller, R.* 1489; *Rogers* 1489
Third reading ... *McClellan* 1513
Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
(Outside of House sittings)

Corporations

Alberta Venture list of most-respected ... *Rogers*
1450–51

Provincial information assistance to [See also **Electronic
Business Intelligence Service**]; *Dunford* 1007–08

Corporations—Law and legislation

Conversion to/from unlimited liability corporation,
minority dissenting shareholders buyout (Bill 56) ...
Brown 1890

- Corporations—Law and legislation** (*Continued*)
 Enforcement of ... *Mason* 1828; *McClellan* 1828
 Harmonization with federal legislation: Bill 16 ... *Brown* 127
- Corporations—Taxation**
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 412; *McClellan* 412
 Rebates re, interest paid on ... *McClellan* 964; *Miller, R.* 963
 Reduction in ... *Hinman* 970; *Mason* 968; *McClellan* 961–62; *Miller, R.* 961; *Pannu* 1793, 1797
 Tax avoidance prevention: Legislation (Bill 26) ... *McClellan* 210
- Correctional institutions**
 Aboriginal population *See Prisoners, Aboriginal*
 MLA committee to review *See Correctional Services MLA Review Committee*
- Correctional institutions—Finance**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1427, 1433–34; *Miller, B.* 1432
- Correctional institutions—Staff training**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1433
- Correctional institutions—Staffing**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1427
- Correctional Services MLA Review Committee**
 Report ... *Pastoor* 800
- Corridors, Strategic economic**
See Strategic economic corridors (Highway construction)
- Cougars**
 Public awareness of ... *Coutts* 769; *Groeneveld* 769
 Relocation of ... *Coutts* 769; *Groeneveld* 769
- Council of Alberta School Superintendents**
 General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 311
- Council of Alberta University Students**
 A Plan for Alberta's Universities (SP206/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 370
 Postsecondary education funding concerns ... *Pannu* 872
- Council of Education Facility Planners International**
 International award, given to Olds College ... *Marz* 1835
- Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety**
 Airport rental costs issue ... *Oberg* 362
- Council of the Federation**
 Alberta as chair of ... *Stelmach* 1181
 General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1185
 Meeting in Banff, 2005 ... *Stelmach* 288, 1182
 Meeting in Banff, 2005: Hosting costs ... *Stelmach* 1180, 1184
 Meeting in Banff, 2005: Senate reform discussions ... *Stelmach* 288, 455, 695
- Council on Admissions and Transfer**
See Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer
- Council on Electricity, Advisory**
See Alberta Advisory Council on Electricity
- Council on Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century**
See Provincial/Municipal Council on Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century, Minister's
- Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**
See Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
- Counsellors, Family court**
See Family court counsellors
- Counsellors, School/guidance**
See School counsellors
- Counterterrorism**
See Terrorist attacks—Prevention
- Countervail (Softwood lumber)**
See Softwoods—Export—United States, Countervail duties re
- Court briefs**
 Electronic distribution of *See Disclosure of evidence (Legal procedure), Computerized system re*
- Court interpretation services for disabled people**
See Interpretation services for disabled people in court
- Court interpreters—Fees**
 Increase in ... *Cao* 1502; *Stevens* 1226, 1502
- Court of Appeal (Alberta)**
 AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion ruling ... *Boutilier* 1027; *Swann* 1027
- Court of Appeal (Saskatchewan)**
 Wheat Board protesters acquittal ... *Morton* 1203
- Court of Queen's Bench**
 Edmonton Public School Board school closure decision ... *Flaherty* 1446; *Oberg* 1446; *Zwozdesky* 1446
 Edmonton Public School Board school closure decision (SP441/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1507
 General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 276
- Court proceedings, Video conferencing of**
See Video conferencing of court proceedings
- Court workers, Aboriginal**
See Aboriginal court workers
- Courtepatte, Nina Louise**
See Child welfare recipients, Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case
- Courthouse—Edmonton**
 Kyle Young's death in *See Young, Kyle James (Prisoner)*
- Courtroom security officers—Training**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 743, 1433; *Miller, B.* 743, 1430; *Stevens* 743
- Courts**
 Computer network expansion in, funding for ... *Stevens* 1225–26
- Courts, Aboriginal**
See Aboriginal courts
- Courts, Drug**
See Drug courts
- Courts—Calgary**
 Additional courtrooms, funding for ... *Miller, B.* 275; *Stevens* 275, 276
 New courthouse, Public/private funding of ... *Chase* 905; *MacDonald* 255; *Martin* 616; *Oberg* 905
- Courts—Finance**
 General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1228; *Pannu* 1232, 1235; *Stevens* 1234
- Courts—Security aspects**
 Funding for ... *Cenaiko* 1427
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 902, 1431; *Johnston* 902; *McClellan* 749; *Stevens* 1226
- Courts—Staff**
 Increase in ... *Stevens* 275
- Cousins Building, Lethbridge Community College**
See Lethbridge Community College, Cousins building upgrading, funding for

Cow-calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta)

See **Calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta)**

CP Rail

Ogden rail yards, Calgary: Toxic materials runoff from ... *Boutillier* 1709; *Cao* 1709

CPA

See **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

CPR–Training

See **Cardiopulmonary resuscitation–Training**

Credit card companies

Refund policy for unprovided services (airline tickets) ... *Lund* 204

Credit ratings, Personal

Consumer protection legislation re ... *Speech from the Throne* 9

Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation

Annual report, 2003 (SP79/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94

Annual report, 2004 (SP278/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 622

Credits, Emission control

See **Emission control credits**

Credits, High school

See **High school credits**

Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease

Incidence of ... *Horner* 250, 288

CRHA

See **Calgary Health Region**

Crime

News media coverage of ... *Miller, B.* 1227–28

Statistics re ... *Pannu* 1231

Toughening of sentencing re See **Sentences (Criminal procedure), Increasing of**

Crime, Gang-related–Prevention

See **Gang-related crime–Prevention**

Crime, Violent

See **Violent crime**

Crime prevention

[See also **Violent crime, Prevention of**]

Aboriginal programs re ... *Cenaiko* 1428

Funding for ... *Cenaiko* 1427; *McClellan* 748–49

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1256, 1428, 1671;

Lukaszuk 1671; *MacDonald* 1258; *Miller, B.* 1227–28; *Miller, R.* 1256

Crime rate

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1671; *Lukaszuk* 1671;

Pannu 1231

Criminal Code (Federal)

Conditional sentencing provisions ... *Stevens* 1229–30

Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 459, 1148, 1427

Criminal justice system

General remarks ... *Stevens* 1226

Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)

First reading ... *Jablonski* 1631

Second reading ... *Chase* 1867; *Jablonski* 1686–87;

Martin 1867–68; *Miller, B.* 1687; *Miller, R.* 1868

Committee ... *Agnihotri* 1902–03, 1905; *Dunford* 1905;

Elsalhy 1903; *Hancock* 1903–04; *Miller, B.* 1902;

Pannu 1904–05; *Tougas* 1904

Third reading ... *Jablonski* 2024–25; *Miller, B.* 2025

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Criminals, Rehabilitation of

See **Rehabilitation of criminals**

Criminals, Violent

Prevention of profiting from their stories: Legislation re (Bill 46) ... *Jablonski* 1631

Crisis management planning

See **Terrorist attacks–Prevention**

Critical infrastructure

See **Infrastructure, Critical**

Crop insurance program

Claims under, impacts on ... *Horner* 1207

Deductible for ... *Horner* 1214; *Martin* 1212

General remarks ... *Hinman* 1216; *Horner* 1214, 1850; *MacDonald* 1208; *Martin* 1212

Payouts to renters of land ... *Hinman* 1217; *Horner* 1219

Per-acre funding for payouts re ... *Horner* 1214; *Martin* 1212

Premiums for ... *Hinman* 1216; *Horner* 1219

Production insurance coverage ... *Goudreau* 1570;

Horner 1570

Snowed under crop coverage ... *Hinman* 1216; *Horner* 1219

Spring price endorsement option ... *Danyluk* 695;

Goudreau 979, 1570; *Hinman* 1216; *Horner* 695,

979, 1211, 1214, 1219, 1570, 1624, 1850

Spring price endorsement option: Statement re ... *Oberle* 698

Cross-country ski championships

2005 World Cup event in Alberta See **Alberta**

Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)

Haywood Canada Cup champion (Sara Renner) ...

Tarchuk 773

Crowfoot Learning Centre

See **Calgary Police Service, Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre**

Crown buildings

See **Public buildings**

Crown contracts

See **Public contracts**

Crown counsel

See **Government attorneys**

Crown lands

See **Public lands**

Crown leases

See **Oil and gas leases**

Crown wilderness area

See **Castle–Crown wilderness area**

Crowsnest Pass regulation

See **Municipal Government Act, Crowsnest Pass regulation**

Crude, Synthetic–Royalties

See **Heavy oil–Royalties**

Cruelty to animals, Legislation re

See **Animals, Treatment of, Legislation re (Bill 22)**

Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)

Cause of youth violence ... *Agnihotri* 1578

Chemical ingredients in, control of ... *Stevens* 1235

Chemical ingredients in, control of: Legislation re (Bill 204) ... *Stevens* 1235; *Strang* 171

Dogs as sniffers re, in schools ... *Hinman* 1272

Interprovincial conference re ... *Stevens* 1235

Manufacturing of (illegal meth labs) ... *Cenaiko* 1427, 1430; *Jablonski* 25

- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) (Continued)**
 Manufacturing of (illegal meth labs): Firefighting training re (SP186/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 327
 Safe injection site re: Letter (SP180/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 327
 Test for use of (strips detecting smell) ... *Zwozdesky* 1265
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse–Prevention**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 770, 1884; *Evans* 1669–70; *Flaherty* 1263; *Jablonski* 1669–70; *Mather* 1234; *Strang* 770; *Zwozdesky* 1265, 1729
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse–Treatment**
 AADAC treatment program for ... *Evans* 1669, 1670; *Rodney* 804
 Treatment centres for ... *Evans* 267, 852, 1669–70; *Flaherty* 266–67; *Jablonski* 1670
 Treatment centres for, in closed young offender centres ... *Cenaiko* 800; *Pastoor* 800
 Treatment centres for: News article re (SP194/05: Tabled) ... *Mather* 327
- CSIS**
 See **Canadian Security Intelligence Service**
- CT scans (Medical imaging procedure)**
 Coverage under health care plan ... *Blakeman* 366; *Evans* 366
 Private clinic provision of ... *Blakeman* 365–66; *Evans* 365–66
 Safety aspects ... *Blakeman* 365–66; *Evans* 365–66
- Culinary trade show**
 See **Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Exposition (ARFEX), Edmonton (2005)**
- Cultural facilities–Finance**
 General remarks ... *McClellan* 750
- Culture–Finance**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 797; *Zwozdesky* 797
- Cunningham, Dr. John Robert**
 Investiture into Order of Canada ... *Jablonski* 1743
- Curling championships**
 Masters Curling Championship ... *Rogers* 126
 Team Ferbey (2005 Brier champions) ... *Agnihotri* 169; *Lukaszuk* 168
 Team Ferbey (2005 Brier champions): Letter from Premier to (SP115/05: Tabled) ... *Lukaszuk* 171
 Team Ferbey (2005 world champions) ... *Ducharme* 650–51; *Lougheed* 651–52
 Team Ferbey (2005 world champions): Premier's letter to (SP304/05: Tabled) ... *Ducharme* 653; *Klein* 653
 Team Martin (2005 Canada Cup champions) ... *Rogers* 418
 Under-18 International champions (Scheidegger rink, Alberta rink) ... *McFarland* 578
 Western Canadian Blind championship ... *Abbott* 126
- Curricula**
 See **Education–Curricula**
- Custom Environmental Services Ltd.**
 Fire at ... *Boutilier* 1335–36, 1337–38; *Eggen* 1337–38; *Lougheed* 1335–36
- CWD**
 See **Chronic wasting disease**
- Cyberbullying**
 See **Bullying, Over the Internet**
- Cypress Hills Provincial Park**
 [See also **Parks, Provincial**]
 Centennial projects in ... *Mar* 1473
 Industrial development in ... *Chase* 1011–12
- Cystic fibrosis**
 Statement re ... *Lougheed* 1577–78
- Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Canadian**
 See **Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation**
- Daily physical activity in schools**
 See **Physical fitness–Teaching, Daily mandatory activities**
- Daishowa Canada Co. Ltd.**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1012; *Dunford* 1013
- Damage deposits**
 Legislation re (Bill 10) ... *Strang* 93
- Dangerous offenders**
 See **Criminals, Violent**
- DARE program**
 See **Drug abuse resistance education program**
- Darfur, Sudan**
 See **Genocide–Sudan**
- DATS**
 See **Disabled Adults Transportation Service**
- David Thompson Regional Health Authority**
 Annual report, 2003–04 (SP92/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004–05 (SP624/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Funding ... *Evans* 271
- Day for Tolerance**
 See **International Day for Tolerance**
- Day homes, Private**
 See **Daycare in private homes**
- Day of Disabled Persons, International**
 See **International Day of Disabled Persons**
- Day of Mourning, International**
 See **International Day of Mourning**
- Daycare centres**
 Available spaces in ... *Miller, B.* 1732; *Pannu* 1058
 National plan principles re ... *Blakeman* 1061; *Forsyth* 304, 1056, 1062, 1732, 2013; *Hinman* 1714; *Miller, B.* 1732; *Pannu* 304, 1057–58, 1309, 1917
 Quality of care in ... *Mather* 1054; *Pannu* 1057–58
 Special-needs children ... *Forsyth* 1730; *Mather* 1731; *Zwozdesky* 311
 Statement re ... *Pannu* 1916–17
 Subsidies re ... *Eggen* 1733; *Forsyth* 85, 304, 1730, 1733; *Mather* 85, 1054, 1055, 1731; *Pannu* 304, 1058, 1063, 1917
 Subsidies re, for stay-at-home parents ... *Forsyth* 1730, 1731; *Mather* 1731
 Survey re ... *Forsyth* 1056; *Mather* 1054–55
- Daycare centres–Campuses**
 Waiting lists for ... *Hancock* 1831; *Taylor* 1831
- Daycare centres–Closure**
 General remarks ... *Eggen* 1733; *Forsyth* 1733
- Daycare centres–Employees**
 Accreditation program for ... *Eggen* 1733; *Forsyth* 1056, 1059, 1732, 2013; *Mather* 1056, 2013; *Speech from the Throne* 10
 Qualifications of ... *Pannu* 1063
 Salaries of ... *Forsyth* 1730, 1731, 1733, 2013; *Mather* 1054–55, 1731, 2013; *Pannu* 1063, 1917
 Salaries of: KPMG study of ... *Eggen* 1732; *Pannu* 1058
 Training for ... *Forsyth* 1730; *Mather* 1730
- Daycare centres–Finance**
 General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1052; *Pannu* 1063
 National program for ... *Pannu* 621

Daycare centres—Finance (*Continued*)

National program for: Alberta participation ... *Ady* 1388–89; *Blakeman* 1059; *Forsyth* 85, 304, 1051–52, 1056, 1059, 1076–77, 1309–10, 1388–89, 1730, 1731, 1732, 1733, 2013; *Groeneveld* 1503; *Hancock* 1831; *Hinman* 1444; *Klein* 1444; *Mather* 85, 1054–55, 1731, 2013; *Miller, B.* 1732; *Morton* 1076–77; *Pannu* 304, 621, 1309–10; *Stelmach* 1392, 1503

National program for: Alberta participation, federal Conservative Party comments re ... *Forsyth* 1059; *Pannu* 1058

National program for: Alberta participation, Letters re (SP282-284/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 622

National program for: Alberta participation, Letters re (SP308/05: Tabled) ... *Mather* 699

Resource rebate funds use for, letters re (SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1837

Daycare centres—Inspection

Surplus funding for ... *Forsyth* 1732; *Mather* 1731

Daycare centres—Safety aspects

General remarks ... *Eggen* 1733; *Forsyth* 1733

Daycare in family members' homes

Subsidies for ... *Forsyth* 1730, 1732

Daycare in private homes

Subsidies for ... *Forsyth* 1730

Daycare in private homes—Inspection

Surplus funding for ... *Forsyth* 1731; *Mather* 1730

Death Highway

See Highway 63

Debate (Parliamentary procedure)

Time limits on ... *Blakeman* 54

Debenture Interest Rebate Program, Municipal

See Municipal Debenture Interest Rebate Program

Debt collection

Consumer protection legislation re ... *Speech from the Throne* 9

Debts, Public (Municipal government)—Fort McMurray

General remarks ... *Chase* 576; *McClellan* 576

Debts, Public (Provincial government)

General remarks ... *Chase* 1086, 1466; *Dunford* 1010; *McClellan* 749, 750, 958, 1448–49; *Melchin* 922; *Miller, R.* 1448; *Oberg* 1093; *Speech from the Throne* 9

General servicing costs re ... *McClellan* 964; *Miller, R.* 963

Retirement of: Legislation re (Bill 37) ... *McClellan* 775; *Zwozdesky* 775

Statutory servicing costs re ... *McClellan* 964; *Miller, R.* 963

Debts, Student

See Student financial aid

Deceased persons

Disclosure of personal information re: Legislation re (Bill 8) ... *Mitzel* 373

Declaration of Arbroath (Scottish independence, 1320)

Recognition of ... *DeLong* 578

Decriminalization of marijuana

See Marijuana, Decriminalization of

Deep Well Oil & Gas Ltd.

Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ... *Boutillier* 902–03; *Eggen* 902–03; *Melchin* 643; *Swann* 643

Deer

Testing of, for chronic wasting disease ... *Horner* 250

Deer—Alberta/Saskatchewan border area

Culling of, due to CWD threat ... *Bonko* 250, 937; *Coutts* 934; *Eggen* 933; *Horner* 250

Deer—New York (State)

CWD infected deer served for human consumption, news article re (SP290/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 623

Deer ranching

Impact of chronic wasting disease on ... *Horner* 456; *Prins* 456

Deerfoot Trail, Calgary

Douglasdale Drive interchange, funding for ... *Oberg* 1086

Median barrier installation ... *Oberg* 2011; *Shariff* 2011

Deficit financing

General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 966

Delegations, International

See International delegations

Dell Inc.

Involvement in Alberta ... *Dunford* 1010

Delta Driving School

Licensing incident ... *McFarland* 1309; *Oberg* 1309

Demerit points (Traffic infractions)

Application to photoradar infractions ... *Abbott* 614; *Oberg* 615

Democratic renewal

See Electoral reform

Denmar Energy Services Ltd.

Donation to Bonnyville recreation centre ... *Ducharme* 1482

Team Ferby sponsors ... *Ducharme* 650

Dental Assistants Association

See Alberta Dental Assistants Association

Dental Association and College

See Alberta Dental Association and College

Dental benefits for seniors

See Alberta seniors benefit program, Dental benefits

Dental Hygienists' Association

See Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association

Dentistry, Veterinary

Inclusion in Veterinary Profession Act *See Veterinary Profession Act, Changes to, re veterinary dentistry inclusion in*

Denturists, College of Alberta

See College of Alberta Denturists

Dependent Adults Act

Review of ... *Fritz* 887; *Speech from the Throne* 10

Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP39/05: Tabled) ... *Calahasen* 93; *Clerk, The* 93

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP562/05: Tabled) ...

Calahasen 1675; *Clerk, The* 1675

Estimates, 2005-06: Amount of detail in ... *Tougas* 837

Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Bonko* 843, 845; *Calahasen* 835–42, 844–45; *Danyluk* 836–37, 843, 844; *Eggen* 839–40; *Hinman* 841–42; *Swann* 844, 845; *Tougas* 837–38, 844

Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP501/05: Tabled) ... *Calahasen* 1608

Funding details ... *Calahasen* 844, 845; *Eggen* 839–40; *Hinman* 841; *Swann* 844, 845; *Tougas* 837

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
(Continued)

Minister's potential conflict re Lubicon land claim process ... *Calahasen* 841; *Stevens* 1600-01
Staffing ... *Calahasen* 835

Dept. of Advanced Education

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP563/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Hancock* 1675
Budget target ... *Hancock* 1621; *Taft* 1621
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Abbott* 874; *Blakeman* 865-67; *Brown* 874; *Cao* 874-75; *Eggen* 875; *Flaherty* 874; *Hancock* 859-61, 863-65, 867-71, 875; *Pannu* 872-74; *Prins* 874; *Taylor* 861-63, 870
Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP429/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 1396
General remarks ... *Chase* 755
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Chase* 265-66; *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257; *Pannu* 259; *Taylor* 261
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
Nonbudgetary disbursements ... *Pannu* 259
Return of capital funding to ... *Oberg* 1803
Separation from Dept. of Learning, costs re ... *Blakeman* 865; *Hancock* 869
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Hancock* 276-78; *Mason* 278; *Taylor* 276-77
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Chase* 1798; *Hancock* 1789-98; *Pannu* 1793-94, 1796-97; *Taylor* 1791-92

Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP40/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Horner* 93
Annual report, 2004-05 (SP564/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Horner* 1675
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Hinman* 1216-19; *Horner* 1206-12, 1214-16, 1219-23; *MacDonald* 1208-09; *Martin* 1212-14; *Swann* 1221
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Hinman* 262-63; *Horner* 258; *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
Minister's trip to Ottawa re border closure to Canadian cattle ... *Klein* 14; *Stelmach* 20
Rural offices closure ... *Horner* 298; *MacDonald* 297, 1850
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Horner* 296-301; *MacDonald* 296-97; *Pannu* 299-300
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Hinman* 1851-52; *Horner* 1849-51; *MacDonald* 1850
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852

Dept. of Agriculture (United States)

Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... *Horner* 289, 290, 417, 739-40, 949; *Mason* 949; *Mitzel* 289; *Stelmach* 19-20

Dept. of Children's Services

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP41/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Forsyth* 93
Annual report, 2004-05 (SP565/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Forsyth* 1675

Dept. of Children's Services (Continued)

Business plan ... *Mather* 1053
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Blakeman* 1059-61; *Danyluk* 1052-53, 1062-63; *Forsyth* 1051-52, 1055-57, 1059, 1061-62; *Johnston* 1053; *Mather* 1053-57; *Pannu* 1057-58, 1063; *Taylor* 1057
Estimates, 2005-06: Member declared conflict of interest re, and withdrew ... *Liepert* 1051
General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1138
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 305; *Forsyth* 301, 303-05; *Mather* 301-03, 305; *Pannu* 303-04
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Eggen* 1731-32; *Forsyth* 1730-33; *Mather* 1730-31; *Miller, B.* 1731
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852
Youth substance abuse treatment programs funding ... *Forsyth* 23; *Jablonski* 23

Dept. of Community Development

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP42/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Mar* 93
Annual report, 2004-05 (SP566/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Mar* 1675
Budget allocations ... *Mar* 1475-76
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 1474-75, 1483; *Blakeman* 1476-77; *Brown* 1482; *Chase* 1480-81; *Ducharme* 1482-83; *Eggen* 1477-78; *Mar* 1472-73, 1475-76, 1479, 1484; *McClellan* 1479-80; *Miller, R.* 1483-84
Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP720/05: Tabled) ... *Mar* 1919
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 260; *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
Seniors division, Ombudsman's letter re concerns re (SP289/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 622-23
Staffing ... *Agnihotri* 1475; *Mar* 1476
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 305-06; *Graydon* 305-06; *Pannu* 306
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852

Dept. of Economic Development

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP43/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Dunford* 93
Annual report, 2004-05 (SP567/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Dunford* 1675
Corporate communications, relation to Public Affairs Bureau ... *Dunford* 1015; *Eggen* 1014
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Bonko* 1008-10; *Chase* 1011-13; *Dunford* 1006-08, 1010-11, 1013, 1015-18; *Eggen* 1014-15; *Hinman* 1017
Grants distributed by (M45/05: Defeated) ... *Bonko* 1748; *Doerksen* 1748; *Dunford* 1748
Hosting expenses, 1992-2005 (Q39/05: Defeated) ... *Bonko* 1747; *Doerksen* 1747; *Dunford* 1747
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257

Dept. of Economic Development (Continued)

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Performance measures ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1011
 Relation to Dept. of International and Intergovernmental
 Relations ... *Eggen* 1183; *Stelmach* 1183, 1187
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ...
Blakeman 281; *Dunford* 281
 Trade missions expenditures (Q13/05: Defeated) ...
Bonko 808; *Chase* 808; *Elsalhy* 808; *MacDonald*
 808; *Renner* 808
 Trade show expenditures (Q12/05: Defeated) ... *Bonko*
 807; *Chase* 807; *Dunford* 807; *Elsalhy* 807;
MacDonald 807; *Renner* 807

Dept. of Education

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP568/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk*,
The 1675; *Zwozdesky* 1675
 Business plan ... *Zwozdesky* 1260
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Bonko* 1266-67;
Flaherty 1262-64; *Hinman* 1272-73; *Martin*
 1269-71; *Mather* 1275; *Zwozdesky* 1259-62,
 1264-69, 1271-75
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Chase* 265;
Flaherty 266; *Hinman* 263; *MacDonald* 254
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Minister's visits to all school boards ... *Herard* 165-66;
Zwozdesky 166
 Return of school capital funding to ... *Cao* 1914; *Chase*
 1086-87, 1801; *Eggen* 1728; *Flaherty* 84; *Martin*
 1802; *Oberg* 84, 1088, 1803; *Zwozdesky* 1723, 1914
 Separation from Dept. of Learning, costs re ... *Blakeman*
 865; *Hancock* 869
 Supplementary estimates ... *Flaherty* 1264; *Zwozdesky*
 1265
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Bonko*
 309-10; *Flaherty* 307; *MacDonald* 311; *Mason* 310;
Pannu 308-09; *Zwozdesky* 306-12
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber*
 312
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ...
Agnihotri 1724; *Eggen* 1728-29; *Flaherty* 1721;
Martin 1722-23; *Mather* 1725-26; *Zwozdesky*
 1720-30

Dept. of Energy

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP44/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 93; *Melchin* 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP569/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk*,
The 1675; *Melchin* 1675
 Communications contracts expenditures, 2003-04
 (Q16/05: Defeated) ... *Boutilier* 811; *Chase* 811;
Hancock 811-12; *MacDonald* 811, 812
 Contracted employees/consultants salaries, 2003-04
 (M25/05: Response tabled as SP808/05) ... *Boutilier*
 990; *Clerk, The* 2018; *MacDonald* 990; *Melchin*
 2018
 Discussions with Enron, correspondence re (M47/05:
 Defeated) ... *MacDonald* 1749; *Melchin* 1749;
Taylor 1749
 Discussions with Enron, correspondence re (SP678/05:
 Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1837
 Discussions with Enron, public access to documents re
 ... *Klein* 246-47; *MacDonald* 246-47
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Eggen* 913-15; *Elsalhy*
 917-18; *MacDonald* 910-12; *Martin* 919-21;
Melchin 908-10, 912-13, 915-19, 921-22

Dept. of Energy (Continued)

Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during
 (SP484 & 734/05: Tabled) ... *Melchin* 1578, 1920
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Minister's noninternational trips details, 2003-04
 (M26/05: Response tabled as SP735/05) ... *Boutilier*
 990-91; *Clerk, The* 1920; *MacDonald* 990; *Mason*
 991; *Melchin* 1920
 Service contracts costs, 2003-05 (Q41/05: Defeated) ...
MacDonald 1748; *Melchin* 1748; *Taylor* 1748
 Staffing ... *MacDonald* 911; *Melchin* 913

Dept. of Environment

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP45/05: Tabled) ... *Boutilier*
 93; *Clerk, The* 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP570/05: Tabled) ... *Boutilier*
 1675; *Clerk, The* 1675
 Corporate services ... *Swann* 1039
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Boutilier* 1036-37,
 1039-40, 1042-49; *Chase* 1047-48; *Eggen* 1040-42;
Johnson 1046-47; *Swann* 1037-39, 1049; *Taylor*
 1044-45
 Funding level for ... *Klein* 573, 768-69; *McClellan* 769;
Swann 573, 768-69
 Information technology requirements funding ... *Swann*
 282
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Minister's role in Fort McMurray land sale [See also
under Alberta Social Housing Corporation]; *Fritz*
 1570; *Mason* 1570
 Minister's role re hazardous materials spills ... *Boutilier*
 1668; *Swann* 1668
 Performance measures ... *Boutilier* 1037, 1043; *Eggen*
 1041; *Swann* 1038
 Staff ... *Boutilier* 1045-46; *Swann* 1039; *Taylor* 1045
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Swann*
 282
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber*
 312
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley*
 1852
 Support services ... *Eggen* 1041

Dept. of Finance

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP47/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 93; *McClellan* 93
 Annual report, 2005 (SP572/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 1675; *McClellan* 1675
 Business plan ... *Miller, R.* 961
 Communications division ... *McClellan* 961; *Miller, R.*
 959, 963
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Blakeman* 964-65;
Elsalhy 966-67; *Hinman* 970-71; *Mason* 968-69;
McClellan 958-59, 961-62, 964-70; *Miller, R.*
 959-63, 966
 Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during
 (SP433/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1452
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254;
McClellan 264; *Miller, R.* 256
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Minister of, comments re ... *Blakeman* 986; *Hancock*
 420, 985; *Speaker, The* 421; *Taft* 410
 Nonbudgetary disbursements ... *Miller, R.* 256
 Performance measures ... *Miller, R.* 961

Dept. of Finance (Continued)

Revenues ... *McClellan* 959
 Staff ... *McClellan* 959; *Miller, R.* 963
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Mason* 283; *McClellan* 283; *Miller, R.* 283
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312

Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans (Federal government)

Bridges over waterways, construction approval process ... *Hinman* 1804-05; *Oberg* 1802

Dept. of Gaming

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP48/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Graydon* 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP573/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Graydon* 1675
 Budget: Other initiatives item ... *Graydon* 1284; *Tougas* 1284
 Business plan ... *Tougas* 1279
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Chase* 1283-84; *Graydon* 1277-84, 1286-90; *MacDonald* 1289-90; *Miller, B.* 1287; *Pannu* 1284-86, 1288; *Swann* 1282-83; *Tougas* 1279-81, 1284, 1287-88
 Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP458/05: Tabled) ... *Graydon* 1528
 General remarks ... *Tougas* 1279
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Flaherty* 266-67; *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 258; *Pastoor* 268
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Role of ... *Graydon* 1277
 Social responsibility division ... *Graydon* 487, 1286
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Graydon* 1798-99; *MacDonald* 1799; *Tougas* 1798-99

Dept. of Government Services

Access and privacy branch, role of ... *Elsalhy* 1418
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP49/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Lund* 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP574/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Lund* 1675
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Brown* 1422; *Elsalhy* 1417-18, 1426; *Hinman* 1425-26; *Lund* 1415-26; *Martin* 1420-21; *Mather* 1422-23; *Miller, B.* 1424-25; *Pastoor* 1423-24; *Swann* 1419-20
 Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP497/05: Tabled) ... *Lund* 1607
 Fees ... *Lund* 1415
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Performance measures ... *Lund* 1415; *Martin* 1421
 Relation to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... *Martin* 756; *Taylor* 757
 Staffing ... *Elsalhy* 1417; *Lund* 1418
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
 Support services budget ... *Elsalhy* 1417; *Lund* 1418

Dept. of Health and Wellness

Annual report, 2003-04, sections I and II (SP50-51/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Evans* 93
 Annual report, 2004-05, sections I and II (SP575-576/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Evans* 1675
 Budget target ... *Evans* 1621; *Taft* 1621

Dept. of Health and Wellness (Continued)

Contracts awarded to Charlebois Consulting Ltd. ... *Evans* 642-43; *Taft* 642-43
 Credit or recovery budget amounts ... *Blakeman* 273
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Blakeman* 1459-64, 1469-70, 1471; *Chase* 1466-68, 1470; *Evans* 1458-59, 1461-62, 1464-65; *Hinman* 1468; *Mason* 1465-66; *McClellan* 1464, 1471-72; *Swann* 1468
 Health information protection budget ... *Blakeman* 617; *Evans* 617
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Evans* 259-60, 267; *MacDonald* 255; *Miller, R.* 257, 258; *Pannu* 267; *Pastoor* 268-69
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Medical imaging services, digital, cost savings on ... *Ouellette* 757
 Return of health facility funding to ... *Chase* 1801; *Martin* 1802; *Oberg* 1803
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Blakeman* 272-74; *Evans* 271-75; *Mason* 274
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Responses to questions during (SP516/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1608; *Evans* 1608
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 1844; *Blakeman* 1839-41; *Evans* 1838-39, 1841-46; *Hinman* 1844-45; *MacDonald* 1845-46; *Mason* 1842-43
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852
 Website chart re cataract surgeries in Calgary (SP802/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 2018

Dept. of Health (Federal)

Draft report on CWD in wild game animals ... *Horner* 456; *Prins* 456

Dept. of Human Resources and Employment

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP52/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 93; *Clerk, The* 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP577/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1675; *Clerk, The* 1675
 Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta (Report) (SP638/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1746; *Clerk, The* 1746
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 1141-42; *Backs* 1130-32; *Blakeman* 1138-40; *Bonko* 1133-34; *Cardinal* 1129-30, 1132-33, 1135, 1137-38, 1140-41; *Martin* 1135-37
 Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP494/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1579; *Clerk, The* 1579
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 255
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Labour Relations Board letters/emails to, re health care union restructuring (SP801/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 2018
 Minister's resignation ... *Backs* 2009; *Cardinal* 2009
 Research and development funding ... *Agnihotri* 1142; *Backs* 1131
 Service centres ... *Cardinal* 280, 1129
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Backs* 278-81; *Cardinal* 278, 280-81
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312

Dept. of Human Resources and Skills Development (Federal)

Minister of: Alberta MLA's comments re ... *Abbott* 1607; *Miller, R.* 1606-07

Dept. of Infrastructure

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP53/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Oberg* 94

Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP578/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Oberg* 1675

Anthony Henday Drive southeast project, background re (SP169/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 295; *Pannu* 295

Budget target ... *Oberg* 1621; *Taft* 1621

Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 1089-90; *Chase* 1086-88; *MacDonald* 1097-98; *Martin* 1091-93; *Oberg* 1085-86, 1088-91, 1093-98; *VanderBurg* 1095-96

General remarks ... *Chase* 755

Highway maintenance yard, Caroline, environmental issues re ... *Oberg* 1800

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Chase* 264; *MacDonald* 255; *Miller, R.* 258; *Taylor* 261

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Reason for merging together ... *Oberg* 1088

Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... *Cao* 1914; *Chase* 1086-87, 1801; *Eggen* 1728; *Flaherty* 84; *Martin* 1802; *Oberg* 84, 1088, 1803; *Zwozdesky* 1723, 1914

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Chase* 1801-02; *Hinman* 1804-05; *MacDonald* 1803-04; *Martin* 1802-03; *Oberg* 1799-1805

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852

Dept. of Innovation and Science

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP55/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Doerksen* 94

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP579/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Doerksen* 1675

Credit card statements for deputy minister (M18/05: Response tabled as SP772/05) ... *Chase* 820; *Doerksen* 2017; *Elsalhy* 820; *Zwozdesky* 820

Employee information technology security awareness, actions to promote (Q18/05: Defeated) ... *Elsalhy* 812-13; *Ouellette* 812

Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Backs* 1375-76; *Chase* 1377; *Doerksen* 1368-69, 1372-78; *Eggen* 1373-74; *Elsalhy* 1370-72; *Miller, B.* 1377-78

Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP498/05: Tabled) ... *Doerksen* 1607

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 255

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Performance measures ... *Backs* 1376; *Doerksen* 1372, 1377; *Elsalhy* 1370

Staffing ... *Doerksen* 1372; *Elsalhy* 1370

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312

Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP56/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Stelmach* 94

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP580/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Stelmach* 1675

Budget target ... *Stelmach* 1621; *Taft* 1621

Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations

(Continued)

Elimination of ... *Bonko* 1187; *Stelmach* 1187

Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... *Bonko* 1187, 1189; *Brown* 1188; *Chase* 1184-87, 1189; *Eggen* 1182-83; *Miller, R.* 1187-88; *Pastoor* 1181-82; *Stelmach* 1180-89

Hosting expenses, 1996-2004 (Q17/05: Response tabled as SP743/05) ... *Pastoor* 812; *Stelmach* 812, 1970; *Stevens* 812

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 255; *Pastoor* 269

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Performance measures ... *Bonko* 1187, 1189; *Eggen* 1183; *Pastoor* 1181, 1182; *Stelmach* 1182, 1189

Relation to Dept. of Economic Development ... *Eggen* 1183; *Stelmach* 1183, 1187

Staff ... *Miller, R.* 1187; *Stelmach* 1188

Dept. of Justice and Attorney General

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP57/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Stevens* 94

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP581/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Stevens* 1675

Business plan ... *Mather* 1234; *Miller, B.* 1227; *Stevens* 1225

Discussions with federal Justice dept. re sentencing in child abuse cases ... *Miller, B.* 1228

Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Flaherty* 1235; *Mather* 1234; *Miller, B.* 1227-28; *Pannu* 1230-32, 1235-36; *Stevens* 1225-30, 1232-36

Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP495/05: Tabled) ... *Stevens* 1579

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 255

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Relations with other depts. ... *Miller, B.* 1227; *Stevens* 1229

Relations with Solicitor General's dept. ... *Stevens* 1229

Role of ... *Stevens* 1229

Staffing ... *Miller, B.* 1228; *Stevens* 1229

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Mason* 276; *Miller, B.* 275-76; *Stevens* 275-76

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312

Dept. of Learning

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP58/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Zwozdesky* 94

Credit card statements for deputy minister (M17/05: Response tabled as SP718/05) ... *Chase* 819; *Flaherty* 818; *MacDonald* 818-20; *Martin* 819; *Zwozdesky* 818, 1919

General remarks ... *Chase* 755

Separation into depts. of Education and Advanced Education, costs re ... *Blakeman* 865; *Hancock* 869

Dept. of Municipal Affairs

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP59/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Renner* 94

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP582/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Renner* 1675

Credit card statements for deputy minister (M15/05: Response tabled as SP826/05) ... *Chase* 817; *Clerk, The* 2056; *MacDonald* 815-17; *Renner* 816, 2056; *Taft* 815; *Zwozdesky* 816

Dept. of Municipal Affairs (Continued)

- Credit card statements for minister and executive assistant (M16/05: Response tabled as SP827/05) ... *Clerk, The* 2056; *MacDonald* 817–18; *Renner* 817, 2056; *Taft* 817; *Zwozdesky* 817
- Elected officials' training courses *See* **Municipal excellence program**
- Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Agnihotri* 1327; *Bonko* 1328–29; *Elsalhy* 1326–27; *Martin* 1324–26; *Miller, R.* 1327–28; *Pastoor* 1324; *Renner* 1319–24, 1326; *Taft* 1321–23
- Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP456/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1508; *Renner* 1508
- Information technology section, contracting out of, privacy aspects ... *Pastoor* 1324
- Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 255
- Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
- Minister's business expenses (M14/05: Response tabled as SP825/05) ... *Clerk, The* 2056; *MacDonald* 815; *Renner* 815, 2056; *Taft* 815; *Zwozdesky* 815
- Performance measures ... *Miller, R.* 1328
- Staffing ... *Martin* 1325
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
- Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852
- Support services ... *Renner* 1321

Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency

- Alberta Corporate Service Centre transferred to ... *Elsalhy* 1417; *Lund* 1418, 1420; *Ouellette* 244, 751
- Alberta SuperNet project transferred to ... *Doerksen* 461; *Eggen* 1373; *Elsalhy* 461, 1370; *MacDonald* 255; *Miller, R.* 257
- Alberta SuperNet project transferred to: Documentation re (M29/05: Accepted) ... *Elsalhy* 1160; *Ouellette* 1160
- Ambulance services restructuring, role in ... *Ouellette* 244; *Taft* 244
- Annual report, 2004-05 (SP583/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Ouellette* 1675
- Budget statements ... *Chase* 756; *Martin* 756; *Ouellette* 753, 754–55, 756, 757
- Communications function ... *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1099, 1101
- Cost of establishing ... *Ouellette* 244; *Taft* 244
- Cross-government human resources function ... *Elsalhy* 1710; *Ouellette* 1710
- Deputy ministers, number of ... *Chase* 755
- Elimination of ... *Hinman* 1599; *McClellan* 1599
- Enron electricity prices manipulation scheme, investigation of ... *Elsalhy* 249; *Ouellette* 249
- Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Ady* 763; *Blakeman* 753–54, 760; *Chase* 755–56; *DeLong* 758; *Elsalhy* 763; *Goudreau* 761; *Hinman* 761–62; *MacDonald* 759–60; *Martin* 756–57; *Miller, R.* 763; *Ouellette* 751–63; *Taylor* 757–58
- Estimates, 2005-06: Net loss statement ... *Elsalhy* 763
- Executive Council budget increase, investigation of ... *Klein* 1103; *MacDonald* 1103
- ICT initiative for cross-government system ... *Ouellette* 1710
- Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 255; *Miller, R.* 257; *Pannu* 259
- Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency*(Continued)*

- Microfiling of Alberta pension cheques, recommendation to cease ... *Elsalhy* 1026; *McClellan* 1026
- Opportunity and restructuring assessment function ... *Ady* 763; *Elsalhy* 763; *Goudreau* 761; *Ouellette* 751, 761, 763
- Regulatory review function ... *Ouellette* 1710
- Relation to Dept. of Government Services ... *Martin* 756; *Taylor* 757
- Role of ... *Eggen* 1183; *Elsalhy* 1104, 1710; *Hinman* 970; *Klein* 244, 1109; *Martin* 756; *Mason* 1108; *Ouellette* 244, 1710; *Taft* 244
- School closures for efficiency reasons ... *Ouellette* 287; *Taylor* 287
- Staffing ... *Elsalhy* 763, 1104; *Klein* 1099; *MacDonald* 759; *Ouellette* 761

Dept. of Revenue

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP60/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94

Dept. of Seniors

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP61/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Fritz* 94

Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports

- Annual report, 2004-05 (SP584/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Fritz* 1675
- Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Ady* 889; *Backs* 889–90; *Blakeman* 880–81; *DeLong* 890; *Fritz* 877–80, 882–85, 887–90; *Groeneveld* 887; *Hinman* 888; *Johnston* 890; *Martin* 884–86; *Mather* 884; *Pastoor* 879–80; *Prins* 884; *Taylor* 882–83
- Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP439/05: Tabled) ... *Fritz* 1507
- Financial statements, inclusion of management bodies' surpluses/assets in ... *Fritz* 1253; *Pastoor* 1252–53
- Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 255; *Pannu* 259
- Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
- Jurisdiction re long-term care residents' treatment ... *Evans* 613
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... *Fritz* 282–83; *Pastoor* 282–83
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
- Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852

Dept. of Solicitor General

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP62/05: Tabled) ... *Cenaiko* 94; *Clerk, The* 94
- Annual report, 2004-05 (SP585/05: Tabled) ... *Cenaiko* 1675; *Clerk, The* 1675
- Business plan ... *Cenaiko* 1427; *Miller, B.* 1429–30
- Communications branch ... *Cenaiko* 1435–36; *Taft* 1435
- Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Blakeman* 1436–37; *Cenaiko* 1427–28, 1430–38; *Mason* 1437; *Miller, B.* 1428–30, 1432; *Taft* 1434–35
- Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
- Minister's letter re Crowsnest Pass police grant ... *Cenaiko* 1305; *Miller, B.* 1305
- Minister's letter re Crowsnest Pass police grant (SP411/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1315
- Relations with Justice dept. ... *Stevens* 1229

Dept. of Solicitor General (Continued)

- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852

Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP63/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Coutts* 94
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP586/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Coutts* 1675
 Deputy Minister's and departmental official's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M13/05: Response tabled as SP738/05) ... *Bonko* 667; *Clerk, The* 1920; *Coutts* 667, 1920; *Zwozdesky* 667
 Deputy Minister's office budget ... *Bonko* 928
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Bonko* 927-30, 937-38; *Coutts* 925-27, 930-37; *Eggen* 932-33; *Groeneveld* 935; *Oberle* 935-36
 Fee revenues ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 931
 Human resources budget ... *Bonko* 928
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Lottery funding to ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 930
 Minister's and executive assistant's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M12/05: Response tabled as SP737/05) ... *Bonko* 666-67; *Clerk, The* 1920; *Coutts* 666, 1920; *Zwozdesky* 666-67
 Minister's business expenses, 2003-04 (M11/05: Response tabled as SP736/05) ... *Bonko* 666; *Clerk, The* 1920; *Coutts* 666, 1920; *Zwozdesky* 666
 Minister's office budget ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 930
 Property theft in (Q28/05: Response tabled as SP776/05) ... *Bonko* 1158; *Cardinal* 1158; *Coutts* 1158, 2017; *Miller, R.* 1158
 Role in Métis hunting/fishing agreement ... *Calahasen* 1574
 Staff salaries ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 930
 Staffing ... *Coutts* 925, 930
 Strategic corporate services budget ... *Bonko* 928
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Bonko* 1847-48; *Coutts* 1846-49; *Swann* 1849
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Haley* 1852
 Support services funding ... *Bonko* 928

Dept. of Transportation

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP54/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *Oberg* 94

Deputy Chair

- Election of, on second ballot ... *Abbott* 4; *Cao* 4; *Clerk, The* 4, 5; *Danyluk* 4; *Haley* 4; *Johnson* 4; *Klein* 3; *Shariff* 4, 5; *Speaker, The* 4, 5

Deputy Chair—Rulings and statements

- Access to Statutes in the Assembly ... *Deputy Chair* 1958
 Decorum ... *Deputy Chair* 256
 Insulting language ... *Deputy Chair* 267
 Questions to members other than ministers ... *Deputy Chair* 839
 Referring to the absence of members ... *Deputy Chair* 267
 Relevance ... *Deputy Chair* 606
 Separating amendments ... *Deputy Chair* 723
 Speaking order ... *Deputy Chair* 1465

Deputy constables

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1436; *Cenaiko* 1437

Deputy Speaker

- Election of ... *Amery* 2; *Clerk, The* 3; *Klein* 3; *Marz* 2, 4; *McFarland* 2; *Shariff* 2; *Speaker, The* 2, 3

Deputy Speaker—Rulings and statements

[See also **Speaker—Rulings and statements**]

- Addressing questions through the chair ... *Deputy Speaker* 1862
 Decorum ... *Deputy Speaker* 142
 Historical vignettes of Alberta ... *Deputy Speaker* 199
 Legislature Page appreciation (Leah Halliday) ... *Deputy Speaker* 1258
 Legislature Page recognition ... *Deputy Speaker* 1604-05, 2055

Deregulation: Public inquiry into

See **Electric utilities—Regulations, Deregulation: Public inquiry into**

Desalination of water

- Research into ... *Chase* 1377

Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board, Persons with

See **Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board**

Developmentally disabled

See **Mentally disabled**

Developmentally disabled—Housing

See **Mentally disabled—Housing**

DeVry Institute of Technology

- Academic programs, approval of ... *Hancock* 1166, 1168; *Martin* 1166

Diabetes—Treatment

Edmonton Protocol See **Edmonton Protocol (Diabetes treatment)**

- Foot problems ... *Blakeman* 1463, 1471

Diabetes strategy

- Funding for ... *Blakeman* 272; *Evans* 271

Dietitians of Alberta, College of

See **College of Dietitians of Alberta**

Digi-bingo

See **Bingos, Electronic**

Digital fax machines

See **Fax machines, Digital**

Digital library, Lois Hole (Proposed)

See **Lois Hole digital library (Proposed)**

Digital photocopiers

See **Photocopiers, Digital**

Dinning, Jim

See **Age Care Ltd., Board of directors; Alberta Securities Commission, Influencing regulatory activity case; Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement; TransAlta Utilities Corporation, Hydropower generation pricing; Jim Dinning's role in**

Dinosaur Provincial Park

[See also **Parks, Provincial**]

- Centennial projects in ... *Mar* 1473

Dinosaur Trail

- General remarks ... *Dunford* 48, 1013

Diploma exams

See **Student testing, Diploma exams**

Direct Energy Business Services

- Brochure re long-term contracts (SP299/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 653

Direct Energy Business Services (Continued)

Energy savings partnership with University of Calgary ... *DeLong* 696; *Hancock* 696–97; *Oberg* 696
 Promise to, re regulated rate electricity price ... *MacDonald* 1119; *Melchin* 1119

Directives, Personal

See **Personal directives**

Disability Strategy, Alberta

See **Alberta Disability Strategy**

Disabled

General remarks ... *Lougheed* 2054
 Government programs for ... *Cao* 1524; *Elsalhy* 967; *Fritz* 877, 885, 1524; *Klein* 1109; *Mason* 1109
 Services for ... *Lougheed* 745

Disabled–Employment

Government programs for ... *Cardinal* 1130, 1138

Disabled–Housing

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 881; *Fritz* 878

Disabled Adults Transportation Service

Provincial funding for ... *Bonko* 1328

Disabled and building design

See **Architecture and the disabled**

Disabled children

Daycare for *See* **Daycare centres, Special-needs children**
 Government programs for: Funding re ... *Forsyth* 1051, 1052; *McClellan* 748

Disabled children–Education

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 1030; *Zwozdesky* 166, 648, 1029, 1030
 Review of (2000) ... *Flaherty* 1255; *Zwozdesky* 1255

Disabled children–Education–Finance

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 311, 1126, 1261, 1501, 1525

Disabled people in court, Interpretation services for

See **Interpretation services for disabled people in court**

Disabled Persons, International Day of

See **International Day of Disabled Persons**

Disabled persons' council

See **Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

Disaster preparedness

See **Emergency planning**

Disaster relief

Auditor General's comments re ... *Swann* 1419
 Disaster recovery program expenditures (M44/05: Accepted) ... *Renner* 1748; *Taft* 1748; *Taylor* 1748
 Funding for ... *Graydon* 1798–99; *McClellan* 1668; *Swann* 1668; *Tougas* 1798–99
 General remarks ... *Renner* 1320
 Letter re (SP749/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1970
 National response system re ... *Renner* 1320
 Southern Alberta flood situation ... *Amery* 1708; *Renner* 1708

Disaster relief, Agricultural

See **Farm income disaster program (Alberta)**

Disaster relief fund (Proposed)

Funding for ... *Graydon* 1799; *Tougas* 1798–99

Disaster response services, Medical–Calgary

See **Emergency medical response services–Calgary**

Disaster Services Alberta

See **Emergency Management Alberta**

Disclosure of evidence (Legal procedure)

Computerized system re ... *Stevens* 1226

Discount cigarettes–Taxation

See **Cigarettes, Discount–Taxation**

Diseases, Animal

Transmission to humans, research into *See* **Zoonosis–Research**

Diseases, Communicable–Control

See **Communicable diseases–Control**

Dispute resolution (Justice system)

Child and youth cases ... *Stevens* 275, 1225

Dispute resolution (Landlord and tenant)

See **Residential tenancies dispute resolution service**

Distance education

[*See also* **eCampus Alberta**]

General remarks ... *Hancock* 981; *Lukaszuk* 1505; *Speech from the Throne* 8

Vocational courses ... *Hancock* 1883

Distance health services

See **Telehealth services**

Diversification

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007; *Eggen* 1015

Diversified livestock industry

See **Game farming**

Diversion (Aboriginal offenders)

General remarks ... *Stevens* 1233

Diversion (Mentally disabled offenders)

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1785

Diversion of water

See **Water diversion**

Dividend cheques (Resource rebates)

See **Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)**

Dividend payments to Albertans (From Heritage Fund)

[*See also* **Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)**]

General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 966; *McClellan* 967

Division 8 designation (Foreign workers for major projects)

See **Labour Relations Code, Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects)**

Division (Recorded vote) (2005)

Bill 15 (2r), Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 594

Bill 47 (CoW), Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act 2004

Bill 201 (2r), Smoke-free Places Act 186

Bill 201 (3r amendment and 3r), Smoke-free Places Act 997–98

Bill 201 (CoW amendment and CoW), Smoke-free Places Act 508

Bill 203 (2r), Report on Alberta's Legacy Act 1353

M24 Temporary foreign workers 989–90

Motion 501, Wellness initiatives 74

Motion 502, Elimination of library card fees in tribute to Dr. Lois Hole 343–44

Q1 Student loan defaults 655

Q8 Automobile insurance rebates 660

DNA-based census of grizzly bears

See **Grizzly bears–Populations, DNA-based census of**

Doan, Ms Catriona Le May

See **Le May Doan, Ms Catriona**

Doctors, Immigrant

See **Immigrant doctors**

- Doctors, Training of**
See Medical profession—Education
- Doctors—Rural areas**
See Medical profession—Rural areas
- Doctors—Supply**
See Medical profession—Supply
- Doctors' fees**
See Medical profession—Fees
- Doctors' teams in medical care**
See Medical care, Primary, Team-based care
- Dogs and drug detection in schools**
See Drugs in schools, Use of dogs to detect
- Doha round of negotiations (WTO)**
See World Trade Organization, Doha round of negotiations
- Dolphin, Frank (Author)**
See *The Alberta Legislature (Book)*
- Domestic violence**
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1527; *Cenaiko* 1196; *Forsyth* 739, 1200; *Klein* 739; *Mather* 1200, 1234; *Miller, B.* 1196–97; *Pannu* 739, 1231, 1235–36; *Stevens* 1196–97, 1236
 Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003 ... *Cenaiko* 1196, 1575; *Jablonski* 1575, 1918; *Miller, B.* 1196; *Stevens* 1196–97
 Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... *Blakeman* 1061; *Forsyth* 301, 303, 305, 1051, 1052; *Mather* 303, 1054; *McClellan* 748; *Pannu* 303; *Stevens* 1226
 Provincial initiatives re: Impact of provision of, on health care demand ... *Blakeman* 1462
 Provincial initiatives re (Calgary HomeFront project)
See HomeFront (Domestic violence prevention program)
 Risk assessment group re violent cases ... *Stevens* 1196, 1233, 1236
 Statement re ... *Jablonski* 1629–30, 2053–54
- Domestic violence—Legal aspects**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1433; *Miller, B.* 276
- Domestic violence courts**
See Family courts
- Domestic violence courts—Calgary**
See Family courts—Calgary
- Domestic Violence Handbook for Police and Crown Prosecutors**
 Statement re ... *Jablonski* 1918
- Dominions, British**
See Commonwealth of Nations
- Donation of organs and tissue**
See Organ and tissue donation
- Dosseter Health Ethics Centre**
See John Dosseter Health Ethics Centre
- Douglasdale Drive/Deerfoot Trial interchange funding**
See Deerfoot Trail, Calgary, Douglasdale Drive interchange, funding for
- Downhill ski championships**
 World Cup champion (Thomas Grandi) ... *Tarchuk* 773
- Drayton Valley bridge**
See Bridges—North Saskatchewan River—Drayton Valley area
- Drayton Valley—Calmar (Constituency)**
 Notice of privilege re actions by Member for (Not proceeded with) ... *Blakeman* 1614–15, 1633; *Miller, R.* 1614, 1633; *Shariff* 1615; *Speaker, The* 1633
- Drayton Valley sour gas well drilling**
See Gas well drilling industry—Tomahawk/Drayton Valley area
- Driedmeat Lake—Water levels**
 Raising of ... *Boutilier* 618
- Drilling industry, Gas well—Calgary area**
See Gas well drilling industry—Calgary area
- Drilling industry, Gas well—Drayton Valley/Tomahawk area**
See Gas well drilling industry—Drayton Valley/Tomahawk area
- Drinking water**
 In schools ... *Agnihotri* 1711; *Zwozdesky* 1711
 Safety of ... *Eggen* 1041; *Speech from the Throne* 10; *Taylor* 1045
- Drinking water—Stettler area**
 Allocation level for, in Bill 11 ... *Boutilier* 978–79; *Swann* 978, 1038
- Drinking water—Turner Valley area**
 Testing of ... *Boutilier* 1961–62; *Mar* 1961
- Drinking water—Vietnam**
 Wild Rose grants for ... *Agnihotri* 1335; *Mar* 1335
- Driver licensing, Motorcycle**
See Motorcycle driver licensing
- Drivers' licences, Automobile**
See Automobile drivers' licences
- Drivers' licences, Automobile—Security aspects**
See Automobile drivers' licences—Security aspects
- Drivers' tests, Automobile**
See Automobile drivers' tests
- Driving under the influence of alcohol**
See Drunk driving
- Driving without insurance**
See Insurance, Automobile, Driving without: Legislation re (Bill 39)
- Dropouts**
See School dropouts; University dropouts
- Drought**
 Compensation plans re ... *Horner* 296, 301
- Drug abuse**
 Cause of youth violence ... *Agnihotri* 1578
 Impact on parents of drug addicted child: Document re (SP193/05: Tabled) ... *Mather* 327
 School programs re ... *Flaherty* 266
 Statement re ... *Jablonski* 25, 621
- Drug abuse—Prevention**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1884
- Drug abuse—Prevention—Youth**
See Substance abuse—Prevention—Youth
- Drug abuse—Testing**
 General remarks ... *Evans* 2048; *Jablonski* 2048
 Home testing kits, accuracy of ... *Evans* 2048; *Jablonski* 2048
- Drug abuse—Treatment—Youth**
See Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
- Drug Abuse Commission**
See Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
- Drug abuse resistance education program**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1201; *Flaherty* 1263; *Hinman* 1272; *Jablonski* 1201; *Mather* 1234; *Zwozdesky* 1265, 1274
- Drug benefits, Seniors**
See Alberta Blue Cross Plan, Seniors' drug benefits

- Drug courts**
General remarks ... *Stevens* 1230
- Drug injection sites**
See Safe injection sites (Drugs)
- Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area**
See under Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Drug-sniffing dogs in schools**
See Drugs in schools, Use of dogs to detect
- Drug Strategy**
See Alberta Drug Strategy
- Drug trafficking**
Role in gang-related crime ... *Cenaiko* 1148
- Drug trafficking—Prevention**
General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 770; *Stevens* 1234–35; *Strang* 770
- Drug usage by long-term care residents**
See Extended care facilities residents, Prescription drug usage
- Drug use in the workplace**
Random testing for ... *Backs* 45; *Cardinal* 45
Random testing for: Report on ... *Backs* 45; *Cardinal* 45
- Drugs, Generic**
General remarks ... *Mason* 1465
- Drugs, Generic—Prices**
Policy re ... *Evans* 1461
- Drugs, Prescription**
National plan for ... *Blakeman* 1463–64; *Chase* 1189, 1468; *Stelmach* 1189
Public vs private development of ... *Blakeman* 1470
- Drugs, Prescription—Costs**
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1461; *Chase* 1468; *Evans* 1458, 1461–62; *Hinman* 1844; *Mason* 1465
Legislation re (Bill 206) ... *Mason* 984
- Drugs in schools**
Use of dogs to detect ... *Cenaiko* 1256; *Hinman* 1272; *Miller, R.* 1256
- Drunk driving**
Funding for government programs for ... *Oberg* 1800
- Dumps**
See Sanitary landfills
- Dunn, Fred**
See Auditor General
- Dunvegan bridge**
See Highway 2—Dunvegan bridge area
- E-biz**
See Electronic Business Intelligence Service
- E-health**
See Telehealth services
- E-learning**
See Distance education
- EAG**
See Edmonton Art Gallery
- Early childhood education**
Full-day programs ... *Eggen* 1728; *Martin* 1028–29, 1722–23; *Zwozdesky* 1029, 1260, 1723, 1730
Full-day programs: Studies re (Q29/05: Response tabled as SP499/05) ... *Flaherty* 1158; *Zwozdesky* 1158, 1607
Funding ... *Forsyth* 1730–33; *Zwozdesky* 1261
General remarks ... *Mather* 302, 1726; *Zwozdesky* 311, 1727
Junior kindergarten (prekindergarten) ... *Martin* 1028–29, 1269, 1722–23; *Pannu* 1917; *Zwozdesky* 1029, 1260, 1723
- Early childhood education, Private**
Funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 1260, 1261
- Early intervention programs (Child welfare)**
See Child welfare, Early childhood intervention programs
- Earning loss supplement, impact of increased minimum wage on**
See Workers' compensation, Earning loss supplement, impact of increased minimum wage on
- Earthquakes—Pakistan**
Alberta disaster relief for 2005 quake ... *Graydon* 1798–99; *Tougas* 1798–99
- East Central Health**
Annual report, 2003-04 (SP93/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
Annual report, 2004-05 (SP621/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
Funding ... *Evans* 271
Funding formula ... *Evans* 977
Health education courses at Augustana campus, project re ... *Johnson* 1917
Seniors' supportive housing projects ... *Fritz* 282
- East Coulee spring festival**
Statement re ... *Chase* 775
- Eastern Slopes areas**
See Public lands—Eastern Slopes
- Eastwood Public Health Centre**
Surplus funding for ... *Blakeman* 1839; *Evans* 1622, 1839, 1841; *Taft* 1621
- EBIS**
See Electronic Business Intelligence Service
- eCampusAlberta (Distance education)**
[*See also Distance education*]
General remarks ... *Hancock* 981, 1795
- Eckel's Transport Ltd.**
See B & R — Eckel's Transport Ltd.
- Ecology**
See Environmental protection
- Ecology—Finance**
See Environmental protection—Finance
- Economic corridors, Strategic**
See Strategic economic corridors (Highway construction)
- Economic development**
General remarks ... *Danyluk* 531; *Dunford* 531, 1007; *Melchin* 532
- Economic development, Aboriginal**
See Aboriginal economic development
- Economic Development, Dept. of**
See Dept. of Economic Development
- Economic development, Rural**
See Rural economic development
- Economic development—Lethbridge**
General remarks ... *Dunford* 531
- Economic development—Northern Alberta**
See Northern development
- Economic development and the environment**
General remarks ... *Abbott* 485; *Bonko* 937, 1312, 1829; *Boutilier* 485, 1829, 1913–14, 1963–64; *Chase* 1011–12, 1048; *Coutts* 1312, 1964, 1965; *Eggen* 575, 1395–96, 1714–15; *Groeneveld* 648; *Klein* 573, 1105; *Knight* 1963–64; *Melchin* 575, 648–49, 1829–30, 1964; *Strang* 1965; *Swann* 573, 1037, 1606, 1913
Research re ... *Boutilier* 292; *Doerksen* 292; *Knight* 292; *Melchin* 292

- Economic Development Authority, Alberta**
See Alberta Economic Development Authority
- Economic development partnerships, Regional**
See Regional economic development partnerships
- Economic development (Value-added industries)**
See Industrial development (Value-added industries)
- Economic diversification**
See Diversification
- Economic policy—Alberta**
See Alberta—Economic policy
- Ecotourism**
 Relation to preserving boreal forests ... *Eggen* 1396
- Edmonton**
 As festival city ... *Dunford* 1011
- Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee**
 General remarks ... *Calahasen* 838, 841; *Tougas* 838
- Edmonton Airports Authority**
See Edmonton Regional Airports Authority
- Edmonton Archives**
See City of Edmonton Archives
- Edmonton Art Gallery**
 Private donation to ... *Blakeman* 1476
 Provincial support ... *Blakeman* 1476; *Brown* 1482
- Edmonton-Calgary corridor**
See Calgary-Edmonton corridor
- Edmonton-Castle Downs (Constituency)**
 Report on electoral results in ... *Clerk, The* 11
 Role of Administrator of the province in legal decision re electoral results in: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 26; *Taft* 26
- Edmonton Catholic School District**
 Capital plan, 2002-05 (SP386/05: Tabled) ... *Lukaszuk* 1205
 Capital plan changes (Castle Downs high school, Terwillegar school) ... *Lukaszuk* 1078, 1197-98; *Oberg* 1078, 1197-98; *Zwozdesky* 1078
 Letter to (SP388/05: Tabled) ... *Lukaszuk* 1205
 Statement re ... *Lukaszuk* 1080
- Edmonton City Centre Airport**
 Operational status ... *Dunford* 125; *Oberle* 125
 Statement re ... *Pastoor* 1527
- Edmonton Community Loan Fund Society**
 Pamphlet (SP524/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1632
- Edmonton courthouse, prisoner's death in**
See Young, Kyle James (Prisoner), Death in Edmonton courthouse
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club**
 2005 Grey Cup contenders: Letter re (SP711/05: Tabled) ... *Flaherty* 1891
 2005 Grey Cup contenders: Statement re ... *Backs* 1888
 2005 Grey Cup contenders: T-shirt and thunderstick from (to be provided) ... *Speaker, The* 1888
 2005 Grey Cup contenders: T-shirt and thunderstick from (no SP number: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1920
 2005 Grey Cup victors: Statement re ... *Hinman* 1909; *Klein* 1908; *Mason* 1908-09; *Taft* 1908
 2005 western final win: Statement re ... *Lukaszuk* 1743-44
- Edmonton Fire Rescue Service**
 Response to Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire ... *Boutilier* 1335-36
- Edmonton Folk Festival**
 Provincial funding for ... *Blakeman* 1477; *Eggen* 1478
- Edmonton Foundation**
See Greater Edmonton Foundation
- Edmonton International Airport**
 Airport vicinity protection area discussions ... *Renner* 577; *Rogers* 577
- Edmonton Journal (Newspaper)**
 Fort McMurray land deal articles (SP521-522/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1632
 Lawsuit by Edmonton Police Service against (Overtime bar case) ... *Mason* 411-12
 Nov.27, 2002 article about Castle Downs high school (SP387/05: Tabled) ... *Lukaszuk* 1205
- Edmonton Northlands**
 Funding for ... *Graydon* 1289, 1798-99; *MacDonald* 1289; *Tougas* 1798
 Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 124, 976, 1278, 1288; *Tougas* 976, 1288
 Statement re ... *VanderBurg* 1080
- Edmonton-Norwood (Constituency)**
 Former member for, Report of Ethics Commissioner re allegations re (SP14/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 27
- Edmonton Oilers Hockey Club**
 Lottery funding *See Hockey, Lottery funding for*
- Edmonton Police Service**
 Child exploitation prevention teams ... *Cenaiko* 206, 1671
 Community support officers/special constables pilot project ... *Cenaiko* 1437
 Family violence conflict unit ... *Cenaiko* 1576
 Inmate sexual assault investigation ... *Cenaiko* 696; *Miller, B.* 696
 Mill Woods gang-related killing investigation ... *Cenaiko* 1148; *Mather* 1148
 Missing women investigations, joint team re *See Project Kare (Missing women investigation team)*
 Organized crime cases *See Integrated Response to Organized Crime*
 Police radio conversation transcript, publication in news media (Overtime bar case) ... *Cenaiko* 411-12; *Mason* 411-12
 Provincial funding for ... *Cenaiko* 800-01, 952-53, 1148, 1671; *Lukaszuk* 1671; *Pannu* 800-01
 Randy Fryingpan taser case ... *Cenaiko* 1431, 1504; *Mason* 1437; *Miller, B.* 1429, 1503-04
 Training centre ... *Cenaiko* 1123
- Edmonton Protocol (Diabetes treatment)**
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1368
- Edmonton Public School Board**
 City centre education project ... *Martin* 1029, 1269; *Zwozdesky* 1029
 Closure of schools ... *Chase* 1311; *Eggen* 1447; *Flaherty* 120-21, 576-77, 693, 851, 1446, 1570; *MacDonald* 124-25, 311, 369, 694, 738, 767, 1097; *Martin* 1722; *Mason* 310; *Oberg* 120-21, 577, 1311, 1446, 1570; *Zwozdesky* 124-25, 311, 693, 694, 767, 851, 1446, 1447
 Closure of schools: Court decision re ... *Flaherty* 1446; *Oberg* 1446; *Zwozdesky* 1446
 Closure of schools: Is Your Public School at Risk? document (SP353/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 957
 Closure of schools: Letter re (SP100/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 128

Edmonton Public School Board (*Continued*)

- Closure of schools: Letter re use of outdated regulation re (SP325/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 776
- Closure of schools: Provision of Supernet service to ... *MacDonald* 759–60
- Closure of schools: Statement re ... *MacDonald* 982–83
- Closure of schools: Workshop re (SP341/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 858
- Closure of Strathearn school: Report re (SP318/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 746
- Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... *Lukaszuk* 84–85; *MacDonald* 982–83, 1097; *Martin* 1270, 1722; *Mason* 310; *Oberg* 84–85, 577; *Pannu* 308; *Zwozdesky* 693, 851
- Cluster study re utilization levels in schools, geographic distribution of schools (SP487/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1578
- Learning resource personnel shortage, letter re (SP605/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1716
- Leasing of commercial space for continuing education ... *MacDonald* 738; *Oberg* 738; *Zwozdesky* 738
- Maintenance/utility costs, use of instructional funds for ... *Flaherty* 1570; *Oberg* 1570; *Zwozdesky* 1570
- Partnership with Canadian Space Agency ... *Mather* 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1726
- Portables for Kenilworth junior high ... *MacDonald* 694; *Zwozdesky* 694
- Portables for Kenilworth junior high, purchase of, letter to minister re (SP285/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 622
- Portables for Kenilworth junior high, purchase of, letter to minister re: Minister's response (SP486/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1578
- Statement re ... *Mather* 1080–81
- Teachers, hiring of ... *Zwozdesky* 309
- Unused space ... *Oberg* 738, 1570–71
- Victoria school project funds, diversion to new school funding ... *MacDonald* 1524; *Oberg* 1524

Edmonton Regional Airports Authority

- General remarks ... *Dunford* 125
- Rent paid to federal government ... *Oberg* 362

Edmonton regional health authority

See **Capital Health**

Edmonton Remand Centre

- Funding for ... *Miller, B.* 1432
- New facility for ... *Cenaiko* 696
- Overcrowding ... *Agnihotri* 855; *Cenaiko* 696, 855, 1389, 1434; *Mar* 855; *Miller, B.* 695–96, 1389, 1432
- Rape of inmates in ... *Agnihotri* 855; *Cenaiko* 696, 1389, 1433; *Magnus* 1430; *Mar* 855; *Miller, B.* 695–96, 1389, 1430
- Replacement of ... *Cenaiko* 1434

Edmonton-Rutherford (Constituency)

- Notice of privilege re actions by Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar against (Not proceeded with) ... *Blakeman* 1614–15, 1633; *Miller, R.* 1614, 1633; *Shariff* 1615; *Speaker, The* 1633

Edmonton separate school board

See **Edmonton Catholic School District**

Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre

See **Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton**

Edmonton Social Planning Council

- Information sheet (social determinants of health) (SP396/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1206

Edmonton Sport Council

- Request for provincial sport funding ... *Agnihotri* 1474

Edmonton Sun (Newspaper)

- Lawsuit by Edmonton Police Service against (Overtime bar case) ... *Mason* 411–12

Edson Health Care Centre

- Upgrades to ... *Evans* 1839, 1841

Edson trail

- Statement re ... *Knight* 1672

Education

- General remarks ... *Mather* 1726; *McClellan* 747; *Speech from the Throne* 8, 9; *Zwozdesky* 1260, 1267
- Impact of provision of, on health care demand ... *Blakeman* 1462
- Issues re ... *Flaherty* 952; *Herard* 166; *Zwozdesky* 166, 952
- Provincial support for: Statement re ... *Chase* 1506
- Statement re ... *Cao* 651

Education, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Education**

Education, Elementary

See **Elementary education**

Education, High school–Curricula

See **High school education–Curricula**

Education, International

See **International education**

Education, Postsecondary

- Aboriginal students ... *Danyluk* 843, 1395; *Goudreau* 1394; *Hancock* 1624
- Access to, affordability review to improve ... *Brown* 1571; *Cao* 874; *Danyluk* 981; *Hancock* 20, 48, 320, 361, 483, 649, 697, 798, 860, 863, 865, 981–82, 1123, 1202–03, 1571, 1574, 1624, 1795–96, 1830; *Pannu* 872–73; *Rogers* 320; *Speech from the Throne* 8; *Taylor* 20, 261, 649, 798, 1202–03, 1624, 1835
- Access to, affordability review to improve: Conference on results of ... *Hancock* 1571
- Access to, affordability review to improve: Funding for ... *McClellan* 748
- Access to, affordability review to improve: Legislation re (Bill 1) ... *Klein* 11
- Access to, affordability review to improve: U of A Student's Union news release re (SP103/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 128
- Access to, by low-income students ... *Hancock* 1830–31; *Taylor* 1830–31
- Access to, by low-income students, statement re ... *Taylor* 1835
- Access to, new spaces to improve ... *Blakeman* 866; *Chase* 1087; *Danyluk* 981; *Hancock* 48, 859, 863, 864, 870, 981, 1790, 1791, 1792–93, 1794; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg* 1089; *Pannu* 1793, 1796; *Speech from the Throne* 8; *Taylor* 862, 1791, 1792
- Commission to review ... *Pannu* 873
- Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... *Ady* 1547–48; *Brown* 1552; *Cao* 1553; *Chase* 1552–53; *Hancock* 1549–51; *Martin* 1551–52; *Mason* 1547, 1553–54; *Pannu* 1547; *Taylor* 1548–49
- General remarks ... *Chase* 265–66; *Hancock* 859; *Knight* 901; *McClellan* 747; *Speech from the Throne* 8
- Independent review of ... *Hancock* 1202, 1254; *Pannu* 873; *Taylor* 1202, 1254

Education, Postsecondary (*Continued*)

International learning component ... *Johnson* 1673
 Legislation re (Bill 9) ... *Hancock* 92

Education, Postsecondary—Calgary

Access to, new spaces to improve ... *Hancock* 1791–92,
 1793; *Taylor* 1791, 1792

Education, Postsecondary—Finance

[*See also Access Growth Fund (Postsecondary education); Access to the Future Fund*]

Capital spending ... *Blakeman* 865; *Eggen* 875;
Hancock 860, 863–64, 869; *Taylor* 861–62
 Federal funding ... *Cao* 1306–07; *Hancock* 1306–07
 Funding envelopes ... *Hancock* 864; *Taylor* 862
 General remarks ... *Abbott* 874; *Blakeman* 865–67;
Brown 874; *Cao* 874–75; *Chase* 265, 755; *Eggen*
 875; *Flaherty* 874; *Hancock* 859–61, 863–65,
 867–72; *Klein* 767; *Mather* 302; *McClellan* 747–48;
Pannu 872–74, 1793; *Prins* 874; *Taylor* 261,
 766–67, 861–63, 870
 Incentive funding for specific needs ... *Flaherty* 874
 Legislation re (Bill 1) ... *Speech from the Throne* 9
 Letter re (SP311/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 700
 MLA committee to review (2000) *See MLA Post-*
secondary Funding Review Committee (2000)
 Review of ... *Brown* 1571; *Hancock* 20, 320, 361,
 1202–03, 1571
 Surplus revenue dedicated to (legacy funding) ... *Miller,*
R. 960
 Surplus spending on ... *Hancock* 1621; *McClellan*
 1667; *Taft* 1621
 University of Alberta report on (SP187/05: Tabled) ...
Taylor 327
 University presidents' comments re (SP330/05: Tabled)
 ... *Klein* 784; *Zwozdesky* 784

Education, Postsecondary—Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 843

Education, Postsecondary—Rural areas

Funding ... *Hancock* 860

Education, Preschool

See Early childhood education

Education, Special

See Disabled children—Education; Gifted children—Education

Education, Special—Finance

See Disabled children—Education—Finance

Education—Curricula

Aboriginal-specific courses ... *Zwozdesky* 1264
 Drug abuse awareness courses ... *Flaherty* 266
 Fine arts courses ... *Flaherty* 952; *Zwozdesky* 952
 First aid/CPR training courses ... *Lukaszuk* 204–05;
Zwozdesky 205
 General remarks ... *Flaherty* 307, 1262; *Martin* 1271;
Zwozdesky 166, 307, 308, 1264, 1272
 Health and wellness instruction framework ... *Flaherty*
 952; *Speech from the Throne* 10; *Zwozdesky* 416,
 952, 1028, 1967
 Review of ... *Zwozdesky* 1028
 Social studies courses ... *Bonko* 309; *Zwozdesky*
 306–07
 Vocational/trades courses *See High school education—Curricula, Vocational/trades courses*

Education—Curricula—Edmonton

Alternative programs ... *Mather* 1081

Education—Curricula—Rural areas

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1274
 Matrix for ... *Hinman* 1273

Education—Edmonton

Statement re ... *Mather* 1080–81

Education—Finance

[*See also Program unit funding (Education); School boards, Funding*]

Cutbacks ... *Bonko* 1267
 Funding for teachers' salaries ... *Flaherty* 203;
Zwozdesky 203
 General remarks ... *Ady* 977–78; *Bonko* 1266; *Chase*
 265, 755; *Flaherty* 693, 851, 952, 1522, 1570;
Hinman 1272; *MacDonald* 1524–25; *Martin* 1269;
Mather 302, 1125–26; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg* 1522,
 1524–25, 1570–71; *Ouellette* 756; *Zwozdesky* 693,
 851, 952, 977–78, 1030, 1125–26, 1260–62, 1267,
 1525, 1570, 1833
 Letter re (SP442/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1507
 Property tax funds contribution to ... *Renner* 799;
Rogers 799
 Statement re ... *Chase* 1506
 Surplus funding for ... *McClellan* 1667
 University of Alberta report on (SP187/05: Tabled) ...
Taylor 327
 User fees ... *Ady* 1525; *Flaherty* 266, 1833–34;
Lukaszuk 1913; *Martin* 1723; *Mather* 1726;
Zwozdesky 1525, 1723–24, 1727, 1833–34, 1913
 User fees: Petition presented for elimination of ...
Elsalhy 1674, 1715, 1745, 1837, 1889–90, 1918–19
 User fees: Total revenue from, 2000–04 (Q14/05:
 Response tabled as SP500/05) ... *Flaherty* 808;
Miller, R. 808; *Zwozdesky* 808, 1607
 User fees: Total revenue from, 2000–04 (Q15/05:
 Defeated) ... *Chase* 809, 810; *Flaherty* 808; *Hancock*
 810; *MacDonald* 809, 810; *Martin* 809–10; *Miller, R.*
 808–11; *Zwozdesky* 808

Education—Finance—Rural areas

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1273–74

Education—Specialists

Funding for ... *Flaherty* 1030; *Zwozdesky* 1030

Education and Employment, Standing Policy Committee on

See Committee on Education and Employment, Standing Policy

Education at a distance

See Distance education

Education at home—Regulations

See Home education—Regulations

Education Facility Planners International, Council of

See Council of Education Facility Planners International

Education levy

See Property tax—Education levy

Education Savings Plan, Alberta Centennial

See Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan

Education savings plan, Registered (Federal)

See Registered education savings plan (Federal)

Education Week, International (November 2005)

See International Education Week (November 2005)

Education Week (Provincial, April 2005)

Statement re ... *Flaherty* 1032; *Lindsay* 955; *Rodney*
 1032

Educational specialists

See **Education—Specialists**

Educators

See **Teachers**

Edwin Parr awards

See **Alberta School Boards Association, Edwin Parr awards, statement re**

EHR (Electronic health records)

See **Medical records, Electronic**

EIAs

See **Environmental impact assessments**

EI Mais, Mohamed

Recognition of ... *Griffiths* 417

Elder abuse

FAIRE report on (SP303/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 653
General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 260; *Backs* 889; *Martin* 886; *Pastoor* 879

Elder Advocates of Alberta Society

Extended care facilities inspection: Letter re (SP419/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1342

Forum on extended care residents treatment ... *Evans* 613, 614; *Fritz* 614; *Mason* 613; *Pastoor* 614

Rights of vulnerable persons in care document (SP465/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 1528–29

Eldercare facilities

See **Extended care facilities**

Eldercare facilities, Private

See **Extended care facilities, Private**

Elected officials—Training

See **Municipal excellence program**

Elected representatives, Recall of

See **Recall of elected representatives**

Election Act

All-party committee review of: Letter re (SP5/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 27

Election contributions

See **Electoral campaign funds**

Election (Electoral Reform) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 217)

First reading ... *Taylor* 2016

Elections, Federal

Referenda on property rights and Alberta definition of marriage during ... *Hinman* 1714, 1738; *McClellan* 1738

Elections, Municipal—Calgary

Ward 10 election process ... *Miller, R.* 1328

Ward 10 election process: Bob Clark's inspection of ... *Renner* 1249, 1334

Ward 10 election process: Cost of investigation of (Q30/05: Response tabled as SP806/05) ... *Clerk, The* 2018; *Flaherty* 1158; *Renner* 1158, 2018; *Stevens* 1158; *Taft* 1158

Ward 10 election process: Police investigations re ... *Renner* 1249, 1333–34

Ward 10 election process: Public inquiry re ... *Renner* 1333–34; *Taylor* 1333–34

Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re ... *Renner* 1249, 1333–34; *Taft* 1248; *Taylor* 1333–34

Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re, news releases re ... *Renner* 1334

Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re, news releases re (SP415-416/05: Tabled) ... *Renner* 1342

Elections, Municipal—Law and legislation

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 1328

Elections, Provincial

Fixed dates for ... *Hancock* 1251; *Hinman* 1251; *Klein* 691; *Mather* 956; *Pastoor* 691

Fixed dates for: Legislation re (Bill 217) ... *Taylor* 2016

Reform of: Legislation re (Bill 217) ... *Taylor* 2016

Report on general election of Nov. 22, 2004 ... *Clerk, The* 11

Report on general election of Nov. 22, 2004 results for Edmonton-Castle Downs ... *Clerk, The* 11

Review of conditions of ... *Mather* 956

Electoral campaign funds

Reform of ... *Mason* 699

Electoral Officer

See **Chief Electoral Officer**

Electoral Officer Search Committee, Select Special**Chief**

See **Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee, Select Special**

Electoral reform

General remarks ... *Hancock* 1251; *Hinman* 1251

Statement re ... *Mather* 956

Electoral reform, Citizens' assembly on (Alberta)**(Proposed)**

See **Citizens' assembly on electoral reform (Alberta) (Proposed)**

Electric power, Coal-produced

General remarks ... *Tougas* 1127

Research into ... *Boutilier* 21; *Doerksen* 1369; *Martin* 920–21; *Melchin* 922

Research into: Funding for ... *Chase* 1377; *McClellan* 749

Research into: Tax incentives for ... *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911–12

Standards for ... *Boutilier* 1046

Electric power, Natural gas-produced

General remarks ... *Tougas* 1127

Electric power—Export

General remarks ... *Eggen* 1306; *Hinman* 1425; *Lougheed* 1447; *MacDonald* 650; *Melchin* 650, 1306, 1447; *Pastoor* 1181; *Stelmach* 1182

Electric power—Import

General remarks ... *Melchin* 650, 1306, 1447

Price manipulation re, investigation into ... *MacDonald* 204, 650; *Melchin* 204

Electric power—Prices

Consumer protection re [*See also Utilities Consumer Advocate*]; *Elsalhy* 1418; *Hinman* 1074, 1425–26; *Klein* 161; *Lund* 161–62, 975, 1025, 1416, 1420; *MacDonald* 286, 455–56, 533; *Martin* 1420–21; *Mason* 161, 1025; *Melchin* 286, 455–56, 488, 533, 650; *Swann* 1419

Contributing factors to (London Economics group report on) ... *Liepert* 291; *Melchin* 291

Electric System Operator report on (SP191/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 327

General remarks ... *Eggen* 914; *Hinman* 1074, 1425, 1911; *Klein* 1911; *Lund* 975–76, 1421; *MacDonald* 911, 912, 948; *Martin* 1420; *Mason* 975–76; *Melchin* 912–13, 948, 1120, 1306, 1307, 1447; *Tougas* 1127

Impact on seniors ... *Backs* 889–90; *Hinman* 888; *Lund* 1424; *MacDonald* 255; *Pastoor* 1423

Impact on universities ... *Taylor* 261

Electric power—Prices *(Continued)*

- Manipulation of ... *Eggen* 914; *Klein* 488–89; *MacDonald* 204, 286, 488–89, 948–49, 1196; *Melchin* 204, 286, 796, 899, 948–49, 1195–96; *Taft* 796, 899, 1195–96
- Manipulation of, legal penalties re ... *Melchin* 796; *Taft* 796
- Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... *Chase* 1186; *Elsalhy* 249; *Klein* 18, 83, 118, 119, 247; *Lund* 249; *MacDonald* 23, 83, 161, 204, 247, 455–56, 533; *McClellan* 42; *Melchin* 18, 23–24, 118–19, 161, 204, 249, 360, 455–56, 533, 796; *Miller, B.* 42; *Ouellette* 249; *Stelmach* 1186; *Stevens* 42; *Taft* 18, 118–19, 360, 796
- Regulated option re ... *Elsalhy* 918; *Hinman* 1074; *Klein* 1073, 1074; *Lindsay* 647; *Lund* 1420, 1421; *MacDonald* 912, 1073, 1119–20; *Mason* 1120; *Melchin* 647, 913, 919, 1073, 1075, 1119–20
- Regulated option vs contract rate, compensation for difference in ... *Eggen* 1073; *Klein* 1074

Electric power—Retail sales

- Billing systems re ... *Klein* 18, 161; *Lund* 161–62, 1420; *Mason* 161
- Cross-Canada comparison, report on (SP323/05: Tabled)
... *Melchin* 775–76
- General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 918; *MacDonald* 912; *Martin* 1420–21; *Melchin* 913, 919
- Review of ... *DeLong* 1075; *Lund* 1075; *Melchin* 1075, 1119

Electric power—Supply

- General remarks ... *Eggen* 1306; *Hinman* 1425–26, 1911; *Klein* 1074, 1911; *Lund* 975, 976, 1025; *MacDonald* 650, 911–12; *Melchin* 489, 650, 913, 917, 921, 1073, 1120, 1306, 1307; *Tougas* 1127

Electric power contracts, Residential

- Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... *Eggen* 1073; *Klein* 1025, 1073; *Lund* 1025, 1424; *MacDonald* 1025, 1073, 1119–20; *Mason* 1025, 1120; *Melchin* 1073, 1119–20; *Pastoor* 1423
- Long-term contracts for residential consumers, cancellation of without penalty ... *Eggen* 1074; *Klein* 1074
- Plain language requirement ... *Speech from the Throne* 9

Electric power lines

- Capacity ... *Melchin* 649; *Oberle* 649
- General remarks ... *MacDonald* 650; *Melchin* 650
- Tie lines with B.C. ... *MacDonald* 911; *Melchin* 916–17
- Tie lines with B.C. and Montana ... *Melchin* 649–50; *Oberle* 649

Electric power lines—Construction

- Alberta to California (Northern Lights Transmission project) ... *Pastoor* 1181
- General remarks ... *Lougheed* 1446–47; *Melchin* 1447

Electric power lines—Edmonton/Calgary

- Upgrading of ... *Abbott* 1831; *Lindsay* 903–04; *Melchin* 904, 1447, 1831

Electric power production from waste materials

- See **Co-energy electrical production**

Electric System Operator, Alberta

- See **Alberta Electric System Operator**

Electric utilities

- Competitive choice re ... *Lund* 1421; *Martin* 1421

Electric utilities—Lake Wabamun area

- Taxation of ... *MacDonald* 912; *Melchin* 913

Electric utilities—Regulations

- Deregulation ... *Eggen* 653, 914; *Hinman* 1425–26; *Horner* 1222; *Klein* 83, 118, 119, 161, 1024–25, 1073, 1074; *Liepert* 291; *Lund* 161–62, 975–76, 1025; *MacDonald* 83, 161, 911, 1024–25, 1969; *Martin* 919–20, 1420, 1421; *Mason* 161, 975–76, 1025, 1120; *McClellan* 42; *Melchin* 118–19, 161, 291, 489, 796, 909, 917, 948, 1073, 1120, 1306; *Miller, B.* 42; *Stevens* 42; *Taft* 118–19, 796
- Deregulation: Energy dept. correspondence with Enron Canada re (M47/05: Defeated) ... *MacDonald* 1749; *Melchin* 1749; *Taylor* 1749
- Deregulation: Impact on seniors ... *MacDonald* 255
- Deregulation: Petition presented re ... *Hinman* 1970
- Deregulation: Private consultant re (Kellan Fluckiger) ... *MacDonald* 1307; *Melchin* 1307
- Deregulation: Public inquiry into ... *Klein* 18; *MacDonald* 204, 899; *Melchin* 18, 204; *Taft* 18
- Deregulation: Public reaction to ... *Elsalhy* 917–18, 975; *Lund* 975; *Melchin* 919, 921
- Deregulation: Publicity campaign re ... *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1105
- Deregulation: Statement re ... *Tougas* 1127
- Deregulation: *Western Standard* article re (SP697/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1865

Electric wire installation

- Permits for (journeyman/master electricians) ... *Renner* 904–05; *VanderBurg* 904–05

Electrical Contractors Association of Alberta

- Review of master electrician program ... *Renner* 905

Electrical power production from waste materials

- See **Co-energy electrical production**

Electrical power purchase agreements

- Enron activities re Sundance B power ... *MacDonald* 1337, 1834–35, 1912–13; *Melchin* 1337, 1912–13
- Enron activities re Sundance B power: Email re (SP677/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1837
- Enron comments re: Transcript of taped conversation re (SP422/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1342
- Enron comments re mispricing of ... *MacDonald* 1337; *Melchin* 1337
- Exclusion of hydropower from ... *MacDonald* 363, 489; *Melchin* 363–64, 489
- General remarks ... *Melchin* 118

Electricity, Alberta Advisory Council on

- See **Alberta Advisory Council on Electricity**

Electricity—Retail sales

- See **Electric power—Retail sales**

Electricity contracts, Residential

- See **Electric power contracts, Residential**

Electronic bingos

- See **Bingos, Electronic**

Electronic Business Intelligence Service

- General remarks ... *Dunford* 1008

Electronic health records

- See **Medical records, Electronic**

Electronic learning

- See **Distance education**

Electronic physician/specialist referrals

- See **Physician/specialist referrals, Electronic**

Electronic security

See **Government information systems, Security aspects; Public records—Confidentiality**

Electronic waste—Recycling

Fees for ... *Boutilier* 1043; *Eggen* 1041
General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1039; *Eggen* 1041

Elementary education

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 1262–63; *Zwozdesky* 1265

Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety**Association**

See **Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association**

Elizabeth House

General remarks ... *Fritz* 1338

Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain

Address to Legislative Assembly ... *Her Majesty* 1617–18

Alberta visit, May 2005 ... *Abbott* 907; *Haley* 1786; *Klein* 1099, 1617; *Mar* 1473, 1476; *McClellan* 749; *Miller, R.* 257; *Speaker, The* 464, 1617; *Speech from the Throne* 8

Alberta visit, May 2005: First Nations participation ... *Calahasen* 1445; *Eggen* 1573; *Mar* 1445, 1573; *Shariff* 1444–45

Alberta visit, May 2005: Protocol questions, correspondence re ... *Speaker, The* 1579

Alberta visit, May 2005: Special Legislature sitting for (Motion 16: Hancock) ... *Blakeman* 597; *Chase* 597–98; *Hancock* 597; *Hinman* 597; *McClellan* 598

Elk

Testing of, for chronic wasting disease ... *Horner* 250

Elk antler velvet—Health aspects

General remarks ... *Evans* 319; *Horner* 456; *Prins* 456; *Swann* 319

Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division #41

Interest in Lakeland College's Sherwood Park campus ... *Oberg* 1575

Elk ranching

Impact of chronic wasting disease on ... *Horner* 456; *Prins* 456

Ellerslie elementary school

Condition of ... *Agnihotri* 1724; *Zwozdesky* 1725
Drinking water in ... *Agnihotri* 1711, 1724; *Zwozdesky* 1711, 1725

Ellerslie Rugby Club

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1327

Elzinga, Peter

See **Office of the Premier, Former chief of staff (Peter Elzinga) remuneration (Q22/05: Defeated)**

EMA

See **Emergency Management Alberta**

Embury, Mrs. Sheila (Former MLA)

Memorial tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 1619

Emergency agencies (Fire, etc.)

Procedures at toxic waste site fires ... *Boutilier* 1335–36; *Lougheed* 1335–36

Emergency debates under Standing Order 30

Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... *Abbott* 1410–11; *Blakeman* 1398–99, 1404–05; *Bonko* 1407–08; *Brown* 1413; *Chase* 1400; *Danyluk* 1409–10; *Doerksen* 1408–09; *Fritz* 1406–07; *Goudreau* 1403–04; *Hancock* 1397–98; *Martin* 1399, 1411–13; *Mason* 1396–97, 1401–02; *Mitzel* 1405–06; *Oberg* 1402–03; *Prins* 1399–1400;

Emergency debates under Standing Order 30**(Continued)**

Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) *(Continued)* ... *Speaker, The* 1399, 1400–01; *Strang* 1413–14; *Webber* 1406

Long-term care funding (Not proceeded with) ... *Backs* 1718; *Hancock* 1718; *Pastoor* 1717–18; *Speaker, The* 1718–19

Securities Commission, loss of investor confidence in (not proceeded with) ... *Blakeman* 1084; *Hancock* 1084; *Martin* 1083–84; *McClellan* 1082–83; *Speaker, The* 1084–85; *Taft* 1082

Securities Commission challenge of Auditor General's authority (not proceeded with) ... *Hancock* 1316–17; *MacDonald* 1318; *Martin* 1317–18; *Speaker, The* 1318–19; *Taft* 1315–16; *Zwozdesky* 1318

Emergency Management Alberta

General remarks ... *Renner* 1251

Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by Shell chemical plant ... *Boutilier* 162; *Lougheed* 162; *Renner* 162, 207

Emergency medical response services—Calgary

Contingency plan for ... *Blakeman* 644; *Evans* 645

Emergency medical technicians

Impact of ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities on ... *Evans* 17, 19; *Klein* 19; *Mason* 19; *Taft* 17

Increase in numbers of ... *Chase* 1467

Emergency medical technicians—Wainwright

Layoff of ... *Evans* 19; *Klein* 19; *Mason* 19

Emergency motions under Standing Order 40

Ambulance services funding ... *Blakeman* 28

Debate on supplementary estimates ... *Pannu* 1971

Emergency planning

Budget reduction ... *Agnihotri* 1327

Energy industry incidents ... *Swann* 1039

Funding for ... *McClellan* 1668; *Swann* 1668

General remarks ... *Lougheed* 207; *Prins* 1251; *Renner* 207, 1251, 1320, 1321

Statement re ... *Mitzel* 1151–52

Emergency Preparedness Week

General remarks ... *Mitzel* 1151; *Prins* 1251; *Renner* 1251

Emergency public warning system

General remarks ... *Renner* 207

Emergency relief

See **Disaster relief**

Emergency response plan for communicable diseases

See **Communicable diseases—Control, Emergency response plan for**

Emergency room volunteers

See **Hospitals—Emergency services, "Friends of ..." volunteers re**

Emergency services (Hospitals)

See **Hospitals—Emergency services**

Emergency vehicles, Stationary

Speed limits for passing of ... *Lougheed* 1884; *Oberg* 1884

Speed limits for passing of: Legislation re (Bill 39) ... *Magnus* 746

Emission control credits

Trading of ... *Boutilier* 485, 1043; *Horner* 1222; *Melchin* 743; *VanderBurg* 743

Employee/employer relations*See Labour relations***Employer/employee relations***See Labour relations***Employment, Standing Policy Committee on Education and***See Committee on Education and Employment, Standing Policy***Employment and age***See Age and employment***Employment and training centres**General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129**Employment credentials, Foreign***See Professional qualifications, Foreign***Employment department***See Dept. of Human Resources and Employment***Employment of children***See Children–Employment***Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 35)**First reading ... *Brown* 419Second reading ... *Brown* 551–52; *Miller, R.* 1019–20; *Shariff* 1194Committee ... *Blakeman* 1491–92; *Brown* 1490–92; *Miller, R.* 1490–91Third reading ... *Brown* 1581–82; *Miller, R.* 1582
Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
(Outside of House sittings)Amendment (SP437/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1490; *Shariff* 1493**Employment standards**Bathroom/coffee breaks inclusion in ... *Backs* 1625; *Cardinal* 1625General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129Review of ... *Cardinal* 980; *Speech from the Throne* 10**Employment tax credit***See Tax incentives, Employment tax credit***Employment training programs**Aboriginal peoples ... *Backs* 279, 281, 1131; *Calahasen* 839, 840, 844; *Cardinal* 280, 281, 1130; *Danyluk* 843; *Eggen* 840Eligibility of young adults for ... *Cardinal* 363; *Jablonski* 363General remarks ... *Backs* 278–79, 1131; *Cardinal* 86, 278, 280, 531, 1129, 1137, 1916; *Danyluk* 531; *Goudreau* 1916; *Jablonski* 86Non profit groups providing ... *Cao* 164–65; *Cardinal* 165Tuition fees re ... *Cardinal* 1130**Employment training programs–Northern Alberta**General remarks ... *Danyluk* 837, 843**Enbridge Inc.**Gateway pipeline, joint project with PetroChina ... *Melchin* 801**Encana Corporation**Development in Suffield national wildlife area, newsrelease re (SP550/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 1675
Donation to Bonnyville recreation centre ... *Ducharme* 1482**Endangered plant species**Protection of ... *Coutts* 1521; *Strang* 1521**Endangered Species Conservation Committee**General remarks ... *Coutts* 1521, 1963Grizzly bear designation recommendation ... *Bonko* 957, 1396; *Coutts* 1963Statement re ... *Strang* 1605**Endangered wildlife species**Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... *Bonko* 1746; *Coutts* 1746Protection of ... *Bonko* 21, 929, 957, 1963; *Calahasen* 574; *Coutts* 21, 926, 931–32, 955, 1521, 1963; *Lougheed* 574; *Strang* 955, 1521**Endowment fund for forest fire control (Proposed)**[*See also Endowment funds, Public*]General remarks ... *Eggen* 932**Endowment fund for postsecondary education***See Access to the Future Fund***Endowment funds, Public**[*See also Access to the Future Fund; Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research; Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research; Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund; Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund; Endowment fund for forest fire control (Proposed)*]General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1368, 1372; *Hancock* 868, 871; *McClellan* 749, 958, 962**Energy, Department of***See Dept. of Energy***Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy Committee on***See Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy***Energy and Utilities Board***See Alberta Energy and Utilities Board***Energy bill (U.S.)***See U.S. energy bill***Energy efficiency (Buildings)**Direct Energy/U of C partnership re ... *Boutilier* 1037; *DeLong* 696; *Hancock* 696–97; *Oberg* 696Interest-free loans for ... *Boutilier* 365; *Eggen* 365Legislation re (Bill 211) ... *Eggen* 1890–91**Energy efficiency (Municipal buildings)**Provincial interest-free loans re *See ME First!***(Municipal Energy Efficiency Assistance) program****Energy industry**Aboriginal opportunities in ... *Calahasen* 1781; *Tougas* 1781Foreign investment in ... *Melchin* 801; *Oberle* 801General remarks ... *Melchin* 908–09Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... *Abbott* 772; *Melchin* 772Impact on agriculture ... *Swann* 1221Land use activities: Coalition for Alberta's Future's news release re (SP339/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 858Profits ... *Eggen* 914Statement re ... *Cao* 1526–27Use of water supplies ... *Bonko* 843Use of water supplies, phase out of ... *Boutilier* 978; *Chase* 1377Value-adding/upgrading increase in ... *Melchin* 909, 917, 1310**Energy industry–Crown lands**Aboriginal issues re ... *Bonko* 843, 845; *Boutilier* 615, 802–03, 902–03; *Calahasen* 615, 836, 841, 844–45, 1503; *Eggen* 840, 902–03; *Klein* 486; *Melchin* 615, 802; *Speech from the Throne* 9; *Stevens* 486; *Swann* 485–86, 615, 802–03, 844; *Tougas* 837–38, 844, 1502–03Land management issues re ... *Groeneveld* 648; *Melchin* 648–49

Energy industry—Crown lands—Sawn Lake area

Oil well drilling before approvals for ... *Bonko* 902, 951; *Boutilier* 849; *Coutts* 902; *Klein* 849; *Melchin* 951; *Stevens* 1600–01; *Swann* 849; *Tougas* 1600
Photographs re (SP340/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 858

Energy industry—Environmental aspects

EnergyINet information kit re (SP159/05: Tabled) ... *Doerksen* 295
General remarks ... *Boutilier* 292, 1040; *Doerksen* 292; *Knight* 292; *Melchin* 292, 802, 922; *Swann* 802
Reforestation activities ... *Bonko* 929

Energy industry—Safety aspects

General remarks ... *Eggen* 575; *Melchin* 575

Energy Innovation Network

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 292, 1915, 1967; *Doerksen* 292, 1369, 1375; *Dunford* 1016; *Knight* 292; *Melchin* 292
Information kit re (SP159/05: Tabled) ... *Doerksen* 295
Royalty relief incentives re ... *McClellan* 749

Energy rebates

Funding for ... *Hinman* 1805; *Oberg* 1085

Energy research

Funding ... *Elsalhy* 1371; *McClellan* 749
General remarks ... *Backs* 1376; *DeLong* 1887; *Doerksen* 1369, 1372, 1375, 1887; *Melchin* 909

Energy Research Institute

See **Alberta Energy Research Institute**

Energy resources

Development of ... *Speech from the Throne* 9

Energy resources, Alternate

[See also **Biomass as energy source; Co-energy electrical production; Solar power; Wind power**]

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1037, 1832, 1915; *Doerksen* 1390, 1887; *Eggen* 1832, 1915; *Hinman* 1426; *Horner* 1389; *Johnson* 1389; *Martin* 920; *Mason* 1787; *Melchin* 922, 1120
Provincial government usage of ... *Boutilier* 22; *Klein* 1073; *Oberg* 696
Research into ... *Doerksen* 1369, 1374–75
Research into: Funding for ... *Chase* 1377; *McClellan* 749
Research into: Tax incentives for ... *Hinman* 1426, 1911; *Klein* 1911–12
Use of royalty structure to encourage ... *Dunford* 1016; *Eggen* 1015

Energy revenue

See **Natural resources revenue**

Energy technology, Clean

See **Clean energy technology**

EnergyINet

See **Energy Innovation Network**

Enforcement of fish and wildlife legislation

See **Fish and wildlife legislation, Enforcement of**

Enforcement officers

See **Fish and wildlife officers; Forest guardians**

Enfranchisement of women

See **Women—Right to vote**

Engage Energy Canada, L.P.

Former executive of ... *MacDonald* 161; *Melchin* 161; *Taft* 118
Overcharging re electricity prices: EUB decision re (SP129/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 211

Engineering Research, Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and

See **Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research**

Engineers' association

See **Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta**

Engineers of Alberta, Consulting

See **Consulting Engineers of Alberta**

English as a Second Language

Funding ... *Amery* 949–50, 1572; *Backs* 1131; *Cardinal* 1130, 1132; *Chase* 265, 755; *Hancock* 860; *Zwozdesky* 311, 949–50, 1126, 1261, 1501, 1525, 1572
General remarks ... *Amery* 1571–72; *Blakeman* 866–67; *Bonko* 1134; *Cao* 1784; *Cardinal* 1129; *Flaherty* 952; *Hancock* 859, 870, 871, 1833; *Zwozdesky* 166, 952, 1572, 1784
Review of ... *Zwozdesky* 1572, 1784

Enhanced oil recovery methods

See **Oil recovery methods**

Enrollment in postsecondary educational institutions

See **Postsecondary educational institutions—Admissions (enrollment)**

Enron Canada Corporation

Alberta activities, public inquiry re: Statement re ... *MacDonald* 1969
Alberta activities: Statement re ... *MacDonald* 1834–35
Bonuses to senior officials of: Website article re (SP188/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 327
Discussions with Alberta Energy ... *Klein* 286; *Melchin* 286; *Taft* 285–86
Discussions with Alberta Energy, correspondence re (M47/05: Defeated) ... *MacDonald* 1749; *Melchin* 1749; *Taylor* 1749
Discussions with Alberta Energy, correspondence re (SP678/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1837
Discussions with Alberta Energy, documents re given to Competition Bureau ... *Klein* 286; *Melchin* 286; *Taft* 286
Discussions with Alberta Energy, e-mails re (SP651 & 677/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1788, 1837
Discussions with Alberta Energy, FOIP request re (SP189/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 327
Discussions with Alberta Energy, public access to documents re ... *Klein* 246–47; *MacDonald* 246–47
Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... *Chase* 1186; *Elsalhy* 249; *Klein* 18, 83, 118, 119, 246–47, 1964; *Lund* 249; *MacDonald* 23, 83, 161, 204, 246–47, 286, 455–56, 533, 650, 949, 1196, 1964; *Melchin* 913, 1964; *Stelmach* 1186
Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Adamson report on ... *Klein* 1145; *MacDonald* 1144–45; *Melchin* 1145
Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Background and e-mail re (SP148-149/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 252–53
Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Destruction of trading tapes re ... *McClellan* 42; *Miller, B.* 42
Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Destruction of trading tapes re, e-mail re (SP149/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 252–53

Enron Canada Corporation *(Continued)*

- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Documents re (SP32 & 33/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 93
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): E-mails re (SP130, 163, 252-253/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 211, 295, 492
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): FERC documents re (SP246, 347, 393, 401-402/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 464, 908, 1206, 1259
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Frontier Economics report re ... *MacDonald* 1145; *Melchin* 1145
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Frontier Economics report re (SP8/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 27
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... *Eggen* 914; *MacDonald* 911; *McClellan* 42; *Melchin* 18, 23-24, 118-19, 161, 204, 249, 360, 455-56, 533, 650, 796, 916, 1195-96; *Miller, B.* 42; *Ouellette* 249; *Stevens* 42; *Taft* 18, 118-19, 360, 796, 1195-96
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Tapes of employees' conversations re (SP112 & 190/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 171, 327
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): U.S. lawsuits re ... *MacDonald* 1249; *Melchin* 1249
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Utilities Consumer Advocate's web site re (SP151/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 253
- Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): *Western Standard* article re (SP697/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1865
- Involvement in Alberta power generation system ... *MacDonald* 1337; *Melchin* 1337
- Involvement in Alberta power generation system: Transcript of tape re (SP422/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1342
- Sundance B power purchase arrangement, sale of ... *MacDonald* 1834-35, 1912-13, 1964; *Melchin* 1912-13, 1964
- Sundance B power purchase arrangement, sale of: Letter/emails re (SP751-753/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1970
- Sundance B power purchase arrangement auction participation ... *MacDonald* 1337; *Melchin* 1337
- Sundance power plant, takeover of control of ... *MacDonald* 899; *Melchin* 899

Environics Research Group (Western) Limited

- Government advertising contract ... *Klein* 1103; *MacDonald* 1103

Environment, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Environment**

Environment and economic development

See **Economic development and the environment**

Environmental emergencies

See **Emergency planning**

Environmental farm plans

General remarks ... *Horner* 1222

Environmental impact assessments

- AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion ... *Boutilier* 1027; *Coutts* 1027; *Swann* 1027
- Coal-bed methane extraction process ... *Boutilier* 1202; *Swann* 1202

Environmental impact assessments *(Continued)*

- Oil sands mining projects ... *Eggen* 1714-15
- Sour gas well drilling, Calgary area (Compton Petroleum) ... *Melchin* 1391; *Swann* 1391
- Well drilling, Lubicon Lake Band areas ... *Bonko* 843; *Boutilier* 615; *Swann* 615
- Well drilling, Sawn Lake area ... *Bonko* 902; *Coutts* 902

Environmental law

- Enforcement of ... *Boutilier* 1043, 1046, 1049; *Eggen* 1041, 1042; *Klein* 769; *Swann* 769, 1039; *Taylor* 1045
- Enforcement of, staffing re ... *Boutilier* 1045-46; *Taylor* 1045

Environmental officers

See **Environmental law, Enforcement of, staffing re**

Environmental protection

- Conference on ... *Boutilier* 1044
- Federal/provincial co-operation re ... *Boutilier* 1039; *Chase* 1047; *Swann* 1038
- General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1036, 1037, 1040, 1044; *Chase* 1048; *Taylor* 1044
- Public consultation re ... *Pannu* 268
- Public education re ... *Boutilier* 1043-44
- Statement re ... *Eggen* 1033

Environmental protection—Finance

- General remarks ... *Eggen* 1040-41; *Klein* 768-69; *McClellan* 769; *Swann* 282, 768-69

Environmental Protection Act (Federal)

See **Canadian Environmental Protection Act (Federal)**

Environmental Protection Commission

- Report on Lake Wabamum train derailment ... *Boutilier* 1668; *Lindsay* 1668

Environmental Protection Security Fund

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP139/04: Tabled) ... *Boutilier* 211; *Clerk, The* 211
- Annual report, 2004-05 (SP810/04: Tabled) ... *Boutilier* 2018; *Clerk, The* 2018

Environmental regulations

- MacNichol report on ... *Boutilier* 1049; *Swann* 1049

Environmental research

- Endowment fund for (proposed) ... *Doerksen* 1375; *Eggen* 1374
- General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1043

Envoy to Washington, D.C. (Murray Smith)

See **Alberta Government Offices, Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue**

Enzyme replacement therapy for Fabry disease

See **Fabry disease, Enzyme replacement therapy for, provincial assistance re**

EPCOR Group of Companies

- Electricity bill changes ... *Melchin* 489; *VanderBurg* 489

Epidemic response services—Calgary

Contingency plan for ... *Blakeman* 644; *Evans* 645

EPPAs

See **Electrical power purchase agreements**

Equalization payments

- General remarks ... *Hinman* 971; *McClellan* 1524, 1667; *Miller, R.* 1188; *Morton* 1667; *Pastoor* 1181, 1523-24; *Stelmach* 1187, 1188, 1523

Equating diploma exams, studies re

See **Student testing, Diploma exams: Method for equating, studies re (M49/05: Accepted)**

Equipment, Medical

See **Medical equipment**

Equity loss advance component (CAIS program)

See **Canadian agriculture income stabilization program, Equity loss advance component**

Erosion control

See **Soil conservation**

ESL

See **English as a Second Language**

Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)

Amount of detail in ... *Bonko* 928

General remarks ... *Hancock* 56

Interim estimates (Main, Legisl. Offices and Lottery Fund) 2005-06 considered for one day (Motion 14: *McClellan*) ... *McClellan* 211

Interim estimates (Main, Legisl. Offices and Lottery Fund) 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 13: *McClellan*) ... *McClellan* 211

Interim estimates (Main, Legisl. Offices and Lottery Fund) 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP140/05: Tabled) ... *Deputy Speaker* 211; *McClellan* 211

Main and Lottery Fund estimates, 2005-06: Motion to waive SO 58(5) re ... *Speaker, The* 1085

Main and Lottery Fund estimates, 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP320/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 746-47; *Speaker, The* 746-47

Main and Lottery Fund estimates 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 18: *McClellan*) ... *McClellan* 747

Schedule of debate (SP315/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 746

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Responses to questions during (SP279/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 622

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 considered for two days (Motion 9: *McClellan*) ... *McClellan* 94

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 8: *McClellan*) (SP171/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 94; *Webber* 312

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 transmitted to Assembly (SP85/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 94; *Speaker, The* 94

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days (Motion 23: *McClellan*) ... *McClellan* 1681

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days (Schedule of debate) (SP541/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 1674; *Stevens* 1674

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 erratum (revised page 1) (SP629/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1745

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 22: *McClellan*) ... *Hinman* 1679-80; *Lukaszuk* 1680; *MacDonald* 1678-79; *Mason* 1676-78, 1680; *McClellan* 1680-81

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 tabled (SP696/05) ... *Haley* 1852

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP593/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1676

Ethane-Supply

General remarks ... *Backs* 1443; *Melchin* 1443

Ethical investments by Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

See **Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Ethical investments by**

Ethics, Political

See **Political ethics**

Ethics Commissioner

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP12/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 27

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP531/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 1632

Directives to premier's chief of staff, publication of ... *Klein* 643; *Taft* 643

Gifts to members received during trade missions reported to ... *Agnihotri* 46

Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257

Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Introduction of ... *Speaker, The* 5

Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Abbott* 764; *Chair* 751

Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... *McClellan* 747

MLA nominating of ASC commissioner candidates, review of ... *McClellan* 1597; *Taft* 1597

Report into allegations re former Member for Edmonton-Norwood (SP14/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 27

Report into allegations re Minister of Environment and Fort McMurray land sale process, leak to media, point of privilege re ... *Boutilier* 1675-76; *Mason* 1636-37; *Speaker, The* 1637-38, 1675, 1676, 1719-20; *Stevens* 1637

Report into allegations re Minister of Environment and Fort McMurray land sale process (SP532/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 1632

Role in Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee ... *Stevens* 105

Ethics of science

See **Research and development, Ethical implications**

Eurig court decision

See **Supreme Court of Canada, Government fees decision (Eurig case)**

Evidence disclosure (Legal procedure)

See **Disclosure of evidence (Legal procedure)**

Examination of students

See **Student testing**

Excellence, Alberta Order of

See **Alberta Order of Excellence**

Excellence in Teaching Awards

General remarks ... *Haley* 1504-05; *Strang* 1526

Excellence in teaching Canadian history, Governor**General's award for**

See **Governor General's award for excellence in teaching Canadian history**

Exceptional children-Education

See **Gifted children-Education**

Executive Council

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP46/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 93; *Klein* 93

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP571/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *Klein* 1675

Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *Brown* 1106; *Elsalhy* 1103-04; *Johnson* 1107; *Klein* 1099-1110; *MacDonald* 1102-05; *Mason* 1108-09; *Miller, R.* 1106-07; *Taft* 1101-02

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 258; *Pannu* 268

Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269

Executive Council (Continued)

Limousine service costs ... *Klein* 1107; *MacDonald* 1103; *Miller, R.* 1106
 Staff ... *Klein* 1099
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... *Webber* 312

Exhibitions

See Fairs

Expert Advisory Panel to Review Publically Funded Health Services

Report ... *Blakeman* 205

Export highway

See North/south trade corridor

Export tax on softwood lumber

See Softwoods–Export–United States, Countervail duties re: Export tax to replace

Exports

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1008; *McClellan* 1667

Expression, Freedom of

See Freedom of expression

Extended care facilities

Auditor General's review of ... *Evans* 1077; *Fritz* 1201; *Klein* 1334; *Martin* 1077; *Mason* 1334

Auditor General's review of: Report ... *Blakeman* 1387, 1460, 1577; *Evans* 1497–98, 1707, 1843–44, 1962; *Fritz* 1387, 1388, 1392, 1497, 2010, 2012; *Klein* 1386–87, 1388, 1391–92, 1443–44; *Martin* 1391–92, 1444, 1886, 2012–13; *Mason* 1388, 1443–44, 1842, 1962; *McClellan* 1599; *Pastoor* 1497, 1707; *Taft* 1386

Auditor General's review of: Report (SP417/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 1342

Conditions in ... *Agnihotri* 260, 1499; *Blakeman* 1469, 1577; *Evans* 1499–1500; *Fritz* 797; *Klein* 797, 850; *Mason* 797, 849–50, 1599; *McClellan* 1599

Conditions in: Letters re (SP404, 418/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1259, 1342

Conditions in: Petition tabled re (SP337/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 858

Death of resident in (Jean Warden) ... *Fritz* 1881–82; *Pastoor* 1881; *Stevens* 1881

Death of resident in (Jennie Nelson) ... *Evans* 1962; *Mason* 1962

Food service ... *Fritz* 887; *Martin* 886

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1460, 1839; *Evans* 1707, 1839, 1841–42; *McClellan* 1464; *Pastoor* 1707; *Prins* 884

MLA committee to review (2005) ... *Evans* 1443, 1497–98; *Klein* 1442–43; *Pastoor* 1442–43, 1451, 1498

MLA committee to review (2005): Report ... *Blakeman* 1839; *Evans* 1623, 1707, 1843–44, 1886–87, 1962; *Fritz* 1624, 2010, 2012; *Pastoor* 1707; *Taft* 1707; *Webber* 1623–24

Ombudsman for (See Ombudsperson (Long-term care residents))

Redesignation to assisted living status ... *Blakeman* 1460, 1463; *Evans* 1843, 1962; *Fritz* 1886, 2012–13; *Martin* 1886, 2012–13; *Mason* 1842, 1962

Redesignation to assisted living status: Letter re (SP758/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 1971

Review of ... *Evans* 1497; *Fritz* 614; *Pastoor* 614

Review of (1999) *See Long-Term Care Review Advisory Committee (1999)*

Extended care facilities, Private

Public funding of ... *Blakeman* 1460–61, 1569; *Evans* 1569

Extended care facilities–Fees

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1387; *Fritz* 1387; *Klein* 1387

Increase in ... *Chase* 1467

Increase in, cancellation of ... *Fritz* 1201; *Pannu* 1201

Extended care facilities–Finance

Emergency debate on (Not proceeded with) ... *Backs* 1718; *Hancock* 1718; *Pastoor* 1717–18; *Speaker, The* 1718–19

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469; *Evans* 613, 1074–75; *Johnson* 1074; *McClellan* 748

Government funding revoked for inadequate performance by facility ... *Klein* 1387

Government grants ... *Evans* 2049–50; *Pastoor* 2049–50

Petition presented re ... *VanderBurg* 252

Extended care facilities–Hinton

Reclassification of: Petition presented re ... *Martin* 1918, 1970, 2016

Extended care facilities–Inspection

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469; *Fritz* 1200; *Klein* 850, 1334, 1386–87; *Martin* 1391; *Mason* 849–50, 1334; *Pannu* 1200; *Taft* 1386

Inspector general re (proposed) ... *Fritz* 1882; *Pastoor* 1881

Letter re (SP419/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1342

Extended care facilities–Inspection–Ontario

Publication of results of ... *Klein* 1334; *Mason* 1334

Extended care facilities–Lethbridge

Letter re (SP702/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1891; *Mason* 1891

Extended care facilities–Onoway

Petition tabled re (SP161/05) ... *VanderBurg* 295

Extended care facilities–Regulations

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1460–61, 1469

Extended care facilities–Rural areas

Funding for ... *Evans* 1707; *Klein* 1706–07; *McClellan* 748

Extended care facilities–Staffing

Shortage of: Letters re (SP249/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 492

Shortage of: Petition presented re ... *Pannu* 806

Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... *Blakeman* 981, 1121, 1460, 1469; *Chase* 1467; *Evans* 981, 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1458, 1497, 1498, 1623, 1707; *Fritz* 797, 887, 1200, 1392; *Jablonski* 1124; *Johnson* 1074; *Klein* 797, 850, 1392, 1706–07; *Martin* 886, 1077, 1392; *Mason* 797; *McClellan* 1599; *Pannu* 1200; *Pastoor* 268, 1497, 1707; *Taft* 1706–07; *Webber* 1623

Training of ... *Backs* 889; *Fritz* 890

Extended care facilities–Standards

Accommodation standards: Revision of ... *Fritz* 614; *Speech from the Throne* 10

All-party standing committee re *See Committee on Continuing Care Standards, Standing*

Chemical/physical restraints use standards ... *Fritz* 1497; *Pastoor* 1497

Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... *Abbott* 1410–11; *Blakeman* 1398–99, 1404–05; *Bonko* 1407–08; *Brown* 1413; *Chase* 1400;

Extended care facilities—Standards (*Continued*)

Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) (*Continued*) ... *Danyluk* 1409–10; *Doerksen* 1408–09; *Fritz* 1406–07; *Goudreau* 1403–04; *Hancock* 1397–98; *Martin* 1399, 1411–13; *Mason* 1396–97, 1401–02; *Mitzel* 1405–06; *Oberg* 1402–03; *Prins* 1399–1400; *Speaker, The* 1399, 1400–01; *Strang* 1413–14; *Webber* 1406

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1121, 1460, 1469, 1498; *Evans* 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1458, 1459, 1464, 1497–98, 1844, 1962; *Fritz* 878, 887, 1200–01, 1388, 1392, 1497, 2010, 2012–13; *Jablonski* 1124; *Johnson* 1074; *Klein* 797, 1388, 1391–92, 1962, 2010; *Martin* 1077, 1391–92, 2012–13; *Mason* 797, 1388, 1962; *Pannu* 1200–01; *Pastoor* 1497–98, 2010

Improvement of (Motion 507: *Mason*) ... *Bonko* 1178; *Chase* 1176; *Eggen* 1175–76; *Herard* 1176–77; *Hinman* 1177–78; *Mason* 1173–74, 1177, 1179; *Mitzel* 1177; *Pannu* 1200; *Pastoor* 1176, 1178–79; *Snelgrove* 1174–75

Personal hygiene standards ... *Blakeman* 1498; *Evans* 1498

Extended care facilities—Vegreville

General remarks ... *Evans* 977

Extended care facilities—Vermilion

General remarks ... *Evans* 977

Extended care facilities—Whitecourt-Ste. Anne constituency

Statement re ... *VanderBurg* 1395

Extended care facilities residents

Abuse/neglect of ... *Evans* 613, 614; *Fritz* 614; *Klein* 850; *Mason* 613; *Pastoor* 614

Incontinent supplies for ... *Pastoor* 268–69

Prescription drug usage ... *Evans* 207–08, 415, 613; *Mason* 613; *Pastoor* 207–08, 415

Extendicare Inc.

Lobbying of government ... *Blakeman* 1569; *Evans* 1569

Extension programs for seniors

See Universities and colleges, Extension programs for seniors

Fabry disease

Enzyme replacement therapy for, provincial assistance re ... *Blakeman* 290; *Evans* 290

Fabryzyme (Drug)

General remarks ... *Evans* 290

Facial recognition system (Drivers' licences)

See Automobile drivers' licences—Security aspects, Facial recognition system

Factory farms—Environmental aspects

See Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects

Faculty, University

See University teachers

Fair Trade, Canadian Cattlemen for

See Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade

Fair Trading Act

General remarks ... *Hinman* 1425; *Lund* 1415–16
Payday loan industry provisions ... *Lund* 365

Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)

First reading ... *Ducharme* 51

Second reading ... *Backs* 217–18; *Ducharme* 216; *Elsalhy* 216–217

Committee ... *Ducharme* 476–77; *Elsalhy* 477–78

Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6) (*Continued*)

Third reading ... *Chase* 550; *Ducharme* 547–48, 551; *Elsalhy* 548; *MacDonald* 548–50; *Martin* 548; *Miller, R.* 550–51

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

General remarks ... *Lund* 365

Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)

First reading ... *Pham* 622

Second reading ... *Abbott* 1539–40; *Ady* 1753; *Agnihotri* 1540; *Blakeman* 1750; *Bonko* 1542; *Brown* 1542–43; *Cao* 1541–42; *DeLong* 1752–53; *Eggen* 1540–41; *Elsalhy* 1538–39; *Groeneveld* 1750–52; *MacDonald* 1543–44; *Miller, R.* 1752; *Pham* 1536–37; *Taylor* 1749–50; *Webber* 1544–45; *Zwozdesky* 1545

FAIRE

See Families Allied to Influence Responsible Eldercare

Fairs

Capital grants to ... *Graydon* 124, 1278; *Johnson* 124

Fairview College

Takeover by Northern Alberta Institute of Technology: Recognition of ... *Goudreau* 325

Falcons, Peregrine

See Peregrine falcons

Fallen Four memorial, Mayerthorpe

See Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial for fallen officers, statement re

Falun Gong

Promotion of hatred against, letters re (SP552/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1675

Falun school

See Schools—Construction—Falun

Families Allied to Influence Responsible Eldercare

Elder abuse report (SP303/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 653

Family

General remarks ... *Mather* 302, 1234

Family and Community Research, Alberta Centre for Child,

See Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research

Family and community support services program

Funding ... *Forsyth* 1052

Funding for, using resource rebate funds, letters re (SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1837

General remarks ... *Pannu* 1917

Review of ... *Forsyth* 303

Youth program funding ... *Forsyth* 206–07, 532; *Mather* 532

Family and social services department

See Dept. of Human Resources and Employment

Family court counsellors

General remarks ... *Stevens* 1225

Family courts

General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1197, 1228; *Speech from the Throne* 10; *Stevens* 1197, 1226, 1230, 1234, 1236

Visitation rulings in violent spouse cases ... *Miller, B.* 1196; *Stevens* 1196–97

Family courts—Calgary

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1433

Family day homes

See Daycare in private homes

Family Doctor Week

Statement re ... *Johnson* 1969

Family employment tax credit

See Alberta family employment tax credit

Family farm

Preservation of ... *Horner* 1214; *Martin* 1214

Family farm awards, Centennial

See Century Farm & Ranch awards

Family justice services funding

See Family law, Support services re, funding for

Family law

Letter re (SP652/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1788

Support services re, funding for ... *Stevens* 1225

Family Law Act

General remarks ... *Stevens* 1225, 1234

Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)

First reading ... *Stevens* 51

Second reading ... *Miller, B.* 197; *Stevens* 195–98

Committee ... *Blakeman* 633–36; *DeLong* 636; *Miller, B.* 566–67; *Pannu* 567, 634–36; *Stevens* 444–46, 635

Third reading ... *Chase* 1021; *Stevens* 1020–21

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
(Outside of House sitting)

Amendment (Minister of Justice) (SP235, 272, 295/05:

Tabled) ... *Abbott* 567; *Haley* 636; *Stevens* 444, 566, 633; *Webber* 450

Subamendment (SP294/05: Tabled) ... *Haley* 636;
Pannu 635

Family mediation

See Mediation (Legal process), Child and youth cases

Family member child care

See Daycare in family members' homes

Family services authorities

See Child and family services authorities

Family shelters—Finance

See Women's shelters—Finance

Family Support for Children With Disabilities Act

Initiatives re: Funding for ... *Forsyth* 1051, 1052, 1730, 1731; *Mather* 1731

Family violence

See Domestic violence

Family Violence, World Conference on Prevention of, Banff (October 2005)

See World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence, Banff (October 2005)

Family violence—Legal aspects

See Domestic violence—Legal aspects

Family Violence and Bullying, Round-table on (May 2004)

See Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary (May 2004)

Family Violence Prevention Month

General remarks ... *Jablonski* 1630, 2053

Famous Five

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 856

Replica of Ottawa statuette re, to be housed in
Legislature Building ... *Speaker, The* 856, 1526

Farm, Family

See Family farm

Farm & Ranch awards

See Century Farm & Ranch awards

Farm aid package (Federal)

See Farm Income Payment Program (Federal)

Farm animals

See Livestock

Farm cash receipts

See Farm income

Farm fertilizer—Taxation

See Fertilizer—Taxation

Farm foreclosure

See Foreclosure—Farms

Farm fuel—Taxation

General remarks ... *Hinman* 1218; *Horner* 1219

Farm Fuel Distribution Allowance

General remarks ... *Horner* 695, 1219

Farm gate sales (Beef)

See Beef—Marketing, Farm gate sales

Farm Implement Board

Annual report, 2004 (SP293/05: Tabled) ... *Horner* 623

Farm income

Decline in ... *Mason* 16

Impacts on ... *Horner* 1207

Farm income disaster program (Alberta)

General remarks ... *Horner* 296, 297

Farm Income Payment Program (Federal)

Alberta participation ... *Horner* 488; *Marz* 488

Farm income support

General remarks ... *MacDonald* 1209

Farm input costs

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 695; *Horner* 695

Tax portion impact on ... *Hinman* 1218

Farm manure—Recycling

Pilot project re ... *Doerksen* 1390; *Horner* 1389;
Johnson 1389

Farm plans, Environmental

See Environmental farm plans

Farm produce—Export

Antidumping rules re ... *Horner* 293, 614; *Prins*
613–14; *Stelmach* 614

General remarks ... *McClellan* 749

Statement re ... *Cao* 1032

Farm produce—Processing

See Food industry and trade

Farm safety

Statement re ... *Prins* 293–94

Farm vehicles

Eligibility for veterans' licence plate stickers ...
Lougheed 366; *Lund* 366

Farm workers

See Agricultural workers

Farmers' markets

Food service regulations at ... *Evans* 1520; *Snelgrove*
1520

Farmfair International 2005

Statement re ... *VanderBurg* 1968

Farming

See Agriculture; Family farm

Farming, Organic

See Organic farming

FASD

See Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder

FASD affected adults—Housing;

*See Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder affected
adults—Housing*

Fatalities, Traffic*See* **Traffic fatalities****Fatalities, Work-related**

Day of mourning re ... *Backs* 1118; *Cardinal* 1118;
Eggen 1081; *Martin* 1118
 Federation of Labour report and factsheet re (SP412-
 13/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1315
 Statistics on, over past 100 years (SP374/05: Tabled) ...
Eggen 1081

Fatality inquiries

Fekete family murder/suicide case ... *Cenaiko* 1575;
Jablonski 1575
 Kyle Young's death in Edmonton courthouse ... *Stevens*
 743
 Long-term care resident's death (Jean Warden) ... *Fritz*
 1881; *Pastoor* 1881; *Stevens* 1881
 Long-term care resident's death (Jennie Nelson) ...
Evans
 1962; *Mason* 1962
 Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... *Forsyth* 1390, 1445;
Mather 1390, 1445; *Stevens* 1445
 RCMP corporal's death in mentally ill gunman case ...
Cenaiko 1784; *Miller, B.* 1784
 RCMP drug raid fatalities investigation ... *Stevens* 41,
 43; *VanderBurg* 43, 91
 Role of news media at ... *Miller, B.* 414; *Stevens* 414

Fatality Inquiries Act

Public inquiries provision ... *Cenaiko* 162; *Pannu*
 1231–32

Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)

First reading ... *Stevens* 170
 Second reading ... *Blakeman* 703–04; *Bonko* 702–03;
Chase 700–01; *Elsalhy* 702; *Martin* 701–02; *Miller,*
B. 679–80; *Pannu* 680–81; *Pastoor* 682–83;
Snelgrove 681, 702; *Stevens* 380–81; *Tougas*
 681–82
 Committee ... *Blakeman* 721–23; *Miller, B.* 725; *Pannu*
 722–24; *Pastoor* 723–24; *Stevens* 719–25
 Third reading ... *Miller, B.* 1378–79; *Stevens* 1378
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
 (Outside of House sitting)
 Amendment (SP312/05: Tabled) ... *Oberle* 733; *Pannu*
 722
 General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 414; *Pannu* 1231–32;
Stevens 414

Fatality Review Board

General remarks ... *Stevens* 1881

Fathers

Statement re ... *DeLong* 1394

Fax machines, Digital

Security concerns ... *Johnston* 413; *Ouellette* 413, 752

FBI

See **Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)**

FCM

See **Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

FCSS

See **Family and community support services program**

Fearnley, Mr. Ken

Statement re ... *MacDonald* 858

Feather industry

See **Poultry industry**

Fed cattle set-aside program

Extension of ... *Horner* 119, 1498; *Mitzel* 119

Federal Building

Disposition of ... *Oberg* 1096–97, 1518; *Taft* 1518;
VanderBurg 1096

Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)

Access to Canadian health records held by U.S.
 companies ... *Evans* 482; *Taft* 482

Federal elections

See **Elections, Federal**

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (U.S.)

Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers:
 Documents re ... *MacDonald* 911
 Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers:
 Documents re (SP347, 401–402/05: Tabled) ...
MacDonald 908, 1259
 Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers:
 Testimony re ... *MacDonald* 1196; *Melchin* 1195;
Taft 1195
 Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers:
 Testimony re, document re (SP393/05: Tabled) ...
MacDonald 1206
 Frontier Economics report on Enron trading strategies on
 website of ... *MacDonald* 1145
 Report on Enron trading strategies (SP246/05: Tabled) ...
MacDonald 464

Federal government

Governing party's loss of vote of confidence ... *Shariff*
 1935

Federal/Ontario fiscal relations

Impact of federal parliamentary situation on ... *Abbott*
 1392; *McClellan* 1524; *Stelmach* 1392, 1503, 1523

Federal/provincial fiscal relations

General remarks ... *Abbott* 1392; *Groeneveld* 1503;
Hinman 971, 1444; *Klein* 1444; *McClellan* 1444,
 1524; *Miller, R.* 1188; *Pastoor* 1181, 1523–24;
Stelmach 1188, 1392, 1503, 1523–24

Federal/provincial relations

Budget increase for ... *Eggen* 1183; *Pastoor* 1181;
Stelmach 1182
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 1444; *Klein* 1444;
McClellan 1444; *Miller, R.* 1188; *Stelmach* 1180,
 1187, 1188
 Statement re ... *Hinman* 1714

Federal/provincial/territorial agriculture ministers' meeting, Alberta (July 2005)

See **Agriculture ministers' meeting (Federal/provincial/territorial), Alberta (July 2005)**

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Subsidized housing statistics ... *Fritz* 1198

Federation of Police Associations, Alberta

See **Alberta Federation of Police Associations**

Feeder Associations Guarantee Amendment Act, 2004 (Bill 28, 2004)

General remarks ... *MacDonald* 1209

Feeder associations (Livestock)

Provincial guarantees to ... *MacDonald* 1209

Feedlots

Clean up costs re ... *MacDonald* 1209
 Tax incentives re ... *Hinman* 1852

Feedlots–Waste disposal

Biomass reactor for, tax incentives re ... *Hinman*
 1851–52
 Joint research project re ... *Doerksen* 1390; *Horner*
 1389; *Johnson* 1389

Fees, Government

General remarks ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 931
Review of ... *Blakeman* 754; *Ouellette* 752

Fees, User

See **Dept. of Government Services, Fees;**
Education–Finance, User fees; Extended care
facilities–Fees; Medical care–Finance, User fees;
Midwives and midwifery–Fees;
Schoolchildren–Transportation, User fees for

Fekete family tragedy

See **Domestic violence, Murder/suicide case, Red**
Deer 2003

Fellowship program for university graduates

See **University graduates, Fellowship program for**

Ferbey rink

See *under* **Curling championships**

Fertilization treatment, In vitro

See **In vitro fertilization treatment**

Fertilizer, Nitrogen

See **Nitrogen fertilizer**

Fertilizer–Taxation

Reduction of ... *Hinman* 1851

Festivals–Finance

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1477; *Chase* 1481;
Eggen 1478

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder

AADAC program re, funding for ... *Evans* 271
Canada northwest partnership re ... *Forsyth* 769
Funding for programs re ... *Forsyth* 303; *Mather* 302
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 769–70; *Forsyth* 769–70

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder–Research

General remarks ... *Forsyth* 769–70

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder affected**adults–Housing**

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 770; *Forsyth* 770

FIDP

See **Farm income disaster program**

Film Commission Advisory Council, Alberta

See **Alberta Film Commission Advisory Council**

Film development grant program

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1475; *Dunford* 322;
Haley 322; *Mar* 322, 1473

Film industry

Benefits received from Alberta trade missions ...
Agnihotri 46; *Mar* 46
Film distribution problems: Letter re (SP178/05: Tabled)
... *Blakeman* 327
General remarks ... *Bonko* 1009; *DeLong* 2013;
Dunford 1011, 1013, 2013; *Eggen* 1015
Government budget for ... *Agnihotri* 1474; *Bonko*
1010; *Mar* 1476, 1783
Hiring of local talent provisions ... *Eggen* 1015
Impact of industrial development on ... *Chase* 1011–12
Statement re ... *Groeneveld* 1968
Tax incentives for ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1010,
1013, 1016; *Eggen* 1015

Film industry–Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Oberle* 1341

Filumena (Opera)

Opening performance at Alberta Scene in Ottawa ...
Speaker, The 1151

Finance, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Finance**

Financial Administration Act

General remarks ... *Klein* 1912

Financial aid, Student

See **Student financial aid**

Financial management–Alberta

See **Alberta–Economic policy**

Financial management and planning department

See **Dept. of Finance**

Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)

First reading ... *McClellan* 775; *Zwozdesky* 775
Second reading ... *Eggen* 939; *MacDonald* 939;
McClellan 845, 939; *Miller, R.* 938–39; *Zwozdesky*
845–46
Committee ... *Chase* 1018; *Miller, R.* 1018–19;
Zwozdesky 1018–19
Third reading ... *Mason* 1112–13; *McClellan* 1112–13;
Taft 1113
Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
(Outside of House sitting)
General remarks ... *Eggen* 1374; *McClellan* 961;
Miller, R. 959
Responses to questions asked during second reading
(SP376/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1112
Responses to questions asked during third reading
(SP438/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1507

Fine arts courses in high school

See **High school education–Curricula, Fine arts**
courses: Letter re (SP195/05: Tabled)

Fine arts courses in junior high school

See **Junior high school education–Curricula, Fine**
arts courses

Fine arts credit in high school

See **High school credits, Fine arts credit requirement**
(Motion 505: Herard)

Fines (Poaching violations)

General remarks ... *Coutts* 21

Fines (Traffic violations)

Computerized cash register system re ... *Stevens* 1225
Graduated licence conditions violation ... *Cenaiko* 1308;
Jablonski 1308

Finning (Canada)

Labour Relations Board decision re company and
machinists' union (SP799/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 2018

Fire–Control

Winter conditions' effect on ... *Bonko* 1328–29

Fire Commissioner's Office

See **Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office**

Fire-killed timber

See **Timber, Fire-killed**

Firearms–Licensing

Impact on provincial hunting regulations ... *Coutts*
2050; *Morton* 2050

Firebag project

See **Suncor Inc., Firebag project, royalty discussions**
re

Firefighters–Training

Provincial initiative re ... *Renner* 1320–21

Firefighters' heart attacks

See **Heart attacks in firefighters**

Firefly, Camp (Anti-bullying initiative)

See **Camp Firefly (Anti-bullying initiative)**

FireNet (Forest fire communications system)

General remarks ... *Coutts* 930

Fires, Forest—Prevention

See Forest fires—Prevention

Fires at hazardous waste sites

Monitoring of ... *Boutilier* 1335–36, 1337–38; *Eggen* 1337–38; *Lougheed* 1335–36

FireSmart program (Forest fire prevention)

General remarks ... *Coutts* 47, 1849; *Strang* 47

Firewall committee

See MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation

Firewall issues (Federal/provincial relations)

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188

First aid—Training

As part of school curriculum ... *Lukaszuk* 204–05; *Zwozdesky* 205

First-contract certification legislation

See Collective bargaining, First-contract certification legislation

First ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues, Kelowna, November 2005

See Aboriginal issues, First ministers' meeting re, Kelowna, November 2005

First Nations apprenticeship training

See Apprenticeship training, Aboriginal people

First Nations children—Education

See Aboriginal children—Education

First Nations courts

See Aboriginal courts

First Nations development fund

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1278, 1282
Revenue decrease ... *Graydon* 1799; *Tougas* 1799

First Nations economic development

See Aboriginal economic development

First Nations' gaming policy

See Gambling—Aboriginal reserves

First Nations health care

See Aboriginal peoples—Health care

First Nations land claims

See Aboriginal land claims

First Nations participation in Royal visit

See Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain, Alberta visit, May 2005: First Nations participation

First Nations police services

See Aboriginal police services

First Nations traffic accident injuries

See Traffic accident injuries—Aboriginal communities

First Nations treaties

Honouring of ... *Calahasen* 1829

Fiscal Responsibility Act

Amendment of, re resource rebates (Bill 43) ...
McClellan 1631
Amendment of (Bill 37) ... *McClellan* 775; *Zwozdesky* 775

Fiscal sustainability fund

See Alberta Sustainability Fund

Fish and Game Association, Alberta

See Alberta Fish and Game Association

Fish and wildlife legislation

Enforcement of ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 931, 933–34, 936; *Eggen* 932–33; *Oberle* 936

Fish and wildlife officers

[*See also Forest guardians*]
Number of ... *Bonko* 928, 929, 1848; *Chase* 1480–81; *Coutts* 925, 931, 933–34, 936, 1254, 1849; *Eggen* 932–33, 1254

Fish and wildlife officers (Continued)

Number of: AUPE news release re (SP406/05: Tabled)
... *Eggen* 1259

Fish conservation

General remarks ... *Coutts* 855
Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... *Calahasen* 43, 45, 89; *Coutts* 89, 615–16, 926; *Morton* 615–16; *Oberle* 89

Fish management

General remarks ... *Coutts* 925–26, 934

Fish populations—Alberta

General remarks ... *Coutts* 855; *Jablonski* 854–55

Fish stocking

General remarks ... *Coutts* 855; *Jablonski* 855

Fisheries, Commercial

Exclusion from Métis hunting/fishing agreement ...
Calahasen 842
Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... *Coutts* 615–16; *Morton* 615–16
Reduction in ... *Coutts* 926

Fisheries, Commercial—Bow River

General remarks ... *Coutts* 615; *Morton* 615

Fisheries department

See Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development

Fishing, Industrial

See Fisheries, Commercial

Fishing, Sport

2005 Alberta Guide to Sport Fishing Regulations (SP110/05: Tabled) ... *Coutts* 171
General remarks ... *Coutts* 855; *Jablonski* 854–55
Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... *Calahasen* 89; *Coutts* 89; *Oberle* 89

Fishing rights, Métis

See Métis hunting/fishing rights

Fitness—Teaching

See Physical fitness—Teaching

Fixed election dates

See Elections, Provincial, Fixed dates for

Fjeldheim, Brian (Retired Chief Electoral Officer)

[*See also Chief Electoral Officer*]
Statement re ... *Tarchuk* 2054

Flat tax, Provincial

See Income tax, Provincial, Flat tax

Flawed, Failed, Abandoned: 100 P3s (Report)

See Friends of Medicare, Report on P3s in health care projects (Flawed, Failed, Abandoned) (SP302/05: Tabled)

Flesher, Mr. Ken

Recognition of ... *Rogers* 126

Flood Risk Management Committee

Flood prevention planning ... *Renner* 1709

Floods—Guyana

Recognition of ... *Agnihotri* 50

Floods—Prevention

General remarks ... *Amery* 1708; *Renner* 1708–09

Floods—Southern Alberta

Compensation re ... *Amery* 1708; *Renner* 1708

Floor of the Assembly Chamber

See under Legislative Assembly Chamber

Floor price for beef

See Beef—Prices, Minimum floor price

Flu, Avian

See Avian influenza

Flu vaccine, Avian

See Vaccine, Avian influenza

Fluckiger, Mr. Kellan

See **Electric utilities—Regulations, Deregulation: Private consultant re (Kellan Fluckiger)**

Fly for a Cure (Charity fundraiser)

Statement re ... *Miller, R.* 1313

FMA's

See **Forest management agreements**

FOIP Act

See **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

Folk Festival, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Folk Festival**

Food and Rural Development department

See **Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development**

Food banks

General remarks ... *Fritz* 366; *Pastoor* 366

Statement re ... *Oberle* 1888

Food Banks, Canadian Association of

See **Canadian Association of Food Banks**

Food for schoolchildren—Edmonton

See **School lunch programs—Edmonton**

Food industry and trade

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 836; *Horner* 1222; *MacDonald* 1208

Provincial support programs re ... *Horner* 296, 298, 1214; *MacDonald* 297; *Martin* 1212

Research re ... *Horner* 296

Statement re ... *Goudreau* 1080

Food Inspection Agency, Canadian

See **Canadian Food Inspection Agency**

Food production

See **Agriculture**

Food safety

Chronic wasting disease infected deer, served for human consumption, news article re (SP290/05: Tabled) ... *Horner* 623

Chronic wasting disease threat to ... *Horner* 250, 288; *Klein* 288; *Swann* 288

General remarks ... *Horner* 48, 1222

Rural community halls ... *Evans* 248, 1520; *Marz* 248; *Snelgrove* 1520

Food service employees—Wages

See **Wages—Food service employees**

Food Services Association, Alberta Restaurant and

See **Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Association**

Foot patrols

See **Police, Neighbourhood patrols**

Football championships

Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions ... *Backs* 1888; *Hinman* 1909; *Klein* 1908; *Lukaszuk* 1743–44; *Mason* 1908–09; *Taft* 1908

Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions: Letter re (SP711/05: Tabled) ... *Flaherty* 1891

Raymond Comets tier 1 provincial champions, Statement re ... *Hinman* 2055

Foothills Country Hospice Society

Statement re ... *Groeneveld* 2014–15

Foothills Medical Centre

Road access to new children's hospital ... *Chase* 210, 364, 653; *Oberg* 364

Foothills Medical Centre (Continued)

Single room format ... *Chase* 1467

Upgrades to ... *Blakeman* 644; *Chase* 1470; *Evans* 533, 644; *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309

Upgrades to, funding for ... *Evans* 1838; *Oberg* 1086

Forbes elementary school, Grande Prairie

See **Alexander Forbes elementary school, Grande Prairie**

Foreclosure—Farms

BSE related situations ... *Hinman* 49; *Horner* 49

Foreign doctors

See **Immigrant doctors**

Foreign investments

See **Investments, Foreign**

Foreign medical graduates

See **Medical graduates, Foreign**

Foreign offices, Albertan

See **Alberta Government Offices**

Foreign policy

See **Alberta—Foreign policy**

Foreign qualifications assessment service

See **Professional qualifications, Foreign, Assessment service**

Foreign relations

See **International relations**

Foreign students

See **Students, Foreign (Grade school)**

Foreign trade—United States

See **International trade—United States**

Foreign workers, Temporary

[*See also* **Labour Relations Code, Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects)**]

Alberta document re (SP245/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 464

Alberta/federal government memorandum re: Information package (SP366/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1034; *Clerk, The* 1034

Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated) ... *Backs* 823, 825, 989; *Cardinal* 823, 989; *Chase* 824–25; *MacDonald* 823–24; *Mason* 824; *Zwozdesky* 989

Ban on: Petitions presented re ... *Agnihotri* 652, 699, 1128; *Backs* 294, 326, 418, 463, 491, 536, 621, 652, 745–46, 775, 806, 858, 957, 984, 1033, 1128, 1132, 1153, 1205, 1314, 1396, 1451–52, 1507, 1528, 1578, 1607, 1630, 1674, 1715, 1745, 1788, 1836, 1970, 2016; *Bonko* 326, 419, 621, 652, 699; *Elsalhy* 369, 462, 621; *MacDonald* 369, 418, 463, 491, 536, 1507; *Miller, B.* 1396; *Miller, R.* 418, 463, 536, 579; *Pastoor* 491, 579, 653, 806; *Taylor* 369, 462–63

Ban on: Petitions presented re, tabling re disallowed ... *Abbott* 1206; *Speaker, The* 1258–59

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1090; *Backs* 121–22, 279, 318, 360–61, 411, 571, 1132, 1443; *Blakeman* 1140; *Bonko* 1266; *Calahasen* 839; *Cao* 802; *Cardinal* 85–86, 121–22, 280, 281, 318, 321–22, 361, 362, 411, 458, 571, 802, 1133, 1135, 1443; *Danyluk* 843; *Dunford* 86, 1008; *Hancock* 248; *Jablonski* 85–86, 121; *Klein* 647; *Martin* 321–22, 458, 647, 920, 1136–37, 1171; *Mason* 361–62; *Oberg* 1090–91; *Taylor* 248; *Tougas* 838

Implications re workplace safety ... *Martin* 1136

Language training for ... *Backs* 1131; *Bonko* 1134; *Cardinal* 1132

Letter re (SP254/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 492

Foreign workers, Temporary (Continued)

- Letter re (SP336/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 807
- Letters re (SP116, 136, 168, 208, 243, 255, 269, 287, 424, 431, 435/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 171, 211, 295, 370, 463, 492, 536, 622, 1342, 1396, 1452
- Letters re (SP205/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 370
- Letters re (SP338 & 360/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 858, 984
- Letters re (SP444, 463, 492, 505/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1508, 1528, 1579, 1608
- Process to apply for (SP217/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 370
- Statement re ... *Mason* 209–10
- Suncor communications plan re (SP244/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 464
- Treaty 8 First Nations resolution and letter re (SP134-135/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 211

Forensics lab closure, Edmonton

- See **Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Forensics lab closure, Edmonton**

Forest conservation

- General remarks ... *Bonko* 929, 930, 1312; *Coutts* 936, 1312
- Sierra Club press release re Alberta policy re (SP421/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1342
- Statement re ... *Eggen* 1395–96

Forest fire areas, logging in

- See **Logging in forest fire hit areas**

Forest firefighters

- Room and board rates for ... *Bonko* 618, 928; *Coutts* 618, 934; *Eggen* 932

Forest firefighters—Training

- General remarks ... *Coutts* 1393

Forest fires—Control

- Capital funding for ... *Coutts* 927
- Endowment fund for See **Endowment fund for forest fire control (Proposed)**
- Equipment for ... *Bonko* 928; *Coutts* 930
- Funding for ... *Bonko* 928, 929, 938, 1848; *Coutts* 930, 934, 1846–47, 1849; *Eggen* 932
- General remarks ... *Bonko* 618; *Coutts* 618
- Impact on pine beetle control ... *Bonko* 1847–48; *Coutts* 1848
- Use of government aircraft for ... *Oberg* 1096; *VanderBurg* 1096

Forest fires—Control—Municipal areas

- Assistance program re ... *Bonko* 929

Forest fires—Prevention

- General remarks ... *Coutts* 47, 1393; *Oberle* 1393; *Strang* 47
- Phone reporting line re ... *Coutts* 1393

Forest guardians

- [See also **Fish and wildlife officers**]

- General remarks ... *Coutts* 925, 931, 934, 1252, 1254

Forest harvesting

- See **Logging**

Forest industries

- Impact of mountain pine beetle on ... *Coutts* 247, 926; *Oberle* 247
- Impact of softwood lumber dispute on ... *Coutts* 20–21, 1626; *Strang* 20, 1626
- Value-added processing in ... *Coutts* 926–27, 937; *Dunford* 88, 124, 644, 836; *Strang* 644

Forest Lawn high school

- Awards night: Statement re ... *Cao* 1968

Forest management

- General remarks ... *Eggen* 1396; *Oberle* 935

Forest management agreements

- Al-Pac agreement: Study ... *Eggen* 1395
- Bigstone Cree lands, pamphlet on concerns re (SP705/05: Tabled) ... *Tougas* 1891
- Consultation on renewals of, with Treaty 8 First Nations, resolution re (SP634/05: Tabled) ... *Bonko* 1745
- Recreational/snowmobile access to lands under ... *Coutts* 694; *Rogers* 693–94
- Reforestation requirements ... *Bonko* 929; *Coutts* 1575

Forest protection

- Budget for, reports on (Q37/05: Accepted) ... *Bonko* 1747; *Coutts* 1747

Forest regeneration

- See **Reforestation**

Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta

- General remarks ... *Bonko* 937; *Coutts* 530, 927, 931, 936, 1575

Forest resource improvement program

- General remarks ... *Coutts* 927

Forest sustainability

- See **Forest conservation**

Forest Technologists, College of Alberta Professional

- See **College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists**

Forest tenure system

- General remarks ... *Coutts* 936–37; *Oberle* 936

Forest Week

- See **National Forest Week**

ForestCare (Forest protection program)

- General remarks ... *Coutts* 936

Foresters, College of Alberta Professional

- See **College of Alberta Professional Foresters**

Forestry department

- See **Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development**

Forestry Research Institute

- See **Alberta Forestry Research Institute**

Forestry sinks

- See **Carbon dioxide sinks**

Forintek Canada Corp.

- Provincial partnership with ... *Coutts* 927

Fort MacKay First Nation

- Passing of Chief Dorothy McDonald ... *Johnston* 1628

Fort McMurray

- Impact of oil sands expansion on ... *Boutilier* 201, 485; *Chase* 484–85, 575–76, 1086, 1627–28; *Danyluk* 203, 843; *Evans* 576; *Klein* 201, 484–85, 527–28; *MacDonald* 911; *McClellan* 527, 576, 962, 1628; *Melchin* 203; *Oberg* 200–01, 576, 1628, 1800; *Renner* 1628; *Swann* 201; *Taft* 200, 527; *Taylor* 535; *Tougas* 838
- Impact of oil sands expansion on: Environmental aspects ... *Boutilier* 1048; *Chase* 1047
- Impact of oil sands expansion on: Meeting re, April 8, 2005 ... *Klein* 201
- Impact of oil sands expansion on: Report on (SP266/05: Tabled) ... *Melchin* 536

Fort McMurray health authority

- See **Northern Lights Health Region**

Fort McMurray hospital

- See **Hospitals—Fort McMurray**

Fort McMurray land sale

- See **Alberta Social Housing Corporation, Transfer of land to Fort McMurray**

Fort McMurray rail link

See Rail service—Edmonton/Fort McMurray

Fort McMurray teachers' salaries

See Wages—Teachers—Fort McMurray

Fort Saskatchewan hospital

See Hospitals—Fort Saskatchewan

FortisAlberta Inc.

Co-ordination of bills with EPCOR ... *Melchin* 489;
VanderBurg 489

Forum for Young Albertans

Statement re ... *Danyluk* 1126

Forum on advanced education

See Education, Postsecondary, Access to,
affordability review to improve

Foster children

Requirement to work ... *Backs* 1779; *Cardinal* 1779

Foster Parent Association, Alberta

See Alberta Foster Parent Association

Foster parents

Increased funding for ... *Forsyth* 301, 305, 1052, 1056;
Mather 303, 1054
Legal aid funding for ... *Flaherty* 1235; *Stevens* 1235
Review of ... *Forsyth* 1052
Statement re ... *Mather* 1715

Foundation for the Arts, Alberta

See Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Fox, Terry

Statement re ... *Johnston* 698–99

A Framework for Reform (Report)

See Premier's Advisory Council on Health,
Recommendations (A Framework for Reform)

Franchise, Provincial

See Voting in provincial elections

Franchise, Women's

See Women—Right to vote

Francis Winspear Centre for Music

General remarks ... *Bonko* 1009

Francization

See French language—Teaching

Francophone school boards

See School boards, Francophone

Francophone schools

Provincial funding of ... *Hinman* 1805; *Oberg* 1805

Francophone Secretariat

Funding for ... *Ducharme* 1482; *Mar* 1484

Frank exhibit, Calgary

See Anne Frank exhibit, Calgary

Frankenstein (Film)

Statement re ... *Johnston* 1126–27

Fraser, Hon. Catherine (Chief Justice)

See Administrator of the Province of Alberta

Free trade—Continental North America

See North American free trade agreement

Free trade highway

See North/south trade corridor

Free tuition

See Tuition fees, Remission of, for second year
courses

Freedom of expression

Statement re ... *Morton* 698

Freedom of Expression Committee (Book and Periodical Council)

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 25–26

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP672/05: Tabled) ... *Lund*
1837

Application to Canadian subsidiaries of U.S.
corporations ... *Elsalhy* 1886; *Lund* 1886

Application to police radio conversations (Overtime bar
case) ... *Cenaiko* 411

Edmonton Journal request under, re government aircraft
manifest information ... *Chase* 1518–19; *Elsalhy*
1521; *Lund* 1521–22; *Oberg* 1519, 1521

Edmonton Journal request under, re government aircraft
manifest information: Public inquiry re ... *Oberg*
1519, 1521

Enron/Energy dept. correspondence re electricity
deregulation request under ... *Melchin* 1749; *Taylor*
1749

Environmental information requests under ... *Boutilier*
1036

Fees ... *Elsalhy* 1521; *Lund* 1521–22

General remarks ... *Backs* 1169; *Blakeman* 1140;
Cardinal 1169; *Chase* 57; *Haley* 58; *Hancock* 1167;
Lund 1416, 1423; *Martin* 1166, 1167; *Mather* 1422;
Miller, R. 257, 1164; *Stelmach* 1166; *Zwozdesky*
1164

Liberal opposition requests under, re Enron/Alberta
Energy records (SP189/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald*
327

Liberal opposition requests under, re government aircraft
manifest information ... *Blakeman* 53; *Eggen* 87;
Klein 19; *Oberg* 42, 53, 87, 122–23

Oil/gas sites reclamation costs, prevention of disclosure
of ... *Melchin* 1519; *Swann* 1519

Social Housing Corporation sale agreement re land
transfer to Fort McMurray, release of information re
under ... *Fritz* 1569; *McClellan* 1598

Freedom of speech

See Freedom of expression

Freedom to Read Week

Statement re ... *Blakeman* 25–26

Freestyle ski championships

World Cup moguls winner (Jennifer Heil) ... *Lindsay*
417

French language—Teaching

Funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 1126

FRIAA

See Forest Resource Improvement Association of
Alberta

Friends of Medicare

Co-sponsor of alternative Calgary health care conference
(Weighing the Evidence) ... *Blakeman* 1459; *Chase*
1152; *Swann* 1468

Long-term care facilities' conditions, news conference re
... *Klein* 797, 850

Report on P3s in health care projects (Flawed, Failed,
Abandoned) (SP302/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 653

Friends of the Emergency Room

See Hospitals—Emergency services, "Friends of ..."
volunteers re

Friends of the jubilee auditoria societies

General remarks ... *Mar* 1484

Friendship centres, Native

See Native friendship centres

- Frontier Economics Inc.**
 Report on Project Stanley ... *MacDonald* 1145; *Melchin* 1145
 Report on Project Stanley (SP8/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 27
- Fryingpan, Randy**
See **Edmonton Police Service, Randy Fryingpan**
 tasing case
- Fuel tax**
See **Gasoline–Taxation**
- Fund-raising, School**
See **School councils, Fund-raising activities**
- Funding envelopes (Postsecondary education)**
See **Education, Postsecondary–Finance, Funding envelopes**
- Funeral Services Regulatory Board, Alberta**
See **Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board**
- Funerals–Law and legislation**
 General remarks ... *Lund* 1425; *Miller, B.* 1425
- Furnace rebate program**
 Letter re (SP706/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 1891
- Further education councils**
See **Community learning centres**
- Future Fund, Access to the**
See **Access to the Future Fund**
- Future leaders program**
See **Leaders of Tomorrow program**
- Galileo (European satellite navigation system)**
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1369
- Gambling**
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 1286
- Gambling, Compulsive**
 Amount of ... *Graydon* 1281
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 1286; *Pannu* 1284–85, 1285–86
 Level of revenue from ... *Graydon* 487; *Tougas* 487
 Research into ... *Graydon* 1278, 1281, 1286
 Statement re ... *Tougas* 1888–89
 Youth gambling ... *Evans* 741; *McFarland* 741
- Gambling, Compulsive–Treatment**
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 487
- Gambling–Aboriginal reserves**
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 1282; *Swann* 1282; *Tougas* 1279
 Revenue from, distribution of ... *Graydon* 1278
- Gambling–Moral/legal issues**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1284; *Graydon* 1286; *Pannu* 1285; *Swann* 1282; *Tougas* 1279–80
- Gambling–Research**
See **Gambling, Compulsive, Research into**
- Gambling industry**
See **Gaming industry**
- Gambling research**
See **Gambling, Compulsive, Research into**
- Gambling summit**
See **Alberta Lotteries and Gaming Summit (1998)**
- Game farming**
 BSE disease issue in ... *Swann* 1221
 Chronic wasting disease issue in ... *Bonko* 250; *Coutts* 934; *Eggen* 933; *Horner* 250, 288, 456; *Klein* 288; *Prins* 456; *Swann* 288, 1221
 Federal/provincial compensation to ... *Horner* 258
 General remarks ... *Swann* 1221
 Public inquiry re ... *Bonko* 250; *Horner* 319; *Klein* 288; *Swann* 288, 319
 Use of public lands for ... *Swann* 1221
- Gaming, Dept. of**
See **Dept. of Gaming**
- Gaming and Liquor Act**
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 1277
- Gaming and Liquor Commission**
See **Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission**
- Gaming industry**
 Future of ... *Tougas* 1279–80
 General remarks ... *Tougas* 1279
 Revenue from ... *Chase* 1283–84; *Graydon* 1279, 1281; *Pannu* 1284–85; *Tougas* 1279–80
 Revenue from, distribution of ... *Graydon* 1289; *MacDonald* 1289
 Revenue from, impact of smoking restrictions on ... *Graydon* 1279
 Revenue from, relation to oil/gas revenues ... *Chase* 1283; *Tougas* 1279
 Revenue from, statement re ... *Chase* 1744–45
- Gaming industry–British Columbia**
 Revenue from ... *Tougas* 1279–80
- Gaming industry–Nova Scotia**
 General remarks ... *Graydon* 1280
 Policy re, report on ... *Tougas* 1280
- Gaming Licensing Policy Review**
 Lottery fund disbursements, charity-based ... *Pannu* 1285, 1288
- Gaming Research Council**
See **Alberta Gaming Research Council**
- Gaming Research Institute**
See **Alberta Gaming Research Institute**
- Gaming Summit (1998)**
See **Alberta Lotteries and Gaming Summit (1998)**
- Gang-related crime**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1148, 1430; *Mather* 1148
- Gang-related crime–Prevention**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 205, 1148, 1916; *Mason* 1437; *Mather* 1148; *Miller, B.* 16; *Pannu* 205
 Police intelligence sharing re ... *Cenaiko* 205, 1916
- Ganwon, Korea, twinning arrangement**
See **Twinning of cities, provinces, etc., Ganwon, Korea**
- Garbage disposal**
See **Refuse and refuse disposal**
- Garbage dumps**
See **Sanitary landfills**
- Garden on Legislature grounds**
See **Legislature grounds, Memorial garden for Hon. Lois Hole on**
- Garden suites**
See **Senior citizens–Housing, Garden suites**
- Gas, Natural**
 General remarks ... *Melchin* 908–09, 910
 Upgrading of *See* **Energy industry, Value-adding/upgrading increase in**
 Use as power source in oil sands production ... *Chase* 1377; *Eggen* 1715
- Gas, Natural–Export**
 General remarks ... *Melchin* 922
 Impact on petrochemical industry employment levels ... *Mason* 572; *Melchin* 572
- Gas, Natural–Export–United States**
 Impact of U.S. energy bill on ... *Knight* 1310; *Melchin* 1310

Gas, Natural–Prices

Forecasting of ... *Eggen* 914; *Elsalhy* 966; *Martin* 919;
McClellan 962, 1667; *Melchin* 909, 915, 921
 General remarks ... *McClellan* 747; *Melchin* 916
 Impact on seniors ... *Backs* 889–90; *Hinman* 888
 Provincial rebate re *See Natural gas rebates*
 Residential heating prices, provincial comparison of ...
MacDonald 1670; *Melchin* 1670

Gas, Natural–Retail sales

General remarks ... *MacDonald* 912

Gas, Natural–Royalties

[*See also Royalty structure (Energy resources)*]
 From disputed aboriginal lands ... *Calahasen* 1503;
Tougas 1503
 General remarks ... *Mason* 1787; *Melchin* 922, 1670
 Rebate for gas used as feedstock for nitrogen fertilizer:
 Letter re (SP174/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 327
 Relation to gaming revenues ... *Chase* 1283

Gas, Natural–Supply

General remarks ... *Melchin* 916

Gas contracts, Residential

See Natural gas contracts, Residential

Gas emissions, Greenhouse

See Greenhouse gas emissions

Gas in coal extraction

See Coal bed methane extraction

Gas industry

General remarks ... *Eggen* 915; *Melchin* 922

Gas leak, Innisfail area

*See Gas well drilling industry–Safety aspects, Sour
 gas leak, Innisfail area*

Gas leases

See Oil and gas leases

**Gas pipelines–Alaska/Northwest Territories thru
 Alberta**

Stripping of natural gas liquids from throughput of ...
Melchin 922

Gas plants

See Gas industry

Gas-produced electric power

See Electric power, Natural gas-produced

Gas rebates

See Natural gas rebates

Gas recovery methods

Research into: Funding for ... *McClellan* 749

Gas revenue

See Natural resources revenue

Gas well drilling industry

General remarks ... *Eggen* 915
 In vicinity of urban areas ... *Eggen* 665, 1033; *Melchin*
 1828; *Swann* 1828
 Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group:
 Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 664–65;
Melchin 665; *Zwozdesky* 665
 Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group:
 Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ...
Clerk, The 1789; *Eggen* 665; *Melchin* 665, 1789;
Zwozdesky 665
 Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04
 (M10/05: Defeated) ... *Eggen* 665–66; *Melchin* 666;
Zwozdesky 666
 Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M9/05:
 Defeated) ... *Eggen* 665; *Melchin* 665; *Zwozdesky*
 665

Gas well drilling industry–Calgary area

General remarks ... *Eggen* 915; *Melchin* 1391, 1742,
 1828; *Swann* 1391, 1741, 1828

Gas well drilling industry–Safety aspects

General remarks ... *Eggen* 915; *Melchin* 910, 1828;
Swann 1828
 Sour gas leak, Innisfail area ... *Melchin* 1741–42, 1828;
Swann 1741, 1828

**Gas well drilling industry–Tomahawk/Drayton Valley
 area**

Safety aspects ... *Lindsay* 741–42; *Melchin* 741–42

Gas wells, Abandoned

See Well sites, Abandoned

Gasoline–Taxation

Federal revenue from ... *McClellan* 1667
 Federal revenue from, transferred to municipalities ...
Magnus 852; *Oberg* 852, 1085, 1199; *Renner* 1323

Gasoline storage sites remediation program

See Petroleum tank sites remediation program

Gay couples–Law and legislation

Marriage laws *See Same-sex marriage–Law and
 legislation*

Gay/lesbian youth, bullying of

*See Bullying–Prevention, Provincial initiatives re:
 For gay/lesbian youth*

GCI Canada

Tobacco industry front groups, website article re
 (SP821/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2056

Geddes, Marie

[*See also Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose,
 Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in*]

Statement re ... *Blakeman* 1577

Geiger, Alyse

Recognition of ... *Hancock* 169; *Oberle* 169

General Accountants Association of Alberta, Certified

*See Certified General Accountants Association of
 Alberta*

General Hospital, Calgary

See Calgary General Hospital

General Revenue Fund

Details by payee, 2003-04 (SP65/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,
 The* 94; *McClellan* 94
 Details by payee, 2004-05 (SP657/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,
 The* 1789; *McClellan* 1789

Generic drugs–Prices

See Drugs, Generic–Prices

Genocide–Sudan

Statement re ... *Swann* 1341

Geologists' association

*See Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists
 and Geophysicists of Alberta*

Geophysicists' association

*See Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists
 and Geophysicists of Alberta*

George C. King Tower, Calgary

Security concerns ... *Cenaiko* 616; *Fritz* 616; *Taylor*
 616

George Nicholson school

Community use of ... *Martin* 1270

GHG reduction programs (Federal)

See Greenhouse gas reduction programs (Federal)

Ghost-Waiparous recreation area

Access management plan for ... *Coutts* 927, 1252, 1573;
Tarchuk 1252

Ghost-Waiparous recreation area *(Continued)*

Management of use of ... *Coutts* 1252; *Tarchuk* 1252
 Off-highway vehicle access to ... *Chase* 1601; *Coutts*
 1573–74; *Groeneveld* 1573; *Mar* 1601

Gifted children—Education

Funding for ... *Flaherty* 266
 General remarks ... *Lukaszuk* 1078, 1080; *Zwozdesky*
 1078

Giguere, Caroline

Statement re ... *Strang* 1526

GLA

See **Student assessment, Grade level achievement method**

Glenbow Museum

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1476; *Brown* 1482; *Mar*
 1484

Glendale elementary school

Film created by students at: Statement re ... *Johnston*
 1126–27

Global Charter for Humanity, Women's

See **Women's Global Charter for Humanity**

Global Gaming Expo, Las Vegas (September 2005)

Minister of Gaming's attendance at ... *Graydon* 2052;
Tougas 2052

Global positioning systems

Centre of excellence in ... *Doerksen* 1369

Global warming

See **Climate change**

Global warming, Kyoto protocol on

See **Climate change, Kyoto protocol on**

Golden Triangle (Snowmobile trail)

General remarks ... *Dunford* 744

Gomery inquiry

See **Sponsorship scandal (Federal government)**

Good Samaritans Society, Hinton

Redesignation of continuing care beds: Petition
 presented re ... *Martin* 1918, 1970

Goodman, Dr. Ron

See **Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamum, CN train
 derailment: Minister's advisors re**

Government

Public participation: Statement re ... *Swann* 1606

Government accountability

Federal Conservative Party leader's address re (SP526 &
 548/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 1632, 1674
 General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 2010–11; *Klein* 2011;
McClellan 2011

Government agencies, boards, and commissions

Constitutional law situations in, referred to courts (Bill
 23) ... *Stevens* 170
 PC party supporters' appointment to ... *Elsalhy* 1603;
McClellan 1603; *Ouellette* 1603
 Political appointments to ... *Klein* 2047–48; *Mason*
 2047–48; *McClellan* 2047
 Political appointments to, independent panel to
 investigate ... *Klein* 2048; *Mason* 2048

Government aircraft

Costs ... *Eggen* 46; *Oberg* 46
 General remarks ... *MacDonald* 255
 Policy on usage of ... *Chase* 18–19; *Eggen* 45–46;
Klein 18–19; *Martin* 979, 1091; *Oberg* 18–19,
 45–46, 979, 1094
 Policy on usage of: Review by Auditor General ... *Klein*
 82

Government aircraft *(Continued)*

Reduction in number of ... *Oberg* 41; *Taft* 41
 Release of flight logs/manifests for ... *Blakeman* 52–53;
Chase 19, 122–23, 1518–19; *Elsalhy* 1521; *Klein* 19;
Lund 1521–22; *Miller, R.* 257; *Oberg* 42, 53,
 122–23, 1519, 1521; *Taft* 42
 Rod Love's trip to Fort McMurray on ... *Chase* 612;
Klein 82; *Oberg* 612; *Taft* 82
 Use for forest fire fighting ... *Oberg* 1096; *VanderBurg*
 1096
 Use for Tory leadership campaign purposes ... *Oberg*
 42; *Taft* 41

Government appointments

PC party supporters' appointments ... *Elsalhy* 1603;
Evans 1603; *McClellan* 1603; *Ouellette* 1603

Government attorneys

Specialization in child exploitation cases ... *Cenaiko* 206
 Specialization in gun-related crime cases ... *Cenaiko*
 1916; *Miller, B.* 1916
 Training in aboriginal case handling ... *Stevens* 1233
 Training in domestic violence case handling ... *Speech*
from the Throne 10
 Training in domestic violence case handling: Handbook
 for ... *Jablonski* 1918

Government auditing

Prior to elections ... *Mather* 956

Government auto insurance plan

See **Insurance, Automobile, Public plan re**

Government automobiles

See **Government vehicles**

Government bills

See **Bills, Government (2005)**

Government buildings

See **Public buildings**

Government cars

See **Government vehicles**

Government chartered aircraft

Policy on usage of ... *Eggen* 45–46, 86–87; *Martin* 979,
 1091; *Mason* 699; *Oberg* 45–46, 87, 979, 1094
 Premier's use of ... *Chase* 160–61; *Klein* 160–61, 1109;
Mason 1108; *Ouellette* 161
 Provision of details re ... *Mason* 691; *Oberg* 691
 Provision of details re: Documents, April 2001 to Dec.
 2004 (SP358/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 957; *Oberg*
 957

Government computer equipment

Cost savings on ... *Ouellette* 757
 Costs of ... *Martin* 757

Government contracts

See **Public contracts**

Government corporate identity

General remarks ... *Klein* 1101–02; *Taft* 1101

Government debt, Municipal—Fort McMurray

See **Debts, Public (Municipal government)—Fort
 McMurray**

Government debt, Provincial

See **Debts, Public (Provincial government)**

Government departments

Communications staff ... *Mason* 1109
 Control of infrastructure planning/funding ... *Chase*
 1086–87
 Number of ... *Elsalhy* 773, 953; *Hinman* 761, 762;
MacDonald 759; *Martin* 756; *Ouellette* 773, 953
 Renaming of ... *Chase* 755
 Restructuring of ... *Hinman* 1599; *McClellan* 1599

Government efficiency

General remarks ... *Ady* 763; *Blakeman* 753–54, 760; *Chase* 755–56; *DeLong* 758; *Eggen* 694–95; *Elsalhy* 763, 773, 804, 953–54; *Goudreau* 761; *Hinman* 761–62, 1599; *MacDonald* 759–60; *Martin* 756–57; *McClellan* 1599; *Ouellette* 691, 695, 751–63, 773, 804, 953–54; *Pastoor* 691; *Taylor* 757–58

Monitoring of ... *Martin* 756; *Ouellette* 751, 754

Government Efficiency department

See **Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency**

Government employees—Alberta—Salaries

See **Wages—Public service employees**

Government fees

See **Fees, Government**

Government grants to municipalities

See **Municipal finance, Government grants**

Government information

Access to [See also **Alberta Connects (Government information initiative)**]; *Elsalhy* 1103–04; *Klein* 1100–01; *Lund* 1425; *Ouellette* 751–52

Access to, through MLAs' offices ... *Miller, B.* 1425

Access to, through registry offices ... *Lund* 1416, 1419

On-line provision of ... *Ouellette* 751

Government information systems

Security aspects ... *Blakeman* 754; *DeLong* 758; *Johnston* 413; *Ouellette* 413, 755, 758–59

Security aspects: Improvement of employee awareness of (Q18/05: Defeated) ... *Elsalhy* 812–13; *Ouellette* 812

Government investments

See **Investment of public funds**

Government lawyers

See **Government attorneys**

Government motions

See **Resolutions (2005)**

Government of Alberta

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP38/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 93

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP555/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *McClellan* 1675

Web site ... *Klein* 1100–01

Government office space

Leased space costs ... *Oberg* 1800

Government office supplies

Cost savings on ... *Ouellette* 757

Government Organization Act

Amendment by Bill 7 ... *Evans* 52; *Mitzel* 240

Government programs

Communication initiatives re ... *Klein* 1100

Lottery funding for ... *Chase* 1284; *Graydon* 1278

Review of ... *McClellan* 1599

Government purchases

See **Purchases, Government**

Government records—Confidentiality

See **Public records—Confidentiality**

Government Services, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Government Services**

Government Services, Standing Policy Committee on Justice and

See **Committee on Justice and Government Services, Standing Policy**

Government spending policy

General remarks ... *Evans* 1622; *Hancock* 1621; *Klein* 1621; *MacDonald* 254; *McClellan* 747, 1622, 1667; *Morton* 1667; *Oberg* 1621; *Stelmach* 1621; *Taft* 1621–22

Government travel

See **Travel at public expense**

Government vehicles

Funding for ... *Oberg* 1800

Governor General's award for excellence in teaching**Canadian history**

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 2016

Letters of congratulations to Alberta winners of (SP777/05: Tabled) ... *Zwozdesky* 2017

Statement re ... *Morton* 2015–16

GPS

See **Global positioning systems**

Grace Hospital, Calgary

Sale of ... *Chase* 1087, 1466

Grace Martin school, Edmonton

Number of portable classrooms at ... *Mather* 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1727

Grade level achievement

See **Student assessment, Grade level achievement method**

Grade level achievement reports

See **School reports, Grade level achievement reports**

Graduated drivers' licences

See **Automobile drivers' licences, Graduated licences**

Graduates, Aboriginal postsecondary

See **Postsecondary graduates, Aboriginal**

Graduates, Foreign medical

See **Medical graduates, Foreign**

Graduates, High school

See **High school graduates**

Graduates, Postsecondary

See **Postsecondary graduates**

Graduates, University

See **University graduates**

Grain—Marketing

Saskatchewan court decision re ... *Morton* 1203

Grain—Prices

Provincial assistance program re ... *Danyluk* 1624–25; *Horner* 488, 1624–25; *Marz* 488

Provincial assistance re ... *Horner* 1222

Grande Prairie health authority

See **Peace Country Health**

Grande Prairie Regional College

Aboriginal workforce participation initiative See **Aboriginal workforce participation initiative**

Portable trailers, funding to replace ... *Hancock* 1791, 1794

Grande Prairie school

See **School—Grande Prairie**

Grandi, Thomas

Statement re ... *Tarchuk* 773

Grandparents Association, Alberta

See **Alberta Grandparents Association**

Grandparents' rights

Access rights to grandchildren: Letter re (SP198/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 328

Granny houses

See **Senior citizens—Housing, Garden suites**

Grant MacEwan Community College

- Capital expenditures ... *Brown* 1571; *Hancock* 1571
- Degree-granting programs, funding for ... *Hancock* 1790, 1796; *Pannu* 1794; *Taylor* 1791
- Degree-granting programs, transferability of ... *Hancock* 1791, 1796; *Pannu* 1794; *Taylor* 1791
- Health care learning centre: Funding for ... *Blakeman* 867; *Hancock* 871
- Health care learning centre: Statement re ... *Lukaszuk* 1505

Grants, Government

See **Municipal finance, Government grants**

Grants in place of taxes

General remarks ... *Renner* 1320

Granum school

In Assembly during Queen's address ... *Klein* 1617

Gravel operators

See **Sand and gravel operators**

Gravel roads

See **Road construction, Gravel roads**

Graydon report

See **Medical care—Finance, MLA committee to review: Report**

Grazing lands, Public

- Bison grazing on ... *Bonko* 1393, 1449; *Coutts* 1393
- General remarks ... *Bonko* 930; *Coutts* 927
- Revenue from oil and gas leases on ... *Bonko* 1393, 1449; *Coutts* 1393, 1449; *Horner* 1449

Great Kids of Alberta

- Awards: Recognition of ... *Bonko* 418; *Danyluk* 168; *Ducharme* 168; *Hancock* 169; *Johnson* 251; *Oberle* 169; *Rodney* 325
- Awards: Statement re ... *Cao* 368

Greater Black Gold Teachers' Local #8

Letter to minister re collective bargaining method (SP403/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1259

Greater Edmonton Foundation

General remarks ... *MacDonald* 858

Green power

See **Energy resources, Alternate**

Greenhouse effect

See **Climate change**

Greenhouse effect, Kyoto protocol on

See **Climate change, Kyoto protocol on**

Greenhouse equipment and supplies

Tracking purchases of ... *Cao* 459; *Cenaiko* 460

Greenhouse gas emissions

- Reduction of ... *Boutilier* 22, 44–45, 365, 1039, 1042, 1832, 1913–15; *Eggen* 364–65, 1042, 1374, 1832, 1914–15; *Johnson* 21; *Swann* 44, 1038, 1913
- Reduction of: Federal budget legislation re ... *Abbott* 485; *Boutilier* 485
- Reduction of: Funding for research into ... *McClellan* 749
- Reduction of: Large final emitters industries ... *Melchin* 771
- Reduction of: Provincial advertising campaign re ... *Klein* 1105
- Regulations re ... *Boutilier* 1967–68; *Morton* 1967

Greenhouse gas emissions—Fort McMurray area

Reduction of ... *Boutilier* 201; *Klein* 201; *Swann* 201

Greenhouse gas reduction programs (Federal)

General remarks ... *Abbott* 771; *Melchin* 771–72

Grey Cup winners

See under **Edmonton Eskimo Football Club**

Grey Nuns Hospital

- Emergency services waiting times, letter re (SP549/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1674–75
- Staff shortages ... *Agnihotri* 1844; *Evans* 1844
- Upgrades to ... *Blakeman* 1839; *Evans* 1839

Grid West

Membership list (SP382/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1154

Griffith Scott middle school, Millet

Replacement/renovation of ... *Johnson* 1025–26; *Oberg* 1025–26

Grimma, Germany/Leduc partnership

See **Leduc/Grimma, Germany co-operation agreement**

Grizzly bear conservation

General remarks ... *Bonko* 1848, 1963; *Coutts* 1849, 1963

Grizzly bear hunting

General remarks ... *Bonko* 21, 929, 937, 1311–12, 1848; *Coutts* 21, 246, 935, 1311–12, 1849; *Groeneveld* 935; *Morton* 246

Grizzly bears

- Designation as threatened species ... *Bonko* 21; *Coutts* 21
- Designation as threatened species: Petitions presented re ... *Bonko* 957, 1396
- Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... *Bonko* 1746; *Coutts* 1746
- Feeding of, with roadkill ... *Bonko* 937
- Human contact issues ... *Coutts* 935

Grizzly bears—Cheviot Creek area

Impact of coal mine access road on ... *Eggen* 1042

Grizzly bears—Populations

DNA-based census of ... *Bonko* 937, 1963; *Coutts* 926, 935, 1963

Gross, Paul (Producer)

See **Passchendaele (Film)**

Groundwater—Contamination—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds

From pesticides/herbicides ... *Boutilier* 800; *Brown* 800

Group homes—Standards

Locating of homes ... *Backs* 646; *Fritz* 646

Grow ops

See **Marijuana growing operations**

Grow with Canola program

General remarks ... *Knight* 368–69

Growth, Urban

See **Urban growth**

Guardians, Forest

See **Forest guardians**

Guardianship of children

Joint guardianship rules: Legislation re (Bill 5) ... *Stevens* 51

Guards, Security—Law and legislation

See **Security guards—Law and legislation**

Guidance counsellors

See **School counsellors**

Gun control (Federal)

Registry for ... *Hinman* 1444; *Klein* 1444

Gutierrez, Ana

See **Workers' Compensation Board, Ana Gutierrez case: Correspondence re (M42/05: Defeated)**

- Guyana floods**
See Floods—Guyana
- GuZoo**
See Kneehill Animal Control and Rehabilitation Centre Ltd.
- H₂S emissions**
See Hydrogen sulphide emissions
- Hackett, Finola**
 Statement re ... *Lougheed* 907
- Halliday, Leah**
 Statement re ... *Marz* 1258
- Hamilton, Don**
See Ethics Commissioner
- Handicapped**
See Disabled
- Handicapped, Assured Income for the Severely**
See Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
- Hang-gliding**
 Death of Cochrane resident during ... *Miller, R.* 1081
 Fundraiser by enthusiasts for ... *Miller, R.* 1313
- Hank Williams First Nation (Film)**
 Statement re ... *Oberle* 1341
- Hantavirus**
 Precautions re ... *Evans* 1522; *Jablonski* 1522
- Harper, Hon. Stephen (Federal Leader of the Opposition)**
 Address on government accountability (SP526 & 548/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 1632, 1674
 Daycare program comments *See Daycare centres—Finance, National program for: Alberta participation, federal Conservative Party comments re*
- Harry Ainlay high school, Edmonton**
 Drug-sniffing dog program ... *Cenaiko* 1256; *Miller, R.* 1256
- Hay-Zama Lakes wild-land provincial park**
 General remarks ... *Danyluk* 774
- Hazard preparedness**
See Emergency planning
- Hazardous substances—Health aspects**
 During fires ... *Boutilier* 1337–38; *Eggen* 1337–38
- Hazardous substances—Safety aspects**
 During fires ... *Boutilier* 1335–36; *Lougheed* 1335–36
- Hazardous substances spill—Lake Wabamum**
See Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamum, CN train derailment
- Hazardous waste treatment plant, Swan Hills**
See Swan Hills Treatment Centre
- Head Start program**
 General remarks ... *Mather* 579
- Healing and Reconciliation, National Day of**
See National Day of Healing and Reconciliation
- Health**
 Social determinants of ... *Blakeman* 880, 1139, 1459, 1462; *Mason* 1465–66; *Swann* 1468
 Social determinants of: Letter re (SP654/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 1788; *Pannu* 1788
- Health, Premier's Advisory Council on**
See Premier's Advisory Council on Health
- Health and safety inspections**
See Workplace safety inspections
- Health and Social Transfer**
See Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
- Health and Wellness, Dept. of**
See Dept. of Health and Wellness
- Health and wellness programs in schools**
See Education—Curricula, Health and wellness instruction framework
- Health Appeal Board**
See Public Health Appeal Board
- Health authorities, Regional**
See Regional health authorities
- Health Benefit (Human Resources program)**
See Alberta Adult Health Benefit (Human Resources program)
- Health benefits program, Children**
See Child health benefits program
- Health Canada**
See Dept. of Health (Federal)
- Health capital projects**
See Capital projects, Medical
- Health cards, security aspects**
See Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan, Personal health cards for, security aspects
- Health care, Aboriginal**
See Aboriginal peoples—Health care
- Health care, Primary**
See Medical care, Primary
- Health care, Private**
See Medical care, Private
- Health care—Finance**
See Medical care—Finance
- Health care at a distance**
See Telehealth services
- Health care conference, Calgary, April 30 2005**
See Friends of Medicare, Co-sponsor of alternative Calgary health care conference (Weighing the Evidence)
- Health care costs**
See Medical care, Cost of
- Health care demand, reduction of**
See Medical care, Demand for, reduction of
- Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums**
See Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
- Health care learning centre, Grant MacEwan**
See Grant MacEwan Community College, Health care learning centre: Statement re
- Health Care Protection Act (Bill 11, 2000)**
 Advertising campaign re ... *Blakeman* 1666; *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1105
 General remarks ... *MacDonald* 1846
- Health care reform**
See Medical care, Restructuring
- Health care staffing**
See Health workforce planning; Nurses—Supply
- Health care symposium**
See Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
- Health care workers—Education**
See Health sciences personnel—Education
- Health care workers—Supply**
See Health workforce planning
- Health Council of Canada**
 Wait times comments ... *Evans* 1845
- Health Disciplines Board**
 Annual report, 2003 (SP356/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 957; *Evans* 957

- Health Disciplines Board** (*Continued*)
Annual report, 2004 (SP357/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 957; *Evans* 957
- Health Economics, Institute of**
See Institute of Health Economics
- Health Ethics Centre, John Dosseter**
See John Dosseter Health Ethics Centre
- Health facilities**
Personal donations for ... *Chase* 1467
- Health facilities, Private**
General remarks ... *Hinman* 1845
- Health facilities—Construction**
[*See also Capital projects, Medical*]
Funding for ... *Evans* 1458; *Oberg* 1803
- Health Facilities Review Committee**
See Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
- Health First Strathcona**
General remarks ... *Evans* 1569
- Health framework, Student**
See Education—Curricula, Health and wellness instruction framework
- Health information—Confidentiality**
See Medical records—Confidentiality
- Health Information Act**
Paramourncy over Personal Information Protection Act ... *Mitzel* 373
- Health Information Act Review Committee, Select Special**
Final report, 2004 (SP200/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1471; *Speaker, The* 369
Second committee, need for ... *Blakeman* 1471
- Health information panels (Health care debate)**
General remarks ... *Klein* 1105; *MacDonald* 1105
- Health insurance, Private**
See Insurance, Health (Private)
- Health Link Alberta**
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1463; *Chase* 1467; *Danyluk* 1152; *Evans* 693
- Health on 12th**
See Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, Calgary
- Health plan**
See Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
- Health Professions Act**
Amendment by Bill 7 ... *Evans* 52; *Mitzel* 240
General remarks ... *Evans* 271
Midwives inclusion under ... *Evans* 1146
- Health promotion**
See Preventive medical services
- Health Quality Council of Alberta**
Hospital emergency services study ... *Evans* 692
- Health records**
See Medical records
- Health records, Electronic**
See Medical records, Electronic
- Health regulations in rural community halls**
See Food safety, Rural community halls
- Health Research, Canadian Institutes of**
See Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Health Resource Centre, Calgary**
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 205; *Evans* 205
Hip/knee surgery contract with Calgary health region ... *Blakeman* 244–45; *Evans* 244–45, 644, 1145, 1569; *Klein* 644, 1145; *Mason* 643–44, 1145
Wait times at ... *Blakeman* 244–45; *Evans* 244–45, 1145; *Klein* 644, 1145; *Mason* 644, 1145
- Health risk management**
See Drinking water, Safety of; Traffic safety, Promotion of
- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)**
Funding for ... *Evans* 1458; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg* 1086, 1096; *VanderBurg* 1095
General remarks ... *Hancock* 869; *Zwozdesky* 1164
Statement re ... *Lukaszuk* 1032–33
Surplus spending on ... *Hancock* 1621; *Taft* 1621
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta**
Physiotherapy funding cuts: Press release re (SP124/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 210
- Health Sciences Centre, University of Alberta**
See Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre
- Health sciences personnel—Education**
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469
- Health sciences personnel—Supply**
See Health workforce planning
- Health Services, Expert Advisory Panel to Review Publically Funded**
See Expert Advisory Panel to Review Publically Funded Health Services
- Health services at a distance**
See Telehealth services
- Health services for schoolchildren**
See Student health initiative
- Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 7)**
First reading ... *Evans* 52
Second reading ... *Blakeman* 371–72; *Mitzel* 240, 371, 373; *Pannu* 372
Committee ... *Mitzel* 448–49; *Taylor* 449
Third reading ... *Blakeman* 637; *Mitzel* 637; *Pannu* 637–38
Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Health symposium, Alternate**
See Friends of Medicare, Co-sponsor of alternative Calgary health care conference (Weighing the Evidence)
- Health symposium, Government sponsored**
See Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
- Health workforce planning**
[*See also Medical profession—Supply; Nurses—Supply; Pharmacists—Supply*]
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 980–81, 1461, 1469–70, 1840; *Evans* 980–81, 1459, 1461, 1842
Letters re (SP544-545/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1674
- Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta, College of**
See College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta
- Hearing aids for seniors**
Provincial assistance re ... *Fritz* 163–64; *Lukaszuk* 163
- Heart—Surgery**
Coronary artery bypass grafting procedure, intensive home care for patients waiting for ... *Blakeman* 273; *Evans* 271
Funding for ... *Blakeman* 272; *Evans* 271
Wait times for ... *Blakeman* 273; *Evans* 271, 274
- Heart attacks in firefighters**
Workers' compensation coverage of: Legislation re (Bill 50) ... *Magnus* 1716
- Heart Institute, Mazankowski Alberta**
See Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute

Heavy equipment

Purchase of, with infrastructure funding ... *McFarland* 1253; *Oberg* 1253

Heavy oil

[*See also Bitumen*]

General remarks ... *Melchin* 909, 916

Heavy oil–Royalties

General remarks ... *Eggen* 915; *Hinman* 1017; *MacDonald* 910–11; *Martin* 920; *Melchin* 912, 918
 Projected revenues from, 2005-2015 (Q24/05: Defeated) ... *MacDonald* 1154–55; *Melchin* 1154–55; *Swann* 1155
 Reductions in ... *Klein* 1911; *Mason* 572; *Melchin* 572
 Verification of, Auditor General's comments re ... *Eggen* 915; *Martin* 921; *Melchin* 921

Heavy oil sands development

See Tar sands development

Heckling (Parliamentary procedure)

Elimination of: Statement re ... *Swann* 535–36

Hedley, Kristen

Statement re ... *Griffiths* 1204

Heil, Jennifer

Recognition of ... *Lindsay* 417

Heinricks, Mr. Mark

Statement re ... *Mitzel* 1450

Helicopter ambulance service

See Ambulance service, Aerial

Hells Angels (Biker gang)

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1430

Hemp

See Marijuana

Henday Drive

See Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton

Henry, Frederick B., Roman Catholic Bishop of Calgary

Remarks about definition of marriage ... *Hinman* 572, 1153; *Klein* 572; *Morton* 698

Henwood Treatment Centre

Replacement of ... *Oberg* 1800

Herbicides in water sources

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 799–800; *Brown* 799–800

Herceptin (Cancer therapy)

Funding for, letters re (SP546-547/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1674

Heritage facilities–Finance

See Historic sites–Finance

Heritage Foundation for Medical Research

See Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research

Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research

See Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research

Heritage languages–Teaching

See Languages–Teaching

Heritage Savings Trust Fund

See Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing Committee on

See Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing

Heritage Scholarship Fund

See Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund

HIA Review Committee

See Health Information Act Review Committee, Select Special

High-needs schools

See Schools–Downtown areas

High-needs students–Education

See Children at risk–Education

High Prairie Health Complex

Upgrades to ... *Evans* 1839

High River (Town)

Statement re ... *Groeneveld* 1257

High school completion rates

See High school graduates, Numbers of

High school credits

Fine arts credit requirement ... *Martin* 1270; *Zwozdesky* 1271–72

Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... *Agnihotri* 833; *Bonko* 832; *Cao* 833–34; *Eggen* 830–31; *Flaherty* 828–29; *Herard* 827–28, 834–35; *Jablonski* 832–33; *Mather* 834; *Tarchuk* 829–30; *Zwozdesky* 831

High school dropouts

See School dropouts

High school education–Curricula

Fine arts courses ... *Chase* 1481; *Flaherty* 952; *Zwozdesky* 952

Fine arts courses: Letter re (SP195/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 327

Vocational/trades courses ... *Bonko* 1266, 1267; *Flaherty* 1262; *Hancock* 1883; *Zwozdesky* 1267, 1269

Vocational/trades courses: Statement re ... *Flaherty* 1787

Vocational/trades courses: Use of ticketed journeymen in ... *Hinman* 1272; *Zwozdesky* 1274

High school education–Finance

General remarks ... *Mather* 1275

High school graduates

Numbers of ... *Brown* 123; *Flaherty* 1262; *Hancock* 1797, 1798; *Pannu* 1796, 1797; *Zwozdesky* 123, 1264, 1267

Numbers of: Transition to postsecondary education ... *Hancock* 1797, 1798; *Pannu* 1796, 1797

High school students

Financial assistance to, when living independently ... *Cardinal* 363; *Jablonski* 363

High school students, Aboriginal

Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... *Calahasen* 1912

High schools–Construction–Edmonton

Castle Downs area school, change in priority re ... *Lukaszuk* 1078, 1197–98; *Oberg* 1078, 1197–98

Castle Downs area school, *Edmonton Journal* article re (SP387/05: Tabled) ... *Lukaszuk* 1205

South Edmonton academic school construction ... *Lukaszuk* 1078, 1080, 1197–98; *Oberg* 1078, 1197–98

High schools–Maintenance and repair

Funding for ... *Mather* 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1727

High-speed rail service–Edmonton/Calgary

See Rail service, High-speed–Edmonton/Calgary

High technology

See Research and development

Highland Feeders Limited

Joint manure utilization system project ... *Horner* 1222, 1389; *Johnson* 1389

- Highway 2—Aldersyde area**
Interchange with highways 7 and 547 ... *Groeneveld* 575; *Oberg* 575
- Highway 2—Dunvegan bridge area**
Realignment of ... *Goudreau* 88; *Hinman* 1804–05; *Oberg* 88, 1805
- Highway 2—Edmonton/Calgary**
See **Queen Elizabeth II highway**
- Highway 2A—Red Deer/Blackfalds area**
Intersection at Blindman industrial park ... *Jablonski* 1962–63; *Oberg* 1963
- Highway 7**
Interchange with Highways 2 and 547 ... See **Highway 2—Aldersyde area, Interchange with highways 7 and 547**
- Highway 8—Calgary area**
Impact of southwest ring road on ... *Morton* 460; *Oberg* 460–61
Intersection with 101st Street ... *Morton* 460; *Oberg* 460
Intersection with highway 22 ... *Morton* 460; *Oberg* 167, 460–61
Truck traffic on ... *Liepert* 167; *Morton* 460; *Oberg* 167, 460
Twinning of ... *Liepert* 166–67; *Oberg* 166–67, 461
Upgrading of ... *Chase* 264
- Highway 11**
Upgrading of: Cost overruns ... *Chase* 1336; *Oberg* 1336
- Highway 13—Camrose area**
Upgrading of ... *Johnson* 1448; *Oberg* 1448
- Highway 14**
Impact of Henday Drive on ... *Lougheed* 324; *Oberg* 324
- Highway 19**
Twinning ... *Oberg* 950–51; *Rogers* 950–51
- Highway 21**
Impact of Henday Drive on ... *Lougheed* 324; *Oberg* 324
- Highway 22**
Intersection with highway 8 ... *Oberg* 167
- Highway 28**
Upgrading of ... *Chase* 741, 1628; *Danyluk* 87; *Oberg* 87, 741, 1628
Upgrading of: Letters re (SP317/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 746
- Highway 36**
See **Veterans Memorial Highway**
- Highway 43**
Upgrading of ... *Chase* 264; *Knight* 44; *Oberg* 44, 1740–41; *VanderBurg* 1740–41
- Highway 63**
Upgrading of ... *Agnihotri* 1089; *Blakeman* 1140; *Cardinal* 1133, 1138; *Chase* 264, 1336, 1628; *Danyluk* 87, 1199–1200; *Klein* 201, 485, 528; *Knight* 44; *Martin* 1137; *Oberg* 44, 87, 200, 1090, 1199–1200, 1336, 1628, 1803; *Taft* 200
Upgrading of: Letter re (SP237/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 463
Upgrading of: Petitions presented re ... *Chase* 1452; *Eggen* 1506; *Martin* 252, 369, 652, 858, 1128, 1137, 1258, 1314, 1578, 1607, 1970, 2055; *Mason* 1970, 2055
- Highway 501—Cardston east**
Paving of ... *Hinman* 1804
- Highway 547**
Interchange with Highways 2 and 7 See **Highway 2—Aldersyde area, Interchange with highways 7 and 547**
- Highway 725**
Upgrading of: Cost overruns ... *Chase* 1336; *Oberg* 1336
- Highway 813**
General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1133, 1138
- Highway 881**
Extension to Alberta/Saskatchewan border, employment opportunities of ... *Backs* 1131; *Cardinal* 1133, 1138
Upgrading of ... *Cardinal* 1138; *Danyluk* 1199–1200; *Klein* 201, 485, 528; *Oberg* 44, 87, 200, 1090, 1199–1200, 1336; *Taft* 200
- Highway construction**
See **Road construction**
- Highway construction—Finance**
See **Road construction—Finance**
- Highway construction sites—Safety aspects**
Speeding limits ... *Lougheed* 1884; *Oberg* 1884
Speeding limits: Legislation re (Bill 39) ... *Magnus* 746
- Highway corridors, Strategic**
See **Strategic economic corridors (Highway construction)**
- Highway fatalities**
See **Traffic fatalities**
- Highway interchanges—Construction**
Funding for ... *Oberg* 1086
- Highway laws**
See **Traffic regulations**
- Highway maintenance—Northern Alberta**
See **Roads—Maintenance and repair—Northern Alberta**
- Highway maintenance yard, Caroline, environmental issues re**
See **Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation, Highway maintenance yard, Caroline, environmental issues re**
- Highway Safety, Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and**
See **Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety**
- Highway safety—Northern Alberta**
See **Traffic safety—Northern Alberta**
- Highways**
See **Roads**
- Highwood Communications Ltd.**
Government advertising contract ... *Klein* 1102, 1103; *MacDonald* 1103; *Taft* 1102
- Hill, Mr. Don**
See **Wildrose Forum (CBC radio program), Dismissal of Don Hill, host, from: Letters re (SP309/05: Tabled)**
- Hinton Training Centre**
General remarks ... *Coutts* 1393
- HIP**
See **Health information panels (Health care debate)**
- Hip and knee surgery**
[See also under **Health Resource Centre, Calgary**]
Funding for ... *Blakeman* 272; *Evans* 271, 1458

Hip and knee surgery (*Continued*)

- Government news release re (SP298/05: Tabled) ...
Martin 653
 Pilot projects re ... *Evans* 1846; *MacDonald* 1846
 Private health insurance for ... *Evans* 1665; *Taft* 1665
 Privatization of, in Calgary ... *Chase* 1466; *Evans*
 1145; *Klein* 1145; *Mason* 1145, 1465
 Waiting lists for ... *Chase* 1466; *Mason* 1465
 Waiting lists for, reduction of ... *Evans* 271

Historic Resources Fund

- Accounting principles in, Auditor General's comments
 re ... *Agnihotri* 1475

Historic sites—Finance

- General remarks ... *Mar* 1472–73; *McClellan* 750

Historic sites—Wetaskiwin

- Statement re ... *Johnson* 1836

Historical Resources Foundation

- See **Alberta Historical Resources Foundation**

Historical vignette

- Committees of the whole House ... *Speaker, The* 253

Historical vignettes of Alberta

- Arrival of sailor (Charles Walker) at Saddle Lake Indian
 Reserve to report loss of ship on west coast, April 14,
 1898 ... *Speaker, The* 775
 Aspen Beach designated Alberta's first provincial park,
 November 21, 1932 ... *Speaker, The* 1743
 Athabasca, Town of, established May 18, 1905 ...
Speaker, The 1608
 Bassano dam opened, April 25, 1914 ... *Speaker, The*
 982
 Cardston founded, April 26, 1887 ... *Speaker, The* 1033
 Deputy Premier/Minister of Finance elected, November
 23, 1987 ... *Speaker, The* 1836
 Duke of Windsor (Edward VIII) visit to Calgary, April
 11, 1950 ... *Speaker, The* 652
 Edmonton Grads win international basketball title,
 March 24, 1930 ... *Speaker, The* 453
 Famous Five maquette on display in Legislature
 Building starting May 16, 2005 ... *Speaker, The* 1526
 First air mail service began, March 3, 1930 ... *Speaker,*
The 13
 First and only woman hanged in Alberta (Florence
 (Filumena) Lassandro), May 2, 1923 ... *Speaker, The*
 1151
 First dial telephones in Canada installed in Edmonton,
 April 5, 1908 ... *Speaker, The* 537
 First Edmonton to Calgary automobile journey, March
 1906 ... *Speaker, The* 49
 First electoral franchise for women (1917) and
 aboriginals (April 12, 1965) ... *Speaker, The* 699
 First of two women elected to provincial legislature
 (Roberta MacAdams), June 7, 1917 ... *Speaker, The*
 243
 First Ombudsman in Alberta and Canada (George B.
 McClellan), April 6, 1967 ... *Speaker, The* 579
 First session of Legislature, March 15, 1906 & first
 radio/TV coverage of Legislature sittings, March 15,
 1972 ... *Deputy Speaker* 199
 First session of Legislature prorogued, May 9, 1906 (76
 bills passed, Wetaskiwin, Lethbridge and U of A
 incorporated) ... *Speaker, The* 1340
 First state funeral for a Lieutenant Governor (Hon.
 Philip Primrose) who died in office, March 17, 1937
 ... *Speaker, The* 285

Historical vignettes of Alberta (*Continued*)

- First time a Legislature convened in the Assembly
 Chamber, November 30, 1911 ... *Speaker, The* 2019
 Floral Emblem Act passed and general election held,
 March 21, 1930 and 1940 respectively ... *Speaker, The*
 315
 Frank Slide, April 29, 1903 ... *Speaker, The* 1127–28
 General election of 1909 (March 22) ... *Speaker, The*
 359
 General election of 1979 (March 14) ... *Speaker, The*
 159
 Herbert Greenfield resigned as Premier, November 23,
 1925 ... *Speaker, The* 1836
 Hon. Colonel J.C. Bowen appointed Lieutenant
 Governor, March 23, 1937 ... *Speaker, The* 409
 Legislative Assembly historical data on sitting days/Bills
 passed ... *Speaker, The* 1504
 Lethbridge incorporated as a town, November 29, 1890
 ... *Speaker, The* 1968
 Lord Strathcona statue unveiled on Legislature Grounds,
 May 17, 2000 ... *Speaker, The* 1576
 Métis Nation of Alberta agreement with province, April
 20, 1999 ... *Speaker, The* 908
 Mount Royal College established, April 18, 1966 ...
Speaker, The 804
 Naval reserve division formed, Edmonton, 1923 ...
Speaker, The 1257
 New Democratic Party representation in Legislature,
 November 16, 1966 ... *Speaker, The* 1672
 Peace River (town) incorporated, December 1, 1919 ...
Speaker, The 2056
 Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with
 Disabilities Act passed Committee reading, May 10,
 1988 ... *Speaker, The* 1396
 RCAF Flying Officer L.W. Powell ... *Speaker, The* 1628
 Retired cabinet ministers made honorary life members of
 Legislature press gallery, April 21, 1971 ... *Speaker,*
The 958
 Royal Canadian Navy formed, May 4, 1910 ... *Speaker,*
The 1256–57
 Rupert's Land purchased, May 11, 1870 ... *Speaker, The*
 1451
 Saluting of Union Jack made mandatory, March 9, 1941
 ... *Speaker, The* 125
 Special sitting of the Legislature re oil and gas
 conservation, Nov. 15 - 22, 1938 ... *Speaker, The*
 1787
 Thelma Chalifoux became a Senator, November 24,
 1997 ... *Speaker, The* 1889
 Unknown Canadian soldier repatriation commemoration,
 May 3, 2000 ... *Speaker, The* 1205
 Vegreville established as a village, April 4, 1906 ...
Speaker, The 491
 Women's right to vote and hold elected office, April 19,
 1916 ... *Speaker, The* 848

Ho Lem, Mr. George (Former MLA)

- Memorial tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 1619

Hockey

- Lottery funding for ... *Eggen* 1478; *Graydon* 1289–90;
MacDonald 1289–90; *Mar* 1479
 Lottery funding for 2004, reallocation to low-income
 programs ... *Graydon* 1290; *MacDonald* 1290

Hockey championships

- Calgary pee wee girls provincial champions ... *Chase* 907
- Camrose Kodiaks Canadian junior A hockey silver medal winners ... *Johnson* 1577
- Camrose Kodiaks Junior Hockey League champions ... *Johnson* 857
- Medicine Hat Royals pee wee AA champions ... *Mitzel* 417
- Stony Plain atom double-A team champions ... *Lindsay* 251
- U of A Golden Bears 2005 University Cup winners ... *Johnson* 490; *Taft* 620
- U of A Pandas Canada West title winners ... *Danyluk* 50; *Rogers* 169; *Taft* 620

Hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)

- See Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)*

Hockey game, World's longest

- Dr. Brent Saik's Guinness record: Statement re ... *Lougheed* 24–25

Hockey players, Out-of-province—Taxation

- See National Hockey League, Out-of-province player levy*

Hockey school for girls, Warner

- See Warner hockey school for girls*

Hog industry, Large-scale—Environmental aspects

- See Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects*

Hogs—Export—United States

- [*See also Pork—Export—United States*]
- Antidumping duties on ... *Abbott* 293; *Horner* 293, 614; *Prins* 613–14; *Stelmach* 614

Hokkaido, Japan, twinning arrangement

- See Twinning of cities, provinces, etc., Hokkaido, Japan*

Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former Lieutenant Governor)

- [*See also Legislature grounds, Memorial garden for Hon. Lois Hole on; Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards; Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park; Lois Hole digital library (Proposed); Lois Hole elementary school (Proposed); Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship (Proposed)*]
- Tribute to ... *Klein* 1100; *Speaker, The* 7; *Speech from the Throne* 7–8

Holocaust Memorial Day

- See Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)*

Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act

- General remarks ... *Mar* 1248

Holocaust memorial project

- See Righteous among the Nations (Holocaust memorial project)*

Holy Cross Hospital

- Sale of ... *Chase* 1466

Home care program

- General remarks ... *Backs* 889; *Blakeman* 1463; *Evans* 1464, 1707; *Fritz* 889, 890

Home drug testing kits, accuracy of

- See Drug abuse—Testing, Home testing kits, accuracy of*

Home education—Regulations

- Review of ... *Abbott* 1255–56; *Zwozdesky* 1255–56

Home Education Association, Alberta

- See Alberta Home Education Association*

Home energy retrofits, Interest-free loans for

- See Energy efficiency (Buildings), Interest-free loans for*

Home Protection Act (U.S.)

- Application to Canadian records ... *Pastoor* 1324

Home-schooling—Regulations

- See Home education—Regulations*

HomeFront (Domestic violence prevention program)

- General remarks ... *Stevens* 1230, 1236

Homeless—Housing

- Funding for ... *DeLong* 890; *Fritz* 366, 878, 883, 890, 1778; *MacDonald* 1799; *McClellan* 366; *Pastoor* 366
- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 881; *Forsyth* 1832; *Martin* 886; *Mather* 1832; *Taylor* 882, 883
- Presence of children in ... *Forsyth* 1778, 1832; *Fritz* 1778; *Mather* 1832; *Taft* 1778
- Transitional housing ... *Fritz* 1778

Hooper, Marilyn (Former director of outreach for ND party)

- Recognition of contribution of (SP510/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 1608

Horizon oil sands project

- See under Canadian Natural Resources Limited*

Horse industry

- Consultation with, re changes to Veterinary Profession Act ... *Abbott* 1627; *Cardinal* 1627

Horse racetrack—Balzac

- Funding for ... *Pastoor* 268

Horse racetrack entertainment centres

- See Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)*

Horse racing

- Lottery funding for ... *Agnihotri* 367, 977; *Backs* 849, 856; *Cardinal* 849; *Elsalhy* 954; *Graydon* 770–71, 855–56, 901, 976, 1278, 1282–83, 1288–89; *Horner* 954; *Mar* 367, 977; *McClellan* 856; *Ouellette* 954; *Pannu* 1285, 1288; *Swann* 1282; *Tougas* 770–71, 901, 976

Horse Racing Alberta

- Annual report, 2003 (SP146/05: Tabled) ... *Graydon* 252
- Annual report, 2004 (SP671/05: Tabled) ... *Graydon* 1837
- General remarks ... *Graydon* 855–56, 901, 976, 1289; *McClellan* 856; *Tougas* 976

Horse Racing Alberta Act

- General remarks ... *Graydon* 1277

Horse-racing industry renewal initiative

- See Horse racing, Lottery funding for*

Horseshoe Canyon

- Industrial development in ... *Chase* 1012

Hospice Society, Foothills Country

- See Foothills Country Hospice Society*

Hospital beds

- Funding for ... *Evans* 1839

Hospital beds—Calgary

- Shortages of ... *Amery* 533; *Blakeman* 272, 644–45; *Chase* 797, 1467; *Evans* 274, 533, 644–45; *Hancock* 797; *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309

Hospital beds—Edmonton

Shortages of ... *Blakeman* 272

Hospital beds—Rural areas

Funding for ... *Blakeman* 272; *Evans* 1839

Hospitals

Hotel-like accommodation in: Pamphlet re (SP754/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 1971

Hospitals, Auxiliary

See **Extended care facilities**

Hospitals, Auxiliary—Finance

See **Extended care facilities—Finance**

Hospitals, Auxiliary—Standards

See **Extended care facilities—Standards**

Hospitals, Private auxiliary

See **Extended care facilities, Private**

Hospitals—Calgary

Capital upgrades to ... *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309

Closure of ... *Chase* 1087, 1466

New south Calgary hospital ... *Chase* 265, 797, 1087, 1467; *Hancock* 797; *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309

New south Calgary hospital: Funding for ... *Blakeman* 272; *Evans* 274, 1458; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg* 1086

New south Calgary hospital: Public/private funding of ... *Blakeman* 272; *Chase* 645, 905; *Evans* 646; *Martin* 616; *Oberg* 905

Hospitals—Closure

General remarks ... *Chase* 1087

Hospitals—Construction

Funding for ... *Oberg* 1085

Funding for: Letters re (SP544-545/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1674

General remarks ... *MacDonald* 1845-46

Hospitals—Emergency services

"Friends of ..." volunteers re ... *Evans* 692

General remarks ... *Evans* 692-93; *Hinman* 1845; *Pham* 692-93

Wait-times at ... *Blakeman* 1915; *Evans* 1915

Hospitals—Finance

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1915; *Evans* 1915; *McClellan* 749

Hospitals—Fort McMurray

Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... *Klein* 201; *Oberg* 200; *Taft* 200

Hospitals—Fort Saskatchewan

Surplus funding for ... *Blakeman* 1839, 1840; *Evans* 1622, 1839, 1843; *Mason* 1842-43; *Taft* 1622

Hospitals—Strathcona County

Surplus funding for ... *Blakeman* 1839; *Evans* 1622, 1839, 1843; *Mason* 1842-43; *Taft* 1622

Hospitals—Vulcan

Reconversion to active-care use: Letter re (SP114/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 171

Hot lunch programs—Edmonton

See **School lunch programs—Edmonton**

Hotel accommodation at University hospital

See **Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre, Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility**

Hotel accommodation in hospitals

See **Hospitals, Hotel-like accommodation in**

Hotel room tax

Conversion to a tourism levy See **Tourism levy, Conversion of hotel tax to**

Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)

First reading ... *Rodney* 170

Second reading ... *Dunford* 212-213; *Miller, R.* 213-215; *Rodney* 212, 216; *Taylor* 215-216

Committee ... *Blakeman* 229-31; *Pannu* 231; *Rodney* 231-232

Third reading ... *Hinman* 399; *Mason* 398-99; *Miller, R.* 397-98; *Pastoor* 399; *Rodney* 397, 400

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 465

E-mail re (SP138/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 211

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 257

Hours of labour

Working alone regulation ... *Cao* 364; *Cardinal* 364

Housing

Impact of provision of, on health care demand ... *Blakeman* 1462

Housing—Aboriginal peoples

See **Aboriginal peoples—Housing**

Housing—Canmore

General remarks ... *Taylor* 535

Housing—Fort McMurray

Impact of population increase on ... *Chase* 485; *Danyluk* 87, 843; *Fritz* 87; *Klein* 201, 485, 528; *McClellan* 527; *Taylor* 535; *Tougas* 838

Houston Offshore Technology Conference

Attendance of Minister of Economic Development at ... *Dunford* 1500

HRC

See **Health Resource Centre, Calgary**

HSAA

See **Health Sciences Association of Alberta**

Hub Oil Company Ltd.

Calgary plant fire: Cleanup efforts ... *Boutillier* 1710; *Cao* 1710

Hudson's Bay building, Edmonton, purchase of

See **University of Alberta, Bay building purchase, to accommodate learning transition facility**

Hudson's Bay Company

Royal charter obligation ... *Abbott* 907

Human Resources and Employment, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Human Resources and Employment**

Human Resources and Skills Development, Dept. of (Federal)

See **Dept. of Human Resources and Skills Development (Federal)**

Human rights

Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1474, 1475; *Mar* 1472

Human Rights and Citizenship Commission

See **Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission**

Human tissue donation

See **Organ and tissue donation**

Humanities—Research

Funding for ... *Doerksen* 1373; *Elsalhy* 1371

Humanities and social sciences scholarship, Lois Hole (Proposed)

See **Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship (Proposed)**

Hunger in schoolchildren—Edmonton

See **School lunch programs—Edmonton**

Hunger strike by Bethany long-term care resident

See **Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose, Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in**

Hunters–Education

General remarks ... *Coutts* 2050

Hunting–Regulations

For youth ... *Coutts* 2050; *Morton* 2050

Hunting rights, Métis

See **Métis hunting/fishing rights**

Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, U.S. (2005)

Alberta disaster relief for ... *Graydon* 1798–99; *Tougas* 1798–99

Hydrocarbon Upgrading Task force

General remarks ... *Melchin* 572, 917

Hydrogen as fuel

Research re ... *Boutilier* 21

Hydrogen sulphide emissions

General remarks ... *Lindsay* 741–42; *Melchin* 741–42

Hydrogen sulphide emissions–Health aspects–Calgary area

General remarks ... *Melchin* 1391; *Swann* 1391

Hydropower purchase arrangements

See **Electrical power purchase agreements, Exclusion of hydropower from; TransAlta Utilities Corporation, Hydropower generation pricing**

IBC

See **Insurance Bureau of Canada**

IBM Canada Ltd.

General remarks ... *Martin* 757

Microfiche of Alberta pension cheques, security implications ... *Elsalhy* 1026; *Klein* 1026; *McClellan* 1026

Processing of Alberta health records, security implications ... *Blakeman* 617; *Evans* 482, 483, 529, 617; *Taft* 482

ICAP

See **Infrastructure Canada/Alberta Program**

Ice arena–Cold Lake

Provincial funding for ... *Ducharme* 1482–83

Ice fishing

Impact on fish stocks ... *Bonko* 1848; *Coutts* 1849

Ice Marathon, Spitz Sylvan Lake

See **Spitz Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon**

ICE teams

See **Integrated child exploitation teams**

ICORE

See **Informatics Circle of Research Excellence**

ICT Institute

See **Alberta Information and Communications Technology Institute**

Identification, Personal

Theft of ... *Lund* 1415, 1425; *Miller, B.* 1228

Theft of, from lost health records ... *Evans* 483–84, 529; *Klein* 529; *Mason* 528–29; *Pannu* 483–84

Identity theft

See **Identification, Personal, Theft of**

Iggulden, Liz

Statement re ... *Pannu* 774

Illinois Central Railroad

Role in Port of Prince Rupert terminal See **Port of Prince Rupert, CN/Illinois Central's role in**

Illiteracy

See **Literacy**

Imaging services, Digital medical

See **Medical imaging services, Digital**

IMET (RCMP)

See **Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Alberta Securities Commission case, IMET unit investigation of**

IMHA

See **Métis hunting/fishing rights, Provincial agreement re, 2004**

Immigrant doctors

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1463; *Chase* 1467; *Evans* 1122–23, 1339, 1461; *Pham* 1122–23

Immigrant qualifications assessment service

See **Professional qualifications, Foreign, Assessment service**

Immigrant workers, Temporary

See **Foreign workers, Temporary**

Immigrants

Federal funding for ... *Lukaszuk* 1832–33; *Stelmach* 1503, 1833

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1142; *Cao* 1605

Government internship program for ... *Cao* 1576–77

Language training See **English as a Second Language**

Professional qualifications of, assessment See

Professional qualifications, Foreign, Assessment service for

Visas for, Alberta processing of ... *Cardinal* 1833; *Lukaszuk* 1833

Immigrants of Distinction Awards

Recognition of ... *Cao* 490

Immigration

General remarks ... *Backs* 279; *Hancock* 870

Provincial nominee program ... *Cardinal* 1833; *Dunford* 86, 1008; *Evans* 1461; *Jablonski* 86

Statement re ... *Cao* 1576–77

Immunization program, National

See **National immunization program**

Immunization Trust, Public health and (Federal)

See **Public Health and Immunization Trust (Federal)**

Impaired driving

See **Drunk driving**

Imperial Oil Ltd.

Cleanup of contaminated site, Lynnview Ridge, Calgary ... *Boutilier* 529; *Cao* 529

IMSEP report

See **Midwives and midwifery, Integration of midwifery services evaluation report**

In vitro fertilization treatment

Cost of, letter re (SP680/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1837

Incentive for school improvement

See **Alberta initiative for school improvement**

Incineration

As electrical power generation method ... *Boutilier* 1710–11; *McFarland* 1710–11

Income Support program

Caseload increase ... *Backs* 278–79; *Cardinal* 278, 280

Funding cutbacks to ... *Cardinal* 1137; *Martin* 1135–36

General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129

Income tax, Corporate

See **Corporations–Taxation**

Income tax, Federal

Reduction of ... *Abbott* 1392; *Stelmach* 1392

Income tax, Provincial

Decrease in ... *Hinman* 264; *Miller, R.* 959, 961

Decrease in, use of surplus for ... *McClellan* 961

Flat tax ... *Klein* 768; *Mason* 768, 968; *Miller, R.* 959

Income tax, Provincial*(Continued)*

- General remarks ... *McClellan* 749
 Legislation re (Bill 20) ... *Ducharme* 128
 Personal exemption level ... *Hinman* 412; *Mason* 968;
McClellan 412
 Provincial vs federal collection of ... *Hinman* 1444;
Klein 1444; *McClellan* 1444; *Stelmach* 1188
 Revenue from ... *Miller, R.* 963

Independent colleges—Finance

See Private colleges—Finance

Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta

- Electricity prices comparison, commissioned report on
 (SP323/05: Tabled) ... *Melchin* 775–76

Independent schools—Finance

See Private schools—Finance

Independent System Operator (Electricity industry)

- 10-year power transmission plan ... *Melchin* 649, 650,
 1447
 Edmonton/Calgary transmission line upgrade
 application ... *Lindsay* 903–04; *Melchin* 904, 1447
 General remarks ... *Melchin* 1447

Indexing of AISH benefits

*See Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped,
 Benefit levels, formula for*

Indexing of minimum wage

See Wages—Minimum wage, Indexing of

Indian Posse (Aboriginal street gang)

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1430

Industrial accidents

See Workplace accidents

Industrial Association of Southern Alberta

- Letter re Enron power purchase agreement (SP751/05:
 Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1970

Industrial development (Value-added industries)

- Government budget for ... *Bonko* 1010
 Government strategy re ... *Doerksen* 1369; *Dunford*
 1007

Industrial fatalities

See Fatalities, Work-related

Industrial safety

See Workplace safety

Infectious diseases—Control

See Communicable diseases—Control

Inflation-proofing of Heritage Fund

*See Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Inflation-
 proofing of*

Influenza, Avian

See Avian influenza

Influenza vaccine, Avian

See Vaccine, Avian influenza

Informatics Circle of Research Excellence

- Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and
 Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 94; *Doerksen* 94
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP774/05: Tabled) ...
Doerksen 2017
 Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and
 Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,*
The 1675; *Doerksen* 1675
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1369; *Eggen* 1373;
Herard 1151

Information, Confidentiality of

See Privacy, Right of

Information and communications technology

- Cross-government system ... *Ouellette* 1710
 Funding for ... *Ouellette* 753
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1373
 Privacy standards ... *Ouellette* 752
 Research into ... *Doerksen* 1369, 1372
 Security issues ... *DeLong* 758; *Ouellette* 758
 Security issues: Auditor General's recommendation re
 (Q18/05: Defeated) ... *Ouellette* 812–13; *Ouellette* 812
 Security issues: Auditor General's recommendation re
 (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... *Clerk, The*
 2056; *Elsalhy* 1746; *Ouellette* 1746, 2056
 Standards re ... *Ouellette* 759

Information and Communications Technology Institute, Alberta

*See Alberta Information and Communications
 Technology Institute*

Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP15/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker,*
The 27
 Co-ordination with other provincial commissioners:
 Legislation re (Bill 8) ... *Mitzel* 373
 Digital photocopiers/fax machines security concerns,
 news release re ... *Johnston* 413; *Ouellette* 413
 General remarks ... *Mather* 1422
 Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254;
Miller, R. 257
 Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Introduction of ... *Speaker, The* 5
 Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta
 health records ... *Evans* 482–84, 529, 617; *Lund*
 1423; *Ouellette* 617; *Taft* 482
 Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta
 pension records ... *Elsalhy* 1026; *Klein* 1026; *Lund*
 1423; *McClellan* 1026
 Labour Relations Board conflict re drafting Bill 27,
 2003, release of information re ... *Klein* 2008
 Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Abbott* 764; *Chair*
 751
 Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ...
McClellan 747
 Notification of, re privacy issues when discarding digital
 photocopiers/fax machines ... *Ouellette* 752
 U.S. access to Alberta health records, investigation of ...
Lund 1424

Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)

- Ruling on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian
 health records ... *Evans* 482; *Lund* 1424; *Taft* 482
 Ruling on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian
 health records (SP247/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman*
 491–92; *Taft* 491
 Warning on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian
 personal privacy ... *Elsalhy* 1885–86; *Lund* 1886

Information management services (Government department)

See Dept. of Government Services

Information Officer, Corporate Chief

See Corporate Chief Information Officer

Information systems, Government

See Government information systems

Information technology in schools

See Computers in schools

Infrastructure, Critical

- National protection strategy re ... *Renner* 1320

Infrastructure, Municipal–Finance

See **Capital projects, Municipal–Finance**

Infrastructure Canada/Alberta Program

General remarks ... *Oberg* 1086

Infrastructure debt

See **Capital projects, Deficit re; Universities and colleges–Maintenance and repair, Deficit in**

Infrastructure deficit, Municipal

See **Capital projects, Municipal–Finance**

Infrastructure dept.

See **Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation**

Ingenuity Fund

See **Alberta Ingenuity Fund**

Initiative for school improvement

See **Alberta initiative for school improvement**

Initiative referenda, Citizens'

See **Citizens' initiative referenda**

Injection sites (Drugs)

See **Safe injection sites (Drugs)**

Injuries, Traffic accident

See **Traffic accident injuries**

Injuries, Workplace

See **Workplace accidents**

Inmates–Mental health services

See **Mental health services–Prisoners**

Inmates–Safety aspects

See **Prisoners–Safety aspects**

Inner-city schools

See **Schools–Downtown areas**

Innisfail Meats Ltd.

Recognition of Mad Butcher brand name ... *Jablonski* 489–90

Innisfail sour gas leak

See **Gas well drilling industry–Safety aspects, Sour gas leak, Innisfail area**

Innovation and Science, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Innovation and Science**

Innovation Network, Energy

See **Energy Innovation Network**

Innovation strategy

General remarks ... *Doerksen* 51

Input costs, Farm

See **Farm input costs**

Inquests

See **Fatality inquiries**

Insider trading at Securities Commission

See **Alberta Securities Commission, Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading**

Inspections, Workplace safety

See **Workplace safety inspections**

Institute for Nanotechnology, National

See **National Institute for Nanotechnology**

Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 92

Resolution by (SP34/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 93

Institute of Health Economics

Chronic disease management pilot projects ... *Evans* 271

Institutes of Health Research, Canadian

See **Canadian Institutes of Health Research**

Insurance, Airline ticket

See **Airline company failures, Consumer insurance plan for**

Insurance, Automobile

Competition open to other provinces' public plans:

Legislation re (Bill 34) ... *Oberle* 326

Driving without: Legislation re (Bill 39) ... *Magnus* 746

Public plan re ... *Mason* 969; *McClellan* 86, 969; *Miller, R.* 86

Reform of ... *Blakeman* 954; *McClellan* 691–92, 854, 900, 904, 954, 958, 962, 1339–40; *Miller, R.* 854, 1339–40; *Rodney* 691–92

Reform of: Communications budget re ... *Mason* 283; *McClellan* 283; *Miller, R.* 256, 283

Reform of: Letter re (SP707/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 1891

Reform of: PC caucus committee review of ... *McClellan* 1339; *Miller, R.* 1339

Reform of: Review of ... *McClellan* 1339; *Miller, R.* 1339

Reform of: *Thompson's World Insurance News* article re ... *Miller, R.* 454

Reform of: *Thompson's World Insurance News* article re (SP241/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 463

Insurance, Automobile–Premiums

Elimination of sales tax from ... *McClellan* 86, 854, 962; *Miller, R.* 86, 854, 960

General remarks ... *McClellan* 86; *Miller, R.* 86, 256

Impact of driver training course for truck drivers on ... *Oberg* 1308

Impact on non-profit sector ... *Blakeman* 964–65; *McClellan* 965

Impact on small business ... *McClellan* 854, 904; *Miller, R.* 854, 904, 960

Rebates under \$50, number of (Q8/05: Defeated) ... *Mason* 660; *McClellan* 660; *Miller, R.* 660; *Taylor* 660; *Zwozdesky* 660

Reductions in ... *Abbott* 412–13; *Mason* 454–55, 969; *McClellan* 363, 412–13, 454–55, 461, 969, 1669; *Miller, R.* 362–63, 454, 1669; *Taft* 454

Reductions in: Political influence re ... *McClellan* 454; *Miller, R.* 454; *Taft* 454

Reductions in: Publicity campaign re ... *Miller, R.* 963

Six percent cut to ... *Hinman* 970; *Klein* 900; *Mason* 899–900, 969; *McClellan* 900, 904, 969; *Miller, R.* 904

Insurance, Health (Private)

Alberta plan for [*See also Aon Consulting Inc., Private health insurance in Alberta, study of*]; *Blakeman* 1622, 1666; *Evans* 1665, 1666, 1671, 1843, 1845; *Hinman* 1845; *Klein* 1622, 1666; *Mason* 1666, 1842; *Pannu* 1671; *Taft* 1665

News article re high U.S. rates for (SP380/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1128

Pre-existing conditions, provision for ... *Evans* 1845

Insurance, Liability

For small businesses ... *Miller, R.* 961

For social services agencies See **Social services agencies (Non-profit), Insurance costs**

Insurance, Superintendent of

See **Superintendent of Insurance**

Insurance, Travel

See **Travel insurance**

Insurance–Premiums

Elimination of sales tax from ... *McClellan* 854, 1031; *Miller, R.* 854, 1031

Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)

- First reading ... *Oberle* 326
 Second reading ... *Blakeman* 710–11; *Chase* 711–12;
Eggen 584–85; *Elsalhy* 582–84; *MacDonald*
 587–88; *Martin* 709–10; *Mason* 583; *Mather* 584;
Miller, B. 709; *Miller, R.* 579–82, 584; *Oberle* 476,
 579, 712–13; *Pastoor* 586–87; *Tougas* 585–86
 Committee ... *Chase* 1191, 1193; *Miller, R.* 1190–93;
Oberle 1191–93; *Tougas* 1192
 Third reading ... *Backs* 1513; *MacDonald* 1514–15;
Martin 1514, 1515; *Oberle* 1513, 1515; *Tougas*
 1513–14
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
 (Outside of House sittings)

Insurance Bureau of Canada

- Mortgage fraud initiative ... *Lund* 1425
 Young truck driver insurance rates, provincial
 negotiations re with ... *Oberg* 1308

Insurance companies

- Profits ... *Mason* 454–55; *McClellan* 86, 363, 455;
Miller, R. 86, 256

Insurance Council, Alberta

- See **Alberta Insurance Council**

Insurance for nonprofit sector

- See **Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations,**
Insurance costs for

Insurance Rate Board, Automobile

- See **Automobile Insurance Rate Board**

Integrated child exploitation teams

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 206, 1427, 1432–33, 1884;
Jablonski 206; *Miller, B.* 1228, 1429

Integrated manure utilization system

- See **Farm manure–Recycling, Pilot project re**

Integrated market enforcement team (RCMP)

- See **Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Alberta**
Securities Commission case, IMET unit
investigation of

Integrated resource management (Public lands)

- Access issues ... *Coutts* 694, 927; *Rogers* 694
 Big Lake basin ... *Boutilier* 321
 General remarks ... *Bonko* 902, 1312; *Boutilier*
 1048–49; *Coutts* 648, 902, 927, 1312, 1849;
Groeneveld 648; *Melchin* 648–49; *Speech from the*
Throne 9; *Swann* 1849

Integrated resource management (Public lands)–Fort McMurray area

- General remarks ... *Coutts* 1964; *Knight* 1964

Integrated Response to Organized Crime

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 459, 770, 801, 952, 1148,
 1430–31, 1671; *Miller, B.* 1228; *Stevens* 1235
 Increase in RCMP officers for ... *Cenaiko* 1201; *Miller,*
B. 1429

Intelligence agencies–United States

- Access to Canadian health records held by U.S.
 companies ... *Evans* 482; *Taft* 482

Intelligence Service Alberta, Criminal

- See **Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta**

Intelligence sharing by police

- See **Police, Intelligence sharing re crime prevention**

Intensive livestock operations–Environmental aspects

- See **Livestock industry, Intensive–Environmental**
aspects

Interbasin transfer of water

- See **Water diversion**

Interchanges, Highway–Construction

- See **Highway interchanges–Construction**

Interest-free loans for home energy retrofits

- See **Energy efficiency (Buildings), Interest-free loans**
for

Intergovernmental fiscal relations

- See **Federal/provincial fiscal relations;**
Provincial/municipal fiscal relations

Intergovernmental relations

- See **Federal/provincial relations; Intermunicipal**
relations; Provincial/municipal relations

Intergovernmental Relations dept.

- See **Dept. of International and Intergovernmental**
Relations

Interim Métis harvesting agreement

- See **Métis hunting/fishing rights, Provincial**
agreement re, 2004

Interim supply–Saskatchewan

- General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 257

Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005–06

- Procedural motions are entered under Estimates of
 Supply; debate is entered below
 Estimates debated ... *Agnihotri* 260; *Chase* 264–66;
Evans 259–60, 267; *Flaherty* 266–67; *Hancock*
 253–54; *Hinman* 262–64; *Horner* 258; *MacDonald*
 254–55; *McClellan* 264; *Miller, R.* 255–58; *Pannu*
 258–59, 267–68; *Pastoor* 268–69; *Taylor* 260–62
 Estimates passed (SP156/05: Tabled) ... *Webber* 269

Intermunicipal relations

- General remarks ... *Renner* 1322

Internal Auditor's office

- See **Chief Internal Auditor's office**

Internal trade

- See **Interprovincial trade, Internal trade agreement**

International and Intergovernmental Relations, Dept. of

- See **Dept. of International and Intergovernmental**
Relations

International border crossings–Canada/United States

- See **Border crossings–Canada/United States**

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

- Recognition of ... *Elsalhy* 325; *Lindsay* 324–25; *Pannu*
 326

International Day for Tolerance

- Statement re ... *Agnihotri* 1673

International Day of Disabled Persons

- Statement re ... *Lougheed* 2054

International Day of Mourning (Workplace fatalities)

- General remarks ... *Eggen* 1081; *Taylor* 979

International Day of the Midwife

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1146; *Elsalhy* 1313;
Pannu 1313–14

International delegations

- General remarks ... *Johnson* 773; *Stelmach* 773
 Shandong delegation's visit to Alberta ... *Johnson* 773;
Stelmach 773

International education

- Provincial action plan re: Brochure (SP542/05) ...
Hancock 1674; *Johnson* 1674
 Student brochure re (SP543/05) ... *Hancock* 1674;
Johnson 1674

International Education Week (November 2005)

- Statement re ... *Johnson* 1673

- International health care symposium**
See Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
- International Literacy Day**
 Stars of Literacy 2005 program (SP525/05: Tabled) ...
Blakeman 1632
- International offices**
See Alberta Government Offices
- International relations**
 Budget increase re ... *Pastoor* 1181; *Stelmach* 1182
 Communication initiatives re ... *Klein* 1100
 General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1180, 1183
 Provincial role in ... *Stelmach* 1181
- International students**
See Students, Foreign (Grade school)
- International trade**
 Alberta strategy re ... *Dunford* 1011; *Stelmach* 1180
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007, 1008
 Provincial budget re ... *Bonko* 1009
- International trade—Asian countries**
 General remarks ... *Danyluk* 772; *Stelmach* 772, 1180
- International trade—China**
 General remarks ... *Eggen* 1014
- International trade—United States**
 General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1186, 1187
 Irritants re ... *Abbott* 293; *Horner* 289, 293; *Mitzel* 288–89; *Stelmach* 288–89
- International Trade Commission (U.S.)**
 Pork/hog import duties investigation ... *Horner* 293, 614; *Prins* 613–14
- International Women's Day**
 Recognition of ... *Pannu* 127
 Statement re ... *Ady* 92; *Blakeman* 92
 Statement re (SP30/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 93
- Internet bullying**
See Bullying, Over the Internet
- Internet child pornography: Education program re**
See Pornography, Child, On the Internet: Education program re
- Internet child prostitution: Education program re**
See Prostitution, Juvenile, On the Internet: Education program re
- Internet (Computer network)**
 Crimes against children on ... *Cenaiko* 1427, 1432–33; *Miller, B.* 1228; *Stevens* 1230
 Crimes against children on: Education program re ...
Speech from the Throne 10
 Crimes against children on: Provincial initiatives re ...
Cenaiko 206, 1427; *Miller, B.* 1429
 Government information on *See Government information, On-line provision of*
 Sales contract regulation (airline tickets) ... *Lund* 204
- Interpretation services for disabled people in court**
 Provision of ... *Stevens* 1226
- Interpreters, Court—Fees**
See Court interpreters—Fees
- Interprovincial trade**
 Internal trade agreement ... *Stelmach* 1181
- Interprovincial water rights**
See Water rights, Interprovincial
- Inuit children—Education**
 Funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 166, 1261, 1264
 General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 123
- Invasion of privacy**
See Privacy, Right of
- Investigators, Private—Law and legislation**
See Private investigators—Law and legislation
- Investment of public funds**
 General remarks ... *McClellan* 958
- Investments**
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007, 1008
- Investments, Foreign**
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1500
- IPPSA**
See Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta
- Iris, Wild**
See Western blue flag (Flower)
- IRM**
See Integrated resource management (Public lands)
- IROC**
See Integrated Response to Organized Crime
- Iron Horse Trail (Snowmobiles)**
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 744
- Irrigation**
 Upgrading of infrastructure re ... *Hinman* 1216; *Horner* 1219
- Irrigation—Finance**
 General remarks ... *Horner* 1207; *McClellan* 749; *Oberg* 1086
- Is Your Public School at Risk? (Document)**
 Copy tabled (SP353/05) ... *MacDonald* 957
- I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park**
See Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park
- IVF treatment**
See In vitro fertilization treatment
- J. Percy Page high school, Edmonton**
 Partnership with Canadian Space Agency ... *Mather* 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1726
- Jason Lang Scholarships**
 [See also Scholarships]
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 1738
- Jasper/Banff special infrastructure program**
See Banff/Jasper special infrastructure program
- Jasper National Park**
 Industrial development near ... *Chase* 1012
- Jazz City festival, Edmonton**
 Provincial funding for ... *Blakeman* 1477; *Eggen* 1478
- Jetsgo Corporation**
 Bankruptcy: Ticket refunds re ... *DeLong* 204; *Lund* 204
- Jivraj, Dr.**
See Age Care Ltd., Board of directors
- Joffre carbon dioxide project**
See Carbon dioxide projects, Joffre project
- John Dosseter Health Ethics Centre**
 General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1378; *Miller, B.* 1377
- John Howard Society**
 General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1228; *Stevens* 1229
- John Paul II, Pope**
 Prayer for ... *Speaker, The* 481
 Recognition of ... *Lukaszuk* 489; *Mather* 490
- Johne's disease**
 Detection and control program for ... *Horner* 1885; *Johnson* 1885
- Joint replacement surgery**
See Hip and knee surgery

- Jones Hereford ranch award**
See Century Farm & Ranch awards, Jones Hereford ranch, statement re
- Journeyman/apprentice ratio**
See Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, Ratio of journeymen to apprentices
- Journeyman electrician permits**
See Electric wire installation, Permits for (journeyman/master electricians)
- Journeymen as high school trades instructors**
See High school education—Curricula, Vocational/trades courses: Use of ticketed journeymen in
- JPs**
See Justices of the peace
- Jubilee auditoria**
See Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium; Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
- Jubilee Lodge Nursing Home Ltd.**
 Government grants to ... *Evans* 2049–50; *Pastoor* 2049–50
- Judges, Provincial court**
See Provincial court judges
- Judges, Provincial court—Salaries**
See Wages—Provincial court judges
- Judges, Supreme Court**
See Supreme Court judges
- Judges' Association, Provincial**
See Provincial Judges' Association
- Judicial Compensation Commission**
 Report on Provincial Court judges salary increase ... *Miller, B.* 275–76; *Stevens* 275
 Report on Provincial Court judges salary increase: Provincial challenge of ... *Miller, B.* 276; *Stevens* 276
- Judicial system and aboriginal people**
See Aboriginal people and the judicial system
- Junior high school education—Curricula**
 Fine arts courses ... *Chase* 1481; *Mar* 1484
- Junior kindergarten**
See Early childhood education, Junior kindergarten (prekindergarten)
- Justice, Administration of**
See Justice system
- Justice and Attorney General, Dept. of**
See Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
- Justice and Government Services, Standing Policy Committee on**
See Committee on Justice and Government Services, Standing Policy
- Justice ministers' meeting, Ottawa (January 2005)**
 Discussion re changes to conditional sentencing ... *Stevens* 1230
 Discussion re legal aid funding ... *Stevens* 1232
- Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 48)**
 First reading ... *Stevens* 1631
 Second reading ... *Martin* 1689; *Miller, B.* 1688–89; *Stevens* 1687–88, 1689
 Committee ... *Blakeman* 1822–23; *Stevens* 1822
 Third reading ... *Hancock* 1899; *Miller, B.* 1899; *Pannu* 1899; *Stevens* 1899
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057
- Justice Policy Advisory Committee**
 General remarks ... *Stevens* 1229
- Justice summit**
See Alberta Summit on Justice (1999)
- Justice system**
 Access to ... *Miller, B.* 1228
 News media coverage of ... *Pannu* 1231–32; *Stevens* 1230
 News media coverage of, Ontario solution ... *Stevens* 1230
- Justice system and aboriginal people**
See Aboriginal people and the judicial system
- Justices of the peace**
 Legislation re (Bill 48) ... *Stevens* 1631
- Juvenile prostitution**
See Prostitution, Juvenile
- Kakwa-Narraway watershed**
 Industrial development in, letter re (SP803/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2018
 Mountain pine beetle infestation in ... *Coutts* 1847, 1848
- Kananaskis Country**
 Mountain pine beetle infestation in ... *Coutts* 926
- Kane Veterinary Supplies Ltd.**
 Letter re changes to Veterinary Profession Act (SP650/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1788
- Kangwon, Korea, twinning arrangement**
See Twinning of cities, provinces, etc., Ganwon, Korea
- Katrina, Hurricane**
See Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, U.S. (2005)
- Kauffman, Dr. Stuart**
See Cancer—Research, Dr. Stuart Kauffman's research
- Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd.**
 Contracts with Dept. of Health and Wellness ... *Evans* 642–43; *Taft* 642–43
- Kelowna first ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues, November 2005**
See Aboriginal issues, First ministers' meeting re, Kelowna, November 2005
- Kenilworth junior high school**
 Portables for ... *MacDonald* 694, 1098; *Zwozdesky* 694
 Portables for, purchase of, letter to minister re (SP285/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 622
 Portables for, purchase of, letter to minister re: Minister's response (SP486/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1578
- Kerby Centre**
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 1388
- Keyano College**
 Transition program to University of Alberta programs: Statement re ... *Danyluk* 1394–95
- Khehra, Mr. Charan**
 Statement re ... *Mason* 1506
- Kidney Foundation of Canada**
 General remarks ... *Mitzel* 805
- Kids 4 Cops product sales**
See 7-Eleven, Inc., Kids 4 Cops product sales; Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Canada, Kids 4 Cops product sales
- Kids in the Hall Bistro**
 Provincial funding for ... *Forsyth* 206; *Mather* 206
- Kidzone website**
See Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, Kidzone website
- Kin child care**
See Daycare in family members' homes

Kindergarten

See **Early childhood education**

Kindergarten programs for at-risk (high-needs) children

See **Children at risk—Education, Kindergarten programs for**

Kindred House program

See **Boyle McCauley Health Centre, Kindred House program: Statement re**

King's University College

Graduation program (SP392/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1206

Knee surgery

See **Hip and knee surgery**

Kneehill Animal Control and Rehabilitation Centre Ltd.

Pictures illustrating conditions in (SP242/05: Tabled) ... *Bonko* 463

Renewal of permit for ... *Brown* 533–34; *Coutts* 534

Knowledge, Advanced

See **Education, Postsecondary**

Knowledge, Advanced—Finance

See **Education, Postsecondary—Finance**

Knowledge-based economy

See **Research and development**

Knowledge industry

See **Research and development**

Korea War Veterans Day

Recognition of date of, July 27 (Motion 21: Hancock) ... *Hancock* 1111–12; *Taft* 1112

KPMG consulting

Alberta Securities Commission employees' e-mails, forensic audit of ... *Martin* 1148; *Mason* 969; *McClellan* 948, 969, 975; *Taft* 948, 975

Daycare workers' salaries report ... *Eggen* 1733; *Pannu* 1058

Kyoto protocol on climate change

See **Climate change, Kyoto protocol on**

La Loche road

See **Highway 881, Extension to Alberta/Saskatchewan border, employment opportunities of**

La Ronde Restaurant, Edmonton

Braille menu at: Statement re ... *Lougheed* 745

LaBelle triplets

Recognition of ... *Pastoor* 578

Laboratory of Public Health, Provincial

See **Provincial Laboratory of Public Health**

Labour, Hours of (Night shifts)

See **Hours of labour, Working alone regulation**

Labour department

See **Dept. of Human Resources and Employment**

Labour force

See **Labour supply**

Labour laws and legislation

General remarks ... *Backs* 1625; *Cardinal* 1138, 1625, 1711–12; *Klein* 1625; *Martin* 1136, 1171, 1630, 1711–12

Labour market development program, Canada/Alberta

See **Canada/Alberta labour market development program**

Labour mobility

General remarks ... *Backs* 279

Labour productivity

General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1916; *Goudreau* 1916

Labour relations

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1141; *Cardinal* 1129, 1711, 2048

Impact of foreign worker importation on ... *Klein* 647; *Martin* 647, 1136–37

Labour Relations Board

Advancing of interests of Christian Labour Association ... *Backs* 2009, 2048; *Cardinal* 2009, 2048–49

Chair of, resignation ... *Klein* 2009; *Mason* 2009

Chair/vice-chairs of, firing of ... *Backs* 2049; *Cardinal* 2049

Finning (Canada)/machinists' union case, decision re (SP799/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 2018

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1141; *Cardinal* 1129

Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring) ... *Backs* 2008–09, 2048–49; *Cardinal* 2009, 2048–49; *Klein* 2008, 2009; *Mason* 2009; *Taft* 2008

Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Letters/emails to HRE dept. re (SP801/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 2018

Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): News reports/emails re (SP779-780/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 2017; *Taylor* 2017

Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Public inquiry into ... *Klein* 2008, 2009; *Mason* 2009; *Taft* 2008

Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Public inquiry into, news release re (SP781/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 2017

Labour Relations Code

Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects) [*See also* **Foreign workers, Temporary**]; *Backs* 121–22; *Blakeman* 1140; *Cardinal* 121–22; *Jablonski* 121; *Klein* 647; *Martin* 647, 920, 1136–37, 1171

Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects): Labour Relations Board involvement in ... *Backs* 2048; *Cardinal* 2048–49

Review of: MLA committee re: Report (M43/05: Defeated) ... *Backs* 1170–71; *Cardinal* 1170; *MacDonald* 1171; *Martin* 1170–71

Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities**Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)**

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1141

Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting ... *Backs* 2008–09, 2048–49; *Cardinal* 2009, 2048–49; *Klein* 2008, 2009; *Mason* 2009; *Taft* 2008

Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: Letters/emails to HRE dept. re (SP801/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 2018

Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: News reports/emails re (SP799-780/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 2017; *Taylor* 2017

Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: Public inquiry ... *Klein* 2008, 2009; *Mason* 2009; *Taft* 2008

Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: Public inquiry, news release (SP781/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 2017

Labour strife—Lakeside Packers employees

See **Strikes and lockouts—Lakeside Packers employees**

Labour supply

Alberta labour force statistics ... *Backs* 279

Alberta labour force statistics (Web site article) (SP355/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 957

Labour supply (*Continued*)

Shortages of skilled workers ... *Agnihotri* 1090, 1141;
Cardinal 85–86, 1915–16, 2049; *Dunford* 86;
Goudreau 1915–16; *Jablonski* 85–86; *Martin* 1137;
Oberg 1090
 Strategy re ... *Backs* 279, 1131–32; *Cardinal* 1133

Labour training programs

See **Employment training programs**

Labour unions

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1138
 Impact on, of division 8 designation re foreign workers
 ... *Backs* 121–22; *Cardinal* 121–22; *Jablonski* 121;
Mason 209–10
 Organizing activities (Salting) ... *Backs* 1170; *Cardinal*
 1170; *MacDonald* 1171; *Martin* 1170, 1171

Lachappelle, Dr. Gerard (Chair)

See **Global positioning systems, Centre of excellence in**

Lake Wabamum train derailment

See **Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamum, CN train derailment**

Lakeland College

Sherwood Park campus ... *Hancock* 1574; *Lougheed*
 1574
 Sherwood Park campus: P3 proposal for ... *Lougheed*
 1575; *Oberg* 1575
 Sherwood Park campus: Role in postsecondary
 education system ... *Hancock* 1574
 Surplus spending for programs at ... *Hancock* 1621;
Taft 1621

Lakeside Packers

Brooks packing plant: Complaints re working conditions
 in ... *Backs* 1625; *Cardinal* 1625

Lakeside Packers—Employees—Strike

See **Strikes and lockouts—Lakeside Packers employees**

Lancer Group

Purchase of equity in Zi Corporation, Securities
 Commission investigation of ... *McClellan* 1909; *Taft*
 1909

Land agents—Licensing

Legislation re (Bill 218) ... *Danyluk* 1919

Land Agents Licensing (Licence Requirement)**Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 218)**

First reading ... *Danyluk* 1919

Land claims, Aboriginal

See **Aboriginal land claims**

Land Compensation Board

See **Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board**

The Land Development Company

Letter of complaint to Walton International (SP785/05:
 Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 2017
 Letter to Securities Commission re Walton's business
 practices (SP796/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 2017
 Securities Commission case re, documents (SP790-
 791/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 2017

Land reclamation

See **Reclamation of land**

Land subdivision

See **Subdivision of land**

Land titles—Registration

Performance measures ... *Lund* 1415
 Security concerns in ... *Lund* 1425; *Miller, B.* 1424

Land titles—Registration (*Continued*)

Security concerns in, re mortgage fraud cases ... *Elsalhy*
 803–04; *Lund* 803; *Ouellette* 804

Land use and the energy industry

See under **Energy industry, Land use activities**

Land-use management framework (Public lands)

See **Integrated resource management (Public lands)**

Landfills, Sanitary

See **Sanitary landfills**

Landlord and tenant

Alternate dispute resolution service for See **Residential tenancies dispute resolution service**
 Legislation re (Bill 10) ... *Strang* 93
 Legislation re (Bill 44) ... *Lund* 1631

Lands department

See **Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development**

Lang Scholarship

See **Jason Lang Scholarship**

Language, Parliamentary

See **Parliamentary language**

Language teachers

See **Teachers, Modern languages**

Languages—Teaching

General remarks ... *Goudreau* 1603–04; *Zwozdesky*
 1603–04

Large final emitters industries

See **Greenhouse gas emissions, Reduction of: Large final emitters industries**

Large-scale livestock production—Environmental aspects

See **Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects**

Larviciding program (Mosquitos)

See **Mosquito control programs**

Law, Environmental

See **Environmental law**

Law Enforcement Review Board

Annual report, 2003 (SP384/05: Tabled) ... *Cenaiko*
 1205
 Enhancement of effectiveness of: Legislation re (Bill 49)
 ... *Cenaiko* 1674
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 162, 574

Law Foundation

See **Alberta Law Foundation**

Law Reform Institute, Alberta

See **Alberta Law Reform Institute**

Law Society of Alberta

Annual report, 2004 (SP365/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
 1034; *Stevens* 1034

Lawyers, Government

See **Government attorneys**

Le May Doan, Ms Catriona

Investiture into Order of Canada ... *Jablonski* 1743

Leaders of Tomorrow program

Wetaskiwin and Camrose winners: Statement re ...
Johnson 1152

LearnAlberta.ca (Website)

Statement re ... *DeLong* 2015

Learner assistance allowances

See **Alberta Works (Employment training program), Learner assistance allowances**

Learning, Alberta's Commission on

See **Alberta's Commission on Learning**

- A Learning Alberta; Framing the Challenge (Minister's Forum on advanced education)**
See Education, Postsecondary, Access to, affordability review to improve
- Learning assessment**
See Student assessment
- Learning at a distance**
See Distance education
- Learning dept.**
See Dept. of Advanced Education; Dept. of Education
- Learning disabled children—Education**
See Disabled children—Education
- Learning disabled children—Education—Finance**
See Disabled children—Education—Finance
- Learning Resources Centre**
 Buy-down credit for school purchases at ... *Bonko* 309;
Zwozdesky 310
- Learning strategy**
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 1202
- Leased office space costs, Government**
See Government office space, Leased space costs
- Leases, Oil and gas**
See Oil and gas leases
- Lecturers, University**
See University lecturers
- Leduc Industries Limited**
 Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... *Cardinal* 321; *Martin* 321
- Leduc, City of**
 Growth of, impact of international airport protection area discussions on ... *Renner* 577; *Rogers* 577
- Leduc/Devon Oilfield Historical Society**
 General remarks ... *Rogers* 774
- Leduc/Grimma, Germany co-operation agreement**
 Statement re ... *Rogers* 955–56
- Leduc-Nisku Economic Development Authority**
 General remarks ... *Rogers* 955
- Leduc No. 1 Historic Site**
 General remarks ... *Rogers* 774
- Legacy Act (Bill 203)**
See Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
- Legacy fund for infrastructure**
See Capital projects, Municipal—Finance, Legacy funding for, proposed
- Legacy project**
See Canadian Beef Export Federation, Legacy project
- Legal aid**
 Exclusion of lawyers in private practice from ... *Miller, B.* 1709; *Stevens* 1709
 Funding for ... *Flaherty* 1235; *Pannu* 1232; *Stevens* 1232, 1235
- Legal Aid Society of Alberta**
 General remarks ... *Stevens* 1235
 Remuneration re legal aid cases ... *Pannu* 1232; *Stevens* 1232
- Legal opinions database**
 General remarks ... *Stevens* 1226
- Legion, Royal Canadian**
See Royal Canadian Legion
- Legislation, Citizens' initiative**
See Citizens' initiative referenda
- Legislative Assembly Chamber**
 Heckling in *See Heckling (Parliamentary procedure)*
 New sound system in ... *Speaker, The* 1619
 New sound system microphones in ... *Deputy Speaker* 1862; *Speaker, The* 1838
 VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of ... *Eggen* 1303; *Hancock* 1302; *Hinman* 1303; *Lieberman* 1301–02; *Speaker, The* 1259, 1301, 1303; *Taft* 1302–03
 VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of (Motion 20: Hancock) ... *Backs* 1111; *Brown* 1110–11; *Hancock* 1110; *Mason* 1111
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta**
 First session, March 5, 1906: Statement re ... *Shariff* 1605–06
 General remarks ... *Speaker, The* 1617
 Special sitting of, for Royal visit (Motion 16: Hancock) ... *Blakeman* 597; *Chase* 597–98; *Hancock* 597; *Hinman* 597; *McClellan* 598
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta—Adjournment**
 Fall sittings (Motion 26: Hancock) ... *Hancock* 2057
 For RCMP memorial service, March 10, 2005 (Motion 12: Cernaiko/Stevens) ... *Cernaiko* 105; *Stevens* 105
 Spring recess (Motion 6: Hancock) ... *Hancock* 75
 Summer recess (Motion 7: Hancock) ... *Hancock* 75
- Legislative Assembly Office**
 Annual report, 2003 (Includes CPA Alberta branch annual report (SP16/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 27
 Incident in south members' lounge, May 18, 2005, security report on (SP533/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 1632
 Interim estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257
 Interim estimates, 2005–06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
 Main estimates, 2005–06: Passed ... *Abbott* 764; *Chair* 751
 Main estimates, 2005–06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... *McClellan* 747
- Legislative Offices, Standing Committee on**
See Committee on Legislative Offices, Standing
- Legislature Annex Building**
 Disposition of ... *Oberg* 1097, 1518; *Taft* 1518
- Legislature committees**
See Committees, Select standing
- Legislature grounds**
 Centennial concert on, September 1 *See 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations, Legislature grounds concert re, September 1*
 Memorial garden for Hon. Lois Hole on [*See also Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former Lieutenant Governor)*]; *Speech from the Throne* 8
 Power plant on, disposition of ... *Oberg* 1518; *Taft* 1518
 Upgrading of ... *Oberg* 1096, 1518; *Taft* 1518
- Lem, Mr. George Ho (Former MLA)**
See Ho Lem, Mr. George (Former MLA)
- Lemire, Angela**
 Statement re ... *Strang* 1526
- Lesbian couples—Law and legislation**
 Marriage laws *See Same-sex marriage—Law and legislation*
- Lesbian youth, bullying of**
See Bullying—Prevention, Provincial initiatives re: For gay/lesbian youth

Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park[See also **Parks, Provincial**]Centennial projects in ... *Mar* 1473**Lethbridge Community College**Cousins building upgrading, funding for ... *Hancock* 1795Increased funding for ... *Hancock* 1123; *Pastoor* 1123Police training programs ... *Cenaiko* 1123, 1602; *McFarland* 1602; *Pastoor* 1123, 1127**Lethbridge economic development**See **Economic development–Lethbridge****Lethbridge regional health authority**See **Chinook Regional Health Authority****Lethbridge Regional Hospital**General remarks ... *Hinman* 1845Upgrades to ... *Evans* 1839**Lethbridge Young Offender Centre**Closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... *Cenaiko* 800; *Pastoor* 800**Level 3 lab for livestock testing**See **Veterinary laboratories, Level 3 lab****LFE industries**See **Greenhouse gas emissions, Reduction of: Large final emitters industries****Liability insurance**See **Insurance, Liability****Liberal opposition**See **Official Opposition****Librarian-teachers**See **Teacher-librarians****Libraries**Access to Alberta SuperNet See **Alberta SuperNet, Library access to****Libraries, School**General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 166Purchase of books for ... *Mather* 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1727Purchase of books for, using donated resource rebate cheques, letter re (SP674/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1837**Libraries, School–Employees**General remarks ... *Martin* 1722–23**Libraries–Finance**General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 367, 1475, 1483; *Mar* 367, 1472, 1475, 1476; *Miller, R.* 1483–84**Library cards**Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole ... *Agnihotri* 1483; *Miller, R.* 1483Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... *Agnihotri* 187–88, 343, 367; *Boutilier* 188–89; *Brown* 188; *Danyluk* 193, 343; *Eggen* 189; *Griffiths* 189–90; *Groeneveld* 192–93; *MacDonald* 191–92; *Miller, B.* 193; *Swann* 190; *Tougas* 188; *Zwozdesky* 190–91General remarks ... *Mar* 367**Licence plates, Automobile**See **Automobile licence plates****Licences, Casino**See **Casino licences****Licensed practical nurses**See **Nurses, Licensed practical****Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta, College of**See **College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta****Licensed premises**Amendment to retain smoking in ... *Blakeman* 119; *Klein* 119Bouncers in, training of ... *Graydon* 1287Economic impact of smoking ban in (SP120/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 171Liquor sales to minors ... *Graydon* 1029, 1287; *Rodney* 1029**Lieutenant Governor of Alberta**Budget for ... *Klein* 1099Entrance of ... *Lieutenant Governor* 1, 7Former Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Lois Hole) ... *Klein* 1100Former Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Lois Hole), Tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 7; *Speech from the Throne* 7New Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Norman Kwong) ... *Klein* 1099–1100

Transmittal of 2004-05 supplementary estimates

(SP85/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 94; *Speaker, The* 94Transmittal of 2005-06 interim estimates (SP140/05: Tabled) ... *Deputy Speaker* 211; *McClellan* 211Transmittal of 2005-06 Main and Lottery Fund estimates (SP320/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 746–47; *Speaker, The* 746–47Transmittal of 2005-06 supplementary estimates (SP593/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1676**Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards**[See also **Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM AOE (Former Lieutenant Governor)**]Statement re ... *Tarchuk* 1606**Lieutenant Governors of Alberta**General remarks ... *Speaker, The* 1617**Life Sciences Institute, Alberta**See **Alberta Life Sciences Institute****Life sciences research**Funding for wet lab re ... *Doerksen* 1501; *Elsalhy* 1501General remarks ... *Doerksen* 1368, 1369, 1372; *Eggen* 1373**Light rail transit–Finance**Provincial funding ... *Miller, R.* 1327; *Taft* 1323**Limousines**Use by government members ... *Klein* 1107;*MacDonald* 1103; *Miller, R.* 1106**Linder, David C. (Executive Director)**See **Alberta Securities Commission, Influencing regulatory activity case****Linear assessment**See **Assessment, Linear assessment process: Legislation re (Bill 28)****Liquor Commission**See **Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission****Liquor rooms**See **Licensed premises****Liquor sales**Revenue from ... *Graydon* 1286–87**Liquor sales–Regulations**Server intervention program ... *Graydon* 1287Under-25 program ... *Graydon* 1287**Lisac, Mark (Author)**See **Alberta Politics Uncovered (Publication)****Literacy**General remarks ... *Hancock* 859, 860Impact of library card fees on ... *Agnihotri* 367; *Mar* 367

- Literacy Day, International**
See International Literacy Day
- Live2Share (Organ donation campaign)**
 General remarks ... *Mitzel* 805
- Livery Stable Keepers Act**
 Replacement by the Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32) ...
Goudreau 370
- Livestock**
 Tracking system re ... *Stelmach* 1186
- Livestock, Treatment of**
See Animals, Treatment of
- Livestock brands–Inspection**
 Role in cattle rustling prevention ... *Horner* 1121–22;
Mitzel 1121
- Livestock Identification Services Ltd.**
 General remarks ... *Horner* 1122
 Manager's report and financial statements, 2004-05
 (SP666/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1789; *Horner* 1789
- Livestock industry, Diversified**
See Game farming
- Livestock industry, Intensive**
 General remarks ... *Swann* 1221
 Municipal control over location of ... *Taft* 1321
 Phase out of: Petition presented re ... *Bonko* 1674,
 1715, 1745, 1969; *Eggen* 1788, 1837, 1889; *Swann*
 1837, 1969
 Public education re ... *Horner* 1222
- Livestock industry, Intensive–Environmental aspects**
 Cleanup costs ... *MacDonald* 1209
 Enforcement of legislation re ... *Bonko* 1252; *Boutilier*
 1027; *Coutts* 1027, 1252; *Swann* 1027
 Enforcement of legislation re, review of ... *Coutts* 1252,
 1740
- Livestock industry, Intensive–Waste disposal**
*See Livestock industry, Intensive–Environmental
 aspects*
- Living allowances for learners**
*See Alberta Works (Employment training program),
 Learner assistance allowances*
- Lloydminster, City of**
 New charter for: Legislation re (Bill 3) ... *Snelgrove* 51
- Loan brokering**
 Consumer protection legislation re ... *Speech from the
 Throne* 9
- Loan remission policy re student loans**
See Student financial aid, Loan remission policy re
- Loans, Student**
See Student financial aid
- Lobbyists–Registration**
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1569; *Elsalhy* 2011;
Evans 1569; *Klein* 691, 2008, 2011; *Mason* 699;
McClellan 454; *Miller, R.* 454; *Pastoor* 691; *Taft*
 2008
- Local authorities–Finance**
See Municipal finance
- Local Authorities Election Act**
 Contraventions of, during Calgary ward 10 municipal
 election: Police investigation re ... *Renner* 1249
 Review of ... *Miller, R.* 1328
- Local primary care initiatives**
See Medical care, Primary, Local initiatives re
- Lockheed Martin Corporation**
 Heritage Fund investment in ... *McClellan* 120; *Miller,
 R.* 120
- Lockouts–Lakeside Packers employees**
See Strikes and lockouts–Lakeside Packers employees
- Lodge assistance program–Northern Alberta**
See Senior citizens' lodges–Northern Alberta
- Logging**
 As pine bark beetle prevention measure ... *Coutts* 1742
 Rate of ... *Coutts* 530–31; *Oberle* 530–31
- Logging, Clear-cut**
 Impact on tourism ... *Chase* 1012
- Logging, Clear-cut–Cataract Creek area**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1012, 1480–81; *Mar* 1484
- Logging in forest fire hit areas**
 General remarks ... *Coutts* 1393
- Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park**
 [See also *Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former
 Lieutenant Governor)*]
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1012; *Klein* 1100; *Mar* 2012
 Statement re ... *Lukaszuk* 982
- Lois Hole digital library (Proposed)**
 [See also *Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former
 Lieutenant Governor)*]
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 797, 869, 1078–79; *Speech
 from the Throne* 9
- Lois Hole elementary school (Proposed)**
 [See also *Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former
 Lieutenant Governor)*]
 General remarks ... *Flaherty* 121; *Oberg* 121
- Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship
 (Proposed)**
 [See also *Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former
 Lieutenant Governor); Scholarships*]
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 866; *Hancock* 860, 869;
Klein 1100; *McClellan* 748; *Speech from the Throne*
 9
- London Economics International LLC**
 Electricity prices, contributing factors to, report ..
Liepert 291; *Melchin* 291
 Electricity prices comparison, cross-Canada, report
 (SP323/05: Tabled) ... *Melchin* 775–76
- Long Term Care Association, Alberta**
See Alberta Long Term Care Association
- Long term care facilities**
See Extended care facilities
- Long term care facilities, Private**
See Extended care facilities, Private
- Long term care facilities–Finance**
See Extended care facilities–Finance
- Long term care facilities–Standards**
See Extended care facilities–Standards
- Long-term care residents**
See Extended care facilities residents
- Long-Term Care Review Advisory Committee (1999)**
 Final report ... *Blakeman* 1463; *Evans* 617
- Long-term electricity contracts**
*See Electric power contracts, Residential, Long-term
 contracts for residential consumers*
- Lost health records**
*See Medical records–Confidentiality, Missing health
 records situation*
- Lotteries and Gaming Summit (1998)**
See Alberta Lotteries and Gaming Summit (1998)
- Lottery boards, Community**
 Elimination of ... *Chase* 1283

Lottery commission

See Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission

Lottery Fund

Capital grants to major fairs from ... *Graydon* 124, 534;
Johnson 124; *Tougas* 534

Disaster relief funding ... *Graydon* 1799; *Tougas*
1798–99

Funds allocation ... *Chase* 1284; *Eggen* 1478; *Graydon*
1277, 1278, 1282; *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 258;
Pannu 1285, 1288; *Swann* 1282

Funds allocation to Sustainable Resources dept. ...
Bonko 928; *Coutts* 930

Interim estimates, 2005-06, procedural motions are
entered under Estimates of Supply.

Interim estimates, 2005-06, debate is entered under
Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery
Fund) estimates, 2005-06

Main estimates, 2005-06, procedural motions are
entered under Estimates of Supply

Project Discovery funding ... *Rogers* 774

Race track gaming revenues to ... *Graydon* 770–71,
901, 976; *Tougas* 770–71, 901, 976

Revenue in ... *Graydon* 1279

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05, procedural motions
are entered under Estimates of Supply

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05, debate is entered
under individual department names

Louis Riel commemoration ceremony

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1672

Louise McKinney Post-Secondary Scholarships

General remarks ... *Hancock* 1738

Louise McKinney Riverfront Park, Edmonton

Centennial funding for ... *Blakeman* 1477

Lounges

See Licensed premises

Love, Rod

[*See also Office of the Premier, Current chief of staff*
(**Rod Love**) remuneration (Q23/05: Defeated)]

Fees paid to, re Fort McMurray rail service consultation
... *Chase* 612; *Klein* 612

Tobacco industry ties, influence on smoke-free
legislation changes ... *Klein* 690; *Taft* 690

Trip to Fort McMurray on government aircraft ... *Chase*
612; *Klein* 82; *Oberg* 612; *Taft* 82

Love Consulting Inc.

See Rod Love Consulting Inc.

Low-income families

General remarks ... *Backs* 849; *Cardinal* 849

Government programs ... *Evans* 1832; *Forsyth* 1832;
Mather 1831–32

Government programs: Letter re (SP654/05: Tabled) ...
Mason 1788; *Pannu* 1788

MLA committee review of programs for ... *Cardinal*
1966

Tax reductions for ... *Klein* 768; *McClellan* 749, 766,
968; *Miller, R.* 959, 961

Low-income health benefits program (Children)

See Child health benefits program

Low-income housing

See Social housing

Low-income seniors

Special-needs assistance ... *Fritz* 877, 1387

Special-needs assistance: Hearing aid coverage ... *Fritz*
163

Low-income students

Access to postsecondary education *See Education,*
Postsecondary, Access to, by low-income students

Low-income support

See Public assistance

Low-income support, Aboriginal

See Public assistance, Aboriginal peoples

LPCI

See Medical care, Primary, Local initiatives re

LPNs

See Nurses, Licensed practical

Lubicon Lake Band

Land claim, minister's potential conflict re ... *Calahasen*
841; *Stevens* 1600–01

Land claim negotiations: Petition tabled re (SP814/05) ...
Swann 2055

Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... *Bonko* 843,
951; *Boutilier* 615, 802–03, 902–03; *Calahasen* 615,
841, 1503; *Eggen* 840, 902–03, 1042; *Klein* 486;
Melchin 615, 643, 802, 951; *Stevens* 486, 1600–01;
Swann 486, 615, 643, 802–03; *Tougas* 838, 1502–03,
1600

Lumber–Export–United States

See Softwoods–Export–United States

Lunchtime supervision in schools

See School lunchtime supervision

Luring of children via the Internet

See Internet (Computer network), Crimes against
children on: Education program re

Lynnview Ridge, Calgary

Cleanup of contaminated soil from *See Contaminated*
soil–Lynnview Ridge, Calgary, Cleanup of

MacAdams, Roberta

See Historical vignettes of Alberta, First of two
women elected to provincial legislature (Roberta
MacAdams), June 7, 1917

MacDonald, Tara law

See Hours of labour, Working alone regulation

Mack, Mr.

See Alberta Securities Commission, Influencing
regulatory activity case: Report on

Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre

See Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre

MacLeod, Mr. Roderick (Former MLA)

Tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 13

MacNichol report

See Environmental regulations, MacNichol report on

Mactaggart Art Collection

Statement re ... *Hancock* 946–47; *Hinman* 947; *Taft*
947

Mad Butcher (brand name)

See Innisfail Meats Ltd., Recognition of Mad Butcher
brand name

Mad cow disease

See Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

Magnetic resonance imaging

Fort McMurray unit ... *Chase* 576; *Evans* 576

Funding for ... *Evans* 271

Mobile units for ... *Danyluk* 854; *Evans* 854

Magnetic resonance imaging clinics, Private

Relation to Canada Health Act ... *Hancock* 1308; *Swann*
1308

Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 99–100; *Backs* 133–34; *Bonko* 78–79; *Brown* 66–67; *Chase* 64–66; *Eggen* 95–96; *Elsalhy* 137–38; *Flaherty* 147–48; *Groeneveld* 96–97; *Hinman* 149; *Johnson* 142–43; *Johnston* 110; *Liepert* 102–03; *Lindsay* 144–46; *Mather* 112–14; *Miller, B.* 67–68; *Miller, R.* 108–10; *Mitzel* 97–99; *Morton* 131–33; *Oberle* 116; *Pastoor* 114–16; *Prins* 110–12; *Rodney* 135–37; *Rogers* 79–80; *Swann* 75–77; *Taylor* 129–30; *Tougas* 100–01; *Webber* 138–39

Maintenance (Domestic relations)

General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1228
Rate increase funding ... *Forsyth* 1052
Reciprocal agreements re, with other jurisdictions ... *Miller, B.* 1228
Staffing ... *Miller, B.* 1228

Mais, Mohamed El

See *El Mais, Mohamed*

Management bodies (Housing)

Surpluses/assets, reporting of ... *Fritz* 1253; *Pastoor* 1252–53

Mandatory child drug treatment programs

See *Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth, Mandatory programs for*

Mannix, Mr. Ronald Neil

Investiture into Order of Canada ... *Jablonski* 1743

Manufacturing

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007–08; *Speech from the Throne* 9

Manure, Farm–Recycling

See *Farm manure–Recycling*

Manure methane as fuel source

See *Methane from manure as fuel source*

Margaret Kool Marketing Inc.

Government advertising contract ... *Klein* 1103, 1105; *MacDonald* 1103

Marijuana

Decriminalization of ... *Cenaiko* 41; *Miller, B.* 1227

Marijuana growing operations

General remarks ... *Cao* 459; *Cenaiko* 459, 1427; *Jablonski* 25; *Mather* 1234
Northern/southern investigative teams re ... *Cenaiko* 1430

Market-basket measure criteria (Public assistance)

See *Public assistance, Market-basket measure as basis for*

Market enhancement recovery funds

General remarks ... *Backs* 1170; *Cardinal* 1170; *MacDonald* 1171; *Martin* 1170, 1171

Market retention and development fund

See *Beef–Marketing, Market retention and development fund for*

Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)

Background of ... *MacDonald* 161; *Melchin* 118–19, 161; *Taft* 118–19
Electricity imports, investigation into, re price manipulation activities ... *MacDonald* 204; *Melchin* 204
Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... *Klein* 18, 83, 119, 247, 286; *MacDonald* 23, 83, 204, 246–47, 533, 899, 1145;

Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry) (Continued)

Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into (Continued) ... *McClellan* 42; *Melchin* 18, 23, 118–19, 204, 249, 286, 360, 456, 533, 796, 899, 913, 917, 1145, 1196, 1249; *Miller, B.* 42; *Stevens* 42; *Taft* 18, 118–19, 360, 796
Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into, report on Power Pool prices (SP164-165/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 295
Enron's takeover of Sundance power plant production, investigation of ... *MacDonald* 899; *Melchin* 899
Monitoring of electricity prices ... *Eggen* 914; *Melchin* 286, 488
Resignation of: Letters re (SP270/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 536
TransAlta price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... *MacDonald* 286; *Melchin* 286, 360, 456, 796, 899, 949; *Taft* 360, 796, 899
TransAlta price manipulation scheme, inquiry into, report on Power Pool prices re (SP164-165/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 295

Market value assessment

See *Assessment, Market value as basis for: Statement re*

Markets & Strategic Initiatives report

See *Alberta Electric System Operator, Markets & Strategic Initiatives report (SP191/05: Tabled)*

Markin Institute for Public Health

Personal donation to ... *Chase* 1467

Marriage

Definition of ... *Hinman* 245–46, 572; *Klein* 245–46, 484, 572; *Lund* 1425; *McClellan* 317; *Oberle* 484; *Stevens* 246, 484
Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... *Hinman* 245–46; *Klein* 245–46, 484; *Mar* 317; *McClellan* 317; *Oberle* 484; *Ouellette* 317–18; *Stevens* 246, 484; *Taft* 317
Definition of: Alberta legal action re, payment of costs re ... *Ouellette* 317–18; *Taft* 317
Definition of: Citizens' initiative legislation re ... *Hinman* 1251
Definition of: Referendum on Alberta definition in next federal election ... *Hinman* 1714, 1738; *McClellan* 1738
Definition of: Referendum on Alberta definition in next federal election, response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... *Hinman* 1738
Definition of: Statement re ... *Hinman* 1153; *Morton* 698
Pro traditional marriage rally, Mill Woods ... *Hinman* 1153

Marriage Act, Civil (Federal)

See *Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)*

Marriage Act (Alberta)

Legal challenge to, re same-sex marriage ... *Oberle* 484; *Stevens* 484

Marriage Amendment Act, 2000 (Alberta Bill 202, 2000)

Renewal of ... *Hinman* 245–46; *Klein* 245–46; *Stevens* 246

Marriage commissioners, Civil

See *Civil marriage commissioners*

Marriage licences

Provision of, by religious institutions ... *Lund* 1425; *Miller, B.* 1424

Marriage licences (Continued)

Provision of, through registry offices ... *Lund* 1425;
Miller, B. 1424

Martin rink

See **Curling championships, Team Martin (2005 Canada Cup champions)**

Mass casualties—Treatment—Calgary

See **Emergency medical response services—Calgary**

Mass transit—Finance

See **Public transit—Finance**

Master electrician permits

See **Electric wire installation, Permits for (journeyman/master electricians)**

Masters Curling Championship

See **Curling championships, Masters Curling Championship**

Masters in Chambers—Salaries

See **Wages—Masters in Chambers**

Masters in Chambers Pension Plan

See **Provincial Judges and Masters in Chambers Pension Plan**

Masters [summer] Games, Edmonton (July 2005)

See **World Masters [summer] Games, Edmonton (July 2005)**

Masters [winter] Games

See **World Masters [winter] Games**

Maternal tort immunity provisions

See **Prenatal wrongful conduct law, Maternal tort immunity provisions (Bill 45)**

Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)

First reading ... *Oberle* 1631

Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 1774–75; *Bonko* 1685–86;
Eggen 1683–85; *Evans* 1774; *Flaherty* 1686, 1772;
Miller, B. 1682–83; *Oberle* 1681–82, 1775;
Snelgrove 1685; *Stevens* 1772–74; *Swann* 1774;
Tougas 1773

Committee ... *Bonko* 1876; *Chase* 1875, 1877–78;
DeLong 1878; *MacDonald* 1874–75; *Martin*
1873–74; *Miller, R.* 1872, 1877; *Oberle* 1872–78;
Pastoor 1876

Third reading ... *Eggen* 2023; *Miller, B.* 2022–23;
Oberle 2022; *Pannu* 2023

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Maternity Center Association

Booklet about cesarean section (SP410/05: Tabled) ...
Elsalhy 1315

Matrix for rural education curricula

See **Education—Curricula—Rural areas, Matrix for**

Mayerthorpe area drug raid

See under **Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts, Calgary

Program from (SP362/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 984
Statement re ... *Taylor* 983

Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute

Funding for ... *Evans* 1458; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg*
1086

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1164

Mazankowski council

See **Premier's Advisory Council on Health**

Mazankowski report

See **Premier's Advisory Council on Health, Recommendations (A Framework for Reform)**

MCC Employment Development

General remarks ... *Cao* 165; *Cardinal* 165

McCallum, Sandy

Recognition of ... *Rogers* 490

McDermid report

See **Traffic safety, McDermid report on**

McDonald, Chief Dorothy

Statement re ... *Johnston* 1628

McKenzie Towne school, Calgary

See **Schools—Construction—Calgary, McKenzie Towne area school**

McKinney Post-Secondary Scholarships

See **Louise McKinney Post-Secondary Scholarships**

McLennan Ross LLP (Legal counsel)

Information about partner in (SP823/05: Tabled) ...
Backs 2056

Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 amendments ...
Backs 2048; *Cardinal* 2048

ME First! (Municipal Energy Efficiency Assistance) program

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 365; *Renner* 1320

Meals on Wheels

40th anniversary of ... *Chase* 1342

General remarks ... *Fritz* 889, 890

Recognition of ... *Mather* 418

Meat Association, National

See **National Meat Association (U.S.)**

Meat Institute, American

See **American Meat Institute (U.S.)**

Meat packing industry

Profit margins ... *Hinman* 1217; *Horner* 42, 1498;
MacDonald 297; *Mason* 16, 26, 42, 1498; *Pannu*
299

Provincial incentives to ... *Hinman* 971, 1017

Meat packing plants

BSE testing labs in ... *Hinman* 1218; *Horner* 1220

Building of ... *Dunford* 1017; *Hinman* 1217–18;
Horner 43, 46, 1210–11, 1216, 1220; *Klein* 14;
Martin 22, 1213; *McClellan* 22–23

Building of: Infrastructure support for ... *Taft* 15

Building of: Provincial support for ... *Chase* 266;
Hinman 48, 262–63, 1017; *Horner* 48; *MacDonald*
297, 1208; *Pannu* 300

Cap on slaughter capacity for large plants ... *Taft* 15

Independent ownership of ... *Taft* 15

Medallions, Centennial

See **Centennial medallions**

Media and the justice system

See **Justice system, News media coverage of**

Media coverage of crime

See **Crime, News media coverage of**

Media role at fatality inquiries

See **Fatality inquiries, Role of news media at**

Mediation (Legal process)

Child and youth cases ... *Stevens* 275, 1225, 1236

Funding for ... *Stevens* 1226

Medical Association, Alberta

See **Alberta Medical Association**

Medical Association, Canadian

See **Canadian Medical Association**

Medical capital projects

See **Capital projects, Medical**

Medical care

24-hour service re ... *Evans* 1459

Demand for, reduction of ... *Blakeman* 1462; *Chase*
1467; *Swann* 1468

Medical care (Continued)

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1459; *Chase* 1152; *Evans* 1846; *Klein* 1666; *McClellan* 747; *Speech from the Throne* 9
- New Democrat opposition public hearings re ... *Mason* 1466
- New Democrat opposition public hearings re, report ... *Pannu* 1205
- New Democrat opposition public hearings re, report (SP381/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1153–54; *Mason* 1153–54
- Opting out of national plan for ... *Miller, R.* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188–89
- Premier's remarks re: Letter re (SP310/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 700
- Restructuring ... *MacDonald* 1845–46; *Mason* 1465
- Restructuring: Funding for ... *Evans* 271
- Restructuring: Government news release re (SP297/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 653
- Restructuring: Statement re ... *Pannu* 1127
- Restructuring (third way option) ... *Agnihotri* 1844; *Blakeman* 205, 460, 1839, 1840, 1841; *Chase* 1087; *Elsalhy* 1506; *Evans* 205, 275, 460, 1123–24, 1458, 1627, 1832, 1841, 1842, 1844; *Hancock* 1308; *Klein* 249, 1666–67; *Mason* 1465, 1466, 1666; *Miller, R.* 257; *Oberg* 1096; *Pannu* 248–49, 1123–24, 1205, 1626–27, 1716, 2051; *Speech from the Throne* 9; *Swann* 1308; *Taft* 482; *Taylor* 649
- Restructuring (third way option): Advertising campaign re ... *Blakeman* 1666; *Evans* 1666; *Klein* 1666; *Mason* 1666
- Restructuring (third way option): Letters re (SP653 & 822/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 1788; *Pannu* 1788, 2056
- Restructuring (third way option): Public consultation re ... *Blakeman* 1666; *Evans* 1666
- Restructuring (third way option): Public consultation re, letter (SP599/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1716
- Statement re ... *Pannu* 1205

Medical care, Aboriginal

See **Aboriginal peoples–Health care**

Medical care, Cost of

Public knowledge of, purpose of ... *Blakeman* 1666, 1782; *Evans* 1782

Medical care, Primary

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 273, 1461; *Evans* 205, 271, 533, 1459
- Local initiatives re ... *Blakeman* 1462, 1469; *Evans* 693, 1077–78
- Local initiatives re: Performance measures ... *Blakeman* 1469
- Midwives inclusion in ... *Blakeman* 1462; *Evans* 1146
- Team-based care ... *Blakeman* 1461; *Evans* 693, 1458, 1843; *Swann* 1468

Medical care, Primary–Finance

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469; *Evans* 1458

Medical care, Private

- Document re (SP394/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1206
- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 205, 1459–60, 1569, 1622; *Chase* 1087, 1466; *Evans* 205, 260, 1123–24, 1145, 1569, 1622, 2051; *Hancock* 1308; *Hinman* 1844–45; *Klein* 1105, 1145, 1622–23, 2051; *MacDonald* 1846; *Mason* 1145, 1465, 1623; *Miller, R.* 1971; *Pannu* 1123–24, 1127, 2051; *Swann* 1308

Medical care, Private (Continued)

- Influence of health symposium on ... *Cao* 1147; *Evans* 1147; *Hancock* 1308; *Martin* 1164–65; *Swann* 1308; *Zwozdesky* 1164–65
- Statement re ... *Pannu* 1205
- Medical care, Private–United States**
- News article re (SP345/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 908
- Medical care–Calgary**
- General remarks ... *Amery* 533; *Evans* 533; *Taylor* 535
- Medical care–Finance**
- [See also **Regional health authorities, Funding**]
- Federal contribution See **Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)**
- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 272, 273, 274, 1840; *Chase* 1470; *Evans* 271, 273, 274, 1458; *Klein* 249, 766, 1667; *McClellan* 748; *Miller, R.* 258
- MLA committee to review: Report ... *Blakeman* 205; *Evans* 1124; *Pannu* 1124, 1127
- National agreement on ... *Stelmach* 1180
- Surplus funding for ... *Evans* 1622; *McClellan* 1667; *Taft* 1621
- User fees ... *Evans* 1123–24; *Pannu* 1123–24
- Medical care–Northern Alberta**
- General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1339; *Evans* 1339
- Medical care–Utilization**
- Premier's remarks re ... *Klein* 1706; *Taft* 1706
- Medical clinics, 24-hour**
- See **Medical care, 24-hour service re**
- Medical disaster response services–Calgary**
- See **Emergency medical response services–Calgary**
- Medical education**
- See **Medical profession–Education**
- Medical equipment**
- [See also **Surgery equipment**]
- Funding for ... *Blakeman* 273, 1461; *Evans* 271, 273, 274, 1458, 1459
- Medical Examiner's Office, Chief**
- See **Chief Medical Examiner's Office**
- Medical facilities, Private**
- See **Health facilities, Private**
- Medical facilities–Construction**
- See **Health facilities–Construction**
- Medical graduates, Foreign**
- Residencies for ... *Evans* 1123
- Medical imaging services, Digital**
- Cost savings on ... *Ouellette* 757
- Medical insurance, Private**
- See **Insurance, Health (Private)**
- Medical Laboratory Technologists, Alberta College of**
- See **Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists**
- Medical practice guidelines symposium**
- See **Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)**
- Medical profession**
- Complaints against See **College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, Investigation of complaints against physicians: Letter re (SP113/05: Tabled)**
- Practicing in public/private health systems ... *Blakeman* 1622; *Evans* 1622, 1665–66; *Taft* 1665
- Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... *Blakeman* 1362–63; *Chase* 1364–65; *Danyluk* 1361–62, 1368; *Eggen* 1365–66; *Evans* 1366–67; *Griffiths* 1365; *Hinman* 1367; *Prins* 1363–64
- Scope of practice, change to ... *Swann* 1468

Medical profession—Education

Accessibility of ... *Hancock* 1965; *Taylor* 1965
 Bursary program for ... *Evans* 1339
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469, 1840–41
 U of A training facility ... *Lukaszuk* 1032–33

Medical profession—Fees

Alternative payment schemes ... *Blakeman* 1469; *Evans* 289
 Funding for ... *Evans* 1458

Medical profession—Rural areas

Action plan re ... *Blakeman* 1469, 1841; *Evans* 289, 1339; *Hancock* 1965; *McClellan* 1471; *Pastoor* 289
 Action plan re: Web site article (SP748/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 1970
 General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1339; *Evans* 1339; *Hinman* 1468
 Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... *Blakeman* 1362–63; *Chase* 1364–65; *Danyluk* 1361–62, 1368; *Eggen* 1365–66; *Evans* 1366–67; *Griffiths* 1365; *Hinman* 1367; *Prins* 1363–64

Medical profession—Supply

[See also **Health workforce planning**]
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1461, 1463; *Chase* 1467; *Evans* 1458, 1461
 Northeast Calgary area ... *Amery* 533; *Evans* 533

Medical profession (Medical Examiner's office)

Salary increase ... *Stevens* 1227

Medical records

Outsourcing management of ... *Blakeman* 617; *Evans* 482; *Ouellette* 617; *Taft* 482

Medical records, Electronic

Funding for ... *McClellan* 748
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1471; *Chase* 1467; *DeLong* 320–21; *Evans* 205, 320–21, 854, 1339, 1459, 1782
 Impact on organ transplantation process ... *Evans* 1601; *VanderBurg* 1601

Medical records—Access issues

Access by outside intelligence agencies ... *Evans* 482; *Taft* 482

Medical records—Confidentiality

Departmental budget for ... *Blakeman* 617; *Evans* 617
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1471
 Missing health records situation ... *Blakeman* 617; *Evans* 482–84, 529, 617; *Klein* 484, 529; *Lund* 1424; *Mason* 528–29; *Mather* 1423; *Ouellette* 617; *Pannu* 483–84; *Taft* 482
 U.S. access to information re ... *Evans* 482–84; *Lund* 1424; *Pastoor* 1423; *Taft* 482

Medical referrals, Electronic

See **Physician/specialist referrals, Electronic**

Medical research—Finance

General remarks ... *Chase* 1377; *Hancock* 868

Medical research foundation

See **Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research**

Medical residents

Payback of student loans ... *Hancock* 1965; *Taylor* 1965

Medical school tuition fees

See **Tuition fees, For medical students**

Medical students—Education

See **Medical profession—Education**

Medical tests

Necessity for repeated tests, letter re (SP724/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1919

Medicare

See **Medical care**

Medicare premiums

See **Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums**

Medication—Costs

See **Drugs, Prescription—Costs**

Medication copay allowance

See **Public assistance, Medication copay allowance**

Medication for seniors

See **Extended care facilities residents, Prescription drug usage**

Medications—Costs

See **Drugs, Prescription—Costs**

Medicentres

See **Health facilities, Private**

Medicine Hat ambulance service

See **Ambulance service—Medicine Hat**

Medicine Hat College

Construction projects at ... *Oberg* 1088

Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005

Petition presented ... *Brown* 326
 Recommendation to proceed ... *Brown* 1033
 Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... *Brown* 369

Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill Pr. 3)

First reading ... *Mitzel* 622
 Second reading ... *Mitzel* 1509; *Oberle* 1509
 Committee ... *Shariff* 1509
 Third reading ... *Mitzel* 1557
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)

Medicine Hat health region

See **Palliser Health Region**

Medicine Hat Remand Centre

Young offender unit, closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... *Cenaiko* 800; *Pastoor* 800

MEG Energy Corp.

Chinese investment in ... *Melchin* 801

Mega Project Excellence: Preparing for Alberta's Legacy, An Action Plan (Report)

Copy tabled (SP266/05) ... *Melchin* 536
 General remarks ... *Backs* 1132

Members' apologies to the House

General remarks ... *Abbott* 1632; *Backs* 619; *Blakeman* 1454, 1456, 1633; *Hinman* 262; *Klein* 1108, 1110; *MacDonald* 421; *Mason* 1082, 1457; *Taft* 421, 1454, 1456; *Zwozdesky* 1343

Members' correction of remarks

Location of Bergen op Zoom ... *Speaker, The* 1301, 1343

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Centennial medallions presented to ... *Klein* 3; *Taft* 3
 Conduct in the Chamber ... *Hinman* 1272–73; *Zwozdesky* 1274
 Consultation of, re capital project funding ... *Agnihotri* 1089
 Coverage under risk management fund: Review See **Risk management fund, Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under**

Members of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

- Former members, association of: Legislation re (Bill 47) ... *Johnson* 1631
- Former members, association of: Legislation re (Bill 207) ... *Johnson* 984
- Government members only web site, address for (SP379/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 1128
- Opposition members' invitation to public events, statement re ... *Elsalhy* 1744
- Recall of *See Recall of elected representatives*
- Relationship with Wild Rose Foundation ... *Mar* 1598; *Taft* 1598
- Report of selected payments to, 2003-04 (SP64/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94
- Report of selected payments to, 2004-05 (SP656/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1788-89; *McClellan* 1788-89
- Securities Commission appointments, involvement in ... *McClellan* 1880; *Taft* 1880
- Tribute to former members ... *Speaker, The* 13, 1619

Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan

- Annual reports, 2001-2004 (SP74-77/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94
- Annual reports, 2004-05 (SP558/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1675; *McClellan* 1675

Members' Services, Special Standing Committee on
*See Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing***Members' Statements**

- Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... *Blakeman* 624-25; *Hancock* 624; *Martin* 625; *Stevens* 624
- Comment invited re ... *Speaker, The* 53
- Interim agreement re ... *Speaker, The* 17, 91
- Speaker's statement re ... *Speaker, The* 1607

Members' Statements (2005)

- 4-H ambassadors ... *Marz* 1204
- AADAC youth drug treatment programs ... *Rodney* 804
- Aboriginal workforce participation initiative ... *Knight* 294, 1450
- Acquittal of Wheat Board protesters ... *Morton* 1203
- Affordability of postsecondary education ... *Taylor* 1835
- Agriculture industry ... *Cao* 1032; *Goudreau* 1080
- Air India flight 182 ... *Mason* 462
- Alberta: Land of opportunity ... *Cao* 857
- Alberta Centennial ... *Cao* 1605
- Alberta Centennial Multicultural Gala Night / East Coulee Spring Festival ... *Chase* 735
- Alberta film industry ... *Groeneveld* 1968
- Alberta Scene festival ... *DeLong* 1257-58
- Alberta Venture most-respected corporations ... *Rogers* 1450-51
- Alberta's research environment ... *Herard* 1151
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission ... *Rodney* 1786-87
- All-party committees ... *Pastoor* 1451
- Allan Brown ... *Brown* 535
- Angela Lemire/Caroline Giguere ... *Strang* 1526
- Anne Frank memorial ... *Brown* 1079-80
- ARFEX 2005 culinary trade show ... *Cao* 744-45
- Armenian genocide ... *Jablonski* 1031-32
- Barrier-free accessibility ... *Lougheed* 1917
- Battle River Community Foundation ... *Johnson* 1340
- Benefits of immigration to Alberta ... *Cao* 1576-77

Members' Statements (2005) (Continued)

- Boreal forest ... *Eggen* 1395-96
- Bow Valley College/Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology ... *Marz* 1629
- Braille menu at La Ronde Restaurant ... *Lougheed* 745
- Brian Fjeldheim ... *Tarchuk* 2054
- BVolunteer achievements ... *Chase* 907
- Calgary Exhibition and Stampede ... *Ady* 1204
- Camrose Kodiaks hockey team ... *Johnson* 857, 1577
- Canada Health Day ... *Elsalhy* 1505-06
- Canadian Agricultural Safety Week ... *Prins* 293-94
- Canadian contribution to victory in Europe ... *Brown* 1312
- Canadian Finals Rodeo and Farmfair 2005 ... *VanderBurg* 1968
- Caritas Health Group school lunch program ... *Blakeman* 2015
- Caroline Mouris ... *Miller, R.* 805-06
- Castle wilderness ... *Chase* 1673
- Catholic high school construction ... *Lukaszuk* 1080
- Cattle rustling ... *Backs* 1258
- Centennial canoe trip ... *Abbott* 907
- Centennial celebrations in Bonnyville ... *Ducharme* 1714
- Centennial events in Airdrie ... *Haley* 1786
- Centennial hockey challenge ... *Snelgrove* 805
- Centennial salute for sport and recreation ... *Abbott* 2054
- A Centennial Summary (poem) ... *Chase* 1918
- Centennial World Cup ... *Tarchuk* 1888
- Charan Khehra ... *Mason* 1506
- Child care ... *Pannu* 1916-17
- Chris Muller ... *Miller, R.* 1081
- City of Edmonton Archives ... *Blakeman* 745
- CKUA Radio ... *Tougas* 907
- Community learning campus at Olds College ... *Marz* 1835
- Community schools ... *MacDonald* 369
- Conflict in Sudan ... *Swann* 1341
- Construction labour trades ... *Mason* 209-10
- Crop production insurance changes ... *Oberle* 698
- Cystic fibrosis ... *Lougheed* 1577-78
- Deaths of RCMP officers ... *VanderBurg* 91
- Definition of marriage ... *Hinman* 1153; *Morton* 698
- Democratic renewal ... *Mather* 956
- Discovery of oil in Turner Valley ... *Morton* 1527
- Domestic violence handbook ... *Jablonski* 1918
- Dorothy McDonald ... *Johnston* 1628
- Dorothy Pacquette ... *Backs* 652
- Economic development in northern Alberta ... *Danyluk* 804-05
- Edmonton City Centre Airport ... *Pastoor* 1527-28
- Edmonton Eskimos ... *Backs* 1888; *Lukaszuk* 1743-44
- Edmonton Public Schools ... *Mather* 1080-81
- Edson trial ... *Knight* 1672
- Education Week ... *Flaherty* 1032; *Lindsay* 955; *Rodney* 1032
- Edwin Parr education awards ... *Ady* 1786
- Electricity deregulation ... *Tougas* 1127
- Emergency preparedness ... *Mitzel* 1151-52
- Endangered Species Conservation Committee ... *Strang* 1605
- Enron activities in Alberta ... *MacDonald* 1834-35, 1969

Members' Statements (2005) (Continued)

Environmental sustainability ... *Eggen* 1033
 Ethical investments ... *Miller, R.* 294
 Events attended by Member for Calgary-Varsity ...
 Chase 1152, 1341–42
 Family Doctor Week ... *Johnson* 1969
 Federal/provincial relations ... *Hinman* 1714
 Finola Hackett ... *Lougheed* 907
 First Session of the first Alberta Legislature ... *Shariff*
 1605–06
 Fly for a Cure fundraiser ... *Miller, R.* 1313
 Food bank usage ... *Oberle* 1888
 Foothills Country Hospice Society ... *Groeneveld*
 2014–15
 Forest Lawn high school awards night ... *Cao* 1968
 Forum for Young Albertans ... *Danyluk* 1126
 Foster parents ... *Mather* 1715
 Freedom to Read Week ... *Blakeman* 25–26
 Gaming as a source of revenue ... *Chase* 1744–45
 Glendale elementary school ... *Johnston* 1126–27
 Governing in the public interest ... *Swann* 1606
 Governor General's awards for excellence in teaching
 Canadian history ... *Morton* 2015–16
 Grant MacEwan College learning centre ... *Lukaszuk*
 1505
 Great Kids awards ... *Cao* 368
 Hank Williams First Nation ... *Oberle* 1341
 Health care system ... *Pannu* 1205
 Health sciences ambulatory learning centre ... *Lukaszuk*
 1032–33
 Heckling in the Legislative Assembly ... *Swann* 535–36
 High school CPR program ... *Johnson* 535
 Historical preservation in Wetaskiwin ... *Johnson* 1836
 Ian Seright ... *Amery* 982
 Infrastructure spending ... *Taylor* 535
 International Day for Tolerance ... *Agnihotri* 1673
 International Day of Disabled Persons ... *Lougheed*
 2054
 International Education Week ... *Johnson* 1673
 International students ... *Cao* 1786
 International Women's Day ... *Ady* 92; *Blakeman* 92
 Ken Fearnley ... *MacDonald* 858
 Kevin Robins ... *Rogers* 2016
 Kindred House ... *Mather* 1451
 Kristen Hedley ... *Griffiths* 1204
 Lakeside Packers labour dispute ... *Martin* 1630
 Leah Halliday ... *Marz* 1258
 Leduc/Grimma partnership ... *Rogers* 955–56
 Legislature committees structure ... *Backs* 733–34
 Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie ... *Chase* 209;
 Ducharme 208–09
 Liberation of the Netherlands ... *VanderBurg* 1312–13
 Lieutenant Governor of Alberta arts awards ... *Tarchuk*
 1606
 Linda-Rae Carson ... *Miller, R.* 2016
 Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park ... *Lukaszuk* 982
 Long-term care in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne ... *VanderBurg*
 1395
 Loretta Van Brabant ... *Miller, R.* 698
 Marie Geddes ... *Blakeman* 1577
 Mark Heinrichs ... *Mitzel* 1450
 Market value assessments ... *Taylor* 461–62
 Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts ... *Taylor*
 983

Members' Statements (2005) (Continued)

Memorial to fallen RCMP officers ... *VanderBurg* 1835
 Métis Week ... *Danyluk* 1672
 Midwifery services ... *Elsalhy* 1313; *Pannu* 1313–14
 Movable oil sands strategy ... *Eggen* 1714–15
 MLA invitations to public events ... *Elsalhy* 1744
 Motorcycle exhibition at Reynolds-Alberta Museum ...
 Johnson 1450
 Mountain of Heroes Foundation ... *Rodney* 293
 Multiple Sclerosis ... *Lougheed* 1257
 Municipal excellence awards ... *Rogers* 1835–36
 National child care strategy ... *Pannu* 621
 National Child Day ... *Danyluk* 1714
 National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence
 against Women ... *Jablonski* 2053–54
 National Forest Week ... *Oberle* 1257
 National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week ...
 Mitzel 805
 National Social Work Week ... *Shariff* 209
 National Soil Conservation Week ... *Danyluk* 906
 National Volunteer Week ... *Strang* 906
 National Wildlife Week ... *Danyluk* 734
 Northlands Park ... *VanderBurg* 1080
 Nursing Week ... *Blakeman* 1395; *Danyluk* 1152
 Old Strathcona Foundation ... *Pannu* 734
 Order of Canada awards ... *Jablonski* 1743
 Ottewell community patrol ... *MacDonald* 1258
 Parent Link Centres ... *Danyluk* 462
 Participation of women in politics ... *Blakeman* 856
 Petroleum industry ... *Cao* 1526–27
 Police recruitment and training centre ... *Pastoor* 1127
 Political reform ... *Mason* 699
 Pope Benedict XVI ... *Lukaszuk* 857–58
 Positive influence on teachers ... *Haley* 1504–05
 Postsecondary tuition fees ... *Pannu* 1889
 Prevention of bullying ... *Lindsay* 1715
 Prevention of family violence ... *Jablonski* 1629–30
 Prevention of youth violence ... *Agnihotri* 1578
 Pride Rainbow project ... *Taylor* 651
 Private Braun Scott Woodfield ... *Johnston* 1917
 Problem gambling ... *Tougas* 1888–89
 Progressive Conservative convention ... *Oberle* 651
 Project Discovery ... *Rogers* 734
 Proliferation of drug abuse ... *Jablonski* 25
 Protection of Children Abusing Drugs legislation ...
 Jablonski 697–98, 956; *Mather* 745
 Public education stressors ... *Chase* 1506
 Public health care ... *Pannu* 1127
 Raymond Comets/Cardston Lady Cougars ... *Hinman*
 956–57
 Reclamation of contaminated sites ... *Swann* 1969
 Registered apprenticeship program ... *Johnson* 983
 Remembrance Day ... *Backs* 1629
 Resource revenues ... *Mason* 1787
 Respect for women in politics ... *Miller, R.* 1606–07
 Respect for women in politics, point of order request re
 ... *Abbott* 1607; *Speaker, The* 1607
 Ritske and Immigje Veenstra ... *Marz* 1340
 Rotary International ... *Miller, R.* 25
 Royal Alberta Museum ... *Lindsay* 1505
 Royal Alexandra Hospital volunteers ... *Bonko* 1204–05
 Rural development ... *Griffiths* 1126
 Rural tourism conference ... *Johnson* 368
 Sara Renner / Thomas Grandi ... *Tarchuk* 733

Members' Statements (2005) (Continued)

- School closures ... *MacDonald* 982–83; *Martin* 806
 The Speaker's 26th anniversary as an MLA ... *Marz* 1743
 Stollery Children's Hospital ... *Ducharme* 956
 Strathcona Cadet Tatoo ... *Lougheed* 1313
 Student leadership conference ... *Marz* 1527
 Sue Moleski ... *Tarchuk* 620–21
 SuperNet learning resources ... *DeLong* 2015
 Team Ferby ... *Ducharme* 650–51; *Lougheed* 651–52
 Teen drug addiction ... *Jablonski* 621
 Terry Fox ... *Johnston* 698–99
 Town of High River ... *Groeneveld* 1257
 A tribute to fathers ... *DeLong* 1394
 A tribute to mothers ... *Griffiths* 1340–41
 U of A and Keyano College partnership ... *Danyluk* 1394–95
 U of A and Northern Lakes College partnership ... *Goudreau* 1394
 U of A sports achievements ... *Taft* 620
 University of Alberta Augustana campus ... *Johnson* 1917–18
 University of Calgary centennial projects ... *Brown* 1744
 Value of education ... *Cao* 651
 Veterans Memorial Highway ... *Cao* 1629
 Victor Ringuette ... *Ducharme* 744
 Vietnamese Cao Daist Society ... *Pham* 1672–73
 Vocational education ... *Flaherty* 1787
 Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment ... *Knight* 368–69
 Wes Montgomery ... *Liepert* 983
 Wetaskiwin and Camrose Leaders of Tomorrow awards ... *Johnson* 1152
 Women's Global Charter for Humanity ... *Blakeman* 1527
 World AIDS Day ... *Miller, B.* 2054–55
 World No Tobacco Day ... *Rodney* 1577
 World Schools Debating Championship ... *Cao* 91
 World's longest hockey game ... *Lougheed* 24–25
 www.opentheborder.com ... *Tarchuk* 461
 Youth Advisory Panel ... *Danyluk* 1889
 Youth Secretariat ... *Danyluk* 857
- Members' withdrawal from debate**
 Children's Services estimates ... *Liepert* 1051
- Members' withdrawal of remarks**
 General remarks ... *Oberg* 623; *Pham* 1457; *Stevens* 623; *Zwozdesky* 1343
 Regarding Member for Calgary-Montrose ... *Blakeman* 1454, 1456; *Taft* 1454, 1456
 Regarding Minister of Finance ... *Hancock* 985; *MacDonald* 421; *Speaker, The* 988; *Taft* 421, 985
 Regarding unparliamentary language ... *Martin* 1036; *Mason* 1082; *Speaker, The* 1036, 1082
- Memorandum of understanding for co-operation and development, Alberta/Northwest Territories**
 See *Alberta/Northwest Territories memorandum of understanding for co-operation and development*
- Memorial garden on Legislature grounds**
 See *Legislature grounds, Memorial garden for Hon. Lois Hole on*
- Memorial service for RCMP officers**
 See under *Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

Mental Health Act

- Change from danger model to a treatment model ... *Blakeman* 903; *Evans* 903

Mental Health Board

- See *Alberta Mental Health Board*

Mental health innovation fund

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1464; *Evans* 205, 1458, 1465; *McClellan* 748

Mental Health Patient Advocate

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP608/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717

Mental health services

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1464; *Evans* 1459, 1465; *Fritz* 878; *Swann* 1468

Mental health services—Children

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1464; *Evans* 205, 903, 1458

Mental health services—Funding

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 903, 1840; *Evans* 271, 903, 1841

Mental health services—Prisoners

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1438, 1785; *Miller, B.* 1785

Mental health services—Young offenders

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1433, 1438

Mental health strategy

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 903; *Evans* 903

Mentally disabled

- Diversion away from correctional facilities See

Diversion (Mentally disabled offenders)

- Funding for programs for: Letter re (SP820/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2056

- Involvement with police ... *Cenaiko* 1784–85; *Miller, B.* 1784–85

- Workers with, salary levels of, letters re (SP798/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 2018

Mentally disabled—Housing

- Group homes, locating of ... *Backs* 646; *Fritz* 646

Mentally disabled offenders diversion programs

- See *Diversion (Mentally disabled offenders)*

MERFs

- See *Market enhancement recovery funds*

Merit Contractors Association

- General remarks ... *Backs* 1170; *Martin* 1170, 1171
 Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... *Martin* 647, 1136–37

Merritt, Mr. Martin

- See *Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)*

Metering, Net

- See *Net metering (Electricity)*

Meth labs

- See *Crystal methamphetamine (Drug), Manufacturing of (illegal meth labs)*

Methamphetamine (Drug)

- See *Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)*

Methane

- Presence at proposed school site in Calgary's Battalion park area ... *Liepert* 2051–52; *Oberg* 2051–52

Methane extraction, Coal bed

- See *Coal bed methane extraction*

Methane from manure as fuel source

- General remarks ... *Horner* 1222, 1389; *Johnson* 1389

Métis

Definition of ... *Brown* 850; *Calahasen* 850
 General remarks ... *Her Majesty* 1617

Métis–Self-government

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836; *Eggen* 840

Métis and the judicial system

See **Aboriginal people and the judicial system**

Métis children–Education

Funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 166, 1261, 1264

General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 123

Métis hunting/fishing rights

Justice dept. involvement with ... *Stevens* 1233

Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... *Abbott* 45; *Bonko* 928, 929; *Brown* 850; *Calahasen* 43–44, 45, 89, 323–24, 574, 836, 840, 842, 850, 1124–25, 1574; *Coutts* 89, 165, 246, 615–16, 926, 931, 936; *Danyluk* 1672; *Eggen* 840, 932, 933; *Hinman* 841–42; *Lougheed* 573–74; *Morton* 246, 615–16; *Oberle* 89, 936; *Tougas* 43, 165, 323, 838, 1124–25, 1574

Provincial agreement re, 2004: Letter re (SP117/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 171

Provincial agreement re, 2004: Letters re (SP102 & 199/05: Tabled) ... *Tougas* 128, 328

Provincial agreement re, 2004: Letters re (SP307, 327, 335/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 699, 776, 807

Provincial agreement re, 2004: Petition tabled re (SP797/05) ... *Tougas* 2017

Provincial agreement re, 2004: Public meeting re ... *Miller, R.* 257

Métis hunting/fishing rights–Ontario

Provincial agreement re ... *Coutts* 165; *Tougas* 165

Métis issues

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 1781, 1829; *Jablonski* 1829

Métis Nation of Alberta Association

Consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ... *Calahasen* 45, 323, 574, 842, 850; *Danyluk* 1672

Métis self-government

See **Métis–Self-government**

Métis settlements

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 835; *Danyluk* 1672

Métis Settlements Accord Implementation Act

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 835

Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal

Funding for ... *Calahasen* 835

Métis Settlements General Council

Consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ...

Calahasen 45, 323, 574, 842, 850; *Danyluk* 1672

Funding for, ends 2007 ... *Calahasen* 835, 840; *Eggen* 840; *Tougas* 837

Métis Week

Statement re ... *Danyluk* 1672

Metro High School, Edmonton

General remarks ... *Oberg* 738

Mexico/U.S./Canada free trade

See **North American free trade agreement**

Microsoft Corporation

Centres of excellence establishment at NAIT/SAIT ... *Doerksen* 1369

School software licences purchase by provincial government ... *Hancock* 286–87; *Ouellette* 323; *Taylor* 286–87, 322–23; *Zwozdesky* 322–23

Microsoft Corporation (Continued)

School software licences purchase by provincial government: Documents re (M27/05: Accepted) ... *Blakeman* 1159; *Flaherty* 1159; *Zwozdesky* 1159

Midwife, International Day of the

See **International Day of the Midwife**

Midwifery Health Disciplines Committee

Consumer representative on ... *Blakeman* 1146, 1462; *Evans* 1146

Midwives and midwifery

Financial support for: Letter re (SP175/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 327

Inclusion under health care plan ... *Blakeman* 1146, 1462; *Elsalhy* 1313; *Evans* 1146, 1464; *Pannu* 1314

Inclusion under health care plan: Mock invoices re (SP443/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 1507–08

Integration of midwifery services evaluation report ... *Blakeman* 1146, 1462; *Evans* 1146

Integration of midwifery services evaluation report (SP405/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1259

New Democrat position regarding (SP409/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1314

Package of information regarding midwifery (SP408/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1314

Statement re ... *Elsalhy* 1313; *Pannu* 1313–14

Midwives and midwifery–Fees

General remarks ... *Pannu* 1314

Military forces, Canadian

See **Canadian armed forces**

Milk River school

See **Schools–Milk River**

Milk River (Town)

Access to Alberta SuperNet ... *Hinman* 761–62; *Ouellette* 762

Loan rate from Capital Finance Authority ... *Hinman* 900; *McClellan* 900

Mill rates (Education funding)

See **Property tax–Education levy**

Mill Woods gang-related killing

See **Edmonton Police Service, Mill Woods gang-related killing investigation**

Mill Woods hospital

See **Grey Nuns Hospital**

Mill Woods pro traditional marriage rally

See **Marriage, Pro traditional marriage rally, Mill Woods**

Millet school

See **Griffith Scott middle school, Millet**

Milliken, Hon. Peter (Speaker, Federal parliament)

See **Speaker (Federal parliament)–Rulings and statements, Toews bill, March 2001 news media briefing re**

Minable oil sands strategy–Environmental aspects

General remarks ... *Bonko* 1829; *Boutilier* 1829, 1915, 1963–64; *Coutts* 1964; *Knight* 1963–64; *Melchin* 1829–30, 1913–14, 1964; *Swann* 1913

Pembina Institute news release re (SP602/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1716

Statement re ... *Eggen* 1714–15

Minimum floor price for cattle

See **Cattle–Prices, Minimum floor price**

Minimum wage

See **Wages–Minimum wage**

- Minimum wage earners**
See Low-income families
- Minister of Finance, comments re**
See Dept. of Finance, Minister of, comments re
- Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development dept. (Federal)**
See Dept. of Human Resources and Skills Development (Federal)
- Ministerial Advisory Committee on Renewed Funding Framework**
See School boards, Funding: Renewed funding framework advisory committee
- Ministerial Statements (2005)**
 Border closure to Canadian beef ... *Hinman* 16; *Klein* 14–15; *Mason* 15–16; *Speaker, The* 16; *Taft* 15
 Centennial medallions ... *Klein* 3; *Taft* 3
 Deaths of RCMP officers ... *Cenaiko* 40; *Miller, B.* 40; *Pannu* 41
 Edmonton Eskimos ... *Hinman* 1909; *Klein* 1908; *Mason* 1908–09; *Taft* 1908
 Mactaggart Art Collection ... *Hancock* 946–47; *Hinman* 947; *Taft* 947
 National Day of Mourning ... *Backs* 1118; *Cardinal* 1118; *Martin* 1118
 RCMP drug raid near Mayerthorpe ... *Cenaiko* 16; *Miller, B.* 16
 Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day ... *Hinman* 1248; *Mar* 1247–48; *Pannu* 1248; *Taft* 1248
- Minister's council on roles, responsibilities and resources (Municipal Affairs)**
See Provincial/Municipal Council on Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century, Minister's
- Minister's Forum on advanced education**
See Education, Postsecondary, Access to, affordability review to improve
- Ministers (Provincial government)**
 Cooling-off period for, following resignation ... *Elsalhy* 2011; *Klein* 2011
 Number of ... *Elsalhy* 773, 953; *Hinman* 761, 762; *MacDonald* 255; *Ouellette* 773, 953; *Pannu* 268
 Random drug tests for ... *Backs* 45; *Cardinal* 45
 Securities Commission, influencing of ... *McClellan* 1880; *Taft* 1880
- Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety, Council of**
See Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety
- Minority shareholders buyout**
See Corporations—Law and legislation, Conversion to/from unlimited liability corporation, minority dissenting shareholders buyout (Bill 56)
- Miquelon Lake Provincial Park**
 [See also Parks, Provincial]
 General remarks ... *Mar* 250
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 42)**
 First reading ... *Stevens* 1528
 Second reading ... *Stevens* 1580–81
 Committee ... *Marz* 1585
 Third reading ... *Stevens* 1608
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 52)**
 First reading ... *Stevens* 1919
 Second reading ... *Stevens* 1971–72
 Committee ... *Blakeman* 1974
 Third reading ... *Hancock* 2027; *Stevens* 2027
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057
- Misericordia Community Hospital**
 Upgrades to ... *Evans* 1839
- Missing health records**
See Medical records—Confidentiality, Missing health records situation
- Missions, Trade—Southeast Asia**
See Trade missions—Southeast Asia
- MLA AISH Review Committee report**
See Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Review of (2005): Report (SP389/05: Tabled)
- MLA committee on Justice Summit**
See Alberta Summit on Justice (1999), MLA committee re
- MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation**
 Report ... *Miller, R.* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188
- MLA committee to review ambulance service in Alberta (2002): Report**
See Ambulance service, Review of, 2002: Report
- MLA committee to review correctional services**
See Correctional Services MLA Review Committee
- MLA committee to review health care financing: Report**
See Medical care—Finance, MLA committee to review: Report
- MLA committee to review low-income programs**
See Low-income families, MLA committee review of programs for
- MLA committee to review policing in Alberta: Report**
See Police, MLA committee review of: Report
- MLA committee to review the Labour Relations Code**
See Labour Relations Code, Review of: MLA committee re
- MLA committee to review workers' compensation report**
See Workers' Compensation Board, MLA committee to review: Report
- MLA Pension Plan**
See Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan
- MLA Policing Review Committee: Report**
See Police, MLA committee review of: Report
- MLA Post-secondary Funding Review Committee (2000)**
 Report ... *Hancock* 278
- MLA Review Committee on Secondary Suites, report**
See Rental housing, Secondary suites: MLA Review Committee on, report
- MLA Task Force on Continuing Care Health Service and Accommodation Standards**
See Extended care facilities, MLA committee to review (2005)
- MLA Task Force on Funding and Revenue Generation: Report**
See Medical care—Finance, MLA committee to review: Report

MLAs

See **Members of the Legislative Assembly**

MNAA

See **Métis Nation of Alberta Association**

Mobility of labour

See **Labour mobility**

Modern language teachers

See **Teachers, Modern languages**

Modern languages—Teaching

See **Languages—Teaching**

Modified AISH program for assisted care facilities residents

See **Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Modified AISH program for assisted care facilities residents**

Modular/portable classrooms

See **Portable/modular classrooms**

Modular schools

See **Schools—Construction, Modular schools**

Moleski, Sue

Statement re ... *Tarchuk* 620–21

Molesting of children—Prevention

See **Child abuse—Prevention**

Monarchy, British

General remarks ... *Klein* 1617

Montana court injunction to keep border closed to live cattle

See **Cattle—Export—United States, Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed**

Montana tie lines (electric power)

See **Electric power lines, Tie lines with B.C. and Montana**

Montgomery, Mr. Euell (Former MLA)

Tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 13

Montgomery, Mr. Wes

Statement re ... *Liepert* 983

Montgomery junior high school, Calgary

Physical condition ... *Oberg* 459; *Swann* 459

Montreal conference on climate change

See **Climate change, International conference on, Montreal, November 2005**

Morgan, Tonika

Statement re ... *Blakeman* 1527

Mortgage fraud

Caused by marijuana grow ops problems ... *Cenaiko* 1417, 1430

General remarks ... *Lund* 803, 1416, 1419, 1425; *Miller, B.* 1424; *Ouellette* 804

Government advisory committee re ... *Lund* 1416

Mortgages—Interest rates

Reduction by Heritage Fund monies ... *Hinman* 971

Mosquito control programs

Funding for ... *Renner* 1449; *Rogers* 1449

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1120–21; *Evans* 1120; *Haley* 1120

MOSS—Environmental aspects

See **Minable oil sands strategy—Environmental aspects**

Mothers

Statement re ... *Griffiths* 1340–41

Motions, Debatable

See **Resolutions (2005)**

Motions other than Government Motions

Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... *Blakeman* 624–25; *Hancock* 624; *Martin* 625; *Stevens* 624

Motions under Standing Order 30

See **Emergency debates under Standing Order 30**

Motions under Standing Order 40

See **Emergency motions under Standing Order 40**

Motor vehicle accident injuries

See **Traffic accident injuries**

Motor vehicle chop shops

See **Automobile chop shops**

Motor vehicle traffic accident injuries, Prenatal

See **Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)**

Motor vehicles, Commercial—Inspection—Alberta/B.C. border

See **Trucks—Inspection—Alberta/B.C. border**

Motor vehicles, Farm

See **Farm vehicles**

Motor vehicles, Rebuilt

See **Automobiles, Written off/rebuilt**

Motor vehicles—Registration

See **Automobiles—Registration**

Motor vehicles—Seizure

See **Automobiles—Seizure**

Motorcycle driver licensing

Review of ... *Lindsay* 954; *Oberg* 954

Motorcycle exhibition

See **Reynolds-Alberta Museum, Motorcycle exhibition: Statement re**

Mount Royal College

Capacity of ... *Hancock* 864; *Taylor* 862

Capital expenditures ... *Brown* 1571; *Hancock* 1571

Construction projects at ... *Oberg* 1088

Infrastructure needs ... *Chase* 796; *Hancock* 796

Request for university status ... *Ady* 851; *Hancock* 24, 483, 851, 860, 864; *Liepert* 24; *Pannu* 1794; *Taylor* 483

Request for university status: CMAA letter re (SP391/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 1205

University transfer programs ... *Hancock* 864; *Taylor* 862

Mountain of Heroes Foundation

Statement re ... *Rodney* 293

Mountain pine beetles—Control

See **Pine beetles—Control**

Mouris, Caroline

Statement re ... *Mitzel* 805–06

MRI

See **Magnetic resonance imaging**

MRI clinics, Private

See **Magnetic resonance imaging clinics, Private**

MS Awareness Month

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 1313

Statement re ... *Lougheed* 1257

Muller, Mr. Chris

Statement re ... *Miller, R.* 1081

Multi-Corp Inc.

See under new name **Zi Corporation**

Multiple sclerosis

Statement re ... *Lougheed* 1257

Multiple sclerosis—Research

Contributions by hang-gliding fundraiser to ... *Miller, R.* 1313

Muni university training program

See **Municipal excellence program**

Municipal Affairs, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Municipal Affairs**

- Municipal assessment**
See Assessment
- Municipal bylaws**
 Pawnshop provision of client information to police, requirement for ... *Cenaiko* 416; *Johnson* 416; *Lund* 416
- Municipal capital projects—Finance**
See Capital projects, Municipal—Finance
- Municipal Debenture Interest Rebate Program**
 General remarks ... *Renner* 1320
- Municipal debt—Fort McMurray**
See Debts, Public (Municipal government)—Fort McMurray
- Municipal Districts and Counties, Alberta Association of**
See Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
- Municipal elections—Calgary**
See Elections, Municipal—Calgary
- Municipal Energy Efficiency Assistance program**
See ME First! (Municipal Energy Efficiency Assistance) program
- Municipal excellence awards**
 Statement re ... *Rogers* 1835–36
- Municipal excellence program**
 General remarks ... *Renner* 1320
- Municipal finance**
[See also Provincial/municipal fiscal relations]
 Deferred maintenance costs ... *Chase* 1801–02
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 412; *Renner* 848; *Taft* 848
 Government grants ... *Renner* 1320
 Government grants, unconditional grants ... *Agnihotri* 1327; *Martin* 1325
 Revenue generating tools: Legislation re (Bill 28) ... *Renner* 252
- Municipal finance—Crowsnest Pass area**
 Government grants ... *Cenaiko* 1250, 1305; *Miller, B.* 1249–50, 1305–06; *Renner* 1306
 Letter from Solicitor General re (SP411/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1315
- Municipal Government Act**
 Crowsnest Pass regulation ... *Cenaiko* 1250, 1305; *Miller, B.* 1249–50, 1305–06; *Oberg* 1305; *Renner* 1306
 Property tax exemptions for Canadian Legions ... *Abbott* 323; *Renner* 323
 Review of ... *Martin* 1325; *Renner* 1321–22; *Taft* 1321
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)**
 First reading ... *Renner* 252
 Second reading ... *Backs* 473; *Blakeman* 386–87, 470–71; *Bonko* 475; *Chase* 386; *Eggen* 472–73; *Elsalhy* 473–74; *Flaherty* 472; *Mason* 474–75; *Renner* 383–84; *Taft* 384–86; *Tougas* 471
 Committee ... *Agnihotri* 632; *Bonko* 563–64, 631–32; *Elsalhy* 632–33; *Renner* 562–63; *Taft* 563
 Third reading ... *Backs* 891; *Martin* 891; *Renner* 636, 891
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
 General remarks ... *Flaherty* 1264
 Public consultation re ... *Elsalhy* 1326; *Miller, R.* 1327–28
- Municipal Government Board**
 Assessment services ... *Martin* 1325
 Role of ... *Renner* 1321
- Municipal governments**
 Agriculture infrastructure, provincial assistance re ... *Horner* 1849
 Autonomy of ... *Renner* 849; *Taft* 848–49
 General remarks ... *Renner* 1320
 Legislative authority ... *Renner* 1321–22; *Taft* 1321
 Role of ... *Renner* 1321–22; *Taft* 1321
- Municipal/provincial fiscal relations**
See Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
- Municipal/provincial relations**
See Provincial/municipal relations
- Municipal relations**
See Intermunicipal relations
- Municipal rural infrastructure program, Canada/Alberta**
See Canada/Alberta municipal rural infrastructure program
- Municipal sponsorship program**
 General remarks ... *Renner* 1320
- Municipal taxation**
See Taxation, Municipal
- Municipal transit—Finance**
See Public transit—Finance
- Municipal wildfires assistance program**
See Forest fires—Control—Municipal areas, Assistance program re
- Murdoch Manor, Calgary**
 Security concerns ... *Cenaiko* 616; *Fritz* 616; *Taylor* 616
- Murrell, John (Playwright)**
 Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Award recipient ... *Tarchuk* 1606
- Museums, Provincial—Finance**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1012; *Mar* 1472–73
- Music Alberta**
 Closing of ... *Agnihotri* 1571; *Mar* 1571
- Mustard Seed Street Ministry**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1341
- My Most Memorable Teacher: 100 Stories Celebrating 100 Years of Alberta Teaching Excellence (Book)**
See Teachers, University of Calgary book about (My Most Memorable Teacher ...)
- Myocardial infarction in firefighters**
See Heart attacks in firefighters
- NADC**
See Northern Alberta Development Council
- NAFTA**
See North American free trade agreement
- NAIT**
See Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
- NAMIT**
See Marijuana growing operations, Northern/southern investigative teams re
- Nanotechnology, National Institute for**
See National Institute for Nanotechnology
- Narraway-Kakwa watershed**
See Kakwa-Narraway watershed
- Nation-wide scholarship program (Centennial gift)**
See Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program
- National Addictions Awareness Week**
 General remarks ... *Tougas* 1888
- National Arts Centre, Ottawa**
 Alberta Scene arts festival ... *Blakeman* 1477; *Eggen* 1478

National Cattlemen's Beef Association (U.S.)

Discussions with, re opening border to live cattle ...
Horner 43, 290, 949, 1210, 1215

National child benefit

General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129; *Zwozdesky* 1827

National child care initiative

See Daycare centres—Finance, National program for

National Child Day

Statement re ... *Danyluk* 1714

National critical infrastructure protection strategy

See Infrastructure, Critical, National protection strategy re

National Day of Healing and Reconciliation

Program (SP504/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 1608

National Day of Mourning (Work-related injuries/deaths)

Statement re ... *Backs* 1118; *Cardinal* 1118; *Martin* 1118

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

Statement re ... *Jablonski* 2053–54

National daycare funding program

See Daycare centres—Finance, National program for

National emergency response system

See Disaster relief, National response system re

National Energy Board

Future energy supply projections ... *MacDonald* 1155

National Forest Week

Statement re ... *Oberle* 1257

National Gallery of Canada

Alberta artwork donated to ... *Ady* 1738–39; *Mar* 1739

National Hockey League

Out-of-province player levy ... *Mar* 1473, 1479

National immunization program

Federal funding for ... *Evans* 271

National Institute for Nanotechnology

General remarks ... *Backs* 1376; *Doerksen* 1044, 1373; *Elsalhy* 1371

National Meat Association (U.S.)

General remarks ... *Horner* 290

National memorial service for RCMP officers

See under Royal Canadian Mounted Police

National Nursing Week

See Nursing Week

National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week

Statement re ... *Mitzel* 805

National Public Relations Calgary Inc.

Government advertising contract ... *MacDonald* 1103

National securities regulator

See Securities regulator, National

National Social Work Week

Statement re ... *Shariff* 209

National Soil Conservation Week

Statement re ... *Danyluk* 906

National Volunteer Week

Statement re ... *Strang* 906

National Wildlife Area, Canadian Forces Base Suffield

See Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area

National Wildlife Week

Statement re ... *Danyluk* 774

Native children, Welfare of

See Child welfare, Aboriginal children

Native friendship centres

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 839

Native issues

See Aboriginal issues

Native land claims

See Aboriginal land claims

Native people and the judicial system

See Aboriginal people and the judicial system

Native peoples—Policing

See Aboriginal police services

Native self-government

See Aboriginal peoples—Self-government

Natural gas—Prices

See Gas, Natural—Prices

Natural gas—Royalties

See Gas, Natural—Royalties

Natural gas contracts, Residential

Plain language requirement ... *Speech from the Throne* 9

Natural gas in coal

See Coal bed methane extraction

Natural gas industry

See Gas industry

Natural gas pipelines—Alaska/Northwest Territories thru Alberta

See Gas pipelines—Alaska/Northwest Territories thru Alberta

Natural gas-produced electric power

See Electric power, Natural gas-produced

Natural gas rebates

For commercial operations ... *Melchin* 1146; *Mitzel* 1146

General remarks ... *Klein* 1911; *Melchin* 909, 1670; *Oberg* 1800; *Zwozdesky* 1725

Renewal of ... *Melchin* 1146; *Mitzel* 1145–46

Natural resources

Access issues (surface disturbances) ... *Melchin* 910

Inventory of ... *Boutilier* 1040; *Swann* 1037

Value-adding re ... *Danyluk* 531–32; *Melchin* 532, 909

Natural Resources Conservation Board

AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion approval ...
Boutilier 1027; *Coutts* 1027; *Swann* 1027

Appeals process: NRCB advisors as representatives of companies during ... *Bonko* 1251–52; *Coutts* 1252

Board governance review report ... *Bonko* 1740; *Coutts* 1740

Chief operating officer ... *Coutts* 1740

Confined feeding operations regulation ... *Bonko* 1252; *Coutts* 1252, 1740

Confined feeding operations regulation, review of ...
Coutts 1252

Role of ... *Boutilier* 1049

Staffing levels ... *Bonko* 1740; *Coutts* 1740

Natural resources revenue

Forecasting of ... *Eggen* 914; *Martin* 919; *Melchin* 909, 915; *Miller, R.* 960

General remarks ... *Chase* 1086; *Martin* 920; *Mason* 968; *Melchin* 908–09, 910

Relation to gaming revenues ... *Chase* 1283; *Tougas* 1279

Statement re ... *Mason* 1787

Use for budget purposes ... *Elsalhy* 966; *Hancock* 868; *Klein* 1621; *McClellan* 747, 961, 1622, 1667; *Miller, R.* 959–60; *Morton* 1667; *Taft* 1621

- Natural resources revenue** (*Continued*)
 Use for budget purposes: Legislation re (Bill 37) ...
McClellan 775; Zwozdesky 775
 Volatility of ... *McClellan 1667; Morton 1667*
- Natural Resources Transfer Agreement**
 First Nations hunting/fishing rights under, Blais court case re ... *Calahasen 842*
- NCBA**
See National Cattlemen's Beef Association (U.S.)
- Neighbourhood patrols**
See Police, Neighbourhood patrols
- Nelson, Jennie**
See Extended care facilities, Death of resident in (Jennie Nelson)
- Nelson, Sandra (President)**
See Warner hockey school for girls
- Net income stabilization account (Farm income program)**
 General remarks ... *Horner 297*
- Net metering (Electricity)**
 General remarks ... *Hinman 1426*
 Motion 510: Marz ... *Abbott 1766–67; DeLong 1767, 1769; Eggen 1765–66, 1768; Groeneveld 1765; Horner 1767; MacDonald 1764, 1766; Marz 1763–64, 1766, 1769; Melchin 1768; Swann 1767, 1769; VanderBurg 1767*
- Netherlands**
 Liberation of, and ties with Canada ... *Speaker, The 1313; VanderBurg 1312–13*
- New Democrat Opposition**
 The Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Agency (Report) (SP636/05: Tabled) ... *Martin 1746; Mason 1746*
 Position on midwifery services (SP409/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu 1314*
 Public hearings re health care system, report *See Medical care, New Democrat opposition public hearings re, report (SP381/05: Tabled)*
 Role in Question Period ... *Blakeman 54; Hancock 56; Mason 55; Pannu 58; Speaker, The 90*
- New York City. Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene**
 Smoke-free workplace legislation: Press release re (SP121/05: Tabled) ... *Mason 171*
- New York International Independent Film and Video Festival**
 Showing of Alberta school produced film ... *Johnston 1126–27*
- New York Times (Newspaper)**
 Article re U.S. private health care system (SP345/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu 908*
- Newell, Dr. Eric (Chair)**
See Environmental Protection Commission
- News media and the justice system**
See Justice system, News media coverage of
- News media coverage of crime**
See Crime, News media coverage of
- News media role at fatality inquiries**
See Fatality inquiries, Role of news media at
- Newton, Mr. Grahame**
See Alberta Securities Commission, Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton): Letter re (SP359/05: Tabled)
- NHL**
See National Hockey League
- Night shift staffing**
See Hours of labour, Working alone regulation
- NINT**
See National Institute for Nanotechnology
- NISA**
See Net income stabilization account (Farm income program)
- Nitrogen fertilizer**
 Natural gas as feedstock for, royalty rebate for: Letter re (SP174/05: Tabled) ... *Taft 327*
- No More Time to Wait (Report)**
See Waiting lists (Medical care), Interim report re (No More Time to Wait) (SP296/05: Tabled)
- Nominee program (Immigration)**
See Immigration, Provincial nominee program
- Non-Smokers' Rights Association**
 Tobacco industry front groups in Canada, statement re (SP821/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen 2056*
- Nonconforming suites, MLA Review committee on**
See Rental housing, Secondary suites: MLA Review Committee on, report
- Nonemergency health care services**
 Definition ... *Evans 1843; Mason 1842*
- Nongroup health benefits**
See Alberta Blue Cross Plan, Nongroup benefits
- Nonprofit organizations**
See Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations
- Nonrenewable resources revenue**
See Natural resources revenue
- Nonsmoking initiatives**
See Smoking–Prevention
- Nonsmoking legislation**
See Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
- NorQuest College**
 English as a Second Language courses ... *Blakeman 866; Hancock 871*
 Partnership agreement with University of Alberta ... *Danyluk 1395*
- North American free trade agreement**
 Border closure to cattle challenge under ... *Horner 289, 290–91, 301; Klein 290; Martin 290; Mitzel 289; Pannu 299–300*
 Private postsecondary educational institutions, funding implications under ... *Pannu 873*
 Sale of electricity under ... *Eggen 1306; Hinman 1425; Melchin 1306*
 Sale of water under ... *Boutilier 530; Hinman 1425; Klein 573; Swann 530, 573*
 Softwood lumber dispute challenge under ... *Stelmach 20, 644, 1626; Strang 644, 1626*
- North Edmonton school**
 Closure ... *Martin 1270, 1722*
- North Red Deer Regional Water Users Group**
 Regional water initiative ... *Jablonski 576; Oberg 576*
- North Saskatchewan River rescue**
 Recognition of ... *Lukaszuk 49–50*
- North Saskatchewan River water diversion**
See Water diversion–North Saskatchewan/Battle River basins
- North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance**
 [See also Water councils]
 Report ... *Boutilier 978*

- North/south trade corridor**
 Funding for ... *Oberg* 1086
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1011
- Northern Alberta Development Council**
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP502/05: Tabled) ...
Calahasen 1608
 Bursary programs ... *Hancock* 1883; *Hinman* 841
 Bursary programs: Northern student supplement ...
Hancock 1883
 Funding for ... *Calahasen* 835; *Tougas* 837
 General remarks ... *Danyluk* 837, 843
 Recognition of former executive director (Tom
 Baldwin) ... *Danyluk* 251
 Relationship with Sustainable Resource Development
 dept. ... *Bonko* 843; *Danyluk* 844
 Role of ... *Danyluk* 844
 Youth apprenticeship program ... *Cardinal* 1135;
Hancock 982, 1882; *Hinman* 1272; *Zwozdesky* 1267
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology**
 Centre of excellence for small manufacturers ...
Doerksen 1369
 Input into high school vocational/trades courses ...
Bonko 1267; *Zwozdesky* 1269
 Takeover of Fairview College: Recognition of ...
Goudreau 325
 Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment fund
 See **Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy
 endowment fund**
- Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium**
 Alberta Order of Excellence recipients, display of ...
Klein 1108
 Auditor General's recommendation re ... *Agnihotri*
 1475; *Mar* 1473, 1476
 General remarks ... *Bonko* 1009
 Renovations ... *Agnihotri* 305; *Blakeman* 1477; *Chase*
 1481; *Mar* 324, 1473, 1484; *McClellan* 749-50,
 1480
- Northern Alberta Post-Secondary Institution Society**
 See **Alberta-North; Northern Alberta Post-
 Secondary Institution Society**
- Northern corridor study**
 See **Transportation, Interprovincial- Alberta/British
 Columbia, Northern corridor study re**
- Northern development**
 Statement re ... *Bonko* 843; *Calahasen* 835, 836, 837,
 839; *Danyluk* 804-05, 836-37, 843, 844; *Tougas*
 838
- Northern Development, Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and
 Development**
 See **Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern
 Development**
- Northern Development Ministers Forum
 (Federal/provincial)**
 Alberta participation ... *Calahasen* 836
- Northern Forum (International ministers' meetings)**
 General remarks ... *Calahasen* 836
- Northern Lakes College**
 Role in postsecondary education system ... *Hancock*
 1574, 1795
 Transition program to University of Alberta programs ...
Danyluk 1395
 Transition program to University of Alberta programs:
 Statement re ... *Goudreau* 1394
- Northern Lights Health Region**
 Abortion services ... *Evans* 853
- Northern Lights Health Region (Continued)**
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP141/05: Tabled) ... *Evans*
 252
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP623/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk,*
The 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Funding ... *Evans* 271
 Magnetic resonance imaging unit ... *Chase* 576; *Evans*
 576
- Northern living allowance**
 See **Collective bargaining-Teachers-Fort McMurray,
 Agreement: Northern allowance provision**
- Northern residence tax deduction**
 See **Tax incentives, Northern residence tax deduction**
- Northern student supplement**
 See **Northern Alberta Development Council, Bursary
 programs: Northern student supplement**
- Northern Lights Transmission**
 Power lines from Alberta to California ... *Pastoor* 1181
- Northlands**
 See **Edmonton Northlands**
- Northwest Territories/Alberta memorandum of
 understanding for co-operation and development**
 See **Alberta/Northwest Territories memorandum of
 understanding for co-operation and development**
- Norwegian Government Petroleum Fund**
 General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 966; *McClellan* 967
- Notwithstanding clause**
 See **Constitution Act, 1982, Opting out provisions**
- Nova Scotia gaming policy report**
 See **Gaming industry-Nova Scotia, Policy re, report
 on**
- NRCB**
 See **Natural Resources Conservation Board**
- NRTA**
 See **Natural Resources Transfer Agreement**
- Nurse practitioners**
 General remarks ... *Evans* 1461; *McClellan* 1464
 Regulation changes re (Bill 7) ... *Evans* 52; *Mitzel* 240
- Nurses**
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1395
 Scope of practice, change to ... *Swann* 1468
- Nurses, Licensed practical**
 Extensive use of, in long-term care facilities ... *Chase*
 1467
 Medication duties ... *Blakeman* 1121; *Evans* 1121
- Nurses-Education**
 East Central Health and Augustana campus project re ...
Johnson 1917; *Lukaszuk* 1505
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469
- Nurses-Supply**
 [See also **Health workforce planning**]
 General remarks ... *Evans* 1461
- Nursing homes-Inspection**
 General remarks ... *Klein* 1334; *Mason* 1334
- Nursing homes-Staffing**
 Shortages: Impact on medication levels for residents of
 ... *Evans* 207-08; *Pastoor* 207-08
 Shortages: Letter re (SP179/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman*
 327
 Shortages: Petition tabled re (SP489/05: Tabled) ...
Blakeman 1579
- Nursing homes-Standards**
 General remarks ... *Klein* 1334; *Mason* 1334

Nursing Homes Act

Review of standards under ... *Evans* 614; *Pastoor* 614

Nursing Week

Statement re ... *Blakeman* 1395; *Danyluk* 1152

Nutrition programs in schools

See **School nutrition programs**

Oberg agreement

See **Foreign workers, Temporary, Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated)**

Obesity in children

Reduction of, through physical activity in schools ...

Flaherty 416; *Zwozdesky* 416–17, 1028, 1966

School programs re ... *Flaherty* 1966–67; *Zwozdesky* 1966–67

Obstructive pulmonary disease initiative

See **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease initiative**

Occupational health

See **Workers' health**

Occupational health and safety inspections

See **Workplace safety inspections**

Occupational safety

See **Workplace safety**

Occupational Therapists, Alberta Association of Registered

See **Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists**

Occupational training

See **Employment training programs**

Off-highway vehicles

Access to Ghost-Waiporous recreation area ... *Chase* 1601; *Coutts* 1252; *Mar* 1601; *Tarchuk* 1252

Access to public lands ... *Coutts* 694, 1573; *Groeneveld* 1573

Off-site road levies

See **Subdivision of land, Off-site road levies for**

Offenders, Aboriginal

See **Prisoners, Aboriginal**

Offenders, Rehabilitation of

See **Rehabilitation of criminals**

Offenders, Violent

See **Criminals, Violent**

Offenders–Mental health services

See **Mental health services–Prisoners**

Offenders–Safety aspects

See **Prisoners–Safety aspects**

Offenders' diversion programs

See **Diversion (Aboriginal offenders); Diversion (Mentally disabled offenders)**

Office of the Premier

Current chief of staff (Rod Love) remuneration (Q23/05: Defeated) [*See also Love, Rod*]; *Chase* 814; *Miller, R.* 814–15; *Zwozdesky* 814

Former chief of staff (Peter Elzinga) remuneration (Q22/05: Defeated) ... *Chase* 814; *Klein* 814; *Miller, R.* 814; *Zwozdesky* 814

Former chief of staff (Steve West) severance package ... *McClellan* 292; *Miller, R.* 292

Former chief of staff (Steve West) severance package: E-mail re (SP125/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 210

Premier's accountability ... *Klein* 1623; *Mason* 1623

Premier's remarks to Queen Elizabeth II on Her address to the Assembly ... *Klein* 1617

Premier's television addresses ... *Klein* 1107, 1109; *Mason* 1108; *Miller, R.* 1106–07

Office of the Premier (Continued)

Premier's travel details, posting of, on government website ... *Klein* 1109; *Mason* 1108

Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005 ... *Klein* 1623; *MacDonald* 1670; *Mason* 1623, 1787

Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005: Centennial gifts to Canadians announced during ... *Ady* 1738; *Hancock* 1738; *Mar* 1739

Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005: Discussion of private health care plans during ... *Klein* 1666; *Mason* 1666

Premier's use of chartered aircraft for Ottawa health conference, 2004 ... *Chase* 160–61; *Klein* 160–61; *Ouellette* 161

Office space, Government

See **Government office space**

Office supplies, Government

See **Government office supplies**

Officers of the Legislative Assembly

Definition of ... *Speaker, The* 987–88

Definition of, re *Beauchesne* 493 ... *Blakeman* 986; *Martin* 987

Reports by, released to media, point of privilege re ... *Mason* 1636–37; *Speaker, The* 1637–38, 1719–20; *Stevens* 1637

Offices of the Legislative Assembly

See **Auditor General; Chief Electoral Officer; Ethics Commissioner; Information and Privacy Commissioner; Legislative Assembly Office; Ombudsman**

Official Opposition

Leader's speech to National Club in Toronto, invitation to (SP804/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2018

Press release re Auditor General ... *Klein* 1333

Press release re Auditor General (SP414/05: Tabled) ... *Klein* 1342; *Zwozdesky* 1342

Role in Question Period ... *Blakeman* 53–54; *Hancock* 56–57; *Speaker, The* 90

Ogden rail yard contamination

See **CP Rail, Ogden rail yards, Calgary: Toxic materials runoff from**

OHVs

See **Off-highway vehicles**

OIE

See **World Organisation for Animal Health**

Oil

General remarks ... *Melchin* 908–09

Upgrading of See **Energy industry, Value-adding/upgrading increase in**

Oil–Export

Through port of Prince Rupert ... *Oberg* 905

Oil–Export–United States

Impact of U.S. energy bill on ... *Knight* 1310; *Melchin* 1310

Oil–Prices

Forecasting of ... *Eggen* 914; *Elsalhy* 966; *Martin* 919; *McClellan* 962, 1667; *Melchin* 909, 915, 921; *Miller, R.* 960, 962

General remarks ... *McClellan* 747

Oil–Royalties

[*See also Royalty structure (Energy resources)*]

From disputed aboriginal lands ... *Calahasen* 1503; *Stevens* 1600; *Tougas* 1503, 1600

Oil–Royalties (*Continued*)

- General remarks ... *Mason* 1787
- Investment into research and development ... *Chase* 1377
- Relation to gaming revenues ... *Chase* 1283; *Tougas* 1279

Oil and gas leases

- Revenue from ... *Melchin* 913

Oil and gas leases–Public lands

- Revenue from *See* **Grazing lands, Public, Revenue from oil and gas leases on**

Oil discovery–Turner Valley

- Statement re ... *Morton* 1527

Oil-field contractors/Aboriginal peoples issues

- See* **Energy industry–Crown lands, Aboriginal issues re**

Oil industry

- Use of water supplies ... *Eggen* 914; *Melchin* 916

Oil industry–Safety aspects

- See* **Energy industry–Safety aspects**

Oil recovery methods

- Carbon dioxide sequestering ... *Eggen* 1042; *Melchin* 743, 912
- Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research ... *Backs* 1376; *Boutilier* 21; *Doerksen* 1374; *Eggen* 1374
- Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research into, tax incentives re ... *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911–12
- General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1039–40
- Research into ... *Doerksen* 1369
- Research into: Funding for ... *McClellan* 749
- Royalty tax reductions to encourage ... *Melchin* 912

Oil revenue

- See* **Natural resources revenue**

Oil sands bitumen

- See* **Bitumen**

Oil sands development

- See* **Tar sands development**

Oil sands development–Royalties

- See* **Heavy oil–Royalties**

Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority

- See* **Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority**

Oil shales–United States

- Research re ... *Melchin* 1310

Oil well drilling industry–Public lands

- EUB permits required for ... *Bonko* 951, 957; *Boutilier* 849, 902–03; *Coutts* 902; *Eggen* 902–03; *Klein* 849; *Melchin* 643, 951; *Swann* 643, 849

Oil wells

- Temporary suspension of maximum rate limitations, letter re (SP679/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1837

Oil wells, Abandoned

- See* **Well sites, Abandoned**

Old age and employment

- See* **Age and employment**

Old Strathcona Foundation

- Statement re ... *Pannu* 774

Older workers

- See* **Age and employment**

Olds Agricultural Society

- Gaming revenue to ... *MacDonald* 1289

Olds College

- Community learning campus ... *Marz* 1835
- Community learning campus, funding for ... *Hancock* 1790

Olds College (*Continued*)

- Partnership agreement with University of Alberta ... *Danyluk* 1395

Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (Constituency)

- Member for, elected as Deputy Speaker ... *Amery* 2; *Clerk, The* 3; *Marz* 2, 4; *McFarland* 2; *Shariff* 2; *Speaker, The* 2, 3

Olympic Winter Games, Vancouver/Whistler (2010)

- Alberta tourism opportunities re ... *Dunford* 1013

Ombudsman

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP11/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 27
- Annual report, 2004-05 (SP655/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 1788
- Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... *MacDonald* 254; *Miller, R.* 257
- Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... *Webber* 269
- Introduction of ... *Speaker, The* 5
- Letter to Yvonne Nadeau re concerns with Dept. of Community Development (SP289/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 622–23
- Long-term care residents' abuse, report on ... *Evans* 613; *Klein* 613; *Mason* 613
- Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... *Abbott* 764; *Chair* 751
- Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... *McClellan* 747

Ombudsman, Utilities consumer

- See* **Utilities consumer ombudsman**

Ombudsperson (Long-term care residents)

- General remarks ... *Klein* 1386; *Taft* 1386

On-line provision of government information

- See* **Government information, On-line provision of**

One Window initiative (Government information access)

- See* **Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)**

Oneway long-term care facility

- See* **Extended care facilities–Oneway**

Ontario/federal fiscal relations

- See* **Federal/Ontario fiscal relations**

Ontario handling of justice system and the media

- See* **Justice system, News media coverage of, Ontario solution**

Ontario Métis hunting agreement

- See* **Métis hunting/fishing rights–Ontario, Provincial agreement re**

Ontario school closure policy

- See* **Schools–Closure–Ontario, Policy document re**

Ontario Securities Commission

- Conflict of interest and disclosure guidelines (SP747/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1970

OPEC

- See* **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries**

Open the Border website

- See* **Cattle–Export–United States, Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Web site re**

Opportunity Company, Alberta

- See* **Alberta Opportunity Company**

Opposition, Official

- See* **Official Opposition**

Opposition (Parliamentary procedure)

- Members of, excluded from public events, statement re ... *Elsalhy* 1744

Optical benefits for seniors

See Alberta seniors benefit program, Optical benefits

Opticians Association, Alberta

See Alberta Opticians Association

Opting out of medicare

See Medical care, Opting out of national plan for

Opting out provisions

See Constitution Act, 1982, Opting out provisions

Optometrists, Alberta College of

See Alberta College of Optometrists

OQP

See Oral Question Period (2005); Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)

Oral Question Period (2005)

AAA Cattle Company ... *Boutilier* 1027; *Coutts* 1027; *Swann* 1027

Aboriginal issues ... *Calahasen* 1781, 1829, 1912; *Jablonski* 1829, 1912; *Tougas* 1781

Abortion services ... *Evans* 853; *Pannu* 853

Access to information on Enron ... *Klein* 247; *MacDonald* 246–247

Access to medical services ... *Agnihotri* 1077–78; *Evans* 1077–78

Access to postsecondary education ... *Danyluk* 981; *Hancock* 981–82, 1830–31; *Taylor* 1830–31

Access to the Future Fund ... *Hancock* 1078–79; *Knight* 900–01; *McClellan* 901; *Taylor* 1078–79

Accessibility of medical education ... *Hancock* 1965; *Taylor* 1965

Achievement testing ... *Flaherty* 1255; *Zwozdesky* 1255

Advanced education tuition costs ... *Hancock* 20; *Taylor* 20

Affordability of postsecondary education ... *Hancock* 649; *Taylor* 649

Affordable housing in Fort McMurray ... *Danyluk* 87; *Fritz* 87; *Oberg* 87

Affordable housing in the north ... *Danyluk* 1125; *Fritz* 1125

Affordable supportive living program ... *Fritz* 2009–10; *VanderBurg* 2009

Age Care Ltd. ... *Blakeman* 460; *Evans* 460

Agricultural assistance ... *Danyluk* 1624–25; *Goudreau* 979; *Horner* 122, 488, 979, 1624–25; *Marz* 488; *McFarland* 122

Agricultural income stabilization program ... *Horner* 119–20, 367; *Mitzel* 119; *VanderBurg* 367

Agricultural research initiatives ... *Doerksen* 1390; *Horner* 1389–90; *Johnson* 1389–90

Aid for disabled persons ... *Cao* 1524; *Fritz* 1524

Airport rental costs ... *Danyluk* 362; *Oberg* 362, 1390–91; *Rogers* 1390–91

Alberta office in Washington ... *Shariff* 289; *Stelmach* 289

Alberta Securities Commission ... *Mason* 1707–08; *McClellan* 1707–08

Alberta/U.S. border crossings ... *Dunford* 646; *Mitzel* 646; *Oberg* 646

Allen Gray Continuing Care Centre ... *Agnihotri* 1499; *Evans* 1499–1500

Ambulance services ... *Evans* 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–245, 245; *Klein* 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202, 245; *Mason* 19, 83–84, 202, 245; *Ouellette* 244; *Renner* 243; *Taft* 17, 19, 202, 243–44

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Animal health surveillance ... *Doerksen* 1885; *Horner* 1885; *Johnson* 1885

Anthony Henday ring road ... *Lukaszuk* 1713; *Oberg* 1713

Aon Consulting Inc. ... *Evans* 1627, 1670–71; *Pannu* 1626–27, 1670–71

Applewood Park Community Association ... *Agnihotri* 1335, 1742–43; *Mar* 1335, 1442, 1497, 1525–26, 1742–43; *Taft* 1442, 1497, 1526

Application process for seniors' benefits ... *Fritz* 619; *Pham* 618–19

Apprenticeship training ... *Cardinal* 980; *Hancock* 201–202, 248, 980; *Taylor* 201–02, 247–48, 979–80

Arts funding ... *Agnihotri* 692, 977, 1571, 2053; *Mar* 692, 977, 1571, 2053; *McClellan* 2053

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped ... *Amery* 1254–55; *Fritz* 22, 1149–50, 1254–55; *Pastoor* 22, 1149–50

Attempted child abductions ... *Cenaiko* 486–87; *Pham* 486

Automobile insurance ... *McClellan* 1669; *Miller, R.* 1669

Automobile insurance rates ... *Abbott* 412–13; *Ady* 457; *Klein* 900; *Mason* 454–55, 899–90; *McClellan* 86, 363, 412–13, 454–55, 457, 461, 900; *Miller, R.* 86, 362–63, 454; *Taft* 454

Automobile insurance reforms ... *McClellan* 1339–40; *Miller, R.* 1339–40

Avian influenza ... *Coutts* 1780–81; *Haley* 1780; *Horner* 1780

Battle River water strategy ... *Boutilier* 618; *Johnson* 618

B.C. ports strategy ... *Dunford* 319; *Knight* 319

B.C./Alberta transportation issues ... *Danyluk* 772; *Stelmach* 772

Beef marketing ... *Horner* 1498–99; *Mason* 1498–99

Beef recovery strategy ... *Danyluk* 46; *Horner* 46; *Martin* 22; *McClellan* 22–23

Beef slaughter facilities ... *Hinman* 48–49; *Horner* 48–49

Benefits of SuperNet for rural Alberta ... *Danyluk* 853–54; *Evans* 854; *Ouellette* 854

Big Lake natural area ... *Boutilier* 321; *Flaherty* 321; *Mar* 321

Bison grazing on agricultural public land ... *Bonko* 1393; *Coutts* 1393

Boards, commissions, and agencies ... *Klein* 2047–48; *Mason* 2047–48; *McClellan* 2047

Border closure to Canadian beef ... *Snelgrove* 19–20; *Stelmach* 19–20

Border closure to Canadian cattle ... *Hinman* 739; *Horner* 42–43, 290–91, 739–40, 949; *Klein* 290, 739; *Martin* 290; *Mason* 42–43, 949

Border closure to U.S. cattle ... *Haley* 417; *Horner* 417

Bow and Elbow River watersheds ... *Boutilier* 799–800; *Brown* 799–800

Bridge repair and construction ... *Abbott* 803; *Oberg* 803

BSE testing ... *Horner* 414; *VanderBurg* 414

Budget expenditures ... *Chase* 796–97; *Hancock* 796–97; *Zwozdesky* 797

Budget process ... *Klein* 160; *McClellan* 160; *Ouellette* 160; *Taft* 160

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Budget surplus expenditures ... *Evans* 1622; *Hancock* 1621; *Klein* 1621; *McClellan* 1622, 1626; *Miller, R.* 1626; *Oberg* 1621; *Stelmach* 1621; *Taft* 1621–22
 Calgary area road construction ... *Liepert* 166–167; *Oberg* 166–167
 Calgary Catholic School Board funding ... *Ady* 1501; *Zwozdesky* 1501
 Calgary hospitals ... *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309
 Calgary ring road southwest portion ... *Magnus* 1781–82; *Oberg* 1781–82
 Calgary Ward 10 election ... *Renner* 1249, 1333–34; *Taft* 1248–49; *Taylor* 1333–34
 Camrose women's shelter ... *Forsyth* 1200; *Mather* 1200
 Canadian Forest Products Ltd. mill closure ... *Bonko* 123–124; *Coutts* 88; *Dunford* 88–89, 123–124; *Goudreau* 88; *Oberg* 88
 Canadian Natural Resources Limited pipeline leak ... *Boutilier* 1448; *Melchin* 1447–48; *Swann* 1447–48
 Capital grants for major fairs ... *Graydon* 124; *Johnson* 124
 Capital health outpatient residence ... *Evans* 1960; *Horner* 1960; *Klein* 1960–61; *Taft* 1960–61
 Capital investment in schools ... *Martin* 771; *Zwozdesky* 771
 Capital region petrochemical workers ... *Backs* 1443; *Cardinal* 1443; *Melchin* 1443
 Caribou conservation ... *Coutts* 1965; *Strang* 1964–65
 Casino construction ... *Graydon* 1712–13; *Tougas* 1712–13
 Cattle rustling ... *Cenaiko* 1121; *Horner* 1121–22; *Mitzel* 1121
 Centennial Education Savings Plan ... *Hancock* 47–48; *Herard* 47–48
 Centennial gifts to Canadians ... *Ady* 1738–39; *Hancock* 1738; *Mar* 1739
 Centennial hockey challenge ... *Mar* 645; *Snelgrove* 645
 Centennial project funding ... *Agnihotri* 1783; *Mar* 1783
 Centennial projects ... *Agnihotri* 324; *Mar* 324
 Centralized teacher bargaining ... *Flaherty* 1147; *Lukaszuk* 1147–48; *Zwozdesky* 1147–48
 Chartered air travel ... *Chase* 160–161; *Klein* 160–161; *Martin* 979; *Oberg* 979; *Ouellette* 161
 Child and Youth Advocate ... *Forsyth* 1598; *Mather* 1598
 Child care standards ... *Forsyth* 2013; *Mather* 2013
 Child protection ... *Forsyth* 1445; *Mather* 1445; *Stevens* 1445
 Childhood obesity ... *Flaherty* 1966–67; *Zwozdesky* 1966–67
 Children in care ... *Forsyth* 1737; *Mather* 1737
 Children in poverty ... *Forsyth* 1778; *Fritz* 1778; *Taft* 1778
 Children's Services special case review ... *Forsyth* 1500–01; *Mather* 1500–01
 Chiropractic and physiotherapy insurance fees ... *McClellan* 691–92; *Rodney* 691–92
 Class sizes ... *Ady* 977–78; *Oberg* 978; *Zwozdesky* 977–78
 Clean energy incentives ... *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911–12

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Climate change ... *Abbott* 771–72; *Boutilier* 44–45, 365, 1832, 1967–68; *DeLong* 1887; *Doerksen* 1887; *Eggen* 364–65, 1832; *Melchin* 743, 771–72; *Morton* 1967; *Swann* 44; *VanderBurg* 743
 Climate change technology ... *Boutilier* 21–22; *Johnson* 21
 Coal-bed methane ... *Bonko* 1075; *Boutilier* 1202; *Horner* 1075; *Melchin* 1075, 1201–02; *Swann* 1201–02
 Commercial vehicle insurance rates ... *McClellan* 904; *Miller, R.* 904
 Community policing ... *Cenaiko* 952–53, 1201; *Jablonski* 1201; *Martin* 952–53
 Confidentiality of health records ... *Evans* 482; *Taft* 482
 Constitutional referendums ... *Hinman* 1738; *McClellan* 1738
 Construction projects in University Heights ... *Chase* 364; *Oberg* 364
 Contaminated sites cleanup in Calgary ... *Boutilier* 1709–10; *Cao* 1709–10
 Continuing care funding ... *Evans* 1707; *Klein* 1706–07; *Pastoor* 1707; *Taft* 1706–07
 Continuing care review ... *Evans* 1443, 1623; *Fritz* 1624; *Klein* 1442–43; *Pastoor* 1442–43; *Webber* 1623–24
 Continuing care standards ... *Fritz* 2010, 2012–13; *Klein* 2010; *Martin* 2012–13; *Pastoor* 2010
 Contracted employment training ... *Cao* 164–165; *Cardinal* 165
 Cornea transplants ... *Evans* 1601; *VanderBurg* 1601
 Corporate accountability ... *Mason* 1828; *McClellan* 1828
 Corrections officers ... *Cenaiko* 743–44; *Miller, B.* 743; *Stevens* 743–44
 Cougar management ... *Coutts* 769; *Groeneveld* 769
 Courthouse security ... *Cenaiko* 902; *Johnston* 902
 Crime prevention ... *Cenaiko* 1256; *Miller, R.* 1256
 Crime rate reduction ... *Cenaiko* 1671; *Lukaszuk* 1671
 Crop insurance ... *Goudreau* 1570; *Horner* 1570
 Crop production insurance changes ... *Danyluk* 695; *Horner* 695
 Crystal methamphetamine ... *Evans* 1669–70; *Jablonski* 1669–70
 CT scans ... *Blakeman* 365–66; *Evans* 365–66
 Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire ... *Boutilier* 1335–36, 1337–38; *Eggen* 1337–38; *Lougheed* 1335–36
 Daily physical activity in schools ... *Ady* 1027–28; *Zwozdesky* 1028
 Daycare system ... *Forsyth* 85; *Mather* 85
 Death of a patient in long-term care ... *Fritz* 1881–82; *Pastoor* 1881; *Stevens* 1881
 Deerfoot Trail median barriers ... *Oberg* 2011; *Shariff* 2011
 Definition of marriage ... *Hinman* 245–46, 572; *Klein* 245–46, 484, 572; *Mar* 317; *McClellan* 317; *Oberle* 484; *Ouellette* 317–18; *Stevens* 246, 484; *Taft* 317
 Dental assistance for seniors ... *Fritz* 951–52; *Mitzel* 951
 Diploma exam grades ... *Pannu* 164, 168; *Zwozdesky* 164, 168
 Diversified livestock industry ... *Horner* 456; *Prins* 456

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Domestic violence ... *Cenaiko* 1196, 1575–76; *Jablonski* 1575–76; *Miller, B.* 1196–97; *Stevens* 1196–97, 1576

Drug abuse by children ... *Evans* 2048; *Jablonski* 2048

Economic benefits of snowmobiling ... *Dunford* 744; *Rogers* 744

Edmonton City Centre Airport ... *Dunford* 125; *Oberle* 125

Edmonton Police Service investigation ... *Cenaiko* 1504; *Miller, B.* 1503–04; *Stevens* 1504

Edmonton Remand Centre ... *Agnihotri* 855; *Cenaiko* 696, 855; *Mar* 855; *Miller, B.* 695–96

Edmonton Remand Centre assault incident ... *Cenaiko* 1389; *Miller, B.* 1389

Education funding ... *Mather* 1125–26; *Zwozdesky* 1125–26

Education fundraising ... *Flaherty* 1833–34; *Zwozdesky* 1833–34

Education property tax ... *Renner* 798–99; *Rogers* 798–99

Education system ... *Flaherty* 952; *Zwozdesky* 952

Electoral reform ... *Hancock* 1251; *Hinman* 1251

Electrical permits ... *Renner* 904–05; *VanderBurg* 904–05

Electrical transmission system ... *Lougheed* 1446–47; *Melchin* 1447

Electricity billing ... *Klein* 161; *Lund* 161–162; *Mason* 161

Electricity consultant ... *MacDonald* 1307; *Melchin* 1307

Electricity costs ... *Liepert* 291; *Melchin* 291

Electricity deregulation ... *Klein* 118, 1024–25; *MacDonald* 204, 1024–25; *Melchin* 118, 204; *Taft* 118

Electricity exports ... *Eggen* 1306; *MacDonald* 650; *Melchin* 650, 1306

Electricity line between Edmonton and Calgary ... *Abbott* 1831; *Melchin* 1831

Electricity marketing ... *Eggen* 1073–74; *Hinman* 1074; *Klein* 1073–74; *MacDonald* 948–49, 1073, 1119–20; *Mason* 1120; *Melchin* 796, 899, 948–49, 1073, 1119–20; *Taft* 796, 899

Electricity marketing review ... *DeLong* 1075; *Lund* 1075; *Melchin* 1075

Electricity pricing ... *MacDonald* 286; *Melchin* 286

Electricity transmission ... *Lindsay* 903–04; *Melchin* 904

Electricity transmission line capacity ... *Melchin* 649–50; *Oberle* 649

Electronic health record ... *DeLong* 320–21; *Evans* 320–21

Emergency hospital services ... *Evans* 692–93; *Pham* 692–93

Emergency preparedness ... *Lougheed* 207; *Prins* 1251; *Renner* 207, 1251

Employment of children ... *Backs* 1779; *Cardinal* 1779

Energy and Utilities Board ... *Eggen* 575; *Melchin* 575, 1519; *Swann* 1519

Energy efficiency at the University of Calgary ... *DeLong* 696; *Hancock* 696–97; *Oberg* 696

Energy Innovation Network ... *Boutillier* 292; *Doerksen* 292; *Knight* 292; *Melchin* 292

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

English as a Second Language program ... *Amery* 1571–72; *Zwozdesky* 1572

English as a Second Language programs ... *Cao* 1784; *Zwozdesky* 1784

Enron activities in Alberta ... *Elsalhy* 249; *Klein* 286, 1145, 1964; *Lund* 249; *MacDonald* 533, 899, 1144–45, 1196, 1249, 1337, 1912–13, 1964; *Melchin* 249, 286, 360, 533, 899, 1145, 1195–96, 1249, 1337, 1912–13, 1964; *Ouellette* 249; *Taft* 285–286, 360, 1195–96

Environment budget ... *Klein* 768–69; *McClellan* 769; *Swann* 768–69

Environmental protection ... *Horner* 1391; *Melchin* 1391; *Swann* 1391

EPCOR energy bills ... *Lund* 489; *Melchin* 489; *VanderBurg* 489

ESL funding ... *Amery* 949–50; *Zwozdesky* 949–50

Exploitation of children ... *Cenaiko* 206; *Jablonski* 206

Fabry disease ... *Blakeman* 290; *Evans* 290

Fatality inquiries ... *Miller, B.* 414; *Stevens* 414

Federal financial support ... *Abbott* 1392; *McClellan* 1524; *Pastoor* 1523–24; *Stelmach* 1392, 1523–24

Federal gas tax agreement ... *Magnus* 852; *Oberg* 852

Federal/provincial relations ... *Hinman* 1444; *Klein* 1444; *McClellan* 1444

Federal transfer payments ... *Groeneveld* 1503; *Stelmach* 1503

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder ... *Blakeman* 769–70; *Forsyth* 769–70

Film development program ... *Dunford* 322; *Haley* 322; *Mar* 322

Film industry ... *DeLong* 2013; *Dunford* 2013

Financial assistance for youths ... *Cardinal* 363; *Jablonski* 363

First aid and CPR training in schools ... *Lukaszuk* 204–205; *Zwozdesky* 205

First-contract labour arbitration ... *Cardinal* 1711–12; *Martin* 1711–12

First Nations land claims ... *Calahasen* 1503; *Tougas* 1502–03

First Nations participation in Royal visit ... *Calahasen* 1445; *Eggen* 1573; *Mar* 1445, 1573; *Shariff* 1444–45

Flood disaster relief ... *Amery* 1708; *Renner* 1708–09

Food regulations review ... *Evans* 1520; *Snelgrove* 1520

For-profit health care ... *Blakeman* 1569; *Evans* 1569

Foreign and non-union workers ... *Backs* 121–122; *Cardinal* 121–122; *Jablonski* 121

Foreign investments in the energy industry ... *Melchin* 801; *Oberle* 801

Foreign-trained physicians ... *Evans* 1122–23; *Pham* 1122–23

Foreign workers ... *Cardinal* 85–86; *Dunford* 86; *Jablonski* 85–86

Forest fires ... *Coutts* 1393; *Oberle* 1393

Forest sustainability ... *Coutts* 530–31; *Oberle* 530–31

Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... *Boutillier* 485; *Chase* 484–85, 575–76, 1627–28; *Evans* 576; *Klein* 484–85; *McClellan* 576, 1628; *Oberg* 576, 1628; *Renner* 1628

Funding for regional health authorities ... *Evans* 977; *Snelgrove* 976–77

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Funding for youth programs ... *Forsyth* 206–207; *Mather* 206–207

Gambling addiction ... *Evans* 741; *McFarland* 741

Game farming ... *Bonko* 250; *Evans* 319; *Horner* 250, 288, 319; *Klein* 288; *Swann* 288, 319

Gaming Research Institute ... *Graydon* 534; *Tougas* 534

Gaming technology ... *Graydon* 2052; *Tougas* 2052

Gang violence ... *Cenaiko* 1148; *Mather* 1148

Ghost-Waiparous access management ... *Coutts* 1252; *Tarchuk* 1252

Government accountability ... *Elsalhy* 2010–11; *Klein* 2011; *Mason* 1598–99; *McClellan* 1598–99, 2011

Government air travel ... *Eggen* 45–46, 86–87; *Oberg* 45–46, 87

Government aircraft ... *Chase* 18–19, 122–123; *Klein* 18–19, 82; *Oberg* 18–19, 41–42, 122–123; *Taft* 41–42, 82

Government aircraft flight logs ... *Chase* 1518–19; *Elsalhy* 1521; *Lund* 1521–22; *Oberg* 1519, 1521

Government appointments ... *Elsalhy* 1603; *Evans* 1603; *McClellan* 1603; *Ouellette* 1603

Government chartered air travel ... *Mason* 691; *Oberg* 691

Government contracts ... *Elsalhy* 619; *Ouellette* 619

Government efficiency ... *Elsalhy* 773, 953–54; *Hinman* 1599; *Horner* 954; *McClellan* 1599; *Ouellette* 773, 953–54

Government investments ... *McClellan* 120; *Miller, R.* 120

Grade level achievement reporting ... *Griffiths* 1445–46; *Zwozdesky* 1446

Graduated drivers' licences ... *Cenaiko* 1307–08; *Jablonski* 1307–08; *Oberg* 1308

Greenhouse gas emissions ... *Abbott* 485; *Boutilier* 485, 1914–15; *Eggen* 1914–15

Griffith Scott middle school ... *Johnson* 1025–26; *Oberg* 1025–26

Grizzly bear hunt ... *Bonko* 21; *Coutts* 21

Group homes ... *Backs* 646; *Fritz* 646

Growth pressures in Fort McMurray ... *Klein* 527–28; *McClellan* 527; *Taft* 527

GuZoo animal farm ... *Brown* 533–34; *Coutts* 534

Hantavirus ... *Evans* 1522; *Jablonski* 1522

Hazardous material spill at Wabamun Lake ... *Boutilier* 1667–68; *Lindsay* 1668; *McClellan* 1668; *Swann* 1667–68

Health care costs ... *Blakeman* 1782; *Evans* 1782

Health care insurance privatization ... *Evans* 1665–66; *Taft* 1665

Health care operating costs ... *Blakeman* 1915; *Evans* 1915

Health care premiums ... *Klein* 766, 768; *Mason* 768; *McClellan* 766; *Taft* 766

Health care privatization ... *Blakeman* 1666; *Evans* 1145, 1666; *Hancock* 1308; *Klein* 1145, 1666–67; *Mason* 1145, 1666; *Swann* 1308

Health care reform ... *Blakeman* 205; *Evans* 205

Health care staffing ... *Blakeman* 980–81; *Evans* 980–81

Health care utilization ... *Klein* 1706; *Taft* 1706

Health Facilities Review Committee ... *Klein* 1334, 1386–87; *Mason* 1334; *Taft* 1386

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Health reform ... *Klein* 249; *Pannu* 248–249

Health regulations for rural community halls ... *Evans* 248; *Marz* 248

Health Resource Centre ... *Blakeman* 244–245; *Evans* 244–245

Health Resource Centre joint replacements ... *Evans* 644; *Klein* 644; *Mason* 643–44

Health services in Calgary ... *Amery* 533; *Evans* 533

Health services in the north ... *Danyluk* 1339; *Evans* 1339

Health symposium ... *Cao* 1146–47; *Evans* 1123–24, 1147; *Pannu* 1123–24

Health symposium webcast ... *DeLong* 1336; *Evans* 1336; *Ouellette* 1336

High school completion rate ... *Brown* 123; *Zwozdesky* 123

Highway 2A ... *Jablonski* 1962–63; *Oberg* 1963

Highway 13 ... *Johnson* 1448; *Oberg* 1448

Highway 28 ... *Chase* 741; *Oberg* 741; *Zwozdesky* 741

Highway 43 ... *Oberg* 1740–41; *VanderBurg* 1740–41

Highway construction ... *Chase* 1336; *Oberg* 950–51, 1336; *Rogers* 950–51

Highway improvements in northeastern Alberta ... *Danyluk* 1199–1200; *Oberg* 1199–1200

Highway safety ... *Knight* 44; *Oberg* 44

Highways 2, 7 and 547 interchange ... *Groeneveld* 575; *Oberg* 575

Home schooling ... *Abbott* 1255–56; *Zwozdesky* 1255–56

Homeless shelters ... *Fritz* 366; *McClellan* 366; *Pastoor* 366

Horizon oil sands project ... *Klein* 647; *Martin* 647

Horse-racing industry ... *Graydon* 901, 976; *Tougas* 901, 976

Horse-racing renewal program ... *Graydon* 770–71; *Tougas* 770–71

Hospital space in Calgary ... *Blakeman* 644–45; *Evans* 644–45

Hunting regulations for youths ... *Coutts* 2050; *Morton* 2050

Hydropower purchase arrangements ... *MacDonald* 363; *Melchin* 363–64

Impacts of oil sands expansion ... *Boutilier* 201; *Klein* 201; *Oberg* 200–201; *Swann* 201; *Taft* 200

Impoverished Albertans ... *Evans* 1832; *Forsyth* 1832; *Mather* 1831–32

Infrastructure needs in Fort McMurray ... *Chase* 612; *Klein* 612; *Oberg* 612

Infrastructure spending ... *Forsyth* 900; *Hinman* 900; *Oberg* 900

Inquiry into deaths of RCMP officers ... *Cenaiko* 41; *Stevens* 41, 43; *Taft* 41; *VanderBurg* 43

Insurance costs for nonprofit sector ... *McClellan* 1031; *Miller, R.* 1031

Insurance rates for small and medium-sized businesses ... *McClellan* 854; *Miller, R.* 854

Integrated land management ... *Coutts* 648; *Groeneveld* 648; *Melchin* 648–49

International airport vicinity protection ... *Renner* 577; *Rogers* 577

International delegations ... *Johnson* 773; *Stelmach* 773

Interpretation services in courts ... *Cao* 1502; *Stevens* 1502

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Investments in tobacco companies ... *Blakeman* 82–83; *Klein* 82–83; *McClellan* 82–83
 Jetsgo bankruptcy ... *DeLong* 204; *Lund* 204
 Joint fire and ambulance services ... *Blakeman* 482–83; *Evans* 482–83
 Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd. ... *Evans* 642–43; *Taft* 642–43
 Kindergarten programs ... *Martin* 1028–29; *Zwozdesky* 1029
 Kyoto climate change agreement ... *Griffiths* 1334–35; *Horner* 1334–35
 Labour force resources ... *Cardinal* 1915–16; *Goudreau* 1915–16
 Labour negotiations with teachers ... *Flaherty* 203; *Zwozdesky* 203–204
 Labour Relations Board ... *Backs* 2008–09, 2048–49; *Cardinal* 2009, 2048–49; *Klein* 2008–09; *Mason* 2009; *Taft* 2008
 Lakeland College ... *Hancock* 1574; *Lougheed* 1574–75; *Oberg* 1575
 Lakeside Packers labour dispute ... *Backs* 1625; *Cardinal* 1625; *Klein* 1625
 Learning assessment ... *Rogers* 1782–83; *Zwozdesky* 1782–83
 Leaseholders on agricultural public land ... *Bonko* 1449; *Coutts* 1449; *Horner* 1449
 Legal aid ... *Miller, B.* 1709; *Stevens* 1709
 Legislature environs ... *Oberg* 1518; *Taft* 1518
 Library funding ... *Agnihotri* 367; *Mar* 367–68
 Live hog exports ... *Horner* 614; *Prins* 613–14; *Stelmach* 614
 Long-term care ... *Fritz* 1886–87; *Martin* 1886
 Long-term care facilities ... *Fritz* 797; *Klein* 797, 850; *Mason* 797, 849–50
 Long-term care facility standards ... *Blakeman* 1498; *Evans* 1497–98; *Fritz* 1388, 1397, 1497; *Klein* 1388, 1391–92, 1443–44; *Martin* 1391–92; *Mason* 1388, 1443–44; *McClellan* 1388; *Pastoor* 1497–98
 Long-term care funding ... *Evans* 2049–50; *Pastoor* 2049–50
 Long-term care standards ... *Blakeman* 1121; *Evans* 614, 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1962; *Fritz* 614, 1200–01; *Jablonski* 1124; *Johnson* 1074; *Klein* 1962; *Martin* 1077; *Mason* 1962; *Pannu* 1200–01; *Pastoor* 614
 Lubicon Band land claim ... *Stevens* 1600–01; *Tougas* 1600
 Lunchtime supervision in schools ... *Lukaszuk* 1913; *Zwozdesky* 1913
 Lynnview Ridge ... *Boutilier* 84, 529–30; *Cao* 84, 529
 Major Alberta projects ... *Cardinal* 531; *Danyluk* 531–32; *Dunford* 531; *Melchin* 532
 Market surveillance administrator ... *MacDonald* 161; *Melchin* 161
 Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ... *Klein* 18, 83, 119; *MacDonald* 23, 83; *McClellan* 42; *Melchin* 18, 23–24, 118–119; *Miller, B.* 42; *Stevens* 42; *Taft* 18, 118–19
 Medication for seniors ... *Evans* 207–208, 415; *Pastoor* 207–208, 415
 Mental health strategy ... *Blakeman* 903; *Evans* 903

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Mental illness and the criminal justice system ... *Cenaiko* 1784–85; *Miller, B.* 1784–85
 Métis hunting rights ... *Abbott* 45; *Brown* 850; *Calahasen* 43–45, 89, 323–24, 574, 850, 1124–25, 1574; *Coutts* 89, 165, 246, 615–16, 850; *Lougheed* 573–74; *Morton* 246, 615–16; *Oberle* 89; *Tougas* 43, 165, 323, 1124–25, 1574
 Midwifery services ... *Blakeman* 1146; *Evans* 1146
 Movable oil sands strategy ... *Bonko* 1829; *Boutilier* 1829, 1913–14, 1963–64; *Coutts* 1964; *Knight* 1963–64; *Melchin* 1829–30, 1964; *Swann* 1913
 Minimum wage ... *Backs* 164, 612–13; *Cardinal* 164, 613
 Minimum wage rate ... *Cao* 980; *Cardinal* 980
 Ministry of seniors financial statements ... *Fritz* 1253; *Pastoor* 1252–53
 Missing computer tapes and microfiches ... *Elsalhy* 1026; *Klein* 1026; *McClellan* 1026
 Missing health records ... *Blakeman* 617; *Evans* 483–84, 529, 617; *Klein* 484, 529; *Mason* 528–29; *Ouellette* 617; *Pannu* 483–84
 Mortgage fraud ... *Elsalhy* 803–04; *Lund* 803; *Ouellette* 804
 Motorcycle driver licensing ... *Lindsay* 954; *Oberg* 954
 Mount Royal College ... *Ady* 851; *Hancock* 24, 483, 851; *Liepert* 24; *Taylor* 483
 Mountain pine beetle ... *Bonko* 801–02; *Coutts* 801–02
 Mountain pine beetle control ... *Bonko* 740; *Coutts* 247, 740, 1742; *Oberle* 247, 1742
 Municipal grants to Crowsnest Pass ... *Cenaiko* 1305; *Miller, B.* 1305–06; *Oberg* 1305; *Renner* 1306
 Municipal infrastructure program ... *McFarland* 1253; *Oberg* 1253; *Renner* 848–49, 1253; *Taft* 848–49
 Municipal infrastructure spending ... *Chase* 1199; *Oberg* 1199
 Municipal tax exemptions ... *Abbott* 323; *Renner* 323
 National child care initiative ... *Ady* 1388–89; *Forsyth* 1076–77, 1309–10, 1388–89; *Morton* 1076–77; *Pannu* 1309–10
 Natural gas prices ... *MacDonald* 1670; *Melchin* 1670
 Natural gas rebates ... *Melchin* 1146; *Mitzel* 1145–46
 Natural Resources Conservation Board ... *Bonko* 1740; *Coutts* 1740
 Natural Resources Conservation Board appeals ... *Bonko* 1251–52; *Coutts* 1252
 Nina Louise Courtepatte ... *Forsyth* 1390; *Mather* 1390
 Nonsmoking legislation ... *Blakeman* 119; *Klein* 119
 North American trade ... *Horner* 289; *Mitzel* 288–89; *Stelmach* 288
 Nutrition programs for schools ... *Amery* 1739–40; *Taft* 1778–79; *Zwozdesky* 1739–40, 1779
 Nutrition programs in schools ... *Forsyth* 1827–28; *McClellan* 1827; *Taft* 1827; *Zwozdesky* 1827
 Office of the Chief Internal Auditor ... *Klein* 1024; *McClellan* 1024; *Taft* 1024
 Oil sands bitumen export ... *Mason* 571–72; *Melchin* 572
 Oil sands development ... *Danyluk* 203; *Melchin* 203
 Oil sands employment ... *Backs* 571; *Cardinal* 571; *McClellan* 571
 Oil well drilling on Crown land ... *Bonko* 902, 951; *Boutilier* 615, 802–03, 849, 902–03; *Calahasen* 615; *Coutts* 902; *Eggen* 902–03; *Klein* 486, 849;

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Oil well drilling on Crown land (Continued) ... *Melchin* 615, 643, 802, 951; *Stevens* 486; *Swann* 485–86, 615, 643, 802–03, 849

Opening of Alberta office in Washington ... *Pannu* 415; *Stelmach* 415

Oversize/overweight trucking permits ... *Oberg* 2010; *Snelgrove* 2010

Parks and protected areas ... *Bonko* 167; *Chase* 852–53, 1601, 2012; *Klein* 2012; *Mar* 167, 852–53, 1601–02, 2012

Payday loans ... *DeLong* 365; *Lund* 365

Pheasant hunting ... *Coutts* 162–163; *Johnson* 162–163

Photoradar ... *Abbott* 614; *Oberg* 614–15

Physical activities in schools ... *Flaherty* 416; *Zwozdesky* 416–17

Physiotherapy insurance fees ... *Blakeman* 954; *Evans* 954; *McClellan* 954

Physiotherapy services ... *Backs* 292; *Cardinal* 292; *Ouellette* 292

Police recruitment and training centre ... *Cenaiko* 1123, 1602; *Hancock* 1123; *McFarland* 1602; *Pastoor* 1123

Police service investigation ... *Cenaiko* 411–12; *Mason* 411–12

Policing resources ... *Cenaiko* 800–01; *Pannu* 800–01

Policing review ... *Cenaiko* 162; *Miller, B.* 162

Policing services ... *Cenaiko* 167, 205–206, 574, 1884–85, 1916; *Eggen* 167; *Miller, B.* 574, 1884–85, 1916; *Pannu* 205–206; *Stevens* 1916

Policing services in Crowsnest Pass ... *Cenaiko* 1250; *Miller, B.* 1249–50

Pork exports ... *Abbott* 293; *Horner* 293

Postsecondary education costs ... *Hancock* 361; *Taylor* 361

Postsecondary education federal funding ... *Cao* 1306–07; *Hancock* 1306–07

Postsecondary education funding ... *Klein* 767; *Taylor* 766–67

Postsecondary education review ... *Brown* 1571; *Hancock* 1202–03, 1254, 1571, 1624; *Ouellette* 1203; *Taylor* 1202–03, 1254, 1624

Postsecondary opportunities for youth ... *Danyluk* 1882–83; *Hancock* 1882–83

Premier's travel ... *Klein* 1623; *Mason* 1623

Prevention of wildfires ... *Coutts* 47; *Strang* 47

Private health services ... *Blakeman* 1622; *Evans* 1622; *Klein* 1622; *Mason* 1622

Private postsecondary institutions ... *Hancock* 2014; *Prins* 2014

Private/public partnerships ... *Chase* 645, 905, 1883; *Evans* 646; *Martin* 616–17; *McClellan* 616–17; *Oberg* 617, 645, 905, 1883–84

Private security legislation review ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Private vocational schools ... *Hancock* 1602–03; *Pannu* 1602–03

Problem gambling ... *Graydon* 487; *Tougas* 487

Project Kare ... *Cenaiko* 901–02, 1523; *Johnston* 1523; *Lukaszuk* 901

Protection for persons in long-term care ... *Evans* 613; *Klein* 613; *Mason* 613

Protection of children abusing drugs ... *Forsyth* 413; *Mather* 413

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Protection of children abusing drugs legislation ... *Hancock* 737; *Klein* 737; *Taft* 737

Protection of personal information ... *Cenaiko* 416; *Elsalhy* 1885–86; *Johnson* 416; *Johnston* 413; *Lund* 416, 1886; *Ouellette* 413

Provincial achievement tests ... *Flaherty* 648; *Zwozdesky* 648

Public Accounts committee ... *Eggen* 1783–84; *Hancock* 1784

Public land management ... *Coutts* 1573–74; *Groeneveld* 1573

Public service pension appeals ... *McClellan* 291–292; *Miller, R.* 291–292

Railway container terminals ... *Danyluk* 905; *Oberg* 905–06

Reclamation of oil well sites ... *Boutilier* 166; *Melchin* 166; *Swann* 166

Recreational sport fishing ... *Coutts* 855; *Jablonski* 854–55

Red Deer River water transfer ... *Boutilier* 1785; *Jablonski* 1785

Reforestation ... *Bonko* 1575; *Coutts* 1575

Regional water and sewer systems ... *Jablonski* 576; *Oberg* 576

Regulated rate option for electricity ... *Lindsay* 647; *Melchin* 647

Regulatory reform ... *Morton* 1150; *Ouellette* 1150

Resource revenues ... *McClellan* 1667; *Morton* 1667

Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... *Elsalhy* 1710; *Klein* 244; *Miller, R.* 1710; *Ouellette* 244, 1710; *Taft* 244

Road safety ... *Cenaiko* 458; *Herard* 458; *Oberg* 458

Rod Love Consulting Inc. ... *Klein* 643; *Taft* 643

Room and board for forest firefighters ... *Bonko* 618; *Coutts* 618

Rural development strategies ... *Evans* 289; *Oberg* 289; *Ouellette* 289; *Pastoor* 289

Rural police services ... *Cenaiko* 770; *Strang* 770

Sale of liquor to minors ... *Graydon* 1029; *Rodney* 1029

Sale of Social Housing Corporation land ... *Fritz* 1502, 1519–20, 1568–69, 1569–70; *Martin* 1502; *Mason* 1519–20, 1569–70; *Pastoor* 1568–69

School board consultations ... *Herard* 165–166; *Zwozdesky* 165–166

School closures ... *Eggen* 1447; *Flaherty* 693, 851, 1446, 1570; *MacDonald* 694, 767; *Martin* 742, 1522–23; *Oberg* 1446, 1570–71; *Zwozdesky* 693, 694, 742, 767, 851, 1446, 1447, 1522–23, 1570

School construction ... *Lukaszuk* 1078; *Oberg* 1078; *Zwozdesky* 1078

School construction estimates ... *Chase* 1310–11; *Oberg* 1310–11

School construction in Calgary ... *Ady* 1198–99; *Cao* 1026–27; *Oberg* 1026–27, 1198–99, 1572–73; *Taylor* 1572

School construction in Edmonton ... *Lukaszuk* 1197–98; *Oberg* 1197–98

School construction in southwest Calgary ... *Liepert* 2051–52; *Oberg* 2051–52

School fees ... *Ady* 1525; *Zwozdesky* 1525

School funding formula ... *Flaherty* 1522; *Oberg* 1522

School infrastructure ... *Oberg* 459; *Swann* 459

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

School infrastructure funding ... *Flaherty* 1739;
Zwozdesky 1739

School infrastructure needs in Calgary ... *Cao* 1914;
Zwozdesky 1914

School operation and maintenance funding ... *Abbott*
1030; *Oberg* 1030–31

School utilization ... *Flaherty* 84, 576–77; *Lukaszuk*
84–85; *MacDonald* 738; *Oberg* 84–85, 577, 738;
Zwozdesky 738

School utilization formula ... *Flaherty* 120–121;
MacDonald 124–25; *Oberg* 121; *Zwozdesky*
124–125

Second-language instruction ... *Goudreau* 1603–04;
Hancock 1604; *Zwozdesky* 1603–04

Securities Commission ... *Hancock* 1197, 1250–51,
1304–05; *Klein* 612, 1333, 1961, 2046; *MacDonald*
1597; *Martin* 487–88, 532, 1148–49, 1197, 1250;
Mason 1910–11; *McClellan* 410–11, 453, 487–88,
528, 532–33, 570–71, 612, 690, 898–99, 947–48,
974–75, 1024, 1072–73, 1119, 1144, 1148–49,
1332–33, 1568, 1597, 1664–65, 1880–81, 1909–10,
1911, 1961, 2046–47; *Melchin* 772, 1197; *Miller, R.*
528, 772; *Taft* 410, 453, 528, 570–71, 612, 690,
898–99, 947–48, 974–75, 1024, 1072–73, 1118–19,
1144, 1304–05, 1332–33, 1568, 1597, 1664–65,
1880–81, 1909–10, 1961, 2046–47

Securities Commission chairman ... *McClellan*
1736–37; *Taft* 1736–37

Securities Commission investigation ... *Mason*
1737–38, 1779–80, 1882; *McClellan* 1737–38,
1779–80, 1827, 1882; *Taft* 1827

Security in seniors' apartment buildings ... *Cenaiko* 616;
Fritz 616; *Taylor* 616

Seizure of vehicles in prostitution-related offences ...
Cao 120; *Cenaiko* 120, 456; *Oberg* 120, 456–57;
Taylor 456–57

Self-managed care for seniors ... *Evans* 617; *Shariff*
617

Senate appointments ... *Oberle* 455; *Stelmach* 455

Senate reform ... *Morton* 287–88; *Stelmach* 287–88

Seniors' benefit program ... *Fritz* 163–164, 1387–88;
Lukaszuk 163; *Pastoor* 1387–88

Seniors' property taxes ... *Amery* 2049; *Fritz* 2049;
McClellan 2049

Services for immigrants ... *Cardinal* 1833; *Hancock*
1833; *Lukaszuk* 1832–33; *Stelmach* 1833

Sex trade workers ... *Cenaiko* 1339; *Fritz* 1338;
Pastoor 1338–39

Shell chemical plant vapour release ... *Boutilier* 162;
Lougheed 162; *Renner* 162

Smoke-free places legislation ... *Klein* 690; *Taft* 690

Snowmobile use on public lands ... *Coutts* 693–94;
Rogers 693–94

Social assistance rates ... *Backs* 849, 856; *Cardinal*
849; *Graydon* 855–56; *McClellan* 856

Social Housing Corporation land sales ... *Fritz* 1741;
Martin 1741; *McClellan* 1741

Software licences for schools ... *Hancock* 287;
Ouellette 287, 323; *Taylor* 286–287, 322–23;
Zwozdesky 322–23

Softwood lumber trade dispute ... *Coutts* 20–21, 89,
573, 1626; *Dunford* 644; *McClellan* 644;
Oberle 1499; *Stelmach* 20, 89, 573, 644, 1202, 1499,
1625–26; *Strang* 20, 89, 572–73, 644, 1625–26;
VanderBurg 1202

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Sour gas leak ... *Melchin* 1741–42; *Swann* 1741

Sour gas well safety ... *Lindsay* 741–42; *Melchin*
741–42, 1828; *Swann* 1828

Southeast Edmonton ring road ... *Klein* 287; *Lougheed*
324; *Mason* 287, 318; *Oberg* 287, 318, 324

Special-needs education ... *Flaherty* 1030; *Zwozdesky*
1030

Species at risk ... *Coutts* 955, 1521; *Strang* 955, 1521

Standing policy committee ... *Backs* 737–38; *Klein*
737–38

Stony Plain youth justice committee ... *Backs* 1076;
Cenaiko 1076

Student finance system ... *Hancock* 697, 798; *Taylor*
697, 798

Student loan program ... *Hancock* 1830; *Shariff* 1830

Student loans ... *Hancock* 320; *Rogers* 319–320

SuperNet ... *Doerksen* 461; *Elsalhy* 88, 320, 461;
Ouellette 88, 320, 1149; *Webber* 1149

SuperNet hookup cost ... *Webber* 740; *Zwozdesky* 740

Support for active living ... *Agnihotri* 1150–51; *Mar*
1150–51

Support for low-income Albertans ... *Backs* 1198;
Cardinal 1198; *Fritz* 1198

Sustainable resource management ... *Bonko* 1311–12;
Coutts 1311–12

Taxation policy ... *Hinman* 412; *McClellan* 412

Teachers' retirement fund ... *McClellan* 1448–49;
Miller, R. 1448

Teachers' unfunded pension liability ... *Abbott* 1712;
McClellan 1910; *Miller, R.* 1910; *Zwozdesky* 1712,
1910

Technology funding ... *Doerksen* 1501; *Elsalhy* 1501

Temporary foreign workers ... *Backs* 318, 360–61, 411;
Cao 802; *Cardinal* 318, 321–22, 361–62, 411, 458,
802; *Martin* 321–22, 458; *Mason* 361–62

Tobacco reduction strategy ... *Blakeman* 1028; *Evans*
1028

Tourism in rural Alberta ... *Dunford* 48; *Griffiths* 48

Tracking and tracing system for Alberta beef ... *Haley*
1599–1600; *Horner* 1599–1600

Trade mission to Southeast Asia ... *Agnihotri* 46; *Mar*
46

Trade mission to United States ... *DeLong* 1500;
Dunford 1500

Traffic safety ... *Lougheed* 1884; *Oberg* 1884

TransAlta Utilities ... *Klein* 488–89; *MacDonald*
455–56, 488–89; *Melchin* 455–56, 488–89

Traumatic injury rate in the aboriginal community ...
Calahasen 768; *Cenaiko* 768; *Ducharme* 768

Travel by elected Senators ... *Eggen* 694–95; *Klein* 691;
Ouellette 691, 695; *Pastoor* 691; *Stelmach* 695

Treasury Branch loans ... *McClellan* 2050; *Miller, R.*
2050

Truck driver certification ... *McFarland* 1308–09;
Oberg 1308–09

Turner Valley gas plant historic site ... *Boutilier*
1961–62; *Mar* 1961; *Swann* 1961–62

Unbudgeted surplus ... *Ady* 797–98; *McClellan* 797–98;
Oberg 798

United States energy legislation ... *Knight* 1310;
Melchin 1310

Use of school instructional funding ... *MacDonald*
1524–25; *Oberg* 1524; *Zwozdesky* 1525

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

- User fees in long-term care facilities ... *Blakeman* 1387; *Fritz* 1387; *Klein* 1387
- Utilities Consumer Advocate ... *Elsalhy* 975; *Lund* 975–76; *Mason* 975–76; *VanderBurg* 976
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council ... *Lund* 1025; *Mason* 1025
- Veterans' licence plates ... *Lougheed* 366; *Lund* 366
- Veterinary profession legislation ... *Abbott* 1627; *Cardinal* 1627
- Wabamun provincial park closure ... *Lindsay* 249–250; *Mar* 249–250
- Wait times for health care ... *Evans* 1966; *Klein* 1966; *Pannu* 1965–66
- Wait times for ophthalmology services ... *Evans* 2051; *Klein* 2051; *Pannu* 2051
- Walton International Group Inc. ... *Klein* 2008; *McClellan* 2008; *Taft* 2007–08
- Waste management strategy ... *Boutilier* 1710–11; *McFarland* 1710–11
- Water quality in Ellerslie elementary school ... *Agnihotri* 1711; *Zwozdesky* 1711
- Water strategy ... *Boutilier* 530, 978–79; *Klein* 573; *Swann* 530, 573, 978
- Wellness initiatives ... *Blakeman* 163; *Evans* 163
- West Nile virus ... *Boutilier* 1120–21; *Evans* 1120; *Haley* 1120; *Renner* 1449; *Rogers* 1449
- Whistle-blower protection ... *McClellan* 1520–21; *Miller, R.* 1520–21
- Widows' pension ... *Abbott* 1966; *Cardinal* 1966
- Wild Rose Agricultural Producers ... *Groeneveld* 953; *Horner* 953
- Wild Rose Foundation grants ... *Agnihotri* 531; *Mar* 457, 531, 1597–98; *Taft* 1597–98; *Tougas* 457
- Wildlife conservation ... *Bonko* 1963; *Coutts* 1963
- Wildlife protection ... *Coutts* 1254; *Eggen* 1253–54
- Womens' shelters ... *Forsyth* 739, 742–43; *Klein* 739; *Mather* 742–43; *Pannu* 738–39
- Workers' compensation ... *Cao* 1338; *Cardinal* 1338, 2052; *Pham* 2052
- Workers' compensation appeals ... *Backs* 950; *Cao* 1834; *Cardinal* 950, 1834
- Workplace drug testing ... *Backs* 45; *Cardinal* 45
- Workplace safety ... *Backs* 1122; *Cao* 364; *Cardinal* 364, 1122
- Youth emergency shelters ... *Forsyth* 532; *Mather* 532
- Youth residential drug treatment ... *Cenaiko* 800; *Evans* 23, 852; *Forsyth* 23, 799; *Jablonski* 23; *Mather* 799, 852; *Pastoor* 800

Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)

- Alliance member's participation in ... *Blakeman* 54; *Hancock* 56, 57; *Hinman* 55–56; *Speaker, The* 16, 90
- Government members' role in ... *Blakeman* 53–54; *Brown* 58; *Haley* 57–58; *Speaker, The* 90
- Official opposition role in ... *Blakeman* 53–54; *Chase* 57; *Hancock* 56–57; *Speaker, The* 90
- Preambles before supplementary questions ... *Blakeman* 54; *Speaker, The* 90
- Rotation of questions and answers: 1986 precedent ... *Blakeman* 54; *Mason* 55; *Pannu* 58; *Speaker, The* 58, 90
- Rotation of questions and answers: Interim agreement re ... *Speaker, The* 16–17

Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)*(Continued)*

- Rotation of questions and answers: Ruling on (SP37/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 90–91, 93
- Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... *Blakeman* 53–54; *Brown* 58; *Haley* 57–58; *Hancock* 56–57; *Hinman* 55–56; *Knight* 58; *Mason* 55; *Pannu* 58; *Speaker, The* 53, 58
- Third opposition party's role in ... *Blakeman* 54; *Hancock* 56; *Mason* 55; *Pannu* 58; *Speaker, The* 90
- Time limit on questions and answers ... *Blakeman* 54; *Hancock* 56; *Speaker, The* 17, 90
- Order of Canada**
Albertans invested into, statement re ... *Jablonski* 1743
- Order of Excellence**
See Alberta Order of Excellence
- Order of Excellence Council**
See Alberta Order of Excellence Council
- Order Paper (Publication)**
See Sessional publications (Legislative Assembly)
- Organ and tissue donation**
General remarks ... *Evans* 1601; *VanderBurg* 1601
- Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week**
See National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week
- Organic farming**
General remarks ... *Swann* 1221
- Organic materials' recycling**
See Composting
- Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries**
Canadian membership in ... *Cao* 1526
- Organized crime**
Additional officers for ... *Cenaiko* 1427
Impact of globalization on ... *Pannu* 1232
Involvement with marijuana grow ops ... *Cenaiko* 1430
- Organized crime, Gang-related–Prevention**
See Gang-related crime–Prevention
- Organized Crime, Integrated Response to**
See Integrated Response to Organized Crime
- Organized crime–Prevention**
Funding for ... *Cenaiko* 1427; *McClellan* 749
General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 41, 1256, 1671, 1884, 1916; *Goudreau* 1916; *Lukaszuk* 1671; *Mason* 1437; *Miller, R.* 1256
Police intelligence sharing re ... *Cenaiko* 206, 1916
- Organized labour**
See Labour unions
- Orphan underground storage sites remediation program**
See Petroleum tank sites remediation program
- Orphaned well sites**
See Well sites, Abandoned
- Orthopedic surgery**
See Hip and knee surgery
- Ottawa arts festival**
Alberta participation *See Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)*
- Ottawa office**
See Alberta Government Offices, Ottawa office
- Ottewell community patrol**
Pamphlet re (SP423/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1342
Statement re ... *MacDonald* 1258
- Out is In project (Anti-bullying initiative)**
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1061

- Out of school care**
See **Child care after school**
- Outpatient residence, U of A hospital**
See **Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre, Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility**
- Overseas offices, Albertan**
See **Alberta Government Offices**
- Overtime Broiler & Taproom**
 Edmonton Police stakeout at ... *Cenaiko* 411–12; *Mason* 411–12
- P3 capital project financing**
See **Capital projects, Public/private partnerships re P3s**
- P3s**
See **Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton, Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of; Courts–Calgary, New courthouse, Public/private funding of; Hospitals–Calgary, New south Calgary hospital: Public/private funding of; Lakeland College, Sherwood Park campus: P3 proposal for; Road construction–Finance, Public/private partnerships re; Schools–Construction, Public/private projects re**
- Pacific Northwest Economic Region**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1186; *Stelmach* 1186
- Pacquette, Dorothy**
 Run from Fort McMurray to Edmonton: Statement re ... *Backs* 652
- Page high school, J. Percy, Edmonton**
See **J. Percy Page high school, Edmonton**
- Pages (Legislative Assembly)**
 Biographies of (pamphlet) ... *Speaker, The* 3
 Biographies of (pamphlet) (SP637/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 1746
 Leah Halliday appreciation ... *Marz* 1258
 Recognition of ... *Deputy Speaker* 1604–05, 2055; *Speaker, The* 1605
- Pakistan earthquake**
See **Earthquakes–Pakistan**
- Palliser Health Region**
 Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... *Blakeman* 483; *Evans* 202, 245, 483; *Klein* 83, 202
 Annual report, 2003–04 (SP90/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 128
 Annual report, 2004–05 (SP622/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Former medical officer of health situation, 2003 ... *Blakeman* 26
 Funding ... *Evans* 271, 273
- Pandemic response services–Calgary**
See **Epidemic response services–Calgary**
- PAO**
See **Personnel Administration Office**
- Paramedics**
See **Emergency medical technicians**
- Parent councils**
See **School councils**
- Parent fund-raising (Education)**
See **School councils, Fund-raising activities**
- Parent information telephone line**
 General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1730; *Mather* 1731
- Parent Link Centres**
 Expansion of ... *Speech from the Throne* 10
- Parent Link Centres (Continued)**
 Funding for ... *Forsyth* 301, 305, 1052, 1730; *Pannu* 304
 General remarks ... *Evans* 1832; *Pannu* 1917
 Statement re ... *Danyluk* 462
- Parent resource centres**
See **Parent Link Centres**
- Parents Empowering Parents**
 Recognition of ... *Mather* 325
- Parkland Institute**
 Co-sponsor of Calgary health care conference ... *Chase* 1152
 Provincial budget 2005, commentary (SP328/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 776
 A Sustainable and Equitable Economy, a Pre-Budget Commentary (SP288/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 622
- Parkland School Division**
 Portable classrooms ... *Chase* 1801
- Parks**
 Taxation status re (Bill 28) ... *Renner* 252
- Parks, Provincial**
 [See also **Cypress Hills Provincial Park; Dinosaur Provincial Park; Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park; Miquelon Lake Provincial Park; Pembina River Provincial Park; Wabamun Lake Provincial Park; Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park**]
 Enforcement of rules in ... *Chase* 1601; *Mar* 1601
 Funding for ... *Chase* 264, 1480–81; *Eggen* 1478; *Mar* 1472–73, 1476, 1479; *McClellan* 1479
 General remarks ... *Chase* 2012; *Klein* 2012
 Increase in number of ... *Chase* 1048
 Industrial development in ... *Chase* 1012, 1601; *Mar* 1601–02
 Interpretive centre programs in ... *Chase* 1012
 Renaming of: Letter re (SP185/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 327
 Upgrading of ... *Bonko* 167; *Chase* 852–53, 1012, 2012; *Dunford* 1013; *Lindsay* 249–50; *Mar* 167, 249–50, 852–53, 977, 1150, 2012; *McClellan* 750
- Parks, Provincial–Northern Alberta**
 Funding for ... *Danyluk* 843
- Parks and Wilderness Society, Canadian**
See **Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society**
- Parks and Wildlife Foundation**
See **Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation**
- Parks department**
See **Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development**
- Parliamentary Association, Commonwealth**
See **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**
- Parliamentary debates**
See **Debate (Parliamentary procedure)**
- Parliamentary language**
 General remarks ... *Lund* 1034; *Martin* 623; *Mason* 623, 1082; *Speaker, The* 623–24, 988, 1035–36; *Stevens* 623
- Parr, Edwin awards**
See **Alberta School Boards Association, Edwin Parr awards, statement re**
- Partnership Fund (Federal)**
 General remarks ... *Abbott* 771; *Melchin* 771–72
- Passchendaele (Film)**
 Provincial funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1783; *Hinman* 1805; *Mar* 1783

- Passport approach to securities regulation**
See Securities—Law and legislation, National harmonization of
- Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment fund**
See Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment fund
- Patient capacity (Health system)—Calgary**
See Hospital beds—Calgary
- Patient participation in health care funding**
See Medical care—Finance, User fees
- Patient privacy**
See Medical records—Confidentiality
- PATRIOT Act (U.S.)**
See USA PATRIOT Act
- Pawnshops**
 Provision of client information to police ... *Cenaiko* 416; *Johnson* 416; *Lund* 416
 Review of ... *Lund* 1424
- Payday loan companies**
 Business practices ... *DeLong* 365; *Lund* 365
 Legislation re (Bill 6) ... *Ducharme* 51; *Lund* 365
 National regulations re ... *Lund* 365
- PCL Construction Group Inc.**
 100th anniversary of: Recognition of ... *Danyluk* 577–78
- PDD Board**
See Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board
- PDD programs—Children**
See Mental health services—Children
- Peace**
 Recognition of promoters of ... *Eggen* 418
- Peace Country Health**
 Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... *Blakeman* 483; *Evans* 202, 245, 483; *Klein* 83, 202
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP133/05: Tabled) ... *Evans* 211
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP618/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 1717
 Funding ... *Evans* 271
- Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op Ltd.**
 General remarks ... *Horner* 1216, 1221; *Martin* 22, 1213; *McClellan* 22–23
 Provincial assistance to ... *Pannu* 300
- Peace Region Economic Development Alliance**
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 88, 123
- Peace River area**
 Opening of: Statement re ... *Knight* 1672
- Pediatric psychiatric care**
See Mental health services—Children
- Peigan Nation**
See Piikani (Peigan) Nation
- Pembina Institute for Sustainable Development**
 Coal-bed methane extraction impacts ... *Swann* 1201
 Movable oil sands strategy, news release re (SP602/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1716
- Pembina River Provincial Park**
 [See also Parks, Provincial]
 General remarks ... *Mar* 250
- Penalties (Traffic violations)**
See Fines (Traffic violations)
- Pension cheques, Civil service**
See Civil service pension cheques
- Pension Corporation British Columbia**
See British Columbia Pension Corporation
- Pension plan (Proposed), Alberta**
See Alberta pension plan (Proposed)
- Pensions, Civil service**
See Civil service pensions
- Pensions, Private-sector**
 Access to information re (Bill 35) ... *Brown* 419
 Auditor General's comments re ... *McClellan* 962; *Miller, R.* 960
 General remarks ... *McClellan* 958
- Pensions Administration Corporation**
See Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation
- Pensions for widows**
See Widows—Pensions
- PEP**
See Parents Empowering Parents
- Peregrine falcons**
 Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... *Bonko* 1746; *Coutts* 1746
 Restoration of ... *Coutts* 955
- Performance envelope funding (Postsecondary institutions)**
See Postsecondary educational institutions—Finance, Performance envelope funds
- Personal directives**
 Promotion of ... *Fritz* 879
- Personal Directives Act**
 Review of ... *Fritz* 887
- Personal identification**
See Identification, Personal
- Personal income support (AISH)**
See Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Supplementary benefits to personal income support
- Personal information, Protection of**
See Privacy, Right of
- Personal Information Protection Act**
 Application to data held by Canadian subsidiaries of U.S. corporations ... *Lund* 1886
 Application to pawnshops ... *Cenaiko* 416; *Johnson* 416; *Lund* 416
 Select committee review of ... *Lund* 1416
 Select committee review of, delayed by one year ... *Mitzel* 373
- Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)**
 First reading ... *Groeneveld* 92
 Second reading ... *Blakeman* 374–75; *Eggen* 375; *Elsalhy* 373–74; *Groeneveld* 373, 375
 Committee ... *Backs* 688; *Groeneveld* 686, 688; *Mather* 686–87
 Third reading ... *Blakeman* 1486–87; *Groeneveld* 1486–87
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
 Amendment (SP305/05: Tabled) ... *Mather* 687; *Mitzel* 688
- Personal property**
See Property, Personal
- Personnel Administration Office**
 Communications function ... *Klein* 1099
 General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129, 1130
 Staffing ... *Klein* 1099

Persons in care—Protection*See Social services recipients—Protection***Persons with developmental disabilities***See Mentally disabled***Persons with developmental disabilities programs—Children***See Mental health services—Children***Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board**Annual report, 2003-04 (SP378/05: Tabled) ... *Fritz* 1128**Pesticides in water sources**General remarks ... *Boutillier* 799–800; *Brown* 799–800**Peter Lougheed Centre (Calgary General Hospital)**Upgrades to ... *Blakeman* 644; *Chase* 1470; *Evans* 533, 644; *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309Upgrades to, funding for ... *Evans* 1838; *Oberg* 1086**Petitions**Property rights inclusion in Canadian constitution ... *Hinman* 1738; *McClellan* 1738**Petitions for Private Bills (2005)**Bow Valley Community Foundation Act ... *Brown* 326Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act ... *Brown* 326Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act ... *Brown* 326Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 ... *Brown* 326**Petitions for Private Bills (Parliamentary procedure)**Fees for, recommendation to increase ... *Brown* 1033**Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)**AISH benefit increase ... *Mather* 1788; *Pastoor* 26Confined feeding operations phase out ... *Bonko* 1674, 1715, 1745, 1969; *Eggen* 1788, 1837, 1889; *Swann* 1837, 1969Grizzly bear declaration as endangered species ... *Bonko* 957, 1396Highway 63 upgrading ... *Chase* 1452; *Eggen* 1506; *Martin* 252, 369, 652, 858, 1128, 1258, 1314, 1578, 1607, 1970, 2055; *Mason* 1970, 2055Long-term care facility funding ... *VanderBurg* 252Long-term care facility in Hinton, classification of ... *Martin* 1918, 1970, 2016Long-term care facility staffing levels ... *Pannu* 806

Mandatory drug treatment programs (Bill 202) ...

Jablonski 210, 653, 745, 1342, 1528Minimum floor price for cattle ... *Eggen* 51; *Martin* 26, 252, 294, 326Public school for McKenzie Towne district, Calgary (Not in order to be presented) ... *Johnston* 1342Re-regulation of electric utilities ... *Hinman* 1970Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, increase in number of ... *Eggen* 1837School construction in Calgary ... *Johnston* 1507School fees elimination ... *Elsalhy* 1673–74, 1715, 1745, 1837, 1890, 1918–19Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... *Agnihotri* 652, 699, 1128; *Backs* 294, 326, 418, 463, 491, 536, 621, 652, 745–46, 775, 806, 858, 957, 984, 1033, 1128, 1153, 1205, 1314, 1396, 1451, 1507, 1528, 1578, 1607, 1630, 1674, 1715, 1745, 1788, 1836, 1970, 2016; *Bonko* 326, 419, 621, 652, 699; *Elsalhy* 369, 462, 621;**Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)***(Continued)*Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on *(Continued)* ... *MacDonald* 369, 418, 463, 491, 536, 1507; *Miller, B.* 1396; *Miller, R.* 418, 463, 536, 579; *Pastoor* 491, 579, 653, 806; *Taylor* 369, 462–63Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on, tabling re disallowed ... *Abbott* 1206; *Speaker, The* 1258–59Tuition fee assistance to students ... *Eggen* 1506; *Taylor* 210Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15) ... *Martin* 984**Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)**Ambulance service funding (SP430/05: Tabled) ... *Jablonski* 1396Breast prosthesis inclusion under AADL program (SP306/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 699; *VanderBurg* 699Community school funding (SP273/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 579Farmworkers' status under Charter of Rights (SP508/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1608Long-term care facilities conditions (SP337/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 858Lubicon Cree land claim negotiations (SP814/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 2055Métis harvesting agreement, opposition to (SP797/05: Tabled) ... *Tougas* 2017Nursing homes staffing improvement (SP489/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1579Oneway long-term care facility (SP161/05: Tabled) ... *VanderBurg* 295Seniors' programs changes (SP236/05: Tabled) ... *Ducharme* 463Strathearn school closure (SP506/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1608**Petro-Canada**Oil sands project with UTS Energy Corp. ... *Melchin* 203**Petrochemical industry**Bitumen as feedstock for ... *Melchin* 532, 572, 909, 917General remarks ... *Eggen* 914–15; *Melchin* 918–19Impact of Chinese investments on ... *Melchin* 801Impact of natural resources exports on ... *Martin* 920; *Mason* 572; *Melchin* 572, 922**Petrochemical industry—Edmonton area**Employees laid off at, employment in Fort McMurray ... *Backs* 1443; *Cardinal* 1443Ethane supply for ... *Backs* 1443; *Melchin* 1443**PetroChina International Co.**Investment in Gateway pipeline project *See Enbridge Inc., Gateway pipeline, joint project with PetroChina***Petroleos de Venezuela**Former employees of, recruited for Alberta oil sands employment ... *Backs* 411; *Cardinal* 411**Petroleum—Prices***See Oil—Prices***Petroleum industry***See Oil industry***Petroleum Interpretive Centre, Canadian***See Canadian Petroleum Interpretive Centre*

Petroleum Producers, Canadian Association of

See **Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers**

Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta

Annual report, 2004 (SP644/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Renner* 1746

Petroleum tank sites remediation program

General remarks ... *Boutillier* 1046; *Renner* 1321, 1323; *Taft* 1323

Petty Trespass Act

Snowmobiles on public lands provisions ... *Coutts* 693–94; *Rogers* 693–94

Pharmacare

See **Drugs, Prescription, National plan for**

Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)

See **Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)**

Pharmaceuticals—Costs

See **Drugs, Prescription—Costs**

Pharmacist Awareness Week

Recognition of ... *Elsalhy* 50–51

Pharmacists—Supply

[See also **Health workforce planning**]

General remarks ... *Evans* 1461

Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)

First reading ... *Ady* 491

Second reading ... *Blakeman* 713–14; *Chase* 714–15; *Elsalhy* 715; *Evans* 630–31; *Martin* 715; *Shariff* 1485

Committee ... *Ady* 1558; *Chase* 1560; *Elsalhy* 1559–60; *Martin* 1560

Third reading ... *Ady* 1582; *Blakeman* 1582

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)

Amendment (SP467/05: Tabled) ... *Ady* 1558; *Mather* 1562

Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting)**Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)**

First reading ... *Strang* 171

Second reading ... *Abbott* 1534–35; *Ady* 1535–36; *Blakeman* 1529–31; *Bonko* 1533–34; *Cao* 1359, 1529; *Eggen* 1358–59; *Elsalhy* 1354–55; *Groeneveld* 1357–58; *Jablonski* 1355–57; *Johnson* 1532–33; *MacDonald* 1532; *Rodney* 1531; *Strang* 1353–54; *Swann* 1357

Committee ... *Abbott* 1927–28; *Blakeman* 1931–32; *Cao* 1932–33; *Chase* 1929, 1934; *Danyluk* 1925–26; *Elsalhy* 1926–27; *Jablonski* 1925; *Johnson* 1930–31; *Lougheed* 1929–30; *Martin* 1924; *Mather* 1923–24; *Rodney* 1928–29; *Strang* 1922–23, 1933–34; *VanderBurg* 1934; *Webber* 1932

Amendment A1 (SP741/05: Tabled) ... *Marz* 1935; *Strang* 1922

Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee

Medication use guidelines ... *Evans* 415

Pheasant hunting

General remarks ... *Coutts* 162–63; *Johnson* 162–63

Phone emergency warning system, Fort Saskatchewan

See **Telephone emergency warning system, Fort Saskatchewan**

Phone information lines

See **Forest fires—Prevention, Phone reporting line re; Health Link Alberta;**

Phone information lines (Continued)

See **Parent information telephone line; Seniors' issues, Telephone information line re; Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)**

Phones in automobiles

See **Cellular telephones in automobiles**

Photocopiers, Digital

Security concerns ... *Johnston* 413; *Ouellette* 413, 752

Photoradar (Traffic safety)

Use on provincial highways ... *Abbott* 614; *Oberg* 614–15

Physical fitness—Teaching

Daily mandatory activities ... *Ady* 1027–28; *Evans* 1459; *Flaherty* 307, 416; *Speech from the Throne* 10; *Zwozdesky* 307–08, 416–17, 1028

Daily mandatory activities, funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 1261

Mandatory grade 10 course: First aid/CPR component ... *Zwozdesky* 205

Physical Therapists of Alberta, College of

See **College of Physical Therapists of Alberta**

Physical therapy

Inclusion under health care plan ... *Blakeman* 1463; *Evans* 1465; *Mason* 1466

Physical therapy—Fees

Set fees for traffic injury cases ... *Blakeman* 954; *Evans* 954; *McClellan* 691–92, 954; *Rodney* 691–92

Physical therapy—Finance

Cutbacks to ... *Backs* 292; *Blakeman* 163; *Cardinal* 292; *Evans* 163; *Ouellette* 292

Cutbacks to: Health Sciences Association press release re (SP124/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 210

General remarks ... *Evans* 274; *Mason* 274

Physician/specialist referrals, Electronic

General remarks ... *Speech from the Throne* 9

Physician teams in medical care

See **Medical care, Primary, Team-based care**

Physicians, Immigrant

See **Immigrant doctors**

Physicians, Training of

See **Medical profession—Education**

Physicians—Rural areas

See **Medical profession—Rural areas**

Physicians—Supply

See **Medical profession—Supply**

Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta

See **College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta**

Physiotherapy—Fees

See **Physical therapy—Fees**

Physiotherapy—Finance

See **Physical therapy—Finance**

Piikani (Peigan) Nation

General remarks ... *Chase* 1673, 2012; *Eggen* 2056

Pine beetles—Control

Federal funding for ... *Coutts* 936; *Oberle* 936

General remarks ... *Bonko* 740, 801–02, 929, 937, 1312, 1847–48; *Coutts* 247, 740, 801–02, 926, 930–31, 934, 936, 1312, 1742, 1847, 1848–49; *Eggen* 933;

Flaherty 266; *Mar* 1602; *Oberle* 247, 935–36, 1742

Impact of forest fire fighting on ... *Bonko* 1847–48;

Coutts 1848

Research into ... *Bonko* 929, 1848; *Coutts* 1848; *Eggen* 933; *Oberle* 935–36

PIPA

See **Personal Information Protection Act**

Pipeline, Gateway

See **Enbridge Inc., Gateway pipeline, joint project with PetroChina**

Pipelines

Development of ... *Eggen* 914–15; *Martin* 920; *Melchin* 917

Monitoring of ... *Melchin* 1447; *Swann* 1447

Pipelines, Gas–Alaska/Northwest Territories thru Alberta

See **Gas pipelines–Alaska/Northwest Territories thru Alberta**

Pipelines, Water–Red Deer area

See **Water pipelines–Red Deer area**

Pipelines–Alberta/Prince Rupert, B.C.

General remarks ... *Oberg* 905

PISA test

See **Student testing, Achievement tests: Comparison to international standards**

A Place to Grow (Report)

See **Rural economic development, Government strategy re: Report (A Place to Grow)**

Plain language contracts

See **Electric power contracts, Plain language requirement; Natural gas contracts, Plain language requirement**

A Plan for Alberta's Universities (Report)

See **Council of Alberta University Students, A Plan for Alberta's Universities (SP206/05: Tabled)**

Planning, Economic–Alberta

See **Alberta–Economic policy**

Plant species, Endangered

See **Endangered plant species**

Platform technology development

See **Research and development, Platform technology development**

Pleasant View Lodge, Mayerthorpe

Upgrades to, funding ... *Fritz* 2010; *VanderBurg* 2009

PNP

See **Immigration, Provincial nominee program**

PNWER

See **Pacific Northwest Economic Region**

Poaching

Penalties for ... *Coutts* 955

Poaching–Law and legislation

Enforcement of ... *Coutts* 1254; *Eggen* 1254

Poaching fines

See **Fines (Poaching violations)**

Podiatry

Inclusion under health care plan ... *Blakeman* 1463, 1471; *Evans* 1464–65

Podiatry Association, Alberta

See **Alberta Podiatry Association**

Point of Order

Allegations against a member ... *Hancock* 420, 985; *MacDonald* 421; *Speaker, The* 421

Challenging the Chair ... *Mason* 1444, 1457; *Speaker, The* 1444, 1457

Citing documents ... *Hancock* 1580; *Mason* 1579–80; *Speaker, The* 1580

Clarification ... *Brown* 1512; *MacDonald* 1768;

Point of Order (Continued)

Clarification (Continued) ... *Martin* 1512; *Shariff* 1512, 1768

Decorum ... *Deputy Chair* 1692; *Mason* 1692

Explanation of Speaker's ruling ... *Mason* 989, 1789, 1920; *Speaker, The* 989, 1789, 1920–21

Factual accuracy ... *Chair* 1110; *Klein* 1110; *Mason* 1110; *Miller, R.* 1343–44; *Speaker, The* 1344; *Zwozdesky* 1343–44

False allegations ... *Hancock* 1411; *Martin* 1412; *Mason* 1411–12; *Oberg* 1412; *Speaker, The* 1412

Improper questions ... *Brown* 2056–57; *Martin* 2057; *Speaker, The* 2057

Imputing motives ... *Blakeman* 1482; *Brown* 1482; *Deputy Chair* 262–63, 1482; *Hancock* 1035; *Hinman* 262–63; *Horner* 262–63; *Lund* 1034; *Martin* 1035; *Mason* 1082; *Speaker, The* 1035–36

Insulting language ... *Blakeman* 493; *Boutilier* 493; *Chase* 493

Items previously decided ... *Chase* 1292, 1293; *Hancock* 1292; *Lukaszuk* 1293; *MacDonald* 1293; *Shariff* 1292, 1293

Member's Statement re respect for women in politics ... *Abbott* 1607; *Speaker, The* 1607

Parliamentary language ... *Martin* 623; *Mason* 623; *Speaker, The* 623–24; *Stevens* 623

Provoking debate ... *Blakeman* 52–53; *Oberg* 53

Question and comment period ... *Deputy Speaker* 141; *Hancock* 141; *MacDonald* 141

Quoting documents ... *Deputy Speaker* 1857; *Zwozdesky* 1857

Reading from documents ... *Brown* 265; *Chase* 265; *Deputy Chair* 265

Referring to a member by name ... *Eggen* 1343; *Speaker, The* 1343; *Zwozdesky* 1343

Referring to the absence of members ... *Blakeman* 1489; *Chair* 306; *Deputy Chair* 256, 1489; *Dunford* 256; *MacDonald* 256, 306; *Mason* 306; *Oberle* 306; *Rogers* 1489

Reflections on a member ... *Blakeman* 1454–55, 1456; *Hancock* 1455; *Lukaszuk* 1455; *Pham* 1454, 1456–57; *Speaker, The* 1455–57

Reflections on nonmembers ... *Blakeman* 1452–53, 1454; *Hancock* 1453; *Pham* 1452, 1454; *Speaker, The* 1453–54

Relevance ... *Agnihotri* 305; *Blakeman* 237; *Brown* 1511; *Chair* 305; *Chase* 442, 443–44; *Deputy Speaker* 237, 442, 443–44; *Forsyth* 305; *Herard* 237, 442, 443–44; *MacDonald* 443, 1511; *Shariff* 1511

Second reading debate ... *Shariff* 1945; *Zwozdesky* 1945

Sub judice rule ... *Miller, R.* 581; *Oberle* 581

Subamendments ... *Deputy Speaker* 993; *Mason* 993; *Renner* 993

Urgency of questions ... *Blakeman* 700; *Hancock* 700; *Speaker, The* 700

Police

Challenges performing duties of ... *Cenaiko* 16; *Miller, B.* 16; *Pannu* 41; *Taft* 41

Complaints against, procedure for ... *Cenaiko* 574, 1428, 1431, 1438, 1504; *Mason* 1437; *Miller, B.* 574, 1429, 1503–04

Complaints against, procedure for: Legislation re (Bill 36) ... *Cenaiko* 491

Police (Continued)

- Complaints against, procedure for: Legislation re (Bill 49) ... *Cenaiko* 1674
- Domestic violence case handling training ... *Cenaiko* 1196, 1575–76; *Jablonski* 1575; *Miller, B.* 1196; *Speech from the Throne* 10
- Domestic violence case handling training: Handbook for ... *Jablonski* 1918
- Gang-related activity prevention efforts ... *Cenaiko* 1148; *Mather* 1148
- General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1429
- Increase in numbers of ... *Agnihotri* 1327; *Cenaiko* 205–06, 1201, 1427, 1431, 1671, 1884–85, 1916; *Jablonski* 1201; *Lukaszuk* 1671; *Mason* 1437; *McClellan* 748–49; *Miller, B.* 1429, 1884–85, 1916; *Pannu* 205–06
- Intelligence sharing re crime prevention ... *Cenaiko* 206
- Intermunicipal co-operation between ... *Cenaiko* 205, 1602
- Mental health related incidents, responses to ... *Cenaiko* 1784–85; *Miller, B.* 1784–85
- MLA committee review of: Report ... *Blakeman* 1436; *Cenaiko* 162, 491, 574, 1428, 1437, 1602; *McFarland* 1602; *Miller, B.* 162; *Pastoor* 1123, 1127
- Neighbourhood patrols ... *Cenaiko* 952–53; *MacDonald* 1258; *Martin* 952–53; *Mason* 1437; *Miller, B.* 1429; *Pannu* 205
- Numbers of: Stats Can table re (SP123/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 210
- Pawnshop provision of client information to ... *Cenaiko* 416; *Johnson* 416; *Lund* 416
- Protective safe houses for child prostitutes, awareness of ... *Eggen* 1733
- Public confidence in ... *Cenaiko* 574; *Miller, B.* 574
- Reporting missing health records to ... *Evans* 483–84; *Klein* 484; *Pannu* 483–84
- Use-of-force policy ... *Cenaiko* 1431

Police, Alberta Association of Chiefs of

See Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police

Police, Provincial

Establishment of ... *Miller, R.* 1188

Police, Regional

See Police, Intermunicipal co-operation between

Police—Calgary

See Calgary Police Service

Police—Edmonton

See Edmonton Police Service

Police—Finance

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 205–06, 770, 1148, 1427, 1432; *Eggen* 167; *Mather* 1148; *Miller, B.* 16, 1429; *Pannu* 205–06
- Increase to ... *Cenaiko* 770, 800–01, 952–53, 1201, 1431, 1671, 1916; *Jablonski* 1201; *McClellan* 748–49; *Miller, B.* 1429, 1916; *Pannu* 800–01; *Strang* 770

Police—Finance—Crownsnest Pass

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1250, 1305, 1432; *Miller, B.* 1249–50, 1305, 1429
- Letter from Solicitor General re (SP411/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1315

Police—Rural areas

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 167, 1201, 1884–85; *Eggen* 167; *Miller, B.* 1884–85; *Pannu* 800–01; *Strang* 770

Police—Standards

- Auditing of ... *Cenaiko* 1432, 1885; *Miller, B.* 1885
- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1431–32

Police—Training

- Centre of excellence re ... *Cenaiko* 1123, 1428, 1602; *Hancock* 1123; *McFarland* 1602; *Pastoor* 1123
- Centre of excellence re: Statement re ... *Pastoor* 1127
- Mentally ill people handling ... *Cenaiko* 1784–85; *Miller, B.* 1784–85

Police Act

- Amendments to ... *Cenaiko* 162; *Miller, B.* 162
- Civilian oversight provision enhancement ... *Cenaiko* 162; *Miller, B.* 162; *Speech from the Throne* 10
- Paramountcy over Crownsnest Pass regulation re police funding ... *Cenaiko* 1250; *Miller, B.* 1250
- Police funding provisions ... *Cenaiko* 1432

Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)

- First reading ... *Cenaiko* 491
- Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 1242–43; *Bonko* 708–09; *Cenaiko* 629–30, 1244; *Chase* 705; *Eggen* 684–85; *Martin* 706–07; *Mather* 707–08; *Miller, B.* 683–84; *Pannu* 1243–44
- Committee ... *Backs* 1381; *Cenaiko* 1296–99, 1379–82; *Chase* 1299, 1379, 1381–82; *Eggen* 1381–82; *Miller, B.* 1297–99, 1379–80
- Third reading ... *Blakeman* 1584–85; *Cenaiko* 1583; *Chase* 1585; *Martin* 1584; *Miller, B.* 1583–84
- Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Amendment A1 (SP407/05: Tabled) ... *Goudreau* 1299; *Miller, B.* 1297, 1298
- Amendment A2 (SP426/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1379; *Webber* 1383
- Amendment A3 (SP427/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1379; *Webber* 1383
- Amendment A4 (SP428/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1381; *Webber* 1383
- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 574, 1428, 1431, 1438; *Miller, B.* 1429

Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 49)

- First reading ... *Cenaiko* 1674
- Second reading ... *Cenaiko* 1770–71; *Eggen* 1771; *Miller, B.* 1770–71
- Committee ... *Agnihotri* 1900–01; *Johnston* 1899–1900; *Miller, B.* 1900; *Pannu* 1901–02
- Third reading ... *Cenaiko* 2026; *Miller, B.* 2026–27; *Pannu* 2027
- Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Police Associations, Alberta Federation of

See Alberta Federation of Police Associations

Police commissions

- Oversight function ... *Cenaiko* 1428, 1431, 1438; *Mason* 1437

Police Governance, Alberta Association of

See Alberta Association of Police Governance

Police Service, Calgary

See Calgary Police Service

Police Service, Edmonton

See Edmonton Police Service

Police services, Aboriginal

See Aboriginal police services

Police vehicles, Stationary

See Emergency vehicles, Stationary

- Policy committees, PC caucus**
See **Caucus policy committees (PC party)**
- Political bodies**
 Exemption from privacy legislation (PIPA) (Bill 8) ...
Groeneveld 373
- Political ethics**
 Breach of, by Securities Commission director of enforcement ... *Mason* 1737–38; *McClellan* 1665, 1737–38; *Taft* 1665
 Statement re ... *Mason* 699
- Political interference in Securities Commission investigation**
See **Alberta Securities Commission, Influencing regulatory activity case: Ministerial involvement**
- Politicians, Recall of**
See **Recall of elected representatives**
- Pollution**
 Cleanup orders re, enforcement of ... *Boutilier* 84; *Cao* 84
- Pollution Watch**
 Pollution fact sheets (SP601/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1716
- Poole, John and Barbara (Donors)**
See **Edmonton Art Gallery, Private donation to**
- Poor children**
See **Children and poverty**
- Pope Benedict XVI**
See **Benedict XVI, Pope**
- Pope John Paul II**
See **John Paul II, Pope**
- Porcupine caribou**
See **Caribou (Porcupine herd)–Alaska/Canada**
- Pork–Export–United States**
 [See also **Hogs–Export–United States**]
 Antidumping duties on ... *Abbott* 293; *Horner* 293
- Pornography, Child**
 On the Internet ... *Stevens* 1230
 On the Internet: Education program re ... *Speech from the Throne* 10
 Provincial initiatives re ... *Cenaiko* 206; *Forsyth* 1052
- Port of Prince Rupert**
 Alberta participation in development of ... *Danyluk* 772; *Dunford* 319, 1007, 1016; *Eggen* 1014–15; *Knight* 319; *Stelmach* 772
 CN/Illinois Central's role in ... *Dunford* 1016; *Eggen* 1014–15
 Container terminal at ... *Danyluk* 905; *Oberg* 905
- Portable/modular classrooms**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1801; *Eggen* 1728; *Flaherty* 1721; *MacDonald* 622, 1098; *Mather* 1726; *Zwozdesky* 771, 978, 1720, 1721, 1725, 1727, 1729
- Portage College**
 Role in postsecondary education system ... *Hancock* 1574
- Ports strategy, British Columbia**
See **British Columbia ports strategy**
- Post-secondary Funding Review Committee (2000)**
See **MLA Post-secondary Funding Review Committee (2000)**
- Post-Secondary Institution Society, Northern Alberta**
See **Alberta-North; Northern Alberta Post-Secondary Institution Society**
- Post-secondary Learning Act**
 Governance provisions ... *Pannu* 873
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)**
 First reading ... *Hancock* 92
 Second reading ... *Blakeman* 377–79; *Eggen* 379; *Hancock* 240–41, 379; *Taylor* 376–77
 Committee ... *Hancock* 1691–1700; *MacDonald* 1695; *Pannu* 1692, 1694, 1698–1700; *Pastoor* 1694; *Swann* 1696; *Taylor* 1691–94, 1696–97
 Third reading ... *Hancock* 1806; *Taylor* 1806
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057
 Amendment (SP597/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 1691; *Rogers* 1700
 General remarks ... *Hancock* 2014
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 55)**
 First reading ... *Hancock* 1890
 Second reading ... *Hancock* 1952–53; *Taylor* 1972–73
 Committee ... *Blakeman* 1975; *Hancock* 1974–76; *Martin* 1975–76; *Taylor* 1974, 1975
 Third reading ... *Chase* 2030; *Hancock* 2029; *Pannu* 2029–30; *Taylor* 2029
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057
- Post-Secondary Scholarships**
See **Louise McKinney Post-Secondary Scholarships**
- Postsecondary education**
See **Education, Postsecondary**
- Postsecondary education–Finance**
See **Education, Postsecondary–Finance**
- Postsecondary education endowment fund**
See **Access to the Future Fund**
- Postsecondary educational institutions**
 Accreditation of degree-granting institutions, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... *Chase* 1921–22; *Hancock* 1921–22; *Taylor* 1921
 Governance question ... *Pannu* 873
 Student services ... *Flaherty* 874
 Upgrading of, funding for ... *Hancock* 1790, 1791, 1792, 1794; *Oberg* 1086; *Pannu* 1794; *Taylor* 1791
- Postsecondary educational institutions, Private**
 Funding ... *Hancock* 2014; *Prins* 2014
 Funding, NAFTA implications re ... *Pannu* 873
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Admissions (enrollment)**
 Province-wide centralization of ... *Hancock* 864, 1792, 2014; *Pannu* 259; *Prins* 2014
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Calgary–Maintenance and repair**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 796–97; *Hancock* 796–97
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Construction**
 General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1089; *Chase* 1087; *Oberg* 1088
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Finance**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1087; *Hancock* 859; *McClellan* 749
 MLA committee to review (2000) *See* **MLA Post-secondary Funding Review Committee (2000)**
 Performance envelope funds ... *Abbott* 874; *Hancock* 277, 278, 861; *Mason* 278; *Taylor* 276
 Private-sector funding ... *Blakeman* 867; *Hancock* 868; *Pannu* 873
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Utilization**
 General remarks ... *Oberg* 1088
 Year-round operation ... *Oberg* 1088–89
- Postsecondary graduates**
 Number of ... *Chase* 1087; *Oberg* 1089

Postsecondary graduates, Aboriginal

Increase in number of ... *Calahasen* 1912

Potable water

See **Drinking water**

Potts, Jared

Recognition of ... *Johnson* 251

Poultry industry

Protective measures re avian flu ... *Haley* 1780; *Horner* 1780

Poverty

General remarks ... *Evans* 1832; *Forsyth* 1832; *Mather* 1831–32

Impact on health care demand ... *Mason* 1466

Impact on women ... *Blakeman* 1527

Poverty and children

See **Children and poverty**

Power, Coal-produced

See **Electric power, Coal-produced**

Power, Electrical–Retail sales

See **Electric power–Retail sales**

Power lines

See **Electric power lines**

Power plant on Legislature grounds

See **Legislature grounds, Power plant on, disposition of**

Power Pool of Alberta

Contribution to funding for Utilities Consumer

Advocate ... *Elsalhy* 975; *Lund* 975

Enron price manipulation at ... *MacDonald* 247

Power Producers Society of Alberta, Independent

See **Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta**

Power purchase agreements

See **Electrical power purchase agreements**

Powerex

See **British Columbia Power Exchange Corp.**

Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights)

See **Supreme Court of Canada, Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights)**

PPAs

See **Electrical power purchase agreements**

Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology

Students offered courses at Bow Valley College ... *Marz* 1629

Pre-existing health conditions, provision for

See **Insurance, Health (Private), Pre-existing conditions, provision for**

Preambles before supplementary questions

See **Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure), Preambles before supplementary questions**

Prekindergarten programs

See **Early childhood education, Junior kindergarten (prekindergarten)**

Premier's 4-H award

See **4-H Premier's award**

Premier's Advisory Council on Health

Recommendations (A Framework for Reform) ... *Blakeman* 205; *Evans* 205, 1124, 1459; *Mason* 1465; *Pannu* 1127

Premiers' conferences

See **Council of the Federation**

Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Alberta Disability Strategy See **Alberta Disability Strategy**

Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (Continued)

Annual report, 2004 (SP160/05: Tabled) ... *Lougheed* 295

Awards of excellence ... *Lougheed* 2054

Barrier-free access to buildings, survey re ... *Lougheed* 1917

General remarks ... *Lougheed* 745

Premier's Office

See **Office of the Premier**

Premiums, Medicare

See **Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan–Premiums**

Prenatal traffic accident injuries

See **Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)**

Prenatal wrongful conduct law

Maternal tort immunity provisions (Bill 45) ... *Oberle* 1631

Prepared for Growth: Building Alberta's Labour Supply

See **Labour supply, Strategy re**

Preschool programs

See **Early childhood education**

Prescription drugs–Costs

See **Drugs, Prescription–Costs**

Preventive medical services

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 163, 1470; *Chase* 1467; *Elsalhy* 1505–06; *Evans* 163, 271, 1458–59; *Speech from the Throne* 10; *Swann* 1468

Preventive social service program

See **Family and community support services program**

Pride Rainbow project

Statement re ... *Taylor* 651

Primary health care

See **Medical care, Primary**

Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 698; *Mitzel* 1450

Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre

Early Edmonton tax rolls on Archives web site ... *Blakeman* 745

Map cataloguing project ... *Blakeman* 745

Prince Rupert container handling facility

See **Port of Prince Rupert, Container terminal at**

Prince Rupert port

See **Port of Prince Rupert**

Principal Group Ltd.

Public inquiry into collapse of ... *Taft* 18

Prion research (BSE control)

Funding for ... *Doerksen* 1368–69, 1372, 1885; *Elsalhy* 1370; *Horner* 250, 300, 1211; *Johnson* 1885; *Klein* 15; *McClellan* 749

General remarks ... *Horner* 1207; *Martin* 1213

Prion research institute

See **Alberta prion research institute**

Prisoners

Application of Charter of Rights to ... *Agnihotri* 855; *Cenaiko* 855; *Mar* 855

Transfer of ... *McClellan* 749

Prisoners, Aboriginal

Numbers of ... *Miller, B.* 1228; *Pannu* 1231

Prisoners–Mental health services

See **Mental health services–Prisoners**

Prisoners–Safety aspects

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 696, 1389; *Miller, B.* 696, 1389

Privacy, Right of

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 416; *Elsalhy* 1417, 1885–86; *Evans* 482–84; *Johnson* 416; *Johnston* 413; *Klein* 484; *Lund* 416, 1416, 1419, 1886; *Martin* 1420; *Mather* 1423; *Ouellette* 413; *Pannu* 483–84; *Taft* 482

Legislative amendments re (Bill 8) ... *Groeneveld* 92

Privacy Act

See Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Privacy Commissioner

See Information and Privacy Commissioner

Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)

See Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)

Privacy of government records

See Public records–Confidentiality

Privacy of medical records

See Medical records–Confidentiality

Privacy services (Government department)

See Dept. of Government Services

Private Bills

See Bills, Private (2005)

Private Bills, Standing Committee on

See Committee on Private Bills, Standing

Private cataract surgery–Calgary

See Cataract surgery, Private–Calgary

Private clinics

See Health facilities, Private

Private colleges–Finance

General remarks ... *Cao* 874; *Prins* 874

Private Colleges Accreditation Board

Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... *Hancock* 1166–67; *Martin* 1166–67; *Pannu* 1166

Private CT scans

See CT scans (Medical imaging procedure), Private clinic provision of

Private day homes

See Daycare in private homes

Private early childhood education

See Early childhood education, Private

Private extended care facilities

See Extended care facilities, Private

Private health insurance

See Insurance, Health (Private)

Private investigators–Law and legislation

Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Private investigators–Licensing

Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Private investigators–Training

Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Private Investigators and Security Guards Act

Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Private long-term care facilities

See Extended care facilities, Private

Private magnetic resonance imaging clinics

See Magnetic resonance imaging clinics, Private

Private medical care

See Medical care, Private

Private members' bills

See Bills, Private members' public (2005)

Private members' motions

See Resolutions (2005)

Private non-profit colleges

Funding for ... *Hancock* 859

Private pensions

See Pensions, Private-sector

Private postsecondary educational institutions

See Postsecondary educational institutions, Private

Private property

See Property, Personal

Private registry offices–Security aspects

See Registry offices, Private–Security aspects

Private schools–Finance

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 952; *Zwozdesky* 952, 1260, 1261

Private-sector pensions

See Pensions, Private-sector

Private surgical services

See Surgical services, Private

Private vocational schools

Provincial monitoring of ... *Hancock* 1166–68, 1602–03; *Martin* 1166–69; *Pannu* 1602–03

Students' complaints procedure re ... *Hancock* 1603; *Pannu* 1603

Privilege

Auditor General's investigation of Securities

Commission enforcement processes, comments re ...

Blakeman 985, 986; *Hancock* 984–85; *Martin* 986–87; *Speaker, The* 988

Contempt (Auditor General's report on Securities

Commission enforcement processes, release to media)

... *Blakeman* 1633–35; *Mason* 1635; *Speaker, The* 1635, 1636, 1719–20; *Stevens* 1635–36

Contempt (Release to media of three reports by Officers

of the Assembly) ... *Boutilier* 1675–76; *Mason*

1636–37; *Speaker, The* 1637–38, 1675, 1676; *Stevens* 1637

Minister of Finance, comments re ... *Hancock* 420;

Speaker, The 421

Notice of, re actions by Member for Drayton Valley-

Calmar (Not proceeded with) ... *Blakeman* 1614–15,

1633; *Miller, R.* 1614, 1633; *Shariff* 1615; *Speaker, The* 1633

Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Standing Committee on

See Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Standing

Pro traditional marriage rally, Mill Woods

See Marriage, Pro traditional marriage rally, Mill Woods

Probation officers

General remarks ... *Mather* 1234

Supervision of youth justice committees ... *Blakeman* 1436–37; *Cenaiko* 1076, 1434, 1435; *Miller, B.* 1432

Problem gambling

See Gambling, Compulsive

Production insurance coverage, Crop

See Crop insurance program, Production insurance coverage

Productivity, Labour

See Labour productivity

Professional development for teachers

Funding for *See* Teachers, Professional development for, funding for

Professional qualifications, Foreign

Assessment service for ... *Blakeman* 866; *Hancock* 870, 871, 1833; *Lukaszuk* 1833

Professions—Law and legislation

Agrology profession (Bill 17) ... *Danyluk* 128

Professors

See **University teachers**

Program for international student achievement

See **Student testing, Achievement tests: Comparison to international standards**

Program unit funding (Education)

[See also **Education—Finance**]

Programming for children-at-risk ... *Martin* 1271

Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta

Convention, Edmonton: Statement re ... *Oberle* 651

Donations to members of, by Walton International:

Documents re (SP788/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 2017

Payment of legal fees re provincial same-sex marriage strategy by ... *Ouellette* 318; *Taft* 317

Payment of senators-in-waiting speaking tour costs by ... *Eggen* 695; *Ouellette* 695

Progressive Contractors Association of Canada

General remarks ... *Backs* 1170

Web site article re Labour Relations Board decision re Finning (Canada) and machinists' union (SP799/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 2018

Project Discovery

See **Canadian Petroleum Interpretive Centre, Expansion to (Project Discovery)**

Project Green (Federal Kyoto accord implementation plan)

General remarks ... *Abbott* 771–72; *Melchin* 743, 771–72; *VanderBurg* 743

Project Kare (Missing women investigation team)

Funding for ... *Cenaiko* 800, 901–02, 1339, 1523; *Johnston* 1523; *Lukaszuk* 901; *Pastoor* 1339

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1523, 1671; *Johnston* 1523

Project Stanley

See **Enron Canada Corporation, Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley)**

Projected Government Business (Parliamentary procedure)

For the week of March 14, 2005 (SP99/05: Tabled) ... *Hancock* 128; *Speaker, The* 129

Property, Personal

Seizure of ... *Oberg* 457

Property rights

Inclusion in Canadian constitution, referendum re ... *Hinman* 1738; *McClellan* 1738

Inclusion in Canadian constitution, referendum re: Response to questions re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... *Stelmach* 1837

Property tax

General remarks ... *Renner* 1320, 1322, 1324

Increment financing tool re: Legislation (Bill 28) ... *Renner* 252

Payment by Canadian Legions ... *Abbott* 323; *Renner* 323

Property tax—Education levy

Collection of, by municipalities ... *Chase* 1086–87
Collection of, by municipalities, funding for ... *Martin* 1325

Elimination of ... *Renner* 1324

Elimination of: Legislation re (Bill 210) ... *Marz* 1890

Elimination of: Letter re (SP800/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 2018

Property tax—Education levy (Continued)

General remarks ... *Renner* 798–99, 1322; *Rogers* 798–99; *Zwozdesky* 1260

Reduction of ... *Chase* 1801; *Hinman* 971; *McClellan* 749

Seniors' tax relief re ... *Amery* 2049; *Fritz* 877–78, 887, 2049; *Klein* 768; *Martin* 886; *McClellan* 748, 749, 766, 961, 2049; *Pastoor* 880; *Speech from the Throne* 10

Seniors' tax relief re: Letter (SP815/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 2055

Prosecutors, Government

See **Government attorneys**

Prosperity cheques (Resource rebates)

See **Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)**

Prostitutes

Murder of ... *Cardinal* 953; *Cenaiko* 800, 901–02, 952–53, 1339; *Fritz* 1338; *Lukaszuk* 901–02; *Mason* 952–53; *Pannu* 800; *Pastoor* 1338

Prostitutes—Housing

Transitional housing ... *Fritz* 1338; *Pastoor* 1338

Prostitution, Juvenile

Education program re ... *Forsyth* 1052

General remarks ... *Eggen* 1733; *Forsyth* 1055

On the Internet: Education program re ... *Forsyth* 1052; *Speech from the Throne* 10

Safe houses re See **Protective safe houses (Child prostitute protection)**

Prostitution-related offences (Car seizures re)

See **Automobiles—Seizure, For prostitution-related offences: Legislation re (Bill 39)**

Protected areas

Enforcement of rules in ... *Chase* 1601; *Mar* 1601

Funding for ... *Chase* 264, 1480–81; *Eggen* 1478; *Mar* 1472–73

General remarks ... *Chase* 2012; *Klein* 2012

Increase in number of ... *Chase* 1048

Industrial development in ... *Chase* 1012, 1601; *Mar* 1601–02

Upgrading of ... *Bonko* 167; *Chase* 852–53, 1012; *Mar* 167, 852–53

Protection for persons in care

See **Social services recipients—Protection**

Protection for Persons in Care Act

General remarks ... *Evans* 613; *Fritz* 614, 879, 890, 1881; *Klein* 850; *Martin* 886; *Pastoor* 614

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)

First reading ... *Jablonski* 52

Second reading ... *Abbott* 338–39; *Elsalhy* 339–40; *Flaherty* 333–34; *Haley* 332–33; *Jablonski* 328–29, 342; *Johnson* 336–37; *Mather* 329–31; *Miller, B.* 337–38; *Pannu* 331–32; *Pastoor* 341; *Stevens* 334–35; *Strang* 340–41; *Swann* 335–36

Committee ... *Ady* 786–87; *Agnihotri* 787–88; *Cao* 788; *Flaherty* 788; *Herard* 788–89; *Hinman* 789; *Jablonski* 784–85; *Martin* 785–86; *Mather* 786; *Shariff* 789–90

Third reading ... *Abbott* 791; *Calahasen* 793; *DeLong* 792; *Forsyth* 792; *Jablonski* 790–91, 793; *Mather* 791; *Miller, R.* 791–92; *Strang* 792–93; *Tougas* 792; *Zwozdesky* 793

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)*(Continued)*

- Amendment (SP332/05: Tabled) ... *Haley* 790;
Jablonski 784
- Document re (SP162/05: Tabled) ... *Jablonski* 295
- Expediting passage of ... *Hancock* 737; *Jablonski* 956;
Klein 737; *Taft* 737
- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 800; *Evans* 852, 2048;
Forsyth 413, 799; *Mather* 413
- Implementation of ... *Evans* 1670; *Jablonski* 1670;
Rodney 1787
- Letter re (SP147/05: Tabled) ... *Jablonski* 252
- Letter re (SP181/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 327
- News article re (SP197/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 328
- Petition presented re ... *Jablonski* 210, 653, 745
- Statement re ... *Jablonski* 697; *Mather* 745
- Unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and Third
readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... *Jablonski* 784, 790;
Speaker, The 784; *Zwozdesky* 793
- Web site article re (SP196/05: Tabled) ... *Flaherty* 327

Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution ActGeneral remarks ... *Eggen* 1733**Protection of personal information***See Privacy, Right of***Protection of Privacy Act***See Freedom of Information and Protection of
Privacy Act***Protection officers, Provincial***See Provincial protection officers***Protective safe houses (Child prostitute protection)**General remarks ... *Eggen* 1733**Protective vests (Corrections officers)**General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1427, 1434**Protocol Office**General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1099**Protocols for medical practices symposium***See Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems
Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)***Province-wide teacher bargaining***See Collective bargaining—Teachers, Province-wide
bargaining***Provincial Advisory Committee on Public Safety and
Sour Gas**Study (2000) ... *Melchin* 910**Provincial Archives of Alberta**Upgrading ... *Agnihotri* 305**Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 25)**First reading ... *Stevens* 170Second reading ... *Flaherty* 717; *Miller, B.* 717;
Stevens 356–57Committee ... *Miller, B.* 727; *Pannu* 727–28; *Stevens*
727Third reading ... *Stevens* 1379Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
(Outside of House sitting)**Provincial court judges**Post-retirement part-time service: Legislation re (Bill
25) ... *Stevens* 170**Provincial Court judges—Salaries***See Wages—Provincial Court judges***Provincial debt***See Debts, Public (Provincial government)***Provincial elections***See Elections, Provincial***Provincial income tax***See Income tax, Provincial***Provincial Judges and Masters in Chambers Pension
Plan**Annual reports, 2000/01 - 2002/03 (SP80-82/05: Tabled)
... *Clerk, The* 94; *McClellan* 94**Provincial Judges' Association**General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 275**Provincial Laboratory of Public Health**Funding ... *Evans* 271**Provincial/Municipal Council on Roles, Responsibilities
and Resources in the 21st Century, Minister's**General remarks ... *Renner* 1320, 1322**Provincial/municipal fiscal relations***[See also Municipal finance]*General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1327; *Elsalhy* 1326;
Martin 1325; *Renner* 848, 1322, 1323; *Speech from
the Throne* 9; *Taft* 848, 1323; *Taylor* 462**Provincial/municipal relations**General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 1327–28; *Renner* 1322**Provincial Museum of Alberta***[See also under new name Royal Alberta Museum]*Funding for upgrading ... *Brown* 1482Hoof Prints to Tank Tracks exhibit ... *Speaker, The*
1576Renaming to Royal Alberta Museum ... *Lindsay* 1505**Provincial museums—Finance***See Museums, Provincial—Finance***Provincial nominee program***See Immigration, Provincial nominee program***Provincial parks***See Parks, Provincial***Provincial police***See Police, Provincial***Provincial protection officers**General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1427, 1431Training ... *Cenaiko* 1433**Provincial Secretary (Hon. Ron Stevens)**Message from Lieutenant Governor ... *Stevens* 7Statement at Legislature opening ... *Stevens* 1**Provincial stroke strategy***See Strokes (Brain disease), Provincial strategy re***Psychiatric services, Children***See Mental health services—Children***Psychologists, College of Alberta***See College of Alberta Psychologists***Psychotropic drug usage by long-term care residents***See Extended care facilities residents, Prescription
drug usage***Public Accounts, Standing Committee on***See Committee on Public Accounts, Standing***Public Accounts, Standing Committee on (Federal
government)***See Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
(Federal government)***Public Affairs Bureau**Advertising budget ... *Klein* 1102, 1103; *MacDonald*
1103; *Taft* 1102Auto insurance press release ... *McClellan* 1669; *Miller,
R.* 1669Communications goals ... *Elsalhy* 1103–04; *Klein* 1100,
1101, 1104–05General remarks ... *Pannu* 268

Public Affairs Bureau (Continued)

- Relation to departmental communications divisions ...
Cenaiko 1435–36; *Dunford* 1015; *Eggen* 1014;
Elsalhy 1104; *Klein* 1105; *Taft* 1435
- Role of ... *Elsalhy* 1104; *Klein* 1105; *Mason* 1108–09
- Staffing ... *Klein* 1101; *Mason* 1109; *Taft* 1101
- Web site for government members only ... *Klein* 1101;
Taft 1101
- Web site for government members only, address of
(SP379/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 1128

Public assistance

- Aboriginal peoples ... *Cardinal* 281
- Caseload ... *Cardinal* 1129
- Funding for ... *McClellan* 748
- Funding for, using resource rebate funds, letters re
(SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1837
- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1459; *Cardinal* 1129,
1140–41; *Pannu* 739; *Speech from the Throne* 9
- Health/utility benefits, ... *Backs* 278; *Cardinal* 278
- Increase to ... *Backs* 849, 856, 1198; *Blakeman* 1139,
1140; *Cardinal* 849, 953, 1138, 1198; *Fritz* 1198;
Graydon 855–56; *Martin* 953, 1136; *McClellan* 856
- Increase to: Letter re (SP527/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri*
1632
- Increase to: Letter re (SP793/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.*
2017
- Market-basket measure as basis for ... *Backs* 849;
Cardinal 849
- Medication copay allowance ... *Blakeman* 1140
- Personal income exemption increase ... *Backs* 849;
Cardinal 849
- Review of ... *Backs* 1198; *Cardinal* 1198

Public auctions

- Consumer protection legislation re ... *Speech from the
Throne* 9

Public auditing

See **Government auditing**

Public auto insurance plan

See **Insurance, Automobile, Public plan re**

Public buildings

- Energy efficiency in ... *DeLong* 696; *Oberg* 696
- Renewable energy use in See **Energy resources,
Alternate, Provincial government usage of**

Public buildings—Maintenance and repair

- Funding for ... *Oberg* 1085, 1799–1800

Public contracts

- Auditor General's comments re ... *Elsalhy* 1418; *Lund*
1419; *Pastoor* 1423–24
- Awarding of, to former ministerial aides ... *Evans*
642–43; *Klein* 643; *Mason* 699; *Taft* 642–43
- Cost overruns in ... *MacDonald* 1098
- Savings on ... *Ouellette* 757
- Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ...
Elsalhy 619, 1418; *MacDonald* 760; *Ouellette* 619,
761
- Sole-source contracts: Review committee re ... *Ouellette*
761

Public debt, Municipal—Fort McMurray

See **Debts, Public (Municipal government)—Fort
McMurray**

Public debt, Provincial

See **Debts, Public (Provincial government)**

Public education

See **Education**

Public education—Finance

See **Education—Finance**

Public Guardian's office

- Funding ... *Fritz* 879, 887; *Martin* 886

Public Health, Provincial Laboratory of

See **Provincial Laboratory of Public Health**

Public Health Act

- Amendment by Bill 7 ... *Evans* 52; *Mitzel* 240
- Food service regulations under ... *Evans* 1520

Public Health and Immunization Trust (Federal)

- Alberta's share ... *Blakeman* 272, 273; *Evans* 271, 273

Public Health Appeal Board

- Annual report, 2004 (SP397/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The*
1206; *Evans* 1206

Public housing

See **Social housing**

Public interest and government

- General remarks ... *Pannu* 267–68
- Statement re ... *Swann* 1606

Public lands

- Access to ... *Coutts* 648, 693–94, 927, 1573;
Groeneveld 648, 1573; *Rogers* 693–94
- Game farming use of ... *Swann* 1221
- General remarks ... *Bonko* 928, 1075; *Boutilier* 1040;
Coutts 1075
- Grazing usage See **Grazing lands, Public**
- Industrial development on ... *Bonko* 928, 937
- Sale of ... *Chase* 1012, 1048
- Sale of, freeze on ... *Bonko* 167; *Chase* 853; *Mar* 167,
853

Public lands—Eastern Slopes

- Access issues re ... *Coutts* 1573–74; *Groeneveld* 1573
- General remarks ... *Bonko* 928

Public lands—Fort McMurray

See **Alberta Social Housing Corporation, Transfer of
land to Fort McMurray**

Public lands department

See **Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development**

Public/private partnerships

- See **Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton,
Public/private partnership funding model for
southeast portion of; Capital projects,
Public/private partnerships re; Courts—Calgary,
New courthouse, Public/private funding of;
Hospitals—Calgary, New south Calgary hospital:
Public/private funding of; Lakeland College,
Sherwood Park campus: P3 proposal for; Road
construction—Finance, Public/private partnerships
re; Schools—Construction, Public/private projects
re**

Public records—Confidentiality

- General remarks ... *Elsalhy* 1026, 1417, 1426, 1886;
Evans 482–84; *Johnston* 413; *Klein* 484, 1026; *Lund*
1415, 1419, 1423, 1886; *Martin* 1420; *Mather* 1423;
McClellan 1026; *Ouellette* 413; *Pannu* 484; *Pastoor*
1324, 1423; *Taft* 482

**Public Safety and Sour Gas, Provincial Advisory
Committee on**

See **Provincial Advisory Committee on Public Safety
and Sour Gas**

Public safety (Building/fire codes)

- Electric wire installation permit review, safety aspects ...
Renner 904–05; *VanderBurg* 904–05
- Funding for ... *Bonko* 1328; *Elsalhy* 1326
- General remarks ... *Renner* 1320

Public safety (From criminal activity)

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1327; *Cenaiko* 1427, 1433; *McClellan* 748–49; *Miller, B.* 1227, 1428–29; *Stevens* 1226

Performance measures ... *Miller, B.* 1428–29

Public safety (From criminal activity)—Inner city areas

General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1429

Public School Boards Council

Showcase celebration, program from (SP682/05: Tabled)
... *Flaherty* 1838

Public security (Counterterrorism)

See **Terrorist attacks—Prevention**

Public service—Alberta

Cuts to, in 1994 ... *Chase* 1466

Decrease in ... *Hinman* 970

Employees on minimum wage ... *Backs* 1130

Increase in ... *Cardinal* 1133; *Elsalhy* 773; *Ouellette* 773

Increase in, freeze on ... *Hinman* 1599; *McClellan* 1599

Information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... *Clerk, The* 2056; *Elsalhy* 1746; *Ouellette* 1746, 2056

Senior officials' cooling-off period, following resignation ... *Elsalhy* 2011; *Klein* 2011

Succession planning for ... *Backs* 1131; *Cardinal* 1130, 1133

Public service—Alberta—Salaries

See **Wages—Public service employees**

Public service pensions

See **Civil service pensions**

Public transit—Finance

Federal funding ... *Taft* 1323

Provincial funding ... *Bonko* 1328; *Taft* 1323

Public transportation services

See **Dept. of Transportation**

Public Trustee

Funding for office of ... *Stevens* 275, 276

Public warning system

See **Emergency public warning system**

Public works, Municipal—Finance

See **Capital projects, Municipal—Finance**

Public works, supply and services department

See **Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation**

Publicly Funded Health Services, Expert Advisory Panel to Review

See **Expert Advisory Panel to Review Publicly Funded Health Services**

Publishing industry

Funding ... *Agnihotri* 977, 2053; *Mar* 977, 2053; *McClellan* 2053

PUF funding (Education)

See **Program unit funding (Education)**

Pulmonary disease initiative

See **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease initiative**

Punjabi language—Teaching

Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1724; *Zwozdesky* 1725

Pupil/teacher ratio (Grade school)

See **Class size (Grade school)**

Purchases, Government

Efficiencies re ... *Ouellette* 752

New procurement card system for ... *Ouellette* 757

PWSS

See **Dept. of Infrastructure**

QUAD child care plan principles

See **Daycare centres, National plan principles re**

Quality, universality, accessibility, and child development (Child care plan principles)

See **Daycare centres, National plan principles re**

Queen Elizabeth II

See **Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain**

Queen Elizabeth II highway—Carstairs/Crossfield area

Upgrading of ... *Chase* 264

Queen Elizabeth II highway—Edmonton area

Underpass, Henday Drive interchange ... *MacDonald* 1804; *Oberg* 1804

Queen's Printer

Staff ... *Klein* 1101

Question Period

See **Oral Question Period (2005); Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)**

Quilting in Learning and Tribute project

General remarks ... *Jablonski* 1630

R-CALF

See **Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)**

Racial Discrimination, International Day for the Elimination of

See **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

Racing Appeal Tribunal

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1277

Racing Corporation

See **Alberta Racing Corporation**

Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1283, 1288–89

Revenue from ... *Backs* 849; *Cardinal* 849; *Graydon* 855–56; *McClellan* 856

Slot machines in See **Slot machines in racing entertainment centres**

Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)—Calgary

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1283

RAGE dept.

See **Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency**

RAH

See **Royal Alexandra Hospital**

Rail service, High-speed—Edmonton/Calgary

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1745

Rail service—Alberta/Prince Rupert, B.C.

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 836, 843; *Oberg* 905

Rail service—Edmonton/Fort McMurray

Lobbyist for, fees paid to ... *Chase* 612; *Klein* 612, 643; *Taft* 643

Lobbyist for, use of government aircraft ... *Klein* 82; *Taft* 82

Rail service—Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 804–05, 836

Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)

First reading ... *Oberg* 93

Second reading ... *Bonko* 422; *Chase* 421–22; *Eggen* 422; *Oberg* 421, 422; *Taylor* 422

Committee ... *Chase* 449

Third reading ... *Bonko* 637; *Flaherty* 637; *Oberg* 637

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

Railway container terminals—Grande Prairie area

Proposal for ... *Danyluk* 837, 843, 905; *Oberg* 905

Railway container terminals—Prince Rupert, B.C.

Impact on Alberta trade ... *Danyluk* 905; *Oberg* 905

Railway crossings

Dispute resolution mechanism re (Bill 13) ... *Oberg* 93

RAM

See **Royal Alberta Museum**

Rancher's Beef

Provincial assistance to ... *Horner* 1210; *MacDonald* 1208

Treasury Board loan to ... *McClellan* 2050; *Miller, R.* 2050

Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)

Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... *Chase* 1187; *Danyluk* 46; *Horner* 290, 301, 949, 1207, 1210; *Klein* 14, 15; *MacDonald* 297; *Martin* 1166, 1212–13; *Mason* 15, 949; *Stelmach* 1182, 1186, 1187

Ranchers Own Meet Processors Inc.

Provincial assistance to ... *MacDonald* 1208

Relation to Cargill ... *MacDonald* 1208

Random workplace drug testing

See **Drug use in the workplace, Random testing for**

Rangeland, Public

See **Grazing lands, Public**

RAP

See **Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)**

RAP scholarships

See **Registered apprenticeship program (High schools), Scholarships for**

Rape of inmates in remand facility

See **Edmonton Remand Centre, Rape of inmates in**

Rapid transit—Finance

See **Public transit—Finance**

Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph

See **Benedict XVI, Pope**

RCMP

See **Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

Reading recovery program

General remarks ... *Mather* 1726

Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)

First reading ... *Lund* 326

Second reading ... *Backs* 579; *Bonko* 539–40; *Chase* 540; *Eggen* 539; *Elsalhy* 538–39; *Lund* 538; *Martin* 540; *Miller, R.* 540

Committee ... *Chase* 1190; *Zwozdesky* 1190

Third reading ... *Hancock* 1290; *Lund* 1290; *Tougas* 1290

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

Mortgage fraud provisions ... *Lund* 803

Real Estate Assurance Fund

General remarks ... *Lund* 803

Restriction on access to (Bill 31) ... *Lund* 326

Real Estate Council of Alberta

General remarks ... *Lund* 803

Mortgage fraud initiative ... *Lund* 1416, 1425

Rebates, Alberta 2005 resource

See **Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)**

Rebates, Energy

See **Energy rebates**

Rebates, Natural gas

See **Natural gas rebates**

Rebuilt automobiles

See **Automobiles, Written off/rebuilt**

RECA

See **Real Estate Council of Alberta**

Recall of elected representatives

Legislation re ... *Hancock* 1251; *Hinman* 1251

Reclamation of land

Abandoned well sites ... *Boutilier* 166; *Eggen* 914; *Melchin* 166, 916; *Swann* 166

Energy industry sites ... *Boutilier* 1046; *Klein* 769; *Melchin* 649, 910; *Swann* 769, 1038–39; *Taylor* 1045

Energy industry sites, prevention of disclosure of costs of under FOIP law ... *Melchin* 1519; *Swann* 1519

Energy industry sites, regulations re: Statement re ... *Swann* 1969

Failed reclamation work, legislation allowing re-entry to rectify (Bill 53) ... *Oberle* 1745

Oil sands sites ... *Boutilier* 1915; *Melchin* 1829–30, 1914

Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure)

Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... *Blakeman* 624–25; *Hancock* 624; *Martin* 625; *Stevens* 624

Comment invited re ... *Speaker, The* 53

General remarks ... *Speaker, The* 169

Interim agreement re ... *Speaker, The* 17, 91

Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)

General remarks ... *Abbott* 126; *Agnihotri* 50, 169; *Blakeman* 252; *Bonko* 127, 418; *Cao* 50, 490; *Chase* 490–91; *Danyluk* 50, 168, 251, 577–78; *DeLong* 578; *Ducharme* 168; *Eggen* 418; *Elsalhy* 50–51, 325; *Goudreau* 325; *Griffiths* 417; *Herard* 325; *Jablonski* 50, 251, 489–90; *Johnson* 50, 126, 251, 490; *Johnston* 126; *Liepert* 578; *Lindsay* 251, 324–25, 417; *Lukaszuk* 49–50, 168, 489; *Mather* 126–27, 251, 325, 418, 490, 578–79; *McFarland* 578; *Miller, B.* 168–69; *Mitzel* 417–18; *Oberle* 169; *Pannu* 127, 326; *Pastoor* 578; *Rodney* 325, 578; *Rogers* 126, 169, 418, 490

Recorded vote

See **Division (Recorded vote) (2005)**

Records management services (Government department)

See **Dept. of Government Services**

Recovery of oil

See **Oil recovery methods**

Recreation

Role in provincial economy ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1010–11

Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation

See **Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation**

Recreation—Finance

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1150–51; *Mar* 1150–51

Recreation areas

Taxation status re (Bill 28) ... *Renner* 252

Recreation centre—Bonnyville

Provincial funding for ... *Ducharme* 1482

Recreational fishing

See **Fishing, Sport**

- Recreational trails**
See Trails, Recreational
- Recycling of computers/electronic waste**
See Electronic waste—Recycling
- Recycling of farm manure**
See Farm manure—Recycling
- Recycling of organic materials**
See Composting
- Recycling (Waste, etc.)**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1710–11
- Red Deer ambulance service**
See Ambulance service—Red Deer
- Red Deer College**
 Construction projects at ... *Oberg* 1088
 Trade centre, spending of provincial surplus on ...
Hancock 1621; *Taft* 1621
 Truck driver training program ... *Oberg* 1308
- Red Deer Regional Hospital**
 Renovations, funding for ... *Oberg* 1086
- Red Deer Regional Water Users Group, North**
See North Red Deer Regional Water Users Group
- Red Deer Remand Centre**
 Young offender unit, closure of, use for youth drug
 treatment facility ... *Cenaiko* 800; *Pastoor* 800
- Red Deer River water diversion**
*See Water diversion—Red Deer River basin/Special
 Areas*
- Red Deer water pipeline**
See Water pipelines—Red Deer area
- Redd Alert (Aboriginal street gang)**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1430
- Reducing health care demands**
See Medical care, Demand for, reduction of
- Reed Stenhouse**
See Aon Reed Stenhouse
- Referenda, Citizens' initiative**
See Citizens' initiative referenda
- Referendum, Federal**
 Definition of marriage ... *Hinman* 1714, 1738;
McClellan 1738
 Property rights ... *Hinman* 1738; *McClellan* 1738
- Referendum, Provincial**
 Video gambling machines, removal of ... *Chase* 1284;
Graydon 1284
- Referrals, Electronic medical**
See Physician/specialist referrals, Electronic
- Reforestation**
 Energy industry lands ... *Bonko* 929
 General remarks ... *Coutts* 530–31, 927, 931, 936, 937,
 1393; *Oberle* 530–31, 936
 Oil sands lands ... *Boutilier* 1915; *Melchin* 1829–30,
 1914
 Timelines met re (Q19/05: Response tabled as
 SP775/05) ... *Bonko* 813; *Coutts* 813, 2017; *Elsalhy*
 813
- Reforestation on burnt-out areas**
 [See also **Wildfire reclamation program**]
 General remarks ... *Bonko* 937, 1575; *Coutts* 927, 931,
 1575
- Reform of health care**
See Medical care, Restructuring
- Refuse and refuse disposal**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1040
 Provincial funding for ... *Swann* 282
- Refuse and refuse disposal (Continued)**
 Provincial strategy re ... *Boutilier* 1710–11; *McFarland*
 1710–11
- Regional economic development**
See Rural economic development
- Regional economic development partnerships**
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1008, 1011, 1017; *Renner*
 1320
- Regional health authorities**
 Abortion services ... *Evans* 853; *Pannu* 853
 Ambulance service ... *Evans* 1915
 Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ...
Blakeman 482; *Evans* 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 482;
Klein 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202; *Mason* 19, 83–84, 202;
Ouellette 244; *Renner* 243; *Taft* 17, 243–44
 Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of,
 provincial assistance re ... *Blakeman* 482; *Evans* 17,
 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 245, 482; *Klein* 17, 83, 202, 245;
Mason 19, 83, 202, 245; *Renner* 243; *Taft* 17, 243
 Ambulance service transfer to: Costs ... *Evans* 19, 202,
 245; *Klein* 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202, 245; *Mason*
 83–84, 202, 245; *Taft* 17
 Ambulance service transfer to: Impact of joint
 ambulance/fire services on ... *Blakeman* 482–83;
Evans 482–83
 Board members with PC party connections ... *Elsalhy*
 1603; *Evans* 1603
 Capital plans ... *Evans* 1838, 1841
 CT scan safety requirements ... *Evans* 366
 Deficits ... *Evans* 260
 Deficits, elimination of ... *Blakeman* 273; *Evans* 271,
 273; *Klein* 249
 Detection of overcharging on electric power bills ...
Klein 161; *Lund* 161–62; *Mason* 161
 Disaster/epidemic planning ... *Evans* 645
 Drug abuse treatment programs ... *Evans* 852; *Mather*
 852
 Emergency rooms improvements ... *Evans* 692–93;
Pham 692
 Employee health premium costs ... *McClellan* 766; *Taft*
 766
 Food safety regulations application ... *Evans* 248; *Marz*
 248
 Funding [See also **Medical care—Finance**]; *Blakeman*
 272, 1840; *Evans* 271, 273, 977, 1074, 1458, 1915;
MacDonald 255, 1846; *McClellan* 748; *Snelgrove*
 976–77
 General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1459
 Long-term care facilities' programs ... *Blakeman* 1121;
Evans 207–08, 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1707,
 1962, 2049–50; *Fritz* 614, 1886; *Johnson* 1074; *Klein*
 797, 850; *Pastoor* 207–08
 Long-term care facilities' programs: Auditor General's
 audit of ... *Evans* 2050
 Medical specialists in smaller regions ... *Hinman* 1845
 Medications usage monitoring ... *Evans* 415
 Mental health programs ... *Blakeman* 1464
 Physiotherapy fees paid ... *Evans* 274; *McClellan* 954
 Provincewide services ... *Evans* 977, 1339
 Role in health care restructuring ... *Evans* 205
 Self-managed care programs for seniors ... *Evans* 617
 Staffing levels increase ... *Evans* 1623
 Vaccine administrative grants to, federal ... *Evans* 271

Regional health authorities—Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1339; *Evans* 1339

Regional health authority—Calgary

See **Calgary Health Region**

Regional health authority—Edmonton

See **Capital Health**

Regional health authority no. 1

See **Chinook Regional Health Authority**

Regional health authority no. 2

See **Palliser Health Region**

Regional health authority no. 3

See **Calgary Health Region**

Regional health authority no. 4

See **David Thompson Regional Health Authority**

Regional health authority no. 5

See **East Central Health**

Regional health authority no. 6

See **Capital Health**

Regional health authority no. 7

See **Aspen Regional Health Authority**

Regional health authority no. 8

See **Peace Country Health**

Regional health authority no. 9

See **Northern Lights Health Region**

Regional municipal services partnerships

See **Intermunicipal relations**

Regional partnerships

See **Regional economic development partnerships**

Regional planning

General remarks ... *Renner* 1322; *Taft* 1321

Regional planning commissions

Elimination of ... *Renner* 1322; *Taft* 1321

Regional policing

See **Police, Intermunicipal co-operation between**

Regional school boards

See **School boards, Regional**

Regional sewage disposal plants

See **Sewage disposal plants, Regional**

Regional water systems—Red deer area

See **Water pipelines—Red Deer area**

Regional water treatment plants

See **Water treatment plants, Regional**

Regionalization of children's services

See **Child and family services authorities**

Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)

General remarks ... *Bonko* 1266; *Cardinal* 1135;

Flaherty 1787; *Hancock* 982; *Hinman* 1272;

Zwozdesky 1267

Scholarships for ... *Hancock* 981

Scholarships for: Statement re ... *Johnson* 983

Registered education savings plan (Federal)

Provincial contribution to ... *Hancock* 47–48

Provincial contribution to: Legislation re (Bill 54) ...

Hancock 1890

Registered nurses

See **Nurses**

Registered Nurses, Alberta Association of

See **Alberta Association of Registered Nurses**

Registered nurses—Education

See **Nurses—Education**

Registered nurses—Supply

See **Nurses—Supply**

Registries

See **Alberta Registries**

Registry for cornea donations

See **Cornea transplants, Registry for**

Registry offices, Private

General remarks ... *Brown* 1422; *Elsalhy* 1417, 1418;

Lund 1418–19, 1422

Provision of government information through ... *Lund*

1416, 1419, 1425

Provision of marriage licences through ... *Lund* 1425;

Miller, B. 1424

Registry offices, Private—Security aspects

Concerns re mortgage fraud ... *Elsalhy* 803–04; *Lund*

803; *Ouellette* 804

Fraud awareness programs for agents ... *Lund* 1415

Regulated power prices

See **Electric power—Prices, Regulated option re**

Regulations

See **Alberta Regulations; British Columbia regulations**

Regulatory reform

See **Alberta Regulations, Reform of**

Regulatory Review Secretariat

General remarks ... *Ouellette* 752

Rehabilitation of criminals

Funding for ... *Cenaiko* 1427

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1433; *Miller, B.* 1430

Relationship threat assessment and management initiative

See **Domestic violence, Risk assessment group re violent cases**

Religious schools—Finance

See **Private schools—Finance**

Remand Centre, Calgary

See **Calgary Remand Centre**

Remand Centre, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Remand Centre**

Remand Centre, Medicine Hat

See **Medicine Hat Remand Centre**

Remand Centre, Red Deer

See **Red Deer Remand Centre**

Remand centres—Construction

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 696

Remand centres—Finance

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1427, 1433–34; *Miller, B.* 1432

Remembrance Day

Statement re ... *Backs* 1629

Remission policy re student loans

See **Student financial aid, Loan remission policy re**

Remote housing initiative

See **Social housing—Rural areas, Sustainable remote housing initiative**

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, 2005

Statement re ... *Chase* 209; *Ducharme* 208–09

Renewable energy resources

See **Energy resources, Alternate**

Renewed funding framework (Education)

See **School boards, Funding: Renewed funding framework**

Renewed Funding Framework Ministerial Advisory Committee

See **School boards, Funding: Renewed funding framework advisory committee**

Renner, Sara

Statement re ... *Tarchuk* 773

Rent supplement program

See **Social housing, Rent supplement program**

Rental housing

Secondary suites: MLA Review Committee on, report ...
Renner 1321

Rental land issue (Crop insurance payouts)

See **Crop insurance program, Payouts to renters of land**

Renters

See **Landlord and tenant**

Replacement workers

Legislation re, proposed ... *Blakeman* 1139; *Cardinal* 1140

Replagal (Drug)

General remarks ... *Evans* 290

Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)

First reading ... *MacDonald* 170
Second reading ... *Abbott* 1347-49; *Blakeman* 513-14; *Bonko* 1346, 1349-50; *Chase* 515-16; *Eggen* 517, 1345-46; *Griffiths* 516-17; *Groeneveld* 514-15; *MacDonald* 513, 1352-53; *Mather* 1349; *Miller, R.* 1350-51; *Pastoor* 1346; *Prins* 1351-52; *Snelgrove* 1350; *Taylor* 1346-47

General remarks ... *McClellan* 962; *Miller, R.* 960

Reports, Grade level achievement

See **School reports, Grade level achievement reports**

Request for emergency debate

See **Emergency debates under Standing Order 30**

Research and development

Chairs for, establishment of ... *Backs* 1376; *Doerksen* 1377

Ethical implications ... *Doerksen* 1378; *Miller, B.* 1377

Funding for ... *Backs* 1376; *Chase* 1377; *Doerksen* 1368-69, 1372, 1501; *Elsalhy* 1371, 1501; *Hancock* 864, 868, 871; *McClellan* 749

Funding for: Private partnership re ... *Doerksen* 1375; *Eggen* 1373-74

General remarks ... *Backs* 1375-76; *Hancock* 869; *Speech from the Throne* 9

Human Resources projects See **Dept. of Human Resources and Employment, Research and development funding**

Platform technology development ... *Doerksen* 1372

Public awareness of ... *Backs* 1376; *Doerksen* 1376-77

Recruitment of scientists for ... *Backs* 1376; *Doerksen* 1377

Statement re ... *Herard* 1151

Tax incentives for ... *Bonko* 1009

Research and Technology Authority

See **Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority**

Research Council Inc.

See **Alberta Research Council Inc.**

Reserves, Gambling on

See **Gambling-Aboriginal reserves**

Reservoirs-Finance

General remarks ... *McClellan* 749

Residential electric power contracts

See **Electric power contracts, Residential**

Residential natural gas contracts

See **Natural gas contracts, Residential**

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)

First reading ... *Strang* 93

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)

(Continued)

Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 467-68; *Backs* 468; *Blakeman* 469-70; *Bonko* 466; *Eggen* 466-67; *Elsalhy* 380, 465-66; *Hancock* 380; *Hinman* 468-69; *Shariff* 380; *Strang* 465-66, 470

Committee ... *Pastoor* 602; *Strang* 602

Third reading ... *Backs* 1513; *Strang* 1512-13

Royal Assent ... Lieutenant Governor 2 June, 2005

(Outside of House sittings)

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)

First reading ... *Lund* 1631

Second reading ... *Backs* 1808; *Blakeman* 1808-09; *Elsalhy* 1807-08; *Lund* 1805-06, 1811; *Miller, R.* 1809-10; *Pannu* 1810

Committee ... *Elsalhy* 1978; *Lund* 1978-79; *Martin* 1978

Third reading ... *Eggen* 2022; *Flaherty* 2021; *Hancock* 2021; *Lund* 2021; *Pannu* 2021-22

Royal Assent ... Lieutenant Governor of Alberta 2057

Residential tenancies dispute resolution service

General remarks ... *Lund* 1416

Legislation re (Bill 44) ... *Lund* 1631

Residential youth wildlife certificate

See **Hunting-Regulations, For youth**

Residents, Medical

See **Medical residents**

Residents of long-term care facilities

See **Extended care facilities residents**

Resolutions (2005)

No. 4 Committee of the Whole, Motion to resolve into 75

No. 5 Committee of Supply, Motion to resolve into 75

No. 6 Adjournment of the Legislature (spring recess) 75

No. 7 Adjournment of the Legislature (summer recess) 75

No. 8 Supplementary estimates 2004-05 referred to Committee of Supply 94

No. 9 Supplementary estimates 2004-05 considered for two days 94

No. 10 Report on risk management fund coverage of MLAs 106-08

No. 11 Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee 105-06

No. 12 Adjournment of the Legislature for RCMP memorial service 105

No. 13 Interim supply 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply 211

No. 14 Interim supply 2005-06 to be debated for one day 211

No. 15 Speech from the Throne, Address in reply, engrossed 436

No. 16 Special sitting of the Legislature for Royal visit 597-98

No. 17 Amendments to Standing Orders 624-25

No. 18 2005-06 main and lottery fund estimates referred to Committee of Supply 747

No. 19 Budget Address 747-50

No. 19 Budget debate 776-83

No. 20 60th Anniversary of VE Day 1110-11

No. 21 Korea War Veterans Day 1111-12

No. 22 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply 1676-81

Resolutions (2005) (Continued)

- No. 23 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days 1681
- No. 24 Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee membership change 1638
- No. 25 Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee, Select Special, Motion to appoint 1943-44
- No. 26 Adjournment of the Legislature (fall session) 2057
- No. 501 Wellness initiatives 69-74
- No. 502 Elimination of library card fees in tribute to Dr. Lois E. Hole 187-93, 343-44
- No. 503 Alberta Ingenuity Fund 344-48, 511-13
- No. 504 Cleaner energy incentive 669-75
- No. 505 High school credits 827-35
- No. 506 Hand-held cellphone use while driving 999-1006
- No. 507 Smoking prohibition in public places and workplaces (item previously decided; invitation to revise motion) 1034
- No. 507 Long-term care standards (revised motion) 1173-79
- No. 508 Recruitment of health care professionals 1361-68
- No. 509 Postsecondary education system review 1547-54
- No. 510 Net metering of electricity 1763-69
- No. 512 Salaries of government employees 1937-43
- Committee of Supply (Interim estimates, 2005-06) 253-69
- Committee of Supply (Main estimates, 2005-06) 751-64, 835-45, 858-75, 877-90, 908-22, 925-38, 958-71, 1006-18, 1036-49, 1051-63, 1085-98, 1099-1110, 1129-42, 1180-89, 1206-23, 1225-36, 1259-75, 1277-90, 1319-29, 1368-78, 1415-38, 1458-70, 1471-84
- Committee of Supply (Supplementary estimates, 2004-05) 271-83, 296-312
- Committee of Supply (Supplementary estimates, 2005-06) 1720-34, 1789-1805, 1838-52
- Select standing committees, Members' lists presented 11
- Select standing committees, Motion to appoint 11
- Speech from the Throne, Motion to consider 11
- Speech from the Throne debate 28-99, 59-68, 75-80, 94-103, 108-16, 129-46, 147-49, 155-58, 436
- Resource development, First Nations/energy industry issues**
See **Energy industry-Crown lands, Aboriginal issues re**
- Resource development department**
See **Dept. of Energy**
- Resource development department, Sustainable**
See **Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development**
- Resource management (Public lands)**
See **Integrated resource management (Public lands)**
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)**
[See also **Dividend payments to Albertans (From Heritage Fund)**]
General remarks ... *Hancock* 1795; *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911; *McClellan* 1626; *Miller, R.* 1626
Legislation re (Bill 43) ... *McClellan* 1630-31
Letter re (SP604/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1716
Letters re (SP633, 674-676, 723/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1745, 1837, 1919

Resource revenueSee **Natural resources revenue****RESP**See **Registered education savings plan (Federal)****RespErate (Blood pressure device)**Web site article re (SP724/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1919**Responsible gaming features (VLTs)**See **Video gambling machines, Responsible gaming features****Restaurant and Food Services Association, Alberta**See **Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Association****Restaurant and Food Services Exposition (ARFEX), Edmonton (2005)**See **Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Exposition (ARFEX), Edmonton (2005)****Restructuring and Government Efficiency, Dept. of**See **Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency****Retirement pensions, Civil service**See **Civil service pensions****Retirement pensions, Private**See **Pensions, Private-sector****Revenue, Dept. of**See **Dept. of Revenue****Revenue sharing**See **Federal/provincial fiscal relations; Provincial/municipal fiscal relations****Rewega, Brooklynn (Infant)**See under **Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act****Reynolds-Alberta Museum**General remarks ... *Johnson* 1836Motorcycle exhibition: Statement re ... *Johnson* 1450**RHAs**See **Regional health authorities****Richmond Road diagnostic and treatment centre**See **Alberta Children's Hospital, Former hospital: Renovations to****Riel commemoration ceremony**See **Louis Riel commemoration ceremony****Right of privacy**See **Privacy, Right of****Right of property**See **Property rights****Right to vote-Women**See **Women-Right to vote****Righteous among the Nations (Holocaust memorial project)**Statement re ... *Marz* 1340**Rights of the Child, United Nations Convention on**See **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child****Ring roads-Calgary**Funding for ... *Oberg* 1086, 1800Impact on highway 8 ... *Morton* 460; *Oberg* 460-61Land acquisition re, from Tsuu T'ina nation ... *Liepert*166; *Magnus* 1781-82; *Oberg* 166, 1781-82Public/private partnership funding model for ... *Speech from the Throne* 9**Ring roads-Edmonton**See **Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton**

- Ringuette, Mr. Victor**
Statement re ... *Ducharme* 744
- Risk assessment group (Violent domestic cases)**
See **Domestic violence, Risk assessment group re violent cases**
- Risk management fund**
General remarks ... *Blakeman* 964; *McClellan* 965
Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under: Referred to Members' Services committee (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... *Hancock* 106; *MacDonald* 106-07; *Pannu* 107-08; *Stevens* 106, 108
Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under (M1/05: Withdrawn) ... *Martin* 494
Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under (SP3/05: Tabled) ... *Stevens* 26
- Risk management in health**
See **Drinking water, Safety of; Traffic safety, Promotion of**
- RITE call centre**
See **Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)**
- Road construction**
Contracting procedure re ... *Hinman* 1804
General remarks ... *Chase* 1087, 1336; *Oberg* 1336
Gravel roads ... *Oberg* 1096; *VanderBurg* 1096
Priorities re ... *Oberg* 950-51; *Rogers* 950-51
Resource road program ... *Oberg* 1085
Secondary road program ... *Hinman* 1804; *Speech from the Throne* 9
- Road construction-Finance**
General remarks ... *McClellan* 749; *Oberg* 1085, 1086, 1094, 1800, 1803
Public/private partnerships re ... *Hinman* 1804; *Oberg* 1804
Small projects ... *Oberg* 1800
Surplus spending on ... *McClellan* 1667
Trust fund for ... *Hinman* 1804; *Oberg* 1805
- Road construction-Fort McMurray area**
Impact of population increase on ... *Chase* 612; *Danyluk* 87; *Klein* 612; *Oberg* 87
- Road construction-Northern Alberta**
Employment opportunities in ... *Backs* 1131; *Blakeman* 1139; *Cardinal* 1133, 1138
General remarks ... *Danyluk* 804-05, 837
- Road construction services**
See **Dept. of Transportation**
- Road construction sites-Safety aspects**
See **Highway construction sites-Safety aspects**
- Road Runner day care, Calgary**
Closure of ... *Eggen* 1733; *Forsyth* 1733
- Road safety-Northern Alberta**
See **Traffic safety-Northern Alberta**
- Road Safety Vision 2010 (Federal traffic safety initiative)**
General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1435
- Roadkill**
Feeding of, to grizzly bears See **Grizzly bears, Feeding of, with roadkill**
- Roads**
Median barrier installation, on twinned roads ... *Oberg* 2011; *Shariff* 2011
- Roads, Winter**
See **Winter roads**
- Roads-Edmonton**
23rd Avenue/Calgary Trail intersection: Upgrading ... *Agnihotri* 1090; *Miller, R.* 258, 1327; *Oberg* 1091
- Roads-Interchanges-Construction**
See **Highway interchanges-Construction**
- Roads-Maintenance and repair**
Funding for ... *Chase* 1802; *Oberg* 1085, 1086
General remarks ... *Chase* 264
Impact on traffic safety ... *Herard* 458; *Oberg* 458, 950-51, 1085; *Rogers* 950-51
- Roads-Maintenance and repair-Northern Alberta**
General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1199-1200; *Oberg* 1199-1200
Impact on traffic safety ... *Knight* 44; *Oberg* 44
- Roads-Northern Alberta**
Impact on aboriginal employment possibilities ... *Backs* 281, 1131; *Blakeman* 1139; *Cardinal* 280, 1133, 1138
- Roads for royalties**
General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1089; *Oberg* 1090
- Robertshaw, Jessica**
Recognition of ... *Rodney* 578
- Robins, Mr. Kevin**
Statement re ... *Rogers* 2016
- Rochfort Bridge area drug raid**
See under **Royal Canadian Mounted Police**
- Rocky Mountain Turf Club Inc.**
Gaming revenue to ... *MacDonald* 1289
- Rockyview General Hospital**
Upgrades to ... *Blakeman* 644, 1840; *Chase* 1470; *Evans* 533, 644, 1838-39; *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309
Upgrades to, companies bidding on contracts for ... *Agnihotri* 1089; *Oberg* 1090
- Rod Love Consulting Inc.**
Government contracts with ... *Klein* 643; *Taft* 643
- Rodeo, Canadian Finals**
See **Canadian Finals Rodeo**
- Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century council**
See **Provincial/Municipal Council on Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century, Minister's**
- Rosebud Theatre**
General remarks ... *Chase* 1012; *Dunford* 1013
- Ross, Jennifer**
Recognition of ... *Johnson* 251
- Rotary International**
100th anniversary: Statement re ... *Miller, R.* 25
- Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary (May 2004)**
General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1052; *Forsyth* 305; *McClellan* 748; *Stevens* 1236; *Zwozdesky* 1265
Involvement of youth in ... *Danyluk* 1062
- Royal Alberta Museum**
[See also under former name **Provincial Museum of Alberta**]
Centennial funding for ... *Mar* 1473
General remarks ... *Her Majesty* 1617
Statement re ... *Lindsay* 1505
- Royal Alexandra Hospital**
Abortion services cancellation ... *Evans* 853; *Pannu* 853
In vitro fertilization clinic ... *Evans* 853
Renovations, funding for ... *Oberg* 1086
Volunteers at: Statement re ... *Bonko* 1204-05

Royal Canadian Legion

Payment of property taxes ... *Abbott* 323; *Renner* 323

Royal Canadian Legion. Alberta-Northwest Territories Branch

Veterans' licence sticker situation ... *Lund* 366

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Air India bombing investigation ... *Mason* 462

Alberta Securities Commission case ... *Blakeman* 1919

Alberta Securities Commission case, IMET unit

investigation of ... *McClellan* 1332; *Taft* 1332

Alberta Securities Commission chairman/exec. director's

e-mails, investigation of ... *McClellan* 948; *Taft* 948

Auditor General of Canada's report on provincial

policing services by ... *Cenaiko* 1884-85; *Miller, B.*

1884-85

Auditor General of Canada's report on provincial

policing services by, chapter 1 (SP703/05: Tabled) ...

Miller, B. 1891

Cattle rustling prevention efforts ... *Cenaiko* 1121;

Mitzel 1121

Child exploitation prevention teams ... *Cenaiko* 206

Co-operation with province on organized crime ...

McClellan 749

Corporal's death in mentally ill gunman case ... *Cenaiko*

1784; *Miller, B.* 1784

Domestic violence handling training ... *Cenaiko* 1575;

Jablonski 1575

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area ... *Cenaiko* 1430;

Jablonski 25; *Mason* 1437; *McClellan* 748; *Miller,*

B. 1428

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial for fallen

officers, statement re ... *VanderBurg* 1835

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial service for

fallen officers, Assembly adjourned (Motion 12:

Cenaiko/Stevens) ... *Cenaiko* 105; *Stevens* 105

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial service for

fallen officers, program from (SP118/05: Tabled) ...

Miller, B. 171

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial service for

fallen officers, recognition of ... *Miller, B.* 168-69

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Prayer and moment of

silence for fallen officers in ... *Speaker, The* 38, 39

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Provincial inquiry into ...

Cenaiko 41; *Stevens* 41, 43; *Taft* 41; *VanderBurg*

43

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: RCMP inquiry into ...

Stevens 41, 43

Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Statement re fallen

officers in ... *Cenaiko* 16, 40; *Miller, B.* 16, 40;

Pannu 41; *VanderBurg* 91

Forensics lab closure, Edmonton: Letter re (SP192/05:

Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 327

Forensics lab closure, Edmonton: Letters re (SP9-10/05:

Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 27

Impact of provincial police training centre on ... *Cenaiko*

1602; *McFarland* 1602

Increase in numbers of ... *Cenaiko* 205, 770, 1201,

1427, 1431, 1435, 1884-85; *McClellan* 749; *Miller,*

B. 1884-85; *Pannu* 205

Increase in numbers of: Petition presented re ... *Eggen*

1837

Missing women investigations, joint team re *See*

Project Kare (Missing women investigation team)

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Continued)

Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003, investigation,

recommendations from ... *Cenaiko* 1196, 1575;

Miller, B. 1196

Organized crime cases *See Integrated Response to*

Organized Crime

Pawnshop provision of client information to, bylaw re ...

Cenaiko 416; *Johnson* 416; *Lund* 416

Provincial funding for ... *McClellan* 749

Requalification of officers (weapons handling) ...

Cenaiko 1885; *Miller, B.* 1884-85

Royal Rubber Stamp Co.

Executive Council contract ... *Klein* 1107; *MacDonald*

1103; *Miller, R.* 1106

Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology

ATCO learning centre at ... *McClellan* 1479-80

Royalties

See Gas, Natural-Royalties; Heavy oil-Royalties;

Oil-Royalties; Timber-Royalties

Royalty revenue

See Natural resources revenue

Royalty structure (Energy resources)

[*See also Gas, Natural-Royalties; Oil-Royalties*]

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1018; *Eggen* 914, 915;

Elsalhy 917; *Mason* 1787; *Melchin* 908-09, 912,

915-16, 918, 919, 921-22

Reduction incentives ... *McClellan* 749; *Melchin* 912

Reduction incentives for clean energy technology

development ... *Melchin* 743

Reduction incentives for clean energy technology

development (Motion 504: Swann) ... *Backs* 673-74;

Eggen 670-71; *Groeneveld* 674-75; *Knight* 674;

Miller, R. 671-72; *Pannu* 672-73; *Prins* 670;

Snelgrove 672; *Swann* 669-70, 675

Use for green energy production ... *Dunford* 1016;

Eggen 1015

Royalty tax credit

See Alberta royalty tax credit

RPAP

See Medical profession-Rural areas, Action plan re

RTDRS

See Residential tenancies dispute resolution service

Rules of the road in traffic

See Traffic regulations

Rumsey natural area

Industrial activity in: Letter re (SP760/05: Tabled) ...

Eggen 1971

Rural affordable supportive living program

See Senior citizens-Housing-Rural areas, Rural

affordable supportive living program

Rural agriculture offices closure

See Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural

Development, Rural offices closure

Rural community halls

See Community halls-Rural areas

Rural Development department

See Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural

Development

Rural Development Strategy Task Force

General remarks ... *Horner* 1222

Report ... *Horner* 1221

Rural economic development

Government strategy re ... *Bonko* 123; *Boutilier* 1785;

Dunford 123, 1007, 1008, 1011, 1017, 2013;

Rural economic development (Continued)

Government strategy re (*Continued*) ... *Evans* 289;
Flaherty 84; *Forsyth* 1200; *Hinman* 1017; *Horner*
 300, 1207, 1221, 1960; *Johnson* 1917; *MacDonald*
 1209; *Mar* 167; *Martin* 1214; *Marz* 1835; *Mather*
 1200; *McClellan* 749; *Oberg* 289; *Ouellette* 289,
 758; *Pannu* 299; *Pastoor* 289; *Speech from the*
Throne 9
 Government strategy re: Report (A Place to Grow) ...
Dunford 48, 1007; *Griffiths* 48
 Government strategy re: Statement re ... *Griffiths* 1126
 Infrastructure support for small packing plants ... *Taft*
 15
 Provincial budget re ... *Bonko* 1009

Rural infrastructure program, Canada/Alberta municipal

See **Canada/Alberta municipal rural infrastructure program**

Rural physician action plan

See **Medical profession—Rural areas, Action plan re**

Rural schools

See **Schools—Rural areas**

Rural tourism conference

See **Tourism—Rural Alberta, 2005 conference on: Statement re**

Rural/urban relations

See **Urban/rural relations**

Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park

See **Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park**

Rustling of cattle—Prevention

See **Cattle rustling—Prevention**

Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement

See **Alexander Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement**

Ruzycski, Mr. Stanley N. (Former MLA)

Tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 13

Sadlowski, Mr. Vic (Centennial ambassador)

General remarks ... *Ducharme* 1482

Safe houses

See **Protective safe houses (Child prostitute protection)**

Safe injection sites (Drugs)

Letter re (SP180/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 327

Safety, Public

See **Public safety (Building/fire codes); Public safety (From criminal activity); Terrorist attacks—Prevention**

Safety, Workplace

See **Workplace safety**

Safety and Sour Gas, Provincial Advisory Committee on Public

See **Provincial Advisory Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas**

Safety Codes Act

Permitting regulations, review of ... *Renner* 905

Safety Codes Council

Administration of underground storage tank remediation program ... *Renner* 1323
 Annual report, 2004 (SP645/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1746; *Renner* 1746
 Provincial liaison with, re barrier-free design ... *Renner* 1321

Safety inspections, Workplace

See **Workplace safety inspections**

Safeway Ltd.

See **Canada Safeway Ltd.**

Saik, Dr. Brent

See **Hockey game, World's longest, Dr. Brent Saik's Guinness record: Statement re**

Saint John's School of Alberta

Centennial canoe trip, Rocky Mountain House to Edmonton ... *Abbott* 907

St. John Ambulance

First aid/CPR instruction in schools ... *Lukaszuk* 205; *Zwozdesky* 205
 Training of emergency room volunteers ... *Evans* 692

St. Matthew Lutheran school

In Assembly during Queen's address ... *Klein* 1617

SAIT

See **Southern Alberta Institute of Technology**

Sales tax, Provincial

General remarks ... *Mason* 968; *McClellan* 967

Saline water conversion

See **Desalination of water**

SALT

See **Seniors' Action and Liason Team**

Salt water conversion

See **Desalination of water**

Salting

See **Labour unions, Organizing activities (Salting)**

Same-sex marriage

Exemption of civil marriage commissioners from performing, letter re (SP632/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1745

Statement re ... *Morton* 698; *Taylor* 651

Same-sex marriage—Law and legislation

Federal legislation ... *Miller, B.* 1424
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 245–46; *Klein* 245–46, 484; *Mar* 317; *McClellan* 317; *Oberle* 484; *Ouellette* 317–18; *Stevens* 246, 484; *Taft* 317

SAMIT

See **Marijuana growing operations, Northern/southern investigative teams re**

Sand and gravel operators

Municipal levy on: Legislation re (Bill 28) ... *Renner* 252

Sangudo high school

Closure ... *Flaherty* 693; *MacDonald* 767; *Zwozdesky* 693

Sanitary landfills

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1044, 1710–11

Saskatchewan centennial celebrations

See **Centennial celebrations—Saskatchewan**

Saskatchewan Court of Appeal

See **Court of Appeal (Saskatchewan)**

Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads (McDermid report)

See **Traffic safety, McDermid report on**

Sawn Lake oil and gas development

See **Energy industry—Crown lands—Sawn Lake area, Oil well drilling before approvals for**

Schindler, Dr. David

[See also **Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamum, CN train derailment: Minister's advisors re**]

Remarks re environmental research funding ... *Eggen* 1374

Remarks re northern Alberta wilderness conservation ... *Eggen* 1396

Scholarship Fund

See **Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund**

Scholarships

[See also **Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program**; **Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund**; **Alexander Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement**; **Jason Lang Scholarships**; **Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship**; **University graduates, Scholarship program for**]

Aboriginal students ... *Calahasen* 1912

For second-language teachers ... *Zwozdesky* 1604

Funding for ... *Hancock* 860, 864, 869

General remarks ... *Herard* 1151; *McClellan* 748;
Speech from the Throne 8, 9

Impact of diploma exam grading errors on awarding of ... *Pannu* 164; *Zwozdesky* 164

Nation-wide scholarship program (Centennial gift) See **Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program**

Rural/northern students ... *Danyluk* 1883; *Hancock* 1883

U of C/Direct Energy scholarship ... *DeLong* 696;
Hancock 696–97

Scholarships for registered apprenticeship program

See **Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)**, **Scholarships for**

School–Grande Prairie

Portables at ... *Eggen* 1728; *Zwozdesky* 1729

School Act

School closure provisions ... *Zwozdesky* 742

Section 119, inter-school board co-operation ...
Zwozdesky 1271

School at the Legislature (Educational program)

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 1606; *Speaker, The* 906

Report card, 2003–04 (SP342/04: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 858

School boards

Academic school entrance requirements ... *Lukaszuk* 1078; *Zwozdesky* 1078

Academic school entrance requirements: Statement re ...
Lukaszuk 1080

Audit upgrades ... *Chase* 1801

Audited financial statements, sections 1–3 (SP104–06/05: Tabled) ... *Zwozdesky* 171

Budget process ... *Mather* 1126; *Zwozdesky* 1126

Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ...
Lukaszuk 1147–48; *Zwozdesky* 204, 1147–48

Deferred maintenance ... *Chase* 1801

Deficit financing ... *Chase* 265

Education minister's visits to ... *Herard* 165–66;
Zwozdesky 166

Employee health premium costs ... *McClellan* 766; *Taft* 766

Foreign student recruitment ... *Chase* 265

Funding [See also **Education–Finance**]; *Chase* 1801;
Flaherty 1522; *Mather* 1125–26; *McClellan* 748;
Oberg 1522; *Zwozdesky* 1125–26, 1260

Funding: Renewed funding framework ... *Zwozdesky* 1260–61, 1274, 1723, 1739, 1834

Funding: Renewed funding framework advisory committee ... *Zwozdesky* 1727, 1739, 1784

Funding for restoration of aging schools ... *Oberg* 1572;
Taylor 1572

School closure regulation ... *MacDonald* 767;
Zwozdesky 767

Utility costs ... *Chase* 1801; *Flaherty* 1522, 1570;
Oberg 1522, 1570

School boards, Francophone

Funding ... *Zwozdesky* 1261

School boards, Regional

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 1147; *Zwozdesky* 1147

School Boards Association

See **Alberta School Boards Association**

School classroom space

See **Classroom space**

School classrooms, Portable/modular

See **Portable/modular classrooms**

School councils

Fund-raising activities ... *Ady* 1525; *Flaherty* 1833–34;
Mather 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1525, 1723–24, 1727,
1833–34

Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... *Chase* 809, 810; *Flaherty* 808; *Hancock* 810; *MacDonald* 809, 810; *Martin* 809–10; *Miller, R.* 808–11; *Zwozdesky* 809

School counsellors

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 1721; *Martin* 1722–23;
Mather 1726; *Zwozdesky* 1268, 1723, 1727

School dropouts

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 266, 1262; *MacDonald* 738; *Mather* 1726; *Pannu* 1796; *Zwozdesky* 738, 1264, 1726

School fees

See **Education–Finance, User fees**

School fitness classes

See **Physical fitness–Teaching**

School Foundation Fund

See **Alberta School Foundation Fund**

School fund-raising

See **School councils, Fund-raising activities**

School health services

See **Student Health Initiative**

School improvement, Alberta initiative for

See **Alberta initiative for school improvement**

School Infrastructure Manual: A Guide to Existing**Legislation ...**

General remarks ... *MacDonald* 1098

School libraries

See **Libraries, School**

School library staff

See **Libraries, School–Employees**

School lunch programs

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 2015; *Forsyth* 1827–28;
McClellan 1827; *Taft* 1778–79, 1827; *Zwozdesky* 1739, 1779, 1827

School lunch programs–Edmonton

Recognition of ... *Mather* 251

School lunchtime supervision

Fees ... *Lukaszuk* 1913; *Zwozdesky* 1913

School nutrition programs

General remarks ... *Amery* 1739–40; *Forsyth* 1827–28;
McClellan 1827; *Taft* 1778–79, 1827; *Zwozdesky* 1739–40, 1779, 1827

Opposition Leader's letter to government ministers re (SP813/05: Tabled) ... *Taft* 2055; *Taylor* 2055

School of veterinary medicine

See **Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)**

School principals

Inclusion in Alberta Teachers' Association ... *Martin* 1270; *Zwozdesky* 1266

School (Property Tax Reduction) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 210)

First reading ... *Marz* 1890

School reports

Grade level achievement reports ... *Griffiths* 1445–46;
Zwozdesky 1446

School software licences

See **Microsoft Corporation, School software licences purchase by provincial government**

School Superintendents, Council of Alberta

See **Council of Alberta School Superintendents**

School tax

See **Property tax—Education levy**

School trustees

Role of, re teacher bargaining process ... *Bonko* 1267

School wellness programs

See **Education—Curricula, Health and wellness instruction framework**

Schoolchildren

Presentation of centennial medallions to ... *Speech from the Throne* 8

Schoolchildren—Food services

See **School lunch programs; School nutrition programs**

Schoolchildren—Protective services

Child abduction cases ... *Cenaiko* 487; *Pham* 486

Schoolchildren—Transportation

Cost effectiveness of ... *Chase* 265
Funding increase for ... *Flaherty* 1721; *Zwozdesky* 1261, 1720, 1721–22, 1724, 1727
User fees for ... *Zwozdesky* 1525

Schoolchildren grade level achievement reports

See **School reports, Grade level achievement reports**

Schooling at home—Regulations

See **Home education—Regulations**

Schools

Access to Alberta SuperNet See **Alberta SuperNet, School access to**

Restoration of, funding for ... *Oberg* 1572; *Taylor* 1572

Schools, Community

See **Community schools**

Schools, Francophone

See **Francophone schools**

Schools, Private—Finance

See **Private schools—Finance**

Schools, Technology in

See **Computers in schools**

Schools—Closure

Community use of schools, in lieu of See **Schools—Utilization, Community group use of, as part of formula re**

General remarks ... *Bonko* 1266–67; *Chase* 1087, 1311; *Eggen* 1447; *Flaherty* 84, 120–21, 576–77, 693, 851, 1263, 1446, 1570; *Lukaszuk* 84–85; *MacDonald* 124–25, 311, 694, 738, 767, 1097–98; *Martin* 742, 771, 1092–93, 1270, 1522–23, 1722; *Mason* 310; *Oberg* 84–85, 120–21, 577, 1095, 1311, 1446, 1570–71; *Ouellette* 287; *Taylor* 287; *Zwozdesky* 124–25, 310, 311, 693, 694, 742, 767, 771, 851, 1265, 1271, 1446, 1447, 1522–23, 1570, 1723

Letter re (SP177/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 327

Regulations: Amendment to, on government web site, letter re (SP400/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1259

Statement re ... *MacDonald* 982–83; *Martin* 806

Schools—Closure—Edmonton

See **Edmonton Public School Board, Closure of schools**

Schools—Closure—Ontario

Policy document re ... *Martin* 742, 1270, 1523, 1722;
Zwozdesky 742, 1271, 1523

Policy document re (SP316/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 746

Schools—Closure—Rural areas

General remarks ... *Hinman* 263, 1273; *MacDonald* 1209; *Zwozdesky* 1274

Schools—Construction

Contingent on closure of older schools ... *Chase* 1087;
Martin 742, 1523; *Zwozdesky* 742, 1523

Determining of priorities for ... *Lukaszuk* 1078; *Oberg* 1078

General remarks ... *Chase* 1801; *Flaherty* 1721; *Martin* 1722; *Oberg* 1089; *Zwozdesky* 1720, 1721

Impact of class size reduction targets on ... *Ady* 978;
Oberg 978

Impact of utilization formula on ... *Chase* 1310–11;
Flaherty 121, 1739; *Oberg* 121, 1310–11; *Zwozdesky* 1739

Modular schools ... *Oberg* 1089; *Zwozdesky* 1265
Public/private projects re ... *Chase* 905; *Oberg* 905, 1088

Schools—Construction—Calgary

Battalion park area ... *Liepert* 2051–52; *Oberg* 2051–52
General remarks ... *Ady* 1198–99; *Cao* 1026–27, 1914;

Oberg 1026–27, 1086, 1198–99, 1572–73; *Taylor* 1572; *Zwozdesky* 1914

McKenzie Towne area school ... *Johnston* 1342

McKenzie Towne area school: Petition presented re ...
Johnston 1507

Schools—Construction—Canmore

P3 funding ... *Oberg* 1088

Schools—Construction—Edmonton

General remarks ... *Chase* 1311; *Lukaszuk* 1078, 1197–98; *MacDonald* 1524; *Martin* 771; *Oberg* 1078, 1086, 1197–98, 1311, 1524; *Zwozdesky* 771, 1078

Schools—Construction—Falun

General remarks ... *Oberg* 1025

Schools—Construction—Finance

General remarks ... *Martin* 771; *McClellan* 749; *Oberg* 1085, 1086; *Zwozdesky* 771

Return to Education dept. responsibility ... *Cao* 1914
Chase 1086–87; *Eggen* 1728; *Flaherty* 84; *Oberg* 84, 1088; *Zwozdesky* 1723, 1914

Use of budget surplus funds for ... *Ady* 797–98; *Chase* 1087; *Flaherty* 1739; *Oberg* 798; *Zwozdesky* 1739

Schools—Construction—Fort McMurray

Increase in, due to oil sands expansion ... *Klein* 201;
Oberg 200; *Taft* 200

Schools—Curricula

See **Education—Curricula**

Schools—Downtown areas

General remarks ... *Flaherty* 1264; *Martin* 1722–23;
Mason 310

Schools—Maintenance and repair

Funding for ... *Abbott* 1030; *Agnihotri* 1724; *Flaherty* 1522, 1570, 1721; *MacDonald* 1524–25; *Martin* 771, 1722; *Mather* 1275; *Oberg* 1030–31, 1085, 1086, 1522, 1570–71; *Zwozdesky* 771, 1525, 1570, 1720, 1723, 1724–25, 1727

Schools—Maintenance and repair (*Continued*)

- General remarks ... *Oberg* 459; *Swann* 459
 Impact of class size reduction targets on ... *Ady* 978;
Oberg 978
 Renovation or replacement criteria ... *Johnson* 1026;
Oberg 1026
 Use of budget surplus funds for ... *Ady* 797–98;
Flaherty 1739; *Oberg* 798; *Zwozdesky* 1739

Schools—Milk River

- Utilization formula's impact on ... *Hinman* 263

Schools—Millet

- See **Griffith Scott middle school, Millet**

Schools—Rural areas

- Community-based utilization formula for ... *Flaherty*
 84, 121; *Oberg* 84, 121
 General remarks ... *MacDonald* 759, 1209; *Oberg* 289;
Pastoor 289; *Zwozdesky* 1273–74

Schools—Utilization

- Change to formula for ... *Chase* 1310–11; *Eggen* 1447;
Flaherty 84, 120–21, 576–77, 693, 1446, 1570;
Hinman 263; *Lukaszuk* 84–85; *MacDonald* 124–25,
 694, 957, 982, 1097–98; *Martin* 742; *Oberg* 84–85,
 120–21, 577, 1310–11, 1446, 1522, 1570–71;
Zwozdesky 124–25, 693, 694, 742, 771, 1271, 1447
 Change to formula for: Statement re ... *Martin* 805–06
 Community group use of, as part of formula re ... *Bonko*
 1266–67; *Eggen* 1728; *Flaherty* 577, 1263–64;
Hinman 1272; *MacDonald* 1209; *Martin* 1093,
 1270; *Oberg* 577; *Zwozdesky* 1265–66, 1268, 1271
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1087, 1801; *Eggen* 1728;
MacDonald 369, 738; *Martin* 1092–93, 1270, 1722,
 1802; *Mason* 310; *Oberg* 738, 1089, 1095, 1803;
Zwozdesky 311, 738, 1723, 1729
 Review of formula for ... *Eggen* 1447; *Oberg* 1522;
Zwozdesky 1447, 1739

Schools Debating Championship, World

- See **World Schools Debating Championship**

Schubert, Joane Cardinal- (Artist)

- See **Artwork, Alberta, Donation to National Gallery of Canada**

Schulich donation to Faculty of Engineering, University of Calgary

- See **University of Calgary, Schulich donation to Faculty of Engineering, matching provincial contribution re**

Science

- Public awareness of ... *Backs* 1376; *Doerksen* 1376–77

Science, Dept. of Innovation and

- See **Dept. of Innovation and Science**

Science, Research and Information Technology, Minister responsible for

- See **Dept. of Innovation and Science**

Science, Research and Technology Authority

- See **Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority**

Science and Engineering Research, Alberta Heritage Foundation for

- See **Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research**

Science and Research Authority

- See **Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority**

Science and technology

- See **Research and development**

Science ethics

- See **Research and development, Ethical implications**

Science Month, Youth

- See **Youth Science Month**

Seat belts, Automobile

- See **Automobile seat belts**

Second language teaching

- See **Languages—Teaching**

Second-stage housing for women

- See **Battered women—Housing, Second-stage housing**

Secondary education—Curricula

- See **High school education—Curricula**

Secondary oil recovery methods

- See **Oil recovery methods**

Secondary road program

- See **Road construction, Secondary road program**

Secondary Suites, MLA Review Committee on

- See **Rental housing, Secondary suites: MLA Review Committee on, report**

Secretariat to review regulations

- See **Alberta Regulations, Secretariat to review**

Securities—Law and legislation

- National harmonization of ... *Hancock* 1197; *Mason*
 968–69; *McClellan* 958, 970; *Melchin* 1197
 National harmonization of: Legislation re (Bill 19) ...
Knight 169–70
 National harmonization of: Publication excerpt re
 (SP395/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1206

Securities Act

- Amendment re Securities Commission enforcement
 process investigation ... *Hancock* 1250; *Martin* 1250

Securities Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 19)

- First reading ... *Knight* 169–70
 Second reading ... *Bonko* 629; *Knight* 450–51, 625,
 629; *Martin* 627–29; *Miller, R.* 625–27
 Committee ... *Eggen* 726–27; *Knight* 725–27; *Miller, R.*
 725, 727
 Third reading ... *Eggen* 942; *Knight* 941; *Miller, R.* 941
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
 (Outside of House sitting)
 Amendment ... *Eggen* 942; *Martin* 942

Securities Commission, Alberta

- See **Alberta Securities Commission**

Securities Commission, British Columbia

- See **British Columbia Securities Commission**

Securities Commission, Ontario

- See **Ontario Securities Commission**

Securities regulator, National

- General remarks ... *Hancock* 1197; *Martin* 1197;
Melchin 1197

Security, Public

- See **Public safety (Building/fire codes); Public safety (From criminal activity); Terrorist attacks—Prevention**

Security deposits

- See **Damage deposits**

Security guards—Law and legislation

- Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Security guards—Licensing

- Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Security guards—Training

- Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1311; *Johnston* 1311

Security Intelligence Service

- See **Canadian Security Intelligence Service**

- Security officers, Courtroom–Training**
See Courtroom security officers–Training
- Security planning**
See Emergency planning; Terrorist attacks–Prevention
- Seizure of automobiles**
See Automobiles–Seizure
- Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee**
See Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
- Select Special Health Information Act Review Committee**
See Health Information Act Review Committee, Select Special
- Select standing committees**
See Committees, Select standing
- Selective traffic enforcement program**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1307–08
- Self-government, Aboriginal**
See Aboriginal peoples–Self-government
- Self-managed care program for seniors**
See Seniors' self-managed care program
- Senate (Canada)**
 Reform of ... *Klein* 691, 1444; *Morton* 287–88; *Oberle* 455; *Ouellette* 691; *Pastoor* 691; *Stelmach* 287–88, 455, 695, 1184
- Senate (United States)**
 Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... *Horner* 42–43; *Mason* 42; *Snelgrove* 19; *Stelmach* 19
- Senators**
 Alberta nominees for ... *Eggen* 1183; *Morton* 287–88; *Oberle* 455; *Stelmach* 287–88, 455, 1184
 Alberta nominees for: Eastern Canada speaking tour ... *Eggen* 694–95; *Klein* 691; *Ouellette* 691, 695; *Pastoor* 691; *Stelmach* 695
 Alberta nominees for: Election costs re ... *MacDonald* 254
 Appointments of, by Prime Minister ... *Oberle* 455; *Stelmach* 455
- Senior abuse**
See Elder abuse
- Senior citizens**
 Benefits vs. family assistance to ... *Fritz* 888–89; *Hinman* 888
 Contribution to province ... *Speech from the Throne* 8
 Definition of ... *Blakeman* 1460
 Government programs ... *Fritz* 163–64, 877–80, 882–85, 887–90; *Hinman* 888; *Lukaszuk* 163
 Government programs: Auditor General's review of ... *Evans* 1077; *Fritz* 1201; *Klein* 1334; *Martin* 1077; *Mason* 1334
 Government programs: Auditor General's review of, Report (SP417/05: Tabled) ... *Tarchuk* 1342
 Government programs: Streamlining of application process re ... *Fritz* 619; *Pham* 618–19
- Senior citizens, Abuse of**
See Elder abuse
- Senior citizens–Dental care**
 Benefits re *See Alberta seniors benefit program, Dental benefits*
- Senior citizens–Education**
 Extension programs for *See Universities and colleges, Extension programs for seniors*
- Senior citizens–Housing**
 Assisted living concept ... *Evans* 1962; *Fritz* 1886; *Martin* 1886; *Mason* 1962
 Assisted living concept, keeping senior couples together ... *Ady* 889; *Fritz* 888
 Garden suites ... *Fritz* 888; *Hinman* 888
 Security concerns re ... *Cenaiko* 616; *Taylor* 616
 Standards for ... *Fritz* 880; *Pastoor* 880; *Speech from the Throne* 10
 Supportive housing program *See Seniors' supportive housing incentive program*
 Telephone/cable TV provision in rental rates for ... *Blakeman* 881
- Senior citizens–Housing–Northern Alberta**
 General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1125; *Fritz* 1125
- Senior citizens–Housing–Rural areas**
 Rural affordable supportive living program ... *Fritz* 1125
- Senior citizens–Medical care**
 Funding for ... *Evans* 1458
- Senior citizens–Optical care**
 Benefits re *See Alberta seniors benefit program, Optical benefits*
- Senior citizens' apartments–Security aspects–Calgary**
See Seniors' apartment buildings–Security aspects–Calgary
- Senior Citizens' Housing Association, Alberta**
See Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association
- Senior citizens' lodges**
 Funding for ... *Fritz* 878, 1624; *McClellan* 748; *Oberg* 1800; *Webber* 1623–24
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 1886–87
 Rents: Letter re (SP759/05: Tabled) ... *Pastoor* 1971
 Upgrades to, funding ... *Fritz* 2009–10; *VanderBurg* 2009–10
- Senior citizens' lodges–Mayerthorpe**
See Pleasant View Lodge, Mayerthorpe
- Senior citizens' lodges–Northern Alberta**
 Funding for ... *Danyluk* 1125; *Fritz* 1125
- Senior public officials' cooling-off period**
See Public service–Alberta, Senior officials' cooling-off period, following resignation
- Seniors, Low-income**
See Low-income seniors
- Seniors' Action and Liason Team**
 The Third Way or the Third Hoax? (Brochure) (SP553/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 1675
- Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta**
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP122/05: Tabled) ... *Prins* 210
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP631/05: Tabled) ... *Prins* 1745
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 884; *Prins* 884
- Seniors and Community Supports, Dept. of**
See Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
- Seniors' apartment buildings–Security aspects–Calgary**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 616; *Fritz* 616; *Taylor* 616
- Seniors benefit program**
See Alberta seniors benefit program
- Seniors' centres**
 Funding using resource rebate funds, letters re (SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1837
- Seniors' drug benefits**
See Alberta Blue Cross Plan, Seniors' drug benefits

- Seniors' health premiums**
See under Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums, Seniors' premiums
- Seniors in long-term care**
See Extended care facilities residents
- Seniors' issues**
 Petition tabled re (SP236/05) ... *Ducharme* 463
 Telephone information line re ... *Fritz* 619, 889
- Seniors' self-managed care program**
 Funding for ... *Evans* 617; *Shariff* 617
- Seniors' supportive housing incentive program**
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 2009–10; *VanderBurg* 2009–10
- Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—East Central Health region**
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 282; *Pastoor* 282–83
- Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—Standards**
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 1886–87
- Seniors United Now**
 General remarks ... *Fritz* 1388
- Sentences, Conditional (Criminal procedure)**
 Changes needed to, Justice ministers' meeting discussion of ... *Stevens* 1230
 Changes needed to, Paper re ... *Stevens* 1229–30
 Domestic violence cases, required treatment for abusers ... *Stevens* 1576
 Federal reform of ... *Speech from the Throne* 10
 General remarks ... *Stevens* 1229
- Sentences (Criminal procedure)**
 General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 1227
 Increasing of ... *Miller, B.* 1227; *Stevens* 1229
 Increasing of, re child abuse convictions ... *Miller, B.* 1228
- Separatism, Western**
 General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188
- September 1, 2005 centennial concert**
See 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations, Legislature grounds concert re, September 1
- September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, New York/Washington, D.C.**
See Terrorist attacks—New York City/Washington, D.C.
- Seright, Mr. Samuel Ian**
 Statement re ... *Amery* 982
- Serious and violent crime**
See Violent crime
- Serious and violent young offenders**
See Young offenders, Violent
- Server intervention program (Liquor sales)**
See Liquor sales—Regulations, Server intervention program
- Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)**
 Equipment upgrades for ... *Klein* 1099, 1100, 1101
 General remarks ... *Lund* 1416
 Provision of orientation for MLAs' staff ... *Lund* 1425; *Miller, B.* 1425
- Service centres (Government welfare/employment assistance)**
See Dept. of Human Resources and Employment, Service centres
- Sessional publications (Legislative Assembly)**
 Proliferation of ... *Taylor* 260–61
- Set-aside programs (Cattle sales)**
See Calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta); Fed cattle set-aside program
- Sewage disposal plants**
 General remarks ... *Boutillier* 978
- Sewage disposal plants, Regional**
 General remarks ... *Jablonski* 576; *Oberg* 576
- Sewage disposal plants—Finance**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1801; *Mar* 1473; *Oberg* 1085, 1800
- Sewage disposal plants—Fort McMurray**
 Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... *Boutillier* 485; *Chase* 484–85, 1627–28; *Klein* 484–85; *McClellan* 527, 1628; *Oberg* 200, 1628; *Renner* 1628; *Taft* 200
- Sex abuse of children—Prevention**
See Child abuse—Prevention
- Sex trade workers**
See Prostitutes
- Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton**
 Budget ... *Blakeman* 1060
- Sexual assault centres**
 Funding for ... *Blakeman* 92, 965, 1060, 1061, 1436, 1462; *Forsyth* 1062; *McClellan* 965
- Sexual Assault Centres, Alberta Association of**
See Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres
- Sexual assault victims**
See Victims of sexual assault
- SFI (Supports for independence program)**
See Income Support program
- Shandong delegation**
See International delegations, Shandong delegation's visit to Alberta
- Shanghai trade office**
See Alberta Government Offices, Shanghai office proposal
- Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs (Report, 2000)**
See Disabled children—Education, Review of (2000)
- Shared services, Municipal**
See Intermunicipal relations
- Shared services centre**
See Alberta Corporate Service Centre
- Sheep River water quality**
See Water quality—Sheep River
- Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, Calgary**
 Funding for ... *Evans* 1838; *Oberg* 1309; *Taylor* 1309
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1467
- Shell Canada Limited**
 Chemical plant vapour pressure release, Fort Saskatchewan area ... *Boutillier* 162; *Lougheed* 162, 207; *Renner* 162, 207
 Dredging in beluga whale habitat ... *Chase* 907
 Oil sands project, Fort McMurray area ... *Melchin* 203
- Shelters**
See Homeless—Housing
- Shelters, Women's—Finance**
See Women's shelters—Finance
- Sherwood Park campus**
See Lakeland College, Sherwood Park campus
- Shewfelt, Kyle**
 Recognition of ... *Cao* 50
- SHIP**
See Student Health Initiative

Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service Foundation

High school CPR program, Statement re ... *Johnson* 535

Lethbridge base ... *Hinman* 1468

Sibold, Stephen P. (Chair)

See **Alberta Securities Commission, Influencing regulatory activity case**

Sierra Club of Canada

Press release re Alberta's forest policy ... *Eggen* 1396

Press release re Alberta's forest policy (SP421/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1342

Simon Fraser junior high school, Calgary

Band program cancellation: E-mails re (SP490/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1579

Band program cancellation: Letters re (SP442, 461/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1507, 1528

Single-member party

See **Alberta Alliance Party**

Single-point-of-entry process (Postsecondary institutions)

See **Postsecondary educational institutions—Admissions (enrollment), Province-wide centralization of**

Single-rate income tax, Provincial

See **Income tax, Provincial, Flat tax**

Sinks, Carbon dioxide

See **Carbon dioxide sinks**

Six-point restructuring plan (Cattle trade)

See **Cattle—Export—United States, Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure**

Ski championships

See **Cross-country ski championships; Downhill ski championships; Freestyle ski championships**

Skilled workers, Mobility of

See **Labour mobility**

Skilled workers—Supply

See **Labour supply**

Skills development

See **Employment training programs**

Skills development, Aboriginal

See **Employment training programs, Aboriginal peoples**

Slaughter capacity (Cattle)

See **Meat packing plants, Building of**

Slot machines

General remarks ... *Graydon* 1281

Number of ... *Graydon* 1284; *Tougas* 1284

Slot machines in casinos

Cashless technology for ... *Graydon* 2052; *Tougas* 2052

Number of ... *Graydon* 1286; *Pannu* 1285

Revenue from ... *Tougas* 1281

Slot machines in racing entertainment centres

Revenue from, transferred to horse-racing industry ... *Graydon* 901, 976, 1278, 1288–89; *Pannu* 1288; *Tougas* 901, 976

Small business

Impact of auto insurance rates on ... *McClellan* 854, 904; *Miller, R.* 854, 904, 960

Impact of liability insurance rates on ... *Miller, R.* 961

Impact of Securities Commission situation on ... *Martin* 532; *McClellan* 532

Regulations re, review of ... *Hinman* 762

Venture capital for ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1010

Small business—Taxation

General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 960

Smell test re crystal meth use

See **Crystal methamphetamine (Drug), Test for use of (strips detecting smell)**

Smith, Alaina

Recognition of ... *Ducharme* 168

Smith, Dr. Eldon Raymond

Investiture into Order of Canada ... *Jablonski* 1743

Smith, Mr. Arthur

Recognition of ... *Johnson* 126

Smith, Mr. Murray (Alberta representative in U.S.)

See **Alberta Government Offices, Washington, D.C. office; TUSK Energy Corporation, Involvement of former minister of energy (Murray Smith) with, letter re (SP600/05: Tabled)**

Smithsonian Institution

Alberta exhibition at ... *Stelmach* 1186

Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)

First reading ... *Rodney* 52

Second reading ... *Ady* 185–86; *Amery* 180; *Backs* 176–77; *Blakeman* 173–74; *Cao* 177–78; *Chase* 178; *Danyluk* 184–85; *Evans* 181; *Flaherty* 184; *Griffiths* 175–76; *Haley* 174–75; *Hinman* 185; *Marz* 183–84; *Mason* 182–83; *Mather* 180; *Miller, R.* 179–80; *Oberle* 178–79; *Rodney* 172–73, 186; *Swann* 175

Committee ... *Abbott* 499–501; *Agnihotri* 505–06; *Cao* 508; *Chase* 496–97; *Danyluk* 495–96; *Eggen* 501; *Griffiths* 498; *Hinman* 507–08; *Horner* 505;

Jablonski 497; *Lund* 502–03; *MacDonald* 504–05; *Martin* 497–98; *Mather* 499; *Oberle* 506–07;

Ouellette 504; *Snelgrove* 494–95; *Swann* 495; *Taylor* 503–04; *Tougas* 502; *VanderBurg* 501–02

Third reading ... *Backs* 996–97; *Elsalhy* 996; *Flaherty* 997; *Jablonski* 996; *MacDonald* 992–93; *Martin* 995–96; *Mason* 993–94; *Mather* 994–95; *Pastoor* 997; *Rodney* 991–92, 998; *Snelgrove* 994; *Swann* 994

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

Alberta Medical Assoc. letter re (SP204/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 370

Amendment (SP354/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 957

Amendments ... *Klein* 690; *Taft* 690

Amendments (SP265/05: Tabled) ... *Oberle* 509; *Snelgrove* 494

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 119, 1028; *Chase* 1466; *Evans* 1028; *Klein* 82, 119; *Swann* 1468

Letters re (SP276/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 579

Second reading on same day as first reading, motion for, denied ... *Hancock* 59; *Speaker, The* 59

Smokers' Freedom Society

Website article re (SP821/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 2056

Smoking

Far Side cartoon re (SP153/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 253

Smoking—Prevention

AADAC award of excellence and scholarship re (Barb Tarbox award) ... *Chase* 490–91

AADAC program re (Web site) ... *Rodney* 1787

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1028; *Evans* 1028

Recognition of ... *Chase* 490–91

Relation of provincial investment in tobacco companies to ... *Blakeman* 82–83; *Klein* 82–83; *McClellan* 82–83

Statement re ... *Rodney* 1577

Smoking in public places

- Ban on ... *Blakeman* 1028; *Evans* 1028
 Ban on: Impact on gaming revenue ... *Graydon* 1279
 Ban on: Legislation re (Bill 201) ... *Rodney* 52
 Ban on (Motion 507: Mason, invitation to revise motion) ... *Speaker, The* 1034
 E-mail re (SP137/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 211
 E-mail re (SP361/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 984
 E-mails re (SP238-239/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 463
 Letters re (SP239 & 334/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 463, 806–07

Smoking in the workplace

- Ban on ... *Blakeman* 163; *Evans* 163
 Ban on: Legislation re (Bill 201) ... *Blakeman* 119; *Klein* 119
 Ban on: Letter re (SP167/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 295
 Ban on: Letter re (SP250/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 492
 Ban on: Studies re economic impact of (SP120-121/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 171
 Ban on: Study re health effect of (SP119/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 171
 Ban on (Motion 507: Mason, invitation to revise motion) ... *Speaker, The* 1034
 E-mail re (SP137/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 211

Snohomish Public Utility District, Washington State (U.S.)

- Investigation of Enron price fixing ... *Klein* 119; *Melchin* 118–19; *Taft* 119

Snowmobile trails

- Tourism aspects ... *Dunford* 744; *Rogers* 744

Snowmobiles

- Access to public lands ... *Coutts* 693–94; *Rogers* 693–94

Social assistance

See **Public assistance**

Social assistance, Aboriginal

See **Public assistance, Aboriginal peoples**

Social Care Facilities Licensing Act

- Group home provisions ... *Fritz* 646
 Review of ... *Forsyth* 1732

Social Care Facilities Review Committee

- Annual report, 2003-04 (SP329/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 776; *Forsyth* 776
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP809/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 2018; *Forsyth* 2018
 General remarks ... *Johnston* 1053
 Semiannual report, October 2002 to March 2003 (SP264/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 492; *Forsyth* 492

Social determinants of health

See **Health, Social determinants of**

Social housing

- General remarks ... *Backs* 1198; *Blakeman* 881, 1139; *Fritz* 877, 878, 883–84, 888, 1198, 1778; *Groeneveld* 887; *Pannu* 739; *Taylor* 882, 883
 Rent supplement program ... *Fritz* 87, 1198
 Subsidy level increase ... *Fritz* 880; *Pastoor* 879

Social housing—Finance

- Federal/provincial funding ... *Blakeman* 881

Social housing—Northern Alberta

- Committee to study ... *Danyluk* 1125; *Fritz* 1125
 General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1125; *Fritz* 1125

Social housing—Rural areas

- Sustainable remote housing initiative ... *Danyluk* 1125; *Fritz* 1125

Social Housing Corporation

See **Alberta Social Housing Corporation**

Social Planning Council, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Social Planning Council**

Social responsibility division (Dept. of Gaming)

See **Dept. of Gaming, Social responsibility division**

Social sciences—Research

- Funding for ... *Doerksen* 1373; *Elsalhy* 1371

Social sciences scholarship, Lois Hole humanities and (Proposed)

See **Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship (Proposed)**

Social services agencies (Non-profit)

- Duplication of services with government agencies ... *Forsyth* 303; *Mather* 302
 Employees of, salaries for ... *Forsyth* 1052
 Employees of, training ... *Forsyth* 303; *Mather* 302
 Insurance costs ... *Blakeman* 1061

Social services department

See **Dept. of Human Resources and Employment**

Social services recipients—Protection

- General remarks ... *Fritz* 878–79, 890; *Martin* 886; *Pastoor* 879

Social studies curriculum

See **Education—Curricula, Social studies courses**

Social Transfer

See **Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)**

Social Work Week, National

See **National Social Work Week**

Social Workers, Alberta College of

See **Alberta College of Social Workers**

Software licences for schools

See **Microsoft Corporation, School software licences purchase by provincial government**

Softwood Lumber Trade Council

See **Alberta Softwood Lumber Trade Council**

Softwoods—Export—United States

- Countervail duties re ... *Bonko* 929; *Coutts* 20–21, 89, 927, 937, 1626; *Mitzel* 288; *Oberle* 936; *Stelmach* 20, 89, 288, 644, 1181, 1184, 1621, 1625–26; *Strang* 20, 89, 644, 1625–26; *Taft* 1621
 Countervail duties re: Byrd amendment re ... *Coutts* 573; *Oberle* 1499; *Stelmach* 573, 1499; *Strang* 572–73
 Countervail duties re: Canadian retaliatory actions re ... *Stelmach* 573; *Strang* 573
 Countervail duties re: Export tax to replace ... *Stelmach* 1202; *VanderBurg* 1202

Soil, Contaminated—Lynnview Ridge, Calgary

See **Contaminated soil—Lynnview Ridge, Calgary**

Soil conservation

- General remarks ... *Danyluk* 906
 Provincial funding for ... *Swann* 282

Soil Conservation Week

See **National Soil Conservation Week**

Soils

- Carbon absorption properties ... *Griffiths* 1334–35; *Horner* 1334–35

Solar power

- [See also **Energy resources, Alternate**]
 Housing project, Okotoks ... *Doerksen* 1375, 1887

Soldier's death in Afghanistan conflict

See **Canadian armed forces, Service in Afghanistan: Prayer/condolences for death re**

Sole-source contracts

See **Public contracts, Sole-source contracts**

Solicitor General, Dept. of

See **Dept. of Solicitor General**

Solid waste management

See **Refuse and refuse disposal**

Sorensen, Mr. Aaron

General remarks ... *Oberle* 1341

Sour Gas, Provincial Advisory Committee on Public**Safety and**

See **Provincial Advisory Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas**

Sour gas emissions

See **Hydrogen sulphide emissions**

Sour gas leak, Innisfail area

See **Gas well drilling industry—Safety aspects, Sour gas leak, Innisfail area**

Sour gas well drilling industry—Calgary area

See **Gas well drilling industry—Calgary area**

Sour gas well drilling industry—Tomahawk/Drayton**Valley area**

See **Gas well drilling industry—Tomahawk/Drayton Valley area**

Source waters protection

See **Water quality, Source waters protection aspect**

Southeast Edmonton ring road

See **Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton**

Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association

Concerns re Métis hunting agreement: Letter re (SP199/05: Tabled) ... *Tougas* 328

Southern Alberta children's hospital

See **Alberta Children's Hospital**

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology

Aerospace centre at Calgary airport ... *Hancock* 796

Centre of excellence for small manufacturers ...

Doerksen 1369

Infrastructure needs ... *Chase* 796; *Hancock* 796

Input into high school vocational/trades courses ...

Bonko 1267; *Zwozdesky* 1269

Surplus spending on ... *Hancock* 1621; *Taft* 1621

Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium

Alberta Order of Excellence recipients, display of ... *Klein* 1108

Auditor General's recommendation re ... *Agnihotri* 1475; *Mar* 1473, 1476

Renovations ... *Agnihotri* 305; *Blakeman* 1477; *Chase* 1481; *Mar* 324, 1473, 1484; *McClellan* 749–50, 1480

SouthLink health centre, Calgary

P3 project funding ... *Chase* 1467

Spaces in postsecondary educational institutions, New

See **Education, Postsecondary, Access to, new spaces to improve**

Spam (Computer junk e-mail)

Federal task force on ... *Ouellette* 759

General remarks ... *DeLong* 758; *Ouellette* 759

SPE option

See **Crop insurance program, Spring price endorsement option**

Speaker

26th anniversary as an MLA, statement re ... *Marz* 1743; *Speaker, The* 1743

Speaker (Continued)

Congratulations to ... *Abbott* 4; *Amery* 2; *Danyluk* 4; *Hancock* 56; *Johnson* 4; *Klein* 3; *Marz* 4; *McFarland* 2

Election of ... *Clerk, The* 1; *Haley* 1; *Kowalski* 1

Role of ... *Haley* 1

Speaker—Rulings and statements

[*See also* **Deputy Speaker—Rulings and statements**] Address to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II ... *Speaker, The* 1617, 1618

Address to Lieutenant Governor ... *Speaker, The* 7

Address to the Assembly upon election as Speaker ...

Speaker, The 1–2

Addressing the Chair ... *Shariff* 1945

Anticipation ... *Speaker, The* 1078, 1122

Assembly sitting details, 2005 ... *Speaker, The* 1608

Bills containing similar provisions (Bills 47 and 207) ... *Speaker, The* 1789

Birthday congratulations to a member ... *Speaker, The* 1451

Brevity in Members' Statements ... *Speaker, The* 652

Brevity in Oral Question Period ... *Speaker, The* 1604

Calendar of special events ... *Speaker, The* 92, 491, 1153

Clarification ... *Speaker, The* 1500

Clerk of Journals/Table Research's vacation/marriage ... *Speaker, The* 543

Committees of the whole House, historical background ... *Speaker, The* 253

Death of Canadian soldier in Afghanistan: Moment of silence for ... *Speaker, The* 1880

Decorum ... *Shariff* 825

Edmonton Eskimos regalia, provision of, to members ... *Speaker, The* 1888

Electoral anniversary of Deputy Premier/Minister of Finance ... *Speaker, The* 1836

Electoral anniversary of several members, congratulations re ... *Speaker, The* 1785

Estimates consideration (waiver of SO 58(5) re) ... *Speaker, The* 1085, 1319

Famous Five statuette replica to be housed in Legislature Bldg. during centennial year ... *Speaker, The* 856

Gift of promotional attire ... *Speaker, The* 805

Historic occasion: Unanimous consent given to waive SO 8(3) to allow consideration of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act ... *Speaker, The* 784

Historical vignette (Committees of the whole House) ... *Speaker, The* 253, 652

Historical vignettes of Alberta [**See under Historical vignettes of Alberta for detailed listing**]; *Speaker, The* 13, 49, 125, 243, 285, 315, 359, 409, 453, 491,

537, 579, 699, 775, 804, 848, 908, 958, 982, 1033,

1127–28, 1151, 1205, 1256–57, 1340, 1396, 1451,

1504, 1526, 1576, 1608, 1628, 1672, 1743, 1787,

1836, 1889, 1968, 2019, 2056

Items previously decided ... *Speaker, The* 368

Items previously decided (Motion 507, invitation to revise) ... *Speaker, The* 1034

Members' Statements ... *Speaker, The* 1607

Memorial tribute to Hon. Lois Hole, former Lieutenant Governor ... *Speaker, The* 7

Page Biographies (pamphlet) ... *Speaker, The* 3

Pages, letter to Assembly from ... *Speaker, The* 1605

Prayer for fallen RCMP officers ... *Speaker, The* 38

Speaker—Rulings and statements (*Continued*)

- Prayer for Pope John Paul II ... *Speaker, The* 481
 Prayer in recognition of 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day ... *Speaker, The* 1301
 Prayer in recognition of Holocaust Memorial Day ... *Speaker, The* 1247
 Preambles ... *Martin* 493; *Speaker, The* 493
 Projected government business ... *Speaker, The* 129
 Queen's visit protocol questions for members, correspondence re ... *Speaker, The* 1579
 Question Period rotation of questions and statements ... *Speaker, The* 16–17, 53, 58, 90–91
 Question Period rotation of questions and statements: Copy of ruling tabled (SP37/05) ... *Speaker, The* 93
 Questions about a legislative committee ... *Speaker, The* 1783, 1789
 Questions about previous ministers ... *Speaker, The* 2046
 Questions outside ministerial responsibility ... *Speaker, The* 1306
 Re-election of Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, congratulations re ... *Speaker, The* 1785
 Recognitions ... *Speaker, The* 169
 Referring to a member by name ... *Speaker, The* 134–35, 169, 1506
 Referring to an officer of the Legislature ... *Blakeman* 985–86; *Hancock* 984–85; *Martin* 986–87; *Speaker, The* 955, 984, 987–88; *Tarchuk* 987
 Reports by officers of the Assembly, premature release of ... *Speaker, The* 1719–20
 School at the Legislature program ... *Speaker, The* 906
 Sound system microphones ... *Speaker, The* 1838
 Sound system renovations ... *Speaker, The* 1619
 Speaking time ... *Speaker, The* 31–32
 Sub judice rule ... *Speaker, The* 743
 Tabling correspondence to the Speaker ... *Speaker, The* 26
 Tabling documents ... *Speaker, The* 328
 Tabling notes to oneself ... *Speaker, The* 1258
 Tablings ... *Speaker, The* 2018
 Third reading of Bill 31 ... *Shariff* 1291
 Time limit on Members' Statements ... *Speaker, The* 1203–04
 VE Day ceremony, with forces representatives on floor of Assembly ... *Speaker, The* 1259, 1301, 1303
 Voting on Bills ... *Speaker, The* 737
 World War II food ration box distributed in the Netherlands ... *Speaker, The* 1313
- Speaker (Federal parliament)—Rulings and statements**
 Toews bill, March 2001 news media briefing re ... *Blakeman* 1633–34, 1635
- Speaking times (Parliamentary procedure)**
 See **Closure debate (Parliamentary procedure); Debate (Parliamentary procedure), Time limits on**
- Spear, Constable Joe**
 General remarks ... *MacDonald* 1258
- Special Areas Trust Account**
 2004 financial statements (SP432/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1396; *Renner* 1396
- Special Areas water diversion**
 See **Water diversion—Red Deer River basin/Special Areas**
- Special Cases Committee (Student evaluation)**
 Review of examination results appeals ... *Zwozdesky* 168

Special constables

- Role of ... *Blakeman* 867, 1436; *Cenaiko* 1437
 Role of, review ... *Cenaiko* 1123, 1428, 1437–38
- Special constables—Grande Prairie**
 General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1438
- Special education**
 See **Disabled children—Education; Gifted children—Education**
- Special education—Finance**
 See **Disabled children—Education—Finance**
- Special needs, Persons with**
 See **Disabled; Mentally disabled**
- Special needs, Persons with—Housing**
 See **Mentally disabled—Housing**
- Special needs, Persons with—Education**
 See **Disabled children—Education**
- Special needs assistance (Seniors)**
 See **Low-income seniors, Special-needs assistance**
- Special needs daycare**
 See **Daycare centres, Special-needs children**
- Special Places program**
 General remarks ... *Chase* 2012; *Mar* 2012
- Special warrants**
 General remarks ... *MacDonald* 254
- Special waste treatment centre**
 See **Swan Hills Treatment Centre**
- Specialist/physician referrals, Electronic**
 See **Physician/specialist referrals, Electronic**
- Specialists in education**
 See **Education—Specialists**
- Species at risk**
 See **Endangered plant species; Endangered wildlife species**
- Species at Risk Act (Federal)**
 General remarks ... *Coutts* 955; *Strang* 955
- Specified risk material (Cattle parts)**
 Handling of ... *Horner* 1390
 Research into ... *Horner* 258, 298, 300
- Speech, Freedom of**
 See **Freedom of expression**
- Speech from the Throne**
 Address given ... *Lieutenant Governor* 7–10
 Address in reply, engrossed (Motion 15: Klein/Hancock) ... *Hancock* 436; *Klein* 436
 Copy tabled (SP1/05: Tabled) ... *Speaker, The* 11
 Debate ... *Abbott* 35; *Ady* 30–31; *Agnihotri* 99–100; *Backs* 133–34; *Blakeman* 59–61; *Bonko* 78–79; *Brown* 66–67; *Cao* 77–78; *Chase* 64–66; *Eggen* 95–96; *Elsalhy* 137–38; *Flaherty* 147–48; *Groeneveld* 96–97; *Haley* 61–62; *Hancock* 157–58; *Herard* 101–02; *Hinman* 149; *Jablonski* 37–38, 114; *Johnson* 142–43; *Johnston* 110; *Liepert* 102–03; *Lindsay* 144–46; *Lukaszuk* 28–30; *MacDonald* 64, 140–42; *Mason* 35–37; *Mather* 112–14; *McClellan* 146; *McFarland* 155–57; *Miller, B.* 67–68; *Miller, R.* 108–10; *Mitzel* 97–99; *Morton* 131–33; *Oberle* 116; *Pannu* 62–64; *Pastoor* 114–16; *Prins* 110–12; *Rodney* 135–37; *Rogers* 79–80; *Strang* 143–44; *Swann* 75–77; *Taft* 32–35; *Taylor* 129–30; *Tougas* 100–01; *Webber* 138–39
 Motion to consider ... *Klein* 11
- Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, Alberta College of**
 See **Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists**

Speech therapy

In schools ... *Flaherty* 1263, 1721; *Zwozdesky* 1030, 1265

Speed limits

Legislation re (Bill 39) ... *Magnus* 746

Speed skating

Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon ... *Jablonski* 50

Spelling championships

CanWest CanSpell champion (Finola Hackett) ...
Lougheed 907

Spending policy, Government

See **Government spending policy**

Spills (Pollution)

Funding for cleanup re ... *McClellan* 1668; *Swann* 1668

Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamum

CN train derailment ... *Boutilier* 1667–68; *Lindsay* 1668; *McClellan* 1668; *Swann* 1667–68

CN train derailment: Bans on boating/usage of lake re, lifting of ... *Boutilier* 1668; *Lindsay* 1668

CN train derailment: Cleanup procedures ... *Boutilier* 1668; *Lindsay* 1668

CN train derailment: Environmental enforcement orders re ... *Boutilier* 1668

CN train derailment: Minister's advisors re [*See also* **Schindler, Dr. David**]; *Boutilier* 1668

Spitz Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon

Recognition of ... *Jablonski* 50

Sponsorship scandal (Federal government)

General remarks ... *Mason* 699; *Miller, R.* 1188; *Stelmach* 1188

Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation

See **Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation**

Sport and recreation, Alberta centennial salute for

See **Alberta centennial salute for sport and recreation**

Sport Council, Edmonton

See **Edmonton Sport Council**

Sport development centre, Camrose regional

See **Camrose regional sport development centre**

Sport fishing

See **Fishing, Sport**

Sport Fishing Regulations Guide

See **Fishing, Sport, 2005 Alberta Guide to Sport Fishing Regulations (SP110/05: Tabled)**

Sports

Plan for ... *Agnihotri* 1151; *Mar* 1151, 1474, 1475

Role in provincial economy ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1010–11

Sports—Finance

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1150–51, 1474; *Mar* 1150–51, 1472–73

Sports exchange programs

Funding for ... *Miller, R.* 1483–84

Spousal abusers

Treatment of, required ... *Jablonski* 1576; *Stevens* 1576

Sprawl, Urban

See **Urban growth**

Spring price endorsement option (Crop insurance)

See **Crop insurance program, Spring price endorsement option**

SRM

See **Specified risk material (Cattle parts)**

SSHIP

See **Seniors' supportive housing incentive program**

SSHIP—East Central Health region

See **Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—East Central Health region**

SSHIP—Standards

See **Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—Standards**

Stab-resistant protective vests

See **Protective vests (Corrections officers)**

Stabilization fund

See **Alberta Sustainability Fund**

Stalking

Threat assessment initiative re ... *Stevens* 1233

Standing Committee on Continuing Care Standards

See **Committee on Continuing Care Standards, Standing**

Standing Committee on Continuing Care Standards Act (Bill 213)

First reading ... *Pastoor* 1919

Standing Orders

Amendments to, re Members' Statements and Recognitions ... *Speaker, The* 17, 91

Amendments to, re Members' Statements and Recognitions (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ...
Hancock 624–25; *Stevens* 624–25

SO 8(3) waived to allow consideration of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act ...

Jablonski 784, 790; *Speaker, The* 784; *Zwozdesky* 793

SO 50 (Public Accounts committee) amendments, eight motions re (SP673/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1837

SO 58(5) waived to allow consideration of main estimates ... *Speaker, The* 1085, 1319

SO 87(1) amendment, to increase fees for petitioning private bills ... *Brown* 1033; *Speaker, The* 1033

Standing Orders, SO 30 motion

See **Emergency debates under Standing Order 30**

Standing Orders, SO 40 motion

See **Emergency motions under Standing Order 40**

Standing Orders and Printing, Standing Committee on

See **Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Standing**

Standing policy committees

See **Caucus policy committees (PC party)**

Stanford, Mr. James M.

Investiture into Order of Canada ... *Jablonski* 1743

Stanley, Project

See **Enron Canada Corporation, Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley)**

Stanley-Venne, Ms Muriel

Investiture into Order of Canada ... *Jablonski* 1743

STARS Foundation

See **Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service Foundation**

Stars of Literacy 2005 program

See **International Literacy Day, Stars of Literacy 2005 program (SP525/05: Tabled)**

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company

Rate reduction ... *Mason* 455; *McClellan* 455

Stationary emergency vehicles

See **Emergency vehicles, Stationary**

Statistics Canada

Policing levels across Canada: Table re (SP123/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 210

Statistics Canada (Continued)

- Report on construction industry employment levels *See*
Construction trades, Employment levels: Stats Can report on
 Research paper on tuition fees (SP750/05: Tabled) ...
Taylor 1970

Stay-at-home parents (subsidies re daycare)

- See* **Daycare centres, Subsidies re, for stay-at-home parents**

Stay-at-home parents (tax relief re daycare)

- See* **Tax incentives, Stay-at-home parents (re daycare)**

Stealing cars—Prevention

- See* **Automobile theft—Prevention**

STEP

- See* **Selective traffic enforcement program; Summer Temporary Employment Program**

Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)

- [*See also* **Water diversion**]

- First reading ... *Mitzel* 252
 Second reading ... *Blakeman* 519–20, 521, 522;
Boutilier 523; *Chase* 522–23, 524–25; *Eggen*
 524–25; *Evans* 523; *Hinman* 523, 524; *MacDonald*
 520, 521; *Mitzel* 517–18, 525; *Pastoor* 521; *Prins*
 520–22; *Swann* 518–19, 521
 Committee ... *Chase* 605–06, 609–10; *Hancock*
 606–07; *Mason* 603, 608–09; *McClellan* 607–08;
Mitzel 602–06, 608–09; *Ouellette* 606; *Swann*
 603–06
 Third reading ... *Eggen* 940; *Mitzel* 940; *Pastoor* 940
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
 (Outside of House sitting)
 Allocation level in ... *Boutilier* 978–79; *Swann* 978,
 1038
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 530; *Elsalhy* 1371

Stocking of fish

- See* **Fish stocking**

Stollery Children's Hospital

- Statement re ... *Ducharme* 956

Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation

- General remarks ... *Ducharme* 956

Stoney Trail bridge, Calgary

- See* **Bridges—Stoney Trail, Calgary**

Stony Plain youth justice committee

- See* **Youth justice committees—Stony Plain**

Stranded beef export container initiative

- General remarks ... *Pannu* 299

Strategic economic corridors (Highway construction)

- Funding for ... *Oberg* 1800

Strategic Tourism Marketing Council

- General remarks ... *Dunford* 1008

Strathcona Cadet Tatoo

- Statement re ... *Lougheed* 1313

Strathcona County

- Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by
 Shell chemical plant ... *Boutilier* 162

Strathcona County Emergency Services

- Response to Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire ...
Boutilier 1335–36

Strathcona County hospital

- See* **Hospitals—Strathcona County**

Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School, Edmonton

- Closure ... *Eggen* 1447; *MacDonald* 311, 694, 767,
 1097–98; *Ouellette* 287; *Taylor* 287; *Zwozdesky*
 694,767, 1447

Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School, Edmonton (Continued)

- Closure: Court decision re ... *Flaherty* 1446; *Oberg*
 1446; *Zwozdesky* 1446

- Closure: Court decision re (SP441/05: Tabled) ...
MacDonald 1507

- Closure: Letter re (SP177/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 327

- Closure: Parent advisory association reports on (SP318
 & 326/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 746, 776

- Closure: Petition tabled re (SP506/05) ... *MacDonald*
 1608

- Closure: Provision of Supernet service to ... *MacDonald*
 759–60; *Ouellette* 759–60

- Fact sheet re (SP207/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 370

Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)

- First reading ... *Horner* 370

- Second reading ... *Chase* 545; *Elsalhy* 544–45; *Horner*
 543, 546; *MacDonald* 543–44; *Martin* 544; *Miller, R.*
 545–46; *Swann* 544

- Committee ... *Agnihotri* 561; *Hinman* 562; *Horner*
 560–62; *Miller, R.* 561–62

- Third reading ... *Hancock* 943; *Horner* 943;
MacDonald 943

- Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005
 (Outside of House sitting)

Street car-racing

- Letter re (SP726/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1920

Strengthening Relationships: The Government of Alberta's Proposed Aboriginal Policy Framework

- See* **Aboriginal policy framework**

Strikes and lockouts

- Replacement workers during *See* **Replacement workers**

Strikes and lockouts—Lakeside Packers employees

- General remarks ... *Backs* 1625; *Cardinal* 1625,
 1711–12; *Klein* 1625; *Martin* 1711–12
 Statement re ... *Martin* 1630

Strikes and lockouts—Oil sands employees

- General remarks ... *Backs* 1132

Strip test for smell re crystal meth use

- See* **Crystal methamphetamine (Drug), Test for use of (strips detecting smell)**

Strokes (Brain disease)

- Provincial strategy re ... *Evans* 1458

Stronach, Belinda (Federal cabinet minister)

- See* **Dept. of Human Resources and Skills Development (Federal)**

Student assessment

- Computer adaptive assessment tool re ... *Rogers*
 1782–83; *Zwozdesky* 1782–83

- Fees for ... *Eggen* 1728–29; *Zwozdesky* 1730

- Grade level achievement method ... *Rogers* 1782–83;
Zwozdesky 1782–83

Student associations

- See* **Student unions**

Student complaints procedure

- See* **Private vocational schools, Students' complaints procedure re**

Student financial aid

- Appeals of loan awards, 2000-04 (Q27/05: Response
 tabled as SP478/05) ... *Blakeman* 1157; *Hancock*
 1157–58, 1578; *Taylor* 1157

- Default rates, 1994-95 to 2003-04 (Q25/05: Response
 tabled as SP476/05) ... *Blakeman* 1155–57; *Hancock*
 1155–56, 1578; *Martin* 1156; *Taylor* 1155

Student financial aid (Continued)

- Default rates, 2000-2003 (Q1/05: Response tabled as SP468/05) ... *Hancock* 653-54, 1578; *Pannu* 654-55
- Default rates of private vocational school students ... *Hancock* 1602; *Pannu* 1602
- Defaults: Value of, 2000-2003 (Q2/05: Response tabled as SP469/05) ... *Hancock* 655-56, 1578; *Pannu* 656
- Dollar value, 2001-03 (Q4/05: Response tabled as SP471/05) ... *Hancock* 657-58, 1578; *Pannu* 657-58
- Dollar value for students attending private institutions, 2000-04 (Q21/05: Response tabled as SP475/05) ... *Chase* 814; *Hancock* 813, 1578; *Miller, R.* 813-14; *Taylor* 813
- Dollar value under student loan program, 2000-04 (Q20/05: Response tabled as SP474/05) ... *Hancock* 813, 1578; *Miller, R.* 813; *Taylor* 813
- Federal loan limit increase ... *Hancock* 320; *Rogers* 319-20
- Federal loans ... *Hancock* 361
- General remarks ... *Cao* 874; *Hancock* 20, 48, 277-78, 649, 697, 860, 864-65, 1796, 1797, 1831, 1965; *Herard* 48; *Mason* 278; *McClellan* 748; *Pannu* 872, 1889; *Speech from the Throne* 8; *Taylor* 20, 276, 277, 649, 697, 862, 1831, 1835
- Grants vs. loans ... *Pannu* 1796
- Loan interest rates ... *Hancock* 1830; *Shariff* 1830
- Loan remission funding ... *Hancock* 277-78, 860, 864, 1795-96, 1797; *Mason* 278; *Pannu* 1794, 1796-97; *Taylor* 276
- Loan remission policy re ... *Hancock* 697, 798, 864, 1830; *Taylor* 798, 862
- Maximum allowable loans, number of (Q26/05: Response tabled as SP477/05) ... *Blakeman* 1157; *Hancock* 1157, 1578; *Taylor* 1157
- Number of students receiving, 2000-2004 (Q3/05: Response tabled as SP470) ... *Hancock* 656-57, 1578; *Pannu* 657
- Provincial loan policy ... *Hancock* 320, 361, 1830; *Rogers* 320; *Shariff* 1830; *Taylor* 361
- Provincial loan policy: Report re (SP206/05: Tabled) ... *Taylor* 370
- Relief benefits/completion payments dollar value, 2000-2004 (private vocational schools attendance) (Q11/05: Response tabled as SP473/05) ... *Hancock* 662, 1578; *Taylor* 662
- Relief benefits/completion payments dollar value, 2000-2004 (public institutions attendance) (Q10/05: Response tabled as SP472/05) ... *Hancock* 661-62, 1578; *Taylor* 662
- Repayment systems for, reports/studies (M31/05: Response tabled as SP481/05) ... *Blakeman* 1161; *Hancock* 1161, 1578; *Taylor* 1161
- Supplemental assistance from students' unions ... *Hancock* 649, 697; *Taylor* 649, 697

Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)

- First reading ... *Hancock* 127
- Second reading ... *Abbott* 433; *Bonko* 431; *Chase* 430, 433, 434; *Eggen* 430-31; *Flaherty* 434-35; *Hancock* 427-28, 435; *Hinman* 431; *Horner* 433; *MacDonald* 431-33; *Martin* 433-34; *Miller, R.* 430; *Snelgrove* 434; *Taylor* 428-30
- Committee ... *Chase* 1561; *Martin* 1561-62; *Taylor* 1560-61

Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14) (Continued)

- Third reading ... *Flaherty* 1581; *Hancock* 1581
- Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Student grade level achievement reports**
See School reports, Grade level achievement reports
- Student health framework**
See Education-Curricula, Health and wellness instruction framework
- Student Health Initiative**
Funding ... *Zwozdesky* 1261
- Student leadership conference, Olds (May 2005)**
Statement re ... *Marz* 1527
- Student services**
See Postsecondary educational institutions, Student services
- Student/teacher ratio (Grade school)**
See Class size (Grade school)
- Student temporary employment program**
See Summer Temporary Employment Program
- Student testing**
Achievement tests ... *Chase* 265; *Flaherty* 266, 1255, 1262-63; *Martin* 1271; *Zwozdesky* 1255, 1264-65, 1272
- Achievement tests: Comparison to international standards ... *Flaherty* 1262; *Zwozdesky* 1264
- Achievement tests: Costs of administering, 2000-05 (Q40/05: Accepted) ... *Bonko* 1747; *Flaherty* 1747; *Zwozdesky* 1747
- Achievement tests, Edmonton ... *Mather* 1081
- Achievement tests: Grade 3 retesting ... *Flaherty* 648, 952; *Zwozdesky* 648, 952, 1255
- Diagnostic tests ... *Flaherty* 266, 952, 1255, 1262-63, 1264; *Zwozdesky* 648, 952, 1255, 1265
- Diploma exams: Funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 1265
- Diploma exams: Grading errors on ... *Pannu* 164; *Zwozdesky* 164, 168
- Diploma exams: Method for equating, studies re (M49/05: Accepted) ... *Flaherty* 1920; *Zwozdesky* 1920
- Student unions**
Establishment of, in private vocational schools ... *Hancock* 1602-03; *Pannu* 1602
- Student wellness program**
See Education-Curricula, Health and wellness instruction framework
- Students, Foreign (Grade school)**
Recruitment of ... *Cao* 874-75; *Chase* 265
- Statement re ... *Cao* 1786
- Students' associations**
See Student unions
- Students Finance Board**
General remarks ... *Hancock* 649, 697, 862, 864
- Stumpage rates**
See Timber-Royalties
- Sub judice**
General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 581; *Oberle* 581; *Speaker, The* 581-82, 743
- Subdivision of land**
Off-site road levies for ... *Pastoor* 1324; *Renner* 1324
- Subsidies**
See Daycare centres, Subsidies re; Daycare in family members' homes, Subsidies for;

Subsidies (Continued)

See **Daycare in private homes, Subsidies for;**
Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre,
Outpatient residence, replacement with private
run facility: Subsidies re

Subsidized housing

See **Social housing**

Substance abuse—Prevention—Youth

General remarks ... *Mather* 1234
 Youth input into ... *Danyluk* 1052–53, 1062–63

Substance abuse—Treatment

Impact of provision of, on health care demand ...
Blakeman 1462
 Parent support group re ... *Mather* 325

Substance abuse—Treatment—Prisoners

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1436; *Cenaiko* 1438

Substance abuse—Treatment—Young offenders

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1436; *Cenaiko* 1433,
 1438

Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth

Detox/residential services re ... *Evans* 23, 267, 1458,
 2048; *Flaherty* 266–67; *Forsyth* 23, 799; *Jablonski*
 23, 2048; *Mather* 799, 1234; *Rodney* 1787

Detox/residential services re, in empty young offender
 centres ... *Cenaiko* 800; *Pastoor* 800

Detox/residential services re: Letter re (SP607/05:
 Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1716–17

Detox/residential services re: Tendering procedures re ...
Evans 852; *Mather* 852

Mandatory programs for ... *Evans* 852; *Jablonski* 621,
 2048; *Rodney* 1787

Mandatory programs for: Legislation re (Bill 202) ...
Jablonski 52, 956; *Rodney* 1787

Mandatory programs for: Legislation re (Bill 202) -
 unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and
 Third readings of ... *Jablonski* 784, 790, 956;
Speaker, The 784; *Zwozdesky* 793

Mandatory programs for: Letter re (SP181/05: Tabled)
 ... *Blakeman* 327

Mandatory programs for: Petitions presented re ...
Jablonski 210, 653, 745, 1342, 1528

Mandatory programs for: Provincial policy on ...
Forsyth 413; *Mather* 413

Mandatory programs for: Statement re ... *Jablonski*
 697–98; *Mather* 745

News report re lack of (SP503/05: Tabled) ... *Swann*
 1608

Sudan—Politics and government

Statement re ... *Swann* 1341

Suffield National Wildlife Area

See **Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife**
Area

Suffrage, Women's

See **Women—Right to vote**

Summer Temporary Employment Program

General remarks ... *Backs* 1131; *Cardinal* 1132

Summer villages capital projects

See **Capital projects, Municipal—Finance, Summer**
villages projects

Summit on Justice

See **Alberta Summit on Justice (1999)**

Summit on lotteries and gaming

See **Alberta Lotteries and Gaming Summit (1998)**

SUN

See **Seniors United Now**

Sun Microsystems Inc.

Ontario deal with, for school software licences ...
Hancock 287; *Taylor* 287, 323; *Zwozdesky* 323

Suncor Inc.

Communications plan re temporary foreign workers
 (SP244/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 464

Employee strike action at ... *Backs* 1132

Firebag project, royalty discussions re ... *Melchin* 919

Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... *Chase* 1047

Greenhouse gas emissions reduction, comments on ...
Boutilier 365; *Eggen* 365

Memo re temporary foreign workers ... *Backs* 360–61;
Cardinal 361, 458; *Martin* 458

Pipeline planning, wildlife consideration ... *Coutts* 1965

Voyageur project ... *Danyluk* 203; *Melchin* 203, 572

Sundance electric power plant

See under **Enron Canada Corporation**

Sunterra Quality Food Markets Inc.

Cattle farm ... *McClellan* 23

Packing plant, provincial assistance to ... *Horner* 1210

Superintendent of Insurance

Private-sector pension funds security precautions:
 Legislation re (Bill 35) ... *Brown* 419

SuperNet

See **Alberta SuperNet**

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05

Procedural motions are entered under Estimates of
 Supply (Government expenditures)

Debate is entered under individual department names

Emergency motion re, under Standing Order 40 ... *Pannu*
 1971

General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1724; *Blakeman* 1839;
Chase 1798, 1801; *Doerksen* 1372; *Eggen* 1732;
Elsalhy 966, 1326, 1370; *Forsyth* 1056, 1733;
Hancock 1798; *Mather* 303, 1053, 1054; *Pannu* 303;
Swann 282; *Taylor* 1791; *Zwozdesky* 1724

Response to questions during (SP279/05: Tabled) ...
McClellan 622

Supportive housing incentive program

See **Seniors' supportive housing incentive program**

Supportive housing incentive program—East Central Health region

See **Seniors' supportive housing incentive**
program—East Central Health region

Supports for independence program

See **Income Support program**

Supreme Court judges

Selection process for ... *Stelmach* 1184

Supreme Court of Canada

15 top decisions on section 15 of Charter of Rights,
 document re (SP333/05: Tabled) ... *Pannu* 806

Definition of marriage decision ... *Hinman* 1153

Government fees decision (Eurig case) ... *Blakeman* 754

Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... *Abbott*
 45; *Calahasen* 43, 45, 323, 574, 840, 842, 845, 1124;

Chase 776; *Coutts* 165, 246, 616; *Eggen* 840;

Lougheed 573–74; *Tougas* 165, 323, 838

Private health insurance ruling ... *Blakeman* 1622; *Klein*
 1622, 1623

Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)

First reading ... *Oberle* 1745

Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)*(Continued)*

- Second reading ... *Bonko* 1868–69; *Chase* 1869; *Oberle* 1868, 1869
 Committee ... *Elsalhy* 1979; *Martin* 1979; *Oberle* 1979
 Third reading ... *Chase* 2027–28; *Knight* 2028; *Oberle* 2027; *Pannu* 2028
 Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board

- Annual report, 2004 (SP324/05: Tabled) ... *Coutts* 776
 Appeals to, re re-entry to land to rectify failed reclamation work ... *Oberle* 1745

Surgery equipment[See also **Medical equipment**]

- Funding for ... *Evans* 271

Surgery waiting lists

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 273; *Evans* 271, 1077, 1915
 Public vs private facilities ... *Blakeman* 244–45; *Evans* 244–45, 1145; *Klein* 644, 1145; *Mason* 644, 1145

Surgical services, Private

- General remarks ... *Miller, R.* 258

Surplus, Budgetary

- Aboriginal issues funding with ... *Calahasen* 1781; *Tougas* 1781
 Accountability for, relation to Premier's travel to eastern Canada ... *Klein* 1623; *Mason* 1623
 Agricultural society funding ... *Graydon* 1799
 AISH increase with ... *Backs* 889
 Ambulance service funding ... *Blakeman* 1463
 Arts funding with ... *Blakeman* 1477
 Brochure re, mailed to all residents ... *McClellan* 1667
 Brochure re, mailed to all residents: Cost breakdown re (SP539/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1674
 Capital project funding with ... *Ady* 797–98; *Chase* 645; *McClellan* 747, 797–98; *Oberg* 645, 798, 1621, 1800–01; *Taft* 1621
 Child care after school funding with ... *Mather* 1731
 Daycare/family day homes inspecting with ... *Mather* 1731
 Endowment funds funding ... *Doerksen* 1368
 Fort McMurray infrastructure funding with ... *Chase* 1627–28; *McClellan* 1628; *Oberg* 1628; *Renner* 1628
 General remarks ... *Chase* 1801; *Elsalhy* 966; *Evans* 1622, 1707; *Hancock* 1621; *Hinman* 264; *Klein* 1621, 1706–07; *Martin* 919; *McClellan* 747, 962, 1622, 1626, 1667; *Melchin* 922; *Miller, R.* 961, 1626; *Morton* 1667; *Oberg* 1621; *Stelmach* 1621; *Taft* 1621–22, 1706–07
 Heritage Savings funding with ... *Miller, R.* 960
 Homelessness initiatives funding ... *MacDonald* 1799
 Hospital funding with ... *Blakeman* 1839, 1840; *Evans* 1838, 1841, 1915
 Investment in capital account ... *Elsalhy* 1326
 Investment policy for: Legislation re (Bill 203) ... *MacDonald* 170; *Miller, R.* 960
 Municipal infrastructure debt funding with ... *Miller, R.* 960
 Postsecondary education funding with ... *Blakeman* 866; *Hancock* 859, 867–68, 1621, 1790, 1795, 1798; *McClellan* 901, 1667; *Miller, R.* 960; *Taylor* 1791
 Public assistance increase with ... *Backs* 849; *Cardinal* 849

Surplus, Budgetary (Continued)

- Road construction funding with ... *Oberg* 1800–01
 School construction funding with ... *Chase* 1087; *Flaherty* 1739; *McClellan* 1667; *Zwozdesky* 1725, 1739, 1914
 Tax reduction funding with ... *McClellan* 961
Surplus in victims of crime fund
 See **Victims of Crime Fund, Surplus**
Sustainability fund
 See **Alberta Sustainability Fund**
A Sustainable and Equitable Economy, a Pre-Budget Commentary
 See **Parkland Institute, A Sustainable and Equitable Economy, a Pre-Budget Commentary (SP288/05: Tabled)**
Sustainable Development, Standing Policy Committee on Energy and
 See **Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy**
Sustainable economic development
 See **Economic development and the environment**
Sustainable forests
 See **Forest conservation**
Sustainable remote housing initiative
 See **Social housing—Rural areas, Sustainable remote housing initiative**
Sustainable Resource Development, Dept. of
 See **Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development**
Swan Hills Treatment Centre
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1337; *Eggen* 1337
 Operational funding for ... *Oberg* 1085
Swan Hills waste treatment plant
 See **Swan Hills Treatment Centre**
Swine—Export—United States
 See **Hogs—Export—United States**
Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon
 See **Spitz Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon**
Symposium on best practices in health care
 See **Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)**
Synthetic crude—Royalties
 See **Heavy oil—Royalties**
Taber Safe Haven (Women's shelter)
 Funding for ... *Forsyth* 900; *Hinman* 900
Tabling returns and reports (Parliamentary procedure)
 Newspaper articles ... *Speaker, The* 2018
Taft, Mr. Kevin (Leader)
 See under **Official Opposition**
Tailings ponds
 See **Tar sands development—Waste disposal, Tailings ponds**
Talisman Energy Inc.
 Heritage Fund investment in ... *McClellan* 120; *Miller, R.* 120
Tap water
 See **Drinking water**
Tar sands development
 Chinese investment in ... *Melchin* 801; *Oberle* 801
 Employee strike actions in See **Strikes and lockouts—Oil sands employees**
 Employment opportunities in ... *Backs* 279, 571, 1131, 1132; *Cao* 802; *Cardinal* 531, 571, 802; *Danyluk* 531; *Hancock* 201–02; *Klein* 647; *Martin* 647; *Taylor* 201–02

Tar sands development (Continued)

- Employment opportunities in: Dorothy Paquette run for, Edmonton - Fort McMurray ... *Backs* 652
- Expansion projects ... *Danyluk* 203, 531; *Dunford* 531; *Melchin* 203, 532
- Expansion projects: Auditor General's comments re ... *Martin* 921; *Melchin* 921
- Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... *Backs* 121–22, 279, 318, 360–61, 411, 1443; *Calahasen* 839; *Cao* 802; *Cardinal* 121–22, 280, 281, 318, 321–22, 361, 362, 411, 458, 802, 1443; *Danyluk* 843; *Hancock* 248; *Jablonski* 121; *Klein* 647; *Martin* 321–22, 458, 647, 920; *Mason* 361–62; *Taylor* 248; *Tougas* 838
- Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers), Letters re (SP205/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 370
- General remarks ... *MacDonald* 910–11; *Martin* 920; *McClellan* 967; *Melchin* 908, 909–10, 921–22
- Impact of ... *Boutilier* 201; *Danyluk* 203; *Klein* 201; *Melchin* 203; *Oberg* 200–01; *Swann* 201; *Taft* 200
- Labour relations issues in ... *Martin* 1137
- Rail access for *See Rail service–Edmonton/Fort McMurray*
- Use of natural gas supplies ... *Chase* 1377; *Eggen* 1715
- Use of water supplies ... *Eggen* 1715
- Value-added opportunities ... *Danyluk* 804–05, 836; *Martin* 920; *Mason* 571–72; *Melchin* 532, 572, 801, 916, 921; *Oberle* 801

Tar sands development–Environmental aspects

- General remarks ... *Bonko* 1829; *Boutilier* 201, 365, 1042–43, 1048–49, 1829, 1914–15, 1963–64, 1967–68; *Chase* 1047; *Coutts* 1964; *Eggen* 365, 1714–15, 1914–15; *Klein* 201; *Knight* 1963–64; *Melchin* 1829–30, 1964; *Morton* 1967; *Swann* 201

Tar sands development–Research

- General remarks ... *Backs* 1376; *Doerksen* 1369; *McClellan* 749
- U.S. interest in ... *Melchin* 1310

Tar sands development–Royalties

See Heavy oil–Royalties

Tar sands development–Safety aspects

- General remarks ... *Backs* 1122, 1134; *Cardinal* 1122

Tar sands development–Waste disposal

- Tailings ponds ... *Melchin* 1913; *Swann* 1913

Tara MacDonald law

See Hours of labour, Working alone regulation

Tarbox award of excellence and scholarship

See Smoking–Prevention, AADAC award of excellence and scholarship re (Barb Tarbox award)

Tartan Day (Scotland)

- Recognition of ... *DeLong* 578

Tasering case

See Edmonton Police Service, Randy Fryingpan tasering case

Task Force, Rural Development Strategy

See Rural Development Strategy Task Force

Task Force on Continuing Care Health Service and Accommodation Standards, MLA

See Extended care facilities, MLA committee to review (2005)

Task Force on Funding and Revenue Generation, MLA (Report)

See Medical care–Finance, MLA committee to review: Report

Task force on health care funding: Report

See Medical care–Finance, MLA committee to review: Report

Task force on spam, Federal

See Spam (Computer junk e-mail), Federal task force on

Taverns

See Licensed premises

Tax deductions

See Tax incentives

Tax incentives

- Agribusinesses ... *Hinman* 1851
- Alternate energy research ... *Hinman* 1426, 1911; *Klein* 1911–12
- Clean energy research ... *Hinman* 1911; *Klein* 1911–12
- Employment tax credit ... *McClellan* 961
- Energy industry incentives ... *Hinman* 1017
- Film/TV production companies ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1010, 1013, 1016; *Eggen* 1015
- General remarks ... *Dunford* 1010; *McClellan* 749
- Investments in new technology companies ... *Bonko* 1009
- Northern residence tax deduction ... *Backs* 571; *McClellan* 571
- Research and development projects ... *Bonko* 1009
- Resource rebates (Bill 43) ... *McClellan* 1631
- Stay-at-home parents (re daycare) ... *Forsyth* 1076–77, 1310, 1731; *Morton* 1076–77; *Pannu* 1310
- Youth recreation programs (for purposes of youth violence prevention) ... *Agnihotri* 1578

Tax on income, Provincial

See Income tax, Provincial

Tax on NHL players

See National Hockey League, Out-of-province player levy

Tax revenue, Provincial

- General remarks ... *Hinman* 970–71; *McClellan* 959; *Miller, R.* 963

Tax revenue sharing

See Federal/provincial fiscal relations; Provincial/municipal fiscal relations

Taxation

- General remarks ... *Abbott* 1392; *Dunford* 1010; *Hinman* 412; *Klein* 768; *Mason* 768, 968; *McClellan* 412, 571, 749, 766, 958, 961, 967, 969–70; *Miller, R.* 959–60, 961; *Speech from the Throne* 9; *Stelmach* 1392
- Reduction in ... *Hinman* 970–71; *McClellan* 967
- Reduction in, use of surplus for ... *McClellan* 962, 1626; *Miller, R.* 1626
- Review of ... *McClellan* 2049

Taxation, Municipal

- General remarks ... *Pastoor* 1324; *Renner* 1324

Teacher-librarians

- General remarks ... *Bonko* 1267; *Martin* 1722–23; *Zwozdesky* 1268, 1723, 1727

Teacher/student ratio (Grade school)

See Class size (Grade school)

Teachers

- General remarks ... *Cao* 651
- Numbers of, increase in: Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1724; *Bonko* 309; *MacDonald* 311; *McClellan* 748; *Zwozdesky* 306, 308, 309, 311, 1727

Teachers (Continued)

- Professional development for, funding for ... *Zwozdesky* 1260, 1261, 1264
- Rewards for excellence ... *Hinman* 1273; *Zwozdesky* 1274
- Statement re ... *Haley* 1504–05
- University of Calgary book about (*My Most Memorable Teacher ...*) ... *Brown* 1744
- University of Calgary book about (*My Most Memorable Teacher ...*): Letter of congratulations re (SP630/05: Tabled) ... *Zwozdesky* 1745

Teachers, Aboriginal

- Incentives for ... *Flaherty* 874

Teachers, Modern languages

- Incentives for ... *Goudreau* 1604; *Zwozdesky* 1604

Teachers—Collective bargaining

- See **Collective bargaining—Teachers**

Teachers—Salaries

- See **Wages—Teachers**

Teachers' Association

- See **Alberta Teachers' Association**

Teachers' Pension Plan

- Unfunded liability ... *Abbott* 1712; *Mather* 1726; *McClellan* 1448–49, 1910; *Miller, R.* 1448, 1910; *Zwozdesky* 1261, 1712, 1910
- Unfunded liability: Letter re (SP603/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1716
- Unfunded liability: Letter re (SP816/05: Tabled) ... *Mather* 2056
- Unfunded liability: Letter re (SP817/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 2056
- Unfunded liability: Letters re (SP708-710, 730-731/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 1891, 1920

Teachers' Pension Plans Act

- General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1261

Teachers' Retirement Fund (Administrator)

- See **Teachers' Pension Plan**

Teaching Awards, Excellence in

- See **Excellence in Teaching Awards**

Teaching Excellence, Prime Minister's Awards for

- See **Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence**

Team-based medical care

- See **Medical care, Primary, Team-based care**

Technical schools

- Audited financial statements, 2002-03 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 623; *Hancock* 623
- Audited financial statements, 2003-04 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1920; *Hancock* 1920
- Enrollment decline at ... *Cardinal* 1141
- Governance structure, academic council model, legislation re (Bill 55) ... *Hancock* 1890

Technical schools—Finance

- General remarks ... *McClellan* 748

Technological equipment, Medical

- See **Medical equipment**

Technological research

- See **Research and development**

Technology Authority

- See **Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority**

Technology commercialization

- General remarks ... *Chase* 1377; *Doerksen* 1369; *Eggen* 1373
- Provincial initiative re ... *Bonko* 1009

Technology in schools

- See **Computers in schools**

Technology venture fund (Proposed)

- General remarks ... *Bonko* 1009

Teenage prostitution

- See **Prostitution, Juvenile**

Teenagers—Employment

- See **Young adults—Employment**

Telehealth services

- General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1469, 1471; *Danyluk* 843, 853–54; *Evans* 854, 1339; *McClellan* 1471–72; *Ouellette* 854

Telemarketing

- Legislation re (Bill 205) ... *Pham* 622

Telephone emergency warning system, Fort**Saskatchewan**

- General remarks ... *Renner* 207

Telephone information lines

- See **Forest fires—Prevention, Phone reporting line re; Health Link Alberta; Parent information telephone line; Seniors' issues, Telephone information line re; Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)**

Telephones, Cellular

- See **Cellular telephones**

Telephones in automobiles

- See **Cellular telephones in automobiles**

Telus Corporation

- Appeal of linear assessment ... *Martin* 1325
- Labour situation: E-mail re (SP373/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1081
- SuperNet contract bid ... *Elsalhy* 320; *Ouellette* 320

Tenants

- See **Landlord and tenant**

Tender Beef Co-op Ltd.

- See **Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op Ltd.**

Tenure system, Forest

- See **Forest tenure system**

Terrace Building, Edmonton

- Disposition of ... *Oberg* 1097, 1518; *Taft* 1518

Terrace Heights Elementary School, Edmonton

- Closure ... *Flaherty* 1446; *MacDonald* 311, 1098; *Oberg* 1446; *Zwozdesky* 1446
- Closure: Provision of Supernet service to ... *MacDonald* 759, 760
- Leasing by Alberta Online Consortium Association (SP488/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1578

Terrorist attacks—New York City/Washington, D.C.

- September 11, 2001 aircraft crashes ... *Mason* 462

Terrorist attacks—Prevention

- General remarks ... *Prins* 1251; *Renner* 1251

Tertiary oil recovery methods

- See **Oil recovery methods**

Testing of students

- See **Student testing**

Tests, Medical

- See **Medical tests**

Textbooks—Finance

- General remarks ... *Bonko* 309, 310; *Flaherty* 307; *Zwozdesky* 306–07, 310

Theatre

- Provincial funding for ... *McClellan* 1479

Theft of personal identity

- See **under Identification, Personal**

- Third party opposition**
See **New Democrat Opposition**
- Third way (Alberta health care reform)**
See **Medical care, Restructuring (third way option)**
- The Third Way or the Third Hoax? (Brochure)**
See **Seniors' Action and Liason Team, The Third Way or the Third Hoax? (Brochure) (SP553/05: Tabled)**
- Thompson's World Insurance News**
 March 14, 2005 article re Alberta auto insurance reforms ... *Miller, R.* 454
 March 14, 2005 article re Alberta auto insurance reforms (SP241/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 463
- Threat assessment and management initiative (Domestic violence cases)**
See **Domestic violence, Risk assessment group re violent cases**
- Throne Speech**
See **Speech from the Throne**
- Ticket program for hockey funding**
See **Hockey, Lottery funding for**
- Tidal wave—Thailand/Indian Ocean area**
See **Tsunami—Thailand/Indian Ocean area**
- Tie lines (electric power) with B.C. and Montana**
See **Electric power lines, Tie lines with B.C. and Montana**
- Timber, Fire-killed**
 Value-adding re ... *Coutts* 1393
- Timber—Hines Creek area**
 Allocation of ... *Coutts* 88
- Timber—Royalties**
 General remarks ... *Bonko* 928–29; *Coutts* 930, 931
- Timber harvesting**
See **Logging**
- Timber harvesting in forest fire hit areas**
See **Logging in forest fire hit areas**
- Timber management agreements**
See **Forest management agreements**
- Timberlea Consortium Incorporated**
 Purchase of public land in Fort McMurray ... *Fritz* 1502, 1519–20; *Martin* 1502; *Mason* 1519–20, 1598; *McClellan* 1598
 Purchase of public land in Fort McMurray: Land titles certificate re (SP446/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1508
- Time for Action: HungerCount 2005 (Report)**
See **Canadian Association of Food Banks, Time for Action: HungerCount 2005 (Report) (SP712/05: Tabled)**
- Tissue donation**
See **Organ and tissue donation**
- Tissue Donor Awareness Week**
See **National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week**
- Tobacco companies**
 Heritage Fund investment in ... *Blakeman* 82–83; *Elsalhy* 966; *Klein* 82–83; *McClellan* 82–83, 120, 964; *Miller, R.* 120, 294, 963
 Heritage Fund investment in: List of (SP35/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 93
 Influence on smoke-free legislation changes ... *Klein* 690; *Taft* 690
 Meetings with provincial ministers, 2001–2004 (M4/05: Response tabled as SP628/05) ... *Clerk, The* 1717; *Evans* 494, 1717; *Mason* 494; *Pannu* 494
- Tobacco reduction strategy**
See **Smoking—Prevention**
- Tobacco use—Prevention**
See **Smoking—Prevention**
- Tolerance, International Day for**
See **International Day for Tolerance**
- Tomahawk sour gas well drilling**
See **Gas well drilling industry—Tomahawk/Drayton Valley area**
- The Top 15 on 15 (Document)**
See **Supreme Court of Canada, 15 top decisions on section 15 of Charter of Rights, document re (SP333/05: Tabled)**
- Toughening of sentencing re crime**
See **Sentences (Criminal procedure), Increasing of**
- Tourism**
 Centennial year events ... *Mar* 1484
 General remarks ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1015; *Groeneveld* 1968; *VanderBurg* 1968
 Government budget for ... *Bonko* 1010
 Impact of arts/culture facilities on ... *Chase* 1012; *Dunford* 1013
 Impact of industrial development on ... *Chase* 1011–12
 Snowmobile trails attractions ... *Dunford* 744; *Rogers* 744
- Tourism, Ecological**
See **Ecotourism**
- Tourism—Hines Creek area**
 General remarks ... *Bonko* 123; *Dunford* 88, 123
- Tourism—Marketing**
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1007, 1008, 1013
 International marketing efforts ... *Eggen* 1014
 Provincial budget re ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford* 1011
 Use of tourism levy revenue for ... *Dunford* 1008; *McClellan* 959; *Miller, R.* 960; *Rodney* 170
- Tourism—Northern Alberta**
 General remarks ... *Danyluk* 804–05, 836
- Tourism—Rural Alberta**
 2005 conference on: Statement re ... *Johnson* 368
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 48; *Griffiths* 48
- Tourism—Southeast Alberta**
 Impact of additional 24-hour border crossing on ... *Dunford* 646; *Mitzel* 646; *Oberg* 646
- Tourism levy**
 Conversion of hotel tax to ... *McClellan* 749; *Miller, R.* 257
 Conversion of hotel tax to: Impact on computer hardware requirements ... *Dunford* 281
 Conversion of hotel tax to: Legislation re (Bill 21) ... *Rodney* 170
 General remarks ... *Dunford* 1008, 1011; *McClellan* 959, 962; *Miller, R.* 960
- Tourism Marketing Council**
See **Strategic Tourism Marketing Council**
- Town of High River**
See **High River (Town)**
- Trace back system (Livestock)**
See **Livestock, Tracking system re**
- Trade**
See **International trade; Interprovincial trade**
- Trade Centre, Edmonton**
See **World Trade Centre, Edmonton**
- Trade Commission, International**
See **International Trade Commission (U.S.)**

Trade corridor

See **North/south trade corridor**

Trade missions

Expenditures re (Q13/05: Defeated) ... *Bonko* 808;
Chase 808; *Elsalhy* 808; *MacDonald* 808; *Renner*
808

General remarks ... *Dunford* 1016; *Stelmach* 1184

Performance measures re ... *Bonko* 1009; *Dunford*
1011; *Pastoor* 1181; *Stelmach* 1182

Trade missions—Southeast Asia

Benefits of ... *Agnihotri* 46; *Mar* 46

Trade missions—United States

Benefits of ... *DeLong* 1500; *Dunford* 1500

Trade offices, Overseas

See **Alberta Government Offices**

Trade shows

Expenditures re (Q12/05: Defeated) ... *Bonko* 807;
Chase 807; *Dunford* 807; *Elsalhy* 807; *MacDonald*
807; *Renner* 807

Trade unions

See **Labour unions**

Trades

Designation of: Legislation re (Bill 57) ... *Hancock*
1890

Trades courses

See **High school education—Curricula,
Vocational/trades courses**

Tradesmen as high school trades instructors

See **High school education—Curricula,
Vocational/trades courses: Use of ticketed
journeymen in**

Tradespeople—Training

See **Apprenticeship training**

Traditional land-use studies

See **Aboriginal land claims, Traditional land-use
studies re**

Traditional marriage rally, Mill Woods

See **Marriage, Pro traditional marriage rally, Mill
Woods**

Traffic accident injuries

Chiropractic/physiotherapy fee schedule for ...
McClellan 691–92; *Rodney* 691–92

Prenatal injuries, legislation re See **Maternal Tort
Liability Act (Bill 45)**

Traffic accident injuries—Aboriginal communities

Rates of ... *Calahasen* 768; *Ducharme* 768

Traffic accidents—Prevention

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 458; *Herard* 458; *Oberg*
458; *Taft* 1434–35

Traffic enforcement program, Selective

See **Selective traffic enforcement program**

Traffic fatalities

Reduction of ... *Agnihotri* 1089; *Oberg* 1090

Traffic fines

See **Fines (Traffic violations)**

Traffic laws

See **Traffic regulations**

Traffic regulations

Enforcement of ... *Cenaiko* 458; *Herard* 458; *Knight*
44; *Oberg* 44

Traffic safety

Federal initiative re See **Road Safety Vision 2010
(Federal traffic safety initiative)**

Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 1089; *Oberg* 1085, 1090

Traffic safety (Continued)

Funding for children's programs re ... *Oberg* 1800
General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1435; *Lougheed* 1884;
Oberg 950, 1884; *Pannu* 1231; *Rogers* 950; *Taft*
1434–35

McDermid report on ... *Calahasen* 768; *Cenaiko* 1435;
Chase 1802; *Herard* 458; *Oberg* 44, 458, 1802

McDermid report on: Costs of (M48/05: Response tabled
as SP713/05) ... *Chase* 1749; *Clerk, The* 1891;

Doerksen 1749; *Elsalhy* 1749; *Oberg* 1749, 1891

Median barrier installations, on twinned roads ... *Oberg*
2011; *Shariff* 2011

Promotion of ... *Calahasen* 768; *Speech from the
Throne* 10

Review of ... *Cenaiko* 1435

Traffic safety—Aboriginal communities

General remarks ... *Calahasen* 768; *Ducharme* 768

Traffic safety—Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Knight* 44; *Oberg* 44

Traffic safety—Rural Alberta

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1435

Traffic Safety Act

Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving
(Motion 506: Chase) ... *Agnihotri* 1003; *Bonko*
1000–01; *Cao* 1001–02; *Chase* 999, 1006; *Eggen*
1002–03; *Hinman* 1005–06; *Jablonski* 1003–04;
Liepert 999–1000; *Miller, R.* 1004–05; *Mitzel* 1005
Amendments required by Bill 206, 2003 ... *Oberg*
456–57

Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)

First reading ... *Magnus* 746

Second reading ... *Chase* 1292–93; *MacDonald*
1294–95; *Magnus* 891–92, 1291–92; *Pannu* 1293–94

Committee ... *Chase* 1487–88; *Magnus* 1488

Third reading ... *Chase* 1582; *Magnus* 1582; *Strang*
1582

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 2 June, 2005
(Outside of House sittings)

Amendment (SP436/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1487; *Shariff*
1493

General remarks ... *Oberg* 1090

Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution**Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 206, 2003)**

Proclamation of ... *Cenaiko* 456; *Oberg* 456–57; *Taylor*
456–57

Traffic tickets

See **Fines (Traffic violations)**

Trafficking in drugs—Prevention

See **Drug trafficking—Prevention**

Trails, Recreational

On public lands ... *Coutts* 694; *Rogers* 694

Train service, High-speed—Edmonton/Calgary

See **Rail service, High-speed—Edmonton/Calgary**

Train service—Edmonton/Fort McMurray

See **Rail service—Edmonton/Fort McMurray**

Training, Apprenticeship

See **Apprenticeship training**

Training programs, Aboriginal

See **Employment training programs, Aboriginal
peoples**

Training programs, Labour

See **Employment training programs**

TransAlta Utilities Corporation

Donations to provincial PC party ... *Melchin* 1196; *Taft*
1196

TransAlta Utilities Corporation (Continued)

- Electricity price manipulation activities ... *Klein* 488–89; *MacDonald* 286, 455–56, 488–89, 948–49; *Melchin* 286, 360, 455–56, 488–89, 796, 899, 948–49, 1195–96; *Taft* 360, 796, 899, 1195–96
- Electricity price manipulation activities: Documents re (SP163-164/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 295
- Electricity price manipulation activities: Employees' conversations re (SP190/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 327
- Electricity price manipulation activities: Independent investigation of ... *MacDonald* 949; *Melchin* 949
- Hydropower generation pricing ... *Klein* 489; *MacDonald* 363, 456, 488–89; *Melchin* 363–64, 456, 489, 492
- Hydropower generation pricing: Jim Dinning's role in ... *MacDonald* 456; *Melchin* 456
- Hydropower generation pricing: Response to questions re (SP248/05: Tabled) ... *Melchin* 492

Transfer of technology

See **Technology commercialization**

Transfer payments to provinces (CHST)

See **Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)**

Transit, Public–Finance

See **Public transit–Finance**

Transition from the justice system, Youth in

See **Youth in transition from the justice system**

Transitional housing

See **Homeless–Housing, Transitional housing; Prostitutes–Housing, Transitional housing**

Transitional housing for women

See **Battered women–Housing, Second-stage housing**

Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies

See **Bovine spongiform encephalopathy; Chronic wasting disease**

Transmission lines

See **Electric power lines**

Transplantation of corneas

See **Cornea transplants**

Transportation, Interprovincial–Alberta/British Columbia

- General remarks ... *Danyluk* 772, 836–37, 843; *Stelmach* 772, 1180
- Northern corridor study re ... *Danyluk* 772; *Stelmach* 772

Transportation–Northern Alberta

General remarks ... *Danyluk* 843

Transportation and Highway Safety, Council of Ministers Responsible for

See **Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety**

Transportation dept.

See **Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation**

Transportation of schoolchildren

See **Schoolchildren–Transportation**

Transportation Safety Board

See **Alberta Transportation Safety Board**

Trash disposal

See **Refuse and refuse disposal**

Travel Alberta

Web site ... *Dunford* 1008

Travel Alberta Secretariat

Computer hardware, provincial funding for ... *Blakeman* 281; *Dunford* 281

Travel at public expense

- Alberta senators-in-waiting trip to eastern Canada ... *Eggen* 694–95; *Klein* 691; *Ouellette* 691, 695; *Pastoor* 691; *Stelmach* 695
- Premier's travel details, posting of, on government website ... *Klein* 1109; *Mason* 1108

Travel insurance

Refunds for unprovided services (airline tickets) ... *Lund* 204

Travel promotion

See **Tourism–Marketing**

Treasury Branches

- Expansion plans ... *McClellan* 962; *Miller, R.* 961
- Former superintendent's involvement in WEM loan refinancing ... *Mason* 1828; *McClellan* 1828
- Former superintendent's involvement in WEM loan refinancing, response to question re (SP700/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1891
- Former superintendent's involvement in WEM loan refinancing, response to question re (SP729/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 1920
- Lending policies, Auditor General's comments re ... *McClellan* 2050; *Miller, R.* 960, 2050
- Loan to Rancher's Beef ... *McClellan* 2050; *Miller, R.* 2050

Treasury department

See **Dept. of Revenue**

Treasury department (Financial management and planning)

See **Dept. of Finance**

Treaties, First Nations

See **First Nations treaties**

Treaty 8 First Nations

- Resolution and letter re hiring temporary foreign workers (SP134-135/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 211
- Resolution re consultation on forest management agreement renewals (SP634/05: Tabled) ... *Bonko* 1745

Tribal police

See **Aboriginal police services**

Tribal police services

See **Aboriginal police services**

Trimester system (Postsecondary institutions)

See **Postsecondary educational institutions–Utilization, Year-round operation**

Trout–Bow River

Commercial fishing of ... *Coutts* 615; *Morton* 615

Truck drivers–Supply

Government calculations re (Q42/05: Response tabled as SP805/05) ... *Cardinal* 1748, 2018; *Chase* 1748; *Clerk, The* 2018; *Elsalhy* 1748; *Evans* 1748

Truck drivers–Training

College-based course ... *McFarland* 1308–09; *Oberg* 1308–09

Trucking industry

- Canada/U.S. co-operation re regulations for ... *Stelmach* 1186
- Legislation re (Bill 39) ... *Magnus* 746
- Oversize permit process ... *Oberg* 2010; *Snelgrove* 2010
- Use of highway 8 ... *Liepert* 167; *Oberg* 167

Trucks, Government*See* Government vehicles**Trucks–Inspection–Alberta/B.C. border**Joint inspection station ... *Stelmach* 772**Truth squads (Health care debate)***See* Health information panels (Health care debate)**TSEs (Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies)***See* Bovine spongiform encephalopathy; Chronic wasting disease**Tsunami–Thailand/Indian Ocean area**Alberta relief funds for ... *Graydon* 1284**Tsuu T'ina First Nation**Transfer of land re southwest Calgary ring road ...
Liepert 166; *Magnus* 1781–82; *Oberg* 166, 1781–82**Tuition fees**Documentation re (M28/05: Defeated) ... *Blakeman*
1160; *Hancock* 1160; *Taylor* 1160Federal funding to be used for ... *Cao* 1306; *Hancock*
1306–07For occupational training ... *Cardinal* 1130General remarks ... *Hancock* 1203, 1795, 1797, 1830;
Pannu 1793–94; *Taylor* 1203, 1830Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by
provincial government ... *Cao* 1307; *Flaherty* 577;
Hancock 20, 48, 320, 361, 860, 865, 1202–03, 1307,
1795, 2014; *McClellan* 748; *Pannu* 259, 1793; *Prins*
2014; *Speech from the Throne* 8; *Taylor* 20, 361,
862, 1202Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by
provincial government: Legislation re (Bill 1) ... *Klein*
11Increase in, for 2006-07 school year ... *Hancock* 1624;
Taylor 1624Increase in, over last few years ... *Eggen* 875; *Hancock*
649, 697; *Pannu* 872–73; *Taylor* 649, 697For medical students ... *Hancock* 1965; *Taylor* 1965Provincial assistance re, after 2005-06 rebate program ...
Hancock 361, 865, 1202; *Taylor* 361, 862, 1202Provincial assistance re: Petition presented re ... *Eggen*
1506; *Taylor* 210Reduction of ... *Hancock* 1795, 1798; *Pannu* 1793,
1797Remission of, for second year courses ... *Blakeman* 867Remission of, for second year courses, letter re
(SP635/05: Tabled) ... *Agnihotri* 1746Review of ... *Hancock* 20, 48, 320, 361, 798; *Taylor*
20, 361Statement re ... *Pannu* 1889Stats Can research paper on (SP750/05: Tabled) ...
Taylor 1970**Turner Valley Gas Plant (Historic site)**Environmental cleanup of ... *Boutilier* 1961–62; *Mar*
1961; *Oberg* 1800; *Swann* 1961–62**Turner Valley oil discovery***See* Oil discovery–Turner Valley**Turner Valley (Town)**75th anniversary ... *Morton* 1527**TUSK Energy Corporation**Involvement of former minister of energy (Murray
Smith) with, letter re (SP600/05: Tabled) ...
MacDonald 1716**Twinning of cities, provinces, etc.**Ganwon, Korea ... *Stelmach* 1180General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1180Hokkaido, Japan ... *Stelmach* 1180, 1182**Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology***See* Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology**Tyson Foods, Inc.**General remarks ... *Martin* 1630, 1711**U. S. Dept. of Agriculture***See* Dept. of Agriculture (United States)**U. S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission***See* Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (U.S.)**U. S. International Trade Commission***See* International Trade Commission (U.S.)**U of A***See* University of Alberta**U of C***See* University of Calgary**U of L***See* University of Lethbridge**Ukraine–Politics and government**Democratic process: Recognition of ... *Bonko* 127**UNA***See* United Nurses of Alberta**Unconditional government grants***See* Municipal finance, Government grants,
unconditional grants**Under-25 program (Liquor sales)***See* Liquor sales–Regulations, Under-25 program**Underground storage tanks remediation program***See* Petroleum tank sites remediation program**Underground water–Contamination–Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds***See* Groundwater–Contamination–Bow/Elbow Rivers
watersheds**Unemployment**General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129**Unemployment–Wabasca**General remarks ... *Backs* 1131; *Cardinal* 1133**Unemployment–Youth**General remarks ... *Backs* 279**Unions, Labour***See* Labour unions**Unions, Student***See* Student unions**United Church of Canada. Alberta and Northwest Conference**Letter from executive secretary to province on occasion
of centennial (SP719/05: Tabled) ... *Mar* 1919Letter from presidents to province on occasion of
centennial (SP727/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, B.* 1920**United Nations conference on climate change, Montreal
See Climate change, International conference on,
Montreal, November 2005****United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1714**United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons***See* International Day of Disabled Persons**United Nurses of Alberta**Nursing shortage comment ... *Blakeman* 1840**United States Dept. of Agriculture***See* Dept. of Agriculture (United States)**United States energy bill***See* U.S. energy bill**United States Federal Bureau of Investigation***See* Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)**United States Federal Energy Regulatory Commission***See* Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (U.S.)

United States PATRIOT Act

See **USA PATRIOT Act**

United Way (Charitable organization)

Contributions by hang-gliding fundraiser to ... *Miller, R.* 1313

Universities and colleges

Audited financial statements, 2003 and 2004 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 623; *Hancock* 623

Audited financial statements, 2004 and 2005 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... *Clerk, The* 1920; *Hancock* 1920

Climate change research ... *Boutilier* 21

College degrees, transferability of ... *Hancock* 1790, 1791, 1794, 1796; *Taylor* 1791

Extension programs for seniors ... *Flaherty* 874

Governance structure, academic council model, legislation re (Bill 55) ... *Hancock* 1890

Private-sector driven instruction in ... *Blakeman* 867; *Hancock* 868; *Pannu* 873

Quality of instruction in ... *Blakeman* 867; *Hancock* 871–72

Research capacity ... *Elsalhy* 1371

Universities and colleges—Accreditation

National standards for ... *Hancock* 1791

Universities and colleges—Finance

Deficit financing ... *Taylor* 261

General remarks ... *McClellan* 748

Impact of utility cost increase on ... *Taylor* 261

Universities and colleges—Maintenance and repair

Deficit in ... *Hancock* 1794, 1797; *Pannu* 1794, 1797; *Taylor* 261

Universities and Colleges of Canada, Association of

See **Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada**

University campuses' daycare spaces

See **Daycare centres—Campuses**

University dropouts

Rate of ... *Eggen* 875; *Pannu* 872

University graduates

Fellowship program for ... *Speech from the Throne* 8

Scholarship program for [See also **Scholarships**]; *Speech from the Throne* 8

University lecturers

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 867; *Hancock* 871–72

University of Alberta

Auditor General's management letters re, release of: Letter re (SP101/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 128

Bay building purchase, to accommodate learning transition facility ... *Hancock* 1790, 1794; *Pannu* 1794

Centre for Chinese studies See **Centre for Chinese studies (Proposed)**

Construction projects at ... *Oberg* 1088

Deferred maintenance costs ... *Pannu* 1794

Elected officials training courses See **Municipal excellence program**

Health research innovation centre at ... *Hancock* 869

Information access and privacy protection program ... *Mather* 1422

Level 3 lab for animal health, joint project re ... *Horner* 1885

Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 1289; *MacDonald* 1289

Mactaggart Art Collection ... *Hancock* 946–47; *Hinman* 947; *Taft* 947

University of Alberta (Continued)

Merger of Augustana University College with: Legislation re (Bill Pr. 2) ... *Johnson* 622

Partnership agreement with Keyano College ... *Danyluk* 1394–95

Partnership agreement with NorQuest College ... *Danyluk* 1395

Partnership agreement with Northern Lakes College ... *Danyluk* 1395; *Goudreau* 1394

Partnership agreement with Olds College ... *Danyluk* 1395

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP454/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP662/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1789; *Clerk, The* 1789

Report on postsecondary education funding See **Education, Postsecondary—Finance, University of Alberta report on (SP187/05: Tabled)**

Sports teams achievements ... *Taft* 620

University of Alberta. Augustana campus

Statement re ... *Johnson* 1917–18

University of Alberta health sciences ambulatory learning centre

See **Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)**

University of Alberta Hospital

See **Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre**

University of Calgary

Auditor General's management letters re, release of: Letter re (SP101/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 128

Centennial projects, statement re ... *Brown* 1744

Construction projects at ... *Oberg* 1088

Craigie Hall renovation ... *Oberg* 1086

Digital library project ... *Hancock* 797, 1792; *Taylor* 1791

Energy savings partnership with Direct Energy ... *DeLong* 696; *Hancock* 696–97; *Oberg* 696

Health research innovation centre at ... *Hancock* 869

Infrastructure needs ... *Chase* 796; *Hancock* 796–97

Lottery funding for ... *Graydon* 1289; *MacDonald* 1289

Markin Institute for Public Health See **Markin Institute for Public Health**

Mount Royal College transfer students ... *Hancock* 864; *Taylor* 862

Province-wide digital library See **Lois Hole digital library (Proposed)**

Radiation health administration organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP453/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1508; *Clerk, The* 1508

Radiation health administration organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP663/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1789; *Clerk, The* 1789

Research initiatives report (SP399/05: Tabled) ... *Brown* 1259; *Morton* 1259

Schulich donation to Faculty of Engineering, matching provincial contribution re ... *Hancock* 1790, 1791, 1792; *Taylor* 1791

Veterinary medical school See **Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)**

University of Lethbridge

Service building replacement ... *Oberg* 1086

University of Lethbridge (Continued)

Water and Environmental Science building, spending of provincial surplus on ... *Hancock* 1621, 1790, 1794; *Taft* 1621

Wellness centre ... *Pastoor* 269

University of Phoenix

Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Approval of ... *Hancock* 1166–67; *Martin* 1166–67

Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Documentation re, including PCAB documents (M30/05: Defeated) ... *Blakeman* 1160–61; *Hancock* 1160–61; *Taylor* 1160

Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Documentation re (M3/05: Response tabled as SP480/05) ... *Hancock* 663, 1578; *Martin* 663–64; *Pannu* 663

Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Letter of approval re (M2/05: Response tabled as SP479/05) ... *Hancock* 663, 1578; *Martin* 663; *Pannu* 663

University participation rate

See **High school graduates, Numbers of: Transition to postsecondary education**

University Students, Council of Alberta

See **Council of Alberta University Students**

University teachers

General remarks ... *Pannu* 872

Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1459, 1471; *Cao* 1146–47; *Evans* 163, 205, 260, 1078, 1123–24, 1147, 1458; *Hancock* 797, 1308; *Klein* 249, 1145; *Mason* 1465; *McClellan* 748; *Miller, R.* 257; *Pannu* 249, 267, 1123–24, 1127, 1205; *Speech from the Throne* 9–10; *Swann* 1468

Private health care system submissions ... *Blakeman* 1622; *Klein* 1622

Provincial funding for (Q31/05: Not moved, dropped from Order Paper) ... *Pannu* 1158

Speakers/presenters at, remuneration paid to (M35/05: Accepted) ... *Evans* 1165; *Martin* 1164–65; *Pannu* 1164; *Zwozdesky* 1164–65

Webcast of ... *DeLong* 1336; *Evans* 1336; *Ouellette* 1337

Unlimited liability corporations

Incorporation of (Bill 16) ... *Brown* 127, 1422; *Lund* 1422

Unparliamentary language

See **Parliamentary language**

Urban aboriginals

See **Aboriginal peoples–Urban areas**

Urban growth

General remarks ... *Horner* 1222

Urban Municipalities Association

See **Alberta Urban Municipalities Association**

Urban/rural relations

Public education re ... *Horner* 1222–23

Urban sprawl

See **Urban growth**

Urban transit–Finance

See **Public transit–Finance**

Urquhart, Diane

See **Alberta Securities Commission, Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Diane Urquhart re**

U.S. energy bill

Impact on Alberta ... *Knight* 1310; *Melchin* 1310

U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation

See **Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)**

USA PATRIOT Act

Impact on access to Canadian medical records ... *Evans* 482; *Lund* 1424; *Taft* 482

Impact on access to Canadian medical records

(SP247/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 491–92; *Taft* 491

Impact on Canadian personal privacy ... *Elsalhy* 1426, 1885–86; *Lund* 1886

USDA

See **Dept. of Agriculture (United States)**

Use-of-force policy (Police)

See **Police, Use-of-force policy**

User fees

See **Education–Finance, User fees; Extended care facilities–Fees; Fees, Government; Medical care–Finance, User fees; Midwives and midwifery–Fees; Schoolchildren–Transportation, User fees for**

Utilities Board

See **Alberta Energy and Utilities Board**

Utilities Consumer Advocate

[See also **Electric power–Prices, Consumer protection re**]

Advisory committee re: Report on retail electricity business ... *Lund* 1419, 1421, 1424

Budget ... *Elsalhy* 1418; *Lund* 1419

Consumer complaints to ... *Elsalhy* 1418; *Klein* 161; *Lund* 161–62, 1419

Enron electricity price manipulation investigation ... *Elsalhy* 249; *Lund* 249; *Ouellette* 249

Enron electricity price manipulation investigation: Web site re (SP151/05: Tabled) ... *Elsalhy* 253

EPCOR/Fortis electricity bills co-ordination ... *Melchin* 489; *VanderBurg* 489

General remarks ... *Hinman* 1425; *MacDonald* 254–55; *Pastoor* 1423

Independence of (arm's length from government) ...

Elsalhy 975, 1418; *Lund* 975, 1419, 1421–22; *Martin* 1420–21

Role of ... *Lund* 1416, 1420, 1422; *Martin* 1420–21

Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council

Input into retail electricity marketing review ... *DeLong* 1075; *Lund* 1075

Membership of ... *Lund* 976; *VanderBurg* 976

Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) ... *Elsalhy* 975; *Klein* 1024; *Lund* 975–76, 1025, 1075; *MacDonald* 1024; *Mason* 975–76, 1025

Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) (SP364/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 1034

Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005): Point of Order ... *Hancock* 1035; *Lund* 1034; *Martin* 1035; *Speaker, The* 1035–36

Response to DOE's (Dept. of Energy) Call for Comments on it's Discussion Paper ... (April 14, 2005) ... *Lund* 1075; *Mason* 1120; *Melchin* 1120

Response to DOE's (Dept. of Energy) Call for Comments on it's Discussion Paper ... (April 14, 2005) (SP372/05: Tabled) ... *Lund* 1081

Utilities consumer ombudsman

Proposal for ... *Lund* 1423; *Mather* 1423

Utilities department

See **Dept. of Energy**

Utility pole penetrating lubricant spill, Lake Wabamum

See **Spills (Pollution)–Lake Wabamum**

UTS Energy Corp.

Oil sands project with Petro-Canada, Fort McMurray area ... *Melchin* 203

VAAA

See **Visual Arts Alberta Association**

Vaccination program, National

See **National immunization program**

Vaccine, Avian influenza

Funding for ... *Blakeman* 273; *Evans* 274

Vaccine administrative grants

See **Regional health authorities, Vaccine administrative grants to, federal**

Vaccines–Finance

Federal funding ... *Blakeman* 272, 273; *Evans* 271, 273

Valhalla school, Peace River

Closure ... *Flaherty* 693; *Zwozdesky* 693

Value-added agriculture

See **Agricultural bioproducts industry; Beef processing; Food industry and trade**

Value-added forestry

See **Forest industries, Value-added processing in; Timber, Fire-killed, Value-adding re**

Value-added natural resources

See **Natural resources, Value-adding re**

Value-added strategy

See **Industrial development (Value-added industries)**

Value-adding re oil and gas

See **Energy industry, Value-adding/upgrading increase in; Petrochemical industry**

Value-adding re oil sands products

See **Tar sands development, Value-added opportunities**

Van Brabant, Loretta

Statement re ... *Miller, R.* 698

Vancouver/Whistler Olympic Games (2010)

See **Olympic Winter Games, Vancouver/Whistler (2010)**

VE Day

See **Victory in Europe Day**

Veenstra, Ritske and Immigje

Statement re ... *Marz* 1340

Vehicle chop shops

See **Automobile chop shops**

Vehicle safety

See **Traffic safety**

Vehicle theft–Prevention

See **Automobile theft–Prevention**

Vehicle Theft Committee, Alberta

See **Alberta Vehicle Theft Committee**

Vehicles, Commercial–Inspection–Alberta/B.C. border

See **Trucks–Inspection–Alberta/B.C. border**

Vehicles, Farm

See **Farm vehicles**

Vehicles, Government

See **Government vehicles**

Vehicles, Off-highway

See **Off-highway vehicles**

Vehicles, Rebuilt

See **Automobiles, Written off/rebuilt**

Vehicles–Registration

See **Automobiles–Registration**

Vehicles–Seizure

See **Automobiles–Seizure**

Velvet, Elk antler–Health aspects

See **Elk antler velvet–Health aspects**

Venezuela national oil company

See **Petroleos de Venezuela**

Venture capital

See **Small business, Venture capital for**

Venture fund, Technology (Proposed)

See **Technology venture fund (Proposed)**

Vests, Protective (Corrections officers)

See **Protective vests (Corrections officers)**

Veteran, Year of the

See **Year of the Veteran, 2005**

Veterans' film

See **Passchendaele (Film)**

Veterans' licence plates

See **Automobile licence plates, Veterans' stickers for**

Veterans Memorial Highway

Statement re ... *Cao* 1629

Veterinary dentistry

Inclusion in **Veterinary Profession Act** See **Veterinary Profession Act, Changes to, re veterinary dentistry inclusion in**

Veterinary laboratories

Level 3 lab ... *Horner* 1885; *Johnson* 1885

Veterinary Medical Association, Alberta

See **Alberta Veterinary Medical Association**

Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)

Curriculum development funding ... *Hancock* 277; *Taylor* 276

Funding for ... *Hancock* 1790, 1794

General remarks ... *Horner* 298, 1885; *MacDonald* 297; *McClellan* 749; *Pannu* 872

Veterinary Profession Act

Changes to, re veterinary dentistry inclusion in ... *Abbott* 1627; *Cardinal* 1627

Changes to, re veterinary dentistry inclusion in: Letter re (SP650/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1788

Veterinary surveillance network

See **Alberta veterinary surveillance network**

Victims of crime

Assistance programs: Funding for ... *Cenaiko* 1427, 1428

Assistance programs: Status report re, 2003-04 (SP385/05: Tabled) ... *Cenaiko* 1205

Assistance programs: Status report re, 2004-05 (SP517/05: Tabled) ... *Cenaiko* 1632

Definition of ... *Blakeman* 1436; *Cenaiko* 1438

Federal/provincial/territorial principles re: Legislation re (Bill12) ... *Jablonski* 93

Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)

First reading ... *Jablonski* 93

Second reading ... *Agnihotri* 556–57; *Backs* 556, 557; *Blakeman* 599–01; *Bonko* 554–55; *Cenaiko* 600–01; *Hinman* 555–56; *Jablonski* 525, 553, 601–02; *Mason* 601; *Miller, B.* 553–54, 601; *Pannu* 554; *Taft* 556

Committee ... *Miller, B.* 718; *Pannu* 718

Third reading ... *Jablonski* 1290; *Miller, B.* 1290–91

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor* 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1428

Victims of Crime Fund

- Compensation to assaulted inmate from ... *Cenaiko* 1389; *Miller, B.* 1389
- Compensation to sexual assault victims from ... *Blakeman* 965; *Cenaiko* 1438
- One-time payment issue ... *Miller, B.* 1430
- Surplus ... *Blakeman* 1436; *Cenaiko* 1433; *Miller, B.* 1430

Victims of Crime Programs Committee

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1433

Victims of domestic violence—Legal aspects

- See Domestic violence—Legal aspects*

Victims of sexual assault

- Definition of ... *Cenaiko* 1438

Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts, Edmonton

- Funding for ... *Oberg* 1086
- Funding for, diverted to new school funding ... *MacDonald* 1524; *Oberg* 1524

Victory in Europe Day

- 60th Anniversary of ... *McFarland* 1308
- 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber ... *Eggen* 1303; *Hancock* 1302; *Hinman* 1303; *Lieberman* 1301–02; *Speaker, The* 1259, 1301, 1303, 1343; *Taft* 1302–03
- 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber (Motion 20: Hancock) ... *Backs* 1111; *Brown* 1110–11; *Hancock* 1110; *Mason* 1111
- 60th Anniversary of: Statement re ... *Brown* 1312; *VanderBurg* 1312

Video conferencing in education

- General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1723

Video conferencing of court proceedings

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 902, 1427; *Stevens* 1226, 1229

Video conferencing via Alberta SuperNet

- See Alberta SuperNet, Video conferencing capabilities*

Video gambling machines

- Cap on number of ... *Graydon* 1280, 1281, 1286, 1713; *Pannu* 1285; *Tougas* 1281
- General remarks ... *Graydon* 1281; *Tougas* 1888–89
- Impact on problem gambling ... *Pannu* 1285–86
- Referendum on removal of ... *Chase* 1284; *Graydon* 1284
- Responsible gaming features ... *Graydon* 1280–81; *Tougas* 1281

Video gambling machines—Nova Scotia

- Cap on number of ... *Graydon* 1280; *Tougas* 1280

Videoconferencing in education

- General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 311, 1274
- Second language teaching application ... *Zwozdesky* 1604

Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society, Calgary

- See Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society*

Vignettes of Alberta

- See Historical vignettes of Alberta*

Viking Health Centre

- Upgrades to ... *Evans* 1839

Violence, Domestic

- See Domestic violence*

Violence, Domestic—Legal aspects

- See Domestic violence—Legal aspects*

Violence against animals

- See Animals, Treatment of, Legislation re (Bill 22)*

Violence against women

- Aboriginal women ... *Blakeman* 92
- Statement re ... *Blakeman* 92

Violence against Women, National Day of Remembrance and Action on

- See National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women*

Violent crime

- Prevention of [*See also Crime prevention*]; *Cenaiko* 1916; *Miller, B.* 1227, 1916

Violent crime—Finance

- General remarks ... *Cenaiko* 1427

Violent criminals

- See Criminals, Violent*

Violent young offenders

- See Young offenders, Violent*

Vision 2010 (Federal traffic safety initiative)

- See Road Safety Vision 2010 (Federal traffic safety initiative)*

Visual Arts Alberta Association

- Funding for ... *Agnihotri* 692, 1571; *Mar* 692, 1571
- Review of, by Foundation for the Arts ... *Agnihotri* 1571; *Mar* 1571

Vital Statistics

- Removal of marriage licensing from ... *Lund* 1425; *Miller, B.* 1424

VLTs

- See Video gambling machines*

Vocational schools, Private

- See Private vocational schools*

Vocational/trades courses

- See High school education—Curricula, Vocational/trades courses*

Voice over Internet via Alberta SuperNet

- See Alberta SuperNet, Voice over Internet capabilities*

Volleyball championships

- Red Deer College Kings national champions ... *Jablonski* 251
- U of A Golden Bears national men's title winners ... *Johnson* 50; *Taft* 620

Voluntary sector

- See Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations; Social services agencies (Non-profit)*

Volunteer Week, National

- See National Volunteer Week*

Volunteers

- General remarks ... *Mar* 1472; *Strang* 906
- Statement re ... *Chase* 907

Vote, Recorded

- See Division (Recorded vote) (2005)*

Vote, Right to—Women

- See Women—Right to vote*

Vote of confidence (Federal government)

- See Federal government, Governing party's loss of vote of confidence*

Votes and Proceedings (Publication)

- See Sessional publications (Legislative Assembly)*

Voting in provincial elections

- Statement re ... *Mather* 956

- Voyteck, Joe, and family**
Endowment in honour of ... *Johnson* 1340
- Vulcan hospital**
See Hospitals–Vulcan
- Vulnerable seniors, Abuse of**
See Elder abuse
- W. P. Wagner high school, Edmonton**
Closure of ... *Bonko* 1266; *Zwozdesky* 1267
- Wabamum Lake train derailment**
See Spills (Pollution)–Lake Wabamum, CN train derailment
- Wabamun Lake Provincial Park**
[*See also Parks, Provincial*]
Closure, 2005 season ... *Lindsay* 249–50; *Mar* 249–50
- Wages–Daycare centre employees**
See Daycare centres–Employees, Salaries of
- Wages–Food service employees**
Increase in ... *Backs* 613; *Cardinal* 613
- Wages–Masters in Chambers**
Increase in ... *Stevens* 275, 276
- Wages–Minimum wage**
Impact on health care demand ... *Blakeman* 1462
Increase to ... *Backs* 164, 612–13, 1130; *Bonko* 1134; *Cao* 980; *Cardinal* 164, 612–13, 980, 1132, 1135, 1140, 1198; *Martin* 1136; *Speech from the Throne* 10
Increase to: Exceptions for food service and youth employees ... *Backs* 613; *Cao* 980; *Cardinal* 613, 980, 1779
Increase to: Impact on workers' compensation earning loss supplement ... *Cardinal* 2052; *Pham* 2052
Increase to: Letter from Calgary Local Council of Women re (SP350/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 957
Indexing of ... *Cardinal* 1138; *Martin* 1136
Public sector employees on ... *Backs* 1130
- Wages–Provincial Court judges**
Increase in ... *Miller, B.* 275–76; *Stevens* 275, 276
- Wages–Public service employees**
Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... *Backs* 1937–38; *DeLong* 1942–43; *Dunford* 1938; *Evans* 1941; *Griffiths* 1937; *Hinman* 1940–41; *Jablonski* 1939–40; *MacDonald* 1941–42; *Pannu* 1938–39; *Snelgrove* 1937, 1943
- Wages–Teachers**
Funding for increase in ... *Flaherty* 203; *Zwozdesky* 203
General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1274
- Wages–Teachers–Fort McMurray**
Coverage of cost of living ... *Flaherty* 203; *Zwozdesky* 203
- Wages–Youth**
Increase in ... *Backs* 613; *Cardinal* 613
- Wagner, Eva**
100th birthday gold medal ... *Haley* 1786
- Wainwright ambulance personnel layoff**
See Emergency medical technicians–Wainwright, Layoff of
- Waiting lists, Surgery**
See Cornea transplants, Waiting list for; Surgery waiting lists
- Waiting lists (Medical care)**
General remarks ... *Agnihotri* 1077–78;
- Waiting lists (Medical care) (Continued)**
General remarks (Continued) ... *Blakeman* 1470; *Evans* 1077–78, 1838, 1843, 1844, 1845; *Hinman* 1845; *Klein* 249; *MacDonald* 1846; *Mason* 1465, 1842; *Speech from the Throne* 9
Interim report re (No More Time to Wait) (SP296/05: Tabled) ... *Martin* 653
- Waiting lists (Medical care)–Calgary**
General remarks ... *Chase* 1466
- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Canada**
Kids 4 Cops products sale ... *VanderBurg* 1835
Store relocation to Lambton industrial park, Edmonton: Letter re (SP440/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1507
- Walkerton, Ont., water treatment plant**
See Water treatment plants–Walkerton, Ont.
- Walking trails**
See Trails, Recreational
- Walleye fishing**
General remarks ... *Coutts* 855; *Jablonski* 855
- Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre**
Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility ... *Evans* 1960; *Horner* 1960; *Klein* 1960–61; *Taft* 1960–61
Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility: Email re (SP681/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 1838
Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility: Pamphlet re (SP754/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 1971
Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility: Subsidies re ... *Evans* 1960; *Klein* 1960–61
- Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment fund**
Statement re ... *Knight* 368–69
- Walton International Group Inc.**
Documents re (SP782-785/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 2017
Documents re (SP786-787/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 2017
Invitation to presentation on their land banking business (SP795/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 2017
Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission ... *Klein* 2008; *McClellan* 2008; *Taft* 2007–08
Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission: Decision re (SP794/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 2017
Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission: Letter from Land Development Company re (SP796/05: Tabled) ... *Miller, R.* 2017
Political donations to Alberta Conservative party members (SP788/05: Tabled) ... *Swann* 2017
- Ward 10, Calgary, municipal election**
See under Elections, Municipal–Calgary, Ward 10 election process
- Warden, Jean**
See Extended care facilities, Death of resident in (Jean Warden)
- Warner hockey school for girls**
Infrastructure funding for ... *Hinman* 900, 1273, 1805; *Oberg* 900; *Zwozdesky* 1274
- Warning system**
See Emergency public warning system
- Washburn, Jennifer (Author)**
See Corporate Corruption of Higher Education (Book)

- Washington, D.C. office**
See Alberta Government Offices, Washington, D.C. office
- Waste, Disposal of**
See Refuse and refuse disposal
- Waste as electric energy source**
See Co-energy electrical production
- Waste management**
See Refuse and refuse disposal
- Waste recycling**
See Recycling (Waste, etc.)
- Wastes, Agricultural**
See Agricultural wastes
- Wastewater treatment plants, Regional**
See Sewage disposal plants, Regional
- Wastewater treatment plants—Fort McMurray**
See Sewage disposal plants—Fort McMurray
- Water**
 Sale of ... *Eggen* 1033
- Water, Underground—Contamination—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds**
See Groundwater—Contamination—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds
- Water—Export**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 530; *Elsalhy* 1372; *Hinman* 1425; *Klein* 573; *Lund* 1425; *Pastoor* 1181; *Stelmach* 1182; *Swann* 530, 573
 Impact of NAFTA on ... *Boutilier* 530; *Klein* 573; *Swann* 530, 573
- Water Act**
 Exports prohibition ... *Lund* 1425
 Interbasin water transfers provisions ... *Boutilier* 1785
- Water bombers**
See Air tankers (Water bombers)
- Water conservation**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1047; *Elsalhy* 1372; *Horner* 1222; *Swann* 1221
 Legislation re (Bill 214) ... *Swann* 1919
 Provincial plan for ... *Boutilier* 1039–40; *Melchin* 916; *Speech from the Throne* 9
- Water conservation—United States**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1040
- Water Council**
See Alberta Water Council
- Water councils**
 [See also North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance]
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 978, 1040
- Water diversion**
 [See also Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)]
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 530; *Elsalhy* 1371–72; *Klein* 573; *Swann* 530, 1038
- Water diversion—North Saskatchewan/Battle River basins**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 618; *Johnson* 618
- Water diversion—Red Deer River basin/Special Areas**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1785; *Jablonski* 1785
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability**
 Funding for ... *Boutilier* 978–79, 1037; *Chase* 1801; *Hancock* 1621; *Klein* 768–69; *Mar* 1473; *McClellan* 749, 769; *Oberg* 1085, 1800; *Swann* 768–69, 978
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 530, 1037, 1040, 1046, 1047; *Doerksen* 1373; *Elsalhy* 1371;
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability (Continued)**
 General remarks (Continued) ... *Horner* 1219, 1222; *Johnson* 1047; *Klein* 573; *Melchin* 916; *Speech from the Throne* 9; *Swann* 530, 573; *Taylor* 1045
 Impact of economic development policy on ... *Klein* 573; *Swann* 573
 Performance measures ... *Eggen* 1041
- Water levels—Driedmeat Lake**
See Driedmeat Lake—Water levels
- Water licences**
 Intensive livestock operations approvals (AAA Cattle Company) ... *Boutilier* 1027
- Water management—Big Lake basin**
See Water resources development—Big Lake basin
- Water pipelines—Red Deer area**
 General remarks ... *Jablonski* 576; *Oberg* 576
- Water Protection and Conservation Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 214)**
 First reading ... *Swann* 1919
- Water quality**
 General remarks ... *Eggen* 1041; *Swann* 1038
 Source waters protection aspect ... *Brown* 799
- Water quality—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds**
 Identification of contaminants to ... *Boutilier* 799–800; *Brown* 799–800
- Water quality—Sheep River**
 Impact of Turner Valley Gas Plant historic site on ... *Boutilier* 1961–62; *Mar* 1961; *Swann* 1961–62
- Water resources development**
 General remarks ... *Eggen* 1033; *Taylor* 1045
 Infrastructure for ... *Boutilier* 1043; *Swann* 1038
 Legislation re (Bill 214) ... *Swann* 1919
 Research into ... *Doerksen* 1369, 1373; *Elsalhy* 1371
- Water resources development—Battle River**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 618; *Johnson* 618
- Water resources development—Big Lake basin**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 321; *Flaherty* 321
- Water resources development—Finance**
 General remarks ... *McClellan* 749; *Swann* 282
- Water rights, Interprovincial**
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1037
- Water storage**
 General remarks ... *Hinman* 1216
- Water strategy**
See Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
- Water supply**
 Measurement of total provincial supply ... *Boutilier* 530, 978, 1040; *Eggen* 1041; *Swann* 530, 978, 1037–38
 Use by energy industry ... *Bonko* 843; *Eggen* 914; *Melchin* 916
 Use by energy industry, phase out of ... *Boutilier* 978; *Chase* 1377
 Use by oil sands producers ... *Eggen* 1715
- Water supply, Safe**
See Drinking water, Safety of
- Water supply—Stettler area communities**
 Legislation re (Bill 11) ... *Mitzel* 252
- Water tower, Wetaskiwin**
See Wetaskiwin water tower
- Water transfer**
See Water diversion

Water treatment plants

Funding for ... *Boutilier* 1043; *Chase* 1801; *Mar* 1473; *McClellan* 749; *Oberg* 1085, 1800; *Speech from the Throne* 10
 General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1046; *Taylor* 1045
 Review of ... *Boutilier* 978

Water treatment plants, Regional

General remarks ... *Jablonski* 576

Water treatment plants–Fort McMurray

General remarks ... *Chase* 576, 1627–28; *McClellan* 527, 1628; *Oberg* 576, 1628; *Renner* 1628; *Taylor* 535

Water treatment plants–Walkerton, Ont.

Safety lapse at ... *Boutilier* 1046

Water Users Group, North Red Deer Regional

See North Red Deer Regional Water Users Group

Water wells–Lake Wabamum

Testing of, re train derailment ... *Boutilier* 1668

Waterfowl, Wild

See Wild waterfowl

Watering holes

See Licensed premises

Watershed planning

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1047
 Legislation re ... *Boutilier* 530; *Swann* 530

Watershed planning and advisory councils

General remarks ... *Boutilier* 1046; *Johnson* 1046

WCB

See Workers' Compensation Board

Web sites

See Alberta Government Offices, Korea office website; Alberta Order of Excellence Council, Web site for children; Communityaccessibility.ca (Web site); Consumer Choice (Government web site); LearnAlberta.ca (Website); Members of the Legislative Assembly, Government members only web site; Public Affairs Bureau, Web site for government MLAs only; Smoking–Prevention, AADAC program re (Web site); Travel Alberta, Web site

Web sites, Government

See Government of Alberta, Web site

Webcast of health symposium

See under Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems Symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)

Weighing the Evidence (Health care conference, Calgary, April 30 2005)

See Friends of Medicare, Co-sponsor of alternative Calgary health care conference (Weighing the Evidence)

Welfare

See Public assistance

Welfare, Aboriginal

See Public assistance, Aboriginal peoples

Welfare recipients, Adult–Protection

See Social services recipients–Protection

Welfare recipients, Child

See Child welfare recipients

Well drilling industry, Gas–Calgary area

See Gas well drilling industry–Calgary area

Well drilling industry, Gas–Drayton Valley/Tomahawk area

See Gas well drilling industry–Drayton Valley/Tomahawk area

Well drilling industry, Oil–Public lands

See Oil well drilling industry–Public lands

Well sites

Reclamation of ... *Klein* 769; *Melchin* 649; *Swann* 769, 1038–39; *Taylor* 1045
 Reclamation of, costs, prevention of disclosure of under FOIP law ... *Melchin* 1519; *Swann* 1519

Well sites, Abandoned

Reclamation of ... *Boutilier* 166; *Eggen* 914; *Melchin* 166, 916; *Swann* 166

Wellness, Dept. of Health and

See Dept. of Health and Wellness

Wellness fund (Proposed)

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 163, 205; *Evans* 163, 205
 Motion 501: *Blakeman* ... *Blakeman* 69–70, 74; *Brown* 73; *Chase* 73; *Elsalhy* 74; *Haley* 70; *Johnston* 71–72; *Miller, B.* 70–71; *Pastoor* 73–74; *Swann* 72–73

Wellness initiatives

See Preventive medical services

Wellness program in schools

See Education–Curricula, Health and wellness instruction framework

Wells, Water–Lake Wabamum

See Water wells–Lake Wabamum

Welwyn Resources Ltd.

Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ... *Melchin* 643; *Taft* 643

West, Steve

See Office of the Premier, Former chief of staff (Steve West) severance package

West Castle Wetlands ecological reserve

General remarks ... *Mar* 2012

West Edmonton Mall

Loan refinancing: Former TB superintendent's involvement ... *Mason* 1828; *McClellan* 1828
 Loan refinancing: Former TB superintendent's involvement, response to question re (SP700/05: Tabled) ... *McClellan* 1891
 Loan refinancing: Former TB superintendent's involvement, response to question re (SP729/05: Tabled) ... *Mason* 1920

West Edmonton Mall Grand Prix Champ Car race

Letter re (SP726/05: Tabled) ... *Chase* 1920

West Nile virus

Control methods for ... *Boutilier* 1120–21; *Evans* 1120; *Haley* 1120
 Control methods for, funding of ... *Renner* 1449; *Rogers* 1449
 Monitoring of ... *Coutts* 926

Westbury report

See Expert Advisory Panel to Review Publically Funded Health Services, Report

Western blue flag (Flower)

Protection of ... *Coutts* 1521

Western Canada high school, Calgary

Restoration of ... *Oberg* 1572–73; *Taylor* 1572

Western Economic Diversification Office

Alberta urban aboriginal accord ... *Calahasen* 838, 841

Western Hockey League

Centennial hockey game *See Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)*

Western Premiers' Conference, Lloydminster (May 2005)

General remarks ... *Stelmach* 1182
 Hosting costs ... *Stelmach* 1180, 1184

Western Standard (News magazine)

Article about Alberta Securities Commission ...
McClellan 1827, 1880–81; *Taft* 1827, 1880
 Article about Enron and electricity deregulation in
 Alberta (SP697/05: Tabled) ... *MacDonald* 1865

Wet lab funding

See **Life sciences research, Funding for wet lab re**

Wetaskiwin water tower

Statement re ... *Johnson* 1836

Wetlands

Provincial policy re ... *Boutillier* 1040

Whaleback Ridge natural area

Industrial development in ... *Chase* 1012

Wheat-Marketing

General remarks ... *Martin* 1213; *Morton* 1203; *Speech from the Throne* 9

Wheat Board

See **Canadian Wheat Board**

Whistle-blower protection

General remarks ... *Lund* 1420; *Swann* 1419–20
 Securities Commission case ... *Elsalhy* 2011; *Mason*
 1598; *McClellan* 410, 948, 974, 1333, 1520–21,
 1599, 2011; *Miller, R.* 1520–21; *Taft* 410, 948, 974,
 1333
 Securities Commission case: Letter re (SP359/05:
 Tabled) ... *Martin* 984
 Workplace safety complaints ... *Cenaiko* 744; *Martin*
 1136; *Miller, B.* 743; *Stevens* 744

WHL centennial hockey game

See **Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)**

Wickman, Mr. Percy (Former MLA)

Tribute to ... *Speaker, The* 13

Widows-Pensions

Replacement of, with seniors' benefit ... *Abbott* 1966;
Cardinal 1966

Wife beaters

See **Spousal abusers**

Wild birds

See **Wild waterfowl**

Wild deer-Alberta/Saskatchewan border area

See **Deer-Alberta/Saskatchewan border area**

Wild Horse border crossing

See **Border crossings-Canada/United States, Additional 24-hour crossing for Alberta (Wild Horse crossing)**

Wild iris

See **Western blue flag (Flower)**

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

Provincial funding for ... *Groeneveld* 953; *Horner* 953

Wild Rose Foundation

Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for ... *Agnihotri*
 1335; *Mar* 1335, 1442, 1497; *Taft* 1442, 1497
 Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor
 General's report on ... *Agnihotri* 1742–43; *Mar*
 1742–43
 Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor
 General's review of ... *Mar* 1525–26, 1597–98; *Taft*
 1526, 1597–98

Wild Rose Foundation (Continued)

Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor
 General's review of, minister's letter re (SP464/05:
 Tabled) ... *Mar* 1528
 Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Community
 association's letter re (SP459/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman*
 1528; *Taft* 1528
 Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Point of
 order re ... *Blakeman* 1452–53, 1454; *Hancock* 1453;
Pham 1452, 1454; *Speaker, The* 1453–54
 Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Political
 interference re ... *Mar* 1597; *Taft* 1597
 Funding ... *Agnihotri* 1475; *Mar* 1475
 Funds granted by, follow-up auditing of ... *Agnihotri*
 531, 1335, 1743; *Mar* 531, 1335, 1442, 1743
 Grants procedures ... *Agnihotri* 531; *Mar* 457, 531;
Tougas 457
 Grants procedures: Response to questions re (SP277/05:
 Tabled) ... *Mar* 579
 International disaster relief funding ... *Graydon* 1799
 Relationship between MLAs and ... *Mar* 1598; *Taft*
 1598
 Volunteer Week activities ... *Strang* 906

Wild Rose School Division

Operation/maintenance funding concerns ... *Abbott*
 1030; *Oberg* 1030
 Portable classrooms ... *Chase* 1801

Wild waterfowl

Detection of avian flu in ... *Haley* 1780; *Horner* 1780
 Handling of, re avian flu risk ... *Coutts* 1780–81; *Haley*
 1780

Wilderness Association, Alberta

See **Alberta Wilderness Association**

Wilderness safety

See **Backcountry safety**

Wildfire reclamation program

[See also **Reforestation on burnt-out areas**]
 General remarks ... *Coutts* 927, 931

Wildfires-Prevention

See **Forest fires-Prevention**

Wildlife, Endangered

See **Endangered wildlife species**

Wildlife Act

Changes to, re federal firearms licensing regulations ...
Coutts 2050
 Sale of animal parts regulations ... *Brown* 850; *Coutts*
 850
 Species at risk provisions ... *Coutts* 931–32, 955

Wildlife animal parts

Sale of See **Wildlife Act, Sale of animal parts regulations**

Wildlife conservation

General remarks ... *Bonko* 21, 929, 1311–12, 1963;
Coutts 21, 926, 1311–12, 1521, 1963, 1965; *Strang*
 1521, 1964–65
 Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... *Calahasen* 43, 45,
 89, 323–24, 574; *Coutts* 89, 165, 246, 615–16, 850,
 926; *Lougheed* 574; *Morton* 246, 615–16; *Oberle*
 89; *Tougas* 165, 323
 Statement re ... *Danyluk* 774; *Strang* 1605

Wildlife damage

Provincial programs re ... *Hinman* 1216; *Horner* 296,
 301, 1214, 1850; *Pannu* 299

Wildlife department

See **Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development**

Wildlife farming

See **Game farming**

Wildlife Foundation

See **Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation**

Wildlife Health Centre, Canadian Cooperative

See **Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre**

Wildlife legislation

See **Fish and wildlife legislation**

Wildlife management

General remarks ... *Bonko* 1848; *Coutts* 925–26, 1254, 1849; *Eggen* 1253–54

Human/wildlife interaction issue ... *Coutts* 769, 935; *Groeneveld* 769

Wildlife protection

See **Wildlife management**

Wildlife Week, National

See **National Wildlife Week**

Wildrose Forum (CBC radio program)

Dismissal of Don Hill, host, from: Letters re (SP309/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 699

Willmore Wilderness Park

Mountain pine bark beetle infestation in ... *Coutts* 1742, 1847, 1848; *Oberle* 1742

Wind power

[See also **Energy resources, Alternate**]

General remarks ... *Eggen* 1015; *Hinman* 1426; *Lund* 1426; *Melchin* 917

Tax incentives re ... *Hinman* 1426, 1852

Wind power—Cypress Hills area

Impact on tourism ... *Chase* 1012

Winspear Centre for Music

See **Francis Winspear Centre for Music**

Winspear Foundation

Support for people on social assistance ... *Blakeman* 1139

Winter Games, Vancouver/Whistler (2010)

See **Olympic Winter Games, Vancouver/Whistler (2010)**

Winter roads

To facilitate travel to employment opportunities ... *Backs* 1131

Wojtyla, Karol

See **John Paul II, Pope**

Women, Violence against

See **Violence against women**

Women—Employment

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1140

Women—Right to vote

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 856

Women in politics

Respect for: Statement re ... *Miller, R.* 1606–07

Respect for: Statement re, point of order re ... *Abbott* 1607

Statement re ... *Blakeman* 856

Women's Day, International

See **International Women's Day**

Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre

General remarks ... *Fritz* 1338

Women's Global Charter for Humanity

Statement re ... *Blakeman* 1527

Womens' shelters

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 881; *Forsyth* 1056; *Mather* 1055, 1056–57

Statistics re ... *Blakeman* 1061; *Mather* 1055

Violent spouse situations handling ... *Cenaiko* 1196; *Forsyth* 1200; *Mather* 1200

Women's Shelters, Alberta Council of

See **Alberta Council of Women's Shelters**

Womens' shelters—Camrose

Funding ... *Forsyth* 1200; *Mather* 1200

Womens' shelters—Finance

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 92, 1061; *Forsyth* 739, 742–43, 1051, 1052; *Klein* 739; *Mather* 742–43; *Pannu* 738–39

Women's shelters—Taber

Funding for ... *Forsyth* 900; *Hinman* 900

Woodfield, Private Braun Scott

Death of: Statement re ... *Johnston* 1917

Woodland caribou

See under headings beginning with **Caribou**

Work, Frank

See **Information and Privacy Commissioner**

Work Safe Alberta

General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1118, 1122, 1129, 1130

Work stoppages—Lakeside Packers employees

See **Strikes and lockouts—Lakeside Packers employees**

Workers, Older

See **Age and employment**

Workers, Replacement

See **Replacement workers**

Workers—Supply

See **Labour supply**

Workers' compensation

Earning loss supplement, impact of increased minimum wage on ... *Cardinal* 2052; *Pham* 2052

Reviews of, results ... *Cao* 1338; *Cardinal* 1338

Workers' Compensation Act

Coverage of firefighters' heart attacks ... *Magnus* 1716

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002 (Bill 26, 2002)

General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1338

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)

First reading ... *Webber* 127

Second reading ... *Backs* 588–590, 591, 593, 595; *Eggen* 592–93; *Flaherty* 590–91; *MacDonald* 593–595;

Martin 547; *Mather* 591–92; *Miller, R.* 685–86;

Pastoor 593–594; *Webber* 546–47

Committee ... *Backs* 1649–53, 1657, 1659–61;

Blakeman 1656–58, 1661; *Chase* 1651, 1654–55,

1659–61; *Dunford* 1652, 1661; *Elsalhy* 1651,

1655–56, 1660; *Herard* 1651–54, 1658–61; *Martin*

1650–51, 1653–54, 1657, 1659–61; *Mason* 1115–16;

Swann 1656–57; *Webber* 1638–39, 1652, 1658

Third reading ... *Backs* 1870–71; *Herard* 1869–70;

MacDonald 1872; *Martin* 1871–72; *Webber* 1869

Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057

Amendment ... *Eggen* 592; *Martin* 592

Amendment A1 (SP534-535/05: Tabled) ... *Danyluk*

1639, 1662; *Webber* 1638

Amendment A2 (SP537/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1657;

Danyluk 1662

Amendment A3 (SP538/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1659;

Danyluk 1662

Amendments (SP383/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1154

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)*(Continued)*

- General remarks ... *Backs* 1169; *Martin* 1169–70
- Letter re (SP346/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 908
- Petition presented re ... *Martin* 984
- Public consultation re: Letter requesting (SP348/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 908
- Subamendment SA1 (SP536/05: Tabled) ... *Danyluk* 1662; *Martin* 1651

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)

- First reading ... *Magnus* 1716
- Second reading ... *Backs* 1812–13, 1815; *Blakeman* 1814–15; *Herard* 1813; *Hinman* 1815; *Magnus* 1811–12, 1816; *Miller, R.* 1815–16; *Pannu* 1813–14; *Swann* 1813
- Committee ... *Agnihotri* 1895; *Backs* 1893–96; *Elsalhy* 1894; *Herard* 1894–97; *Magnus* 1892–95; *Martin* 1896–97; *Mason* 1896; *Pannu* 1897; *Tougas* 1895
- Third reading ... *Backs* 1898; *Elsalhy* 1898–99; *Magnus* 1898, 1899; *Martin* 1898
- Royal Assent ... *Lieutenant Governor of Alberta* 2057
- Amendment A1 (SP714/05: Tabled) ... *Backs* 1894; *Danyluk* 1897
- Amendment A2 (SP715/05: Tabled) ... *Danyluk* 1897; *Martin* 1897

Workers' Compensation Board

- 2004 accountability framework report (SP694/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1838; *Clerk, The* 1838
- Ana Gutierrez case: Correspondence re (M42/05: Defeated) ... *Backs* 1169; *Cardinal* 1169; *Martin* 1169–70
- Annual report, 2004 (SP691/05: Tabled) ... *Cardinal* 1838; *Clerk, The* 1838
- Annual reports ... *Cardinal* 1338
- Auditor General's performance review of ... *Cardinal* 1338
- Board of directors' immunity: Legislation re (Bill 15) ... *Webber* 127
- Early return to work issue ... *Bonko* 1134
- Fees paid re third-party civil actions: Legislation re (Bill 15) ... *Webber* 127
- General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1129
- Long standing claims issue ... *Agnihotri* 1141; *Backs* 950; *Cardinal* 950
- Medical opinion process, new ... *Cao* 1834; *Cardinal* 1338, 1834
- Medical panel's independence from ... *Magnus* 1716
- MLA committee to review: Report ... *Cao* 1834; *Cardinal* 1834
- MLAs concerns re, resolution of ... *Cardinal* 1135
- Provision of physiotherapy services ... *Backs* 292; *Cardinal* 292; *McClellan* 954; *Ouellette* 292
- Support for Work Safe Alberta ... *Cardinal* 1130
- Temporary partial disability benefits increase: Legislation re (Bill 15) ... *Webber* 127

Workers' Compensation Board. Appeals Commission
*See Appeals Commission (Workers' compensation)***Workers' health**

- General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1130

Workers' safety*See Workplace safety***Workforce***See Labour supply***Working alone regulation***See Hours of labour, Working alone regulation***Working Alone Safely (Brochure)**General remarks ... *Cardinal* 364**Working hours (Night shifts)***See Hours of labour, Working alone regulation***Working poor***See Low-income families***Workplace accidents**

- General remarks ... *Cardinal* 1138; *Martin* 1136
- Impact of foreign workers on rate of ... *Martin* 1136
- Location of ... *Cardinal* 1122
- Reduction in ... *Cardinal* 1130

Workplace drug testing*See Drug use in the workplace, Random testing for***Workplace fatalities***See Fatalities, Work-related***Workplace safety**

- Drug use issue ... *Backs* 45; *Cardinal* 45
- Employee complaints re ... *Cenaiko* 744; *Miller, B.* 743; *Stevens* 744
- General remarks ... *Backs* 279, 1118, 1122; *Bonko* 1134; *Cao* 364; *Cardinal* 364, 980, 1118, 1122, 1130, 1135; *Martin* 1118; *Speech from the Throne* 10; *Taylor* 980

Workplace safety inspectionsGeneral remarks ... *Backs* 1122; *Bonko* 1134; *Cardinal* 1122, 1135; *Martin* 1136**Workplace smoking ban***See Smoking in the workplace, Ban on***Works, Alberta (Employment training program)***See Alberta Works (Employment training program)***World AIDS Day**Statement re ... *Miller, B.* 2054–55**World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence, Banff (October 2005)**General remarks ... *Forsyth* 1051; *Jablonski* 1629**World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)***See Alberta Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)***World Masters [summer] Games, Edmonton (July 2005)**Funding for ... *Mar* 1473
General remarks ... *Zwozdesky* 1165**World Masters [winter] Games**Alberta bid for ... *Zwozdesky* 1165**World No Tobacco Day**Statement re ... *Rodney* 1577**World Organisation for Animal Health**BSE testing standards ... *Horner* 414**World Schools Debating Championship**Statement re ... *Cao* 91**World Society for the Protection of Animals**Letter re zoo licensing (SP420/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1342**World Trade Centre, Edmonton**Provincial contribution to ... *Blakeman* 281; *Dunford* 281**World Trade Organization**

- Byrd amendment ruling ... *Stelmach* 573, 1499
- Doha round of negotiations ... *Stelmach* 1180–81, 1182, 1184
- Doha round of negotiations: Federal/provincial discussions re ... *Stelmach* 1621; *Taft* 1621

- World Trade Organization (Continued)**
Softwood lumber dispute ruling ... *Stelmach* 644, 1625–26; *Strang* 644, 1625–26
- World War II**
General remarks ... *Brown* 1312
- World's longest hockey game**
See Hockey game, World's longest
- Writers' workshops**
Provincial funding for ... *McClellan* 1479
- Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park**
[*See also Parks, Provincial*]
Centennial projects in ... *Mar* 1473
General remarks ... *Dunford* 1013
Industrial development in ... *Chase* 1012
- Written-off vehicles**
See Automobiles, Written off/rebuilt
- WSPA**
See World Society for the Protection of Animals
- WTO**
See World Trade Organization
- Yaassoub, Justin**
Recognition of ... *Bonko* 418
- YAP**
See Northern Alberta Development Council, Youth apprenticeship program
- Year of the Veteran, 2005**
General remarks ... *Cao* 1629; *Johnston* 1917; *Lieberman* 1301; *Lougheed* 1313
Military history film produced during ... *Mar* 1783
- YESS**
See Youth Emergency Shelter Society
- Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)**
Statement re ... *Hinman* 1248; *Mar* 1247–48; *Pannu* 1248; *Taft* 1248
- Young, Kyle James (Prisoner)**
Death in Edmonton courthouse ... *Cenaiko* 743–44, 1433; *Miller, B.* 743–44, 1430; *Stevens* 743–44
- Young adult shelters—Finance**
See Youth shelters—Finance
- Young adults**
Provincial initiatives re, Involvement of youth in ... *Danyluk* 1052–53
- Young adults—Employment**
Provincial initiatives re ... *Backs* 1130–31
- Young adults in high school**
See High school students
- Young Albertans, Forum for**
See Forum for Young Albertans
- Young Offender Centre, Lethbridge**
See Lethbridge Young Offender Centre
- Young offender centre, Medicine Hat**
See Medicine Hat Remand Centre
- Young offender centre, Red Deer**
See Red Deer Remand Centre
- Young offenders**
General remarks ... *Mather* 1234
Government programs for ... *Cenaiko* 1433
Release from justice system, transitional programs for
See Youth in transition from the justice system, Government programs for
- Young offenders, Violent**
Prevention programs for: Statement re ... *Agnihotri* 1578
- Young offenders—Mental health services**
See Mental health services—Young offenders
- Young offenders—Substance abuse treatment**
See Substance abuse—Treatment—Young offenders
- Youth**
See Young adults
- Youth—Employment**
See Young adults—Employment
- Youth—Wages**
See Wages—Youth
- Youth addictions treatment**
See Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
- Youth Advisory Panel**
General remarks ... *Danyluk* 857, 1053, 1882
Statement re ... *Danyluk* 1889
- Youth Advocate**
See Child and Youth Advocate
- Youth apprenticeship program—Northern Alberta**
See Northern Alberta Development Council, Youth apprenticeship program
- Youth Connections (Employment service)**
General remarks ... *Backs* 1130–31; *Blakeman* 1140; *Bonko* 1134; *Cardinal* 1132, 1135, 1141
- Youth crime**
See Young offenders
- Youth crime, Violent**
See Young offenders, Violent
- Youth Criminal Justice Act**
Impact on young offender centres' populations ... *Cenaiko* 800
- Youth Emergency Shelter Society**
FCSS funding for, letter re (SP251/05: Tabled) ... *Mather* 492
Recognition of ... *Mather* 126–27
- Youth gambling addiction**
See Gambling, Compulsive, Youth gambling
- Youth in transition from the justice system**
Government programs for ... *Cenaiko* 1433; *Forsyth* 303; *Mather* 302
Government programs for: Funding ... *Blakeman* 1061; *Forsyth* 1052, 1062
- Youth Initiative**
See Alberta Children and Youth Initiative
- Youth Justice Act**
General remarks ... *Miller, B.* 276
- Youth justice committees**
General remarks ... *Backs* 1076; *Cenaiko* 1076, 1428, 1434, 1435; *Taft* 1435
Probation officer liaisons to ... *Cenaiko* 1435
Probation officers' review of decisions by ... *Blakeman* 1436–37; *Miller, B.* 1432
- Youth justice committees—Stony Plain**
Resignation of members of ... *Backs* 1076; *Blakeman* 1437; *Cenaiko* 1076; *Miller, B.* 1432
- Youth Science Month**
Recognition of ... *Johnson* 126
- Youth Secretariat**
General remarks ... *Danyluk* 1052–53
Statement re ... *Danyluk* 857
- Youth shelters—Finance**
General remarks ... *Forsyth* 206–07, 532, 1055–56, 1731–32; *Mather* 206–07, 532, 1054, 1055, 1731
- Youth unemployment**
See Unemployment—Youth

Youth wildlife certificate

See **Hunting—Regulations, For youth**

Youths in high school

See **High school students**

Zama Lakes wild-land provincial park

See **Hay-Zama Lakes wild-land provincial park**

Zebra Child Protection Centre

General remarks ... *Blakeman* 1060

Zero-based metering (Electricity)

See **Net metering (Electricity)**

Zi Corporation

Purchase of equity in by Lancer funds, Securities

Commission investigation of ... *McClellan* 1909; *Taft* 1909

Securities Commission investigation of ... *McClellan* 1827, 1880–81; *Taft* 1827, 1880–81

Securities Commission investigation of: Letter re (SP722/05: Tabled) ... *Blakeman* 1919; *Taft* 1919

Zoonosis—Research

General remarks ... *Horner* 300

Zoos—Licensing

Letter re (SP420/05: Tabled) ... *Eggen* 1342

Abbott, Tony (PC, Drayton Valley-Calmar)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Committee ... 895
 - Amendment A1 (SP271 & 313/05: Tabled) ... 567
 - Amendment A2 (SP314 & 343/05: Tabled) ... 895
 - Amendment A3 (SP344 & 367/05: Tabled) ... 895
- Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Second reading ... 1643-44
- Alberta centennial salute for sport and recreation
 - Statement re ... 2054
- Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1756-57
- Alberta School Boards Association
 - Pension fund liability discussions ... 1712
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Replaces widows' pension ... 1966
- Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation
 - Centennial salute for sport and recreation award ... 2054
- Alberta Teachers' Association
 - Pension fund liability discussions ... 1712
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Teacher bargaining model recommendation ... 1712
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - First reading ... 170
 - Second reading ... 424, 427
 - Committee ... 1295
 - Third reading ... 1581
- Animals, Treatment of
 - Legislation re (Bill 22) ... 170
- Antidumping laws (International trade)
 - General remarks ... 293
- Auditor General
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 764
- Automobile industry
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... 772
- Automobile Insurance Rate Board
 - Report on rate reductions ... 412-13
- Black Gold Regional Division #18
 - Operation/maintenance funding concerns ... 1030
- Bridges-Construction
 - Funding for ... 803
- Bridges-North Saskatchewan River-Drayton Valley area
 - General remarks ... 803
- Calgary-McCall (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... 4
- Canadian Environmental Protection Act (Federal)
 - Amendments to, in federal budget legislation ... 485
- Centennial canoe trip, Rocky Mountain House to Edmonton
 - Statement re ... 907
- Chief Electoral Officer
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 764
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 485
- Climate Fund (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 771
- Collective bargaining-Teachers
 - Province-wide bargaining ... 1712
 - Ten year deal in return for teachers' pension plan solvency ... 1712

Abbott, Tony (PC, Drayton Valley-Calmar) (Continued)

- Committee on Education and Employment, Standing Policy
 - Home education issues ... 1255
- Curling championships
 - Western Canadian Blind championship ... 126
- Demerit points (Traffic infractions)
 - Application to photoradar infractions ... 614
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 874
- Dept. of Human Resources and Skills Development (Federal)
 - Minister of: Alberta MLA's comments re ... 1607
- Deputy Chair
 - Election of, on second ballot ... 4
- Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 485
- Education, Postsecondary-Finance
 - General remarks ... 874
- Electric power lines-Edmonton/Calgary
 - Upgrading of ... 1831
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 907
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1410-11
- Energy industry
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... 772
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 764
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1410-11
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1539-40
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Amendment (Minister of Justice) (SP235, 272, 295/05: Tabled) ... 567
- Federal/Ontario fiscal relations
 - Impact of federal parliamentary situation on ... 1392
- Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1392
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re, tabling re disallowed ... 1206
- Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reduction of: Federal budget legislation re ... 485
- Greenhouse gas reduction programs (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 771
- Hogs-Export-United States
 - Antidumping duties on ... 293
- Home education-Regulations
 - Review of ... 1255-56
- Horse industry
 - Consultation with, re changes to Veterinary Profession Act ... 1627
- Hudson's Bay Company
 - Royal charter obligation ... 907
- Income tax, Federal
 - Reduction of ... 1392
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 764

Abbott, Tony (PC, Drayton Valley-Calmar) (Continued)

- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Reductions in ... 412–13
- International trade—United States
 - Irritants re ... 293
- Legislative Assembly Office
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 764
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 1632
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Centennial canoe trip ... 907
 - Centennial salute for sport and recreation ... 2054
 - Respect for women in politics, point of order request re ... 1607
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 45
- Municipal Government Act
 - Property tax exemptions for Canadian Legions ... 323
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1766–67
- Ombudsman
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 764
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Automobile insurance rates ... 412–13
 - Bridge repair and construction ... 803
 - Climate change ... 771–72
 - Electricity line between Edmonton and Calgary ... 1831
 - Federal financial support ... 1392
 - Greenhouse gas emissions ... 485
 - Home schooling ... 1255–56
 - Métis hunting rights ... 45
 - Municipal tax exemptions ... 323
 - Photoradar ... 614
 - Pork exports ... 293
 - School operation and maintenance funding ... 1030
 - Teachers' unfunded pension liability ... 1712
 - Veterinary profession legislation ... 1627
 - Widows' pension ... 1966
- Partnership Fund (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 771
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on, tabling re disallowed ... 1206
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1534–35
 - Committee ... 1927–28
- Photoradar (Traffic safety)
 - Use on provincial highways ... 614
- Point of Order
 - Member's Statement re respect for women in politics ... 1607
- Pork—Export—United States
 - Antidumping duties on ... 293
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Finance
 - Performance envelope funds ... 874
- Project Green (Federal Kyoto accord implementation plan)
 - General remarks ... 771–72
- Property tax
 - Payment by Canadian Legions ... 323
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 338–39
 - Third reading ... 791

Abbott, Tony (PC, Drayton Valley-Calmar) (Continued)

- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 126
 - Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1347–49
 - Royal Canadian Legion
 - Payment of property taxes ... 323
 - Saint John's School of Alberta
 - Centennial canoe trip, Rocky Mountain House to Edmonton ... 907
 - Schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1030
 - Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 499–501
 - Speaker
 - Congratulations to ... 4
 - Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 35
 - Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 433
 - Supreme Court of Canada
 - Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... 45
 - Taxation
 - General remarks ... 1392
 - Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Unfunded liability ... 1712
 - Veterinary Profession Act
 - Changes to, re veterinary dentistry inclusion in ... 1627
 - Widows—Pensions
 - Replacement of, with seniors' benefit ... 1966
 - Wild Rose School Division
 - Operation/maintenance funding concerns ... 1030
 - Women in politics
 - Respect for: Statement re, point of order re ... 1607
- Ady, Cindy (PC, Calgary-Shaw)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Gifts to Canadians nation-wide (scholarships and artwork) ... 1738–39
 - Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program
 - Nation-wide program ... 1738
 - Alberta College of Pharmacists
 - Standards for pharmacy services: Legislation re (Bill 38) ... 491
 - Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1759–60
 - Alberta School Boards Association
 - Edwin Parr awards, statement re ... 1786
 - Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Forms re, filling out of ... 889
 - Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Daily physical activity recommendation ... 1027–28
 - Artwork, Alberta
 - Donation to National Gallery of Canada ... 1738–39
 - Automobile Insurance Rate Board
 - Announcement on rate reductions ... 457
 - Calgary Board of Education
 - School construction delays ... 1198–99
 - Calgary Catholic Board of Education
 - Funding ... 1501
 - Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Ltd.
 - Statement re ... 1204

Ady, Cindy (PC, Calgary-Shaw) (Continued)

- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - Calgary education projects ... 1198–99
- Capital projects–Finance
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 797–98
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Reduction of: Funding for ... 977–78
- Classroom space
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 978
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1547–48
- Daycare centres–Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 1388–89
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 763
 - Opportunity and restructuring assessment function ... 763
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 889
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1547–48
- Education–Finance
 - General remarks ... 977–78
 - User fees ... 1525
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1753
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 763
- International Women's Day
 - Statement re ... 92
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Calgary Exhibition and Stampede ... 1204
 - Edwin Parr education awards ... 1786
 - International Women's Day ... 92
- Mount Royal College
 - Request for university status ... 851
- National Gallery of Canada
 - Alberta artwork donated to ... 1738–39
- Office of the Premier
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005: Centennial gifts to Canadians announced during ... 1738
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Automobile insurance rates ... 457
 - Calgary Catholic School Board funding ... 1501
 - Centennial gifts to Canadians ... 1738–39
 - Class sizes ... 977–78
 - Daily physical activity in schools ... 1027–28
 - Mount Royal College ... 851
 - National child care initiative ... 1388–89
 - School construction in Calgary ... 1198–99
 - School fees ... 1525
 - Unbudgeted surplus ... 797–98
- Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 - First reading ... 491
 - Committee ... 1558
 - Third reading ... 1582
 - Amendment (SP467/05: Tabled) ... 1558
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1535–36

Ady, Cindy (PC, Calgary-Shaw) (Continued)

- Physical fitness–Teaching
 - Daily mandatory activities ... 1027–28
 - Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Committee ... 786–87
 - School councils
 - Fund-raising activities ... 1525
 - Schools–Construction
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 978
 - Schools–Construction–Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1198–99
 - Schools–Construction–Finance
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 797–98
 - Schools–Maintenance and repair
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 978
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 797–98
 - Senior citizens–Housing
 - Assisted living concept, keeping senior couples together ... 889
 - Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 185–86
 - Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 30–31
 - Surplus, Budgetary
 - Capital project funding with ... 797–98
- Agnihotri, Bharat (L, Edmonton-Ellerslie)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Busing of schoolchildren to ... 1724
 - Funding for ... 1474, 1783
 - General remarks ... 305, 692
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 390–91
 - Active living strategy
 - Funding for ... 1474
 - Alberta–Economic conditions
 - General remarks ... 1141
 - Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs, letter re (SP607/05: Tabled) ... 1716–17
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Second reading ... 1643
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)
 - Second reading ... 238–39
 - Third reading ... 439
 - Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office
 - Budget reduction ... 1327
 - Alberta Foundation for the Arts
 - Funding ... 692, 1474, 1475
 - Review of Visual Arts Alberta Association ... 1571
 - Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan–Premiums
 - Elimination of: Email re (SP728/05: Tabled) ... 1920
 - Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
 - Complaints procedure ... 1474
 - Funding for ... 1475
 - Investigation of inmate rape case ... 855
 - Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 18)
 - Second reading ... 352–53
 - Committee ... 446
 - Third reading ... 638–39
 - Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)
 - Centennial funding for ... 305, 324, 692, 1474
 - Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 260
 - Optical benefits ... 260

Agnihotri, Bharat (L, Edmonton-Ellerslie) (Continued)

Allan Gray Continuing Care Centre
 Conditions in ... 1499
 Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 Impact on resident, letters re (SP704/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to ... 1335
 Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's report on ... 1742–43
 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 Second reading ... 1944–45
 Arts–Finance
 General remarks ... 692, 977, 1474, 1475, 1483, 1571, 1783, 2053
 Athletes, Albertan
 Support for ... 1151
 Auditor General
 Historic Resources Fund accounting comments ... 1475
 Jubilee auditoria comments ... 1475
 Wild Rose Foundation grants' auditing ... 1742–43
 Blue Sky Communication Inc.
 Film funding request ... 1475
 Book Publishers Association of Alberta
 Lobbying for government support ... 2053
 Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
 Second reading ... 1947–48
 Committee ... 1957–58
 Canmore Nordic Centre
 Upgrades to: Funding for ... 306
 Capital Health
 Allan Gray Continuing Care Centre, review of conditions in ... 1499
 Capital projects, Medical
 Funding for ... 1844
 Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 General remarks ... 1327
 Capital projects–Finance
 MLA input into prioritization of ... 1089
 Cellular telephones in automobiles
 Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1003
 Centennial legacies grant program
 General remarks ... 324, 1474
 Constitution Act, 1982
 Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Application to prison inmates ... 855
 Construction trades
 Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 1090
 Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 Committee ... 1902–03, 1905
 Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 Cause of youth violence ... 1578
 Curling championships
 Team Ferbey (2005 Brier champions) ... 169
 Dept. of Children's Services
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 305
 Dept. of Community Development
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1474–75, 1483
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 260
 Staffing ... 1475

Agnihotri, Bharat (L, Edmonton-Ellerslie) (Continued)

Dept. of Community Development (Continued)
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 305–06
 Dept. of Education
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1724
 Dept. of Health and Wellness
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1844
 Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1141–42
 Research and development funding ... 1142
 Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1089–90
 Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1327
 Disaster relief
 Letter re (SP749/05: Tabled) ... 1970
 Drinking water
 In schools ... 1711
 Drinking water–Vietnam
 Wild Rose grants for ... 1335
 Drug abuse
 Cause of youth violence ... 1578
 Edmonton Remand Centre
 Overcrowding ... 855
 Rape of inmates in ... 855
 Edmonton Sport Council
 Request for provincial sport funding ... 1474
 Elder abuse
 General remarks ... 260
 Ellerslie elementary school
 Condition of ... 1724
 Drinking water in ... 1711, 1724
 Ellerslie Rugby Club
 General remarks ... 1327
 Emergency planning
 Budget reduction ... 1327
 Ethics Commissioner
 Gifts to members received during trade missions reported to ... 46
 Extended care facilities
 Conditions in ... 260, 1499
 Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 Second reading ... 1540
 Family law
 Letter re (SP652/05: Tabled) ... 1788
 Film development grant program
 General remarks ... 1475
 Film industry
 Benefits received from Alberta trade missions ... 46
 Government budget for ... 1474
 Floods–Guyana
 Recognition of ... 50
 Foreign workers, Temporary
 Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 652, 699, 1128
 General remarks ... 1090
 Grey Nuns Hospital
 Emergency services waiting times, letter re (SP549/05: Tabled) ... 1674–75
 Staff shortages ... 1844
 High school credits
 Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 833

Agnihotri, Bharat (L, Edmonton-Ellerslie) (Continued)

- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 1089
- Historic Resources Fund
 - Accounting principles in, Auditor General's comments re ... 1475
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 367, 977
- Human rights
 - Funding for ... 1474, 1475
- Immigrants
 - General remarks ... 1142
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 260
- International Day for Tolerance
 - Statement re ... 1673
- Labour relations
 - General remarks ... 1141
- Labour Relations Board
 - General remarks ... 1141
- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
 - General remarks ... 1141
- Labour supply
 - Shortages of skilled workers ... 1090, 1141
- Libraries-Finance
 - General remarks ... 367, 1475, 1483
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole ... 1483
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 187-88, 343, 367
- Literacy
 - Impact of library card fees on ... 367
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 99-100
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1774-75
- Medical care
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 1844
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Consultation of, re capital project funding ... 1089
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - International Day for Tolerance ... 1673
 - Prevention of youth violence ... 1578
- Municipal finance
 - Government grants, unconditional grants ... 1327
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Committee ... 632
- Music Alberta
 - Closing of ... 1571
- Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Auditor General's recommendation re ... 1475
 - Renovations ... 305
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Access to medical services ... 1077-78
 - Allen Gray Continuing Care Centre ... 1499
 - Applewood Park Community Association ... 1335, 1742-43
 - Arts funding ... 692, 977, 1571, 2053
 - Centennial project funding ... 1783
 - Centennial projects ... 324
 - Edmonton Remand Centre ... 855

Agnihotri, Bharat (L, Edmonton-Ellerslie) (Continued)

- Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)
 - Library funding ... 367
 - Support for active living ... 1150-51
 - Trade mission to Southeast Asia ... 46
 - Water quality in Ellerslie elementary school ... 1711
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants ... 531
- Passchendaele* (Film)
 - Provincial funding for ... 1783
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 652, 699, 1128
- Point of Order
 - Relevance ... 305
- Police
 - Increase in numbers of ... 1327
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 1242-43
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 49)
 - Committee ... 1900-01
- Postsecondary educational institutions-Construction
 - General remarks ... 1089
- Prisoners
 - Application of Charter of Rights to ... 855
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Committee ... 787-88
- Provincial Archives of Alberta
 - Upgrading ... 305
- Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1327
- Public assistance
 - Increase to: Letter re (SP527/05: Tabled) ... 1632
- Public safety (From criminal activity)
 - General remarks ... 1327
- Publishing industry
 - Funding ... 977, 2053
- Punjabi language-Teaching
 - Funding for ... 1724
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 50, 169
- Recreation-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1150-51
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Second reading ... 467-68
- Roads-Edmonton
 - 23rd Avenue/Calgary Trail intersection: Upgrading ... 1090
- Roads for royalties
 - General remarks ... 1089
- Rockyview General Hospital
 - Upgrades to, companies bidding on contracts for ... 1089
- Schools-Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1724
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 505-06
- Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Auditor General's recommendation re ... 1475
 - Renovations ... 305
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 99-100
- Sports
 - Plan for ... 1151

Agnihotri, Bharat (L, Edmonton-Ellerslie) (Continued)

- Sports–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1150–51, 1474
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Committee ... 561
- Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth
 - Detox/residential services re: Letter re (SP607/05: Tabled) ... 1716–17
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 1724
- Tax incentives
 - Youth recreation programs (for purposes of youth violence prevention) ... 1578
- Teachers
 - Numbers of, increase in: Funding for ... 1724
- Trade missions–Southeast Asia
 - Benefits of ... 46
- Traffic fatalities
 - Reduction of ... 1089
- Traffic safety
 - Funding for ... 1089
- Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1003
- Tuition fees
 - Remission of, for second year courses, letter re (SP635/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 556–57
- Visual Arts Alberta Association
 - Funding for ... 692, 1571
 - Review of, by Foundation for the Arts ... 1571
- In vitro fertilization treatment
 - Cost of, letter re (SP680/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - General remarks ... 1077–78
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for ... 1335
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor General's report on ... 1742–43
 - Funding ... 1475
 - Funds granted by, follow-up auditing of ... 531, 1335, 1743
 - Grants procedures ... 531
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Committee ... 1895
- Workers' Compensation Board
 - Long standing claims issue ... 1141
- Young offenders, Violent
 - Prevention programs for: Statement re ... 1578

Amery, Moe (PC, Calgary-East)

- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Earned income exemption under, raising of ... 1254–55
 - Review of (2005): Report ... 1254–55
- Calgary Board of Education
 - English as a Second Language programs, funding for ... 1572
- Calgary Health Region
 - Doctor shortage, northeast Calgary, review of ... 533
- Chair
 - Election of ... 2

Amery, Moe (PC, Calgary-East) (Continued)

- Deputy Speaker
 - Election of ... 2
- Disaster relief
 - Southern Alberta flood situation ... 1708
- English as a Second Language
 - Funding ... 949–50, 1572
 - General remarks ... 1571–72
- Floods–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1708
- Floods–Southern Alberta
 - Compensation re ... 1708
- Hospital beds–Calgary
 - Shortages of ... 533
- Medical care–Calgary
 - General remarks ... 533
- Medical profession–Supply
 - Northeast Calgary area ... 533
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Ian Seright ... 982
- Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Speaker ... 2
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped ... 1254–55
 - English as a Second Language program ... 1571–72
 - ESL funding ... 949–50
 - Flood disaster relief ... 1708
 - Health services in Calgary ... 533
 - Nutrition programs for schools ... 1739–40
 - Seniors' property taxes ... 2049
- Property tax–Education levy
 - Seniors' tax relief re ... 2049
- School nutrition programs
 - General remarks ... 1739–40
- Seright, Mr. Samuel Ian
 - Statement re ... 982
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 180
- Speaker
 - Congratulations to ... 2

Backs, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning)

- Aboriginal peoples–Employment
 - General remarks ... 279, 1131
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 225–26
- Age and employment
 - General remarks ... 1131–32
- Agrology Profession Act (Bill 17)
 - Committee ... 557–58
 - Third reading ... 1513
- Alberta Adult Health Benefit (Human Resources program)
 - General remarks ... 278
- Alberta Children and Youth Initiative
 - General remarks ... 279–80
- Alberta Federation of Labour
 - Workplace fatalities, report and factsheet re (SP412-413/05: Tabled) ... 1315
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 346, 513
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1819, 1862–63, 1866, 1867

Backs, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning) (Continued)

- Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act 2005 (Bill 4)
 - Committee ... 450
- Alberta Works (Employment training program)
 - Learner assistance allowances ... 1131
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05: Response tabled as SP511/05) ... 1162
- Appeals Commission (Workers' compensation)
 - Funding transfer to minister's budget ... 950
 - General remarks ... 1131
 - Waiting times at ... 950
- Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 57)
 - Second reading ... 1953–54
 - Committee ... 1980–81
- Apprenticeship training
 - Aboriginal people ... 279, 411
 - General remarks ... 279
 - Letters re (SP431, 435, 444, 463/05: Tabled) ... 1396, 1452, 1508, 1528
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Third reading ... 1612–13
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Second reading ... 1946
 - Committee ... 1984–85
 - Third reading ... 2040
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits increase ... 889
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Third reading ... 1512
- Baby boom
 - General remarks ... 1131–32
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Second reading ... 677–78
- Canadian College International Institute
 - Monitoring report on, 2004 (SP445/05: Tabled) ... 1508
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
 - Report on workplace injuries in Canada ... 1122
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at ... 121–22, 2048
- Capital projects
 - Public/private partnerships re: List of all potential projects (M33/05: Response tabled as SP512/05) ... 1163
- Cattle rustling
 - Statement re ... 1258
- Caucus policy committees (PC party)
 - General remarks ... 737–38, 774
- Celanese Canada Inc.
 - Edmonton plant closure ... 1443
- Children–Employment
 - Age restriction re ... 1779
- Christian Labour Association of Canada
 - Actions of Labour Relations Board in advancing interests of ... 2009, 2048
 - General remarks ... 1170
 - Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... 411, 2048

Backs, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning) (Continued)

- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Committee ... 447
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 673–74
- Collective bargaining
 - First-contract certification legislation ... 1625
- Collective bargaining–Health authorities
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in ... 2008, 2009, 2048–49
- Committees, Select standing
 - Statement re ... 773–74
- Conflict of interest
 - WCB/Ana Gutierrez case ... 1169
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Alberta government web site article on (SP355/05: Tabled) ... 957
 - Employment levels: Dorothy Paquette run for, Edmonton - Fort McMurray ... 652
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 121–22, 279, 318, 361, 411, 571, 1132
 - Employment levels: Stats Can report on (SP268 & 286/05: Tabled) ... 536, 622
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 1130–32
 - Minister's resignation ... 2009
 - Research and development funding ... 1131
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004–05: Debated ... 278–81
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 1375–76
 - Performance measures ... 1376
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 889–90
- Drug use in the workplace
 - Random testing for ... 45
 - Random testing for: Report on ... 45
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 Grey Cup contenders: Statement re ... 1888
 - 2005 Grey Cup contenders: T-shirt and thunderstick from (no SP number: Tabled) ... 1920
- Edmonton Social Planning Council
 - Information sheet (social determinants of health) (SP396/05: Tabled) ... 1206
- Elder abuse
 - General remarks ... 889
- Electric power–Prices
 - Impact on seniors ... 889–90
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care funding (Not proceeded with) ... 1718
- Employment standards
 - Bathroom/coffee breaks inclusion in ... 1625
- Employment training programs
 - Aboriginal peoples ... 279, 281, 1131
 - General remarks ... 278–79, 1131
- Energy research
 - General remarks ... 1376
- English as a Second Language
 - Funding ... 1131
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Frontier Economics report re (SP8/05: Tabled) ... 27

Backs, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning) (Continued)

- Ethane—Supply
 - General remarks ... 1443
- Extended care facilities—Finance
 - Emergency debate on (Not proceeded with) ... 1718
- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Training of ... 889
- Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 - Second reading ... 217–18
- Fatalities, Work-related
 - Day of mourning re ... 1118
 - Federation of Labour report and factsheet re (SP412-413/05: Tabled) ... 1315
- Football championships
 - Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions ... 1888
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated) ... 823, 825, 989
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 294, 326, 418, 463, 491, 536, 621, 652, 745–46, 775, 806, 858, 957, 984, 1033, 1128, 1132, 1153, 1205, 1314, 1396, 1451–52, 1507, 1528, 1578, 1607, 1630, 1674, 1715, 1745, 1788, 1836, 1970, 2016
 - General remarks ... 121–22, 279, 318, 360–61, 411, 571, 1132, 1443
 - Language training for ... 1131
 - Letters re (SP116, 136, 168, 208, 243, 255, 269, 287, 424, 431, 435/05: Tabled) ... 171, 211, 295, 370, 463, 492, 536, 622, 1342, 1396, 1452
 - Letters re (SP444, 463, 492, 505/05: Tabled) ... 1508, 1528, 1579, 1608
 - Treaty 8 First Nations resolution and letter re (SP134-135/05: Tabled) ... 211
- Foster children
 - Requirement to work ... 1779
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1169
- Frontier Economics Inc.
 - Report on Project Stanley (SP8/05: Tabled) ... 27
- Gas, Natural—Prices
 - Impact on seniors ... 889–90
- Group homes—Standards
 - Locating of homes ... 646
- Highway 881
 - Extension to Alberta/Saskatchewan border, employment opportunities of ... 1131
- Home care program
 - General remarks ... 889
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 849, 856
- Immigration
 - General remarks ... 279
- Income Support program
 - Caseload increase ... 278–79
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Third reading ... 1513
- Labour laws and legislation
 - General remarks ... 1625
- Labour mobility
 - General remarks ... 279
- Labour Relations Board
 - Advancing of interests of Christian Labour Association ... 2009, 2048

Backs, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning) (Continued)

- Labour Relations Board (Continued)
 - Chair/vice-chairs of, firing of ... 2049
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring) ... 2008–09, 2048–49
- Labour Relations Code
 - Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects) ... 121–22
 - Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects): Labour Relations Board involvement in ... 2048
 - Review of: MLA committee re: Report (M43/05: Defeated) ... 1170–71
- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting ... 2008–09, 2048–49
- Labour supply
 - Alberta labour force statistics ... 279
 - Alberta labour force statistics (Web site article) (SP355/05: Tabled) ... 957
 - Strategy re ... 279, 1131–32
- Labour unions
 - Impact on, of division 8 designation re foreign workers ... 121–22
 - Organizing activities (Salting) ... 1170
- Lakeside Packers
 - Brooks packing plant: Complaints re working conditions in ... 1625
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1111
- Low-income families
 - General remarks ... 849
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 133–34
- Market enhancement recovery funds
 - General remarks ... 1170
- McLennan Ross LLP (Legal counsel)
 - Information about partner in (SP823/05: Tabled) ... 2056
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 amendments ... 2048
- Mega Project Excellence: Preparing for Alberta's Legacy, An Action Plan (Report)
 - General remarks ... 1132
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 619
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Cattle rustling ... 1258
 - Dorothy Pacquette ... 652
 - Edmonton Eskimos ... 1888
 - Legislature committees structure ... 733–34
 - Remembrance Day ... 1629
- Mentally disabled—Housing
 - Group homes, locating of ... 646
- Merit Contractors Association
 - General remarks ... 1170
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - National Day of Mourning ... 1118
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Random drug tests for ... 45

Backs, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning) (Continued)

- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 473
 - Third reading ... 891
- National Day of Mourning (Work-related injuries/deaths)
 - Statement re ... 1118
- National Institute for Nanotechnology
 - General remarks ... 1376
- Oil recovery methods
 - Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research ... 1376
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Capital region petrochemical workers ... 1443
 - Employment of children ... 1779
 - Foreign and non-union workers ... 121–122
 - Group homes ... 646
 - Labour Relations Board ... 2008–09, 2048–49
 - Lakeside Packers labour dispute ... 1625
 - Minimum wage ... 164, 612–13
 - Oil sands employment ... 571
 - Physiotherapy services ... 292
 - Social assistance rates ... 849, 856
 - Standing policy committee ... 737–38
 - Stony Plain youth justice committee ... 1076
 - Support for low-income Albertans ... 1198
 - Temporary foreign workers ... 318, 360–61, 411
 - Workers' compensation appeals ... 950
 - Workplace drug testing ... 45
 - Workplace safety ... 1122
- Pacquette, Dorothy
 - Run from Fort McMurray to Edmonton: Statement re ... 652
- Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
 - Committee ... 688
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 294, 326, 418, 463, 491, 536, 621, 652, 745–46, 775, 806, 858, 957, 984, 1033, 1128, 1153, 1205, 1314, 1396, 1451, 1507, 1528, 1578, 1607, 1630, 1674, 1715, 1745, 1788, 1836, 1970, 2016
- Petrochemical industry–Edmonton area
 - Employees laid off at, employment in Fort McMurray ... 1443
 - Ethane supply for ... 1443
- Petroleos de Venezuela
 - Former employees of, recruited for Alberta oil sands employment ... 411
- Physical therapy–Finance
 - Cutbacks to ... 292
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Committee ... 1381
- Progressive Contractors Association of Canada
 - General remarks ... 1170
- Public assistance
 - Health/utility benefits ... 278
 - Increase to ... 849, 856, 1198
 - Market-basket measure as basis for ... 849
 - Personal income exemption increase ... 849
 - Review of ... 1198
- Public service–Alberta
 - Employees on minimum wage ... 1130
 - Succession planning for ... 1131

Backs, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning) (Continued)

- Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)
 - Revenue from ... 849
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Second reading ... 579
- Remembrance Day
 - Statement re ... 1629
- Research and development
 - Chairs for, establishment of ... 1376
 - Funding for ... 1376
 - General remarks ... 1375–76
 - Public awareness of ... 1376
 - Recruitment of scientists for ... 1376
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Second reading ... 468
 - Third reading ... 1513
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - Second reading ... 1808
- Road construction–Northern Alberta
 - Employment opportunities in ... 1131
- Roads–Northern Alberta
 - Impact on aboriginal employment possibilities ... 281, 1131
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 673–74
- Science
 - Public awareness of ... 1376
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 176–77
 - Third reading ... 996–97
- Smoking in the workplace
 - Ban on: Letter re (SP167/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Social housing
 - General remarks ... 1198
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 133–34
- Strikes and lockouts–Lakeside Packers employees
 - General remarks ... 1625
- Strikes and lockouts–Oil sands employees
 - General remarks ... 1132
- Summer Temporary Employment Program
 - General remarks ... 1131
- Suncor Inc.
 - Employee strike action at ... 1132
 - Memo re temporary foreign workers ... 360–61
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - AISH increase with ... 889
 - Public assistance increase with ... 849
- Tar sands development
 - Employment opportunities in ... 279, 571, 1131, 1132
 - Employment opportunities in: Dorothy Paquette run for, Edmonton - Fort McMurray ... 652
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 121–22, 279, 318, 360–61, 411, 1443
- Tar sands development–Research
 - General remarks ... 1376
- Tar sands development–Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 1122, 1134
- Tax incentives
 - Northern residence tax deduction ... 571

Baeks, Dan (L, Edmonton-Manning) *(Continued)*

- Treaty 8 First Nations
 - Resolution and letter re hiring temporary foreign workers (SP134-135/05: Tabled) ... 211
- Unemployment—Wabasca
 - General remarks ... 1131
- Unemployment—Youth
 - General remarks ... 279
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 556, 557
- Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1111
- Wages—Food service employees
 - Increase in ... 613
- Wages—Minimum wage
 - Increase to ... 164, 612–13, 1130
 - Increase to: Exceptions for food service and youth employees ... 613
 - Public sector employees on ... 1130
- Wages—Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1937–38
- Wages—Youth
 - Increase in ... 613
- Winter roads
 - To facilitate travel to employment opportunities ... 1131
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Second reading ... 588–590, 591, 593, 595
 - Committee ... 1649–53, 1657, 1659–61
 - Third reading ... 1870–71
 - Amendment A2 (SP537/05: Tabled) ... 1657
 - Amendment A3 (SP538/05: Tabled) ... 1659
 - Amendments (SP383/05: Tabled) ... 1154
 - General remarks ... 1169
 - Public consultation re: Letter requesting (SP348/05: Tabled) ... 908
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Second reading ... 1812–13, 1815
 - Committee ... 1893–96
 - Third reading ... 1898
 - Amendment A1 (SP714/05: Tabled) ... 1894
- Workers' Compensation Board
 - Ana Gutierrez case: Correspondence re (M42/05: Defeated) ... 1169
 - Long standing claims issue ... 950
 - Provision of physiotherapy services ... 292
- Workplace safety
 - Drug use issue ... 45
 - General remarks ... 279, 1118, 1122
- Workplace safety inspections
 - General remarks ... 1122
- Young adults—Employment
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 1130–31
- Youth Connections (Employment service)
 - General remarks ... 1130–31
- Youth justice committees
 - General remarks ... 1076
- Youth justice committees—Stony Plain
 - Resignation of members of ... 1076

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre)

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Commonwealth Stadium concert re, payment of artists at ... 1477
 - Funding for ... 1477
 - Legacy of ... 1477
- Aboriginal peoples—Employment
 - General remarks ... 1139
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 234–35, 393
 - Committee ... 728–29, 892–93
- Access to the Future Fund
 - General remarks ... 866
- Age Care Ltd.
 - Board of directors ... 460
 - Partnership with Calgary health region re long-term care facilities ... 460
- Alberta 75th anniversary celebrations
 - Legacy of ... 1477
- Alberta Alliance Party
 - Member of, participation in Question Period ... 54
- Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Second reading ... 1640–42
- Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres
 - Core services for survivors ... 1060
- Alberta Blue Cross Plan
 - Nongroup benefits, provincial funding for ... 1464
- Alberta Cancer Board
 - Funding increase for ... 1028
- Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)
 - Committee ... 1976
- Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
 - Shelter statistics ... 1061
- Alberta Disability Strategy
 - General remarks ... 880–81
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
 - CT scans coverage ... 366
 - Midwifery coverage ... 1146
 - Podiatry coverage ... 1463, 1471
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - Elimination of ... 965
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Ethical investments by ... 82
 - Investment in tobacco companies ... 82–83
 - Investment in tobacco companies: List of (SP35/05: Tabled) ... 93
- Alberta Medical Association
 - Letter supporting Bill 201, Smoke-free Places Act (SP204/05: Tabled) ... 370
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 20)
 - Committee ... 479
- Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1755–56
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1816–18, 1821
- Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)
 - General remarks ... 1476–77
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Chairman, Opposition Leaders comments re, law firm letter re (SP721/05: Tabled) ... 1919

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Alberta Securities Commission *(Continued)*
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on investigation of, release to media, point of privilege re ... 1633–35
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Emergency debate under SO 30 re ... 1084
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement: Court documents re (SP812/05: Tabled) ... 2055
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... 986
 - Operations of, memo to William Code re (SP811/05: Tabled) ... 2055
 - Zi Corporation (formerly Multi-Corp) investigation: Letter re (SP722/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 881
 - Optical benefits ... 881
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Monitoring of contracts re ... 754
 - School access to ... 760
- Alberta Works (Employment training program)
 - General remarks ... 1139
 - Learner assistance allowances ... 1139, 1140
- Ambulance service
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of ... 482, 754, 1463
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 482
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Discovery projects re ... 483
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Emergency motion under SO40 re ... 28
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Impact of joint ambulance/fire services on ... 482–83
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Red Deer news release re (SP126/05: Tabled) ... 210
- Ambulance service–Finance
 - Use of surplus funds for ... 1463
- Ambulance service–Medicine Hat
 - Joint fire/ambulance service ... 482–83
- Ambulance service–Red Deer
 - News release re (SP126/05: Tabled) ... 210
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Third reading ... 1581
- Aon Consulting Inc.
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of ... 1839
- Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Association's letter re (SP459/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Point of order re ... 1452–53, 1454
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Committee ... 1586–88, 1590–91
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Committee ... 400–02, 404–05
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1989–91
 - Third reading ... 2035–36
- Arts–Finance
 - General remarks ... 866, 1476–77

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- ArtStart program
 - Recognition of Safeway contribution to ... 252
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefit levels, formula for ... 880
 - Benefit levels, market-basket measurement formula for ... 880
 - Supplementary benefits to personal income support ... 881
- Auditor General
 - Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation ... 754
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1387, 1460
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to news media of report on, point of privilege re ... 1633–35
 - Suggestive references to, in Legislative Assembly ... 985–86
- Axia NetMedia Corporation
 - Alberta Supernet contract ... 754
- Battered women
 - Government programs for ... 1139
- Bell West
 - Alberta SuperNet contract ... 754
- Bennett Jones LLP
 - Letter to Opposition Leader re comments concerning Chair of Securities Commission (SP721/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose
 - Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in ... 1121, 1577
- Bingo halls
 - Amendment to retain smoking in ... 119
- Budget
 - General remarks ... 272
- Bullying–Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re: For gay/lesbian youth ... 1060–61
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - Committee ... 1979–80
- Calgary Health Region
 - Hip/knee surgery contract with Health Resource Centre ... 244–45
 - Partnership with Age Care Ltd. re long-term care facilities ... 460
- Calgary–Mountain View (Constituency)
 - Member for ... 26
- Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society
 - Wild Rose grants transferred to: Community association's letter re (SP459/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Wild Rose grants transferred to: Point of order re ... 1452–53, 1454
- Camp Firefly (Anti-bullying initiative)
 - General remarks ... 1061
- Canada/Alberta Affordable Housing Program
 - General remarks ... 881
- Canada Health Act
 - General remarks ... 1463
 - Physician access to both public and private health systems provisions ... 1622
- Canada Safeway Ltd.
 - Oliver, Edmonton, store support for ArtStart program ... 252

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Cancer—Treatment
 - Funding increase for ... 1028
- Capital Health
 - Hospital capital upgrades ... 1839
 - Physiotherapy service cuts ... 163
- Capital projects, Medical
 - Funding for ... 272, 1839–41
 - General remarks ... 1841
 - Operating funds for ... 1840
- Caritas Health Group
 - School lunch program: Statement re ... 2015
- Casinos
 - Amendment to retain smoking in ... 119
- Caucus policy committees (PC party)
 - General remarks ... 54
- Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations
 - Insurance costs for ... 964–65
 - Support for people on social assistance ... 1139
- Child abuse
 - Victims of, services to ... 1060
- Child welfare
 - Early childhood intervention programs ... 1462
- City of Edmonton Archives
 - Historical projects: Statement re ... 745
- Civil marriage commissioners
 - Exemption from performing same-sex marriages, letter re (SP632/05: Tabled) ... 1745
- Closure debate (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 54
- Collective bargaining
 - First-contract certification legislation ... 647
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
 - Investigation of complaints against physicians: Letter re (SP113/05: Tabled) ... 171
- Committee on Legislative Offices, Standing
 - Referral of comments in Legislature re Auditor General to ... 986
- Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Standing
 - Referral of comments in Legislature re Auditor General to ... 986
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Changes to operation of ... 625
 - Changes to operation of, eight motions to amend SO50 re (SP673/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - Report, 2004 (SP111/05: Tabled) ... 625
- Community health centres
 - General remarks ... 1469
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Membership change for (Motion 24: Hancock) ... 1638
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 1140
- Consumer protection
 - Auto insurance rates ... 964–65
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Safe injection site re: Letter (SP180/05: Tabled) ... 327
- CT scans (Medical imaging procedure)
 - Coverage under health care plan ... 366
 - Private clinic provision of ... 365–66
 - Safety aspects ... 365–66

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Daycare centres
 - National plan principles re ... 1061
- Daycare centres—Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 1059
 - Resource rebate funds use for, letters re (SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Debate (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Time limits on ... 54
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 865–67
 - Separation from Dept. of Learning, costs re ... 865
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1059–61
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1476–77
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 281
- Dept. of Education
 - Separation from Dept. of Learning, costs re ... 865
- Dept. of Finance
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 964–65
 - Minister of, comments re ... 986
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Credit or recovery budget amounts ... 273
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1459–64, 1469–70, 1471
 - Health information protection budget ... 617
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 272–74
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1839–41
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1138–40
- Dept. of Learning
 - Separation into depts. of Education and Advanced Education, costs re ... 865
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 753–54, 760
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 880–81
- Dept. of Solicitor General
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1436–37
- Deputy constables
 - General remarks ... 1436
- Diabetes—Treatment
 - Foot problems ... 1463, 1471
- Diabetes strategy
 - Funding for ... 272
- Disabled—Housing
 - General remarks ... 881
- Domestic violence
 - General remarks ... 1527
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 1061
 - Provincial initiatives re: Impact of provision of, on health care demand ... 1462
- Drayton Valley—Calmar (Constituency)
 - Notice of privilege re actions by Member for (Not proceeded with) ... 1614–15, 1633
- Drugs, Prescription
 - National plan for ... 1463–64
 - Public vs private development of ... 1470
- Drugs, Prescription—Costs
 - General remarks ... 1461

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Eastwood Public Health Centre
 - Surplus funding for ... 1839
- Edmonton Art Gallery
 - Private donation to ... 1476
 - Provincial support ... 1476
- Edmonton Community Loan Fund Society
 - Pamphlet (SP524/05: Tabled) ... 1632
- Edmonton Folk Festival
 - Provincial funding for ... 1477
- Edmonton-Rutherford (Constituency)
 - Notice of privilege re actions by Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor against (Not proceeded with) ... 1614–15, 1633
- Education
 - Impact of provision of, on health care demand ... 1462
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 866
- Education, Postsecondary–Finance
 - Capital spending ... 865
 - General remarks ... 865–67
 - Letter re (SP311/05: Tabled) ... 700
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: Special Legislature sitting for (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 597
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1398–99, 1404–05
 - Securities Commission, loss of investor confidence in (not proceeded with) ... 1084
- Emergency medical response services–Calgary
 - Contingency plan for ... 644
- Emergency motions under Standing Order 40
 - Ambulance services funding ... 28
- Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 35)
 - Committee ... 1491–92
- English as a Second Language
 - General remarks ... 866–67
- Epidemic response services–Calgary
 - Contingency plan for ... 644
- Expert Advisory Panel to Review Publically Funded Health Services
 - Report ... 205
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1387, 1460, 1577
 - Conditions in ... 1469, 1577
 - General remarks ... 1460, 1839
 - MLA committee to review (2005): Report ... 1839
 - Redesignation to assisted living status ... 1460, 1463
- Extended care facilities, Private
 - Public funding of ... 1460–61, 1569
- Extended care facilities–Fees
 - General remarks ... 1387
- Extended care facilities–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1469
- Extended care facilities–Inspection
 - General remarks ... 1469
- Extended care facilities–Regulations
 - General remarks ... 1460–61, 1469
- Extended care facilities–Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 981, 1121, 1460, 1469

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Extended care facilities–Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1398–99, 1404–05
 - General remarks ... 1121, 1460, 1469, 1498
 - Personal hygiene standards ... 1498
- Extencicare Inc.
 - Lobbying of government ... 1569
- Fabry disease
 - Enzyme replacement therapy for, provincial assistance re ... 290
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1750
- Family and community support services program
 - Funding for, using resource rebate funds, letters re (SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Committee ... 633–36
- Famous Five
 - General remarks ... 856
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 703–04
 - Committee ... 721–23
- Fees, Government
 - Review of ... 754
- Festivals–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1477
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
 - General remarks ... 769–70
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder affected adults–Housing
 - General remarks ... 770
- Film industry
 - Film distribution problems: Letter re (SP178/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Foothills Medical Centre
 - Upgrades to ... 644
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 1140
 - Letters re (SP205/05: Tabled) ... 370
- Freedom of Expression Committee (Book and Periodical Council)
 - General remarks ... 25–26
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1140
 - Liberal opposition requests under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 53
- Freedom to Read Week
 - Statement re ... 25–26
- Friends of Medicare
 - Co-sponsor of alternative Calgary health care conference (Weighing the Evidence) ... 1459
- Geddes, Marie
 - Statement re ... 1577
- Glenbow Museum
 - General remarks ... 1476
- Government aircraft
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 52–53
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 753–54, 760
- Government information systems
 - Security aspects ... 754
- Grant MacEwan Community College
 - Health care learning centre: Funding for ... 867

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

Grey Nuns Hospital
 Upgrades to ... 1839

Health
 Social determinants of ... 880, 1139, 1459, 1462

Health Care Protection Act (Bill 11, 2000)
 Advertising campaign re ... 1666

Health Information Act Review Committee, Select
 Special
 Final report, 2004 (SP200/05: Tabled) ... 1471
 Second committee, need for ... 1471

Health Link Alberta
 General remarks ... 1463

Health Resource Centre, Calgary
 General remarks ... 205
 Hip/knee surgery contract with Calgary health region
 ... 244–45
 Wait times at ... 244–45

Health sciences personnel—Education
 General remarks ... 1469

Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 7)
 Second reading ... 371–72
 Third reading ... 637

Health workforce planning
 General remarks ... 980–81, 1461, 1469–70, 1840
 Letters re (SP544-545/05: Tabled) ... 1674

Heart—Surgery
 Coronary artery bypass grafting procedure, intensive
 home care for patients waiting for ... 273
 Funding for ... 272
 Wait times for ... 273

Herceptin (Cancer therapy)
 Funding for, letters re (SP546-547/05: Tabled) ...
 1674

Highway 63
 Upgrading of ... 1140
 Upgrading of: Letter re (SP237/05: Tabled) ... 463

Hip and knee surgery
 Funding for ... 272

Home care program
 General remarks ... 1463

Homeless—Housing
 General remarks ... 881

Hospital beds—Calgary
 Shortages of ... 272, 644–45

Hospital beds—Edmonton
 Shortages of ... 272

Hospital beds—Rural areas
 Funding for ... 272

Hospitals—Calgary
 New south Calgary hospital: Funding for ... 272
 New south Calgary hospital: Public/private funding of
 ... 272

Hospitals—Construction
 Funding for: Letters re (SP544-545/05: Tabled) ...
 1674

Hospitals—Emergency services
 Wait-times at ... 1915

Hospitals—Finance
 General remarks ... 1915

Hospitals—Fort Saskatchewan
 Surplus funding for ... 1839, 1840

Hospitals—Strathcona County
 Surplus funding for ... 1839

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

Hospitals—Vulcan
 Reconversion to active-care use: Letter re (SP114/05:
 Tabled) ... 171

Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005
 (Bill 21)
 Committee ... 229–31

Housing
 Impact of provision of, on health care demand ...
 1462

IBM Canada Ltd.
 Processing of Alberta health records, security
 implications ... 617

Immigrant doctors
 General remarks ... 1463

Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)
 Ruling on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on
 Canadian health records (SP247/05: Tabled) ...
 491–92

Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women
 General remarks ... 92
 Resolution by (SP34/05: Tabled) ... 93

Insurance, Automobile
 Reform of ... 954

Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 Impact on non-profit sector ... 964–65

Insurance, Health (Private)
 Alberta plan for ... 1622, 1666

Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 Second reading ... 710–11

International Day of the Midwife
 General remarks ... 1146

International Literacy Day
 Stars of Literacy 2005 program (SP525/05: Tabled) ...
 1632

International Women's Day
 Statement re ... 92

Jazz City festival, Edmonton
 Provincial funding for ... 1477

Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 48)
 Committee ... 1822–23

Labour Relations Code
 Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major
 projects) ... 1140

Labour unions
 General remarks ... 1138

The Land Development Company
 Letter of complaint to Walton International
 (SP785/05: Tabled) ... 2017

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
 Special sitting of, for Royal visit (Motion 16:
 Hancock) ... 597

Libraries, School
 Purchase of books for, using donated resource rebate
 cheques, letter re (SP674/05: Tabled) ... 1837

Licensed premises
 Amendment to retain smoking in ... 119

Lobbyists—Registration
 General remarks ... 1569

Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship
 (Proposed)
 General remarks ... 866

Long-Term Care Review Advisory Committee (1999)
 Final report ... 1463

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Louise McKinney Riverfront Park, Edmonton
 - Centennial funding for ... 1477
- Medical care
 - Demand for, reduction of ... 1462
 - General remarks ... 1459
 - Premier's remarks re: Letter re (SP310/05: Tabled) ... 700
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 205, 460, 1839, 1840, 1841
 - Restructuring (third way option): Advertising campaign re ... 1666
 - Restructuring (third way option): Public consultation re ... 1666
- Medical care, Cost of
 - Public knowledge of, purpose of ... 1666, 1782
- Medical care, Primary
 - General remarks ... 273, 1461
 - Local initiatives re ... 1462, 1469
 - Local initiatives re: Performance measures ... 1469
 - Midwives inclusion in ... 1462
 - Team-based care ... 1461
- Medical care, Primary–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1469
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 205, 1459–60, 1569, 1622
- Medical care–Finance
 - General remarks ... 272, 273, 274, 1840
 - MLA committee to review: Report ... 205
- Medical equipment
 - Funding for ... 273, 1461
- Medical profession
 - Practicing in public/private health systems ... 1622
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1362–63
- Medical profession–Education
 - General remarks ... 1469, 1840–41
- Medical profession–Fees
 - Alternative payment schemes ... 1469
- Medical profession–Rural areas
 - Action plan re ... 1469, 1841
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1362–63
- Medical profession–Supply
 - General remarks ... 1461, 1463
- Medical records
 - Outsourcing management of ... 617
- Medical records, Electronic
 - General remarks ... 1471
- Medical records–Confidentiality
 - Departmental budget for ... 617
 - General remarks ... 1471
 - Missing health records situation ... 617
- Medical tests
 - Necessity for repeated tests, letter re (SP724/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 1454, 1456, 1633
- Members' Statements
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624–25
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Caritas Health Group school lunch program ... 2015
 - City of Edmonton Archives ... 745
 - Freedom to Read Week ... 25–26
 - International Women's Day ... 92

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Members' Statements (2005) (Continued)
 - Marie Geddes ... 1577
 - Nursing Week ... 1395
 - Participation of women in politics ... 856
 - Women's Global Charter for Humanity ... 1527
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - Regarding Member for Calgary-Montrose ... 1454, 1456
- Mental Health Act
 - Change from danger model to a treatment model ... 903
- Mental health innovation fund
 - General remarks ... 1464
- Mental health services
 - General remarks ... 1464
- Mental health services–Children
 - General remarks ... 1464
- Mental health services–Funding
 - General remarks ... 903, 1840
- Mental health strategy
 - General remarks ... 903
- Microsoft Corporation
 - School software licences purchase by provincial government: Documents re (M27/05: Accepted) ... 1159
- Midwifery Health Disciplines Committee
 - Consumer representative on ... 1146, 1462
- Midwives and midwifery
 - Inclusion under health care plan ... 1146, 1462
 - Integration of midwifery services evaluation report ... 1146, 1462
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 52)
 - Committee ... 1974
- Morgan, Tonika
 - Statement re ... 1527
- Motions other than Government Motions
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624–25
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 386–87, 470–71
- National Arts Centre, Ottawa
 - Alberta Scene arts festival ... 1477
- New Democrat Opposition
 - Role in Question Period ... 54
- NorQuest College
 - English as a Second Language courses ... 866
- Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Renovations ... 1477
- Nurses
 - General remarks ... 1395
- Nurses, Licensed practical
 - Medication duties ... 1121
- Nurses–Education
 - General remarks ... 1469
- Nursing homes–Staffing
 - Shortages: Letter re (SP179/05: Tabled) ... 327
 - Shortages: Petition tabled re (SP489/05: Tabled) ... 1579
- Nursing Week
 - Statement re ... 1395
- Office of the Premier
 - Former chief of staff (Steve West) severance package: E-mail re (SP125/05: Tabled) ... 210

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Officers of the Legislative Assembly
 - Definition of, re *Beauchesne* 493 ... 986
- Official Opposition
 - Role in Question Period ... 53–54
- Ontario Securities Commission
 - Conflict of interest and disclosure guidelines (SP747/05: Tabled) ... 1970
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Age Care Ltd. ... 460
 - CT scans ... 365–66
 - Fabry disease ... 290
 - Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder ... 769–70
 - For-profit health care ... 1569
 - Health care costs ... 1782
 - Health care operating costs ... 1915
 - Health care privatization ... 1666
 - Health care reform ... 205
 - Health care staffing ... 980–81
 - Health Resource Centre ... 244–245
 - Hospital space in Calgary ... 644–45
 - Investments in tobacco companies ... 82–83
 - Joint fire and ambulance services ... 482–83
 - Long-term care facility standards ... 1498
 - Long-term care standards ... 1121
 - Mental health strategy ... 903
 - Midwifery services ... 1146
 - Missing health records ... 617
 - Nonsmoking legislation ... 119
 - Physiotherapy insurance fees ... 954
 - Private health services ... 1622
 - Tobacco reduction strategy ... 1028
 - User fees in long-term care facilities ... 1387
 - Wellness initiatives ... 163
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Alliance member's participation in ... 54
 - Government members' role in ... 53–54
 - Official opposition role in ... 53–54
 - Preambles before supplementary questions ... 54
 - Rotation of questions and answers: 1986 precedent ... 54
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 53–54
 - Third opposition party's role in ... 54
 - Time limit on questions and answers ... 54
- Out is In project (Anti-bullying initiative)
 - General remarks ... 1061
- Palliser Health Region
 - Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... 483
 - Former medical officer of health situation, 2003 ... 26
- Peace Country Health
 - Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... 483
- Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
 - Second reading ... 374–75
 - Third reading ... 1486–87
- Peter Lougheed Centre (Calgary General Hospital)
 - Upgrades to ... 644
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Nursing homes staffing improvement (SP489/05: Tabled) ... 1579

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 - Second reading ... 713–14
 - Third reading ... 1582
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1529–31
 - Committee ... 1931–32
- Physical therapy
 - Inclusion under health care plan ... 1463
- Physical therapy–Fees
 - Set fees for traffic injury cases ... 954
- Physical therapy–Finance
 - Cutbacks to ... 163
- Podiatry
 - Inclusion under health care plan ... 1463, 1471
- Point of Order
 - Imputing motives ... 1482
 - Insulting language ... 493
 - Provoking debate ... 52–53
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 1489
 - Reflections on a member ... 1454–55, 1456
 - Reflections on nonmembers ... 1452–53, 1454
 - Relevance ... 237
 - Urgency of questions ... 700
- Police
 - MLA committee review of: Report ... 1436
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Third reading ... 1584–85
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Second reading ... 377–79
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 55)
 - Committee ... 1975
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Finance
 - Private-sector funding ... 867
- Poverty
 - Impact on women ... 1527
- Premier's Advisory Council on Health
 - Recommendations (A Framework for Reform) ... 205
- Preventive medical services
 - General remarks ... 163, 1470
- Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre
 - Early Edmonton tax rolls on Archives web site ... 745
 - Map cataloguing project ... 745
- Privilege
 - Auditor General's investigation of Securities Commission enforcement processes, comments re ... 985, 986
 - Contempt (Auditor General's report on Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to media) ... 1633–35
 - Notice of, re actions by Member for Drayton Valley–Calmar (Not proceeded with) ... 1614–15, 1633
- Probation officers
 - Supervision of youth justice committees ... 1436–37
- Professional qualifications, Foreign
 - Assessment service for ... 866
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Letter re (SP181/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Public assistance
 - Funding for, using resource rebate funds, letters re (SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - General remarks ... 1459

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Public assistance (*Continued*)
 - Increase to ... 1139, 1140
 - Medication copay allowance ... 1140
- Public Health and Immunization Trust (Federal)
 - Alberta's share ... 272, 273
- Rail service, High-speed–Edmonton/Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1745
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624–25
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 252
- Regional health authorities
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ... 482
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 482
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Impact of joint ambulance/fire services on ... 482–83
 - Deficits, elimination of ... 273
 - Funding ... 272, 1840
 - General remarks ... 1459
 - Long-term care facilities' programs ... 1121
 - Mental health programs ... 1464
- Replacement workers
 - Legislation re, proposed ... 1139
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 513–14
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Second reading ... 469–70
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - Second reading ... 1808–09
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
 - Letters re (SP633, 674-676, 723/05: Tabled) ... 1745, 1837, 1919
- RespErate (Blood pressure device)
 - Web site article re (SP724/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Risk management fund
 - General remarks ... 964
- Road construction–Northern Alberta
 - Employment opportunities in ... 1139
- Roads–Northern Alberta
 - Impact on aboriginal employment possibilities ... 1139
- Rockyview General Hospital
 - Upgrades to ... 644, 1840
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Alberta Securities Commission case ... 1919
- Safe injection sites (Drugs)
 - Letter re (SP180/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Same-sex marriage
 - Exemption of civil marriage commissioners from performing, letter re (SP632/05: Tabled) ... 1745
- School lunch programs
 - General remarks ... 2015
- Senior citizens
 - Definition of ... 1460
- Senior citizens–Housing
 - Telephone/cable TV provision in rental rates for ... 881
- Seniors' centres
 - Funding using resource rebate funds, letters re (SP675-676/05: Tabled) ... 1837

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
 - Budget ... 1060
- Sexual assault centres
 - Funding for ... 92, 965, 1060, 1061, 1436, 1462
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 173–74
 - Alberta Medical Assoc. letter re (SP204/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - General remarks ... 119, 1028
- Smoking–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1028
 - Relation of provincial investment in tobacco companies to ... 82–83
- Smoking in public places
 - Ban on ... 1028
- Smoking in the workplace
 - Ban on ... 163
 - Ban on: Legislation re (Bill 201) ... 119
- Social housing
 - General remarks ... 881, 1139
- Social housing–Finance
 - Federal/provincial funding ... 881
- Social services agencies (Non-profit)
 - Insurance costs ... 1061
- Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Renovations ... 1477
- Speaker–Rulings and statements
 - Referring to an officer of the Legislature ... 985–86
- Speaker (Federal parliament)–Rulings and statements
 - Toews bill, March 2001 news media briefing re ... 1633–34, 1635
- Special constables
 - Role of ... 867, 1436
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 59–61
- Standing Orders
 - SO 50 (Public Accounts committee) amendments, eight motions re (SP673/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 519–20, 521, 522
- Student financial aid
 - Appeals of loan awards, 2000-04 (Q27/05: Response tabled as SP478/05) ... 1157
 - Default rates, 1994-95 to 2003-04 (Q25/05: Response tabled as SP476/05) ... 1155–57
 - Maximum allowable loans, number of (Q26/05: Response tabled as SP477/05) ... 1157
 - Repayment systems for, reports/studies (M31/05: Response tabled as SP481/05) ... 1161
- Substance abuse–Treatment
 - Impact of provision of, on health care demand ... 1462
- Substance abuse–Treatment–Prisoners
 - General remarks ... 1436
- Substance abuse–Treatment–Young offenders
 - General remarks ... 1436
- Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth
 - Mandatory programs for: Letter re (SP181/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 1839
- Supreme Court of Canada
 - Government fees decision (Eurig case) ... 754
 - Private health insurance ruling ... 1622

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Surgery waiting lists
 - General remarks ... 273
 - Public vs private facilities ... 244–45
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Ambulance service funding ... 1463
 - Arts funding with ... 1477
 - Hospital funding with ... 1839, 1840
 - Postsecondary education funding with ... 866
- Tar sands development
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers), Letters re (SP205/05: Tabled) ... 370
- Telehealth services
 - General remarks ... 1469, 1471
- Tobacco companies
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 82–83
 - Heritage Fund investment in: List of (SP35/05: Tabled) ... 93
- Travel Alberta Secretariat
 - Computer hardware, provincial funding for ... 281
- Tuition fees
 - Documentation re (M28/05: Defeated) ... 1160
 - Remission of, for second year courses ... 867
- United Nurses of Alberta
 - Nursing shortage comment ... 1840
- Universities and colleges
 - Private-sector driven instruction in ... 867
 - Quality of instruction in ... 867
- University lecturers
 - General remarks ... 867
- University of Phoenix
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Documentation re, including PCAB documents (M30/05: Defeated) ... 1160–61
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1459, 1471
 - Private health care system submissions ... 1622
- USA PATRIOT Act
 - Impact on access to Canadian medical records (SP247/05: Tabled) ... 491–92
- Vaccine, Avian influenza
 - Funding for ... 273
- Vaccines–Finance
 - Federal funding ... 272, 273
- Victims of crime
 - Definition of ... 1436
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 599–01
- Victims of Crime Fund
 - Compensation to sexual assault victims from ... 965
 - Surplus ... 1436
- Violence against women
 - Aboriginal women ... 92
 - Statement re ... 92
- Wages–Minimum wage
 - Impact on health care demand ... 1462
- Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - General remarks ... 1470
- Walton International Group Inc.
 - Documents re (SP782-785/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 163, 205
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 69–70, 74

Blakeman, Laurie (L, Edmonton-Centre) (Continued)

- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Community association's letter re (SP459/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Point of order re ... 1452–53, 1454
 - Winspear Foundation
 - Support for people on social assistance ... 1139
 - Women–Employment
 - General remarks ... 1140
 - Women–Right to vote
 - General remarks ... 856
 - Women in politics
 - Statement re ... 856
 - Women's Global Charter for Humanity
 - Statement re ... 1527
 - Womens' shelters
 - General remarks ... 881
 - Statistics re ... 1061
 - Womens' shelters–Finance
 - General remarks ... 92, 1061
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Committee ... 1656–58, 1661
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Second reading ... 1814–15
 - World Trade Centre, Edmonton
 - Provincial contribution to ... 281
 - Youth Connections (Employment service)
 - General remarks ... 1140
 - Youth in transition from the justice system
 - Government programs for: Funding ... 1061
 - Youth justice committees
 - Probation officers' review of decisions by ... 1436–37
 - Youth justice committees–Stony Plain
 - Resignation of members of ... 1437
 - Zebra Child Protection Centre
 - General remarks ... 1060
 - Zi Corporation
 - Securities Commission investigation of: Letter re (SP722/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore)**
- Aboriginal issues
 - General remarks ... 843, 845
 - Agrology Profession Act (Bill 17)
 - Committee ... 557–58
 - Air tankers (Water bombers)
 - Upgrading of ... 928
 - Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Coal-bed methane well drilling requirements ... 1075
 - Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... 843, 951
 - Guide 56, well licence application ... 951
 - Guide 56, well licence application (SP352/05: Tabled) ... 957
 - Informational letter IL2001-5 (well site preparation prior to licence issuing) ... 951
 - Informational letter IL2001-5 (well site preparation prior to licence issuing) (SP351/05: Tabled) ... 957
 - Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office ... 1187, 1189
 - Washington, D.C. office: Documents re (M20/05: Response tabled as SP744/05) ... 821

Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore) (Continued)

- Alberta Government Offices (*Continued*)
 Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving softwood
 lumber issue ... 929
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
 (Bill 43)
 Second reading ... 1861–62, 1863
- Alberta School Boards Association
 Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ...
 1267
- Alberta SuperNet
 School access to: Total amount spent on (Q35/05:
 Response tabled as SP717/05) ... 1746
- Alberta Wilderness Association
 Big game farming ban, call for ... 250
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 Second reading ... 425
- Appeals Commission (Workers' compensation)
 Budget increase ... 1134
- Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act,
 2005 (Bill 57)
 Third reading ... 2031–32
- Apprenticeship training
 General remarks ... 1134
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill
 27)
 Second reading ... 351–52
- Arts
 Role in provincial economy ... 1009
- Auditor General
 Sustainable resource development comments ... 1829
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 Third reading ... 1194
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
 Hines Creek mill closure, impact of ... 123–24
- Caribou management
 General remarks ... 930, 1963
- Cellular telephones in automobiles
 Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1000–01
- Chronic wasting disease
 Elk and deer testing for ... 937
 Human/animal risk of ... 250
 Presence on game farms ... 250
 Roadkill testing for ... 937
- Coal bed methane extraction
 Impact of ... 1075
- Collective bargaining—Teachers
 Province-wide bargaining ... 1267
- Community schools
 General remarks ... 1266–67
- Computers in schools
 Funding for ... 310
- Conflict of interest
 Natural Resources Conservation Board advisors'
 appearance at appeals hearings ... 1252
- Construction trades
 Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring
 ... 1266
- Deer—Alberta/Saskatchewan border area
 Culling of, due to CWD threat ... 250, 937
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 843, 845
- Dept. of Economic Development
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1008–10

Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore) (Continued)

- Dept. of Economic Development (*Continued*)
 Grants distributed by (M45/05: Defeated) ... 1748
 Hosting expenses, 1992-2005 (Q39/05: Defeated) ...
 1747
 Performance measures ... 1009
 Trade missions expenditures (Q13/05: Defeated) ...
 808
 Trade show expenditures (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Dept. of Education
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1266–67
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ...
 309–10
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1133–34
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 Elimination of ... 1187
 Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 1187, 1189
 Performance measures ... 1187, 1189
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1328–29
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 Deputy Minister's and departmental official's credit
 card statements, 2003-04 (M13/05: Response
 tabled as SP738/05) ... 667
 Deputy Minister's office budget ... 928
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 927–30, 937–38
 Fee revenues ... 928
 Human resources budget ... 928
 Lottery funding to ... 928
 Minister's and executive assistant's credit card
 statements, 2003-04 (M12/05: Response tabled as
 SP737/05) ... 666–67
 Minister's business expenses, 2003-04 (M11/05:
 Response tabled as SP736/05) ... 666
 Minister's office budget ... 928
 Property theft in (Q28/05: Response tabled as
 SP776/05) ... 1158
 Staff salaries ... 928
 Strategic corporate services budget ... 928
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ...
 1847–48
 Support services funding ... 928
- Disabled Adults Transportation Service
 Provincial funding for ... 1328
- Economic development and the environment
 General remarks ... 937, 1312, 1829
- Education—Curricula
 Social studies courses ... 309
- Education—Finance
 Cutbacks ... 1267
 General remarks ... 1266
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ...
 1407–08
- Endangered Species Conservation Committee
 Grizzly bear designation recommendation ... 957,
 1396
- Endangered wildlife species
 Development management plans re (Q34/05:
 Accepted) ... 1746
 Protection of ... 21, 929, 957, 1963
- Energy industry
 Use of water supplies ... 843

Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore) (Continued)

- Energy industry—Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 843, 845
- Energy industry—Crown lands—Sawn Lake area
 - Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 902, 951
- Energy industry—Environmental aspects
 - Reforestation activities ... 929
- English as a Second Language
 - General remarks ... 1134
- Environmental impact assessments
 - Well drilling, Lubicon Lake Band areas ... 843
 - Well drilling, Sawn Lake area ... 902
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Amount of detail in ... 928
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1407–08
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1178
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1542
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 702–03
- Fees, Government
 - General remarks ... 928
- Film industry
 - General remarks ... 1009
 - Government budget for ... 1010
 - Tax incentives for ... 1009
- Fire—Control
 - Winter conditions' effect on ... 1328–29
- Fish and wildlife legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 928
- Fish and wildlife officers
 - Number of ... 928, 929, 1848
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 326, 419, 621, 652, 699
 - General remarks ... 1266
 - Language training for ... 1134
- Forest conservation
 - General remarks ... 929, 930, 1312
- Forest firefighters
 - Room and board rates for ... 618, 928
- Forest fires—Control
 - Equipment for ... 928
 - Funding for ... 928, 929, 938, 1848
 - General remarks ... 618
 - Impact on pine beetle control ... 1847–48
- Forest fires—Control—Municipal areas
 - Assistance program re ... 929
- Forest management agreements
 - Consultation on renewals of, with Treaty 8 First Nations, resolution re (SP634/05: Tabled) ... 1745
 - Reforestation requirements ... 929
- Forest protection
 - Budget for, reports on (Q37/05: Accepted) ... 1747
- Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta
 - General remarks ... 937
- Francis Winspear Centre for Music
 - General remarks ... 1009
- Game farming
 - Chronic wasting disease issue in ... 250
 - Public inquiry re ... 250

Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore) (Continued)

- Grazing lands, Public
 - Bison grazing on ... 1393, 1449
 - General remarks ... 930
 - Revenue from oil and gas leases on ... 1393, 1449
- Great Kids of Alberta
 - Awards: Recognition of ... 418
- Grizzly bear conservation
 - General remarks ... 1848, 1963
- Grizzly bear hunting
 - General remarks ... 21, 929, 937, 1311–12, 1848
- Grizzly bears
 - Designation as threatened species ... 21
 - Designation as threatened species: Petitions presented re ... 957, 1396
 - Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... 1746
 - Feeding of, with roadkill ... 937
- Grizzly bears—Populations
 - DNA-based census of ... 937, 1963
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 832
- High school education—Curricula
 - Vocational/trades courses ... 1266, 1267
- Ice fishing
 - Impact on fish stocks ... 1848
- Industrial development (Value-added industries)
 - Government budget for ... 1010
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)
 - General remarks ... 902, 1312
- International trade
 - Provincial budget re ... 1009
- Kneehill Animal Control and Rehabilitation Centre Ltd.
 - Pictures illustrating conditions in (SP242/05: Tabled) ... 463
- Learning Resources Centre
 - Buy-down credit for school purchases at ... 309
- Livestock industry, Intensive
 - Phase out of: Petition presented re ... 1674, 1715, 1745, 1969
- Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects
 - Enforcement of legislation re ... 1252
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation to Sustainable Resources dept. ... 928
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 843, 951
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 78–79
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1685–86
 - Committee ... 1876
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Royal Alexandra Hospital volunteers ... 1204–05
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 928, 929
- Minable oil sands strategy—Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1829
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 475
 - Committee ... 563–64, 631–32
- Natural Resources Conservation Board
 - Appeals process: NRCB advisors as representatives of companies during ... 1251–52

Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore) (Continued)

- Natural Resources Conservation Board (Continued)
 - Board governance review report ... 1740
 - Confined feeding operations regulation ... 1252
 - Staffing levels ... 1740
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - Relationship with Sustainable Resource Development dept. ... 843
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Input into high school vocational/trades courses ... 1267
- Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - General remarks ... 1009
- Northern development
 - Statement re ... 843
- Oil well drilling industry—Public lands
 - EUB permits required for ... 951, 957
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Bison grazing on agricultural public land ... 1393
 - Canadian Forest Products Ltd. mill closure ... 123–124
 - Coal-bed methane ... 1075
 - Game farming ... 250
 - Grizzly bear hunt ... 21
 - Leaseholders on agricultural public land ... 1449
 - Mineable oil sands strategy ... 1829
 - Mountain pine beetle ... 801–02
 - Mountain pine beetle control ... 740
 - Natural Resources Conservation Board ... 1740
 - Natural Resources Conservation Board appeals ... 1251–52
 - Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 902, 951
 - Parks and protected areas ... 167
 - Reforestation ... 1575
 - Room and board for forest firefighters ... 618
 - Sustainable resource management ... 1311–12
 - Wildlife conservation ... 1963
- Parks, Provincial
 - Upgrading of ... 167
- Peregrine falcons
 - Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... 1746
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Confined feeding operations phase out ... 1674, 1715, 1745, 1969
 - Grizzly bear declaration as endangered species ... 957, 1396
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 326, 419, 621, 652, 699
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1533–34
- Pine beetles—Control
 - General remarks ... 740, 801–02, 929, 937, 1312, 1847–48
 - Impact of forest fire fighting on ... 1847–48
 - Research into ... 929, 1848
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 708–09
- Protected areas
 - Upgrading of ... 167
- Public lands
 - General remarks ... 928, 1075
 - Industrial development on ... 928, 937
 - Sale of, freeze on ... 167

Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore) (Continued)

- Public lands—Eastern Slopes
 - General remarks ... 928
- Public safety (Building/fire codes)
 - Funding for ... 1328
- Public transit—Finance
 - Provincial funding ... 1328
- Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)
 - Second reading ... 422
 - Third reading ... 637
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Second reading ... 539–40
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 127, 418
- Recreation
 - Role in provincial economy ... 1009
- Reforestation
 - Energy industry lands ... 929
 - Timelines met re (Q19/05: Response tabled as SP775/05) ... 813
- Reforestation on burnt-out areas
 - General remarks ... 937, 1575
- Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)
 - General remarks ... 1266
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1346, 1349–50
- Research and development
 - Tax incentives for ... 1009
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Second reading ... 466
- Royal Alexandra Hospital
 - Volunteers at: Statement re ... 1204–05
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 123
 - Provincial budget re ... 1009
- School trustees
 - Role of, re teacher bargaining process ... 1267
- Schools—Closure
 - General remarks ... 1266–67
- Schools—Utilization
 - Community group use of, as part of formula re ... 1266–67
- Securities Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 19)
 - Second reading ... 629
- Small business
 - Venture capital for ... 1009
- Softwoods—Export—United States
 - Countervail duties re ... 929
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Input into high school vocational/trades courses ... 1267
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 78–79
- Sports
 - Role in provincial economy ... 1009
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 431
- Student testing
 - Achievement tests: Costs of administering, 2000–05 (Q40/05: Accepted) ... 1747
- Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)
 - Second reading ... 1868–69
- Tar sands development—Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1829

Bonko, Bill (L, Edmonton-Decore) (Continued)

- Tax incentives
 - Film/TV production companies ... 1009
 - Investments in new technology companies ... 1009
 - Research and development projects ... 1009
- Teacher-librarians
 - General remarks ... 1267
- Teachers
 - Numbers of, increase in: Funding for ... 309
- Technology commercialization
 - Provincial initiative re ... 1009
- Technology venture fund (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 1009
- Textbooks—Finance
 - General remarks ... 309, 310
- Timber—Royalties
 - General remarks ... 928–29
- Tourism
 - General remarks ... 1009
 - Government budget for ... 1010
- Tourism—Hines Creek area
 - General remarks ... 123
- Tourism—Marketing
 - Provincial budget re ... 1009
- Trade missions
 - Expenditures re (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
 - Performance measures re ... 1009
- Trade shows
 - Expenditures re (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1000–01
- Treaty 8 First Nations
 - Resolution re consultation on forest management agreement renewals (SP634/05: Tabled) ... 1745
- Ukraine—Politics and government
 - Democratic process: Recognition of ... 127
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 554–55
- W. P. Wagner high school, Edmonton
 - Closure of ... 1266
- Wages—Minimum wage
 - Increase to ... 1134
- Water supply
 - Use by energy industry ... 843
- Wildlife conservation
 - General remarks ... 21, 929, 1311–12, 1963
- Wildlife management
 - General remarks ... 1848
- Workers' Compensation Board
 - Early return to work issue ... 1134
- Workplace safety
 - General remarks ... 1134
- Workplace safety inspections
 - General remarks ... 1134
- Yaassoub, Justin
 - Recognition of ... 418
- Youth Connections (Employment service)
 - General remarks ... 1134

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo)

- AAA Cattle Company
 - Feedlot expansion approval ... 1027

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo) (Continued)

- Air quality
 - General remarks ... 1046
- Air quality—Monitoring
 - Toxic waste fires situations ... 1335–36, 1337–38
- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Canadian Natural Resources pipeline leak ... 1448
 - Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... 615, 902–03
 - Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by Shell chemical plant ... 162
 - Role of ... 1049
 - Standards for reclamation of abandoned well sites ... 166
- Alberta Water Council
 - Water conservation planning ... 530
- Alberta's Environment Conference 2005, Edmonton (April 20-22)
 - General remarks ... 978
- Auditor General
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1675–76
 - Performance measures comments ... 1037
 - Sustainable resource development comments ... 1829
- Battle River watershed
 - Planning re ... 1047
- Bow River Water Quality Task Force
 - Water quality recommendations ... 799
- Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction, comments on ... 365, 485
- Canadian Environmental Protection Act (Federal)
 - Amendments to, in federal budget legislation ... 485
 - Carbon dioxide classified as noxious gas under ... 1967
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Pipeline leak ... 1448
- Capital projects, Municipal—Finance
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 485
- Carbon dioxide
 - Classification as noxious gas ... 1967
- Carbon dioxide emissions
 - Reduction in ... 1829
 - Regulations re ... 1967–68
- Carbon dioxide projects
 - Joffre project ... 21
- Clean Air Strategic Alliance
 - General remarks ... 1040
- Climate change
 - General remarks ... 1832
 - Initiatives re ... 44–45
 - International conference on, Montreal, November 2005 ... 1832, 1914
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 485
 - Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to ... 365, 1037, 1040, 1043, 1046, 1967–68
 - Technological developments re ... 21, 485, 1832
- Climate Change and Emissions Management Act (Bill 37, 2003)
 - General remarks ... 22
- Climate Change Central
 - General remarks ... 44, 365, 1037, 1039, 1043, 1832, 1915, 1967

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo) (Continued)

CN Rail
 Train derailment, Lake Wabamum ... 1667-68

Co-energy electrical production
 Garbage as energy source ... 1710-11

Coal bed methane extraction
 Impact of ... 1202
 Water recovery issues ... 1202

Coal bed methane extraction-Environmental aspects
 General remarks ... 1202

Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development,
 Standing Policy
 Municipal infrastructure funding discussion ... 485

Composting
 General remarks ... 1040

Contaminated sites
 Cleanup of ... 1961-62

Contaminated sites-Calgary
 Cleanup efforts ... 1709-10

Contaminated soil-Lynnview Ridge, Calgary
 Cleanup of ... 84, 529-30, 1709

Court of Appeal (Alberta)
 AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion ruling ...
 1027

CP Rail
 Ogden rail yards, Calgary: Toxic materials runoff
 from ... 1709

Custom Environmental Services Ltd.
 Fire at ... 1335-36, 1337-38

Deep Well Oil & Gas Ltd.
 Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ...
 902-03

Dept. of Energy
 Communications contracts expenditures, 2003-04
 (Q16/05: Defeated) ... 811
 Contracted employees/consultants salaries, 2003-04
 (M25/05: Response tabled as SP808/05) ... 990
 Minister's noninternational trips details, 2003-04
 (M26/05: Response tabled as SP735/05) ... 990-91

Dept. of Environment
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP45/05: Tabled) ... 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP570/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1036-37, 1039-40,
 1042-49
 Minister's role re hazardous materials spills ... 1668
 Performance measures ... 1037, 1043
 Staff ... 1045-46

Driedmeat Lake-Water levels
 Raising of ... 618

Drinking water-Stettler area
 Allocation level for, in Bill 11 ... 978-79

Drinking water-Turner Valley area
 Testing of ... 1961-62

Economic development and the environment
 General remarks ... 485, 1829, 1913-14, 1963-64
 Research re ... 292

Edmonton Fire Rescue Service
 Response to Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire
 ... 1335-36

Electric power, Coal-produced
 Research into ... 21
 Standards for ... 1046

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo) (Continued)

Electronic waste-Recycling
 Fees for ... 1043
 General remarks ... 1039

Emergency agencies (Fire, etc.)
 Procedures at toxic waste site fires ... 1335-36

Emergency Management Alberta
 Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release
 by Shell chemical plant ... 162

Emission control credits
 Trading of ... 485, 1043

Energy efficiency (Buildings)
 Direct Energy/U of C partnership re ... 1037
 Interest-free loans for ... 365

Energy industry
 Use of water supplies, phase out of ... 978

Energy industry-Crown lands
 Aboriginal issues re ... 615, 802-03, 902-03

Energy industry-Crown lands-Sawn Lake area
 Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 849

Energy industry-Environmental aspects
 General remarks ... 292, 1040

Energy Innovation Network
 General remarks ... 292, 1915, 1967

Energy resources, Alternate
 General remarks ... 1037, 1832, 1915
 Provincial government usage of ... 22

Environmental impact assessments
 AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion ... 1027
 Coal-bed methane extraction process ... 1202
 Well drilling, Lubicon Lake Band areas ... 615

Environmental law
 Enforcement of ... 1043, 1046, 1049
 Enforcement of, staffing re ... 1045-46

Environmental protection
 Conference on ... 1044
 Federal/provincial co-operation re ... 1039
 General remarks ... 1036, 1037, 1040, 1044
 Public education re ... 1043-44

Environmental Protection Commission
 Report on Lake Wabamum train derailment ... 1668

Environmental Protection Security Fund
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP139/04: Tabled) ... 211
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP810/04: Tabled) ... 2018

Environmental regulations
 MacNichol report on ... 1049

Environmental research
 General remarks ... 1043

Ethics Commissioner
 Report into allegations re Minister of Environment
 and Fort McMurray land sale process, leak to
 media, point of privilege re ... 1675-76

Fires at hazardous waste sites
 Monitoring of ... 1335-36, 1337-38

Fort McMurray
 Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 201, 485
 Impact of oil sands expansion on: Environmental
 aspects ... 1048

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 Environmental information requests under ... 1036

Greenhouse gas emissions
 Reduction of ... 22, 44-45, 365, 1039, 1042, 1832,
 1913-15

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo) (Continued)

- Greenhouse gas emissions *(Continued)*
 - Reduction of: Federal budget legislation re ... 485
 - Regulations re ... 1967–68
- Greenhouse gas emissions–Fort McMurray area
 - Reduction of ... 201
- Groundwater–Contamination–Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds
 - From pesticides/herbicides ... 800
- Hazardous substances–Health aspects
 - During fires ... 1337–38
- Hazardous substances–Safety aspects
 - During fires ... 1335–36
- Herbicides in water sources
 - General remarks ... 799–800
- Hub Oil Company Ltd.
 - Calgary plant fire: Cleanup efforts ... 1710
- Hydrogen as fuel
 - Research re ... 21
- Imperial Oil Ltd.
 - Cleanup of contaminated site, Lynnview Ridge, Calgary ... 529
- Incineration
 - As electrical power generation method ... 1710–11
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)
 - Big Lake basin ... 321
 - General remarks ... 1048–49
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 188–89
- Livestock industry, Intensive–Environmental aspects
 - Enforcement of legislation re ... 1027
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 615, 802–03, 902–03
- ME First! (Municipal Energy Efficiency Assistance) program
 - General remarks ... 365
- Mineable oil sands strategy–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1829, 1915, 1963–64
- Mosquito control programs
 - General remarks ... 1120–21
- Natural resources
 - Inventory of ... 1040
- Natural Resources Conservation Board
 - AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion approval ... 1027
 - Role of ... 1049
- North American free trade agreement
 - Sale of water under ... 530
- North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
 - Report ... 978
- Oil recovery methods
 - Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research ... 21
 - General remarks ... 1039–40
- Oil well drilling industry–Public lands
 - EUB permits required for ... 849, 902–03
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - AAA Cattle Company ... 1027
 - Battle River water strategy ... 618
 - Big Lake natural area ... 321
 - Bow and Elbow River watersheds ... 799–800

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo) (Continued)

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - Canadian Natural Resources Limited pipeline leak ... 1448
 - Climate change ... 44–45, 365, 1832, 1967–68
 - Climate change technology ... 21–22
 - Coal-bed methane ... 1202
 - Contaminated sites cleanup in Calgary ... 1709–10
 - Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire ... 1335–36, 1337–38
 - Energy Innovation Network ... 292
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... 485
 - Greenhouse gas emissions ... 485, 1914–15
 - Hazardous material spill at Wabamun Lake ... 1667–68
 - Impacts of oil sands expansion ... 201
 - Lynnview Ridge ... 84, 529–30
 - Mineable oil sands strategy ... 1829, 1913–14, 1963–64
 - Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 615, 802–03, 849, 902–03
 - Reclamation of oil well sites ... 166
 - Red Deer River water transfer ... 1785
 - Shell chemical plant vapour release ... 162
 - Turner Valley gas plant historic site ... 1961–62
 - Waste management strategy ... 1710–11
 - Water strategy ... 530, 978–79
 - West Nile virus ... 1120–21
- Pesticides in water sources
 - General remarks ... 799–800
- Petroleum tank sites remediation program
 - General remarks ... 1046
- Point of Order
 - Insulting language ... 493
- Pollution
 - Cleanup orders re, enforcement of ... 84
- Privilege
 - Contempt (Release to media of three reports by Officers of the Assembly) ... 1675–76
- Public lands
 - General remarks ... 1040
- Reclamation of land
 - Abandoned well sites ... 166
 - Energy industry sites ... 1046
 - Oil sands sites ... 1915
- Recycling (Waste, etc.)
 - General remarks ... 1710–11
- Reforestation
 - Oil sands lands ... 1915
- Refuse and refuse disposal
 - General remarks ... 1040
 - Provincial strategy re ... 1710–11
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1785
- Sanitary landfills
 - General remarks ... 1044, 1710–11
- Sewage disposal plants
 - General remarks ... 978
- Sewage disposal plants–Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 485
- Shell Canada Limited
 - Chemical plant vapour pressure release, Fort Saskatchewan area ... 162

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo) (Continued)

- Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamum
 - CN train derailment ... 1667–68
 - CN train derailment: Bans on boating/usage of lake re, lifting of ... 1668
 - CN train derailment: Cleanup procedures ... 1668
 - CN train derailment: Environmental enforcement orders re ... 1668
 - CN train derailment: Minister's advisors re ... 1668
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 523
 - Allocation level in ... 978–79
 - General remarks ... 530
- Strathcona County
 - Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by Shell chemical plant ... 162
- Strathcona County Emergency Services
 - Response to Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire ... 1335–36
- Suncor Inc.
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction, comments on ... 365
- Swan Hills Treatment Centre
 - General remarks ... 1337
- Tar sands development
 - Impact of ... 201
- Tar sands development—Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 201, 365, 1042–43, 1048–49, 1829, 1914–15, 1963–64, 1967–68
- Turner Valley Gas Plant (Historic site)
 - Environmental cleanup of ... 1961–62
- Universities and colleges
 - Climate change research ... 21
- Water—Export
 - General remarks ... 530
 - Impact of NAFTA on ... 530
- Water Act
 - Interbasin water transfers provisions ... 1785
- Water conservation
 - General remarks ... 1047
 - Provincial plan for ... 1039–40
- Water conservation—United States
 - General remarks ... 1040
- Water councils
 - General remarks ... 978, 1040
- Water diversion
 - General remarks ... 530
- Water diversion—North Saskatchewan/Battle River basins
 - General remarks ... 618
- Water diversion—Red Deer River basin/Special Areas
 - General remarks ... 1785
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 978–79, 1037
 - General remarks ... 530, 1037, 1040, 1046, 1047
- Water licences
 - Intensive livestock operations approvals (AAA Cattle Company) ... 1027
- Water quality—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds
 - Identification of contaminants to ... 799–800
- Water quality—Sheep River
 - Impact of Turner Valley Gas Plant historic site on ... 1961–62

Boutilier, Hon. Guy C. (PC, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo) (Continued)

- Water resources development
 - Infrastructure for ... 1043
 - Water resources development—Battle River
 - General remarks ... 618
 - Water resources development—Big Lake basin
 - General remarks ... 321
 - Water rights, Interprovincial
 - General remarks ... 1037
 - Water supply
 - Measurement of total provincial supply ... 530, 978, 1040
 - Use by energy industry, phase out of ... 978
 - Water treatment plants
 - Funding for ... 1043
 - General remarks ... 1046
 - Review of ... 978
 - Water treatment plants—Walkerton, Ont.
 - Safety lapse at ... 1046
 - Water wells—Lake Wabamum
 - Testing of, re train derailment ... 1668
 - Watershed planning
 - General remarks ... 1047
 - Legislation re ... 530
 - Watershed planning and advisory councils
 - General remarks ... 1046
 - Well sites, Abandoned
 - Reclamation of ... 166
 - West Nile virus
 - Control methods for ... 1120–21
 - Wetlands
 - Provincial policy re ... 1040
- Brown, Dr. Neil (PC, Calgary-Nose Hill)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Funding for ... 1482
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Committee ... 1069
 - Amendment A3 (SP344 & 367/05: Tabled) ... 1069
 - Amendment A4 (SP368/05: Tabled) ... 1069
 - Amendment A5 (withdrawn) (SP369/05: Tabled) ... 1069
 - Amendment A6 (SP370/05: Tabled) ... 1069
 - Four amendments (SP371/05: Tabled) ... 1069
 - Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
 - Drilling in ... 1188
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Amendment A1 (SP716 & 767/05: Tabled) ... 1906
 - Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Representative's comments re Alaska wildlife refuge drilling ... 1188
 - Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - High school completion rate recommendation ... 123
 - Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Second reading ... 427
 - Anne Frank exhibit, Calgary
 - Statement re ... 1079–80
 - Arts—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1482
 - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Second reading ... 1070
 - Third reading ... 1509–10, 1512

Brown, Dr. Neil (PC, Calgary-Nose Hill) (Continued)

- Automobiles—Registration
 - Registrations transferred from other provinces, timeliness of ... 1422
- Bighorn sheep hunting
 - Under Métis hunting agreement ... 850
- Bow Valley Community Foundation Act
 - Petition presented ... 326
 - Recommendation to proceed ... 1033
 - Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... 369
- Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act
 - Deferred until fall 2005 sitting ... 1033
 - Petition presented ... 326
 - Recommendation to proceed, with amendment ... 1788
 - Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... 369
- Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
 - Amendment (SP647/05: Tabled) ... 1788
- Brown, Mr. Allan
 - Statement re ... 535
- Budget
 - General remarks ... 1106
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - First reading ... 127
 - Second reading ... 423
 - Committee ... 1113–15
 - Third reading ... 1194
 - Amendment (SP377/05: Tabled) ... 1113
 - Proclamation of ... 1422
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - First reading ... 1890
 - Second reading ... 1955
 - Committee ... 1980
- Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act
 - Petition presented ... 326
 - Recommendation to proceed, with amendment ... 1033
 - Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... 369
- Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act (Bill Pr. 2)
 - Amendment (SP363/05: Tabled) ... 1033
- Caribou (Porcupine herd)—Alaska/Canada
 - Impact of drilling activity on ... 1188
- Chief Internal Auditor's office
 - Role of ... 1106
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1552
- Committee on Private Bills, Standing
 - Fees for petitions, recommendation to increase ... 1033
 - Report presented ... 369, 1033, 1788
- Corporations—Law and legislation
 - Conversion to/from unlimited liability corporation, minority dissenting shareholders buyout (Bill 56) ... 1890
 - Harmonization with federal legislation: Bill 16 ... 127
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 874
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1482

Brown, Dr. Neil (PC, Calgary-Nose Hill) (Continued)

- Dept. of Government Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1422
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 1188
- Edmonton Art Gallery
 - Provincial support ... 1482
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, affordability review to improve ... 1571
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1552
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - General remarks ... 874
 - Review of ... 1571
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1413
- Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 35)
 - First reading ... 419
 - Second reading ... 551–52
 - Committee ... 1490–92
 - Third reading ... 1581–82
 - Amendment (SP437/05: Tabled) ... 1490
- Executive Council
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1106
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1413
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1542–43
- Glenbow Museum
 - General remarks ... 1482
- Grant MacEwan Community College
 - Capital expenditures ... 1571
- Groundwater—Contamination—Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds
 - From pesticides/herbicides ... 800
- Herbicides in water sources
 - General remarks ... 799–800
- High school graduates
 - Numbers of ... 123
- Kneehill Animal Control and Rehabilitation Centre Ltd.
 - Renewal of permit for ... 533–34
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1110–11
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 188
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 66–67
- Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005
 - Petition presented ... 326
 - Recommendation to proceed ... 1033
 - Standing Orders 85-89 complied with ... 369
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Allan Brown ... 535
 - Anne Frank memorial ... 1079–80
 - Canadian contribution to victory in Europe ... 1312
 - University of Calgary centennial projects ... 1744

Brown, Dr. Neil (PC, Calgary-Nose Hill) (Continued)

- Métis
 - Definition of ... 850
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 850
- Mount Royal College
 - Capital expenditures ... 1571
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Bow and Elbow River watersheds ... 799–800
 - GuZoo animal farm ... 533–34
 - High school completion rate ... 123
 - Métis hunting rights ... 850
 - Postsecondary education review ... 1571
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Government members' role in ... 58
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 58
- Pensions, Private-sector
 - Access to information re (Bill 35) ... 419
- Pesticides in water sources
 - General remarks ... 799–800
- Petitions for Private Bills (2005)
 - Bow Valley Community Foundation Act ... 326
 - Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act ... 326
 - Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act ... 326
 - Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 ... 326
- Petitions for Private Bills (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Fees for, recommendation to increase ... 1033
- Point of Order
 - Clarification ... 1512
 - Improper questions ... 2056–57
 - Imputing motives ... 1482
 - Reading from documents ... 265
 - Relevance ... 1511
- Provincial Museum of Alberta
 - Funding for upgrading ... 1482
- Registry offices, Private
 - General remarks ... 1422
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 66–67
- Standing Orders
 - SO 87(1) amendment, to increase fees for petitioning private bills ... 1033
- Superintendent of Insurance
 - Private-sector pension funds security precautions: Legislation re (Bill 35) ... 419
- Teachers
 - University of Calgary book about (*My Most Memorable Teacher ...*) ... 1744
- University of Calgary
 - Centennial projects, statement re ... 1744
 - Research initiatives report (SP399/05: Tabled) ... 1259
- Unlimited liability corporations
 - Incorporation of (Bill 16) ... 127, 1422
- Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1110–11
 - 60th Anniversary of: Statement re ... 1312
- Water quality
 - Source waters protection aspect ... 799

Brown, Dr. Neil (PC, Calgary-Nose Hill) (Continued)

- Water quality–Bow/Elbow Rivers watersheds
 - Identification of contaminants to ... 799–800
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 73
- Wildlife Act
 - Sale of animal parts regulations ... 850
- World War II
 - General remarks ... 1312
- Calahasen, Hon. Pearl (PC, Lesser Slave Lake)**
 - Aboriginal children–Education
 - General remarks ... 839
 - Aboriginal economic development
 - General remarks ... 836, 844, 1781
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1829, 1912
 - Aboriginal issues
 - First ministers' meeting re, Kelowna, November 2005 ... 1781, 1829, 1912
 - General remarks ... 835–42, 844–45, 1781, 1829
 - Aboriginal land claims
 - General remarks ... 836, 1502–03
 - Traditional land-use studies re ... 615, 836, 844, 1781
 - Aboriginal peoples–Education
 - General remarks ... 839
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1829, 1912
 - Aboriginal peoples–Health care
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1829, 1912
 - Aboriginal peoples–Housing
 - General remarks ... 841
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1829, 1912
 - Aboriginal peoples–Self-government
 - General remarks ... 836
 - Aboriginal peoples–Urban areas
 - General remarks ... 835, 836, 838–39
 - Aboriginal peoples–Urban areas–Calgary
 - General remarks ... 838
 - Aboriginal peoples–Urban areas–Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 838
 - Aboriginal peoples–Urban areas–Lethbridge
 - General remarks ... 838–39
 - Aboriginal policy framework
 - General remarks ... 835, 836
 - Aboriginal policy initiative
 - General remarks ... 836, 839, 845
 - Alberta-Alaska Bilateral Council
 - Alberta membership in ... 836
 - Alberta/British Columbia accord
 - General remarks ... 836
 - Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... 1503
 - Alberta Fish and Game Association
 - Provincial consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ... 43
 - Alberta/Northwest Territories memorandum of understanding for co-operation and development
 - General remarks ... 836
 - Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Aboriginal-specific recommendations ... 839

Calahasen, Hon. Pearl (PC, Lesser Slave Lake)*(Continued)*

- Apprenticeship training
 - Aboriginal people ... 1912
- Auditor General
 - Aboriginal Affairs dept. comments ... 839
- Bighorn sheep hunting
 - Under Métis hunting agreement ... 850
- Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee
 - General remarks ... 838, 841
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 839
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP39/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP562/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 835-42, 844-45
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP501/05: Tabled) ... 1608
 - Funding details ... 844, 845
 - Minister's potential conflict re Lubicon land claim process ... 841
 - Staffing ... 835
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Role in Métis hunting/fishing agreement ... 1574
- Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee
 - General remarks ... 838, 841
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: First Nations participation ... 1445
- Employment training programs
 - Aboriginal peoples ... 839, 840, 844
- Endangered wildlife species
 - Protection of ... 574
- Energy industry
 - Aboriginal opportunities in ... 1781
- Energy industry-Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 615, 836, 841, 844-45, 1503
- First Nations treaties
 - Honouring of ... 1829
- Fish conservation
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 43, 45, 89
- Fisheries, Commercial
 - Exclusion from Métis hunting/fishing agreement ... 842
- Fishing, Sport
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 89
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 839
- Gas, Natural-Royalties
 - From disputed aboriginal lands ... 1503
- High school students, Aboriginal
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1912
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claim, minister's potential conflict re ... 841
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 615, 841, 1503
- Métis
 - Definition of ... 850
- Métis-Self-government
 - General remarks ... 836
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 43-44, 45, 89, 323-24, 574, 836, 840, 842, 850, 1124-25, 1574

Calahasen, Hon. Pearl (PC, Lesser Slave Lake)*(Continued)*

- Métis issues
 - General remarks ... 1781, 1829
- Métis Nation of Alberta Association
 - Consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ... 45, 323, 574, 842, 850
- Métis settlements
 - General remarks ... 835
- Métis Settlements Accord Implementation Act
 - General remarks ... 835
- Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal
 - Funding for ... 835
- Métis Settlements General Council
 - Consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ... 45, 323, 574, 842, 850
 - Funding for, ends 2007 ... 835, 840
- Native friendship centres
 - General remarks ... 839
- Natural Resources Transfer Agreement
 - First Nations hunting/fishing rights under, Blais court case re ... 842
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP502/05: Tabled) ... 1608
 - Funding for ... 835
- Northern development
 - Statement re ... 835, 836, 837, 839
- Northern Development Ministers Forum (Federal/provincial)
 - Alberta participation ... 836
- Northern Forum (International ministers' meetings)
 - General remarks ... 836
- Oil-Royalties
 - From disputed aboriginal lands ... 1503
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Aboriginal issues ... 1781, 1829, 1912
 - First Nations land claims ... 1503
 - First Nations participation in Royal visit ... 1445
 - Métis hunting rights ... 43-45, 89, 323-24, 574, 850, 1124-25, 1574
 - Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 615
 - Traumatic injury rate in the aboriginal community ... 768
- Postsecondary graduates, Aboriginal
 - Increase in number of ... 1912
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Third reading ... 793
- Scholarships
 - Aboriginal students ... 1912
- Supreme Court of Canada
 - Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... 43, 45, 323, 574, 840, 842, 845, 1124
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Aboriginal issues funding with ... 1781
- Tar sands development
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 839
- Traffic accident injuries-Aboriginal communities
 - Rates of ... 768
- Traffic safety
 - McDermid report on ... 768
 - Promotion of ... 768
- Traffic safety-Aboriginal communities
 - General remarks ... 768

Calahasen, Hon. Pearl (PC, Lesser Slave Lake)*(Continued)*

- Western Economic Diversification Office
- Alberta urban aboriginal accord ... 838, 841
- Wildlife conservation
- Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 43, 45, 89, 323–24, 574

Cao, Wayne C.N. (PC, Calgary-Fort)

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
- Statement re ... 1605
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
- Second reading ... 396
- Agribusiness
- Statement re ... 1032
- Agriculture
- Statement re ... 1032
- Alberta
- Statement re ... 857
- Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
- Second reading ... 1646–47
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
- Second reading ... 1864
- Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Exposition (ARFEX), Edmonton (2005)
- Statement re ... 744–45
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
- School funding under Education dept. recommendation ... 1914
- Appeals Commission (Workers' compensation)
- General remarks ... 1834
- Blind–Employment
- CNIB assistance program re ... 1524
- Calgary Board of Education
- English as a Second Language programs, funding for ... 1784
- International students ... 1786
- Calgary-McCall (Constituency)
- Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... 4
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Bridge to employment program ... 1524
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
- Calgary education projects ... 1026–27
- Cellular telephones in automobiles
- Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1001–02
- Chinook College
- General remarks ... 1786
- Coalition for Equal Access to Education
- English as a second language study ... 1784
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
- Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1553
- Construction trades
- Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 802
- Contaminated sites–Calgary
- Cleanup efforts ... 1709–10
- Contaminated soil–Lynnview Ridge, Calgary
- Cleanup of ... 84, 529, 1709
- Court interpreters–Fees
- Increase in ... 1502
- CP Rail
- Ogden rail yards, Calgary: Toxic materials runoff from ... 1709

Cao, Wayne C.N. (PC, Calgary-Fort) (Continued)

- Dept. of Advanced Education
- Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 874–75
- Dept. of Education
- Return of school capital funding to ... 1914
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
- Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... 1914
- Deputy Chair
- Election of, on second ballot ... 4
- Disabled
- Government programs for ... 1524
- Education
- Statement re ... 651
- Education, Postsecondary
- Access to, affordability review to improve ... 874
- Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1553
- Education, Postsecondary–Finance
- Federal funding ... 1306–07
- General remarks ... 874–75
- Employment training programs
- Non profit groups providing ... 164–65
- Energy industry
- Statement re ... 1526–27
- English as a Second Language
- General remarks ... 1784
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
- Second reading ... 1541–42
- Farm produce–Export
- Statement re ... 1032
- Foreign workers, Temporary
- General remarks ... 802
- Forest Lawn high school
- Awards night: Statement re ... 1968
- Great Kids of Alberta
- Awards: Statement re ... 368
- Greenhouse equipment and supplies
- Tracking purchases of ... 459
- High school credits
- Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 833–34
- Hours of labour
- Working alone regulation ... 364
- Hub Oil Company Ltd.
- Calgary plant fire: Cleanup efforts ... 1710
- Immigrants
- General remarks ... 1605
- Government internship program for ... 1576–77
- Immigrants of Distinction Awards
- Recognition of ... 490
- Immigration
- Statement re ... 1576–77
- Imperial Oil Ltd.
- Cleanup of contaminated site, Lynnview Ridge, Calgary ... 529
- Marijuana growing operations
- General remarks ... 459
- MCC Employment Development
- General remarks ... 165
- Medical care, Private
- Influence of health symposium on ... 1147

Cao, Wayne C.N. (PC, Calgary-Fort) (Continued)

- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Agriculture industry ... 1032
 - Alberta: Land of opportunity ... 857
 - Alberta Centennial ... 1605
 - ARFEX 2005 culinary trade show ... 744-45
 - Benefits of immigration to Alberta ... 1576-77
 - Forest Lawn high school awards night ... 1968
 - Great Kids awards ... 368
 - International students ... 1786
 - Petroleum industry ... 1526-27
 - Value of education ... 651
 - Veterans Memorial Highway ... 1629
 - World Schools Debating Championship ... 91
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Aid for disabled persons ... 1524
 - Contaminated sites cleanup in Calgary ... 1709-10
 - Contracted employment training ... 164-165
 - English as a Second Language programs ... 1784
 - Health symposium ... 1146-47
 - Interpretation services in courts ... 1502
 - Lynnview Ridge ... 84, 529
 - Minimum wage rate ... 980
 - Postsecondary education federal funding ... 1306-07
 - School construction in Calgary ... 1026-27
 - School infrastructure needs in Calgary ... 1914
 - Seizure of vehicles in prostitution-related offences ... 120
 - Temporary foreign workers ... 802
 - Workers' compensation ... 1338
 - Workers' compensation appeals ... 1834
 - Workplace safety ... 364
- Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
 - Canadian membership in ... 1526
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting)
 - Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1359, 1529
 - Committee ... 1932-33
- Pollution
 - Cleanup orders re, enforcement of ... 84
- Private colleges-Finance
 - General remarks ... 874
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Committee ... 788
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 50, 490
- Schools-Construction-Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1026-27, 1914
- Schools-Construction-Finance
 - Return to Education dept. responsibility ... 1914
- Shewfelt, Kyle
 - Recognition of ... 50
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 177-78
 - Committee ... 508
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 77-78
- Student financial aid
 - General remarks ... 874
- Students, Foreign (Grade school)
 - Recruitment of ... 874-75
 - Statement re ... 1786
- Tar sands development
 - Employment opportunities in ... 802

Cao, Wayne C.N. (PC, Calgary-Fort) (Continued)

- Tar sands development (Continued)
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 802
 - Teachers
 - General remarks ... 651
 - Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1001-02
 - Tuition fees
 - Federal funding to be used for ... 1306
 - Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by provincial government ... 1307
 - Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1146-47
 - Veterans Memorial Highway
 - Statement re ... 1629
 - Wages-Minimum wage
 - Increase to ... 980
 - Increase to: Exceptions for food service and youth employees ... 980
 - Workers' compensation
 - Reviews of, results ... 1338
 - Workers' Compensation Board
 - Medical opinion process, new ... 1834
 - MLA committee to review: Report ... 1834
 - Workplace safety
 - General remarks ... 364
 - World Schools Debating Championship
 - Statement re ... 91
 - Year of the Veteran, 2005
 - General remarks ... 1629
- Cardinal, Hon. Mike (PC, Athabasca-Redwater)**
- Aboriginal peoples
 - Federal policies re ... 1133, 1141
 - Aboriginal peoples-Employment
 - General remarks ... 281, 1131, 1132-33
 - Airports-Northern Alberta
 - Employment opportunities re ... 1138
 - Alberta Adult Health Benefit (Human Resources program)
 - General remarks ... 278, 1129
 - Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board
 - Ratio of journeymen to apprentices ... 1138
 - Alberta Association of Architects
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP447/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Alberta Dental Association and College
 - Radiation health and safety program annual report, 2003 (SP452/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Radiation health and safety program annual report, 2004 (SP658/05: Tabled) ... 1789
 - Alberta Land Surveyors' Association
 - 95th annual general meeting (SP449/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - 96th annual general meeting (SP689/05: Tabled) ... 1838
 - Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Replaces widows' pension ... 1966
 - Alberta Veterinary Medical Association
 - Consultation with, re changes to Veterinary Profession Act ... 1627
 - Radiation protection program annual report, 2003 (SP451/05: Tabled) ... 1508

Cardinal, Hon. Mike (PC, Athabasca-Redwater)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Veterinary Medical Association *(Continued)*
 - Radiation protection program annual report, 2004 (SP659/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- Alberta Works (Employment training program)
 - General remarks ... 1129
- Appeals Commission (Workers' compensation)
 - Budget increase ... 1135
 - Funding transfer to minister's budget ... 950
 - General remarks ... 1129, 1130, 1338, 1834
 - Waiting times at ... 950
- Apprenticeship training
 - Aboriginal people ... 411
 - General remarks ... 86, 280–81, 321, 531, 1129, 1135
 - Government supports for ... 1129
 - Safety aspects ... 980
- Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP448/05: Tabled) ... 1508
- Auditor General
 - Workers' Compensation Board performance review ... 1338
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
 - Report on workplace injuries in Canada ... 1122
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Horizon oil sands project, airport for ... 1138
 - Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at ... 121–22, 322, 2048–49
- Careers: the Next Generation (Youth employment program)
 - General remarks ... 1135
- Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP692/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- Child health benefits program
 - General remarks ... 1129
- Children–Employment
 - Age restriction re ... 1779
- Christian Labour Association of Canada
 - Actions of Labour Relations Board in advancing interests of ... 2009, 2048–49
 - Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... 321, 411, 458, 2048–49
- Collective bargaining
 - First-contract certification legislation ... 1140, 1625, 1711–12
 - Report on: Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta (SP638/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- Collective bargaining–Health authorities
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in ... 2009, 2048–49
- College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP450/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Financial statements, 2004 (SP695/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Alberta Professional Foresters
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP690/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Chiropractors of Alberta
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP466/05: Tabled) ... 1529
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP660/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP455/05: Tabled) ... 1508

Cardinal, Hon. Mike (PC, Athabasca-Redwater)*(Continued)*

- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta *(Continued)*
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP661/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 85–86, 121–22, 280, 281, 318, 321–22, 361–62, 411, 458, 571, 802, 1133, 1135
- Consulting Engineers of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP693/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - General remarks ... 1138
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP52/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP577/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta (Report) (SP638/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1129–30, 1132–33, 1135, 1137–38, 1140–41
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP494/05: Tabled) ... 1579
 - Minister's resignation ... 2009
 - Service centres ... 280, 1129
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 278, 280–81
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Property theft in (Q28/05: Response tabled as SP776/05) ... 1158
- Disabled–Employment
 - Government programs for ... 1130, 1138
- Drug use in the workplace
 - Random testing for ... 45
 - Random testing for: Report on ... 45
- Employment and training centres
 - General remarks ... 1129
- Employment standards
 - Bathroom/coffee breaks inclusion in ... 1625
 - General remarks ... 1129
 - Review of ... 980
- Employment training programs
 - Aboriginal peoples ... 280, 281, 1130
 - Eligibility of young adults for ... 363
 - General remarks ... 86, 278, 280, 531, 1129, 1137, 1916
 - Non profit groups providing ... 165
 - Tuition fees re ... 1130
- English as a Second Language
 - Funding ... 1130, 1132
 - General remarks ... 1129
- Fatalities, Work-related
 - Day of mourning re ... 1118
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Alberta/federal government memorandum re: Information package (SP366/05: Tabled) ... 1034
 - Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated) ... 823, 989
 - General remarks ... 85–86, 121–22, 280, 281, 318, 321–22, 361, 362, 411, 458, 571, 802, 1133, 1135, 1443
 - Language training for ... 1132
 - Process to apply for (SP217/05: Tabled) ... 370
- Foster children
 - Requirement to work ... 1779

Cardinal, Hon. Mike (PC, Athabasca-Redwater)*(Continued)*

- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1169
- High school students
 - Financial assistance to, when living independently ... 363
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 1133, 1138
- Highway 813
 - General remarks ... 1133, 1138
- Highway 881
 - Extension to Alberta/Saskatchewan border, employment opportunities of ... 1133, 1138
 - Upgrading of ... 1138
- Horse industry
 - Consultation with, re changes to Veterinary Profession Act ... 1627
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 849
- Hours of labour
 - Working alone regulation ... 364
- Immigrants
 - Visas for, Alberta processing of ... 1833
- Immigration
 - Provincial nominee program ... 1833
- Income Support program
 - Caseload increase ... 278, 280
 - Funding cutbacks to ... 1137
 - General remarks ... 1129
- Labour laws and legislation
 - General remarks ... 1138, 1625, 1711–12
- Labour productivity
 - General remarks ... 1916
- Labour relations
 - General remarks ... 1129, 1711, 2048
- Labour Relations Board
 - Advancing of interests of Christian Labour Association ... 2009, 2048–49
 - Chair/vice-chairs of, firing of ... 2049
 - General remarks ... 1129
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring) ... 2009, 2048–49
- Labour Relations Code
 - Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects) ... 121–22
 - Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects): Labour Relations Board involvement in ... 2048–49
 - Review of: MLA committee re: Report (M43/05: Defeated) ... 1170
- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting ... 2009, 2048–49
- Labour supply
 - Shortages of skilled workers ... 85–86, 1915–16, 2049
 - Strategy re ... 1133
- Labour unions
 - Impact on, of division 8 designation re foreign workers ... 121–22
 - Organizing activities (Salting) ... 1170

Cardinal, Hon. Mike (PC, Athabasca-Redwater)*(Continued)*

- Lakeside Packers
 - Brooks packing plant: Complaints re working conditions in ... 1625
- Ledcor Industries Limited
 - Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... 321
- Low-income families
 - General remarks ... 849
 - MLA committee review of programs for ... 1966
- Market enhancement recovery funds
 - General remarks ... 1170
- MCC Employment Development
 - General remarks ... 165
- McLennan Ross LLP (Legal counsel)
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 amendments ... 2048
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - National Day of Mourning ... 1118
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Random drug tests for ... 45
- National child benefit
 - General remarks ... 1129
- National Day of Mourning (Work-related injuries/deaths)
 - Statement re ... 1118
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - Youth apprenticeship program ... 1135
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Apprenticeship training ... 980
 - Capital region petrochemical workers ... 1443
 - Contracted employment training ... 165
 - Employment of children ... 1779
 - Financial assistance for youths ... 363
 - First-contract labour arbitration ... 1711–12
 - Foreign and non-union workers ... 121–122
 - Foreign workers ... 85–86
 - Labour force resources ... 1915–16
 - Labour Relations Board ... 2009, 2048–49
 - Lakeside Packers labour dispute ... 1625
 - Major Alberta projects ... 531
 - Minimum wage ... 164, 613
 - Minimum wage rate ... 980
 - Oil sands employment ... 571
 - Physiotherapy services ... 292
 - Services for immigrants ... 1833
 - Social assistance rates ... 849
 - Support for low-income Albertans ... 1198
 - Temporary foreign workers ... 318, 321–22, 361–62, 411, 458, 802
 - Veterinary profession legislation ... 1627
 - Widows' pension ... 1966
 - Workers' compensation ... 1338, 2052
 - Workers' compensation appeals ... 950, 1834
 - Workplace drug testing ... 45
 - Workplace safety ... 364, 1122
- Personnel Administration Office
 - General remarks ... 1129, 1130
- Petrochemical industry—Edmonton area
 - Employees laid off at, employment in Fort McMurray ... 1443
- Petroleos de Venezuela
 - Former employees of, recruited for Alberta oil sands employment ... 411

Cardinal, Hon. Mike (PC, Athabasca-Redwater)*(Continued)*

- Physical therapy–Finance
 - Cutbacks to ... 292
- Prostitutes
 - Murder of ... 953
- Public assistance
 - Aboriginal peoples ... 281
 - Caseload ... 1129
 - General remarks ... 1129, 1140–41
 - Health/utility benefits ... 278
 - Increase to ... 849, 953, 1138, 1198
 - Market-basket measure as basis for ... 849
 - Personal income exemption increase ... 849
 - Review of ... 1198
- Public service–Alberta
 - Increase in ... 1133
 - Succession planning for ... 1130, 1133
- Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)
 - Revenue from ... 849
- Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)
 - General remarks ... 1135
- Replacement workers
 - Legislation re, proposed ... 1140
- Road construction–Northern Alberta
 - Employment opportunities in ... 1133, 1138
- Roads–Northern Alberta
 - Impact on aboriginal employment possibilities ... 280, 1133, 1138
- Strikes and lockouts–Lakeside Packers employees
 - General remarks ... 1625, 1711–12
- Summer Temporary Employment Program
 - General remarks ... 1132
- Suncor Inc.
 - Memo re temporary foreign workers ... 361, 458
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Public assistance increase with ... 849
- Tar sands development
 - Employment opportunities in ... 531, 571, 802
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 121–22, 280, 281, 318, 321–22, 361, 362, 411, 458, 802, 1443
- Tar sands development–Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 1122
- Technical schools
 - Enrollment decline at ... 1141
- Truck drivers–Supply
 - Government calculations re (Q42/05: Response tabled as SP805/05) ... 1748, 2018
- Tuition fees
 - For occupational training ... 1130
- Unemployment
 - General remarks ... 1129
- Unemployment–Wabasca
 - General remarks ... 1133
- University of Alberta
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP454/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP662/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- University of Calgary
 - Radiation health administration organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP453/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Radiation health administration organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP663/05: Tabled) ... 1789

Cardinal, Hon. Mike (PC, Athabasca-Redwater)*(Continued)*

- Veterinary Profession Act
 - Changes to, re veterinary dentistry inclusion in ... 1627
 - Wages–Food service employees
 - Increase in ... 613
 - Wages–Minimum wage
 - Increase to ... 164, 612–13, 980, 1132, 1135, 1140, 1198
 - Increase to: Exceptions for food service and youth employees ... 613, 980, 1779
 - Increase to: Impact on workers' compensation earning loss supplement ... 2052
 - Indexing of ... 1138
 - Wages–Youth
 - Increase in ... 613
 - Widows–Pensions
 - Replacement of, with seniors' benefit ... 1966
 - Work Safe Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1118, 1122, 1129, 1130
 - Workers' compensation
 - Earning loss supplement, impact of increased minimum wage on ... 2052
 - Reviews of, results ... 1338
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002 (Bill 26, 2002)
 - General remarks ... 1338
 - Workers' Compensation Board
 - 2004 accountability framework report (SP694/05: Tabled) ... 1838
 - Ana Gutierrez case: Correspondence re (M42/05: Defeated) ... 1169
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP691/05: Tabled) ... 1838
 - Annual reports ... 1338
 - Auditor General's performance review of ... 1338
 - General remarks ... 1129
 - Long standing claims issue ... 950
 - Medical opinion process, new ... 1338, 1834
 - MLA committee to review: Report ... 1834
 - MLAs concerns re, resolution of ... 1135
 - Provision of physiotherapy services ... 292
 - Support for Work Safe Alberta ... 1130
 - Workers' health
 - General remarks ... 1130
 - Working Alone Safely (Brochure)
 - General remarks ... 364
 - Workplace accidents
 - General remarks ... 1138
 - Location of ... 1122
 - Reduction in ... 1130
 - Workplace safety
 - Drug use issue ... 45
 - General remarks ... 364, 980, 1118, 1122, 1130, 1135
 - Workplace safety inspections
 - General remarks ... 1122, 1135
 - Youth Connections (Employment service)
 - General remarks ... 1132, 1135, 1141
- Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-Buffalo)**
- Abduction of children–Calgary
 - Police actions re ... 486–87
 - Aboriginal police services
 - General remarks ... 768, 1428
 - Aboriginal policy initiative
 - General remarks ... 1428

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-Buffalo)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police
 - General remarks ... 574
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
 - Police funding discussions with provincial government ... 1250, 1432
- Alberta Association of Police Governance
 - General remarks ... 574
- Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres
 - General remarks ... 1438
- Alberta Children and Youth Initiative
 - Sexual exploitation initiative ... 1433
- Alberta Federation of Police Associations
 - General remarks ... 574
- Alberta Mental Health Board
 - Funding for diversion services for mentally ill offenders ... 1785
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Police funding discussions with provincial government ... 1250, 1432
- Alberta Vehicle Theft Committee
 - General remarks ... 1256
- Alberta Warriors (Aboriginal street gang)
 - General remarks ... 1430
- Auditor General
 - Policing in Alberta, study of ... 1885
 - Policing standards comments ... 1432
- Auditor General of Canada
 - RCMP services report ... 1884–85
- Automobile chop shops
 - General remarks ... 1256
- Automobile drivers' licences
 - Graduated licences, monitoring of ... 1307–08
- Automobile theft–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1256
- Automobiles–Seizure
 - For prostitution-related offences: Legislation re (Bill 206, 2003) ... 456
- Calgary Board of Education
 - Co-operation with police service in child abduction cases ... 487
- Calgary Police Service
 - Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre ... 1123
 - Child abduction procedures ... 486
 - Child exploitation prevention teams ... 206
 - Domestic violence conflict unit ... 1576
 - Peace officers on beat in inner city areas ... 1437–38
 - Provincial funding for ... 800–01
- Calgary Remand Centre
 - Extension to ... 696
- Cattle rustling–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1121
- Check Stop program
 - Use for graduated drivers' licence checks ... 1307–08
- Child abuse–Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 206, 1433, 1671
- Child Welfare Act
 - Funding for youth in transition from custody ... 1433
- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
 - Funding for youth in transition from custody ... 1433
- Committee on Justice and Government Services, Standing Policy
 - Vehicle Theft Committee's recommendations to ... 1256

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-Buffalo)*(Continued)*

- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Application to prison inmates ... 855
- Correctional institutions–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1427, 1433–34
- Correctional institutions–Staff training
 - General remarks ... 1433
- Correctional institutions–Staffing
 - General remarks ... 1427
- Courtroom security officers–Training
 - General remarks ... 743, 1433
- Courts–Security aspects
 - Funding for ... 1427
 - General remarks ... 902, 1431
- Crime prevention
 - Aboriginal programs re ... 1428
 - Funding for ... 1427
 - General remarks ... 1256, 1428, 1671
- Crime rate
 - General remarks ... 1671
- Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta
 - General remarks ... 459, 1148, 1427
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Manufacturing of (illegal meth labs) ... 1427, 1430
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 770, 1884
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse–Treatment
 - Treatment centres for, in closed young offender centres ... 800
- Dept. of Solicitor General
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP62/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP585/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Business plan ... 1427
 - Communications branch ... 1435–36
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1427–28, 1430–38
 - Minister's letter re Crowsnest Pass police grant ... 1305
- Deputy constables
 - General remarks ... 1437
- Diversion (Mentally disabled offenders)
 - General remarks ... 1785
- Domestic violence
 - General remarks ... 1196
 - Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003 ... 1196, 1575
- Domestic violence–Legal aspects
 - General remarks ... 1433
- Drug abuse–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1884
- Drug abuse resistance education program
 - General remarks ... 1201
- Drug trafficking
 - Role in gang-related crime ... 1148
- Drug trafficking–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 770
- Drugs in schools
 - Use of dogs to detect ... 1256
- Edmonton Police Service
 - Child exploitation prevention teams ... 206, 1671
 - Community support officers/special constables pilot project ... 1437
 - Family violence conflict unit ... 1576
 - Inmate sexual assault investigation ... 696

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-Buffalo)*(Continued)*

- Edmonton Police Service *(Continued)*
 - Mill Woods gang-related killing investigation ... 1148
 - Police radio conversation transcript, publication in news media (Overtime bar case) ... 411–12
 - Provincial funding for ... 800–01, 952–53, 1148, 1671
 - Randy Fryingpan taser case ... 1431, 1504
 - Training centre ... 1123
- Edmonton Remand Centre
 - New facility for ... 696
 - Overcrowding ... 696, 855, 1389, 1434
 - Rape of inmates in ... 696, 1389, 1433
 - Replacement of ... 1434
- Family courts—Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1433
- Fatality inquiries
 - Fekete family murder/suicide case ... 1575
 - RCMP corporal's death in mentally ill gunman case ... 1784
- Fatality Inquiries Act
 - Public inquiries provision ... 162
- Fines (Traffic violations)
 - Graduated licence conditions violation ... 1308
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Application to police radio conversations (Overtime bar case) ... 411
- Gang-related crime
 - General remarks ... 1148, 1430
- Gang-related crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 205, 1148, 1916
 - Police intelligence sharing re ... 205, 1916
- George C. King Tower, Calgary
 - Security concerns ... 616
- Government attorneys
 - Specialization in child exploitation cases ... 206
 - Specialization in gun-related crime cases ... 1916
- Greenhouse equipment and supplies
 - Tracking purchases of ... 460
- Harry Ainlay high school, Edmonton
 - Drug-sniffing dog program ... 1256
- Hells Angels (Biker gang)
 - General remarks ... 1430
- Indian Posse (Aboriginal street gang)
 - General remarks ... 1430
- Integrated child exploitation teams
 - General remarks ... 206, 1427, 1432–33, 1884
- Integrated Response to Organized Crime
 - General remarks ... 459, 770, 801, 952, 1148, 1430–31, 1671
 - Increase in RCMP officers for ... 1201
- Internet (Computer network)
 - Crimes against children on ... 1427, 1432–33
 - Crimes against children on: Provincial initiatives re ... 206, 1427
- Law Enforcement Review Board
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP384/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - Enhancement of effectiveness of: Legislation re (Bill 49) ... 1674
 - General remarks ... 162, 574
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta—Adjournment
 - For RCMP memorial service, March 10, 2005 (Motion 12: Cenaiko/Stevens) ... 105

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-Buffalo)*(Continued)*

- Lethbridge Community College
 - Police training programs ... 1123, 1602
- Lethbridge Young Offender Centre
 - Closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... 800
- Marijuana
 - Decriminalization of ... 41
- Marijuana growing operations
 - General remarks ... 459, 1427
 - Northern/southern investigative teams re ... 1430
- Medicine Hat Remand Centre
 - Young offender unit, closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... 800
- Mental health services—Prisoners
 - General remarks ... 1438, 1785
- Mental health services—Young offenders
 - General remarks ... 1433, 1438
- Mentally disabled
 - Involvement with police ... 1784–85
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Deaths of RCMP officers ... 40
 - RCMP drug raid near Mayerthorpe ... 16
- Mortgage fraud
 - Caused by marijuana grow ops problems ... 1417, 1430
- Municipal bylaws
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to police, requirement for ... 416
- Municipal finance—Crowsnest Pass area
 - Government grants ... 1250, 1305
- Municipal Government Act
 - Crowsnest Pass regulation ... 1250, 1305
- Murdoch Manor, Calgary
 - Security concerns ... 616
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Attempted child abductions ... 486–87
 - Cattle rustling ... 1121
 - Community policing ... 952–53, 1201
 - Corrections officers ... 743–44
 - Courthouse security ... 902
 - Crime prevention ... 1256
 - Crime rate reduction ... 1671
 - Domestic violence ... 1196, 1575–76
 - Edmonton Police Service investigation ... 1504
 - Edmonton Remand Centre ... 696, 855
 - Edmonton Remand Centre assault incident ... 1389
 - Exploitation of children ... 206
 - Gang violence ... 1148
 - Graduated drivers' licences ... 1307–08
 - Inquiry into deaths of RCMP officers ... 41
 - Mental illness and the criminal justice system ... 1784–85
 - Municipal grants to Crowsnest Pass ... 1305
 - Police recruitment and training centre ... 1123, 1602
 - Police service investigation ... 411–12
 - Policing resources ... 800–01
 - Policing review ... 162
 - Policing services ... 167, 205–206, 574, 1884–85, 1916
 - Policing services in Crowsnest Pass ... 1250
 - Private security legislation review ... 1311
 - Project Kare ... 901–02, 1523

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-*Buffalo*)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - Protection of personal information ... 416
 - Road safety ... 458
 - Rural police services ... 770
 - Security in seniors' apartment buildings ... 616
 - Seizure of vehicles in prostitution-related offences ... 120, 456
 - Sex trade workers ... 1339
 - Stony Plain youth justice committee ... 1076
 - Traumatic injury rate in the aboriginal community ... 768
 - Youth residential drug treatment ... 800
- Organized crime
 - Additional officers for ... 1427
 - Involvement with marijuana grow ops ... 1430
- Organized crime-Prevention
 - Funding for ... 1427
 - General remarks ... 41, 1256, 1671, 1884, 1916
 - Police intelligence sharing re ... 206, 1916
- Overtime Broiler & Taproom
 - Edmonton Police stakeout at ... 411-12
- Pawnshops
 - Provision of client information to police ... 416
- Personal Information Protection Act
 - Application to pawnshops ... 416
- Police
 - Challenges performing duties of ... 16
 - Complaints against, procedure for ... 574, 1428, 1431, 1438, 1504
 - Complaints against, procedure for: Legislation re (Bill 36) ... 491
 - Complaints against, procedure for: Legislation re (Bill 49) ... 1674
 - Domestic violence case handling training ... 1196, 1575-76
 - Gang-related activity prevention efforts ... 1148
 - Increase in numbers of ... 205-06, 1201, 1427, 1431, 1671, 1884-85, 1916
 - Intelligence sharing re crime prevention ... 206
 - Intermunicipal co-operation between ... 205, 1602
 - Mental health related incidents, responses to ... 1784-85
 - MLA committee review of: Report ... 162, 491, 574, 1428, 1437, 1602
 - Neighbourhood patrols ... 952-53
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to ... 416
 - Public confidence in ... 574
 - Use-of-force policy ... 1431
- Police-Finance
 - General remarks ... 205-06, 770, 1148, 1427, 1432
 - Increase to ... 770, 800-01, 952-53, 1201, 1431, 1671, 1916
- Police-Finance-Crowsnest Pass
 - General remarks ... 1250, 1305, 1432
- Police-Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 167, 1201, 1884-85
- Police-Standards
 - Auditing of ... 1432, 1885
 - General remarks ... 1431-32
- Police-Training
 - Centre of excellence re ... 1123, 1428, 1602
 - Mentally ill people handling ... 1784-85

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-*Buffalo*)*(Continued)*

- Police Act
 - Amendments to ... 162
 - Civilian oversight provision enhancement ... 162
 - Paramouncy over Crowsnest Pass regulation re police funding ... 1250
 - Police funding provisions ... 1432
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - First reading ... 491
 - Second reading ... 629-30, 1244
 - Committee ... 1296-99, 1379-82
 - Third reading ... 1583
 - General remarks ... 574, 1428, 1431, 1438
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 49)
 - First reading ... 1674
 - Second reading ... 1770-71
 - Third reading ... 2026
- Police commissions
 - Oversight function ... 1428, 1431, 1438
- Pornography, Child
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 206
- Prisoners
 - Application of Charter of Rights to ... 855
- Prisoners-Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 696, 1389
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 416
- Private investigators-Law and legislation
 - Review of ... 1311
- Private investigators-Licensing
 - Review of ... 1311
- Private investigators-Training
 - Review of ... 1311
- Private Investigators and Security Guards Act
 - Review of ... 1311
- Probation officers
 - Supervision of youth justice committees ... 1076, 1434, 1435
- Project Kare (Missing women investigation team)
 - Funding for ... 800, 901-02, 1339, 1523
 - General remarks ... 1523, 1671
- Prostitutes
 - Murder of ... 800, 901-02, 952-53, 1339
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - General remarks ... 800
- Protective vests (Corrections officers)
 - General remarks ... 1427, 1434
- Provincial protection officers
 - General remarks ... 1427, 1431
 - Training ... 1433
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Relation to departmental communications divisions ... 1435-36
- Public safety (From criminal activity)
 - General remarks ... 1427, 1433
- Red Deer Remand Centre
 - Young offender unit, closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... 800
- Redd Alert (Aboriginal street gang)
 - General remarks ... 1430
- Rehabilitation of criminals
 - Funding for ... 1427
 - General remarks ... 1433

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-Buffalo)*(Continued)*

- Remand centres—Construction
 - General remarks ... 696
- Remand centres—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1427, 1433–34
- Road Safety Vision 2010 (Federal traffic safety initiative)
 - General remarks ... 1435
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Auditor General of Canada's report on provincial policing services by ... 1884–85
 - Cattle rustling prevention efforts ... 1121
 - Child exploitation prevention teams ... 206
 - Corporal's death in mentally ill gunman case ... 1784
 - Domestic violence handling training ... 1575
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area ... 1430
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial service for fallen officers, Assembly adjourned (Motion 12: Cenaiko/Stevens) ... 105
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Provincial inquiry into ... 41
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Statement re fallen officers in ... 16, 40
 - Impact of provincial police training centre on ... 1602
 - Increase in numbers of ... 205, 770, 1201, 1427, 1431, 1435, 1884–85
 - Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003, investigation, recommendations from ... 1196, 1575
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to, bylaw re ... 416
 - Requalification of officers (weapons handling) ... 1885
- Schoolchildren—Protective services
 - Child abduction cases ... 487
- Security guards—Law and legislation
 - Review of ... 1311
- Security guards—Licensing
 - Review of ... 1311
- Security guards—Training
 - Review of ... 1311
- Selective traffic enforcement program
 - General remarks ... 1307–08
- Senior citizens—Housing
 - Security concerns re ... 616
- Seniors' apartment buildings—Security aspects—Calgary
 - General remarks ... 616
- Special constables
 - Role of ... 1437
 - Role of, review ... 1123, 1428, 1437–38
- Special constables—Grande Prairie
 - General remarks ... 1438
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Prisoners
 - General remarks ... 1438
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Young offenders
 - General remarks ... 1433, 1438
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - Detox/residential services re, in empty young offender centres ... 800
- Traffic accidents—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 458
- Traffic regulations
 - Enforcement of ... 458

Cenaiko, Hon. Harvey (PC, Calgary-Buffalo)*(Continued)*

- Traffic safety
 - General remarks ... 1435
 - McDermid report on ... 1435
 - Review of ... 1435
- Traffic safety—Rural Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1435
- Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 206, 2003)
 - Proclamation of ... 456
- Victims of crime
 - Assistance programs: Funding for ... 1427, 1428
 - Assistance programs: Status report re, 2003-04 (SP385/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - Assistance programs: Status report re, 2004-05 (SP517/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Definition of ... 1438
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 600–01
 - General remarks ... 1428
- Victims of Crime Fund
 - Compensation to assaulted inmate from ... 1389
 - Compensation to sexual assault victims from ... 1438
 - Surplus ... 1433
- Victims of Crime Programs Committee
 - General remarks ... 1433
- Victims of sexual assault
 - Definition of ... 1438
- Video conferencing of court proceedings
 - General remarks ... 902, 1427
- Violent crime
 - Prevention of ... 1916
- Violent crime—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1427
- Whistle-blower protection
 - Workplace safety complaints ... 744
- Womens' shelters
 - Violent spouse situations handling ... 1196
- Workplace safety
 - Employee complaints re ... 744
- Young, Kyle James (Prisoner)
 - Death in Edmonton courthouse ... 743–44, 1433
- Young offenders
 - Government programs for ... 1433
- Youth Criminal Justice Act
 - Impact on young offender centres' populations ... 800
- Youth in transition from the justice system
 - Government programs for ... 1433
- Youth justice committees
 - General remarks ... 1076, 1428, 1434, 1435
 - Probation officer liaisons to ... 1435
- Youth justice committees—Stony Plain
 - Resignation of members of ... 1076
- Chair of Committees (Marz, Richard)**
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Amendment A2 (SP314 & 343/05: Tabled) ... 892
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Amendment A1 (SP716 & 767/05: Tabled) ... 2001
 - Auditor General
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 751
 - Chief Electoral Officer
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 751

Chair of Committees (Marz, Richard) (Continued)

- Ethics Commissioner
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 751
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 751
- Legislative Assembly Office
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 751
- Ombudsman
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 751
- Point of Order
 - Factual accuracy ... 1110
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 306
 - Relevance ... 305

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity)

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Funding for ... 1481
 - General remarks ... 264
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 236-38
- Alberta 75th anniversary celebrations
 - Legacy of ... 1481
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Gambling addiction programs ... 1284
- Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Committee ... 2001, 2003-05
 - Third reading ... 2026
 - Amendment A5 (SP771/05: Tabled) ... 2005
- Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)
 - Third reading ... 2032
- Alberta Centennial Multicultural Gala Night, Calgary
 - Statement re ... 775
- Alberta Children's Hospital
 - New hospital ... 1467-68
 - New hospital: Road access ... 364
 - New hospital: Road access, letters re (SP127-128, 150, 182-184, 240, 300-301/05: Tabled) ... 210, 253, 327, 463, 653
- Alberta College of Art and Design
 - 2005 convocation ceremony program (SP491/05: Tabled) ... 1579
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796
- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Funding for ... 1048
 - Role of ... 1048
- Alberta Government Offices
 - China office ... 1185
 - India office ... 1185
 - Japan office ... 1185
 - Ottawa office ... 1185
 - Washington, D.C. office ... 1185
 - Washington, D.C. office: Documents re (M20/05: Response tabled as SP744/05) ... 821-22
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 1187
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border trade crossing issue ... 1186
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan-Premiums
 - Increase in ... 1466-67
- Alberta Historical Resources Foundation
 - Consultation with, re renaming of provincial parks: Letter re (SP185/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 512

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 18)
 - Committee ... 446
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 20)
 - Second reading ... 437
 - Third reading ... 551
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1856-58, 1862, 1864, 1866, 1867
 - Third reading ... 2019, 2021
- Alberta SuperNet
 - School access to ... 756
- Alberta Wilderness Association
 - Calgary Tower climb ... 907
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - General remarks ... 1506
- Ambulance service
 - General remarks ... 1467
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of ... 1470
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Documents re (M19/05: Response tabled as SP807) ... 821
- Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park
 - Redesignation of Castle wilderness as ... 1673, 2012
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Second reading ... 541
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Second reading ... 425-26, 427
 - Third reading ... 1581
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Cost overruns ... 1336
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of ... 1883
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05: Response tabled as SP511/05) ... 1161
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Second reading ... 1565
 - Committee ... 1588
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - Third reading ... 441-42, 451
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1991-92, 2000
- Arts
 - Impact on tourism ... 1012
- Arts-Finance
 - General remarks ... 797, 984, 1481
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
 - Degree-granting accreditation procedure, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921-22
- Bentall Real Estate
 - Involvement with SouthLink health centre ... 1467
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 266
 - Testing re, to expedite exports ... 266, 1185
- Bridges-North Saskatchewan River-Drayton Valley area
 - General remarks ... 1802
- Bridges-Stoney Trail, Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1802

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Third reading ... 1194
- Calgary Board of Education
 - Portable classrooms ... 1801
- Calgary Catholic Board of Education
 - Portable classrooms ... 1801
- Calgary General Hospital
 - Destruction of ... 1087, 1466
- Calgary Heritage Fair
 - General remarks ... 1342
- Calgary-Varsity (Constituency)
 - Events in, attended by the Member for ... 1152, 1341–42
- Campus Alberta Quality Council
 - Degree program approval process, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921–22
- Canadian Association of Journalists
 - Code of Silence Award given to province of Alberta: News release re (SP462/05: Tabled) ... 1528
- Cancer Awareness Month
 - Recognition of ... 490–91
- Canoffer Society
 - 25th anniversary: Program from (SP390/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - 25th anniversary: Statement re ... 1152
- Capital endowment fund (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 1801
- Capital projects
 - General remarks ... 265
 - Public/private partnerships re ... 645, 905, 1467, 1883
 - Public/private partnerships re: List of all potential projects (M33/05: Response tabled as SP512/05) ... 1162
 - Small projects funding ... 1801
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - Federal funding ... 1801
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 484–85, 575–76, 1199, 1627–28
 - General remarks ... 796–97, 1086, 1199
 - Legacy funding for, proposed ... 741
- Casinos
 - Use as provincial revenue generator ... 1744–45
- Castle-Crown wilderness area
 - Redesignation as Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park ... 1673, 2012
- Cataract Creek wilderness protected area
 - General remarks ... 1480–81
- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 1186, 1187
- Cellular telephones in automobiles
 - Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 999, 1006
- Centennial ambassadors
 - General remarks ... 1481
- Centennial celebrations–Saskatchewan
 - General remarks ... 1481
- Centennial Legacy Ball, Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 1342
- Centennial Summary (Poem)
 - General remarks ... 1918
- Chrysalis Society
 - 10th annual achievement awards: Program from (SP390/05: Tabled) ... 1205

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Chrysalis Society (Continued)
 - 10th annual achievement awards: Statement re ... 1152
- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Committee ... 447
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 1047
- Coal bed methane extraction–Horseshoe Canyon area
 - Impact on tourism of ... 1012
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1552–53
- Community schools
 - General remarks ... 265
- Confederation Park Senior Citizens Centre
 - Extension contract, letter re (SP725/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Appointment of (Motion 11: Stevens) ... 105–06
- Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 26)
 - Second reading ... 537
- Courts–Calgary
 - New courthouse, Public/private funding of ... 905
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Second reading ... 1867
- Culture–Finance
 - General remarks ... 797
- Cypress Hills Provincial Park
 - Industrial development in ... 1011–12
- Daishowa Canada Co. Ltd.
 - General remarks ... 1012
- Daycare centres–Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation, Letters re (SP282-284/05: Tabled) ... 622
- Debts, Public (Municipal government)–Fort McMurray
 - General remarks ... 576
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - General remarks ... 1086, 1466
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - General remarks ... 755
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 265–66
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1798
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1480–81
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1011–13
 - Trade missions expenditures (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
 - Trade show expenditures (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Dept. of Education
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 265
 - Return of school capital funding to ... 1086–87, 1801
- Dept. of Energy
 - Communications contracts expenditures, 2003-04 (Q16/05: Defeated) ... 811
- Dept. of Environment
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1047–48
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1283–84
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1466–68, 1470
 - Return of health facility funding to ... 1801

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1086–88
 - General remarks ... 755
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 264
 - Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... 1086–87, 1801
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1801–02
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M18/05: Response tabled as SP772/05) ... 820
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1377
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 1184–87, 1189
- Dept. of Learning
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M17/05: Response tabled as SP718/05) ... 819
 - General remarks ... 755
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M15/05: Response tabled as SP826/05) ... 817
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Budget statements ... 756
 - Deputy ministers, number of ... 755
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 755–56
- Desalination of water
 - Research into ... 1377
- Drugs, Prescription
 - National plan for ... 1189, 1468
- Drugs, Prescription—Costs
 - General remarks ... 1468
- East Coulee spring festival
 - Statement re ... 775
- Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 1011–12, 1048
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Closure of schools ... 1311
- Education
 - Provincial support for: Statement re ... 1506
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 1087
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1552–53
 - General remarks ... 265–66
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - General remarks ... 265, 755
- Education—Finance
 - General remarks ... 265, 755
 - Letter re (SP442/05: Tabled) ... 1507
 - Statement re ... 1506
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 809, 810
- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - Research into: Funding for ... 1377
- Electric power—Prices
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 1186
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: Special Legislature sitting for (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 597–98
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1400

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Emergency medical technicians
 - Increase in numbers of ... 1467
- Energy industry
 - Use of water supplies, phase out of ... 1377
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - Research into: Funding for ... 1377
- English as a Second Language
 - Funding ... 265, 755
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... 1186
- Environmental protection
 - Federal/provincial co-operation re ... 1047
 - General remarks ... 1048
- Extended care facilities—Fees
 - Increase in ... 1467
- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 1467
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1400
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1176
- Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 - Third reading ... 550
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Third reading ... 1021
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 700–01
- Festivals—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1481
- Film industry
 - Impact of industrial development on ... 1011–12
- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - Committee ... 1018
- Fish and wildlife officers
 - Number of ... 1480–81
- Foothills Medical Centre
 - Road access to new children's hospital ... 210, 364, 653
 - Single room format ... 1467
 - Upgrades to ... 1470
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated) ... 824–25
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 484–85, 575–76, 1086, 1627–28
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on: Environmental aspects ... 1047
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Edmonton Journal* request under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 1518–19
 - General remarks ... 57
- Friends of Medicare
 - Co-sponsor of alternative Calgary health care conference (Weighing the Evidence) ... 1152
 - Report on P3s in health care projects (Flawed, Failed, Abandoned) (SP302/05: Tabled) ... 653
- Gambling—Moral/legal issues
 - General remarks ... 1284
- Gaming industry
 - Revenue from ... 1283–84

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Gaming industry *(Continued)*
 - Revenue from, relation to oil/gas revenues ... 1283
 - Revenue from, statement re ... 1744-45
- Gas, Natural
 - Use as power source in oil sands production ... 1377
- Gas, Natural-Royalties
 - Relation to gaming revenues ... 1283
- Ghost-Waiparous recreation area
 - Off-highway vehicle access to ... 1601
- Government aircraft
 - Policy on usage of ... 18-19
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 19, 122-23, 1518-19
 - Rod Love's trip to Fort McMurray on ... 612
- Government chartered aircraft
 - Premier's use of ... 160-61
- Government departments
 - Control of infrastructure planning/funding ... 1086-87
 - Renaming of ... 755
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 755-56
- Government programs
 - Lottery funding for ... 1284
- Grace Hospital, Calgary
 - Sale of ... 1087, 1466
- Health facilities
 - Personal donations for ... 1467
- Health Link Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1467
- High school education-Curricula
 - Fine arts courses ... 1481
- Highway 8-Calgary area
 - Upgrading of ... 264
- Highway 11
 - Upgrading of: Cost overruns ... 1336
- Highway 28
 - Upgrading of ... 741, 1628
 - Upgrading of: Letters re (SP317/05: Tabled) ... 746
- Highway 43
 - Upgrading of ... 264
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 264, 1336, 1628
 - Upgrading of: Petitions presented re ... 1452
- Highway 725
 - Upgrading of: Cost overruns ... 1336
- Hip and knee surgery
 - Privatization of, in Calgary ... 1466
 - Waiting lists for ... 1466
- Hockey championships
 - Calgary pee wee girls provincial champions ... 907
- Holy Cross Hospital
 - Sale of ... 1466
- Horseshoe Canyon
 - Industrial development in ... 1012
- Hospital beds-Calgary
 - Shortages of ... 797, 1467
- Hospitals-Calgary
 - Closure of ... 1087, 1466
 - New south Calgary hospital ... 265, 797, 1087, 1467
 - New south Calgary hospital: Public/private funding of ... 645, 905
- Hospitals-Closure
 - General remarks ... 1087

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Housing-Fort McMurray
 - Impact of population increase on ... 485
- Immigrant doctors
 - General remarks ... 1467
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 711-12
 - Committee ... 1191, 1193
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 264-66
- Jasper National Park
 - Industrial development near ... 1012
- Junior high school education-Curricula
 - Fine arts courses ... 1481
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta
 - Special sitting of, for Royal visit (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 597-98
- Logging, Clear-cut
 - Impact on tourism ... 1012
- Logging, Clear-cut-Cataract Creek area
 - General remarks ... 1012, 1480-81
- Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park
 - General remarks ... 1012
- Lottery boards, Community
 - Elimination of ... 1283
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation ... 1284
- Love, Rod
 - Fees paid to, re Fort McMurray rail service consultation ... 612
 - Trip to Fort McMurray on government aircraft ... 612
- Magnetic resonance imaging
 - Fort McMurray unit ... 576
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 64-66
- Markin Institute for Public Health
 - Personal donation to ... 1467
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Committee ... 1875, 1877-78
- Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts, Calgary
 - Program from (SP362/05: Tabled) ... 984
- Meals on Wheels
 - 40th anniversary of ... 1342
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of: Provincial support for ... 266
- Medical care
 - Demand for, reduction of ... 1467
 - General remarks ... 1152
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 1087
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1087, 1466
- Medical care-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1470
- Medical profession
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1364-65
- Medical profession-Rural areas
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1364-65
- Medical profession-Supply
 - General remarks ... 1467
- Medical records, Electronic
 - General remarks ... 1467
- Medical research-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1377

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Alberta Centennial Multicultural Gala Night / East Coulee Spring Festival ... 735
 - BVolunteer achievements ... 907
 - Castle wilderness ... 1673
 - A Centennial Summary (poem) ... 1918
 - Events attended by Member for Calgary-Varsity ... 1152, 1341–42
 - Gaming as a source of revenue ... 1744–45
 - Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie ... 209
 - Public education stressors ... 1506
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004: Letters re (SP307, 327, 335/05: Tabled) ... 699, 776, 807
- Mount Royal College
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796
- Municipal finance
 - Deferred maintenance costs ... 1801–02
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 386
- Museums, Provincial–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1012
- Mustard Seed Street Ministry
 - General remarks ... 1341
- Natural resources revenue
 - General remarks ... 1086
 - Relation to gaming revenues ... 1283
- Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Renovations ... 1481
- Northern Lights Health Region
 - Magnetic resonance imaging unit ... 576
- Nurses, Licensed practical
 - Extensive use of, in long-term care facilities ... 1467
- Off-highway vehicles
 - Access to Ghost-Waiporous recreation area ... 1601
- Office of the Premier
 - Current chief of staff (Rod Love) remuneration (Q23/05: Defeated) ... 814
 - Former chief of staff (Peter Elzinga) remuneration (Q22/05: Defeated) ... 814
 - Premier's use of chartered aircraft for Ottawa health conference, 2004 ... 160–61
- Oil–Royalties
 - Investment into research and development ... 1377
 - Relation to gaming revenues ... 1283
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Budget expenditures ... 796–97
 - Chartered air travel ... 160–161
 - Construction projects in University Heights ... 364
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... 484–85, 575–76, 1627–28
 - Government aircraft ... 18–19, 122–123
 - Government aircraft flight logs ... 1518–19
 - Highway 28 ... 741
 - Highway construction ... 1336
 - Infrastructure needs in Fort McMurray ... 612
 - Municipal infrastructure spending ... 1199
 - Parks and protected areas ... 852–53, 1601, 2012
 - Private/public partnerships ... 645, 905, 1883
 - School construction estimates ... 1310–11
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Official opposition role in ... 57

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Pacific Northwest Economic Region
 - General remarks ... 1186
- Parkland Institute
 - Co-sponsor of Calgary health care conference ... 1152
- Parkland School Division
 - Portable classrooms ... 1801
- Parks, Provincial
 - Enforcement of rules in ... 1601
 - Funding for ... 264, 1480–81
 - General remarks ... 2012
 - Increase in number of ... 1048
 - Industrial development in ... 1012, 1601
 - Interpretive centre programs in ... 1012
 - Renaming of: Letter re (SP185/05: Tabled) ... 327
 - Upgrading of ... 852–53, 1012, 2012
- Peter Lougheed Centre (Calgary General Hospital)
 - Upgrades to ... 1470
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Highway 63 upgrading ... 1452
- Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 - Second reading ... 714–15
 - Committee ... 1560
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Committee ... 1929, 1934
- Piikani (Peigan) Nation
 - General remarks ... 1673, 2012
- Point of Order
 - Insulting language ... 493
 - Items previously decided ... 1292, 1293
 - Reading from documents ... 265
 - Relevance ... 442, 443–44
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 705
 - Committee ... 1299, 1379, 1381–82
 - Third reading ... 1585
- Portable/modular classrooms
 - General remarks ... 1801
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 55)
 - Third reading ... 2030
- Postsecondary educational institutions
 - Accreditation of degree-granting institutions, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921–22
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Calgary–Maintenance and repair
 - General remarks ... 796–97
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Construction
 - General remarks ... 1087
- Postsecondary educational institutions–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1087
- Postsecondary graduates
 - Number of ... 1087
- Preventive medical services
 - General remarks ... 1467
- Property tax–Education levy
 - Collection of, by municipalities ... 1086–87
 - Reduction of ... 1801
- Protected areas
 - Enforcement of rules in ... 1601
 - Funding for ... 264, 1480–81
 - General remarks ... 2012
 - Increase in number of ... 1048

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Protected areas (*Continued*)
 - Industrial development in ... 1012, 1601
 - Upgrading of ... 852–53, 1012
- Public lands
 - Sale of ... 1012, 1048
 - Sale of, freeze on ... 853
- Public service–Alberta
 - Cuts to, in 1994 ... 1466
- Queen Elizabeth II highway–Carstairs/Crossfield area
 - Upgrading of ... 264
- Rail service–Edmonton/Fort McMurray
 - Lobbyist for, fees paid to ... 612
- Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)
 - Second reading ... 421–22
 - Committee ... 449
- Ranchers–Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)
 - Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 1187
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Second reading ... 540
 - Committee ... 1190
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 490–91
- Referendum, Provincial
 - Video gambling machines, removal of ... 1284
- Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, 2005
 - Statement re ... 209
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 515–16
- Research and development
 - Funding for ... 1377
- Road construction
 - General remarks ... 1087, 1336
- Road construction–Fort McMurray area
 - Impact of population increase on ... 612
- Roads–Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1802
 - General remarks ... 264
- Rockyview General Hospital
 - Upgrades to ... 1470
- Rosebud Theatre
 - General remarks ... 1012
- School boards
 - Audit upgrades ... 1801
 - Deferred maintenance ... 1801
 - Deficit financing ... 265
 - Foreign student recruitment ... 265
 - Funding ... 1801
 - Utility costs ... 1801
- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 809, 810
- Schoolchildren–Transportation
 - Cost effectiveness of ... 265
- Schools–Closure
 - General remarks ... 1087, 1311
- Schools–Construction
 - Contingent on closure of older schools ... 1087
 - General remarks ... 1801
 - Impact of utilization formula on ... 1310–11
 - Public/private projects re ... 905
- Schools–Construction–Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 1311

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Schools–Construction–Finance
 - Return to Education dept. responsibility ... 1086–87
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 1087
- Schools–Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 1310–11
 - General remarks ... 1087, 1801
- Sewage disposal plants–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1801
- Sewage disposal plants–Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 484–85, 1627–28
- Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1467
- Shell Canada Limited
 - Dredging in beluga whale habitat ... 907
- Simon Fraser junior high school, Calgary
 - Band program cancellation: E-mails re (SP490/05: Tabled) ... 1579
 - Band program cancellation: Letters re (SP442, 461/05: Tabled) ... 1507, 1528
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 178
 - Committee ... 496–97
 - General remarks ... 1466
 - Letters re (SP276/05: Tabled) ... 579
- Smoking–Prevention
 - AADAC award of excellence and scholarship re (Barb Tarbox award) ... 490–91
 - Recognition of ... 490–91
- Smoking in public places
 - E-mail re (SP361/05: Tabled) ... 984
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796
- Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Renovations ... 1481
- SouthLink health centre, Calgary
 - P3 project funding ... 1467
- Special Places program
 - General remarks ... 2012
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 64–66
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 522–23, 524–25
 - Committee ... 605–06, 609–10
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Second reading ... 545
- Street car-racing
 - Letter re (SP726/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Student financial aid
 - Dollar value for students attending private institutions, 2000-04 (Q21/05: Response tabled as SP475/05) ... 814
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 430, 433, 434
 - Committee ... 1561
- Student testing
 - Achievement tests ... 265
- Students, Foreign (Grade school)
 - Recruitment of ... 265
- Suncor Inc.
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... 1047

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 1798, 1801
- Supreme Court of Canada
 - Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... 776
- Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)
 - Second reading ... 1869
 - Third reading ... 2027-28
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Capital project funding with ... 645
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure funding with ... 1627-28
 - General remarks ... 1801
 - School construction funding with ... 1087
- Tar sands development
 - Use of natural gas supplies ... 1377
- Tar sands development-Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1047
- Technology commercialization
 - General remarks ... 1377
- Tourism
 - Impact of arts/culture facilities on ... 1012
 - Impact of industrial development on ... 1011-12
- Trade missions
 - Expenditures re (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
- Trade shows
 - Expenditures re (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Traffic safety
 - McDermid report on ... 1802
 - McDermid report on: Costs of (M48/05: Response tabled as SP713/05) ... 1749
- Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 999, 1006
- Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)
 - Second reading ... 1292-93
 - Committee ... 1487-88
 - Third reading ... 1582
 - Amendment (SP436/05: Tabled) ... 1487
- Truck drivers-Supply
 - Government calculations re (Q42/05: Response tabled as SP805/05) ... 1748
- University of Calgary
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796
- Video gambling machines
 - Referendum on removal of ... 1284
- Volunteers
 - Statement re ... 907
- Waiting lists (Medical care)-Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1466
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 1801
- Water supply
 - Use by energy industry, phase out of ... 1377
- Water treatment plants
 - Funding for ... 1801
- Water treatment plants-Fort McMurray
 - General remarks ... 576, 1627-28
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 73
- West Edmonton Mall Grand Prix Champ Car race
 - Letter re (SP726/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Whaleback Ridge natural area
 - Industrial development in ... 1012

Chase, Harry B. (L, Calgary-Varsity) (Continued)

- Wild Rose School Division
 - Portable classrooms ... 1801
- Wind power-Cypress Hills area
 - Impact on tourism ... 1012
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Committee ... 1651, 1654-55, 1659-61
- Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park
 - Industrial development in ... 1012
- Clerk of the Legislative Assembly**
 - Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP66/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP587 & 664/05: Tabled) ... 1675, 1789
 - Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council
 - Annual report, 2002-03 (SP665/05: Tabled) ... 1789
 - Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP292/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP733/05: Tabled) ... 1920
 - Alberta Association of Architects
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP447/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Alberta Association of Registered Nurses
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP609/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP763/05: Tabled) ... 1971
 - Alberta Automobile Insurance Board
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP69/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Alberta Boilers Safety Association
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP642/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 - Alberta Cancer Board
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP626/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Alberta Capital Finance Authority
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP67/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP764/05: Tabled) ... 1971
 - Alberta College of Optometrists
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP615/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Alberta College of Pharmacists
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP612/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Alberta College of Social Workers
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP216/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP688/05: Tabled) ... 1838
 - Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP614/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Alberta Dental Assistants Association
 - Annual report, 2003 and 2004 (SP761-762/05: Tabled) ... 1971
 - Alberta Dental Association and College
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP211 & 683/05: Tabled) ... 1838
 - Radiation health and safety program annual report, 2003 (SP452/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Radiation health and safety program annual report, 2004 (SP658/05: Tabled) ... 1789
 - Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP213/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP611/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP643/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 - Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP209/05: Tabled) ... 370

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP68/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP588/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - First- and second-quarter updates, 2004-05 (SP83-4/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Alberta Land Surveyors' Association
 - 95th annual general meeting (SP449/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - 96th annual general meeting (SP689/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- Alberta Law Foundation
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP154/05: Tabled) ... 253
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP51/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Financial statements, 2003-04 (SP155/05: Tabled) ... 253
 - Financial statements, 2004-05 (SP592/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta Mental Health Board
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP616/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Alberta Opticians Association
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP610/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Alberta Research Council Inc.
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP560/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: Documentation re (M29/05: Response tabled as SP515/05) ... 1608
- Alberta Treasury Branch Financial
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP78/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP561/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta Veterinary Medical Association
 - Radiation protection program annual report, 2003 (SP451/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Radiation protection program annual report, 2004 (SP659/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- Alberta's Promise
 - Partners' report, 2004 (SP590/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Ambulance service
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re (Q5/05: Response tabled as SP627/05) ... 1717

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

- Ambulance service (Continued)
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Documents re (M19/05: Response tabled as SP807) ... 2018
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Contracts re (M39/05: Response tabled as SP513/05) ... 1608
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs comparison for (M41/05: Response tabled as SP514/05) ... 1608
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05: Response tabled as SP511/05) ... 1608
- Aspen Regional Health Authority
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP617/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP448/05: Tabled) ... 1508
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits dollar value (Q9/05: Response tabled as SP639/05) ... 1746
 - Benefits received under (Q32/05: Response tabled as SP640/05) ... 1746
 - Review of (2004): Submissions received by (M23/05: Response tabled as SP641/05) ... 1746
- Auditor General
 - Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 2056
- Authorized accredited agencies
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP646/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- Automobile Insurance Rate Board
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP559/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Banff Centre for Continuing Education
 - Audited financial statements, 2003-04 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Audited financial statements, 2004-05 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Speaker ... 1
- Bercha Group
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 1789
- Budget
 - 2004-05 first- and second-quarter fiscal updates and activity reports (SP70-73/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - 2005-06 first-quarter activity report (SP557/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - 2005-06 first-quarter fiscal update (SP556/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Calgary Health Region
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP619/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Calgary-McCall (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... 4, 5
- Capital Health
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP620/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Capital projects
 - Public/private partnerships re: List of all potential projects (M33/05: Response tabled as SP512/05) ... 1608

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

- Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP692/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- Chair
 - Election of ... 3
- Chinook Regional Health Authority
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP625/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Collective bargaining
 - Report on: Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta (SP638/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- College of Alberta Denturists
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP214/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP613/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP450/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Financial statements, 2004 (SP695/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Alberta Professional Foresters
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP690/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Alberta Psychologists
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP687/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Chiropractors of Alberta
 - Annual review, 2004-05 (SP766/05: Tabled) ... 1971
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP466/05: Tabled) ... 1529
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP660/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- College of Dental Technologists of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP765/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- College of Dietitians of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP215 & 685/05: Tabled) ... 370, 1838
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP686/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP398/05: Tabled) ... 1206
- College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP212/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP684/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Physical Therapists of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP210/05: Tabled) ... 370
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP455/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP661/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing
 - Reports, 2004 & 2005 (SP739-740/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Consulting Engineers of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP693/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP79/05: Tabled) ... 94
- David Thompson Regional Health Authority
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP624/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP39/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP562/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP563/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP40/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP564/05: Tabled) ... 1675

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP41/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP565/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP42/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP566/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP43/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP567/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Education
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP568/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Energy
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP44/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP569/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Contracted employees/consultants salaries, 2003-04 (M25/05: Response tabled as SP808/05) ... 2018
 - Minister's noninternational trips details, 2003-04 (M26/05: Response tabled as SP735/05) ... 1920
- Dept. of Environment
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP45/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP570/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Finance
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP47/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP572/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP48/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP573/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP49/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP574/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Annual report, 2003-04, sections I and II (SP50-51/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05, sections I and II (SP575-576/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Responses to questions during (SP516/05: Tabled) ... 1608
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP52/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP577/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Collective Agreement Settlements in Alberta (Report) (SP638/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP494/05: Tabled) ... 1579
- Dept. of Infrastructure
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP53/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP578/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP56/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP580/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP57/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP581/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Dept. of Learning
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP58/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP59/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP582/05: Tabled) ... 1675

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

- Dept. of Municipal Affairs (Continued)
 Credit card statements for deputy minister (M15/05: Response tabled as SP826/05) ... 2056
 Credit card statements for minister and executive assistant (M16/05: Response tabled as SP827/05) ... 2056
 Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP456/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 Minister's business expenses (M14/05: Response tabled as SP825/05) ... 2056
 Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP583/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Dept. of Revenue
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP60/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Dept. of Seniors
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP61/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP584/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Dept. of Solicitor General
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP62/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP585/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP63/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP586/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Deputy Minister's and departmental official's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M13/05: Response tabled as SP738/05) ... 1920
 Minister's and executive assistant's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M12/05: Response tabled as SP737/05) ... 1920
 Minister's business expenses, 2003-04 (M11/05: Response tabled as SP736/05) ... 1920
 Dept. of Transportation
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP54/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Deputy Chair
 Election of, on second ballot ... 4, 5
 Deputy Speaker
 Election of ... 3
 East Central Health
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP621/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 Edmonton-Castle Downs (Constituency)
 Report on electoral results in ... 11
 Elections, Municipal—Calgary
 Ward 10 election process: Cost of investigation of (Q30/05: Response tabled as SP806/05) ... 2018
 Elections, Provincial
 Report on general election of Nov. 22, 2004 ... 11
 Report on general election of Nov. 22, 2004 results for Edmonton-Castle Downs ... 11
 Environmental Protection Security Fund
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP139/04: Tabled) ... 211
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP810/04: Tabled) ... 2018
 Executive Council
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP46/05: Tabled) ... 93
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP571/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Foreign workers, Temporary
 Alberta/federal government memorandum re: Information package (SP366/05: Tabled) ... 1034
 Gas well drilling industry
 Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 1789

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

- General Revenue Fund
 Details by payee, 2003-04 (SP65/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Details by payee, 2004-05 (SP657/05: Tabled) ... 1789
 Government chartered aircraft
 Provision of details re: Documents, April 2001 to Dec. 2004 (SP358/05: Tabled) ... 957
 Government of Alberta
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP555/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Health Disciplines Board
 Annual report, 2003 (SP356/05: Tabled) ... 957
 Annual report, 2004 (SP357/05: Tabled) ... 957
 Informatics Circle of Research Excellence
 Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Information and communications technology
 Security issues: Auditor General's recommendation re (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 2056
 Law Society of Alberta
 Annual report, 2004 (SP365/05: Tabled) ... 1034
 Livestock Identification Services Ltd.
 Manager's report and financial statements, 2004-05 (SP666/05: Tabled) ... 1789
 Members of the Legislative Assembly
 Report of selected payments to, 2003-04 (SP64/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Report of selected payments to, 2004-05 (SP656/05: Tabled) ... 1788–89
 Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan
 Annual reports, 2001-2004 (SP74-77/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Annual reports, 2004-05 (SP558/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Mental Health Patient Advocate
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP608/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 Northern Lights Health Region
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP623/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (Constituency)
 Member for, elected as Deputy Speaker ... 3
 Palliser Health Region
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP622/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 Peace Country Health
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP618/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta
 Annual report, 2004 (SP644/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 Provincial Judges and Masters in Chambers Pension Plan
 Annual reports, 2000/01 - 2002/03 (SP80-82/05: Tabled) ... 94
 Public Health Appeal Board
 Annual report, 2004 (SP397/05: Tabled) ... 1206
 Public service—Alberta
 Information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 2056
 Safety Codes Council
 Annual report, 2004 (SP645/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 Social Care Facilities Review Committee
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP329/05: Tabled) ... 776
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP809/05: Tabled) ... 2018
 Semiannual report, October 2002 to March 2003 (SP264/05: Tabled) ... 492

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly (Continued)

Speaker

Election of ... 1

Special Areas Trust Account

2004 financial statements (SP432/05: Tabled) ... 1396

Technical schools

Audited financial statements, 2002-03 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... 623

Audited financial statements, 2003-04 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... 1920

Tobacco companies

Meetings with provincial ministers, 2001-2004 (M4/05: Response tabled as SP628/05) ... 1717

Traffic safety

McDermid report on: Costs of (M48/05: Response tabled as SP713/05) ... 1891

Truck drivers—Supply

Government calculations re (Q42/05: Response tabled as SP805/05) ... 2018

Universities and colleges

Audited financial statements, 2003 and 2004 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... 623

Audited financial statements, 2004 and 2005 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... 1920

University of Alberta

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP454/05: Tabled) ... 1508

Radiation health administrative organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP662/05: Tabled) ... 1789

University of Calgary

Radiation health administration organization annual report, 2003-04 (SP453/05: Tabled) ... 1508

Radiation health administration organization annual report, 2004-05 (SP663/05: Tabled) ... 1789

Workers' Compensation Board

2004 accountability framework report (SP694/05: Tabled) ... 1838

Annual report, 2004 (SP691/05: Tabled) ... 1838

Coutts, Hon. David (PC, Livingstone-Macleod)

AAA Cattle Company

Feedlot expansion approval ... 1027

Air tankers (Water bombers)

Fees for airport use by ... 937

Upgrading of ... 927

Upgrading of bases for ... 927

Airports—Northern Alberta

Review of fees at, for water bomber fleet ... 937

Alberta/British Columbia joint cabinet meeting, March 2005

Mountain pine bark beetle infestation discussions ... 740

Alberta Conservation Association

Funding for, from fishing licences ... 855

Alberta Softwood Lumber Trade Council

General remarks ... 21, 89

Alberta Sustainability Fund

Use for forest fire control costs ... 930, 934

Backcountry safety

General remarks ... 769

Bighorn sheep hunting

Under Métis hunting agreement ... 850

Bighorn wildlife recreation area

Access management plan for ... 648, 1573

Coutts, Hon. David (PC, Livingstone-Macleod)*(Continued)*

Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre

National surveillance program for avian flu ... 1781

Canadian Forest Products Ltd.

Hines Creek mill closure, impact of ... 88

Caribou management

General remarks ... 926, 955, 1521, 1963, 1965

Chronic wasting disease

Human/animal risk of ... 934

Presence on game farms ... 934

Survey of ... 926

Coal bed methane extraction

Impact of ... 1075

Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy

Eastern Slopes access issues, discussion of rural municipalities report on ... 1573

Community timber program

General remarks ... 927, 931

Conflict of interest

Natural Resources Conservation Board advisors' appearance at appeals hearings ... 1252

ConocoPhillips

Pipeline planning, wildlife consideration ... 1965

Cougars

Public awareness of ... 769

Relocation of ... 769

Deer—Alberta/Saskatchewan border area

Culling of, due to CWD threat ... 934

Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development

Annual report, 2003-04 (SP63/05: Tabled) ... 94

Annual report, 2004-05 (SP586/05: Tabled) ... 1675

Deputy Minister's and departmental official's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M13/05: Response tabled as SP738/05) ... 667, 1920

Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 925-27, 930-37

Fee revenues ... 931

Lottery funding to ... 930

Minister's and executive assistant's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M12/05: Response tabled as SP737/05) ... 666, 1920

Minister's business expenses, 2003-04 (M11/05: Response tabled as SP736/05) ... 666, 1920

Minister's office budget ... 930

Property theft in (Q28/05: Response tabled as SP776/05) ... 1158, 2017

Staff salaries ... 930

Staffing ... 925, 930

Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1846-49

Economic development and the environment

General remarks ... 1312, 1964, 1965

Endangered plant species

Protection of ... 1521

Endangered Species Conservation Committee

General remarks ... 1521, 1963

Grizzly bear designation recommendation ... 1963

Endangered wildlife species

Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... 1746

Protection of ... 21, 926, 931-32, 955, 1521, 1963

Energy industry—Crown lands—Sawn Lake area

Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 902

Coutts, Hon. David (PC, Livingstone-Macleod)*(Continued)*

- Environmental impact assessments
 - AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion ... 1027
 - Well drilling, Sawn Lake area ... 902
- Fees, Government
 - General remarks ... 931
- Fines (Poaching violations)
 - General remarks ... 21
- Firearms–Licensing
 - Impact on provincial hunting regulations ... 2050
- FireNet (Forest fire communications system)
 - General remarks ... 930
- FireSmart program (Forest fire prevention)
 - General remarks ... 47, 1849
- Fish and wildlife legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 931, 933–34, 936
- Fish and wildlife officers
 - Number of ... 925, 931, 933–34, 936, 1254, 1849
- Fish conservation
 - General remarks ... 855
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 89, 615–16, 926
- Fish management
 - General remarks ... 925–26, 934
- Fish populations–Alberta
 - General remarks ... 855
- Fish stocking
 - General remarks ... 855
- Fisheries, Commercial
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 615–16
 - Reduction in ... 926
- Fisheries, Commercial–Bow River
 - General remarks ... 615
- Fishing, Sport
 - 2005 Alberta Guide to Sport Fishing Regulations (SP110/05: Tabled) ... 171
 - General remarks ... 855
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 89
- Forest conservation
 - General remarks ... 936, 1312
- Forest firefighters
 - Room and board rates for ... 618, 934
- Forest firefighters–Training
 - General remarks ... 1393
- Forest fires–Control
 - Capital funding for ... 927
 - Equipment for ... 930
 - Funding for ... 930, 934, 1846–47, 1849
 - General remarks ... 618
 - Impact on pine beetle control ... 1848
- Forest fires–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 47, 1393
 - Phone reporting line re ... 1393
- Forest guardians
 - General remarks ... 925, 931, 934, 1252, 1254
- Forest industries
 - Impact of mountain pine beetle on ... 247, 926
 - Impact of softwood lumber dispute on ... 20–21, 1626
 - Value-added processing in ... 926–27, 937
- Forest management agreements
 - Recreational/snowmobile access to lands under ... 694
 - Reforestation requirements ... 1575
- Forest protection
 - Budget for, reports on (Q37/05: Accepted) ... 1747

Coutts, Hon. David (PC, Livingstone-Macleod)*(Continued)*

- Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta
 - General remarks ... 530, 927, 931, 936, 1575
- Forest resource improvement program
 - General remarks ... 927
- Forest tenure system
 - General remarks ... 936–37
- ForestCare (Forest protection program)
 - General remarks ... 936
- Forintek Canada Corp.
 - Provincial partnership with ... 927
- Game farming
 - Chronic wasting disease issue in ... 934
- Ghost-Waiparous recreation area
 - Access management plan for ... 927, 1252, 1573
 - Management of use of ... 1252
 - Off-highway vehicle access to ... 1573–74
- Grazing lands, Public
 - Bison grazing on ... 1393
 - General remarks ... 927
 - Revenue from oil and gas leases on ... 1393, 1449
- Grizzly bear conservation
 - General remarks ... 1849, 1963
- Grizzly bear hunting
 - General remarks ... 21, 246, 935, 1311–12, 1849
- Grizzly bears
 - Designation as threatened species ... 21
 - Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... 1746
 - Human contact issues ... 935
- Grizzly bears–Populations
 - DNA-based census of ... 926, 935, 1963
- Hinton Training Centre
 - General remarks ... 1393
- Hunters–Education
 - General remarks ... 2050
- Hunting–Regulations
 - For youth ... 2050
- Ice fishing
 - Impact on fish stocks ... 1849
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)
 - Access issues ... 694, 927
 - General remarks ... 648, 902, 927, 1312, 1849
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)–Fort McMurray area
 - General remarks ... 1964
- Kakwa-Narraway watershed
 - Mountain pine beetle infestation in ... 1847, 1848
- Kananaskis Country
 - Mountain pine beetle infestation in ... 926
- Kneehill Animal Control and Rehabilitation Centre Ltd.
 - Renewal of permit for ... 534
- Livestock industry, Intensive–Environmental aspects
 - Enforcement of legislation re ... 1027, 1252
 - Enforcement of legislation re, review of ... 1252, 1740
- Logging
 - As pine bark beetle prevention measure ... 1742
 - Rate of ... 530–31
- Logging in forest fire hit areas
 - General remarks ... 1393
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation to Sustainable Resources dept. ... 930

Coutts, Hon. David (PC, Livingstone-Macleod)*(Continued)*

- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 89, 165, 246, 615–16, 926, 931, 936
- Métis hunting/fishing rights–Ontario
 - Provincial agreement re ... 165
- Minable oil sands strategy–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1964
- Natural Resources Conservation Board
 - AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion approval ... 1027
 - Appeals process: NRCB advisors as representatives of companies during ... 1252
 - Board governance review report ... 1740
 - Chief operating officer ... 1740
 - Confined feeding operations regulation ... 1252, 1740
 - Confined feeding operations regulation, review of ... 1252
 - Staffing levels ... 1740
- Off-highway vehicles
 - Access to Ghost-Waiporous recreation area ... 1252
 - Access to public lands ... 694, 1573
- Oil well drilling industry–Public lands
 - EUB permits required for ... 902
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - AAA Cattle Company ... 1027
 - Avian influenza ... 1780–81
 - Bison grazing on agricultural public land ... 1393
 - Canadian Forest Products Ltd. mill closure ... 88
 - Caribou conservation ... 1965
 - Cougar management ... 769
 - Forest fires ... 1393
 - Forest sustainability ... 530–31
 - Ghost-Waiporous access management ... 1252
 - Grizzly bear hunt ... 21
 - GuZoo animal farm ... 534
 - Hunting regulations for youths ... 2050
 - Integrated land management ... 648
 - Leaseholders on agricultural public land ... 1449
 - Métis hunting rights ... 89, 165, 246, 615–16, 850
 - Minable oil sands strategy ... 1964
 - Mountain pine beetle ... 801–02
 - Mountain pine beetle control ... 247, 740, 1742
 - Natural Resources Conservation Board ... 1740
 - Natural Resources Conservation Board appeals ... 1252
 - Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 902
 - Pheasant hunting ... 162–163
 - Prevention of wildfires ... 47
 - Public land management ... 1573–74
 - Recreational sport fishing ... 855
 - Reforestation ... 1575
 - Room and board for forest firefighters ... 618
 - Snowmobile use on public lands ... 693–94
 - Snowwood lumber trade dispute ... 20–21, 89, 573, 1626
 - Species at risk ... 955, 1521
 - Sustainable resource management ... 1311–12
 - Wildlife conservation ... 1963
 - Wildlife protection ... 1254
- Peregrine falcons
 - Development management plans re (Q34/05: Accepted) ... 1746
 - Restoration of ... 955

Coutts, Hon. David (PC, Livingstone-Macleod)*(Continued)*

- Petty Trespass Act
 - Snowmobiles on public lands provisions ... 693–94
- Pheasant hunting
 - General remarks ... 162–63
- Pine beetles–Control
 - Federal funding for ... 936
 - General remarks ... 247, 740, 801–02, 926, 930–31, 934, 936, 1312, 1742, 1847, 1848–49
 - Impact of forest fire fighting on ... 1848
 - Research into ... 1848
- Poaching
 - Penalties for ... 955
- Poaching–Law and legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 1254
- Public lands
 - Access to ... 648, 693–94, 927, 1573
 - General remarks ... 1075
- Public lands–Eastern Slopes
 - Access issues re ... 1573–74
- Reforestation
 - General remarks ... 530–31, 927, 931, 936, 937, 1393
 - Timelines met re (Q19/05: Response tabled as SP775/05) ... 813, 2017
- Reforestation on burnt-out areas
 - General remarks ... 927, 931, 1575
- Snowmobiles
 - Access to public lands ... 693–94
- Softwoods–Export–United States
 - Countervail duties re ... 20–21, 89, 927, 937, 1626
 - Countervail duties re: Byrd amendment re ... 573
- Species at Risk Act (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 955
- Suncor Inc.
 - Pipeline planning, wildlife consideration ... 1965
- Supreme Court of Canada
 - Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... 165, 246, 616
- Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP324/05: Tabled) ... 776
- Tar sands development–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1964
- Timber, Fire-killed
 - Value-adding re ... 1393
- Timber–Hines Creek area
 - Allocation of ... 88
- Timber–Royalties
 - General remarks ... 930, 931
- Trails, Recreational
 - On public lands ... 694
- Trout–Bow River
 - Commercial fishing of ... 615
- Walleye fishing
 - General remarks ... 855
- West Nile virus
 - Monitoring of ... 926
- Western blue flag (Flower)
 - Protection of ... 1521
- Wild waterfowl
 - Handling of, re avian flu risk ... 1780–81
- Wildfire reclamation program
 - General remarks ... 927, 931

Coutts, Hon. David (PC, Livingstone-Macleod)*(Continued)*

- Wildlife Act
 - Changes to, re federal firearms licensing regulations ... 2050
 - Sale of animal parts regulations ... 850
 - Species at risk provisions ... 931–32, 955
- Wildlife conservation
 - General remarks ... 21, 926, 1311–12, 1521, 1963, 1965
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 89, 165, 246, 615–16, 850, 926
- Wildlife management
 - General remarks ... 925–26, 1254, 1849
 - Human/wildlife interaction issue ... 769, 935
- Willmore Wilderness Park
 - Mountain pine bark beetle infestation in ... 1742, 1847, 1848

Danyluk, Ray (PC, Lac La Biche-St. Paul)

- Aboriginal issues
 - General remarks ... 836–37, 843, 844
- Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs ... 1624–25
- Agrology Profession Act (Bill 17)
 - First reading ... 128
 - Second reading ... 194
 - Committee ... 557–58
 - Third reading ... 1513
- Airport authorities
 - Rent paid to federal government ... 362
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Health services delivery via ... 853–54
 - Library access to ... 843
 - Rural homes access to ... 843
 - School access to ... 843
- Apprenticeship training
 - General remarks ... 1882–83
- Apprenticeship training–Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 981
 - Provincial assistance re ... 1882–83
- Apprenticeship training–Rural areas
 - Provincial assistance re ... 1883
- Baldwin, Mr. Tom
 - Recognition of ... 251
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 46
 - Impact on crop production ... 695
- British Columbia ports strategy
 - Alberta participation in ... 772
- Bullying–Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re: Involvement of youth in ... 1062
- Calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta)
 - Extension of ... 46
- Calgary-McCall (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... 4
- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - Changes to ... 1624–25
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 203
- Capital projects–Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 804–05

Danyluk, Ray (PC, Lac La Biche-St. Paul) (Continued)

- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... 46
 - Current assistance plans re border reopening ... 46
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 906
- Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy
 - Municipal infrastructure funding discussion ... 531
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 843
- Crop insurance program
 - Spring price endorsement option ... 695
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 836–37, 843, 844
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1052–53, 1062–63
- Deputy Chair
 - Election of, on second ballot ... 4
- Economic development
 - General remarks ... 531
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Aboriginal students ... 843, 1395
 - Access to, affordability review to improve ... 981
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 981
- Education, Postsecondary–Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 843
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1409–10
- Employment training programs
 - Aboriginal peoples ... 843
 - General remarks ... 531
- Employment training programs–Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 837, 843
- Extended care facilities–Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1409–10
- Farm input costs
 - General remarks ... 695
- Food industry and trade
 - General remarks ... 836
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 843
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 203, 843
- Forum for Young Albertans
 - Statement re ... 1126
- Grain–Prices
 - Provincial assistance program re ... 1624–25
- Great Kids of Alberta
 - Awards: Recognition of ... 168
- Hay-Zama Lakes wild-land provincial park
 - General remarks ... 774
- Health Link Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1152
- Highway 28
 - Upgrading of ... 87
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 87, 1199–1200
- Highway 881
 - Upgrading of ... 1199–1200

Danyluk, Ray (PC, Lac La Biche-St. Paul) (Continued)

- Hockey championships
 - U of A Pandas Canada West title winners ... 50
- Housing—Fort McMurray
 - Impact of population increase on ... 87, 843
- International trade—Asian countries
 - General remarks ... 772
- Keyano College
 - Transition program to University of Alberta programs: Statement re ... 1394–95
- Land agents—Licensing
 - Legislation re (Bill 218) ... 1919
- Land Agents Licensing (Licence Requirement) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 218)
 - First reading ... 1919
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 193, 343
- Louis Riel commemoration ceremony
 - General remarks ... 1672
- Magnetic resonance imaging
 - Mobile units for ... 854
- Medical care—Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1339
- Medical profession
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1361–62, 1368
- Medical profession—Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1339
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1361–62, 1368
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Economic development in northern Alberta ... 804–05
 - Forum for Young Albertans ... 1126
 - Métis Week ... 1672
 - National Child Day ... 1714
 - National Soil Conservation Week ... 906
 - National Wildlife Week ... 734
 - Nursing Week ... 1152
 - Parent Link Centres ... 462
 - U of A and Keyano College partnership ... 1394–95
 - Youth Advisory Panel ... 1889
 - Youth Secretariat ... 857
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 1672
- Métis Nation of Alberta Association
 - Consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ... 1672
- Métis settlements
 - General remarks ... 1672
- Métis Settlements General Council
 - Consultations with, re Métis hunting/fishing rights ... 1672
- Métis Week
 - Statement re ... 1672
- National Child Day
 - Statement re ... 1714
- National Soil Conservation Week
 - Statement re ... 906
- National Wildlife Week
 - Statement re ... 774
- Natural resources
 - Value-adding re ... 531–32

Danyluk, Ray (PC, Lac La Biche-St. Paul) (Continued)

- NorQuest College
 - Partnership agreement with University of Alberta ... 1395
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - General remarks ... 837, 843
 - Recognition of former executive director (Tom Baldwin) ... 251
 - Relationship with Sustainable Resource Development dept. ... 844
 - Role of ... 844
- Northern development
 - Statement re ... 804–05, 836–37, 843, 844
- Northern Lakes College
 - Transition program to University of Alberta programs ... 1395
- Nursing Week
 - Statement re ... 1152
- Olds College
 - Partnership agreement with University of Alberta ... 1395
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Access to postsecondary education ... 981
 - Affordable housing in Fort McMurray ... 87
 - Affordable housing in the north ... 1125
 - Agricultural assistance ... 1624–25
 - Airport rental costs ... 362
 - B.C./Alberta transportation issues ... 772
 - Beef recovery strategy ... 46
 - Benefits of SuperNet for rural Alberta ... 853–54
 - Crop production insurance changes ... 695
 - Health services in the north ... 1339
 - Highway improvements in northeastern Alberta ... 1199–1200
 - Major Alberta projects ... 531–32
 - Oil sands development ... 203
 - Postsecondary opportunities for youth ... 1882–83
 - Railway container terminals ... 905
- Parent Link Centres
 - Statement re ... 462
- Parks, Provincial—Northern Alberta
 - Funding for ... 843
- PCL Construction Group Inc.
 - 100th anniversary of: Recognition of ... 577–78
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Committee ... 1925–26
- Port of Prince Rupert
 - Alberta participation in development of ... 772
 - Container terminal at ... 905
- Professions—Law and legislation
 - Agrology profession (Bill 17) ... 128
- Rail service—Alberta/Prince Rupert, B.C.
 - General remarks ... 836, 843
- Rail service—Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 804–05, 836
- Railway container terminals—Grande Prairie area
 - Proposal for ... 837, 843, 905
- Railway container terminals—Prince Rupert, B.C.
 - Impact on Alberta trade ... 905
- Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)
 - Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 46

Danyluk, Ray (PC, Lac La Biche-St. Paul) (Continued)

Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 General remarks ... 50, 168, 251, 577–78
 Regional health authorities–Northern Alberta
 General remarks ... 1339
 Road construction–Fort McMurray area
 Impact of population increase on ... 87
 Road construction–Northern Alberta
 General remarks ... 804–05, 837
 Roads–Maintenance and repair–Northern Alberta
 General remarks ... 1199–1200
 Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary
 (May 2004)
 General remarks ... 1052
 Involvement of youth in ... 1062
 Scholarships
 Rural/northern students ... 1883
 Senior citizens–Housing–Northern Alberta
 General remarks ... 1125
 Senior citizens' lodges–Northern Alberta
 Funding for ... 1125
 Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 Second reading ... 184–85
 Committee ... 495–96
 Social housing–Northern Alberta
 Committee to study ... 1125
 General remarks ... 1125
 Social housing–Rural areas
 Sustainable remote housing initiative ... 1125
 Soil conservation
 General remarks ... 906
 Speaker
 Congratulations to ... 4
 Substance abuse–Prevention–Youth
 Youth input into ... 1052–53, 1062–63
 Suncor Inc.
 Voyageur project ... 203
 Tar sands development
 Employment opportunities in ... 531
 Expansion projects ... 203, 531
 Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re
 (foreign workers) ... 843
 Impact of ... 203
 Value-added opportunities ... 804–05, 836
 Telehealth services
 General remarks ... 843, 853–54
 Tourism–Northern Alberta
 General remarks ... 804–05, 836
 Transportation, Interprovincial–Alberta/British
 Columbia
 General remarks ... 772, 836–37, 843
 Northern corridor study re ... 772
 Transportation–Northern Alberta
 General remarks ... 843
 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 General remarks ... 1714
 University of Alberta
 Partnership agreement with Keyano College ...
 1394–95
 Partnership agreement with NorQuest College ...
 1395
 Partnership agreement with Northern Lakes College
 ... 1395
 Partnership agreement with Olds College ... 1395

Danyluk, Ray (PC, Lac La Biche-St. Paul) (Continued)

Wildlife conservation
 Statement re ... 774
 Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 Amendment A1 (SP534-535/05: Tabled) ... 1639,
 1662
 Amendment A2 (SP537/05: Tabled) ... 1662
 Amendment A3 (SP538/05: Tabled) ... 1662
 Subamendment SA1 (SP536/05: Tabled) ... 1662
 Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
 (Bill 50)
 Amendment A1 (SP714/05: Tabled) ... 1897
 Amendment A2 (SP715/05: Tabled) ... 1897
 Young adults
 Provincial initiatives re, Involvement of youth in ...
 1052–53
 Youth Advisory Panel
 General remarks ... 857, 1053, 1882
 Statement re ... 1889
 Youth Secretariat
 General remarks ... 1052–53
 Statement re ... 857
DeLong, Alana (PC, Calgary-Bow)
 Airline company failures
 Consumer insurance plan for ... 204
 Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
 (Bill 43)
 Third reading ... 2021
 Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)
 Statement re ... 1257–58
 Alberta SuperNet
 School access to: Statement re ... 2015
 Webcast of health symposium over ... 1336
 Climate change
 International conference on, Montreal, November
 2005 ... 1887
 Declaration of Arbroath (Scottish independence, 1320)
 Recognition of ... 578
 Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 758
 Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 890
 Direct Energy Business Services
 Energy savings partnership with University of
 Calgary ... 696
 Electric power–Retail sales
 Review of ... 1075
 Energy efficiency (Buildings)
 Direct Energy/U of C partnership re ... 696
 Energy research
 General remarks ... 1887
 Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005
 (Bill 205)
 Second reading ... 1752–53
 Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 Committee ... 636
 Fathers
 Statement re ... 1394
 Film industry
 General remarks ... 2013
 Government efficiency
 General remarks ... 758
 Government information systems
 Security aspects ... 758

DeLong, Alana (PC, Calgary-Bow) (Continued)

- Homeless–Housing
 - Funding for ... 890
- Information and communications technology
 - Security issues ... 758
- Jetsgo Corporation
 - Bankruptcy: Ticket refunds re ... 204
- LearnAlberta.ca (Website)
 - Statement re ... 2015
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Committee ... 1878
- Medical records, Electronic
 - General remarks ... 320–21
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Alberta Scene festival ... 1257–58
 - SuperNet learning resources ... 2015
 - A tribute to fathers ... 1394
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1767, 1769
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Climate change ... 1887
 - Electricity marketing review ... 1075
 - Electronic health record ... 320–21
 - Energy efficiency at the University of Calgary ... 696
 - Film industry ... 2013
 - Health symposium webcast ... 1336
 - Jetsgo bankruptcy ... 204
 - Payday loans ... 365
 - Trade mission to United States ... 1500
- Payday loan companies
 - Business practices ... 365
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Third reading ... 792
- Public buildings
 - Energy efficiency in ... 696
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 578
- Scholarships
 - U of C/Direct Energy scholarship ... 696
- Spam (Computer junk e-mail)
 - General remarks ... 758
- Tartan Day (Scotland)
 - Recognition of ... 578
- Trade missions–United States
 - Benefits of ... 1500
- University of Calgary
 - Energy savings partnership with Direct Energy ... 696
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - Webcast of ... 1336
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Input into retail electricity marketing review ... 1075
- Wages–Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1942–43

Deputy Chair of Committees (Shariff, Shiraz)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Amendment A1 (SP271 & 313/05: Tabled) ... 728
- Deputy Chair–Rulings and statements
 - Access to Statutes in the Assembly ... 1958
 - Decorum ... 256
 - Insulting language ... 267
 - Questions to members other than ministers ... 839
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 267

Deputy Chair of Committees (Shariff, Shiraz)*(Continued)***Deputy Chair–Rulings and statements (Continued)**

- Relevance ... 606
- Separating amendments ... 723
- Speaking order ... 1465
- Point of Order
 - Decorum ... 1692
 - Imputing motives ... 262–63, 1482
 - Reading from documents ... 265
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 256, 1489

Deputy Speaker (Marz, Richard)

- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Third reading ... 451
- Deputy Speaker–Rulings and statements
 - Addressing questions through the chair ... 1862
 - Decorum ... 142
 - Historical vignettes of Alberta ... 199
 - Legislature Page appreciation (Leah Halliday) ... 1258
 - Legislature Page recognition ... 1604–05, 2055
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Interim estimates (Main, Legisl. Offices and Lottery Fund) 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP140/05: Tabled) ... 211
- Historical vignettes of Alberta
 - First session of Legislature, March 15, 1906 & first radio/TV coverage of Legislature sittings, March 15, 1972 ... 199
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - New sound system microphones in ... 1862
- Lieutenant Governor of Alberta
 - Transmittal of 2005-06 interim estimates (SP140/05: Tabled) ... 211
- Pages (Legislative Assembly)
 - Recognition of ... 1604–05, 2055
- Point of Order
 - Question and comment period ... 141
 - Quoting documents ... 1857
 - Relevance ... 237, 442, 443–44
 - Subamendments ... 993

Doerksen, Hon. Victor P. (PC, Red Deer-South)

- Access to the Future Fund
 - General remarks ... 1375, 1377
- Agricultural bioproducts industry
 - General remarks ... 1369
- Agriculture–Research
 - General remarks ... 1390
- Alberta Energy Research Institute
 - EnergyINet initiative ... 292, 1369
 - General remarks ... 1887
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Funding for ... 1368, 1375
 - Programs and financial highlights, 2004-05, with attached 2006 calendar (SP773/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94

Doerksen, Hon. Victor P. (PC, Red Deer-South)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research *(Continued)*
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Alberta Information and Communications Technology Institute
 - Establishment of: Legislation re (Bill 4) ... 51, 1369
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Funding for ... 1368, 1372, 1375
 - Funding for prion research ... 1368-69, 1372, 1885
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 347
 - Water research ... 1373
- Alberta Life Sciences Institute
 - Establishment of ... 1369
 - Establishment of: Legislation re (Bill 4) ... 51
- Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority
 - General remarks ... 1372
- Alberta prion research institute
 - Funding for ... 1885
- Alberta Research Council Inc.
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - General remarks ... 1369
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1817
- Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - General remarks ... 1368, 1369, 1373, 1377
- Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act 2005 (Bill 4)
 - First reading ... 51
 - Second reading ... 194-95
 - Committee ... 449-50
 - Third reading ... 638
 - General remarks ... 1369
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 461
- Alberta Water Council
 - General remarks ... 1373
- Biomass as energy source
 - Vegreville project ... 1887
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Research into ... 1372
- Carbon dioxide emissions
 - Research into ... 1369, 1374
- Carbon dioxide projects
 - General remarks ... 1887
- Climate change
 - International conference on, Montreal, November 2005 ... 1887
 - Technological developments re ... 1369
- Corporate Chief Information Officer
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 461, 1372
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Grants distributed by (M45/05: Defeated) ... 1748
 - Hosting expenses, 1992-2005 (Q39/05: Defeated) ... 1747

Doerksen, Hon. Victor P. (PC, Red Deer-South)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M18/05: Response tabled as SP772/05) ... 2017
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1368-69, 1372-78
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP498/05: Tabled) ... 1607
 - Performance measures ... 1372, 1377
 - Staffing ... 1372
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Alberta SuperNet project transferred to ... 461
- Economic development and the environment
 - Research re ... 292
- Edmonton Protocol (Diabetes treatment)
 - General remarks ... 1368
- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - Research into ... 1369
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1408-09
- Endowment funds, Public
 - General remarks ... 1368, 1372
- Energy industry-Environmental aspects
 - EnergyINet information kit re (SP159/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - General remarks ... 292
- Energy Innovation Network
 - General remarks ... 292, 1369, 1375
 - Information kit re (SP159/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Energy research
 - General remarks ... 1369, 1372, 1375, 1887
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 1390, 1887
 - Research into ... 1369, 1374-75
- Environmental research
 - Endowment fund for (proposed) ... 1375
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1408-09
- Farm manure-Recycling
 - Pilot project re ... 1390
- Feedlots-Waste disposal
 - Joint research project re ... 1390
- Galileo (European satellite navigation system)
 - General remarks ... 1369
- Global positioning systems
 - Centre of excellence in ... 1369
- Humanities-Research
 - Funding for ... 1373
- Industrial development (Value-added industries)
 - Government strategy re ... 1369
- Informatics Circle of Research Excellence
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP55/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP774/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (In Dept. of Innovation and Science annual report, SP579/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - General remarks ... 1369
- Information and communications technology
 - General remarks ... 1373
 - Research into ... 1369, 1372

Doerksen, Hon. Victor P. (PC, Red Deer-South)*(Continued)*

Innovation strategy
 General remarks ... 51
 John Dosseter Health Ethics Centre
 General remarks ... 1378
 Life sciences research
 Funding for wet lab re ... 1501
 General remarks ... 1368, 1369, 1372
 Microsoft Corporation
 Centres of excellence establishment at NAIT/SAIT ...
 1369
 National Institute for Nanotechnology
 General remarks ... 1044, 1373
 Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
 Centre of excellence for small manufacturers ... 1369
 Oil recovery methods
 Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research ... 1374
 Research into ... 1369
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Agricultural research initiatives ... 1390
 Animal health surveillance ... 1885
 Climate change ... 1887
 Energy Innovation Network ... 292
 SuperNet ... 461
 Technology funding ... 1501
 Prion research (BSE control)
 Funding for ... 1368-69, 1372, 1885
 Research and development
 Chairs for, establishment of ... 1377
 Ethical implications ... 1378
 Funding for ... 1368-69, 1372, 1501
 Funding for: Private partnership re ... 1375
 Platform technology development ... 1372
 Public awareness of ... 1376-77
 Recruitment of scientists for ... 1377
 Science
 Public awareness of ... 1376-77
 Social sciences-Research
 Funding for ... 1373
 Solar power
 Housing project, Okotoks ... 1375, 1887
 Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
 Centre of excellence for small manufacturers ... 1369
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 General remarks ... 1372
 Surplus, Budgetary
 Endowment funds funding ... 1368
 Tar sands development-Research
 General remarks ... 1369
 Technology commercialization
 General remarks ... 1369
 Traffic safety
 McDermid report on: Costs of (M48/05: Response
 tabled as SP713/05) ... 1749
 Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 General remarks ... 1373
 Water resources development
 Research into ... 1369, 1373

Ducharme, Denis (PC, Bonnyville-Cold Lake)
 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 Bonnyville celebrations ... 1482
 Bonnyville celebrations: Statement re ... 1714
 Funding for ... 1482

Ducharme, Denis (PC, Bonnyville-Cold Lake)*(Continued)*

Aboriginal police services
 General remarks ... 768
 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005
 (Bill 20)
 First reading ... 128
 Second reading ... 436
 Committee ... 478-79
 Third reading ... 551
 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005
 (No. 2) (Bill 40)
 Second reading ... 1244
 Third reading ... 1557
 B & R - Eckel's Transport Ltd.
 General remarks ... 744
 Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 Donation to Bonnyville recreation centre ... 1482
 Centennial ambassadors
 General remarks ... 1483
 Curling championships
 Team Ferbey (2005 world champions) ... 650-51
 Team Ferbey (2005 world champions): Premier's
 letter to (SP304/05: Tabled) ... 653
 Denmark Energy Services Ltd.
 Donation to Bonnyville recreation centre ... 1482
 Team Ferby sponsors ... 650
 Dept. of Community Development
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1482-83
 Encana Corporation
 Donation to Bonnyville recreation centre ... 1482
 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 First reading ... 51
 Second reading ... 216
 Committee ... 476-77
 Third reading ... 547-48, 551
 Francophone Secretariat
 Funding for ... 1482
 Great Kids of Alberta
 Awards: Recognition of ... 168
 Ice arena-Cold Lake
 Provincial funding for ... 1482-83
 Income tax, Provincial
 Legislation re (Bill 20) ... 128
 Members' Statements (2005)
 Centennial celebrations in Bonnyville ... 1714
 Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie ... 208-09
 Stollery Children's Hospital ... 956
 Team Ferby ... 650-51
 Victor Ringuette ... 744
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Traumatic injury rate in the aboriginal community ...
 768
 Payday loan companies
 Legislation re (Bill 6) ... 51
 Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 Seniors' programs changes (SP236/05: Tabled) ... 463
 Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 General remarks ... 168
 Recreation centre-Bonnyville
 Provincial funding for ... 1482
 Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, 2005
 Statement re ... 208-09

Ducharme, Denis (PC, Bonnyville-Cold Lake)*(Continued)*

- Ringuette, Mr. Victor
 - Statement re ... 744
- Sadlowski, Mr. Vic (Centennial ambassador)
 - General remarks ... 1482
- Seniors' issues
 - Petition tabled re (SP236/05) ... 463
- Smith, Alaina
 - Recognition of ... 168
- Stollery Children's Hospital
 - Statement re ... 956
- Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation
 - General remarks ... 956
- Traffic accident injuries—Aboriginal communities
 - Rates of ... 768
- Traffic safety—Aboriginal communities
 - General remarks ... 768

Dunford, Hon. Clint (PC, Lethbridge-West)

- Aboriginal economic development
 - General remarks ... 1008
- Alberta—Economic policy
 - 20-year strategic plan ... 1007
- Alberta/British Columbia joint cabinet meeting, March 2005
 - B.C. ports strategy discussion at ... 319
- Alberta Economic Development Authority
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP280 & 485/05: Tabled) ... 622, 1578
- Alberta Film Commission Advisory Council
 - General remarks ... 322
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP281/05: Tabled) ... 622
 - Beijing office ... 1016
 - General remarks ... 1007, 1008
 - Korea office website ... 1016
 - Shanghai office proposal ... 1016
 - Washington, D.C. office ... 1016
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1858–59
- Arts
 - Impact on tourism ... 1013
 - Role in provincial economy ... 1010–11
- Aspen exhibition, Japan
 - Alberta participation ... 644
- Badlands—Alberta
 - Tourism development in ... 48
- Beef—Export
 - Diversification of markets for ... 1017
- Bighorn wildlife recreation area
 - Snowmobile trails in ... 744
- Biotechnology
 - General remarks ... 1007, 1016
- Border crossings—Canada/United States
 - Additional 24-hour crossing for Alberta (Wild Horse crossing) ... 646
- British Columbia ports strategy
 - Alberta participation in ... 319
- The Business Link
 - General remarks ... 1007
- Calgary
 - As financial centre ... 1011

Dunford, Hon. Clint (PC, Lethbridge-West) (Continued)

- Calgary Business Information Centre
 - General remarks ... 1007
- Calgary-Edmonton corridor
 - Economic growth in ... 531
- Canadian Beef Export Federation
 - Legacy project ... 1017
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
 - Hines Creek mill closure, impact of ... 88–89, 123–24
- China-Alberta Petroleum Centre
 - General remarks ... 1016
- Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy
 - Municipal infrastructure funding discussion ... 531
- Commuter Air Access Network of Alberta
 - Edmonton City Centre Airport status ... 125
- Corporations
 - Provincial information assistance to ... 1007–08
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Committee ... 1905
- Daishowa Canada Co. Ltd.
 - General remarks ... 1013
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - General remarks ... 1010
- Dell Inc.
 - Involvement in Alberta ... 1010
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP43/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP567/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Corporate communications, relation to Public Affairs Bureau ... 1015
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1006–08, 1010–11, 1013, 1015–18
 - Grants distributed by (M45/05: Defeated) ... 1748
 - Hosting expenses, 1992-2005 (Q39/05: Defeated) ... 1747
 - Performance measures ... 1011
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 281
 - Trade show expenditures (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Dinosaur Trail
 - General remarks ... 48, 1013
- Diversification
 - General remarks ... 1007
- Economic development
 - General remarks ... 531, 1007
- Economic development—Lethbridge
 - General remarks ... 531
- Edmonton
 - As festival city ... 1011
- Edmonton City Centre Airport
 - Operational status ... 125
- Edmonton Regional Airports Authority
 - General remarks ... 125
- Electronic Business Intelligence Service
 - General remarks ... 1008
- Energy Innovation Network
 - General remarks ... 1016
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - Use of royalty structure to encourage ... 1016
- Exports
 - General remarks ... 1008
- Film development grant program
 - General remarks ... 322

Dunford, Hon. Clint (PC, Lethbridge-West) (Continued)

- Film industry
 - General remarks ... 1011, 1013, 2013
 - Tax incentives for ... 1010, 1013, 1016
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 86, 1008
- Forest industries
 - Value-added processing in ... 88, 124, 644, 836
- Golden Triangle (Snowmobile trail)
 - General remarks ... 744
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - Second reading ... 212–213
- Houston Offshore Technology Conference
 - Attendance of Minister of Economic Development at ... 1500
- Immigration
 - Provincial nominee program ... 86, 1008
- Industrial development (Value-added industries)
 - Government strategy re ... 1007
- International trade
 - Alberta strategy re ... 1011
 - General remarks ... 1007, 1008
- Investments
 - General remarks ... 1007, 1008
- Investments, Foreign
 - General remarks ... 1500
- Iron Horse Trail (Snowmobiles)
 - General remarks ... 744
- Labour supply
 - Shortages of skilled workers ... 86
- Manufacturing
 - General remarks ... 1007–08
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of ... 1017
- North/south trade corridor
 - General remarks ... 1011
- Olympic Winter Games, Vancouver/Whistler (2010)
 - Alberta tourism opportunities re ... 1013
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Alberta/U.S. border crossings ... 646
 - B.C. ports strategy ... 319
 - Canadian Forest Products Ltd. mill closure ... 88–89, 123–124
 - Economic benefits of snowmobiling ... 744
 - Edmonton City Centre Airport ... 125
 - Film development program ... 322
 - Film industry ... 2013
 - Foreign workers ... 86
 - Major Alberta projects ... 531
 - Softwood lumber trade dispute ... 644
 - Tourism in rural Alberta ... 48
 - Trade mission to United States ... 1500
- Parks, Provincial
 - Upgrading of ... 1013
- Peace Region Economic Development Alliance
 - General remarks ... 88, 123
- Point of Order
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 256
- Port of Prince Rupert
 - Alberta participation in development of ... 319, 1007, 1016
 - CN/Illinois Central's role in ... 1016

Dunford, Hon. Clint (PC, Lethbridge-West) (Continued)

- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Relation to departmental communications divisions ... 1015
- Recreation
 - Role in provincial economy ... 1010–11
- Regional economic development partnerships
 - General remarks ... 1008, 1011, 1017
- Rosebud Theatre
 - General remarks ... 1013
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - General remarks ... 1018
 - Use for green energy production ... 1016
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 123, 1007, 1008, 1011, 1017, 2013
 - Government strategy re: Report (A Place to Grow) ... 48, 1007
- Small business
 - Venture capital for ... 1010
- Snowmobile trails
 - Tourism aspects ... 744
- Sports
 - Role in provincial economy ... 1010–11
- Strategic Tourism Marketing Council
 - General remarks ... 1008
- Tar sands development
 - Expansion projects ... 531
- Tax incentives
 - Film/TV production companies ... 1010, 1013, 1016
 - General remarks ... 1010
- Taxation
 - General remarks ... 1010
- Tourism
 - General remarks ... 1015
 - Impact of arts/culture facilities on ... 1013
 - Snowmobile trails attractions ... 744
- Tourism–Hines Creek area
 - General remarks ... 88, 123
- Tourism–Marketing
 - General remarks ... 1007, 1008, 1013
 - Provincial budget re ... 1011
 - Use of tourism levy revenue for ... 1008
- Tourism–Rural Alberta
 - General remarks ... 48
- Tourism–Southeast Alberta
 - Impact of additional 24-hour border crossing on ... 646
- Tourism levy
 - Conversion of hotel tax to: Impact on computer hardware requirements ... 281
 - General remarks ... 1008, 1011
- Trade missions
 - General remarks ... 1016
 - Performance measures re ... 1011
- Trade missions–United States
 - Benefits of ... 1500
- Trade shows
 - Expenditures re (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Travel Alberta
 - Web site ... 1008
- Travel Alberta Secretariat
 - Computer hardware, provincial funding for ... 281

Dunford, Hon. Clint (PC, Lethbridge-West) (Continued)

- Wages—Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1938
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Committee ... 1652, 1661
 - World Trade Centre, Edmonton
 - Provincial contribution to ... 281
 - Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park
 - General remarks ... 1013
- Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Funding for ... 1478
 - Aboriginal issues
 - General remarks ... 839–40
 - Aboriginal peoples—Housing
 - General remarks ... 840
 - Aboriginal peoples—Urban areas
 - General remarks ... 840
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 154–55
 - Access to the Future Fund
 - General remarks ... 1374
 - Acclaim Energy Inc.
 - Acheson gas well failure, Edmonton ... 575
 - Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
 - Second reading ... 679
 - Agricultural workers
 - Status under Charter of Rights: Petition tabled re (SP508/05) ... 1608
 - Air pollution—Alberta
 - Fact sheet re (SP601/05: Tabled) ... 1716
 - Air quality—Monitoring
 - Toxic waste fires situations ... 1337–38
 - Air quality—Standards
 - General remarks ... 1041
 - Alberta 75th anniversary celebrations
 - Legacy of ... 1478
 - Alberta Advisory Council on Electricity
 - Electricity exports recommendation ... 1306
 - Alberta Agricultural Research Institute
 - General remarks ... 1373
 - Alberta Alliance Party
 - Payment of senators-in-waiting speaking tour costs ... 695
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Second reading ... 1645–46
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)
 - Committee ... 354
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)
 - Second reading ... 1973
 - Alberta Commission on Energy Efficiency Act (Bill 211)
 - First reading ... 1890–91
 - Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Coal bed methane well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Coal bed methane well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... 902–03
 - Enforcement policy changes ... 575, 1033

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) (Continued)

- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (Continued)
 - Enforcement policy changes: EUB bulletin re (SP275/05: Tabled) ... 579
 - Enforcement policy changes: News release re (SP274/05: Tabled) ... 579
 - Gas well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M10/05: Defeated) ... 665–66
 - Gas well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M9/05: Defeated) ... 665
 - Kidzone website ... 915
- Alberta Energy Research Institute
 - General remarks ... 1373
 - Public/private research arrangements ... 1373
- Alberta Foundation for the Arts
 - Funding ... 1478
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Beijing office ... 1014
 - General remarks ... 1014
 - Korea office website ... 1014
 - Shanghai office proposal ... 1014
 - Washington, D.C. office ... 1014
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role re energy trade ... 1014
 - Washington, D.C. office: Salary of head of ... 1183
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - Funding for ... 1374
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research
 - Funding for ... 1374
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - General remarks ... 1373
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 347–48
- Alberta Life Sciences Institute
 - Establishment of ... 1374
- Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 18)
 - Second reading ... 353
- Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc.
 - Forest management area study ... 1395
- Alberta Research Council Inc.
 - General remarks ... 1373
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1820–21
- Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)
 - Centennial funding for ... 1478
 - Return of artists at, to Alberta ... 1478
- Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority
 - General remarks ... 1373
- Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act 2005 (Bill 4)
 - General remarks ... 1374
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Land titles certificate re (SP446 & 507/05: Tabled) ... 1608
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1373
- Alberta Union of Provincial Employees
 - News release re fish and wildlife officers numbers (SP406/05: Tabled) ... 1259
- Alberta Wilderness Association
 - Letter re industrial activity in Kakwa-Narraway watershed (SP803/05: Tabled) ... 2018

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Alberta Wilderness Association *(Continued)*
 - Letter re industrial activity in Rumsey natural area (SP760/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Ambulance service
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Provincial commitment re (SP31/05: Tabled) ... 93
- Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park
 - Redesignation of Castle wilderness as: Letter re (SP819/05: Tabled) ... 2012
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Second reading ... 424–25
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Third reading ... 1610–12
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - Second reading ... 350–51
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1994–96
- Arts–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1478
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits received under (Q32/05: Response tabled as SP640/05) ... 1344–45
- Athabasca River
 - Rerouting of tributaries to ... 1715
- Auditor General
 - Performance measures comments ... 1041
 - Royalty reduction programs evaluation recommendation ... 915
- Bear's Paw Day Care Centre, Edmonton
 - Closure of ... 1733
- Bercha Group
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study: Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... 664–65
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 665
- Boreal forest
 - Statement re ... 1395–96
- Calgary Local Council of Women
 - Minimum wage increase, letter re (SP350/05: Tabled) ... 957
- Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction, comments on ... 365
- Carbon dioxide emissions
 - Reduction in ... 1374
 - Research into ... 1374
- Caribou–Kakwa–Narraway watershed
 - Impact of industrial development on: Letter re (SP803/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Castle-Crown wilderness area
 - Redesignation as Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp wild-land park: Letter re (SP819/05: Tabled) ... 2056
- Cattle–Prices
 - Minimum floor price: Petitions presented re ... 51
- Cellular telephones in automobiles
 - Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1002–03
- Cheviot Creek coal mine–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1041–42
 - Road access assessment ... 1042
- Child welfare workers
 - Protective safe houses for child prostitutes, awareness of ... 1733

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Chronic wasting disease
 - Human/animal risk of ... 933
 - Presence on game farms ... 933
- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Second reading ... 382–83
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Reduction of ... 1728
- Clean Air Strategic Alliance
 - General remarks ... 1041
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 670–71
- Climate change
 - General remarks ... 933, 1042, 1832
 - International conference on, Montreal, November 2005 ... 1832, 1914
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 1374, 1914
 - Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to ... 364–65
 - Kyoto protocol on: ND opposition proposals for (SP203/05: Tabled) ... 370
- Climate Change Central
 - General remarks ... 1042
- Coal bed methane extraction
 - General remarks ... 1033
 - Impact of ... 914
 - Reclamation costs re ... 914
 - Water recovery issues ... 914
 - Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... 664
- Coal bed methane extraction–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 914
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Changes to operation of ... 1783–64
- Community schools
 - Funding for: Petition tabled re (SP273/05) ... 579
 - General remarks ... 1728
- Compton Petroleum Corporation
 - Gas well drilling, Calgary area ... 915
- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Application to farm workers, petition tabled re (SP508/05) ... 1608
- Consumer Choice (Government web site)
 - Excerpt from, re long-term retail electricity/natural gas contracts (SP375/05: Tabled) ... 1081
- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas contracts ... 1073–74
- Custom Environmental Services Ltd.
 - Fire at ... 1337–38
- Daycare centres
 - Subsidies re ... 1733
- Daycare centres–Closure
 - General remarks ... 1733
- Daycare centres–Employees
 - Accreditation program for ... 1733
 - Salaries of: KPMG study of ... 1732
- Daycare centres–Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 1733
- Deep Well Oil & Gas Ltd.
 - Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ... 902–03
- Deer–Alberta/Saskatchewan border area
 - Culling of, due to CWD threat ... 933

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 839-40
 - Funding details ... 839-40
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 875
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1731-32
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1477-78
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Corporate communications, relation to Public Affairs Bureau ... 1014
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1014-15
 - Relation to Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations ... 1183
- Dept. of Education
 - Return of school capital funding to ... 1728
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1728-29
- Dept. of Energy
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 913-15
- Dept. of Environment
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1040-42
 - Performance measures ... 1041
 - Support services ... 1041
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... 1728
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1373-74
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 1182-83
 - Performance measures ... 1183
 - Relation to Dept. of Economic Development ... 1183
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Alberta SuperNet project transferred to ... 1373
 - Role of ... 1183
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 932-33
- Direct Energy Business Services
 - Brochure re long-term contracts (SP299/05: Tabled) ... 653
- Diversification
 - General remarks ... 1015
- Drinking water
 - Safety of ... 1041
- Early childhood education
 - Full-day programs ... 1728
- Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 575, 1395-96, 1714-15
- Ecotourism
 - Relation to preserving boreal forests ... 1396
- Edmonton Folk Festival
 - Provincial funding for ... 1478
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Closure of schools ... 1447
- Education, Postsecondary-Finance
 - Capital spending ... 875
 - General remarks ... 875
- Electric power-Export
 - General remarks ... 1306

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Electric power-Prices
 - General remarks ... 914
 - Manipulation of ... 914
 - Regulated option vs contract rate, compensation for difference in ... 1073
- Electric power-Supply
 - General remarks ... 1306
- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... 1073
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers, cancellation of without penalty ... 1074
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 653, 914
- Electronic waste-Recycling
 - Fees for ... 1041
 - General remarks ... 1041
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: First Nations participation ... 1573
- Employment training programs
 - Aboriginal peoples ... 840
- Endowment fund for forest fire control (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 932
- Energy efficiency (Buildings)
 - Interest-free loans for ... 365
 - Legislation re (Bill 211) ... 1890-91
- Energy industry
 - Profits ... 914
- Energy industry-Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 840, 902-03
- Energy industry-Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 575
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 1832, 1915
 - Use of royalty structure to encourage ... 1015
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 914
- Environmental impact assessments
 - Oil sands mining projects ... 1714-15
- Environmental law
 - Enforcement of ... 1041, 1042
- Environmental protection
 - Statement re ... 1033
- Environmental protection-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1040-41
- Environmental research
 - Endowment fund for (proposed) ... 1374
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1175-76
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1540-41
- Fatalities, Work-related
 - Day of mourning re ... 1081
 - Statistics on, over past 100 years (SP374/05: Tabled) ... 1081
- Federal/provincial relations
 - Budget increase for ... 1183
- Festivals-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1478

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Film industry
 - General remarks ... 1015
 - Hiring of local talent provisions ... 1015
 - Tax incentives for ... 1015
- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - Second reading ... 939
 - General remarks ... 1374
- Fires at hazardous waste sites
 - Monitoring of ... 1337–38
- Fish and wildlife legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 932–33
- Fish and wildlife officers
 - Number of ... 932–33, 1254
 - Number of: AUPE news release re (SP406/05: Tabled) ... 1259
- Forest conservation
 - Sierra Club press release re Alberta policy re (SP421/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Statement re ... 1395–96
- Forest firefighters
 - Room and board rates for ... 932
- Forest fires—Control
 - Funding for ... 932
- Forest management
 - General remarks ... 1396
- Forest management agreements
 - Al-Pac agreement: Study ... 1395
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Liberal opposition requests under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 87
- Game farming
 - Chronic wasting disease issue in ... 933
- Gas, Natural
 - Use as power source in oil sands production ... 1715
- Gas, Natural—Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 914
- Gas industry
 - General remarks ... 915
- Gas well drilling industry
 - General remarks ... 915
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group: Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... 664–65
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 665
 - In vicinity of urban areas ... 665, 1033
 - Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04 (M10/05: Defeated) ... 665–66
 - Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M9/05: Defeated) ... 665
- Gas well drilling industry—Calgary area
 - General remarks ... 915
- Gas well drilling industry—Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 915
- GCI Canada
 - Tobacco industry front groups, website article re (SP821/05: Tabled) ... 2056
- Government aircraft
 - Costs ... 46
 - Policy on usage of ... 45–46
- Government chartered aircraft
 - Policy on usage of ... 45–46, 86–87

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 694–95
- Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reduction of ... 364–65, 1042, 1374, 1832, 1914–15
- Grizzly bears—Cheviot Creek area
 - Impact of coal mine access road on ... 1042
- Hazardous substances—Health aspects
 - During fires ... 1337–38
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta
 - Physiotherapy funding cuts: Press release re (SP124/05: Tabled) ... 210
- Heavy oil—Royalties
 - General remarks ... 915
 - Verification of, Auditor General's comments re ... 915
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 830–31
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of: Petitions presented re ... 1506
- Hockey
 - Lottery funding for ... 1478
- Informatics Circle of Research Excellence
 - General remarks ... 1373
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 584–85
- International Day of Mourning (Workplace fatalities)
 - General remarks ... 1081
- International trade—China
 - General remarks ... 1014
- Jazz City festival, Edmonton
 - Provincial funding for ... 1478
- Kakwa-Naraway watershed
 - Industrial development in, letter re (SP803/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- KPMG consulting
 - Daycare workers' salaries report ... 1733
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of ... 1303
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 189
- Life sciences research
 - General remarks ... 1373
- Livestock industry, Intensive
 - Phase out of: Petition presented re ... 1788, 1837, 1889
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation ... 1478
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 840, 902–03, 1042
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 95–96
- Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)
 - Monitoring of electricity prices ... 914
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1683–85
 - Third reading ... 2023
- Medical profession
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1365–66
- Medical profession—Rural areas
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1365–66

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Boreal forest ... 1395–96
 - Environmental sustainability ... 1033
 - Minable oil sands strategy ... 1714–15
- Mentally disabled
 - Funding for programs for: Letter re (SP820/05: Tabled) ... 2056
- Métis–Self-government
 - General remarks ... 840
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 840, 932, 933
- Métis Settlements General Council
 - Funding for, ends 2007 ... 840
- Minable oil sands strategy–Environmental aspects
 - Pembina Institute news release re (SP602/05: Tabled) ... 1716
 - Statement re ... 1714–15
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 472–73
- National Arts Centre, Ottawa
 - Alberta Scene arts festival ... 1478
- Natural resources revenue
 - Forecasting of ... 914
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1765–66, 1768
- Non-Smokers' Rights Association
 - Tobacco industry front groups in Canada, statement re (SP821/05: Tabled) ... 2056
- North American free trade agreement
 - Sale of electricity under ... 1306
- Official Opposition
 - Leader's speech to National Club in Toronto, invitation to (SP804/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Oil–Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 914
- Oil industry
 - Use of water supplies ... 914
- Oil recovery methods
 - Carbon dioxide sequestering ... 1042
 - Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research ... 1374
- Oil well drilling industry–Public lands
 - EUB permits required for ... 902–03
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Climate change ... 364–65, 1832
 - Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire ... 1337–38
 - Electricity exports ... 1306
 - Electricity marketing ... 1073–74
 - Energy and Utilities Board ... 575
 - First Nations participation in Royal visit ... 1573
 - Government air travel ... 45–46, 86–87
 - Greenhouse gas emissions ... 1914–15
 - Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 902–03
 - Policing services ... 167
 - Public Accounts committee ... 1783–84
 - School closures ... 1447
 - Travel by elected Senators ... 694–95
 - Wildlife protection ... 1253–54
- Parks, Provincial
 - Funding for ... 1478
- Peace
 - Recognition of promoters of ... 418
- Pembina Institute for Sustainable Development
 - Minable oil sands strategy, news release re (SP602/05: Tabled) ... 1716

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
 - Second reading ... 375
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Confined feeding operations phase out ... 1788, 1837, 1889
 - Highway 63 upgrading ... 1506
 - Minimum floor price for cattle ... 51
 - Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, increase in number of ... 1837
 - Tuition fee assistance to students ... 1506
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Community school funding (SP273/05: Tabled) ... 579
 - Farmworkers' status under Charter of Rights (SP508/05: Tabled) ... 1608
- Petrochemical industry
 - General remarks ... 914–15
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1358–59
- Physical therapy–Finance
 - Cutbacks to: Health Sciences Association press release re (SP124/05: Tabled) ... 210
- Piikani (Peigan) Nation
 - General remarks ... 2056
- Pine beetles–Control
 - General remarks ... 933
 - Research into ... 933
- Pipelines
 - Development of ... 914–15
- Poaching–Law and legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 1254
- Point of Order
 - Referring to a member by name ... 1343
- Police
 - Protective safe houses for child prostitutes, awareness of ... 1733
- Police–Finance
 - General remarks ... 167
- Police–Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 167
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 684–85
 - Committee ... 1381–82
 - Amendment A4 (SP428/05: Tabled) ... 1381
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 49)
 - Second reading ... 1771
- Pollution Watch
 - Pollution fact sheets (SP601/05: Tabled) ... 1716
- Port of Prince Rupert
 - Alberta participation in development of ... 1014–15
 - CN/Illinois Central's role in ... 1014–15
- Portable/modular classrooms
 - General remarks ... 1728
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Second reading ... 379
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
 - Payment of senators-in-waiting speaking tour costs by ... 695
- Prostitution, Juvenile
 - General remarks ... 1733

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

Protected areas
 Funding for ... 1478
 Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act
 General remarks ... 1733
 Protective safe houses (Child prostitute protection)
 General remarks ... 1733
 Public Affairs Bureau
 Relation to departmental communications divisions ...
 1014
 Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)
 Second reading ... 422
 Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 Second reading ... 539
 Reclamation of land
 Abandoned well sites ... 914
 Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 General remarks ... 418
 Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 Second reading ... 517, 1345–46
 Research and development
 Funding for: Private partnership re ... 1373–74
 Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 Second reading ... 466–67
 Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
 (Bill 44)
 Third reading ... 2022
 Road Runner day care, Calgary
 Closure of ... 1733
 Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 Increase in numbers of: Petition presented re ... 1837
 Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 General remarks ... 914, 915
 Reduction incentives for clean energy technology
 development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 670–71
 Use for green energy production ... 1015
 Rumsey natural area
 Industrial activity in: Letter re (SP760/05: Tabled) ...
 1971
 Schindler, Dr. David
 Remarks re environmental research funding ... 1374
 Remarks re northern Alberta wilderness conservation
 ... 1396
 School–Grande Prairie
 Portables at ... 1728
 Schools–Closure
 General remarks ... 1447
 Schools–Construction–Finance
 Return to Education dept. responsibility ... 1728
 Schools–Utilization
 Change to formula for ... 1447
 Community group use of, as part of formula re ...
 1728
 General remarks ... 1728
 Review of formula for ... 1447
 Securities Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 19)
 Committee ... 726–27
 Third reading ... 942
 Amendment ... 942
 Senators
 Alberta nominees for ... 1183
 Alberta nominees for: Eastern Canada speaking tour
 ... 694–95

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

Sierra Club of Canada
 Press release re Alberta's forest policy ... 1396
 Press release re Alberta's forest policy (SP421/05:
 Tabled) ... 1342
 Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 Committee ... 501
 Smokers' Freedom Society
 Website article re (SP821/05: Tabled) ... 2056
 Smoking in the workplace
 Ban on: Letter re (SP250/05: Tabled) ... 492
 Speech from the Throne
 Debate ... 95–96
 Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 Second reading ... 524–25
 Third reading ... 940
 Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School,
 Edmonton
 Closure ... 1447
 Student assessment
 Fees for ... 1728–29
 Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005
 (Bill 14)
 Second reading ... 430–31
 Suncor Inc.
 Greenhouse gas emissions reduction, comments on ...
 365
 Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 General remarks ... 1732
 Supreme Court of Canada
 Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... 840
 Swan Hills Treatment Centre
 General remarks ... 1337
 Tar sands development
 Use of natural gas supplies ... 1715
 Use of water supplies ... 1715
 Tar sands development–Environmental aspects
 General remarks ... 365, 1714–15, 1914–15
 Tax incentives
 Film/TV production companies ... 1015
 Technology commercialization
 General remarks ... 1373
 Tourism–Marketing
 International marketing efforts ... 1014
 Traffic Safety Act
 Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while
 driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1002–03
 Travel at public expense
 Alberta senators-in-waiting trip to eastern Canada ...
 694–95
 Tuition fees
 Increase in, over last few years ... 875
 Provincial assistance re: Petition presented re ... 1506
 University dropouts
 Rate of ... 875
 Victory in Europe Day
 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives
 addressed the Assembly in the Chamber ... 1303
 Wages–Minimum wage
 Increase to: Letter from Calgary Local Council of
 Women re (SP350/05: Tabled) ... 957
 Water
 Sale of ... 1033

Eggen, David (ND, Edmonton-Calder) *(Continued)*

- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Performance measures ... 1041
 - Water quality
 - General remarks ... 1041
 - Water resources development
 - General remarks ... 1033
 - Water supply
 - Measurement of total provincial supply ... 1041
 - Use by energy industry ... 914
 - Use by oil sands producers ... 1715
 - Well sites, Abandoned
 - Reclamation of ... 914
 - Wildlife management
 - General remarks ... 1253–54
 - Wildrose Forum (CBC radio program)
 - Dismissal of Don Hill, host, from: Letters re (SP309/05: Tabled) ... 699
 - Wind power
 - General remarks ... 1015
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Second reading ... 592–93
 - Amendment ... 592
 - Letter re (SP346/05: Tabled) ... 908
 - World Society for the Protection of Animals
 - Letter re zoo licensing (SP420/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Zoos–Licensing
 - Letter re (SP420/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung)**
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 223–25
 - Alaska permanent fund
 - General remarks ... 966
 - Alberta Agricultural Research Institute
 - Annual reports ... 1370
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Second reading ... 1644–45
 - Committee ... 1905–06
 - Amendment A1 (SP716 & 767/05: Tabled) ... 1906
 - Amendment A5 (SP771/05: Tabled) ... 2005
 - Alberta Corporate Service Centre
 - Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ... 619
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1417
 - Alberta Energy Research Institute
 - Annual reports ... 1370
 - Alberta Forestry Research Institute
 - Annual reports ... 1370
 - Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Documents re (M20/05: Response tabled as SP744/05) ... 821–22
 - Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
 - Midwifery coverage ... 1313
 - Midwifery coverage: Mock invoices re (SP443/05: Tabled) ... 1507–08
 - Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan–Premiums
 - Elimination of ... 966–67
 - Reducing of ... 954
 - Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Ethical investments by ... 966
 - General remarks ... 966, 1326
 - Investment in tobacco companies ... 966

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) *(Continued)*

- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 345
- Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation
 - Microfiche copies of pension cheques, loss of ... 1026
- Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1757
- Alberta Research Council Inc.
 - General remarks ... 1370
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1818–20
- Alberta royalty tax credit
 - General remarks ... 917
- Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act 2005 (Bill 4)
 - Second reading ... 195
 - Third reading ... 638
 - General remarks ... 1370
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Influencing regulatory activity case ... 2011
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Completion date ... 88
 - Hookup fees ... 320
 - Telus bid on ... 320
- Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 461, 1370
- Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: Documentation re (M29/05: Response tabled as SP515/05) ... 1160
- Alberta Sustainability Fund
 - General remarks ... 966
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Municipal Government Act review discussions ... 1326
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public opening of, invitation of Opposition MLAs to, statement re ... 1744
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Second reading ... 349
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - Second reading ... 350
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1981–82
- Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth
 - General remarks ... 1313
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits increase ... 966–67
- Auditor General
 - Government contracting process comments ... 1418
 - Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation (Q18/05: Defeated) ... 812–13
 - Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 1746
 - Internal auditor, liaison with ... 1104
 - Royalty reduction programs evaluation recommendation ... 917
 - Sole-source contracts comments ... 619, 1418

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) (Continued)

- Automobile drivers' licences
 - Resumption of provincial control over issuing of ... 1417
- Automobile drivers' tests
 - Resumption of provincial control over ... 1417
- Balancing Pool for Alberta's Electricity Consumers
 - Contribution to funding for Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 975, 1418
- Bell West
 - Alberta SuperNet contract ... 320
- Budget
 - 2002-03 budget, advertising campaign re ... 1104
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Second reading ... 675-76
 - Committee ... 1113-15
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - Committee ... 1980
- Canada Health Day
 - Statement re ... 1505
- Capital endowment fund (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 1326
- Capital projects
 - Public/private partnerships re ... 88
- Capital projects, Municipal-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1326
- Centennial Capital Plan
 - General remarks ... 966
- Chief Internal Auditor's office
 - Liason with Auditor General ... 1104
 - New chief's appointment process ... 1603
 - Role of ... 1104
- Civil service pension cheques
 - Loss of microfiche copies of, privacy concerns re ... 1026
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to, publicity campaign re ... 1104
- Conflict of interest
 - Securities Commission director of enforcement issue ... 2011
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Recommendations ... 2010-11
- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 975, 1418
 - General remarks ... 1417
- Corporate Chief Information Officer
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1370
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Committee ... 1903
- Deficit financing
 - General remarks ... 966
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Trade missions expenditures (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
 - Trade show expenditures (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Dept. of Energy
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 917-18
- Dept. of Finance
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 966-67

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) (Continued)

- Dept. of Government Services
 - Access and privacy branch, role of ... 1418
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1417-18, 1426
 - Staffing ... 1417
 - Support services budget ... 1417
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M18/05: Response tabled as SP772/05) ... 820
 - Employee information technology security awareness, actions to promote (Q18/05: Defeated) ... 812-13
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1370-72
 - Performance measures ... 1370
 - Staffing ... 1370
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1326-27
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Alberta Corporate Service Centre transferred to ... 1417
 - Alberta SuperNet project transferred to ... 461, 1370
 - Alberta SuperNet project transferred to:
 - Documentation re (M29/05: Accepted) ... 1160
 - Communications function ... 1104
 - Cross-government human resources function ... 1710
 - Enron electricity prices manipulation scheme, investigation of ... 249
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 763
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Net loss statement ... 763
 - Microfiching of Alberta pension cheques, recommendation to cease ... 1026
 - Opportunity and restructuring assessment function ... 763
 - Role of ... 1104, 1710
 - Staffing ... 763, 1104
- Disabled
 - Government programs for ... 967
- Dividend payments to Albertans (From Heritage Fund)
 - General remarks ... 966
- Education-Finance
 - User fees: Petition presented for elimination of ... 1674, 1715, 1745, 1837, 1889-90, 1918-19
- Electric power-Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 1418
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 249
 - Regulated option re ... 918
- Electric power-Retail sales
 - General remarks ... 918
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation: Public reaction to ... 917-18, 975
 - Deregulation: Publicity campaign re ... 1104
- Energy research
 - Funding ... 1371
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... 249
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Utilities Consumer Advocate's web site re (SP151/05: Tabled) ... 253
- Executive Council
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1103-04
- Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 - Second reading ... 216-217
 - Committee ... 477-78
 - Third reading ... 548

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) (Continued)

- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1538–39
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 702
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 369, 462, 621
 - Letter re (SP254/05: Tabled) ... 492
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Application to Canadian subsidiaries of U.S. corporations ... 1886
 - Edmonton Journal* request under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 1521
 - Fees ... 1521
- Gas, Natural–Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 966
- Government accountability
 - Federal Conservative Party leader's address re (SP526 & 548/05: Tabled) ... 1632, 1674
 - General remarks ... 2010–11
- Government agencies, boards, and commissions
 - PC party supporters' appointment to ... 1603
- Government aircraft
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 1521
- Government appointments
 - PC party supporters' appointments ... 1603
- Government departments
 - Number of ... 773, 953
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 763, 773, 804, 953–54
- Government information
 - Access to ... 1103–04
- Government information systems
 - Security aspects: Improvement of employee awareness of (Q18/05: Defeated) ... 812–13
- Harper, Hon. Stephen (Federal Leader of the Opposition)
 - Address on government accountability (SP526 & 548/05: Tabled) ... 1632, 1674
- Health Care Protection Act (Bill 11, 2000)
 - Advertising campaign re ... 1104
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 954
- Humanities–Research
 - Funding for ... 1371
- IBM Canada Ltd.
 - Microfiching of Alberta pension cheques, security implications ... 1026
- Information and communications technology
 - Security issues: Auditor General's recommendation re (Q18/05: Defeated) ... 812–13
 - Security issues: Auditor General's recommendation re (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 1746
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta pension records ... 1026
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)
 - Warning on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian personal privacy ... 1885–86
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 582–84
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
 - Recognition of ... 325

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) (Continued)

- International Day of the Midwife
 - General remarks ... 1313
- Land titles–Registration
 - Security concerns in, re mortgage fraud cases ... 803–04
- Life sciences research
 - Funding for wet lab re ... 1501
- Lobbyists–Registration
 - General remarks ... 2011
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 137–38
- Maternity Center Association
 - Booklet about cesarean section (SP410/05: Tabled) ... 1315
- Medical care
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 1506
- Medical profession–Rural areas
 - Action plan re: Web site article (SP748/05: Tabled) ... 1970
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Opposition members' invitation to public events, statement re ... 1744
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Canada Health Day ... 1505–06
 - Midwifery services ... 1313
 - MLA invitations to public events ... 1744
- Midwives and midwifery
 - Inclusion under health care plan ... 1313
 - Inclusion under health care plan: Mock invoices re (SP443/05: Tabled) ... 1507–08
 - Statement re ... 1313
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Cooling-off period for, following resignation ... 2011
 - Number of ... 773, 953
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 473–74
 - Committee ... 632–33
 - Public consultation re ... 1326
- National Institute for Nanotechnology
 - General remarks ... 1371
- Natural resources revenue
 - Use for budget purposes ... 966
- Norwegian Government Petroleum Fund
 - General remarks ... 966
- Oil–Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 966
- Opposition (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Members of, excluded from public events, statement re ... 1744
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Enron activities in Alberta ... 249
 - Government accountability ... 2010–11
 - Government aircraft flight logs ... 1521
 - Government appointments ... 1603
 - Government contracts ... 619
 - Government efficiency ... 773, 953–54
 - Missing computer tapes and microfiches ... 1026
 - Mortgage fraud ... 803–04
 - Protection of personal information ... 1885–86
 - Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1710
 - SuperNet ... 88, 320, 461
 - Technology funding ... 1501
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 975

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) *(Continued)*

- Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
 - Second reading ... 373–74
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - School fees elimination ... 1673–74, 1715, 1745, 1837, 1890, 1918–19
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 369, 462, 621
- Pharmacist Awareness Week
 - Recognition of ... 50–51
- Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 - Second reading ... 715
 - Committee ... 1559–60
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1354–55
 - Committee ... 1926–27
- Power Pool of Alberta
 - Contribution to funding for Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 975
- Preventive medical services
 - General remarks ... 1505–06
- Prion research (BSE control)
 - Funding for ... 1370
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 1417, 1885–86
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 339–40
- Protocol Office
 - General remarks ... 1104
- Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1326
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Communications goals ... 1103–04
 - Relation to departmental communications divisions ... 1104
 - Role of ... 1104
- Public contracts
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 1418
 - Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ... 619, 1418
- Public records–Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 1026, 1417, 1426, 1886
- Public safety (Building/fire codes)
 - Funding for ... 1326
- Public service–Alberta
 - Increase in ... 773
 - Information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 1746
 - Senior officials' cooling-off period, following resignation ... 2011
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Second reading ... 538–39
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 50–51, 325
- Reforestation
 - Timelines met re (Q19/05: Response tabled as SP775/05) ... 813
- Regional health authorities
 - Board members with PC party connections ... 1603
- Registry offices, Private
 - General remarks ... 1417, 1418

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) *(Continued)*

- Registry offices, Private–Security aspects
 - Concerns re mortgage fraud ... 803–04
- Research and development
 - Funding for ... 1371, 1501
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Second reading ... 380, 465–66
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - Second reading ... 1807–08
 - Committee ... 1978
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - General remarks ... 917
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Third reading ... 996
- Smoking in public places
 - E-mails re (SP238-239/05: Tabled) ... 463
 - Letters re (SP239 & 334/05: Tabled) ... 463, 806–07
- Social sciences–Research
 - Funding for ... 1371
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 137–38
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - General remarks ... 1371
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Second reading ... 544–45
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 966, 1326, 1370
- Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)
 - Committee ... 1979
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 966
 - Investment in capital account ... 1326
- Telus Corporation
 - SuperNet contract bid ... 320
- Tobacco companies
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 966
- Trade missions
 - Expenditures re (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
- Trade shows
 - Expenditures re (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Traffic safety
 - McDermid report on: Costs of (M48/05: Response tabled as SP713/05) ... 1749
- Truck drivers–Supply
 - Government calculations re (Q42/05: Response tabled as SP805/05) ... 1748
- Universities and colleges
 - Research capacity ... 1371
- USA PATRIOT Act
 - Impact on Canadian personal privacy ... 1426, 1885–86
- Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - Budget ... 1418
 - Consumer complaints to ... 1418
 - Enron electricity price manipulation investigation ... 249
 - Enron electricity price manipulation investigation: Web site re (SP151/05: Tabled) ... 253
 - Independence of (arm's length from government) ... 975, 1418
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) ... 975

Elsalhy, Mo (L, Edmonton-McClung) (Continued)

- Water—Export
 - General remarks ... 1372
- Water conservation
 - General remarks ... 1372
- Water diversion
 - General remarks ... 1371–72
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - General remarks ... 1371
- Water resources development
 - Research into ... 1371
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 74
- Whistle-blower protection
 - Securities Commission case ... 2011
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Committee ... 1651, 1655–56, 1660
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Committee ... 1894
 - Third reading ... 1898–99

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park)

- 1157268 Alberta Ltd.
 - Hip and knee surgery contract ... 1846
- Abortion—Edmonton
 - Provision by private clinic only ... 853
- Abortion—Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 853
- Age Care Ltd.
 - Board of directors ... 460
 - Partnership with Calgary health region re long-term care facilities ... 460
- Alberta Aids to Daily Living
 - Jurisdiction re long-term care residents' treatment ... 613
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Addictions treatment programs, funding for ... 1458
 - Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder program ... 271
 - Funding ... 1458
 - Youth gambling addiction survey ... 741
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs ... 23, 267, 1669, 1670, 2048
- Alberta Association of Registered Nurses
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP609/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - General remarks ... 271
- Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP763/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Alberta Blue Cross Plan
 - Nongroup benefits, provincial funding for ... 1458, 1465
 - Seniors' drug benefits ... 1458
- Alberta Cancer Board
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP142/05: Tabled) ... 252
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP626/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Funding ... 271, 1458
 - Funding increase for ... 1028
 - Locating of facility at new south Calgary hospital ... 274
- Alberta Children's Hospital
 - Former hospital: Renovations to ... 1839
 - New hospital: Funding for ... 1458
- Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP96/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP764/05: Tabled) ... 1971

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Alberta College of Optometrists
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP95/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP615/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Alberta College of Pharmacists
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP94/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP612/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Alberta College of Social Workers
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP216/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP688/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP97/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP614/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Alberta Dental Assistants Association
 - Annual report, 2003 and 2004 (SP761-762/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Alberta Dental Association and College
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP211 & 683/05: Tabled) ... 370, 1838
- Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP213/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP611/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Act
 - Notwithstanding provision addition to ... 1665–66
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
 - CT scans coverage ... 366
 - Midwifery coverage ... 1146
 - Podiatry coverage ... 1464–65
- Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP209/05: Tabled) ... 370
- Alberta Medical Association
 - Provincial discussions with, re public/private health systems ... 1665
- Alberta Mental Health Board
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP143/05: Tabled) ... 252
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP616/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Funding ... 1458
- Alberta Opticians Association
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP98/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP610/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1755
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Health services delivery via ... 854
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities discussions ... 17, 483
- Allan Gray Continuing Care Centre
 - Conditions in ... 1499–1500
- Ambulance Governance Advisory Council
 - General remarks ... 1458
- Ambulance service
 - Co-ordination of ... 1915
 - Review of, 2002: Report ... 202
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:
 - Cancellation of ... 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 482, 1464
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:
 - Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 245, 482, 1464
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions:
 - Cancellation of, provincial assistance re (Q5/05: Response tabled as SP627/05) ... 658, 1717

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Ambulance service (Continued)
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Costs ... 19, 202, 245
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Discovery projects re ... 202, 245, 483
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Impact of joint ambulance/fire services on ... 482–83
- Ambulance service–Finance
 - General remarks ... 83
- Ambulance service–Medicine Hat
 - Joint fire/ambulance service ... 482–83
- Ambulance service–Red Deer
 - General remarks ... 202, 245
- Ambulance service–Rural areas
 - Costs, provincial assistance re ... 243–44
- Aon Consulting Inc.
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of ... 1627, 1665, 1670–71, 1841, 1844
- Aon Reed Stenhouse
 - General remarks ... 1671
- Aspen Regional Health Authority
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP132/05: Tabled) ... 211
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP617/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Funding ... 271
- Auditor General
 - Charlebois Consulting Ltd. contracts, investigation of ... 642–43
 - Long-term care facility grants: Audit of ... 2050
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs) ... 1077
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1497–98, 1623, 1707, 1843–44, 1962
- Automobile seat belts
 - Role of, in preventive health care strategy ... 205
- Barrhead Healthcare Centre
 - Upgrades to ... 1839, 1842
- Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose
 - Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in ... 1074, 1077, 1121
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Human/animal risk of ... 319
- Budget
 - General remarks ... 273
 - Process re ... 1622
- Calgary Health Region
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP91/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP619/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... 1966, 2051
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services, review of ... 1966
 - Doctor shortage, northeast Calgary, review of ... 533
 - Funding ... 271, 977
 - Hip/knee surgery contract with Health Resource Centre ... 244–45, 644, 1145
 - Hospital capital upgrades ... 1838
 - Partnership with Age Care Ltd. re long-term care facilities ... 460
 - Partnership with Alberta Cancer Board re new cancer facility ... 274
 - Physical therapy funding ... 274

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Canada Health Act
 - General remarks ... 205, 1147, 1465, 1843, 1846
 - Physician access to both public and private health systems provisions ... 1622
- Canadian Cancer Society
 - Research on cancer prevention projects ... 271
- Canadian Medical Association
 - Provincial discussions with, re public/private health systems ... 1665
- Cancer–Prevention
 - Pilot projects re ... 271
- Cancer–Treatment
 - Funding increase for ... 1028
- Capital Health
 - Abortion services, contracting out of ... 853
 - Allan Gray Continuing Care Centre, review of conditions in ... 1499
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP131/05: Tabled) ... 211
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP620/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... 1966, 2051
 - Funding ... 271, 273, 977
 - Hospital capital upgrades ... 1839
 - Physical therapy funding ... 274
 - Physiotherapy service cuts ... 163
 - Surplus funding for ... 1622
- Capital projects
 - Public/private partnerships re ... 646
- Capital projects, Medical
 - Funding for ... 271–75, 1458, 1838–39, 1841–46
 - Operating funds for ... 1841
- Cataract surgery, Private–Calgary
 - Waiting times for ... 1966, 2051
- Caucus policy committees (PC party)
 - Meetings of tobacco companies with, 2001-2004 (M4/05: Accepted) ... 494
- Child and family services authorities
 - Mental health programs ... 903
- Children and poverty
 - General remarks ... 1778, 1832
- Chinook Regional Health Authority
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP89/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP625/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Conversion of long-term care facilities to assisted living status ... 1843
 - Funding ... 271
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease initiative
 - Federal funding ... 271
- Chronic wasting disease
 - Human/animal risk of ... 319
- Cigarettes, Discount–Taxation
 - General remarks ... 1028
- Cigarettes–Retail sales
 - Positioning re ... 1028
- Cold fX (Cold/flu prevention preparation)
 - Given to seniors in care facilities ... 207
- College of Alberta Denturists
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP214/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP613/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- College of Alberta Psychologists
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP687/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Chiropractors of Alberta
 - Annual review, 2004-05 (SP766/05: Tabled) ... 1971

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- College of Dental Technologists of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP765/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- College of Dietitians of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP215 & 685/05: Tabled) ... 370, 1838
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP686/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP398/05: Tabled) ... 1206
- College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP212/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP684/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- College of Physical Therapists of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP210/05: Tabled) ... 370
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
 - Special register, section 5 (Foreign doctor recruitment) ... 1122
- Committee on Continuing Care Standards, Standing
 - General remarks ... 1464
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Charlebois Consulting Ltd. contract, discussion of ... 643
- Community halls—Rural areas
 - Food safety regulations in ... 248, 1520
- Cornea transplants
 - Registry for ... 1601
 - Waiting list for ... 1601
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1669–70
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Treatment
 - AADAC treatment program for ... 1669, 1670
 - Treatment centres for ... 267, 852, 1669–70
- CT scans (Medical imaging procedure)
 - Coverage under health care plan ... 366
 - Private clinic provision of ... 365–66
 - Safety aspects ... 365–66
- David Thompson Regional Health Authority
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP92/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP624/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Funding ... 271
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Annual report, 2003-04, sections I and II (SP50-51/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05, sections I and II (SP575-576/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Budget target ... 1621
 - Contracts awarded to Charlebois Consulting Ltd. ... 642–43
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1458–59, 1461–62, 1464–65
 - Health information protection budget ... 617
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 259–60, 267
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 271–75
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Responses to questions during (SP516/05: Tabled) ... 1608
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1838–39, 1841–46
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Jurisdiction re long-term care residents' treatment ... 613
- Diabetes strategy
 - Funding for ... 271

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Drug abuse—Testing
 - General remarks ... 2048
 - Home testing kits, accuracy of ... 2048
- Drugs, Generic—Prices
 - Policy re ... 1461
- Drugs, Prescription—Costs
 - General remarks ... 1458, 1461–62
- East Central Health
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP93/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP621/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Funding ... 271
 - Funding formula ... 977
- Eastwood Public Health Centre
 - Surplus funding for ... 1622, 1839, 1841
- Edson Health Care Centre
 - Upgrades to ... 1839, 1841
- Elder Advocates of Alberta Society
 - Forum on extended care residents treatment ... 613, 614
- Elk antler velvet—Health aspects
 - General remarks ... 319
- Emergency medical response services—Calgary
 - Contingency plan for ... 645
- Emergency medical technicians
 - Impact of ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities on ... 17, 19
- Emergency medical technicians—Wainwright
 - Layoff of ... 19
- Epidemic response services—Calgary
 - Contingency plan for ... 645
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of ... 1077
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1497–98, 1707, 1843–44, 1962
 - Conditions in ... 1499–1500
 - Death of resident in (Jennie Nelson) ... 1962
 - General remarks ... 1707, 1839, 1841–42
 - MLA committee to review (2005) ... 1443, 1497–98
 - MLA committee to review (2005): Report ... 1623, 1707, 1843–44, 1886–87, 1962
 - Redesignation to assisted living status ... 1843, 1962
 - Review of ... 1497
- Extended care facilities, Private
 - Public funding of ... 1569
- Extended care facilities—Finance
 - General remarks ... 613, 1074–75
 - Government grants ... 2049–50
- Extended care facilities—Rural areas
 - Funding for ... 1707
- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 981, 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1458, 1497, 1498, 1623, 1707
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - General remarks ... 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1458, 1459, 1464, 1497–98, 1844, 1962
 - Personal hygiene standards ... 1498
- Extended care facilities—Vegreville
 - General remarks ... 977
- Extended care facilities—Vermilion
 - General remarks ... 977
- Extended care facilities residents
 - Abuse/neglect of ... 613, 614
 - Prescription drug usage ... 207–08, 415, 613

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Extencicare Inc.
 - Lobbying of government ... 1569
- Fabry disease
 - Enzyme replacement therapy for, provincial assistance re ... 290
- Fabryzyme (Drug)
 - General remarks ... 290
- Farmers' markets
 - Food service regulations at ... 1520
- Fatality inquiries
 - Long-term care resident's death (Jennie Nelson) ... 1962
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)
 - Access to Canadian health records held by U.S. companies ... 482
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
 - AADAC program re, funding for ... 271
- Food safety
 - Rural community halls ... 248, 1520
- Foothills Medical Centre
 - Upgrades to ... 533, 644
 - Upgrades to, funding for ... 1838
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 576
- Gambling, Compulsive
 - Youth gambling ... 741
- Government appointments
 - PC party supporters' appointments ... 1603
- Government Organization Act
 - Amendment by Bill 7 ... 52
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 1622
- Grey Nuns Hospital
 - Staff shortages ... 1844
 - Upgrades to ... 1839
- Hantavirus
 - Precautions re ... 1522
- Health Council of Canada
 - Wait times comments ... 1845
- Health Disciplines Board
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP356/05: Tabled) ... 957
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP357/05: Tabled) ... 957
- Health facilities—Construction
 - Funding for ... 1458
- Health First Strathcona
 - General remarks ... 1569
- Health Link Alberta
 - General remarks ... 693
- Health Professions Act
 - Amendment by Bill 7 ... 52
 - General remarks ... 271
 - Midwives inclusion under ... 1146
- Health Quality Council of Alberta
 - Hospital emergency services study ... 692
- Health Resource Centre, Calgary
 - General remarks ... 205
 - Hip/knee surgery contract with Calgary health region ... 244–45, 644, 1145, 1569
 - Wait times at ... 244–45, 1145
- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)
 - Funding for ... 1458

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 7)
 - First reading ... 52
- Health workforce planning
 - General remarks ... 980–81, 1459, 1461, 1842
- Heart—Surgery
 - Coronary artery bypass grafting procedure, intensive home care for patients waiting for ... 271
 - Funding for ... 271
 - Wait times for ... 271, 274
- High Prairie Health Complex
 - Upgrades to ... 1839
- Hip and knee surgery
 - Funding for ... 271, 1458
 - Pilot projects re ... 1846
 - Private health insurance for ... 1665
 - Privatization of, in Calgary ... 1145
 - Waiting lists for, reduction of ... 271
- Home care program
 - General remarks ... 1464, 1707
- Hospital beds
 - Funding for ... 1839
- Hospital beds—Calgary
 - Shortages of ... 274, 533, 644–45
- Hospital beds—Rural areas
 - Funding for ... 1839
- Hospitals—Calgary
 - New south Calgary hospital: Funding for ... 274, 1458
 - New south Calgary hospital: Public/private funding of ... 646
- Hospitals—Emergency services
 - "Friends of ..." volunteers re ... 692
 - General remarks ... 692–93
 - Wait-times at ... 1915
- Hospitals—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1915
- Hospitals—Fort Saskatchewan
 - Surplus funding for ... 1622, 1839, 1843
- Hospitals—Strathcona County
 - Surplus funding for ... 1622, 1839, 1843
- IBM Canada Ltd.
 - Processing of Alberta health records, security implications ... 482, 483, 529, 617
- Identification, Personal
 - Theft of, from lost health records ... 483–84, 529
- Immigrant doctors
 - General remarks ... 1122–23, 1339, 1461
- Immigration
 - Provincial nominee program ... 1461
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta health records ... 482–84, 529, 617
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)
 - Ruling on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian health records ... 482
- Institute of Health Economics
 - Chronic disease management pilot projects ... 271
- Insurance, Health (Private)
 - Alberta plan for ... 1665, 1666, 1671, 1843, 1845
 - Pre-existing conditions, provision for ... 1845
- Intelligence agencies—United States
 - Access to Canadian health records held by U.S. companies ... 482

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 259-60, 267
- Jubilee Lodge Nursing Home Ltd.
 - Government grants to ... 2049-50
- Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd.
 - Contracts with Dept. of Health and Wellness ... 642-43
- Lethbridge Regional Hospital
 - Upgrades to ... 1839
- Lobbyists-Registration
 - General remarks ... 1569
- Long-Term Care Review Advisory Committee (1999)
 - Final report ... 617
- Low-income families
 - Government programs ... 1832
- Magnetic resonance imaging
 - Fort McMurray unit ... 576
 - Funding for ... 271
 - Mobile units for ... 854
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1774
- Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute
 - Funding for ... 1458
- Medical care
 - 24-hour service re ... 1459
 - General remarks ... 1846
 - Restructuring: Funding for ... 271
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 205, 275, 460, 1123-24, 1458, 1627, 1832, 1841, 1842, 1844
 - Restructuring (third way option): Advertising campaign re ... 1666
 - Restructuring (third way option): Public consultation re ... 1666
- Medical care, Cost of
 - Public knowledge of, purpose of ... 1782
- Medical care, Primary
 - General remarks ... 205, 271, 533, 1459
 - Local initiatives re ... 693, 1077-78
 - Midwives inclusion in ... 1146
 - Team-based care ... 693, 1458, 1843
- Medical care, Primary-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1458
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 205, 260, 1123-24, 1145, 1569, 1622, 2051
 - Influence of health symposium on ... 1147
- Medical care-Calgary
 - General remarks ... 533
- Medical care-Finance
 - General remarks ... 271, 273, 274, 1458
 - MLA committee to review: Report ... 1124
 - Surplus funding for ... 1622
 - User fees ... 1123-24
- Medical care-Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1339
- Medical equipment
 - Funding for ... 271, 273, 274, 1458, 1459
- Medical graduates, Foreign
 - Residencies for ... 1123
- Medical profession
 - Practicing in public/private health systems ... 1622, 1665-66
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1366-67

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Medical profession-Education
 - Bursary program for ... 1339
- Medical profession-Fees
 - Alternative payment schemes ... 289
 - Funding for ... 1458
- Medical profession-Rural areas
 - Action plan re ... 289, 1339
 - General remarks ... 1339
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1366-67
- Medical profession-Supply
 - General remarks ... 1458, 1461
 - Northeast Calgary area ... 533
- Medical records
 - Outsourcing management of ... 482
- Medical records, Electronic
 - General remarks ... 205, 320-21, 854, 1339, 1459, 1782
 - Impact on organ transplantation process ... 1601
- Medical records-Access issues
 - Access by outside intelligence agencies ... 482
- Medical records-Confidentiality
 - Departmental budget for ... 617
 - Missing health records situation ... 482-84, 529, 617
 - U.S. access to information re ... 482-84
- Mental Health Act
 - Change from danger model to a treatment model ... 903
- Mental health innovation fund
 - General remarks ... 205, 1458, 1465
- Mental Health Patient Advocate
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP608/05: Tabled) ... 1717
- Mental health services
 - General remarks ... 1459, 1465
- Mental health services-Children
 - General remarks ... 205, 903, 1458
- Mental health services-Funding
 - General remarks ... 271, 903, 1841
- Mental health strategy
 - General remarks ... 903
- Midwifery Health Disciplines Committee
 - Consumer representative on ... 1146
- Midwives and midwifery
 - Inclusion under health care plan ... 1146, 1464
 - Integration of midwifery services evaluation report ... 1146
- Misericordia Community Hospital
 - Upgrades to ... 1839
- Mosquito control programs
 - General remarks ... 1120
- National immunization program
 - Federal funding for ... 271
- Nonemergency health care services
 - Definition ... 1843
- Northern Lights Health Region
 - Abortion services ... 853
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP141/05: Tabled) ... 252
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP623/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 - Funding ... 271
 - Magnetic resonance imaging unit ... 576
- Nurse practitioners
 - General remarks ... 1461
 - Regulation changes re (Bill 7) ... 52
- Nurses, Licensed practical
 - Medication duties ... 1121

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

Nurses—Supply
 General remarks ... 1461
 Nursing homes—Staffing
 Shortages: Impact on medication levels for residents of ... 207–08
 Nursing Homes Act
 Review of standards under ... 614
 Ombudsman
 Long-term care residents' abuse, report on ... 613
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Abortion services ... 853
 Access to medical services ... 1077–78
 Age Care Ltd. ... 460
 Allen Gray Continuing Care Centre ... 1499–1500
 Ambulance services ... 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–245, 245
 Aon Consulting Inc. ... 1627, 1670–71
 Benefits of SuperNet for rural Alberta ... 854
 Budget surplus expenditures ... 1622
 Capital health outpatient residence ... 1960
 Confidentiality of health records ... 482
 Continuing care funding ... 1707
 Continuing care review ... 1443, 1623
 Cornea transplants ... 1601
 Crystal methamphetamine ... 1669–70
 CT scans ... 365–66
 Drug abuse by children ... 2048
 Electronic health record ... 320–21
 Emergency hospital services ... 692–93
 Fabry disease ... 290
 Food regulations review ... 1520
 For-profit health care ... 1569
 Foreign-trained physicians ... 1122–23
 Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... 576
 Funding for regional health authorities ... 977
 Gambling addiction ... 741
 Game farming ... 319
 Government appointments ... 1603
 Hantavirus ... 1522
 Health care costs ... 1782
 Health care insurance privatization ... 1665–66
 Health care operating costs ... 1915
 Health care privatization ... 1145, 1666
 Health care reform ... 205
 Health care staffing ... 980–81
 Health regulations for rural community halls ... 248
 Health Resource Centre ... 244–245
 Health Resource Centre joint replacements ... 644
 Health services in Calgary ... 533
 Health services in the north ... 1339
 Health symposium ... 1123–24, 1147
 Health symposium webcast ... 1336
 Hospital space in Calgary ... 644–45
 Impoverished Albertans ... 1832
 Joint fire and ambulance services ... 482–83
 Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd. ... 642–43
 Long-term care facility standards ... 1497–98
 Long-term care funding ... 2049–50
 Long-term care standards ... 614, 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1962
 Medication for seniors ... 207–208, 415
 Mental health strategy ... 903
 Midwifery services ... 1146
 Missing health records ... 483–84, 529, 617

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)
 Physiotherapy insurance fees ... 954
 Private health services ... 1622
 Private/public partnerships ... 646
 Protection for persons in long-term care ... 613
 Rural development strategies ... 289
 Self-managed care for seniors ... 617
 Tobacco reduction strategy ... 1028
 Wait times for health care ... 1966
 Wait times for ophthalmology services ... 2051
 Wellness initiatives ... 163
 West Nile virus ... 1120
 Youth residential drug treatment ... 23, 852
 Organ and tissue donation
 General remarks ... 1601
 Palliser Health Region
 Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... 202, 245, 483
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP90/05: Tabled) ... 128
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP622/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 Funding ... 271, 273
 Parent Link Centres
 General remarks ... 1832
 Peace Country Health
 Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... 202, 245, 483
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP133/05: Tabled) ... 211
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP618/05: Tabled) ... 1717
 Funding ... 271
 Peter Lougheed Centre (Calgary General Hospital)
 Upgrades to ... 533, 644
 Upgrades to, funding for ... 1838
 Pharmacists—Supply
 General remarks ... 1461
 Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 Second reading ... 630–31
 Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee
 Medication use guidelines ... 415
 Physical fitness—Teaching
 Daily mandatory activities ... 1459
 Physical therapy
 Inclusion under health care plan ... 1465
 Physical therapy—Fees
 Set fees for traffic injury cases ... 954
 Physical therapy—Finance
 Cutbacks to ... 163
 General remarks ... 274
 Podiatry
 Inclusion under health care plan ... 1464–65
 Police
 Reporting missing health records to ... 483–84
 Poverty
 General remarks ... 1832
 Premier's Advisory Council on Health
 Recommendations (A Framework for Reform) ... 205, 1124, 1459
 Preventive medical services
 General remarks ... 163, 271, 1458–59
 Privacy, Right of
 General remarks ... 482–84
 Protection for Persons in Care Act
 General remarks ... 613

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - General remarks ... 852, 2048
 - Implementation of ... 1670
- Provincial Laboratory of Public Health
 - Funding ... 271
- Public contracts
 - Awarding of, to former ministerial aides ... 642–43
- Public Health Act
 - Amendment by Bill 7 ... 52
 - Food service regulations under ... 1520
- Public Health and Immunization Trust (Federal)
 - Alberta's share ... 271, 273
- Public Health Appeal Board
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP397/05: Tabled) ... 1206
- Public records—Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 482–84
- Regional health authorities
 - Abortion services ... 853
 - Ambulance service ... 1915
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ... 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 482
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 17, 19, 83, 202, 243–44, 245, 482
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Costs ... 19, 202, 245
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Impact of joint ambulance/fire services on ... 482–83
 - Board members with PC party connections ... 1603
 - Capital plans ... 1838, 1841
 - CT scan safety requirements ... 366
 - Deficits ... 260
 - Deficits, elimination of ... 271, 273
 - Disaster/epidemic planning ... 645
 - Drug abuse treatment programs ... 852
 - Emergency rooms improvements ... 692–93
 - Food safety regulations application ... 248
 - Funding ... 271, 273, 977, 1074, 1458, 1915
 - Long-term care facilities' programs ... 207–08, 1074–75, 1077, 1121, 1124, 1707, 1962, 2049–50
 - Long-term care facilities' programs: Auditor General's audit of ... 2050
 - Medications usage monitoring ... 415
 - Physiotherapy fees paid ... 274
 - Provincewide services ... 977, 1339
 - Role in health care restructuring ... 205
 - Self-managed care programs for seniors ... 617
 - Staffing levels increase ... 1623
 - Vaccine administrative grants to, federal ... 271
- Regional health authorities—Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1339
- Replagal (Drug)
 - General remarks ... 290
- Rockyview General Hospital
 - Upgrades to ... 533, 644, 1838–39
- Royal Alexandra Hospital
 - Abortion services cancellation ... 853
 - In vitro fertilization clinic ... 853
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 289
- St. John Ambulance
 - Training of emergency room volunteers ... 692
- Senior citizens
 - Government programs: Auditor General's review of ... 1077

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Senior citizens—Housing
 - Assisted living concept ... 1962
- Senior citizens—Medical care
 - Funding for ... 1458
- Seniors' self-managed care program
 - Funding for ... 617
- Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, Calgary
 - Funding for ... 1838
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 181
 - General remarks ... 1028
- Smoking—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1028
- Smoking in public places
 - Ban on ... 1028
- Smoking in the workplace
 - Ban on ... 163
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 523
- Strokes (Brain disease)
 - Provincial strategy re ... 1458
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - Detox/residential services re ... 23, 267, 1458, 2048
 - Detox/residential services re: Tendering procedures re ... 852
 - Mandatory programs for ... 852
- Surgery equipment
 - Funding for ... 271
- Surgery waiting lists
 - General remarks ... 271, 1077, 1915
 - Public vs private facilities ... 244–45, 1145
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 1622, 1707
 - Hospital funding with ... 1838, 1841, 1915
- Telehealth services
 - General remarks ... 854, 1339
- Tobacco companies
 - Meetings with provincial ministers, 2001–2004 (M4/05: Response tabled as SP628/05) ... 494, 1717
- Truck drivers—Supply
 - Government calculations re (Q42/05: Response tabled as SP805/05) ... 1748
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3–5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 163, 205, 260, 1078, 1123–24, 1147, 1458
 - Speakers/presenters at, remuneration paid to (M35/05: Accepted) ... 1165
 - Webcast of ... 1336
- USA PATRIOT Act
 - Impact on access to Canadian medical records ... 482
- Vaccine, Avian influenza
 - Funding for ... 274
- Vaccines—Finance
 - Federal funding ... 271, 273
- Viking Health Centre
 - Upgrades to ... 1839
- Wages—Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1941
- Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - General remarks ... 1077–78, 1838, 1843, 1844, 1845

Evans, Hon. Iris (PC, Sherwood Park) (Continued)

- Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility ... 1960
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility: Subsidies re ... 1960
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 163, 205
- West Nile virus
 - Control methods for ... 1120

Flaherty, Jack (L, St. Albert)

- Aboriginal policy framework
 - General remarks ... 874
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 236
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs ... 266–67
- Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Committee ... 2001
- Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)
 - Second reading ... 239
- Alberta SuperNet
 - School access to: Total amount spent on (Q35/05: Response tabled as SP717/05) ... 1746
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Aboriginal-specific recommendations ... 874
 - Class size guideline ... 307
 - Daily physical activity recommendation ... 416
 - School funding under Education dept. recommendation ... 84
- Alexander Forbes elementary school, Grande Prairie
 - Expansion funding for ... 1721, 1739
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Committee ... 1593
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1992–93
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Third reading ... 1510
- Big Lake natural area
 - Designation as provincial park ... 321
 - Renaming of ... 321
- Bruderheim Elementary School
 - Closure ... 693
- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Third reading ... 479–80
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Reduction of: Funding for ... 307, 1570
- Classroom space
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 307
- Collective bargaining—Teachers
 - General remarks ... 203
 - Province-wide bargaining ... 203–04, 1147
- Collective bargaining—Teachers—Fort McMurray
 - Agreement: Northern allowance provision ... 203
- Community schools
 - General remarks ... 266, 1263–64
- Court of Queen's Bench
 - Edmonton Public School Board school closure decision ... 1446
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1263

Flaherty, Jack (L, St. Albert) (Continued)

- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Treatment
 - Treatment centres for ... 266–67
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 874
- Dept. of Education
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 1262–64
 - Interim estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 266
 - Return of school capital funding to ... 84
 - Supplementary estimates ... 1264
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004–05: Debated ... 307
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 1721
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Interim estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 266–67
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... 84
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 1235
- Dept. of Learning
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M17/05: Response tabled as SP718/05) ... 818
- Disabled children—Education
 - General remarks ... 1030
 - Review of (2000) ... 1255
- Drug abuse
 - School programs re ... 266
- Drug abuse resistance education program
 - General remarks ... 1263
- Early childhood education
 - Full-day programs: Studies re (Q29/05: Response tabled as SP499/05) ... 1158
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 Grey Cup contenders: Letter re (SP711/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Closure of schools ... 120–21, 576–77, 693, 851, 1446, 1570
 - Closure of schools: Court decision re ... 1446
 - Maintenance/utility costs, use of instructional funds for ... 1570
- Education
 - Issues re ... 952
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - General remarks ... 874
 - Incentive funding for specific needs ... 874
- Education—Curricula
 - Drug abuse awareness courses ... 266
 - Fine arts courses ... 952
 - General remarks ... 307, 1262
 - Health and wellness instruction framework ... 952
- Education—Finance
 - Funding for teachers' salaries ... 203
 - General remarks ... 693, 851, 952, 1522, 1570
 - User fees ... 266, 1833–34
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000–04 (Q14/05: Response tabled as SP500/05) ... 808
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000–04 (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 808
- Education—Specialists
 - Funding for ... 1030
- Education Week (Provincial, April 2005)
 - Statement re ... 1032

Flaherty, Jack (L, St. Albert) (Continued)

- Elections, Municipal—Calgary
 - Ward 10 election process: Cost of investigation of (Q30/05: Response tabled as SP806/05) ... 1158
- Elementary education
 - General remarks ... 1262–63
- English as a Second Language
 - General remarks ... 952
- Football championships
 - Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions: Letter re (SP711/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Foster parents
 - Legal aid funding for ... 1235
- Gifted children—Education
 - Funding for ... 266
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 828–29
- High school education—Curricula
 - Fine arts courses ... 952
 - Vocational/trades courses ... 1262
 - Vocational/trades courses: Statement re ... 1787
- High school graduates
 - Numbers of ... 1262
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 266–67
- Legal aid
 - Funding for ... 1235
- Lois Hole elementary school (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 121
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 147–48
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1686, 1772
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Education Week ... 1032
 - Vocational education ... 1787
- Microsoft Corporation
 - School software licences purchase by provincial government: Documents re (M27/05: Accepted) ... 1159
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 472
 - General remarks ... 1264
- Obesity in children
 - Reduction of, through physical activity in schools ... 416
 - School programs re ... 1966–67
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Achievement testing ... 1255
 - Big Lake natural area ... 321
 - Centralized teacher bargaining ... 1147
 - Childhood obesity ... 1966–67
 - Education fundraising ... 1833–34
 - Education system ... 952
 - Labour negotiations with teachers ... 203
 - Physical activities in schools ... 416
 - Provincial achievement tests ... 648
 - School closures ... 693, 851, 1446, 1570
 - School funding formula ... 1522
 - School infrastructure funding ... 1739
 - School utilization ... 84, 576–77
 - School utilization formula ... 120–121
 - Special-needs education ... 1030

Flaherty, Jack (L, St. Albert) (Continued)

- Physical fitness—Teaching
 - Daily mandatory activities ... 307, 416
- Pine beetles—Control
 - General remarks ... 266
- Portable/modular classrooms
 - General remarks ... 1721
- Postsecondary educational institutions
 - Student services ... 874
- Private schools—Finance
 - General remarks ... 952
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 333–34
 - Committee ... 788
 - Web site article re (SP196/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 25)
 - Second reading ... 717
- Public School Boards Council
 - Showcase celebration, program from (SP682/05: Tabled) ... 1838
- Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)
 - Third reading ... 637
- Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)
 - General remarks ... 1787
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - Third reading ... 2021
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 84
- Sangudo high school
 - Closure ... 693
- School boards
 - Funding ... 1522
 - Utility costs ... 1522, 1570
- School boards, Regional
 - General remarks ... 1147
- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities ... 1833–34
 - Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 808
- School counsellors
 - General remarks ... 1721
- School dropouts
 - General remarks ... 266, 1262
- Schoolchildren—Transportation
 - Funding increase for ... 1721
- Schools—Closure
 - General remarks ... 84, 120–21, 576–77, 693, 851, 1263, 1446, 1570
- Schools—Construction
 - General remarks ... 1721
 - Impact of utilization formula on ... 121, 1739
- Schools—Construction—Finance
 - Return to Education dept. responsibility ... 84
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 1739
- Schools—Downtown areas
 - General remarks ... 1264
- Schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1522, 1570, 1721
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 1739
- Schools—Rural areas
 - Community-based utilization formula for ... 84, 121
- Schools—Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 84, 120–21, 576–77, 693, 1446, 1570

Flaherty, Jack (L, St. Albert) (Continued)

- Schools—Utilization (Continued)
 - Community group use of, as part of formula re ... 577, 1263–64
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 184
 - Third reading ... 997
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 147–48
- Speech therapy
 - In schools ... 1263, 1721
- Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School, Edmonton
 - Closure: Court decision re ... 1446
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 434–35
 - Third reading ... 1581
- Student testing
 - Achievement tests ... 266, 1255, 1262–63
 - Achievement tests: Comparison to international standards ... 1262
 - Achievement tests: Costs of administering, 2000-05 (Q40/05: Accepted) ... 1747
 - Achievement tests: Grade 3 retesting ... 648, 952
 - Diagnostic tests ... 266, 952, 1255, 1262–63, 1264
 - Diploma exams: Method for equating, studies re (M49/05: Accepted) ... 1920
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - Detox/residential services re ... 266–67
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - School construction funding with ... 1739
- Teachers, Aboriginal
 - Incentives for ... 874
- Terrace Heights Elementary School, Edmonton
 - Closure ... 1446
- Textbooks—Finance
 - General remarks ... 307
- Tuition fees
 - Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by provincial government ... 577
- Universities and colleges
 - Extension programs for seniors ... 874
- Valhalla school, Peace River
 - Closure ... 693
- Wages—Teachers
 - Funding for increase in ... 203
- Wages—Teachers—Fort McMurray
 - Coverage of cost of living ... 203
- Water resources development—Big Lake basin
 - General remarks ... 321
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Second reading ... 590–91

Forsyth, Hon. Heather (PC, Calgary-Fish Creek)

- Advancing futures* bursary program
 - Funding for ... 1052, 1062
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Chimo Healing Home (youth addictions treatment program) ... 23
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs ... 799
- Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres
 - Funding for ... 1062
- Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research
 - Funding ... 1052

Forsyth, Hon. Heather (PC, Calgary-Fish Creek) (Continued)

- Alberta Foster Parent Association
 - General remarks ... 1056
- Alberta's Promise
 - Private support re ... 1052
- Battered women—Housing
 - Second-stage housing ... 743
- Bear's Paw Day Care Centre, Edmonton
 - Closure of ... 1733
- Budget
 - As reflection of social values ... 303
- Bullying
 - Over the Internet ... 1062
- Bullying—Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 1062
 - Provincial initiatives re: For gay/lesbian youth ... 1062
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 301, 303, 1051, 1052
- Capital projects, Municipal—Finance
 - General remarks ... 900
- Casinos—Camrose
 - Provincial funding for ... 1200
- Child abuse
 - Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1390
- Child abuse—Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 1051, 1052
- Child and family services authorities
 - Funding ... 301, 1051
- Child and Youth Advocate
 - Funding for ... 1598
 - Role of ... 1052
 - Transfer to legislature officer status ... 1445, 1737
- Child care after school
 - Accreditation ... 2013
 - Provincial support for ... 1731
- Child care after school—Employees
 - Salaries and training ... 2013
- Child welfare
 - Aboriginal children ... 1052
 - Early childhood intervention programs: Funding ... 1052
 - Government programs ... 301–05
 - Government programs: Cross-ministry initiative re ... 1056
 - Statistics re, interpretation of ... 1055
- Child welfare—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1051–52
- Child welfare recipients
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1445, 1500–01
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, fatality review of ... 1390, 1445
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, independent review of ... 1445
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, internal review of ... 1390
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, special case review of ... 1445, 1501, 1737
 - Deaths of: Special case reviews re, publication of ... 1737
- Child welfare workers
 - General remarks ... 1500–01

Forsyth, Hon. Heather (PC, Calgary-Fish Creek)*(Continued)*

- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
 - Funding for implementation of ... 301, 305, 1051, 1052, 1055, 1730, 1731
 - General remarks ... 1500–01, 1827–28, 1832
- Children and poverty
 - General remarks ... 1827–28, 1832
- Children's Advocate
 - Annual report, 2002-03 (SP482/05: Tabled) ... 1578
 - Annual report, 2002-03: Responses to (SP483/05: Tabled) ... 1578
 - Annual reports, lateness of reporting of ... 1598
- Commonwealth of Nations
 - General remarks ... 301–02
- Community incentive grants
 - General remarks ... 1062
- Daycare centres
 - National plan principles re ... 304, 1056, 1062, 1732, 2013
 - Special-needs children ... 1730
 - Subsidies re ... 85, 304, 1730, 1733
 - Subsidies re, for stay-at-home parents ... 1730, 1731
 - Survey re ... 1056
- Daycare centres—Closure
 - General remarks ... 1733
- Daycare centres—Employees
 - Accreditation program for ... 1056, 1059, 1732, 2013
 - Salaries of ... 1730, 1731, 1733, 2013
 - Training for ... 1730
- Daycare centres—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1052
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 85, 304, 1051–52, 1056, 1059, 1076–77, 1309–10, 1388–89, 1730, 1731, 1732, 1733, 2013
 - National program for: Alberta participation, federal Conservative Party comments re ... 1059
- Daycare centres—Inspection
 - Surplus funding for ... 1732
- Daycare centres—Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 1733
- Daycare in family members' homes
 - Subsidies for ... 1730, 1732
- Daycare in private homes
 - Subsidies for ... 1730
- Daycare in private homes—Inspection
 - Surplus funding for ... 1731
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP41/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP565/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1051–52, 1055–57, 1059, 1061–62
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 301, 303–05
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1730–33
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs funding ... 23
- Disabled children
 - Government programs for: Funding re ... 1051, 1052
- Domestic violence
 - General remarks ... 739, 1200
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 301, 303, 305, 1051, 1052

Forsyth, Hon. Heather (PC, Calgary-Fish Creek)*(Continued)*

- Early childhood education
 - Funding ... 1730–33
- Family and community support services program
 - Funding ... 1052
 - Review of ... 303
 - Youth program funding ... 206–07, 532
- Family Support for Children With Disabilities Act
 - Initiatives re: Funding for ... 1051, 1052, 1730, 1731
- Fatality inquiries
 - Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1390, 1445
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
 - Canada northwest partnership re ... 769
 - Funding for programs re ... 303
 - General remarks ... 769–70
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder—Research
 - General remarks ... 769–70
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder affected adults—Housing
 - General remarks ... 770
- Foster parents
 - Increased funding for ... 301, 305, 1052, 1056
 - Review of ... 1052
- Homeless—Housing
 - General remarks ... 1832
 - Presence of children in ... 1778, 1832
- Kids in the Hall Bistro
 - Provincial funding for ... 206
- Low-income families
 - Government programs ... 1832
- Maintenance (Domestic relations)
 - Rate increase funding ... 1052
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Camrose women's shelter ... 1200
 - Child and Youth Advocate ... 1598
 - Child care standards ... 2013
 - Child protection ... 1445
 - Children in care ... 1737
 - Children in poverty ... 1778
 - Children's Services special case review ... 1500–01
 - Daycare system ... 85
 - Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder ... 769–70
 - Funding for youth programs ... 206–207
 - Impoverished Albertans ... 1832
 - Infrastructure spending ... 900
 - National child care initiative ... 1076–77, 1309–10, 1388–89
 - Nina Louise Courtepatte ... 1390
 - Nutrition programs in schools ... 1827–28
 - Protection of children abusing drugs ... 413
 - Womens' shelters ... 739, 742–43
 - Youth emergency shelters ... 532
 - Youth residential drug treatment ... 23, 799
- Parent information telephone line
 - General remarks ... 1730
- Parent Link Centres
 - Funding for ... 301, 305, 1052, 1730
- Point of Order
 - Relevance ... 305
- Pornography, Child
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 1052
- Poverty
 - General remarks ... 1832

Forsyth, Hon. Heather (PC, Calgary-Fish Creek)*(Continued)*

- Prostitution, Juvenile
 - Education program re ... 1052
 - General remarks ... 1055
 - On the Internet: Education program re ... 1052
 - Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Third reading ... 792
 - General remarks ... 413, 799
 - Road Runner day care, Calgary
 - Closure of ... 1733
 - Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary (May 2004)
 - General remarks ... 305
 - Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1200
 - School lunch programs
 - General remarks ... 1827-28
 - School nutrition programs
 - General remarks ... 1827-28
 - Sexual assault centres
 - Funding for ... 1062
 - Social Care Facilities Licensing Act
 - Review of ... 1732
 - Social Care Facilities Review Committee
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP329/05: Tabled) ... 776
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP809/05: Tabled) ... 2018
 - Semiannual report, October 2002 to March 2003 (SP264/05: Tabled) ... 492
 - Social services agencies (Non-profit)
 - Duplication of services with government agencies ... 303
 - Employees of, salaries for ... 1052
 - Employees of, training ... 303
 - Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - Detox/residential services re ... 23, 799
 - Mandatory programs for: Provincial policy on ... 413
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 1056, 1733
 - Taber Safe Haven (Women's shelter)
 - Funding for ... 900
 - Tax incentives
 - Stay-at-home parents (re daycare) ... 1076-77, 1310, 1731
 - Womens' shelters
 - General remarks ... 1056
 - Violent spouse situations handling ... 1200
 - Womens' shelters—Camrose
 - Funding ... 1200
 - Womens' shelters—Finance
 - General remarks ... 739, 742-43, 1051, 1052
 - Women's shelters—Taber
 - Funding for ... 900
 - World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence, Banff (October 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1051
 - Youth in transition from the justice system
 - Government programs for ... 303
 - Government programs for: Funding ... 1052, 1062
 - Youth shelters—Finance
 - General remarks ... 206-07, 532, 1055-56, 1731-32
- Fritz, Hon. Yvonne (PC, Calgary-Cross)**
- Alberta Aids to Daily Living
 - General remarks ... 877, 878, 879, 887, 890
 - Hearing aid coverage for seniors ... 163

Fritz, Hon. Yvonne (PC, Calgary-Cross) (Continued)

- Alberta Blue Cross Plan
 - Seniors' drug benefits ... 164, 877, 887
- Alberta Dental Association and College
 - General remarks ... 951
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - Seniors' premiums: Elimination of ... 164, 877, 887
- Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Long-term care facilities inspection ... 1201
- Alberta Housing Act
 - Management bodies provisions ... 1253
 - Sale of public land provisions ... 1502, 1519-20
- Alberta Long Term Care Association
 - General remarks ... 614, 1388
- Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association
 - General remarks ... 614, 1388, 1886, 2009
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Benefits comparison, before and after July 1, 2004 changes (M46/05: Accepted) ... 1748
 - Booklet re, complexity of ... 889
 - Dental benefits ... 877-78, 882-83, 884, 951-52
 - Dental benefits: Enhancement of ... 163-64, 282
 - Evaluation criteria for ... 1387-88
 - Federal seniors' benefits relation to ... 1387
 - Forms re, filling out of ... 889
 - General remarks ... 877, 884
 - Income testing of ... 164, 1387
 - Optical benefits ... 877-78, 882
 - Optical benefits: Enhancement of ... 282
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray ... 87, 1502, 1519-20
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Appraisal process re ... 1519-20, 1568-70
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on ... 1741
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Role of Minister of Environment in ... 1570
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Tabling of copy of agreement re ... 1520, 1569-70
- Assessment
 - Market value as basis for: Impact on seniors ... 889
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefit levels, formula for ... 880, 885
 - Benefits dollar value (Q9/05: Response tabled as SP639/05) ... 661, 1746
 - Benefits increase ... 22, 661, 877, 1149-50
 - Benefits increase: Funding for ... 878
 - Benefits increase: Legislation re (Bill 29) ... 806
 - Benefits received under (Q32/05: Response tabled as SP640/05) ... 1344, 1746
 - Earned income exemption under, raising of ... 878, 890, 1254-55
 - General remarks ... 877, 885, 887, 1524
 - Modified AISH program for assisted care facilities residents ... 1149-50
 - Review of (2004): Report ... 22, 661, 1150
 - Review of (2004): Submissions received by (M23/05: Response tabled as SP641/05) ... 822-23, 1746
 - Review of (2005): Report ... 878, 1254-55
 - Supplementary benefits to personal income support ... 878, 879-80
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - First reading ... 806

Fritz, Hon. Yvonne (PC, Calgary-Cross) (Continued)

- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29) (Continued)
- Second reading ... 939–40
- Committee ... 1244–45
- General remarks ... 879
- Auditor General
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on ... 1741
 - Long-term care facility management investigation
(Seniors care programs) ... 1201
 - Long-term care facility management investigation
(Seniors care programs): Report ... 1387, 1388,
1392, 1497, 2010, 2012
 - Seniors' benefits program comments ... 1387
 - Seniors dept. financial statements, reservation of
opinion re ... 1253
- Blind–Employment
 - CNIB assistance program re ... 1524
- Canada/Alberta Affordable Housing Program
 - Funding for Fort McMurray housing ... 87
 - Funding for northern Alberta housing ... 1125
 - General remarks ... 878, 882, 888, 1198
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
 - Bridge to employment program ... 1524
- Children and poverty
 - General remarks ... 1778
- College of Alberta Denturists
 - General remarks ... 951
- Dependent Adults Act
 - Review of ... 887
- Dept. of Environment
 - Minister's role in Fort McMurray land sale ... 1570
- Dept. of Seniors
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP61/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP584/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 877–80, 882–85,
887–90
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during
(SP439/05: Tabled) ... 1507
 - Financial statements, inclusion of management
bodies' surpluses/assets in ... 1253
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ...
282–83
- Disabled
 - Government programs for ... 877, 885, 1524
- Disabled–Housing
 - General remarks ... 878
- East Central Health
 - Seniors' supportive housing projects ... 282
- Elder Advocates of Alberta Society
 - Forum on extended care residents treatment ... 614
- Elizabeth House
 - General remarks ... 1338
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ...
1406–07
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of ... 1201
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1387, 1388,
1392, 1497, 2010, 2012
 - Conditions in ... 797
 - Death of resident in (Jean Warden) ... 1881–82
 - Food service ... 887

Fritz, Hon. Yvonne (PC, Calgary-Cross) (Continued)

- Extended care facilities (Continued)
- MLA committee to review (2005): Report ... 1624,
2010, 2012
- Redesignation to assisted living status ... 1886,
2012–13
- Review of ... 614
- Extended care facilities–Fees
 - General remarks ... 1387
 - Increase in, cancellation of ... 1201
- Extended care facilities–Inspection
 - General remarks ... 1200
 - Inspector general re (proposed) ... 1882
- Extended care facilities–Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 797, 887,
1200, 1392
 - Training of ... 890
- Extended care facilities–Standards
 - Accommodation standards: Revision of ... 614
 - Chemical/physical restraints use standards ... 1497
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ...
1406–07
 - General remarks ... 878, 887, 1200–01, 1388, 1392,
1497, 2010, 2012–13
- Extended care facilities residents
 - Abuse/neglect of ... 614
- Fatality inquiries
 - Long-term care resident's death (Jean Warden) ...
1881
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities
 - Subsidized housing statistics ... 1198
- Food banks
 - General remarks ... 366
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Social Housing Corporation sale agreement re land
transfer to Fort McMurray, release of information
re under ... 1569
- George C. King Tower, Calgary
 - Security concerns ... 616
- Group homes–Standards
 - Locating of homes ... 646
- Hearing aids for seniors
 - Provincial assistance re ... 163–64
- Home care program
 - General remarks ... 889, 890
- Homeless–Housing
 - Funding for ... 366, 878, 883, 890, 1778
 - Presence of children in ... 1778
 - Transitional housing ... 1778
- Housing–Fort McMurray
 - Impact of population increase on ... 87
- Kerby Centre
 - General remarks ... 1388
- Low-income seniors
 - Special-needs assistance ... 877, 1387
 - Special-needs assistance: Hearing aid coverage ... 163
- Management bodies (Housing)
 - Surpluses/assets, reporting of ... 1253
- Meals on Wheels
 - General remarks ... 889, 890
- Mental health services
 - General remarks ... 878
- Mentally disabled–Housing
 - Group homes, locating of ... 646

Fritz, Hon. Yvonne (PC, Calgary-Cross) (Continued)

Murdoch Manor, Calgary
 Security concerns ... 616
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Affordable housing in Fort McMurray ... 87
 Affordable housing in the north ... 1125
 Affordable supportive living program ... 2009–10
 Aid for disabled persons ... 1524
 Application process for seniors' benefits ... 619
 Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped ... 22, 1149–50, 1254–55
 Children in poverty ... 1778
 Continuing care review ... 1624
 Continuing care standards ... 2010, 2012–13
 Death of a patient in long-term care ... 1881–82
 Dental assistance for seniors ... 951–52
 Group homes ... 646
 Homeless shelters ... 366
 Long-term care ... 1886–87
 Long-term care facilities ... 797
 Long-term care facility standards ... 1388, 1397, 1497
 Long-term care standards ... 614, 1200–01
 Ministry of seniors financial statements ... 1253
 Sale of Social Housing Corporation land ... 1502, 1519–20, 1568–69, 1569–70
 Security in seniors' apartment buildings ... 616
 Seniors' benefit program ... 163–164, 1387–88
 Seniors' property taxes ... 2049
 Sex trade workers ... 1338
 Social Housing Corporation land sales ... 1741
 Support for low-income Albertans ... 1198
 User fees in long-term care facilities ... 1387
 Personal directives
 Promotion of ... 879
 Personal Directives Act
 Review of ... 887
 Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board
 Annual report, 2003-04 (SP378/05: Tabled) ... 1128
 Pleasant View Lodge, Mayerthorpe
 Upgrades to, funding ... 2010
 Property tax—Education levy
 Seniors' tax relief re ... 877–78, 887, 2049
 Prostitutes
 Murder of ... 1338
 Prostitutes—Housing
 Transitional housing ... 1338
 Protection for Persons in Care Act
 General remarks ... 614, 879, 890, 1881
 Public assistance
 Increase to ... 1198
 Public Guardian's office
 Funding ... 879, 887
 Regional health authorities
 Long-term care facilities' programs ... 614, 1886
 Senior citizens
 Benefits vs. family assistance to ... 888–89
 Government programs ... 163–64, 877–80, 882–85, 887–90
 Government programs: Auditor General's review of ... 1201
 Government programs: Streamlining of application process re ... 619

Fritz, Hon. Yvonne (PC, Calgary-Cross) (Continued)

Senior citizens—Housing
 Assisted living concept ... 1886
 Assisted living concept, keeping senior couples together ... 888
 Garden suites ... 888
 Standards for ... 880
 Senior citizens—Housing—Northern Alberta
 General remarks ... 1125
 Senior citizens—Housing—Rural areas
 Rural affordable supportive living program ... 1125
 Senior citizens' lodges
 Funding for ... 878, 1624
 General remarks ... 1886–87
 Upgrades to, funding ... 2009–10
 Senior citizens' lodges—Northern Alberta
 Funding for ... 1125
 Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta
 General remarks ... 884
 Seniors' apartment buildings—Security aspects—Calgary
 General remarks ... 616
 Seniors' issues
 Telephone information line re ... 619, 889
 Seniors' supportive housing incentive program
 General remarks ... 2009–10
 Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—East Central Health region
 General remarks ... 282
 Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—Standards
 General remarks ... 1886–87
 Seniors United Now
 General remarks ... 1388
 Social Care Facilities Licensing Act
 Group home provisions ... 646
 Social housing
 General remarks ... 877, 878, 883–84, 888, 1198, 1778
 Rent supplement program ... 87, 1198
 Subsidy level increase ... 880
 Social housing—Northern Alberta
 Committee to study ... 1125
 General remarks ... 1125
 Social housing—Rural areas
 Sustainable remote housing initiative ... 1125
 Social services recipients—Protection
 General remarks ... 878–79, 890
 Timberlea Consortium Incorporated
 Purchase of public land in Fort McMurray ... 1502, 1519–20
 Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre
 General remarks ... 1338
Goudreau, Hector G. (PC, Dunvegan-Central Peace)
 Agriculture
 Statement re ... 1080
 Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 348
 Alberta's Commission on Learning
 Second-language teaching initiative ... 1603–04
 Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 First reading ... 370
 Second reading ... 540
 Committee ... 558
 Third reading ... 943

Goudreau, Hector G. (PC, Dunvegan-Central Peace)*(Continued)*

- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Committee ... 1295–96
- Animals, Treatment of
 - Legislation re (Bill 32) ... 370
- Campus Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1394
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
 - Hines Creek mill closure, impact of ... 88
- Crop insurance program
 - Production insurance coverage ... 1570
 - Spring price endorsement option ... 979, 1570
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 761
 - Opportunity and restructuring assessment function ... 761
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Aboriginal students ... 1394
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1403–04
- Employment training programs
 - General remarks ... 1916
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1403–04
- Fairview College
 - Takeover by Northern Alberta Institute of Technology: Recognition of ... 325
- Food industry and trade
 - Statement re ... 1080
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 761
- Highway 2–Dunvegan bridge area
 - Realignment of ... 88
- Labour productivity
 - General remarks ... 1916
- Labour supply
 - Shortages of skilled workers ... 1915–16
- Languages—Teaching
 - General remarks ... 1603–04
- Livery Stable Keepers Act
 - Replacement by the Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32) ... 370
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Agriculture industry ... 1080
 - U of A and Northern Lakes College partnership ... 1394
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Takeover of Fairview College: Recognition of ... 325
- Northern Lakes College
 - Transition program to University of Alberta programs: Statement re ... 1394
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Agricultural assistance ... 979
 - Canadian Forest Products Ltd. mill closure ... 88
 - Crop insurance ... 1570
 - Labour force resources ... 1915–16
 - Second-language instruction ... 1603–04
- Organized crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1916
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Amendment A1 (SP407/05: Tabled) ... 1299

Goudreau, Hector G. (PC, Dunvegan-Central Peace)*(Continued)*

- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 325
- Teachers, Modern languages
 - Incentives for ... 1604
- University of Alberta
 - Partnership agreement with Northern Lakes College ... 1394
- Graydon, Hon. Gord (PC, Grande Prairie-Wapiti)**
 - Agricultural societies
 - Lottery funding ... 124, 534
 - Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Gambling addiction programs ... 487, 1281
 - Gambling research ... 1286
 - Lottery funding for ... 1286
 - Alberta Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)
 - General remarks ... 305
 - Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
 - Annual report, 2003–04 (SP144/05: Tabled) ... 252
 - Annual report, 2004–05 (SP669/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - Board members, selection process re ... 1283
 - Casino application process ... 1281, 1712
 - Disciplinary board hearings in camera ... 1288
 - General remarks ... 1277, 1283
 - Inspections for liquor licence violations ... 1029
 - Alberta Gaming Research Council
 - Board members, selection process re ... 1283
 - General remarks ... 1277, 1278
 - Alberta Gaming Research Institute
 - Funding for ... 487, 534, 1278, 1288
 - General remarks ... 1277
 - Research done by ... 1286
 - Research done by, interference in ... 487, 534
 - Study on compulsive gambling revenue ... 487
 - Bingo halls
 - Impact of anti-smoking legislation on ... 1799
 - Revenue decrease from ... 1799
 - Bingos, Electronic
 - Proceeds distribution ... 1278
 - Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Ltd.
 - Closure of race track ... 1283
 - Funding for ... 1798–99
 - Lottery funding for ... 124, 976, 1278, 1288, 1289
 - Camrose Regional Exhibition and Agricultural Society
 - Lottery funding for ... 1286
 - Canadian Finals Rodeo 2005
 - Lottery funding for ... 1278
 - Canmore Nordic Centre
 - Upgrades to: Funding for ... 305, 306
 - Casinos
 - Cashless technology in ... 2052
 - General remarks ... 1281, 1283
 - Impact on local crime rate ... 1287
 - Limit on number of ... 1280, 1712–13
 - Casinos—Camrose
 - Lottery funding for ... 1286
 - Charitable Gaming in Alberta, 2003–2004 in Review (Report)
 - Copy tabled (SP145/05) ... 252
 - Charitable Gaming in Alberta, 2004–2005 in Review (Report)
 - Copy tabled (SP670/05) ... 1837

Graydon, Hon. Gord (PC, Grande Prairie-Wapiti)*(Continued)*

- Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations
 - Gaming revenue for ... 1282
 - Lottery funding for ... 1278
- Community facility enhancement program
 - Churches' application to ... 1287
 - General remarks ... 771, 1277, 1278, 1282, 1284
 - Lottery funds to ... 1289
- Community initiatives program
 - General remarks ... 1277, 1278, 1282, 1284
 - Lottery funds to ... 1289
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 305-06
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP48/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP573/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Budget: Other initiatives item ... 1284
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1277-84, 1286-90
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP458/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Role of ... 1277
 - Social responsibility division ... 487, 1286
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1798-99
- Disaster relief
 - Funding for ... 1798-99
- Disaster relief fund (Proposed)
 - Funding for ... 1799
- Earthquakes-Pakistan
 - Alberta disaster relief for 2005 quake ... 1798-99
- Edmonton Northlands
 - Funding for ... 1289, 1798-99
 - Lottery funding for ... 124, 976, 1278, 1288
- Fairs
 - Capital grants to ... 124, 1278
- First Nations development fund
 - General remarks ... 1278, 1282
 - Revenue decrease ... 1799
- Gambling
 - General remarks ... 1286
- Gambling, Compulsive
 - Amount of ... 1281
 - General remarks ... 1286
 - Level of revenue from ... 487
 - Research into ... 1278, 1281, 1286
- Gambling, Compulsive-Treatment
 - General remarks ... 487
- Gambling-Aboriginal reserves
 - General remarks ... 1282
 - Revenue from, distribution of ... 1278
- Gambling-Moral/legal issues
 - General remarks ... 1286
- Gaming and Liquor Act
 - General remarks ... 1277
- Gaming industry
 - Revenue from ... 1279, 1281
 - Revenue from, distribution of ... 1289
 - Revenue from, impact of smoking restrictions on ... 1279
- Gaming industry-Nova Scotia
 - General remarks ... 1280

Graydon, Hon. Gord (PC, Grande Prairie-Wapiti)*(Continued)*

- Global Gaming Expo, Las Vegas (September 2005)
 - Minister of Gaming's attendance at ... 2052
- Government programs
 - Lottery funding for ... 1278
- Hockey
 - Lottery funding for ... 1289-90
 - Lottery funding for 2004, reallocation to low-income programs ... 1290
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 770-71, 855-56, 901, 976, 1278, 1282-83, 1288-89
- Horse Racing Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP146/05: Tabled) ... 252
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP671/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - General remarks ... 855-56, 901, 976, 1289
- Horse Racing Alberta Act
 - General remarks ... 1277
- Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, U.S. (2005)
 - Alberta disaster relief for ... 1798-99
- Licensed premises
 - Bouncers in, training of ... 1287
 - Liquor sales to minors ... 1029, 1287
- Liquor sales
 - Revenue from ... 1286-87
- Liquor sales-Regulations
 - Server intervention program ... 1287
 - Under-25 program ... 1287
- Lottery Fund
 - Capital grants to major fairs from ... 124, 534
 - Disaster relief funding ... 1799
 - Funds allocation ... 1277, 1278, 1282
 - Race track gaming revenues to ... 770-71, 901, 976
 - Revenue in ... 1279
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Capital grants for major fairs ... 124
 - Casino construction ... 1712-13
 - Gaming Research Institute ... 534
 - Gaming technology ... 2052
 - Horse-racing industry ... 901, 976
 - Horse-racing renewal program ... 770-71
 - Problem gambling ... 487
 - Sale of liquor to minors ... 1029
 - Social assistance rates ... 855-56
- Public assistance
 - Increase to ... 855-56
- Racing Appeal Tribunal
 - General remarks ... 1277
- Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)
 - General remarks ... 1283, 1288-89
 - Revenue from ... 855-56
- Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)-Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1283
- Referendum, Provincial
 - Video gambling machines, removal of ... 1284
- Slot machines
 - General remarks ... 1281
 - Number of ... 1284
- Slot machines in casinos
 - Cashless technology for ... 2052
 - Number of ... 1286

Graydon, Hon. Gord (PC, Grande Prairie-Wapiti)*(Continued)*

- Slot machines in racing entertainment centres
 - Revenue from, transferred to horse-racing industry ... 901, 976, 1278, 1288–89
- Smoking in public places
 - Ban on: Impact on gaming revenue ... 1279
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Agricultural society funding ... 1799
- Tsunami–Thailand/Indian Ocean area
 - Alberta relief funds for ... 1284
- University of Alberta
 - Lottery funding for ... 1289
- University of Calgary
 - Lottery funding for ... 1289
- Video gambling machines
 - Cap on number of ... 1280, 1281, 1286, 1713
 - General remarks ... 1281
 - Referendum on removal of ... 1284
 - Responsible gaming features ... 1280–81
- Video gambling machines–Nova Scotia
 - Cap on number of ... 1280
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - International disaster relief funding ... 1799
- Griffiths, Doug (PC, Battle River-Wainwright)**
 - 4-H Premier's award
 - Statement re ... 1204
 - Carbon dioxide sinks
 - General remarks ... 1334–35
 - Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on: Carbon credit plan re ... 1334–35
 - El Mais, Mohamed
 - Recognition of ... 417
 - Hedley, Kristen
 - Statement re ... 1204
 - Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 189–90
 - Medical profession
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1365
 - Medical profession–Rural areas
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1365
 - Members' Statements (2005)
 - Kristen Hedley ... 1204
 - Rural development ... 1126
 - A tribute to mothers ... 1340–41
 - Mothers
 - Statement re ... 1340–41
 - Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Grade level achievement reporting ... 1445–46
 - Kyoto climate change agreement ... 1334–35
 - Tourism in rural Alberta ... 48
 - Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 417
 - Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 516–17
 - Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re: Report (A Place to Grow) ... 48
 - Government strategy re: Statement re ... 1126
 - School reports
 - Grade level achievement reports ... 1445–46
 - Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 175–76
 - Committee ... 498

Griffiths, Doug (PC, Battle River-Wainwright)*(Continued)*

- Soils
 - Carbon absorption properties ... 1334–35
- Tourism–Rural Alberta
 - General remarks ... 48
- Wages–Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1937
- Groeneveld, George (PC, Highwood)**
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1867
 - Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (Movie)
 - General remarks ... 1968
 - Automobile licence plates
 - Sale of, portion of to Wild Rose Ag. Producers ... 953
 - Backcountry safety
 - General remarks ... 769
 - Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
 - Parity of Ontario and Alberta re ... 1503
 - Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 674–75
 - Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy
 - Eastern Slopes access issues, discussion of rural municipalities report on ... 1573
 - Cougars
 - Public awareness of ... 769
 - Relocation of ... 769
 - Daycare centres–Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 1503
 - Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 887
 - Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Estimates, 2005–06: Debated ... 935
 - Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 648
 - Energy industry–Crown lands
 - Land management issues re ... 648
 - Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1750–52
 - Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1503
 - Film industry
 - Statement re ... 1968
 - Foothills Country Hospice Society
 - Statement re ... 2014–15
 - Ghost-Waiparous recreation area
 - Off-highway vehicle access to ... 1573
 - Grizzly bear hunting
 - General remarks ... 935
 - High River (Town)
 - Statement re ... 1257
 - Highway 2–Aldersyde area
 - Interchange with highways 7 and 547 ... 575
 - Integrated resource management (Public lands)
 - General remarks ... 648
 - Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 192–93

Groeneveld, George (PC, Highwood) (Continued)

- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 96–97
 - Members' Statements (2005)
 - Alberta film industry ... 1968
 - Foothills Country Hospice Society ... 2014–15
 - Town of High River ... 1257
 - Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1765
 - Off-highway vehicles
 - Access to public lands ... 1573
 - Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Cougar management ... 769
 - Federal transfer payments ... 1503
 - Highways 2, 7 and 547 interchange ... 575
 - Integrated land management ... 648
 - Public land management ... 1573
 - Wild Rose Agricultural Producers ... 953
 - Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
 - First reading ... 92
 - Second reading ... 373, 375
 - Committee ... 686, 688
 - Third reading ... 1486–87
 - Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1357–58
 - Political bodies
 - Exemption from privacy legislation (PIPA) (Bill 8) ... 373
 - Privacy, Right of
 - Legislative amendments re (Bill 8) ... 92
 - Public lands
 - Access to ... 648, 1573
 - Public lands—Eastern Slopes
 - Access issues re ... 1573
 - Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 514–15
 - Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 674–75
 - Social housing
 - General remarks ... 887
 - Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 96–97
 - Tourism
 - General remarks ... 1968
 - Wild Rose Agricultural Producers
 - Provincial funding for ... 953
 - Wildlife management
 - Human/wildlife interaction issue ... 769
- Haley, Carol (PC, Airdrie-Chestermere)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Airdrie celebrations: Statement re ... 1786
 - General remarks ... 1
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Amendment A1 (SP716 & 767/05: Tabled) ... 2005
 - Amendment A2 (SP768/05: Tabled) ... 2005
 - Amendment A3 (SP769/05: Tabled) ... 2005
 - Amendment A4 (SP770/05: Tabled) ... 2005
 - Amendment A5 (SP771/05: Tabled) ... 2005
 - Alberta Film Commission Advisory Council
 - General remarks ... 322

Haley, Carol (PC, Airdrie-Chestermere) (Continued)

- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Third reading ... 1609–10
- Avian influenza
 - Industry protection measures re ... 1780
- Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Speaker ... 1
- Beef-Export
 - BSE-free status to expedite ... 1599–1600
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 417, 1599–1600
 - Testing re, to expedite exports ... 1599–1600
- Calgary-McCall (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... 4
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency
 - Avian flu test results announcements ... 1780
- Cattle-Export-United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 417
- Cattle-Import-United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed, impact on ... 417
- Caucus policy committees (PC party)
 - General remarks ... 58
- Centennial medallions
 - Presentation to Airdrie-Chestermere constituents ... 1786
- Century Farm & Ranch awards
 - Jones Hereford ranch, statement re ... 1786
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Environment
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Solicitor General
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 1852
- Deputy Chair
 - Election of, on second ballot ... 4
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 1786
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 tabled (SP696/05) ... 1852
- Excellence in Teaching Awards
 - General remarks ... 1504–05
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Amendment (Minister of Justice) (SP235, 272, 295/05: Tabled) ... 636
 - Subamendment (SP294/05: Tabled) ... 636

Haley, Carol (PC, Airdrie-Chestermere) (Continued)

- Film development grant program
 - General remarks ... 322
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 58
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Centennial events in Airdrie ... 1786
 - Positive influence on teachers ... 1504-05
- Mosquito control programs
 - General remarks ... 1120
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Avian influenza ... 1780
 - Border closure to U.S. cattle ... 417
 - Film development program ... 322
 - Tracking and tracing system for Alberta beef ... 1599-1600
 - West Nile virus ... 1120
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Government members' role in ... 57-58
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 57-58
- Poultry industry
 - Protective measures re avian flu ... 1780
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 332-33
 - Amendment (SP332/05: Tabled) ... 790
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 174-75
- Speaker
 - Election of ... 1
 - Role of ... 1
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 61-62
- Teachers
 - Statement re ... 1504-05
- Wagner, Eva
 - 100th birthday gold medal ... 1786
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 70
- West Nile virus
 - Control methods for ... 1120
- Wild waterfowl
 - Detection of avian flu in ... 1780
 - Handling of, re avian flu risk ... 1780

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Gifts to Canadians nation-wide (scholarships and artwork) ... 1738
- Aboriginal health careers bursary
 - General remarks ... 1883
- Access Growth Fund (Postsecondary education)
 - General remarks ... 277, 278, 859, 860, 862, 981
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 150-52, 222, 224, 391
 - Committee ... 728, 732-33, 1064, 1066-69
 - Third reading ... 1237, 1242
 - Amendment A1 (SP271 & 313/05: Tabled) ... 868, 870-71
 - Amendment A3 (SP344 & 367/05: Tabled) ... 1064
 - Cap on contributions to ... 870-71
 - General remarks ... 864, 868, 871, 1079, 1738, 2014
- Access to the Future Fund
 - General remarks ... 20, 859, 865, 867-68, 869, 870-71, 1078-79, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1795
 - Role re centre for Chinese studies ... 946-47

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud) (Continued)

- Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
 - Third reading ... 942
- Advancing futures* bursary program
 - General remarks ... 1883
- Alberta-Economic policy
 - 20-year strategic plan ... 20, 48, 859, 868-69, 1571
- Alberta Alliance Party
 - Member of, participation in Question Period ... 56, 57
- Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP292/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP733/05: Tabled) ... 1920
 - Ratio of journeymen to apprentices, review of ... 980
- Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan
 - Children born before 2005 exclusion from ... 47-48
 - General remarks ... 277, 278, 859
- Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 54)
 - First reading ... 1890
 - Second reading ... 1950, 1952
 - Third reading ... 2028
- Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)
 - Second reading ... 1973
- Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program
 - Nation-wide program ... 1738
- Alberta College of Art and Design
 - Downtown campus site ... 796-97
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796
- Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer
 - General remarks ... 1796
 - Mount Royal College issue ... 864
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - Funding for ... 868, 871, 1795
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research
 - Funding for ... 868
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - General remarks ... 871
- Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund
 - General remarks ... 860, 864, 868, 869-70, 871, 1738, 1795
 - Inclusion of nation-wide scholarship endowment under ... 1738
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - General remarks ... 868, 871, 1795
- Alberta-North; Northern Alberta Post-Secondary Institution Society
 - General remarks ... 981
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40)
 - Second reading ... 1244
 - Third reading ... 1557
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Third reading ... 2019
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Commissioners of, dismissal ... 1250
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's authority challenged re, emergency debate re ... 1316-17

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Securities Commission *(Continued)*
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... 1197, 1250–51, 1304–05
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Emergency debate under SO 30 re ... 1084
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Report on ... 1305
 - Interim chairman ... 1250, 1304
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Distance education delivery via ... 1883
- Alberta Treasury Branch Financial
 - Subsidiary companies' control processes, Auditor General's recommendation re (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1788
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Postsecondary system independent review recommendation ... 1254
- Alexander Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement
 - General remarks ... 1738
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05: Response tabled as SP511/05) ... 1161–62
- Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Point of order re ... 1453
- Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 57)
 - First reading ... 1890
 - Second reading ... 1953
 - Committee ... 1980
 - Third reading ... 2031
- Apprenticeship training
 - Aboriginal people ... 982, 1883
 - Automated registration system for ... 277, 861
 - General remarks ... 201–02, 248, 859, 860, 1792, 1794, 1882–83
 - Mobile/distance delivery of ... 861
 - Safety aspects ... 980
- Apprenticeship training–Finance
 - Equipment funding ... 277
 - General remarks ... 860
- Apprenticeship training–Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 861, 981–82
 - Provincial assistance re ... 1882–83
- Apprenticeship training–Rural areas
 - Provincial assistance re ... 1883
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Second reading ... 1554
 - Third reading ... 1614
 - Unanimous consent to introduce denied ... 1485
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - First reading ... 295
 - Committee ... 402–03
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - First reading ... 312–13
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Third reading ... 2033, 2037, 2039

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Arts–Finance
 - General remarks ... 869
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
 - Degree-granting accreditation procedure ... 1791
 - Degree-granting accreditation procedure, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921–22
- Athabasca University
 - General remarks ... 981, 1793, 1795
 - Mount Royal College transfer students ... 864
- Auditor General
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... 1197, 1250–51, 1304–05
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, authority to challenged, emergency debate re ... 1316–17
 - Suggestive references to, in Legislative Assembly ... 984–85
 - Treasury Branches' control processes comments (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1788
- Banff Centre for Continuing Education
 - Audited financial statements, 2003-04 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Audited financial statements, 2004-05 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Bills, Private members' public
 - Passage of ... 56
- Budget
 - Process re ... 1621
- Bursaries
 - Funding for ... 860, 864
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - Third reading ... 2030
- Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society
 - Wild Rose grants transferred to: Point of order re ... 1453
- Campus Alberta Quality Council
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP701/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 - Degree program approval process ... 851, 1168, 1790, 1791, 1796
 - Degree program approval process, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921–22
 - Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... 1166–67
- Campus Calgary
 - General remarks ... 864, 1791, 1793
- Canada Health Act
 - Discussions with federal officials re ... 1308
- Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
 - Impact of Alberta's health care restructuring on ... 1308
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - General remarks ... 796–97
- Centennial Capital Plan
 - General remarks ... 1795
- Centre for Chinese studies (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 1079
 - Statement re ... 946–47
- Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee, Select Special
 - Motion to appoint (Motion 25: Hancock/Zwozdesky) ... 1943

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Citizens' initiative referenda
 - Legislation re ... 1251
- Columbia College
 - Letters, memos re (M40/05: Defeated) ... 1167–68
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1549–51
- Committee of Supply
 - Motion to resolve into (Motion 5: McClellan/Hancock) ... 75
 - Schedule of debate (SP315/05: Tabled) ... 746
- Committee of the Whole Assembly
 - Motion to resolve into (Motion 4: Hancock) ... 75
- Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing
 - Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... 11
 - Motion to appoint ... 11
- Committee on Legislative Offices, Standing
 - Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... 11
 - Motion to appoint ... 11
 - Referral of comments in Legislature re Auditor General to ... 985
- Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing
 - Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, referred to (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... 106
 - Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... 11
 - Motion to appoint ... 11
- Committee on Private Bills, Standing
 - Members' list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... 11
 - Motion to appoint ... 11
- Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Standing
 - Members list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... 11
 - Motion to appoint ... 11
 - Referral of comments in Legislature re Auditor General to ... 985
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Changes to operation of ... 1784
 - Members list presented (SP2/05: Tabled) ... 11
 - Motion to appoint ... 11
- Community learning centres
 - Funding for ... 981
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Membership change for (Motion 24: Hancock) ... 1638
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 248
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Committee ... 1903–04
- Daycare centres—Campuses
 - Waiting lists for ... 1831
- Daycare centres—Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 1831
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP563/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Budget target ... 1621
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 859–61, 863–65, 867–71, 875
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP429/05: Tabled) ... 1396

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Advanced Education *(Continued)*
 - Separation from Dept. of Learning, costs re ... 869
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 276–78
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1789–98
- Dept. of Education
 - Separation from Dept. of Learning, costs re ... 869
- Dept. of Energy
 - Communications contracts expenditures, 2003-04 (Q16/05: Defeated) ... 811–12
- Dept. of Finance
 - Minister of, comments re ... 420, 985
- Dept. of Learning
 - Separation into depts. of Education and Advanced Education, costs re ... 869
- DeVry Institute of Technology
 - Academic programs, approval of ... 1166, 1168
- Direct Energy Business Services
 - Energy savings partnership with University of Calgary ... 696–97
- Distance education
 - General remarks ... 981
 - Vocational courses ... 1883
- eCampusAlberta (Distance education)
 - General remarks ... 981, 1795
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Aboriginal students ... 1624
 - Access to, affordability review to improve ... 20, 48, 320, 361, 483, 649, 697, 798, 860, 863, 865, 981–82, 1123, 1202–03, 1571, 1574, 1624, 1795–96, 1830
 - Access to, affordability review to improve:
 - Conference on results of ... 1571
 - Access to, by low-income students ... 1830–31
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 48, 859, 863, 864, 870, 981, 1790, 1791, 1792–93, 1794
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1549–51
 - General remarks ... 859
 - Independent review of ... 1202, 1254
 - Legislation re (Bill 9) ... 92
- Education, Postsecondary—Calgary
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 1791–92, 1793
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - Capital spending ... 860, 863–64, 869
 - Federal funding ... 1306–07
 - Funding envelopes ... 864
 - General remarks ... 859–61, 863–65, 867–72
 - Review of ... 20, 320, 361, 1202–03, 1571
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- Education, Postsecondary—Rural areas
 - Funding ... 860
- Education—Finance
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 810
- Elections, Provincial
 - Fixed dates for ... 1251
- Electoral reform
 - General remarks ... 1251
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: Special Legislature sitting for (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 597

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1397-98
 - Long-term care funding (Not proceeded with) ... 1718
- Securities Commission, loss of investor confidence in (not proceeded with) ... 1084
- Securities Commission challenge of Auditor General's authority (not proceeded with) ... 1316-17
- Endowment funds, Public
 - General remarks ... 868, 871
- Energy efficiency (Buildings)
 - Direct Energy/U of C partnership re ... 696-97
- English as a Second Language
 - Funding ... 860
 - General remarks ... 859, 870, 871, 1833
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - General remarks ... 56
 - Schedule of debate (SP315/05: Tabled) ... 746
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days (Schedule of debate) (SP541/05: Tabled) ... 1674
- Extended care facilities-Finance
 - Emergency debate on (Not proceeded with) ... 1718
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1397-98
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 248
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1167
- Geiger, Alyse
 - Recognition of ... 169
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 1621
- Grande Prairie Regional College
 - Portable trailers, funding to replace ... 1791, 1794
- Grant MacEwan Community College
 - Capital expenditures ... 1571
 - Degree-granting programs, funding for ... 1790, 1796
 - Degree-granting programs, transferability of ... 1791, 1796
 - Health care learning centre: Funding for ... 871
- Great Kids of Alberta
 - Awards: Recognition of ... 169
- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)
 - General remarks ... 869
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- High school education-Curricula
 - Vocational/trades courses ... 1883
- High school graduates
 - Numbers of ... 1797, 1798
 - Numbers of: Transition to postsecondary education ... 1797, 1798
- Hospital beds-Calgary
 - Shortages of ... 797
- Hospitals-Calgary
 - New south Calgary hospital ... 797
- Immigration
 - General remarks ... 870

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 253-54
- International education
 - Provincial action plan re: Brochure (SP542/05) ... 1674
 - Student brochure re (SP543/05) ... 1674
- Jason Lang Scholarships
 - General remarks ... 1738
- Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 48)
 - Third reading ... 1899
- Korea War Veterans Day
 - Recognition of date of, July 27 (Motion 21: Hancock) ... 1111-12
- Lakeland College
 - Sherwood Park campus ... 1574
 - Sherwood Park campus: Role in postsecondary education system ... 1574
 - Surplus spending for programs at ... 1621
- Learning strategy
 - General remarks ... 1202
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of ... 1302
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1110
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta
 - Special sitting of, for Royal visit (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 597
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta-Adjournment
 - Fall sittings (Motion 26: Hancock) ... 2057
 - Spring recess (Motion 6: Hancock) ... 75
 - Summer recess (Motion 7: Hancock) ... 75
- Lethbridge Community College
 - Cousins building upgrading, funding for ... 1795
 - Increased funding for ... 1123
- Literacy
 - General remarks ... 859, 860
- Lois Hole digital library (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 797, 869, 1078-79
- Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 860, 869
- Louise McKinney Post-Secondary Scholarships
 - General remarks ... 1738
- Mactaggart Art Collection
 - Statement re ... 946-47
- Magnetic resonance imaging clinics, Private
 - Relation to Canada Health Act ... 1308
- Medical care
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 1308
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1308
 - Influence of health symposium on ... 1308
- Medical profession-Education
 - Accessibility of ... 1965
- Medical profession-Rural areas
 - Action plan re ... 1965
- Medical research-Finance
 - General remarks ... 868
- Medical residents
 - Payback of student loans ... 1965

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Members' Statements
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - Regarding Minister of Finance ... 985
- Microsoft Corporation
 - School software licences purchase by provincial government ... 286–87
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Mactaggart Art Collection ... 946–47
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 52)
 - Third reading ... 2027
- MLA Post-secondary Funding Review Committee (2000)
 - Report ... 278
- Motions other than Government Motions
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624
- Mount Royal College
 - Capacity of ... 864
 - Capital expenditures ... 1571
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796
 - Request for university status ... 24, 483, 851, 860, 864
 - University transfer programs ... 864
- Natural resources revenue
 - Use for budget purposes ... 868
- New Democrat Opposition
 - Role in Question Period ... 56
- NorQuest College
 - English as a Second Language courses ... 871
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - Bursary programs ... 1883
 - Bursary programs: Northern student supplement ... 1883
 - Youth apprenticeship program ... 982, 1882
- Northern Lakes College
 - Role in postsecondary education system ... 1574, 1795
- Office of the Premier
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005: Centennial gifts to Canadians announced during ... 1738
- Official Opposition
 - Role in Question Period ... 56–57
- Olds College
 - Community learning campus, funding for ... 1790
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Access to postsecondary education ... 981–82, 1830–31
 - Access to the Future Fund ... 1078–79
 - Accessibility of medical education ... 1965
 - Advanced education tuition costs ... 20
 - Affordability of postsecondary education ... 649
 - Apprenticeship training ... 201–202, 248, 980
 - Budget expenditures ... 796–97
 - Budget surplus expenditures ... 1621
 - Centennial Education Savings Plan ... 47–48
 - Centennial gifts to Canadians ... 1738
 - Electoral reform ... 1251
 - Energy efficiency at the University of Calgary ... 696–97

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - Health care privatization ... 1308
 - Lakeland College ... 1574
 - Mount Royal College ... 24, 483, 851
 - Police recruitment and training centre ... 1123
 - Postsecondary education costs ... 361
 - Postsecondary education federal funding ... 1306–07
 - Postsecondary education review ... 1202–03, 1254, 1571, 1624
 - Postsecondary opportunities for youth ... 1882–83
 - Private postsecondary institutions ... 2014
 - Private vocational schools ... 1602–03
 - Protection of children abusing drugs legislation ... 737
 - Public Accounts committee ... 1784
 - Second-language instruction ... 1604
 - Securities Commission ... 1197, 1250–51, 1304–05
 - Services for immigrants ... 1833
 - Software licences for schools ... 287
 - Student finance system ... 697, 798
 - Student loan program ... 1830
 - Student loans ... 320
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Alliance member's participation in ... 56, 57
 - Official opposition role in ... 56–57
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 56–57
 - Third opposition party's role in ... 56
 - Time limit on questions and answers ... 56
- Point of Order
 - Allegations against a member ... 420, 985
 - Citing documents ... 1580
 - False allegations ... 1411
 - Imputing motives ... 1035
 - Items previously decided ... 1292
 - Question and comment period ... 141
 - Reflections on a member ... 1455
 - Reflections on nonmembers ... 1453
 - Urgency of questions ... 700
- Police–Training
 - Centre of excellence re ... 1123
- Portage College
 - Role in postsecondary education system ... 1574
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - First reading ... 92
 - Second reading ... 240–41, 379
 - Committee ... 1691–1700
 - Third reading ... 1806
 - Amendment (SP597/05: Tabled) ... 1691
 - General remarks ... 2014
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 55)
 - First reading ... 1890
 - Second reading ... 1952–53
 - Committee ... 1974–76
 - Third reading ... 2029
- Postsecondary educational institutions
 - Accreditation of degree-granting institutions, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921–22
 - Upgrading of, funding for ... 1790, 1791, 1792, 1794
- Postsecondary educational institutions, Private Funding ... 2014

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Postsecondary educational institutions—Admissions (enrollment)
 - Province-wide centralization of ... 864, 1792, 2014
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Calgary—Maintenance and repair
 - General remarks ... 796–97
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Finance
 - General remarks ... 859
 - Performance envelope funds ... 277, 278, 861
 - Private-sector funding ... 868
- Private Colleges Accreditation Board
 - Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... 1166–67
- Private non-profit colleges
 - Funding for ... 859
- Private vocational schools
 - Provincial monitoring of ... 1166–68, 1602–03
 - Students' complaints procedure re ... 1603
- Privilege
 - Auditor General's investigation of Securities Commission enforcement processes, comments re ... 984–85
 - Minister of Finance, comments re ... 420
- Professional qualifications, Foreign
 - Assessment service for ... 870, 871, 1833
- Projected Government Business (Parliamentary procedure)
 - For the week of March 14, 2005 (SP99/05: Tabled) ... 128
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Expediting passage of ... 737
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Third reading ... 1290
- Recall of elected representatives
 - Legislation re ... 1251
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624
- Red Deer College
 - Trade centre, spending of provincial surplus on ... 1621
- Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)
 - General remarks ... 982
 - Scholarships for ... 981
- Registered education savings plan (Federal)
 - Provincial contribution to ... 47–48
 - Provincial contribution to: Legislation re (Bill 54) ... 1890
- Research and development
 - Funding for ... 864, 868, 871
 - General remarks ... 869
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Second reading ... 380
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - Third reading ... 2021
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
 - General remarks ... 1795
- Risk management fund
 - Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under: Referred to Members' Services committee (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... 106

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Scholarships
 - Funding for ... 860, 864, 869
 - Rural/northern students ... 1883
 - U of C/Direct Energy scholarship ... 696–97
- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 810
- Securities—Law and legislation
 - National harmonization of ... 1197
- Securities Act
 - Amendment re Securities Commission enforcement process investigation ... 1250
- Securities regulator, National
 - General remarks ... 1197
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading on same day as first reading, motion for, denied ... 59
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Aerospace centre at Calgary airport ... 796
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- Speaker
 - Congratulations to ... 56
- Speaker—Rulings and statements
 - Referring to an officer of the Legislature ... 984–85
- Speech from the Throne
 - Address in reply, engrossed (Motion 15: Klein/Hancock) ... 436
 - Debate ... 157–58
- Standing Orders
 - Amendments to, re Members' Statements and Recognitions (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624–25
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Committee ... 606–07
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Third reading ... 943
- Student financial aid
 - Appeals of loan awards, 2000-04 (Q27/05: Response tabled as SP478/05) ... 1157–58, 1578
 - Default rates, 1994-95 to 2003-04 (Q25/05: Response tabled as SP476/05) ... 1155–56, 1578
 - Default rates, 2000-2003 (Q1/05: Response tabled as SP468/05) ... 653–54, 1578
 - Default rates of private vocational school students ... 1602
 - Defaults: Value of, 2000-2003 (Q2/05: Response tabled as SP469/05) ... 655–56, 1578
 - Dollar value, 2001-03 (Q4/05: Response tabled as SP471/05) ... 657–58, 1578
 - Dollar value for students attending private institutions, 2000-04 (Q21/05: Response tabled as SP475/05) ... 813, 1578
 - Dollar value under student loan program, 2000-04 (Q20/05: Response tabled as SP474/05) ... 813, 1578
 - Federal loan limit increase ... 320
 - Federal loans ... 361
 - General remarks ... 20, 48, 277–78, 649, 697, 860, 864–65, 1796, 1797, 1831, 1965
 - Loan interest rates ... 1830

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Student financial aid *(Continued)*
 - Loan remission funding ... 277-78, 860, 864, 1795-96, 1797
 - Loan remission policy re ... 697, 798, 864, 1830
 - Maximum allowable loans, number of (Q26/05: Response tabled as SP477/05) ... 1157, 1578
 - Number of students receiving, 2000-2004 (Q3/05: Response tabled as SP470) ... 656-57, 1578
 - Provincial loan policy ... 320, 361, 1830
 - Relief benefits/completion payments dollar value, 2000-2004 (private vocational schools attendance) (Q11/05: Response tabled as SP473/05) ... 662, 1578
 - Relief benefits/completion payments dollar value, 2000-2004 (public institutions attendance) (Q10/05: Response tabled as SP472/05) ... 661-62, 1578
 - Repayment systems for, reports/studies (M31/05: Response tabled as SP481/05) ... 1161, 1578
 - Supplemental assistance from students' unions ... 649, 697
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - First reading ... 127
 - Second reading ... 427-28, 435
 - Third reading ... 1581
- Student unions
 - Establishment of, in private vocational schools ... 1602-03
- Students Finance Board
 - General remarks ... 649, 697, 862, 864
- Sun Microsystems Inc.
 - Ontario deal with, for school software licences ... 287
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 1798
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 1621
 - Postsecondary education funding with ... 859, 867-68, 1621, 1790, 1795, 1798
- Tar sands development
 - Employment opportunities in ... 201-02
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 248
- Technical schools
 - Audited financial statements, 2002-03 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Audited financial statements, 2003-04 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... 1920
 - Governance structure, academic council model, legislation re (Bill 55) ... 1890
- Trades
 - Designation of: Legislation re (Bill 57) ... 1890
- Tuition fees
 - Documentation re (M28/05: Defeated) ... 1160
 - Federal funding to be used for ... 1306-07
 - General remarks ... 1203, 1795, 1797, 1830
 - Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by provincial government ... 20, 48, 320, 361, 860, 865, 1202-03, 1307, 1795, 2014
 - Increase in, for 2006-07 school year ... 1624
 - Increase in, over last few years ... 649, 697
 - For medical students ... 1965

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Tuition fees *(Continued)*
 - Provincial assistance re, after 2005-06 rebate program ... 361, 865, 1202
 - Reduction of ... 1795, 1798
 - Review of ... 20, 48, 320, 361, 798
- Universities and colleges
 - Audited financial statements, 2003 and 2004 (SP291/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Audited financial statements, 2004 and 2005 (SP732/05: Tabled) ... 1920
 - College degrees, transferability of ... 1790, 1791, 1794, 1796
 - Governance structure, academic council model, legislation re (Bill 55) ... 1890
 - Private-sector driven instruction in ... 868
 - Quality of instruction in ... 871-72
- Universities and colleges—Accreditation
 - National standards for ... 1791
- Universities and colleges—Maintenance and repair
 - Deficit in ... 1794, 1797
- University lecturers
 - General remarks ... 871-72
- University of Alberta
 - Bay building purchase, to accommodate learning transition facility ... 1790, 1794
 - Health research innovation centre at ... 869
 - Mactaggart Art Collection ... 946-47
- University of Calgary
 - Digital library project ... 797, 1792
 - Energy savings partnership with Direct Energy ... 696-97
 - Health research innovation centre at ... 869
 - Infrastructure needs ... 796-97
 - Mount Royal College transfer students ... 864
 - Schulich donation to Faculty of Engineering, matching provincial contribution re ... 1790, 1791, 1792
- University of Lethbridge
 - Water and Environmental Science building, spending of provincial surplus on ... 1621, 1790, 1794
- University of Phoenix
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Approval of ... 1166-67
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Documentation re, including PCAB documents (M30/05: Defeated) ... 1160-61
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Documentation re (M3/05: Response tabled as SP480/05) ... 663, 1578
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Letter of approval re (M2/05: Response tabled as SP479/05) ... 663, 1578
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 797, 1308
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005): Point of Order ... 1035

Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC (PC, Edmonton-Whitemud)*(Continued)*

- Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)
 - Curriculum development funding ... 277
 - Funding for ... 1790, 1794
- Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber ... 1302
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1110
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 1621
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Point of order re ... 1453

Herard, Denis (PC, Calgary-Egmont)

- Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan
 - Children born before 2005 exclusion from ... 47–48
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1863
- Basketball championships
 - Lord Beaverbrook Lords 4A high school champions ... 325
- Cancer—Research
 - Dr. Stuart Kauffman's research ... 1151
- Dept. of Education
 - Minister's visits to all school boards ... 165–66
- Education
 - Issues re ... 166
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1176–77
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 827–28, 834–35
- Informatics Circle of Research Excellence
 - General remarks ... 1151
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Alberta's research environment ... 1151
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Centennial Education Savings Plan ... 47–48
 - Road safety ... 458
 - School board consultations ... 165–166
- Point of Order
 - Relevance ... 237, 442, 443–44
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Committee ... 788–89
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 325
- Research and development
 - Statement re ... 1151
- Roads—Maintenance and repair
 - Impact on traffic safety ... 458
- Scholarships
 - General remarks ... 1151
- School boards
 - Education minister's visits to ... 165–66
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 101–02
- Student financial aid
 - General remarks ... 48
- Traffic accidents—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 458

Herard, Denis (PC, Calgary-Egmont) (Continued)

- Traffic regulations
 - Enforcement of ... 458
 - Traffic safety
 - McDermid report on ... 458
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Committee ... 1651–54, 1658–61
 - Third reading ... 1869–70
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Second reading ... 1813
 - Committee ... 1894–97
- Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - General remarks ... 1273
 - Aboriginal issues
 - General remarks ... 841–42
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 227–228, 396–97
 - Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs: Federal involvement ... 1851
 - Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework
 - General remarks ... 1218
 - Alberta Aids to Daily Living
 - Staff assistance under ... 888
 - Alberta Alliance Party
 - Caucus research and secretarial funding request ... 262
 - Member of, participation in Question Period ... 55–56
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Committee ... 2001–05
 - Third reading ... 2026
 - Alberta Beef Producers
 - Check-off fees ... 1218
 - Alberta Capital Finance Authority
 - Loan interest rate ... 900
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)
 - Third reading ... 439
 - Alberta Centennial Scholarship Program
 - Nation-wide program ... 1805
 - Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 739
 - Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
 - Personal health cards for, security aspects ... 970
 - Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - Elimination of ... 971
 - Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Use to reduce long-term mortgage interest rates ... 971
 - Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
 - Investigation of complaints re Bishop Henry's remarks ... 572, 1153
 - Alberta Regulations
 - Review of ... 762
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1818, 1859–60
 - Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Booklet re, complexity of ... 888

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- Alberta SuperNet
 - Municipal government offices' connection to ... 761-62
 - Rural homes access to ... 841
- Alberta Teachers' Association
 - Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ... 1273
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Second reading ... 542
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Second reading ... 426-27
- Apprenticeship training
 - General remarks ... 1272
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Committee ... 405
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1985-86, 2000
 - Third reading ... 2033, 2036, 2042
- Assessment
 - Market value as basis for: Impact on seniors ... 888
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Earned income exemption under, raising of ... 888
- Basketball championships
 - Cardston Lady Cougars 3A provincial champions ... 956-57
 - Raymond Comets 4A provincial champions ... 956-57
- Beef-Export
 - Diversification of markets for ... 1017, 1217
- Beef-Marketing
 - Farm gate sales ... 48
- Beef processing
 - General remarks ... 48
- Biomass as energy source
 - General remarks ... 1426
 - Tax incentives re ... 1426, 1851-52
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 48-49, 262, 1217
 - Impact on slaughter plants regulations ... 762
 - Testing re ... 1017, 1218
 - U.S. cow infected ... 262, 1217
- British Columbia regulations
 - General remarks ... 762
- Budget debate
 - Motion 19: McClellan ... 782-83
- Bullying-Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1272-73
- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - General remarks ... 263, 1217, 1714, 1851
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency
 - BSE tests approval ... 1218
- Canadian Wheat Board
 - Market choice addition to ... 1217
 - Value-added products removal from ... 1217
- Cancer-Treatment-Southern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1468
- Capital projects, Municipal-Finance
 - General remarks ... 900
- Carbon dioxide projects
 - Tax incentives for research into ... 1911

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- Cattle-Export-United States
 - Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... 1017
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 17, 262, 739, 1217
 - Promotion of ... 1017
- Cellular telephones in automobiles
 - Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1005-06
- Centre for Chinese studies (Proposed)
 - Statement re ... 947
- Chinook Regional Health Authority
 - Specialized medical services in ... 1468, 1845
- Chronic wasting disease-United States
 - General remarks ... 1217
- Citizens' initiative referenda
 - Legislation re ... 1251
- Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 - General remarks ... 245-46, 572
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial tax incentives for research into ... 1911
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 1444, 1714
- Coal bed methane extraction
 - Tax incentives for research into ... 1911
- Collective bargaining-Teachers
 - Province-wide bargaining ... 1273
- Committee of Supply
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1679-80
- Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing
 - Alberta Alliance member's request at ... 262
- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Alberta definition of marriage inclusion in ... 1738
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms ... 1738
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Same-sex marriage issue ... 1153
 - Opting out provisions (same-sex marriage issue) ... 245-46, 1714
 - Property rights inclusion in ... 1738
- Constitutional Referendum Act
 - Property rights referendum during federal election ... 1738
- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 1074, 1426
 - General remarks ... 1425
- Corporations-Taxation
 - General remarks ... 412
 - Reduction in ... 970
- Crop insurance program
 - General remarks ... 1216
 - Payouts to renters of land ... 1217
 - Premiums for ... 1216
 - Snowed under crop coverage ... 1216
 - Spring price endorsement option ... 1216
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Dogs as sniffers re, in schools ... 1272
- Daycare centres
 - National plan principles re ... 1714
- Daycare centres-Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 1444

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 841-42
 - Funding details ... 841
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1216-19
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 262-63
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1851-52
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1017
- Dept. of Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1272-73
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 263
- Dept. of Finance
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 970-71
- Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans (Federal government)
 - Bridges over waterways, construction approval process ... 1804-05
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1425-26
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1468
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1844-45
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1804-05
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Elimination of ... 1599
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 761-62
 - Role of ... 970
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 888
- Drug abuse resistance education program
 - General remarks ... 1272
- Drugs, Prescription-Costs
 - General remarks ... 1844
- Drugs in schools
 - Use of dogs to detect ... 1272
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 Grey Cup victors: Statement re ... 1909
- Education-Curricula-Rural areas
 - Matrix for ... 1273
- Education-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1272
- Elections, Federal
 - Referenda on property rights and Alberta definition of marriage during ... 1714, 1738
- Elections, Provincial
 - Fixed dates for ... 1251
- Electoral reform
 - General remarks ... 1251
- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - Research into: Tax incentives for ... 1911
- Electric power-Export
 - General remarks ... 1425
- Electric power-Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 1074, 1425-26
 - General remarks ... 1074, 1425, 1911
 - Impact on seniors ... 888
 - Regulated option re ... 1074

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- Electric power-Supply
 - General remarks ... 1425-26, 1911
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 1425-26
 - Deregulation: Petition presented re ... 1970
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: Special Legislature sitting for (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 597
- Energy rebates
 - Funding for ... 1805
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 1426
 - Research into: Tax incentives for ... 1426, 1911
- Equalization payments
 - General remarks ... 971
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1679-80
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1177-78
- Fair Trading Act
 - General remarks ... 1425
- Farm fuel-Taxation
 - General remarks ... 1218
- Farm input costs
 - Tax portion impact on ... 1218
- Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 971, 1444
- Federal/provincial relations
 - General remarks ... 1444
 - Statement re ... 1714
- Feedlots
 - Tax incentives re ... 1852
- Feedlots-Waste disposal
 - Biomass reactor for, tax incentives re ... 1851-52
- Fertilizer-Taxation
 - Reduction of ... 1851
- Football championships
 - Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions ... 1909
 - Raymond Comets tier 1 provincial champions, Statement re ... 2055
- Foreclosure-Farms
 - BSE related situations ... 49
- Francophone schools
 - Provincial funding of ... 1805
- Gas, Natural-Prices
 - Impact on seniors ... 888
- Government departments
 - Number of ... 761, 762
 - Restructuring of ... 1599
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 761-62, 1599
- Gun control (Federal)
 - Registry for ... 1444
- Health facilities, Private
 - General remarks ... 1845
- Heavy oil-Royalties
 - General remarks ... 1017
- Henry, Frederick B., Roman Catholic Bishop of Calgary
 - Remarks about definition of marriage ... 572, 1153

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- High school education—Curricula
 - Vocational/trades courses: Use of ticketed journeymen in ... 1272
- Highway 2—Dunvegan bridge area
 - Realignment of ... 1804–05
- Highway 501—Cardston east
 - Paving of ... 1804
- Hospitals—Emergency services
 - General remarks ... 1845
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - Third reading ... 399
- Income tax, Provincial
 - Decrease in ... 264
 - Personal exemption level ... 412
 - Provincial vs federal collection of ... 1444
- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Six percent cut to ... 970
- Insurance, Health (Private)
 - Alberta plan for ... 1845
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 262–64
- Irrigation
 - Upgrading of infrastructure re ... 1216
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of ... 1303
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta
 - Special sitting of, for Royal visit (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 597
- Lethbridge Regional Hospital
 - General remarks ... 1845
- Mactaggart Art Collection
 - Statement re ... 947
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 149
- Marriage
 - Definition of ... 245–46, 572
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 245–46
 - Definition of: Citizens' initiative legislation re ... 1251
 - Definition of: Referendum on Alberta definition in next federal election ... 1714, 1738
 - Definition of: Referendum on Alberta definition in next federal election, response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... 1738
 - Definition of: Statement re ... 1153
 - Pro traditional marriage rally, Mill Woods ... 1153
- Marriage Amendment Act, 2000 (Alberta Bill 202, 2000)
 - Renewal of ... 245–46
- Meat packing industry
 - Profit margins ... 1217
 - Provincial incentives to ... 971, 1017
- Meat packing plants
 - BSE testing labs in ... 1218
 - Building of ... 1217–18
 - Building of: Provincial support for ... 48, 262–63, 1017
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1844–45

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- Medical profession
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1367
- Medical profession—Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1468
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1367
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 262
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Conduct in the Chamber ... 1272–73
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Definition of marriage ... 1153
 - Federal/provincial relations ... 1714
 - Raymond Comets/Cardston Lady Cougars ... 956–57
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 841–42
- Milk River (Town)
 - Access to Alberta SuperNet ... 761–62
 - Loan rate from Capital Finance Authority ... 900
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Border closure to Canadian beef ... 16
 - Edmonton Eskimos ... 1909
 - Mactaggart Art Collection ... 947
 - Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day ... 1248
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Number of ... 761, 762
- Mortgages—Interest rates
 - Reduction by Heritage Fund monies ... 971
- Municipal finance
 - General remarks ... 412
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - General remarks ... 1426
- North American free trade agreement
 - Sale of electricity under ... 1425
 - Sale of water under ... 1425
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - Bursary programs ... 841
 - Youth apprenticeship program ... 1272
- Oil recovery methods
 - Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research into, tax incentives re ... 1911
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Beef slaughter facilities ... 48–49
 - Border closure to Canadian cattle ... 739
 - Clean energy incentives ... 1911
 - Constitutional referendums ... 1738
 - Definition of marriage ... 245–46, 572
 - Electoral reform ... 1251
 - Electricity marketing ... 1074
 - Federal/provincial relations ... 1444
 - Government efficiency ... 1599
 - Infrastructure spending ... 900
 - Taxation policy ... 412
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Alliance member's participation in ... 55–56
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 55–56
- Passchendaele* (Film)
 - Provincial funding for ... 1805
- Petitions
 - Property rights inclusion in Canadian constitution ... 1738

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Re-regulation of electric utilities ... 1970
- Point of Order
 - Imputing motives ... 262–63
- Property rights
 - Inclusion in Canadian constitution, referendum re ... 1738
- Property tax–Education levy
 - Reduction of ... 971
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Committee ... 789
- Public service–Alberta
 - Decrease in ... 970
 - Increase in, freeze on ... 1599
- Recall of elected representatives
 - Legislation re ... 1251
- Referendum, Federal
 - Definition of marriage ... 1714, 1738
 - Property rights ... 1738
- Regional health authorities
 - Medical specialists in smaller regions ... 1845
- Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)
 - General remarks ... 1272
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Second reading ... 468–69
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
 - General remarks ... 1911
- Road construction
 - Contracting procedure re ... 1804
 - Secondary road program ... 1804
- Road construction–Finance
 - Public/private partnerships re ... 1804
 - Trust fund for ... 1804
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1017
- Same-sex marriage–Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 245–46
- Schools–Closure–Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 263, 1273
- Schools–Milk River
 - Utilization formula's impact on ... 263
- Schools–Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 263
 - Community group use of, as part of formula re ... 1272
- Senior citizens
 - Benefits vs. family assistance to ... 888
 - Government programs ... 888
- Senior citizens–Housing
 - Garden suites ... 888
- Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service Foundation
 - Lethbridge base ... 1468
- Small business
 - Regulations re, review of ... 762
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 185
 - Committee ... 507–08
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 149
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 523, 524

Hinman, Paul (AAP, Cardston-Taber-Warner)*(Continued)*

- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Committee ... 562
 - Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 431
 - Supreme Court of Canada
 - Definition of marriage decision ... 1153
 - Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 264
 - Taber Safe Haven (Women's shelter)
 - Funding for ... 900
 - Tax incentives
 - Agribusinesses ... 1851
 - Alternate energy research ... 1426, 1911
 - Clean energy research ... 1911
 - Energy industry incentives ... 1017
 - Tax revenue, Provincial
 - General remarks ... 970–71
 - Taxation
 - General remarks ... 412
 - Reduction in ... 970–71
 - Teachers
 - Rewards for excellence ... 1273
 - Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1005–06
 - University of Alberta
 - Mactaggart Art Collection ... 947
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - General remarks ... 1425
 - Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 555–56
 - Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber ... 1303
 - Wages–Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1940–41
 - Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - General remarks ... 1845
 - Warner hockey school for girls
 - Infrastructure funding for ... 900, 1273, 1805
 - Water–Export
 - General remarks ... 1425
 - Water storage
 - General remarks ... 1216
 - Wildlife damage
 - Provincial programs re ... 1216
 - Wind power
 - General remarks ... 1426
 - Tax incentives re ... 1426, 1852
 - Women's shelters–Taber
 - Funding for ... 900
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Second reading ... 1815
 - Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)
 - Statement re ... 1248
- Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert)**
- Agricultural policy framework (Federal/provincial)
 - General remarks ... 488, 1222

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) (Continued)

- Agricultural wastes
 - Conversion to fuel source ... 1222
- Agriculture
 - General remarks ... 1206–07
 - Government assistance programs ... 119–20, 122, 488, 1210, 1214, 1624–25
- Agriculture–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1222
- Agriculture–Research
 - Funding ... 1207
 - General remarks ... 1389–90
- Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
 - Advertising costs ... 1211
 - Annual report, 2003–04 (SP66/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004–05 (SP587 & 664/05: Tabled) ... 1675, 1789
 - CAIS program ... 122, 298, 367, 488
 - General remarks ... 1220, 1221
 - Role of ... 1210–11
- Agriculture ministers' meeting (Federal/provincial/territorial), Alberta (July 2005)
 - CAIS program discussions ... 1215
 - General remarks ... 119, 122
- Agriculture Research and Innovation Strategic Framework
 - General remarks ... 1207
- Agriculture service boards
 - Funding ... 1207
- Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council
 - Annual report, 2002–03 (SP665/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
 - Representation on Rural Development Strategy Task Force ... 1221
- Alberta Beef Producers
 - Check-off fees ... 1220
 - General remarks ... 290, 299, 300, 949, 1210, 1215, 1498
- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Coal-bed methane well drilling requirements ... 1075
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Ottawa office ... 1211
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 42–43, 291, 740, 1211
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 512–13
- Alberta Opportunity Company
 - General remarks ... 1210
- Alberta Research Council Inc.
 - Level 3 lab for animal health, joint project re ... 1885
 - Manure utilization system, joint project re ... 1389
- Alberta veterinary surveillance network
 - General remarks ... 1885
- American Meat Institute (U.S.)
 - General remarks ... 290, 1210, 1215
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Second reading ... 540–41, 543
 - Committee ... 558–60
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Second reading ... 425
- Antidumping laws (International trade)
 - General remarks ... 293, 614

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) (Continued)

- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Second reading ... 1947
- Auditor General
 - BSE compensation programs auditing ... 299
- Australian Wheat Board
 - General remarks ... 1221, 1222
- Automobile licence plates
 - Sale of, portion of to Wild Rose Ag. Producers ... 953
- Avian influenza
 - Industry protection measures re ... 1780
- Beef–Export
 - Age of animal verification system to expedite ... 1220, 1600
 - BSE-free status to expedite ... 296, 1599–1600
 - Diversification of markets for ... 46, 298, 300, 1207, 1209, 1215–16, 1220
- Beef–Marketing
 - Farm gate sales ... 48
 - Federal funding for ... 258, 296
 - Market retention and development fund for ... 296, 300
 - Provincial funding for ... 298, 1849
- Beef–Prices
 - General remarks ... 1210, 1499
 - Minimum floor price ... 300–01
- Beef processing
 - Concentration of, in few companies ... 1209–10
 - General remarks ... 48, 296, 1211
 - Provincial assistance re ... 1214
- Biodigesters
 - Conversion of agricultural wastes to fuel source ... 1222
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Compensation plans re ... 296, 1207, 1210, 1849
 - Compensation plans re: Auditor General investigation of ... 299
 - Compensation plans re: Federal funding for ... 258, 296, 1210
 - Human/animal risk of ... 250, 288, 319
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 42–43, 46, 48–49, 119, 289, 296, 298, 417, 1390, 1599–1600, 1607
 - Impact on crop production ... 695
 - Live testing for ... 300
 - New assistance programs re (2005) ... 46, 258, 296
 - Research into ... 258, 1211
 - Testing re ... 1207, 1220
 - Testing re, to expedite exports ... 296, 298–99, 300, 1216, 1599–1600
 - Testing standards re, harmonization with U.S. standards ... 414, 417
 - U.S. cow infected ... 1220
- Calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta)
 - Extension of ... 42, 46, 119–20, 301, 1207, 1208, 1498
 - General remarks ... 301, 1220
- Canada Beef Export Federation
 - General remarks ... 1209
- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - Administration costs ... 1851
 - Changes to ... 1624–25, 1849
 - Claims under, impacts on ... 1207

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) (Continued)

- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
(Continued)
 - Equity loss advance component ... 298
 - General remarks ... 49, 119–20, 122, 296, 297–98, 367, 488, 695, 1211–12, 1219–20, 1850, 1851
 - Overpayments ... 1850–51
 - Recalculation of reference margins, pilot project re ... 1624–25
- Canadian Beef Export Federation
 - Legacy project ... 298, 1220
- Canadian Cattle Identification Agency
 - Age verification system for slaughter cattle ... 1600
- Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade
 - NAFTA challenge re U.S. border closure to Canadian cattle ... 289, 290–91, 301
- Canadian Cattlemen's Association
 - General remarks ... 290, 299, 949, 1210, 1215, 1220, 1498
- Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre
 - National surveillance program for avian flu ... 1780
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency
 - Alberta level 3 lab approval ... 1885
 - Avian flu test results announcements ... 1780
 - BSE tests approval ... 414, 417, 1220
- Canadian Wheat Board
 - Market choice addition to ... 1221, 1222
- Carbon dioxide sinks
 - General remarks ... 1334–35
- Cargill, Incorporated
 - Relation to Ranchers Own ... 1210
- Cattle
 - Age verification system re ... 298–99, 1600, 1849
 - Age verification system re: Press release re (SP496/05: Tabled) ... 1607
- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Alternatives to ... 46
 - Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... 43, 46, 48, 119, 1390
 - Current assistance plans re border reopening ... 46
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 42–43, 289, 290–91, 301, 417, 739–40, 1207, 1210, 1220, 1498, 1849
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of ... 949
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, participation of federal PC party in ... 949, 1215
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, under NAFTA ... 289, 290–91, 301
- Cattle–Import–United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed, impact on ... 417
- Cattle–Marketing
 - Diversification of markets for ... 46
- Cattle–Prices
 - General remarks ... 1499
 - Minimum floor price ... 42
- Cattle carcass quality feedback program
 - General remarks ... 1600
- Cattle rustling–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1121–22

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) (Continued)

- Chronic wasting disease
 - Elk and deer testing for ... 250
 - Human/animal risk of ... 250, 288, 319
 - Presence on game farms ... 456
 - Research into ... 1211
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 1222
 - Kyoto protocol on: Carbon credit plan re ... 1334–35
- Coal bed methane extraction
 - Impact of ... 1075, 1391
- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
 - Incidence of ... 250, 288
- Crop insurance program
 - Claims under, impacts on ... 1207
 - Deductible for ... 1214
 - General remarks ... 1214, 1850
 - Payouts to renters of land ... 1219
 - Per-acre funding for payouts re ... 1214
 - Premiums for ... 1219
 - Production insurance coverage ... 1570
 - Snowed under crop coverage ... 1219
 - Spring price endorsement option ... 695, 979, 1211, 1214, 1219, 1570, 1624, 1850
- Deer
 - Testing of, for chronic wasting disease ... 250
- Deer–Alberta/Saskatchewan border area
 - Culling of, due to CWD threat ... 250
- Deer ranching
 - Impact of chronic wasting disease on ... 456
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP40/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP564/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1206–12, 1214–16, 1219–23
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 258
 - Rural offices closure ... 298
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 296–301
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1849–51
- Dept. of Agriculture (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 289, 290, 417, 739–40, 949
- Dept. of Health (Federal)
 - Draft report on CWD in wild game animals ... 456
- Drought
 - Compensation plans re ... 296, 301
- Electric utilities–Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 1222
- Elk
 - Testing of, for chronic wasting disease ... 250
- Elk antler velvet–Health aspects
 - General remarks ... 456
- Elk ranching
 - Impact of chronic wasting disease on ... 456
- Emission control credits
 - Trading of ... 1222
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 1389
- Environmental farm plans
 - General remarks ... 1222

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) *(Continued)*

- Family farm
 - Preservation of ... 1214
- Farm fuel—Taxation
 - General remarks ... 1219
- Farm Fuel Distribution Allowance
 - General remarks ... 695, 1219
- Farm Implement Board
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP293/05: Tabled) ... 623
- Farm income
 - Impacts on ... 1207
- Farm income disaster program (Alberta)
 - General remarks ... 296, 297
- Farm Income Payment Program (Federal)
 - Alberta participation ... 488
- Farm input costs
 - General remarks ... 695
- Farm manure—Recycling
 - Pilot project re ... 1389
- Farm produce—Export
 - Antidumping rules re ... 293, 614
- Fed cattle set-aside program
 - Extension of ... 119, 1498
- Feedlots—Waste disposal
 - Joint research project re ... 1389
- Food industry and trade
 - General remarks ... 1222
 - Provincial support programs re ... 296, 298, 1214
 - Research re ... 296
- Food safety
 - Chronic wasting disease infected deer, served for human consumption, news article re (SP290/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Chronic wasting disease threat to ... 250, 288
 - General remarks ... 48, 1222
- Foreclosure—Farms
 - BSE related situations ... 49
- Game farming
 - Chronic wasting disease issue in ... 250, 288, 456
 - Federal/provincial compensation to ... 258
 - Public inquiry re ... 319
- Grain—Prices
 - Provincial assistance program re ... 488, 1624–25
 - Provincial assistance re ... 1222
- Grazing lands, Public
 - Revenue from oil and gas leases on ... 1449
- Highland Feeders Limited
 - Joint manure utilization system project ... 1222, 1389
- Hogs—Export—United States
 - Antidumping duties on ... 293, 614
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 954
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 258
- International trade—United States
 - Irritants re ... 289, 293
- International Trade Commission (U.S.)
 - Pork/hog import duties investigation ... 293, 614
- Irrigation
 - Upgrading of infrastructure re ... 1219
- Irrigation—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1207

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) *(Continued)*

- Johne's disease
 - Detection and control program for ... 1885
- Livestock brands—Inspection
 - Role in cattle rustling prevention ... 1121–22
- Livestock Identification Services Ltd.
 - General remarks ... 1122
 - Manager's report and financial statements, 2004-05 (SP666/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- Livestock industry, Intensive
 - Public education re ... 1222
- Meat packing industry
 - Profit margins ... 42, 1498
- Meat packing plants
 - BSE testing labs in ... 1220
 - Building of ... 43, 46, 1210–11, 1216, 1220
 - Building of: Provincial support for ... 48
- Methane from manure as fuel source
 - General remarks ... 1222, 1389
- Municipal governments
 - Agriculture infrastructure, provincial assistance re ... 1849
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association (U.S.)
 - Discussions with, re opening border to live cattle ... 43, 290, 949, 1210, 1215
- National Meat Association (U.S.)
 - General remarks ... 290
- Net income stabilization account (Farm income program)
 - General remarks ... 297
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1767
- North American free trade agreement
 - Border closure to cattle challenge under ... 289, 290–91, 301
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Agricultural assistance ... 122, 488, 979, 1624–25
 - Agricultural income stabilization program ... 119–20, 367
 - Agricultural research initiatives ... 1389–90
 - Animal health surveillance ... 1885
 - Avian influenza ... 1780
 - Beef marketing ... 1498–99
 - Beef recovery strategy ... 46
 - Beef slaughter facilities ... 48–49
 - Border closure to Canadian cattle ... 42–43, 290–91, 739–40, 949
 - Border closure to U.S. cattle ... 417
 - BSE testing ... 414
 - Capital health outpatient residence ... 1960
 - Cattle rustling ... 1121–22
 - Coal-bed methane ... 1075
 - Crop insurance ... 1570
 - Crop production insurance changes ... 695
 - Diversified livestock industry ... 456
 - Environmental protection ... 1391
 - Game farming ... 250, 288, 319
 - Government efficiency ... 954
 - Kyoto climate change agreement ... 1334–35
 - Leaseholders on agricultural public land ... 1449
 - Live hog exports ... 614
 - North American trade ... 289
 - Pork exports ... 293

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) (Continued)

- Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)
 - Tracking and tracing system for Alberta beef ... 1599–1600
 - Wild Rose Agricultural Producers ... 953
- Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op Ltd.
 - General remarks ... 1216, 1221
- Point of Order
 - Imputing motives ... 262–63
- Pork–Export–United States
 - Antidumping duties on ... 293
- Poultry industry
 - Protective measures re avian flu ... 1780
- Prion research (BSE control)
 - Funding for ... 250, 300, 1211
 - General remarks ... 1207
- Rancher's Beef
 - Provincial assistance to ... 1210
- Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)
 - Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 290, 301, 949, 1207, 1210
- Rural Development Strategy Task Force
 - General remarks ... 1222
 - Report ... 1221
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 300, 1207, 1221, 1960
- Senate (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 42–43
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 505
- Soils
 - Carbon absorption properties ... 1334–35
- Specified risk material (Cattle parts)
 - Handling of ... 1390
 - Research into ... 258, 298, 300
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - First reading ... 370
 - Second reading ... 543, 546
 - Committee ... 560–62
 - Third reading ... 943
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 433
- Sunterra Quality Food Markets Inc.
 - Packing plant, provincial assistance to ... 1210
- University of Alberta
 - Level 3 lab for animal health, joint project re ... 1885
- Urban growth
 - General remarks ... 1222
- Urban/rural relations
 - Public education re ... 1222–23
- Veterinary laboratories
 - Level 3 lab ... 1885
- Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)
 - General remarks ... 298, 1885
- Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility ... 1960
- Water conservation
 - General remarks ... 1222
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - General remarks ... 1219, 1222

Horner, Hon. Doug (PC, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert) (Continued)

- Wild Rose Agricultural Producers
 - Provincial funding for ... 953
- Wild waterfowl
 - Detection of avian flu in ... 1780
- Wildlife damage
 - Provincial programs re ... 296, 301, 1214, 1850
- World Organisation for Animal Health
 - BSE testing standards ... 414
- Zoonosis–Research
 - General remarks ... 300
- Jablonski, Mary Anne (PC, Red Deer-North)**
 - Aboriginal economic development
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1912
 - Aboriginal issues
 - First ministers' meeting re, Kelowna, November 2005 ... 1829, 1912
 - General remarks ... 1829
 - Aboriginal peoples–Education
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1912
 - Aboriginal peoples–Health care
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1912
 - Aboriginal peoples–Housing
 - Kelowna first ministers' meeting consideration of funding for ... 1912
 - Alberta Conservation Association
 - Funding for, from fishing licences ... 855
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1821, 1860
 - Ambulance service–Finance
 - Petition tabled re (SP430/05) ... 1396
 - Apprenticeship training
 - General remarks ... 86
 - Armenian genocide
 - Statement re ... 1031–32
 - Automobile drivers' licences
 - Graduated licences, monitoring of ... 1307–08
 - Bills, Private members' public
 - Unanimous consent given for Bill 202 to proceed to Committee and Third readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... 784, 790
 - Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at ... 121
 - Cellular telephones in automobiles
 - Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1003–04
 - Check Stop program
 - Use for graduated drivers' licence checks ... 1307
 - Child abuse–Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 206
 - Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 85–86, 121
 - Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - First reading ... 1631
 - Second reading ... 1686–87
 - Third reading ... 2024–25
 - Criminals, Violent
 - Prevention of profiting from their stories: Legislation re (Bill 46) ... 1631

Jablonski, Mary Anne (PC, Red Deer-North)*(Continued)*

- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Manufacturing of (illegal meth labs) ... 25
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1669–70
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Treatment
 - Treatment centres for ... 1670
- Cunningham, Dr. John Robert
 - Investiture into Order of Canada ... 1743
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs funding ... 23
- Domestic violence
 - Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003 ... 1575, 1918
 - Statement re ... 1629–30, 2053–54
- Domestic Violence Handbook for Police and Crown Prosecutors
 - Statement re ... 1918
- Drug abuse
 - Statement re ... 25, 621
- Drug abuse—Testing
 - General remarks ... 2048
 - Home testing kits, accuracy of ... 2048
- Drug abuse resistance education program
 - General remarks ... 1201
- Employment training programs
 - Eligibility of young adults for ... 363
 - General remarks ... 86
- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 1124
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - General remarks ... 1124
- Family Violence Prevention Month
 - General remarks ... 1630, 2053
- Fatality inquiries
 - Fekete family murder/suicide case ... 1575
- Fines (Traffic violations)
 - Graduated licence conditions violation ... 1308
- Fish populations—Alberta
 - General remarks ... 854–55
- Fish stocking
 - General remarks ... 855
- Fishing, Sport
 - General remarks ... 854–55
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 85–86, 121
- Government attorneys
 - Training in domestic violence case handling: Handbook for ... 1918
- Hantavirus
 - Precautions re ... 1522
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 832–33
- High school students
 - Financial assistance to, when living independently ... 363
- Highway 2A—Red Deer/Blackfalds area
 - Intersection at Blindman industrial park ... 1962–63
- Immigration
 - Provincial nominee program ... 86
- Innisfail Meats Ltd.
 - Recognition of Mad Butcher brand name ... 489–90

Jablonski, Mary Anne (PC, Red Deer-North)*(Continued)*

- Integrated child exploitation teams
 - General remarks ... 206
- Labour Relations Code
 - Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects) ... 121
- Labour supply
 - Shortages of skilled workers ... 85–86
- Labour unions
 - Impact on, of division 8 designation re foreign workers ... 121
- Le May Doan, Ms Catriona
 - Investiture into Order of Canada ... 1743
- Mannix, Mr. Ronald Neil
 - Investiture into Order of Canada ... 1743
- Marijuana growing operations
 - General remarks ... 25
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Armenian genocide ... 1031–32
 - Domestic violence handbook ... 1918
 - National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women ... 2053–54
 - Order of Canada awards ... 1743
 - Prevention of family violence ... 1629–30
 - Proliferation of drug abuse ... 25
 - Protection of Children Abusing Drugs legislation ... 697–98, 956
 - Teen drug addiction ... 621
- Métis issues
 - General remarks ... 1829
- National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women
 - Statement re ... 2053–54
- North Red Deer Regional Water Users Group
 - Regional water initiative ... 576
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Aboriginal issues ... 1829, 1912
 - Community policing ... 1201
 - Crystal methamphetamine ... 1669–70
 - Domestic violence ... 1575–76
 - Drug abuse by children ... 2048
 - Exploitation of children ... 206
 - Financial assistance for youths ... 363
 - Foreign and non-union workers ... 121
 - Foreign workers ... 85–86
 - Graduated drivers' licences ... 1307–08
 - Hantavirus ... 1522
 - Highway 2A ... 1962–63
 - Long-term care standards ... 1124
 - Recreational sport fishing ... 854–55
 - Red Deer River water transfer ... 1785
 - Regional water and sewer systems ... 576
 - Youth residential drug treatment ... 23
- Order of Canada
 - Albertans invested into, statement re ... 1743
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Mandatory drug treatment programs (Bill 202) ... 210, 653, 745, 1342, 1528
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Ambulance service funding (SP430/05: Tabled) ... 1396

Jablonski, Mary Anne (PC, Red Deer-North)*(Continued)*

- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1355–57
 - Committee ... 1925
- Police
 - Domestic violence case handling training ... 1575
 - Domestic violence case handling training: Handbook for ... 1918
 - Increase in numbers of ... 1201
- Police–Finance
 - Increase to ... 1201
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - First reading ... 52
 - Second reading ... 328–29, 342
 - Committee ... 784–85
 - Third reading ... 790–91, 793
 - Amendment (SP332/05: Tabled) ... 784
 - Document re (SP162/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Expediting passage of ... 956
 - Implementation of ... 1670
 - Letter re (SP147/05: Tabled) ... 252
 - Petition presented re ... 210, 653, 745
 - Statement re ... 697
 - Unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and Third readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... 784, 790
- Quilting in Learning and Tribute project
 - General remarks ... 1630
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 50, 251, 489–90
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Domestic violence handling training ... 1575
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area ... 25
- Sewage disposal plants, Regional
 - General remarks ... 576
- Smith, Dr. Eldon Raymond
 - Investiture into Order of Canada ... 1743
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 497
 - Third reading ... 996
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 37–38, 114
- Speed skating
 - Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon ... 50
- Spitz Sylvan Lake Ice Marathon
 - Recognition of ... 50
- Spousal abusers
 - Treatment of, required ... 1576
- Standing Orders
 - SO 8(3) waived to allow consideration of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act ... 784, 790
- Stanford, Mr. James M.
 - Investiture into Order of Canada ... 1743
- Stanley-Venne, Ms Muriel
 - Investiture into Order of Canada ... 1743
- Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth
 - Detox/residential services re ... 23, 2048
 - Mandatory programs for ... 621, 2048
 - Mandatory programs for: Legislation re (Bill 202) ... 52, 956
 - Mandatory programs for: Legislation re (Bill 202) - unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and Third readings of ... 784, 790, 956

Jablonski, Mary Anne (PC, Red Deer-North)*(Continued)*

- Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth *(Continued)*
 - Mandatory programs for: Petitions presented re ... 210, 653, 745, 1342, 1528
 - Mandatory programs for: Statement re ... 697–98
- Tar sands development
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 121
- Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1003–04
- Victims of crime
 - Federal/provincial/territorial principles re: Legislation re (Bill 12) ... 93
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - First reading ... 93
 - Second reading ... 525, 553, 601–02
 - Third reading ... 1290
- Volleyball championships
 - Red Deer College Kings national champions ... 251
- Wages–Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1939–40
- Walleye fishing
 - General remarks ... 855
- Water diversion–Red Deer River basin/Special Areas
 - General remarks ... 1785
- Water pipelines–Red Deer area
 - General remarks ... 576
- Water treatment plants, Regional
 - General remarks ... 576
- World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence, Banff (October 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1629
- Johnson, LeRoy (PC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose)**
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 223
 - Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation of Canada
 - High school CPR program, Statement re ... 535
 - Agriculture–Research
 - General remarks ... 1389–90
 - Alberta–Economic policy
 - 20-year strategic plan ... 1673
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - First reading ... 1631
 - Second reading ... 1639–40
 - Committee ... 1905, 2001–05
 - Third reading ... 2025–26
 - Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act (Bill 207)
 - First reading ... 984
 - Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Funding for prion research ... 1885
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 345–46
 - Alberta Order of Excellence
 - General remarks ... 1107
 - Alberta Order of Excellence Council
 - General remarks ... 1107
 - Alberta Research Council Inc.
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP778/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Manure utilization system, joint project re ... 1389
 - Alberta Water Council
 - Water conservation planning ... 1046

Johnson, LeRoy (PC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose)*(Continued)*

- Augustana University College
 - Merger with University of Alberta: Legislation re (Bill Pr. 2) ... 622
- Battle River Community Foundation
 - Endowment funds, Statement re ... 1340
- Battle River watershed
 - Planning re ... 1046–47
- Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose
 - Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in ... 1074
- British Commonwealth air crew memorial, Calgary
 - Recognition of ... 126
- Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
 - Amendment (SP742/05: Tabled) ... 1958
- Calgary-McCall (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... 4
- Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act (Bill Pr. 2)
 - First reading ... 622
 - Second reading ... 1508
 - Committee ... 1509
 - Third reading ... 1556
 - Amendment (SP457/05: Tabled) ... 1509
- Camrose regional sport development centre
 - General remarks ... 1917–18
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation–Training
 - Statement re ... 535
- Climate change
 - Technological developments re ... 21
- Dept. of Environment
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1046–47
- Deputy Chair
 - Election of, on second ballot ... 4
- East Central Health
 - Health education courses at Augustana campus, project re ... 1917
- Education, Postsecondary
 - International learning component ... 1673
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 1389
- Executive Council
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1107
- Extended care facilities–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1074
- Extended care facilities–Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 1074
- Extended care facilities–Standards
 - General remarks ... 1074
- Fairs
 - Capital grants to ... 124
- Family Doctor Week
 - Statement re ... 1969
- Farm manure–Recycling
 - Pilot project re ... 1389
- Feedlots–Waste disposal
 - Joint research project re ... 1389
- Great Kids of Alberta
 - Awards: Recognition of ... 251
- Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reduction of ... 21
- Griffith Scott middle school, Millet
 - Replacement/renovation of ... 1025–26

Johnson, LeRoy (PC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose)*(Continued)*

- Highland Feeders Limited
 - Joint manure utilization system project ... 1389
- Highway 13–Camrose area
 - Upgrading of ... 1448
- Historic sites–Wetaskiwin
 - Statement re ... 1836
- Hockey championships
 - Camrose Kodiaks Canadian junior A hockey silver medal winners ... 1577
 - Camrose Kodiaks Junior Hockey League champions ... 857
 - U of A Golden Bears 2005 University Cup winners ... 490
- International delegations
 - General remarks ... 773
 - Shandong delegation's visit to Alberta ... 773
- International education
 - Provincial action plan re: Brochure (SP542/05) ... 1674
 - Student brochure re (SP543/05) ... 1674
- International Education Week (November 2005)
 - Statement re ... 1673
- Johne's disease
 - Detection and control program for ... 1885
- Leaders of Tomorrow program
 - Wetaskiwin and Camrose winners: Statement re ... 1152
- Lottery Fund
 - Capital grants to major fairs from ... 124
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 142–43
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Former members, association of: Legislation re (Bill 47) ... 1631
 - Former members, association of: Legislation re (Bill 207) ... 984
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Battle River Community Foundation ... 1340
 - Camrose Kodiaks hockey team ... 857, 1577
 - Family Doctor Week ... 1969
 - High school CPR program ... 535
 - Historical preservation in Wetaskiwin ... 1836
 - International Education Week ... 1673
 - Motorcycle exhibition at Reynolds-Alberta Museum ... 1450
 - Registered apprenticeship program ... 983
 - Rural tourism conference ... 368
 - University of Alberta Augustana campus ... 1917–18
 - Wetaskiwin and Camrose Leaders of Tomorrow awards ... 1152
- Methane from manure as fuel source
 - General remarks ... 1389
- Municipal bylaws
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to police, requirement for ... 416
- Nurses–Education
 - East Central Health and Augustana campus project re ... 1917
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Agricultural research initiatives ... 1389–90
 - Animal health surveillance ... 1885
 - Battle River water strategy ... 618
 - Capital grants for major fairs ... 124

Johnson, LeRoy (PC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - Climate change technology ... 21
 - Griffith Scott middle school ... 1025–26
 - Highway 13 ... 1448
 - International delegations ... 773
 - Long-term care standards ... 1074
 - Pheasant hunting ... 162–163
 - Protection of personal information ... 416
- Pawnshops
 - Provision of client information to police ... 416
- Personal Information Protection Act
 - Application to pawnshops ... 416
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1532–33
 - Committee ... 1930–31
- Pheasant hunting
 - General remarks ... 162–63
- Police
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to ... 416
- Potts, Jared
 - Recognition of ... 251
- Prion research (BSE control)
 - Funding for ... 1885
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 416
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 336–37
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 50, 126, 251, 490
- Regional health authorities
 - Long-term care facilities' programs ... 1074
- Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)
 - Scholarships for: Statement re ... 983
- Reynolds-Alberta Museum
 - General remarks ... 1836
 - Motorcycle exhibition: Statement re ... 1450
- Ross, Jennifer
 - Recognition of ... 251
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to, bylaw re ... 416
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1917
- Schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Renovation or replacement criteria ... 1026
- Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service Foundation
 - High school CPR program, Statement re ... 535
- Smith, Mr. Arthur
 - Recognition of ... 126
- Speaker
 - Congratulations to ... 4
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 142–43
- Tourism—Rural Alberta
 - 2005 conference on: Statement re ... 368
- University of Alberta
 - Merger of Augustana University College with:
 - Legislation re (Bill Pr. 2) ... 622
- University of Alberta, Augustana campus
 - Statement re ... 1917–18
- Veterinary laboratories
 - Level 3 lab ... 1885

Johnson, LeRoy (PC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose)*(Continued)*

- Volleyball championships
 - U of A Golden Bears national men's title winners ... 50
- Voytechek, Joe, and family
 - Endowment in honour of ... 1340
- Water diversion—North Saskatchewan/Battle River basins
 - General remarks ... 618
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - General remarks ... 1047
- Water resources development—Battle River
 - General remarks ... 618
- Watershed planning and advisory councils
 - General remarks ... 1046
- Wetaskiwin water tower
 - Statement re ... 1836
- Youth Science Month
 - Recognition of ... 126
- Johnston, Art (PC, Calgary-Hays)**
 - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Earned income exemption under, raising of ... 890
 - Courts—Security aspects
 - General remarks ... 902
 - Dept. of Children's Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1053
 - Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 890
 - Fax machines, Digital
 - Security concerns ... 413
 - Fort MacKay First Nation
 - Passing of Chief Dorothy McDonald ... 1628
 - Fox, Terry
 - Statement re ... 698–99
 - Frankenstein* (Film)
 - Statement re ... 1126–27
 - Glendale elementary school
 - Film created by students at: Statement re ... 1126–27
 - Government information systems
 - Security aspects ... 413
 - Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Digital photocopiers/fax machines security concerns, news release re ... 413
 - Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 110
 - McDonald, Chief Dorothy
 - Statement re ... 1628
 - Members' Statements (2005)
 - Dorothy McDonald ... 1628
 - Glendale elementary school ... 1126–27
 - Private Braun Scott Woodfield ... 1917
 - Terry Fox ... 698–99
 - New York International Independent Film and Video Festival
 - Showing of Alberta school produced film ... 1126–27
 - Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Courthouse security ... 902
 - Private security legislation review ... 1311
 - Project Kare ... 1523
 - Protection of personal information ... 413
 - Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Public school for McKenzie Towne district, Calgary (Not in order to be presented) ... 1342
 - School construction in Calgary ... 1507

Johnston, Art (PC, Calgary-Hays) (Continued)

- Photocopiers, Digital
 - Security concerns ... 413
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 49)
 - Committee ... 1899–1900
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 413
- Private investigators–Law and legislation
 - Review of ... 1311
- Private investigators–Licensing
 - Review of ... 1311
- Private investigators–Training
 - Review of ... 1311
- Private Investigators and Security Guards Act
 - Review of ... 1311
- Project Kare (Missing women investigation team)
 - Funding for ... 1523
 - General remarks ... 1523
- Public records–Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 413
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 126
- Schools–Construction–Calgary
 - McKenzie Towne area school ... 1342
 - McKenzie Towne area school: Petition presented re ... 1507
- Security guards–Law and legislation
 - Review of ... 1311
- Security guards–Licensing
 - Review of ... 1311
- Security guards–Training
 - Review of ... 1311
- Social Care Facilities Review Committee
 - General remarks ... 1053
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 110
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 71–72
- Woodfield, Private Braun Scott
 - Death of: Statement re ... 1917
- Year of the Veteran, 2005
 - General remarks ... 1917

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow)

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster, April 14, 2005: Premiers' wager re (SP331/05: Tabled) ... 784
 - Communications re ... 1100
 - General remarks ... 3, 11, 1099, 1617
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - First reading ... 11
- Access to the Future Fund
 - Establishment of ... 11
 - General remarks ... 767
- Alberta–Economic policy
 - 20-year strategic plan ... 1099
- Alberta Connects (Government information initiative)
 - General remarks ... 1101
- Alberta family employment tax credit
 - Improvement of ... 768
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 739

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan–Premiums
 - Elimination of ... 766, 768
 - General remarks ... 766
 - Seniors' premiums: Elimination of ... 766, 768
- Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Long-term care facilities inspection ... 1334, 1386–87, 1443
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Ethical investments by ... 82
 - Investment in tobacco companies ... 82–83
- Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
 - Investigation of complaints re Bishop Henry's remarks ... 572
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Funding for clean energy research projects ... 1911
- Alberta Order of Excellence
 - Display of members of, in Jubilee Auditoria ... 1108
 - General remarks ... 1107–08
- Alberta Order of Excellence Council
 - Budget for ... 1099
 - Web site for children ... 1108
- Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation
 - Microfiche copies of pension cheques, loss of ... 1026
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading: Action taken re ... 2047
 - Influencing regulatory activity case ... 612
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... 1333
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement ... 2046
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Ministerial involvement ... 1961
 - Interim chairman ... 1333
 - Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus ... 2008
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray ... 201, 485, 528
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1109
- Alberta's Promise
 - Partners' report, 2004 (SP590/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Ambulance service
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of ... 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 17, 83, 202, 245
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Costs ... 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202, 245
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Discovery projects re ... 83, 202
- Ambulance service–Red Deer
 - General remarks ... 202, 245
- Andy Russell Itai Sah Kòp wild-land park
 - Redesignation of Castle wilderness as ... 2012
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs ... 287
- Aon Consulting Inc.
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of ... 1666

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Audit Committee
 - Public members on ... 1102, 1106
- Auditor General
 - Government agencies, boards, and commissions, political appointments to, recommendations re ... 2047–48
 - Government aircraft usage, Review of ... 82
 - Internal audit function centralization, comments re ... 1100, 1102, 1106
 - Internal auditor, liason with ... 1103, 1106
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs) ... 1334
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1386–87, 1388, 1392, 1443–44
 - Official Opposition press release re ... 1333
 - Official Opposition press release re (SP414/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... 1333
- Bank of Montreal
 - Executive Council account ... 1107
- Beef processing
 - General remarks ... 14–15
- Bingo halls
 - Amendment to retain smoking in ... 119
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - General remarks ... 1444
 - Human/animal risk of ... 288
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 14–15
- British Columbia Power Exchange Corp.
 - Involvement in Enron electricity price manipulation ... 83
- Budget
 - 2002-03 budget, advertising campaign re ... 1105
 - Process re ... 160, 1621
- Calgary Health Region
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... 1966, 2051
 - Hip/knee surgery contract with Health Resource Centre ... 644, 1145
- Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade
 - NAFTA challenge re U.S. border closure to Canadian cattle ... 290
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at ... 647
- Capital Health
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... 1966, 2051
 - Electric power bills to, overcharging re ... 161
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 484–85, 527–28
- Carbon dioxide projects
 - Tax incentives for research into ... 1911–12
- Casinos
 - Amendment to retain smoking in ... 119
- Castle-Crown wilderness area
 - Redesignation as Andy Russell Itai Sah Kòp wild-land park ... 2012
- Cataract surgery, Private–Calgary
 - Waiting times for ... 1966, 2051
- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... 14–15, 290

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Cattle–Export–United States (Continued)
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 14–15, 290, 739
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, under NAFTA ... 290
- Caucus policy committees (PC party)
 - General remarks ... 737–38
- Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)
 - Premiers' wager re (SP331/05: Tabled) ... 784
- Centennial medallions
 - Presentation to Members of the Legislative Assembly ... 3
- Chair
 - Election of ... 3
- Chief Internal Auditor's office
 - Budget ... 1099, 1103
 - Liason with Auditor General ... 1103, 1106
 - Performance measures ... 1100
 - Public members in, PC party membership ... 1024, 1102
 - Role of ... 1100, 1102, 1106
- Chronic wasting disease
 - Human/animal risk of ... 288
 - Presence on game farms ... 288
- Citizens' assembly on electoral reform (Alberta) (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 691
- Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 - General remarks ... 245–46, 484, 572
- Civil service pension cheques
 - Loss of microfiche copies of, privacy concerns re ... 1026
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial tax incentives for research into ... 1911–12
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 201, 1444
 - Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to, publicity campaign re ... 1105
- Coal bed methane extraction
 - Tax incentives for research into ... 1911
- Collective bargaining
 - First-contract certification legislation ... 1625
 - Impact of use of foreign labour on ... 647
- Collective bargaining–Health authorities
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in ... 2008, 2009
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in: Public inquiry into ... 2008, 2009
- Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy
 - Municipal infrastructure funding discussion ... 612
- Commonwealth of Nations
 - General remarks ... 1617
- Competition Bureau (Federal)
 - Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 18, 83, 247, 286
- CompuSmart.com
 - Executive Council contract ... 1107
- Conflict of interest
 - Labour Relations Board's involvement in drafting collective bargaining legislation (Bill 27, 2003) ... 2008
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Recommendations ... 2011

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Opting out provisions (same-sex marriage issue) ... 245–46
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 647
- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas contracts ... 1073–74
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 161, 1074
- Curling championships
 - Team Ferbey (2005 world champions): Premier's letter to (SP304/05: Tabled) ... 653
- Daycare centres–Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 1444
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Minister's trip to Ottawa re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 14
- Dept. of Energy
 - Discussions with Enron, public access to documents re ... 246–47
- Dept. of Environment
 - Funding level for ... 573, 768–69
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Communications function ... 1099, 1101
 - Executive Council budget increase, investigation of ... 1103
 - Role of ... 244, 1109
 - Staffing ... 1099
- Deputy Chair
 - Election of, on second ballot ... 3
- Deputy Speaker
 - Election of ... 3
- Disabled
 - Government programs for ... 1109
- Domestic violence
 - General remarks ... 739
- Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 573, 1105
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 Grey Cup victors: Statement re ... 1908
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, affordability review to improve: Legislation re (Bill 1) ... 11
- Education, Postsecondary–Finance
 - General remarks ... 767
 - University presidents' comments re (SP330/05: Tabled) ... 784
- Elections, Provincial
 - Fixed dates for ... 691
- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - Research into: Tax incentives for ... 1911–12
- Electric power–Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 161
 - General remarks ... 1911
 - Manipulation of ... 488–89
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 18, 83, 118, 119, 247
 - Regulated option re ... 1073, 1074
 - Regulated option vs contract rate, compensation for difference in ... 1074
- Electric power–Retail sales
 - Billing systems re ... 18, 161

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Electric power–Supply
 - General remarks ... 1074, 1911
- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... 1025, 1073
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers, cancellation of without penalty ... 1074
- Electric utilities–Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 83, 118, 119, 161, 1024–25, 1073, 1074
 - Deregulation: Public inquiry into ... 18
 - Deregulation: Publicity campaign re ... 1105
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 1099, 1617
- Emergency medical technicians
 - Impact of ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities on ... 19
- Emergency medical technicians–Wainwright
 - Layoff of ... 19
- Energy industry–Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 486
- Energy industry–Crown lands–Sawn Lake area
 - Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 849
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - Provincial government usage of ... 1073
 - Research into: Tax incentives for ... 1911–12
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy ... 286
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy, documents re given to Competition Bureau ... 286
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy, public access to documents re ... 246–47
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... 18, 83, 118, 119, 246–47, 1964
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Adamson report on ... 1145
- Environics Research Group (Western) Limited
 - Government advertising contract ... 1103
- Environmental law
 - Enforcement of ... 769
- Environmental protection–Finance
 - General remarks ... 768–69
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Directives to premier's chief of staff, publication of ... 643
- Executive Council
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP46/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP571/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1099–1110
 - Limousine service costs ... 1107
 - Staff ... 1099
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of ... 1334
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1386–87, 1388, 1391–92, 1443–44
 - Conditions in ... 797, 850
 - MLA committee to review (2005) ... 1442–43
- Extended care facilities–Fees
 - General remarks ... 1387
- Extended care facilities–Finance
 - Government funding revoked for inadequate performance by facility ... 1387

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Extended care facilities—Inspection
 - General remarks ... 850, 1334, 1386–87
- Extended care facilities—Inspection—Ontario
 - Publication of results of ... 1334
- Extended care facilities—Rural areas
 - Funding for ... 1706–07
- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 797, 850, 1392, 1706–07
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - General remarks ... 797, 1388, 1391–92, 1962, 2010
- Extended care facilities residents
 - Abuse/neglect of ... 850
- Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1444
- Federal/provincial relations
 - General remarks ... 1444
- Financial Administration Act
 - General remarks ... 1912
- Food safety
 - Chronic wasting disease threat to ... 288
- Football championships
 - Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions ... 1908
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 647
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 201, 484–85, 527–28
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on: Meeting re, April 8, 2005 ... 201
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Liberal opposition requests under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 19
- Friends of Medicare
 - Long-term care facilities' conditions, news conference re ... 797, 850
- Game farming
 - Chronic wasting disease issue in ... 288
 - Public inquiry re ... 288
- Government accountability
 - General remarks ... 2011
- Government agencies, boards, and commissions
 - Political appointments to ... 2047–48
 - Political appointments to, independent panel to investigate ... 2048
- Government aircraft
 - Policy on usage of ... 18–19
 - Policy on usage of: Review by Auditor General ... 82
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 19
 - Rod Love's trip to Fort McMurray on ... 82
- Government chartered aircraft
 - Premier's use of ... 160–61, 1109
- Government corporate identity
 - General remarks ... 1101–02
- Government information
 - Access to ... 1100–01
- Government of Alberta
 - Web site ... 1100–01
- Government programs
 - Communication initiatives re ... 1100
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 1621

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Granum school
 - In Assembly during Queen's address ... 1617
- Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reduction of: Provincial advertising campaign re ... 1105
- Greenhouse gas emissions—Fort McMurray area
 - Reduction of ... 201
- Gun control (Federal)
 - Registry for ... 1444
- Health Care Protection Act (Bill 11, 2000)
 - Advertising campaign re ... 1105
- Health information panels (Health care debate)
 - General remarks ... 1105
- Health Resource Centre, Calgary
 - Hip/knee surgery contract with Calgary health region ... 644, 1145
 - Wait times at ... 644, 1145
- Heavy oil—Royalties
 - Reductions in ... 1911
- Henry, Frederick B., Roman Catholic Bishop of Calgary
 - Remarks about definition of marriage ... 572
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 201, 485, 528
- Highway 881
 - Upgrading of ... 201, 485, 528
- Highwood Communications Ltd.
 - Government advertising contract ... 1102, 1103
- Hip and knee surgery
 - Privatization of, in Calgary ... 1145
- Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former Lieutenant Governor)
 - Tribute to ... 1100
- Hospitals—Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 201
- Housing—Fort McMurray
 - Impact of population increase on ... 201, 485, 528
- IBM Canada Ltd.
 - Microfishing of Alberta pension cheques, security implications ... 1026
- Identification, Personal
 - Theft of, from lost health records ... 529
- Income tax, Provincial
 - Flat tax ... 768
 - Provincial vs federal collection of ... 1444
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta pension records ... 1026
 - Labour Relations Board conflict re drafting Bill 27, 2003, release of information re ... 2008
- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Six percent cut to ... 900
- Insurance, Health (Private)
 - Alberta plan for ... 1622, 1666
- International relations
 - Communication initiatives re ... 1100
- Labour laws and legislation
 - General remarks ... 1625
- Labour relations
 - Impact of foreign worker importation on ... 647
- Labour Relations Board
 - Chair of, resignation ... 2009
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring) ... 2008, 2009

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Labour Relations Board (Continued)
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Public inquiry into ... 2008, 2009
- Labour Relations Code
 - Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects) ... 647
- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting ... 2008, 2009
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: Public inquiry ... 2008, 2009
- Licensed premises
 - Amendment to retain smoking in ... 119
- Lieutenant Governor of Alberta
 - Budget for ... 1099
 - Former Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Lois Hole) ... 1100
 - New Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Norman Kwong) ... 1099–1100
- Limousines
 - Use by government members ... 1107
- Lobbyists–Registration
 - General remarks ... 691, 2008, 2011
- Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park
 - General remarks ... 1100
- Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 1100
- Love, Rod
 - Fees paid to, re Fort McMurray rail service consultation ... 612
 - Tobacco industry ties, influence on smoke-free legislation changes ... 690
 - Trip to Fort McMurray on government aircraft ... 82
- Low-income families
 - Tax reductions for ... 768
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 486
- Margaret Kool Marketing Inc.
 - Government advertising contract ... 1103, 1105
- Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)
 - Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 18, 83, 119, 247, 286
- Marriage
 - Definition of ... 245–46, 484, 572
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 245–46, 484
- Marriage Amendment Act, 2000 (Alberta Bill 202, 2000)
 - Renewal of ... 245–46
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of ... 14
- Medical care
 - General remarks ... 1666
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 249, 1666–67
 - Restructuring (third way option): Advertising campaign re ... 1666
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1105, 1145, 1622–23, 2051
- Medical care–Finance
 - General remarks ... 249, 766, 1667

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Medical care–Utilization
 - Premier's remarks re ... 1706
- Medical records–Confidentiality
 - Missing health records situation ... 484, 529
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 1108, 1110
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Centennial medallions presented to ... 3
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Border closure to Canadian beef ... 14–15
 - Centennial medallions ... 3
 - Edmonton Eskimos ... 1908
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Cooling-off period for, following resignation ... 2011
- Monarchy, British
 - General remarks ... 1617
- Natural gas rebates
 - General remarks ... 1911
- Natural resources revenue
 - Use for budget purposes ... 1621
- North American free trade agreement
 - Border closure to cattle challenge under ... 290
 - Sale of water under ... 573
- Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Alberta Order of Excellence recipients, display of ... 1108
- Nursing homes–Inspection
 - General remarks ... 1334
- Nursing homes–Standards
 - General remarks ... 1334
- Office of the Premier
 - Former chief of staff (Peter Elzinga) remuneration (Q22/05: Defeated) ... 814
 - Premier's accountability ... 1623
 - Premier's remarks to Queen Elizabeth II on Her address to the Assembly ... 1617
 - Premier's television addresses ... 1107, 1109
 - Premier's travel details, posting of, on government website ... 1109
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005 ... 1623
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005: Discussion of private health care plans during ... 1666
 - Premier's use of chartered aircraft for Ottawa health conference, 2004 ... 160–61
- Official Opposition
 - Press release re Auditor General ... 1333
 - Press release re Auditor General (SP414/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Oil recovery methods
 - Carbon dioxide sequestering: Research into, tax incentives re ... 1911–12
- Oil well drilling industry–Public lands
 - EUB permits required for ... 849
- Ombudsman
 - Long-term care residents' abuse, report on ... 613
- Ombudsperson (Long-term care residents)
 - General remarks ... 1386
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Access to information on Enron ... 247
 - Ambulance services ... 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202, 245
 - Automobile insurance rates ... 900

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Boards, commissions, and agencies ... 2047–48

Border closure to Canadian cattle ... 290, 739

Budget process ... 160

Budget surplus expenditures ... 1621

Capital health outpatient residence ... 1960–61

Chartered air travel ... 160–161

Clean energy incentives ... 1911–12

Continuing care funding ... 1706–07

Continuing care review ... 1442–43

Continuing care standards ... 2010

Definition of marriage ... 245–46, 484, 572

Electricity billing ... 161

Electricity deregulation ... 118, 1024–25

Electricity marketing ... 1073–74

Enron activities in Alberta ... 286, 1145, 1964

Environment budget ... 768–69

Federal/provincial relations ... 1444

Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... 484–85

Game farming ... 288

Government accountability ... 2011

Government aircraft ... 18–19, 82

Growth pressures in Fort McMurray ... 527–28

Health care premiums ... 766, 768

Health care privatization ... 1145, 1666–67

Health care utilization ... 1706

Health Facilities Review Committee ... 1334, 1386–87

Health reform ... 249

Health Resource Centre joint replacements ... 644

Horizon oil sands project ... 647

Impacts of oil sands expansion ... 201

Infrastructure needs in Fort McMurray ... 612

Investments in tobacco companies ... 82–83

Labour Relations Board ... 2008–09

Lakeside Packers labour dispute ... 1625

Long-term care facilities ... 797, 850

Long-term care facility standards ... 1388, 1391–92, 1443–44

Long-term care standards ... 1962

Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ... 18, 83, 119

Missing computer tapes and microfiches ... 1026

Missing health records ... 484, 529

Nonsmoking legislation ... 119

Office of the Chief Internal Auditor ... 1024

Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 486, 849

Parks and protected areas ... 2012

Postsecondary education funding ... 767

Premier's travel ... 1623

Private health services ... 1622

Protection for persons in long-term care ... 613

Protection of children abusing drugs legislation ... 737

Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 244

Rod Love Consulting Inc. ... 643

Securities Commission ... 612, 1333, 1961, 2046

Smoke-free places legislation ... 690

Southeast Edmonton ring road ... 287

Standing policy committee ... 737–38

TransAlta Utilities ... 488–89

Travel by elected Senators ... 691

User fees in long-term care facilities ... 1387

Wait times for health care ... 1966

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)

Wait times for ophthalmology services ... 2051

Walton International Group Inc. ... 2008

Water strategy ... 573

Womens' shelters ... 739

Palliser Health Region

Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... 83, 202

Parks, Provincial

General remarks ... 2012

Peace Country Health

Ambulance service transfer to, discovery project re ... 83, 202

Personnel Administration Office

Communications function ... 1099

Staffing ... 1099

Point of Order

Factual accuracy ... 1110

Police

Reporting missing health records to ... 484

Prion research (BSE control)

Funding for ... 15

Privacy, Right of

General remarks ... 484

Property tax—Education levy

Seniors' tax relief re ... 768

Protected areas

General remarks ... 2012

Protection for Persons in Care Act

General remarks ... 850

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)

Expediting passage of ... 737

Protocol Office

General remarks ... 1099

Public Affairs Bureau

Advertising budget ... 1102, 1103

Communications goals ... 1100, 1101, 1104–05

Relation to departmental communications divisions ... 1105

Role of ... 1105

Staffing ... 1101

Web site for government members only ... 1101

Public contracts

Awarding of, to former ministerial aides ... 643

Public records—Confidentiality

General remarks ... 484, 1026

Public service—Alberta

Senior officials' cooling-off period, following resignation ... 2011

Queen's Printer

Staff ... 1101

Rail service—Edmonton/Fort McMurray

Lobbyist for, fees paid to ... 612, 643

Lobbyist for, use of government aircraft ... 82

Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)

Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 14, 15

Reclamation of land

Energy industry sites ... 769

Regional health authorities

Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ... 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202

Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 17, 83, 202, 245

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Regional health authorities *(Continued)*
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Costs ... 17–18, 19, 83–84, 202, 245
 - Deficits, elimination of ... 249
 - Detection of overcharging on electric power bills ... 161
 - Long-term care facilities' programs ... 797, 850
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
 - General remarks ... 1911
- Road construction–Fort McMurray area
 - Impact of population increase on ... 612
- Rod Love Consulting Inc.
 - Government contracts with ... 643
- Royal Rubber Stamp Co.
 - Executive Council contract ... 1107
- St. Matthew Lutheran school
 - In Assembly during Queen's address ... 1617
- Same-sex marriage–Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 245–46, 484
- Schools–Construction–Fort McMurray
 - Increase in, due to oil sands expansion ... 201
- Senate (Canada)
 - Reform of ... 691, 1444
- Senators
 - Alberta nominees for: Eastern Canada speaking tour ... 691
- Senior citizens
 - Government programs: Auditor General's review of ... 1334
- Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)
 - Equipment upgrades for ... 1099, 1100, 1101
- Sewage disposal plants–Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 484–85
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Amendments ... 690
 - General remarks ... 82, 119
- Smoking–Prevention
 - Relation of provincial investment in tobacco companies to ... 82–83
- Smoking in the workplace
 - Ban on: Legislation re (Bill 201) ... 119
- Snohomish Public Utility District, Washington State (U.S.)
 - Investigation of Enron price fixing ... 119
- Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Alberta Order of Excellence recipients, display of ... 1108
- Speaker
 - Congratulations to ... 3
- Speech from the Throne
 - Address in reply, engrossed (Motion 15: Klein/Hancock) ... 436
 - Motion to consider ... 11
- Strikes and lockouts–Lakeside Packers employees
 - General remarks ... 1625
- Supreme Court of Canada
 - Private health insurance ruling ... 1622, 1623
- Surgery waiting lists
 - Public vs private facilities ... 644, 1145
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Accountability for, relation to Premier's travel to eastern Canada ... 1623
 - General remarks ... 1621, 1706–07

Klein, Hon. Ralph (PC, Calgary-Elbow) (Continued)

- Tar sands development
 - Employment opportunities in ... 647
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 647
 - Impact of ... 201
 - Tar sands development–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 201
 - Tax incentives
 - Alternate energy research ... 1911–12
 - Clean energy research ... 1911–12
 - Taxation
 - General remarks ... 768
 - Tobacco companies
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 82–83
 - Influence on smoke-free legislation changes ... 690
 - TransAlta Utilities Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation activities ... 488–89
 - Hydropower generation pricing ... 489
 - Travel at public expense
 - Alberta senators-in-waiting trip to eastern Canada ... 691
 - Premier's travel details, posting of, on government website ... 1109
 - Tuition fees
 - Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by provincial government: Legislation re (Bill 1) ... 11
 - Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 249, 1145
 - Private health care system submissions ... 1622
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - Consumer complaints to ... 161
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) ... 1024
 - Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - General remarks ... 249
 - Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility ... 1960–61
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility: Subsidies re ... 1960–61
 - Walton International Group Inc.
 - Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission ... 2008
 - Water–Export
 - General remarks ... 573
 - Impact of NAFTA on ... 573
 - Water diversion
 - General remarks ... 573
 - Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 768–69
 - General remarks ... 573
 - Impact of economic development policy on ... 573
 - Well sites
 - Reclamation of ... 769
 - Womens' shelters–Finance
 - General remarks ... 739
- Knight, Mel (PC, Grande Prairie-Smoky)**
- Aboriginal peoples–Employment
 - General remarks ... 1450

Knight, Mel (PC, Grande Prairie-Smoky) (Continued)

- Aboriginal workforce participation initiative
 - General remarks ... 1450
 - Statement re ... 294
- Access to the Future Fund
 - General remarks ... 900–01
- Agrology Profession Act (Bill 17)
 - Third reading ... 1513
- Alberta–Economic policy
 - 20-year strategic plan ... 901
- Alberta/British Columbia joint cabinet meeting, March 2005
 - B.C. ports strategy discussion at ... 319
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research
 - Funding for ... 901
- Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund
 - General remarks ... 901
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 344–45
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1821–22
- Alberta Sustainability Fund
 - Transfers to education endowment funds ... 901
- Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 57)
 - Third reading ... 2032
- British Columbia ports strategy
 - Alberta participation in ... 319
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 674
- Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 1963–64
 - Research re ... 292
- Edson trail
 - Statement re ... 1672
- Education, Postsecondary
 - General remarks ... 901
- Energy industry–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 292
- Energy Innovation Network
 - General remarks ... 292
- Gas, Natural–Export–United States
 - Impact of U.S. energy bill on ... 1310
- Grow with Canola program
 - General remarks ... 368–69
- Highway 43
 - Upgrading of ... 44
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 44
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)–Fort McMurray area
 - General remarks ... 1964
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Aboriginal workforce participation initiative ... 294, 1450
 - Edson trial ... 1672
 - Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment ... 368–69
- Minable oil sands strategy–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1963–64

Knight, Mel (PC, Grande Prairie-Smoky) (Continued)

- Oil–Export–United States
 - Impact of U.S. energy bill on ... 1310
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Access to the Future Fund ... 900–01
 - B.C. ports strategy ... 319
 - Energy Innovation Network ... 292
 - Highway safety ... 44
 - Minable oil sands strategy ... 1963–64
 - United States energy legislation ... 1310
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 58
- Peace River area
 - Opening of: Statement re ... 1672
- Port of Prince Rupert
 - Alberta participation in development of ... 319
- Roads–Maintenance and repair–Northern Alberta
 - Impact on traffic safety ... 44
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 674
- Securities–Law and legislation
 - National harmonization of: Legislation re (Bill 19) ... 169–70
- Securities Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 19)
 - First reading ... 169–70
 - Second reading ... 450–51, 625, 629
 - Committee ... 725–27
 - Third reading ... 941
- Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)
 - Third reading ... 2028
- Tar sands development–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1963–64
- Traffic regulations
 - Enforcement of ... 44
- Traffic safety–Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 44
- U.S. energy bill
 - Impact on Alberta ... 1310
- Walter Paszkowski agricultural legacy endowment fund
 - Statement re ... 368–69
- Kowalski, Mr. Kenneth R. (PC, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock)**
 - Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Speaker ... 1
 - Speaker
 - Election of ... 1
- Lieberman, Hon. Mr. Justice Sam (World War II veteran, RCAF; VE Day ceremony spokesman)**
 - Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of ... 1301–02
 - Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber ... 1301–02
 - Year of the Veteran, 2005
 - General remarks ... 1301
- Liepert, Ron (PC, Calgary-West)**
 - Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP68/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP588/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - First-quarter update, 2005–06 (SP589/05: Tabled) ... 1675

Liepert, Ron (PC, Calgary-West) (Continued)

- Alberta's Promise
 - Recognition of new members in ... 578
- Cellular telephones in automobiles
 - Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 999–1000
- Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing
 - Reports, 2004 & 2005 (SP739-740/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Conflict of interest
 - Declaration of, re Children's Services estimates (member withdrew) ... 1051
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Member declared conflict of interest re, and withdrew ... 1051
- Electric power—Prices
 - Contributing factors to (London Economics group report on) ... 291
- Electric utilities—Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 291
- Highway 8—Calgary area
 - Truck traffic on ... 167
 - Twinning of ... 166–67
- London Economics International LLC
 - Electricity prices, contributing factors to, report ... 291
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 102–03
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Wes Montgomery ... 983
- Members' withdrawal from debate
 - Children's Services estimates ... 1051
- Methane
 - Presence at proposed school site in Calgary's Battalion park area ... 2051–52
- Montgomery, Mr. Wes
 - Statement re ... 983
- Mount Royal College
 - Request for university status ... 24
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Calgary area road construction ... 166–167
 - Electricity costs ... 291
 - Mount Royal College ... 24
 - School construction in southwest Calgary ... 2051–52
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 578
- Ring roads—Calgary
 - Land acquisition re, from Tsuu T'ina nation ... 166
- Schools—Construction—Calgary
 - Battalion park area ... 2051–52
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 102–03
- Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 999–1000
- Trucking industry
 - Use of highway 8 ... 167
- Tsuu T'ina First Nation
 - Transfer of land re southwest Calgary ring road ... 166

Lieutenant Governor of Alberta

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)

Lieutenant Governor of Alberta (Continued)

- Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Agrology Profession Act (Bill 17)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 18)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 20)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act 2005 (Bill 4)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sitting), 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Bow Valley Community Foundation Act (Bill Pr. 1)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act (Bill Pr. 2)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 26)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 35)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)

Lieutenant Governor of Alberta *(Continued)*

- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 7)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Lieutenant Governor of Alberta
 - Entrance of ... 1, 7
- Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill Pr. 3)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 42)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 25)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Securities Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 19)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Speech from the Throne
 - Address given ... 7–10
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)

Lieutenant Governor of Alberta *(Continued)*

- Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)
 - Royal Assent ... 2 June, 2005 (Outside of House sittings)
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Royal Assent ... 10 May, 2005 (Outside of House sitting)
- Lindsay, Fred (PC, Stony Plain)**
 - 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - General remarks ... 955
 - Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Edmonton/Calgary transmission line upgrade application, approval of ... 903–04
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1862–63
 - Bullying–Prevention
 - Statement re ... 1715
 - Bullying Awareness Week
 - General remarks ... 1715
 - Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Amendment (SP377/05: Tabled) ... 1116
 - CN Rail
 - Train derailment, Lake Wabamun ... 1668
 - Education Week (Provincial, April 2005)
 - Statement re ... 955
 - Electric power–Prices
 - Regulated option re ... 647
 - Electric power lines–Edmonton/Calgary
 - Upgrading of ... 903–04
 - Environmental Protection Commission
 - Report on Lake Wabamun train derailment ... 1668
 - Freestyle ski championships
 - World Cup moguls winner (Jennifer Heil) ... 417
 - Gas well drilling industry–Tomahawk/Drayton Valley area
 - Safety aspects ... 741–42
 - Heil, Jennifer
 - Recognition of ... 417
 - Hockey championships
 - Stony Plain atom double-A team champions ... 251
 - Hydrogen sulphide emissions
 - General remarks ... 741–42
 - Independent System Operator (Electricity industry)
 - Edmonton/Calgary transmission line upgrade application ... 903–04
 - International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
 - Recognition of ... 324–25
 - Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 144–46
 - Members' Statements (2005)
 - Education Week ... 955
 - Prevention of bullying ... 1715
 - Royal Alberta Museum ... 1505
 - Motorcycle driver licensing
 - Review of ... 954
 - Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Electricity transmission ... 903–04
 - Hazardous material spill at Wabamun Lake ... 1668
 - Motorcycle driver licensing ... 954
 - Regulated rate option for electricity ... 647
 - Sour gas well safety ... 741–42
 - Wabamun provincial park closure ... 249–250

Lindsay, Fred (PC, Stony Plain) (Continued)

- Parks, Provincial
 - Upgrading of ... 249–50
- Provincial Museum of Alberta
 - Renaming to Royal Alberta Museum ... 1505
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 251, 324–25, 417
- Royal Alberta Museum
 - Statement re ... 1505
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 144–46
- Spills (Pollution)–Lake Wabamum
 - CN train derailment ... 1668
 - CN train derailment: Bans on boating/usage of lake re, lifting of ... 1668
 - CN train derailment: Cleanup procedures ... 1668
- Wabamun Lake Provincial Park
 - Closure, 2005 season ... 249–50
- Lougheed, Rob (PC, Strathcona)**
 - Air quality–Monitoring
 - Toxic waste fires situations ... 1335–36
 - Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Association
 - General remarks ... 745
 - Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Impact on highways 14 and 21 ... 324
 - Time frame for completion ... 324
 - Architecture and the disabled
 - Statement re ... 1917
 - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Review of (2005): Report (SP389/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - Automobile licence plates
 - Veterans' stickers for ... 366
 - Bow Valley Community Foundation Act (Bill Pr. 1)
 - Third reading ... 1556
 - BP Canada
 - Fire, Fort Saskatchewan facility ... 207
 - Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
 - Statement re ... 1577–78
 - CanWest CanSpell National Spelling Bee
 - Champion (Finola Hackett) ... 907
 - Communityaccessibility.ca (Web site)
 - General remarks ... 1917
 - Curling championships
 - Team Ferby (2005 world champions) ... 651–52
 - Custom Environmental Services Ltd.
 - Fire at ... 1335–36
 - Cystic fibrosis
 - Statement re ... 1577–78
 - Disabled
 - General remarks ... 2054
 - Services for ... 745
 - Electric power–Export
 - General remarks ... 1447
 - Electric power lines–Construction
 - General remarks ... 1446–47
 - Emergency agencies (Fire, etc.)
 - Procedures at toxic waste site fires ... 1335–36
 - Emergency Management Alberta
 - Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by Shell chemical plant ... 162
 - Emergency planning
 - General remarks ... 207
 - Emergency vehicles, Stationary
 - Speed limits for passing of ... 1884

Lougheed, Rob (PC, Strathcona) (Continued)

- Endangered wildlife species
 - Protection of ... 574
- Farm vehicles
 - Eligibility for veterans' licence plate stickers ... 366
- Fires at hazardous waste sites
 - Monitoring of ... 1335–36
- Hackett, Finola
 - Statement re ... 907
- Hazardous substances–Safety aspects
 - During fires ... 1335–36
- Highway 14
 - Impact of Henday Drive on ... 324
- Highway 21
 - Impact of Henday Drive on ... 324
- Highway construction sites–Safety aspects
 - Speeding limits ... 1884
- Hockey game, World's longest
 - Dr. Brent Saik's Guinness record: Statement re ... 24–25
- International Day of Disabled Persons
 - Statement re ... 2054
- La Ronde Restaurant, Edmonton
 - Braille menu at: Statement re ... 745
- Lakeland College
 - Sherwood Park campus ... 1574
 - Sherwood Park campus: P3 proposal for ... 1575
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Barrier-free accessibility ... 1917
 - Braille menu at La Ronde Restaurant ... 745
 - Cystic fibrosis ... 1577–78
 - Finola Hackett ... 907
 - International Day of Disabled Persons ... 2054
 - Multiple Sclerosis ... 1257
 - Strathcona Cadet Tattoo ... 1313
 - Team Ferby ... 651–52
 - World's longest hockey game ... 24–25
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 573–74
- MS Awareness Month
 - Statement re ... 1257
- Multiple sclerosis
 - Statement re ... 1257
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Custom Environmental Services Ltd. fire ... 1335–36
 - Electrical transmission system ... 1446–47
 - Emergency preparedness ... 207
 - Lakeland College ... 1574–75
 - Métis hunting rights ... 573–74
 - Shell chemical plant vapour release ... 162
 - Southeast Edmonton ring road ... 324
 - Traffic safety ... 1884
 - Veterans' licence plates ... 366
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Committee ... 1929–30
- Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP160/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Awards of excellence ... 2054
 - Barrier-free access to buildings, survey re ... 1917
 - General remarks ... 745
- Shell Canada Limited
 - Chemical plant vapour pressure release, Fort Saskatchewan area ... 162, 207

Lougheed, Rob (PC, Strathcona) (*Continued*)

- Spelling championships
 - CanWest CanSpell champion (Finola Hackett) ... 907
- Strathcona Cadet Tatro
 - Statement re ... 1313
- Supreme Court of Canada
 - Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... 573–74
- Traffic safety
 - General remarks ... 1884
- Wildlife conservation
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 574
- Year of the Veteran, 2005
 - General remarks ... 1313

Lukaszuk, Thomas A. (PC, Edmonton-Castle Downs)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 224
- Alberta School Boards Association
 - Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ... 1147–48
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits: Enhancement of ... 163
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Distance education delivery via ... 1505
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Teacher bargaining model recommendation ... 1147
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - North portion of, completion date ... 1713
 - Public/private partnership funding model for north portion of ... 1713
- Benedict XVI, Pope
 - Statement re ... 857–58
- Big Lake natural area
 - Designation as provincial park ... 982
 - Renaming of ... 982
- Budget debate
 - Motion 19: McClellan ... 783
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation–Training
 - As part of school curriculum ... 204–05
- Collective bargaining–Teachers
 - Province-wide bargaining ... 1147–48
- Committee of Supply
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1680
- Crime prevention
 - General remarks ... 1671
- Crime rate
 - General remarks ... 1671
- Curling championships
 - Team Ferbey (2005 Brier champions) ... 168
 - Team Ferbey (2005 Brier champions): Letter from Premier to (SP115/05: Tabled) ... 171
- Distance education
 - General remarks ... 1505
- Edmonton Catholic School District
 - Capital plan, 2002-05 (SP386/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - Capital plan changes (Castle Downs high school, Terwillegar school) ... 1078, 1197–98
 - Letter to (SP388/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - Statement re ... 1080
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 western final win: Statement re ... 1743–44
- Edmonton Journal* (Newspaper)
 - Nov. 27, 2002 article about Castle Downs high school (SP387/05: Tabled) ... 1205

Lukaszuk, Thomas A. (PC, Edmonton-Castle Downs) (*Continued*)

- Edmonton Police Service
 - Provincial funding for ... 1671
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... 84–85
- Education–Curricula
 - First aid/CPR training courses ... 204–05
- Education–Finance
 - User fees ... 1913
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1680
- First aid–Training
 - As part of school curriculum ... 204–05
- Football championships
 - Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions ... 1743–44
- Gifted children–Education
 - General remarks ... 1078, 1080
- Grant MacEwan Community College
 - Health care learning centre: Statement re ... 1505
- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)
 - Statement re ... 1032–33
- Hearing aids for seniors
 - Provincial assistance re ... 163
- High schools–Construction–Edmonton
 - Castle Downs area school, change in priority re ... 1078, 1197–98
 - Castle Downs area school, *Edmonton Journal* article re (SP387/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - South Edmonton academic school construction ... 1078, 1080, 1197–98
- Immigrants
 - Federal funding for ... 1832–33
 - Visas for, Alberta processing of ... 1833
- John Paul II, Pope
 - Recognition of ... 489
- Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park
 - Statement re ... 982
- Medical profession–Education
 - U of A training facility ... 1032–33
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Catholic high school construction ... 1080
 - Edmonton Eskimos ... 1743–44
 - Grant MacEwan College learning centre ... 1505
 - Health sciences ambulatory learning centre ... 1032–33
 - Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park ... 982
 - Pope Benedict XVI ... 857–58
- North Saskatchewan River rescue
 - Recognition of ... 49–50
- Nurses–Education
 - East Central Health and Augustana campus project re ... 1505
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Anthony Henday ring road ... 1713
 - Centralized teacher bargaining ... 1147–48
 - Crime rate reduction ... 1671
 - First aid and CPR training in schools ... 204–205
 - Lunchtime supervision in schools ... 1913
 - Project Kare ... 901

Lukaszuk, Thomas A. (PC, Edmonton-Castle Downs)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - School construction ... 1078
 - School construction in Edmonton ... 1197-98
 - School utilization ... 84-85
 - Seniors' benefit program ... 163
 - Services for immigrants ... 1832-33
- Organized crime-Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1671
- Point of Order
 - Items previously decided ... 1293
 - Reflections on a member ... 1455
- Police
 - Increase in numbers of ... 1671
- Professional qualifications, Foreign
 - Assessment service for ... 1833
- Project Kare (Missing women investigation team)
 - Funding for ... 901
- Prostitutes
 - Murder of ... 901-02
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 49-50, 168, 489
- St. John Ambulance
 - First aid/CPR instruction in schools ... 205
- School boards
 - Academic school entrance requirements ... 1078
 - Academic school entrance requirements: Statement re ... 1080
 - Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ... 1147-48
- School lunchtime supervision
 - Fees ... 1913
- Schools-Closure
 - General remarks ... 84-85
- Schools-Construction
 - Determining of priorities for ... 1078
- Schools-Construction-Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 1078, 1197-98
- Schools-Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 84-85
- Senior citizens
 - Government programs ... 163
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 28-30

Lund, Hon. Ty (PC, Rocky Mountain House)

- Abduction of children-Calgary
 - Police actions re ... 486
- Airline company failures
 - Consumer insurance plan for ... 204
- Alberta Corporate Service Centre
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1418, 1420
- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Electricity prices monitoring ... 1420
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate's presentations to ... 1416
- Alberta Registries
 - General remarks ... 1415
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Third reading ... 2042
- Auditor General
 - Conflict of interest comments ... 1420
 - Government contracting process comments ... 1419

Lund, Hon. Ty (PC, Rocky Mountain House)*(Continued)*

- Automobile chop shops
 - General remarks ... 1424
- Automobile drivers' licences-Security aspects
 - Facial recognition system ... 1415
- Automobile licence plates
 - Veterans' stickers for ... 366
- Automobile theft-Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1419, 1424, 1425
- Automobiles, Written off/rebuilt
 - Resale of ... 1424
- Automobiles-Registration
 - Database of, use in child abduction cases ... 486
- Balancing Pool for Alberta's Electricity Consumers
 - Contribution to funding for Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 975, 1419
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Proclamation of ... 1422
- Capital Health
 - Electric power bills to, overcharging re ... 161-62
- Cemeteries Act
 - Modernization of ... 1425
- Civil service pension cheques
 - Loss of microfiche copies of, privacy concerns re ... 1423
- Competition Bureau (Federal)
 - Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 249
- Conflict of interest
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 1420
- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas contracts ... 1416, 1420
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 161-62, 975, 1025, 1416, 1420
 - General remarks ... 1415, 1416, 1424, 1425
 - Legislation re ... 326
- Credit card companies
 - Refund policy for unprovided services (airline tickets) ... 204
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP49/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP574/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1415-26
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP497/05: Tabled) ... 1607
 - Fees ... 1415
 - Performance measures ... 1415
 - Staffing ... 1418
 - Support services budget ... 1418
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Alberta Corporate Service Centre transferred to ... 1418, 1420
- Electric power-Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 161-62, 975, 1025, 1416, 1420
 - General remarks ... 975-76, 1421
 - Impact on seniors ... 1424
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 249
 - Regulated option re ... 1420, 1421
- Electric power-Retail sales
 - Billing systems re ... 161-62, 1420
 - Review of ... 1075
- Electric power-Supply
 - General remarks ... 975, 976, 1025

Lund, Hon. Ty (PC, Rocky Mountain House)*(Continued)*

- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... 1025, 1424
- Electric utilities
 - Competitive choice re ... 1421
- Electric utilities—Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 161–62, 975–76, 1025
 - Deregulation: Public reaction to ... 975
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... 249
- Fair Trading Act
 - General remarks ... 1415–16
 - Payday loan industry provisions ... 365
- Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 - General remarks ... 365
- Farm vehicles
 - Eligibility for veterans' licence plate stickers ... 366
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP672/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - Application to Canadian subsidiaries of U.S. corporations ... 1886
 - Edmonton Journal* request under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 1521–22
 - Fees ... 1521–22
 - General remarks ... 1416, 1423
- Funerals—Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 1425
- Government aircraft
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 1521–22
- Government information
 - Access to ... 1425
 - Access to, through registry offices ... 1416, 1419
- Identification, Personal
 - Theft of ... 1415, 1425
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta health records ... 1423
 - Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta pension records ... 1423
 - U.S. access to Alberta health records, investigation of ... 1424
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)
 - Ruling on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian health records ... 1424
 - Warning on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian personal privacy ... 1886
- Insurance Bureau of Canada
 - Mortgage fraud initiative ... 1425
- Internet (Computer network)
 - Sales contract regulation (airline tickets) ... 204
- Jetsgo Corporation
 - Bankruptcy: Ticket refunds re ... 204
- Land titles—Registration
 - Performance measures ... 1415
 - Security concerns in ... 1425
 - Security concerns in, re mortgage fraud cases ... 803
- Landlord and tenant
 - Legislation re (Bill 44) ... 1631
- Marriage
 - Definition of ... 1425

Lund, Hon. Ty (PC, Rocky Mountain House)*(Continued)*

- Marriage licences
 - Provision of, by religious institutions ... 1425
 - Provision of, through registry offices ... 1425
- Medical records—Confidentiality
 - Missing health records situation ... 1424
 - U.S. access to information re ... 1424
- Mortgage fraud
 - General remarks ... 803, 1416, 1419, 1425
 - Government advisory committee re ... 1416
- Municipal bylaws
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to police, requirement for ... 416
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Electricity billing ... 161–162
 - Electricity marketing review ... 1075
 - Enron activities in Alberta ... 249
 - EPCOR energy bills ... 489
 - Government aircraft flight logs ... 1521–22
 - Jetsgo bankruptcy ... 204
 - Mortgage fraud ... 803
 - Payday loans ... 365
 - Protection of personal information ... 416, 1886
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 975–76
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council ... 1025
 - Veterans' licence plates ... 366
- Parliamentary language
 - General remarks ... 1034
- Pawnshops
 - Provision of client information to police ... 416
 - Review of ... 1424
- Payday loan companies
 - Business practices ... 365
 - Legislation re (Bill 6) ... 365
 - National regulations re ... 365
- Personal Information Protection Act
 - Application to data held by Canadian subsidiaries of U.S. corporations ... 1886
 - Application to pawnshops ... 416
 - Select committee review of ... 1416
- Point of Order
 - Imputing motives ... 1034
- Police
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to ... 416
- Power Pool of Alberta
 - Contribution to funding for Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 975
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 416, 1416, 1419, 1886
- Public contracts
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 1419
- Public records—Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 1415, 1419, 1423, 1886
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - First reading ... 326
 - Second reading ... 538
 - Third reading ... 1290
 - Mortgage fraud provisions ... 803
- Real Estate Assurance Fund
 - General remarks ... 803
 - Restriction on access to (Bill 31) ... 326

Lund, Hon. Ty (PC, Rocky Mountain House)*(Continued)*

- Real Estate Council of Alberta
 - General remarks ... 803
 - Mortgage fraud initiative ... 1416, 1425
- Regional health authorities
 - Detection of overcharging on electric power bills ... 161–62
- Registry offices, Private
 - General remarks ... 1418–19, 1422
 - Provision of government information through ... 1416, 1419, 1425
 - Provision of marriage licences through ... 1425
- Registry offices, Private–Security aspects
 - Concerns re mortgage fraud ... 803
 - Fraud awareness programs for agents ... 1415
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - First reading ... 1631
 - Second reading ... 1805–06, 1811
 - Committee ... 1978–79
 - Third reading ... 2021
- Residential tenancies dispute resolution service
 - General remarks ... 1416
 - Legislation re (Bill 44) ... 1631
- Royal Canadian Legion, Alberta-Northwest Territories Branch
 - Veterans' licence sticker situation ... 366
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Pawnshop provision of client information to, bylaw re ... 416
- Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)
 - General remarks ... 1416
 - Provision of orientation for MLAs' staff ... 1425
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 502–03
- Travel insurance
 - Refunds for unprovided services (airline tickets) ... 204
- Unlimited liability corporations
 - Incorporation of (Bill 16) ... 1422
- USA PATRIOT Act
 - Impact on access to Canadian medical records ... 1424
 - Impact on Canadian personal privacy ... 1886
- Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - Advisory committee re: Report on retail electricity business ... 1419, 1421, 1424
 - Budget ... 1419
 - Consumer complaints to ... 161–62, 1419
 - Enron electricity price manipulation investigation ... 249
 - Independence of (arm's length from government) ... 975, 1419, 1421–22
 - Role of ... 1416, 1420, 1422
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Input into retail electricity marketing review ... 1075
 - Membership of ... 976
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) ... 975–76, 1025, 1075

Lund, Hon. Ty (PC, Rocky Mountain House)*(Continued)*

- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - (Continued)*
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005): Point of Order ... 1034
 - Response to DOE's (Dept. of Energy) Call for Comments on it's Discussion Paper ... (April 14, 2005) ... 1075
 - Response to DOE's (Dept. of Energy) Call for Comments on it's Discussion Paper ... (April 14, 2005) (SP372/05: Tabled) ... 1081
- Utilities consumer ombudsman
 - Proposal for ... 1423
- Vital Statistics
 - Removal of marriage licensing from ... 1425
- Water–Export
 - General remarks ... 1425
- Water Act
 - Exports prohibition ... 1425
- Whistle-blower protection
 - General remarks ... 1420
- Wind power
 - General remarks ... 1426
- MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar)**
 - 1157268 Alberta Ltd.
 - Hip and knee surgery contract ... 1846
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 226–227
 - Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
 - Third reading ... 942–43
 - Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
 - Advertising costs ... 1208
 - Debt servicing costs ... 1209
 - Governance issues ... 1208, 1209
 - Role of ... 1208
 - Alberta Corporate Service Centre
 - Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ... 760
 - Alberta Electric System Operator
 - Electricity supply study ... 911–12
 - Markets & Strategic Initiatives report (SP191/05: Tabled) ... 327
 - Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Electricity price overcharging advisory ... 949
 - Engage Energy electricity overcharging: Decision re (SP129/05: Tabled) ... 211
 - Grid West membership (SP382/05: Tabled) ... 1154
 - TransAlta hydropower pricing strategy ... 363, 488
 - TransAlta power pricing activities ... 455
 - Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Accommodation costs of head of (Q6/05: Response tabled as SP540/05) ... 659
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 1208
 - Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 20)
 - Second reading ... 437
 - Alberta Racing Corporation
 - Gaming revenue to ... 1289

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Alberta Regulations
 - Review of, staffing for ... 760
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1864–66
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's authority challenged re, emergency debate re ... 1318
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - General remarks ... 255
- Alberta SuperNet
 - General remarks ... 255
 - School access to ... 759–60
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 255, 759
- Alberta Sustainability Fund
 - Use for CAIS program funding ... 1850
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Class size guideline ... 311, 369
- AltaGas Services Inc.
 - Purchase of Sundance B power purchase arrangements from Enron ... 1834, 1912–13
- Ambulance service
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re (Q5/05: Response tabled as SP627/05) ... 658–59
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Documents re (M19/05: Response tabled as SP807) ... 820–21
- Ambulance service, Aerial
 - Funding for ... 255
- Ambulance service–Rural areas
 - Costs, provincial assistance re ... 1209
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Second reading ... 541–42
 - Third reading ... 943
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Second reading ... 424
 - Committee ... 1296
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Cost overruns ... 1803–04
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05: Response tabled as SP511/05) ... 1161–62
- Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 57)
 - Second reading ... 1954–55
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Third reading ... 1613–14
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Third reading ... 442–44
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - Third reading ... 439–41
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Second reading ... 1945–47
 - Committee ... 1986
 - Third reading ... 2041–43
- Artspace Housing Co-operative Ltd.
 - Brochure on co-op housing (SP551/05: Tabled) ... 1675

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits dollar value (Q9/05: Response tabled as SP639/05) ... 660–61
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Third reading ... 1510
- Auditor General
 - BSE compensation programs auditing ... 297
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 - Internal auditor, liaison with ... 1103
 - Management letters re U of A and U of C, release of: Letter re (SP101/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, authority to challenged, emergency debate re ... 1318
 - Sole-source contracts comments ... 760
- Beef–Prices
 - General remarks ... 1208
- Beef processing
 - Concentration of, in few companies ... 1208
- Bighorn power plant
 - Exclusion from power purchase agreements ... 363
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Compensation plans re ... 296–97
 - Compensation plans re: Auditor General investigation of ... 297
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 296–97
 - Live testing for ... 297
 - New assistance programs re (2005) ... 296–97
 - Research into ... 1208
 - Testing re, to expedite exports ... 297
- Brazeau power plant
 - Exclusion from power purchase agreements ... 363
- British Columbia Power Exchange Corp.
 - Electricity price manipulation at Power Pool of Alberta ... 286
 - Electricity price manipulation at Power Pool of Alberta: Document re (SP164/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Involvement in Enron electricity price manipulation ... 83, 650
 - Involvement in Enron electricity price manipulation: Backgrounder re (SP148/05: Tabled) ... 252–53
- Brooklyn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
 - Second reading ... 1949
 - Committee ... 1958
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Second reading ... 423
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - Second reading ... 1956–57
 - Committee ... 1980
- Calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta)
 - Extension of ... 1208
- Calgary General Hospital
 - Destruction of ... 1845
- Calgary Health Region
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... 1846
 - Funding ... 1846
 - Hip and knee surgery project ... 1846
 - Privatization initiatives ... 1846
- Calpine Energy Services
 - Electricity export application ... 650

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - Administration costs ... 1850
 - General remarks ... 297, 1208–09
 - Overpayments ... 1850
- Capital Health
 - Funding ... 1846
 - Hip and knee surgery project ... 1846
- Capital projects
 - Public/private partnerships re: List of all potential projects (M33/05: Response tabled as SP512/05) ... 1162–64
- Capital projects, Medical
 - Funding for ... 1845–46
- Cargill, Incorporated
 - Relation to Ranchers Own ... 1208
- Cataract surgery, Private–Calgary
 - Waiting times for ... 1846
- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 297, 1208, 1209
- Cement
 - Shortage of, impact on road construction costs ... 1804
- Chief Electoral Officer
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee, Select Special
 - Motion to appoint (Motion 25: Hancock/Zwozdesky) ... 1944
- Chief Internal Auditor's office
 - Budget ... 1102–03
 - Liason with Auditor General ... 1103
 - Role of ... 1102–03
- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Committee ... 447–48
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Reduction of: Funding for ... 311
- Committee of Supply
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1678–79
- Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing
 - Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, referred to (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... 106–07
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Report, 2004 (SP111/05: Tabled) ... 171
- Community schools
 - General remarks ... 124, 1209
 - Statement re ... 369
- Competition Bureau (Federal)
 - Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 533, 911, 949, 1337
 - Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation: Backgrounder re (SP148/05: Tabled) ... 252–53
 - TransAlta electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 949
- Conflict of interest
 - Market surveillance administrator ... 161
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Appointment of (Motion 11: Stevens) ... 105

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas contracts ... 1073
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 286, 455–56, 533, 650
- Court of Queen's Bench
 - Edmonton Public School Board school closure decision (SP441/05: Tabled) ... 1507
- Courts–Calgary
 - New courthouse, Public/private funding of ... 255
- Crime prevention
 - General remarks ... 1258
- Crop insurance program
 - General remarks ... 1208
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1208–09
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 - Rural offices closure ... 297, 1850
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 296–97
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1850
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 - Trade missions expenditures (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
 - Trade show expenditures (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Dept. of Education
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 311
- Dept. of Energy
 - Communications contracts expenditures, 2003-04 (Q16/05: Defeated) ... 811, 812
 - Contracted employees/consultants salaries, 2003-04 (M25/05: Response tabled as SP808/05) ... 990
 - Discussions with Enron, correspondence re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
 - Discussions with Enron, correspondence re (SP678/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - Discussions with Enron, public access to documents re ... 246–47
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 910–12
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 - Minister's noninternational trips details, 2003-04 (M26/05: Response tabled as SP735/05) ... 990
 - Service contracts costs, 2003-05 (Q41/05: Defeated) ... 1748
 - Staffing ... 911
- Dept. of Environment
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Dept. of Finance
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1289–90
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1799
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) (Continued)

- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1845-46
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1097-98
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1803-04
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
- Dept. of Learning
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M17/05: Response tabled as SP718/05) ... 818-20
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M15/05: Response tabled as SP826/05) ... 815-17
 - Credit card statements for minister and executive assistant (M16/05: Response tabled as SP827/05) ... 817-18
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
 - Minister's business expenses (M14/05: Response tabled as SP825/05) ... 815
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Alberta SuperNet project transferred to ... 255
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 759-60
 - Executive Council budget increase, investigation of ... 1103
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
 - Staffing ... 759
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 255
- Direct Energy Business Services
 - Promise to, re regulated rate electricity price ... 1119
- Edmonton Northlands
 - Funding for ... 1289
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Closure of schools ... 124-25, 311, 369, 694, 738, 767, 1097
 - Closure of schools: Is Your Public School at Risk? document (SP353/05: Tabled) ... 957
 - Closure of schools: Letter re (SP100/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Closure of schools: Letter re use of outdated regulation re (SP325/05: Tabled) ... 776
 - Closure of schools: Provision of Supernet service to ... 759-60
 - Closure of schools: Statement re ... 982-83
 - Closure of schools: Workshop re (SP341/05: Tabled) ... 858
 - Closure of Strathearn school: Report re (SP318/05: Tabled) ... 746
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... 982-83, 1097
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools, geographic distribution of schools (SP487/05: Tabled) ... 1578

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) (Continued)

- Edmonton Public School Board (Continued)
 - Leasing of commercial space for continuing education ... 738
 - Portables for Kenilworth junior high ... 694
 - Portables for Kenilworth junior high, purchase of, letter to minister re (SP285/05: Tabled) ... 622
 - Portables for Kenilworth junior high, purchase of, letter to minister re: Minister's response (SP486/05: Tabled) ... 1578
 - Victoria school project funds, diversion to new school funding ... 1524
- Education-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1524-25
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 809, 810
- Electric power-Export
 - General remarks ... 650
- Electric power-Import
 - Price manipulation re, investigation into ... 204, 650
- Electric power-Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 286, 455-56, 533
 - Electric System Operator report on (SP191/05: Tabled) ... 327
 - General remarks ... 911, 912, 948
 - Impact on seniors ... 255
 - Manipulation of ... 204, 286, 488-89, 948-49, 1196
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 23, 83, 161, 204, 247, 455-56, 533
 - Regulated option re ... 912, 1073, 1119-20
- Electric power-Retail sales
 - General remarks ... 912
- Electric power-Supply
 - General remarks ... 650, 911-12
- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... 1025, 1073, 1119-20
- Electric power lines
 - General remarks ... 650
 - Tie lines with B.C. ... 911
- Electric utilities-Lake Wabamun area
 - Taxation of ... 912
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 83, 161, 911, 1024-25, 1969
 - Deregulation: Energy dept. correspondence with Enron Canada re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
 - Deregulation: Impact on seniors ... 255
 - Deregulation: Private consultant re (Kellan Fluckiger) ... 1307
 - Deregulation: Public inquiry into ... 204, 899
 - Deregulation: *Western Standard* article re (SP697/05: Tabled) ... 1865
- Electrical power purchase agreements
 - Enron activities re Sundance B power ... 1337, 1834-35, 1912-13
 - Enron activities re Sundance B power: Email re (SP677/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - Enron comments re: Transcript of taped conversation re (SP422/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Enron comments re mispricing of ... 1337
 - Exclusion of hydropower from ... 363, 489
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Securities Commission challenge of Auditor General's authority (not proceeded with) ... 1318

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

Engage Energy Canada, L.P.
 Former executive of ... 161
 Overcharging re electricity prices: EUB decision re (SP129/05: Tabled) ... 211

Enron Canada Corporation
 Alberta activities, public inquiry re: Statement re ... 1969
 Alberta activities: Statement re ... 1834–35
 Bonuses to senior officials of: Website article re (SP188/05: Tabled) ... 327
 Discussions with Alberta Energy, correspondence re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
 Discussions with Alberta Energy, correspondence re (SP678/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 Discussions with Alberta Energy, e-mails re (SP651 & 677/05: Tabled) ... 1788, 1837
 Discussions with Alberta Energy, FOIP request re (SP189/05: Tabled) ... 327
 Discussions with Alberta Energy, public access to documents re ... 246–47
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... 23, 83, 161, 204, 246–47, 286, 455–56, 533, 650, 949, 1196, 1964
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Adamson report on ... 1144–45
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Backgrounder and e-mail re (SP148-149/05: Tabled) ... 252–53
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Destruction of trading tapes re, e-mail re (SP149/05: Tabled) ... 252–53
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Documents re (SP32 & 33/05: Tabled) ... 93
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): E-mails re (SP130, 163, 252-253/05: Tabled) ... 211, 295, 492
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): FERC documents re (SP246, 347, 393, 401-402/05: Tabled) ... 464, 908, 1206, 1259
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Frontier Economics report re ... 1145
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 911
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Tapes of employees' conversations re (SP112 & 190/05: Tabled) ... 171, 327
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): U.S. lawsuits re ... 1249
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): *Western Standard* article re (SP697/05: Tabled) ... 1865
 Involvement in Alberta power generation system ... 1337
 Involvement in Alberta power generation system: Transcript of tape re (SP422/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 Sundance B power purchase arrangement, sale of ... 1834–35, 1912–13, 1964
 Sundance B power purchase arrangement, sale of: Letter/emails re (SP751-753/05: Tabled) ... 1970
 Sundance B power purchase arrangement auction participation ... 1337
 Sundance power plant, takeover of control of ... 899

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

Enviro-nics Research Group (Western) Limited
 Government advertising contract ... 1103
 Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1678–79
 Ethics Commissioner
 Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 Executive Council
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1102–05
 Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
 Limousine service costs ... 1103
 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 Third reading ... 548–50
 Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 Second reading ... 1543–44
 Farm income support
 General remarks ... 1209
 Fearnley, Mr. Ken
 Statement re ... 858
 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (U.S.)
 Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers: Documents re ... 911
 Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers: Documents re (SP347, 401-402/05: Tabled) ... 908, 1259
 Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers: Testimony re ... 1196
 Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers: Testimony re, document re (SP393/05: Tabled) ... 1206
 Frontier Economics report on Enron trading strategies on website of ... 1145
 Report on Enron trading strategies (SP246/05: Tabled) ... 464
 Feeder Associations Guarantee Amendment Act, 2004 (Bill 28, 2004)
 General remarks ... 1209
 Feeder associations (Livestock)
 Provincial guarantees to ... 1209
 Feedlots
 Clean up costs re ... 1209
 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 Second reading ... 939
 Food industry and trade
 General remarks ... 1208
 Provincial support programs re ... 297
 Foreign workers, Temporary
 Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated) ... 823–24
 Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 369, 418, 463, 491, 536, 1507
 Fort McMurray
 Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 911
 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 Liberal opposition requests under, re Enron/Alberta Energy records (SP189/05: Tabled) ... 327
 Frontier Economics Inc.
 Report on Project Stanley ... 1145
 Gaming industry
 Revenue from, distribution of ... 1289

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Gas, Natural—Prices
 - Residential heating prices, provincial comparison of ... 1670
- Gas, Natural—Retail sales
 - General remarks ... 912
- Government aircraft
 - General remarks ... 255
- Government departments
 - Number of ... 759
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 759–60
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 254
- Greater Edmonton Foundation
 - General remarks ... 858
- Grid West
 - Membership list (SP382/05: Tabled) ... 1154
- Health Care Protection Act (Bill 11, 2000)
 - General remarks ... 1846
- Health information panels (Health care debate)
 - General remarks ... 1105
- Heavy oil—Royalties
 - General remarks ... 910–11
 - Projected revenues from, 2005-2015 (Q24/05: Defeated) ... 1154–55
- Highwood Communications Ltd.
 - Government advertising contract ... 1103
- Hip and knee surgery
 - Pilot projects re ... 1846
- Hockey
 - Lottery funding for ... 1289–90
 - Lottery funding for 2004, reallocation to low-income programs ... 1290
- Homeless—Housing
 - Funding for ... 1799
- Hospitals—Construction
 - General remarks ... 1845–46
- Industrial Association of Southern Alberta
 - Letter re Enron power purchase agreement (SP751/05: Tabled) ... 1970
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 587–88
 - Third reading ... 1514–15
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 254–55
- Is Your Public School at Risk? (Document)
 - Copy tabled (SP353/05) ... 957
- Kane Veterinary Supplies Ltd.
 - Letter re changes to Veterinary Profession Act (SP650/05: Tabled) ... 1788
- Kenilworth junior high school
 - Portables for ... 694, 1098
 - Portables for, purchase of, letter to minister re (SP285/05: Tabled) ... 622
 - Portables for, purchase of, letter to minister re: Minister's response (SP486/05: Tabled) ... 1578
- King's University College
 - Graduation program (SP392/05: Tabled) ... 1206
- Labour Relations Code
 - Review of: MLA committee re: Report (M43/05: Defeated) ... 1171

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Labour unions
 - Organizing activities (Salting) ... 1171
- Legislative Assembly Office
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 191–92
- Limousines
 - Use by government members ... 1103
- Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects
 - Cleanup costs ... 1209
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation ... 254
- Margaret Kool Marketing Inc.
 - Government advertising contract ... 1103
- Market enhancement recovery funds
 - General remarks ... 1171
- Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)
 - Background of ... 161
 - Electricity imports, investigation into, re price manipulation activities ... 204
 - Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 23, 83, 204, 246–47, 533, 899, 1145
 - Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into, report on Power Pool prices (SP164-165/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Enron's takeover of Sundance power plant production, investigation of ... 899
 - Resignation of: Letters re (SP270/05: Tabled) ... 536
 - TransAlta price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 286
 - TransAlta price manipulation scheme, inquiry into, report on Power Pool prices re (SP164-165/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Committee ... 1874–75
- Meat packing industry
 - Profit margins ... 297
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of: Provincial support for ... 297, 1208
- Medical care
 - Restructuring ... 1845–46
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1846
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 421
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Community schools ... 369
 - Enron activities in Alberta ... 1834–35, 1969
 - Ken Fearnley ... 858
 - Ottewell community patrol ... 1258
 - School closures ... 982–83
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - Regarding Minister of Finance ... 421
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Number of ... 255
- National Energy Board
 - Future energy supply projections ... 1155
- National Public Relations Calgary Inc.
 - Government advertising contract ... 1103
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1764, 1766

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Office of the Premier
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005 ... 1670
- Oil wells
 - Temporary suspension of maximum rate limitations, letter re (SP679/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Olds Agricultural Society
 - Gaming revenue to ... 1289
- Ombudsman
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 254
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Access to information on Enron ... 246-247
 - Electricity consultant ... 1307
 - Electricity deregulation ... 204, 1024-25
 - Electricity exports ... 650
 - Electricity marketing ... 948-49, 1073, 1119-20
 - Electricity pricing ... 286
 - Enron activities in Alberta ... 533, 899, 1144-45, 1196, 1249, 1337, 1912-13, 1964
 - Hydropower purchase arrangements ... 363
 - Market surveillance administrator ... 161
 - Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ... 23, 83
 - Natural gas prices ... 1670
 - School closures ... 694, 767
 - School utilization ... 738
 - School utilization formula ... 124-25
 - Securities Commission ... 1597
 - TransAlta Utilities ... 455-56, 488-89
 - Use of school instructional funding ... 1524-25
- Ottewell community patrol
 - Pamphlet re (SP423/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Statement re ... 1258
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 369, 418, 463, 491, 536, 1507
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Strathearn school closure (SP506/05: Tabled) ... 1608
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1532
- Point of Order
 - Allegations against a member ... 421
 - Clarification ... 1768
 - Items previously decided ... 1293
 - Question and comment period ... 141
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 256, 306
 - Relevance ... 443, 1511
- Police
 - Neighbourhood patrols ... 1258
- Portable/modular classrooms
 - General remarks ... 622, 1098
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Committee ... 1695
- Power Pool of Alberta
 - Enron price manipulation at ... 247
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Advertising budget ... 1103
- Public contracts
 - Cost overruns in ... 1098
 - Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ... 760

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

- Queen Elizabeth II highway-Edmonton area
 - Underpass, Henday Drive interchange ... 1804
- Rancher's Beef
 - Provincial assistance to ... 1208
- Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)
 - Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 297
- Ranchers Own Meet Processors Inc.
 - Provincial assistance to ... 1208
 - Relation to Cargill ... 1208
- Regional health authorities
 - Funding ... 255, 1846
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - First reading ... 170
 - Second reading ... 513, 1352-53
- Risk management fund
 - Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under: Referred to Members' Services committee (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... 106-07
- Rocky Mountain Turf Club Inc.
 - Gaming revenue to ... 1289
- Royal Rubber Stamp Co.
 - Executive Council contract ... 1103
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1209
- Sangudo high school
 - Closure ... 767
- School boards
 - School closure regulation ... 767
- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 809, 810
- School dropouts
 - General remarks ... 738
- School Infrastructure Manual: A Guide to Existing Legislation ...
 - General remarks ... 1098
- Schools-Closure
 - General remarks ... 124-25, 311, 694, 738, 767, 1097-98
 - Regulations: Amendment to, on government web site, letter re (SP400/05: Tabled) ... 1259
 - Statement re ... 982-83
- Schools-Closure-Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1209
- Schools-Construction-Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 1524
- Schools-Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1524-25
- Schools-Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 759, 1209
- Schools-Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 124-25, 694, 957, 982, 1097-98
 - Community group use of, as part of formula re ... 1209
 - General remarks ... 369, 738
- Senators
 - Alberta nominees for: Election costs re ... 254
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 504-05
 - Third reading ... 992-93
 - Amendment (SP354/05: Tabled) ... 957

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

Spear, Constable Joe
 General remarks ... 1258
 Special warrants
 General remarks ... 254
 Speech from the Throne
 Debate ... 64, 140–42
 Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 Second reading ... 520, 521
 Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School,
 Edmonton
 Closure ... 311, 694, 767, 1097–98
 Closure: Court decision re (SP441/05: Tabled) ...
 1507
 Closure: Parent advisory association reports on
 (SP318 & 326/05: Tabled) ... 746, 776
 Closure: Petition tabled re (SP506/05) ... 1608
 Closure: Provision of Supernet service to ... 759–60
 Fact sheet re (SP207/05: Tabled) ... 370
 Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 Second reading ... 543–44
 Third reading ... 943
 Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005
 (Bill 14)
 Second reading ... 431–33
 Surplus, Budgetary
 Homelessness initiatives funding ... 1799
 Investment policy for: Legislation re (Bill 203) ... 170
 Tar sands development
 General remarks ... 910–11
 Teachers
 Numbers of, increase in: Funding for ... 311
 Terrace Heights Elementary School, Edmonton
 Closure ... 311, 1098
 Closure: Provision of Supernet service to ... 759, 760
 Leasing by Alberta Online Consortium Association
 (SP488/05: Tabled) ... 1578
 Trade missions
 Expenditures re (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
 Trade shows
 Expenditures re (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)
 Second reading ... 1294–95
 TransAlta Utilities Corporation
 Electricity price manipulation activities ... 286,
 455–56, 488–89, 948–49
 Electricity price manipulation activities: Documents
 re (SP163-164/05: Tabled) ... 295
 Electricity price manipulation activities: Employees'
 conversations re (SP190/05: Tabled) ... 327
 Electricity price manipulation activities: Independent
 investigation of ... 949
 Hydropower generation pricing ... 363, 456, 488–89
 Hydropower generation pricing: Jim Dinning's role in
 ... 456
 TUSK Energy Corporation
 Involvement of former minister of energy (Murray
 Smith) with, letter re (SP600/05: Tabled) ... 1716
 University of Alberta
 Auditor General's management letters re, release of:
 Letter re (SP101/05: Tabled) ... 128
 Lottery funding for ... 1289
 University of Calgary
 Auditor General's management letters re, release of:
 Letter re (SP101/05: Tabled) ... 128

MacDonald, Hugh (L, Edmonton-Gold Bar) *(Continued)*

University of Calgary *(Continued)*
 Lottery funding for ... 1289
 Utilities Consumer Advocate
 General remarks ... 254–55
 Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer
 Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity
 ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) ... 1024
 Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)
 General remarks ... 297
 Veterinary Profession Act
 Changes to, re veterinary dentistry inclusion in: Letter
 re (SP650/05: Tabled) ... 1788
 Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts,
 Edmonton
 Funding for, diverted to new school funding ... 1524
 Wages–Public service employees
 Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index
 (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1941–42
 Waiting lists (Medical care)
 General remarks ... 1846
 Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Canada
 Store relocation to Lambton industrial park,
 Edmonton: Letter re (SP440/05: Tabled) ... 1507
Western Standard (News magazine)
 Article about Enron and electricity deregulation in
 Alberta (SP697/05: Tabled) ... 1865
 Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 Second reading ... 593–595
 Third reading ... 1872
Magnus, Richard (PC, Calgary-North Hill)
 Alberta Transportation Safety Board
 Operational changes to, including appeals:
 Legislation re (Bill 39) ... 746
 Automobiles–Seizure
 For prostitution-related offences: Legislation re (Bill
 39) ... 746
 Edmonton Remand Centre
 Rape of inmates in ... 1430
 Emergency vehicles, Stationary
 Speed limits for passing of: Legislation re (Bill 39) ...
 746
 Gasoline–Taxation
 Federal revenue from, transferred to municipalities ...
 852
 Heart attacks in firefighters
 Workers' compensation coverage of: Legislation re
 (Bill 50) ... 1716
 Highway construction sites–Safety aspects
 Speeding limits: Legislation re (Bill 39) ... 746
 Insurance, Automobile
 Driving without: Legislation re (Bill 39) ... 746
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Calgary ring road southwest portion ... 1781–82
 Federal gas tax agreement ... 852
 Ring roads–Calgary
 Land acquisition re, from Tsuu T'ina nation ... 1781–82
 Speed limits
 Legislation re (Bill 39) ... 746
 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)
 First reading ... 746
 Second reading ... 891–92, 1291–92
 Committee ... 1488
 Third reading ... 1582

Magnus, Richard (PC, Calgary-North Hill) (Continued)

- Trucking industry
 - Legislation re (Bill 39) ... 746
 - Tsui Tina First Nation
 - Transfer of land re southwest Calgary ring road ... 1781–82
 - Workers' Compensation Act
 - Coverage of firefighters' heart attacks ... 1716
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - First reading ... 1716
 - Second reading ... 1811–12, 1816
 - Committee ... 1892–95
 - Third reading ... 1898, 1899
 - Workers' Compensation Board
 - Medical panel's independence from ... 1716
- Mar, Hon. Gary G., QC (PC, Calgary-Mackay)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Commonwealth Stadium concert re ... 1473
 - Funding for ... 1473, 1479, 1783
 - General remarks ... 692, 1472–73, 1484
 - Gifts to Canadians nation-wide (scholarships and artwork) ... 1739
 - Legislature grounds concert re, September 1 ... 1473, 1479
 - Active living strategy
 - Funding for ... 1476
 - Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan
 - General remarks ... 1473
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)
 - First reading ... 51
 - Second reading ... 238, 240
 - Committee ... 354
 - Third reading ... 439
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)
 - First reading ... 1919
 - Second reading ... 1973–74
 - Committee ... 1976–77
 - Third reading ... 2032
 - Alberta Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)
 - Funding for ... 1473
 - Alberta Foundation for the Arts
 - Funding ... 692, 1783
 - Review of Visual Arts Alberta Association ... 1571
 - Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
 - Funding for ... 1475
 - Investigation of inmate rape case ... 855
 - Role in provincial same-sex marriage strategy ... 317
 - Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)
 - Centennial funding for ... 324, 692, 1473, 1783
 - General remarks ... 1476
 - Return of artists at, to Alberta ... 1476, 1479
 - Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation
 - General remarks ... 1150
 - Alberta SuperNet
 - Library access to ... 1472
 - Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to ... 1335, 1442, 1497
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's random audit of, 2004 ... 1525
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's report on ... 1742–43

Mar, Hon. Gary G., QC (PC, Calgary-Mackay)

- (Continued)*
- Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
 - (Continued)*
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's review of ... 1525–26, 1597–98
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's review of, minister's letter re (SP464/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Political interference re ... 1597
 - Arts–Finance
 - General remarks ... 692, 977, 1472–73, 1475, 1479, 1571, 1783, 2053
 - Artwork, Alberta
 - Donation to National Gallery of Canada ... 1739
 - Athletes, Albertan
 - Support for ... 1151
 - Auditor General
 - Jubilee auditoria comments ... 1473, 1476
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants' auditing ... 1497, 1525–26, 1597–98, 1742–43
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants' auditing: Minister's letter requesting (SP464/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Big Lake natural area
 - Designation as provincial park ... 321
 - Renaming of ... 321
 - Calgary-Montrose (Constituency)
 - Member for's role re transfer of Wild Rose grants to Vietnamese cultural society ... 1442
 - Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society
 - Wild Rose grants transferred to ... 1442, 1497
 - Canadian International Development Agency
 - Alberta partnership with, for foreign aid projects ... 1442, 1497, 1597
 - Canmore Nordic Centre
 - Funding for ... 1150
 - Upgrades to: Costs (M36/05: Accepted) ... 1165
 - Upgrades to: Funding for ... 305, 1473
 - Castle-Crown wilderness area
 - General remarks ... 2012
 - Cataract Creek wilderness protected area
 - General remarks ... 1484
 - Centennial ambassadors
 - General remarks ... 1484
 - Centennial celebrations–Saskatchewan
 - General remarks ... 1484
 - Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 645
 - Centennial legacies grant program
 - General remarks ... 324, 1150, 1472
 - Centennial medallions
 - General remarks ... 1473
 - Legislation re (Bill 2) ... 51
 - Presentation protocol adjustment: Legislation re (Bill 58) ... 1919
 - Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 - General remarks ... 317
 - Constitution Act, 1982
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Application to prison inmates ... 855
 - Contaminated sites
 - Cleanup of ... 1961
 - Cypress Hills Provincial Park
 - Centennial projects in ... 1473

Mar, Hon. Gary G., QC (PC, Calgary-Mackay)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Community Development
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP42/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP566/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Budget allocations ... 1475-76
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1472-73, 1475-76, 1479, 1484
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP720/05: Tabled) ... 1919
 - Staffing ... 1476
- Dinosaur Provincial Park
 - Centennial projects in ... 1473
- Drinking water-Turner Valley area
 - Testing of ... 1961
- Drinking water-Vietnam
 - Wild Rose grants for ... 1335
- Edmonton Remand Centre
 - Overcrowding ... 855
 - Rape of inmates in ... 855
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 1473, 1476
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: First Nations participation ... 1445, 1573
- Film development grant program
 - General remarks ... 322, 1473
- Film industry
 - Benefits received from Alberta trade missions ... 46
 - Government budget for ... 1476, 1783
- Francophone Secretariat
 - Funding for ... 1484
- Friends of the jubilee auditoria societies
 - General remarks ... 1484
- Ghost-Waiparous recreation area
 - Off-highway vehicle access to ... 1601
- Glenbow Museum
 - General remarks ... 1484
- Historic sites-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1472-73
- Hockey
 - Lottery funding for ... 1479
- Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act
 - General remarks ... 1248
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 367, 977
- Human rights
 - Funding for ... 1472
- Junior high school education-Curricula
 - Fine arts courses ... 1484
- Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park
 - Centennial projects in ... 1473
- Libraries-Finance
 - General remarks ... 367, 1472, 1475, 1476
- Library cards
 - General remarks ... 367
- Literacy
 - Impact of library card fees on ... 367
- Logging, Clear-cut-Cataract Creek area
 - General remarks ... 1484
- Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park
 - General remarks ... 2012
- Marriage
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 317

Mar, Hon. Gary G., QC (PC, Calgary-Mackay)*(Continued)*

- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Relationship with Wild Rose Foundation ... 1598
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day ... 1247-48
- Miquelon Lake Provincial Park
 - General remarks ... 250
- Museums, Provincial-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1472-73
- Music Alberta
 - Closing of ... 1571
- National Gallery of Canada
 - Alberta artwork donated to ... 1739
- National Hockey League
 - Out-of-province player levy ... 1473, 1479
- Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Auditor General's recommendation re ... 1473, 1476
 - Renovations ... 324, 1473, 1484
- Off-highway vehicles
 - Access to Ghost-Waiparous recreation area ... 1601
- Office of the Premier
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005: Centennial gifts to Canadians announced during ... 1739
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Applewood Park Community Association ... 1335, 1442, 1497, 1525-26, 1742-43
 - Arts funding ... 692, 977, 1571, 2053
 - Big Lake natural area ... 321
 - Centennial gifts to Canadians ... 1739
 - Centennial hockey challenge ... 645
 - Centennial project funding ... 1783
 - Centennial projects ... 324
 - Definition of marriage ... 317
 - Edmonton Remand Centre ... 855
 - Film development program ... 322
 - First Nations participation in Royal visit ... 1445, 1573
 - Library funding ... 367-68
 - Parks and protected areas ... 167, 852-53, 1601-02, 2012
 - Support for active living ... 1150-51
 - Trade mission to Southeast Asia ... 46
 - Turner Valley gas plant historic site ... 1961
 - Wabamun provincial park closure ... 249-250
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants ... 457, 531, 1597-98
- Parks, Provincial
 - Enforcement of rules in ... 1601
 - Funding for ... 1472-73, 1476, 1479
 - Industrial development in ... 1601-02
 - Upgrading of ... 167, 249-50, 852-53, 977, 1150, 2012
- Passchendaele* (Film)
 - Provincial funding for ... 1783
- Pembina River Provincial Park
 - General remarks ... 250
- Pine beetles-Control
 - General remarks ... 1602
- Prisoners
 - Application of Charter of Rights to ... 855
- Protected areas
 - Enforcement of rules in ... 1601
 - Funding for ... 1472-73

Mar, Hon. Gary G., QC (PC, Calgary-Mackay)*(Continued)*

- Protected areas *(Continued)*
 - Industrial development in ... 1601-02
 - Upgrading of ... 167, 852-53
- Public lands
 - Sale of, freeze on ... 167, 853
- Publishing industry
 - Funding ... 977, 2053
- Recreation-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1150-51
- Royal Alberta Museum
 - Centennial funding for ... 1473
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 167
- Same-sex marriage-Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 317
- Sewage disposal plants-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1473
- Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Auditor General's recommendation re ... 1473, 1476
 - Renovations ... 324, 1473, 1484
- Special Places program
 - General remarks ... 2012
- Sports
 - Plan for ... 1151, 1474, 1475
- Sports-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1150-51, 1472-73
- Tourism
 - Centennial year events ... 1484
- Trade missions-Southeast Asia
 - Benefits of ... 46
- Turner Valley Gas Plant (Historic site)
 - Environmental cleanup of ... 1961
- United Church of Canada. Alberta and Northwest Conference
 - Letter from executive secretary to province on occasion of centennial (SP719/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Visual Arts Alberta Association
 - Funding for ... 692, 1571
 - Review of, by Foundation for the Arts ... 1571
- Volunteers
 - General remarks ... 1472
- Wabamun Lake Provincial Park
 - Closure, 2005 season ... 249-50
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 1473
- Water quality-Sheep River
 - Impact of Turner Valley Gas Plant historic site on ... 1961
- Water treatment plants
 - Funding for ... 1473
- West Castle Wetlands ecological reserve
 - General remarks ... 2012
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for ... 1335, 1442, 1497
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor General's report on ... 1742-43
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor General's review of ... 1525-26, 1597-98
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor General's review of, minister's letter re (SP464/05: Tabled) ... 1528

Mar, Hon. Gary G., QC (PC, Calgary-Mackay)*(Continued)*

- Wild Rose Foundation *(Continued)*
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Political interference re ... 1597
 - Funding ... 1475
 - Funds granted by, follow-up auditing of ... 531, 1335, 1442, 1743
 - Grants procedures ... 457, 531
 - Grants procedures: Response to questions re (SP277/05: Tabled) ... 579
 - Relationship between MLAs and ... 1598
 - World Masters [summer] Games, Edmonton (July 2005)
 - Funding for ... 1473
 - Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park
 - Centennial projects in ... 1473
 - Year of the Veteran, 2005
 - Military history film produced during ... 1783
 - Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)
 - Statement re ... 1247-48
- Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)**
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Committee ... 893-94
 - Agribusiness
 - Provincial assistance to ... 1212
 - Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs ... 1212
 - Alberta Advantage
 - Letter re (SP493/05: Tabled) ... 1579
 - Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board
 - Ratio of journeymen to apprentices ... 1136
 - Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
 - Municipal Government Act review discussions ... 1325
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)
 - Committee ... 1977
 - Alberta Construction Association
 - Labour supply survey ... 1137
 - Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Reports from director of (M37/05: Defeated) ... 1166
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 1166
 - Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Long-term care facilities inspection: Letter re (SP419/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - General remarks ... 920
 - Alberta initiative for school improvement
 - General remarks ... 1269
 - Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 20)
 - Second reading ... 437
 - Third reading ... 551
 - Alberta Politics Uncovered* (Publication)
 - Excerpt from (SP395/05: Tabled) ... 1206
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1855-56, 1858
 - Committee ... 1977-78
 - Alberta royalty tax credit
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 921

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Alberta School Boards Association
 - Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ... 1270
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Commissioners of, dismissal ... 1250
 - Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton) ... 1148
 - Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton): Letter re (SP359/05: Tabled) ... 984
 - Influencing regulatory activity case ... 487–88
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's authority challenged re, emergency debate re ... 1317–18
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... 1148–49, 1197, 1250
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, letter to Legislative Offices committee re (SP434/05: Tabled) ... 1452
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, restrictions on ... 1148
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Emergency debate under SO 30 re ... 1083–84
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... 532, 987
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Report on ... 488, 532
 - KPMG hired for forensic audit of employee e-mails ... 1148
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits: Letter re (SP818/05: Tabled) ... 2056
 - Optical benefits ... 886
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray ... 1502
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on leaked to media, AG's news release re (SP523/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: *Edmonton Journal* articles re (SP521-522/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Land titles certificate re (SP446 & 507/05: Tabled) ... 1508, 1608
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Completion date ... 756, 757
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 756
- Alberta Teachers' Association
 - Inclusion of principals in ... 1270
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Municipal Government Act review discussions ... 1325
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Kindergarten recommendations ... 1269, 1722–23
 - Teacher bargaining model recommendation ... 1270
- Ambulance service
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Calgary mayor's comments re (SP7/05: Tabled) ... 27
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Second reading ... 541
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of ... 1092, 1802

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton *(Continued)*
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Contracts re (M39/05: Response tabled as SP513/05) ... 1167
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs ... 616–17
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs comparison for (M41/05: Response tabled as SP514/05) ... 1169
- Aon Consulting Inc.
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of: Letter re (SP755/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Apprenticeship training
 - General remarks ... 1171
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Committee ... 1588–89
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1984
 - Third reading ... 2037–38
- Aspen Regional Health Authority
 - Redesignation of continuing care beds in Hinton: Petition presented re ... 1918, 1970
- Assessment
 - Linear assessment process: Appeal process ... 1325
- Assessment–Agricultural land
 - Level of ... 1325
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefit levels, formula for ... 884–85
 - Benefits increase ... 884–85
 - Benefits received under (Q32/05: Response tabled as SP640/05) ... 1344
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Third reading ... 1511–12
- Auditor General
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on leaked to media, AG's news release re (SP523/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs) ... 1077
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1444, 1886, 2010, 2012–13
 - Oil sands projects approvals comments ... 921
 - Public/private partnership contracts, comments on ... 616, 1092, 1802
 - Royalty reduction programs evaluation recommendation ... 921
 - Royalty revenues (oil sands) verification ... 921
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... 1148–49, 1197, 1250
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, authority to challenged, emergency debate re ... 1317–18
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, letter to Legislative Offices committee re (SP434/05: Tabled) ... 1452
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, restrictions on ... 1148
 - Suggestive references to, in Legislative Assembly ... 986–87

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Barley–Marketing
 - General remarks ... 1213
- Beef–Export
 - Diversification of markets for ... 1213
- Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose
 - Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in ... 1077
- Black Gold Regional Division #18
 - Letter to minister re collective bargaining method (SP403/05: Tabled) ... 1259
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Compensation plans re ... 1212
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 22
 - Testing re, to expedite exports ... 1213
- Braille
 - Teaching of, by teacher aids: Letter re (SP756/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Calgary Sun* (Newspaper)
 - Calgary mayor's comments re ambulance service transfer to municipalities (SP7/05: Tabled) ... 27
- Campus Alberta Quality Council
 - Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... 1166–67
- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - General remarks ... 1212
- Canadian Cattle Identification Agency
 - RF ID tag requirement: Letter re (SP267/05: Tabled) ... 536
- Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade
 - NAFTA challenge re U.S. border closure to Canadian cattle ... 290
- Canadian Council of the Blind, Alberta division
 - Letter re using teacher aids to teach braille (SP756/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
 - Report on workplace injuries in Canada ... 1118
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at ... 647, 920, 1137
- Canadian Wheat Board
 - Market choice addition to ... 1213
- Canmore Nordic Centre
 - Upgrades to: Costs (M36/05: Accepted) ... 1165
- Capital projects
 - Deficit re ... 1802–03
 - Public/private partnerships re ... 616–17, 1092, 1802
 - Public/private partnerships re: Auditor General's comments re ... 616, 1092
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1091
 - Vetting of projects with provincial government ... 1091
- Capital projects–Finance
 - General remarks ... 771
- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... 22
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 22, 290, 1166
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, participation of federal PC party in ... 1212–13
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, under NAFTA ... 290

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Cattle–Identification
 - RF ID tags for: Letter re (SP267/05: Tabled) ... 536
- Cattle–Prices
 - Minimum floor price: Petitions presented re ... 26, 252, 294, 326
- Celanese Canada Inc.
 - Edmonton plant closure ... 920
- Children at risk–Education
 - Kindergarten programs for ... 1028–29, 1269, 1722–23
- Chinook Regional Health Authority
 - Continuing care facilities, Lethbridge, letter re (SP702/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Christian Labour Association of Canada
 - General remarks ... 1170
 - Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... 321, 458, 647, 1136–37
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Capping of ... 1723
 - Reduction of ... 1269
- Class size (High school)
 - Reduction of ... 1269
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 920
- Coal bed methane extraction–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 920–21
- Collective bargaining
 - First-contract certification legislation ... 1630, 1711–12
 - First-contract certification legislation, other provincial legislation re (SP606/05: Tabled) ... 1716
 - Impact of use of foreign labour on ... 647
- Collective bargaining–Building trades
 - Elimination of ... 1137
- Collective bargaining–Health authorities
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in: Letters/emails to HRE dept. re (SP801/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Collective bargaining–Teachers
 - Province-wide bargaining ... 1270
 - Province-wide bargaining: Letter re (SP403/05: Tabled) ... 1259
- Columbia College
 - Letters, memos re (M40/05: Defeated) ... 1167–69
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1551–52
- Committee on Legislative Offices, Standing
 - Discussion of Auditor General's power to investigate the Alberta Securities Commission: Letter re (SP434/05: Tabled) ... 1452
- Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing
 - Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, referred to ... 494
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Chair of, directing questions to ... 1789
 - Changes to operation of ... 625
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 321–22, 458, 647, 920, 1136–37
 - Employment levels: Stats Can report on (SP202/05: Tabled) ... 370

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas contracts ... 1420–21
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 420–21
- Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 26)
 - Second reading ... 537
- Courts–Calgary
 - New courthouse, Public/private funding of ... 616
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Second reading ... 1867–68
- Crop insurance program
 - Deductible for ... 1212
 - General remarks ... 1212
 - Per-acre funding for payouts re ... 1212
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1212–14
- Dept. of Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1269–71
 - Return of school capital funding to ... 1802
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1722–23
- Dept. of Energy
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 919–21
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1420–21
 - Performance measures ... 1421
 - Relation to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 756
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Return of health facility funding to ... 1802
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1135–37
 - Labour Relations Board letters/emails to, re health care union restructuring (SP801/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1091–93
 - Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... 1802
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1802–03
- Dept. of Learning
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M17/05: Response tabled as SP718/05) ... 819
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1324–26
 - Staffing ... 1325
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Budget statements ... 756
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 756–57
 - Relation to Dept. of Government Services ... 756
 - Role of ... 756
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 884–86
- DeVry Institute of Technology
 - Academic programs, approval of ... 1166
- Early childhood education
 - Full-day programs ... 1028–29, 1722–23
 - Junior kindergarten (prekindergarten) ... 1028–29, 1269, 1722–23
- Edmonton Journal* (Newspaper)
 - Fort McMurray land deal articles (SP521-522/05: Tabled) ... 1632

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Edmonton Public School Board
 - City centre education project ... 1029, 1269
 - Closure of schools ... 1722
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... 1270, 1722
 - Learning resource personnel shortage, letter re (SP605/05: Tabled) ... 1716
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1551–52
- Education–Curricula
 - General remarks ... 1271
- Education–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1269
 - User fees ... 1723
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 809–10
- Elder abuse
 - General remarks ... 886
- Elder Advocates of Alberta Society
 - Extended care facilities inspection: Letter re (SP419/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - Research into ... 920–21
- Electric power–Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 1420–21
 - General remarks ... 1420
- Electric power–Retail sales
 - General remarks ... 1420–21
- Electric utilities
 - Competitive choice re ... 1421
- Electric utilities–Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 919–20, 1420, 1421
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1399, 1411–13
 - Securities Commission, loss of investor confidence in (not proceeded with) ... 1083–84
 - Securities Commission challenge of Auditor General's authority (not proceeded with) ... 1317–18
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 920
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of ... 1077
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1391–92, 1444, 1886, 2012–13
 - Conditions in: Letters re (SP404, 418/05: Tabled) ... 1259, 1342
 - Food service ... 886
 - Redesignation to assisted living status ... 1886, 2012–13
- Extended care facilities–Hinton
 - Reclassification of: Petition presented re ... 1918, 1970, 2016
- Extended care facilities–Inspection
 - General remarks ... 1391
 - Letter re (SP419/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Extended care facilities–Lethbridge
 - Letter re (SP702/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Extended care facilities–Staffing
 - Shortage of: Letters re (SP249/05: Tabled) ... 492

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Extended care facilities—Staffing *(Continued)*
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 886, 1077, 1392
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1399, 1411–13
 - General remarks ... 1077, 1391–92, 2012–13
- Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 - Third reading ... 548
- Family farm
 - Preservation of ... 1214
- Fatalities, Work-related
 - Day of mourning re ... 1118
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 701–02
- Food industry and trade
 - Provincial support programs re ... 1212
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Alberta document re (SP245/05: Tabled) ... 464
 - General remarks ... 321–22, 458, 647, 920, 1136–37, 1171
 - Implications re workplace safety ... 1136
 - Letters re (SP338 & 360/05: Tabled) ... 858, 984
 - Suncor communications plan re (SP244/05: Tabled) ... 464
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1166, 1167
- Gas, Natural—Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 919
- George Nicholson school
 - Community use of ... 1270
- Good Samaritans Society, Hinton
 - Redesignation of continuing care beds: Petition presented re ... 1918, 1970
- Government aircraft
 - Policy on usage of ... 979, 1091
- Government chartered aircraft
 - Policy on usage of ... 979, 1091
- Government computer equipment
 - Costs of ... 757
- Government departments
 - Number of ... 756
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 756–57
 - Monitoring of ... 756
- Greater Black Gold Teachers' Local #8
 - Letter to minister re collective bargaining method (SP403/05: Tabled) ... 1259
- Heavy oil—Royalties
 - General remarks ... 920
 - Verification of, Auditor General's comments re ... 921
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement ... 1270
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 1137
 - Upgrading of: Petitions presented re ... 252, 369, 652, 858, 1128, 1137, 1258, 1314, 1578, 1607, 1970, 2055
- Hip and knee surgery
 - Government news release re (SP298/05: Tabled) ... 653
- Homeless—Housing
 - General remarks ... 886

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Hospitals—Calgary
 - New south Calgary hospital: Public/private funding of ... 616
- IBM Canada Ltd.
 - General remarks ... 757
- Income Support program
 - Funding cutbacks to ... 1135–36
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 709–10
 - Third reading ... 1514, 1515
- Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 48)
 - Second reading ... 1689
- KPMG consulting
 - Alberta Securities Commission employees' e-mails, forensic audit of ... 1148
- Labour laws and legislation
 - General remarks ... 1136, 1171, 1630, 1711–12
- Labour relations
 - Impact of foreign worker importation on ... 647, 1136–37
- Labour Relations Board
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Letters/emails to HRE dept. re (SP801/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Labour Relations Code
 - Division 8 provision (Foreign workers for major projects) ... 647, 920, 1136–37, 1171
 - Review of: MLA committee re: Report (M43/05: Defeated) ... 1170–71
- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: Letters/emails to HRE dept. re (SP801/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Labour supply
 - Shortages of skilled workers ... 1137
- Labour unions
 - Organizing activities (Salting) ... 1170, 1171
- Ledcor Industries Limited
 - Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... 321
- Libraries, School—Employees
 - General remarks ... 1722–23
- Market enhancement recovery funds
 - General remarks ... 1170, 1171
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Committee ... 1873–74
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of ... 22, 1213
- Medical care
 - New Democrat opposition public hearings re, report (SP381/05: Tabled) ... 1153–54
 - Restructuring: Government news release re (SP297/05: Tabled) ... 653
- Medical care, Private
 - Influence of health symposium on ... 1164–65
- Members' Statements
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 625
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Lakeside Packers labour dispute ... 1630
 - School closures ... 806

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - Regarding unparliamentary language ... 1036
- Merit Contractors Association
 - General remarks ... 1170, 1171
 - Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... 647, 1136–37
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - National Day of Mourning ... 1118
- Motions other than Government Motions
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 625
- Municipal finance
 - Government grants, unconditional grants ... 1325
- Municipal Government Act
 - Review of ... 1325
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Third reading ... 891
- Municipal Government Board
 - Assessment services ... 1325
- National Day of Mourning (Work-related injuries/deaths)
 - Statement re ... 1118
- Natural resources revenue
 - Forecasting of ... 919
 - General remarks ... 920
- New Democrat Opposition
 - The Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Agency (Report) (SP636/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- North American free trade agreement
 - Border closure to cattle challenge under ... 290
- North Edmonton school
 - Closure ... 1270, 1722
- Officers of the Legislative Assembly
 - Definition of, re *Beauchesne* 493 ... 987
- Oil—Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 919
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Beef recovery strategy ... 22
 - Border closure to Canadian cattle ... 290
 - Capital investment in schools ... 771
 - Chartered air travel ... 979
 - Community policing ... 952–53
 - Continuing care standards ... 2012–13
 - First-contract labour arbitration ... 1711–12
 - Horizon oil sands project ... 647
 - Kindergarten programs ... 1028–29
 - Long-term care ... 1886
 - Long-term care facility standards ... 1391–92
 - Long-term care standards ... 1077
 - Private/public partnerships ... 616–17
 - Sale of Social Housing Corporation land ... 1502
 - School closures ... 742, 1522–23
 - Securities Commission ... 487–88, 532, 1148–49, 1197, 1250
 - Social Housing Corporation land sales ... 1741
 - Temporary foreign workers ... 321–22, 458
- Parkland Institute
 - Provincial budget 2005, commentary (SP328/05: Tabled) ... 776
- Parliamentary language
 - General remarks ... 623

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op Ltd.
 - General remarks ... 22, 1213
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Highway 63 upgrading ... 252, 369, 652, 858, 1128, 1258, 1314, 1578, 1607, 1970, 2055
 - Long-term care facility in Hinton, classification of ... 1918, 1970, 2016
 - Minimum floor price for cattle ... 26, 252, 294, 326
 - Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15) ... 984
- Petrochemical industry
 - Impact of natural resources exports on ... 920
- Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 - Second reading ... 715
 - Committee ... 1560
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Committee ... 1924
- Pipelines
 - Development of ... 920
- Point of Order
 - Clarification ... 1512
 - False allegations ... 1412
 - Improper questions ... 2057
 - Imputing motives ... 1035
 - Parliamentary language ... 623
- Police
 - Neighbourhood patrols ... 952–53
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 706–07
 - Third reading ... 1584
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 55)
 - Committee ... 1975–76
- Prion research (BSE control)
 - General remarks ... 1213
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 1420
- Private Colleges Accreditation Board
 - Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... 1166–67
- Private vocational schools
 - Provincial monitoring of ... 1166–69
- Privilege
 - Auditor General's investigation of Securities Commission enforcement processes, comments re ... 986–87
- Program unit funding (Education)
 - Programming for children-at-risk ... 1271
- Property tax—Education levy
 - Collection of, by municipalities, funding for ... 1325
 - Elimination of: Letter re (SP800/05: Tabled) ... 2018
 - Seniors' tax relief re ... 886
- Protection for Persons in Care Act
 - General remarks ... 886
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Committee ... 785–86
- Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1325
- Public assistance
 - Increase to ... 953, 1136

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Public Guardian's office
 - Funding ... 886
- Public records—Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 1420
- Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)
 - Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 1166, 1212–13
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Second reading ... 540
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 625
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - Committee ... 1978
- Risk management fund
 - Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under (M1/05: Withdrawn) ... 494
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1214
- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 809–10
- School counsellors
 - General remarks ... 1722–23
- School principals
 - Inclusion in Alberta Teachers' Association ... 1270
- Schools—Closure
 - General remarks ... 742, 771, 1092–93, 1270, 1522–23, 1722
 - Letter re (SP177/05: Tabled) ... 327
 - Statement re ... 806
- Schools—Closure—Ontario
 - Policy document re ... 742, 1270, 1523, 1722
 - Policy document re (SP316/05: Tabled) ... 746
- Schools—Construction
 - Contingent on closure of older schools ... 742, 1523
 - General remarks ... 1722
- Schools—Construction—Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 771
- Schools—Construction—Finance
 - General remarks ... 771
- Schools—Downtown areas
 - General remarks ... 1722–23
- Schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 771, 1722
- Schools—Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 742
 - Change to formula for: Statement re ... 805–06
 - Community group use of, as part of formula re ... 1093, 1270
 - General remarks ... 1092–93, 1270, 1722, 1802
- Securities—Law and legislation
 - National harmonization of: Publication excerpt re (SP395/05: Tabled) ... 1206
- Securities Act
 - Amendment re Securities Commission enforcement process investigation ... 1250
- Securities Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 19)
 - Second reading ... 627–29
 - Amendment ... 942

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Securities regulator, National
 - General remarks ... 1197
- Senior citizens
 - Government programs: Auditor General's review of ... 1077
- Senior citizens—Housing
 - Assisted living concept ... 1886
- Small business
 - Impact of Securities Commission situation on ... 532
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 497–98
 - Third reading ... 995–96
- Social services recipients—Protection
 - General remarks ... 886
- Speaker—Rulings and statements
 - Preambles ... 493
 - Referring to an officer of the Legislature ... 986–87
- Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School, Edmonton
 - Closure: Letter re (SP177/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Second reading ... 544
- Strikes and lockouts—Lakeside Packers employees
 - General remarks ... 1711–12
 - Statement re ... 1630
- Student financial aid
 - Default rates, 1994-95 to 2003-04 (Q25/05: Response tabled as SP476/05) ... 1156
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 433–34
 - Committee ... 1561–62
- Student testing
 - Achievement tests ... 1271
- Suncor Inc.
 - Communications plan re temporary foreign workers (SP244/05: Tabled) ... 464
 - Memo re temporary foreign workers ... 458
- Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)
 - Committee ... 1979
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 919
- Tar sands development
 - Employment opportunities in ... 647
 - Expansion projects: Auditor General's comments re ... 921
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 321–22, 458, 647, 920
 - General remarks ... 920
 - Labour relations issues in ... 1137
 - Value-added opportunities ... 920
- Teacher-librarians
 - General remarks ... 1722–23
- Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Unfunded liability: Letter re (SP817/05: Tabled) ... 2056
- Telus Corporation
 - Appeal of linear assessment ... 1325
 - Labour situation: E-mail re (SP373/05: Tabled) ... 1081
- Timberlea Consortium Incorporated
 - Purchase of public land in Fort McMurray ... 1502

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Timberlea Consortium Incorporated *(Continued)*
 - Purchase of public land in Fort McMurray: Land titles certificate re (SP446/05: Tabled) ... 1508
- Tyson Foods, Inc.
 - General remarks ... 1630, 1711
- University of Phoenix
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Approval of ... 1166–67
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta:
 - Documentation re (M3/05: Response tabled as SP480/05) ... 663–64
 - Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Letter of approval re (M2/05: Response tabled as SP479/05) ... 663
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - Speakers/presenters at, remuneration paid to (M35/05: Accepted) ... 1164–65
- Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - Independence of (arm's length from government) ... 1420–21
 - Role of ... 1420–21
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) (SP364/05: Tabled) ... 1034
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005): Point of Order ... 1035
- Wages–Minimum wage
 - Increase to ... 1136
 - Indexing of ... 1136
- Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - Interim report re (No More Time to Wait) (SP296/05: Tabled) ... 653
- Wheat–Marketing
 - General remarks ... 1213
- Whistle-blower protection
 - Securities Commission case: Letter re (SP359/05: Tabled) ... 984
 - Workplace safety complaints ... 1136
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Second reading ... 547
 - Committee ... 1650–51, 1653–54, 1657, 1659–61
 - Third reading ... 1871–72
 - Amendment ... 592
 - General remarks ... 1169–70
 - Petition presented re ... 984
 - Subamendment SA1 (SP536/05: Tabled) ... 1651
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Committee ... 1896–97
 - Third reading ... 1898
 - Amendment A2 (SP715/05: Tabled) ... 1897
- Workers' Compensation Board
 - Ana Gutierrez case: Correspondence re (M42/05: Defeated) ... 1169–70
- Workplace accidents
 - General remarks ... 1136
 - Impact of foreign workers on rate of ... 1136

Martin, Ray (ND, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview)*(Continued)*

- Workplace safety
 - General remarks ... 1118
- Workplace safety inspections
 - General remarks ... 1136
- Marz, Richard (PC, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills)**
- 4-H ambassadors
 - Statement re ... 1204
- Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs ... 488
- Bow Valley College
 - Courses offered to Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology students ... 1629
- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - General remarks ... 488
- Chair
 - Election of ... 2, 4
- Community halls–Rural areas
 - Food safety regulations in ... 248
- Council of Education Facility Planners International
 - International award, given to Olds College ... 1835
- Deputy Speaker
 - Election of ... 2, 4
- Farm Income Payment Program (Federal)
 - Alberta participation ... 488
- Food safety
 - Rural community halls ... 248
- Grain–Prices
 - Provincial assistance program re ... 488
- Halliday, Leah
 - Statement re ... 1258
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - 4-H ambassadors ... 1204
 - Bow Valley College/Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology ... 1629
 - Community learning campus at Olds College ... 1835
 - Leah Halliday ... 1258
 - Ritske and Immigje Veenstra ... 1340
 - The Speaker's 26th anniversary as an MLA ... 1743
 - Student leadership conference ... 1527
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 42)
 - Committee ... 1585
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1763–64, 1766, 1769
- Olds College
 - Community learning campus ... 1835
- Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Speaker ... 2, 4
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Agricultural assistance ... 488
 - Health regulations for rural community halls ... 248
- Pages (Legislative Assembly)
 - Leah Halliday appreciation ... 1258
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Amendment A1 (SP741/05: Tabled) ... 1935
- Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology
 - Students offered courses at Bow Valley College ... 1629
- Property tax–Education levy
 - Elimination of: Legislation re (Bill 210) ... 1890
- Regional health authorities
 - Food safety regulations application ... 248

Marz, Richard (PC, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills)*(Continued)*

- Righteous among the Nations (Holocaust memorial project)
 - Statement re ... 1340
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1835
- School (Property Tax Reduction) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 210)
 - First reading ... 1890
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 183–84
- Speaker
 - 26th anniversary as an MLA, statement re ... 1743
 - Congratulations to ... 4
- Student leadership conference, Olds (May 2005)
 - Statement re ... 1527
- Veenstra, Ritske and Immigje
 - Statement re ... 1340

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 393–95, 396
- Air India
 - Bombing of flight 182, June 23, 1985: Public inquiry into ... 462
 - Bombing of flight 182, June 23, 1985: Statement re ... 462
- Alberta Building Trades Council
 - Reaction to division 8 designation for oil sands projects construction ... 209
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Reports from director of (M37/05: Defeated) ... 1166
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 42, 1166
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - Elimination of ... 768, 968
 - General remarks ... 968
 - Seniors' premiums: Elimination of ... 968
- Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Long-term care facilities inspection ... 1334
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40)
 - Third reading ... 1557
- Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - First reading ... 984
 - Second reading ... 1754–55, 1760–61
 - General remarks ... 1842
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1852–53
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading ... 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80, 1828, 1882, 1910–11
 - Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton) ... 1598
 - Influencing regulatory activity case ... 969
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... 969
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on (2005) ... 1708, 1737–38

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Securities Commission *(Continued)*
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on investigation of, release to media, point of privilege re ... 1635, 1636
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Chronology of events re ... 1780, 1882, 1911
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... 1910–11
 - KPMG hired for forensic audit of employee e-mails ... 969
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray ... 1519–20, 1598, 1828
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Alleged role of Minister of Environment in, Ethics commissioner's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1636–37
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Appraisal process re ... 1569
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on ... 1741
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1636–37
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Role of Minister of Environment in ... 1570
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Tabling of copy of agreement re ... 1520, 1569
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1108
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities discussions ... 245
 - Ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities discussions: Press release re (SP152/05: Tabled) ... 253
- Alliance pipeline
 - General remarks ... 572
- Ambulance service
 - Review of, 2002: Report ... 202
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: AUMA news release re (SP152/05: Tabled) ... 253
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of ... 19, 83–84, 202
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 19, 83, 202, 245
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Costs ... 83–84, 202, 245
- Ambulance service—Red Deer
 - General remarks ... 202, 245
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Backgrounder re (SP169/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs ... 287, 318
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: MLA questions/answers re (SP170/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Aon Consulting Inc.
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of ... 1666, 1842

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Aon Consulting Inc. *(Continued)*
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of: Letter re (SP755/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Second reading ... 1562–63
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Committee ... 402–03
- Auditor General
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on ... 1741
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1636–37
 - Government agencies, boards, and commissions, political appointments to, recommendations re ... 2047–48
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs) ... 1334
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1388, 1443–44, 1842, 1962
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, 2005 report on ... 1708
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... 969, 1882
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to news media of report on, point of privilege re ... 1635, 1636
- Automobile Insurance Rate Board
 - Report on rate reductions ... 900
 - Review of rates ... 969
- Beef–Prices
 - General remarks ... 1499
- Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose
 - Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in ... 1599
- Bitumen
 - Value-adding re ... 571–72
- Bitumen–Export
 - Impact on oil sands upgrading jobs ... 571–72
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 42–43
 - Testing re, to expedite exports ... 16
- Budget debate
 - Motion 19: McClellan ... 780–82
- Calgary Health Region
 - Hip/knee surgery contract with Health Resource Centre ... 643–44, 1145
 - Privatization initiatives ... 1465
- Calgary Local Council of Women
 - Minimum wage increase, letter re (SP350/05: Tabled) ... 957
- Canada Health Act
 - General remarks ... 1842
- Canadian Association of Journalists
 - Code of Silence Award given to province of Alberta ... 1569
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Horizon oil sands project: Foreign workers at, statement re ... 209–10
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service
 - Air India bombing investigation ... 462
- Capital Health
 - Electric power bills to, overcharging re ... 161

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Capital projects, Medical
 - Funding for ... 1842–43
- Cataract surgery, Private–Calgary
 - Waiting times for ... 1465
- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 15–16, 42–43, 1498
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of ... 949
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, participation of federal PC party in ... 949
- Cattle–Prices
 - General remarks ... 1499
 - Minimum floor price ... 42
- Caucus policy committees (PC party)
 - Meetings of tobacco companies with, 2001-2004 (M4/05: Accepted) ... 494
- Chinook Regional Health Authority
 - Continuing care facilities, Lethbridge, letter re (SP702/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Christian Labour Association of Canada
 - Use of foreign workers in oil sands projects ... 362
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 571
- Collective bargaining–Health authorities
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in ... 2009
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in: Public inquiry into ... 2009
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1547, 1553–54
- Committee of Supply
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1676–78, 1680
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Changes to operation of ... 699
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing (Federal government)
 - Sponsorship program investigation ... 699
- Conflict of interest
 - Securities Commission director of enforcement issue ... 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 361–62
- Consumer protection
 - Auto insurance rates ... 454–55
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 161, 975–76, 1025
- Corporations–Law and legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 1828
- Corporations–Taxation
 - Reduction in ... 968
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 278
- Dept. of Agriculture (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 949
- Dept. of Education
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 310

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Energy
 - Minister's noninternational trips details, 2003-04 (M26/05: Response tabled as SP735/05) ... 991
- Dept. of Environment
 - Minister's role in Fort McMurray land sale ... 1570
- Dept. of Finance
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 968-69
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 283
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1465-66
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 274
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1842-43
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Anthony Henday Drive southeast project, backgrounder re (SP169/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 276
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Role of ... 1108
- Dept. of Solicitor General
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1437
- Disabled
 - Government programs for ... 1109
- Drugs, Generic
 - General remarks ... 1465
- Drugs, Prescription-Costs
 - General remarks ... 1465
 - Legislation re (Bill 206) ... 984
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 Grey Cup victors: Statement re ... 1908-09
- Edmonton Journal* (Newspaper)
 - Lawsuit by Edmonton Police Service against (Overtime bar case) ... 411-12
- Edmonton Police Service
 - Police radio conversation transcript, publication in news media (Overtime bar case) ... 411-12
 - Randy Fryingpan tasing case ... 1437
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Closure of schools ... 310
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... 310
- Edmonton Sun* (Newspaper)
 - Lawsuit by Edmonton Police Service against (Overtime bar case) ... 411-12
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1547, 1553-54
- Elder Advocates of Alberta Society
 - Forum on extended care residents treatment ... 613
- Electoral campaign funds
 - Reform of ... 699
- Electric power-Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 161, 1025
 - General remarks ... 975-76
 - Regulated option re ... 1120
- Electric power-Retail sales
 - Billing systems re ... 161
- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... 1025, 1120
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 161, 975-76, 1025, 1120

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1396-97, 1401-02
- Emergency medical technicians
 - Impact of ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities on ... 19
- Emergency medical technicians-Wainwright
 - Layoff of ... 19
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 1787
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1676-78, 1680
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Report into allegations re Minister of Environment and Fort McMurray land sale process, leak to media, point of privilege re ... 1636-37
- Executive Council
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1108-09
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of ... 1334
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1388, 1443-44, 1842, 1962
 - Conditions in ... 797, 849-50, 1599
 - Death of resident in (Jennie Nelson) ... 1962
 - Redesignation to assisted living status ... 1842, 1962
- Extended care facilities-Inspection
 - General remarks ... 849-50, 1334
- Extended care facilities-Inspection-Ontario
 - Publication of results of ... 1334
- Extended care facilities-Lethbridge
 - Letter re (SP702/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Extended care facilities-Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 797
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1396-97, 1401-02
 - General remarks ... 797, 1388, 1962
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1173-74, 1177, 1179
- Extended care facilities residents
 - Abuse/neglect of ... 613
 - Prescription drug usage ... 613
- Farm income
 - Decline in ... 16
- Fatality inquiries
 - Long-term care resident's death (Jennie Nelson) ... 1962
- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - Third reading ... 1112-13
- Finning (Canada)
 - Labour Relations Board decision re company and machinists' union (SP799/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Football championships
 - Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions ... 1908-09
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated) ... 824
 - General remarks ... 361-62
 - Statement re ... 209-10

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Gang-related crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1437
- Gas, Natural—Export
 - Impact on petrochemical industry employment levels ... 572
- Gas, Natural—Royalties
 - General remarks ... 1787
- Government agencies, boards, and commissions
 - Political appointments to ... 2047–48
 - Political appointments to, independent panel to investigate ... 2048
- Government chartered aircraft
 - Policy on usage of ... 699
 - Premier's use of ... 1108
 - Provision of details re ... 691
- Government departments
 - Communications staff ... 1109
- Health
 - Social determinants of ... 1465–66
 - Social determinants of: Letter re (SP654/05: Tabled) ... 1788
- Health Resource Centre, Calgary
 - Hip/knee surgery contract with Calgary health region ... 643–44, 1145
 - Wait times at ... 644, 1145
- Heavy oil—Royalties
 - Reductions in ... 572
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of: Petitions presented re ... 1970, 2055
- Hip and knee surgery
 - Privatization of, in Calgary ... 1145, 1465
 - Waiting lists for ... 1465
- Hooper, Marilyn (Former director of outreach for ND party)
 - Recognition of contribution of (SP510/05: Tabled) ... 1608
- Hospitals—Fort Saskatchewan
 - Surplus funding for ... 1842–43
- Hospitals—Strathcona County
 - Surplus funding for ... 1842–43
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - Third reading ... 398–99
- Identification, Personal
 - Theft of, from lost health records ... 528–29
- Income tax, Provincial
 - Flat tax ... 768, 968
 - Personal exemption level ... 968
- Insurance, Automobile
 - Public plan re ... 969
 - Reform of: Communications budget re ... 283
- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Rebates under \$50, number of (Q8/05: Defeated) ... 660
 - Reductions in ... 454–55, 969
 - Six percent cut to ... 899–900, 969
- Insurance, Health (Private)
 - Alberta plan for ... 1666, 1842
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 583
- Insurance companies
 - Profits ... 454–55

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Khehra, Mr. Charan
 - Statement re ... 1506
- KPMG consulting
 - Alberta Securities Commission employees' e-mails, forensic audit of ... 969
- Labour Relations Board
 - Chair of, resignation ... 2009
 - Finning (Canada)/machinists' union case, decision re (SP799/05: Tabled) ... 2018
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring) ... 2009
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Public inquiry into ... 2009
- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting ... 2009
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: Public inquiry ... 2009
- Labour unions
 - Impact on, of division 8 designation re foreign workers ... 209–10
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1111
- Licensed premises
 - Economic impact of smoking ban in (SP120/05: Tabled) ... 171
- Lobbyists—Registration
 - General remarks ... 699
- Low-income families
 - Government programs: Letter re (SP654/05: Tabled) ... 1788
- Meat packing industry
 - Profit margins ... 16, 26, 42, 1498
- Medical care
 - New Democrat opposition public hearings re ... 1466
 - New Democrat opposition public hearings re, report (SP381/05: Tabled) ... 1153–54
 - Restructuring ... 1465
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 1465, 1466, 1666
 - Restructuring (third way option): Advertising campaign re ... 1666
 - Restructuring (third way option): Letters re (SP653 & 822/05: Tabled) ... 1788
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1145, 1465, 1623
- Medical records—Confidentiality
 - Missing health records situation ... 528–29
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 1082, 1457
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Air India flight 182 ... 462
 - Charan Khehra ... 1506
 - Construction labour trades ... 209–10
 - Political reform ... 699
 - Resource revenues ... 1787
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - Regarding unparliamentary language ... 1082
- Mentally disabled
 - Workers with, salary levels of, letters re (SP798/05: Tabled) ... 2018

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Border closure to Canadian beef ... 15–16
 - Edmonton Eskimos ... 1908–09
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 474–75
- Natural resources revenue
 - General remarks ... 968
 - Statement re ... 1787
- New Democrat Opposition
 - The Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Agency (Report) (SP636/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 - Role in Question Period ... 55
- New York City. Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene
 - Smoke-free workplace legislation: Press release re (SP121/05: Tabled) ... 171
- Nonemergency health care services
 - Definition ... 1842
- Nursing homes—Inspection
 - General remarks ... 1334
- Nursing homes—Standards
 - General remarks ... 1334
- Office of the Premier
 - Premier's accountability ... 1623
 - Premier's television addresses ... 1108
 - Premier's travel details, posting of, on government website ... 1108
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005 ... 1623, 1787
 - Premier's travel to Ottawa, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, November 2005: Discussion of private health care plans during ... 1666
- Officers of the Legislative Assembly
 - Reports by, released to media, point of privilege re ... 1636–37
- Oil—Royalties
 - General remarks ... 1787
- Ombudsman
 - Long-term care residents' abuse, report on ... 613
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Alberta Securities Commission ... 1707–08
 - Ambulance services ... 19, 83–84, 202, 245
 - Automobile insurance rates ... 454–55, 899–90
 - Beef marketing ... 1498–99
 - Boards, commissions, and agencies ... 2047–48
 - Border closure to Canadian cattle ... 42–43, 949
 - Corporate accountability ... 1828
 - Electricity billing ... 161
 - Electricity marketing ... 1120
 - Government accountability ... 1598–99
 - Government chartered air travel ... 691
 - Health care premiums ... 768
 - Health care privatization ... 1145, 1666
 - Health Facilities Review Committee ... 1334
 - Health Resource Centre joint replacements ... 643–44
 - Labour Relations Board ... 2009
 - Long-term care facilities ... 797, 849–50
 - Long-term care facility standards ... 1388, 1443–44
 - Long-term care standards ... 1962
 - Missing health records ... 528–29
 - Oil sands bitumen export ... 571–72
 - Police service investigation ... 411–12
 - Premier's travel ... 1623

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - Private health services ... 1622
 - Protection for persons in long-term care ... 613
 - Sale of Social Housing Corporation land ... 1519–20, 1569–70
 - Securities Commission ... 1910–11
 - Securities Commission investigation ... 1737–38, 1779–80, 1882
 - Southeast Edmonton ring road ... 287, 318
 - Temporary foreign workers ... 361–62
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 975–76
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council ... 1025
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Rotation of questions and answers: 1986 precedent ... 55
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 55
 - Third opposition party's role in ... 55
- Organized crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1437
- Overtime Broiler & Taproom
 - Edmonton Police stakeout at ... 411–12
- Parliamentary language
 - General remarks ... 623, 1082
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Highway 63 upgrading ... 1970, 2055
- Petrochemical industry
 - Impact of natural resources exports on ... 572
- Physical therapy
 - Inclusion under health care plan ... 1466
- Physical therapy—Finance
 - General remarks ... 274
- Point of Order
 - Challenging the Chair ... 1444, 1457
 - Citing documents ... 1579–80
 - Decorum ... 1692
 - Explanation of Speaker's ruling ... 989, 1789, 1920
 - Factual accuracy ... 1110
 - False allegations ... 1411–12
 - Imputing motives ... 1082
 - Parliamentary language ... 623
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 306
 - Subamendments ... 993
- Police
 - Complaints against, procedure for ... 1437
 - Increase in numbers of ... 1437
 - Neighbourhood patrols ... 1437
- Police commissions
 - Oversight function ... 1437
- Political ethics
 - Breach of, by Securities Commission director of enforcement ... 1737–38
 - Statement re ... 699
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Finance
 - Performance envelope funds ... 278
- Poverty
 - Impact on health care demand ... 1466
- Premier's Advisory Council on Health
 - Recommendations (A Framework for Reform) ... 1465

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Privilege
 - Contempt (Auditor General's report on Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to media) ... 1635
 - Contempt (Release to media of three reports by Officers of the Assembly) ... 1636-37
- Progressive Contractors Association of Canada
 - Web site article re Labour Relations Board decision re Finning (Canada) and machinists' union (SP799/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Prostitutes
 - Murder of ... 952-53
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Role of ... 1108-09
 - Staffing ... 1109
- Public contracts
 - Awarding of, to former ministerial aides ... 699
- Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)
 - Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 15, 949
- Regional health authorities
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ... 19, 83-84, 202
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 19, 83, 202, 245
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Costs ... 83-84, 202, 245
 - Detection of overcharging on electric power bills ... 161
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Air India bombing investigation ... 462
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area ... 1437
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - General remarks ... 1787
- Sales tax, Provincial
 - General remarks ... 968
- Schools-Closure
 - General remarks ... 310
- Schools-Downtown areas
 - General remarks ... 310
- Schools-Utilization
 - General remarks ... 310
- Securities-Law and legislation
 - National harmonization of ... 968-69
- Senate (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 42
- Senior citizens
 - Government programs: Auditor General's review of ... 1334
- Senior citizens-Housing
 - Assisted living concept ... 1962
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 182-83
 - Third reading ... 993-94
- Smoking
 - Far Side cartoon re (SP153/05: Tabled) ... 253
- Smoking in the workplace
 - Ban on: Studies re economic impact of (SP120-121/05: Tabled) ... 171
 - Ban on: Study re health effect of (SP119/05: Tabled) ... 171

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 35-37
- Sponsorship scandal (Federal government)
 - General remarks ... 699
- State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company
 - Rate reduction ... 455
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Committee ... 603, 608-09
- Student financial aid
 - General remarks ... 278
 - Loan remission funding ... 278
- Surgery waiting lists
 - Public vs private facilities ... 644, 1145
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Accountability for, relation to Premier's travel to eastern Canada ... 1623
- Tar sands development
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 361-62
 - Value-added opportunities ... 571-72
- Taxation
 - General remarks ... 768, 968
- Terrorist attacks-New York City/Washington, D.C.
 - September 11, 2001 aircraft crashes ... 462
- Timberlea Consortium Incorporated
 - Purchase of public land in Fort McMurray ... 1519-20, 1598
- Tobacco companies
 - Meetings with provincial ministers, 2001-2004 (M4/05: Response tabled as SP628/05) ... 494
- Travel at public expense
 - Premier's travel details, posting of, on government website ... 1108
- Treasury Branches
 - Former superintendent's involvement in WEM loan refinancing ... 1828
 - Former superintendent's involvement in WEM loan refinancing, response to question re (SP729/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1465
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005) ... 975-76, 1025
 - Response to DOE's (Dept. of Energy) Call for Comments on it's Discussion Paper ... (April 14, 2005) ... 1120
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 601
- Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber (Motion 20: Hancock) ... 1111
- Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - General remarks ... 1465, 1842
- West Edmonton Mall
 - Loan refinancing: Former TB superintendent's involvement ... 1828
 - Loan refinancing: Former TB superintendent's involvement, response to question re (SP729/05: Tabled) ... 1920

Mason, Brian (ND, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood)*(Continued)*

- Whistle-blower protection
 - Securities Commission case ... 1598
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Committee ... 1115–16
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Committee ... 1896

Mather, Weslyn (L, Edmonton-Mill Woods)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 219–220
 - Committee ... 565, 893
 - General remarks ... 302
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs ... 799
- Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
 - Shelter statistics ... 1055
- Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 18)
 - Second reading ... 353
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1860
- Alberta Response Model (Child welfare)
 - Evaluation of ... 1054
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 884
- Apprenticeship training
 - General remarks ... 1726
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Committee ... 1589–90
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Third reading ... 2038–40
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits increase: Petition presented re ... 1788
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Committee ... 1246
- Birth to Three Society, Edmonton
 - Recognition of ... 578–79
- Boyle McCauley Health Centre
 - Kindred House program: Statement re ... 1451
- Budget
 - Production of, prior to elections ... 956
 - As reflection of social values ... 302
- Bullying–Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 303, 1054
- Canada–History
 - General remarks ... 302
- Canadian Space Agency
 - Partnership with Edmonton Public School Board ... 1726
- Casinos–Camrose
 - Provincial funding for ... 1200
- Child abuse
 - Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1390
- Child and family services authorities
 - Funding ... 302, 303
- Child and Youth Advocate
 - Funding for ... 1598
 - Transfer to legislature officer status ... 1445, 1737

Mather, Weslyn (L, Edmonton-Mill Woods) *(Continued)*

- Child care after school
 - Accreditation ... 2013
 - Provincial support for ... 1731
- Child care after school–Employees
 - Salaries and training ... 2013
- Child welfare
 - Early childhood intervention programs ... 579
 - Government programs ... 301–03
 - Government programs: Cross-ministry initiative re ... 1054
 - Inquiry into: E-mail re (SP460/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Statistics re, interpretation of ... 1053–54
- Child welfare–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1055
- Child welfare recipients
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1390, 1445, 1500–01
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, fatality review of ... 1390, 1445
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, independent review of ... 1445
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, special case review of ... 1501, 1737
 - Deaths of: Special case reviews re, publication of ... 1737
- Child welfare workers
 - E-mail re (SP460/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - General remarks ... 1500
- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
 - Assessment procedures ... 1053–54
 - Funding for implementation of ... 1054, 1731
- Children and poverty
 - General remarks ... 1831–32
- Children's Advocate
 - Annual reports, lateness of reporting of ... 1598
- Civil service pension cheques
 - Loss of microfiche copies of, privacy concerns re ... 1423
- Class size (Grade school)
 - General remarks ... 1726
- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Time limit for legislatures/elections ... 956
- Consumer protection
 - General remarks ... 1422
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1234
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse–Treatment
 - Treatment centres for: News article re (SP194/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Daycare centres
 - Quality of care in ... 1054
 - Special-needs children ... 1731
 - Subsidies re ... 85, 1054, 1055, 1731
 - Subsidies re, for stay-at-home parents ... 1731
 - Survey re ... 1054–55
- Daycare centres–Employees
 - Accreditation program for ... 1056, 2013
 - Salaries of ... 1054–55, 1731, 2013
 - Training for ... 1730
- Daycare centres–Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 85, 1054–55, 1731, 2013

Mather, Weslyn (L, Edmonton-Mill Woods) (Continued)

- Daycare centres—Finance (Continued)
 - National program for: Alberta participation, Letters re (SP308/05: Tabled) ... 699
- Daycare centres—Inspection
 - Surplus funding for ... 1731
- Daycare in private homes—Inspection
 - Surplus funding for ... 1730
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Business plan ... 1053
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1053-57
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 301-03, 305
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1730-31
- Dept. of Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1275
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1725-26
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1422-23
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Business plan ... 1234
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1234
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 884
- Domestic violence
 - General remarks ... 1200, 1234
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 303, 1054
- Drug abuse
 - Impact on parents of drug addicted child: Document re (SP193/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Drug abuse resistance education program
 - General remarks ... 1234
- Early childhood education
 - General remarks ... 302, 1726
- Edmonton Police Service
 - Mill Woods gang-related killing investigation ... 1148
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Partnership with Canadian Space Agency ... 1726
 - Statement re ... 1080-81
- Education
 - General remarks ... 1726
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - General remarks ... 302
- Education—Curricula—Edmonton
 - Alternative programs ... 1081
- Education—Edmonton
 - Statement re ... 1080-81
- Education—Finance
 - General remarks ... 302, 1125-26
 - User fees ... 1726
- Elections, Provincial
 - Fixed dates for ... 956
 - Review of conditions of ... 956
- Electoral reform
 - Statement re ... 956
- Family
 - General remarks ... 302, 1234
- Family and community support services program
 - Youth program funding ... 532
- Family Support for Children With Disabilities Act
 - Initiatives re: Funding for ... 1731

Mather, Weslyn (L, Edmonton-Mill Woods) (Continued)

- Fatality inquiries
 - Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1390, 1445
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
 - Funding for programs re ... 302
- Foster parents
 - Increased funding for ... 303, 1054
 - Statement re ... 1715
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1422
- Gang-related crime
 - General remarks ... 1148
- Gang-related crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1148
- Government auditing
 - Prior to elections ... 956
- Grace Martin school, Edmonton
 - Number of portable classrooms at ... 1726
- Head Start program
 - General remarks ... 579
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 834
- High school education—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1275
- High schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1726
- Homeless—Housing
 - General remarks ... 1832
 - Presence of children in ... 1832
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - General remarks ... 1422
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 584
- J. Percy Page high school, Edmonton
 - Partnership with Canadian Space Agency ... 1726
- John Paul II, Pope
 - Recognition of ... 490
- Kids in the Hall Bistro
 - Provincial funding for ... 206
- Libraries, School
 - Purchase of books for ... 1726
- Low-income families
 - Government programs ... 1831-32
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 112-14
- Marijuana growing operations
 - General remarks ... 1234
- Meals on Wheels
 - Recognition of ... 418
- Medical records—Confidentiality
 - Missing health records situation ... 1423
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Democratic renewal ... 956
 - Edmonton Public Schools ... 1080-81
 - Foster parents ... 1715
 - Kindred House ... 1451
 - Protection of Children Abusing Drugs legislation ... 745
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Camrose women's shelter ... 1200
 - Child and Youth Advocate ... 1598
 - Child care standards ... 2013
 - Child protection ... 1445

Mather, Weslyn (L, Edmonton-Mill Woods) (Continued)

- Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)
 - Children in care ... 1737
 - Children's Services special case review ... 1500-01
 - Daycare system ... 85
 - Education funding ... 1125-26
 - Funding for youth programs ... 206-207
 - Gang violence ... 1148
 - Impoverished Albertans ... 1831-32
 - Nina Louise Courtepatte ... 1390
 - Protection of children abusing drugs ... 413
 - Womens' shelters ... 742-43
 - Youth emergency shelters ... 532
 - Youth residential drug treatment ... 799, 852
- Parent information telephone line
 - General remarks ... 1731
- Parents Empowering Parents
 - Recognition of ... 325
- Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
 - Committee ... 686-87
 - Amendment (SP305/05: Tabled) ... 687
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - AISH benefit increase ... 1788
- Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)
 - Amendment (SP467/05: Tabled) ... 1562
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Committee ... 1923-24
- Police
 - Gang-related activity prevention efforts ... 1148
- Police-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1148
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 707-08
- Portable/modular classrooms
 - General remarks ... 1726
- Poverty
 - General remarks ... 1831-32
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 1423
- Probation officers
 - General remarks ... 1234
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 329-31
 - Committee ... 786
 - Third reading ... 791
 - General remarks ... 413
 - Statement re ... 745
- Public records-Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 1423
- Reading recovery program
 - General remarks ... 1726
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 126-27, 251, 325, 418, 490, 578-79
- Regional health authorities
 - Drug abuse treatment programs ... 852
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1349
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 1200
- School boards
 - Budget process ... 1126
 - Funding ... 1125-26

Mather, Weslyn (L, Edmonton-Mill Woods) (Continued)

- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities ... 1726
- School counsellors
 - General remarks ... 1726
- School dropouts
 - General remarks ... 1726
- School lunch programs-Edmonton
 - Recognition of ... 251
- Schools-Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1275
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 180
 - Committee ... 499
 - Third reading ... 994-95
- Social services agencies (Non-profit)
 - Duplication of services with government agencies ... 302
 - Employees of, training ... 302
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 112-14
- Student testing
 - Achievement tests, Edmonton ... 1081
- Substance abuse-Prevention-Youth
 - General remarks ... 1234
- Substance abuse-Treatment
 - Parent support group re ... 325
- Substance abuse-Treatment-Youth
 - Detox/residential services re ... 799, 1234
 - Detox/residential services re: Tendering procedures re ... 852
 - Mandatory programs for: Provincial policy on ... 413
 - Mandatory programs for: Statement re ... 745
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 303, 1053, 1054
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Child care after school funding with ... 1731
 - Daycare/family day homes inspecting with ... 1731
- Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Unfunded liability ... 1726
 - Unfunded liability: Letter re (SP816/05: Tabled) ... 2056
- University of Alberta
 - Information access and privacy protection program ... 1422
- Utilities consumer ombudsman
 - Proposal for ... 1423
- Voting in provincial elections
 - Statement re ... 956
- Womens' shelters
 - General remarks ... 1055, 1056-57
 - Statistics re ... 1055
 - Violent spouse situations handling ... 1200
- Womens' shelters-Camrose
 - Funding ... 1200
- Womens' shelters-Finance
 - General remarks ... 742-43
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Second reading ... 591-92
- Young offenders
 - General remarks ... 1234
- Youth Emergency Shelter Society
 - FCSS funding for, letter re (SP251/05: Tabled) ... 492
 - Recognition of ... 126-27

Mather, Weslyn (L, Edmonton-Mill Woods) (Continued)

- Youth in transition from the justice system
 - Government programs for ... 302
- Youth shelters—Finance
 - General remarks ... 206–07, 532, 1054, 1055, 1731

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - General remarks ... 747, 749–50
 - Legacy of ... 1479–80
- ABC Benefits Corporation Act
 - Amendment (Bill 26) ... 210
- Access to the Future Fund
 - General remarks ... 748, 901, 958
- Agricultural societies
 - Insurance costs for ... 965, 1031
- Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs ... 749
- Alaska permanent fund
 - General remarks ... 967
- Alberta—Economic policy
 - 20-year strategic plan ... 747
- Alberta Automobile Insurance Board
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP69/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Alberta Blue Cross Benefits Corporation
 - Change in tax-exempt status: Legislation re (Bill 26) ... 210
- Alberta Cancer Board
 - Funding increase for ... 748
- Alberta Capital Finance Authority
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP67/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Loan interest rate ... 900
- Alberta Children's Hospital
 - New hospital: Funding for ... 748
- Alberta family employment tax credit
 - Improvement of ... 749
 - Improvement of: Legislation re (Bill 40) ... 1034
- Alberta Foundation for the Arts
 - Funding ... 1479
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Accommodation costs of head of (Q6/05: Response tabled as SP540/05) ... 1674
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - Elimination of ... 967, 969
 - General remarks ... 766, 968
 - Seniors' premiums: Elimination of ... 749, 766, 961, 968
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - Funding for ... 901, 958–59
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research
 - Funding for ... 901, 959
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Ethical investments by ... 120, 964, 967
 - First- and second-quarter updates, 2004-05 (SP83-84/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - First-quarter update, 2005-06 (SP589/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - General remarks ... 958

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund *(Continued)*
 - Inflation-proofing of ... 901, 958, 962, 967
 - Inflation-proofing of: Response to questions re (SP698/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 - Investment in tobacco companies ... 82–83, 964
 - Second-quarter update, 2005-06 (SP596/05: Tabled) ... 1676
 - Third-quarter update, 2004-05 (SP88/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund
 - General remarks ... 901
- Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation
 - Appeals received by (M34/05: Defeated) ... 1164
 - Microfiche copies of pension cheques, loss of ... 1026
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Act
 - Amendment to, re resource rebates (Bill 43) ... 1630–31
- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40)
 - First reading ... 1034
 - Second reading ... 1244
 - Committee ... 1492
 - Third reading ... 1557
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - First reading ... 1630–31
 - Second reading ... 1700–01, 1867
 - Third reading ... 2019
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP560/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Board of, suspension ... 1072
 - Chairman/commissioners of, MLA participation in nominating candidates ... 1568, 1597
 - Chairman's ties with former employer ... 1736–37, 1961
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading ... 1665, 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80, 1828, 1882, 1911
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading: Action taken re ... 2047
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading: Auditor General's info. re ... 2047
 - Executive director's tenure ... 1665
 - Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton) ... 974, 1144, 1599
 - Human resource issues in ... 528, 570–71, 690, 948, 975, 1024, 1072, 1144, 1520–21
 - Influencing regulatory activity case ... 410–11, 453, 487–88, 528, 570–71, 612, 690, 974–75, 1024, 1073, 1119, 1144, 1520–21, 1597, 1880–81
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Finance minister re ... 410, 487
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Finance minister re (SP221/05: Tabled) ... 419
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Finance minister re, response to (SP220/05: Tabled) ... 419

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Securities Commission *(Continued)*
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Diane Urquhart re ... 419, 690
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... 898–99, 1148–49, 1332–33
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, appropriateness of ... 947–48
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, letter re (SP349/05: Tabled) ... 908
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, restrictions on ... 1119, 1144
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on (2005) ... 1664–65, 1707–08, 1737–38, 1880–81, 1909, 1911
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Chief Internal Auditor's office investigation of ... 1024
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Chronology of events re ... 1737–38, 1780, 1880–81, 1882, 1911
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Chronology of events re, letter re (SP699/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Emergency debate under SO 30 re ... 1082–83
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Forensic audit re ... 975, 1144
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's/chief of staff involvement ... 2047
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement ... 2046–47
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... 532–33, 690, 947–48, 1144, 1911
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Ministerial involvement ... 1880–81, 1910, 1961, 2047
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Ministerial/MLA/senior officials' involvement, legislation re ... 2047
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Report on ... 410–11, 453, 487–88, 528, 532–33, 690, 898, 948, 1072, 1073, 1119, 1597
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Retention of files re ... 1333
 - Interim chairman ... 1333, 1961
 - KPMG hired for forensic audit of employee e-mails ... 948, 969, 975
 - Letter from staff at, to Minister of Finance ... 1072
 - Members of, appointment process ... 453, 1880
 - New chairman of, search committee for ... 453, 1568
 - RCMP investigation of chairman/exec. director's e-mails ... 948
 - Securities violations, review of investigation into ... 453
 - Staffing ... 959
 - Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus ... 2008
 - Zi Corporation equity purchase by Lancer funds, investigation of ... 1909
 - Zi Corporation (formerly Multi-Corp) investigation ... 1827, 1881

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 748
 - Optical benefits ... 748
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray ... 527, 1598, 1828
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on ... 1741, 1828
- Alberta Sustainability Fund
 - Eligibility of softwood lumber dispute situation for ... 644
 - General remarks ... 747
 - Transfers to education endowment funds ... 901
- Alberta Treasury Branch Financial
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP78/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP561/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Subsidiary companies' control processes, Auditor General's recommendation re (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1747, 1788
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Class size guideline ... 748
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs ... 617
- Apprenticeship training–Finance
 - General remarks ... 748
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - First reading ... 1507
 - Third reading ... 1609
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Second reading ... 348
 - Third reading ... 442
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - First reading ... 312
 - Second reading ... 349
 - Third reading ... 439
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - First reading ... 1890
 - Second reading ... 1944
 - Third reading ... 2032–33, 2043
- Arts–Finance
 - General remarks ... 2053
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits increase ... 961, 967–68
 - Benefits increase: Funding for ... 748
 - Earned income exemption under, raising of ... 967
- Auditor General
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on ... 1741, 1828
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1599
 - Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... 747
 - Pension plans compliance comments ... 962
 - Public/private partnership contracts, comments on ... 616
 - Securities Commission director of enforcement, information on action taken re ... 2047
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, 2005 report on ... 1664–65, 1707–08, 1828
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... 898–99, 1144, 1148–49, 1332–33, 1882

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*Auditor General *(Continued)*

- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, appropriateness of ... 947-48
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, Auditor General's report on ... 1909
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of: Minister's letter re ... 898
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of: Minister's letter re (SP349/05: Tabled) ... 908
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, restrictions on ... 1119, 1144
- Tax programs recommendations ... 958-59
- Treasury Branches' control processes comments (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1747, 1788
- Treasury Branches lending policies comments ... 2050

Automobile Insurance Rate Board

- Announcement on rate reductions ... 454, 457
- Annual report, 2004 (SP559/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- General remarks ... 363, 958, 1669
- Report on rate reductions ... 86, 412-13, 900
- Review of questionable practices by insurance companies ... 1339
- Review of rates ... 454, 455, 457, 461, 900, 904, 969, 1339

Beef processing

- General remarks ... 22

Bethany Long Term Care Centre, Camrose

- Resident of, hunger strike re conditions in ... 1599

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

- Impact on cattle industry ... 22-23, 749
- Research into ... 749

Budget

- 2004-05 first- and second-quarter fiscal updates and activity reports (SP70-73/05: Tabled) ... 94
- 2004-05 third-quarter fiscal update and activity report (SP86-87/05: Tabled) ... 94
- 2005-06 first-quarter activity report (SP557/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- 2005-06 first-quarter fiscal update (SP556/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- 2005-06 second-quarter activity report (SP595/05: Tabled) ... 1676
- 2005-06 second-quarter fiscal update ... 1667
- 2005-06 second-quarter fiscal update (SP594/05: Tabled) ... 1676
- Process re ... 160, 1622

Budget 2005

- Business plans 2005-08 (SP322/05: Tabled) ... 747
- Fiscal plan 2005-08 (SP321/05: Tabled) ... 747

Budget Address

- Motion 19: McClellan ... 747-50

Bullying-Prevention

- Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 748

Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)

- General remarks ... 1667
- Parity of Ontario and Alberta re ... 1524

Canadian agriculture income stabilization program

- Funding of, with surplus funds ... 1626

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

Capital projects

- General remarks ... 747, 749
- Public/private partnerships re ... 616-17
- Public/private partnerships re: Auditor General's comments re ... 616

Capital projects, Municipal-Finance

- Fort McMurray projects ... 527, 1628
- General remarks ... 749, 900

Capital projects-Finance

- Use of budget surplus funds for ... 797-98

Cattle-Export-United States

- Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... 22-23
- Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 22-23, 749

Centennial Capital Plan

- General remarks ... 958

Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations

- Insurance costs for ... 965, 1031

Chief Electoral Officer

- Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... 747

Chief Internal Auditor's office

- New chief's appointment process ... 1603
- Role in Securities Commission investigation ... 1024

Child and family services authorities

- Employee health premium costs ... 766

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act

- Amendment to, re resource rebates (Bill 43) ... 1631

Children and poverty

- General remarks ... 1827

Chiropractic services-Fees

- Set fees for traffic injury cases ... 691-92

Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)

- General remarks ... 317

Civil service pension cheques

- Loss of microfiche copies of, privacy concerns re ... 1026

Civil service pensions

- Appeal process re ... 291-92

Class size (Grade school)

- Reduction of: Funding for ... 748

Climate change

- Technological developments re ... 749

CN Rail

- Train derailment, Lake Wabamum ... 1668

Committee of Supply

- Interim estimates, 2005-06 considered for one day (Motion 14: McClellan) ... 211
- Interim estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 13: McClellan) ... 211
- Main and Lottery Fund estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 18: McClellan) ... 747
- Motion to resolve into (Motion 5: McClellan/Hancock) ... 75
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 considered for two days (Motion 9: McClellan) ... 94
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 referred to (Motion 8: McClellan) ... 94
- Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days (Motion 23: McClellan) ... 1681
- Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1680-81

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing
 - Ethical investment deliberations ... 82, 120
- Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy
 - Municipal infrastructure funding discussion ... 527, 576
- Competition Bureau (Federal)
 - Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 42
- Conflict of interest
 - MLA nomination of candidates for ASC commissioners ... 1597
 - Securities Commission appointments, MLA involvement in ... 1880
 - Securities Commission chair/interim chair issue ... 1961
 - Securities Commission director of enforcement issue ... 1665, 1707–08, 1737–38, 1779–80, 2011
- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Alberta definition of marriage inclusion in ... 1738
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms ... 1738
 - Property rights inclusion in ... 1738
- Constitutional Referendum Act
 - Property rights referendum during federal election ... 1738
- Consumer protection
 - Auto insurance rates ... 363, 454–55
- Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 26)
 - First reading ... 210
 - Second reading ... 475
 - Third reading ... 1513
- Corporations—Law and legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 1828
- Corporations—Taxation
 - General remarks ... 412
 - Rebates re, interest paid on ... 964
 - Reduction in ... 961–62
 - Tax avoidance prevention: Legislation (Bill 26) ... 210
- Courts—Security aspects
 - General remarks ... 749
- Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP79/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP278/05: Tabled) ... 622
- Crime prevention
 - Funding for ... 748–49
- Cultural facilities—Finance
 - General remarks ... 750
- Debts, Public (Municipal government)—Fort McMurray
 - General remarks ... 576
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - General remarks ... 749, 750, 958, 1448–49
 - General servicing costs re ... 964
 - Retirement of: Legislation re (Bill 37) ... 775
 - Statutory servicing costs re ... 964
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1479–80
- Dept. of Environment
 - Funding level for ... 769
- Dept. of Finance
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP47/05: Tabled) ... 93

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Finance *(Continued)*
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP572/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Communications division ... 961
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 958–59, 961–62, 964–70
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP433/05: Tabled) ... 1452
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 264
 - Revenues ... 959
 - Staff ... 959
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 283
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1464, 1471–72
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Elimination of ... 1599
 - Microfiling of Alberta pension cheques, recommendation to cease ... 1026
- Dept. of Revenue
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP60/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Disabled children
 - Government programs for: Funding re ... 748
- Disaster relief
 - Funding for ... 1668
- Dividend payments to Albertans (From Heritage Fund)
 - General remarks ... 967
- Domestic violence
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 748
- Education
 - General remarks ... 747
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, affordability review to improve: Funding for ... 748
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 748
 - General remarks ... 747
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - General remarks ... 747–48
 - Surplus spending on ... 1667
- Education—Finance
 - General remarks ... 748
 - Surplus funding for ... 1667
- Elections, Federal
 - Referenda on property rights and Alberta definition of marriage during ... 1738
- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - Research into: Funding for ... 749
- Electric power—Prices
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 42
- Electric utilities—Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 42
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 749
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: Special Legislature sitting for (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 598
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Securities Commission, loss of investor confidence in (not proceeded with) ... 1082–83
- Emergency planning
 - Funding for ... 1668
- Endowment funds, Public
 - General remarks ... 749, 958, 962
- Energy Innovation Network
 - Royalty relief incentives re ... 749

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Energy research
 - Funding ... 749
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - Research into: Funding for ... 749
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Destruction of trading tapes re ... 42
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 42
- Environmental protection—Finance
 - General remarks ... 769
- Equalization payments
 - General remarks ... 1524, 1667
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Interim estimates (Main, Legisl. Offices and Lottery Fund) 2005-06 considered for one day (Motion 14: McClellan) ... 211
 - Interim estimates (Main, Legisl. Offices and Lottery Fund) 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 13: McClellan) ... 211
 - Interim estimates (Main, Legisl. Offices and Lottery Fund) 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP140/05: Tabled) ... 211
 - Main and Lottery Fund estimates, 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP320/05: Tabled) ... 746-47
 - Main and Lottery Fund estimates 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 18: McClellan) ... 747
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Responses to questions during (SP279/05: Tabled) ... 622
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 considered for two days (Motion 9: McClellan) ... 94
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 8: McClellan) (SP171/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 transmitted to Assembly (SP85/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days (Motion 23: McClellan) ... 1681
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 erratum (revised page 1) (SP629/05: Tabled) ... 1745
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 22: McClellan) ... 1680-81
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP593/05: Tabled) ... 1676
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... 747
 - MLA nominating of ASC commissioner candidates, review of ... 1597
- Exports
 - General remarks ... 1667
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1599
 - Conditions in ... 1599
 - General remarks ... 1464
- Extended care facilities—Finance
 - General remarks ... 748
- Extended care facilities—Rural areas
 - Funding for ... 748

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 1599
- Farm produce—Export
 - General remarks ... 749
- Federal/Ontario fiscal relations
 - Impact of federal parliamentary situation on ... 1524
- Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1444, 1524
- Federal/provincial relations
 - General remarks ... 1444
- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - First reading ... 775
 - Second reading ... 845, 939
 - Third reading ... 1112-13
 - General remarks ... 961
 - Responses to questions asked during second reading (SP376/05: Tabled) ... 1112
 - Responses to questions asked during third reading (SP438/05: Tabled) ... 1507
- Fiscal Responsibility Act
 - Amendment of, re resource rebates (Bill 43) ... 1631
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 527, 576, 962, 1628
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Social Housing Corporation sale agreement re land transfer to Fort McMurray, release of information re under ... 1598
- Gas, Natural—Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 962, 1667
 - General remarks ... 747
- Gas recovery methods
 - Research into: Funding for ... 749
- Gasoline—Taxation
 - Federal revenue from ... 1667
- General Revenue Fund
 - Details by payee, 2003-04 (SP65/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Details by payee, 2004-05 (SP657/05: Tabled) ... 1789
- Government accountability
 - General remarks ... 2011
- Government agencies, boards, and commissions
 - PC party supporters' appointment to ... 1603
 - Political appointments to ... 2047
- Government appointments
 - PC party supporters' appointments ... 1603
- Government departments
 - Restructuring of ... 1599
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 1599
- Government of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP38/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP555/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Government programs
 - Review of ... 1599
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 747, 1622, 1667
- Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reduction of: Funding for research into ... 749

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)
 - Funding for ... 748
- Historic sites—Finance
 - General remarks ... 750
- Homeless—Housing
 - Funding for ... 366
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 856
- Horse Racing Alberta
 - General remarks ... 856
- Hospitals—Calgary
 - New south Calgary hospital: Funding for ... 748
- Hospitals—Finance
 - General remarks ... 749
- Housing—Fort McMurray
 - Impact of population increase on ... 527
- IBM Canada Ltd.
 - Microfiling of Alberta pension cheques, security implications ... 1026
- Income tax, Provincial
 - Decrease in, use of surplus for ... 961
 - General remarks ... 749
 - Personal exemption level ... 412
 - Provincial vs federal collection of ... 1444
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta pension records ... 1026
 - Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... 747
- Insurance, Automobile
 - Public plan re ... 86, 969
 - Reform of ... 691–92, 854, 900, 904, 954, 958, 962, 1339–40
 - Reform of: Communications budget re ... 283
 - Reform of: PC caucus committee review of ... 1339
 - Reform of: Review of ... 1339
- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Elimination of sales tax from ... 86, 854, 962
 - General remarks ... 86
 - Impact on non-profit sector ... 965
 - Impact on small business ... 854, 904
 - Rebates under \$50, number of (Q8/05: Defeated) ... 660
 - Reductions in ... 363, 412–13, 454–55, 461, 969, 1669
 - Reductions in: Political influence re ... 454
 - Six percent cut to ... 900, 904, 969
- Insurance—Premiums
 - Elimination of sales tax from ... 854, 1031
- Insurance companies
 - Profits ... 86, 363, 455
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 264
- Investment of public funds
 - General remarks ... 958
- Irrigation—Finance
 - General remarks ... 749
- KPMG consulting
 - Alberta Securities Commission employees' e-mails, forensic audit of ... 948, 969, 975

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Lancer Group
 - Purchase of equity in Zi Corporation, Securities Commission investigation of ... 1909
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta
 - Special sitting of, for Royal visit (Motion 16: Hancock) ... 598
- Legislative Assembly Office
 - Main estimates, 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... 747
- Lieutenant Governor of Alberta
 - Transmittal of 2004-05 supplementary estimates (SP85/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Transmittal of 2005-06 interim estimates (SP140/05: Tabled) ... 211
 - Transmittal of 2005-06 Main and Lottery Fund estimates (SP320/05: Tabled) ... 746–47
 - Transmittal of 2005-06 supplementary estimates (SP593/05: Tabled) ... 1676
- Lobbyists—Registration
 - General remarks ... 454
- Lockheed Martin Corporation
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 120
- Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 748
- Low-income families
 - Tax reductions for ... 749, 766, 968
- Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)
 - Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 42
- Marriage
 - Definition of ... 317
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 317
 - Definition of: Referendum on Alberta definition in next federal election ... 1738
- Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute
 - Funding for ... 748
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of ... 22–23
- Medical care
 - General remarks ... 747
- Medical care—Finance
 - General remarks ... 748
 - Surplus funding for ... 1667
- Medical profession—Rural areas
 - Action plan re ... 1471
- Medical records, Electronic
 - Funding for ... 748
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Report of selected payments to, 2003-04 (SP64/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Report of selected payments to, 2004-05 (SP656/05: Tabled) ... 1788–89
 - Securities Commission appointments, involvement in ... 1880
- Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan
 - Annual reports, 2001-2004 (SP74-77/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual reports, 2004-05 (SP558/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Mental health innovation fund
 - General remarks ... 748
- Milk River (Town)
 - Loan rate from Capital Finance Authority ... 900

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

Ministers (Provincial government)
 Securities Commission, influencing of ... 1880
 Natural resources revenue
 Use for budget purposes ... 747, 961, 1622, 1667
 Use for budget purposes: Legislation re (Bill 37) ...
 775
 Volatility of ... 1667
 Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 Renovations ... 749–50, 1480
 Norwegian Government Petroleum Fund
 General remarks ... 967
 Nurse practitioners
 General remarks ... 1464
 Office of the Premier
 Former chief of staff (Steve West) severance package
 ... 292
 Oil—Prices
 Forecasting of ... 962, 1667
 General remarks ... 747
 Oil recovery methods
 Research into: Funding for ... 749
 Ombudsman
 Main estimates 2005-06: Tabled (SP319/05) ... 747
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Access to the Future Fund ... 901
 Alberta Securities Commission ... 1707–08
 Arts funding ... 2053
 Automobile insurance ... 1669
 Automobile insurance rates ... 86, 363, 412–13,
 454–55, 457, 461, 900
 Automobile insurance reforms ... 1339–40
 Beef recovery strategy ... 22–23
 Boards, commissions, and agencies ... 2047
 Budget process ... 160
 Budget surplus expenditures ... 1622, 1626
 Chiropractic and physiotherapy insurance fees ...
 691–92
 Commercial vehicle insurance rates ... 904
 Constitutional referendums ... 1738
 Corporate accountability ... 1828
 Definition of marriage ... 317
 Environment budget ... 769
 Federal financial support ... 1524
 Federal/provincial relations ... 1444
 Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... 576, 1628
 Government accountability ... 1598–99, 2011
 Government appointments ... 1603
 Government efficiency ... 1599
 Government investments ... 120
 Growth pressures in Fort McMurray ... 527
 Hazardous material spill at Wabamun Lake ... 1668
 Health care premiums ... 766
 Homeless shelters ... 366
 Insurance costs for nonprofit sector ... 1031
 Insurance rates for small and medium-sized
 businesses ... 854
 Investments in tobacco companies ... 82–83
 Long-term care facility standards ... 1388
 Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ...
 42
 Missing computer tapes and microfiches ... 1026
 Nutrition programs in schools ... 1827

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 Office of the Chief Internal Auditor ... 1024
 Oil sands employment ... 571
 Physiotherapy insurance fees ... 954
 Private/public partnerships ... 616–17
 Public service pension appeals ... 291–292
 Resource revenues ... 1667
 Securities Commission ... 410–11, 453, 487–88, 528,
 532–33, 570–71, 612, 690, 898–99, 947–48,
 974–75, 1024, 1072–73, 1119, 1144, 1148–49,
 1332–33, 1568, 1597, 1664–65, 1880–81, 1909–10,
 1911, 1961, 2046–47
 Securities Commission chairman ... 1736–37
 Securities Commission investigation ... 1737–38,
 1779–80, 1827, 1882
 Seniors' property taxes ... 2049
 Social assistance rates ... 856
 Social Housing Corporation land sales ... 1741
 Softwood lumber trade dispute ... 644
 Taxation policy ... 412
 Teachers' retirement fund ... 1448–49
 Teachers' unfunded pension liability ... 1910
 Treasury Branch loans ... 2050
 Unbudgeted surplus ... 797–98
 Walton International Group Inc. ... 2008
 Whistle-blower protection ... 1520–21
 Organized crime—Prevention
 Funding for ... 749
 Parks, Provincial
 Funding for ... 1479
 Upgrading of ... 750
 Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op Ltd.
 General remarks ... 22–23
 Pensions, Private-sector
 Auditor General's comments re ... 962
 General remarks ... 958
 Petitions
 Property rights inclusion in Canadian constitution ...
 1738
 Physical therapy—Fees
 Set fees for traffic injury cases ... 691–92, 954
 Police
 Increase in numbers of ... 748–49
 Police—Finance
 Increase to ... 748–49
 Political ethics
 Breach of, by Securities Commission director of
 enforcement ... 1665, 1737–38
 Postsecondary educational institutions—Finance
 General remarks ... 749
 Prion research (BSE control)
 Funding for ... 749
 Prisoners
 Transfer of ... 749
 Property rights
 Inclusion in Canadian constitution, referendum re ...
 1738
 Property tax—Education levy
 Reduction of ... 749
 Seniors' tax relief re ... 748, 749, 766, 961, 2049
 Provincial Judges and Masters in Chambers Pension
 Plan
 Annual reports, 2000/01 - 2002/03 (SP80-82/05:
 Tabled) ... 94

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Auto insurance press release ... 1669
- Public assistance
 - Funding for ... 748
 - Increase to ... 856
- Public records—Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 1026
- Public safety (From criminal activity)
 - General remarks ... 748–49
- Public service—Alberta
 - Increase in, freeze on ... 1599
- Publishing industry
 - Funding ... 2053
- Racing entertainment centres (Horse racetracks)
 - Revenue from ... 856
- Rancher's Beef
 - Treasury Board loan to ... 2050
- Referendum, Federal
 - Definition of marriage ... 1738
 - Property rights ... 1738
- Regional health authorities
 - Employee health premium costs ... 766
 - Funding ... 748
 - Physiotherapy fees paid ... 954
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - General remarks ... 962
- Research and development
 - Funding for ... 749
- Reservoirs—Finance
 - General remarks ... 749
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
 - General remarks ... 1626
 - Legislation re (Bill 43) ... 1630–31
- Risk management fund
 - General remarks ... 965
- Road construction—Finance
 - General remarks ... 749
 - Surplus spending on ... 1667
- Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary (May 2004)
 - General remarks ... 748
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Alberta Securities Commission case, IMET unit investigation of ... 1332
 - Alberta Securities Commission chairman/exec. director's e-mails, investigation of ... 948
 - Co-operation with province on organized crime ... 749
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area ... 748
 - Increase in numbers of ... 749
 - Provincial funding for ... 749
- Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology
 - ATCO learning centre at ... 1479–80
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives ... 749
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 749
- Sales tax, Provincial
 - General remarks ... 967
- Same-sex marriage—Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 317

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Scholarships
 - General remarks ... 748
- School boards
 - Employee health premium costs ... 766
 - Funding ... 748
- School lunch programs
 - General remarks ... 1827
- School nutrition programs
 - General remarks ... 1827
- Schools—Construction—Finance
 - General remarks ... 749
- Securities—Law and legislation
 - National harmonization of ... 958, 970
- Senior citizens' lodges
 - Funding for ... 748
- Sewage disposal plants—Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 527, 1628
- Sexual assault centres
 - Funding for ... 965
- Small business
 - Impact of auto insurance rates on ... 854, 904
 - Impact of Securities Commission situation on ... 532
- Smoking—Prevention
 - Relation of provincial investment in tobacco companies to ... 82–83
- Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
 - Renovations ... 749–50, 1480
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 146
- Spills (Pollution)
 - Funding for cleanup re ... 1668
- Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamung
 - CN train derailment ... 1668
- State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company
 - Rate reduction ... 455
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Committee ... 607–08
- Student financial aid
 - General remarks ... 748
- Sunterra Quality Food Markets Inc.
 - Cattle farm ... 23
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - Response to questions during (SP279/05: Tabled) ... 622
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Brochure re, mailed to all residents ... 1667
 - Brochure re, mailed to all residents: Cost breakdown re (SP539/05: Tabled) ... 1674
 - Capital project funding with ... 747, 797–98
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure funding with ... 1628
 - General remarks ... 747, 962, 1622, 1626, 1667
 - Postsecondary education funding with ... 901, 1667
 - School construction funding with ... 1667
 - Tax reduction funding with ... 961
- Talisman Energy Inc.
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 120
- Tar sands development
 - General remarks ... 967
- Tar sands development—Research
 - General remarks ... 749
- Tax incentives
 - Employment tax credit ... 961

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Tax incentives *(Continued)*
 - General remarks ... 749
 - Northern residence tax deduction ... 571
 - Resource rebates (Bill 43) ... 1631
- Tax revenue, Provincial
 - General remarks ... 959
- Taxation
 - General remarks ... 412, 571, 749, 766, 958, 961, 967, 969–70
 - Reduction in ... 967
 - Reduction in, use of surplus for ... 962, 1626
 - Review of ... 2049
- Teachers
 - Numbers of, increase in: Funding for ... 748
- Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Unfunded liability ... 1448–49, 1910
- Technical schools–Finance
 - General remarks ... 748
- Telehealth services
 - General remarks ... 1471–72
- Theatre
 - Provincial funding for ... 1479
- Timberlea Consortium Incorporated
 - Purchase of public land in Fort McMurray ... 1598
- Tobacco companies
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 82–83, 120, 964
- Tourism–Marketing
 - Use of tourism levy revenue for ... 959
- Tourism levy
 - Conversion of hotel tax to ... 749
 - General remarks ... 959, 962
- Traffic accident injuries
 - Chiropractic/physiotherapy fee schedule for ... 691–92
- Treasury Branches
 - Expansion plans ... 962
 - Former superintendent's involvement in WEM loan refinancing ... 1828
 - Former superintendent's involvement in WEM loan refinancing, response to question re (SP700/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 - Lending policies, Auditor General's comments re ... 2050
 - Loan to Rancher's Beef ... 2050
- Tuition fees
 - Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by provincial government ... 748
- Universities and colleges–Finance
 - General remarks ... 748
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 748
- Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)
 - General remarks ... 749
- Walton International Group Inc.
 - Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission ... 2008
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 749, 769
- Water resources development–Finance
 - General remarks ... 749

McClellan, Hon. Shirley (PC, Drumheller-Stettler)*(Continued)*

- Water treatment plants
 - Funding for ... 749
- Water treatment plants–Fort McMurray
 - General remarks ... 527, 1628
- West Edmonton Mall
 - Loan refinancing: Former TB superintendent's involvement ... 1828
 - Loan refinancing: Former TB superintendent's involvement, response to question re (SP700/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Western Standard* (News magazine)
 - Article about Alberta Securities Commission ... 1827, 1880–81
- Whistle-blower protection
 - Securities Commission case ... 410, 948, 974, 1333, 1520–21, 1599, 2011
- Workers' Compensation Board
 - Provision of physiotherapy services ... 954
- Writers' workshops
 - Provincial funding for ... 1479
- Zi Corporation
 - Purchase of equity in by Lancer funds, Securities Commission investigation of ... 1909
 - Securities Commission investigation of ... 1827, 1880–81
- McFarland, Barry (PC, Little Bow)**
 - Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs ... 122
 - Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - General remarks ... 122
 - Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1253
 - Chair
 - Election of ... 2
 - Co-energy electrical production
 - Garbage as energy source ... 1710–11
 - Curling championships
 - Under-18 International champions (Scheidegger rink, Alberta rink) ... 578
 - Delta Driving School
 - Licensing incident ... 1309
 - Deputy Speaker
 - Election of ... 2
 - Gambling, Compulsive
 - Youth gambling ... 741
 - Heavy equipment
 - Purchase of, with infrastructure funding ... 1253
 - Incineration
 - As electrical power generation method ... 1710–11
 - Lethbridge Community College
 - Police training programs ... 1602
 - Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Speaker ... 2
 - Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Agricultural assistance ... 122
 - Gambling addiction ... 741
 - Municipal infrastructure program ... 1253
 - Police recruitment and training centre ... 1602
 - Truck driver certification ... 1308–09
 - Waste management strategy ... 1710–11
 - Police
 - MLA committee review of: Report ... 1602

McFarland, Barry (PC, Little Bow) (Continued)

- Police–Training
 - Centre of excellence re ... 1602
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 578
- Refuse and refuse disposal
 - Provincial strategy re ... 1710–11
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Impact of provincial police training centre on ... 1602
- Speaker
 - Congratulations to ... 2
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 155–57
- Truck drivers–Training
 - College-based course ... 1308–09
- Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of ... 1308

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)

- Acclaim Energy Inc.
 - Acheson gas well failure, Edmonton ... 575, 1828
- Alberta Advisory Council on Electricity
 - Electricity exports recommendation ... 1306
- Alberta Electric System Operator
 - Electric power lines, 10-year plan re ... 1831
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme concerns ... 360, 796, 899
- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Canadian Natural Resources pipeline leak ... 1447–48
 - Coal-bed methane extraction impact ... 1201–02
 - Coal bed methane well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Coal bed methane well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... 615, 643, 802, 951
 - Edmonton/Calgary transmission line upgrade application, approval of ... 904, 1447
 - Electricity price overcharging advisory ... 949
 - Electricity prices monitoring ... 1913
 - Electricity transmission projects applications ... 649, 1447, 1831
 - Enforcement policy changes ... 575
 - Funding for ... 910
 - Gas well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M10/05: Defeated) ... 666
 - Gas well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M9/05: Defeated) ... 665
 - Oil/gas sites reclamation costs, prevention of disclosure re, under FOIP law ... 1519
 - Sour gas recommendations ... 741–42, 910, 1828
 - Sour gas well hearings (Compton Petroleum), Calgary area ... 1391, 1828
 - Sour gas well leak, Innisfail area, reported to ... 1741–42, 1828
 - Staff ... 913
 - TransAlta hydropower pricing strategy ... 363–64, 488
 - TransAlta power pricing activities ... 455
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - Funding for ... 922
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - General remarks ... 922
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - General remarks ... 922

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

- Alberta royalty tax credit
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 921
 - General remarks ... 918
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Influencing regulatory activity case ... 772
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... 1197
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... 772
- Alberta Sustainability Fund
 - General remarks ... 922
- Alliance pipeline
 - General remarks ... 922
- AltaGas Services Inc.
 - Purchase of Sundance B power purchase arrangements from Enron ... 1912–13
- AltaLink Management Ltd.
 - Public consultations re electric power line siting ... 1831
- Auditor General
 - Oil sands projects approvals comments ... 921
 - Royalty reduction programs evaluation recommendation ... 921
 - Royalty revenues (oil sands) verification ... 921
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... 1197
- Automobile industry
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... 772
- Bercha Group
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study: Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... 665
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 665, 1789
- Bighorn power plant
 - Exclusion from power purchase agreements ... 363–64
- Bitumen
 - Value-adding re ... 532, 572, 909, 916, 917, 918
- Bitumen–Export
 - Impact on oil sands upgrading jobs ... 572
- Brazeau power plant
 - Exclusion from power purchase agreements ... 363–64
- British Columbia Power Exchange Corp.
 - Electricity price manipulation at Power Pool of Alberta ... 286
- Calpine Energy Services
 - Electricity export application ... 650
- Canadian Environmental Protection Act (Federal)
 - Vehicle for Project Green implementation ... 772
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Horizon oil sands project ... 203
 - Pipeline leak ... 1447–48
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 203
- Carbon dioxide projects
 - General remarks ... 743
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 532, 918–19
 - Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to ... 743, 771
 - Technological developments re ... 771–72

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

- Climate Change and Emissions Management Act (Bill 37, 2003)
 - General remarks ... 743
- Climate Fund (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 771–72
- Coal–Supply
 - General remarks ... 910
- Coal bed methane extraction
 - General remarks ... 910
 - Impact of ... 916, 1075, 1201–02
 - Reclamation costs re ... 916
 - Water recovered from (Q7/05: Defeated) ... 659
 - Water recovery issues ... 916
 - Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... 664
- Coal bed methane extraction–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1201–02
- Coal bed methane extraction–Horseshoe Canyon area
 - Impact of ... 1202
- Competition Bureau (Federal)
 - Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 18, 24, 118, 161, 204, 249, 286, 360, 456, 533, 796, 917, 949, 1196, 1337
 - Enron's takeover of Sundance power plant production, investigation of ... 899
 - TransAlta electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 949
- Compton Petroleum Corporation
 - Gas well drilling, Calgary area ... 1391, 1742, 1828
- Conflict of interest
 - Market surveillance administrator ... 161
- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas contracts ... 1073
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 286, 455–56, 488, 533, 650
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - General remarks ... 922
- Deep Well Oil & Gas Ltd.
 - Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ... 643
- Dept. of Energy
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP44/05: Tabled) ... 93
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP569/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Contracted employees/consultants salaries, 2003-04 (M25/05: Response tabled as SP808/05) ... 2018
 - Discussions with Enron, correspondence re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 908–10, 912–13, 915–19, 921–22
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP484 & 734/05: Tabled) ... 1578, 1920
 - Minister's noninternational trips details, 2003-04 (M26/05: Response tabled as SP735/05) ... 1920
 - Service contracts costs, 2003-05 (Q41/05: Defeated) ... 1748
 - Staffing ... 913
- Direct Energy Business Services
 - Promise to, re regulated rate electricity price ... 1119
- Economic development
 - General remarks ... 532

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

- Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 575, 648–49, 1829–30, 1964
 - Research re ... 292
- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - Research into ... 922
- Electric power–Export
 - General remarks ... 650, 1306, 1447
- Electric power–Import
 - General remarks ... 650, 1306, 1447
 - Price manipulation re, investigation into ... 204
- Electric power–Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 286, 455–56, 488, 533, 650
 - Contributing factors to (London Economics group report on) ... 291
 - General remarks ... 912–13, 948, 1120, 1306, 1307, 1447
 - Manipulation of ... 204, 286, 796, 899, 948–49, 1195–96
 - Manipulation of, legal penalties re ... 796
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 18, 23–24, 118–19, 161, 204, 249, 360, 455–56, 533, 796
 - Regulated option re ... 647, 913, 919, 1073, 1075, 1119–20
- Electric power–Retail sales
 - Cross-Canada comparison, report on (SP323/05: Tabled) ... 775–76
 - General remarks ... 913, 919
 - Review of ... 1075, 1119
- Electric power–Supply
 - General remarks ... 489, 650, 913, 917, 921, 1073, 1120, 1306, 1307
- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... 1073, 1119–20
- Electric power lines
 - Capacity ... 649
 - General remarks ... 650
 - Tie lines with B.C. ... 916–17
 - Tie lines with B.C. and Montana ... 649–50
- Electric power lines–Construction
 - General remarks ... 1447
- Electric power lines–Edmonton/Calgary
 - Upgrading of ... 904, 1447, 1831
- Electric utilities–Lake Wabamun area
 - Taxation of ... 913
- Electric utilities–Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 118–19, 161, 291, 489, 796, 909, 917, 948, 1073, 1120, 1306
 - Deregulation: Energy dept. correspondence with Enron Canada re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
 - Deregulation: Private consultant re (Kellan Fluckiger) ... 1307
 - Deregulation: Public inquiry into ... 18, 204
 - Deregulation: Public reaction to ... 919, 921
- Electrical power purchase agreements
 - Enron activities re Sundance B power ... 1337, 1912–13
 - Enron comments re mispricing of ... 1337
- Exclusion of hydropower from ... 363–64, 489
- General remarks ... 118

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

- Emission control credits
 - Trading of ... 743
- Enbridge Inc.
 - Gateway pipeline, joint project with PetroChina ... 801
- Energy industry
 - Foreign investment in ... 801
 - General remarks ... 908–09
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ... 772
 - Value-adding/upgrading increase in ... 909, 917, 1310
- Energy industry–Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 615, 802
 - Land management issues re ... 648–49
- Energy industry–Crown lands–Sawn Lake area
 - Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 951
- Energy industry–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 292, 802, 922
- Energy industry–Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 575
- Energy Innovation Network
 - General remarks ... 292
- Energy research
 - General remarks ... 909
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - General remarks ... 922, 1120
- Engage Energy Canada, L.P.
 - Former executive of ... 161
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy ... 286
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy, correspondence re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy, documents re given to Competition Bureau ... 286
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... 913, 1964
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Adamson report on ... 1145
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Frontier Economics report re ... 1145
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 18, 23–24, 118–19, 161, 204, 249, 360, 455–56, 533, 650, 796, 916, 1195–96
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): U.S. lawsuits re ... 1249
- Involvement in Alberta power generation system ... 1337
- Sundance B power purchase arrangement, sale of ... 1912–13, 1964
- Sundance B power purchase arrangement auction participation ... 1337
- Sundance power plant, takeover of control of ... 899
- Environmental impact assessments
 - Sour gas well drilling, Calgary area (Compton Petroleum) ... 1391
- EPCOR Group of Companies
 - Electricity bill changes ... 489
- Ethane–Supply
 - General remarks ... 1443
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (U.S.)
 - Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers: Testimony re ... 1195

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 203
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on: Report on (SP266/05: Tabled) ... 536
- FortisAlberta Inc.
 - Co-ordination of bills with EPCOR ... 489
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Enron/Energy dept. correspondence re electricity deregulation request under ... 1749
 - Oil/gas sites reclamation costs, prevention of disclosure of ... 1519
- Frontier Economics Inc.
 - Report on Project Stanley ... 1145
- Gas, Natural
 - General remarks ... 908–09, 910
- Gas, Natural–Export
 - General remarks ... 922
 - Impact on petrochemical industry employment levels ... 572
- Gas, Natural–Export–United States
 - Impact of U.S. energy bill on ... 1310
- Gas, Natural–Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 909, 915, 921
 - General remarks ... 916
 - Residential heating prices, provincial comparison of ... 1670
- Gas, Natural–Royalties
 - General remarks ... 922, 1670
- Gas, Natural–Supply
 - General remarks ... 916
- Gas industry
 - General remarks ... 922
- Gas pipelines–Alaska/Northwest Territories thru Alberta
 - Stripping of natural gas liquids from throughput of ... 922
- Gas well drilling industry
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group: Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... 665
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 665, 1789
 - In vicinity of urban areas ... 1828
 - Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04 (M10/05: Defeated) ... 666
 - Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M9/05: Defeated) ... 665
- Gas well drilling industry–Calgary area
 - General remarks ... 1391, 1742, 1828
- Gas well drilling industry–Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 910, 1828
 - Sour gas leak, Innisfail area ... 1741–42, 1828
- Gas well drilling industry–Tomahawk/Drayton Valley area
 - Safety aspects ... 741–42
- Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reduction of: Large final emitters industries ... 771
- Greenhouse gas reduction programs (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 771–72
- Heavy oil
 - General remarks ... 909, 916
- Heavy oil–Royalties
 - General remarks ... 912, 918

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*Heavy oil–Royalties *(Continued)*

Projected revenues from, 2005-2015 (Q24/05:

Defeated) ... 1154–55

Reductions in ... 572

Verification of, Auditor General's comments re ... 921

Hydrocarbon Upgrading Task force

General remarks ... 572, 917

Hydrogen sulphide emissions

General remarks ... 741–42

Hydrogen sulphide emissions–Health aspects–Calgary area

General remarks ... 1391

Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta

Electricity prices comparison, commissioned report on (SP323/05: Tabled) ... 775–76

Independent System Operator (Electricity industry)

10-year power transmission plan ... 649, 650, 1447

Edmonton/Calgary transmission line upgrade application ... 904, 1447

General remarks ... 1447

Integrated resource management (Public lands)

General remarks ... 648–49

London Economics International LLC

Electricity prices, contributing factors to, report ... 291

Electricity prices comparison, cross-Canada, report (SP323/05: Tabled) ... 775–76

Lubicon Lake Band

Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 615, 643, 802, 951

Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)

Background of ... 118–19, 161

Electricity imports, investigation into, re price manipulation activities ... 204

Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 18, 23, 118–19, 204, 249, 286, 360, 456, 533, 796, 899, 913, 917, 1145, 1196, 1249

Enron's takeover of Sundance power plant production, investigation of ... 899

Monitoring of electricity prices ... 286, 488

TransAlta price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 286, 360, 456, 796, 899, 949

MEG Energy Corp.

Chinese investment in ... 801

Mega Project Excellence: Preparing for Alberta's

Legacy, An Action Plan (Report)

Copy tabled (SP266/05) ... 536

Minaible oil sands strategy–Environmental aspects

General remarks ... 1829–30, 1913–14, 1964

Natural gas rebates

For commercial operations ... 1146

General remarks ... 909, 1670

Renewal of ... 1146

Natural resources

Access issues (surface disturbances) ... 910

Value-adding re ... 532, 909

Natural resources revenue

Forecasting of ... 909, 915

General remarks ... 908–09, 910

Net metering (Electricity)

Motion 510: Marz ... 1768

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

North American free trade agreement

Sale of electricity under ... 1306

Oil

General remarks ... 908–09

Oil–Export–United States

Impact of U.S. energy bill on ... 1310

Oil–Prices

Forecasting of ... 909, 915, 921

Oil and gas leases

Revenue from ... 913

Oil industry

Use of water supplies ... 916

Oil recovery methods

Carbon dioxide sequestering ... 743, 912

Royalty tax reductions to encourage ... 912

Oil shales–United States

Research re ... 1310

Oil well drilling industry–Public lands

EUB permits required for ... 643, 951

Oral Question Period (2005)

Canadian Natural Resources Limited pipeline leak ... 1447–48

Capital region petrochemical workers ... 1443

Climate change ... 743, 771–72

Coal-bed methane ... 1075, 1201–02

Electrical transmission system ... 1447

Electricity consultant ... 1307

Electricity costs ... 291

Electricity deregulation ... 118, 204

Electricity exports ... 650, 1306

Electricity line between Edmonton and Calgary ... 1831

Electricity marketing ... 796, 899, 948–49, 1073, 1119–20

Electricity marketing review ... 1075

Electricity pricing ... 286

Electricity transmission ... 904

Electricity transmission line capacity ... 649–50

Energy and Utilities Board ... 575, 1519

Energy Innovation Network ... 292

Enron activities in Alberta ... 249, 286, 360, 533, 899, 1145, 1195–96, 1249, 1337, 1912–13, 1964

Environmental protection ... 1391

EPCOR energy bills ... 489

Foreign investments in the energy industry ... 801

Hydropower purchase arrangements ... 363–64

Integrated land management ... 648–49

Major Alberta projects ... 532

Market surveillance administrator ... 161

Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ... 18, 23–24, 118–119

Minaible oil sands strategy ... 1829–30, 1964

Natural gas prices ... 1670

Natural gas rebates ... 1146

Oil sands bitumen export ... 572

Oil sands development ... 203

Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 615, 643, 802, 951

Reclamation of oil well sites ... 166

Regulated rate option for electricity ... 647

Securities Commission ... 772, 1197

Sour gas leak ... 1741–42

Sour gas well safety ... 741–42, 1828

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - TransAlta Utilities ... 455–56, 488–89
 - United States energy legislation ... 1310
- Partnership Fund (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 771–72
- Petro-Canada
 - Oil sands project with UTS Energy Corp. ... 203
- Petrochemical industry
 - Bitumen as feedstock for ... 532, 572, 909, 917
 - General remarks ... 918–19
 - Impact of Chinese investments on ... 801
 - Impact of natural resources exports on ... 572, 922
- Petrochemical industry—Edmonton area
 - Ethane supply for ... 1443
- Pipelines
 - Development of ... 917
 - Monitoring of ... 1447
- Project Green (Federal Kyoto accord implementation plan)
 - General remarks ... 743, 771–72
- Provincial Advisory Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas
 - Study (2000) ... 910
- Reclamation of land
 - Abandoned well sites ... 166, 916
 - Energy industry sites ... 649, 910
 - Energy industry sites, prevention of disclosure of costs of under FOIP law ... 1519
 - Oil sands sites ... 1829–30, 1914
- Reforestation
 - Oil sands lands ... 1829–30, 1914
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - General remarks ... 908–09, 912, 915–16, 918, 919, 921–22
 - Reduction incentives ... 912
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development ... 743
- Securities—Law and legislation
 - National harmonization of ... 1197
- Securities regulator, National
 - General remarks ... 1197
- Shell Canada Limited
 - Oil sands project, Fort McMurray area ... 203
- Snohomish Public Utility District, Washington State (U.S.)
 - Investigation of Enron price fixing ... 118–19
- Suncor Inc.
 - Firebag project, royalty discussions re ... 919
 - Voyageur project ... 203, 572
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 922
- Tar sands development
 - Chinese investment in ... 801
 - Expansion projects ... 203, 532
 - Expansion projects: Auditor General's comments re ... 921
 - General remarks ... 908, 909–10, 921–22
 - Impact of ... 203
 - Value-added opportunities ... 532, 572, 801, 916, 921
- Tar sands development—Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1829–30, 1964

Melchin, Hon. Greg (PC, Calgary-North West)*(Continued)*

- Tar sands development—Research
 - U.S. interest in ... 1310
- Tar sands development—Waste disposal
 - Tailings ponds ... 1913
- TransAlta Utilities Corporation
 - Donations to provincial PC party ... 1196
 - Electricity price manipulation activities ... 286, 360, 455–56, 488–89, 796, 899, 948–49, 1195–96
 - Electricity price manipulation activities: Independent investigation of ... 949
 - Hydropower generation pricing ... 363–64, 456, 489, 492
 - Hydropower generation pricing: Jim Dinning's role in ... 456
 - Hydropower generation pricing: Response to questions re (SP248/05: Tabled) ... 492
- U.S. energy bill
 - Impact on Alberta ... 1310
- Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - EPCOR/Fortis electricity bills co-ordination ... 489
- Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Response to DOE's (Dept. of Energy) Call for Comments on it's Discussion Paper ... (April 14, 2005) ... 1120
- UTS Energy Corp.
 - Oil sands project with Petro-Canada, Fort McMurray area ... 203
- Water conservation
 - Provincial plan for ... 916
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - General remarks ... 916
- Water supply
 - Use by energy industry ... 916
- Well sites
 - Reclamation of ... 649
 - Reclamation of, costs, prevention of disclosure of under FOIP law ... 1519
- Well sites, Abandoned
 - Reclamation of ... 166, 916
- Welwyn Resources Ltd.
 - Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ... 643
- Wind power
 - General remarks ... 917
- Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora)**
 - Aboriginal courts
 - General remarks ... 1228
 - Aboriginal people and the judicial system
 - General remarks ... 1228
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 221–23
 - Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
 - Second reading ... 678–79
 - Committee ... 718
 - General remarks ... 1228
 - Administrative tribunals
 - General remarks ... 1228
 - Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board
 - General remarks ... 1425
 - Alberta Law Reform Institute
 - Report on administrative tribunals ... 1228

Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora) *(Continued)*

- Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40)
Third reading ... 1557
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
Committee ... 1977
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Land Development Company case, decision re (SP790/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Land Development Company case, notice of hearing re (SP791/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Land interests included in securities, news release re (SP792/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Land sales (undivided interests), staff notice re (SP789/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Alberta Vehicle Theft Committee
General remarks ... 1424
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
Committee ... 406
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
Committee ... 1983–84
Third reading ... 2038
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
Committee ... 1245–46
- Auditor General
Policing in Alberta, study of ... 1885
- Auditor General of Canada
RCMP services report ... 1884–85
RCMP services report, chapter 1 (SP703/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Automobile Insurance Rate Board
Report on rate reductions ... 86
- Automobile theft–Prevention
General remarks ... 1424
- British Columbia Power Exchange Corp.
Involvement in Enron electricity price manipulation ... 42
- Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
Third reading ... 2024
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
Crownsnest Pass projects ... 1305–06
- Cemeteries Act
Modernization of ... 1424–25
- Child abuse–Legal aspects
Sentences re, increasing of ... 1228
- Community facility enhancement program
Churches' application to ... 1287
- Consumer protection
General remarks ... 1424
- Correctional institutions–Finance
General remarks ... 1432
- Court of Queen's Bench
General remarks ... 276
- Courtroom security officers–Training
General remarks ... 743, 1430
- Courts–Calgary
Additional courtrooms, funding for ... 275
- Courts–Finance
General remarks ... 1228

Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora) *(Continued)*

- Crime
 - News media coverage of ... 1227–28
- Crime prevention
General remarks ... 1227–28
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
Second reading ... 1687
Committee ... 1902
Third reading ... 2025
- Daycare centres
 - Available spaces in ... 1732
 - National plan principles re ... 1732
- Daycare centres–Finance
National program for: Alberta participation ... 1732
- Dept. of Children's Services
Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1731
- Dept. of Gaming
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1287
- Dept. of Government Services
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1424–25
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1377–78
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
Business plan ... 1227
Discussions with federal Justice dept. re sentencing in child abuse cases ... 1228
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1227–28
Relations with other depts. ... 1227
Staffing ... 1228
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 275–76
- Dept. of Solicitor General
Business plan ... 1429–30
Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1428–30, 1432
Minister's letter re Crownsnest Pass police grant ... 1305
Minister's letter re Crownsnest Pass police grant (SP411/05: Tabled) ... 1315
- Domestic violence
General remarks ... 1196–97
Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003 ... 1196
- Domestic violence–Legal aspects
General remarks ... 276
- Edmonton Police Service
Inmate sexual assault investigation ... 696
Randy Fryingpan tasing case ... 1429, 1503–04
- Edmonton Remand Centre
Funding for ... 1432
Overcrowding ... 695–96, 1389, 1432
Rape of inmates in ... 695–96, 1389, 1430
- Electric power–Prices
Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 42
- Electric utilities–Regulations
Deregulation ... 42
- Enron Canada Corporation
Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Destruction of trading tapes re ... 42
Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 42
- Falun Gong
Promotion of hatred against, letters re (SP552/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Family courts
General remarks ... 1197, 1228
Visitation rulings in violent spouse cases ... 1196

Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora) (Continued)

- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Second reading ... 197
 - Committee ... 566–67
- Fatality inquiries
 - RCMP corporal's death in mentally ill gunman case ... 1784
 - Role of news media at ... 414
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 679–80
 - Committee ... 725
 - Third reading ... 1378–79
 - General remarks ... 414
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 1396
- Funerals—Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 1425
- Gang-related crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 16
- Government attorneys
 - Specialization in gun-related crime cases ... 1916
- Government information
 - Access to, through MLAs' offices ... 1425
- Identification, Personal
 - Theft of ... 1228
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 709
- Integrated child exploitation teams
 - General remarks ... 1228, 1429
- Integrated Response to Organized Crime
 - General remarks ... 1228
 - Increase in RCMP officers for ... 1429
- Internet (Computer network)
 - Crimes against children on ... 1228
 - Crimes against children on: Provincial initiatives re ... 1429
- John Dosseter Health Ethics Centre
 - General remarks ... 1377
- John Howard Society
 - General remarks ... 1228
- Judicial Compensation Commission
 - Report on Provincial Court judges salary increase ... 275–76
 - Report on Provincial Court judges salary increase: Provincial challenge of ... 276
- Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 48)
 - Second reading ... 1688–89
 - Third reading ... 1899
- Justice system
 - Access to ... 1228
- The Land Development Company
 - Securities Commission case re, documents (SP790-791/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Land titles—Registration
 - Security concerns in ... 1424
- Legal aid
 - Exclusion of lawyers in private practice from ... 1709
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 193
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 67–68
- Maintenance (Domestic relations)
 - General remarks ... 1228

Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora) (Continued)

- Maintenance (Domestic relations) (Continued)
 - Reciprocal agreements re, with other jurisdictions ... 1228
 - Staffing ... 1228
- Marijuana
 - Decriminalization of ... 1227
- Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)
 - Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 42
- Marriage licences
 - Provision of, by religious institutions ... 1424
 - Provision of, through registry offices ... 1424
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1682–83
 - Third reading ... 2022–23
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - World AIDS Day ... 2054–55
- Mental health services—Prisoners
 - General remarks ... 1785
- Mentally disabled
 - Involvement with police ... 1784–85
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Deaths of RCMP officers ... 40
 - RCMP drug raid near Mayerthorpe ... 16
- Mortgage fraud
 - General remarks ... 1424
- Municipal finance—Crowsnest Pass area
 - Government grants ... 1249–50, 1305–06
 - Letter from Solicitor General re (SP411/05: Tabled) ... 1315
- Municipal Government Act
 - Crowsnest Pass regulation ... 1249–50, 1305–06
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Corrections officers ... 743
 - Domestic violence ... 1196–97
 - Edmonton Police Service investigation ... 1503–04
 - Edmonton Remand Centre ... 695–96
 - Edmonton Remand Centre assault incident ... 1389
 - Fatality inquiries ... 414
 - Legal aid ... 1709
 - Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ... 42
 - Mental illness and the criminal justice system ... 1784–85
 - Municipal grants to Crowsnest Pass ... 1305–06
 - Policing review ... 162
 - Policing services ... 574, 1884–85, 1916
 - Policing services in Crowsnest Pass ... 1249–50
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 1396
- Police
 - Challenges performing duties of ... 16
 - Complaints against, procedure for ... 574, 1429, 1503–04
 - Domestic violence case handling training ... 1196
 - General remarks ... 1429
 - Increase in numbers of ... 1429, 1884–85, 1916
 - Mental health related incidents, responses to ... 1784–85
 - MLA committee review of: Report ... 162
 - Neighbourhood patrols ... 1429
 - Public confidence in ... 574

Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora) (Continued)

- Police–Finance
 - General remarks ... 16, 1429
 - Increase to ... 1429, 1916
- Police–Finance–Crownsnest Pass
 - General remarks ... 1249–50, 1305, 1429
 - Letter from Solicitor General re (SP411/05: Tabled) ... 1315
- Police–Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1884–85
- Police–Standards
 - Auditing of ... 1885
- Police–Training
 - Mentally ill people handling ... 1784–85
- Police Act
 - Amendments to ... 162
 - Civilian oversight provision enhancement ... 162
 - Paramourty over Crownsnest Pass regulation re police funding ... 1250
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 683–84
 - Committee ... 1297–99, 1379–80
 - Third reading ... 1583–84
 - Amendment A1 (SP407/05: Tabled) ... 1297, 1298
 - Amendment A2 (SP426/05: Tabled) ... 1379
 - Amendment A3 (SP427/05: Tabled) ... 1379
 - General remarks ... 1429
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 49)
 - Second reading ... 1770–71
 - Committee ... 1900
 - Third reading ... 2026–27
- Prisoners, Aboriginal
 - Numbers of ... 1228
- Prisoners–Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 696, 1389
- Probation officers
 - Supervision of youth justice committees ... 1432
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 337–38
 - News article re (SP197/05: Tabled) ... 328
- Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 25)
 - Second reading ... 717
 - Committee ... 727
- Provincial Judges' Association
 - General remarks ... 275
- Public safety (From criminal activity)
 - General remarks ... 1227, 1428–29
 - Performance measures ... 1428–29
- Public safety (From criminal activity)–Inner city areas
 - General remarks ... 1429
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 168–69
- Registry offices, Private
 - Provision of marriage licences through ... 1424
- Rehabilitation of criminals
 - General remarks ... 1430
- Remand centres–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1432
- Research and development
 - Ethical implications ... 1377
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
 - Letter re (SP604/05: Tabled) ... 1716
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Auditor General of Canada's report on provincial policing services by ... 1884–85

Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora) (Continued)

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Continued)
 - Auditor General of Canada's report on provincial policing services by, chapter 1 (SP703/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 - Corporal's death in mentally ill gunman case ... 1784
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area ... 1428
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial service for fallen officers, program from (SP118/05: Tabled) ... 171
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial service for fallen officers, recognition of ... 168–69
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Statement re fallen officers in ... 16, 40
 - Forensics lab closure, Edmonton: Letters re (SP9-10/05: Tabled) ... 27
 - Increase in numbers of ... 1884–85
 - Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003, investigation, recommendations from ... 1196
 - Requalification of officers (weapons handling) ... 1884–85
- Same-sex marriage–Law and legislation
 - Federal legislation ... 1424
- Sentences (Criminal procedure)
 - General remarks ... 1227
 - Increasing of ... 1227
 - Increasing of, re child abuse convictions ... 1228
- Service Alberta initiative (Government information access)
 - Provision of orientation for MLAs' staff ... 1425
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 67–68
- Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Unfunded liability: Letter re (SP603/05: Tabled) ... 1716
- United Church of Canada. Alberta and Northwest Conference
 - Letter from presidents to province on occasion of centennial (SP727/05: Tabled) ... 1920
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 553–54, 601
 - Committee ... 718
 - Third reading ... 1290–91
- Victims of Crime Fund
 - Compensation to assaulted inmate from ... 1389
 - One-time payment issue ... 1430
 - Surplus ... 1430
- Violent crime
 - Prevention of ... 1227, 1916
- Vital Statistics
 - Removal of marriage licensing from ... 1424
- Wages–Provincial Court judges
 - Increase in ... 275–76
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 70–71
- Whistle-blower protection
 - Workplace safety complaints ... 743
- Workplace safety
 - Employee complaints re ... 743
- World AIDS Day
 - Statement re ... 2054–55
- Young, Kyle James (Prisoner)
 - Death in Edmonton courthouse ... 743–44, 1430

Miller, Dr. Bruce (L, Edmonton-Glenora) *(Continued)*

- Youth Justice Act
 - General remarks ... 276
- Youth justice committees
 - Probation officers' review of decisions by ... 1432
- Youth justice committees—Stony Plain
 - Resignation of members of ... 1432
- Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford)**
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 391–93
 - Committee ... 565, 729–30
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Second reading ... 1643, 1645
 - Committee ... 2001
 - Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 54)
 - Second reading ... 1950–51
 - Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)
 - Committee ... 354
 - Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - General remarks ... 959–60
 - Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Ethical investments by ... 120, 962–63
 - Ethical investments by: Statement re ... 294
 - Investment in tobacco companies ... 294, 963
 - Investment income from ... 963
 - Surplus revenue deposited into (legacy funding) ... 960
 - Alberta Insurance Council
 - Special projects costs ... 963
 - Alberta pension plan (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 1188
 - Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation
 - Appeals received by (M34/05: Defeated) ... 1164
 - Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 20)
 - Second reading ... 436, 437
 - Third reading ... 551
 - Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 40)
 - Second reading ... 1485
 - Committee ... 1492
 - Third reading ... 1557
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1701–03, 1820, 1858, 1859, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865
 - Alberta Securities Commission
 - Human resource issues in ... 528, 1520
 - Influencing regulatory activity case ... 772, 1520
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... 772
 - Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus: Decision re (SP794/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus: Letter from Land Development Company re (SP796/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Alberta SuperNet
 - General remarks ... 257
 - Alberta Treasury Branch Financial
 - Subsidiary companies' control processes, Auditor General's recommendation re (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1746–47

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) *(Continued)*

- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Municipal Government Act review discussions ... 1327–28
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Second reading ... 542
 - Committee ... 558–60
 - Third reading ... 943
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Second reading ... 1554–56
 - Committee ... 1591–93
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Second reading ... 348–49
 - Committee ... 403–04
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - Second reading ... 349
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1998–99
- Arts—Finance
 - Surplus revenue dedicated to (legacy funding) ... 960
- Auditor General
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 257
 - Pension plans compliance comments ... 960
 - Treasury Branches' control processes comments (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1746–47
 - Treasury Branches lending policies comments ... 960, 2050
- Automobile chop shops
 - General remarks ... 1256
- Automobile Insurance Rate Board
 - Report on rate reductions ... 283
 - Review of questionable practices by insurance companies ... 1339
 - Review of rates ... 904, 1339
 - Review of rates: Letter requesting copy of (SP36/05: Tabled) ... 93
- Automobile theft—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1256
- Bank of Montreal
 - Executive Council account ... 1107
- Bennett Jones LLP
 - ASC action on Walton International, letter re (SP794/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Compensation plans re: Federal funding for ... 257
 - New assistance programs re (2005) ... 257
- Breast cancer—Research
 - Contributions by hang-gliding fundraiser to ... 1313
- British Columbia Pension Corporation
 - Appeal process: Website re (SP166/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
 - Second reading ... 1949
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - Second reading ... 1956
- Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - Funding of, with surplus funds ... 1626

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) *(Continued)*

- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - Edmonton projects ... 258, 1327
 - Federal funding ... 1328
 - General remarks ... 1327
 - Legacy funding for, proposed ... 960
- Carson, Ms Linda-Rae
 - Statement re ... 2016
- Cellular telephones in automobiles
 - Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1004–05
- Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations
 - Insurance costs for ... 961
- Chief Electoral Officer
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Civil service pensions
 - Appeal process re ... 291–92
 - Letter re (SP425/05: Tabled) ... 1343
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 671–72
- Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Standing
 - Ethical investment deliberations ... 294
- CompuSmart.com
 - Executive Council contract ... 1106
- Consumer protection
 - Auto insurance rates ... 363, 454
- Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 26)
 - Second reading ... 537
 - Committee ... 1489
- Corporations–Taxation
 - Rebates re, interest paid on ... 963
 - Reduction in ... 961
- Crime prevention
 - General remarks ... 1256
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Second reading ... 1868
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - General remarks ... 1448
 - General servicing costs re ... 963
 - Statutory servicing costs re ... 963
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1483–84
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Dept. of Finance
 - Business plan ... 961
 - Communications division ... 959, 963
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 959–63, 966
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 256
 - Nonbudgetary disbursements ... 256
 - Performance measures ... 961
 - Staff ... 963
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 283
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 258

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) *(Continued)*

- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257, 258
- Dept. of Human Resources and Skills Development (Federal)
 - Minister of: Alberta MLA's comments re ... 1606–07
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 258
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 1187–88
 - Staff ... 1187
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1327–28
 - Performance measures ... 1328
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Alberta SuperNet project transferred to ... 257
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 763
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Property theft in (Q28/05: Response tabled as SP776/05) ... 1158
- Drayton Valley–Calmar (Constituency)
 - Notice of privilege re actions by Member for (Not proceeded with) ... 1614, 1633
- Drugs in schools
 - Use of dogs to detect ... 1256
- Edmonton-Rutherford (Constituency)
 - Notice of privilege re actions by Member for Drayton Valley–Calmar against (Not proceeded with) ... 1614, 1633
- Education, Postsecondary–Finance
 - Surplus revenue dedicated to (legacy funding) ... 960
- Education–Finance
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q14/05: Response tabled as SP500/05) ... 808
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 808–11
- Elections, Municipal–Calgary
 - Ward 10 election process ... 1328
- Elections, Municipal–Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 1328
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 257
- Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 35)
 - Second reading ... 1019–20
 - Committee ... 1490–91
 - Third reading ... 1582
- Equalization payments
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Executive Council
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1106–07
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 258
 - Limousine service costs ... 1106
- Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 6)
 - Third reading ... 550–51
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1752
- Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1188

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) (Continued)

- Federal/provincial relations
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - Second reading ... 938–39
 - Committee ... 1018–19
 - General remarks ... 959
- Firewall issues (Federal/provincial relations)
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Fly for a Cure (Charity fundraiser)
 - Statement re ... 1313
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 418, 463, 536, 579
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 257, 1164
- Furnace rebate program
 - Letter re (SP706/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Government aircraft
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 257
- Governor General's award for excellence in teaching
 - Canadian history
 - General remarks ... 2016
- Hang-gliding
 - Death of Cochrane resident during ... 1081
 - Fundraiser by enthusiasts for ... 1313
- Harry Ainlay high school, Edmonton
 - Drug-sniffing dog program ... 1256
- Hospitals
 - Hotel-like accommodation in: Pamphlet re (SP754/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - Second reading ... 213–215
 - Third reading ... 397–98
 - E-mail re (SP138/05: Tabled) ... 211
 - General remarks ... 257
- Income tax, Provincial
 - Decrease in ... 959, 961
 - Flat tax ... 959
 - Revenue from ... 963
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Insurance, Automobile
 - Public plan re ... 86
 - Reform of ... 854, 1339–40
 - Reform of: Communications budget re ... 256, 283
 - Reform of: Letter re (SP707/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 - Reform of: PC caucus committee review of ... 1339
 - Reform of: Review of ... 1339
 - Reform of: *Thompson's World Insurance News* article re ... 454
 - Reform of: *Thompson's World Insurance News* article re (SP241/05: Tabled) ... 463
- Insurance, Automobile–Premiums
 - Elimination of sales tax from ... 86, 854, 960
 - General remarks ... 86, 256
 - Impact on small business ... 854, 904, 960
 - Rebates under \$50, number of (Q8/05: Defeated) ... 660
 - Reductions in ... 362–63, 454, 1669
 - Reductions in: Political influence re ... 454
 - Reductions in: Publicity campaign re ... 963
 - Six percent cut to ... 904

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) (Continued)

- Insurance, Liability
 - For small businesses ... 961
- Insurance–Premiums
 - Elimination of sales tax from ... 854, 1031
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 579–82, 584
 - Committee ... 1190–93
- Insurance companies
 - Profits ... 86, 256
- Interim supply–Saskatchewan
 - General remarks ... 257
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund)
 - estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 255–58
- The Land Development Company
 - Letter to Securities Commission re Walton's business practices (SP796/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Legislative Assembly Office
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Libraries–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1483–84
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole ... 1483
- Light rail transit–Finance
 - Provincial funding ... 1327
- Limousines
 - Use by government members ... 1106
- Lobbyists–Registration
 - General remarks ... 454
- Local Authorities Election Act
 - Review of ... 1328
- Lockheed Martin Corporation
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 120
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation ... 258
- Low-income families
 - Tax reductions for ... 959, 961
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 108–10
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Committee ... 1872, 1877
- Medical care
 - Opting out of national plan for ... 1188
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 257
- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1971
- Medical care–Finance
 - General remarks ... 258
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Caroline Mouris ... 805–06
 - Chris Muller ... 1081
 - Ethical investments ... 294
 - Fly for a Cure fundraiser ... 1313
 - Linda-Rae Carson ... 2016
 - Loretta Van Brabant ... 698
 - Respect for women in politics ... 1606–07
 - Rotary International ... 25
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004: Letter re (SP117/05: Tabled) ... 171
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004: Public meeting re ... 257

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) *(Continued)*

- MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation
 - Report ... 1188
- MS Awareness Month
 - General remarks ... 1313
- Muller, Mr. Chris
 - Statement re ... 1081
- Multiple sclerosis—Research
 - Contributions by hang-gliding fundraiser to ... 1313
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Public consultation re ... 1327–28
- Natural resources revenue
 - Forecasting of ... 960
 - Use for budget purposes ... 959–60
- Office of the Premier
 - Current chief of staff (Rod Love) remuneration (Q23/05: Defeated) ... 814–15
 - Former chief of staff (Peter Elzinga) remuneration (Q22/05: Defeated) ... 814
 - Former chief of staff (Steve West) severance package ... 292
 - Premier's television addresses ... 1106–07
- Oil—Prices
 - Forecasting of ... 960, 962
- Ombudsman
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 257
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Automobile insurance ... 1669
 - Automobile insurance rates ... 86, 362–63, 454
 - Automobile insurance reforms ... 1339–40
 - Budget surplus expenditures ... 1626
 - Commercial vehicle insurance rates ... 904
 - Crime prevention ... 1256
 - Government investments ... 120
 - Insurance costs for nonprofit sector ... 1031
 - Insurance rates for small and medium-sized businesses ... 854
 - Public service pension appeals ... 291–292
 - Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 1710
 - Securities Commission ... 528, 772
 - Teachers' retirement fund ... 1448
 - Teachers' unfunded pension liability ... 1910
 - Treasury Branch loans ... 2050
 - Whistle-blower protection ... 1520–21
- Organized crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1256
- Pensions, Private-sector
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 960
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 418, 463, 536, 579
- Point of Order
 - Factual accuracy ... 1343–44
 - Sub judice rule ... 581
- Police, Provincial
 - Establishment of ... 1188
- Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence
 - General remarks ... 698
- Privilege
 - Notice of, re actions by Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor (Not proceeded with) ... 1614, 1633
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Third reading ... 791–92

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) *(Continued)*

- Provincial/municipal relations
 - General remarks ... 1327–28
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Auto insurance press release ... 1669
- Public assistance
 - Increase to: Letter re (SP793/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Rancher's Beef
 - Treasury Board loan to ... 2050
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Second reading ... 540
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1350–51
 - General remarks ... 960
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 44)
 - Second reading ... 1809–10
- Resource rebates from budget surplus (2005)
 - General remarks ... 1626
- Roads—Edmonton
 - 23rd Avenue/Calgary Trail intersection: Upgrading ... 258, 1327
- Rotary International
 - 100th anniversary: Statement re ... 25
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Forensics lab closure, Edmonton: Letter re (SP192/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Royal Rubber Stamp Co.
 - Executive Council contract ... 1106
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 671–72
- School at the Legislature (Educational program)
 - General remarks ... 1606
- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 808–11
- Securities Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 19)
 - Second reading ... 625–27
 - Committee ... 725, 727
 - Third reading ... 941
- Separatism, Western
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Small business
 - Impact of auto insurance rates on ... 854, 904, 960
 - Impact of liability insurance rates on ... 961
- Small business—Taxation
 - General remarks ... 960
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 179–80
- Smoking in public places
 - E-mail re (SP137/05: Tabled) ... 211
- Smoking in the workplace
 - E-mail re (SP137/05: Tabled) ... 211
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 108–10
- Sponsorship scandal (Federal government)
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Sports exchange programs
 - Funding for ... 1483–84
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Second reading ... 545–46
 - Committee ... 561–62

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) *(Continued)*

- Student financial aid
 - Dollar value for students attending private institutions, 2000-04 (Q21/05: Response tabled as SP475/05) ... 813-14
 - Dollar value under student loan program, 2000-04 (Q20/05: Response tabled as SP474/05) ... 813
- Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 430
- Sub judge
 - General remarks ... 581
- Surgical services, Private
 - General remarks ... 258
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 961, 1626
 - Heritage Savings funding with ... 960
 - Investment policy for: Legislation re (Bill 203) ... 960
 - Municipal infrastructure debt funding with ... 960
 - Postsecondary education funding with ... 960
- Talisman Energy Inc.
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 120
- Tax revenue, Provincial
 - General remarks ... 963
- Taxation
 - General remarks ... 959-60, 961
 - Reduction in, use of surplus for ... 1626
- Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Unfunded liability ... 1448, 1910
 - Unfunded liability: Letters re (SP708-710, 730-731/05: Tabled) ... 1891, 1920
- Thompson's World Insurance News*
 - March 14, 2005 article re Alberta auto insurance reforms ... 454
 - March 14, 2005 article re Alberta auto insurance reforms (SP241/05: Tabled) ... 463
- Tobacco companies
 - Heritage Fund investment in ... 120, 294, 963
- Tourism-Marketing
 - Use of tourism levy revenue for ... 960
- Tourism levy
 - Conversion of hotel tax to ... 257
 - General remarks ... 960
- Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1004-05
- Treasury Branches
 - Expansion plans ... 961
 - Lending policies, Auditor General's comments re ... 960, 2050
 - Loan to Rancher's Beef ... 2050
- United Way (Charitable organization)
 - Contributions by hang-gliding fundraiser to ... 1313
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 257
- Van Brabant, Loretta
 - Statement re ... 698
- Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility: Email re (SP681/05: Tabled) ... 1838
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility: Pamphlet re (SP754/05: Tabled) ... 1971

Miller, Rick (L, Edmonton-Rutherford) *(Continued)*

- Walton International Group Inc.
 - Invitation to presentation on their land banking business (SP795/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission: Decision re (SP794/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission: Letter from Land Development Company re (SP796/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Whistle-blower protection
 - Securities Commission case ... 1520-21
- Women in politics
 - Respect for: Statement re ... 1606-07
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Second reading ... 685-86
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Second reading ... 1815-16
- Mitzel, Len (PC, Cypress-Medicine Hat)**
 - Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs ... 119
 - Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board
 - General remarks ... 373
 - Alberta Podiatry Association
 - General remarks ... 240
 - Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 951
 - Basketball championships
 - Foremost high school Falcons 1A provincial champions ... 417-18
 - Border crossings-Canada/United States
 - Additional 24-hour crossing for Alberta (Wild Horse crossing) ... 646
 - Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 119, 288-89
 - Calf set-aside program (Canada/Alberta)
 - Extension of ... 119
 - Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - General remarks ... 119
 - Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade
 - NAFTA challenge re U.S. border closure to Canadian cattle ... 289
 - Cattle-Export-United States
 - Contingency plan (2004) re continued border closure ... 119
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 289
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, under NAFTA ... 290
 - Cattle rustling-Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1121
 - Cellular telephones in automobiles
 - Legislation re (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1005
 - College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
 - General remarks ... 240
 - Deceased persons
 - Disclosure of personal information re: Legislation re (Bill 8) ... 373
 - Dept. of Agriculture (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 289
 - Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1405-06

Mitzel, Len (PC, Cypress-Medicine Hat) (Continued)

Emergency planning
Statement re ... 1151–52

Emergency Preparedness Week
General remarks ... 1151

Extended care facilities—Standards
Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1405–06
Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1177

Fed cattle set-aside program
Extension of ... 119

Government Organization Act
Amendment by Bill 7 ... 240

Health Information Act
Paramouncy over Personal Information Protection Act ... 373

Health Professions Act
Amendment by Bill 7 ... 240

Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 7)
Second reading ... 240, 371, 373
Committee ... 448–49
Third reading ... 637

Heinricks, Mr. Mark
Statement re ... 1450

Hockey championships
Medicine Hat Royals pee wee AA champions ... 417

Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
Co-ordination with other provincial commissioners:
Legislation re (Bill 8) ... 373

International trade—United States
Irritants re ... 288–89

Kidney Foundation of Canada
General remarks ... 805

Live2Share (Organ donation campaign)
General remarks ... 805

Livestock brands—Inspection
Role in cattle rustling prevention ... 1121

Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
General remarks ... 97–99

Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill Pr. 3)
First reading ... 622
Second reading ... 1509
Third reading ... 1557

Members' Statements (2005)
Emergency preparedness ... 1151–52
Mark Heinricks ... 1450
National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week ... 805

Mouris, Caroline
Statement re ... 805–06

National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week
Statement re ... 805

Natural gas rebates
For commercial operations ... 1146
Renewal of ... 1145–46

North American free trade agreement
Border closure to cattle challenge under ... 289

Nurse practitioners
Regulation changes re (Bill 7) ... 240

Oral Question Period (2005)
Agricultural income stabilization program ... 119
Alberta/U.S. border crossings ... 646
Cattle rustling ... 1121

Mitzel, Len (PC, Cypress-Medicine Hat) (Continued)

Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)
Dental assistance for seniors ... 951
Natural gas rebates ... 1145–46
North American trade ... 288–89

Personal Information Protection Act
Select committee review of, delayed by one year ... 373

Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 8)
Amendment (SP305/05: Tabled) ... 688

Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence
General remarks ... 1450

Public Health Act
Amendment by Bill 7 ... 240

Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
General remarks ... 417–18

Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Cattle rustling prevention efforts ... 1121

Softwoods—Export—United States
Countervail duties re ... 288

Speech from the Throne
Debate ... 97–99

Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
First reading ... 252
Second reading ... 517–18, 525
Committee ... 602–06, 608–09
Third reading ... 940

Tourism—Southeast Alberta
Impact of additional 24-hour border crossing on ... 646

Traffic Safety Act
Amendments re hand-held cell phone use while driving (Motion 506: Chase) ... 1005

Water supply—Stettler area communities
Legislation re (Bill 11) ... 252

Morton, Dr. F.L. (PC, Foothills-Rockyview)
Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
Third reading ... 1238–40

Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
Second reading ... 679

Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
Investigation of complaints re Bishop Henry's remarks ... 698

Alberta Regulations
Reform of ... 1150

Barley—Marketing
General remarks ... 1203

Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
Second reading ... 1948

Budget
2005-06 second-quarter fiscal update ... 1667

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
Second reading ... 1955–56, 1957

Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
General remarks ... 1667

Canadian Environmental Protection Act (Federal)
Carbon dioxide classified as noxious gas under ... 1967

Canadian Wheat Board
Protesters against, Saskatchewan court decision re ... 1203

Morton, Dr. F.L. (PC, Foothills-Rockyview) (Continued)

Carbon dioxide
 Classification as noxious gas ... 1967
 Carbon dioxide emissions
 Regulations re ... 1967
 Carson, Ms Linda-Rae
 Statement re ... 2016
 Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 General remarks ... 698
 Climate change
 Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to ... 1967
 Court of Appeal (Saskatchewan)
 Wheat Board protesters acquittal ... 1203
 Daycare centres—Finance
 National program for: Alberta participation ...
 1076–77
 Equalization payments
 General remarks ... 1667
 Firearms—Licensing
 Impact on provincial hunting regulations ... 2050
 Fish conservation
 Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 615–16
 Fisheries, Commercial
 Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 615–16
 Fisheries, Commercial—Bow River
 General remarks ... 615
 Freedom of expression
 Statement re ... 698
 Government spending policy
 General remarks ... 1667
 Governor General's award for excellence in teaching
 Canadian history
 Statement re ... 2015–16
 Grain—Marketing
 Saskatchewan court decision re ... 1203
 Greenhouse gas emissions
 Regulations re ... 1967
 Grizzly bear hunting
 General remarks ... 246
 Henry, Frederick B., Roman Catholic Bishop of Calgary
 Remarks about definition of marriage ... 698
 Highway 8—Calgary area
 Impact of southwest ring road on ... 460
 Intersection with 101st Street ... 460
 Intersection with highway 22 ... 460
 Truck traffic on ... 460
 Hunting—Regulations
 For youth ... 2050
 Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 General remarks ... 131–33
 Marriage
 Definition of: Statement re ... 698
 Members' Statements (2005)
 Acquittal of Wheat Board protesters ... 1203
 Definition of marriage ... 698
 Discovery of oil in Turner Valley ... 1527
 Governor General's awards for excellence in teaching
 Canadian history ... 2015–16
 Métis hunting/fishing rights
 Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 246, 615–16
 Natural resources revenue
 Use for budget purposes ... 1667
 Volatility of ... 1667

Morton, Dr. F.L. (PC, Foothills-Rockyview) (Continued)

Oil discovery—Turner Valley
 Statement re ... 1527
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Climate change ... 1967
 Hunting regulations for youths ... 2050
 Métis hunting rights ... 246, 615–16
 National child care initiative ... 1076–77
 Regulatory reform ... 1150
 Resource revenues ... 1667
 Senate reform ... 287–88
 Ring roads—Calgary
 Impact on highway 8 ... 460
 Same-sex marriage
 Statement re ... 698
 Senate (Canada)
 Reform of ... 287–88
 Senators
 Alberta nominees for ... 287–88
 Speech from the Throne
 Debate ... 131–33
 Surplus, Budgetary
 General remarks ... 1667
 Tar sands development—Environmental aspects
 General remarks ... 1967
 Tax incentives
 Stay-at-home parents (re daycare) ... 1076–77
 Trout—Bow River
 Commercial fishing of ... 615
 Turner Valley (Town)
 75th anniversary ... 1527
 University of Calgary
 Research initiatives report (SP399/05: Tabled) ...
 1259
 Wheat—Marketing
 General remarks ... 1203
 Wildlife conservation
 Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 246, 615–16
Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks)
 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 Funding for ... 1085
 Airline industry
 Government incentives to ... 1391
 Airport authorities
 Independence of ... 362
 Rent paid to federal government ... 362, 1390–91
 Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 Henwood facility, replacement of ... 1800
 Leased facilities costs ... 1800
 Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
 Federal gasoline tax revenue discussions ... 852
 Alberta Children's Hospital
 New hospital: Funding for ... 1086
 New hospital: Opening of ... 1309
 New hospital: Road access ... 364
 Alberta Cities Transportation Partnership program
 General remarks ... 1085
 Alberta SuperNet
 General remarks ... 289
 School access to ... 1095
 Alberta Transportation Safety Board
 Appeals to, time limit on: Legislation re (Bill 13) ...
 93
 Funding for ... 1085

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Federal gasoline tax revenue discussions ... 852
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - School funding under Education dept. recommendation ... 84
- Amiskwaciy Academy
 - General remarks ... 738
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Cost overruns ... 1336
 - Funding for ... 1086, 1800
 - Impact on highways 14 and 21 ... 324
 - North portion of, completion date ... 1713
 - Public/private partnership funding model for north portion of ... 1713
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of ... 324, 645, 1086, 1093, 1713, 1883–84
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Contracts re (M39/05: Response tabled as SP513/05) ... 1608
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs ... 287, 318, 617
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs comparison for (M41/05: Response tabled as SP514/05) ... 1169, 1608
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05: Response tabled as SP511/05) ... 1162, 1608
 - Time frame for completion ... 324
- Apprenticeship training
 - General remarks ... 1089
- Auditor General
 - Anthony Henday Drive P3 contract, involvement in ... 287, 318
 - Public/private partnership contracts, comments on ... 1095
- Automobiles–Seizure
 - For prostitution-related offences: Legislation re (Bill 206, 2003) ... 456–57
- Banff Centre for Continuing Education
 - Sir Donald Cameron Hall renovations, funding for ... 1086, 1088
- Black Gold Regional Division #18
 - Operation/maintenance funding concerns ... 1030
- Bow River Irrigation District
 - Headworks upgrading ... 1086
- Bow Valley College
 - Construction projects at ... 1088
- Bowness school, Calgary
 - Refurbishment of ... 1572
- Bridges–Construction
 - Funding for ... 803, 1086
 - Over waterways, federal approval process re ... 1802
- Bridges–North Saskatchewan River–Drayton Valley area
 - General remarks ... 803, 1802
- Budget
 - Process re ... 1621
- Calgary Airport Authority
 - Rent paid to federal government ... 362
- Calgary Board of Education
 - School construction delays ... 1198–99

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Calgary Board of Education (Continued)
 - School maintenance problems ... 459
 - Western Canada high school restoration funding ... 1572
- Calgary Health Region
 - Hospital capital upgrades ... 1309
- Canada/Alberta municipal rural infrastructure program
 - General remarks ... 1086
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
 - Hines Creek mill closure, impact of ... 88
- Capital projects
 - Deficit re ... 1803
 - Public/private partnerships re ... 617, 645, 905, 1093, 1095, 1803, 1883–84
 - Public/private partnerships re: Auditor General's comments re ... 1095
 - Public/private partnerships re: List of all potential projects (M33/05: Response tabled as SP512/05) ... 1163, 1608
 - Small projects funding ... 1800
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- Capital projects, Municipal–Finance
 - Calgary education projects ... 1026–27, 1198–99
 - Crowsnest Pass projects ... 1305
 - Federal funding ... 1086, 1800
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 200, 576, 1199, 1628
 - General remarks ... 200–01, 900, 1085, 1093–94, 1096, 1199, 1253
 - Regional pooling of ... 1096
 - Summer villages projects ... 1096
 - Vetting of projects with provincial government ... 1094, 1253
- Capital projects–Finance
 - General remarks ... 1085, 1803
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 798
- Cement
 - Shortage of, impact on road construction costs ... 1804
- Centennial Capital Plan
 - General remarks ... 1805
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Reduction of: Funding for ... 1570
- Classroom space
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 978
- Committee on Aviation, Standing
 - Minister's presentation to, re airport rental costs ... 1391
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 1090–91
- Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety
 - Airport rental costs issue ... 362
- Court of Queen's Bench
 - Edmonton Public School Board school closure decision ... 1446
- Courts–Calgary
 - New courthouse, Public/private funding of ... 905
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - General remarks ... 1093
- Deerfoot Trail, Calgary
 - Douglasdale Drive interchange, funding for ... 1086
 - Median barrier installation ... 2011

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Delta Driving School
 - Licensing incident ... 1309
- Demerit points (Traffic infractions)
 - Application to photoradar infractions ... 615
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Return of capital funding to ... 1803
- Dept. of Education
 - Return of school capital funding to ... 84, 1088, 1803
- Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans (Federal government)
 - Bridges over waterways, construction approval process ... 1802
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Return of health facility funding to ... 1803
- Dept. of Infrastructure
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP53/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP578/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Budget target ... 1621
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1085-86, 1088-91, 1093-98
 - Highway maintenance yard, Caroline, environmental issues re ... 1800
 - Reason for merging together ... 1088
 - Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... 84, 1088, 1803
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1799-1805
- Dept. of Transportation
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP54/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Direct Energy Business Services
 - Energy savings partnership with University of Calgary ... 696
- Drunk driving
 - Funding for government programs for ... 1800
- Edmonton Catholic School District
 - Capital plan changes (Castle Downs high school, Terwillegar school) ... 1078, 1197-98
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Closure of schools ... 120-21, 577, 1311, 1446, 1570
 - Closure of schools: Court decision re ... 1446
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... 84-85, 577
 - Leasing of commercial space for continuing education ... 738
 - Maintenance/utility costs, use of instructional funds for ... 1570
 - Unused space ... 738, 1570-71
 - Victoria school project funds, diversion to new school funding ... 1524
- Edmonton Regional Airports Authority
 - Rent paid to federal government ... 362
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 1089
- Education-Finance
 - General remarks ... 1522, 1524-25, 1570-71
- Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division #41
 - Interest in Lakeland College's Sherwood Park campus ... 1575
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1402-03
- Emergency vehicles, Stationary
 - Speed limits for passing of ... 1884

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Energy efficiency (Buildings)
 - Direct Energy/U of C partnership re ... 696
- Energy rebates
 - Funding for ... 1085
- Energy resources, Alternate
 - Provincial government usage of ... 696
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1402-03
- Federal Building
 - Disposition of ... 1096-97, 1518
- Foothills Medical Centre
 - Road access to new children's hospital ... 364
- Upgrades to ... 1309
- Upgrades to, funding for ... 1086
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 1090-91
- Forest fires-Control
 - Use of government aircraft for ... 1096
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 200-01, 576, 1628, 1800
- Francophone schools
 - Provincial funding of ... 1805
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Edmonton Journal* request under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 1519, 1521
 - Edmonton Journal* request under, re government aircraft manifest information: Public inquiry re ... 1519, 1521
 - Liberal opposition requests under, re government aircraft manifest information ... 42, 53, 87, 122-23
- Gasoline-Taxation
 - Federal revenue from, transferred to municipalities ... 852, 1085, 1199
- Government aircraft
 - Costs ... 46
 - Policy on usage of ... 18-19, 45-46, 979, 1094
 - Reduction in number of ... 41
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 42, 53, 122-23, 1519, 1521
 - Rod Love's trip to Fort McMurray on ... 612
 - Use for forest fire fighting ... 1096
 - Use for Tory leadership campaign purposes ... 42
- Government chartered aircraft
 - Policy on usage of ... 45-46, 87, 979, 1094
 - Provision of details re ... 691
 - Provision of details re: Documents, April 2001 to Dec. 2004 (SP358/05: Tabled) ... 957
- Government office space
 - Leased space costs ... 1800
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 1621
- Government vehicles
 - Funding for ... 1800
- Griffith Scott middle school, Millet
 - Replacement/renovation of ... 1025-26
- Health facilities-Construction
 - Funding for ... 1803
- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)
 - Funding for ... 1086, 1096

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Heavy equipment
 - Purchase of, with infrastructure funding ... 1253
- Henwood Treatment Centre
 - Replacement of ... 1800
- High schools—Construction—Edmonton
 - Castle Downs area school, change in priority re ... 1078, 1197–98
 - South Edmonton academic school construction ... 1078, 1197–98
- Highway 2—Aldersyde area
 - Interchange with highways 7 and 547 ... 575
- Highway 2—Dunvegan bridge area
 - Realignment of ... 88, 1805
- Highway 2A—Red Deer/Blackfalds area
 - Intersection at Blindman industrial park ... 1963
- Highway 8—Calgary area
 - Impact of southwest ring road on ... 460–61
 - Intersection with 101st Street ... 460
 - Intersection with highway 22 ... 167, 460–61
 - Truck traffic on ... 167, 460
 - Twinning of ... 166–67, 461
- Highway 11
 - Upgrading of: Cost overruns ... 1336
- Highway 13—Camrose area
 - Upgrading of ... 1448
- Highway 14
 - Impact of Henday Drive on ... 324
- Highway 19
 - Twinning ... 950–51
- Highway 21
 - Impact of Henday Drive on ... 324
- Highway 22
 - Intersection with highway 8 ... 167
- Highway 28
 - Upgrading of ... 87, 741, 1628
- Highway 43
 - Upgrading of ... 44, 1740–41
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 44, 87, 200, 1090, 1199–1200, 1336, 1628, 1803
- Highway 725
 - Upgrading of: Cost overruns ... 1336
- Highway 881
 - Upgrading of ... 44, 87, 200, 1090, 1199–1200, 1336
- Highway construction sites—Safety aspects
 - Speeding limits ... 1884
- Highway interchanges—Construction
 - Funding for ... 1086
- Hospital beds—Calgary
 - Shortages of ... 1309
- Hospitals—Calgary
 - Capital upgrades to ... 1309
 - New south Calgary hospital ... 1309
 - New south Calgary hospital: Funding for ... 1086
 - New south Calgary hospital: Public/private funding of ... 905
- Hospitals—Construction
 - Funding for ... 1085
- Hospitals—Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 200
- Infrastructure Canada/Alberta Program
 - General remarks ... 1086

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Impact of driver training course for truck drivers on ... 1308
- Insurance Bureau of Canada
 - Young truck driver insurance rates, provincial negotiations re with ... 1308
- Irrigation—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1086
- Labour supply
 - Shortages of skilled workers ... 1090
- Lakeland College
 - Sherwood Park campus: P3 proposal for ... 1575
- Legislature Annex Building
 - Disposition of ... 1097, 1518
- Legislature grounds
 - Power plant on, disposition of ... 1518
 - Upgrading of ... 1096, 1518
- Lois Hole elementary school (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 121
- Love, Rod
 - Trip to Fort McMurray on government aircraft ... 612
- Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute
 - Funding for ... 1086
- Medical care
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 1096
- Medicine Hat College
 - Construction projects at ... 1088
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - General remarks ... 623
- Methane
 - Presence at proposed school site in Calgary's Battalion park area ... 2051–52
- Metro High School, Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 738
- Montgomery junior high school, Calgary
 - Physical condition ... 459
- Motorcycle driver licensing
 - Review of ... 954
- Mount Royal College
 - Construction projects at ... 1088
- Municipal Government Act
 - Crowsnest Pass regulation ... 1305
- Natural gas rebates
 - General remarks ... 1800
- North Red Deer Regional Water Users Group
 - Regional water initiative ... 576
- North/south trade corridor
 - Funding for ... 1086
- Oil—Export
 - Through port of Prince Rupert ... 905
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Affordable housing in Fort McMurray ... 87
 - Airport rental costs ... 362, 1390–91
 - Alberta/U.S. border crossings ... 646
 - Anthony Henday ring road ... 1713
 - Bridge repair and construction ... 803
 - Budget surplus expenditures ... 1621
 - Calgary area road construction ... 166–167
 - Calgary hospitals ... 1309
 - Calgary ring road southwest portion ... 1781–82
 - Canadian Forest Products Ltd. mill closure ... 88
 - Chartered air travel ... 979
 - Class sizes ... 978

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)
 - Construction projects in University Heights ... 364
 - Deerfoot Trail median barriers ... 2011
 - Energy efficiency at the University of Calgary ... 696
 - Federal gas tax agreement ... 852
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... 576, 1628
 - Government air travel ... 45-46, 87
 - Government aircraft ... 18-19, 41-42, 122-123
 - Government aircraft flight logs ... 1519, 1521
 - Government chartered air travel ... 691
 - Graduated drivers' licences ... 1308
 - Griffith Scott middle school ... 1025-26
 - Highway 2A ... 1963
 - Highway 13 ... 1448
 - Highway 28 ... 741
 - Highway 43 ... 1740-41
 - Highway construction ... 950-51, 1336
 - Highway improvements in northeastern Alberta ... 1199-1200
 - Highway safety ... 44
 - Highways 2, 7 and 547 interchange ... 575
 - Impacts of oil sands expansion ... 200-201
 - Infrastructure needs in Fort McMurray ... 612
 - Infrastructure spending ... 900
 - Lakeland College ... 1575
 - Legislature environs ... 1518
 - Motorcycle driver licensing ... 954
 - Municipal grants to Crowsnest Pass ... 1305
 - Municipal infrastructure program ... 1253
 - Municipal infrastructure spending ... 1199
 - Oversize/overweight trucking permits ... 2010
 - Photoradar ... 614-15
 - Private/public partnerships ... 617, 645, 905, 1883-84
 - Railway container terminals ... 905-06
 - Regional water and sewer systems ... 576
 - Road safety ... 458
 - Rural development strategies ... 289
 - School closures ... 1446, 1570-71
 - School construction ... 1078
 - School construction estimates ... 1310-11
 - School construction in Calgary ... 1026-27, 1198-99, 1572-73
 - School construction in Edmonton ... 1197-98
 - School construction in southwest Calgary ... 2051-52
 - School funding formula ... 1522
 - School infrastructure ... 459
 - School operation and maintenance funding ... 1030-31
 - School utilization ... 84-85, 577, 738
 - School utilization formula ... 121
 - Seizure of vehicles in prostitution-related offences ... 120, 456-57
 - Southeast Edmonton ring road ... 287, 318, 324
 - Traffic safety ... 1884
 - Truck driver certification ... 1308-09
 - Unbudgeted surplus ... 798
 - Use of school instructional funding ... 1524
- Peter Lougheed Centre (Calgary General Hospital)
 - Upgrades to ... 1309
 - Upgrades to, funding for ... 1086
- Photoradar (Traffic safety)
 - Use on provincial highways ... 614-15

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Pipelines—Alberta/Prince Rupert, B.C.
 - General remarks ... 905
- Point of Order
 - False allegations ... 1412
 - Provoking debate ... 53
- Port of Prince Rupert
 - Container terminal at ... 905
- Postsecondary educational institutions
 - Upgrading of, funding for ... 1086
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Construction
 - General remarks ... 1088
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Utilization
 - General remarks ... 1088
 - Year-round operation ... 1088-89
- Postsecondary graduates
 - Number of ... 1089
- Property, Personal
 - Seizure of ... 457
- Public buildings
 - Energy efficiency in ... 696
- Public buildings—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1085, 1799-1800
- Queen Elizabeth II highway—Edmonton area
 - Underpass, Henday Drive interchange ... 1804
- Rail service—Alberta/Prince Rupert, B.C.
 - General remarks ... 905
- Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)
 - First reading ... 93
 - Second reading ... 421, 422
 - Third reading ... 637
- Railway container terminals—Grande Prairie area
 - Proposal for ... 905
- Railway container terminals—Prince Rupert, B.C.
 - Impact on Alberta trade ... 905
- Railway crossings
 - Dispute resolution mechanism re (Bill 13) ... 93
- Red Deer College
 - Construction projects at ... 1088
 - Truck driver training program ... 1308
- Red Deer Regional Hospital
 - Renovations, funding for ... 1086
- Ring roads—Calgary
 - Funding for ... 1086, 1800
 - Impact on highway 8 ... 460-61
 - Land acquisition re, from Tsuu T'ina nation ... 166, 1781-82
- Road construction
 - General remarks ... 1336
 - Gravel roads ... 1096
 - Priorities re ... 950-51
 - Resource road program ... 1085
- Road construction—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1085, 1086, 1094, 1800, 1803
 - Public/private partnerships re ... 1804
 - Small projects ... 1800
 - Trust fund for ... 1805
- Road construction—Fort McMurray area
 - Impact of population increase on ... 87
- Roads
 - Median barrier installation, on twinned roads ... 2011
- Roads—Edmonton
 - 23rd Avenue/Calgary Trail intersection: Upgrading ... 1091

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Roads—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1085, 1086
 - Impact on traffic safety ... 458, 950–51, 1085
- Roads—Maintenance and repair—Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1199–1200
 - Impact on traffic safety ... 44
- Roads for royalties
 - General remarks ... 1090
- Rockyview General Hospital
 - Upgrades to ... 1309
 - Upgrades to, companies bidding on contracts for ... 1090
- Royal Alexandra Hospital
 - Renovations, funding for ... 1086
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 289
- School boards
 - Funding ... 1522
 - Funding for restoration of aging schools ... 1572
 - Utility costs ... 1522, 1570
- Schools
 - Restoration of, funding for ... 1572
- Schools—Closure
 - General remarks ... 84–85, 120–21, 577, 1095, 1311, 1446, 1570–71
- Schools—Construction
 - Determining of priorities for ... 1078
 - General remarks ... 1089
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 978
 - Impact of utilization formula on ... 121, 1310–11
 - Modular schools ... 1089
 - Public/private projects re ... 905, 1088
- Schools—Construction—Calgary
 - Battalion park area ... 2051–52
 - General remarks ... 1026–27, 1086, 1198–99, 1572–73
- Schools—Construction—Canmore
 - P3 funding ... 1088
- Schools—Construction—Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 1078, 1086, 1197–98, 1311, 1524
- Schools—Construction—Falun
 - General remarks ... 1025
- Schools—Construction—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1085, 1086
 - Return to Education dept. responsibility ... 84, 1088
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 798
- Schools—Construction—Fort McMurray
 - Increase in, due to oil sands expansion ... 200
- Schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1030–31, 1085, 1086, 1522, 1570–71
 - General remarks ... 459
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 978
 - Renovation or replacement criteria ... 1026
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 798
- Schools—Rural areas
 - Community-based utilization formula for ... 84, 121
 - General remarks ... 289
- Schools—Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 84–85, 120–21, 577, 1310–11, 1446, 1522, 1570–71
 - Community group use of, as part of formula re ... 577
 - General remarks ... 738, 1089, 1095, 1803
 - Review of formula for ... 1522

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Senior citizens' lodges
 - Funding for ... 1800
- Sewage disposal plants, Regional
 - General remarks ... 576
- Sewage disposal plants—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1085, 1800
- Sewage disposal plants—Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 200, 1628
- Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, Calgary
 - Funding for ... 1309
- Strategic economic corridors (Highway construction)
 - Funding for ... 1800
- Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School, Edmonton
 - Closure: Court decision re ... 1446
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Capital project funding with ... 645, 798, 1621, 1800–01
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure funding with ... 1628
 - General remarks ... 1621
 - Road construction funding with ... 1800–01
- Swan Hills Treatment Centre
 - Operational funding for ... 1085
- Tar sands development
 - Impact of ... 200–01
- Terrace Building, Edmonton
 - Disposition of ... 1097, 1518
- Terrace Heights Elementary School, Edmonton
 - Closure ... 1446
- Tourism—Southeast Alberta
 - Impact of additional 24-hour border crossing on ... 646
- Traffic accidents—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 458
- Traffic fatalities
 - Reduction of ... 1090
- Traffic regulations
 - Enforcement of ... 44
- Traffic safety
 - Funding for ... 1085, 1090
 - Funding for children's programs re ... 1800
 - General remarks ... 950, 1884
 - McDermid report on ... 44, 458, 1802
 - McDermid report on: Costs of (M48/05: Response tabled as SP713/05) ... 1749, 1891
 - Median barrier installations, on twinned roads ... 2011
- Traffic safety—Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 44
- Traffic Safety Act
 - Amendments required by Bill 206, 2003 ... 456–57
- Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)
 - General remarks ... 1090
- Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 206, 2003)
 - Proclamation of ... 456–57
- Truck drivers—Training
 - College-based course ... 1308–09
- Trucking industry
 - Oversize permit process ... 2010
 - Use of highway 8 ... 167
- Tsuu T'ina First Nation
 - Transfer of land re southwest Calgary ring road ... 166, 1781–82

Oberg, Hon. Lyle (PC, Strathmore-Brooks) (Continued)

- Turner Valley Gas Plant (Historic site)
 - Environmental cleanup of ... 1800
 - University of Alberta
 - Construction projects at ... 1088
 - University of Calgary
 - Construction projects at ... 1088
 - Craigie Hall renovation ... 1086
 - Energy savings partnership with Direct Energy ... 696
 - University of Lethbridge
 - Service building replacement ... 1086
 - Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts, Edmonton
 - Funding for ... 1086
 - Funding for, diverted to new school funding ... 1524
 - Warner hockey school for girls
 - Infrastructure funding for ... 900
 - Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 1085, 1800
 - Water pipelines—Red Deer area
 - General remarks ... 576
 - Water treatment plants
 - Funding for ... 1085, 1800
 - Water treatment plants—Fort McMurray
 - General remarks ... 576, 1628
 - Western Canada high school, Calgary
 - Restoration of ... 1572–73
 - Wild Rose School Division
 - Operation/maintenance funding concerns ... 1030
- Oberle, Frank (PC, Peace River)**
- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 224–25
 - Amendment A1 (SP271 & 313/05: Tabled) ... 733
 - Amendment A2 (SP314 & 343/05: Tabled) ... 733
 - Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
 - Risk management tools ... 698
 - Air tankers (Water bombers)
 - Fees for airport use by ... 936
 - Airports—Northern Alberta
 - Review of fees at, for water bomber fleet ... 936
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1821
 - Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on crop production ... 698
 - Brooklyn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
 - First reading ... 622
 - Second reading ... 1947, 1949–50
 - Committee ... 1957–58
 - Third reading ... 2024
 - Amendment (SP742/05: Tabled) ... 1957
 - Canadian Association of Food Banks
 - Time for Action: HungerCount 2005 (Report) (SP712/05: Tabled) ... 1891
 - Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 - General remarks ... 484
 - Consumer protection
 - Legislation re ... 326
 - Crop insurance program
 - Spring price endorsement option: Statement re ... 698
 - Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 935–36

Oberle, Frank (PC, Peace River) (Continued)

- Edmonton City Centre Airport
 - Operational status ... 125
- Electric power lines
 - Capacity ... 649
 - Tie lines with B.C. and Montana ... 649
- Energy industry
 - Foreign investment in ... 801
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Amendment (SP312/05: Tabled) ... 733
- Film industry—Northern Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1341
- Fish and wildlife legislation
 - Enforcement of ... 936
- Fish conservation
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 89
- Fishing, Sport
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 89
- Food banks
 - Statement re ... 1888
- Forest fires—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1393
- Forest industries
 - Impact of mountain pine beetle on ... 247
- Forest management
 - General remarks ... 935
- Forest tenure system
 - General remarks ... 936
- Geiger, Alyse
 - Recognition of ... 169
- Great Kids of Alberta
 - Awards: Recognition of ... 169
- Hank Williams First Nation* (Film)
 - Statement re ... 1341
- Insurance, Automobile
 - Competition open to other provinces' public plans: Legislation re (Bill 34) ... 326
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - First reading ... 326
 - Second reading ... 476, 579, 712–13
 - Committee ... 1191–93
 - Third reading ... 1513, 1515
- Logging
 - Rate of ... 530–31
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 116
- Marriage
 - Definition of ... 484
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 484
- Marriage Act (Alberta)
 - Legal challenge to, re same-sex marriage ... 484
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - First reading ... 1631
 - Second reading ... 1681–82, 1775
 - Committee ... 1872–78
 - Third reading ... 2022
- Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill Pr. 3)
 - Second reading ... 1509
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Crop production insurance changes ... 698
 - Food bank usage ... 1888
 - Hank Williams First Nation* ... 1341
 - National Forest Week ... 1257
 - Progressive Conservative convention ... 651

Oberle, Frank (PC, Peace River) (Continued)

- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 89, 936
- National Forest Week
 - Statement re ... 1257
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Definition of marriage ... 484
 - Edmonton City Centre Airport ... 125
 - Electricity transmission line capacity ... 649
 - Foreign investments in the energy industry ... 801
 - Forest fires ... 1393
 - Forest sustainability ... 530–31
 - Métis hunting rights ... 89
 - Mountain pine beetle control ... 247, 1742
 - Senate appointments ... 455
 - Softwood lumber trade dispute ... 1499
- Pine beetles—Control
 - Federal funding for ... 936
 - General remarks ... 247, 935–36, 1742
 - Research into ... 935–36
- Point of Order
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 306
 - Sub judice rule ... 581
- Prenatal wrongful conduct law
 - Maternal tort immunity provisions (Bill 45) ... 1631
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
 - Convention, Edmonton: Statement re ... 651
- Reclamation of land
 - Failed reclamation work, legislation allowing re-entry to rectify (Bill 53) ... 1745
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 169
- Reforestation
 - General remarks ... 530–31, 936
- Same-sex marriage—Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 484
- Senate (Canada)
 - Reform of ... 455
- Senators
 - Alberta nominees for ... 455
 - Appointments of, by Prime Minister ... 455
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 178–79
 - Committee ... 506–07
 - Amendments (SP265/05: Tabled) ... 509
- Softwoods—Export—United States
 - Countervail duties re ... 936
 - Countervail duties re: Byrd amendment re ... 1499
- Sorensen, Mr. Aaron
 - General remarks ... 1341
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 116
- Sub judice
 - General remarks ... 581
- Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)
 - First reading ... 1745
 - Second reading ... 1868, 1869
 - Committee ... 1979
 - Third reading ... 2027
- Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board
 - Appeals to, re-entry to land to rectify failed reclamation work ... 1745
- Tar sands development
 - Chinese investment in ... 801
 - Value-added opportunities ... 801

Oberle, Frank (PC, Peace River) (Continued)

- Wildlife conservation
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 89
- Willmore Wilderness Park
 - Mountain pine bark beetle infestation in ... 1742
- Ouellette, Hon. Luke (PC, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake)**
 - Alberta Alliance Party
 - Payment of senators-in-waiting speaking tour costs ... 695
 - Alberta Corporate Service Centre
 - General remarks ... 752, 755, 756, 757, 758, 761, 763
 - Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ... 619, 761
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 244, 751
 - Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - Reducing of ... 954
 - Alberta Regulations
 - Reform of ... 1150
 - Review of ... 1710
 - Review of, staffing for ... 761
 - Secretariat to review ... 1150
 - Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1818–19
 - Alberta SuperNet
 - Completion date ... 88, 757
 - General remarks ... 244, 289, 752–53, 753, 755, 757, 758, 762, 1149
 - Health services delivery via ... 854
 - Hookup fees ... 320
 - Monitoring of contracts re ... 755
 - School access to ... 756, 758, 760–61
 - Security features ... 755
 - Telus bid on ... 320
 - Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency: Documentation re (M29/05: Response tabled as SP515/05) ... 1160, 1608
 - Video conferencing capabilities ... 757, 1337
 - Voice over Internet capabilities ... 757
 - Webcast of health symposium over ... 1337
 - Webcasting capabilities ... 1337
 - Ambulance service
 - Review of, 2002 ... 244
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of ... 244
 - Auditor General
 - General remarks ... 754
 - Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation ... 755, 758, 759
 - Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation (Q18/05: Defeated) ... 812
 - Government employees' information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 1746, 2056
 - Sole-source contracts comments ... 619, 761
 - Axia NetMedia Corporation
 - Alberta Supernet contract ... 755, 762, 854
 - Bank of Montreal
 - Government procurement card system ... 757
 - Bell West
 - Alberta SuperNet contract ... 320, 755, 759–60, 854

Ouellette, Hon. Luke (PC, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake)*(Continued)*

British Columbia regulations
 General remarks ... 763
 Bruderheim Elementary School
 Closure ... 287
 Budget
 Process re ... 160
 Capital projects
 Public/private partnerships re ... 88
 Cellular telephones
 Security concerns ... 752
 Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 General remarks ... 317
 Corporate Chief Information Officer
 General remarks ... 752, 757, 758, 761
 Transfer to Dept. of Restructuring and Government
 Efficiency ... 244, 751, 812
 Dept. of Health and Wellness
 Medical imaging services, digital, cost savings on ...
 757
 Dept. of Innovation and Science
 Employee information technology security
 awareness, actions to promote (Q18/05: Defeated)
 ... 812
 Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 Alberta Corporate Service Centre transferred to ...
 244, 751
 Alberta SuperNet project transferred to:
 Documentation re (M29/05: Accepted) ... 1160
 Ambulance services restructuring, role in ... 244
 Annual report, 2004-05 (SP583/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Budget statements ... 753, 754-55, 756, 757
 Cost of establishing ... 244
 Cross-government human resources function ... 1710
 Enron electricity prices manipulation scheme,
 investigation of ... 249
 Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 751-63
 ICT initiative for cross-government system ... 1710
 Opportunity and restructuring assessment function ...
 751, 761, 763
 Regulatory review function ... 1710
 Role of ... 244, 1710
 School closures for efficiency reasons ... 287
 Staffing ... 761
 Education-Finance
 General remarks ... 756
 Electric power-Prices
 Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 249
 Enron Canada Corporation
 Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project
 Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 249
 Fax machines, Digital
 Security concerns ... 413, 752
 Fees, Government
 Review of ... 752
 Government agencies, boards, and commissions
 PC party supporters' appointment to ... 1603
 Government appointments
 PC party supporters' appointments ... 1603
 Government chartered aircraft
 Premier's use of ... 161
 Government computer equipment
 Cost savings on ... 757

Ouellette, Hon. Luke (PC, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake)*(Continued)*

Government departments
 Number of ... 773, 953
 Government efficiency
 General remarks ... 691, 695, 751-63, 773, 804,
 953-54
 Monitoring of ... 751, 754
 Government information
 Access to ... 751-52
 On-line provision of ... 751
 Government information systems
 Security aspects ... 413, 755, 758-59
 Security aspects: Improvement of employee
 awareness of (Q18/05: Defeated) ... 812
 Government office supplies
 Cost savings on ... 757
 Horse racing
 Lottery funding for ... 954
 Information and communications technology
 Cross-government system ... 1710
 Funding for ... 753
 Privacy standards ... 752
 Security issues ... 758
 Security issues: Auditor General's recommendation re
 (Q18/05: Defeated) ... 812
 Security issues: Auditor General's recommendation re
 (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 1746,
 2056
 Standards re ... 759
 Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 Digital photocopiers/fax machines security concerns,
 news release re ... 413
 Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta
 health records ... 617
 Notification of, re privacy issues when discarding
 digital photocopiers/fax machines ... 752
 Land titles-Registration
 Security concerns in, re mortgage fraud cases ... 804
 Marriage
 Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 317-18
 Definition of: Alberta legal action re, payment of
 costs re ... 317-18
 Medical imaging services, Digital
 Cost savings on ... 757
 Medical records
 Outsourcing management of ... 617
 Medical records-Confidentiality
 Missing health records situation ... 617
 Microsoft Corporation
 School software licences purchase by provincial
 government ... 323
 Milk River (Town)
 Access to Alberta SuperNet ... 762
 Ministers (Provincial government)
 Number of ... 773, 953
 Mortgage fraud
 General remarks ... 804
 Office of the Premier
 Premier's use of chartered aircraft for Ottawa health
 conference, 2004 ... 161
 Oral Question Period (2005)
 Ambulance services ... 244
 Benefits of SuperNet for rural Alberta ... 854

Ouellette, Hon. Luke (PC, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake)*(Continued)*Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*

- Budget process ... 160
- Chartered air travel ... 161
- Definition of marriage ... 317–18
- Enron activities in Alberta ... 249
- Government appointments ... 1603
- Government contracts ... 619
- Government efficiency ... 773, 953–54
- Health symposium webcast ... 1336
- Missing health records ... 617
- Mortgage fraud ... 804
- Physiotherapy services ... 292
- Postsecondary education review ... 1203
- Protection of personal information ... 413
- Regulatory reform ... 1150
- Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 244, 1710
- Rural development strategies ... 289
- Software licences for schools ... 287, 323
- SuperNet ... 88, 320, 1149
- Travel by elected Senators ... 691, 695
- Photocopiers, Digital
 - Security concerns ... 413, 752
- Physical therapy–Finance
 - Cutbacks to ... 292
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 413
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
 - Payment of legal fees re provincial same-sex marriage strategy by ... 318
 - Payment of senators-in-waiting speaking tour costs by ... 695
- Public contracts
 - Savings on ... 757
 - Sole-source contracts: Auditor General's comments re ... 619, 761
 - Sole-source contracts: Review committee re ... 761
- Public records–Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 413
- Public service–Alberta
 - Increase in ... 773
 - Information technology security awareness recommendation (Q33/05: Response tabled as SP824/05) ... 1746, 2056
- Purchases, Government
 - Efficiencies re ... 752
 - New procurement card system for ... 757
- Regional health authorities
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ... 244
- Registry offices, Private–Security aspects
 - Concerns re mortgage fraud ... 804
- Regulatory Review Secretariat
 - General remarks ... 752
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 289, 758
- Same-sex marriage–Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 317–18
- Schools–Closure
 - General remarks ... 287
- Senate (Canada)
 - Reform of ... 691

Ouellette, Hon. Luke (PC, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake)*(Continued)*

Senators

- Alberta nominees for: Eastern Canada speaking tour ... 691, 695
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 504
- Spam (Computer junk e-mail)
 - Federal task force on ... 759
 - General remarks ... 759
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Committee ... 606
- Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School, Edmonton
 - Closure ... 287
 - Closure: Provision of Supernet service to ... 759–60
- Telehealth services
 - General remarks ... 854
- Telus Corporation
 - SuperNet contract bid ... 320
- Travel at public expense
 - Alberta senators-in-waiting trip to eastern Canada ... 691, 695
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - Webcast of ... 1337
- Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - Enron electricity price manipulation investigation ... 249
- Workers' Compensation Board
 - Provision of physiotherapy services ... 292
- Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona)**
 - Aboriginal people and the judicial system
 - General remarks ... 1231
 - Abortion–Edmonton
 - Provision by private clinic only ... 853
 - Abortion–Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 853
 - Access Advisory Council (Postsecondary educational institutions)
 - Appointment process re ... 873
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 232–34
 - Committee ... 565–66, 1064–69
 - Third reading ... 1240–42
 - Advisory council appointment process ... 873
 - Amendment A4 (SP368/05: Tabled) ... 1065
 - Amendment A5 (withdrawn) (SP369/05: Tabled) ... 1067
 - Amendment A6 (SP370/05: Tabled) ... 1068
 - General remarks ... 259
 - Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
 - Committee ... 719
 - Alberta–Foreign policy
 - Development of ... 415
 - Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Gambling addiction programs ... 1285, 1286
 - Lottery funding for ... 1285
 - Alberta Career Computer Center Inc.
 - Letter to ND member from solicitors for (SP509/05: Tabled) ... 1608

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 54)
 - Second reading ... 1951–52
 - Third reading ... 2029
- Alberta Centennial Medal Act (Bill 2)
 - Second reading ... 239–40
 - Third reading ... 439
- Alberta Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)
 - General remarks ... 305
- Alberta Gaming Research Council
 - Funding for ... 1288
- Alberta Gaming Research Institute
 - Funding for ... 1288
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Opening of ... 415
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
 - Midwifery coverage ... 1314
- Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1757–59
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Third reading ... 2020
- Alberta Science and Research Authority Amendment Act 2005 (Bill 4)
 - Third reading ... 638
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits: Enhancement of ... 259
 - Optical benefits ... 259
- Alberta Summit on Justice (1999)
 - General remarks ... 267
 - MLA committee re ... 267–68
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Class size guideline ... 308
 - Kindergarten recommendations ... 1917
- Alexander Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement
 - Impact of diploma exam grading errors on awarding of ... 164
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Committee ... 559
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Backgrounder re (SP169/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: MLA questions/answers re (SP170/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Aon Consulting Inc.
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of ... 1626–27, 1670–71
 - Private health insurance in Alberta, study of: Letters re (SP554 & 598/05: Tabled) ... 1675, 1716
- Apprenticeship and Industry Training Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 57)
 - Second reading ... 1955
- Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth
 - General remarks ... 1314
 - Package of information regarding midwifery (SP408/05: Tabled) ... 1314
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
 - Degree-granting accreditation procedure ... 1794
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits increase: Funding for ... 259

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Second reading ... 1069–70
- Beef–Marketing
 - Market retention and development fund for ... 299
- Beef–Prices
 - Minimum floor price ... 299
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Compensation plans re ... 299
- Brooklynn Hannah George Rewega Right of Civil Action Act (Bill Pr. 4)
 - Second reading ... 1949
 - Third reading ... 2024
- Budget
 - General remarks ... 259
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 16)
 - Second reading ... 676–77
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - Third reading ... 2030–31
- Calgary Health Region
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... 1966, 2051
- Calgary Police Service
 - Provincial funding for ... 800–01
- Campus Alberta Quality Council
 - Degree program approval process ... 1794
 - Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... 1166
- Camrose Regional Exhibition and Agricultural Society
 - Lottery funding for ... 1285
- Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade
 - NAFTA challenge re U.S. border closure to Canadian cattle ... 300
- Canmore Nordic Centre
 - Upgrades to: Costs (M36/05: Accepted) ... 1165
 - Upgrades to: Funding for ... 306
- Capital Health
 - Abortion services, contracting out of ... 853
 - Cataract surgery/ophthalmology services ... 1966
- Casinos–Camrose
 - Lottery funding for ... 1285
- Cataract surgery, Private–Calgary
 - Waiting times for ... 1965–66, 2051
 - Waiting times for: Health and Wellness website chart re ... 1965–66, 2051
 - Waiting times for: Health and Wellness website chart re (SP802/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Cattle–Export–United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 299
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Appeal of, under NAFTA ... 299–300
- Caucus policy committees (PC party)
 - Meetings of tobacco companies with, 2001–2004 (M4/05: Accepted) ... 494
- Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations
 - Lottery fundng for ... 1288
- Child welfare
 - Early childhood intervention programs ... 1058
 - Early childhood intervention programs: Funding ... 1063
 - Government programs ... 303–04

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Child welfare—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1058
- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
 - Funding for implementation of ... 303–04, 1063
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Reduction of: Funding for ... 308–09
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 672–73
- Columbia College
 - Letters, memos re (M40/05: Defeated) ... 1167
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1547
- Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing
 - Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, referred to (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... 107–08
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Appointment of (Motion 11: Stevens) ... 106
- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms: 15 top Supreme Court decisions re (SP333/05) ... 806
- Corporate Corruption of Higher Education* (Book)
 - General remarks ... 873
- Corporations—Taxation
 - Reduction in ... 1793, 1797
- Council of Alberta University Students
 - Postsecondary education funding concerns ... 872
- Courts—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1232, 1235
- Crime
 - Statistics re ... 1231
- Crime rate
 - General remarks ... 1231
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Committee ... 1904–05
- Daycare centres
 - Available spaces in ... 1058
 - National plan principles re ... 304, 1057–58, 1309, 1917
 - Quality of care in ... 1057–58
 - Statement re ... 1916–17
 - Subsidies re ... 304, 1058, 1063, 1917
- Daycare centres—Employees
 - Qualifications of ... 1063
 - Salaries of ... 1063, 1917
 - Salaries of: KPMG study of ... 1058
- Daycare centres—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1063
 - National program for ... 621
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 304, 621, 1309–10
 - National program for: Alberta participation, federal Conservative Party comments re ... 1058
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 872–74
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 259
 - Nonbudgetary disbursements ... 259
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1793–94, 1796–97

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 299–300
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1057–58, 1063
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 303–04
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Seniors division, Ombudsman's letter re concerns re (SP289/05: Tabled) ... 622–23
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 306
- Dept. of Education
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 308–09
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1284–86, 1288
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 267
 - Website chart re cataract surgeries in Calgary (SP802/05: Tabled) ... 2018
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Anthony Henday Drive southeast project, backgrounder re (SP169/05: Tabled) ... 295
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1230–32, 1235–36
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 259
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 259
- Domestic violence
 - General remarks ... 739, 1231, 1235–36
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 303
- Early childhood education
 - Junior kindergarten (prekindergarten) ... 1917
- Edmonton Police Service
 - Provincial funding for ... 800–01
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... 308
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, affordability review to improve ... 872–73
 - Access to, affordability review to improve: U of A Student's Union news release re (SP103/05: Tabled) ... 128
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 1793, 1796
 - Commission to review ... 873
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1547
 - Independent review of ... 873
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - General remarks ... 872–74, 1793
- Emergency motions under Standing Order 40
 - Debate on supplementary estimates ... 1971
- Environmental protection
 - Public consultation re ... 268
- Executive Council
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 268
- Extended care facilities
 - Conditions in: Petition tabled re (SP337/05: Tabled) ... 858
- Extended care facilities—Fees
 - Increase in, cancellation of ... 1201
- Extended care facilities—Inspection
 - General remarks ... 1200

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Shortage of: Petition presented re ... 806
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 1200
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - General remarks ... 1200–01
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1200
- Family and community support services program
 - General remarks ... 1917
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Committee ... 567, 634–36
 - Subamendment (SP294/05: Tabled) ... 635
- Fatality Inquiries Act
 - Public inquiries provision ... 1231–32
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 680–81
 - Committee ... 722–24
 - Amendment (SP312/05: Tabled) ... 722
 - General remarks ... 1231–32
- Gambling, Compulsive
 - General remarks ... 1284–85, 1285–86
- Gambling—Moral/legal issues
 - General remarks ... 1285
- Gaming industry
 - Revenue from ... 1284–85
- Gaming Licensing Policy Review
 - Lottery fund disbursements, charity-based ... 1285, 1288
- Gang-related crime—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 205
- Grant MacEwan Community College
 - Degree-granting programs, funding for ... 1794
 - Degree-granting programs, transferability of ... 1794
- Health
 - Social determinants of: Letter re (SP654/05: Tabled) ... 1788
- Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 7)
 - Second reading ... 372
 - Third reading ... 637–38
- High school graduates
 - Numbers of ... 1796, 1797
 - Numbers of: Transition to postsecondary education ... 1796, 1797
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 1285, 1288
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - Committee ... 231
- Identification, Personal
 - Theft of, from lost health records ... 483–84
- Iggulden, Liz
 - Statement re ... 774
- Insurance, Health (Private)
 - Alberta plan for ... 1671
 - News article re high U.S. rates for (SP380/05: Tabled) ... 1128
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 258–59, 267–68
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
 - Recognition of ... 326
- International Day of the Midwife
 - General remarks ... 1313–14

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- International Women's Day
 - Recognition of ... 127
 - Statement re (SP30/05: Tabled) ... 93
- Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 48)
 - Third reading ... 1899
- Justice system
 - News media coverage of ... 1231–32
- KPMG consulting
 - Daycare workers' salaries report ... 1058
- Legal aid
 - Funding for ... 1232
- Legal Aid Society of Alberta
 - Remuneration re legal aid cases ... 1232
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation ... 1285, 1288
- Low-income families
 - Government programs: Letter re (SP654/05: Tabled) ... 1788
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Third reading ... 2023
- Meat packing industry
 - Profit margins ... 299
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of: Provincial support for ... 300
- Medical care
 - New Democrat opposition public hearings re, report ... 1205
 - Restructuring: Statement re ... 1127
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 248–49, 1123–24, 1205, 1626–27, 1716, 2051
 - Restructuring (third way option): Letters re (SP653 & 822/05: Tabled) ... 1788, 2056
 - Restructuring (third way option): Public consultation re, letter (SP599/05: Tabled) ... 1716
 - Statement re ... 1205
- Medical care, Private
 - Document re (SP394/05: Tabled) ... 1206
 - General remarks ... 1123–24, 1127, 2051
 - Statement re ... 1205
- Medical care, Private—United States
 - News article re (SP345/05: Tabled) ... 908
- Medical care—Finance
 - MLA committee to review: Report ... 1124, 1127
 - User fees ... 1123–24
- Medical records—Confidentiality
 - Missing health records situation ... 483–84
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Child care ... 1916–17
 - Health care system ... 1205
 - Midwifery services ... 1313–14
 - National child care strategy ... 621
 - Old Strathcona Foundation ... 734
 - Postsecondary tuition fees ... 1889
 - Public health care ... 1127
- Midwives and midwifery
 - Inclusion under health care plan ... 1314
 - Integration of midwifery services evaluation report (SP405/05: Tabled) ... 1259
 - New Democrat position regarding (SP409/05: Tabled) ... 1314
 - Package of information regarding midwifery (SP408/05: Tabled) ... 1314
 - Statement re ... 1313–14

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Midwives and midwifery—Fees
 - General remarks ... 1314
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Deaths of RCMP officers ... 41
 - Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day ... 1248
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Number of ... 268
- Mount Royal College
 - Request for university status ... 1794
- New Democrat Opposition
 - Position on midwifery services (SP409/05: Tabled) ... 1314
 - Role in Question Period ... 58
- New York Times* (Newspaper)
 - Article re U.S. private health care system (SP345/05: Tabled) ... 908
- North American free trade agreement
 - Border closure to cattle challenge under ... 299–300
 - Private postsecondary educational institutions, funding implications under ... 873
- Old Strathcona Foundation
 - Statement re ... 774
- Ombudsman
 - Letter to Yvonne Nadeau re concerns with Dept. of Community Development (SP289/05: Tabled) ... 622–23
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Abortion services ... 853
 - Aon Consulting Inc. ... 1626–27, 1670–71
 - Diploma exam grades ... 164, 168
 - Health reform ... 248–249
 - Health symposium ... 1123–24
 - Long-term care standards ... 1200–01
 - Missing health records ... 483–84
 - National child care initiative ... 1309–10
 - Opening of Alberta office in Washington ... 415
 - Policing resources ... 800–01
 - Policing services ... 205–206
 - Private vocational schools ... 1602–03
 - Wait times for health care ... 1965–66
 - Wait times for ophthalmology services ... 2051
 - Womens' shelters ... 738–39
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Rotation of questions and answers: 1986 precedent ... 58
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 58
 - Third opposition party's role in ... 58
- Organized crime
 - Impact of globalization on ... 1232
- Parent Link Centres
 - Funding for ... 304
 - General remarks ... 1917
- Parkland Institute
 - A Sustainable and Equitable Economy, a Pre-Budget Commentary (SP288/05: Tabled) ... 622
- Peace Country Tender Beef Co-op Ltd.
 - Provincial assistance to ... 300
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Long-term care facility staffing levels ... 806
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Long-term care facilities conditions (SP337/05: Tabled) ... 858

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Police
 - Challenges performing duties of ... 41
 - Increase in numbers of ... 205–06
 - Neighbourhood patrols ... 205
 - Numbers of: Stats Can table re (SP123/05: Tabled) ... 210
 - Reporting missing health records to ... 483–84
- Police—Finance
 - General remarks ... 205–06
 - Increase to ... 800–01
- Police—Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 800–01
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Second reading ... 1243–44
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 49)
 - Committee ... 1901–02
 - Third reading ... 2027
- Post-secondary Learning Act
 - Governance provisions ... 873
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Committee ... 1692, 1694, 1698–1700
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 55)
 - Third reading ... 2029–30
- Postsecondary educational institutions
 - Governance question ... 873
 - Upgrading of, funding for ... 1794
- Postsecondary educational institutions, Private Funding, NAFTA implications re ... 873
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Admissions (enrollment)
 - Province-wide centralization of ... 259
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Finance
 - Private-sector funding ... 873
- Premier's Advisory Council on Health
 - Recommendations (A Framework for Reform) ... 1127
- Prisoners, Aboriginal
 - Numbers of ... 1231
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 483–84
- Private Colleges Accreditation Board
 - Minutes of meetings of (M38/05: Defeated) ... 1166
- Private vocational schools
 - Provincial monitoring of ... 1602–03
 - Students' complaints procedure re ... 1603
- Prostitutes
 - Murder of ... 800
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 331–32
- Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 25)
 - Committee ... 727–28
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - General remarks ... 268
- Public assistance
 - General remarks ... 739
- Public interest and government
 - General remarks ... 267–68
- Public records—Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 484
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 127, 326

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

Regional health authorities
 Abortion services ... 853
 Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)
 (Bill 44)
 Second reading ... 1810
 Third reading ... 2021–22
 Risk management fund
 Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative
 Assembly under: Referred to Members' Services
 committee (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ...
 107–08
 Royal Alexandra Hospital
 Abortion services cancellation ... 853
 Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Statement re fallen
 officers in ... 41
 Increase in numbers of ... 205
 Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 Reduction incentives for clean energy technology
 development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 672–73
 Rural economic development
 Government strategy re ... 299
 Scholarships
 Impact of diploma exam grading errors on awarding
 of ... 164
 School dropouts
 General remarks ... 1796
 Seniors' Action and Liason Team
 The Third Way or the Third Hoax? (Brochure)
 (SP553/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 Slot machines in casinos
 Number of ... 1285
 Slot machines in racing entertainment centres
 Revenue from, transferred to horse-racing industry ...
 1288
 Social housing
 General remarks ... 739
 Speech from the Throne
 Debate ... 62–64
 Statistics Canada
 Policing levels across Canada: Table re (SP123/05:
 Tabled) ... 210
 Stranded beef export container initiative
 General remarks ... 299
 Student financial aid
 Default rates, 2000-2003 (Q1/05: Response tabled as
 SP468/05) ... 654–55
 Default rates of private vocational school students ...
 1602
 Defaults: Value of, 2000-2003 (Q2/05: Response
 tabled as SP469/05) ... 656
 Dollar value, 2001-03 (Q4/05: Response tabled as
 SP471/05) ... 657–58
 General remarks ... 872, 1889
 Grants vs. loans ... 1796
 Loan remission funding ... 1794, 1796–97
 Number of students receiving, 2000-2004 (Q3/05:
 Response tabled as SP470) ... 657
 Student testing
 Diploma exams: Grading errors on ... 164
 Student unions
 Establishment of, in private vocational schools ...
 1602

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 Emergency motion re, under Standing Order 40 ...
 1971
 General remarks ... 303
 Supreme Court of Canada
 15 top decisions on section 15 of Charter of Rights,
 document re (SP333/05: Tabled) ... 806
 Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 53)
 Third reading ... 2028
 Tax incentives
 Stay-at-home parents (re daycare) ... 1310
 Tobacco companies
 Meetings with provincial ministers, 2001-2004
 (M4/05: Response tabled as SP628/05) ... 494
 Traffic safety
 General remarks ... 1231
 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)
 Second reading ... 1293–94
 Tuition fees
 General remarks ... 1793–94
 Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by
 provincial government ... 259, 1793
 Increase in, over last few years ... 872–73
 Reduction of ... 1793, 1797
 Statement re ... 1889
 Universities and colleges
 Private-sector driven instruction in ... 873
 Universities and colleges—Maintenance and repair
 Deficit in ... 1794, 1797
 University dropouts
 Rate of ... 872
 University of Alberta
 Bay building purchase, to accommodate learning
 transition facility ... 1794
 Deferred maintenance costs ... 1794
 University of Phoenix
 Accredited degree programs in Alberta:
 Documentation re (M3/05: Response tabled as
 SP480/05) ... 663
 Accredited degree programs in Alberta: Letter of
 approval re (M2/05: Response tabled as SP479/05)
 ... 663
 University teachers
 General remarks ... 872
 Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium
 (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 General remarks ... 249, 267, 1123–24, 1127, 1205
 Provincial funding for (Q31/05: Not moved, dropped
 from Order Paper) ... 1158
 Speakers/presenters at, remuneration paid to
 (M35/05: Accepted) ... 1164
 Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)
 General remarks ... 872
 Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 Second reading ... 554
 Committee ... 718
 Video gambling machines
 Cap on number of ... 1285
 Impact on problem gambling ... 1285–86
 Wages—Public service employees
 Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index
 (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1938–39

Pannu, Dr. Raj (ND, Edmonton-Strathcona) (Continued)

- Wildlife damage
 - Provincial programs re ... 299
- Womens' shelters—Finance
 - General remarks ... 738–39
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Second reading ... 1813–14
 - Committee ... 1897
- Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)
 - Statement re ... 1248

Pastoor, Bridget Brennan (L, Lethbridge-East)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 395–96
 - Committee ... 894, 1064
- Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Second reading ... 1647
 - Committee ... 2002–04
 - Amendment A4 (SP770/05: Tabled) ... 2004
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Accommodation costs of head of (Q6/05: Response tabled as SP540/05) ... 659
 - Washington, D.C. office: Budget breakdown for (M22/05: Response tabled as SP746/05) ... 822
 - Washington, D.C. office: Cost-benefit analysis re (M21/05: Response tabled as SP745/05) ... 822
 - Washington, D.C. office: Costs ... 269
 - Washington, D.C. office: Documents re (M20/05: Response tabled as SP744/05) ... 821
- Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Long-term care facilities inspection ... 1443
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1866–67
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Benefits comparison, before and after July 1, 2004 changes (M46/05: Accepted) ... 1748–49
 - Dental benefits: Enhancement of ... 282
 - Dental benefits: Letter re (SP757/05: Tabled) ... 1971
 - Evaluation criteria for ... 1387–88
 - General remarks ... 879
 - Optical benefits: Enhancement of ... 282
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Appraisal process re ... 1568–69
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Tabling of copy of agreement re ... 1569
- Alberta SuperNet
 - General remarks ... 289
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Third reading ... 943
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1982–83
 - Third reading ... 2039, 2040–41
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefit levels, formula for ... 879
 - Benefit levels, market-basket measurement formula for ... 879
 - Benefits dollar value (Q9/05: Response tabled as SP639/05) ... 660
 - Benefits increase ... 22, 879, 1149–50
 - Benefits increase: Petition presented re ... 26

Pastoor, Bridget Brennan (L, Lethbridge-East)

- (Continued)
 - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (Continued)
 - Modified AISH program for assisted care facilities residents ... 1149–50
 - Review of (2004): Report ... 22
 - Review of (2004): Submissions received by (M23/05: Response tabled as SP641/05) ... 822–23
 - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 29)
 - Second reading ... 1069
 - Auditor General
 - Government contracting process comments ... 1423–24
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1497, 1707, 1717, 1881
 - Municipal Affairs dept. comments ... 1324
 - Seniors' benefits program comments ... 1387
 - Seniors dept. financial statements, reservation of opinion re ... 1252–53
 - Automobile chop shops
 - General remarks ... 1423
 - Automobile theft—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1423
 - Beef processing
 - General remarks ... 1181
 - Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 1181, 1182
 - Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
 - General remarks ... 1181
 - Parity of Ontario and Alberta re ... 1523–24
 - Cattle—Export—United States
 - Contingency plan re continued border closure ... 1181
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 1182
 - Chinook Regional Health Authority
 - Conversion of long-term care facilities to assisted living status: Letter re (SP758/05: Tabled) ... 1971
 - Citizens' assembly on electoral reform (Alberta) (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 691
 - Committee on Continuing Care Standards, Standing Legislation re (Bill 213) ... 1919
 - Committees, All-party
 - General remarks ... 1442
 - Statement re ... 1451
 - Consumer protection
 - General remarks ... 1423
 - Correctional Services MLA Review Committee
 - Report ... 800
 - Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Treatment
 - Treatment centres for, in closed young offender centres ... 800
 - Dept. of Gaming
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 268
 - Dept. of Government Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1423–24
 - Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 268–69
 - Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 1181–82
 - Hosting expenses, 1996-2004 (Q17/05: Response tabled as SP743/05) ... 812

Pastoor, Bridget Brennan (L, Lethbridge-East)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
(Continued)
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 269
 - Performance measures ... 1181, 1182
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1324
 - Information technology section, contracting out of, privacy aspects ... 1324
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 879-80
 - Financial statements, inclusion of management bodies' surpluses/assets in ... 1252-53
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 282-83
- Edmonton City Centre Airport
 - Statement re ... 1527
- Elder abuse
 - FAIRE report on (SP303/05: Tabled) ... 653
 - General remarks ... 879
- Elder Advocates of Alberta Society
 - Forum on extended care residents treatment ... 614
 - Rights of vulnerable persons in care document (SP465/05: Tabled) ... 1528-29
- Elections, Provincial
 - Fixed dates for ... 691
- Electric power-Export
 - General remarks ... 1181
- Electric power-Prices
 - Impact on seniors ... 1423
- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Long-term contracts for residential consumers ... 1423
- Electric power lines-Construction
 - Alberta to California (Northern Lights Transmission project) ... 1181
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care funding (Not proceeded with) ... 1717-18
- Equalization payments
 - General remarks ... 1181, 1523-24
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1497, 1707
 - Death of resident in (Jean Warden) ... 1881
 - General remarks ... 1707
 - MLA committee to review (2005) ... 1442-43, 1451, 1498
 - MLA committee to review (2005): Report ... 1707
 - Redesignation to assisted living status: Letter re (SP758/05: Tabled) ... 1971
 - Review of ... 614
- Extended care facilities-Finance
 - Emergency debate on (Not proceeded with) ... 1717-18
 - Government grants ... 2049-50
- Extended care facilities-Inspection
 - Inspector general re (proposed) ... 1881
- Extended care facilities-Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 268, 1497, 1707
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Chemical/physical restraints use standards ... 1497
 - General remarks ... 1497-98, 2010

Pastoor, Bridget Brennan (L, Lethbridge-East)*(Continued)*

- Extended care facilities-Standards *(Continued)*
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1176, 1178-79
- Extended care facilities residents
 - Abuse/neglect of ... 614
 - Incontinent supplies for ... 268-69
 - Prescription drug usage ... 207-08, 415
- Families Allied to Influence Responsible Eldercare
 - Elder abuse report (SP303/05: Tabled) ... 653
- Fatality inquiries
 - Long-term care resident's death (Jean Warden) ... 1881
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 682-83
 - Committee ... 723-24
- Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1181, 1523-24
- Federal/provincial relations
 - Budget increase for ... 1181
- Food banks
 - General remarks ... 366
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 491, 579, 653, 806
 - Letter re (SP336/05: Tabled) ... 807
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 691
- High school education-Curricula
 - Fine arts courses: Letter re (SP195/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Home Protection Act (U.S.)
 - Application to Canadian records ... 1324
- Homeless-Housing
 - Funding for ... 366
- Horse racetrack-Balzac
 - Funding for ... 268
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - Third reading ... 399
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 586-87
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 268-69
- International relations
 - Budget increase re ... 1181
- Jubilee Lodge Nursing Home Ltd.
 - Government grants to ... 2049-50
- LaBelle triplets
 - Recognition of ... 578
- Lethbridge Community College
 - Increased funding for ... 1123
 - Police training programs ... 1123, 1127
- Lethbridge Young Offender Centre
 - Closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... 800
- Lobbyists-Registration
 - General remarks ... 691
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 114-16
- Management bodies (Housing)
 - Surpluses/assets, reporting of ... 1252-53
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Committee ... 1876

Pastoor, Bridget Brennan (L, Lethbridge-East)*(Continued)*

- Medical profession—Rural areas
 - Action plan re ... 289
- Medical records—Confidentiality
 - U.S. access to information re ... 1423
- Medicine Hat Remand Centre
 - Young offender unit, closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... 800
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - All-party committees ... 1451
 - Edmonton City Centre Airport ... 1527–28
 - Police recruitment and training centre ... 1127
- NorthernLights Transmission
 - Power lines from Alberta to California ... 1181
- Nursing homes—Staffing
 - Shortages: Impact on medication levels for residents of ... 207–08
- Nursing Homes Act
 - Review of standards under ... 614
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped ... 22, 1149–50
 - Continuing care funding ... 1707
 - Continuing care review ... 1442–43
 - Continuing care standards ... 2010
 - Death of a patient in long-term care ... 1881
 - Federal financial support ... 1523–24
 - Homeless shelters ... 366
 - Long-term care facility standards ... 1497–98
 - Long-term care funding ... 2049–50
 - Long-term care standards ... 614
 - Medication for seniors ... 207–208, 415
 - Ministry of seniors financial statements ... 1252–53
 - Police recruitment and training centre ... 1123
 - Rural development strategies ... 289
 - Sale of Social Housing Corporation land ... 1568–69
 - Seniors' benefit program ... 1387–88
 - Sex trade workers ... 1338–39
 - Travel by elected Senators ... 691
 - Youth residential drug treatment ... 800
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - AISH benefit increase ... 26
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 491, 579, 653, 806
- Police
 - MLA committee review of: Report ... 1123, 1127
- Police—Training
 - Centre of excellence re ... 1123
 - Centre of excellence re: Statement re ... 1127
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Committee ... 1694
- Project Kare (Missing women investigation team)
 - Funding for ... 1339
- Property tax—Education levy
 - Seniors' tax relief re ... 880
- Prostitutes
 - Murder of ... 1338
- Prostitutes—Housing
 - Transitional housing ... 1338
- Protection for Persons in Care Act
 - General remarks ... 614
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 341

Pastoor, Bridget Brennan (L, Lethbridge-East)*(Continued)*

- Public contracts
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 1423–24
- Public records—Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 1324, 1423
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 578
- Red Deer Remand Centre
 - Young offender unit, closure of, use for youth drug treatment facility ... 800
- Regional health authorities
 - Long-term care facilities' programs ... 207–08
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1346
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - Committee ... 602
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 289
- Schools—Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 289
- Senate (Canada)
 - Reform of ... 691
- Senators
 - Alberta nominees for: Eastern Canada speaking tour ... 691
- Senior citizens—Housing
 - Standards for ... 880
- Senior citizens' lodges
 - Rents: Letter re (SP759/05: Tabled) ... 1971
- Seniors' supportive housing incentive program—East Central Health region
 - General remarks ... 282–83
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Third reading ... 997
- Social housing
 - Subsidy level increase ... 879
- Social services recipients—Protection
 - General remarks ... 879
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 114–16
- Standing Committee on Continuing Care Standards Act (Bill 213)
 - First reading ... 1919
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 521
 - Third reading ... 940
- Subdivision of land
 - Off-site road levies for ... 1324
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - Detox/residential services re, in empty young offender centres ... 800
- Taxation, Municipal
 - General remarks ... 1324
- Trade missions
 - Performance measures re ... 1181
- Travel at public expense
 - Alberta senators-in-waiting trip to eastern Canada ... 691
- University of Lethbridge
 - Wellness centre ... 269
- Utilities Consumer Advocate
 - General remarks ... 1423

Pastoor, Bridget Brennan (L, Lethbridge-East)*(Continued)*

- Water—Export
 - General remarks ... 1181
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 73–74
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Second reading ... 593–594

Pham, Hung Kim (PC, Calgary-Montrose)

- Abduction of children—Calgary
 - Police actions re ... 486
- Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1672
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Point of order re ... 1452, 1454
- Automobiles—Registration
 - Database of, use in child abduction cases ... 486
- Calgary Board of Education
 - Co-operation with police service in child abduction cases ... 486
- Calgary Police Service
 - Child abduction procedures ... 486
- Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society
 - Statement re ... 1672–73
 - Wild Rose grants transferred to: Point of order re ... 1452, 1454
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - First reading ... 622
 - Second reading ... 1536–37
- Hospitals—Emergency services
 - General remarks ... 692–93
- Immigrant doctors
 - General remarks ... 1122–23
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Vietnamese Cao Daist Society ... 1672–73
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - General remarks ... 1457
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Application process for seniors' benefits ... 618–19
 - Attempted child abductions ... 486
 - Emergency hospital services ... 692–93
 - Foreign-trained physicians ... 1122–23
 - Workers' compensation ... 2052
- Point of Order
 - Reflections on a member ... 1454, 1456–57
 - Reflections on nonmembers ... 1452, 1454
- Regional health authorities
 - Emergency rooms improvements ... 692
- Schoolchildren—Protective services
 - Child abduction cases ... 486
- Senior citizens
 - Government programs: Streamlining of application process re ... 618–19
- Telemarketing
 - Legislation re (Bill 205) ... 622
- Wages—Minimum wage
 - Increase to: Impact on workers' compensation earning loss supplement ... 2052
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Point of order re ... 1452, 1454
- Workers' compensation
 - Earning loss supplement, impact of increased minimum wage on ... 2052

Prins, Ray (PC, Lacombe-Ponoka)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - General remarks ... 2014
- Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1759
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 884
 - General remarks ... 884
- Antidumping laws (International trade)
 - General remarks ... 614
- Camrose Lutheran College Corporation Act (Bill Pr. 2)
 - Second reading ... 1508–09
 - Committee ... 1509
 - Amendment (SP457/05: Tabled) ... 1509
- Canadian Agricultural Safety Week
 - Statement re ... 293–94
- Chronic wasting disease
 - Presence on game farms ... 456
- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 670
- Deer ranching
 - Impact of chronic wasting disease on ... 456
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 874
- Dept. of Health (Federal)
 - Draft report on CWD in wild game animals ... 456
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 884
- Education, Postsecondary—Finance
 - General remarks ... 874
- Elk antler velvet—Health aspects
 - General remarks ... 456
- Elk ranching
 - Impact of chronic wasting disease on ... 456
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1399–1400
- Emergency planning
 - General remarks ... 1251
- Emergency Preparedness Week
 - General remarks ... 1251
- Extended care facilities
 - General remarks ... 884
- Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1399–1400
- Farm produce—Export
 - Antidumping rules re ... 613–14
- Farm safety
 - Statement re ... 293–94
- Game farming
 - Chronic wasting disease issue in ... 456
- Hogs—Export—United States
 - Antidumping duties on ... 613–14
- International Trade Commission (U.S.)
 - Pork/hog import duties investigation ... 613–14
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 110–12
- Medical profession
 - Recruitment of (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1363–64
- Medical profession—Rural areas
 - Recruitment for (Motion 508: Danyluk) ... 1363–64

Prins, Ray (PC, Lacombe-Ponoka) (Continued)

- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Canadian Agricultural Safety Week ... 293–94
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Diversified livestock industry ... 456
 - Emergency preparedness ... 1251
 - Live hog exports ... 613–14
 - Private postsecondary institutions ... 2014
- Postsecondary educational institutions, Private
 - Funding ... 2014
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Admissions (enrollment)
 - Province-wide centralization of ... 2014
- Private colleges—Finance
 - General remarks ... 874
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1351–52
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 670
- Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP122/05: Tabled) ... 210
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP631/05: Tabled) ... 1745
 - General remarks ... 884
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 110–12
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 520–22
- Terrorist attacks—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1251
- Tuition fees
 - Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by provincial government ... 2014

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - General remarks ... 1617
- Aboriginal peoples
 - General remarks ... 1617
- Alberta—History
 - General remarks ... 1617–18
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Address to Legislative Assembly ... 1617–18
- Métis
 - General remarks ... 1617
- Royal Alberta Museum
 - General remarks ... 1617

Renner, Hon. Rob (PC, Medicine Hat)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Committee ... 895
- Alberta Boilers Safety Association
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP642/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP643/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Emergency response plan update for upstream oil industry incidents ... 207
 - Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by Shell chemical plant ... 207
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - 2004 convention, invitees to (Q38/05: Accepted) ... 1747
- Ambulance service
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of ... 243, 1324

Renner, Hon. Rob (PC, Medicine Hat) (Continued)

- Ambulance service (Continued)
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 243
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Documents re (M19/05: Response tabled as SP807) ... 821, 2018
- Architecture and the disabled
 - Provincial initiative re ... 1321
- Assessment
 - Appeals system ... 1321
 - General remarks ... 1320
 - Linear assessment process: Legislation re (Bill 28) ... 252
- Authorized accredited agencies
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP646/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- Banff/Jasper special infrastructure program
 - General remarks ... 1320
- BP Canada
 - Fire, Fort Saskatchewan facility ... 207
- Calgary-Montrose (Constituency)
 - Member for's role in Calgary ward 10 municipal election investigation ... 1249
- Capital projects, Municipal—Finance
 - Crowsnest Pass projects ... 1306
 - Federal funding ... 1323
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 1628
 - General remarks ... 1253, 1323
 - Vetting of projects with provincial government ... 848
- Contaminated sites
 - Cleanup of ... 1323–24
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Trade missions expenditures (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
 - Trade show expenditures (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP59/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP582/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M15/05: Response tabled as SP826/05) ... 816, 2056
 - Credit card statements for minister and executive assistant (M16/05: Response tabled as SP827/05) ... 817, 2056
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1319–24, 1326
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP456/05: Tabled) ... 1508
 - Minister's business expenses (M14/05: Response tabled as SP825/05) ... 815, 2056
 - Support services ... 1321
- Disaster relief
 - Disaster recovery program expenditures (M44/05: Accepted) ... 1748
 - General remarks ... 1320
 - National response system re ... 1320
 - Southern Alberta flood situation ... 1708
- Edmonton International Airport
 - Airport vicinity protection area discussions ... 577
- Education—Finance
 - Property tax funds contribution to ... 799
- Elections, Municipal—Calgary
 - Ward 10 election process: Bob Clark's inspection of ... 1249, 1334
 - Ward 10 election process: Cost of investigation of (Q30/05: Response tabled as SP806/05) ... 1158, 2018

Renner, Hon. Rob (PC, Medicine Hat) (Continued)

- Elections, Municipal—Calgary (Continued)
 - Ward 10 election process: Police investigations re ... 1249, 1333–34
 - Ward 10 election process: Public inquiry re ... 1333–34
 - Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re ... 1249, 1333–34
 - Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re, news releases re ... 1334
 - Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re, news releases re (SP415-416/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Electric wire installation
 - Permits for (journeyman/master electricians) ... 904–05
- Electrical Contractors Association of Alberta
 - Review of master electrician program ... 905
- Emergency Management Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1251
 - Role in handling of chemical vapour pressure release by Shell chemical plant ... 162, 207
- Emergency planning
 - General remarks ... 207, 1251, 1320, 1321
- Emergency Preparedness Week
 - General remarks ... 1251
- Emergency public warning system
 - General remarks ... 207
- Firefighters—Training
 - Provincial initiative re ... 1320–21
- Flood Risk Management Committee
 - Flood prevention planning ... 1709
- Floods—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1708–09
- Floods—Southern Alberta
 - Compensation re ... 1708
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 1628
- Gasoline—Taxation
 - Federal revenue from, transferred to municipalities ... 1323
- Grants in place of taxes
 - General remarks ... 1320
- Infrastructure, Critical
 - National protection strategy re ... 1320
- Intermunicipal relations
 - General remarks ... 1322
- Leduc, City of
 - Growth of, impact of international airport protection area discussions on ... 577
- Local Authorities Election Act
 - Contraventions of, during Calgary ward 10 municipal election: Police investigation re ... 1249
- ME First! (Municipal Energy Efficiency Assistance) program
 - General remarks ... 1320
- Mosquito control programs
 - Funding for ... 1449
- Municipal Debenture Interest Rebate Program
 - General remarks ... 1320
- Municipal excellence program
 - General remarks ... 1320
- Municipal finance
 - General remarks ... 848
 - Government grants ... 1320

Renner, Hon. Rob (PC, Medicine Hat) (Continued)

- Municipal finance (Continued)
 - Revenue generating tools: Legislation re (Bill 28) ... 252
- Municipal finance—Crownsnest Pass area
 - Government grants ... 1306
- Municipal Government Act
 - Crownsnest Pass regulation ... 1306
 - Property tax exemptions for Canadian Legions ... 323
 - Review of ... 1321–22
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - First reading ... 252
 - Second reading ... 383–84
 - Committee ... 562–63
 - Third reading ... 636, 891
- Municipal Government Board
 - Role of ... 1321
- Municipal governments
 - Autonomy of ... 849
 - General remarks ... 1320
 - Legislative authority ... 1321–22
 - Role of ... 1321–22
- Municipal sponsorship program
 - General remarks ... 1320
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Ambulance services ... 243
 - Calgary Ward 10 election ... 1249, 1333–34
 - Education property tax ... 798–99
 - Electrical permits ... 904–05
 - Emergency preparedness ... 207, 1251
 - Flood disaster relief ... 1708–09
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure needs ... 1628
 - International airport vicinity protection ... 577
 - Municipal grants to Crownsnest Pass ... 1306
 - Municipal infrastructure program ... 848–49, 1253
 - Municipal tax exemptions ... 323
 - Shell chemical plant vapour release ... 162
 - West Nile virus ... 1449
- Parks
 - Taxation status re (Bill 28) ... 252
- Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP644/05: Tabled) ... 1746
- Petroleum tank sites remediation program
 - General remarks ... 1321, 1323
- Point of Order
 - Subamendments ... 993
- Property tax
 - General remarks ... 1320, 1322, 1324
 - Increment financing tool re: Legislation (Bill 28) ... 252
 - Payment by Canadian Legions ... 323
- Property tax—Education levy
 - Elimination of ... 1324
 - General remarks ... 798–99, 1322
- Provincial/Municipal Council on Roles, Responsibilities and Resources in the 21st Century, Minister's
 - General remarks ... 1320, 1322
- Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 848, 1322, 1323
- Provincial/municipal relations
 - General remarks ... 1322
- Public safety (Building/fire codes)
 - Electric wire installation permit review, safety aspects ... 904–05
 - General remarks ... 1320

Renner, Hon. Rob (PC, Medicine Hat) (Continued)

- Recreation areas
 - Taxation status re (Bill 28) ... 252
- Regional economic development partnerships
 - General remarks ... 1320
- Regional health authorities
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ... 243
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 243
- Regional planning
 - General remarks ... 1322
- Regional planning commissions
 - Elimination of ... 1322
- Rental housing
 - Secondary suites: MLA Review Committee on, report ... 1321
- Royal Canadian Legion
 - Payment of property taxes ... 323
- Safety Codes Act
 - Permitting regulations, review of ... 905
- Safety Codes Council
 - Administration of underground storage tank remediation program ... 1323
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP645/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 - Provincial liaison with, re barrier-free design ... 1321
- Sand and gravel operators
 - Municipal levy on: Legislation re (Bill 28) ... 252
- Sewage disposal plants—Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 1628
- Shell Canada Limited
 - Chemical plant vapour pressure release, Fort Saskatchewan area ... 162, 207
- Special Areas Trust Account
 - 2004 financial statements (SP432/05: Tabled) ... 1396
- Subdivision of land
 - Off-site road levies for ... 1324
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Fort McMurray infrastructure funding with ... 1628
- Taxation, Municipal
 - General remarks ... 1324
- Telephone emergency warning system, Fort Saskatchewan
 - General remarks ... 207
- Terrorist attacks—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1251
- Trade missions
 - Expenditures re (Q13/05: Defeated) ... 808
- Trade shows
 - Expenditures re (Q12/05: Defeated) ... 807
- Water treatment plants—Fort McMurray
 - General remarks ... 1628
- West Nile virus
 - Control methods for, funding of ... 1449

Rodney, Dave (PC, Calgary-Lougheed)

- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP173/05: Tabled) ... 326
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP649/05: Tabled) ... 1788
 - Gambling addiction programs ... 1787
 - Smoking prevention programs ... 1577, 1787
 - Statement re ... 1787
 - Youth substance abuse treatment programs ... 804, 1787
- Alberta Drug Strategy
 - General remarks ... 1787

Rodney, Dave (PC, Calgary-Lougheed) (Continued)

- Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
 - Inspections for liquor licence violations ... 1029
- Bellingham, Brendan Thomas
 - Recognition of ... 325
- Chiropractic services—Fees
 - Set fees for traffic injury cases ... 691-92
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Treatment
 - AADAC treatment program for ... 804
- Education Week (Provincial, April 2005)
 - Statement re ... 1032
- Great Kids of Alberta
 - Awards: Recognition of ... 325
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - First reading ... 170
 - Second reading ... 212, 216
 - Committee ... 231-232
 - Third reading ... 397, 400
- Insurance, Automobile
 - Reform of ... 691-92
- Licensed premises
 - Liquor sales to minors ... 1029
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 135-37
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - AADAC youth drug treatment programs ... 804
 - Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission ... 1786-87
 - Education Week ... 1032
 - Mountain of Heroes Foundation ... 293
 - World No Tobacco Day ... 1577
- Mountain of Heroes Foundation
 - Statement re ... 293
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Chiropractic and physiotherapy insurance fees ... 691-92
 - Sale of liquor to minors ... 1029
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1531
 - Committee ... 1928-29
- Physical therapy—Fees
 - Set fees for traffic injury cases ... 691-92
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Implementation of ... 1787
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 325, 578
- Robertshaw, Jessica
 - Recognition of ... 578
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - First reading ... 52
 - Second reading ... 172-73, 186
 - Third reading ... 991-92, 998
- Smoking—Prevention
 - AADAC program re (Web site) ... 1787
 - Statement re ... 1577
- Smoking in public places
 - Ban on: Legislation re (Bill 201) ... 52
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 135-37
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - Detox/residential services re ... 1787
 - Mandatory programs for ... 1787
 - Mandatory programs for: Legislation re (Bill 202) ... 1787

Rodney, Dave (PC, Calgary-Lougheed) (Continued)

- Tourism–Marketing
 - Use of tourism levy revenue for ... 170
- Tourism levy
 - Conversion of hotel tax to: Legislation re (Bill 21) ... 170
- Traffic accident injuries
 - Chiropractic/physiotherapy fee schedule for ... 691–92
- World No Tobacco Day
 - Statement re ... 1577

Rogers, George (PC, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon)

- Airline industry
 - Government incentives to ... 1391
- Airport authorities
 - Rent paid to federal government ... 1390–91
- Alberta Order of Excellence
 - Increase in awards per year (Bill 18) ... 128
- Alberta Order of Excellence Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 18)
 - First reading ... 128
 - Second reading ... 352, 353
 - Committee ... 446
 - Third reading ... 638
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - Chief administrative officer award: Statement re ... 2016
- Alberta Venture* (Magazine)
 - Most-respected corporations list: Statement re ... 1450–51
- Canadian Petroleum Interpretive Centre
 - Expansion to (Project Discovery) ... 774
- Corporate Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 26)
 - Second reading ... 538
 - Committee ... 1489
- Corporations
 - Alberta Venture* list of most-respected ... 1450–51
- Curling championships
 - Masters Curling Championship ... 126
 - Team Martin (2005 Canada Cup champions) ... 418
- Edmonton International Airport
 - Airport vicinity protection area discussions ... 577
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, affordability review to improve ... 320
- Education–Finance
 - Property tax funds contribution to ... 799
- Flesher, Mr. Ken
 - Recognition of ... 126
- Forest management agreements
 - Recreational/snowmobile access to lands under ... 693–94
- Highway 19
 - Twinning ... 950–51
- Hockey championships
 - U of A Pandas Canada West title winners ... 169
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)
 - Access issues ... 694
- Leduc, City of
 - Growth of, impact of international airport protection area discussions on ... 577
- Leduc/Devon Oilfield Historical Society
 - General remarks ... 774
- Leduc/Grimma, Germany co-operation agreement
 - Statement re ... 955–56

Rogers, George (PC, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon)*(Continued)*

- Leduc-Nisku Economic Development Authority
 - General remarks ... 955
- Leduc No. 1 Historic Site
 - General remarks ... 774
- Lottery Fund
 - Project Discovery funding ... 774
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 79–80
- McCallum, Sandy
 - Recognition of ... 490
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Alberta Venture* most-respected corporations ... 1450–51
 - Kevin Robins ... 2016
 - Leduc/Grimma partnership ... 955–56
 - Municipal excellence awards ... 1835–36
 - Project Discovery ... 734
- Mosquito control programs
 - Funding for ... 1449
- Municipal excellence awards
 - Statement re ... 1835–36
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Airport rental costs ... 1390–91
 - Economic benefits of snowmobiling ... 744
 - Education property tax ... 798–99
 - Highway construction ... 950–51
 - International airport vicinity protection ... 577
 - Learning assessment ... 1782–83
 - Snowmobile use on public lands ... 693–94
 - Student loans ... 319–320
 - West Nile virus ... 1449
- Petty Trespass Act
 - Snowmobiles on public lands provisions ... 693–94
- Point of Order
 - Referring to the absence of members ... 1489
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Amendment (SP597/05: Tabled) ... 1700
- Property tax–Education levy
 - General remarks ... 798–99
- Public lands
 - Access to ... 693–94
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure) (2005)
 - General remarks ... 126, 169, 418, 490
- Road construction
 - Priorities re ... 950–51
- Roads–Maintenance and repair
 - Impact on traffic safety ... 950–51
- Robins, Mr. Kevin
 - Statement re ... 2016
- Snowmobile trails
 - Tourism aspects ... 744
- Snowmobiles
 - Access to public lands ... 693–94
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 79–80
- Student assessment
 - Computer adaptive assessment tool re ... 1782–83
 - Grade level achievement method ... 1782–83
- Student financial aid
 - Federal loan limit increase ... 319–20
 - Provincial loan policy ... 320

Rogers, George (PC, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon)*(Continued)*

Tourism

Snowmobile trails attractions ... 744

Traffic safety

General remarks ... 950

Trails, Recreational

On public lands ... 694

West Nile virus

Control methods for, funding of ... 1449

Shariff, Shiraz (PC, Calgary-McCall)

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)

Second reading ... 1642–43

Alberta Government Offices

Washington, D.C. office ... 289

The Alberta Legislature (Book)

General remarks ... 1605–06

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2)
(Bill 51)

Second reading ... 1953–54

Bow Valley Community Foundation Act (Bill Pr. 1)

Committee ... 1509

Calgary-McCall (Constituency)

Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees,
on second ballot ... 4, 5

Chair

Election of ... 2

Deerfoot Trail, Calgary

Median barrier installation ... 2011

Deputy Chair

Election of, on second ballot ... 4, 5

Deputy Speaker

Election of ... 2

Drayton Valley-Calmar (Constituency)

Notice of privilege re actions by Member for (Not
proceeded with) ... 1615

Edmonton-Rutherford (Constituency)

Notice of privilege re actions by Member for Drayton
Valley-Calmar against (Not proceeded with) ...
1615

Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain

Alberta visit, May 2005: First Nations participation ...
1444–45Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill
35)

Second reading ... 1194

Amendment (SP437/05: Tabled) ... 1493

Federal government

Governing party's loss of vote of confidence ... 1935

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

First session, March 5, 1906: Statement re ... 1605–06

Medicine Hat Community Foundation Amendment Act,
2005 (Bill Pr. 3)

Committee ... 1509

Members' Statements (2005)

First Session of the first Alberta Legislature ...
1605–06

National Social Work Week ... 209

National Social Work Week

Statement re ... 209

Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (Constituency)

Member for, elected as Deputy Speaker ... 2

Oral Question Period (2005)

Alberta office in Washington ... 289

Shariff, Shiraz (PC, Calgary-McCall) (Continued)Oral Question Period (2005)*(Continued)*

Deerfoot Trail median barriers ... 2011

First Nations participation in Royal visit ... 1444–45

Self-managed care for seniors ... 617

Student loan program ... 1830

Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 38)

Second reading ... 1485

Point of Order

Clarification ... 1512, 1768

Items previously decided ... 1292, 1293

Relevance ... 1511

Second reading debate ... 1945

Privilege

Notice of, re actions by Member for Drayton Valley-
Calmar (Not proceeded with) ... 1615

Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)

Committee ... 789–90

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)

Second reading ... 380

Roads

Median barrier installation, on twinned roads ... 2011

Seniors' self-managed care program

Funding for ... 617

Speaker—Rulings and statements

Addressing the Chair ... 1945

Decorum ... 825

Third reading of Bill 31 ... 1291

Student financial aid

Loan interest rates ... 1830

Provincial loan policy ... 1830

Traffic safety

Median barrier installations, on twinned roads ... 2011

Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)

Amendment (SP436/05: Tabled) ... 1493

Snelgrove, Lloyd (PC, Vermilion-Lloydminster)

Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)

Second reading ... 222

Alberta Government Offices

Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border
closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 20

Alberta Ingenuity Fund

Increase in value of (Motion 503: Knight) ... 511

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

Impact on cattle industry ... 19–20

Calgary Health Region

Funding ... 977

Capital Health

Funding ... 977

Cattle—Export—United States

Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border
closed ... 19–20

Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)

General remarks ... 645

Statement re ... 805

City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)

First reading ... 51

Second reading ... 238, 382–83

Committee ... 447–48

Third reading ... 479

Clean energy technology

Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion
504: Swann) ... 672

Snelgrove, Lloyd (PC, Vermilion-Lloydminster)*(Continued)*

- Community halls—Rural areas
 - Food safety regulations in ... 1520
 - Extended care facilities—Standards
 - Improvement of (Motion 507: Mason) ... 1174–75
 - Farmers' markets
 - Food service regulations at ... 1520
 - Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 681, 702
 - Food safety
 - Rural community halls ... 1520
 - Lloydminster, City of
 - New charter for: Legislation re (Bill 3) ... 51
 - Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1685
 - Members' Statements (2005)
 - Centennial hockey challenge ... 805
 - Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Border closure to Canadian beef ... 19–20
 - Centennial hockey challenge ... 645
 - Food regulations review ... 1520
 - Funding for regional health authorities ... 976–77
 - Oversize/overweight trucking permits ... 2010
 - Regional health authorities
 - Funding ... 976–77
 - Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1350
 - Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 672
 - Senate (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 19
 - Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 494–95
 - Third reading ... 994
 - Amendments (SP265/05: Tabled) ... 494
 - Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 14)
 - Second reading ... 434
 - Trucking industry
 - Oversize permit process ... 2010
 - Wages—Public service employees
 - Indexing of, to average weekly earnings index (Motion 512: Griffiths/Snelgrove) ... 1937, 1943
- Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.)**
- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - General remarks ... 1
 - Replica of Famous Five statuette, to be housed in Legislature Building during ... 856
 - Administrator of the Province of Alberta
 - Role in Edmonton-Castle Downs election determination: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... 26
 - Role of, authority for: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... 26
 - Alberta
 - Statement re ... 1617
 - Alberta Aids to Daily Living
 - Breast prosthesis inclusion under: Petition tabled re (SP306/05) ... 699
 - Alberta Alliance Party
 - Member of, participation in Question Period ... 16, 90

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Supercedes similar Bill 207 ... 1789
- Alberta Association of Former M.L.A.s Act (Bill 207)
 - Not proceeded with (withdrawn from Order Paper) ... 1789
- Alberta Scene (Arts festival, Ottawa)
 - Opening performance of ... 1151
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's authority challenged re, emergency debate re ... 1318–19
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on investigation of, release to media, point of privilege re ... 1635, 1636, 1637–38, 1719–20
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Emergency debate under SO 30 re ... 1084–85
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Alleged role of Minister of Environment in, Ethics commissioner's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1637–38
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Alleged role of Minister of Environment in, Ethics commissioner's report on (SP532/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1637–38, 1719–20
- Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Point of order re ... 1453–54
- Auditor General
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1637–38, 1675, 1676, 1719–20
 - Introduction of ... 5
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, authority to challenged, emergency debate re ... 1318–19
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to news media of report on, point of privilege re ... 1635, 1636, 1637–38, 1719–20
 - Suggestive references to, in Legislative Assembly ... 955, 984, 987–88
- Batiuk, Mr. John (former MLA)
 - Memorial tribute to ... 1619
- Bills, Government
 - Bills containing similar provisions (Bills 47 and 207), ruling on ... 1789
- Bills, Private members' public
 - Unanimous consent given for Bill 202 to proceed to Committee and Third readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... 784
- Breast prostheses
 - Inclusion under AADL program: Petition tabled re (SP306/05) ... 699
- Calgary-McCall (Constituency)
 - Member for, appreciation extended to ... 4
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Chair of Committees, on second ballot ... 4, 5
- Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society
 - Wild Rose grants transferred to: Point of order re ... 1453–54

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Canadian armed forces
 - Service in Afghanistan: Prayer/condolences for death re ... 1880
- Chair
 - Election of ... 2, 3
- Chief Electoral Officer
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP13/05: Tabled) ... 27
 - Introduction of ... 5
 - Report on candidates who failed to file campaign financial statements (SP256/05: Tabled) ... 492
 - Report on Senate candidates who failed to file campaign financial statements (SP257/05: Tabled) ... 492
- Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing Members' Services orders no.1/05 to no.6/05 (SP258-263/05: Tabled) ... 492
 - Members' Services orders no.7/05 to no.9/05 (SP528-530/05: Tabled) ... 1632
- Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Standing
 - Referral of comments in Legislature re Auditor General to ... 988
- Committee on Public Accounts, Standing
 - Chair of, directing questions to ... 1789
- Committees of the whole House
 - Historical background of ... 253
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Alberta branch
 - Annual report, 2003 (In Legislative Assembly Office, Annual report, SP16/05: Tabled) ... 27
- Dept. of Finance
 - Minister of, comments re ... 421
- Deputy Chair
 - Election of, on second ballot ... 4, 5
- Deputy Speaker
 - Election of ... 2, 3
- Drayton Valley-Calmor (Constituency)
 - Notice of privilege re actions by Member for (Not proceeded with) ... 1633
- Edmonton-Castle Downs (Constituency)
 - Role of Administrator of the province in legal decision re electoral results in: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... 26
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 Grey Cup contenders: T-shirt and thunderstick from (to be provided) ... 1888
- Edmonton-Norwood (Constituency)
 - Former member for, Report of Ethics Commissioner re allegations re (SP14/05: Tabled) ... 27
- Edmonton-Rutherford (Constituency)
 - Notice of privilege re actions by Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor against (Not proceeded with) ... 1633
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 464, 1617
 - Alberta visit, May 2005: Protocol questions, correspondence re ... 1579
- Embury, Mrs. Sheila (Former MLA)
 - Memorial tribute to ... 1619
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1399, 1400-01
 - Long-term care funding (Not proceeded with) ... 1718-19

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30 *(Continued)*
 - Securities Commission, loss of investor confidence in (not proceeded with) ... 1084-85
 - Securities Commission challenge of Auditor General's authority (not proceeded with) ... 1318-19
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Main and Lottery Fund estimates, 2005-06: Motion to waive SO 58(5) re ... 1085
 - Main and Lottery Fund estimates, 2005-06 transmitted to Assembly (SP320/05: Tabled) ... 746-47
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 transmitted to Assembly (SP85/05: Tabled) ... 94
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP12/05: Tabled) ... 27
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP531/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Introduction of ... 5
 - Report into allegations re former Member for Edmonton-Norwood (SP14/05: Tabled) ... 27
 - Report into allegations re Minister of Environment and Fort McMurray land sale process, leak to media, point of privilege re ... 1637-38, 1675, 1676, 1719-20
 - Report into allegations re Minister of Environment and Fort McMurray land sale process (SP532/05: Tabled) ... 1632
- Extended care facilities-Finance
 - Emergency debate on (Not proceeded with) ... 1718-19
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1399, 1400-01
- Famous Five
 - Replica of Ottawa statuette re, to be housed in Legislature Building ... 856, 1526
- Filumena* (Opera)
 - Opening performance at Alberta Scene in Ottawa ... 1151
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re, tabling re disallowed ... 1258-59
- Health Information Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Final report, 2004 (SP200/05: Tabled) ... 369
- Historical vignette
 - Committees of the whole House ... 253
- Historical vignettes of Alberta
 - Arrival of sailor (Charles Walker) at Saddle Lake Indian Reserve to report loss of ship on west coast, April 14, 1898 ... 775
 - Aspen Beach designated Alberta's first provincial park, November 21, 1932 ... 1743
 - Athabasca, Town of, established May 18, 1905 ... 1608
 - Bassano dam opened, April 25, 1914 ... 982
 - Cardston founded, April 26, 1887 ... 1033
 - Deputy Premier/Minister of Finance elected, November 23, 1987 ... 1836
 - Duke of Windsor (Edward VIII) visit to Calgary, April 11, 1950 ... 652
 - Edmonton Grads win international basketball title, March 24, 1930 ... 453

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Historical vignettes of Alberta *(Continued)*
- Famous Five maquette on display in Legislature Building starting May 16, 2005 ... 1526
 - First air mail service began, March 3, 1930 ... 13
 - First and only woman hanged in Alberta (Florence (Filumena) Lassandro), May 2, 1923 ... 1151
 - First dial telephones in Canada installed in Edmonton, April 5, 1908 ... 537
 - First Edmonton to Calgary automobile journey, March 1906 ... 49
 - First electoral franchise for women (1917) and aboriginals (April 12, 1965) ... 699
 - First of two women elected to provincial legislature (Roberta MacAdams), June 7, 1917 ... 243
 - First Ombudsman in Alberta and Canada (George B. McClellan), April 6, 1967 ... 579
 - First session of Legislature prorogued, May 9, 1906 (76 bills passed, Wetaskiwin, Lethbridge and U of A incorporated) ... 1340
 - First state funeral for a Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Philip Primrose) who died in office, March 17, 1937 ... 285
 - First time a Legislature convened in the Assembly Chamber, November 30, 1911 ... 2019
 - Floral Emblem Act passed and general election held, March 21, 1930 and 1940 respectively ... 315
 - Frank Slide, April 29, 1903 ... 1127–28
 - General election of 1909 (March 22) ... 359
 - General election of 1979 (March 14) ... 159
 - Herbert Greenfield resigned as Premier, November 23, 1925 ... 1836
 - Hon. Colonel J.C. Bowen appointed Lieutenant Governor, March 23, 1937 ... 409
 - Legislative Assembly historical data on sitting days/Bills passed ... 1504
 - Lethbridge incorporated as a town, November 29, 1890 ... 1968
 - Lord Strathcona statue unveiled on Legislature Grounds, May 17, 2000 ... 1576
 - Métis Nation of Alberta agreement with province, April 20, 1999 ... 908
 - Mount Royal College established, April 18, 1966 ... 804
 - Naval reserve division formed, Edmonton, 1923 ... 1257
 - New Democratic Party representation in Legislature, November 16, 1966 ... 1672
 - Peace River (town) incorporated, December 1, 1919 ... 2056
 - Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act passed Committee reading, May 10, 1988 ... 1396
 - RCAF Flying Officer L.W. Powell ... 1628
 - Retired cabinet ministers made honorary life members of Legislature press gallery, April 21, 1971 ... 958
 - Royal Canadian Navy formed, May 4, 1910 ... 1256–57
 - Rupert's Land purchased, May 11, 1870 ... 1451
 - Saluting of Union Jack made mandatory, March 9, 1941 ... 125
 - Special sitting of the Legislature re oil and gas conservation, Nov. 15 - 22, 1938 ... 1787

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Historical vignettes of Alberta *(Continued)*
- Thelma Chalifoux became a Senator, November 24, 1997 ... 1889
 - Unknown Canadian soldier repatriation commemoration, May 3, 2000 ... 1205
 - Vegreville established as a village, April 4, 1906 ... 491
 - Women's right to vote and hold elected office, April 19, 1916 ... 848
 - Ho Lem, Mr. George (Former MLA)
 - Memorial tribute to ... 1619
 - Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former Lieutenant Governor)
 - Tribute to ... 7
 - Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP15/05: Tabled) ... 27
 - Introduction of ... 5
 - John Paul II, Pope
 - Prayer for ... 481
 - Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - New sound system in ... 1619
 - New sound system microphones in ... 1838
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of ... 1259, 1301, 1303
 - Legislative Assembly of Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1617
 - Legislative Assembly Office
 - Annual report, 2003 (Includes CPA Alberta branch annual report (SP16/05: Tabled) ... 27
 - Incident in south members' lounge, May 18, 2005, security report on (SP533/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Lieutenant Governor of Alberta
 - Former Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Lois Hole),
 - Tribute to ... 7
 - Transmittal of 2004-05 supplementary estimates (SP85/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Transmittal of 2005-06 Main and Lottery Fund estimates (SP320/05: Tabled) ... 746–47
 - Lieutenant Governors of Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1617
 - MacLeod, Mr. Roderick (Former MLA)
 - Tribute to ... 13
 - Members' correction of remarks
 - Location of Bergen op Zoom ... 1301, 1343
 - Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Tribute to former members ... 13, 1619
 - Members' Statements
 - Comment invited re ... 53
 - Interim agreement re ... 17, 91
 - Speaker's statement re ... 1607
 - Members' Statements (2005)
 - Respect for women in politics, point of order request re ... 1607
 - Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - Regarding Minister of Finance ... 988
 - Regarding unparliamentary language ... 1036, 1082
 - Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Border closure to Canadian beef ... 16
 - Montgomery, Mr. Euell (Former MLA)
 - Tribute to ... 13
 - Netherlands
 - Liberation of, and ties with Canada ... 1313

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- New Democrat Opposition
 - Role in Question Period ... 90
- Officers of the Legislative Assembly
 - Definition of ... 987–88
 - Reports by, released to media, point of privilege re ... 1637–38, 1719–20
- Official Opposition
 - Role in Question Period ... 90
- Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (Constituency)
 - Member for, elected as Deputy Speaker ... 2, 3
- Ombudsman
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP11/05: Tabled) ... 27
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP655/05: Tabled) ... 1788
 - Introduction of ... 5
- Oral Question Period (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Alliance member's participation in ... 16, 90
 - Government members' role in ... 90
 - Official opposition role in ... 90
 - Preambles before supplementary questions ... 90
 - Rotation of questions and answers: 1986 precedent ... 58, 90
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Interim agreement re ... 16–17
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Ruling on (SP37/05: Tabled) ... 90–91, 93
 - Rotation of questions and answers: Submissions on ... 53, 58
 - Third opposition party's role in ... 90
 - Time limit on questions and answers ... 17, 90
- Pages (Legislative Assembly)
 - Biographies of (pamphlet) ... 3
 - Biographies of (pamphlet) (SP637/05: Tabled) ... 1746
 - Recognition of ... 1605
- Parliamentary language
 - General remarks ... 623–24, 988, 1035–36
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on, tabling re disallowed ... 1258–59
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Breast prosthesis inclusion under AADL program (SP306/05: Tabled) ... 699
- Point of Order
 - Allegations against a member ... 421
 - Challenging the Chair ... 1444, 1457
 - Citing documents ... 1580
 - Explanation of Speaker's ruling ... 989, 1789, 1920–21
 - Factual accuracy ... 1344
 - False allegations ... 1412
 - Improper questions ... 2057
 - Imputing motives ... 1035–36
 - Member's Statement re respect for women in politics ... 1607
 - Parliamentary language ... 623–24
 - Referring to a member by name ... 1343
 - Reflections on a member ... 1455–57
 - Reflections on nonmembers ... 1453–54
 - Urgency of questions ... 700
- Privilege
 - Auditor General's investigation of Securities Commission enforcement processes, comments re ... 988

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Privilege *(Continued)*
 - Contempt (Auditor General's report on Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to media) ... 1635, 1636, 1719–20
 - Contempt (Release to media of three reports by Officers of the Assembly) ... 1637–38, 1675, 1676
 - Minister of Finance, comments re ... 421
 - Notice of, re actions by Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar (Not proceeded with) ... 1633
- Projected Government Business (Parliamentary procedure)
 - For the week of March 14, 2005 (SP99/05: Tabled) ... 129
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and Third readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... 784
- Provincial Museum of Alberta
 - Hoof Prints to Tank Tracks exhibit ... 1576
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Comment invited re ... 53
 - General remarks ... 169
 - Interim agreement re ... 17, 91
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Prayer and moment of silence for fallen officers in ... 38, 39
- Ruzycski, Mr. Stanley N. (Former MLA)
 - Tribute to ... 13
- School at the Legislature (Educational program)
 - General remarks ... 906
 - Report card, 2003-04 (SP342/04: Tabled) ... 858
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading on same day as first reading, motion for, denied ... 59
- Smoking in public places
 - Ban on (Motion 507: Mason, invitation to revise motion) ... 1034
- Smoking in the workplace
 - Ban on (Motion 507: Mason, invitation to revise motion) ... 1034
- Speaker
 - 26th anniversary as an MLA, statement re ... 1743
- Speaker–Rulings and statements
 - Address to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II ... 1617, 1618
 - Address to Lieutenant Governor ... 7
 - Address to the Assembly upon election as Speaker ... 1–2
 - Anticipation ... 1078, 1122
 - Assembly sitting details, 2005 ... 1608
 - Bills containing similar provisions (Bills 47 and 207) ... 1789
 - Birthday congratulations to a member ... 1451
 - Brevity in Members' Statements ... 652
 - Brevity in Oral Question Period ... 1604
 - Calendar of special events ... 92, 491, 1153
 - Clarification ... 1500
 - Clerk of Journals/Table Research's vacation/marriage ... 543
 - Committees of the whole House, historical background ... 253
 - Death of Canadian soldier in Afghanistan: Moment of silence for ... 1880

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Speaker—Rulings and statements *(Continued)*
- Edmonton Eskimos regalia, provision of, to members ... 1888
 - Electoral anniversary of Deputy Premier/Minister of Finance ... 1836
 - Electoral anniversary of several members, congratulations re ... 1785
 - Estimates consideration (waiver of SO 58(5) re) ... 1085, 1319
 - Famous Five statuette replica to be housed in Legislature Bldg. during centennial year ... 856
 - Gift of promotional attire ... 805
 - Historic occasion: Unanimous consent given to waive SO 8(3) to allow consideration of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act ... 784
 - Historical vignette (Committees of the whole House) ... 253, 652
 - Historical vignettes of Alberta ... 13, 49, 125, 243, 285, 315, 359, 409, 453, 491, 537, 579, 699, 775, 804, 848, 908, 958, 982, 1033, 1127–28, 1151, 1205, 1256–57, 1340, 1396, 1451, 1504, 1526, 1576, 1608, 1628, 1672, 1743, 1787, 1836, 1889, 1968, 2019, 2056
 - Items previously decided ... 368
 - Items previously decided (Motion 507, invitation to revise) ... 1034
 - Members' Statements ... 1607
 - Memorial tribute to Hon. Lois Hole, former Lieutenant Governor ... 7
 - Page Biographies (pamphlet) ... 3
 - Pages, letter to Assembly from ... 1605
 - Prayer for fallen RCMP officers ... 38
 - Prayer for Pope John Paul II ... 481
 - Prayer in recognition of 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day ... 1301
 - Prayer in recognition of Holocaust Memorial Day ... 1247
 - Preambles ... 493
 - Projected government business ... 129
 - Queen's visit protocol questions for members, correspondence re ... 1579
 - Question Period rotation of questions and statements ... 16–17, 53, 58, 90–91
 - Question Period rotation of questions and statements: Copy of ruling tabled (SP37/05) ... 93
 - Questions about a legislative committee ... 1783, 1789
 - Questions about previous ministers ... 2046
 - Questions outside ministerial responsibility ... 1306
 - Re-election of Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, congratulations re ... 1785
 - Recognitions ... 169
 - Referring to a member by name ... 134–35, 169, 1506
 - Referring to an officer of the Legislature ... 955, 984, 987–88
 - Reports by officers of the Assembly, premature release of ... 1719–20
 - School at the Legislature program ... 906
 - Sound system microphones ... 1838
 - Sound system renovations ... 1619
 - Speaking time ... 31–32
 - Sub judice rule ... 743
 - Tabling correspondence to the Speaker ... 26

Speaker, The (Kowalski, Hon. Kenneth R.) *(Continued)*

- Speaker—Rulings and statements *(Continued)*
- Tabling documents ... 328
 - Tabling notes to oneself ... 1258
 - Tablings ... 2018
 - Time limit on Members' Statements ... 1203–04
 - VE Day ceremony, with forces representatives on floor of Assembly ... 1259, 1301, 1303
 - Voting on Bills ... 737
 - World War II food ration box distributed in the Netherlands ... 1313
 - Speech from the Throne
 - Copy tabled (SP1/05: Tabled) ... 11
 - Standing Orders
 - Amendments to, re Members' Statements and Recognitions ... 17, 91
 - SO 8(3) waived to allow consideration of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act ... 784
 - SO 58(5) waived to allow consideration of main estimates ... 1085, 1319
 - SO 87(1) amendment, to increase fees for petitioning private bills ... 1033
 - Sub judice
 - General remarks ... 581–82, 743
 - Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - Mandatory programs for: Legislation re (Bill 202) - unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and Third readings of ... 784
 - Tabling returns and reports (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Newspaper articles ... 2018
 - Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
 - Recommendations to the Utilities Consumer Advocate on Retail Energy Options for Electricity ("draft" report, Feb. 23, 2005): Point of Order ... 1035–36
 - Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber ... 1259, 1301, 1303, 1343
 - Wickman, Mr. Percy (Former MLA)
 - Tribute to ... 13
 - Wild Rose Foundation
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Point of order re ... 1453–54
 - Speech from the Throne**
 - 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - General remarks ... 8
 - Aboriginal issues
 - General remarks ... 9
 - Aboriginal peoples
 - General remarks ... 8
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - General remarks ... 9
 - Access to the Future Fund
 - Establishment of ... 9
 - Agriculture
 - Government assistance programs ... 9
 - Alberta—Economic policy
 - General remarks ... 8–10
 - Alberta—History
 - General remarks ... 8
 - Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
 - Inflation-proofing of ... 9

Speech from the Throne *(Continued)*

- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 10
 - Optical benefits ... 10
- Alberta SuperNet
 - General remarks ... 8
- Alberta Water Council
 - Water conservation planning ... 9
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Class size guideline ... 8
- Alberta's Promise
 - General remarks ... 10
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of ... 9
- Apprenticeship training
 - Aboriginal people ... 8
 - Improvements to ... 8
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits increase ... 10
 - Review of (2004) ... 10
- Barley–Marketing
 - General remarks ... 9
- Beef processing
 - General remarks ... 9
- Canadian Wheat Board
 - Market choice addition to ... 9
- Capital projects
 - General remarks ... 9
- Capital projects, Municipal
 - General remarks ... 9
- Centenarians
 - Presentation of centennial medallions to ... 8
- Centennial medallions
 - Presentation to Alberta centenarians ... 8
 - Presentation to Alberta schoolchildren ... 8
- Child abuse–Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 10
- Children
 - Government programs for ... 10
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Reduction of ... 8
- Communicable diseases–Control
 - Emergency response plan for ... 10
- Consumer protection
 - General remarks ... 9
- Credit ratings, Personal
 - Consumer protection legislation re ... 9
- Daycare centres–Employees
 - Accreditation program for ... 10
- Debt collection
 - Consumer protection legislation re ... 9
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - General remarks ... 9
- Dependent Adults Act
 - Review of ... 10
- Distance education
 - General remarks ... 8
- Drinking water
 - Safety of ... 10
- Education
 - General remarks ... 8, 9
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, affordability review to improve ... 8

Speech from the Throne *(Continued)*

- Education, Postsecondary *(Continued)*
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 8
 - General remarks ... 8
- Education, Postsecondary–Finance
 - Legislation re (Bill 1) ... 9
- Education–Curricula
 - Health and wellness instruction framework ... 10
- Electric power contracts, Residential
 - Plain language requirement ... 9
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain
 - Alberta visit, May 2005 ... 8
- Employment standards
 - Review of ... 10
- Energy industry–Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 9
- Energy resources
 - Development of ... 9
- Extended care facilities–Standards
 - Accommodation standards: Revision of ... 10
- Family courts
 - General remarks ... 10
- Government attorneys
 - Training in domestic violence case handling ... 10
- Hole, Hon. Lois E., CM, AOE (Former Lieutenant Governor)
 - Tribute to ... 7–8
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)
 - General remarks ... 9
- Internet (Computer network)
 - Crimes against children on: Education program re ... 10
- Legislature grounds
 - Memorial garden for Hon. Lois Hole on ... 8
- Lieutenant Governor of Alberta
 - Former Lieutenant Governor (Hon. Lois Hole), Tribute to ... 7
- Loan brokering
 - Consumer protection legislation re ... 9
- Lois Hole digital library (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 9
- Lois Hole humanities and social sciences scholarship (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 9
- Manufacturing
 - General remarks ... 9
- Medical care
 - General remarks ... 9
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 9
- Natural gas contracts, Residential
 - Plain language requirement ... 9
- Parent Link Centres
 - Expansion of ... 10
- Physical fitness–Teaching
 - Daily mandatory activities ... 10
- Physician/specialist referrals, Electronic
 - General remarks ... 9
- Police
 - Domestic violence case handling training ... 10
- Police Act
 - Civilian oversight provision enhancement ... 10
- Pornography, Child
 - On the Internet: Education program re ... 10

Speech from the Throne *(Continued)*

- Preventive medical services
 - General remarks ... 10
- Property tax—Education levy
 - Seniors' tax relief re ... 10
- Prostitution, Juvenile
 - On the Internet: Education program re ... 10
- Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 9
- Public assistance
 - General remarks ... 9
- Public auctions
 - Consumer protection legislation re ... 9
- Research and development
 - General remarks ... 9
- Ring roads—Calgary
 - Public/private partnership funding model for ... 9
- Road construction
 - Secondary road program ... 9
- Rural economic development
 - Government strategy re ... 9
- Scholarships
 - General remarks ... 8, 9
- Schoolchildren
 - Presentation of centennial medallions to ... 8
- Senior citizens
 - Contribution to province ... 8
- Senior citizens—Housing
 - Standards for ... 10
- Sentences, Conditional (Criminal procedure)
 - Federal reform of ... 10
- Student financial aid
 - General remarks ... 8
- Taxation
 - General remarks ... 9
- Traffic safety
 - Promotion of ... 10
- Tuition fees
 - Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by provincial government ... 8
- University graduates
 - Fellowship program for ... 8
 - Scholarship program for ... 8
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 9–10
- Wages—Minimum wage
 - Increase to ... 10
- Waiting lists (Medical care)
 - General remarks ... 9
- Water conservation
 - Provincial plan for ... 9
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - General remarks ... 9
- Water treatment plants
 - Funding for ... 10
- Wheat—Marketing
 - General remarks ... 9
- Workplace safety
 - General remarks ... 10

Stelmach, Hon. Ed (PC, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville)

- Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
 - Drilling in ... 1188
- Alberta—Foreign policy
 - Development of ... 415

Stelmach, Hon. Ed (PC, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Blue Cross Plan
 - Drug coverage ... 1189
- Alberta/British Columbia relations
 - General remarks ... 1180, 1183
- Alberta Government Offices
 - China office ... 1185
 - Japan office ... 1185
 - Ottawa office ... 1185
 - Washington, D.C. office ... 289, 1180, 1184, 1185–86, 1189, 1621
 - Washington, D.C. office: Accommodation costs of head of (Q6/05: Response tabled as SP540/05) ... 659, 1674
 - Washington, D.C. office: Budget breakdown for (M22/05: Response tabled as SP746/05) ... 822, 1970
 - Washington, D.C. office: Cost-benefit analysis re (M21/05: Response tabled as SP745/05) ... 822, 1970
 - Washington, D.C. office: Costs ... 415
 - Washington, D.C. office: Documents re (M20/05: Response tabled as SP744/05) ... 821, 1970
 - Washington, D.C. office: Opening of ... 415
 - Washington, D.C. office: Reports from director of (M37/05: Defeated) ... 1166
 - Washington, D.C. office: Representative's comments re Alaska wildlife refuge drilling ... 1188
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border closure to Canadian cattle issue ... 1166, 1187
 - Washington, D.C. office: Role in resolving border trade crossing issue ... 1186
 - Washington, D.C. office: Salary of head of ... 1184
- Alberta pension plan (Proposed)
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Contracts re (M39/05: Response tabled as SP513/05) ... 1167
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Costs comparison for (M41/05: Response tabled as SP514/05) ... 1169
 - Public/private partnership funding model for southeast portion of: Loan interest rate comparison re (M32/05: Response tabled as SP511/05) ... 1162
- Antidumping laws (International trade)
 - General remarks ... 614
- Auditor General
 - Performance measures comments ... 1182
- Beef—Export
 - General remarks ... 1184, 1186
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - General remarks ... 1181
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 19–20, 288, 1182, 1184
 - Testing re, to expedite exports ... 1186
- British Columbia ports strategy
 - Alberta participation in ... 772
- Budget
 - Process re ... 1621
- Canada/Alberta labour market development program
 - General remarks ... 1392
- Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
 - General remarks ... 1188
 - Parity of Ontario and Alberta re ... 1503, 1523–24

Stelmach, Hon. Ed (PC, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville)*(Continued)*

- Capital projects
 - Public/private partnerships re: List of all potential projects (M33/05: Response tabled as SP512/05) ... 1163
- Caribou (Porcupine herd)—Alaska/Canada
 - Impact of drilling activity on ... 1188
- Cattle—Export—United States
 - Contingency plan re continued border closure ... 1182
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 19–20, 1182, 1184, 1186–87, 1187
- Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 1181
- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Alberta definition of marriage inclusion in, response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... 1837
 - Property rights inclusion in, response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Constitutional Referendum Act
 - Property rights referendum during federal election, response to question re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Council of the Federation
 - Alberta as chair of ... 1181
 - General remarks ... 1185
 - Meeting in Banff, 2005 ... 288, 1182
 - Meeting in Banff, 2005: Hosting costs ... 1180, 1184
 - Meeting in Banff, 2005: Senate reform discussions ... 288, 455, 695
- Daycare centres—Finance
 - National program for: Alberta participation ... 1392, 1503
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Minister's trip to Ottawa re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 20
- Dept. of Agriculture (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 19–20
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Relation to Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations ... 1183, 1187
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP56/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP580/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Budget target ... 1621
 - Elimination of ... 1187
 - Estimates 2005-06: Debated ... 1180–89
 - Hosting expenses, 1996-2004 (Q17/05: Response tabled as SP743/05) ... 812, 1970
 - Performance measures ... 1182, 1189
 - Relation to Dept. of Economic Development ... 1183, 1187
 - Staff ... 1188
- Drugs, Prescription
 - National plan for ... 1189
- Electric power—Export
 - General remarks ... 1182
- Electric power—Prices
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 1186
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley) ... 1186

Stelmach, Hon. Ed (PC, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville)*(Continued)*

- Equalization payments
 - General remarks ... 1187, 1188, 1523
- Farm produce—Export
 - Antidumping rules re ... 614
- Federal/Ontario fiscal relations
 - Impact of federal parliamentary situation on ... 1392, 1503, 1523
- Federal/provincial fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 1188, 1392, 1503, 1523–24
- Federal/provincial relations
 - Budget increase for ... 1182
 - General remarks ... 1180, 1187, 1188
- Firewall issues (Federal/provincial relations)
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1166
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 1621
- Hogs—Export—United States
 - Antidumping duties on ... 614
- Immigrants
 - Federal funding for ... 1503, 1833
- Income tax, Federal
 - Reduction of ... 1392
- Income tax, Provincial
 - Provincial vs federal collection of ... 1188
- International delegations
 - General remarks ... 773
 - Shandong delegation's visit to Alberta ... 773
- International relations
 - Budget increase re ... 1182
 - General remarks ... 1180, 1183
 - Provincial role in ... 1181
- International trade
 - Alberta strategy re ... 1180
- International trade—Asian countries
 - General remarks ... 772, 1180
- International trade—United States
 - General remarks ... 1186, 1187
 - Irritants re ... 288–89
- Interprovincial trade
 - Internal trade agreement ... 1181
- Livestock
 - Tracking system re ... 1186
- Medical care
 - Opting out of national plan for ... 1188–89
- Medical care—Finance
 - National agreement on ... 1180
- MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation
 - Report ... 1188
- North American free trade agreement
 - Softwood lumber dispute challenge under ... 20, 644, 1626
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Alberta office in Washington ... 289
 - B.C./Alberta transportation issues ... 772
 - Border closure to Canadian beef ... 19–20
 - Budget surplus expenditures ... 1621
 - Federal financial support ... 1392, 1523–24
 - Federal transfer payments ... 1503
 - International delegations ... 773

Stelmach, Hon. Ed (PC, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - Live hog exports ... 614
 - North American trade ... 288
 - Opening of Alberta office in Washington ... 415
 - Senate appointments ... 455
 - Senate reform ... 287–88
 - Services for immigrants ... 1833
 - Softwood lumber trade dispute ... 20, 89, 573, 644, 1202, 1499, 1625–26
 - Travel by elected Senators ... 695
- Pacific Northwest Economic Region
 - General remarks ... 1186
- Port of Prince Rupert
 - Alberta participation in development of ... 772
- Property rights
 - Inclusion in Canadian constitution, referendum re:
 - Response to questions re (SP668/05: Tabled) ... 1837
- Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Foundation (U.S.)
 - Court challenge re Canadian beef imports: Decision re ... 1182, 1186, 1187
- Senate (Canada)
 - Reform of ... 287–88, 455, 695, 1184
- Senate (United States)
 - Position on Montana court injunction re border closure to Canadian cattle ... 19
- Senators
 - Alberta nominees for ... 287–88, 455, 1184
 - Alberta nominees for: Eastern Canada speaking tour ... 695
 - Appointments of, by Prime Minister ... 455
- Separatism, Western
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Smithsonian Institution
 - Alberta exhibition at ... 1186
- Softwoods–Export–United States
 - Countervail duties re ... 20, 89, 288, 644, 1181, 1184, 1621, 1625–26
 - Countervail duties re: Byrd amendment re ... 573, 1499
 - Countervail duties re: Canadian retaliatory actions re ... 573
 - Countervail duties re: Export tax to replace ... 1202
- Sponsorship scandal (Federal government)
 - General remarks ... 1188
- Supreme Court judges
 - Selection process for ... 1184
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - General remarks ... 1621
- Taxation
 - General remarks ... 1392
- Trade missions
 - General remarks ... 1184
 - Performance measures re ... 1182
- Transportation, Interprovincial–Alberta/British Columbia
 - General remarks ... 772, 1180
 - Northern corridor study re ... 772
- Travel at public expense
 - Alberta senators-in-waiting trip to eastern Canada ... 695

Stelmach, Hon. Ed (PC, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville)*(Continued)*

- Trucking industry
 - Canada/U.S. co-operation re regulations for ... 1186
 - Trucks–Inspection–Alberta/B.C. border
 - Joint inspection station ... 772
 - Twinning of cities, provinces, etc.
 - Ganwon, Korea ... 1180
 - General remarks ... 1180
 - Hokkaido, Japan ... 1180, 1182
 - Water–Export
 - General remarks ... 1182
 - Western Premiers' Conference, Lloydminster (May 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1182
 - Hosting costs ... 1180, 1184
 - World Trade Organization
 - Byrd amendment ruling ... 573, 1499
 - Doha round of negotiations ... 1180–81, 1182, 1184
 - Doha round of negotiations: Federal/provincial discussions re ... 1621
 - Softwood lumber dispute ruling ... 644, 1625–26
- Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)**
- Aboriginal court workers
 - General remarks ... 1233
 - Aboriginal courts
 - General remarks ... 1233
 - Aboriginal people and the judicial system
 - General remarks ... 1233
 - Aboriginal policy framework
 - General remarks ... 1233
 - Administrative Procedures Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 23)
 - First reading ... 170
 - Second reading ... 354–56
 - Third reading ... 942
 - Administrator of the Province of Alberta
 - Role of, authority for: Letter to the Speaker re, response to (SP201/05: Tabled) ... 370
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Committee ... 2003–04
 - Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... 486
 - Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Budget breakdown for (M22/05: Response tabled as SP746/05) ... 822
 - Washington, D.C. office: Cost-benefit analysis re (M21/05: Response tabled as SP745/05) ... 822
 - Washington, D.C. office: Documents re (M20/05: Response tabled as SP744/05) ... 821
 - Alberta Law Foundation
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP154/05: Tabled) ... 253
 - Annual report, 2005 (SP51/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Financial statements, 2003–04 (SP155/05: Tabled) ... 253
 - Financial statements, 2004–05 (SP592/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Alberta Law Reform Institute
 - Alberta Rules of Court* rewrite ... 1230
 - Alberta Rules of Court*
 - Rewrite of ... 1230

Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on investigation of, release to media, point of privilege re ... 1635–36, 1637
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Alleged role of Minister of Environment in, Ethics commissioner's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1637
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1637
- Alberta Summit on Justice (1999)
 - General remarks ... 1229
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Court services provision via ... 1225
 - Justice dept. applications via ... 1226, 1229
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Third reading ... 1609
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
 - Benefits received under (Q32/05: Response tabled as SP640/05) ... 1344–45
- Auditor General
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, report on leaked to media, point of privilege re ... 1637
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to news media of report on, point of privilege re ... 1635–36, 1637
- British Columbia Power Exchange Corp.
 - Involvement in Enron electricity price manipulation ... 42
- Chief Medical Examiner's Office
 - Budget ... 1227
- Child welfare recipients
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1445
 - Deaths of: Nina Louise Courtepatte case, fatality review of ... 1445
- Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act
 - Funding for implementation of ... 275, 276, 1234
- Civil law system
 - General remarks ... 1226–27
- Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 - General remarks ... 246
- Committee on Members' Services, Special Standing
 - Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Alberta Risk Management Fund review, referred to (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... 106, 108
- Conflict of interest
 - Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and Lubicon land claim ... 1600–01
- Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, Select Special
 - Appointment of (Motion 11: Stevens) ... 105–06
- Constitution Act, 1982
 - Opting out provisions (same-sex marriage issue) ... 246
- Constitutional law
 - Question of, in government boards/tribunals, referred to courts (Bill 23) ... 170
- Court interpreters—Fees
 - Increase in ... 1226, 1502

Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)*(Continued)*

- Courtroom security officers—Training
 - General remarks ... 743
- Courts
 - Computer network expansion in, funding for ... 1225–26
- Courts—Calgary
 - Additional courtrooms, funding for ... 275, 276
- Courts—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1234
- Courts—Security aspects
 - General remarks ... 1226
- Courts—Staff
 - Increase in ... 275
- Criminal Code (Federal)
 - Conditional sentencing provisions ... 1229–30
- Criminal justice system
 - General remarks ... 1226
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Chemical ingredients in, control of ... 1235
 - Chemical ingredients in, control of: Legislation re (Bill 204) ... 1235
 - Interprovincial conference re ... 1235
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Minister's potential conflict re Lubicon land claim process ... 1600–01
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Hosting expenses, 1996-2004 (Q17/05: Response tabled as SP743/05) ... 812
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP57/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP581/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Business plan ... 1225
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1225–30, 1232–36
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Responses to questions during (SP495/05: Tabled) ... 1579
 - Relations with other depts. ... 1229
 - Relations with Solicitor General's dept. ... 1229
 - Role of ... 1229
 - Staffing ... 1229
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 275–76
- Dept. of Solicitor General
 - Relations with Justice dept. ... 1229
- Disclosure of evidence (Legal procedure)
 - Computerized system re ... 1226
- Dispute resolution (Justice system)
 - Child and youth cases ... 275, 1225
- Diversion (Aboriginal offenders)
 - General remarks ... 1233
- Domestic violence
 - General remarks ... 1196–97, 1236
 - Murder/suicide case, Red Deer 2003 ... 1196–97
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 1226
 - Risk assessment group re violent cases ... 1196, 1233, 1236
- Drug courts
 - General remarks ... 1230
- Drug trafficking—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1234–35
- Elections, Municipal—Calgary
 - Ward 10 election process: Cost of investigation of (Q30/05: Response tabled as SP806/05) ... 1158

Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)*(Continued)*

- Electric power—Prices
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 42
- Electric utilities—Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 42
- Energy industry—Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 486
- Energy industry—Crown lands—Sawn Lake area
 - Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 1600–01
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 42
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06 considered for three days (Schedule of debate) (SP541/05: Tabled) ... 1674
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Report into allegations re Minister of Environment and Fort McMurray land sale process, leak to media, point of privilege re ... 1637
 - Role in Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee ... 105
- Extended care facilities
 - Death of resident in (Jean Warden) ... 1881
- Family court counsellors
 - General remarks ... 1225
- Family courts
 - General remarks ... 1197, 1226, 1230, 1234, 1236
 - Visitation rulings in violent spouse cases ... 1196–97
- Family law
 - Support services re, funding for ... 1225
- Family Law Act
 - General remarks ... 1225, 1234
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - First reading ... 51
 - Second reading ... 195–98
 - Committee ... 444–46, 635
 - Third reading ... 1020–21
 - Amendment (Minister of Justice) (SP235, 272, 295/05: Tabled) ... 444, 566, 633
- Fatality inquiries
 - Kyle Young's death in Edmonton courthouse ... 743
 - Long-term care resident's death (Jean Warden) ... 1881
 - Nina Louise Courtepatte case ... 1445
 - RCMP drug raid fatalities investigation ... 41, 43
 - Role of news media at ... 414
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - First reading ... 170
 - Second reading ... 380–81
 - Committee ... 719–25
 - Third reading ... 1378
 - General remarks ... 414
- Fatality Review Board
 - General remarks ... 1881
- Fines (Traffic violations)
 - Computerized cash register system re ... 1225
- Foster parents
 - Legal aid funding for ... 1235
- Government agencies, boards, and commissions
 - Constitutional law situations in, referred to courts (Bill 23) ... 170

Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)*(Continued)*

- Government attorneys
 - Training in aboriginal case handling ... 1233
- Guardianship of children
 - Joint guardianship rules: Legislation re (Bill 5) ... 51
- HomeFront (Domestic violence prevention program)
 - General remarks ... 1230, 1236
- Integrated Response to Organized Crime
 - General remarks ... 1235
- Internet (Computer network)
 - Crimes against children on ... 1230
- Interpretation services for disabled people in court
 - Provision of ... 1226
- John Howard Society
 - General remarks ... 1229
- Judicial Compensation Commission
 - Report on Provincial Court judges salary increase ... 275
 - Report on Provincial Court judges salary increase: Provincial challenge of ... 276
- Justice ministers' meeting, Ottawa (January 2005)
 - Discussion re changes to conditional sentencing ... 1230
 - Discussion re legal aid funding ... 1232
- Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 48)
 - First reading ... 1631
 - Second reading ... 1687–88, 1689
 - Committee ... 1822
 - Third reading ... 1899
- Justice Policy Advisory Committee
 - General remarks ... 1229
- Justice system
 - News media coverage of ... 1230
 - News media coverage of, Ontario solution ... 1230
- Justices of the peace
 - Legislation re (Bill 48) ... 1631
- Law Society of Alberta
 - Annual report, 2004 (SP365/05: Tabled) ... 1034
- Legal aid
 - Exclusion of lawyers in private practice from ... 1709
 - Funding for ... 1232, 1235
- Legal Aid Society of Alberta
 - General remarks ... 1235
 - Remuneration re legal aid cases ... 1232
- Legal opinions database
 - General remarks ... 1226
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta—Adjournment
 - For RCMP memorial service, March 10, 2005 (Motion 12: Cenaiko/Stevens) ... 105
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claim, minister's potential conflict re ... 1600–01
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 486, 1600–01
- Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)
 - Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 42
- Marriage
 - Definition of ... 246, 484
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 246, 484
- Marriage Act (Alberta)
 - Legal challenge to, re same-sex marriage ... 484
- Marriage Amendment Act, 2000 (Alberta Bill 202, 2000)
 - Renewal of ... 246

Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)*(Continued)*

- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1772–74
- Mediation (Legal process)
 - Child and youth cases ... 275, 1225, 1236
 - Funding for ... 1226
- Medical profession (Medical Examiner's office)
 - Salary increase ... 1227
- Members' Statements
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - General remarks ... 623
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Justice dept. involvement with ... 1233
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 42)
 - First reading ... 1528
 - Second reading ... 1580–81
 - Third reading ... 1608
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 52)
 - First reading ... 1919
 - Second reading ... 1971–72
 - Third reading ... 2027
- Motions other than Government Motions
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624
- Officers of the Legislative Assembly
 - Reports by, released to media, point of privilege re ... 1637
- Oil–Royalties
 - From disputed aboriginal lands ... 1600
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Child protection ... 1445
 - Corrections officers ... 743–44
 - Death of a patient in long-term care ... 1881
 - Definition of marriage ... 246, 484
 - Domestic violence ... 1196–97, 1576
 - Edmonton Police Service investigation ... 1504
 - Fatality inquiries ... 414
 - Inquiry into deaths of RCMP officers ... 41, 43
 - Interpretation services in courts ... 1502
 - Legal aid ... 1709
 - Lubicon Band land claim ... 1600–01
 - Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ... 42
 - Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 486
 - Policing services ... 1916
- Parliamentary language
 - General remarks ... 623
- Point of Order
 - Parliamentary language ... 623
- Pornography, Child
 - On the Internet ... 1230
- Privilege
 - Contempt (Auditor General's report on Securities Commission enforcement processes, release to media) ... 1635–36
 - Contempt (Release to media of three reports by Officers of the Assembly) ... 1637
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 334–35

Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)*(Continued)*

- Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 25)
 - First reading ... 170
 - Second reading ... 356–57
 - Committee ... 727
 - Third reading ... 1379
- Provincial court judges
 - Post-retirement part-time service: Legislation re (Bill 25) ... 170
- Provincial Secretary (Hon. Ron Stevens)
 - Message from Lieutenant Governor ... 7
 - Statement at Legislature opening ... 1
- Public safety (From criminal activity)
 - General remarks ... 1226
- Public Trustee
 - Funding for office of ... 275, 276
- Recognitions (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Amendment to Standing Orders re (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624
- Risk management fund
 - Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under: Referred to Members' Services committee (Motion 10: Hancock/Stevens) ... 106, 108
 - Review, Coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly under (SP3/05: Tabled) ... 26
- Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary (May 2004)
 - General remarks ... 1236
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial service for fallen officers, Assembly adjourned (Motion 12: Cenaiko/Stevens) ... 105
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Provincial inquiry into ... 41, 43
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: RCMP inquiry into ... 41, 43
- Same-sex marriage–Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 246, 484
- Sentences, Conditional (Criminal procedure)
 - Changes needed to, Justice ministers' meeting discussion of ... 1230
 - Changes needed to, Paper re ... 1229–30
 - Domestic violence cases, required treatment for abusers ... 1576
 - General remarks ... 1229
- Sentences (Criminal procedure)
 - Increasing of ... 1229
- Spousal abusers
 - Treatment of, required ... 1576
- Stalking
 - Threat assessment initiative re ... 1233
- Standing Orders
 - Amendments to, re Members' Statements and Recognitions (Motion 17: Hancock/Stevens) ... 624–25
- Video conferencing of court proceedings
 - General remarks ... 1226, 1229
- Wages–Masters in Chambers
 - Increase in ... 275, 276
- Wages–Provincial Court judges
 - Increase in ... 275, 276

Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC (PC, Calgary-Glenmore)*(Continued)*

- Whistle-blower protection
 - Workplace safety complaints ... 744
- Workplace safety
 - Employee complaints re ... 744
- Young, Kyle James (Prisoner)
 - Death in Edmonton courthouse ... 743–44
- Strang, Ivan (PC, West Yellowhead)**
 - Alberta Pharmaceutical Savings Commission Act (Bill 206)
 - Second reading ... 1760
 - Alberta Sustainability Fund
 - Eligibility of softwood lumber dispute situation for ... 644
 - Amphetamine (Drug)
 - Restriction of access to: Legislation re (Bill 204) ... 171
 - Caribou management
 - General remarks ... 1964–65
 - Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Chemical ingredients in, control of: Legislation re (Bill 204) ... 171
 - Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 770
 - Damage deposits
 - Legislation re (Bill 10) ... 93
 - Drug trafficking–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 770
 - Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 1965
 - Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1413–14
 - Endangered plant species
 - Protection of ... 1521
 - Endangered Species Conservation Committee
 - Statement re ... 1605
 - Endangered wildlife species
 - Protection of ... 955, 1521
 - Excellence in Teaching Awards
 - General remarks ... 1526
 - Extended care facilities–Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1413–14
 - FireSmart program (Forest fire prevention)
 - General remarks ... 47
 - Forest fires–Prevention
 - General remarks ... 47
 - Forest industries
 - Impact of softwood lumber dispute on ... 20, 1626
 - Value-added processing in ... 644
 - Giguere, Caroline
 - Statement re ... 1526
 - Landlord and tenant
 - Legislation re (Bill 10) ... 93
 - Lemire, Angela
 - Statement re ... 1526
 - Members' Statements (2005)
 - Angela Lemire/Caroline Giguere ... 1526
 - Endangered Species Conservation Committee ... 1605
 - National Volunteer Week ... 906
 - National Volunteer Week
 - Statement re ... 906

Strang, Ivan (PC, West Yellowhead) (Continued)

- North American free trade agreement
 - Softwood lumber dispute challenge under ... 644, 1626
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Caribou conservation ... 1964–65
 - Prevention of wildfires ... 47
 - Rural police services ... 770
 - Softwood lumber trade dispute ... 20, 89, 572–73, 644, 1625–26
 - Species at risk ... 955, 1521
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - First reading ... 171
 - Second reading ... 1353–54
 - Committee ... 1922–23, 1933–34
 - Amendment A1 (SP741/05: Tabled) ... 1922
- Police–Finance
 - Increase to ... 770
- Police–Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 770
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 340–41
 - Third reading ... 792–93
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 10)
 - First reading ... 93
 - Second reading ... 465–66, 470
 - Committee ... 602
 - Third reading ... 1512–13
- Softwoods–Export–United States
 - Countervail duties re ... 20, 89, 644, 1625–26
 - Countervail duties re: Byrd amendment re ... 572–73
 - Countervail duties re: Canadian retaliatory actions re ... 573
- Species at Risk Act (Federal)
 - General remarks ... 955
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 143–44
- Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 39)
 - Third reading ... 1582
- Volunteers
 - General remarks ... 906
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Volunteer Week activities ... 906
- Wildlife conservation
 - General remarks ... 1521, 1964–65
 - Statement re ... 1605
- World Trade Organization
 - Softwood lumber dispute ruling ... 644, 1625–26
- Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)**
 - AAA Cattle Company
 - Feedlot expansion approval ... 1027
 - Aboriginal issues
 - General remarks ... 844, 845
 - Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 218–219
 - Acclaim Energy Inc.
 - Acheson gas well failure, Edmonton ... 1828
 - Agriculture–Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1221
 - Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act (Bill 47)
 - Committee ... 2002–04
 - Third reading ... 2026
 - Amendment A2 (SP768/05: Tabled) ... 2002
 - Amendment A3 (SP769/05: Tabled) ... 2003

Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Canadian Natural Resources pipeline leak ... 1447-48
 - Coal-bed methane extraction impact ... 1201
 - Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands, review of ... 615, 643, 802
 - Oil/gas sites reclamation costs, prevention of disclosure re, under FOIP law ... 1519
 - Sour gas recommendations ... 1828
 - Sour gas well hearings (Compton Petroleum), Calgary area ... 1391, 1828
 - Sour gas well leak, Innisfail area, reported to ... 1741, 1828
- Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
 - Board members, selection process re ... 1283
- Alberta Gaming Research Council
 - Board members, selection process re ... 1283
- Alberta Grandparents Association
 - Letter re access to grandchildren (SP198/05: Tabled) ... 328
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1818
 - Third reading ... 2020-21
- Alberta's Environment Conference 2005, Edmonton (April 20-22)
 - General remarks ... 978
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Third reading ... 1615-16
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - Committee ... 406
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1996-98
- Auditor General
 - Conflict of interest comments ... 1419
 - Disaster recovery programs comments ... 1419
 - Royalty reduction programs evaluation recommendation ... 1155
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Human/animal risk of ... 319
 - Presence on game farms ... 1221
- Calgary Board of Education
 - School maintenance problems ... 459
- Canada Health Act
 - Discussions with federal officials re ... 1308
- Canada Health and Social Transfer (Federal government)
 - Impact of Alberta's health care restructuring on ... 1308
- Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area
 - Encana development in, news release re (SP550/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Canadian Natural Resources Limited
 - Pipeline leak ... 1447-48
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
 - Newsrelease re Encana development in Suffield national wildlife area (SP550/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Chronic wasting disease
 - Deer infected with, served for human consumption, news article re (SP290/05: Tabled) ... 623
 - Human/animal risk of ... 288, 319
 - Presence on game farms ... 288, 1221

Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)*(Continued)*

- Clean energy technology
 - Provincial incentives for (royalty reductions) (Motion 504: Swann) ... 669-70, 675
- Climate change
 - Initiatives re ... 44
 - Kyoto protocol on ... 44
- Climate Change Central
 - General remarks ... 1038
- CN Rail
 - Train derailment, Lake Wabamum ... 1667-68
- Coal bed methane extraction
 - Impact of ... 1201-02, 1391
 - Water recovery issues ... 1202
- Coal bed methane extraction-Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1201-02
- Coal bed methane extraction-Horseshoe Canyon area
 - Impact of ... 1201
- Coalition for Alberta's Future
 - Newsrelease re land use and oil/gas industry activity (SP339/05: Tabled) ... 858
- Community health centres
 - General remarks ... 1468
- Composting
 - General remarks ... 1038
- Compton Petroleum Corporation
 - Gas well drilling, Calgary area ... 1391, 1741, 1828
- Conflict of interest
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 1419
- Consumer protection
 - Re electricity/gas prices ... 1419
- Contaminated sites
 - Cleanup of ... 1961-62
 - Energy industry sites, regulations re: Statement re ... 1969
- Court of Appeal (Alberta)
 - AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion ruling ... 1027
- Deep Well Oil & Gas Ltd.
 - Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ... 643
- Deer-New York (State)
 - CWD infected deer served for human consumption, news article re (SP290/05: Tabled) ... 623
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 844, 845
 - Funding details ... 844, 845
- Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1221
- Dept. of Environment
 - Corporate services ... 1039
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1037-39, 1049
 - Funding level for ... 573, 768-69
 - Information technology requirements funding ... 282
 - Minister's role re hazardous materials spills ... 1668
 - Performance measures ... 1038
 - Staff ... 1039
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 282
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1282-83
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1419-20
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1468

Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1849
- Disaster relief
 - Auditor General's comments re ... 1419
 - Funding for ... 1668
- Drinking water—Stettler area
 - Allocation level for, in Bill 11 ... 978, 1038
- Economic development and the environment
 - General remarks ... 573, 1037, 1606, 1913
- Electric power—Prices
 - Consumer protection re ... 1419
- Elk antler velvet—Health aspects
 - General remarks ... 319
- Emergency planning
 - Energy industry incidents ... 1039
 - Funding for ... 1668
- Encana Corporation
 - Development in Suffield national wildlife area, newsrelease re (SP550/05: Tabled) ... 1675
- Energy industry
 - Impact on agriculture ... 1221
 - Land use activities: Coalition for Alberta's Future's news release re (SP339/05: Tabled) ... 858
- Energy industry—Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 485–86, 615, 802–03, 844
- Energy industry—Crown lands—Sawn Lake area
 - Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 849
 - Photographs re (SP340/05: Tabled) ... 858
- Energy industry—Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 802
- Environmental impact assessments
 - AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion ... 1027
 - Coal-bed methane extraction process ... 1202
 - Sour gas well drilling, Calgary area (Compton Petroleum) ... 1391
 - Well drilling, Lubicon Lake Band areas ... 615
- Environmental law
 - Enforcement of ... 769, 1039
- Environmental protection
 - Federal/provincial co-operation re ... 1038
- Environmental protection—Finance
 - General remarks ... 282, 768–69
- Environmental regulations
 - MacNichol report on ... 1049
- Food safety
 - Chronic wasting disease threat to ... 288
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 201
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Oil/gas sites reclamation costs, prevention of disclosure of ... 1519
- Friends of Medicare
 - Co-sponsor of alternative Calgary health care conference (Weighing the Evidence) ... 1468
- Gambling—Aboriginal reserves
 - General remarks ... 1282
- Gambling—Moral/legal issues
 - General remarks ... 1282
- Game farming
 - BSE disease issue in ... 1221
 - Chronic wasting disease issue in ... 288, 1221
 - General remarks ... 1221

Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)*(Continued)*

- Game farming *(Continued)*
 - Public inquiry re ... 288, 319
 - Use of public lands for ... 1221
- Gas well drilling industry
 - In vicinity of urban areas ... 1828
- Gas well drilling industry—Calgary area
 - General remarks ... 1391, 1741, 1828
- Gas well drilling industry—Safety aspects
 - General remarks ... 1828
 - Sour gas leak, Innisfail area ... 1741, 1828
- Genocide—Sudan
 - Statement re ... 1341
- Government
 - Public participation: Statement re ... 1606
- Grandparents' rights
 - Access rights to grandchildren: Letter re (SP198/05: Tabled) ... 328
- Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reduction of ... 44, 1038, 1913
- Greenhouse gas emissions—Fort McMurray area
 - Reduction of ... 201
- Health
 - Social determinants of ... 1468
- Heavy oil—Royalties
 - Projected revenues from, 2005-2015 (Q24/05: Defeated) ... 1155
- Heckling (Parliamentary procedure)
 - Elimination of: Statement re ... 535–36
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 1282
- Hydrogen sulphide emissions—Health aspects—Calgary area
 - General remarks ... 1391
- Integrated resource management (Public lands)
 - General remarks ... 1849
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 190
- Livestock industry, Intensive
 - General remarks ... 1221
 - Phase out of: Petition presented re ... 1837, 1969
- Livestock industry, Intensive—Environmental aspects
 - Enforcement of legislation re ... 1027
- Lottery Fund
 - Funds allocation ... 1282
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claim negotiations: Petition tabled re (SP814/05) ... 2055
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 486, 615, 643, 802–03
- Magnetic resonance imaging clinics, Private
 - Relation to Canada Health Act ... 1308
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 75–77
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1774
- Medical care
 - Demand for, reduction of ... 1468
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 1308
- Medical care, Primary
 - Team-based care ... 1468

Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)*(Continued)*

- Medical care, Private
 - General remarks ... 1308
 - Influence of health symposium on ... 1308
- Medical profession
 - Scope of practice, change to ... 1468
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Conflict in Sudan ... 1341
 - Governing in the public interest ... 1606
 - Heckling in the Legislative Assembly ... 535–36
 - Reclamation of contaminated sites ... 1969
- Mental health services
 - General remarks ... 1468
- Minable oil sands strategy—Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 1913
- Montgomery junior high school, Calgary
 - Physical condition ... 459
- National Day of Healing and Reconciliation
 - Program (SP504/05: Tabled) ... 1608
- Natural resources
 - Inventory of ... 1037
- Natural Resources Conservation Board
 - AAA Cattle Company feedlot expansion approval ... 1027
- Net metering (Electricity)
 - Motion 510: Marz ... 1767, 1769
- North American free trade agreement
 - Sale of water under ... 530, 573
- Nurses
 - Scope of practice, change to ... 1468
- Oil well drilling industry—Public lands
 - EUB permits required for ... 643, 849
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - AAA Cattle Company ... 1027
 - Canadian Natural Resources Limited pipeline leak ... 1447–48
 - Climate change ... 44
 - Coal-bed methane ... 1201–02
 - Energy and Utilities Board ... 1519
 - Environment budget ... 768–69
 - Environmental protection ... 1391
 - Game farming ... 288, 319
 - Hazardous material spill at Wabamun Lake ... 1667–68
 - Health care privatization ... 1308
 - Impacts of oil sands expansion ... 201
 - Minable oil sands strategy ... 1913
 - Oil well drilling on Crown land ... 485–86, 615, 643, 802–03, 849
 - Reclamation of oil well sites ... 166
 - School infrastructure ... 459
 - Sour gas leak ... 1741
 - Sour gas well safety ... 1828
 - Turner Valley gas plant historic site ... 1961–62
 - Water strategy ... 530, 573, 978
- Organic farming
 - General remarks ... 1221
- Pembina Institute for Sustainable Development
 - Coal-bed methane extraction impacts ... 1201
- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Confined feeding operations phase out ... 1837, 1969
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Lubicon Cree land claim negotiations (SP814/05: Tabled) ... 2055

Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)*(Continued)*

- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Second reading ... 1357
- Pipelines
 - Monitoring of ... 1447
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Committee ... 1696
- Preventive medical services
 - General remarks ... 1468
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
 - Donations to members of, by Walton International: Documents re (SP788/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Property tax—Education levy
 - Seniors' tax relief re: Letter (SP815/05: Tabled) ... 2055
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Second reading ... 335–36
- Public interest and government
 - Statement re ... 1606
- Public lands
 - Game farming use of ... 1221
- Reclamation of land
 - Abandoned well sites ... 166
 - Energy industry sites ... 769, 1038–39
 - Energy industry sites, prevention of disclosure of costs of under FOIP law ... 1519
 - Energy industry sites, regulations re: Statement re ... 1969
- Refuse and refuse disposal
 - Provincial funding for ... 282
- Royalty structure (Energy resources)
 - Reduction incentives for clean energy technology development (Motion 504: Swann) ... 669–70, 675
- Schools—Maintenance and repair
 - General remarks ... 459
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Second reading ... 175
 - Committee ... 495
 - Third reading ... 994
 - General remarks ... 1468
- Soil conservation
 - Provincial funding for ... 282
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 75–77
- Spills (Pollution)
 - Funding for cleanup re ... 1668
- Spills (Pollution)—Lake Wabamun
 - CN train derailment ... 1667–68
- Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act (Bill 11)
 - Second reading ... 518–19, 521
 - Committee ... 603–06
 - Allocation level in ... 978, 1038
- Stray Animals Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 33)
 - Second reading ... 544
- Substance abuse—Treatment—Youth
 - News report re lack of (SP503/05: Tabled) ... 1608
- Sudan—Politics and government
 - Statement re ... 1341
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 282
- Tar sands development
 - Impact of ... 201

Swann, Dr. David (L, Calgary-Mountain View)*(Continued)*

- Tar sands development—Environmental aspects
 - General remarks ... 201
- Tar sands development—Waste disposal
 - Tailings ponds ... 1913
- Turner Valley Gas Plant (Historic site)
 - Environmental cleanup of ... 1961–62
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1468
- Walton International Group Inc.
 - Documents re (SP786-787/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Political donations to Alberta Conservative party members (SP788/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Water—Export
 - General remarks ... 530, 573
 - Impact of NAFTA on ... 530, 573
- Water conservation
 - General remarks ... 1221
 - Legislation re (Bill 214) ... 1919
- Water diversion
 - General remarks ... 530, 1038
- Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
 - Funding for ... 768–69, 978
 - General remarks ... 530, 573
 - Impact of economic development policy on ... 573
- Water Protection and Conservation Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 214)
 - First reading ... 1919
- Water quality
 - General remarks ... 1038
- Water quality—Sheep River
 - Impact of Turner Valley Gas Plant historic site on ... 1961–62
- Water resources development
 - Infrastructure for ... 1038
 - Legislation re (Bill 214) ... 1919
- Water resources development—Finance
 - General remarks ... 282
- Water supply
 - Measurement of total provincial supply ... 530, 978, 1037–38
- Watershed planning
 - Legislation re ... 530
- Well sites
 - Reclamation of ... 769, 1038–39
 - Reclamation of, costs, prevention of disclosure of under FOIP law ... 1519
- Well sites, Abandoned
 - Reclamation of ... 166
- Wellness fund (Proposed)
 - Motion 501: Blakeman ... 72–73
- Whistle-blower protection
 - General remarks ... 1419–20
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - Committee ... 1656–57
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Second reading ... 1813

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 389–90
 - Committee ... 566

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Administrator of the Province of Alberta
 - Role in Edmonton-Castle Downs election determination: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... 26
 - Role of, authority for: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... 26
- Alberta Act (Federal government)
 - Amendment of, re municipal government authority ... 1321
- Alberta Electric System Operator
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme concerns ... 360, 796, 899
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office ... 1621
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Act
 - Notwithstanding provision addition to ... 1665
- Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan—Premiums
 - Elimination of ... 766
 - General remarks ... 766
- Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Long-term care facilities inspection ... 1386
- Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
 - Role in provincial same-sex marriage strategy ... 317
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Board of, suspension ... 1072
 - Chairman/commissioners of, MLA participation in nominating candidates ... 1568, 1597
 - Chairman's ties with former employer ... 1736–37, 1961
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading ... 1665
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading: Action taken re ... 2047
 - Director of enforcement's breach of code of ethics/conflict of interest/insider trading: Auditor General's info. re ... 2047
- Executive director's tenure ... 1665
- Firing of director of administrative services (Grahame Newton) ... 974, 1144
- Human resource issues in ... 570–71, 975
- Influencing regulatory activity case ... 410, 453, 528, 570–71, 612, 690, 974–75, 1024, 1073, 1118–19, 1144, 1597, 1880–81
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Letter from Diane Urquhart re ... 690
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's authority challenged re, emergency debate re ... 1315–16
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of ... 898–99, 1304–05, 1332–33
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, appropriateness of ... 947–48
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's investigation of, restrictions on ... 1118–19, 1144
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on (2005) ... 1664–65, 1880–81, 1909
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Chief Internal Auditor's office investigation of ... 1024

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Alberta Securities Commission (Continued)
- Influencing regulatory activity case: Chronology of events re ... 1880
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Emergency debate under SO 30 re ... 1082
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Forensic audit re ... 975, 1144
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's/chief of staff involvement ... 2047
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement ... 2046-47
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Former Treasurer's (Jim Dinning) involvement: Court documents re (SP812/05: Tabled) ... 2055
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Independent investigation of ... 690, 947-48, 1144
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Ministerial involvement ... 1880-81, 1909-10, 1961, 2047
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Ministerial/MLA/senior officials' involvement, legislation re ... 2047
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Report on ... 410, 528, 898, 1305
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Retention of files re ... 1332
 - Interim chairman ... 1333, 1961
 - KPMG hired for forensic audit of employee e-mails ... 948, 975
 - Letter from staff at, to Minister of Finance ... 1072
 - Members of, appointment process ... 453, 1880
 - New chairman of, search committee for ... 453, 1568
 - Operations of, memo to William Code re (SP811/05: Tabled) ... 2055
 - RCMP investigation of chairman/exec. director's e-mails ... 948
 - Securities violations, review of investigation into ... 453
 - Walton International land sales without filing a prospectus ... 2007-08
 - Zi Corporation equity purchase by Lancer funds, investigation of ... 1909
 - Zi Corporation (formerly Multi-Corp) investigation ... 1827, 1881, 2008
 - Zi Corporation (formerly Multi-Corp) investigation: Letter re (SP722/05: Tabled) ... 1919
- Alberta SuperNet
- General remarks ... 244
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
- 2004 convention, invitees to (Q38/05: Accepted) ... 1747
- Ambulance service
- Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of ... 17, 243-44, 1323
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 17, 243
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re (Q5/05: Response tabled as SP627/05) ... 658
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Costs ... 17
 - Transfer of responsibility for, to health regions: Documents re (M19/05: Response tabled as SP807) ... 820

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Ambulance service-Rural areas
- Costs, provincial assistance re ... 243
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
- Committee ... 560
- Aon Consulting Inc.
- Private health insurance in Alberta, study of ... 1665
- Applewood Park Community Association, Calgary
- Wild Rose Foundation grants to ... 1442, 1497
- Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Association's letter re (SP459/05: Tabled) ... 1528
- Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Auditor General's review of ... 1526, 1597-98
- Wild Rose Foundation grants to: Political interference re ... 1597
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
- Benefits increase: Letter re (SP176/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Audit Committee
- Public members on ... 1102
- Auditor General
- Charlebois Consulting Ltd. contracts, investigation of ... 642-43
- Internal audit function centralization, comments re ... 1102
- Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report ... 1386, 1707
- Securities Commission director of enforcement, information on action taken re ... 2047
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, 2005 report on ... 1664-65, 1880
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of ... 898-99, 1144, 1304-05, 1332-33
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, appropriateness of ... 947-48
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, Auditor General's report on ... 1909
- Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, authority to challenged, emergency debate re ... 1144, 1315-16
- Wild Rose Foundation grants' auditing ... 1497, 1526, 1597-98
- Automobile Insurance Rate Board
- Announcement on rate reductions ... 454
- Basketball championships
- U o A Golden Bears Canada West champions ... 620
- Beef-Export
- Diversification of markets for ... 15
- Bon Ton Bakery Ltd.
- Healthy Choices pamphlet (SP6/05: Tabled) ... 27
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
- Impact on cattle industry ... 15
- British Columbia Securities Commission
- Procedures re land sales ... 2008
- Budget
- Process re ... 160, 1621-22
- Budget debate
- Motion 19: McClellan ... 776-80
- Calgary-Montrose (Constituency)
- Member for's role in Calgary ward 10 municipal election investigation ... 1249
- Member for's role re transfer of Wild Rose grants to Vietnamese cultural society ... 1442

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Calgary Vietnamese Caodaist Cultural Society
 - Wild Rose grants transferred to ... 1442, 1497
- Canadian International Development Agency
 - Alberta partnership with, for foreign aid projects ... 1497, 1526, 1597
- Capital Health
 - Surplus funding for ... 1621
- Capital projects
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- Capital projects, Municipal-Finance
 - Federal funding ... 1323
 - Fort McMurray projects ... 200, 527
 - General remarks ... 200
 - Vetting of projects with provincial government ... 848
- Cattle-Export-United States
 - Alternatives to ... 15
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 15
- Cattle-Marketing
 - Diversification of markets for ... 15
- Centennial medallions
 - Presentation to Members of the Legislative Assembly ... 3
- Centre for Chinese studies (Proposed)
 - Statement re ... 947
- Chief Internal Auditor's office
 - Public members in, PC party membership ... 1024, 1102
 - Role in Securities Commission investigation ... 1024
- Child and family services authorities
 - Employee health premium costs ... 766
- Children and poverty
 - General remarks ... 1778-79, 1827
- City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Second reading ... 382
- Civil Marriage Act (Federal) (Bill C-38)
 - General remarks ... 317
- Collective bargaining-Health authorities
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in ... 2008
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in: News reports/emails re (SP799-780/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in: Public inquiry into ... 2008
- Committee on Energy and Sustainable Development, Standing Policy
 - Municipal infrastructure funding discussion ... 527
- Competition Bureau (Federal)
 - Enron electricity price manipulation scheme investigation ... 18, 286
- Conflict of interest
 - Labour Relations Board's involvement in drafting collective bargaining legislation (Bill 27, 2003) ... 2008
 - MLA nomination of candidates for ASC commissioners ... 1597
 - Securities Commission appointments, MLA involvement in ... 1880
 - Securities Commission chair/interim chair issue ... 1961
- Consumer protection
 - Auto insurance rates ... 454
- Contaminated sites
 - Cleanup of ... 1323

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Budget target ... 1621
- Dept. of Finance
 - Minister of, comments re ... 410
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Budget target ... 1621
 - Contracts awarded to Charlebois Consulting Ltd. ... 642-43
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Budget target ... 1621
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Budget target ... 1621
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M15/05: Response tabled as SP826/05) ... 815
 - Credit card statements for minister and executive assistant (M16/05: Response tabled as SP827/05) ... 817
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1321-23
 - Minister's business expenses (M14/05: Response tabled as SP825/05) ... 815
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Ambulance services restructuring, role in ... 244
 - Cost of establishing ... 244
 - Role of ... 244
- Dept. of Solicitor General
 - Communications branch ... 1435
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1434-35
- Disaster relief
 - Disaster recovery program expenditures (M44/05: Accepted) ... 1748
- Eastwood Public Health Centre
 - Surplus funding for ... 1621
- Edmonton-Castle Downs (Constituency)
 - Role of Administrator of the province in legal decision re electoral results in: Letter to the Speaker re (SP4/05: Tabled) ... 26
- Edmonton Eskimo Football Club
 - 2005 Grey Cup victors: Statement re ... 1908
- Education, Postsecondary-Finance
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- Election Act
 - All-party committee review of: Letter re (SP5/05: Tabled) ... 27
- Elections, Municipal-Calgary
 - Ward 10 election process: Cost of investigation of (Q30/05: Response tabled as SP806/05) ... 1158
 - Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re ... 1248
- Electric power-Prices
 - Manipulation of ... 796, 899, 1195-96
 - Manipulation of, legal penalties re ... 796
 - Manipulation of: Project Stanley scheme ... 18, 118-19, 360, 796
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation ... 118-19, 796
 - Deregulation: Public inquiry into ... 18
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Securities Commission, loss of investor confidence in (not proceeded with) ... 1082
 - Securities Commission challenge of Auditor General's authority (not proceeded with) ... 1315-16

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Emergency medical technicians
 - Impact of ambulance service transfer to regional health authorities on ... 17
- Engage Energy Canada, L.P.
 - Former executive of ... 118
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy ... 285–86
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy, documents re given to Competition Bureau ... 286
 - Electricity price manipulation scheme (Project Stanley): Public inquiry re ... 18, 118–19, 360, 796, 1195–96
- Ethics Commissioner
 - Directives to premier's chief of staff, publication of ... 643
 - MLA nominating of ASC commissioner candidates, review of ... 1597
- Executive Council
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1101–02
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of: Report ... 1386
 - MLA committee to review (2005): Report ... 1707
- Extended care facilities—Inspection
 - General remarks ... 1386
- Extended care facilities—Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 1706–07
- Federal Building
 - Disposition of ... 1518
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)
 - Access to Canadian health records held by U.S. companies ... 482
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (U.S.)
 - Enron collusion with other electricity suppliers: Testimony re ... 1195
- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - Third reading ... 1113
- Football championships
 - Edmonton Eskimos Grey Cup contenders and champions ... 1908
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 200, 527
- Gas, Natural—Royalties
 - Rebate for gas used as feedstock for nitrogen fertilizer: Letter re (SP174/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Government aircraft
 - Reduction in number of ... 41
 - Release of flight logs/manifests for ... 42
 - Rod Love's trip to Fort McMurray on ... 82
 - Use for Tory leadership campaign purposes ... 41
- Government corporate identity
 - General remarks ... 1101
- Government spending policy
 - General remarks ... 1621–22
- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- Highway 63
 - Upgrading of ... 200
- Highway 881
 - Upgrading of ... 200
- Highwood Communications Ltd.
 - Government advertising contract ... 1102

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Hip and knee surgery
 - Private health insurance for ... 1665
- Hockey championships
 - U of A Golden Bears 2005 University Cup winners ... 620
 - U of A Pandas Canada West title winners ... 620
- Homeless—Housing
 - Presence of children in ... 1778
- Hospitals—Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 200
- Hospitals—Fort Saskatchewan
 - Surplus funding for ... 1622
- Hospitals—Strathcona County
 - Surplus funding for ... 1622
- IBM Canada Ltd.
 - Processing of Alberta health records, security implications ... 482
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Investigation of privacy issues from loss of Alberta health records ... 482
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (B.C.)
 - Ruling on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian health records ... 482
 - Ruling on impact of USA PRIVACY Act on Canadian health records (SP247/05: Tabled) ... 491
- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Reductions in ... 454
 - Reductions in: Political influence re ... 454
- Insurance, Health (Private)
 - Alberta plan for ... 1665
- Intelligence agencies—United States
 - Access to Canadian health records held by U.S. companies ... 482
- Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd.
 - Contracts with Dept. of Health and Wellness ... 642–43
- Korea War Veterans Day
 - Recognition of date of, July 27 (Motion 21: Hancock) ... 1112
- KPMG consulting
 - Alberta Securities Commission employees' e-mails, forensic audit of ... 948, 975
- Labour Relations Board
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring) ... 2008
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): News reports/emails re (SP779-780/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Public inquiry into ... 2008
- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting ... 2008
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: News reports/emails re (SP799-780/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting: Public inquiry ... 2008
- Lakeland College
 - Surplus spending for programs at ... 1621

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Lancer Group
 - Purchase of equity in Zi Corporation, Securities Commission investigation of ... 1909
- Legislative Assembly Chamber
 - VE Day address by Armed Forces' representative on floor of ... 1302-03
- Legislature Annex Building
 - Disposition of ... 1518
- Legislature grounds
 - Power plant on, disposition of ... 1518
 - Upgrading of ... 1518
- Light rail transit-Finance
 - Provincial funding ... 1323
- Livestock industry, Intensive
 - Municipal control over location of ... 1321
- Lobbyists-Registration
 - General remarks ... 2008
- Love, Rod
 - Tobacco industry ties, influence on smoke-free legislation changes ... 690
 - Trip to Fort McMurray on government aircraft ... 82
- Mactaggart Art Collection
 - Statement re ... 947
- Market Surveillance Administrator (Electricity industry)
 - Background of ... 118-19
 - Enron's price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 18, 118-19, 360, 796
 - TransAlta price manipulation scheme, inquiry into ... 360, 796, 899
- Marriage
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re ... 317
 - Definition of: Alberta legal action re, payment of costs re ... 317
- Meat packing plants
 - Building of: Infrastructure support for ... 15
 - Cap on slaughter capacity for large plants ... 15
 - Independent ownership of ... 15
- Medical care
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 482
- Medical care-Finance
 - Surplus funding for ... 1621
- Medical care-Utilization
 - Premier's remarks re ... 1706
- Medical profession
 - Practicing in public/private health systems ... 1665
- Medical records
 - Outsourcing management of ... 482
- Medical records-Access issues
 - Access by outside intelligence agencies ... 482
- Medical records-Confidentiality
 - Missing health records situation ... 482
 - U.S. access to information re ... 482
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 421, 1454, 1456
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Centennial medallions presented to ... 3
 - Relationship with Wild Rose Foundation ... 1598
 - Securities Commission appointments, involvement in ... 1880
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - U of A sports achievements ... 620
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - Regarding Member for Calgary-Montrose ... 1454, 1456
 - Regarding Minister of Finance ... 421, 985

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Midwives and midwifery
 - Financial support for: Letter re (SP175/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Ministerial Statements (2005)
 - Border closure to Canadian beef ... 15
 - Centennial medallions ... 3
 - Edmonton Eskimos ... 1908
 - Mactaggart Art Collection ... 947
 - Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day ... 1248
- Ministers (Provincial government)
 - Securities Commission, influencing of ... 1880
- Municipal finance
 - General remarks ... 848
- Municipal Government Act
 - Review of ... 1321
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 384-86
 - Committee ... 563
- Municipal governments
 - Autonomy of ... 848-49
 - Legislative authority ... 1321
 - Role of ... 1321
- Natural resources revenue
 - Use for budget purposes ... 1621
- Nitrogen fertilizer
 - Natural gas as feedstock for, royalty rebate for: Letter re (SP174/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Ombudsperson (Long-term care residents)
 - General remarks ... 1386
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Ambulance services ... 17, 19, 202, 243-44
 - Applewood Park Community Association ... 1442, 1497, 1526
 - Automobile insurance rates ... 454
 - Budget process ... 160
 - Budget surplus expenditures ... 1621-22
 - Calgary Ward 10 election ... 1248-49
 - Capital health outpatient residence ... 1960-61
 - Children in poverty ... 1778
 - Confidentiality of health records ... 482
 - Continuing care funding ... 1706-07
 - Definition of marriage ... 317
 - Electricity deregulation ... 118
 - Electricity marketing ... 796, 899
 - Enron activities in Alberta ... 285-286, 360, 1195-96
 - Government aircraft ... 41-42, 82
 - Growth pressures in Fort McMurray ... 527
 - Health care insurance privatization ... 1665
 - Health care premiums ... 766
 - Health care utilization ... 1706
 - Health Facilities Review Committee ... 1386
 - Impacts of oil sands expansion ... 200
 - Inquiry into deaths of RCMP officers ... 41
 - Kelley Charlebois Consulting Ltd. ... 642-43
 - Labour Relations Board ... 2008
 - Legislature environs ... 1518
 - Market surveillance administrator review of Enron ... 18, 118-19
 - Municipal infrastructure program ... 848-49
 - Nutrition programs for schools ... 1778-79
 - Nutrition programs in schools ... 1827
 - Office of the Chief Internal Auditor ... 1024
 - Protection of children abusing drugs legislation ... 737

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Oral Question Period (2005) (Continued)
 - Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 244
 - Rod Love Consulting Inc. ... 643
 - Securities Commission ... 410, 453, 528, 570-71, 612, 690, 898-99, 947-48, 974-75, 1024, 1072-73, 1118-19, 1144, 1304-05, 1332-33, 1568, 1597, 1664-65, 1880-81, 1909-10, 1961, 2046-47
 - Securities Commission chairman ... 1736-37
 - Securities Commission investigation ... 1827
 - Smoke-free places legislation ... 690
 - Walton International Group Inc. ... 2007-08
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants ... 1597-98
- Petroleum tank sites remediation program
 - General remarks ... 1323
- Police
 - Challenges performing duties of ... 41
- Political ethics
 - Breach of, by Securities Commission director of enforcement ... 1665
- Principal Group Ltd.
 - Public inquiry into collapse of ... 18
- Privacy, Right of
 - General remarks ... 482
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
 - Payment of legal fees re provincial same-sex marriage strategy by ... 317
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Expediting passage of ... 737
- Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 848, 1323
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Advertising budget ... 1102
 - Relation to departmental communications divisions ... 1435
 - Staffing ... 1101
 - Web site for government members only ... 1101
- Public contracts
 - Awarding of, to former ministerial aides ... 642-43
- Public records-Confidentiality
 - General remarks ... 482
- Public transit-Finance
 - Federal funding ... 1323
 - Provincial funding ... 1323
- Rail service-Edmonton/Fort McMurray
 - Lobbyist for, fees paid to ... 643
 - Lobbyist for, use of government aircraft ... 82
- Red Deer College
 - Trade centre, spending of provincial surplus on ... 1621
- Regional health authorities
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of ... 17, 243-44
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Cancellation of, provincial assistance re ... 17, 243
 - Ambulance service transfer to: Costs ... 17
 - Employee health premium costs ... 766
- Regional planning
 - General remarks ... 1321
- Regional planning commissions
 - Elimination of ... 1321
- Rod Love Consulting Inc.
 - Government contracts with ... 643

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
 - Alberta Securities Commission case, IMET unit investigation of ... 1332
 - Alberta Securities Commission chairman/exec. director's e-mails, investigation of ... 948
 - Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Provincial inquiry into ... 41
- Rural economic development
 - Infrastructure support for small packing plants ... 15
- Same-sex marriage-Law and legislation
 - General remarks ... 317
- School boards
 - Employee health premium costs ... 766
- School lunch programs
 - General remarks ... 1778-79, 1827
- School nutrition programs
 - General remarks ... 1778-79, 1827
 - Opposition Leader's letter to government ministers re (SP813/05: Tabled) ... 2055
- Schools-Construction-Fort McMurray
 - Increase in, due to oil sands expansion ... 200
- Sewage disposal plants-Fort McMurray
 - Upgrading of, due to oil sands expansion ... 200
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Amendments ... 690
- Snohomish Public Utility District, Washington State (U.S.)
 - Investigation of Enron price fixing ... 119
- Softwoods-Export-United States
 - Countervail duties re ... 1621
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Surplus spending on ... 1621
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 32-35
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Capital project funding with ... 1621
 - General remarks ... 1621-22, 1706-07
- Tar sands development
 - Impact of ... 200
- Terrace Building, Edmonton
 - Disposition of ... 1518
- Tobacco companies
 - Influence on smoke-free legislation changes ... 690
- Traffic accidents-Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1434-35
- Traffic safety
 - General remarks ... 1434-35
- TransAlta Utilities Corporation
 - Donations to provincial PC party ... 1196
 - Electricity price manipulation activities ... 360, 796, 899, 1195-96
- University of Alberta
 - Mactaggart Art Collection ... 947
 - Sports teams achievements ... 620
- University of Lethbridge
 - Water and Environmental Science building, spending of provincial surplus on ... 1621
- USA PATRIOT Act
 - Impact on access to Canadian medical records ... 482
 - Impact on access to Canadian medical records (SP247/05: Tabled) ... 491
- Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 12)
 - Second reading ... 556

Taft, Dr. Kevin (L, Edmonton-Riverview) (Continued)

- Victory in Europe Day
 - 60th Anniversary of: Armed Forces representatives addressed the Assembly in the Chamber ... 1302-03
- Volleyball championships
 - U of A Golden Bears national men's title winners ... 620
- Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre
 - Outpatient residence, replacement with private run hotel facility ... 1960-61
- Walton International Group Inc.
 - Land sales without filing prospectus with Securities Commission ... 2007-08
- Welwyn Resources Ltd.
 - Oil well drilling activity, Lubicon Lake area ... 643
- Western Standard* (News magazine)
 - Article about Alberta Securities Commission ... 1827, 1880
- Whistle-blower protection
 - Securities Commission case ... 410, 948, 974, 1333
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for ... 1442, 1497
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Auditor General's review of ... 1526, 1597-98
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Community association's letter re (SP459/05: Tabled) ... 1528
 - Drinking water project, Vietnam, grants for: Political interference re ... 1597
 - Relationship between MLAs and ... 1598
- World Trade Organization
 - Doha round of negotiations: Federal/provincial discussions re ... 1621
- Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)
 - Statement re ... 1248
- Youth justice committees
 - General remarks ... 1435
- Zi Corporation
 - Purchase of equity in by Lancer funds, Securities Commission investigation of ... 1909
 - Securities Commission investigation of ... 1827, 1880-81
 - Securities Commission investigation of: Letter re (SP722/05: Tabled) ... 1919

Tarchuk, Janis (PC, Banff-Cochrane)

- Alberta Centennial World Cup Cross Country competition, Canmore (December 2005)
 - Statement re ... 1888
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's report on (2005) (SP520/05: Tabled) ... 1632
- Alberta Social Housing Corporation
 - Transfer of land to Fort McMurray: Auditor General's report on (SP519/05: Tabled) ... 1632
- Auditor General
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP158/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP518/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - BSE compensation programs auditing: Report on (SP157/05: Tabled) ... 295
 - Fort McMurray land sale process, Auditor General's report on (SP518/05: Tabled) ... 1632

Tarchuk, Janis (PC, Banff-Cochrane) (Continued)

- Auditor General (Continued)
 - Long-term care facility management investigation (Seniors care programs): Report (SP417/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, Auditor General's report on (SP520/05: Tabled) ... 1632
 - Suggestive references to, in Legislative Assembly ... 987
- Auditor General and Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee, Select Special Report, part 1 (Auditor General appointment) concurred in (Motion 23, 2002) ... 987
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Impact on cattle industry ... 461
- Bow Valley Community Foundation Act (Bill Pr. 1)
 - First reading ... 653
 - Second reading ... 1508
 - Third reading ... 1556
- Canmore Nordic Centre
 - General remarks ... 1888
- Cardinal, Douglas (Architect)
 - Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Award recipient ... 1606
- Cattle-Export-United States
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed ... 461
 - Montana court injunction (2005) to keep border closed: Web site re ... 461
- Committee on Legislative Offices, Standing Chair's comments re Auditor General ... 987
- Cross-country ski championships
 - Haywood Canada Cup champion (Sara Renner) ... 773
- Downhill ski championships
 - World Cup champion (Thomas Grandi) ... 773
- Extended care facilities
 - Auditor General's review of: Report (SP417/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Fjeldheim, Brian (Retired Chief Electoral Officer)
 - Statement re ... 2054
- Ghost-Waiparous recreation area
 - Access management plan for ... 1252
 - Management of use of ... 1252
- Grandi, Thomas
 - Statement re ... 773
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 829-30
- Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards
 - Statement re ... 1606
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Brian Fjeldheim ... 2054
 - Centennial World Cup ... 1888
 - Lieutenant Governor of Alberta arts awards ... 1606
 - Sara Renner / Thomas Grandi ... 733
 - Sue Moleski ... 620-21
 - www.opentheborder.com ... 461
- Moleski, Sue
 - Statement re ... 620-21
- Murrell, John (Playwright)
 - Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Award recipient ... 1606

Tarchuk, Janis (PC, Banff-Cochrane) (Continued)

- Off-highway vehicles
 - Access to Ghost-Waiporous recreation area ... 1252
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Ghost-Waiporous access management ... 1252
- Renner, Sara
 - Statement re ... 773
- Senior citizens
 - Government programs: Auditor General's review of, Report (SP417/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Speaker—Rulings and statements
 - Referring to an officer of the Legislature ... 987

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie)

- Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
 - Second reading ... 152–54
 - Committee ... 564–65, 730–32, 894–95, 1065–67
 - Third reading ... 1237–38
 - Amendment A1 (SP271 & 313/05: Tabled) ... 564, 862, 870
 - Amendment A2 (SP314 & 343/05: Tabled) ... 731
 - Amendment A3 (SP344 & 367/05: Tabled) ... 894
 - Cap on contributions to ... 862–63, 870
 - Four amendments (SP371/05: Tabled) ... 1065
 - General remarks ... 767, 1079
- Access to the Future Fund
 - General remarks ... 20, 261, 767, 862–63, 870, 1078–79, 1791
- Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 54)
 - Committee ... 1979
 - Third reading ... 2029
- Alberta Centennial Medal Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 58)
 - Second reading ... 1973
- Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer
 - Mount Royal College issue ... 862
- Alberta Federation of Labour
 - News release re LRB involvement in drafting collective bargaining legislation (SP781/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund
 - General remarks ... 261
- Alberta Ingenuity Fund
 - General remarks ... 261
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Third reading ... 2019–20
- Alberta seniors benefit program
 - Dental benefits ... 882
- Alberta SuperNet
 - General remarks ... 757–58
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
 - 2004 convention, invitees to (Q38/05: Accepted) ... 1747
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Postsecondary system independent review recommendation ... 1254
- Animal Keepers Act (Bill 32)
 - Committee ... 558
- Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 22)
 - Second reading ... 426
- Apprenticeship training
 - General remarks ... 201–02, 247–48, 862
 - Safety aspects ... 979–80

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie) (Continued)

- Apprenticeship training—Finance
 - Equipment funding ... 276
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Second reading ... 1563–65
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Committee ... 1993–94
- Arts—Finance
 - Statement re ... 983
- Assessment
 - Market value as basis for: Statement re ... 461–62
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
 - Degree-granting accreditation procedure, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921
- Automobiles—Seizure
 - For prostitution-related offences: Legislation re (Bill 206, 2003) ... 456–57
- Bruderheim Elementary School
 - Closure ... 287
- Budget
 - General remarks ... 261
- Calgary Board of Education
 - Western Canada high school restoration funding ... 1572
- Campus Alberta Quality Council
 - Degree program approval process, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921
- Campus Calgary
 - General remarks ... 862, 1791, 1792
- Capital projects
 - General remarks ... 261
- Capital projects, Municipal—Finance
 - Fort McMurray projects: Statement re ... 535
- Capital projects—Finance
 - Statement re ... 535
- Certified Management Accountants of Alberta
 - Letter re Mount Royal College's degree-granting request (SP391/05: Tabled) ... 1206
- Citizens' assembly on electoral reform (Alberta) (Proposed)
 - Legislation re (Bill 217) ... 2016
- Collective bargaining—Health authorities
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in: News reports/emails re (SP799-780/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in: Public inquiry into, news release re (SPSP781/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Commission on advanced education (Proposed)
 - Review of public postsecondary education system (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1548–49
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 248
- Council of Alberta University Students
 - A Plan for Alberta's Universities (SP206/05: Tabled) ... 370
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Manufacturing of (illegal meth labs): Firefighting training re (SP186/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Daycare centres—Campuses
 - Waiting lists for ... 1831
- Dept. of Advanced Education
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 861–63, 870

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie) (Continued)

- Dept. of Advanced Education (Continued)
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 261
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 276-77
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1791-92
- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1057
- Dept. of Energy
 - Discussions with Enron, correspondence re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
 - Service contracts costs, 2003-05 (Q41/05: Defeated) ... 1748
- Dept. of Environment
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1044-45
 - Staff ... 1045
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Relation to Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency ... 757
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 261
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 757-58
 - Relation to Dept. of Government Services ... 757
 - School closures for efficiency reasons ... 287
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 882-83
- Disaster relief
 - Disaster recovery program expenditures (M44/05: Accepted) ... 1748
- Drinking water
 - Safety of ... 1045
- Education, Postsecondary
 - Access to, affordability review to improve ... 20, 261, 649, 798, 1202-03, 1624, 1835
 - Access to, by low-income students ... 1830-31
 - Access to, by low-income students, statement re ... 1835
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 862, 1791, 1792
 - Commission to review (Motion 509: Pannu/Mason) ... 1548-49
 - Independent review of ... 1202, 1254
- Education, Postsecondary-Calgary
 - Access to, new spaces to improve ... 1791, 1792
- Education, Postsecondary-Finance
 - Capital spending ... 861-62
 - Funding envelopes ... 862
 - General remarks ... 261, 766-67, 861-63, 870
 - University of Alberta report on (SP187/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Education-Finance
 - University of Alberta report on (SP187/05: Tabled) ... 327
- Election (Electoral Reform) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 217)
 - First reading ... 2016
- Elections, Municipal-Calgary
 - Ward 10 election process: Public inquiry re ... 1333-34
 - Ward 10 election process: Public inspection re ... 1333-34
- Elections, Provincial
 - Fixed dates for: Legislation re (Bill 217) ... 2016
 - Reform of: Legislation re (Bill 217) ... 2016

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie) (Continued)

- Electric power-Prices
 - Impact on universities ... 261
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation: Energy dept. correspondence with Enron Canada re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
- Enron Canada Corporation
 - Discussions with Alberta Energy, correspondence re (M47/05: Defeated) ... 1749
- Environmental law
 - Enforcement of ... 1045
 - Enforcement of, staffing re ... 1045
- Environmental protection
 - General remarks ... 1044
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1749-50
- Foothills Medical Centre
 - Upgrades to ... 1309
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Ban on: Petitions presented re ... 369, 462-63
 - General remarks ... 248
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 535
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Enron/Energy dept. correspondence re electricity deregulation request under ... 1749
- George C. King Tower, Calgary
 - Security concerns ... 616
- Government efficiency
 - General remarks ... 757-58
- Grant MacEwan Community College
 - Degree-granting programs, funding for ... 1791
 - Degree-granting programs, transferability of ... 1791
- Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 7)
 - Committee ... 449
- Homeless-Housing
 - General remarks ... 882, 883
- Hospital beds-Calgary
 - Shortages of ... 1309
- Hospitals-Calgary
 - Capital upgrades to ... 1309
 - New south Calgary hospital ... 1309
- Hotel Room Tax (Tourism Levy) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 21)
 - Second reading ... 215-216
- Housing-Canmore
 - General remarks ... 535
- Housing-Fort McMurray
 - Impact of population increase on ... 535
- Insurance, Automobile-Premiums
 - Rebates under \$50, number of (Q8/05: Defeated) ... 660
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates debated ... 260-62
- International Day of Mourning (Workplace fatalities)
 - General remarks ... 979
- Labour Relations Board
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): News reports/emails re (SP779-780/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Involvement in drafting Bill 27, 2003 (health authorities bargaining restructuring): Public inquiry into, news release re (SP781/05: Tabled) ... 2017

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie) (Continued)

- Labour Relations (Regional Health Authorities Restructuring) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 27, 2003)
- Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting:
 - News reports/emails re (SP799-780/05: Tabled) ... 2017
 - Labour Relations Board involvement in drafting:
 - Public inquiry, news release (SP781/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 129–30
- Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts, Calgary
 - Statement re ... 983
- Medical care
 - Restructuring (third way option) ... 649
- Medical care—Calgary
 - General remarks ... 535
- Medical profession—Education
 - Accessibility of ... 1965
- Medical residents
 - Payback of student loans ... 1965
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Government members only web site, address for (SP379/05: Tabled) ... 1128
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - Affordability of postsecondary education ... 1835
 - Infrastructure spending ... 535
 - Market value assessments ... 461–62
 - Mayor's Luncheon for Business & the Arts ... 983
 - Pride Rainbow project ... 651
- Microsoft Corporation
 - School software licences purchase by provincial government ... 286–87, 322–23
- Mount Royal College
 - Capacity of ... 862
 - Request for university status ... 483
 - Request for university status: CMAA letter re (SP391/05: Tabled) ... 1205
 - University transfer programs ... 862
- Murdoch Manor, Calgary
 - Security concerns ... 616
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Access to postsecondary education ... 1830–31
 - Access to the Future Fund ... 1078–79
 - Accessibility of medical education ... 1965
 - Advanced education tuition costs ... 20
 - Affordability of postsecondary education ... 649
 - Apprenticeship training ... 201–02, 247–48, 979–80
 - Calgary hospitals ... 1309
 - Calgary Ward 10 election ... 1333–34
 - Mount Royal College ... 483
 - Postsecondary education costs ... 361
 - Postsecondary education funding ... 766–67
 - Postsecondary education review ... 1202–03, 1254, 1624
 - School construction in Calgary ... 1572
 - Security in seniors' apartment buildings ... 616
 - Seizure of vehicles in prostitution-related offences ... 456–57
 - Software licences for schools ... 286–287, 322–23
 - Student finance system ... 697, 798
- Peter Lougheed Centre (Calgary General Hospital)
 - Upgrades to ... 1309

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie) (Continued)

- Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Temporary foreign workers for oil sands construction projects, ban on ... 369, 462–63
 - Tuition fee assistance to students ... 210
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 9)
 - Second reading ... 376–77
 - Committee ... 1691–94, 1696–97
 - Third reading ... 1806
- Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 55)
 - Second reading ... 1972–73
 - Committee ... 1974, 1975
 - Third reading ... 2029
- Postsecondary educational institutions
 - Accreditation of degree-granting institutions, documentation re (M50/05: Defeated) ... 1921
 - Upgrading of, funding for ... 1791
- Postsecondary educational institutions—Finance
 - Performance envelope funds ... 276
- Pride Rainbow project
 - Statement re ... 651
- Provincial/municipal fiscal relations
 - General remarks ... 462
- Public Affairs Bureau
 - Web site for government members only, address of (SP379/05: Tabled) ... 1128
- Railway (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 13)
 - Second reading ... 422
- Reclamation of land
 - Energy industry sites ... 1045
- Report on Alberta's Legacy Act (Bill 203)
 - Second reading ... 1346–47
- Rockyview General Hospital
 - Upgrades to ... 1309
- Same-sex marriage
 - Statement re ... 651
- School boards
 - Funding for restoration of aging schools ... 1572
- School nutrition programs
 - Opposition Leader's letter to government ministers re (SP813/05: Tabled) ... 2055
- Schools
 - Restoration of, funding for ... 1572
- Schools—Closure
 - General remarks ... 287
- Schools—Construction—Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1572
- Senior citizens—Housing
 - Security concerns re ... 616
- Seniors' apartment buildings—Security aspects—Calgary
 - General remarks ... 616
- Sessional publications (Legislative Assembly)
 - Proliferation of ... 260–61
- Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, Calgary
 - Funding for ... 1309
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 503–04
- Social housing
 - General remarks ... 882, 883
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 129–30
- Statistics Canada
 - Research paper on tuition fees (SP750/05: Tabled) ... 1970

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie) (Continued)

Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School,
Edmonton
Closure ... 287

Student financial aid
Appeals of loan awards, 2000-04 (Q27/05: Response
tabled as SP478/05) ... 1157
Default rates, 1994-95 to 2003-04 (Q25/05: Response
tabled as SP476/05) ... 1155
Dollar value for students attending private
institutions, 2000-04 (Q21/05: Response tabled as
SP475/05) ... 813
Dollar value under student loan program, 2000-04
(Q20/05: Response tabled as SP474/05) ... 813
General remarks ... 20, 276, 277, 649, 697, 862, 1831,
1835
Loan remission funding ... 276
Loan remission policy re ... 798, 862
Maximum allowable loans, number of (Q26/05:
Response tabled as SP477/05) ... 1157
Provincial loan policy ... 361
Provincial loan policy: Report re (SP206/05: Tabled)
... 370
Relief benefits/completion payments dollar value,
2000-2004 (private vocational schools attendance)
(Q11/05: Response tabled as SP473/05) ... 662
Relief benefits/completion payments dollar value,
2000-2004 (public institutions attendance) (Q10/05:
Response tabled as SP472/05) ... 662
Repayment systems for, reports/studies (M31/05:
Response tabled as SP481/05) ... 1161
Supplemental assistance from students' unions ... 649,
697

Student Financial Assistance Amendment Act, 2005
(Bill 14)
Second reading ... 428-30
Committee ... 1560-61

Sun Microsystems Inc.
Ontario deal with, for school software licences ... 287,
323

Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
General remarks ... 1791

Surplus, Budgetary
Postsecondary education funding with ... 1791

Tar sands development
Employment opportunities in ... 201-02
Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re
(foreign workers) ... 248

Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution
Related Offences) Amendment Act, 2003 (Bill 206,
2003)
Proclamation of ... 456-57

Tuition fees
Documentation re (M28/05: Defeated) ... 1160
General remarks ... 1203, 1830
Increase in, for 2005-06 school year, covered by
provincial government ... 20, 361, 862, 1202
Increase in, for 2006-07 school year ... 1624
Increase in, over last few years ... 649, 697
For medical students ... 1965
Provincial assistance re, after 2005-06 rebate program
... 361, 862, 1202
Provincial assistance re: Petition presented re ... 210
Review of ... 20, 361

Taylor, Dave (L, Calgary-Currie) (Continued)

Tuition fees (Continued)
Stats Can research paper on (SP750/05: Tabled) ...
1970

Universities and colleges
College degrees, transferability of ... 1791

Universities and colleges-Finance
Deficit financing ... 261
Impact of utility cost increase on ... 261

Universities and colleges-Maintenance and repair
Deficit in ... 261

University of Calgary
Digital library project ... 1791
Mount Royal College transfer students ... 862
Schulich donation to Faculty of Engineering,
matching provincial contribution re ... 1791

University of Phoenix
Accredited degree programs in Alberta:
Documentation re, including PCAB documents
(M30/05: Defeated) ... 1160

Veterinary medical school (University of Calgary)
Curriculum development funding ... 276

Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability
General remarks ... 1045

Water resources development
General remarks ... 1045

Water treatment plants
General remarks ... 1045

Water treatment plants-Fort McMurray
General remarks ... 535

Well sites
Reclamation of ... 1045

Western Canada high school, Calgary
Restoration of ... 1572

Workplace safety
General remarks ... 980

Tougas, Maurice (L, Edmonton-Meadowlark)
Aboriginal economic development
General remarks ... 838

Aboriginal issues
First ministers' meeting re, Kelowna, November 2005
... 1781
General remarks ... 837-38, 844, 1781

Aboriginal land claims
General remarks ... 1502-03

Aboriginal peoples-Urban areas
General remarks ... 838

Aboriginal peoples-Urban areas-Edmonton
General remarks ... 838

Access to the Future Act (Bill 1)
Second reading ... 220-221

Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
Drilling applications on Lubicon claimed lands,
review of ... 838, 1502-03

Alberta Fish and Game Association
Provincial consultations with, re Métis
hunting/fishing rights ... 43

Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
Disciplinary board hearings in camera ... 1287-88

Alberta Gaming Research Institute
Funding for ... 487, 534, 1288
Research done by, interference in ... 487, 534
Study on compulsive gambling revenue ... 487, 1888

Tougas, Maurice (L, Edmonton-Meadowlark)*(Continued)*

- Alberta Lotteries and Gaming Summit (1998)
 - General remarks ... 1279
- Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation
 - General remarks ... 1288
- Appropriation Act, 2005 (Bill 41)
 - Third reading ... 1609
- Bigstone Cree Nation
 - Pamphlet on concerns re forest management agreement on lands of (SP705/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Bingo halls
 - Revenue decrease from ... 1799
- Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 56)
 - Third reading ... 2030
- Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Ltd.
 - Funding for ... 1798
 - Lottery funding for ... 976, 1288
- Casino licences
 - Application for, public hearing re ... 1288
- Casinos
 - Cashless technology in ... 2052
 - General remarks ... 1279, 1889
 - Limit on number of ... 1280, 1712-13
 - Use as provincial revenue generator ... 1279
- Celebrations casino, Edmonton
 - Licence application, public hearing re ... 1288
- Charitable societies, nonprofit organizations
 - Gaming revenue for ... 1279
- CKUA Radio
 - Statement re ... 907
- Community facility enhancement program
 - General remarks ... 771
- Construction trades
 - Employment levels: Relation to foreign worker hiring ... 838
- Criminal Notoriety Act (Bill 46)
 - Committee ... 1904
- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Amount of detail in ... 837
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 837-38, 844
 - Funding details ... 837
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Budget: Other initiatives item ... 1284
 - Business plan ... 1279
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1279-81, 1284, 1287-88
 - General remarks ... 1279
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1798-99
- Disaster relief
 - Funding for ... 1798-99
- Disaster relief fund (Proposed)
 - Funding for ... 1798-99
- Earthquakes-Pakistan
 - Alberta disaster relief for 2005 quake ... 1798-99
- Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee
 - General remarks ... 838
- Edmonton Northlands
 - Funding for ... 1798
 - Lottery funding for ... 976, 1288

Tougas, Maurice (L, Edmonton-Meadowlark)*(Continued)*

- Electric power, Coal-produced
 - General remarks ... 1127
- Electric power, Natural gas-produced
 - General remarks ... 1127
- Electric power-Prices
 - General remarks ... 1127
- Electric power-Supply
 - General remarks ... 1127
- Electric utilities-Regulations
 - Deregulation: Statement re ... 1127
- Energy industry
 - Aboriginal opportunities in ... 1781
- Energy industry-Crown lands
 - Aboriginal issues re ... 837-38, 844, 1502-03
- Energy industry-Crown lands-Sawn Lake area
 - Oil well drilling before approvals for ... 1600
- Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 24)
 - Second reading ... 681-82
- First Nations development fund
 - Revenue decrease ... 1799
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - General remarks ... 838
- Forest management agreements
 - Bigstone Cree lands, pamphlet on concerns re (SP705/05: Tabled) ... 1891
- Fort McMurray
 - Impact of oil sands expansion on ... 838
- Gambling, Compulsive
 - Level of revenue from ... 487
 - Statement re ... 1888-89
- Gambling-Aboriginal reserves
 - General remarks ... 1279
- Gambling-Moral/legal issues
 - General remarks ... 1279-80
- Gaming industry
 - Future of ... 1279-80
 - General remarks ... 1279
 - Revenue from ... 1279-80
 - Revenue from, relation to oil/gas revenues ... 1279
- Gaming industry-British Columbia
 - Revenue from ... 1279-80
- Gaming industry-Nova Scotia
 - Policy re, report on ... 1280
- Gas, Natural-Royalties
 - From disputed aboriginal lands ... 1503
- Global Gaming Expo, Las Vegas (September 2005)
 - Minister of Gaming's attendance at ... 2052
- Horse racing
 - Lottery funding for ... 770-71, 901, 976
- Horse Racing Alberta
 - General remarks ... 976
- Housing-Fort McMurray
 - Impact of population increase on ... 838
- Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, U.S. (2005)
 - Alberta disaster relief for ... 1798-99
- Insurance Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 34)
 - Second reading ... 585-86
 - Committee ... 1192
 - Third reading ... 1513-14
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 188

Tougas, Maurice (L, Edmonton-Meadowlark)*(Continued)*

- Lottery Fund
 - Capital grants to major fairs from ... 534
 - Disaster relief funding ... 1798–99
 - Race track gaming revenues to ... 770–71, 901, 976
- Lubicon Lake Band
 - Land claimed by, oil and gas activity on ... 838, 1502–03, 1600
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 100–01
- Maternal Tort Liability Act (Bill 45)
 - Second reading ... 1773
- Members' Statements (2005)
 - CKUA Radio ... 907
 - Electricity deregulation ... 1127
 - Problem gambling ... 1888–89
- Métis hunting/fishing rights
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004 ... 43, 165, 323, 838, 1124–25, 1574
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004: Letters re (SP102 & 199/05: Tabled) ... 128, 328
 - Provincial agreement re, 2004: Petition tabled re (SP797/05) ... 2017
- Métis hunting/fishing rights—Ontario
 - Provincial agreement re ... 165
- Métis Settlements General Council
 - Funding for, ends 2007 ... 837
- Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 28)
 - Second reading ... 471
- National Addictions Awareness Week
 - General remarks ... 1888
- Natural resources revenue
 - Relation to gaming revenues ... 1279
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - Funding for ... 837
- Northern development
 - Statement re ... 838
- Oil—Royalties
 - From disputed aboriginal lands ... 1503, 1600
 - Relation to gaming revenues ... 1279
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Aboriginal issues ... 1781
 - Casino construction ... 1712–13
 - First Nations land claims ... 1502–03
 - Gaming Research Institute ... 534
 - Gaming technology ... 2052
 - Horse-racing industry ... 901, 976
 - Horse-racing renewal program ... 770–71
 - Lubicon Band land claim ... 1600
 - Métis hunting rights ... 43, 165, 323, 1124–25, 1574
 - Problem gambling ... 487
 - Wild Rose Foundation grants ... 457
- Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
 - Métis harvesting agreement, opposition to (SP797/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Third reading ... 792
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Third reading ... 1290
- Slot machines
 - Number of ... 1284
- Slot machines in casinos
 - Cashless technology for ... 2052
 - Revenue from ... 1281

Tougas, Maurice (L, Edmonton-Meadowlark)*(Continued)*

- Slot machines in racing entertainment centres
 - Revenue from, transferred to horse-racing industry ... 901, 976
- Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
 - Committee ... 502
- Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association
 - Concerns re Métis hunting agreement: Letter re (SP199/05: Tabled) ... 328
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 100–01
- Supreme Court of Canada
 - Powley decision (Métis hunting/fishing rights) ... 165, 323, 838
- Surplus, Budgetary
 - Aboriginal issues funding with ... 1781
- Tar sands development
 - Expansion projects: Labour code exemption re (foreign workers) ... 838
- Video gambling machines
 - Cap on number of ... 1281
 - General remarks ... 1888–89
 - Responsible gaming features ... 1281
- Video gambling machines—Nova Scotia
 - Cap on number of ... 1280
- Wild Rose Foundation
 - Grants procedures ... 457
- Wildlife conservation
 - Impact of Métis hunting rights on ... 165, 323
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) (Bill 50)
 - Committee ... 1895
- VanderBurg, George (PC, Whitecourt-St. Anne)**
 - 7-Eleven, Inc.
 - Kids 4 Cops products sale ... 1835
 - Alberta Aids to Daily Living
 - Breast prosthesis inclusion under: Petition tabled re (SP306/05) ... 699
 - Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee
 - Long-term care facilities inspection ... 1395
 - Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
 - Testing standards re, harmonization with U.S. standards ... 414
 - Breast prostheses
 - Inclusion under AADL program: Petition tabled re (SP306/05) ... 699
 - Canadian agriculture income stabilization program
 - General remarks ... 367
 - Canadian Finals Rodeo 2005
 - Statement re ... 1968
 - Capital projects, Municipal—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1095–96
 - Regional pooling of ... 1096
 - Summer villages projects ... 1096
 - City of Lloydminster Act (Bill 3)
 - Third reading ... 479
 - Climate change
 - Kyoto protocol on: Alberta alternative to ... 743
 - Cornea transplants
 - Registry for ... 1601
 - Waiting list for ... 1601
 - Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1095–96

VanderBurg, George (PC, Whitecourt-St. Anne)*(Continued)*

Edmonton Northlands
Statement re ... 1080

Electric wire installation
Permits for (journeyman/master electricians) ...
904-05

Emission control credits
Trading of ... 743

EPCOR Group of Companies
Electricity bill changes ... 489

Extended care facilities—Finance
Petition presented re ... 252

Extended care facilities—Onoway
Petition tabled re (SP161/05) ... 295

Extended care facilities—Whitecourt-St. Anne
constituency
Statement re ... 1395

Farmfair International 2005
Statement re ... 1968

Fatality inquiries
RCMP drug raid fatalities investigation ... 43, 91

Federal Building
Disposition of ... 1096

Forest fires—Control
Use of government aircraft for ... 1096

FortisAlberta Inc.
Co-ordination of bills with EPCOR ... 489

Government aircraft
Use for forest fire fighting ... 1096

Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University
of Alberta)
Funding for ... 1095

Highway 43
Upgrading of ... 1740-41

Medical records, Electronic
Impact on organ transplantation process ... 1601

Members' Statements (2005)
Canadian Finals Rodeo and Farmfair 2005 ... 1968
Deaths of RCMP officers ... 91
Liberation of the Netherlands ... 1312-13
Long-term care in Whitecourt-St. Anne ... 1395
Memorial to fallen RCMP officers ... 1835
Northlands Park ... 1080

Net metering (Electricity)
Motion 510: Marz ... 1767

Netherlands
Liberation of, and ties with Canada ... 1312-13

Oral Question Period (2005)
Affordable supportive living program ... 2009
Agricultural income stabilization program ... 367
BSE testing ... 414
Climate change ... 743
Cornea transplants ... 1601
Electrical permits ... 904-05
EPCOR energy bills ... 489
Highway 43 ... 1740-41
Inquiry into deaths of RCMP officers ... 43
Softwood lumber trade dispute ... 1202
Utilities Consumer Advocate ... 976

Organ and tissue donation
General remarks ... 1601

Petitions Presented to the Legislative Assembly (2005)
Long-term care facility funding ... 252

VanderBurg, George (PC, Whitecourt-St. Anne)*(Continued)*

Petitions Tabled in the Legislative Assembly (2005)
Breast prosthesis inclusion under AADL program
(SP306/05: Tabled) ... 699
Onoway long-term care facility (SP161/05: Tabled) ...
295

Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting)
Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
Committee ... 1934

Pleasant View Lodge, Mayerthorpe
Upgrades to, funding ... 2009

Project Green (Federal Kyoto accord implementation
plan)
General remarks ... 743

Public safety (Building/fire codes)
Electric wire installation permit review, safety aspects
... 904-05

Road construction
Gravel roads ... 1096

Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Memorial for fallen
officers, statement re ... 1835
Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Provincial inquiry into
... 43
Drug raid, Mayerthorpe area: Statement re fallen
officers in ... 91

Senior citizens' lodges
Upgrades to, funding ... 2009-10

Seniors' supportive housing incentive program
General remarks ... 2009-10

Smoke-free Places Act (Bill 201)
Committee ... 501-02

Softwoods—Export—United States
Countervail duties re: Export tax to replace ... 1202

Tourism
General remarks ... 1968

Utilities Consumer Advocate
EPCOR/Fortis electricity bills co-ordination ... 489

Utilities Consumer Advocate Advisory Council
Membership of ... 976

Victory in Europe Day
60th Anniversary of: Statement re ... 1312

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Canada
Kids 4 Cops products sale ... 1835

Webber, Len (PC, Calgary-Foothills)
Alberta SuperNet
General remarks ... 1149
Hookup fees ... 740
School access to ... 740

Auditor General
Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... 269

Chief Electoral Officer
Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... 269
Supplementary estimates 2004-05: Passed ... 312

Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269

Dept. of Advanced Education
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312

Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312

Webber, Len (PC, Calgary-Foothills) (Continued)

- Dept. of Children's Services
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Community Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Economic Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Dept. of Education
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Energy
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Dept. of Environment
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Finance
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Gaming
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Government Services
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Health and Wellness
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Human Resources and Employment
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of International and Intergovernmental Relations
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Dept. of Justice and Attorney General
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Restructuring and Government Efficiency
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Dept. of Seniors and Community Supports
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Solicitor General
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Long-term care facility standards (proceeded with) ... 1406
- Estimates of Supply (Government expenditures)
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05 referred to Committee of Supply (Motion 8: McClellan) (SP171/05: Tabled) ... 312

Webber, Len (PC, Calgary-Foothills) (Continued)

- Ethics Commissioner
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Executive Council
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Passed ... 312
- Extended care facilities
 - MLA committee to review (2005): Report ... 1623-24
- Extended care facilities-Staffing
 - Shortage of: Re nursing hours per patient ... 1623
- Extended care facilities-Standards
 - Emergency debate under SO30 re (proceeded with) ... 1406
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1544-45
- Family Law Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 5)
 - Amendment (Minister of Justice) (SP235, 272, 295/05: Tabled) ... 450
- Information and Privacy Commissioner (Alberta)
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Interim supply (Main, Legisl. Offices, and Lottery Fund) estimates, 2005-06
 - Estimates passed (SP156/05: Tabled) ... 269
- Legislative Assembly Office
 - Interim estimates, 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Maiden Speeches (Parliamentary procedure)
 - General remarks ... 138-39
- Ombudsman
 - Interim estimates 2005-06: Passed ... 269
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Continuing care review ... 1623-24
 - SuperNet ... 1149
 - SuperNet hookup cost ... 740
- Pharmacy and Drug (Methamphetamine Limiting) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 204)
 - Committee ... 1932
- Police Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 36)
 - Amendment A2 (SP426/05: Tabled) ... 1383
 - Amendment A3 (SP427/05: Tabled) ... 1383
 - Amendment A4 (SP428/05: Tabled) ... 1383
- Senior citizens' lodges
 - Funding for ... 1623-24
- Speech from the Throne
 - Debate ... 138-39
- Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 15)
 - First reading ... 127
 - Second reading ... 546-47
 - Committee ... 1638-39, 1652, 1658
 - Third reading ... 1869
 - Amendment A1 (SP534-535/05: Tabled) ... 1638
- Workers' Compensation Board
 - Board of directors' immunity: Legislation re (Bill 15) ... 127
 - Fees paid re third-party civil actions: Legislation re (Bill 15) ... 127
 - Temporary partial disability benefits increase: Legislation re (Bill 15) ... 127

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)

- 2005 Alberta centennial celebrations
 - Busing of schoolchildren to ... 1725
 - Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster, April 14, 2005: Premiers' wager re (SP331/05: Tabled) ... 784

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Aboriginal children—Education
 - Funding for ... 166, 1261, 1264
 - General remarks ... 123
- Alberta—Economic policy
 - 20-year strategic plan ... 1260
- Alberta Association for Community Living
 - General remarks ... 311
- Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
 - Coal bed methane well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Coal bed methane well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Gas well applications approved by, 2001-04 (M10/05: Defeated) ... 666
 - Gas well applications denied by, 2001-04 (M9/05: Defeated) ... 665
- Alberta Government Offices
 - Washington, D.C. office: Accommodation costs of head of (Q6/05: Response tabled as SP540/05) ... 659
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
 - 2005 calendar (SP107/05: Tabled) ... 171
 - Financial highlights and statements, 2003-04 (SP108-109/05: Tabled) ... 171
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Alberta Home and School Association
 - General remarks ... 311
- Alberta Home Education Association
 - Conference, Red Deer, minister's attendance at ... 1256
- Alberta initiative for school improvement
 - General remarks ... 123, 166, 1260, 1261, 1269
- Alberta Pensions Administration Corporation
 - Appeals received by (M34/05: Defeated) ... 1164
- Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 43)
 - Second reading ... 1862
- Alberta School Boards Association
 - Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ... 204, 1147-48, 1268, 1274
 - Grade level achievement (GLA) discussions with province ... 1783
 - Input into provincial renewed funding framework ... 1261
 - Pension fund liability discussions ... 1712
- Alberta School Foundation Fund
 - General remarks ... 1260
- Alberta Securities Commission
 - Influencing regulatory activity case: Auditor General's authority challenged re, emergency debate re ... 1318
- Alberta SuperNet
 - Hookup fees ... 740
 - School access to ... 740, 1260, 1262, 1274, 1723

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Alberta SuperNet *(Continued)*
 - School access to: Total amount spent on (Q35/05: Response tabled as SP717/05) ... 1746, 1919
 - Video conferencing capabilities ... 1723
- Alberta Teachers' Association
 - Annual report, 2003 (SP172/05: Tabled) ... 326
 - Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ... 204, 1147-48, 1268, 1274
 - General remarks ... 311
 - Grade level achievement (GLA) discussions with province ... 1783
 - Inclusion of principals in ... 1266
 - Pension fund liability discussions ... 1712
- Alberta Treasury Branch Financial
 - Subsidiary companies' control processes, Auditor General's recommendation re (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1747
- Alberta's Commission on Learning
 - Aboriginal-specific recommendations ... 1261
 - Basic education vs extras, definition of ... 1525
 - Child progress reporting recommendation ... 1446
 - Class size guideline ... 306, 308, 309, 1261, 1262, 1723, 1727, 1730
 - Daily physical activity recommendation ... 416, 1028, 1261
 - Early childhood funding recommendation ... 1261
 - ESL funding recommendation ... 1261
 - Feedback on ... 165
 - Francophone education funding recommendation ... 1261
 - High school completion rate recommendation ... 123
 - Kindergarten recommendations ... 1260, 1271
 - Recommendations ... 1030, 1260-62, 1523, 1723
 - School fees/fundraising issue ... 1834
 - School funding under Education dept. recommendation ... 1914
 - School transportation funding recommendation ... 1261
 - Second-language teaching initiative ... 1603-04
 - Special needs students' programs recommendations ... 1255, 1261
 - Teacher bargaining model recommendation ... 204, 1147, 1260, 1265, 1268, 1274
- Alberta's Promise
 - School nutrition program involvement ... 1740
- Alexander Forbes elementary school, Grande Prairie
 - Expansion funding for ... 1729, 1739
- Alexander Rutherford Scholarships for High School Achievement
 - Impact of diploma exam grading errors on awarding of ... 164
- Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 30)
 - Second reading ... 348
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (Bill 27)
 - Second reading ... 349, 352
- Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2005 (No.2) (Bill 51)
 - Second reading ... 1944
- Arts—Finance
 - General remarks ... 797

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Auditor General
 - Diploma exams equating process, recommendation re ... 164
 - Official Opposition press release re (SP414/05: Tabled) ... 1342
 - Securities Commission enforcement processes, investigation of, authority to challenged, emergency debate re ... 1318
 - Treasury Branches' control processes comments (Q36/05: Response tabled as SP648/05) ... 1747
- Bercha Group
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study: Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... 665
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 665
- Bills, Private members' public
 - Unanimous consent given for Bill 202 to proceed to Committee and Third readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... 793
- Bruderheim Elementary School
 - Closure ... 693
- Bullying—Prevention
 - Provincial initiatives re ... 1274
 - Provincial initiatives re: Funding for ... 1265
- Calgary Board of Education
 - English as a Second Language programs, funding for ... 1572, 1784
 - Shawnessy-Somerset school ... 1914
- Calgary Catholic Board of Education
 - Funding ... 1501
 - Tuscany school ... 1914
- Canadian Space Agency
 - Partnership with Edmonton Public School Board ... 1726
- Canmore Nordic Centre
 - Upgrades to: Costs (M36/05: Accepted) ... 1165
- Capital projects, Municipal—Finance
 - General remarks ... 771
 - Legacy funding for, proposed ... 741
- Capital projects—Finance
 - General remarks ... 771
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation—Training
 - As part of school curriculum ... 205
- Centennial hockey game, Lloydminster (April 14, 2005)
 - Premiers' wager re (SP331/05: Tabled) ... 784
- Chartered schools
 - General remarks ... 1274
- Chartered schools—Finance
 - General remarks ... 1260
- Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee, Select Special
 - Motion to appoint (Motion 25: Hancock/Zwozdesky) ... 1943–44
- Children and poverty
 - General remarks ... 1779, 1827
- Children at risk—Education
 - General remarks ... 648
 - Kindergarten programs for ... 1029, 1271
- Class size (Grade school)
 - Capping of ... 1730
 - General remarks ... 1727
 - Reduction of ... 123, 1729–30

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Class size (Grade school) *(Continued)*
 - Reduction of: Funding for ... 166, 306, 308, 309, 311–12, 977–78, 1260, 1261, 1262, 1723
- Classroom space
 - Impact of class size reduction targets on ... 308, 978
- Coal bed methane extraction
 - Water recovered from (Q7/05: Defeated) ... 659
 - Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04 (M6/05: Defeated) ... 664
 - Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M5/05: Defeated) ... 664
- Coalition for Equal Access to Education
 - English as a second language study ... 1784
- Collective bargaining—Teachers
 - General remarks ... 203, 1260, 1266
 - Province-wide bargaining ... 204, 1147–48, 1268, 1271, 1274
 - Ten year deal in return for teachers' pension plan solvency ... 1712
- Collective bargaining—Teachers—Fort McMurray
 - Agreement: Northern allowance provision ... 203
- Community schools
 - General remarks ... 1729
- Computers in schools
 - Funding for ... 310
 - General remarks ... 1724
- Council of Alberta School Superintendents
 - General remarks ... 311
- Court of Queen's Bench
 - Edmonton Public School Board school closure decision ... 1446
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug)
 - Test for use of (strips detecting smell) ... 1265
- Crystal methamphetamine (Drug) abuse—Prevention
 - General remarks ... 1265, 1729
- Culture—Finance
 - General remarks ... 797
- Daycare centres
 - Special-needs children ... 311
- Debts, Public (Provincial government)
 - Retirement of: Legislation re (Bill 37) ... 775
- Dept. of Education
 - Annual report, 2004-05 (SP568/05: Tabled) ... 1675
 - Business plan ... 1260
 - Estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1259–62, 1264–69, 1271–75
 - Minister's visits to all school boards ... 166
 - Return of school capital funding to ... 1723, 1914
 - Supplementary estimates ... 1265
 - Supplementary estimates, 2004-05: Debated ... 306–12
 - Supplementary estimates, 2005-06: Debated ... 1720–30
- Dept. of Infrastructure and Transportation
 - Reassignment of capital funding to other departments ... 1723, 1914
- Dept. of Innovation and Science
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M18/05: Response tabled as SP772/05) ... 820
- Dept. of Learning
 - Annual report, 2003-04 (SP58/05: Tabled) ... 94
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M17/05: Response tabled as SP718/05) ... 818, 1919

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
 - Credit card statements for deputy minister (M15/05: Response tabled as SP826/05) ... 816
 - Credit card statements for minister and executive assistant (M16/05: Response tabled as SP827/05) ... 817
 - Minister's business expenses (M14/05: Response tabled as SP825/05) ... 815
- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development
 - Deputy Minister's and departmental official's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M13/05: Response tabled as SP738/05) ... 667
 - Minister's and executive assistant's credit card statements, 2003-04 (M12/05: Response tabled as SP737/05) ... 666-67
 - Minister's business expenses, 2003-04 (M11/05: Response tabled as SP736/05) ... 666
- Disabled children-Education
 - General remarks ... 166, 648, 1029, 1030
 - Review of (2000) ... 1255
- Disabled children-Education-Finance
 - General remarks ... 311, 1126, 1261, 1501, 1525
- Drinking water
 - In schools ... 1711
- Drug abuse resistance education program
 - General remarks ... 1265, 1274
- Early childhood education
 - Full-day programs ... 1029, 1260, 1723, 1730
 - Full-day programs: Studies re (Q29/05: Response tabled as SP499/05) ... 1158, 1607
 - Funding ... 1261
 - General remarks ... 311, 1727
 - Junior kindergarten (prekindergarten) ... 1029, 1260, 1723
- Early childhood education, Private
 - Funding for ... 1260, 1261
- Edmonton Catholic School District
 - Capital plan changes (Castle Downs high school, Terwillegar school) ... 1078
- Edmonton Public School Board
 - City centre education project ... 1029
 - Closure of schools ... 124-25, 311, 693, 694, 767, 851, 1446, 1447
 - Closure of schools: Court decision re ... 1446
 - Cluster study re utilization levels in schools ... 693, 851
 - Leasing of commercial space for continuing education ... 738
 - Maintenance/utility costs, use of instructional funds for ... 1570
 - Partnership with Canadian Space Agency ... 1726
 - Portables for Kenilworth junior high ... 694
 - Teachers, hiring of ... 309
- Education
 - General remarks ... 1260, 1267
 - Issues re ... 166, 952
- Education, Postsecondary-Finance
 - University presidents' comments re (SP330/05: Tabled) ... 784
- Education-Curricula
 - Aboriginal-specific courses ... 1264
 - Fine arts courses ... 952

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Education-Curricula *(Continued)*
 - First aid/CPR training courses ... 205
 - General remarks ... 166, 307, 308, 1264, 1272
 - Health and wellness instruction framework ... 416, 952, 1028, 1967
 - Review of ... 1028
 - Social studies courses ... 306-07
- Education-Curricula-Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1274
- Education-Finance
 - Funding for teachers' salaries ... 203
 - General remarks ... 693, 851, 952, 977-78, 1030, 1125-26, 1260-62, 1267, 1525, 1570, 1833
 - User fees ... 1525, 1723-24, 1727, 1833-34, 1913
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q14/05: Response tabled as SP500/05) ... 808, 1607
 - User fees: Total revenue from, 2000-04 (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 808
- Education-Finance-Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1273-74
- Education-Specialists
 - Funding for ... 1030
- Elementary education
 - General remarks ... 1265
- Ellerslie elementary school
 - Condition of ... 1725
 - Drinking water in ... 1711, 1725
- Emergency debates under Standing Order 30
 - Securities Commission challenge of Auditor General's authority (not proceeded with) ... 1318
- English as a Second Language
 - Funding ... 311, 949-50, 1126, 1261, 1501, 1525, 1572
 - General remarks ... 166, 952, 1572, 1784
 - Review of ... 1572, 1784
- Fair Trading (Telemarketing) Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 205)
 - Second reading ... 1545
- Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 37)
 - First reading ... 775
 - Second reading ... 845-46
 - Committee ... 1018-19
- First aid-Training
 - As part of school curriculum ... 205
- Fiscal Responsibility Act
 - Amendment of (Bill 37) ... 775
- Foreign workers, Temporary
 - Alberta/federal government memorandum re (M24/05: Defeated) ... 989
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - General remarks ... 1164
- French language-Teaching
 - Funding for ... 1126
- Gas well drilling industry
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group: Memos re (M7/05: Defeated) ... 665
 - Sour gas blowout ignition study by Bercha Group: Study re (M8/05: Response tabled as SP667/05) ... 665
 - Well applications approved by AEUB, 2001-04 (M10/05: Defeated) ... 666
 - Well applications denied by AEUB, 2001-04 (M9/05: Defeated) ... 665

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Gifted children—Education
 - General remarks ... 1078
- Governor General's award for excellence in teaching
 - Canadian history
 - Letters of congratulations to Alberta winners of (SP777/05: Tabled) ... 2017
- Grace Martin school, Edmonton
 - Number of portable classrooms at ... 1727
- Health sciences ambulatory learning centre (University of Alberta)
 - General remarks ... 1164
- High school credits
 - Fine arts credit requirement ... 1271–72
 - Fine arts credit requirement (Motion 505: Herard) ... 831
- High school education—Curricula
 - Fine arts courses ... 952
 - Vocational/trades courses ... 1267, 1269
 - Vocational/trades courses: Use of ticketed journeymen in ... 1274
- High school graduates
 - Numbers of ... 123, 1264, 1267
- High schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 1727
- Home education—Regulations
 - Review of ... 1255–56
- Insurance, Automobile—Premiums
 - Rebates under \$50, number of (Q8/05: Defeated) ... 660
- Inuit children—Education
 - Funding for ... 166, 1261, 1264
 - General remarks ... 123
- J. Percy Page high school, Edmonton
 - Partnership with Canadian Space Agency ... 1726
- Kenilworth junior high school
 - Portables for ... 694
- Languages—Teaching
 - General remarks ... 1603–04
- Learning Resources Centre
 - Buy-down credit for school purchases at ... 310
- Libraries, School
 - General remarks ... 166
 - Purchase of books for ... 1727
- Library cards
 - Fees: Elimination of, in tribute to Hon. Lois Hole (Motion 502: Agnihotri) ... 190–91
- Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute
 - General remarks ... 1164
- Medical care, Private
 - Influence of health symposium on ... 1164–65
- Members' apologies to the House
 - General remarks ... 1343
- Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Conduct in the Chamber ... 1274
- Members' withdrawal of remarks
 - General remarks ... 1343
- Métis children—Education
 - Funding for ... 166, 1261, 1264
 - General remarks ... 123
- Microsoft Corporation
 - School software licences purchase by provincial government ... 322–23

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Microsoft Corporation *(Continued)*
 - School software licences purchase by provincial government: Documents re (M27/05: Accepted) ... 1159
- National child benefit
 - General remarks ... 1827
- Natural gas rebates
 - General remarks ... 1725
- Natural resources revenue
 - Use for budget purposes: Legislation re (Bill 37) ... 775
- Northern Alberta Development Council
 - Youth apprenticeship program ... 1267
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Input into high school vocational/trades courses ... 1269
- Obesity in children
 - Reduction of, through physical activity in schools ... 416–17, 1028, 1966
 - School programs re ... 1966–67
- Office of the Premier
 - Current chief of staff (Rod Love) remuneration (Q23/05: Defeated) ... 814
 - Former chief of staff (Peter Elzinga) remuneration (Q22/05: Defeated) ... 814
- Official Opposition
 - Press release re Auditor General (SP414/05: Tabled) ... 1342
- Oral Question Period (2005)
 - Achievement testing ... 1255
 - Budget expenditures ... 797
 - Calgary Catholic School Board funding ... 1501
 - Capital investment in schools ... 771
 - Centralized teacher bargaining ... 1147–48
 - Childhood obesity ... 1966–67
 - Class sizes ... 977–78
 - Daily physical activity in schools ... 1028
 - Diploma exam grades ... 164, 168
 - Education funding ... 1125–26
 - Education fundraising ... 1833–34
 - Education system ... 952
 - English as a Second Language program ... 1572
 - English as a Second Language programs ... 1784
 - ESL funding ... 949–50
 - First aid and CPR training in schools ... 205
 - Grade level achievement reporting ... 1446
 - High school completion rate ... 123
 - Highway 28 ... 741
 - Home schooling ... 1255–56
 - Kindergarten programs ... 1029
 - Labour negotiations with teachers ... 203–204
 - Learning assessment ... 1782–83
 - Lunchtime supervision in schools ... 1913
 - Nutrition programs for schools ... 1739–40, 1779
 - Nutrition programs in schools ... 1827
 - Physical activities in schools ... 416–17
 - Provincial achievement tests ... 648
 - School board consultations ... 165–166
 - School closures ... 693, 694, 742, 767, 851, 1446, 1447, 1522–23, 1570
 - School construction ... 1078
 - School fees ... 1525

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Oral Question Period (2005) *(Continued)*
 - School infrastructure funding ... 1739
 - School infrastructure needs in Calgary ... 1914
 - School utilization ... 738
 - School utilization formula ... 124–125
 - Second-language instruction ... 1603–04
 - Software licences for schools ... 322–23
 - Special-needs education ... 1030
 - SuperNet hookup cost ... 740
 - Teachers' unfunded pension liability ... 1712, 1910
 - Use of school instructional funding ... 1525
 - Water quality in ELLerslie elementary school ... 1711
- Physical fitness—Teaching
 - Daily mandatory activities ... 307–08, 416–17, 1028
 - Daily mandatory activities, funding for ... 1261
 - Mandatory grade 10 course: First aid/CPR component ... 205
- Point of Order
 - Factual accuracy ... 1343–44
 - Quoting documents ... 1857
 - Referring to a member by name ... 1343
 - Second reading debate ... 1945
- Portable/modular classrooms
 - General remarks ... 771, 978, 1720, 1721, 1725, 1727, 1729
- Private schools—Finance
 - General remarks ... 952, 1260, 1261
- Property tax—Education levy
 - General remarks ... 1260
- Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Bill 202)
 - Third reading ... 793
 - Unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and Third readings (SO 8(3) waived) ... 793
- Punjabi language—Teaching
 - Funding for ... 1725
- Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill 31)
 - Committee ... 1190
- Registered apprenticeship program (High schools)
 - General remarks ... 1267
- Round-table on Family Violence and Bullying, Calgary (May 2004)
 - General remarks ... 1265
- St. John Ambulance
 - First aid/CPR instruction in schools ... 205
- Sangudo high school
 - Closure ... 693
- Scholarships
 - Impact of diploma exam grading errors on awarding of ... 164
 - For second-language teachers ... 1604
- School—Grande Prairie
 - Portables at ... 1729
- School Act
 - School closure provisions ... 742
 - Section 119, inter-school board co-operation ... 1271
- School boards
 - Academic school entrance requirements ... 1078
 - Audited financial statements, sections 1-3 (SP104-106/05: Tabled) ... 171
 - Budget process ... 1126
 - Collective bargaining model for teachers, study of ... 204, 1147–48

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- School boards *(Continued)*
 - Education minister's visits to ... 166
 - Funding ... 1125–26, 1260
 - Funding: Renewed funding framework ... 1260–61, 1274, 1723, 1739, 1834
 - Funding: Renewed funding framework advisory committee ... 1727, 1739, 1784
 - School closure regulation ... 767
- School boards, Francophone
 - Funding ... 1261
- School boards, Regional
 - General remarks ... 1147
- School councils
 - Fund-raising activities ... 1525, 1723–24, 1727, 1833–34
 - Fund-raising activities: Revenues from (Q15/05: Defeated) ... 809
- School counsellors
 - General remarks ... 1268, 1723, 1727
- School dropouts
 - General remarks ... 738, 1264, 1726
- School lunch programs
 - General remarks ... 1739, 1779, 1827
- School lunchtime supervision
 - Fees ... 1913
- School nutrition programs
 - General remarks ... 1739–40, 1779, 1827
- School principals
 - Inclusion in Alberta Teachers' Association ... 1266
- School reports
 - Grade level achievement reports ... 1446
- Schoolchildren—Transportation
 - Funding increase for ... 1261, 1720, 1721–22, 1724, 1727
 - User fees for ... 1525
- Schools—Closure
 - General remarks ... 124–25, 310, 311, 693, 694, 742, 767, 771, 851, 1265, 1271, 1446, 1447, 1522–23, 1570, 1723
- Schools—Closure—Ontario
 - Policy document re ... 742, 1271, 1523
- Schools—Closure—Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1274
- Schools—Construction
 - Contingent on closure of older schools ... 742, 1523
 - General remarks ... 1720, 1721
 - Impact of utilization formula on ... 1739
 - Modular schools ... 1265
- Schools—Construction—Calgary
 - General remarks ... 1914
- Schools—Construction—Edmonton
 - General remarks ... 771, 1078
- Schools—Construction—Finance
 - General remarks ... 771
 - Return to Education dept. responsibility ... 1723, 1914
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 1739
- Schools—Maintenance and repair
 - Funding for ... 771, 1525, 1570, 1720, 1723, 1724–25, 1727
 - Use of budget surplus funds for ... 1739
- Schools—Rural areas
 - General remarks ... 1273–74

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Schools–Utilization
 - Change to formula for ... 124–25, 693, 694, 742, 771, 1271, 1447
 - Community group use of, as part of formula re ... 1265–66, 1268, 1271
 - General remarks ... 311, 738, 1723, 1729
 - Review of formula for ... 1447, 1739
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
 - Input into high school vocational/trades courses ... 1269
- Special Cases Committee (Student evaluation)
 - Review of examination results appeals ... 168
- Speech therapy
 - In schools ... 1030, 1265
- Standing Orders
 - SO 8(3) waived to allow consideration of Bill 202, Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act ... 793
- Strathearn Elementary and Junior High School, Edmonton
 - Closure ... 694, 767, 1447
 - Closure: Court decision re ... 1446
- Student assessment
 - Computer adaptive assessment tool re ... 1782–83
 - Fees for ... 1730
 - Grade level achievement method ... 1782–83
- Student Health Initiative
 - Funding ... 1261
- Student testing
 - Achievement tests ... 1255, 1264–65, 1272
 - Achievement tests: Comparison to international standards ... 1264
 - Achievement tests: Costs of administering, 2000-05 (Q40/05: Accepted) ... 1747
 - Achievement tests: Grade 3 retesting ... 648, 952, 1255
 - Diagnostic tests ... 648, 952, 1255, 1265
 - Diploma exams: Funding for ... 1265
 - Diploma exams: Grading errors on ... 164, 168
 - Diploma exams: Method for equating, studies re (M49/05: Accepted) ... 1920
- Substance abuse–Treatment–Youth
 - Mandatory programs for: Legislation re (Bill 202) - unanimous consent to proceed to Committee and Third readings of ... 793
- Sun Microsystems Inc.
 - Ontario deal with, for school software licences ... 323
- Supplementary estimates, 2004-05
 - General remarks ... 1724

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene (PC, Edmonton-Mill Creek)*(Continued)*

- Surplus, Budgetary
 - School construction funding with ... 1725, 1739, 1914
- Teacher-librarians
 - General remarks ... 1268, 1723, 1727
- Teachers
 - Numbers of, increase in: Funding for ... 306, 308, 309, 311, 1727
 - Professional development for, funding for ... 1260, 1261, 1264
 - Rewards for excellence ... 1274
 - University of Calgary book about (*My Most Memorable Teacher ...*): Letter of congratulations re (SP630/05: Tabled) ... 1745
- Teachers, Modern languages
 - Incentives for ... 1604
- Teachers' Pension Plan
 - Unfunded liability ... 1261, 1712, 1910
- Teachers' Pension Plans Act
 - General remarks ... 1261
- Terrace Heights Elementary School, Edmonton
 - Closure ... 1446
- Textbooks–Finance
 - General remarks ... 306–07, 310
- Unleashing Innovation in Health Systems symposium (Calgary, May 3-5, 2005)
 - Speakers/presenters at, remuneration paid to (M35/05: Accepted) ... 1164–65
- Valhalla school, Peace River
 - Closure ... 693
- Video conferencing in education
 - General remarks ... 1723
- Videoconferencing in education
 - General remarks ... 311, 1274
 - Second language teaching application ... 1604
- W. P. Wagner high school, Edmonton
 - Closure of ... 1267
- Wages–Teachers
 - Funding for increase in ... 203
 - General remarks ... 1274
- Wages–Teachers–Fort McMurray
 - Coverage of cost of living ... 203
- Warner hockey school for girls
 - Infrastructure funding for ... 1274
- World Masters [summer] Games, Edmonton (July 2005)
 - General remarks ... 1165
- World Masters [winter] Games
 - Alberta bid for ... 1165

